

ASA

God desires in His warriors faithfulness. Not just when it is convenience but all the time. Asa is a great grandson of David and from the day he began to reign; Asa determined to please the Lord. Asa commanded the people to seek the Lord and even deposed his grandmother who was into idolatry.

God honored Asa's faithfulness and provided the wealth for Asa to continue to fortify the cities of Judah. "Let us build up these towns," he said to Judah, "and put walls around them, with towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God; we sought him and he has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered. Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah, equipped with large shields and with spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, armed with small shields and with bows. All these were brave fighting men. (II Chronicles 14:7-8).

Apparently, with the loss of the northern tribes, Judah no longer had available some of the skilled fighters available in David's time. Asa does have the heavy phalanx armed with large protective shields and sporting the long spears. This army is further supported with the lighter armed men from Benjamin who use the bow. The army has an effective strength of about 580,000 men.

Asa has great foresight in preparing the inhabitants for coming warfare. The main area of fortification in the early period of Asa's rule is the Kadesh-Barnea and the area south. These fortifications originally built by David and refortified by Solomon had been overrun by the Egyptians during the rule of Rehoboam, Asa's grandfather. Now, Asa rebuilds and strengthens the area. The citadel at this site was built at the top of a low hill, and dominated the surrounding country, its lower part was oval in plan, and its measurements...40 meters by 30 meters. Its walls

were of the casement type. There was a gate at its southern side, the width of its inner entrance being 2 meters. ¹Fortifications of this nature were necessary to stop invasion from the south route. Back through ancient history prior even to the time of Moses the Egyptians and wandering tribes like the Amalekites would attack using this route. The enemy could not leave fortified positions behind so there was no choice but to assault each fortified position as it was approached.

There is a spiritual lesson in this for us. See, weakness demands, during times of peace, that the areas be fortified. Acquiring skills to overcome anger, immoral impurity, pride, weak marriages, vocational ineptness all the areas which the enemy uses to destroy us are open to fortification.

Asa's building projects in the south are completed and the army trained, now the enemy attacks.

The enemy usually attempts to overwhelm and frighten the godly. Zerah the Cushite leads thousands and thousands North in an invasion of Israelite territory. The tactics utilized have all the earmarks of an Egyptian backing. Observing Asa's strengthening of the border probably motivated the Egyptians to back the Cushite attack.

The first battles must have occurred just south of Kadesh-Barnea at the fortified positions just described. Moving north, Gerar, Ziklag, Eglon, and Lachish must have fallen to the invaders. Zerah utilizes the Philistines and the smaller towns around Gerar as staging areas in preparation for the main battle at Mareshah.

¹ The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands, Vol. 2, p. 376).

Destruction of Ziklag, and Lachish would have been time consuming for these were well fortified towns built specifically for this type of assault. Asa's army proceeds to Mareshah, to the Valley of Zarathah. The sight was terrifying. Stretched out in the valley was an armed force at least twice the size of Asa's army. Along with the vast force of Zerah's infantry was a force of 300 chariots, and cavalry. The sight must have struck terror in the heart of Asa.

This chariot force was probably fashioned after the Egyptian chariots and the tactics were the same. It is probable that the Egyptians themselves may have provided the entire force of men and chariots since the control of the Palestinian land mass was a top priority.

The Egyptian chariot was capable of 24 to 27 miles per hour, with a fire power of 8-10 arrows on target per minute, or about 3000 per minute from the three hundred chariots. It is unlikely that Asa had anything to counter the chariots since none was listed in his force. The Egyptian invasion under Rehoboam had occurred just a few years before. The chariot force was lightning fast and known for its ability to quickly overwhelm a foe.

Asa calls upon God. The God he had been serving faithfully". Asa's prayer acknowledges that there is no one like the Lord God Almighty. Asa, in his prayer reminds the Lord that His faithful people are gathered against this vast army. Defend your People O Lord.

The initial blow is struck by the Lord. The text does not say how. But whatever, it causes the army of Zerah to flee in mass confusion. God's warriors have been taught to never flee the battlefield because more are killed when fleeing than those who stand and fight.

Fearlessness is the character quality at work. Between the fearless Israelites and the power of God Almighty, the enemy is crushed.

The amount of plunder is tremendous. Calculations based on the usual amount dedicated to the Lord yields just in animals at 7000 head of cattle and 70,000 sheep and goats! The weapons

and other material goods would have been overwhelming. God generously rewards faithfulness. “And without faith is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6).

Often the Lord turns hardship, trials, and the impossible into supreme blessings when we obey and trust the Lord to provide, guide, correct, and direct our steps. “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (II Chronicles 16:9).” Like Asa, though we have our periods of unbelief and anger when we are corrected such reactions to the Lord's discipline will eventually harden our hearts and close the door to a relationship with the Lord, as it did with Asa.