

Joash

I am Joash. I became king of Judah at age 7. It was hardly a fairy tale, however. My grandmother was a mass murderer. All my brothers and cousins were killed, and I was saved only by being hidden in a bedroom with a nurse during the rampage. The priest Jehoiada protected me until the time he felt ready to have me crowned. He arranged for it to happen with the entire company of Levites standing guard.

Even so, my evil grandmother Athaliah still wanted to kill me. I guess it isn't surprising, since she was a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. While I was hidden, she had reigned over Judah for 6 years as queen mother. I still don't understand why my grandfather Jehoram married her. He must have thought it would unite the kingdoms. Well, it sort of did, because he and my father, Ahaziah, both did evil things just exactly as the northern kingdom did.

I did what was right! Well, for years it was the priest Jehoiada, acting as my prime minister, who actually made the decisions. I had learned from my nurse how he saved my life, and I knew that I was not capable of making the kind of decisions needed from a king. I was grateful to have a wonderful man to essentially be a substitute father.

He organized the leaders of the people and made a covenant that all the people would again be the LORD's people. They destroyed the temple of Baal with its altars and idols and killed Mattan, the priest of Baal. Jehoiada also set the priests, who were Levites, over the Temple in Jerusalem to perform the sacrifices with music and singing. We, meaning Jehoiada with my royal permission, repaired the Temple, using money collected from the people. There was great enthusiasm for the project by the priests and the workmen and generous donations by the people.

Eventually Jehoiada died, at the age of 130. I was approached by the officials of Judah. I was surprised that they were not in sympathy with these projects. I was used to taking advice from my elders and went along with their suggestions. We then restored the Asherah poles and other idols.

Zechariah son of Jehoiada came, by the Spirit of God, to say, "This is what God says: 'Why do you disobey the LORD's commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.'" I should have realized that this was the word of the LORD coming through the son of my long-time friend. I clearly should have repented. I am sorry to say that instead, I called for him to be stoned.

Aram, our perpetual enemy, came with only a small army, but because we had forsaken the LORD and therefore, the LORD had forsaken us, we were defeated. I was wounded and some of my officials conspired against me – can you believe it – for stoning Zechariah. And I thought I was pleasing them. They killed me in my bed.

I have been allowed to contact you to convey some important lessons. If you have children, do not only make wise decisions for them, teach them how to make wise decisions by themselves, under the guidance of the LORD. Also, if a message arrives for you purporting to come from the LORD, do not kill the messenger. Determine if it is true and repent if appropriate. And most of all, thank the LORD for the warning.