

# THE KINGDOM IS DIVIDED

## *Divided Kingdom*

1 Kings 12 -16; 2 Chronicles 10 - 16

### STRUCTURE

**Key-persons:** Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Asa

**Key-locations:** Samaria, Jerusalem

**Key-repetitions:**

- Sinned: Rehoboam, king of Judah (2 Chr 12:1, 14); the people of Judah (1 Kin 14:22-24); Abijah, king of Judah (15:3); Israel (12:30; 13:34); Jeroboam, king of Israel sinned against the Lord and caused the people to sin (1 Kin 14:16).
- Idolatry, idols or altar to other gods (1 Kin 12:25-33; 13:1-5, 32; 14:9, 21-31; 15:9-24; 16:13, 26).
- God of Israel (14:7, 13; 15:30; 16:13, 26).
- God spoke through prophets: Shemaiah (1 Kin 12:21-24; 2 Chr 12:5-8); a man of God (1 Kin 13:1-10).
- Followed the example of: Jeroboam (1 Kin 15:26, 34; 16:13, 26, 19, 26); Rehoboam (1 Kin 15:3); David (1 Kin 15:11).
- Seek the Lord (2 Chr 11:16; 12:14; 15:2, 15).

**Key-attitudes:**

- Rebellion against God.
- The selfish arrogant pride of Rehoboam.
- The Israelites had hope in Rehoboam when they first met with him, but after his harsh words they begrudged him.
- Jeroboam's insecurity and haughtiness.
- The persistence with idolatry of the kings of Israel.
- Asa was esteemed until he was reprimanded, then he was resented.
- The courage of the prophets.

**Initial-situation:**

Solomon was wiser and richer than all the other kings on earth. High taxes and forced labor enabled him to obtain wealth and succeed with his building projects.

The Lord had warned the Israelites not to marry people of other nations. However, Solomon had 700 wives from foreign, royal families and 300 concubines. His wives seduced him away from the Lord.

The Lord was furious with Solomon. Ahijah the prophet told Jeroboam that after the death of Solomon, the Lord would rip ten of the tribes of Israel away from Solomon's son and give them to Jeroboam to rule.

Solomon died and his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king.

**Initial-problem:**

Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel told the newly anointed King Rehoboam, "Your father put a heavy yoke on us and made us work hard, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."

**Final-situation:**

Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, sinned by making idols. He sinned and caused the people to sin. All the kings of Israel followed the example of Jeroboam.

The first two kings of Judah, Rehoboam and Abijah, also worshiped idols. But Asa imitated David and did what was right for 36 of his 41 years as king.

### BIBLE STORY

#### Division of the Kingdom

All the Israelites came together to make Rehoboam king. Jeroboam had taken asylum in Egypt to escape King Solomon's wrath. When Rehoboam became king, Jeroboam returned from Egypt. Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel told Rehoboam, "Your father put a heavy yoke on us and made us work hard. Loosen up the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you" (1 Kin 12:1-4).

Rehoboam replied, "Return in three days, and I will answer you." So the people left.

King Rehoboam consulted the older leaders, who had served his father Solomon when he was alive. "How do you advise me to answer these people?"

The elders replied, "Be a servant to these people and respond with compassion and they will always be your servants" (1 Kin 12:5-7).

Rehoboam asked the young men who had grown up with him, "What is your advice?"

The young men replied, "Tell these people, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father beat you with whips; I will beat you with chains!'" (1 Kin 12:8-11).

Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam. The king followed the advice of the young men and answered the people with cruel words, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father beat you with whips; I will beat you with chains!" God caused Rehoboam to refuse to listen to the people in order to fulfill the prophecy spoken to Jeroboam (1 Kin 12:12-15).

When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king, "What do we have to do with David? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!"

Ten tribes of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam and followed Jeroboam. They called their new nation Israel or the Northern Kingdom. Its capital was Samaria. The Israelites made Jeroboam king over all Israel.

Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem and continued to rule the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah. Two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to Rehoboam. Their kingdom was called Judah, or the Southern Kingdom. Its capital was Jerusalem.

All the kings of Judah were descendants of David, while the kings of Israel were not.

Rehoboam called up the 180,000 fighting men of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to make war against the house of Israel so he could take back the kingdom for himself.

But the word of God came to a prophet to tell Rehoboam, along with everyone in Judah and Benjamin, "The Lord commands you not to go up to war against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, for this is my doing." They obeyed the Lord and returned to their homes (1 Kin 12:16-24).

### **Israel: Jeroboam Creates New Worship**

Jeroboam thought, "When these people go up to worship at the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will want to be ruled by Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and go back to King Rehoboam."

The king made two golden calves and told the people, "It is too hard for you to go up to Jerusalem to worship. Here are your gods who brought you up out of Egypt." Jeroboam put one calf in Bethel, and the other in Dan. This was blatant sin against God.

Jeroboam recruited priests from all sorts of people. He created a new festival for the Israelites to worship and offer sacrifices at the altar he had built at Bethel (1 Kin 12:25-33).

### **Judah: Many from Israel Flee to Judah**

Jeroboam dismissed the Levites as priests and appointed his own priests for worship centers where he installed goat and calf idols. Priests and Levites throughout Israel sided with Rehoboam, abandoned their pastures and property, and moved to Judah and its capital city of Jerusalem.

Everyone from all the tribes of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the Lord God of Israel, migrated with the Levites to Jerusalem. They supported Rehoboam for three years, during the time he was loyal to the ways of David (2 Chr 11:13-17).

### **Israel: Prophecy against Jeroboam**

Jeroboam was standing by the altar in Bethel to make an offering. A man of God cried out, pronouncing the Lord's words, "O altar, altar! The Lord says, 'David's family will have a son

named Josiah. Josiah will kill the priests who now make offerings here on you. Human bones will be burned on you. God gives this sign that these things will come to pass: the altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will fall onto the dirt.”

King Jeroboam stretched out his arm, yelling, “Seize him!” But Jeroboam’s arm became paralyzed and hung useless. At the same time, the altar broke apart and its ashes spilled into the dirt; the sign that the man of God had just given.

Jeroboam pleaded with the man of God, “Intercede for me! Pray to the Lord your God that my arm may be healed.” The man of God prayed, and the king’s arm was healed (1 Kin 13:1-10).

However, Jeroboam kept right on doing evil, recruiting priests indiscriminately for the forbidden shrines. This was the root sin of Jeroboam’s government. This was the sin that ruined him (1 Kin 13:33-34).

Jeroboam reigned for 22 years and then died (1 Kin 14:19-20).

All of the kings of Israel imitated Jeroboam and did evil. They all promoted idolatry and immorality.

### **Judah: Rehoboam**

Rehoboam, son of Solomon, was 41 years old when he became king in Judah. He ruled for 17 years in Jerusalem (1 Kin 14:21).

After Rehoboam secured his kingdom and was strong again, he and all Judah with him abandoned the law of the Lord. Their sins provoked the Lord’s jealous anger more than their ancestors had done. They set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles (sex-and-religion idols) on high hills and under spreading trees. Male religious prostitutes were at the places built to worship their gods. The people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites (1 Kin 14:22-24).

Rehoboam died and Abijah his son succeeded him as king (1 Kin 14:29-31).

### **Judah: Asa**

King Abijah of Judah, continued to sin just like his father Rehoboam had before him. When Abijah died and was buried, his son Asa succeeded him as king (1 Kin 15:1-8).

Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his ancestor David had done. He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols made by his predecessors. He removed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, because she made a memorial to the whore goddess Asherah. Asa cut the idol pole down and burned it (1 Kin 15:11-15). He commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his commands (2 Chr 14:4).

A prophet told Asa, “The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Be strong and do not give up, for your good work will be rewarded.”

When Asa heard the prophecy, he took courage. He removed the detestable idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns he had captured. He repaired the altar of the Lord that was in front of the Temple porch. Then he assembled all Judah and Benjamin and

the people from other tribes of Israel who had settled among them. Many from Israel had left their homes and joined Asa when they saw that the Lord God was with him.

They assembled at Jerusalem in the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. They sacrificed to the Lord and entered into a covenant to seek the Lord with all their heart and soul. All Judah rejoiced about the oath. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. The Lord gave them rest from war. There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign (2 Chr 15:1-19).

During the 35<sup>th</sup> year of King Asa's reign, King Baasha of Israel attacked Judah by building a fort at Ramah. Asa sent silver and gold to King Ben-Hadad of Aram, and asked him to fight against the towns of Israel (1 Kin 15:16-22; 2 Chr 16:1-6).

Hanani, the prophet, condemned Asa because he relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord. Asa put Hanani in prison and started being cruel to some of the people (2 Chr 16:7-10).

In the 39<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, Asa was afflicted with a severe disease in his feet. He did not seek help from the Lord. Asa died in the 41<sup>th</sup> year of his reign (2 Chr 16:11-14; 1 Kin 15:23-24).

## GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

## SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did the Kingdom of Israel become divided into two kingdoms?
2. Which kingdom always had a king who was a descendant of David, and which kingdom never had a king whose son was a descendant of David?
3. How did Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, sin and cause the people to sin?
4. How was King Asa different than the other kings of Judah?
5. How is the political situation today similar to, or different from, the times of Israel and Judah?

## LIFE-LESSONS

1. Following bad advice may result in disaster. Rehoboam followed the advice of his peers and his kingdom was divided (1 Kin 12:8-17). Jeroboam sought the counsel of men who advised him to make golden calves. This sin resulted in the destruction of his family and nation (1 Kin 12:28; 14:9-11).  
better for those who teach others to sin to have a millstone tied around their neck and be thrown into the sea (Mk 9:42).
2. False religions have their origin in human beings. The false religion of Jeroboam originated with his own thoughts (1 Kin 12:26) and was motivated by his selfish desires (1 Kin 12:27).
3. The worst sinners are those who lead others to do wrong. Jeroboam sinned and caused Israel to sin (1 Kin 14:9, 16; 15:30). Jesus said it would be  
4. Anyone is qualified to represent a god that is worthless. To represent the Lord God Almighty; however, a person must live by God's standards, not man's. Jeroboam built forbidden shrines and recruited priests from all sorts of people (1 Kin 12:25-33). Jeroboam kept on indiscriminately recruiting priests for the forbidden shrines. Anyone who wanted to become a priest, Jeroboam consecrated for the local shrines (1 Kin 13:33-34).
5. Children whose parents are rebellious against God can faithfully serve the Lord. Asa is an example.

The heart of Asa was totally committed to the Lord (1 Kin 15:14). Asa's reign was a time of powerful religious reform (1 Kin 15:12-15). However, Asa's father Abijah committed serious sins, following in the footsteps of Asa's grandfather Rehoboam (1 Kin 15:3). Asa's grandmother worshiped the whore-goddess Asherah (1 Kin 15:13).

6. Years of faithfulness to God will come to an end if a person rejects what God says in a specific

situation. Asa faithfully served the Lord for 36 years. In the 36<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, Asa relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord God during a war. The prophet Hanani brought Asa the Lord's Word reprimanding him. Asa put Hanani in prison and started being cruel to some of the people (2 Chr 16:7-10). When Asa was afflicted with a severe disease in the 39<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, he did not seek help from the Lord; he only sought help from doctors (2 Chr 16:11-14; 1 Kin 15:23-24).