

2Chronicles 11:1 ¶ And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen *men*, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam.

2Chronicles 11:2 But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

2Chronicles 11:3 Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying,

2Chronicles 11:4 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam.

Continuing in context from the previous chapter...

After the murder of Hadoram, Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem to gather together an army in preparation for going to war against the northern tribes. He amassed a military force of 180,000 chosen men identified as warriors with the intent of restoring the whole kingdom of Israel under his rule.

The LORD sent a message to Rehoboam through Shemaiah “the man of God,” a man that was recognized as a prophet of God. He told Rehoboam that the LORD’s command was for him to send all the men back home. He was not to go and fight against Jeroboam and the northern tribes because their rejection of Rehoboam was in accordance with God’s will.

Interesting to note is that Rehoboam obeyed the word of the LORD without protest.

2Chronicles 11:5 And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah.

2Chronicles 11:6 He built even Bethlehem, and Etam, and Tekoa,

2Chronicles 11:7 And Bethzur, and Shoco, and Adullam,

2Chronicles 11:8 And Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph,

2Chronicles 11:9 And Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah,

2Chronicles 11:10 And Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which *are* in Judah and in Benjamin fenced cities.

2Chronicles 11:11 And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine.

2Chronicles 11:12 And in every several city *he put* shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

Rehoboam maintained his palace in Jerusalem and built up the defense cities of Judah and Benjamin, specifically near its borders. As he fortified the cities he assigned captains to be in charge, including supervision of stores of food, olive oil and wine to provide for the troops stationed there. He also equipped them with shields and spears to strengthen their defenses.

The IVP Commentary adds this insight: These cities “form an inner line of

defense of the Jerusalem hills. There are four groups, ranging north to south, at strategic points guarding major approaches and highways: (1) Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa and Beth Zur guard the eastern boundary; (2) Socoth, Adullam, Gath and Maresha guard the west; (3) a southern line of defense includes Lachish, Ziph and Adoraim; (4) Zorah and Aijalon seem to function as northwestern fortresses, while Hebron (David's old capital in 2 Sam 2:1) may function as a staging point or regional center for both the south and the west."

2Chronicles 11:13 ¶ And the priests and the Levites that *were* in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts.

2Chronicles 11:14 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:

2Chronicles 11:15 And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.

2Chronicles 11:16 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.

2Chronicles 11:17 So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon.

After Jeroboam removed all the priests and Levites that were faithful to the LORD from their positions as priests, they left their homes and possessions in the northern kingdom to come to live in Judah and Jerusalem.

Jeroboam ordained priests of his own choosing to serve at the high places for the "devils" (goat/ faun gods) and the calves (idols) that he designated as representing God. 1Kings adds a bit more information.

1 Kings 12:26–29 "And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: 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. 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. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan."

I liked Gill's observation on the use of the term "devils": "...idols of whatsoever kind are so called; for whosoever worships them worships not God, but devils...."

Others out of ALL the tribes in the northern kingdom that desired to remain faithful to the worship of the LORD God of Israel also came to Jerusalem to be able to sacrifice to the LORD at the temple. These additional people helped to strengthen the kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom, and made Rehoboam a stronger king for the first three years of his reign.

It is significant to note that people from all tribes were represented in the southern kingdom of Judah. There were no "lost tribes" of Israel.

It is emphasized that for three years they (Rehoboam and those under his rule) walked in the way of David and Solomon. I believe this is a reference to choosing to obey the LORD. Though we know that Solomon rebelled for quite some time, we know his reign began in faithful obedience to the LORD. I also believe the book of Ecclesiastes indicates that he ended his reign in repentance and faith.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

2Chronicles 11:18 And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, and Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse;

2Chronicles 11:19 Which bare him children; Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zaham.

2Chronicles 11:20 And after her he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom; which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith.

2Chronicles 11:21 And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.)

2Chronicles 11:22 And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, to be ruler among his brethren: for he thought to make him king.

2Chronicles 11:23 And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives.

This section makes reference to Rehoboam's wives and sons. (Reminder: "son of" can be a reference to grandsons and great grandsons)

- Mahalath, daughter of Jerimoth son of David
- Abihail, daughter of Eliab son of Jesse – children: Jeush, Shamariah, Zaham
- Maachah, daughter of Absalom, the wife he cherished above all others – children: Abijah, Attai, Ziza, Shelomith
- A total of 18 wives and 60 concubines that gave him 28 sons and 60 daughters

Rehoboam appointed Abijah, son of Maachah, to the highest authority among his siblings; he intended Abijah to inherit the throne.

It is noted that he dealt wisely by sending his children throughout the cities of Judah and Benjamin with an abundant supply of food. By giving them all areas of authority, he probably helped avoid jealousy among them.

Like his father Solomon before him, he "desired" many wives. The Hebrew indicates that he demanded to have these wives. I can't help but wonder if he thought that so many wives and concubines made him appear to be stronger.