

1ST KINGS

Week 24, chapter 14

We folded our tents and went home last week after reading about King Jeroboam of Israel utterly abandoning Yehoveh God of Israel by means of creating and worshipping golden calf gods and telling his subjects that “these are your gods who brought you out of Egypt, O Israel!” In other words he renounced his allegiance to Yehoveh and switched it to these calf gods.

I think it's important to make one thing vitally clear because it has great bearing on the life of a modern Believer: Jeroboam's renunciation of YHVH did not mean that he had quite believing in Him. It did not mean that Jeroboam woke up one morning and came to the conclusion that Yehoveh didn't exist. He certainly continued to believe that Yehoveh was alive and well; he just didn't trust in Him as his own god any longer and turned instead to things that he contrived in his own mind and heart; things that better served his agenda and purposes. The Lord God calls this an abandonment of Him.

James 2:19 CJB

19 You believe that "God is one"? Good for you! The demons believe it too- the thought makes them shudder with fear!

Even demons believe in God, they just give their allegiance to another no matter how irrational that might seem to us. So Christians need to understand that in God's eyes abandoning Him is not about committing sins and it is also not necessarily about becoming an atheist. Abandoning God, renouncing His lordship of our lives, means that we have determined to walk away from our relationship with Him and choosing something else instead. And when such a thing happens in our own free wills, it is a dangerous place to be, because if we haven't come to our senses, repented and returned to God then if we die during that time we will die as the unrighteous dead. James, half-brother of Jesus and head of the Believers in Jerusalem, said it

this way:

James 5:19-20 CJB

¹⁹ ***My brothers, if one of you wanders from the truth, and someone causes him to return,***

²⁰ ***you should know that whoever turns a sinner from his wandering path will save him from death and cover many sins.***

The Lord responded to Jeroboam's abandonment of Him by sending a person that chapter 13 refers to as an ***ish elohim***, a man of God, to Beit-El to confront ***Yarov'am*** as he inaugurated his newly built golden calf alter by burning incense upon it. Further, this now wicked king used this occasion to invent and declare a new holiday in the 8th month of the year that began on the 15th day (the full moon) that no doubt was to replace and mimic the God-ordained Feast of Sukkot that was to take place on the 15th day of the previous month.

After a brief drama in which the King tried to have the ***ish elohim*** arrested for daring to publically denounce his actions, but the King's arm was supernaturally paralyzed and then healed, and the altar he was about to burn incense upon inexplicably split and the ashes of earlier sacrifices spilled onto the ground, the King tried to make amends by flattering the man of God and offering hospitality. The man of God refused saying that the Lord had prohibited it for him.

A old prophet of Ba'al who lived in Beit-El wanted to enjoy the company of the ***ish elohim*** (whom he viewed as a colleague of the profession), and so found him on the road as he was returning to Judah and by lying to him enticed him to come back to Beit-El. The lie was that supposedly an angel visited him and told him that God had rescinded His instructions to the ***ish elohim*** that prohibited him from having food or drink anywhere near Beit-El. The man of God believed him and partook of the old prophet's hospitality; but then the ***ish elohim*** received the startling oracle from God that for his disobedience he would die and his corpse would not be buried in his family grave plot. It happened as predicted; the man of God was attacked by a lion on the way home and died.

Jeroboam, knowing all that had happened, still refused to give up the calf worship and repent.

His heart was now hard and impenetrable towards Yehoveh. And this was after his youthful training in knowing and worshipping the God of Israel at the Temple in Jerusalem. He was without excuse.

This is where chapter 14 picks up.

READ 1ST KINGS CHAPTER 14 all

Things begin to speed up from here on in the book of Kings. Up through the first 13 chapters the entire time has been devoted to primarily dealing with Solomon, only a little more than a chapter with David, and just in the last few passages Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The time period covered thus far in the book of Kings is perhaps only 50 years. But during the next 8 chapters that completes the 1st book of Kings we will cover around 80 years and meet several more kings of Israel and Judah. By the time we complete the 2nd book of Kings about 250 more years will have passed until the last king of Israel makes his appearance.

The thing that gets a bit difficult at this point is that we have two separate and independent Israelite Kingdoms to deal with: the northern one called Israel and the southern one called Judah. Since each will have their own king, we find the coming chapters will give us information that helps us to synchronize the reigns of the northern kings to the southern kings. Thus we have two separate lists of Israelite kings operating simultaneously. For instance we find that during the reign of Jeroboam over the northern kingdom called Israel, there will be a succession of 3 kings over Judah: Rehoboam, then **Aviyam**, then **Asa**.

Since we're going to be dealing with a number of kings in relatively few Biblical chapters then necessarily the information recorded about each king is brief and condensed. In fact the ancient editors of the book of Kings will mention several times that more extensive information about the several Israelite kings can be found in two other books (both non-biblical and both lost to history): The Annals of the Kings of Israel, and the Annals of the Kings of Judah. In fact it is likely that the bulk of the information that we have on the Israelite kings in the 2 books of Kings was gleaned from those now-lost ancient archives.

The opening words of verse 1 “at that time” aren’t there to give us a precise timeframe except to say that this was after the Beit-El affair and that Jeroboam was still firmly entrenched in his state of apostasy. Although **Yarov’am** didn’t realize it, the Lord had already decided to rip the throne from him because he broke the one condition that had been placed upon him when the prophet **Achiyah** of Shiloh told him that the throne would be his and his dynasty would endure IF he walked in God’s ways. In fact the curse that the **ish elohim** from Judah had put on the gross altar of Beit-El only included a veiled implication that there was a curse upon Jeroboam as well; Jeroboam didn’t seem to recognize that.

So now, some indeterminate time later, Jeroboam’s son **Aviyah** was critically ill and Jeroboam and his wife were full of worry. Did the Lord cause this illness? Perhaps; because although the formal curse upon Jeroboam’s family would not be pronounced on earth for a few more days, it had already been established in the heavenlies. What is interesting is the boy’s name: **Aviyah**, my father is God. **Yah** is a shortened name or reference to the God of Israel so either this son was born before Jeroboam went completely spiritually insane and some modicum of Yehoveh worship remained in his heart, or perhaps it was done to appease the people of his kingdom.

Rather typically for that era, Jeroboam and his wife sought to learn if their sick son would survive. Since medical care in that era was based more on superstitions than anything that actually had a beneficial physical effect, the issue was not what actions might be taken to make their son better; rather, the concern was simply to know in advance if their son would ultimately live or die. Therefore the King sent the boy’s mother to a seer to inquire about it. Verse 2 explains that the seer of interest was **Achiyah**, the prophet of Shiloh, who had pronounced God’s oracle to Jeroboam some years earlier that he would be king of the northern tribes; and of course his prediction turned out to be correct so obviously if Jeroboam wanted an answer he could believe, this was his man.

But the king orders his wife to go to the prophet in disguise. Why? There are several theories by the Rabbis on this and they mostly revolve around Jeroboam’s embarrassment at seeking out the prophet who had pronounced his ascension to the throne with the warning to be true to Yehoveh. Of course the degree of his failure cannot be overstated: instead of pious obedience to the Lord the king became one of the worst idolaters of his era, renounced Yehoveh as his god, turned his people away from worshipping at the only authorized Temple of God in Jerusalem, and now wants to hear from a true prophet of Yehoveh about the fate of his son. Would the prophet even receive his wife if he knew who she was?

To help with the disguise she takes 10 loaves of bread, some honey, and something called cakes in the CJB and which other translations say are crumbs. The Hebrew word being dealt with is **niqqud**, and it is a general word that means some kind of hard crusty food. The word “cake” for modern Westerners gives us the entirely wrong idea. For us a cake is some kind of luscious desert; but in the Bible the word cake more operates like in the term “a cake of soap”. In other words it’s just a description of the shape or the way the food is bound together. In the Bible we’ll hear of someone bringing out a cake of raisins to eat; all this means is that raisins were packed tightly together as a usual means to store them. Bringing a gift to a prophet as payment for his services was customary; the gift that was being brought by Jeroboam’s wife was appropriate for an average Israelite to present but was hardly lavish that would be indicative of the wealth and station of a king. That was on purpose in hopes that the deception would seem all the more real to those who saw her coming and going to Shiloh and to try to fool **Achiyah**. Of course, it didn’t work.

As it turned out a disguise wasn’t needed because the prophet was almost blind anyway. But not only that, the Lord was not about to let Jeroboam pull a fast one on **Achiyah** or benefit in any way from the Lord’s faithful prophet. That neither Jeroboam nor his wife seemed to know that **Achiyah** was virtually blind makes it clear that they hadn’t seen him or inquired about him in a substantial amount of time, and that whoever Jeroboam was using for his personal seers (which every king employed) **Achiyah** had been snubbed.

In verse 5 we read that the Lord came to **Achiyah** and told him that Jeroboam’s wife was on her way to see him, and what the visit was about, and also told him what he was to say to her. In verse 6, **Achiyah** wasted no time in letting her know that he not only knew who she was but want she wanted. But then he immediately issued an official curse upon Jeroboam and his family, and did so with a brutally frank economy of words. One can only imagine Mrs. Jeroboam wondering how she was going to communicate these devastating words to her regal husband who wasn’t used to being spoken to in such a manner.

Here is the gist of what the Lord communicated to Jeroboam through **Achiyah**:

1. You were a mere commoner and not of a royal line, but I elevated you from among your people and made you king over 10 tribes of My people.
2. I did this because Solomon and his branch of David’s line proved to not be worthy of ruling over the entire Kingdom of God on earth.
3. I gave you an amazing opportunity and you failed. You were supposed to be like David but instead you have taken the monarchy of Israel to new lows. In fact you have acted more wickedly than any Israelite king before you.
4. Not only did you go after other gods, you created your own and led your people to worship them.

5. You “put me behind your back”; you showed Me the greatest contempt.
 6. Therefore in consequence the House of Jeroboam will be terminated. All the influential male descendants that could have ruled instead will die like dogs.
 7. I shall cause the male descendants of Jeroboam to die violently and their remains to be treated as though they were excrement and not human corpses to be dealt with respectfully.
 8. Therefore any of your male offspring who dies within city walls will be eaten by packs of unclean dogs; any who die outside of the city walls will be eaten by unclean scavenger birds.
 9. Yehoveh will anoint a new king who will eliminate the rule of the House of Jeroboam.
- 10) But worst of all, because Jeroboam did all these things, his 10 northern tribes will be torn out by their roots and exiled from their land to a foreign place beyond the Euphrates.

In verse 13 the Lord makes a partial exception to the awful curse he has issued upon the House of Jeroboam; it is that although this ill son will die, he will be buried with honor and properly mourned by the people of Israel. This is in direct contrast to all other male descendants of Jeroboam who will NOT have any burial at all. And this is going to happen because **Aviyah** has been found by God to have something good in him towards the Lord. Scholars, Jewish and gentile, have wrestled with this difficult phrase. In Hebrew it says that this son **tov dabbar el-Yehoveh**. Most literally and plainly it means “a good word towards Yehoveh”. I’m sure I have nothing more to offer than these great Bible translators regarding this phrase, but if the literal and plain sense is usually the best, then this is saying that in some unexplained way this son **Aviyah** (who had a godly name) said good (or beautiful) words concerning Yehoveh thus indicating that he held the Lord in high regard. The ancient Sages say that however one wants to take this, it is obvious that if **Aviyah** looked to Yehoveh and his father Jeroboam looked to his own golden calf gods, then their relationship must have been a tense one, not unlike between the godly Abraham and his father, **Terach**, a peddler of idols.

In some ways the boy passing away peacefully in bed, family at his side, and having an honorable burial was a good example of God’s **chesed** (His kindness and blessing) to him because **Aviyah** didn’t have to experience all the coming horrors and evils and violence that were about to befall the rest of his family.

A reasonable question is why will all of the people of the 10 northern tribes be eventually exiled to (what will turn out to be) Assyria? Because they have, in less than 1 generation, taken up the worship of the Canaanites and rejected the worship of Yehoveh. They have erected Asherah and given themselves over to the Canaanite gods. And why did they do that? Was it because they were oppressed and forced to do so? No. It was all because of Jeroboam’s wicked and failed leadership. Verse 16 says:

CJB 1 Kings 14:16 *He (God) will give up on Isra'el because of the sins of Yarov'am, which he committed himself, and with which he made Isra'el sin as well.*

Time for a needed pause to get a panoramic view of where we have arrived. For several lessons now I have made a theme of the consequences of bad leadership. So that you don't think I am somehow referring to any particular modern day national leader, rest assured I am not. Actually, I would ask you this: is there ANY good and godly leader of a nation in the world today? While some are certainly better than others, in my opinion none measure up to any reasonable Biblical standard. And thus virtually every nation on earth of any consequence is in a state of decline, darkness and confusion, which is the inevitable and natural result of refusing to follow the ways of the Lord. The same thing happens to us as individuals if we refuse to trust God.

For reasons I do not understand the Lord has created many followers and only a few leaders. God's Word demonstrates from Genesis to Revelation that humankind was created with the inherent need to be led. This is why we have the Book of Judges to show what happens when there are no leaders, and why we must have a king. But even leaders need leaders above them. The ultimate earthly leader still needs direction from and accountability to the Creator King. Leaders at every level are responsible for how they lead their people and will be judged accordingly by God. Yet the followers are not without responsibility. Had the people of the 10 northern Israelite tribes risen up against Jeroboam and refused his perverted gods and filthy worship practices (as they should have), and desired Yehoveh with a whole heart (which they did not), perhaps their exile would not have been ordained because Jeroboam would have been removed. Jeroboam could not have done what he did without the consent of the people, or at least the people not strongly resisting.

Why must Messiah Yeshua return to earth and have a throne here? Why can't He just rule us from heaven? Why since our mere trust in His faithful work on the cross is sufficient to redeem us, is it necessary for Him to physically come back, fight a war, and rule His people with a rod of iron from his Temple in the Millennial Kingdom? If the good and the righteous are going to be supernaturally raptured away before His return, why would not God with but a thought simply terminate every wicked person on this planet? Christ must return because we (mankind), even redeemed mankind, need visible and tangible leadership; it's part of who we are and how we are made. Perhaps that will change with the new heaven and earth that comes after the Millennial Kingdom, but I suspect it will not.

This is why leaders bear such responsibility before the Lord, and why when you willingly or passively submit yourself to a national leader, a local leader, or a church or synagogue leader who you know is not godly, nor truthful, nor anointed to be a leader, nor good for you, you (and I) have responsibility for that choice and will suffer divine consequences.

So now the Book of Kings shows us that while a king is needed to lead God's people, it is not the world's contorted definition of a king that we must have, but rather the Lord's ideal of a king. A king who rules based on the commandments of God; a king who recognizes that his job is to serve the people and not to be served by them. A king who accepts that he is as subject to God's laws as are those he rules over. A king who rules in power and love; in justice and mercy; in kindness and in severity when it is called for. All who ruled Israel to this point have not only failed, but it seems as though each successive round of new kings are worse than the previous.

Thus the Book of Judges shows that we must have kingly leadership and we cannot rule ourselves.

The Book of Kings shows that any old king won't do. Only a king who bears God's attributes is capable of success.

The Books of the Prophets tell us that this king that the world needs is the Messiah.

And the New Testament tells us who this Messiah King is; he is Yeshua of Nazareth. And as it turns out, this Messiah not only has godly attributes, He is God.

In verse 17 as Jeroboam's distraught wife comes home and her heart-weary foot touches the threshold her treasured son breathes his last. And as foretold he was buried in honor and all Israel (meaning the 10 northern tribes in this case) mourned over him. Then in typical abbreviated Biblical fashion we are told that Jeroboam ruled for 22 years and died, and was followed by his son **Nadav**. Jeroboam had ruled from 928 B.C. to 907 B.C. The scene now makes a sudden shift from northern to southern Israel and to the King of Judah, Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

Beginning in verse 21 we find out that even though Rehoboam wasn't nearly as bad as his counterpart in the north, he too was a major disappointment. While we find that the story of the northern tribes has become one of an unrelenting downward spiral into darkness and idolatry, the Kingdom of Judah seemed to alternate between valleys and peaks of apostasy and then faithfulness. Unfortunately Rehoboam represents one of those valleys. It seems as though the

placing of his mother's name here is meant to implicate her as part of the reason for the spiritual decline of **Rechov'am** and therefore of Judah; she was **Naamah** from Ammon. In other words she was not a Hebrew but rather one of the many foreigners that **Shlomo** had married and thus her pagan influence on Rehoboam had a great deal to do with his failures.

Interestingly in verse 22 it says that the "people of Judah" did evil in God's eyes and greatly angered Him. I saying interestingly because Rehoboam is not blamed; thus it is typical among the Rabbis to say that he was not a sinner at all. Perhaps they should consult the parallel account of this era in 2nd Chronicles 12.

^{CJB} **2 Chronicles 12:1** *But in time, after Rechav'am had consolidated his rulership and had become strong, he, and with him all Isra'el, abandoned the Torah of ADONAI.*

^{CJB} **2 Chronicles 12:14** *He did what was evil, because he had not set his heart on seeking ADONAI.*

So here it is that Rehoboam abandoned the Torah, stopped seeking the Lord, and of course all his subjects in Judah followed him into this spiritual abyss. Bad leadership strikes again and it harms everyone concerned. The citizens of Judah built **Asherah**, and **matsebah**, and **bamot**: that is they built totem poles to the fertility goddess, memorial pillars to other gods, and high places (unauthorized altars) for sacrifice. But in verse 24 it was even worse: they committed something that involved sexual immorality that the CJB and most other translations call either male prostitution or sodomy. Since this is a subject that comes up from time to time in the Bible and Christians especially bring it up considering today's sexually immoral climate, let's talk about it for a moment.

First, despite what our English translations might say, the word sodomy or even prostitute is not there in the Hebrew; what it says is that there was **qadesh** in the land that was like what all the gentile nations did that was an abomination to God. And again, despite what you might read in your Concordances, the word **qadesh** merely means consecrated, sacred or set-apart. It does not, of itself, have anything to do with prostitution or sexual immorality. And whereas various translations will also add the word male and sometimes additionally include female, those two words aren't there either.

So, what we have here in our English Bibles is what is called a dynamic translation. It is taking a set of Hebrew words and trying to figure out what it means in the contextual setting because when taken literally word for the word the sense of this sentence obviously cannot be that there was sacredness in the land of Judah and this equated to the abominations of the gentiles.

The bottom line is that it is generally agreed that what is being referred to are sexual acts that are somehow associated with religious ritual. That is there were **qadesh** (sacred, set-apart) people who did abominable things in service to the Temple. It could have been fertility rituals that involved sexual intercourse; it could have been prostitution as a means to collect money for the Temple. It could have been something else entirely; it is simply not currently known. Whatever it was it was terrible in the eyes of the Lord, it was something that the pagan gentiles did and therefore Hebrews should not do it, and it happened in Judah and in conjunction with supposedly honoring God.

But let's understand: whatever occurred was done in the name of Yehoveh by Israelites who thought they were doing a good deed. No doubt they were sincere and probably wanted to please God. Of course, as 2nd Chronicles 12 explains, they had abandoned the Torah and so followed their own hearts and minds and did what seemed good to them. The religious establishment obviously condoned it (even encouraged and supervised it), and probably at least partly because it brought in revenue to the Temple. Those involved certainly did NOT think they were doing wrong; but because they didn't know God's commandments they had nothing to measure their behavior against. What was the consequence for this apostasy?

Verse 25 says that Shishak, king of Egypt, took his army up to Judah, attacked Jerusalem, and carried off the treasures of the Temple. He also took all the exquisite and enormously valuable golden shields that King Solomon had made for his palace. This was the same Pharaoh who had granted political asylum to Jeroboam. Interestingly we also don't see him taking over Judah; apparently he was satisfied to demonstrate Egypt's ability to project its power and go home with a fortune taken from Solomon's Temple and palace.

Rehoboam replaced the golden shields with much less valuable bronze ones. They were used by his personal bodyguard especially on the occasion when in some kind of royal procession Rehoboam would go to the Temple. No doubt we are meant to take from this episode that Shishak's attack was permitted by Yehoveh because of what Rehoboam and Judah had sunk to.

To end this chapter we are told that Rehoboam and Jeroboam warred all their days. Indeed Rehoboam had mustered an enormous army of 180,000 men with the intention of attacking Jeroboam but the prophet **Shemaiah** told Rehoboam not to because this secession of the northern tribes from the union was God's doing. This so-called never ending state of war has been disputed by scholars since there is no record of constant warfare between the two kingdoms. But no doubt this is merely meant to be taken in the common way of speaking that indicates that there was hostility between the two all during this era. It would be very similar to modern times when North and South Korea are technically at war, but they haven't had a serious military battle in a very long time. Of course they remain immensely hostile toward one another and the situation is always tense. So most of the time Jeroboam and Rehoboam were engaged in cold war, but at times military battles undoubtedly did erupt.

Finally Rehoboam died and his son **Aviyam** took the throne. Rehoboam had reigned from 928 B.C. to 911 B.C. a period of 17 years. He was a relatively young man when he died, possibly barely 40 years old. Jeroboam was still alive and in power when Rehoboam passed.

We'll begin chapter 15 next time.