

## 1 Kings 14:21-31

### The Sins of Judah

With all the idolatry going on in the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam, it seems like the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and King Rehoboam will be coming out looking like God's favorites. After all, Temple worship continued in Jerusalem as before. Most of the Levites who lived in the Northern Kingdom left to serve in Judah.

During his first three years on the throne, Rehoboam reigned well:

- **2 Chronicles 11:16-17** - "And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon."

But Rehoboam "desired many wives" (**2 Chronicles 11:23**) He had eighteen wives, and threescore concubines. So things started to spiritually go off course.

Idolatry eventually spread throughout Judah as it did in Jeroboam's kingdom.

**1 Kings 14:21** - "And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess."

The rabbis suspected that his mother, an Ammonitess, was instrumental in drawing Rehoboam away from the Lord into idolatry. She was among the foreign wives and concubines that drew Solomon into idolatry earlier.

Remember that the Ammonites were descended from Ben-Ammi, a son of Lot with his younger daughter (**Genesis 19:37-38**). They were longtime enemies of Israel.

**1 Kings 14:22-24** - "And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel."

We already discussed the groves. Here these artificial "trees of life" were set up alone or in the midst of natural "green trees."

High Places - *bama* - reflected the pride and "puffed up" egos of the idolaters. Like Lucifer rising above the cloud.

See **Isaiah 14:12-15** - "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

The High Places were like the Tower of Babel, whose builders had said, ""Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.""

Babel comes from the Hebrew word *bālal*, meaning confusion.

"And there were also sodomites in the land" - The King James Version translates the Hebrew word *qadesh* as Sodomites, linking them to what they considered homosexual practices.

But the rabbis translated *qadesh* as adulterer or whoremonger, males who served as the counterpoints to *qadeshah*, or female "sacred" prostitutes (*qadesh* basically means "holy, set apart"). A *qadesh* is a male ritual prostitute.

The idea was that by acting out sexual intercourse before the Asherah goddess or an idol, through the belief in what anthropologists call "sympathetic magic," the act would encourage fertility of crops, success and prosperity for the participants and for the whole land.

In some instances, women would come to the idol altar and its precincts and wait for a man to come by, choose them for sex, and who would afterward leave an offering of money either for her or for the idol. The male *qadesh* would do the same for women. It is uncertain - and widely debated by scholars - whether there was male-on-male sex taking place, but the verse says "all the abominations" of the Canaanites were being acted out, so who knows what was going on.

What aspect of idolatry do the male or female prostitutes reveal?

### **Hypocrisy Linked to the Qadesh**

In looking up *qadesh* I ran across an interesting passage:

- **Job 36:13-14** - "But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean (*qadesh*)."

The word for hypocrites simply means "impious." But the phrase "impious in heart" indicates a hidden *inner* trait not displayed outwardly.

Prostitution, the activity of the *qadesh*, is related to improving one's appearance or

hiding its unflattering aspects. Historically, prostitutes were linked to artificial accouterments to make themselves more attractive.

The apocryphal book of **1 Enoch** describes how the fallen angels introduced forbidden knowledge to humans. Azazel gave men knowledge of weapons of war, but also to women “the use of antimony, and the beautifying of the eyelids and all kinds of costly stones, and all coloring tinctures” - i.e. jewelry, cosmetics and makeup (**1 Enoch 3:2-7**).

The process of portraying yourself as something different from who you really are is called “hypocrisy.” The word comes from a Greek term *hypokrisis* for “acting on a stage.” All Greek actors would wear masks to represent their characters.

According to the Greek historian Herodotus and other ancient authors, the women who, in Babylon for instance, were required once in their life to prostitute themselves in honor of the goddess, would have to wait for someone to choose them. The ones who were not so attractive might wait for months or even years. There was a strong impetus for making yourself attractive.

When we act as hypocrites, we are feigning to be better in character than we really are. To believe things we really don't practice. To have principles or virtues we really don't possess. It's about pretense and pretending. From another perspective, it's hiding or keeping secret some aspect of ourselves we don't want others to see.

Jesus had many things to say about the hypocrites or Pharisees he encountered.

- **Matthew 23:25-26** - "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

- **Mark 7:6** - "He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

The people in Judah were portraying themselves as the kingdom that honored God by continuing His service and sacrifices in the Temple, but they were also worshipping idols. They were “hypocrites in heart.”

The response to idolotry is stated in the Torah:

- **Deuteronomy 12:2-3** - “Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars (*mastebah*), and burn their groves (*asherah*) with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images (*pāsîl*) of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.”

pillars = *mastebah* - the phallic-shaped male counterpoint to the female Asherah false

tree of life.

graven images - *pāsîl* - carved wooden idols covered with silver or gold.

molten images - *massēkâ* - (see **2 Chronicles 34:44**) idols made by liquid metal (gold or silver) poured into a mold.

Perhaps the graven images represent the conscious rules and norms passed on to us by society, while the molten images represent the subconscious displayed in the fluid emotions and frenzied passions utilized and invoked by the false worship, like the dancing and music by Israel before the golden calf in the wilderness (**Exodus 32**).

We'll be encountering these terms continuously from now on. The remaining chapters and the other books of biblical history as well as the books of the prophets focus on Israel's addiction to idolatry.

### **Chastisement and an Egyptian Invasion**

God chastised Rehoboam by sending Pharaoh Shishak to invade and ransack the Temple treasuries.

**1 Kings 14:5-26** - "And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made."

Jeroboam had spent time in Egypt while escaping from Solomon. He now might have told the Pharaoh about the Temple treasures to entice him into attacking his enemy Rehoboam.

**1 Kings 14:27-28** - "And King Rehoboam made in their stead brasen shields, and committed them unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house. And it was so, when the king went into the house of the LORD, that the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber."

Brass had replaced gold in the shields of Rehoboam. It was emblematic of the status of his faith - it tried to shine like gold but was false, a counterfeit. The spiritual meaning of brass or bronze is judgment.

**1 Kings 14:29** - "Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"

Not the Books of **1 and 2 Chronicles**, but rather the king's own annals recorded by scribes and kept in the palace. The biblical books adapted some of these annals in their record of his reign.

**1 Kings 14:30-31** - "And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their

days. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead."

Rehoboam's mother is mentioned again, probably as a warning to emphasize her responsibility for leading him into idolatry.

It's odd that both the sons of Jeroboam and Rehoboam had similar names - Abijah and Abijam.

### **Summary**

Hypocrisy is closely associated with idolatry. Like the Pharisees, we will hide ourselves through pretense and feigned piety so we can continue to worship our idols. Pray that God would strip us of our masks, reveal our inner idol worship and bring us back to him in repentance.