

# 2 Chronicles 13 - King Abijah Reigns in Judah; Civil War; 500,000 Die in Israel

IV. Judah's Kings (2 Chr 10:1—36:23)

(2) Reform and apostasy in Judah (2 Chr 12:1—36:14)

(B) Before defeating Jeroboam's army Abijah tells him that Judah is the true kingdom on account of the Davidic Covenant and priestly worship (13:1-22)

## 2 Chronicles 13

(B) Before defeating Jeroboam's army Abijah tells him that Judah is the true kingdom on account of the Davidic Covenant and priestly worship (13:1-22) (Cf. 1 Kings 15:1-8)

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1 Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah.

- "...Abijah" - or "Abijam"; means "my father is Yah[weh]"

— He was the son and successor of Rehoboam, king of Judah in the 18th year of Jeroboam I of Israel (1 Kings 14:31; 2 Chr 12:16)

— By a different chronological system at use in Judah from that in Israel, Abijah began his reign in the 18th year of Jeroboam of Israel but only in the 17th year of his father Rehoboam, though both began to rule at the same time. Thus Abijah came to power in 913 BC and reigned until 911 BC.

2 He reigned in Jerusalem for three years; and his mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

### **Civil War (v2b-19; Cf. 1 Kings 15:6)**

Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

2 He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother was Uriel's daughter Micaiah from Gibeah.

**A** war started between Abijah and Jeroboam.

2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

- Abijah's three-year reign in Judah (913-911 BC) was within Jeroboam's reign in Israel (931-910 BC)

- Abijah was a son of Rehoboam and Maacah, a daughter of Absalom (Abishalom is a variant spelling, 2 Chr 11:21), of Uriel (2 Chr 13:2)

— Hence, it has been thought probable that Tamar, the daughter of Absalom (2 Sam 14:27; 18:18), had been married to Uriel, and that Maachah was their daughter (the granddaughter of Absalom)

3 Abijah began the battle with an army of warriors, four hundred thousand chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men *who were* valiant warriors.

3 Abijah began the battle with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men *who were* valiant warriors.

3 Abijah started the battle with an army of 400,000 specially chosen valiant soldiers, but Jeroboam opposed him with 800,000 specially chosen valiant soldiers.

3 And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour.

- Abijah was the aggressor, even though Jeroboam's army outnumbered his by two to one (800k to 400k)

#### **Abijah's Hilltop Speech to Israel**

4 Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel:

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4 Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim and announced:

"Listen to me, Jeroboam and Israel!

4 And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which is in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel;

- Hoping to forestall a bloody encounter, Abijah addressed his Israelite brothers from Mount Zemaraim, near the border between Ephraim (Israel) and Judah, a few miles southwest Bethel (Cf. Joshua 18:22)

5 Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a **covenant of salt**?

5 Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?

5 Don't you know that the LORD God of Israel assigned the kingship over Israel to David and his descendants forever by a salt covenant?

5 Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?

- Abijah charged Israel (northern kingdom) with fighting against *Yahweh*, since the Judahites had remained faithful to Him by following the proper worship requirements (Cf. v11-12)

- "...covenant of salt" - salt is associated with the Mosaic Covenant (Lev 2:13), Priestly Covenant (Num 18:19) and the New Covenant sacrifices in the Messianic Kingdom (Ezek 43:24)

— The preservative quality of salt represents the loyalty intended in keeping the covenant

— Here, it refers to God's irrevocable pledge and intended loyalty in fulfilling the Davidic Covenant and God's desire for the loyalty of David's lineage to Him if the people were to enjoy the blessings of the covenant.

6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his master,

6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his master,

6 Even so, Nebat's son Jeroboam, who used to serve David's son Solomon, rose in rebellion against his own master!

6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord.

7 and worthless men gathered to him, wicked men, who proved too strong for Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, when he was young and timid and could not hold his own against them.

7 and worthless men gathered about him, scoundrels, who proved too strong for Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, when he was young and timid and could not hold his own against them.

7 Useless troublemakers soon gathered around him, who turned out to be too strong for Rehoboam, because he was young, timid, and unable to withstand them.

7 And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them.

- In fact Jeroboam's rebellious action was possible only because naive Rehoboam had been duped by his counselors

8 "So now you intend to assert yourselves against the kingdom of the LORD through the sons of David, being a great multitude and *having* with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made for you as gods.

8 "So now you intend to resist the kingdom of the LORD through the sons of David, being a great multitude and *having* with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made for gods for you.

8 "So now you think you'll be able to withstand the LORD's kingdom as controlled by David's descendants, just because you have a large crown and have brought with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made for you as gods.

8 And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods.

- The real difference between the Southern and Northern Kingdoms was theological. Judah was relying on what God had done, but Israel was trusting in what she could do.

— The temple site and ritual were God's provision for His people (Cf. Gen. 22:14). Israel had rejected these, and had set up a system of her own devising that she hoped would make her acceptable to God. Israel had rejected God's grace and had adopted a works system of worship.

- Abijah reminded them that the true kingship lay with David's dynasty, not with Jeroboam

- The Israelites indeed had a vast army, but since they had exiled the true priests and Levites (Cf. 11:14b-15) and chosen other gods (golden calves, Cf. 11:15) they could have no hope of victory because the Lord was on the side of Judah

9 Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of *other* lands? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of *things that are* not gods.

9 Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of *other* lands? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of *what are* no gods.

9 Haven't you already driven away the LORD's priests, the descendants of Aaron and the descendants of Levi? Haven't you established your own priests like the people of other lands?

9 Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods.

10 But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not abandoned Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the Levites attend to their work.

10 But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the Levites attend to their work.

10 "Now as far as we're concerned, the LORD is our God, and we haven't abandoned him. The descendants of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the descendants of Levi continue their work.

10 But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business:

This chapter is the only assessment in Chronicles of the Northern Kingdom's sin. From here on, the writer's attention focused on Judah primarily.

11 Every morning and evening they burn to the LORD burnt offerings and fragrant incense, and the showbread is set on the clean table, and the golden lampstand with its lamps is ready to light every evening; for we perform *our* duty to the LORD our God, but you have abandoned Him.

11 Every morning and evening they burn to the LORD burnt offerings and fragrant incense, and the showbread is set on the clean table, and the golden lampstand with its lamps is ready to light every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken Him.

11 Every morning and evening, they're offering burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD, the showbread is set out on the pure table, and they take care of the golden lamp stand so its lamps can continue to burn every evening. We continue to be faithful over what the LORD our God entrusted to us, but you have abandoned him.

11 And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the [lampstand] of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him.

- Abijah referred to only one lampstand, though Solomon's temple had 10 (2 Chr 4:7). Perhaps this one was the original lampstand Moses made for the tabernacle.

12 Now behold, God is with us at *our* head, and His priests with the signal trumpets to sound the war cry against you. Sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you will not succeed."

12 Now behold, God is with us at *our* head and His priests with the signal trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you will not succeed."

12 Now listen! God is with us to lead us, and his priests are about to sound their battle trumpets against you. Descendants of Israel, don't fight against the LORD God of your ancestors, because you won't succeed!"

12 And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.

### **God Defeats Jeroboam**

**13** But Jeroboam had set an ambush to come from behind, so that *Israel* was in front of Judah and the ambush was behind them.

**13** But Jeroboam had set an ambush to come from the rear, so that *Israel* was in front of Judah and the ambush was behind them.

**13** But Jeroboam had sent an ambush to attack from the rear, so Israel was in front of Judah, with the ambush set in place behind them.

**13** But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them.

14 When Judah turned around, behold, they were attacked both from front and rear; so they cried out to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets.

14 When Judah turned around, behold, they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets.

14 When the army of Judah turned around to look, they were being attacked from both front and rear, so they cried out to the LORD while the priests sounded their trumpets.

14 And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets.

15 Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

15 Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

15 Then the army of Judah sounded a war cry, and God routed Jeroboam and the entire army of Israel in front of Abijah and Judah.

15 Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

- At a time of certain defeat, with 400,000 troops behind and 400,000 in front, Judah was saved by divine intervention

— What God did is unknown, but the army of Israel began to flee and the soldiers of Judah massacred 500,000 of them (v17)

16 When the sons of Israel fled from Judah, God handed them over to them.

16 When the sons of Israel fled before Judah, God gave them into their hand.

16 When the descendants of Israel ran away from the army of Judah, God handed them over to the army of Judah.

16 And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand.

17 Abijah and his people defeated them with a great slaughter, so that five hundred thousand chosen men of Israel fell slain.

17 Abijah and his people defeated them with a great slaughter, so that 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain.

17 Abijah and his army defeated them in a tremendous slaughter that resulted in 500,000 special forces from Israel being slain.

17 And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.

18 The sons of Israel were subdued at that time, and the sons of Judah conquered because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their fathers.

18 Thus the sons of Israel were subdued at that time, and the sons of Judah conquered because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their fathers.

18 And so the descendants of Israel were defeated at that time. The descendants of Judah were victorious because they trusted in the LORD God of their ancestors.

18 Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers.

19 Abijah pursued Jeroboam and captured from him *several* cities, Bethel with its villages, Jeshanah with its villages, and Ephron with its villages.

19 Abijah pursued Jeroboam and captured from him *several* cities, Bethel with its villages, Jeshanah with its villages and Ephron with its villages.

19 After this Abijah pursued Jeroboam and captured Bethel and its villages, Jeshanah and its villages, and Ephron and its villages.

**19** And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him, Bethel with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof, and Ephraim with the towns thereof.

- Thus defeated, Israel retreated and left Judah to occupy: Bethel, where Jeroboam had set up a golden calf for worship (1 Kings 12:26-29,33); Jeshanah (now Burj el-Isaneh, four miles south of Shiloh); and, Ephron (four miles northeast of Bethel).

— Evidences of God's blessing on Abijah were the cities he was able to take from Israel (v19), the death of his enemy Jeroboam (v20), his power (v21), and his many children (v21).

— Though marrying many wives was a sin, fathering many children was an evidence of divine blessing (fruitfulness). This does not mean that God blesses sin, it means that God blesses in spite of sin.

### **Jeroboam's Death and Asa's Reign in Judah**

20 Jeroboam did not again recover strength in the days of Abijah; and the LORD struck him and he died.

20 Jeroboam did not again recover strength in the days of Abijah; and the LORD struck him and he died.

20 Jeroboam never recovered his strength for the rest of Abijah's life. The LORD struck Jeroboam, and he died,

20 Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the LORD struck him, and he died.

**21** But Abijah became powerful, and he took fourteen wives for himself, and fathered twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.

**21** But Abijah became powerful; and took fourteen wives to himself, and became the father of twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.

**21** but Abijah continued to grow more powerful. He took fourteen wives for himself and fathered 22 sons and sixteen daughters.

**21** But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters.

22 Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his words are written in the treatise of Iddo the prophet.

22 Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his words are written in the treatise of the prophet Iddo.

22 The rest of Abijah's accomplishments, his lifestyle and his memoirs are recorded in the Midrash of the Prophet Iddo.

22 And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

- Jeroboam never recovered from this blow and died at about the same time as Abijah (910 BC)

— Abijah, like his father and grandfather, was strong politically. Like them, he too was involved in polygamy (Cf. 2 Chr 11:21), having 14 wives and 38 children.

### **Abijah (Summary)**

Abijah began his three years' reign with a strenuous but unsuccessful effort to bring back the Northern tribes to their allegiance (2 Chr 12:16; 13:1-2). In a very bloody battle, 500,000 of the army of Israel perished on the field. Abijah walked "in all the sins of his father" (1 Kings 15:3; 2 Chr 11:20-22). One of the chronicler's apparent purposes was to provide a comprehensive account of the divine selection of David and his dynasty. Thus, the kings of Judah dominate the record and those of Israel appear only when they relate to affairs in the Southern Kingdom.