

1 KINGS 11

1 Kings 11:1–2

This commandment from the Lord is not a direct quote of any specific passage. Either it is a mix of various other statements, or it is a quote from a now missing book or passage (the most similar being Deuteronomy 7:1–4). Rehoboam, Solomon’s son who inherited the kingdom, was the son of Naamah, who was an Ammonite and more than likely was a princess of that nation. Solomon’s cleaving to his wives invokes images of the Garden of Eden, with Solomon acting as Adam and eating the forbidden fruit. His actions removed the people from the golden years of Israel under David and Solomon.

1 Kings 11:3

The nice round numbers and the fact that they add up to an even one thousand may indicate an exaggeration or linguistic stylization on the author’s part. Solomon certainly had many wives, and some of them were political marriages to solidify relations between the neighboring peoples. But there were not seven hundred nearby kingdoms to provide so many princesses, even if we assume the other kings also had many wives and many daughters to marry off. The Jews at the time believed the whole world was composed of seventy nations, and the number seven hundred likely comes from that, perhaps implying ten princesses from every nation. Nowhere in the Bible are these seventy nations listed, making the number a symbolic representation for the actual number of kingdoms in the world. The commandment found in Deuteronomy 7:3 not to marry Canaanite women lists seven Canaanite nations.

1 Kings 11:4–12

What follows are three specific individuals who took parts of Solomon’s kingdom away from him. The last one, Jeroboam, took his part after Solomon had died, but the first two, Hadad and Rezon, may have

taken theirs during Solomon's reign. Since those kingdoms were not tribes of Israel, that is possibly the rationale for the promise in verse 12 that the kingdom would be rent after Solomon's death.

1 Kings 11:13

Technically more than one tribe remained in David's dynasty: Judah, Benjamin, and some of Levi. Benjamin may not have had a very large population at the time because of the events in Judges 20, in which a large number of the tribe was killed, leaving only six hundred men. Levi likewise would have had a small population because in Joshua's division of the land, Levi did not receive territory. They were distributed to the whole land of Israel to act as priests for the people. With the temple under their supervision, the territory of Judah likely had the largest percentage of people from Levi. Today, Jews with the surname Cohen or Levy are probably descendants of the Levites who lived in Judah. Other modern Jews are also descendants of Benjamin, but Benjaminites didn't have a traditional role like priests that preserved their membership in a tribe. Some possible surnames like Yospe (from the stone jasper associated with Benjamin in Exodus 28:20) might indicate a Benjaminite origin. If so, these Benjaminites and Levites are not technically Jews since that term refers to descendants of Judah. However, since the name Jew has come to refer to those who follow the religion of Judaism, other tribes appropriately assume the name.

1 Kings 11:14

"Adversary" comes from the Hebrew word *satan*, here used in a way that doesn't have anything to do with Lucifer, except perhaps symbolically as an enemy of Israel. Edom is the nation descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother. Rebekah was told the descendants of the two boys in her womb would fight. The most famous Edomite, aside from Esau, was Herod the Great. In between the Old and New Testaments, the Jewish kingdom of the Maccabees conquered Edom again and forced them to convert to Judaism. Herod's father was the leader of the Edomites at the time, and it is a cruel irony that Herod, a powerful leader who was hated and feared by the Jews, could rise up to rule them. A better translation for "of the king's seed" might be "of the royal line."

1 Kings 11:15–16

This claim, like many others, is probably greatly exaggerated. Logically, if every male Edomite was killed, the nation would essentially cease to exist—not enough people would remain for Hadad to rule.

1 Kings 11:17–20

Tahpenes is most likely the Egyptian phrase "wife of the king" spelled out in Hebrew and then transliterated as a name by the King James Version translators. Similarly, the word *pharaoh* translates to "big house," hinting that at one time the title was a description. It's possible Tahpenes was also an official title for the queen. That the author of this text calls her "Tahpenes the queen" would still make sense as an explanatory

note, the way someone might write “Pharoah the king.” Neither of those Egyptian etymologies were known until modern times after the discovery of the Rosetta Stone allowed Egyptologists to translate the Egyptian language. Hadad symbolically represents a kind of reverse Moses, leaving the promised land, going to Midian (Moses’s father-in-law Jethro was a Midianite), and arriving in Egypt to be welcomed into the house of Pharoah and given a wife the way Jethro gave Zipporah to Moses in marriage.

1 Kings 11:21–22

Continuing the anti-Moses theme, the text mirrors Exodus: “For all the men are dead which sought thy life” (Exodus 4:19).

1 Kings 11:23–26

Jeroboam is called “Solomon’s servant” to match the statement in verse 11. But as we’ll see in verse 28, Solomon gave Jeroboam charge over two tribes (Joseph’s two sons were Ephraim and Manasseh), and by all accounts Ephraim was the largest of the tribes. Jeroboam’s position was more like governor.

1 Kings 11:27

“Millo” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word, and its meaning is unclear. It is some kind of structure or earthwork that contributed to the defense of Jerusalem.

1 Kings 11:28–32

Again, the Davidic dynasty included more than one tribe, but we are also reminded of Joseph’s “coat of many colors” because Joseph is mentioned in verse 28 and the torn garment is mentioned in verse 30. Finally, through the actions of Judah’s descendant Solomon, once again clothing is torn, affecting Jeroboam, a descendant of Joseph. One portion out of ten also represents a tithe. The Lord’s “Jerusalem . . . which I have chosen” (verse 32) sounds like the Lord taking His portion or tithe. Jerusalem was chosen because it now had the temple, the house of the Lord.

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