

From the Rabbi's Desk  
Rabbi Manes Kogan

Hillcrest Jewish Center  
183-02 Union Turnpike, Flushing, NY 11366  
[rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org](mailto:rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org)

## Stories with a Twist [211]

### Who Will Be at the Head?

Insights into Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 101b-102a

#### Background to Our Story

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>

The experiment with the opulence and power of the great eastern kingdoms had ended in disaster for Israel. King Solomon created the wealthiest and most powerful central government the Hebrews would ever see, but he did so at an impossibly high cost. Land was given away to pay for his extravagances and people were sent into forced labor into Tyre in the north. When Solomon died, between 926 and 922 BCE, the ten northern tribes refused to submit to his son, Rehoboam, and revolted.

From this point on, there would be two kingdoms of Hebrews: in the north - Israel, and in the south - Judah. The Israelites formed their capital in the city of Samaria, and the Judaeans kept their capital in Jerusalem. These kingdoms remained separate states for over two hundred years.



#### Jeroboam I, King of Israel

[aboutbibleprophecy.com](http://aboutbibleprophecy.com)

Jeroboam 1 was the son of Nebat. He became the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel, after Israel had split away from Judah, which included the city of Jerusalem and the

Temple. The prophet Ahijah prophesied that upon Solomon's death, Jeroboam would become king over ten tribes. After Solomon heard of the prophecy, he ordered Jeroboam killed, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt.

After Solomon's death, his son, Rehoboam, angered the ten tribes in the northern part of Israel with heavy taxes. This encouraged the people in the northern part of Israel to break away from Judah (the southern part of Israel) and to form a separate kingdom. Jeroboam returned from Egypt and was crowned king of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was home to ten of the tribes of Israel. Wars were continuous between Israel and Judah during Jeroboam's reign.

Jeroboam followed pagan ways. He placed golden calves in the towns of Bethel and Dan in the hopes of getting people to worship without going to the Temple in Jerusalem, which was in Judah. Jeroboam dismissed the priestly tribe of Levi and appointed his own priests. This caused many Levites to defect to Jerusalem.

The Lord sent a prophet to warn Jeroboam to turn away from his evil ways. Jeroboam's refusal eventually resulted in the destruction of his kingdom and his family.

Ahijah the prophet told Jeroboam's wife of the oncoming death of their son, and also of a king over Israel who will destroy the family of Jeroboam, and how the people of Israel will be uprooted and scattered beyond the Euphrates, because they angered the Lord by worshiping idols. All this later happened.

## Rehoboam



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rehoboam>

Rehoboam (Hebrew: רְחֹבָם, Modern *Rehav'am*) was an Israelite king mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. According to I Kings and II Chronicles, he was initially king of the United Monarchy of Israel, but after the ten northern tribes of Israel rebelled in 932/931 BC to form the independent Kingdom of Israel (Samaria), he remained as king of only the Kingdom of Judah, or southern kingdom. He was a son of Solomon and a grandson of David. His mother was Naamah the Ammonite.

The assembly for the coronation of Solomon's successor, Rehoboam, was called at [Shechem](#), the one sacredly historic city within the territory of the Ten Tribes. Before the coronation took place the assembly requested certain reforms in the policy followed by Rehoboam's father, Solomon. The reforms requested would materially reduce the royal exchequer and hence its power to continue the magnificence of Solomon's court. The older men counseled Rehoboam at least to speak to the people in a civil manner (it is not clear whether they counseled him to accept the demands). However, the new king sought the advice from the people he had grown up with, who advised the king to show no weakness to the people, and to tax them even more, which Rehoboam did. He proclaimed to the people,

"Whereas my father laid upon you a heavy yoke, so shall I add tenfold thereto. Whereas my father chastised (tortured) you with whips, so shall I chastise you with scorpions. For my littlest finger is thicker than my father's loins; and your backs, which bent like reeds at my father's touch, shall break like straws at my own touch."

Although the ostensible reason was the heavy burden laid upon Israel because of Solomon's great outlay for buildings and for luxury of all kinds, the other reasons include the historical opposition between the north and the south. The two sections had acted independently until David, by his victories, succeeded in uniting all the tribes, though the Ephraimitic jealousy was ever ready to develop into open revolt. Religious considerations were also operative. The building of the Temple was a severe blow for the various sanctuaries scattered through

the land, and the priests of the high places probably supported the revolt. Josephus (Ant., VIII., viii. 3) makes the rebels exclaim: " We leave to Rehoboam the Temple his father built."

Jeroboam and the people rebelled, with the ten northern tribes breaking away and forming a separate kingdom. The new breakaway kingdom continued to be called Kingdom of Israel, and was also known as Samaria, or Ephraim or the northern Kingdom. The realm Rehoboam was left with was called Kingdom of Judah.

## Jesse



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesse>

Jesse or Yishai is a figure described in the Bible as the father of David, who became the king of the Israelites. His son David is sometimes called simply "Son of Jesse" (*Ben Yishai*).

### **The Text: Babylonia Talmud Sanhedrin 101b-102a**

Rav Nachman said: The arrogance that was in Yarovam banished him from the World to come, as it is stated (*I Kings 12:26-27*): "*Yarovam said to himself, 'Now the kingdom may well revert to the House of David: if these people will go up to offer sacrifices at the House of Hashem in Jerusalem, the heart of the people will turn back to their master, to Rechavam king of Judah; they will kill me and return to Rechavam king of Judah.'*"

[Yarovam] said: There is a tradition from Sinai that there is no sitting permitted in the Temple Courtyard by anyone other than the kings of the House of Judah. When [the people] see Rechavam sitting there – while I, who am not from Judah, stand, they will think: This one [Rechavam], is the king, whereas that one [Yarovam], must be the servant. And if I sit, I will be regarded as a rebel against the Davidic monarchy and they will kill me and follow him [Rechavam].

*"Thereupon the King (Yarovam) 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 Beth El and the other he placed in Dan."* (*I Kings 12:26-27*).

...

"After this thing, Yarovam did not turn back from his evil way." (I Kings 13:33). What is the meaning of *after this thing*? Rabbi Abba said: After the Holy One, Blessed is He, seized Yarovam by his garment and said to him: Return! i.e. repent, and I, you and the son of Jesse will stroll together in the Garden of Eden!

[Yarovam] thereupon said to [God]: Who will be at the head?

God replied: The son of Jesse will be at the head.

If so, Yarovam replied, I do not desire it.



### Explaining the Story

What is the sequence of events in the story?

### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

**?** Why would *King Yarovam's subjects want to go to Jerusalem?*

**?** Why didn't *King Yarovam want his subjects to go up to Jerusalem?*

**?** Why did *King Yarovam make two golden calves and set up one in Beth El and the other in Dan?*

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 4 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** Which sin does God want King Yarovam to repent from?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Extra Bonus ?** How do we know that *King Yarovam wanted to repent?*

**Extra Bonus ?** In what way is God's offer to *King Yarovam a generous one?*

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Extra Bonus ?** Why doesn't *King Yarovam accept God's offer?*

### "The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

- ! Arrogance: the father and mother of all sins.

## EPILOGUE

What barred King Yarovam from the World to Come? This is the question our story seems to address.

Was it the grievous sin of idolatry? Was it his rebellion against the House of David? Was it the fact that he prevented his Jewish subjects from fulfilling their religious obligations in the Temple of Jerusalem?

The author of our story wants us to focus on the more mundane sin of arrogance. If only King Yarovam would have accepted being second to King David, he would now be strolling with God in the Garden of Eden.

The take-away from our story is to turn away from arrogant behavior and be mindful of its pitfalls in order to live a more meaningful and happy life.