

King Josiah and the Book of the Law

A play based on portions of 2 Kings 22 and 23

Characters: Narrator
King Josiah
Shaphan (the scribe)
Hilkiah (the high priest)
Huldah (a prophetess)
People of Jerusalem (2-3 to represent a crowd)

Option: use robes or T-shirts as costumes, and a crown for King Josiah. Shaphan could carry a pen or tablet to show that he is a scribe. Huldah might have a shawl and/or a head scarf. Props should include include a large scroll of rolled up paper to represent the Book of the Law.

There are three scenes in this play. The first one takes place inside the king's palace. The second takes place in the house of Huldah the prophetess. The third happens outside the house of the temple (the house of the Lord) in Jerusalem.

Scene I – King Josiah's Palace

Josiah sits on a chair in the center of the stage, and Shaphan stands in front of him. The narrator stands off to one side.

Narrator: Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan, the scribe, to the house of the Lord.

Josiah: Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the Lord. Let them give it to those who are in the house of the Lord doing the work, to repair the damages of the house.

Shaphan exits.

Narrator: Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David. He did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

Shaphan enters, carrying a large scroll. He crosses the stage to stand before the king.

Narrator: Shaphan the scribe returned from the house of the Lord to report to the king.

Shaphan: Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the Lord. *(pause)* Hilkiah the priest told me that he had found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord. And he has given me the book.

Shaphan opens the scroll and mimes reading aloud.

Narrator: And Shaphan read it before the king. Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes.

As the narrator speaks, Josiah stands and tears open his robe in distress. Then he motions vigorously to someone offstage. Hilkiah the priest enters and stands beside Shaphan.

Narrator: Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Shaphan the scribe, and some other men to go ask a certain prophetess about the will of the Lord.

Josiah: Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and all of Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.

Hilkiyah and Shaphan exit quickly. After a brief pause, Josiah and the Narrator follow them.

Scene II – House of the Prophetess Huldah

Huldah sits on a low stool in the middle of the stage. The narrator stands off to one side.

Narrator: So Hilkiyah the priest, Shaphan the scribe, and the others went to Huldah the prophetess as the king had commanded.

Hilkiyah and Shaphan enter and speak to Huldah.

Hilkiyah: The king asks if you would inquire of the Lord for him, for the people, and for all Judah concerning the Book of the Law which has been found in the house of the Lord.

Huldah: Thus says the Lord God of Israel, “Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read—because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.”

But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, in this manner you shall speak to him, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Concerning the words which you have heard—because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before Yehowah when you heard what I spoke and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you. Surely, therefore, you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.”

Hilkiyah and Shaphan exit.

Narrator: And they went and told the king all that Huldah the prophetess had said.

Scene III – Outside the Temple in Jerusalem

Josiah stands in the center of the stage with Hilkiah and Shaphan near him. The People of Jerusalem stand a little further away, and the Narrator stands off to one side. Josiah holds a large scroll and as the Narrator speaks, he opens it and mimes reading aloud.

Narrator: Then the king sent to gather all the elders of Judah to him. And he went up to the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord. Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before Yehowah.

Josiah hands the scroll to Hilkiah and steps forward, raising both his arms up and looking up.

Josiah: Lord God of our fathers, I promise to follow You and to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, with all my heart and with all my soul, to perform all the words of this covenant that are written in this Book of the Law.

The People of Jerusalem, along with Hilkiah and Shaphan put their hands over their hearts.

Narrator: And all the people took their stand for the covenant. (*Pause, while people lower their hands.*) Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and his followers.

Hilkiah steps forward as Josiah speaks to him.

Josiah: Bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the other false gods. Burn them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carry their ashes to Bethel. Burn the wooden images in the house of the Lord and the horses and chariots that were dedicated to the sun by the kings of Judah. Crush the altars on the roof, in the upper chamber of Ahaz and the altars which Manasseh had made. Pulverize them all and throw their dust into the Brook Kidron.

Hilkiah hands the scroll back to the king and exits.

Narrator: Then the king commanded all the people, saying...

Josiah: Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.

Narrator: Surely such a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the Lord in Jerusalem.

The king and Shaphan exit on one side of the stage. The People of Jerusalem exit on the other side. The Narrator moves to stand in the center of the otherwise empty stage.

Narrator: Now before Josiah there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.