

# CHAPTER 3

## INTRODUCTION TO FIRST KINGS 3

This chapter relates the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter, (<sup><1K1></sup>1 Kings 3:1); his piety and devotion, (<sup><1K2></sup>1 Kings 3:2-4); his prayer for wisdom and understanding, which was acceptable to God, who promised to grant his request, with an addition to it, (<sup><1K3></sup>1 Kings 3:5-15); an instance and proof of the wisdom given him in determining a case between two harlots brought before him, which greatly raised his reputation, and gave him reverence among his people, (<sup><1K6></sup>1 Kings 3:16-28).

**Ver. 1.** *And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt*, etc.] Pharaoh was a common name of the kings of Egypt, of whom no mention is made in Scripture from the times of Moses until this time; which may seem strange, when it is considered that that kingdom was a potent one, and near the land of Canaan; but it was governed by a race of kings in this period of time, of whom, as Diodorus Siculus <sup>f35</sup> says, there is nothing worthy of relation. The name of this Pharaoh, according to Eupolemus <sup>f36</sup>, an Heathen writer, was Vaphres; for he says, that David contracted a friendship with this king, and he relates some letters which passed between him and Solomon, concerning sending him workmen for the building of the temple, which are still preserved; but Calvisius <sup>f37</sup> thinks it was Sesostris; what this affinity was is next observed:

*and took Pharaoh's daughter*: that is, married her; who, according to Ben Gersom, was proselyted first to the Jewish religion; which is very probable, or otherwise it can hardly be thought Solomon would marry her; and as the forty fifth psalm, (<sup><3951></sup>Psalm 45:1-17), and the book of Canticles, supposed to be written on that occasion, seem to confirm; to which may be added, that it does not appear she ever enticed or drew him into idolatry; for, of all the idols his wives drew him into the worship of, no mention is made of any Egyptian deities. The Jews say <sup>f38</sup> Rome was built the same day Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, but without foundation: this was not Solomon's first wife; he was married to Naamah the Ammonitess before he was king, for he had Rehoboam by her a year before that for Solomon

reigned only forty years, and Rehoboam, who succeeded him, was forty one years of age when he began to reign, (<sup><1114></sup>1 Kings 11:41 14:21);

*and brought her into the city of David;* the fort of Zion:

*until he had made an end of building his own house:* which was thirteen years in building, and now seems to have been begun, (<sup><100></sup>1 Kings 7:1);

*and the house of the Lord;* the temple, which according to the Jewish chronology<sup>f39</sup>, was begun building before his marriage of Pharaoh's daughter, and was seven years in building; and therefore this marriage must be in the fourth year of his reign; for then he began to build the temple, (<sup><1067></sup>1 Kings 6:37,38); and so it must be, since Shimei lived three years in Jerusalem before he was put to death, after which this marriage was, (<sup><1023></sup>1 Kings 2:37);

*and the wall of Jerusalem round about;* all which he built by raising a levy on the people, (<sup><1095></sup>1 Kings 9:15); and when these buildings were finished, he built a house for his wife, but in the mean while she dwelt in the city of David.

**Ver. 2.** *Only the people sacrificed in high places,* etc.] On the tops of their houses, on hills and mountains, and particularly at the high place in Gibeon, where the tabernacle was:

*because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord until those days;* to which they were obliged to repair as afterwards, and there offer their sacrifices, as the Lord had commanded, (<sup><626></sup>Deuteronomy 12:5,6).

**Ver. 3.** *And Solomon loved the Lord,* etc.] The worship of the Lord, as the Targum: and which he showed by

*walking in the statutes of David his father;* in which his father walked, which were the statutes of the Lord, or which he exhorted him to walk in, and were the same, (<sup><108></sup>1 Kings 2:3);

*only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places;* besides that at Gibeon, which it seems David did not.

**Ver. 4.** *And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there,* etc.] About four or five miles from Jerusalem; (see Gill on "<sup><1028></sup>1 Kings 2:28");

*for that [was] the great high place;* not that the place itself might be higher than others that were used; but here were the tabernacle of Moses, and the

altar; so that it was a more dignified place, and more sacred because of them:

*a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar*; the brazen altar of burnt offerings there; not at one time, but on several days successively; though Jarchi says on one day; and which was a prodigious number, never was known the like, unless at the dedication of the temple, (~~<1Kings>~~ 1 Kings 8:63,64).

**Ver. 5.** *In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night*, etc.] This was not a common natural dream, but an extraordinary, divine, and supernatural one, a prophetic dream, a night vision, such as God used to speak in to his prophets; in which he had the full use of his reasoning powers, was under divine impressions, and in a spiritual frame of mind, and in the exercise of grace; it was not a mere dream that the Lord did appear to him, but he really did appear to him while sleeping and dreaming, by some display of his glory in some way or another:

*and God said, ask what I shall give thee*; he did not hereby dream that God said to him, but he really did say this; bid him ask what he would and it should be given him; he knew what he designed to give, but he would have it asked of him, as he will be inquired of by all his people to do that for them which he has intended and provided for them; and it is encouragement enough for them to ask, since he has promised to give.

**Ver. 6.** *And Solomon said*, etc.] In his dream; not that he dreamt he said, when he did not; but he really said, as follows:

*thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy*; bestowed many favours and blessings upon him, both temporal and spiritual:

*according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee*; in the truth of doctrine and worship, according to the revealed will and word of God, and which he observed with great strictness, living soberly, righteously, and godly, though not without failings and imperfections, yet with great integrity and sincerity; and this holy walk of his was not the cause of God's showing mercy to him, nor was it in proportion to that, but what he was influenced to by the mercy that was shown him:

*and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as [it is] this day*; a son to be his successor,

meaning himself; which was an additional favour to all the rest, and was in reserve, and now bestowed, as time had made to appear.

**Ver. 7.** *And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father*, etc.] Removed by death, in whose stead he reigned by the appointment of God, and through his overruling providence, notwithstanding the attempts made to prevent it, and therefore to God he ascribes it:

*and I [am but] a little child*; not in age and stature, but in knowledge and understanding; for though his father called him a wise man, and he was judged so by others, and really was one, yet in his own opinion and thought of himself such was his modesty and humility, that he was but a child as to his intellectual powers and capacity for government: some understand this of age; and the Jews commonly say he was but twelve years of age when he was anointed king, which they reckon thus; that he was born at the time that Ammon ravished Tamar, two years after which was Absalom's sheep shearing, when he slew Amnon, on which he fled to Geshur, and was there three years; here are five years; he returned thence and was at Jerusalem two years; lo, seven years; he rebelled and was slain, and after that there was a famine of three years, which make ten; and in the year following David numbered the people, which was nine or ten months in doing; the next year he died, which was the fortieth of his reign, in all twelve years; so reckon Jarchi and Kimchi; and Eupolemus, an Heathen writer<sup>f40</sup>, is express for it, who says, that David, when he had reigned forty years, delivered up the kingdom to Solomon his son, being then twelve years of age, which he must receive from the tradition of the Jews; the same is said by several of the ancient fathers, as Ignatius<sup>f41</sup> and Jerom<sup>f42</sup>; but this cannot be fact; for, if so, his son Rehoboam must be born to him when he was but eleven years of age; (see Gill on "<sup>1</sup>Kings 3:5"); it is best therefore to interpret this of the sense he had of the weakness of his understanding, and of his incapacity for government, as the next clause explains it:

*I know not [how] to go out or come in*; in the administration of government, to execute his office as a king, in allusion to shepherds, as kings are sometimes called, going in and out before their sheep.

**Ver. 8.** *And thy servant [is] in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen*, etc.] To be his special and peculiar people above all people on the earth; this is not to be understood locally, though Jerusalem, where his palace was, was in the middle of the land; but of the exercise of his office,

he being placed over the people, and among them, and having the care and inspection of them:

*a great people, that cannot be numbered and counted for multitude*; being for number as the stars in the sky, and as the sand upon the seashore, as had been promised.

**Ver. 9.** *Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people*, etc.] Not an understanding of things spiritual, nor of things natural, though both were given him, but of things political, what related to the civil government, that he might be able to judge or rule the people of Israel in the best manner:

*that I may discern between good and bad*; not merely between moral good and evil, of which he had a discernment; but between right and wrong in any case or controversy that came before him between man and man, that so he might be able to pass a right sentence, and do justice to every one:

*for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?* who are so very numerous, and have so many causes to be heard and and those many of them very intricate and difficult; so that no man is equal to such arduous work, unless he has more than an ordinary capacity given him by the Lord.

**Ver. 10.** *And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.*] Understanding in the affairs of civil government; since he had respect not to his own private benefit and advantage, but the good of the people he governed, and the honour and glory of God, who had set him over them, they being his chosen people, and whose vicegerent he was.

**Ver. 11.** *And God said unto him*, etc.] Being yet in a dream:

*because thou hast asked this thing*; wisdom for government:

*and hast not asked for thyself long life*; which is naturally desired by men, and always reckoned a great temporal blessing, and especially to be wished for by a king living in great pomp and splendour:

*neither hast asked riches for thyself*; to support his grandeur; for though David his father had left him much, yet not for himself, but for the building of the temple:

*nor hast asked the life of thine enemies*; victory over them, and to have it in his power to take away their lives when he pleased; which kings, and

especially tyrants, are desirous of, such as are ambitious, haughty, and revengeful:

*but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment*; where the right of a cause lay, that so he might make a right judgment of it, and pass a righteous sentence, a sentence not to the injury of any.

**Ver. 12.** *Behold, I have done according to thy words*, etc.] Expressed in his request: he not only promised he would grant him it, but he had already done it, or at least had begun to do it:

*lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart*; had greatly increased his wisdom and understanding in things political, things respecting civil government, and also in things natural, in the knowledge of the things of nature as appears from (<sup><1063></sup>1 Kings 4:33); and of the arts and sciences:

*so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee*: which some restrain to kings, and to the kings of Israel; that there were none of the kings before him, as Saul and David, like him for wisdom, nor any of the kings of Judah and Israel after him; but it may include all men of all nations in the world, since he is said to be wiser than all men; and some other nations, and particular men of other nations, famous for wisdom, are expressly mentioned as inferior to him, (<sup><1063></sup>1 Kings 4:30,31); but then this must be understood of men since the fall; for Adam, doubtless, had a larger stock of knowledge and understanding in his state of innocence than ever Solomon had; and it must be restrained to political and natural knowledge; for, as for divine knowledge, Kimchi excepts Moses; and we may well except the apostles of Christ for spiritual and evangelical knowledge; and as for our Lord, the antitype of Solomon, he is greater than him in all kind of knowledge, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge being hid in him, (see <sup><1022></sup>Matthew 12:42 <sup><5013></sup>Colossians 2:3).

**Ver. 13.** *And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked*, etc.] That is, intended to give him, and now promised it, and was about to bestow it on him:

*both riches and honour*; the former through the presents and tribute of the nations about him, and his trading to foreign parts; and the latter chiefly through his wisdom, the fame of which was spread everywhere:

*so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days;* that is, none like him for riches and honour among all the kings of the neighbouring nations so long as he lived; though there might be kings in later times as rich, or richer than he, as Croesus, Alexander, etc. but then not so honourable as he; so, putting both together, there were no kings like him before or after, and especially if wisdom be added to them, as in (<sup><14012></sup>2 Chronicles 1:12).

**Ver. 14.** *And if thou wilt walk in my ways,* etc.] Prescribed and directed to in his word,

*to keep my statutes and my commandments;* ceremonial, moral, and judicial:

*as thy father David did walk;* which Solomon himself had observed, (<sup><14016></sup>1 Kings 3:6); and whose walk was worthy of his imitation:

*then I will lengthen thy days;* the other promises of riches and honour are absolute, but this of long life conditional, depending upon his holy walk and conversation; and hence, because he failed in this the Jews observe he did not attain to long life, dying, as they suppose, at fifty two years of age; which is grounded on a wrong hypothesis, that he was but twelve years of age when he he began to reign, and he reigned forty years, as before observed.

**Ver. 15.** *And Solomon awoke, and, behold, [it was] a dream,* etc.] Not that it was nothing but a dream, a natural one, a vain and empty one, but a divine and supernatural one, a dream of prophecy, as the Jews call it, or a prophetic dream; a true one, which had its full accomplishment in him, the truth of which he perceived as soon as he awoke; for he found himself possessed of such a measure of wisdom and knowledge he never had before, which occasioned the thanksgiving and joy next expressed:

*and he came to Jerusalem;* from Gibeon, accompanied by his nobles and servants:

*and stood before the ark of the covenant the Lord;* which was in a tent David had pitched for it there, (<sup><14017></sup>2 Samuel 6:17); here he stood with holy reverence, as in the presence of the Lord, and as a servant of his, to minister to him, and as a worshipper of him, with a heart full of gratitude for the great things he had done for him, and promised to him:

*and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings*; by way of thankfulness for his quiet settlement in the for the Lord's appearance to him at Gibeon, and what he had already given, and promised to give:

*and made a feast to all his servants*; in a way of joy and gladness for the above layouts; this feast was either the part of the peace offerings he offered, which belonged to the offerer to eat with his friends, or this was a special feast made at his own palace for his courtiers.

**Ver. 16.** *Then came there two women [that] were harlots unto the king,* etc.] The same day, as Abarbinel thinks, the night before which the Lord had appeared to Solomon; this came to pass through the providence of God, that there should be immediately an instance and proof of the wisdom and understanding the Lord had given to Solomon; these women, according to the Targum, were victuallers or inn keepers; and so Ben Gersom thinks they were sellers of food, as Rahab; though he observes it is possible they might, prostitute themselves: this may be said in their favour, that common prostitutes do not usually bear children, or, when they do, take no care of them, have no affection for them, and much less are fond of them, as these seem to be; but, on the other hand, no mention being made of their husbands, and living together in one house, and alone, and being impudent, brawling, and litigious, give great suspicion of the truth of the character they bear in our version and others:

*and stood before him*; to lay their case before him, and each plead their own cause; it may be, it had been tried in another court before, and could not be determined, and so was brought to the king; and, if so, the wisdom of Solomon was the more conspicuous, in deciding it in the manner he did.

**Ver. 17.** *And the one woman said,* etc.] Who was the plaintiff:

*O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house*; pointing to the defendant, who stood by her:

*and I was delivered of a child with her in the house*; she being present at the delivery, and she only, as it should seem.

**Ver. 18.** *And it came to pass, the third day after I was delivered,* etc.] Of a child, as before expressed:



*that this woman was delivered also*; of another child; and being both of the same sex, both sons, as afterwards appears; and being so nearly of an age, it was difficult to distinguish them;

*and we [were] together; [there was] no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house*; so that in this trial no evidences could be produced on either side.

**Ver. 19.** *And this woman's child died in the night*, etc.] Whether the same night following the day it was born is not certain;

*because she overlaid it*; or laid upon it, being heavy through sleep, and not knowing what she did, turned herself upon it, and smothered it; because it had no previous illness, or any marks of any disease it could be thought to die of, and perhaps there might be some of its being overlaid.

**Ver. 20.** *And she arose at midnight*, etc.] Perceiving what she had done, that she had overlaid her child, and it was dead; either through fear of punishment inflicted on persons thus negligent, or because of the disgrace of it, taking no more care of her child, she made use of the following stratagem:

*and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept*; this served to puzzle the cause, for how could she know what she did when she was asleep? this she could not prove, it was only conjecture:

*and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom*; where she found it in the morning; but still what proof was there that it was the other woman's, and not her own, that lay dead in her bosom?

**Ver. 21.** *And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck*, etc.] As she used to do:

*behold, it was dead*; her own child, as she thought at first:

*but when I had considered it in the morning*; it was towards morning, or just at break of day, when she arose to suckle it, and found it dead: but when it was broad day, and the light of the morning was increased, she more narrowly viewed it, and by its features, or some marks she had observed;

*behold, it was not my son which I did bear*: she was fully satisfied it was not her own child, but another.

**Ver. 22.** *And the other woman said,* etc.] The defendant:

*nay, but the living [is] my son, and the dead [is] thy son;* she denied what the other said, but offered nothing in proof of it:

*and this said;* she who was the plaintiff replied in the same language:

*no: but the dead [is] thy son, and the living [is] my son;* without being able to add anything in confirmation of what she had deposed:

*thus they spake before the king;* several times, over and over again, what is before expressed, having nothing to produce on either side in proof of their assertions; so that it was very difficult to determine to whom the living child belonged.

**Ver. 23.** *Then said the king,* etc.] As judge, summing up what had been said on both sides, which were only bare assertions without proof; the one affirming what the other denied, and the other denying what the other affirmed:

*the one saith, this [is] my son that liveth, and thy son [is] the dead; and the other saith nay; but thy son [is] the dead, and my son [is] the living;* this he repeated to show to all present that no determination could be made by what had been said on each side, and that some other method must be taken.

**Ver. 24.** *And the king said, bring me a sword,* etc.] The design of which might not at first appear to the court, and it might be thought strange, and greatly wondered at: what should be the meaning of it:

*and they brought a sword before the king;* his commands were obeyed.

**Ver. 25.** *And the king said,* etc.] To one of his officers:

*divide the living child in two;* not that he meant it should be actually done, though it might at first be thought he really intended it, and so strike the minds of some with horror, as it did, however, the mother; but he ordered this, to try the affections of the women, and thereby come to the true knowledge of the affair; though, some think he knew it before by their countenances and manner of speech, but that he was desirous all present might see it, and be satisfied of it:

*and give half to the one, and half to the other;* since both claimed it.

**Ver. 26.** *Then spake the woman, whose the living child [was], unto the king,* etc.] In haste, and with great vehemency, lest the executioner should at once dispatch it:

*(for her bowels yearned upon her son)*; not being able to bear to see his life taken away:

*and she said, O my lord:* or, “on me<sup>f43</sup>, my lord”; let the sin, the lie that I have told, be on me, and the punishment of it; she rather chose to be reckoned a liar, and to endure any punishment such an offence deserved, than that her child should be cut asunder:

*give her the living child, and in no wise slay it;* being willing to part with her interest in it, rather than it should be put to death:

*but the other said, let it be neither mine nor thine, [but] divide [it];* for as she knew it was not her own, she had no affection for it, nor desire to have it; chose rather to be clear of the expense of keeping and nursing it, and would, by its being put to death, be avenged of her adversary, who had brought this cause before the king.

**Ver. 27.** *Then the king answered and said, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it,* etc.] That is, to her who desired it might not be slain, but rather be given to her who had no right to it:

*she [is] the mother thereof;* which might be strongly concluded from her compassion for it, her eagerness and earnestness to have its life spared, and from the indifference of the other, yea, from her cruelty and barbarity in moving to have it divided.

**Ver. 28.** *And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged,* etc.] In the above case; the decision of it was divulged throughout the land, and the fame of it was spread everywhere:

*and they feared the king;* revered him as a wise, judicious, and faithful king, and feared to do anything of a criminal nature, as perceiving that he was so sagacious and penetrating, that he would discover it quickly, and bring them to shame and punishment:

*for they saw that the wisdom of God [was] in him to do judgment;* that God had put more than ordinary wisdom into him, to make a right judgment in causes that came before him, and finish them in the most just and equitable manner.