



First Kings - Chapter Eleven

I 1 Kings 1:1-11:43 - The Reign of King Solomon (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Eleven

Solomon had many foreign wives despite it being against the will of God to do so. In his old age they turned his heart away from the Lord and to foreign gods. He even built places of worship to them. Therefore, God was angry with him and he told Solomon that the price would be the loss of the kingdom, but it would not occur in his lifetime for David's sake. Instead, his son would have rule over one tribe while the others would be taken from him.

During his conflict with Edom, David had most males killed by one leader Hadad fled with a group of men to Egypt where he stayed until the time was right for him to return to his own land and to oppose King Solomon. Likewise, a former enemy of David called Rezon built up a group of marauders and he too opposed Solomon. Both these adversaries of the king were raised up by the Lord.

Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, had been a loyal servant of Solomon and was over the slave labour. However, he encountered the prophet Ahijah who showed him that God was going to tear the nation into two, with the house of David retaining a king over Judah but Jeroboam becoming the leader of ten tribes. The reason for this was Solomon's apostasy, for he had turned to the pagan gods of the surrounding nations. God promised Jeroboam that if he kept the commandments of the Lord then he would have an enduring house over all Israel. When Solomon heard this he tried to kill Jeroboam, who promptly fled to Egypt.

After forty years the reign of Solomon came to an end. Following his death then his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

I.k 1 Kings 11:1-43 - Solomon's Apostasy, Opponents, and Death

Throughout Chapters 1-10 the reader has received hints that all is not well with Solomon's heart: 1 Kings 3:1-3 juxtaposed his love for God with suggestions of divided loyalties revealed in his choice of marriage partner; 4:26 and 4:28 told of his accumulation of horses; 6:38-7:1 pursued the question of building project priorities; and 10:26-29 did the same with regard to horses, in a context in which the topic of Solomon's great wealth was introduced and the marriage question again briefly addressed. Since the prayer of 8:22-53 and God's response to it in 9:1-9 have made clear both the importance of keeping the law and the consequences of disobedience, 9:10-10:29 sounded ominous; and now the authors reveal the inevitable consequences of all that has gone before. Solomon's sins have led him to apostasy.

I.k.i 1 Kings 11:1-13 - Solomon's Errors

Solomon's downfall was his love of women, particularly those from other nations. He married seven hundred princesses and had three hundred concubines, contrary to the commandments of the Lord. In later life, these women caused Solomon to forsake the Lord and turn to the pagan gods of the nations.

¹ King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ² from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the Israelites, 'You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you; for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods;' Solomon clung to these in love. ³ Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David.

1 Kings 11:1-4

King Solomon loved many foreign women; Solomon clung to these in love. There are two obvious problems here. First, that he loved foreign women who worshipped other gods and brought pagan influences to Israel. Second, that he loved many women, rejecting God's plan from the beginning for one man and one woman to become one flesh in marriage: <<*Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.'* Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh>> (Genesis 2:23-24), and confirmed by Jesus: <<*He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female", and said, "For*

*this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate’>> (Matthew 19:4-6). Solomon loved, Hebrew *’ahab* in 1 Kings 3:3, the Lord, but he also loved, again Hebrew *’ahab*, the daughter of Pharaoh and many other women, and he clung, Hebrew *dabaq*, to them. Both verbs appear in Deuteronomy, i.e. Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, 10:20, 11:1, 11:22, 13:4 and 30:20, where they speak of unswerving human loyalty to God.*

From the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the Israelites, ‘You shall not enter into marriage with them’. God gave a general warning to all Israel to not intermarry with these nations, because they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods: <<*And you will take wives from among their daughters for your sons, and their daughters who prostitute themselves to their gods will make your sons also prostitute themselves to their gods*>> (Exodus 34:16). For all Solomon’s great wisdom, he did not have the wisdom to apply this simple command to his own life. Solomon probably did what many people do. He somehow thought that he would be the exception, that he would escape the consequences of this sin, despite seeing how it affected others. Solomon learned, or should have learned, that he was not the exception to this rule. There are no exceptions to following the will of God other than to follow the ways of Satan!

Solomon clung to these in love. At this point, Solomon wanted romance and sensual fulfilment more than he wanted the Lord. For all his wisdom, he was snared by the power of romantic and sensual love. He did not seriously consider that it is possible to be romantically and sensually attracted to people he had no moral or righteous reason to be attracted to. Once under the power of this attraction, he clung to these in love instead of giving them up to the Lord.

Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines. This is an almost unbelievable number of marriage partners. His wives were considered princesses, although the translation here suggests that he had seven hundred wives who were princesses by birthright and indicates that he had even more wives besides. His concubines were legal partners without the same standing as wives. All said, Solomon had far more marriage partners than any man could possibly give attention to - sexual attention or other attention.

Following their return from exile many Israelites married foreign women, probably because there was a shortage of women from their own people. However, the priest Ezra knew that this would lead to the same types of problems that Solomon had and ordered the people to divorce them: <<Now make confession to the Lord the God of your ancestors, and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives>> (Ezra 10:11).

In this sense a concubine was a legal mistress. Many prominent men in the OT had concubines. Examples include Abraham (Genesis 25:6), Jacob (Genesis 35:22), Caleb (1 Chronicles 2:46), Saul (2 Samuel 3:7), David (2 Samuel 5:13), and Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11:21). Significantly, this kind of family life is never seen to be blessed by God. It could be said that:

- Solomon had so many marriage partners because he followed the bad example of his father David, who had many wives and concubines himself; refer to 2 Samuel 5:13-16.
- Solomon had so many marriage partners because of his own sexual lust. This is a profound and sobering example of the principle that if one wife is not enough to satisfy a man, then one thousand wives will not be enough. When a man is unsatisfied with the woman God gave to him, the problem is with him, not with his wife. One thousand women cannot satisfy the lust of man. Solomon should have listened to Proverbs 27:20: *<<Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and human eyes are never satisfied>>*, which may even have been his own advice to others.
- Solomon had so many marriage partners because of his lust for power and prestige. In those days a large harem was a status symbol. It said to the world, “Look how many wives and children I can support. Look how many women I have authority over.” Solomon’s desire for worldly prestige led him to these ungodly marriages.

For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods. Of course they did. Age did not make Solomon wiser. He seemed to be wiser in his youth, and old age hardened the sinful tendencies that were present in his younger days. Age and experience should make believers more godly and wise, but they do not automatically do so. Based upon the Song of Solomon, it can be said that at first Solomon seemed to know what true love was with one woman. Yet his subsequent history reveals that it is possible to be in that place and depart from it. It is not true to say that love will keep people together. The life of Solomon demonstrates that people can know true love and depart from it. It is better said that the blessing and power of God upon people’s obedience will keep them together.

It is not known when Solomon added his second wife. When he did, it was easy for him to rationalise it - after all, the greatest King of Israel, his father David, had several wives and concubines. Yet once he followed his father David into this departure from God’s plan from the beginning, it was easy to keep adding wives and concubines.

As he added wives he broke the specific commandment God gave to the future kings of Israel: *<<And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away>>* (Deuteronomy 17:17a). Solomon did multiply wives for

himself (by any account, one thousand marriage partners is multiplication), and it did turn away his heart from the Lord.

His heart was not true to the Lord his God. Solomon's heart, however, was divided; and in spite of his pious hope that God would always turn Israelite hearts to himself (according to Solomon's own words in 1 Kings 8:58), the king's wives, in his old age, turned away his heart in the opposite direction, after other gods. Solomon is a contrast to those who did fully follow the Lord. This phrase is used in a positive sense of three men in the OT: Joshua and Caleb in Numbers 32:11-12, Deuteronomy 1:36, Joshua 14:8-9 and 14:14), and here of David. Solomon was conspicuous as someone who did not wholly follow the Lord.

As was the heart of his father David. Solomon had more than one wife and David had more than one wife; in fact he had fifteen according to 1 Chronicles 3:1-9. David spiritually survived this failing but Solomon did not survive it.

From what is known of the world beyond from the account of the Rich Man and Lazarus told by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31, it can be said that David was not yet in heaven, but in a place of blessing and comfort known as Abraham's bosom. If it were possible for someone in Abraham's bosom to see life on the earth and be sorry, David would, no doubt, have been very sorry when he saw Solomon and his sin. David certainly hoped that his children would be better than he, and find more victory in the areas of life that troubled him. Sadly, David's sons found less victory in controlling the lust of the flesh, and especially sexual lust. Yet David's sin did not turn his heart away from the Lord. It is possible for a particular sin in one person to be a hindrance that they would do better without, while in another person that sin is the cause of ruin. David's lack of romantic and sexual restraint hindered him; it destroyed Solomon. This is one reason why Christians must be so careful with the sin of causing another brother or sister to stumble or fall; refer to Paul's teaching on this in Romans Chapter 14 and 1 Corinthians Chapter 8.

⁵ For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

1 Kings 11:5

For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. This seems almost unbelievable. Many might not accept it as true unless the Scriptures clearly stated it. This man of great heritage, wisdom, and blessing turns to the most depraved gods of the pagan nations.

At ancient Ugarit in Syria the sun was worshipped as Shapash, the moon as Yarikh, and Venus as Astarte. Ashtoreth is also the biblical name for Astarte, a deliberate

distortion of the original using the vowels of the Hebrew word *boshet*, meaning shame. Milcom was a god of the underworld.

What Solomon did was similar to what his descendants had done that started the downward spiral of apostasy during the time of the Judges: <<*Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and worshipped the Baals; and they abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They abandoned the Lord, and worshipped Baal and the Astartes*>> (Judges 2:11-13).

⁶ So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not completely follow the Lord, as his father David had done.

1 Kings 11:6

Individual kings are characteristically assessed in 1-2 Kings in terms of whether on the whole they 'did what was right' or what was evil in the sight of the Lord; Judæan kings are additionally said to be like David or not. Examples are: <<*Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. He walked in all the way of his father Asa; he did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord*>> (1 Kings 22:42-43a), <<*In the eighteenth year of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, Jehoram son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria; he reigned for twelve years. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord*>> (2 Kings 3:1-2a), and: <<*Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam began to reign over Judah. He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom. He committed all the sins that his father did before him; his heart was not true to the Lord his God, like the heart of his father David*>> (1 Kings 15:1-3).

⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸ He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods.

1 Kings 11:7-8

The worship of other gods at high places lies at the very heart of the authors' concern in 1-2 Kings, for examples refer to 1 Kings 12:25-33, 14:23 and 16:31-33.

Chemosh was the chief god of the Moabites, already known in ancient Ebla in Syria as Kamish and probably to be identified with the Mesopotamian deity Nergal, an underworld god associated with famine, drought, plague, and death.

Molech is possibly, but not certainly, to be identified with Milcom in v.5. The biblical authors associate Molech with child sacrifice, which was a prominent feature of at least some of the polytheistic Canaanite religions, practiced in ancient times in Syria-Palestine. This sacrificing involved the burning of the victim. Examples can be found in Leviticus 18:21, 2 Kings 16:3 and 21:6, and Jeremiah 32:35.

Probably Solomon did not see this as a denial of the Lord God of Israel. In his mind, he probably thought that he still honoured the Lord, he simply added the honour of these other gods to his honour of the Lord. He had become one of: *<<those who bow down and swear to the Lord, but also swear by Milcom>>* (Zephaniah 1:5b). However, this is never acceptable to God. He demands to be the only God in anyone's life. This is a tragic example of the power of the lust of the flesh. Because of lust, Solomon found himself in a place where he never thought he would find himself. He found himself burning incense at the altars of depraved pagan gods. He found himself at the altar of child sacrifice unto the god Molech. This is the power of lust - it can capture a person in a spell, in a fog of spiritual confusion until they do things they never thought they would do.

⁹ Then the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what the Lord commanded. ¹¹ Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. ¹² Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³ I will not, however, tear away the entire kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.'

1 Kings 11:9-13

Then the Lord was angry with Solomon; I will surely tear the kingdom from you. This is what 1 Kings 2:4, 8:25 and 9:4-5 have led the reader to expect. Yet the punishment is unexpectedly mitigated: I will not do it in your lifetime; I will not,

however, tear away the entire kingdom. One tribe remains out of grace, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.

God promised the entire kingdom of Israel to the descendants of David forever; all they were required to do was to remain obedient. David reminded Solomon of this promise shortly before his death: *<<Then the Lord will establish his word that he spoke concerning me: "If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel">>* (1 Kings 2:4). Yet they could not remain faithful for even one generation. Solomon's kingdom was an outstanding example of wealth, military power and prestige. Yet the true security of Israel did not rest in any of those things. It rested in the blessing of God and in the obedience and faithfulness of their king.

God had special reason to be displeased with Solomon - he had appeared to him twice, and Solomon still went after other gods. Solomon's sin was base ingratitude and a waste of great spiritual privilege. Some Christians think that great spiritual experiences will keep them from sin and will keep them faithful to God. This was not the case with the wisest man who has ever lived, and it will not be the case with anyone else either.

I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. For the sake of David, God delayed this judgement until after Solomon's generation. However, the disobedience that brought the judgement came in the first generation following Solomon's demise.

I will not, however, tear away the entire kingdom. Even in this great judgement, God must mingle undeserved mercy with deserved judgement. God announces that the kingdom will be divided, and part of it will be loyal to the descendants of David and part of it will be under a different dynasty. Many other passages in the OT, such as 2 Chronicles 11:12, reveal that the southern kingdom was made up of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. Several times in this chapter the southern kingdom is referred to as one tribe. This is because either Benjamin is swallowed up in Judah, or the idea was one tribe in addition to Judah.

I.k.ii 1 Kings 11:14-25 - Adversaries of Solomon

In 1 Kings 5:4, Solomon told Hiram, in the midst of God's blessing, that he had peace on every side, there was no adversary. Now the blessing has departed and the peace is fractured. Two men who had hitherto not caused Solomon significant problems are now raised up by God to oppose the apostate king in his old age.

The first is Hadad, a victim of David's wars: *<<David won a name for himself. When he returned, he killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord gave victory to David*

wherever he went>> (2 Samuel 8:13-14); the second is Rezon, who had apparently either escaped from the battle described in 2 Samuel 8:3-4 or fled from Hadadezer later, unwilling to submit to imperial rule from Jerusalem.

Damascus, from ancient times a major site on the main caravan route from Africa to Mesopotamia, now becomes the capital of the Aramæan kingdom of Syria, which will rise to become a significant power in the region during the divided monarchy in Israel. Syria will often be in conflict with Israel and Judah but will sometimes ally with them against common foes. The kingdom will ultimately be absorbed into the Assyrian Empire as a result of the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III in 733-732 BC. Rezon opposes Solomon from the north, Hadad from the south; and where the king once had peace on all sides, he now finds enemies.



Solomon's Enemies circa 950 BC

Although Solomon held a firm grip on his kingdom throughout his lifetime, there were still those who worked to subvert his rule. Hadad was a member of the royal family of Edom who fled to Egypt to escape David's purge of all Edomite males. He would later return to Edom to oppose Solomon.

Rezon was originally an outlaw in Zobah who gathered a bandit army and established himself as king in Damascus.

Jeroboam originally oversaw one of Solomon's forced labour units, but Ahijah's prophecy foretelling Jeroboam's eventual rule over ten Israelite tribes caused Solomon to seek to kill him, so he fled to Egypt; refer to vv.26-40.

¹⁴ Then the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal house in Edom. ¹⁵ For when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the dead, he killed every male in Edom ¹⁶ (for Joab and all Israel remained there for six months, until he had eliminated every male in Edom); ¹⁷ but Hadad fled to Egypt with some Edomites who were servants of his father. He was a young boy at that time. ¹⁸ They set out from Midian and came to Paran; they took people with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, assigned him an allowance of food, and gave him land. ¹⁹ Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him his sister-in-law for a wife, the sister of Queen Tahpenes. ²⁰ The sister of Tahpenes gave birth by him to his son Genubath, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house; Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the children of Pharaoh. ²¹ When Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his ancestors and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, 'Let me depart, that I may go to my own country.' ²² But Pharaoh said to him, 'What do you lack with me that you now seek to go to your own country?' And he said, 'No, do let me go.'

1 Kings 11:14-22

Then the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite. Solomon's reign was glorious, but God did not allow it to be completely without problems. He raised up adversaries like Hadad against Solomon. When he sent to Hiram to assist him in the building of the temple of the Lord, he could say, "There was no Satan" as commented in 1 Kings 5:4, but now that he had turned away from God three 'satans' rise up against him at once, Hadad, Rezon (vv.23-25), and Jeroboam (vv.26-40).

He was of the royal house in Edom. Hadad sought to avenge his conquered people. He found refuge and support in Egypt and bided his time until David and Joab were both dead. He then returned to his homeland presumably to raise an army against Solomon.

Let me depart, that I may go to my own country. The reader is not told specifically how Hadad troubled or was an adversary to Solomon, only that he returned to bother Solomon with the permission of Pharaoh.

Edom was the land founded originally by Jacob's twin brother Esau: <<Esau said to Jacob, 'Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!' (Therefore he was called Edom)>> (Genesis 25:30), and: <<Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom>> (Genesis 32:3). The land lay to the south of Judah: <<The lot for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their families reached southwards to the boundary of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south>> (Joshua 15:1). They had opposed Israel right of passage through their land as they travelled to the Promised Land: <<But Edom said to him, 'You shall not pass through, or we will come out with the sword against you'>> (Numbers 20:18). However, God had stated that Israel shall not go to war with Edom: <<You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien residing in their land>> (Deuteronomy 23:7). Yet war between them came and they were subdued during the reign of David. Before Judah was eventually taken into captivity, Edom fought and won many battles with Judah and even stood by as the Babylonians took them into captivity, so God ordained that they too would be defeated: <<For the slaughter and violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off for ever. On the day that you stood aside, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth, and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you too were like one of them. But you should not have gloated over your brother on the day of his misfortune; you should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah on the day of their ruin; you should not have boasted on the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people on the day of their calamity; you should not have joined in the gloating over Judah's disaster on the day of his calamity; you should not have looted his goods on the day of his calamity. You should not have stood at the crossings to cut off his fugitives; you should not have handed over his survivors on the day of distress>> (Obadiah 10-14).

²³ God raised up another adversary against Solomon, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah. ²⁴ He gathered followers around him and became leader of a marauding band, after the slaughter by David; they went to Damascus, settled there, and made him king in Damascus. ²⁵ He was an adversary of Israel

all the days of Solomon, making trouble as Hadad did; he despised Israel and reigned over Aram.

1 Kings 11:23-25

God raised up another adversary against Solomon, Rezon son of Eliada. It seems that Rezon was a continuous thorn in the flesh during Solomon's time, probably raiding smaller settlements and stealing from them, i.e. he was the leader of a marauding band out of the land of Aram, and an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon.

After the slaughter by David. As noted above, David subdued Edom by killing eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and then set up garrisons in their land to keep them in submission; refer to 2 Samuel 8:13-14.

I.k.iii 1 Kings 11:26-40 - Jeroboam's Rebellion

Solomon's most important enemy, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, was to be found right on his doorstep. He was the former superintendent of the forced labour of the house of Joseph, those who had been helping with the construction work in Jerusalem (vv.27-28). He was approached outside the city by the prophet Ahijah (v.29) with a prophecy concerning the kingship. The scene is reminiscent of the rejection of Saul in 1 Samuel Chapter 15; in both passages an outer garment is torn as a symbol of the fact that God is tearing the kingdom away from the reigning king, which God stated to Saul in 1 Samuel 15:27-28 and to Solomon in v.11 above.

The garment here is divided into twelve pieces, of which ten, symbolising ten northern tribes, are given to Jeroboam (vv.30-31). One tribe is to remain for the sake of David and Jerusalem, i.e. Judah. Benjamin is not included in specifically here, perhaps because this tribe was regarded simply as Jerusalem's own territory, on the analogy of the Canaanite city-state; this territory came with the city, and needed no special mention. It could also be that it was intended that it should be one tribe in addition to Judah.

The mitigation of vv.13-14 is repeated, although in a slightly different way. Solomon will lose no tribes during his lifetime; and his son is to have one tribe, so that the Davidic flame will always burn. In fact, although Jeroboam has been promised that he can also have a dynasty like David's if he is obedient (v.38), this promise already conceals within it the expectation of failure; the division of the kingdom in v.39 is not forever.

²⁶ Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, rebelled against the king. ²⁷ The following was the reason he rebelled against the king. Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the gap in the wall of the city of

his father David. ²⁸ The man Jeroboam was very able, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious he gave him charge over all the forced labour of the house of Joseph.

1 Kings 11:26-28

Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite. Jeroboam was different from the two previously mentioned adversaries of Solomon, because he was a fellow Israelite.

The following was the reason he rebelled against the king. Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the gap in the wall of the city of his father David. It is not immediately apparent why these construction projects caused him to rebel against Solomon. Jewish traditions say he opposed the oppressive use of forced labour in these building projects. Since he was the officer over the entire labour force, this tradition makes some sense. Another possibility was that he charge was the forced labour of the house of Joseph. These men would have been drawn from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, direct descendants of Joseph, and their use perhaps caused a shortfall of slave labour that would have been required for the routine work of those tribes.

The man Jeroboam was very able means that he was a man of great valour, and therefore he would have been a significant threat to Solomon.

²⁹ About that time, when Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Ahijah had clothed himself with a new garment. The two of them were alone in the open country ³⁰ when Ahijah laid hold of the new garment he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. ³¹ He then said to Jeroboam: Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘See, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and will give you ten tribes. ³² One tribe will remain his, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. ³³ This is because he has forsaken me, worshipped Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and has not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, as his father David did. ³⁴ Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom away from him but will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of my servant David whom I chose and who did keep my commandments and my statutes; ³⁵ but I will take the kingdom away from his son and give it to you – that is, the ten tribes.

³⁶ Yet to his son I will give one tribe, so that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name.

1 Kings 11:29-36

The prophet Ahijah the Shilonite plays a significant role in the life of Jeroboam, prophesying here that he would become king over ten tribes and later prophesying that his descendants would be all perish.

He then said to Jeroboam: Take for yourself ten pieces. In this acted-out-prophecy, Ahijah showed Jeroboam that he would lead ten tribes of a divided Israel after the death of Solomon. Using practical demonstrations was one way that a prophet could communicate the impact of his prophecy: *<<In the year that the commander-in-chief, who was sent by King Sargon of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it – at that time the Lord had spoken to Isaiah son of Amoz, saying, ‘Go, and loose the sackcloth from your loins and take your sandals off your feet’, and he had done so, walking naked and barefoot. Then the Lord said, ‘Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia, so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as captives and the Ethiopians as exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt>> (Isaiah 20:1-4), and: <<Mortal, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. And utter an allegory to the rebellious house and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Set on the pot, set it on, pour in water also; put in it the pieces, all the good pieces, the thigh and the shoulder; fill it with choice bones. Take the choicest one of the flock, pile the logs under it; boil its pieces, seethe also its bones in it. Therefore, thus says the Lord God: Woe to the bloody city, the pot whose rust is in it, whose rust has not gone out of it! Empty it piece by piece, making no choice at all. For the blood she shed is inside it; she placed it on a bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground, to cover it with earth. To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance, I have placed the blood she shed on a bare rock, so that it may not be covered>> (Ezekiel 24:2-8).*

This is because he has forsaken me. God promised to divide Israel and put ten of the twelve tribes under Jeroboam as judgement for the sin and idolatry of Solomon. God would still keep one tribe under the house of David, in faithfulness to his promise to David.

This is the first detail given of the divided kingdom, which became Israel’s history for hundreds of years after the death of Solomon. At this first description it would be expected that the ten tribes under Jeroboam would be larger, greater, and more enduring than the one tribe left unto the House of

David. As it worked out, just the opposite occurred because the ten tribes forsook the Lord, while the one tribe was more obedient.

Yet to his son I will give one tribe. As previously stated, there would actually be two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. In addition, many of the Levitical priests remained in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns, but Levi was never enumerated among the other tribes: <<*Therefore Levi has no allotment or inheritance with his kindred; the Lord is his inheritance, as the Lord your God promised him*>> (Deuteronomy 10:9).

My servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem. Descendants of David continued to rule for around four hundred years until the time of the Babylonian exile. Following the exile no human king sat on the throne in Israel until the coming of the Messiah nearly one thousand years after David. His rule will continue for all time, as foreseen during the exile: <<*As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed*>> (Daniel 7:13-14). It was confirmed in a promise by an angel to Mary: <<*The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end'*>> (Luke 1:30-33).

The city where I have chosen to put my name. The name of God is very important to the Lord for it reveals his character and values. Therefore, he has instructed his people: <<*You shall tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their sacred poles (for you shall worship no other god, because the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)*>> (Exodus 34:13-14), and: <<*Therefore, thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name*>> (Ezekiel 39:25).

³⁷ I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires; you shall be king over Israel. ³⁸ If you will listen to all that I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you, and will build you an enduring house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. ³⁹ For this reason I will punish the descendants of David, but not for ever.' ⁴⁰ Solomon sought therefore to kill

Jeroboam; but Jeroboam promptly fled to Egypt, to King Shishak of Egypt, and remained in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

1 Kings 11:37-40

I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires; you shall be king over Israel. God ordained the division of Israel and the reign of Jeroboam. He did this as a judgement - a great judgement - upon Solomon for his embrace of idolatry.

If you will listen to all that I command you, I will be with you, and will build you an enduring house. This was an amazing offer. God promised to make a lasting dynasty for Jeroboam, if he would do what is right in the sight of the Lord. An obedient Jeroboam had the opportunity to establish a parallel dynasty to the House of David. Both Jeroboam and David were appointed by God to follow after disobedient kings. David waited upon the Lord to make the throne clear, and God blessed his reign. Jeroboam did not wait on the Lord and he made his own way to the throne, and God did not bless his reign.

Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. This is another startling piece of evidence of Solomon's decline. God specifically said this would happen after the death of Solomon, and in judgement of Solomon's apostasy. Solomon did not want to hear it, so he sought to kill Jeroboam. Solomon thought he could defeat God's will in this, but he was unsuccessful. God's word through Ahijah proved true.

King Shishak of Egypt is usually identified with the historical pharaoh Shoshenq I. This alliance with Jeroboam would prove costly to Judah after the nations split: **<<So King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house; he took everything. He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made>>** (2 Chronicles 12:9). This may well have been by arrangement made with Jeroboam.

I.k.iv 1 Kings 11:41-43 - Death of Solomon

Solomon's life comes to an end after forty years on the throne. It is a sad end to what had promised to be such a magnificent enduring kingdom, ruined by his failure to stay true to the God who had given him so much. Solomon was buried in Jerusalem and his son Rehoboam became the last king over the entire nation.

⁴¹ Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did as well as his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon?

⁴² The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. ⁴³ Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

1 Kings 11:41-43

The Book of the Acts of Solomon would have been a chronicle of all that happened throughout the entire reign of Solomon. Sadly, the record has been lost to history.

The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. Many commentators believe that Solomon began his reign when he was about 20 years old. This means that Solomon did not live a particularly long life. It also means that the promise made at the start of his reign was not fulfilled to Solomon, because of his disobedience: <<*If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life*>> (1 Kings 3:14).

Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David. This does not necessarily mean that Solomon died a saved man. It is a familiar phrase used in 1 and 2 Kings, used a total of 25 times, and was appears for one of the most wicked kings, Ahab, in 1 Kings 22:40. It simply means that Solomon passed to the world beyond. No one can say with certainty that he is in heaven.

The often repeated phrase 'slept with his ancestors' reflected the reality that almost all Israelite burials were in multi-chambered, rock-hewn tombs carved into hillsides. They were probably used as family tombs, so that even in death family ties were underscored.

The last look at the life of Solomon in First Kings leads the reader to believe that he died in apostasy. There is no hopeful or cheerful end to the story in this account. However, it may be that Solomon was shown special mercy for the sake of David his father, as in 2 Samuel 7:14-15, if that promise also applies to Solomon as well as the Messiah. Some also believe that Solomon wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes at the very end of his life as a renunciation of his fall into vanity. It makes for fascinating reading following such a privileged mortal life.