

1 Kings Chapter 11

Verses 1-8

“Solomon’s power, prestige and wealth became his undoing.

The taking of foreign “wives,” whether in the making of alliances or in order to increase his harem, was not only a violation of the law of Moses (Exodus 34:12-17), but extremely dangerous spiritually (see note on Judges 3:6-7).

Solomon was about 60 years old by this time.

Among kings in the ancient Near East, taking “foreign” wives often produced political alliances; for Israel, it led to the worship of other gods (Exodus 34:12-17), a double disobedience.

“Loved many strange women”:

Many of Solomon’s marriages were for the purpose of ratifying treaties with other nations, a common practice in the ancient Near East.

The practice of multiplying royal wives (prohibited in Deut. 17:17), because the practice would turn the king’s heart away from the LORD, proved to be accurate in the experience of Solomon.

His love for his wives (verses 1-2), led him to abandon his loyalty to the LORD and worship other gods (verse 3-6).

No sadder picture can be imagined than the ugly apostasy of his later years (overs 50), which can be traced back to his sins with foreign wives.

Polygamy was tolerated among the ancient Hebrews, though most in the east had only one wife.

A number of wives were seen as a sign of wealth and importance.

The king desired to have a larger harem than any of his subjects, and Solomon resorted to this form of state magnificence.

But it was a sin directly violating God’s law, and the very result which that law was designed to prevent happened.

1 Kings 11:1 "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, [and] Hittites;"

“Moabites”:

Descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:37), who lived in the land east of the Dead sea between the Arnon River to the north and the Zered Brook to the south.

“Ammonites”:

Descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:38), who were located in the area of the Transjordan beginning about 25 miles east of the Jordan River.

“Edomites”:

Descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:1), who located in the area south of Moab, to the southeast of the Dead sea.

“Zidonians”:

See note on 5:6.

“Hittites”:

See note on 10:29.

The word "strange" indicates they were forbidden to the Hebrews.

One of the dangers of great wealth and power is that we have a tendency to think too highly of ourselves.

Solomon was no exception.

He felt he could do no wrong.

He obviously had forgotten the warnings of God about not keeping His commandments.

Wealth, such as Solomon had accumulated, was associated with worldliness.

God had never wanted Israel depending on horses and chariots to win their battles either.

God was their strength.

Perhaps many of these marriages were marriages of state to avoid war with the girl's family.

That still is no excuse for these many marriages.

Marrying women who worshipped false gods, would be Solomon's downfall.

1 Kings 11:2 "Of the nations [concerning] which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: [for] surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love."

That is, they should not intermarry with one another.

This is to be understood of the last mentioned, the Hittites, who were one of the seven nations this law respected (Deut. 7:1).

"For surely they will turn away your heart after their gods":

Which is the reason given for the making the above law, and was sadly verified in Solomon.

"Solomon clave unto these in love":

He not only took them, but kept them, and expressed a strong affection for them.

Solomon had done exactly what God told him not to do.

He had married women who would turn his head away from the One True God to false gods.

1 Kings 11:3 "And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."

In all 1000, a prodigious number; though these might not be all for use, but for state after the manner of the eastern monarchs.

These were a far greater number than are alluded to (in SOS 6:8), unless the virgins without number there, were such of these as were not defiled by him.

But the number here seems plainly referred to (in Ecclesiastes 7:28).

"And his wives turned away his heart":

Both from his duty to his God, and from attendance to his business as a king, especially the former, as follows.

Lust of the flesh causes Solomon to fall into deep sin.

It really does not matter whether the number of wives and concubines is an accurate number or not.

He did have numerous wives and concubines.

Solomon, like most men, should have been more selective in his wives.

He should have chosen women who worshipped the One True God.

1 Kings 11:4 "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, [that] his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as [was] the heart of David his father."

“Of David” (verse 6).

David is consistently presented in Kings as the standard by which other kings were to act and be judged (3:14; 9:4; 14:8; 15:3; 2 Kings 8:19; 22:2).

This was not because David had not sinned (2 Sam. 11-12), but rather because he repented appropriately from his sin (Psalm 32, 51), and because sin did not continue as the pattern of his life.

David sinned, but never turned his heart away from God.

This is not the same with Solomon.

He not only sinned, but his heart was turned away from God.

He followed his wives into the worship of false gods.

1 Kings 11:5 "For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites."

“Ashtoreth,”:

A deliberate distortion of the Canaanite “ashtart,” re-vocalized based on the Hebrew word for “shame”.

She was the goddess of love and fertility, especially worshiped at Tyre and Sidon.

“Milcom”:

Another name for Molech (verse 7), the national god of the Ammonites.

His name seems to mean “the one who rules”.

The worship of Molech was associated with the sacrifice of children in the fire (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Jer. 32:35).

(See the note on Judges 2:11-15).

This is idolatry.

Solomon has broken relationship with his God.

When he built altars to these false gods for his wives to worship, he was agreeing that this was alright to do.

Solomon did not stop worshipping the LORD.

He just allowed his wives to worship their false gods with his approval.

Ashteroth had to do with sensuous worship.

Milcom included human sacrifice in its worship.

1 Kings 11:6 "And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as [did] David his father."

“Evil in the sight of the LORD”:

The evil of Solomon was his tolerance of and personal practice of idolatry.

These same words were used throughout (the book of Kings), to describe the rulers who promoted and practiced idolatry (15:26, 34; 16:19, 25, 30; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:2; 8:18, 27; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:2; 21:2, 20; 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19).

Solomon became an open idolater, worshiping images of wood and stone in the sight of the temple which, in his early years, he had erected to the one true God.

The word "fully", in the verse above, lets us know that Solomon never stopped worshipping the LORD.

His tolerance of the worship of false gods by his wives was not right however, and his associations made him guilty of idolatry.

1 Kings 11:7 "Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that [is] before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon."

“Chemosh”:

The god of the Moabites, to whom the sacrifice of children as a burnt offering was customary (2 Kings. 3:27).

“The hill ... before Jerusalem”:

Probably the Mount of Olives.

This is the area called Tophet (in Jer. 7:30-34), and the mount of corruption (in 2 Kings 23:13).

For “Molech” (see the note on 2 Kings 23:10).

Solomon was being tolerant of the worship of his wives of false gods.

He was the leader of the country and should not have permitted it.

His success had come from the One True God.

1 Kings 11:8 "And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods."

That is, built high places for their idols, or suffered them to be built.

For when he had done it for one, he could not refuse it to another, without greatly disobliging them; even for many of them.

"Which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods":

The gods of the countries from where they came, and in the worship of which they had been brought up.

This shows that the best and wisest of men, when left to themselves, may do the worst and most foolish of all things; as nothing can be more so than the worship of such wretched deities.

There were places all over Jerusalem where they were erecting places of worship of these false gods.

Verses 9-12

Even God’s blessing and wisdom cannot compensate for a divided heart.

Solomon spoke with the God of Israel” in person “twice” (3:5; 9:2), and was singled out for special blessing.

Yet he left a son who was more foolish than he was (Chapter 12), and Solomon died knowing that the great kingdom God had given him from his father would soon be torn asunder.

God had warned Solomon, so he had no excuses.

1 Kings 11:9 "And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,"

Or from the fear of him, as the Targum, which must in a great measure be cast off, or he could not have given in to idolatry in any shape as he did.

For it was for that the LORD was displeased, the reason nothing is more provoking to him, as may be often observed.

"Which had appeared unto him twice":

Once at Gibeon, and again after his prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 3:5), which is mentioned here as an aggravation of his sin, that he should fall into it, when the LORD had condescended to appear to him so graciously.

(See the note on 6:11-13).

1 Kings 11:10 "And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded."

Which is another aggravation of his sin that it was against an express command of God, and was particularly given him, and he was warned to observe it, and threatened with evil should he break it.

But he kept not that which the LORD commanded":

See 1 Kings 9:5.

He had broken the first of the Ten Commandments.

Our God is a jealous God.

He had been given everything his heart could desire, and yet, he was not faithful to the One who gave it to him.

God had favored Solomon more than any man who had ever lived.

He had even appeared to him twice.

God had told him ahead of time of the consequences of going after false gods.

He knew that there were blessings if he remained faithful, and curses if he did not.

He had sinned in full knowledge.

Verses 11-13

“Solomon” was doubly blameworthy.

God had personally appeared to him twice (verse 9), to give him great wisdom and wealth (3:12-13), and to instruct him explicitly in matters relative to the Davidic covenant (9:2-9).

Despite Solomon’s lack of fidelity, God would remain faithful.

For the retaining of “one tribe” (see the note on verse 32).

1 Kings 11:11 "Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant."

“Not kept my covenant”:

Solomon failed to obey the commandments to honor God (Exodus 20:3-6), which were part of the Mosaic Covenant.

Obedience to that Covenant was necessary for receiving the blessing of the Davidic covenant (see 2:3-4).

“Rend the kingdom from thee”:

The LORD’s tearing of the kingdom for Solomon was announced in Alijah’s symbolic action of tearing his garment (in verses 29-39).

The tearing of the robe, picturing the loss of the kingdom, recalls the interaction between Samuel and Saul (1 Sam. 15:27-28), when the LORD took the kingdom away from Saul because of his disobedience.

The great gifts to Solomon followed by his great abuse warranted such a judgment.

1 Kings 11:12 "Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: [but] I will rend it out of the hand of thy son."

“In thy days I will not do it”:

The LORD’s great love for David caused Him to temper His judgment with mercy by not disrupting the kingdom in Solomon’s lifetime (verse 34).

This showed that Solomon’s disobedience did not annul the Davidic Covenant; the LORD’s commitment to fulfill His Word to David remained firm (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

God's great love and blessings for Solomon have turned to wrath.

It is almost certain that the LORD did not speak directly to Solomon this time, because He was so angry with him.

He probably spoke through a prophet.

Solomon had been blessed greatly, but he also had worked hard to get the kingdom where it was.

It would be quite a comedown to hear that one of his servants would inherit the kingdom.

Solomon would have the rest of his life to think about what he had done, and what would happen to the kingdom.

The LORD would let him remain king while he was alive, because of the love the LORD had for David.

He would live in dread of the day, when the kingdom would not be in his family however.

1 Kings 11:13 "Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; [but] will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

“One tribe”:

The one tribe that remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty was Judah (12:20).

“For Jerusalem’s sake”:

The LORD had chosen Jerusalem as the place where His name would dwell forever (9:3).

Therefore, Jerusalem and the temple would remain so that the divine promise might stand.

This one tribe of course, is Judah.

God keeps reminding Solomon that this is not done because of Solomon.

It is because God loved David.

God also wanted Jerusalem to remain as the holy city.

God had put his presence in the temple and in this city.

It is much later, when the presence of the LORD leaves Jerusalem just before it burns.

Verses 14-18

King “Hadad” became a thorn in Solomon’s side for the rest of his reign.

Hadad lived to take revenge on Israel for David’s slaughter of the Edomites (2 Sam. 8:13-14).

“Hadad the Edomite”:

Even though Hadad belonged to the royal family that ruled Edom, he escaped death at the hands of David’s army when he was a child, and he fled to Egypt (2 Sam. 8:13-14; 1 Chron. 18:12-13).

(In verses 14-22), “Hadad” had escaped the slaughter of the “Edomite” army in David’s day (2 Sam. 8:13-14; 1 Chron. 18:12-13), and had made his way to “Egypt.

Pharaoh” had received him well, perhaps so that after Solomon died, he would have a strong ally for himself and a hated enemy of “Israel” in “Edom” on Israel’s strategic eastern border.

1 Kings 11:14 "And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he [was] of the king's seed in Edom."

The verses that follow set the scene for the division of the kingdom and the difficulties that would occur after Solomon’s death (verses 11-12).

Notice, this is from God.

He chastises Solomon by sending enemies to cause problems.

Hadad was an Edomite.

He was a prince of the royal house.

He married the sister-in-law of Pharaoh.

He harassed Solomon.

1 Kings 11:15 "For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom;"

Fighting with the Edomites, and subduing them, and putting garrisons in the land (2 Samuel 8:14).

“And Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain”:

The Israelites that fell in battle, or whom the Edomites afterwards, through stratagem and surprise, fell upon in their garrisons and destroyed, and which caused Joab to go thither to bury them, and take vengeance on the Edomites for it.

Or these were the Edomites slain by David and Joab; and it has been always reckoned a piece of humanity to bury the dead of an enemy, and is to the honor of the conqueror (see Ezek. 39:12).

Or to suffer the enemy to bury them themselves.

It is said, that Hercules was the first that brought up this practice and that before they were left on the field, to be devoured by dogs.

So they were in the times of the Trojan war, as appears by the writings of Homer; but burying them, in later times, was used by the Romans and Greeks.

And Josephus delivers it as a law of Moses to bury enemies, and not suffer any dead to lie without partaking of the earth, nor to pass by or overlook any unburied.

But from whence he took it, or grounds it upon, is not very evident; this is the first mention of it; though the Targum is, "to strip the slain".

"After he had smitten every male in Edom":

As he thought, intending to root out the name of them; being enraged at their falling upon the garrisons, if that was the case.

1 Kings 11:16 "(For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom:)"

With the whole army.

"Until he had cut off every male in Edom":

As he supposed; for it was not fact, since after this they increased again, and became a powerful people, and had a king over them, and revolted from Judah (2 Kings 8:20).

1 Kings 11:17 "That Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad [being] yet a little child."

While Joab was burying the slain.

"He and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him":

Who either was a king and these some of his officers and courtiers; or however was of the royal family, and had an equipage, and these some of them.

"To go into Egypt":

That was their view at first setting out, where they might hope for help, at least shelter.

"Hadad being yet a little child":

Whom his father's servants hid, while Joab was making the slaughter he did, and took the opportunity of fleeing with him while he was burying the dead.

From other Scriptures in Chronicles and Psalms, it is uncertain actually who was in charge of David's army who killed the Edomites.

We read (in Psalms), that Joab killed 12,000, and we read (in first Chronicles), that Abishai killed 18,000. Perhaps they both led troops into this battle, and each of them killed a large number.

We do know it took Joab 6 months before he was satisfied they were all dead.

Hadad might not have been killed even if he had remained, because he was a child.

1 Kings 11:18 'And they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran: and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, unto Pharaoh king of Egypt; which gave him a house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land.'

“Midian”:

The land directly east of Edom, to which Hadad first fled on his way to Egypt.

“Paran”:

A wilderness southeast of Kadesh in the central area of the Sinai Peninsula (Num. 12:16; 13:3).

1 Kings 11:19 "And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen."

Perhaps due to his comely personage, princely qualities and good behavior as he grew up.

"So that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen":

It seems the kings of Egypt used to marry their favorites to great personages (see Gen. 41:45).

This is an explanation of how Hadad was spared, when Joab killed all of the men of Edom.

He had fled to Egypt for safety as a child, and grew up there.

The Pharaoh liked him very much and actually gave him land to get a new start.

He became brother-in-law to the Pharaoh.

Pharaoh's wife, Tahpenes, was sister of the wife of Hadad.

1 Kings 11:20 "And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh."

Which signifies "stealth", and the name might be given in memory of himself being carried away by stealth from his own land.

"Whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house":

Who was so fond of the child, that she took it, and weaned it for her in the king's palace.

"And Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh":

Brought up among them, as if he was one of them.

Hadad was like a son to the Pharaoh.

He and his wife lived with the Pharaoh when their son was born, and stayed there about three years until the baby was weaned.

1 Kings 11:21 "And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country."

"Let me depart":

Like Moses (Exodus 2:10), Hadad's son grew up in Pharaoh's household.

As did Moses (Exodus 5:1), Hadad requested that Pharaoh allow him to leave Egypt.

Hearing of the deaths of David and Joab, he renounced his easy position and possessions in Egypt to return to Edom in order to regain his throne.

His activities gave great trouble to Israel (verse 25).

Hadad wanted to go back and take his land back.

The dreaded Joab was dead and so was David.

The danger would not be as great now.

Notice Hadad must get permission from the Pharaoh to go.

1 Kings 11:22 "Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise."

Either of furnishings suitable to his birth and marriage; or of provisions for his household, or of honor and respect, or of any favor from him.

"That, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country?"

As if not well used where he was, or would be better provided for there.

"And he answered, Nothing":

He wanted nothing at all, as he had all he could wish for.

"Howbeit let me go in any wise":

He had such an extreme desire to go, that he begged it might not be denied him on any account.

Whether he acquainted Pharaoh with his view in this request is not said, but it is probable he did, and it is certain Pharaoh gave him leave to go (see 1 Kings 11:25).

Pharaoh obviously did not want him to go, but would give him permission if he insisted.

He first tried to talk him out of it by reminding Hadad how good he had been to him.

Hadad agreed that he had wanted for nothing, but he still wanted to go.

1 Kings Chapter 11 Questions

1. King Solomon loved many _____ women.
2. Who had God forbidden the Israelites to intermarry with, that Solomon married?
3. What other things had Solomon done, that was displeasing to God?
4. What were many of these marriages?
5. What was wrong with marrying them?
6. He had _____ wives and _____ concubines.
7. What should Solomon have done about choosing wives?
8. What was different about his sin, and David's sin?
9. Who was the false goddess of the Zidonians?
10. Who was the abomination of the Ammonites?

11. What shows us that Solomon never stopped worshipping the LORD?
12. How was he guilty of idolatry?
13. What false gods did Solomon build high places for?
14. How did the LORD feel about this?
15. Who did the LORD speak through to Solomon?
16. Who would inherit his kingdom, when he died?
17. Why did the LORD not just remove Solomon immediately?
18. What will be left, when the LORD rends away the kingdom?
19. How does God chastise Solomon?
20. Who had killed the males in Edom?
21. Who escaped to Egypt?
22. Who helped him, in Egypt?
23. Who did Hadad marry?
24. Who was Tahpenes?
25. What was Hadad's first child named?
26. How long did they stay in Pharaoh's house, after the baby was born?
27. What did Hadad ask Pharaoh?