

# FIRST KINGS

## Chapter 11

### *Solomon's Wives*

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. <sup>2</sup> They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. <sup>3</sup> He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. <sup>4</sup> As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. <sup>5</sup> He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. <sup>6</sup> So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. <sup>7</sup> On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. <sup>8</sup> He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. <sup>9</sup> The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. <sup>10</sup> Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. <sup>11</sup> So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. <sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. <sup>13</sup> Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

**11:1** *loved many foreign women.* Many of Solomon's marriages were no doubt for the purpose of sealing international relationships with various kingdoms, large and small—a common practice in the ancient Near East. But this violated not only Dt 17:17 with respect to the multiplicity of wives, but also the prohibition against taking wives from the pagan peoples among whom Israel settled (see Ex 34:16; Dt 7:1–3; Jos 23:12–13; Ezr 9:2; 10:2–3; Ne 13:23–27). (CSB)

Solomon enacted marriage alliances with virtually all the surrounding states, longtime rivals of Israel. (TLSB)

*Moabites.* See note on Ge 19:36–38. (CSB)

*Ammonites.* See note on Ge 19:36–38; see also 14:21; Dt 23:3. (CSB)

*Edomites.* See notes on Ge 25:26; 36:1; Am 1:11; 9:12; see also Dt 23:7–8. (CSB)

*Sidonians*. See 16:31. (CSB)

**11:2** *they will surely turn your hearts after their gods*. An example in Israel's earlier history is found in Nu 25:1–15. (CSB)

*in love*. Solomon followed the desires of his heart rather than God's Word forbidding intermarriage with foreign women. (TLSB)

**11:3** *seven hundred ... three hundred*. Cf. SS 6:8, but see note there. (CSB)

Large harem indicates the splendor of Solomon's court, not merely his sexual excesses. His wives, who outnumbered his concubines, were princesses acquired out of political considerations. (TLSB)

**11:4** *turned away*. Gifts of God, such as wisdom and riches, are not a guarantee that their recipient will use them to glorify the Giver. Solomon demonstrated how irrational human wickedness is. The more generously God showered Solomon with wisdom and riches, the greater became his temptation to turn to other gods. (Cf Mt 19:23.) Because Solomon followed the gods of his wives, the Lord allowed his empire to disintegrate and the nation to divide. Cf Lk 12:21; Rm 1:18. (TLSB)

*his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God*. See 8:61. The atmosphere of paganism and idolatry introduced into Solomon's court by his foreign wives gradually led Solomon into syncretistic religious practices. (CSB)

**11:5** *Ashtoreth*. See v. 33; 14:15; 2Ki 23:13; see also note on Jdg 2:13. (CSB)

*Molech*. See 2Sa 12:30 and NIV text note. Molech and Milcom (see NIV text note) are alternate names for the same pagan deity. Worship of this god not only severely jeopardized the continued recognition of the absolute kingship of the Lord over his people, but also involved (on rare occasions) the abomination of child sacrifice (see 2Ki 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Lev 18:21; 20:2–5; see also note on Jdg 10:6). (CSB)

**11:6** *as David his father had done*. Although David committed grievous sins, he was repentant, and he was never involved in idolatrous worship. (CSB)

**11:7** *high place*. See note on 3:2. (CSB)

*Chemosh*. See 2Ki 3:26–27. (CSB)

Before entering Canaan, Israel defeated the "people of Chemosh" (Nu 21:29), who sacrificed children to their national idol (2Ki 3:27). (TLSB)

*mountain east*. Hill outside the walls of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**11:1–8** The great tragedy of Solomon’s reign is that, having married many foreign women and taken hundreds of concubines, he turns from the Lord to worship his wives’ idols. The tragic fall of Solomon is a warning to believers throughout all ages. If someone so wise and good as Solomon can turn from the Lord, how easily the same thing can happen to us! With a deep sense of humility, we say, “There but for the grace of God go I.” Thanks be to God that He blesses us with faithful spouses and dear families hallowed by His grace. • Lord Jesus, Savior dear, be my guide through life, lest I lose the way. Be my hope and comfort also in the hour of death. Amen. (TLSB)

**11:9** *appeared to him twice.* See 3:4–5; 9:1–9. (CSB)

**11:11** *not kept my covenant.* Solomon had broken the most basic demands of the covenant (see Ex 20:2–5) and thereby severely undermined the entire covenant relationship between God and his people. (CSB)

*give it to your servant.* Irony. The servants Solomon exploited would inherit the kingdom. (TLSB)

**11:12** *for the sake of David your father.* Because of David’s unwavering loyalty to the Lord and God’s covenant with him (see 2Sa 7:11–16). (CSB)

*your son.* Rehoboam precipitated the kingdom’s division. Under his rule, Judah “committed [abominations], more than all that their fathers had done” (14:22). (TLSB)

**11:13** *one tribe.* Judah (see note on vv. 31–32; see also 12:20). (CSB)

*for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.* Now that Jerusalem contained the temple built by David’s son in accordance with 2Sa 7:13, the destiny of Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty were closely linked (see 2Ki 19:34; 21:7–8; Ps 132). The temple represented God’s royal palace, where his earthly throne (the ark) was situated and where he had pledged to be present as Israel’s Great King (9:3). (CSB)

### ***Solomon’s Adversaries***

**<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom. <sup>15</sup> Earlier when David was fighting with Edom, Joab the commander of the army, who had gone up to bury the dead, had struck down all the men in Edom. <sup>16</sup> Joab and all the Israelites stayed there for six months, until they had destroyed all the men in Edom. <sup>17</sup> But Hadad, still only a boy, fled to Egypt with some Edomite officials who had served his father. <sup>18</sup> They set out from Midian and went to Paran. Then taking men from Paran with them, they went to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house and land and provided him with food. <sup>19</sup> Pharaoh was so pleased with Hadad that he gave him a sister of his own wife, Queen Tahpenes, in marriage. <sup>20</sup> The sister of Tahpenes bore him a son named Genubath, whom Tahpenes brought up in the royal palace. There Genubath lived with Pharaoh’s own children. <sup>21</sup> While he was in Egypt, Hadad heard that David rested with his fathers and that Joab the commander of the army**

was also dead. Then Hadad said to Pharaoh, “Let me go, that I may return to my own country.”<sup>22</sup> “What have you lacked here that you want to go back to your own country?” Pharaoh asked. “Nothing,” Hadad replied, “but do let me go!”<sup>23</sup> And God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah.<sup>24</sup> He gathered men around him and became the leader of a band of rebels when David destroyed the forces of Zobah; the rebels went to Damascus, where they settled and took control.<sup>25</sup> Rezon was Israel’s adversary as long as Solomon lived, adding to the trouble caused by Hadad. So Rezon ruled in Aram and was hostile toward Israel.

**11:14–22** Flashback to David’s military campaigns and their effect on Solomon. (TLSB)

**11:14** *Hadad*. A familiar name among Edomite kings (see Ge 36:35, 39). (CSB)

Escaped a punitive campaign directed by Joab and Abishai (2Sm 8:13; 1Ch 18:12).

*Edom*. Country neighboring Israel, south of Moab. (TLSB)

**11:15–16** Cf 2Sm 8:13–14. (TLSB)

**11:15** *David was fighting with Edom*. See 2Sa 8:13–14. (CSB)

**11:16** *all the Israelites ... all the men in Edom*. All those, on both sides, who took part in the campaign. (CSB)

**11:17** *only a boy*. Probably in his early teens. (CSB)

**11:18** *Midian*. At this time Midianites inhabited a region on the eastern borders of Moab and Edom. (CSB)

East of the Gulf of Aqaba and south of Israel. (TLSB)

*Paran*. A desert area southeast of Kadesh in the central area of the Sinai peninsula (see Nu 10:12; 12:16; 13:3). (CSB)

Eastern side of the Sinai Peninsula. (TLSB)

*Pharaoh king of Egypt*. See note on 3:1. (CSB)

*gave Hadad a house and land and ... food*. In a time of Israel’s growing strength it was in Egypt’s interest to befriend those who would harass Israel and keep her power in check. (CSB)

**11:19** *sister of Tahpenes*. Egypt’s prestige had ebbed low by this time. In better days, foreign rulers found it politically expedient to send their noblewomen to the court on the Nile. Now, Pharaoh gave his sister-in-law in marriage to a fugitive prince (cf note, v 40). (TLSB)

**11:21** *Let me go.* It appears that Hadad returned to Edom during the early days of Solomon's reign. (CSB)

After David's death (970 BC), Hadad returned to his homeland for the purpose of "doing harm" (v 25), very likely by engaging in guerrilla warfare against Solomon. (TLSB)

**11:22** *What have you lacked here ... ?* Because Egypt had by this time established relatively good relations with Israel (see note on 3:1), the pharaoh was reluctant to see Hadad return to Edom and provoke trouble with Solomon. (CSB)

**11:23** *Rezon.* When David crushed King Hadadezer's power (2Sm 8:3–12; 10:16–19), the latter's vassal succeeded in making Damascus an independent capital. Under Rezon and his successors, the Syrian state perennially threatened Israel until, two centuries later, the Assyrians overpowered both Syria and Israel. (TLSB)

*Zobah.* City-state located north of Damascus and controlling eastern Syria. (TLSB)

**11:24** *leader of a band of rebels.* As David had been (1Sa 22:1–2), and Jephthah before him (Jdg 11:3). (CSB)

*rebels went to Damascus, where they settled and took control.* Presumably this took place in the early part of Solomon's reign (see 2Sa 8:6 for the situation in Damascus during the time of David). It is likely that Solomon's expedition (2Ch 8:3) against Hamath Zobah (the kingdom formerly ruled by Hadadezer, 2Sa 8:3–6) was provoked by opposition led by Rezon. Even though Solomon was able to retain control of the territory north of Damascus to the Euphrates (4:21, 24), he was not able to drive Rezon from Damascus itself. (CSB)

**11:25** *reigned over Syria.* Cf 10:29 regarding Syria's military strength. (TLSB)

### ***Jeroboam Rebels Against Solomon***

<sup>26</sup> Also, Jeroboam son of Nebat rebelled against the king. He was one of Solomon's officials, an Ephraimite from Zeredah, and his mother was a widow named Zeruah. <sup>27</sup> Here is the account of how he rebelled against the king: Solomon had built the supporting terraces and had filled in the gap in the wall of the city of David his father. <sup>28</sup> Now Jeroboam was a man of standing, and when Solomon saw how well the young man did his work, he put him in charge of the whole labor force of the house of Joseph. <sup>29</sup> About that time Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him on the way, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone out in the country, <sup>30</sup> and Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. <sup>31</sup> Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. <sup>32</sup> But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe. <sup>33</sup> I will do

this because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon's father, did. <sup>34</sup> "But I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand; I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David my servant, whom I chose and who observed my commands and statutes. <sup>35</sup> I will take the kingdom from his son's hands and give you ten tribes. <sup>36</sup> I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name. <sup>37</sup> However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. <sup>38</sup> If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you. <sup>39</sup> I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever.' " <sup>40</sup> Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt, to Shishak the king, and stayed there until Solomon's death.

**11:26** *Jeroboam ... lifted up.* He capitalized on the general discontent with Solomon's demand for forced labor and brought about the secession of the north. (TLSB)

*Zeredah.* A town in Ephraim, probably c 20 mi NE of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

*rebelled against the king.* See note on v. 40. (CSB)

**11:27** *supporting terraces.* See 9:15 and note. (CSB)

**11:28** *whole labor force of the house of Joseph.* See 5:13–18. Jeroboam's supervision of the conscripted laborers from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh made him aware of the smoldering discontent among the people over Solomon's policies (see 12:4). (CSB)

Common name for the Northern Kingdom because Ephraim and Manasseh were the two most powerful tribes of the 10 that revolted (cf Ezk 37:16, 19; Am 5:15). (TLSB)

**11:29** *Ahijah.* Perhaps through him the Lord told Solomon (v 11) the consequences of the king's unfaithfulness. (TLSB)

*new garment.* Symbolizing the newness of the kingdom. (TLSB)

**11:30–31** By a symbolic act, Ahijah revealed how the kingdom would be divided. (TLSB)

**11:31–32** *ten tribes ... one tribe.* The tradition of considering the ten northern tribes as a unit distinct from the southern tribes (Judah and Simeon—Levi received no territorial inheritance; see Jos 21) goes back to the period of the judges (see Jdg 5:14–16). Part of the reason may be the continuing presence of a non-Israelite corridor (Jerusalem, Gibeonite league, Gezer) that separated the two Israelite regions (see map No. 3 at the end of the Study Bible). Political division along the same line during the early years of

David's reign and the different arrangements that brought the southern and northern segments under David's rule (see 2Sa 2:4; 5:3) reinforced this sense of division. With the conquest of Jerusalem by David (2Sa 5:6–7) and the pharaoh's gift of Gezer to Solomon's wife (9:16–17), all Israel was for the first time territorially united. (Now that Jerusalem and Gezer were under Israelite control, the Gibeonite league, which had submitted already to Joshua—see Jos 9—could be effectively absorbed politically.) In the division here announced, the “one tribe” refers to the area dominated by Judah (but including Simeon; see Jos 19:1–9), and the “ten tribes” refers to the region that came under David's rule at the later date (Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's sons, being counted as two tribes; see Ge 48:5; see also note on Jos 14:4). For further refinement of the new boundaries that came about see note on 12:21. (CSB)

*one tribe.* Jeroboam was to receive 10 tribes. Rehoboam was to rule over only one tribe (the small tribe of Benjamin) besides his own tribe of Judah. Benjamin and the tribe of Simeon were virtually absorbed by Judah. The Levites had received no territory. (TLSB)

**11:33** *forsaken me.* See vv. 5–7. (CSB)

The prophet describes the reason for Judah's punishment and offers no solution to their dilemma. (TLSB)

*have not walked in my ways.* See vv. 1–2; 3:14. (CSB)

**11:34** *I have made him ruler all the days of his life.* See vv. 12–13. (CSB)

Cf 1Sm 10:1. (TLSB)

**11:35** *from his son's hands.* From Rehoboam (see 12:1–24). (CSB)

**11:36** *a lamp before me in Jerusalem.* Symbolizes the continuance of the Davidic dynasty in the city where God had chosen to cause his Name to dwell (see v. 13 and note). In a number of passages, the burning or snuffing out of one's lamp signifies the flourishing or ceasing of one's life (Job 18:6; 21:17; Pr 13:9; 20:20; 24:20). Here (and in 15:4; 2Ki 8:19; 2Ch 21:7; Ps 132:17) the same figure is applied to David's dynasty (see especially Ps 132:17, where “set up a lamp for my anointed” is parallel to “make a horn grow for David”). In David's royal sons his “lamp” continues to burn before the Lord in Jerusalem. (CSB)

Figurative expression for David's family line. (TLSB)

**11:37** *Israel.* The northern ten tribes. (CSB)

**11:38** *If you do whatever I command you ... I will be with you.* Jeroboam was placed under the same covenant obligations as David and Solomon before him (see 2:3–4; 3:14; 6:12–13). (CSB)

*build you a sure house.* The Lord makes a new covenant with Jeroboam regarding the northern tribes. He calls Jeroboam to restore the use of God’s Word among them. Unlike the covenant with David, there is no promise of a messianic King. (TLSB)

**11:39** *humble David’s descendants.* The division of the kingdom considerably reduced the status and power of the house of David. *not forever.* Anticipates a restoration (announced also in the Messianic prophecies of Jer 30:9; Eze 34:23; 37:15–28; Hos 3:5; Am 9:11–12) in which the nation is reunited under the rule of the house of David. (CSB)

*not forever.* Never again mighty in the political domain, the house of David maintained its identity until One “greater than Solomon” came out of it (cf Lk 2:4; 11:31). (TLSB)

**11:40** *Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam.* Jeroboam, perhaps indifferent to the timing announced by Ahijah (vv. 34–35), may have made an abortive attempt to wrest the kingdom from Solomon (see v. 26). (CSB)

Either Ahijah’s prophecy became known or Solomon noticed subversive efforts by his once-favored servant (v 28). (TLSB)

*Shishak the king.* See 14:25–26. This first Egyptian pharaoh to be mentioned by name in the OT was the Libyan founder of the 22nd dynasty (945–924 B.C.). Solomon’s marriage ties were with the previous dynasty (see note on 3:1). (CSB)

First Pharaoh mentioned by name in the OT. Known in Egyptian records as Shoshenq I, he founded the weak Twenty-second (Libyan) Dynasty c 945 BC. After Solomon’s death, he invaded Judah and Israel (14:25–26). (TLSB)

*death of Solomon.* 931 BC. (TLSB)

## **Solomon’s Death**

**41** As for the other events of Solomon’s reign—all he did and the wisdom he displayed—are they not written in the book of the annals of Solomon? **42** Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. **43** Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king.

**11:41** *annals of Solomon.* A written source concerning Solomon’s life and administration, which was used by the writer of 1,2 Kings (see Introduction: Author, Sources and Date; see also 15:7, 23). (CSB)

**11:42** *forty years.* The years during which Solomon was associated with his father may be included in this figure. (tlsb)

**11:43** *rested with his fathers.* See note on 1:21. (CSB)



**11:9–43** The closing years of Solomon’s reign are troubled as the Lord foretells the division of the kingdom and raises up adversaries to Solomon (e.g., Jeroboam). We dare never take God’s grace lightly, thinking we can sin without consequences. May God the Holy Spirit always keep us focused on our Savior through Word and Sacraments. Jesus did not take us for granted; He saved us with precious grace. • Blest Savior dear, be always near. Keep me from evil, harm, and fear. Amen. (TLSB)