

### Jehosophat: He Trusted God's Provision

Jehosophat, king in Judah, was definitely a favorite with his people. Although he made some big mistakes sometimes, he proved to be a very good king. Like Asa, his father, he usually sought the council of the Lord before making decisions, and then he followed God's advice. He was a wise man. When he first became king, he made his kingdom stronger so it would be able to withstand Israel to the north, if need be. This he accomplished without alliances, but by garrisons and forts. (Ahab, king in Israel, was later to cause Jehosophat to be ensnared, by the way, by his friendship--not by fighting his men.)

Jehosophat became popular among the Jews, who could see that he was doing a good job as king. They brought him gifts and gave him honor. But this did not cause him to be proud; he remained happy in the Lord and joyful in his task. Even nations around him sent him presents like silver or tribute money or like large herds of animals. Even the casual observer will note that Jehosophat had instituted the preaching of the word of God as he became king. He honored God even above himself. Because of this God surrounded him with prosperity and honor.

He did make one rather enormous error, however; he became friends with King Ahab of Samaria, and, in order to strengthen the ties they had, he consented to a marriage between his son Jehoram and Ahab's Athaliah. "But", he reasoned, "our religion does not allow me to arrange for him to marry any of the heathen in countries round about. And, of course, she must be royalty."

This had to be the worst match he could have made--both for the couple, and for his part, too. He was drawn into a closer family relationship with a king who was bent for evil. As time passed, Jehosophat journeyed to Samaria at Ahab's invitation. They had many animals slaughtered for the meal that night, and Ahab had planned a feast for his guest. When they had had a good evening, Ahab worked the conversation in a way to suit his purposes.

"Jehosophat, how about going out with me as I go to fight my next battle? How would you like that?" he weeded, but Jehosophat didn't seem to notice the shifty look in his eyes.

"Count me in," rejoined Jehosophat. "I'm on your side. But first, let's ask the guidance of the Lord in this matter. Ahab responded by calling 400 of his prophets to come and give the "word" which had been requested.

Soon the two kings, dressed up in full official regalia, sat on thrones at the city gate. They looked toward the prophets, and were eager to hear what they would say. King

Ahab and King Jehosophat listened first to Ahab's group.

Ahab spoke to them: "Shall we go up to the battle, or not?"

"Oh, yes, your Majesty!"

"It will be a tremendous victory!"

"The enemy has no chance!"

"I just wish I could see their faces!"

All of the prophets that had been called by Ahab were in agreement. But Jesophat heard this with a sceptical ear.

"Isn't there even one prophet of the Lord that we could ask?" worried Jehosophat.

"Oh, yeah, there's one old guy named Micaiah--but I hate him because he NEVER tells me anything good. It's ALWAYS bad.

So Jesophat asked for him.

"Quickly--go get Micaiah, son of Imla! "King Ahab blurted out to a servant.

When Ahab asked him about whether or not they should fight, Micaiah said (in effect), "Sure, why not, sir?"

The King spoke sharply now: "How many times have I told you that you must speak the truth in the name of the Lord?"

"Actually", admitted Micaiah, "I saw Israel on the mountains, wandering like sheep who have no shepherd to guide them." He paused. "Their shepherd has been killed."

"SEE?" exclaimed Ahab. "THAT'S JUST LIKE HIM, TELLING ME BAD THINGS ALL THE TIME! I WILL NOT LISTEN TO THAT! Such

an attitude! AWAY WITH HIM! Put him in prison and let him eat bread and water,", he told his guards. "KEEP HIM THERE until I come back, alright!"

But the prophet retorted, "If you come back alright, it was not the Lord who has spoken to me." Then he looked toward the crowd around them: "Mark my words, everybody!"

The day came that the armies would do battle. Ahab had no care for Jesophat, and he wanted him to be killed so that he could rule his kingdom through Jehoram, his son-in-law. But of course, he had to arrange it so that he, Ahab, would be safe. Ahab said to Jehosophat, "Go ahead and wear your kingly robes today so the men will be encouraged, seeing their king fight along with them. My army is used to seeing me dress in common clothes, so that is what I will do." Jehosophat probably thought this was strange, but he never suspected anything sinister.

The king of the enemy army, though, told his charioteers to fight only the KING of Israel (he didn't know about Jehosophat being there, too), so when they spotted the royal robes of Jehosophat flying, they quickly decided, "There he is!" and circled around him to fight. Jehosophat looked, cried out, and...instead of being run through with a sword, the enemy realized this was not the king of Israel! They continued to fight elsewhere.

But King Ahab, who had gone to so much trouble to be just like an ordinary soldier, was killed by a stray arrow

which struck a joint in his armour. So, even as Milciah had said, he did not come back safe from battle. However, King Jehosophat returned home in peace. God had seen to his safety.

For some time he ruled in peace, and even started a system of courts to be sure the law was carried out. There came a day, though, that Jehosophat was given a message of a huge, oncoming army, marching from across the sea nearby.

"O, King, the army is so large and well-equipped that you haven't a chance," the messenger said, his arms flying. Jehosophat was afraid. The first source of help he thought of (thank goodness) was God. All of the people of the country called upon the Lord, and the King proclaimed a fast. Many came to Jerusalem so that they --men, women, and children--could all pray together that the Lord would deliver them.

King Jehosophat didn't muster his forces in response to this threat. He didn't call in his chaplins to invite God on the scene. No, instead Jehosophat prayed directly to the Lord God Almighty, asking the One who has all power to "help us, who have no might against this host." He said to his God, "God, we are looking to you for help."

God answered by way of a Jew named Jahaziel: "Do not be afraid, people of Judah. Listen, Jehosophat, because I, the Lord am answering you now. The battle is not yours--you won't even have to fight. Stand still, and see the salvation

of the Lord. I do want you to get all ready to do battle, but I am with you.

Jehosophat and all the people in Jerusalem immediately bowed their faces to the ground, thanking Him for his answer and His promise of deliverance. The armies did go out with the King, but they found that the enemies had all gotten confused and killed each other. And the Israelites praised God in the temple that night. Jehosophat's people knew peace. (This story is in the Bible at I Kings 22.)