

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

### Week 19, chapter 11

We'll continue in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 11 by re-reading the entire chapter in sections. Last time we just go started into this chapter that could reasonably be titled: "The Reasons for the Division of the Kingdom of Israel" because we are given 4 basic premises of the author of this Bible book for how it could be that the united and sovereign nation of Israel, an admired and powerful and wealthy country, would fall into ruin and civil war and split into two kingdoms within a few months after Solomon's death.

The 4 reasons are:

1. Solomon's deliberate and outrageous behavior towards his people that mirrored that of a typical Middle Eastern monarch instead of a set-apart and anointed king whose God was Yehoveh and whose guide was the Torah.
2. As a consequence of this bad behavior the Lord raised up adversaries to weaken Solomon's Kingdom and prepare it to be torn apart.
3. Jeroboam always sought power and glory, and so the Lord used him as a tool to wreak havoc and be the leader of the rebels who wanted to overthrow the Davidic dynasty.
4. Shlomo's idolatry that had its root in his vast harem of foreign wives and concubines was a severe offense towards the Lord and it couldn't go unpunished or God would not be a just God.

I'll probably enjoy today's lesson more than you will, because due to its subject and content I get to preach at you a little bit! And, towards the end, we'll take a little detour that I think you'll find informative and helpful. So I'd like to start by reminding us all that while our personal salvation is a matter between each individual and the Lord, whatever divine justice we experience communally as the member of a nation of people is based on the actions and character of our leadership. This is a Biblical principle that stands as firmly today as it always has, even though for some reason our Christian and Jewish leaders rarely openly discuss it. Thus one could reasonably say that while the fate of our eternal spiritual essence is determined on a one-by-one basis by Yehoveh, the fate of our earthly physical essence (our flesh-and-blood bodies and our day-to-day lives) is largely determined by the standards and

behavior of our national leadership. The common people of ancient Israel (of all ancient kingdoms for that matter) had little if any choice in the selection of national leadership; but they still suffered or benefited depending on that leader's standing before God. However in modern democratic countries of today, we have only ourselves to blame as citizens for when we select a poor leader or refuse to take action to remove a leader who has proved him or herself to be unworthy of their position.

It has always been a challenge for followers of Christ to determine how involved we ought to become in what we have come to call "politics". For some Christians becoming informed and helping to choose or influence our various levels of government is seen as something to avoid altogether as it has nothing to do with their faith walk. For others they see their involvement in politics as a calling and even a full time preoccupation. Wherever you might fall along this spectrum of political involvement I would like you to pay close attention to what happens to the Kingdom of Israel as Solomon becomes the poorest of leaders, places economics and wealth above all else, practices and demands tolerance for all religions and all gods, and sees the people of his nation as but pawns to be used to achieve his personal ideology and ambitions.

Let's re-read a few verses.

### RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 11:1 – 13

Since in our last lesson we discussed much of what is written here, I would like to focus on verse 4. There it says that the difference between **Shlomo** and his father David is that David had remained wholehearted towards Yehoveh. In Hebrew the words are **Shlomo lo male achar Yehoveh** and it most literally translates to "Solomon did not go fully after Yehoveh". What this is referring to is loyalty; Solomon quit being loyal only to the God of Israel. We spent months in Samuel and in Kings discussing the terrible things that David did, from murder to adultery (usually to satisfy his sexual lusts or exorcize his political paranoia's). But what he did NOT do was worship other gods. He hung on steadfastly to Yehoveh, even in the midst of committing heinous sin, and did not succumb to worshipping any other than the God of Israel. Solomon on the other hand does not appear to have engaged in adultery (at least as defined culturally in those days as taking another man's wife) or in overt murder. Yet in his old age he openly worshipped other gods (even if mainly to please his many foreign wives). David's punishment for his many sins against other men was to be barred by the Lord from building the Temple. Solomon's punishment for his sin against God (idolatry) was that God would yank Israel from his grasp (in reality from Solomon's son's grasp).

Thus perhaps this is a good clue to help us understand what our Savior meant about speaking against, or blaspheming, the Holy Spirit when he said in Matthew 12:

**Matt 12:31-32 CJB**

***<sup>31</sup> Because of this, I tell you that people will be forgiven any sin and blasphemy, but blaspheming the Ruach HaKodesh will not be forgiven.***

***<sup>32</sup> One can say something against the Son of Man and be forgiven; but whoever keeps on speaking against the Ruach HaKodesh will never be forgiven, neither in the 'olam hazeh nor in the 'olam haba.***

The King James Version puts it this way and I think it captures the sense of the words a little better:

**Matt 12:31-32 KJV**

***<sup>31</sup> Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.***

***<sup>32</sup> And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.***

But what these passages are actually getting at is that the committing of sins (crimes) against humans, or blaspheming (lying, slandering) against humans, which is also against the Law of Moses, can be forgiven them; however blaspheming (speaking against) the Holy Spirit cannot. And notice that in the Matthew passages that Yeshua uses one of his favorite expressions when referring to himself: the son of man. When he says “the son of man” he is emphasizing his humanness. Although He is indeed a God/man by using the phrase “son of man” he is

identifying himself with us, the human race, in all of our fleshly weaknesses and frailties. Thus what Yeshua meant when he was saying that it could be forgiven to speak against him was meant in the context of one man speaking against another man, as opposed to the context of a man speaking against God and thus committing spiritual blasphemy.

While I'm not confident enough to say that I fully understand all the elements of this concept of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, nor where the line is that once crossed amounts in God's eyes to blaspheming Him, the gist of the concept is perhaps best seen in God's attitude towards David who regularly blasphemed and committed crimes against humans but stayed loyal to Yehoveh (did not blaspheme God), versus Solomon who generally did not blaspheme humans or commit crimes against them but did blaspheme God (by committing idolatry). As in the 10 Commandments whereby some commandments deal with human to human behavior and others deal with human to God behavior, so we see the same in Yeshua's words in the NT book of Matthew, and here in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11, that there are crimes that are directly men against men and thus these crimes are only indirectly against God. But there are also crimes that don't really have a human victim, but instead are directly against God. Idolatry is the chief of these crimes and therefore idolatry is by definition "blaspheming the Holy Spirit".

It is common among the Rabbis to say the following as do the editors of the Artscroll series on the Prophets, in their commentary on 1<sup>st</sup> Kings:

**Quote: ".....This chapter criticizes him (Solomon) sharply, saying that toward the end of his life his many wives caused him to go astray, even so far as to follow idols. That very verse implies clearly that Solomon was NOT literally an idolater, because it goes on to state that his failing was that his heart was not AS wholesome with Hashem as that his father David, not that he actually worshipped idols....."**

As much as I admire the learned Hebrew sages, they are often (like some Christian teachers and pastors) caught-up in mindlessly defending a dubious doctrine by declaring something that simply isn't backed up by Scripture. Look at verse 5; no matter which version of the Scriptures one wants to examine, it clearly and unequivocally states that Solomon followed after (worshipped) Ashtoreth and Molech. The Hebrew is equally clear. In fact in verses 9 and 10 the passage explains that the main source of God's anger with Solomon was that even though God had visited Solomon twice, and on one occasion told him explicitly not to follow other gods, Solomon disobeyed and DID follow other gods. But the Rabbis deny this and say that he only did this in his heart (his mind) and not physically. Now most Christians would say that there is but a hair's breadth of difference between thinking it and doing it (and I certainly agree with that). And thus we have another valuable insight into Judaism that can be hard for

especially gentile Christians to digest. It is that Orthodox Judaism is built as a system of physical rituals and behaviors. Therefore what one thinks in their minds, and what one believes and has faith in, is secondary to what one physically does. So if Solomon did not actually, physically, openly get on his knees before an idol and say certain prayers to it out loud, and offer it sacrifices, then he wasn't really an idolater from their perspective.

Of course in our case, the Scriptures clearly state that not only did he physically worship these false gods he even ordered altars built for them. Solomon was an idolater of grand magnitude. And as I just mentioned let's not quickly bypass that in verse 9 we're reminded that God indeed appeared to Solomon twice. God NEVER appeared to David. God appearing to Solomon in a dream/vision was a rare and amazing honor. And for Solomon to still go and worship other gods after Yehoveh personally speaking to Solomon and personally telling him not to worship other gods, well, it's hard to find words of sufficient condemnation.

Back in verse 5 and then in the next couple of verses we're given details of which false gods Solomon worshipped, and where he had their altars built. The name that stands out and is mentioned first is the one that will be at the center of almost every false god system ever to emerge in history: Ashtoreth. Ashtoreth is the moon goddess, and the goddess of fertility. Her name translated into the languages of other cultures is Ishtar in Assyrian, Aphrodite in the Greek world, and Eostre in Anglo-Saxon. In English her name is Easter, from which we get the name of the holy day that we celebrate Messiah's resurrection. That she is the fertility goddess is why the main symbols for Easter all over the world are rabbits and eggs. So while we have every right to condemn Solomon for sinking into syncretism and adding pagan symbols and worship practices to the religion of the God of the Hebrews, it is undeniable that long ago Christianity succumbed to its own form of syncretism by adopting the practices of ritual worship to the goddess Ashtoreth (Easter) in observation of perhaps the holiest day of the year.

When the verses speak of the hill on the south, it means the Mt. of Olives. So the same Mt. of Olives that millions of Christian and Jewish pilgrims visit every year was littered with altars to false gods during Solomon's era.

So in verse 11 Yehoveh tells Solomon that since NOT ONLY was the thought to follow other gods existent in his mind (that is, he desired to follow these gods), but he also didn't keep the Torah (meaning he physically did the wrong things he was thinking to do) and as a consequence the Kingdom of Israel would be taken away from him and given to another. Specifically it would be given to one of Solomon's servants. I doubt Solomon comprehended what God meant by "servant", or in Hebrew **ebed**. This is referring to someone that Solomon

lorded over; an underling. But these represented everyone from the lowest woodchopper to a member of his royal court. So who might this person be?

Now here comes another God-principle that we need to be mindful of; God doesn't go back on His word even when it seems that He ought to. God promised David that at the least one of his ancestors would be alive and qualified to be on the throne of Israel forever. So how can Yehoveh take the throne of Israel from Solomon and give it to a servant of Solomon's, who by definition would NOT be a family member, and yet keep his promise to David? Because doing such a thing sounds like it would be the end of the David's dynasty.

The answer comes in the next two verses. For the sake of the promise that God had made to David, Solomon would not physically lose the throne of Israel. Rather it would pass on to his son after his death and then his son would lose the throne. But even then what this son would lose would be his rule over the largest portion of the Kingdom, but a small piece would be retained for him to rule over. When God orders something to happen on earth, from a spiritual perspective it has already occurred. When God told Solomon that he would lose the throne in the form of it being taken from his son, in heaven it had already occurred. Nothing good could happen upon the throne of Israel from this moment forward since its occupant was no longer in God's favor.

The Lord says that He is going to give Solomon's son but ONE tribe to be king over, all else will be taken away from him. That single tribe will hold the territory of Judah, because Yerushalayim is to remain with David's descendants. This is the place where God has chosen to put His name, and so it will not change. Ever. And what an effect upon the entire globe that ancient promise has even to our day as the world's powers try every way imaginable to force Israel to give up hope of having a Temple for Yehoveh rebuilt in Jerusalem. What they don't know is that from a heavenly perspective, it's already been built, because God ordained it 3000 years ago and it will happen.

### RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 11:14 – 25

Since this entire chapter is dedicated to explaining that what happened that caused Israel to effectively be dissolved and split into two kingdoms was God's anger at Solomon, verse 14 tells us that one of the steps God took to bring it about was to weaken the civil fabric of Israel and the hold of King Solomon upon his kingdom, by raising up enemies to trouble Israel. The result would be that the aging **Shlomo** would lose some valuable pieces of territory, the

common folk of the land would become discouraged and disheartened, no longer sure of his leadership, and Israel's enemies would become confident and emboldened, and thus the table would be set for civil war.

Solomon's first antagonist was Hadad, a fugitive from the land of Edom. It seems that many years earlier King David along with his military commander **Yo'av** found themselves battling Edom. The result was a resounding victory for David that devastated the male population of Edom but also had the effect of instilling a furious hatred toward Israel that would not be quenched until revenge was taken. This exploit is something we talked about back in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 8. It seems that when Hadad was but a young child his father fled Joab's onslaught, his son Hadad in tow. Although the intention was to seek asylum in Egypt, they first spent considerable time in Midian and in the area of the Paran wilderness (years apparently). This gave them time to build up a force of fighters before they ventured down to Egypt.

When they finally arrived in Egypt the Pharaoh was kindly disposed to them, giving them a place to live and everything they needed to be comfortable. Hadad was now a young man, and because he was Edomite royalty others who hated Israel and King David rallied around him. After a few more years Hadad gained such favor with the Pharaoh that the Pharaoh wanted to create a formal alliance and so gave Hadad one of his family in marriage. Naturally Hadad had children with the Pharaoh's sister-in-law and the firstborn was given the name G'nuvat. The child was raised along with members of Pharaoh's royal court in Pharaoh's palace.

It is rare for Holy Scripture to spend so much time describing someone's personal circumstances; but here it is to show how deep and embedded was Hadad's hatred and determination to shed his family's and his Edomite countrymen's shame of being defeated and decimated by David. So when word arrives that Hadad's nemesis King David has died, he goes to the Pharaoh and seeks his permission to leave Egypt and return to Edom. This protocol of a guest seeking permission to leave is merely a common courtesy among Easterners that is customary; the king of Egypt would not have refused him. It is only a means of the guest showing proper respect for the grace of hospitality that his host has shown to him. And in the typical Middle Eastern Kabuki dance that always accompanies these sorts of formalities the Pharaoh wants to know if perhaps he hasn't done enough for Hadad. Hadad responds that such is not the case at all; it's just time for him to go. Without explanation as to why.

It is interesting that we don't hear of Hadad explaining the reason for his arrival in Egypt, nor his departure several years later. But the reason for keeping quiet (especially about his departure) is obvious: David is dead, Solomon is king, and one of Pharaoh's daughters is now

King Solomon's wife. Pharaoh had a very good relationship with Israel, was even closely allied with Israel by means of his daughter's marriage to Israel's king, and so Hadad had to keep hidden that his intent was to go back to Edom, organize, and then take revenge on Solomon and Israel for what David and Joab had done to his people so many years earlier.

Here's where we're going to take a detour. I'd like to take some time to explain that the source of Hadad's extreme hatred for Israel was shame. The attack upon Edom by David (as representative of Israel) had taken away Hadad's family, and his nation's, honor. This is a concept that is very difficult for Westerners to wrap our minds around but it is an important one for us to grasp and it is obvious that our highest government officials who shape and direct our Middle Eastern policy have little understanding of this foundational principle of the very societies they are trying to deal with. And it is not only important for us to explore because it helps us to better understand what we read in the Bible and exposes the common motive in the Bible for its characters to become shamed and then seek to restore their honor through revenge, but also because this same code of shame and honor is at the heart of the unrest in the Middle East today.

So let's detour for a few minutes to see if I can, in fairly abbreviated fashion, shed a little light on the subject of shame and honor. To get there I need to set the stage. Each of the world's many societies can generally be described as being built upon one of three sets of rudimentary philosophies of civil society: 1) guilt and innocence, 2) power and fear, or 3) shame and honor. I don't want you to think that these philosophies are pure in the way they exist and play out, and certainly elements of each type exist in almost every society. But in general we can say that every identifiable society in the world conforms to primarily one of these 3 basic philosophical platforms: guilt and innocence, power and fear, or shame and honor. And what we can also generally say is that whichever of these 3 platforms a society has adopted it is not really consciously aware of it, it invariably is also unaware that there are 2 other platforms in existence, and generally they cannot conceive of another society operating on a different platform. This probably has more to do with the misunderstandings among the many societies and nations of our planet than any other cause.

Briefly, the platform of guilt and innocence is the one we are most familiar with. It is the underlying societal platform of what is typically called the Western world. North America and Europe are the prime examples, but so is the Soviet Union, modern day Australia, and to a lesser extent a few of the countries of South America. What makes us a guilt and innocence society is that we operate on a system of laws that sets down right and wrong. And then in some form or another there is a justice system that determines if wrong has been done and applies the consequences.

Usually (especially if we look past the corruption) the laws are absolute and the punishments are consistent. Some societies such as the USA are the most rigid about the absolute nature of its laws, and other societies such as some in Eastern Europe and in parts of South America are more flexible. No matter; the idea is that if one violates the law that person is guilty, and if one is law abiding they are innocent. And it is this sense of guilt or innocence that defines the character and status and value of a person as a member of this kind of a society. Therefore we find our politics, for instance, revolve around a discussion of right versus wrong. Decisions are made on a basis of right versus wrong. And this is because to be right under the law makes one innocent and to be wrong under the law makes one guilty.

As revered a person as the business tycoon Bernard Madoff once was, he is now a pariah after wrongly bilking thousands of people out of billions of dollars. And this status as pariah is because whereas at one time he operated with a societal status of innocent, he is now guilty. And it is his status as a guilty person who has committed wrong that makes him a societal outcast. Now to most ears, you are probably saying, so what's new? Of course that's how we do things. Everybody thinks that way. All societies have their unique sense of right and wrong, guilt and innocence, even if they can be quite different. No, they do not, and that's where our misunderstandings of society and the Bible begin.

The second of the 3 philosophical platforms of society is fear and power. This is one that seems the most primitive when we understand what it is. It is a societal platform that believes in the existence of many spirits and gods and operates based on an immutable belief that these spirits and gods have power over you. And because a spirit or god who has power over you can harm you, therefore you have fear. These societies have shamans and witch doctors as guides and protectors and doctors who treat spiritual infestations. This is a society that operates day to day on trying to counteract and/or avoid the fearful power of a spirit or a god. They believe that they must find a way to live in peace with these unseen powers either by avoiding them stealthily or by appeasing them or by finding some means to appropriate some kind of opposing power for themselves that causes sufficient fear in these spirits and gods to leave them alone.

Thus in this kind of society, their chief goal, and the underlying rules of their society has no systematic or universal code of right and wrong. The terms right and wrong, guilty and innocent, have no meaning whatsoever because that is not how life operates. Whatever means it takes to gain power and thus alleviate your fear, or to gain power as a means to project fear into someone else or to ward off some spirit or god, is fair game. There is no right or wrong to it. These people see themselves as living in a sphere where the natural and the supernatural live together and are not separated. Men making laws and rules are incomprehensible to them. Therefore there is no such concept as guilt. As the Bible tells us, where there is no law there is no trespass. And if there has never been such a thing as a law, then there has never been

such a thing as guilt.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> societal platform is called shame and honor, and while there is a concept of right and wrong, it is not absolute and it is not the driving force in the society. Let me be clear on one thing however: for Westerners shame more means feelings of guilt or a loss of self-esteem. Shame tends to come upon us when people we trust violate that trust, as with child abuse or molestation. Shame is also what we feel, at times, when we feel guilty.

We tell our children or our friends or even our congregations to act rightly. And if they do not, they will properly feel guilt. But in a shame and honor based society all members are taught to act honorably, not rightly. And if they do NOT act honorably, then the result is shame. Just as in a guilt and innocence based society where our status and position is based on our doing right or wrong, in a shame and honor based society ones societal status and position is based on being in a condition of shame or of honor.

So as much as a person works to be honorable, if they are shamed then they will do whatever it takes to get their honor back. Thus right and wrong are not based on any absolute, but rather within the context of achieving, maintaining, or reacquiring honor. This is why a Middle Eastern father whose daughter has violated some cultural norm, and thus has brought shame upon her and her family, feels no sense of wrong by murdering her even though he may also feel grief stricken over her loss. Rather he has done what he must to rid his family of shame so that they can go forward in honor once again. If a person finds him or herself in a position that if they tell the truth they will lose their honor, then they will lie and it is not wrong because in their society maintaining honor is the basis of their culture.

Thus right and wrong are relative. Right and wrong are not predicated on laws but rather on cultural rules and customs about how to avoid shame and maintain honor. Sometimes one must actually do something to return their honor that the government has determined deserves a punishment. But even that isn't necessarily a matter of right or wrong. In fact that punishment is often seen as merit for doing what one must to get back their honor. Often this punishment is seen as merely a price to be paid, like a ransom, for what must be done to get rid of shame and one is often quite admired for it.

Further, time and generational turnover plays no role in a shame and honor society. Thus a man who died in shame expects his son to avenge that shame for him. And if that son is unable to, then his son is obligated and so on. Entire nations operate on a national level with

that same understanding. Maintaining or recouping honor is far more important than life or death. Thus for someone to kill another for causing them shame brings no sense of guilt, because it is “right” in that society to have honor at all cost.

I’ll end this for today with this thought. In the Muslim world, shame is routinely handled by killing the person who shamed you, and thus bringing you and/or your family back to a societal status of honor. But in other oriental societies who have shame and honor as at least a major part of their societal platform, such as the Japanese, shame is often handled through suicide. But either way (to a fault) shame and honor based societies put human life and death far below the matter of shame and honor. The only issue is who dies in order that the shame is relieved: the party who caused the shame, or the party who was shamed. In the one the answer is homicide, in the other the answer is suicide.

We’ll start next week by talking about how this applies to the Bible and then also apply what we’ve learned to 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11 and the person of Hadad.