



## Second Chronicles - Chapter Eleven

### **III 2 Chronicles 10:1-36:23 - The Kingdom of Judah Down to the Exile (continues)**

#### **III.a 2 Chronicles 10:1-12:16 - Rehoboam (continues)**

##### Summary of Chapter Eleven

Rehoboam's first instinct was to start a war with the northern tribes but through a prophet he was told by the Lord not to. Instead, he improved the defences of Judah.

The priests and the Levites living in the northern kingdom were prevented from serving by Jeroboam and so they came to Rehoboam to pledge their allegiance to him, serving the Lord in Judah instead.

Rehoboam followed in his father Solomon's footsteps and this chapter provides a brief account of some of his eighteen wives, sixty concubines and the resulting eighty eight children.

The information in vv.5-23 has no parallel in First Kings but is derived from another source or sources. It illustrates the blessings that come to Judah following Rehoboam's and the people's obedience to the word of Yahweh (v.4), while Jeroboam leads the northerners into apostasy.

##### Introduction to 2 Chronicles 11:1-12:16

The Chronicler's account of Rehoboam's rule over the southern kingdom is much longer and more complex than that given in 1 Kings 14:21-31. As the first king of Judah after the division of the kingdom, Rehoboam serves to illustrate several of the key themes that will recur throughout the subsequent history of the Davidic monarchy: the blessings that flow from repentance and obedience to the prophetic word; conversely, the punishment that follows disobedience to God's law; the

function of the faithful Levites in strengthening the kingdom; and the constant presence of the prophetic word to guide and rebuke. Rehoboam's reign shows how the principles and promises of judgement and restoration in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 are being enacted in the life of the kingdom, even when the king falls short of the ideal compared to his people: <<**He did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord**>> (2 Chronicles 12:14).

### III.a.ii 2 Chronicles 11:1-12 - Judah and Benjamin Fortified

Although the king's first response to the rebellion against him and the secession of the northern tribes was to take the army out against them, the word of the Lord came to him through Shemaiah the prophet forbidding him to do so. Instead, he fortified the towns of the southern kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled one hundred and eighty thousand chosen troops of the house of Judah and Benjamin to fight against Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. <sup>2</sup> But the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah the man of God: <sup>3</sup> Say to King Rehoboam of Judah, son of Solomon, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, <sup>4</sup> 'Thus says the Lord: You shall not go up or fight against your kindred. Let everyone return home, for this thing is from me.' So they heeded the word of the Lord and turned back from the expedition against Jeroboam.

#### 2 Chronicles 11:1-4

To fight against Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. This was the time of Jeroboam's rebellion against the house of David. Rehoboam intended to keep the kingdom united by force. Rehoboam instinct was to make war against the seceding tribes of Israel, but God spoke through a prophet and stopped him. To his credit - or perhaps due to a lack of courage - Rehoboam listened to God's word through Shemaiah the man of God. Shemaiah is mentioned only here in Scripture and yet his role is quite remarkable because his faithfulness in delivering a message that opposed the king's will restrained one hundred and eighty thousand chosen troops from engaging in what would surely have become a bitter and bloody civil war.

Charles Spurgeon comments, "Here is one Shemaiah, - some of you never heard of him before, perhaps you will never hear of him again; he appears once in this history, and then he vanishes; he comes, and he goes, - only fancy this one man constraining to peace a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, warriors ready to fight against the house of Israel, by giving to them in very plain, unpolished words, the simple command of God. Why have we not such power? Peradventure, brethren, we do not always speak in the name of the

Lord, or speak God's Word as God's Word. If we are simply tellers out of our own thoughts, why should men mind us?"

The word of the Lord came to Shemaiah the man of God. This is a typical phrase that appears for many of the later prophets whom God uses to instruct his people: <<*Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah*>> (Isaiah 38:4), <<*The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign*>> (Jeremiah 1:1-2), <<*the word of the Lord came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was on him there*>> (Ezekiel 1:3), <<*The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel*>> (Hosea 1:1), and many more. The title the man of God was also frequently used to describe a prophet, for example: <<*The altar also was torn down, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign that the man of God had given by the word of the Lord*>> (1 Kings 13:5), <<*But Elijah answered them, 'If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.'* Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty>> (2 Kings 1:12), <<*But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, 'Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel'*>> (2 Kings 5:5).

You shall not go up or fight against your kindred. Whatever the differences there may be between the two kingdoms they remain part of the same family of God.

For this thing is from me. The Lord reminds the king that the split in the nations has come about by his will; clearly, what is about to unfold serves as a great lesson from history for both Israel and the rest of humankind.

So they heeded the word of the Lord and turned back from the expedition against Jeroboam. At least for now a war was averted, but this peace does not last long. The reader will later learn of continual war between north and south throughout the period after the division of the kingdoms, until the two sides see that they are indeed relatives and should accept the status quo.

<sup>5</sup> Rehoboam resided in Jerusalem, and he built cities for defence in Judah. <sup>6</sup> He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, <sup>7</sup> Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, <sup>8</sup> Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, <sup>9</sup> Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, <sup>10</sup> Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, fortified cities that are in Judah and in Benjamin. <sup>11</sup> He made the fortresses strong, and put commanders in them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. <sup>12</sup> He also put large shields and spears in

all the cities, and made them very strong. So he held Judah and Benjamin.

### 2 Chronicles 11:5-12

Rehoboam built cities for defence in Judah. Stung by the rebellion that more than halved his kingdom, Rehoboam set his focus on defence, building a series of fortified cities for defence. The fifteen cities that Ezra lists lie towards Judah's southern and western borders. Their choice seems to have been dictated by threat from Egypt for the fortresses covered the eastern, southern, and western approaches to Judah, and were thus probably intended as a defence against Egypt, Jeroboam's ally. Yet they did not prove effective against King Shishak of Egypt: *<<He took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem>>* (2 Chronicles 12:4).

He also put large shields and spears in all the cities, and made them very strong. Rehoboam sought to strengthen his kingdom and succeeded to some extent. Yet overall he neglected the spiritual things necessary to strengthen his kingdom. In these places he laid up stores of provisions, not only to enable them to endure a siege; but also that they might be able, from their situation, to supply the remote villages in their areas.

So he held Judah and Benjamin. This is a reference to what is better known as the southern kingdom of Judah.

### III.a.iii 2 Chronicles 11:13-17 - Priests and Levites Support Rehoboam

Jeroboam instituted his own syncretistic cult in Bethel and Dan to deter his people from going to sacrifice in Jerusalem and possibly defecting to Rehoboam; refer to 1 Kings 12:26-33. The Chronicler condemns him for his goat idols as well as golden calves (v.15), and for driving out the legitimate priesthood (v.14). The exemplary attitude is shown by those Levites who took the costly step of abandoning their lands to move to Judah, and those laypeople who followed them to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice (v.16). Israel's true unity was centred on the temple worship. The theme of the Levites' strengthening the kingdom is frequent in Chronicles, and the task remained equally relevant in the Chronicler's own day.

<sup>13</sup> The priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him from all their territories. <sup>14</sup> The Levites had left their common lands and their holdings and had come to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons had prevented them from serving as priests of the Lord, <sup>15</sup> and had appointed his own priests for the high places, and for the goat-demons, and for the calves that he had made. <sup>16</sup> Those who had set their hearts to seek the Lord God of

Israel came after them from all the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord, the God of their ancestors.

### 2 Chronicles 11:13-16

The priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him from all their territories. This was in response to the state-sponsored idolatry of Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom; refer to 1 Kings 12:26-33. These godly servants of the Lord refused to live in a kingdom where worshipping God as he commanded was against the law.

The Levites had left their common lands and their holdings and had come to Judah and Jerusalem. It was not just the Levites who came for there were many God-fearing people who would not tolerate the new style of worship and they too made the migration south. This meant that since the days of Jeroboam the southern kingdom of Judah was made up not only of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but also of a godly remnant from all the ten northern tribes. Spiritually speaking, Israel was struck twice - by the ungodly religion of Jeroboam and by the departure of the godly and faithful. There were few godly people left in the northern kingdom.

The statement 'Jeroboam and his sons had prevented them from serving as priests of the Lord' also indicates that the process went on beyond the reign of Jeroboam. More and more pious people from the northern tribes would find their way to Judah in the coming generations.

And had appointed his own priests for the high places, and for the goat-demons, and for the calves that he had made. Fear that the presence of the house of the Lord at Jerusalem will lead northern Israel to return to Rehoboam leads Jeroboam to invent his own worship system, central to which were two golden calves. His words to the people about them: <<***Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt***>> (1 Kings 12:28b) are almost exactly the words with which the people greeted the construction of the calf by Aaron; refer to Exodus 32:4. These bull icons were unacceptable as representations of the Lord, since Mosaic religion requires a clear distinction between the Creator and the created. The worship of bull icons as representations of other gods was more unacceptable still. It blurs the distinction between the Lord and other gods, a blurring already in evidence in 1 Kings 14:15; refer to the comment made there.

<sup>17</sup> They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they made Rehoboam son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon.

## 2 Chronicles 11:17

They strengthened the kingdom of Judah. This was the true strength of Judah; the godly men and women from the northern kingdom who migrated to the southern kingdom to live there. However, the faithfulness of the priests and other Levites can also not be overstated for their devotion to the Lord would hold the nation together especially when Judah too had apostate kings.

Rehoboam's and Judah's commitment to faithful worship and obedience to God's law lasted only three years: <<*When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he grew strong, he abandoned the law of the Lord, he and all Israel with him*>> (2 Chronicles 12:1).

### III.a.iv 2 Chronicles 11:18-23 - Rehoboam's Marriages

The growth of Rehoboam's family is a sign of God's blessing on him, although these details must refer to the whole of his seventeen year reign, and not just the three year period of faithfulness to God's law. His family is of strong Davidic lineage.

<sup>18</sup> Rehoboam took as his wife Mahalath daughter of Jerimoth son of David, and of Abihail daughter of Eliab son of Jesse. <sup>19</sup> She bore him sons: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham. <sup>20</sup> After her he took Maacah daughter of Absalom, who bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. <sup>21</sup> Rehoboam loved Maacah daughter of Absalom more than all his other wives and concubines (he took eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters). <sup>22</sup> Rehoboam appointed Abijah son of Maacah as chief prince among his brothers, for he intended to make him king. <sup>23</sup> He dealt wisely, and distributed some of his sons through all the districts of Judah and Benjamin, in all the fortified cities; he gave them abundant provisions, and found many wives for them.

## 2 Chronicles 11:18-23

Rehoboam took as his wife Mahalath daughter of Jerimoth son of David, and of Abihail daughter of Eliab son of Jesse. After her he took Maacah daughter of Absalom. Unlike his father Solomon, Rehoboam took three wives from a good pedigree. However, in the way of his father he took eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. Rehoboam obviously did not learn from his father Solomon's error. Although he had far fewer wives and concubines for he was probably less able to support as many, he still had a heart that broke the command: <<*And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself*>> (Deuteronomy 17:17).

The father of Mahalath was Jerimoth, presumably the son of one of David's concubines: <<*All these were David's sons, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was their sister*>> (1 Chronicles 3:9), while Maacah was probably the granddaughter of David's son Absalom, through his daughter Tamar: <<*There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman*>> (2 Samuel 14:27).

The two references to Tamar above are different women with the second, Absalom's daughter being named after the first, his sister.

Rehoboam appointed Abijah son of Maacah as chief prince among his brothers. This means that he appointed Abijah to be his successor, the crown prince and perhaps for some period of time co-regent. Abijah certainly was not the firstborn of Rehoboam; but as he loved Maachah more than all his other wives, he preferred her son, probably through his mother's influence on him.

He dealt wisely, and distributed some of his sons through all the districts of Judah and Benjamin, in all the fortified cities. On the face of it the reader might believe he was placing his sons in positions of trust for they would remain loyal to their father. However, this was wise because it kept his many sons apart and less likely to form an alliance against Abijah, who might be considered an illegitimate successor to the throne.

He gave them abundant provisions, and found many wives for them. His sons were well provided for and therefore less likely to rebel against their father and his choice of Abijah as his successor. The language appears to mean that each son had many wives, thus following in the family tradition started by David.