

Judah During the Divided Kingdom (2 Chronicles 10:1 – 28:7)

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The Reign of Amaziah, part 2: Amaziah's Trouble from Israel; Amaziah's Infidelity; Closure of Amaziah's Reign (2 Chronicles 25:13-28)

Amaziah's Trouble from Israel (25:13)

In the center of Amaziah's reign the Chronicler added a relatively disconnected report of trouble from the northern Israelites (see figure 44). The soldiers whom the king sent home **in a great rage** (25:10b) wreaked havoc in Judah while Amaziah battled with the Edomites. It is difficult to understand how these mercenaries plundered **from Samaria to Beth Horon** (25:13), unless they were dismissed from duty as they readied themselves in Samaria. Whatever the case, the raids of these troops were extensive. They killed **three thousand people and carried off great quantities of plunder** (25:13).

This brief report forms a pivotal event between the two accounts of battle in Amaziah's reign (see figure 44). It resulted from the king's intended alliance with the North against Edom (see 25:6), and led to his provocation of war against the North (see 25:17). By structuring his account in this manner, the Chronicler demonstrated that the king's initial disloyalty eventually led to defeat and death.

Amaziah's Infidelity (25:14-24)

Having reported Amaziah's victory over the Edomites and the incursion of angry northern mercenaries into Judah, the Chronicler demonstrated how victory over the Edomites led to a failed attempt to redress the atrocities of the Israelite mercenaries.

Structure of 25:14-24

The Chronicler's account of these matters divides into three major steps, the last of which is a self-contained narrative in its own right (see figure 44). Amaziah adopts Edomite gods (25:14). He is

rebuked by a prophet (25:15-16). Finally, Amaziah receives the punishment appropriate for his infidelity (25:17-24).

Amaziah Worships Edomite Gods (25:14)

The Chronicler added 25:14 to the account of Kings. Amaziah **brought back the gods of the people of Seir** (25:14). At first glance it may seem incongruous that Amaziah would worship the gods of a defeated people. Nevertheless, it was customary in the ancient Near East for a conquering people to carry the gods of their defeated enemies back to their own temples (see 1 Sam 5:1-2). Records from nations surrounding Israel explain that victors in battle often worshipped captured idols to thank them for betraying their own people to defeat. Amaziah probably **bowed down to them** for similar reasons (25:14). Whatever his precise motivations, Amaziah's actions proved to be a flagrant violation of his loyalty to God and led to serious trouble in his kingdom. His actions followed a common scenario in Chronicles; an experience of blessing from God led to infidelity. (For the Chronicler's warning against permitting blessings to lead to infidelity see comments on 1 Chr 5:24.)

Amaziah Encounters Prophetic Rebuke (25:15-16)

The Chronicler continued to add his own material to the reign of Amaziah and immediately explained that Amaziah's act of disloyalty stirred **the anger of the Lord** (25:15). In his usual fashion, the Chronicler presented **a prophet** who came to warn the king (25:15; see *Introduction: 15 Prophets*). As in Amaziah's previous encounter with a prophet (see 25:7-9), a dialogue occurred in which the prophet spoke (25:15), the king responded with a question (25:16a), and the prophet replied (25:16b).

In the first place, the prophet asked, "**Why do you consult ...**" the Edomite gods (25:15). The Hebrew word translated **consult** in this passage is one of the Chronicler's favorite terms often translated "inquire" or "seek" (see *Introduction: 19 Seeking*). By expressing the prophet's message in this manner, the Chronicler revealed that Amaziah's worship of the Edomite gods was earnest and a serious act of infidelity. The prophet demonstrated the folly of Amaziah's actions by pointing out how impotent these gods were. They were unable to **save their own people** (25:15). Such gods were not worthy of worship.

Second, the Chronicler reported Amaziah's answer to this harsh prophetic rebuke (25:16a). The king interrupted the prophet and asked, "**Have we appointed you an adviser to the king?**" (25:16a). Amaziah hired prophets to serve in his court much as Ahab had in the northern kingdom (see 18:8). He gathered around himself prophets who gave the kinds of prophecies he desired. Once on the royal payroll, it was difficult for a prophet to speak words of condemnation. This unnamed prophet was not a member of the royal court. Like Amos of Tekoa, he was not a professional prophet, nor the son (student) of a professional prophet (see Am 7:14). He spoke as a free agent and therefore brought a very negative warning. So, Amaziah told him not to speak or he would be **struck down** (25:16a).

Amaziah's disposition toward the prophet was mixed, demonstrating his half-hearted devotion to God once again. On the one hand, he did not want to see the prophet of God harmed. On the other hand, he considered himself in control of the prophets and rejected the prophetic word. This event contrasted with the king's earlier compliance with the warning of another prophet (see 25:7-10). The Chronicler's mixed assessment of Amaziah (see 25:2b) held true in these scenes as well.

Third, **the prophet stopped but said** a final word of warning (25:16b). The prophetic speech followed the form of an oracle of judgment. First, he sentenced Amaziah to a difficult future. **God has determined to destroy** the king (26:16b). Then, two accusations provided the basis for this harsh sentence. The king had **done this** (i.e. worshipped the Edomite gods) and had **not listened** to the advice of the prophet (26:16b).

In these few words the Chronicler repeated a theme he mentioned a number of times in his history. To ignore the words of God's prophets was to fall subject to the judgment of God (see *Introduction: 15) Prophets*). The Chronicler was convinced that paying attention to the prophetic word was one of his readers' most urgent needs. To avoid divine judgment, they must reject the example of Amaziah.

Amaziah Receives Judgment for Infidelity (25:17-24)

In 25:17-24 the Chronicler returned to his source in 2 Kgs 14:8-14 (but see 25:20). His dependence on Kings at this point leads to a somewhat awkward structural transition, but his intention is clear. The Chronicler introduced Amaziah's syncretism and rejection of the prophet as the explanation for the defeat of Judah recorded in these verses. In an unusually positive portrait of the northern kingdom, the Israelites defeated Amaziah in fulfillment of the prophetic word (25:16b).

Structure of 25:17-24

The account of battle between Amaziah and Jehoash of northern Israel divides into a three step narrative (see figure 44). This story begins with Amaziah challenging Jehoash to battle (25:17-19). This challenge is balanced by Jehoash defeating Amaziah in battle (25:21-24). The turning point in the drama is Amaziah's refusal to heed Jehoash's warning of certain defeat (25:20).

Amaziah Challenges Jehoash to Battle (25:17-19)

From the preceding context it seems likely that Amaziah challenged Jehoash because of the earlier incursion of Israelite mercenaries (see 25:13). 2 Kgs 14:8 simply says that "Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash." The Chronicler expanded this verse by mentioning that Amaziah first **consulted his advisors** (25:17). This additional detail drew a sharp contrast between Amaziah's reaction to the prophet and his favored court advisors. The king had earlier rejected the man of God,

declaring that he had no right to be **an advisor** to the king (25:16). Now he readily listened to the advice of those whom he paid. Amaziah compounded his sin by this act.

Amaziah challenged Jehoash to meet **face to face** (25:17). Later in the story Jehoash and Amaziah **faced each other** (25:21), but not immediately. Instead, the story highlights Amaziah's folly by recording Jehoash's warning (25:18-19). In an ironic twist, the text depicts the king of northern Israel rightly rebuking Amaziah for pursuing war.

In the first place, Jehoash spoke a parable about **a thistle in Lebanon** (i.e. Judah) that asked for the daughter of **a cedar** (i.e. Edom). Meanwhile, **a wild beast** (i.e. northern Israel) came along and **trampled the thistle underfoot** (25:18).

Second, Jehoash interpreted his parable. The record of 2 Kgs 14:10 simply says that Amaziah was "arrogant." The Chronicler expanded the description by adding that Amaziah was **arrogant and proud** (25:19). Similar language indicating pride and arrogance appear a number of times in the Old Testament as a cause of disloyalty to God (see 1 Sam 2:3; 2 Kgs 19:28; Prov 8:13; 11:2; 16:18; 21:24; 29:23; Isa 2:17; 37:29; Hos 5:5; Amos 6:8; Zeph 2:10). The Chronicler mentioned the subject three other times (see 26:16; 32:25,26). Like the thistle who would dare to ask for the daughter of a cedar, Amaziah had ventured arrogantly into matters too great for him.

Third, Jehoash asked why Amaziah wanted to cause his own **downfall and that of Judah also** (25:19). Jehoash warned Amaziah that his arrogance had caused him to be unaware that battle with northern Israel would be like a lion trampling a thistle. Judah would be destroyed. The text does not explain why Jehoash was so confident about the outcome of battle. Perhaps his army far outnumbered Amaziah's forces. Whatever the case, the rest of this story demonstrates that Amaziah should have listened to him (see 25:21-24).

Amaziah Refuses Jehoash's Warnings (25:20)

The turning point of this account amounts to Amaziah's foolish refusal of Jehoash's advice. Although Jehoash had given him fair warning, Amaziah **would not listen** (25:20). This act led directly to one of Judah's worst defeats.

The Chronicler expanded the record of Kings (// 2 Kgs 14:11) to give the reason for Amaziah's foolish refusal. He added that **God so worked that he might hand them over to Jehoash because they sought the gods of Edom** (25:20). As in a number of other passages divine purposes undergird this extraordinary event (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*). God had determined that Judah would be defeated for the sin of turning to Edomite gods (see 25:14,15).

By this expansion, the Chronicler made it explicit that the misfortune soon to come on Judah was the direct result of divine judgment. His message to the original post-exilic readers was evident. Pride resulting from ill-gotten successes would be avenged by God. Only success in the context of humble service to God would lead to further blessing.

Amaziah Loses Battle to Jehoash (25:21-24)

Chronicles returns to following the account of 2 Kgs 14:11b-14 and describes the manner in which divine judgment came against Amaziah. The scenes move with great speed, displaying the utter defeat of Judah. Jehoash struck first (25:21). **Every man** of Judah **fled home** (25:22). Jehoash **captured Amaziah** (25:23). He **broke down the wall of Jerusalem ... a section about six hundred feet long** (25:23). He took **all the gold and silver and all the articles found in the temple** as well as **the palace treasures and the hostages** (25:24). Jehoash inflicted tremendous destruction on the city of David and **returned to Samaria** in safety (25:24).

The extensive details of these events makes the Chronicler's outlook very clear. Never before had Jerusalem suffered such a defeat. Amaziah's half-hearted devotion to God (see 25:2) may have brought some good to the nation, but in the end it led to a horrible outcome for him and all of Judah. The Chronicler's post-exilic readers could expect the same in their day, if they refused to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

Closure of Amaziah's Reign (25:25-28)

The Chronicler closed his account of Amaziah's reign in his usual manner. After omitting the record of Jehoash's death in 2 Kgs 14:15-16, he depended on 2 Kgs 14:17-20 to bring Amaziah's kingdom to an end. This ending amounts to two reports on his death and burial (25:25, 27-28) which frame a reference to other sources (25:26).

The most significant aspect of these verses is the Chronicler's addition in 25:27 (*//* 2 Kgs 14:19). He added that the conspiracy leading to Amaziah's death began **from the time that Amaziah turned away from following the Lord** (25:27). Much like his father Joash, Amaziah's apostasy was the cause of a conspiracy that eventually led to his death (see 24:25). By adding these words, the Chronicler made it clear that Amaziah's ignoble death was also the result of divine judgment. After the death of Jehoash (24:25), Amaziah fled for his life to Lachish, but divine judgment was sure and murderers **killed him there** (25:27). Nevertheless, true to his historical records and his earlier assessment of the king (see 25:2), the Chronicler admitted that Amaziah was **buried with his fathers in the city of Judah** (25:28), an honor withheld from Joash his father (see *Introduction: 28) Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*).