

BAASHA

MAJORING IN MINORS

Text: 1 Kings 15:33; 16:7

The heart of life's journey is making the appropriate decisions from one end of life to the other. Life, we might say, is one long series of decisions. These choices can be classified as big and little decisions, as major and minor choices.

The big decisions are made first, and they govern the making of the little ones. Some would try to make the process vice versa, depending on the little decisions to take care of the big ones. Life's choices will not work that way. For example, think of the daily matter of eating, a minor decision. When a person decides to live his life in harmony with God's will—a big decision—he then will make the minor decision to regulate his eating habits by God's will. The big decision affects and guides the making of the small ones. However, if a person eats as he desires, fulfilling his lusts and appetites, he has made his stomach his god. He has allowed a minor decision to become a major one. His supreme choices are controlled by small ones. If a breakdown occurs in what governs our decisions—if we major in minors—we will have trouble in living and trouble with God.

I have read of a man who sold peanuts for a living. He had a little stand on the corner of a street in a major city. Every day, from early morning until late evening, he sold his packages of peanuts to those who passed by. The fact is, he made a good living at what he was doing. Toward the end of his life, he had a fortune put away from his peanut business. Now, think about this man. I do not know much else about

him, but let us say that what I read about him was all that could be said about him—he just gave his life to selling peanuts on the corner of a street. He never became a Christian, never worshiped God, never had a Christian family. If you asked him why he never became a Christian or lived for God, he would answer, "I was just too busy selling peanuts." Here would be a man who had missed the purpose of life, who had let the smaller decisions of life erase the big decisions. The big choice of serving God had been superseded in his mind by the smaller choice of making a living.

A reversal of values—focusing on minor decisions—is illustrated by the reign of Baasha, the third king of Israel. He reigned from 909 to 886 B.C., when Asa was on the throne of Judah (15:33). Baasha, the only Northern king from the tribe of Issachar, made his capital at Tirzah and began the second dynasty of Israel. He came to the throne by assassination. Apparently, he was a general in Nadab's army, but he revolted against him, killed him, and took the throne. His first act as king was to annihilate the house of Jeroboam, thus fulfilling Ahijah's prophecy:

And it came about, as soon as he was king, he struck down all the household of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam any persons alive, until he had destroyed them, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite (15:29).

This massacre was a ferocious act and later was condemned by God (16:7). Yes, it had been prophesied that this would take place, and Baasha was an instrument of execution in the hand of God.

Nevertheless, God held Baasha responsible for what he did, the way he did it, and the motivation behind his actions. His fulfilling this prophecy reminds us of the mystery that often surrounds divine prophecy and its fulfillment. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be crucified by the hands of lawless men (Isaiah 53:7–9), but those lawless men were held responsible for their wicked deed (Acts 2:23).

Baasha's twenty-four years on the throne offer nothing to commend him. He wasted the years God gave him to be king. He was a murderer—not only of men, but also of opportunity. He had the power to influence and the authority to command. He had all eyes looking his way, but his life went down in God's Word as a failure because he chose wrongly in the big decisions of life. His little decisions had no compass, no guiding star. He chose to make them with unaided human wisdom, based on selfish whims. The result was a misdirected life—a life over which to mourn, not rejoice.

Look carefully at the big decisions that Baasha failed to make. Consider how this failure affected the very core of his life.

ABOUT GOD'S WORD

The first big decision Baasha had to make dealt with God's will. There must have been times earlier in his life when his deeds and thoughts were questioned by God's prophets, but any warnings or admonitions were unheeded by Baasha. He heard but did not heed; he observed but did not obey.

Particular mention is made of a time, maybe near the end of his life, when he was rebuked by the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani (16:1–7). In his message, Jehu fearlessly prophesied that God would cut off the house of Baasha as He had the household of Jeroboam (16:3, 4). The relatives of Baasha, he said, would fall in the city and in the field, and their corpses would be left unburied:

Anyone of Baasha who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat (16:4).

Baasha had spurned the words of the Lord, and his dynasty would not continue. No intimation is found in the text that Baasha responded fa-

vorably to this prophecy. It must be that he turned a hardened heart toward it as he had toward all other prophetic messages he had heard.

What would have happened if Baasha had followed God's Word from the start to the finish of his reign? God would have honored him, and we probably would be holding him up as one of the great men of the Old Testament. Having made the major decision to follow God's Word, all of his other decisions would have been sanctified and purified by that decision. His life would have been dedicated to worshiping Jehovah, preaching His will, and obeying it.

The foundation of life is deciding to obey God's Word, regardless of what that means and regardless of where it may lead. Such a decision will not only be profitable to the one who makes it and to the world around him or her, but living for God will make for an exciting life! How loaded with adventure were the lives of the prophets as they obeyed God's will! They saw lives changed for the good, brought whole nations closer to God, and left a living legacy that affects even the world of our day. On the other hand, ignoring this decision sends a person down "Disobedient Street" in the city of Sin, with only foolish, human judgment as his companion. His life will be filled with difficulties that only obedience to God's will could eliminate. Either Baasha never saw the importance of this decision, or he refused to make it.

REGARDING GOD'S WAY

The second big decision Baasha had to make was a decision about Jeroboam's system of religion. Would he let it stand, or would he remove it? Would he continue in Jeroboam's way, or would he return to God's way? This decision would be a major one and would require a heart and mind devoted to God. It would take an extraordinary man to lead a nation away from error and back to God. Would Baasha be that man? Nadab had not seen the need to do it. Would Baasha?

Our hearts break as we read of Baasha's decision. The angels wept and the demons danced with glee, for he decided to walk in the ways of Jeroboam and to continue with a man's religion instead of God's.

And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin (15:34).

All people have Baasha's decision to make. The choice is always there, looking us in the face. Some never see it. Some see it for a fleeting moment but look away to other concerns. Some see the choice, make a decision, and allow their resolve to color the rest of their lives.

The devil accomplishes more when he is robed as an angel of light than when he walks about as a roaring lion. We can recognize and run from a roaring lion. However, we say of a beautiful mock-angel of light, "His message has to be right." As an angel of light, the devil deceives; as a roaring lion, he viciously devours. When the devil comes to us as an angel of light, we forget in his presence to study the Scriptures and see what God says and wants (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). We can follow such an angel of light into a manmade religion, into disobedience to God.

Baasha failed in his second big decision. How about us? What will we do about the decision regarding God's way?

CONCERNING GOD'S PEOPLE

Baasha's third big decision was a decision regarding God's people. How would he treat them? Would he seek to unite them, or would he continue in war with them? We do not have to read far into the story of Baasha's reign to see what he did:

Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days (15:16).

God's man will love God's people. He will not intentionally be a peace-breaker; on the contrary, he will continually strive to be a peace-maker (Matthew 5:9).

Baasha maintained the rift between the nations and even worked to increase it. Bothered by the fact that sincere Israelites, the worshipers of Jehovah, were returning to Jerusalem, Baasha attempted to blockade the border. He put up fortifications at Ramah (15:17), a city located only about four miles from Jerusalem. He sought to control the north-south traffic into Jerusalem. Baasha was a strong military leader, and with the strong arm of the flesh, he was able to come near Jerusalem without interference by Asa, the

king of Judah. Asa was unable to deter him, because he would not ask for God's help. Finally, contrary to God's will, Asa turned to Benhadad I, the Syrian king of Damascus, for assistance. Asa gave Benhadad I silver and gold to come and fight with him. His coming relieved Asa. Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and the store cities were taken by the Syrian king.

These military successes of Benhadad I made Baasha turn away from Ramah. Baasha seems to have made no further efforts to control Ramah and prevent defections to Jerusalem. No doubt, his decision was made because of a stronger foe, not because of a change of heart toward God's people.

The text gives no indication that Baasha ever sought peace with the Southern Kingdom. He had espoused a man's religion and his commitment had produced division, not unity, among God's people.

CONCLUSION

No one can be a genuine child of God if he despises God's children. Two of life's biggest decisions must be choosing God's religion and choosing God's family. These choices will automatically provide parameters and direction for smaller decisions. We will no longer have to ask, "What will we do on Sunday?" These little decisions flow out of the big decisions made about God's religion and God's family.

I have had students in my classes who seemed to be devout Christians. My impression was that they would serve God wherever they went. Years later, I have preached in areas where some of these students have chosen to live after their graduation. Having missed them at worship services, I have inquired about them and have been told that they never attend the services of the church. That kind of answer is always a big disappointment to me, as it would be to any preacher. One cannot be an isolated Christian. God's church is a community of believers. It is made up of people who worship together, love each other, and share each others' burdens and joys.

A big decision after becoming a Christian is the decision to live daily as one of God's people. Some make the second decision well, and some make it poorly; Baasha did not make it at all. Those who choose to live for Christ are influ-

enced by that choice in all of their living; those who fail to make the right choice are hurt and hampered by that failure.

Baasha reigned twenty-four years as king of Israel. When you ask Bible students, "Who was Baasha?" most can only answer, "He was one of the kings of Israel." Perhaps they only know that much about him because they memorized the lists of kings, not because of anything outstanding he did that should be remembered. Yes, he had his opportunity, but he allowed it to slip by because he ignored the big decisions of life.

We are not told how Baasha died. We read, "And Baasha slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah. . . ." (16:6). His life was in-

significant, and we have no real interest in his death. He died as he had lived, outside the circle of God's will. All the evidence indicates that he missed the truth that real life is predicated upon making wisely the big decisions regarding God's Word, God's way, and God's people. When these decisions are not made wisely, life has no abiding foundation, and a life without the right foundation will sooner or later crumble. ■

*Lesson To Be Learned:
The house of life
must be built
on the right foundation.*

The Standard

"The first king of the northern kingdom, Jeroboam, 'made two golden calves' to keep people from reverting to worshiping at Jerusalem at feast time (1 Kings 12:27, 28). All eighteen of Jeroboam's successors continued to ignore Yahweh and worship these idols instead. Thus, the refrain keeps repeating itself through Israel's history: 'He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit' (1 Kings 15:34; 16:19, 26, 31, etc.)."

Old Testament Highlights: Survey of the Hebrew Scriptures

Jim Townsend

©Copyright, 1997, 1998 by Truth for Today
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED