

19.01 Jeroboam¹ ☹/ Rehoboam¹ ☹ Split the Kingdom (1 Kings 12:1–24; 2 Chronicles 10:1–19; 11:1–4)

In the story title above, the name on the left indicates a northern king (of Israel); the name on the right, a southern king (of Judah). The superscript numbers indicate the king's accession number, and the happy or sad faces show whether the king was good or bad.

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

Brackets [. . .] indicate a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud, or they show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- (None this week)

Scripture (ESV)

1 Kings 12:1 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. 2 And as soon as Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt. 3 And they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, 4 “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you.” 5 He said to them, “Go away for three days, then come again to me.” So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, “How do you advise me to answer this people?” 7 And they said to him, “If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.” 8 But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. 9 And he said to them, “What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us’?” 10 And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,’ thus shall you say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s thighs. 11 And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king said, “Come to me again the third day.” 13 And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him, 14 he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” 15 So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord that he might fulfill his word, which the Lord spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David.” So Israel went to their tents. 17 But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah. 18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. 20 And when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. There was none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah only.

21 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of

Solomon. 22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: 23 “Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, 24 ‘Thus says the Lord, You shall not go up or fight against your relatives the people of Israel. Every man return to his home, for this thing is from me.’” So they listened to the word of the Lord and went home again, according to the word of the Lord.

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. And he went out from there and built Peniel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” 28 So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” 29 And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. 31 He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. 32 And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. 33 He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings.

Introduction/Review:

Israel had a history of division. Let’s consider some divisions in the kingdom. (1) Way back when Saul had died and God had chosen David to be king, some Benjamites and others had been loyal to the family of Saul. (2) When Absalom had usurped the kingship, it seems as if the majority of the nation had sided with Absalom against David. (3) Even when they had brought David back to Jerusalem, the tribes had argued about their share of the king. (4) Adonijah had gained a following before Solomon had become king. (5) Solomon’s rule had been prosperous and peaceful, but, my, did the people pay taxes! Lots of taxes.

Jeroboam had been a good servant of Solomon. In fact, he had become a boss over the workmen from his tribe of Ephraim. Ahijah the prophet had come to Jeroboam, had torn his coat into twelve pieces, and had given Jeroboam ten pieces, showing how God would tear most of the kingdom from Solomon because Solomon had forsaken the Lord due to the bad influences of his many pagan wives.¹

Story:

Israel’s request of Rehoboam

Now that Solomon was dead, Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, was to become king. He went up to Shechem [locate] for the grand coronation. But Israel was concerned: they had had to pay so much money to Solomon’s government in order to enable Solomon to build buildings, cities, and other things like his own palace.

Israel called Jeroboam from Egypt, where he had been hiding from Solomon, and he with other Israelites made an appeal to Rehoboam: “Your father made our burden heavy: we had to pay lots of taxes and had to work hard for him. Now, if you take away some of these taxes and hard work, we will serve you.”

“I will think about this request,” said Rehoboam. “Come back in three days, and I will give you an answer.”

The people went away for three days. While they were gone, Rehoboam asked advice from the old men who had helped his father. “If you do as the people say, they will serve you forever,” was their advice.

“Nah! I don’t like that advice,” thought Rehoboam. “I’ll ask my friends who have grown up with me. Hey, guys! What do you think I should do? Should I lighten the loads of the people as they’re asking?”

✓These young men had grown up in luxury with all they could want. They enjoyed their easy, rich lifestyle. “Tell the people this,” they said. “If you think my father’s load was heavy, mine will be heavier. It will be

like this: My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. My father made you work by lashing you with whips, but I will lash you with biting scorpions."

Rehoboam's response

After three days the people came back for their answer. Rehoboam was ready. Whose advice do you think he chose—the old men's or the young men's? This is what Rehoboam said, "My father made your burden heavy, but I will add to it. My father punished you with whips, but I will punish with biting scorpions."

Was this wise advice? [No.] Why didn't God make Rehoboam wise like his father, Solomon? Why didn't Rehoboam encourage the people by making their burden lighter? The Bible says it was because of God's judgment on Solomon and the people for turning away from the one true God to serve idols, false gods. This is what the prophet Ahijah had told Jeroboam when he had torn his coat into twelve pieces and had given ten pieces to Jeroboam.

The people's response

How did the people respond to Rehoboam's answer? They turned away, saying, "We are not part of David's family! Let's go to our own tents, Israel! You can take care of yourself, David—the tribe of Judah."

They went home, they no longer paid taxes to the king at Jerusalem, and they now refused to work for this son of Solomon.

Rehoboam's backlash

✓Rehoboam might have thought, "They can't do this to me! They'd better get back to work." So he sent the main boss, a taskmaster, to get them to work. Instead of working, the Israelites threw stones at this man until he died. Oh, rebellion was going on in full force!

Rehoboam needed to get away from these people; he got into his chariot and rode out of Shechem, fleeing back to Jerusalem in a hurry.

From that time on, Israel and Judah fought against each other. Rehoboam himself, in a last-ditch effort, got together 180,000 soldiers from Judah and Benjamin to go against Israel. However, God sent a prophet named Shemaiah, a man of God, who told Rehoboam and all Judah and Benjamin, "The Lord says, 'You shall not go up or fight against your relatives, the people of Israel. Go home. This fighting is not from Me.'"

The people and king heeded Shemaiah's words and went back home, obeying the Lord.

Northern Israel's new king

Who do you think became king of Israel? Jeroboam, of course. Ahijah had said, "If you follow the Lord, your family will always reign over Israel." Will Jeroboam follow the Lord? I'll give you a hint before you answer: Is making gold calves a way to worship the Lord? No.

¹"[N]o man can be duly animated to the fear and service of God, and to the study of his law, until he is firmly persuaded that all the ungodly are miserable, and they who do not withdraw from their company shall be involved in the same destruction with them" (John Calvin, *Commentary upon the Book of Psalms*, on Psalm 1, p. 2).

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:

"When Solomon's iniquity is remembered, and for it his son loses ten tribes, David's piety is not forgotten, nor the promise made to him; but for the sake of that his grandson had two tribes preserved to him [so that Jesus Christ would be born of the tribe of Judah]. The failings of the saints shall not frustrate any promise made to Christ their Head" ([2 Chronicles 10 Commentary - Matthew Henry](#))

Activities:

- Play dough: finger; leg (thigh); scorpion
- Snack: Sugar cookies cut in the shape of the numeral 3 (for the three days Rehoboam deliberated)
- Compare the size of a finger and a thigh
- Make a heavy weight (like a stack of books) and add to it.
- Sing “Rehoboam/Jeroboam.” A pdf song sheet can be found at [REHOBOAM JEROBOAM.musx \(biblesongsandmore.com\)](http://REHOBOAM JEROBOAM.musx(biblesongsandmore.com)). An audio of the song is found at www.biblesongsandmore.com/biblesongsrehoboamjeroboam.mp3.
- If you wish to have a nature talk about scorpions, this site has a 3+ minute video: [Will this Scorpion Sting Me?! - Bing video](#). We can assume the scorpions mentioned by Rehoboam would have a *bad* sting.
- Review questions: (Game: For each correct answer, a student may place the name of one of northern Israel’s tribes, found below, in a pocket chart or on a flannel board.)
 1. What was the name of Solomon’s son who was to become the next king? [Rehoboam.]
 2. What was the name of Solomon’s servant who had escaped to Egypt? [Jeroboam.]
 3. What did the people ask of Rehoboam? [That he lighten the load of work and of taxes.]
 4. What did the older men of the kingdom advise Rehoboam? [To do as the people asked.]
 5. What did the younger men of the kingdom advise Rehoboam? [To make the burdens heavier.]
 6. Whose advice did Rehoboam take? [The advice of the younger men to increase the burden.]
 7. How did the people respond to Rehoboam’s decision? [They separated from David’s family, the tribe of Judah.]
 8. Who became the king of the majority of Israel’s tribes? [Jeroboam.]
 9. What happened to the taskmaster Rehoboam sent to force labor? [The people stoned him to death.]
 10. What did Rehoboam do when Shemaiah the godly prophet told him not to go fight Israel? [He heeded the word from the Lord.]

Memory Verse[s]:

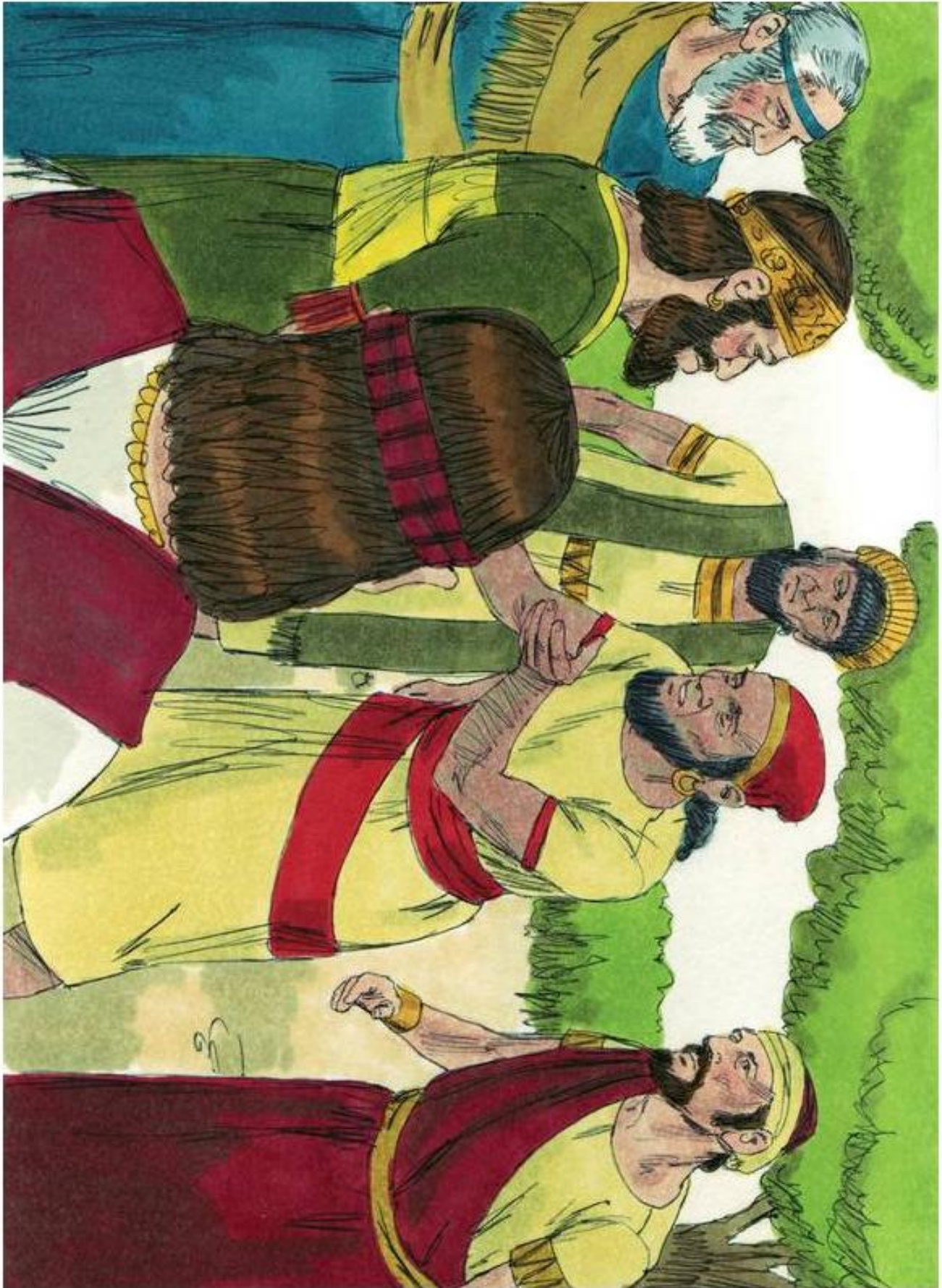
- Review Psalm 100 (KJV): Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. 3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. 5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.
- Ephesians 5:17: “Be . . . not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Handwork:

- Make puppets, found below, of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Print on card stock, cut out, and attach a Popsicle® stick or tongue depressor stick to the back of each puppet.

Divisions in Israel

- (1) When David became king, some Benjamites and others were loyal to the family of Saul.**
- (2) When Absalom usurped the kingship, it seems as if the majority of the nation had sided against David.**
- (3) When David came back to Jerusalem, the tribes had argued about their share of the king.**
- (4) Adonijah gained a following before Solomon became king.**
- (5) Solomon's rule had been prosperous and peaceful, but, my, did the people pay taxes! Lots of taxes.**











Reuben

Manasseh

Ephraim

Naphtali

Asshur

Gad

Dan

Issachar

Zebulun

Simeon



[Hands On Bible Teacher: Jeroboam](#) (resized)