

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 14

And Abijah rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. Asa his son succeeded him as king, and in his days the country was at peace for ten years.

Chs 14–16 The Chronicler’s account is a major expansion of the rather brief treatment in 1Ki 15:8b–24a. However, 1Ki provides the framework. (TLSB)

14:1 The Chronicler drives home the lesson his readers were to learn from history: the blessing of covenant faithfulness and the dire results of apostasy. Asa’s prosperous reign is related directly to his purging the land of idolatry (vv 1–8). He was spared a foreign invasion because “the LORD defeated the Ethiopians” (v 12), who attacked his southern and western borders (vv 9–15). (TLSB)

peace for ten years. For the Chronicler peace and prosperity go hand in hand with righteous rule. This first decade of Asa’s reign (910–900 B.C.) preceded the invasion by Zerah (14:9–15) and was followed by 20 more years of peace, from the 15th (15:10) to the 35th years (15:19). Contrast this account with the statement that there was war between Asa and Baasha throughout their reigns (see 1Ki 15:16 and note). The tensions between the two kingdoms may have accounted for Asa’s fortifications (14:7–8), though actual combat was likely confined to raids until the major campaign was launched in Asa’s 36th year (16:1). See 15:8 and note. (CSB)

A theme developed in two ways. First, it is associated with the temple, where Yahweh takes up His rest among the people (1Ch 28:2; 2Ch 6:41; Ps 132:8). Second, it is associated with the reign of Solomon (1Ch 22:9) and later Judean kings when they are faithful to the Lord, esp in the cases of Asa and Jehoshaphat. (TLSB)

Asa King of Judah

² Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. ³ He removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. ^a ⁴ He commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to obey his laws and commands. ⁵ He removed the high places and incense altars in every town in Judah, and the kingdom was at peace under him. ⁶ He built up the fortified cities of Judah, since the land was at peace. No one was at war with him during those years, for the LORD gave him rest. ⁷ “Let us build up these towns,” he said to Judah, “and put walls around them, with towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God; we sought him and he has given us rest on every side.” So they built and

prospered. ⁸ Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah, equipped with large shields and with spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, armed with small shields and with bows. All these were brave fighting men. ⁹ Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with a vast army ^b and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. ¹⁰ Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah. ¹¹ Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, “LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O LORD, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you.” ¹² The LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled, ¹³ and Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar. Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover; they were crushed before the LORD and his forces. The men of Judah carried off a large amount of plunder. ¹⁴ They destroyed all the villages around Gerar, for the terror of the LORD had fallen upon them. They plundered all these villages, since there was much booty there. ¹⁵ They also attacked the camps of the herdsmen and carried off droves of sheep and goats and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

14:2–16:14 The account of Asa’s reign (910–869 B.C.) here is greatly expanded over the one in 1Ki 15:9–24. The expansions characteristically express the Chronicler’s view concerning the relationship between obedience and blessing, disobedience and punishment. The author introduces chronological notes into his account to divide Asa’s reign into these periods (see note on 12:2): For ten years Asa did what was right and prospered (14:1–7), and an invasion by a powerful Cushite force was repulsed because he called on the Lord (14:8–15). There followed further reforms (15:1–9) and a covenant renewal in Asa’s 15th year (15:10–18), and so he enjoyed peace until his 35th year (15:19). But then came a change: When confronted by an invasion from the northern kingdom in his 36th year (16:1), he hired Aramean reinforcements rather than trusting in the Lord (16:2–6), and imprisoned the prophet who rebuked him (16:7–10). In his 39th year he was afflicted with a disease (16:12), but still steadfastly refused to seek the Lord. In his 41st year he died (16:13). (CSB)

14:2–5 Asa’s first reformation. Cf 1Ki 15:12. The temple worship reforms of 1Ki are radically different here. The Chronicler makes no mention of “the male cult prostitutes,” nor does he refer to “all the idols that his [Asa’s] fathers had made.” The Chronicler’s favorable accounts of the reigns of Solomon, Rehoboam, and esp Abijah would preclude the mention of these idols. (TLSB)

14:3 *high places*. Demonstrates resilience of false religions. Similar problem occurred in the reign of Jehoshaphat. (TLSB)

14:4–5 Asa’s first reform is specifically tied to the cities of Judah and was broader than his unilateral removal of idolatrous cult objects from Judah’s cities. The entire nation was involved in the reform. (TLSB)

seek the LORD. Pious king leads the nation toward proper worship. (TLSB)

14:5 *removed the high places.* 1Ki 15:14 states that Asa did not remove the high places. This difficulty is best resolved by the Chronicler’s own statement in 15:17, which is properly parallel to 1Ki 15:14: Early in his reign Asa did attempt to remove the high places, but pagan worship was extremely resilient, and ultimately his efforts were unsuccessful (15:17). Statements that the high places both were and were not removed are also found in the reign of Jehoshaphat (17:6; 20:33). Cf. Dt 12:2–3. (CSB)

14:6–7 Asa’s building program is unique to 2Ch. Asa’s reforms brought peace and rest and an opportunity to build. Building programs were undertaken, not only by Rehoboam and Asa, but also by Jehoshaphat (17:12), Uzziah (26:9–10), Jotham (27:3), Hezekiah (32:5), and Manasseh after his repentance (33:14). The opposite situation came about in the latter phase of Asa’s reign (2Ch 16:9). (TLSB)

14:6 *no war.* V 1 gives the round figure of 10 years for the period when “the land had rest.” Then hostilities broke out with the northern king Baasha (16:1–6), who began his 24-year reign in the third year of Asa’s reign (1Ki 15:33). (TLSB)

14:8 Tally of Asa’s army. Theme of peace and prosperity now shifts dramatically to war and its instruments. Asa commands an army of 580,000 composed of Judean infantry and Benjaminite “artillery,” i.e., archers. (TLSB)

14:9–12 Battle with Ethiopia. Tremendous Judean army is met by an enemy army of even greater dimensions, a million men and 300 chariots led by Zerah the Ethiopian (Hbr, Cushite), an otherwise unknown individual, who likely served as a general for one of the pharaohs. (TLSB)

14:9 *Zerah the Cushite.* Many identify him with Pharaoh Osorkon I, second pharaoh of the 22nd Egyptian dynasty. However, since he is not called “king” or “pharaoh,” and is known as the “Cushite” or “Nubian,” some prefer to identify him as an otherwise unknown general serving the pharaoh. The invasion appears to have been an attempt to duplicate the attack of Shishak 30 years earlier (12:1–12), but the results against Asa were quite different. (CSB)

Mareshah. City c 25 mi SW of Jerusalem; fortified by Asa’s grandfather Rehoboam (11:8). (TLSB)

14:10 *Valley of Zephathah.* Marked the entrance to a road leading to the hills of Judah and Jerusalem. (CSB)

Mareshah. Earlier fortified by Rehoboam (11:8) to protect the route mentioned here. (CSB)

14:11 Asa's prayer functions as an application and paradigm of Solomon's dedicatory prayer (6:34), which prescribed prayer in time of war. (TLSB)

14:12 The Lord responded to the prayer of pious Asa. Similar wording is used in 13:15b–16a. Cf Ex 14:14; Dt 20:4; 1Sm 17:47. In Abijah's battle with Jeroboam (ch 13), the people participated in a limited way by blowing the trumpets and raising the battle shout. In Asa's battle, even such minimal participation is omitted. The Lord acts alone in response to the prayer of Asa. (TLSB)

14:13–15 Aftermath of the battle. The taking of booty by a victorious Judean army is described both here and in Jehoshaphat's war in 20:25. Conversely, the plundering of Judah also occurred when Judah met defeat (e.g., at the hands of Shishak in 12:9–11). Some of Asa's booty is sacrificed to the Lord (15:11; cf Dt 2:34–35). (TLSB)

14:13 **14:13** *Gerar*. Located in the Philistine plain 25 mi SW of Mareshah. (TLSB)

His army. Asa's troops served the Lord (cf 1Ch 12:22–23). (TLSB)

plunder. Much of this booty (v. 14) made its way to the storehouses of the temple (15:18; see note on 1Ch 18:1–20:8). (CSB)

14:14 *fear of the LORD*. Cf 1Sm 11:7, where the same phrase is translated “the dread of the LORD. (TLSB)