

Inputs For Political Stability In 1 Kings 12: Rethinking the Efficacy of Youth Advocacy in Africa Today

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ABSTRACT

By number and vibrancy, the youth constitute a formidable part of the future of any people. However, the potency of their advocacy is often ignored and dismissed for appearing negative. This has robbed society of some gains and paradoxically empowers them for more negativity. This research, predicated upon the necessity to redirect youthful exuberance unto responsibility, is a response to the need to pay objective attention to their veiled potentials. 1 Kings 12 provides a viable Biblical setting for rethinking youth potentialities. Even in this apparently bad portrayal of their position, there is an implicit advantage that needs to be explored. The Historical methods of exegesis, with an Analytico-descriptive approach, will be used to examine and identify that positive but often ignored import, applying it to benefit present day demands. The hope is to discover and highlight a positive potential as a viable alternative to youthful irresponsibility. The findings will be informative and directional in moving from 'youthfulness' to responsibility. The Conclusions and recommendations promise generally, to provoke more Biblically related scholarship in youth-apostolate; but above all, specifically, to initialize a positive attitude about youth advocacy, making it serve the needs of the polity today.

KEYWORDS: Youth; Bible (Old Testament); Politics; Advocacy; Africa; and Development

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I. INTRODUCTION

The stability of the polity is very important in every social setting. The adverse result of instability is trans-generational and needs to be avoided at all cost. This is the reason why every hand should be on deck to ensure communal responsibility and harmonious living. All through the ages, one group that has become very controversial in matters related political stability is the youth. In many cases, the Youth would claim to be the pillars of political stability. The question is whether or not their claim has played out as their gain. But, whether they are living up to their glorious claims or not, one thing that is undeniable is that the presence of the youth and their impact – whether negative or positive, is evidently playing out in many quarters. Unfortunately, some people tend to ignore this especially when they are seen as negative influences. This leaves a serious gap that must be filled – hence this research. Instead of ignoring them, let's seek to discover reasons for youth advocacy in this context. The Youth can hardly be ignored without dying consequences. In today's search for stability in the polity, it has become very relevant to examine the efficacy of this youth advocacy. Knowing the Bible to be a book of perennial resource, this research intends to explore the youth-related situation in Biblical Israel and use same to determine the efficacy or otherwise of advocating for the youth in matters of political stability. The Biblical passage of 1 Kings 12 provides a face-value picture of political instability purportedly caused by the youth. Using the methods of exegesis, this work sets out to study, interpret and understand the import of youth involvement in 1 Kings 12, in order to draw relevant conclusions for rethinking the efficacy or otherwise of youth advocacy today. The aim of this research is to determine the place of youth in political stability and to project such advocacy to benefit political stability today. The conclusions and recommendations promise to be a great insight to this generational need for political stability.

EXPLICATION OF TERMS

In order to have a firm comprehension of the submissions in this research work, it is important to define the following concepts within context: Political Stability, Youth Advocacy, and Efficacy.

Political Stability

In the face of the incessant strife, war, disharmony, division and disunity experienced across the globe today, political stability here refers to the right working of a political entity, where peace and harmony characterize fraternity and political correctness. This situation causes firmness and resistance, consistency,

steadiness, invariability or immutability. Stability is the quality or state of sound and consistent co-existence. Political stability is when such sound coexistence in a polity results in peace, harmony and sustainable growth

Youth Advocacy

Though ‘Youth Advocacy’ can differ in meaning depending on focus, it is used in the context of this research work to refer to that driving spirit of identifying, understanding, and addressing issues that are important to young people. It is an attempt to speak out in favour of the young people and project their strength over any weakness that would veil or drown their relevance. The advocacy here is ‘for’ youth and not necessarily ‘by’ youth.¹

Efficacy

By efficacy here we mean the ability for somebody or something to produce some intended results. It is the power to produce an effect. It has to do with the success potential and meaningfulness of youth advocacy.

EXEGESIS OF I KINGS 12

While the passage of consideration spans the entire 12th Chapter of 1 Kings, the specific section of relevance is verses 1-17 (especially verses 8, 10 and 14)

Hebrew: (WTT 1 Kings 12: 8-17)

וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת־עֲצַת הַזְּקֵנִים אֲשֶׁר יִעָצְהוּ וַיָּנֹעַז אֶת־הַיְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוּ אִתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הָעַמִּידִם לְכָנִי:
9 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מָה אַתֶּם נוֹעֲצִים וְנִשְׁיֵב דָּבָר אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרוּ אֵלַי לֵאמֹר הֲקֹל מִרְהֹלֵל אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן אֲבִיךָ עָלֵינוּ:
10 וַיַּדְּבְרוּ אֵלָיו הַיְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוּ אִתּוֹ לֵאמֹר כֹּה־תֹאמַר לָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרוּ אֵלַיךָ לֵאמֹר אֲבִיךָ הַכְּבִיד אֶת־עֲלֵנוּ וְאַתָּה הֲקֹל מַעֲלִינוּ כֹּה
תִּדְבֹר אֲלֵיהֶם קִטְנֵי עֲבָה מִמֶּתְנֵי אָבִי:
11 וְעַתָּה אֲבִי הָעָמִים עָלֵיכֶם עַל כֵּךְ וְנֹאנִי אוֹסִיף עַל־עַלְכֶם אָבִי יִסֹּר אֶתְכֶם בַּשּׁוּטִים וְנֹאנִי יִסֹּר אֶתְכֶם בַּעֲקָרִים:
12 [וַיִּבְאוּ] יִרְבָּעָם וְכָל־הָעָם אֶל־יִרְבָּעָם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי פֶּאֶשֶׁר דִּבֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ לֵאמֹר שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי:
13 וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת־הָעָם קִשָּׁה וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת־עֲצַת הַזְּקֵנִים אֲשֶׁר יִעָצְהוּ:
14 וַיַּדְּבֵר אֲלֵיהֶם פַּעֲמַת הַיְלָדִים לֵאמֹר אֲבִי הַכְּבִיד אֶת־עַלְכֶם וְנֹאנִי אוֹסִיף עַל־עַלְכֶם אָבִי יִסֹּר אֶתְכֶם בַּשּׁוּטִים וְנֹאנִי יִסֹּר אֶתְכֶם בַּעֲקָרִים:
15 וְלֹא־שָׁמַע הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־הָעָם כִּי־הִוָּתָה סִבָּה מֵעַם וְהָיָה לְמַעַן הָקִים אֶת־דְּבָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי אֶל־יִרְבָּעָם בִּרְנָבֹט:
16 וַיָּרָא כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי לֹא־שָׁמַע הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲלֵיהֶם וַיָּשֻׁבוּ הָעָם אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּבָר וַיֹּאמֶר מִה־לָּנֹכַח בְּדוֹד וְלֹא־נִחַלְתָּה בְּדוֹדִי־שִׁי לֹא־הָלִיךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל
עִתָּה רָאָה בִּיהָדָה דָּגָד וַיִּגְלֹף יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־הָלִיךְ:
17 וַיִּבְגֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיִּשָּׁבִים בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה וַיִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵיהֶם יִרְבָּעָם: פ

Hebrew Transliteration (1 Kings 12: 8-17)

wayya'azōb 'et-'āsat hazzəqēnīm 'āšer yə'āšuhū wayyiwwā'aš 'et-hayyəlādīm 'āšer gādolū 'ittō 'āšer hā'ōmādīm ləpānāyw. 9 wayyō'mer 'ālēhem māh 'attem nō'āšim wənāšīb dābār 'et-hā'ām hazzeh 'āšer dibbərū 'elai lē'mōr hāqēl min-hā'ōl 'āšer-nātan 'ābikā 'ālēnū. 10 waydabbərū 'ēlāyw hayyəlādīm 'āšer gādolū 'ittō lē'mōr kōh-tō'mar lā'ām hazzeh 'āšer dibbərū 'elēkā lē'mōr 'ābikā hikbīd 'et-'ullēnū wə'attāh hāqēl mē'ālēnū kōh tādabbēr 'ālēhem qātānnī 'ābāh mimmātənē 'ābī. 11 wə'attāh 'ābī he'mis 'ālēkem 'ōl kābēd wa'ānī 'ōsīp 'al-'ullākem 'ābī yissar 'etkem baššōtīm wa'ānī 'āyassēr 'etkem bā'aqrabbīm. 12 (wayyābō) [wayyābō] yārob'ām wəkol-hā'ām 'el-rəḥab'ām bayyōm haššəlīšī ka'āšer dibber hammelek lē'mōr šūbū 'elai bayyōm haššəlīšī. 13 wayya'an hammelek 'et-hā'ām qāšāh wayya'azōb 'et-'āsat hazzəqēnīm 'āšer yə'āšuhū. 14 waydabbēr 'ālēhem ka'āsat hayyəlādīm lē'mōr 'ābī hikbīd 'et-'ullākem wa'ānī 'ōsīp 'al-'ullākem 'ābī yissar 'etkem baššōtīm wa'ānī 'āyassēr 'etkem bā'aqrabbīm. 15 wəlō'-šāma' hammelek 'el-hā'ām kī-hāyētāh sibbāh mē'im 'ādōnāi lōma'an hāqīm 'et-dəbārō 'āšer dibber 'ādōnāi bəyaq 'āhiyyāh haššīlōnī 'el-yārob'ām ben-nəbāt. 16 wayyar' kol-yisrā'el kī lō'-šāma' hammelek 'ālēhem wayyāšībū hā'ām 'et-hammelek dābār lē'mōr mah-lānū ḥēleq bəḏāwid wəlō'-naḥālāh bəben-yisai lə'ōhālēkā yisrā'el 'attāh rə'eh bētkā dāwid wayyēlek yisrā'el lə'ōhālāyw. 17 ūbənē yisrā'el hayyōšəbīm bə'ārē yəhūdāh wayyimlōk 'ālēhem rəḥab'ām.

English: (1Ki 12:1-17 RSV)

1. Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.
- 2 And when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, whither he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt.

¹ See more on Youth Advocacy in R Adam “What is Youth Advocacy and why do we need it?” accessed online on 29th October 2023, from www.aesimpact.org

3 And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam,
4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke upon us, and we will serve you."
5 He said to them, "Depart for three days, then come again to me." So the people went away.
6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?"
7 And they said to him, "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants for ever."
8 But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him.
9 And he said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put upon us?'"
10 And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but do you lighten it for us'; thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins.'
11 And now, whereas my father laid upon you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."
12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king said, "Come to me again the third day."
13 And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel which the old men had given him,
14 he 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."
15 So the king did not hearken to the people; for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfil his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.
16 And when all Israel saw that the king did not hearken to them, the people answered the king, "What portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David." So Israel departed to their tents.
17 But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah.

The Analysis of the Text

On face value, 1Kings 12 details why and how Israel rebelled against Rehoboam. The interest of this research is on the involvement of the young people and its import for political stability. An analysis of the text could give further insight into this.²

Textually, there is little or no serious concerns in 1 Kings 12: 1-24. The few variants do not affect the reading or meaning of the text and this research decides to suspend going into such exegetically unyielding controversy.³

There is both the remote and proximate background to 1 Kings 12: 1-17.⁴ Remotely, there are two backgrounds. The preservation of the Davidic dynasty as promised in 2 Sam 7: 12 - 16 plays out here. Also, the warning of God to Israel when they first asked for a king is being fulfilled. In 1 Sam 8: 10-18 and in Deut 17: 16-20, God warned that having a king would bring certain harsh consequences to them. That remote background played out in the experience that Israel had with Solomon. That experience of harshness underlies the political instability harvested by Rehoboam in our text (1 Kings 12: 1-17). On the other hand, the proximate background of this passage is the prophecy of Ahijah in the previous chapter (1 Kings 11). It was prophesied that Israel would be divided into two and Jeroboam would rule over 10 tribes. The events of 1 Kings 12: 1-24 constitute a fulfillment of that prophecy.⁵

² For more information about the text, see more in these commentaries: R. Paul House (1995) 1, 2 Kings, *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 8. Nashville: B&H Publishers; C. F Keil (1996) 1 and 2 Kings; *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers; John Peter Lange (2008) et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 1 Kings*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

³ For the appreciation of Textual analysis of a text, read Ellis R. Brotzman (1994) *Old Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 73-76

⁴ Cf. James A. Montgomery, & Snyder German Henry (1986) *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings*, ICC Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 56ff

⁵ See James A. Montgomery, & Snyder German Henry (1986) *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings*, ICC Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 57

By Structure, as we saw in the background, 1 Kings 12: 1-24 is a part of a much larger periscope of 1 Kings 11: 28/29-12: 1-24. Appreciating it by our focus on the role of the youth in the unfolding of the events leaves us with the following subdivisions:

1. 1 Kings 12: 1-17 (Israel rebels against the house of David – Rehoboam)
 - Introduction (Preamble) (vv. 1-2)
 - Representation and Request to Rehoboam (vv. 3-5)
 - Counsel with Elders (vv. 6-7)
 - Counsel with the Youth (vv. 8-11)
 - Rehoboam's Response to the people (vv. 12-15)
 - The people's reaction and the Division of the Kingdom (v. 16)
 - The consequent fate of Rehoboam (v. 17)
2. 1 Kings 12: 18-20 (Rehoboam attempts to regain the North)
3. 1 Kings 12: 22-24 (The people obeyed the Word of God)

The above outline reveals a structure of progressive events beginning from the prologue (vv. 1-5) to the Counsels (vv. 6-11) to the consequent instability of the polity (vv. 12-17). Looking at the political instability of Israel in this context, the above structure of verses 1-17, if explored, could offer further useful insights.

- ❖ Verses 1-5: PREAMBLE
- ❖ Verses 6-11: COUNSELS
- ❖ Verses 12-17: POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Generally, the plot is between the two 'King-designates' (Jeroboam and Rehoboam). But specifically, it is between King Rehoboam, the people of Israel, and the two groups from whom he took counsel (The Elders and The Young people).⁶ The progression is from the people to King Rehoboam vv. 1-3; then King Rehoboam back to the People v. 4; King Rehoboam to the Elders v. 6; King Rehoboam to the Youth v. 8; and again, King Rehoboam to the People vv. 12-13.

1. **Israel** to Rehoboam and Rehoboam to **Israel** (vv1-5)
 2. Rehoboam to ELDERS (v. 6)
 3. Rehoboam to YOUTH (v. 8)
4. **Israel** to Rehoboam and Rehoboam to **Israel** (vv. 12-13)

In this structure, the King has left the people's fate to be sandwiched between the Elders and the Youth.⁷ That structure reveals what we can call a '*concentricism*'⁸ focusing on Israel. Everything is about the people of Israel. Whatever Rehoboam's final decision would be after consultation, the impact will occasion the stability or otherwise of Israel.

The chiasmic play on the words '*hazzəqēnīm* and *hayyālādīm*' is a pointer to their importance in this research. We see '*hazzəqēnīm*' in v.6; '*hazzəqēnīm*' again in v. 8; '*hayyālādīm*' in v. 8; '*hayyālādīm*' again in v. 10; and, '*hazzəqēnīm*' in vv. 12-13. The heart of the periscope is punctuated by these words in vv. 6, 8, 10 and 12.

A detailed exegetical analysis would reveal more about the import and implications of the counsels (especially that of the *hayyālādīm* and how it affects the stability of the polity). Verses 1 and 2 constitute a preamble/prologue to this political plot. After the death of Solomon, with the hardship that his regime inflicted on the people, the people desired some respite and came to his son Rehoboam to request for respite as they were considering making him king. Rehoboam actually walked a wise path by buying some time to consult. This leads to the heart of this periscope – the counsels. Rehoboam bought sometime in order to consult and seek advice.⁹ The first counsel was with the elders - *hazzəqēnīm*. These are veterans with adequate experience. Some of them may have served in the cabinet of King Solomon and knew and experienced the hardship of the time. From that background, they advised Rehoboam: "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them,

⁶ Simon J. Devries (2003) *1 Kings, Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 12. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 89f

⁷ Walter Brueggemann (1983). *1Kings KPG*, Atlanta: John Knox, 192f.

⁸ The word concentricism is coined by this research to address the nature of this passage structure where focus is concentrated on Israel as per the outcome and impact of whatever King Rehoboam will communicate after consulting with the Elders and the Youth.

⁹ See Choon-Leong Seow, (1999 "The First and Second Books of Kings (Introduction, Commentary and Reflections)" in *The New Interpreter's Bible* Vol. III, Edited by Leander E Keck et al, Nashville: Abingdon, 102

and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants for ever”¹⁰ Unfortunately, Rehoboam rejected this conciliatory approach and turned to the youth - *hayyālādīm*. The big question here is: Why did he reject the counsel of the elders, which appears to be more meaningful only to embrace a very ‘unpopular’ counsel from the youth? Also, what could this situation be telling us about the place of the youth in political stability? The word *zqn* denotes ‘experience’ more than number of years. The use of the word *yld* in contrast to *zqn* is significant. The word *yld* here does not just denote ‘young’ but also ‘inexperienced’. Why then did Rehoboam reject the counsel of the elders?¹¹

Some detailed analysis of this could bring more insight. Rehoboam does not seem to have any personal connection with or appreciation of the Elders. He seems to reach out to them just to fulfill all righteousness. It is important to note how impersonally he consulted the Elders as different from how personally he would later connect with the Youth. To the Elders, Rehoboam said: “How do you advise me to answer these people?” (1 Kings 12: 6). The textual impression is that, these Elders were already known to Rehoboam, as allies of his father Solomon. Could it be that there was something he knew about them that did not add up? The textual impression is that Rehoboam made recourse to the young people after he had already decided to abandon the counsel of the Elders. It is not as if he decided to stay with the Youth after realizing that their counsel was better than the initial one he had from the Elders. Instead, Rehoboam had already decided to reject the counsel of the Elders even before listening to what the Youth had to offer. “But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him.” (1Kings 12: 8). The verb *wayya’āzōb* connotes abandonment. Rehoboam forsook and abandoned the counsel of the Elders and it is obvious that he preferred to turn to a familiar group – The Youth, who had grown up with him.¹² The level of appreciation of the Youth is evident in the manner he identifies with them and in the choice of his words: In consulting these young ones, he says in verse 9: What do you advise that we answer this people? The choice of pronouns here is important. With the Elders, everything was in the second personal pronoun (YOU and ME or YOU to ME). “How do **you** advise **me**...” (1Kings 12: 6 emphasis, mine). But with the Youth, Rehoboam did not only use the first personal pronoun but used an inclusive ‘royal we.’ What do **you** advise that **we** answer this people... (1Kings 12: 8 emphasis, mine). In the use of this pronoun, ‘WE,’ “his bias is evident” in identifying with a preferred group.¹³ But why did Rehoboam feel more comfortable identifying with the youth?

Biblical scholarship has confirmed a few interesting facts about Rehoboam.¹⁴ His Father was King Solomon (2Chr 9: 31). His mother was by name Naamah as seen in 2Chron. 12: 13. He reigned as first King of Judah in succession to his father Solomon. He was 41 years when he became King and reigned for 17 years.¹⁵ This shows that Rehoboam was a Youth. At 41, it is understandable to see him relate more with *hayyālādīm* (the Youth). Technically, the Hebrew *yld* is used in a derogatory way as “the boys,” to connote “the young, the child, the inexperienced and the trouble makers.”¹⁶ This is not only the group that Rehoboam belonged to by status classification, but this is also the group that influenced him most. This explains why he sought their desired opinion by asking: “What do WE answer this people?”

Though the turn of events is what was earlier prophesied and goes to confirm the efficacy of God’s word, but, the preference of an uncompromising and divisive piece of advice from an inexperienced and unserious group to a very responsible counsel from an experienced group, calls for attention especially because the resultant outcome spelt doom for the polity. It led to the division of the Kingdom. The 10 Tribes of Israel were led by Jeroboam leaving only two Tribes for Rehoboam in Judah. In that political instability, Israel lost its one identity and sovereignty as a united polity.

At peripheral sight, the Youth here can be dismissed as irrelevant. But a careful second thought could paradoxically point to some strength in the youth (*hayyālādīm*). How did they overwhelm the supposedly better counsel of the Elders? This points to the efficacy of their advocacy – a trend that deserves attention and study.

¹⁰ 1 Kings 12: 7

¹¹ Cf. Dale Ralph Davis (2002). *1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly*, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 5ff.

¹² It is possible that this long acquaintancy could have been the reason why he had more confidence in the youth. It is also possible that he himself shed their life, life-style and convictions.

¹³ See Choon-Leong Seow, (1999) “The First and Second Books of Kings (Introduction, Commentary and Reflections)” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* Vol. III, Edited by Leander E Keck et al, Nashville: Abingdon, 102

¹⁴ For more, read: 2Chron. 10, 11, 12; 1Kings 14: 21-31

¹⁵ Cf. 2Chron. 12: 13

¹⁶ Driver Brown (1996) “Hebrew Lexicon Entry for *yeled*” in *The NAS Old Testament Lexicon*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson,

The Findings from the Text

1kings 12 is an account of the fragmentation of the Kingdom of Israel.¹⁷ It is an explanation of the instability that crept into Israel. The roles of Rehoboam, Jeroboam, The Elders, and the Youth, are all significant pointers to political rethinking. Following from the exegesis above, and, against the background of the need to constructively rethink a path to political stability, it is important not to ignore the pointers here.

The stability of Israel was sold out by Rehoboam when he abandoned the counsel of the Elders and took the advice of his peers. The Youth have a stake in this whole scenario. It is evident that Rehoboam did not assent to their advice because it was the better option by objectivity. He accepted their advice just because it came from them – his peers, his friends, his age mates, his play mates, his closest allies and above all, his fellow youth. The closest Allies of Solomon, were the Elders. Rehoboam must have sought to ‘experiment’ something different and give some empowerment to a different group. There are many reasons he could have favoured the Youth. But the choice of their counsel spelt doom for Israel. Far from exposing only the inexperience of the Youth as seen in the text, it is important to focus more on the relevance of these Youth to spring up a revolution and motivate political change. The point is not whether the change brought by the Youth is good or bad. The point is their ability to spring up a political change no matter how unpopular even in the face of supposedly meaningful alternatives. This research just found in this text, the power and importance of the Youth and by implication, the need to advocate their relevance and better prepare them so that whenever they come into the political arena to spring up any change, they would spring up a positive and not a negative change.¹⁸ This finding from the text calls for renewed and need-directed Youth advocacy.

YOUTH ADVOCACY

Youth Advocacy, as the campaign and support for the empowerment of young people has become a sine-qua-non especially in search for political stability today. Given what we see today in the political world as exemplified in what is happening in Africa, nay, Nigeria, there is need to have a serious rethink about the efficacy of youth Advocacy today.¹⁹

Youth Advocacy Today

Today, much more than before, many people have come to realize the need to re-project the youth because of its growing relevance and presence in the life of the communities they find themselves. Such experience has heightened the process of identifying, understanding and addressing issues that are important to young people. But Youth advocacy today, is done, much more, as an empowerment of the young for the benefit of the young. What this research has found reason to propose is that youth advocacy is also necessary today as a preparation to save the polity tomorrow. The reason is not only for the youth and for the present but more especially for the sustained stability of communal living in the future – it is for everybody. It is true that as far as prominence is concerned, whether people like it or not, the youth will always have some way of ‘coming out.’ The greater concern should be on what they will represent when they come out. What advice would they give and what actions would they spring up? Would their actions and advice sustain political stability or cause instability?

Today, Youth advocacy which tends mainly, towards making a case for youth empowerment, is championed, in many quarters, by individuals and agencies. Their focus is to project the youth unto relevance in one area or the other. They seek to “cultivate a generation that cares about the future”²⁰ This advocacy is driven by many factors. Some could even be selfish while others are selfless. When advocated by others, there is the tendency to have the objective drive unto future service. The youth, in their inexperience, may not even appreciate their full potentials. There is need to project such potentials and advocate for their refinement in order to serve the future needs of the polis.²¹

¹⁷ See Philip Graham Ryken (2011). 1 Kings, Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing; Choon Leon Seow (1999) “The First and Second Books of Kings (Introduction, Commentary and Reflections)” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* Vol. III, Edited by Leander E Keck et al, Nashville: Abingdon, 1-298

¹⁸ The political strength of the youth can be traced to many factors. In comparison to the Elders, the Youth could have advantage in many fronts. It could be their number, their physical strength, their age-relation to the Head of Government etc. In whatever way we look at it, the youth is a relevant front that must not be ignored.

¹⁹ See more in R. Adam, “What is Youth Advocacy and why do we need it?” accessed online on 29th October 2023, from www.aesimpact.org

²⁰ R. Adam, “What is Youth Advocacy and why do we need it?” accessed online on 29th October 2023, from www.aesimpact.org

²¹ A Adamu, (2003), “Youths and Development in Nigeria” Being a paper presented at National Congress of the National Youths Council of Nigeria held at Abacha Youths Centre, Lafia, Nigeria.

Youth Advocacy and Political Stability

The Youth, by nature, have a lot at stake in political circles. They may not have the experience, they may not have the money but they have the driving force. They have the number, they have the strength, they have the zeal, they have the connection. They cannot be ignored without consequences. Something must therefore be done to re-project them onto renewed relevance. Experience has shown that the youth are very conspicuously involved in politics. They want to belong and they strive to belong. Sometimes, on account of the passion, they sometimes tend to push their way through to the extent of causing political instability. The Youth themselves have advocated for political involvement. Other individuals and Agencies have also advocated for Youth empowerment. Today, the focus is in involving them but little or nothing is done in preparing them for this involvement.²² This is the reason why youth involvement in politics could breed instability in certain areas. Youth Advocacy must therefore anticipate a relevant aspect as a matter of need. It must introduce and accommodate involvement with preparations and formation.²³

EVALUATION

The importance of Youth Advocacy cannot be overemphasized. But the subject of advocacy must be determined. The focus has to serve the needs of the time. Our text of study, 1Kings 12, leaves us with many lessons potent enough to define the needed Advocacy for the youth. However, there is need to establish the efficacy of this advocacy for the youth and make some recommendations for the future.²⁴

Rethinking the Efficacy of Youth Advocacy

The findings from the study of 1Kings 12 give us reason to propose a rethinking of the efficacy of youth advocacy. Generally, the efficacy of Youth Advocacy has been in the need to project, engage, and involve the youth especially in leadership roles.²⁵ This has gone on for years. However, in some areas, the attitude of the youth made it difficult for this Advocacy to continue. The Youth came to be seen and known as a pressure group viable only in selfish furtherance of their cause. Besides, their conduct while in service was not rated as high as the advocacy would suggest. The output was below expectation and that really discouraged further advocacy by some people – individuals and groups.

Today, the findings of 1Kings 12 leave us with reasons to rethink the efficacy of youth advocacy.²⁶ There is renewed reasons to advocate for the youth. One of the main reasons is that it is not possible to ignore the overwhelming presence of this group especially in political circles. They have risen all the more conscious of their identity. But even in this self-awareness, the capacity to deliver is questionable. Their reasoning smacks of inexperience. In this situation, wise response is not suspension of advocacy for the youth, instead, this situation leaves us with the need to have a rethink on youth advocacy.

Rethinking the efficacy of youth advocacy must be in two ways. First of all, there is the need for a reconsideration of ‘renewed advocacy.’ Secondly there is an urgent need for ‘redirected advocacy.’ Advocacy has to be renewed. Individuals and agents must again see in the youth a dependable group to project in spite of the not-too-pleasant self image in the past. The society must not lose faith in the youth. Indeed, the society is called to renew its faith in the youth.²⁷ Secondly, this renewed advocacy must be redirected. The focus of advocacy does not need to be so much of creating awareness for youth empowerment, this research has found

²² R.E. Aiyede, (nd), *The State, Values and Development: Towards Re-orientating the Nigerian Youths for Positive Leadership*, in Tunde Babawale, ed., *Cultural Rejuvenation for National Integration and Sustainable Development*. Lagos, Malthouse. 103-118.

²³ For more, read: S.G Anaeto and M. Anaeto (2010). *Development Communication Principle and Practice*. Ibadan, Sterling- Holden Ltd. Ibadan

²⁴ The Youth need a clear-cut policy in order to face the future meaningfully. For more, see K. Gyimah-Brempong and M.S. Kimenyi (2013), “Youth Policy and the Future of African Development,” In *Africa Growth Initiative Working Papers* 9, April, Pp. 1-44.

²⁵ See D.J. Eberly and R. Gall (2007), “A Role for Young People in Building Post-Conflict Civil Society”, In *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*. Vol. 9, no. 4 August 2007/ Pp. 73-78.

²⁶ Cf. Lori, S. Ashford (2007), *Africa's Youthful Population: Risk or Opportunity?* Washington: Population Reference Bureau.

²⁷ For more insight into the place of the youth, see Eugene Odoh; and Innocent Okechukwu, (2014) “Role of the Youth in National Development” In *Signaporean Journal of Business Economics, and Management Studies*, Vol 3, No 2; A. Ozohu-Suleiman (2006), “The Nigerian Youths in Contemporary Political Development: Relevance, Challenges and Role Expectation” in *A Journal of Constitutional Development* Vol. 6 No.4.

reason to begin with an advocacy for youth formation given that empowerment for availability is more or less a given.²⁸

By Advocating Youth formation, attention would be given to preparing the youth for responsible leadership. This would include forming their minds and redirecting their attitude to responsibility. Renewed advocacy would surely still include giving the youth early opportunities to grow their experience. But the redirected advocacy must address the initial need to ‘train the trainers.’²⁹

II. Recommendations

In order to drive home the conclusions of this research, and, against the background of the findings of this research and what is happening in the political arena today, it is important to make the following recommendations:

1. Since political stability is a fruit of right leadership style, the youth must be exposed to leadership circles in families, schools and Church, to build up experience even from the early days of their life. Advocacy must create a path for the formation of the mind.
2. Youth advocacy must begin with a projection of their self worth and relevance. Hence a call to responsibility.
3. Advocacy for youth responsibility must include advocating for Moral instruction to be taught and enforced in schools as a mandatory subject
4. Instead of dismissing the youth as inexperienced, the Elders must be disposed to share the wealth of their political experience with the youth early enough to ensure smooth and responsible continuity
5. The Elders must appreciate the need to relinquish political power to the youth while remaining behind as advisers
6. The youth must not ignore the wise counsel of the Elders

III. CONCLUSION

The youths constitute a very indissoluble component of political constitution. By their very nature, they are connected to the political base and setting in such a way that their influence can either make or mar political arrangements. Sampled experience with the youth in recent times is not too different from what played out in 1Kings 12: 1-17. By their inexperience and lack of training, the youth have directly and indirectly been agents of destabilization of political settings. This is where inputs must be drawn from our passage of study for political stability today. Youth advocacy must be renewed and redirected. The advocacy for youth empowerment as encouraged, is one thing; on the other hand, it is important that this advocacy be redirected to include and, indeed begin with early formation of the youth so that they grow up with the experience, responsibility and maturity to take informed decisions that will enhance stability in political circles. The Biblical Theology of 1Kings 12 has a lot to teach our present day search for political stability especially when dealing with the Youth. Advocacy must continue for the benefit of the youth but drawing from this research, there is need to redirect such advocacy more and primarily to the need for preparing these youth for their imminent empowerment. By rethinking the efficacy of Youth Advocacy in this way, this research with all its benefits for scholarship, is also significant in politics for re-opening a novel avenue for the contribution of the youth towards political stability – A campaign towards the right formation of the mind. In an era where youth empowerment is growing in sensitivity, it is quite reassuring and safe to conclude that the input of 1Kings 12 for “renewed and redirected” youth advocacy, has much to offer towards political stability. The results promise to be very efficacious especially when the recommendations above are objectively considered.

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²⁸ For more, see S. Amanda, (2003), Youths Network and Governance, Common Wealth Journal of Youths and Development Vol. 1 No.2

²⁹ “Train the trainers” has come to represent today’s invitation to prepare the leaders on leadership. This is actually the thesis of this research: That the youth, having become such an indissoluble component of society and leadership, would need to be prepared for the task of leadership tomorrow. There is need to build responsibility in them

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