

## 1 Kings 14:1-20

### The Death of Jeroboam's Son

In the previous chapter, Jeroboam sees proof of the prophecy of the man of God, and also experiences his paralyzed arm healed, yet refuses to acknowledge God.

We also saw an incident of deception when the old prophet lied about talking to an angelic messenger.

Jeroboam had seen the power of God at work, and when his son falls sick, he knows that true spiritual healing power lies with Yahweh and the prophets of Judah.

But he can't afford to have people know he is seeking help from the spiritual resources of Judah, Israel's enemy. So he sends his wife in disguise to the prophet Ahijah - the same prophet who told him he would be king of Israel.

**1 Kings 14:1-2** - "At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people."

The prophet is blind, which shows his recognition of her true identity is a supernatural word from God.

**1 Kings 14:5** - "And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman."

But Ahijah has "heavy tidings" for Jeroboam: The deal's off.

**1 Kings 14:14-11** - "Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes; But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back: Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone. Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath spoken it."

"pisseth against the wall" - i.e. all the men in his line will be cut off.

**1 Kings 14:12-13** - "Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy

feet enter into the city, the child shall die. And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam."

What was the "good thing" toward the Lord in Jeroboam's son?

The rabbis saw his son not as a child but as a young man that Jeroboam had assigned duties.

Rashi - "For he absented his watch, for his father had stationed him as a sentry so that no man would go up on the pilgrimage festivals. Instead, he absented his watch and he himself went up." (Babylonian Talmud, Moed Katon, fol. 28. 2.)

i.e. because of his death, Israelites could for a time secretly travel to the pilgrimage feasts in Jerusalem.

It gets worse, as the prophecy gets more specific.

**1 Kings 14:14** - "Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now."

The king referred to here is Baasha (see **1 Kings 15:29**). He would act as soon as he took power on the throne.

**1 Kings 14:15-16** - "For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger. And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin."

The prophets usually proclaimed a future prediction supported by a short-term sign or prophecy that would confirm the long-range one. Here, the death of Jeroboam's son just as his wife entered the threshold of the city proved the validity of the prophecy of the destruction of Jeroboam's house and lineage.

### **The Groves/Asherah**

God's main complaint here is that Israel has "made their groves."

The groves or *asherah* were false trees of life, basically sacred poles or stylized trees - a stump or artificial tree decorated with hangings in honor of whatever goddess was worshipped. Elsewhere she might be worshipped among a grove of living, sacred trees. The term *asherah* is sometimes used for the Canaanite mother goddess herself, along with Astarte and Anath. Similar worship as found throughout the Middle East.

Archaeological findings associate Asherah with lions (indicating power), serpents (representing immortality or healing), and sacred trees (signifying fertility)

God had warned Israel against this:

- **Deuteronomy 16:21-22** - "Thou shalt not plant (or establish) thee a grove (*asherah*) of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the LORD thy God hateth."

For Jeroboam, who labeled the golden calf idols as images of the true god Yahweh, *asherah* were probably seen as honoring the wife or consort of Yahweh.

- **Jeremiah 7:18** - "The children gather sticks, the fathers build the fire, and the mothers knead dough, to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven, and they pour libations to other gods, to vex Me."

She was mother goddess, queen of heaven, "the creatress," and the pantheon of 70 the Canaanite gods were her children.

The term "*asherah*" itself can be interpreted as the basis for the Hebrew *me'ushar* meaning blessed or happy.

Basically she was a perversion of Eve, mother of all living (**Genesis 3:20**), whose seed was to be the Deliverer/Messiah (**Genesis 3:15**). Like the *asherah*, Eve is associated with serpents and trees.

Solomon describes the genuine tree of life as a female aspect of divinity - Wisdom personified - which the rabbis understood to represent the Torah.

- **Proverbs 3:18** - "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her."

... and is described as being present when God was creating the world - **Proverbs 8:22-31**

The genuine Tree of Life, which was in the midst of the Garden, is reflected in the Book of Revelation:

- **Revelation 22:2** - "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

- **Revelation 22:14** - "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by its gates."

- **Revelation 2:7** - "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will grant the right to eat from the tree of life in the Paradise of God."

How do we set up an "*asherah*" in our hearts?

We need to examine the things that we get "life" from.

A personal example - After my divorce, is found that running helped me temporarily be free of the emotional pain. I could literally outrun it for a while. I appreciated that as a gift from God. But years later, my knees started to give out. The doctor told me I could no longer run. I was well past the pain of the divorce, and decades into my marriage with Joysanna. But his words brought tears to my eyes, which was embarrassing for me and for him.

What was going on?

I had set up an *asherah* next to the altar of God. Someone had threatened it, and it was suddenly revealed.

It could be things we fear, things we take pride in, things that we think define us. If we see them as gifts from the hand of God, they are blessings. If we worship them as necessary to our existence, they are *asherah*.

As with any idolatry, Jesus has already overturned the images, cut down the groves and broken the false altars. We just need to agree, and see these things as defiled and no longer worthy of worship.

The harsh prophecy of Ahijah has already fallen on us, and our old man has been destroyed.

Again, we're called back to the cross.

- **Romans 6:4** - "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."