

Exegetical Notes – 1 Kings 1:1-31

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1 Kings 1:1-31

Verses 1-2

¹ When King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him. ² So his attendants said to him, “Let us look for a young virgin to serve the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm.”

- David was Israel’s king and he was now nearly 70 years old (see 2 Samuel 5:4-5). He was unable to keep warm, even when covered with blankets.
- His attendants decided to find a young woman to sleep in the king’s bed with him to keep him warm. While this practice may seem odd to us, it was apparently common practice in ancient times to warm a sick person in this way.

Verses 3-4

³ Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful young woman and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. ⁴ The woman was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no sexual relations with her.

- An appropriate woman was found. Her name was Abishag. She became part of David’s harem and took care of David in his old age but did not have sexual relations with him (all of this will become important later in the story).

Verses 5-6

⁵ Now Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, “I will be king.” So he got chariots and horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him. ⁶ (His father had never rebuked him by asking, “Why do you behave as you do?” He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom.)

- Adonijah was, apparently, David’s oldest living son (see 2 Samuel 3:2-4). The problem is that David had sons by many women. Thus, there were many sons of David who could claim to be his first born son as they were the first

born sons of David by different mothers. So, the succession to David's throne could be easily challenged.

- Adonijah decided to “put himself forward” as David's rightful heir. He declared his intention to be king and collected around himself the accoutrements to make himself appear to be the crown prince.
- David made no effort to stop Adonijah. David let it appear as if he approved of Adoniah's behavior and accepted his claim to be Israel's next king.

Verses 7-8

⁷ Adonijah conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they gave him their support. ⁸ But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei and Rei and David's special guard did not join Adonijah.

- Adonijah spoke to the appropriate people about his claim. Joab, the commander of the army and Abiathar, the High Priest, accepted his claim to the throne. But Zadok, Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei, Rei, and David's personal bodyguard did not accept Adonijah's claim.

Verses 9-10

⁹ Adonijah then sacrificed sheep, cattle and fattened calves at the Stone of Zohemoth near En Rogel. He invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, ¹⁰ but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon.

- Adonijah proceeded to lay official claim to David's throne. He had an official gathering at which he declared himself to be David's rightful heir.
- He invited all of his brothers to this event except his brother Solomon, the prophet Nathan, Benaiah, and the king's body guard.
- He was not leading a rebellion against David. He was declaring himself to be David's heir.

Verses 11-21

¹¹ Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, “Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king, and our lord David knows nothing about it? ¹² Now then, let me advise you how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. ¹³ Go in to King David and say to him, ‘My lord the king, did you not swear to me your servant: “Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne”? Why then has Adonijah become

king?’¹⁴ While you are still there talking to the king, I will come in and add my word to what you have said.”

¹⁵ So Bathsheba went to see the aged king in his room, where Abishag the Shunammite was attending him. ¹⁶ Bathsheba bowed down, prostrating herself before the king.

“What is it you want?” the king asked.

¹⁷ She said to him, “My lord, you yourself swore to me your servant by the Lord your God: ‘Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne.’¹⁸ But now Adonijah has become king, and you, my lord the king, do not know about it. ¹⁹ He has sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep, and has invited all the king’s sons, Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant. ²⁰ My lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. ²¹ Otherwise, as soon as my lord the king is laid to rest with his ancestors, I and my son Solomon will be treated as criminals.”

- Nathan, the prophet, went to Bathsheba, and asked her if she knew what Adonijah was up to. Bathsheba was the mother of King David’s son Solomon. He informed her that Adonijah had laid claim to David’s throne without David’s knowledge of what he had done.
- Nathan was sure that Adonijah would kill Solomon after his ascension to the throne. He had invited his other brothers to the gathering and was thereby extending his protection to them. But he had not extended that protection to Solomon.
- Nathan then told Bathsheba what to do to protect Solomon. He suggested that she seek a private audience with King David. She was to ask David if he had not sworn to her that Solomon would be his rightful heir. (There is no record that David had declared that Solomon would be heir to his kingdom. But it must have been obvious that Solomon was David’s favored son and that David intended him to reign after David. Apparently, Nathan knew that David favored Solomon, and Adonijah knew it, too.) The intention of David that Solomon would be his heir was a public secret. Everyone knew it, but David had done nothing to make it official. If Bathsheba could get David to admit his intention, the secret would become known to all.
- She was then to reveal to David what had happened, and that Adonijah had declared himself to be David’s heir. At that moment, Nathan would arrive to confirm her report.

Verses 22-27

22 While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived. 23 And the king was told, "Nathan the prophet is here." So he went before the king and bowed with his face to the ground.

24 Nathan said, "Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne? 25 Today he has gone down and sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep. He has invited all the king's sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest. Right now they are eating and drinking with him and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!' 26 But me your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon he did not invite. 27 Is this something my lord the king has done without letting his servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

- After Bathsheba had told the king what was happening, Nathan arrived and confirmed her story. He asked the king if he had intended to name Adonijah his heir.

Verses 28-31

28 Then King David said, "Call in Bathsheba." So she came into the king's presence and stood before him.

29 The king then took an oath: "As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, 30 I will surely carry out this very day what I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place."

31 Then Bathsheba bowed down with her face to the ground, prostrating herself before the king, and said, "May my lord King David live forever!"

- After hearing what was afoot, David publicly declared that he intended Solomon to reign after him. He avowed that he had made this promise to Bathsheba.
- Because of David's failure to obey God's rules related to marriage and the intrigue in his family caused by his failure to be decisive, Israel now has two crown princes.

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