



Second Kings - Chapter Eleven

Summary of Chapter Eleven

With the death of her son Ahaziah, Athaliah plans to kill all the heirs to his throne so that she would be queen and so Jehosheba hides the infant Joash thus avoiding his death. After seven years the priest Jehoiada showed the boy to his guards and instructed them to stand guard at the temple while he anointed Joash as the king of Judah. When Athaliah went into the temple and saw that Joash had been made king she cried treason but Jehoiada instructed the guards to take her outside and kill her. When the people heard that the queen was dead and that Joash was their new king they went to the temple of Baal, tore it down and killed the priest of Baal.

III 2 Kings 11:1-12:21 - Joash

The destruction of the house of Ahab has greatly affected the house of David: Ahaziah of Judah has been killed, just like Jehoram of Israel, and a number of his relatives have suffered the same fate as Ahab's relatives (2 Kings 10:12-14). Have the two houses become so identified in intermarriage that a distinction no longer exists between them? Chapters 11-12 clarify that in fact the distinction remains, for David's house survives even the assault of wicked Queen Athaliah, a Judæan Jezebel.

III.a 2 Kings 11:1-3 - Athaliah Reigns over Judah

Probably a daughter of Jezebel, Athaliah certainly displays the same ruthless streak. Her attack on the royal family is stemmed only by the resourceful Jehosheba, who hides the young Joash and his nurse in the Jerusalem temple. The nurse's willingness to share danger with the child in her care contrasts sharply with the spineless leading men of Samaria in 2 Kings 10:1-7.

¹ Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family. ² But Jehosheba, King

Joram's daughter, Ahaziah's sister, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be killed; she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus she hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not killed; ³ he remained with her for six years, hidden in the house of the Lord, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

2 Kings 11:1-3

Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead. Ahaziah was executed by Jehu, as recorded in 2 Kings 9:27-29. She used the occasion of her son's death to take power for herself, and she reigned over the land for six years. Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and probably Jezebel, and was given to Jehoram, King of Judah as a bride. She was a bad influence on both her husband and her son King Ahaziah of Judah.

She set about to destroy all the royal family. Athaliah was from the family of Ahab, and Jehu had completely destroyed all of Ahab's descendants in Israel. Now, after Jehu's coup, Athaliah tried to save something for Ahab's family by trying to eliminate the house of David in Judah.

In a similar account, when Abimelech tried to place himself as king, even before Israel had established a monarchy, he too killed his siblings who might have become rivals: <<*He went to his father's house at Ophrah, and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone; but Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, survived, for he hid himself*>> (Judges 9:5).

But Jehosheba. This little known woman had an important place in God's plan of the ages. Through her courage and ingenuity, she preserved the royal line of David through which the Messiah would come. Evil people like Athaliah will begin their work, but God can always raise up a Jehosheba. According to 2 Chronicles 22:11 Jehosheba, named as Jehoshabeath, was the wife of Jehoiada, the high priest and the daughter of King Jehoram of Judah.

Remained with her for six years, hidden in the house of the Lord. Although Ahaziah was a bad king who made evil alliances, he was still a descendant of David and the successor of his royal line. For the sake of David, God remembered his promise and spared this one young survivor to the massacre of Athaliah. The line of David was almost extinguished and continued only in the presence of a small boy, but God preserved that flickering flame.

According to Josephus in Jewish Antiquities 9.7.1 the bedroom where the child and his nurse hid was a room where spare furniture and mattresses were stored. Like the boy Samuel, Joash grew up in the temple. Like Samuel, he

probably found little ways to help the priests, whatever could be done without attracting too much attention.

Athaliah reigned over the land. For six years this wicked queen achieved her ambition of power over the southern kingdom of Judah. One reason Athaliah was able to reign for six years was that no one knew any alternative. Many people live under the reign of Satan because they do not really know there is a legitimate King ready to take reign in their life.

III.b 2 Kings 11:4-12 - Jehoiada Anoints the Child Joash

After six years the high priest Jehoiada reveals the existence of this rightful heir to the Davidic throne. He carefully places guards to protect the child and takes him into the temple where he is anointed as the king of Judah.

⁴ But in the seventh year Jehoiada summoned the captains of the Carites and of the guards and had them come to him in the house of the Lord. He made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the Lord; then he showed them the king's son.

2 Kings 11:4

Jehoiada, the Carites and the guards. Jehoiada was a godly man who was concerned with restoring the throne of David to the line of David, and taking it away from this daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. It is subsequently clarified that Jehoiada is the chief priest (v.9 and v.15). Jerusalem's guards and their duties around the palace and the temple have been described in 1 Kings 14:27-28. The Carites appear in the consonantal Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 20:23 as part of the elite royal bodyguard alongside the Pelethites. They may well be the same body as, or at least the regiment may be descended from the regiment of the Cherethites, with whom the Pelethites normally appear in the OT. Refer to 2 Samuel 8:18, 15:18, 20:7, and 20:23, 1 Kings 1:38 and 1:44; and the comment made on 1 Kings 1:38.

He made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the Lord. From the place where the oath was made and the context of the oath, it is learned that the worship of the true God was not dead in Judah. These captains, bodyguards and escorts could respond to their responsibility before the Lord.

Then he showed them the king's son. This was a dramatic moment. For six years everyone believed there were no more surviving heirs of David's royal line and there was no legitimate ruler to displace the wicked Athaliah. The secret had to be secure, because the king's son would have been immediately killed if his existence were revealed. The captains, bodyguards and escorts must have been shocked by the sight of this six year old heir to the throne. Yet they did not doubt the word of their priest.

⁵ He commanded them, ‘This is what you are to do: one-third of you, those who go off duty on the sabbath and guard the king’s house ⁶ (another third being at the gate Sur and a third at the gate behind the guards), shall guard the palace; ⁷ and your two divisions that come on duty in force on the sabbath and guard the house of the Lord ⁸ shall surround the king, each with weapons in hand; and whoever approaches the ranks is to be killed. Be with the king in his comings and goings.’

2 Kings 11:5-8

This is what you are to do. The normal duties of the troops mentioned here are reasonably clear: the guarding of the king’s house, i.e. the royal palace, and the house of the Lord, that is, Solomon’s temple, along with two important gates.

On the Sabbath. Jehoiada chose the Sabbath for the day of the coup because that was the day when the guards changed their shifts and they could assemble two groups of guards at the temple at the same time without attracting attention. The duties of the guards were typically on a seven day cycle: <<***The gatekeepers were on the four sides, east, west, north, and south; and their kindred who were in their villages were obliged to come in every seven days, in turn, to be with them***>> (1 Chronicles 9:24-25).

The gate Sur was a gate in the walled enclosure that surrounded the temple precincts and the royal residences in Jerusalem, probably to be identified with the gate of Shallecheth of 1 Chronicles 26:16, and referred to as the Gate of the Foundation in 2 Chronicles 23:5. From this gate a road ascended to the Fish Gate at the northwest corner of the city’s outer defensive wall.

The gate behind the guards was apparently located in a wall separating the temple and palace complexes (v.19) and is called the upper gate in 2 Kings 15:35 and 2 Chronicles 23:20. The interpretation of the troops’ reassignments, however, is more difficult. It does not seem likely that the troops in vv.5-6 are being assigned to guard the king’s palace, for the terminology used to specify the building at the end of v.6 (Hebrew *habbayit massakh*, perhaps ‘house named destruction’?) is not the same as the terminology used of the royal palace in v.5, i.e. ‘the king’s house,’ Hebrew *bet-hammelek*. Furthermore, Athaliah leaves the royal palace unhindered in v.13, with no guards in sight. Most likely, then, it is the temple (‘palace’) of Baal that is to be guarded in v.6 – the building destined for destruction in v.18. Troops are sent to both temples: the ‘house named destruction’ (vv.5-6) and the ‘house of the Lord’ (v.7). They are sent to the first in order to discourage interference by the worshippers of Baal and to detain the priest Mattan. The overall concern is that sufficient security be provided for the coronation ceremony to take place within the temple precincts.

⁹ The captains did according to all that the priest Jehoiada commanded; each brought his men who were to go off duty on the sabbath, with those who were to come on duty on the sabbath, and came to the priest Jehoiada. ¹⁰ The priest delivered to the captains the spears and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of the Lord; ¹¹ the guards stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house, around the altar and the house, to guard the king on every side.

2 Kings 11:9-11

The spears and shields. Since it is not likely that the soldiers needed to be armed by the chief priest, it is probably the symbolism that is important here. The commanders are making it clear that they have allied themselves with David's cause, and at the same time they are receiving articles to be given to the new king as symbols of his royal power. The spear is a prominent royal weapon in the Books of Samuel; e.g. 1 Samuel 18:10-11 and 22:6. It was fitting for these soldiers who would set the heir of David's royal line back on the throne of Judah to use these weapons which had belonged to King David.

¹² Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the covenant; they proclaimed him king, and anointed him; they clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king!'

2 Kings 11:12

Then he brought out the king's son. First the king's son had to be revealed. No one could support him and he could not take his rightful throne until he was brought out before the people.

Put the crown on him. Next the king's son had to be crowned. This was the public and official recognition of him as king.

The covenant or the testimony. Joash is presented with a list of divinely ordained laws, Hebrew 'edut. The king's son had to come with the Word of God. Joash appeared before the people holding the scrolls of God's Word. This is similar to the declaration of his later descendant King Josiah, who was an even better reforming king: <<*The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant*>> (2 Kings 23:3). Deuteronomy 17:18 states that the king should have his own copy of the Scriptures. This is the basis for the British custom of presenting the monarch with a copy of the Bible during the coronation service.

They proclaimed him king. The king's son had to be received. He had the royal right to impose his reign, but he instead allowed his rule to be received.

And anointed him. The king's son could never fulfil his office without a divine anointing.

They clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king!' The king's son received praise once he was recognised as their king. The people of God should always clap their hands with joy, as does all creation: <<***Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy***>> (Psalm 47:1), <<***Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy***>> (Psalm 98:8), and: <<***For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands***>> (Isaiah 55:12). That same response is now due to Jesus as King.

III.c **2 Kings 11:13-21 - Death of Athaliah**

Queen Athaliah went to the temple and saw that Joash was being crowned as the king and she cried out treason. The priest gave orders that she should be taken out of the temple and killed. The people of Judah rejoiced that they now had a legitimate king and they went to the temple of Baal to destroy it and to kill the priest of Baal who led the worship there.

¹³ When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she went into the house of the Lord to the people; ¹⁴ when she looked, there was the king standing by the pillar, according to custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, 'Treason! Treason!'

2 Kings 11:13-14

When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she went into the house of the Lord to the people. At this point the queen had no idea what was going on for she had no knowledge that an heir to the throne had survived her earlier purge.

When she looked, there was the king. For the usurper queen mother this was a horrifying sight. For six years she had ruled because she believed there were no legitimate claimants to the throne of David. Now she sees that one son of Ahaziah - Joash, her own grandson - had escaped her murderous intent.

The pillar. In 1-2 Kings the Hebrew '*ammud*' has appeared thus far only in 1 Kings Chapter 7, referring to the pillars of the Solomonic palace (1 Kings 7:2-3 and 7:6), and the temple (1 Kings 7:15-22 and 7:41-42). Either Jachin or Boaz is probably in

view here (1 Kings 7:21); Jachin may mean ‘the establisher,’ and would thus provide a fitting location for a coronation.

The emphasis on custom is important in a context where the authors are trying to stress the legitimacy of Joash’s claim to the throne; the coronation takes place in line with law and custom, and in full view of all the people of the land. The people were rejoicing, they were obviously weary of the wicked reign of Athaliah.

Treason! Treason! The charge was not unfounded. This was treason against her government, but it was a well-founded and godly treason against a tyrannical, wicked and illegitimate ruler.

¹⁵ Then the priest Jehoiada commanded the captains who were set over the army, ‘Bring her out between the ranks, and kill with the sword anyone who follows her.’ For the priest said, ‘Let her not be killed in the house of the Lord.’ ¹⁶ So they laid hands on her; she went through the horses’ entrance to the king’s house, and there she was put to death.

2 Kings 11:15-16

Bring her out between the ranks, and kill with the sword anyone who follows her. This was both righteous and prudent. It was a just sentence against this woman who had murdered so many, and prudent precautions were taken so she could not mount any resistance.

Let her not be killed in the house of the Lord. As a priest, Jehoiada had a great concern for the sanctity and reputation of the temple. Yet in the place where horses entered, **there she was put to death**. Thus Athaliah, the most infamous queen of Judah, died at the hands of her executioners in much the same way as her mother Jezebel, the wicked queen of Israel.

Unsurprisingly, this gate is also referred to as the Horse Gate: <<Above the Horse Gate the priests made repairs, each one opposite his own house>> (Nehemiah 3:28), and: <<The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the fields as far as the Wadi Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate towards the east, shall be sacred to the Lord. It shall never again be uprooted or overthrown>> (Jeremiah 31:40).

¹⁷ Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and people, that they should be the Lord’s people; also between the king and the people.

2 Kings 11:17

Jehoiada made a covenant. The covenant was between the Lord, the king and the people. They re-committed themselves to honour, obey, and serve God. The king and people once more identify themselves as the Lord's people through a covenant renewal ceremony; refer also to Joshua 24:1-27 and 2 Kings 23:1-3.

When the people were not following the decrees of God after returning from Babylonian exile, they too made a covenant with God to rectify the problem: <<So now let us make a covenant with our God to send away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law>> (Ezra 10:3).

Also between the king and the people. At the same time, a covenant is made between the king and the people as did David with the people of Israel in 2 Samuel 5:1-3, redefining kingship in distinctively Israelite terms after a period in which foreign ideas have dominated. This shows that God intends that both kings and citizens have mutual obligations towards the other. Neither have absolute rights over or against the other.

¹⁸ Then all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, before the altars. The priest posted guards over the house of the Lord. ¹⁹ He took the captains, the Carites, the guards, and all the people of the land; then they brought the king down from the house of the Lord, marching through the gate of the guards to the king's house. He took his seat on the throne of the kings. ²⁰ So all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been killed with the sword at the king's house.

2 Kings 11:18-20

Then all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down. In 2 Kings Chapter 10 Jehu supervised the destruction of the temple of Baal in Samaria. Here the temple of Baal in Jerusalem was destroyed, and appropriately destroyed by the people of the land. They did not stop at destroying the building itself; they went on to destroy both the sacred objects dedicated to Baal and to kill Mattan, the priest of Baal.

One reason the people resented this worship of Baal in Jerusalem so much was because according to the Chronicler, Athaliah had directed that sacred objects from the temple of the Lord be put into the temple of Baal: <<For the children of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had

even used all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord for the Baals>> (2 Chronicles 24:7).

He took his seat on the throne of the kings. After more than six dark years, now the rightful king of Judah once again ruled over his grateful people.

So all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been killed with the sword at the king's house. Clearly, Jerusalem had been in turmoil during the reign of Athaliah. Now peace reigned once more as the ways of the Lord were restored: <<*When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked perish, there is jubilation*>> (Proverbs 11:10).

²¹ Jehoash was seven years old when he began to reign.

2 Kings 11:21

Joash, introduced by that name in v.2, will be called Jehoash throughout most of Chapter 12, to be called Joash again only in 2 Kings 12:19, where his death is reported. Refer also to the comment made on 2 Kings 13:9.