

Abijah

You probably don't recognize my name, but you probably know people like me. I was very good at calling attention to other people's sins, but did not seem to notice my own. I was king of Judah, succeeding my father Rehoboam, son of Solomon, son of David. I knew that the LORD had chosen our people and had chosen the descendants of David to rule them. I was a descendant of David and ruled the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, called "Judah" for short. The other 10 tribes, "Israel," were ruled by Jeroboam, who had been an official of Solomon.

Jeroboam fled to Egypt and returned when Solomon died, claiming the throne to the northern tribes. He used his personal influence to sway the people towards endorsing him. Then, to prevent the people from returning to Jerusalem to worship, he proceeded to make two golden calves, declaring them to be the gods who led them out of Egypt. Of course, he expelled the priests and Levites from Israel.

At this point I am required to fill in the details that I would rather leave out. The prophet Ahijah (no relation to me) had revealed to Jeroboam that because of disobedience, the LORD was tearing the 10 tribes away from Solomon's descendants and giving them to Jeroboam. When Solomon found out about that prophecy he tried to kill Jeroboam and that was the reason for the flight to Egypt. The prophet told Jeroboam that if he followed the LORD with all his heart his descendants would rule, but if he did not, the kingdom would be taken from him. That was the same covenant offered to my father.

I went to war with Jeroboam and stood on Mount Zemaraim and called out to him across the battle lines. "Don't you know that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants forever?" I went on to mention the golden calves and the expulsion of the priests and called attention to the sacrifices to the LORD God Jehovah that were ongoing in the Temple. I have to admit that I was not personally following the LORD, but I was right about the facts that I mentioned.

So, I was a hypocrite. But the LORD is gracious and merciful. While I was calling out to the people of Israel to abandon disobedient Israel and join forces with hypocritical Judah, Jeroboam sent troops secretly to circle us. We called out to the LORD and he heard us! As the priests blew the trumpets and the men raised the battle cry, Israel fled before us. We routed them, took many towns and villages and broke Jeroboam's power.

So, did I follow the LORD with all my heart in gratitude for his miraculous intervention on my behalf, despite my unworthiness? No! My father had served the LORD for three years with the help of the refugee priests from Israel, but after he was secure, he abandoned the law of the LORD. Instead, he restored the Asherah poles, sacred stones, high places and male shrine prostitutes, the religious practices for which the

LORD had driven the Canaanites from the land. It might have been the influence of his mother who was an Ammonite.

I did the same thing. It was easier to just stick with the way things were and it was probably the influence of my fourteen wives. It took 700 wives and 300 concubines to corrupt Solomon. Have you been dragged down by marriage to an ungodly person? It really requires only one. But with the power of the LORD, shouldn't his followers convert the unfaithful? Is there some force of spiritual gravity? Why is it so much easier to be dragged down than to lift up? I have been told that after I left the temporal and entered the eternal kingdom, my son Asa returned the people to the LORD and abolished the detestable practices. Maybe I helped him by serving as a bad example!

1 Kings 14, 15, 2 Chronicles 13