

In War

2 Chron. 20:1 -4

Dr. Pierre Cannings

I. Attack

- a. Together
 - i. Sons of Ammon
 - ii. Sons of Moab
 - iii. Meunites
- 1. The only history back of this story probably is the fact that Jehoshaphat, associated with Jehoram, was engaged in a campaign against the Moabites. This campaign is described in one way in 2 K. 3:4–27 Jehoshaphat is no longer associated with Jehoram, nor yet is he the attacking party, but is suffering invasion in his own land; his army also does not fight, but only prays (vv. 15–17). Edifying prayers and prophetic admonitions (vv. 3 ff. 14 ff).
- b. Against
 - i. Jehosaphat
 - 1. Report
 - a. A Great Multitude
 - b. Beyond the Sea
 - c. Out of Aram
 - 2. They are in Hazazon-tamar
 - a. after the events described in the previous chapter, where Jehoshaphat is represented engaged in works of piety and peace.—*The sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon and the Meunim* The last people, so named from Ma'an, a city south of the Dead Sea, or representing an Arabian people (*cf* 1 Ch. 4:41), appear as *the children or inhabitants of Mount Seir* in vv. 10, 22, 23.—**2. The sea**] i.e., the Dead Sea
 - b. Jehoshaphat was warned of an invading army from the direction of Transjordan, a coalition of Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites
 - c. This incident must be read against the background of 17:3, 10, which distinguish between the early and later years of Jehoshaphat. Before his disobedience recounted in chap. 18 and condemned in 19:1–3, his kingdom was protected from

attacking enemies by the fear of the Lord “on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah.” Then after the response of faith recounted in this chapter, this situation was renewed (20:29–30).

Spending money should always make you nervous

II. Preparation

- a. Afraid
 - i. Afraid- to be frightened
 - ii. Jehoshaphat’s first response was fear, an appropriate response in the circumstances.
 - iii. Jahaziel later counseled, “Do not fear” (v. 17), counsel that occurs 365 times in the Bible, enough for each day’s quota of fearful situations.
- b. Turned His Attention
 - i. Attention- to turn the face, turn round; with a threatening intention
 - 1. Jehoshaphat’s second response was (literally) to “give his face to seek Yahweh.” In fact, the two verbs “feared and gave” begin the verse in Hebrew almost as one verb.
 - ii. Seek the Lord - To seek God also connotes an inquiry after knowledge, advice, insight, into a particular problem
 - iii. Jehoshaphat knew how to deal with fear. Seeking the Lord is stressed here with two synonyms, the first (*dāraš*) translated “inquire” and the other (*biqqēš*) translated “seek” (see comments at 14:4). In this emergency situation Judah expressed their serious need for divine help by fasting.
- c. Proclaimed a Fast
 - i. Proclaim - basic meaning of the vb.: to draw attention to oneself by loudness of the voice
 - ii. Fast- Fasting is the deliberate, temporary abstention from food for religious reasons. In the biblical material, fasting is total abstention, and is thus to be distinguished both from permanent food restrictions, like those against unclean animals, and also from occasional abstention from certain foods, like meat on Fridays, a practice adopted by the later Christian Church
 - 1. Another occasion for fasting was making a critical decision or following an ominous course of action. **Esther, intending to seek the king’s favor in reversing the decree of Haman, placed herself under the king’s mercy and possible wrath which could end in her death. Therefore she requested that all the Jews fast and entreat God for her mission (Est 4:16). Nehemiah fasted upon learning of the sorrowful condition of Jerusalem (Neh 1:4)**

2. National fasting was called during times of extreme crisis, such as a plague, a military threat or the death of a king. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast because the kings of Moab and Ammon were planning a campaign against Judah. The people assembled at Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat led the assembly in prayer. Then Jahaziel, a Levite, under the inspiration of the Lord's Spirit, proclaimed an assurance of salvation. Prayer and enthusiastic praising followed. Afterwards Jehoshaphat led the army to war, but Yahweh had already discomfited the enemies; the army had only to collect the spoil (II Chr 20:1–29). In 604 when the Babylonian army was camped against Ashkelon, about a three day march from Jerusalem, King Jehoiakim proclaimed a fast. Jer used this occasion to have Baruch read his prophecies from a scroll before the people near the New Gate of the temple (Jer 36:1–10).
3. When Elijah condemned Ahab for Naboth's death, he mourned in sackcloth and fasted. God had mercy on him and delayed the punishment on his house (I Kgs 21:27ff.).

iii. Throughout all of Judah

III. Counterattack

- a. Gathered together
 - i. Gathered – Assemble
 - 1. Not individual
 - 2. We are in this together
 - ii. From all the cities
- b. Seek Help
 - i. Seek connotes an inquiry after knowledge, advice, insight, into a particular problem
 - 1. to **search for, call on, consult**
 - ii. From the Lord
 - 1. Not Princes or Armies
 - a. Ps:146:3; 118:9; 147:10-11
 - b. Proverbs 21:31
 - c. Isaiah 30:1-3
 - 2. Seek the Lord

Word Studies

Attention: to turn the face, turn round; with a threatening intention ¹²

Seek- To seek God also connotes an inquiry after knowledge, advice, insight, into a particular problem³

Proclaim- basic meaning of the vb.: to draw attention to oneself by loudness of the voice.⁴

Fast - Fasting is the deliberate, temporary abstention from food for religious reasons. In the biblical material, fasting is total abstention, and is thus to be distinguished both from permanent food restrictions, like those against unclean animals, and also from occasional abstention from certain foods, like meat on Fridays, a practice adopted by the later Christian Church.⁵

Another occasion for fasting was making a critical decision or following an ominous course of action. Esther, intending to seek the king's favor in reversing the decree of Haman, placed herself under the king's mercy and possible wrath which could end in her death. Therefore she requested that all the Jews fast and entreat God for her mission (Est 4:16). Nehemiah fasted upon learning of the sorrowful condition of Jerusalem (Neh 1:4), and then proceeded to work to correct the situation. Apparently before a person was stoned for blasphemy, the people mourned the sin and coming execution with fasting. Jezebel proclaimed such a fast for Naboth (1 Kgs 21:9, 12). Also upon learning of one's sin, fasting is in order. When Elijah condemned Ahab for Naboth's death, he mourned in sackcloth and fasted. God had mercy on him and delayed the punishment on his house (1 Kgs 21:27ff.).

An individual could intercede in supplication and fasting for an entire nation. Daniel confessed his sin and his people's sins that had led them into captivity (Dan 9:3–19). Gabriel answered his prayer, assured him of the ending of the captivity and promised the establishing of a new covenant (Dan 9:22–27).

¹ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 939. [*Ludwig Koehler et al., The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament \(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000\)*](#), 939.

² Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 939. [*Ludwig Koehler et al., The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament \(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000\)*](#), 939.

³ Leonard J. Copes, [“455 שְׁמַרְתָּן”](#) in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. [“455 שְׁמַרְתָּן”](#) in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 198.

⁴ Ludwig Koehler et al., [*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*](#) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1128. [*Ludwig Koehler et al., The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament \(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000\)*](#), 1128.

⁵ John Muddiman, [“Fast, Fasting,”](#) [John Muddiman, “Fast, Fasting,”](#) in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 773.

National fasting was called during times of extreme crisis, such as a plague, a military threat or the death of a king. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast because the kings of Moab and Ammon were planning a campaign against Judah. The people assembled at Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat led the assembly in prayer. Then Jahaziel, a Levite, under the inspiration of the Lord's Spirit, proclaimed an assurance of salvation. Prayer and enthusiastic praising followed. Afterwards Jehoshaphat led the army to war, but Yahweh had already discomfited the enemies; the army had only to collect the spoil (II Chr 20:1–29). In 604 when the Babylonian army was camped against Ashkelon, about a three day march from Jerusalem, King Jehoiakim proclaimed a fast. Jer used this occasion to have Baruch read his prophecies from a scroll before the people near the New Gate of the temple (Jer 36:1–10). Jer wanted the people to move from an outward show of contrition to true repentance. On another occasion, Joel foresaw the coming of the Day of Yahweh; therefore he exhorted the people to sanctify a fast and call a solemn assembly (Joel 1:14; 2:15). He proclaimed that if the people would truly repent in mourning and fasting, then God would be gracious and postpone the day of judgment (Joel 2:12–14). The case of Nineveh shows God's desire to extend mercy and not judgment. On hearing the proclamation of judgment by Jonah, the Ninevites proclaimed a fast and repented. Thereby they averted for a time the day of judgment (Jon 3:5–10).⁶

Gather – Assemble

Help -

Commentary Studies

⁶ John E. Hartley, “[1890 דַּיָּה](#),” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. [“1890 דַּיָּה”](#), in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 758–759.

20:1–30. The victory over the Moabites and the Ammonites.—A religious tale of great marvel. The only history back of this story probably is the fact that Jehoshaphat, associated with Jehoram, was engaged in a campaign against the Moabites. This campaign is described in one way in 2 K. 3:4–27, where it is embellished with wonders to the glorification of Elisha the prophet of northern Israel; here the campaign wholly transformed is described in another way, and all semblance to historical reality is lost; only the *Moabites* remain as the enemies of Israel. Jehoshaphat is no longer associated with Jehoram, nor yet is he the attacking party, but is suffering invasion in his own land; his army also does not fight, but only prays (vv. 15–17). Edifying prayers and prophetic admonitions (vv. 3 ff, 14 ff.), and a startling wonder from Yahweh (vv. 22 ff.), which at the same time serves to show the importance of the worship of Yahweh through the Levites with services of song, are the principal features of the narrative. The influence of the prophetic tale of 2 K. may be seen in the feature of the self-destruction of enemies which appears in both (*cf.* 2 K. 3:23 with v. 23).

An attempt to defend the historicity of this narrative has been made by assuming an invasion of three kindred tribes to settle in western Palestine, coming by way of the southern end of the Dead Sea, harassed by the population of that district and ruptured (*sic* destroyed) by internal dissensions, and leaving a very great spoil, because, coming to settle, they brought all their property with them (Ba. *Com.* p. xxxi.). But in view of the thoroughly Midrashic character of the narrative such conjectures are idle.

1–4. The invasion.—**1.** *After this*] *i.e.*, after the events described in the previous chapter, where Jehoshaphat is represented engaged in works of piety and peace.—*The sons of Moab and*

vv. verses.

vv. verses.

ff and following.

ff. and following.

vv. verses.

ff. and following.

cf. confer, compare.

v. verse.

Ba. W. E. Barnes, *Chronicles in The Cambridge Bible.*

p. page.

i.e. id est, that is.

*the sons of Ammon and the Meunim**] (v. i.). The last people, so named from Ma'an, a city south of the Dead Sea, or representing an Arabian people (cf. 1 Ch. 4:41), appear as *the children or inhabitants of Mount Seir* in vv. 10, 22, 23.—**2. The sea**] i.e., the Dead Sea.—*From Edom**] (v. i.).

This reading *Edom* instead of *Syria* (, RV.) requires only the change of a single consonant (םָרָא becoming סָרָא). Syria lies far to the north of the Dead Sea, while Edom lies immediately to the south and south-east of the sea.—*Hazazon-tamar*] (Gn. 14:7†) on the basis of this verse identified with *En-gedi* (Jos. 15:62, 1 S. 23:28, Ct. 1:14, Ez. 47:10†); mod. *Ain Jidi*, overlooking the western shore of the Dead Sea, 680 feet below the sea-level and 612 above that of the lake (EBi. II. col. 1293). There is little doubt but that this identification is correct. The name *Hazazon* seems preserved in the *Wady Husaseh* north-west of En-gedi. *Tamar*, meaning *palm-tree*, is very appropriate. Palm-trees are known to have flourished there (mentioned by Josephus, Ant. ix, 1, 2, and Pliny, HN. V. 15 (17)). The suggestion of the identification of *Hazazon-tamar* with *Tamar* of Ez. 47:19 to the south-west of the Dead Sea (DB.) has little in its favour. A pass leads from *En-*

* indicates that Massoretic text has not been followed, but earlier Vrss. or conjectural emendations.

v. i. *vide infra*, see below (usually textual note on same verse).

cf. *confer*, compare.

vv. verses.

i.e. *id est*, that is.

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v. i. *vide infra*, see below (usually textual note on same verse).

Hebrew consonantal text.

RV. Revised Version.

† indicates all passages cited.

‡ indicates all passages cited.

mod. modern.

EBi. *Encyclopaedia Biblica*.

col. column, columns.

Ant. *Antiquities*.

DB. *Dictionary of the Bible*, usually Hastings'.

gedi up into the hill-country of Judah. For a description of the route of this invading army, see GAS. HGHL. p. 172.—**3. And proclaimed a fast**]. This was usual in view of any impending calamity (Jon. 3:5 ff.) and involved the assembling of the people (1 K. 21:9, 12, Je. 36:6, 9, Jo. 2:15).

1. Since the Ammonites are already mentioned in this verse, and since three groups of people are mentioned in vv. 10, 22, 24, read מִהָּעִוּנִים with M[ε]ιναίων, so Be., Ke., et al., cf. 26:7, 1 Ch. 4:41.—**2.** [וַיָּבֹא] used as the French *on* and the German *man*, v. Ges. § 144f—**3.** [הַמּוֹן] other MSS. **מְאֹדָם**, *great number* a late usage, cf. 1 Ch. 29:16.—**4.** [מְאֹרֶם] also in , but improbable here. Read **הַמּוֹן**, with most commentators (v. s.). **5.** **אָדָם** *he set his*

GAS. George Adam Smith.

HGHL. George Adam Smith., *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land.*

p. page.

ff and following.

vv. verses.

Be. E. Bertheau, *Die Bücher der Chronik*² in *Handbuch zum A. T.*

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Ke. C. F. Keil, *Chronicles in Biblical Commentary on the OT.*

et al. et aliter, and elsewhere, and others.

cf. confer, compare.

v. *vide*, see.

Ges. W. Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch (Eng. trans. by Collins and Cowley).

cf. *confer*, compare.

v. s. *vide supra*, see above (usually general remark on same verse).

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Syriac Peshitto Version.

face, i.e., he determined, equivalent to פָּנִים ... וַיִּשְׁמַע in 2 K. 12:18.—**4.** לְבָקַשׁ] *to ask, request*, a late use of בָּקַשׁ only here with no acc. of the thing.

5–13. Jehoshaphat’s prayer.—This prayer contains the following elements: (1) an invocation of Yahweh as all-powerful (v. 6); (2) the land now threatened had been given by him as a perpetual possession (v. 7); (3) a sanctuary has been built in this land for him, with faith in his presence to deliver in every time of need (vv. 8 f.); (4) these enemies are requiting evil for good upon this his land (vv. 10 f.); (5) Israel is powerless before these enemies and can only look unto him for help (v. 12).⁷

i.e. id est, that is.

acc. accusative.

v. verse.

v. verse.

vv. verses.

f. and following.

vv. verses.

f. and following.

v. verse.

⁷ Edward Lewis Curtis and Albert Alonzo Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 404–406.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S GREAT VICTORY (20:1–30)

20:1–2 This incident must be read against the background of 17:3, 10, which distinguish between the early and later years of Jehoshaphat. Before his disobedience recounted in chap. 18 and condemned in 19:1–3, his kingdom was protected from attacking enemies by the fear of the Lord “on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah.” Then after the response of faith recounted in this chapter, this situation was renewed (20:29–30).

Jehoshaphat was warned of an invading army from the direction of Transjordan, a coalition of Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites. There is some speculation about the third group. The MT reads “Ammonites,” which is repetitive and probably the result of dittography. That there was a third group is clear from vv. 2, 10, 22–23, which indicate the third group was from Mount Seir, that is, Edom. The LXX reads “the Meunites,” who are mentioned together with the Ammonites during the time of Hezekiah (26:7; cf. 1 Chr 4:41). The location of such a group has been linked with the Arab town *Ma'an*, twelve miles southeast of Petra. Their link with Mount Seir need not be a problem. Seir was located somewhere in the southern Negeb. *Ma'an* is situated in the Negeb in several places (Josh 15:55; 1 Sam 23:24; 25:2; 1 Chr 2:45). Most commentators accept the hint in the LXX and translate “Meunites.”⁴¹ The coalition was very diverse, and the difference in origins may account for the strife referred to in v. 23. An advance up the western side of the Dead Sea as far as Hazazon Tamar (En Gedi) is feasible. The location of Hazazon Tamar is uncertain, but it may be el-Hasasa between En Gedi and Bethlehem. En Gedi lay in the center of the western side of the Dead Sea. The ascent to the top of the mountains was by way of the pass of Ziz (v. 16).

20:3–4 Jehoshaphat's first response was fear, an appropriate response in the circumstances. Jahaziel later counseled, “Do not fear” (v. 17), counsel that occurs 365 times in the Bible, enough for each day's quota of fearful situations.⁴² Jehoshaphat's second response was (literally) to “give his face to seek Yahweh.” In fact, the two verbs “feared and gave” begin the verse in Hebrew almost as one verb. Jehoshaphat knew how to deal with fear. Seeking the Lord is stressed here with two synonyms, the first (*dāraš*) translated “inquire” and the other (*biqqēš*) translated “seek”

MT Masoretic Text

⁴¹ Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 155–56. He also notes that reading “Edom” rather than the MT מִן־אָרָם (“Aram”) is not properly a text-critical decision in itself but is a conjectural one formed by geopolitical factors.

⁴² L. C. Allen, *1, 2 Chronicles*, CC (Dallas: Word, 1987), 306.

(see comments at 14:4). In this emergency situation Judah expressed their serious need for divine help by fasting.⁸

JEHOSHAPHAT'S DEFEAT OF A FOREIGN ALLIANCE (20:1–30)

20:1–2. Shortly after the disastrous adventure at Ramoth Gilead (chap. 18), **Moabites** ... **Ammonites**, and **Meunites** launched an attack **on Jehoshaphat** from across the Jordan. The Meunites (cf. 1 Chron. 4:41; 2 Chron. 26:7) were an Arabian tribe living in Edom and elsewhere east and south of the Dead Sea. The **army** mentioned in 20:2, then, was from Edom (cf. Mount Seir [Edom] in vv. 10, 22–23), not from Aram (Heb.; cf. NIV marg., v. 2). **Jehoshaphat** learned that this great host was **already** at **Hazazon Tamar (En Gedi)**; cf. 1 Sam. 23:29), on the west shore of the Dead Sea, and would soon head for Jerusalem.

20:3–12. This situation prompted the king to proclaim a national **fast** (perhaps to show the people's sincerity; cf. 1 Sam. 7:6) and to **seek** God. He then addressed **the LORD** in prayer before **the temple ... courtyard** (cf. 2 Chron. 4:9). **Jehoshaphat** first extolled **God** for His sovereign **power** (20:6) and then recalled God's grace in giving them, Abraham's **descendants**, the **land** (v. 7; cf. Gen. 15:18–21) and temple (**sanctuary**, 2 Chron. 20:8). (**Abraham** was also called God's **friend** in Isa. 41:8 and James 2:23.)⁹

⁸ J. A. Thompson, [1, 2 Chronicles](#), vol. 9, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 292–293.

NIV New International Version

marg. margin, marginal reading

⁹ Eugene H. Merrill, [“2 Chronicles,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 634.