

# KING REHOBOAM

1 Kings 12:1 - 14:31

## STRUCTURE

**Key-person:** Rehoboam (Solomon's son)

**Key-location:** Judah (Southern Kingdom), Jerusalem

### Key-repetitions:

- Yoke/labor: Israelites accused Solomon of putting a heavy yoke and harsh labor on them (1 Kin 12:4); Israelites asked Rehoboam to loosen the labor and yoke (1 Kin 12:4); young counselors advised Rehoboam to answer that he would increase yoke (1 Kin 12:10-11); Rehoboam answered the Israelites that his father made their yoke heavy, and he'd make it even heavier (1 Kin 12:14).
- Advice: Rehoboam received advice from older counselors (1 Kin 12:5-7); he received advice from young men (1 Kin 12:8-11); Rehoboam followed advice of the young men (1 Kin 12:12-15); the word of the Lord came to a prophet for Rehoboam, and everyone in Judah, to not go to war against the Israelites (1 Kin 12:21-24).
- Rehoboam's wrongs: he followed the advice of the young men and answered the people with cruel words (1 Kin 12:12-15); he called up fighting men to war against the house of Israel (1 Kin 12:21); after he became strong, he abandoned the Law of the Lord and set up sacred stones and idols and male prostitutes in idol temples (1 Kin 14:22-24).

### Key-attitudes:

- People's anger at forced labor and high taxes.
- Elder counselors' compassion for the people.
- Younger counselors' arrogance toward the people.
- Rehoboam's selfish, arrogant pride.
- Israelites' hope in Rehoboam when they first met with him.
- Israelites' resentment of Rehoboam after hearing his harsh words.
- Rehoboam's desperation when he fled from the revolting people.
- Confrontation between Rehoboam and the people.

### Initial-situation:

High taxes and forced labor enabled Solomon to obtain wealth and success with his building projects.

The Lord warned the Israelites not to marry people of other nations. However, Solomon had 700 wives from foreign royal families and 300 concubines. His wives seduced him away from the Lord.

A prophet told Jeroboam, an adversary of Solomon, that the Lord would rip ten of the tribes of Israel away from Solomon's son and give them to Jeroboam to rule.

Solomon died and his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king.

**Initial-problem:**

Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel told the newly anointed King Rehoboam, "Your father put a heavy yoke on us and made us work hard. Loosen the harsh labor and heavy yoke he put on us, and we'll serve you."

**Final-situation:**

The people of Judah engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. King Rehoboam died and his son succeeded him as king. His son continued to sin just like his father.

**BIBLE STORY**

Solomon died and all the Israelites assembled to make Rehoboam king. Jeroboam, who had taken asylum in Egypt to escape King Solomon's wrath, returned from Egypt. Jeroboam and the assembly of Israel told Rehoboam, "Your father put a heavy yoke on us and made us work hard. Loosen the harsh labor and heavy yoke he put on us, and we'll serve you" (1 Kin 12:1-4).

Rehoboam replied, "Return in three days for my answer." The people left.

King Rehoboam's older counselors who had served his father Solomon, advised him, "Be a servant to these people and respond with compassion, and they'll always be your servants" (1 Kin 12:5-7).

Young men who had grown up with Rehoboam advised him, "Tell these people, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke. I'll make it even heavier. My father beat you with whips. I'll beat you with chains!'" (1 Kin 12:8-11).

Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam. The king followed the advice of the young men and answered the people with cruel words, "My father made your yoke heavy. I'll make it even heavier. My father beat you with whips. I'll beat you with chains!" God caused Rehoboam to refuse to listen to the people in order to fulfill the prophecy spoken to Jeroboam (1 Kin 12:12-15).

Ten of the tribes of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam and followed Jeroboam. They called their new nation Israel or the Northern Kingdom. The Israelites made Jeroboam king over Israel.

Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem and continued to rule the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah. Two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to Rehoboam. Their kingdom was called Judah, or the Southern Kingdom. Its capital was Jerusalem.

All the kings of Judah were descendants of David, while the kings of Israel were not.

Rehoboam called up the 180,000 fighting men of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to make war against the house of Israel so he could take back the kingdom for himself.

The word of God came to a prophet to tell Rehoboam, along with everyone in Judah, "The Lord commands you not to go to war against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, for this is my doing." The people of Judah obeyed the Lord and returned to their homes (1 Kin 12:16-24).

Rehoboam followed God's commands and laws until he secured his kingdom and was strong again. Then Rehoboam and all Judah with him abandoned the law of the Lord. Their sins provoked the Lord's jealous anger more than their ancestors had done. They set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles (sex-and-religious idols) on high hills and under spreading trees. Male religious prostitutes were at the places built to worship their gods. The people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites (1 Kin 14:22-24).

Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king in Judah. He ruled for seventeen years in Jerusalem (1 Kin 14:21). Rehoboam died and his son succeeded him as king (1 Kin 14:29-31). Rehoboam's son continued to sin just like his father.

### GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

### SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What request did the assembly of Israel make to the new king, Rehoboam?
2. What counsel did Rehoboam receive from the elderly counselors and from the young counselors?
3. Whose advice did Rehoboam follow?
4. From whom do you seek advice when you have tough decisions to make?
5. How did the Kingdom of Israel become divided into two kingdoms?
6. Which kingdom always had a king who was a descendant of David?
7. Which kingdom never had a king whose son was a descendant of David?
8. How did Rehoboam react when he first lost his kingdom?
9. How did Rehoboam react when he became strong and had established his kingdom?
10. Why do some people abandon God after they become successful?

### LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Following bad advice may result in disaster.** Rehoboam followed the advice of his peers and his kingdom was divided (1 Kin 12:8-17). Jeroboam listened to counsel from men who advised him to make golden calves. This sin resulted in the destruction of his family and nation (1 Kin 12:28; 14:9-11).
2. **Glory days can end abruptly.** The glory of the Kingdom of Israel was in its height when Solomon was king. But the kingdom declined, and began to wither in the reign

of Solomon's son. When the kingdom divided, it weakened and became little in comparison with what it had been (1 Kin 12:16-18).

3. **Wisdom is not inherited.** Solomon had 1,000 wives and concubines, yet we read but of one of his sons. Solomon came to the crown very young, yet he was then a wise man. Rehoboam came to the crown at forty-one years old, when men will be wise if ever they will, yet he was foolish. Solomon's court was full of wisdom and the rendezvous of learned men. Rehoboam was raised in the environment of wisdom, yet he was a foolish man.
4. **The best way to rule is to serve.** Those who are in power stand tallest when they serve those who are subject to them. King Rehoboam's senior counselors advised him, "Be a servant to these people and respond with compassion, and they'll always be your servants" (1 Kin 12:5-7).
5. **It is of great consequence to young people when they are making important decisions, from whom they depend upon for advice.** If young people depend on advice from people who feed their pride, gratify their vanity, and further them in their pleasures, they are marked for ruin. King Rehoboam listened to the advice of young men who had grown up with him, and consequently he answered the people with cruel words. As a result, Rehoboam lost his kingdom (1 Kin 12:8-15).
6. **It is common for those who are most haughty in their prosperity to be most abject in adversity.** Rehoboam went from one extreme to the other. Rehoboam was arrogant and talked big when he thought the kingdom was his. At the first sign of danger, Rehoboam quit his ground and rushed to Jerusalem; thereby, he deserted his friends and gave advantage to his enemies. Rehoboam's critics had gone to their tents in disgust (1 Kin 12:16). His critics did not make Jeroboam king until Rehoboam had fled (1 Kin 12:20).

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Series of Tableaux:

The storyteller narrates the Bible story from beginning to the end. Then drama participants plan a series of frozen images that, together, tell the part of the story where ten tribes rebel against Rehoboam. Designate drama participants to represent characters from the story:

- Jeroboam and citizens who asked King Rehoboam to lessen taxes and the forced labor.
- King Rehoboam.
- Two to represent Rehoboam's elderly counselors.
- Two to represent Rehoboam's young counselors.

The storyteller starts retelling the Bible story. Drama participants stand around the performance area. When the storyteller pauses, drama participants step into the

performance area and establish a frozen image in relation to that event in the story until it, the tableau, is complete. The storyteller will pause after narrating the following events and allow drama participants to interpret each event with a frozen image:

- Jeroboam and the assembly of Israel told Rehoboam, "Your father put a heavy yoke on us and made us work hard. Loosen the harsh labor and heavy yoke he put on us, and we'll serve you" (1 Kin 12:1-4).
- King Rehoboam's older counselors advised him, "Be a servant to these people and respond with compassion." However, young men who had grown up with Rehoboam advised him to answer the people with cruel words.
- Ten of the tribes of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam and followed Jeroboam. Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem and continued to rule the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.