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Historical Details Related to First Kings 3:1 to 4:34



This section is lengthy and describes the first years of **Solomon's** rule and the fame **he** gained during that time. Foreign and domestic political situations are mentioned as are religious, literary and commercial issues. Since **First Kings Chapters 1-2** establishes **Solomon** as the successor of **David**, then **First Kings Chapters 3-**4 indicates how **Solomon** began to fill the rather large void left by **his father**.

Most of the events of **Chapters 3-4** occur during the first three years of **Solomon's** rule (970-966 BC). At least they are told before construction on the Temple began **in the fourth year of Solomon's rule (First Kings 6:1).** Three historical details deserve mention: **Solomon's** relationship to Egypt, **Solomon's** organization of **Isra'el** into twelve districts, and the extent of the cost of **Solomon's** kingdom. These details are interspersed between the chapters' most important ideas, which are the origin, emergence, and fruit of **Solomon's** wisdom.

As has been stated, **David** left a significant kingdom to **his son**. **He** had built a nation largely through conquest. Philistia, Mo'ab, Ammon, Edom, and Syrian had all fallen to **his** armies. Those nations continued to be under **Isra'el's** authority during the first decades of **Solomon's** rule, which presented **the** new **king** with an administrative problem, not a military one. Since **he** controlled virtually all the land between **Egypt** and the Hittite kingdom, **Solomon** was a major player in international affairs.

Egypt's pharaoh, most probably Siamun (978-959 BC),[71] recognized **Solomon's**

significance and made an alliance with **him** by marrying one of **his** daughters to **Isra'el's king (First Kings 3:1)**. Perhaps **Egypt** was weak and needed **Solomon's** support at that time, or maybe **Egypt** thought it would be easier to gain access to **Isra'el's** trade routes through negotiation rather than through war. But whatever the reasons, peaceful relations existed with **Egypt** and **Isra'el** for some twenty years – until the twenty-first dynasty was superseded by Shishak in 945 BC.[72] Having **Egypt** as an ally enhanced **Solomon's** status even more. When this alliance ceased, however, **Egypt** actually helped support **Jeroboam** who eventually split **Isra'el** into two rival nations (**to see link click Dc – A House Divided**).

Before **Solomon, Isra'el's** government was fairly informal. **Sha'ul** and **David's** kingdoms were not disorganized, but **they** were forced to focus on waging war rather than managing a peaceful empire. **Solomon**, on the other hand, was determined to accomplish normal peacetime goals, such as trading and building. Therefore, **he** divided **Isra'el** into twelve districts, each of which was ruled by a governor, **who was in charge of providing food and supplies for the king and his household; each one was in charge of provisions for one month out of the year (First Kings 4:7).** In other words, the governors collected the taxes in their districts that went to support the central government. These districts roughly corresponded with the old tribal areas, but tribal boundaries were often disregarded. Resentment over this redistricting undoubtedly arose, then grew as certain districts struggled to pay their portion.

In any event this was a radical and decisive step, because it imposed upon the people an unprecedented burden. It meant that the fading old tribal system was virtually abolished as far as its political functioning was concerned. In place of the twelve tribes caring in turn for the Temple and the priesthood, there were twelve districts taxed for the support of **Solomon's** court.[73]

Without question, **Solomon's** court needed vast sums of money to support its many interests. Besides **the king**, **his** harem, and **his** officials, there were chariot horses and regular army horses to feed **(First Kings 4:26)**. In addition, **the nation's** population grew **(First Kings 4:20)**, which required further administrative costs. Since funds could not be gained through warfare, taxes and trade had to provide all the government's income. Only an extremely wise **king** would fund all those various interests. But even that type of ruler could not do so for an indefinite period of time.[74]