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King Me!

First Kings 1: 1-10

King me DIG: What is David's condition? To what is an aging king vulnerable? Who arranges for Abishag to wait on David? Why does the writer view Adonijah in a negative light? Is he a champion schemer or an anxious heir apparent? Why did Adonijah invite Joab and Abiathar to his party? Why didn't he invite Solomon and Nathan to his coronation ceremony?

REFLECT: In what ways do you feel more vulnerable now than ten years ago? What bothers you about aging? How competitive are you? Would you run over people in order to win? Walk over them? Ask them to step aside? What ambitions have you yet to fulfill? Do you try to control things directly or indirectly? How are you tempted to take what you want?

Have you ever felt the temptation to take what you wanted, when you wanted it, instead of waiting for what God would give?

In every simple game of checkers there is a thrilling moment when one of the ordinary playing pieces suddenly becomes royalty. Having moved and jumped all the way to the far side of the board, a checker becomes a king. "King me!" commands one of the players. A second checker is carefully placed on top of the first checker, and from then on the new king has the power to move all over the board.



Many people want the game of checkers to become their way of life. Not content to be ordinary, they want to be the royal center of attention. “King me!” they say, wanting enough power and money to get the control and buy the pleasure they want out of life. “King me!” is what the single man is saying when he uses other women. “King me!” (or “Queen me!” to use a chess term) is what the overbearing mother says when she makes her own desires the rule of the household). And “King me!” is what I am saying whenever my own desires become the most important thing in life, even at the expense of others. The problem with building our own little kingdoms is that we never find our rightful place in the true kingdom of **God**. This is the central issue in our walk with **the Lord**, and it is the issue as we open the book of **First Kings**. Who will be **king**? Will we accept **the Kingship** that **ADONAI** has established? Or will we always insist on having our own way in this life?

The question of **kingship** arises right from the beginning of **First Kings**. The books of **Samuel** were dominated by **the kingship** of **David**. But **First Kings** opens by telling us that **when King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him**. For anyone who admires **King David**, this scene is full of sadness. **He** was among the greatest of earthly kings - maybe **the** greatest. From boyhood **he** performed many heroic feats in battle. **He** killed lions and bears to defend **his** father’s flocks and herds. **He** slew giants. **He** conquered kingdoms. **He** established a fortress for **his** people in Jerusalem. **He** sired a royal dynasty, fathering many **sons** to be the princes of **Isra’el**. But now, the famous **king** was old and gray, and for all **his** greatness, **he** was on **his deathbed**.

David’s feeble decline is a sad reminder of our own frailty. **The king** was about seventy years old when this event took place (**Second Samuel 5:4**). What happened to him will happen to all of us: our hearing will fail; our eyesight will grow dim; and our limbs will get weak and brittle. Eventually we will be confined to **bed**, and maybe will find it hard to stay **warm**. How important it is, therefore, to pay attention to this counsel from Scripture: **Remember your Creator while you are young, before the evil days come, and the years approach when you will say: They no longer give me pleasure (Ecclesiastes 12:1)**. If, like **David**, we give our hearts to **God** when we are **young**, we will still remember **Him** when we are old, and **He** will remember us.²⁶

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being so wonderful! **You** are the absolute best **Father**, wisest **King**, Strongest and Most Almighty **General**, Perfect **Lover**, **Gracious** and always near friend. It is such a blessing that **You** welcome into **Your** family all who love **You** (**John 1:12**) and receive **You** as their **Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9-10)**. What a joy to trust **You** as a child and to have **You** always near to help and to guide.*

*What a joy to make time to meditate on **Your** power and glory because **I looked for You . . . to see Your power and Your glory (Palm 63:3)**. When we remember how great and Awesome **You** are, we delight in praising **You!** **Since Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You (Psalms 63:4)**. Meditating on **You** is a sure way to bring joy to my heart! **When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You through the night watches. For You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to You - Your right hand upholds me (Psalms 63:7-9)**. May we bless **You** with praises. **You** are a wonderful **God** and **Father** and I seek to bless **You** in all I do, say and think! In Holy **Yeshua's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

So, his attendants said to him, "Let us look for a young virgin to serve the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm." Then they searched throughout Isra'el for a beautiful young woman and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. Abishag's employment as a kind of human hot water bottle raises more questions than it answers. Were **David's** servants simply trying to keep **him warm**? If so, then why did they conduct a Miss **Isra'el** pageant to find the prettiest young thing in **the Land**. Though the situation seems charged with sexuality, we also sense that **the king** was diminished. This was hardly the **David** who knew **Bathsheba** - a **David** who fathered so many other sons and daughters. Not even a stunning **young virgin** could stir **his** blood. On the contrary, **his** sexual incapacity showed that **he** suffered from a loss of vitality and virility. **The woman was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no sexual relations with her (First Kings 1:1-4)**. **The woman** chosen to minister to **David** had the status of a concubine, though in fact **she** served **David** as a nurse and nothing more.

Soon old **David** would be dead and buried, which showed one of the inherent limitations of **kingship** in ancient **Isra'el**. All **the kings died**, throwing **the kingship** into question for each new generation of the people of **God**. **David** was the best of **Isra'el's kings**, yet even **he** went down to the grave, where **his** body remains to this day. **His** very mortality meant that **he** could never be the ultimate **King** for **God's** people.

This shows, by way of contrast, **the superior Kingship** that we have in **Yeshua Messiah**, who is the true **Son of David** and the only divine **Son of God**. **Yeshua** also **died**, suffering crucifixion for our sins. But **on the third day He** was raised again to reign forever in **kingly** majesty. **Messiah** is the immortal **King of all ages (First Timothy 1:16)**. This is **the Kingdom** we need, ruled by a **King** who will never **die** again, but will always live to rule us and defend us. Our **Lord** will never shiver in the cold chill of old age, but will remain at the full glow of **His** divine powers for all eternity - our once-and-forever **King!**²⁷

As **David's kingship** came to an end, **his** royal court was full of intrigue. The advisers were whispering in the hallways, "Who will be the next **king**?" That question had been on people's minds for years, much the way that people have long speculated about who would succeed England's Queen Elizabeth II. In fact, there had already been at least two attempts to take the throne away from **David**: the rebellion of **Absalom**, which led to civil war (**Second Samuel 14-18**), and the uprising of **Sheba** the Benjamite (**Second Samuel 20**). **David** was able to quell both rebellions, but as **he** grew older **he** also grew weaker. Now **he** was not even able to get warm **in bed**, and **his** shivering impotence was creating a power vacuum.

As far as **ADONAI** was concerned, **David's** rightful heir was supposed to be **Solomon**. Although **he** was not **the** oldest **son** - **he** was actually tenth in line - **Solomon** was **the** chosen **son**. **God** did not always choose **the** oldest **son** as **David's** own coronation illustrated (**First Samuel 16:10-13**). We know from **First Chronicles 22:9-10** that the word of **the LORD** had announced to **David** that **Solomon** would be the next **king**: **But you will have a son who will be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his enemies that surround him; for his name is to be Solomon, and during his reign I will give peace and quiet to Isra'el. It is he who will build a house for My name. He will be my son and I will be his father, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Isra'el forever.** By divine calling, **Solomon** would be **Isra'el's king**.

Yet, there was another contender for the crown, an alternative candidate to sit on **Isra'el's** throne. Most people saw **him** as the heir apparent. **His** name was **Adonijah**, and **he** seemed to be everything that **David** used to be but was no more. The Bible describes **him** as **a very handsome man (First Kings 1:6b)**. Humanly speaking, **Adonijah** had everything going for **him**. **He** had all the qualifications that people usually look for. Like **his** older brother **Absalom**, **he** was easy on the eyes, which counts for a lot in life - more than we sometimes would like to admit. So, as far as **kingship** was concerned, **Adonijah** looked the part (at least to people who look at the outward appearance, which **God** doesn't).

So, the young man decided to seize **his** chance, declaring **his** intention to be **the king** after **his father**. Because **David's** reign was scarred by violence, it isn't a surprise that this chapter about **his** demise and succession is permeated with an undercurrent of violence.²⁸ **Now Adonijah, David's fourth son, whose mother was Haggith, cherished the thought of his right to succeed David as king and put himself forward, brazenly declaring, as if thumping his chest: I will be king (First Kings 1:5).** This gives us a window into **his** soul. The form of the verb may indicate continuous action, as if to show that **Adonijah's** self-exaltation was not simply a one-time thing; **his** whole life was all about putting **himself**

forward to be **the king**. But **he** seems to have learned nothing from **his** failed brother **Absalom**, for like **him**, **he** asserted **himself** without reckoning with the still formidable power of **David** to make or break **his** ambitious sons.

From a merely human perspective, **Adonijah's** ambition is thoroughly understandable. After all, who wouldn't want to be **the king**? Besides, isn't it the natural order of things for a king to show some initiative and seize his crown? But this was no ordinary **kingdom**. The royal house of **David** was part of **God's** plan for salvation of the world. **David** had received a divine and covenant promise that his dynasty would last forever, that his throne would be established eternally. This was the will of **YHVH**. It would be the work of **God**, which meant that rather than making its own choice for a **king**, **Isra'el** was supposed to trust **ADONAI** to provide the man of **His** choice. **God** would announce **His** own **king** in **His** own good time (**Deut 17:15**). The problem was that men like **Adonijah** (and **Absalom**) would not accept **God's** choice, but kept exalting **themselves**. **They** would not even wait for **their father** to **die** (**Luke 15:12**), but tried to take by force something that was only **God's** to give.

Have you ever felt the same temptation - the temptation to take what you wanted when you wanted it instead of waiting for what **God** would give? Children are tempted to do it by saying, "That's mine!" and grabbing whatever they can get. Bigger kids are tempted to do it by getting angry when they don't get their own way. Some adults are tempted to do it by taking the pleasures of sex without the gift of marriage. Others are tempted to climb over other people to get the next promotion, or to put themselves forward for ministry without any calling from the congregation, or to gain ungodly control over their spouses by force.

In one way or another, we are all tempted to exalt ourselves. All too often we are like **Diotrephes**, whom the B'rit Chadashah describes as someone **who likes to put himself first** (**Third John 9**). But when we put ourselves on the throne, **ADONAI** is no longer the **God** of our lives; **He** is only another one of our servants. Rather than seeking **His Kingdom**, we expect **Him** to advance ours. Sooner or later, we will get upset with **Him** for not doing whatever it is that we expect **Him** to do for us. Typically, we get angry when we don't get what we want, which makes anger one of the best clues to our own private idolatries. When we get angry at the world or angry with **God**, it is almost always because we have the wrong person on the throne.²⁹

Consider the various ways that **Adonijah** acted for **his** own honor. First, like **Absalom**, **he got chariots and horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him**. If you want people to know how important you are, it helps to have your own entourage! So **Adonijah** gathered **his** posse, so to speak, an honor guard of palace **chariots**, and **footmen to run ahead** and

announce **his** coming. When it comes to being important, image is everything. If you're going to be the king, you need to act like the king, which includes having people around you treat you like the king. You need to have some followers - people to tell you how great you are. And so, like **his** brother **Absalom** before **him** (another ominous connection), **Adonijah** grandly employed an entourage of **horses, chariots** and **foot servants (Second Samuel 15:1)**.

As a side note, **David, had never** disciplined **him** as a boy by asking, "**Why do you behave as you do?**" **Adonijah** was merely allowed to do whatever **he** wanted to do, so **he** assumed **himself** to be **his father's** favorite and presumptive heir (**First Kings 1:6**). An excessively indulgent **father** had produced a self-exalted **son**. Good looks and a favored status, coupled with parental indulgence, rarely build strong character. Neither do they install wisdom. **Adonijah** may well have enjoyed a happy childhood, but **his father's** lack of discipline eventually led **the young man** into treason.³⁰

Adonijah was cunning enough to get the support of both the army and the priesthood by enlisting **Joab** the general and **Abiathar the priest (First Kings 7:1)**. Though **their** careers ended in disgrace, both of those **men** were key leaders. **Joab** was the commander of **Isra'el's** army. For many years **he** had served as **David's** right-hand-man. **Joab** was a general who helped **the king** conquer Jerusalem, who suppressed rebellion against **his** throne, and who protected his life by assassinating **his** enemies (**Second Samuel 2:13ff; First Chronicles 11:4-6**). Unfortunately, **Joab** had also disobeyed **David's** order when he killed **his son Absalom**, which put **him** out of royal favor and diminished **his** political influence. Yet perhaps aligning **himself** with **Adonijah**, **he** could regain **his** powerful position in **the kingdom**. Thus, **Joab** was decisive, powerful, and politically dangerous to **Solomon**.

Abiathar the priest was also making a power grab. Like **Joab**, **he** was one of **the king's** old associates, a **man** who had been with **David** almost from the beginning (see the commentary on [the Life of David, to see link click Bd - Sha'ul Kills the Priests of Nov](#)). **Abiathar** was not **the high priest**, but maybe **he** wanted to be. In any case, **he** decided that **he** would follow **Adonijah** in **his** rise to power. **Both gave him their full support (First Kings 1:7b)**. **Adonijah** was falling headlong into rebellion against **his father** and **his God**. What made that especially ironic was that **his** very name meant "**ADONAI is Master.**" Yet, **Adonijah** wanted to be **his** own master, and thus **he** never submitted to the desires of **YHVH**.

To be more specific, **he** never submitted to the authority of **the prophet, the priest, or the**

king that **God** had established in **Isra'el**. But **he** never consulted with the three men who had true, **God-given** spiritual authority: **Nathan**, **Isra'el's** true **prophet**; **Zadok**, the first **High Priest** of **Isra'el** (**First Chronicles 6:49-53**); or **Solomon**, whom **God** had chosen to be the next king - representing **the** rightful **kingship** of **David**. Other **mighty men** - like **Benaiah** who was captain of **the king's** bodyguard (see the commentary on [the Life of David Ej - David's Mighty Warriors](#)) - **did not join Adonijah** (**First Kings 1:8**). **Adonijah** did not consult with **them** because **he** knew **they** would not **support him**. **He** had made up **his** mind to be **king**, for **his** own glory and **his** own pleasure without ever submitting to the will of **Ha'Shem**.

Now **David** had already publicly proclaimed the selection of **Solomon** to the throne when **he** announced the building of **the Temple** (**First Chronicles 22** and **28**). Nevertheless, **Adonijah** had arranged a coronation feast on the eve of **his** planned proclamation as **David's** successor. **He sacrificed** (Hebrew: *zaback*, used to indicate the solemnity of the occasion) **sheep, cattle and fattened calves at the Stone of Zohemoth near** the spring of **En Rogel** (**First Kings 1:9a**), which is located slightly southwest of **Jerusalem**, where the Hinnom and Kidron valleys intersect. It was evidently important that the coronation take place near a water source (this will come up later with **Solomon**). In addition, this **stone** may have been a sacrificial **stone**, and therefore a sacred place. It was somewhat secluded and thus ideally suited for **Adonijah's** secret gathering of forces before taking public action.³¹

The participation of **Joab** and **Abiathar** in the ritual sacrifice and coronation lent an aura of legitimacy to the occasion (**Absalom** had begun **his** coup in a similar fashion). **Adonijah** **invited all his brothers, the king's sons** (who evidently did not contest **Adonijah's** claim to the throne) **and all the royal officials of Judah**. Maybe all **his** guests thought that **David** had actually laid **his** hands on **Adonijah** and named **him king**. **But he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon** (who would have been killed at **Adonijah's** ascension to the throne), so it was pretty obvious that **Adonijah** had named **himself king** without any authority from either **David** or **YHVH** (**First Kings 1:9b-10**).

This gives us a practical principle for our own decision making, which is always to submit to the will of **God**. Am I doing what I am doing because it is what I want to do or because it is what **ADONAI** wants me to do? Happily, in the goodness of **the Lord** many things that **He** calls us to do *are* the things that we want to do. But whenever there's a conflict, we need to submit to **God's** authority.

It is characteristic of godly decisions that they are made out in the open with the help of godly counsel, including from people who are willing to tell us some things that we don't want to hear. Submitting to **God's** will always starts with knowing the Scriptures, which rule some things in and some things out. It also includes listening to the people **God** has provided for our spiritual guidance: parents, perhaps, or spouses, or teachers, or bosses, or Messianic rabbis, or pastors and elders in the congregations of **God**, depending on your situation in life.

Do not seek your own pleasure and glory, but submit to **God's** will for your life. For **Adonijah**, that meant consulting with **Nathan, Zadok, and David**. For us it means submitting to **Yeshua Messiah**, who is the true **Prophet**, the faithful **Priest**, and the rightful **King** for the people of **God**. The prophets, priests, and kings in the TaNaKh all point to **the Person** and work of **the Master**. **Yeshua** is **the Prophet** who speaks **the Word of God**; listen to what **He** says. **Messiah** is **the Priest** who offered **Himself** as a sacrifice; trust in **Him** for the forgiveness of sins. **The Lord** is **the King** who rules us and defends us; ask for **His** protection.

As we consider **Messiah** as **King**, we can hardly help but notice that **His Kingdom** is the antithesis of everything we see in **Adonijah**, who announced **his** own **kingship**, for **his** own glory and **his** own pleasure. But **Yeshua** did the exact opposite. Unlike the proud **Adonijah**, **He** did not ride palace chariots or hire footmen to announce **His** royal majesty. Instead, **He** rode a lowly donkey, and whatever attendants **He** had followed **Him** of their own free devotion. **Messiah** did not come down to do **His** own will, but the will of **the Father** who sent **Him**, even when it meant going to the cross for our sins. Setting aside **His** own pleasure, **He** endured the agony of the cross. Then, rather than exalting **Himself**, **He** waited for **God the Father** to raise **Him** from the dead and lift him to heaven's throne (**Philippians 2:6-11**).

This is **the King** we serve: not a **king** who is in it for **himself**, but who rules for the good of **His people** and the glory of **God**. Now we are called to live the same way: not "kinging" ourselves, but crowning **Messiah** as **King**, and serving others for **Yeshua's** sake.³²

The Bible says **that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (First Corinthians 15:3b-4)**. If you believe that and have never asked **Yeshua** to be your **Lord** and **Savior** would you pray this simple prayer today: **God, I admit that I have sinned. I believe Yeshua Messiah died for my sins, and I want to trust Him to save me right now**. Now you need to find a good messianic synagogue or church that teaches the Word of



God faithfully so you can grow in your faith and have fellowship with other believers.