



## Reading the book of 1 Kings

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

1. Originally, 1 and 2 Kings were one book. Their title, the book of Kings, is quite appropriate: these books recount the main events and characteristics of the reigns of all the kings of Judah and Israel, from the death of David to the end of the kingdom of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem.
2. The expression “I am about to go the way of all the earth” mentioned in 1 Kings 2:2 by David whose heart was all to the Lord during his whole life, means "I am going to die".
3. The first half of 1 Kings describes the life of a man whose everything came into him on a golden plate. The son of King David and Queen Bath-sheba, the young Solomon had grown up in the royal palace. In his youth, he distinguished himself as a composer and historian. He composed 1,500 hymns and 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32), some of which are found in the book of Proverbs.
4. Solomon had become the king of Israel and had received a special gift of wisdom from God. He was called the wisest man in the world. Kings and queens traveled hundreds of miles to meet him (1 Kings 4:34). They all returned amazed at the great wisdom of the king of Israel and the prosperity of his nation.
5. Solomon responded harshly (1 Kings 2:23) to Adonijah’s request to marry King David’s mistress. This request may have been a veiled attempt by Adonijah to occupy the throne vested in Solomon. In the ancient Middle East, a person who married one of the wives or mistresses of a deceased king would publicly claim the rights of the former ruler (2 S. 12:8, 16:21-22).
6. During the reign of David and Solomon, Israel extended from the borders of Egypt to the borders of Babylon (1 Kings 4:21). Israel, which included Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, was approximately three times the size of the today’s nation.
7. Of all Solomon’s achievements, one stood out. It was the temple of God that he built, the most beautiful building at that time. Nearly 200,000 men worked for seven years to complete this building (1 Kings 6:37-38).
8. The Bible describes the architecture of Solomon’s temple without much detail (1 Kings 6). It survived for 380 years. Destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, it was partially rebuilt under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah and renovated by King Herod

in the days of Jesus. Jesus walked in the temple. The early church held meetings in this temple: Peter preached there (Acts 3). Today, a mosque occupies the site of the temple.

9. The magnificent temple and palace built by Solomon were symbols of Israel's glory years. Solomon also built many great cities that controlled the main trade routes. He fortified Jerusalem, the capital, with a wall so thick that parts of it still exist today. He modernized the Israelite army by providing 12,000 horses and the first chariot units, and wisely made alliances with neighboring countries.
10. The cedar of Lebanon was a noble wood that resisted decay. All the utensils dedicated to the service of the Lord in the Most Holy Place were made of gold.
11. Much of the temple was not accessible to the public; only the priests could enter. But these priests could not enter the Most Holy Place except on special occasions. Solomon did not build this temple for men - he wanted a place where God could dwell. And as described in 1 Kings 8:11, the magnificent glory of God did fill the temple.
12. In Solomon's dedication prayer, he clearly stated that the Lord of the universe does not fully dwell in a house made with human hands (1 Kings 8:27). However, God's presence, or "Name", would remain in that temple. This is why Salmon established the practice of prayer where the position of the one praying is towards Jerusalem, still observed today by many Jews. (1 R. 8 :29)
13. God's promise to dwell in the temple was conditional, in the sense that if the people disobey his word that temple will be devastated. (1 R. 9 :6 - 9)
14. Despite the successes of Solomon's reign, his life had taken a dramatic turn in his old age. His decadence eventually led to the collapse of the kingdom around him. The second half of 1 Kings describes the awful process of this collapse.
15. Solomon granted part of the Promised Land to a foreigner, an act that could have stirred up the hatred of the northern tribes against the south. King Hiram, unhappy with the 20 cities that Salmon had given him in return for services rendered, called them "the land of Cabul" (1 Kings 9:13). It is interesting to note that these are the cities that Jesus chose as the focal point of his ministry on earth.
16. Israel's heyday of greatness was during the reign of King Solomon, a time that Jews will always remember with nostalgia. Almost all of the Promised Land was in Israel's possession, and the nation lived in peace.
17. The high places were introduced during the reign of Rehoboam and became a normal part of the Judah area for hundreds of years (1 Kings 14:23). They were dedicated to a mother goddess and often erected next to the altars on the high places dedicated to God. They

represented Judah's slow descent into idolatry. In analyzing the failures of the various kings, the authors commented, "but he did not remove the high places".

18. King Jeroboam did not listen to the word that God had spoken to him through the prophet Ahijah. Instead, he led the people into idolatry for the fear of losing the kingdom. Because he persisted in his disobedience, the consequences were the extermination and destruction of his entire house from the face of the earth. (1 R. 13 :33 - 34)
19. The killing of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:40) was a law enacted by God through Moses (Deut. 13).
20. Elijah had first been fed by ravens. Then, when the stream from which he drank had dried up, God sent him to a poor and desperate widow. All this required complete faith in God. This widow was not an Israelite, but she had faith in the prophet and in God. She lived in Zarephath, in Jezebel's territory, a dangerous area for a wanted prophet. Jesus referred to this story as an example of God's intervention among non-Jews. (Luke 4 :25 – 26)
21. Jezebel's fame was such that Elijah fled in fear, even after the victorious demonstration of God's power on Mount Carmel. Jezebel followed in her father's footsteps (1 Kings 16:31). Married to Ahab as part of a political alliance, she established 950 prophets of Baal and ordered the systematic destruction of all prophets who would oppose her. Ahab's weak character and Jezebel's influence made him the most wicked king in Israel.
22. The incident concerning Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21) shows how skillfully the Old Testament writers wrote history. In fact, this usurpation was a minor incident in Ahab's reign. Yet 1 Kings devotes more space to it than to the entire history of the reign of some kings. This is proof that the king abused his power and disobeyed God's covenant. Every Israelite had the right to possess a portion of the Promised Land. Even a king was not allowed to violate this right.
23. When Ahab was dead, the dogs came and licked his blood to fulfill the words of judgment that God pronounced against him because he agreed with his wife Jezebel who killed Naboth to take his land (1 Kings 21:19: 22:38).
24. After years of war, Israel and Judah finally reached a peace agreement. This agreement united Ahab, the worst of Israel's kings with Jehoshaphat, one of Judah's greatest kings. This unholy alliance with Ahab caused a fatal war against Syria that almost cost Jehoshaphat his own life (1 Kings 22:29-33). The king of Judah then rejected all other proposals for collaboration (1 Kings 22:49), but his son married Ahab's daughter.