

The CHRONICLES of the KINGS

The Foolish Life of the World's Wisest Man

1 Chronicles 28:8-9

March 28, 2026

Last week we ended with the death of David and now we move from the book of Samuel and into Kings.

The content of 1st and 2nd Kings presents Israel's history from a prophetic and moral perspective beginning with Solomon (971 BC) and concluding with the release of King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon (562 BC) – a time span of roughly 409 years.

The Chronicles is a retrospective, written after the Babylonian Captivity and focuses primarily on the Kingdom of Judah with only brief mentions of Israel, which had been destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC.

The authors of these books tell a sad story of Israel's tragic decline, national split and the eventual destruction of both nations because of the people's persistent and intentional and willful sin.

We begin with Solomon. The Primary Rabbinic Record of the chronology of Tanach and the Second Temple era deduces that Solomon 12 years old when he became king. However, other biblical scholars suggest he was probably at least 20. The fact is, the Bible doesn't tell us, so while the above information is helpful, it is also speculation. It is interesting to note that Solomon reigned for 40 years, but his oldest son, Rehoboam was 41 when he became king (1 Kings 14:21).

After Adonijah's attempt to declare himself king backfired, Solomon had promised not to kill him *"if he proved himself worthy."* However, after David died, Adonijah went to Bathsheba, *"As you know the kingdom was mine and all Israel looked to me as their king, however things changed and Solomon is now king...."* Then he asked her to go to Solomon and request that he be given David's former caregiver – the beautiful Abishag – to be his wife.

Bathsheba went to Solomon and he was not amused. He interpreted the request as an attempt by Adonijah, Joab and Abiathar to legitimize Adonijah's claim to David's throne, so Solomon ordered Benaiah to kill Adonijah.

Next up, Abiathar. Solomon told him to return to Anathoth. *"You deserve to die, but for now I am going to spare your life. However, I am removing you as a priest for Yahweh."*

Next up, Joab. He fled to the Tabernacle and grasped the horns of the altar in an attempt to claim asylum. When ordered to come out, he stated that he would die right there. Solomon instructed Benaiah to oblige Joab, *"Strike him down and bury him. This will clear my father's house of the guilt of the innocent blood of Abner, commander of Israel's army and Amasa, commander of Judah's army, that Joab shed. Both of them were better men and more upright than he. May the guilt of their blood rest on the head of Joab and his descendants forever."*

Next up, Shimei. Solomon told him to build a house in Jerusalem and that he was never to leave the city. *"If you cross the Kidron Valley, you will die."*

For 3 years Shimei stayed in Jerusalem, but when 2 of his slaves ran away, he went to Gath to get them. Benaiah was ordered to kill him.

Before becoming king, Solomon was already married to at least 1 wife – Naamah an Ammonite (Rehoboam's mother).

But now, he sought to establish a kingdom of peace by taking more wives from the surrounding nations. The 1st of these political alliances was with the king of Egypt. This marriage represented quite a political achievement as it was something few other kings had done before. Solomon brought his Egyptian princess to the City of David until he had completed his own palace, the Temple and the new wall around Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, a glimpse of future disaster is revealed in 1st Kings 3:2-3 - *The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places, because a temple had not yet been built for Yahweh. Solomon showed his love for Yahweh by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.*

2nd Chronicles (1 Kings 3:4-15) begins by telling us that Solomon and "the whole assembly" went to Gibeon to inquire of Yahweh, because that's where the remnants of the desert Tabernacle were (even though the Ark was in Jerusalem).

That night, Yahweh appeared to Solomon and said, "ask for whatever you want and I will give it to you."

Solomon: *"You showed great kindness to my father, David and chose me to replace him. Let all your promises to my father be confirmed. Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may lead your people."*

Yahweh: *"Since your heart's desire is wisdom and knowledge and you have not asked for wealth, riches, honor, the death of your enemies or long life, I will give you what you have asked for and I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king before you had and no king after you will have."*

So, Solomon returned to Jerusalem and began to reign over Israel.

Solomon became famous and respected worldwide for his wisdom. One incredible story demonstrates his extraordinary gift (see 1 Kings 4):

2 prostitutes came before Solomon requesting justice in a particularly interesting case:

- **Prostitute 1:** *Your Majesty, this woman and I live alone in the same house. We both had baby boys within days of each other. During the night she accidentally laid on her son, killing him. She then took my son, while I slept and replaced him with her dead son. The next morning, when I went to nurse my son, he was dead! But upon closer examination I determined he wasn't my son.*

Prostitute 2: *She is lying! The living one is my son; the dead one is hers!*

Prostitute 1: *I am telling the truth! The dead one is hers; the living one is mine.*

Solomon: *Hmmm... Bring me a sword. ---- Now, cut the living child in 2 - give 1/2 to one mother and 1/2 to the other.*

Prostitute 1: *Please, my lord, don't kill him! Give him to her.*

Prostitute 2: *Go ahead, kill him! Neither of us will have him.*

Solomon: *Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.*

When all Israel heard the verdict, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt and he was wiser than any other man. His fame spread to all the surrounding nations and the kings of the world sent men to listen to Solomon's Wisdom:

- He spoke 3000 proverbs and wrote 1005 songs.
- He described plant life, from the Cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls.
- He taught about animals, birds, reptiles and fish.

1 Kings 4:20-21, 25, 29 - *The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life.... and had peace on all sides.... During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree.... God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.*

Great start! Solomon was humble and eager to follow the plans and purposes of God, but then:

2 Chronicles 1:14-17 - *Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue –the royal merchants purchased them from Kue. They imported a chariot from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver, and a horse for a 150. They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans.*

The juxtaposition between Solomon's prayer for wisdom and knowledge and these verses is interesting and I think intentional by the Chronicler, because they report the violation of God's instructions for any future king in Israel (Deut. 17:14-20).

- The king must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them,
- He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray.
- He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.
- He is not to consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left.

1st Kings 10:14-29 and 2 Chronicles 9:13-31 give us more detail:

- Solomon received 666 talents (approx. 50,000 lbs.) of gold yearly, not including trade revenue.
- He made 200 large shields of hammered gold and 300 small shields of hammered gold.
- He made a great throne of inlaid ivory – overlaid with fine gold. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom.
- All his goblets were gold, as were all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value.
- He had a fleet of trading ships. Once every three years it returned, carrying gold, silver and ivory, and apes and baboons.
- He was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth and the whole world sought audience with him and they brought gifts with them – articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules.

In all the verses in 1st Kings 10 describing Solomon's wealth, God is only mentioned once in passing. That should give us pause.

Beyond that,

1st Kings 4:7, 22-23 tells us that Solomon introduced a national tax system to provide for his daily needs.

1 Kings 5:13 tells us he continued David's policy of forced labor for the construction of his great buildings projects, including the Temple (2 Chronicles 2:1-2).

1 Kings 11 tells us that he loved many foreign wives, besides his Egyptian Princess. Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites - from nations Yahweh had specifically instructed Israel was not to intermarry with. Despite this, Solomon clung to his wives – he loved them. He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines and they led him astray.

1 Kings 11:4-8 - *As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Yahweh his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of Yahweh; he did not follow Yahweh completely, as David his father had done. On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.*

So much for his promising start.....

Until Next Time