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The First Prophecy of Ahijah
First Kings 11: 26-40

The first prophecy of Ahijah DIG: How does the LORD show His grace and mercy in these verses? How did Jeroboam learn that he would be the king of the northern kingdom? What amazing offer did YHVH give to Jeroboam? What were the conditions of the offer? Did he obey?

REFLECT: When you think of ADONAI keeping His promises to Solomon, even though the king had a divided heart and committed spiritual adultery, how does that make you feel about your relationship with God? Who can you share that Good News with this week?

Judgment would last for a night, but mercy would come in the morning.

The rise of Jeroboam: The disintegration of **Solomon's** empire came at the hand of **his** enemies, adversaries that **Ha'Shem** raised against **him**. **Hadad** attacked **Solomon** from **Edom** in the south, and **Rezon the Syrian** raided **Isra'el** from the north (**to see link click By – The Fall of the House of David**). But the worst enemy of all came from inside **Solomon's** own kingdom. **Also, Jeroboam the son of N'vat, an Ephraimite from Zeredah, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, one of Solomon's servants, rebelled against the king (First Kings 11:26) .** The father's name is not mentioned, he probably passed away. In **11:11, God** said that part of **the kingdom** would be given to one of **Solomon's servants,** and now **Jeroboam** is declared **the servant of Solomon**. **He** was from the tribe of **Ephraim**, a northern tribe. Thus, **he** could possibly muster a power base that could rival **Solomon's** southern-based coalition. **He** would have been less of a threat if **he** were from **the king's** own region.

This too was the will of **God**, for **Jeroboam** was given a direct prophecy of **a** future **kingdom**, which the Bible identifies as **the reason he rebelled against the king. Solomon was building the Ophel,** or **the terraces** to fortify the southern slope of the Temple compound, **and closing the breach in the wall of the City of David. Now this Jeroboam** seemed to have success written all over **him, he**

was a strong (Hebrew: *gibbor*, meaning *mighty* or *great*)**, energetic young man.** The word **First Kings** uses to describe **his** ability is the same word that the book of **Ruth** uses to describe **Boaz (Ruth 2:1)**. **He** was a gifted leader, a man of wealth and influence. We might also compare **him** to Joseph, who always rose to the top of any organization. **Jeroboam** was such a hard worker, and did such excellent work, that despite **his** youth and inexperience, **he** was quickly promoted to management.[226] **And Solomon, seeing how industrious he was, made him supervisor over all the work being done by the tribe of Joseph (First Kings 11:27-28). His** ties with **the house of Joseph,** the northern tribes, will become significant when the rebellion actually occurs. Ironically, **Solomon** promoted the man who would eventually divide **his kingdom**.[227]



The prophecy of Ahijah: The division of **Solomon's kingdom** was the will of **YHVH**, as we know from the strange and dramatic prophecy that changed **Jeroboam's** life. **And, at that time, when Jeroboam had gone out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh spotted him traveling. Ahijah was wearing a new cloak, and the two of them were alone in open country. Ahijah** suddenly and unexpectedly appeared and did something that must have seemed very strange. **Ahijah took hold of his brand-new cloak that he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces.** The prophets had a way of doing this sort of thing, which might be called a parable in action. **Jeremiah** did something like this when **he** smashed **a clay jar** in front of the people to show how broken **they** were (see the commentary of **Jeremiah Cz – Judah is Like a Broken Jar**).

The torn cloak was a sign of **God's** judgment. **Solomon's kingdom** would be

torn apart. Something similar happened to **King Sha'ul** when **he** had **his** tragic downfall. **The prophet Samuel** told **Sha'ul** that **Ha'Shem** had rejected **him** as **king**. When **the prophet** turned to leave, **Sha'ul** desperately grabbed **his cloak**, **tearing its** hem. **Samuel** interpreted **the tear** as a sign of **God's** judgment, saying to **the king, "ADONAI has torn the kingdom of Isra'el from you this day" (First Samuel 15:28).**

What **Ahijah** did with **his cloak** had a similar meaning: **God** was tearing away **Solomon's kingdom**. This meaning is reinforced by the vocabulary of the passage. The Hebrew word for **cloak** (*salma*) is based on the same three consonants as the name **Solomo**n (*sholmoh*) . . . almost as if **the king himself** would be divided. According to **Ahijah**, **Solomon's kingdom** would be **torn** into **twelve** little pieces. This number is significant because each piece represented one of **the twelve** tribes of **Isra'el**, going back to the original **twelve** sons of **Jacob**.

In this case, **Ahijah's** prophecy would change the course of history. **Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself! For here is what ADONAI the God of Isra'el** says: **I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand, and I will give ten tribes to you" (First Kings 11:29-31).** Up to this point, the **twelve** tribes of **Isra'el** had always been united – even when they were slaves in **Egypt**. But from this point forward, **the kingdom** would be divided, north and south. The ten northern tribes would be taken away from **Solomon** and given to **Jeroboam**, and thus they would leave **the house of David**. This was an act of divine judgment, in which **Jeroboam** served as the agent of **God's** justice.[228]

The remnant of ADONAI: The Good News is that there is also one great promise in this passage, a promise of grace that triumphs over judgment. Contrary to what some people think, this is something we often see in the TaNaKh. The passages that threaten the most severe judgment also contain the clearest promise of saving **mercy** – like bright stars shining through the blackest night.

First Kings 11 is one of the saddest chapters in the entire Bible. **The** divided **kingdom** was a complete catastrophe. The painful consequences of that divinely ordained division lasted for centuries. Eventually the northern tribes were scattered among the nations. But **God** had not forgotten **His** promises. **He** never does! Therefore, even as **He** was judging **His** people for their sins, **He** was also working out their salvation. There were no lost tribes. When the spiritual adultery intensified under **Jeroboam** in the north, the righteous of the TaNaKh left and went south to **Jerusalem** and worshiped at the place appointed by **ADONAI**. **The LORD** always

has a believing remnant, no matter the dispensation (see the commentary on **Exodus Da – The Dispensation of the Torah**).

There are reminders of **ADONAI's** saving grace throughout this passage. Almost every other verse in **Ahijah's** prophecy contains a promise of **God's** faithfulness to **the house of David**. The first reminder comes in **verse 32**, which stands as a kind of parenthesis. Yes, it is true that **Jeroboam** will get **ten tribes**. **But God** promised **Solomon** that **he would keep one tribe** (**Benjamin**, which was too small and insignificant to mention, was merged with **Judah**) **for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the City I have chosen from all the tribes of Isra'el. I will do this because they have abandoned me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites and Molek the god of the Ammonites. They haven't lived according to my ways, so that they could do what was right in my view and obey my regulations and rulings, as did David his father (First Kings 11:32-33).**

There is another gracious promise in **verse 34**. Even this act of judgment would not happen right away. **Solomon** would remain in power until the day of **his** death. It would only be after **his** lifetime that **his kingdom** would be divided. Notice why **YHVH** showed **Solomon** that favor; **He** did it **for David's sake**. **Nevertheless, I will not take the entire kingdom away from him; but I will make him prince as long as he lives, for the sake of David my servant, whom I chose, because he obeyed my statutes and ordinances. However, I will take the kingdom away from his son and give ten tribes of it to you. ADONAI** not only chose **David**, but **He** also chose **Jerusalem**. **His** purpose there was to glorify **His Name** through unified and committed worship at the Temple.[229]

The next promise is even more reassuring: **To his son I will give one tribe, so that David my servant will always have a burning lamp before me in Jerusalem, the City I chose for Myself as the place to put My name (First Kings 11:34-36). God** already said that **Solomon** would get **one tribe, Judah** (**the tribe** of **Benjamin** being so small it was considered to be **one tribe** with **Judah**), **the tribe** that **the Messiah** would come through. So here the promise is extended out into the future. Even after **Solomon's** sin – the divided heart that divided the **kingdom** – **ADONAI** would not turn **His** back on the promise **He** made to **David**. The flame of **David's lamp** would never be extinguished. In biblical times, **the lamp** was a symbol of life. To die was to have one's **lamp put out (Job 18:5-6; Proverbs 20:20)**; to live was to keep **shining like a light on a**

lampstand (Second Samuel 21:17). When **the LORD** said that **David** would always have **a burning lamp before Him**, it meant that **David's kingdom** would endure **forever**.

As for **Jeroboam**, **YHVH** shockingly promised **him** a **kingdom**, a dynasty as enduring as the one **He** had **built for David**! **Jeroboam** was not the legitimate **heir** to **Isra'el's** throne. **He** did not belong to **the house** and line **of David**. Yet, **God** offered **him** the blessings of **David** nonetheless. **He** promised to be with **Jeroboam** and to establish **his kingdom**. **I will take you, and you will rule over everything you want; you will be king over Isra'el.** But notice how those blessings were contingent on **Jeroboam's** obedience. **Now if you will listen to all that I order you, live according to My ways and do what is right in My sight, so that you observe my regulations and mitzvot, as David my servant did.** If only **Jeroboam** would be obedient, **he** would experience the full blessing of **God** in ruling over **Isra'el**. **Then I will be with you, and I will build you a lasting dynasty, as I built for David; and I will give Isra'el to you. For this offense I will trouble David's descendants, but not forever" (First Kings 11:37-39).** Judgment would last for a night, but **mercy** would come in the morning.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being so merciful! Sometimes we get so caught up in enjoying **Your** great love for the world by **Your Son** being the sacrifice for the sins of those who love **You (First Corinthians 5:21),** that we lose sight of our responsibility to love **You** back and confessing **Your** name as our **Savior**, even when it is hard **(Rom 10:9-10).***

*Obedience is Not an option to be done if convenient; rather obedience shows that our belief in **You** is real belief from our heart. **You** liken obedience to genuine love.* ***He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him (John 14:21).***

Your Word** says: **Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding yourselves (James 1:22). Thank you for saving us by your grace thru our faith (Ephesians 2:8-9)**. Please help us to remember that faith is not a mere mental thank **You**; but it is a heartfelt love that desires to obey **You**. **So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself (James 2:17).** How wonderful that my **love** for **You** opens the door of my heart for **You** to enter and live within me! **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My

word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23). *I delight in loving **You** and obeying **Your Word,** for **You** are such a wonderful **Father**. In **Your** holy **Son's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

If **Jeroboam** had obeyed **ADONAI** the way **he** was told, there would have been two nations that followed **YHVH**, not just one: **Isra'el** in the north and **Judah** in the south. Yet, **Jeroboam** had little interest in serving **God**. **He** decided to serve **his** own interests instead, and soon **he** became **king** of false worship. If **David** served as the royal standard for **kingship** in **Isra'el**, then **Jeroboam** is consistently held up as the negative example: **the king** who decided *not* to follow **God**.[230]

Ahijah's prominence in this story begins the prophet's role as a major player in the history of **Isra'el**. Of course, earlier prophets impacted **Isra'el's** story, such as **Samuel** and **Nathan**, but the prophetic movement now becomes even more significant. In the rest of **First** and **Second Kings**, the prophets speak for **God** as anointers of new kings, as miracle workers, and as **Isra'el's** overall covenant conscience. It is difficult to conceive of an **Israelite** nation without them.[231]

When **Solomon** heard about **Ahijah's** prophecy, **he** did everything **he** could to stop it from ever coming true. Just as **Sha'ul** had once tried to **kill David**, **Solomon tried to assassinate Jeroboam**. **But** by then it was too late. **Jeroboam** then **fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and stayed in Egypt until the death of Solomon (First Kings 11:40). He** found refuge in Pharaoh **Shishak's** court, a fact that alerts readers to changes in **Egypt's** leadership. **Shishak** was not as friendly to **Solomon** as **his** predecessor had been. Perhaps this new **Pharaoh** resented paying **Solomon's** tolls, or perhaps **he** attempted to build a new power base that would serve **his** own interests. Either way, the Davidic lineage was in trouble. **Jeroboam** had a following in Northern **Isra'el**, a significant foreign ally, and **God's** promise to place **him** in power.[232] **YHVH** had spoken: **the kingdom** would be divided. So **Jeroboam** waited for the day when **he** would rule over **Isra'el.**

All these promises find their fulfillment in **Yeshua Messiah**, the greater **Solomon** of **the kingdom** of **God**. The reason **God** said that **David's son** would have a tribe – and the reason **He** kept saying this over and over again – was that **He** had a plan for our salvation that depended on **the house of David**. One day **He** would send **a Savior** to be **the King** of **His** people forever. In order to keep that promise, **God** had to preserve the tribe of **Judah** until the coming of **Yeshua Messiah**, **the Son**

of David. **He** is **the light of the world (John 8:12)** whose **lamp** still burns in **the house of God (Revelation 1:12-13)**.[233]