



The dangers of wisdom (continued)

1. Talmud, Sanhedrin 21b

It is written, "He shall not increase his wives. (Deuteronomy 17)" Solomon said: I will increase and not deviate. And it is written, "And it was in Solomon's old age, his wives turned his heart."

And it is written, "He shall not increase his horses. (ibid.)" Solomon said: I will increase and I will not return [the Jews to Egypt]." And it is written, "And the chariot came from Egypt with six hundred silver, etc. (Kings I 10:29)"

2. Talmud, Sanhedrin 104b

They wanted to list one more [King Solomon]. The image of his father came and bowed before them, and they paid no attention. Fire came from heaven and licked at their benches, and they paid no attention. A small [Heavenly] voice emerged and said, "'Have you seen a man who is quick in his work? He will stand before kings, he will not stand before those who are darkened.' He put My house before his house, and not only that, he built My house in seven years while he took thirteen years to build his house. He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before darkened ones!" And they paid no attention. A small [Heavenly] voice emerged and said, "Shall you be in charge of payment, such that you can reject it? Shall you choose, not Me? Speak of what you know!"

How wise was Solomon?

3. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Kings I 3:24

By knowing the faces of the harlots and from their features when he examined them, and the way of their speech when he heard them, he grasped what was hidden in their hearts and he descended to the truth of the matter.

4. Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser (Malbim), Commentary to Kings I 3:22

The defendant said it with the language of "My son is the living one and your son is the deceased," and the plaintiff said the opposite, "Your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one." There is a principle in language, that people put first that which is the essence, and postpone that which is subsidiary.

5. Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra (Spain, Egypt, Israel 16th century), Responsum 3:634

King Solomon identified the mother of the child from a few points. First, he recognized that the features of the living child resembled the features of the plaintiff, and the features of the deceased child resembled the features of the woman who held the living child. He also recognized the nature of the plaintiff, that she made small motions, and was energetic and careful, and she did not lie on her child. He recognized that the other woman was the opposite, and he judged that the deceased child was hers...

6. Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Yehuda Weisenberg, משפט שלמה, <https://www.herzog.ac.il/vtc/0030840.html>

Her claim against that woman, that in her carelessness she killed her son, "And the son of this woman died, for she lay upon him," has a challenge to it within itself. How could she know this, if she was sleeping?

7. Talmud, Makkot 23b

[Divine inspiration] was in the court of Solomon, for it says, "And the king declared, saying: Give her the living child, and do not kill him; she is his mother." How did he know? Perhaps she was being clever! A small voice emerged [from Heaven] and said, "She is his mother."

8. Samuel I 16:18

I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem; he knows how to play, and he is is mighty in *chayil*, a warrior, he speaks with understanding, he is a man of good appearance, and Gd is with him.

9. Genesis 40:8, 41:16

And Joseph said to them: Does Gd not have explanations? Please tell me.

And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying: It is not from me. Gd will answer...

10. Daniel 2:27-28

Daniel declared before the king, saying: The question the king asks, sages and magicians cannot tell the king. But there is a Gd in Heaven, for whom secrets are revealed, and He is telling King Nevuchadnezzar what will be at the end of days...

11. Isaiah 11:1-5 (JPS 1985 tr., c/o sefaria.org)

But a shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse, A twig shall sprout from his stock. The spirit of the Lord shall alight upon him: A spirit of wisdom and insight, A spirit of counsel and valor, A spirit of devotion and reverence for the Lord. He shall sense the truth by his reverence for the Lord: He shall not judge by what his eyes behold, Nor decide by what his ears perceive. Thus he shall judge the poor with equity And decide with justice for the lowly of the land. He shall strike down a land with the rod of his mouth And slay the wicked with the breath of his lips. Justice shall be the girdle of his loins, And faithfulness the girdle of his waist.

Rechavam (Rehoboam): The Jewish Kingdom turns upside down

12. Kings I 11:43-12:1

And Solomon lay with his ancestors, and he was buried in the city of his father David, and his son Rechavam reigned after him. And Rechavam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to enthrone him.

13. Kings I 12:18-21

And King Rechavam sent Adoram, who was in charge of taxes, and all Israel stoned him with rocks, and he died. And King Rechavam strengthened himself to ascend a chariot and flee to Jerusalem. And Israel rebelled against David's house, until today. And when all Israel heard that Yeravam had returned [from Egypt], they sent and called him to the community and enthroned him over Israel. No one followed the house of David, other than the tribe of Judah alone. And Rechavam came to Jerusalem, and he gathered the whole house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 young men, warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to return the throne to Rechavam son of Solomon.

The Judah/Israel faultline

14. Genesis 29:18-28

And Jacob loved Rachel, and he said, "I will work for you for seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter." And Laban said, "Better that I give her to you than that I give her to another man; stay with me." And Jacob worked for Rachel for seven years, and they were just a number of days in his eyes, in his love for her.

And Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are complete, and I will be with her."

And Laban gathered all of the local people, and he made a feast. And that evening, and he took his daughter Leah and he brought her to [Jacob], and he came to her. And Laban gave her his maid Zilpah, to his daughter Leah as a maid.

And it was in the morning, and behold, she was Leah. And he said to Laban, "What is this, that you have done to me?! Did I not work with you for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?!"

And Laban said, "Thus shall not be done in our place, to give the younger before the elder. Complete this week, and we will give you also this one, for the work you shall do with me for another seven years."

And Jacob did this, and he completed that week, and [Laban] gave him his daughter Rachel, to him as a wife.

15. Genesis 30:1

And Rachel saw that she had not birthed to Jacob, and Rachel became jealous of her sister. And she said to Jacob: Give me children! If not, I shall die.

16. Genesis 30:14-15

And Reuben went during the wheat harvest, and he found mandrakes in the field and he brought them to his mother Leah. And Rachel said to Leah: Please give me from your son's mandrakes.

And [Leah] said to her: Is it a small thing, that you took my husband, and now you will take my son's mandrakes?

And Rachel said: Therefore, he will lie with you tonight, in exchange for your son's mandrakes.

17. Genesis 33:1-2

And Jacob raised his eyes and saw Esav coming, and 400 men with him. And he split the children between Leah, Rachel and the two maids. And he placed the maids first with their children, and Leah and her children after them, and Rachel and Joseph after them.

18. Genesis 37:2

These are the children of Jacob: Joseph was seventeen years old, herding the sheep with his brothers, and he was a *na'ar* with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives...

19. Numbers 1:5-15

Reuben, Simon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph (Ephraim & Menasheh), Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Gad, Naphtali

20. Further along

- Joshua 6 Joshua vs Achan
- Judges 15 Samson vs Judah
- Judges 20-21 Benjamin vs Everyone

21. Samuel II 2:4, 2:8-10

And the men of Judah came, and they anointed David there as king over the house of Judah... And Avner son of Ner, Saul's general, took Ish Boshet son of Saul and brought him to Machanayim. And he enthroned him over Gilad, and over Ashur, and over Yizre'el, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ish Boshet was forty years old when he reigned over Israel, he reigned for two years, but the House of Judah was after David.

22. Samuel II 16:3

And the king [David] said: Where is the son of your master? And Tziva said to the king: He sits in Jerusalem, saying, 'Today the house of Israel will restore my father's throne to me.'

23. Samuel II 20:1-2

And a wicked man happened to be there; his name was Sheva son of Bichri, a Benjaminite. And he blew the horn and said, "We have no share in David and no portion in the son of Jesse! Each should go to his own tent, Israel!" And each Israelite left David to follow Sheva son of Bichri; and the Judeans stuck to their king, [going] from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

Who was Rechavam?

24. Talmud, Yevamot 63a

Gd said to Abraham: I have two good cuttings to graft to you: Ruth of Moav and Naamah of Amon.

25. Rabbi David Kimchi, Commentary to Kings I 14:21

"And his mother's name was Naamah of Amon" – This is told in order to inform that he followed his mother's deeds, worshipping idols after three years [see Chronicles II 11:17].

26. Kings I 12:1-17 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to acclaim him as king. Jeroboam son of Nebat learned of it while he was still in Egypt; for Jeroboam had fled from King Solomon, and had settled in Egypt. They sent for him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam as follows: "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke which your father laid on us, and we will serve you." He answered them, "Go away for three days and then come back to me." So the people went away.

King Rehoboam took counsel with the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. He said, "What answer do you advise [me] to give to this people?" They answered him, "If you will be a servant to those people today and serve them, and if you respond to them with kind words, they will be your servants always." But he ignored the advice that the elders gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and were serving

him. "What," he asked, "do you advise that we reply to the people who said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father placed upon us'?" And the young men who had grown up with him answered, "Speak thus to the people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us.' Say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. My father imposed a heavy yoke on you, and I will add to your yoke; my father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions.'" Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, since the king had told them: "Come back on the third day." The king answered the people harshly, ignoring the advice that the elders had given him.

He spoke to them in accordance with the advice of the young men, and said, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions." (The king did not listen to the people; for the Lord had brought it about in order to fulfill the promise that the Lord had made through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.)

When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered the king: "We have no portion in David, No share in Jesse's son! To your tents, O Israel! Now look to your own House, O David." So the Israelites returned to their homes. But Rehoboam continued to reign over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

Approach #1: Divine punishment

27. Kings I 11:11-13

And Gd said to Solomon: Because this was with you, and you did not guard My covenant and My laws which I commanded you, I will tear the throne from upon you and give it to your servant. But I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David. I will tear it from your son. But, I will not tear the entire empire; I will give your son one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.

28. Kings I 11:26-40 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, the son of a widow whose name was Zeruah, was in Solomon's service; he raised his hand against the king. The circumstances under which he raised his hand against the king were as follows: Solomon built the Millo and repaired the breach of the city of his father, David. This Jeroboam was an able man, and when Solomon saw that the young man was a capable worker, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the House of Joseph.

During that time Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem and the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh met him on the way. He had put on a new robe; and when the two were alone in the open country, Ahijah took hold of the new robe he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. "Take ten pieces," he said to Jeroboam. "For thus said the Lord, the Gd of Israel: I am about to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hands, and I will give you ten tribes. But one tribe shall remain his—for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. For they have forsaken Me; they have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Phoenicians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites; they have not walked in My ways, or done what is pleasing to Me, or [kept] My laws and rules, as his father David did. However, I will not take the entire kingdom away from him, but will keep him as ruler as long as he lives for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, and who kept My commandments and My laws. But I will take the kingship out of the hands of his son and give it to you—the ten tribes. To his son I will give one tribe, so that there may be a lamp for My servant David forever before Me in Jerusalem—the city where I have chosen to establish My name.

But you have been chosen by Me; reign wherever you wish, and you shall be king over Israel. If you heed all that I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, keeping My laws and commandments as My servant David did, then I will be with you and I will build for you a lasting dynasty as I did for David. I hereby give Israel to you; and I will chastise David's descendants for that [sin], though not forever."

Solomon sought to put Jeroboam to death, but Jeroboam promptly fled to King Shishak of Egypt; and he remained in Egypt till the death of Solomon.