

## 1 KINGS 13:1-10 | TROUBLE WITH GOD

### VERSE 1 – A DRAMATIC TURN OF EVENTS

It is possible that the events in verses 1-10 occurred during the “dedication” ceremony mentioned in the previous verse, which would make for a dramatic turn of events.

Although the prophet’s identity remains unknown, it is clear that he has been sent by **the LORD** to address the issue at hand.

Upon the unnamed prophet’s arrival, Jeroboam was **by the altar, preparing to burn incense**. This act would have been punishable by death in Judaism, as the priesthood was reserved exclusively for Levites and separated from the monarchy.

### VERSE 2 – THE PROPHECY ABOUT JOSIAH

It is interesting that the man **cried against the altar** rather than against Jeroboam himself. Why is this? Perhaps it is to shame Jeroboam as something of a pawn in the story. Or perhaps the prophet spoke to the altar rather than directly to Jeroboam because he was addressing the spiritual problem behind Jeroboam’s idolatry. The altar was the physical manifestation of the spiritual problem, as it represented the false gods that Jeroboam had set up for the people to worship.

By speaking to the altar, the prophet was symbolically addressing the root of the problem and making it clear that God was not pleased with the false worship taking place there. It was a powerful statement that challenged Jeroboam’s authority and highlighted the need for true worship of the one true God.

The man gives an amazing prophecy that **a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name**. What makes this such a fantastic prophecy is that Josiah was not born until several centuries later. Furthermore, according to the biblical account in 2 Kings 23:15-20, King Josiah destroyed the altar at Bethel, which had been set up by Jeroboam and had become a site of false worship.

Josiah carried out extensive religious reforms in Judah during his reign, which included the removal of idols and false worship practices, the restoration of proper worship of the Lord, and the destruction of false altars and high places throughout the land. The destruction of the altar at Bethel was part of these reforms, as it was a symbol of the false worship that had been established in Israel and needed to be eliminated. It is most amazing that these events were prophesied several hundred years in advance.

### VERSE 3 – PROPHECY SPOKEN, SOON TO BE FULFILLED

The prophecy about Josiah would not be fulfilled for several hundred years. But the prophecy about the **altar** and the **ashes** will be fulfilled in verse 5.

### VERSE 4 – A DEFEATED PROPHET

Jeroboam, in a seeming rage, tells his officers **“Lay hold on him.”** But no sooner does he speak this than his hand **dried up**, leaving the arm (it seems), paralyzed.

The Hebrew word **יָבֵשׁ** (yavesh), which is translated as “dried up” in 1 Kings 13:4, is used to describe withered or dried up body parts in other places in the Hebrew Bible.

For example, in Job 13:28, the word is used to describe how a person’s body can become withered and dry like a mummy: **“And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten.”** Similarly, in Psalm 22:15, the word is used to describe the body becoming weak and withered like dry clay: **“My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”**

So while the word **יָבֵשׁ** (yavesh) is not exclusively used to describe body parts, it can be used in this context to describe withered or dried up body parts. The word appears in a number of ancient Hebrew inscriptions and documents, including the Mesha Stele, the Siloam Inscription, and the Lachish Letters. In these inscriptions, the word **יָבֵשׁ** (yavesh) is used to describe the drying up or withering of plants, trees, and crops due to drought or lack of water. The word is also used to describe the withering or drying up of animal hides or skin due to exposure to the sun or lack of moisture.

**VERSE 5 – PROPHECY FULFILLED**

Verse 5 fulfills the prophecy of verse 3, quickly and swiftly.

**VERSES 6-7 – JEROBOAM’S RESPONSE**

Jeroboam’s tune changed instantly, as sudden partial paralysis is likely to do. He begins to **Intreat** (older English spelling of *entreat*) **the face of the LORD thy God**. It is interesting that Jeroboam subtly testifies that **the LORD** no longer is “my God” but **thy God**.

Graciously, **the man of God** did as asked, and his hand **became as it was before**. Jeroboam’s immediate response is to pay the prophet with refreshment and **reward**.

There is somewhat a parallel in the story of Nathan confronting David after his sin with Bathsheba.

	Jeroboam (1 Kings 13)	David (2 Samuel 12)
Sin Committed	Setting up of false idols and altars, leading Israel to sin (1 Kings 12:26-33)	Adultery with Bathsheba, followed by arranging for Uriah the Hittite to be killed (2 Samuel 11)
Accuser	Man of God	Prophet Nathan
Response	Attempts to seize the man of God but is struck with paralysis and asks the man of God to intercede with the Lord (1 Kings 13:4-6)	Confesses sin and repents after being confronted with a parable by Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-13)
Attitude	Wants to reward the prophet but doesn’t confess his sin.	Repents and seeks forgiveness from God, accepts the punishment (2 Samuel 12:13-23)

**VERSES 8-10 – REWARD REFUSED**

Verse 8 was a significant rebuke. It was the prophet’s way of implying, “you’re still living in sin despite my warning.”

At first glance, it seems the LORD instructed the man not to return to Judah **by the same way** he came (v. 9-10) for his own protection. However, since the prophet announced this publicly, that doesn’t seem likely. It’s possible that it was simply for the sake of the prophet’s obedience, but this seems arbitrary.

It’s also possible that there is a symbolism that is not easily understood by Western minds. In Abraham’s life, there were times when he went too far and missed his destination, and he would retrace his steps. There appears to be a symbolism of “correcting a mistake” by retracing one’s steps. Therefore, it’s possible that God was warning the prophet, “Don’t let anything change your mind. This is a divine decree.”