

# Bible Stories

## REHOBOAM and JEROBOAM

1<sup>st</sup> Kings 12:20-21

January 28, 2023

Solomon reigned over Israel for 40 years. He was successful in many areas of his life, but he also made choices that led to catastrophic failures and consequences that would lead to the division of the nation.

Jeroboam worked for Solomon. A prophet of God told him that, because of Solomon's infidelity, Israel would be divided and 10 tribes would go with him. Solomon tried to have Jeroboam killed, but he fled to Egypt and remained there until Solomon's death.

When Solomon died, his son, Rehoboam, was declared king, so, when Jeroboam returned from Egypt, he and all the assembly of Israel went to him with a request:

- **1 Kings 12:4 and 2 Chronicles 10:4** - 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.

Rehoboam took counsel with the elders who had served his father and was advised to do as the people requested – *“Deal kindly with the people and they will serve you faithfully.”* He didn't like that advise, so he sought counsel from the young men he had grown up with. Here's what they said:

- **1 Kings 12:10-11** - .... say to the people: My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. 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!

This can only end poorly.....

- **1 Kings 12:16** - When all of 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.

All Israel made Jeroboam king, *“Not one followed after the house of David except the tribe of Judah alone.”* – 1 Kings 12:20

Rehoboam assembled 180,000 troops from Judah and Benjamin, intending to squash the rebellion, but was stopped short when he was told it was Yahweh who had decreed the division of the nation. Civil war was averted and everyone went home.

Both Jeroboam and Rehoboam began to rule in **931 BC**.

### Over in Israel:

**Jeroboam:** Reigned for 22 years (931-910 BC) = **EVIL**.

Jeroboam was afraid the people would go to worship at the Temple, so he had 2 golden calves made. He set up temples and appointed his own priests – because the priests and Levites had all gone to Judah. He created feast days and led the people in the worship of idols.

God sent a young prophet with a message:

- **1 Kings 13:2-3** - .... O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: “A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you. This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.”

Jeroboam had a fit, but, right in the middle of his tantrum, 2 things happened: his hand shriveled up and the altar split in ½, all the ash spilling to the ground.

- **1 Kings 13:6** - Then the king said, "Intercede with Yahweh your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored."

The young man interceded and the king's hand was restored. The young man was invited home for lunch, but he declined.

Yahweh had specifically told this prophet, *“Get in and get out. Don't linger. Don't stop to smell the flowers. Don't eat, don't drink just say what I tell you to say and go home”.*

## The Story within The Story

The young prophet headed for home. But then, he decided to linger – prophesying can be tiring after all – so, he reigned in his donkey under an oak tree and took a nap.

This is where the story takes a tragic turn. By not obeying all the way to the border and choosing instead to rest under the oak tree this young prophet was playing a very dangerous game – a game that will cost him his life.

An old prophet, whose sons had been at the altar, went looking for the younger man and invited him home. He would not take no for an answer, insisting that an angel from Yahweh had instructed him to invite the young man home (he was lying).

What **SHOULD** the young prophet have done?

*“No thanks, Yahweh was very clear and He has not spoken to me directly of a change of plans.”*

Well, he didn't do that. He just went home with the old man.

In the middle of dinner, the old man declared that the young man would die because he had disobeyed Yahweh's direct command.

After dinner, as the young man travelled down the road toward home, a lion popped out from behind a rock and killed him.

This strange story, placed within the context of Jeroboam's sin, shows us they are connected.

- **Ellen White {PK 107}**: .... If, after disobeying the word of the Lord, the prophet had been permitted to go on in safety, the king would have used this fact in an attempt to vindicate his own disobedience....

Jeroboam needed to understand that God expects obedience from His people – especially His leaders. If He would not let the sin of His prophet go unpunished neither would he allow Jeroboam's continued sin to go unpunished.

And how did Jeroboam respond?

- **1 Kings 13:33** - Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places.

## Meanwhile, over in Judah:

**Rehoboam**: Reigned for 17 years (931-913 BC) = **EVIL**.

While Rehoboam was faithful, Judah was strong, but eventually he abandoned Yahweh. High places, stone pillars and sacred poles were built on every hill and under every tree and male shrine prostitutes were employed. *“They did according to all the abominations of the nations which Yahweh had driven out....”* – 1 Kings 14:24

Five years into Rehoboam's reign, Pharaoh Shishak (945-924 BC) invaded Judah. Yahweh sent a prophet with a message: *“You have forsaken me; therefore, I am handing you over to Shishak.”*

Rehoboam and the people repented. Yahweh intervened and Shishak did not destroy Judah, but they remained subject to him:

- **2 Chronicles 12:8** - ... so that they may learn the difference between serving me and serving the kings of other lands."

Shishak went home, taking treasures from the Temple and Palace with him.

Rehoboam died and his son, **Abijah (Abijam)** became king.

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**Abijah**: reigned 3 years (913-911 BC) = **EVIL**.

- **1 Kings 15:3** - He walked in all the sins of his father that he had done before him, and his heart was not fully with Yahweh his God as the heart of David his father.

2 Chronicles 13:18 does show us a moment, when civil war broke out between Judah and Israel, that Abijah chose faithfulness. This was the result: *“and the men of Judah were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers.”*

**In Israel** - Jeroboam died and **Nadab** his son became king.

**In Judah** - Abijah died and his son **Asa** became king.

**Asa:** reigned 41 years (911-870 BC) = **RIGHT**.

- **1 Kings 15:12-14** - He put away the male shrine prostitutes from the land. He removed all the idols that his ancestors made. He had his mother removed as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the Asherah. He cut down the image and burned it in the Wadi Kidron. But the high places he did not remove. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was completely with Yahweh all of his days.

### **Meanwhile, over in Israel:**

**Nadab:** Reigned for 2 years (910-909 BC) = **EVIL**.

- **1 Kings 15:27** - He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, walking in the ways of his father and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.

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Baasha murdered Nadab and killed every member of Jeroboam's family – no one survived.

**Baasha:** Reigned for 24 years (909-886 BC) = **EVIL**.

- **1 Kings 15:34** - He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.

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**Elah:** Reigned for 2 years (886-885 BC) = **EVIL**.

- **1 Kings 16:9-10, 13** - Zimri, one of his officials, who had command of half his chariots, plotted against him..... struck him down and killed him, then he succeeded him as king..... because of all the sins Baasha and his son, Elah had committed and had caused Israel to commit.

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**Zimri:** Reigned for 7 days (885 BC) = **EVIL**.

Because Zimri killed Elah and Baasha's entire family, the people declared Omri king.

- **1 Kings 16:18** - When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel and set the palace on fire around him. He died.....
- **1 Kings 16:21-22** - Then the people of Israel were split into two factions; half supported Tibni and the other half supported Omri. But Omri's followers proved stronger than those of Tibni. Tibni died and Omri became king.

**Tibni:** Reigned for 4 years (885-880 BC) = **EVIL** / **Omri:** Reigned for 12 years (885-874 BC) = **EVIL**.

- **1 Kings 16:25** - Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD and sinned more than all those before him.

**In Israel** - Omri died and his son **Ahab** became king.

**In Judah** - Asa died and his son **Jehoshaphat** became king.

<p><b>Ahab:</b> Reigned for 22 years (874-853 BC) = <b>EVIL</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1 Kings 16:30</b> - Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him.</li></ul>	<p><b>Jehoshaphat:</b> Reigned for 25 years (872-848 BC) = <b>RIGHT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1 Kings 22:43-44</b> - He walked in all of the way of Asa his father, and he did not turn aside from it, doing right in the eyes of Yahweh. Only he did not remove the high places; the people were still sacrificing and burning incense on the high places. He made peace with Ahab.</li></ul>
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### **What do we do with this?**

To understand the position we find God's people in, we have to go back further than the Monarchy.

Israel is the only nation, **EVER**, to be a Theocracy – a nation, whose Leader is God. But that wasn't good enough for them. God wasn't good enough for them. Nice benefits, but too restrictive. So, they made a choice, believing it was in their best interest to be like everyone else.

They traded Yahweh in in-order to be like **"other nations."** Remember what Yahweh said to Samuel: **"They are not rejecting you, they are rejecting Me."**

A sad history followed. There were a few bright spots here and there, but for the most part, every king – beginning with Saul – made disastrous choices that led the people of Israel down a very dark path away from God.

- **John Maxwell {The Leadership Bible}** - As the Leader goes, so goes the Nation - When Israel or Judah lived under good kings, things went well. Under bad kings, things went sour. The heart and skill of a leader will always affect the lives of the people under his direction. This is a law, both timeless and universal.....