

1 Kings 14: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0:00] 1 Kings chapter 14 At that time Ahijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick, and Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise and disguise yourself, that it not be known that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh.

Behold, Ahijah the prophet is there, who said of me that I shall be king over this people. Take with you ten loaves, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what shall happen to the child.

Jeroboam's wife did so. She arose and went to Shiloh and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age.

And the Lord said to Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, for he is sick. Thus and thus shall you say to her. When she came she pretended to be another woman.

But when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet as she came in at the door, he said, Come in, wife of Jeroboam, why do you pretend to be another? For I am charged with unbearable news for you.

[1:01] Go, tell Jeroboam. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Because I exalted you from among the people, and made you leader over my people Israel, and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, and yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my eyes.

But you have done evil above all who were before you, and have gone and made for yourself other gods and metal images, provoking me to anger, and have cast me behind your back.

Therefore, behold, I will bring harm upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in Israel, and will burn up the house of Jeroboam, as a man burns up dung until it is all gone.

Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat, and anyone who dies in the open country, the birds of the heavens shall eat, for the Lord has spoken it. Arise therefore, go to your house.

When your feet enter the city, the child shall die, and all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him. For he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something pleasing to the Lord, the God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

[2:14] Moreover, the Lord will raise up for himself a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today. And henceforth the Lord will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water, and root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their fathers, and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their asherim, provoking the Lord to anger.

And he will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and made Israel to sin. Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed and came to Terza. And as she came to the threshold of the house, the child died.

And all Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Ahijah the prophet. Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, behold they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

And the time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years, and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place. Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah.

Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there.

[3:25] His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. And Judah did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done.

For they also built for themselves high places and pillars, and asherim on every high hill and under every green tree. And there were also male cult prostitutes in the land.

They did according to all the abominations of the nations that the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem. He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made. And King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house.

And as often as the king went into the house of the Lord, the guard carried them and brought them back to the guard room. Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

[4 : 29] And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. His mother's name was Naaman the Ammonite, and Abijam his son reigned in his place.

In 1 Kings chapter 14, we see God's judgment upon Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Jeroboam had set Israel off on the path of idolatry in chapter 12.

He had established the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Their purpose was in large part political. They were designed to avoid the prospect of Israel rejoining with Judah as they went down to worship in the temple in Jerusalem.

Jeroboam was still worshipping the Lord, but he was worshipping the Lord with idols, directly breaking the second commandment. He was repeating the sins of Aaron. There were several similarities between Jeroboam and Aaron.

In chapter 12, Jeroboam was like Moses and Aaron, confronting Pharaoh concerning the oppression of the people. But then he ends up building golden calves. He's confronted by the man of God in chapter 13, and the altar is split in two, like Moses split the tablets of stone in chapter 32 of Exodus.

[5 : 38] Now in this chapter, we discover that he has two sons named Nadab and Abijah, much as Aaron had two sons who were condemned to death by the Lord, Nadab and Abihu.

Severe judgment comes upon Jeroboam and his house in this chapter on account of his sin. We should recognize the similarity here with the judgment that comes upon the house of Eli and upon the house of Saul.

As Jeroboam's son Abijah falls ill, he sends his wife to speak to Ahijah the prophet, the same prophet that had declared that he would have the kingdom from David. He sends her with ten loaves, perhaps representing the ten tribes that are in his hand.

Now, however, the message is not a good one. There will be a great judgment upon his house and upon the nation. Jeroboam's wife's visit to Ahijah the prophet might remind us of the visit of Saul to the witch of Endor, back in 1 Samuel.

That had been on the eve of judgment upon the house of Saul, and now this is the eve of judgment upon the house of Jeroboam. There is an inverted Passover here as well, a reverse story of Israel.

[6 : 40] Israel will be stricken like a reed by the water, and returned to the land from which Abraham was first called, on the far side of the Euphrates. There is a sort of reversal of both the Passover, the Red Sea, and then a return to the land from which they first came.

Both as the wife of Jeroboam comes to Ahijah, and as she enters her own house and her son dies, the importance of the door is prominent. The door is associated with birth, it is also associated with death.

The association between the death of the firstborn and the doorway is clearly a Passover theme.

There is a sort of inverse Passover here. It's the righteous son that dies, to spare him from the harsher judgment that will come upon others.

Israel is already doomed to exile at this point, from the very beginning of its life as an independent kingdom. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, sets the course for Israel, and Israel never truly departs from it.

Jeroboam's wife is condemned to become the silent herald of her own son's death, seemingly fatalistically resigned to her doom. There is no repentance, pleading with God for forgiveness, or request for mercy here.

[7 : 47] Throughout this chapter, it's as if the history of Israel and Judah is thrown into reverse. Israel will be uprooted from the land and scattered beyond the river Euphrates. Jeroboam, who had

begun with Exodus themes, will experience a great reversal of the Exodus, as Israel once again finds itself in captivity.

The Red Sea crossing will be undone, the calling from beyond the Euphrates would be undone also. While the previous chapter had given signs of hope, Jeroboam's hand was restored to him after he entreated the Lord.

In this chapter, no such requests are made. 1 Kings 14 concludes with the account of the king of Egypt invading Jerusalem and plundering it, much as Israel had once plundered the Egyptians. The glorious treasures of the house of the Lord and the king's house were all removed. To replace the dazzling golden shields of Solomon, Rehoboam had bronze shields constructed in their place. A very clear sign of the decline of the kingdom. In many respects, the fall of Solomon occurred as he heeded the voice and the influence of the serpent Pharaoh, an influence probably exercised in large measure through his wife, Pharaoh's daughter.

[8 : 53] Like Adam broke the law concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Solomon broke the key commandments that were given to the king in Deuteronomy chapter 17. And the result of his sin was grim.

His son Rehoboam lost the rule of the kingdom of Israel to Jeroboam, and brother was set at war against brother. And the wily serpent Pharaoh, who had been harboring and arming the future enemies of Solomon all along, shrewdly pursuing a policy of regional division and conquest and manipulation, ended up devouring the very riches for which Solomon had so compromised himself. Yet for all the failures of the house of David, unlike the kings in the north, the dynasty of David continued, and while the later kings of Israel all walked in the path of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin, apostasy never had the final word in the history of Judah.

A question to consider. What lessons might we learn about forgiveness and repentance from the contrasting histories of Israel and Judah?