



## First Kings - Chapter Two

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

#### I.a 1 Kings 1:1-2:46 - Solomon Becomes King (continues/concludes)

##### Summary of Chapter Two

As David's life draws to an end he reminds Solomon of his duty to serve according to God's laws. He also provides instruction as to whom Solomon should honour and those who deserved appropriate punishment. Having ruled for forty years, David's life then came to an end.

Adonijah then requested Bathsheba to seek Solomon's permission for him to have Abishag, the young woman that had served David at the end of his life. She made the request but Solomon believed it was the start of Adonijah's scheme to become king once more, so he had him killed.

The priest Abiathar had supported Adonijah's claim to the throne and therefore Solomon banished him to his home town, never to serve as priest in Jerusalem again. Joab, the other main supporter of Adonijah, fled to the tent of the Lord and sought the protection before the altar. Solomon ordered that he should die anyway and Benaiah did so. Thus Benaiah was appointed as head of the army and Zadok as priest, replacing Abiathar.

Shimei was the final antagonist that David had instructed Solomon to deal with. Solomon instructed Shimei that he must remain within Jerusalem on pain of death. When two of his slaves ran away to Gath Shimei left Jerusalem to go and retrieve them. On his return he paid the penalty for breaking the terms of his confinement. Thus Solomon had dealt with those who may have opposed his kingship following David's death.

### I.a.iii 1 Kings 2:1-9 - David's Instruction to Solomon

David instructs Solomon to remain faithful to God in all his ways and his reign would be secure. He gave further instruction regarding Joab, Abiathar the priest and Shimei, who had opposed David. All three were not to be allowed to live out their days in peace. However, the descendants of Barzillai who had supported David as Absalom sought his life were to be well cared for.

<sup>1</sup> When David's time to die drew near, he charged his son Solomon, saying: <sup>2</sup> 'I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, <sup>3</sup> and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.

#### 1 Kings 2:1-3

I am about to go the way of all the earth. David, son of Jesse - Israel's greatest king, apart from the Messiah - recognised that he was but a man and shared the common destiny of all the earth: <<*The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away*>> (Psalm 90:10). Knowing he would soon pass from this life, David gave a final charge to Solomon. An expanded account of David's charge to Solomon is given in 1 Chronicles Chapters 28 and 29. It especially emphasises Solomon's duty to build the temple.

Be strong, be courageous. David's parting words to Solomon echo God's words to Joshua upon his succession to the leadership of Israel after Moses' death: <<*Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*>> (Joshua 1:6-9). This injunction begins by using the language of warriorship before moving on immediately to define the framework within which this strength must be exercised, i.e. obedience to God, in accordance with the law of Moses. Particularly in view here, as in Joshua, is the law code of Deuteronomy, as the language of vv.3-4 indicates; refer to Deuteronomy 4:29, 6:2, 8:6, 9:5, 11:1, and 29:9. Be strong, be courageous seems to be an idiom that refers primarily to

conducting oneself bravely as defined specifically here within the framework of faithful adherence to the Mosaic Law; it will take bravery for Solomon to lead the people faithfully.

<sup>4</sup> 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

His word that he spoke concerning me. The reference is apparently to 2 Samuel 7:11b-16, although that passage does not explicitly mention any conditions attached to the promise, i.e. if your heirs take heed to their way. It is in fact plainly stated in 2 Samuel 7:14-15 that wrongdoing on the part of David’s successors will not lead to the end of the dynasty, and this is reflected also in 1-2 Kings, e.g. 1 Kings 11:36 and 15:4, and 2 Kings 8:19. The Books of Kings thus carry a degree of tension as to the precise implications of the Davidic promise, a tension that remains even by the end of 2 Kings Chapter 25, when the people of Judah are finally taken away into Babylonian captivity and the age of the kings ceases.

David had a general reason to exhort Solomon to obedience, but he also had a specific reason, a specific promise of God. God promised David that as long as his sons walked in obedience, they would keep the throne of Israel: <<*If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them, their sons also, for evermore, shall sit on your throne*>> (Psalm 132:12). This was an amazing promise. No matter what the Assyrians or the Egyptians or the Babylonians did, as long as David’s sons were obedient and followed God with their heart and with all their soul, God would establish their kingdom. He would take care of the rest. Christians may envy the sons of David because they had such a promise - but they have a similar promise from God. Jesus said: <<*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*>> (Matthew 6:33 NIV). God promises that if people put him first, he will take care of the rest.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Moreover, you know also what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether, whom he murdered, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet.

## 1 Kings 2:5

What Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me. Joab is to be killed so as to clear David's house of 'the guilt for the blood' that he 'shed without cause' (v.31). It is curious, however, that David himself had apparently not been sufficiently concerned about this bloodguilt to take action against someone who had been so useful to him, e.g. 2 Samuel 11:15, 14:1-33 and 19:1-8. Perhaps beneath David's words is more of a political than a religious concern. Joab is too dangerous to be allowed to live in Solomon's united kingdom once David is gone because he is too much a man of the Judæan past, just as Shimei is too much a man of the Israelite past (v.8-9). Between these disruptive elements from Judah and Israel, elements that are hostile to harmony, stands Barzillai from Gilead in Transjordan, who helped David when Absalom sought his father's life; refer to 2 Samuel 17:27-29 and 19:31-39. He is a model of dutiful service to his king, which is rewarded in peaceful fellowship for his sons around the king's table.

David wanted Solomon to begin his reign with justice, and to first give justice to the victims of Joab, who was guilty of the murder of both Abner, the general of Israel's army under Saul (2 Samuel 3:27), and Amasa, one of David's military commanders (2 Samuel 20:9-10).

Joab is one of the more complex characters of the OT. He was fiercely loyal to David, yet not strongly obedient. He disobeyed David when he thought it was in David's best interest, and he was cunning and ruthless in furthering his own position. David did not mention Joab's killing of Absalom, which David commanded him not to do in 2 Samuel Chapter 18. Perhaps by this time David recognised that Absalom did in fact have to die for his treason against and attempted murder of David.

Many people think that David did not command Joab's execution during his lifetime because Joab knew about the murder of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:14-25. The idea is that Joab used this knowledge as blackmail against David. This may be true, but it seems that others knew of David's sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah also, such as Nathan the prophet and servants in David's court. It would seem that Joab's knowledge was only effective as blackmail if no one else knew about it. At the very least, David knew the complexity of Joab's character. He knew the loyalty and sacrifices Joab had made for David over the years, and he knew his violence and ruthlessness. David felt under obligation to Joab, and although David was certainly not lacking in courage, he was not able to cope with the mixture of Joab's loyalty and his misdeeds.

<sup>6</sup> Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his grey head go down to Sheol in peace. <sup>7</sup> Deal loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your

table; for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from your brother Absalom. <sup>8</sup> There is also with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a terrible curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim; but when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, “I will not put you to death with the sword.” <sup>9</sup> Therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you must bring his grey head down with blood to Sheol.’

### 1 Kings 2:6-9

Act therefore according to your wisdom. Solomon must not act rashly, but must find some appropriate justification for removing Joab from the scene so that he does not die a peaceful and natural death in old age, i.e. do not let his grey head go down to Sheol in peace. Solomon’s wisdom, Hebrew *khokhmah*, will be highlighted in the following chapters, i.e. 1 Kings 3:1-28, 4:29-34 and 10:1-13, but it will never again be used to such ruthless effect.

Sheol here refers to the place of the dead. In the Bible, it is usually found in idiomatic expressions such as ‘go down to Sheol’ or ‘come up from Sheol.’ God is also the one who raises up a soul from Sheol: <<*O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit*>> (Psalm 30:3), so he has authority over the dead as well as the living. He is the one who holds the key to Job’s question: <<*If mortals die, will they live again?*>> (Job 14:14a). Job remains confident: <<*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth*>> (Job 19:25). Hannah affirms that same confidence, and so should Christians: <<*Such is the confidence that we have through Christ towards God*>> (2 Corinthians 3:4), and: <<*Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward*>> (Hebrews 10:35).

Deal loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite. David also wanted Solomon to do right by these who had helped David in a time of great need.

Let them be among those who eat at your table. This was a great privilege. To eat at the king’s table was the equivalent of having a pension, the beneficiary receiving a regular royal allowance of food and clothing, with a house and land to support him and his family. David also bestowed this privilege on Mephibosheth, the son of his great friend Jonathan: <<*You and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him, and shall bring in the produce, so that your master’s grandson may have food to eat; but your master’s grandson Mephibosheth shall always eat at my table*>> (2 Samuel 9:10a).

**Shimei: you must bring his grey head down with blood to Sheol.** David vowed that he would not kill the obnoxious rebel Shimei: <<*The king said to Shimei, 'You shall not die.'* And the king gave him his oath>> (2 Samuel 19:23), who had cursed David as he fled from Absalom in 2 Samuel 16:5-13. It was right for David to keep his vow, but it was also right for him to make sure that Shimei received due punishment without David breaking his vow.

#### I.a.iv 1 Kings 2:10-12 - Death of David

David's life comes to an end and Solomon now rules the entire nation of Israel.

<sup>10</sup> Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David.

#### 1 Kings 2:10

**David slept with his ancestors.** The metaphor of sleep hints at the expectation of awakening sometime in the future, and '**with his ancestors**' hints that previous generations also join in this hope, and that David is somehow now with them. Truly, David passed from this life to eternal rest and reward. This phrase will be repeated many times in Kings and Chronicles.

**And was buried in the city of David.** Jerusalem became known by this name shortly after David captured it from the Jebusites: <<*Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, which is now the city of David*>> (2 Samuel 5:7). The tomb of David was known in the time of Jesus and the apostles, according to Acts 2:29. Afterwards, the Christian writer Jerome speaks of it being known in his time. What is currently known in Jerusalem as David's Tomb is almost certainly not the genuine one that was known in ancient times. According to 2 Kings 11:10, David's weapons were preserved as relics in the sanctuary, while, according to Josephus, other representative treasures of his reign were buried with him in his tomb.



David's Tomb in Jerusalem

<sup>11</sup> The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned for seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

## 1 Kings 2:11

David reigned over Israel for forty years, and died in 970 BC. This gives David's age at approximately seventy: <<*David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for forty years. At Hebron he reigned over Judah for seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years*>> (2 Samuel 5:4-5).

<sup>12</sup> So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

## 1 Kings 2:12

His kingdom was firmly established. The Hebrew *kun* or established is strategically positioned at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of vv.12-46, recalling 2 Samuel 7:11b-16, where it appears on three occasions in relation to God's action in ensuring for David an everlasting dynasty. God has done for Solomon what he had done earlier for David: <<*David then perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel*>> (2 Samuel 5:12), in accordance with his promise to David (v.24). That promise was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David; but it also had a definite and partial fulfilment in Solomon.

### I.a.v 1 Kings 2:13-46 - Solomon Consolidates His Reign

Solomon deals with the three men that his father had asked him to judge appropriately. Adonijah was killed because he remained a threat to Solomon on the throne; Joab was killed even though he took refuge by the altar and the priest Abiathar was banished for supporting Adonijah. Shimei was confined to Jerusalem and when he broke the terms of his confinement he too was killed.

<sup>13</sup> Then Adonijah son of Haggith came to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. She asked, 'Do you come peaceably?' He said, 'Peaceably.'<sup>14</sup> Then he said, 'May I have a word with you?' She said, 'Go on.'<sup>15</sup> He said, 'You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel expected me to reign; however, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from the Lord.'<sup>16</sup> And now I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me.' She said to him, 'Go on.'<sup>17</sup> He said, 'Please ask King Solomon — he will not refuse you — to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife.'<sup>18</sup> Bathsheba said, 'Very well; I will speak to the king on your behalf.'

## 1 Kings 2:13-18

Do you come peaceably? This was a valid question. Adonijah attempted to succeed David as king over Israel, but was kept from establishing his reign when Nathan and Bathsheba warned King David of Adonijah's attempt. Adonijah had reason to wish revenge on Bathsheba.

You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel expected me to reign. Adonijah seemed to suffer from delusions of grandeur. He imagined that there was widespread popular support for him as king. In reality, he only had a handful of influential malcontents to support him, and they quickly deserted him when it was evident that David favoured Solomon: <<***Then all the guests of Adonijah got up trembling and went their own ways***>> (1 Kings 1:49).

To give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife. Second Samuel 16:20-22 suggests that sexual liaison with the king's concubines amounted to a claim to the throne; and although it remains unknown whether or not Abishag was strictly a concubine, she was intimately associated in people's minds with David. Certainly Solomon appears to interpret Adonijah's request as a revival of the conspiracy of 1 Kings Chapter 1 – as precisely the 'wickedness' against which Solomon had warned him in 1 Kings 1:52 and Solomon voices this in v.22.

<sup>19</sup> So Bathsheba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. <sup>20</sup> Then she said, 'I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me.' And the king said to her, 'Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you.' <sup>21</sup> She said, 'Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to your brother Adonijah as his wife.'

## 1 Kings 2:19-21

So Bathsheba went to King Solomon. She knew that this was an outrageous request, yet she still agreed to bring it to Solomon. Bathsheba probably believed that it was best that Solomon knew what Adonijah wanted to do.

The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her. When Bathsheba went into the presence of her husband King David, she bowed down before him. Although Solomon could have commanded the same respect, he reverses the protocol and bows down to honour his mother. This is in keeping with God's commandments: <<***Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you***>> (Exodus 20:12).

I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me. Bathsheba knew this was not a small petition at all. She was at least a little sarcastic, to make the request of Adonijah seem even more offensive to the ears of Solomon.

<sup>22</sup> King Solomon answered his mother, ‘And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom as well! For he is my elder brother; ask not only for him but also for the priest Abiathar and for Joab son of Zeruah!’ <sup>23</sup> Then King Solomon swore by the Lord, ‘So may God do to me, and more also, for Adonijah has devised this scheme at the risk of his life!’ <sup>24</sup> Now therefore as the Lord lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of my father David, and who has made me a house as he promised, today Adonijah shall be put to death.’ <sup>25</sup> So King Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he struck him down, and he died.

### 1 Kings 2:22-25

Ask for him the kingdom as well! Solomon understood the situation perfectly. He knew that this was Adonijah’s attempt to again declare or build a claim to the throne of Israel.

My elder brother. It is not clear to what extent the eldest son was normally expected in Israel to succeed his father to the throne, but at least some Israelites would certainly have regarded the eldest as having a particular claim on the throne. This would have been in keeping with the rights of the eldest son to receive a double portion of the father’s estate as his inheritance: <<**He must acknowledge as firstborn the son of the one who is disliked, giving him a double portion of all that he has; since he is the first issue of his virility, the right of the firstborn is his**>> (Deuteronomy 21:17). The rights of the firstborn were passed down to the next eldest if the firstborn died.

Then King Solomon swore by the Lord, ‘So may God do to me, and more also.’ Solomon binds himself by an oath that invites punishment if he is unfaithful in keeping it. He swears this oath in the name of Yahweh, thereby owning him as his God, just as Ruth did: <<**Where you die, I will die – there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!**>> (Ruth 1:17). A similar statement is also used elsewhere; for example in 1 Samuel 3:17.

Now therefore as the Lord lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of my father David. Solomon was zealous to give justice to Adonijah because he knew that God gave him the throne of Israel.

**Today Adonijah shall be put to death.** Solomon simply acted according to the terms of parole granted to Adonijah: <<*So Solomon responded, 'If he proves to be a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die'*>> (1 Kings 1:52). Adonijah made a wicked, treasonous request and is executed because of it. It might be wondered why Adonijah - after hearing the warning Solomon made in 1 Kings 1:52 - would make such an outrageous request. Perhaps he felt that Solomon was too young, too inexperienced, or too timid to do the right thing. He soon found out that Solomon was a wise and decisive leader.

<sup>26</sup> The king said to the priest Abiathar, 'Go to Anathoth, to your estate; for you deserve death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord God before my father David, and because you shared in all the hardships my father endured.'<sup>27</sup> So Solomon banished Abiathar from being priest to the Lord, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

#### **1 Kings 2:26-27**

**Go to Anathoth.** Anathoth was one of the towns allocated to the Levites who were given no land inheritance for they served the Lord: <<*Out of the tribe of Benjamin: Gibeon with its pasture lands, Geba with its pasture lands, Anathoth with its pasture lands, and Almon with its pasture lands – four towns*>> (Joshua 21:17-18). It would become the hometown of the prophet Jeremiah: <<*The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin*>> (Jeremiah 1:1).

**For you deserve death.** There is no evidence that Abiathar and Joab had anything to do with Adonijah's initiative in regard to Abishag, but both are pronounced guilty by association. However, Abiathar did deserve death because he supported Adonijah as the next king, in defiance of the will of God and the will of King David; refer to 1 Kings 1:7. This was treason against both God and the king of Israel.

**But I will not at this time put you to death.** Solomon showed mercy and wisdom to Abiathar. Mercy was shown in sparing Abiathar's life in light of his past standing as a chief priest and supporter of David. Wisdom was shown in exiling him and saying, "**I will not at this time put you to death.**" Solomon let Abiathar know that he could still be executed.

**Thus fulfilling the word of the Lord that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.** This refers to the prophecies found in 1 Samuel 2:27-36 and 1 Samuel 3:11-14. By removing Abiathar from the priesthood, Solomon - without direct intention - fulfilled the promise of judgement against the house of Eli, made some

100 years before Solomon took the throne. Abiathar is identified as a member of Eli's house in 1 Samuel 22:20, and the <<*faithful priest*>> of 1 Samuel 2:35 is now discovered to be Zadok (v.35). The Books of Kings are very interested in this idea of prophecy and fulfilment, which is one of the themes that binds the books together and gives them their distinctive atmosphere.

<sup>28</sup> When the news came to Joab – for Joab had supported Adonijah though he had not supported Absalom – Joab fled to the tent of the Lord and grasped the horns of the altar. <sup>29</sup> When it was told King Solomon, ‘Joab has fled to the tent of the Lord and now is beside the altar’, Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada, saying, ‘Go, strike him down.’ <sup>30</sup> So Benaiah came to the tent of the Lord and said to him, ‘The king commands, “Come out.”’ But he said, ‘No, I will die here.’ Then Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, ‘Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me.’ <sup>31</sup> The king replied to him, ‘Do as he has said, strike him down and bury him; and thus take away from me and from my father's house the guilt for the blood that Joab shed without cause. <sup>32</sup> The Lord will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head, because, without the knowledge of my father David, he attacked and killed with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself, Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. <sup>33</sup> So shall their blood come back on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants for ever; but to David, and to his descendants, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace from the Lord for evermore.’ <sup>34</sup> Then Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up and struck him down and killed him; and he was buried at his own house near the wilderness. <sup>35</sup> The king put Benaiah son of Jehoiada over the army in his place, and the king put the priest Zadok in the place of Abiathar.

### 1 Kings 2:28-35

**Heeding David's instructions, Solomon moves to have Joab eliminated.**

**The horns of the altar.** Joab supported Adonijah in his treasonous attempt to gain David's throne. Now he imitated Adonijah's attempt to find refuge by taking hold of the horns of the altar, just as Adonijah had done in 1 Kings 1:50-53.

**Go, strike him down.** Although it was almost a universal custom in the ancient world to find sanctuary at a holy altar, Solomon knew that this ancient custom was

not used in Israel to protect a guilty man. Since Joab refused to leave, Solomon had him executed right at the altar.

**The Lord will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head.** Solomon indicates to Benaiah that the judgement that will come upon Joab is not from the king but from the Lord, as also seen in earlier times: <<*and God also made all the wickedness of the people of Shechem fall back on their heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal*>> (Judges 9:57).

**But to David, and to his descendants, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace from the Lord for evermore.** This was only true if and when David's descendants followed the Lord. Destiny is not determined by the ways of the ancestors, but by a current relationship with God.

**Then Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up and struck him down and killed him.** Joab does not think that Solomon will be as ruthless as Joab had shown himself to be, that is, prepared even to have someone killed in the place of sanctuary. Although this was not strictly in compliance with Exodus 21:12-14, which states that a murderer is to be taken away from the altar and put to death, taking refuge in the sanctuary applied only to the case of accidental death, not intentional murder; the point of Exodus 21:14 was that the altar provided no protection for a wilful murderer. David's view was that Joab deserved death for the murder of both Abner in 2 Samuel 3:27 and Amasa in 2 Samuel 20:10.

<sup>36</sup> Then the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, 'Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and live there, and do not go out from there to any place whatever. <sup>37</sup> For on the day you go out, and cross the Wadi Kidron, know for certain that you shall die; your blood shall be on your own head.' <sup>38</sup> And Shimei said to the king, 'The sentence is fair; as my lord the king has said, so will your servant do.' So Shimei lived in Jerusalem for many days.

### **1 Kings 2:36-38**

Solomon moves next to eliminate **Shimei**, who had cursed David as he fled from Absalom; refer to 2 Samuel 16:5-13. When Shimei ignores Solomon's order not to go from Jerusalem to any other place (v.36 and v.42), Solomon orders his execution (v.46). He thus proves himself to be a 'wise' king (v.6 and v.9), but it is a dubious kind of wisdom.

**For on the day you go out, and cross the Wadi Kidron, know for certain that you shall die.** The Kidron brook flowed between the city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, marking the boundary of the city to the east. It is ironic that this should look forward to Jesus making the same journey into the Garden of Gethsemane on the day that he was destined to die: <<*After Jesus had spoken*

*these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered>> (John 18:1).*

Your blood shall be on your own head. Shimei had cursed the king, the symbolic father of the nation, and was therefore responsible for his own death: <<*All who curse father or mother shall be put to death; having cursed father or mother, their blood is upon them*>> (Leviticus 20:9).

The sentence is fair. Shimei knew that Solomon was merciful and generous to him. He not only agreed with the arrangement, he appears also grateful for it.

<sup>39</sup> But it happened at the end of three years that two of Shimei's slaves ran away to King Achish son of Maacah of Gath. When it was told Shimei, 'Your slaves are in Gath', <sup>40</sup> Shimei arose and saddled a donkey, and went to Achish in Gath, to search for his slaves; Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath. <sup>41</sup> When Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and returned, <sup>42</sup> the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, 'Did I not make you swear by the Lord, and solemnly adjure you, saying, "Know for certain that on the day you go out and go to any place whatever, you shall die"? And you said to me, "The sentence is fair; I accept."' <sup>43</sup> Why then have you not kept your oath to the Lord and the commandment with which I charged you?' <sup>44</sup> The king also said to Shimei, 'You know in your own heart all the evil that you did to my father David; so the Lord will bring back your evil on your own head. <sup>45</sup> But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever.' <sup>46a</sup> Then the king commanded Benaiah son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died.

### 1 Kings 2:39-46a

Shimei arose and saddled a donkey, and went to Achish in Gath, to search for his slaves. Normally, an owner of slaves had the legal right to retrieve those who had absconded from his service and Shimei acted in what he would have seen as the proper way.

**Paul's letter to Philemon is an example of how the runaway slave Onesimus should be treated:** <<*Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever, no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother – especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account*>> (Philemon 15-18).

Why then have you not kept your oath to the Lord and the commandment with which I charged you? Solomon extended mercy to Shimei, but Shimei abused it and took advantage of it. It seems to have mainly been a matter of neglect or forgetfulness, but it was criminal and costly to neglect or forget a royal covenant.

Then the king commanded Benaiah son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died. Unlike the occasions when someone put a man to death for David on their own initiative, such as Abner, Amasa or King Ishbaal, Solomon gives the precise order for the execution. Once again the task falls to Benaiah to carry out the king's commands.

<sup>46b</sup> So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

### 1 Kings 2:46b

So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon. This chapter demonstrates that Solomon's throne was secure at an early date, not like the reign of David or Saul.