

**Negative Leadership of Three Kings**

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## **Introduction**

The scholarly study of leadership is a rather recent phenomenon, but we can go back millennia to see how negative or ineffective leadership traits or activities contributed to history. In fact, King's Solomon, Rehoboam and Ahab in the books 1 and 2 Kings show myriad examples of poor leadership. In today's society, the Bible still has a profound effect on countless numbers of people and the examination of the deeds and misdeeds of Biblical leaders can be useful in understanding the importance of ethical behavior (Friedman & Friedman, 2019) The concepts of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1991; Greenleaf, 1993; as cited in Friedman & Friedman, 2019), covenantal leadership (Pava, 2003; as cited in Friedman & Friedman, 2019), and spiritual leadership all have their roots in the traditions of the Bible. Merida (2015) provides excellent commentary in examining 1 & 2 Kings and the focus of this paper is to scrutinize how negative or ineffective leadership effected the direction of Solomon, Rehoboam and Ahab.

## **Solomon and the Lack of Conceptualization**

Friedman & Friedman (2019) argue that Solomon's blunder began when he lost connection with the basic tenants of ethical leadership. As the story goes Solomon was the wisest of all people and he used that great wisdom to ensure that there was peace in the world. (Friedman & Friedman, 2019) But that peace came at a substantial cost. Solomon amassed extraordinary wealth. Friedman & Friedman (2019) state that this wealth is difficult to determine but a number of \$100 billion is not unreasonable. What becomes relevant is that Solomon did not use this wealth to maintain justice and righteousness (Friedman & Friedman, 2019). He used it to build a magnificent throne. 1 Kings 10:20 (NIV) says, "Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom." A great leader is not supposed to be concerned with his own wealth and

pleasure. (Friedman & Friedman, 2019) and Solomon's major error as a leader was forgoing authentic governing to pursue the trappings of leadership; wealth, fame and power.

According to Bryman (2007; as cited in Patel & Hamlin, 2017), leadership may be significant for its adverse effects rather than for the positive ones. More specifically the issue is not so much what leaders should do, but more about what they should avoid doing. (Bryman, 2007; as cited in Patel & Hamlin, 2017) It appears that Solomon lacked the conceptualization or the ability to imagine the possibilities of the future when he amassed such wealth. Solomon had great wealth, but he did not use it to help his people. Rather, his massive expenditures resulted in a substantial tax burden on the people and it ultimately caused complications for Rehoboam, Solomon's son as successor as king. (Friedman & Friedman, 2019) Conceptualization is one of the more important qualities of a servant leader. This ability helps the leader visualize a bright future and what needs to be done to get there. This lack of conceptualization on Solomon's part reveals the degree of brevity, variety, fragmentation and interpersonal interaction that characterizes his work as a leader. (Patel & Hamlin, 2017)

### **Rehoboam and Lack of Empathy**

According to Friedman & Friedman (2019), Rehoboam was approached after the death of his father, Solomon and asked to lighten the huge tax burden placed on the people to finance the overindulgence of his predecessor. (1 Kings 12:4) Instead Rehoboam responded in a harsh and unsympathetic manner and it caused the people to rebel against him. This tough leadership approach demanded obedience from his followers and can easily cause a rebellion. (Friedman & Friedman, 2019) A servant leader needs to have the ability to recognize and understand the feelings and emotions of his people. Empathetic leadership also requires a genuine desire to help others. In the time of Rehoboam, the kingdom of Israel was divided because he chose to follow

the unwise counsel of his peers (1 Kings 12:9-16) This lack of leadership and lack of empathy towards his people caused an upheaval that lasted for many years. According to Mortier et al. (2015) authentic leaders align their beliefs with their actions and are not often persuaded by external pressures. The wicked leadership of Rehoboam had long lasting results. (Friedman & Friedman, 2019)

Empathy, viewed as the compassion for attunement to other's emotions and circumstances, has been highlighted as an important aspect of effective leadership in research literature for several decades (Burbank, Burbank, and Burbank, 2017) This "leader empathy" makes leaders better listeners, who understand their followers, thereby inculcating trust in those group members being heard. (Bass, 1969; as cited in Burbank et al., 2017). Rehoboam failed at this very concept. His lack of empathy towards his people created a division that tore the kingdom apart. Simply, Rehoboam's inability to step outside of himself and see the world as other people do (Patnaik, 2009; as cited in Burbank, 2017) and in turn he chose to have his people held captive for many years.

### **Ahab's Weakness**

As a king, Ahab could have anything he wanted but he still wants something that was not available to him. The story of the vineyard comes to mind in 1 Kings 21:1-16, and of course the story of Jezebel, her marriage to Ahab and their lack of constraint. This all leads to an ineffective leadership style with many negative traits including, self-centered behavior. Ahab's greatest weakness as a leader is that he was an opportunist who would follow whoever leads him, whether they were good or bad. This was Ahab's downfall. He did whatever he could to get what he wanted and if he did not, he would retreat to his house resentful and sullen. (1 Kings 20:43)

One of the principle qualities of a bad leader is for someone who has a self-centered attitude toward leading. The concept of self-centered leadership refers to a personalized pattern of leadership which aims the manager to put the whole organization under his thumb. (Hisham, 2019) This negative leadership trait exemplifies Ahab in the 1 Kings. Rather than thinking he could take a different approach all together and followed a servant-based leadership model. Servant leadership theory is well known for its selfless approach to managing others. (Davis, 2017) This style of leadership would be seen much later in the Bible with Jesus Christ and St. Paul attracting individuals searching for a morally just leadership approach (Agosto, 2005; as cited in Davis, 2017)

### **Conclusion**

The stories of Solomon, Rehoboam and Ahab demonstrate that even the wisest and most powerful among us can lose their way as leaders. (Friedman & Friedman, 2017). Negative and ineffective leadership traits are replete throughout history and if that is any indication what we can learn from the past can prove to be a valuable example of how leadership is accomplished in the future. The verse, Proverbs 29:2 (ESV) says it best, “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.”

### References

- Burbank, S.H., Burbank, J.M., Burbank, A.W. (2017). Cultivating empathy: New perspectives on educating business leaders. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*. 10(1).  
[https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=vic\\_liberty&id=GALE%7CA492222672&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon](https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE%7CA492222672&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon)
- Davis, H.J. (2017). Discerning the servant's path: Applying pre-committal questioning to Greenleaf's servant leadership. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*. 10(2).  
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- Friedman, H. H., Friedman, L.W. (2019). What Went Wrong? Lessons in Leadership from Solomon, the Bible's Wisest and Worst Ruler. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, 12(1), 21+. [https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A581864344/AONE?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=ac30c93c](https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A581864344/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=ac30c93c)
- Hisham, H. H. (2019). The riddle of self-centered leadership in Arab organizations: A measurement scale. *Management Research Review*, 42(4), 430-459.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1108/MRR-04-2018-0168>

Merida, D. (2015). *Christ-centered exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings*. B&H Publishing Group.

Mortier, A.V., Vlerick, P., Clays, E. (2015). Authentic leadership and thriving among nurses; The mediating role of empathy. *Journal of Nursing Management*. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1111/jonm.12329>

Patel, T., Hamlin, R.G. (2017). Toward a unified framework of perceived negative leader behaviors insights from French and British educational sectors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145(1), 157-182. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s10551-015-2909-5>

### Negative Leadership of Three Kings: Annotated Bibliography

Burbank, S.H., Burbank, J.M., Burbank, A.W. (2017). Cultivating empathy: New perspectives on educating business leaders. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*. 10(1).

[https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=vic\\_liberty&id=GALE%7CA492222672&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon](https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE%7CA492222672&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon)

This journal article was used to examine how empathy, viewed as the compassion for attunement to other's emotions and circumstances, has been highlighted as an important aspect of effective leadership in research literature for several decades (Burbank, Burbank, and Burbank, 2017) This was relevant to this paper in examining the negative leadership traits of Rehoboam and how he used this lack of empathy in the destruction of his kingdom.

The purpose of this study by Burbank et al. (2017) was to examine business student's perceptions on what matters in leadership. They explore in detail the phenomenon of empathy in order to offer potential enhancements to the methodology of education of future business students for future leadership roles. (Burbank, et al., (2017)

The journal was *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership* that was used in this paper on two other occasions with Davis (2017) and Friedman & Friedman. (2019) It is interesting that this author did not note the source for three of the references of this paper until it was time to complete the annotated bibliography. The authors have all only published this one paper, so it is difficult to determine the academic quality of their research at this time.

Davis, H.J. (2017). Discerning the servant's path: Applying pre-committal questioning to

Greenleaf's servant leadership. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*. 10(2).

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[com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=vic\\_liberty&id=GALE%7CA505130893&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon](https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE%7CA505130893&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon)

This journal article was used to examine how servant leadership theory is well known for its selfless approach to managing others and in particular how it relates to Ahab in 1 Kings. This author also used Davis to provide a definition of servant leadership and how it compares and contrasts to later stories in the bible with Jesus Christ and St. Paul.

The purpose of Davis' paper was to analyze definitions of servant leadership and identify core themes found across descriptions to create a series of questions for potential servant leaders to weigh upon before committing themselves to servant leadership. (Davis, 2017) Davis concludes that in his investigation of the various definitions it became increasingly evident that recurrent themes could be conveyed across the literature and that most of these themes were interchangeable. (Davis, 2017)

Davis is the author of just two peer-reviewed papers but, *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership* which focuses on leaders, teachers and entrepreneurs is longstanding and is a well-respected peer reviewed source. It is the same journal that was cited in Friedman & Friedman for this paper.

Friedman, H. H., Friedman, L.W. (2019). What Went Wrong? Lessons in Leadership from

Solomon, the Bible's Wisest and Worst Ruler. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*,

12(1), 21+. [https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A581864344/AONE?u=vic\\_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=ac30c93c](https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A581864344/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=ac30c93c)

This journal article was the first one researched by this author and was used as a starting point to determine the negative leadership traits of the three kings in the first 130 pages of Merida's (2015) book as told in 1 & 2 Kings. This article was used to examine the story and history of Solomon and his lack of conceptualization and how that affected his role as a king and a leader under the lens of not only the Bible but through modern history.

Hershey Freidman is a professor in the Business Management Department of Brooklyn College of the City University of New York and has published more than 250 scholarly articles. He is also the author of *God Laughed: Sources of Jewish Humor* (Routledge, 2014) along with the co-author of this journal article, Linda Friedman. She is a professor of statistics and information systems at Baruch College of the City University of New York. The journal that this article was published is *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership* which focuses on leaders, teachers and entrepreneurs.

Hisham, H. H. (2019). The riddle of self-centered leadership in Arab organizations: A measurement scale. *Management Research Review*, 42(4), 430-459.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1108/MRR-04-2018-0168>

This journal article was retrieved from the JFL using an advanced search for "self-centered leadership." The purpose of the paper was to develop a scale to empirically measure self-centered leadership patterns in Arab organizations. (Hisham, 2019) The approach and design depended on two Egyptian samples using an exploratory factor

analysis to generate the proposed servant-centered leadership measurement scale.

(Hisham, 2019) The authors findings revealed that the new measurement scale was valid and reliable. (Hisham, 2019).

This author used this paper to examine the role of self-centered leadership and its negative effects with regard to Ahab in the 1 Kings and his subsequent lack of constraint. The author, Hisham, has published seven peer reviewed papers but the journal, *Management Research Review* has an impact factor of 1.68 which is an increase of 35.48% since 2018. The journal has been in publication since 2009 and it focuses on business management and accounting.

Merida, D. (2015). *Christ-centered exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings*. B&H Publishing Group.

Merida's (2015) book was the primary source used for this paper. In examining the stories of three kings, Solomon, Rehoboam, and Ahab through page 131. The book brings together theology and practice in a way that allows for extended commentary in a Christ centered way. This author used the source to examine negative leadership traits of the three kings. Merida is the lead pastor of a church in Raleigh, NC, and holds a Ph.D. in preaching from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where he serves as an associate professor of Preaching. He is the author of three books.

Mortier, A.V., Vlerick, P., Clays, E. (2015). Authentic leadership and thriving among nurses;

The mediating role of empathy. *Journal of Nursing Management*. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1111/jonm.12329>

This journal article was used to examine the role of authentic leadership and empathy in the story of King Rehoboam. The articles aim was to examine the relationship between authentic leadership and two dimensions of thriving (learning and vitality) among nurses and to study the role of empathy in this relationship. (Mortier, Vlerick, and Clays, 2015) The authors used a cross-sectional design study in 2013 at a large hospital to test the hypothesis through hierarchal regression analyses. Their results found that there was a significant positive relationship between perceived authentic leadership and vitality was mediated by perceived empathy. (Mortier, Vlerick, and Clays, 2015)

This author used this article to examine how empathy, viewed as the compassion for attunement to other's emotions and circumstances as it relates to Rehoboam and how his lack of empathy was a negative leadership trait that actually tore two kingdoms apart.

The authors of the journal article come from varying backgrounds. Mortier is a Ph.D. candidate at Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium whereas Vlerick and Clays are both professors at the same university. The *Journal of Nursing Management* is peer reviewed which aims to inform and advance the discipline of nursing management and leadership. The journal has an impact factor of 1.912 as of 2018.

Patel, T., Hamlin, R. G. (2017). Toward a unified framework of perceived negative leader behaviors insights from French and British educational sectors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145(1), 157-182. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s10551-015-2909-5>

This journal article was retrieved from the JFL using an advanced search for “negative research traits.” It was used to compare and contrast leadership qualities and how

effective negative traits are in regard to Solomon and his apparent lack of conceptualization. The story of Solomon can best be described as that of a greedy leader and this author attempted to show that in this paper.

The purpose of the work of Patel et al. (2017) was to develop a unified framework of negative leader behaviors in an educational setting. Their methodology was to use an inductive approach because the existing literature does not offer a sufficiently rich conceptualization of negative leadership. (Patel et al. 2017) Their results showed that there are similarities between negative leader behaviors in an educational setting as well as other sectors and in order to produce ethical leaders of tomorrow will have to be a shared responsibility. (Patel et al. 2017)

The authors of this paper have been published multiple times. Patel has 29 publications and Hamlin with 44. Patel's primary research focus are in the areas of culture and leadership. Hamlin focuses on leadership and comparative analysis. The journal, *Journal of Business Ethics* has a long-standing history and has been published since 1987. The journal has an impact factor of 4.330 which is very reputable.