

# **Jeroboam**

**Would Rule The Ten**

**Northern Tribes**

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## Overview

### **JEROBOAM WOULD RULE THE TEN NORTHERN TRIBES**

Jeroboam's story is told in 1 Kings 11:26-14:20. He is also mentioned in 2 Chron. 10-13.

Even clear warnings are hard to obey. The Bible is filled with stories of people who had direction from God and yet chose their own way. Their disobedience was rarely due to ignorance of what God wanted; rather, it grew out of stubborn selfishness. Jeroboam was a consistent example of this all-too-human trait.

During his construction activities, Solomon noticed young Jeroboam's natural leadership skills and made him a special project foreman. Shortly after this, God contacted Jeroboam through the prophet Ahijah.

He told Jeroboam that God would punish David's dynasty by tearing the kingdom from Solomon's son and that Jeroboam would rule the ten northern tribes. And God made it clear that the same fate would destroy Jeroboam's family if they refused to obey God.

Apparently Solomon heard about these events and tried to have Jeroboam killed. The future king escaped to Egypt, where he stayed until Solomon died.

When Rehoboam, Solomon's heir, took the throne, Jeroboam returned. He represented the people in demanding that the new king be more lenient than his father. Rehoboam's unwise choice to reject his people's request led to their rejecting him as king. Only Judah and the annexed tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to David's dynasty. The other ten tribes made Jeroboam king.

Rather than seeing this fulfillment of God's promise as motivation to obey God, Jeroboam decided to do whatever he could to secure his position. He led his kingdom away from the God who had allowed him to reign. God had already warned him of the consequences of this action—his family was eventually wiped out.

And Jeroboam set into motion events that would lead to the destruction of the northern kingdom.

## **First king of Israel after the revolt**

### **Promoted by Solomon**

#### **1 Kings 11:28**

Jeroboam was a very capable young man, and when Solomon saw how industrious he was, he put him in charge of the labor force from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

The prophet Ahijah predicted the division of the kingdom of Israel. After Solomon's death, 10 of Israel's 12 tribes would follow Jeroboam. The other two tribes, Judah and the area of Benjamin around Jerusalem, would remain loyal to David. Judah, the largest tribe, and Benjamin, the smallest, were often mentioned as one tribe because they shared the same border. Both Jeroboam and Ahijah were from Ephraim, the most prominent of the 10 rebel tribes.

### **Ahijah's prophecy concerning**

#### **1 Kings 11:29-39**

One day as Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh met him on the road, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone in a field, and Ahijah took the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces.

Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten of these pieces, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and I will give ten of the tribes to you!

But I will leave him one tribe for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel.

For Solomon has abandoned me and worshiped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians; Chemosh, the god of Moab; and Molech, the god of the Ammonites. He has not followed my ways and done what is pleasing in my sight. He has not obeyed my laws and regulations as his father, David, did.

“But I will not take the entire kingdom from Solomon at this time. For the sake of my servant David, the one whom I chose and who obeyed my commands and laws, I will let Solomon reign for the rest of his life.

But I will take the kingdom away from his son and give ten of the tribes to you. His son will have one tribe so that the descendants of David my servant will continue to reign in Jerusalem, the city I have chosen to be the place for my name.

And 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 I will punish the descendants of David because of Solomon's sin—though not forever.' "

## **Flees to Egypt to escape from Solomon**

### **1 Kings 11:26-40**

Another rebel leader was Jeroboam son of Nebat, one of Solomon's own officials. He came from the city of Zeredah in Ephraim, and his mother was Zeruah, a widow.

This is the story behind his rebellion. Solomon was rebuilding the Millo and repairing the walls of the city of his father, David. [28] Jeroboam was a very capable young man, and when Solomon saw how industrious he was, he put him in charge of the labor force from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

One day as Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh met him on the road, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone in a field, and Ahijah took the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces.

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Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but he fled to King Shishak of Egypt and stayed there until Solomon died.

### **Recalled from Egypt by the ten tribes on account of disaffection toward Rehoboam, and made king**

#### **1 Kings 12:1-20**

Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of Solomon's death, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon.

The leaders of Israel sent for Jeroboam, and the whole assembly of Israel went to speak with Rehoboam.

"Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects."

Rehoboam replied, "Give me three days to think this over. Then come back for my answer." So the people went away.

Then King Rehoboam went to discuss the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. "What is your advice?" he asked. "How should I answer these people?"

The older counselors replied, "If you are willing to serve the people today and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects."

But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and who were now his advisers. "What is your advice?" he asked them. "How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?"

The young men replied, "This is what you should tell those complainers: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist—if you think he was hard on you, just wait and see what I'll be like! Yes, my father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!'"

Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people returned to hear Rehoboam's decision, just as the king had requested. But Rehoboam spoke harshly to them, for he rejected the advice of the older counselors and followed the counsel of his younger advisers.

He told the people, "My father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!" So the king paid no attention to the people's demands. This turn of events was the will of the Lord, for it fulfilled the Lord's message to Jeroboam son of Nebat through the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh.

When all Israel realized that the king had rejected their request, they shouted, "Down with David and his dynasty! We have no share in Jesse's son! Let's go home, Israel! Look out for your own house, O David!" So the people of Israel

returned home. But Rehoboam continued to rule over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

King Rehoboam sent Adoniram, who was in charge of the labor force, to restore order, but all Israel stoned him to death. When this news reached King Rehoboam, he quickly jumped into his chariot and fled to Jerusalem. The northern tribes of Israel have refused to be ruled by a descendant of David to this day.

When the people of Israel learned of Jeroboam's return from Egypt, they called an assembly and made him king over all Israel. So only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the family of David.

After Solomon's death, the northern tribes revolt, forming two separate nations. Each nation experiences disastrous consequences from having evil kings. Elijah appears on the scene, confronting these kings for their sin. God deals with sin in powerful ways. Although judgment may appear to be slow, God will judge evil harshly.

Rehoboam asked for advice, but he didn't carefully evaluate what he was told. If he had, he would have realized that the advice offered by the elders was wiser than that of his peers. To evaluate advice, ask if it is realistic, workable, and consistent with Biblical principles. Determine if the results of following the advice will be fair, make improvements, and give a positive solution or direction. Seek counsel from those more experienced and wiser. Advice is helpful only if it is consistent with God's standards.

Both Jeroboam and Rehoboam did what was good for themselves, not what was good for their people. Rehoboam was harsh and did not listen to what the people said; Jeroboam established new places of worship to keep his people from traveling to Jerusalem, Rehoboam's capital. Both actions backfired. Rehoboam's move divided the nation, and Jeroboam's turned the people from God. Good leaders put the best interests of the "followers" above their own. Making decisions only for yourself will backfire and cause you to lose more than if you had kept the welfare of others in mind.

This marks the beginning of the division of the kingdom that lasted for centuries. Ten of Israel's 12 tribes followed Jeroboam and called their new nation Israel (the northern kingdom). The other two tribes remained loyal to Rehoboam and called their nation Judah (the southern kingdom).

The kingdom did not split overnight. It was already dividing as early as the days of the judges because of tribal jealousies, especially between Ephraim, the most influential tribe of the north, and Judah, the chief tribe of the south.

Before the days of Saul and David, the religious center of Israel was located, for the most part, in the territory of Ephraim. When Solomon built the temple, he moved the religious center of Israel to Jerusalem. This eventually brought tribal rivalries to the breaking point

### **Subverts the religion of Moses**

#### **1 Kings 12:25-33**

Jeroboam then built up the city of Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and it became his capital. Later he went and built up the town of Peniel. Jeroboam thought to himself, "Unless I am careful, the kingdom will return to the dynasty of David.

When they go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple of the Lord, they will again give their allegiance to King Rehoboam of Judah. They will kill me and make him their king instead."

[28] So on the advice of his counselors, 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!"

[29] He placed these calf idols at the southern and northern ends of Israel—in Bethel and in Dan. [30] This became a great sin, for the people worshiped them, traveling even as far as Dan.

Jeroboam built shrines at the pagan high places and ordained priests from the rank and file of the people—those who were not from the priestly tribe of Levi.

Jeroboam also instituted a religious festival in Bethel, held on a day in midautumn, similar to the annual Festival of Shelters in Judah.

There at Bethel he himself offered sacrifices to the calves he had made. And it was at Bethel that he appointed priests for the pagan shrines he had made.



So on the appointed day in midautumn, a day that he himself had designated, Jeroboam offered sacrifices on the altar at Bethel. He instituted a religious festival for Israel, and he went up to the altar to burn incense.

All Jewish men were required to travel to the temple three times each year (Deut. 16:16), but Jeroboam set up his own worship centers and told his people it was too **0** Jeroboam and his advisers did not learn from Israel's previous disaster with a golden calf (Exodus 32).

Perhaps they were ignorant of Scripture, or maybe they knew about the event and decided to ignore it. Study the Bible to become aware of God's acts in history, and then apply the important lessons to your life.

If you learn from the past, you will not face disaster as a result of repeating others' mistakes much trouble to travel all the way to Jerusalem. Those who obeyed Jeroboam were disobeying God. Some ideas, though practical, may include suggestions that lead you away from God.

Don't let anyone talk you out of doing what is right by telling you that moral actions are not worth the effort. Do what God wants, no matter what the cost in time, energy, reputation, or resources.

Calves were used as idols to symbolize fertility and strength. Pagan gods of the Canaanites were often depicted as standing on calves or bulls. Jeroboam shrewdly placed the golden calves in Bethel and Dan, strategic locations.

Bethel was just 10 miles north of Jerusalem on the main road, enticing the citizens from the north to stop there instead of traveling the rest of the way to Jerusalem. Dan was the northernmost city in Israel, so people living in the north far from Jerusalem were attracted to its convenient location.

As leader of the northern kingdom, Jeroboam wanted to establish his own worship centers; otherwise his people would make regular trips to Jerusalem, and his authority would be undermined. Soon this substitute religion had little in common with true faith in God.

## **Choosing unauthorized priest brings destruction and death.**

### **1 Kings 13:33-34**

But even after this, Jeroboam did not turn from his evil ways. He continued to choose priests from the rank and file of the people. Anyone who wanted to could become a priest for the pagan shrines. This became a great sin and resulted in the destruction of Jeroboam's kingdom and the death of all his family.

In the days of Israel's founding fathers, the city of Bethel was a symbol of commitment to God because it was there that Jacob had rededicated himself to God (Genesis 28:16-22).

But Jeroboam turned the city into Israel's chief religious center, intending it to compete with Jerusalem. Bethel's religion, however, centered on an idol, and this led to Israel's eventual downfall.

Bethel developed a reputation as a wicked and idolatrous city. The prophets Hosea and Amos recognized the sins of Bethel and condemned the city for its godless ways (Hosea 4:15-17; Hosea 10:8; Amos 5:4-6).

## **Greater evil prevailed.**

### **1 Kings 14:9**

You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made other gods and have made me furious with your gold calves. And since you have turned your back on me,

## **God abandon's Israel**

### **1 Kings 14:16**

He will abandon Israel because Jeroboam sinned and made all of Israel sin along with him."

Who was this king who would "cut off the family of Jeroboam"? His name was Baasha, and he would kill all of Jeroboam's descendants (1 Kings 15:27-30).

## **People were caused to sin.**

### **1 Kings 16:2**

"I lifted you out of the dust to make you ruler of my people Israel, but you have followed the evil example of Jeroboam. You have aroused my anger by causing my people to sin.

God destroyed Jeroboam's descendants for their flagrant sins, and yet Baasha repeated the same mistakes. He did not learn from the example of those who went before him; he did not stop to think that his sin would be punished. Make sure you learn from your past, the experiences of others, and the lives of those whose stories are told in the Bible. Don't repeat mistakes.

## **Followed sinful example**

### **1 Kings 16:26**

He followed the example of Jeroboam, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit. Thus, he aroused the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel.

Omri's new capital, Samaria, offered some political advantages. The city was his personal property, so he had total control over it. Samaria also

commanded a hilltop position, which made it easy to defend. Omri died before completing the city. So his son, Ahab, completed it, building not only the beautiful ivory palace (1 Kings 22:39; Amos 3:13-15), but also a temple to the god Baal

### **The people were led to worship Baal**

#### **1 Kings 16:31**

And as though it were not enough to live like Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to worship Baal.

### **The Levites moved to Judah.**

#### **2 Chron. 11:14**

The Levites even abandoned their homes and property and moved to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons would not allow them to serve the Lord as priests.

Before the nation split, the center of worship was in Jerusalem, and people flocked there for the three great annual religious festivals. During the rest of the year, priests and Levites who lived throughout the land conducted other worship services and rituals in the tribal territories. They offered sacrifices, taught God's laws, and encouraged the people to continue to follow God and avoid pagan influences.

After the nation split, Jeroboam, the new king of Israel, saw these priests and Levites as threats to his new government because they retained loyalty to Jerusalem, now the capital of Judah.

So he appointed his own priests, effectively banning the Levites from their duties and forcing them to move to the southern kingdom. Jeroboam's pagan priests encouraged idol worship. With the absence of spiritual leaders, the new northern kingdom was in danger of abandoning God.

## **Death of Jeroboam**

### **1 Kings 14:20**

Jeroboam reigned in Israel twenty-two years. When Jeroboam died, his son Nadab became the next king.

**King Jeroboam never regained power.**

### **2 Chron. 13:20**

So Jeroboam of Israel never regained his power during Abijah's lifetime, and finally the Lord struck him down and he died.

**God's punishment is not always immediate.**

Sins consequences are guaranteed in God's Word, but the timing of those consequences is hard to predict. When we do something directly opposed to Gods commands and there isn't immediate disaster, we are often fooled into believing we got away with disobedience.

But that is a dangerous assumption. Jeroboams life should make us recognize our frequent need to admit our disobedience and ask God to forgive us.

### **Lessons from his life:**

Great opportunities are often destroyed by small decisions

Careless efforts to correct another's errors often lead to the same errors

Mistakes always occur when we attempt to take over Gods role in a situation

**Key verses:**

“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. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth” (1 Kings 13:33-34).

**To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:**

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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