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1KINGS 12: 1 Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

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The people go to Shechem to make Rehoboam king, and send for Jeroboam out of Egypt, who with the heads of the tribes, requests relief from the heavy burdens laid on them by Solomon, 1Kgs 12:1-4. He requires three days to consider their petition, 1Kgs 12:5. He rejects the counsel of the elders, who served his father, and follows that of young men, and returns the people a provoking answer, 1Kgs 12:6-15. The people therefore renounce the family of David, stone to death Adoram, who came to receive their tribute, and make Jeroboam king; none cleaving to Rehoboam but the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, 1Kgs 12:16-20. Rehoboam comes to Jerusalem, and assembles all the fighting men of Judah and Benjamin, and finds the number to be one hundred and eighty thousand; and with these he purposes to reduce the men of Israel to his allegiance, but is forbidden by the Prophet Shemaiah, 1Kgs 12:21-24. Jeroboam builds Shechem in Mount Ephraim and Penuel, 1Kgs 12:25. And lest the people should be drawn away from their allegiance to him by going up to Jerusalem to worship, he makes two golden calves, and sets them up, one in Dan, the other in Beth-el, and the people worship them, 1Kgs 12:26-30. He makes priests of the lowest of the people, and establishes the fifteenth day of the eighth month as a feast to his new gods; makes offerings, and burns incense, 1Kgs 12:31-33.

#### Verse 1

Rehoboam went to Shechem - Rehoboam was probably the only son of Solomon; for although he had a thousand wives, he had not the blessing of a numerous offspring; and although he was the wisest of men himself, his son was a poor, unprincipled fool. Had Solomon kept himself within reasonable bounds in matrimonial affairs, he would probably have had more children; and such as would have had common sense enough to discern the delicacy of their situation, and rule according to reason and religion.

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1KINGS 12: 2 When Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam lived in Egypt,

1KINGS 12: 3 and they sent and called him), Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came, and spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

1KINGS 12: 4 "Your father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make you the grievous service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, lighter, and we will serve you."

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#### Verse 4

The grievous service - and - heavy yoke - They seem here to complain of two things - excessively laborious service, and a heavy taxation. At first it is supposed Solomon employed no Israelite in drudgery: afterwards, when he forsook the God of compassion, he seems to have used them as slaves, and to have revived the Egyptian bondage.

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1KINGS 12: 5 He said to them, "Depart for three days, then come back to me."

The people departed.

1KINGS 12: 6 King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, "What counsel do you give me to return answer to this people?"

1KINGS 12: 7 They spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people this day, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

#### Verse 7

If thou wilt be a servant unto this people - This is a constitutional idea of a king: he is the servant, but not the slave of his people; every regal act of a just king is an act of service to the state. The king is not only the fountain of law and justice; but as he has the appointment of all officers and judges, consequently he is the executor of the laws; and all justice is administered in his name. Properly speaking, a good and constitutional king is the servant of his people; and in being such he is their father and their king.

They will be thy servants for ever - The way to insure the obedience of the people is to hold the reins of empire with a steady and impartial hand; let the people see that the king lives for them, and not for himself; and they will obey, love, and defend him. The state is maintained on the part of the ruler and the ruled by mutual acts of service and benevolence. A good king has no self-interest; and such a king will ever have obedient and loving subjects. The haughty, proud tyrant will have a suspicious and jealous people, hourly ripening for revolt. The king is made for the people, not the people for the king. Let every potentate wisely consider this; and let every subject know that the heaviest cares rest on the heart, and the heaviest responsibility rests on the head, of the king. Let them therefore, under his government, fashion themselves as obedient children; acknowledge him their head; and duly consider whose authority he has; that they may love, honor and obey him. Happy are the people who have such a king; safe is the king who has such a people.

1KINGS 12: 8 But he abandoned the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.

1KINGS 12: 9 He said to them, "What counsel do you give, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, 'Make the yoke that your father put on us lighter?'"

1KINGS 12: 10 The young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall tell this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but make it lighter to us;' you shall say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist."

#### Verse 10

And the young men that were grown up with him - It was a custom in different countries to educate with the heir to the throne young noblemen of nearly the same age. This, as Calmet observes, answered two great and important ends: -

1. It excited the prince to emulation; that he might, as far as possible, surpass in all manly exercises, and in all acts of prudence and virtue, those whom one day he was to surpass in the elevation and dignity of his station.

2. That he might acquire a correct knowledge of the disposition and views of those who were likely to be, under him, the highest officers of the state; and consequently, know the better how to trust and employ them. The old counsellors Rehoboam did not know; with the young nobility he had been familiar.

My little finger shall be thicker - A proverbial mode of expression: "My little finger is thicker than my father's thigh." As much as the thigh surpasses the little finger in thickness, so much does my power exceed that of my father; and the use that I shall make of it, to employ and tax you, shall be in proportion.

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1KINGS 12: 11 Now whereas my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

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Verse 11

Chastise you with scorpions - Should you rebel, or become disaffected, my father's whip shall be a scorpion in my hand. His was chastisement, mine shall be punishment. St. Isidore, and after him Calmet and others, assert that the scorpion was a sort of severe whip, the lashes of which were armed with iron points, that sunk into and tore the flesh. We know that the scorpion was a military engine among the Romans for shooting arrows, which, being poisoned, were likened to the scorpion's sting, and the wound it inflicted.

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1KINGS 12: 12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king asked, saying, "Come to me again the third day."

1KINGS 12: 13 The king answered the people roughly, and abandoned the counsel of the old men which they had given him,

1KINGS 12: 14 and spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

1KINGS 12: 15 So the king didn't listen to the people; for it was a thing brought about of the LORD, that he might establish his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

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Verse 15

The cause was from the Lord - God left him to himself, and did not incline his heart to follow the counsel of the wise men. This is making the best of our present version; but if we come to inquire into the meaning of the Cause of all this confusion and anarchy, we shall find it was Rehoboam's folly, cruelty, and despotic tyranny: and was this from the Lord? But does the text speak this bad

doctrine? No: it says סבב sibbah, the Revolution, was from the Lord. This is consistent with all the declarations which went before. God stirred up the people to revolt from a man who had neither skill nor humanity to govern them. We had such a סבב revolution in these nations in 1688; and, thank God, we have never since needed another. None of our ancient translations understood the word as our present version does: they have it either the Turning Away was from the Lord, or it was the Lord's Ordinance; viz., that they should turn away from this foolish king.

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1KINGS 12: 16 When all Israel saw that the king didn't listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, "What portion have we in David? Neither do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, Israel! Now see to your own house, David." So Israel departed to their tents.

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#### Verse 16

So Israel departed unto their tents - That is, the ten tribes withdrew their allegiance from Rehoboam; only Judah and Benjamin, frequently reckoned one tribe, remaining with him.

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1KINGS 12: 17 But as for the children of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

1KINGS 12: 18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the men subject to forced labour; and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. King Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

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#### Verse 18

King Rehoboam sent Adoram - As this was the person who was superintendent over the tribute, he was probably sent to collect the ordinary taxes; but the people, indignant at the master who had given them such a brutish answer, stoned the servant to death. The sending of Adoram to collect the taxes, when the public mind was in such a state of fermentation, was another proof of Rehoboam's folly and incapacity to govern.

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1KINGS 12: 19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David to this day.

1KINGS 12: 20 When all Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned, they sent and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was no one who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

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#### Verse 20

Made him king over all Israel - What is called Israel here, was ten-twelfths of the whole nation; and had they a right to call another person to the throne? They had not, - they had neither legal nor constitutional right. Jeroboam was not of the blood royal; he had no affinity to the kingdom. Nothing

could justify this act, but the just judgment of God. God thus punished a disobedient and gainsaying people; and especially Solomon's family, whose sins against the Lord were of no ordinary magnitude.

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1KINGS 12: 21 When Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

1KINGS 12: 22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

1KINGS 12: 23 "Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying,

1KINGS 12: 24 'Thus says the LORD, "You shall not go up, nor fight against your brothers, the children of Israel. Everyone return to his house; for this thing is of me."'" So they listened to the LORD's word, and returned and went their way, according to the LORD's word.

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#### Verse 24

For this thing is from me - That is, the separation of the ten tribes from the house of David.

They - returned to depart - This was great deference, both in Rehoboam and his officers, to relinquish, at the demand of the prophet, a war which they thought they had good grounds to undertake. The remnant of the people heard the Divine command gratefully, for the mass of mankind are averse from war. No nations would ever rise up against each other, were they not instigated to it or compelled by the rulers.

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1KINGS 12: 25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived in it; and he went out from there, and built Penuel.

1KINGS 12: 26 Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David.

1KINGS 12: 27 If this people goes up to offer sacrifices in the LORD's house at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."

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#### Verse 27

And they shall kill me - He found he had little cause to trust this fickle people; though they had declared for him it was more from caprice, desire of change, and novelty, than from any regular and praiseworthy principle.

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1KINGS 12: 28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look and see your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

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## Verse 28

Made two calves of gold - He invented a political religion, instituted feasts in his own times different from those appointed by the Lord, gave the people certain objects of devotion, and pretended to think it would be both inconvenient and oppressive to them to have to go up to Jerusalem to worship. This was not the last time that religion was made a state engine to serve political purposes. It is strange that in pointing out his calves to the people, he should use the same words that Aaron used when he made the golden calf in the wilderness, when they must have heard what terrible judgments fell upon their forefathers for this idolatry.

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1KINGS 12: 29 He set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

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## Verse 29

One in Beth-el, and the other - in Dan - One at the southern and the other at the northern extremity of the land. Solomon's idolatry had prepared the people for Jeroboam's abominations!

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1KINGS 12: 30 This thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even to Dan.

1KINGS 12: 31 He made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

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## Verse 31

A house of high places - A temple of temples; he had many high places in the land, and to imitate the temple at Jerusalem, he made one chief over all the rest, where he established a priesthood of his own ordination. Probably a place of separate appointment, where different idols were set up and worshipped; so it was a sort of pantheon.

Made priests of the lowest of the people - He took the people indifferently as they came, and made them priests, till he had enough, without troubling himself whether they were of the family of Aaron or the house of Levi, or not. Any priests would do well enough for such gods. But those whom he took seem to have been worthless, good-for-nothing fellows, who had neither piety nor good sense. Probably the sons of Levi had grace enough to refuse to sanction this new priesthood and idolatrous worship.

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1KINGS 12: 32 Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; he did so in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made.

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## Verse 32

Ordained a feast - The Jews held their feast of tabernacles on the fifteenth day of the seventh month; Jeroboam, who would meet the prejudices of the people as far as he could, appointed a

similar feast on the fifteenth of the eighth month; thus appearing to hold the thing while he subverted the ordinance.

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1KINGS 12: 33 He went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and went up to the altar, to burn incense.

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Verse 33

He offered upon the altar - Jeroboam probably performed the functions of high priest himself, that he might in his own person condense the civil and ecclesiastical power.