



Solomon's Legacy: God's Purpose in each Generation (1 Kings 11:14-42)

Notes: Week Ten

New American Commentary¹

(2) Rebellions Against Solomon [11:14-25](#)

[11:14-22](#) Just because the Lord leaves Solomon on the throne does not mean Solomon encounters no consequences of his sin. God raises up an adversary, an Edomite named Hadad, to oppose Solomon. Hadad was the only surviving member of Edom's royal family after David's crushing victory over that nation (cf. [2 Sam 8:13-14](#); [1 Chr 18:11-13](#)). Having fled to Egypt, it is understandable for him to grow up hating Israel. Apparently the Pharaoh had no problem nurturing Hadad while maintaining favorable relations with Solomon at the same time. Eventually Hadad returns home to harass Solomon, who could no longer expect total cooperation from this vassal state.

[11:23-25](#) God also raises up a second adversary. This individual, Rezon, began his career, like David, as a leader of a band of rebels. Later he took control of Damascus, from which he caused Solomon much trouble. David had defeated Syria earlier (cf. [2 Sam 8:3-9](#)), so Rezon's hatred of Israel was similar to Hadad's. Together they posed an ongoing threat to Israel's interests in Solomon's latter years. As Patterson and Austel note, Rezon "was Solomon's troublemaker in the north while Hadad caused problems in the south (v. [25](#))."

(3) Ahijah Prophecies Division [11:26-40](#)

[11:26](#) A third adversary is introduced. This man, named Jeroboam, comes from Israel itself. In fact, this opponent emerges from Solomon's own court, for Jeroboam is "one of Solomon's officials." Two other items are mentioned. First, he is from the tribe of Ephraim, a northern clan. Thus, he can possibly muster a power base that will rival Solomon's southern-based coalition. He would be less of a threat if he were from Solomon's own region. Second, he is a widow's son. The Greek translation turns his mother into a harlot, a move clearly aimed at defaming Jeroboam at his mother's expense. Evidence is insufficient to accept this alteration. The Greek translators appear to lessen Solomon's and his family's roles in Israel's downfall. Jeroboam's identity, however, is not as significant as how he rises to prominence.

[11:27-33](#) Verse [27](#) announces that what follows details how Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon, then eventually gained power. At some unstated period of time after "Solomon had built the supporting terraces" and repaired Jerusalem's walls (Cf. [1 Kgs 9:24](#)), Jeroboam impresses the king. Jeroboam is "a man of standing," which perhaps means that he has received an inheritance from his deceased father. He is still a "young man," so the king's decision to "put him in charge of the whole labor force of the house of Joseph" demonstrates just "how well" he does his work. His ties with "the house of Joseph," the northern tribes, will become significant when the rebellion actually occurs. Ironically, Solomon chooses, promotes, and gives a power base to the man who will end the Davidic dynasty's rule over Northern Israel.

1. Paul R. House, *New American Commentary – Volume 8: 1, 2 Kings*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 167-173.

Now God acts decisively to inform Jeroboam that he will one day have his own kingdom. Ahijah the prophet takes a new cloak and meets Jeroboam outside Jerusalem. At this apparently unplanned meeting, Ahijah tears the cloak into twelve pieces, gives Jeroboam ten pieces, and explains that Israel will be divided. David's descendants from the tribe of Judah will have one other tribe (Benjamin) to rule. Jeroboam will govern the remaining ten tribes. Israel will remain in the promised land but in a divided, weakened condition.

Ahijah explains two extremely important theological ideas that impact Israel's future. These ideas come as direct words from the Lord. First, he says that it is only because of God's faithfulness to David and choice of Jerusalem that Judah will continue as a kingdom. Second, the prophet asserts that the division will occur as a judgment of Solomon and the people's idolatry. Clearly, sin impacts a country's so-called secular existence. Despite Solomon's unfaithfulness, however, the Lord will remain faithful. Promises made to David in [2 Samuel 7](#) will be kept, as will the pledges made to Solomon in [1 Kings 3; 6; and 9](#). The reader senses at this point that ongoing national sin will lead to still greater punishment, such as exile and the other consequences described in [Deuteronomy 27–28](#) and [Leviticus 26](#).

[11:34–40](#) Ahijah continues God's message to Jeroboam by commenting further on Jerusalem's importance in Judah's survival. Not only has God chosen David, the Lord has chosen Jerusalem. His purpose there was to glorify his name through unified and committed worship at the temple (cf. [1 Kgs 9:1–9](#)) and through the witness of a people wholly committed to a personal, relational, just, covenant God.

As for Jeroboam, God promises him a kingdom and, startlingly, "a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David." To receive these blessings,

however, Jeroboam must act like David. He must obey God, keep the commandments, and walk in God's ways. Only then will he be blessed as David has been blessed. Implicit in these promises is the notion that any idolatry will bring this covenant to a halt. Jeroboam must emulate David, not Solomon. Ahijah concludes the message by stating that all these things happen to "humble David's descendants," not to eliminate the promise of an eternal kingdom. The messianic promise remains in effect, for the punishment will not last "forever."

The episode ends with Jeroboam fleeing to Egypt to avoid Solomon's desire to kill him. He finds refuge in Shishak's court, a fact that alerts readers to changes in Egypt's leadership. Shishak is not as friendly to Solomon as Siamun was in the past. Perhaps the new Pharaoh resents paying Solomon's tolls, or perhaps he attempts to build a new power base that will serve his own interests. Either way the Davidic lineage is in trouble. Jeroboam has a constituency in Israel, a significant foreign ally, and God's promise to place him in power. Without question, then, he will soon be the major force in Israelite politics.

Ahijah's prominence in this story begins the prophets' role as major players in the history of Israel. Of course, earlier prophets impact Israel's story, such as Samuel and Nathan, but the prophetic movement now becomes even more significant. In the rest of 1, 2 Kings the prophets act as God's spokespersons, as anointers of new kings, as miracle workers, and as Israel's overall covenant conscience. Scholars disagree about how, when, and why the prophetic movement emerged in Israel. Still, much work has been done that illuminates these unusual servants of God. More specifically, how the prophets received their messages, what the prophets taught, the forms their messages took, the prophets' place in society, the prophets' historical setting, and the prophets' literary artistry have all been treated thoroughly over the past several decades. These analyses testify to the depth and diversity inherent in the prophetic tradition. Without these individuals it is difficult to conceive of an Israelite religion.

(4) Solomon's Death [11:41–43](#)

[11:41–43](#) The author uses what will become a familiar formula to mark Solomon's passing. First, the author mentions the source for the information found in chaps. [1–11](#). No one knows the exact contents of "the book of the annals of Solomon," but this "book" probably contained both narrative and chronological materials. Second, the length of Solomon's reign (forty years) is duly noted. Solomon rules for the same number of years as his father (cf. [1 Kgs 2:11](#)), which at least implies that the Lord has kept his promise to David to place his son on the throne and his promise of long life to Solomon (cf. [1 Kgs 3:14](#)). Third, Solomon's death and the name of his successor are mentioned. Rehoboam will become king, but he does not know what the reader knows: Solomon's son will govern a greatly reduced kingdom. Israel's glory days are over.

With Solomon's death one of the book's major characters leaves the story. Only Elijah, Elisha, and, perhaps, Hezekiah and Josiah approach Solomon's prominence in the overall scheme of 1, 2 Kings. What kind of man was Solomon? How does the author characterize him? Certainly Solomon has some positive traits. Chief among these good qualities is his wisdom. He has the ability to gather knowledge on a wide range of topics, organize the information gathered, write his conclusions, live by his conclusions, and finally teach others what he has learned (cf. [1 Kgs 4:29–34](#); [10:1–13](#)). Most importantly, at his best Solomon is able to do all these things in *spiritual* matters. Early in his career Solomon applies his knowledge of Scriptures and his experiences with God in a way that helps him obey God. He keeps the Lord's commands, judges justly, and builds the temple. Thus, wisdom means the ability to obey God's truth, and Solomon is quite able to be wise.

Three other positive characteristics demonstrate Solomon's wisdom in so-called secular realms. First, he is an organizational genius. He is able to order, tax, and govern a fairly extensive political and financial empire. Solomon's cognitive abilities make this success possible. Second, he implements an effective foreign policy, which demonstrates his adaptability and willingness to compromise and improvise. Third, Solomon is humble enough to ask for God's help and thoughtful enough to pray for Israel, both in his time and in the future, and for other nations as well. Despite his failings in later years these good traits should not be forgotten.

Sadly, no character sketch of Solomon is complete without an analysis of his flaws. He is capable of expressing his ambition to be a great king through the acquiring of vast wealth and numerous wives. Eventually these twin desires for prestige and sensuality lead to his nation's downfall. Solomon is not beyond using oppressive measures to get what he wants, as the institution of forced labor indicates, nor is he beyond cheating a friend, as his giving of worthless towns to Hiram proves. Worst of all, Solomon condones and even practices idolatry. Thus, he is capable of irrational thinking, ingratitude, and covenant infidelity. At his worst, then, this wise leader of Israel acts no better than the most foolish of his subjects. He thereby serves as a warning to those who take their God-given gifts for granted or, worse, come to believe they have achieved greatness on their own.

Understanding the Bible Commentary Series²

17. Opposition and Death ([1 Kgs. 11:14-43](#))

A divided heart will lead to a divided kingdom: that was effectively God's promise to Solomon in [11:9-13](#). This last section on the great king pursues this theme of division. It tells us of still further seeds of destruction that were planted in the earlier part of his reign and have now grown into plants whose shadow looms darkly over the kingdom. It tells of opposition on the edges of the empire, and it introduces for the first time the man who will be the focal point of that same opposition within Israel itself—the man who will eventually become king of the northern tribes in place of Solomon's son. He is Jeroboam son of Nebat; his name will later echo throughout the book as that of the archidolater.

[11:14-22](#) / “When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him” ([Prov. 16:7](#)). Thus Solomon had claimed in [1 Kings 5:4](#) that he was without **adversary**. Now the blessing has departed and the peace is fractured. We hear of two adversaries, enemies who had hitherto not caused significant problems but are now **raised up** by God to oppose the apostate king in his old age. The first is **Hadad**, a victim of David's wars ([2 Sam. 8:13-14](#)). In a story strangely reminiscent of Israel's own, he finds favor in Egypt ([v. 19](#); cf. [Gen. 39:4](#)). He prospers, marrying an Egyptian woman (cf. [Gen. 41:45](#)) and fathering a son, **Genubath**. We do not need the hint from his son's name (cf. Hb. *gnb*, “to steal”) to realize, however, that this is a man likely to be very angry indeed about the “stolen” lives of his countrymen and unlikely to want to stay forever in Egypt. It is therefore no surprise to find him later pleading with Pharaoh to **Let him go** (Hb. *slh*, [vv. 21-22](#)). The plea is well-remembered from Israel's past (cf. [Exod. 5:1](#); [7:16](#); [8:1](#) etc.), but on this occasion Pharaoh fails to harden his heart, and Hadad (the narrative implies, without being specific about the circumstances) is allowed to leave for Edom. Solomon's first adversary is thus, ironically, set upon him by an old enemy of Israel whom he had unwisely treated as a friend ([1 Kgs. 3:1](#)).

[11:23-25](#) / **Rezon son of Eliada** had apparently either escaped from the battle described in [2 Samuel 8:3-4](#) or flown from **Hadadezer** later, unwilling to submit to imperial rule from Jerusalem. He had formed a bandit group that late in Solomon's reign took control of **Damascus** (garrisoned by David in [2 Sam. 8:6](#) and clearly part of the territory ruled by Solomon in [1 Kgs. 4:24](#)), the capital of the new state of **Aram**, which plays such an important part in Israel's subsequent history (e.g., [1 Kgs. 15:18-20](#)). Rezon opposes the king from the north, Hadad from the south. Where there was peace on all sides, now there are only enemies.

[11:26-33](#) / Solomon's most important enemy, however, is to be found right on his doorstep: **Jeroboam son of Nebat**, erstwhile superintendent of the **labor force of the house of Joseph** that had been helping with the construction work in Jerusalem ([vv. 27-28](#)). It is outside Jerusalem that he is approached by **Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh** ([v. 29](#)). This scene is clearly reminiscent of the passage about the rejection of Saul in [1 Samuel 15](#), where we also find an outer garment torn as a symbol of the fact that God is tearing (Hb. *qr*) the kingdom away from the reigning king ([1 Sam. 15:27-28](#); cf. [1 Kgs. 11:11](#)). On this occasion, however, it is only *division* of the kingdom that will take place, and so the **cloak** is divided into twelve pieces, of which **ten**, symbolizing ten tribes, are given to Jeroboam ([vv. 30-31](#)). **One tribe** is to remain for the sake of **David** and **Jerusalem**. The mathematics are strange, since ten plus one does not equal twelve. It is clear from [chapter 12](#), in fact, that two tribes actually remained under Davidic control (Judah and Benjamin, [12:21](#); cf. also [15:22](#)). Benjamin, for some reason, is not highlighted in [11:30-39](#); its possession by Solomon is simply presupposed. The emphasis here (and indeed most of the emphasis in [12:1-24](#), cf. [vv. 12:17](#), [20](#)) falls upon Judah. Because of his apostasy, this is all the territory that Solomon will retain ([v. 33](#)). Solomon's abandonment of God, it should be noted,

2. Iain W. Provan, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series – 1 & 2 Kings*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "17. Opposition and Death (1 Kgs. 11:14-43)".

is also the people's abandonment of God. This is demonstrated in the plural phrase, **they have forsaken me**, which reflects the way that in the book of Kings, kings are characteristically models for and representative of the behavior of their subjects.

[11:34-39](#) / The mitigation of [11:12-13](#) is repeated, although in a slightly different way. Solomon will not lose any tribes during his lifetime, and even his son is to retain one tribe so that David will always have a **lamp ... in Jerusalem** ([v. 36](#)). God's grace to Solomon and to Solomon's successors is reaffirmed. And indeed, there is just a hint of a resolution here to that tension between law and grace that we noted again in [11:11-13](#). Jeroboam is promised that he, too, can have a dynasty like David's in the north, if he is obedient ([v. 38](#)), but there is already concealed in this promise the expectation of failure. For the division of the kingdom, [verse 39](#) implies, is **not forever**. There will be a reunion. Even such punishment as has been meted out to David is not, it turns out, eternal punishment. Though it appears that God has treated Solomon very much like Saul (in spite of [2 Sam. 7:15](#)), in reality he is merely handing down fatherly discipline ([2 Sam. 7:14](#)). Here is a glimmer of hope to hold on to as the story that follows unfolds. Law does indeed appear to prevail in the last Judean king's loss of his throne at the end of Kings. But law is not in the end more powerful than grace, and grace, [11:39](#) implies, does not function only to mitigate judgment, but ultimately to transform it into blessing. God's anger ([11:9](#)) will not last forever.

[11:40-43](#) / We are not told exactly what happened after Jeroboam received Ahijah's message. We are told simply that Solomon, aware of the threat, sought Jeroboam's death only to find his own. Jeroboam escaped to Egypt, and from there he will shortly re-emerge with hostile intent ([ch. 12](#)). Like Hadad, he will use the liberation language of Exodus. Jeroboam, however, will be intent on liberating Israel, not from Egypt, but from Judah.

Additional Notes

[11:14](#) / **An adversary:** The Hb. here is *śātān*, which in other OT texts refers to the great adversary, Satan (e.g., [Job 1:6](#); [2:1](#)). It is this latter opponent who is normally in view when "satan" appears in the NT (e.g., [Matt. 12:22-37](#)), although the human contribution to "opposition" is certainly prominent in [Matt. 16:21-28](#).

[11:25](#) / **As long as Solomon lived:** This is *lit.* "all the days of Solomon." It has sometimes been argued either that the authors are now telling us that Solomon was troubled by adversaries throughout his entire reign or that this was what their sources here said, and they have, in trying to make them say something different (that there was only opposition to Solomon in his *later* years), simply failed to remove the "contradiction." The latter view implies editorial ineptitude so colossal as to be unbelievable, especially in literature that gives evidence of being as carefully crafted as does [1 Kgs. 1-11](#). The former view is equally implausible, given how much trouble the authors have otherwise taken to convince us that adversaries only became a problem late in Solomon's life. We must remember that it has been part of the strategy throughout [1 Kgs. 1-11](#) to suggest that the *seeds* of what occurred later in Solomon's reign were already present earlier. The fact that Rezon and Hadad (and indeed Jeroboam) may have been Solomon's adversaries from early on (if "all his days" does not simply mean "all the *remaining* days of his old age," cf. [11:34](#)) does not logically entail that they were a *problem* to him as such ("adversaries" worthy of the name) or that their activities were so significant in Solomon's earlier period that the general state of affairs could not be described as "peace" ([5:4](#)). It is noteworthy that we are not told when, exactly, Hadad was allowed to leave Egypt or when, exactly, Rezon took control of Damascus and "ruled in Aram."

11:26 / One of Solomon's officials: The Hb. is once again *'ebed*, which is the same word as in [11:11](#) (the NIV's "subordinate"). It is a very general term, which may refer not to Jeroboam's job after his elevation in [v. 28](#) but rather to his job before this as a "worker" (cf. the commentary on [9:22](#)). Given that the emphasis in [v. 28](#) is, in addition, upon the quality of his work, Hb. *gibbor hayil* in that verse is much better understood in terms, not of his social status (**a man of standing**), but of his physique—he had the physical attributes of a warrior (cf. *gibbôr hayil* in [Josh. 1:14](#); [6:2](#); [8:3](#); [Judg. 11:1](#); etc.). It is such attributes that mark men out for leadership in the OT, and indeed for kingship (see [1 Sam. 9:1-2](#), where *gibbor hayil* is also best understood in these terms; cf. [10:23-24](#)). Solomon advances a man eminently suited to be, and certainly destined to be, his successor. Not for the only time in this narrative, echoes of the earlier Saul/David story are audible (cf. [1 Sam. 16:18](#), where David is also *gibbôr hayil*, advanced by the king he will replace).

11:28 / Labor force: Hitherto in the narrative we have met only the *mas*, comprising 30,000 Canaanite forced-laborers ([1 Kgs. 5:13-14](#); [9:15-23](#)) and a larger number of other laborers who worked on the temple ([5:15-18](#)). The labor force in [11:28](#) is said to have worked, like the *mas* ([9:15](#)), on some of Solomon's building projects in Jerusalem ([11:27](#)), though it is called not *mas*, but *sebel*. The obvious implication of the choice of a different term is that this is an Israelite, and not a Canaanite, group; this is borne out by the fact that Jeroboam, an Ephraimite worker, is elevated from among its number to supervise the work (the *mas* being overseen by Adoniram, [5:14](#)). The neatest solution in the light of all the evidence is to regard the *sebel* as the northern component of the labor force of [5:15-18](#), kept on in Jerusalem after the temple-building for further work. The only other occurrence of the root *sbl* in Kgs. is, in fact, to be found in [5:15](#) (70,000 *carriers*, Hb. *noše' sabbal*). What kind of group was this? We must certainly imagine, given the insistence of [9:15-23](#) that no Israelite was the same sort of "servant" as any Canaanite, that the authors do not wish us to regard the *sebel* as forced labor in the same sense as the *mas*; and indeed, the difference can be seen in [Neh. 4:17](#), where we are again told of the building of Jerusalem's wall. That is not to say, of course, that many *Israelites* did not see it as a harsh regime (cf. [ch. 12](#)). To them, *sebel* undoubtedly has much more the atmosphere of the Egyptian oppression (cf. [Ps. 81:6](#)).

11:30 / The new cloak: It comes as no surprise to the reader who has begun to appreciate the artistry of [1 Kgs. 1-11](#) to discover that **cloak**, Hb. *šalmâ*, has almost exactly the same consonants as the name Solomon (Hb. *selomoh*). The division of the cloak thus speaks particularly forcefully of the division of Solomon's kingdom.

11:32 / He will have one tribe: It is difficult to know why the authors felt that Davidic rule over Benjamin could be presupposed and not explicitly mentioned. One possibility is that they regarded Benjamin simply as Jerusalem's own territory, on the analogy of the Canaanite city-state: this territory came with the city, as it were, and needed no special mention. Certainly Jerusalem is regarded as belonging to Benjamin in [Josh. 18:21-28](#). What is really important here, however, is Judah—the tribe that gives the whole southern kingdom its name (e.g., [1 Kgs. 14:21](#)), even though Benjamin is incorporated into it.