

1ST KINGS

Week 13, chapter 8

We continue today by first completing our saga of the 1st Temple (and this means the Temple in whatever form it existed and evolved up until the time of its destruction by the Babylonians). Then afterwards we'll begin the long and profound 8th chapter of 1st Kings that revolves around the initial dedication of Solomon's Temple so that services of worship to Yehoveh could begin within it.

We're taking the time at this point to follow and sum up the history of the 1st Temple because it plays such an important role in defining the context for the history of Israel. And the history of Israel over the next several hundred years had everything to do with the character and actions of a long series of Israelite kings, both good and wicked ones, who ruled over the fractured Promised Land. And the nature of their leadership was always visibly manifested in their attitude towards the Temple and the priesthood in Jerusalem.

Recall from our previous lesson that within a few years after King **Shlomo's** death Israel fell into Civil War, divided back into its more historically traditional northern and southern coalitions of tribes, and therefore what was for 80 years a single united kingdom of God with one king over all the tribes and tribal territories was now two separate kingdoms each with its own monarch.

So as we discuss the two kingdoms of Israel (or as the Bible often calls them, the two houses of Israel) first understand that these two kingdoms came into being very quickly after Solomon's death, and second that the name for the southern kingdom was Judah, and the name for the northern was Israel. But within 30-50 years after the two kingdoms were established the northern kingdom's name was no longer Israel but Ephraim (or Ephraim-Israel for the sake of clarity) and this was because Ephraim was the dominant tribe of the 10 that occupied that portion of the Promised Land.

Last week we followed primarily the progression of kings of the southern kingdom of Judah because Jerusalem, and therefore the Temple, was in their jurisdiction. We really didn't address the kings of the northern kingdom except for minor mention of them in explaining that they generally shunned the Jerusalem Temple and instead they established two worship centers for themselves, one up to the far north in the city of Dan, and another at their southern territorial edge at Bethel. In fact they also continued in a steady dissolution of their relationship with Yehoveh by instituting calf worship, intermixing Ba'al worship with Yehoveh worship, and setting-up an alternative and Biblically unauthorized priesthood.

Rehoboam was the first king of Judah, and Jeroboam the first king of Israel, immediately following the civil war after Solomon's death about 925 B.C. Our Temple journey from our last lesson took us up to the time of Ahaz, king of Judah, who began his rule about 740 B.C. So we have covered almost 2 centuries in time since the original building of Solomon's Temple.

Ahaz ruled for 16 or 17 years and was one of the worst, most evil kings Judah had ever known. His desecration of the Temple was without conscience and probably unrivaled to that point. Rather than review what he did it can probably best be summed up with a few verses taken from the books of 2nd Kings and 2nd Chronicles.

2Kings 16:17-18 CJB

¹⁷ King Achaz removed the panels of the trolleys and took the basins off them; he took the Sea off the bronze oxen supporting it and set it on the stone pavement;

¹⁸ and, because of the king of Ashur, he removed from the house of ADONAI the colonnade used on Shabbat that had been built for it and the king's entranceway outside it.

And also in 2nd Chronicles we are told this about Ahaz and his effect upon Israel:

2Chron. 28:20-25 CJB

²⁰ Tilgat-Piln'esor king of Ashur attacked and besieged Achaz instead of strengthening him-

²¹ even though Achaz had stripped the house of ADONAI and the palaces of the king and princes and had given the plunder to the king of Ashur, it didn't help him at all.

²² During his time of distress this same King Achaz added to his treachery against ADONAI

²³ by sacrificing to the gods of Dammesek, who had attacked him, reasoning, "The gods of the kings of Aram helped them, so I will sacrifice to them, and then they'll help me." But they became the ruin of him and of all Isra'el.

²⁴ Achaz collected the equipment from the house of God, broke to pieces the equipment from the house of God and sealed the doors of the house of ADONAI; then he made himself altars in every corner of Yerushalayim.

²⁵ In every city of Y'hudah he made high places for offering to other gods, thus provoking ADONAI the God of his ancestors.

I ask you to take what has happened here to heart. Notice how the entire kingdom of Judah suffered because of one unusually bad leader who on the one hand insisted that he was a true worshipper of the God of Israel, but on the other mixed the worship of other gods in with his worship of Yehoveh. He saw no inconsistencies with breaking down the God-ordained institutions established by Yehoveh and instead instituting what he saw as a modern and enlightened way to practice the religion of his forefathers. And he did this because he was certain that he (and presumably the citizens of Judah) would benefit by being tolerant and inclusive and adapting to the new geopolitical realities of the region. It made political and economic sense to him to take this path, but in a relatively short time it proved ruinous for the nation and people of Judah.

In a final act of rebellious defiance towards the Lord, Ahaz closed the doors to the Temple and stopped its vital services. But his son Hezekiah followed him and set about to make the Temple operational again.

Hezekiah began his rule over Judah in about 725 B.C., around the same time that the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel was in the process of being conquered by Assyria. Let me be clear on this because the historical context is critical to our understanding Holy Scripture (and much prophecy that has yet to play out) from this point forward. Part of the reason that Hezekiah's father Ahaz was so accommodating to the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser was because the Assyrian Empire was enormous and growing; it was virtually unstoppable and had already put the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel under siege. Ahaz King of Judah saw what was happening all around him and figured it was better to switch than fight, so he tried to fashion a vassal relationship with Assyria that allowed him to remain in power and Judah to remain a Hebrew nation.

It is usually said in historical textbooks that the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel was conquered in 722 B.C. (about the 3rd year of Hezekiah's reign). But in reality that is merely when the final stronghold of the northern kingdom, which was **Shomron** (Samaria, the capital city of Ephraim-Israel), fell to Tiglath-Pileser's armies. The northern kingdom had been under assault by the Assyrians for at least a decade before that happened and tribal region by tribal region the 10 Israelite tribes that populated the northern kingdom were deported to far away lands and scattered all over the vast Assyrian Empire. This is where the legend of the 10 lost tribes of Israel was born. And the only real inaccuracy of that so-called legend is when we add the word "lost" to its title. These people were never lost to themselves, except spiritually speaking. Their exile was the result of their own desire to give up their Hebrew heritage and their Hebrew God and instead adopt the ways and gods of their gentile neighbors. These 10 tribes in exile knew exactly who they were, and many of them have doggedly maintained their tribal identities right up until today. Sadly the vast bulk of those tribes, however, lost their identities and merely melded their genes with the gentile world.

Therefore understand that this was the difficult situation that Ahaz operated under, and now so did his son and the new king of Israel, Hezekiah. They were basically trying to survive as a tribe and as a nation of Israelites and hoping to remain in the land; and they did so by submitting to Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria. And this submission involved accepting great societal change and even further intentional intermixing of the worship of the Assyrian gods with the worship of Yehoveh.

We see the same process happening in modern times in Europe as the leaders of nation after nation move to distance themselves from what little remains of their Christian heritage in order to appease the violent onslaught of the Muslim religion as (what is to them) but a pragmatic political accommodation in order for their nations to survive and the leaders to remain in power. And naturally it involves tremendous social and financial upheaval, a watering down or abandonment of traditional morals and ways of life, and an all encompassing religious and cultural tolerance that is advertised as modern intellectual enlightenment. And it is this new

enlightenment that forms the rationale for the enormous changes that are underway that is really nothing but raising the white flag of surrender.

And despite what American leadership might say publically, the United States is on the same path (merely a few years behind Europe) and the recognition of this danger by the USA citizenry is why such movements as the Tea Party spontaneously sprang to life. It is also why there is a growing uprising of Evangelical Christians from years of passivity and silence, as well as a swelling chasm between Christian denominations who on the one side want to embrace this new enlightenment and religious tolerance but on the other side want to stick close to the Biblical ways of old.

And I tell you all of this as both a context for Ahaz's and Hezekiah's reigns, and as a warning. The outcome was not what those ancient Jewish leaders hoped all of their compromising would bring, and it will not be what modern political, church and synagogue leaders hope for; it will be one of destruction of Judeo-Christian ethic and principle that has been the firm foundation of the Western world for well over a millennia, even though modern leaders now deny it. Further, with the help of an expanding crowd of heretical Christian leaders, this new era of enlightenment and tolerance will deceive countless numbers of worshippers of Messiah Yeshua and the God of Israel into adopting ways that are abominable from the Lord's perspective and it will lead inevitably to ruin and a severe response from the Lord.

History is cyclical and as Solomon so wisely noted: nothing is new under the sun. We've witnessed this all before. And these ancient Biblical records weren't left for us to merely intellectually know what Israel did and the terrible result, but also to show us what happens when we do the same (as in happening currently) and what can be the only possible outcome.

Hezekiah's first act as the new King of Judah was to re-open the Temple doors. The Temple was so badly damaged under the previous administration that structural repairs had to be made before any kind of cosmetic restoration could be undertaken. Simply clearing the interior of the **hekal**, the Temple, of trash and debris took a large team of priests a full week. Then they set about trying to recover as many of the precious looted vessels and ritual implements as possible. Some had to be remade or purchased.

After the refurbishment was largely completed Hezekiah ordered a rededication ceremony and then the vital Temple functions restarted. The first celebration after the rededication was **Pesach** (Passover). Hezekiah also ordered that the many **bamot** (the high places) that had

been constructed all over Jerusalem (and then later Judah) be destroyed. He even ventured into the northern kingdom's territory and tore down some of their altars.

But Hezekiah will be equally remembered for enlarging the Temple Mount until it formed the shape of a square of about 800 feet on a side. More buildings were added to the Temple complex, a water tunnel was dug through sheer rock to the pool of Siloam under the City of David to help protect Jerusalem's water supply, and in fact one can walk inside that water tunnel today.

However in the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign the latest in the line of kings of Assyria, Sennacherib, came down to Judah, attacked, and gained control over a number of cities. This of course was meant as a message to Hezekiah and it served its purpose; Hezekiah paid a large bribe to Sennacherib in order for Hezekiah to remain king and Judah to remain intact as a Hebrew nation.

^{CJB} **2 Kings 18:16** *It was at that time that Hizkiyahu stripped the gold from the doors of the sanctuary of ADONAI and from the doorposts which Hizkiyahu king of Y'hudah himself had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Ashur.*

What we see thus far in the Temple saga is the cycle of the Temple being looted then restored, damaged then refurbished, but also of it being heavily remodeled and added onto. In fact many experts believe that during the 1st Temple period of 4 centuries the holy complex had undergone so many changes and repairs due to looting, earthquakes, attacks from foreign enemies, and simply normal repairs caused by time and weathering that the Temple that the Babylonians eventually destroyed was unrecognizable from the one that **Shlomo** built. Some claim that is what accounts for the differences that we see in the description of the Temple in 1st Kings 6-7, versus 2nd Chronicles 3-4 (that is, these are descriptions from two different eras), as opposed to what many other scholars say are merely copyist errors.

As Hezekiah grew older his son Manasseh ruled alongside of him (very similar to how it went with David and Solomon for a time). However upon his father's death in 686 B.C. Manessah set about to backslide and reverse all the reforms his father had accomplished. He went so far as to build altars to the stars, sun and moon in the Temple, and even set up an Asherah there. The priests no doubt fearing that Manessah would ultimately desecrate the Holy of Holies removed the Ark of the Covenant from under the wings of the giant Cherubim and hid it for many years.

After being hauled off to Assyria for a time for not being loyal enough to his foreign masters, Manasseh returned and removed at least some of the pagan altars he had ordered built. At the same time he repaired or rebuilt the Great Altar of Burnt Offering meaning that even it had been defaced and ruined during his reign.

Manessah's son Amon followed him and he was quickly murdered by his own servants. Amon's son Josiah was next and he began his reign at the tender age of only 8 and at the age of 16 began to diligently seek after the God of Israel. Within a few years he began a series of reforms and we read about that in 2nd Chronicles 34.

^{CJB} **2 Chronicles 34:1** *Yoshiyahu was eight years old when he began his reign, and he ruled for thirty-one years in Yerushalayim.*

² *He did what was right from ADONAI's perspective, living entirely in the manner of David his ancestor and turning away neither to the right nor to the left.*

³ *For in the eighth year of his reign, when he was still young, he began seeking after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year, he began cleansing Y'hudah and Yerushalayim from the high places, the sacred poles, and the carved and cast metal images.*

⁴ *In his presence they broke down the altars of the ba'alim, and he chopped down the pillars for sun-worship mounted above them. He smashed the sacred poles and the carved and cast metal images, grinding them to dust, which he threw on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.*

⁵ *He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, thus cleansing Y'hudah and Yerushalayim.*

⁶ *He did likewise in the cities of M'nasheh, Efrayim, Shim'on and even as far as Naftali, in their surrounding ruins.*

⁷ *He broke down the altars, beat the sacred poles and carved images to powder and chopped down the pillars for sun-worship throughout all the land of Isra'el. Then he returned to Yerushalayim.*

It was during the renewal and restoration of the Temple at Josiah's command that the current High Priest Hilkiah made a startling discovery. In the midst of the debris he found the Book of

the Law, which for that era was considered the book we today call Deuteronomy. No doubt it was somewhere inside in the Holy of Holies and that is why it was the High Priest who discovered the scroll because only he could enter that chamber. Apparently even though the Ark had been removed some years earlier to save it from being desecrated by King Manessah, the Deuteronomy scroll had been left behind. Recall that the Book of the Law was placed OUTSIDE of the Ark, not inside with the stone tablets from Mt. Sinai so it would not have gone with the Ark into hiding.

So now Josiah took his turn in history at rebuilding the Temple and once it was completed he ordered that the Ark be returned to its rightful place. And this is the point at which the mystery of the whereabouts of the Ark of the Covenant actually begins, because this is the last that we'll hear of the Ark until the Prophet Jeremiah's statement in Jeremiah 3 that indicates that the Ark is gone from the Temple and its whereabouts are unknown. And yet Jeremiah says that at some future time when all the nations of the world call Jerusalem the throne of Yehoveh, THEN it shall be rediscovered.

Let me comment here that I am not going to get into the currently unsolvable debate over the modern day location of the Ark of the Covenant. Some claim the Vatican has it, others that it is in Ethiopia; still others say it is buried under the Temple Mount, and some insist that it was destroyed. I will say this much: while I don't have a strong opinion on where it is, I do strongly believe that it was not destroyed and it exists just as it was originally made during the days of Moses. There is not a hint whatsoever in the Bible that it was destroyed, nor is there any extra-Biblical documentation that claims its demise. And it is self-evident that if any writer of the Bible had sufficient evidence that the Ark of the Covenant no longer existed they certainly would have spoken of it. I don't think we're far away from it resurfacing if the prophecy of Jeremiah 3 is being correctly interpreted.

Poor Josiah was killed in 609 B.C. as he naively tried to stand against Pharaoh Necho of Egypt who merely wanted to pass through Judah on his way further north to war against Assyria. Because Josiah needlessly wounded Pharaoh's army, Necho retaliated by subjugating Judah and appointing a fellow named Jehoiakim as a vassal king over Judah. A few years later King Nebuchadnezzar fought the Egyptian army and defeated them, and then in 604 B.C. he invaded Judah. Jehoiakim quickly switched loyalties from Egypt to Babylon and so was allowed to remain king. However he chaffed at Babylonian rule and in a short lived revolution was killed in 598 B.C.

Jehoiakim was replaced by Jehoiachin; but he only lasted for a few months when he (along with a large amount of Temple treasure) and thousands of his fellow Judahites were hauled off

to Babylon as prisoners. Zedekiah replaced Jehoiachin and he was the last king of Judah. He too chafed at the rule and demands of the Babylonians, and so Nebuchadnezzar's armies came down and completely destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. Nothing was left of it.

The Temple would not be rebuilt from the ground up in any form until 536 B.C. and then it would go through many more improvements, degradations, followed by expansions, more desecrations and more redesigns until Herod built the most magnificent Temple complex ever created on Mt. Moriah.

We'll stop here in our Temple saga because the final point I want to make is this: there are interminable arguments and debates about whether the Temple destroyed by the Babylonians should even be considered as Solomon's Temple due to everything that had happened to it. And if the terribly modest one built after the Babylonian captivity should be thought of as the 2nd Temple. And if it was the 2nd one, should Herod's Temple be considered the 3rd Temple or should it be considered as but an expansion of the 2nd. And thus will the prophesied Temple of modern times be the 4th Temple, or the 3rd Temple?

The bottom line is: nothing is that nice and neat in Bible history, nor is it in Bible prophecy. If we are going to have an intellectually honest study of the Bible, and then an equally intellectually honest discussion of its meaning and application, then we have to realize that we don't have all the answers supplied to us by God's Word about what happened in the past and what is going to happen in the future. But even more, we certainly can't reasonably expect to understand Bible history from only the New Testament, nor can we expect to have a reasonable understanding of what lay ahead prophetically from only the Old Testament. And some of the rigid interpretations that pass for truth today within Christianity are little more than speculations that support personal agendas, and this is in order for denominations to have something to differentiate them from other ones, and for pastors and teachers to create followings and sometimes to generate lucrative book sales.

What we also see is that Solomon's creative interpretation of what a proper Temple to Yehoveh ought to look like from the viewpoint of a Hebrew society in 960 B.C. is very different from that the Israelites of 800 B.C. then of 700 B.C. then of 600 B.C. and then of the early 500's B.C. envisioned. Herod's temple built about 20 years before Yeshua's birth envisioned it another way, as does Ezekiel's Millennial Temple (even though there are commonalities). And the one that will soon displace that ungodly Golden Dome Shrine of Islam on the Temple Mount will no doubt look different than all the rest.

If any of us are fortunate enough to witness the next Temple constructed on Mt. Moriah, hold lightly today onto your personal vision of what it will be, because I doubt it will be anything like it. And remember, other than for the requirement of an inner and outermost chamber (the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place) not much else structurally matters. It is mankind, Jews and Christians, who seems to have a lot of emotional investment in the idea of exactly how a Temple for Yehoveh ought to be constructed.

Because as God told David 3000 years ago, He is not impressed or concerned with fancy buildings; He is perfectly happy with a tent for His earthly dwelling place.

As promised, let's get started on 1st Kings Chapter 8 and the dedication ceremony of Solomon's Temple. It is a very long chapter and so I want to approach this by today reading it from start to finish, and then spending a few moments to give you some general information about it. Then next week we'll revisit it in sections, re-reading short portions of it as we go.

READ 1ST KINGS 8 all

This long chapter can be viewed as being in 3 parts:

1. Bringing the Ark, the remnants of the Wilderness Tabernacle, and the various ritual vessels to the Temple atop Mt. Moriah.
2. Solomon's prayer of Temple dedication.
3. The blessing of the congregation of Israel and the many sacrifices that will initiate the Temple services.

There is also a brief mention of another event and that is the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) that takes place in conjunction with the Temple dedication ceremony.

The most interesting (and controversial) aspect of the opening couple of verses is WHEN the Temple dedication ceremony took place. Notice that we're told that it happened in the 7th

month. However if we go back to 1st Kings Chapter 6 we read this:

1Kings 6:37-38 CJB

37 The foundation of the house of ADONAI was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv.

38 In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, all parts of the house were completed exactly as designed. Thus he was seven years building it.

So, the Temple was finished in the 8th month, but the dedication is said to have been performed in the 7th month. First let me mention that the 7th month is called Etanim in 1st Kings 8, which is not a Hebrew word. Etanim is Phoenician and it means something like endure or strengthen. Why has a Phoenician word for the month been used here? Probably because Hiram was a Phoenician king and his involvement in the building of the Temple was crucial. So this was likely for the purpose of honoring the Phoenicians and their king for their generosity and participation in the Temple construction.

Etanim, the 7th month, is today called ***Tishri***.

Now for the problem of the timing; there is no other reasonable explanation than there was an 11 month delay from the official day of completion of the Temple to the official day of its dedication. Some scholars try to say that it actually didn't happen for several years until after Solomon completed his own palace complex (because we read about the building of Solomon's Palace prior to reading about the Temple dedication); that simply defies common sense and as we have discussed, the Bible doesn't operate in strict chronological sequences. Solomon would not rush to build a grand Temple, outfit it entirely, and then let it sit there dormant and unused for 13 more years. There is no evidence that Solomon saw any kind of temporal connection between the Temple and his personal palace that could account for a 13 year wait.

But why would he wait even an 11 month period to dedicate the Temple and start to use it?

Actually it's not hard to understand if one knows the Torah. The 7th month is a very special holiday month in the Hebrew religious calendar as the 3 Fall feasts occur then as ordained by Yehoveh: the feast of **Yom Teruah** (today called **Rosh Hashanah**) that happens on the 1st day of the month, the feast of **Yom Kippur** that happens on the 10th day of the month, and finally the feast of **Sukkot** that begins on the 15th day of the month and lasts for 8 days. The key to understanding why this exact time was chosen to dedicate the Temple is not contained in the festival that is the more obvious one in this chapter (**Sukkot**) but rather it is **Yom Kippur**.

The issue was that the Ark of the Covenant had to be placed into the newly built Holy of Holies for the Temple to become functional. But only one person (the High Priest) was authorized to enter that chamber and just as importantly only on one specific day per year: **Yom Kippur**. So the Temple couldn't be dedicated and anointed unless the Ark was in the Holy of Holies, but that couldn't happen EXCEPT on the 10th day of the 7th month of the year, **Yom Kippur**. Thus the wait of 11 months from the date of the Temple's completion to the date that it could be dedicated was so that the next **Yom Kippur** could arrive and the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies to place the Ark of the Covenant there.

We'll continue with chapter 8 next week.