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Putting the Kingdom First First Kings 2: 13-46

Putting the Kingdom first DIG: Why does Adonijah want Abishag as his wife? What did sleeping with the king's concubines symbolize? Why did he make the request through Bathsheba? What did Solomon see behind his brother's request? Why did Solomon banish Abiathar and execute Joab immediately after Adonijah's request? Why did Abiathar deserve to die? Why did Joab flee to the Tabernacle? What justification did Solomon offer for Joab's execution? Did Solomon act righteously or was he simply eliminating a political threat? Why did Solomon merely sentence Shim'i to house arrest? How did Solomon ultimately justify Shim'i's execution? How and when will Yeshua Messiah eliminate His enemies?

REFLECT: Solomon seemed to be acting with traditional wisdom of state, "Do unto others before they do unto you." What do you think of this popular motto? Is it unreasonable to protect yourself? In your requests to ADONAI, can you ever ask too much of Him? What guidelines keep your requests in check? Many modern governments still use the tactics of assassination and sentencing without trial. This is not an ideal state of affairs, nor does it support the notion that modern society has improved. Are we making any progress in human rights today? In what ways are we no further advanced than the ancient Israelites? Are you too soft on those who wrong you? In what ways are you putting the Kingdom of God first?

What is the one thing that is keeping me from giving everything to the Kingdom of God?



During **Adonijah's** attempt to preempt the throne, **Solomon himself** did not indulge in plotting to make certain that **he** would be the next **king**. In fact, **he** exercised remarkable restraint. But once **he** was formally declared **king**, **he** acted firmly with decisiveness and speed.⁵⁸ Many commentators are critical of **the king** moving down this hit list. Maybe there is some truth in that criticism, and **First** and **Second Kings** is mainly about power politics. However, we need to remember that **Solomon** was **ADONAI's** anointed **king**. **He** had been properly crowned, according to the promise of **God**. Therefore, it was necessary for **Solomon's kingdom** to be established. This was necessary, in fact, for the salvation of the whole world, because **YHVH** had promised that our **Messiah** would come through the line of **David** and **Solomon**. Furthermore, everyone in **Isra'el** owed their full allegiance to **Solomon** the rightful **king**. This was not merely a matter of politics, but a question of obedient submission to **the Kingdom of God**. If **the Kingdom** was to be secure, the threats against **it** had to be neutralized. And since those **men** were **Solomon's** rivals, **they** were also the enemies of the crown that **Ha'Shem** had placed on **Solomon's** head.

Thus, **Adonijah** and **his** henchmen were guilty of the sin of high treason, which has always been rightly regarded as a capital offense. We are not talking about **men** who merely disagreed with **Solomon's** policies, but about **men** who wanted to take **his** very crown. The correct and proper way **for a king to** punish such mortal enemies is not by giving them liberty, but by giving them **death**, or at least exile. The security of **the kingdom** requires the elimination of its enemies (see the commentary on **Revelation, to see link click Ex - The Eight Stage Campaign of Armageddon**). **The kingdom** must come first, by preserving it from those trying to undermine and destroy it. To disagree with this form of justice is to misunderstand what it means for a **king** to be a **king**. As different situations arose, **Solomon** needed to heed the counsel of **his father David** and establish **his kingdom** by eliminating **his** enemies.

Solomon had four enemies to eliminate: **Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab**, and **Shim'i**. It is important to recognize that each of these **men** put **their** own desire for money, sex, or power ahead of loving obedience to **the Kingdom of God**. Thus, the accounts of these men give us test cases for temptation in our own lives. The first man **Solomon** had to deal with was **Adonijah**, who wanted sex and power more than **he** wanted **God's Kingdom**.⁵⁹

Adonijah's foolish request and execution (First Kings 2:13-25): In contrast to **Solomon's** wisdom, **Adonijah** made a foolish request. After **David's death**, **Adonijah** came to **Bathsheba** and made an enormous miscalculation. **He** wanted to be given **Abishag, the Shunamite** who had last ministered to **the king (First Kings 1:1-2)**. Later **Adonijah son of Haggith** came to **Bathsheba, Solomon's mother**. "Is your coming

in shalom, in good faith, not to make trouble?" **she** asked. **"It is in shalom," he** said deceitfully. **Then he** said, **"I have something to say to you."** **"Speak!" she** said (First Kings 2:13-14).

With at least a trace of bitterness, **he** reminded **the queen mother**, using a bit of exaggeration: **You know that the kingdom was mine and that all Isra'el looked to me to be the king. However,** in a massive understatement **he** observed, **"But things have changed and the kingship has gone to my brother - for it was his from ADONAI. So now one petition I ask of you; do not deny me. "Speak!" she** said to him. **Then he** said: **Please, speak to King Solomon - for he won't turn you down - to give me Abishag the Shunammite as wife.** This seemed like such a small request. **"Very well," said Bathsheba, "I will speak to the king for you" (First Kings 2:15-18).** There is no indication that **Bathsheba** would speak on **his** behalf and be willing to support the request. **She** would speak about **him**, but not for **him**.

How easy it is for us to take the same attitude when the disappointments of life get in the way of our plans for our own kingdoms! We suffer a financial setback, a medical hardship, or a failed relationship. Then, rather than believing that the mercy of **Yeshua** is enough for us, and trusting our **King** to know what **He** is doing, we demand something to make up for what we have lost. "I deserve this," we say, and then we take something for ourselves that **God** does not want us to have - some sinful pleasure, perhaps, or some shiny new toy. Rather than letting go of what we want so that we can have what **ADONAI** wants to give us, we find a way to take what we want for ourselves.⁶⁰

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, What a great and wonderful father **You** are! It is a comfort to know that in **Your love** and power **You** always give me exactly what I need. **The Lord is my helper; I will not fear (Hebrews 13:5c-6a). ADONAI gives grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly (Psalms 84:11b-c).** Sometimes the need is for strength, sometimes financial, sometimes wisdom, but whatever I need, **You** are always right there to help guide and to provide. **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you," so that with confidence we say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What will man do to me" (Hebrews 13:5b-6)?***

*Praise **You** that I can trust **You** completely to guide me in situations and to give me what I really need. I find great peace that when I rest in the knowledge that though situations in my life do not look as I want them to look, as I surrender my all to **You**, **You** will work to guide all details of my life to **Your** glory! Praise **You** that in **Your** perfect knowledge **You** know when to say "Yes", "No" and "Wait." **You** carefully consider my every request. Praise*

Your Almighty power and Your compassionate love. In Yeshua's holy name and power of His resurrection. Amen

What **Adonijah** wanted to take was **Abishag**. The problem with **his** request was that **she** had the status of a concubine, which was part of **the king's** harem, and as Absalom found out - anyone claiming a woman in **the king's** harem, claimed to be **the king (Second Samuel 16:20-23)**! **He** made **his** pitiful request to **the queen mother** by reminding **her** that **he** was "supposed" to be **the king**, and receiving **Abishag** would be a nice little consolation prize. In making **his** request, however, **Adonijah** foolishly signed **his** own **death** warrant.

Unfortunately for **Adonijah**, **the queen mother** did what **she** promised. **Bathsheba** dutifully relayed the request to **Solomon**, perhaps with rolling eyes. **She** seemed to be an indifferent messenger. But surely, **she** understood, as **Adonijah** apparently did not, the inevitable outcome of the request. **The king rose up to greet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat down on his throne and had a throne set up for the king's mother, and she sat at his right hand.** Using almost the same words as **Adonijah**, **she** said: **I ask one small petition of you; do not deny. "Ask, my mother," the king said to her, "for I will not turn you down." So she said: Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as wife (First Kings 2:19-21).**

Solomon's response was swift and clear. Ask for **Abishag**? Why not ask for the entire **kingdom as well**?! **Adonijah** had not only threatened **Solomon**, but **he** had failed to accept the will of **God**. **Then King Solomon swore by ADONAI** saying: **May God do so to me and even more, if Adonijah does not pay with his own life for this request! Now therefore, as ADONAI lives who has established me and set me on the throne of my father David, and who has made me a house as He promised, surely Adonijah shall be put to death this day. Then Benaiah, the hatchet man of the new regime, was dispatched by king Solomon and the rebellious Adonijah was executed (First Kings 2:22-25).** The force of **Solomon's** response likely indicates **his** awareness that **he** was still more than a little vulnerable. After all, not only **Adonijah**, but **Joab** and **Abiathar** were still alive. It seemed that the party of **Adonijah** was still alive as well.⁶¹ So **Adonijah** came to a bad end. **His** sinful request proved that **he** was not a worthy **man**. **He** knew that **Solomon** was supposed to be **the king**, but **he** refused to submit to **his kingship**. **He** would not put **the Kingdom of God** first, so **he** perished in **his** sins.

Bathsheba never appears in the book again, so it is appropriate to assess **her** actions concerning **Adonijah** here. It is unmistakably clear that **the queen mother** was a most

formidable presence in the ancient world of royal intrigue, and **Bathsheba** was no novice. **She** lived in the palace and was a major player in **her son's** rise to power ([Al - A Royal Conspiracy](#)). In addition, **she** fully understood the intricacies of harem politics more than anyone because **she** was in charge of the royal harem! **She** would have hardly aided **her son's** chief rival. Therefore, we must conclude that **Bathsheba** understood the nature of **Adonijah's** request and prudently warned **her son** of **his** rival's inept power play.⁶²

Solomon banishes Abiathar (First Kings 2:26-27): **Abiathar** had to be dealt with for **his** support of **Adonijah** (see [Ak - King Me!](#)). In Solomon's mind, **Abiathar** remained a pro-**Adonijah** threat to **his** newly established **kingship**. **So the king** said to **Abiathar**, "**Go to Anathoth**," which was about three-and-a-half miles north of Jerusalem. It was a Levitical city for the tribe of Benjamin where **priests** lived when not in active service (**Joshua 21:1-3** and **18; Jeremiah 1:1**). **Abiathar deserved to die** because **he** opposed not only **David's** will but also the will of **ADONAI** in the matter of succession. **But Solomon** mercifully added: **I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of ADONAI Elohim before my father David, and because you were afflicted in everything with which my father was afflicted** (see the commentary on [the Life of David Dp - David Flees from Absalom](#)). Notice the words: **I will not put you to death now**. The reprieve from execution was seemingly dependent on **Abiathar's** continued good behavior. **So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being the high priest to ADONAI - so fulfilling the word of ADONAI that He spoke at Shiloh about the house of Eli (First Samuel 2:30-36).**⁶³

Solomon had Joab executed (First Kings 2:28-34): Having heard of **Solomon's** actions with regard to **Adonijah** and **Abiathar**, **Joab** knew that **his** judgment would not be long in coming. **When the news came to Joab, he fled to the Tabernacle and grasped the horns of the bronze altar - for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom.** It was reported to King **Solomon** that **Joab** had fled to the **Tabernacle**, and was by the **bronze altar**. Then **Solomon** sent **Benaiah, son of Jehoiada**, saying: **Go, strike him down (First Kings 2:28-29)!**

So Benaiah came to the Tabernacle and said to him, "Thus says the king: Come out!" But he replied: **No, for I will die here.** **Joab's** refusal created a serious dilemma for **Benaiah**, who did not want to carry out the execution in the courtyard of **the Tabernacle**. **So he reported back to the king** saying: **Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me (First Kings 2:30).** In response, **the king** repeated **his** orders and made it very clear why **Joab** deserved to **die**.

Then the king commanded him, saying: Do as he has said - strike him down. Then bury him. So you will remove the blood that Joab shed without cause from me and from my father's house. Thus, ADONAI will return his blood on his own head, because he struck down two men more righteous and better than he - Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Isra'el (see [the Life of David Ck - Joab Murders Abner](#)), and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah (see [the Life of David Ee - Sheba Rebels Against David: The Murder of Amasa](#)) - and killed them with the sword, without my father David's knowledge. May the guilt of their blood return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his offspring forever, but to David and his descendants and his house, and his throne, may there be shalom forever from ADONAI." Then Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up, struck him down and killed him, and he was buried in his own house in Bethlehem (2 Sam 2:32). This was an act of honor for old general for his previous loyalty (1 Kings 2:31-33).

ADONAI abhors wrongful violence, and **Joab** was a violent man. **He** was guilty of shedding innocent **blood**, and **his** bloodguilt for that sin had not yet been paid. The Torah declares that **whoever sheds the blood of a man, by man shall his blood be shed (Genesis 9:6)**. If **Solomon** did not deal justly with **Joab** by giving **him** the punishment that **his** sins deserved, then **the king** would become guilty **himself**, for it was **his** responsibility to see that justice was done. Only then could **Solomon's kingdom** be established in **shalom**.

Then Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up, struck him down and killed him, and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness (First Kings 2:34). The Bible seems to imply that **Benaiah killed Joab** right in the courtyard of **the Tabernacle**. However, **he** may have done what the Torah required in that situation, which was to drag the criminal **away from the bronze altar** and **put him to death** outside **the Tabernacle (Exodus 21:14)**. **The bronze altar** of **God** was never meant to protect someone who was guilty of premeditated murder.

In the end, **Joab** got what **he** deserved. **His** unhappy demise reminds us never to excuse our own love for violence. To batter one's spouse, to strike someone in anger, to use hateful and threatening words, even to think murderous thoughts - these are sins against the peace of humanity and the holiness of **God**. If we do not repent of our violent hearts, but insist on abusing power to get what we want from other people, we will suffer the consequences in this life (see the commentary on [Hebrews Cz - God Disciplines His Children](#)). Going to church will not save us, any more than going to **the Tabernacle** saved **Joab**. The only thing that can save us is a blood offering to atone for our guilty souls. Praise **God**, this is exactly the offering that **Yeshua** made when **He** was crucified; a blood atonement for all our sins. It

is simply not enough to be desperate for mercy, as **Joab** was; we must also come to **ADONAI** in true repentance for our sins and genuine faith in **Yeshua Messiah**.⁶⁴

The promotion of Benaiah and Zadok (First Kings 2:35): Solomon wasted little time to fortify **his** regime. **Then the king appointed Benaiah son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and Zadok the king appointed in Abiathar's place as high priest (First Kings 2:35).** A quick review of those who supported **Adonijah's** attempted coup makes it clear that the old guard had been eliminated and new appointees were made. However, **Benaiah** was ruthless for **Solomon** as **Joab** had been for **David**. And **he** was duly rewarded for **his** brutality with a promotion.⁶⁵ The descendents of **Zadok** retained the priesthood until 171 BC, when Antiochus conferred it to Menelaus. **The Essenes at Qumran were at odds with the priests of the day and awaited the restoration of the Zadokites, whom they looked upon as the only legitimate priestly family.** We don't see **the sons of Zadok** again until **they** are ministering in the Messianic Temple (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gs - God Shows a Vision of the Millennial Temple**).⁶⁶ The elimination of **Adonijah**, **Abiathar**, and **Joab** made the new regime secure. But there was one more score to be settled from **David's** list (see **Ao - David's Last Words: Unfinished Business**).

Shim'i's disobedience and execution (First Kings 2:36-36): The last man to suffer **Solomon's** wrath was **Shim'i**, who was condemned for putting money ahead of **the Kingdom of God**. We have heard part of **his** story before, **Shim'i** was the man who **threw stones at King David, cursing him** and wrongly accusing **him** of murder (see **the Life of David Ds - Shim'i Curses David**). **David** vowed not to **kill Shim'i**, but **Solomon** was not bound by **his father's** oath. So in **his** last words **David** advised **Solomon** to **bring his gray head down to the grave in blood (First Kings 2:8-9)**.⁶⁷

Mercifully, what **Solomon** decided to do instead was to place **Shim'i** under a general house arrest, ordering **him** not to leave **Jerusalem**. **Then the king sent and summoned Shim'i, and commanded him: "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there, and depart not from there anywhere else. For on the day, you go out and cross over the Kidron valley, know for certain that you shall surely die - your blood shall be on your own head."** By forbidding **Shim'i** to leave **Jerusalem**, **Solomon** kept **him** isolated from **his** kinsmen of Benjamin who had taken the lead in the revolt against **David** under **Sheba** (see **the Life of David Ee - Sheba Rebels Against David**). **Shim'i** was forbidden to go anywhere outside **Jerusalem**, but **the Kidron valley** received special mention for it is on the direct route toward Bahurim, **Shim'i's** hometown.⁶⁸ **Shim'i** agreed to **Solomon's** gracious terms, posturing **himself** as a faithful **servant** of **the king**, saying: **What you say**

is good. As my lord the king has said, so will your servant do. So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days (First Kings 2:36-38). Having given **his** word, all **he** had to do was stay put in **Jerusalem**.

However, **Shim'i** would not sit still, and **he** eventually violated the terms of **his** parole: **But it came about at the end of three years that two of Shim'i's servants ran away to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath, located twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. So they told Shim'i, saying: Behold, your servants are in Gath. So Shim'i arose, saddled his donkey and went to Gath to Achish, to look for his servants; then Shim'i went and brought his servants back from Gath (First Kings 2:39-40).** Had **he** taken the conditions of **his** confinement seriously and been an honest man, **he** would have gone to **Solomon** and requested either that **the king** would fetch **his** slaves for **him** or else allow **him** to make the trip **himself**. Now **Shim'i** didn't actually cross **the Kidron valley** to chase **his servants**, maybe **he** thought that **he** didn't violate the spirit of **Solomon's** ban. If so, **he** made a colossal mistake. **The king** obviously interpreted the travel ban to be on going "anywhere else" rather than on a literal crossing of **the Kidron valley**. By breaking **his** oath to **God** and to **Solomon**, the one who had cursed **David** had ironically cursed **himself!**

The root of **Shim'i's** crime was **his** refusal to put **the Kingdom** first. **His** own financial gain was more important to **him** than obedience to **the Kingdom of God**. **He** was like **the rich young ruler** that **Yeshua** commanded to **sell everything he had** and then **give the money to the poor** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ II - The Rich Young Ruler](#)). **He** sadly refused because **he loved his money** more than **he loved the Kingdom of God**. **Shim'i** made the same ungodly decision. **He** wanted to keep all of **his** property for **himself**. **He** couldn't bear to let any of it go, even when that meant disobeying **the king** and breaking **his** promise to **God**.

But it was reported to Solomon that Shim'i had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and back. So the king sent someone and summoned Shim'i. The king said to him, "Didn't I make you swear by ADONAI and forewarned you, saying: Know for certain that on the day you depart and go anywhere else, you shall surely die? You even said to me: "The saying is good; I have heard it." Why then haven't you kept the oath of ADONAI and the commandment that I charged you with" (First Kings 2:41-43)? But **Shim'i** had nothing to say in **his** defense. **He** had foolishly disregarded the direct command of **his** sovereign **king**, who he **had** promised to obey with a solemn oath taken in the presence of **YHVH**.

Then **the king** proceeded to pronounce **Shim'i's** doom: **You know all the evil, which**

your heart should acknowledge, that you did to my father David. Therefore, ADONAI will return your evil on your own head. But I shall be blessed and the throne of David established before ADONAI forever.” Solomon rehearsed Shim’i’s crimes, both past and present. Then the sentence was quickly executed: So the king commanded Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck him down, so that he died. Then all the rebellious supporters of **Adonijah** had been crushed. **David’s** instructions had been carried out, and **Solomon** had proved **himself** to be **a wise king. Thus, the kingdom was secured in his hands (First Kings 2:44-46).** With **the death of Shim’i** there would be no more challenges from the house of Sha’ul.

Each of these **men** that **Solomon** executed had one thing that **they** refused to give up for **the Kingdom of God.** **Adonijah** had to have **Abishag,** **Joab** would not give up **his** desire for revenge for **the death of his brother,** and **Shim’i** would not let go of **his servants.**

We face similar temptations. Some of us are like **Shim’i:** our temptation is what money can buy. So we are unwilling to walk away from a lucrative business deal that is not entirely honest. Or we build our careers at the expense of our families. Or we shortchange **God** by skimping on our tithes and offerings. Other people are like **Adonijah:** we pursue sexual gratification ahead of our commitment to **the Kingdom.** Or, like **Joab,** we are guilty of angry violence.

The question for each of us is this: What is the one thing that is keeping me from giving everything to **the Kingdom of God?** It’s like all or nothing with **ADONAI,** as it is for every self-respecting **king.** It is the character of **a king** to demand total allegiance. If we follow **God** only when **He** gives us what we want, then we are not treating **Him** like **a King,** but only as **a servant.** To put **God** first, **He** has to be first in every aspect of our lives, including the one thing we really don’t want to give up for **His Kingdom,** whatever that one thing may be.⁶⁹