

tion. According to this 1st-century CE apocalypse, the 10 tribes finally learned to keep the Torah of God in Arzareth. At some point after their deportation to Assyria, the tribes came to a common resolve to leave the mass of nations, and go to an unpopulated land. This journey took a year and a half and was attended by special miraculous signs. The passage goes on to speak of a future return of these tribes with similar miraculous signs in time for a messianic deliverance. The manuscripts differ on whether Arzareth was home to nine, nine and a half (cf. 2 Bar. 77:17, 19; 78:1), or ten tribes. Arzareth is likely based on the Hebrew phrase *'eres 'aheret* ("another land"), used in Deut 29:29 (ET 29:28), which mentions the exile. A Syriac version reads *Arzaph*, or "end land," interpreting the word as the "end of the earth." Josephus sanctioned a similar tradition, noting that the 10 tribes existed somewhere beyond the Euphrates as a nation of immense numbers (*Ant.* 11.5.2). Christopher Columbus believed he had found the land of Arzareth. Such traditions have been kept alive in movements such as the British Israelism, Mormonism, and Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God.

Gerald Bilkes

## Asa

An account of his reign appears in 1 Kgs 15:9–24 and another in 2 Chr 14:1–16:14. These accounts shape substantially different images of him and his reign.

Although according to biblical tradition Asa is the third king of Judah since the secession of the North, according to 1 Kings, he is a "first" in many different ways. He is the first king in Judah since the secession (hereafter, "first king") who "did what was right in the sight of Lord, as his father David had done" (1 Kgs 15:11). Moreover, if one takes into consideration the contextually relevant information in 1 Kgs 15:5, Asa's piety may be partially, but positively compared to that of David's (cf. 1 Kgs 15:5, 14). He is also the first king who is succeeded by a son who is also a pious king (1 Kgs 22:43) and thus demonstrates the potential of the Davidic dynasty. Certainly, he is the first king to carry out a cultic reform, and echoes of this reappear in the last reform, the one carried out by Josiah (cf. 1 Kgs 15:12–13 with 2 Kgs 23:6–7; 24). He is the first king who not only outlived Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, but also two entire northern dynasties (Jeroboam and Baasha's) and even the northern civil war as well as the two leaders who fought it. As such, his reign is presented as embodying, and pointing to the enduring stability of the southern kingdom and the Davidic dynasty in opposition to the lack of stability associated with the northern polity. Moreover, it seems

that Asa is presented as a Judahite, earlier and pious version of the image of the king who is a "builder of cities," a motif that was linked to the two main figures of the Omrides, the third dynasty of Israel. In fact, only about Ahab and Asa it is explicitly stated in 1 Kings that they "built cities" (see 1 Kgs 15:23; 22:39; and cf. 16:24 that refers to Omri, Ahab's father).

In 1 Kings, Asa is explicitly portrayed as achieving some degree of success in the struggle against the North. To be sure, his success was presented as the result a bribe he paid out of treasuries of the temple and the palace to the king of Aram to convince him to break his treaty with Baasha, king of Israel and attack the latter's country. Thus he is the first king who is portrayed as relying on foreign kings. Although all other instances of "voluntary" servitude to foreign kings in 1–2 Kings are depicted negatively, there is no clear expression of condemnation in Asa's account. Moreover, although the text states that there was constant warfare between Baasha and Asa, no reference is made to wars between Asa and northern kings later than Baasha, and the last reference to any military action related to this struggle was the report about the cessation of northern fortification works in Ramah, Asa's capture of the material gathered for that purpose and its use for the fortification of Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah, all of which are directly presented to the readers as positive consequences of the bribe that Asa paid.

Finally, the conclusion of the account of his reign in 1 Kings contains an uncommon note stating that at *his old age* he was affected by a foot illness. This reference may point to a tradition about his very unusual cause of death (Cogan: 402).

2 Chronicles not only enlarges considerably the account in 1 Kings, but substantially transforms the image of Asa and completely reshapes his reign. To begin with, in 2 Chronicles, he is not first pious king since the secession, or the first royal father whose son became a pious king, or the first Judahite king who prevailed against the northern kingdom, or the first "builder of cities." Yet Asa becomes a didactic paradigm of the vicissitudes that a king may encounter. He begins as a pious king who embarks on a cultic reform (described in terms different than those in 1 Kings). Consequently he is blessed with peace. During this time, he fortifies the kingdom. As a pious person, however, he is a good candidate for YHWH's testing, which in his case takes the form of an invasion by the largest foreign army mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. Trusting in YHWH rather than in his military forces or foreign alliances, he is given victory over this far superior enemy. Following the didactic speech of a prophet, he launches a second reform that involves not only Judahites, but some pious Israelites from the North, and leads to a covenant to "seek"

YHWH and cultic celebrations that portrayed him as a new David/Solomon. (These actions portray him also as a precursor of Hezekiah and Josiah.) Except for the mentioned invasion, his reign is portrayed as one of continuous peace, till his story resumes at his 36th regnal year when he is faced with a divine test for a second time, only that now he fails as he relies on a foreign power (Aram) instead of relying on YHWH as he confronts Baasha. (Hezekiah is also tested twice, and fails the second time). Condemned by a prophet for this failure, instead of repenting the king puts the prophet "in the stocks, in prison" and oppress – implicitly pious – people who oppose his actions. (The fate of the latter serves in 2 Chronicles, among others, to put in proportion the association between following YHWH and earthly well-being/blessing that some aspects of the main narrative of Asa's kingdom convey.) He is then afflicted by a disease, but even in his illness failed to "seek YHWH" (he sought only human physicians). Yet at his death, the people recognized that all in all, despite his actions during the last three years of his life, he was a great king and provided him with great honor. The story of Asa in 2 Chronicles along with the account in 1 Kings, continue to shape at its foundational level the memory of this king in the late Second Temple (see Josephus) and beyond (e.g., rabbinic literature, many present histories of the period). The story of Asa in 2 Chronicles, in addition, is a mine of information about the Chronicler's implicit and explicit didactic messages to its readers, his historiographical approach and his construction of which elements of the past are malleable and which are not, which in itself is a reflection of the Chronicler's ideology. For example, whereas the sequence and regnal years of the kings of Judah advanced in 1 Kings cannot be modified, for they properly construe time; the regnal years of the kings of Israel and their correlations with those of Judah can be modified since they do not properly construe time as demonstrated by the reference to Baasha as alive and reigning over Israel in Asa's 36th year (see 2 Chr 16:1–10 and cf. 1 Kgs 15:33; 16:8, 15, 23; cf. 29). Another example: the speech of the prophet Azariah (2 Chr 15:3–7) points at important questions about who knew what and when in the Chronicler's construction of the past.

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## Asahel

This name of (probably) four men in the Old Testament means "God has done/made (it)." For related forms, including extra-biblical occurrences, see Fowler (92–93, 356).

### 1. Son of Zeruah

One of the three "Zeruah boys," strong supporters of David in his rise to power, who was killed by Abner during the civil war following Saul's death (2 Sam 2:18–32). One of his brothers, Joab, later took vengeance (2 Sam 3:22–30), despite Abner's having meanwhile come over to David's side.

Asahel also appears in the list of "the thirty" – David's warriors (2 Sam 23:24). It is usually explained that the list goes back to, or at least includes, David's supporters from the time of his rise to power. Na'aman, however, thinks the list points to the fabrication of the story of Asahel's death as part of the move to exonerate David of Abner's death, whereas others note that Asahel's position in the list suggests that he has been added later, in order to put him on a par with his two older brothers. This might gain support from the observation that it appears to be the start of a trajectory: in the parallel 1 Chr 11:26 the name is better integrated into the list, while at 1 Chr 27:7, which is part of a clearly artificial composition (Williamson 1982: 174–75), he has become a regular army commander.

### 2. Levite under Jehoshaphat

One of a group of eight Levites sent with two priests and some laymen to teach the law throughout Judah in Jehoshaphat's third year (2 Chr 17:8). Such a task is more characteristic of the post-exilic period (Neh 8:7–8; Japhet: 748–49), though the listing of the Levites before the priests is unusual.

### 3. Levite under Hezekiah

One of a number of Levites appointed by Hezekiah to oversee the contributions to the temple during Hezekiah's reign (2 Chr 31:13). Again, this sounds more like a post-exilic practice (Japhet: 966–68).

### 4. Father of Jonathan

The father of Jonathan (otherwise unknown), one of four people who apparently took a more rigorous stance than Ezra over how to handle the issue of mixed marriages (Williamson 1985: 156–57). Pace 1 Esd 9:34, it is most unlikely that he also