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Solomon's Wives

First Kings 11: 1-8

Solomon's wives DIG: What was Solomon's basic problem? Why didn't his wisdom save him? Why was intermarriage forbidden (Deuteronomy 7:1-4)? What purpose did royal weddings serve? Why have concubines? What happened in the worship of Molech (Second Kings 23:10). Why is God so harsh, knowing that those shrines were only for the wives?

REFLECT: What is my heart condition? What is the greatest object of my affections? Honestly, am I growing ever more deeply in love with Yeshua, or is my heart turning away toward tragedy, as Solomon's did? What weaknesses hurts my relationship with ADONAI? With others? How was the worship of Molech then similar to the worship of abortion of today?

Even the greatest spiritual gifts will not keep us from sin if our hearts turn away from God.

Most Bible stories are comedies - not in the popular sense in that they are funny, but in the literary sense that they have a happy ending. Noah and his family passed through the deep waters of the great Flood, but they saw the rainbow on the other side. Joseph got sold into slavery, but rose to greatness and saved Jacob and his family from famine. And so on. The Bible is full of happy endings. The happiest of all, of course, is the Gospel, in which Yeshua rises again on the third day after dying, and then comes to us with the promise that our own story will have a happy ending also: eternal life through faith in Him.

But not every story has a happy ending. Some Bible stories are tragedies - not simply in the popular sense that they are sad, but in the more technical sense that we use the word "tragedy" in literature. Shakespeare wrote several famous tragedies - great plays like *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. And before that there were the ancient Greek tragedies. From these tragedies, we learn that a tragedy is a story of a great man who makes a wrong choice and falls into bitter disgrace and (sometimes) learns from his mistakes.

One of the saddest tragedies in the Bible is the story of **Solomon**. **He** was the greatest **king** the world had ever seen. Yet, at the end of **his** life **he** made one of the most disastrous choices ever made, with tragic consequences for **himself** and **his** kingdom. O **Solomon**! Where did **you** go so wrong, and **what lessons can we learn** to avoid making the same mistakes that **you** did?²¹⁵

Solomon's greatness: A tragedy is always a story about some great person, even more, greatness of spirit. **Solomon** meets this qualification and then some, for **he** was one of the greatest men who ever lived. To begin with, **he** came from a noble birth. As **the son of David**, **he** was heir to the world's most famous dynasty. **He** was **the king of Isra'el**. Furthermore, almost everything **he** did was a total success. **He** was a famous builder. **His** golden **Temple** in **Jerusalem** was one of the wonders of the ancient world. In addition to everything else, **Solomon** was a man of prayer. Very simply, **Solomon** was one of the greatest men who ever lived. Anyone who ever heard the wisdom of **his** counsel or watched **him** lead people in prayer would never have expected **his** kingship to end in tragedy. "Anyone by **Solomon**," they would have said. "**He** is the last person that I would imagine falling into serious sin."

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How Holy and Awesome **You** are! Praise **You** for loving me with a **love** greater than anyone could conceive. Praise **You** that **Your love** is always steadfast and **You** are totally righteous and faithful. **For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him (Psalms 103:11). Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like the great deep (Psalms 36:4-5b).***

*If **Solomon** had focused on **eternal** pleasures rather than temporal joys, **his** life on earth and in heaven would have been filled with **eternal** joys! Please help me to always remember that life on earth is fleeting, both the good times and the hard times; but heaven will last forever! It is a joy to please **You** now, even when others laugh at us and tell us of the pleasures that we are missing. How much better to live with our eye on the eternal reward of being with **You**! **Knowing that he who raised the Lord Yeshua will raise us also with Yeshua and bring us with you into His presence . . . For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (Second Corinthians 4:14 and 17). I love you! In Yeshua's holy name and power of His resurrection. Amen***

Solomon's folly: In a tragedy, the main character is always responsible for **his** own

downfall, since he has made the tragic choice. The Greek word Aristotle used for this tragic flaw was *hamartia*, which also happens to be one of the most important words in the B'rit Chadashah for sin - missing the mark. Some defect which is painful or destructive. So what was **Solomon's** destructive defect? **King Solomon** was not faithful in **his** marriage, **he loved many foreign women besides the daughter of Pharaoh** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, **to see link click [Br](#) - Do Not Commit Adultery**). **He** foolishly squandered **his** affections on **women** he was forbidden to touch. **There were women from the Moabites, Amorites, Edomites, Tzidoni and Hittites**. And having foreign **wives** was a violation of **Exodus 34:15-16** and **Deuteronomy 7:3-4**. When the Bible says that **Solomon was deeply attached to them by his love**, the connotation is frankly sexual. **He had 700 wives, all princesses, and 300 concubines (First Kings 11:1 and 3)**.

But **Solomon** was guilty of more than sexual sin. The mention of **princesses** is a clear indication that many of those marriages represented political alliances. By marrying the daughters of foreign kings, **Solomon** was practicing politics, lusting after power as well as sex. Those **women** came from the very nations that **God** told **Isra'el** to drive out of the Promised Land. Yet, **Solomon** foolishly allowed **them** to share **his** bed.

Even worse, **the king** began to worship **their gods**. This was something that **Ha'Shem** had warned about from the very beginning: **Don't intermarry with them - don't give your daughter to his son, don't take his daughter for your son. For he will turn your children away from following Me in order to serve other gods. If this happens, the anger of ADONAI will flare up against you, and He will quickly destroy you (Deuteronomy 7:3-4)**. The issue with those **foreign wives** was not **their** ethnicity, but **their** religion. **The women** whom **Solomon** married did not believe in **the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**, but came from **nations about which ADONAI had said to the people of Isra'el, "You are not to go among them or they among you, because they will turn your hearts away toward their gods."** But **Solomon clung** (Hebrew: *dabaq*) **to these pagan women in love (11:2)**.²¹⁶



Solomon's polygamy turned **him** into a polytheist. **For when Solomon became old, his wives turned his heart away toward other gods; so that he was not wholehearted with ADONAI his God, as David his father had been. Solomon followed 'Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and Milkom the abomination of the Ammonites (First Kings 11:4-5). Ashtoreth** was the sex goddess of the Canaanites. **Mikom** is less familiar, although some scholars identify **him** with **Molech**, who was worshiped with child sacrifices (Jeremiah 32:35). Nevertheless, **Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Mo'av on the hill in front of Jerusalem, and another for Molech the abomination of the people of 'Amon. This is what he did for all his foreign wives, who then offered and sacrificed to their gods (First Kings 11:7-8). The hill east of Jerusalem** is the Mount of Olives, which stands directly opposite the Temple Mount. Thus, **Solomon** practiced those damnable pagan rites of worship within plain sight of **God's Holy Temple**. The one that **Solomon himself** had built and dedicated!²¹⁷

Thus, Solomon did what was evil in ADONAI's view and did not fully follow ADONAI, as David his father had done (First Kings 11:6). What **Solomon** did was not only **wicked**, but also foolish. It was foolish to lust after sex and power, foolish to have a thousand wives, and foolish to worship their **gods**. These things were foolish because they violated **God's Word**.

Solomon's wicked folly is very familiar, because the sins that **he** committed are just as common today. We are living in a sex-crazed society, where the seductions of sin are always on display. Longing for intimacy, young believers today are often tempted to do what **Solomon** did and have relations with someone who doesn't even believe in the **God** of the Bible. Rather than worshiping the one true **God**, they worship many false gods: money and pleasure, work and leisure, self and sexuality. **Solomon** seems like the perfect king for

these postmodern times. **His** sins are still very much with us, which means that we ourselves may be in danger of a tragic downfall. Unless we learn from **his** mistakes, we might fall to sexual temptation, end up marrying an unbeliever, or get involved with false religion, just like **he** did.²¹⁸

Lesson 1 - The little choices we make: Typically, a tragic hero will learn from his mistakes. His story does not simply end in destruction, but leads to some profound recognition of what went wrong. The hero comes to a place of self-awareness where he sees the tragic choice that led to his tragic failure. He may even come to the point of repentance.

First Kings does not directly tell us what **Solomon** learned from **his** mistakes. For this we need the book of **Ecclesiastes** (to see link click [Cc - The Failure of Earthly Things](#)), where **he** learned to fear **ADONAI** and keep His mitzvot (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**). Yet, we can study **First Kings** and look carefully at what went wrong. **Solomon's** famous wisdom failed him, but **he** may yet become a source of wisdom for us.

First, we start falling into sin long before we fall into disgrace. So if we wish to avoid our own tragic downfall, we need to fight against every little sin that creeps into our lives by the power of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. Notice the contrast, or even contradiction, between the way **Solomon's** life began and the way it ended. When **he** rose to power and chose wisdom over wealth, the Bible tells us that **he loved ADONAI (First Kings 3:3)**. The word used here for **love** (Hebrew: *ahab*) is the same word that is used at the end of **his** life to describe **the king's** relationship to **foreign women (First Kings 11:1)**. An absolute change had taken place in **Solomon's** affections. **The man** who once **loved God** ended up **loving** many pagan **wives**. Tragic.

How did this change take place? It didn't happen overnight. **Solomon** started falling into sin long before **he** ever fell into disgrace. **He** didn't wake up one day and suddenly decide to stop **loving God** and start **loving** someone else. No, the spiritual change happened little-by-little, as it always does. His life was like a tower of blocks. With each tragic and sinful choice, **he** was pulling another block out of the structure of **his** existence. For a long time **his** life still seemed solid, at least from the outside. But the king was getting weaker and weaker until finally **he** collapsed in a heap of ungodly sins.

Learn from **Solomon's** mistake! Resist every little sin as if your life depended on it. The Puritans sometimes compared little sins to baby snakes: they are tiny, but deadly, and if they are not put to death when they hatch, they will grow up to be huge serpents. So whenever we see a little sin creep into our lives, we need to resist it with the power of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. Then we should ask **ADONAI** to give us the grace to make the right

choices with our money, our relationships, and everything else in life. Even if it is only a small decision, making the right decision will keep us from falling into spiritual decline. If we are young, we are wise to choose the road that God wants us to take in life and then stay on it. If we are old and have already chosen a good path, we should not turn away from it the way Solomon did in his later years. Choose for Yeshua and then keep choosing for him all the way to the end of your life.²¹⁹

Lesson 2 - Sin is where the heart is: This lesson helps us understand the mystery of **Solomon's** tragedy. How could such a wise man be so foolish? If **God** truly gave **Solomon** the gift of wisdom, then why wasn't he wise enough to avoid falling into disgrace? The answer is that the gifts of **God** never operate independently or automatically, but always according to the affection of our **hearts**. The **heart** is the control center of our lives, and thus the use of our gifts is governed by the condition of our **heart**. Our talents can be useful for building the kingdom of **God**, but only if our **hearts** are committed to the glory of **God**. If our **hearts** turn away from **God**, even the gifts that **He** has given us will be used against **Him**.

At the beginning of his reign, **Solomon's** heart was in the right place. The reason he asked **God** for wisdom was that he had a **heart** for **God's** people and **he** wanted to rule them well. When he prayed for **an understanding mind**, more literally **he** requested an understanding **heart** (**First Kings 3:9**). Having a heart for **God** is the essence of what it means to be a believer. **Solomon** started out with that holy affection; the living **God** was his first and truest **love**. This was evident from the way he governed his people and prayed to **God**.

The tragedy is that **Solomon's heart** ended up in the wrong place. **He** lost **his first love** (see the commentary on **Revelation Az - The Church at Ephesus**). These verses emphasize this by diagnosing his downfall as **heart** failure. In **First Kings 11:1** we read that **the king loved many foreign women**. Then in **First Kings 11:2**, when **God** explains what is wrong with taking pagan brides, **He** says: **They will turn your hearts away toward their gods**. And that is exactly what happened: **His wives turned his heart away**. Or again: **For when Solomon became old, his wives turned his heart away toward other gods; so that he was not wholehearted with ADONAI his God (First Kings 11:4)**.

The vocabulary used to describe the change in **Solomon's heart** is enlightening. The TaNaKh typically uses the verb for **clinging** (Hebrew: *dabaq*) to describe the way someone holds on to **God** by faith (**Deuteronomy 30:20**). But in **Solomon's** case the same verb is

used to describe how **Solomon clung** (Hebrew: *dabaq*) **to his wives in love (11:2)**. The Bible says it over and over again: **Solomon's** story became a tragedy because **his heart loved** other things more than the living **God**. **He did love God**, to a certain extent, but he had a deeply divided **heart** that also **loved** too many **women** and worshiped too many **gods**.

If our **hearts** turn away from **God**, our spiritual gifts will not prevent us from falling into serious sin. **Solomon's** wisdom did not keep **him** holy, nor did the Temple **he** built keep him from idolatry. The Bible says that **Solomon** ended up doing **what was evil in ADONAI's view (First Kings 11:6)**. The same man who was wise enough to build a house for **God** was so foolish that **he** ended up building high places for the worship of pagan deities. Learn from **Solomon's** mistake and apply this lesson to your own life: spiritual gifts will not keep us from sin if we have a **heart** that is turning away from **God**.

What ever happened to old king Solomon? People wonder what happened to **Solomon** in the end. Did **he** ever repent of **his** sins? Will we see **him** in heaven? Was he saved? This is always the most important question for anyone? Nothing is more important in life than where we will end up for eternity. For eternity is a long, long time. A person may commit harmful sins, as Solomon did, yet still end up in heaven by the grace of God through faith in Yeshua. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Messiah alone.

We have good reason to be hopeful about **Solomon's** salvation. One reason to be hopeful is that **ADOANI** had promised **David** that although **his son** would be disciplined, **he** would not be abandoned: **I will be a father for him, and he will be a son for Me. If he does something wrong, I will punish him with a rod and blows, just as everyone gets punished; nevertheless, my grace will not leave him, as I took it away from Sha'ul, whom I removed from before you (Second Samuel 7:14-15)**. If the book of **Ecclesiastes** is any indication, **the king** learned from his mistakes and came back into a right relationship with **God**.

Whether or not **Solomon** was saved or not, we can be absolutely sure of our own salvation. Even after all our wrong affections – after all the times that our own hearts have wandered away from the **God** we **love** – our salvation is still secure (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **ADONAI** has mercy for us, even after all the tragic choices that we have made and all the wrong affections that have led us away from **Him**. Therefore, Yeshua is a new kind of hero, one who steps into our tragic story to take our place. We are the people with the tragic and sinful flaw. We are the ones who deserve to suffer the consequences of our sin. Yet **Yeshua** has stepped in to suffer the wrath of **God** in our place. This is why **He** came into the world: to enter into our tragic

situation and rescue us from our downfall. By dying in our place, **Yeshua** turns our tragedy into a comedy - a story with a happy ending. **Ha'Shem** is angry with us because of our sin. We deserve to fall under his righteous judgment. But **God** has saved us from **His** own wrath by sending **His Son** to be our **Savior**.²²⁰