

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 26

Uzziah King of Judah

Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah,^a who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah.² He was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his fathers.³ Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem.⁴ He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done.⁵ He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear^b of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.⁶ He went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. He then rebuilt towns near Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines.⁷ God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabs who lived in Gur Baal and against the Meunites.⁸ The Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful.⁹ Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall, and he fortified them.¹⁰ He also built towers in the desert and dug many cisterns, because he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain. He had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.¹¹ Uzziah had a well-trained army, ready to go out by divisions according to their numbers as mustered by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the officer under the direction of Hananiah, one of the royal officials.¹² The total number of family leaders over the fighting men was 2,600.¹³ Under their command was an army of 307,500 men trained for war, a powerful force to support the king against his enemies.¹⁴ Uzziah provided shields, spears, helmets, coats of armor, bows and slingstones for the entire army.¹⁵ In Jerusalem he made machines designed by skillful men for use on the towers and on the corner defenses to shoot arrows and hurl large stones. His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.¹⁶ But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.¹⁷ Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in.¹⁸ They confronted him and said, "It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the LORD God."¹⁹ Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the

LORD's temple, leprosy^c broke out on his forehead.²⁰ When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the LORD had afflicted him.²¹ King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house^d—leprosy, and excluded from the temple of the LORD. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.²² The other events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.²³ Uzziah rested with his fathers and was buried near them in a field for burial that belonged to the kings, for people said, "He had leprosy." And Jotham his son succeeded him as king.

26:1–23 The Chronicler has characteristically divided his account of Uzziah's reign into two parts: the good years, then the bad; cf. his treatment of Uzziah's father Amaziah and his grandfather Joash (see notes on 24:2; 25:1–28). The Chronicler elaborates on the blessings and divine help that flowed from Uzziah's obedience and fidelity (vv. 4–15), whereas the author of Kings only alludes to his fidelity (2Ki 15:3). Where Kings only mentions Uzziah's leprosy (2Ki 15:5), the Chronicler gives additional details to show that the disease was a result of unfaithfulness (vv. 16–21). Under Uzziah and his contemporary in the north, Jeroboam II, the borders of Israel and Judah briefly reached the extent they had attained under David and Solomon (vv. 6–8; 2Ki 14:25). In part, this flourishing of the two kingdoms was facilitated by the removal of the Aramean threat by Assyria under Adadnirari III (802 B.C.), following which Assyria herself went into a period of weakness. (CSB)

Uzziah (Azariah in Kings) is initially a good king who does what is right in the eyes of the Lord (v 4), but then he comes to a sad end. The Chronicler's account serves to explain the transition from a good beginning to Uzziah's leprous death. (TLSB)

26:1 *all the people*. The nation still favored Davidic succession, even though a conspiracy swept away the previous occupant of the throne. (TLSB)

Uzziah. (see e.g., 2Ki 15:6–7; 1Ch 3:12). It is likely that Uzziah was a throne name, while Azariah was his personal name. (CSB)

The Chronicler may have chosen this variation of the name to avoid confusion with Azariah the priest in vv 17–20. (TLSB)

sixteen years old. Uzziah was made king before Amaziah died (he fled to Lachish and ruled there, 25:27). There was a period of co-regency between father and son. (TLSB)

26:2 *Eloth*. Also spelled Elath. For its location and significance, cf 1Ki 9:26; 2Ch 8:17. (TLSB)

26:3–4 The Chronicler does not report that the high places remained in Judah under Uzziah (2Ki 15:4). (TLSB)

26:3 *fifty-two years*. 792–740 B.C., including a co-regency with Amaziah from 792 to 767. (CSB)

26:4 The Chronicler has constructed his account of Uzziah’s reign to give it the same outline as that for Amaziah and Joash (see note on vv. 1–23). He has also once again bypassed the statement in the parallel account that the king did not remove the high places (2Ki 15:4), just as he did in the accounts of the other two kings. (CSB)

26:5–21 The Chronicler’s account gives the reason for Uzziah’s initial successes (vv 5–15) as well as his unfaithfulness (vv 16–19a) and resulting leprosy (vv 19b–21). (TLSB)

26:5 *days of Zechariah*. The author again uses chronological notes to portray the cycles of blessing and judgment associated with the individual king’s response to God’s commands (see note on 12:2). (CSB)

Perhaps the same person who attested Isaiah’s message (Is 8:2). Like Joash (24:2), Uzziah prospered under the tutelage of a godly adviser in the early part of his reign. (TLSB)

fear of God. Lit, “vision of God.” Cf 1Ch 13:12; 2Ch 6:31, 33; 19:9. (TLSB)

26:6–8 Uzziah’s conquests were toward the southeast and the southwest; Israel’s powerful Jeroboam II was in control to the north of Judah. (CSB)

26:6 *Gath ... Jabneh ... Ashdod*. See color map 1. Uzziah recaptured and fortified cities on the western and southwestern borders. Gath had fallen into David’s hands (1Ch 18:1). (TLSB)

26:7 *Meunites*. While Uzziah was faithful, he enjoyed military victory, exactly as his forefathers Rehoboam, Joash, and Amaziah had. But all of them met disaster when they turned away from the Lord. (TLSB)

26:8–15 Uzziah’s faithfulness is marked by other indicators of divine favor. He was held in respect and received tribute from other nations (v 8), engaged in building programs (vv 9–10), and maintained a well-equipped army of 307,500 men (TLSB)

26:9 *Corner Gate ... Valley Gate*. Found at the northeast and southwest portions of the walls. *fortified*. This construction along the wall of Jerusalem may reflect, in part, repair of the damage done by Jehoash during the reign of Amaziah (25:23). (CSB)

Opened into the Valley of Hinnom, west and south of the city. (TLSB)

the Angle. Lit, “at the turning,” i.e., where the wall turned in another direction. (TLSB)

26:10 towers ... cisterns. Towers and cisterns have been found in several excavations (Qumran, Gibeah, Beersheba). A seal bearing Uzziah's name has been found in a cistern at Tell Beit Mirsim. (CSB)

loved the soil. Uzziah made the land productive and safe. He promoted agriculture in various parts of the country: in the wilderness, the grazing lands south and southeast of Jerusalem; in the Shephelah, or lowlands, where the hills of Judah fall away toward the Great Sea; in the plain, the tableland east of the Jordan and the Salt Sea; and in the hill country as well as in the more fertile lands. (TLSB)

26:11–12 Uzziah put his army under the command of 2,600 “mighty men of valor,” i.e., professional soldiers. Their forces could be augmented by calling up a militia for service in divisions. (TLSB)

26:11 *Uzziah had a well-trained army.* Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria states that he was opposed in his advance toward the west (743 B.C.) by a coalition headed by “Azriau of Yaudi,” perhaps Azariah (Uzziah) of Judah. (CSB)

26:14 Army was completely outfitted with current armor and weapons. (TLSB)

26:15 *machines ... to shoot arrows and hurl large stones.* Since the catapult was not known in the military technology of the period, and since torsion-operated devices for shooting arrows did not appear for approximately another three centuries, the devices mentioned here may refer to defensive constructions to protect those shooting arrows and hurling stones from the tops of the walls. (CSB)

marvelously helped. By the Lord. (TLSB)

26:16–19a Downfall of Uzziah. Just as Rehoboam abandoned the Law of the Lord when he had grown strong (12:1), Uzziah did the same. The writer supplies the reason why the Lord makes Uzziah a leper (v 20): pride. Not even the king was permitted to assume worship functions reserved by divine Law for “the priests, the sons of Aaron” (v 18). David and Solomon had acted as priestly kings by pronouncing God's blessing over the people (1Ch 16:1–3; 2Ch 1:2–10), but unfaithful Uzziah could not do so, though he was a son of David. Pride, humankind's undoing from the beginning, has not lost its appeal for the children of Adam (cf Gn 3:6; Pr 16:18; 29:23). (TLSB)

26:19 *leprosy.* For disease as a punishment for sin. (CSB)

Refers to a broad range of afflictions, not necessarily to the disease we call leprosy today. Cf Lv 13 and the diseases of Asa (16:12–14) and Jehoram (21:18–19). (TLSB)

26:21 *governing.* Uzziah's son Jotham exercised the functions of government while Uzziah was still alive. (TLSB)

separate house. See NIV text note; the same phrase in the Canaanite texts from Ugarit suggests a kind of quarantine or separation. (CSB)

26:22 *recorded by ... Isaiah*. Not a reference to the canonical book but to some other work no longer in existence. (CSB)

Called to prophetic office “in the year that King Uzziah died” (Is 6:1). The Chronicler drew on Isaiah’s writings for details about Uzziah’s prosperity and his fall, which the writer of Kings did not incorporate (cf 2Ki 15:6). (TLSB)

26:23 *buried ... in a field ... that belonged to the kings*. Cf. 2Ki 15:7. Apparently due to his leprosy, Uzziah was buried in a cemetery belonging to the kings, though not in the tombs of the kings. (CSB)

Due to his leprosy, Uzziah was buried in a graveyard rather than the tomb of the kings (cf 2Ki 15:7). (TLSB)