

# SECOND CHRONICLES

## Chapter 20

### *Jehoshaphat Defeats Moab and Ammon*

After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites <sup>a</sup> came to make war on Jehoshaphat. <sup>2</sup> Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, <sup>b</sup> from the other side of the Sea. <sup>c</sup> It is already in Hazazon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). <sup>3</sup> Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. <sup>4</sup> The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. <sup>5</sup> Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard <sup>6</sup> and said: “O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. <sup>7</sup> O our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? <sup>8</sup> They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, <sup>9</sup> ‘If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.’ <sup>10</sup> “But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. <sup>11</sup> See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. <sup>12</sup> O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.” <sup>13</sup> All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD. <sup>14</sup> Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. <sup>15</sup> He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. <sup>16</sup> Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. <sup>17</sup> You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’” <sup>18</sup> Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. <sup>19</sup> Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the

LORD, the God of Israel, with very loud voice. <sup>20</sup> Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.” <sup>21</sup> After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his <sup>d</sup> holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: “Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.” <sup>22</sup> As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. <sup>23</sup> The men of Ammon and Moab rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another. <sup>24</sup> When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped. <sup>25</sup> So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing <sup>e</sup> and also articles of value—more than they could take away. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it. <sup>26</sup> On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, where they praised the LORD. This is why it is called the Valley of Beracah <sup>f</sup> to this day. <sup>27</sup> Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. <sup>28</sup> They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lutes and trumpets. <sup>29</sup> The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. <sup>30</sup> And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

**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*. See NIV text note. 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 (see Introduction to 1 Chronicles: Purpose and Themes). (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)

**20:15** See Ex 14:13–14. (CSB)

**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)

*Have faith 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** *ambushes.* 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)

**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 on every side.* 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)

## *The End of Jehoshaphat's Reign*

<sup>31</sup> So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. <sup>32</sup> He walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. <sup>33</sup> The high places, however, were not removed, and the people still had not set their hearts on the God of their fathers. <sup>34</sup> The other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the annals of Jehu son of Hanani, which are recorded in the book of the kings of Israel. <sup>35</sup> Later, Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel, who was guilty of wickedness. <sup>36</sup> He agreed with him to construct a fleet of trading ships. <sup>a</sup> After these were built at Ezion Geber, <sup>37</sup> Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." The ships were wrecked and were not able to set sail to trade. <sup>b</sup>

**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.* See note on 17:6. (CSB)

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)

**20:34** *Jehu son of Hanani.* See note on 19:2. (CSB)

**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)

**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)