

### 1<sup>st</sup> KINGS

#### Week 4, chapter 2

Solomon is King of Israel. David is still alive but is weak and bedridden. It has taken a somewhat contrived and self-serving meeting arranged by Nathan but between Bathsheba and David to get Solomon officially crowned as king because apparently David had decided that he just didn't have the heart to choose between the son who was first-in-line by birthright for the throne (**Adoniyah**) and **Shlomo** (Bathsheba's son) who was God's choice.

We find that it is not unusual as God deals with humankind that in this strange inexplicable way He is able to achieve His will even when those who are bringing it about don't realize it or they even actively oppose it. We should never think that as God's redeemed we are immune from such a scenario; David is still regarded as perhaps second only to Messiah Yeshua (or maybe to Moses) as nearest to the Father's heart. Yet David, who knows that Solomon is God's anointed, tries to avoid naming him king. It is not all that different from Pharaoh being resistant to Yehoveh's will by refusing to let God's people go until Egypt was in ruins. In both cases God used these men to advance His plan of redemption, in both cases these men weren't particularly willing participants, in both cases they were fully aware of the God of Israel's direct involvement, and in both cases God's will overrode their agendas (even using those agendas to His purpose) so that the next step in the Lord's cosmic plan could be taken. Even so one man trusted Yehoveh fully and is applauded by the Lord, and the other trusted only in his own false gods and has been eternally judged by the Lord. Truly God is no respecter of persons: saved or unsaved.

I think it is important to state at this point that in our study of the 2 Books of Kings there are many important details about David's life, and of Solomon's reign and of the series of kings that followed them right up until Judah was hauled off to Babylon, which are left out. Rather some of these details are recorded for our benefit in the 2 Books of Chronicles. I think it is best for the sake of continuity that in general we follow the narrative of the 2 Books of Kings as they are written and not try to intertwine all of the additional information given to us in Chronicles. Our goal is to study the books of the Bible in order, not to study the personal history of any particular biblical character using facts that can be gleaned from the various places in the Bible where this information might appear. So with that caveat, let's read 1<sup>st</sup> Kings chapter 2.

### READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS CHAPTER 2 all

I think it is undeniable that what we have here is nothing short of a sordid account of power politics mixed with an attempt by the writer to soften it all by implying some religious overtones to David's and Solomon's actions. This is why I began this lesson with the statement that God regularly uses the imperfect and even wicked actions of men and women to achieve His goals. David and Solomon taking severe preemptive steps against citizens who they deem to be a possible threat to their power, or that have upset them in some way, hardly qualifies as justifiable or pious. But since the writer of the Books of Kings wrote with the benefit of hindsight and can view matters in a broad panorama, he can see the Lord's hand at work even in David's and Solomon's questionable agendas and decisions. I don't want to take the analogy too far, but it is somewhat like Hitler's horrific and evil intent to rid the world of Jews; in the end, this is what drove the Jewish people to demand a state of their own; and a disgraced and guilt ridden world to give it to them. Looking back we see that God's will for the rebirth of Israel as a nation of Hebrews was achieved as a result; yet it most certainly was not the Lord's perfect will that it happen because of the worst incidence of mass murder that the world has ever known. In other words Hitler should get no credit, receive no pardon, and certainly ought to be viewed for the demonic person that he was even though it was by means of his wicked agenda that something wonderful came out of it.

David and Solomon were certainly not a couple of Hitlers; but neither were they saints who only had God's will at heart. I don't mean to hammer this home too hard; but if we are going to take an honest approach to what is clearly stated in the Book of Kings then we need to acknowledge their fallen humanness and not try to paint over it as do most of the ancient and modern Rabbis, and a substantial portion of past and present Christian leadership. Otherwise some of the best applications of God's principles to our own lives that get demonstrated in these passages are bypassed and we lose out.

The first words of the opening verse are telling; for the first time in a long time David is referred to without the title of King being attached. And the idea is that David is no longer king but **Shlomo** is. The royal torch has passed and thus the time for David to depart this earth has come.

Verse 2 tells us of David charging Solomon to discharge his new duties in a manner that is

appropriate not merely for a king but for God's anointed. So here we have David's deathbed instructions to his son and successor, who can be no more than 20 years old (and probably is in his late teens). Compare this with David who didn't become a king until he was at least 30 years of age and thus more mature and better prepared. Let me comment here that the Rabbis say that Solomon was 12 years old when he became king and the primary criteria for that belief has to do with David telling Solomon to "show yourself a man". In other words their thought is that Solomon is still legally a child since he hasn't been **Bar Mitzvah'd** yet (usually at 13 years old). He has not come of age to be called an adult (a man). I think that is pretty fanciful and belies the context of what we see happening. But what that rabbinical declaration actually does is to read backwards into Scripture a Talmudic tradition that wasn't established until at least the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. and probably considerably later. There is no biblical, archaeological or Jewish historical record of such a thing as a Bar Mitzvah or that 13 was the magic age prior to a time well after Christ's death.

So when David tells Shlomo to "show yourself an **ish** (a man)", it is truly about telling this teenager that it was necessary for him to grow up and to put behind him the ways of youth now that he had the fate of a nation resting squarely on his shoulders. But because this was no ordinary nation but rather it was the earthly Kingdom of God, and because Solomon was God's **mashiach** (anointed one) divinely appointed to lead God's Kingdom, then David reminds young **Shlomo** that spiritual awareness, faithfulness to God, and obedience to Yehoveh's Torah was to be at the core of his administration. And that it was by means of walking this path that Solomon would achieve success.

Then David adds something a bit unexpected; he adds a condition to God's promise of an everlasting Davidic dynasty that we haven't heard until now. That is David tells his son that God told him that IF David's royal descendants follow the Lord with all of their heart and being, THEN there will always be a member of David's family on the throne of Israel. Let's go back and re-read what we find about this promise in the Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel.

### READ 2<sup>ND</sup> SAMUEL 7:12 – 16

There really isn't an If-Then formula in that statement; it is more along the lines of a unilateral promise given to David in similar manner to the one given to Abraham. Even so David certainly sees God's promise to him as having conditions in the sense that all kings issuing from his loins must be faithful to God if they are to remain on the throne.

Let's sort this out. The words of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7 (your throne will be set up forever) do not mean that no king in David's dynasty would ever be removed from his throne no matter what the cause. Rather it means that the posterity of David would never end. It means that David's kingly line would never become extinct. It means that there would forever be a descendant of David alive and legally eligible to take possession of the throne (whether that possession took place or not). Yeshua would become the ultimate fulfillment of that promise on a whole other level (earthly and spiritual).

It would be wonderful if that's where David's speech to **Shlomo** ended; but sadly it does not. The Bible does not hide from us the uglier side of even God's greatest heroes. We are witnesses to another set of instructions that aren't so high minded and godly, but they are from the sincere and loving concern of a father towards his son. There were great political dangers lurking all around Solomon and David doubted that this youthful man who stood at his bedside was fully aware of them or knew how to deal with them. So in the next several passages are what most would call 2 acts of revenge and 1 act of blessing upon some men who were very close to the throne, or represented a threat to the throne, during David's reign.

Since we've read them, but before I go over them in detail, I want to begin by defining the term "revenge". That word isn't used in these passages but it is used by Rabbis and Christian scholars to describe the nature of what David told Solomon to do with David's enemies. The Torah on the one hand forbids revenge, but on the other says that God will take revenge (vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, is one of the more memorable passages that Christians seem to use often). In fact in a certain sense revenge is a positive thing when used properly in the context of the Lord's ordained justice system as called for in the Law of Moses.

The Rabbis say that what Scripture shows us is that mankind has the opportunity to pursue revenge for two reasons: one of them is wrong and the other is either required or recommended. When a person wants to satisfy their desire to punish another as an anger-induced tit-for-tat, like-for-like reaction to being offended (a personal need for retaliation) then that is wrong. However this is still the world; and in this world justice that involves proportional punishment in response to a crime is not only warranted but commanded by YHWH. Wrongs need to be righted, and those criminals who do wrong need to either be punished or to pay reparations. The first kind of revenge is typical of humans; the second kind is typical of God.

The principle of the desire to punish out of anger for an offense (which is wrong minded) is usually expressed in Christendom by this famous statement of Jesus:

**CJB Matthew 5:39 *But I tell you not to stand up against someone who does you wrong. On the contrary, if someone hits you on the right cheek, let him hit you on the left cheek too!***

This statement of Messiah is not about criminal activity; it is about personal offense and our knee jerk reaction to strike back. In our time, in the West, if someone literally slaps your face that is called assault and it is usually a misdemeanor criminal offense; but that certainly was not the case 2000 years ago in the Middle East. Rather such a slap was merely an insult; thus this is the sense of Yeshua's statement not to seek revenge for a personal offense.

However God makes it clear in the Law of Moses that God-defined wrong doing and criminal activity (sin) is to have consequences or (if you would) legally and heavenly sanctioned revenge. To NOT administer this revenge as justice is itself wrong.

### **Exodus 21:22-25 CJB**

**<sup>22</sup> *"If people are fighting with each other and happen to hurt a pregnant woman so badly that her unborn child dies, then, even if no other harm follows, he must be fined. He must pay the amount set by the woman's husband and confirmed by judges.***

**<sup>23</sup> *But if any harm follows, then you are to give life for life,***

**<sup>24</sup> *eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,***

**<sup>25</sup> *burn for burn, wound for wound and bruise for bruise.***

The Law describes what is right and what is wrong, and it prescribes punishment for criminal activity. However as this passage in Exodus is telling us, the punishment must fit the crime; it must be proportional to the harm caused by the crime. You cannot kill a thief for stealing your sheep. You cannot demand that a man pay you back a bull for laming your donkey. When administered according to God's justice system, revenge is not only right it is required.

So what about David and Solomon? Was what David was suggesting (and what Solomon eventually did) right or wrong? Was it human revenge or was it godly justice? We'll deal with that as we go on a case by case basis.

The first case is in verse 5 and involves Joab, David's General of the Army. **Yo'av** was David's nephew but he had committed a number of offenses that caused David great heartache and problems. Interestingly the offense that David lists involved the political assassinations of two of David's army commanders. One might have thought that when David is speaking to **Shlomo** of what Joab "did to me", he would have been recalling Joab killing David's rebellious son Absalom as he hung helplessly from a tree branch, caught by his head. David had given explicit orders that Absalom was to be treated gently if he was captured; but as **Yo'av** was so often in the habit of doing (and had the power of the army behind him to do it) he ignored orders and did what he felt like doing. That day he felt like killing **Avishalom**.

But no; David told Solomon that Joab needed to be dealt with on account of his murdering Abner and Amasa. It indeed was murder (at least in David's eyes) as he says that Joab "shed the blood of war in peacetime". In other words, in the time of war one soldier killing another soldier (an enemy) is considered justifiable homicide by the Torah law. Killing in battle is not an offense to God nor is it a crime. However when it is a time of peace and one soldier kills a rival soldier out of hatred or revenge or some personal reason that is unjustifiable homicide. Both Amasa and Abner were under David's authority, it was a time of relative peace, and Joab killed them both (on separate occasions) merely because he didn't want his own position as General of the Army compromised.

So if David sees what Joab did as a criminal offense, why didn't he exact justice at the time? By the laws of Torah Joab should have been tried and executed. The reality is that at the time it happened David didn't feel he could do without Joab and he didn't see himself in a strong enough position politically or militarily to bring Joab up on charges. So essentially what David did was to transfer the carrying out of justice upon **Yo'av** to Solomon.

If we will only read what is written, we see that David did NOT tell Solomon to kill Joab in revenge. He merely told Solomon to act according to what he thought was the best course of action; however David cautioned **Shlomo** not to allow Joab to "go down to the grave in peace". Or in Hebrew, Solomon should not allow **Yo'av** to go to **She'ol** in **shalom**. **She'ol** is not just the grave but is also the portal into the underworld of the dead. It can be pleasant or it can be a place of discomfort. All go to **She'ol** but one's fate while there can be quite different for the wicked versus the good.

The fuzzy concept of **She'ol** eventually became attached to the Greek idea of Hades, a place of fire and eternal punishment. However that wasn't really the Hebrew idea. The Hebrew idea evolved into concept that after entering **She'ol**, somehow the wicked became assigned to an underground chamber called The Place of Torments; while the righteous dead became assigned to another underground chamber called Abraham's Bosom.

The idea is this: since **Yo'av** is a wicked man he should not enjoy a normal life span and die at the end of his days. And he certainly should not enter into She'ol and receive **shalom** (well being). Such is the intended blessing for a righteous man. Thus what David is doing is telling Solomon that he needs to watch him very closely, keep him away from power, make him uneasy and remove authority from him, and is implying that Solomon should be on the look-out to find a way to make Joab guilty of a capital offense so that he can legally execute him.

In contrast to Joab, in verse 7 David instructs Solomon that he should show continued kindness (**chesed**) to the sons of **Barzallai**. And as king, **Shlomo** should continue the practice of providing these sons royal provisions, keeping them near the royal family, and even allowing them to dine with the royal court. The principle David is demonstrating is that while punishment is just, so is reward for loyalty needed.

**Barzallai** was an elderly but wealthy gentile who lived in the Trans-Jordan. He became a great friend to David when David was fleeing from his son Absalom. **Barzallai** provided food and comforts for David and his family for many weeks as they lived in exile and gathered strength for a counter-attack to defeat **Avishalom's** rebel forces. When David began his return to Jerusalem he offered for **Barzallai** to come with him but he politely refused. However he did accept for his sons, and they are the subjects of this instruction to Solomon.

Next in verse 8 David tells Solomon to deal with **Shimei**, the Benjamite from Bachurim. On his way out of Jerusalem this man cursed David and threw dirt and stones at him (no doubt figuring that David's reign as king was over). But to **Shimei's** surprise, when David's forces defeated Absalom's, and David began his march back to reassume the throne in Jerusalem, **Shimei** greeted him and asked for mercy. Along with him came 1000 of his Benjamite tribesmen. The wise David promised not to kill him with the sword primarily because he didn't want to mar this joyous day with death. This man must have been even older than David by now, but was still living and David was concerned that he might try to incite rebellion against Solomon. David told **Shlomo** that he should kill **Shimei** for punishment (revenge).

So what we see is that David told Solomon to find a way to deal with Joab, but that he wasn't necessarily suggesting that he kill him. Next he insists that Solomon continue rewarding **Barzillai's** sons for their and their father's great loyalty in David's worst hour. And finally he outright orders Solomon to kill **Shimei**. Again David prefaces his instruction by saying that Solomon should use wisdom to decide how to bring about Shimei's death.

As is so typical for the Bible, when even the great Bible character dies it is met with little fanfare. Verse 10 just briefly states that David died and was buried in the City of David. And that he had ruled first over Judah for 7 years and then 33 years over the united kingdom of Israel, for a total of 40 years. These are all round numbers and not meant to be exact figures. In fact we know from 2Samuel 5 that David ruled in Hebron not for 7 but for 7 ½ years. Precise amounts of time seem important to us in our day, but back then it was a trivial matter. A year here or there was entirely secondary to the greatness of the person being spoken of, or to the importance of an event that was recorded. Sequence and substance mattered; time didn't.

Where David was buried is rather interesting. No doubt he was initially buried near the City of David, and no doubt in some family tomb. As we've discussed many times, to sleep with one's ancestors is a holdover phrase from the days of ancestor worship, which still played a factor in the Hebrew religion when it came to death and afterlife. Although the Israelites indeed thought of a righteous person dying and receiving the reward of communing eternally with his ancestors in a netherworld, the term "slept with his ancestors" had also come to denote "dying in peace". In other words this was at least the most positive aspect of death (and then even more than now, death was not a welcome thing); rather than living an afterlife of discomfort as did the wicked dead, the righteous dead lived a relatively pleasant afterlife with the chief attribute being reunited with their departed family.

We know from several ancient records that David's royal family tomb was in use for about 300 years, up until the days of King Manessah. Later in the time that the Persian Empire arose (which defeated Babylon and thus allowed the Jews to return home from exile), the Book of Nehemiah reports that the Davidic tombs were located in the southeast part of the city of David. Josephus even tells us that these graves were robbed for their wealth; so until Josephus' day, the whereabouts of David's family tomb complex was known.

Even with all of this information modern archeologists have never found these tombs likely due to the Arab housing developments that were built there (thus there is no way for archeologists to explore under Arab homes since the last thing the Arab Muslims want is for evidence of



David's tomb to be found where they claim that the Jews never existed). The current day site of David's personal tomb is on Mt. Zion; it is an area several hundred yards to the northwest from the City of David. This is the area of Jerusalem that is owned by the Greek Orthodox Church. It is located in a building that houses the New Testament Upper Room where Paul and others of Jesus' disciples met. In fact the Tomb of David is essentially directly below the Upper Room. It is anyone's guess as to whether at some point David's remains were moved to this location and if what is in that crypt is actually David. The Rabbis are adamant that this is case, and it is certainly feasible.

Upon verse 12 some unknown amount of time has passed (not too long I think) and **Shlomo** is now well established as the undisputed King of Israel. Out of the blue, when all seems to be peaceful and calm and the transition from David to Solomon has run its course, **Adoniyah** reappears and makes a secret visit to Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. However when the surprised Bat-Sheva receives Adonijah she immediately inquires, "Have you come as a friend (or better have you come in peace)?" He assures her that he has. Why would she ask such a thing? Because the rivalry between **Adoniyah's** mother's family and Bathsheba's family was ongoing even if it had only been simmering just under the surface.

Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that because of the liberal acquisition of wives and concubines, the sons born to a king were actually mostly loyal to their mother's families. In other words, while they all had the same father (the king) what divided them was that they were born to a number of different mothers. So they were invariably far more closely tied to their mother's side of the family than to their father's.

**Bat-Sheva** would have been far wiser to refuse an audience to Adonijah because it is difficult to think of anything of a positive nature that he might want. But being a woman and having a mother's heart, and also no doubt being curious why he would take such a risk, she allowed him to speak. He begins with a provocative statement that ought to have had him booted out before he could speak one more word; but Bathsheba tolerates him. He virtually gives away his purpose for coming to King Solomon's mother's home when he says by all right he should have been made king. He even boasts that all of Israel looked to him to be the next ruler. This part is probably true, but it was dumb to say it. Since David had gone totally silent about who was to succeed him, the people of Israel had to assume it would be **Adoniyah** because he was the legitimate next in line. And as I mentioned in our last lesson, there is no evidence that he was a bad man or would have even made a bad king. The problem for him was that he wasn't God's man.

We'll leave it here and next week see what comes of this clandestine meeting between the

king's mother and the man who figured that he ought to have been made king.