



Second Chronicles - Chapter Twenty Five

III 2 Chronicles 10:1-36:23 - The Kingdom of Judah Down to the Exile (continues)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Five

This section is drawn mainly from 2 Kings 14:2-20, with a long interpolation in vv.5-16 accounting for Amaziah's defeat by Israel. His reign between 796-767 BC is divided into a period of relative obedience and blessing, followed by outright apostasy and judgement. Yet throughout his reign, Amaziah is basically half-hearted and divided in his loyalty to God, so his final failure is one of steady degeneration rather than radical reversal. Amaziah's reign included a long period of co-regency between 791-767 BC with his son Uzziah as a result of his capture by King Joash of the northern kingdom of Israel.

III.h 2 Chronicles 25:1-28 - Amaziah

Refer to the chapter summary above.

It should be noted that Amaziah was the son of Joash also called Jehoash and reigned at the same time as the king of Israel who was also Joash/Jehoash.

III.h.i 2 Chronicles 25:1-4 - Reign of Amaziah

Amaziah is announced as a relatively good king at the start of his reign. His first act was to seek justice for his father by having the servants who assassinated him put to death.

¹ Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. ² He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not with a true heart.

2 Chronicles 25:1-2

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. Amaziah, son of an initially great reformer Joash, continued the generally godly reign began by his father. However, like his father, it would not be so for his entire reign.

Yet not with a true heart. Amaziah faithfully continued his father Joash's policies of reform. Yet some of those policies were compromised, such as allowing sacrifices and incense offerings to continue on the high places: <<*In the second year of King Joash son of Joahaz of Israel, King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like his ancestor David; in all things he did as his father Joash had done. But the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places*>> (2 Kings 14:1-4). Compared to David - the greatest merely human king to reign over the people of God - Amaziah did not match up favourably.

³ As soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand he killed his servants who had murdered his father the king. ⁴ But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the law, in the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, 'The parents shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the parents; but all shall be put to death for their own sins.'

2 Chronicles 25:3-4

He killed his servants who had murdered his father the king. This was both just and in the best interest of Amaziah. It was good for him to eliminate those who found the assassination of the king a reasonable way to change the kingdom. It also fulfilled God's command to punish murderers with execution, first given in Genesis 9:5-7, which predated the book of Moses, a reference here to Deuteronomy.

But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the law, in the book of Moses. It was the standard practice of the ancient world to execute not only the guilty party in such a murder, but also their family. Amaziah went against the conventional practice of his day and obeyed the Word of God instead: <<*Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death*>> (Deuteronomy 24:16).

III.h.ii 2 Chronicles 25:5-16 - Slaughter of the Edomites

This subsection provides the background and aftermath to the comment in 2 Kings 14:7 on the war against Edom. Amaziah's decision to hire mercenaries from the northern kingdom is denounced by an unnamed prophet because the Lord is not with Israel on account of its continuing idolatry, and because a king should trust in God rather than his army. Encouraged by the thought of material gain, Amaziah heeds the prophet's call to dismiss the mercenaries and proceeds to a bloodthirsty victory against the men of Seir, an alternative name for Edom.

Amaziah's worship of the captured Edomite gods, perhaps undertaken to placate their presumed displeasure, only provokes the Lord's anger. Again, the possibility of repentance is offered by God's prophet, but Amaziah seals his fate by silencing godly counsel in favour of his own advisers.

⁵ Amaziah assembled the people of Judah, and set them by ancestral houses under commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He mustered those twenty years old and upwards, and found that they were three hundred thousand picked troops fit for war, able to handle spear and shield. ⁶ He also hired one hundred thousand mighty warriors from Israel for one hundred talents of silver. ⁷ But a man of God came to him and said, 'O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel – all these Ephraimites. ⁸ Rather, go by yourself and act; be strong in battle, or God will fling you down before the enemy; for God has power to help or to overthrow.'

2 Chronicles 25:5-8

Amaziah amassed an army of three hundred thousand picked troops from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. However, he wanted an even stronger army so he also hired one hundred thousand mighty warriors from Israel for one hundred talents of silver. In assembling an army that would eventually fight against Edom, Amaziah hired mercenary troops from the northern tribes of Israel. This was a common practice in the ancient world but not a wise move for a godly man.

O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the Lord is not with Israel. This anonymous prophet warned King Amaziah not to use the Israelite troops that he had hired. Going further, he warned him that if he should go into battle using these Israelite troops, God will fling you down before the enemy. Even though it made military sense for Amaziah to hire and use these troops, according to the word from God, it made no spiritual sense. This is because God has power to help or to overthrow. To fight with God is to receive his help; to fight against him is to be overthrown by God.

Ephraimites was a term often used for the northern kingdom as a whole mainly because they were the largest single tribe and their land lay closest to Judah and that may be its intended use here. It was often used by the prophets, for example: <<*The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah – the king of Assyria*>> (Isaiah 7:17), <<*And I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim*>> (Jeremiah 7:15), <<*Israel’s pride testifies against him; Ephraim stumbles in his guilt; Judah also stumbles with them*>> (Hosea 5:5), and: <<*For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will arouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior’s sword*>> (Zechariah 9:13).

⁹ Amaziah said to the man of God, ‘But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?’ The man of God answered, ‘The Lord is able to give you much more than this.’

2 Chronicles 25:9

But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel? Amaziah heard and understood the word of God from his messenger. Yet his question was familiar: “How much will it cost me to be obedient?” This is not necessarily a bad question to ask, providing the person asking the question is willing to be persuaded by the Lord’s answer. Jesus is clear in his teaching as to the cost: <<*Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me’*>> (Mark 10:21).

The Lord is able to give you much more than this. The prophet wisely answered Amaziah. Whatever obedience costs, it is always ultimately cheaper than disobedience.

¹⁰ Then Amaziah discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim, letting them go home again. But they became very angry with Judah, and returned home in fierce anger.

2 Chronicles 25:10

Then Amaziah discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim, letting them go home again. He had paid them as promised, trusting that God was able to return to him much more, and he sent them home in faith, trusting God to both protect and provide. This greatly aroused the dismissed army against Judah, probably because they counted on the anticipated plunder as additional income. The Israelites’ **fierce anger**, repeated in Hebrew for emphasis, shows further why they Lord was not with them.

¹¹ Amaziah took courage, and led out his people; he went to the Valley of Salt, and struck down ten thousand men of Seir. ¹² The people of Judah captured another ten thousand alive, took them to the top of Sela, and threw them down from the top of Sela, so that all of them were dashed to pieces. ¹³ But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, fell on the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth-horon; they killed three thousand people in them, and took much booty.

2 Chronicles 25:11-13

Amaziah took courage, and led out his people; he went to the Valley of Salt, and struck down ten thousand men of Seir. Walking in obedience to God, Amaziah saw the victory that God had promised. The Edomites, who had apparently rebelled against Judah's authority, were defeated. The victory is definite enough, although it is achieved without any acknowledgment of God's help and with excessive violence.

The Valley of Salt must have been in the Edomite territory south and east of the Dead Sea. It was the scene of a famous victory attributed to David: <<*David won a name for himself. When he returned, he killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt*>> (2 Samuel 8:13), a battle probably fought by one of his mighty men Abishai: <<*Abishai son of Zeruiah killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt*>> (1 Chronicles 18:12).

Some believe Sela was the ancient rock city in the desert also known as Petra; others believe it was a different place. One way or another, this was a significant victory for Amaziah.

But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, fell on the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth-horon; they killed three thousand people in them, and took much booty. This shows the wickedness of the dismissed Israelite soldiers and their hunger for plunder and spoil. They were determined to enrich themselves through conquest, beyond their soldier's wages.

This slaughter of innocent people is clearly caused by the rage these rejected soldiers felt but the root cause was Amaziah's ill-devised plan to hire them in the first place, at least in doing so without first seeking the will of God. This is another example in Scripture that teaches there is cause and effect in the decisions people make and the effect is often felt by others rather than the one who actually causes the problem.

¹⁴ Now after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up as his gods, and worshipped them, making offerings to them. ¹⁵ The Lord was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, ‘Why have you resorted to a people’s gods who could not deliver their own people from your hand?’ ¹⁶ But as he was speaking the king said to him, ‘Have we made you a royal counsellor? Stop! Why should you be put to death?’ So the prophet stopped, but said, ‘I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my advice.’

2 Chronicles 25:14-16

Now after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up as his gods, and worshipped them, making offerings to them. This action of Amaziah shows the deep foolishness of idolatry. These gods of the people of Seir were unable to defend or help the Edomites, yet Amaziah worshipped them anyway. God sent a prophet to make this point clear to King Amaziah. Amaziah’s achievement seems to bring out the worst in him. Whereas he had previously made some response to God, now he turns to idolatry, persecution, revenge, intransigence, pride, and apostasy.

Like his father before him, Amaziah started out by turning to the Lord but once he was secure in his life he abandons God and turns to the ways of the world around him. This is something that was not unique to the times or the people of Israel but has been repeated time and again throughout the church age as well.

The Lord was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, ‘Why have you resorted to a people’s gods who could not deliver their own people from your hand?’ The Lord always seems to act first through grace and mercy in sending this prophet to warn the sinner. All Amaziah had to do was to repent and turn again to the Lord. But he did not.

But as he was speaking the king said to him, ‘Have we made you a royal counsellor? Stop! Why should you be put to death?’ The king arrogantly silenced the prophet, yet pronounced a final word of judgement against Amaziah: So the prophet stopped, but said, ‘I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my advice’. This was a rejection of God’s mercy to Amaziah. God was gracious enough to send him a correcting prophet. Rather than listen to the truth through this courageous and obedient prophet, Amaziah resorts to threats, hoping to silence him.

III.h.iii 2 Chronicles 25:17-24 - Israel Defeats Judah

Amaziah was flush with the success of victory over Edom and so he now challenges King Joash of Israel. Joash advises Amaziah to be satisfied with his recent victory and to go home but he would not listen because the Lord wanted to punish him for his apostasy. The two armies fought, Judah was defeated and Amaziah was taken as a prisoner. Joash sacked Jerusalem and took away all the treasure.

¹⁷ Then King Amaziah of Judah took counsel and sent to King Joash son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu of Israel, saying, ‘Come, let us look one another in the face.’ ¹⁸ King Joash of Israel sent word to King Amaziah of Judah, ‘A thornbush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, “Give your daughter to my son for a wife”; but a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thornbush. ¹⁹ You say, “See, I have defeated Edom”, and your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness. Now stay at home; why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?’

2 Chronicles 25:17-19

Come, let us look one another in the face. Emboldened by his defeat of the Edomites, Amaziah now wants to take on the king of Israel and his northern tribes. He may have justified it to himself because of the actions of the mercenaries earlier but once again he makes decisions based on his own strength and does not enquire of the Lord.

A thornbush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying. In response to Amaziah’s challenge to the more powerful king of Israel, Joash sends him this warning. The point of Joash’s parable is that a puny thistle, i.e. Amaziah, so easily trampled by any wild animal, should not make the mistake of comparing itself in might to the immovable cedar on Lebanon, that is, Joash and his army. This parable is similar to that recorded in Judges 9:8-15 and may have been in the mind of Joash when he issued this warning.

See, I have defeated Edom. Amaziah had reason to believe he would be successful. He had recently assembled a three hundred thousand strong army that had killed twenty thousand Edomites in a victory over Edom. Israel seemed very weak, having only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers following his father Jehoahaz’s defeat by the Aramæans; this is stated in 2 Kings 13:7.

Your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness. Pride was the downfall of other kings who started well in their reigns just as Amaziah had done, for example his own son King Uzziah: <<*But when he had become strong he grew proud, to his*

destruction. For he was false to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to make offering on the altar of incense>> (2 Chronicles 26:16), and even the good King Hezekiah: <<*But Hezekiah did not respond according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem*>> (2 Chronicles 32:25).

Jesus warned that pride was just one of the aspects of the heart that defile a person: <<*For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person*>> (Mark 7:21-23).

Now stay at home; why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you? Joash is not seeking conflict with Amaziah. The reply of King Joash of Israel was both wise and diplomatic. With this little story and its application, he counselled Amaziah to glory in his previous victory over Edom but then to stay at home. Amaziah should have listened to this sound advice from Joash, but he did not. He provoked a fight he should have avoided, and did not consider both the likelihood of success and the effect his defeat would have on the whole kingdom of Judah. Above all, he never consulted a priest or prophet to determine the will of God on this matter.

²⁰ But Amaziah would not listen – it was God’s doing, in order to hand them over, because they had sought the gods of Edom. ²¹ So King Joash of Israel went up; he and King Amaziah of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. ²² Judah was defeated by Israel; everyone fled home. ²³ King Joash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah, son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh; he brought him to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a distance of four hundred cubits. ²⁴ He seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God, and Obed-edom with them; he seized also the treasuries of the king’s house, also hostages; then he returned to Samaria.

2 Chronicles 25:20-24

But Amaziah would not listen. Amaziah was foolish. Not only did he fail to heed the warning given to him by the king of Israel but, as stated above, there is also no indication that he sought the counsel of the Lord, as David had always done; for example: <<*After this David inquired of the Lord, ‘Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?’ The Lord said to him, ‘Go up.’ David said, ‘To which shall I go up?’ He said, ‘To Hebron’*>> (2 Samuel 2:1).

Beth-shemesh. This important town on the northwest border of Judah, about 20 miles or 32 km by road from Jerusalem, guarded an important pass from the Philistine plain. Defeat here inevitably led to an assault on Jerusalem itself and the destruction of about 600 feet or 183m of city **wall** on the northern side between **the Ephraim Gate**, which was the main gate in the centre of the northern wall, and **the Corner Gate**, probably at the north-western corner of the city.

Because of his foolish attack against Israel, Amaziah saw the defences of Jerusalem broken down. Not only did they lose the battle at Beth-shemesh, but they were also in a weaker position to face future attacks by any opposing force that might choose to come against them.

King Joash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah. Because of his foolish attack against Israel, Amaziah lost his freedom and for a time became a prisoner of the king of Israel. Amaziah had a mighty army and Joash had a weak army. Yet God gave Israel the victory over Judah to rebuke the idolatry of Amaziah.

He seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God. Because of his foolish attack against Israel, Amaziah lost the treasure of the people of God. It was not just a loss of his personal wealth, i.e. the treasuries of the king's house, but also of the gold and silver of God's people, and indeed that offered up to the Lord himself: **all the vessels that were found in the house of God**. Amaziah did not have the wisdom to see how losing this battle would hurt others as well as him. Sin so often has consequences beyond the sinner personally. This even extended to **hostages** who were taken from Jerusalem to **Samaria**. The decision to attack Israel was his alone, but the price paid for the foolish attack was paid by the whole kingdom of Judah. It is a sober warning to all leaders, to consider how their foolish decisions affect many other people.

III.h.iv **2 Chronicles 25:25-28 - Death of Amaziah**

Amaziah outlived Joash of Israel and was seemingly released to return as king in Jerusalem. However, because of his apostasy, the Lord raised a conspiracy against Amaziah who fled to Lachish but was followed there, killed and brought back to Jerusalem for burial.

²⁵ King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, lived fifteen years after the death of King Joash son of Jehoahaz of Israel. ²⁶ Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, from first to last, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel? ²⁷ From the time that Amaziah turned away from the Lord they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there. ²⁸ They brought him back on horses; he was buried with his ancestors in the city of David.

2 Chronicles 25:25-28

King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, lived fifteen years after the death of King Joash son of Jehoahaz of Israel. The death of Joash probably prompted Amaziah's release from captivity, although it may have occurred earlier. The surprising repetition of this information concerning Joash in the context of Amaziah's reign (2 Kings 13:12-13) may be intended to contrast the two kings in their deaths: Joash, who did not seek conflict with fellow Israelites, came to a natural and peaceful end, while Amaziah, the aggressor who acted as Rehoboam had been forbidden to act, met a violent death; refer to 1 Kings 12:22-24. It is also possible, however, that King Joash of Israel is highlighted here because he was the effective ruler of Judah in this period, as was his son Jeroboam after him; Amaziah is not said to have 'ruled' in Judah after Joash's death, but only to have 'lived' there.

The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel was a separate record from Kings and Chronicles to which the authors had access that recorded everything of significance that occurred during the reign of the kings. Sadly, they are no longer extant and are lost to history.

From the time that Amaziah turned away from the Lord they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. The embarrassing loss against Israel undermined Amaziah's support among the leaders of Judah. Nothing is said of any reprisals by Amaziah's son against the conspirators perhaps implying that his own son Uzziah or Azariah was himself one of the mysterious 'they' in: <<*They made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there. They brought him on horses; he was buried in Jerusalem with his ancestors in the city of David. All the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king to succeed his father Amaziah*>> (2 Kings 14:19-21). King Amaziah was bound to be unpopular, given the consequences for the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants from his military folly.

The city of Lachish, where Amaziah died, was the most important fortified city in Judah after Jerusalem, defending one of the east-west valleys that gave access to the Judæan Plateau and Jerusalem from the coastal plains.

Amaziah tried but was unable to escape the conspirators. He was assassinated, just like his father was in 2 Kings 12:20-21. Lachish was the first of the cities of Judah to adopt the idolatries of the kingdom of Israel: <<*Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish; it was the beginning of sin to daughter Zion, for in you were found the transgressions of Israel*>> (Micah 1:13), and it was natural for the idolatrous Amaziah to seek an asylum there.

Some commentators believe the assassins who put Amaziah to death may have been the very children whom Amaziah had spared. They, in turn, were exacting vengeance for Amaziah's executions.

He was buried with his ancestors in the city of David. It is not immediately clear whether this was a burial befitting a king or not for it was written concerning his own father King Joash: <<*So he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings*>> (2 Chronicles 24:25b).