

### 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS

#### Week 21, Chapters 11 and 12

After our detour last week to take a good look at the 3 societal platforms that form the basis for virtually every known culture, and with the revelation that the shame-honor culture is the one that we see most prevalent in the Bible, let's return to 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11 and start with verse 14. Let me also mention that beginning with Mt. Sinai, the guilt-innocence societal platform was introduced into Israel by means of the Law. However the extent of its influence upon Hebrew society varied greatly over time, and was not uniform among the tribes.

Let's re-read a portion of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11 to get grounded for today's lesson.

#### RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 11:14 – end

As a brief review, Israel is in a process of being divided into two kingdoms. A man name Hadad was raised up by Yehoveh to be an adversary against King Solomon as one of the steps along the way to punish the King for his idolatry by stripping him and his descendants of the right to rule the 10 northern Israelite tribes. Hadad was an Edomite and of the royal family of Edom. When Hadad was just a child David and his army general Joab attacked and killed nearly all of the males of fighting age in Edom. This exploit was given slight mention back in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 8:

#### 2Sam. 8:13-14 CJB

<sup>13</sup> *David gained more fame on returning from killing 18,000 men from Aram in the Salt Valley.*

***<sup>14</sup> David stationed garrisons in Edom; he put garrisons throughout all of Edom, and all the people of Edom became subject to him. ADONAI gave victory to David wherever he went.***

Hadad's father and some of their servants fled, stayed a while in Midian and the Paran Wilderness, and then moved on to a more long term sojourn in Egypt. In Egypt Hadad was greatly favored by the current Pharaoh, Siamun, who was also a staunch ally of King Solomon. In fact Siamun's daughter was wed to Solomon and it is clear in the previous chapters that this Egyptian wife held perhaps the highest place of all of Solomon's wives in some respects.

When King David died and Solomon began to rule Israel, Hadad decided to return to Edom (after many years in Egypt). While it is not stated, it is clear from Hadad's God-ordained purpose that he did not return to Edom simply because he felt that he could now be safe from persecution by King David. Rather it was so that he could raise some kind of army and cause trouble for Israel and Solomon.

A second antagonist against Solomon is spoken of beginning in verse 23: Rezon son of Elyada. Rezon was a royal servant to King Hadad-ezer (this person is of no relation to our first Hadad) at a time when King David fought and defeated Hadad-ezer. This event was recorded in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 8:3-8.

***<sup>CJB</sup> 2 Samuel 8:3 David, on his way to establish his dominion as far as the Euphrates River, also defeated Hadad'ezer the son of Rechov king of Tzovah.***

We'll encounter this person Rezon again in chapter 15 but he'll be going by a different name: Hezion. The reason is that Rezon is not a formal name but rather is a title that means ruler. So Rezon was apparently fairly high up in King Hadad-ezer's royal court.

During this losing battle against King David, Rezon escaped and formed a band of thieves and mercenaries. Likely most of these men were warriors who fled from David along with Rezon. This band of marauders was powerful enough that they took over the city of Damascus and settled there. Damascus was under Solomon's rule, so when they took it over it was a serious

blow to King Solomon's reputation and to his kingdom. There isn't recorded any serious attempt by Solomon to take it back.

Verse 25 explains that between Hadad and Rezon they bedeviled King Solomon all the way until his death. Neither man had the resources to take on Solomon and Israel head-on. But since Rezon had a power base in the north, and Hadad had a power base in the south, they could co-ordinate their efforts and inflict constant torment upon Israel's 12 tribes. This of course would have given rise to calls from the tribal leaders for Solomon to do something about it; but he was never able to effectively combat either man. Why? Because God protected them both; they were put there to be a thorn to Solomon and to destabilize his monarchy. Besides, Solomon was the opposite of his father David. As much as David was a fierce warrior who met fire with fire, Solomon was a peaceful diplomat who preferred to negotiate and compromise and buy his way out of trouble. King Solomon inherited a kingdom won by his father by means of war. He had no aptitude or attitude that could deal with such men as Hadad and Rezon.

In verse 26 we are introduced to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the men the God raised up against Solomon; but this one is special. He would become far more than a mere trouble maker; he would become king over the 10 northern tribes. This is the man who would rip away the northern part of Solomon's kingdom from him (or more accurately, rip it away from Solomon's son after Solomon's death).

The man is named **Yarov'am** (we know him better as Jeroboam). His name means something like "may the kin (God's people) increase". The CJB (as do several other versions) incorrectly say that he was an **Efrati** from **Tz'redah**. Rather it should say that he as an Ephraimite from **Tz'redah**. We'll find a lot of confusion by Old Testament translators when they encounter the Hebrew word **eprati** because indeed in certain contexts it can mean a person who is from the village of Ephrath. But the word at times also indicates a person who is especially well-off. However most usually it is simply a word that means a person from the tribe of Ephraim, and that is the case here. Since the only village named Ephrath that is recorded thus far in the Bible is located in the territory of Judah, and we can be certain that Jeroboam was NOT a Judahite, he would not have been associated to the village of Ephrath. Rather he was a member of the northern tribes.

Jeroboam's mother is said to be a widow. The Rabbis say that the reason a woman is even mentioned here as a means to establish his lineage is twofold: 1) because Jeroboam's father died very early on and so his widowed mother raised him. And 2) because the name recorded for his mother probably was not her real name. **Tz'ru'ah** comes from the root word **Tzara'at**

and it refers to skin disease. That is **Tzara'at** is a skin disease (usually wrongly translated into English as leprosy) that is attributed to that person as receiving a kind of punishment from God. It was a divinely directed means to expose an unclean soul by having it break-out upon their skin for all to see. In a shame-honor society it also meant that this person had lost their social status of honor and had fallen into shame from which there was no human remedy. This is one of the reasons that people with **Tzara'at** were removed from society; that is they were in a societal status condition of shame, they couldn't hide it and they couldn't fix it and thus they were ostracized for it.

So since Jeroboam was a rebel and he tried to go against God's promise to Solomon that his kingdom would not be torn from him until after his death, Jeroboam's mother's name of **Tz'ru'ah** is meant as an epithet to communicate that Jeroboam was born from a mother of shame. **Yarov'am** gained his bad character and his unclean ways from his mother is the essence of this statement. It was in his DNA and he was destined to be this wicked man. Remember: the context for the Bible is the Middle East and so it is common in the Bible to see a cultural nickname used for a person that expresses a message that people from that era would understand.

When verse 26 says that Jeroboam rebelled, in Hebrew it says that he raised his **yad**, his hand, against Solomon. This means that his rebellion was that he reproached the King in public and spoke against him in slanderous terms. The thing is this: in Middle Eastern society that one man sought to dethrone a king and take over wasn't a sign of bad character; in fact it usually brought a measure of admiration for his boldness and strength. However to "raise his hand" against the King is different; it speaks of going about his efforts to take over the throne in a wicked way that ran against the grain of the traditions and mindset of the shame-honor society and thus it was not admirable.

Verse 28 says that Jeroboam was a **gibbor hayil**; a mighty man or man of valor. In other words he had a strong personality, was a leader of men, and was quite bold and capable. So the term has nothing to do with character, only ability. Thus unwittingly Solomon gave him a position of power in his administration. He saw his ambition and energy and put **Yarov'am** in charge of the forced labor (labor as taxes was Solomon's hallmark) that was due from the tribe of Joseph; in other words, from the two tribes of Ephraim and Manassah. Let me be clear: Jeroboam was NOT in charge of all forced labor but only for a significant portion of it. **Adoram** was part of the royal inner circle and so he was the one in charge of all the forced labor and Jeroboam would have reported to him.

Back in verse 27 the passage begins by saying that "this is the reason that Jeroboam

rebelled” and then goes on to explain that he was working on a massive project to rebuild that portion of the wall surrounding the City of David that is known as the Millo. Some interpreters say that it was the nature of the project that caused the rebellion, in that the reconstruction had to do with enlarging the quarters of Solomon’s Egyptian wife at the expense of eliminating the large public square where pilgrims gathered on special religious occasions. Thus this was terribly unfair on Solomon’s part. While they are historically correct about the intent of the construction, I think that these Bible translators are reading something into the plain meaning of the text that just isn’t there by assuming that something about this project (that it was taking away a wonderful public square) greatly offended Jeroboam. Rather I see the intent of the author as merely painting a picture: an important event happened during the timeframe that Jeroboam was working on an extensive project of reconstructing the Millo using forced labor from Ephraim and Manessah. And for some project related reason it was necessary for him to travel outside of Jerusalem; and it was this set of circumstances that (by God’s providence) caused **Yarov’am** to run into this prophet named **Achiyah** who then went on to give him a message from the Lord.

**Achiyah** (meaning God my brother) was from Shiloh; Shiloh was in the hill country of the tribal territory of Ephraim, which is logical since Jeroboam was venturing back into his home tribal territory and no doubt in order to deal with some aspect of his assignment of forced labor from the Joseph tribes. Shiloh was the major priestly center for the 12 tribes during Samuel’s day until it’s destruction by the Philistines. However it was rebuilt and occupied almost immediately; and for the northern tribes especially it continued to hold a high religious significance even though the Tabernacle was long gone from there. Thus it is no surprise that Jeroboam would heed the words of a prophet from Shiloh.

They were alone in a field. The idea is that they had to be alone for **Achiyah** to say what he did; otherwise he would have been reported to the King and treated as treasonous. The prophecy was that since Solomon had become an idolater the Lord has decreed that his son would not have the opportunity to reign over all twelve tribes. And to symbolize this, a cloak was torn into twelve pieces and 10 were handed to Jeroboam. The idea was that the 12 pieces represented the 12 tribes and that Jeroboam would rule over 10 of those 12.

There have been countless debates over whose cloak was being torn; and there has never been a consensus among the Rabbis or among Christian commentators. I don’t think it matters; it is the newness of the cloak that matters. Newness in the Bible is symbolic of a new thing being done; and in many contexts of the new thing being divinely directed. We see that Elisha went to Jericho where the people were saying that everything there was wonderful except that their water was so bad that it was almost poisonous. He ordered them to bring him a new flask and so sweetened the water supernaturally. We know of the new wineskins metaphor of the New Testament that Yeshua pronounces in Matthew 9. Thus here in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings

we have a new cloak announcing that God is going to do a new thing after Solomon is deceased and it is to divide the Kingdom of Israel.

The prophet says that the Lord has determined that 10 tribes shall be taken from the Davidic dynasty, however out of kindness for David and because the Lord has placed His name over Yerushalayim, 1 tribe shall remain under Solomon's son's rule. It doesn't take a mathematician to add 10 and 1 and come up with 11. But what about the 12<sup>th</sup> tribe of Israel? Here's the thing: by now the tribes had undergone expansion and assimilation. The weaker tribes were being absorbed into the larger tribes. Simeon, for instance, was doomed to become part of Judah eventually as their territory was literally like the round bull's eye in the center of a target. They were the donut hole in the middle of the donut that was Judah. They were 100% surrounded, had virtually nothing but desert wilderness for land, and had received a blessing from Jacob back in Egypt that was essentially a curse that they would be scattered among the other tribes of Israel in time. And that's what happened.

But then there is the matter of Benjamin. Were they part of the 10 northern tribes (as in Saul's day), or part of the 1 southern tribe, Judah? Benjamin was a buffer state between the northern and southern tribal coalitions and Benjamin's allegiance rocked back and forth from one side to the other. And you can be sure that among the many clans of Benjamin that there was no consensus of which tribal coalition to support or join. Be that as it may, as of this time apparently Benjamin was an ally of Judah. Probably because the King of Israel was from the tribe of Judah it made political sense to side with the people who were in power.

We're not going to get in to the historical and theological debates over whether editors changed the number totals somewhat (actually the Septuagint says 10 tribes and 2 tribes). The meaning and intent remains the same. But for the sake of understanding what this division of the kingdom would mean as far as the new tribal alignment, we could say that not much would change from the most ancient of times going back to when Joshua crossed over the Jordan River leading the wandering Israelites into their new home. Judah usually was allied with Benjamin, and Simeon was dispersed with some going to Judah, and the rest to the other tribal alliance that included all the other tribes. Even when David was made king, it was a constant strain on him to keep the 10 northern tribes in line and as part of his 12 tribe nation. The sheer wealth of the nation that was doubled and doubled again, thanks to Solomon, kept the 10 northern tribes reluctantly loyal to Solomon's monarchy because it benefited them.

But with Solomon visibly aging and showing definite signs of political weakness, the time was ripe for all the old jealousies to come spilling out. God would use this to achieve His purposes.

More than once in his oracle the prophet tells Jeroboam that the reason for the Lord giving these 10 tribes to him is NOT for Jeroboam's worthiness but for Solomon's unfaithfulness that this is happening. Further Jeroboam is not to become king over ALL of Israel, just over the northern 10 tribes. And that this is NOT to happen to Solomon directly, but only after Solomon is deceased and his son has taken over. In words reminiscent of Nathan's oracle to David, the Lord tells Jeroboam that he will have an enduring dynasty of rulers over Israel IF.....IF.....he will walk in God's ways and obey his commandments. There are a couple of important differences about what was promised to David as compared to what was promised to Jeroboam. First, Jeroboam's obedience could bring many generations of a family dynasty after him but it was not to be a "forever" dynasty. It was just "enduring", meaning for a long but indeterminate amount of time. Second is that while David would rule over a united nation of all 12 tribes called Israel, Jeroboam would only rule over but one part of a divided Israel (even though it was the larger part).

Let me take a moment to point out that especially from here forward the term "Israel" has to be carefully placed into context or it can get terribly confusing. Especially at this time when there still exists a greater Israel that is David and Solomon's Kingdom, there is also in-process a division of this greater-Kingdom in which one Kingdom called Judah and another called Israel will come from it. But it will only be a few decades after the split until the Israel of 10 tribes will no longer be called Israel, but rather Ephraim. So from here forward in the Bible be on the alert as to whether the text is speaking of the 10 tribe coalition of Israel (with a separate Judah) or to the complete and whole Israel of 12 tribes.

In chapter 12 we are going to read of the secession of the northern tribes from the union. It was perhaps only 2 or 3 years after Solomon's death that it happened and it has NEVER been united again since then. But right here in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11 God pronounces that this split of the kingdom, and of David's dynasty ruling over but 1 part of the 12 tribes, would only be for a time. Eventually, an ancestor of David would rule over all 12 tribes and it would be in perpetuity. Hundreds of years later the tribes were still split, and the 10 northern tribes had even been ejected from the land, yet Ezekiel prophesied that someday the promised reunion would happen. But the conditions for it to happen seemed like pure fantasy for the people of his day. However we have the awesome privilege of being in that generation of history to witness the healing process and reunification between Ephraim and Judah get underway (but that's a topic for another time, not today).

So in verse 40 we hear that Solomon tried to have Jeroboam executed. What is happening in this story is that we are essentially back-tracking to verse 27 that begins:

**CJB 1 Kings 11:27 *Here is the reason he rebelled against the king: Shlomo was building the Millo and closing the breach in [the wall of] the City of David his father. (1Ki 11:27 CJB)***

So from verse 27 to verse 40 is the story of WHY Jeroboam decided to raise his hand against **Shlomo**. And starting with verse 40 is what happened as a result. And the result was the Solomon tried to arrest and execute **Yarov'am** but he managed to escape to Egypt. The Pharaoh was now Shishak. He was the 1<sup>st</sup> Pharaoh of the 22<sup>nd</sup> dynasty. Siamun, the last Pharaoh of the 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty who had been Solomon's great ally but Siamun was now dead. Shishak had no love for Israel or Solomon and so was quite willing to harbor this rebel.

It is important to grasp that **Yarov'am** had already disobeyed the Lord's commands to him and thus had sealed his fate with God. He was given specific instructions that he was NOT to try and unseat Solomon but rather the split of the kingdom was not to happen until Solomon's son was in power. This is in contrast to David who was given knowledge that the Kingdom would be his, but refused to lay a hand on the demented King Saul no matter how insanely and homicidally irrational the king behaved. Recall the several examples given when David could have easily disposed of King Saul and become ruler immediately, but would not because he knew that this was not what the Lord would have him do.

But Jeroboam took the part of God's message that he liked and ignored the rest. He really enjoyed that part about becoming a King, but couldn't see the advantage of waiting for God's timing and doing it God's way, in obedience. In fact, it was obvious that his intent was to rule over all of Israel if he could, not just the 10 northern tribes. But whatever he was to rule over he wanted it NOW!

I'm sad to say that too much of Christianity has done a similar thing when it comes to our salvation, our place in the Kingdom of God, and our relationship with Israel. St. Paul forcefully (in his typically undiplomatic way) says in Romans 11 that for gentiles who become Believers to think that we are now the new or replacement Israel is the worst of follies. Rather we are, after all, just a grafted-in branch from a different tree altogether. That we would ever come to think that this matter of redemption is all about us, or that we are now supposed to function apart from the root of our faith and the Biblical covenants that form the soil that nourishes that root, is a slippery slope of error. Yes, gentiles, we have been shown great favor by Yehoveh; yes we have been given a salvation that was at first only Israel's. And yes there would be for a time a refusal on Israel's part to take up that salvation in Messiah Yeshua. However it was



(and remains) our duty to demonstrate such unyielding faithfulness to Our Lord, such undying love towards His Hebrew people, that in a jealousy to acquire what we have (the Holy Spirit) they will see the light that is Christ and come back to God and accept their Jewish Messiah.

But instead, within a few decades after Yeshua's death, the Church Bishops erected a wall and said that no Jews are welcome (unless of course they give up their Kippahs and Tallits and trade them for a ham sandwich). They constructed doctrines that made the Hebrew people God's unwanted stepchildren and gentile Believers the be-all, end-all of God's love for mankind. They did what Jeroboam did; they took the part of God's Word that they liked and that benefited gentile Believers and that gave us a wonderful holy status before God and discarded the rest. And after centuries of these doctrines becoming ingrained and often unquestioned within our Christian institutions, it has had a terrible effect upon millions of Believers and led to much bad doctrine being practiced.

So now among some of our largest denominations Israel is the bad guys and the Palestinians are the good guys. The gentile Church is the head and Israel is the tail. The Torah is a relic and the New Testament is essentially our entire Bible. Obedience to God's Word is now condemned as legalism, the Sabbath is anything we want it to be, and God's Feasts have been replaced with manmade holidays based on ancient pagan celebrations. Many have taken the route of Jeroboam. But the good news is that today, in our time, we are seeing a growing movement of gentile Believers who are challenging these doctrines and re-discovering the Torah and our Hebrew faith roots. Like some of the kings who would follow Jeroboam, we are trying to knock down the false high places that he had erected to suit his own agenda and to restore fellowship with our elder brothers and sisters in the faith, the Judahites, the Jewish people.

The final 3 verses end the saga of Solomon. Here we find out that there was another and well-known historical document at one time called the Annals of Solomon where the record of his life and deeds were written in greater detail. No doubt most of what we have read in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings about Solomon was taken from that book. It is indeed a tragedy that it has been lost. Solomon reigned for 40 years and then died, meaning he was in his early 60's when he went to his grave. His father died in his early 70's which was seen as a reasonable amount of time for a righteous man to live. For Solomon to only live 60 years says that all was not right. He was buried in the city of David and His son **Rechav'am** succeeded him; but not for long.

Let's read the opening words of chapter 12 and then we'll read it all next week.

### READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 12: 1 - 5

In many ways this chapter tells the story of one of the greatest ongoing tragedies in Israel's history: the dissolution of the Kingdom of Israel. The Golden Age was over. It had lasted a mere 80 years. And much of the blame falls at Solomon's son's feet.

**Rehov'am** immediately succeeded his father; there is no hint of controversy over his coronation. No record of others of his brothers or half-brothers contesting his right to the throne is extant. All appears to have been an orderly and peaceful and dignified process.

Rehoboam was no doubt a much younger man when he first assumed the throne of Israel than the 41 years of age that is typically quoted in Bible manuscripts. He was probably more like 21 and the 41 is but a copyist error. If he was 41 that means that he was Solomon's first son and that he was born either immediately before, or immediately upon, Solomon's coronation. Since **Rehov'am's** mother was a foreigner, an Ammonite, and we're told that only in his older age, during a steep and rapid descent into idolatry, did he start marrying foreign women by the scores. In fact it was mentioned earlier that Ammonites were chief among the women he eventually married and that this was an especially terrible thing. His first wife was an Egyptian princess and this was not her son. So there is little to prove, and much to disprove, that **Rehov'am** was 41 when he became King. In fact soon we'll read some narrative about he and his "young" friends he had grown up with choosing some harsh and immature words to speak to the people of the 10 northern tribes and this would be the spark to set fire to the kingdom.

When Solomon died and it was time of Rehoboam's coronation some of the leaders of the northern tribal coalition sent for Jeroboam to come back from his self-imposed exile in Egypt to prepare for what they had been planning for a long time: to secede from the union and once again become their own 10-tribe kingdom. But what we'll soon see is that this determination to separate themselves led to also seceding from God's commandments, from His Torah, and from His covenants, and instead setting up an alternative religious system that pleased them.

That's where we'll continue next time.

