

Who is right and who is evil in the sight of God?

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In the Book of Deuteronomy we read: **“And you shall do that which is right and good in the sight of YHWH; that it may be well with you”** (Deu 6:18; see also: Ex 15:26; Deu 12:25, 28; 13:19; 21:9).

Although it is not fully explained here what is “right in the sight of YHWH”, we gain some information from:

ויעשו בני-ישראל את-הרע בעיני יהוה, וישכחו את-יהוה אלהיהם; ויעבדו את-הבעלים ואת-האשרות.

“And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, and forgot YHWH their God, and served the Baalim and the Asheroth” (Jud 3:7; see also: Deu 4:25; Jud 2:11; 10:6; Jer 7:30).

In the Book of Kings we read:

אז יבנה שלמה במה לכמוש שקץ מואב בהר אשר על-פני ירושלים; ולמלך שקץ בני עמון. וכן עשה לכל-נשיו הנכריות מקטירות ומזבחות לאלהיהן.

“Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh the detestation of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestation of the children of Ammon. And so did he for all his foreign wives, who offered and sacrificed to their gods” (1 Ki 11:7-8).

We also read in this book:

ויעש שלמה הרע בעיני יהוה; ולא מלא אחרי יהוה כדוד אביו.

“And Solomon did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, and went not fully after YHWH, as did David his father” (1 Ki 11:6).

As he met Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite told him that because King Solomon did not do that “which was right in the eyes of God”, God will make Jeroboam king of ten Israelite tribes (1 Ki 11:29-31).

Yet years later, the same Prophet sent a message to the Israelite King - Jeroboam son of Nebat: **ואקרע את-הממלכה מבית דוד ואתנה לך; ולא-היית כעבדי דוד אשר שמר מצותי ואשר-הלך אחרי בכל-לבבו, לעשות רק הישר בעיני ותרע לעשות מכל אשר-היו לפניך; ותלך ותעשה-לך אלהים אחרים ומסכות להכעיסני, ואתי השלכת אחרי גוך.**

“And I rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to you; and yet you had not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments, and who followed Me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in My eyes; And you had done evil above all that were before you, and had gone and made you other gods, and molten images, to provoke Me, and had cast Me behind your back” (1 Ki 14:8-9).

Except for King Solomon, we do not know who were: “**all that were before you**” that apparently also did “that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH*.”

It appears that the biblical sorting of a person as “making right or evil in the sight of God” depends on a single criterion: whether he crafted or destroyed other gods.

The religious transgressions of Jeroboam son of Nebat became the yardstick for evaluating the sinfulness of the kings of Israel that reigned after him.

We read about the King Nadab the son of Jeroboam:

ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה; וילך בדרך אביו ובחטאתו, אשר החטיא את-ישראל.

“**And he did that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH*, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin**” (1 Ki 15:26).

According to the Book of Kings, except for Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, all the kings of Israel **עשו את-הרע בעיני יהוה** - “did that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH*.”



Jehu, or Jehu's ambassador, bows before the Assyrian Shalmaneser III (reigned 858-824 BC). A relief of the Black Obelisk found in Nimrud (ancient Kalhu), in northern Mesopotamia.

We read that God told Jehu the King of Israel:

ויאמר יהוה אל-יהוא, יען אשר-הטיבת לעשות הישר בעיני-ככל אשר בלבבי,

“**And *YHWH* said to Jehu: Because you have done well in doing that which is right in My eyes**” (2 Ki 10:30).

Yet we also read about Jehu:

ויהוא לא שמר ללכת בתורת-יהוה אלהי-ישראל-בכל-לבבו: לא סר מעל חטאות ירבעם אשר החטיא את-ישראל.

“**And Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of *YHWH*, the God of Israel, with all his heart; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin**” (2 Ki 10:31).

The Book of Kings informs us that except for Jehoram the son of Ahab and Hosea the son of Elah, all the kings of Israel, followed **חטאות ירבעם בן-נבט, אשר החטיא את-ישראל** - “**the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin.**”

While all the Kings of Israel did “that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH*”, or followed “the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat”, or did both, the obedience of the kings of Judah to God was more varying.

We read about the Judean king - Abijam the son of Rehoboam the son of Solomon:

וילך בכל-חטאות אביו אשר-עשה לפניו; ולא-היה לבנו שלם עם-יהוה אלהיו, כלבב דוד אביו.

“And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; and his heart was not whole with *YHWH* his God, as the heart of David his father” (1 Ki 15:3).

In contrast to of Rehoboam and his son Abijam, we read about King Asa the son of Abijam, and about Asa’s son Jehoshaphat:

**ויעש אסא הישר בעיני יהוה, כדוד אביו.
ויעבר הקדשים מן-הארץ; ויסר את-כל-הגללים אשר עשו אבתיו.**

**“And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*, as did David his father.
And he put away the *qedeshim* out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made” (1 Ki 15:11; see also: 2 Ch 14:1).**

וילך בכל-דרך אסא אביו-לא-סר ממנו: לעשות הישר בעיני יהוה.

“And he (Jehoshaphat) walked in all the way of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*” (1 Ki 22:43; 2 Ch 20:32).

The Chronicler also tells us about Jehoshaphat:

**ויהי יהוה עם-יהושפט: כי הלך בדרכי דויד אביו הראשנים, ולא דרש לבעלים.
כי לאלהי אביו דרש ובמצותיו הלך; ולא כמעשה ישראל.**

**“And *YHWH* was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not to the Baalim;
But sought to the God of his father, and walked in His commandments, and not after the doings of Israel” (2 Ch 17:3-4).**

Yet we also read in the Book of Kings: **וישלים יהושפט עם-מלך ישראל** - “And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel” (2 Ki 22:45).

The Chronicler tells us about this new relationship:

ויהי ליהושפט עשר וכבוד לרב; ויתחתן לאחאב.

“And Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage” (2 Ch 18:1).

However, the Chronicler does not tell us the name of the Omerite woman that Jehoshaphat married. Yet it is interesting that we read about **יורם בן-אחאב** - “Joram the son of Ahab” (2 Ki 8:16), and that Jehoshaphat named his son with the same name. It should also be noticed that while the writers of the Books of Kings and Chronicles usually report the names of the mothers of the kings of Judah, they do not mention the name of the mother of Jehoshaphat’s successor - Jehoram King of Judah.

The Book of Kings tells us about Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah:

וילך בדרך מלכי ישראל, כאשר עשו בית אחאב- כי בת-אחאב היתה- לו לאשה; ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה.

“And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife; and he did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH” (2 Ki 8:18; see also 2 Ch 21:6).

We are told that the son of Jehoram king of Judah was Ahaziah and we read about him:

ושם אמו עתליהו, בת-עמרי מלך ישראל - “And his mother's name was Athaliah the daughter of Omri king of Israel” (2 Ki 8:27; see also: 2 Ch 22:2).

However it appears that Jehoram passed away prior to the death of his father King Jehoshaphat, and it is therefore possible that King Ahaziah was actually the son of Jehoshaphat. If that is the case, then it appears that Jehoshaphat married Ahab's sister - Athaliah. This may also explain why this son of Jehoshaphat was named with the same name of **אחזיהו בן-אחאב - “Ahaziah the son of Ahab”** (1 Ki 22:52).

We read about Ahaziah King of Judah:

וילך בדרך בית אחאב, ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה כבית אחאב: כי חתן בית-אחאב הוא.
“And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, as did the house of Ahab; for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab” (2 Ki 8:27; see also: 2 Ch 22:3-4).

We read in the Book of Kings that after slaying Ahaziah the king of Judah, Jehu met with Ahaziah's brothers and did not leave any of them alive (2 Ki 10:13-14; see also: 2 Ch 22:8). Yet we are told that it was the mother of King Ahaziah who **“destroyed all the royal seed”** (2 Ki 11:1; see also: 2 Ch 22:10).

Miraculously, a baby was found and it was claimed that he was **יואש בן-אחזיה - “Joash the son of Ahaziah”** (2 Ki 11:2). We are told that the baby was saved and hid for six years by a lady named Jehosheba, whom the Chronicler tells us was: **אשת יהוידע הכהן - “the wife of Jehoiada the priest”** (2 Ch 22:11-12). This scenario suggests the possibility that the baby could actually have been the son of this couple.

The Chronicler also tells us:

ויזקן יהוידע וישבע ימים וימת-בן-מאה ושלושים שנה, במותו. ויקברוהו בעיר-דויד עם-המלכים:
“And Jehoiada waxed old and was full of days, and he died; a hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.
And they buried him in the city of David among the kings” (2 Ch 24:15-16).

The Bible does not report about any other priest that was buried among the kings in the city of David, but this apparently was King Joash's solution for his own quest to be buried In the city of David and with his father:

ויקברו אתו עם-אבתיו, בעיר דוד - “and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David” (2 Ki 12:22).

The Book of Kings also tells us about King Joash:

ויעש יהואש הישר בעיני יהוה כל-ימיו, אשר הורהו יהוידע הכהן.

“And Jehoash did that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH* all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him” (2 Ki 12:3; see also: 2 Ch 24:2).

Joash is the only king of Judah that learned from a priest how to do “that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*.”

About King Joash’s son - Amaziah we read:

ויעש הישר בעיני יהוה-רק לא כדוד אביו: ככל אשר-עשה יואש אביו, עשה.

“And he did that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*, yet not like David his father; he did according to all that Joash his father had done” (2 Ki 14:3).

The Chronicler tries to explain the meaning of “yet not like David his father” by telling us that:

ויעש הישר בעיני יהוה: רק לא בלבב שלם.

“And he did that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*, but not with a whole heart” (2 Ch 25:2).

Yet the Chronicler (but not the writer of the Book of Kings) also tells us about King Amaziah:

ויהי אחרי בוא אמציהו מהכות את-אדומים, ויבא את-אלהי בני שעיר, ויעמידם לו לאלהים; ולפניהם ישתחוה, ולהם יקטר.

ויחר-אף יהוה באמציהו; וישלח אליו נביא, ויאמר לו למה דרשת את-אלהי העם אשר לא-הצילו את-עמם מידך.

ויהי בדברו אליו, ויאמר לו הליועץ למלך נתנוך-חדל-לך, למה יכוד; ויחדל הנביא,

“Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and prostrated himself before them, and offered unto them.

Wherefore the anger of *YHWH* was kindled against Amaziah, and He sent to him a prophet, who said unto him: Why had you sought after the gods of the people, which have not delivered their own people out of your hand?

And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that [the king] said to him: Have we made you of the king's counsel? forbear; why should you be smitten? Then the prophet forbore” (2 Ch 25:14-16).

It appears incomprehensible that if this information is genuine, that King Amaziah will be defines as one “who did “that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*.”

Similar description about the piety of Amaziah was ascribed to his son - Azariah:

ויעש הישר בעיני יהוה, ככל אשר-עשה אמציהו אביו.

“And he (Azariah) did that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*, according to all that his father Amaziah had done” (2 Ki 15:3; see also: 2 Ch 26:4).

About Amaziah’s grandson, Jotham the son of Uzziah (=Azariah) king of Judah we are told:

ויעש הישר בעיני יהוה: ככל אשר-עשה עזיהו אביו, עשה.

“And he (Jotham) did that which was right in the eyes of YHWH; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done” (2 Ki 15:34; see also: 2 Ch 27:2).

Yet about the reign of the consecutive Judean kings from Joash to Jotham we also read:

רק הבמות לא-סרו: עוד העם מזבחים ומקטרים בבמות.

“Howbeit the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and offered in the high places” (2 Ki 12:4; 14:4; 15:4, 35).

It is therefore not surprising that we do not find about any of them the statement:

ויעש הישר בעיני יהוה, ככל אשר-עשה דוד אביו.

“And he did that which was right in the eyes of YHWH, according to all that David his father had done.”

Unlike his predecessors, Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah is not even described as acting like his father. In fact we are told:

ולא-עשה הישר בעיני יהוה אלהיו-כדוד אביו.

“And he did not do that which was right in the eyes of YHWH his God, like David his father” (2 Ki 16:2; see also: 2 Ch 28:1).

This evaluation of King Ahaz was based on his transgressions that were far greater than those of his Judean ancestors, and were practiced only by some of the kings of Israel:

וילך בדרך מלכי ישראל; וגם את-בנו העביר באש כתעבות הגוים, אשר הוריש יהוה אתם מפני בני ישראל.

ויזבח ויקטר בבמות, ועל-הגבעות ותחת כל-עץ רענן.

“And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom YHWH cast out from before the children of Israel.

And he sacrificed and offered in the high places, and on the hills, and under every leafy tree” (2 Ki 16:3-4).

The Chronicler wrote about King Ahaz:

וילך בדרכי מלכי ישראל; וגם מסכות עשה לבעלים

והוא הקטיר בגיא בן-הננס; ויבער את-בניו באש כתעבות הגוים אשר הריש יהוה מפני בני ישראל.

ויזבח ויקטר בבמות, ועל-הגבעות ותחת כל-עץ רענן.

“And he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for the Baalim.

Moreover he offered in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom YHWH cast out before the children of Israel.

And he sacrificed and offered in the high places, and on the hills, and under every leafy tree” (2 Ch 28:2-4).

In contrast to the grave transgressions of his father Ahaz, we are told about King Hezekiah:

ויעש הישר בעיני יהוה, ככל אשר-עשה דוד אביו.

“And he did that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*, according to all that David his father had done” (2 Ki 18:3; see also: 2 Ch 29:2; 31:20).

It appears that King Hezekiah earned this appraisal because of his destructive undertakings against the idols:

הוא הסיר את-הבמות, ושבר את-המצבת, וכרת את-האשרה; וכתת נחש הנחשת אשר-עשה משה, כי עד-הימים ההמה היו בני-ישראל מקטרים לו, ויקרא-לו נחשתן ביהוה אלהי-ישראל בטח; ואחריו לא-היה כמהו בכל מלכי יהודה, ואשר היו לפניו. וידבק ביהוה, לא-סר מאחריו; וישמר מצותיו, אשר-צוה יהוה את-משה.

“He removed the high places, and broke the pillars, and cut down the Asherah; and he broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for to those days the children of Israel did offer to it; and it was called Nehushtan.

He trusted in *YHWH*, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him.

For he cleaved to *YHWH*, he departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which *YHWH* commanded Moses” (2 Ki 18:4-6; see also: 2 Ch 29:5; 30:14; 31:1).

Regrettably, his son King Manasseh did not inherit from his father Hezekiah the zeal for God.

We read about King Manasseh:

ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה-כתועבת הגוים אשר הוריש יהוה מפני בני ישראל.

“And he did that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH*, after the abominations of the nations, whom *YHWH* cast out before the children of Israel” (2 Ki 21:2; see also: 2 Ch 33:2).

The writer of the Book of Kings tells us about King Manasseh:

וישב ויבן את-הבמות אשר אבד חזקיהו אביו; ויקם מזבחת לבעל, ויעש אשרה כאשר עשה אחאב מלך ישראל, וישתחו לכל-צבא השמים, ויעבד אתם. ובנה מזבחת בבית יהוה, אשר אמר יהוה בירושלם אשים את-שמי. ויבן מזבחות לכל-צבא השמים, בשתי חצרות בית-יהוה והעביר את-בנו באש, ועונן ונחש ועשה אוב וידענים: הרבה לעשות הרע בעיני יהוה-להכעיס.

וישם את-פסל האשרה אשר עשה בבית, אשר אמר יהוה אל-דוד ואל-שלמה בנו, בבית הזה ובירושלם אשר בחרתי מכל שבטי ישראל, אשים את-שמי לעולם.

“For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab king of Israel, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

And he built altars in the house of *YHWH*, whereof *YHWH* said: In Jerusalem will I put My name.

And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of *YHWH*.

And he made his son to pass through the fire, and practiced soothsaying, and used enchantments, and appointed them that divined by a ghost or a familiar spirit: he wrought much evil in the sight of *YHWH*, to provoke Him.

And he set the graven image of Asherah, that he had made, in the house of which *YHWH* said to David and to Solomon his son: In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen

out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever” (2 Ki 21:3-7; see also: 2 Ch 33:3-7).

The writer of the Book of Kings also tells us that God spoke to his Prophets:

אשר עשה מנשה מלך-יהודה התעבות האלה-הרע מכל אשר-עשו האמרי אשר לפניו; ויחטא גם-את-יהודה בגלוליו.

“**Manasseh king of Judah had done these abominations, and had done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, that were before him, and had made Judah also to sin with his idols”** (2 Ki 21:11; see also: 2 Ch 33:9).

וגם דם נקי שפך מנשה הרבה מאד, עד אשר-מלא את-ירושלם פה לפה-לבד מחטאתו אשר החטיא את-יהודה, לעשות הרע בעיני יהוה.

“**Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of YHWH”** (2 Ki 21:16).

To ascertain if King Manasseh indeed acted as Ahab king of Israel we need to read the words of the writer of the Book of Kings about Ahab:

ויקח אשה את-איזבל, בת-אתבעל מלך צידנים, וילך ויעבד את-הבעל וישתחו לו. ויקם מזבח לבעל, בית הבעל אשר בנה בשמרון.

ויעש אחאב את-האשרה; ויוסף אחאב לעשות להכעיס את-יהוה אלהי ישראל, מכל מלכי ישראל אשר היו לפניו.

“**And he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.**

And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke YHWH, the God of Israel, than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (1 Ki 16:31-33).

רק לא-היה כאחאב אשר התמכר לעשות הרע בעיני יהוה-אשר-הסתה אתו איזבל אשתו. ויתעב מאד ללכת אחרי הגללים-ככל אשר עשו האמרי אשר הוריש יהוה מפני בני ישראל.

“**But there was none like to Ahab, who did give himself over to do that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.**

And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom YHWH cast out before the children of Israel” (1 Ki 21:25-26).

Yet we are told that after hearing the words of Elijah the Tishbite:

ויהי כשמע אחאב את-הדברים האלה, ויקרע בגדיו, וישם-שק על-בשרו, ויצום; וישכב בשק, ויהלך אט.

ויהי דבר-יהוה, אל-אליהו התשבי לאמר.

הראית כי-נכנע אחאב מלפני; יען כי-נכנע מפני לא-אבי הרעה בימיו-בימי בנו אביא הרעה על-ביתו.

“**And when Ahab heard those words, he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softy.**

And the word of YHWH came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying:

See you how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house” (1 Ki 27-29).

It appears that King Manasseh’s conduct was similar to that of King Ahab to such a degree that even he finally “humbled himself greatly before God.”

The Chronicler (but not the writer of the Book of Kings) wrote that after the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon:

**וכהצר לו-חלה את-פני יהוה אלהיו; ויכנע מאד מלפני אלהי אבתיו.
ויתפלל אליו, ויעתר לו וישמע תחנתו, וישיבהו ירושלם למלכותו; וידע מנשה, כי יהוה הוא האלהים.**

“And when he was in distress, he besought YHWH his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

And he prayed to Him; and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that YHWH is the God” (2 Ch 33:12-13).

**ויסר את-אלהי הנכר ואת-הסמל מבית יהוה, וכל-המזבחות אשר בנה בהר בית-יהוה,
ובירושלם; וישלך חוצה לעיר.
ויכן (ויבן) את-מזבח יהוה, ויזבח עליו זבחי שלמים ותודה; ויאמר ליהודה לעבוד את-יהוה אלהי ישראל.
אבל עוד העם זבחים בבמות:**

“And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of YHWH, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of YHWH, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.

And he built up the altar of YHWH, and offered thereon sacrifices of peace-offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve YHWH, the God of Israel.

Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places” (2 Ch 33:15-17).

About Amon son of Manasseh King of Judah we read:

**ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה, כאשר עשה מנשה אביו.
וילך בכל-הדרך אשר-הלך אביו; ויעבד את-הגללים אשר עבד אביו וישתחו להם.
ויעזב את-יהוה אלהי אבתיו; ולא הלך בדרך יהוה.**

“And he did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, as did Manasseh his father.

And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them.

And he forsook YHWH, the God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of YHWH ” (2 Ki 21:20-22; see also: 2 Ch 33:22-23).

The Chronicler adds about Amon: **“And he humbled not himself before YHWH, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself”** (2 Ch 33:23).

In contrast to Amon transgressions, we read about his son Josiah King of Judah:

ויעש הישר בעיני יהוה; וילך בדרכי דויד אביו, ולא-סר ימין ושמאול.

“And he did that which was right in the eyes of YHWH, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left” (2 Ki 22:2; see also: 2 Ch 34:2).

וכמהו לא-היה לפניו מלך אשר-שב אל-יהוה בכל-לבבו ובכל-נפשו ובכל-מאדו-ככל תורת משה; ואחריו לא-קם כמהו.

“And like him was there no king before him, that turned to YHWH with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him” (2 Ki 23:25).

While in general Josiah’s destructive campaign against the idols was similar to that of his great-grandfather Hezekiah, its description in the Book of Kings is more detailed (2 Ki 23:4-24; see also: 2 Ch 34:3-7, 33).

There are elements in Josiah’s crusade against the adoration of idols that have never been mentioned in previous operations against graven images:

ויתץ את-בתי הקדשים אשר בבית יהוה: אשר הנשים ארגות שם בתים-לאשרה.

“And he broke down the houses of the sodomites, that were in the house of YHWH, where the women wove coverings for the Asherah” (2 Ki 23:7).

וטמא את-התפת אשר בגי בני- (בן-) הנם: לבלתי להעביר איש את-בנו ואת-בתו באש-למלך.

“And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech” (2 Ki 23:10).

וישבת את-הסוסים אשר נתנו מלכי יהודה לשמש מבא בית-יהוה, אל-לשכת נתן-מלך הסריס אשר בפרורים; ואת-מרכבות השמש שרף באש.

“And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of YHWH, by the chamber of Nethan-melech the officer, which was in the precincts; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire” (2 Ki 23:11).

ואת-המזבחות אשר על-הגג עלית אחז אשר-עשו מלכי יהודה, ואת-המזבחות אשר-עשה מנשה בשתי חצרות בית-יהוה-נתן המלך

“And the altars that were on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of YHWH, did the king break down” (2 Ki 23:12).

ואת-הבמות אשר על-פני ירושלם אשר מימין להר-המשחית, אשר בנה שלמה מלך-ישראל לעשתרת שקץ צידנים ולכמוש שקץ מואב, ולמלכם תועבת בני-עמון-טמא המלך.

“And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the detestation of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the detestation of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile” (2 Ki 23:13).

וגם את-המזבח אשר בבית-אל, הבמה אשר עשה ירבעם בן-נבט אשר החטיא את-ישראל-
גם את-המזבח ההוא ואת-הבמה נתץ; וישרף את-הבמה הדק לעפר, ושרף אשרה.
“Moreover the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of
Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he broke
down; and he burned the high place and stamped it small to powder, and burned the
Asherah” (2 Ki 23:15).

וגם את-כל-בתי הבמות אשר בערי שמרון, אשר עשו מלכי ישראל להכעיס-הסיר יאשיהו;
ויעש להם-ככל-המעשים אשר עשה בבית-אל.
“And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the
kings of Israel had made to provoke, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the
acts that he had done in Beth-el ” (2 Ki 23:19).

In contrast to King Josiah piousness, not one of his sons followed his devotion to God.

We read about his son King Jehoahaz who reigned for merely three month:

ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה, ככל אשר-עשו אבתיו.
“And he did that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH*, according to all that his fathers had
done” (2 Ki 23:32).

Apparently his brother Eliakim (named by Pharaoh; Jehoiakim) was no much better as we read:

ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה, ככל אשר-עשו אבתיו.
“And he did that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH*, according to all that his fathers had
done” (2 Ki 23:37; see also 2 Ch 36:5).

We read that king Jehoiakim's son - Jehoiachin, who similarly his uncle King Jehoahaz reigned
for just three months: ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה, ככל אשר-עשה אביו - “And he did that which
was evil in the sight of *YHWH*, according to all that his father had done” (2 Ki 24:9; see
also: 2 Ch 36:9).

We read that after deposing King Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed his
uncle Mattaniah (whom he renamed as Zedekiah) as the King of Judah. Therefore King Zedekiah
was a third son of the pious king Josiah but he was described by the writer of the Book of Kings
as:

ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה, ככל אשר-עשה יהויקים.
“And he did that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH*, according to all that Jehoiakim had
done” (2 Ki 24:19).

The Chronicler adds a unique remark about King Zedekiah:

ויעש הרע בעיני יהוה אלהיו: לא נכנע מלפני ירמיהו הנביא-מפי יהוה.
“And he did that which was evil in the sight of *YHWH* his God; he humbled not himself
before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of *YHWH*” (2 Ch 36:12).

In the Pentateuch we read repeatedly about God:

פקד עון אבות על-בנים ועל-בני בנים, על-שלשים ועל-רבעים.

“Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and upon the children's children, to the third and to the fourth generation” (Ex 34:7; see also: Ex 20:4; Num 14:18; Deu 5:9; Jer 31:28; 32:18).

Yet the information about inconsistent piousness of the kings of Judah had forced the writer (or a late scribe) of the Book of Kings to declare:

ככתוב בספר תורת-משה אשר-צוה יהוה לאמר, לא-יומתו אבות על-בנים ובנים לא-יומתו על-אבות-כי אם-איש בחטאו ימות (יומת).

“According to that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, as *YHWH* commanded saying: The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin” (2 Ki 14:6; see also: 2 Ch 25:4).

It seems that the highest grade of piousness that a king could have achieved was:

ויילך בדרכי דוד אביו - “and he walked in all the way of David his father.” Yet we never hear that David had destroyed idols or said anything about them. Furthermore, there is not a single mention of Baalim or Asheroth in all the biblical texts that mention David.

On the contrary, we read in the Book of Samuel:

וישאל דוד ביהוה לאמר, האעלה אל-פלשתים, התתנם בידי; ויאמר יהוה אל-דוד עלה, כי-נתן אתן את-הפלשתים בידך. ויבא דוד בבעל-פרצים, ויכס שם דוד, ויאמר, פרץ יהוה את-איבי לפני כפרץ מים; על-כן, קרא שם-המקום ההוא-בעל פרצים. ויעזבו שם את-עצביהם; וישאם דוד ואנשיו.

“And David inquired of *YHWH*, saying: Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?

And *YHWH* said to David: Go up; for I will certainly deliver the Philistines into your hand.

And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there; and he said: *YHWH* had broken my enemies before me, like the breach of waters. Therefore the name of that place was called Baal-perazim.

And they left their images there, and David and his men carried them away” (2 Sam 5:19-21).

This act of David is not unlike that of King Amaziah (2 Ch 25:14-16). Yet the Chronicler, who was disturbed by the implication of this information about David, rushed to explain:

ויעזבו שם את-אלהיהם; ויאמר דוד, וישרפו באש.

“And they left their gods there; and David gave commandment, and they were burned with fire” (1 Ch 14:12).



Shalmaneser III's (859–824 BC) Kurkh Monolith names King Ahab.

As indicated above one of the most abominable biblical kings was the King of Israel - Ahab. We read that Jezebel arranged the killing of Naboth, so that her husband Ahab would be able to take his vineyard. It is not claimed that Ahab himself killed Naboth or gave orders to kill him. In fact it is not even certain that Ahab was aware of his wife scheming. Yet the Prophet Elijah the Tishbite said to Ahab: **“Had you killed, and also taken possessions?”** (1 Ki 21:19).

On the other hand we read that after King David impregnated Uriah's wife:

ויהי בבקר, ויכתב דוד ספר אל-יואב; וישלח ביד אוריה.

“And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah” (2 Sam 11:14).

In this letter David gave an order to Joab:

ויכתב בספר לאמר: הבו את-אוריה אל-מול פני המלחמה החזקה, ושבתם מאחריו ונכה ומת.

“And he wrote in the letter, saying: Set you Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire you from him, that he may be smitten, and die” (2 Sam 11:15).

After that event the Prophet Nathan told David:

מדוע בזית את-דבר יהוה, לעשות הרע בעיניו (בעיני), את אוריה החתי הכית בחרב, ואת-אשתו לקחת לך לאשה; ואתו הרגת בחרב בני עמון.

“Wherefore had you despised the word of YHWH, to do that which is evil in My sight? Uriah the Hittite you had smitten with the sword, and his wife you had taken to be your wife, and him you had slain with the sword of the children of Ammon” (2 Sam 12:9).

Yet the biblical evaluation of Ahab is: **ויעש אחאב בן-עמרי הרע בעיני יהוה-מכל אשר לפניו** - **“And Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH above all that were before him”** (1 Ki 16:30).

While one chapter earlier we read about King David:

אשר עשה דוד את-הישר בעיני יהוה; ולא-סר מכל אשר-צוהו כל ימי חייו-רק בדבר אוריה
החתי.

“because David did that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*, and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Ki 15:5).

It seems that our current sense of decency and righteousness had much changed since the biblical times. If the Bible would have to be rewritten today, then not David but Josiah King of Judah seems to be the utmost example of a man that “**did that which was right in the eyes of *YHWH*.**”