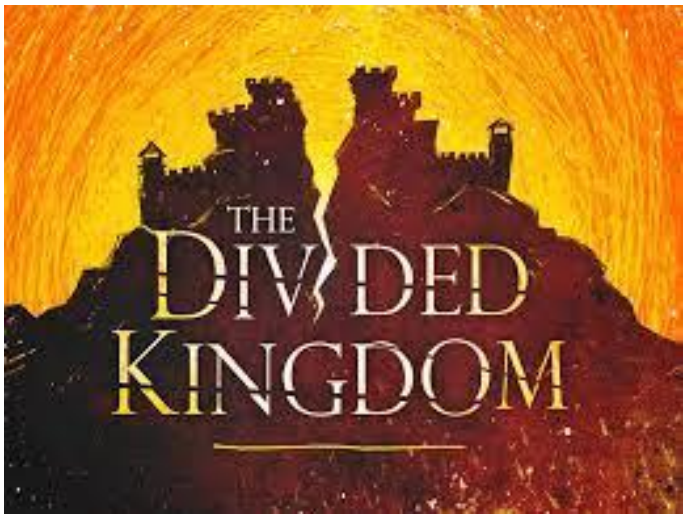
–Save This Page as a PDF–

The Divided Kingdom: The Rise of Idolatry
First Kings 12:1 to 16:34 and Second Chronicles 10:1 to 17:1



Solomon's death left a gigantic hole in **Isra'el's** leadership structure. **David's son**, the man who gave **Isra'el** political cohesion, wealth, prestige, and religious unity, was dead. Who could possibly fill his place? The Bible has already introduced what would occur (see the commentary on **the Life of David**, **to see link click Ct – The LORD's Covenant with David**). **ADONAI** would continue to honor the covenant with **David**, so **Solomon's son** would have a two-tribe kingdom **(First Kings 11:32-36)**. Because of **Solomon's** idolatry, however, **Jeroboam** would rule the other ten tribes **(First Kings 11:26-31)**. **God** had sent these infallible promises through **Ahijah the prophet**, so the prophecies must come true. What remains to be seen is *how* they will come to pass.

Sadly, **Solomon's son Rehoboam's** lack of political skill opened the door for the split (see **Dc – A House Divided**). Just as sadly, **Jeroboam** did not appreciate what **Ha'Shem** had done for him, for **he** would establish an alternative religion in **his** new kingdom (see **Dd – Golden Calves at Dan and Bethel**). Though **the LORD** sent **prophets** to warn **Jeroboam** to change **his** ways, **he** refused to do so **(First**

Kings 13:1-10). As a result, **YHVH** condemned **Jeroboam's** actions (see **Dg – The Prophecy of Ahijah**) and ended **his** dynasty after a few short generations **(First Kings 15:29-30)**. **Jeroboam's** deeds are particularly unacceptable to **God** because **he** was told that **he** came to power because of **Solomon's** disobedience **(First Kings 11:26-31)**. Indeed, **Jeroboam's** sins are so far-reaching and repulsive that the author uses **him** as the example of how to define a morally deficient **king (First Kings 16:7, 9** and **26)**.

After **Jeroboam** passes from the scene, several other rather nondescript **kings** come to power in **Isra'el**, and **David's** dynasty continues to rule **Judah**. Judah's **kings, Asa** (see **Dk – Asa's Reforms**) and **Jehoshaphat** (see **Dm – Jehoshaphat King of Judah**), impresses the author in a positive way. None of the northern **kings** are righteous (see **Dn – The Kings of Isra'el**), yet one is significant. **Omri** builds a new capitol, makes an alliance with Tyre, and places **his son, Ahab**, on the throne (see **Ds – Omri King of Isra'el**). He thereby provides a stable dynasty for **Isra'el**. **Ahab** will become one of the major characters in the rest of **First Kings**.

Overall, these chapters present a picture of moral decline among **God's** people. Certainly the nation's division spells political decline. More importantly, **Jeroboam's** decision to form a new religion tears the people apart from **ADONAI**, which meant that their political situation would get even worse. **Prophets** rebuked the kings but were ignored. A confrontation between **God's messengers** and the monarchs loomed in the future.[321]

As **the Chronicler** entered the Divided Kingdom, **he** left behind the reigns of **his** ideal **kings**. Although the number of **kings** during this period accomplished some remarkably positive achievements, this material is much more balanced between positive and negative events. Instead of providing the post-exilic community with extended models of faithful living, the **kings** of the Divided Kingdom offered contrasting scenarios of obedience and disobedience which led to divine blessing and judgment.

In addition, at this point it is important to point out that the greatest difference between **Kings** and **Chronicles** in this section is that **Chronicles** omits all the materials dealing exclusively with northern **Isra'el**. Events in the North appear only as they touched on the life of **Judah**. As a result, this material nearly exclusively focuses on conditions within **Judah** during the Divided Kingdom. This orientation reflected **the Chronicler's** keen interest in **Jerusalem** and **Judah** as the center of the post-exilic restoration. From **his** point of view, **his** readers needed to

concentrate their attention on events in the South so that they could learn how to further the restoration of the Kingdom in their day.[322]