

could fall away so far from God, and become attached to idol worship. It was, however, a gradual process. So deceitful is sin that we are its slaves before we think, unless constantly in the path of righteousness. "At first we permit in others, through complaisance, sin, which we could and should have checked; and thus we actually assist ourselves to sin."—*Osiander*. What men call toleration is often nothing but the profoundest sympathy with sin, and has its origin in a corrupt heart. The warnings which he received from time to time show clearly that his lapse was not sudden. (See 3. 14; 6. 12; 9. 3.) He disobeyed the law in three different ways—he multiplied wives, horses, and wealth (Deut. 17. 16, 17). Polygamy, luxury, and despotism have been the ruin of the most powerful monarchs. **His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God.** The word rendered "perfect" implies entire consecration or integrity. His devotion to Jehovah was half-hearted. It is not said that he entirely abandoned Jehovah, but that he tolerated and sanctioned other forms of worship. This was the same in that age of intolerance as to acknowledge the equality of the various religions. He who thinks that one religion is as good as another can have no lofty idea of any. **As the heart of David.** David, though a man of like passions with Solomon, and who had sinned most flagrantly, was never guilty of idolatry. He never swerved from the worship of Jehovah. It is as such he is regarded as perfect.

5. Ashtoreth. She was the chief goddess of the Phenicians, just as Baal was their chief god. Some connect the name with Astarte (Venus) of the Greeks, others with the moon:

"Astarte, queen of heavens, with crescent horns,
To whose bright image, nightly by the moon,
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs."

As Baal was the sun-god, so Ashtoreth represented the moon, or, according to others, the personification of the feminine principle of nature. There were immoral and highly indecent rites connected with her worship, which was widespread among the various tribes in and around Canaan, and extending even to Carthage. **Milcom.** This is also called Molech (verse 7) and Malcham (Jer. 49. 1). The name is derived from a root, meaning to rule or to be king. **The abomination.** That which was detestable to a good Hebrew. The exact form of worship paid the idol is not positively known, but it is commonly thought that it was accompanied with much cruelty. As the worship of Ashtoreth was characterized by impurity, that of Milcom was with lasciviousness and cruelty. "Lust," says Farrar, "as in all forms of pagan idolatry, stood hard by hate." We read in 2 Chron. 28. 3, that Ahab burnt his children as an offering to this god. Some, however, claim that the passage cannot be understood literally. According

to tradition the image of Molech was hollow, and in this a fire was kindled, and children were thrown into the red-hot arms of the idol. It is not probable that Solomon would tolerate such ceremonies within sight of the temple.

6. Did evil. This phrase is often used, and is equivalent to saying that he worshiped idols (see 15. 26, 34; 16. 25), and often **went not fully.** Solomon did not utterly forsake Jehovah, but in order to gratify his desires for glory and empire he formed alliance with all the surrounding countries, and became gradually used to the various heathen practices then in vogue, all more or less immoral and degrading in their tendencies. It is now, as then, next to impossible to associate with irreligious and immoral people, unless it be with the avowed purpose of helping them to the Lord, without sooner or later partaking of their indifference to holy things, and indeed becoming contaminated with gross worldliness and disloyalty to God.

7. Then did Solomon build a high place. High places were altars; indeed, "altar" means "a high place." It was a common belief that the gods could be most acceptably worshiped on lofty eminences and hills, for it was believed that the hills or mountains were nearer the sun or heaven, the dwelling-place of God. Even in modern times, in many parts of Europe, the church will be found on the highest spot in the town or village. High places were at one time quite common in Palestine, notably in the days of Samuel, but it seems that most priests and prophets did not regard them with favor, inasmuch as Jehovah was to be worshiped in one place, and one only (Deut. 12. 13, 14). The high places which existed alongside of the tabernacle or temple were evidently irregular places of sacrifice and worship, and as such the objects of condemnation. These high places were often nothing more than rude altars, yet sometimes there were sanctuaries connected with them (chap. 13. 32; 2 Kings 17. 29, and 23. 19). These irregular sanctuaries were not fully destroyed till the days of Josiah (2 Kings 23. 19). **Chemosh.** About all we know of this god is that he was worshiped by the people of Moab. The name occurs several times on the famous Moabite stone, one of the oldest and completest monuments found near Palestine. We read in Judg. 11. 24, that the Ammonites also paid adoration to Chemosh. We are totally ignorant as to the nature and character of his worship. Keil has the following, which the reader may take for what it is worth: "Chemosh was a *sun-god*, who was worshiped as a king of his people and as a god of war, and as such is depicted upon coins with a sword, lance, and shield in his hands, and with two torches at his side." **The mount that is before Jerusalem.** This without doubt was the southern crest of the Mount of Olives, and this peak has been called the "mount