

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

#### Week 9, chapters 5 and 6

We left off at verse 6 of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 5 last time, the mention of an exorbitant number of horses belonging to King Solomon's monarchy being the subject. In the preceding passages we read of an equally exorbitant amount of food that the king's large and growing government required, and which the common folk of Israel had to supply in the form of a levy.

King **Shlomo** is as much businessman as king, and he uses that ability to make the Kingdom of Israel the envy of the world. Not long after being crowned he ran his country as a CEO runs a corporation, with economics as the overriding priority. But at this early point in his career it seemed as though the spiritual man within him held the reigns of his life as he went about ordering his kingdom in a way that made the lives of his citizens more prosperous and peaceful than they had ever known (even if the burdens of centralized government and the high national aspirations of their king put an ever-growing weight upon their shoulders). For the moment **Shlomo** seemed to be carefully navigating along a razor's edge that balances the kind of earthly wisdom that brings fame and wealth with the higher kind that exalts a nation in God's eyes.

Thus in his early reign Solomon wrote down timeless words of wisdom and advice that surely honestly represented his righteous views on matters that he faced, and that we all must deal with on a day to day basis. In Proverbs 3 God's anointed king who was promised unmatched divine wisdom, and given long life as a conditional gift for obeying God's commandments, says this:

#### Proverbs 3:13-18 CJB

<sup>13</sup> *Happy the person who finds wisdom, the person who acquires understanding;*

<sup>14</sup> *for her profit exceeds that of silver, gaining her is better than gold,*

***15 she is more precious than pearls- nothing you want can compare with her.***

***16 Long life is in her right hand, riches and honor in her left.***

***17 Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.***

***18 She is a tree of life to those who grasp her; whoever holds fast to her will be made happy.***

As true and profound as his statement is, already in chapter 5 we are seeing ominous signs that the evil inclination remained alive and well within **Shlomo**; so, much like his father, he loved God with all his heart on the one hand, and inexplicably on the other hand he could not resist the temptations that the world offered him. I think perhaps no one summed up Solomon's problem, my problem and yours, better than the Apostle Paul when it comes to the maddening dilemma of our knowing and loving God and yet inevitably at times doing what we know is wicked and destructive and shameful.

#### **Rom 7:14-24 CJB**

***14 For we know that the Torah is of the Spirit; but as for me, I am bound to the old nature, sold to sin as a slave.***

***15 I don't understand my own behavior- I don't do what I want to do; instead, I do the very thing I hate!***

***16 Now if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am agreeing that the Torah is good.***

***17 But now it is no longer "the real me" doing it, but the sin housed inside me.***

***18 For I know that there is nothing good housed inside me- that is, inside my old nature. I can want what is good, but I can't do it!***

***19 For I don't do the good I want; instead, the evil that I don't want is what I do!***

***20 But if I am doing what "the real me" doesn't want, it is no longer "the real me" doing it but the sin housed inside me.***

***21 So I find it to be the rule, a kind of perverse "torah," that although I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me!***

*<sup>22</sup> For in my inner self I completely agree with God's Torah;*

*<sup>23</sup> but in my various parts, I see a different "torah," one that battles with the Torah in my mind and makes me a prisoner of sin's "torah," which is operating in my various parts.*

*<sup>24</sup> What a miserable creature I am! Who will rescue me from this body bound for death?*

As much as God had given to Solomon he didn't have what even the poorest, weakest, most oppressed Believer has today to help him: Christ.

Let's re-read a portion of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 5. Let me remind you that if you are following along with a Bible that is based on the Greek Septuagint, what I am about to read will be in Chapter 4 starting in verse 29.

### RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS CHAPTER 5:9 – end

The first words of verse 9 are that God gave **Shlomo** exceptional wisdom and understanding as well as a vast heart. Let's look at the Hebrew words used here to put a finer point on what the intent of this passage is because it goes a long way toward helping us to understand just who this famous man was. But this also helps us to better grasp just what wisdom is, as it is presented to us in the Bible.

The English word wisdom is in Hebrew **chokmah**, understanding is **tabunah**, and vast heart is **rochab leib**. **Chokmah** indeed means wisdom, but more in the sense of administrative acumen, good decision making, shrewdness and prudence. In other words it is a practical type of wisdom that we all hope to have, but leaders in particular require. We will appropriate this wisdom from one of two sources: as a gift from the Lord, or from our evil inclinations that lead us to deal with the world in all of our carnality. There is no separate Hebrew word for Godly Wisdom as opposed to Carnal Wisdom; **chokmah** covers both and it is within the context that we must discern the lower and the higher kinds.

**Tabunah** means understanding, but it also means it in the sense of an ability to apply the **chokmah**, the wisdom, to any given situation. Understanding is what a teacher has (if they're a good teacher) and understanding also leads to using what is known from a variety of disciplines.

**Rochab Leb** translated literally means vast heart, but in modern Western thought and vocabulary it MEANS expansive **mind**. I'll remind you again that in the Bible heart means mind because from the earliest to the latest Bible times, it was believed by all known cultures that the heart organ was where conscious thought took place. So the idea with the incorporation of these 3 attributes of **chokmah**, **tabunah**, and **rochab leb** to describe **Shlomo** is that he explored and understood a wide variety of knowledge. He wasn't a specialist; rather he was a brilliant generalist who had great skills and interest in many subjects and disciplines; he is what we today might call a Renaissance Man.

That the term **chokmah** is a generic term used throughout the Bible for most any kind of wisdom (spirit filled or earthly) is immediately validated in verse 10 as we're told that Solomon had greater wisdom (**chokmah**) than the children of the east or even of Egypt. What kind of wisdom did Egypt and the children of the east possess? It was of two different kinds; the children of the east possessed cunning and shrewdness. It is the kind that we usually assign to Oriental traders and merchants. From this point forward in the Bible you can generally take any mention of the children of the east to be Ishmaelites; Arabs.

As for the Egyptians, they were known for their technology, engineering and science. They were early intellectuals who excelled in advanced farming, animal breeding techniques, designing and building of enormous structures, medicine, advancing the art of writing, and military armaments. It is the kind of wisdom that today we assign to Western cultures. So it is within the context both of shrewdness in business and politics, and intellectualism, that Solomon is being praised.

And the thing that is so critical for us to see in this is that although Solomon's great capacity for understanding and knowledge came from Yehoveh that doesn't mean that Solomon always used it in ways that reflected Yehoveh's will. Such is the challenge that faces all who call Yehoveh Father. Just because as redeemed people we are given spiritual gifts doesn't mean that we'll use them correctly. The gift of spiritual gifts and abilities from the divine giver doesn't amputate our free will from us or disable our evil inclination. These spiritual gifts are like Abraham's Covenant: they are divine promises. How we use those gifts are like the Mosaic Covenant: there are conditions and choices that remain largely in our hands. We can choose righteously or wickedly. We can choose to use our God-given gifts for His purposes or

for our purposes.

And verses 11 through 14 give us a number of disciplines in which **Shlomo** excelled: as a writer of wisdom statements (Proverbs); as a composer of inspirational poems and songs; as a botanist; as a biologist; and as a politician and leader.

From this point forward, now that Israel enjoyed prosperity, wealth and power never attained before or since, the most important work of his reign was ready to be addressed. This was the building of a house unto the name of Yehoveh. And what these first verses (starting at vs.15) tell us is that surprisingly the Gentile nations will play a willing and pivotal role in the building of the Temple. And the most prominent name among those Gentiles is Hiram King of **Tzor**. As happens so often in the Bible, the same people or nation go by several names and the mention of **Tzor** is one of those instances. **Tzor**, Sidon and Phoenicia are all speaking of the same nation and people. We're told that Hiram loved David and we need to be careful how we take the term "love" in this context and not think of it as meaning deep affection or some sort of intense emotional attachment. When you have love between political leaders it is a political term meant in the sense of loyalty and alliance. So Hiram was politically loyal to David and Israel and **Tzor** had an uncommonly good and peaceful relationship with David that Hiram wished to extend to Solomon. And Solomon, the diplomat, was certainly happy to accept it and reciprocate. So Hiram sent his ambassadors to **Shlomo** and **Shlomo** sent a letter back with them that respectfully asked the King of Tzor to help Solomon build the Temple.

We get an interesting piece of information that apparently David had shared with Hiram his great desire to build a house for God and even discussed the actual blueprints and plans he had developed, even going so far as to assemble materials.

**CJB 1 Chronicles 22:1**

***Then David said, "This is the house of ADONAI, God; and this is the altar Isra'el is to use for burnt offerings."***

***<sup>2</sup> David ordered that the foreigners in the land of Isra'el should be assembled, and he appointed stone-workers to shape stones for building the house of God.***

***<sup>3</sup> David prepared a large store of iron from which to make nails and clamps for the gateway doors and, a quantity of bronze too great to weigh,***

<sup>4</sup> *and cedar logs beyond numbering- because the Tzidonim and the people from Tzor brought cedar logs in abundance to David.*

<sup>5</sup> *David said, "Shlomo my son is young and inexperienced, while the house to be built for ADONAI must be so magnificent and splendid that its fame and glory will be known in every country; so I will make preparations for him." Therefore David made extensive preparations before his death.*

But as Solomon's message reported to Hiram, David never did build the Temple because of the wars that beset him on every side. But that is only partially true; because in 1Chronicles 22:8 God tells David that: **'You have shed much blood and fought great wars. You are not to build a house for my name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth in my sight'**. David had shed just blood (in fighting wars) and unjust blood (in killing Bathsheba's husband and other rivals) so the Lord determined that David would not get the honor of building a house for God, but his son would. And that son turned out to be Solomon.

Therefore the message from Solomon to Hiram continues that Solomon requests that Hiram have his people harvest timber from the cedar trees on his land, and part of that land includes Lebanon. But what we know from 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles is that Israel already had some of the lumber they needed for David had stockpiled it. Note that the lumber is not a gift or is it tribute; Solomon made it clear that he would pay for it. In fact Solomon would send laborers up to the Lebanon to assist Hiram's workers, but Hiram's men would be in charge because they were expert at selecting and felling these large trees.

King Hiram is pleased to hear of Solomon's intent to build a Temple and compliments him for it. Notice that the Bible has Hiram saying, "Blessed be Adonai today". It actually says blessed be YHWH today. That Hiram used Yehoveh's name in no way means that Hiram worshipped the God of Israel; it is simply that he respects Israel's God and Israel's worship of Him. While the situation is not identical it is similar: I think this offers Christians an example of how to relate to modern day Israel and the Jewish people. While we don't agree with their stance regarding Messiah Yeshua, we can certainly agree that both Christianity and Judaism worship the God of Israel, Yehoveh, and share strong faith roots and values. And as a result we can show them respect and loyalty at the very least. The unfortunate attitude among too many Believers of denouncing Israel and thus often siding with their enemies on account of Israel's regrettable stance against Jews accepting Yeshua is wrong minded. We ought to be the Jewish people's greatest and most faithful friends if for no other reason than enlightened self-interest as the Bible makes it clear in the Old and New Testaments that those who befriend Israel shall be blessed and those who come against Israel shall be dealt with harshly by God.

The Cedar forests of Lebanon where this precious commodity of large trees were located, was about 2 days journey north of Beirut. And it was a long way from there to Jerusalem. Great skill was needed not only to harvest the trees but to select exactly the right ones. But even more there was much know-how needed to transport those large logs all that distance. And they had in ingenious way of doing it: they took the logs to the Mediterranean Seashore and made huge rafts out of them, which they sailed down the coast to Israel. More than likely the Israeli port they used in that era was Yafo (Jaffa). Upon arrival they would disassemble the rafts, thus separating the logs, and then transport them by oxcart to Jerusalem.

Hiram agreed to all this (no doubt it was to a large degree prearranged by David and essentially Solomon merely had to say the word to set the plan into motion), and he also told Solomon that the price for his participation would be the provision of food for his entire royal household (meaning the government) of **Tzor**. And verse 25 records that Solomon agreed to provide 100,000 bushels of wheat and 1000 gallons of olive oil to Hiram each and every year that Hiram was providing the wood. Now that is a lot of food even though we're not really sure of exactly the amount because although most Bibles will say bushels and gallons (or perhaps measures), the Hebrew word is **kor** in both instances. And what the original Hebrew says is that the amounts paid are **esrim eleph kor** of wheat and **esrim kor** of olive oil, which translates to 20,000 **kor** of wheat and 20 **kor** of olive oil. The question, of course, is "how much is a **kor**?" And it is a bit hazy because a **kor** is technically a unit of dry measurement and here it is used for both a dry measure (wheat) and a liquid measure (oil). Here's the thing: essentially a **kor** is the largest unit of dry measurement in the Hebrew vocabulary, in the same way that **eleph** (1000) is the largest number unit in the Hebrew vocabulary. And a **kor** is really only an approximate amount, not an exact weight or measure. It is defined as the maximum amount of whatever the product might be that a donkey can carry, fully loaded down. So another term we could use for a **kor** is a donkey load. Thus Solomon was to pay Hiram 20,000 donkey loads of wheat and 20 donkey loads of olive oil per year.

At verse 27 we get a troubling report that Solomon conscripted 30,000 men from Israel to send to Lebanon to help cut and transport the cedar trees, in 10,000 man rotations of one month's stay. I say troubling because, like the many horses Solomon had amassed, in ordering his people into forced labor Solomon was behaving like a typical pagan gentile despot and monarch and not like the Godly Shepherd that he was supposed to be. In a certain sense these (and other similar) actions of Solomon were a fulfillment of prophetic warning by the Prophet Samuel as recorded in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 8.

**READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL 8:10 – 18**

But these commands from Solomon were just the beginning. In order to quarry stones for the Temple Solomon enlisted 150,000 men to cut and carry those stones; 70,000 were used to transport the load and 80,000 were stonecutters. Then Solomon set over them 3300 supervisors. We get a little more detail about this in 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles.

### 2Chronicles 2:16-17 CJB

***<sup>16</sup> Shlomo took a census of all the foreigners in the land of Isra'el, following the pattern of the census of David his father; they were found to number 153,600.***

***<sup>17</sup> He appointed 70,000 of them to carry loads, 80,000 to be stonecutters in the hills and 3,600 as supervisors to assign the people their work.***

Some explanation is needed in determining exactly who these 153,600 were who were counted in this special census. The term that is translated as foreigner in the CJB, is translated in a number of ways in other Bibles as aliens, strangers, men, sojourners, and a few other terms as well. The variety of English terms is because the Hebrew word being translated is ***enosh ha'gerim*** and it literally means mankind of the Gentiles. If this were the only factor we could simply say that these were resident alien gentiles living in Israel. However in the next verse it says that overseers were set over these ***'am***. And the term ***'am***, which is usually translated as people, is actually referring to kindred people meaning in this case kindred to Israel; so they were considered as part of Israel.

The bottom line is that some of the modern translators have started to use the English word proselytes and I think they've nailed it. These people were gentiles who came to live among Israel, and who gave their allegiance to Israel and to Israel's God, but who tended to live within their own ethnic groups as has been common among foreign immigrants from time immemorial right up to our day. No doubt they were somewhat recent to Israel, and since they weren't natural born Hebrews and had not sought full assimilation into Hebrew culture it was much less of a political problem for Solomon to conscript them to this hard and unpleasant labor (instead of natural born Hebrews) because they were ethnically different from the rest of the Israelis. Nonetheless, no doubt these 150,000 men used to quarry the stones for the Temple were former gentiles who were now official Israelis by their own choice.

The ending verses of chapter 5 make it clear that even the foundation stones of the Temple were cut, quarried, and shaped. That is they weren't slightly modified boulders that would be



used as the foundation as was typical in that era. Cut stones were usually used when they were visible; foundation stones were of course underground. We get an interesting note that men from **Tzor** worked with men from Israel to get the job done, and also a group of men from a place called **G'val** were pressed into action. **G'val** is also known as Byblos, which is north of Beirut.

Let's get started on chapter 6.

### READ 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS CHAPTER 6:1 - 5

It was in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Shlomo's reign that the construction of the Temple began. There is great disagreement (because there is no way to know for sure) what constituted the beginning of the construction. Was it at the ordering of materials from Hiram? Was it at the arrival of the first foundation stones? Was it when the foundation was completed? We don't know the criteria and so I'm not about to add to the long list of guesses. Even the meaning of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Solomon's reign isn't precise because the ancients had varying ways of specifying a king's reign.

Because many Bible students and other Christians get bound up in Biblical chronology and calendar debates, not only accusing one another but even accusing the Scriptures of being in error about some of these matters, I'm going to take us on a brief detour at this point to discuss this issue of measuring the time of a king's reign. This is because the time of a king's reign had much to do with setting historical time markers in ancient days, and thus Biblical chronology and the variant chronologies that we use today depended on the dates that certain kings were in office. And in a nutshell the issue is that the method a king's reign was measured changed with time, and it changed within the culture he lived and within the culture that reported that king's reign. In other words, the Bible not only talks about Hebrew kings but foreign kings as well. And we also have developed some of our Biblical chronology from extra-Biblical documents because the Bible at times doesn't give us the needed information but ancient documents from other nations do. But the question then becomes, what time method did THAT culture use to determine a king's reign?

Briefly: there are 5 different protocols used in antiquity (and no doubt in the Bible) to define the chronology of a monarch. They are called the Regnal year, the Accession Year, the Postdating system, the Nonaccession year, and Co-regency.

1. **Regnal year.** This was when the official “royal year” began at the start of the New Year. However it was back-dated to the previous New Year. For the Hebrews the New Year was usually considered as Nissan (this was the same up in Mesopotamia). But it gets more complicated because it seems that after Solomon, the northern Kingdom of Israel used the month of Tishri (the 7<sup>th</sup> month) as the month of the New Year, while the southern Kingdom of Judah used the month of Nissan (the 1<sup>st</sup> month) as the month of the New Year.
2. **Accession year.** This determines that the King’s first year takes place in whatever time there is between the actual date of his coronation and the New Year. So a king could take the throne 1 week before the New Year, and upon the New Year enter into the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of his reign. His first “year” of reign could be only a few days.
3. **Postdating system.** This system counts a king’s 1<sup>st</sup> year as the 1<sup>st</sup> full year AFTER New Years. Therefore a king could assume the throne many months before New Year, and it is **not** counted towards period of his reign. Only after passing the New Year is that considered the 1<sup>st</sup> year of his reign. So he could be on the throne for 11 months, and none of that time is counted because the clock doesn’t start until the first New Year after his coronation.
4. **Nonaccession year.** This method doesn’t pay any attention to New Years but rather only to the actual date the king assumes the office. So one year from his actual date of coronation ends his first year and begins the 2<sup>nd</sup> year (and so on).
5. **Co-regency.** This refers to the designation of the royal heir during the lifetime of the sitting king. Thus as with Solomon and David, David was still living (and still king) when he named Solomon as the royal heir and within hours Solomon assumed the throne. But it also appears that David did NOT give up the throne; rather there was a sort of senior king and junior king operating at once. So the end of David’s time as king doesn’t coincide with Solomon becoming king, but instead ends at David’s death. Solomon becoming king overlaps with David remaining king.

There is nothing right nor wrong, or better or worse, among these various systems. Often the choice of dating system seemed to be at the whim of the king himself; or it changed according to circumstance for one king, and then his successor was measured in a different way. Even more, it at times appears that the writer or editor of the book did the choosing. And frankly we only rarely even know which method they used because it is usually not recorded. The bottom line is that all these nice neat Biblical timelines we see printed in beautiful color fold-outs about the various kings of Israel and Judah, or about the Judges, or generally any other succession of national or regional leaders, are not absolute but rather are approximates and so we’ll see significant variations among them.

Next week we’ll delve extensively into one of the most important and seminal events in the entire Bible: the building of the first Temple to Yehoveh.

