

A Case of Spousal Abuse

A Study of the Marriage of Jeroboam I (1 Kings 14:1-18)¹

Robin Gallaher Branch

Crichton College

rgbranch@crichton.edu

22 November 2008

Abstract

The biblical text introduces Jeroboam with high praise as a *hayil*, a man of standing (1 Kgs 11:28). From this singular honor, the text chronicles his downfall. A vignette showcasing his marriage (1 Kgs 14:1-18) functions as the concluding event in his 22-year reign. Something is clearly wrong in his household. Using a cross-disciplinary approach incorporating a close textual reading and psychology, this paper focuses on the unnamed, silent wife of Jeroboam and argues that she and her marriage reflect the classic signs of a kind of suffering now termed spousal abuse. Granted, the vignette recounts no evidence of physical beating. However, textual evidence supporting the view that the wife of Jeroboam experiences abuse includes the following: her isolation, passivity, and instant obedience. Most indicatively, she returns home after hearing the prophet Ahijah's three-fold announcement of doom.

Textual evidence that Jeroboam operates as an abusive husband includes his control over her comings and goings; his command-mode mentality in addressing her; his lack of compassion toward her; his cowardice in sending her to Ahijah instead of going himself; and his earlier violence toward the man of God (1 Kgs 13). Via Ahijah's

¹ This paper builds on my earlier published work, Robin Gallaher Branch, "The Wife of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 14:1-18: The Incredible, Riveting, History-Changing Significance of an Unnamed, Overlooked, Ignored, Obedient, Obscure Woman" *Old Testament Essays*, 2004, 17 (2):157-167.

prophetic word, God lists Jeroboam's sins as disobedience, making idols of metal, provoking God to anger, and thrusting God away.

Shortly after Jeroboam's reign ends, his name is ignominiously paired with evil and sins (2 Kgs 13:2; 13:11; 14:24; 15:9). If indeed the wife of Jeroboam is an abused woman as this paper claims, then God's assessment of Jeroboam's reign as evil (1 Kgs 14:9) encompasses more than is commonly held: it encompasses the sin of spousal abuse.

Introduction

The wife of Jeroboam is introduced in the biblical text within the context of the account of the story of Jeroboam, the first king of Israel in the Divided Kingdom of Israel and Judah.² Jeroboam reigned for 22 years, 930-909 BCE.³ The wife of Jeroboam makes a cameo appearance on the biblical stage within the setting of a family crisis (1 Kgs 14:1-20): Jeroboam's son Abijah (presumably by this woman) is sick to the point of death. The wife of Jeroboam serves as a conduit for information between her husband and the prophet Ahijah and back again. Throughout the interchanges, the wife of Jeroboam remains unnamed and silent.

Her silence and anonymity raise intriguing questions which this paper explores. This paper takes an interdisciplinary approach, continuing the biblical scholarship of my

² Here is a synopsis of Jeroboam I's reign (1 Kgs 11:26-42, 12-14:20): The story of Jeroboam begins with the prophetic word of the prophet Ahijah that God would tear ten tribes from Solomon and give them to Jeroboam. A reason for the splitting of the kingdom included the people's worship of Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:26-33). In the prophetic word of Ahijah, God graciously promises to establish a dynasty for Jeroboam if Jeroboam keeps God's statutes and commands as David had done. God promises Jeroboam a dynasty as "enduring as the one I built for David" (1 Kgs 11:39). But once Jeroboam is king, he constructs alternative worship centers twelve miles north of Jerusalem in Bethel and further north at Dan; this is in defiance of the Lord who had mandated Jerusalem as the place of his presence and worship (1 Kings 8:27-30). He then mixed the worship of God with the worshipping Baal. He erected golden calves at both Dan and Bethel and proclaimed that "H are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt" (1 Kgs 12:28). Jeroboam then built worship shrines upon the high places throughout his kingdom. He put his own priests in to run them and created his own worship festivals (1 Kgs 12:31-33). The king's false worship led to a prophetic oracle against him (1 Kgs 13) by an unnamed prophet. This unnamed prophet declared that Jeroboam's actions would bring disaster upon his dynasty; Jeroboam ordered the man seized; but Jeroboam's hand shriveled and he countered his own order by asking the man of God to intercede for him. Jeroboam's hand was restored. However, the unnamed prophet's words come true when Baasha assassinated Jeroboam's son and heir, Nadab, and murdered the remaining members of Jeroboam's family (1 Kgs 15:27-28) (for an excellent account of Jeroboam I's life and reign, see Paul D. Gardner, ed., *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters: The Complete Who's Who in the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 317-318).

³ *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 496.

earlier examination of this passage (1 Kgs 14:1-18) and adding insights from the discipline of psychology.

This paper argues that the wife of Jeroboam and her marriage show some of the classic signs of abuse.⁴ The marriage of the royals bears what counselors term “a family likeness to abuse.”⁵ Significantly, the encounter of Jeroboam and his wife takes place in privacy; the text notes no servants, counselors, or others in attendance.⁶ Furthermore, modern studies show that violence against women rises sharply during emergencies.⁷ The illness of the lad Abijah constitutes both a family and national crisis.⁸

Granted, the verses about the wife of Jeroboam show no evidence of rape or physical beating.⁹ But other textual evidence argues for the possibility her being an abused wife and for the possibility of Jeroboam being an abuser. Consider this: modern research agrees that physical abuse is almost always accompanied by psychological abuse.¹⁰ This paper argues that the verbal interchange of Jeroboam and his wife shows a family likeness, indeed a family pattern, of abuse.

Consequently, if Jeroboam is indeed an abuser, then the judgment of evil (1 Kgs 14:9) against Jeroboam and the later pairing of sins and evil (see 2 Kgs 13:2; 13:11; 14:24; 15:9, 18; & 24, for example) in connection with his name as an evaluative standard of the kings of Israel enlarge the definition of evil to include an indictment against wife abuse. Historically as part of the law governing the covenant community, women were to be treated well in Israel. For instance, if a man took a second wife, he was not to

⁴ Consider these modern statistics: In the United States, 67 percent of all marriages experience abuse; in South Africa, one in every six women is regularly assaulted by her mate (Aruna Gnanadason, *No Longer a Secret* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993), 9-10).

⁵ I credit the use of this phrase, *a family likeness to abuse*, to a suggestion and comment from Jeremy Baker, MD, of Christchurch, New Zealand. Dr. Baker and I presented consecutive papers in a section at the 2008 International Congress of the Society of Biblical Literature, July 2008.

⁶ The absence of witnesses, especially non-nuclear family members, is a characteristic of abuse (Richard J. Gelles, “No Place to Go: the Social Dynamics of Marital Violence” [in *Battered Women: A Psychosociological Study of Domestic Violence*, ed., Maria Roy, 1977: 46-63], 46).

⁷ James Newton Poling, *Render Unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence, and Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), 16-17.

⁸ Abijah must have been a darling little boy and beloved by all, for at his death he receives this singular honor: “all Israel mourned for him” (1 Kgs 14:13, 18). This honor, the mourning of an entire nation, is given to Samuel (1 Sam 25:1).

⁹ Violence against women in the Bible most typically takes the form of rape (Gen 34:2; Judg 5:3; 19:24-25; 2 Sam 13:14); humiliation by exposure of the genitals (Hos 2:12; Ezek 16:37); the ripping open of pregnant women (Amos 1:13; Hos 14:1); sterility (2 Sam 6:23); and the slaughter of mother and children (Hos 10:14) (see Phyllis A. Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997], 71).

¹⁰ Marijke Velzeboer, Mary Ellsberg, C. C. Arcas, & Claudia Garcia-Moreno, *Violence Against Women: The Health Sector Responds* (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Health Organization, 2003), 5.

deprive the first one of “her food, clothing, and marital rights” (Ex 21:10). Women in Israel were not to be abused.¹¹

Evidence that the wife of Jeroboam possibly experienced abuse includes the following:

1. Her isolation.
2. Her passivity.
3. Her instant obedience.
4. Her coming back.
5. Her lack of response to Jeroboam and Ahijah.
6. The possibility that her personality changed throughout her marriage from something that complemented the personality of her husband, a leader of men and man of standing (11:26-28), to something quite colorless.

Evidence that Jeroboam possibly is an abuser includes the following:

1. His command-mode manner of addressing his wife.
2. His lack of compassion toward her over the illness of their son.
3. His control over her comings and goings.
4. His insecurity over going to Ahijah himself.
5. His lack of courage.
6. His violence toward the man of God in 1 Kgs 13.
7. His choice of evil.
8. His choice deliberately to disobey God regarding the worship of other gods, to erect of rival places of worship, to install rival priests, to inaugurate an additional festival, and to offer sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel (11:25-33).
9. His use of emotional control over his wife.

¹¹ See the excellent article “What God Has Joined” by David Instone-Brewer, *Christianity Today*, October 2007, 26-29. The idea as well in Ex 21:10 is that sexual intimacy between a husband and wife is to be enjoyed, is necessary to a marriage, and should not be denied by one partner to the other; the New Testament affirms this concept (1 Cor 7:3ff) (Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Committed Marriage* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976], 156-157). However, it is likewise true that a free woman, whether married or unmarried, remained a minor all her life; she had no legal authority over her life. She was protected by her husband, father, and/or male relatives. For instance, if widowed, a woman often returned to her father’s house or remained under the authority of her father-in-law (see Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], 112n).

10. His character change from being a *hayil*, a man of standing (11:28), to doing “more evil than all who lived before” him (14:9).

Jeroboam: Possibly an Abusing Husband

Jeroboam, chosen by God to be king of Israel, recipient of a covenant covering his house for generation after generation if he obeyed God, is a man who becomes a byword and definition for evil (1 Kgs 11:26-40; 2 Kgs 3:3). Significantly, there is no evidence of intergenerational abuse in Jeroboam’s life.¹² But in one of the most startling downward spirals in the biblical text, Jeroboam falls from being described as a *hayil*, a man of standing (1 Kgs 11:28), to becoming within his lifetime the standard for evil and sin (14:9).¹³ The biblical text amply supports this. Jeroboam also fits the pattern (for lack of a better word) of an abuser. Abuse is a modern word for an age-old condition of emotional, verbal, and/or physical violence.

Margi Laird McCue provides a number of insights on an abusive male.¹⁴ Traits of an abuser include low self-esteem; a belief in male superiority; the tendency to blame others for his actions; a pathological jealousy; a dual personality; severe stress reactions; the frequent use of sex as an act of aggression; and a refusal to believe that his actions may have negative consequences. An abusive man is possessive of his wife’s time; he tends to be jealous. He stalks her, eavesdrops, puts her under surveillance, and monitors her activities. The abuser typically blames the woman because he feels a loss of control.

Men who batter their partners exhibit controlling behavior patterns.¹⁵ Men who batter their partners conform to rigid gender roles, accept the dominance of the male as a right, and see violence as an acceptable way to resolve a conflict.¹⁶ A violent man knows from experience how to frighten others and play on their fears.¹⁷ A man with a low level of self-control over his actions and one evidencing strong anti-social behavior (the technical term is psychopathy) tends not to care very much about the suffering he

¹² See Poling, *Render Unto God*, 10.

¹³ *Hayil* is a title of honor for both men and women in the biblical text. The description is shared by Boaz (Ruth 2:1), Ruth (Ruth 3:11), Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5:1), and the Proverbs 31 woman (Prov. 31:10).

¹⁴ Margi Laird McCue, *Domestic Violence: A Reference Book* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1995), 108-109.

¹⁵ Velzeboer, Ellsberg, Arcas, & Garcia-Moreno, *Violence Against Women*, 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷ James Newton Poling, *Understanding Male Violence: Pastoral Care Issue* (Danvers: Chalice Press, 2003), 25.

causes others.¹⁸ Abuse takes place within complex situational conditions; in these conditions, abusers use the children of their partners or ex-partners as a means to play on fear and to continue the abuse.¹⁹ The child Abijah and his grave illness spark the encounter between Jeroboam and his wife.

The biblical text substantiates that Jeroboam fits a number of the characteristics of an abuser. Jeroboam certainly controls the encounter with his wife: he summons her and commands her. He commands her to monitor and direct her activities. His reaction to the man of God's decree against him (1 Kgs 13) was violence ("Seize him!" v. 4).²⁰ The encounter with the man of God shows Jeroboam's anger and severe stress over his withered hand; he commands the man of God to intercede immediately so that his hand could be restored (v. 5). Jeroboam refuses to believe his actions of setting up golden calves in Dan and Bethel, erecting shrines on high places, establishing new feast days, and even assuming the role of priest and offering sacrifices would have a severe consequences (1 Kgs 12:25-33). Throughout his reign, he expresses no repentance or remorse although given several opportunities.²¹

Apparently in terms of his encounter with his wife, he sends her on a potentially dangerous errand totally alone and without protection. The text shows that Jeroboam has learned that aggressive behavior controls others.²² An abuser denies personal

¹⁸ Eli J. Finkel, "Impelling and Inhibiting Forces in the Perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence" (*Review of General Psychology*, June 2007 11(2): 193-207).
http://csaweb115v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=mmva9a4lpc6miq2v996vpnfve5&db=psyarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2007%2D08858%2D009&f1=1089%2D2680%2C11%2C2%2C193%2C2007&key=GPR%2F11%2Fgpr%5F11%5F2%5F193&is=1089%2D2680&jv=11&ji=2&jp=193%2D207&sp=193&ep=207&year=2007&mon=06&day=1089%2D2680%2C11%2C2%2C193%2C2007.

Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

¹⁹ Marisa L. Beeble, Deborah Bybee, & Cris M. Sullivan, "Abusive Men's Use of Children to Control their Partners and Ex-Partners" (*European Psychologist* 2007 12(1): 54-61).
http://csaweb115v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=mmva9a4lpc6miq2v996vpnfve5&db=psyarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2007%2D04213%2D007&f1=1016%2D9040%2C12%2C1%2C54%2C2007&key=EPP%2F12%2Ffepp%5F12%5F1%5F54&is=1016%2D9040&jv=12&ji=1&jp=54%2D61&sp=54&ep=61&year=2007&mon=00&day=1016%2D9040%2C12%2C1%2C54%2C2007. Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

²⁰ When a man learns he can control others by force of violence, he will use that method (Mildred Daley Pagelow, *Woman Battering: Victims and Their Experiences* [Beverly Hills: Sage Library of Social Research], 43).

²¹ Opportunities for repentance include his encounter with the man of God (1 Kings 13) and hearing the prophetic word from Ahijah that was delivered by his wife upon her return (1 Kgs 14:17). One would think that the death of his son would have humbled him and brought him to repentance as it did David (2 Sam. 12:15-25), but it did not. One would think that the judgment against his house and Israel would have brought him to repentance as it did Ahab years later (2 Kgs 21:25-28), but it did not.

²² Pagelow, *Woman Battering*, 129.

responsibility.²³ Jeroboam, by choosing not to go to Ahijah himself, abrogates responsibility, forces his wife to lie, and shows himself a coward. Arguably, Jeroboam uses a mother's natural concern for her child and her fear of his death to compel his wife to obey, to lie, and to embark on an errand of deceit.

A person like Jeroboam with marked leadership characteristics may be an abuser. According to James Alsdurf and Phyllis Alsdurf, men who batter their wives are often articulate, function successfully in their jobs and are competent in their roles outside of marriage. They come from all walks of life, and many hold positions of leadership.²⁴ An abuser typically allocates all responsibility for the success of a marriage and the health of the children to the woman. An abuser knows how to push his wife's buttons of guilt and worry.²⁵ Jeroboam's speech plays on his wife's concern over their child's life and any guilt she may have over her abilities as a mother. Of course she'll go to Ahijah!

An abuser is typically both bully and coward. Jeroboam's actions indicate he wants to control all situations.²⁶ Jeroboam's actions also indicate he feels insecure about his throne; that is why he erected golden calves at Dan and Bethel (1 Kgs 12:26-30). Jeroboam's action shows no faith in the God who gave him the kingdom. Hungering to keep his position whatever the cost shows a desire to have and to wield power as king.²⁷ Jeroboam is jealous of Jerusalem's position as center of Israel's festivals; hence his building of shrines, installing priests, offering sacrifices and instituting rival festivals (1 Kgs 12:31-33). Possibly the trait of jealousy extends towards his wife; researchers note that jealousy is consistently an abuser's hallmark.²⁸

²³ Nancy Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife: How Christians Confront Family Violence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 10.

²⁴ In fact one study found that more highly educated batterers inflicted more serious injuries (James Alsdurf & Phyllis Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989], 67, citing Jeffrey A. Fagen, Douglas K. Steward and Karen V. Hanse, "Violent Men or Violent Husbands?" Finkelhor et al., eds., *Dark side of Families* [Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983], 57).

²⁵ Rita-Lou Clarke, *Pastoral Care of Battered Women* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 43.

²⁶ In an abusive, dysfunctional marriage like that of Jeroboam and his wife, the first step toward healing is to recognize abuse as sin. Jeroboam does not do this. Another step is for a husband with a propensity toward control to direct his ability to control toward controlling his own impulses. A husband needs to take responsibility for his actions and experience the natural consequences of his behavior (James Alsdurf & Phyllis Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission*, 42-43). Jeroboam's cowardly action of sending his wife in his place to Ahijah shows his perpetual avoidance of taking responsibility for his actions.

²⁷ See Tom L. Eisenman, *Temptations Men Face: Straightforward Talk on Power, Money, Affairs, Perfection, Insensitivity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 115-116.

²⁸ Abusive men are frequently irrationally jealous about their wives and the activities of their wives. Consequently, they monitor their wives' use of space and time and question all contact with other men (Donald G. Dutton, *The Abusive Personality: Violence and Control in Intimate Relationships* [New York: Guilford Press, 1998], 44).

The biblical text emphasizes Jeroboam's opportunities for repentance (13:1-10; 14:1-18)—and his lack of repentance. Because Jeroboam shows no remorse, maybe he is psychopathic. Psychopathic men do not suffer pangs of conscience; most normally-socialized men who are not psychopathic do go through some remorse for abusing their wife.²⁹ Jeroboam displays no remorse about any of his actions as king—or husband. Instead he intensifies his disobedient actions with innovative religious reforms the biblical text subsequently describes as evil.

Because Jeroboam acts in an emotionally detached way, he may have a severe personality disorder called ESS (Extremely Self-Serving). According to Gary Hankins and Carol Hankins,³⁰ a husband with this disorder is so self-centered that he believes he has every right to do whatever he wants to his wife. An ESS husband regards his wife as his personal property.

Instead of kindness or concern, two qualities expected as normal when a couple faces the illness of their son, Jeroboam commands his wife.³¹ He rapidly fires off five orders: “Go. Disguise yourself. Go to Shiloh. Take ten loaves of bread. Go (to the prophet)” (14:2-3). Issuing imperatives seems to be his normal method of operation with her. Jeroboam's mode of communication permits no response. He treats his wife as if she deserves to be ordered around. His treatment of her shows he views her as one who must meet his needs, as one who lives to meet his needs. He keeps her in her place, and her place is subservient to him. But she is not his slave; she is his wife. Treating her as a slave is abuse. Abusive men have learned that abuse tends to keep women in their place.³²

The Marriage of the Royals

Society may look on Jeroboam and his wife as married, but their marriage came to an end long ago.³³ This small vignette in 1 Kings 14 recording their encounter abounds with evidence that their marriage is over. Neither Jeroboam nor his wife shows evidence of marital satisfaction.³⁴ The encounter indicates an abruptness, almost a

²⁹ Ibid., 49.

³⁰ Gary Hankins with Carol Hankins, *Prescription for Anger: Coping with Angry Feelings and Angry People* (New York: Warner Books, 1993), 15.

³¹ Research shows that the more frequently the woman is verbally abused, the less capable she is of seeing her relationship as positive (Barbara Wexler, *Violent Relationships: Battering and Abuse Among Adults* [Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003], 48).

³² Dutton, *The Abusive Personality*, 45.

³³ See Charles Allen, *When a Marriage Ends* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1986), 15.

³⁴ Studies indicate that marital satisfaction decreases with verbal aggression (see Susan C. South, Eric Turkheimer, Thomas F. Oltmanns, “Personality Disorder Symptoms and Marital Functioning” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, October 2008 76(5): 769-780).

master/slave manner of relating, a lack of tenderness. There is no personal relationship between them.³⁵ Jeroboam treats his wife curtly; his treatment indicates he views her as one who lives to meet his needs. Jeroboam takes no responsibility in the marriage. In the command mode, he portrays no tenderness, no respect, and clearly no love toward her. The wife of Jeroboam exudes lifelessness and certainly lacks self-confidence. Her passivity makes her seem emotionally dead inside. Unlike other women in Kings with both good and bad textual assessments—the widow of Zarephath; Jezebel; and Athaliah, and Jeosheba;³⁶—the wife of Jeroboam portrays no self-confidence. The books of Kings abound with strong women who hold their own textually with strong kings and prophets. Why is the wife of Jeroboam—by her namelessness, silence, and obedience—so weak, so colorless?

Consider these two possibilities about the marriage of the royals: first, the wife of Jeroboam is economically dependent on Jeroboam; second the wife of Jeroboam is emotionally dependent on Jeroboam. These two dependencies, according to modern research, contribute to the risk of domestic partner abuse.³⁷ Of the two dependencies—emotional and economic—research indicates that a woman’s economic dependency plays a more significant role in terms of risk of abuse, while emotional dependency plays a more modest role.³⁸

In any marriage, the partners assume roles that if not comfortable are at least habitual. In the marriage of the king of Israel and his wife, Jeroboam acts as the decider, the one who orders others around, the commander. Often a woman living in an abusive, dysfunctional situation becomes an enabler. She functions as the heroic martyr, concealer, comforter, placater, rescuer, persecutor, victim.³⁹ The wife of Jeroboam certainly is a concealer and resigned enabler of her husband’s orders and whims.⁴⁰

http://csaweb113v.csa.com/ids70/view_record.php?id=2&recnum=29&log=from_res&SID=ocackoh7dbo68l8uil5mhh3j14&mark_id=search%3A2%3A35%2C20%2C30

Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

³⁵ Allen, *When a Marriage Ends*, 13.

³⁶ See 1 Kgs 17, 19 and 2 Kgs 11.

³⁷ Robert F. Bornstein, “The Complex Relationship Between Dependency and Domestic Violence: Converging Psychological Factors and Social Forces” (*American Psychologist*, September 2006 61(6): 595-606).

http://csaweb115v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=mmva9a4lpc6miq2v996vpnfve5&db=psyarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2006%2D11202%2D003&f1=0003%2D066X%2C61%2C6%2C595%2C2006&key=AMP%2F61%2F&famp%5F61%5F6%5F595&is=0003%2D066X&jv=61&jj=6&jp=595%2D606&sp=595&ep=606&year=2006&mon=09&day=0003%2D066X%2C61%2C6%2C595%2C2006. Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Robert Hemfelt, Frank Minirth, & Paul Meier, *Love is a Choice: Recovery for Codependent Relationships* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 159-162.

⁴⁰ The wife of Jeroboam also portrays aspects of a victim. Consider more insights from Hemfelt, Minirth, and Meier (162): A true victim didn’t ask for this situation, whatever it is. To ne kind of victim thinks she

Jeroboam's command mode shows that the model of marriage in his household is male dominance. The structure of their marriage, the text reveals, is male headship/female submission. This model, if taken to an extreme, is a dangerous structure and may set a tone for domestic violence.⁴¹ Power dispersed in a hurtful ways has the potential to destroy. The wife of Jeroboam in her extreme passivity throughout the passage displays evidence of responding to abusive power by retreating into a silent shell. Perhaps a silent shell is her safe haven.

Taken to an extreme, a male headship/female submission model destroys a woman's esteem and makes a man into a monster.⁴² Taken to the extreme, patriarchy makes a woman live without power in a condition of graded subjugation.⁴³ Neither partner fulfills his/her God-given potential. Taken to an extreme, both partners in a male headship/female submission model suffer. Their marriage dynamic is *kiddiwampus*, off balance, out of whack. Taken to an extreme, this model puts the burden of a marriage's success on the woman. She carries the weight for the emotional, physical, psychological, parenting, sexual, spiritual, economic, maintenance, and provision issues in a marriage. Furthermore, she believes the truthfulness of the words of her husband and the justification of his actions toward her.⁴⁴ However, she believes lies.

An abused woman's belief in her husband's words and her acceptance of his actions toward her as right destroy her self-esteem and warp her personality. The inner workings of a marriage like this are not normal; they are dysfunctional. But because of habit and use, they become normal and even self-perpetuating. Others observe the dysfunction. Young children in the marriage see something that is inherently evil and abnormal as normal. In short, abuse prevents a healthy partnership.⁴⁵ The marriage of the royals—Jeroboam and his wife—shows no signs of health.⁴⁶

could be happy if only all this weren't happening. This woman may think she is the soul most to be pitied because she is so very nice down inside and none of this was deserved. Another kind of victim who is the enabler is a self-pitying person, but a true victim does not perceive of herself in this self-pitying way. However, the silence of the wife of Jeroboam makes it impossible to know if she is self-pitying or merely resigned to her life.

⁴¹ See A. L. Miles, *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 28-29.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴³ Aruna Gnanadason, *No Longer a Secret* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993), 4-5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁶ Please see my article, Robin Gallaher Branch, "Spreek 31:10-31: 'n Bybelse model vir die huwelik," *Die Kerkblad* 106 (2003):20-22. Also, my talk at the Society of Biblical International meeting, July 2008, in Auckland, New Zealand, "Proverbs 31:10-31 as a model for marriage" gives biblical guidelines for a healthy, happy, and successful marriage. Incidentally, the marriage described in Prov. 31:10-31 is egalitarian.

Let's look again for a moment at Israel's legal history. Within the context of marriage and divorce of a Hebrew man and a Hebrew slave woman, minimum standards were given in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. Ex 21:10-11 says this: "If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights. If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money." Commenting on this text, David Instone-Brewer writes that these three categories are marriage vows, "promises of faithfulness and provision of food, clothing, and love. The latter three may be generalized as material and emotional support. Physical and emotional abuse are extreme failures of material and emotional support."⁴⁷ At the very least, Jeroboam's manner toward his wife shows an extreme failure of emotional support.

Violence

The terse, strained interaction between Jeroboam and his wife brings up the possibility of violence in their marriage. Research stresses that a wife's actions are not the cause or precipitator of violence.⁴⁸ Quite the contrary. Violence is a specific choice made by an abusive husband.⁴⁹ A man's violence is a man's choice of behavior.⁵⁰ Violence is learned behavior.⁵¹ At the heart of violent actions is the condition of the heart. Until this heart condition is changed and sin is acknowledged, violence will continue.⁵²

The question of power in a relationship appears to play a significant role in battering; some studies show it begins before marriage.⁵³ There are attempts to dominate one's partner via financial, social, and decision-making control. Some researchers theorize that because men of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to batter, they do it to assert the power that they lack economically. Violence becomes the tactic that

⁴⁷ David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 308.

⁴⁸ Margie Margi Laird McCue cautions against looking for the causes of male violence in women; that may be another way of blaming the victim (McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 84).

⁴⁹ Alsdurf & Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission*, 68.

⁵⁰ McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 84.

⁵¹ Nancy Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife: How Christians Confront Family Violence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 8.

⁵² Violence is a sign of the batterer's choice to allow such corruption to take root and become evil (Alsdurf & Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission*, 57, 59).

⁵³ Wexler, *Violent Relationships*, 33.

compensates for the control, power, independence, and self-sufficiency these men lack in other areas.⁵⁴ Presumably Jeroboam as king of Israel enjoyed financial security.

Popular culture says violence is a response to stress, the result of poor family modeling, and the outcome of failure to be aware of one's feelings. However, this is not an accurate discernment of where the battle lies. James Alsdurf & Phyllis Alsdurf argue that battering and violence are expressions of evil and must be confronted on a spiritual level because they are spiritual problems.⁵⁵ The prophetic word charges Jeroboam with making for himself other gods, idols of metal. Instead of seeking the God of Israel, Jeroboam provoked the God of Israel to anger (1 Kgs 14:9).

Remember this: Violence by the batterer is violence on the batterer's own behalf. It is violence designed to serve himself and attain power over others. It is violence based on a lust for power, a lust which destroys.⁵⁶ Jeroboam's violent behavior toward the man of God (1 Kgs 13) and his treatment of his wife (1 Kgs 14) show he gears his actions to attain power over others.

Abuse denotes elements of control and a fight for hierarchy. Abuse also deals with terror, power, ownership, and entitlement.⁵⁷ The problem of wife abuse is not one of feminism, secular humanism, or a lack of headship in the home. It is the problem of evil—unseen and unopposed.⁵⁸

Studies show that the abuse a woman receives cannot be changed by changing the actions of the woman. Put another way, the victim cannot stop the abuse by changing her behavior.⁵⁹ Abuse has little to do with what a woman does or does not do, what a woman says or does not say. Sadly, a woman's efforts to change her behavior cannot alone save her marriage or her family. A popular myth—and one erroneous to its core—is that a woman saves her marriage and changes her husband by changing her behavior and words. The abuser himself and only he is responsible for his actions and for changing his behavior.⁶⁰ Jeroboam, though undoubtedly warned by his wife on her

⁵⁴ Ibid., 33-34.

⁵⁵ Alsdurf & Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission*, 53-62.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁷ McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 95

⁵⁸ See Alsdurf & Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission*, 62. Studies show that violence against women crosses all racial and economic lines; for example, in a given time there were as many calls from Montgomery County, Maryland, about domestic disturbances as there were from downtown Washington, DC. Some studies, however, show that there is more domestic violence among the poor and working class (McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 85).

⁵⁹ See Miles, *Domestic Violence*, 67.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 69.

return of Ahijah's prophecy, chooses not to change. He disregards the prophetic word. The cost? Destruction of his household, abolition of his dynasty, and destruction of his nation.

Why She Goes Back/Why She Stays

After hearing Ahijah's prophesy, why does the wife of Jeroboam go back? Indeed, if she is an abused wife, why does she stay? Excellent questions these.⁶¹

The wife of Jeroboam returns home, and her return sets in motion the chain of events outlined in Ahijah's prophetic word leading to the death of her son, the extinction of the house of Jeroboam, and the uprooting of Israel (1 Kgs 14:6-16). Modern research finds that an abused woman who returns home after a battering session (or is already an abused woman) most often has been married for a long time; she is not a newlywed. Estimating the length of their marriage from their son Abijah's age, the royals realistically had been married at least a decade when this incident takes place. Sadly, one pattern of family violence is that women in a violent situation want someone to tell them what to do.⁶² Why? Because women in abusive situations feel disoriented and live with a very low self-esteem.⁶³ Jeroboam and Ahijah both comply and clearly tell the wife of Jeroboam what to do.

The primary reason an abused woman stays in an abusive relationship is fear.⁶⁴ This fear involves fear of a husband and fear of the future. A woman's fear includes fear of the unknown and fear of doing or saying something to arouse her husband's anger and to trigger his abuse.⁶⁵ Perversely, an abused woman may fear abandonment more than an outburst of abuse, for at least abuse is known and somewhat structured but the future is wide open. The biblical text gives an ancient, interesting parallel: the liberated Hebrews *begged* Moses to let them return to Egypt rather than to lead them to face the wilderness (Ex. 14:11; Num. 14:2-4). Human nature presents this tendency: known death is sometimes better than unknown obstacles and opportunities. Perhaps the wife of Jeroboam and mother of Abijah returns home because her fear of the unknown is greater than her fear of Jeroboam.

⁶¹ In the 1920s it was believed women of low intelligence stayed in an abusive relationship; in the 1930s to the 1940s, it was believed battered women were masochistic; from the 1970s on, it has been believed that battered women are isolated and have fewer educational and social resources as backups (McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 112-116).

⁶² Velzeboer, Ellsberg, Arcas, & Garcia-Moreno, *Violence Against Women*, 80.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁴ McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 113-114.

⁶⁵ Clarke, *Pastoral Care of Battered Women*, 15.

According to modern research, the long-term effect of the repeated and unpredictable situations of terror to which battered women are subjected is that they become afraid of staying in their marriages and yet are more terrified of leaving.⁶⁶ In the case of the wife of Jeroboam, where could she go? Who would take her in? The arm of the king extended throughout the kingdom. Quite likely she does not know what to do because she doesn't know if her actions will bring her what she longs for the most: safety.⁶⁷

Let's keep looking at fear, for it involves extensive loss. An abused woman fears the loss of her family, the loss of her reputation and status, the loss of her children, the loss of her home, the loss of income; an abused woman faces the cultural pressure and economic necessity of staying put.⁶⁸ Surprisingly, modern research finds that women of higher socioeconomic status tend to turn inward when encountering spousal aggression.⁶⁹ Arguably, the silence of the wife of Jeroboam is not because she is stupid but because she has turned inward. She seeks safety from a frightening exterior world by turning inside to a quiet place inside where at least she can control the silence.

Interviews with abused women show they retain a naïve hope. Research finds that women repeatedly return to abusive relationships hoping to resolve the conflict and thus to not see themselves or their marriages as failures; in addition, an abused woman often takes advantage of help and then goes back to her husband once the tension has subsided.⁷⁰ Perhaps the wife of Jeroboam returns because she's familiar with the cycle of abuse (tension build-up, anger, rage, explosion, honeymoon period, tension build-up, anger, rage, explosion, etc.).⁷¹ She knows the habits of Jeroboam, her husband, and calculates that the "timing" favors a somewhat peaceful time in her life. The wife of Jeroboam clearly acts in a passive, non-provoking way.⁷² She provokes neither her husband nor the prophet.

⁶⁶ Alsdurf & Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission*, 74.

⁶⁷ Wexler, *Violent Relationships*, 46.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷⁰ Alsdurf & Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission*, 76.

⁷¹ Women living in the cycle of abuse are constantly on guard and become so insecure they further isolate themselves (Wexler, *Violent Relationships*, 47). A woman who is imprisoned in her home with no individual freedom to seek help does not seek help because she has been physically and psychologically locked into her situation (*ibid.*, 47). Isolation becomes a habit, a mode of survival.

⁷² Perhaps the wife of Jeroboam is passive for good reason. Repeated battering, like electrical shocks, diminishes a woman's motivation to respond. She becomes passive. Second, her cognitive ability to perceive success is changed. She does not believe her response will result in a favorable outcome, whether or not it might. Third, having generalized her helplessness, the battered woman does not believe anything she does will alter any outcome. Fourth, her sense of emotional well-being becomes precarious (Alsdurf & Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission*, 73-74).

Significantly, the biblical text gives no information about the wife of Jeroboam—her town, her age, her other children (if any), her physical appearance, or the names of her parents.⁷³ (Ironically, the town, tribe and mother of Jeroboam are named. He was an Ephraimite from Zaredah, and his mother was a widow named Zeruah [1 Kgs 11:26]). However, social learning psychologists theorize that women who grow up in a home where they witness their mothers being beaten are more likely to become victims themselves.⁷⁴

Let us assume that the wife of Jeroboam was in her time an affluent woman. An affluent woman today is married to a man at the top of his career; she has children and is active in her community; she entertains regularly.⁷⁵ Yet in reality her “life is a nightmare,” McCue says.⁷⁶ She is embarrassed, ashamed. If the wife of Jeroboam, a queen, left her husband, she would face national humiliation.

In today’s world, an affluent, abused woman rarely feels she can go to her family and/or friends. The husband manages the credit cards or they have jointly owned assets. In other words, even an affluent woman today often feels helpless in an abusive situation.⁷⁷ If a modern-day woman flees the domicile, she is charged with desertion in the divorce decree. When a wealthy woman runs from her abusive husband, she many times loses her children as well as her home and her social status.⁷⁸ Living in Israel c. 915 BC, is the wife of Jeroboam so much different?

Studies show that women separated from their abuser or divorced from him are more likely now in their single state to encounter abuse than are married women.⁷⁹ One study shows that 55 percent of assaults against separated women are made by males they knew and 15.6 percent of assaults on married women are domestic.⁸⁰

⁷³ The biblical text gives the names of the mothers of Rehoboam and Abijah, kings of Judah (1 Kgs 14:21; 15:1-2), for example. The text about Jeroboam’s successor, his son Nadab, contains no mention of Nadab’s mother (1 Kgs 15:25).

⁷⁴ McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 84.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁷ A modern woman living in an abusive situation fears losing face within the community. To report a condition of domestic violence may isolate or cut off a woman from her community as well as from her family. In addition, an older woman who was brought up to keep her family problems private is much less able to reach out for help (*ibid.*, 90).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

Consider this chilling insight. Research shows that women who try to escape the cycle of abuse are beaten—or killed—for it. The act of leaving an abusive relationship is often followed by more abuse.⁸¹ A Florida study showed that 57 percent of men who killed their wives were living apart from them at the time of the killing.⁸² Research shows that the most common reasons for the killing of a wife by a husband involve issues related to the husband: the husband experiences a loss of control and the husband fears abandonment.⁸³ Perhaps the wife of Jeroboam feared being killed. Three things are certain: the wife of Jeroboam goes back; her home was not a safe place for her in 1 Kgs 11:1; and the home she goes back to is certainly less a safe place for her in verse 17. The story of the wife of Jeroboam reinforces this fact found in modern research: it is a myth that the family home and the family itself are places of security and refuge.⁸⁴

The Wife of Jeroboam: Possibly an Abused Woman

The biblical text shows that the wife of Jeroboam (like a modern woman in an abusive situation) has adopted a strategy for coping with abnormal and unusually frightening experiences.⁸⁵ Her strategy involves silence, denial, passivity, instant obedience, no dialogue, isolation, and minimalizing herself.⁸⁶ Denial and minimalization enable an abused woman to live with what is happening and to avoid feelings of terror and humiliation.⁸⁷ She adopts an attitude of learned helplessness.⁸⁸ *Modern research makes this important observation: battered women may suffer a range of psychosocial problems not because they are sick but because they are battered.*⁸⁹ Arguably because of her strategies for survival, the wife of Jeroboam plays an active role in her own victimization.⁹⁰

Research indicates that there are numerous health outcomes on the part of the woman who has or is experiencing violence. Mental health issues may include post traumatic stress syndrome; depression; anxiety; phobias; panic attacks; eating disorders; sexual dysfunction; substance abuse; and low self-esteem.⁹¹ Furthermore, chronic health

⁸¹ Ibid., 115.

⁸² Ibid., 115.

⁸³ Ibid., 115.

⁸⁴ Gnanadason, *No Longer a Secret*, 8.

⁸⁵ Wexler, *Violent Relationships*, 46.

⁸⁶ Coping skills include denial, minimalization, anger, shock, nightmares, dissociation (see McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 100).

⁸⁷ In an actual battering event, shock and dissociation can numb the woman's mind and body while the assault takes place (ibid., 100).

⁸⁸ Clarke, *Pastoral Care of Battered Women*, 44.

⁸⁹ McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 100.

⁹⁰ Gelles, "No Place to Go," 57.

⁹¹ Velzeboer, Ellsberg, Arcas, & Garcia-Moreno, *Violence Against Women*, 6.

conditions from long-term abuse include irritable bowel syndrome; fibromyalgia; gastrointestinal disorders; and chronic pain syndrome.⁹² The reactions of the wife of Jeroboam show the possibility not only of low self-esteem but also of depression.⁹³

The silence of the wife of Jeroboam may indicate a pattern in her marriage of being blamed for everything. She may be reasoning that if she says nothing, maybe Jeroboam won't affix blame to her. Research finds that the abuser blames the woman because he feels a loss of control.⁹⁴ The silence of the wife of Jeroboam may indicate she retreats to a fantasy world—an imaginary place where she is safe, where the community respects her, where her husband is gentle toward her.⁹⁵

The text emphasizes the isolation of the wife of Jeroboam. She confides in no friend, sheds no tears, and receives no safe or tender touch from Jeroboam, Ahijah, or God. She solicits no help from the royal court or faith communities. It would seem she lives in an unsafe situation and has no support system she can trust.⁹⁶ In modern parlance she has no sister support.⁹⁷

⁹² Ibid., 6. Research confirms that exposure to long-term interpersonal violence increases the likelihood of mental health problems for a woman. These include a heightened risk of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use problems (Kristina A. Hedtke, Kenneth J. Ruggiero, Monica M. Fitzgerald, Heidi M. Zinzow, Benjamin E. Saunders, Heidi S. Resnick, & Dean G. Kilpatrick, "A Longitudinal Investigation of Interpersonal Violence in Relation to Mental Health and Substance Use" *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. August 2008 76(4): 633-647). http://csaweb113v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=ocackoh7dbo68l8uil5mhh3j14&db=psycarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2008%2D09736%2D009&f1=0022%2D006X%2C76%2C4%2C633%2C2008&key=CCP%2F76%2Fccp%5F76%5F4%5F633&is=0022%2D006X&jv=76&ji=4&jp=633%2D647&sp=633&ep=647&year=2008&mon=08&day=0022%2D006X%2C76%2C4%2C633%2C2008. Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

⁹³ Research indicates that poor quality social bonds showed over time an acute drop in self-esteem; this drop in self-esteem led to acute increases in health problems (Danu Anthony Stinson, Christine Logel, Mark P. Zanna, John G.I Holmes, Jessica J. Cameron, Joanne V. Wood, Steven J. Spencer. "The Cost of Lower Self-Esteem: Testing a Self-and Social-Bonds Model of Health." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. March 2008 94(3): 412-428). http://csaweb115v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=mmva9a4lpc6miq2v996vpnfve5&db=psycarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2008%2D01768%2D004&f1=0022%2D3514%2C94%2C3%2C412%2C2008&key=PSP%2F94%2Fpsp%5F94%5F3%5F412&is=0022%2D3514&jv=94&ji=3&jp=412%2D428&sp=412&ep=428&year=2008&mon=03&day=0022%2D3514%2C94%2C3%2C412%2C2008. Date accessed: 8 November 2008

Date accessed: 8 November 2008

⁹⁴ Ibid., 109.

⁹⁵ See Clarke, *Pastoral Care of Battered Women*, 61.

⁹⁶ Christine A Courtois, "Complex Trauma, Complex Reactions: Assessment and Treatment (Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, August 2008 (1): 86-100). http://csaweb105v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=9oo3mhc9hjds58ost05. Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

⁹⁷ See Linda H. Hollies, *Sister, Save Yourself!* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 58, 94.

Although the wife of Jeroboam arguably sees few alternatives to her possibly loveless and possibly abusive situation, she is a survivor. It's important to give abused women credit. Yes, indeed, victims of domestic violence are survivors. Many find various ways to contain the abuse until they are able to leave the relationship. The coping strategies they work out enable them to put their feelings on hold so that they can deal with the day-to-day challenges of living a home life filled with violence and danger. The abused one dons survival strategies like learned helplessness.⁹⁸ An abused person dissociates, self-hypnotizes, and distances herself (emotionally, at least) from her situation.⁹⁹

Often a woman in a battering/abuse situation thinks she has only three choices. First, to leave. Second, to stay and risk psychological death. Third, to stay and choose to kill her abuser. Arguably by going back, the wife of Jeroboam chooses to stay and experience a psychological death.

The silence of the wife of Jeroboam may indicate depression. Depression may come from post traumatic stress syndrome.¹⁰⁰ Her silence may indicate Disintegration Anxiety; in this disorder, the victim shows a serious loss of initiative, a profound drop in self-esteem, and a sense of total meaninglessness.¹⁰¹

The silence of the wife of Jeroboam may indicate her suffering. A woman's sense of self and sense of worth often are determined by the input and opinions of others.¹⁰² Jeroboam's treatment of his wife arguably indicates a contempt of her and a devaluing her as a person.

The marriage of the royals displays no statement of faith, no action of seeking of God together. Consider the contrast between Jeroboam and his wife and David and Bathsheba. Both couples faced the illness and death of a son. But David openly sought the Lord; he fasted, prayed, repented, and asked the Lord to spare the unnamed baby (2 Sam. 12:15-18). When he learned of the baby's death, David got up from the ground, washed himself, put on clean clothes, worshiped the Lord, ate, "and comforted his wife Bathsheba" (12:19-20, 24). The Kings text gives no indication that Jeroboam or his wife fasted, prayed, worshiped, or mourned together about their son; sadly, it likewise gives no indication that Jeroboam comforted his wife.

⁹⁸ See Clarke, *Pastoral Care of Battered Women*, 44.

⁹⁹ Dutton, *The Abusive Personality*, 42.

¹⁰⁰ McCue, *Domestic Violence*, 100.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰² Nancy Leigh DeMoss, *Lies Women Believe and the Truth That Sets Them Free* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 66.

Quite likely, the wife of Jeroboam has not only a low self-esteem but also a low estimation of God. Neither Jeroboam nor the wife of Jeroboam seeks the Lord. Nancy Leigh DeMoss offers a profound insight for women today that applies to difficult marriages. She believes that the problem of many modern women is not a low self-esteem and a poor self-image but a poor God-image “Our need is not to love ourselves more but to receive His incredible love for us and to accept His design and purpose for our lives,” DeMoss writes.¹⁰³ Her counsel is in keeping with the biblical mandates to love and seek God.

Possible Modern Applications from the Story of the Wife of Jeroboam

The wife of Jeroboam did not get help from the royal court or a faith community. In modern parlance, she fell through the cracks. Yet her story—by its silences—shows what is needed for a safety net. A modern safety net particularly in a faith community could include the following items:¹⁰⁴

1. A commitment to listen to and believe a victim’s stories.
2. A choice to put the safety of the victim and her family first.
3. A team approach to abuse that includes outside professionals.
4. A safe, clean refuge for herself and her children.

Evidently neither the wife of Jeroboam nor Jeroboam sought or received counseling. However, counseling is available to modern couples. Nancy Nason-Clark offers guidelines for counseling a couple in a marriage in which abuse takes place. Her suggestions include the following:¹⁰⁵

1. Be aware of a tendency to buy into the excuses of the batterer; he’s probably a respected person in the civic community or faith community.
2. Comfort the abused.
3. Help each party recognize his or her anger.
4. Set goals.
5. Encourage the development of relationships with others in the faith community.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 70-71

¹⁰⁴ See Miles, *Domestic Violence*, 75.

¹⁰⁵ Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 102-103.

6. Help each party learn ways to stop the pattern and habit of abuse.

Conclusion

Why is the wife of Jeroboam silent, mute, ultra obedient and seemingly passionless and lifeless in I Kings 14? I do not believe she was passionless and colorless and lifeless as a young girl; I believe she became that way in response to her life in her marriage. Jeroboam, described as a man of standing, a *hayil*, would have married a woman of like character and disposition. He would not have married a simpleton—a bimbo, to use a modern word.¹⁰⁶

I venture that the downward spiral of Jeroboam's character from a *hayil* to the standard of evil in his generation and for subsequent evaluations of kings in the Northern Kingdom is mirrored by his wife. Why is she lifeless, mute, and passionless? Why does she go back? I answer that her portrayal in this chapter is consistent with one kind of reaction to abuse. Sadly, the marriage of Jeroboam and his wife shows "a family likeness" to an abusive relationship.

The wife of Jeroboam tries in all ways to avoid confrontation. She tries to please, does exactly what Jeroboam says, and downplays herself. Her silence can be a retreat into an inner sanctum of protection. She presents a portrait of a woman who has no vibrance or life—and that kind of woman would not have initially attracted a man like Jeroboam, a leader of Solomon's builders and a man to whom God gave ten tribes. God signaled out Jeroboam in I Kings 11. I believe that her personality, as seen in this last episode of the Jeroboam cycle, has been formed by the treatment of her by her husband over a period of many years of marriage, as this vignette in 1 Kings 14 shows.

The wife of Jeroboam is extremely important in the biblical text because of the prophecy she receives. God's plan to uproot and scatter Israel is revealed first to this unnamed woman. Her return home sets in motion events that lead to her son's death, to the destruction of her household, and to the overthrow of Israel. Obedient, mysterious, and mute, she nonetheless figures prominently in Israel's history because of the significance of the prophetic word given to her. If indeed she is abused, God's judgment against Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 14:9) significantly expands the concept and definition of evil past idolatry to include abuse. Her society cannot or does not hold Jeroboam I

¹⁰⁶ There is ample evidence in the biblical text that like marries like. Consider these marriage: Ruth and Boaz, Jezebel and Ahab, Abigail and David (1 Sam 25), the Proverbs 31 woman and her husband, and the Aramean general Naaman and his wife (2 Kgs 5).

accountable—but God does.¹⁰⁷ Thus the text—and God—accord the wife of Jeroboam more dignity and relevance than do her husband, her society, and traditional scholars.

-30-

Bibliography

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. 1976. *The Committed Marriage*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

Allen, Charles L. 1986. *When a Marriage Ends*. Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell.

Alsdurf, James, & Phyllis Alsdurf. 1989. *Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Baker, Jeremy, MD. Fellow presenter at the 2008 International Congress of the Society of Biblical Literature, Auckland, New Zealand, July 2008.

Beeble, Marisa L., Deborah Bybee, & Cris M. Sullivan. 2007. "Abusive Men's Use of Children to Control their Partners and Ex-Partners." *European Psychologist* 2007 12(1): 54-61.

http://csaweb115v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=mmva9a4lpc6miq2v996vpnfve5&db=psycarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2007%2D04213%2D007&f1=1016%2D9040%2C12%2C1%2C54%2C2007&key=EPP%2F12%2Fep%5F12%5F1%5F54&is=1016%2D9040&jv=12&ji=1&jp=54%2D61&sp=54&ep=61&year=2007&mon=00&day=1016%2D9040%2C12%2C1%2C54%2C2007. Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

Bird, Phyllis A. 1997. *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

¹⁰⁷ See Hollies, *Sister, Save Yourself!* 80.

Bornstein, Robert F. 2006. "The Complex Relationship Between Dependency and Domestic Violence: Converging Psychological Factors and Social Forces." *American Psychologist*, September 2006 61(6): 595-606.

http://csaweb115v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=mmva9a4lpc6miq2v996vvpnfve5&db=psycarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2006%2D11202%2D003&f1=0003%2D066X%2C61%2C6%2C595%2C2006&key=AMP%2F61%2Famp%5F61%5F6%5F595&is=0003%2D066X&jv=61&ji=6&jp=595%2D606&sp=595&ep=606&year=2006&mon=09&day=0003%2D066X%2C61%2C6%2C595%2C2006. Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

Branch, Robin Gallaher. 2003. "Spreuke 31:10-31: 'n Bybelse model vir die huwelik." *Die Kerkblad* 106 (2003): 20-22.

_____. 2004. "The Wife of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 14:1-18: The Incredible, Riveting, History-Changing Significance of an Unnamed, Overlooked, Ignored, Obedient, Obscure Woman", *Old Testament Essays*, 2004, 17 (2):157-167.

_____. 2008. "Proverbs 31:10-31 as a model for marriage." Paper given in July at the Society of Biblical Literature international meeting, Auckland, New Zealand. July 2008.

Clarke, Rita-Lou. 1986. *Pastoral Care of Battered Women*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

Courtois, Christine A. 2008. "Complex Trauma, Complex Reactions: Assessment and Treatment (Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, August 2008 (1): 86-100.

http://csaweb113v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=ocackoh7dbo68l8uil5mhh3j14&db=psycarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2008%2D10829%2D004&f1=1942%2D9681%2CS%2C1%2C86%2C2008&key=TRA%2FS%2Ftra%5FS%5F1%5F86&is=1942%2D9681&jv=S&ji=1&jp=86%2D100&sp=86&ep=100&year=2008&mon=08&day=1942%2D9681%2CS%2C1%2C86%2C2008
Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

DeMoss, Nancy Leigh. 2001. *Lies Women Believe and the Truth That Sets Them Free*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Dutton, Donald G. 1998. *The Abusive Personality: Violence and Control in Intimate Relationships*. New York: Guilford Press.

Eisenman, Tom L. 1990. *Temptations Men Face: Straightforward Talk on Power, Money, Affair., Perfectionism, Insensitivity*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Finkel, Eli J. 2007. "Impelling and Inhibiting Forces in the Perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence." *Review of General Psychology*, June 2007 11(2): 193-207.

http://csaweb115v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=mmva9a4lpc6miq2v996vpnfve5&db=psycarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2007%2D08858%2D009&f1=1089%2D2680%2C11%2C2%2C193%2C2007&key=GPR%2F11%2Fgpr%5F11%5F2%5F193&is=1089%2D2680&jv=11&ji=2&jp=193%2D207&sp=193&ep=207&year=2007&mon=06&day=1089%2D2680%2C11%2C2%2C193%2C2007

Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

Fuchs, Esther, 2003. *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Gardner, Paul D., ed. 1995. *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters: The Complete Who's Who in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Gelles, Richard J. 1977. "No Place to Go: The Social Dynamics of Marital Violence." *Battered Women: A Psychosociological Study of Domestic Violence*. Maria Roy, ed., 46-63.

Gnanadason, Aruna. 1993. *No Longer a Secret*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.

Hankins, Gary, with Carol Hankins. 1993. *Prescription for Anger: coping with Angry Feelings and Angry People*. New York: Warner Books.

Hedtke, Kristina A., Kenneth J. Ruggiero, Monica M. Fitzgerald, Heidi M. Zinzow, Benjamin E. Saunders, Heidi S. Resnick, & Dean G. Kilpatrick. 2008. "A Longitudinal Investigation of Interpersonal Violence in Relation to Mental Health and Substance

Use." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, August 2008, 76(4): 633-647. http://csaweb113v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=ocackoh7dbo68l8uil5mhh3j14&db=psycarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2008%2D09736%2D009&f1=0022%2D006X%2C76%2C4%2C633%2C2008&key=CCP%2F76%2Fccp%5F76%5F4%5F633&is=0022%2D006X&jv=76&ji=4&jp=633%2D647&sp=633&ep=647&year=2008&mon=08&day=0022%2D006X%2C76%2C4%2C633%2C2008.

Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

Hemfelt, Robert, Frank Minirth, & Paul Meier. 1989. *Love is a Choice: Recovery for Codependent Relationships*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Hollies, Linda H. 2006. *Sister, Save Yourself!* Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press.

Instone-Brewer, David. 2002. *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

_____. 2007. "What God Has Joined." *Christianity Today*. October 2007: 26-29.

McCue, Margi Laird. 1995. *Domestic Violence: A Reference Book*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc.

Miles, A. L. 2000. *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Murphy, Christopher M., & Christopher I. Eckhardt. 2005. *Treating the Abusive Partner: An Individualized Cognitive-Behavioral Approach*. New York: Guilford.

Nason-Clark, Nancy. 1997. *The Battered Wife: How Christians Confront Family Violence*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

New International Version Study Bible. 1995. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Pagelow, Mildred Daley. 1981. *Woman Battering: Victims and Their Experiences*. Beverly Hills: Sage Library of Social Research.

Poling, James Newton. 2002. *Render Unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence, and Pastoral Theology*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Poling, James Newton. 2003. *Understanding Male Violence: Pastoral Care Issues*. Danvers: Chalice Press.

South, Susan C., Eric Turkheimer, Thomas F. Oltmanns 2008. "Personality Disorder Symptoms and Marital Functioning." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, October 2008 76(5): 769-780.
http://csaweb113v.csa.com/ids70/view_record.php?id=2&recnum=29&log=from_res&SID=ocackoh7dbo68l8uil5mhh3j14&mark_id=search%3A2%3A35%2C20%2C30
Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

Stinson, Danu Anthony, Christine Logel, Mark P. Zanna, John G. I. Holmes, Jessica J. Cameron, Joanne V. Wood, Steven J. Spencer. 2008. "The Cost of Lower Self-Esteem: Testing a Self-and Social-Bonds Model of Health." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. March 2008 94(3): 412-428.
http://csaweb115v.csa.com/ids70/display_fulltext_html.php?SID=mmva9a4lpc6miq2v996vpnfve5&db=psycarticles%2Dset%2Dc&an=2008%2D01768%2D004&f1=0022%2D3514%2C94%2C3%2C412%2C2008&key=PSP%2F94%2Fpsp%5F94%5F3%5F412&is=0022%2D3514&jv=94&jj=3&jp=412%2D428&sp=412&ep=428&year=2008&mon=03&day=0022%2D3514%2C94%2C3%2C412%2C2008
Date accessed: 8 November 2008.

Velzeboer, Marijke, Mary Ellsberg, C. C. Arcas, & Claudia Garcia-Moreno. 2003. *Violence Against Women: The Health Sector Responds*. Washington, D.C.: Pan American Health Organization.

Walker, Lenore. 1979. *The Battered Woman*. New York: Harper & Row.

Wexler, Barbara. 2003. *Violent Relationships: Battering and Abuse Among Adults*. Information Plus Reference Series. Detroit: Thomson Gale.