

### 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS

#### Week 17, chapters 9 and 10

We moved into 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 9 last week, and the chapter begins sometime after the halfway point of Solomon's 40 year reign. The Temple is built and in operation, Solomon's extravagant Palace is completed. King Shlomo's many building projects throughout his kingdom have elevated his personal fame and Israel's national status, and monarchs ruling far flung kingdoms are curious and envious of this amazingly wise king and the astounding wealth this relatively small country has amassed almost overnight.

Unexpectedly the Lord God appears to Solomon in a dream-vision, just as He had 2 decades earlier at the beginning of Shlomo's reign. God brings a dual-edged oracle to Solomon; first it is to confirm that He has heard Solomon's prayers and petitions at the Temple dedication ceremony (now some 13 or more years in the past), and that He has been looking favorably upon them. Second is to issue a reminder that is actually a not-so-veiled threat. Yehoveh reminds Solomon that despite all the adulation and notoriety that is being heaped upon him for his stupendous accomplishments, the future of Solomon's dynasty and the well-being of the nation of Israel shall always be subject to the Lord's discretion.

The idea is that Solomon should NOT take it that because Israel and its king have become the envy of the world that somehow this is indicative that all is right between Israel and God; the accumulation of wealth and fame is not an earthly indication of righteousness or even harmony with the Lord. Rather it is that if Solomon expects for one his sons to rule Israel after him, and if Israel is to continue under God's blessing, then there are 4 conditions that must be met. And obviously Solomon meeting those conditions is currently in doubt or the Lord wouldn't have offered this warning.

What is so interesting is that we find confirmation yet again of the Biblical principle that a nation's fate from God's perspective is all wrapped up in its leadership. The ideal king is a Shepherd-King. It is a leader who leads for the benefit of the people and not himself. It is a leader who sees himself as Joseph was in relation to Pharaoh, a kind of under-king, doing the

will of the almighty king.

In God's economy Israel's leader (as the ideal example for all leaders) was first and foremost to lead his people down Godly paths, using God's Torah as the map. Like a Shepherd it was not a matter of asking the sheep where they wanted to go and taking them there. Nor was it a matter of forcefully or deceptively taking the sheep someplace that they ought not to go because it was dangerous or wicked, but it did benefit the leader. Thus the leader is responsible for the people as a congregation, and he or she also represents the spiritual condition of the people on a national basis before the Lord. This is an immutable God-principle, and it not something that any nation can hold themselves up as being exempt.

Thus Israel's fate is squarely on Solomon's royal shoulders because the Lord has put it there. England's fate is on their Prime Minister's shoulders and the United States' fate is on the President's shoulders and each represents the spiritual condition of the nation they govern before God, and so on throughout the world in all times and eras. And thus the Lord lays out 4 conditions that Solomon must follow otherwise the consequences will be what we find in chapter 9 verses 6 – 9.

### **RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 9:6-9**

Notice that there are 2 main consequences for not meeting these 4 conditions: God will abandon the Temple, and God will eject Israel from the land. Several of the ancient Sages have interpreted verse 6 where it says, "But if you turn away from me, you or your children....." as meaning King Solomon or the people of Israel. That is "your children" are meaning the citizens of Israel. So the idea is that even if the King is righteous, if the people behaved wickedly, then these curses of God will come upon the nation. That interpretation is terribly flawed and without merit, and it only serves the rabbinical agenda to prove that Solomon (as was his father, David) a 100% righteous man despite what we might read about him in the Scriptures. And thus when Israel is divinely punished it has nothing to do with the actions of any of David's descendants but rather it is the rebellion of the people. The words immediately preceding these are "You will never lack a man on the throne of Israel", and they are part of a reminder that Solomon is to obey God or else that promise of a dynasty will be removed. Further, this same requirement of obedience goes for each succeeding generation of Solomon's dynasty.

So the continuation of God's presence as demonstrated by God's willingness to "dwell" in the

Temple is conditional based on the worthiness of Israel's leadership. And if God abandons the Temple then it becomes an empty shell that loses all value. Thus verse 8 explains that what was once a magnificent monument to Yehoveh that epitomized His glory being worked out through Israel will overnight turn into something that will shock those from other lands who knew it from prior times when God dwelled there and was blessing it. Some people will look at the Temple building in horror and anguish; others will view it, smirk, and enjoy its demise. But all will ask, "how did this happen?" And God says that BECAUSE the current King of Israel disobeyed and because he elected to follow other gods and did not follow the 4 conditions, and then the Lord views these actions as amounting to abandonment of Him by the congregation as a whole.

Does it bother you that as followers that you are judged according to the actions and spiritual condition of the leader? Consider then that it cuts both ways, and this Biblical principle is as foundational for a nation being cursed as it is for an individual being blessed. Because it is the righteousness of our leader Yeshua HaMashiach that makes us, His followers eligible for God's blessing. As members of God's Kingdom, with our king being God Himself, then we will be judged follower-by-follower according to His deeds and His perfection.

Let's re-read some more of chapter 9.

### RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 9:10 – 14

Solomon has made a bad turn. He is succumbing to his great wealth, position, power, and intellect. King Hiram of Tyre was a true partner in building the Temple and Solomon's Palace and now in return King Shlomo seems to be giving away cities in Israel to Hiram in gratitude for his help. What a shameful thing to do, but apparently expedient. What we see here is something that we need to always keep in mind: be careful who you become indebted to because someday you will have to repay.

Especially in the next chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, in the Queen of Sheba episode, we are going to get a glimpse of the other-worldly wealth that had become King **Shlomo's** and Israel's. But in case it hasn't yet occurred to you, none of it is coming from the land of Israel, but rather from foreign places. Israel has never had any valuable natural resources to harvest; no gold, no silver, no forests, no strange animals desired by other nations. Gold, silver, timber, precious

gems, and exotic creatures all had to be imported from abroad. They had to be provided by pagan gentiles. King Solomon completely depended on non-God worshippers for expertise and materials even to build the Temple to Yehoveh; the chief source being Hiram. Now it was time to pay the piper. And of course, what would Solomon use to pay him except all that Israel had to offer: a piece of the Promised Land.

It is interesting however to try to properly characterize the nature of what went on once Solomon offered these 20 Israelite cities and their surrounding territories up in the beautiful and fertile areas of the northlands called the **Galil** (Galilee). The way most translations have it is that Solomon offered these territories, and then Hiram came to view his new land, but was not pleased with what he saw so he rejected it and gave it back as an insult. And thus he gave the rejected 20-city region the negative epithet of **Kabul**, and it has been declared in Bible commentaries that **Kabul** means “worthless”.

However there is another and more likely interpretation. Most Jewish scholars have a problem with translating **Kabul** as worthless. Rather it more means binding or collateral. In other words it is a term that has to do with debt and securing debt. “Binding” is meant in the sense of offering collateral as proof of a debt, and as binding surety for a debt. This makes far more sense for the context of this passage. Thus what we have here is that Solomon didn't give these cities away to King Hiram per se, but he did offer them as a debt guarantee for the enormous national debt he had piled upon Israel for the immense sums of gold, valuable and rare lumber, and skilled labor that he obtained from Hiram. Hiram was a friend and ally of Israel, but he wasn't naïve or simple; he of course held his own national interests above Israel's and so he would loan the modern equivalent of scores of millions of dollars to King **Shlomo**, but not without some concrete assurances that his nation would be repaid. Thus these 20 cities of northern Israel were essentially the collateral for the loan that would become Hiram's by default if Israel failed to repay the debt. And by the way: notice that King Solomon who is a member of the southern Israel tribe of Judah didn't blink at offering Hiram some northern tribal territories as collateral for his projects, but of course nothing in Judah was put in jeopardy.

Hiram went to see these 20 cities, found them as insufficient collateral, and rejected them as such. When we think of the enormous amount of gold (here it is said to be 4 tons) that Hiram loaned to Solomon, plus the vast quantities of material and labor, then Hiram must have had high expectations for the value of this region up in the Galil. Obviously the region failed to meet those expectations. Thus the region became known as what it was: **Kabul**, collateral. That certainly would have been a degrading name as far as its residents were concerned. Hiram had already given Solomon the bulk of the labor and materials so it was too late to break the deal (which he probably wouldn't have done anyway). But in the end, Solomon really can't be regarded as any less guilty for putting at risk part of God's Kingdom as surety for a loan from a

pagan, than for simply exchanging the land for payment of the loan because if Solomon had defaulted the result would have been the same.

And yet there is a caveat for all this that might help to explain Solomon's attitude about these cities and not being very concerned about what became of them.

<sup>CJB</sup> **2 Chronicles 8:1** *At the end of twenty years, during which time Shlomo had built the house of ADONAI and his own palace,*

<sup>2</sup> **Shlomo built up the cities which Hiram had given to Shlomo and had the people of Isra'el live there.**

In this passage Hiram is called Hiram (just a typical issue in ancient Hebrew of trying to determine the vowel sounds). Apparently the idea is that these 20 cities were indeed in Israelite territory, but they were occupied by non-Israelites, probably Canaanites, (on a peaceful basis, and these residents gave their allegiance to **Shlomo**). And we read that on a number of occasions Solomon used the resources of non-Hebrews living in Israel for his own profit because the Hebrew majority wouldn't have protested that approach. So Solomon offered the collateral of 20 cities that were populated with non-Israelites and this displeased Hiram because of course, as a king, he fully understood that what Solomon offered as a loan guarantee wasn't all that valuable to Solomon (as it would have been had tribal Israelites possessed these cities).

However later on Shlomo put government funds into building up these cities and when he did, naturally he moved Israelites into the formerly Canaanite populated cities. A very popular move no doubt, and probably one designed to placate the northern Israelite tribes who would have felt rather insulted for Solomon offering parts of their territory to Hiram. Politicians have always known how to spend other people's money for their own benefit.

Let's re-read a little more.

**RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 9:15 – 23**

Our modern politicians have nothing on Solomon; here we see that he was the tax-and-spend King of Israel. But thankfully in our time the tax is always money. What we see in these passages is that the levy that **Shlomo** put upon his people was primarily forced labor. We get a list of the major projects that this conscripted labor force was used for and besides the Temple and Solomon's personal palace are listed the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem and the cities of Hatzor, Megiddo and Gezer. We will begin to run across these places and names regularly from here forward and some play a significant role in end-times matters so let's take a few minutes to familiarize ourselves with them.

**Millo** literally means "earthen rampart". It is a fortified wall structure used as defensive position on the Kidron Valley side of the City of David. Its design is as a retaining wall back-filled with soil and rubble. The Millo that we read about here has been rediscovered and confirmed and you can visit it when you go to Israel. It was originally built by the Jebusites, later fortified by David, and now rebuilt and strengthened by King Solomon.

The wall of **Yerushalayim** is referring to defensive walls that went beyond those of the City of David. Solomon had been extending the city on up the hill towards the Temple Mount. There was an undeveloped space between the City of David and the Temple Mount called the Ophel and this was where Jerusalem was first expanded. This wall of Yerushalayim mentioned here is bound to be a wall designed to join the City of David to the Temple Mount and thus enclose the Ophel area.

**Hatzor** and **Megiddo** were in the Galilee region and both were strategic military outposts along the invaluable Via Maris trade route. **Hatzor** served as a fortress designed to guard the northern flank of Israel from the area of Syria. Likely this was one of Solomon's most important fortifications. **Megiddo** is better known today in Christian circles as **Har Megiddo** or Armageddon. **Har** means hill or mountain, thus the name "the hill of Megiddo". This is the place of the end-times prophetic war to end all wars. In ancient times it guarded the pass into the Jezreel Valley that over the centuries was the major north-south and east-west trade crossroads, and it was also a battlefield and amazingly fertile agricultural region since time immemorial. This may have been Solomon's most famous and extensive chariot city outside of Jerusalem and one can see the excavated remains of the stables and fortifications to this day.

**Gezer** and **Beth-Horon** were in the center of Israel, more or less at the southern border of Ephraim's tribal territory. We get an interesting aside in verse 16 explaining how King **Shlomo**

had acquired **Gezer**. Let me pause for just a moment to note that by these passages explaining how **Gezer** became Israelite, and a few verses earlier how the 20 cities used as collateral for a debt owed to King Hiram in time became Hebrew cities, we see that still into Solomon's day Israel had many pockets of cities and towns within the Promised Land that were Canaanite or occupied by some foreigners. It would be as though in the modern USA there would be substantial towns and cities that were thoroughly Native American and not assimilated into the European-based American culture. So it's not a matter of an enemy occupying some cities within an otherwise sovereign nation, but rather they were cities primarily occupied by other ethnic groups and generally on peaceful terms with Israel.

**Gezer** was a Canaanite city that was captured some years earlier by Solomon's father in law Pharaoh Siamun of Egypt. He had destroyed the city by fire. But then he gave the remains of the city to his daughter as a wedding present for her marriage to Solomon. The bottom line here is that the marriage of Pharaoh's daughter to Solomon, plus the giving of the defeated but destroyed Canaanite city of **Gezer** to Solomon, created a strong and friendly political alliance between Israel and Egypt. **Gezer** was in a strategically valuable location and as soon as he could, Solomon moved Hebrews into the city and used government funds to rebuild it. It was strategic because it controlled that particular section of the Via Maris trade route, and was 700 feet above sea level making it a marvelous lookout where one could see miles in every direction.

Interestingly, again to demonstrate the geopolitical reality of the Israelites' time in the Promised Land, we see in Joshua 10 that centuries earlier Joshua actually captured **Gezer**, killing the king, but then the Philistines gained control. It was even assigned the important status as a Levitical city in Joshua 21. Apparently the Philistines eventually lost control to some Canaanites, then the Canaanites lost control to Egypt, and now Egypt gave control to Solomon as a political gift of friendship. So this acquisition of land and territory was uneven and often the same piece of land changed hands regularly for any number of reasons. Egypt's interest in **Gezer** was economic and had to do with the Via Maris trade route. **Gezer** became another of Solomon's chariot cities. And each of these chariot cities was also where Israel's tax collectors had offices to extract a levy from the many trade caravans that passed through.

We also find a fleeting mention of Solomon building buildings in Lebanon, so we can see how far north his influence extended. But starting in verse 20 we get a listing of the various ethnic groups that still lived in the Israelite tribal territories, in peace with Israel and under Solomon's rule. And it was from these various groups that Solomon conscripted the labor for his many projects.



Verse 22 makes it clear that Solomon did NOT use Hebrews as forced laborers (a political consideration). Instead, in a kind of role reversal for how it was for Israel in Egypt, the Israelites were the foremen and task masters over the foreign labor pool. And national Israelites also formed the loyal government administrators, military commanders, and other officials working for **Shlomo**. Let me also be clear that while this was forced labor, the laborers were not slaves. It was no different than the taxes we all pay to our government, which is also “forced” so-to-speak. That is, we don’t pay by choice but by dictate of our government; we are not at all slaves but the law compels us to give or to be prosecuted. It was that way in Israel under Solomon except that the taxes amounted to labor and not money.

### RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS CHAPTER 9:24 – end

Hebrew tradition better explains why this verse about Solomon’s Egyptian wife and her move from the City of David to the Palace was included. It was that when Solomon married her he gave her a place to live in the City of David. As soon as he could he built a palace outside the City of David and then moved her into it. David has used the area of the **Millo** as a place for the many pilgrims who came to Jerusalem to meet and congregate; it was intentionally arranged as an area for an open public courtyard. But Solomon confiscated that area and built private quarters upon it for his wife’s servants, thus eliminating its use for the common pilgrims. Thus we get the words that only after Pharaoh’s daughter was moved into her new quarters did the **Millo** refurbishment occur that entirely changed its character from a public meeting place to private quarters for the king’s servants.

Verse 25 seems straightforward enough until we consider what is being implied. First, the mention of Solomon officiating over sacrifices 3 times per year is referring to the 3 Torah ordained **chag** or pilgrimage Biblical Feasts of **Matza, Shavuot and Sukkot**. What makes this troubling is that we have Solomon offering the sacrifices at the altar and that were, by Torah Law, tasks only for the priests to perform. This is just one of many indulgences that Solomon took upon himself and it was seriously wrong and sinful and shows Solomon’s rapid descent into self-importance and a sense that he was authorized to manipulate or change God’s Laws at his whim.

To end the chapter we get a most interesting few words about Solomon building a fleet of ships. This took place on the finger of the Red Sea called the Gulf of Aqaba. The building of ships and their home port was near the city of Eilat. Ancient Eilat is on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqaba in what is modern day Jordan. Modern Eilat on the western side of the Gulf, but



it too is a port city. As Israel was not a nation of seafarers, Solomon was able to get Hiram to send some experienced sailors and ship builders to supervise and teach. This fleet sailed the Red Sea, stopping at Arabian and African ports of call, and probably ventured as far as the Indian Ocean.

The mention of **Ofir** as a place where gold was obtained in substantial quantities has always intrigued Bible scholars and there is no agreement as to its location. However, any idea that it was in the Mediterranean as is often surmised is illogical and unrealistic and certainly Solomon's fleet didn't sail down the eastern coast of Africa, around the Horn of Africa, down and around South Africa, back up Africa's west coast and then enter the Mediterranean through the Straits of Gibraltar.

Let's move on to chapter 10.

### READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS CHAPTER 10 all

This chapter begins with the story of the famous Queen of Sheba and is put here to show that God fulfilled His promise to Solomon to gift him with great wisdom and unprecedented wealth.

We won't get much farther today than the 1<sup>st</sup> verse or so because there's more here than meets the eye. First let's talk about who the Queen of Sheba might have been. It is nearly certain that due to a copyist error the spelling of **Sheva** ought to have been with a seen 's' and not a sheen 'sh'. That is should give the first letter of her name the sound of an "s" instead of an "sh". Thus she was the Queen of Saba, not the Queen of Sheba.

The City of Saba was the capital of the ancient Arabian culture of the Sabaeans. They were traders in gold, incense and precious stones. These descendants of Ishmael were located along the Arabian coast of the Red Sea and were known to traditionally have Queens instead

of Kings. They were Moon God worshippers and as one might well expect there is a close tie between Islam and the Sabeans. In fact, the account of the Queen of the Sabeans (the Queen of Saba) and her visit with Solomon is told in the Muslim Koran in Sura 27.

Our English translations hide a really interesting word play in the 1<sup>st</sup> verse. Where the English says that the Queen of Sheba heard what was being said about Shlomo because of the name of Yehoveh, the Hebrew says this:

The Queen of Sheva **shema** what was being **shama** of Shlomo because of the **shem** of Yehoveh. Not only do we have a memorable litany of the Hebrew letter sheen (sh) but also a word play on the Hebrew word **shema**. What is being said is the Queen of Sheba **shema** (heard and acted) on the **shama** (the report or description) about Solomon because of the **shem** (the reputation, the characteristics) of his god Yehoveh. And the idea is that Yehoveh was getting credit, as Solomon's god, for all the amazing wealth and wisdom of Solomon and his nation of Israel.

We are also told that she came to test him with hard questions. In Hebrew she came to **nacah** Shlomo with **chedoth**. **Nacah** (nasah) means to test or to prove; **chedoth** means riddles. So quite literally the Queen of Sheba came all the way to meet Solomon and test to see if his wisdom was as stupefying as she had heard, by giving him riddles to solve.

That's all for this week.