**Research: Asa’s reformation of Judah**

**II Chronicles 15:1, 2 (to 3rd ;), 3–6 (to :), 7–9, 12, 15**

1 And the spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:

“Azariah the son of Oded—This prophet, who is mentioned nowhere else, appears at this stage of the sacred story in the discharge of an interesting mission. He went to meet Asa, as he was returning from his victorious pursuit of the Ethiopians, and the congratulatory address here recorded was publicly made to the king in presence of his army.Asa, with Judah and many of Israel, moved by Azariah the prophet, renew a solemn covenant with God, [2 Chronicles 15:1-15](https://biblehub.com/context/2_chronicles/15-1.htm). He removeth Maachah his mother for her idolatry; bringeth the hallowed things again into the temple; and enjoyeth a long peace, [2 Chronicles 15:16-19](https://biblehub.com/context/2_chronicles/15-16.htm)” (Jamieson Fausset-Brown).

2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you;

“And he went out to meet Asa,.... From Jerusalem, as Asa was coming to it:

“and said unto him, hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; the principal inhabitants of which tribes had been collected, and went to this war, and were now returning:

“the Lord is with you, while ye be with him; it was a clear case he had been with them, in giving them the victory over the Ethiopians; and as long as they continued in the service of God, and abode by his pure worship, they might expect he would yet be with them, otherwise not:

“and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; you will see his face, and enjoy his favour, and have his presence, and help from him in every time of need, when they sought him by prayer and supplication, as Asa had, and attended his worship and ordinances:

“but if ye forsake him; his laws and his service:

“he will forsake you; and leave you to fall into the hands of your enemies” (Gill’s Exposition).

 3 Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

“Many a time hath Israel been without true God,” etc. Periods of religious decline, such as those recorded in the Book of Judges, as well as those of later times, especially since the division of the kingdom, are adduced as historical proof of the statement that the Lord was with Israel while they were with him” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

“*without a teaching priest, and without law* The connexion between these two is closer than the English suggests. “Law” (Heb. *torah*) is properly “teaching, guidance.” A “teaching” (Heb. *moreh*) priest is one who gives “torah” or “guidance” on doubtful points of morality or ritual” (Cambridge Bible).

“Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, —Some think that Azariah was referring to the sad and disastrous condition to which superstition and idolatry had brought the neighboring kingdom of Israel. His words should rather be taken in a wider sense, for it seems manifest that the prophet had his eye upon many periods in the national history, when the people were in the state described—a state of spiritual destitution and ignorance—and exhibited its natural result as widespread anarchy, mutual dissension among the tribes, and general suffering (Jud 9:23; 12:4; 20:21; 2Ch 13:17). These calamities God permitted to befall them as the punishment of their apostasy” (Jamieson Fausset Brown).

4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

“*In those times —*When Israel lived in the gross neglect of God and his law; *there was no peace to him that went out,*&c. — Men could not go abroad about their private business without great danger” (Benson Commentary).

6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city:

“**they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city**. Israel is meant. In the civil strife of the days of the Judges Israel appeared more than once as two nations destroying one another” (Cambridge Bible).

“Among other patent instances, not the least remarkable are found in [Judges 20:35-45](https://biblehub.com/judges/20-35.htm); [Judges 9:44-47](https://biblehub.com/judges/9-44.htm); these forecast and heralded that final rupture of Rehoboam and Jeroboam, which showed the "house divided against itself," and the sure consequences thereof” (Pulpit Commentary).

“One part of the people of Israel destroyed the other by civil wars” (Benson Commentary).

“And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.”

II Chron 12:1

 7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

“We have here the moral of the prophet’s address. The ruinous results of not “seeking,” and “forsaking,” Jehovah ([2Chronicles 15:2](https://biblehub.com/2_chronicles/15-2.htm)) have been briefly but powerfully sketched from the past history of the nation. The conclusion is, Do not ye fall away like your forefathers; but let your allegiance to Jehovah be decided and sincere.

**“Your work.**—Of rooting out idolatry” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

“*Be ye strong therefore —*Go on resolutely to maintain God’s worship, and to root out idolatry, as you have begun to do; for this is the only method of preserving yourselves from such calamities as your predecessors have felt. *And let not your hands be weak —*Be not discouraged with the opposition which you may possibly meet with. *For your work shall be rewarded —*What you do for God, and for his honour and service, shall not be overlooked, or go unrequited” (Benson Commentary).

 8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the Lord, that was before the porch of the Lord.

“*When Asa heard these words of Oded the prophet —*Of Azariah, the son of Oded, who was also called by his father’s name; *he took courage* — For it required great courage to put away all the idols, to which so great a number of his people were still attached, and among others Maachah, the queen, his mother, whom, for this reason, he deposed, [1 Kings 15:13](https://biblehub.com/1_kings/15-13.htm). *And out of the cities which he had taken —*Or, *which had been taken,*namely, by Abijah his father. *And renewed the altar of the Lord —*Which had been either decayed by time and long use of it, or broken by his idolatrous mother’s means. Or the expression may signify, *He consecrated,*or *dedicated, the altar,*&c., which, possibly, had been polluted by idolaters, and now needed some purification” (Benson Commentary)

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.

“**Simeon**] The territory of Simeon must have practically belonged to Judah from the time of Jeroboam's revolt, but some Simeonites may have resided in the northern kingdom” (Dummelow’s).

“**The strangers**—*i.e.,* the non-Judæans; members of the northern kingdom. A similar accession to the southern kingdom had taken place under Rehoboam ([2Chronicles 11:16](https://biblehub.com/2_chronicles/11-16.htm)); and another yet is related in the reign of Hezekiah”.

“Strangers ... - i. e. "Israelites of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh." The separation of the two kingdoms had made their Israelite brethren "strangers," or "foreigners," to Judah” (Barnes’ Notes).

**“and out of Simeon.**—This tribe is again mentioned along with Ephraim and Manasseh in [2Chronicles 34:6](https://biblehub.com/2_chronicles/34-6.htm), although its territory lay “within the inheritance of the children of Judah” ([Joshua 19:1](https://biblehub.com/joshua/19-1.htm)). Perhaps a portion of the tribe had migrated northward (comp. Judges 18), and some of these now settled again in Judah. [Genesis 49:7](https://biblehub.com/genesis/49-7.htm) speaks of Simeon as “divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel.” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

“The people make a solemn covenant with God. - The work of complete reformation appeared so difficult, that Asa had not courage to attempt it, till assured of Divine assistance and acceptance. He and his people offered sacrifices to God; thanksgiving for the favours they had received, and supplication for further favours. Prayers and praises are now our spiritual sacrifices. The people, of their own will, covenanted to seek the Lord, each for himself, with earnestness. What is religion but seeking God, inquiring after him, applying to him upon all occasions?” (Matthew Henry).

15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about.

“Solemn renewals of the original covenant which God made with their fathers in the wilderness [Exodus 24:3-8](https://biblehub.com/exodus/24-3.htm) occur from time to time in the history of the Jews, following upon intervals of apostasy. This renewal in the reign of Asa is the first on record. The next falls 300 years later in the reign of Josiah. There is a third in the time of Nehemiah (see the marginal references). On such occasions, the people bound themselves by a solem oath to observe all the directions of the Law and called down God's curse upon them if they forsook it” (Barnes’ Notes).