

The Death of Josiah

2 Kings 23:29-35

2 Chronicles 35:20 – 36:4

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Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt was marching his army northeast toward the Euphrates River in order to aid the king of Assyria in battle. As he was passing by, King Josiah of Judah marched out to intercept him. They met at Megiddo.

Neco sent a message to Josiah. "I don't have any quarrel with you. My battle is elsewhere, and God is with me. Interfere and you will be destroyed."

God had indeed set Neco on his current course, but Josiah refused to listen. He disguised himself and led his army into battle on the plain of Megiddo. He was struck by multiple arrows. His officers took him back to Jerusalem, where he died. All of Judah mourned Josiah's passing.

The prophet Jeremiah composed laments in memory of Josiah and his acts of faithfulness to the Law of the Lord. For many years to come the people of Judah sang these sad songs to commemorate their last good king.

After the death of Josiah, his son Jehoahaz was made king. His reign was very brief. Pharaoh Neco dethroned him and took him to Egypt in chains. There Jehoahaz died. Neco installed Eliakim, another of Josiah's sons, to reign in place of his father. To express his authority over Judah's king, Neco changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Neco also imposed a substantial levy on Judah. Jehoiakim had to tax his people dearly in order to pay this tribute to Egypt. He required everyone to pay in proportion to their wealth.