

THE BOOK OF FIRST KINGS

The Books now known as First and Second Kings were so named from their contents. In the Septuagint (LXX) the "Book of Kings" is regarded as a continuation of the material in the "Book of Samuel".

The two Books obviously form one whole, covering Israel's history from the monarchy under Solomon to the nation's dissolution under Zedekiah. They deal with the fortunes of the nation of Israel in their relationship with the Lord; and point out the sins of the Kings who broke the covenant and brought about the dispersion of Israel and Judah.

2 Kings closes with the release of Jehoiachin from prison in the thirty-seventh year of his imprisonment (about 562/561 BC); therefore, the book could not have been completed before that date. It also could not have been completed later than 536 BC since it says nothing about the return from the Babylonian captivity. The Book was probably written by an Israeli in captivity; and since it is one unit and not the product of several writers over several years, it is to be dated in the period about 562— 536 BC.

The writer states plainly that he had sources for his history: (1) Acts of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:41); and (2) The chronicles of the kings of Judah (e.g., I Kgs 14:29) and (3) The chronicles of the kings of Israel (e.g., I Kgs 14:19). The various writings that deal with the history of the kings of Judah are never mixed with those for the history of the kings of Israel; and therefore it is easy to see that each of them was a separate, distinct document. The citations from these works show that they contained much more material than is given in The Books of 1 and 2 Kings.

Specific authors of the firsthand sources are cited for us in the parallel Book of "Chronicles": Nathan the prophet, Ahijah the Shilonite, and Iddo (2 Chr 9:29); Shemaiah the prophet and Iddo the seer (2 Chr 12:15); Iddo the prophet (2 Chr 13:22); Isaiah the prophet (2 Chr 26:22; 32:32); Jehu (1 Kgs 16:1). These sources are very pointed and blunt, giving us a forthright record of the deeds of the kings. No "official" royal historian would have dared to publish such incriminating facts about David or Jeroboam I as are here given.

The writer was concerned with David's Monarchy in Judah, but had to deal with the Kingdom in Israel as well. While the people knew the prophetic sources of this history, the sources were too voluminous and cumbersome to display easily; so this Book was written to compile these sources.

The writer skillfully develops the history of Israel in respect to the covenant of Jehovah (Ex 19:3-6). They were to have no gods but the Lord (Ex 20:2-6); and so idolatry and image worship are regarded in these Books as the worst of all sins, which since they were continued and repeated, brought about Israel's deportation.

The writer holds up the history of Israel and Judah before the captives to teach them that the only way to freedom is to repent of idolatry, return to God, keep the covenant, and trust in His divine promises. He seeks to teach them the truth of God's Plan for them and to strengthen them in this conviction.

The prophets were God's messengers to remind the people of their relationship with God. It was their mission to seek by means of warnings, threats, and promises for the people to live by that divine relationship (Jer 7:13) (11:1-8). In these books, the kings are pronounced as good or bad as they adhered to or departed from that covenant relationship with God.

The Israelites were the first people of history to develop and maintain a true recorded history. Other nations (Assyria, Babylon, Egypt) all had a hodge-podge of historical documents of dates and figures; but only Israel actually wrote these events down as "one history".

In David's day, Egypt and Assyria had weakened; but as king after king assumed power and died, Assyria began to re-awaken under King Tiglath-Pileser III. In 721 BC, Samaria fell and Judah was invaded; but Jerusalem was never completely defeated by these attacks.

In King Josiah's time, Egypt and Assyria were defeated by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who promptly invaded Judah on three occasions, with the third one coming in 586 BC.

A BRIEF OUTLINE FROM WYCLIFFE COMMENTARY

I. THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM SOLOMON TO REHOBOAM (1:1-11:43)

A. SOLOMON'S ASCENSION TO THE THRONE (1:1-2:46)

B. THE WISDOM AND WEALTH OF SOLOMON (3:1-4:34)

C. SOLOMON'S BUILDING ACTIVITIES (5:1-9:28)

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E. SOLOMON'S APOSTASY, DECLINE, AND DEATH (11:1-43)

II. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM FROM REHOBOAM TO THE FALL OF ISRAEL (12:1-22:53)

A. EARLY ANTAGONISM BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JUDAH (JEREBOAM TO
OMRI) (12:1-16:28).

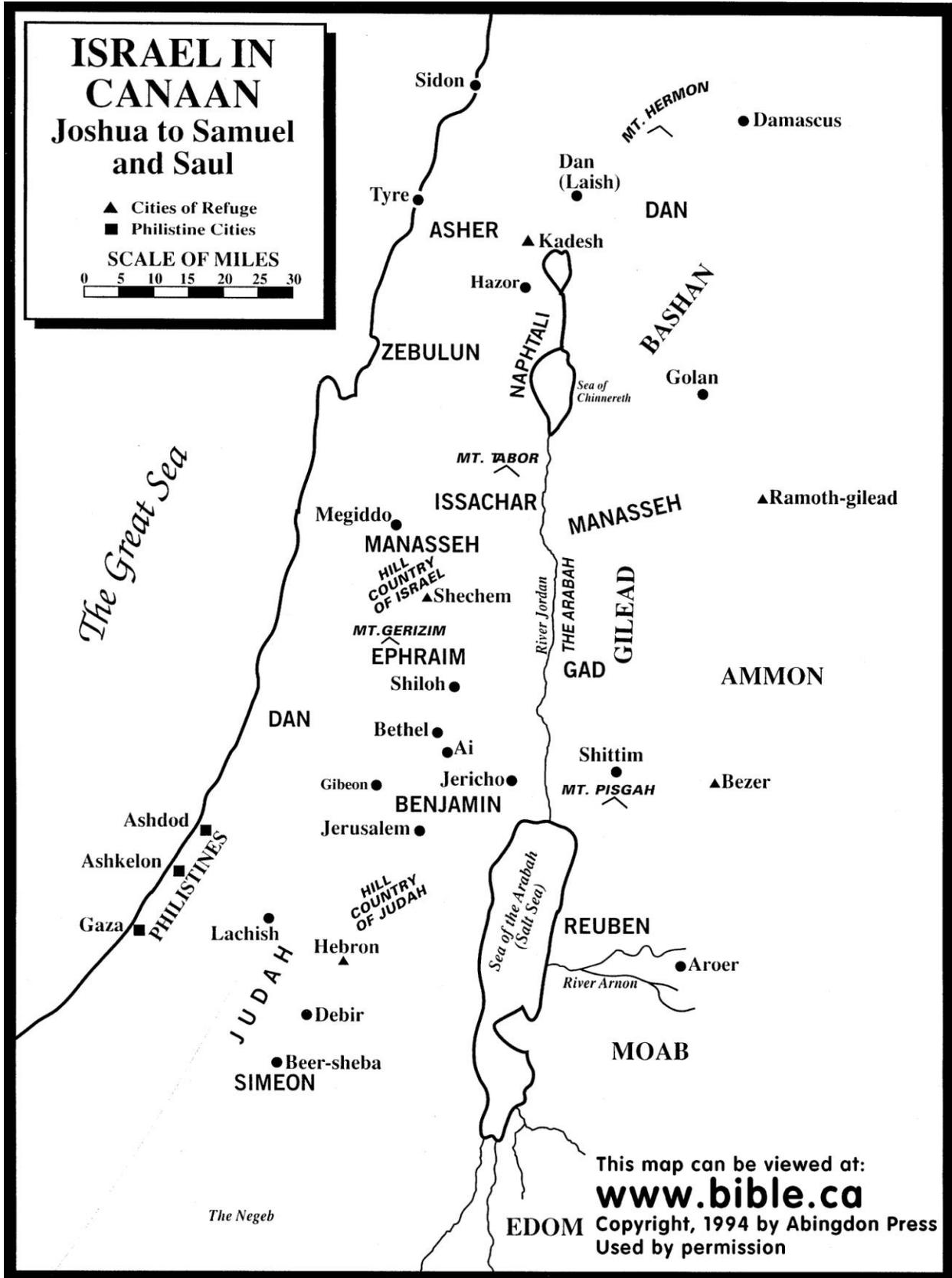
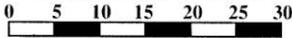
B. FROM AHAB TO JORAM (16:29-22:53)

ISRAEL IN CANAAN

Joshua to Samuel and Saul

- ▲ Cities of Refuge
- Philistine Cities

SCALE OF MILES



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I. THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM SOLOMON TO REHOBOAM [1:1-11:43]

A. SOLOMON'S ASCENSION TO THE THRONE [1:1-2:46].

1. ADONIJAH'S ASPIRATION TO THE THRONE IS DEFEATED [1:1-53].

1:1] Now King David was old (70 years old – 2 Sam 5:4) and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes (“bed clothes”), but he got no heat.

The final blow to David had been Absalom's rebellion.

1:2] Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the King a young virgin: and let her stand before the King, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in your bosom, that my lord the King may get heat.

This was “acceptable” as a medical practice even as late as the Middle Ages. Nothing immoral should be inferred or imagined in that admittedly bizarre and unusual practice.

1:3] So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite (of Issachar, in the Plains of Jezreel), and brought her to the king.

1:4] And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the King, and ministered to him: but the King knew her not (“did not have sexual relations with her”).

She is somewhat similar to a private practical or “hospice” nurse to the dying man.

1:5] Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

Adonijah was David's fourth son; his mother was Haggith. He was at that time the eldest living son.

But God had already chosen Solomon of Bath-Sheba; and David had agreed.

DAVID'S WIVES (lower case) AND CHILDREN (UPPER CASE) IN HEBRON

| | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|----------|------------|---------|--------|
| Ahinoam | Abigale | Maacha | Haggith | Abital | Eglah | Michal |
| | | | | | | |
| AMNON | CHILEAB | ABSALOM | ADONIJAH | SHEPHATIAH | ITHREAM | |

DAVID'S FAMILY IN JERUSALEM
(Wives in lower case; Children in upper case)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|----------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| ? | | ? | | ? | Bathsheba | | ? | | ? |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| SHAMMUAH | SHOBAB | NATHAN | SOLOMON | IBHAIR | ELISHUA | NEPHEG | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? | ? |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| JAPHIA | NOGAH | ELISHAMA | ELIADA | ELIPHALET | ELPHALET. | | | | |

1:6] And his (Adonijah) father (David) had not displeased ("corrected or parented") him at any time in saying (by saying), "Why have you done so?" And he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bore ("had born") him after Absalom.

Since he was "4th" in line after Absalom (the 3rd in line of succession) and the first three children were dead; he was actually next in line to be the king. This, of course, assumed that the line was not rearranged by The Lord (which it was).

1:7] And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah, helped him.

Zeruiah was David's sister; and her children had been Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Joab was apparently living in Bethlehem. He had proven himself as David's commander in chief; but he was cruel and treacherous. He had captured the fortress of "Jebus" (which was expanded and is known today as Jerusalem) and besieged Rabbah; but had needlessly shed the blood of Abner and Amasa. Later, Solomon will command Benaiah to execute him. At his own request, Joab was killed beside the Altar in the Tabernacle, where he had taken refuge.

Abiathar was the only Priest who had escaped the brutal vengeance which Saul took on the priests at Nob because they gave aid and comfort to David. After he fled to David, he became his chief advisor and friend. Up to this point, he had remained true to David and Solomon; but now he had joined in the conspiracy of Adonijah against King Solomon. He was subsequently excommunicated from the priesthood; but he was not executed, as he deserved.

1:8] But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah.

Zadok had joined David immediately after Saul's death and accompanied him as he fled from Jerusalem and the rebellion of Prince Absalom. He has also been David's "double agent".

Nathan the prophet is not to be confused with one of the sons of David by the same name.

1:9] And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which is by En-Rogel, and called all his brethren, the King's sons; and all the men of Judah the king's servants:

He threw this feast for selected people who could help him gain the throne. The "stone of Zoheleth" was an outcropping on the southern slope of the Hinnom Valley. It was very large and cast a big shadow.

1:10] But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

Benaiah was the son of Jehoida (the high priest). He was the chief of police under David and was entirely loyal to him. It is easy to understand why Solomon was not summoned. This is proof that Adonijah knew that Solomon had already been chosen to succeed David; and it is reasonable that all the other brothers knew it as well!

1:11] Wherefore Nathan spoke unto Bath-Sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith (one of David's wives) does reign, and David our lord ("master") knows it not?

Nathan had first appeared to tell David that he must defer building the Temple. Later, he reproved the King for his sin of murder and adultery. He now warns the new King's people of the plot to overthrow him.

1:12] Now therefore come, let me, I pray you, give you counsel, that you may save your own life, and the life of your son Solomon.

1:13] Go and get you in unto King David, and say unto him, Did not you, my lord, O King, swear unto your handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? Why then does Adonijah reign?

1:14] Behold, while you yet talk there with the King, I also will come in after you, and confirm your words.

This was to give assurances that she was not overreacting.

1:15] And Bath-Sheba went in unto the King into the chamber: and the King was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king.

1:16] And Bath-Sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the King. And the King said, What would you?

1:17] And she said unto him, My lord, you swore by the LORD your God unto your handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne.

1:18] And now, behold, Adonijah reigns; and now, my lord the King, you know it not:

1:19] And he has slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and has called all the sons of the King, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon your servant has he not called.

1:20] And you, my lord, O King, the eyes of all Israel are upon you, that you should tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the King after him.

She appealed to David to make a forthright and immediate declaration.

1:21] Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the King shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.

1:22] And, lo, while she yet talked with the King, Nathan the prophet also came in.

1:23] And they told the King, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the King, he bowed himself before the King with his face to the ground.

True to his promise, Nathan appeared to support what Bath-Sheba had told David, which otherwise might have appeared to the monarch as an exaggerated report. He repeated substantially the same story that David had just learned from Bath-Sheba's lips.

1:24] And Nathan said, My lord, O King, have you said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne?

1:25] For he is gone down this day, and has slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and has called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save King Adonijah.

1:26] But me, even me your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon, has he not called.

1:27] Is this thing done by my lord the King, and you have not showed it unto your servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the King after him?

1:28] Then King David answered and said, Call me Bath-Sheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.

In Oriental fashion Bath-Sheba had discreetly withdrawn when Nathan entered, but now she was recalled to hear the King make his official pronouncement.

1:29] And the King swore, and said, As the LORD lives, that has redeemed my soul out of all distress,

This oath removed all further debate.

1:30] Even as I swore unto you by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.

1:31] Then Bath-Sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the King, and said, Let my lord King David live forever.

She conveyed her gratitude for his assurance that her son would reign.

1:32] And King David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king.

1:33] The King also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon:

This command to Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah spelled the collapse of Adonijah's plot, for the coronation of the rebel's half brother Solomon was about to begin. The King gave specific instructions for the ceremony of crowning. David's own royal mule was to be used to signify that Solomon was the King's chosen one.

1:34] And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there King over Israel: and blow the trumpet, and say, God save King Solomon ("Long live King Solomon").

Both King and Priest in Israel were inducted into office through the rite of anointing, in distinction to the prophet, who held a non-anointed office. The blast of the trumpets was to announce to the people that Solomon had now legally taken the throne of his father David, even before David's death.

1:35] Then you shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be King in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.

1:36] And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the King, and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the King say so too.

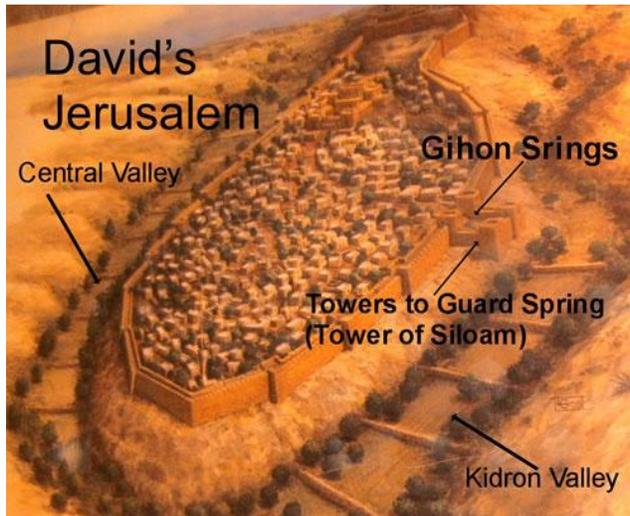
Benaiah gave his acquiescence and his promise of obedience to all that David had stated in relation to the crowning of Solomon.

1:37] As the LORD has been with my lord the King, even so be He with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David.

1:38] So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of

Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon King David's mule, and brought him to Gihon.

The Cherethites and Pelethites were the royal bodyguards; and they carried out the instructions of the King in detail. Gihon, situated in the



Kidron Valley just below the eastern hill (Ophel), was a spring which was at that time Jerusalem's chief source of water.

1:39] And Zadok the priest took a horn of oil out of the Tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save King Solomon.

Zadok, the custodian of the sacred Tent, went to it to get the visible symbol of God's invisible anointing (cf. II Sam 6:17).

1:40] And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them.

With a new and promising King on the throne, a new and promising era stretched out before Israel. Behind lay memories of great conquests under David; ahead lay a future of peace and expansion.

1:41] And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him heard it as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar?

1:42] And while he yet spoke, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for you are a valiant man, and bring good tidings.

1:43] And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord King David has made Solomon king.

1:44] And the King has sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule:

1:45] And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him King in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that you have heard.

1:46] And also Solomon sits on the throne of the kingdom.

1:47] And moreover the King's servants came to bless our lord King David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than your name, and make his throne greater than your throne. And the King bowed himself upon the bed.

1:48] And also thus said the King, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which has given one to sit on my throne this day, my eyes even seeing it.

These verses relate the collapse of Adonijah's conspiracy to seize the throne.

1:49] And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way.



They feared, with good reason, that they would be regarded as traitors against the state, and be summarily dealt with.

1:50] And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

Forsaken and deserted by those who called themselves his friends,

Adonijah fled in very terror of his life to seek asylum in the Sanctuary of the Tabernacle. The "horns" were the four projections at the four corners of the altar. It is significant that all altars designed by The Lord and constructed by Israel were "square" or "cubical" in shape; all of them had these "corners".

1:51] And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah fears King Solomon: for, lo, he has caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let King Solomon swear unto me today that he will not slay his servant with the sword.

In Oriental practice, an insurgent like Adonijah would have been severely punished, if not put to death. However, Solomon dealt mercifully with him, remitting the death penalty and placing him under watchful observation, thus setting the pattern for his magnanimous rule. Not until Adonijah committed another act of treason was his judgment pronounced.

1:52] And Solomon said, If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness ("another wickedness") shall be found in him, he shall die.

1:53] So King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to King Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to your house.

Solomon respected the sanctuary of the altar. Only one who was proved to be a murderer was to be removed from the altar without mercy. Adonijah professed to submit to Solomon and obey his rule. Had his submission been genuine, his subsequent life would have been more peaceful and his story far happier.