

## Who was Athaliah? by Minister Lori Younge

### What's in a name?

Not all names that sound cool or pretty have meanings that match their “attractiveness”. What sounds like a pretty name can be one that has a “negative” meaning. **Athaliah** is one such name. In ancient (Biblical) Jewish naming practices, a name given was connected to the situation/circumstance surrounding the child's birth. It was also typical for the mother to name the child, however the child could be named by the father or someone else. For an example, let's take a look at how Jacob's youngest son was named. Genesis 35:16-18 says,

*<sup>16</sup> And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. <sup>17</sup> And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. <sup>18</sup> And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.*

Benoni is a compound name that means “son of my sorrow”. (Ben = “son” + -oni refers to sorrow.) Benjamin is also a compound name that means “son of the right hand”. (-jamin refers to right hand/right side.) Rachel's name choice described the current situation, while Jacob's name choice described the position the child was going to have. Every time Benoni's name would've been called, all would be reminded that he was part of a sorrowful situation--a circumstance that his mother didn't survive. Every time Benjamin's name was called, it was being declared who he was/the position he would now have. It is very critical what you name a child. Every time the child's name is called, a declaration is being made over his/her life. Purpose and destiny are the things that are in a name.

[For those of you that have children, how did you choose their names? Also, if you knew then what you know now, would you give the children the same names?]

The name **Athaliah**, like the name examples above, is a compound name. **Athaliah** means “afflicted of the Lord”. (The name comes from the two parts Athlai = “whom Jehovah afflicts” + Jah, a shortened form of Jehovah) Now knowing the meaning of the name, my question would be, ‘What was she afflicted with?’ The current definition of the word ‘afflict’, according to Dictionary.com, is *to distress with mental or bodily pain; trouble greatly or grievously*. An obsolete definition says *to overthrow; defeat*. Let's take a look into the life of **Athaliah**, as it is recorded in the Bible.

### First Mention

The first time **Athaliah** was mentioned in the Bible occurs in 2 Kings 8:26. It says,

*Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was **Athaliah**, the daughter of Omri king of Israel.*

Here, she is introduced to us as the mother of King Ahaziah (which reigned in Jerusalem) and as the daughter of King Omri of Israel.

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### A Bit of History and Lineage

- Who was King Ahaziah (that reigned one year in Jerusalem)?  
King Ahaziah of Jerusalem was the sixth king/ruler of the *Southern Kingdom of Judah*. (He was also called Jehoahaz.) Ahaziah reigned for only one year in Jerusalem because he was killed by Jehu while visiting wounded King Joram (a.k.a Jehoram) of the Northern Kingdom. See 2 Kings 9:16, 22-24, 27-28. (Jehu was a captain of the host of Israel who was anointed king by the son of a prophet at the command of Elisha the prophet. See 2 Kings 9:1-6.)
  
- Who was Omri King of Israel?  
King Omri was the seventh king of the *Northern Kingdom of Israel*. His accomplishments include building the capital city of Samaria and possessing great military power. His major issue was that he led Israel into idolatry. See 1 Kings 16:16-28. He reigned for a total of 12 years--six years in the capital of Tirzah and six years in the capital of Samaria. Omri was the father of King Ahab who took over when Omri died. This makes King Omri Athaliah's grandfather.
  
- How is **Athaliah** connected to the two kingdoms?  
You may have noticed that **Athaliah's** fathers were kings of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) while her son was a king of Judah (the Southern Kingdom). **Athaliah's** father, King Ahab, gave her to King Jehoram (of the Southern Kingdom) for a wife. See 2 Kings 8:16-18. [This marriage was arranged as a political move on the part of King Jehoshaphat, **Athaliah's** father-in-law, to strengthen the connection between the two kingdoms by forming an alliance. Unfortunately, it turned out to be one of the worst things that could've happened to the kingdom.]

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*After the death of King Solomon, the (united) kingdom of Israel split into two separate nations. This was the result of a revolt of ten northern tribes against being ruled by King Rehoboam. 1 Kings 12:1-22:53. The ten tribes didn't want to be ruled by King Rehoboam because he decided to follow the counsel of the young men instead of the old ones, by increasing an already heavy burden put on them by his father. 1 Kings 12:1-19.*

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| <b>Kingdom:</b>                                | <b>Northern Kingdom of Israel</b><br>(see 1 Kings 12:20)   | <b>Southern Kingdom of Judah</b><br>(see 1 Kings 12:17, 21)   |
| <b>Tribes:</b>                                 | Reuben                      Gad<br>Issachar                    Asher<br>Zebulun                    Ephraim<br>Dan                            Manasseh<br>Naphtali                    (Levi)  | Judah<br>Benjamin   |
| <b>Capital(s):</b>                             | 1. Shechem (built by King Jeroboam)<br>2. Penuel?? (built by King Jeroboam; see 2 Kings 12:25)<br>3. Tirzah<br>4. Samaria  | Jerusalem   |
| <b>Kings/Rulers<br/>(Chronological Order):</b> | 1. Jeroboam (22 years - <i>servant of King Solomon</i> ; see 2 Kings 11:26)<br>2. Nadab (2 years)<br>3. Baasha (24 years)<br>4. Elah (2 years)<br>5. Zimri (7 days)<br>6. Tibni (N.A.)<br>7. Omri (12 years)<br>8. Ahab (22 years)<br>9. Ahaziah (2 years)<br>10. Jehoram (12 years)<br>11. Jehu (28 years)<br>12. Jehoahaz (17 years)<br>13. Jehoash (16 years)<br>14. Jeroboam II (41 years)<br>15. Zechariah (6 months)<br>16. Shallum (1 month)<br>17. Menahem (10 years)<br>18. Pekahiah (2 years)<br>19. Pekah (8 years)<br>20. Hoshea (9 years) | 1. Rehoboam (17 years - <i>son of King Solomon</i> )<br>2. Abijam (3 years)<br>3. Asa (41 years)<br>4. Jehoshaphat (25 years)<br>5. Jehoram (8 years)<br>6. Ahaziah/Jehoahaz (1 year)<br>7. <b>Athaliah</b> (6 years - <i>only woman</i> )<br>8. Joash (40 years)<br>9. Amaziah (29 years)<br>10. Uzziah (52 years)<br>11. Jotham (16 years)<br>12. Ahaz (16 years)<br>13. Hezekiah (29 years)<br>14. Manasseh (55 years)<br>15. Amon (2 years)<br>16. Josiah (31 years)<br>17. Jehoahaz (3 months)<br>18. Eliakim/Jehoiakim (11 years)<br>19. Jehoiachin (3 months)<br>20. Mattaniah/Zedekiah (11 years) |
| <b>Dates:</b>                                  | 930-722 B.C. (208 years)   | 930-586 B.C. (344 years)  |
| <b>Ending of the Kingdom:</b>                  | Israel is taken to Assyria by King Shalmaneser   | Carried off captive to Babylon King Nebuchadnezzar  |

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### Athaliah's Story

There are two accounts of **Athaliah's** story found in the Bible:

| <p style="text-align: center;"> 2 Kings 11<br/>(According to Jewish tradition,<br/>Jeremiah or other prophets authored 2 Kings.)</p>  | <p style="text-align: center;"> 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21<br/>(According to Jewish tradition, Ezra authored 2 Chronicles.)</p>  |
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| <p><sup>1</sup>And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.</p> <p><sup>2</sup>But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;</p> <p><sup>6</sup>And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down.</p> <p><sup>7</sup>And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD about the king.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 2 Kings 11)</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>22</b></p> <p><sup>10</sup>But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah.</p> <p><sup>11</sup>But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not.</p> <p><sup>12</sup>And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>23</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup>And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him.</p> <p><sup>2</sup>And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the doors;</p> <p><sup>5</sup>And a third part shall be at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD.</p> <p><sup>6</sup>But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they are holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the LORD.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21)</p> |

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<sup>8</sup>And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in.

<sup>9</sup>And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

<sup>10</sup>And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that were in the temple of the LORD.

<sup>11</sup>And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple.

<sup>12</sup>And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

<sup>13</sup>And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, Treason.

<sup>15</sup>But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD.

<sup>16</sup>And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.

(📖 2 Kings 11)

<sup>7</sup>And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever else cometh into the house, he shall be put to death: but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out.

<sup>8</sup>So the Levites and all Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go out on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses.

<sup>9</sup>Moreover Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's, which were in the house of God.

<sup>10</sup>And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about.

<sup>11</sup>Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

<sup>12</sup>Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD:

<sup>13</sup>And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of musick, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason.

<sup>14</sup>Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there.

(📖 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21)

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<sup>17</sup>And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people; between the king also and the people.

<sup>18</sup>And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.

And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

<sup>19</sup>And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

<sup>20</sup>And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet: and they slew Athaliah with the sword beside the king's house.

<sup>21</sup>Seven years old was Jehoash when he began to reign.

( 2 Kings 11)

<sup>16</sup>And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD's people.

<sup>17</sup>Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.

<sup>18</sup>Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David.

<sup>19</sup>And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none which was unclean in any thing should enter in.

<sup>20</sup>And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom.

<sup>21</sup>And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

( 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21)

**Queen Athaliah**

Queen **Athaliah** was the seventh ruler of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, succeeding her son King Ahaziah who reigned a short while. She also had a brother, King Ahaziah of the Northern Kingdom, who was her father's successor (see 1 Kings 22:51). **Athaliah** was the daughter of King Ahab. One could easily assume that Queen Jezebel (Ahab's wife) was her mother, but there is the possibility that Jezebel was not **Athaliah's** mother. King Ahab had to have other wives (as did his fathers) because it is recorded in 2 Kings 10:1 that Ahab had 70 sons. So, one of those women could've been her mother. Nonetheless, being Ahab's daughter, **Athaliah** adopted the ways of Baal worship practiced by the Northern Kingdom and introduced it to the Southern Kingdom via her marriage to King Jehoram. Her marriage to King Jehoram did two things:

1. It helped to create an alliance between the two kingdoms.
2. It allowed King Ahab to have lineage in both kingdoms.

At the death of her son, King Ahaziah, **Athaliah** didn't do what most mothers of kings would do--mourn the loss of her son and see one of her grandsons take the throne as the next king. Instead, **Athaliah** kills all of her grandsons (the seed royal) except for one who was hidden from her by Jehosheba (or Jehoshabeath). [Jehosheba was the daughter of King Jehoram of the Southern Kingdom, and wife of the high priest Jehoiada, together with whom she saved her brother's son Joash from **Athaliah**.] After the killing, she seized the throne and reigned for just six years. Had **Athaliah** been successful in killing every last one of her grandsons, she would've ended the line through which the Messiah would come. Remember, her son was a descendant of King David. God promised King David that his throne will be established forever (see 2 Samuel 7:12-13). Of course God would not allow **Athaliah** to carry out the enemy's plan and worked through Jehosheba for His (God's) will to be done.

**Athaliah** was dethroned when her remaining grandson was anointed and crowned king. Her death followed shortly after.

What kind of woman must you be in order for you to have "all" of your grandsons (seed royal) killed? [Being that **Athaliah** was a Baal worshipper, she was used to death as it was a practice of the religion to burn infants alive as a sacrificial offering to the deity. Horrific screams and the stench of charred human flesh would surround the altar.] Her religious practices desensitized her to any conviction of committing such sin. Her narrow minded focus on (political) power caused her to be afflicted of greed and jealousy and propelled her to carry out an act that was already done in her heart. She was out of order in her thinking and in her actions.

The Word of God says in Romans 6:23a, "The wages of sin is death;" What is the first thing God mentioned when giving Moses the commandments? Exodus 20:1-3 says,

*<sup>1</sup>And God spake all these words, saying, <sup>2</sup>I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. <sup>3</sup>Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Since Athaliah was directly involved in leading the people of the Southern Kingdom into idolatry, she was bound to deal with the consequences of her actions.