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The Division of the Kingdom: Its Causes and Consequences

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INTRODUCTION:

The division of the kingdom (I Kings 12:1 – 19) is a very significant event in the history of Israel. Through the biblical narrative pins from the cause for the division of the kingdom to an event in particular (I Kings 12:16), an attempt in this paper has been made to trace through the monarchic history in identifying the factors culminating to the division of the kingdom and thereby also to note the consequences the divided kingdoms were prone to consequent to the division.

While at this task, it is to be reckoned that the text itself poses many problems and raises various issues, such as the questions of, at what time did Jeroboam return from his exile in Egypt? Was it immediately after the death of Solomon; or was it not until he heard that all Israel had already gathered in Shechem to make Rehoboam King? (I Kings 12:2)[1] Whether Jeroboam was actually involved in the meeting at the Shechem Parliament between Rehoboam and the northern tribes when the tribes broke away from the Judahite rule.[2] (cf I Kings 12:2; 3a; 12 and 20). Was the kingdom in two halves ruled by one king or did it divide into two in Rehoboam's time (I Kings 11:11 – 13). The question of different terminology[3] עם I Kings 12:3; עד ה V.12 ; and קהל V.20. Who the 'young men' (I Kings 12:8) were and their role in the institution of monarchy.[4] Still further from the comparison of the text with its parallel in II Chrn. 10: 1 – 9 and with the LXX's two different versions (A) 3 Reign 11: 26 – 12:24 and B 12:24a – 24z, poses the question of how one could account for the contradictions. This issue further opens to inquiry into whether the LXX accounts and especially the 'B' account a history or Midrash.[5]

Each issue further raises many more problems of which scholars have grappled with whose results stand contradicting each other. And it is not my present concern to argue for or against of the various views held by different scholars regarding the multiple issues by way of textual criticisms but venture into the historical problems of, 'The division of the kingdom: Its causes and consequences.'

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1. Sources:[6]

The following literary sources are available for reconstructing the period immediately after the death of King Solomon a) an historical work about the dissolution of the personal union between Judah and Israel (I Kings 12: 1 – 19); b) individual prophetic legends revised by the Deuteronomist (I Kings 11:29 – 40; 12:21 – 24; 14:1 – 18); c) and extracts from the annals of the kings of Israel and Judah (I Kings 12:25 – 31; 14:21 – 31).

Gooding[7] says that there are three versions of Jeroboam's rise to power, which is the event of the division.

a) The extreme whitewashing version of LXX- A.

b) The extreme viliying version of LXX-B (argued against by)[8]

c) And standing some where between these two extremes, the moderate version of the MT.

He holds that these versions, not three independent historical courses, and not even three more or less independent textual traditions in the strict sense of that form but rather the original story plus two Rabbinic, homiletic variations on it.

2. Biblical narrative

After David's forty-year reign ca. 962-922 (I Chrn. 29:27), Solomon too ruled Israel for forty-years (II Chrn. 9:30) and was then succeeded by his son Rehoboam. But within days, the kingdom had divided apart. I Kings 12:1-19 records the event.

3. Kingdom or Kingdoms

It has been widely held, since Aldrecht. Alt[9] argued the position David and Solomon, unlike Saul, ruled not a single united realm, but a twin kingdom, in other words, Israel and Judah were quite separate political entities, united only in the fact that each acknowledged the same man as king. If, therefore, the two kingdoms should ever decide to offer allegiance to two different men, very few links would need to be broken, Israel and Judah would quite naturally fall apart.

Since, the monarchy was a dual one, an union of Israel and Judah in the person of the king. John Bright says that it was necessary for Rehoboam to journey Schechem to be acclaimed king of Israel by the representatives of the northern tribes and when "he insolently rejected the demands' whereupon Israel's representatives angrily announced their secession from the state. Rehoboam's chief of Corvee, whom he sent presumably to whip the rebels into line, was lynched, and Rehoboam himself fled ignominiously."[10]

Donner suggests that the outcome of the events "cannot be described properly with the usual term 'Division of the kingdom'. Actually it involved not the division of an inherently unified national structure but the non-renewal of a personal union between Judah and Israel and the restoration and solidification of the duality of south and north, which this personal union had temporarily overcome but had not dissolved.[11]

The identity of the person who would occupy the throne presented no difficulties. The right man had been available for along time in the person of Jeroboam the Ephraimite, who had served as territorial officer under Solomon in charge of the forced labour of the 'house of

Joseph' (I Kings 11:28). Yahweh according to I Kings 11:29-40 had already designated Jeroboam king over Israel during Solomon's life time. "This might be a projection of latter events back to an earlier time. At any rate, Jeroboam had been forced to flee to Egypt for reasons which are not entirely clear and had been granted political asylum by Pharaoh Shosheno I (the biblical Shishak) of the Twenty-Second Libyan Dynasty."[12] He returned after Solomon's death as indicated in the introduction, whether before or after the events at Shechem is an issue to be dealt separately (and not in the preview of this paper), nevertheless he was made king over Israel by acclamation of the representatives of the northern tribes (I Kings 12:20).

I. Northern Israelite Understanding of Kingship

a. *Covenant act:*

Malamat[13] vividly explains the northern understanding of the fundamentals of kingship. He says the northern tribes have only attached themselves to the House of David by a covenantal act (II Sam. 5:1-3). He points out that though the northern delegation had come to Hebron to finalize the treaty with David, Rehoboam on the contrary goes to Shechem to the center of the northern tribal confederation indicating that in either case covenantal agreement was a condition between the southern king and the northern subjects. But the slogan in I Kings 12:16 'To your tents O Israel:' is a cry of dissolution of the seembly and thereby an outright nullification of the treaty consequent upon the Rehoboam's rejection of the northern plea.

b. *Speaking Good Words:*[14]

Secondly Naor's findings are explained by Malamat of Abner's negotiations with David as prerequisite to concluding the covenant with the northern tribes, the latter (David) is urged to do 'all that is good in the eyes of Israel' (II Sam. 3:19). This is said to be in parallel with the Rehoboam's story of the elders advising Rehoboam to 'speak good words' (I Kings 12:7). But Rehoboam had done the other way. Instances of 'good word' and 'good thing' are also traced in the Aramaic treaty of the 8th cen. BCE, and also found in the citations from the akkadian.

c. *Alleviation:* [15]

Malamat's observation as substantiated by H. Gevaryahu, see relationship between the request of Israel to Rehoboam (I Kings 12:4) and the so-called *Misharum* – procedure of Mesopotamian kings where the new king introduces various facilitations, cancels debts and releases slaves and the like. The people of Israel could rightly expect alleviation of their economic burden, in connection with the impending coronation but proved contrary bringing about the division.

d. *Charismatic Leadership:*

Albrecht Alt[16] explicates the features of kingship or leadership in the life of the Israelite tribes as charismatic. Like the heroes of the past, in the original conception, the king of Israel, owed his authority exclusively to the fact that he was spontaneously called and endowed with charismatic power by YHMH (I Sam 9:1-10). As with the earlier judges, the authority imparted to the king of Israel empowered him originally only to summon together and command the army of the tribes to resist the claims of foreign neighbours against the territory and

independence of Israel (I Sam. 9:16). Campaigns of aggression lay outside his appointed task, and he had no concern with the internal politics of the tribes. His recognition as king by tribes principally means that they place their military levy permanently at his disposal, as often as he calls it to arms for any compelling reason.

Only if the charisma continued to give the king power to achieve the necessary success as the head of the army was it achieving its purpose, and only so long as this took place, demonstrating that the calling and endowment of the king of Yahweh was still in force, did his claim to lead the levy of the tribes still hold good. How seriously this was taken as shown by the story of the rejection of Saul (I Sam. 15), I Sam 16:14; I Kings 15:27; 16:15ff illustrates the fact that monarchy/leadership passed from one tribe to another, Benjamin, Judah, Ephraim, and Issachar in turn providing a charismatic leadership. This view depicts the reason of the northern tribes being unfavourable to the dynastic rule of the south against the charismatic election.

e. ***Deuteronomistic historian:***

H. Donner[17] highlights the thought of Noah who sees the scheme of 'prophecy and fulfillment' and believed that the Deuteronomistic historian incorporated into his presentation and supplemented with materials of different origins, began with the report of Jeroboam's designation by the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh during Solomon's life time and included the promise that the former would gain sovereign rule over ten of Israel's tribes. There followed, as a fulfillment of this, account of the break-up of the personal union between Judah and Israel. The narrative in describing how Jeroboam, having become king of northern Israel, soon departed from the right way of setting up the golden calves in bethel and Dan and so received a prophetic ill, his own downfall, and that of his house.

But Donner does not see this way, and that I Kings 12: 1-19 as an independent short historical work having as its theme the dissolution of the personal union. Its major emphasis being the historical problem expressed inits final sentence "So Israel has rebelled against the house of David to this day." (I Kings 12:19)

II. Schism and its causes

Apart from the reasons we had underlined from the text and the traditions yet the direct causes of monarchism are yet to be noted. Payne says, "the incredible stupidity of Rehoboam turned an empire of moderate dimension into two small, second rate states."[18] Such could be the understanding when one does not look at the event in the sitz-im-leben of the broader historical milieu. Another view, "the split, after all, was the result of Solomon's errors. He paved the way for the split while Rehoboam merely reaped the fruit of this father's act."[19] Even this again is limited way of looking at the historical situation though a major part of it is indeed right, but attached no art to Rehoboam himself and king David's rule.

The original form of the kingdom of Israel under king Saul (cf II Sam. 2:9f) and that period its name was appropriate. But as early as "David's reign the situation was fundamentally altered' he set up a kingdom of Judah alongside the kingdom of Israel, so making of one art of the twelve tribes a national state independent of the other."[20]

So then the personal union of the kingdom under David's rule, and then under Solomon, cannot hide the fact that under this system the earlier organization of the federation of Israelite tribes has been abandoned, and "the setting up by David of an empire stretching far beyond Palestine shows that in the second stage of its development the monarchy successfully carried our military and political ventures which of its very nature the ancient federation of tribes could never have contemplated (II Sam. 5:6ff; 8)"[21] " Even David's rule over Israel had in his last years became despotic."[22]

1) ***Solomon's Administrative districts:***

Solomon laid a heavy hand on his subjects in the form of taxation. To make this more efficient, " he reorganized the land into twelve administrative districts, each with a governor responsible to the crown (I Kings 4: 7-19) ... Each district was obliged to furnish provisions for the court for one month of the year (v.27)"[23] "apparently were not imposed upon the Judean south."[24] And now apart from the unprecedented burden, the place of the twelve tribes contributing soldiers in times of danger were twelve districts taxed for the support of Solomon's court.

2) ***Solomon's Foreign trade:***[25]

Solomon introduced foreign trade and increased the national income to a very great extent. After all 1,400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen and considerable infantry were a burdensome yoke in those days. But all this engendered hatred toward the regime and full-scale opposition against Solomon.

3) ***Fiscal and Administrative Measures:***

Caught between the chronic financial predicament and necessity, Solomon introduced "harsh service of forced labour ...upon Israel (I Kings 5: 13-18; 9: 15-22; 11:16)[26] and for his numerous projects Solomon resorted to the hated Corvee in all Israel (I Kings 5: 13f).

4) ***The Inner Transformation of Israel:***

Bright[27] paints that the tribal confederacy with its sacral institutions and charismatic leadership had given away to the dynastic rule and thus the Israelite society had been profoundly affected.

He says that tribal independence had ended. Tribesmen who had once known no central authority and no political obligation except to rally in times of danger were now turned into conscription for manual labour.

Onto Israel's traditionally agrarian and pastoral society an imposing commercial and industrial super structure had been grafted. In short, tribal democracy had weakened and there was the beginning – if only the beginning – of the Schism in Israelite society.

5) ***Tension with the Monarchy:***

David, Solomon and to add even Rehoboam have filed to bridge the gap between tribal independence and the demands of central authority, between the ancient tradition and the claims of the new order. In the reign of Solomon, trouble had come near to exploding "there are two references to this a) Jeroboam's 'lifting a hand against the king' (I Kings 11:27) b) In close

proximity to the intended rebellion, we have the incident of Ahijah the Shilonite (I Kings 11: 29ff)."[28] and Shemaiah I kings 12:21-24. "They resinted the states encroachment upon tribal prerogatives" and regarded both Solomon's highhanded treatment of his subjects and his fostering of foreign cults (I Kings 11:1-8 as gross violation of Yahweh's covenant. These prophets represented a desire abroad in Israel to retreat from the Davidic-Solomon state to a more ancient order, by revolution if need be."[29]

III. Schism and its consequences

We have observed that in the understanding of the northern tribes of kingship and in its intolerance to monarchic developments, there has been resistance, rebellion and revolting in the north which was by Solomon's oppressive policy completely alienated from the government in Jerusalem. But Solomon's strong hand had prevented the Schism. But as soon as Solomon died the pent-up resentment exploded and tore Israel apart.

1. *The Rival states: Sectional warfare*

The schism was followed by two generations of sectional warfare, fought to no conclusion, in the course of which the position of both the states further deteriorated. Israel and Judah had become petty kingdom which had to defend themselves.

"Jerusalem, a former capital and international center had to be protected against a former partner in the state."[30] Sectional warfare especially for the retention of the Benjamin territory which was historically a northern tribe, the seat of Saul, which might have succeeded with the rest (I Kings 12:20). "This however Rehoboam could not allow. Since Jerusalem lay on the very border of Benjamin, loss of Benjamin would have rendered the capital untenable."[31]

So constant war between Judah and Israel and in the period of the kings Rehoboam and Jeroboam (I Kings 14:30), and in that of the kings Asa and Baasha (I Kings 15:16), the reference is to this border warfare. Martin North[32] says that the basis of the story of war of king Elijah of Judah with Jeroboam that the Chronicles elaborated in (II Chrn. 13: 3-20) belongs to this context. Thus the problem of the northern boundary of Judah remained paramount.

2. *Internal affairs in Israel*

a) *Jeroboam's administrative policy: (I Kings 12:25)*

"For a capita, Jeroboam chose Shechem, a city of central position and long-standing importance. From the political aspect, it could well rival Jerusalem."[33] Shechem was centrally located, had ancient cultic associations, and since it was cananite – Hebrew enclave within Manasseh but loosely related to the tribal system, "its choice wuld arouse a minimum of tribal jealousy and, at the same time, please bon-Israelite elements of the population."[34] Presumably Jeroboam had taken over the administrative structure developed by Solomon in so far as was practicable. Bright brings to light that the Samaria Ostraca brings to light that "it is hightly probable (cf. I Kings 15:22) that the Corvee was called upon in building the fortifications of Shechem, Penuel and Tirzah, as well as for other state projects, though perhaps on a modest scale."[35]

b) *Jeroboam's Religious policy:*

Jeroboam, in an effort to keep the people of his newly constituted state from effecting to

Jerusalem for worship, made calf images and placed them at Dan and Bethel (I Kings 12:28-30). The king appointed non-levitical priests at his high places (12:31; 13:33) and instituted an annual rival (8:2) festival at Bethel in the eight month (12:32). E. Theodore Mullen Jr.[36] says that, for the deuteronomistic historian these activities become the sin of the dynasty (byt) of Jeroboam.

3. *Internal affairs of Judah: 922-873:* [37]

Bright tells us that there was no dynastic change. And a tension between the aristocracy of Jerusalem and the rural population. The former, born to the luzury of Solomon's court and including many of non-Israelite background, tended to be international in outlook, with little feeling for the essential nature of Yahvism. The latter, mostly small farmers and shepherds whose life was exceedingly simple, clung tenaciously to ancesteral social and religious traditions.

Through the reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah, the party of internationalism and tolerance had the upper hand, and the paganizing tendencies fostered or tolerated by Solomon continued.

Untill Asa (913-873) and his son Jehoshaphat (873-849) freed Judah, at least officially, of pagan cults (I Kings 22:43) with the final suspension of the war with Israel late in Asa's reign. Judah entered a period of relative peace and since she still controlled the trade routes south towards the gulf of Agabah, we may suppose of prosperity also.

4. *The collapse of the Empire:*

The core area of the empire which David had erected fell apart soon after Solomon's death. It was now only a matter of time before the foreign territories which had not yet rebelled under Solomon would regain their independence also.[38]

The Aramaic territories to the northeast, already partly lost by the defecation of Damascus, could no longer be held on the contrary, Damascus rapidly consolidated its position and became within the generation a serious threat to Israel herself.

To the southwest, the Philistine cities – except for Gath, which Judah still held (II Chron. 11:8) were free of Israelite domination. Though the Philistines were no longer dangerous, frontier fighting with them near Gibbethon (I Kings 15:27, 16:15) occupied Israel for a number of years.

To the east, Amman captured by David (II Sam 12:30), owed no allegiance to Israel and could not beheld by Judah. Moad likewise seems to have made itself free.[39]

Areas to the north "which had been dominated by Solomon were separated from Rehoboam's control by the sheer geographical fact of the existence of the new state of Israel, the northern kingdom."[40]

5. *Struggles with neighbouring states:*[41]

The disintegration of the empire of David and Solomon turned Judah and Israel into minor states within the political world of Syria and Palestine. They were forced to fight for their survival in repeated conflicts with the other powers.

The dangers which loomed from the northeast were far more menacing for Judah and in particular, for Israel than the military embarrassments from the southwest. In the northeast the Aramaean monarchy of Damascus, which had been founded in Solomon's time, quickly became a dangerous enemy, and soon the strongest power of all, in the world of Syria and Palestine.

The change in the situation caused the Philistines in the southwest to bestir themselves again.

In any case, it is not surprising that the Philistines henceforth tried to regain Gath. According to II Kings 12:18f; however, Gath was still in the hands of Judah at the time of the Judean King Jehoash (ca. 839-838 to 800-799 BCE). At that time, the Aramean king Hazel- evidently as an ally to the Philistines, who were no match for Judah on their own-conquered the city of Gath and even threatened Jerusalem, so that the king of Judah had to pay dearly for Hazael's retreat by rendering tribute from the Temple and palace treasury in Jerusalem.

The state of Israel waged repeated border warfare with the Philistines near the city of Gibbethon. On two occasions we learn accidentlly that the whole of the Israelite militia was encamped at Gibbethon (I Kings 15:27; 16:15-17).

The Philistines became dangerous for Judah and for Israel at this period only in so far as they worked hand in hand with the far stronger Aramaeans of Damascus. Just as, for Judah, this probably led to the loss of Gath, it also seems, according to the supplement to II Kings 13:22, in the LXX, to have injured Israel.

6. *The invasion of Shishak*: (I Kings 14:25-28)

On one occasion a greater power, says Martin North,[42] from the southwest intervened for a time in the history of Israel and Judah. In the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that is, in the year 922-921 BCE, the Pharaoh Shishak-I, a Libyan leader of Mercenaries, who had founded the 22nd Dynasty in Egypt undertook an expedition to Palestine, evidently in order to renew the tradition of the great pharaoh's of the new kingdom who had for a time possessed the whole of Syria and Palestine.

Shishak struck with terrific force. The Bible which tells us only that Rehoboam yeilded an enormous tribute to Shishak from the treasures of the temple and palace in Jerusalem to induce him to withdraw, "leaves the impression that the attack was directed against Jerusalem alone. But Shishak's own inscription at Karnak, which lists over 150 places which he claimed to have taken. The cities include the northern Israel as also evidenced by archaeology."[43]

Bright[44] reports further that the Egyptian armies devastated Palestine from one end to the other. They ranged through the Negeb, reducing the Solomonic forts in that area (Arad and Ezion-geber were apparently destroyed at this time), and penetrated still Edom. Various towns in the southern hill country and the Shephelah and Judah were attacked and in some cases destroyed. Then having approached Jerusalem by way of Aijalon, Beth-horen and Gideon and having forced that city to capitulate, the Egyptians pressed on into north Israel, spreading destruction everywhere. Their fairest advance took them eastward into Transfordan (Penuel, Mahanaim) and northward as far as Esdraelon; at Megiddo (mentioned in the list) a fragment of a triumphal stele of Shishak has been found.

The blow laid both Israel and Judah low and undoubtedly forced a postponement of their private quarrel.

7. ***Economic consequences*:**

"In foreign affairs, the two kingdoms only sustained losses. The system of complicated dependencies of tributary state and governorship, which was built up by David and neglected by Solomon, completely collapsed."[45] (I Kings 9:26-28; 10:11f; 22) depict that inspired by Phoenician expansion to the west and with their active co-operation, Solomon sought to develop similar possibilities by way of the Red Sea to the south. He constructed, certainly with the aid of Phoenician shipbuilders, a merchant fleet at Ezion -geber and, manning it with Phoenician jailors, he understood to send it as regular trading voyages as far as Ophir (in Arabia which is famous for God ... These voyages took a year and allowed the ships to touch on both sides of the Red Sea. They brought back to Solomon the wealth and exotic products of the south: gold and silver, rare woods, jewels, ivory and, for his majestys amusement-monkeys.[46]

Shishak' campaign seems to have connected in the main with trade routes; he asserted Egyptian domination over the major highway through Palestine-up the Philistine coast, and through the pass of Megiddo into the plain of Jezreel. Then he turned south and apparently destroyed Solomon's fortress at Ezion-geber in order to damage Judah's Red Sea trade.[47]

The Economic consequences were serious, tribute ceased to flow in with the trade routes along the coast and through transjordan no longer Israelite monopolies, and with internal strife making the free passage of trade difficult if not at times impossible, most of the lucrative ventures undertaken by Solomon collapsed. Bright says, although we lack direct evidence of it, the economy of Israel must have been damaged severely.[48]

Conclusion

Though the issues raised in the introduction have not been touched upon for obvious reasons their study would surely help in understanding the text of I Kings 12: 1-19 and the history it tries to note. Then as far as the paper is concerned the immediate factors and the causes leading to the dissolution of and the consequences there-upon the kingdoms reaped consequent to the dissolution have been dealt with.

NOTES

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3. A. Malamat, "Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy," *BA* 28 (1965), p.38
4. A. Malamat, *Ibid.*, p.45
5. R.P. Gordon, "The Second Septuagint account of Jeroboam: History or Midrash," *VT* 25 (May. '75) p.368
6. H. Donner, "The Separate States of Israel and Judah," in *Israelite and Judean History*, Eds: Hayes, John and Miller, J. Maxwell, SCM: London, 1977, p.383

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8. M.Aberbach and Leivy Smolar, " Jeroboam's Rise to Power," *JBL* 88 (1969), p.69-72
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10. John Bright, *A History of Israel*, II Ed. SCM Press: London, 1960, p.230
11. H. Donner, *Israelite and Judean History*. p.385.
12. H. Donner, *Ibid.*, p.386.
13. A. Malamat' "Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy," pp. 35-40
14. A. Malamat' *Ibid.*, p.63f
15. A. Malamat' *Ibid.*, pp.55-63f.
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17. H. Donner, *Israelite and Judean History*. p.382f.
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19. A. Malamat, "Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy," p.52
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21. Albrecht Alt, *Loc. cit;*
22. H.Donner, *Israelite and Judean History*. p.384
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24. H.Donner, *Loc.cit.*
25. A. Malamat, "Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy" P.52.
26. H.Donner, *Loc. cit.*
27. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, p.223
28. A. Malamat, "Organs of Statecraft ....." p.52
29. John Bright,*Op.cit.*, p.231
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31. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, p.232
32. Martin North, *The History of Israel*, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1958. p.233
33. David G. Payne, *Kingdoms of the Lord*. p. 68.
34. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, p.236
35. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, p.237.
36. E. Theodore Mullen. Jr., "The Sins of Jeroboam: A Redactional Assessment." *CBQ* 49 (Ap.1987), p. 213
37. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, p.239-40
38. H. Donner, *Israelite and Judean History*. p.387
39. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, 231f
40. David. F. Payne, *Op.cit.*, p. 67
41. Martin Noth, The History of Israel, pp. 236-241
42. Maratin North, *Ibid.*, p. 238
43. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, p. 233f
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45. Seigfried Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times*. P.198
46. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, p. 215.
47. David. F. Payne, *Op.cit.*, p. 70
48. John Bright, *Op.cit.*, p. 232