

**1Kings 12:1 ¶ And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.**

**1Kings 12:2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;)**

**1Kings 12:3 That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying,**

**1Kings 12:4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.**

**1Kings 12:5 And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.**

After the death of Solomon, the people of Israel gathered at Shechem to make Rehoboam the king. The fact that they gathered in Shechem instead of Jerusalem seems to allude to an underlying feeling of discontent among the people, especially the tribes in the north.

Gill included an interesting note on Shechem: "The Jews observe that this place was very ominous; here Dinah was ravished, Joseph was sold, Abimelech exercised tyranny, and here now the kingdom was divided."

Guzik adds this note regarding the gathering at Shechem: "All in all, it showed that Rehoboam was in a position of weakness, having to meet the ten northern tribes on *their* territory, instead of demanding that representatives come to Jerusalem."

Solomon wanted to kill Jeroboam, so he sought refuge in Egypt for several years. It seems that the friends of Jeroboam sent him a message informing him of Solomon's death. Enough time elapsed before this gathering for Jeroboam to be able to get to Shechem in time to participate in the process. JFB notes that the time lapse was to allow for a period of public mourning. It's also possible that it was calculated to allow Jeroboam time to return.

It seems that Jeroboam was one of the acknowledged leaders of the gathering and likely the appointed representative that spoke to Rehoboam on behalf of the people of Israel. It was noted that Solomon had ruled with a heavy hand regarding compulsory service and taxes. They told Rehoboam that they would willingly serve him if he would but lighten their load. He told the people that they could come back to hear his decision in three days.

The people had not asked for specifics, and it seems like a wiser man would have immediately promised to do as they had asked.

**1Kings 12:6 And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?**

**1Kings 12:7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good**

**words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.**

Rehoboam first consulted with the older men that had served his father for their opinion on how to answer the people. They encouraged him to purpose to be a servant to his people and speak encouragingly to them, and they would become his loyal servants.

**1Kings 12:8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, *and* which stood before him:**

**1Kings 12:9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?**

Rehoboam did not like the counsel provided by the older men and went to consult with some of his peers in his inner circle. He told them what the people had said and asked what they recommended.

I liked Guzik's comment: "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."

**1Kings 12:10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins.**

**1Kings 12:11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.**

Rehoboam and his friends were sorely lacking in wisdom—he for trusting them, and they for giving him such poor advice. Positions of power and authority often have a corrupting influence—especially on the young and/or inexperienced. We know from 2Chronicles 12 that Rehoboam was 41 years old when he began to reign. That he and his friends are described as "young" is relative to the older men that served Solomon as well as their lack of experience in any type of leadership.

Rehoboam's peers told him that he should declare his intent to make the yoke of the people even heavier using even more severe methods of enforcement.

**1Kings 12:12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.**

**1Kings 12:13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him;**

**1Kings 12:14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father *also* chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.**

**1Kings 12:15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.**

Jeroboam and the people of Israel returned on the third day as Rehoboam had designated. He then answered them in accordance with the recommendation from his peers.

Interestingly, Rehoboam's response is identified as coming from the LORD in order to fulfill the promise that he had made in past years to Jeroboam through the prophet Ahijah. This can be confusing. The fact is that the LORD is omniscient and often works His will by utilizing the choices of men against them or others in accordance with His own purposes. The LORD accomplished His own purpose without violating Rehoboam's freedom to make his own choices. Our God is so amazing and so far beyond our understanding!

**1Kings 12:16 ¶ So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.**

**1Kings 12:17 But *as for* the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.**

Obviously, the people were not pleased with his answer and basically declared that they would not serve Rehoboam. The people who lived in the cities of Judah, however, accepted him as their king.

**1Kings 12:18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who *was* over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.**

**1Kings 12:19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.**

Rehoboam did not seem to realize that the people had refused him as their king and sent Adoram, his chief tax collector, to collect taxes—but the people stoned him to death. Rehoboam quickly fled to Jerusalem once he heard what had happened. The kingdom was now divided. The Northern Kingdom was referred to as Israel and the Southern Kingdom as Judah.

**1Kings 12:20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.**

The leaders of the northern ten tribes of Israel sent for Jeroboam to come before the congregation, and they made him king over Israel. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (see the next verse) comprised Rehoboam's kingdom.

**1Kings 12:21** And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

**1Kings 12:22** But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, **1Kings 12:23** Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

**1Kings 12:24** Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

When Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem, he gathered together the people of Judah and Benjamin and assembled an army of 180,00 chosen warriors to fight against the house of Israel. He was determined to take control over all twelve tribes.

God spoke to the prophet Shemaiah and gave him a message for Rehoboam and all those of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He told them not to go fight against their brethren in Israel. They were to go home because God had purposed that the kingdom be divided. It was a consequence of Solomon's idolatry.

*1 Kings 11:9–12 “And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.”*

Amazingly, they listened to the message from the LORD and went back home.

V23 “and to the remnant of the people” – This seems to be referring to those whose lineage were of the ten northern tribes that lived in Judah.

**1Kings 12:25 ¶** Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel.

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

**1Kings 12:27** If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

After becoming king in Israel, Jeroboam built up the city of Shechem and

established it as his capital. Later on he built up Penuel, a city on the east side of Jordan, the place where Jacob had wrestled with God.

*Genesis 32:24–30 “And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day....And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”*

Jeroboam was an insecure ruler; he obviously didn't believe that God would really establish him as the king in Israel as He had promised.

*1 Kings 11:30–31 & 38 “And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee....And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.”*

The king reasoned that if he allowed the people to continue to sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem (which was required three times each year) in accordance with God's command, they would soon want to get rid of him and give their allegiance to Rehoboam and the house of David.

**1Kings 12:28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.**

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

**1Kings 12:30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.**

Seeking counsel among his friends, he decided to establish new places of worship at Bethel (in the south) and in Dan (in the north). He made two calves of gold and presented them as representing “the gods” that had brought their people out of Egypt (just as Aaron had done for the people in the wilderness). He explained that it was too much to expect them to have to continue to go to Jerusalem. Jeroboam led the people into direct sin against the LORD.

Reminder: Jeroboam had lived in Egypt for several years. Gill reasons: “...he might have learned the calf or ox worship there, and might take his pattern from thence, and have two as they had; the one they called Apis, which was worshipped at Memphis, and another called Mnevis, worshipped at Hierapolis....”

The NIV Commentary offers this explanation: “The golden calves he caused to be erected were probably not intended to be construed as pagan images per se but representations of animals on whose back stood the invisible god, unseen by the eye of the worshiper. Similar practices involving the worship of the Canaanite god Baal Hadad are well documented in the literature and art of Ugarit. It was inevitable that religious confusion and apostasy would soon set in.”

**1Kings 12:31** And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

**1Kings 12:32** And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

**1Kings 12:33** So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

Jeroboam also established temples at the two locations and made priests of men that were not of the tribe of Levi. He ordered a feast for the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, to replace the feast of tabernacles that was celebrated in Judah in the seventh month. He sacrificed to the golden calves on an altar at Bethel and burned incense according to his own purposes in direct opposition to the feast established by the LORD.

The Chronicler adds some further insight.

*2 Chronicles 11:14–16 “For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest’s office unto the LORD: And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made. And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.”*

All those that were determined to seek the LORD God of Israel moved to the southern kingdom. So, in fact, there were representatives from all the tribes that became a part of the southern kingdom. There is often reference made to the ten lost tribes of Israel that were conquered by the Assyrians. That is a misnomer since the kingdom of Judah was a composite of all twelve tribes.