

Judah During the Divided Kingdom (2 Chronicles 10:1 – 28:7)

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<p>The Reign of Jehoshaphat, part 1: Overview; Jehoshaphat's Earlier Years, part 1: Jehoshaphat's Earlier Fidelity (2 Chronicles 17:1-19)</p>
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The Reign of Jehoshaphat (17:1-21:3)

The next king of Judah was Jehoshaphat (872-848 B.C.). In general terms, the Chronicler presented this king as one whose fidelity resulted in tremendous blessing. Nevertheless, on two occasions Jehoshaphat involved himself with the sinful northern Israelite kingdom. Jehoshaphat's reign therefore illustrated the blessings derived from fidelity and warned of troubles that come to anyone who compromised with the unfaithful.

Comparison of 17:1-21:3 with 1 Kings 22:1-50

The Chronicler's point of view on Jehoshaphat becomes evident when his record is compared with Kings. Detailed notes will follow in the comments on each section, but an overarching comparison provides a helpful orientation to the Chronicler's presentation (see figure 34).

2 Chr		1 Kgs
17:1-2	Opening of Jehoshaphat's Reign (expanded)	15:24c
17:3-19	Jehoshaphat's Earlier Fidelity (added)	-----
-----	Events in Northern Israel (omitted)	15:25-21:29
18:1-34	Jehoshaphat's Earlier Battle (loosely parallel)	22:1-40
19:1-11	Jehoshaphat's Later Fidelity (added)	-----
20:1-30	Jehoshaphat's Later Battle (added)	-----
20:31-21:3	Closure of Jehoshaphat's Reign (expanded)	22:41-50

Comparison of 2 Chr 17:1-21:1 and 1 Kgs 15:25-22:50 (figure 34)

Although the Chronicler omitted events in northern Israel found in 1 Kgs 15:25-21:29 as he usually did, he more than doubled the size of material devoted to Jehoshaphat (50 verses in Kings and 104 verses in Chronicles). 17:1-19 greatly expands 1 Kgs 15:24c and gives examples of blessings which Jehoshaphat received during reforms in the first years of his reign. The Chronicler then followed Kings in its description of a battle with Syria (18:1-34 // 1 Kgs 22:1-40). The Chronicler added a second record of Jehoshaphat's reforms and blessings (19:1-11) as well as another battle he faced (20:1-30). Near the end, Chronicles returns to material in Kings to close Jehoshaphat's reign (20:31-21:1 // 1 Kgs 22:41-50).

Structure of 17:1-21:3

Jehoshaphat's reign divides into four main sections (see figure 35). It opens (17:1-2) and closes (20:31-21:3). The body of the reign separates into the king's early years (17:3-19:3) and his later years (19:4-20:30).

■ Opening of Jehoshaphat's Reign (17:1-2)

◆ Jehoshaphat's Earlier Years (17:3-19:3)

● Jehoshaphat's Earlier Fidelity (17:3-19)

Jehoshaphat's Strength Explained (17:3-9)

Jehoshaphat's International Blessings (17:10-11)

Jehoshaphat's Strength Elaborated (17:12-19)

● Jehoshaphat's Earlier Battle (18:1-19:3)

Jehoshaphat Visits Ahab (18:1-2a)

Jehoshaphat Agrees to Fight with Ahab (18:2b-27)

Synopsis of Royal Deliberations (18:2b-3)

First Prophetic Inquiry (18:4-5)

Second Prophetic Inquiry (18:6-27)

Jehoshaphat Fights with Ahab (18:28-34)

Ahab's Twofold Plan (18:28-29a)

Ahab Enters Battle (18:29b)

Twofold Results of Ahab's Plan (18:30-34)

Jehoshaphat Returns to Jerusalem (19:1-3)

◆Jehoshaphat's Later Years (19:4-20:30)

●Jehoshaphat's Later Fidelity (19:4-11)

Title: Jehoshaphat's Extensive Reforms (19:4)

Judicial Reforms Outside Jerusalem (19:5-7)

Appointments Outside Jerusalem (19:5)

Instructions Outside Jerusalem (19:6-7)

Judicial Reforms Within Jerusalem (19:8-11)

Appointments Within Jerusalem (19:8)

Instructions Within Jerusalem (19:9-11)

●Jehoshaphat's Later Battle (20:1-30)

—Jehoshaphat's Enemies Attack (20:1)

—Jehoshaphat Holds an Assembly in Jerusalem (20:2-19)

Calling of the Assembly (20:2-4)

Jehoshaphat Learns of Attack (20:2)

Jehoshaphat Calls Judah to Assemble (20:3)

Judah Assembles (20:4)

Ceremony of the Assembly (20:5-19)

Jehoshaphat and Assembly Pray for Help (20:5-13)

Jehoshaphat and Assembly Receive Response
(20:14-17)

Jehoshaphat and Assembly Respond with Praise
(20:18-19)

—Jehoshaphat's Army Marches to Battle (20:20-21)

—God Intervenes for Jehoshaphat (20:22-23)

—Jehoshaphat's Army Gathers Plunder (20:24-26)

—Jehoshaphat Returns and Holds an Assembly (20:27-28)

—Jehoshaphat Has Peace and Rest (20:29-30)

■Closure of Jehoshaphat's Reign (20:31-21:3)

Summary of Jehoshaphat's Reign (20:31-34)

Jehoshaphat's Maritime Alliance (20:35-37)

Jehoshaphat Builds Ships with Ahaziah (20:35-36a)

Prophetic Condemnation (20:36b-37a)

Jehoshaphat's Ships are Destroyed (20:37b).

Jehoshaphat's Death, Burial, and Successor (21:1-3)

Outline of 2 Chr 17:1-21:3 (figure 35)

After brief opening remarks (17:1-2), the account deals first with Jehoshaphat's earlier years (17:3,7; 18:2). This first period consists of a time of blessing followed by battle (17:1-

19:3). Jehoshaphat's later years also include a record of blessing followed by battle (19:4-20:30). As we will see in the comments that follow, this symmetry was designed to draw attention to similarities and contrasts between the earlier and later years of the king's reign. Jehoshaphat's reign closes with an unusually complex ending (20:31-21:3).

Opening of Jehoshaphat's Reign (17:1-2)

In his usual fashion, the Chronicler began with a brief description of Jehoshaphat's rise to power. The Chronicler included the information of 1 Kgs 15:24c (// 17:1). He also expanded this notice with an additional verse (17:2).

Jehoshaphat first **strengthened himself** (17:1). In the Chronicler's vocabulary, for a king to "strengthen himself" meant that he consolidated power so that opponents offered no genuine threat (For the significance of this expression see 1:1.) In this case, the Chronicler specified that Jehoshaphat was secure **against Israel** (17:1). Conflict between Judah and northern Israel originated with Rehoboam (see 11:1-4) and extended through the reigns of Abijah (see 13:19) and Asa (see 15:8). Jehoshaphat, however, secured his borders against northern aggression. He not only **stationed troops** in **Judah** but also in **the towns of Ephraim** that Abijah (see 13:19) and Asa (see 15:8) had taken before him (17:2).

By describing Jehoshaphat's security as **against Israel** (17:1), the Chronicler immediately prepared his readers for relating this material to the next section of Jehoshaphat's early years, namely his alliance with Israel against Syria (see 18:1-19:3). The Chronicler made it clear that the king had nothing to fear from his northern kinsmen, but he nevertheless entered an alliance in which he helped northern Israel against a common foe.

Jehoshaphat's Earlier Years (17:3-19:3)

The Chronicler's record of Jehoshaphat's early years focuses in two directions. It first deals with the king's acts of obedience and the blessings he received (17:3-19). It then describes his mixed experience in battle against the Syrians (18:1-34).

Jehoshaphat's Earlier Fidelity (17:3-19)

Jehoshaphat's reign begins with a record of the king's early fidelity and blessing which appears only in Chronicles. This expansion of Kings reflects the Chronicler's typical style and vocabulary on many occasions.

Structure of 17:3-19

The record of Jehoshaphat's early fidelity divides into three parts (see figure 35). His strength is described (17:3-9), his international blessings appear (17:10-11), and then an elaboration closes the section (17:12-19). The Chronicler formed these reports to explain and illustrate how Jehoshaphat was able to consolidate his strength in such a remarkable way.

Jehoshaphat's Strength Explained (17:3-9)

The Chronicler explained the king's success by reporting his domestic blessings (17:3-9). The Chronicler first explained that **the Lord was with Jehoshaphat** (17:3). The concept of God being "with" a king usually bore the connotation that God was acting as his military leader (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*). The context here is also one of military success. Jehoshaphat's successful positioning of his troops against the North was evidence that God was on the side of Judah **in his early years** (17:3).

The reason for this divine favor is stated explicitly. It was **because Jehoshaphat walked in the ways his father David had followed** (17:3). Comparing kings to David was a common technique in the book of Kings (see 1 Kgs 3:14; 9:4; 11:4-6; 14:8; 15:3,11; 2 Kgs 14:3; 16:2; 18:3; 22:2), but the Chronicler used this device less frequently (28:1; 29:2; 34:2; see *Introduction: 14) Standards*). It is noteworthy, therefore, that Jehoshaphat's early years were comparable to the ideal king David.

The text catalogs a number of specific actions that made Jehoshaphat comparable to David. First, he **sought the God of his father** rather than **the Baals** (17:3). The Chronicler noted a number of times that David sought God (1 Chr 16:11; 22:19; 28:8-9). "Seeking" God for direction and help was one of the Chronicler's highest ideals (see *Introduction: 19) Seeking*). The rejection of **the Baals** contrasts Jehoshaphat with the syncretism taking place in the North under the influence of Jezebel (see 1 Kgs 16:31-33; 18:4).

Second, the king's **heart was devoted** to God (17:6). Wholehearted commitment to the Lord frequently appears in Chronicles as a sincere service that is blessed by God (see *Introduction: 16) Motivations*). In this way as well, Jehoshaphat was likened to David whose sincere heart is highlighted a number of times (see 1 Chr 22:7,9; 28:2,9; 29:17-19).

Third, Jehoshaphat **removed the high places ... and the Asherah poles from Judah** (17:6). Just as David had been devoted to centralizing worship in Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat destroyed the high places. The destruction of pagan worship sites and objects appears frequently in Chronicles as a sign of devotion to God (14:3-5; 17:6; 29:16; 31:1; 33:15; 34:3-7; see *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*). For an explanation of Asherah poles see comments on 14:3-5. As 20:33 indicates, however, Jehoshaphat did not continue with this level of devotion throughout his reign.

As a result of the king's zeal, **the Lord established the kingdom** (17:5). Judah was strengthened because of Jehoshaphat's fidelity and he was blessed with **great wealth and honor** by gifts from **all Judah** (17:5). **Wealth and honor** are mentioned in connection only with a few kings. The use of this terminology here pointed out that Jehoshaphat's early years reached a level of prosperity enjoyed by few (see *Introduction: 26) Prosperity and Poverty*). Moreover, the fact that this **wealth and honor** came from **all Judah** is another way the Chronicler exalted the king (17:5). The entire southern kingdom honored Jehoshaphat (*Introduction: 1) All Israel*).

After listing a number of ways in which Jehoshaphat had shown himself to be faithful like David, the Chronicler paused to point out the king's most remarkable act of devotion (17:7-9). **In the third year** (17:7), probably the king's first year to reign after his father's death, he sent **officials ... to teach in the towns of Judah** (17:7). A number of **Levites and priests** accompanied these political leaders (17:8). Levites and priests were designated as teachers of the people in the Law of Moses (see Deut 24:8; 27:14-26; 31:9-13). Under the king's direction, they took **the Book of the Law** (probably the Pentateuch) and **taught the people** (17:9). A similar event took place later in Jehoshaphat's reign as well (see 19:4-12).

The Chronicler's keen interest in the mutual support of king and temple personnel becomes evident here. The ideal kings David and Solomon concentrated on establishing the priests and Levites in their proper roles (see 1 Chr 15:11-24; 16:4-6,37-42; 23:1-26:32; 2 Chr 8:14-15); Hezekiah also gave much attention to the temple personnel (see 29:1-36; 30:15-17,21-27; 31:2-21) as did Josiah (see 34:8-13; 35:1-19). Here Jehoshaphat established the priests and Levites in their rightful place as teachers of the Law (see *Introduction: 4-9) King and Temple*).

The Chronicler used the example of Jehoshaphat to illustrate the means by which security and wealth could come to the people of God. His post-exilic readers desired these blessings, but they needed to be reminded of the kinds of actions that would lead to such positive results. Devotion to purity in worship and instruction in the Law were to be high priorities in their day.

Jehoshaphat's International Blessings (17:10-11)

In addition to domestic blessings that secured Judah against Israel, Jehoshaphat's fidelity was also rewarded on the broader international front. **The Lord was with Jehoshaphat** (17:3) to fight on his behalf (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*). As a result, **the fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms** (17:10). The dread of God upon foreign nations is mentioned several times in Chronicles as a way of exalting certain kings (see 14:14; 17:10; 20:29). The motif appears elsewhere in Scripture as an ideal for which Israel should hope (see Ex 15:16; 23:27; Dt 2:25; 11:25; Josh 2:9-11). The nations feared because God was fighting for Jehoshaphat and giving him great victories (see *Introduction: 3) International Relations*). In

fact, the presence of God with Jehoshaphat was so evident in his military strength that the nations around him **did not make war** with him (17:10). Instead, they brought **gifts and silver as tribute ... rams and goats** (17:11).

This paragraph explains another reason why Jehoshaphat was able to fortify himself so strongly against northern Israel (see 17:1-2); he had no other enemies to worry him. All the nations, especially the **Philistines** to the west and the **Arabs** to the east (17:11), were pacified by their fear of Jehoshaphat's God.

Jehoshaphat's Strength Elaborated (17:12-19)

After explaining how Jehoshaphat became so strong, the Chronicler returned to the subject of the king's military strength (17:12-19; compare 17:1-2). He mentioned the construction of **forts and store cities** (17:12). Successful building projects frequently exhibited divine blessing in Chronicles (see *Introduction: 24) Building and Destruction*). **Large supplies** also indicated his readiness for battle (17:13a).

The Chronicler then described the king's army (17:13b-19). He listed men from **Judah** and **Benjamin** (17:14,17). The number of **experienced fighting men** (17:13b) totaled 1,160,000. This is the largest number recorded for Judah's army (see comments on 11:1). This and other large numbers may be understood in several ways. For the Chronicler's use of large numbers of soldiers see comments on 1 Chr 12:24-37. However one deals with the number itself, it is evident that Jehoshaphat's army was very large. The Chronicler stressed the size of his army in 17:19 by noting that this number was in addition to those he mentioned in 17:2.

The Chronicler introduced the reign of Jehoshaphat in a positive light to draw attention to the significance of the king's failure that followed (18:29; 19:1-3). God had secured Judah against northern Israel because Jehoshaphat had been faithful to teach and enforce the Law of Moses. These blessings only made his later alliance with the North that much more difficult to justify.

The message of this section to the post-exilic readers was at least twofold. On the one hand, this chapter demonstrated how Judah could find divine support against enemies. Through faithful service to God expressed by obedience and reform, the province of Judah could hope to be strong against her enemies once again. On the other hand, however, strength gained from trust in God made all attempts to find security elsewhere an abrupt affront to God.