

## Asa

My name is Asa, the great-grandson of Solomon. I ruled Judah for 41 years. My reign got brief mention in two of the histories of my people. In one, all the good things were mentioned. I like it so much that I will quote it.

“Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done. He expelled the male shrine-prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his fathers had made. He even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole. Asa cut the pole down and burned it in the Kidron Valley.”

I really cleaned up all the religious garbage. These were the practices for which the LORD drove out the Canaanites. They had been brought back to Israel by some of Solomon’s wives and were not removed by Solomon’s son and grandson. I did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. Not even my evil grandmother is spared! So far, so good.

Do you ever think that you have reached a spiritual plateau from which you cannot fall? I did a couple of things without even realizing that they were decisions. Baasha, king of the northern tribes, was harassing our border. It occurred to me to bribe Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, into breaking his relationship with Baasha and help us instead. We had the gold to pay for it – problem solved -- didn’t even have to fight.

The historical record puts it like this: “At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: ‘Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand.’” It seems that the LORD intended for us to eliminate Ben-Hadad.

The seer said that as a result, I would deal with constant war. Picture this: I am a righteous king, having cleaned up the immoral practices that seduced the kings before me and then I get called out for this! My religion did not affect my politics – I did not fully trust the LORD. It WAS a big deal. And I proved I had a serious problem by throwing the seer in prison and senselessly oppressing the people -- out of frustration. When my great-great-grandfather David had been confronted by the prophet Nathan about his adultery and murder, he admitted his sin!

Did I learn from this experience? Was the reproof effective? No! When I later developed a severe disease in my feet, did I ask for help from the LORD? No, I only sought the help of physicians.

Moses told us, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” I guess I should have realized that it also meant, “all the time.”