

**1 KINGS 12:1-20 AS THE INTERPRETATION OF THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DIVISION OF THE
KINGDOM OF ISRAEL AND THE DAVIDIC-
SOLOMONIC ERA: AN OPPORTUNITY TO CORRECT
THE WRONGS OF THE PAST.**

BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Table of Contents.....	2
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1 The Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.2 Objectives.....	4
1.3 Hypothesis.....	5
1.4 Methodology.....	6
1.5 Text 1Kings 12:1-20.....	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERARY CONTEXT.....	10
2.1 Larger Context.....	10
2.2 Immediate Context.....	25
CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	27
CHAPTER 4: FORM, STRUCTURE, MOVEMENT.....	30
CHAPTER 5: DETAILED ANALYSIS.....	34
CHAPTER 6: SYNTHESIS	55
CHAPTER 7: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS.....	56
CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY.....	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	63

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Statement of the Problem

When the researcher was reading the text in 1 Kings 12:1-20, he found that the relationship between the division of the kingdom of Israel and the Davidic- Solomonic era in 1 Kings 12:1-20 accommodates an opportunity to correct the wrongs of the past.

The request to end the oppressive policy in verse 4 indicates that this division has a relationship with Solomon. Furthermore the slogan in verse 16 shows that this division of the kingdom “had its roots in the older rivalry and antagonisms between the major power centers of the Israelite confederation. Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh in the north and Judah in the south. This rivalry and antagonisms went back to the days of the tribal confederation” (Ceresko 1992:154). The request mentioned previously is an opportunity to correct the wrongs of the past.

The above relationships and an opportunity to correct the wrongs of the past will receive more attention, because even though many authors have written about the Israelite division, most focus on the theological context of this division. As a result, the relationship between the division of the kingdom of Israel and Davidic–Solomonic era that accommodates an opportunity to correct the wrongs of the past did not receive from these authors its much deserved attention.

The theological context of the division of Israel mentioned above is marked by pointing out Solomon's sin, Ahijah's prophecy about the division of the kingdom and the prophet Shemaiah's message that what happened was God's will. This theological context provided by the Deuteronomist "intends to show that these things did not happen by chance; rather, God was at work in the tragic career of Israel from the break-up of the Davidic kingdom and on" (Anderson 1957:233). This context influences how the division of the kingdom of Israel should be viewed and interpreted. And this shows that the author had provided the second context to the division of the kingdom of Israel during the reign of king Rehoboam.

Even though it seems that the author of the book of Kings tried to put the historical context of the division of Israel's kingdom under the theological carpet, the people of Israel themselves exposed this historical context of the division. Nothing in their protest against Solomon's oppressive policy suggests that their action was related to any theological context. For that reason the division of the kingdom of Israel could still be understood even if the theological context is removed. It should be accepted that theological bias dominates the history; however, the historical picture is blurred, even though some of the traditions preserved in this late work are valuable.

1.2 Objectives

To indicate that there is a relationship between the division of the kingdom of Israel and Davidic–Solomonic era, as it appears in the Davidic and Solomonic narratives.

To indicate clearly how this relationship is the real context of the division of the kingdom of Israel, which took place during the time of Rehoboam, Solomon's son.

To indicate the reason why the author provided this theological context for the division of Israel's kingdom. This reason is part of the "conclusion of the Deuteronomic history which begins with Deuteronomy" (Anderson 1957:232).

To indicate that even though there is a relationship between the past and the present, in life there is always an opportunity to correct the wrongs of the past, an opportunity that Rehoboam also had.

1.3 Hypothesis

This research will demonstrate that there is a relationship between our present and the past as it is portrayed in 1 Kings 12:1-20. The past might be wrong or right, good or bad. However, there is always an opportunity to correct the wrongs or to continue in the right ways of the past. And to correct the wrongs or to continue in the right ways of the past depends on how we exercise our right to choose.

This research will also demonstrate that the author has overlooked this right, in favour of pursuing his theological intentions. These theological intentions imply that Rehoboam could not have corrected the wrongs of the past even if he desired to do so, because according to the Deuteronomist it was God's will that the kingdom of Israel should be divided. This seems to be the

author's theological interpretation of the wrong choice of Rehoboam that resulted in the division of the kingdom.

1.4 Methodology

The researcher will use the synchronic method of approach. Because “this approach looks at the final form of the text, the text as it stands in the Bible as we have it” (Gorman 2001:12). In other words the focus of this study will not be on the origin or the development of the text, but on the text itself.

In addition to that, however, the results from historical-critical methods will be incorporated into this study since no one method can answer all exegetical and hermeneutical questions. The results from the historical-critical methods are very crucial because, “it is self-evident that the utterance of God for our time can become His living word in our situation only as we have learned to understand what He intended to say through this word to the people of that time. For this, historical study is absolutely indispensable” (Du Toit 1998:18).

It should be noted that, “the biblical writers were very conscious of history and the Bible itself may be looked upon as largely historical in format and content. The theological messages that the biblical writers sought to convey are so intermeshed with this perceptions of history that it is difficult to separate one from the other” (McKenzie & Haynes 1999:20-21). Therefore, cognisance will be taken of historical problems.

Since the biblical writers have written the history that entails a theological message, it is very important that the existential approach be used also so

that the text could be able to speak to us. Gorman (2001:18) says that the existential approach to the reading of the Bible is primarily interested in the text as something to be engaged into. In other words, the existential approach refers to a reading of the text that allows the text to affect our lives today. It does not read the text as a historical or literary artifact only, for a historical and a literary approach focus on the world behind the text and the world of the text.

1.5 Text: 1 kings 12:1-20

¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all the Israelites had gone there to make him king. ² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. ³ So they sent for Jeroboam and he and the whole assembly went to Rehoboam and said to him : ⁴ “ Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.”⁵ Rehoboam answered, “Go away for three days and come back to me.” So the people went away. ⁶ Then king Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his life time. “How would you advise me to answer this people?” he asked.⁷ They replied, “If today you be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favourable answer, they will always be your servants.” ⁸ But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. ⁹ He asked them, “What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, ‘lighten the yoke your father put on us’?” ¹⁰ The young men who had grown up with him replied, “Tell these people who have said to you, ‘your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter’- tell them, ‘my little finger is thicker than my father’s

waist. ¹¹ My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’” ¹² Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, “Come back in three days.” ¹³ The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given to him by the elders, ¹⁴ he followed the advice of the young men and said, “ My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips, I will scourge you with scorpions.” ¹⁵ So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the Lord, to fulfill the word the Lord had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite. ¹⁶ When all the Israelites saw the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: “What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse’s son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!” So the Israelites went home. ¹⁷ But as for the Israelites who were living in the town of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them. ¹⁸ King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labour, but all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escaped to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. ²⁰ When all the Israelites heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the house of David.

The books of 1 and 2 Kings, from which our interesting pericope, chapter 12:1-20 comes from, is part of the history of Israel wrestling with the myriad problems of political existence. Proper analysis of our pericope shows that it covers the problems that arose from the beginning of the reign of David until

the time of the division of the United Kingdom of Israel. These problems were both external and internal.

CHAPTER 2

LITERARY CONTEXT

2.1 Larger Context

It has been mentioned that the researcher will use the synchronic approach. However, a synchronic analysis of our text will not be used to close doors for the diachronic inputs, in order to avoid touching the textual surface only or “losing the historical context of the text” (Otto 2004:15).

On a synchronic level, 1 Kings 12:1-20 should be understood in the light of the political situation of the time of David to the time of Rehoboam. This pericope presents Rehoboam meeting the Israelites in Shechem, where the people requested him to lift the burden from them. Rehoboam consulted advisers and then he responded to the people of Israel. The people revolted and as a result the kingdom of Israel was divided into two.

As it now stands, this episode hardly would have existed alone. It demands a larger context, because of two reasons. Firstly, the slogan they chanted, mentions David. This shows that David somehow has contributed to their situation. Secondly, the Israelite leaders’ request that the burden which Solomon, Rehoboam’s father, had put on them be lightened. This shows that Solomon had also contributed.

The slogan that says “what share do we have in David, what part in Jesse’s son?” in 1 Kings 12:16, seems to indicate that the Israelites deny that they had any such inheritance under David. In other words, it did not benefit them

to be under the kingship of David. The reason could be that under David their disadvantages probably outweighed their benefits. This is very important to our study, because it shows that there is a relationship between the division of the kingdom of Israel and the Davidic era.

The people resorted to this slogan, because it was appropriate for their situation after their negotiations with Rehoboam in Shechem had failed. This takes us back to the time of David when the northern tribes, who were formerly under the crown of Saul, had attempted to withdraw from the United monarchy.

It is an undeniable truth that, with addition to the slogan to suit their context, “the Israelites reply, containing the decision to separate from the house of David, is a repetition of words spoken in David’s own lifetime by Seba” (Jones 1984:252). Taking from what the Israelites are saying, then, it means that the alliance between Israel and the house of David was repudiated. According to Anderson (1957: 335), “in the ancient cry there was nostalgia for the old days of tribal independence.” This shows that the nature of Davidic kingdom was dual.

In order to understand this more clearly, it is important to understand the situation which led to the establishment of the monarchy in Israel, since those circumstances still existed when David became the king of Israel. Probably, part of the reason for him to be chosen as the king over all Israel was to deal with those situations. On the other hand, to understand these situations will help us to see how they contributed to the context of the division of the kingdom of Israel that took place during Rehoboam’s time.

David became the king of Israel, probably about 1000 BCE. It was during this time that the Israelites were experiencing external political pressure. They were facing a very serious threat from the Philistines during the period between 1000-922 BCE. As a result, they needed powerful and able leaders who could stop the Philistines from having control over any territory in Palestine, since the Judges have failed to do so.

For that reason, “it is clear that the requirement of the monarchy arose from practical sociopolitical, economic realities. The impetus is not ideological or theological, but concerns, as political issues always do, military security and economic prosperity” (Bruggemann 1997:601).

In other words, the Philistines were the ones who have created the situation that led to the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. After Saul, the first king of Israel had also disappointed them, David was chosen secretly by Samuel. In view of what is mentioned above, it would be correct to say that David’s leadership was a situational one. But some of those who came after him were hereditary leaders or kings.

After the Israelites experienced a terrible defeat from the Philistines, David left Ziklag for Hebron. The representatives from his fellow-tribesmen were sent to him there and acclaimed him king of Judah. At this time the principle of heredity was not yet recognised in Israel. For that reason they took advantage. Terazi (1991: 56) indicates that, “before any settlement was made concerning Saul’s succession, David shrewdly secured the kingship in Judah.”

This indicates, as Bright (1960:177) stated, that “the southern clans, though a part of the amphictyony and of Saul’s kingdom, were relatively isolated and had often gone their own way.” This was revealed, firstly, when David was advised by the prophet of Gad to go to the land of Judah where the people did not arrest him and hand him to Saul. Secondly, the men of Benjamin were accused of a plot against Saul.

It appears that the acclamation of David as king of Judah was not welcomed by the northern tribes. Part of the reason is that they assumed that one from the royal family of Saul would be his successor. And the other reason is that, “after becoming king of Judah, David probably wants to win the support of the tribes of the north. A message of gratitude to the people of Jabesh-Gilead for what they did for Saul and his sons when they fell in the battle would be an appropriate act in that context” (Robinson 1993:159).

The second reason reveals David’s political manoeuvre when he sent a message to the people of Gilead, who were part of the northern tribes. Because they were closely allied with Saul, David knew that they were loyal to Saul. Conroy (1983:93) says that, “one can see beneath the pious language the outline of a political manoeuvre to win the elements of the Northern Kingdom.”

However, it is only one-sided to think that the message of gratitude to the people of Jabesh-Gilead had only a political agenda. The likelihood is that David might have sent this message free from any political motive. This could be possible because David had showed respect to Saul. He demonstrated this by not killing Saul even when he had the opportunity to do

so. To send such a message to the people who showed respect for Saul might be appropriate.

Even if David was sincere in sending this message, the northern tribes interpreted this action negatively. To them this action meant that David wanted to make himself a king of all Israel. However, the text is silent as far as the people of Jabesh-Gilead's response is concerned. If a political motive existed in sending the message then his action shows that he had his eyes on the territory of Israel during this period.

To react against this action, the followers of Saul proclaimed his remaining son Ishbaal, who was also called Ishbosheth, to be king in his father's place. "By this declaration, Abner hoped to rally the northern tribes around Saul's heir in order to thwart David's plan for hegemony" (Terazi 1991:57). These names, Ishbosheth and Ishbaal, will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

Ishbosheth was probably proclaimed king in Mahanaim, east of Jordan. According to Huffmon, Spina & Green (1983:51), "with the help of Abner, Ishbosheth's accession in the north had gone unchallenged, although the Philistine threat forced the new leader to govern from exile."

In agreement with Newsome (1982:95), "the account of David's acclamation as king by the elders of Judah at Hebron is followed almost immediately by a notice that survivors among Saul's family and his close supporters have taken measures to insure the continuation of Saul's dynasty in the north."

As a result, the war broke between David's followers and the supporters of Ishbosheth. For several years a rivalry existed between him and the charismatic, famous David. This war had created another problem for the northern tribes. Before this war broke out, they were only facing one problem - the pressure of the Philistines upon them. However, this war was an advantage for David because it helped weakening the northern tribes or the house of Saul.

This war between Saul's house and David drove them further apart. No wonder some years later the division was more apparent and real. David probably sensed this and made every effort not to widen this gap by not participating in the war himself. Because he "preferred to win his way by diplomacy" (Bright 1960:176). But, unexpectedly, Abner was murdered.

Abner's murder "must have raised questions about the king's responsibility" (Conroy 1983:96). The fact that it might have raised questions had future implications for the kingdom. Even though the outcome for the killing of Abner was much to his advantage, David did not jump and dance or rewarded Joab for the good work he had done. Instead, David ordered an "honourable burial for Abner, mourns his death and fasts till sunset as a sign of his non-involvement in the killing" (Conroy 1983:96). David's sincerity was really in question, especially when one compares this action with his last instruction to Solomon. How could he not have been involved and be unhappy about Abner's death?

It is said that, "when Ishbosheth heard the news of Abner's death his courage failed and all Israel was dismayed hardly seems to suggest that

Israel was eagerly seeking to switch allegiance to David” (Gunn 1978:72). This could be true, firstly, because Ishbosheth was a weak leader or king. This became apparent when he failed to take serious action against Abner when he slept with Saul’s concubines. Secondly, “more people undoubtedly began to realize his weakness and began to pin their hopes on David” (Bright 1960:176).

This shows that, although the Northern Kingdom was ruled by a son of Saul, Abner was the real power behind the throne. Had it not been so, the Northern Kingdom could have remained strong, even after Abner’s death, because they still had a king who could lead and protected them.

In David’s camp, probably, even though David himself “protests his innocence and lays the curse of blood-guild on Joab and his family and descendants” (Conroy 1983:96), there was excitement because, one of the obstacles that could have prevented their leader from being the king over the north, was removed. It seems that David’s closest officials knew about his plan and strategy to deal with those potential obstacles, and they started dealing with them according to their order.

For that reason, the first thing is that “Abner had to be eliminated so that Ishbosheth`s regime would collapse. If those things happened, David could let the Israelites choose him as their leader and then control or remove second level contenders like Mephibosheth, sons of concubines, grandsons and others who might prosper to his detriment in the more stable environment he would create” (Huffman et al 1983:52).

If the murder of Abner was the execution of David's plan to remove the obstacles on the way to become the king of all Israel, then his mourning over Abner's death was just an expression of his political wisdom or cunning in dealing with crucial situations, for the Israelites suspected that David was involved in Abner's murder. "Therefore, David's intense mourning over the death of Abner, even overdoing it, may have served to convince the Israelites that it had not been the king's will to slay Abner the son of Ner" (Robinson 1993:167). This action probably achieved its purpose temporarily, namely to alleviate suspicion.

However, it is doubtful whether with the treacherous killing of Ishbosheth, David was also successful even though he repeated the same action, especially since the murderers brought Ishbaal's head to him. It seems the murderers of Ishbaal have done what David had commissioned them to do. To show that they have been faithful in their mission, they must bring the head of Ishbosheth with them.

David's reaction to the news which was brought to him personally, by the murderers together with Ishbaal's head, is surprising. According to Conroy (1983:97), "David had no complicity in a murder which was objectively to his advantage." Probably, this is far from reality. For Ishbosheth was one of the serious obstacles on the way to the throne. At this point, it should have been clear to the Israelites that David was involved in the killing of Ishbosheth.

In agreement with Terazi (1991:58), "the deaths of Abner and Ishbaal were welcomed, if not instigated, by David. Yet in order to gain the support of

Ephraim/ Israel and Benjamin, he publicly denounced their deaths and expressed his sorrow.” The Israelites were afraid to express such a serious suspicion against David. However, later when David was running away from Absalom, they did so.

In fear for their lives that they may be next to face death, “the other tribes of Israel now left leaderless, sent delegates to David, whom they remembered as their beloved commander during the reign of Saul and anointed him king over all Israel” (Bruce 1963:29). This indicates that Saul’s dynasty at this point is doomed.

That the Israelites were left leaderless and Saul’s dynasty was doomed, do not necessarily mean that there was no one left to further the claims of the house of Saul. There were few who could have made that claim, but they were very weak. Later these prospective heirs were eliminated to avoid any unforeseen negative political consequences. They were eliminated, because as long as they were still alive, they were a political threat to David.

“We read in the sources that it was the elders of Judah and Israel who invited David to be king. It is fairly safe to conclude that the elders did this because they thought it was good for them” (Huffmon et al 1983:29). It was good for them because “the tribal confederacy was vulnerable to the political forces of the time as the Philistine menace made clear” (Anderson 1957:156).

In other words Israel’s confederacy was an ineffective organisation. It failed to cope adequately with the troubled situation in Canaan. It became increasingly apparent as political pressure mounted. Then, “the elders of the

northern tribes duly turned to David, the outlaw-hero-king of Judah” (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:150). Their hope was that, “David will save the people from the hand of the Philistines, enemies; and there in consultation with the elders and all the tribes of Israel anointed him king” (Gunn 1978:72).

They may have remembered what the Philistines did to them and surrendered to David for their own benefit. Bruggemann (1997:601) also comments that, “the conventional view offered in the text is that some in Israel wanted monarchy in response to a concrete danger, the acute military threat of the Philistines.” When David had conquered the Philistines, just after he became the king of Israel, this became a reality.

When the elders of the northern tribes turned to David, according to Ceresko (1992:150), “it is even possible that David had reached some kind of understanding with the tribal elders when they made him king, whereby his role within the tribal confederation and his rights and powers were strictly circumscribed and defined.” Probably the kind of understanding mentioned includes the principal features and operation of the older tribal structures, which was later ignored by Solomon. As a result, the kingdom was negatively affected and divided into two.

David himself acquired the crowns of the two territories on different occasions. While he was in Hebron he became king of Judah. The elders of Israel came to him seven years later and asked him to be the king over Israel as well. It is pointed out that, “it is not really a single political entity but the union of two originally distinct territories, Judah and Israel” (Walsh

1996:160). The reason seems to be that “David’s problem was to maintain the tribal unity of the old confederacy under the new nation-state” (Anderson 1957:177).

That David had a problem to maintain the tribal unity of the old confederacy under the new nation state, became more apparent when the Israelites attempted to liberate themselves. It seems that they did not want a permanent union. They tried to free themselves when they saw that it was no longer necessary to be part of the kingdom. The reason is that the Philistines, their chief political enemy was defeated and there was no one left to trouble them. During this time, “the people became more and more restive under the yoke of centralized power and longed for the independence they had enjoyed before Israel became a state” (Anderson 1957:183).

Their longing for independence indicates that the Israelites surrendered themselves to David, because it was good for them, as it has been mentioned earlier. “The same people who once came to David and said: See, we are thy bone and thy flesh, thou hast led us, thou shalt be our king, now said: We have no part in David; what is the shepherd’s son to us” (Barlow 1974:204).

The Israelites might have realised that the independence they wanted could not have been achieved by negotiations. Probably David would not have accepted that, since he was enjoying being a king over all Israel. The only way to achieve this goal was through rebellion. According to Bright (1960:189), “this rebellion, which was an attempt to withdraw northern Israel from its union with Judah under David, is a splendid illustration of the fragile nature of that union and a forerunner of its eventual dissolution.”

The things which David did that displeased the Israelites are not explicit. However, those things gave birth to an animosity between Judah and Israel. This animosity seems to be the background for Sheba's defiance against king David. In agreement with what Bright has mentioned above, Newsome (1982:123) comments that, "the fact that all the men of Israel withdrew from David is an indication that Sheba's revolt may be considered an early effort to accomplish the same schism which Jeroboam was later to achieve."

In other words, there was among the Israelites a feeling of dissatisfaction with David's regime. This started during his lifetime when he was driven into exile by his son, Absalom. The succeeding incidents clearly indicate that the Saul-party welcomed Absalom's rebellion. Firstly, "Mephibosheth rejoiced at David's misfortune and voiced his hope that the throne had been returned to the house of Saul" (Huffmon et al 1983:37).

Secondly, Shimei, son of Gera, hurled accusations at David for his treatment of the northern tribes. In these accusations David was accused of shedding innocent blood. "The blood that, according to the narrative itself, David has on his hands is that of Uriah the Hittite and of the fighting men of Israel who perished at Rabbath Ammon with Uriah" (Alter 1999:292).

Thirdly, Sheba, son of Bichri, expressed his displeasure with David by leading a revolt. However, "David survives these attempted coups, but by his own reckoning is unable to complete all of his domestic campaigns" (Knoppers 1993:67). And, "on seeing what happened to their leaders the Bichrites surrendered" (Robinson 1993:262).

It is mentioned that “it is clear from events during the reign of David that the Saulide faction seemed to have maintained a considerable power base in Benjamin. Shimei was apparently the leader of this faction and it is not unnatural to believe that this Solomon was trying to separate him from this power base, thus alleviating the possibility of unrest in the area” (Whitelam 1979:154).

There is an indication, from what has been said above, that the “political sympathy for Saul’s family was by no means dead” (Newsome 1982:120). Since this political sympathy was still present, it suffices to say that the Israelites continued to teach or influence their children to take a political stance against David’s regime. Probably Jeroboam was still young or was not yet born when the Israelites rebelled during David’s time. But when he grew up, he wanted to overthrow Solomon’s kingdom, because he was influenced to do so.

The negative attitude of the Israelites towards David’s regime suggests that “David imposed unity upon the Israelite tribes, but this unity was personal in nature and hence superficial” (Knoppers 1995:1). Therefore, according to him, it means that it was really not a single political entity but a union of the two originally distinct territories, as it has been mentioned above. Probably, this is the reason why later during the time of Rehoboam when this kingdom was divided the division was according to its territorial boundaries.

Since political sympathy for Saul’s family was by no means dead and since the Israelite tribes were not completely united, as it has been mentioned above, it was necessary for David to give “special instruction to remove

certain threats to his dynasty” (Rice 1990:18). This shows that the war for independence was not yet over and David sensed that.

In order to ensure that there is political stability in his kingdom, “David instructs Solomon on how he should treat three individuals whose actions have an impact on David’s career. Two are to be destroyed, one is to be rewarded. Joab, Shimei and Barzillai” (Walsh 1996:40).

David’s instruction to Solomon in the given quotation above, concerning Joab and Shimei probably indicates that Shimei was right when he accused David of killing innocent people. David did everything he could to convince the people like Shimei that he was not involved in the killing of Israelite leaders. However, the accusation itself shows that David had failed to remove the suspicion completely from the hearts of the Israelites.

It seems that David’s mourning for Abner and Ishbosheth was just an expression of political hypocrisy. The instruction mentioned above reveals this. Walsh (1996:38) agrees and mentions that “David also showed himself capable of bloody vendetta, as well as of profiting from political murder while his own hands remained clean. David’s bloodthirsty advice to Solomon shows that, as Shimei has said, his hands were stained with blood.”

The manner in which the potential threats should be removed, as David had suggested to Solomon, clearly shows that this only increased the dissatisfaction against David’s dynasty among the Israelites. Solomon wanted to crush opposition in the way David, his father had suggested, because even though Solomon was now king, “his throne was not secure.

The threat of the bloodguilt incurred by Joab and the curse of Shimei lurked over him. Also, Adonijah and his supporters were free to pursue their schemes and to exploit any opportunity to advance their cause” (Rice 1990:22). According to Brueggemann (1982:6), “Solomon has a sure sense of where the threats are. Joab is obviously more dangerous.” He was correct, probably because Joab was a military man or experienced soldier.

For that reason Solomon “prevented any division within the kingdom by quickly ordering the death of his rival Adonijah (1 Ki 2:19-25) and also of Joab who had supported Adonijah (1 Ki 2:28-35). Solomon also sent away the priest Abiathar who had approved of Adonijah’s appointment (1 Ki 2:26-27)” (Hinson 1990:96). Shimei also was removed at the order that David had given on his deathbed.

It is said that “in the deuteronomistic presentation, Solomon’s eradication of opposition is therefore essential to ending the state of near anarchy which attends David’s decline” (Knoppers 1993:67). It was essential because this “removal of Solomon’s opponents was not an act of arbitrary tyranny by a cruel despot but was authorized” (Conroy 1983:144). These actions were aimed to suppress any tension within the kingdom.

However, “the monarchy, therefore, never escaped tension. Neither David nor Solomon had, for all their brilliance, succeeded in solving its fundamental problem - essentially that of bridging the gap between tribal independence and the demands of central authority, between the amphictyonic tradition and the claims of the new order. On the contrary,

Solomon's oppressive policy widened that gap irremediably. Though Solomon faced no serious uprising, the problems that beset David in his old age had been repressed, not solved" (Bright 1960:207).

2.2 Immediate Context

Solomon's introduction of oppressive policy marks the beginning of the immediate context of the schism mentioned in 1 Kings 12:1-20. This text indicates that it was Rehoboam's refusal to abolish Solomon's oppressive policy that led the Israelites to revolt. The conditions were that "Solomon spent much of the money which he gained from trade in very large building schemes. He fortified a number of important cities and developed the part of Ezion-Geber, but his most important building projects were in Jerusalem. He imposed heavy taxes on his people to raise the money he needed" (Hinson 1990:97). Solomon did this because, "the state faced a chronic financial dilemma" (Bright 1960:199).

According to Ernest (1973:287), "David implemented an administrative policy that attempted to weaken the coalitions: the selection of Jerusalem as his capital city, the establishment of Levitical cities and probably the institution of administrative districts emphasizing the individual tribes rather than the coalitions." When Solomon came into power, he modified this policy. Ten southern tribes were exempted from supplying the kingdom with revenue and food.

It is stated that, "historians have argued convincingly that the real purpose behind this administrative reorganization was to centralize power in the crown by replacing the old tribal system with twelve fiscal districts, under

the supervision of royal appointees - two of them sons-in-law of Solomon. The boundaries of about half the tribal territories were deliberately changed. No move could have been better designed to destroy the last remnants of tribal independence. In this respect, Solomon abandoned the administrative policy of his father, David, who respected the tribal division and the tribal representatives” (Anderson 1957:194).

In view of what is said above, “the northern tribes are depicted in 1 Kings as being treated like little more - than colonial subjects by David’s son Solomon” (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:151). “It is no wonder, then, that the pent-up resentment of the people eventually exploded into revolution. The leader of the revolt was a man whom Solomon had appointed as an officer over one of the work gangs: a certain Jeroboam, son of Nebat from Ephraim, one of the northern tribes” (Anderson 1957:195). It is not surprising that later when the people gathered in Shechem they sent for Jeroboam to lead them in the negotiations with the king and ultimately they appointed him to be their king.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It has been mentioned earlier that the results from historical-critical methods will be incorporated into this study, and that cognisance will be taken of historical problems. Therefore, this chapter will specifically focus on those results from the historical-critical methods and the historical problems. By so doing, the doors for the diachronic inputs will not be closed and the historical context of our text will not be lost.

As far as the books of Kings are concerned, it is said that “these books, it will be recalled, form the conclusion of the Deuteronomic history which begins with Deuteronomy. As in the case of other periods covered by this work, the history of the monarchy is interpreted in terms of the fundamental theological conviction of the covenant faith: Yahweh acts to bring blessings to those who are obedient to him and judgment upon those who flout his revealed will” (Anderson 1957:232).

That the history of monarchy was interpreted in terms of theological convictions raises the questions whether this history of the monarchy or United Kingdom was a reality; or simply a Deuteronomist’s propaganda; or fiction. According to Boshoff, Scheffler & Spangenberg (2000:96), the “United Kingdom did not itself survive in history.” Their argument is based on the fact that the present biblical text was only edited long after many of the events it describes.

The basis for this argument itself raises the question of the reliability of the biblical text. The biblical text, however, may have preserved reliable historical information of the events that took place long before the time of their narration. Probably, oral as well as “written tradition was handed down from the 9th to 5th BCE, thus providing the author(s) of the book of Kings with reliable historical information on early Israel’s history” (Kofoed 2005:89).

It seems that, “the audience to whom 1-2 Kings is addressed knew well the ambiguities, enigma and contradictions of life. They had witnessed the fall of the Northern Kingdom, the great reform of king Josiah, the undoing of that reform, the crushing defeat of Judah by the Babylonians and exile” (Rice 1990:93). If this is correct, then, “the deuteronomic historian was primarily concerned to interpret the decline and the fall of the kingdoms to his contemporaries in exile” (Heaton 1968:69). In other words, the books of Kings were written to serve contemporary religious or sociopolitical interests. Probably, the Deuteronomist was also trying to make readers to understand the bad relationship between Judah and Israel, as the words “to this day” in (1 Kings 12:19) may suggest.

However, it should not be denied that there is no internal evidence as far as the recipients is concerned. It is argued that, “the book of Kings is not addressed to anyone in particular. It is reasonable to assume that those who were responsible for keeping these records were primarily concerned about providing an account of Israel’s history for future generation” (Tenney 1975:814).

Even though our pericope narrates the events which took place around 922 BCE, its position was determined by the editor of the book of Kings, probably during exile. Tenney (1975:812) suggests that “one or more of the prophets living between 600-500 BCE probably was responsible for the final edition of this book of Kings in its present form.”

That our pericope narrates the events that took place around 922 BCE and before, does not necessarily mean it is unreliable as a witness for the events which took place during that period. It is said that, “the Assyrian royal inscriptions and the Babylonian chronicle provide contemporary historical information that corroborates information in the books of Kings on a number of points” (Kofoed 2005:170). Kofoed further mentions as an example “the existence, sequence and approximate chronological period of Israelite or Judean kings from the mid-9th century onward.”

Therefore, it is not a matter of having evidence, but it is a matter of choice to uphold a skeptical stance toward uncorroborated information about the United Kingdom of Israel. “The late evidence of the biblical narratives,” especially about the United Kingdom, “should be considered reliable witness to the history of 11th and 10th century even when they cannot be corroborated by contemporary evidence” (Kofoed 2005:110). In other words, in order to avoid a biased interpretation of the biblical data, the extrabiblical evidence must be used cautiously.

CHAPTER 4

FORM, STRUCTURE, MOVEMENT

As far as the literary type or genre is concerned, 1 Kings 12:1-20 is a narrative. According to Rendtorff (1985:38), “the historical narrative in 1Kings 12:1-19 gives a vivid picture of events after the death of Solomon.” It narrates how the United Kingdom of Israel, which Knoppers (1993:1) says “David imposed,” came to an end.

This pericope forms part of the history of the monarchy in Israel, from the time of Saul until the time Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. This is very important to know in order to understand the theological meanings found in the books of Kings. Because, “the content of the Deuteronomistic history is the story of Israel’s emergence, success and ultimate failure as an independent political entity in the land of Canaan. It is a theological history” (Richter 2005:220).

This passage occurs immediately after the end of not only Solomon’s life, but also at the end of United Kingdom of Israel. The kingdom which Solomon was able to maintain, “but had to make concessions at the point where political forces were developing which were to shape the long-term future” (Herrmann 1975:176).

This pericope is put in the middle between the United and the Divided Kingdom of Israel. It would be correct to say that it was a transition from the United Kingdom to the independent state of both Israel and Judah.

From the literary point of view, it seems that Jeroboam was introduced in chapter 11 because of the important role he was going to play in the negotiations between Israelite leaders and Rehoboam at Shechem, and because of the responsibility he was going to accept, namely being the first king of the independent state of Israel. That Jeroboam should be a king, has been prophesied in 1 Kings 11, as our text tells us.

According to Long (1984:129), Jeroboam's "story is set as the last event laid out in this thematic context, surely as a kind of anticipation of Jeroboam's story to follow in chapter 12." He further mentions that "as a literary device of the author-editor, this regnal resume is clearly intended to close out the Solomonic era."

The introduction of Jeroboam's revolt against Solomon is a "crucial scene for the course of events in the days of Rehoboam" in which "Jeroboam's previous treachery assumes its full significance" (Talshir 1993:167). Taking what has just been said into consideration, then, it means that, "the author of 1 and 2 Kings" to which our pericope is part of, "was primarily interested in how the facts could be interpreted in terms of Yahweh's purpose for his people" (Heaton 1968:63).

In the larger literary context, 1 Kings 12:1-20 is part of the unit of chapter 11:1-12:24. The author explains that Solomon sinned against the Lord. As a result God brought punishment by raising the adversaries and ultimately the division of the kingdom of Israel.

However, in the nearer literary context, 1 Kings 12:1-20 is the fulfilment of the prophecy that was announced in 1 Kings 11, when Jeroboam was promised by the prophet Ahijah that God will give him the ten tribes of Israel. This sheds light on how Jeroboam became so popular and won the confidence of the northern tribes; finally they elected him as their king.

The narrative is primarily interested in the internal dissatisfaction of the people of Israel. This is a serious danger to the United Kingdom of Israel, which finally makes the difference. This pericope, indeed, serves as a transition from United to the Divided Kingdom of Israel.

When “the story opens in 1 Kings 12, we are told that Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, made a trip into northern territory to be installed as king of Israel, although he had already been recognized as king in Jerusalem” (Anderson 1957:234). To his surprise, the installation of him as the king of Israel depended on whether he would first meet certain conditions. Then he asked the Israelites to give him three days in order to think about that. Then after those few days, he reacted against their demands and as a result the northern tribes declared themselves independent.

This pericope is structured like this: Rehoboam met with the Israelites in Shechem, where the people requested him to lift the burden from them (1-5). Rehoboam consulted the advisers (6-11). Then he responded to the people of Israel (12-15). The people revolted and as a result the kingdom of Israel was divided (16-20). In chapter 5, more will be explained in detail.

As far as the form, structure and movement are concerned, there is no doubt that, “the skill of our author is outstanding. He planned his story with every care; he designed the plot so that it moves in smooth progression; he embroidered it with retrospects and carefully set the major scenes in literary structures; he connected various episodes with sensitivity and played with motifs, words and sounds. He has created a story which has inherent unity of content and form and analysis of its composition serves only to enhance appreciation of its impressive character” (Talshir 1993:180).

CHAPTER 5

DETAILED ANALYSIS

In 1 Kings 12:1 “the unit opens typically, bringing the characters together and briefly sketching the situation of possible conflicts” (Long 1984:134). We are told that Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, who had just succeeded his father on the throne, made a trip to Shechem to be installed as king of Israel. This happened, even though in Jerusalem, he was already recognised as king.

It is said that “Rehoboam, as already stated in 11:43, succeeded to his father’s throne, which presumably means that he was acclaimed king in Jerusalem. But his acclamation by the court there did not carry with it automatic recognition by the northern tribes, which are designated as all Israel in this verse. To regain recognition as king over the northern tribes, Rehoboam’s visit to Shechem was essential” (Jones 1984:249).

As the context suggests, it seems that Rehoboam did not go to Shechem on his own initiative but at the insistence of the Israelites. For that reason he would not decline their invitation, because he has not yet been confirmed as king of all Israel. Probably, “the hereditary rights of the Davidic dynasty were not yet established and the discontented northern tribes had now the opportunity of making their bargain with the new king” (Montgomery 1951:250).

In this verse, the words “all Israel” do not refer to the “larger unity that David had forged out of the remnants of Saul’s kingdom and his own tribe of Judah” (Anderson 1957:234), but refer to the northern tribes alone. Formerly, these northern tribes were part of Saul’s kingdom and were loyal to him.

The Israelites have chosen Shechem for the formal recognition of Rehoboam as their king. That the gathering took place at Shechem was in itself significant, because this place was rich in historical associations. In the Bible the most vivid account about Shechem is found in Judges 9 and in Joshua 24. Shechem was full of patriarchal significance and played an important role as a sanctuary. Therefore early Israel had revered it, as indicated in Joshua 8:30-35, Deuteronomy 27 and 1 Kings 12.

It was at Shechem that Abraham was given the promise of the land by God and also build altar for Him. Also Jacob’s first holding in Canaan was at Shechem. Above all, “in the twelfth century BCE Shechem and its temple compound had become the preeminent focus of Israelite religion and tribal identity” (Gilmour 2005:891).

Shechem was “situated at the foot of mount Gerizim in the heart of the modern city of Nablus, at the west end of a large crescent-shape valley” (Gilmour 2005:889). “From at least the beginning of the second millennium B.C., it was a great Canaanite city-state, strategically located in the narrow pass between mount Gerizim and mount Ebal” (Anderson 1957:126). As it was “standing at the end of the pass between mount Ebal and mount Gerizim, Shechem, Tell Balata, it was an important center in Israel’s

religion” (Jones 1984:249). It was also important because when something crucial was to be decided, the Israelites would gather here.

Since there was something important which was to be decided, namely to make Rehoboam king, the northern tribes gathered at this place. Their action demonstrates some kind of independence. “Rehoboam’s visit to Shechem confirms the semi-independent status enjoyed by the northern tribes even within the United Kingdom of David and Solomon” (Jones 1984:249). Walton, Matthews & Chavalas (2000:432) are of the opinion that the choice of Shechem for this political summit meeting suggests two things. Firstly, Rehoboam was in a weak political situation in comparison to David. Secondly, Rehoboam demonstrated a “lack of insight and administrative finesse.”

In verse 2, we are told of Jeroboam who had gone to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. Jeroboam was introduced as Jeroboam son of Nebat in this verse, perhaps because the author wanted to show the readers that this was the same Jeroboam who was introduced in 1 Kings 11. This was the man whose relationship with Solomon was good in the beginning, but at the end became bad.

The name Jeroboam which means ‘may the people be great’ is according to Heaton (1965:26), “perhaps, a throne name, deliberately chosen as a counterblast to that of his rival Rehoboam, which means ‘may the people expand.’”

According to 1 Kings 11:26, his mother was a widow. Rice (1990:91) is of

the opinion that “Nebat apparently died while Jeroboam was a youth, for his mother is further identified as a widow.” Jeroboam is from Zeredah. “Zeredah has been identified with a village south-west of Shechem” (Heaton 1965:26). “A site in the hill country of Ephraim between Ramah and Shiloh, which Jeroboam is said in the Greek version to have fortified” (Allen 1970:192). Since this village was in the hill country of Ephraim, it is correct to call Jeroboam an Ephraimite.

In agreement with Heaton (1965:26), Jeroboam was “a member of the most powerful of the northern tribes.” For example, Joshua, Moses’ successor was an Ephraimite. It was in their territory where the religious centre of Israel was during the era of Joshua and the Judges. A judge like Jephthah also came from this tribe. This may be reason that even though Jeroboam was a servant to Solomon, he could rebel against him.

Jeroboam was a man of standing. However, his standing does not refer to his personal characteristics, but *gibbor hayil*, according to Hebrew refers to his social standing because he was appointed or promoted as an officer over one of the work gangs. His promotion was a “rank which facilitated his treachery,” (Talshir 1993:195), for he took advantage of this and fortified Zeredah, his home town.

The reason for doing so, according to Talshir (1993:211), is that, “he should have a place to retreat,” and “his malicious intentions are conspicuous.” This may supply the content for lifting up his hand against king Solomon. In other words he sympathised with his own northern tribes who were included in forced labour and heavily taxed.

There is no doubt that, “the accumulation of the horses and chariots, as well as the building carried out at Zeredah form the background to the final condemnation, because his purpose is to overthrow the king” (Talshir 1993:168). Therefore, when Solomon learned about this, he wanted to kill him. To Solomon the rebellion was of sufficient importance to react by attempting to kill Jeroboam, who sought asylum with Shishak king of Egypt.

It is mentioned that, “towards the end of Solomon’s reign a change of regime took place in Egypt. The weak twenty-first dynasty, to which Solomon’s father-in-law belonged, came to an end. It was therefore to his interest to weaken Solomon’s power. This he did in particular by encouraging any movement for independence that showed itself among Solomon’s subject – people” (Bruce 1963:38).

In view of what is mentioned above, one can understand the reason why Egypt gave Jeroboam political protection or asylum. It seems that Egypt had “an interest in the territory ruled by Solomon” (Ernest 1973:285). For that reason “the death of Solomon gave Shishak the opportunity to plot the disruption of Solomon’s Empire on the old-age political principle of ‘divide and conquer.’ So he gladly released Jeroboam to lead the seditionist movement and began to prepare for the invasion of Palestine” (Ceresko 1992:237).

It is stated that when Jeroboam heard this news, he returned. However, it is not clear which news the author is specifically referring to. It might have been the news about Solomon’s death or about the meeting which was to take place between Rehoboam and Israelite leaders. According to Jones

(1984:249), “the present context of the verse refers the phrase ‘heard of it’ to Rehoboam’s acclamation at Shechem; but if taken from its context and read as an independent report with v.20 and possibly v.25, the reference must be to Solomon’s death (11:43), for it was because of him that Jeroboam had fled to Egypt (11:40).”

However, both seem to be the reasons which made Jeroboam to return from Egypt. It should not be forgotten that , forcing Jeroboam into exile was not a real solution. Because, “the underlying causes of discontent were not removed” (Bright 1960:208).

Verse 3 seems to indicate that there was a meeting between the northern tribes and Jeroboam, before they went to meet Rehoboam in Shechem. It appears that Jeroboam “had been summoned by the northern tribes, who somehow had learned of Ahijah’s anointing and Solomon’s revenge. He was now received by them as their champion to lead in their negotiations” (Wood 1970:303).

The gathering of a representative or intertribal council was in itself very important, because it testifies to a reassertion of power by traditional leaders and institutions following Solomon’s death. The nature of this meeting shows that the northern tribes were discontent. It also shows that Solomon has been neglecting to redress the legitimate tribal grievances for a long time.

For this reason the northern tribes went to Rehoboam and said to him: “your father put a heavy yoke on us” and they asked him to lighten the harsh

labour and the heavy yoke his father had put on them. Consequently, they promised to serve him. The northern tribes were expressing how they perceived Solomon's rule. According to them it was a heavy and oppressive yoke. The burden of forced and heavy taxation, were particularly the sources of their grievances.

Under the rule of David there was a, “shift from older order in which an egalitarian ideal had been the principal and determinative factor in policy and decision making. The newly established ruling elite of the state apparatus reserved that policy and decision-making to themselves. Under Solomon this power was used to ensure an extravagant and privileged lifestyle for them. The rest suffered under the burden of taxes and enforced labor imposed by Solomon” (Ceresko 1992:151).

The rest who suffered were the northern tribes, because the taxes and conscription labour were demanded of them. But the “southern tribes were exempted from the major burden of supplying the kingdom with revenue and food and thus allowed the always present tribal antagonism to reassert themselves” (Knoppers 1993:219). The reason that they had no complaint against Rehoboam was because the tyrannical policy of Solomon had fallen upon the northern tribes only.

It is said, “in the book of Kings the assembly in Shechem is not portrayed as a revolt. The people had no intentions other than to accept Rehoboam as their king” (Talshir 1993:225). However, the condition on which they based their loyalty to Rehoboam, indicate that they had other intentions.

If indeed they had no other intentions, they should have just acclaimed Rehoboam, Solomon's son, as their king unconditionally. But they expected the redress from Solomon's heir, Rehoboam before they would recognise him as king. According to Allen (1970:194), their words which say "we will serve you, was a commitment. There is no reason to doubt the good faith of the tribe who had indeed borne a heavy yoke of taxation and forced labor under Solomon."

However, it appears that the northern tribes were more eager to see taxes reduced and life made easy for them, than they were prepared to accept Solomon's son as king. They demanded that a change must take place in the government. They seriously demanded that forced labor and heavy taxation be lightened, but not removed. However, the annoying presence of Jeroboam hints at the possibility of disaster to come. Probably Rehoboam sensed this and delayed his decision for three days to give himself time for the consultation, for he saw it was necessary for him to seek advice on this matter.

In verses 6-11, it is indicated that two different groups of advisers, old men and young men were consulted by Rehoboam. He consulted them separately in order to compare their advice. Because, "seeking royal counsel involved weighing the recommendations of one advisor against those of another" (Polzin 1993:178).

The two groups which Rehoboam had consulted have given him different answers to the Israelites' demands. "The older counselors sensibly proposed

a mild reply to the Israelites' demands, but the younger ones urged a policy of arrogant severity" (Conroy 1983:168).

The old men's advice in verse 7, seem to support the northern tribes' demand. And this advice did not please Rehoboam. According to Walsh (1996:162), the old men's "recommendation is to dissemble." And "if Rehoboam pretends to appease the Israelites now, they will make him king."

Verse 8, however, indicates that Rehoboam rejected the counsel which the old men gave him, without offering any reason for doing so. He also made that decision even before he consulted the young men who were serving as his advisers. This young men advised Rehoboam to respond harshly. The whips which the young men mentioned, according to Jones (1983:252) were "used to drive slaves and to punish them" and "were now to be replaced by scorpions," which "were instruments of punishment."

Without doubt the old men whose advice was rejected, were members of the council that had been active in Solomon's time. But in what sense were these men old? Were they old in terms of long term service? It is said that the term "old men" may "connote the wisdom that comes with age and experience" and "in this case it probably means both, since those people belong to the previous generation of royal advisors" (Walsh 1996:162). The young men, however, refer to those who were taken into service by Rehoboam and had no experience.

We are told in verse 12 that the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said. These words seem to stress the point that there was still

cooperation between Rehoboam and the Israelites, when the assembly reconvened at Shechem, for in verse 5, the king told them to return after three days and the people did so exactly after those three days. The cooperation which Rehoboam received seem to indicate that, “the people were prepared to accept Solomon’s son Rehoboam as king if he would return to the terms of the ancient covenant which his father’s oppressive measures had violated” (Bruce 1963:39).

In verse 13, however, we are told that Rehoboam answered the people harshly. “The impression we get is that Rehoboam thinks of the Israelites as subjects complaining to their king, not as independent agents who have not yet given him their allegiance” (Walsh 1996:163). This verse does not only indicate that Rehoboam answered people harshly, but he also dismissed the advice of his moderate counsellors, the old men. “For unknown reason, Rehoboam, rejecting the counsel of his older advisors and accepting that of his young advisors, increased the burden on the northern tribes” (Ernest 1973:293).

In other words, as verse 14 indicates, he refused to give the Israelites the satisfaction which they requested or to promise an alleviation of the burden which Solomon, his father, had placed upon them. According to Lasine (2001:159), “Rehoboam is portrayed as imitating Solomon’s desires, explicitly outdoing his father in tyrannical traits such as taxation, forced labor and coercion, the very traits that are muted in the Solomon narrative itself.” As a result, Rehoboam’s acceptance of the young men’s advice prompted the northern tribes to react vigorously.

The author in verse 15, tells us that Rehoboam's refusal to listen to the Israelites is actually part of God's plan, so that what Ahijah, the Shilonite, had spoken to Jeroboam would be fulfilled. "Through the use of this prophecy/ fulfillment schema the Deuteronomist reaffirms the legitimacy of Jeroboam's ascent to power" (Von Rad 1966:208). It appears in Ahijah's prophecy that the personal transgressions of Solomon, David's son, is blamed for the division of Israel's kingdom.

In view of what is mentioned above, "it is clear that the oppressive measures of Solomon were primarily responsible for it. But a desire on the part of some to reactivate the amphictyonic tradition was also involved, as the role played by certain prophets indicate. It will be recalled that one of them, Ahijah, had in the name of Jahweh designated Jeroboam king of Israel and thus encouraged him to strike" (Bright 1960:211).

The story of Ahijah and Jeroboam is extensively told in 1 Kings 11:29-39, to which verse 15 makes the direct link. In 1 Kings 11:29 we are told that Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem. The reason why he went out of Jerusalem is not mentioned, but his secret meeting with Ahijah is a possibility, because they shared the same sentiments. Both of them were against Solomon. Also both were coming from the north and their villages were not far from each other.

Their meeting seems not to be an accident, but a planned one. This is "an encounter between Ahijah the prophet and Jeroboam, in which he performs a symbolic action and delivers its explanatory oracle to Jeroboam, even

though much of the oracle's content has to do with Solomon" (Long 1984:128).

In this meeting the discussions was about politics. The prophet encouraged Jeroboam to lead the liberation struggle and he assured him that God was behind him. In other words, the founding of the new kingdom was sanctioned by God.

Ahijah made Jeroboam aware that he is supposed to be an active participant in God's drama, which Jeroboam did not realise. Knoppers (1988:107) has pointed out that "as presented in 1 Kings 11, Jeroboam is one of the deity's instruments to bring about chastisement on the Davidic dynasty."

In their discussion it is indicated that Solomon should lose part of the kingdom and of course the bigger part, but he should not to lose the whole kingdom completely. "It is important to notice that the prophet Ahijah, from the former confederate center of Shiloh, was a chief conspirator in this plot. His prophecy that Yahweh was about to tear the ten northern tribes from Solomon and give them to Jeroboam (1 Ki 11:29-39) poured fuel upon the fires of rebellion" (Anderson 1957:235).

In agreement, "perhaps it is better to say that the appearance and utterance of the prophets evokes a crisis circumstance where none had been perceived previously. That is, the prophets not only respond to crisis, but by their abrupt utterance, they generate crisis" (Brueggemann 1997:624). The prophets respond to crises when they speak against social injustices, immoral behaviour and so on. But they generate crises when they encourage

the people to fight. It was not expected that a prophet should plot secretly against those who are involved in wrong actions, but to denounce those actions publicly.

In 1 Kings 11, as verse 15 of chapter 12 indicates, the division is attributed to theological reasons. However, the disruption of the kingdom is attributed in chapter 12 to political and social reasons. The Ahijah episode introduces a religious factor by attempting to show the influence of God's word on the event. It seems the Deuteronomist's concept expressed in this verse is that the establishment of an Israelite dynasty under Jeroboam is an affliction or punishment on the house of David.

Ahijah, however, says for the sake of David, God will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand. This happens because "David's obedience is held up as the example Solomon and eventually Jeroboam (11:38) must follow if they are to obtain the conditional promises Yahweh makes to them. Yahweh cites David as his reason for mitigating Solomon's punishment; on one occasion that reason is specifically David's obedience (11:34)" (Walsh 1996:156).

In other words, Ahijah had simply offered a promise of kingship to Jeroboam on the condition that he will be obedient to God. Jeroboam was expected not to repeat the mistakes of Solomon. Since David was the model of a faithful king, Jeroboam will do himself a favour if he would follow such a model.

As it is shown in 1 Kings 11, Jeroboam's dynasty would have been built if he did whatever he was commanded to do, because this was the main reason why David's dynasty stood. According to Allen (1970:193), "Ahijah maintained the covenantal ideals of the old tribal confederacy, as Samuel had with Saul, making the continuance of Jeroboam's dynasty conditional on his obedience to Yahweh." He further mentions that "the political role of the prophet was directly connected to the covenant relation with Yahweh. If the reigning king had violated this covenant, the prophet did not hesitate to stir a rebellion against him."

Taking into consideration what is mentioned above, the implication is that Jeroboam was caused to rebel against Solomon by prophet Ahijah. Bruce (1963:39) says that "the prophetic party, which was opposed to the innovating trends of Solomon's policy, marked out this Jeroboam as one to whom the national loyalty could be diverted; and the suggestion was sown in Jeroboam's mind by the acted prophecy of one of their number, Ahijah of Shiloh." This prophecy, the author tells us, was fulfilled during the time of Rehoboam.

It seems, in verse 15, that the author is of opinion that Rehoboam should not be blamed for the stance that he took. It seems also that Rehoboam could not have acted or answered otherwise, because for doing so would have been contrary to God's will, for the time had come that Ahijah's prophecy should be fulfilled. Therefore, the author "intends to show that these things did not happen by chance rather, God was at work in the tragic career of Israel from the breakup of the Davidic kingdom and on" (Anderson 1957:233).

The possibility exists that what the author has said in verse 15, may have been the expression of the views that he or some people had on Rehoboam's response and the people's reaction. Their actions are interpreted as God's will. However, when one reads the story without verse 15, it is clear more especially in verse 16 that the northern tribes were reacting against the harsh economic policy which Rehoboam refused to change. The people reacted because they were tired of the burdensome taxation and forced labour. Therefore, their reaction closed the negotiations. It is correct to mention that "there were good reasons for Israel having refused to endure the rule of the Judean king (Rehoboam)" (Williamson 1977:98).

It is correctly pointed out that "the Israelite reply, containing the decision to separate from the house of David, is a repetition of words spoken in David's own lifetime by Seba (2 Sam 20:1), although there are some variations in detail. Despite the voluntary acceptance of David by northern tribes, with the assertion that they considered themselves to be his flesh and blood (2 Sam 5:1), there grew among them a dissatisfaction with the David regime even during David's lifetime" (Jones 1984:252).

The Israelites answered the king by asking what share or portion they have in David. Their answer to Rehoboam was in the form of question. However, their answer's implication was that the northern tribes felt that they had no inheritance in David's territory. And they also felt that they did not belong to the family of David.

Also, in the same verse they said "to your tents, o Israel! Look after your own house, o David!" This is a political statement of the northern tribes that

carries a decision to cut off the relations with the house of David, and that Rehoboam should only care for the southern tribes, since the other tribes have decided to break away.

It is said that “in view of 2 Samuel 5:3, it would be historically more appropriate to speak of a failure to renew the treaty between the northern tribes and the representatives of the David dynasty” (Rendtorff 1985:38-39). Polley (1989:53) also is of opinion that “this was really not a division of the United Kingdom, but a refusal of the northern tribes to renew their union with Solomon’s successor.”

What is mentioned above by Rendtorff and Polley represents the skeptical stance some scholars have taken against the view that the United Kingdom of Israel had existed in reality. It seems to them that “the Bible is a witness to the United Kingdom in a later time when no United Kingdom existed in reality” (Boshoff, Scheffler & Spangenberg 2000:95). Their use of the words treaty and union instead of United Kingdom are very weak to convince us that the United Kingdom of Israel had never existed in reality. If it was just only treaty or union, it would mean that Israel and Judah had separate kings and ruled independently during the time of David and Solomon. Since it was not so, the United Kingdom of Israel probably could have existed.

The researcher is of the opinion that “the texts of the Hebrew Bible have preserved reliable historical information of the events that took place centuries before the time of their narration” (Kofod 2005:58). However, having said that the United Kingdom of Israel existed in reality does not mean that all the people in that kingdom had the same concept of God, or

agreed on how the kingdom should conduct its affairs and so on. As a political unit however, the United Kingdom of Israel existed under one king at a given time in history from time of David until during the time of Rehoboam, when this kingdom was divided.

It is an undeniable fact that the present biblical text was only finally edited long after many of the events it describes. However, that should not make us think that what the author of the books of Kings has written is not reality or just fiction. The researcher concurs with Kofoed (2005:189) that “the information given in the books of Kings irrespective of when they were written or edited, the author based his account on reliable sources.” For that reason, there was a time in history when the people of the north and the south were really united under one leader or a king. And that was a United Kingdom of Israel.

In verse 17 the author points out that a number of the Israelites, who were already living in Judah, continued to be ruled by Rehoboam, even after the division of the kingdom. Probably, these people were also exempted from paying heavy taxes, which the northern tribes were complaining about. Thus they accepted Rehoboam’s kingship and remained there, because they benefited when Judah was exempted from paying tax.

It is mentioned above that Rehoboam thought of the Israelites as subjects complaining to their king; therefore he treated their complaint as a simple demand and did not seem to realise that the kingdom’s survival hangs in the balance.

The Israelites then took the decision which made Rehoboam see that they were serious. When Rehoboam saw that they were serious, “in a clumsy effort to save the situation,” he “sends Adoram, the head of forced labor, perhaps to explain more fully the terms of forced labor and possibly to offer some concession” (Rice 1990:100). But all Israel stoned him to death.

When Rehoboam realised that his life also was in danger, he managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. “He had good cause to seek the safety of Jerusalem, for when he tried to assert his authority over the rebel tribes by sending the officer in charge of the corvee to the delegates, they showed what they thought of him and his royal master by stoning him to death” (Bruce 1963:39).

Allen (1970:195) comments that “Adoram, according to several versions, should read Adoniram, with whom this taskmaster is to be identified (1 Kings 4:6). If he is the same as David’s head of forced labor, he has been serving about half a century (2 Sam 20:24).” In contrast with what has just been said, Jones (1984:254) argues that “it is possible, but not very likely, that the same person had held the post from its institution at the end of David’s reign; but Adoram would at this stage be a very old man.”

However, the possibility does not exist that Adoram was the same person who served under David. If that is correct, then it means that this post was held during the time of Rehoboam, by someone whose name was the same as that of Adoniram who served during the time of David.

The author comments in verse 19 that Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. To this day seems to suggest that “the focus of the narrative was not on fictional auditorium of the narrated time but on the addressees of the time of narration” (Otto 2004:20). It seems that, at the time this comment was made, the relation between Israel and the house of David was that of enmity. Probably this comment was made during the period between 600-500 BCE.

According to the Deuteronomist who wrote about this, the bad relations between Israel and Judah started even before the time of Rehoboam. It is said “in the period of the Judges, according to the books of Joshua and Judges, the southern tribes did not join the northern tribes in battle against non - Israel. Whether this was a result of a conflict or a consequence of logistical difficulties is not known; perhaps the lack of cooperation resulted from both. The hostility between the two tribal groups continued through the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon. Tribal tensions eventually brought about the dissolution of the kingdom in a civil war between the southern and the northern tribes” (Ernest 1973:277).

According to Otto (2004:22), what is mentioned above is a clear indication that the Deuteronomist’s “main concern was a fiction of the narrated time, into which he wove some signals of transparency for the time of narration.” Therefore, his political and theological intentions should only be “understood in terms of a later exilic (586-539 BCE) or even post-exilic (after 539 BCE) context” (Boshoff et al 2000:94).

In verse 20, we are told that the Israelites sent and called Jeroboam to the assembly and made him king over all Israel, after he returned. Where did he return from? In verses 2-3 and 12 we read that after he returned from Egypt, he has been part of the negotiations at Shechem. It seems that there are contradictions between verse 20 and verses 2-3.

It is said that ‘we can read the verse quite satisfactorily in the present context. When all Israel (that is, the populace as a whole, not simply the representatives who participated in the assembly at Shechem) heard that Jeroboam had returned (from the assembly at Shechem), they sent and called him to a (different) convocation, where they made him king over all Israel” (Walsh 1996:167).

However, when we analyse the present context of this verse properly, the suggested way of reading mentioned above is not satisfactory. The reaction of the northern tribes against Rehoboam and the stoning of his officer created the situation that required military intervention.

Probably Jeroboam went to Egypt to brief Shishak about the development in Israel, and also to discuss how Egypt could help in terms of military intervention if Rehoboam would attack Israel. Afterwards he returned, and when all the Israelites heard about this they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. According to Mangan (1982:94), “the traditions of the desert and the Exodus were stronger in the north so when a leader emerged ‘out of Egypt’ (1 Kings 11:40) they preferred him to a son of the house of David.”

The author also tells us that “only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the house of David” (1 Kings 12:20). The Deuteronomist links Rehoboam and the remaining part of the kingdom with the Davidic promises, for “David is made a vehicle and carrier of Yahweh’s unqualified grace in Israel” (Brueggemann 1997:605).

CHAPTER 6

SYNTHESIS

In this pericope it seems that the author intended to continue to tell the story of Jeroboam, one of Solomon's officials from the beginning to the end. In chapter 11, he narrates the story of this man and how he turned against Solomon, his master. It is in this very chapter where "he is introduced, as it were and given a sort of divine character, presaging what is to come in chapter 12, where he will become active against Solomon" (Long 1984:132).

As he continues narrating in chapter 12, he also introduces Rehoboam, Solomon's son, meeting with the Israelites in the north. Before they could acclaim him king over them, they asked him to end the oppressive policy of his father Solomon. When he refused to do so because he wanted to please his friends, the northern tribes took a decision to separate themselves from the Davidic dynasty. And as a result Jeroboam was elected to be their king. However, the story ends by saying that the people in the south remained loyal to the house of David.

CHAPTER 7

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In this narrative, we learn about some theological reflections. It is an undeniable fact that, “the book of Kings is a narrative about the past.” And “it is not only a narrative about the past, but also a narrative which seeks to teach its readers a number of things about God and God’s ways” (Provan 1997:83). For that reason, this pericope or text should be allowed to speak to us.

In 1 Kings 12:15, we are told that what happened is the will of God. Here “what happened” refers to Rehoboam’s harsh response and the northern tribes’ reaction against him. It seems “a basic concern of the author-editor of 1-2 Kings is to affirm God’s sovereign control and purpose in the midst of the turbulence of history” (Rice 1990:93). Because of that basic concern, the author-editor manipulated theology in order to justify rebellion and to overshadow the possibility that Rehoboam could have done something to prevent the division of the kingdom of Israel.

It is mentioned that “these books, it will be recalled, form the conclusion of the Deuteronomistic history which begins with Deuteronomy. As in the case of other periods covered by this work, the history of the monarchy is interpreted in terms of the fundamental theological conviction of the covenant faith: Yahweh acts to bring blessing to those who are obedient to him and judgment upon those who flout his revealed will” (Anderson 1957:232).

The Deuteronomistic assertion is that the division of the kingdom is purely the means whereby God effects prophecy. In other words, for the Deuteronomist, “once He (JHWH) has spoken, His word always and invariably achieves its purpose in history by virtue of its own inherent power” (Von Rad 1966:208). However, it should be understood that, the same God who sent the prophets to prophesy, has also given the people the right to choose. To be in favour of the prophecy/ fulfilment model only, would mean that God has caused Rehoboam to act the way he acted.

It is an undeniable fact that God can direct events and accomplishes His purpose; however, extremes must be avoided at all cost. The concept that once God has spoken always there must be a fulfilment is one of the extremes that need to be avoided. The nature of prophecy, whether it is conditional or unconditional, and the character or the nature of God should be taken into consideration in order to strike a balance.

God is the God of love, mercy and unity. If indeed, as it is mentioned above that He brings blessings to those who are obedient to Him and judgment upon those who flout His revealed will, then, in Rehoboam’s case there is no sin mentioned which he supposedly had committed. Therefore he deserved no punishment.

It is not surprising that God gave him an opportunity first. This opportunity has to do with correcting the wrongs of the past. Probably God understood that it was not Rehoboam who introduced forced labour and burdensome taxation, but it was his father, Solomon. Rehoboam had only inherited that oppressive government.

The opportunity which has been mentioned above was not given to Rehoboam through explicit means, like prophecy. The northern tribes' request to Rehoboam seems to be the opportunity which God has given to him in order to correct the wrongs of the past. However, it required his ability to analyse the situation or that request properly in order to see this opportunity, since it was implicit.

Sometimes, to leaders like Rehoboam, these kinds of requests may be very irritating, but they serve a good purpose. If the leaders could stop using force or being harsh to the people who are protesting, they would turn what seems to be a threat to become an advantage, and they would be able to succeed in their leadership. The secession of the northern tribes shows that the use of power cannot always achieve the purpose. Rehoboam thought the people would be afraid and accept what he said, but the outcome became very different, even negative.

To leaders like Rehoboam, political, religious and so forth, who inherited oppressive governments, God will probably sometimes if not always give them an opportunity to change some policies or laws which are not compatible with his will. In other words, the leaders should learn to listen to the legitimate concerns of the people. They should also learn how to deal with the adversaries which their predecessors caused by introducing oppressive policies. Failure to do so will only result in the division of their governments.

It is God's will that people should remain united under, not oppressive, but peaceful government. For that reason, leaders should take responsibility to

correct the wrongs or redress the imbalances of the past, in order to save the flickering unity in their governments. They should not destroy that unity by continuing the wrongs of the past.

It appears that the northern tribes were ready to accept Rehoboam as their king. That readiness to accept Rehoboam as their king, indicates that God has already prepared them to keep the kingdom united. Had God not done that, the Israelites probably would have just done what Sheba did during the time of David. During this time the northern tribes took a decision to separate themselves from the house of David without trying to negotiate with David about their grievances first.

It seems that Rehoboam had been deceived by the fact that he had a full support of the southern tribes, the minority tribes within the kingdom of Israel. However, retaining the minority support at the expense of the majority had a negative impact on the United Kingdom of Israel. Since God is the God of unity, He gave Rehoboam an opportunity to correct the wrongs of the past, in order to keep southern and northern tribes united. Therefore, it is necessary that leaders should remove or abolish oppressive policies for the sake of unity.

The author's conclusion, it seems, is that there was nothing that Rehoboam could do, since what happened was God's will. However, Ahijah's prophecy was conditional. Had Rehoboam used the opportunity which God gave him, the kingdom would not have been divided into two. Leaders or the people in general should not blame God or circumstances for every failure they experience in life. But they should learn some introspection and make use of

the opportunities which God provides in order to succeed in keeping the people united.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY

There are a number of objectives which this thesis or research intends to accomplish. Firstly, this research intends to show that there existed a relationship between the division of the kingdom of Israel during the Davidic-Solomonic era. There were specific events which took place during the time of David and Solomon which had driven the northern tribes further away from the Davidic dynasty.

These specific events were the death of Abner, Ishbosheth, Sheba son of Bichri, Adonijah, Joab, Shimei and ultimately Solomon's oppressive policy. The death of the first two, Abner and Ishbosheth raised serious questions about king David's involvement, and this had future implications for the United Kingdom of Israel. With the introduction of the oppressive policy by Solomon, the existing gap between the northern tribes and the Davidic dynasty was widened to the extent that it became irremediable.

Secondly, this research intends to indicate how this relationship was the real context of the division of the kingdom of Israel. The specific events which are mentioned above caused the northern tribes to be politically sympathetic to Saul's family, and as a result they exhibited a negative attitude against the Davidic dynasty. The political sympathy and the negative attitude of the northern tribes made it possible for the kingdom of Israel to divide into two during the time of Rehoboam.

Thirdly, this research intends to show the reason for the author to provide the theological context for the division of Israel's kingdom. The author did this because he was interpreting the history of the monarchy in terms of the fundamental theological conviction of the covenant faith. According to this covenant faith, God acts to bring blessings to those who are obedient to Him and judgment to those who are disobedient to Him. Therefore, according to the Deuteronomist, Solomon's sin was the main causative factor for the division of the kingdom of Israel. This sin had to do with marrying the foreign women and getting involved in worshipping foreign gods, even when he knew that this was against God's law.

Fourthly, the research intends to show that there is a relationship between the past and the present. The selected events mentioned above, probably have caused the kingdom of Israel to divide, but their effect depended on how Rehoboam had exercised his right to choose. A proper analysis of our text, 1 Kings 12:1-20, shows that Rehoboam was presented with an opportunity to correct the wrongs of the past in order to avoid the division of the kingdom of Israel.

However, as the research had demonstrated, the author overlooked this right in favour of pursuing his theological intentions. These theological intentions imply that Rehoboam could not have corrected the wrongs of the past even if he desired to do so. According to the Deuteronomist it was God's will that the kingdom of Israel should be divided. This is the author's theological interpretation of the wrong choice of Rehoboam that resulted in the division of the kingdom of Israel.

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