

What the Bible says about Multiplying Horses (From *Forerunner Commentary*)

Given the size and scope of the empire he inherited from his father David, Solomon no doubt needed means for transportation and trade. Beyond this, horses were prime war materiel in those days, particularly for pulling chariots, so multiplying horses can indicate territorial aggression and a warlike spirit. Most importantly, it can show a lack of [faith](#) in [God](#) and too great a faith in armies.

[I Kings 10:26](#), 28 says that Solomon had thousands of horses imported from Egypt. The next verse reveals further proof of his departure from these royal guidelines: He also imported chariots and sold horses and chariots to other nations. What surfaces here is nothing more than a tenth-century BC arms race! Solomon armed the Hittites and Syria, providing them with the means to attack Israel and Judah in later years ([I Kings 11:23-25](#); [20:1](#); [II Chronicles 22:5](#)). In so doing, he violated one of the "smaller" precepts of [God's law](#), first given to Israel 450 years earlier.

Martin G. Collins

The Enduring Results of Compromise

God's Word provides an example of compromise for us to learn from, if we are wise enough to heed it ([Romans 15:4](#); [I Corinthians 10:11](#)). This example comes from the life of the wisest king ever to live, one whom [God](#) blessed with wisdom that no one could gainsay, who had wealth and ability no one had ever possessed before. God loved this man greatly—He even spoke directly to him more than once, and because of the man's humble response, blessed him far beyond what he requested. This king, a man of [peace](#) and learning, was commissioned to build the most beautiful Temple to God in Jerusalem. The man, of course, was Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba.

To understand why Solomon's compromises seemed so small and insignificant to him when he succumbed to them, we have to understand the situation of Solomon's reign. We could compare it to America today. As [Psalm 18:43-44](#) suggests, David and his armies had essentially subjugated all of [the world](#) that mattered at the time. [King David](#) of Israel was "the head of the nations," and faraway kings he did not even know trembled at the mention of his name. As the sole superpower in the region, wealth poured into Israel. When Solomon was made king upon David's death, not a nation on the face of the earth would have considered attacking Israel. It was just too strong.

So, Solomon ruled the known world, and as time progressed and in that strength, he did not see the need to obey God fully in all that He had commanded the kings of Israel to do. In his power and wealth, he saw no problem with compromising just a little with God's instruction. As we will see, Solomon failed completely in his old age, but the seeds of that failure were sown early in his reign.

[Deuteronomy 17:14-20](#), which specifically warns against multiplying horses, multiplying wives, and multiplying silver and gold. Was Solomon unaware of these instructions? Of course not. David, a man who knew [God's law](#) intimately, would have been sure to instruct his son in them and have him write a copy of the law as commanded. Surely, Solomon could not have been ignorant of them. He, then, must have known it was wrong to import horses and chariots from Egypt, but because of his wealth and might, he must have considered this infraction too minor to take seriously.

Why did God not want Israel's kings to import warhorses? Armored warhorses and the chariots they pulled can be compared to today's tanks, which are devastating when fighting foot soldiers. A nation with this level of war materiel put their reliance on it as it made the army such a powerful fighting machine. Why should a nation trust an invisible God to fight its battles when it could see rank upon rank of seemingly invincible horses and chariots?

God wanted His people to rely on Him. Solomon knew this, since he wrote in Proverbs 21:31: "The horse is prepared for the day of battle: but deliverance is of the LORD." The issue of importing horses may have seemed a small thing to Solomon, but it was important to God. From all indications, his compromise in this matter began his slow separation from God.

Compounding his compromise concerning warhorses, by the end of his reign, Solomon had a substantial harem ([I Kings 11:1-3](#)). As he began his reign, would Solomon have considered "multiply[ing] wives for himself," especially to this extent? Probably not. When he was tender of heart, needing God to help him rule this great people and kingdom (see [II Chronicles 1:7-12](#)), he doubtless walked carefully, making sure he did what was commanded in everything. But once secure in knowledge, wealth, and power, he began to forget the God who had spoken to him, placed him in power, and given him all that he had.

Perhaps Solomon's reasoning went something like this: "When I imported horses from Egypt, there were no adverse consequences, so what would be wrong with taking additional wives for political reasons?" We do not normally see the results of *sin* immediately, yet they inevitably come. At some point, he learned this principle, writing in [Ecclesiastes 8:11](#): "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." In any case, knowing this did not help him, as [I Kings 11:4-8](#) records.

Wise Solomon fell victim to the same temptations that the rest of us so often face. He compromised on what he thought were small concerns—matters he probably considered well into the gray areas—to do things his way rather than God's. The danger of such reasoning is that small compromises weaken character, and over time, they lead to major sins. For Solomon, the results were devastating. His experience is a warning of what will befall us if we follow his example of compromise.

The psalmist writes in [Psalm 111:10](#), "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: His praise endures forever." Solomon's compromises gradually but inexorably distorted his understanding of God's laws and ways. He slowly drifted away from God, so that when he was old, unbelievable as it seems, he allowed his wives to turn his heart from the God that had given him everything.

From the "minor" infraction of importing horses, Solomon eventually condoned and was at least an accessory to the sins of idolatry and outright murder, sins that he would never have considered committing at the beginning of his reign. For, at the end of his life, Solomon worshipped Ashtoreth, Milcom, Chemosh, and Molech, the last having rituals that called for children to be given to the fire of his altar. By giving his royal sanction to worshipping these pagan deities, he set a precedent that was followed by many of the kings of Israel and Judah after him.

John O. Reid (1930-2016)
[Little Compromises](#)