

2 Chronicles 14 — The Rest of the Seekers — Asa Cleanses the Land, the Quiet Years, and the Cry of the Weak Against the Many

2 Chronicles 14: Asa king of Judah does good and right — he tears out the foreign altars, high places, images, and groves, commands Judah to seek the LORD, and the land has rest; he fortifies cities in the quiet years, then meets Zerah the Ethiopian and his host of a thousand thousand with nothing but a prayer that the odds do not matter. Asa's reign, c. 911–870 BC (scriptural chronology; scholars often place his accession around 911 BC).

The Chronicler tells the story of the kings of Judah with one question always running underneath: did this king *seek* the LORD, or not? He is writing for a people that has already been through exile — his first readers are the returned remnant, rebuilding a small temple in a small city under a foreign empire, and they need to know how a people so recently shattered can be secure again. So the Chronicler does not spend his ink on politics. He spends it on faithfulness, and on the plain arithmetic of what faithfulness buys. Asa is his first extended case study, and chapter 14 is where the case is opened.

Hebrew Word Studies

***darash* (H1875) (דָּרַשׁ)** — **to seek, inquire of, resort to, require with care vv. 4, 7.** This is the Chronicler's signature verb, and it is the hinge of Asa's whole story. *Darash* is not a casual glance; it is the word for going to inquire of the LORD at a sanctuary, for seeking Him out with the deliberate energy you would spend tracking something down. Asa "commanded Judah to seek [*darash*] the LORD God of their fathers" (v. 4), and then, when he explains why the land is at peace, he doubles the word for emphasis: "because we have sought [*darash*] the LORD our God, we have sought [*darash*] him" (v. 7). The Chronicler builds his entire moral universe on this one verb — later he will say bluntly that Asa's successors fell "because they sought not the LORD" (a *darash* verdict), and the whole book of Chronicles could be titled by it. It is the same seeking the Lord commands everywhere: "seek, and ye shall find" (Matt. 7:7); "if thou seek him, he will be found of thee" (1 Chr. 28:9); and the Book of Mormon's tireless invitation to "search these things diligently" (3 Ne. 23:1). The word insists that finding God is active. The rest of this chapter is a demonstration of what *darash* purchases — and a warning, in verse 11, of what it feels like to seek in the one hour when everything you have is not enough.

***shaqat* (H8252) (שָׁקַט)** — **to be quiet, still, at rest, undisturbed vv. 1, 5, 6.** Three times in six verses the Chronicler reaches for *shaqat* — "the land was quiet" (v. 1), "the kingdom was quiet before him" (v. 5), and in verse 6 the rest that "the LORD had given him." *Shaqat* is the stillness of water that has stopped churning, of a land no longer shaken by war. It is a covenant word: in Judges the refrain "the land had rest [*shaqat*] forty years" marks each stretch of peace a deliverer bought, and Isaiah promises that "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness [*shaqat*] and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32:17) — which is precisely the sequence Asa lives. The quiet is not the absence of enemies; it is the effect of righteousness, the audible hush that follows when a people finally seeks the right God. And note that *shaqat* is a granted thing — the LORD "had given him rest" — never a thing achieved and owned. This is the Sabbath logic threaded through the whole covenant: the deepest rest is received, not manufactured. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28) — the same grammar, the same Giver, the same gift.

***sha'an* (H8172) / *azar* (H5826) (שָׁאֵן / עָזַר)** — **to lean on, support oneself against, rely / to help, succour v. 11.** Two verbs carry the whole prayer. *Azar*, "help," bookends Asa's cry — "it is nothing with thee to help... help us, O LORD our God" — and it is the plainest word in Hebrew for coming to someone's aid, the root behind names like Eleazar ("God has helped") and Ezra. But the heart of the verse is *sha'an*: "we rest on thee." *Sha'an* means to lean, to prop your weight against something so that if it moves, you fall. It is the word for a man leaning on his staff, or on another's arm — Naaman's king "leaned on his hand" (2 Kgs. 5:18) — and it becomes the great covenant word for reliance. Proverbs commands it directly: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not [*sha'an*] unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5) — do not put your weight on your own judgment. Isaiah rebukes those who "stay [*sha'an*] upon horses" and Egypt "but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 31:1). Asa gets it right: he leans not on his three hundred thousand, not on his new walls, not on his own understanding of the odds, but on the LORD — and in the same breath goes *out* to fight. This is the paradox the word teaches: to rest on God is not to sit still but to march against the multitude with your whole weight thrown on Him. Faith leans and advances at once.

***koach* (H3581) (כֹּחַ)** — **strength, power, ability, might v. 11.** Asa's phrase "them that have no power" is, in Hebrew, *ein koach* — literally "no strength." *Koach* is the raw word for physical might and capacity: the strength that drains out of Samson when his hair is cut (Judg. 16:19), the vigor Caleb still boasts at eighty-five ("as my strength was then, even so is my strength

now," Josh. 14:11), the might a laborer spends and a nation counts on the muster-roll. And that is the point of the confession. Asa does not tell God that Judah's *koach* is merely smaller than Zerah's; he tells God that against heaven, a million men and a handful are *equally* koach-less — the gap that terrifies a general is, to omnipotence, no gap at all. Scripture keeps insisting that God's preferred material is precisely the powerless: "he giveth power [*koach*] to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa. 40:29). It is why Gideon's army had to shrink until only three hundred remained, why the stripling warriors had to be untried boys, why Paul was told "my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). The Book of Mormon states the doctrine most plainly of all: "I give unto men weakness that they may be humble... for if they humble themselves before me... then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Eth. 12:27). No-*koach* is not the disqualification Asa feared; it is the doorway. The man who admits he has no strength of his own is exactly the man God can hand His.

From the Chapter's Architecture

There is one shadow the chapter does not yet cast, and honesty requires naming it: this same Asa, decades later in chapter 16, will face another army and this time lean on the king of Syria instead of the LORD, and a prophet will rebuke him with words that are the exact inverse of verse 11 — "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chr. 16:9). Chapter 14 is Asa at his best, and the Chronicler holds it up precisely because he knows what comes later. The man who prayed the perfect prayer of reliance still had to keep choosing it — and eventually did not. That is a warning built into the triumph: a faith that leaned once must lean again, every time the host appears.