

Who was Adonijah in the Bible?

Adonijah was the fourth son of King David. Adonijah's mother was Haggith, one of David's wives. Adonijah is best known for his failed attempts to usurp the throne of Israel after his father's death.

Adonijah was "a very handsome man" (1 Kings 1:6) with a flair for showmanship (verse 5), but he was also badly behaved. Scripture indicates that the reason for Adonijah's misbehavior was that King David had neglected his discipline: "His father had never rebuked him by asking, 'Why do you behave as you do?'" (verse 6). When David was old and on his deathbed, Adonijah—like his brother Absalom before him (2 Samuel 15)—gathered an army and put himself forward as king, regardless of the fact that David's chosen successor was Solomon. Some influential men supported Adonijah's move, including Joab, the captain of the army; and Abiathar the priest. But others opposed Adonijah's plans, including Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest, and David's wife Bathsheba (1 Kings 1:8).

Adonijah assembled his followers and offered a great number of sacrifices as part of his coronation ceremony (1 Kings 1:9). Nathan heard of Adonijah's activity, and he approached Solomon's mother and David's wife, Bathsheba, encouraging her to go before the aged, ailing king and apprise him of the situation (verses 11–13). King David responded by ordering that Solomon be taken immediately to Gihon to be anointed by Nathan and Zadok as king. After Solomon was anointed, all the people rejoiced with trumpets, music, and shouts of praise so loud that "the ground shook with the sound" (verse 40).

As Adonijah's crowd was finishing their feast, they heard the trumpets sounding in

Gihon, and Adonijah asked what was the meaning of the noise. A priest named Jonathan gave Adonijah the news of Solomon's anointing (1 Kings 1:41-48). Adonijah's supporters quickly dispersed, and, fearing for his life, Adonijah fled to the temple and appealed for clemency by taking hold of the horns of the altar (verses 49-50) . Solomon allowed Adonijah to come before him peaceably and promised him safety, as long as he was found worthy; however, Solomon warned, "If evil is found in him, he will die" (verse 52). Adonijah was then allowed to return home.

In spite of receiving mercy, Adonijah did not stop scheming. After King David's death, he approached Bathsheba and implored her to ask Solomon to give him the hand of David's former nurse, Abishag, in marriage (1 Kings 2:13-17). This request showed that Adonijah still had designs on the throne, and Solomon was enraged. He ordered Adonijah to be executed, and the sentence was carried out that same day (verses 23-25). Solomon also dealt with Adonijah's allies, removing Abiathar from the priesthood and executing Joab.