

# Route 66

## *First Kings: A House Divided*

Part 11 – June 28, 2009

The book of “First Kings” opens with a curious notation on the decline of King David’s health as he reaches the age 70.

When King David was old ... he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him. - 1 Kings 1:1 NIV

And his servants respond with an even more curious, albeit very practical solution.

[They said] Let us look for a young virgin to ... lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm. - 1 Kings 1:2b NIV

Now *those* are servants! And *that’s* a hot water bottle!



City of David / Jerusalem

While David lay dying, his oldest son, Adonijah [ad-oh-NIGH-juh], declares himself king, throws a pre-coronation feast at En Rogel, and *excludes* Bathsheba’s son Solomon, and Nathan the prophet. That’s pretty much a death threat. So, Nathan and Bathsheba quickly conspire to convince David that he had promised to make *Solomon* king. David believes them and fulfills his “promise”.

Solomon is only 19! He has at least 16 older brothers! But, Zadok [ZAY-dohk] the high priest anoints and announces him as David’s successor at Gihon [GEE-hohn], and the people greatly rejoice. So greatly, that Adonijah’s guests hear the commotion and scam! Solomon forgives Adonijah; till he tries to regain some clout by marrying the late King’s hot-water-bottle ... *then* he’s executed.



The high place at Gibeon

Solomon came here, to the high place (i.e. temple) at Gibeon to meet with God. And God appeared to him in a dream and told him to ask for whatever he desired. Solomon confesses that he is only a child and doesn’t know how to carry out his duties.

Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. - 1 Kings 3:9 NIV

And this is the kind of prayer that pleases the Lord. God is so pleased, He not only agrees to do it, He includes what Solomon *didn’t* ask for: riches and honor with no equal among kings!

His wisdom is confirmed when two prostitutes claim the same baby. Solomon calls for a sword to split the child in half. But, when one woman gives up her claim, it reveals her as the true mother.

When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe ...  
- 1 Kings 3:28a NIV



The Dome of the Rock

In the fourth year of Solomon's reign (480 years after the Israelites fled from Egypt), he built the temple (where the Dome of the Rock now sits). It took 183,000 men seven years to complete. And sadly, there is nothing left of the original. The temple sat on the same mountain where Abraham had offered up Isaac.

It was furnished with golden utensils and decorations. And the Ark rested under the 30' wingspan of two golden angels. And Solomon dedicated it all to God and publically praised Him.

Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses. - 1 Kings 8:56b NIV



Solomon's Stable at Megiddo

And they sacrificed 22,000 cattle, and celebrated for 14 days! Then he built himself a palace, and fortified his cities, and assembled a fleet of trading ships, and constructed 4000 stalls for chariot horses. His annual income was 25 tons of gold. His wisdom and wealth overwhelms *everyone*, and they glorify God.

But, he began marrying the royal daughters of the surrounding powers and nations. It seems pretty smart: who would go to war against a man holding his children and grandchildren?!

[Solomon] had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines ... [And] As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods ... - 1 Kings 11:3-4 NIV

He allowed his house to be divided. And slowly, day by day, like water working at a crack in a dam, his faith was compromised. He was worldly wise but spiritually stupid! He knew these marriages violated God's law. Brains don't mean we won't be disobedient. We have to guard our hearts daily, or our desires will distort our devotion.

Idol worship came back to Israel on Solomon's watch. And God would no longer govern His people through the kings.

Solomon's son, Rehoboam was a jerk. Solomon had overworked and overtaxed the people. And after his death they pleaded with his son, Rehoboam to lighten up. The elders said it was a great opportunity to secure the hearts of Israel. But, his buddies told him he needed to be respected.

My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions. - 1 Kings 12:11 NIV



The people stoned Rehoboam's man in charge of forced labor, and appointed one of Solomon's officials, Jeroboam, as king.

And Rehoboam continued to rule over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (from Jerusalem south), and Jeroboam ruled over the other ten tribes (from Bethel north).

It's interesting that the only example given of Solomon's wisdom is the story of dividing a child between the two prostitutes. And now Israel has prostituted itself to false idols, and God seems to be making the same judgment that Solomon did. Only, this time there'll be no selfless act to keep the child intact.

In fact, Jeroboam is so afraid his people will be lulled back when they go to worship at the temple (in the city of David), he blasphemes God by building two new temples of his own design. And then everything just pretty much goes downhill:

Rehoboam encourages more shrines and temples to false gods, and introduces male shrine prostitutes! He reigns for 17 years, and was followed by his son ...

1. Abijah [uh-BIGH-juh], who committed the sins of his father. He reigned three years and was followed by his son ...
2. Asa [A-suh], who actually did *right* in the eyes of the Lord. And Asa reigned for 41 years.

Jeroboam reigned for 22 years, and was followed by his son ...

1. Nadab [NAY-dab], who did *evil* in the eyes of the Lord. He reigned two years and was murdered by his brother ...
2. Baasha [BAY-uh-shuh], who did *evil* in the eyes of the Lord. He reigned 24 years and was followed by his son ...
3. Elah [EE-luh], who did *evil* for two years before he got drunk and was murdered by the commander of his chariots ...
4. Zimri [ZIM-rye], who did *evil* for *seven days* before the army declared their commander as king, and Zimri set the palace on fire and stayed inside. The new king was named ...
5. Omri [AHM-rye]. He did *evil* in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him. He made Samaria the capital city (where the "Good Samaritan" was from). He reigned 12 years and was followed by his son ...
6. Ahab [A-hab], who did more to provoke the Lord to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him. And that's saying something! And he married a woman named Jezebel.

Jezebel was a *Phoenician* princess; and she was on a crusade to wipe out Judaism, kill the prophets, and institute Ba'al worship.



Ba'al/Hadad

And God ushers in the age of the great prophets! Into this scene comes Elijah. He tells Ahab there'll be neither dew nor rain for a few years; and then he hides by a brook in the wilderness, and God sends ravens with food for him.

The word "Baal" means "Lord," and refers to many Canaanite gods. But, the *Phoenician* Ba'al was "Hadad", the *rain* god. He's depicted here standing on clouds, holding a budding staff (agricultural fertility), and casting down lightning. The drought is a challenge to Ba'al Hadad on his own turf.

When the brook dries up (from *his* draught) God sends Elijah to a poor widow, who's jar of flour and jug of oil miraculously remain full for over *two years* (while she tends to Elijah)! And during this time her son dies, and Elijah resurrects him.



View from Mount Carmel

In the third year Elijah goes back to Ahab, and challenges Jezebel's priests to a dual of the gods on Mount Carmel, where they'll both build altars.

The god who answers by fire — he is God. - *1 Kings 18:24 NIV*

And in front of all the people, the 450 prophets of Ba'al shout from morning till noon and dance around the altar. But, nothin'.

At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." - *1 Kings 18:27 NIV*

The word "busy" is most likely a euphemism for relieving oneself, which is why some translations say, "Using the toilet." They became frantic! They shout louder and slash themselves with swords and spears to demonstrate their intensity; but ... nothin'.

Now it's Elijah's turn. He had the people drench the offering and the wood on his altar with water. Then he had them do it again ... and then once more for good measure. And then he prayed.

Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again. - *1 Kings 18:37 NIV*

And, talk about lightning bolts: the offering, the wood, the stone altar, even the soil, gone in a flash; just a crater. The stunned people cried out, "The Lord is God!" And at Elijah's command they seize and slaughter the 450 prophets of Ba'al. And then Elijah prays for rain, and the drought is immediately over.

However, when Jezebel discovers what has happened, she vows to kill Elijah; and he runs for his life, confused and depressed.



Mount Horeb a.k.a. Sinai

He thought one victory would lead to another ... but it didn't. So, he gives up. He tells God he's had enough. He prays to die. And he flees to Mount Horeb. This is what happens when our focus is on our fear.

Q: Do you know why he went to Mount Horeb?

You probably know it by its other name: Mount Sinai. This is where God spoke to *Moses*. Elijah wants some of that. He's trying to go from one mountain top experience to another. When Moses brought the people to meet with God at Mount Sinai, it says there was a tremendous **storm**, and a violent **earthquake**, and then the Lord descended in **fire** upon the mountain. (*Ex 19:16-18*)

Now God tells Elijah to stand on the mountain and He will pass by.

Then a great and powerful **wind** tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks ... but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an **earthquake**, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the **fire**. - *1 Kings 19:11b-12a NIV*

Q: Do you see what God's doing here? He's teaching a lesson.

And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" - *1 Kings 19:12b-13 NIV*

You didn't have to come find me. I'm not deep in thought, or on the toilet, or traveling, or asleep. You don't need to shout, you need to listen. Don't chase after an "experience," chase after intimacy and closeness. That's what sustains you through the tough times.

Then Elijah returned home, and God gave him an apprentice named Elisha. Oh, and Jezebel didn't kill him.

And the inhabitants of both kingdoms continued to treat pagan practices as an acceptable supplement to worshipping God.

And this house divided is about to fall.