

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 20

Jehoshaphat's Prayer

After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. 2 Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar” (that is, Engedi). 3 Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4 And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. 5 And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, 6 and said, “O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. 7 Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? 8 And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, 9 ‘If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.’ 10 And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy— 11 behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. 12 O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” 13 Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. 14 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. 15 And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. 16 Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. 17 You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.” 18 Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. 19 And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. 20 And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.” 21 And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, “Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.” 22 And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. 23 For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of

Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

20:1–30 This episode held special interest for the Chronicler since the restored community was being harassed by the descendants of these same peoples (see Ne 2:19; 4:1–3, 7–9; 6:1–4; 13). He uses it to encourage his contemporaries to trust in the Lord and his prophets, as Jehoshaphat son of David had exhorted (v. 20). The account is significantly structured. Apart from the outer frame, which highlights the reversal of circumstances (vv. 1–4, 28–30), it falls into three divisions: (1) Jehoshaphat’s prayer (vv. 5–13), (2) the Lord’s response (vv. 14–19), (3) the great victory (vv. 20–27). At the center of each is its crucial statement, and these are all linked by a key word: v. 9, “we will stand in your presence before this temple”; v. 17, “stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you”; v. 23, “The men of Ammon and Moab rose up (lit. ‘stood up’) against the men from Mount Seir to destroy ... them.” (CSB)

20:1 *Meunites*. A people from the region of Mount Seir in Edom (26:7; 1Ch 4:41; cf. 2Ch 20:10, 22–23). (CSB)

Inhabitants of Mount Seir (vv 10, 22) in the region of Edom. Perhaps encouraged by the Syrians’ victory, several tribes east and south of the Salt Sea joined forces in an attack on Judah. (TLSB)

20:2 *Edom*. Since the Arameans are well to the north and not mentioned among the attackers named in v. 1, the NIV has followed the reading “Edom.” The difference between “Aram” and “Edom” in Hebrew is only one letter, which is very similar in shape and was often confused in the process of copying manuscripts. (CSB)

20:3 *afraid*. Jehoshaphat had a strong army (17:14–18), but he knew that all its efforts would be in vain if the enemy was God’s rod of wrath against him (19:2; cf Is 10:5–6). seek. See p 843. fast. See note, Lv 16:29. The effect of the invading army on Judah resulted in a national seeking after Yahweh, first for Jehoshaphat himself and then for the people. Such a fast was common in times of war or natural calamities (Jgs 20:26; 1Sm 7:6; 31:13; Jl 2:12–16; Jnh 3:6–9). The piety established by the prophetic rebuke and resulting reforms of ch 19 now bears fruit. (TLSB)

20:5–12 Jehoshaphat’s prayer shows him to be a true theocratic king, a worthy son of David and type (foreshadowing) of the awaited Messiah. (CSB)

20:5 *assembly ... before the new court*. Reference to the large court (4:9) or to an area of the second temple, giving the postexilic readers a specific point to which they can relate. (TLSB)

20:6 *God in heaven?* Reminiscent of Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple, summarized in part in v 9 (cf 1Ki 8:22–53). (TLSB)

20:7–9 Review of history (cf 1Ch 17:5, 7–8; 2Ch 15:3–6). The point that Abraham was the friend of God is a comfort. The significance of the land and the promises to Abraham and his descendants finds fulfillment in the building of the temple and, by implication, temple-centered worship. (TLSB)

20:7 *Your friend?* So called because he trusted God. (TLSB)

20:9 An apparent reference to Solomon’s prayer and the divine promise of response (6:14–42; 7:12–22). (CSB)

20:10 *Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir.* See color map 2. *invade ... destroy.* Jehoshaphat's complaint to the Lord draws on the themes of the historical review (vv 7–9) and applies them to the situation. Israel had not destroyed these peoples when they came from Egypt because the Lord forbade them to do so (Dt 2:4–5, 9, 19). (TLSB)

20:11 *Your possession.* Jehoshaphat boldly shifts the responsibility for the safety of the land to God, pointing out that it belongs to Him. This is a good example of how to wrestle with God in prayer and prevail (cf Gn 32:28). (TLSB)

20:12 Jehoshaphat's petition. Like Asa his father, Jehoshaphat addresses the Lord with the relational expression "our God," admits powerlessness, and confesses trust in the Lord (cf 14:11). (TLSB)

20:13–17 Message of Jahaziel. Jehoshaphat had spoken of the exodus of the people from Egypt (v 10). Here vv 15–17 parallel the wording and ideas of the Red Sea epic (cf Ex 14:13–14). (TLSB)

20:14 *Spirit of the LORD.* Jahaziel's words had divine authority (cf v 20). (TLSB)

Jahaziel. A Levite not mentioned otherwise. (TLSB)

20:16 *Pass of Ziz.* Began seven miles north of En Gedi and wound inland, emerging west of Tekoa. (CSB)

Near the west coast of the Dead Sea. (TLSB)

Jeruel. Southeast of Tekoa. (CSB)

20:19 *Levites.* The Chronicler's interest in the priests and Levites is apparent throughout the account (vv. 14, 21–22, 28). (CSB)

Kohathites and the Korahites. Descendants of Levi who were temple musicians (1Ch 6:1, 22, 31). The Levites and their ministry play a central role in this warfare account, from the national lament in the temple (vv 5–13) to the prophetic activity of the Asaphite Jahaziel (vv 14–17) to the praise of the Kohathites and Korahites and the music of the singers (v 21). Cf 1Ch 25. (TLSB)

20:20 *Tekoa.* Town c 6 mi S of Bethlehem; home of Amos and a certain wise woman (Am 1:1; 2 Sm 14:2). (TLSB)

believe in the LORD your God and ... in his prophets. A particularly apt word for the Chronicler's contemporaries to hear from this son of David—at a time when their only hope for the future lay with the Lord and the reassuring words of his prophets. (CSB)

In Hbr, these verbs are different forms of the same root, meaning "to be firm, stable." Standing unwaveringly on God's Word is faith. Such trust in God gives a firm foundation for life, regardless of outward circumstances. (TLSB)

believe His prophets, and you will succeed. The prophet's Word is the Lord's Word. To hear the prophet is to hear the Lord. (TLSB)

20:21 Normally, a battle begins with the war cry of the entire army. Here it begins with music from the worship leaders. (TLSB)

holy attire. Cf Ex 28. (TLSB)

20:22–23 The victory here is clearly the Lord's. Because the Judeans were told to stand still and watch (v 17), the heavenly army is the agent of victory (cf 2Sm 5:24; 2Ki 7:5–7; 19:35; Is 13:4). The complete lack of participation by Judah's army in ch 20 differs from their minimal participation in chs 13–14. (TLSB)

20:22 *an ambush.* The nature of this "ambush" is indicated in v. 23: Israel's foes destroyed each other in the confusion of battle, similar to the victory under Gideon (Jdg 7:22). (CSB)

Lit, "liers in wait." We are not told who they were, only that their attack was so unexpected and mysterious that the enemy was completely confused. God similarly routed the Midianites before Gideon's army (Jgs 7:22) and the Philistines when Saul was king (1Sm 14:20). (TLSB)

20:1–23 By promise, prayer, and praise, the Lord accomplishes Judah's deliverance. The people are saved by faith (v 20c). Faith in God's promises is still how we relate to and rely on our gracious Lord. Above all blessings, He gives us saving faith in the cross of His beloved Son. • We praise You, O Lord, for delivering us from evil and most of all for delivering us from our sins. Amen. (TLSB)

The LORD Delivers Judah

24 When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. **25** When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much. **26** On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Beracah to this day. **27** Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. **28** They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. **29** And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. **30** So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around. **31** Thus Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. **32** He walked in the way of Asa his father and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. **33** The high places, however, were not taken away; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers. **34** Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

20:24 *watchtower of the wilderness.* In Tekoa, looking southeast toward the Dead Sea. (TLSB)

20:26–28 As before the battle (vv 18–19), the people worship God after the battle. The first ritual on the battlefield describes the army gathering for a worship celebration after taking the spoils. The postbattle ritual at the temple immediately follows. Having begun at the house of the Lord (v 5), the warfare account now ends at the house of the Lord (v 28). The prayer Jehoshaphat offered there (vv 6–12) has been answered. (TLSB)

20:26 *Valley of Beracah.* Slope begins near Tekoa and runs to the middle of the west shore of the Salt Sea, near Engedi. (TLSB)

20:27 *made them rejoice.* Praising God for His salvation involves commemoration of His enemies' defeat. (TLSB)

20:29–30 Answers rhetorical question of v 6. Yes, Yahweh is God in heaven. He alone rules over all the kingdoms of the nations. A righteous king and his realm enjoy peace and rest from enemies. They are held in awe and respect by other nations. These blessings are given to Judah under Jehoshaphat. (TLSB)

20:30 *rest all around.* Rest from enemies is part of God's blessing for obedience in Chronicles (14:5–7; 15:15; 1Ch 22:8–9, 18). Righteous kings have victory in warfare (Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah), while wicked rulers experience defeat (Jehoram, Ahaz, Joash, Zedekiah). (CSB)

20:31 *twenty-five years.* Kings reports 22 (18 in 2Ki 3:1, and 4 more in 8:16). These figures are reconciled by suggesting a co-regency with his father Asa for three years, probably due to the severity of his father's illness and the need to arrange for a secure succession (16:10–14). The author of Kings speaks only of his years of sole reign after his father's death. (CSB)

20:33 *high places ... were not removed.* Royal decree for their removal (17:6) did not have popular support. See note, 15:17; see also p 526. 1Ki 22:43–44 places the blame for the continuing existence of the high places on Jehoshaphat. The Chronicler notes the blame of the people (33b). (TLSB)

20:24–34 The Lord makes Judah rejoice over their enemies, the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites. Though gloating over the troubles of others is sinful, God's people cannot fail to praise the Lord for the victory and the good they receive from Him. Daily offer praise to God for His merciful kindness toward you and your loved ones. Daily rejoice in His greatest victory: the cross and resurrection of Jesus. • Grant us quiet and rest all around, dear Lord, except when we praise You loudly for Your good gifts. Amen. (TLSB)

The End of Jehoshaphat's Reign

35 After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. **36** He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. **37** Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

20:35–37 See 1Ki 22:48–49. The lucrative maritime trade through the Gulf of Aqaba no doubt tempted Jehoshaphat to enter into this improper alliance (see 19:2 and note). Solomon's earlier alliance for the same purpose had been with a non-Israelite king (8:17–18). (CSB)

Reign of this pious king ends on a disappointing note. Jehoshaphat again enters into an alliance with Israel, as he did in ch 18. And just as he was rebuked for the first alliance by the prophet Jehu (19:1–3), here he is rebuked by another prophet, Eliezer. In both cases, Jehoshaphat receives little more than the words of rebuke, though in this case his ships are also destroyed. This warning signals the danger that will develop in the next chapters. (TLSB)

20:35 *Ahaziah.* Reigned 853–852 B.C. (see 1Ki 22:51–2Ki 1:18 for the account of his reign). (CSB)

After Ahab's death (18:34), his son Jehoram reigned in Israel for 12 years (2Ki 3:1) and was succeeded by Ahaziah. (TLSB)

20:36 *to go to Tarshish*. Indicates what kind of ships they were. (TLSB)

20:37 *joined*. According to 1Ki 22:49, Jehoshaphat refused to cooperate with Ahaziah in another similar expedition. (TLSB)