

The LORD had promised that He would bless and secure Jeroboam's kingdom as long as he remained faithful to the LORD. Yet, it did not take long for Jeroboam to doubt the LORD's promise and take steps to insure Israel's loyalty to him. He created a substitute religion so that the people of Israel could worship without needing to travel into Judean territory to worship the LORD in Jerusalem.

### 1 Kings 12

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: 27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

**"And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David"** – The LORD had already promised to give the ten tribes of Israel to Jeroboam and that if he would be faithful to the LORD then his kingdom would be as blessed as David's had been (1 Kings 11:29-38). However, Jeroboam soon began to doubt the LORD's promise because he became concerned that he could lose the ten tribes as easily as he had gained them. This doubt caused Jeroboam to lead Israel into idolatry.

**"If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem"** – The worship of the LORD required periodic trips to the temple in Jerusalem for the various feasts and to offer sacrifices. This would require Jeroboam's people to travel into Judah's territory, which was governed by Rehoboam.

**"then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah"** – Jerusalem was the capital city as well as the location of the temple, so when people from Israel visited Jerusalem to worship at the temple, Jeroboam was afraid that they might be influenced by the familiarity and nostalgia of the city and decide to return to following Rehoboam, the descendant of David.

**"and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah"** – In order to return to Rehoboam, Israel would have to dispose of their current king. Jeroboam knew that his life might be in danger if Israel decided to reunite with Judah under Rehoboam.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.

**"Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold"** – Jeroboam consulted with his advisors, who apparently advised him to give the people an alternative to making pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem. This alternative was to create two golden calves for them to worship, which ended up being a repeat of Israel's sin at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 32:1-4).

**"and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem"** – In a day without modern means of transportation (cars, trains, planes, etc.), a pilgrimage to the temple was a significant undertaking, especially for the people living far away from Jerusalem. Jeroboam proposed a way to relieve Israel of the "inconvenience" of traveling to Jerusalem to worship.

**"behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt"** – This is an almost exact quote of what Israel said of the golden calf that Aaron created at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 32:4). If Jeroboam intentionally repeated the quote, then he should also have realized that his calves would be just as displeasing to the LORD as the one that Aaron created had been. It's quite possible that the statement that the calves were the gods that brought Israel out of Egypt was not an introduction of new gods taking credit for what the LORD had done. It may be that these calves were intended to represent the LORD in a corruption of the proper way to worship the LORD (Ex. 20:4a *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image..."*).

**"And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan"** – Jeroboam placed a calf in each end of Israel, with Bethel being near the southern border between Israel and Judah and Dan being near Israel's northern border. His intent was that these two locations would allow the people of Israel to choose a place of worship that was relatively near to them and no longer have any reason to travel to Jerusalem.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, *even* unto Dan.

**"And this thing became a sin"** – The influence of the king on his people is one of the reasons why his character is very important. A king that serves God will influence his people to also serve God, while one that doesn't will influence his people and cause them to go into idolatry. This is why the LORD had warned Jeroboam of the consequences of disobedience (1 Ki. 11:38 *"And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee"*).

**"for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan"** – The Septuagint (the Greek version of the OT that was in use in the time of Jesus and the apostles) reads "the people went to the one at Bethel and to the other as far as Dan." Jeroboam's calves became a sin because the people began going to Bethel and Dan to worship before them.

31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

**"And he made an house of high places"** – Jeroboam began creating a new religion around these golden calves, starting with the building of houses of worship at the various high places in Israel. "High" (elevated) places have always been associated with idolatry, based on the thinking that the elevation was supposed to bring the worshiper closer to the god being worshiped.

**"and made priests of the lowest [extremities] of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi"** – God had chosen the tribe of Levi to be the priestly tribe but Jeroboam did not choose to ordain his priests from this tribe. The Hebrew word translated "lowest" means "the extremities," indicating that Jeroboam was not selective from which tribes ordained his priests. He seems to have used men from any tribe who were willing to serve.

32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made.

**“And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah”** – The Feast of Tabernacles was scheduled for the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:34). Jeroboam created a new feast day scheduled exactly one month after the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated in Jerusalem in order to give Israel an alternative to traveling to the temple. He purposely created it to mimic the Feast of Tabernacles, using the people’s familiarity with the feast to coax them to remain in Israel. **“and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made”** – Jeroboam included offerings in this new feast in order to encourage the people to participate in the new religion that he had created. These offerings were to the calves and not to the LORD. **“and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made”** – He also installed the new priests that he had ordained to serve at Bethel as another encouragement for the people to engage in the worship of his new religion.

33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

This verse summarizes Jeroboam’s creation of a new religion, adding a couple of new pieces of information: 1) The date of the new feast was one that he had devised in his own heart and not one commanded by the LORD; 2) Jeroboam also burned incense for the new calves in addition to the burnt offerings. Jeroboam mimicked elements from the worship of the LORD in order to give his new religion the appearance of legitimacy. The devil will make his false religions look legitimate in order to deceive people.

### 1 Kings 14

15 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. 16 And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.

The context of vs. 15-16 (1 Kings 14:1-6) is that the son of Jeroboam had become sick and so the king sent his wife to Ahijah (the prophet that had prophesied that Jeroboam would become king) to find out what would happen to their son. After announcing that her son would die, the prophet goes on to tell Jeroboam’s wife that the next king of Israel would destroy the house of Jeroboam as a punishment for his sin. Verses 15-16 extends the judgment to Israel, who followed Jeroboam into sin instead of rejecting the idolatry that he promoted. Israel will be “shaken” and “rooted up” (removed) from the land because of their idolatry (the groves were used in worship of false gods). The LORD will “give Israel up” (abandon them to their enemies) because of Jeroboam’s sin and the fact that Israel followed him into that sin. The fulfillment of this prophesy came some 250 years later when Israel was conquered and carried away captive by Assyria (2 Kings 17:1-23). Jeroboam’s sins had started the clock of the LORD’s inevitable judgment ticking.

### 1 Kings 15

9 And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. 10 And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.

**“And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah”** – Since Jeroboam reigned over Israel for 22 years (1 Kings 14:20), Asa became king of Judah two years before Jeroboam’s death. He was the grandson of Rehoboam. **“And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem”** – Asa may have taken the throne at a young age since he was able to reign for 41 years while his father, Abijam, had only reigned for 3 years (vs. 1-2). Asa may have reigned significantly longer than 41 years but his feet became diseased in his 39<sup>th</sup> year, which apparently shortened his life (v. 23; 2 Chr. 16:12). **“And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom”** – Maachah is also named as Abijam’s mother in v. 2. Commentators suggest that Asa’s own mother may have died when Asa was a child and Maachah took over the duties as mother.

11 And Asa did *that which* was right in the eyes of the LORD, as *did* David his father. 12 And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.

**“And Asa did *that which* was right in the eyes of the LORD, as *did* David his father”** – While Asa’s father, Abijam, had followed in the sinful footsteps of his father, Rehoboam, Asa followed in the footsteps of his ancestor, David, and worshiped the LORD exclusively. **“And he took away the sodomites [male temple prostitutes] out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made”** – Asa took steps to lead Judah back to the LORD by getting rid of things that were used in the worship of idols. Worshipers of Ashtaroah used the services of male prostitutes in their worship but Asa removed these prostitutes from Judah, either by deportation or execution. The “idols that his fathers had made” likely referred to idols as old as those made by Solomon, as well as Rehoboam and Abijam.

13 And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt *it* by the brook Kidron.

Asa did not show preferential treatment even for his grandmother, who had constructed an idol to be worshiped in a grove. He removed her royal authority as queen and destroyed the idolatrous things she’d created.