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Telephone: 503 292 4352

• Internet: www.askelm.com •

E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

Israel and Judah: 20. Civil War and Division

by David Sielaff, October 2016

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for October 2016](#)

Israel and Judah: 20

Civil War
and
Division

THE SITUATION: Solomon has died. He left the kingdom of Israel with wealth and power.^a When great rulers die, subservient foreign nations test the new ruler. They delay payment of their tribute, which often puts the treasury of the new great ruler into deficit, especially if many nations stop paying tribute. Solomon's son Rehoboam has ascended the throne. He has many challenges, foreign and domestic. God has plans for the people of Israel because of sins, particularly the idolatry of their leaders.

It seems that few people ever followed God's instructions, even when He spoke to them personally through prophets. When they heard, few obeyed. Such is the subject of this article.

King David listened, most of the time, but his son Solomon did not listen at the end of his life. What follows is an account of others who did not obey God's explicit, unambiguous instructions. As you read, perhaps you will say to yourself as I did: "How could they be so stupid?" You would think when YHWH (the supreme God) speaks, they would listen to His clear instructions, as all Israelites knew them in the time of David, Solomon, and the later kings. They were all without excuse because Moses wrote long before:

"Behold, to Yahweh your Elohim belong the heavens and the heavens of the heavens, the earth and all that is in it. But Yahweh was attached to your fathers to love them, so that He chooses their seed after them, you, out of all the peoples, as it is this day. Hence you will circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and you should no longer stiffen your neck.

For Yahweh your Elohim, He is the Elohim of elohim [God of gods] and the Lord of lords, the El, the great, the masterful and the fear inspiring One, Who neither shows partiality nor takes a bribe."

• *Deuteronomy 10:14–17, Concordant Literal Version*

Israel has had no excuse for disobedience, except for one thing. God has blinded them to the clear understanding available to them. God has blinded them since the time of Moses (2 Corinthians 3:13–15), up to

^a The last installment was "[Israel and Judah: 19. Solomon's Glory and Death.](#)"

our time today. Although more and more Jews are learning about Jesus their Messiah (Christ) and Savior, most will not learn the truth until God opens their eyes and understanding (Zechariah 12:10–13:2).

King David had two titles, King of Judah and King of Israel, with separate crownings and anointings for him to be King of a united Israel. Solomon ruled both. Rehoboam expected to be king of a united kingdom after Solomon's death (1 Kings 11:43; 2 Chronicles 9:31). God had other plans (1 Kings 11:29–39). Next is the tale of the breakup of the union into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

TEXT: Israel's Rejection of Rehoboam as King

1 Kings 12:1–17

¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

² It came to be as Jeroboam son of Nebat heard it, when he was *still* in Egypt to which he had fled away from the face of king Solomon, that Jeroboam returned from Egypt. ³ So they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and all *the assembly of* Israel came, and they spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

⁴ **“Your father, he made our yoke harsh. As for you now, lighten the harsh service of your father and his heavy yoke that he put on us, and we shall serve you.”**

⁵ He replied to them, **“Go away for three days, and then return to me.”** So the people went away.

⁶ Then king Rehoboam consulted the elders who had been standing before his father Solomon while he was alive, saying, **“How are you counseling to render a reply to this people?”**

⁷ They spoke to him, saying,

“Should you become a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will become your servants all their days.”

⁸ But he forsook the counsel of the elders with which they had counseled him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who were standing before him. ⁹ He asked them,

“What are you counseling we should render as a reply to this people who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us.’”

¹⁰ Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying,

“Thus you should answer this people who have spoken to you, saying, Your father, he made our yoke heavy. As for you, lighten it for us. Thus you should speak to them, My small finger, it is thicker than my father's

2 Chronicles 10:1–17

¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

² It came to be as Jeroboam son of Nebat heard it when he was in Egypt to which he had fled away from the face of king Solomon, that Jeroboam returned from Egypt. ³ So they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and all Israel came, and they spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

⁴ **“Our father, he made our yoke harsh. As for you now, lighten the harsh service of your father, and his heavy yoke that he put on us, and we shall serve you.”**

⁵ He replied to them, **“Go away for three days and then return to me.”** So the people went away.

⁶ Then king Rehoboam consulted the elders who had been standing before his father Solomon while he was alive, saying, **“How are you counseling to render a reply to this people?”**

⁷ They spoke to him, saying,

“Should you become goodhearted to this people today so that you please them and speak good words to them, then they will become your servants all their days.”

⁸ But he forsook the counsel of the elders with which they had counseled him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who were standing before him. ⁹ He asked them,

“What are you counseling we should render as a reply to this people who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us.’”

¹⁰ Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying,

“Thus you should answer the people who have spoken to you, saying, Your father, he made our yoke heavy. As for you, lighten it for us. Thus you should *answer* them, My small finger, it is thicker than my father's

waist. ¹¹ And now my father, he laded a heavy yoke on you; yet I, I shall add to your yoke. My father, he flogged you with whips; yet I, I shall flog you with scorpions.”

¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had spoken, saying, “Return to me on the third day.”

¹³ Yet the king answered the people obstinately and forsook the counsel of the elders who had counseled him. ¹⁴ He spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying,

“My father, he made heavy your yoke; yet I, I shall add to your yoke. My father, he flogged you with whips; yet I, I shall flog you with scorpions.”

¹⁵ The king did not hearken to the people, for the circumstance had come from Yahweh, that He might carry out His word that Yahweh had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat by means of Ahijah the Shilonite.

¹⁶ When all Israel saw that the king did not hearken to them, then the people rendered a reply to the king, saying,

“What portion do we have in David? We have no allotment in the son of Jesse! To your tents, O Israel! Now see to your own house, O David!”

So Israel went to their tents. ¹⁷ As for the sons of Israel who were dwelling in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam still reigned over them.

waist. ¹¹ And now my father, he laded a heavy yoke on you; yet I, I shall add to your yoke. My father, he flogged you with whips; yet I will do so with scorpions.”

¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had spoken, saying, “Return to me on the third day.”

¹³ Yet the king answered them obstinately; king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the elders.

¹⁴ He spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying,

“My father, he made heavy your yoke; yet I, I shall add to it. My father, he flogged you with whips; yet I will do so with scorpions.”

¹⁵ The king did not hearken to the people, for the circumstance had come from the One, Elohim, that Yahweh might carry out His word that He had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat by means of Ahijah the Shilonite.

¹⁶ When all Israel saw that the king did not hearken to them, then the people replied to the king, saying,

“What portion do we have in David? We have no allotment in the son of Jesse! Each one to your tents, O Israel! Now see to your own house, O David!”

So all Israel went to their tents. ¹⁷ As for the sons of Israel who were dwelling in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam still reigned over them. [end text]

Note: the verse numbers correspond between 1 Kings chapter 12 and 2 Chronicles chapter 10 until verse 19.

Verses 1 and 1. The people of Israel intended to make Rehoboam king, not rebel. God thought differently (verses 15 below). Shechem is 30 miles north of Jerusalem as the crow flies, west of the Jordan River north in the united kingdom, in the territory of Ephraim (Joshua 20:7, 21:21). Joshua gathered the tribes there as his life was ending (Joshua chapter 24). A temple of Baal was constructed when Canaanites captured the site for a time (Judges 9:4, 46).

Verses 2 and 2. Jeroboam spent an unknown number of years in exile. His return was probably not widely known (see verses 20 and 20 below). Once seen, he was recognized by the people.

Verses 3 and 3. Jeroboam apparently felt no threat from Rehoboam, addressing the King with the crowd behind him. The people sent for Jeroboam to join them, likely indicating he was their spokesman. After all, he had supervised the workers from “the house of Joseph” (1 Kings 11:28).^b

^b The men of Israel were conscripted workers who wanted a reduced workload. 1 Kings 11:28 Concordant Version:

“Now the man Jeroboam was an able master. When Solomon saw the youth how well he was performing his work, he gave him supervision over the whole burden of the house of Joseph.”

The word “burden” (Concordant Version) or “charge” (KJV) indicates those from the tribes of Ephraim and Manassah (both descended from Joseph) were conscripted labor.

Verses 4 and 4. Only the people of Israel complained about treatment under Solomon's rule. Perhaps only the royal court and the people of Judah reaped the benefits. A civil war was fought for years with Ishbosheth, the heir of King Saul, to unify all Israel. Hostility continued long after. In the rebellion of Absalom the people of Israel in the north supported the usurper. The animosity continued and broke forth after Solomon's death.

Verses 6–8 and 6–8. The counsel of the elders was heard, but later rejected. In verses 7 and 7, the elders advised perfectly, particularly as told in Kings: **“become a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them.”** This is how Jesus advised his apostles — to serve and not try to rule others.

“And, calling them to Him, Jesus is saying to them, You are aware that those of the nations who are presuming to be chiefs are lording it over them, and their great men are coercing them. Yet not thus is it among you. But whosoever may be wanting to become great among you, will be your servant. And whosoever may be wanting to be foremost among you, will be the slave of all.

For even the Son of Mankind came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His soul a ransom for many.

• *Mark 10:42–45*

The apostle Paul tells us that Christ lived what He told His apostles to do. When His work was finished, He was exalted and glorified by God, just as His apostles will be exalted for their service to others. Likewise we shall be exalted for our service to others (Philippians 2:7–11 and following).

The advice of King Rehoboam's elders was true and wise, but the king never knew how to best treat his “subjects,” and Jesus' apostles had forgotten the advice of the elders of Rehoboam. Jesus reminded them.

Verses 8–14 and 8–14. The folly of youth! **Verses 14.** The Israelite workers were flogged and whipped for unstated reasons. Rehoboam pledged to make their plight and punishments even more harsh.

Verses 15 and 15. In 1 Kings 11:29–39, in a long prophecy, personal to Jeroboam himself, Ahijah told him about his rise to rule a kingdom comprised of ten tribes of northern Israel. It was fulfilled soon after Solomon died. Ahijah **“the Shilonite”** (from Shiloh) was a writer, a source in this period for the Chronicler:

“As for the remaining affairs of Solomon, first and last, are they not written in the annals of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the vision seer concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat?”

• *2 Chronicles 9:29*

Jeroboam listened to YHWH's promises but not His warnings. Later Ahijah will speak words of doom.

Verses 16 and 16. The northern tribes said in effect, you go your way, we'll go ours; leave us alone.

Verses 17 and 17. **“The sons of Israel who were dwelling in the cities of Judah.”** There was much interaction, commerce, and intermarriage among the northern tribes and Judah and Benjamin in the south. This was especially true when many came to Jerusalem during the spring and fall feasts. After all, Israelites could live anywhere within the twelve tribal areas, although most preferred to live among their own tribe.

TEXT: Murder and Israel's Open Rebellion

1 Kings 12:18–24

¹⁸ Then king Rehoboam sent out Adoram who was in charge of the tributary service; but **all Israel** pelted him with stones, so that he died.

Yet king Rehoboam was resolute to get up on his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ So Israel transgressed against the house of David until this day.

²⁰ It came to pass as **all Israel** heard that Jeroboam

2 Chronicles 10:18–11:4

¹⁸ Then king Rehoboam sent out Hadoram, who was in charge of the tributary service; but *the sons of Israel* pelted him with stones so that he died.

Yet king Rehoboam was resolute to get up on his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ So Israel transgressed against the house of David until this day.

had returned from Egypt, that they sent and called him to the congregation and made him king over all Israel. And none became a follower of the house of David except the tribe of Judah, it alone.

²¹ When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 choice men, practiced in battle, to fight against the house of Israel, in order to restore the kingship to Rehoboam son of Solomon.

²² But the word of Yahweh came to Shemiah, to the man of Elohim, saying,

²³ **“Speak to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah, to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying,**

²⁴ **“Thus speaks Yahweh: You shall neither go up nor fight against your brothers, the sons of Israel. Return, each man to his house; for it was from Me that this thing has come about.”**

So they hearkened to the word of Yahweh and turned back to go home according to the word of Yahweh.

11:1 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, 180,000 choice men, practiced in battle, to fight against Israel, in order to restore the kingship to Rehoboam.

² But the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah the man of Elohim, saying,

³ **“Speak to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah *and* to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying,**

⁴ **“Thus speaks Yahweh: You shall neither go up nor fight against your brothers. Return, each man to his house; for it was from Me that this thing has come about.”**

So they hearkened to the words of Yahweh and turned back *from going against Jeroboam*.

[end text]

Verses 18 and 18. Murder! The assembled people of Israel stoned a longtime high official of their king. Adoram (also spelled Hadoram, both a contraction of “Adoniram,” 1 Kings 4:6, 5:14):

“Son of Abda; over the tribute for about 47 years under David, Solomon, and Rehoboam; also over Solomon’s levy of 30,000 sent by ten thousands monthly to cut timber in Lebanon (1 Kings 4:6). Contracted into ADORAM (2 Sam. 20:24) and HADORAM. Stoned by the people of Israel when sent by Rehoboam to collect the tribute which had been their chief ground of complaint against the king (1 Kings 12:18; 2 Chronicles 10:18).”

• **“Adoniram,” Faussett Bible Dictionary, *underlines mine***^c

Adoram was a tribute collector (think tax collector) for King Rehoboam. His court needed money, Adoram’s job was to collect it. The people of northern Israel wanted their own king to pay their taxes to, rather than to descendants of David. They felt so oppressed that they murdered Adoram. After his death, King Rehoboam fled for his life, racing by chariot from Shechem some 30 miles south to safety in Jerusalem. The text does not say he was chased, but he must have felt seriously threatened.

Certainly King Rehoboam had guards protecting him from the Israelites. Adoram, representing the King, had a job that made enemies. He likely had guards also, at least to safeguard the collected tribute. Rehoboam, Adoram, the elders, the young men, Jeroboam, and the crowd of disgruntled Israelites (“**all the assembly of Israel,**” or “**all Israel,**” verses 3 and 3) were all at Shechem. Something happened, some spark, led to the violence of Adoram’s death. Whatever it was, it frightened Rehoboam so much that he fled on a fast chariot. Rehoboam seems to have escaped on his own. Did he leave the others to fend for themselves?

Verses 19 and 19. “... until this day” likely means up to the time the authors wrote their account of these events, the northern Israelites were still transgressing against the house of David.^d

^c A. R. Faussett, *Faussett Bible Dictionary* (1888). n.p.: International Bible Translators, 1998. BibleWorks.

^d These writers were likely Isaiah (the primary writer of Kings) who was often agreed with by Ezra the priest (the primary

Verse 20. This account is not in Chronicles. The **“all Israel”** at Shechem (1 Kings 12:18) was distinct from the larger group of **“all Israel”** that heard **“Jeroboam had returned”** (1 Kings 12:20). Jeroboam was made King of Israel by acclamation by the Israelites present at Shechem. This action by the people showed the high degree of discontent felt by the northern tribes, and tells us how well-respected and popular Jeroboam was before he fled to Egypt. His exile was likely a great scandal in its day. The prophecy of Ahijah about Jeroboam may have been known to the people. Whatever the case, they made him king.

Verses 21 and 11:1. **War!** Rehoboam arrived at Jerusalem, organized his military with the intention to attack northern Israel and put down the rebellion just like King David crushed Absalom’s and Sheba’s rebellions (2 Samuel 20:1–22). Rehoboam gathered his troops (formed around a small professional army) and prepared to invade. The northern tribes were rebelling against YHWH’s chosen king from the line of David.

Verses 22 and 11:2. Note different spellings for **“the man of Elohim”** (Shemiah and Shemaiah). YHWH intervenes to stop Rehoboam’s plans.

Verses 23 and 11:3. YHWH speaks through **“Shemaiah the man of Elohim,”** giving a public message to all the people of Judah and Israel that the splitting of the Kingdom of Israel was from YHWH.

There seems to be a difference in meaning of the two texts, but in fact they express the same idea, presented differently.

1. **“to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying ...”** (1 Kings 12:23).
2. **“to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, ...”** (2 Chronicles 11:3).

The first is a tribal reference to Judah and Benjamin and **“the rest of the people,”** meaning those Israelites who are not of the **“all the house of Judah and Benjamin ...”** The second refers to those Israelites (**“all Israel in Judah and Benjamin ...”**) who live in territory allotted to Judah and Benjamin.

Verse 24 and 11:4. Rehoboam obeys this command from God. He stopped the military mobilization; the soldiers went home. Rehoboam did not listen to YHWH earlier, and he must live with his bad decisions and a diminished kingdom from Solomon’s grand realm. Did Rehoboam say to himself, “How could I have been so stupid?” Afterward, Rehoboam ruled over Judah and Benjamin (and Levites) for 17 years. He did as YHWH intended (verses 15 above, as well as 24 and 11:4). We all live with irreparable mistakes, but few have a public reminder of our errors. Rehoboam lived with his foolishness every day of his remaining years.

To review: Saul was the first king chosen by God over all Israel. When Saul and Jonathan died fighting the Philistines, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin made David King of Judah, as God intended. He ruled at Hebron for 7 years. When Saul’s son Ishbosheth died, the people of the 10 tribes of northern Israel decided to make David King of a unified Israel and Judah, again, as God intended. He ruled in Jerusalem for 37 years. Solomon ruled unified Israel for 40 years. Now God divided the unified kingdom with 10 tribes in the north ruled by Jeroboam, and 2 tribes in the south ruled by Rehoboam. The next section is exclusively in First Kings, describing events in the northern kingdom of Israel.

TEXT: Jeroboam’s Enterprises in the Northern Kingdom of Israel

1 Kings 12:25–33

²⁵ Then Jeroboam rebuilt Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and dwelt in it. From there he went forth and rebuilt Penuel. ²⁶ Jeroboam said in his heart,

“Now the kingdom may well return to the house of David. ²⁷ If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the House of Yahweh in Jerusalem, the heart of this people will return to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah. Then they will kill me and will return to Rehoboam king of Judah.”

writer of Chronicles) hundreds of years later. Both worked from source records much older than themselves. While agreeing on the basic story flow, each emphasized different matters. Samuel and Kings presented more of the secular history, while Chronicles presented a more spiritual perspective represented by the Levitical priesthood.

²⁸ So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said to the people, **“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your elohim, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.”** ²⁹ And he placed the one in Bethel and the other he set up in Dan. ³⁰ This matter came to be a sin; the people went before the one as far as Dan.

³¹ He also built a house of the high-places and appointed priests from the whole number of the people who were not of the sons of Levi. ³² Jeroboam established a festival in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the festival that was in Judah, and he went up to the altar which he had built in Bethel to sacrifice to the calves that he had made. He also installed in Bethel the priests of the high-places which he had made. ³³ He went up to the altar which he had built in Bethel, on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had invented in his heart; so he established a festival for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to fume incense. [end text]

Jeroboam’s disobedience toward YHWH was expressed in four ways:

- **“in the place of worship (Bethel and Dan instead of Jerusalem), and**
 - **in the persons by whom it [the worship] was to be performed (priests taken from the masses instead of from Levi), also**
 - **in the time of the feast of tabernacles (the eighth instead of the seventh month).**
 - **In the symbols, the calves, he followed Aaron’s pattern at Sinai, which he himself had been familiarized to in Egypt; at the same time recognizing the reality of God’s deliverance of Israel out of Egypt in saying like Aaron, ‘Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of Egypt’ (1 Kings 12:28; Exodus 32:4, 8).”**
- **“Israel,” Faussett Bible Dictionary**

Verse 25. The city of Shechem, where Jeroboam was made King, became the first capital of the northern Kingdom of Israel.

Verses 26–27. Jeroboam’s first thought was his self-preservation as king. He feared the people might regret their rebellion, return to Rehoboam, and kill him. He had a low opinion of his subjects.

Verses 28–30. Jeroboam analyzed his situation, took counsel with unnamed persons, and made an announcement to the people. The people supported his decision. They should have rejected it. Jeroboam acted for three reasons: protecting his life, his throne, and the legacy of his dynasty. But God’s promises to him were conditional on obedience to YHWH and His Laws. Idolatry of any kind was forbidden.

“... you will become king over Israel. It will come to be, if you shall hearken to all that I instruct you, and you will walk in My ways and do what is upright in My eyes so as to keep My statutes and My instructions just as David My servant did, then I will be with you. I will build for you a sure house, just as I have built for David, and I will give you Israel.”

• **1 Kings 11:37–38**

God separated the kingdom in two parts for this reason, as stated a few verses earlier:

“... because they have forsaken Me and are worshiping Ashtoreth, elohim of the Sidonians, [they are worshipping] Chemosh, elohim of Moab, and [they are worshipping] Milcom, elohim of the sons of Ammon. They have not walked in My ways so as to do what is upright in My eyes and My statutes and My ordinances as his father David did.”

• **1 Kings 11:33**

Jeroboam made idolatrous golden calves, as Aaron did in Exodus chapter 32. He used the same words Aaron used, **“Here are your elohim, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt”** (Exodus 32:4 and 8).

Jeroboam did what YHWH told him not to do. One must ask (as in the case of Rehoboam), how could Jeroboam be so stupid! He had selective hearing with regard to YHWH’s speaking through His prophets. He accepted God’s positive prophecy of his becoming king of Israel, then he rejected the negative warnings

from YHWH against idolatry. With the evidence before him, why did he think YHWH powerful enough to fulfill the prophecy, but not willing or able to punish disobedience to the warning?

Verses 31–33. Jeroboam committed more outrages. He created a priesthood to perform ritual service of his pagan cult with two golden calves. The text says that Levites were excluded from his new priesthood. Jeroboam himself inaugurated his idolatrous cult with a sacrifice. Finally, he created a new festival on a different day than the Mosaic Feast of Tabernacles. He did this so they would not go to Jerusalem for the Tabernacles feast. The next section is exclusive to Second Chronicles and deals with events in Judah.

TEXT: Rehoboam's Enterprises in the Southern Kingdom of Judah

2 Chronicles 11:5–23

⁵ Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem and built fortified cities in Judah. ⁶ Thus he rebuilt Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, ⁷ Bethzur, Soco, Adullam, ⁸ Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, ⁹ Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, ¹⁰ Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron as fortified cities in Judah and Benjamin.

¹¹ He reinforced the fortifications and put governors in them, along with storehouses of food, oil and wine, ¹² as well as large shields and lances in all of them, city by city. Thus he reinforced them very much; and so Judah and Benjamin were his.

¹³ The priests and the Levites from all their territories in all Israel stationed themselves with him; ¹⁴ for the Levites forsook their common pasture lands and their holdings and went to Judah and to Jerusalem, since Jeroboam with his sons had cast them off from serving as priests of Yahweh. ¹⁵ He [Jeroboam] had recruited for himself priests for the high-places, for hairy goat demons and the calf idols that he had made.

¹⁶ And following them [the Levites] from all the tribes of Israel — those who gave their heart to seek Yahweh Elohim of Israel — came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to Yahweh the Elohim of their fathers. ¹⁷ They made the kingdom of Judah steadfast and made Rehoboam son of Solomon resolute for three years, for they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years.

¹⁸ Rehoboam took a wife for himself, Mahalath, daughter of David's son Jerimoth and of Abihail, daughter of Jesse's son Eliab. ¹⁹ The sons she bore him were Jeush, Shemariah and Zaham. ²⁰ After her he took for himself Maacah daughter of Absalom, who bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith. ²¹ Rehoboam loved Maacah daughter of Absalom more than all his wives and his concubines — for he had taken up eighteen wives and sixty concubines; he got twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

²² Rehoboam assigned Abijah son of Maacah to officiate as the head, as governor among his brothers, so as to make him king. ²³ He acted understandingly, and he detailed some of all his sons to all the lands of Judah and Benjamin and to all the fortified cities. He gave them sustenance in abundance, and he took up for them a throng of wives. **[end text]**

Verse 5. Rehoboam sent his army home. If he could not attack, he would build defenses against attack.

Verses 11–12. He upgraded defenses for existing cities. He did not improve fortifications in Jerusalem. They probably were thought to be adequate. He made two changes: first, the governors lived in the chief cities of the district. Second, weapons were housed in the cities. Apparently all weapons were previously in or near Jerusalem. This is considered “forward positioning” of weapon stockpiles in case of war. Each fortified town was to hold out until reinforcements or the main army could bring relief from attack.

Verses 13–14. The priests and Levites living in the north moved south. They had no work or teaching to do as priests and Levites. They were not allowed to serve “**as priests of Yahweh.**” One of their responsibilities was to teach Israel about YHWH in their home areas, besides serving in the Jerusalem Temple, the only legitimate ritual site for Israelites. Jeroboam with his sons “**cast them off from serving,**” happy they left.

Verse 15. This is a quick reference to the extent of Jeroboam's evil.

Verses 16–17. Back to Rehoboam. The priests and Levites abandoned the lands and the cities allotted to them and migrated to Judah. (The Wikipedia article “[Levitical City](#)” gives a quick explanation.) This no

doubt resulted in a population change of educated people that moved to the southern kingdom of Judah.

Verses 17. The priests and Levites, those faithful to Yahweh, helped stabilize Rehoboam's kingdom. As teachers and priests, they told the people the truth of the idolatry being committed by Jeroboam in the north. The king and the kingdom **"walked in the way of David and Solomon for 3 years."** Then they went astray.

Verses 18–21. As the daughter of Absalom, Rehoboam's favorite wife Maacah may have had sympathies with the northerners who supported her father. In all Rehoboam had 28 sons. Any one of them could inherit the throne.

Verse 22. Her son Abijah had the lead position for inheriting the throne.

Verse 23. According to the author of Chronicles, Rehoboam acted shrewdly. He distributed his sons among the various fortified cities and gave each of them more than one wife, or so that is what **"a throng of wives"** seems to say. The royal family was quite expansive. The Davidic dynasty was felt to be safe with many potential heirs.

The next section is exclusive to First Kings.

TEXT: A Man of Elohim Visits Jeroboam, King of Israel

1 Kings 13:1–6

¹ Behold, **a man of Elohim**, he came from Judah by the word of Yahweh to Bethel while Jeroboam was standing at the altar to fume incense. ² He called out against the altar by the word of Yahweh and said,

"'Altar, altar,' thus speaks Yahweh: 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David; Josiah is his name. And he will sacrifice on you the priests of the high-places who are fuming incense on you; and he shall burn human bones on you.'"

³ Then he gave a miracle on that day, saying, **"This is the miracle of which Yahweh has spoken: Behold, the altar will be torn apart, and the greasy ash that is on it will be poured out."**

⁴ Now this came to pass: As the king heard the word of the man of Elohim that he had called out against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from above the altar, saying, **"Apprehend him!"** And his hand that he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not bring it back to himself.

⁵ As for the altar, it was torn apart, and the greasy ash was poured out from the altar, according to the miracle that the man of Elohim had given by the word of Yahweh. ⁶ Now the king responded and said to the man of Elohim, **"Beseech, I pray, the face of Yahweh your Elohim! Pray in my behalf that my hand may return to me."** So the man of Elohim beseeched the face of Yahweh, so that the king's hand may return to him, and it became as at first. [end text]

Verse 1. This **"man of Elohim"** is unnamed. He was a prophet **"from Judah,"** but he was not Ahijah the prophet who appears later in 1 Kings chapter 14, or Shemiah the prophet who speaks later to Jeroboam. Jeroboam was burning incense, perhaps to YHWH, yet the **"man of Elohim"** reports God's message to him.

Verse 2. **"He called out ..."** — the **"man of Elohim"** shouted over the words spoken at the altar by Jeroboam, or perhaps by the priest with Jeroboam nearby. The prophecy about Josiah is clear and direct. Because of this prophecy, the coming on the scene of a Josiah was anticipated for centuries. When it was fulfilled, a king in Judah named Josiah, a descendant of David, did indeed sacrifice idolatrous priests on that altar, just as God predicted through the **"man of Elohim."** The name Josiah means "supported or healed by Jehovah."

Verse 3. The **"man of Elohim"** gave a prophecy that would occur soon, not in hundreds of years.

Verse 4. Jeroboam's hand withered when he called for the prophet's arrest.

Verse 5. Immediately after the prophecy was given, the altar **"was torn apart,"** and the **"greasy ash"** from the sacrifices poured out on the ground, just as prophesied.

Verse 6. Jeroboam's hand was restored when the **"man of Elohim"** asked in prayer for it to be healed. Yet we will see that Jeroboam does not change his idolatrous behavior.

TEXT: The Man of Elohim Is Punished for Disobeying God

1 Kings 13:7–34

⁷ Then the king [Jeroboam] spoke to **the man of Elohim**, **“Do come with me to the house and brace yourself; and let me give you a gift.”** ⁸ But **the man of Elohim** said to the king,

“If you gave me half of your house, I would not come with you. And I would neither eat bread nor drink water in this place. ⁹ For so I was instructed by the word of Yahweh, saying, ‘Neither shall you eat bread nor drink water nor return by the way that you came.’”

¹⁰ So he went by another way and did not return by the way by which he came to Bethel.

¹¹ There was a certain old prophet dwelling in Bethel; now his sons came and related to him all the work that **the man of Elohim** had done that day in Bethel, with the words that he had spoken to the king; so they related them to their father. ¹² Then their father spoke to them, **“Just where is the way he went?”** So his sons showed him the way that **the man of Elohim** had gone, who had come from Judah.

¹³ Then he said to his sons, **“Saddle the donkey for me.”** Now they saddled the donkey for him, and he rode on it. ¹⁴ Thus he went after **the man of Elohim** and found him sitting under a terebinth.

He said to him, **“Are you the man of Elohim who came from Judah?”** And he replied, **“I am.”**

¹⁵ Then he said to him, **“Come with me to the house and eat bread.”** ¹⁶ Yet he replied,

“I can not return with you or come with you; and I may neither eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. ¹⁷ For the order for me came by a word of Yahweh: Neither shall you eat bread nor drink water there; and you shall not return to go by the way in which you came.”

¹⁸ Then the other said to him, **“I too am a prophet like you; there was a messenger who spoke to me by a word of Yahweh, saying, ‘Have him turn back with you to your house that he may eat bread and drink water.’”** But he dissimulated to him.

¹⁹ So he returned with him; and he ate bread in his house and drank water. ²⁰ Now it occurred while they were sitting at the table, that **the word of Yahweh came to the prophet who had brought him back;** ²¹ and he called out to **the man of Elohim** who had come from Judah, saying,

“Thus speaks Yahweh: ‘Inasmuch as you rebelled against the bidding of Yahweh and did not observe the instruction that Yahweh your Elohim enjoined on you, ²² but returned and ate bread and drank water in this place of which He spoke to you, “Do not eat bread and do not drink water,” your carcass shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.’”

²³ Then it came to pass after his eating bread and after his drinking water that he [the old prophet] saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back. ²⁴ So he went away; then a lion found him on the road and put him to death. His carcass came to be flung on the road; and the donkey was standing beside it, and the lion too standing beside the carcass. ²⁵ And behold, men passing by saw the carcass flung on the road with the lion standing beside the carcass. They came and spoke of it in the city in which the old prophet was dwelling.

²⁶ When the prophet who had him turn back from his way, heard of it, then he said,

“He is the man of Elohim who rebelled against the bidding of Yahweh; so Yahweh gave him to the lion that he might break him and put him to death according to the word of Yahweh that he had spoken to him.”

²⁷ Then he spoke to his sons, saying, **“Saddle the donkey for me, and they saddled it.”** ²⁸ He went out and found his carcass flung on the road. The donkey and the lion were standing beside the carcass; the lion had neither eaten the carcass nor broken the donkey. ²⁹ So the prophet took up the carcass of **the man of Elohim**. He let him rest on the donkey and brought him back. Thus he came to the city of **the old prophet** to bewail and to entomb him. ³⁰ Then he let his carcass rest in his own tomb; and they were wailing over him, **“Woe, my brother!”** ³¹ It came to pass after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons, saying,

“At my death you will entomb me also in the tomb in which the man of Elohim is entombed. Beside his bones let my bones rest. ³² For the word shall come to pass, yea come to pass that he called out

by the word of Yahweh against the altar in Bethel and against all the high-place houses in the cities of Samaria.”

³³ After this incident Jeroboam did not turn back from his evil way, but he again appointed priests of the high-places from the outmost ranks of the people. For anyone who so desired, he ordained him, and he became one of the priests of the high-places. ³⁴ This matter came to be a sin of the house of Jeroboam and led to suppress and to exterminate it off the face of the ground. [end text]

Verses 7–10. The **“man of Elohim”** is obedient to this point. While the **“man of Elohim”** was never identified as a prophet, he was given a message from YHWH, and he effectively delivered it, even dealing with opposition from Jeroboam.

Verses 11, 18. The man who is not a prophet delivers a prophecy. This man identified as a **“certain old prophet,”** deliberately lied, leading to disobedience to God and the death of the **“man of Elohim.”**

Verse 18. The phrase, **“he dissimulated to him”** is an editorial comment that the old prophet lied and concealed the truth from **“the man of Elohim.”**

Verse 19. This states the **“man of Elohim”** clearly violated YHWH’s instructions.

Verses 20–22. Imagine the shock for the **“old prophet”** to receive a true prophecy from YHWH. Like Balaam, he finally told the truth.

Verse 23. The lying old prophet saddled the donkey for the **“man of Elohim.”** How nice to help him go to his death. We can only wonder what the old prophet was thinking. Would God punish him also?

Verses 24–25. Death by lion; not a pleasant way to die. Unusual behavior for a lion not to eat their prey.

Verse 26. The old prophet justified his behavior saying God killed him, implying he had nothing to do with his death. The **“man of Elohim”** disobeyed God. **“Yahweh gave him to the lion ... and put him to death.”**

Verses 29–32. The old prophet bewailed and lamented the death of the **“man of Elohim.”** Was his grief a sham? I would say yes.

Excursus: Josiah, Bethel, and the grave. Josiah was the last good King of Judah and he fulfilled God’s prophecy naming Josiah, (verse 2 above) even though the Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed. A contemporary of the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah, Josiah began his religious reforms in Judah and Jerusalem, then went north where the Kingdom of Israel used to be (until destroyed by the Assyrians). What Josiah did in the Kingdom of Judah in the south (2 Kings 23:1–6 and 2 Chronicles 34:4, 29–33), he also did in the wastes of the north, the land of the former Kingdom of Israel.

Read ahead if you wish, and learn what King Josiah did there. It is in 2 Kings 23:7–20 and 2 Chronicles 34:5–7. Josiah encountered the grave of the **“man of Elohim,”** and honored the man used by God to prophesy Josiah’s desecration of pagan sites, going to Bethel, killing the pagan priests on the altar of Jeroboam, and breaking down that altar — all acts prophesied to be done by Josiah at Bethel.

The prophecy was fulfilled in a different manner and at a later time than anyone expected. In fact, some might ask, what was the point? The Kingdom of Israel no longer existed. Remember that YHWH, being sovereign, does according to His will, when He wills.

TEXT: God’s Judgment Upon Jeroboam, King of Israel

1 Kings 14:1–20

¹ At that time Jeroboam’s son Abijah became ill. ² So Jeroboam said to his wife,

“Now get up! Alter yourself so that they may not know that you are the wife of Jeroboam; then you will go to Shiloh. Behold, there is Ahijah the prophet; he is the one who spoke concerning me to become king over this people. ³ You must take in your hand ten loaves of bread, speckled cakes and

a bottle of honey. When you come to him, he himself will tell you what shall become of the lad.”

⁴ Jeroboam’s wife did so. She got up, went to Shiloh and entered Ahijah’s house. As for Ahijah, he was not able to see, for his eyes were fixed because of his greyhaired age. ⁵ But Yahweh had said to Ahijah,

“Behold, Jeroboam’s wife is coming to inquire of you in the matter of her son, for he is ill. This and that shall you speak to her. And it shall come to be, as she enters, that she makes herself unrecognizable.”

⁶ Now it came to pass, as Ahijah heard the sound of her feet entering into the portal, that he said,

“Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why is this that you made yourself unrecognizable? I have been consigned with a severe message for you. ⁷ Go and say to Jeroboam,

‘Thus speaks Yahweh Elohim of Israel: Inasmuch as I exalted you from among the people and appointed you as governor over My people Israel ⁸ and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, yet you have not become like My servant David who kept My instructions and who walked after Me with all his heart to do but what is upright in My eyes;

⁹ you are doing more evil with your deeds than all who came before you; you went and made for yourself other elohim and molten images to provoke Me to vexation; yet Me have you flung behind your body; ¹⁰ wherefore behold, I am bringing evil over the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam any man-child, restrained or forsaken, in Israel. I will take out the last of the house of Jeroboam just as one takes out the ordure [excrement] until it is completely removed. ¹¹ The one dying of Jeroboam’s in the city shall the dogs eat; and the one dying in the field shall the flyers of the heavens eat; for Yahweh Himself has spoken.’

¹² As for you, get up, go to your house. When your feet come into the city, then the boy will die. ¹³ All Israel will bewail him. They will entomb him; for this one, he alone of Jeroboam’s shall come into a tomb, because something well-pleasing to Yahweh Elohim of Israel is found in him, in the house of Jeroboam. ¹⁴ Then Yahweh will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam. This today, and what indeed is next?

¹⁵ Yahweh will smite Israel just as the reed is shaking in the water; He will pluck up Israel off this good ground that He gave to their fathers, and He will toss them beyond the Stream [the Euphrates River], because they made their Asherah poles, thus provoking Yahweh to vexation.

¹⁶ He shall give Israel up owing to the sins of Jeroboam with which he sinned and with which he caused Israel to sin.”

¹⁷ Then Jeroboam’s wife got up and went and came to Tirzah. As she was coming to the threshold of the house, the lad died. ¹⁸ They entombed him, and all Israel bewailed him, according to the word of Yahweh that He had spoken by means of His servant Ahijah the prophet.

¹⁹ The rest of the affairs of Jeroboam, how he fought and how he reigned, behold, they are written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Israel. ²⁰ Now the days that Jeroboam reigned were twenty-two years; then he lay down with his fathers, and his son Nadab reigned in his stead. [end text]

Verses 1 and 4. Desperation over the condition of a sick child, Jeroboam’s son named Abijah. Ahijah is the name of the prophet who gives Jeroboam’s wife a message from YHWH and pronounces the doom of prince Abijah. In this unusual case, his death is entirely due to Jeroboam’s sins. In hope, she goes to Shiloh, within the kingdom of Israel, in hope that the prophet can help.

Verses 6–12, 15–16. YHWH lays out His complaint, based on violation of the covenant Jeroboam agreed to. He refused to repent, whatever the circumstances, representing stiff-necked Israel (Acts 7:51), as Israel represents all mankind to YHWH. Doom is pronounced on Jeroboam, his descendants, and the Kingdom of Israel. Again, one wonders, “How could Jeroboam be so stupid?”

(Rehoboam also had a son named Abijah who did inherit his father’s throne. Yes, it can get confusing.)

Verses 19–20. Some source material of 1, 2 Samuel and 1, 2 Kings is indicated. These four books were a single scroll or book in Hebrew texts. In this case, they are a condensation and commentary of events from “the annals,” archived records by court officials of significant events during Jeroboam’s reign.

TEXT: Judah Under Rehoboam's Rule, Egyptian Invasion, and Rehoboam's Death

1 Kings 14:21–25

²¹ As for Rehoboam son of Solomon, he reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that Yahweh had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to establish His Name there. **His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess.**

²² Judah did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and they made Him jealous above all that their fathers had done by their sins with which they had sinned. ²³ They too were building for themselves high-places, monuments and Asherah poles on every lofty hill and under every flourishing tree. ²⁴ There were even cult-prostitutes in the land. They practiced all the abhorrences of the nations which Yahweh had evicted from before the sons of Israel.

²⁵ It occurred in the fifth year of king Rehoboam that Shishak king of Egypt marched up against Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 12:1–2a

¹ *It came to be that, as soon as Rehoboam's kingship was established and as soon as he held fast to it, he forsook the law of Yahweh, and all Israel with him.*

^{2a} It occurred in the fifth year of king Rehoboam that Shishak king of Egypt marched up against Jerusalem ... [\[go to 2 Chronicles 12:2b ↓\]](#)

2 Chronicles 12:2b–9a

^{2b} ... — because they had offended Yahweh — ³ with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. And there was no number to the people who came with him from Egypt: Libyans, Sukkites and Cushites. ⁴ He seized the fortified cities in Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

⁵ Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the chief officials of Judah who were gathered in Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, **“Thus says Yahweh: You have forsaken Me, and I also have forsaken you to the hand of Shishak.”**

⁶ Then Israel's chief officials and the king submitted and said, **“Just is Yahweh.”**

⁷ When Yahweh saw that they had submitted, the word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah, saying,

“They have submitted, so I shall not bring them to ruin, and I will soon give them deliverance, and My fury shall not be poured forth on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. ⁸ But they shall become his servants, that they may know servitude to Me and servitude to the kingdoms of the other countries.”

^{9a} *When Shishak king of Egypt marched up against Jerusalem, ...* [\[go to 2 Chronicles 12:9b ↓\]](#)

1 Kings 14:26–31

²⁶ He took away the treasures of the House of Yahweh and the treasures of the house of the king; he took them all. He was also taking away *all* the golden shields that Solomon had made.

²⁷ In place of them, king Rehoboam made shields of bronze and gave the supervision over them into the hand of the chiefs of the runners who were guarding the portal of the king's house. ²⁸ It came to be that, as often as the king came to the House of Yahweh, the runners carried them; and

2 Chronicles 12:9b–16

^{9b} ... he took away the treasures of the House of Yahweh and the treasures of the house of the king; he took them all. He was also taking away the golden shields that Solomon had made.

¹⁰ In place of them, king Rehoboam made shields of bronze and gave the supervision over them into the hand of the chiefs of the runners who were guarding the portal of the king's house. ¹¹ It came to be that as often as the king came to the House of Yahweh, the runners *came and* carried them; and

afterward they would bring them back to the anteroom of the runners.

²⁹ The rest of the affairs of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Judah?

³⁰ There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. ³¹ Then Rehoboam lay down with his fathers and was entombed with his fathers in the City of David; his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. His son Abijah reigned in his stead.

afterward they would bring them back to the anteroom of the runners.

¹² Since he had submitted, the anger of Yahweh turned away from him and did not bring him to ruin entirely. And, moreover, in Judah matters came to be well.

¹³ King Rehoboam showed himself steadfast in Jerusalem and reigned; for Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that Yahweh had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put His Name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. ¹⁴ He did evil, for he had not set his heart on seeking after Yahweh.

¹⁵ The affairs of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the annals of Shemaiah the prophet and Iddo the vision seer to be registered in his genealogy? There were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. ¹⁶ Then Rehoboam lay down with his fathers and was entombed in the city of David.

His son Abijah reigned in his stead. [end text]

I Kings 14:21, 31. Told twice for emphasis? Naamah the Ammonitess, as a pagan, taught him idolatry.

I Kings 14:24. Judah committed all the sins of the pagan nations they dispossessed.

Verses 25 and 2. God punished Rehoboam's idolatry by allowing Egypt to invade, overrun much of Judah, and besiege Jerusalem, regardless of Rehoboam's military preparations and fortress construction, done defending against Israel from the north, not Egypt from the west. Jeroboam's former close relationship with Egypt kept her well-informed about vast riches in Jerusalem from long periods of peace and trade.

2 Chronicles 12:6–8. Rehoboam and his officials repented of their idolatry. YHWH on his part repented of ruining Jerusalem. "Servants" and "servitude" indicates that Judah become a vassal to Egypt as overlord or suzerain. Such relationships are permitted when YHWH allows it. It is a low-level means by which God punishes Israel. More sin, more punishment. Repent from sin, decrease punishment, life improves.

Verses 26 and 9. Shishak protected Jeroboam from Solomon (1 Kings 11:40), now Shishak invades Judah (did Jeroboam help?) and conducts a massive robbery in Jerusalem. This new wealth likely initiated a building surge in Egypt. It is disputed which Pharaoh in secular Egyptian history is the biblical Shishak.

Verses 27 and 10. Bronze was less expensive but more functional and durable than gold.

Verses 28 and 11. The shields protected Rehoboam when he went to and from the Temple.

2 Chronicles 12:15. Shemaiah was one of the sources about all of the Rehoboam's official deeds and his wars with Jeroboam. This shows that Shemaiah was not the "man of Elohim" who disobeyed God and was killed by the lion in 1 Kings chapter 13.

Verses 30 and 15. War between Israel and Judah likely involved border skirmishes, toll booth raids, ambushes, and other low-level combat, all while commerce on many levels (except in religion) must have continued. God forbade Judah from invading Israel. Then Judah's power was cut down when Egypt raided its wealth. After all, the lands of Israel and Judah were two parts of major trading routes between Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, and Mesopotamia (Babylon and Assyria).