

# 1 Kings 12 Commentary

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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission  
[1 Kings Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

## THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

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**1 Kings 12:1** Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

- **Rehoboam:** 1Ki 11:43 2Ch 10:1-19
- **Shechem:** Ge 12:6, Sichem, Ge 33:18,19 Jos 20:7 24:1,32 Jdg 9:1 Ps 60:6 Ac 7:16, Sychem

**Related Passages:**

Joshua 20:7+ So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and **Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim**, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.

Joshua 21:20-21+ Then **the cities from the tribe of Ephraim** were allotted to the families of the sons of Kohath, the Levites, even to the rest of the sons of Kohath. 21 **They gave them Shechem, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim**, and Gezer with its pasture lands,



Shechem [CLICK TO ENLARGE](#)  
 Zondervan Atlas of the Bible: C. Rasmussen  
 (recommended resource - do not reproduce)

## REHOBOAM'S MISSED OPPORTUNITY

**Tony Merida** - The passage under consideration has it all: political gamesmanship, a stoning, bovine worship, honest preachers, lying preachers, manipulation, deception, stupidity, fear, faith, pronouncements, a withered hand, a destroyed altar, the death of a child, and (oh yeah) a lion mauls a man. Welcome to the part of the Bible few people read! But we should read it, for there's much to learn here. Over it all is the sovereign God of the universe displaying justice and mercy. We can consider 1 Kings 12:1–14:20 under four headings: division, downfall, disobedience, and death. The kingdom is divided, just as God promised (12:1–24). Downfall happens in every way, most dreadfully perhaps through Israel's worship of a golden calf (12:25–33). Disobedience persists, even in the prophets' lives (13:1–34). Death occurs, most vividly with the death of Jeroboam's child (14:1–20). (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#))

**Then** - Time phrase marking progression in the narrative. Solomon has died and Rehoboam is the replacement in 1 Kings 11:43: "And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David, and his son Rehoboam reigned in his place."

**Rehoboam went to Shechem** - Solomon had many sons but Rehoboam was his oldest, by his favorite wife and his choice among many. It is very likely that one of the reasons Rehoboam chose Shechem was to appease the northern tribes and keep the united monarchy. Historically there had always been jealousy and tension between Judah and the northern tribes, so as they say this was "[an accident waiting to happen](#)". Of course, it was not truly an accident because the division was the sovereign will of Jehovah.

See Shechem on map above just north of the border of the tribe of Ephraim. The map is somewhat misleading in my opinion as it suggests Shechem is north of the borders of the tribe of Ephraim. Shechem was in Ephraim's tribal land but had deep connections to Manasseh Ephraim's brother. Joshua 20:7+ and Joshua 21:20-21+ state that Shechem was designated as a Levitical city in the territory of Ephraim, meaning the Levites lived there and it was also a city of refuge.

[David Guzik](#) has a note which is difficult to believe (but it is true) that "Rehoboam was the only son of Solomon that we know by name. Solomon had 1,000 wives and concubines, yet we read of *one son* he had to bear up his name, and he was a fool. This demonstrates that sin is a bad way of building up a family."

**For** - Term of explanation. This is an important explanation, explaining the purpose for Rehoboam traveling some 40+ miles from Jerusalem, the home of the Temple and the capital city of Israel to the city that was the heart of the northern territories.

**All Israel had come to [Shechem](#)** ("shoulder" "shoulder blade") **to make him king** - **All Israel** is important because it emphasizes the nation was still united. Note that beginning in 1Ki 12:3, 16, 18 "Israel" can be confusing because in these verses it begins to refer to the 10 northern tribes (it could also be referred to by terms "Ephraim" the largest tribe or "Samaria" the capital). This was an opportunity for Rehoboam to unite the nation of Israel. Shechem was between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim.

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[Bob Utley](#) suggests several possible reasons why Rehoboam chose **Shechem**.

1. It was the largest northern city and on the border between Ephraim and Manasseh (i.e., "house of Joseph," 1 Ki 11:28).
2. It was the site of patriarchal sacrifices.
  1. Abraham – Ge 12:6-9 (ED: IT WAS FIRST CITY ABRAM VISITED IN PROMISED LAND)
  2. Jacob – Ge 33:18-20
3. It was the site of Joshua's altar and the reading of the cursings and blessings (i.e., Deuteronomy 27-28) – Deut. 11:29; 27:4,13; Josh. 8:30,33. (ED: IT WAS WHERE JOSHUA RENEWED THE COVENANT - Joshua 24:1)
4. It was the site of Joseph's tomb – Exod. 13:19.
5. It was later the site of Abimelech's conspiracy to become king – Judges 9:6.

See [Utley's discussion of the DIVIDED MONARCHY](#) which includes charts of kings.

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#### **QUESTION - Who was King Rehoboam in the Bible?**

**ANSWER** - Rehoboam was the son of [King Solomon](#) and king of Judah for seventeen years (931–913 BC). Solomon had turned away from God, and God told Solomon that He would tear the kingdom from him yet leave him one tribe. God also promised, for the sake of David, not to tear the kingdom away during Solomon's lifetime but during that of his son (1 Kings 11:9–13). Shortly after Rehoboam became king, a rebellion placed the ten northern tribes under the rule of [Jeroboam](#) and left Rehoboam with his own tribe (Judah) and the tribe of Benjamin.

Jeroboam started out as a servant of Solomon in charge of forced labor (1 Kings 11:28). A prophet told Jeroboam that he would be king over Israel (1 Kings 11:26–40). At some point, Jeroboam fled from Solomon to Egypt. But when Rehoboam went to Shechem to be installed as king of Israel, Jeroboam returned. The people sent Jeroboam to the new king to ask him to lighten the heavy load of labor and taxes that Solomon had laid on them (1 Kings 12:1–4; 2 Chronicles 10:3–4). The older advisers gave King Rehoboam the wise counsel to honor the people's request and thus win their loyalty (1 Kings 12:6–7; 2 Chronicles 10:6–7). King Rehoboam asked the young men who had grown up with him for advice as well. They foolishly told the new king to threaten even harsher conditions. Rehoboam took the young men's advice, and the people rebelled, abandoning the house of David and ultimately making Jeroboam their king (1 Kings 12:8–20; 2 Chronicles 10:8–19). Rehoboam fled to Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:18; 2 Chronicles 10:18), where he mustered 180,000 warriors from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to mount an attack. But Shemaiah, a prophet of God, delivered God's message to Rehoboam: the troops should go home because the divided kingdom had come from the Lord. The people of Judah wisely listened and did not invade Israel (1 Kings 12:21–24; 2 Chronicles 11:1–4). However, there continued to be warfare between Jeroboam and Rehoboam throughout Rehoboam's reign (1 Kings 14:30; 2 Chronicles 12:15).

In the northern kingdom, Jeroboam promoted idolatry and removed the Levites from service, so the priests and Levites came to Rehoboam and served at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 11:13–15), along with all those who wanted to seek the one true God (2 Chronicles 11:16). Second Chronicles 11:17 says, "They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they made Rehoboam the son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon." Rehoboam also built multiple cities for defense, with strong fortresses, commanders, and supplies (2 Chronicles 11:5–12). King Rehoboam "acted wisely" by placing his sons throughout the districts of Judah and Benjamin, supplied ample provisions, and found them wives

(2 Chronicles 11:23).

Unfortunately, after King Rehoboam became established in the southern kingdom, he abandoned the ways of God (2 Chronicles 12:1). In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, Shishak king of Egypt captured the fortified cities in Judah and set out against Jerusalem. Shemaiah the prophet told Rehoboam, "This is what the Lord says, 'You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak'" (2 Chronicles 12:5). "The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, 'The Lord is just'" (verse 6). Seeing their humility, God said He would not destroy them but would allow them to become subjects of Shishak. The Pharaoh attacked Jerusalem and removed all the treasures from the temple and the palace (1 Kings 14:26; 2 Chronicles 12:9). Rehoboam did make bronze shields to replace the gold ones his father had made (1 Kings 14:27; 2 Chronicles 12:10–11).

Second Chronicles 12:12 says, "Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the Lord's anger turned from him, and he was not totally destroyed. Indeed, there was some good in Judah." "Some good in Judah" seems a fitting way to characterize the reign of Rehoboam. He was unwise and perhaps brash in his treatment of the forced laborers, thus leading to his loss of the kingdom. However, that loss was God-ordained, and Rehoboam proceeded to follow the ways of the Lord for some time. But then he turned from God, and the nation slid into moral and spiritual decay. "Judah did evil in the eyes of the LORD. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than those who were before them had done" (1 Kings 14:22). They set up high places and had male shrine prostitutes in the land, which [King Asa](#), Rehoboam's grandson, would later remove.

From King Rehoboam we learn the importance of wise counselors and maintaining faithfulness to God. When Rehoboam went his own way, things did not go well for his kingdom. When he listened to God, Judah was secure.

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#### QUESTION - [What is the importance of Shechem in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** -Shechem was an ancient biblical city in Israel. Today, the area of Shechem is known as Tell Balata, an archaeological site near Nablus in the West Bank. The town was located between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim in central Israel, just southeast of Samaria. The name *Shechem* means "shoulder" in Hebrew, which is appropriate considering its location as a pass between two mountains.

***Shechem was a place of promise.*** First mentioned in Genesis 12:6–7, Shechem was the location where [Abram](#) stopped at the tree of Moreh and received God's promise of the land. Shechem became part of the Promised Land of Israel, was given to the Kohathites, and served as a Levitical city of refuge (Joshua 21:20–21). Shechem was the place where Joseph's remains were buried (Joshua 24:32). During the time of the divided kingdom of Israel, Shechem was the capital of the northern kingdom for a while (1 Kings 12:1).

***Shechem was a place of commitment.*** In the area of Shechem, the Israelites were reminded of God's covenantal relationship to them, which He had first made to Abraham. Before they entered Canaan, the Israelites had been instructed to pronounce the blessings and the curses of the law on [Mount Gerizim](#) and [Mount Ebal](#), respectively (Deuteronomy 11:26–30). They did this under Joshua's leadership after the battle of Ai (Joshua 8:33). Later, a renewal of the covenant also occurred at Shechem, when Joshua gathered the Israelites to challenge them to follow the Lord (Joshua 24:1, 14–15).

***Shechem was a place of worship.*** When the Lord appeared to him at Shechem, Abram built an altar to God at the site (Genesis 12:7). Abram's grandson, Jacob, also built an altar at Shechem, calling it "El Elohe Israel," or "mighty God of Israel" (Genesis 33:18–20). Even in the time of Joshua, the altar at Shechem was a holy site of the Lord (Joshua 24:26).

***Shechem was a place of man's sin.*** A Hivite chieftain named Hamor was the father of a man named Shechem, who lived in the city that bore his name. Shechem raped Jacob's daughter, [Dinah](#), and two of Jacob's sons avenged their sister by slaughtering all the men in the city, including Shechem and Hamor (Genesis 34:1–29).

In the time of the judges, the Shechemites sided with [Abimelek](#), a son of one of Gideon's concubines (Judges 9:1–6). Abimelek positioned himself as king among the Shechemites, killing all but one of Gideon's other sons. Jotham, the surviving son, pronounced a curse on Abimelek and the Shechemites, and after three years the city of Shechem turned against the would-be king (Judges 9:16–20). In response to Shechem's rejection, Abimelek attacked the city and killed a thousand men and women (Judges 9:48–49; 57).

Shechem is only mentioned in the New Testament in Stephen's sermon (Acts 7:16). Some scholars identify Sychar in Samaria as the ancient city of Shechem (John 4:5–6), but most believe that Sychar was a distinct place.

Shechem is important in the Bible because the city displayed man's sinfulness and failure to properly honor God, while at the same time revealing God's faithfulness. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Shechem was the place where Rehoboam was made king and where the kingdom of Israel was divided** Shechem was the place where Rehoboam had the chance to unite the kingdom but instead caused its division. His failure in leadership at Shechem led to one of the most defining moments in Israel's history—the split between Israel and Judah.

**1. Shechem as the Coronation Site of Rehoboam** After King Solomon died, his son Rehoboam was set to become king. Instead of being crowned in Jerusalem, he went to Shechem because the northern tribes gathered there to decide whether they would accept him as king.

**2. The Division of the Kingdom at Shechem** - The people, led by Jeroboam, asked Rehoboam to ease the heavy burden of labor and taxes that Solomon had placed on them. The **elders** advised Rehoboam to be kind and listen to the people, but he **rejected their counsel** and followed the advice of his younger friends, responding harshly: *"My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."* (1 Kings 12:14) This arrogant response **angered the northern tribes**, leading to a **rebellion** and the formation of the **Northern Kingdom (Israel)** under **Jeroboam**. **Shechem became the first capital** of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12:25).

**3. Why Shechem?** Shechem was an important city in Israel's history: **Abraham** built an altar there (Genesis 12:6-7). **Jacob** settled there and buried foreign idols (Genesis 35:2-4). **Joseph** was buried there (Joshua 24:32). **Joshua renewed Israel's covenant with God** at Shechem (Joshua 24:1). This made it a meaningful place for the tribes to gather and discuss leadership.

**4. The Consequences for Rehoboam** His pride and harshness led to the permanent split of the kingdom: Rehoboam ruled only Judah and Benjamin (Southern Kingdom). Jeroboam ruled the ten northern tribes (Northern Kingdom). This division lasted until both kingdoms were eventually conquered (Israel by Assyria in 722 BC, Judah by Babylon in 586 BC).

**Phillip Ryken** introduces this pivotal chapter 12 with this note - There are two kinds of people in the world: the people who use other people, and the people who get used. This is the thesis of Ken Ivy's book Pimpology: The 48 Laws of the Game. To use Ivy's vulgar categories, everyone is either a pimp or a whore—not just on the streets of the ghetto, but at home, in the business world, and everywhere else in life. He writes:

You are either the kind of person who will have people working for you, bringing you the money, or you are the kind of person who will work for someone else, hand over your hard-earned dough, and let someone tell you what to do. This reality may be offensive to some, but it's real, and if you open your eyes to what is truly going on in this world, you will see that everyone falls into one category or the other. (Ken Ivy, with Karen Hunter, Pimpology: The 48 Laws of the Game)

According to this philosophy of life, there are only the two alternatives: serving or being served. Given the title of his book, it is not hard to guess which category the author has chosen. He is a taker, not a giver. "To be valued," Ivy says, "the key is not to give, but to receive—the more, the better. You don't want to 'earn' your price, you want to 'cost' it." ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

Ken Ivy has taken the devil's part of the bargain, but he is basically right about the choice that everyone faces in life. To serve or to be served?—that is the question. We see the question posed repeatedly in 1 Kings 12, as Rehoboam takes the throne and Jeroboam challenges his kingship. ([1 Kings - Reformed Expository Commentary](#))

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## OUTLINE

- King Rehoboam Acts Foolishly (1Ki 12:1-15)
- The Kingdom Divided (1Ki 12:16-24)
- Jeroboam's Turning Away from God to Idolatry (1Ki 12:25-33)

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**Dale Ralph Davis** in [1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#) summarizes chapter 12 - The narrative is easy to follow. There are two major sections (vv. 1–15 and 16–24), each of these ending on the same theological note (vv. 15, 24). One could set it out like this:

**Assembly** (vv. 1–15) (Stupidity under the Sovereignty of God)

Appeal to the king, 1–5

Consultation with advisors, 6–11

Declaration to the people, 12–14

Explanation of the event, 15

**Aftermath** (vv. 16–24) (Tragedy in view of the Promise of God)

Rebellion, 16–20

Restraint, 21–24

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1 Kings 12:1-17 THE desire for the approval of others makes us do strange things. Because of people pressure, we wear clothing that is fashionable whether we like it or not, we accept invitations we would rather decline, and we work much harder than we want to for a level of financial success we don't need. Most regrettably, however, we sometimes choose to follow a crowd that encourages us to do what is wrong.

In 1 Kings 12, we read about King Rehoboam, who also succumbed to people pressure. He rejected the good advice of older wise men who had known his father, Solomon, and the mistakes he had made as king. Rehoboam listened instead to the counsel of his peers, young advisors with whom he had grown up. They were probably motivated by pride and a desire for power, and he was obviously swayed by their influence. How dearly he paid for his mistake!

People pressure. We are all influenced by it. It bears down on us from all directions. But we can choose the path we will take. If we are swayed by the proud or by those who love money, live for pleasure, and long for power, people pressure will lead us down the path that ends in destruction. But if we listen to those who are humble and good, and if we want to please them, we will take the way that pleases God.—HVL

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**D A CARSON** - Borrow [FOR THE LOVE OF GOD page 308](#) 1 Kings 12; Philippians 3; Ezekiel 42; Psalm 94

THE DIVISION OF THE unified kingdom into two unequal parts—the kingdom of Israel with its ten tribes in the north and the kingdom of Judah with two tribes in the south (1 Kings 12)—once again presents us with a remarkable dynamic between God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

God had already predicted, through Ahijah the prophet, that Jeroboam would take away the ten northern tribes from Solomon's successor (11:26–40). Jeroboam was explicitly told that if he then remained faithful to the Lord, the Lord would establish a dynasty for him. Yet the first thing that Jeroboam does, once he secures the northern tribes, is erect golden calves at Bethel and Dan, and consecrate non-Levitical priests, because he does not want his people making the trek to the temple in Jerusalem (12:25–33). Doesn't he realize that if God has the power to give him the ten tribes, and the concern to warn him about disloyalty, he certainly has the power to preserve the integrity of the northern kingdom even if the people go up to Jerusalem for the high festivals? But Jeroboam makes his political judgments, refuses to obey God, and shows himself ungrateful for what has come his way. His only enduring legacy is that throughout the rest of the Old Testament he is designated as "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin" (e.g., 2 Kings 14:24).

More inexplicable yet is Rehoboam, Solomon's son. Solomon may have been a skilled administrator of justice, but by the end of his life his enormously expensive projects were wearing down his people. Their representatives assure Rehoboam that they will be loyal to him if only he will lighten their load a little. The elders assure Rehoboam that their request is reasonable: he should adopt the stance of being "a servant to these people and serve them," for then he will discover that "they will always be your servants" (12:7). With massive insensitivity and piercing stupidity, Rehoboam adopts instead the wretched advice of "young men" full of themselves and their opinions, with no understanding of people generally and of this nation in particular (12:8). So Rehoboam responds harshly, not only rejecting the people's request but promising more demands and increased brutality. And suddenly the rebellion is underway.

Yet the writer comments, "So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite" (12:15). God's sovereignty (see, for example, the meditation for June 3) does not excuse or mitigate Rehoboam's stupidity and Jeroboam's rebellion; their stupidity and sin do not mean that God has lost control. Such mysteries of providence make it difficult to "read" history; they also prove immensely comforting and make it possible for us to rest in Romans 8:28.

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**1 Kings 12:2 Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it, he was living in Egypt (for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon).**

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- **Jeroboam the son of Nebat:** 1Ki 11:26-31,40 2Ch 10:2,3

#### **Related Passages:**

1 Kings 11:26-31+ Then Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king. 27 Now this was the reason why he rebelled against the king: Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the breach of the city of his father David. 28 Now the man Jeroboam was a valiant warrior, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he

appointed him over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph. 29 It came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field. 30 Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces. 31 He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes

2 Chronicles 10:2+ When Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was in Egypt where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon), Jeroboam returned from Egypt.

**Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it, he was living in Egypt-** What did he hear? Or what was **IT**? He heard Solomon was dead and son Rehoboam was about to succeed his father.

**For** (term of explanation) **he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon** 1 Kings 11:40+ says "Solomon sought therefore to put Jeroboam to death; but Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt to Shishak king of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until the death of Solomon."

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**QUESTION** - [What is the story of Rehoboam and Jeroboam? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**ANSWER** - [Rehoboam](#) and [Jeroboam](#) were both kings reigning in [Israel's divided kingdom](#). Rehoboam was one of Solomon's sons and king of Judah in the south (1 Kings 11:43). Jeroboam was one of Solomon's former officials, an Ephraimite, and king of Israel in the north (1 Kings 11:26).

While [Solomon](#) was still alive and Jeroboam was working for him, a prophet named [Ahijah](#) told Jeroboam that God would take ten of the twelve tribes of Israel away from Solomon's son Rehoboam and give them to Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:29–31). This judgment against Solomon's house came because they had forsaken God and worshiped idols (verse 33). Along with the announcement that Jeroboam would be king, God gave him a conditional promise: "If you do whatever I command you and walk in obedience to me and do what is right in my eyes by obeying my decrees and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you" (verse 38). When Solomon heard that God had chosen Jeroboam to rule, the king tried to kill Jeroboam, who fled to Egypt (verse 40).

After Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king, and Jeroboam returned from Egypt (1 Kings 12:1–2). But Rehoboam was a vain and foolish man. Jeroboam, a "mighty man of valor," warned Rehoboam not to make the same mistake his father had made by taxing them heavily to finance a luxurious lifestyle (verses 3–4). Rehoboam defied the advice to lighten the yoke of oppression: "My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions!" (1 Kings 12:14).

The people responded to Rehoboam's harshness by rebelling against the new king and making Jeroboam king over Israel (1 Kings 12:16–20). Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin followed Rehoboam, son of Solomon. The other ten tribes sided with Jeroboam. King Rehoboam gathered 180,000 warriors in an attempt to take back the ten tribes, but God prevented it, saying, "This is my doing" (1 Kings 12:24). So King Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Jeroboam reigned from Shechem and later from Tirzah in Israel.

Once established in the northern kingdom, King Jeroboam feared that, if the people traveled to the temple in Jerusalem to worship, they would return to Rehoboam. So he set up centers of worship in Bethel and Dan, building golden calves and telling the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28). Jeroboam made shrines on the high places, installed priests who were not of the tribe of Levi, appointed a festival, and sacrificed at the altars (1 Kings 12:31–33). In spite of God's offer to establish his dynasty in Israel, Jeroboam chose [idolatry](#), and the prophet Ahijah told Jeroboam that his family would not endure (1 Kings 14).

As Jeroboam was turning people away from God in the northern kingdom, Rehoboam was turning people away from God in the southern kingdom. Rehoboam reigned in Jerusalem for seventeen years, but "he did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord" (2 Chronicles 12:14). After Rehoboam there were good kings and bad kings over Judah. Every other generation or so, a great king stepped forward and turned the people back to the true God. That never happened among the kings of the northern kingdom. They all followed the mold of Jeroboam. Jeroboam reigned over the ten tribes of Israel for twenty-two years and was succeeded by his son Nadab. But then Nadab was murdered after two years on the throne, and the assassin killed all of Jeroboam's family, fulfilling Ahijah's prophecy (1 Kings 15:25–30). All subsequent monarchs of the kingdom of Israel followed Jeroboam's lead. Not one of them was faithful to Israel's God.

The schism that occurred during the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam was the end of a united Israel. This division continued during their reigns: "There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam" (2 Chronicles 12:15) and for centuries afterward.

**1 Kings 12:3 Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying,**

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:3+ So they sent and summoned him. When Jeroboam and all Israel came, they spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

**Then** - Time phrase marking sequence in a narrative.

**They** - Who is **they**? In context this is most likely the leaders of the 10 northern tribes. The 10 northern tribes of Israel were unhappy with Solomon's rule and sought relief from oppressive labor and taxes. **They sent** for Jeroboam, who had previously rebelled against Solomon (1 Kings 11:26-40) and was in exile in Egypt. The leaders of Israel ("they") gathered and called Jeroboam back to lead them in negotiating with Rehoboam.

**Sent and called him** (JEROBOAM), **and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel** ([see note on name](#)) **came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying** - [Rehoboam](#) is king but Jeroboam knows that he will be king soon because of the prophecy of Abijah (1Ki 11:26-31+).

**John Mayer:** Because Jeroboam was a man of great note among the people—having been made a prince over them by Solomon in the past—the people sent for him as the most capable man to speak on their behalf to Rehoboam concerning their grievance. For he made it clear that he and the people would revolt if no redress of errors was promised, and that he would be set up as the king of the people. And it is to be assumed that the people had heard of the prophecy given to Jeroboam by Ahijah, who was of the same tribe. That is, the people were aware of God's purpose in advancing Jeroboam, which is why the people sought his help above others. And that's how Jeroboam came to be the spokesman for the people.

**Peter Wallace:** Notice that Jeroboam is placed at the head of the petitioners in verse 3 and again in verse 12. This is a very defiant move on the part of the people. They have called the one person whom Rehoboam most hates as their spokesman. And they are saying to the crown prince, "Lighten our yoke or else we will not serve you." This is plainly not a group of people who believe in the Divine Right of Kings. You may be the son of David, but remember that we didn't always follow David! What makes you think that we will follow you! Give us the wrong answer – and we'll follow Jeroboam!

**1 Kings 12:4 "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."**

- **our yoke:** 1Ki 4:7,20,22,23,25 9:15,22,23 1Sa 8:11-18 2Ch 10:4,5 Mt 11:29,30 Mt 23:4 1Jn 5:3

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:4+ "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."

## ACCUSATIONS AGAINST SOLOMON'S FORCED LABOR

**Your father made our yoke** ([ol](#); ) **hard** (qashah) - Apparently this is Jeoboam addressing Rehoboam. This yoke is a metaphor for oppression and would include labor needed for Solomon's building projects (1Ki 5:13-14), for draft into military service and taxation. Many Israelites, especially those in the northern tribes, felt the weight of his policies and wanted relief under his son Rehoboam. The Septuagint uses a picturesque Greek word for **yoke**, the noun kloios which was a dog-collar, especially a large wooden collar, put on prisoners or mischievous dogs.

**THOUGHT** - What a difference between the **yoke** of David's son Solomon and David's greater Son Messiah who called all who would hear to "**Take My yoke** upon you and **learn** from Me, for I am gentle and humble in



heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My **yoke** is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30+)

**Now therefore** (term of conclusion - in view of the heavy yoke) **lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy (kabad) yoke ('ol) which he put on us, and we will serve (abad) you** The people, led by Jeroboam, asked Rehoboam to ease the burden. They were essentially saying in effect "We will follow you if you rule with fairness and lighten the oppression we faced under Solomon."

**David Guzik** "God warned Israel about this in 1 Samuel 8:10-19+, when through Samuel He spoke of what a king would take from Israel. After the warning, the people still wanted a king, and now they knew what it was like to be ruled by a taking king. Sadly, the elders of Israel made no spiritual demand or request on Rehoboam. Seemingly, the gross idolatry and apostasy of Solomon didn't bother them at all.

**1 Kings 12:5 Then he said to them, "Depart for three days, then return to me." So the people departed.**

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:5+ He said to them, **Return** to me again in three days." So the people departed.

### REHOBAM PONDERS REQUEST TO LIGHTEN THE LOAD

**Then he (REHOBAM) said to them, "Depart for three days, then return to me." So the people departed** Rehoboam ask for 3 days to give him time to consult his advisors on how to respond to the people's request. But as the story unfolds he chooses the wrong advisors.

**Ryken** - The choice that Rehoboam faced was simple: to go easy or to go hard, to stay the course, maintaining the status quo, or to give the northern tribes change they could believe in. To help him make his decision, Rehoboam summoned two sets of advisers. The advice they gave him was so completely contradictory that it clarified his choice. It also clarifies the basic choice we all have to make in all our relationships with other people, whether to serve or to be served. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

**1 Kings 12:6 King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel me to answer this people?"**

- **consulted:** 2Sa 16:20 17:5 Job 12:12 32:7 Pr 27:10 Jer 42:2-5 43:2

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:6+ Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel me to answer this people?"

### REHOBAM WISELY CONSULTS ELDERS

**King Rehobam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel me to answer this people** - From the context the **elders** whom King Rehoboam consulted were most likely older men who were experienced advisors who had served under King Solomon, men who had firsthand experience with Solomon's leadership and governance.

**Ryken** - Rehoboam was about forty-one years old at the time (see 1 Kings 14:21), but these men were even older, which gave them every opportunity to learn from experience. Older people are not always wiser, of course, but often they are, and the relative age of these men commands our respect, as it should have commanded the respect of Rehoboam. As Solomon said in one of his famous proverbs, "gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life" (Prov. 16:31). Therefore, it is wise for us to listen to our elders. That was especially true in this case because these men had served under Solomon, who was the wisest of all earthly kings. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

**J.A. Thompson:** The elders were important in Israel's earlier patriarchal and tribal society (2 Sam 3:17; 5:3; 17:4, 15; 1 Kgs 20:7–8; 1 Chr 11:3). It would have been a wise and gracious decision by Rehoboam to follow the elders' advice. (See [1, 2 Chronicles: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition](#))

**1 Kings 12:7** Then they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

- **If you will be a servant** 2Ch 10:6,7 Pr 15:1 Mk 10:43-44 Php 2:7-11
- speak good: 1Ki 12:13 2Sa 15:3-6 Ec 10:4 Zec 1:13

#### Related Passages:

Mark 10:43-44+ "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; 44and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.

2 Chronicles 10:7+ They spoke to him, saying, "If you will be kind to this people and please them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

### ELDERS GIVE WISE WORDS

**Then they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant (['ebed](#); Lxx - [doulos](#)) to this people today, and will serve ([abad](#); Lxx - [douleuo](#)) them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants (['ebed](#); Lxx - [doulos](#)) forever** - In 2Ch 10:7 instead of "be a servant" it says "if you will be kind." The elders had been exposed to the wisdom of Solomon and here they give his son wise advice to lighten the load and treat them amicably. This would ensure their allegiance to the crown. They basically tell him to practice Pr 15:1 "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. "

**Ryken** - them, then they will be your servants forever" (1 Kings 12:7). With all their experience in politics, these old men knew that even kings require the consent of the governed. If Rehoboam spoke kindly to Jeroboam and the other challengers, answering them with gentle diplomacy, he would win them over. The elders also understood that the person who rules the most people is called to serve the most people. Thus they advised Rehoboam to make himself the servant of Israel. In the words of Richard Phillips, "The old men counseled a course of godly humility, servant leadership, and moderation in his exercise of power." This was sound advice, based on the biblical principle of servant-leadership. The king is the ruler and defender of his people. He is called by God to protect them from danger and provide for their needs. It is his responsibility to ensure that the citizens of his realm are well cared for, that they have the full opportunity to thrive in business, in culture, and in the life of the family. To that end, the king labors with all his might to give his people what they need to flourish. We need the same kind of leadership today in the home, in the church, and in public life. Husbands and fathers are good servant-leaders when they pray for their wives, as well as care for the emotional and physical needs of their children. Pastors and elders are good servant-leaders when they bless the people in their churches with words of spiritual encouragement. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

**John Mayer: A Gentle Response Turns Away Wrath.** The book of Proverbs says: "A fool gives vent to his spirit." Yet in this case the people had already become exasperated with the new king. But it certainly would have aided Rehoboam to have been lenient and to have replied gently at this time. For this is a general principle among kings: By no means should they show rigor in the beginning of their reign. Rather they should seek to win the hearts of the subjects of their kingdom. (SEE [1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles: Old Testament Volume 5](#))

**Peter Wallace:** The old men understood the situation. They knew that if Rehoboam humbles himself, the people will follow him. But the young men think that humility is a sign of weakness. They confuse servant leadership with wimpiness. Humility is not wimpiness! It takes courage and strength to be humble.

**1 Kings 12:8** But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him.

- 2Ch 10:8 25:15,16 Pr 1:2-5,25,30 19:20 25:12 Ec 10:2,3

## Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:8+ But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him.

## A FOOLISH DECISION BY REHOBOAM

**But** - Term of contrast. Marks a change of direction. This is one of the more strategic "buts" in the Bible for it literally changed the history of the nation of Israel! Had Rehoboam accepted the advice of the elders, presumably there would have been no division. But of course that would not fulfill the prophecy of Yahweh that the nation would be divided. Psalm 115:3+ says "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." I am also reminded of Pr 21:1 in which Solomon wrote "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD. He turns it wherever He wishes." In the present context Yahweh seems to have turned the heart of Rehoboam. In any event Rehoboam still made a choice of his will to forsake (Lxx - [egkatalaipo](#) is in the active voice = volitional choice) the counsel of the elders. Once again we see the juxtaposition of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

**Tony Merida** adds "Over it all, however, is God. The writer says, "The king did not listen to the people, because this turn of events came from the LORD to carry out His word" (v. 15). Thus we see divine sovereignty and human responsibility here (cf. Ex 4:21; 7:3-4; 7:13). This event isn't "mechanical" (Davis, 1 Kings, 128). God didn't violate Rehoboam's will. The young king made his own stupid decision. Yet this whole event happened through a turn of events from the Lord. God isn't surprised. God is actually accomplishing His purposes. We see this sort of dynamic—sovereignty and responsibility—at work in the cross of Christ (Acts 2:23)....This should encourage all believers in general and those living under oppressive governments in particular. God will have the last word. God is in charge. We may not be able to answer all of the questions related to divine sovereignty, but that's not the point. The point is, because God reigns supremely, we should humble ourselves before Him and trust Him. (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#)) (**COMMENT** - This thought fits perfectly with the phrase "it was a turn of events from the LORD" in 1Ki 12:15)

There is an interesting difference in the Hebrew Bible which says Rehoboam was 41 (1Ki 14:21; 2Ch 12:13) at his ascension but the Greek Septuagint says he was 16 (cf 2 Chr. 13:7).

**He forsook** (['azab](#); Lxx - [egkatalaipo](#)) **the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him** - Forsaking the wisdom of the older counselors, Rehoboam foolishly consulted his younger peers, much to his chagrin. These peers were likely in their late 30's to early 40's.

**David Guzik** This is a common phenomenon today – what some call *advice shopping*. The idea is that you keep asking different people for advice until you find someone who will tell you what you want to hear. This is an unwise and ungodly way to get counsel. It is better to have a few trusted counselors you will listen to even when they tell you what you don't want to hear.

**G Campbell Morgan** - The old men had counselled Rehoboam to conciliate the people by yielding to their appeal for relief from burdens imposed upon them by Solomon. His folly was manifested in his allowing himself to be influenced by the advice of the hot-headed youth of his court, who counselled him to rule autocratically, and to impose still heavier burdens on the people. The advice of the elders was inspired by desire for true national well-being. The advice of the young men was inspired by selfish passion for place and power. The whole situation was a difficult one. There is no doubt that Solomon had been an autocrat, and had ruled with a hand of iron under the velvet. Some of the worst tyrants the world has ever had have- robbed the people of their rights, and kept them passive by the drug of gorgeous display. So did Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, and so did Charles I. With the death of Solomon men breathed anew, and discovered their chains. Now was the time for a bid for freedom. Jeroboam returned from Egypt to be the spokesman of this movement. Here was Rehoboam's chance, and he missed it by taking wrongly motivated advice. The result was immediate. Ten tribes revolted. The nation was rent in twain, and, judging by human calculation, Judah was on the verge of a war which would have ended in her defeat and subjugation. Then God interfered. No human folly has ever been permitted to continue long enough to thwart His purposes. Shemaiah, a prophet of God, declared to Rehoboam that the revolt was in the Divine plan. He immediately submitted; and the period of the two kingdoms commenced.

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## P G MATTHEW —1 Kings 12:8

In 1 Kings 12, the young king Rehoboam was faced with a major crisis: ten of the twelve Israelite tribes threatened to rebel and break away from his kingdom. Surely Rehoboam needed divine wisdom to avoid a national catastrophe.

The king was not without the necessary resources. He knew that the king of Israel was commanded to study God's word and seek the Lord in prayer, as his father Solomon had done in his youth. Yet Rehoboam failed to do this. Instead, he leaned onto his own understanding, and the country suffered a devastating loss—permanent partition.

It appears the king approached his decision with a self-confidence born out of arrogance and pride. Rehoboam came to the elders with his mind already made up, and when their counsel crossed his will, he found younger men who would pamper his ego and rubberstamp his plans.

There also were well-known prophets in the land at that time, such as Ahijah, the prophet of Shiloh, and Shemaiah, the man of God. These men were God's gifts to the nation to give godly guidance to the leaders responsible for the people's welfare. Yet we do not see Rehoboam inquiring of these prophets of God.

Most importantly, we do not read that Rehoboam sought counsel from the covenant Lord through earnest prayer and serious study of the Scriptures. The king's disregard for the Bible should not surprise us, for we read in the parallel account, "After Rehoboam's position as king was established . . . he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD" (2 Chron. 12:1).

We all will face important decisions that will impact our family's and our church's welfare. If we do not want to repeat King Rehoboam's grievous mistakes, we must begin by walking in humility and holiness. Then we must earnestly seek the Lord with prayer and fasting, asking for wisdom. Finally, after we have wrestled in honest prayer, we must come to the men of God who have the word of God and accept their counsel so that we may go forward with the assurance that our decision is of God.

**1 Kings 12:9 So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'"**

- 1Ki 22:6-8 2Sa 17:5,6 2Ch 10:9 18:5-7

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:9+ So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'"

### REHOBOAM'S QUESTION TO HIS PEERS

**So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us -** What is sad is there is no mention of either consulting the Word of God or asking the God of the Word His counsel.

**Ryken** - To see how closely the new king identified with these men, we need only notice the pronoun he uses when he addresses them in verse 9: "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to **me**, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on **us**'?" This was the same question that Rehoboam asked in verse 6, only there he had addressed the old men as "**you**." Here he uses the pronoun "**we**." Even before he makes his decision, we sense that Rehoboam will do whatever his friends tell him to do. There is always a strong temptation to do what our friends tell us to do rather than to do what God says is right. This temptation is especially strong for young people....The danger here is not just for teenagers, however. Even later in life, it is tempting to disregard the counsel of people who are older than we are, assuming that they are out of touch and out of date. Young adults are wise to listen to older Christians, especially in matters of love and romance. Young parents are wise to listen to fathers and mothers whose children have grown up to serve the Lord. Young pastors are wise to consult seasoned, godly elders in the church. At every stage of life, the Lord provides someone to give us good counsel—usually someone who is older and wiser than we are. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

**1 Kings 12:10 The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' But you shall speak to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins!**

- **Thus you shall say:** 2Sa 17:7-13
- **My little finger:** 2Ch 10:10,11 Pr 10:14 Pr 18:6,7 Pr 28:25 Pr 29:23 Isa 47:6

#### Related Passages:

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Proverbs 18:6-7 A fool's lips bring strife, And his mouth calls for blows. 7 A fool's mouth is his ruin, And his lips are the snare of his soul.

Proverbs 28:25 An arrogant man stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.

2 Chronicles 10:10+ The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to the people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter for us.' Thus you shall say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins!

## **FOOLISH ADVICE LEADS TO FATAL CONSEQUENCES**

**The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' - Rehoboam would have been wise to consult the words of his father ([see above](#)). These young men likely never experienced the heavy yoke and thus had no compassion for the masses who did.**

**But you shall speak to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins - Their advice is the opposite of that given by the elders. A proverbial mode of expression: "My little finger is thicker than my father's thigh." Rehoboam is saying in essence as much as the thigh surpasses the little finger in thickness (but see Ryken below), so much does my power exceed that of my father; and the use I shall make of it to oppress and tax you shall be in proportion. Foolish, arrogant move to think he was more powerful than his father Solomon!**

**Ryken on My little finger - The language they used to say this was crude, rude, and abusive—an obvious sign of spiritual immaturity. When they talked about Rehoboam's "little finger," they actually said "little one," referring to a different part of his anatomy altogether. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))**

**Iain Provan adds "The Hebrew here is lit. "my little one is thicker than my father's loins." If the "little one" is a finger, this is the only place in the OT where it is so. Given the location of the loins in the lower part of the body, and the fact that power and sexual potency were very much associated in the ancient Near East (cf. the commentary on 1 Kgs. 1:1–4), it may well be that the "little one" is in fact the male sexual organ. It is certainly not beyond the bounds of possibility that young men might respond to a challenge by using language containing fairly basic sexual imagery. Whatever is the case, the claim is that Rehoboam is a bigger man than his father—a power to be reckoned with. (See [1 & 2 Kings \(Understanding the Bible Commentary Series\) - Page 58](#))**

**1 Kings 12:11 'Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'**

- I will add: Ex 1:13,14 5:5-9,18 1Sa 8:18 2Ch 16:10 Isa 58:6 Jer 27:11 Jer 28:13,14
- scorpions: 1Ki 12:14 Eze 2:6 Rev 9:3-10

### **Related Passages:**

2 Chronicles 10:11+ 'Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'

Figurative Whip with Scorpions

**Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke (['ol](#); [kloios](#)), I will add to your yoke (['ol](#); [kloios](#)); my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions**

**[Bob Utley](#) on scorpions - There has never been agreement among commentators about the meaning of "scorpions" (BDB 875). Jewish scholars suggest it is a whip that hurts worse than a normal whip, possibly like the whip of the later Romans with pieces of bone or metal tied to the end of the leather thongs.**

Should you rebel or become disaffected, my father's whip shall be a scorpion in my hand. His was chastisement, mine shall be punishment. Celsius and Hiller conjecture that {akrabbim} denotes a thorny kind of shrub, whose prickles are of a venomous nature,

called by the Arabs scorpion thorns, from the exquisite pain which they inflict. But the Chaldee renders it {marginin,} and the Syriac {moragyal,} i.e., [maragnai,] scourges; and in the parallel place of Chronicles the Arabic has {saut,} a scourge. Isidore, and after him Calmet and others, assert that the scorpion was a sort of severe whip, the lashes of which were armed with knots or points that sunk into and tore the flesh.

This is a common phenomenon today – what some call *advice shopping*. The idea is that you keep asking different people for advice until you find someone who will tell you what you want to hear. This is an unwise and ungodly way to get counsel. It is better to have a few trusted counselors you will listen to even when they tell you what you don't want to hear.

**Russell Dilday** - With a dozen rash words, Rehoboam, the bungling dictator, opened the door for four hundred years of strife, weakness, and, eventually, the destruction of the entire nation." (See [The Preacher's Commentary 1 and 2 Kings - Page 238](#))

**1 Kings 12:12** Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."

- **Return to me on the third day:** 1Ki 12:5 2Ch 10:12-14

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:12+ 'So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."

**SO FAR  
SO GOOD**

**Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, 'Return to me on the third day** - This is as wise as Rehoboam is in this situation, giving himself 3 days. At least he takes time to ponder the two divergent opinions regarding what he should do.

**1 Kings 12:13** The king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him,

- **answered:** 1Ki 20:6-11 Ge 42:7,30 Ex 5:2 10:28 Jdg 12:1-6 1Sa 20:10,30,31 1Sa 25:10,11 2Sa 19:43 Pr 10:11,32 15:1 18:23 Ec 10:12 Jas 3:17
- **harshly** Ge 16:6
- **forsook:** Pr 13:20

#### Related Passages:

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

2 Chronicles 10:13+ 'The king answered them harshly, and King Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the elders.

**A HARSH WORD  
STIRS UP ANGER**

**The king answered the people harshly** ([qasheh](#); Lxx - [skleros](#)), **for he forsook** (['azab](#); Lxx - [egkataleipo](#)) **the advice of the elders which they had given him** - Now the trouble begins. Clearly Rehoboam did not read or at least did not heed his father's wise advice in Pr 15:1+ that "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger."

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**Harsh** (hard, obstinate, stiff, stubborn) ([07186](#)) [qasheh](#) means hard, harsh, cruel, severe, strong, violent, fierce. This term's basic function is to describe something as hard. The root **qāshî** apparently arose from an agricultural milieu. It emphasizes, first, the subjective effect exerted by an overly heavy yoke, which is hard to bear, and secondarily, the rebellious resistance of oxen to the yoke. Thus we see hard labor (Ex 1:14, Ex 6:9, 1 Ki 12:4, 2 Chr 10:4, Isa 14:3), Joseph's hard words (Ge 42:7, 30), Nabal was harsh (1 Sa 25:3), Israel was often described as stubborn or obstinate (Ex 32:9, 33:3, 33:5, 34:9, Dt 9:6, 13, Dt 31:27, Jdg 2:19), obstinate (Is 48:4, Ezek 3:7), oppressed ("hard") in spirit (Hannah in 1 Sa 1:15), hard or difficult legal question (Ex. 18:26), severe battle (2

Sa 2:17), wind (Isa. 27:8), vision (Isa. 21:2); difficult times (Job 30:25), a relentless sword (Isa. 27:1) and fierce jealousy (Song 8:6). The Septuagint translates qasheh here in Exodus 6:9 and here in 1Ki 12:13 with [skleros](#) meaning literally hard, dry, rough; figuratively in the NT; (a) of words harsh, unpleasant, hard to take, intolerable

**QASHEH - 46V** - Gen. 42:7; Gen. 42:30; Exod. 1:14; Exod. 6:9; Exod. 18:26; Exod. 32:9; Exod. 33:3; Exod. 33:5; Exod. 34:9; Deut. 9:6; Deut. 9:13; Deut. 26:6; Deut. 31:27; Jdg. 2:19; Jdg. 4:24; 1 Sam. 1:15; 1 Sam. 20:10; 1 Sam. 25:3; 2 Sam. 2:17; 2 Sam. 3:39; 1 Ki. 12:4; 1 Ki. 12:13; 1 Ki. 14:6; 2 Chr. 10:4; 2 Chr. 10:13; Job 30:25; Ps. 60:3; Cant. 8:6; Isa. 14:3; Isa. 19:4; Isa. 21:2; Isa. 27:1; Isa. 27:8; Isa. 48:4; Ezek. 2:4; Ezek. 3:7

**1 Kings 12:14 and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."**

- **the advice of the young men:** 2Ch 22:4,5 Es 1:16-21 2:2-4 Pr 12:5 Isa 19:11-13 Da 6:7
- **My father made:** 1Ki 12:10,11 Pr 13:10 Pr 16:18 Pr 17:14 Ec 7:8 Jas 3:14-18 4:1,2

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:14+ He spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."

### REHOBAM'S BIG MISTAKE

**and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions** - Oh, how we need to watch our words, for these harsh words cause a rift that would last for the next 400 years and eventually led to destruction of the entire nation. I don't know if this psalm was written but it is one Rehoboam would have been advised to pray and practice

Ps 141:3-4 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. 4 Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.

**THOUGHT** - This is a great passage to memorize and then to practice!

Again we see that Rehoboam either did not read or heed the wise words of his father...

Proverbs 12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are just, But the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

Proverbs 13:10 Through insolence comes nothing but strife, But wisdom is with those who receive counsel.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

Proverbs 17:14 The beginning of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.

**David Guzik** Rehoboam was a fool. Ironically, his father Solomon worried about losing all he worked for under a foolish successor: *Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity* (Ecclesiastes 2:18-19).

**1 Kings 12:15 So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn of events from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat**

- the cause: 1Ki 12:24 22:23 De 2:30 Jdg 14:4 2Ch 10:15 22:7 25:16,20 Ps 5:10 Am 3:6 Ac 2:23 4:28
- **that He might establish His word** 1Ki 11:11,29-38 1Sa 15:29 2Sa 17:14 2Ki 9:36 10:10 Isa 14:13-17 Isa 46:10,11 Da 4:35 Joh 19:23,24,28,29,32-37 Ac 3:17 Ac 13:27-29

#### Related Passages:

1 Kings 11:11 So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.

1 Kings 11:31-36 He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes 32 (but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel), 33 because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and observing My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David did. 34 'Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes; 35 but I will take the kingdom from his son's hand and give it to you, even ten tribes. 36 'But to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name.

2 Chronicles 10:15+ So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of events from God that the LORD might establish His word, which He spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

## GOD SUPERINTENDS SETUP FOR DIVISION

**So the king did not listen** (Lxx - [akouo](#) - active voice = choice of his will) **to the people**- Here we see Rehoboam makes a volitional choice to refuse to listen to the people. Davis asks "Are Rehoboam and his favorites arrogant, cocky, and stupid? Probably!"

**For** (term of explanation) **it was a turn of events from the LORD- NET** = "the LORD was instigating this turn of events." **NLT** = "This turn of events was the will of the LORD." Notice a pattern seen throughout the Scriptures of the juxtaposition of man's (Rehoboam's) responsibility and Yahweh's sovereign control over "His-story!" (See [related topic](#))

**Spurgeon:** Notice also, dear friends, that God is in events which are produced by the sin and the stupidity of men. This breaking up of the kingdom of Solomon into two parts was the result of Solomon's sin and Rehoboam's folly; yet God was in it: "This thing is from me, saith the Lord." God had nothing to do with the sin or the folly, but in some way which we can never explain, in a mysterious way in which we are to believe without hesitation, God was in it all.

**That** (term of purpose) - In other words the writer gives the purpose (or result) of this **turn of events** from Yahweh.

**He might establish** (NET - bring to pass; ESV - fulfill) **His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat** - Divine prophetic promises made, prophetic promises kept!

As **Dale Ralph Davis** says "God stirred up the people to revolt from a man who had neither skill nor humanity to govern them. God serves his own wise and righteous purpose by the imprudences and iniquities of men, and snares sinners in the work of their own hands. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him." ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

*Rehoboam is fatally responsible  
even for what God is seen to have already decreed.*

**R S Wallace** adds "The writer clearly demonstrates that it was Rehoboam's pride and stupidity that brought about the split in the kingdom. Nevertheless he affirms that God Himself took control of everything that happened and worked His will through it all. Rehoboam did not listen to the people "for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD, that He might fulfill His word." God is always LORD over what happens. He knows and directs the course of events. Yet each person involved has to make real and crucial decisions about his or her own part in what is taking place. God is always ready in His grace to relax and change His own course if His people in their freedom will repent and change their. Rehoboam is fatally responsible even for what God is seen to have already decreed." (BORROW Readings in [1 Kings : an interpretation arranged for personal and group Bible study with questions and notes. PAGE 80](#))

**Tony Merida** - Over it all, however, is God. The writer says, "The king did not listen to the people, because **this turn of events came from the LORD** to carry out His word" (v. 15). Thus we see divine sovereignty and human responsibility here (cf. Exod 4:21; 7:3-4; 7:13). This event isn't "mechanical" (Davis, 1 Kings, 128). God didn't violate Rehoboam's will. The young king made his own stupid decision. Yet this whole event happened through a turn of events from the Lord. God isn't surprised. God is actually



accomplishing His purposes. We see this sort of dynamic—sovereignty and responsibility—at work in the cross of Christ (Acts 2:23). In the middle of political and social chaos, we should remember that God sits in the heavens and does as He pleases (Ps 115:3). This should encourage all believers in general and those living under oppressive governments in particular. God will have the last word. God is in charge. We may not be able to answer all of the questions related to divine sovereignty, but that's not the point. The point is, because God reigns supremely, we should humble ourselves before Him and trust Him. (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#))

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#### **QUESTION - [How does God's sovereignty work together with free will?](#)**

**ANSWER** - It is impossible for us to fully understand the dynamics of a holy God molding and shaping the will of man. Scripture is clear that God knows the future (Matthew 6:8; Psalm 139:1-4) and has total sovereign control over all things (Colossians 1:16-17; Daniel 4:35). The Bible also says that we must choose God or be eternally separated from Him. We are held responsible for our actions (Romans 3:19; 6:23; 9:19-21). How these facts work together is impossible for a finite mind to comprehend (Romans 11:33-36).

People can take one of two extremes in regard to this question. Some emphasize the sovereignty of God to the point that human beings are little more than robots simply doing what they have been sovereignly programmed to do. Others emphasize free will to the point of God not having complete control and/or knowledge of all things. Neither of these positions is biblical. The truth is that God does not violate our wills by choosing us and redeeming us. Rather, He changes our hearts so that our wills choose Him. "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19), and "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16).

What are we to do then? First, we are to trust in the Lord, knowing that He is in control (Proverbs 3:5-6). God's sovereignty is supposed to be a comfort to us, not an issue to be concerned about or debate over. Second, we are to live our lives making wise decisions in accordance with God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:5). There will be no excuses before God for why we chose to disobey Him. We will have no one to blame but ourselves for our sin. Last but not least, we are to worship the Lord, praising Him that He is so wonderful, infinite, powerful, full of grace and mercy—and sovereign.

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**D A Carson** - 1 Kings 11:11–13, 29–39; 12:1ff (cf. 2 Chronicles 10:15; 11:4)

That the behaviour of Rehoboam was foolish, immature, harsh and unsympathetic cannot be doubted. Nevertheless, the entire event—including Rehoboam's folly—is attributed to a 'turn of affairs' (1 Kgs. 12:15; 2 Chr. 10:15) from Yahweh.<sup>12</sup> At least part of the reason for Yahweh's action is given to us: he was fulfilling his word through Ahijah the prophet (11:29–39). This in turn arose out of Solomon's idolatry (11:11–13; cf. Exod. 20:5b=Deut. 5:9b), and therefore Yahweh's action was in part judicial. It functions further to explain why Rehoboam did not fight. But the crucial point to observe is the tension between God's sovereignty over the event, and Rehoboam's reprehensible conduct within that framework. The sovereignty-responsibility tension is certainly not eased by the later developments of Jeroboam's evil (14:6ff.). (Borrow [Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility page 12](#))

#### **Related Resource:**

- 13 page article by J I Packer entitled [Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility](#)

**1 Kings 12:16** When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!" So Israel departed to their tents.

- **What portion:** 2Sa 20:1 2Ch 10:16
- **to your tents:** 1Ki 22:17,36
- **Now look after your own house:** 1Ki 11:13,34,36,39 2Sa 7:15,16 Ps 2:1-6 76:10 89:29-37 132:17 Isa 7:2,6,7 9:6,7 Jer 23:5,6 33:15,16,21 Lu 19:14,27
- **Israel:** Jdg 8:35 2Sa 15:13 16:11

#### **Related Passages:**

2 Samuel 20:1+ Now a worthless fellow happened to be there whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite; and he blew the trumpet and said, "We have no portion in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!"

2 Chronicles 10:16+ When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them the people answered the king,

saying, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to your tents, O Israel; Now look after your own house, David." So all Israel departed to their tents.

## THE SECESSION OF THE NORTH FROM THE SOUTH

**When all Israel** (IN CONTEXT = 10 NORTHERN TRIBES) **saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying** - Rehoboam foolish words have blown it! A heavy yoke and "scorpion whip" convinced them it was time to revolt. Remember that through all of these events is the strong undercurrent of the mystery of God's sovereignty (He had predicted this division) and human responsibility (the northern tribes choose to separate).

**"What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse-** This is a strong statement. They utter the cry of Sheba in 2Sa 20:1+. "David" and "Son of Jesse" refer to the House of David, from which Rehoboam descended. The people of Israel (northern tribes) no longer saw themselves as part of the Davidic kingdom. In effect they are now rejecting Rehoboam's rule. For the remainder of Israel's OT history it would be "a house divided."

**To your tents, O Israel!** This was an ancient battle cry (meaning something like "Every man for himself!") and in this context a call to rebellion and marks the inception of the divided kingdom. The 10 northern tribes are done with the House of David! **"Tents"** symbolized their families and homes, meaning they no longer recognized Rehoboam as king. What a change from 1 Kings 8:66 when "On the eighth day he sent the people away and they blessed the king. Then they went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David His servant and to Israel His people."

**Now look after your own house, David!** This was a direct challenge to Rehoboam, essentially saying: "You are no longer our king! Rule over your own people, not us!" And it is also in effect an attack on the Davidic Covenant.

**Philip Ryken** - With these words, Jeroboam and the northern tribes rejected the house of David, and with it, they rejected the way of salvation....To be sure, there were still some people in the northern kingdom of Israel who worshiped the God of Israel. We will meet some of them later in 1 and 2 Kings. But as a nation, they were rebelling against God's true king. Rather than walking the narrow path of salvation with the royal tribe of Judah, the ten tribes of Israel were heading down the broad highway to destruction. Jeroboam's rebellion against Rehoboam is reminiscent of the opening words of Psalm 2: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us' " (Ps. 2:1-3). This is what Jeroboam did: he took counsel against the Lord's anointed. If only he had heeded the warning from the end of the psalm: "Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled" (Ps. 2:10-12). ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

**So** (term of conclusion - a very bad one at that!) **Israel departed to their tents** This signifies the official separation of the northern tribes from Rehoboam's rule. The ten northern tribes formed their own kingdom, which would be led by Jeroboam.

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### QUESTION - [Why was Israel divided into the Southern Kingdom and Northern Kingdom?](#)

**ANSWER** - Throughout their history in the Promised Land, the children of Israel struggled with conflict among the tribes. The disunity went back all the way to the patriarch Jacob, who presided over a house divided. The sons of Leah and the sons of Rachel had their share of contention even in Jacob's lifetime (Genesis 37:1-11).

The enmity among the half-brothers continued in the time of the judges. Benjamin (one of Rachel's tribes) took up arms against the other tribes (Judges 20). Israel's first king, Saul, was of the tribe of Benjamin. When David was crowned king—David was from the tribe of Judah (one of Leah's tribes)—the Benjamites rebelled (2 Samuel 2-3). After a long war (2 Samuel 3:1), David succeeded in uniting all twelve tribes (2Sa 5:1-5).

The frailty of the union was exposed, however, when David's son Absalom promoted himself as the new king and drew many Israelites away from their allegiance to David (2 Samuel 15). Significantly, Absalom set up his throne in Hebron, the site of the former capital (v. 10). A later revolt was led by a man named Sheba against David and the tribe of Judah (2Sa 20:1-2).

The reign of David's son Solomon saw more unrest when one of the king's servants, [Jeroboam](#), rebelled. Jeroboam was on the king's errand when he met the prophet [Ahijah](#), who told him that God was going to give him authority over ten of the twelve tribes of Israel. God's reason for the division of the kingdom was definitive: "Because they have forsaken me . . . and have not walked in my ways." However, God promised that David's dynasty would continue, albeit over a much smaller kingdom, for the sake of God's covenant with David and for the sake of Jerusalem, God's chosen city. When Solomon learned of the prophecy, he sought to kill Jeroboam, who fled to Egypt for sanctuary (1 Kings 11:26-40).

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam was set to become the next king. Jeroboam returned from Egypt and led a group of people to confront Rehoboam with a demand for a lighter tax burden. When Rehoboam refused the demand, ten of the tribes rejected Rehoboam and David's dynasty (1 Kings 12:16), and Ahijah's prophecy was fulfilled. Only Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to King Rehoboam. The northern tribes crowned Jeroboam as their king. Rehoboam made plans to mount an assault on the rebel tribes, but the Lord prevented him from taking that action (vv. 21-24). Meanwhile, Jeroboam further consolidated his power by instituting a form of calf worship unique to his kingdom and declaring that pilgrimages to Jerusalem were unnecessary. Thus, the people of the northern tribes would have no contact with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

"So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day" (1 Kings 12:19). The northern kingdom is called "Israel" (or sometimes "Ephraim") in Scripture, and the southern kingdom is called "Judah." From the divine viewpoint, the division was a judgment on not keeping God's commands, specifically the commands prohibiting idolatry. From a human viewpoint, the division was the result of tribal discord and political unrest. The principle is that sin brings division (1 Corinthians 1:13, 11:18; James 4:1).

The good news is that God, in His mercy, has promised a reuniting of the northern and southern kingdoms. "He will raise a banner for the nations / and gather the exiles of Israel; / he will assemble the scattered people of Judah / from the four quarters of the earth. / Ephraim's jealousy will vanish, / and Judah's enemies will be destroyed; / Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, / nor Judah hostile toward Ephraim" (Isaiah 11:12-13). When the Prince of Peace—Jesus Christ—reigns in His millennial kingdom, all hostility, jealousy, and conflict among the tribes will be put to rest. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**1 Kings 12:17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.**

- **sons of Israel** 1Ki 11:13,36 2Ch 10:17 11:13-17

#### Related Passages:

1 Kings 11:13+ (JEHOVAH SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO SOLOMON) "However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

1 Kings 11:36+ (JEHOVAH SPEAKING THROUGH HIS PROPHET ABIJAH) But to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name.

2 Chronicles 10:17+ But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

Divided Kingdoms  
Click to Enlarge

## REHOBOAM REIGNS OVER JUDAH

**But** - Term of contrast. The contrast is with the action of the 10 northern tribes versus the loyalty of Judah.

**As for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them-** Just as God had stated (1Ki 11:13) He would leave one tribe for Solomon's son.

[Utley](#) points out that "Judah, at this period, was made up of several tribes - Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, Levi. (**ADDENDUM** - Judah, Benjamin and Levi are definitely part of the Southern Kingdom. It is less clear whether Simeon was also part of the kingdom. See the map above which shows that in the original land grants in Joshua's day, the tribe of Simeon was completely surrounded by Judah. Since Simeon was surrounded by Judah, it does seem likely that Simeon became part of the Southern Kingdom by default.)

[Jewish Study Bible](#) on **the sons of Israel** - Benjaminite clans living within view of Jerusalem may have cast their lot with Judah (v. 21); those farther north may have joined the northern confederation. Judah, here, refers not to the tribe but to the kingdom, dominated by the tribe, that also included Simeon, to the south of Judah.

**1 Kings 12:18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. And**

## King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

- Adoram: 1Ki 4:6 1Ki 5:14, Adoniram, 2Sa 20:24 2Ch 10:18, Hadoram
- **all Israel**: Ex 17:4 Nu 14:10 2Ch 24:21 Ac 5:26 7:57,58
- **flee to Jerusalem**: 1Ki 20:18-20 Pr 28:1,2 Am 2:16

### Related Passages:

1 Kings 4:6+ and Ahishar was over the household; and **Adoniram** the son of Abda was over the men subject to forced labor.

1 Kings 5:14+ He sent them to Lebanon, 10,000 a month in relays; they were in Lebanon a month and two months at home. And **Adoniram** was over the forced laborers.

2 Samuel 20:24+ (DURING DAVID'S REIGN) Adoram was over the forced labor, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder;

2 Chronicles 10:18+ Then King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was over the forced labor, and the sons of Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

## REHOBAM'S FOOLISH ATTEMPT TO MEND FENCES

**Then** - Time phrase. This marks progression in the narrative. In this case it will mark Rehoboam's **last ditch effort** to win back the Northern Tribes. Rehoboam was not willing to give up rule without a fight.

**King Rehoboam sent Adoram** (SEE NOTE BELOW ON [ADONIRAM](#)), **who was over the forced labor** ([mas/mac](#)), **and all Israel stoned him to death** - Their decision to revolt was non negotiable or to use a bad pun was **"set in stone!"** This verse demonstrates the foolishness and stupidity of putting forth the head of **the forced labor** as an emissary to negotiate terms! In fact he may have come as the "stinger" (so to speak) to **"discipline (Israel) with scorpions."** (1Ki 12:11) It seems that Solomon's great wisdom was not passed on genetically or even by "osmosis" as Rehoboam surely experienced his father's wisdom in everyday life! See [STONE TO DEATH](#).

**And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem** - As we might say today he saw [the handwriting on the wall](#). He had acted foolishly but was not a complete fool when it came to self-preservation! To say Rehoboam's peace negotiator failed is an understatement. The deadline for negotiation had past and God's word was being fulfilled perfectly! Rehoboam may have been foolish but at least he recognized the writing on the wall so to speak and so quickly departs from Shechem preserving his own life. Clearly this event solidified the tearing of the 10 tribes from the nation of Israel.

**Philip Ryken** writes "Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam made the wrong decision, choosing to be served rather than to serve. With Jeroboam's rebellion, the choice came to Rehoboam again. The same thing happens to all of us. The opportunity to choose for or against God does not come only once in life, but every day, with every decision we make. What we think about, talk about, look at, work on, play with, spend on—these are all kingdom decisions, and they all have to be made every day.." ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

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**ADONIRAM** - ad-o-ni'-ram ('adoniram, "my lord is exalted"): An official of Solomon (1 Ki 4:6; 5:14). Near the close of the reign of David, and at the opening of the reign of Rehoboam, the same office was held by **Adoram** (2 Sam 20:24; 1 Ki 12:18). The name **Adoram** seems to be a contraction of **Adoniram**, and doubtless the same person held the office in all the three reigns. The name also appears as **Hadoram** (2 Ch 10:18). In the King James Version and the Revised Version (British and American) the office is variably described as "over the tribute," which is misleading, and "over the levy," which is correct, though obscure. In the American Standard Revised Version it is uniformly "over the men subject to taskwork." **Adoniram** was at the head of the department of forced labor for the government. The record is to the effect that peoples conquered by Israel, except the Canaanites, were to be spared, subject to the obligation to forced labor on the public works (Dt 20:11); that this law was actually extended to the Canaanites (Josh 16:10; 17:13; Jdg 1:28 ff); that David, in his preparations for the temple, organized and handed over to Solomon a service of forced labor (1 Ch 22:2,15, etc.); that under Solomon this service was elaborately maintained (1Ki 5:13ff; 9:15ff; 2 Ch 8:7ff). It was not for the temple only, but for all Solomon's numerous building enterprises. In theory men of Israelite blood were free from this burden, but practically they found it a burden and a grievance. At the accession of Rehoboam they protested against it (1Ki 12; 2Ch 10). Nothing in the account is more indicative of Rehoboam's utter lack of good judgment than his sending his veteran superintendent of the forced labor department to confer with the people. The murder of Adoniram, and the ignominious flight of Rehoboam, were

natural consequences. -- Willis J. Beecher

NAME	VERSE	KING SERVED	ROLE
Adoniram	1Ki 4:6	Solomon	Over forced labor
Adoniram	2Sa 20:24	David	Over forced labor
Adoram (Hadoram)	1Ki 12:18 (2Ch 10:18)	Rehoboam	Over forced labor

Given the similarities in name, position, and timeframe suggest these are the same person, with slight variations in spelling.

**1 Kings 12:19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.**

- **Israel:** 1Sa 10:19 2Ki 17:21 2Ch 10:19 13:5-7,17 Isa 7:17
- **been in rebellion,** Heb 6:6
- **to this day:** Jos 4:9

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 10:19+ So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

### THE DIVISION OF ISRAEL ENDURES TO THIS DAY

**So** - Term of conclusion. Based on the description of the stoning of Adoram and the fleeing of Rehoboam described above.

**Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day** - In other words the split was irreconcilable. However it will not be permanent (**to this day** refers to the writer's day) for in the return of the King of Israel, the two nations will once again be unified under His rule.

**To this day** in 1 Kings 12 (and throughout the Old Testament) means that the situation being described continued up until the time the book was written. It is a way of emphasizing that the effects of an event had a long-lasting impact. [Utley](#) adds ""**to this day**" This is a literary marker of a later editor. Since the northern ten tribes lost their freedom and national identity by the Assyrians in 722 b.c., the document must have been written between 922 b.c. (tribes split) and 722 b.c."

[David Guzik](#) - There was a long-standing tension between the ten northern tribes and the combined group of Judah and Benjamin. There were two earlier rebellions along this line of potential division in the days after Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 19:40-43), which developed into the rebellion of Sheba (2 Samuel 20:1-2).

**1 Kings 12:20 It came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.**

- **and made him king over all Israel.** 1Sa 10:24 Ho 8:4
- **None but the tribe of Judah** 1Ki 12:17 1Ki 11:13,32 Hos 11:12

### JEROBOAM CROWNED KING

**It came about** - The year of the division was about 931 BC (some say 930). This is one of those many divine providences in Scripture. It did not just come about by accident. It came about because God was behind the scenes controlling the scenes He was behind (see 1Ki 12:15+). (See [The Providence of God](#))

**When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel** - Exactly why **all Israel** called Jeroboam at this point to be king is not clear, but again what is clear is that this reflects the sovereignty of God for it was the prophetic will of Yahweh. Note that Jeroboam is sometimes called Jeroboam I to distinguish him

from a later king of Israel also named Jeroboam, usually known as Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23-29).

**None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David**(or Rehoboam) - For completeness, we should note that the tribe of **Benjamin** was so intimately connected with Judah (especially geographically), this tribe remained under the rule of Rehoboam. To be sure, why Yahweh chose Jeroboam to be the first king of the separated northern tribes is somewhat mysterious. Perhaps God will explain things like this in heaven for as Paul says "now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." (1Co 13:12). Of course Jeroboam clearly recognized the events as related to Ahijah's prophecy "He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes.'" (1Ki 11:31). Jeroboam recognizing the import of the events in Shechem seized the moment and undoubtedly put himself forth to the assembly as the leader. And recall that he did function well as a leader for in 1Ki 11:28+ we read "Now the man Jeroboam was a valiant warrior, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph."

**1 Kings 12:21 Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.**

- **when Rehoboam:** 2Ch 11:1-3
- **180,000 chosen men:** 1Ch 21:5 2Ch 14:8,11 17:14-19 Pr 21:30,31

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 11:1-4 Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. 2 But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 3 "Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, 4 'Thus says the LORD, "You shall not go up or fight against your relatives; return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me.'" So they listened to the words of the LORD and returned from going against Jeroboam.

### REHOBOAM FOOLISHLY PREPARES FOR WAR

**Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon** - Rehoboam's foolishly continues for once he realized that the rebellion and rejection by the Northern 10 tribes ("Israel") was for real, he gathered his remaining armies in Jerusalem, seeking to regain his rule by right or by might.

**Warren Wiersbe** - In David's last census, Joab reported 500,000 able-bodied men in Judah available to bear arms (2 Sam. 24:9), while there were 800,000 men available in the northern tribes. Those numbers were over forty years old, but perhaps the population hadn't changed that much. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**1 Kings 12:22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,**

- De 33:1 2Ki 4:16,22,25,27 1Ti 6:11
- **Shemaiah:** 2Ch 11:2 12:5,7
- **the man:** 1Ki 13:1,4,5,11 17:18,24

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 11:1-4+ Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. 2 But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 3 "Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, 4 'Thus says the LORD, "You shall not go up or fight against your relatives; return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me.'" So they listened to the words of the LORD and returned from going against Jeroboam.

2 Chronicles 12:5-7+ Then **Shemaiah** the prophet came to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, 'You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken you to Shishak.'" 6 So the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is righteous." 7 When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to **Shemaiah**, saying, "They have humbled themselves so I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some measure of deliverance, and My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by means of Shishak."

## **MAN OF GOD RECEIVES WORD OF GOD**

**But** - A term of contrast sent from the Throne Room of God. In an act of divine mercy God intervened to avert a bloodbath!

**The word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying** - Shemaiah (called a prophet in 1Ch 12:5) means something like "heard by Jehovah" and has a great description as "**the man of God**," and in this context he functions as "mouthpiece" (prophet) for God. How **the word of God** came to him is not specified. It is clear that the sovereign God is seeking to avoid a national disaster for His chosen people.

**Shemaiah** appears again in 2 Chronicles 12:5-7+, where he warns Rehoboam that Judah would be invaded by Egypt because of their sins. Beyond that, little is known about him, but he was a true prophet who faithfully delivered God's message.

**Spurgeon** - "Here is one **Shemaiah**, – some of you never heard of him before, perhaps you will never hear of him again; he appears once in this history, and then he vanishes; he comes, and he goes, – only fancy this one man constraining to peace a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, warriors ready to fight against the house of Israel, by giving to them in very plain, unpolished words, the simple command of God... Why have we not such power? Peradventure, brethren, we do not always speak in the name of the Lord, or speak God's Word as God's Word. If we are simply tellers out of our own thoughts, why should men mind us?"

**Warren Wiersbe** points out that "Frequently in Old Testament history we find a prophet confronting a king with "Thus says the Lord." Whenever a king, a priest, or even another prophet stepped out of line, a prophet would step forward and rebuke him; and if the prophet's message was ignored, God's hand of judgment would fall. (See 1 Kings 13:21–22; 14:6–11; 16:1–4; 20:28ff; 2 Kings 1:16; 22:14–15.) Israel was to be a people of God's Word, and God's Word must be held higher than even the word of the king." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Woodhouse** adds "Jeroboam began became a theme of prophetic condemnation (see Hosea 8:4, 5; 10:5, 6; 13:2; Amos 4:4). Eventually it led to the destruction of the kingdom that had been given to Jeroboam (2 Kings 17:6–18)." (See [1 Kings: Power, Politics, and the Hope of the World - Page 43](#))

**Man of God** is a beautiful [moniker](#), one we should all seek to attain to, one used to designate prophets (Shemaiah is called a prophet in 1Ch 12:5) and other men of God some 78x in 73 verses...

Deut. 33:1 (Moses the man of God); Jos. 14:6 (Moses the man of God); Jdg. 13:6, 8 (Refers to a prophet); 1 Sam. 2:27; 1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Sam. 9:7; 1 Sam. 9:8; 1 Sam. 9:10; 1 Ki. 12:22; 1 Ki. 13:1; 1 Ki. 13:4; 1 Ki. 13:5; 1 Ki. 13:6; 1 Ki. 13:7; 1 Ki. 13:8; 1 Ki. 13:11; 1 Ki. 13:12; 1 Ki. 13:14; 1 Ki. 13:21; 1 Ki. 13:26; 1 Ki. 13:29; 1 Ki. 13:31; 1 Ki. 17:18; 1 Ki. 17:24; 1 Ki. 20:28; 2 Ki. 1:9; 2 Ki. 1:10; 2 Ki. 1:11; 2 Ki. 1:12; 2 Ki. 1:13; 2 Ki. 4:7; 2 Ki. 4:9; 2 Ki. 4:16; 2 Ki. 4:21; 2 Ki. 4:22; 2 Ki. 4:25; 2 Ki. 4:27; 2 Ki. 4:40; 2 Ki. 4:42; 2 Ki. 5:8; 2 Ki. 5:14; 2 Ki. 5:15; 2 Ki. 5:20; 2 Ki. 6:6; 2 Ki. 6:9; 2 Ki. 6:10; 2 Ki. 6:15; 2 Ki. 7:2; 2 Ki. 7:17; 2 Ki. 7:18; 2 Ki. 7:19; 2 Ki. 8:2; 2 Ki. 8:4; 2 Ki. 8:7; 2 Ki. 8:8; 2 Ki. 8:11; 2 Ki. 13:19; 2 Ki. 23:16; 2 Ki. 23:17; 1 Chr. 23:14; 2 Chr. 8:14 (David man of God); 2 Chr. 11:2; 2 Chr. 25:7; 2 Chr. 25:9; 2 Chr. 30:16; Ezr. 3:2 (Moses, the man of God); Neh. 12:24; Neh. 12:36; Ps. 90:1; Jer. 35:4; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:17

2Ti 3:16-17+ explains how one becomes and remains a man of God - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the **man of God** may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

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### **Bob Utley** -[PROPHET \(the different Hebrew terms\)](#)

1. ro'eh = "seer" (BDB 906, KB 1157), 1 Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term nabi, which means "prophet" and comes from the root, "to call." Ro'eh is from the general Hebrew term "to see." This person understood God's ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God's will in a matter.

2. hozeh = "seer" (BDB 302, KB 301), 2 Sam. 24:11; Amos 7:12. It is basically a synonym of ro'eh. It is from

a rarer Hebrew term "to see in a vision." The participle form is used most often to refer to prophets.

3. nabi' = "prophet" (BDB 611, KB 661), cognate of Akkadian verb nabu = "to call" and Arabic naba'a = "to announce." This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but "to call" at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH's description of Moses' relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).

4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in 1 Chr. 29:29; Samuel – Ro'eh; Nathan – Nabi'; and Gad – Hozeah.

5. The phrase 'ish ha - 'elohim, "man of God," is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of "prophet."

6. The NT word "prophet" is Greek in origin. It comes from

- a. pro, which means "before" or "for"
- b. phemi, which means "to speak."

1 Kings 12:23 **Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the rest of the people, saying,**

- 1Ki 12:6

### GOD'S WORDS TO THE PROPHET

**Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the rest of the people, saying** - This prophet is not foretelling but is forth telling, like preachers do from their pulpits every Sunday. To whom **the rest of the people** refers is uncertain, as it could be the people of 1Ki 12:17 who were not of the tribe of Judah, or Benjamin.

1 Kings 12:24 **'Thus says the LORD, "You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me." ' " So they listened to the word of the LORD, and returned and went their way according to the word of the LORD.**

- **You must not go up** Nu 14:42 2Ch 11:4 25:7,8 28:9-13
- **for this thing:** 1Ki 12:15 11:29-38 Ho 8:4
- **So they listened:** 2Ch 25:10 28:13-15

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 11:5-12+ (**NOT RECORDED IN FIRST KINGS**) (AFTER HE LISTENED TO GOD'S WORDS TO "STAND DOWN") Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem and built cities for defense in Judah. 6 Thus he built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, 7 Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, 8 Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, 9 Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, 10 Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron, which are fortified cities in Judah and in Benjamin. 11 He also strengthened the fortresses and put officers in them and stores of food, oil and wine. 12 He put shields and spears in every city and strengthened them greatly. So he held Judah and Benjamin.

### THE SUPREME COMMANDER GIVES ORDERS "STAND DOWN!"

**Thus says the LORD** - Shemaiah is not called a prophet but clearly is one as he speaks the words of **the LORD**. OT prophets sometimes spoke prophetic words but also gave instructions and in this case Yahweh gives order to "**Stand Down!**"

**You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for** (term of explanation - reason they must obey Yahweh's orders and not attack the 10 tribes) **this thing has come from Me** (Spurgeon's sermon [This Thing is from Me](#)) - The Supreme Commander gives clear instructions to Rehoboam.



**So** - Term of conclusion, the conclusion as a result of the words of Shemaiah and this time a good conclusion!

**They listened to the word of the LORD, and returned and went their way according to the word of the LORD**- This is a remarkable passage for clearly Rehoboam was ready to ramble, but his willingness to listen shows the power of the word of God, yea, even the power to change the course of the history of a nation!

Note plural pronoun **they** which presupposes Rehoboam and his advisors (including military leaders). Surprisingly this time Rehoboam did not consult his young (foolish) peers but **listened to the word of the LORD** from Shemaiah and did not attack Jeroboam thus avoiding a major civil war. As the saying goes, this would have been a "**no win situation**" for Rehoboam because God had already promised the northern kingdom to Jeroboam through the prophet Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29-31) and God's promises are always perfectly fulfilled. In fairness to Rehoboam, it is notable that many of the kings ignored true prophets, but Rehoboam's openness to hear and heed Shemaiah, demonstrates that he still had some level of respect for the Word of God and the God of the Word!

**Spurgeon** - So far, so good. There was some degree of the fear of God in the minds of men when, at the bidding of a single prophet, a king would disband his troops, and cease from war.

Here are some "takeaways" from this episode with the prophet Shemaiah...

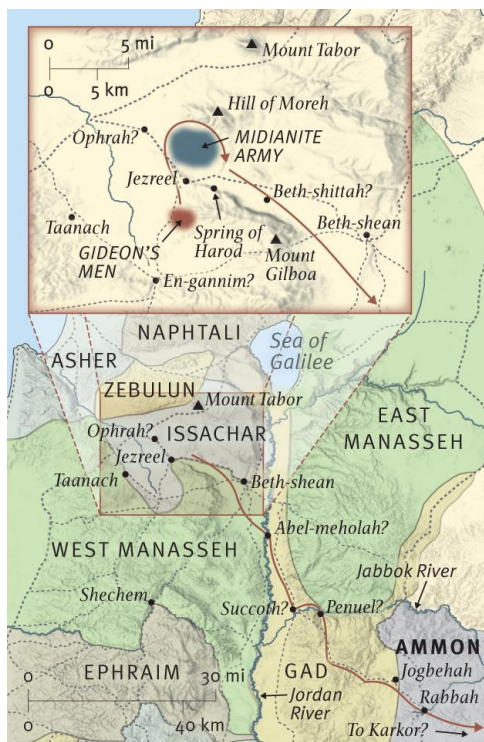
- God is in control of history – The division of Israel wasn't random; it was God's plan.
- Obedience to God's word brings peace – Rehoboam avoided war by listening to Shemaiah.
- True prophets speak even in difficult times – Shemaiah spoke God's word boldly, even when addressing a king.

**1 Kings 12:25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel.**

- **Then Jeroboam built:** 1Ki 9:15,17,18 15:17 16:24 2Ch 11:5-12
- **Shechem:** 1Ki 12:1 Jdg 9:1,45-49
- **built Penuel:** Ge 32:30,31 Jdg 8:8,17

**Related Passages:**

1 Kings 12:1 Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.



Map Showing Possible Location of Penuel  
(Source: ESV Global Study Bible)

## KING JEROBOAM'S EARLY BUILDING PROJECTS

**Then** - Time phrase. **Then** marks progression in the narrative, here moving us from the events in the Southern Kingdom to the events in the Northern Kingdom. Given that First Kings is a very historical narrative with frequent shifts between the northern and southern kingdoms, it should not be surprising that we encounter over 150 uses of THEN in the First Kings record.

**Tony Merida** makes an interesting observation - Before taking a quick look at that event, we must realize how often this tragic downfall is referenced in the book of Kings. The writer constantly refers to Jeroboam's idolatry as Israel's characteristic sin that eventually leads them into exile (Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 109; e.g., 1 Kgs 15:26, 34; 2 Kgs 17:20–23). This is a tragic downfall. Several application questions emerge from this story. We need to consider this account since we too are prone to sink into the pit of idolatry. Three causes of Jeroboam's false worship are (1) **his lack of trust in God**, (ED: HE HAD A CLEAR PROPHETIC PROMISE FROM GOD - 1Ki 11:31-39!+) (2) **his lack of love for God**, and (3) **his lack of the fear of God**.

**Provan** adds "In spite of the clear prophetic word of Ahijah in 1Ki 11:31–39, he is not prepared to leave it to God to maintain his hold over the northern tribes. He fears that the presence of the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem (12:27) will be a more decisive factor in this matter than his own obedience (11:38). It is this inability to trust that is his downfall, for he must now strive for security by himself. In his thinking, religion becomes simply an aspect of political control; such faulty thinking about the place of God in the universe, combined with advice (v. 28) just as flawed as that given to Rehoboam, inevitably leads him to sinful actions. (See [1 & 2 Kings \(Understanding the Bible Commentary Series\) - Page 60](#))

**Patterson** writes that "The people, however, must be cared for not only administratively but also religiously. Here Jeroboam miscalculated and substituted human wisdom for divine direction. Although God may have allowed the kingdom to be divided politically, he intended no theological schism." (See [1 Samuel - 2 Kings - Volume 3 - Page 743](#))

**Jeroboam built [Shechem](#) in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there.** As discussed in detail in the [notes](#) on 1Ki 12:1 [Shechem](#) was a major historical and political city in Israel located in Ephraim which was one of the strongest northern tribes. Jeroboam was seeking to make it a "new (or alternative) Jerusalem." It is ironic that Rehoboam had journeyed there from Jerusalem to be crowned king, but now King Jeroboam makes that his capital. Of course [Shechem](#) was centrally located, making it a strategic capital, was in his own tribal territory (Ephraim), giving him support and was a symbolic city so that he was taking control of a city with deep national history (see [notes](#)).

**Bob Utley** - This was Jeroboam's first capital. It seems, from 1 Kgs. 14:17-18, that later Tirzah became the capital (cf. 1 Kgs. 15:33; 16:8). It was not until the reign of Omri that Samaria became the capital (cf. 1 Kgs. 16:24,28,29,32),

**And he went out from there and built Penuel** - The word **built** likely means he fortified or strengthened the city (NIV and NJB in fact render it "fortified") rather than constructing it from scratch. **Penuel** (Peniel) was located east of the Jordan River (see map above), near the Jabbok River, presumably seeking to strengthen his eastern border.

**W. Ewing** on [PENIEL/PENUEL](#) - ("face of God"; Eidos theou): This is the form of the name in Ge 32:30 (ONLY TIME IT IS CALLED PENIEL). In the next verse and elsewhere it appears as **PENUEL**. The name is said to have been given to the place by Jacob after his night of wrestling by the Jabbok, because, as he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." It was a height evidently close by the stream over which Jacob passed in the morning. Some have thought it might be a prominent cliff, the contour of which resembled a human face. Such a cliff on the seashore to the South of Tripoli was called theou prosopon, "face of God" (Strabo xvi.2,15 f). In later times a city with a strong tower stood upon it. This lay in the line of Gideon's pursuit of the Midianites. When he returned victorious, he beat down the place because of the churlishness of the inhabitants (Jdg 8:8,9,17). It was one of the towns "built" or fortified by Jeroboam (1 Ki 12:25).

**PENUEL** - 8V ONLY FIRST USES REFER TO A GEOGRAPHIC PLACE - Gen. 32:30; Gen. 32:31; Jdg. 8:8; Jdg. 8:9; Jdg. 8:17; 1 Ki. 12:25; 1 Chr. 4:4 (A MAN, NOT A PLACE); 1 Chr. 8:25 (A MAN, NOT A PLACE)

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**Norman Geisler** - [When Critics Ask](#) - 1 KINGS 12:25—Was Jeroboam's residence in Shechem or at Tirzah?

PROBLEM: In 1 Kings 12:25 Jeroboam's home is said to be in Shechem, but later it is listed as Tirzah (1 Kings 14:12–17).

SOLUTION: He may have moved later to a different location. Or, one place could have been a vacation or retreat home. It was not uncommon for kings to have more than one place of residence.

**1 Kings 12:26** Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David."

- 
- said in his heart: Ps 14:1 Mk 2:6-8 Lu 7:39
  - Now shall: 1Ki 11:38 1Sa 27:1 2Ch 20:20 Isa 7:9 Jer 38:18-21 Joh 11:47-50 Joh 12:10,11,19 Ac 4:16,17

## BEWARE OF SAYING IN YOUR HEART!

**Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David-** Had Jeroboam been godly this would have read "said to the Lord" instead of "**said in his heart**" which (in context) reveals his inner thoughts, fears, and worries, which showed his lack of faith in God's promise to give him the kingdom (1Ki 11:29-38+), his human wisdom and insecurity eventually leading to his downfall. Jeroboam's logic is fully expressed in the following passage. Just because the kingdom was divided did not release all 12 tribes from following the Mosaic covenant, but as we shall see Jeroboam clearly has no intent to follow the Law of Moses. Jeroboam perfectly expresses the diametrically opposed responses we can all have from time to time - fear versus faith.

**Dale Ralph Davis** - Jeroboam then turns away from orthodoxy, not because it is no longer true but because it is no longer useful. He does not find it false but fearful. You see his thinking then. He must hold on to 'his' kingdom, and, since he cannot simply trust Yahweh's word for that, he must make himself secure. That is the stimulus here for false religion. If you cannot trust God, you will use religion. In Jeroboam's case, what matters is not truth but position—his position.

**THOUGHT** - Look out when we "say in our heart" for this is often allowing our emotions (fear, pride, doubt) to guide our choices rather than an expression of a surrender and willingness to trust in the LORD in all our ways (Pr 3:5-8+).

**Said in his heart** is looking to SELF for counsel. Our SELF is dominated by fallen flesh and godless reasoning and usually leads to sin as it did in Jeroboam's case. The Consequences of Jeroboam "**Saying in His Heart**"

- Led Israel (northern kingdom.) into sin the abominable sin of idolatry
- Reaped the wrath of God – An unnamed prophet foretold the fall of Jeroboam's dynasty (1 Kings 13:1-5).
- Eventually his kingdom fell into he hands of Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:1-41).

**Philip Ryken** observes that "Jeroboam divided the people of God—not just geographically, but also spiritually. From this point on, there would be two nations with two religions. We should see this for what it really was: a lack of faith in God's word. God had promised Jeroboam a kingdom (1 Kings 11:31, 35), and thus the king did not need to be afraid of losing it. Yet the promise was not enough for Jeroboam. He felt he needed more security than the word of God could provide, so he built great cities to protect himself. This can be a temptation for all of us. God has promised to provide for all our needs, but when finances are tight, it can still be tempting to worry about what we need. God has promised to accept us simply for trusting in what Jesus has done for us in his life and death and resurrection, but it can still be tempting for us to think that there is something more we have to do before God will be pleased with us. Will we take God at His word, or will we keep struggling anxiously for what he has promised to give? ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

**Ryken** goes on to add "Jeroboam did not seek the will of God through prayer; he simply followed his own personal inclinations. In this respect, Jeroboam sounds a lot like the young nurse that Robert Bellah quoted in his book *Habits of the Heart*. Her name was Sheila, and here is how she described her religion: "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice." (Borrow [Habits of the heart : individualism and commitment in American life page 220](#)) The trouble with listening to our own little voice is that our sinful heart desires to lead us into sin. **John Calvin** aptly described the human heart as "a perpetual factory of idols." If we listen to our hearts rather than to the Word of God, we will end up worshiping anything and everything except the one true God, which is exactly what happened with Jeroboam. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

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### James Smith - A MAN-MADE RELIGION 1 Kings 12:26–33

“Hope of every sort—whatever sect,  
Esteem them, sow them, rear them, and protect,  
If wild in nature and not duly found,  
Gethsemane! in thy dear, hallowed ground—  
That cannot bear the blaze of Scripture light,  
Nor cheer the spirit, nor refresh the sight,  
Nor animate the soul to Christ-like deeds,

(Oh, cast them from thee!) are weeds, arrant weeds.”  
—COWPER.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, although of the race of Joshua, he became a ringleader in sin. Seeds of thought sprang up in his heart and mind rank and wild, but instead of treating them as “arrant weeds” he nurtured and protected them, as if they belonged to the Garden of the Lord. So the seeds of evil spread like thistle down. This religion of Jeroboam is like every other Christless religion.

I. It had its Origin in the Human Heart. “Jeroboam said in his heart” (v. 26). There are only, virtually, two religions in the world—the one has its origin in the “I WILL” of God, the other has its source in the “I think” of man. “My thoughts are not your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8), saith the Lord. The heart of man is deceitful and wicked, out of it there can never come a system of worship that meets the claims of God and the needs of the soul. A revelation is needed; a revelation has been given. Anything opposed to this, or a substitute for it, is gross presumption and rebellion.

II. It was for his own Selfish Ends. He set up his golden calves—one in Beth-el and the other in Dan—lest the people should go to Jerusalem to worship and the hearts of the people be turned from himself (vv. 27–29). It was a religion that centred on his own personal honour and aggrandisement. SELF is for ever the centre of every godless religion. The pride of life lies at the root of all mere human schemes. The religion of the scribes and Pharisees was just another form of the sin of Jeroboam (Rom. 10:3).

III. It was Ostensibly for the Good of Others. “It is too much for you to go to Jerusalem” (v. 28). He pretended that it was for their convenience and advantage that these golden gods were set up. The religion that is born in the carnal heart can only make hypocrites. The great scheme of godless socialists are not one whit better than the devices of Jeroboam, they set up calves of gold, saying, “These be thy gods, O people.” It was a religion of selfish expediency and not of sacrifice. The thought of self-denial was carefully excluded.

IV. It was Contrary to the Word of God. “The king said unto them, Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (v. 28). “Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox” (Psa. 106:20). The command of God was plain, “Thou shalt not make unto them any graven image” (Exod. 20:4). The desire of the carnal mind is to walk by sight, and not by faith. The inventions of the unrenewed heart are sure to be in opposition to the revelation of the mind of God. “I thought,” said Naaman, but his thought was not at all in harmony with the manner and purpose of the man of God. Saul was quite in earnest when he thought that he should do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9) The ladder to Heaven must come from Heaven (John 14:6).

V. It Became a Snare to Others. “This thing became a sin” (v. 30). The thing set up became the object of worship instead of a means to help the thoughts to God. Man is always prone to be more taken up with his own works than the works of God. The little ornamental cross or the prayer-book becomes more precious than the things which are invisible and eternal. The products of men’s own imaginations are exalted to the throne of the affections, and the presence of God usurped. That thing, whatever it is, that takes the place of God “becomes a sin.”

VI. It has no Regard for Purity. “He made priests of the lowest of the people” (v. 31). This is characteristic of all man-made religion; there is no value set on inward holiness of life. Outward conformity and parade are enough to meet all its requirements. The consecrated sons of Aaron were not the kind of ministers Jeroboam wanted (Num. 3:6). Their strict adherence to the Word of God would not suit his purpose. It is so still with those who are satisfied with the form of godliness and deny the power. They wish their own will and ways carried out, so they prefer the “lowest” motives as their governing principles; the pure light of God’s Word would only reprove and rebuke.

VII. It has the Appearance of Being Right. There was the altar, the priests, and the ordained feast, “Like unto the feast that is in Judah” (vv. 32, 33). But the whole thing was a sham and a mockery, a lifeless image of the real. There was all the outward semblance of the true, but it had no foundation in the sight of God. “No authority from Him,” no power to bless its votaries with pardon, peace, or hope. It was a thing destined to bring disappointment and the curse of God (chap. 13:2). Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. “Without ME ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

**1 Kings 12:27 "If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."**

- **If this people go up to offer sacrifices:** 1Ki 8:29,30,44 11:32 De 12:5-7,14 16:2,6
- **they will:** Ge 12:12,13 26:7 Pr 29:25 1Co 1:19,20

**Related Passages:**

1 Kings 11:37-39+ 'I (JEHOVAH) will take you (JEROBOAM), and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel. 38 'Then it will be, that **IF** (THE CONDITION OF THE PROMISE) you **listen** to all that I command you and **walk** in My ways, and **do** what is right in My sight by **observing** My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, **THEN** (THE PROMISE FOR MEETING THE CONDITION) I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. 39 'Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for this, but not always.'

## **DOUBTING GOD'S PROMISES & LEANING ON HUMAN LOGIC**

**If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem-** Jeroboam's saying in his heart expressed his fear. He is quickly forgetting the promise keeping God's clear, but conditional promise in 1Ki 11:37-39+.

**Then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah** - In his heart, Jeroboam begins to think like men think and sadly jettisons God's promise to build him an enduring house. Rehoboam had nothing to fear by letting the Northern tribes go to Jerusalem (as required for 3 annual feasts). Twice Jeroboam expresses fear that the people would return to Rehoboam's kingship.

**1 Kings 12:28 So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt."**

- **king consulted** 1Ki 12:8,9 Ex 1:10 Isa 30:1
- **two golden calves:** Ex 20:4 De 4:14-18 2Ki 10:29 17:16 2Ch 11:15 Ho 8:4-7 10:5,6
- **It is too much for you to go up:** Isa 30:10 2Pe 2:19
- **behold:** Ex 32:4-11

### **Related Passages:**

Exodus 20:3-5+ "You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Exodus 32:1-11+ Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2 Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "**This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.**" 5 Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." 6 So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. 7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them (**A FITTING DESCRIPTION OF JEROBOAM TO WHO GOD HAD GIVEN PROMISES OF AN ENDURING KINGDOM!**). They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" 9 The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. 10 "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation." 11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

Proverbs 11:14 Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory.

Proverbs 15:22 Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed.

Proverbs 24:6 For by wise guidance you will wage war, And in abundance of counselors there is victory.

## JEROBOAM'S UNWISE COUNSEL LEADS TO MAKING TWO GOLDEN CALVES

**So** - This is a "deadly" term of conclusion, a conclusion based on Jeroboam's demonically inspired human wisdom (Jas 3:15-16+), and not based on peaceable godly wisdom (Jas 3:17-18+).

**The king consulted** - With whom did he consult? First of all he consulted with his SELF (aka, fallen, sinful flesh) (1Ki 12:26)! The text does not state specifically who else he consulted with but most kings had trusted advisors. Unfortunately there is not always wisdom in an abundance of counselors unless they are godly counselors! (Pr 11:4, cf Pr 15:22)!

**And made two golden calves** - Jeroboam invents a religion of convenience! This harkens back to the golden calf of Israel [see note](#) which Aaron made for the people (Ex 32:2-3+). But Jeroboam does Aaron one better but making **two golden calves** and we can understand his logic for this idol multiplication in the next verse.

**Philip Ryken** rightly observes that Jeroboam's "disbelief led him into disobedience—in particular, the sin of false worship." ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

**Bob Utley** suggests that "Initially it must be stated that Jeroboam did not intend these to be idolatrous, but simply rival worship sites. However, this violated several Mosaic Laws. The people's proclivity to fertility worship morphed these sites into terrible idolatry. This eventually caused the exile of Israel by Assyria in 722 b.c."

**Philip Ryken** observes that "Worshiping these idols may seem very primitive, but the heart of Jeroboam's sin is still with us. Today we are often told that there is more than one god, or even that we can worship Jesus Christ through more than one religion. We may claim not to worship any golden cows, yet we spend hours basking in the warm glow of the computer terminal and the television screen, which constantly tell us to love the world and rarely if ever tell us to love Jesus or serve the kingdom of God. Which would be easier for most of us: to go a whole week without prayer or without using visual technology? People still use the same arguments that Jeroboam used to justify idolatry. There is an appeal to religious diversity: if one God is good, why not worship more than one? There is an appeal to chronology: out with the old, in with the new. There is an appeal to convenience. Why go all the way to Jerusalem, Jeroboam said, when you can worship much closer to home instead, in places like Bethel and Dan? So also today we are told that worship services should be shorter, with less preaching and prayer. The church should schedule its ministry to leave more time free for secular activities on Sunday. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#))

**And he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem-** Notice his sneaky logic. He is saying in essence "I will save you the 40-50 mile trip to Jerusalem by giving you a more convenient place to worship."

**Behold** ([hinneh](#); Lxx - [idou](#)) **your gods, O Israel** - Jeroboam does not even mention the monotheistic God! And his expression (**your gods**) suggests he has never even heard the famous Jewish Shema "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Dt 6:4+)

**THOUGHT** - When you began to backslide into the seductive snare laid out by [SIN](#) it is amazing how quickly you forget the clear precepts and promises of Yahweh! I am sadly speaking from personal experience!

**That brought you up from the land of Egypt** - Jeroboam seems to express some knowledge of Scripture for here he gives almost a direct quotation from Ex 34:4+ "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." (also Ex 32:4+) At least Aaron's idolatry was "monotheistic!"

**Spurgeon** - "Men are willing to worship God if they are allowed to have a ritual and symbols which they have themselves devised"

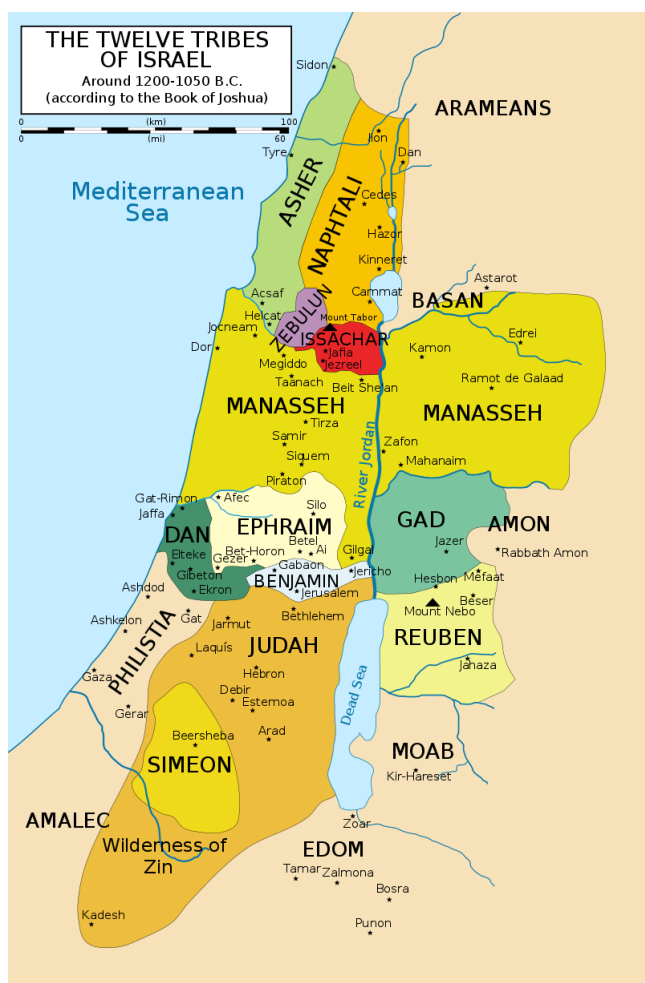
**1 Kings 12:29 He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.**

- **Bethel:** Ge 12:8 28:19 35:1 Ho 4:15
- **Dan:** Ge 14:14 De 34:1 Jdg 18:29-31 20:1 2Ki 10:29 Jer 8:16 Am 8:14

### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 12:5-6+ "But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. 6 "There you shall bring

your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.



SEE DAN IN FAR NORTH, BETHEL (BETEL) IN SOUTH

## IDOLS CONVENIENTLY PLACED SOUTH AND NORTH

He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan Jeroboam's false religious centers were (in his deceived mind) strategically placed in the southern portion of the kingdom at Bethel and the northern portion at Dan in the far north. Note that this is a clear violation of Dt 12:5+ which states Israel was to "seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come." And of course that place was His Temple in Jerusalem.

[Click to take a walk through Tell Dan!](#)  
Ponder the consequences of sin unhinged!

**Henry Morris** - Earlier in his career, Jeroboam had been a man of great promise (1 Kings 11:28), and God had chosen him to lead the ten northern tribes. He became overly ambitious and presumptuous, however, thinking he could best retain the loyalty of his subjects by establishing for them a more convenient religion. Jeroboam lead the people to still profess to worship the God of their fathers, but not worship at Jerusalem. This lead to the blurring of the true religion's distinctiveness in relation to the pagan religions. He even established a new priesthood and new religious festivals (1 Kings 12:31-33), with new altars and new sacrifices. Already conditioned to such changes by the apostasies of Solomon, the people largely went along with this accommodationist religion, but God rebuked and repudiated Jeroboam because of it (1 Kings 13). (Defender's Study Bible)

Sin always has consequences and in this case the Long-Term Consequences of Jeroboam's Sin included...

- Jeroboam's dynasty was cursed – A prophet foretold that his descendants would be wiped out (1 Kings 14:9-11).
- The Northern Kingdom was plagued by idolatry – Every future king of Israel followed Jeroboam's sinful ways (1 Kings 16:2, 2 Kings 17:22).
- Israel was eventually exiled into Assyria in 722 BC – Because they refused to repent, God allowed Assyria to conquer Israel

and scatter its people (2 Kings 17:7-23).

Some takeaways (some repetition) from this passage...

Compromising God's truth leads to disaster – Jeroboam choose convenience over obedience, which led his nation into sin.

Idolatry is a serious offense to God – Worshiping anything other than God brings judgment.

Sin can become a pattern for future generations – The people of Israel continued in idolatry, eventually leading to their downfall.

**1 Kings 12:30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.**

- **became a sin:** 1Ki 13:34 2Ki 10:31 17:21

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 12:30-31 **Beware** that you are not ensnared to follow them (GODLESS CANAANITES), after they are destroyed before you, and **that you do not inquire after their gods**, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?' 31 "You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. (NOTE CAREFULLY THE CLEAR ASSOCIATION OF **IDOLATRY WITH IMMORALITY** = "every abominable act.")

1 Kings 14:7-9+ (ADDRESSING [AHIJAH](#)) Go, say to Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over My people Israel, 8 and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you—yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight; 9 you also have done more evil than all who were before you, and have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back—

## THE SIN OF IDOL WORSHIP

**Now this thing became a sin, for** (term of explanation - explaining is was sin because they acted on it) **the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan** - What is **this thing**? In context clearly this refers to idol worship. **As far as Dan** implies that people from all over the kingdom traveled great distances to worship at the idols instead of worshiping God in Jerusalem. The golden calves led to the sin of idolatry. Idols are attractive to the fallen flesh, and when they are made of gold, they are doubly attractive (seductive). Remember there is only one letter difference between "gold" and "God" but an eternal difference in worshipping one versus the other! Presumably the Shekinah Glory was visible over the Temple in Jerusalem symbolizing God's presence. But now Jeroboam gave the people an even more visible "symbol" to worship, a golden calf. In effect Jeroboam had introduced [syncretism or syncretic worship](#) (false worship) to the 10 Northern Tribes. Religious syncretism is the blending or merging of different religious beliefs, practices, or traditions into a new system, often combining elements from multiple faiths. A classic description of syncretism is seen in 1 Kings 17:33+ where "They feared the LORD and served their own gods."

*Syncretism relies on the whim of man,  
not the standard of Scripture*

**THOUGHT** - We need to be very cautious with [iconography](#)! [Gotquestions](#) adds "There is nothing wrong with producing or enjoying religious art, per se. Viewing a painting of a biblical scene in an art gallery and admiring the artist's technique cannot be considered idolatry. Having a picture of Jesus or of angels in one's home may not be idolatry, either. Iconography can be studied as an art form, and icons can be viewed as fascinating examples of historical religious art. But using icons to aid one's worship or viewing them as a "window to heaven" is definitely idolatry."

What is the significance of the people going as far north as Dan to "worship?" Dan was approximately 65–70 miles north of Shechem, depending on the exact route taken. By Foot this would take about 3–4 days of travel, assuming an average walking speed of 20 miles per day. Dan was 105–110 miles north of Jerusalem, depending on the exact route taken and by foot would take



around 5–6 days of travel. What is the point? (1) Dan was the farthest from the designated site of worship, so they were getting as far away from God's will as they could get. (2) Since it was such a great distance, the fact that the people were willing to make this long trip demonstrates the utter apostasy of their hearts. They were far from Jehovah!

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**QUESTION - [What is religious syncretism?](#) | [GotQuestions.org](#)**

**ANSWER** - *Syncretism*, as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is “the reconciliation or fusion of differing systems of belief.” This is most evident in the areas of philosophy and religion, and usually results in a new teaching or belief system. Obviously, this cannot be reconciled to biblical Christianity.

Religious syncretism often takes place when foreign beliefs are introduced to an indigenous belief system and the teachings are blended. The new, heterogeneous religion then takes a shape of its own. This has been seen most clearly in Roman Catholic missionary history. Take, for example, the Roman Catholic Church’s proselytizing of animistic South America. Threatened with the fear of death, natives were baptized into the church by the tens of thousands without any preaching of the Gospel whatsoever. Former temples were razed, with Catholic shrines and chapels built on the same spot. Natives were allowed to substitute praying to saints instead of gods of water, earth and air, and replaced their former idols with new images of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, the animistic religion the natives had formerly practiced was never fully replaced—it was adapted into Catholic teachings, and this new belief system was allowed to flourish.

More recently, religious syncretism can be seen in such religious systems as the [New Age](#), [Hinduism](#), [Unitarianism](#), and [Christian Science](#). These religions are a blending of multiple different belief systems, and are continually evolving as the philosophies of mankind rise and fall in popularity.

Therein lies the problem, for syncretism relies on the whim of man, not the standard of Scripture. The Bible makes it very clear what true religion is. Think on just a few things stated in Scripture: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37); "Jesus replied, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6); "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31); and "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Religious syncretism is simply not compatible with true Christianity. In fact, any modification to biblical law and principle for the sake of a “better” religion is heresy (Revelation 22:18-19).

**1 Kings 12:31 And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.**

- **houses:** 1Ki 13:24,32 De 24:15 Eze 16:25 Ho 12:11
- **priests:** 1Ki 13:33 Nu 3:10 2Ki 17:32 2Ch 11:14,15 13:9 Eze 44:6-8

**Related Passages:**

2 Chronicles 11:13-16+ Moreover, the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel stood with him from all their districts. 14 For the Levites left their pasture lands and their property and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had excluded them from serving as priests to the LORD. 15 He set up priests of his own for the high places, for the satyrs and for the calves which he had made. 16 Those from all the tribes of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD God of Israel followed them to Jerusalem, to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers. (**ED: THE UPSHOT IS THAT THERE WERE VERY FEW GODLY PEOPLE LEFT IN THE 10 TRIBES!**)

Numbers 3:10+ “So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons that they may keep their priesthood, but the layman who comes near shall be put to death.”

Numbers 16:40+ as a reminder to the sons of Israel that no layman who is not of the descendants of Aaron should come near to burn incense before the LORD; so that he will not become like Korah and his company—just as the LORD had spoken to him through Moses.

**HERE COME THE**

## HIGH PLACES AGAIN!

**And he made houses on high places ([bamah](#))** - Note the word "**houses**" which is the Hebrew word "bayith" so that more literally this would read "house of high places." You may be asking "So what?" Back in 1Ki 12:27 we find the same Hebrew word "bayith" describing the "house of the LORD." As Provan suggests " Rehoboam has a "house" in Jerusalem; Jeroboam needs a "house" to compete with it. So he builds a "house of high places" (i.e., an illegitimate temple in the singular) with its own altar in Bethel (v. 32)."

Like a religious huckster, Jeroboam seeks to make false religion even more convenient! Jeroboam directly disobeyed Dt 12:2-4 which called for destroying instead of making high places! Jeroboam seems to be ignorant (or indifferent) to the fact that the wisest man in the world (Solomon) lost his kingdom in part because of idolatry which included the building of **high places** for his wives (1Ki 11:7+). Jeroboam is going to great lengths to make his "religion" "seeker friendly" not only by providing a golden calves north and south, but also by setting up high places between the Dan and Bethel. Jeroboam was making religious practice "convenient" not to mention corrupt and abominable to a Holy God.

**And made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi-** Having counterfeited the "house of the LORD," he goes all in to counterfeit the divinely designated priesthood! Apparently most (or all) of the Levites who were still in the Northern Kingdom left presumably when Jeroboam made the golden calves. But absence of designated Levitical priests did not deter Jeroboam from inventing his own version of the priesthood, in violation of God's Word.

According to God's law, only Levites (descendants of Aaron) could serve as priests (Nu 3:10, Dt 18:1-5). Jeroboam ignored this divine instruction and appointed priests from any tribe. See [LEVITICAL PRIESTS](#)

2 Chr 11:15+ adds that Jeroboam "set up priests of his own for the high places, for the **satyrs** (sa'iyr) and for the calves which he had made." Paul explains "that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, **they sacrifice to demons and not to God**; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." (1Co 10:20-21+)

Some takeaways from this passage...

Compromising God's truth for personal gain leads to destruction – Jeroboam changed God's commands for political reasons, which ultimately destroyed his kingdom.

False worship may look religious but is still sinful – Jeroboam's idolatrous system imitated true worship, yet it led the people away from God.

God alone defines worship – Worship must be according to His Word, not human preference (John 4:24).

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**QUESTION - [What is the significance of high places in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)**

**ANSWER** - High places, very simply, were places of worship on elevated pieces of ground. High places were originally dedicated to idol worship (Numbers 33:52; Leviticus 26:30), especially among the Moabites (Isaiah 16:12). These shrines often included an altar and a sacred object such as a stone pillar or wooden pole in various shapes identified with the object of worship (animals, constellations, goddesses, and fertility deities). It seems that, at times, high places were set up in a spot that had been artificially elevated; 2 Kings 16:4 seems to differentiate the "high places" from the "hills."

The Israelites, forever turning away from God, practiced [Molech worship](#) and built high places for **Baal** (Jeremiah 32:35). Although Solomon built the temple of God in Jerusalem, he later established idolatrous high places for his foreign wives outside of Jerusalem and worshiped with them, causing him the loss of the kingdom (1 Kings 11:11). The people were still sacrificing at the pagan high places before the temple was built, and Solomon joined them. After the Lord appeared to him in a dream at Gibeon, the king returned to Jerusalem and sacrificed offerings; however, he continued to waver between the two places of worship.

Not all high places were dedicated to idol worship. They played a major role in Israelite worship, and the earliest biblical mention of a site of worship, later called a "high place," is found in Genesis 12:6-8 where Abram built altars to the Lord at Shechem and Hebron. Abraham built an altar in the region of Moriah and was willing to sacrifice his son there (Genesis 22:1-2). This site is traditionally believed to be the same high place where the temple of Jerusalem was built. Jacob set up a stone pillar to the Lord at Bethel (Genesis 28:18-19), and Moses met God on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:1-3).

Joshua set up stone pillars after crossing the Jordan (Joshua 4:20) and considered this a high place of worship because the Israelites "came up from" the Jordan onto higher ground. The high places were visited regularly by the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 7:16). High places as sites of Canaanite idol worship (Judges 3:19) extended into the period of Elijah (1 Kings 18:16-40). God would name only one high place where sacrifice was authorized, and that was the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1). God commanded that all other high places be destroyed. King Josiah destroyed them in 2 Kings 22-23.

**1 Kings 12:32 Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.**

- **like the feast which is in Judah:** 1Ki 8:2,5 Lev 23:33,34-44 Nu 29:12-40 Eze 43:8 Mt 15:8,9
- **sacrificing** Am 7:10-13

#### Related Passages:

Leviticus 23:39+ 'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day.

### JEROBOAM'S FAKE FEAST

**Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made** - Jeroboam continues his counterfeit worship by instituting a feast which presumably was designed to imitate the real Feast of Tabernacles, which was celebrated on the 15th day of the 7th month (Lev 23:33-34+). Notice the phrase he went up to the altar indicating that Jeroboam personally led sacrifices, even though he was not a priest which is another violation of God's law.

Jeroboam's counterfeit feast reminds me of the words of Jesus "BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN." (Mt 15:9+)

**1 Kings 12:33 Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.**

- **went up to the altar** 1Ki 12:32
- **month:** Nu 15:39 Ps 106:39 Isa 29:13 Mt 15:6 Mk 7:13
- **went up to the altar to burn incense:** 1Ki 13:1 1Sa 13:12 2Ch 26:6

#### Related Passages:

1 Kings 13:1+ Now **behold**, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense.

2 Chronicles 26:16-18+ But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. 18 They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to **burn incense to the LORD**, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God."

### JEROBOAM UNLAWFULLY ACTS AS A PRIEST

**Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart** (NIV = "of his own choosing," NET = "he choose this month on his own") - Ponder this a moment. If Jeroboam was choosing the feast day, what was he doing in essence? He is putting Himself in the place of God, Who Alone had the right to set the feast days (cf Lev 23:4). **Devised in his own heart** is a deadly deception, for as Jeremiah 17:9 said "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. Who can understand it?" And the answer here is "Certainly not Jeroboam." The heart of the problem of Jeroboam leading 10 tribes into apostasy was the problem with his heart!

Philip Ryken writes that "This is what happens when we follow our own hearts instead of the Word of God: we will do whatever we please, rather than what is pleasing to God."

**THOUGHT** - I am reminded of that sad 300+ year history of Israel in the Old Testament epitomized by the repeated phrase "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Jdg 21:25+) There was no king in Jeroboam's Israel and he (and the people) did what was right in their own eyes. Notice they were so deceived that they thought what they were doing was right! (See [Deceitfulness of Sin](#)) I would add that Paul's words in Ro 3:18+ would aptly describe Jeroboam and his subjects "There is (was) no fear of God before their eyes." Please Holy Spirit enable us to be ever on guard against taking our eyes off of Jesus and allowing the world's gods to grow in stature and influence in our lives! In Jesus' Name. Amen.

**And he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense**- Only Levites (descendants of Aaron) were allowed to offer sacrifices and burn incense. Jeroboam is in direct rebellion against God for there is only One King is permitted to act as Priest, Jesus Christ, the King of kings! King Uzziah was struck with leprosy for doing what Jeroboam did! (2Ch 26:16-18+)

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**Technical Note** - 1Ki 12:33 would be better placed with 1 Kings 13+. The original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible had no chapter numbers, no verse numbers and were both written in continuous text. The chapter divisions were added by [Stephen Langton](#) (Archbishop of Canterbury) in the early 1200's when he created the chapter divisions we use today in the Latin Vulgate Bible. Robert Estienne later added verses to the NT in the 1500's. In 1560 the Geneva Bible became the first Bible with both chapter and verse numbers throughout.

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JUDAH	ISRAEL
2 TRIBES	10 TRIBES
No images of God	Veneration of calves
Levitical priesthood	Multi-tribe priesthood
Central sanctuary	Local and regional sanctuaries
Separatist cult	Syncretistic cult
Capital Jerusalem	Capital Shechem
Destroyed by Babylon 586 BC	Destroyed by Assyria 722 BC

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#### Summary of sins of Jeroboam:

1. rejected the prophecy of Ahijah – 1Ki 11:38
2. built rival temples
3. had a visible image of YHWH
4. made local high places 1Ki 12:31
5. appointed non-Levite priests 1Ki 12:31
6. changed the date or started a new annual feast 1Ki 12:32,33
7. offered non-Levitical incense on the altar himself

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Some takeaways from the life of Jeroboam...

Political power alone is not enough – Jeroboam was smart in fortifying cities, but he later led Israel into **idolatry** (1 Kings 12:26-33).

Trusting in human strength over God leads to failure – Instead of following God's ways, Jeroboam tried to secure his rule through military and political strategies.

God had already ordained the kingdom's division – Jeroboam's rule was part of God's plan, but he failed to trust God's promises and turned to sin.

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**F B Meyer** - 1 Kings 12:33 The month which he had devised of his own heart.

Jeroboam acted on expediency. It did seem reasonable to argue that the constant going up to Jerusalem to worship might alienate the people from his throne, and awaken a desire for the old national unity; and without doubt a mere worldly wisdom extolled his setting-up of idol-gods at Bethel and Dan; but his policy in this respect led to the downfall of his kingdom. Had he trusted God's promise, made through the prophet Ahijah, the Divine purpose would have ensured the continuance of his rule; but the prompting of expediency resulted in ultimate disaster (1 Kings 14).

How prone we all are to devise out of our own hearts! We take counsel with ourselves, and do what seems prudent and farseeing, with the inevitable result of being betrayed into courses of action that God cannot approve, and of which we have reason to repent bitterly. It is infinitely better to wait on God till He develop His plan, as He most certainly will, when the predestined hour strikes. He who trusts in his own heart, and takes his own way, is a fool. To run before God is to sink knee-deep into the swamp. We must make all things after the pattern shown us on the Mount, and take our time from God's almanac. What a contrast to the course of Jeroboam was that of the Son of Man! He would do nothing of Himself. His eye was always on His Father's dial-plate, and thus He knew when His time was not yet fulfilled. He was always consulting the movement of His Father's will, and did only those things which He saw His Father doing. Similarly make God's will and way thy Pole-star. Oh to be able to say with our blessed Lord, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"!

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### **Before the Face of God - The Kingdom of Jeroboam**

Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. [1 Kings 12:31]

The apostasy of humanity at the Tower of Babel provoked God to scatter the people into many nations. Similarly, the apostasy of Solomon provoked God to divide the kingdom in half. The northern part of the kingdom, which had its own culture, was given to Jeroboam, while the southern part, consisting of Judah and Simeon (which had merged with Judah), was to remain under the Davidic dynasty.

When Solomon learned that Ahijah the prophet had announced that this would happen, he sought to kill Jeroboam, but the opposition leader fled to Egypt (1 Kings 11:40). After Solomon's death, the people gathered to make Rehoboam king. Notice that accession to the throne was not automatic in Israel; the people had to accept Rehoboam, otherwise another son of Solomon would be put forward. On this occasion, Jeroboam came out of Egypt and spoke for the people. As their leader, he asked that they be released from bondage (1 Kings 12:1-4).

These events fit a pattern we have seen. The man who was to be king was presented as one who delivered the people from bondage. Moses delivered them from Egypt and became their judge. David had to flee to Philistia, then worked to deliver Israel from bondage both to Saul and to Philistia. Next, Jeroboam came from Egypt and stood as the new deliverer. Jeroboam showed wisdom. He did not lead a revolution but appealed to Rehoboam to lighten the people's load. Only after Rehoboam refused did the northern tribes secede.

Next, another sad pattern from the reigns of David and Solomon was replayed: Jeroboam was given a kingdom; then he too suffered a "great fall." Fearful that his people would become attracted to the Davidic house if they went to Jerusalem to worship, he set up false worship at two sites in the north. He created a new clergy with himself as high priest, and sold the priestly offices to anyone willing to buy them. In short, he created a state-run church, subservient to the king, in order to shore up his nationalistic aspirations.

Coram Deo Many faithful Christians suffered martyrdom in Nazi Germany because they refused to support the idolatrous "German church." It was easy to be caught up in nationalism, but the church is an international and transcendent institution. Are there ways we can allow nationalism to warp ministry? Pray today for the church universal, especially for those in troubled lands.

## **The Kingdom Divided 1 Kings 12**

### **J R MILLER**

The golden age of Israel closed with the death of Solomon. His empire was great, extending over wide limits. His revenues were very large. Everything in his kingdom was on a grand scale. He "made silver and gold to be as stones in Jerusalem." The palaces and public buildings were magnificent in their splendor. Yet the seed of decay was in the heart of it all. The rabbis say that while Solomon walked about in splendor—a worm was eating at the heart of his empire. This is another way of saying that the elements of corruption were in Solomon's kingdom. There were reasons. His heart had been drawn away from God by his heathen wives. At the same time the magnificence of his kingdom and the extravagance of his reign made it necessary to extort oppressive taxes from the people. Many of them also were drafted for forced labor. No wonder that they grew restive under these hard conditions. When

Solomon died they were ready for the outbreak which followed. If Rehoboam had been wise, there might not have been an immediate rending of the kingdom from him—but in his folly—he drove the people to the extreme of rebellion.

Solomon largely outlived his fame. His reign became excessively burdensome to the people by reason of the heavy taxes they had to pay. His character also lost much of its charm through his departure from God. His aims were not lofty—as they were at the beginning. He was called in his earlier years, the wisest of men—but his later life was characterized by folly. His kingdom was no longer as secure and strong as it was, when he received it. Indeed, it was ready for disruption, and Solomon himself was responsible for its corrupt condition. It was a pathetic ending of his record that, notwithstanding the glory of his reign and the great things he had done—no word of commendation of him is given. All that is said of the close of his life is that he "slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father; and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead."

Solomon did not leave behind him when he died—a sweet, fragrant memory in the hearts of his people. "When he was gone, the people came to Rehoboam, asking him to lighten their oppressive loads. Rehoboam promised them an answer in three days, and then sought advice.

First he sent for the older men, and they advised him to grant the request. Experience had made them gentle. "Show yourself their friend," they said. "Listen to their grievances. Take a kindly interest in them. Think of their good. Speak to them affectionately. Give them the relief they seek, and serve them in any way you can. If you do these things—you will win their love, and they will prove your faithful subjects."

This was good advice—but Rehoboam was not satisfied with it. The aged men were too slow for him. He turned to the young men of his own age, hot-headed fellows like himself, and sought advice of them.

When the people came to the king for his answer, Rehoboam, following the advice of the younger men, and replied to them roughly. His answer, indeed, was insolent and brutal. Such words as he spoke would have kindled the flame of rebellion, even if there had been no tinder dry and ready for the spark.

Rehoboam has many followers. We should learn the folly and wickedness of sharp, rude, and bitter words. Anyone sees how unworthy of a king, Rehoboam's speech was—but such words are unworthy of anyone's lips. They were insolent, contemptuous, haughty, unmanly, and cruel. We are all too apt, under provocation, to give rein to intemperate speech.

Destinies have been wrecked by following foolish counsel. Every young person needs a wise older friend to whom he may go with his life's serious questions. Happy is the young man or young woman who has such a counselor, and who will then accept the wisdom which comes of experience. But Rehoboam rejected the wise counsel of the aged men. He answered the people roughly: "My father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!"

The consequence of Rehoboam's harsh words was the wrecking of his kingdom. The people turned away, saying, "What portion have we in David?" It took but a minute to give the reply which Rehoboam gave—but the harm done by it never could be undone! Burke said, "Rage and frenzy will pull down more in half an hour—than prudent deliberation and foresight can build up in a hundred years." We need not go far, nor seek long—to find other illustrations. Many people lose noble, helpful friends, lose them beyond regaining, by the petulant, ill-tempered words of a minute. Many lives with splendid possibilities become utter failures through uncontrolled tongues. When will men and women learn to put bridles in their mouths?

The matter of seeking advice is always a serious one. Some people too readily turn to others to ask them what they should do. We ought to learn to think for ourselves. Each man must bear his own burden. We never can get clear of the responsibility of choosing for ourselves. However, there are times when we may turn to others for advice. The young and inexperienced especially may receive valuable help from those who are older and more experienced. But in seeking advice we should make sure of the people to whom we turn. Bad advice has wrecked many a life.

Rehoboam had good advice from the older men—but rejected it. There are many who follow him in this regard—they receive good counsel from friends, from parents, from teachers, from godly men, from those who are wiser than themselves, and then ignore it. There are many who, like Rehoboam, reject the good advice—and take the bad. There was OneRehoboam seems to have missed altogether in seeking advice—he did not go to God for counsel. We should always ask God what He would have us do; He never advises unwisely. No life was ever wrecked by taking His counsel.

One lesson we get from Rehoboam's undisciplined course—is that those who would rule over others, must have achieved both self-control and patience in themselves. Rehoboam had achieved neither. He thought only of his own personal gain—the last element that should influence one in dealing with others. He lacked altogether that spirit of meekness, which Jesus said shall inherit the earth. We should keep SELF out of our work for God, out of all our work of love. Whenever SELF comes in—it mars everything. We should think only of our duty, not of the way our act may affect us. If Rehoboam had asked, "What course will be the best for the country and for the good of the kingdom?" he would not have acted so foolishly. He would have shown patience and kindness, and

would have lightened the heavy burdens under which the people were bending.

Those who rule over others, should love them and be ready to serve them. Rehoboam is an example of those who try to govern others by tyranny. If he had really loved the people and had been disposed to serve them, sympathizing with them in their burden-bearing and showing them kindness, they would have continued loyal to him. "Through love, be servants one to another" is the New Testament law.

We all need to guard ourselves at these points. We are apt to be unloving and harsh in our dealings with others, especially when our dignity seems to be hurt. Even parents need to keep a careful guard upon themselves in this matter, lest their consciousness of having authority should make them unjust to their children. Paul exhorts fathers not to provoke their children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Teachers have like temptation in enforcing authority. So have all who are placed over others.

It often happens that a man who has been very kind and brotherly as a fellow-workman, or as an equal among men, becomes tyrannical and intolerant when in a position of authority. We should remember that all power is of God, and we represent Him in whatever place of authority we occupy. We should rule, therefore, in God's name—as He would rule if He were in our place. In all our dealings with those over whom we are placed in the Providence of God—we should be gentle, sincere, loving—that we may look into God's face without shame.

Life has its turning points for all of us. This was the turning point in Rehoboam's career. He had before him the possibilities of a prosperous and successful reign. All hinged, however, on one word. Should he say yes—or no? If he had said yes, he would have won the people to himself and his kingdom would have been established. He said no, however, and he drove the people to anger and rebellion. Men are continually coming to turning points when all their future depends upon a single decision. Two paths lie before them. One leads to beauty, honor, blessing; the other leads to dishonor and sorrow. The decision of the moment, settles for us in which of these two paths we will walk. Many a man or woman by a careless word—throws away the hope of infinite blessing and good.

It is interesting to notice that while the kingdom of David had failed of its best through man's fault and sin, it was not altogether cast off. The vessel had not come out what the potter first intended it to be—it had been marred on the wheel—but he made it again, another vessel, not so fine as the first would have been—but still a good vessel. The kingdom had a second chance. From the seed of David came at length the Messiah. There is encouragement in this for all those who miss their first and best chance. They may try again, and their life may yet realize much honor and beauty. When we think of it, most of the worthy lives of godly men in the Bible—were second chances. They failed, and then God let them try again. David himself, and Jonah, and Peter, and Paul are illustrations.

## **Jeroboam's Idolatry 1 Kings 12**

**J R MILLER**

Jeroboam had a fine opportunity. He had come up from the ranks of the people through his own industry and efficiency. He was among the workmen engaged on the great public works of the nation when Solomon found him, his attention having been drawn to him by his industry and ability. He had risen, not through political influence—but by sheer worth—to a high place. Then he had been divinely pointed out—as the man to be the king of the ten northern revolting tribes. The prophet had told him that the Lord would give him this responsible place. The people had also freely turned to him and chosen him as their leader. He had the gifts and qualifications for kingship. If only he had used his opportunity aright—he might have become a great king and have built up a mighty empire.

But there was a condition, as there always is when God puts a trust into any man's hands. "I will place you on the throne of Israel, and you will rule over all that your heart desires. If you listen to what I tell you and follow my ways and do whatever I consider to be right, and if you obey my laws and commands, as my servant David did, then I will always be with you. I will establish an enduring dynasty for you as I did for David, and I will give Israel to you." But Jeroboam threw away this magnificent opportunity, and wrecked the possibilities of his own life. He might have made a brilliant story of honor and blessing for himself and the new kingdom if he had been faithful to God.

Jeroboam was a good builder. Building had been his business. When he became king, he set to work at once to build and fortify cities. "Jeroboam built Shechem . . . and built Penuel." What a pity it is that he did not stay at his building work all his life! We cannot help thinking how different the history of God's people might have been—if Jeroboam had not become king; or if, being king by divine appointment, he had walked in God's ways.

A trail of sin, however, blotted every page of the nation's story behind him. He is known as "the man who made Israel to sin." Every time his name is mentioned, this mark of dishonor is attached to it. He was put upon his throne with a holy mission. He was called to

be a godly king, and then was promised honor, divine blessing, and the perpetuity of his throne. But he proved a traitor to God, and failed to carry out the divine plan for his life. He not only wrecked his own destiny—but he dragged a nation with him, down to sin and infamy. It seems a pity that he was ever discovered by Solomon and promoted to a place of honor. Better if he had remained all his life in his lowly place. He understood building cities and strengthening fortifications; had he only built morally and spiritually as well as he had built in material things, he would have been a successful king. There are many people who do this world's part of their life-work well enough—but fail utterly of their higher mission.

We must do our common work conscientiously. We are sure that Jesus was a good carpenter and did the work of His trade most honestly and carefully. But He had a higher mission than carpentering. There are fine carpenters, who are neglectful of their spiritual duties. No life is a success—which does not build for heaven. Bricks and stones and timbers—will not make eternal habitations. It is right to do one's work well—but if one's work on the heavenly side is neglected meanwhile, the result will be disastrous in the end. The record of Jeroboam's enterprise, is all eclipsed by the black spots of his great moral failure.

Jeroboam wanted to keep his people loyal and faithful to him, and set about devising ways of encouraging such loyalty and devotion. He thought he saw danger in the people's returning to the feasts in Jerusalem. He feared that if this were still permitted, that they would be drawn back to their former allegiance to the southern kingdom of Judah. He knew that they would not be satisfied without some system of worship. They had been accustomed to go to Jerusalem to the great feasts, and these observances had a tremendous hold upon them. If they had no place of worship of their own, they would continue to go to the temple and would gradually drift back to Judah. "Jeroboam said in his heart. Now . . . if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto the Lord."

It is true that old religious faiths die hard. Religious ties are very strong. When bred in the blood and fiber, it is almost impossible to break them. Those who have been brought up with strong religious habits from their infancy—can scarcely by any power be turned entirely away from these habits in later life. This is one reason why children should be trained from the cradle to obey God, and engage in His service. They may then for a time be drawn away from good paths by the world's temptations—but they will almost surely come back in the end. Jeroboam was right in his impression that the people would be apt to drift back to the old altars, unless he provided something in place of what they had left. Yet this was no justification for the sin into which he led them. If he had been loyal to God—he would have sought the counsel of some wise and godly men, and have devised some plan to provide for his people religious worship, which would have the divine approval.

The king's device to meet the danger was not God's way. "The king made two gold calves. He said to the people, 'It is too much trouble for you to worship in Jerusalem. O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt!' He placed these calf idols at the southern and northern ends of Israel—in Bethel and in Dan. This became a great sin—for the people worshiped them!"

Nature abhors a vacuum. A human heart cannot be left empty. "When one object of devotion is taken from it, something else must be put in its place. The king knew that the only way he could keep the people from returning to the old worship—was by furnishing some other worship for them. So he was not content to forbid them going up to the old national feasts; he set up new shrines and appointed new festivals.

The old missionaries understood this law of life. When cutting down the sacred groves where the people had worshiped idols, they used the wood to erect Christian chapels on the same spot. If we seek to drive out evil—we must do it by getting something good into the heart instead. There is little use in merely urging people to stop doing wrong—they must be taught to do something in place of the wrong, and unless they are given something good to do—they will continue to do the wrong things.

But while Jeroboam took advantage of this law of life, he erred grievously in the way he sought to fill the vacuum. Turning the people away from the worship of the true God—he set up idols and taught them to worship these! Only evil came out of it. "This became a great sin, for the people worshiped them, traveling even as far as Dan!" The king's plan worked well, according to his purpose. The people took readily to his new shrines. They went even to the farthest off, to Dan, to worship. They do not seem to have had any desire to return to Jerusalem. So Jeroboam had a religion of his own for his new kingdom, and thus one of the strongest ties of the old national life, was broken and the separation was made complete.

Yet this is one of the saddest records in the Bible. It tells of the beginning of a departure from God, which in the end brought bitter sorrow and terrible ruin upon the people, blotting from the very face of the earth—the tribes who were thus set going on a wrong path! The man who starts an error—never knows to what it will grow. He who sets another's feet in a wrong path—never knows where it will lead at last. To teach one child falsely—may be to hurt thousands of lives in the end. Those who start new enterprises open fountains of influence, good or bad, which will flow on forever. Jeroboam gave shape and character to the new departure, and the nineteen kings who followed him—all, with not an exception, walked in his evil steps!

There is an old story of an abbot who coveted a certain piece of ground. The owner refused to sell—but consented to lease it for one crop only. The shrewd abbot sowed acorns, a crop of which would take three hundred years to grow and ripen. Jeroboam's one evil sowing, mortgaged the new kingdom for evil through all its two hundred and fifty years of history!



Jeroboam's evil work did not stop with the setting up of the calves of gold. He established a full religious cult and elaborated a complete system of worship. He made priests, and ordained feasts and systems of sacrifice.

We may trace the course of this man's sin as it works itself out in the after history. What were the consequences in Jeroboam himself? Trouble followed trouble. His hand withered at the altar. His child died. He was defeated in war. His kingdom was partially torn from him. He was smitten in his person and went to his grave in dishonor.

Then in all the ages since his name has been gibbeted before the world, branded with infamy, as "the man who made Israel to sin." But his sin did not stop with himself. He poisoned the springs of national life and led a nation into idolatry. The whole history of the ten tribes is one of disaster and calamity, ending in captivity and extinction. Commentators note the fact that in the seventh chapter of Revelation, where the names of the tribes that are sealed in heaven are given, two are missing, Ephraim and Dan, the tribes in whose territories the idol-calves were set up. Is there no significance in this omission? The story of sin is always terrible! "Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death!"

Jeroboam's record is preserved as a warning for those who come after him. The red light of the story shines out as a danger signal. Which way are you starting? Are you facing light or darkness? As you start in youth—you will likely continue to go forever!