

FIRST KINGS

Chapter 4

Solomon's Officials

King Solomon was king over all Israel, 2 and these were his high officials: Azariah the son of Zadok was the priest; 3 Elihoreph and Ahijah the sons of Shisha were secretaries; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 4 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; 5 Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers; Zabud the son of Nathan was priest and king's friend; 6 Ahishar was in charge of the palace; and Adoniram the son of Abda was in charge of the forced labor. 7 Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household. Each man had to make provision for one month in the year. 8 These were their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; 9 Ben-deker, in Makaz, Shaalvim, Bethshemesh, and Elonbeth-hanan; 10 Ben-hesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh and all the land of Hephher); 11 Ben-abinadab, in all Naphath-dor (he had Taphath the daughter of Solomon as his wife); 12 Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth-shean that is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, and from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, as far as the other side of Jokmeam; 13 Bengeber, in Ramoth-gilead (he had the villages of Jair the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, and he had the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars); 14 Ahinadab the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim; 15 Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he had taken Basemath the daughter of Solomon as his wife); 16 Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; 17 Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar; 18 Shimei the son of Ela, in Benjamin; 19 Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan. And there was one governor who was over the land.

4:1 *king over all Israel.* Solomon ruled over an undivided kingdom, as his father had before him (see 2Sa 8:15). (CSB)

4:2 *high officials.* Solomon appointed various officials of cabinet rank, associated with him in Jerusalem (vv 1–6), and 12 regional managers, stationed in their respective districts (vv 7–19). (TLSB)

priest. Cf 2Sm 8:18, where the term “priest” is applied to David’s sons, who according to 1Ch 18:17 were his “chief officials.” In v 5, the “king’s friend” is also a priest. (TLSB)

son. According to 2Sa 15:27, 36 and 1Ch 6:8–9, Azariah was the son of Ahimaaz and the grandson of Zadok (see note on 2:8). Apparently Zadok’s son Ahimaaz had died, so that Zadok was succeeded by his grandson Azariah. (CSB)

4:3 *Elihoreph.* Prompted by a textual variant, some scholars suggest vv 2b–3a reads “Azariah, son of Zadok the priest, was in charge of the calendar,” but the traditional reading is preferred. (TLSB)

Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud. The same person who served in David’s court (see 2Sa 8:16). (CSB)

4:4 *Benaiah.* Replaced Joab as commander of the army (see 2:35; 2Sa 8:18). (CSB)

Zadok and Abiathar. Abiathar was banished at the beginning of Solomon’s reign (2:27, 35), and Zadok was succeeded by his grandson Azariah (v. 2). (CSB)

priests. Chief priests (Levitical) at the ark in Jerusalem. The tabernacle was still at Shiloh. (TLSB)

4:5 *the officers.* Perhaps those mentioned in vv 7–19. (TLSB)

Nathan. Either the prophet (1:11) or the son of David (2Sa 5:14). (CSB)

king's friend. Not a personal friend, but one who rendered confidential service. Zabud was Solomon's trusted counselor as Hushai had been David's (2Sm 15:32). (TLSB)

4:6 *in charge of the palace.* The first OT reference to an office mentioned frequently in 1,2 Kings (1Ki 16:9; 18:3; 2Ki 18:18, 37; 19:2). It is likely that this official was administrator of the palace and steward of the king's properties. (CSB)

Adoniram. Served not only under Solomon, but also under David before him (2Sa 20:24) and Rehoboam after him (1Ki 12:18). (CSB)

Also spelled "Adoram" and "Hadoram." (TLSB)

forced labor. Introduced by David, the draft of laborers for work on state projects became so oppressive under Solomon that it was a main factor in causing the division of the kingdom (12:4, 11, 18–20). (TLSB)

4:7–19 Two noteworthy features of Solomon's reign emerge here: (1) Although some of the place-names have not been identified with known sites, enough fixed points are mentioned to establish the fact that the three districts east and the nine west of the Jordan did not coincide with the territories allotted to the 12 tribes (Jsh 15–19). This administrative realignment of the borders may have been based on the land's productivity because each new district was required to furnish a month's "food for the king and his household" (v 7). (2) One officer appointed to supervise the collection of food from all tribes had his headquarters in the land of Judah (v 9). However, Solomon's own tribe apparently was not required to furnish a monthly share of provisions for the royal household. If this was the case, such discrimination may have sparked the discontent among the other tribes that flared after Solomon's death (ch 12). (TLSB)

4:7 *Solomon ... had twelve officers.* The 12 districts were not identical to tribal territories, possibly because the tribes varied greatly in agricultural productivity. But Solomon's administrative decision violated traditional tribal boundaries and probably stirred up ancient tribal loyalties, eventually contributing to the disruption of the united kingdom. (CSB)

had to make provision. Supplying for the royal household was no small task. Archaeological finds confirm the broad administrative efforts of Judean rulers, whose seals appear on numerous items. (TLSB)

4:8 *Ben-Hur.* The Hebrew *Ben* means "son of." (CSB)

In Solomon's era, the town was rebuilt as a regional center, which included a huge underground reservoir capable of collecting 211,000 gal of water. (TLSB)

4:11 *Ben-Abinadab.* Most likely the "son of" David's brother Abinadab (see 1Sa 16:8; 17:13), making him Solomon's first cousin (he was also his son-in-law). (CSB)

4:12 *Baana son of Ahilud.* Probably a brother of Jehoshaphat the recorder (v. 3). (CSB)

Naphath-dor. Became major seaport by Ahab's time. (TLSB)

4:16 *Baana son of Hushai.* Perhaps the son of David's trusted adviser. (CSB)

4:18 *Shimei son of Ela.* Perhaps the same Shimei mentioned in 1:8. (CSB)

4:19 *Sihon ... Og.* Cf Nu 21:21, 33. (TLLSB)

4:1–19 This list of Solomon's officials, among whom he lived and worked, demonstrates the breadth of his wise rule. Today, the people among whom we work are important to us and to the Lord, who supplies us able companions for serving our nation and His kingdom. We are priceless to Him, and our names are recorded in the Book of Life through Jesus' work on our behalf. • Thank You, Holy Trinity, for the priceless insights of Your Holy Word. In Jesus name. Amen. (TLLSB)

Solomon's Wealth and Wisdom

20 Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. **21** Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life. **22** Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors[c] of fine flour and sixty cors of meal, **23** ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl. **24** For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates. And he had peace on all sides around him. **25** And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon. **26** Solomon also had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. **27** And those officers supplied provisions for King Solomon, and for all who came to King Solomon's table, each one in his month. They let nothing be lacking. **28** Barley also and straw for the horses and swift steeds they brought to the place where it was required, each according to his duty. **29** And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, **30** so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. **31** For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. **32** He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. **33** He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. **34** And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

4:20 *as many as the sand on the sea.* Intentional exaggeration to stress Solomon's great wisdom and wealth. (TLLSB)

they ate, they drank and they were happy. Judah and Israel prospered (see 5:4). (CSB)

With wealth flowing in from a vast empire (v 21), the people ate and drank enough to make life enjoyable, even though they were required to supply enormous provisions for the king's grandiose establishment (vv 22–28). Progressively greater requirements by Solomon finally made his exactions a "heavy yoke" (12:4). (TLLSB)

4:21 *from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt.* The borders of Solomon's empire extended to the limits originally promised to Abraham (see note on 2Sa 8:3). However, rebellion was brewing in Edom (11:14–21) and Damascus (11:23–25). (CSB)

4:22–23 Collected provisions could feed at least 1,500 people: the royal family, officials, and regular troops. (TLLSB)

4:22 *Solomon's provisions for one day.* For all his household, his palace servants and his court officials and their families. (CSB)

Cors. A cor was about 6 bushels. (TLSB)

4:23 *roebucks.* Species of deer, also known as fallow deer. (TLSB)

fattened fowl. Likely geese. (TLSB)

4:24 *Tiphsah.* A city on the west bank of the Euphrates River. (CSB)

Located on the Upper Euphrates c 200 mi NE of Damascus. (TLSB)

Gaza. The southernmost city of the Philistines on the Mediterranean coast. (CSB)

Philistine city near the Great Sea; southwest limit of the empire. In v 21, the extent of Solomon's empire is mentioned in order to account for the source of his income. Here, the reference to distant borders makes clear why his expenditures were so huge. (TLSB)

4:25 *Dan even to Beersheba.* All of Israel (Jgs 20:1). (TLSB)

every man under ... his fig tree. Peace allowed men to build financial security for their families. (TLSB)

4:26 *40,000.* Possibly a scribal slip; 2Ch 9:25 has "4,000 stalls," enough to accommodate the horses of "1,400 chariots" (1Ki 10:26). (TLSB)

4:29 *wisdom.* Solomon gave evidence of his God-given capacities, not only by his judicial abilities (3:16–28) and his administrative astuteness, but also by sage maxims. (TLSB)

beyond measure...sand on the seashore. Figure of speech indicating extent of Solomon's wisdom. (TLSB)

4:30 *people of the East.* The phrase is general and appears to refer to the peoples of Mesopotamia (see Ge 29:1) and Arabia (see Jer 49:28; Eze 25:4, 10)—those associated with Israel's northeastern and eastern horizons, just as Egypt was the main region on her southwestern horizon. Many examples of Mesopotamian wisdom literature have been recovered. (CSB)

wisdom of Egypt. See Ge 41:8; Ex 7:11; Ac 7:22. Examples of Egyptian wisdom literature are to be found in the proverbs of Ptahhotep (c. 2450 B.C.) and Amenemope (see Introduction to Proverbs: Date). (CSB)

4:31 *He was wiser than all other men.* Until Jesus came (see Lk 11:31). (CSB)

Heman, Calcol and Darda. Evidently, the men mentioned here were well known for their wisdom. Their names appear in Judah's genealogy (1Ch 2:6). (TLSB)

4:32 *three thousand proverbs.* Only some of these are preserved in the book of Proverbs. (CSB)

songs were 1,005. One, the Song of Solomon, is recorded in the Bible, as are two psalms (Ps 72; 127). (TLSB)

4:33 *animals and birds, reptiles and fish.* Examples of Solomon’s knowledge of these creatures are found in Pr 6:6–8; 26:2–3, 11; 27:8; 28:1, 15. (CSB)

Solomon did not engage in a scientific study of botany and zoology as we know such disciplines today. The lessons he drew from plant and animal life surpassed in variety and in profundity of thought “the wisdom of all the people of the east [Babylonians and Arabs] and all the wisdom of Egypt” (v 30). Only a few of such maxims have been preserved in Pr (Pr 6:6; 19:12; 30:15–31). (TLSB)

4:34 *all nations ... all the kings of the earth.* A general statement referring to the Near Eastern world (cf. Ge 41:57). (CSB)

4:20–34 This was a fleeting, golden time in Israel’s history. The wealth Solomon enjoyed was a gift from the gracious God. Because of God’s great and undeserved love for us, we enjoy countless blessings in this life, including the certainty of priceless joys and blessings awaiting us in heaven. • Almighty God, thank You for the countless blessings You shower upon us without any merit or worthiness in us. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)