

# Learning from *King Solomon*



**WHEN A LEADER FAILS**, it is always a painful and tragic event. We have often seen the damage it causes in the political and business worlds. But for us as Christians, it is even more difficult when it is a spiritual leader. How is it possible that one whom we have learned from and whose ministry has been fruitful can fall from grace and betray his or her family and church?

In 1 and 2 Kings and 1 Chronicles, we encounter the acts of the kings of Israel. God judges them as good or evil based on whether they followed Him and His ways or neglected to do so. Some had great beginnings but ended very badly. Clearly God is interested in leaders whose hearts are wholly devoted to Him and who live righteously, upholding the *Torah* (the Law of Moses). Let's look at one of the most famous kings in the Bible, Solomon.



## A Good Foundation

King Solomon was the third king of Israel, following Saul and King David, Solomon's father. Solomon was one of King David's younger sons, and his mother was Bathsheba. According to the Orthodox Jewish site [chabad.org](http://chabad.org), Solomon was 12 years old when he became king. The site gives a brief synopsis of Solomon, saying:

“Since he was only twelve years old when he ascended to the throne, Solomon was understandably worried about his ability to rule effectively. He decided to ask G-d

for help. He traveled to Gibeon and offered up sacrifices. G-d appeared to him and asked what he wanted. King Solomon requested that he be granted the wisdom to rule effectively. G-d was very pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom, as opposed to wealth or the like. G-d granted his request. He became famous for his wisdom and knowledge.”

Note: The Jewish people omit the vowels from the name of God or even the word as a sign of deep respect.

Solomon had every reason to succeed. He came from a royal family. He was well educated as a king’s son. He was mentored by his father, King David. When his father made him king, he had support from some influential people, including his mother, Queen Bathsheba, Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. To top it off, he had an amazing personal encounter with God when he received the gifts of wisdom and understanding.

On King David’s deathbed, he gave Solomon good advice:

*“...Be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses [Torah], that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the LORD may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel’” (1 Kings 2:2b–4).*



## Rules for Kings

In David’s dying words to Solomon, he emphasized the need to know and obey the commandments in the Law of Moses. This

included the words in Deuteronomy 17:14–20, which were specific rules for kings.

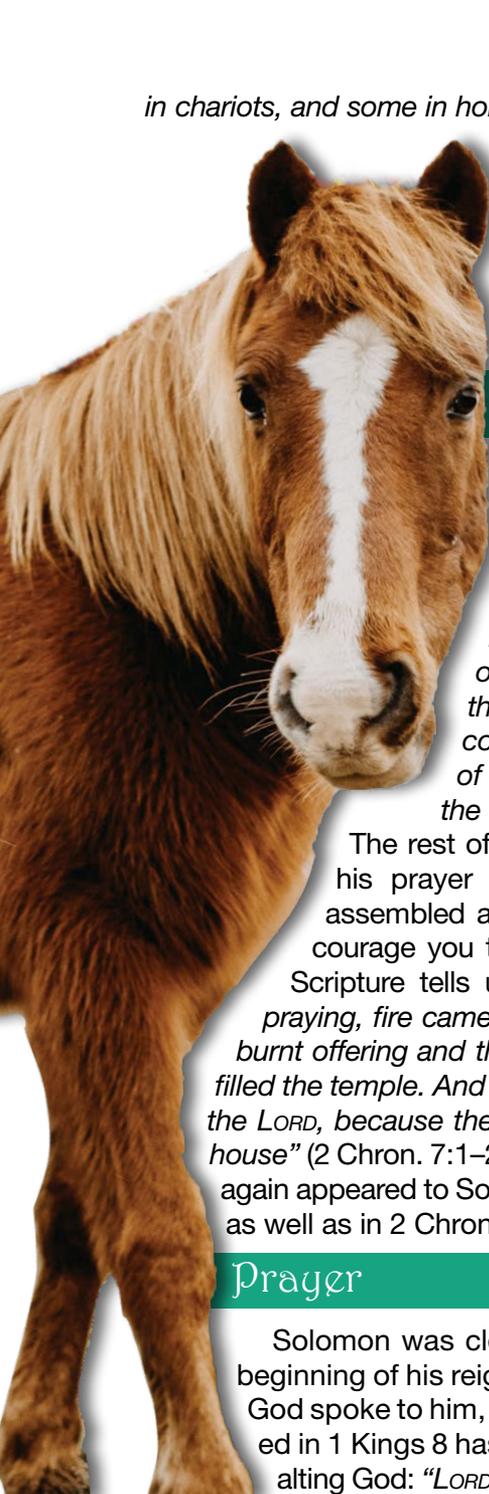
1. The king must be chosen by God.
2. The king must not be a foreigner.
3. He should not multiply horses nor cause people to go to Egypt to get horses.
4. He should not multiply wives for himself.
5. He should not greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.
6. He was to write a copy of this law in a book (the *Torah*: Gen.–Deut.) for himself. This was to be copied from the *Torah* the Levites had. It was to be with him, and he was to read it daily for the rest of his life. This was so he would learn to fear the LORD his God and carefully observe all the words of this law and these statutes.

According to the Nelson Study Bible (NKJV) commentary on these verses:

“These regulations limited the power and splendor of the future king. He would not be dependent on military power or riches. He was exhorted not to entangle the nation in political alliances that would expose Israel to pagan worship. Instead, he was exhorted to guide the nation into obedience to God’s law. The true king of Israel would be bound to God’s instructions. He would not be a tyrant, but a king who ruled in accordance with God’s revealed will.”

In ancient times, horses were used to pull chariots, and owning many was a sign of military power. In Psalm 20:7, it says, “Some trust





*in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” Kings having multiple wives was often an indication of political alliances with pagan entities. These marriage/alliances came with powerful cultural influence (pagan gods) and undoubtedly pressure from powerful leaders in other lands.*

## Temple and Dedication

One of the highlights of Solomon’s accomplishments was the building of the Temple. The dedication of the Temple was an amazing event marked by the manifest presence of God. *“And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD”* (1 Kings 8:10–11).

The rest of chapter 8 records Solomon’s speech, his prayer of dedication, his blessing of those assembled and the dedication of the Temple. I encourage you to go and read the entire chapter. The Scripture tells us that, *“When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’s house”* (2 Chron. 7:1–2). After this amazing spiritual high, God again appeared to Solomon. This is recorded in 1 Kings 9:1–9 as well as in 2 Chronicles 7:12–22.

## Prayer

Solomon was clearly in a good place with God in the beginning of his reign. He had amazing divine encounters. God spoke to him, giving direction, and his prayer recorded in 1 Kings 8 has wonderful elements. He started by exalting God: *“LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven*

*above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with your servants who walk before You with all their hearts” (v. 23). Solomon then asked that God would hear prayers prayed from this Temple. He prayed for the future well-being of the Israelite people in all sorts of future scenarios (when someone sins, in war, when there is no rain, when there is famine or plague, etc.). He even prayed for foreigners who would come to the Temple:*

*“Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name’s sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name” (1 Kings 8:41–43).*

Solomon followed his prayer with amazing words of blessing over the assembled congregation. The dedication, sacrifices and feast continued for 14 days, and all of Israel rejoiced. This was not a onetime occurrence. 1 Kings 9 tells of another divine encounter when God spoke clearly and directly to King Solomon.

King Solomon was inspired to write biblical texts. In fact, three books of the Bible are attributed to him: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.

## Falling from Grace

How is it that this man—with all the advantages he had, who encountered God on more than one occasion, who experienced the glory of God when it filled the Temple, and prayed with such devotion, who wrote parts of the Bible—fell from grace? This is the man who told the Children of Israel, *“Let your heart*

therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day” (1 Kings 8:61).

The late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks commented:

“With Solomon the record is even more chequered [than King David]. He was the man whose name was synonymous with wisdom, author of Song of Songs, Proverbs and *Kohelet* [Ecclesiastes]. At the same time, he was the king who broke all three of the *Torah’s* caveats about monarchy, namely he should not have too many wives, or too many horses, or too much money (Deut. 17:16–17). Solomon—as the *Talmud* [rabbinic commentary on Jewish tradition and the Hebrew Scriptures] says [Sanhedrin 21b]—thought he could break all the rules and stay uncorrupted. Despite all his wisdom, he was wrong.”

The Bible tells us the sad story. Solomon turned to other gods. *“For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David”* (1 Kings 11:4). God’s response? *“So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods, but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded”* (1 Kings 11:9–10).

## The Importance of Finishing Well

I read of the greatness of Solomon, his interactions with the Lord, his accomplishments, and I am so sad that he didn’t finish well. I want to learn from his failure, and I encourage all who are entering leadership or are in leadership to keep your eyes and heart on the Lord. Seek Him for inspiration and guidance. Beware of the power trap, and don’t think you are above reproach because of your giftings or past success. Guard your hearts and minds lest you fall into moral failure. Be careful not to love money. Be wise when it comes to making alliances. While it is not wrong to learn from others, unless we have a direct relationship with the Lord and follow



His direction (written in the Bible and on our hearts), we may find ourselves following another “god.” God is asking for our total heart allegiance—our loyalty. The temptations of the flesh, power and influence are heady, and many a leader has started rightly before becoming derailed. Today I pray for leaders everywhere to turn their hearts toward the God of Israel, that we may have His blessing on our ministries and communities. For those whose churches and communities have been hurt by the actions of failed leaders, I pray for God’s healing touch.

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Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

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## TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God’s chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT) – *Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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