

The Division of the Kingdom (931n BC)

1 Kings 12:1–24

Rehoboam is Confronted by Jeroboam

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

2 It happened that Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *of it* while he was still in Egypt where he had fled from the face of King Solomon, and Jeroboam had lived in Egypt.

3 So they sent and summoned him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came.

Then they spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

4 “Your father made our yoke heavy; now lighten the hard labor of your father and the heavy yoke which he placed on us, and we will serve you.”

5 He said, “Go up for three days and then return to me”; so the people went away.

Rehoboam Consults His Older Advisers

6 Then King Rehoboam consulted with the old men who had been serving before Solomon his father when he was alive, saying, “How *are* you advising *me* to answer this people?”

7 They said to him, “If you will be a servant today to this people, then you will serve them; and if you answer them and speak good words to them, they will always be your servants.”

God Causes Rehoboam to Reject the Elders’ Wise Advice

8 But he rejected the advice of the old men, which they gave him, and he consulted with the youngsters who had grown up with him, who were serving before him.

9 He said to them, “What *are* you advising that we should reply to this people who spoke to me by saying, ‘Lighten the yoke your father put on us.’”

10 Then the youngsters who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, “Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you: ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten *it* for us,’ you shall say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins.

11 So then, my father loaded a heavy yoke on all of you, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions!’”

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

13 Then the king answered all the people harshly, *as* he had rejected the advice of the old men that they had offered.

14 He spoke to them according to the advice of the youngsters, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add onto your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”

15 So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turning of events from Yahweh in order to fulfill his word which Yahweh had spoken through the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

The Northern Tribes Revolt and Proclaim Jeroboam King

16 When all of Israel saw that the king would not listen to them,

2 Chronicles 10:1–11:4

10:1 Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

2 And it happened *that* when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *it*—now he *was* in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon—

Jeroboam returned from Egypt.

3 And they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and all Israel went,

and they spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

4 “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now, therefore, lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, and we will serve you.”

5 And he said to them, “In three days return to me again.” And the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the elders who had been serving before Solomon his father when he was alive, saying, “What word do you advise to answer this people?”

7 And they said to him, “If you will be good to this people and please them,

then speak good words to them. Then they will be your servants forever.”

8 But he forsook the advice of the elders that advised him and took counsel of the young men who had grown up with him who were serving before him.

9 And he said to them, “What do you advise that we should say in return to this people, who said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father has put upon us’?”

10 Then the young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus you should say to this people who have said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, so you yourself should lighten *it* for us.’ Thus you should say to them, ‘My little finger *is* thicker than the loins of my father.

11 So now, my father laid upon you a heavy yoke, but I myself will add to the yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I myself *will do so* with scorpions.’”

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

13 And the king answered them harshly, and King Rehoboam forsook the advice of the elders.

14 And he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, “I will make your yoke heavy, and I myself will add to it. My father disciplined you with whips, but I *will do so* with scorpions.”

15 So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turning of *events* from God, so that Yahweh might fulfill his word that he had spoken by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

16 So all Israel *saw* that the king would not listen to them,

the people answered the king, saying, “What share do we have in David? *There is* no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, Israel! Now look to your house, David!” Then Israel went to their tents.

17 The Israelites were living in the cities of Judah, and Rehoboam was reigning over them.

18 King Rehoboam sent Adoram who *was* over the forced labor, and all of Israel cast stones at him and he died, but King Rehoboam managed to get up on the chariot to flee *to* Jerusalem.

19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David until this day.

20 It happened that just when all of Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all of Israel. Not one *followed* after the house of David except the tribe of Judah alone.

God Prevents a Civil War

21 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all of the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand choice troops to fight with the house of Israel, to restore the kingship to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

22 Then the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

23 “Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon the king of Judah and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and the remainder of the people, saying,

24 ‘Thus says Yahweh: “You shall not go up and you shall not fight with your brothers the Israelites. Return each of you to his house, for this thing was from me.” ’”

So they heeded the word of Yahweh,

and they returned to go home according to the word of Yahweh.

and the people answered the king, saying, “What portion *is there* for us in David? *We have* no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Each to your tents, O Israel! Now look to your own house, David!” And all Israel went to their own tents.

17 But as for the Israelites who were living in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam ruled over them.

18 Then King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was in charge of the forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him with stones, and he died. Then King Rehoboam hastily went up into the chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

19 So Israel has rebelled against the house of David until this day.

11:1 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, one hundred and eighty thousand chosen warriors, to fight against Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam.

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

3 “Say to Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin,

4 ‘Thus says Yahweh: “Do not go up, and do not fight against your brothers. Return, each man to his house, for this matter has come from me.” ’”

So they obeyed the words of Yahweh and turned back from going against Jeroboam.

The North and the South (931–929 BC)

1 Kings 12:25; 2 Chronicles 11:5–12

Jeroboam Fortifies the Northern Kingdom

1 Kgs 12:25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and he resided in it. Then he went out from there and built Penuel.

Rehoboam Fortifies the Southern Kingdom

2 Chr 11:5 And Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, and he built cities as strongholds in Judah.

6 He built Bethlehem, Etah, Tekoa,

7 Beth-Zur, Socoh, Adullam,

8 Gath, Mareshah, Ziph,

9 Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah,

10 Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, fortified cities that *are* in Judah and in Benjamin.

11 And he strengthened the fortifications and put commanders in them, *along with* stores of food, olive oil, and wine.

12 And in all the cities *he put* shields and spears, and he greatly strengthened them. So he had Judah and Benjamin.

Jeroboam’s Sin and Rehoboam’s Obedience (931–929 BC)

1 Kings 12:26–31; 2 Chronicles 11:13–17

Jeroboam Institutes a Religious System of His Own Making

1 Kgs 12:26 Then Jeroboam said to himself, “Now the kingdom will return to the house of David

27 if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem. The heart of this people will return to their master Rehoboam the king of Judah, and they shall kill me and return to him.”

28 And the king had decided, so he made two golden calves and he said to them, “You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough; here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.”

29 He put one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

30 This thing became a sin, and the people walked before the one as far as Dan.

31 Then he built the houses on the high places, and he appointed priests from all walks of life who were not from the sons of Levi.

The Priests and Levites Move to Judah

2 Chr 11:13 Now the priests and the Levites who *were* throughout all Israel took their stand with him [Rehoboam] from all their territories.

14 For the Levites left their pasturelands and their property and came to Judah and to Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to Yahweh.

15 And he appointed his own priests for the high places and for the goat idols and for the bull calves that he had made.

16 Then after them, from all the tribes of Israel, those who set their heart to seek Yahweh, the God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to offer to Yahweh, the God of their ancestors.

17 And they strengthened the kingdom of Judah and made Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, secure for three years, for they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years.

God Sends a Prophet to Bethel (c. 15 Marchesvan [November] 929 BC)

1 Kings 12:32–13:34

The Man of God Cries Out Against Jeroboam’s Altar

12:32 Jeroboam also inaugurated a religious feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the religious feast which was in Judah, and he offered *sacrifices* on the altar. Thus he did in Bethel, by sacrificing to the calves that he had made; and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

33 He offered *sacrifices* on the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month which his heart had devised. He inaugurated a religious feast for the Israelites, and he went up to the altar to offer incense.

13:1 Suddenly a man of God from Judah came to Bethel, by the word of Yahweh, while Jeroboam *was* standing at the altar to offer incense.

2 Then he proclaimed against the altar by the word of Yahweh and said, “O altar, altar, thus says Yahweh: ‘Look, a son will be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall burn on you.’”

3 He gave a sign on that day, saying, “This *is* the sign that Yahweh has predetermined: Look, *this* altar will be torn *apart*, and the ashes that *are* on it will be poured out.”

4 It happened at the moment the king heard the word of the man of God that he cried out against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Seize him!” But his hand which he stretched out to him was paralyzed, and he was not able to draw it back to himself.

5 Then the altar was torn *apart* and the ashes from the altar poured out according to the sign which the man of God had announced by the word of Yahweh.

Jeroboam’s False Repentance and Attempted Bribe

6 Then the king responded and said to the man of God, “Please entreat the favor of Yahweh your God, and pray for me that my hand may return to me.” So the man of God entreated the face of Yahweh, and the hand of the king returned to him, as it was in the beginning.

7 Then the king spoke to the man of God, “Come with me to the house and refresh yourself, that I may give you a gift.”

8 Then the man of God said to the king, “Even if you give to me half of your house I will not come with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water in this place,

9 for the word of Yahweh has commanded me, saying, ‘You shall not eat bread nor drink water, and you shall not return on the way that you came.’”

10 So he went another way, and he did not return by the way on which he had come to Bethel.

The Old Prophet’s Treachery

11 Now a certain older prophet was living in Bethel, and his son came and recounted to him all of the things that the man of God had done that day in Bethel *and* the words he had spoken to the king, and they told them to their father.

12 Then their father asked them, “Which way did he go?” His sons had seen the way which the man of God who had come from Judah had taken.

13 Then he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” So they saddled the donkey for him, and he mounted it

14 and went after the man of God. He found him sitting under the oak and said to him, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” He said, “I *am*.”

15 Then he said to him, “Come with me to the house and eat *some* food.”

16 Then he said, “I am not able to return with you or to go with you. I will not eat food nor will I drink water with you in this place.

17 For a word *came* to me by the word of Yahweh, ‘You shall not eat food, nor shall you drink water there. You shall not return to go by the way that you came.’”

18 Then he said, “I *am* also a prophet like you. An angel spoke to me by the word of Yahweh, saying, ‘Let him return with you to your house that he may eat food and drink water.’” He lied to him.

God’s Judgment Falls on the Man of God

19 So he returned with him and ate food in his house and drank water.

20 Now it happened that they *were* sitting at the table, and the word of Yahweh came to the prophet who brought him back.

21 He proclaimed to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, “Thus says Yahweh: ‘Because you have disobeyed the word of Yahweh and have not kept the command which Yahweh your God commanded you,

22 but you have returned and have eaten food and drank water in the place which he ordered you not to eat food nor to drink water, then your dead body shall not return to the tomb of your ancestors.’”

23 It happened after he ate food and drank water that he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back.

24 When he left, a lion found him on the road and killed him, and his dead body *was* thrown on the road with the donkey standing beside it, and the lion *was* standing by the dead body.

The Old Prophet Buries the Man of God

25 As men *were* passing by and they saw the dead body thrown in the road and the lion standing beside the dead body, they came and told it in the city where the old prophet *was* living.

26 When the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard, he said, “It *is* the man of God who disobeyed the mouth of Yahweh, and Yahweh has given him to the lion. He tore him in pieces and killed him according to the word of Yahweh which he had spoken to him.”

27 Then he spoke to his sons, saying, “Saddle the donkey for me.” So they saddled it.

28 He went and found his dead body thrown in the road and a donkey with the lion standing beside it, but the lion had not eaten the corpse nor attacked the donkey.

29 So the prophet lifted up the corpse of the man of God and put it on the donkey and brought it back. He came to the city of the old prophet to mourn him and to bury him.

30 He put his corpse in his tomb, and they mourned over him, “Alas, my brother!”

31 It happened after he buried him that he said to his sons, “When I die, you shall bury me in the tomb where the man of God *is* buried; you shall lay my bones beside his bones.

32 For surely, the thing which he proclaimed by the word of Yahweh against the altar which *is* in Bethel will happen, *as it will* against all the houses of the high places which *are* in the cities of Samaria.”

Jeroboam Hardens His Heart in Spite of the Miraculous Events

33 After this event, Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but he returned and *again* made priests for the high places of people from all walks of life. He filled his hand with all *his* desire and became *one of* the priests of the high places *himself*.

34 This matter became sin in the house of Jeroboam, to make it disappear and to destroy *it* from the surface of the earth.

Jeroboam’s Refusal to Repent Provokes God’s Judgment (c. 928n BC)

1 Kings 14:1–18

1 At that time, Abijah son of Jeroboam became ill.

2 Jeroboam said to his wife, “Please get up and disguise yourself so that they will not know that you *are* the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Look, Ahijah the prophet is there, and he spoke concerning me *before I became* king over this people.

3 You must take ten loaves of bread in your hand and cakes and a jar of honey, and you must go to him. He shall tell you what will happen to the boy.”

4 The wife of Jeroboam did so. She got up, went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah was not able to see, for his eyes were fixed because of his old age.

5 Then Yahweh said to Ahijah, “Look, the wife of Jeroboam *is* coming to seek a word from you about her son, for he *is* ill. Thus and so you shall say to her. When she comes, she *will be* disguising herself.”

6 It happened at the moment Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps coming through the doorway, he said, “Come *in*, wife of Jeroboam. Why *are* you making yourself unrecognizable? I have been sent a hard *message* for you:

7 Go, tell Jeroboam, ‘Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel: “Because I raised you from the midst of the people and I made you leader over my people Israel,

8 I tore the kingdom from the house of David and I gave it to you. But you were not like my servant David who kept my commandments, and who went after me with all his heart, to do only *what is* right in my eyes.

9 But you did more evil than all who were before you. You have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten idols to provoke me, but me you have completely disregarded.

10 Therefore, look, I am about to bring disaster upon the house of Jeroboam, and I will cut off males from Jeroboam, bond or free, in Israel. I will burn after the house of Jeroboam as one burns after the manure, until it is finished.

11 He who dies for Jeroboam in the city, the dogs will eat. He who dies in the open field, the birds from the heavens will eat, for Yahweh has spoken it.”

12 As for you, get up. Go to your house. When your feet enter the city, the child will die.

13 All of Israel will mourn for him, and they will bury him. This one alone will come to a tomb for Jeroboam, because a good thing has been found in him by Yahweh the God of Israel in the house of Israel.

14 Yahweh will raise up a king for himself over Israel who will even now cut off the house of Jeroboam this day.

15 Yahweh will strike Israel as one shakes the reed plant in the water, and he will root Israel up from this good land that he gave to their ancestors. He will scatter them beyond the River because they have made their sacred poles *which are* provoking Yahweh.

16 He will give up Israel because of the sin of Jeroboam which he sinned and which he caused Israel to sin.”

17 Then the wife of Jeroboam got up, went, and came to Tirzah. As she was coming to the threshold of the house, the boy died.

18 They buried him and all of Israel mourned for him, according to the word of Yahweh which he had spoken by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

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Chronological Notes

- 1) The Hebrew calendar was (and is) lunar-solar. Each month started with the new moon. Since twelve lunar months fall short of a full solar year, in some years a thirteenth month was added. In later years the formula was worked out with some exactitude as to when this should be done. The month that began near the spring equinox was called Nisan. The northern kingdom (Israel) considered the year to start in Nisan throughout its history, whereas for civil purposes Judah considered the year to start in the seventh month, Tishri, corresponding roughly to our October.
- 2) The Scriptures often give the number of the month instead of the month's name, and when this is done the numbering always starts from Nisan, independently of whether the official year started in Nisan or Tishri. In the readings, the expression “931n” is used to represent the year beginning on Nisan 1, 931 BC and ending the day before Nisan 1, 930 BC. This is the kind of year that would be used in the court records of the northern kingdom. “931t” represents the year beginning Tishri 1, 931 BC and ending the day before Tishri 1, 930 BC; this is the kind of year that would be used in Judah. The six-month overlap of these two dates is written as 931t/930n, meaning the time period that began on Tishri 1 of 931 BC and ended the day before Nisan 1 of 930 BC. The overlap of 932t and 931n is written 931n/931t. This method of expressing dates may be called the “Nisan/Tishri” notation.¹

¹ Rodger C. Young, “Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders,” *JETS* 48/2 (June 2005): 225.