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Introduction

Abijam's wicked reign, and death, 1 Kings 15:1-8. Asa succeeds him in the kingdom of Judah, and rules well, 1 Kings 15:9-15. He makes a league with the king of Syria against Baasha king of Israel, who is obliged to desist in his attempts against Judah, 1 Kings 15:16-22. He is diseased in his feet and dies, and is succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat, 1 Kings 15:23-25. Nadab, son of Jeroboam, reigns over Israel; but is slain by Baasha, who reigns in his stead, 1 Kings 15:26-28. Baasha destroys all the house of Jeroboam, according to the prediction of Ahijah, 1 Kings 15:29, 1 Kings 15:30. Baasha continues the idolatry of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 15:31-34.

Verse 1

Reigned Abijam over Judah - Of this son of Rehoboam, of his brethren, and of Rehoboam's family in general, see 2 Chronicles 12, where many particulars are added.

Verse 3

His heart was not perfect - He was an idolater, or did not support the worship of the true God. This appears to be the general meaning of the heart not being perfect with God.

Verse 4

The Lord - give him a lamp - That is, a son to succeed him; see 1 Kings 11:36.

Verse 5

Save only in the matter of Uriah - Properly speaking, this is the only flagrant fault or crime in the life of David. It was a horrible offense, or rather a whole system of offenses. See the notes on 2 Samuel 11 (note), and 2 Samuel 12 (note).

Verse 6

There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam - This was mentioned in the preceding chapter, 1 Kings 14:30, and it can mean no more than this: there was a continual spirit of hostility kept up between the two kingdoms, and no doubt frequent skirmishing between bordering parties; but it never broke out into open war, for this was particularly forbidden. See 1 Kings 12:24. Hostility did exist, and no doubt frequent skirmishes; but open war and pitched battles there were none.

But why is this circumstance repeated, and the history of Abijam interrupted by the repetition? There is some reason to believe that Rehoboam is not the true reading, and that it should be Abijam: "Now there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam all the days of his life." And this is the reading of fourteen of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. The Syriac has Abia the son of Rehoboam; the Arabic has Abijam. In the Septuagint the whole verse is omitted in the London Polyglot, but it is extant in those of Complutum and Antwerp. Some copies of the Targum have Abijam also, and the Editio Princeps of the Vulgate has Abia. This is doubtless the true reading, as we know there was a very memorable war between Abia and Jeroboam; see it particularly described 2 Chronicles 13:3 (note), etc.

Verse 10

His mother's name - Our translators thought that grandmother was likely to be the meaning, and therefore have put it in the margin.

The daughter of Abishalom - She is called, says Calmet, the daughter of Absalom, according to the custom of the Scriptures, which give the name of daughter indifferently to the niece, the grand-daughter, and great grand-daughter.

Verse 12

The sodomites - חֲזָקִים (hakkedeshim); literally, the holy or consecrated ones. See on 1 Kings 14:24 (note).

Verse 13

She had made an idol in a grove - The original word, מִפְּלֶתֶת (miphletseth), is variously understood. I shall give its different views in the versions: -

"Besides, he removed his mother Maacha from being chief in the sacred rites of Priapus, and in his grove which she had consecrated."

- Vulgate.

"And Ana, [other copies Maacha], he removed from being governess, because she had made an assembly in

her grove.â€•

- Septuagint.

â€œMoreover, he deprived Maacha, his mother, of her own magnificence, because she had celebrated a solemnity to her own worship.â€•

- Syriac.

â€œAnd even Maacha, his mother, he removed from the kingdom, because she had made an idol in a grove.â€•

- Chaldee.

â€œBesides, he removed Maacha, his mother, from her kingdom, because she had made a high tree into an idol.â€•

- Arabic.

â€œAlso he removed Maacha, his mother, from the kingdom, because she had made a horrible statue; and our rabbins say that it was called $\text{x}\check{\text{z}}\text{x}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{i}\text{x}^{\text{a}}$ (miphletseth), because $\text{x}\check{\text{z}}\text{x}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}\text{o}$ $\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}\text{i}\text{x}$ $\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}^{\text{a}}\text{x}\text{o}$ (maphli leytsanutha), it produced wonderful ridicule; for she made it ad instar membri virilis, and she used it daily.â€•

- Rabbi Solomon Jarchi.

From the whole, it is pretty evident that the image was a mere Priapus, or something of the same nature, and that Maachah had an assembly in the grove where this image was set up, and doubtless worshipped it with the most impure rites. What the Roman Priapus was I need not tell the learned reader; and as to the unlearned, it would not profit him to know. Maachah was most likely another Messalina; and Asa probably did for his mother what Claudius did for his wife.

Verse 14

The high places were not removed - He was not able to make a thorough reformation; this was reserved for his son Jehoshaphat.

Asaâ€™s heart was perfect - He worshipped the true God, and zealously promoted his service; see on 1 Kings 15:3 (note). And even the high places which he did not remove were probably those where the true God alone was worshipped; for that there were such high places the preceding history amply proves, and Jarchi intimates that these were places which individuals had erected for the worship of Jehovah.

Verse 15

Which his father had dedicated - On what account he and his father dedicated the things mentioned below, we know not; but it appears that Asa thought himself bound by the vow of his father.

Verse 16

There was war - That is, there was continual enmity; see on 1 Kings 15:6 (note). But there was no open war till the thirty-sixth year of Asa, when Baasha, king of Israel, began to build Ramah, that he might prevent all communication between Israel and Judah; see 2 Chronicles 15:19; 2 Chronicles 16:1. But this does not agree with what is said here, 1 Kings 16:8, 1 Kings 16:9, that Elah, the son and successor of Baasha, was killed by Zimri, in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Asa. Chronologers endeavor to reconcile this by saying that the years should be reckoned, not from the beginning of the reign of Asa, but from the separation of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. It is most certain that Baasha could not make war upon Asa in the thirty-sixth year of his reign, when it is evident from this chapter that he was dead in the twenty-sixth year of that king. We must either adopt the mode of solution given by chronologists, or grant that there is a mistake in some of the numbers; most likely in the parallel places in Chronicles, but which we have no direct means of correcting. But the reader may compare 2 Chronicles 14:1, with 2 Chronicles 15:10, 2 Chronicles 15:19; 2 Chronicles 16:1.

Verse 17

And Baasha - built Ramah - As the word signifies a high place, what is here termed Ramah was probably a hill, (commanding a defile through which lay the principal road to Jerusalem), which Baasha fortified in order to prevent all intercourse with the kingdom of Judah, lest his subjects should cleave to the house of David. Ramah was about two leagues northward of Jerusalem.

Verse 18

Asa took all the silver - Shishak, king of Egypt, had not taken the whole, or there had been some treasures brought in since that time.

Ben-hadad - This was the grandson of Rezon, called here Hezion, who founded the kingdom of Damascus. See 1 Kings 11:23, 1 Kings 11:24; and Calmet.

Verse 19

There is a league between me and thee - Or, Let there be a league between me and thee; as there was between my father and thy father. There was no reason why Asa should have emptied his treasures at this time to procure the aid of the Syrian king; as it does not appear that there was any danger which himself could not have turned aside. He probably wished to destroy the kingdom of Israel; and to effect this purpose, even robbed the house of the Lord.

Verse 20

Ijon, and Dan, etc. - He appears to have attacked and taken those towns which constituted the principal strength of the kingdom of Israel.

Verse 21

Dwelt in Tirzah - This seems to have been the royal city; see 1 Kings 15:33, and 1 Kings 14:17; and in this Baasha was probably obliged to shut himself up.

Verse 22

None was exempted - Every man was obliged to go and help to dismantle the fortress at Ramah which Baasha had built. This was a general levee en masse of the people: every one was obliged to lend a helping hand, as the state was then supposed to be in danger, and all exemptions necessarily ceased. This is a maxim of civil policy, Ubi adversus hostem muniendi sent limites, omnis immunitas cessat: "Where the boundaries are to be fortified against an enemy, then all exemptions cease."

Verse 23

And the cities which he built - Such as Geba and Mizpah, which he built out of the spoils of Ramah.

He was diseased in his feet - Probably he had a strong rheumatic affection, or the gout. This took place in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, three years before his death; and it is said that he sought to physicians rather than to the Lord, 2 Chronicles 16:12, 2 Chronicles 16:13.

Verse 24

Asa slept with his fathers - Of his splendid and costly funeral we read 1 Chronicles 16:14.

Verse 25

Nadab - began to reign over Israel - He began his reign in the second year of the reign of Asa, and reigned two years.

Verse 27

Smote him at Gabbethon - This was a city in the tribe of Dan, and generally in the possession of the Philistines.

Verse 29

He smote all the house of Jeroboam - This was according to Ahijah's prophetic declaration; see 1 Kings 14:10, 1 Kings 14:14. Thus God made use of one wicked man to destroy another.

Verse 32

There was war - See on 1 Kings 15:16 (note).

Verse 34

Walked in the way of Jeroboam - The entail of iniquity cannot be cut off but by a thorough conversion of the soul to God; and of this, these bad kings seem to have had no adequate notion. The wicked followed the steps of the wicked, and became still more wicked; sin gathers strength by exercise and age.