

The Alternative Story

1 Kgs LXX 12:24^{a-z}

Translation by Zipora Talshir of her reconstructed Hebrew Vorlage; modified and annotated by Ralph W. Klein

Death of Solomon

a. And King Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the City of David, and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead in Jerusalem. He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned twelve years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Naamah, daughter of Hanun the son of Nahash, king of Ammon. He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh and did not walk in the path of David his father.

Jeroboam Revolts against Solomon

b. There was a man from Mount Ephraim, a servant of Solomon, and his name was Jeroboam. His mother's name was Zeruah, a prostitute.¹ Solomon made him supervisor over the forced labor of the house of Joseph. He built for Solomon Zererah² in Mount Ephraim, and he had three hundred horse-drawn chariots. It was he who built the Millo with forced labor of the house of Ephraim. It was he who closed off the city of David.³ He exalted himself over the kingdom.

c. Solomon sought to have him killed, so he fled in fear to Shishak, king of Egypt, and stayed with him until the death of Solomon.

Jeroboam in Egypt

d. Jeroboam heard in Egypt that Solomon had died,⁴ and he spoke to Shishak, king of Egypt: "Send me away to my own country." Shishak replied to him: "Ask what you will and I shall give it to you."

e. Shishak had given Jeroboam Ano, the sister of Lady Tahpenes, his own wife, for a wife. She had grown up among the king's daughters. She gave birth to Jeroboam Abijah his son.⁵

¹In Kings his mother is a widow. Her name means "leprous."

²The same as Zeredah in Kings' MT.

³These building projects are credited to Solomon in Kings.

⁴As in Kings LXX, it is at the news of Solomon's death that Jeroboam comes back to Israel. In Kings MT, he hears about this and returns after the invitation has gone out to the Shechem assembly.

⁵This event seems to be developed from the story of Hadad, an Edomite who had revolted, fled to Egypt and married into Pharaoh's family. Hadad's son was named Genubath 1 Kgs 11:20. This son will later die because of the sins of his father.

f. Jeroboam said to Shishak: “Send me away and I will go.” Jeroboam departed from Egypt and came to the district of Zererah in Mount Ephraim. There all the tribe of Ephraim gathered and Jeroboam fortified the place.⁶

The Sick Child

g. When his child became seriously ill, Jeroboam went to inquire about the child. He said to Ano his wife: “Go, inquire of God concerning the child whether he will recover from his sickness.”

h. There was a man in Shiloh, whose name was Ahijah.⁷ He was sixty years old, and the word of Yahweh was with him. Jeroboam said to his wife: “Take in your hand for the man of God bread and cakes and grapes and a jar of honey.

i. So the woman took in her hand bread and two cakes and grapes and a jar of honey for Ahijah. The man was old; his eyes stared in sightless vision.

k. When she went up from Zererah⁸ and came to the city, to Ahijah the Shilonite, Ahijah said to his servant: “Go forth now to meet Ano the wife of Jeroboam and say to her: ‘You cannot delay for Yahweh has spoken thus: I have harsh tidings for you.’”

l. Ano came up to the man of God and Ahijah said to her: “To what purpose have you brought me bread and grapes and cakes and a jar of honey? Thus says Yahweh: Behold, as you depart from me and enter the gate of Zererah, your maidservants will come out to meet you and will say to you: “The child is dead.”

m. For thus says Yahweh: “Behold I will cut off from Jeroboam every male and anyone related to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs will devour, and he that dies in the field the birds of the heaven will eat. They will lament the child: Alas, master, for he seemed to have the favor of Yahweh.”⁹

n^a. On hearing these words, the woman walked away. When she entered Zererah and the child had died, she was met by the wail of lament.

The Assembly at Shechem

⁶This fortification seems to be part of Jeroboam’s rebellion.

⁷This prophet is introduced in 1 Kings 11. In the Alternative Story it is Shemaiah rather than Ahijah who authorizes Jeroboam to be king.

⁸In Kings her residence is at Tirzah.

⁹The reason for this judgment on the dynasty stems is based on his plot against Solomon and Rehoboam. Ahijah in the Alternative Story is against Rehoboam from the start whereas in 1 Kings 11 he promises Jeroboam rule over the ten northern tribes.

n^b. Jeroboam went to Shechem in Mount Ephraim and assembled the tribes of Israel there, and Rehoboam the son of Solomon went to confront him.¹⁰

o. Now the word of Yahweh had come to Shemaiah the Nehelamite:¹¹ “Take a new garment that has never been submerged in water and tear it into twelve pieces and give them to Jeroboam and say to him? Thus says Yahweh: Take ten of the pieces to cover yourself.” And Jeroboam took them. Shemaiah said: “Thus Yahweh has said concerning the ten tribes of Israel.”¹²

p. And the people said to Rehoboam the son of Solomon: “Your father made his yoke heavy upon us and his table groaned with good. Now, make it lighter upon us and then we will serve you.” Rehoboam said to the people: “Within three days I will bring back an answer.”

q. Rehoboam said: “Bring me the elders and I will take counsel with them about the answer that I will give back to the people on the third day.” Rehoboam rehearsed in their hearing what the people had sent to him. The elders of the people¹³ said: “The people were entirely right in what they said to you.”

r. But Rehoboam ignored their counsel because he disliked it. Summoning to his presence the young men who had grown up with him he spoke to them in this sense: “The people have made such and such demands of me.” And the young men who had grown up with him said: “You shall speak to the people thus: My little fellow is thicker than my father’s loins.¹⁴ My father chastised you with whips but I shall chastise you with scorpions.”

s. This pleased Rehoboam and he answered the people as the young men who had grown up with him advised him.

t. The whole people unanimously said each to his neighbor, shouting it aloud: “We have no portion in David nor share in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! This man shall be neither ruler nor king-designate.”¹⁵

¹⁰As in Kings LXX, Jeroboam does not participate directly in the negotiations at Shechem. Contrast Kings MT.

¹¹A false prophet in Jer 29:24-32.

¹²In 1 Kings 11 Ahijah promises Jeroboam kingship if he remains faithful. In the Alternative Story, this oracle is preceded by the doom announced in v. 9.

¹³These elders in the Alternative Story are the respected older members of the community. In Kings they are merely senior advisors.

¹⁴My penis is bigger than my father’s hips. If you think you had it rough under Solomon, you haven’t seen anything yet.

¹⁵While the Alternative Story is quite critical of Jeroboam, it also criticizes Rehoboam.

u. All the people dispersed from Shechem, and each person returned to his or her home. Rehoboam took hold of himself, mounted his chariot, and went back to Jerusalem. And the whole tribe of Judah and the whole tribe of Benjamin rallied to his support.¹⁶

x. After about a year¹⁷ Rehoboam assembled all the men of Judah and Benjamin and went up to fight Jeroboam at Shechem.

y. The word of Yahweh came to Shemaiah the man of God: "Tell Rehoboam, King of Judah, and all the house of Judah and Benjamin and the rest of the people: "Yahweh has spoken. You shall neither go up nor fight with your kinsmen, the Israelites. Let each one return to his house for it was at my prompting that this has come about."

z. They obeyed the word of Yahweh and turned back in accordance with the word of Yahweh.

¹⁶In Kings sometimes only Judah is referred to, but at other times both Judah and Benjamin are mentioned.

¹⁷In Kings this happens almost immediately, which makes good strategic sense. Rehoboam would want to attack before Jeroboam had gotten his house in order.