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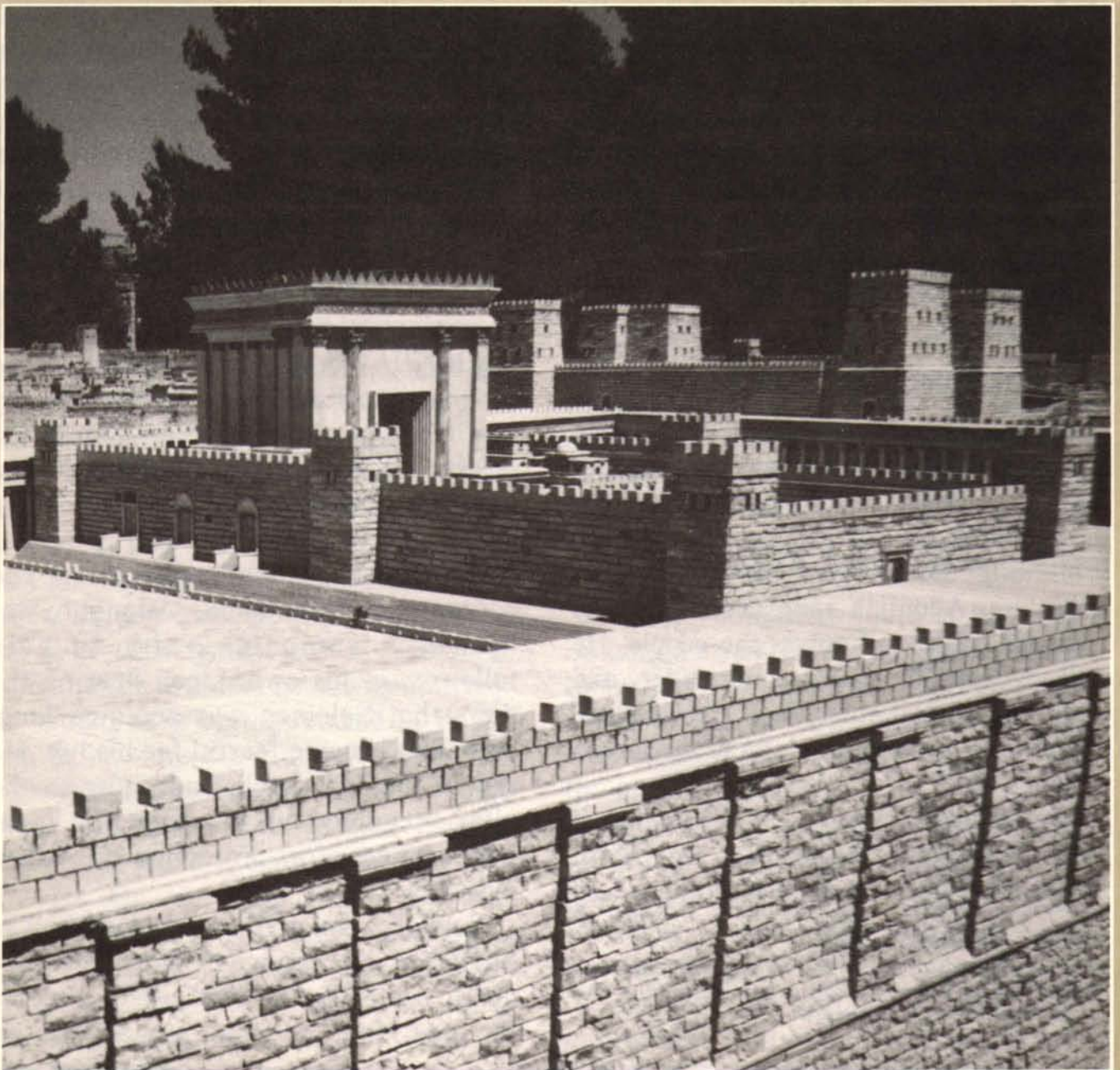
LEVEL 6

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 5



Solomon and the Temple

SOLOMON AND THE TEMPLE

King David lived an exciting and adventurous life. He ruled over the nation of Israel forty years while still a youth. God trained David to be king of Israel and worked patiently with him throughout his life. As king, David received valuable training that will help him to rule over the nation of Israel in the World Tomorrow (Ezekiel 37:24-25).

David's full and vigorous life lasted seventy years.

SOLOMON BECOMES KING

Adonijah, at the time David's oldest son, decided that his father was too old and infirm to rule Israel. Adonijah decided that he should be the one to succeed his father. Following the ways of his late brother Absalom, Adonijah rode about in fancy chariots trying to impress the people. He talked Joab, the army commander, and other influential men like Abiathar the priest, into backing his claim to the throne (I Kings 1:5-7).

Apparently David was unaware of Adonijah's plot to become king until Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan told

him. They reminded David of his promise years earlier to make Solomon the next king. "All Israel," they told him, "is watching to see who you will name as your successor. Unless you take immediate action, Adonijah, who is telling the nation he will be the next king, might succeed in taking over the throne after your death" (I Kings 1:15-27).

David immediately gave instructions to anoint Solomon as king over Israel. During the coronation ceremony, Solomon was officially anointed king by Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest. A great celebration followed and the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" (I Kings 1:28-40.)

At another location, during the coronation of Solomon, Adonijah was having a campaign rally to gain followers of his own. Upon hearing the news that Solomon was anointed king, Adonijah became fearful for his life. He ran to the tabernacle and clung to the altar—regarded as a refuge for those who sinned—for protection (I Kings 1:41-51).

Soldiers soon arrived and took him to Solomon. Expecting to hear his own death sentence for plotting to become the next king, Adonijah was shocked to

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

Model of Herod's Temple and Antonia Fortress as it might have looked in Christ's day, is part of the Holy Land Hotel exhibit in Jerusalem.

Photo by James Capo

hear Solomon willing to grant him mercy. "If you will go the right way from now on," Solomon told him, "no harm will come to you. But if you commit wickedness, you shall die" (I Kings 1:52-53).

DAVID'S INSTRUCTIONS TO SOLOMON

Not long after Solomon became king, David informed him that he was about to die, and that he had valuable advice for him. "Keep God's commandments, statutes and judgments that you may prosper in all that you do," David said. "And remember God's promise that our family will continue on the throne of Israel as long as we live according to His laws."

David then instructed Solomon to take care of some important matters after his death. "Be kind to the sons of Barzillai, who helped me when I fled from Absalom. Consider Shimei who cursed me when I was fleeing from Jerusalem and deal with him as you see fit. I promised him that I would not give orders to have him put to death. But you know he was guilty. Also remember Joab and the murders he has committed. He should have been punished by death long before now" (I Kings 2:1-9).

Do you remember the terrible things Joab had done? Were his crimes deliberate? Read II Samuel 3:26-29 and 20:9-10. On the lines below describe what Joab did. _____

What was the penalty for such crimes? Read Exodus 21:14 and write the answer below. _____

Some months after Solomon became king, David died. With much mourning David was buried in a special tomb at Jerusalem.

Soon after the funeral, Adonijah again plotted to take over the throne. When Solomon learned of Adonijah's conspiracy, he ordered that Adonijah be executed at once. Remember Solomon's earlier warning to him, "But if you commit wickedness, you shall die" (I Kings 1:52).

In time, Solomon fulfilled David's instructions concerning Joab and Shimei. Joab, who took part in Adonijah's conspiracy, was also executed. Later, Shimei was put to death, paying the penalty for the contempt and disrespect he had shown David years earlier (I Kings 2:28-46).

SOLOMON ASKS GOD FOR WISDOM

During the earlier years of his reign, Solomon loved God and attempted to follow the example set by his father David (I Kings 3:3). During this time, God was greatly blessing Solomon and the nation of Israel.

On a special occasion, Solomon went to the city of Gibeon where the tabernacle was and there made many sacrifices to God. That night Solomon was weary from the many activities of the day and fell into a deep sleep. God appeared to him in a dream and said, "I

will give you whatever you ask for” (I Kings 3:4-5).

If God were to give you whatever you wanted, what would you ask for? Solomon asked God for wisdom with which to rightly and justly rule God’s people. An understanding heart and the ability to discern the difference between good and evil are qualities of an exceptionally good ruler. Solomon knew he needed these qualities in order to properly judge the nation of Israel (I Kings 3:6-9).

God was very pleased at Solomon’s request and decided to give him greater wisdom than any other man who had ever lived before him or who would live in the future. Because Solomon’s request showed a sincere concern for the people instead of a desire for personal wealth, God also promised him great wealth and honor. In the dream God also promised Solomon a long life if he would continue to obey Him as his father David had done (I Kings 3:10-14).

When Solomon awoke the next morning, the full impact of the dream hit him. It was such an outstanding experience that as soon as he returned to Jerusalem, he made more burnt offerings and peace offerings, and gave a special feast for all his servants and government officials (I Kings 3:15).

SOLOMON’S WISE JUDGMENT

The people of Israel soon heard about Solomon’s judgments and marveled at his wisdom. The wisdom God gave Solomon enabled him to solve problems too difficult for other people to solve.

Consider Solomon’s wisdom in the following story of two women, found in I Kings 3:16-28.

One day, two women of low character came before Solomon with a serious problem. The first woman said, “The two of us live in the same house. Each of us had a baby. I had mine first and three days later hers was born.

“While asleep one night, she accidentally laid on her baby and smothered it. When she discovered it was dead, she came into my room while I was asleep and stole my child from me. Then she put her dead son next to me.

“When morning came, I thought my baby was dead. But when I took a closer look at the baby, I knew it was not mine.

“The other woman switched babies, but she denies it. She stole my living son!”

After thinking for a moment, Solomon said, “Bring me a sword! We will settle this at once.” To be just, Solomon had to determine who was the real mother. “Divide the living child in half. Give half to each woman,” he said.

The first woman spoke up quickly. “Oh no! Please spare the child! Give her the baby. Don’t kill it!”

The other woman said, “Go ahead and divide it. Let it be neither hers nor mine.”

Upon hearing these words, Solomon knew the truth. “Give the child to the woman who wants him to live. She is the real mother.” Solomon knew the baby’s real mother would want the child to live.

He found a way to get the women to expose their true feelings.

Reports of this matter, as well as others that had to do with Solomon's decisions, spread around the nation. People could discern that God was guiding Solomon and giving him great wisdom. Solomon's fame soon spread to other nations as well. Kings and people from many nations came to hear him speak and ask him for advice.

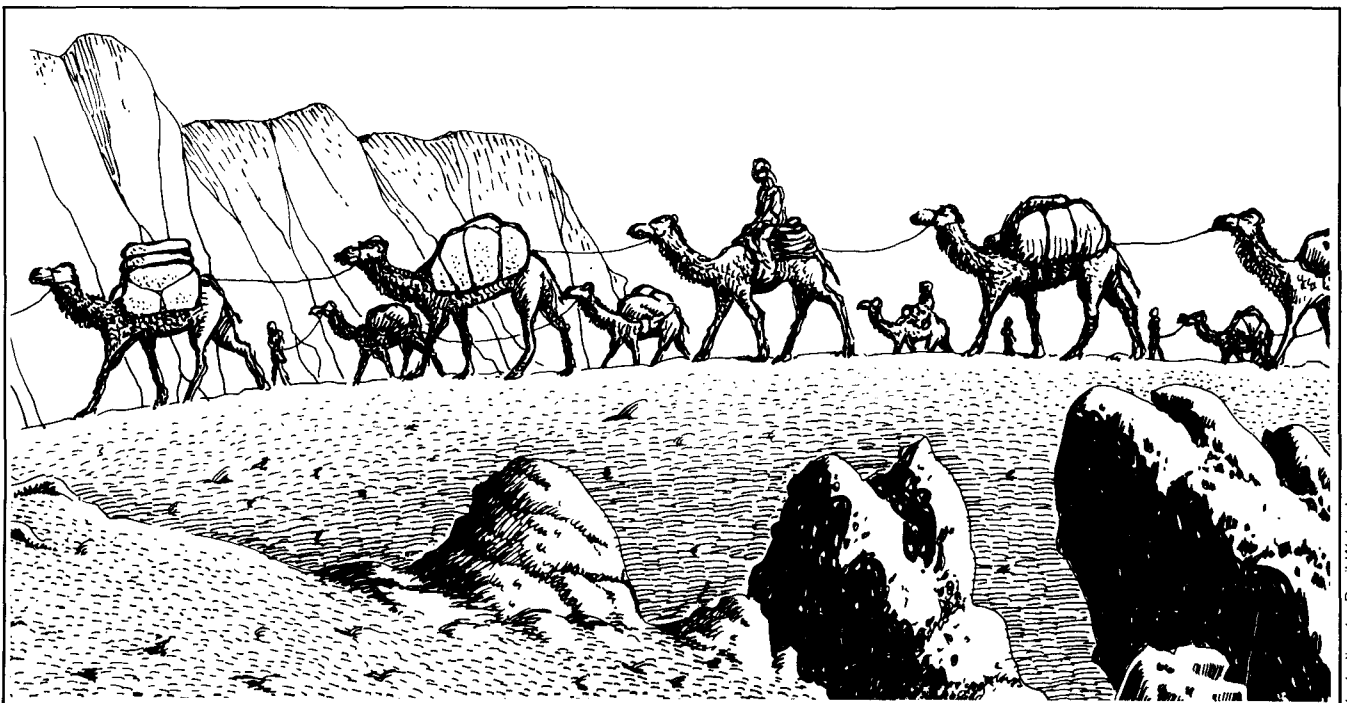
Because God had given Solomon an exceptional mind, good sense and an understanding of people and things, he had more wisdom than any of the other wise men of his day. As Solomon observed and studied things, he greatly grew in knowledge. He certainly must have known a great deal about history, mathematics, plants and animals. He studied music, wrote over a thousand songs, and also wrote hundreds of

proverbs, many of which are preserved in the book of Proverbs in the Bible (I Kings 4:29-34). Solomon also wrote the books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon which also contain valuable advice for us today.

Many of Solomon's proverbs show the qualities of a wise ruler. Take time to study the book of Proverbs and then make a list of the traits of a good ruler. Ask your parents to check your list. Here is a list of scriptures to help you get started: Proverbs 20:28; 24:23; 25:5; 28:16; 29:4; 29:12; 31:3-9.

SOLOMON'S POWER, WEALTH AND FAME

Solomon enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous reign. Nearby kingdoms such as Moab, Ammon, Syria and Damascus were under Solomon's authority and paid tribute to him. His



King Solomon's merchant caravans were constantly adding to his wealth.

kingdom extended from the Euphrates River on the north and east to Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea on the south and west (I Kings 4:1-21, 24).

God certainly kept the promises He made to Solomon in the dream—wisdom, wealth and honor. We do not know just how rich Solomon actually became, but there are legends even today of great mines of gold, diamonds and other precious substances. Perhaps some of these legends are true; God's word does not tell us. Today, over 2,000 years later, there are men who search for Solomon's "lost mines," as well as his other treasures.

Many people served in Solomon's court and ate in his palace. To feed everyone in the palace, the provisions for just one day included 240 bushels of fine flour, 480 bushels of meal, 30 bulls and 100 sheep and goats. To this were added varying numbers of deer, antelope and fowl (I Kings 4:22-23).

Thousands of soldiers were in Solo-

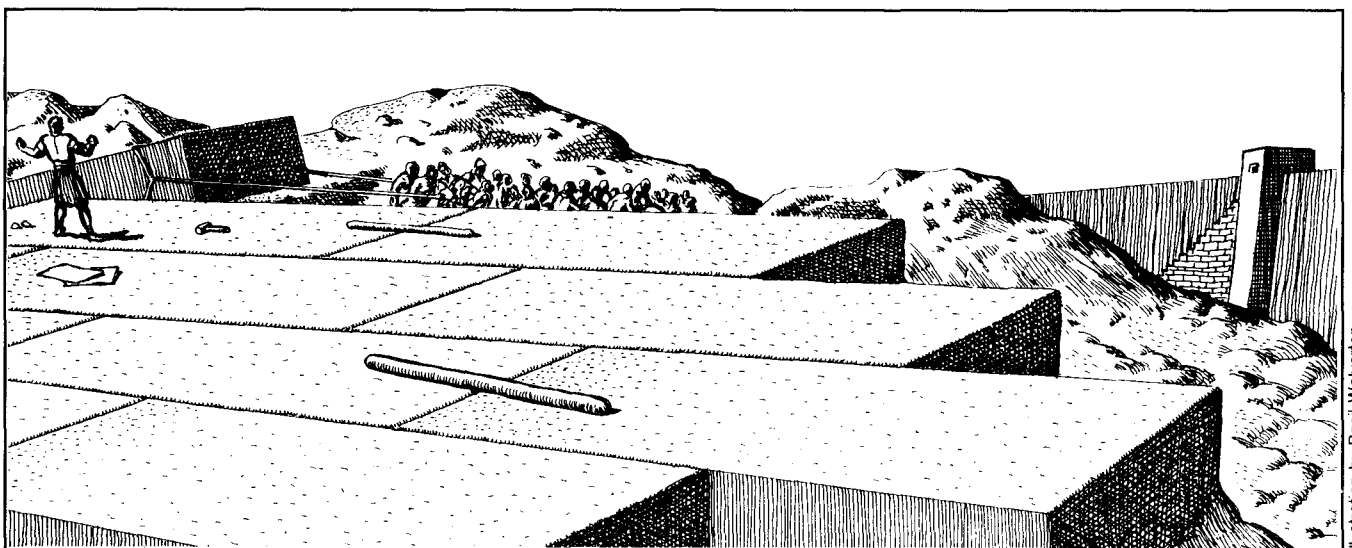
mon's army. He had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. It took a fortune to feed, clothe and house the vast number of servants and soldiers.

WORK BEGINS ON THE TEMPLE

During this time of peace and great prosperity, Solomon decided to begin building the Temple which had long before been planned by David, through God's inspiration, down to the smallest detail.

Solomon remembered the skilled artisans and carpenters from Tyre that built David's palace about thirty years earlier.

In a message sent to Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon reminded him of David's desire to build a temple that would be dedicated to God. Solomon told him of God's promise that David's son would be the one to build it. Solomon then said, "Please send us your best craftsmen and I will pay them and provide laborers to



Huge foundation stones for the Temple were slowly moved into place atop Mt. Moriah.

assist them. We will also need fir and cedar trees from the forests of Lebanon for the temple” (I Kings 5:1-6).

Hiram was very pleased with Solomon’s request. In time, the specially-cut timber arrived in Jerusalem. In payment, Solomon sent large amounts of wheat, barley, oil and wine to Hiram and his workers.

The construction of the large and fabulous Temple of God required thousands of laborers. Over 3,000 foremen supervised the construction of the Temple. Solomon employed over 30,000 Israelites to work with the timber. They were divided into three groups. Each month 10,000 would help cut timber while the other two groups of 10,000 rested.

This large group of laborers and hired craftsmen skillfully cut the timber and carefully squared, smoothed and polished the massive stones required for the building. Each stone was ready to assemble before it was brought to Jerusalem. This was because Solomon wanted no harsh sounds from hammers, axes, or iron tools to be heard as the Temple progressed on Mount Moriah (I Kings 6:7).

The main building was about 126 feet long, 42 feet wide and 63 feet high. To the main building Solomon added chambers for the priests and rooms for storing treasure. With the porches, stone-paved court, towers and outside walls, the entire structure covered several acres.

The inside walls of the Temple were made of cedar and fir overlaid with gold.

Floors inside the Temple were also overlaid with gold (I Kings 6:22, 30). The Temple was decorated with gold, silver, precious stones, carved figures of palm trees and open flowers, and with colorful linen.

Elaborate and expensive furnishings filled the Temple. Candlesticks, bowls, spoons, basins for washing, and censers for burning incense were all specially designed and made from gold, silver or brass.

The Temple took seven years to build, and was finished in the eleventh year of Solomon’s reign (I Kings 6:1, 37-38; II Chronicles 3:1-2). It was undoubtedly the most beautiful building ever constructed. Were such a building constructed today, it would cost literally billions of U.S. dollars!

SOLOMON DEDICATES THE TEMPLE

When the Temple was finished, Solomon planned a great dedication ceremony. The dedication was held during the seventh month of the year (according to God’s calendar). It took place just before the Feast of Tabernacles (I Kings 8:1-2).

The priests moved the ark of God and all the holy vessels from the tabernacle to the Temple. They placed the ark in a special inner room called the Holy of Holies, behind a heavy curtain called a veil (I Kings 8:3-8). (For a description of the ark and its contents, read Exodus 25:10-15 and I Kings 8:9.)

Above the ark in the Holy of Holies were two gleaming gold statues of cherubim. These statues were 21 feet

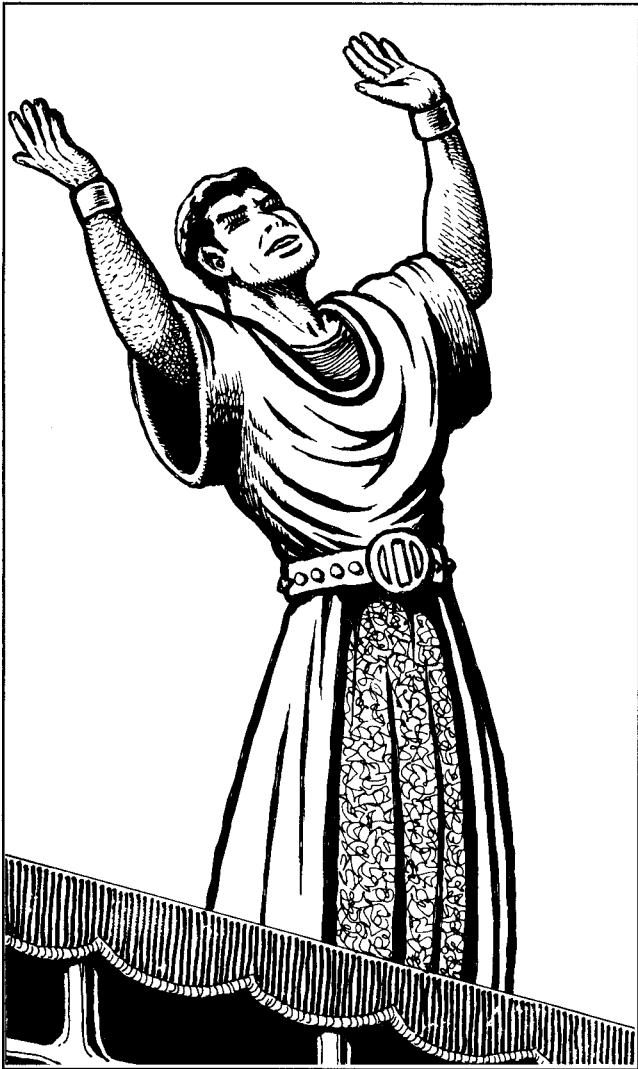


Illustration by Basil Wolverton

Holding his hands toward the sky, Solomon praised God for His greatness and asked Him to bless His people.

high, stood side by side, and their four wings spread out over the ark.

THE GLORY OF THE ETERNAL

Solomon and the people sacrificed so many sheep and oxen during the dedication that the number could not be counted (I Kings 8:5). As the sacrificing continued, the people sang and worshipped. The musicians stopped performing when a mysterious cloud suddenly filled the

Temple. The priests also stopped their duties when the cloud appeared.

The cloud was sent by God as a sign of His presence, and to show Solomon and the people that He was very pleased with the Temple and their rejoicing.

Solomon held his hands toward the sky and voiced a prayer with such volume that it could be heard by thousands. He praised God for His greatness. He told God he knew the Temple was nothing in contrast to the whole universe God created and dwells in. Nevertheless, Solomon reminded God that He said He would put His name on the Temple. He then asked God to especially hear the prayers of His people, bless them, rescue them, and forgive them when they repent of their sins and turn to God (I Kings 8:12-53).

At the conclusion of the prayer, God sent a blinding bolt of fire that instantly consumed the wood and animal flesh on the altar!

God's acceptance of the Temple was so dramatic, that the following Feast of Tabernacles was an exceptionally happy one. The people greatly rejoiced. One of Solomon's proverbs was especially fitting for the occasion. "When the *righteous* are in *authority*, the people *rejoice* . . ." (Proverbs 29:2).

SOLOMON'S PALACE

After building the Temple, Solomon started work on his own palace. It was a tall building and very costly. The main section of the palace was more than 200 feet long, over 100 feet wide, and as high

as a modern six-story office building. Solomon's throne room was beautifully decorated with gold and many colorful precious stones.

The palace contained dining rooms, game rooms and many guest rooms. Beautiful porches and gardens surrounded the building. You may want to sketch on a separate piece of paper what you think Solomon's house might have looked like.

Besides the Temple and the palace, Solomon was involved with many other construction projects. Ecclesiastes 2:4-9 lists some of Solomon's projects.

GOD'S PROMISE AND WARNING

After Solomon finished the Temple and the royal palace, God appeared to him a second time and said, "If you will obey me and keep my commandments as David your father did, then I will establish the throne of your Kingdom upon Israel forever. But if you or your children turn from my ways to pagan religions," God warned, "I will turn from you. The temple will fall into ruins, and people passing by will ask why I allowed it. They will learn that this happened because Israel forsook their God" (I Kings 9:1-9; II Chronicles 7:12-22).

After this reminder, Solomon renewed his determination to obey God. He was thankful for the abundance and great prosperity God had given to him and the people. But Solomon had certain strong desires that could cause him and the nation much trouble if they were not controlled.

Solomon's many building projects,

including the Temple, palace and other public buildings were very costly. So much money was eventually owed to King Hiram for materials and labor that Solomon decided to put a heavy tax on Israel (I Kings 9:15). Heavy taxes like these helped contribute to the nation's eventual downfall.

You may remember that years earlier, God warned the people of Israel what it would eventually mean if they were to have a king. In I Samuel 8:11-17 God described some of the things their kings would do. Read this description and see how much of it applies to Solomon.

A VISIT FROM THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

As time passed, Solomon turned his attention to increasing his wealth. He and King Hiram sent fleets of ships on long voyages to major ports around the world. The ships returned with many valuables including spices, apes, peacocks, gold, silver, ivory, rare kinds of wood, and all kinds of valuable and unique objects (I Kings 10:11-12, 14-15, 22-23).

In time, reports of Solomon's vast wealth and wisdom reached the Queen of Sheba. She visited Solomon and asked him riddles and questions to test his wisdom. She gave Solomon many servants, gold and jewels worth millions of dollars as a gift of friendship.

The Queen was surprised to discover for herself that the reports about Solomon were really true. She greatly admired him (I Kings 10:1-10; II Chronicles 9:1-9). Before she left, Solomon allowed her to select whatever

she wanted from among his many possessions. He then added many items in addition to those she requested (I Kings 10:13; II Chronicles 9:12).

SOLOMON TURNS FROM GOD

As long as Solomon obeyed God, he was blessed. But Solomon had a growing weakness—a desire to have many wives. He was especially attracted to foreign women from other nations, even though they worshipped false gods (I Kings 11:1).

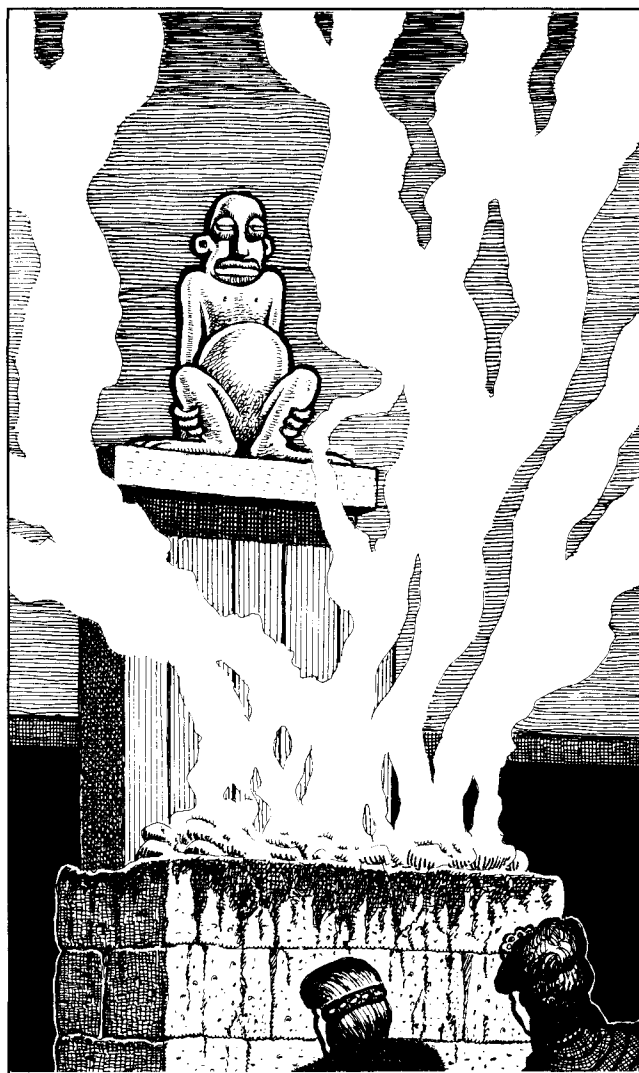
When Israel had come to Canaan years before, God had told the Israelites not to intermarry with those of other nations. God knew that intermarriage with foreigners would result in the Israelites being drawn into the worship of idols and other false gods (Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-6; I Kings 11:2).

This is exactly what happened to Solomon. Solomon's 700 wives and 300 concubines, or secondary wives, eventually turned him from the true God. He became more and more concerned with physical things and with trying to please his wives (I Kings 11:3).

As Solomon grew older, he allowed his heathen wives to talk him into building small temples for their pagan gods. He built them in plain view of the temple he built for God years earlier. This was a terrible insult to the Great God who had so richly blessed him (I Kings 11:4-10).

Solomon was no longer seeking to obey God. He began to pay a heavy price for his sins. Apparently Solomon forgot that God blesses those who continue to obey Him.

God became very angry with Solomon, and told him, "Because of your disobedience and idolatry, I will take the Kingdom of Israel from you!" God's words shocked Solomon. "But for David's sake," God continued, "I will not do it while you are alive. Your son will inherit the throne of Israel, but I will then take it from him and give it to one of your servants. It is only for David's sake, and the sake of Jerusalem my chosen city, that I will allow your



Solomon allowed his heathen wives to offer sacrifices to their pagan gods on altars built within sight of God's Temple.

Illustration by Basil Wolverton

son to reign over the tribe of Judah” (I Kings 11:9-13).

God then stirred up Solomon’s enemies, Hadad the Edomite, and Rezon, captain of a Syrian army. These men were adversaries of Israel, especially during Solomon’s latter days (I Kings 11:14-25).

To fulfill His prophecy, God sent the prophet Ahijah to deliver a message to a man named Jeroboam. Ahijah told Jeroboam that God would allow him to rule over ten of the tribes of Israel. In his excitement Jeroboam quickly spread the news among his family and friends. Solomon soon heard the news and angrily sent soldiers after Jeroboam to kill him. However, Jeroboam escaped, so that God’s Word would come to pass (I Kings 11:26-40).

SOLOMON’S DEATH

After reigning forty years as king of Israel, Solomon died. He lived about sixty years, ten years less than his father David.

Do you remember what God promised Solomon in the dream just after he became king? (I Kings 3:14) “And if thou wilt _____ in my _____, to keep my _____ and my _____ as thy father David did _____, then I will _____ thy _____.” Solomon might have lived much longer had he continued to obey God and keep His commandments.

Before he died, Solomon designated his son Rehoboam to succeed him. As we shall see in the next lesson, God did take away the throne over all of Israel

from Rehoboam, and allowed him to reign only over the nation of Judah in Jerusalem.

CONTINUAL OBEDIENCE NECESSARY

Solomon knew God’s truth and kept His commandments during his early years as king. God greatly blessed him with wisdom, riches and honor. But Solomon did not continue to obey God all his life.

One of the most important lessons we can learn from Solomon’s later life, is that in order to live happy and successful lives, we must *continually* obey God throughout our lives. It is only the overcomers who continue to obey God throughout their lives that are the ones who will receive eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Another important lesson we can learn from Solomon’s life is to always keep our desires under control. What is the apostle Paul’s warning in I Corinthians 9:27? _____

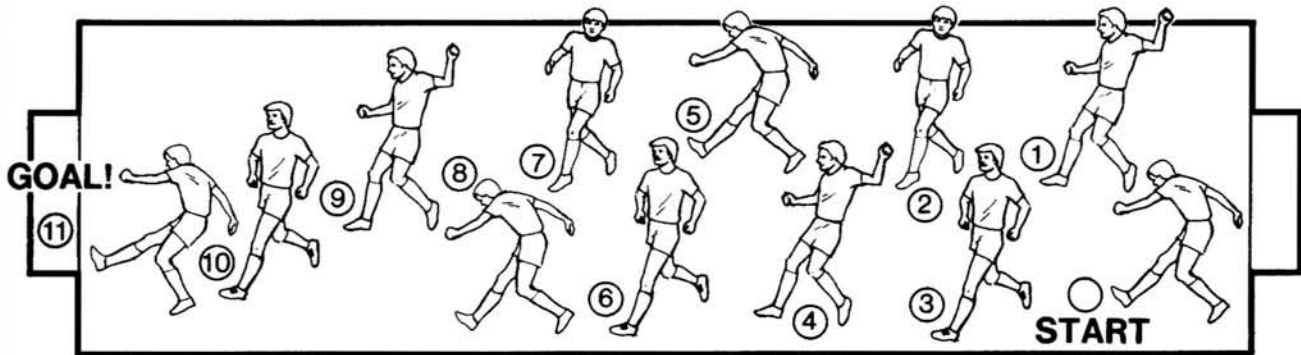
Though Solomon disobeyed God later in life, we can nevertheless learn much from what he wrote during his earlier years when God was with him and inspiring him. Be sure to study the book of Proverbs regularly. It contains valuable advice on many topics of interest to today’s young people. You will learn many vitally important principles and lessons that will help you to have a successful and rewarding life now, and *eternal* life in God’s Kingdom!

BIBLE MEMORY

I Kings 2:2-3
I Kings 3:7-9
I Kings 4:29-30
I Kings 9:3-7

SCORE A GOAL!

Answer the questions below by filling in the blanks. Each time you answer a question correctly, draw a line to the soccer ball with the same number as the question. If you answer all the questions correctly, you will score a goal! The answers are at the bottom of the page.



1. David gave instructions to anoint _____ as king of Israel.
2. Before his death, David instructed Solomon to keep God's _____, statutes and judgments, so he would prosper.
3. Since _____ took part in Adonijah's conspiracy, Solomon had him executed.
4. In the city of Gibeon, the Eternal appeared to Solomon in a _____ saying, "I will give you whatever you ask for."
5. God granted Solomon greater _____ than any other man.
6. Solomon discussed plans to build the Temple with King _____ of Tyre.
7. The beautiful Temple required _____ years of hard labor to build.
8. After building the Temple, Solomon built his own _____ in which the main section was about as tall as a six-story office building.
9. God promised to make Solomon great, but he also warned, "If you or your children turn from my ways to _____ religions, I will turn from you."
10. Solomon had a strong liking for women, and had _____ wives and _____ concubines.
11. Solomon designated _____, his son, as Israel's next king.

ANSWERS:

1. Solomon
2. Commandments
3. Joab
4. dream
5. wisdom
6. Hiram
7. seven
8. palace
9. pagan
10. 700, 300
11. Rehoboam