

# FIRST KINGS

## Chapter 11

*Solomon Turns from the LORD*

Now 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 people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 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 wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. 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 And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

**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)

**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.* 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.* 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** *Molech*. 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. (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** *Chemosh*. 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)

*The LORD Raises Adversaries*

**9** And 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 thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. **11** Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. **12** Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. **13** However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.” **14** And 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 slain, he struck down every male in Edom **16** (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom). **17** But Hadad fled to Egypt, together with certain Edomites of his father’s servants, Hadad still being a little child. **18** They set out from Midian and came to Paran and took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house and assigned him an allowance of food and gave him land. **19** And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him in marriage the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. **20** And the sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh’s house. And Genubath was in Pharaoh’s house among the sons of Pharaoh. **21** But when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers 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 have you lacked with me that you are now seeking to go to your own country?” And he said to him, “Only let me depart.” **23** God also raised up as an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his master Hadadezer king of Zobah. **24** And he gathered men about him and became leader of a marauding band, after the killing by David. And they went to Damascus and lived there and made him king in Damascus. **25** He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, doing harm as Hadad did. And he loathed Israel and reigned over Syria.

26 Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also lifted up his hand against the king. 27 And this was the reason why he lifted up his hand against the king. Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the breach of the city of David his father. 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 labor of the house of Joseph. 29 And at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had dressed himself in a new garment, and the two of them were alone in the open country. 30 Then Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. 31 And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes 32 (but he shall have one tribe, 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 because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules, as David his father did. 34 Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes. 35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and will give it to you, ten tribes. 36 Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. 37 And I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel. 38 And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. 39 And I will afflict the offspring of David because of this, but not forever.'" 40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. 41 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon? 42 And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. 43 And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

**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** *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)

**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)

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

**11:17** *still being a little child*. 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)

*gave him (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 depart*. 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, 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 marauding band*. As David had been (1Sa 22:1–2), and Jephthah before him (Jdg 11:3). (CSB)

*they went to Damascus and lived there*. 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)

**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)

**11:28** *all the forced labor*. 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. 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). (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*. The prophet describes the reason for Judah's punishment and offers no solution to their dilemma. (TLSB)

**11:35** *out of 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. 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** *all that 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** *afflict the offspring of David*. 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. (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)

**11:41** *annals of Solomon*. A written source concerning Solomon’s life and administration, which was used by the writer of 1,2 Kings. (CSB)

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

**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)