

1 KINGS 1-22; 1 CHRONICLES 23-29; 2 CHRONICLES 1-20

Lesson 17, Old Testament, Adult Religion Class, Tuesday, 3 January 2012

Study Guide

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OUTLINE: 1 KINGS 1-22

- I. The Reign of Solomon (1:1 – 11:43)
 - a. Solomon takes the throne (1:1 – 2:46)
 - b. Solomon’s wisdom (3:1 – 4:34)
 - c. Building projects (5:1 – 8:66)
 - d. Solomon’s peak (9:1 – 10:29)
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- II. The Divided Monarchy (12:1 – 22:53)
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 - b. Various kings (15:1 – 16:22)
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 - i. Ba’al worship (16:23-34)
 - ii. Opposition by Elijah (17:1 – 21:29)
 - iii. Death of Ahab (22:1-53)

OUTLINE: 1 CHRONICLES 23 – 2 CHRONICLES 20

- I. Solomon and David co-regents (1 Chr 23:1 – 29:30)
 - a. Solomon made king (1 Chr 23:1)
 - b. David organizes the priesthood (1 Chr 23:2 – 26:32)
 - c. David’s officers (27:1-34)
 - d. David’s final words (28:1 – 29:19)
 - e. Solomon confirmed as king (29:20-30)
 - II. The Reign of Solomon (2 Chr 1:1 – 9:31)
 - a. Coronation and beginnings (2 Chr 1:1-17)
 - b. Building the temple (2 Chr 2:1 – 7:22)
 - c. Solomon’s peak (8:1 – 9:28)
 - d. Solomon’s death (9:29-31)
 - III. The Divided Kingdom (2 Chr 10:1 – 20:37)
 - a. Rehoboam (10:1 – 12:16)
 - b. Abijah (13:1-22)
 - c. Asa (14:1 – 16:14)
 - d. Jehoshaphat (17:1 – 20:37)
- Samuel/Kings and Chronicles compared (from MacArthur, 481):

1. Genealogies	----	1 Chr 1-9
2. Samuel	1 Sam 1-8	----
3. Saul	1 Sam 9-31	1 Chr 10
4 David	2 Sam 1-24	1 Chr 11-29
5 Solomon	1 Kings 1-11	2 Chr 1-9
6 To Assyrian exile	1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17	2 Chr 10-27
7 To Babylonian exile and return	2 Kings 18-25	2 Chr 28-36

INTRODUCTION

In these chapters, we learn about David’s son, Solomon, as well as his immediate successors. We read about wars and prophets who strive to keep the kingdoms focused on the Lord, and sadly watch as

wickedness pulls the people of Israel apart, dividing them into separate kingdoms that fight against each other, just as they did at the end of the book of Judges.

When the Lord allowed kings to be selected for Israel, he warned the people through Samuel that choosing a king would give them significant challenges, including taking people to serve him and his court, the creation of a standing army, and great expenses and taxes (1 Samuel 8:10-18). The stories of the first three kings demonstrate that God tried to select the best among them. The Lord first selected a man who looked the part of a king, being tall and handsome—Saul (1 Samuel 9:2). But Saul was overcome by pride and selfishness. So the Lord selected a man who did not look like a king but was a man after the Lord’s heart—David (1 Samuel 13:14). He, too, was caught up in his own pride and selfishness. Finally, the third king was the epitome of wisdom--Solomon (1 Kings 3:12). But he, too, succumbed to the power of the office and his own pride. All three lost favor with the Lord and aptly demonstrated the problems the Lord warned about through Samuel.

Like the Book of Mormon, Kings was written not by the people who were there but was compiled and abridged later from contemporary or near-contemporary records (which are often cited but are now lost). Unlike the Book of Mormon, we don't know who created/edited Kings—the redactors do not identify themselves. Most likely it was scribes or court historians, some from before and some from the period after the Exile. Chronicles seems to be a parallel record, though written by Levites or Priests and thus providing a different perspective on events.

The combined book of 1 and 2 Kings (which was one scroll anciently) is the longest book in the Hebrew Bible, in terms of the number of words (25,354). By comparison, Genesis has 20,512 and Isaiah 19,123. It is only in the Septuagint (LXX, Greek translation) that the two are divided, and the KJV translators took that lead in having two books. The same is true for 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Chronicles. These notes follow 1 Kings but will call upon Chronicles when that record adds interesting and helpful information.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON (1:1 – 11:43)

INTRODUCTION

David was able to accomplish much in consolidating power under his leadership, bringing the northern and southern tribes together. He defeated Israel’s enemies, established a new capital, and collected materials for a temple for the Lord. This was the inheritance of Solomon. Solomon was able to take that foundation and extend it dramatically, capitalizing on Israel’s position on the trade routes and the relative peace of the time to enrich and expand his kingdom and influence in the region. Had he remained faithful to the Lord, he would surely have completed his reign in peace and left a great heritage to his posterity. Sadly, he allowed his achievements to give him a feeling of superiority instead of humility, and he minimized the role of the Lord in his life, adding in the worship of other gods. This ultimately led to his son losing most of the kingdom to another, creating the two often competing kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

SOLOMON TAKES THE THRONE (1:1 – 2:46)

1:1 *Now king David was old and stricken in years.* David’s long reign was nearing its end as he was more than 70 years old—ancient for that period of time. His health was such that he had poor circulation: “he gat no heat” (1:1). So they brought him a young virgin as a concubine to help warm him up, a beautiful girl from the Galilee named Abishag (“my father is a wanderer”). The text is clear that she cared for him in his situation but that the relationship was not sexual, as “the king knew her not” (1:4). There are two reasons for starting with this episode. First, it shows David’s declining health and lack of involvement in the daily affairs of the kingdom. Second, it sets up the later situation where Adonijah was a threat to Solomon, allowing the new king the justification for killing his rival.

1:5 *Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself.* Adonijah (‘YWHW is my Lord’) was David’s oldest remaining son. Older sons included: Amnon, who

was killed by Absalom for seducing his sister, Tamar; Chileab/Daniel who apparently died very young (is not mentioned other than his birth); and Absalom, who led a revolt against his father, David, and was killed by Joab. As the oldest son, Adonijah might rightly expect to be the next king. But David had already followed the Lord's command and had selected Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:6-13). So Adonijah's attempt to take the throne was a coup—which included getting chariots, horsemen, and 50 heralds (1:5), copying his older brother Absalom had done in his attempt to wrest the kingdom from David (2 Samuel 15:1). That he knew his actions were contrary to David's wishes is demonstrated by his not inviting key people who supported Solomon—specifically, Zadok, Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei, and Rei (1:8)—to the celebration. He was supported by others of David's administration, including Joab, the military leader, and Abiathar, the high priest.

1:12 **that thou mayest save thine own life.** Hearing of this attempt, Nathan went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, and the two conspired to bring it to David's attention, hoping he would publicly select Solomon to end the succession question.

1:33 **cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule.** With Nathan and Bathsheba reminding him of previous promises, David agreed with their assessment and called for his mule and had Solomon placed on it, riding up from the Gihon Spring in the Kidron valley to the sound of trumpets and cheers (1:33-40; the KJV "God save king Solomon" in 1:34, 39 is correctly rendered in the footnote of v. 34). Solomon was thus washed (by the spring, most likely), anointed, and clothed king by both Nathan and Zadok—prophet and priest.

1:50 **Adonijah feared...and caught hold on the horns of the altar.** Adonijah and his supporters heard the noise, being near the city of Jerusalem at En Rogel, and discovered what had taken place. Fearing for their lives, Adonijah's supporters fled and he ran to the altar of sacrifice, grabbing the horns as a sign of a request for tolerance (1:50; see Deuteronomy 19). Solomon assured him that if he caused no more trouble—"shew himself a worthy man"—that he would be spared, but that "if

wickedness shall be found in him [going forward], he shall die" (1:52).

2:2 **I go the way of all the earth.** With the throne secured, David and Solomon co-reigned for a period of time, a practice followed by other kings who wanted to assure the ascendancy of their chosen heir. Finally, as David knew his final days were upon him, he gave Solomon his final charges: "be thou strong...shew thyself a man" (2:2); "walk in [the Lord's] ways, to keep his statutes (2:3); punish Joab ("let not his hoar head to down to the grave in peace," 2:5) for his crimes as well as Shimei (2:8); and "shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai" (2:7) for helping David when he was exiled from Jerusalem by his son Absalom. The two men called out for justice—Joab and Shimei—were things David should have taken care of during his lifetime but he instead left them for Solomon to 'clean up.' After giving this counsel, the text records that "David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David" (2:10), and Solomon sat "upon the throne of David" (2:12).

2:17 **give me Abishag.** One of the first things to happen was that Adonijah asked for David's concubine, Abishag, for a wife. He appealed to Bathsheba, hoping that her influence with Solomon would help his case, but Solomon perceived his request as a means of establishing himself as king (since he would have the king's last wife for his own) and had his personal military man, Benaiah ("YHWH has built") kill him (2:23-25).

2:29 **Go, fall upon him.** Solomon also sent Benaiah after Joab, who had been Benaiah's military commander, to kill Joab, as David had requested. This was for supporting Adonijah's rebellion (2:30-34). As for the other key supporter of Adonijah—Abiathar the priest—Solomon told him to go home to nearby Anathoth, with the warning that he was "worthy of death" but because he had acted in his office as high priest, Solomon spared him but stripped him of his office (2:26-27). Solomon then appointed Benaiah as the new leader of the army and Zadok as the new high priest. As for David's final piece of counsel, Solomon didn't have Shimei killed but instructed him never to leave the city walls of Jerusalem again. Later when he did just that, the king had Benaiah kill Shimei as well.

2:26 **the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.** By his actions, Solomon put down all rivals. This phrase can also be translated ‘by the hand of Solomon,’ indicating it was by his own actions as opposed to the Lord’s actions in establishing him by way of promise to David long before.

How do you feel about Solomon’s actions in establishing his own authority? How does it align with the practices of other Near Eastern monarchs of the time? How does it align with his commitment to the Lord?

SOLOMON’S WISDOM (3:1 – 4:34)

If you ask people to say what character trait comes to mind when you say the name ‘Solomon,’ the majority will answer ‘wisdom.’ It was a gift from God to him. Yet even as we are being told of his great wisdom, the hints of his ultimate failure are planted. The example we get of his wisdom is also fascinatingly symbolic of his later problems.

3:1 **took Pharaoh’s daughter.** The JST adds “to wife” at the end of this phrase, making it clear in what way Solomon took Pharaoh’s daughter (the Hebrew word could also mean to buy or take by force). The JST also makes it clear that because of this action, “The Lord was not pleased with Solomon,” but that he “blessed Solomon for the people’s sake only.”

3:3 **Solomon loved the Lord.** The JST clarifies that Solomon first received blessings from the Lord because of his position and *then* he began to love the Lord and call on his name. The implication is that without the blessings, Solomon would not have felt the same love and commitment to the Lord. Later in

his life, this proved to be part of his challenge, because his loyalty to the Lord was easily overcome by the influence of his foreign wives.

3:5 **In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream.** Solomon had two recorded experiences with God—this happy one at Gibeon in a dream, and another at the time of the temple dedication (1 Kings 9:1-9), which included a conditional promise of great blessings and strong words of warning if the commandments were ignored. Gibeon is where the sun and the moon stood still for Israel under Joshua (Joshua 10) and where the Tabernacle rested for a time (1 Chronicles 21:29). Solomon went there before the temple was built in Jerusalem to worship, sacrificing “a thousand burnt offerings” (3:4). At night, he had a dream in which the Lord said, “Ask what I shall give thee” (3:5). Solomon’s reply in the JST is even more humble than in the KJV: “O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant instead of David my father, **over thy people, and I am but a little child and I know not how to lead them, to go out or come in before them.** And thy servant is **am as a little child** in the midst of thy people **which whom** thou hast chosen” (3:7-8). Solomon humbly asked for “an understanding heart” and discernment “between good and bad” (3:9) that he might judge the people. Because it was an unselfish request, the Lord granted him “a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none **made king over Israel like unto thee**” (3:12), the JST making the comparison not with every person that ever lived but just against other kings of Israel. Then Solomon was promised long days if he was obedient and didn’t “**walk in unrighteousness as did thy father, David**” (JST 3:14).

Does Solomon’s request surprise you in any way? What gift would you ask for in a similar situation?

3:16 **Then came there two women.** As an example of this great gift of wisdom Solomon received from God, the text gives us only this one encounter with two women. It states that they were both harlots living in the same house (presumably a house of prostitution). Both women had babies but one died, so the mother of the dead child changed out the babies while the other was sleeping. They came to the king to determine who should get the living child. Solomon threatened to cut the child in two and give each half, eliciting a loving reply from one woman and a spiteful one from the other, allowing him to judge. As a result, “all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him” (3:28).

The story has great symbolic significance for Solomon and may have been deliberately selected by the editors of Kings for that reason. After his death and because of the great burdens he placed upon the people, his kingdom was divided into two, both of which most often betrayed the Lord. This breaking of the covenant with God is represented in scripture as an adulterous one, even “playing the harlot” (e.g., Jeremiah 2:20; Ezekiel 16:41). How ironic that the only example of Solomon’s wisdom should also portray the sad outcome of his rule.

While there are no other examples, Solomon’s wisdom is described as legendary, and “there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (4:34).

4:7 **Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel.** Chapter 4 is mostly an account of how Solomon put agents over the various divisions of his kingdom and thereby collected taxes in the form of food and other items to support his administration—and unfortunately many of his own tribe of Judah. His use of the people and their resources for his own benefit and the description of his armies matches the warning of what kings would do given by Samuel (1 Samuel 8:10-18), another hint of bad things to come.

How would Solomon’s reign and Israel’s history have been different if the kings had followed King Benjamin’s model of servant-leadership (see Mosiah 3-5)?

BUILDING PROJECTS (5:1 – 8:66)

After establishing himself as king, Solomon started two massive construction projects in Jerusalem—the temple and his own palace. This section concludes with a huge dedication ceremony during which Solomon himself offered the dedicatory prayer.

5:1 **Hiram king of Tyre.** There are two Hiram from Tyre mentioned in this account. The king also dealt with David and developed a great fondness for him. The second Hiram from Tyre (7:13) was a craftsman who helped with the temple construction.

5:3 **David my father could not build an house.** Chronicles gives more details about this, explaining that David wanted to build the temple but the Lord forbid it, so he instead gathered many of the materials that would be needed and gave the charge to Solomon to build it (1 Chronicles 22).

5:10 **Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees.** The two kings “made a league” (5:12) or treaty whereby Hiram supplied building materials and expertise for Solomon’s building projects and Solomon gave Hiram’s kingdom food in form of crops that did not grow well on the northern coast. Both kingdoms benefitted by the trade.

5:13 **Solomon raised a levy.** To supply the necessary labor for his projects, Solomon required huge numbers of workers to be supplied by the various tribes throughout the kingdom. Some of them were perhaps Canaanites who were now subject to Solomon’s rule, but others were Israelites conscripted to provide manpower for the increasing demands of the king.

6:2 **the length thereof was threescore cubits.** The temple was about 100-120 feet long and 35-40 feet wide, a very large building for that day.

6:4 **windows of narrow lights.** The Hebrew means ‘recessed, latticed windows.’ Models of such latticed windows have been found among archaeological excavations in nearby Syria on temples of similar size and date.

6:20 **the oracle in the forepart.** The Holy of Holies is described as twenty cubits square. In other words, the place where the Ark of the Covenant rested was a cube.

6:38 **So was he seven years in building it.** The temple took seven years to complete, with the ashlar (cut stone) walls covered in cedar wood paneling, gold, carvings, and other details that made the house a very elaborate and beautiful structure.

7:1 **Solomon was building his own house thirteen years.** The palace appears to have been built after the temple (see the total of 20 years in 9:10). It is interesting that Solomon’s palace took nearly twice as long as the temple to build. There could be many valid reasons for this, but some scholars note that it might indicate Solomon’s greater concern with his own living quarters, which was every bit as elaborate and impressive as the temple and probably larger.

7:13 **Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre.** This is not the king but an artisan with the same name who also happened to be from Tyre, whose mother was a Jew (7:14). Hiram was responsible for the items that were in and around the temple, such as the pillars, the lavers (fonts) for washing, the utensils (shovels, bowls, etc.), the menorah, and more.

22 **spread forth his hands.** Solomon offered the dedicatory prayer for the temple, with hands held high in the attitude of prayer and priesthood. This blessing in 8:23-61, was a model for D&C 109, Joseph Smith’s dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland temple (and thus all subsequent temples). It contains specific requests from the Lord:

- v. 28-30 (answers to prayers)
- v. 33-39 (forgiveness of sins)
- v. 35-36 (rain or prosperity)
- v. 37 (help during famine or sickness)
- v. 44-45 (help during battle)

Said President Ezra Taft Benson:

In the peace of these lovely temples, sometimes we find solutions to the serious problems of life. Under the influence of the Spirit, sometimes pure knowledge flows to us there. Temples are places of personal revelation. When I have been weighed down by a problem or a difficulty, I have gone to the House of the Lord with a prayer in my heart for answers. These answers have come in clear and unmistakable ways. ("What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple," *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 8).

How can attending the temple help us when we are weighed down with challenges?

SOLOMON’S PEAK (9:1 – 10:29)

9:2 **The Lord appeared to Solomon the second time.** Evidently through another dream (as he had experienced at Gibeon), Solomon saw the Lord again and the Lord told him many things, contained in verses 3-9. This includes that the temple was “hallowed” by God and that he had “put [his] name there” (9:3); that if Solomon would walk uprightly, “the throne of [his] kingdom” would be established forever (9:5); if Israel did not obey the Lord, they would be cut off from their land and this new temple (9:7); if that happened, those that saw it would declare their wickedness (9:9).

9:10 **twenty years.** The temple took seven years and Solomon’s palace thirteen, for a total of twenty years of intense building projects. Not only did Hiram of Tyre receive food each year but Solomon also gave him “twenty cities in the land of Galilee” (9:11) in exchange for the wood, gold, and expertise Hiram

provided, though apparently Hiram didn't think highly of the cities (9:13).

9:14 **six-score talents of gold.** Hiram's gift to Solomon was about four tons (8,000 pounds) of gold.

9:15 **Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.** These three cities are mentioned as having been built up by Solomon. The archaeological record supports that, showing significant construction in all three towns during this period, including walls and large gates to protect the city.

9:26 **Solomon made a navy of ships.** At the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba, Solomon based his navy, giving him trade and influence in the Red Sea area. This statement leads us to the visit of a queen from the southwest Arabian peninsula in chapter 10.

10:1 **the queen of Sheba.** This unnamed queen probably came from southwest Arabia—modern day Yemen. Benefitting from the frankincense trade, this kingdom would have come into contact with Solomon through his navy and trade in the area. The queen came to see for herself if the stories she heard were true, and was impressed by what she found: "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and thy wisdom" (10:6).

10:24 **all the earth sought to Solomon.** Solomon was perhaps the most famous king in the history of Israel, with control of the trade routes between the major sections of the ancient near east. His position brought him and Israel great wealth, as much as 25 tons of gold per year (10:14).

SOLOMON'S DECLINE (11:1-43)

Unfortunately, Solomon's achievements, power, wealth, and honor all eventually made him feel above God's laws. Moreover, unlike David, Solomon felt no need to repent, and went to his grave still caught up in the sins that he choose to follow.

11:1 **Solomon loved many strange women.** "Strange" here is better translated 'foreign.' See Jacob 2:23-24 and D&C 132:38. The number in 11:3 might be slightly exaggerated, but there are other examples in the ancient near east of kings with

hundreds of women in their harems. It was a symbol of power and status.

11:4 **his wives turned away his heart after other gods.** The text does not say that Solomon abandoned the worship of Jehovah (in fact, it implies that he still worshipped him in 11:6) but that he opened his worship to include all the gods of his many foreign wives.

11:11 **the Lord said unto Solomon.** This word of the Lord certainly came by way of a prophet, though the messenger is not named. The message is one of final judgment: the kingdom will be taken from Solomon's heirs and given mostly to another (11:13 says "one tribe" will remain, but the Septuagint has 'two tribes' in verse 36, which is more accurate).

11:14 **the Lord stirred up an adversary.** As Solomon grew older, old enemies from his father's time began to pester him on at least two fronts, one from Edom and other from Syria/Damascus.

11:26 **Jeroboam the son of Nebat.** Here we are introduced to Jeroboam ('the people will contend'), who was a part of Solomon's administration and sent to be one of his rulers to the northern tribes. As he was going, he met the prophet Ahijah ('brother of YHWH'). Ahijah took Jeroboam's new coat and tore it into twelve pieces, giving ten to Jeroboam and declaring that the Lord was going to take away ten of the tribes from Solomon's son because of Solomon's worship of other gods and give them to Jeroboam. The prophet also promised Jeroboam that if he were faithful the Lord, that he could have "a sure house, as I built for David"—a lasting dynasty over the northern tribes of Israel.

11:33 The JST for this verse is telling: "... to do that which is right in mine eyes, and ~~to keep~~ my statutes and judgments, **and his heart is become as David, his father, and he repenteth not**, as did David his father, **that I may forgive him.**" Solomon did not repent of his wrong-doing, as David did after Nathan confronted him.

11:38 The JST changes in this verse show that David's sin was a contributing factor in the division of the kingdom, as were the sins of the people themselves: "... as David my servant did **in the day that I blessed him; . . . And for the transgression**

of David, and also for the people, I have rent the kingdom, and for this I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.”

11:40 **Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam.** The words of Ahijah got back to Solomon, causing Jeroboam to flee to Egypt for his life until Solomon’s death.

11:43 **Solomon slept with his fathers.** After a long reign (“forty years” in 11:42), Solomon died and was buried in the same place as his father, David. His son Rehoboam (“a people has enlarged”) became the new king.

How did Solomon’s wisdom, wealth, and power contribute to his downfall? How do we prevent our strengths from being our downfall?

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve said the following:

How . . . do we prevent our strengths from becoming our downfall? The quality we must

cultivate is humility. Humility is the great protector. Humility is the antidote against pride. Humility is the catalyst for all learning, especially spiritual things. Through the prophet Moroni, the Lord gave us this great insight into the role of humility: ‘I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them’ (Ether 12:27).

We might also say that if men and women humble themselves before God, he will help them prevent their strengths from becoming weaknesses that the adversary can exploit to destroy them. . . . If we are humble and teachable, hearkening to the commandments of God, the counsel of his leaders, and the promptings of his Spirit, we can be guided in how to use our spiritual gifts, our accomplishments, and all of our other strengths for righteousness. And we can be guided in how to avoid Satan’s efforts to use our strengths to cause our downfall.

In all of this, we should remember and rely on the Lord’s direction and promise: ‘Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers’ (D&C 112:10) (“Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 19).

THE DIVIDED MONARCHY (12:1 – 22:53)

INTRODUCTION

Following the death of Solomon, Israel and Judah split into two kingdoms, never to be united again prior to both being carried away by enemies. Two nations that both should have had Jehovah as their king both struggled to stay faithful, with Judah succeeding only marginally better than their northern cousins and lasting only about 100 years longer. But the Lord in his mercy continued to work with them, sending prophets and the word of God in many different ways, getting truth out to as many as would listen. In this section, we encounter several of

those prophets and kings, with special emphasis on two—Elijah and Ahab.

REHOBAM AND JEROBOAM (12:1 – 14:31)

12:1 **Rehoboam went to Shechem.** Seeking the support of the northern tribes, Rehoboam went to the ancient place of Shechem, where the tribes had recommitted themselves to the Lord after entering the land (Joshua 8, 24). Hearing of Solomon’s death, Jeroboam returned from Egypt to participate in and even lead this gathering.

12:4 **make thou the grievous service of thy father . . . lighter.** The people demanded a lessening of the great burdens Solomon had placed upon them. Not only did they have high taxes but they suffered under forced labor, being made to help with the many building projects Solomon planned and executed. Rehoboam consulted with two groups about this request. The first was the “old men” (12:6) who directed him to agree to a lessening of the demands in order to build loyalty. The second group was the “young men” (12:8) who had been raised in privilege like Rehoboam. They counseled a harsh reply, saying that the new king would be even more demanding than his father. Rehoboam listened to the brash, young group, and as a result the people rebelled.

12:20 **made him king over all Israel.** Having told Rehoboam they wanted nothing to do with him, the representatives of the northern tribes called Jeroboam out and made him their king instead.

12:22 **Shemaiah the man of God.** Rehoboam’s reaction to the rejection of the northern tribes was to return to Jerusalem and raise an army. But a prophet came to them and said the Lord didn’t want them to fight, and the people listened to Shemaiah.

12:28 **made two calves of gold.** Fearing the people in his new kingdom would want to return to Jerusalem to worship and would thus be loyal to Rehoboam, Jeroboam created two cultic centers within the northern kingdom of Israel—Bethel in the south (near the Judahite border) and Dan in the far north (12:29). He placed a golden calf at each one, created his own non-Levite priesthood offices, and set up feasts to rival those of Jerusalem but on different dates to break from tradition.

13:1 **there came a man of God.** While Jeroboam was officiating at one of his new feasts, offering sacrifices at the altar, an unnamed prophet came up to him, calling out Jeroboam’s false worship and prophesying that one day a king named Josiah would come to this place and burn idolatrous priests and men’s bones on the altar, to defile it. He gave a sign that the altar itself “shall be rent” (13:3). When Jeroboam tried to capture the prophet, his hand suddenly “dried up” (13:4) and the altar was broken in two. The king pleaded for his hand to be restored,

which the Lord granted through the prophet, then sought to reward the prophet for the healing.

13:8 **I will not go in with thee.** The man of God told Jeroboam that he could not go with him because the Lord had told him to deliver his message and go straight home, and he wanted to be obedient to the Lord. It also represented a clear rejection of and opposition to Jeroboam, since declining such an invitation signified hostility.

13:11 **an old prophet in Beth-el.** Another unnamed prophet living in Bethel heard about the man of God’s encounter with Jeroboam and went out to find him, which he did while the man of God was taking a break under a tree.

13:18 **an angel spake unto me.** In the KJV, it states that the prophet was lying when he said an angel told him to bring the prophet back to dinner. The JST is clear that “he lied **not**” but that the angel asked the old prophet to do this that the man of God might be tested. The man of God unfortunately failed the test and went back with the old prophet to eat.

13:24 **a lion met him by the way, and slew him.** After he left the house of the old prophet, the man of God was killed by a lion. The lion didn’t eat his body or hurt his donkey, but stood by him so everyone would know what killed him. When the old prophet heard, he went and retrieved the body and buried the man of God in his own sepulcher. This story was later told to king Josiah as he was destroying the altar and fulfilling this prophesy, so he left the bones of the man of God alone (2 Kings 23:15-20).

14:1 **Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick.** Jeroboam’s son was gravely ill and he hoped for a blessing from the Lord to heal him, in spite of his sins. Thinking he could trick a blessing out of the old, blind prophet Ahijah (who had prophesied about Jeroboam becoming king), he sent his wife in disguise.

14:6 **Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam.** The Lord told the prophet Jeroboam’s wife was coming, so even though he was blind, he knew exactly who she was and why she was there. However, his pronouncement was not the one she sought—he said that her child would die the moment she returned home. He also said that because of

Jeroboam's sins, he would lose the kingdom to another, and that Israel itself would be taken captive "beyond the river" (14:15) because of their worship of false gods.

14:19 *the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel*. See the important footnote for this verse.

14:20 *Jeroboam reigned . . . two and twenty years*. We learn nothing else from the book of Kings about Jeroboam. We do know that his son Nadab reigned after him.

14:21 *Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah*. Throughout the rest of 1 and 2 Kings, the narrative will switch back and forth between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. In many cases, the reigns of the kings will refer to each other, giving a good relative chronology that in some cases can be tied to non-Biblical and even astronomical calendars, so that we begin to have more firm dates for many of the events from here forward. See the Bible Dictionary under "Chronology."

14:22 *Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord*. Israel wasn't the only people in violation of God's laws. Judah also built images and altars to other gods and worshipped them.

14:25 *Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem*. In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, the alliance his father had formed with Egypt was shattered when a new pharaoh, also called Sheshonk, founded the Twenty-Second Dynasty in 931 B.C. He attacked many towns in Judah and Israel and other areas, as reflected in the archaeology of the period. In his attack on Jerusalem, he was able to take or elicit tribute that include much of the wealth Solomon had accumulated, such that Rehoboam's guard was forced to make their shields out of brass (14:27).

14:31 *Abijam his son reigned in his stead*. Rehoboam spent his life recovering from the loss of the northern tribes. The record says that he and Jeroboam were at war "all their days" (14:30) but otherwise we know nothing else about him.

VARIOUS KINGS (15:1 – 16:22)

Chapters 15 and 16 go quickly through the kings following Rehoboam and Jeroboam. All of the kings of Israel are presented as sinful, while some of the kings of Judah are righteous. The ones in these chapters can be summarized as follows:

KINGS OF ISRAEL

Nadab, son of Jeroboam: reigned only 2 years; killed by Baasha (15:25-26).

Baasha, son of Ahijah of Issachar: killed the whole house of Jeroboam, reigned 24 years (15:27-34; 16:5-6).

Elah, son of Baasha: reigned 2 years, killed by his servant, Zimri, while drunk (16:6-10).

Zimri: killed the whole house of Baasha; reigned only 7 days before burning his house down around him after being attacked by Omri (16:11-20).

Tibni: Attempted to be king after Zimri's death, fighting Omri in a civil war, but died in the war (16:21-22).

KINGS OF JUDAH

Abijam, son of Rehoboam: reigned only 3 years, sinful (15:1-8).

Asa, son of Abijam: reigned 41 years, his "heart was perfect" (15:14). Took away idols and did repairs to the temple (15:9-24).

Jehoshaphat, son of Asa: Only introduced in 15:24; more about him in 1 Kings 22.

THE HOUSE OF OMRI (16:23 – 22:53)

The rest of the book of 1 Kings covers the deeds of Omri and his son, Ahab. Omri came into the story after Zimri, an army captain under Elah, the son of Baasha, killed the drunken king and attempted to take power. Omri was Zimri's military leader and besieged the city Tirtzah where Zimri had barricaded himself. Seeing the battle was lost, Zimri burnt the king's house he had occupied, killing himself in the fire. After killing a rival Tibni, Omri gained sole control of the kingdom of Israel.

BA'AL WORSHIP (16:23-34)

16:24 **he bought the hill.** Since the previous capital of Tirzah was destroyed in the brief civil war, Omri purchased a hill and small village from a man named Shemer. He called the place Samaria after the previous owner and made it his capital city, greatly expanding it with walls and a large palace, according to the archaeological record.

16:28 **Ahab his son reigned in his stead.** Omri was bad, “worse than all that were before him” (16:25). But his son, Ahab, was worse yet: “Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (16:33). He married the daughter of the king of Sidon, Jezebel, and together they served the god of Sidon, Ba'al, building altars and idols to him and Asherah, a prominent female deity (“a grove” in 16:33).

OPPOSITION BY ELIJAH (17:1 – 21:29)

17:1 **Elijah the Tishbite.** In response to Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah suddenly appears on the scene in chapter 17. Though one of the most well-known and celebrated prophets in the Old Testament, little is known of Elijah's background. His name means ‘YHWH is my God.’ Though the location of his home town is unknown, it was somewhere east of the Jordan River in the country of Gilead.

17:1 **there shall not be dew nor rain.** Understanding Ba'al helps to clarify why the Lord choose the signs and activities he did for Elijah during these confrontations. There were many local manifestations of Ba'al in the various regions of the near east. In Samaria, Ba'al was the god of the sky and was therefore responsible for rain, lightning, and sunshine. He was the male representation of fertility, aligned with his female counterpart, Asherah, who was the consort of El but often associated with Ba'al. Ba'al was considered fickle, hunting, chasing women, or taking a nap when it pleased him. Elijah's first sign to Ahab thus pitted Jehovah squarely against Ba'al. If Elijah was able to stop the rain and even the dew in the name of Jehovah, it proved the powerlessness of Ba'al, who was supposed to be in control of moisture.

17:3 **the brooke Cherith.** Elijah first hid himself from Ahab somewhere near the Jordan river in a ravine that had a brook named Cherith. There the Lord sent ravens with food for him twice a day, and water from the brook.

17:9 **get thee to Zarephath.** With no place in Israel that was safe for him, the Lord next sent Elijah to a town in the land of Sidon. Today this place is called Sarafend in modern Lebanon.

17:13 **make me thereof a little cake first.** It took great faith for the widow to feed this unknown prophet first when she was nearly out of food. But she did as he asked and was blessed with abundant food during the famine.

17:21 **he stretched himself upon the child three times.** The widow's son took sick and died. Elijah took the young man up on the roof where he slept and put him on his own bed. After praying for the Lord's help, Elijah stretched himself on the youth three times (or as the LXX says, ‘breathed on the child thrice’) and he was revived. This was a strength to the testimony of the widow.

18:7 **Elijah met him.** The Lord commanded Elijah to return and give a message to Ahab after three years of drought. At the same time, the man in charge of Ahab's house, Obadiah, was sent by Ahab to look for the prophet. Obadiah was a secret follower of Jehovah, having saved a hundred prophets from Jezebel's wrath. When he met Elijah, he fell down out of respect.

18:12 **he shall slay me.** Elijah had instructed Obadiah to tell Ahab he was waiting to talk to him, but Obadiah feared that Elijah would not be there when he got back and he would lose his life. Only after Elijah assured him in the name of the Lord that he would be in the same place did Obadiah go deliver the message.

18:18 **I have not troubled Israel; but thou.** When they met, Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel, but this response from Elijah puts the blame for the drought where it belongs.

18:19 **gather to me all Israel.** Elijah's proposal was an ultimate showdown between him and the priests of Ba'al and Asherah on Mount Carmel, a 1,600 foot

ridge overlooking the Mediterranean sea and the Jezreel Valley.

18:21 *How long halt ye between two opinions?*

Elijah's first words to the assembled host on Mount Carmel were a question—why were they sitting on the fence between worshipping Ba'al and YHWH?

18:24 *the God that answereth by fire, let him be*

God. The proposed solution to the fence-sitting was a sacrificial contest. Both parties would put an animal on an altar and call on God. Whichever god brought down fire from heaven should be the true God. This contest played right to Ba'al's strengths; as the god of lightning, he should be able to bring fire down from heaven with ease. But if he could not and Jehovah could, that showed the power of the Lord.

18:27 *at noon, that Elijah mocked them.* After watching the priests of Ba'al try all day without success to get a response from their god, Elijah prodded them to cry louder, because perhaps Ba'al was talking or hunting or on a trip or sleeping. Attributing such human activities and conditions to a god was typical of many cultures at this time.

18:36 *at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice.* Elijah gave them nearly the entire day. At about 3:00 pm, it was his turn. After preparing the sacrifice and drenching the entire altar, animal, and wood with significant amount of water, he approached the altar, he prayed that the Lord would hear him. Fire from heaven immediately came down, consuming not only the animal but the wood, water, rocks, and even the dust, meaning there was nothing left but bedrock. The people all fell down and believed and Elijah called for the death of the prophets of Ba'al—the price for losing the contest. Then he told Ahab to go home because it was going to rain.

19:2 *Jezebel sent a messenger.* Elijah must have thought that with his great victory, he was now safe, but Jezebel was angry her prophets had been killed. She sent a message to Elijah that she was going to do the same to him, and he fled to Beer-sheba, a town in the kingdom of Judah.

19:4 *It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life.* Elijah was discouraged by his three years of isolation, hiding, and waiting. He had a great victory

but then his life was immediately in danger again. He tells the Lord he is ready to end his mortal mission for he has had no more success than those who went before him.

19:5 *an angel touched him.* In response, an angel woke him up and gave him food. He went back to sleep and the angel came a second time with more food, but also telling him to go to Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai) and fast for many days “in the strength of that meat” (19:8).

19:9 *What doest thou here, Elijah?* The Lord's question does not reflect a lack of knowledge on God's part—he knew exactly why Elijah was there. Rather, it was an opportunity for Elijah to reflect on what he wanted to get from the encounter and to vent his feelings a bit. Elijah used it to complain about his suffering and solitude in the work of the Lord.

19:12 *a still small voice.* Elijah experienced first a wind, then an earthquake, then a fire, but he perceived that these were not true manifestations of God, though other cultures would certainly have seen them that way. Instead, he felt the quiet affirmation of the Spirit, ‘a small whisper of a voice’ (author's translation).

19:13 *What doest thou here, Elijah?* The question was repeated after the lesson was learned—yet Elijah's response was identical the second time. But this time the Lord gives Elijah a commission—go anoint a new king in Damascus, a new king in Israel, a Elisha as his own successor. As reassurance, the Lord added that Elijah was not alone—“I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal” (19:18).

How has the Spirit spoken to you? How has the Lord helped you understand your own trials in their eternal context?

19:21 **Then he arose, and went after Elijah.** Finding the man Elisha ('God is salvation') who was plowing in the field, Elijah called him by putting his own coat ("mantle" in 19:19) on Elisha, who then followed Elijah.

20:1 **Ben-hadad the king of Syria.** Chapter 20 is about a battle between Ahab and this king. Ben-hadad is a title meaning 'son of Hadad' (a god) and thus fits several potential kings from this time. In the battle Ben-hadad, who is surely fighting for trading routes to be opened again to him that had been closed after Ahab married Jezebel and cemented an alliance with Phoenicia and Israel. Though the first verse says he "besieged Samaria," from the text it is clear that it was a battle over a larger area, with messengers coming and going and the ability to rally soldiers from other areas. Ben-hadad got the upper hand at first and Ahab surrendered (20:4) but as the demands became too much, Ahab called for help and was able to get an army large enough to counterattack. As Ben-hadad and his leaders were drinking (20:12 says "in their pavilions" but the Hebrew could refer to a location, probably Succoth), Ahab attacked and was victorious (20:21). A prophet came instructing Ahab to kill Ben-hadad (20:13, 22) but in the moment of victory, Ahab was magnanimous and instead had the Syrian king ride in his chariot with him (20:33-34). Ahab was then condemned by the prophet for not following this command of the Lord.

21:1 **Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard.** Chapter 21 is the second story that shows why Ahab (and Jezebel by extension) was worthy of the Lord's judgment. Next to the palace in Samaria was a wonderful vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. First, Ahab offered to buy it (21:2), but the land was family land and under the Law of Moses, Naboth was not allowed to sell it (21:3). Sad, Ahab explained the situation to Jezebel (21:6), who decided to take matters into her own hands. She arranged for false witnesses (21:10) who testified of Naboth's blasphemy, and he was stoned (which would have started with the witnesses). With Naboth accused of a crime and dead, Ahab could take possession of the vineyard. But even as he was admiring his new acquisition, Elijah appeared condemning his actions

and telling Ahab that his blood would be licked up by dogs in the same place as Naboth's (21:19). He also said that all of Ahab's male heirs would be killed (21:21-22), and finished by saying that Jezebel would die and be eaten by dogs by the wall of Jezreel (21:23). Ahab was overcome by these pronouncements. Rending his clothing, he fasted and prayed (21:27), and so the Lord told Elijah that the evil coming on his house would still happen but be delayed until after his death as a result (21:29).

DEATH OF AHAB (22:1-53)

22:1 **three years without war.** After the defeat of Syria, there was a period of peace. During that time, Ahab made peace with Judah, which was led by Jehoshaphat the king, son of Asa (22:2, 41).

22:3 **Ramoth in Gilead.** This important town was in Israelite hands after the conquest of Joshua but had since been lost. It was a key location on trade routes linking the Jordan and Jezreel valleys. Ahab proposed to Jehoshaphat that they combine their forces and retake it, to which Jehoshaphat agreed.

22:5 **Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord.** Jehoshaphat wanted prophetic confirmation before undertaking this battle. Ahab called four hundred men who came and all said they should go to battle. But they did not speak in the name of Jehovah (notice that "Lord" in 22:6 is in normal type—it is 'adonai' in Hebrew, not YHWH).

22:7 **Is there not here a prophet of the Lord.** Jehoshaphat wanted a prophet of Jehovah to come speak to them. Why didn't they call Elijah? Probably because their last encounter was when Elijah prophesied of the death of Ahab and his family. But Ahab wasn't excited about the other possibility—"Micaiah the son of Imlah"—because "he doth not prophesy good concerning me" (22:8).

22:15 **Go, and prosper.** The servants had warned Micaiah that the king wanted to go to war, so his initial response was probably dripping with sarcasm, even though he said just the words the servants had suggested. Ahab recognized the tone: "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?" (22:16). So Micaiah got serious and said that

he saw Israel on the hills without a shepherd, meaning that Ahab would die, to which Ahab cried to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" (22:18).

22:27 **Put this fellow in the prison.** Micaiah accused the false prophets of lying according to what the king wanted to hear and for his trouble he got put in prison and the two kings went to battle.

22:34 **smote the king of Israel.** A random arrow caught the disguised Ahab in just the right place. He pulled back from the battle in his chariot but died by the end of the day.

22:38 **washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria.** Just as Elijah had said, the dogs came and licked his blood. The phrase in this verse, "they washed his armour" is a mistranslation and should say, 'where the harlots bathed,' with some translations adding that the prostitutes washed themselves in the water mixed with his blood.

22:40 **Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.** His reign will be short (2 Kings 1).

22:41 **Jehoshaphat.** The record turns briefly back to the king of Judah, giving his age and reign years. More importantly, it states that he followed after the righteous efforts of Asa his father, eliminating the idols and male prostitution going on in that time. Kings offers little more about Jehoshaphat but 2 Chronicles 17 does. There we learn that he worked hard to promote the worship of Jehovah, eliminating the altars and idols of other gods. In addition, he commissioned Levites to take the scriptures out to the people and teach them all throughout Judah (2 Chronicles 17:8-9), so that all the people in his

kingdom would have the chance to understand the Law of the Lord.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught:

"Often we spend great effort in trying to increase the activity levels in our stakes. We work diligently to raise the percentages of those attending sacrament meetings. We labor to get a higher percentage of our young men on missions. We strive to improve the numbers of those marrying in the temple. All of these are commendable efforts and important to the growth of the kingdom. But when individual members and families immerse themselves in the scriptures regularly and consistently, these other areas of activity will automatically come. Testimonies will increase. Commitment will be strengthened. Families will be fortified. Personal revelation will flow" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], 44).

How has your personal scripture study enhanced your testimony? How has it brought you closer to the Lord and increased your ability to obey?

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