



Rechavam's Mistake

1. Kings I 12:1-17 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to acclaim him as king. Jeroboam son of Nebat learned of it while he was still in Egypt; for Jeroboam had fled from King Solomon, and had settled in Egypt. They sent for him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam as follows: "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke which your father laid on us, and we will serve you." He answered them, "Go away for three days, and then come back to me." So the people went away.

King Rehoboam took counsel with the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. He said, "What answer do you advise [me] to give to this people?" They answered him, "If you will be a servant to those people today and serve them, and if you respond to them with kind words, they will be your servants always." But he ignored the advice that the elders gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. "What," he asked, "do you advise that we reply to the people who said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father placed upon us'?" And the young men who had grown up with him answered, "Speak thus to the people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us.' Say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. My father imposed a heavy yoke on you, and I will add to your yoke; my father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions.'" Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, since the king had told them: "Come back on the third day." The king answered the people harshly, ignoring the advice that the elders had given him.

He spoke to them in accordance with the advice of the young men, and said, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions." (The king did not listen to the people; for the Lord had brought it about in order to fulfill the promise that the Lord had made through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.)

When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered the king: "We have no portion in David, No share in Jesse's son! To your tents, O Israel! Now look to your own House, O David." So the Israelites returned to their homes. But Rehoboam continued to reign over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

Approach #1: Divine punishment

2. Kings I 11:11-13

And Gd said to Solomon: Because this was with you, and you did not guard My covenant and My laws which I commanded you, I will tear the throne from upon you and give it to your servant. But I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David. I will tear it from your son. But, I will not tear the entire empire; I will give your son one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.

3. Kings I 11:26-40 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, the son of a widow whose name was Zeruah, was in Solomon's service; he raised his hand against the king. The circumstances under which he raised his hand against the king were as follows: Solomon built the Millo and repaired the breach of the city of his father, David. This Jeroboam was an able man, and when Solomon saw that the young man was a capable worker, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the House of Joseph.

During that time Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem and the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh met him on the way. He had put on a new robe; and when the two were alone in the open country, Ahijah took hold of the new robe he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. "Take ten pieces," he said to Jeroboam. "For thus said the Lord, the Gd of Israel: I am about to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hands, and I will give you ten tribes. But one tribe shall remain his—for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. For they have forsaken Me; they have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Phoenicians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites; they have not walked in My ways, or done what is pleasing to Me, or [kept] My laws and rules, as his father David did. However, I will not take the entire kingdom away from him, but will keep him as ruler as long as he lives for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, and who kept My commandments and My laws. But I

will take the kingship out of the hands of his son and give it to you—the ten tribes. To his son I will give one tribe, so that there may be a lamp for My servant David forever before Me in Jerusalem—the city where I have chosen to establish My name.

But you have been chosen by Me; reign wherever you wish, and you shall be king over Israel. If you heed all that I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, keeping My laws and commandments as My servant David did, then I will be with you and I will build for you a lasting dynasty as I did for David. I hereby give Israel to you; and I will chastise David's descendants for that [sin], though not forever."

Solomon sought to put Jeroboam to death, but Jeroboam promptly fled to King Shishak of Egypt; and he remained in Egypt till the death of Solomon.

4. Kings I 14:21-24

And Rechavam son of Solomon reigned in Judea. Rechavam was 41 years old when he became king, and he reigned for 17 years in Jerusalem, the city Gd chose from all of the tribes of Israel, on which to place His Name. And his mother's name was Naamah of Amon. And Judea performed that which was evil in the eyes of Gd, and they were outrageous to Him, beyond all that their ancestors sinned. And they also built for themselves altars and monuments and *asheirim* upon every hill and beneath every leafy tree. And there were also male prostitutes in the land. They performed all of the abhorrent practices of the nations Gd had removed from before Israel.

Approach #2: Politics

5. Deuteronomy 17:20

So that his heart not become elevated above his brethren, and so that he not stray from the command, right or left, so that he will extend his reign, he and his progeny, in the midst of Israel.

6. Samuel II 7:16

And your house and reign will be steadfast forever before you; your throne will be established forever.

7. Talmud, Horiyot 11b

"And we do not anoint a king, son of a king." How do we know this? Rav Acha bar Yaakov said: From Deuteronomy 17:20 – it says that this is an inheritance for you.

8. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings 1:7

Not only monarchy, but all power and all appointments in Israel are inherited by his son and grandson, forever, but only if the son fills the place of his father in wisdom and reverence. If he fills it in reverence, then even if he does not fill it in wisdom, we appoint him in place of his father and we teach him. But anyone who lacks reverence for heaven may not be appointed to any position in Israel, even if he is of great wisdom.

9. Malbim to Kings I 12:1

In truth, from the moment Solomon took the throne, Rechavam acquired the monarchy. He did not need anointing and coronation... But Israel sought a claim, and they came to enthrone him, notifying him that he would not be king until they willingly enthroned him and he fulfilled their conditions. And this is why they came to Shechem - and not Jerusalem, where he would have been strengthened by the house of Judah, his tribe – but Shechem was the head of Joseph, and opposed to Judah... And this is why they chose Yeravam, from the tribe of Joseph, to lead them.

How the Civil War Ends

10. Kings I 12:22-24 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

But the word of Gd came to Shemaiah, the man of Gd: "Say to King Rehoboam son of Solomon of Judah, and to all the House of Judah and Benjamin and the rest of the people: Thus said the Lord: You shall not set out to make war on your kinsmen the Israelites. Let every man return to his home, for this thing has been brought about by Me." They heeded the word of the Lord and turned back, in accordance with the word of the Lord.

11. Kings I 14:25-31 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, King Shishak of Egypt marched against Jerusalem and carried off the treasures of the House of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He carried off everything; he even carried off all the golden shields that Solomon had made. King Rehoboam had bronze shields made instead, and he entrusted them to the officers of the guard who guarded the entrance to the royal palace. Whenever the king went into the House of the Lord, the guards would carry them and then bring them back to the armory of the guards. The other events of Rehoboam's reign, and all his actions, are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Judah. There was continual war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the City of David; his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. His son Abijam succeeded him as king.

Introduction to Yoshiyahu / Josiah

12. Kings I 11:37-39 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

To his son I will give one tribe, so that there may be a lamp for My servant David forever before Me in Jerusalem—the city where I have chosen to establish My name. But you have been chosen by Me; reign wherever you wish, and you shall be king over Israel. If you heed all that I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, keeping My laws and commandments as My servant David did, then I will be with you and I will build for you a lasting dynasty as I did for David. I hereby give Israel to you; and I will chastise David's descendants for that [sin], though not forever."

13. Kings I 12:26-13:5 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Jeroboam said to himself, "Now the kingdom may well return to the House of David. If these people still go up to offer sacrifices at the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, the heart of these people will turn back to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and go back to King Rehoboam of Judah."

So the king took counsel and made two golden calves. He said to the people, "You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!" He set up one in Bethel and placed the other in Dan. That proved to be a cause of guilt, for the people went to worship [the calf at Bethel and] the one at Dan. He also made cult places and appointed priests from the ranks of the people who were not of Levite descent. He stationed at Bethel the priests of the shrines that he had appointed to sacrifice to the calves that he had made.

And Jeroboam established a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; in imitation of the festival in Judah, he established one at Bethel, and he ascended the altar [there]. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month—the month in which he had contrived of his own mind to establish a festival for the Israelites—Jeroboam ascended the altar that he had made in Bethel. As he ascended the altar to present an offering.

A man of Gd arrived at Bethel from Judah at the command of the Lord. While Jeroboam was standing on the altar to present the offering, the man of Gd, at the command of the Lord, cried out against the altar: "O altar, altar! Thus said the Lord: A son shall be born to the House of David, Josiah by name; and he shall slaughter upon you the priests of the shrines who bring offerings upon you. And human bones shall be burned upon you." He gave a portent on that day, saying, "Here is the portent that the Lord has decreed: This altar shall break apart, and the ashes on it shall be spilled." When the king heard what the man of Gd had proclaimed against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his arm above the altar and cried, "Seize him!" But the arm that he stretched out against him became rigid, and he could not draw it back. The altar broke apart and its ashes were spilled—the very portent that the man of Gd had announced at the Lord's command.

The Kings of Judah after Rechavam, and the length of their reign (bold lines refer to kings identified as good)

Aviyam son of Rechavam	3
Asa son of Aviyam	41
Yehoshaphat son of Asa	25
Yehoram son of Yehoshaphat	8
Achaziah son of Yehoram	1
Queen Ataliah	6

Yehoash son of Achaziah	40
Amatziah son of Yehoash	29
Uziah son of Amatziah	52
Yotam	16
Achaz	16
Chizkiyahu	29 – Exile of the Ten Tribes
Menasheh	55 – Point of no return
Amon	2
Yoshiyahu	31

Yoshiyahu's career

14. Kings II 22:2-3 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

He did what was pleasing to the Lord and he followed all the ways of his ancestor David; he did not deviate to the right or to the left. In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent the scribe Shaphan son of Azaliah son of Meshullam to the House of the Lord, saying...

15. Chronicles II 34:3-7 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the Gd of his father David, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the shrines, the sacred posts, the idols, and the molten images. At his bidding, they demolished the altars of the Baals, and he had the incense stands above them cut down; he smashed the sacred posts, the idols, and the images, ground them into dust, and strewed it onto the graves of those who had sacrificed to them...

16. Kings II 22:8-13 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Then the high priest Hilkiah said to the scribe Shaphan, "I have found a scroll of the Teaching in the House of the Lord." And Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan, who read it. The scribe Shaphan then went to the king and reported to the king: "Your servants have melted down the silver that was deposited in the House, and they have delivered it to the overseers of the work who are in charge at the House of the Lord." The scribe Shaphan also told the king, "The high priest Hilkiah has given me a scroll"; and Shaphan read it to the king.

When the king heard the words of the scroll of the Teaching, he rent his clothes. And the king gave orders to the priest Hilkiah, and to Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Michaiah, the scribe Shaphan, and Asaiah the king's minister: "Go, inquire of the Lord on my behalf, and on behalf of the people, and on behalf of all Judah, concerning the words of this scroll that has been found. For great indeed must be the wrath of the Lord that has been kindled against us, because our fathers did not obey the words of this scroll to do all that has been prescribed for us."

17. Talmud, Megillah 14b

How could Josiah abandon Jeremiah and send for her? In the yeshiva of Rabbi Shilah they explained: Because women are merciful. Rabbi Yochanan said: Jeremiah was away, bringing back the ten tribes...

18. Kings II 22:14-20 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

So the priest Hilkiah, and Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah—the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah son of Harhas, the keeper of the wardrobe—who was living in Jerusalem in the Mishneh, and they spoke to her. She responded: "Thus said the Lord, the Gd of Israel: Say to the man who sent you to me: Thus said the Lord: I am going to bring disaster upon this place and its inhabitants, in accordance with all the words of the scroll which the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken Me and have made offerings to other gods and vexed Me with all their deeds, My wrath is kindled against this place and it shall not be quenched. But say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord: Thus said the Lord, the Gd of Israel: As for the words which you have heard - because your heart was softened and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I decreed against this place and its inhabitants—that it will become a desolation and a curse—and because you rent your clothes and wept before Me, I for My part have listened—declares the Lord. Assuredly, I will gather you to your fathers and you will be laid in

your tomb in peace. Your eyes shall not see all the disaster which I will bring upon this place." So they brought back the reply to the king.

19. Rashi to Kings II 22:8

It was hidden beneath a pile of stones, buried there when Achaz burned the Torah.

20. Rabbi David Altschuler, Metzudat David commentary to Kings II 22:8

The kohanim feared that Achaz would send forth his hand against the Torah written by Moses from Gd, that had been located beside the Ark. They took it and buried it, and after his death they searched for it and did not find it...

The sages have said that when they found the scroll, it was rolled to the portion of rebuke (Deuteronomy 28).

21. Deuteronomy 31:24-26

And when Moshe finished writing the words of this Torah upon a scroll, until their completion. And Moshe instructed the Levites, bearers of the Ark of the covenant of Gd: Take the scroll of this Torah, and place it beside the Ark of the covenant of Hashem your Gd, and it will be a testimony for you there...

22. Chronicles II 34:14

And when they brought out the silver which had been brought to the House of Gd, Chilkiyahu the priest found the scroll of the Torah of Gd, in the hand of Moses.

23. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag, Gersonides), Commentary to Kings II 22:11

Perhaps he saw the rebukes and that which continues from them in Deuteronomy, for there is hinted the exile of Samaria and the exile of Judea with the king of Judea.

24. Kings II 23:2-23 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

The king went up to the House of the Lord, together with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and prophets—all the people, young and old. And he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll which had been found in the House of the Lord.

The king stood by the pillar and solemnized the covenant before the Lord: that they would follow the Lord and observe His commandments, His injunctions, and His laws with all their heart and soul; that they would fulfill all the terms of this covenant as inscribed upon the scroll. And all the people entered into the covenant.

Then the king ordered the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second rank, and the guards of the threshold to bring out of the Temple of the Lord all the objects made for Baal and Asherah and all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and he removed the ashes to Bethel...

Josiah turned and saw the graves... He asked, "What is the marker I see there?" And the men of the town replied, "That is the grave of the man of Gd who came from Judah and foretold these things that you have done to the altar of Bethel. "Let him be," he said, "let no one disturb his bones." So they left his bones undisturbed together with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria...

The king commanded all the people, "Offer the passover sacrifice to the Lord your Gd as prescribed in this scroll of the covenant." Now the passover sacrifice had not been offered in that manner in the days of the chieftains who ruled Israel, or during the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. Only in the eighteenth year of King Josiah was such a passover sacrifice offered in that manner to the Lord in Jerusalem.

25. Chronicles II 35:2-5 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

He reinstated the priests in their shifts and rallied them to the service of the House of the Lord. He said to the Levites, consecrated to the Lord, who taught all Israel, "Put the Holy Ark in the House that Solomon son of David, king of Israel, built; as you no longer carry it on your shoulders, see now to the service of the Lord your Gd and His people Israel, and dispose yourselves by clans according to your divisions, as prescribed in the writing of King David of Israel and in the document of his son Solomon, and attend in the Sanctuary, by clan divisions, on your kinsmen, the people—by clan divisions of the Levites.