
Erosion into Exile

Preface

During the period of the conquest, under the dynamic leadership of Joshua, Israel was faithful to God. Apparently, Joshua trained his men well, since the book of Judges tells us that Israel was faithful even after Joshua died. As we shall see in our study of the period of the Judges and the Kings, God's people began deteriorating to a point where it could be said:

"...there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes."

On the other hand, there were also kings, though only a handful, that went to the other extreme where it could be said that they did what was

"..right in the eyes of the Lord his God".

In short, the reign of the judges and kings was a pendulum swing between these two styles of leadership.

For the most part this battle involved a slow erosion, starting from the leaders that filtered down to the people. Each king set a standard for the next one, who either followed suit or overcame the challenges of his day. Nonetheless, the deterioration eventually led God to pronounce judgment by sending them into exile.

The study of "Erosion into Exile" reveals the character of the judges and kings that struggled to do what was right in the eyes of God. These lessons cover over a period of over 800 years of history, from the time of the conquest till Judah's captivity.

We are able to see some of the main causes of this unfaithfulness by contrasting and comparing the reign of the kings with each other. We will also be inspired by the challenges that some of the king had to overcome. Our study will provide invaluable lessons, insights and warnings as we face our own set of challenges and hurdles today, seeking to see our faith exalted rather than eroded!

I hope this study will take your faith and conviction higher in the way that it did ours!

John Louis
Tan Siew Hee

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11. Front Cover "Solomon consecrated King", Used by permission from Scala Picture Library. Original fresco painted by Raphael, *Vatican Loggia*.
12. Picture of High Priest, Figure 1, "Worship and Ritual in Herod's Temple" slide collection, No 19, Leen Ritmeyer.

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Erosion into Exile

Class Requirements

1. Attendance of all lessons. Parents who take turns are to listen to the tapes provided.
2. Daily reading of assigned chapters and memory Scriptures.
3. Be involved in a weekly discipleship group using the application sections at the end of each chapter(after midweek service) where we have a safe place to open up our hearts, get the input from our disciplers and peers also. Talk about the lessons in our individual times with disciplers/leaders.
4. There will be an exam centered not just on academic information but the filling up of a weekly journal at the end of the each lesson.

Note to all Bible Talk Leaders

1. Ensure all Christians in your group have a good understanding of the materials each week.
2. Conduct a thorough discipleship group weekly, talking at heart level with all the Christians in the group.
3. Take your individual times seriously centering everyone during this period on the material taught.
4. Ensure the Christians complete their journals and learn the materials.

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READING ASSIGNMENTS

Thursday	11-Oct-01	Joshua 1, 8:30-35, 24
Friday	12-Oct-01	Judges 1-3
Saturday	13-Oct-01	Judges 4-5
Sunday	14-Oct-01	Judges 6-9
Monday	15-Oct-01	Judges 10-12
Tuesday	16-Oct-01	Judges 13-16
Wednesday	17-Oct-01	Judges 17-21
Thursday	18-Oct-01	1 Sam 10:20-22, 14:1-23,
Friday	19-Oct-01	1 Sam 23:1-14, 28:4-8, 30:3-8, Judges 1:1-2
Saturday	20-Oct-01	Joshua 7:7-15, 9:3-15, 2 Sam 2:1-4
Sunday	21-Oct-01	2 Sam 5:17-25, 1 Sam 27:1-12
Monday	22-Oct-01	1 Kings 11, 16
Tuesday	23-Oct-01	1 Kings 18, 20
Wednesday	24-Oct-01	1 Kings 21-22
Thursday	25-Oct-01	2 Chro 14-16
Friday	26-Oct-01	2 Chro 17-19
Saturday	27-Oct-01	2 Chro 20, 26, 2 Kings 8
Sunday	28-Oct-01	2 Kings 14, 15
Monday	29-Oct-01	Amos 2-5
Tuesday	30-Oct-01	Amos 6-9
Wednesday	31-Oct-01	1 Kings 12-13,
Thursday	01-Nov-01	1 Kings 14-15
Friday	02-Nov-01	1 Kings 17,19
Saturday	03-Nov-01	2 Kings 16, 2 Chro 13
Sunday	04-Nov-01	2 Chro 25, 28
Monday	05-Nov-01	2 Kings 1-3
Tuesday	06-Nov-01	2 Kings 4-5
Wednesday	07-Nov-01	2 Kings 6-7
Thursday	08-Nov-01	2 Chro 1-3
Friday	09-Nov-01	2 Chro 4-6
Saturday	10-Nov-01	2 Chro 7-9
Sunday	11-Nov-01	2 Kings 17, 1 Chro 6, 26
Monday	12-Nov-01	2 Kings 24-25
Tuesday	13-Nov-01	2 Chro 33-34
Wednesday	14-Nov-01	2 Chro 35-36
Thursday	15-Nov-01	2 Kings 13, 21
Friday	16-Nov-01	2 Chro 10-12
Saturday	17-Nov-01	2 Chro 24, 29-30
Sunday	18-Nov-01	2 Chro 31-32
Monday	19-Nov-01	2 Kings 22-23
Tuesday	20-Nov-01	2 Chro 21-23
Wednesday	21-Nov-01	2 Kings 9,11
Thursday	22-Nov-01	1 Kings 1-3
Friday	23-Nov-01	1 Kings 4-6
Saturday	24-Nov-01	1 Kings 7-8
Sunday	25-Nov-01	1 Kings 9-10
Monday	26-Nov-01	2 Kings 18-20
Tuesday	27-Nov-01	2 Kings 10,12
Wednesday	28-Nov-01	2 Chro 27

Erosion into Exile

Ten (10) Memory Scriptures

- ***Week one - Judges 21:25***
“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”
- ***Week two - 1 Samuel 14:6b and c***
“Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few.”
- ***Week two - Psalm 43:3***
“Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.”
- ***Week three - Isaiah 30:1***
“Woe to the obstinate children,” declares the LORD, “to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin;”
- ***Week four - 2 Kings 10:16a***
“Jehu said, “Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD.””
- ***Week four - 2 Chronicles 15:2b – 3***
“The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law.”
- ***Week five - 2 Chronicles 16:9***
“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.”
- ***Week five - 2 Chronicles 21:7***
“Nevertheless, because of the covenant the LORD had made with David, the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David. He had promised to maintain a lamp for him and his descendants forever.”
- ***Week six - 2 Kings 12:2***
“Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him.”
- ***Week seven - 2 Chronicles 29:36***
“Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, because it was done so quickly.”

Erosion into Exile

Introduction

- **Conquest** (*ca. 1400BC-1300BC*) (Map 1)
The story of Israel as a nation truly begins with the Conquest of Canaan. When Moses died, Joshua led Israel to conquer many cities in Canaan. After Joshua's death, the elders continued to serve God and obey the law. Israel was in many ways at its pinnacle - obedient, faithful and trusting, which resulted in much of Canaan being conquered and Israel experiencing peace. *Joshua 1:16-18* and *Joshua 21:25*
- **Judges** (*ca. 1300BC-1050BC*) (Map 2 and Chart 1)
The first judge was probably Othniel and the last was Samuel. This period spanned over 250 years. Unfortunately, it was the beginning of some of the darkest days in Israelite history. Marked by the consistent pattern of prosperity, disobedience, punishment, and repentance, there were signs of a continual deterioration morally and spiritually. The phrase to define this period - "Everyone did as he saw fit".

In the end, the people asked for a king so that they could be like the surrounding nations, imitating the surrounding nations rather than following God. Why did Israel want a king? Monarchies were the practice of the neighboring Canaanite nations. God warned his people against the institution of a king in 1 Samuel 8:10-18. The spiritual dangers involved were clearly outlined. God himself, wanted to be their king, but their stubborn refusal to trust God prevailed. God then allowed them to carry out their plans. (God has always operated in this manner. Another example was when He allowed the people to send out the twelve spies, as recorded in the first chapter of Deuteronomy. See lesson three of the "Wanderings in the Wilderness" series for more on this matter. God's original plan was for them to trust him and go in and conquer the land. Sadly, due to their insistence to carry out their own plans, which God allowed, their plan backfired, which resulted in forty years of wandering in the desert.

Again, during the period of Israel's history as recorded in the beginning of 1 Samuel, a new generation of people wanted to carry out their own plan to create a monarchy which eventually God allowed. This plan, too, like all others against God's plan, backfired. Saul, their first king, was a tyrant. Although there were a handful of kings that did right, most of them were so wicked, (worshipping idols and following the detestable practices of the neighboring Canaanite nations), that they provoked God to anger and led their people astray. The erosion from one generation to the next eventually took them into exile. At this point, it would be useful to study out reasons why Israel wanted a monarchy. Below are some possible reasons:

By having a monarchy, they were imitating the Canaanite nations. They felt insecure as their current arrangement made them feel inferior. They were worldly in their outlook.

The Judges that were supposed to rule were not intimidating figures. They were leaders of Israel that judged the people from their homes. For example,

Deborah was seen to have her court in *Judges 4:5*. Samuel in *1 Samuel 7:16* moved around from his home judging and instructing the people. All the judges were, in one sense, ordinary men. They did not

- a. accumulate wealth
- b. amass a large army
- c. have many wives ; and
- d. impose taxes on the people.

This setup was not glamorous. It was a humble arrangement, not at all worldly. It involved ordinary men, judging God's people from the context of their homes and travels, with God as their King. This plan to govern his people was simple and ordinary. He appointed judges to judge the people, Levites and priests to teach the people the law and prophets to instruct the leaders and the people from time to time. With this arrangement God promised that he would bless them as long as they were faithful to his commands but curse them if they disobeyed (Deuteronomy 28). This plan obviously did not appeal to the people. They wanted their own king. They were worldly and wanted a king, like all the other nations, who could go in and out before them, *1 Samuel 8:20*. In spite of warning them, God granted them this choice, only to their peril.

- **Monarchy** (*ca. 1050BC-586BC*) (Chart 2)

God raised up Saul to be the first king of Israel. He started well but later turned out to be rebellious towards God. God raised up David to take his place and truly this was the Golden age of Israelite history. Not just in terms of the peace and prosperity but also spiritually, Israel was at its peak. The people were focused on loving God and obeying his commandments.

Solomon continued what his father, David, had started. Sadly, he allowed his heart to stray away due to his many wives. Finally, God split the kingdom into two, a northern kingdom and a southern one, during the time of Rehoboam, Solomon's son.

Under the Divided Monarchy, the Northern Kingdom, Israel, was truly bad. None of the 20 kings served God; instead they worshipped the golden calves, Baal and other idols. God sent prophet after prophet to call them to repentance but they would not listen. Finally, in 722BC they were sent into exile by the Assyrians, never to return.

The Southern Kingdom, Judah, did better. Many of the kings did imitate David's heart and walked as he did, yet not all. Though the dynastic succession was maintained, spiritually the nation was slowly eroding. Many prophets were sent to warn them but the hearts of the people did not change. So in 606BC, many of the nobles and priests were exiled by the Babylonians and finally, in 586BC, the temple was destroyed and Jerusalem burned. By now both Israel and Judah had completed their **EROSION INTO EXILE** (see Map 8), a terrible ending to a nation which had started with so much hope, so much faith, and so many miracles, and which had received so much love from their Creator. God was hurting but He was also waiting for something better, which He had in store for us!

In short, the erosion happened because God's people abandoned His Word. Leaders were weak in calling their people back to God. Throughout the entire

study of this history, you will notice that the times where the people did make their way back was when the leaders called them to a commitment to God's Word.

- i) Asa - 2 Chro 14:4
- ii) Jehoshaphat - 2 Chro 17:4, 19:4, 8
- iii) Hezekiah - 2 Chro 29:35, 31:21
- iv) Josiah - 2 Chro 34:29-32

Having been a disciple for over 18 years, I believe with all my heart that the only way to be faithful and to finish strong is to have a relationship with God centered on His Word!

Life Application

- 1) At present, how often do you spend time with God's Word?
_____ daily
_____ 2/3 times a week
_____ once a week
_____ seldom
_____ inconsistent (high when there is a schedule, virtually none when there is no plan, expectation)
- 2) Do you read your newspaper/magazines more than the Bible?
_____ Do you pick up your newspaper/magazine and read it before the Bible?
_____ Do you look forward to finishing your QT so that you can move on with your schedule?
- 3) How do you go about reading the word?
_____ arbitrary selection of passages
_____ relying on material given by church
_____ lessons from leaders only
_____ tapes only
_____ others
_____ use bible study aids, books, software centered on the Bible that deepens your knowledge

Disciples who are centered on the word of God consistently, not leaving it to their "mood", will never erode into a spiritual exile but shall inherit the promise in *Psalm 1:2-3*,

*"But his delight is in the law of the Lord ,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in season
And whose leaf does not wither,
Whatever he does prospers."*

LESSON 1 – Deterioration At The Promised Land

Introduction

Imagine the inspired writer finishing off the last line of the book of Judges with these words in *Judges 21:25*:

“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.”

What a way to end a book. Think of the sadness that God felt as his Holy Spirit moved the writer to write this. Indeed these words were true of the state of his people at that time. Oh, how far had they fallen! This was not the dream that God had for his people. Moses warned his people that this would happen if they forsook God. What went wrong? How did it go wrong? How did Israel get into such a pit?

A state like this cannot happen overnight. There was a SLOW deterioration throughout the ages in many aspects of the nation. The account in *Judges 2:1-3* is really the first major sign of deterioration in the Israelites. Gilgal is located near Jericho (see Map 1) and Bokim is said to be near Bethel¹. After the attack on Bethel in *Judges 1:22*, we see the compromise beginning in the Northern Tribes. The phrase “did not drive out” was mentioned seven times (*Judges 1:27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33*). In contrast, this phrase was used only once for Judah (*Judges 1:19*) and also once for Benjamin (*Judges 1:21*). Thus the deterioration began with the Northern tribes. Listing the 20 cities which the Israelites did not conquer we are able to see this more clearly:

<u>Cities not Conquered</u>	<u>No. of Cities</u>	<u>Tribe Responsible</u>
• Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek, Rehob	(7)	- Asher
• Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo	(5)	- Manasseh
• Aijalon, Shaalbim, Mount Heres	(3)	- Dan
• Kitron, Nahalol	(2)	- Zebulun
• Beth Shemesh, Beth Anath	(2)	- Naphtali
• Gezer	(1)	- Ephraim
	Total (20)	

There were 20 cities mentioned by name that were still in the hands of the enemies, mostly concentrated in northern tribes (see Map 1). In the tribe of Asher in particular, seven (7) Canaanite cities had their stronghold against the Israelites. The fact that these 17 cities were mentioned by name indicates that they were in particular where the Canaanites had their greatest strongholds. The Northern tribe of Asher and Manasseh were the tribes where the Canaanite influence was the greatest. Manasseh also had 5 such cities still under the Canaanites. God’s will was for Israel to be a light to the other nations. Instead, the reverse was true; the Canaanites eventually influenced Israel to abandon God and worship idols. The Israelites eroded slowly over the ages that were to follow.

In *Judges 2:1-5*, the region from Gilgal to Bokim (Bethel) was singled out as the place where the erosion began to gather momentum. Gilgal, coincidentally was located in Manasseh and Bethel in Ephraim (see Map 1).

¹ Pg 39, “At Risk in the Promised Land” , E. John Hamlin.

It's amazing to note that the twenty cities were located among the ten northern tribes, where later on many of the wars would be fought and many of the judges had to be called to rid the land of their enemies.

That is what we will focus on in this study. The three main areas of deterioration that took place were:

I. Deterioration of Brotherly Harmony

We see the slow deterioration in this area:

- *Joshua 1:12-15, Joshua 22:1-3*. What unity! They were fighting for each other until the task was done. This took years. It was not a one-time battle. They sacrificed so much for each other, even from being in their own land all this time. They put the interests of one another above themselves. This carried on until the death of Joshua. Even after that they maintained this closeness as we see in *Judges 1:3*, where Judah and Simeon were willing to go to war together. Again they stuck up for each other. This was clearly due to the strong and courageous leadership of the elders of this time. They stood as one people, one voice and one nation serving their one true God. However, they did not conquer the entire area as intended and commanded by God. The enemies that were left unconquered, namely the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, later became a snare to the Israelites throughout the period of the Judges (see Chart 1). Averting wars with the enemy only brought about short term "peace". The calamities that followed years later, by not eradicating different enemies, were extremely destructive. Procrastinating immediate battles never pays off. Compromise and lack of faith will always bite us at the end. The enemies that were left in later years became rulers over them (compare Chart 1 and map 1).
- In *Judges 1:27*, the tribe of Manasseh was left to fight on their own. Likewise, Ephraim (*1:29*), Asher (*1:31*), Naphtali (*1:33*) and the Danites (*1:34*). Self-interest was gradually, slowly beginning to take the place of brotherly unity.
- In *Judges 5:13-18*, only some of the tribes fought together for the well being of Israel, - Naphtali, Ephraim, Benjamin, East Manasseh, Zebulun and Issachar. Where were the rest?
 - Reuben searching their hearts at the camp fires.
 - Dan lingering at the ships.
 - Gad stayed beyond the Jordan.
 - Asher remained on the coast.
 - No mention of Judah and Simeon, probably the battle was too far north to even bother them.
- In *Judges 8:1-3*, we see here the Ephraimites resented Gideon for not getting them involved and were willing to go to war with them.
- In *Judges 9:5*, Abimelech killed his own brothers, the 70 sons of Gideon. This time, the leaders went beyond resentment to full blown fratricide!

- In *Judges 12:1-6*, again there was resentment from Ephraim because Jephthah fought without them. This time they did not settle the dispute and it resulted in a battle. The numbers of Ephraimites killed were 42,000!
- By the time we reach *Judges 20*, there were further, more devastating intertribal war. In *Judges 20:13b*, the total number of deaths for the tribe of Benjamin were 25,100 people (*Judges 20:35*). With the other 11 tribes, the total number of deaths were:

22,000	1 st battle
18,000	2 nd battle
30	3 rd battle
40,030	Total

The total number killed were 65,130 people, all of whom were Israelites. This took place, not because of an outside enemy, but because of fighting among brothers! There were more deaths here than in the previous wars that the Israelites had fought with their other enemies.

Harmony between the tribes had clearly deteriorated.

Life Application

Are we fighting the right battles? Where are we pointing our guns?
What consumes you? Ill feelings towards leaders/Christians?
Are you promoting unity?
Do you criticize others frequently?
When was the last time you encouraged your leaders?
How unified is your BT/Sector?
Are leaders willing to get into other ministries to help them out?
This is what will promote good, deep peer relationships.
What are your PEER relationships like?

II. Deterioration of Morality Among Leaders

- In *Judges 1:14-15*, Othniel and Acsah had a good marriage. There was also a deep love between father and daughter. The family was good. Father/daughter relationship was an open one. Caleb was willing to meet her needs.
- In *Judges 8: 27*, Gideon made a cheap substitute of the Ephod to be worn by the high priest. He got arrogant and was making up his own rules.
- In *Judges 9:5*, Abimelech killed his own brothers. Totally motivated by selfish ambition.
- In *Judges 11: 34*, Jephthah sacrificed his own daughter, in sharp contrast with Caleb. A rash vow was made here, though not commanded by God.

God never commanded a human sacrifice. Jephthah could have changed his vow.

- In *Judges 14:1*, Samson, the leader, fell for a Philistine woman. After his marriage, he gave his wife over to a friend immediately after the wedding! (*Judges 14:20*). When he visited his wife later, his father-in-law offered the sister instead. He also went to a prostitute (*Judges 16:1*). The standard of morality was steadily deteriorating.
- A Levite from Ephraim allowed others to have sex with his concubine, who was then raped and murdered (*Judges 19:25-26*).
- Micah made his own altar, ephod and installed his own sons as priests (*Judges 17:5-6*). Levites were motivated for financial gain and not to please God (*Judges 17:10-11*).
- In *Judges 18:30*, after the Danites invaded an unsuspecting people, they set up idols and the sons of Moses, among others, were priests!
- In *Judges 19:22-24*, homosexuality was in the open! They also gang raped a woman and murdered her. This was all done openly. The owner was willing to even give his own daughter to satisfy their sexual demands. A sharp contrast with Caleb's attitude towards his daughter in *Judges 1:15*.
- This incident took place in Gibeah, in the tribe of Benjamin. How did the Benjamites degrade so much in their morality by committing such a vile act of rape, homosexuality, and murder? One can't help but equate this to the influence of the Jebusites, that the Benjamites lived with side by side over the years (*Judges 1:21*). Again, the devastating consequences of compromise.

We see through all these that the respect these men leaders had for women was atrocious and was fast deteriorating.

Life Application

What is your purity like? Internet? Chat rooms? Phone sex?
How is your dressing? Are you imitating the latest fashion trends even if it revealing or immodest? How would people describe your dressing?
Are you flirting with colleagues or other friends?

How is your personal integrity/righteousness? Are you honest with money?
When was the first time you told a lie? Did it make you feel bad?
Are you getting progressively worse or better in your purity?
What respect do you have for women/sisters/co-leader?

III. Deterioration of Dynamic Male Leadership

- Great men led Israel when the nation was at its pinnacle. Men like Joshua and Caleb. In *Judges 2:7*, this resulted in an awesome nation that brought glory to God.
- Othniel in *Judges 1* also proved himself.
- Then rose great warriors like Ehud. In *Judges 2:1-4*, the angel of the Lord walked from Gilgal to Bokim. According to *Judges 2:19*, Gilgal was the location where idols had been set up. In other words, this was the headquarters of idolatry where their enemy, King Eglon of Moab had his summer palace to control Israel. Yet in this dangerous place, where he could have felt most afraid and insecure, Ehud not only courageously opposed the idolatry, but he killed the chief of idol-worshippers, Eglon himself.
- This gradually changed and by the time of *Judges 4:8*, Barak was starting to hide behind a woman! He did not want to take the lead and so the glory went to a woman (*Judges 4:9*). Women ruled the day then. Jael killed Sisera, again a woman. Where were the men? (However, Barak is mentioned in Hebrews 11).
- Gideon was so insecure that he asked God for a sign several times before he took charge (*Judges 6:36-40*). How far had they fallen? Wake up men!!
- Male leadership got so weak that by the time of Samson, a woman named Delilah could control the strongest man in Israel. Weak men then ended up getting vile in the area of sexuality as in *Judges 19: 22*. Homosexuality crept in a major way and was in the open!
- In *Judges 10*, Tola, Jair were Judges and although they ruled over twenty years they were not remembered of having done anything incredible. Jair for example was noted for riding on thirty donkeys with his thirty sons. What an accomplishment to be remembered for! By the time of *Judges 21*, no one really took the lead. Tola just lived and died! There were not many heroes then.
- The Elders, leading men, were weak in their convictions and encouraged intermarriage with other nations (*Judges 21: 16*).

In *Judges 18:1*, *Judges 19:1* and *Judges 21:25* it says three (3) times that Israel had no King.

It was a fact that Israel had no king, which the writer states to prepare the way for the books of Samuel and Kings. God did give them a king eventually and even anticipated it in Deut 17. The real issue though was people did as they saw fit rather than obey God's word.

There were men around but no Godly men to take charge and lead them the way God wanted them to do.

A weak leadership without strong convictions to lead the people courageously will result in utter chaos. There was a descent in to EVIL without strong and Godly leadership. Otherwise, as it was in the book of Judges, people will end up making their own rules and doing as they see fit (*Judges 21:25*).

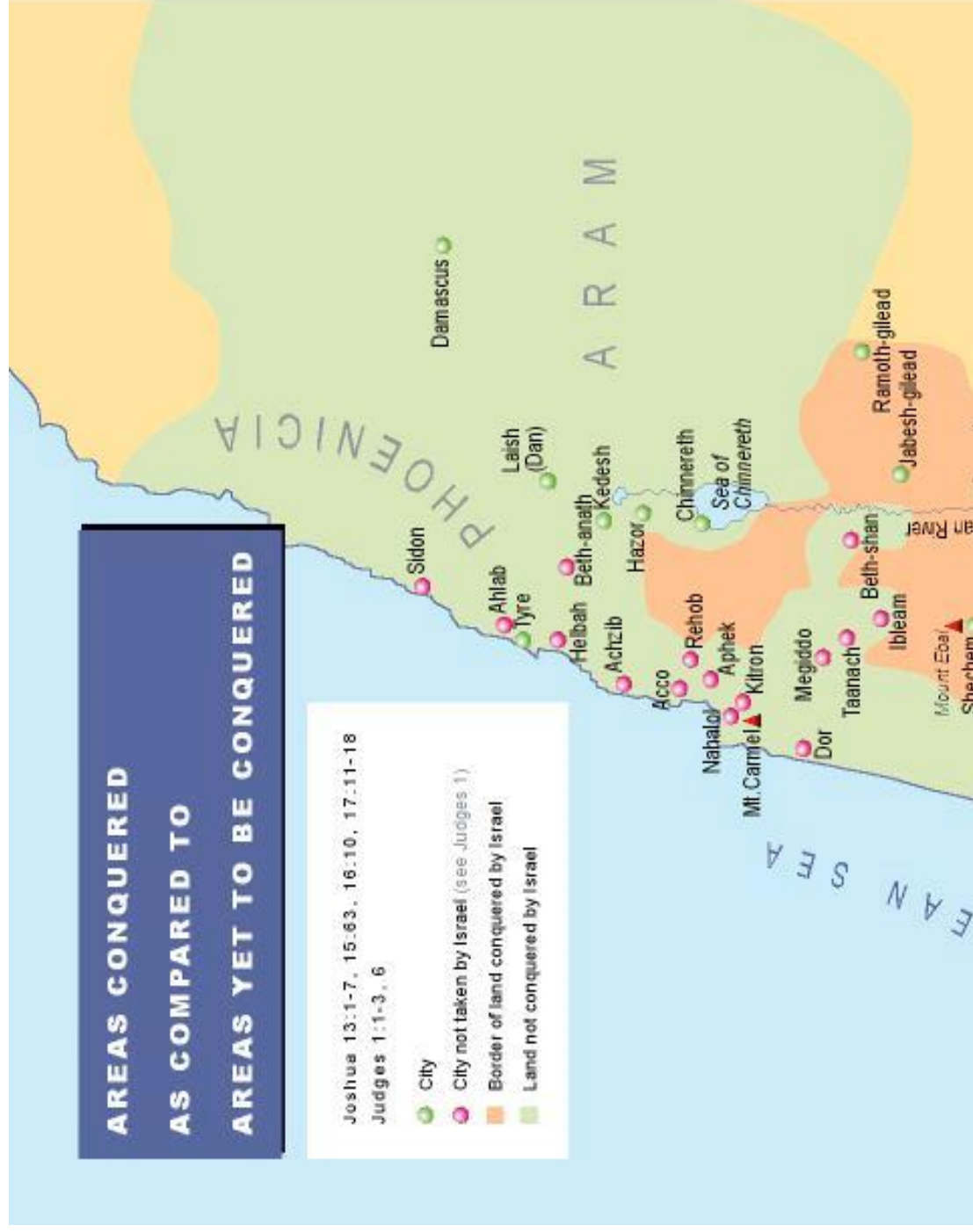
Life Application

What kind of a leader are you? Are known to be strong and courageous?
Do you courageously speak the truth regarding sin?
Do you keep people accountable for the right things?
Has your Bible Talk/family done well spiritually under your leadership?

AREAS CONQUERED AS COMPARED TO AREAS YET TO BE CONQUERED

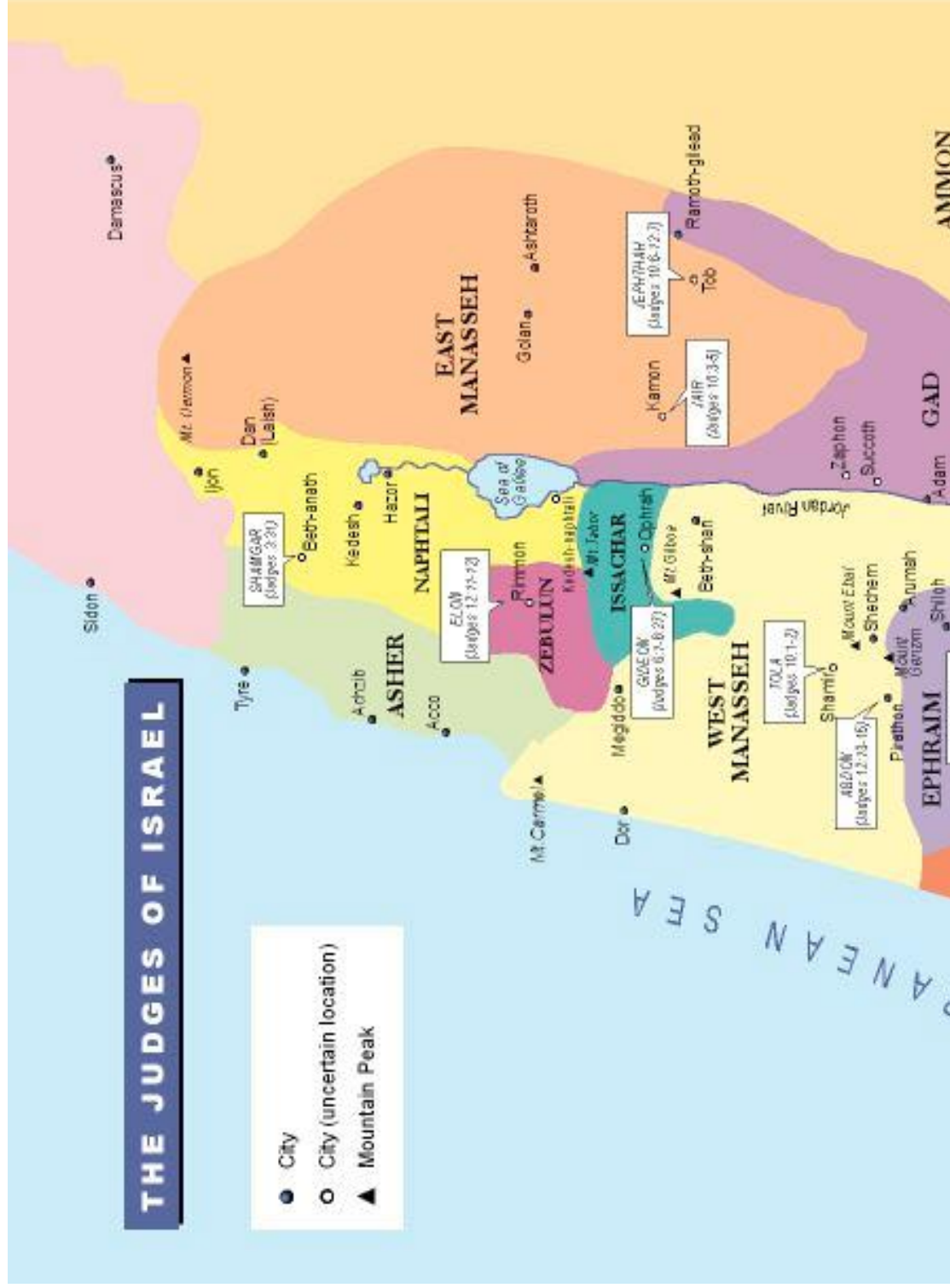
Joshua 13:1-7, 15:63, 16:10, 17:11-18
Judges 1:1-3, 6

- City
- City not taken by Israel (see Judges 1)
- Border of land conquered by Israel
- Land not conquered by Israel



THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain Peak



LESSON 2 - Plans To Give You Hope & A Future

Introduction

The account of the book of Ruth took place during the times of the book of Judges. In fact, one has to only examine the genealogy of Ruth (Ruth 4: 18-22) as well some characters in 1 Samuel to ascertain that this incident took place about one generation before the time of Eli. Assuming none of the characters had a particularly long life we are able to deduce this from the following:

- Samuel was probably a peer in age to Jesse, David's father, since he anointed David and Saul.
- Eli was probably a peer in age to Obed, Jesse's father. Eli also raised up Samuel as a priest.
- Obed was the son of Boaz, who married Ruth.

The book of Ruth is a beautiful, touching and inspirational account of a Moabite woman who ventured out to take care of her aging mother-in-law. It could aptly be said that all she did was to take care of her mother-in-law and step out in faith, and God did the rest. God grafted this foreigner into the genealogy of David and Christ. In the latter days of the Judges, when Israel was rife with the worshipping of false gods, violence towards any and all, disunity among brothers and disrespect toward women, God's hand was slowly working, preparing the future for a whole new generation of his people through this humble family.

The story begins by describing the disaster that fell on the family - famine in Judah that made them move to the land of Moab. God would use this remnant to work through and shape history. Here are some lessons we can learn from this short inspiring book:

I. Terrible Beginnings Always Make a Great Story If We Have Faith

Think how ordinary this family was. They were not descendants of royalty. Famine drove them out to look for better pastures in a land known to be an enemy of Israel. During this time period morality was low and sin was rampant (see Lesson 1). One cannot help but think that this famine was brought upon by the Israelites themselves as they drifted away from God (see promises in Deut 28:15-19). Perhaps Elimelech, being God-fearing, knew of this, and decided to escape the curse of God on his people.

After being there for ten years (Ruth 1:4), a second disaster befell the family, when Naomi's husband and two sons, Mahlon and Killion, died. This hit Naomi very hard and understandably so. She felt the hand of the Lord being against her (Ruth 1:13). She was at the end of her rope. There was no more hope and no more reason to live. Feeling that life was only going from bad to worse, she persuaded her two daughters-in-law to go back and begin their lives again in their own land, Moab. Orpah went back, but Ruth insisted on accompanying Naomi. Out of her intense love for her mother-in-law, Ruth vowed that only death would separate them. Orpah chose the security of a home but Ruth gave up her security and shared with Naomi's insecurity. Orpah decided to go back to her "gods" but Ruth decided to cling on to the God in whom Naomi and her family believed. In times of absolute disaster, she still gave up whatever security she had and stepped out on faith, faith in the God of Israel. In hindsight, that was the best decision she ever made. (One never again hears of Orpah after her departure, who presumably settled in Moab thereafter.)

God pushes us to the edge to see our true colors. Our decisions when times are good are NOT decisions of faith. Our decisions when times are bad are the real tests of our character.

II. Be Greatly Encouraged by the Small Signs

Naomi's faith in God at this point was at an all time low. She was self-piteous and bitter.

When she arrived in Bethlehem it was not a joyful occasion of a woman coming back to her hometown. It was in fact one of bitterness. She complained and expressed her feelings in Ruth 1:20-21. Yet bitterness did not have the last laugh. She began to change. In Ruth 2:20, she exclaimed how the Lord has shown her kindness! Wow, what a change! Bitterness was replaced with gratitude in a matter of a few weeks (days?). What made the difference? What could bring encouragement to this aging woman, battered by the death of her two sons and her husband? It was this: one small sign that Ruth found favour in the eyes of Boaz who allowed her to work as a peasant and glean the harvest; that was all it took to start turning Naomi around. She was quick to be grateful. It was not a huge blessing from God that turned her attitude. Nothing was permanently taken care of as yet.

Likewise, it is natural at times to feel negative, even self-piteous when life gets challenging. However, we must learn how to come out of this mode. Do we see the small signs from God and get encouragement from it? Are we quick to be grateful? Are we impressed with God working through small events? Do we brush them aside and expect only the "big" blessings? For Naomi, a small bit of encouraging news was enough to get her faith back to God after the disaster. This was an indication of her heart and her attitude towards God hidden during the temporary state of her unhappiness and bitterness.

Compare this positive event versus the disaster that fell on her. There was no comparison in terms of magnitude. Must the good be comparable in "size" with the bad before we change our attitude? Make a list of troubles in life versus the blessings. What is your perspective? Get a grip, amen! Be encouraged by the small signs that God throws into our lives.

III. Stoop Down Low so that God Has Room to Lift you Up

Ruth was willing to humble herself and work as a peasant, gleaning the harvest, Ruth 2:7, something that only a poor person would do. (Gleaning was the means by which God made sure the poor had food, at a minor expense to land owners. See Lev 19: 9-10.) Imagine her job description: "Ruth Goldstein, Gleaner". How would you like this to be on your name card? A Gleaner. Today, people would probably change it to "Agricultural Environmental Officer". Her job among other things included:

- Bending down for long hours to pick up the ears of barley left by the reapers.
- Beating them out to separate the husks from the kernels.
- Collecting the precious grain in her shawl and slinging it over her back.
- Carrying it all the way to Bethlehem.

All of this after sacrificing her security to take care of Naomi, all of this after deciding to trust in the God of Israel. Would she not have been better off if she followed Orpah and went back to the land of Moab? She may have been married off to a well-to-do Moabite and had a home. However, Ruth, like Naomi, was quick to be grateful. She took on a potentially embarrassing job. Notice in Ruth 2:15, Boaz told his men not to embarrass her. Gleaning became her daily routine (Ruth 2:17). Ruth had a great work ethic. She continued to take care of her mother-in-law by bringing in food, Ruth 2:18.

Her kindness to Naomi became known to Boaz (Ruth 2:1). Further her work risked her being raped (Ruth 2:22). Given the pathetic sexual morality at that time, which was comparable with that in Jud 19, this was very probable. All because of her love for her aging mother-in-law. What loyalty and love! With this attitude, one of utter humility, a willingness to take a low standing in society and putting herself at risk, God was beginning to work. He chose this route to unfold His plan.

Many of us leave no room for God to bring raise us up because we have PUSHED our way up already. We are not willing to be servants. We want the CEO position quickly; we want to take on the lead guy's role. Are we willing to let God lift us up is His time?

Sometimes we resist the route God has marked out for us. We fight and then blame God. We complain and get more and more bitter. In this day and age we want everything instantly. We expect God to keep up with our times, the 21st century, when everything is done instantly.

Let's wake up and surrender to God, taking one day at a time, being grateful that we have our daily needs met. Remember that by meeting our basis needs God hand can work and is working in our lives.

IV. God's Providence or Good Luck?

In Ruth 2:3, the phrase "as it turned out" is the narrator's way of saying that this was planned by God, not "good luck" or fate. God obviously provided the opportunity for Ruth and Boaz to interact. God did not control their actions. God set it up. Boaz still had to be generous, Ruth still had to be bold and speak up and Naomi still had to plan. The event was so ordinary, yet this is how God usually works. The chain of events that took place were as follows:

- a. Naomi came up with a bold plan. Her plan was daring and ambitious. She instructed Ruth to dress herself up to attract Boaz. (Nothing wrong in looking good on the outside – perfume, etc, Ruth 2:3, but do not FLIRT!).
- b. The plan was implemented fairly quickly. Waiting only after the barley and wheat harvests were over (Ruth 2:23) took about 50 days. This plan took effect only several weeks after Ruth first met Boaz.
- c. This plan involved boldness on Ruth's part. Think of the risk she took --moving toward him at night, uncovering his feet (Ruth 3:7) and taking his cloak to cover her. This was potentially embarrassing event if Boaz were to have rejected the request. She could have even been charged with prostitution!
- d. The plan called for great trust on Ruth's part.

Boaz's response to her showed her reputation with the people (Ruth 3:10-11). It showed that she did not run after the other younger men and was a woman of noble character.

Do we make up a bold, daring faith plan when we want God to work, or do we sit and wait for miracles? God will work when we have a bold plan full of faith and when we get advice from other godly individuals. Look at the present plans you have for your life? Is it daring? Are you going by faith? Did you get advice? Are you taking any risks? Are you willing to be a FOOL for Christ? Do you want God to work through you while you look COOL?

V. The Sharp Contrast Between Judges and Ruth

What a contrast between these two books, Judges and Ruth. The story of Ruth probably took place chronologically during the same time as the last few chapters in the book of Judges. Yet we see a sharp contrast between these two books, especially in the following areas:

- a. **Brotherly Harmony**
Boaz was willing to help his relative Naomi and Ruth, a foreigner. In Judges (see Lesson One) the people of God were at civil war each other, never mind being kind to foreigners. Brotherly harmony was very much apparent in small pockets of such people.
- b. **Respect for Women and Morality**
The way Boaz treated Ruth, never taking advantage of her at the same time helping to meet her needs, was exemplary. He did not take advantage of Ruth when he could have, in Ruth 3:9-14. This was probably NOT the norm of that time, seeing as how the general respect for women had declined so much by then. (See the story of the Israelite in Judges 19 who allowed other men to rape his own concubine!) Boaz, however, kept his integrity. In contrast to the catastrophic accounts at the end of the book of Judges, we see here a man who decided to live an alternative lifestyle – one in which he feared God!
- c. **Respect for the Word of God**
Boaz obeyed the law of redemption as outline in Leviticus to the letter, Lev 25:24-25.
- d. **Trust in God**
Not allowing the disasters and challenges of life to cause their commitment to God drift.

On a macro level, within Israel, there was deterioration in many facets, yet within this family, on a micro level, it was the total opposite. Likewise, in a world where morality is low, we as disciples can and should stand in sharp contrast with the world and please God.

At the end, Naomi was praised. She first entered Bethlehem in humiliation. By trusting God and with Ruth going out by faith, she obtained a good name at the end for both herself and Ruth. Naomi did not just receive the help from Ruth. She “repaid” Ruth’s devotion by giving her the piece of land and devising a plan for Ruth’s well being.

Likewise, when we are helped let’s think of ways to repay the love and gratitude that was shown to us. Both Ruth and Naomi LOVED each other. They cared for one another. They were willing to sacrifice for one another. They were willing to take risks for one another. They were blessed together. Ruth, Naomi or Boaz did not know what was happening. The bitterness, the disasters that they experienced, the date at the barley field (how romantic!), the plan to be loyal to each other till death, the trust in God and his law, their compassion for each other were all used by God for the plan of his people and the birth of David and the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

How did Ruth, a foreigner, became a part of all this? If we meet her in heaven and could ask her this question, she would probably say:

“Well, I loved and looked after my mother-in-law, stepped out in faith and God did the rest.”

Life Application

1. Think of all the unexpected challenges that have come into your life – how have you responded? Rate the order (1,2,3,4,...) on how you have handled them till the present time.
☐ not complaining about it. Just accepted them quietly.
☐ bitter towards leaders
☐ blaming yourself for the supposed wrong decisions that led to this crisis
☐ have talked about it and have dealt with it totally in my heart but I still question God from time to time and get angry.
☐ have dealt with it and can see all the lessons learned from that experience/s
☐ bitter towards God and have not talked much about it.
☐ don't know how you feel; in a state of self denial.
2. What were some small victories that have given you encouragement lately?
Do you attribute that to God or to fate?
3. Think of the time when you felt the most humbled? Are you glad it happened? What have you learnt?
4. Do you have a daring plan on what you want to achieve through God's power or are you waiting for miracles to come to your doorstep?

LESSON 3 - The Urim and Thummim

Introduction

The words Urim and Thummim mean very little to Christians these days. For that matter this subject has not been given very much attention. However, there are some interpretations, the most common one being that the Urim and Thummim (UT) was an oracle by lot, perhaps like what Peter used in the first chapter of Acts to select the twelfth Apostle. One reason why the understanding of the UT was obscure was because there are only seven (7) direct references to it in the bible. Tradition also says little about this subject. However, there have been those of the past that have put forward their views. Men as early as Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 b.c.-50 a.d) regarded this as “virtues”¹. Origen (ca 185-254)² mentioned that the breastpiece, to which the UT was attached, was a symbol of wisdom. Jerome, on the other hand, said that the Thummim was related to the truth that enables the high priest to know what should be taught. Although the UT are referred to only seven (7) times (*Exodus 28:30, Leviticus 8:8, Numbers 27:21, Deuteronomy 33:8, 1 Samuel 28:6, Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65*), upon examination of these and other related passages we can come to an understanding of this subject that will deepen our conviction to rely on God. In *James 4:8*, God promises that he will draw close to us as we draw close to him. What a great promise. God’s heart can be moved to draw close to us when we take the initiative. We shall begin our study by a series of questions. The first part may seem laborious and impractical, but hang in there. Dig and we will find. We will be going deep sea diving, not just snorkeling. We shall tie everything together at the end as we examine the life of Joshua, Saul and David, leaders of Israel at their time.

We shall begin by going through five (5) questions pertaining to the UT. Let’s dive in.

I. What is the Definition of the UT?

An investigation into the meaning in ancient times of the words Urim and Thummim is itself a laborious process. Since I am not a biblical scholar I do not intend to pursue this. In the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) these two words are translated by *delosis* and *aletheia*. This carries the meaning of the Urim being “Lights” and the Thummim being “Truth”³. Although there are varying meanings, this seems to be the most consistent⁴. In one sense, it really does not matter what the definition really is since this is not the focus of this study. We shall turn our attention to the spiritual insights and the circumstances in which they were used.

¹ pg 11, “The Urim and Thummim” Cornelis Van Dam, Copyright © (1997) by Cornelis Van Dam. Reproduced with permission of Cornelis Van Dam via Copyright Clearance Center.

² *ibid.*

³ pg 251, “The Tabernacle the Priesthood and the Offerings”, Henry Soltau

⁴ pg 11, “The Urim and Thummim” Cornelis Van Dam.

II. At What Period Was the UT Used?

All instances of actually using the UT occurred between the time of Moses till the time of David. Although in *Ezra 2:63* and *Nehemiah 7:65*, the UT was mentioned, no record of it being used by priests was mentioned in either of the two books. There was not a clear cut time in history when the UT ceased but there was a gradual disappearance after the time of David. In the Mishnah, the UT was said to have ceased when the last prophets died⁵.

III. What was the Relationship between the UT, Ephod and the Breastpiece?

The key to understanding the UT lies in the proper understanding of its relationship with the ephod and the breastpiece. As such, we will be considering the following three passages:

Exodus 28:30

“Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord.”

Leviticus 8:8

“He placed the breastpiece on him and put the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece.”

Exodus 39:8

Numbers 27:21

“He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in.”

From these three passages we can conclude the following:

- The UT was/were one (or more) gems that were distinguished totally from the breastpiece; that is they were actual physical (stones/gems?) items. They were tangible. The term UT was not a symbolic language to mean wisdom or any other form of revelation.
- They were also separate and apart from the stones that represent the 12 tribes since their stones were mentioned earlier in *Exodus 28:17 – 21*.
- Its exact look is uncertain but small enough to fit into the breastpiece. Also, in *Exodus 39:8 – 21*, the breastpiece material was a piece approximately 9” square and folded double. It was folded double to provide a sturdy base and to form a bag in which the UT would be placed.
- The UT, ephod and the breastpiece were all items required by the high priest when an inquiry of the Lord was made.

(Don’t get bored yet!!)

IV. What is the Implication of the terms “inquiry of the Lord” and “ephod”?

⁵ Sot 9:12, page 305, “The Mishnah”, Danby. The first prophets here mean all except Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi)

Having conclusively established the connection between the UT, the ephod and the breastpiece we now turn our attention to passages with the terms ‘inquiry of the Lord’ and ‘Ephod’. In *Num 27:21*,

“He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in.”

Here the U (the usage of only U here is assumed as being both the U and the T) was essential when an inquiry was made of the Lord. Thus an inquiry of the Lord involved the use of the UT. That was how decisions from the Lord were obtained. Although, God could have provided a revelation to whoever and whenever he wanted, at that time, he did it through the priest, who wore the ephod, by means of the UT.

Let’s look at other passages:

- a. In *1 Sam 23:1-6*, we see that David was in need to find out whether it was God’s will to attack the Philistines. In fact he inquired of God two times. In verse 6 it states clearly that Abiathar the priest had brought the ephod down with him when he went to be with David. What was it about the ephod that was important to David in the task of inquiring before the Lord? Clearly, it was the presence of UT in the ephod, along with the presence of Abiathar the priest that enabled David to make inquiries to the Lord.
- b. In *1 Samuel 23:9*, David was in need again for an answer from the Lord. He summoned for Abiathar to bring the Ephod. Why? Again, it was because the ephod contained the UT. After finding out God’s will, David obeyed.
- c. In *1 Samuel 28: 6*, a direct connection was made between the use of the UT with the use of the term inquiry of the Lord. Clearly, the term “inquiry of the Lord” means the use of the UT in the ephod.
- d. In *1 Samuel 30:7-8*. Again we see explicitly see the connection between the need of the ephod and the task of inquiring of the Lord.
- e. In *1 Samuel 14:18-19*, we see here Saul making an attempt to inquire of the Lord. The statement “withdraw your hand” seem to indicate that the process of inquiring of the Lord involves the usage of the hand of the priest. This seems to imply the hand of the priest involved somewhat in the touching of the UT that was placed in the pouch of the ephod. After all, from what did the high priest has to withdraw his hand, if not from the UT in the ephod? It could not have been the ark for there was never a command for the priest to touch the ark! The use of the UT thus involved the hand of the high priest; a process with which Saul was familiar. We do not know how long the inquiry of the Lord took, but it was not instantaneous. This was seen by Saul’s impatience to stop the process after the inquiry began.

Note: One may argue that Saul requested the ark in verse 18. However, the footnote indicates the Septuagint scriptures as stating, “bring the ephod”. Also, *1 Sam 14:3*, Ahijah was mentioned to have brought the ephod. Hence it does not matter whether or not we trust Septuagint MSS at this juncture.

Therefore, after examining the above passages, the terms “inquiry of the Lord” and the request for the ephod can be clearly concluded to involved directly the use of the UT by the priest to obtain a revelation from God.

(Are you OK? Hang in there.)

V. Was the UT a type of lot casting with only a “yes” and “no” answer?

Lets look at the answers provided by God when inquiries were made,

- a. *Judges 1:1-2*. At this time Phinehas was the priest in Israel after the death of his father Eleazer (*Josh 24:33*). An inquiry was made to the Lord on who should go against the Canaanites. The answer given was Judah. This was not a straight forward “yes” or “no” answer since the answer came with the name of the tribe being mentioned.
- b. *1 Samuel 10:22*. Again the answers given by God through the UT would not have been by lot; i.e. a “yes” or “no” type of answer. This is because the answer from the Lord was not mentioned in the question i.e. “he was hiding behind the baggage”.

Other instances:

- c. *2 Samuel 2:1*. Again when the Lord answered it wasn’t just a “yes” or “no” but specifically “Hebron” was mentioned.

Thus the UT did not merely provide a “yes” or “no” answer like in the casting of a lot. There was communication through the high priest with the ephod, through the UT, sometimes with information that was not present in the questions. God communicated to the inquirer through the priest as he used the ephod with the UT.

(You are through with the hard part! Great job.)

Contrasting and Comparing Those Who Inquired of the Lord

Joshua (Numbers 27:21)

“He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in.”

He was instructed to be in close association with Eleazar the priest, by the inquiring of the UT. At his command, they will go out... come in.

The importance of Joshua always being in a close relation with God cannot be overstated. All the movement of the entire Israelite was based on the direction he got from God, through the high priest, by the use of the ephod which contained the UT. God wanted to have this type of a relationship with Joshua as he guided to lead Israel.

Good example—	<i>Joshua 7:7 – 15</i>	Discovering Achan’s sin in the camp
Bad example –	<i>Joshua 9:3-14</i>	Gibeonite deception

Here, in Joshua 9, we see the price Joshua paid for not being guided by God. By not inquiring of the Lord, the Gibeonite’s deception was successful. As a result they stayed with the Israelites and were not annihilated. Intermarriage took place between them and the Israelites as we see from the study of the genealogy in *1 Chronicles* 8:29. Not to mention they also brought their religion of idol worshipping which other nations also did to the destruction of the Israelites.

Sometimes one mistake is all it takes. Joshua’s one mistake made Israel pay the price for generations. One act of not relying on God on vital matters can cost us our soul and the souls of others.

Are there any important decisions that are coming in life which you have not yet brought before the Lord?

E.g. changing your job, pursuing a life partner, joining new business ventures?

Saul

In *1 Samuel* 14:3, Saul was with Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. There was no sign of Saul at this point inquiring of God. He was sitting at the tree, discouraged (*1 Samuel* 14:2). He had all the tools. He had the high priest, the ephod with the UT, but would not inquire of Lord. Perhaps he was afraid of the answer, that God would tell him to be courageous, like Jonathan, and go into the battle without many weapons but with total faith in God.

Likewise, we may have all the “tools” – disciplers, leaders, books, tapes, but are we looking to God for guidance? Are we afraid of what God will say? Do we deliberately harden our hearts?

Later in *1 Samuel* 14:18, he changed his mind and decided to inquire of the Lord. But as he saw the tables turn, he instructed his priest to “withdraw his hand” and stop the process of inquiring of the Lord. By instructing the priest to withdraw his hand he was withdrawing his own reliance on God. Saul was impatient and rash. He took matter in his own hands. At the end, there was victory, but he aborted his reliance on God.

Later on in life, when God for some reason decided to not answer him, Saul resorted to witchcraft (*1 Samuel 28:6 – 7*).

Do we justify not relying on God when we see victory coming? Do we abort our plans to focus on God when we see events turning for the better (or for worse). Do we withdraw from God when the answer seems to be not in the coming? (*1 Samuel 14:19*)

In *1 Samuel 23:7*, Saul assumed as king that God was with him and bad things would not happen to him. He was so arrogant to think so. In contrast, David (*2 Sam 16:5-14*) believed that when events were against him it could be from God.

Where do you go for counsel when God's reply is not clear? Do you earnestly seek to do his will or your will? Do you withdraw from God by following your emotions?

David

In the early events of his life in *1 Samuel 23*, he relied on God. God directed much of his movements through the priest and the ephod by means of the UT, as shown by the following passages:

- a) *1 Samuel 23:1 - 6*
- b) *1 Samuel 23:9 - 10*
- c) *1 Samuel 30:1 - 8*
- d) *2 Samuel 2:1 - 4*
- e) *2 Samuel 5:17 - 21*

Later on, however, David's fear of Saul grew. David decided then to flee to the Philistines (*1 Samuel 27:1*). If we remember, this was the very nation that produced Goliath! How far had he fallen! From the days when he was a young, shepherd boy, with just a simple faith in God believing that he could do the impossible, he went to a compromising by associating with the Philistines, a plan he never would have dreamed of earlier.

He spent 16 months there (*1 Samuel 27:7*). Life without God for that period became a bitter lesson he learned only later. (*1 Samuel 30:3 – 6*). He almost lost the loyalty of his men. He was disheartened and distressed (*1 Samuel 30:6*). His men almost stoned him to death. Nothing was going right. Wonder why? He knew. He was conscience stricken, and at that low point in life, he decided to find strength in God. The first thing he did (*1 Samuel 30:7*) was to inquire of God again by summoning for the priest, Abiathar, to bring him the ephod. After finding out God's will through the UT, he got the strength from God, and he went on to victory.

How did David feel during the time he in hiding from Saul, chased as an outlaw by his own mentor and king? We can see that by reading some of the Psalms. Look at Psalm 18, 54, 58, 59 and 63 for example. David's reliance on God was not shown only by his usage of the UT but through the writings of psalms. They are a reflection of what was in his heart. David sought the counsel of the Lord earnestly, through the UT and through his prayers. How about us? How earnestly do we seek the counsel God? God will make his will known to us through the following ways:

- a. Placing concerns in our hearts as we study his word and pray
- b. Seeking advise from other godly men & women

Conclusion:

- 1) The UT was a physical item placed inside of the ephod.
- 2) Its exact identity cannot be determined.
- 3) Only the priest could use it to inquire of the Lord on behalf of the leaders at that time in Israel's history.
- 4) It was never used by a commoner. It was used by the leaders for the nation's interest. There was no limit to the number of times it could be used
- 5) The use of the terms "inquiry of the Lord" and the "ephod" were directly in reference to the use of the UT.
- 6) The revelation from the Lord through the UT was not just a "yes" or "no" answer. It might have contained further information pertinent to the inquiry.
- 7) God guides those who obtain guidance from him. The UT was God's plan of knowing his will. Joshua and David, for the very most part relied on God and were guided to victory. Saul on the other hand was rarely seen inquiring of the Lord. The one time when he did, he aborted halfway, going with his own instincts. In *Isaiah 30:1 – 2*, "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the Lord, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; who go down to Egypt without consulting me". God warns us to not carry out plans without seeking his counsel. *Psalms 43:3* – "Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me."

With the definition of the UT stated earlier being "light" and "truth" it is interesting to note that David mentions about the need for light and truth to guide him. Although we cannot say conclusively, there is a possibility that David had meant the light and truth to be the UT. Whether or not this was the case, it is wise instruction.

Life Application

Take a look at your own life. Identify the order in which the actions take place when you are faced with a problem or crisis. Leave a blank if they do not apply.

- _____ Rely on God for guidance
- _____ Blame the crisis on others
- _____ Rely on others to help you through
- _____ Decide to trust and have faith without prayer
- _____ Be discouraged and moody
- _____ Get depressed and want to quit leadership/fall away
- _____ Be afraid, fearful and start to panic
- _____ Try to solve the problems by your own efforts
- _____ Get advice from those above you in the Lord (discipler/staff/shepherding couple)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





The Ephod -
The Double-folded
design creates a bag
and holds the Urim
and Thummim

Fig. 1

LESSON 4 – The Danger of Being Pragmatic Over Being Spiritual

Introduction

Of all the lessons from the kings of Israel and Judah, perhaps none is more important for us to learn than to prioritise spirituality over pragmatism. So many of the Hebrew rulers made decisions which altered their nations' history for the worse, all because they were trying to be pragmatic and "realistic". *Collins Dictionary* defines *pragmatic* as:

"Being concerned with the practicals and not the theory".

The leaders' humanistic reasoning or pragmatism showed itself in three different kinds of alliances with foreign nations -- marital, military, and monetary. Let's look at these areas up close and see how we can avoid the same pitfall.

I. Marital Alliances

Solomon – 1 Kings 11

Never one to do anything halfway, Solomon had 700 wives from many different countries! We will discuss the other sins involved in a later chapter, but certainly one of his motives had been to forge alliances. While Solomon was protected to an extent by David's righteousness, there are other examples that ended in absolute disaster. Being pragmatic was not the solution. Trusting God was.

Omri and Ahab – 1 Kings 16:23-24, 29-33

Omri was known as The David of Northern Israel. He founded Samaria and made that his capital. Omri is known to us from the Mesha Inscription¹ and was the first of Israel's rulers to pay tribute to a new power, Assyria. It is significant that even in the days of Jehu, Northern Israel was still known to the Assyrians as "The House of Omri". He made an alliance with Ethbaal, king of Sidonians by arranging for his son Ahab to be married to the Sidonian princess, Jezebel. (This is supported by the extra biblical source of the Assyrian inscriptions, the most flattering mention being in the annals of the later ruler Tiglath-pilaser III (745 – 727BC) where Israel is called *Bit Hu-um-ri-a* – 'the house of Omri')² Omri clearly made a considerable impression on his own and succeeding generations even beyond the boundaries of his kingdom. His son, Ahab, followed suit and was a pragmatic, selfish king, seen in a number of ways:

1. Married Jezebel, which sealed the political alliance. Obviously, this was a huge mistake. Jezebel's cruelty, selfishness and greed are legendary. To this day, her name is invoked to describe a truly horrible woman.
2. His decision after defeating his enemies was also governed by this pragmatic mindset. Look over in **1 Kings 20: 34**
"I will return the cities my father took from your father," Ben-Hadad offered.
"You may set up your own market areas in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria".

¹ pg 102, "Chronicle of the Old Testament Kings", John Rogerson. It is currently located at the Louvre Museum, Paris.

² pg 101, "Chronicle of the Old Testament Kings", John Rogerson.

Ahab kept the King of Aram alive because of a possible business market venture on the horizon. He never bothered about following God's command; just being pragmatic and selfish, to see what he can get for his own life.

3. Later on in *1 Kg 20:1-4-6* he pouted because he could not get Naboth's vineyard!

His overpowering wife then devised a plan and had Naboth killed!

4. He also tried to rebuild Jericho, in *1 Kg 16:34* at the cost of the builder's children. Again did Ahab care about God's word? No! He wanted to expand and built cities. A selfish pragmatic king.

Ahab's life ended in ruin. Even the dogs licked up his blood when he died! So much for trusting in marriage alliances and being pragmatic. He should have just trusted God.

Jehoram – 2 Chronicles 21 - 23

Jehoshaphat was righteous in God's eyes. Yet he made one fatal mistake, he allowed his son, Jehoram to marry the daughter of Jezebel, Athaliah, in order to ally himself with Israel. Jehoram then killed all his brothers and led Judah into further idolatry! The results of this unholy alliance? All but one of Jehoram's children were taken captive, he died a slow and painful death (whom no one mourned), *and his wife corrupted his remaining son!* To make matters worse, when his son, Ahaziah, also died, Jehoram's wife destroyed the entire line of Judah (except for Joash), so that she could reign as a kind of Queen of Judah and Israel, just like her mother, Jezebel had been! What a legacy! All because Jehoram trusted his human instincts and chose a "practical" partner instead of a spiritual one. It is almost as if he decided to leave God, get married and then get restored.

How many of us, singles who are consumed about finding a life partner, have been tempted to do the same? We think, "Let me fallaway, get married, then get restored again and convert my new found spouse". There may have been examples where this has worked out, but it is few and far between. It is certainly not the norm. I dare say that all couples that are not equally yoked go through very severe trials. Better to be single than to take this chance, which can end up ship wrecking our faith.

Perhaps we have not gone as far as getting married to someone who is not a disciple. However, are we flirting with non-Christians at work? Or even dating them? Adultery? Some Christians have fallen away after having affairs with MARRIED colleagues! Do you go for looks, money, and charm? Are you pragmatic? Or do you remember the wise words of Solomon who learned the hard way, "Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." How about, "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman with no discretion." Who will help you get to heaven? That is the bottom line. Don't ruin your life and your salvation and that of your children—make sure you marry an awesome disciple! Being pragmatic is not the answer. At the end, it never brought them the results they desired. Instead, it backfired!

Who are your best "alliances"(friends)? Christians or non-Christians? Are you afraid to share your faith in the office? Worried about how your boss or supervisor will look at you? Are you pragmatic? Afraid to have a reputation of being righteous? Fearful of

losing out in the promotion race? How about your business practices? Are you learning the “cleaner but still not clean” practices of partners and friends? Who are your business partners, people who will compromise? Would you take a stand with your partners?

II. Military Alliance

Asa -- 2 Chronicles 16:1 – 7

“In the thirty-sixth year of Asa’s reign, 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. Asa then took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of the Lord’s temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. ‘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 silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me.’ (2 Chronicles 16:1-3).

Asa, a king of Judah, was scared of the king of Israel, and instead of praying about it, he made a military alliance with the king of Aram, who was not exactly a great guy. According to verse 4-6, it worked. Look at God’s attitude concerning Asa’s compromise in 2 Chronicles 16:7-9:

“Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.”

Asa had done some radical things for God in his younger years, but after this blunder, his life went downhill fast. Read *verses 10 - 14* for the sad outcome of his life!! (Especially the part where he blamed others for his failures and refused to pray to God out of a bad attitude!)

Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 18:30 - 32) and Jehoram (2 Kings 8:28)

Jehoshaphat and Jehoram also got into big trouble with military alliances; Jehoram even got killed that way. In *1 Kings 22:4*, we can see that Jehoshaphat agreed to the alliance before he inquired of God. In fact, the whole book of Isaiah is about trusting God rather than Egypt and other armies.

This applies to us today in several ways, particularly in relation to trust and security. When the rubber meets the road, who/what do you trust? Power, job, status, looks, talents, others? Or God? Where do you get your security? Remember the words of the Lord in *Jeremiah 9:23,24*:

“...Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, or the strong man...of his strength...but let him who boasts boast about this: that he knows and understands me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight.”

III. Monetary Alliances

Jehoshaphat -- 2 Chronicles 20:35, 36; 1 Kings 22:48, 49

Jehosaphat is known as an outstanding king of Judah. His reliance on God in the face of overwhelming odds is one of the most exciting battle stories in the Old Testament! (see *2 Chronicles 20*). However, in his later years, he, too, fell into the trap of worldly alliances. This time, however, it was not a marital or military alliance, but rather a monetary one. Jehosaphat went into business with Ahaziah (*2 Chronicles 20:35 – 36*), the wicked king of Israel mentioned earlier. He made this alliance in order to renew the gold trade with Ophir that began in the days of Solomon (*1 Kings 9:26 – 28 and 1 Kings 22:48*).

Probably his motives, other than acquiring wealth for himself (GREED), was to bring prosperity to Judah – a good intention, but compromising to “help the kingdom” is never pleasing to God. One could have even argued that conditions were favorable at that time to encourage this type of trade when we examine the following:

- a. That a good partnership began with his counterpart, the king of Israel, Ahaziah, which could promote peace and goodwill between the two nations, not war. Good pragmatic reason.
- b. That the door to this trade was “open” by the fact that there was no king in Edom, only a deputy, (*1 Kings 22:47*) (refer Map 5). A king in Edom otherwise could very well offer resistance to Jehoshaphat taking advantage of this trade opportunity.

Still, with all these open doors, was it God’s will for him to make alliance and begin trade? An open door should not always be seen as a way paved in by God.

In (*1 Kings 22:49*), Ahaziah tries to give it another go but Jehoshaphat was unwilling. Perhaps he learned his lesson. God will sometimes make our plans fail to protect us! Overcoming by a real sense of pragmatism can lead to disastrous results. He finally learned that it was more important to trust God than to be pragmatic.

Jeroboam II and Uzziah – Amos; 2 Kings 14:23 - 29; 2 Chronicles 26:1 - 15

Jeroboam son of Jehoash, also known as Jeroboam II, reigned in Israel 41 long years. Under his reign, Israel reconquered its territory that had been held by the Arameans. The borders of Israel extended from Hamath to the Dead Sea. (see map 5)

Uzziah, Jeroboam’s contemporary in Judah, reigned 52 years. Like Jeroboam II, Uzziah also was a very capable leader – the borders of Judah extended from Elath all the way to the west coast of the Philistine region. Both countries benefited materially as a result of their kings’ leadership, but Uzziah did it with God (during the earlier part of his life) while the other did it by compromise (see map 5). It is not wrong to be in a wealthy and prosperous state. It’s how we get there that is crucial. Uzziah from the start of his reign did it by following God’s law. God raised him up. Jeroboam II achieved this state of prosperity by compromise. (Spend time reflecting the differences between the two by referring to map 5)

Amos prophesied in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II. The nation, as prophesied by Amos, put its hope in mere material strength and vain hypocritical ceremonies. We know that prosperity was evident at that time from the following passages:

Amos 3:15

"I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the house adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished," declares the Lord.

Amos 6:4

"You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves."

Amos 5:11

"You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them".

The wealth was obvious. Materialism was rampant. The bad side of this was that the poor were oppressed. Justice was corrupt. Amos did not attack wealth itself, but its selfish and criminal misuse. Social inequities were apparent in Samaria, where luxurious palaces stood side by side with ghastly slums. The respectable and satisfied upper class went through all the outward rituals of worship but their daily lives were selfish. The lower class was infected by the Baal worship of the surrounding countryside. Pragmatism, not spirituality, won the day.

Amos 5:21 – 23

"The religious practices were full of hypocrisy. "I hate, I despise your religious feasts;

I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,

I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs!

I will not listen to the music of your harps".

The hypocrites could not wait till Sabbath services were over so they could get on with cheating people and getting rich, *Amos 8:5*

".....when will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended

that we may market wheat?"

They most definitely had become arrogant (*Amos 6:1*). God was not pleased -- he had given Israel a heavy responsibility -- to be a light to other nations. He expected mercy and justice, love for others, and hearts devoted to God to be the fruits of true religion. But Israel has stopped serving God to indulge herself. Therefore she would be judged (*Amos 3:8 – 11, 15*).

In all this, Amos prophesied out of conviction, after receiving his call from God. He was not a paid prophet (*Amos 7:14 – 15*) yet his boldness was obvious. He was thrown out from Bethel, where he prophesied (*Amos 7:10 – 13*). He preached against the strong king Jeroboam II, and against people who would do anything to make money.

Life Application

The parallels with living in the first world in the 21st century are infinite. Ask yourselves the following questions:

Are most of your decisions dictated by pragmatism? Are your spiritual values compromised because of this mindset? Look in the following areas:

- Marriage? Are you pragmatic regarding who you want to marry; i.e. Worldly qualifications are more of a priority than spirituality.
- Job? Rather take a higher paying job with more travel and less time with the family?
- Do you look to see what you can gain by being a Christian or are you predominantly motivated by your love for God?
- Are your finances a constant source of worry? (Either from lack of discipline or materialistic overspending?)
- Do you take extra courses when it is not actually necessary solely out of a desire to earn more?
- Are decisions to serve (e.g. being a leader) based on reasons like not enough sleep, too much stress, and too little time? These excuses stem from the sin of selfishness and a pragmatic mindset.
- Do you put more effort into securing a good retirement than into securing a spiritual treasure in heaven?

In conclusion, let us all be careful to not make unholy alliances that may seem innocent at first, but which will, in the end, shipwreck our faith, and possibly steal away our citizenship in heaven. Let's not be pragmatic disciples, but disciples who are willing to love God and his kingdom no matter what the consequences.

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LESSON 5 – Surrender versus Commitment

Introduction

One of the difficulties in having a faith that is not surrendered is that we can think that we have faith when we do not. Another difficulty is that we can be surrendered at one point and then gradually “take it back!” There is also the possibility of “partial” surrender – the surrender of one part of our life while maintaining control of another part.

There are reasons why we don’t easily recognize our lack of surrender. Just like the Old Testament kings we will be studying, we can be deceived by our hard work and commitment. Many of the kings were hardworking and very committed, but missed out on having a relationship with God because of their refusal to submit their wills to God’s.

I. “No Fear” or No Trust!

Jeroboam – 1 Kings 11:26 - 13:10

One of the biggest challenges to our faith is believing in advance that God will do great things and that his ways will always prevail (*Prov 19:21*). Jeroboam did not trust that doing things God’s way would work, although the prophet, Ahijah, had told him that he would inherit the Northern kingdom and be blessed. Jeroboam failed to surrender because he feared that God’s way would fail, bring him unhappiness, and make him look foolish. This fear resulted in:

- a. Impatience – *1 Kings 11:26-31, 40*
Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon and had to flee to Egypt. Why would Solomon have wanted to kill him if Jeroboam had not prematurely made this prophecy known to Solomon out of rebellion? He could have just waited for Solomon to die!
- b. Compromise - *1 Kings 12:25-30*
Jeroboam feared that if he allowed his people to go to Jerusalem and worship, they might be won back over to Rehoboam and he would lose control. Therefore, he built temples outside of Jerusalem when God had never even hinted that he should do that. These places of worship eventually made it so easy for the Israelites to fall into blatant idol worship. Interesting to note the location of Dan and Bethel. One in the North and the other in the South of the Northern kingdom (see map 4)
- c. Defiance - *1 Kings 13:1-5*
Jeroboam, who loved God’s word when it was good news, was defiant to God’s word later, even when spoken by prophets. On one such occasion, he was struck by leprosy!

What can we learn from all of this?

Perhaps you are impatient for God’s promises to be fulfilled in your life. Perhaps you get what you want by compromise, even in the kingdom. Wives, we are warned in *1 Peter* to not give in to fear, but to trust God by trusting our husbands. Perhaps your desire to control causes you to compromise here. Perhaps your life stands in defiance

to God's word, even though your hard work says that you are a committed disciple. Perhaps you have slipped from having a "tremble at My word" attitude (see *Isaiah 66:1,2*). There was much commitment and hard work on Jeroboam's part. Unfortunately for him, he did not learn the lesson that Samuel had tried to teach Saul three generations earlier: "*to obey is better than sacrifice*" (*1Samuel 15:22*). Jeroboam never surrendered to God.

II. "The End Justifies the Means"

Asa – 2 Chronicles 14 - 16

Baasha, the wicked king of the northern ten tribes of Israel, took over Ramah, a city that served as a gateway of between the two kingdoms. He built up Ramah to stop people going in and out of Judah. Asa devised a plan. He hastily made a treaty with the king of Aram, Ben-hadad, using the temple treasures as payment. Ben-hadad accepted the pay off and attacked Israel, forcing Baasha to leave Ramah. In the short run, Asa's plan seemed successful. The pressure was off! However, did the ends justify the means? Obviously not to God, as seen almost immediately when He rebuked Asa through Hanani, the seer. Asa should have known better but he felt that God's way would fail. His way was not better. What was worse, Asa did not respond well to the challenge. Instead he got angry and took his anger out on his own people. God was patient. The ungodly treaty took place in the 36th year of his reign, however, it was not until his 39th year that God started to act. We see in recorded history, God working against him. God did this clearly because of his hard-hearted state. God had waited three years to see his repentance, but it never came. Even during his illness Asa did not call on God but only on the physicians. Asa had lived a life of commitment, but where was the surrender?

Similarly, do we settle down and then decide to step down and retire as disciples? In your life, do you justify things because of your "heart"? Do you blame others when things don't turn out the way you thought they would? Do you get a bad attitude towards God the way that Asa did, and refuse to pray or listen to God?

Ahaz -- 2 Kings 16:7 - 14, Isaiah 7:2

Like Asa, Ahaz devised a plan when attacked by the king of Aram and Israel. He panicked and instead of trusting in God, he emptied the treasuries of the temple and gave it to the king of Assyria. His plan worked – the "end" seemingly did "justify the means." He made the kingdom "pay or suffer". His plan seemed clever, wise and creative. However in *Isaiah 7:2*, Ahaz was advised strongly to not make a treaty with the Assyrian king. Sadly, he felt that his way was better than God's and took matters into his own hands.

Later he went so far as to imitate the religion of the Assyrian kings. He envied their military strength and was drawn to their gods. He made a similar altar of their god in Jerusalem.

Like Asa and Ahaz, who took treasures from the temple, do you trust yourself at the expense of causing damage to the kingdom? Has the kingdom been burnt by some of the decisions you have made to trust in yourself? Do you make the kingdom "pay" for some unpleasant, poor decisions of the past? The most important part of the Christian life is not "commitment" but "surrender". Victory is not us overcoming anything, but rather, **Jesus overcoming us**.

Life Application

Consider the different areas of your life, and grade how you think you are doing in trusting God with that area. When you face problems in each of the following areas of your life, to whom do you tend to turn? (Place an "X" in the appropriate location on the line).

Me	← Hopes and Dreams →	God
Me	← Career →	God
Me	← Finances →	God
Me	← Closest Relationships →	God

Read *Proverbs 3:5 – 6*. What do these verses tell you about what trusting God means?

Discuss with spiritual friends the ways in which fear prevents you from totally surrendering to God.

Reading recommendation: Gordon Ferguson's "Victory of Surrender", (DPI)



LESSON 6 - The Righteous Will Maintain a Lamp

Introduction

God has always remembered the ones who love him and strive for righteousness before his Name. Abraham, who lived by faith, was blessed with a nation of descendants (Genesis 15:5). Ruth, a Moabite woman who decided to follow the path of righteousness before God, was honored with being the great-grandmother of King David, and was even grafted into the ancestry line of Jesus (Matthew 1:4). As Christians today, we don't expect to be the father of a new nation, nor are we hoping to be the ancestor or descendant of Jesus – those things have already been done! We may wonder, however, what will happen to our children and their children as well. Let's look at the lineage of the Kings of Israel and Judah to see up-close the way God allows the righteous to maintain a lamp.

I. The Lineage of Israel

Upon examination of the lineage of the kings of Israel, we see that all of the kings of Israel ended up forsaking God! A phrase repeated about virtually every king of the northern tribes is that they “followed in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat.”

It is no surprise that this unrighteousness was seen in their lineage. Out of the 20 kings, only Omri and Jehu had a dynasty of descendants of more than two generations. All the other kings had sons that lasted on the throne *for only one generation* because of their unrighteousness (see chart 2). Many of the kings were even assassinated (9). There was one exception, Jehu, and even with him, there is not much to brag about. Jehu was blessed to the extent of his righteousness. He had four generations of descendants that ascended to the throne (see chart 2). He was blessed because at the commencement of his throne he obeyed God and destroyed Ahab's household. He zealously slaughtered all of the priests of Baal. In *2 Kings 10:30*, we see a prophecy concerning Jehu, “*Because you have done well in accomplishing what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all I had in mind to do, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.*”

Finally, because of the sin of the nation of Israel and their kings (*2 Kings 17:22-23*), God sent them into exile. The erosion took full effect. The Assyrian army, under Shalmaneser V, invaded Israel during the 9th year of Israel's last king, Hoshea, in the year 722 BC. The Israelites were deported to Assyria. What was interesting was that the Israelites that were sent to exile here never came back to Israel. The revival that took place later in the year 536 BC comprised only of those that had gone to captivity from Judah to Babylon in the year 606 BC. Where were they that went into exile into Assyria? They probably resettled there and as far as God was concerned they were purged from his presence.

II. The Lineage of Judah

Contrast this with the line of Judah! Because of David's walk with God, he was blessed! The entire lineage could be traced to David as God had promised in *2 Chronicles 7:18*. Judah not only had ONE DYNASTY but 20 kings from Rehoboam.

“You shall never fail to have a man to rule over Israel.” (Israel had 7 dynasties and 20 kings). David was remembered by God about 150-200 years later because of his righteousness! Wow! Imagine being remembered and a lamp maintained by God, long after you are dead and gone, because of the righteous life that you had led! For David, this went on and on for generations. **God had maintained the lamp for the sake of David!** (*2 Chronicles 21:7*) Later on the Israelites went into exile to Babylon beginning in the year 606 BC. (There was another invasion in the year 586 BC). Through Jeremiah God promised that the captivity would last seventy years (*Jeremiah 25:12, 29:10*). In the year 536 BC, when the first return took place it was led by Zerubbabel. He was not a king but was a descendent of David and stands in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:13)! God kept maintaining a lamp for David, like he promised, even after the exile.

III. Out of a Dysfunctional Family, Comes a Godly King

However, if a king decided to be righteous, God began working, *regardless of his ancestors*. We see this clearly with several kings. I call it, “Out of a Dysfunctional Family, Comes a Godly King.” For example:

Asa he was righteous, at least in the beginning, even though his father Abijah was not.

Jehoash he was a great king, son of Ahaziah even though Ahaziah himself was unrighteous.

Hezekiahhe was an awesome king, son of Ahaz, who was bad news.

Josiahgrandson of Manasseh, whose wickedness surpassed that of all the kings before him.

Sons of Korahhere is another interesting group of people that originated from a rebellious ancestor, namely Korah that incited a major rebellion in *Num 16*. We see evidence of this when we examine the lineage of Korah in *1 Chronicles 6:37, 1 Chronicles 26:19*. (See also *Psalms 42, 44, 45, 46, 48, 84, 85, 87, 88*) Nine Psalms are found today attributed to be written by the sons of Korah. What a turn around! The sons of Korah were recorded as being gatekeepers in *1 Chronicles 26:19*. As part of the team that guarded the temple and the walls, they were lifted up because they were spiritual (*2 Chronicles 20:19*). We see that even Samuel the prophet emerged from their line of descendents (*1 Chronicles 6:22 – 27*) too. Out of dysfunctional families or ancestors great people can spring up.

Life Application

As you look at your own walk with God, identify the way(s) your family affects you today.

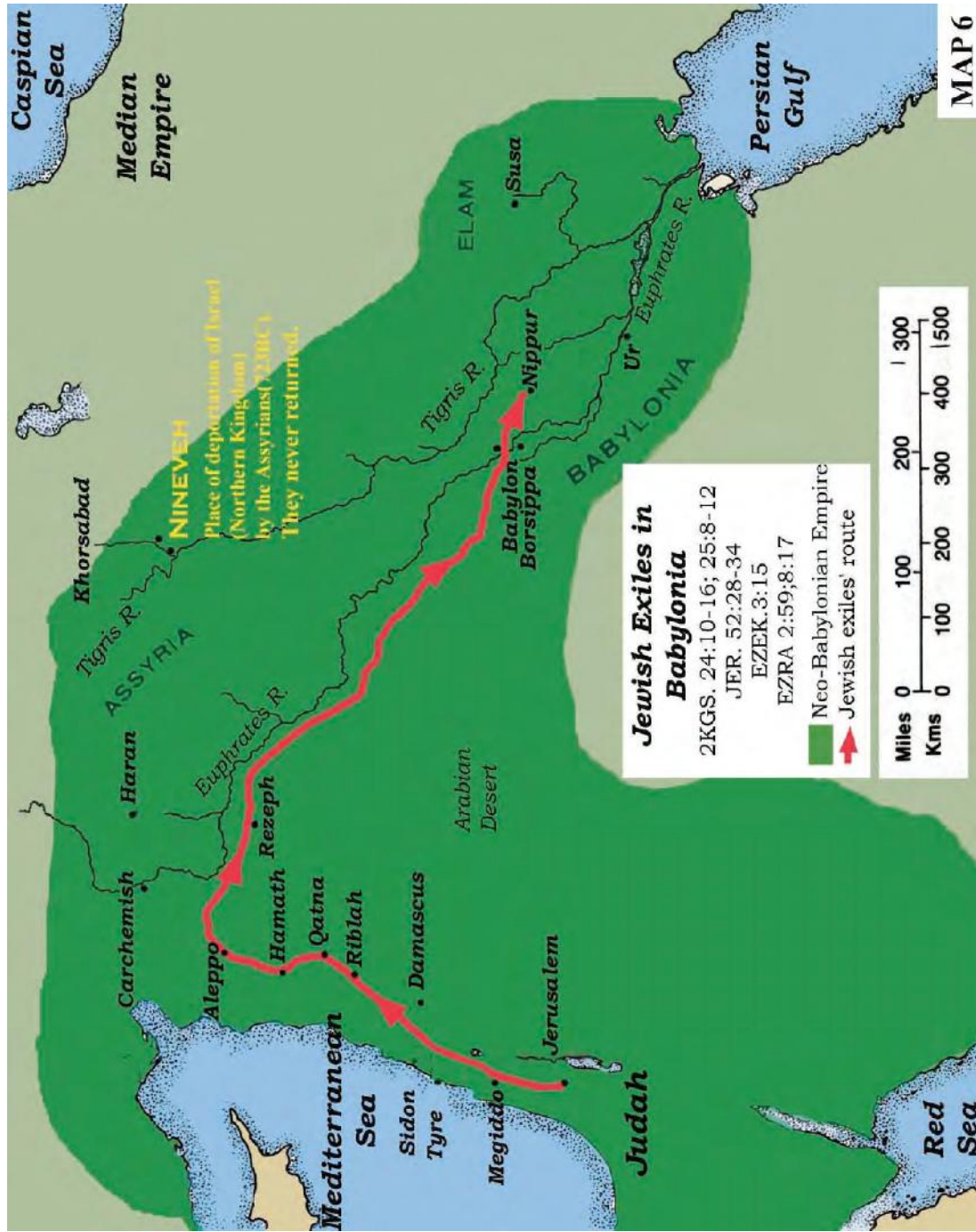
- ☐ My upbringing prods me to make godly choices.
- ☐ My home life tempts me toward wrong choices.
- ☐ I blame my parents for my mistakes and failures.
- ☐ I use my upbringing to excuse my sinful choices.
- ☐ I learn from the mistakes of my family.
- ☐ I am trying to be a godly example for my future descendants.

For disciples today, we must strive for righteousness in our relationship with God. We must not make excuses for our sins, blaming them on the past, nor must we hide from acknowledging the possible influence our past has had on us so that we do not deal with it. For parents, while we should always be grateful for the love that our own parents gave us, we must strive to not perpetuate any sinful cycles from their influence.

In conclusion, let us realize that

- a. we are not so much the products of our environment as we are the products of our choices, and
- b. we can make a difference in the future of our families!

God will maintain a lamp if we are righteous.



LESSON 7 - No Man Is An Island

Introduction

Another lesson we see is the need for dynamic godly peer relationships in our lives. If we are content with a vertical relationship with God, yet do not see the need for horizontal relationships with others, we are deceiving ourselves. We will not make it; we will not be faithful and strong till the end. At some point, be it in our own lives or in our own families, we will lose the battle, because no man is an island. Many kings' lives ended tragically as a result of not understanding this important principle .

I. Joash – 2 Chronicles 24:1

Joash, who became king at seven, was under the godly influence of Jehoiada the priest. They had a special relationship. Jehoiada guided him thoroughly. After Jehoiada's death at the age of 130, Joash began to stray from the ways of the Lord. In *2 Chronicles 24:17*, we see the clear reason for this. The officials of Judah came and took the place of Jehoiada. Under their ungodly influence, the temple was abandoned. For disciples in the new millennium, we have to realize that our choice of friends will also have an effect on our hearts. When our friends change, so will our hearts.

How many years did Jehoiada really spend with Joash is not certain, but from the above scripture analysis we can deduce that they were together at least 23 years! (*2 Kings 12:6*) Perhaps Jehoiada never really changed King Joash's heart. Still, we must remember that godly relationships are indispensable no matter how old we are as a Christian or as a person. No one took Jehoiada's place – the place of being a godly influence on the king. This had tragic consequences.

Incidentally, Jehoiada's heroic act to save Joash at his infancy must have happened when Jehoiada was at a ripe age of about 100 (or close to this). This can be seen by the fact that he died at an age of about 130 (*2Chronicles 24:15*) and that king Joash reigned for 40 years. Never too late to be a hero for God!

II. Josiah – 2 Kings 22:1 – 23:30, 2 Chron 35:18,

Josiah was eight when he came to the throne. Obviously he must have had others that helped him from that young age. Consider now those who were in his life.

a. Shaphan – 2 Kings 22:3

This servant was loyal and followed the decisions of Josiah (or vice versa) to follow the word of God. In *Jeremiah 36:10 and 25*, we see that Gemariah, son of Shaphan, was a protector of Jeremiah and sought to protect the scroll of the word of God. Another son of Shaphan and servant of Josiah, Ahikam, *2 Kings 22:12*, served the king well.

b. Acbor - 2 Kings 22:12

He was also the servant of Josiah. He had a son Elnathan who also sought to protect the word of God. Thus Josiah was surrounded by Shaphan, Ahikam and Acbor. Further to this, he was also surrounded by Zephaniah (*1:1*) who

prophesied during Josiah's reign! Zephaniah's prophecy came shining into the midst of the darkness of the land, and it appears that Josiah was listening!

III. Rehoboam – 1 Kings 12:6 – 11

What a tragedy for King Rehoboam to have listened to the advice of the men who grew up with him! Here's what happens when you listen to the wrong people, or to people who all agree with you.

IV. Uzziah

It seems that Zechariah had a great influence on Uzziah's devotion to the Lord, in *2 Chronicles 26:5*, where Uzziah was said to have sought the Lord during that time. Again, the influence of a godly friend cannot be underestimated. However, Azariah was not able to influence Uzziah, probably due to the king's own pride.

V. Hezekiah

Hezekiah, on the other hand, listened to Isaiah. We see them praying together in *2 Chronicles 32:20*. He also made decisions together with other leaders – *2 Chro 30:2,4*. He listened to his advisers and they worked together. It was not a one-man show.

We see, therefore, if one is going to follow God, it is best to walk with those who follow God. The influence of others in our lives is unmistakable and can mean the difference in our choice to follow God or walk away from him. *1 Corinthians 15:33* – “*Bad company corrupts good character*” and *2 Corinthians 6:14*.

We have no say in who our parents are, or our neighbors. We may have no input into who becomes our boss or our government leaders. We may not get to pick all of our teachers. In areas beyond our control, we trust the sovereignty of God. But in the relationships we choose, we must choose wisely how those relationships are defined. Being “unequally yoked” applies to all “binding” relationship such as marriage, business partnerships, etc. Scripture makes it clear that we are never to choose to be bound together with unbelievers.

VI. Jehoshaphat - 2 Chronicles 18:1, 2 Chronicles 18:2 - 3 and 2 Chronicles 20:35 – 36. We see three different kinds of relationships where the principle of being unequally yoked with unbelievers is violated. With Jehoshaphat's son, it is the arena of intimacy and romance – the marriage relationship – where a bond is formed. With Jehoshaphat and Ahab, the unequally yoked relationship is a military and political one. When Jehoshaphat links himself with Ahaziah, the partnership is an economic alliance. In these examples we see plenty of common ground in the areas where we are prone to make mistakes: romance and business.

Life Application

- What about you? What kind of company are you keeping?

- Are those closest to you helping you to follow God? Or are they causing you to turn to any one of the thousand idols in this country?
- a. Whose words do you respect the most?
- b. What are the qualities of the person that make you have a tremendous amount of respect for them?
- c. Are these qualities spiritual or worldly?
- d. If they are primarily worldly then you will be dragged away to worship an idol. If they are primarily spiritual it will lead you to a better walk with God.
- “Idol” of the 21st century. The worship and/ or obsession of anything or person that will result in any one of the following:
 - a. Affects your relationship with God.
 - b. Affects your commitment to the body, the church.
 - c. Affects your mission.
 - d. Affects your personal purity.
- In which areas are you tempted to compromise with unequal yoking?
 - ☐ Business partnerships
 - ☐ Romance (dating/ marriage)
 - ☐ Friendships
 - ☐ Living situations. Do you avoid living with disciples?
 - ☐ School/Universities/Polytechnics

Honestly ask yourself if the truth you have seen this week demands any changes in your present relationships, and write those changes below:

Ultimately, when all is said and done, our lives are a reflection of the choices we make. In fact, life is an unending sequence of choices. Yet often we fail to realize their far-reaching consequences. Hezekiah succeeded in most of the choices that faced him during his reign. As an act of the will, he consistently pursued that which was *“good, right, and true before the LORD his God. And every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered” (2 Chronicles 31:20 – 21).*

An idol is not just a statue or carved image. It is anything that takes the place of or the priority that God should have in our hearts and lives. As you do the following exercise, check the things that are likely to move toward being idols in your life.

See *1 John 2:15 – 17*.

The lust of the eyes

- Exclusive Cars - Home-Condominium -Expensive Furnishings
- Clothing - Computer/IT gadgets -Grown-up “Toys”
- Other: _____

The cravings of sinful man

- Sex - Food - Beauty/Vanity
- Leisure/Luxury - Hobbies - Experiences/Vacations
- Possessions - Other: _____

The boasting of what he has and does

- Recognition - Competition/Awards - Athletic abilities
- Job Advancement - Positions/Name card - Academic / Degree
- Knowledge - Accomplishments - Child’s Performance
- Other: _____

Do you have peers to help prevent you from making these things idols in your life?

Let’s take care to make sure that we surround ourselves with godly peers! God wants to see the outcome of our lives be like Josiah and Hezekiah, because no man is an island.



LESSON 8 - Finishing Strong

Introduction

Finishing strong in the Lord is something about which we as disciples do not think enough. Many of us are content with just being faithful and looking back happily on our past victories. The kings of Israel have a lesson to teach us on this. Many of them started out well, but did not finish strong; some were even very near misses. A few of them come to mind.

I. Asa – 2 Chron 14:8-10, 16:1-9

Asa reigned for about 41 years. He achieved quite a few victories earlier on because of his reliance on God. However, on his 36th year of his reign (or 36/41, 88% of his reign), he started to get arrogant and began trusting in himself. In order to see the height from which he fell, let's go back to an earlier episode when he was confronted with King Zerah the Ethiopian.

Asa's Army:

300,000 men from Judah	Large shields and bows
280,000 men from Benjamin	Small shields and bows
580,000 men	Total

Zerah's Army (2 Chronicles 14:9 – footnote)

1,000,000 men

300 chariots

The odds were obvious – from an earthly sense, the advice was “don't go to war”. The ratio was about 2:1. (In *Luke 14:31 – 32*, Jesus' parable mentions that a king with such odds should surrender!). However, Asa relied on God and defeated his enemy. What a victory, especially against such odds.

Later on in life, on his 36th year of his reign, he lacked faith to face Baasha, king of Israel. The odds were a lot less threatening. At this stage, he took Ramah, a city on the Northern borders of Judah (see map 4). What did Asa do? He made an ungodly treaty with the king of Aram and provoked God. In the 39th year, when contracted with an illness, he still did not change in his untrusting ways. What a fall. Biblical records have it that he, unfortunately, died in this state! (88% of the way there and then FALL!) He just did not finish strong.

II. Solomon

As he began his reign, it was marked by great humility. When he traveled to Gibeon in the first year of his reign to worship at the Tabernacle, God met up with him in a special way with an unusual offer, “*Ask for whatever you want me to give you.*” (1 Kings 3:5). That is, anything his heart desired, God would give. In Solomon's answer, we see gratitude mingled with fear and great humility. His request: “*Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my*

duties.” (1 Kings 3:7) God’s advice and affirmation, “And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.” (1 Kings 3:14)

Solomon was given greater wisdom than anyone before or since, yet there was no guarantee of godliness. Ours is a society which places a premium on knowledge and education. Learning is viewed as the key to bettering oneself in life. Yet, in *1 Corinthians 8:1*, Paul says, “*knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.*”

Solomon later becomes proud and self-confident. In *1 Kings 10:23 – 24* we get a glimpse of this, “*King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.*”

Although he religiously continued to offer burnt and peace offerings three times a year until his construction projects were finished (*1 Kings 9:25*), by the end of his life those offerings were being given to the Canaanite gods. From *1 Kings 11:7*, idolatry, started to spread fast due to the influence from his many wives. He went from an awesome, glorious temple to idols on a hill east of Jerusalem, not far from the temple itself!

In *1 Kings 9:10*, at the end of twenty years he seemed to have maintained a close walk with God. He reigned Israel for 40 years – we can say that 50% of his life (1st 20 years) was fine. It started eroding slowly after that. He did not finish strong.

III. Hezekiah

From the beginning he was righteous. At 25, when he took to the throne, he walked with God like David his forefather. Right from the start, at the first month of the first year of his reign he opened the doors to the temple and began a great revival.

Hezekiah’s Revival

The Revival that took place was centered on the Word of God. It was done so quickly, involving both Judah and Israel. In *2 Chronicles 30:15*, they celebrated the Passover on the 14th day of the 2nd month. According to *2 Chronicles 31:1*, the Passover ended two weeks later (*2 Chronicles 30:21,23*) with a revival that destroyed all the prevailing idolatry in the land of both Judah and Israel. Imagine a two week revival that involved hundreds of thousands of people.

Look at the challenges against Hezekiah starting this revival :

- a) His father, Ahaz was wicked in the eyes of the Lord.
- b) Faced with the option of joining either Egypt or Assyria, the two rival world-empires.

Of all the political combinations possible, he chose none of them. This policy was no policy at all, but simply to trust in the living God and obey Him and Him only. His faith in God was his policy and his policy was his faith in God. Through all this he also :

- i) abolished all the high places that were left even by other righteous kings of Judah (*1 Kings* 3:2, 15:14, 22:43, *2 Kings* 12:3, 14:4, 15:35). He started all this in the first month of his reign (*2 Chron* 29:3).
- ii) got rid of the bronze snake Moses had made (*2 Kings* 18:4). A tradition that was carried on for many generations, almost 700 years was eliminated overnight!
- iii) opened the services of the temple (*2 Chron* 29:3) that was shut by his father, Ahaz (*2 Chro* 28:24)
- iv) helped to bring the revival to some of the Northern tribes which were not even under his control. The Northern revival began in stages.
 - a) They ridiculed them (*2 Chron* 30:10)
 - b) They joined in without being purified (*2 Chron* 30:1-8)
 - c) They joined in the revival (*2 Chron* 31:1)

In *2 Chronicles* 29:35b, the service at the temple was re-established. From *1 Kings* 30:21, 23, it took only two weeks for his people to have a revival and smash all the idols (*1 Kings* 31:1). He was a man of ACTION. No delay. He carried this on till the very last stages of his life, *1 Kings* 31:20 – 21.

- 1) He even built a water tunnel-(see Map 6) a very clever plan to avoid being trapped by enemies.

Hezekiah reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years (29). He got an extension of another fifteen years when he prayed to God after being inflicted with an illness. In the first 14 years (29 – 15) he walked with God and arrested a catastrophe, the invasion of the Assyrians, solely from his reliance with God. Thereafter something interesting took place, he was given 15 more years to live, which made him the only king who knew when he would die.

Three years into the extension period, Manasseh, his son was born (*2 Chronicles* 33:1; 15 – 12=3). However his son turned out to be one of the worst kings to have ever ruled Judah. What a tragedy! To know when he would die and then to not prepare the palace for a righteous son to take over! It is a sign that he himself had started to erode, and had become bloated with pride (*2 Chronicles* 32:25 – 26). In *2 Chronicles* 32:31, he was tested again and failed to honor God when the envoys visited him. A near miss! He didn't finish strong – a lesson indeed for all of us.

- 2) *Prov* 25:1 He gathered a group of men who recorded these proverbs.
- 3) His other great works included the writing of a Psalm, like *Psalms* 130. He also wrote *Isaiah* 38:9 – 20. What an incredible man who almost slipped at the end. He did not finish strong.

IV. Uzziah – *2 Chronicles* 26:16

Uzziah started out well. He looked at his relation with Zechariah as molding him in the right direction. His fame spread far and wide and certainly he was a vibrant and able ruler.

In *2 Chronicles 26:16*, Uzziah's pride led to his downfall. He took matters into his own hands. He was inflicted with leprosy and was excluded from the palace as a result. He reigned for 52 years (*2 Chronicles 26:3*). It is unclear if he repented at the end. He also did not finish strong but weak.

V. Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat also slipped a little when greed got the better of him; he made a treaty with the king of Israel to begin trading gold. Later, fortunately, he repented. See *2 Chronicles 20:35* and *1 Kings 22:48 – 50*.

Conclusion

1 Cor 9:24-27 Do not be disqualified in the race. Keep your eyes on the prize.

Life Application

- Are you getting weaker or stronger now as an older disciple?
- Do you plan to be faithful till the end?
- What weaknesses have you personally conquered since you got baptized?
- What are the deadly sins that have made you think of leaving God in the past?

Immorality_____

Bitterness_____

Faithlessness in being effective_____

Materialistic_____

Pragmatic_____

Others_____

- What steps are you taking to make sure that you finish strong?

[illegible]

HEZEKIAH'S JERUSALEM

- Addition done by Hezekiah
- Addition done by Solomon
- Addition done by David
- Original city of Jerusalem (City of David)

0 1/8 Miles
0 150 Meters



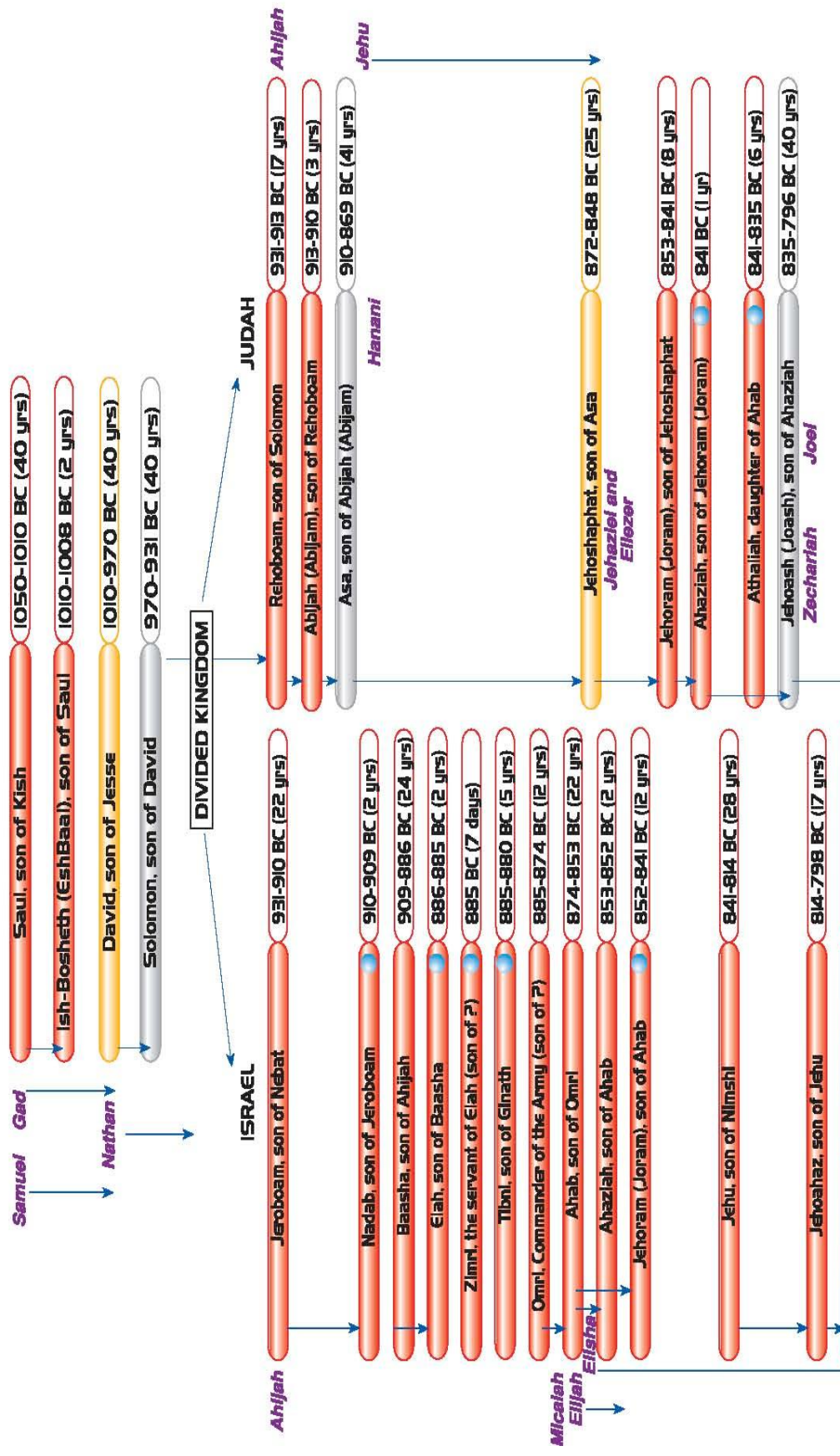
Mount
of Olives

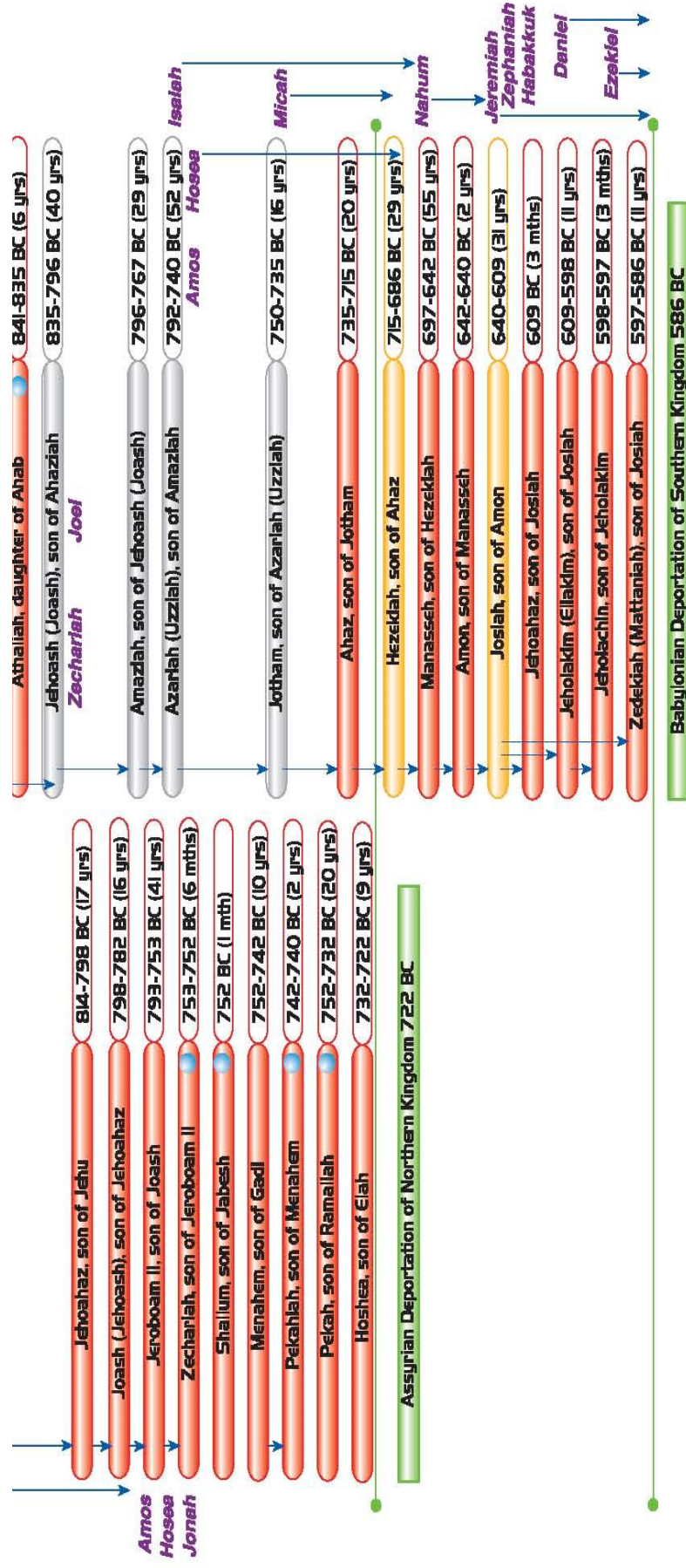
THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL

Judge	Enemy	Years of Oppression	Years of Rule	Years of Peace	Reference
Othniel	Cushan-Rishathaim, King of Aram Naharaim	8		40	Judg 3:8-11
Ehud	Eglon, King of Moab	18		80	Judg 3:12-30
Shamgar	Philistines				Judg 3:31
Deborah/Barak	Jabin, King of Hazor	20		40	Judg 4:1-5:31
Gideon	Midianites	7		40	Judg 6:1-8:27
Abimelech			3		Judg 9
Tola			23		Judg 10:1-2
Jair			22		Judg 10:3-5
Jephthah	Ammonites/Philistines	18	6		Judg 10:6-12:7
Ibzan			7		Judg 12:8-10
Elon			10		Judg 12:11-12
Abdon			8		Judg 12:13-15
Samson	Philistines	40	20		Judg 13-16
<i>Total</i>		<i>111</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>200</i>	
					Grand Total = 410 years

CHART 1

The Kings of Israel and Judah





Legend

Dynasty Line	→
Assassinated	●
Name of Prophet	Isaiah
Reign of a great King	
Reign of a Good King	
Reign that provoked God - Bad king	

Dating based on theory of Edwin R. Thiele

Comparison and Contrast of the Divided Kingdom		Israel	Judah
Total number of kings/rulers		20	20
Total number of dynasties		5	1
Total number of years of reign		209	345
Number of great kings		0	3
Number of good kings		0	5
Number of bad kings		20	12

Chart 2

Military Conflicts of Judah

Date	King	Enemy Nation	Enemy King	Aggressor	Winner	Place of Battle	Territory Gained	Reason for Aggression	Scripture	
									1 Kings	2 Chro
925	Rehoboam	Egypt	Sheshonq I	Egypt	Egypt	Various cities	Various cities	Conquest of Judah	14:25-28	12:2-12
912	Abijam	Israel	Jeroboam	Judah	Judah	Mt Zemaraim	Various cities	To regain territory		13:2-20
900	Asa	Ethiopia(Egypt)	Zerah	Egypt	Judah	Mareshah	None	Conquest of Judah		14:9-15
895	Asa	Israel	Baasha	Israel	Judah	Ramah	Ramah	Gain control of northern route	15:16-17	
853	Jehoshaphat	Syria	Ben-Hadad I	Judah	Syria	Ramoth-gilead	None	Regain subjugated city	22:29-37	18:28-34
853	Jehoshaphat	Edom, Moab, Ammon		Edom, Moab, Ammon	Judah	En-Gedi	None	Conquest of Judah	20:1	
									2 Kings	2 Chro
850	Jehoshaphat	Moab		Moab	Moab		Moab	Freedom from Israel	3:4-27	
845	Joram	Edom		Edom	Edom		Edom	Freedom from Judah	8:22	21:8-10
845	Joram	Libnah		Libnah	Libnah		Libnah	Freedom from Judah	8:22	21:8-10
842	Joram	Philistia, Arabia		Philistia, Arabia	Philistia, Arabia	Jerusalem	None	Plundering		21:16-17
841	Ahaziah	Syria	Hazael	Judah	Syria	Ramoth-gilead	None	Retake subjugated city	8:28-29	22:5-6
796	Joash	Syria	Hazael	Syria	Syria	Various cities	Various cities	Subjugate the cities of Judah	12:18	24:23-24
794	Amaziah	Edom		Judah	Judah	Valley of Salt	Edom	Conquest of Edom	14:7	25:11-13
790	Amaziah	Israel	Jehoash	Judah	Israel	Beth-Shemesh	None	Show of strength, revenge	13:12	25:17-24
									14:11-13	
785	Uzziah	Philistia, Arabia		Judah	Judah	Various cities	Various cities	Subjugate cities		26:6-7
743	Uzziah	Assyria	Tiglath-Pileser III	Assyria	Assyria		None in Judah	Conquest of northern territory	None	
738	Jotham	Ammon		Judah	Judah			Subjugation of Ammon		27:5
735	Ahaz	Israel, Syria	Pekah, Rezin	Israel, Syria	Judah	Jerusalem	None	Force an alliance against Assyria	15:37	28:5-6
									16:5-6	
735	Ahaz	Edom		Edom	Edom		Edom	Plundering		28:17
735	Ahaz	Philistia		Philistia	Philistia	Various cities	Various cities	Plundering		28:18
733	Ahaz	Assyria	Tiglath-Pileser III	Assyria	Assyria		None	Subjugation of territory		28:20
715	Hezekiah	Philistia		Judah	Judah	Various cities	Various cities	Subjugation of Philistia	18:8	
701	Hezekiah	Assyria	Sennacherib	Assyria	Judah	Jerusalem	None	Conquest of Judah	18:13-19:27	32:1-23
650	Manasseh	Assyria	Ashurbanipal	Assyria	Assyria		None	Subjugation of Judah		33:11
609	Josiah	Egypt	Necho	Judah	Egypt	Megiddo	Control of Judah	Prevent Egypt aiding Assyria	23:29	35:20-24
607	Jehoiakim	Moab, Syria		Moab, Syria		Various cities	Various cities	Plundering	24:2	
605	Jehoiakim	Babylon	Nebuchadnezzar	Babylon	Babylon	Jerusalem	None	Subjugation and captives		36:6
597	Jehoiachin	Babylon	Nebuchadnezzar	Babylon	Babylon	Jerusalem	Judah	Subjugation and captives	24:10-12	36:10
586	Zedekiah	Babylon	Nebuchadnezzar	Babylon	Babylon			Conquest of Judah	25	36:13-21

Military Conflicts of Israel

Date	King	Enemy	Name of King	Aggressor	Winner	Place of Battle	Territory Gained	Reason for Aggression	Scripture
925	Jeroboam	Syria	Rezon	Syria	Syria		Syria	Revolution for freedom	
925	Jeroboam	Philistia		Philistia	Philistia	Mt Zemaraim	Philistia	Revolution for freedom	
925	Jeroboam	Moab		Moab	Moab	Gibbethon	Moab	Revolution for freedom	
912	Jeroboam	Judah	Abijam	Judah	Judah		Various Cities	Regain lost territory	2 Chro 13:2-20
909	Nadab	Philistia		Israel	Philistia		None	Regain lost territory	1 Kings 15:27
895	Baasha	Judah	Asa	Israel	Judah		Ramah	Gain control of northern route	1 Ki 15:16-17
890	Baasha	Syria	Ben-Hadad I	Syria	Syria	Ramah	Naphtali	Response to Asa's call	1 Ki 15:20, 2 Chro 16:4-5
885	Zimri	Civil War	Omri	Omri	Omri	Various cities	Israel	Take the throne	1 Ki 16:17-18
881	Omri	Civil War	Tibni	Omri	Omri	Tirzah	Israel	Take the throne	1 Ki 16:22
877	Omri	Moab		Israel	Omri		Moab	Conquest of Moab	
853	Ahab	Syria	Ben-Hadad I	Syria	Israel	Samaria	None	Conquest of Israel	1 Ki 20:1-21
853	Ahab	Syria	Ben-Hadad I	Israel	Israel	Aphek	None	Chase out of country	1 Ki 20:22-30
853	Ahab	Assyria	Shalmaneser I	Assyria	Israel	Qarqar	None	Conquest of Israel	
853	Ahab	Syria	Ben-Hadad I	Israel	Syria	Ramoth-gilead	None	Retake subjugated city	1 Ki 22:29-37 2 Chro 13:28-31
850	Jehoram	Moab	Mesha	Moab	Moab		Moab	Revolution for freedom	2 Ki 3:4-27
845	Jehoram	Syria	Ben-Hadad I	Syria	Israel	Various cities	None	Gain control of territory	2 Ki 6:8
845	Jehoram	Syria	Ben-Hadad I	Syria	Israel	Samaria	None	Conquest of Israel	2 Ki 6:24-7:8
841	Jehoram	Syria	Hazael	Israel	Syria	Ramoth-gilead	None	Retake subjugated city	2 Ki 8:28-29
820	Jehu	Syria	Hazael	Syria	Syria	Various cities	Transjordan	Gain control of territory	2 Ki 10:32-33
810	Jehoahaz	Syria	Hazael	Syria	Syria	Various cities	Various cities	Gain control of territory	2 Ki 13:3-7,22
798	Jehoash	Syria	Ben-Hadad II	Israel	Israel	Various cities	Various cities	Recovery of cities	2 Ki 13:25
795	Jehoash	Syria	Ben-Hadad II	Israel	Israel	Various cities	Various cities	Recovery of cities	2 Ki 13:25
793	Jehoash	Syria	Ben-Hadad II	Israel	Israel	Various cities	Various cities	Recovery of cities	2 Ki 13:25
790	Jehoash	Judah	Amaziah	Judah	Israel	Beth-Shemesh	None	Show of strength, revenge	2 Ki 13:12,14:11-13
780	Jeroboam I	Syria	Ben-Hadad II	Israel	Israel	Various cities	Control of Syria	Conquest of northern territory	2 Ki 14:25-28
735	Pekah	Judah	Ahaz	Israel	Judah	Jerusalem	None	Join alliance against Assyria	2 Ki 15:37,16:5-6
733	Pekah	Assyria	Tiglath-Pileser III	Assyria	Assyria	Various cities	Naphtali	Subjugation, Ahaz' request	2 Ki 15:29
722	Hoshea	Assyria	Shalmaneser V	Assyria	Assyria	Samaria	Israel	Conquest of Israel	2 Ki 17:4-6