

Expansions on the First Book of Kings

Introduction

One can read the Introductions of other “expansion” documents on this homepage and get pretty much the same information which is applicable here. Essentially that boils down to reading a given biblical text from the vantage point of *lectio divina*. Of course, there are plenty of other ways of viewing First (and Second) Kings which appeal to each person’s interests and inclinations, the historical approach being the first one that comes to mind. However, that doesn’t play a role in the document at hand though by no means is it minimalized.

Both First and Second Kings contain a lot of un-interesting, essentially boring sections such as war and intrigue which are not directly relevant to the practice of *lectio divina*. So this deluge of historical information with little or no relevance to us today can be difficult to tie in with *lectio*. Hopefully what’s presented here will offer insight into some underlying currents at work within the text.

Two such underlying currents are as follows. The first is the Hebrew verb and noun *davar* (same spelling) which abounds throughout, usually translated as “word” but means more than that, word-as-expression, especially as coming from the Lord. In fact, *davar* is akin to the Greek *logos*. *Davar* acts as an anchor of reference throughout First Kings and keeps us oriented to what’s going on behind the scenes, if you will, God acting in history with the intent to benefit humankind.

The second point which receive considerable treatment is the conjunctive *v-* translated generally as “and” but also as “then, when, but” or not at all. It serves to connect action that had just taken place and how impinges upon the verse or verses at hand. Such conjunctives begin virtually every verse in First Kings and are found just as much in other biblical books. They come in especially handy when the reader approaches the text in the spirit of *lectio divina*...of when to pause and when to resume with the text. Being aware of this conjunctive’s role as well as *davar* is sufficient to carry the reader’s attention through the entire book.

The only method followed with regard to these “expansions” on First Kings is implementing the practice of *lectio divina* in one’s own life. In other words, it’s an application of the divine *davar* or word-as-expression. Also please keep in mind that what’s offered doesn’t follow a verse-by-verse examination of the text. Instead,

it focuses more upon overall themes...expands upon them hopefully without losing sight of the author's original intent.

The English translation is from **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (RSV)**, (New York, 1973). Also the **NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984) has been used, chiefly for general information with regard to the text.

At the end of each chapter are the transliterated words noted upon which can make for easier cross reference. The above mentioned *davar* is not listed because it's so common.

Chapter One

The story of the last days of King David begins with the tiny one letter word or conjunctive called *v-* and translated as "now." It has been commented upon extensively in other "expansion" documents as showing a close connection between the present action and what had preceded it. Similarly this conjunctive will play an important role in the notations which follow as it serves to govern the flow of the text.

V- suggests that the reader is familiar with David's activity in Second Samuel, even going back to First Samuel when the prophet Samuel had anointed him king. We've reached the end the reign of this second and most famous of Israel's kings (Saul was the first) and are at the threshold of uncharted territory for the nation of Israel. Both promise and dread lay ahead. Which way the balance will tilt at the beginning, nobody knows. The fate of entire nation newly united and established will be determined shortly. But Israel has one thing going for her...*the* thing, namely, the Lord who never fails to intervene.

As for Israel's first king, Saul, the older generation alive at the time of David's death and his son's rise to power has in mind at this time of transition the fateful words of the Lord. They were addressed to the prophet Samuel when the people demanded a king: "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them" [1Sam 8.7]. Such words are destined to reverberate down through the centuries each time a new king comes into being.

The opening verse puts David's condition in dramatic form when reads literally: "And King David was old (and) came in days." In other words, he was at the point of death and required round the clock care. Despite being layered-up in clothes (*beged* also means to cover), he wasn't able to keep warm or as the text has it, "there was no warmth to him." That is to say, David remained cold despite the attention shown to him.

At this point we have no information as to David's mental condition or whether he could communicate with anyone; this comes later in vs. 16. As for now, the picture we have of him is being surrounded by servants, some of which must have been the best physicians in all Israel and even beyond such as from Egypt or Babylon. They were distressed at the condition of their master and tried their best to make sure his last days were as comfortable as possible. Some even hoped against hope that their round-the-clock would stave off death. So as everyone watched and waited, they decided upon a solution. Someone had the idea of procuring a young maiden or *betulah*, that is, girl who hadn't previous sexual experience and brought it to David's attention. Although there's no record of his response, we can be pretty sure he thought it was a great idea. No need to expand upon that which is obvious..This girl was to fulfil a threefold function: wait upon the king, being a nurse and lie in bed with him. *Hamad* or to stand applies to the first, basically being at hand to attend to any and all the king's wishes. The second is to be a nurse, the participle *sakan* meaning to be profitable. Finally she is to lie in David's bosom or *cheyq*.

The conjunctive *v-* of vs. 3 translates as "so" implying immediate action with regard to procuring (*baqash*, to seek) a young maiden somewhere within the bounds of Israel, *gevul* literally meaning this. In other words, David's attendants didn't want to get someone outside Israel which could reflect badly on the king. To procure a foreigner could give the impression that he might be under the domination of some foreign power hovering in the background so as to take over the country. The words *bekol* or "in all" suggest an urgent search, almost frantic, for the king's days were numbered. Finally they found Abishag, a Shunammite from the vicinity of Mount Gilboa and brought her to David. Nothing is said whether or not she consented, let alone her parents. Most likely they were torn between such an honor and the fact that they'd never see their daughter again. Their fears came true, for later Adonijah, a son of David and pretender to the throne, sought Abishag to be his wife. After that or in 2.21 she vanishes from the picture, possibly being shuttled off into the obscurity of one harem or another.

In vs. 4 Abishag is described literally as “exceedingly (the adverb *me’od*) beautiful” and was charged with being David’s nurse or *sakan* as noted in vs. 2. Here the conjunctive *v-* as “but” is revealing. That is to say, David did not know Abishag, *yadah* strongly implying they didn’t have sexual intercourse. In the case at hand, this isn’t admirable restraint on David’s part as some commentators noted. He was simply too old for sexual relations.

With these somewhat introductory remarks out of the way which shows the precarious nature of the political situation, attention moves to Adonijah, David’s eldest son. After all, it’s the first time the nation confronted the natural death of a king and the problem of succession. This can be pinpointed with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now,” the same way First Kings begins. When you bring in the eldest son as we have here with the father-as-king almost dead, automatically you can sense trouble ahead. Obviously the Lord foresaw this in the warning to Samuel from 1Sam 8.7 quoted earlier. In fact, this trouble begins straightaway when Adonijah exalted himself or *nasa’* (to lift up, bear, carry) saying that he will take over from his father. In a sense he was correct, being the eldest, but given the fact that this was the first instance of a royal succession you’d think he would consult not just his father but his brothers and other officials.

A sign that Adonijah was uncertain as to proclaiming himself king despite his bravado was to assemble an army including fifty men “to run before him,” a kind of bodyguard to protect himself against threats to his claim, especially from his brothers including Solomon. Vs. 6 throws in an interjection of sorts by saying that never had David displeased Adonijah, *hatsav* being the verb which connotes hurting one’s feelings. This reveals a key weakness of David insofar as he had been negligent in raising his sons, especially when it came to the issue of who’d succeed him on the throne. The classic example, of course, is Absalom.

As for his brother Absalom mentioned in vs. 6, Adonijah was “a very handsome man” which is rendered literally as “good form exceedingly.” *Me’od* is the adverb as in vs. 4 and *to’ar* which often applies to one’s physical appearance. This is an important assent for a king. For example, Saul is described in glowing terms as “There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he” [1Sam 9.2]. As for David, “Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome” [1Sam 16.12]. Nothing of the kind is said of Solomon who will appear shortly.

Adonijah wasted no time in consulting with those who knew both the political and military situation within Israel, Joab being one of the most important. The last

mention of Joab before the current situation was towards the end of David's active reign when he ordered him to take a census of the people. Despite questioning this, he had carried it out (cf. 2Sam 24.3+). Obviously Adonijah got wind of this and knew Joab was a wily man whose experience would come in handy. Along with Joab the advice of Abiathar the priest would be invaluable who, like Joab, had been in the service of David during Absalom's rebellion. However, five men along with David's "mighty men" (*givor* also as warrior) didn't join in this budding conspiracy. Among these five Nathan the prophet stands out.

So with this formidable, experienced group of followers behind him, Adonijah decided to inaugurate his conspiracy, if you will, by offering sacrifices at an ominously sounding place called Serpent's Stone near En-rogel which later became known as Job's Well, a source of water southeast of Jerusalem. Because Rogel is mentioned in 2Sam 17.17 in conjunction with Absalom's conspiracy, it doesn't forebode well for Adonijah, a warning sign he hadn't taken seriously. Conspicuous about this meeting was the second mention of Nathan as well as Solomon. Also we hear of Solomon for the first time in the drama, no explicit reason given for omitting him though it's easy to infer that David favored him. Most likely Adonijah and Salomon didn't get along right from the beginning. Besides, their treacherous brother Absalom was thrown into the mix. Although nothing is said about Solomon's attitude to his rebellious brother, surely he could perceive Adonijah's character, already an intimation of Solomon's famous wisdom at work.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 11 translated as "then" has a special urgency about it in light of Adonijah's treachery, that is, Nathan speaking with Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon. Although done in private, it was practically impossible to conceal the fact that both were up to something, given that people were moving constantly in and out taking care of the dying king. Being a well respected prophet, Nathan had feelers out with regard to Adonijah. He was used to intrigue, for many years ago he had confronted David about killing Uriah and taking his wife Bathsheba. Now after all this time the two have formed an alliance although it must have been a delicate one, memories of the past never being far away. With regard to the situation at hand, Nathan asks Bathsheba if she knew of Adonijah's conspiracy; after all he is her son. He doesn't care which way she might answer—the situation is too dire for that—and offers Bathsheba counsel (*yahats*) of a desperate nature, that is, to save her life and that of Solomon.

In vs. 13 Nathan urges Bathsheba to approach David at once and fill him in on how his eldest son had been plotting behind his back. He figured that only a wife

could do that, his own influence compromised, if you will, by having called out David as noted above. Obviously David's days were numbered, so it's question of Bathsheba and her son Solomon saving their own lives, *nephesh* being used which fundamentally means soul. As for Solomon, there's no record as to David's preference for him to be king in Second Samuel. And so Nathan the realist spells out the counsel of vs. 12 to Bathsheba, that is, she is to remind her frail husband about Solomon succeeding him as king. Also she is to ask David why Adonijah is king. This is fudging it a bit, for despite the move to become king, Adonijah isn't recognized as such, technically speaking, even by his comrades. Hopefully when David heard this, it'd shock him out of his stupor.

Nathan also counseled Bathsheba to keep on speaking with David which would give an opportunity for him to come on the scene pretty much by accident. In the way he hopes to win over David by confirming Bathsheba's words, the verb being *mala'* which also means to fill or to fulfill. Actually carrying out this deception would be easy, given David's condition. Nevertheless, a problem remained. The king must consent to it. Perhaps Nathan was thinking of when he had accused David some years earlier. Just the sight of him along with Bathsheba was enough to bring back painful old memories. Apart from this, the situation at hand is not entirely unlike Rebekah plotting with her son Jacob against Esau in order to secure his father Isaac's blessing and therefore continue his heritage (cf. Gen 27.1-26).

In vs. 15 Bathsheba does take Nathan's advice by visiting David in his *cheder*, inner room or bedroom. The **RSV** has in parentheses the fact that David was very old with Abishag ministering to him, *sharath* connoting a waiting upon which certainly applies here. Vs. 15 is in parentheses which gives a sense that both Bathsheba and Nathan came in upon an intimate scene best left un-described. As for Bathsheba's presence followed by that of Nathan, it didn't startle Abishag, let alone David, her presence being an accepted fact. Still, it must have been awkward for everyone present, especially for David when he saw Nathan and the woman he had once railed against for causing the death of her husband Uriah. If ever there were an occasion to be, as the expression goes, a fly on the wall, this is a classic example.

Once inside David's *cheder* or inner room, Bathsheba performs the expected obeisance, *shachah* meaning to stoop or bow down. David recognized his wife and asked what she wanted which reads literally as "what to you?" Although both are man and wife, the situation requires such formality, for all facets of life royal were

tightly organized. Without missing a beat, in vs. 17 Bathsheba calls herself a maidservant or '*amah*, a typical way of addressing someone in power, reminding David about how he swore to have Solomon sit upon the throne. Then with baited breath she throws out the clincher that Adonijah is king but not recognized by the people. It didn't surprise her that David didn't know this, his servants most likely afraid to break the news. Even though David was very feeble, Bathsheba braced herself for a violent response. So right away almost as to forestall this she continues with describing how Adonijah is king, proclaimed such by his supporters but without full consent of the nation, let alone David. Even if Adonijah had informed his father, David may have relented. However, to act this way without his consent bordered upon treason.

In vs. 20 Bathsheba puts David on the spot and rightly so by saying that the eyes of the entire nation of Israel are focused upon him. Not only that, the people await word as to who actually shall sit upon the throne. Such words intimate that the people were generally confused both by David's condition and reports about Adonijah. Throughout all this Solomon seems to be an unknown, untested element which contributes to a sense of mystery about him. Bathsheba concludes her plea with the distinct possibility of both her and her son Solomon being considered as offenders or '*chata*', a noun which also means a sinner. To be designated as such is a definite death sentence. Besides, Adonijah wouldn't hesitate to bring up the fact that his father David took Bathsheba as his wife after having had Uriah killed even though she is his mother. Thus behind Bathsheba's plea to David he alone is her last recourse for her survival and that of Solomon.

In vs. 22 we have Nathan coming on the scene as pre-arranged in vs. 14, he monitoring the conversation by the door and giving his approval at what Bathsheba had communicated to David. He wasn't doing this secretly, for there were some attendants introducing him to the king. Furthermore, most likely David was hard of hearing, so it was easy to hear the conversation as Bathsheba spoke up so as to be heard. Just like Bathsheba before him in vs. 16, Nathan did obeisance (*shachah* again) but with his face to the ground. Perhaps this greater obeisance was motivated in part by fear of his past relationship with the king and wanted to make sure he was on his side.

Right away Nathan takes up where Bathsheba leaves off, filling him in with greater details as to Adonijah's treacherous actions. With the same boldness displayed when having confronted David many years ago, Nathan comes right out and asks whether or not the king had designated Adonijah to succeed him. He repeats the

words of vs. 7, that is, how his son had conferred with other leaders such as Joab and the priest Abiathar who have proclaimed him king. Nathan also reminds David that he hadn't been invited along with Solomon and others. Finally he asks directly about *davar*, literally "thing" which fundamentally means word-as-expression, that is, whether or not David had permitted it. The time gap between that vital question and David's response was minuscule but must have lasted much longer as Nathan waited for a response.

Before responding, David dismisses Nathan although it isn't mentioned explicitly. He wanted to announce his decision to Bathsheba who apparently had withdrawn earlier when Nathan entered the room. Like the prophet shortly beforehand, she must have been waiting close by, listening in on the conversation as much as she could. This time Bathsheba didn't do the customary obeisance or *shachah* but simply stood before her husband, king of Israel. With both Nathan and Bathsheba waiting with their hearts beating wildly before David, the king responded with clarity and decisively knowing full well that the future of Israel depended upon his words. First, David used the word *shavah* or to swear which means he was utterly serious. Next he spoke briefly of how the Lord had redeemed his soul from previous adversities, *nephesh* as in vs. 12 along with the verb *padah* which also means to release. As for the adversities or *tsarah* (connotes narrowness or confinement), Nathan and Bathsheba certainly knew what they were, too numerous to be counted. The primary one in their minds, of course, was the Uriah treachery which set in motion the whole series of *tsarah*.

In vs. 30 which forms one whole sentence with the verse before it, David uses *shavah* a second time, here by the Lord (literally, 'in or *b-* the Lord') to both Nathan and Bathsheba that Solomon would sit upon his throne. Then he adds almost as for emphasis that "so I will do this day." Although vs. 31 has Bathsheba doing her obeisance or *shachah* (Nathan isn't mentioned) when she uttered the customary "Long live forever," she did so with a force and relief that she hadn't experienced before. Bathsheba couldn't wait to tell Nathan although David's next words in vs. 32 were to summon him along with Benaiah who later was to kill Adonijah at King Solomon's command (cf. 2.25).

So while in the presence of Bathsheba, Nathan and Benaiah, David commands the latter two to have Solomon (called here in vs. 33 'my son' as though for emphasis) ride on his own mule. This seems to be put a bit oddly...they are literally to "cause (Solomon) to ride," the *hiphil* suggesting, if you will, a respect for a royal person where the situation is prepared. All the person involved has to do is move in and

go through the motions which in this case is riding a mule. As for what seems a strange choice, mules were in the service of royalty. For example, David's son Absalom rode one when coming upon servants of his father (cf. 2Sam 18.9).

Now this small party is to make its way to Gihon, site of a spring on the eastern slope of Mount Zion and water source for Jerusalem. Solomon was to be installed secretly and quietly at the very source of life away from the flashiness of Adonijah's supposed coronation. Note that a new king's installation is done through anointing or *mashach* (verbal root for Messiah), something that did not apply to Adonijah. In the case at hand, both Nathan and the priest Zadok are to officiate which most likely means both held a cruet of oil over Solomon's head and poured it together. As for Solomon himself, we have no words before, during nor after this event which once again casts him in a somewhat mysterious light. In other words, what kind of king will he turn out to be?

Once the all-important anointing has been done—no words of oath or the like seem to be included—someone blows a trumpet and proclaims Solomon as king. This must have echoed far and wide, given the location down below Jerusalem. It reached a wider audience than the fanfare involved with Adonijah's pretended anointing. David continued with instructing both Nathan and Zadok along with Benaiah who are to proceed Solomon from Gihon to his throne in Jerusalem. At this point Benaiah couldn't help exclaim "Amen" and wish the Lord to be with Solomon in the same way he had been with David. Now these three accompanied Solomon along with the Cherethites and Pelethites. As for these two groups of people, 2Sam 8.18 has the faithful Benaiah over both and seem to have been mercenaries at the service of King David.

Zadok the priest took a horn (*qeren*: a receptacle for oil as well as being a symbol of strength and power) of oil from the tent and anointed Salomon. Mention of a tent indicates that this small group determined to fulfil King David's wish when they had camped at Gihon a day or two earlier. In this way they hoped to avoid any suspicious activity which might reach the ears of Adonijah. Furthermore, Gihon was a source of water which attracted a number of people so it was important to blend in without attracting attention. When the trumpet was blown—none was sounded with the supposed installation of Adonijah—the people shouted their approval. As for the people in attendance, they would include those at Gihon as well as those in Jerusalem, the sound echoing from there through the waterway leading into the city above. Everyone surrounded Solomon, rejoicing with great joy, the verb *samach* and the noun derived from it, *simchah*. Apparently this

celebration created so much intense excitement that the noise split the earth, *baqah* being the verb. This was very possible. After all, Gihon was at the base of Mount Zion, the sound, like the trumpet just blown, echoing through the water tunnel and threatening to split Jerusalem in two.

Vs. 41 switches gears, if you will, getting back to Adonijah's premature celebration. Apparently he and his supporters were assembled in Jerusalem, and having finished congratulating each other, they hear suddenly the sound of the trumpet from Gihon below them. As the previous verse states, its sound split the very ground. Joab was astonished by an uproar coming from throughout Jerusalem, the word being *humah* which connotes the growling of some wild beast. They were responding, of course, to the sound coming from beneath them, that plus the *humah* of the city being as one inescapable roar.

Even while Joab was speaking of this *humah*, Jonathan came in and is described in vs. 42 as a worthy fellow, *chayl* (noun) also as valiant. While this may be true, given the situation, Adonijah may have used this phrase as a quick way to reassure both himself and those with him. In other words, he knew immediately what this *humah* was and tried to fake his way through and hopefully escape. As for Jonathan, he sealed Adonijah's fate by blurting out the fact that King David made Solomon his successor and continues speaking through vs. 48. Vs. 67 sums it up perfectly and succinctly: "Solomon sits upon the royal throne." Without a doubt, these words comprise the death sentence of Adonijah.

Apparently the servants belonging to King David knew Solomon quite well, for in vs. 47 they congratulated him, namely, that God will make Solomon's name more famous than that of their master, *yataw* meaning to go well or to be glad. They had an intimation of the wisdom for which Solomon would be renowned, this being a source of comfort for David in his last days. In fact, David got up enough energy to bow down or *shachah* (cf. vs. 31) upon his bed, this in recognition of the transfer of royal authority. Next he thanks God for having one of his sons assume the throne, that is, one of some nineteen. Always in back of David's mind was the transfer of power from Saul to himself, a truly harrowing experience, which at all costs he wished to forego.

Vs. 49 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" which shows the connection between Jonathan's message and the immediate response by Adonijah's guests. In other words, they beat it at once, deserting their master whom just recently they so enthusiastically proclaimed as king. In other words, the guests

trembled or *charad* which also means to be worried or frightened. As for their deserting Adonijah, it's put succinctly as "each went his own way."

So in a flash, "king" Adonijah was left alone with no supporters. Obviously he feared for his life which made him rush to the temple of the Lord and lay hold of the horns of the altar, *chazaq* being a strong word meaning he held on for dear life. This practice is based upon the priest smearing blood of the sacrifice upon the horns as in Ex 29.12. However, there's an exception which pertains to murder: "But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him treacherously, you shall take him from my altar that he may die" [Ex 21.14]. Although the current situation doesn't involve murder, it's more than that, an attempt to usurp the throne of Israel.

Such a dramatic last stand, if you will, naturally reached Solomon's ears who was familiar with the laws laid down in such circumstances. In fact, Adonijah himself sends word to his brother, pleading for his life. What happens next previews, if we can put it that way, the wisdom which would make Solomon famous. He gives a chance for Adonijah to prove himself to be a worthy person which here would mean recognize the legitimate transfer of royal authority. As for the adjective worthy, it's the noun *chayl* as applied to Jonathan in vs. 42. However, should the opposite prove true and wickedness (*rah* also as evil) is found in Adonijah, he is to die. In other words, the proof lays not in the past but in the future. With that in mind, Solomon allows his brother to leave the temple in peace after having done obeisance or *shachah* (cf. vs. 31). This drama must have gone on for some time meaning that sacrificial offerings were suspended which must have stunned the people assembled there.

1) beged, 2) betulah, hamad, sakan, cheyq, 3) baqash, gevul, 4) me'od, yadah, 5) nasa', 6) hatsav, me'od, toar, 10) givor, 12) yahats, 13) nephesh, 14) mala', 15) sharath, cheder, shachah, 16) shachah, 17) 'amah, 21) chata', 29) shavah, nephesh, padah, tsarah, 30) shavah, 31) shachah, 34) mashach, qeren, 40) samach, baqah, 41) humah, 42) chayl, 47) yatav, 47) shachah, 49) charad, 50) chazaq, shachah, 52) rah, chayl

Chapter Two

This new chapter begins with the familiar conjunctive *v-* translated as "when," again showing a close connection between what went before (the Adonijah-

Solomon struggle for power) as well as the imminent death of King David and his struggle to have Solomon succeed him. *Qarav* is the verb describing it, to draw near or to approach, along with the plural “days.” Actually it has been *qarav* for some time, but now it’s right around the corner, and everyone was aware of the fact. Given the close-knit nature of society at the time, most people knew of the power struggle just noted. While everyone had an opinion, chances are they kept quiet, given the uncertain outcome.

The first (or better, last) order of business was for David to order his son Solomon, *tsavah* also as to set up, to appoint with regard to what amounts to his last will and testament, this running through vs. 9. In this special circumstance—the first transfer of royal authority (Saul-to-David not falling under that category) *tsavah* is appropriate, for David is commanding Solomon how he is to comport himself. Such a thing never occurred when David became king; besides, Saul was slain in battle. David begins by saying that he’s about to go (literally) “in the way all earth (*‘erets*),” this noun pertaining to a land or territory compared with the physical land though that can apply as well. When David is speaking, he can’t but have in mind the words of Nathan the prophet when he pointed out his responsibility for slaying Uriah. What really haunted him were the words “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me” [2Sam 12.10]. That means Solomon will experience this sword in his house sooner or later and was well aware of it. Not an auspicious way to inaugurate a new rule.

Solomon is to be *chazaq* (cf. 1.50) or strong in the sense of holding firm and literally “you be to man.” These words can imply a certain assessment of Solomon who to date hasn’t proven himself, at least according to the text. In fact, we know little of him thus far, for he remained pretty much in the background. Yet of all his sons, David saw in him some qualities that would qualify him for office. Solomon is to “keep the charge” of the Lord, *shamar* (to hold on to, to devote oneself to) with the noun *mishmereth* derived from it or that which is held in trust for safekeeping. This can, for example, refer to Dt 11.1: “You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge (*shamar* and *mishmereth*), his statutes, his ordinances and his commandments always.” If Solomon does this and the rest that follows which pertains to him personally, it will overflow to the benefit of those under his rule.

What follows from this *shamar/mishmereth* is that Solomon is to walk in the Lord’s ways, keep (*shamar*) his statutes, commandments, ordinances and testimonies. All these pretty much mirror the Deuteronomy quote above and in

fact encompass everything set down there which comprises the *Torah* of Moses. These are to be *shamar* not as an end in themselves but for prospering, the verb *sakal* meaning to comprehend, to be prudent. *Sakal* also applies to wherever Solomon might turn or literally “turn in it,” the verb being *panah*.

Vs. 4 continues as one sentence with the previous verse and begins with the all important *lemahan* or “that.” David just laid out the general plan of action for his son in accord with the *Torah* of Moses, that the Lord “may establish his word which he spoke.” The verb *qum* fundamentally means to rise—to rise not unlike leaven within bread—with respect to the divine *davar* or word-as-expression he spoke (*davar*) to David. That *davar* refers to 2Sam 7.12: “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up (*qum*) your offspring after you who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.” There is, however, a caveat and consisting of “if” applied not so much to Solomon but to his sons. In other words, David was thinking in the long term. “If” these sons yet to be born “take heed” to their way. In other words, we have another *shamar* as in vs. 3. They are to walk before the Lord in faithfulness (*‘emeth*, also as truth) entirely which involves their heart and soul, *lev* and *nephesh* (cf. 1.12). Both are modified with the adjective *kol* or whole as entirety. So if these sons yet to be born carry this out, Israel can be assured of a king in perpetuity, the alternative being put bluntly as to be cut off, *karath*.

Vs. 5 takes a different turn signified by yet another use of the conjunctive *v*-prefaced to *vgam*, “and also” with David speaking of Joab. Solomon thought he’d mention Adonijah, but that was more a family matter. David never got over the treachery of his former commander because two sons were involved: first Absalom and then Adonijah. That pretty much condemned Joab, and to get rid of him was high on the list. David specifies the treachery as how Joab dealt with two commanders of the army, Abner and Amasa, murdering both which meant Solomon just might be next on the list in a last ditch attempt to get Adonijah on the throne. *Harag* is the verb which also can apply to killing as in war or self-defense.

Joab’s crime according to David? The murder just mentioned is twofold. First, it consists in avenging during a time of peace blood that had been shed in war, the verb being *sum* which means literally to place. Secondly, it touched David intimately. That is to say, this innocent blood (literally, ‘blood of war’) stained the girdle around his loins as well as his sandals. Note that the two uses of the personal pronoun “my” in Hebrew is “his.” The noun for “girdle” is *chagor*...in other

words, underwear. Although that blood had been washed years ago, still it stuck to David as though the incident had happened yesterday.

In vs. 6 David bids Solomon to act quickly in accord with his wisdom or *chakmah* which also means shrewdness or skill in technical matters. In other words, already the father sees in his son that quality for which he will be renowned later in life and which will guide him through the early days of his reign. David's request is quite harsh, showing that even at the point of death he wants revenge upon his enemies and those who might threaten his son's reign. Such long simmering rage is borne out by his words as not to allow Joab's gray head descend to Sheol in peace, Sheol is pretty much a general term for the grave from which there is no return. *Shalom* is the well-known word for peace and implies wholeness or completeness. So if Solomon can pull this off, Joab will be restless for all eternity which would delight David. Then again both are going to the same place; has David ever thought of that?

On the other hand, in vs. 7 David wishes his son to deal loyally with the sons of Barzillai, referring to when they brought food and other supplies while David and his followers were in hiding from his own son Absalom (cf. 2Sam 17.27-29). *Chesed* is the word for the adverb "loyally," the well known noun for mercy usually considered untranslatable. It implies graciousness and faithfulness and equivalent to the New Testament *agape*. The manifestation of this *chesed* in the verse at hand is to share one's table. These sons of Barzillai took David in while fleeing Absalom, the verb *qarav* meaning to approach or to admit.

Another person worthy of David's revenge through his son is Shimei, that "dead dog" [2Sam 16.9] who had cursed him fleeing from Jerusalem. Apparently he survived the take-over of the city by Absalom, obviously was fearful at David's restoration, and now faced certain death at the hands of his son. This comes as somewhat of a surprise, since during his flight David recognized that the Lord had sent Shimei to curse him. David puts it here in vs. 8 as "who cursed me with a grievous curse," *qalal* being the verb and *qelalah* the noun derived from it.

All in all, this account of retribution by someone on his deathbed describes a lingering hatred that's difficult to shed. While this may be true, David also was thinking long term, of extending his kingship basically forever. And to think such hatred originated from David's murder of Uriah and taking his wife to be his own. Solomon must have wondered about that, wondering if his father was on the verge of joining Joab and Shimei in Sheol. Also he was afraid that beginning his reign

with carrying out these orders might just curse him, let alone his successors, as Nathan had predicted long ago.

As for Shimei, Solomon is bidden not to hold him guiltless or *naqah* (also means to be pure), David saying in the same breath that his son is a wise man, *chakam*. In a sense, David is being sly, appealing to that innate *chakmah* (cf. vs. 6) of his son and trying to get him to use it for personal ends. Furthermore, David puts words in Solomon's mouth, that is, "you know what to do with him." That translates into having Shimei share the same fate as Joab. We have no response by Solomon nor information as to what may have been going through his mind, preferring to remain silent and weigh his father's words later on after his death.

As for David's death, that came soon enough or after he had finished giving, so to speak, his last will and testament. In vs. 10 David passes away which is put in the usual terms as sleeping with his ancestors, *shakav* meaning to lay down. Although Sheol was thought of the abode of the dead for just about everyone, hopefully he was in a different section than Joab and Shimei who would follow shortly. Then there's Samuel, the only person recorded as coming back from Sheol, albeit temporarily, when he foretold the death of Saul (cf. 1Sam 29.11+). It was Samuel who originally became the agent by which the Lord expressed anger about the Israelites wanting a king instead of him. Again, Solomon must have feared for his father David to be in Sheol with these assorted characters.

Vs.s. 1-12 simply give the stats as to David's reign first in Hebron and later in Jerusalem, totaling forty years. Now for the first time we have a peaceful...semi-peaceful...transition of power, Adonijah's attempted usurpation being the exception. With Solomon on the throne, the kingdom is established firmly, the verb *kun* suggesting permanence along with the adverb *me'od*, literally as excessively (cf. 1.6) secure. There's the question of Nathan who pretty much disappears off the scene but must have remained alive for some time. Although instrumental in David's life, chances are his influence waned considerably with Solomon. After all, it's time to move on after the initial trials and errors of getting the kingdom established. Chances are, however, Nathan kept in touch with Bathsheba.

Vs. 13 begins with an ominous use of the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" referring to Adonijah who approached Bathsheba, figuring that she had Solomon's ear. In the back of his mind, Solomon knew he had to deal with this more or less immediate threat after the aborted attempt to become king. Note that he's called son of Haggith, the latter mentioned in 1.5: "Now Adonijah, whose mother was

Haggith”...i.e., not Bathsheba, one of David’s wives (cf. 2Sam 3.4). Obviously Bathsheba was suspicious of him; besides his aborted coup, he wasn’t related to her blood-wise. That’s why she asks if Adonijah comes peaceably or not, the noun *shalom* (cf. vs. 6) being used. He responds in the affirmative which given his desperate situation, may or may not be true. Chances are as a precaution she stationed several armed guards nearby but out of sight.

Bathsheba knew what Adonijah wanted as soon as he approached her. He came right out with apparently not giving any kind of obeisance to the widowed wife of a king. Then he blurts out his *davar* or word (as expression) which was obvious on his face. Diplomatically and with a tinge of defensiveness Bathsheba tells Adonijah to get out his *davar*, the verb being used.

Adonijah tries to threaten Bathsheba by claiming that she was aware that the kingdom belonged to him, not to Solomon. Now through no so much an outright lie but an exaggeration, he falsely claims that (literally) “Israel their faces to be king.” That is to say, the face of each and every last Israelite was turned in the direction of Adonijah, nowhere else (implying Solomon, of course). By way of mockery, he could have mentioned that Solomon was anointed king in a cave beneath Jerusalem, but he didn’t go there.

Adonijah’s next ploy is to put the transfer of power in somewhat indirect terms, that some impersonal power brought it about: “the kingdom has turned about,” *savav* being the verb which means to turn around, reverse. This *savav* resulted in the kingdom ultimately ending up in Solomon’s hands. The sentiment expressed here is reminiscent of Moses confronting Aaron with regard to the making of the golden calf: “I threw it (gold) into the fire, and there came out this calf” [Ex 32.24]. Nevertheless, Adonijah recognizes that Solomon got his authority from the Lord.

After these lame but somewhat truthful words, in vs. 16 Adonijah shows a certain boldness borne of desperation especially by the words “do not refuse me,” literally as “my face” (*panay*). Bathsheba doesn’t reveal whether she was taken aback or not but simply asks him to continue. Adonijah is after Abishag who had nursed King David, a request which Bathsheba decided to pass on to Solomon.

Vs. 19 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “so” implying that Bathsheba left Adonijah at once and passed on his request for Abishag. As soon as Adonijah walked in the room, she could tell that he had sealed his fate, for he had an air of

boldness and impudence that was unmistakable. Nevertheless, it was better to get on with solving the problem straightaway, hence the meeting with Solomon. As soon as she entered his presence, Solomon got up from his throne and bowed down to her, something that didn't even enter Adonijah's mind when he made his presumptuous request, actually demand. Not only did he do this, he had her sit on a throne right beside him. Bathsheba says pretty much tongue-in-cheek that she has "one small (*qatan*) request." Solomon knew, of course, what it was without having to ask her. Bathsheba uses the same words Adonijah threw out at her, "do not refuse me," in order to heighten the irony of the situation.

Solomon promises that he won't refuse his mother's "one small request" after which she presents it to him. He replies with a kind of rhetorical question as to why followed by a kind of feigned sarcasm that Adonijah should have requested the kingdom. Solomon throws out the fact that on his brother's side are Abiathar the priest and Joab, two men he has yet to contend with, otherwise his throne won't be secure.

In vs. 23 King Solomon swears (*shavah*, cf. 1.30) by the Lord, wishing that he do such-and-such to him or basically condemn him if Bathsheba's message (*davar* or word) doesn't cost him his life (*nephesh* or soul, cf. vs. 4). Bathsheba was expecting this, of course, and was glad to hear it come from the mouth of her son as the two sat side by side on their respective thrones. Solomon solemnly states that the Lord established him and put him on the throne of his father, the two verbs *kun* (cf. vs. 12) and *yashav* being similar in this instance. Furthermore, the Lord made Solomon a house or *bayth*, often a word which indicates family members or succession. Then he comes out with what Bathsheba expected, actually longed, to hear. Solomon will put Adonijah to death—"this day" added for emphasis—the sentence compounded by the arrogant way he treated Bathsheba who, after all, isn't his mother.

The use of the conjunctive *v-* in vs. 26 as "so" is indicative of Solomon's resolve, let alone that of his mother. He summons Benaiah who struck down Adonijah, *pagah* (also as to fall upon, to meet) followed by "he died," words which give a finality to the threat against the throne.

Next in line is the priest Abiathar whom Solomon had summoned and bids him to return to his estate or *sadeh* which also means a field. Although deserving of death (literally, 'for man to die'), Solomon lets him off with a less-than-veiled threat of "not at this time." The reason for this quasi-reprieve? Abiathar had borne the

Lord's ark before David (cf. 2Sam 15.24). Also he shared in his father's afflictions, *hanah* being the verb which has a wide variety of meanings such as to answer. Solomon took the radical step of banishing (*garash*: to drive out which is more forcibly put) Abiathar from being a priest. This banishment is intensified by the added phrase "to (*l*-) the Lord," Abiathar no longer enjoying what this *l*-intimates. In this way the *davar* of the Lord was fulfilled concerning the house of Eli (cf. 1Sam 2.30+). So while Abiathar was grateful for his life having been spared, he had to live out his days with the threat of death hanging over his head and just as bad, being reminded of Eli's neglect of his two sons whose misuse of the priestly role brought ruin upon their house.

Vs. 28 begins with the conjunctive *v*- translated as "when," referring to news of Adonijah's demise—*shamah* meaning that as soon as he heard of it—he fled, despite not having been on the side of Absalom's rebellion against David. *Natah* is the verb here, to stretch out or to extend. Then, of course, was the news about Abiathar though Solomon spared his life. What to do now? He decided there was no other choice but to follow the example of Adonijah and hasten to the "tent of the Lord," *'ohel* as found in 1.39. Use of *'ohel* goes back to the days when the ark of the Lord in the Sinai wilderness was protected by a tent when the people weren't on the move. Use of it carried over to the permanent temple in Jerusalem.

Joab knew, of course, that Adonijah turned out to find safe haven in the temple, grasping the same horns of the altar while hoping for some kind of reprieve. At the same time he knew that Solomon had dispatched Benaiah at a later time to slay Adonijah. Sure enough, the king sent Benaiah to carry out the job. He orders Joab to come down from the altar (this was the second instance of the sacrifices being interrupted), but he refused. Joab exclaimed in vs. 30 that he'd prefer to die while grasping the horns of the altar. Hesitating to violate any prohibition about killing someone in the temple, let alone at the altar, Benaiah decides to bring back *davar* or word to Solomon as what to do. Without missing a beat Solomon commands him to strike down Joab or *pagah*, just as with Adonijah in vs. 25. Both instances have the preposition *b*- (in) which read literally "strike in him."

While Solomon relented as far as Adonijah goes, he doesn't hesitate to order that Joab be put to death within the temple which must have caused quite a commotion. Was anyone safe, then, who took refuge there? is the question people were asking. Benaiah didn't seem to have any qualms, telling him to carry out Joab's wish to die at the altar. Taking away guilt from David's house and to avenge the deaths of Abner and Amasa were more important (cf. 2Sam 3.27 and 2Sam 20.10). The

Hebrew reads literally here as “take away the blood.” After all, making sure the house of David was established firmly was more important than any violation of religious guidelines, especially when it came to grievous offenses. The real clincher seems to be that Joab slew these two men without David’s knowledge, the two being more righteous than himself, *tsadyq*.

Vs. 33 has two conjunctives or *v-*, the first translated as “so” showing the resolve of Solomon to take vengeance not just upon Joab but upon his descendants. This is put in term of blood being upon their heads, an inverse crown, if you will. The second conjunctive stands in contrast to “so” and translates as “but” with respect to David and his descendants, Solomon obviously thinking of himself. In short, the descendants of David will enjoy peace or *shalom* (cf. vs. 13) forever.

A third conjunctive translated as “then” begins vs. 34 with Benaiah coming on the scene once again as executioner. He goes right ahead and slays (*pagah* with the preposition *b-*, in; cf. vs. 25) Joab in the temple though this isn’t mentioned explicitly but inferred. Joab was then buried in his own house, *bayth* (cf. vs. 24) here used as his property. As a result of his loyalty in carrying out the king’s dirty work, Solomon appoints Benaiah as head of the army which formerly was held by Joab. Zadok, already a priest who had anointed Solomon, succeeded Abiathar.

The final conjunctive *v-* concerning David’s enemies now applies to Shimei, vs. 36 beginning with “then.” As with Abiathar, he decides to spare his life by residing in Jerusalem with the caveat that he can’t leave the city under any circumstance. If he does, his blood, like that of Joab and his descendants, will be poured upon his head. Shimei agreed and as vs. 38 says, lived under these circumstances for many days. This amounted basically to house arrest. To make sure Shimei complied, guards must have been posted outside. Besides, in such a compact place as Jerusalem, everyone would recognize Shimei and know if he went out one of the city gates.

After three years two slaves belonging to Shimei escaped which prompted him to go off to Gath where they had taken refuge. The reason for their escape isn’t given, but it must have been due to harsh treatment. Shimei managed to capture the two and bring back to Jerusalem, but word got out to Solomon who summoned him. It seems that Shimei acted on impulse, not giving a thought to the king’s stipulation not to leave Jerusalem. He figured that since all went well for three years, surely a quick trip to Gath on legitimate business would be acceptable. While under questioning, the king reminded Shimei of an oath he had taken, that is, he failed to

keep (*shamar*, cf. vs. 3) it, *shevuhah* often applied to a covenant and therefore quite serious. In addition to this solemn oath, Solomon reminds Shimei that he had been placed under a commandment or *mitsvah*, this noun being used with the verbal root from which it's derived.

Solomon is so enraged that he doesn't give Shimei a chance to respond. He reminds him of the evil committed in his heart against David, even though as noted earlier David recognized Shimei's cursing was from the Lord. That supposed evil will come back upon Shimei's head, worse than the above mentioned instances of blood being upon the head of Joab. Then in vs. 45 Solomon speaks of himself in the third person which is a more formal and condemnatory way of addressing Shimei. He, that is, the king, shall be blessed, and David's throne shall remain forever. And so the ever faithful and ready Benaiah is summoned to dispatch Shimei. As for his two slaves, let alone others in his charge, they must have rejoiced at this.

Chapter Two ends with the simple yet important statement that Solomon's kingdom was established (*kun*, cf. vs. 23). With his enemies as well as those of his father out of the way, Solomon could now strike out on his own unhindered. As for those who had supported Adonijah's aborted attempt at a coup, they simply melted away with no leader to rally them.

1) qarav, tsavah, 2) 'erets, chazaq, 3) shamar, mishmereth, sakal, panah, 4) lemanah, qum, shamar, 'emeth, lev, nephesh, karath, 5) harag, 6) chakmah, shalom, 7) chesed, qarav, 8) qalal, qelalah, 9) naqah, chakam, 10) shakav, 12) kun, me'od, 13) shalom, 15) savav, 20) qatan, 23) shavah, nephesh, 24) kun, yashav, bayth, 25) pagah, 26) sadeh, hanah, 27) garash, 28) shamah, natah, 'ohel, 32) tsadyq, 33) shalom, 34) pagah, bayth, 43) shamar, shevuhah, mitsvah, 46) kun

Chapter Three

This new chapter begins typically with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated and is a foreboding sign of things to come. To borrow the concluding words of the last chapter, the first order of business once "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" was for him to forge an alliance of marriage (*chatan*: to marry) with Pharaoh of Egypt. It's foreboding in that it sets the stage for Solomon's eventual fall from (divine) grace by getting involved not so much with foreign alliances but falling under the influence of foreign divinities which would impinge

upon Israel's religion. A footnote in the **RSV** puts it well: "One might say that the story begins with wisdom but ends with folly (i.e., chapter 11)."

Vs. 1 says that Solomon brings the unidentified daughter of Pharaoh to Jerusalem which here is called affectionately "city of David," memory of the recently deceased king still very much alive. In fact, some of his supporters must have wondered about this *chatan* with the region's most powerful country. Would David have entered such an alliance in his day? they couldn't help but be concerned. Interestingly vs. 1 adds that already Solomon was engaged in a building project: his own house, the house of the Lord and the wall surrounding Jerusalem. Despite the *chatan* which hopefully promises economic benefits, Solomon is wary of any designs Pharaoh may have upon Jerusalem. One can only wonder what Bathsheba and Nathan thought of all this.

The first paragraph of this new chapter mentions the potential trouble laying up ahead which vs. 2 serves to back up. That is to say, the people—and here the virtually entire population of Israel is intimidated—were sacrificing in high places or *bamah*. Unfortunately the folly the **RSV** footnote mentions above applies to Solomon as well: "Then Solomon built a *bamah* for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the abomination of the Ammonites on the mountain east of Jerusalem" [11.7]. As for the verse at hand, building a temple for the Lord is of the highest priority though vs. 1 has it second on the list. Even if and when it's built, this is no guarantee it will lure the people down from the *bamah*.

The untranslated conjunctive beginning vs. 3 shows the interesting contrast between Solomon loving the Lord (*ahav* also as to long for) and walking in the statutes (*choq*) of his father while simultaneously engaged in what his people were doing. In short, Solomon offered sacrifices and incense upon the *bamah*. At the same time he was conscious of the need to wean the people off them and shift their worship to the Lord as in the temple at Jerusalem. This was a problem Solomon was confronting going all the way back to Moses: how to promote worship of the Lord when confronted with the temptation posed by various deities. It was a delicate balancing act that would continue to challenge subsequent kings and prophets within Israel. As for the attractiveness of such *bamah* they and other practices offered, Israel was plagued by them ever since entering the land of Canaan. In fact, the Israelites worshiped alien Gods while wandering in the Sinai wilderness. Perhaps they got into this back in Egypt, having lived there for some four hundred years though there's not direct evidence of it. A more plausible

explanation is that the stark, monotheistic Lord revealed on Mount Sinai was simply too distant and abstract.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 4 shows the close connection Solomon maintained with these alien divinities by visiting to the central focus of worship at the time, that is, Gibeon. The reason for this visit is unspecified. Going back to the time of Joshua, people from that area heard how he had wiped out the local inhabitants. They disguised themselves as coming from a distant land, made an alliance with Joshua, their ruse having been discovered. Instead of being put to death, essentially became slaves to the Israelites (cf. chapter nine of Joshua). But the more immediate importance of Gibeon lay in the fact that the Lord's tabernacle was there, the one made by Moses himself. David was prevented from going because the sword of the angel of the Lord was present at Gibeon (cf. 1Chron 21.28-30). Perhaps his son and successor just might break this curse. As a footnote in the NIV puts it, "the tabernacle and ancient bronze altar must have been salvaged after the destruction of Shiloh by the Philistines." Anyway, Gibeon at the time of Solomon seemed to be a curious mixture of monotheistic and polytheistic religious observance.

Regardless of the dubious, rather dual nature of Gibeon religiously speaking, in vs. 5 the Lord swallows his pride by overlooking the rival gods, etc., and appears to Solomon in a dream. He has in mind a greater picture which essentially consists in salvation history for the whole human race, not just Israel. The common verb to see or *ra'ah* is used along with *chalom* which often is associated with prophecy. Interestingly its verbal root (*chalam*) means to restore to health as well as to dream...as though dreams were essential to maintaining physical well-being. The Lord gets right to the point, having in mind no so much Solomon's personal religious preferences but the future of the people of Israel. All Solomon has to do is ask, and it will come to him, simple as that.

Wisely Solomon prefaces his request by saying that the Lord has shown great *chesed* (cf. 2.7 for this so-called untranslatable word) to his father, David. This is because David had walked in faithfulness, righteousness and uprightness: '*emeth*, *tsadaqah* and *yesharah*. The last two are similar; the second implies being brought to justice and the third connotes straightness or smoothness. So when the verb "walked" is used as in this instance, it applies to how David governed his people though the three nouns explicitly refer to the Lord, this naturally spilling over to the Israelites. Not only did the Lord show *chesed* to David, but he kept it

tucked away, if you will, the verb *shamar* being used which means to keep watch or guard (cf. 2.3).

After singing the Lord's praises with regard to his Father, in vs. 7 Solomon turns attention to himself saying that he's a little child (*nahar*: adolescent, young man) who doesn't know how to go out or come in, a self-deprecatory way of saying he doesn't know how to govern. Solomon may have thought this way by people who had served his father and were talking behind his back. Furthermore, he's in the midst (*betok*: also as in the middle of) of a people whom the Lord has chosen...some of whom are so-called pilgrims right now at Gibeon, not very pleasing to the Lord. What's redeeming about these words is Solomon's admitted vulnerability and precious need for divine guidance. Always David will hang around his neck as a reminder, this applicable to the people as well.

Now in vs. 9 Solomon asks for what he needs most, and it consists of two parts. The first is an understanding mind which reads literally as a "hearing heart" or a *lev* which is *shamah*. This *shamah* is for the purpose of governance, *shaphat* or to judge in the sense of to settle disputes of which there will be plenty for him to do as king. The second part of Solomon's request has to do with Solomon's discerning between good and evil, *byn* from which "between" or *bayn* is derived. So discernment has to do with distinguishing between things and situations. And so the second half of vs. 9 has Solomon pose a rhetorical question, "who is able to govern this your great people?," another mention of *shaphat*.

In vs. 15 Solomon awakes with the words, "behold (*hineh*), it was a dream." Such words indicate the vividness of his experience, that it happened as if he were fully conscious. As soon as he awoke, he left in haste for Jerusalem, this mentioned in vs. 2 which begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then." That is to say, vs. 1 begins with the same conjunctive, indicative of a quick moving succession of events. At this point Solomon doesn't seem to feel any different despite the Lord giving him "a wise and discerning mind" [vs. 12]. Obviously Solomon was eager to try it out in the field, as were, keeping this dream strictly to himself. However, his closest aides must have picked up a change in attitude, for an experience as this would be difficult to hide. So when Solomon left Gibeon with its dual religious significance, he was happy to do so perhaps with the intent of making it over as a place wholly devoted to worship of the Lord.

Once back in Jerusalem Solomon hastened to the ark of the Lord, this being its first mention with the incidental exception of 2.26 as related to Abiathar, '*aron*

being the noun. Part of this hastiness may be attributed to a feeling of being unclean while at Gibeon and watching the way people worshiped both the Lord and alien divinities, many shifting from one to the other without batting an eye. His standing before the ark in vs. 15 seems to be that of a priest presiding over a ceremony where he made two types of offerings, burn and peace, followed by a feast for his servants, *heved* often meaning a slave.

What was just recounted appears to be a private celebration. Solomon was king now and had to set a positive example for his officials and more importantly, his people. He didn't have to wait long to try out his newly acquired wisdom though there's no such mention of this term relative to him. The first situation which presented itself is in vs. 16 which begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" to signify the event at hand came right on the heels of Solomon's celebration, even as he was leaving the temple.

The situation of two harlot is, of course, well known, *zonah* being derived from a verb which means to commit fornication. The beauty of this story is that a person of any status could approach the king which strengthened the bond between him and them all the more. The result of Solomon's decision has a clear give-away, that is, the woman speaking first calls the other "this woman" which intimates that the speaker is guilty and trying to pass off guilt onto her. Then she claims that no one was around for three days in the house, most likely frequented by prostitutes. There followed considerable bickering before Solomon who during it all was trying to sum it all up.

Finally Solomon asks for a sword to divide the baby or more dramatically, "a sword was brought before the king" [vs. 24] just as the two bickering women were before the king. As everyone knows, the woman to whom the baby didn't belong was eager to cut it in half while the true mother begged that it doesn't happen. And so the baby and true mother were reunited. Nothing is said of the woman who brought the false claim. She must have left fully disgraced and later could have had a change of heart with regard to being a prostitute. In fact, "customers" decided to shun her which put her out of business.

Shortly after this incident Solomon had a chance to reflect upon his decision in light of the divine revelation that came to him in the dream at Gibeon. It was a small incident, really, but one he could use to expand upon with more weighty matters. Even better for Solomon, the entire nation heard of his judgment or *mishpat* which also pertains to handing down legal decisions. On top of this, the

Israelites were in awe of their new king, the verb *yare'* being used which means to fear in the sense of having respect. Note that this verb is found with *ra'ah* or to see ('they perceived'). The two can appear similar in form and almost be confused. For example, their form here is *y'r'u* and *ra'u*.

It is only with the people—those who form the body which is ruled—that *chakmah* or wisdom is found for the first time with regard to Solomon. Such *chakmah* is the manifestation of that “wise and discerning mind” of vs. 12. Thus a relatively minor case serves to enable King Solomon to come into his own and at last be set free from the influence of his father. This is welcomed news, of course, but Solomon had to distinguish himself to set a new course for both himself and the nation. His recent judgment had the further benefit of silencing any residual supporters of Adonijah.

1) chatan, 2) bamah, 3) 'ahav, choq, 5) ra'ah, chalom, 6) chesed, 'emeth, tsedaqah, yesharah, shamar, 7) nahar, 8) betok, 9) lev, shamah, 9) bayn, shaphat, 15) hineh, 'aron, 16) zonah, 28) yare', mishpat, chakmah

Chapter Four

This new chapter begins with the untranslated conjunctive *v-* with Solomon as “king over all Israel.” It mirrors the same unity created by his father David in 2Sam 8.15: “So David reigned over all Israel.” Two deceptively simple statements but loaded in that so much blood, sweat and tears lay behind both efforts to get the nation of Israel on its feet and able to defend itself reasonably well on its own.

As for Chapter Four, it's a list of governmental officials and how King Solomon organized his provision, etc. (cf. vs. 22+). The titles for these people run from vs. 2 through vs. 7:

- high officials or *sar* (cf. vs. 2)
- secretaries or *saphar* (participle meaning to write, vs. 2)
- recorder or *zakar* (participle meaning to remember, vs. 3)
- command over the army which is simply the preposition *hal-* in vs. 4
- priests or *kohen* in vs. 4
- being over the officers or another use of the preposition *hal-* (upon, vs. 5)
- in charge of the palace or *hal-* (upon, vs. 6)
- in charge of forced labor or *hal-* (upon, vs. 6)

-twelve officers or *natsav* (participle meaning to stand, to set up, vs. 7).

After going through a whole list of names and places with regard to these officials, vs. 20 sums up the overall mood at the beginning of Solomon's reign. That is to say, both Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea which is reminiscent of Gen 22.17: "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore." While this is important, even better is the fact that the people "ate, drank and were happy, *samach* being the verb for the last word which also means to rejoice. In sum, these words represent the first time the Israelites were to relax, far more significant than any ideal they might have struggled for, religious, political or otherwise. Right after this in vs. 21 which is 5.1 in the Hebrew, Solomon's rule is described as covering a substantial amount of territory. The overall impression is that both he and the people weren't bent upon conquest, simply to have enough territory in order to be faithful to observing their religion.

Another indication of the relative happiness just described is in vs. 24 which says that Solomon had peace or *shalom* (cf. 2.33) all around him, that is, on his borders. Also Judah and Israel dwelt in safety, *betach* (vs. 25) also meaning confidence and trust. Such *betach* enables the people to sit under their vines and fig trees...in other words, *samach*, to relax.

After a few verses we have a description of Solomon's huge amount of stables and horses along with officers. First impression is a military one, but these officials are charged with providing his table and guests which can be taken as another sign of Israel being at peace within and without.

Vs. 29 gets to what Solomon is remembered for, his wisdom or *chakmah* (cf. 3.28) given by the Lord. Not just *chakmah* is involved but two more which are related:

1) *Tevunah* or understanding which also applies to cleverness and skill. This quality is "beyond measure" which reads literally as "exceedingly (*me'od*, cf. 2.12) great."

2) Largeness of mind or literally "broadness of heart," *rochav* and *lev* (cf. 3.9). Both follow the analogy of sand as in vs. 20 where it applies to Judah and Israel.

Vs. 30 continues extolling the *chakmah* of Solomon by comparing it with four groups of people:

1) Those living in the east, this evoking a sense of mystery as with the example of Magi who followed the star until it rested over the newly born infant Jesus Christ.

2) The Egyptians laying to the south. “Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts” [Ex 7.11].

3) Four men mentioned by name: Ethan mentioned in the title to Ps 89, “A maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite,” while the other three are found in 1Chron 2.6, “The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Herman, Calcol and Darda.” Their renown is lost to us but certainly were known at the time, paling in comparison to Solomon.

4) The most general category of the four, namely, nations “round about” (*savyv*) or those on Israel’s borders such as towards the east as with #1 and Egypt, #2.

The remaining verses of Chapter Four are more or less general, setting the stage for building of the temple at Jerusalem which includes wood coming from Lebanon. First, Solomon becomes renowned for a huge amount of proverbs and songs. He could converse about a wide variety of topics such as nature which prompted people to come from all around because his *chakmah* had extended far and wide, the queen of Sheba most likely included, who will appear on the scene in Chapter Ten.

Despite the glowing reports of the chapter at hand, in truth it’s bracing us for Solomon’s tragic fall. This can be traced back to Nathan’s dreaded words with regard to David having brought about Uriah’s death and taking his wife. It’s cited in 2Sam 12.10, mentioned earlier but well worth repeating: “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me.” If Solomon took the unprecedented step and heeded these prophetic words, chances are he would have undone the curse where the Lord “will raise up evil against you out of your own house” [vs. 11], not from external enemies. Now it’s simply a question to get through, if you will, Solomon’s achievements before we come to his downfall.

2) sar, saphar, 3) zakar, 4) kohen, 7) natsav, 20) samach, 24) shalom, 25) betach, 29) chakmah, tevunah, me’od, rochav, lev, 34) chakmah

Chapter Five

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now.” In the Hebrew text it’s 5.15. The English references will be followed for greater convenience.

The prospect of building a temple suitable for the Lord is something that had haunted King David as well as his son Solomon. For reference to this, see First Chronicles 22+. King Hiram of Tyre was a trusted friend of David who had sent material and workers to build him a house once “David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel” [2Sam 5.12]. This verse is quoted because it represents something Hiram had recognized in his friend and hoped was transferable to his son. That’s the real reason why he was so generous pitching in to construct the temple. As vs. 1 says, Hiram loved (*‘ahav*, cf. 3.3) David and although he heard of Solomon’s installation as successor, he hoped for a continuation of this friendship.

Right away Solomon took the proper diplomatic action by contacting Hiram to see if he would contribute to building the Jerusalem temple. He recalled the reasons why David couldn’t fulfil this task, namely, the wars he had to fight in order to establish his kingdom. Finally the Lord put all threatening nations “under the soles of his feet” [vs. 3], a way of saying that the Lord was responsible for bring it about. Now Solomon takes up the task since the Lord has given him rest, *nuach* also as to set down...not just that but *savyv* (cf. 4.31) or on all sides which means the boarders of Israel. This rest is emphasized by the fact that Israel knows neither adversary nor misfortune, *satan* being the first noun from which (obviously) we get Satan. The second noun is *pegah* meaning an incident modified by the adjective *rah* or evil...an evil incident.

Although everything seemed to be going well for Israel, Solomon knew it wouldn’t last, this prompting him to go ahead with his building project so as to have a permanent place for the Lord as well as for the people to worship him. The words of vs. 5 “I purpose” are literally “behold I said” with regard to the proposed temple. Solomon then quotes his father who said that his son would do the job. “He (Solomon) shall build a house for my name” [2Chron 22.10].

In vs. 6 Solomon is quite forthright toward Hiram, presuming he’ll concur, using the verb *tsava’* (to command, give an order) that he be provided with cedars of Lebanon. This boldness is countered somewhat when Solomon says that his servants or *heved* (cf. 3.15) pretty much synonymous for slave will join those

belonging to Hiram. Among them are the Sidonians who are skilled at cutting timber, the verb *yadah* (cf. 1.4) being used which means intimate knowledge.

Apparently King Hiram hadn't met Solomon in person ('he heard that they had anointed him king,' vs. 1) but was going on his father's reputation which essentially was a gamble showing Hiram's trust and magnanimity. In response to the *tsava*' of vs. 6 Hiram he was delighted, the verb *samach* (to rejoice, cf. 4.20) with the adverb *me'od* connoting excessiveness (cf. 4.29). He then blesses the Lord (though most likely doesn't subscribe directly to worship of him) for having a wise (*chakam*) son as ruler in Israel, again, this coming to him by report, not a one-on-one encounter. Evidence is in vs. 8 when he heard the message about Solomon's request, that is, it was read aloud to him as an official document. Without missing a beat, Hiram says that he is ready to follow Solomon's desire, *chephets* as derived from the verbal root meaning to incline, to will something.

Obviously this response delighted King Solomon, for Hiram readies his men to ship Lebanon cedars on rafts. In return, he asks his wishes (*chephets* again) to be fulfilled which consists in providing food (*lechem* or bread, a general term) for his household, *bayth* including not just his personal domain but all subject to him. And so the exchange went through as noted in vs. 11...not just once by "year by year." As a result of this exchange between two kings who haven't met each other though certainly have struck a cordial relationship, in vs. 12 we have the Lord giving Solomon wisdom or *chakmah* (cf. 4.34) which is mentioned last in 4.29. As for the verb "promised," it's *davar*, to speak in the sense of giving expression. The *chakmah* at hand is, of course, between Solomon and Hiram, king-to-king, resulting in peace or *shalom* (cf. 4.24) between them by reason of a treaty. This is rendered literally as "cut a covenant" or *beryth*.

Vs. 13 takes a darker turn, sign of things to come. That is to say, Solomon raises a levy or *mas*, forced labor or conscription, the same word used with regard to the Israelites in Egypt: "They set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens" [Ex 1.11]. All this contrasts sharply with the almost bucolic description of life in Israel as depicted in Chapter Four, for example, "they ate and drank and were happy" [4.20]. What makes it worse is the fact that Solomon did this *mas* "out of all Israel" meaning no one was spared. All were destined for Lebanon to hew the cedars: a month there and two months at home. This mitigates it a bit, but nevertheless Solomon imposed it; i.e., it wasn't voluntary. Perhaps the *mas* was mitigated because it was in connection with building the temple in Jerusalem. Solomon would have faced definite revolt if it were for some other project.

The remaining verses of Chapter Five give some phenomenal numbers as to other workers: seventy-thousand, eighty thousand, three thousand, three hundred! While doubtful, it shows the high value placed on constructing the temple where virtually everyone in Israel had a relative on the job or knew of someone so involved. What stands out are the “costly stones” of vs. 17 meaning that if the temple’s foundation is constructed properly, it will endure a long time.

1) ‘ahav, 4) nuach, savyv, satan, pegah, rah, 6) tsava’, heved, yadah, 7) samach, me’od, chakam, 8) chephets, 9) lechem, bayth, 12) chakmah, shalom, beryth, 13) mas

Chapter Six

Typically, a new chapter with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated but showing the close connection between the activity in Lebanon and the building of the temple which is described into the next chapter before Solomon dedicates it. Interestingly Chapter Six begins with a calendar remembrance, that is, when Israel had left Egypt. Although it’s 480 years, for the ancients the passage of time is not as significant as in modern times. Actually it wasn’t until the Industrial Revolution that awareness of time became more acute and determinative for life. Thus the distance of 480 years is not as relevant. What counts is the event at hand, the most decisive one in Israel’s history. And so the passage of those years are secondary to the event’s significance. Also the Exodus coincides with the fourth year of Solomon’s reign, a more manageable time frame, but still secondary to the fact that he succeeds his father David.

As for the temple, it’s called aptly “house (*bayth*, cf. 5.5) of the Lord,” a phrase that will become very common later in history. *Bayth* is more appropriate because the former mobile ark has come to a permanent rest which mirrors the stability of the nation of Israel. Now begins a detailed account of the actual construction through vs. 10 where the text pauses, the Lord intervening with a precautionary message to King Solomon in vs.s. 11-12. Then the description resumes not just until the end of Chapter Six but continues through Chapter Seven.

As one reads the account and allows the details to fall into place, it’s quite easy to obtain a visual representation of the final product at the end of these two chapters. However, those details are secondary relative to the spirit which motivated the

construction. They can be taken in light of words from King Solomon in the Song of Songs: “King Solomon made himself a palanquin from the wood of Lebanon. He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; it was lovingly wrought within by the daughters of Jerusalem” [3.9-10]. What’s crucial here is the daughter of Jerusalem who played a part in the palanquin’s construction...they being applied to the architects and workers. In fact, they may have inspired Solomon when he had composed the Song of Songs. As for these daughters, the Song says that they made the palanquin lovingly (*‘ahavah*) within or *betok* which more precisely means in the middle of. This *betok* can apply to the holy of holies which is described shortly.

As expected, dimensions are given after which comes the general outline of the house, *bayth* being used throughout instead of something like temple. After all, this is a place where the Lord lives, not a temporary dwelling place. Both he and the people have to get used to this after the portability of the ark for so many years. A key feature to the house is that stone prepared at the quarry where no tool was heard in the temple (*bayth* is used here as well) while it was under construction. In other words, the stones were removed miraculously in that they came out of their own accord minus any human assistance. Most likely human were involved in hauling these special stones to Jerusalem (the location of the quarry isn’t given, just like Moses’ burial place. The quarry must remain a secret to protect the finished building’s origins. If it were known, other temples might be constructed but would lack the uniqueness and sanctity of the one at Jerusalem. As for the assembly of these stones, once at the construction site, chances are that angels assisted in their assembly.

Vs.s. 8-10 continue with more details of the temple’s construction after which the *davar*—word-as-expression—came from the Lord to Solomon; whether it was a dream or otherwise isn’t specified. Could Nathan the prophet be involved? Perhaps, but his role seems to have faded away with Solomon’s ascension to the throne. Obviously the Lord had been paying close attention to the details of construction, intervening as with the above mentioned quarried stones. He begins vs. 12 with (literally) “this house which you are building.” While very important, the house-temple is secondary to Solomon doing the following three things, each with the four verbs of *halak*, *hasah* and *shamar* and *halak* (second time) or walk, obey (here as ‘to do’), keep and walk. The objects of each verb are three and as follows: *choq*, *mishpat* and *mitsvah* or statutes, ordinances and commandments. The third is singled out as being the object of *shamar* as well as *halak*.

In the same verse (12) we have the crucial conjunctive *v-* translated as “then.” Without this “then” the building project is doomed to fail. There’s the threat that the angels will return and dissemble the stones, sending them back to the quarry where they will re-fasten themselves to the ground from which they had come. This will be carried out should Solomon fail to walk, obey, keep and walk. Nevertheless the promise held out by the Lord is that he will establish (*qum* as to rise, cf. 2.4) his *davar*...word-as-expression with Solomon, the same *davar* which he *davar* (verb) to David. A more specific reference to this with regard to the future temple is 2Sam 8.13 without mentioning Solomon’s name, he not yet being born: “He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

In vs. 13 the Lord continues his *davar* to Solomon, ending in this verse after which we have a resumption of the temple’s construction. As for the Lord, he will live (*shakan*, also to lie down, be familiar with) among the Israelites, *betok* (cf. 3.8) suggestive of being in their very center. And this center is, or rather will be, the new temple. In the meantime the Lord is waiting patiently in the still portable ark. While present there, his *davar* with the king is one of the chief means of bridging the gap between himself and the people of Israel. This *shakan/betok* presence among the people makes it virtually impossible for the Lord to forsake them, *hazav* also as to abandon.

Vs. 14 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “so” which shows the close connection with the temple’s construction described before the Lord intervenes to *davar* with Solomon as well as what will follow, that is, a resumption of the construction project described through the end of this chapter. Surely King Solomon was aware that this *davar* took place at a crucial stage, let’s say approximately midway through the building. If it didn’t, the temple—despite being completed and consecrated—will be notably absent of the Lord’s presence. How that will come about is on everyone’s mind, but right now construction must proceed slowly and carefully.

As we go through the details of construction, it becomes more than the description of a plan. Instead, it’s a tour through the site, each place lovingly laid out and adorned. Note vs. 19 which deals with the most important part of the house or *bayth*, namely, the inner sanctuary or *devyr*. It’s derived from the verbal root *davar* mentioned so often in this document, word-as-expression. The idea seems to be that in this *devyr* the divine *davar* is communicated. It’s found rather frequently in this chapter plus four references in Second Chronicles and just once

in Ps 28.2. In other words, *devyr* isn't mentioned elsewhere in conjunction with divine worship. In Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy the ark of the Lord was the *devyr* itself. In the verse at hand, this *devyr* is located in the innermost part of the house, *betok* (cf. vs. 13) with regard to *bayth*. Here is where the ark of the Lord is to be set, a place to be overlaid in pure gold as one would expect. Then in vs. 22 the altar belonging to the *devyr* was overlaid with gold.

Continuing with the *devyr*, in vs. 23 are stationed cherubim of olive wood where the wings of one touched the other, these two being overlaid with gold as well. Finally after seven years, the house was finished in all its parts and specifications (cf. vs. 38). We're left to take in this "tour" of the house/temple and discover at the end that it is Solomon himself who has led us. All that remains is a dedication, but something before this needs to be done. As for King Hiram, there's no report that he had visited Solomon during the construction, let alone was invited for the temple's dedication.

2) bayth, 7) bayth, 12) halak, hasah, shamar and halak, choq, mishpat, mitsvah, qum, 13) shakan, betok, hazav, 19) devyr, bayth

Chapter Seven

A new chapter and hence a new conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated but certainly not without significance. The previous chapter dealt with the construction of the temple at Jerusalem which has reached completion and is awaiting a proper dedication. This will be a totally new experience for King Solomon as well as the people...actually the very first time such a ceremony was performed. Immediately afterwards and before this dedication the text moves on to describe "his own house" (*bayth*, cf. 6.19), construction of which lasted almost double the time of the temple, thirteen years. As for the conjunctive beginning the chapter, it shows the close connection between this building and that of the temple, the two being representative of earthly and divine power, both relative to the notion of a house or *bayth*.

Vs. 2 also begins with an untranslated conjunctive with regard to Solomon building the House of the Forest or *Beyth Yahar*, so named by reason of the four rows of cedars from Lebanon which adorned it. Also it could be in homage to King Hiram who was so generous both with men and materiel. *Beyth Yahar* is destined to become both a palace and administrative center. The description of this

building continues along with a place for Pharaoh's daughter (cf. vs. 8) whom King Solomon had married. Actually she's relegated to some kind of secondary ceremonial role, here name not even given. Also included are various things for this complex, chief among them being stones which are costly, *yaqar* also as precious or rare. The same applies to the house's foundations in vs. 10 and those above them in vs. 11. As for what they were exactly, details aren't given.

With the construction project well underway, Solomon realized that despite all the effort and skilled labor that was going into it, the just completed temple, residence and the partial completion of *Beyth Yahar* taxed the effort and skill of everyone involved. And so an expert was required to carry forth the project. Without this aide, the projects could be completed, all three being inseparably united. Possibly after consulting the supervisor or work bosses, Solomon sends for Hiram in Tyre who isn't to be identified with King Hiram. Word reached Solomon that Hiram's father was skilled in bronze but more importantly, the man himself was "full of wisdom, understanding and skill" or *chakmah, tevunah* (cf. 5.12 and 4.29 respectively) and *dahath*. This third quality derives from the verbal root *yadah* meaning intimate knowledge. However, these qualities apply to Hiram's ability with regard to working in bronze, certainly not as applied to King Solomon.

Vs. 15 begins with the untranslated conjunctive *v-* to show the immediacy with which Hiram went to work and continues all the way through vs. 47, close to the end of the chapter. So far with all this construction one gets the distinct impression of how important (Lebanon) cedar and gold are for the building. Now comes the material of bronze which comprises many of the implements, etc. for *Beyth Yahar*. Hiram starts with pillars, nets for capitals of checker work (cf. vs. 17), pomegranates and lily-work. All these would give off a mellow glow in the darkness illumined by candles, thereby providing both a cozy yet mystical feel to the place.

Next in vs. 23 Hiram makes a molten sea or huge tank supported by twelve oxen followed by ten stands. Vs.s. 24-37 go into considerable detail as to what adorns this. As for the molten sea, a footnote in the **RSV** says it can't be for ablutions since the tank's rim is approximately ten feet above the pavement. Chances are it's for cleansing prescribed parts of animals that have been sacrificed though this isn't specified.

Vs.s. 40-47 describe pots, shovels and basins which Hiram fashioned, all being made of bronze. Vs. 47 has the remark that there were so many such vessels made that the "weight of the bronze was not found out."

Vs. 48 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “so” by way of summing up the work first on the temple followed by his palace and finally with the help of Hiram skilled in bronze, his administration quarters. The verse at hand leaves Hiram in the dust...Solomon takes credit for having “made all the vessels (*kely*) that were in the house of the Lord.” All are related to divine worship and made of gold. And so Chapter Seven concludes with Solomon’s work on the newly constructed house of the Lord completed, the verb *shalam* being used from which *shalom* is derived. The next step is to transfer there what David his father had dedicated, *qadash* also meaning to be holy or more literally, to be set apart. Such valuables are not for display except on rare occasions but put in the section called the treasury, *‘otsar*. They are to be a continuous remembrance of Israel’s second king (Saul being the first), a fact Solomon wishes anyone succeeding him to perpetuate.

1) bayth, 9) yaqar, 14) chakmah, tevunah, dahath, 48) kely, 51) shalam, qadash, ‘otsar

Chapter Eight

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” to show the immediate (and welcomed) connection between completion of building the house of the Lord, Solomon’s house and *Beyth Yahar*. There’s no mention of time between the events; the conjunctive—and it’s helpful to keep this in mind—is not concerned with precise measurements of time but to show the seamless unity between events such as the construction projects at hand.

Solomon begins by summoning all the leaders of the Israelites, *qahal* being the verb which has a solemn as well as religious connotation especially when the entire nation is involved. The three groups of leaders—elders, heads of tribes and leaders of fathers’ houses—are to come before King Solomon, perhaps in his newly built *Beyth Yahar*. They are to bring up the ark of the Lord from the city of David or Zion which, of course, is Jerusalem. Chapter Six of Second Samuel describes this transference in some detail where King David leads the procession. Throughout all the ceremony there’s no mention of any foreign delegations though it’s presumed quite a few were invited. After all, Solomon was married to the daughter of Pharaoh, so either Pharaoh himself was in attendance or a high representative. Even if such dignitaries were present, the affair is above all else a national one. After all, the very idea of *qahal* doesn’t include foreigners.

In addition to the three groups of leaders, all the Israelites assembled (*qahal*) before King Solomon during the month of Ethanim or during the autumn. Next come the elders and priests, the ones who actually were to bear the ark. Without a doubt, those in attendance couldn't help but recall the crossing of the Jordan River under the direction of Joshua (cf. Jos 3.6+). Not only was the ark of the covenant involved but the tent of meeting and holy vessels (*kely*, cf. 7.48) in it. Vs. 4 also mentions the Levites who joined in this procession. Although King Solomon never mentions it, this display of religious observance is intended to make a clean, once-and-for-all break from Gibeon. It was there that Solomon went to offer sacrifices, a place which involved curious mixture of monotheistic and polytheistic religious observance. To top it off, the entire congregation of Israel was present as they offered innumerable sacrifices, *hedah* derived from a verbal root meaning to give witness and thus differing from *qahal*, usually a sacred assembly. As for the verb *yahad*, *hedah* is derived from it.

Because this solemn procession was so short, there's nothing to say about it except that the people offered innumerable sacrifices somewhere in between, for vs. 6 says that afterwards the priests brought the ark to its place or *maqom*, sometimes used as a special or sacred site. This *maqom* in vs. 6 is described in terms of the following three:

- 1) *Devyr* (cf. 6.19) or inner sanctuary
- 2) *Qodesh haqodashym* most holy place (literally, 'holy of holies')
- 3) Under the wings of the cherubim.

As for the cherubim, they are described in some detail in 6.23+, symbolic guardians of the Lord's presence in the ark. Here their wings are spread not so much over the ark...obviously included...but the *maqom* or place of the ark which seems a space a little larger such as the *devyr*, *qodesh haqodashym* being the same. This served to create a covering not only over the ark but its poles. Such a covering is put in terms of the verb *sakak* which suggests shutting off for protection.

As for the poles or *bad* (also as a shoot), their length is considerable, being seen extending from the holy place before the *devyr*, the former being called *qodesh* which is distinct from the more inner chamber of *qodesh haqodashym* or *devyr*. In other words, the priests who could access the *qodesh*, not the *qodesh haqodashym*, could rest assured that the ark hadn't slipped out on its

own...something like a safety switch to keep tabs on God that he doesn't escape. As for them being there "to this day," it can refer to the original author who saw this for himself. Also it can be taken as a kind of insurance (like the visibility of the poles) that God hasn't picked up and left his house.

Despite the pomp and ceremony, everyone's attention was focused upon the ark. Perhaps over time some people forgot what exactly it contained, a kind of unsolved mystery. So at the point vs. 9 offers reassurance by saying that nothing was inside—words intended to quiet inquiring minds—except the two stone tablets (*luach*; also as board or plank) put there by Moses when the Lord made a covenant (*karath*, to cut) at Horeb. "And he (Moses) took the testimony and put it into the ark and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark" [Ex 40.20]. *Hedoth* is the noun for testimony derived from the verbal root *hedah* as noted in vs. 5. Thus the two tablets stood as this witness among the people of Israel through all thick and thin. Vs. 9 is careful to mention that this was done once Israel came out of Egypt as a way to remind them constantly—be a *hedoth*—by reason of the ark.

Once the priest came out of the holy place or the *qodesh* (cf. vs. 8), literally as a place set apart, a cloud filled the Lord's house. This *hanan* clearly evokes Ex 40.34-35: "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Similarly, when "the man (the unidentified person who accompanied Ezekiel) went in, a cloud filled the inner court" [Ezk 10.3]. In the situation at hand, the priests were not unable to minister (*sharath*, cf. 1.15); in fact, they could not even stand (*hamad*, cf. 1.2). Instead, they simply fell flat on their faces, paralyzed and waiting for the cloud to lift so they could go about their business. With the divine glory or *kavod* (implies heaviness) filling the house, everyone had to bide their time and wait which must have been an unnerving experience.

While all this was transpiring to the awe and wonder of everyone in attendance, in vs. 12 King Solomon exclaims that while the Lord had set the sun in the heavens, he decided to dwell in thick darkness. *Shakan* (cf. 6.13) is the verb which also means to lay down and *haraphel* is the noun with yet another reference to Moses and God's revelation at Horeb which must have entered Solomon's mind: "And the people stood afar off while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was" [Ex 20.21]. Note the use of *zebul* or exalted house which applies to a residence, especially one of God, and thus more narrowed down than *bayth* or house as in Is 63.15: "Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and glorious habitation."

Solomon also calls this a place “to dwell in forever,” *makon* also meaning a foundation. As for dwelling, the verb is *yashav* (cf. 2.24) also meaning to sit down. Compare with *shakan* in vs. 12...two types of presence of the Lord within the ark in the temple and within the nation of Israel.

Vs. 14 has Solomon as “faced about,” *savav* (cf. 2.15) meaning to turn which suggests that he had his back to the congregation while presiding over the dedication ceremonies. From this point through vs. 21 he gives an account of blessings received, careful to make frequent reference to his father, David. This is a shrewd move on his part, for most people had fond memories of their former king, and to do anything contrary to the heritage he struggled to win on their behalf would spell disaster. Solomon begins by blessing (*barak*, originally to bend the knee) the *qahal* before him (cf. vs.s. 1 and 2) which seems primarily to be in the form of words compared with any type of gesture. Solomon, as well as the *qahal* of Israel, had just witnessed the divine presence fill the temple, making it inaccessible...for how long, no one knew. We could say that while Solomon is addressing the *qahal*, the divine cloud and glory was very much present and had not yet departed.

Solomon blessed God for what he had promised his father David, doing this with both his mouth and his hand which means deed and word, the latter a reference to *davar*, word-as-expression. Then he brings to mind how God delivered Israel from Egypt and later after all those years of wandering, decided to build a house under King David. This story is familiar to everyone, the very foundation of Israel’s identity as a people. By mentioning in public his father King David, Solomon hopes to link the people’s fondness for him to their deliverance from under Pharaoh...and then, of course, to him personally.

In vs. 17 Solomon recounts how it was in David’s heart to build a temple to the Lord after so many years of wandering. He had brought about a welcomed political and social stability, so it was time now to do the same in the religious sphere. Then in vs. 19 Solomon tells of how the Lord informed David that he wasn’t destined to build a house for the Lord. Instead, it would be his son who at the time was not yet named to ascend the throne.

Vs. 20 translates the conjunctive *v-* as “now” with regard to the Lord fulfilling his promise, this rendered through the verb *qum* (to arise) and the noun *davar*, word-as-expression. In other words, this divine *davar* is to rise up, bringing along with it the people of Israel. Most importantly, both Solomon and David were as one mind

with the task of building a house for the Lord, furnishing a place or *maqom* (cf. vs. 6) for the ark. This ark contained the covenant of the Lord between him and Israel's fathers, that is, the covenant which he had cut or *karath* (cf. vs. 9).

After this deftly crafted tribute to his father intended to enhance his rule as a continuation (at least at the beginning), King Solomon stands before the altar with the entire *qahal* (cf. vs. 2) continuing to be present. That means he turned around or *savav* the other way (cf. vs. 14) though this isn't mentioned but implied. Having done so, Solomon with outstretched hands addresses the Lord and invokes a blessing which begins with vs. 23 and lasts all the way through vs. 53. The elements of this blessing are outlined accordingly. Most of these thirty-nine verses begin with the conjunctive *v-* which shows the close connection between all the prayers and supplications offered by King Solomon:

Vs. 23: Solomon exclaims that there's no God like the Lord, an insight that may have taken root when he went to Gibeon shortly after having been made king and now has crystalized, that locale being a "high place" where other Gods were worshiped alongside the Lord. For those who are faithful, the Lord does the following two:

- 1) Keeps his covenant (*shamar* and *beryth*, cf. 6.12 and 5.12 respectively)
- 2) Shows steadfast love (*chesed*, cf. 3.6). The condition is that his servants must walk before him with (literally 'in,' *b-*) all their heart or *lev* (cf. 4.29).

Vs. 24: The Lord has kept (second mention of *shamar*, the first relative to the covenant) with King David what he declared to him, *davar* as word-as-expression. To show the intimacy involved, the Lord both spoke with his mouth (*davar* with *b-* or 'in his mouth')—obvious but for emphasis—and with his hand fulfilled (*mala'*) this *davar* "this very day," the day of the temple's dedication.

Vs. 25: Solomon bids not just the Lord but him as "God of Israel," the entire *qahal* being gathered during the temple's dedication. He asks that the Lord keep (third mention of *shamar*) with his father David that which he had promised or *davar* to him. Such words are uttered as though David were still alive meaning in essence that always a king will sit upon the throne or literally, that a ruler never will be cut off from it, *karath* (cf. vs. 20). The condition? That David's sons (Solomon included, of course) *shamar* their way (*derek*, also as path, journey) and walk before the Lord as he had done earlier which implies King David.

Vs. 26: Solomon bids the Lord to confirm (‘*aman*, to be faithful, endure) his *davar* which he *davar* to David.

Vs. 27: Solomon poses a rhetorical question most likely to himself, this in the midst of one of the grandest events thus far in Israel’s history, a culmination of their tortuous journey all the way from in Egypt. As for Egypt and the four hundred plus years spent there, nothing at all is mentioned. The same applies to Israel’s history before that minus the usual reverence for the patriarchs. The question at hand is whether or not God will dwell (*yashav*, cf. vs. 13) literally “in (*b-*) the earth.” Solomon asks this despite the revelation at Horeb, the ark of the covenant and most recently, the divine cloud and glory filling the temple. Perhaps he’s asking whether what everyone has witnessed will continue or will fade away with the passage of time. The newly dedicated house or *bayth*, small as it is, doesn’t seem big enough to contain the Lord, *kul* also meaning to sustain or comprehend.

Vs. 28: Despite the question of the previous verse, Solomon acknowledges that the Lord regards his prayer and supplication, *panah* meaning to turn around with regard to *tiphlah* which means intercession and *techinah* which also means a cry for mercy. This *tephilah* is pretty much synonymous with two more entreaties where the verb *shamah* (hearkening, cf. 3.9) is used concerning his cry and prayer, *rinah* (also as shout for joy) and *tephilah* (second use of this noun). Solomon wants this earnest intercession to reach the Lord “this day” because it’s special due to the temple’s dedication. In other words, it’s an ideal time not just to get God on his side but to keep him there.

Vs. 29: Solomon speaks of God’s eyes which he hopes will be open day and night with regard to “this house” or *bayth* (cf. 7.1). Now he holds God to a promise concerning the house or temple, *bayth* also called a place or *maqom* (cf. vs. 21). Solomon doesn’t give a specific name as to where the Lord had uttered these words though he might have in mind Gibeon which he had frequented after having been made king and where both local divinities and the Lord were worshiped. After all, it was at Gibeon that Solomon besought “an understanding mind” [3.9] to govern Israel, this being a reminder that he didn’t ask for material possessions and so forth. Thus the Lord is reminded to continue supporting him which is put in terms of hearkening (*shamah*) to his prayer or *tephilah* (both in vs. 28). In this instance the two are directed toward “this place” or *maqom*, the verb being *palal* or the root of *tephilah* meaning to pronounce judgment or be an arbiter.

Vs. 30: The conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” takes on special meaning here insofar as it’s a kind of appendix where Solomon asks the Lord again to hearken (*shamah*, cf. vs. 29) not just to his supplication (*techinah*, cf. vs. 28) but to that of the people of Israel, that is, when they pray (*palal*, cf. 29) to this place or *maqom* (cf. vs. 29 for both). Note the shift in position of *maqom* used a second time, that is, heaven which is called “your dwelling place,” *maqom* with the verb *yashav* (cf. vs. 27). It suggests the real home of the Lord, the temple being a second one, to put it somewhat awkwardly but sufficient to ensure divine transcendence with regard to the notion of *maqom*. Finally Solomon says simply and directly that the Lord is to forgive when he hears, *salach* also meaning to be indulgent.

Vs. 31: From this verse through vs. 53 King Solomon shifts the tone of his prayer to the Lord, getting into a whole bunch of specifics instead of the generalities just noted. This is precisely what the people want to hear, for it shows that their king clearly is on their side interceding the Lord. The most common problem has to do with sin, the verb *chata’* originally as to miss the mark. Here it’s specified as in the context of an oath or ‘*alah* also as a curse and agreement and used with the verb which is spelled the same. The text reads literally as “bear (*nasa’*) in him an oath,” *nasa’* also as to lift up. To top it off, such an ‘*alah* is to be done before the altar in the new temple because it contains a certain element of the divine presence and witness to what is transpiring.

Vs. 32: Once the oath comes before the altar, Solomon continues to instruct the Lord, if you will (for he is new at this), asking him—not in the temple but in heaven—to hear, act and judge. Note the similar sound of all three verbs: *shamah*, *hasah* and *shaphat*, as though they formed one unit (cf. vs. 30, 6.12 and 3.9 respectively). They are to either bring about condemnation upon the guilty or vindicate the righteous. The first pair consists of the verb *rashah* (also as to act wickedly) and the noun derived from it and same spelling. The second contains the verb *tsadaq* and the noun derived from it (*tsadyq*, cf. 2.32). As for the former, “bringing his conduct upon his head” reads literally and forcefully as “to give his way (*derek*, cf. vs. 25) in his head.” As for the latter, the Lord is to reward (*natan*, the common verb to give) him in accord with his righteousness or *tsadaqah* (cf. 3.6).

Vs. 33: A second reference to sin or *chata’* as with vs. 31 but differs from the former because it’s applicable to the whole nation of Israel. The situation concerns defeat in battle, *nagaph* being the verb, to injure by striking, the idea here is that the enemy is acting as a kind of retribution at God’s hand. A way out exists,

however. It depends upon the people first fulfilling four conditions “in this house” or *bayth* (cf. vs. 29):

- 1) Turning to the Lord
- 2) Acknowledging his name, the two being accomplished at once, *shuv* and *yadah*. Note that with regard to the latter the last letter is *he*, not *hayin* as with the same transliteration for “to know,” this also meaning to celebrate or to give thanks. Here it’s with respect not to the Lord but to his name or *shem* which connotes retaining in one’s memory.
- 3) Pray or *palal* (cf. vs. 30) in the sense of to intercede
- 4) Make supplication or *chanan* which suggests inclining in a gracious manner.

Vs. 34: The conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” is connected directly with the four conditions of the previous verse. That is to say, Solomon bids the following three from the Lord not from his house or the temple but from heaven:

- 1) *Shamah* (cf. vs. 32)
- 2) Forgive (*salach*, cf. vs. 30)
- 3) Return (*shuv*, cf. vs. 33) the people to the land (*‘adamah* or earth in the physical sense) given originally by the Lord to their fathers, Abraham being chief among them though he isn’t mentioned. That is to say, the Lord is suggesting the very real possibility of exile at some future time.

Vs. 35: This verse deals with the threat of drought which results from *chata’th* (cf. vs. 33), third mention of sin in Solomon’s prayer. However, it can be averted by the following three actions:

- 1) Praying (*palal*, cf. vs. 33) toward “this place” or this *maqom* (cf. vs. 30), the preposition *‘el-* suggestive of everyone not being in the temple but turning toward it wherever they are such as out in the fields.
- 2) Acknowledge (*yadah*, cf. vs. 33) the Lord’s name (*shem*, cf. vs. 33).
- 3) Turn from (*shuv*, cf. vs. 33) their sin at the time of when the Lord afflicts them, *hanah* (cf. 2.26) being associated with the drought at hand.

Vs. 36: As with vs. 34, the conjunctive *v-* translated here as “then” is connected directly with the three conditions laid down in the previous verse. Solomon bids the Lord to hear (*shamah*, cf. vs. 34) not from the temple but from heaven that he might forgive (*salach*, cf. vs. 34) the sin of his servants, this being the fourth

mention (noun). After all, heaven is the Lord's own home whereas the temple is secondary. Even though this takes place in the context of the drought as in vs. 35, more importantly the people are to be taught (*yarah*, also as to show, indicated) the good path or *derek* (cf. vs. 32) in which to walk. The Lord bringing rain upon the earth ('*erets*, cf. 2.2) is a way of maintaining their inheritance or *nachalah* which also applies to the taking into possession.

Vs. 37: A list of afflictions which can come upon Israel ending with “whatever sickness there is,” *machalah* also as disease. This verse continues through vs. 40 as an extended sentence.

Vs. 38: Solomon takes into account any and all prayers or supplications (*tephilah* and *techinah*, vs. 29 and vs. 28 respectively) either by an individual or by the nation...the *qalah*...of Israel. Each person does either one or the other or both by reason of an affliction within his heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 22). The former noun is *negah* connoting a touching or striking which makes it very personal and poignant by reason of the stretching out of hands within the *bayth* of God.

Vs. 39: The conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” shows the close connection so desired by Solomon between the Lord and his people, the *qahal* of Israel. That is to say, he wishes the Lord to do the following four things:

1) Hear (*shamah*, cf. vs. 36) from heaven or his dwelling place or *makon* and the infinitive *yashav* (cf. vs. 13 and vs. 30 respectively), that differing from the *bayth* or the temple.

2) To forgive or *salach* (cf. vs. 36).

3) To act (*hasah*, the common verb to do, cf. vs. 32).

4) To render (*natan*, cf. vs. 32). As for *natan*, it's specified with regard to those hearts (*lev*, cf. vs. 38) whom the Lord knows, *yadah* as intimate knowledge (cf. 5.6). *Natan*, as well as *shamah* and *salach*, are to be effected in accord with all the ways (*derek*, cf. vs. 36) of each individual person petitioning the Lord. Then the **RSV** has in parentheses which seems to be by way of repetition the fact that the Lord alone knows the hearts of men, *yadah* and *lev*.

Vs. 40: *Lemahan* or “in order that” is part of the extended sentence beginning in vs. 37. Here King Solomon wishes that the people fear the Lord, *yare'* (cf. 3.28) in the sense of having respect for him. Such fear will result in living in the land or '*adamah* (cf. vs. 34) the Lord had given to their fathers. In other words, the divine *yare'* extends to these ancestors as well.

Vs. 41: *Vgan* or “likewise” (*v-* prefaced to *gan* or also) begins an extended sentence going through vs. 43. It shows a shift in King Solomon’s prayer to the Lord with regard to the Israelites to foreigners or *nakry* (from the verbal root *nakar* meaning to disguise, make a false presentation). More specifically, it applies to one who comes from a distant land after having heard reports of the Lord’s name.

Vs. 42: The **RSV** has part of this verse in parentheses restating what was said in the previous one, namely, that such foreigners heard of the Lord’s name, mighty hand and outstretched arm. Reference is not just to past wonders and deeds the Lord had done for Israel but more recent events such as the election of David as king followed by his son Solomon and the building of the temple.

Vs. 43: Again, Solomon makes a distinction in his prayer between the Lord hearing (*shamah*, cf. vs. 39) in heaven, his dwelling place or *makon* and the infinitive *yashav* (cf. vs. 39 for both). In other words, he bids the Lord to do the same to the foreigner as he does to the native Israelite. The reason for this is not to confine divine action within the borders of Israel but to extend them to the entire human race. All are to both know and fear (*yadah* and *yare’*, cf. vs.s 39 and 40 respectively) the Lord as well as to know that the house or *bayth* is called by the Lord’s name.

Vs. 44: After the interjection of foreigners in vss. 41-43, King Solomon returns to beseeching the Lord with respect to Israel. The verse at hand has to do with battle or *milchamah* and hints that the Lord knows the way (*derek*, cf. vs. 39) he will send them. While engaged with their enemy, the people are to pray to the Lord, *palal* (cf. vs. 35). Note the two directions to be taken as one: to the Lord and toward the city, ‘*el-* and *derek* or the preposition and the noun. The Lord has chosen the city, and Solomon has built the house within this city. Thus ‘*el-* and *derek* have specific directions though with regard to essentially one place. Implied is that Solomon’s construction of the temple has made the entire city a temple by way of extension.

Vs. 45: If the Israelites engaged in battle as noted in the previous verse do what they are told, Solomon asks the Lord for him to both hear and maintain, *shamah* and *hasah* (cf. vs.s 43 and 39 respectively). The former applies to prayer or *tephilah* and supplication or *techinah* (cf. vs. 38 for both) while the latter to cause or *mishpat* (cf. 6.12) often as judgment.

Vs. 46: This verse forms an extended sentence running through vs. 52. It deals with sin or *chata'* (cf. vs. 35), that having been touched upon in vs. 31 as it concerns one-on-one relationships whereas here it's against the Lord, the preposition *l-* (to) being more direct. Solomon makes it clear to the Lord that every human being sins, a reminder to the Lord not to renege on his mercy. The context is when Israel is defeated and led into captivity whether it's close by or far off. There comes to mind, of course, the most famous exile of them all, the future one in Babylon, not to mention others.

Vs. 47: Note the five uses of words where *sh-* dominates which gives this verse a definite character: *heshyvu*, *nishbu*, *sham*, *shavu* and *shoveyhem*. Despite having been led into exile, hope remains provided the people lay to heart the matter, the verb *shuv* with the noun *lev* (cf. vs.s 35 and 39). It's to be made in the land of their exile, a second use of *shuv* with *sham* (there) the verb for their captivity being *shavah*. Then we have a third use of *shuv* as to repent along with *chanan*, to implore favor. It's to be done in the land of their captors, the verb *shavah*. Such a desire to repent is crucial but not sufficient meaning it must be acknowledged publically. That's why the people say that they have sinned, acted perversely and wickedly, the second and third verb being *havah* which connotes bending and *rashah* (cf. vs. 32).

Vs. 48: The verb *shuv* or repent is used again but with *lev* and *nephesh*, heart and mind, the latter also as soul (cf. vs. 47 and 2.23 respectively). Note that the location is not the land of their captives but of their enemies, *'eyvah* being more forceful. In this hostile place the captives are to pray (*palal*, cf. vs. 44) in four directions, if you will: 1) *'el-*, 2) *derek* (this and the former as in vs. 44) being uses with *'erets* or land of their fathers which differs from the *'erets* in which they find themselves exiled, 3) the city or Jerusalem which the Lord had chosen and 4) the house or *bayth* which Solomon had constructed.

Vs. 49: Solomon again bids the Lord to hear (*shamah*, cf. vs. 45) the prayer, supplication and maintain the cause (*tephilah*, *techinah* and *misphat* cf. vs. 45) of his people, that is, from heaven which is his dwelling place or *makon* and the infinitive *yashav* as noted last in vs. 43.

Vs. 50: *Salach* (cf. vs. 39) or forgive applies to the people who have both sinned (*chata'*, cf. vs. 35) as well as to transgressions (*peshah*: verbal root connotes a breaking with) they have committed. In their place Solomon bids—and it's to be

kept in mind that all these petitions lay in the future—the Lord to be compassionate or *nacham* (also as to console) with the intent of being done in the sight of those who've brought the Israelites into captivity. Thus these captors might receive divine compassion, the verb *racham* meaning to love as well as take pity.

Vs. 51: The **RSV** has this verse in parentheses as if to remind the Lord that Israel is his people as well as heritage, *nachalah* (cf. vs. 36). Even better, a reminder that the Lord was responsible for bring his people from Egypt which is called an iron furnace. “But the Lord has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt to be a people of his own possession as at this day” [Dt 4.20].

Vs. 52: Here Solomon beseeches the Lord not to hear but to have his eyes upon his personal supplication (*techinah*, cf. vs. 49) as well as whenever the people call upon him.

Vs. 53: As a reminder, Solomon tells the Lord that he had separated Israel from other peoples to be his heritage (*nachalah*, cf. vs. 51). He had done this through the mediation of Moses when he brought Israel from Egypt. One such reference is Ex 19.5: “Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my own possession among all peoples for all the earth is mine.”

Vs. 54 begins with the conjunctive *v-* as “then” which shows that as soon as Solomon had finished with this extended prayer and supplication (*palal* and *techinah* (cf. vs.s 48 and 52 respectively), he arose from before the altar. Then he stretched out his hands toward heaven, his dwelling place as noted in vs. 49. In other words throughout it all King Solomon was on his knees. Once he got up, he blessed the *qahal* (cf. vs. 22) or congregation of Israel who most likely had remained on their knees outside the temple. It seems that Solomon had been alone there perhaps with some priests and other officials discreetly in the background.

Vs. 55: “And he stood” suggests taking a position of authority as king after Solomon had been on his knees as just noted. Also it suggests a brief pause before delivering his blessing, a moment of silence when everyone waited with baited breath for him to speak which he did with a loud (*gadol*, great) voice to the *qahal* (cf. vs. 22) before him.

Vs. 56: In the previous verse King Solomon blesses (*barak*, cf. vs. 15) the people and here does so with regard to the Lord, the verb primarily involving praise. The Lord had given Israel rest, *menuchah* implying possession and security. “For you

have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you” [Dt 12.9]. The rest at hand is in accord with God’s promise, *davar* as to speak or give expression followed by the noun of the same spelling. In sum, the Lord hasn’t failed in one *davar* concerning this *davar* (second mention of the noun) which he *davar* to Moses (literally as ‘in the hand of Moses’). The verb *naphal* is used here, has not “failed” Moses in the sense that it hasn’t fallen down. So if we have a verse loaded with so many references to *davar*, the idea is that God will speak...communicate himself...unfailingly.

Vs. 57: When Solomon asks the Lord to be with us as he had been with our fathers, he’s implying that the Lord continues to *davar* his *davar*, that is, blurring the distinction between the past and the present. In other words, *davar* has nothing to do with leaving nor forsaking, *hazav* (cf. 6.13) and *natash*, the latter connoting being spread abroad or scattered.

Vs. 58: Solomon beseeches the following three from the Lord:

1) The verb *natah* (cf. 2.28) means to incline, stretch out and can be taken as done gently or with some force. Here’s it with regard to the *lev* (cf. vs. 48) or hearts of Israel.

2) To walk (*halak*, cf. vs. 6.12) in the Lord’s ways or *derek* (cf. vs. 48)

3) To keep (*shamar*, cf. vs. 25) his ordinances or *mitsvah* (cf. 6.12), all being commanded by Israel’s fathers. In light of what is said under vs. 57 in conjunction with *davar*, no distinction exists between past and present.

Vs. 59: King Solomon gets to the conclusion of his prayer by asking the Lord that his words or *davar* associated with the spirit of supplication (*chanan*, cf. vs. 47) be near to the Lord...not just that but both day and night. Also, that the Lord maintains the cause of his servant, the verb *hasah* (to do) with the noun *mishpat* (usually as judgment), both found in vs. 45. *Mishpat* is used a second time with regard to the people. Solomon’s desire for the Lord to be near day and night is mirrored in the concluding words of this verse (‘as each day requires’) which run literally as “*davar* day in its day.”

Vs. 60: This verse is succinct but right to the point, namely, that not just Israel may know the Lord and no other but all peoples have this same *yadah* (cf. vs. 43).

Vs. 61: Here we have the conclusion the list of thirty-nine verses which comprise all the prayers and supplications offered by King Solomon. All he could say at this

point, really, is to sum up what had gone before or from the beginning of these entreaties:

1) That the people have their hearts (*lev*; cf. vs. 58: singular to correspond to the *qahal* of Israel) remain wholly true to the Lord.

2) Walk in his statutes (*halak* and *choq*, cf. vs. 59 and 6.12 respectively) and keep his commandments (*shamar* and *mitsvah*, cf. vs. 58 for both). Note the important words “as at this day” which brings to mind the abiding presence of *davar* and the Lord *davar* or communicating it to the people.

Vs. 62 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” to show that as soon as King Solomon concluded his prayer, he and “all Israel” offered sacrifices before the Lord. Then it continues...the phenomenal amount of twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep! After this vs. 63 adds almost prosaically, “so the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord,” *chanak* suggestive of initiating or putting to common use.

The ceremony involving such an enormous number of offerings seems like it would take several days, round the clock. However, vs. 64 begins with “the same day.” Because it’s the house of the Lord, the number of sacrificial offerings could be done in one day, for the perception of time and space within this place was very different than from what goes on normally elsewhere. So next comes the consecration or *qadash*, the making holy, of the middle (*tok*, also as midst) of the court before the Lord’s house. There King Solomon made an unspecified number of offerings which must have been quite large since the bronze altar was too small.

This lengthy chapter concludes with Solomon holding a feast or *chag* with the entire *qahal* (cf. vs. 55) of Israel present. Two places are mentioned which give the impression that the feast extended throughout the country but more realistically, implies that the *qahal* consisted of people from every corner of the land. The length of this feast is significant, reading literally “seven days and seven days, fourteen days.” Implied is a representation of the seven days of creation multiplied or enhanced in conjunction with the temple where the concept of space and time takes on a wholly different perception.

Then there’s added the eighth day (literally, ‘day eight’), the beginning of a completely different week which signals the resumption of ordinary life but one with the temple set squarely in the minds and hearts of everyone. The noun ‘*ohel*’ (cf. 2.28) or tent is used for homes, this contrasting with the permanent *bayth* or

house of the Lord, the Jerusalem temple. The very last verse says that the people rejoiced at the goodness the Lord had shown not so much to Solomon, the center of attention throughout this chapter, but to his father, David. We have no inkling of how this constant comparison to David weighed upon Solomon, but there must have been times it irked him though he was careful not to let anyone know about it. It seems never he is able to escape from under his father's shadow.

1) qahal, 2) qahal, 4) kely, 5) hedah, yahad, 6) maqom, devyr, 7) maqom, sakak, 8) bad, qodesh, 9) luach, karath, 10) qodesh, 10) hanan, 11) sharath, hamad, kavod, 12) shakan, 13) zebul, makon, yashav, 14) savav, 15) barak, 20) qum, 21) maqom, karath, 22) qahal, shamar, beryth, chesed, lev, 24) shamar, mala', 25) shamar, karath, shamar, derek, 26) 'aman, 27) yashav, kul, 28) panah, tephilah, techinah, shamah, rinah, tephilah, 29) bayth, maqom, shamah, tephilah, maqom, palal, 30) shamah, palal, maqom, yashav, salach, 31) chata', 'alah, nasa', 32) shamah, hasah, shaphat, rashah (v), rashah (n), tsadaq, tsadyq, derek, natan, tsadaqah, 33) chata', bayth, nagaph, shuv, yadah (-he), shem, palal, chanan, bayth, 34) shamah, salach, shuv, 'adamah, 35) chata'th, palal, maqom, shem, yadah (-he), shuv, hanah, 36) shamah, salach, yarah, derek, 'erets, nachalah, 37) mchalah, 38) tephilah, techinah, lev, negah, 39) shamah, makon, yashav, salach, hasah, natan, lev, yadah, derek, yadah, lev, 40) yare', 'adamah, 41) nakry, 43) shamah, makon, yashav, yadah, yare', 44) derek, palal, derek, milchamah, 45) shamah, hasah, tephilah, techinah, mishpat, 47) shuv, lev, shuv, shavah, shuv, chanan, shavah, havah, rashah, 48) shuv, lev, nephesh, 'eyvah, palal, derek, 'erets, 49) shamah, tephilah, techinah, mishpat, makon, yashav, 50) salach, chata', peshah, nacham, racham, 51) nachalah, 52) techinah, 53) nachalah, 54) palal, techinah, 55) gadol, qahal, 56) barak, menuchah, naphal, 57) hazav, natash, 58) natah, lev, halak, derek, shamar, mitsvah, 59) chanan, hasah, mishpat, 60) yadah, 61) lev, halak, choq, shamar, mitsvah, 63) chanak, 64) qadash, tok, 65) chag, qahal, 'ohel

Chapter Nine

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “when” to show the close connection between King Solomon's dedication of the temple which includes his extended prayer and vision of the Lord. The verb *kalah* or finished means bringing to an end or perfection with regard to the following three:

1) The house (*bayth*, cf. 8.33) of the Lord, 2) The king's personal residence and 3) what seems to be other unnamed projects which the text calls those which Solomon desired to build, *chaphets* suggesting to pursue with ardor.

Although the conjunctive *v-* appears at the beginning of many verses, it's noted here in vs. 2 because Solomon's *chaphets* and the Lord appearing (*yare'*, cf. 8.43) to him are joined intimately. Also it's helpful to be aware of the conjunctive because it ties in directly with the close relationship involved as the Lord responds to the prayer of Solomon. To shrink from it is to invite dire consequences of which the Lord speaks shortly.

As for the vision at hand, the text says that it's the second one following that in Gibeon. Solomon went there to make sacrifice, a "great high place" [3.4] which as noted earlier, had the dubious distinction of being a place of worship for the Lord along with unnamed Canaanite deities. Of course the Lord was aware of this, decides to let it ride, for the people were not yet capable of being weaned away from the two forms of worship. Now with the newly constructed temple, the excuse to do this pretty much evaporated although some Israelites continued frequenting these high places for a long time to come.

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream whereas here there's no such mention of it. Due to Gibeon's association with high places, it was better for the Lord to appear this way. If he assumed a mediating element such as an angel, easily it could be construed with one of the Canaanite Gods worshiped at Gibeon. Nevertheless, the allure of not just Canaanite deities but those of other nations later would seriously hamper King Solomon.

To Solomon's great relief, the Lord did hear both the prayer and supplication (*tephilah* and *techinah*, cf. 8.49) which he made, the verb *chanan* being used (cf. 8.59) which means to make supplication, the verbal root for *techinah*. More specifically, the Lord acknowledges that he had consecrated the *bayth*, *qadash* (cf. 8.64) meaning to set apart and put his name there. Note the similar sound of the last three words: *lasum*, *shemy* and *sham*, all of which imply determination as well as permanence and intensified by the added *had-holam* or forever. Then the Lord says that his eyes and heart (*lev*, cf. 8.61) will be present there for all time which reads literally as "all days."

In vs. 4 the conjunctive *v-* translates "as for (you)" which has a semi-threatening tone about it or perhaps better, a way to maintain Solomon's attention by speaking

of him compared with the temple's consecration. These words may have made King Solomon think that the Lord was going to rebuke him for some reason or another, but instead compares him with his father David. This comparison was brought up a number of times already, an explicit reference being 3.14: "And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days." Despite Solomon maintaining a public recognition of his father, this constant comparison perhaps contributed to his gradual descent into apostasy as described in Chapter Eleven. If the Lord relented a bit here, perhaps Solomon would have come into his own more readily.

In vs. 4 the Lord recalls how King David had walked "with integrity of heart," asking Solomon to do the same which involves the following four:

- 1) His *lev* (cf. vs. 3) which is to be *tam* or upright, this adjective always in the moral sense.
- 2) Uprightness or *yeshar* which fundamentally means to be straight.
- 3) Doing what the Lord commanded Solomon earlier.
- 4) Keeping (*shamar*, cf. 8.61) his statutes and ordinances or *choq* and *mishpat* (cf. vs.s. 61 and 59 respectively).

Once these are stated, vs. 5's conjunctive translates as "then" almost as an enticement. That is to say, the Lord will establish (*qum*, cf. 8.20) Solomon's throne forever, again bringing up his father David. This hearkens back to 2.4: "that the Lord may establish his word which he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons take heed to their way...there shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel.'"

Vs. 6 prepares us for what we've been waiting for, the big "if" or preparing us for the inevitable slide from divine favor. Not only has it been looming over the head of King David but his son, that is, the words of the prophet Nathan (he has conveniently disappeared from the scene), "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me" [2Sam 12.10]. The "but" of vs. 6 continues through vs. 8 forming one sentence where the Lord lists what will happen to Solomon, that is, by turning aside from him, *shuv* being the verb found last in 8.48 and has the alternate meaning of turning in the sense of repent. It applies not just to him but to his sons, thereby extending Nathan's prophecy of which Solomon certainly was aware.

The *shuv* of vs. 6 essentially applies a failure in *shamar* (cf. vs. 4) or not watching, observing or keeping with regard to divine commandments and statutes, *mitsvah*

and *choq* (cf. vs. 4 and 8.61 respectively). This means maintaining a certain watchfulness when it comes to the Torah given by Moses, they being set before Solomon or literally as “given before you” which intimates that the *shamar* isn’t as difficult as one may think.

Despite this immediate presence of *mitsvah* and *choq*, there’s the equal danger of both serving and worshiping other gods. A flush of shame must have come over Solomon at this point, recalling his visit to Gibeon with its high places. Who knows...during that visit Solomon may have sneaked off at night to attend a ceremony there without telling anyone.

Vs. 7 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” which counters the “then” beginning vs. 5’s positive note. The verb *karath* (cf. 8.25) or cut off also is used for cutting a covenant but here means the opposite, almost as cutting off this covenant. *Karath* is used with respect to the land on which Israel dwells which reads literally as “from upon the face of,” that is, the *‘adamah* (cf. 8.40) or physical land. Just as dire as this cutting off is casting out from the Lord’s sight, the verb being *shalach* as to send literally “from upon my face.” *Shalach* refers to the house or *bayth* (cf. vs. 3) which the Lord had consecrated or put aside (*qadash*, cf. vs. 3) for his name. In a sense, *karath* and *qadash* are similar in the sense of removing for a specific purpose. So once these two actions are complete—and Solomon hopes that they never will come to pass—Israel will become a proverb and byword or *mashal* and *shenynah* among all the nations. The former also means a sentence, opinion or generally a saying whereas the latter, a sharp word or a taunt.

In vs. 8 the house or *bayth* (cf. vs. 7)—the newly dedicated temple—will become a heap of ruins or in Hebrew, “high” or *helyon* and will astonish all who are passing by. One take on this is that the ruined temple will be piled so high with ruins and rubble soon after having been dedicated to the Lord. As people pass it, they will hiss or *shara*. They will show their disgust and contempt not so much at the Lord but at Solomon and the Israelites who undertook such a grandiose project. This is evident in the question they ask among themselves as to why the Lord had brought about such a calamity. “All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem” [Lam 2.15].

Those onlookers answer their own question posed in the previous verse as to “why.” That is to say, it’s evident that Israel had forsaken the Lord, *hazav* (cf. 8.57) being the verb which fundamentally means to loosen bonds. Right away they

associated the Lord with having brought them from Egypt and despite this, laid hold of other gods. The verb here is *chazaq* (cf. 2.2), a rather strong way of putting it along with the preposition *b-* (in) prefaced to God reading “they grasped in other gods.” An interesting observation by those passing by who seem to be non-Israelites and therefore not associated with worship of the Lord. Most likely a good many were considering their own allegiance to their gods, that a similar fate may be in store for them. As vs. 9 concludes, the calamity at hand indeed is an evil or *rah* (cf. 5.4) brought upon Israel.

Vs. 10 shifts to a period of some twenty years after the dedication of the temple meaning that it has become part and parcel of Israel’s identity and relationship with the Lord. In sum, the temple provided a much needed stability mirrored in Solomon’s reign. The same applies to his own house which vs. 10 mentions.

Vs. 11 is a reminder of sorts that Hiram had provided much of the wood and gold for the temple’s construction. In return for this outstanding generosity King Solomon tried to pull a fast one by trying to get rid of twenty cities, *hyr* being a general word applicable to a town. As noted earlier, there’s no record of Hiram having come to Jerusalem for the temple’s dedication nor shortly afterwards. However, he decides to come to Galilee to see for himself the twenty cities and wasn’t pleased with them, *yashar* meaning to esteem, approve, to be even. No reason for Hiram’s displeasure is given, his friendship with King Solomon being put to the test once he finds himself having been deceived.

In vs. 12 Hiram expresses his displeasure to King Solomon over this offer, most likely through diplomatic channels, calling him “my brother.” Although this can have conventional diplomatic associations when one ruler addresses another, it can infer an insult as when an equal addresses another by a formal title which hasn’t been used beforehand. The text reads literally as “what are these cities.” As for the twenty cities, a sentence in vs. 12 makes the notation “So they are called the land of Cabul to this day,” Cabul meaning good-for-nothing.

Immediately vs. 14 adds that Hiram sent to Solomon one hundred and twenty talents of God, presumably the price for these cities even though vs. 11 says that Solomon gave them. As for the result of this transaction, nothing is said. It’s as though the matter were dropped then and there. As for the cities’ inhabitants, they may have fared well under Hiram due to his friendship with Solomon. However, both men wouldn’t live forever meaning that at a later time their jurisdiction will shift hands and even end up in conflict.

Vs.s. 15-22 shift focus from this potentially contentious issue to the one of forced labor or *mas* not only with regard to the temple and Solomon's own house but with several other building projects mentioned in vs. 15. As for this *mas*, most likely it applies to non-Israelites compared with Israelites mentioned in 5.13-16. The **RSV** has in parentheses an intervention by Pharaoh who invaded Gezer, slew the Canaanites and gave it as a dowery to his daughter, the wife of Solomon (cf. 3.1). *Mas* is found again in vs. 21 along with the verb *havad* meaning to be a slave; i.e., it's an intensification of the *mas* of vs. 15. Here it applies to the descendants of those peoples whom Israel weren't able to destroy completely when Joshua came into Canaan, the verb being *charam* or to put under a ban in the sense of to devote to destruction. It's a favorite word in the Book of Joshua, one such reference being 11.11: "And they put to the sword all who were in it, utterly destroying them."

In contrast to this, King Solomon didn't make slaves out of the Israelites, choosing instead military officials from them to bolster his position. Memory of having been subjected to slavery in Egypt, deeply entrenched in the collective mind of Israel, precluded any attempt at subjecting them to forced labor.

The remaining verses of this chapter recount how King Solomon offered sacrifices in the house of the Lord, built a fleet of ships aided by his friend Hiram. Apparently their dispute over the twenty cities of Galilee had been settled. Apparently Hiram fades away after a few more references to him in the next chapter with regard to this fleet of ships.

1) kalah, bayth, chaphets, 2) yare', 3) tephilah, techinah, chanan, qadash, bayth, lev, 4) lev, tam, yeshar, shamar, choq, mishpat, 5) qum, 6) shuv, shamar, mitsvah, choq, 7) karath, 'adamah, shalach, bayth, qadash, mashal, shenynah, 8) bayth, helyon, sharaq, 9) hazav, chazaq, rah, 11) hyr, 12) yashar, 15) mas, 21) mas, havad, charam

Chapter Ten

Along with the judgment over custody over a child by two harlots which occurred early in his reign (Chapter Three), King Solomon is best remembered by the visit of the queen of Sheba. Her story is recounted here, this chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now." Here it serves not only to show the close relationship between what had just happened but to introduce a wholly different

element into the ongoing account of Solomon's reign. We have no information as to her identity; furthermore, some uncertainty exists as to the location of Sheba. Despite all this, it enhances her mystery, including her being the first woman whom King Solomon is about to encounter on an equal footing. In a sense, we could say that after the queen's visit, everything goes downhill for Solomon and his successors, essentially until the appearance of Elijah the prophet in Chapter Seventeen. Being aware of this fact prepares us for the depressing accounts sandwiched in between now and then.

The queen had heard of King Solomon's fame. Judging by their sound, five words in rapid fire succession convey what was passing through her mind: *Shevah*, *shamahath*, *shemah*, *Shelmoh* and *leshem* (Sheba, report, heard, Solomon and name). "Fame" or *shemah* derives from the verb *shamah* (cf. 8.49) or to hear, in reference to those reports had reached the queen in her kingdom. The distance—either northern Arabia or Yemen—is secondary. With this in mind, the queen decided to pay a visit more specifically because this *shemah* received pertains to the "name of the Lord." After all, the Lord himself spoke of this in 8.19: "nevertheless you (King David) shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name." In addition to this the queen heard of Solomon's other building projects as well as his wisdom, let alone his fabulous wealth.

In addition to this *shemah* with respect to the Lord and despite the distance involved, King Solomon just might prove to be a threat to her own rule as well as to other local rulers. Apparently the queen was well informed, not setting out on an arduous journey simply to see and to admire Solomon but to test him with some tough questions. Also this questioning might reveal his military preparedness. The verb is *nasah* (can also mean to tempt) with *chydah* which comes from a verbal root meaning to twist and refers to a difficult sentence. "I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old" [Ps 78.2].

Vs. 2 describes the arrival of the queen of Sheba in Jerusalem with a "very great retinue," the noun being *chayl* (cf. 1.52) with the adjective *kaved*. This connotes something heavy along with the adverb *me'od* (cf. 5.7) which means anything done in excess or beyond the mark. Obviously such a caravan caught the attention of everyone along the way, news about it having reached King Solomon long before...in fact, even the very day she left her native land. The impressiveness of the retinue pales in comparison to what this verse conveys, namely, that once the queen arrived in Jerusalem, she wasted no time visiting Solomon. In fact we get the

impression that she didn't even unpack or settle down, for "she told him all that was on her mind," *lev* (cf. 9.4) also meaning heart. And so this visit outwardly was not a diplomatic one but a personal one which must have roused eyebrows among the local population. Would Solomon marry the queen and thus form an alliance?

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 3 reflects both the queen of Sheba's satisfaction and amazement at the response to her questions put to King Solomon, *nagad* also as to declare in the sense of bringing to light. En route to Jerusalem the queen had plenty of time to ponder as well as to consult others in her retinue about what she would ask. We, of course, have no answer about this tantalizing matter. What we do know is that she was being guided to Jerusalem by an impulse not unlike the magi being guided to Bethlehem by the star. Perhaps the magi themselves pondered this journey, she being to them a kind of predecessor and inspiration. So in response to telling King Solomon the *davar* of what was on her heart, he provided more than an adequate response, that is, to her personal *davar*. In effect there was no *davar* hidden from her *davar*, the verb *halam* interestingly implying a covering over with words which adds to the mystery and intrigue as to this incident.

This mysterious exchange is put in terms of the queen having seen (*raha*) "all the wisdom" of King Solomon, that is, his *chakmah* (cf. 7.14). Note that vs. 1 has her having heard of the king followed by her again having heard his response to her questions. However, now she sees in person a manifestation of the wisdom that has produced all this. In sum, the queen of Sheba makes a transition from hearing to seeing which moves on to a tour of all the splendid surroundings and possessions of King Solomon. Most likely he was her personal guide not having to explain things, just point them out. However, one further step remains as presented in vs. 5: "there was no more spirit in her," *ruach* also as breath. It was as though this combination of hearing and seeing removed the queen's very ability to breathe. No longer did she feel the need to communicate or better, no longer could do so. She had seen Solomon's *chakmah* manifested, if you will, into his surroundings. Perhaps the queen was pondering within herself whether somehow she might emulate this in her own kingdom. Then again, being able to translate her exchange of words...her *davar*...with Solomon would be the real key to any future success. This must have occupied her during the trip home.

Vs. 6 begins with the familiar conjunctive showing the rapid-fire exchange of *davar* between the queen of Sheba and her host, King Solomon. Now through vs. 9 she launches into a series of high praises of what she had experienced. Although

her *ruach* may have left her, enough remains for her to give voice in this regard. The queen acknowledges that the *davar* she had heard (*shamah*, cf. vs. 1) corresponded with what she had seen as well as his affairs (*davar* again) including his wisdom or *chakmah* (cf. vs. 4). The queen also admits that she didn't believe the reports (*davar*) until she came to see for herself, claiming in vs. 7 that Solomon's wisdom and prosperity (*chakmah* and *tov*: vs. 6 and the common adjective for good) didn't come close to what she had heard of them. She also exclaims how happy are his wives (the Hebrew has 'men'), '*ashrey* having the force of an interjection as in the case of the first word of the first psalm. The same applies to Solomon's servants, *heved* (cf. 5.6) basically meaning a slave, they lucky enough to be in his presence although if asked privately, they'd rather be set free. At least they fared much better than other slaves.

In vs. 9 the queen of Sheba spontaneously blesses the Lord, calling him "your God" meaning the one of King Solomon, these words expressing the fact that she's an outsider looking in with great admiration. The Lord has taken delight in him, *chaphets* (cf. 9.1) suggestive of ardor and esteem and has placed Solomon on his throne. These words must have delighted the king because it's the first time someone in authority does not acknowledge his father David. Now Solomon has come into his own. The queen continues that the Lord has loved Israel, '*ahavah* being a noun where the text reads literally as "in love the Lord Israel." He does this in order that justice and righteousness may be carried out, *mishpat* and *tsedaqah* (cf. 9.4 and 3.16 respectively).

After these verses of high praise and admiration tinged, to be sure, with a certain desire to implement in her own kingdom what she had witnessed, the queen presents King Solomon a lavish gift of gold, spices and precious stones. The spices are singled out as being in such an abundance due to their exotic nature; Solomon certainly was rich enough in gold and precious stones, but spices from Sheba were another thing. The queen knew of this beforehand, knowing it would make an impression and possibly set up profitable trade between Israel and Sheba.

Between this incident of gift giving by the queen and an account of Solomon's generosity we have an interlude of sorts with vss. 11-12, the **RSV** saying in a footnote that it's related to 9.26-28. It's comprised of the next-to-last mention of King Hiram, the last being vs. 22. Actually reference is to his ships which provided almug wood and precious stones for the two houses or *bayth* (cf. 9.8): of the Lord and of Solomon, this type of wood being possibly juniper. Apparently it's quality was so good that none "has come or been seen to this day."

Vs. 13 brings to conclusion the visit of the queen of Sheba to King Solomon, this verse beginning with the conjunctive *v-* after the interlude of the past few verses just noted. He gave her all that she had desired, *chaphets* (cf. vs. 9) and then some. We have no record of her actual request but can assume it wasn't much, materially speaking. The queen had obtained what she came for, the wisdom of Solomon which hopefully could be applied to governing her native land of Sheba. Throughout this story it may be tempting to consider that the two had a love affair. However, the all-important element of the queen's search for wisdom or *chakmah* overrides such interjections.

The second sentence of vs. 13 is significant, it too beginning with the conjunctive *v-*: "So she turned and went back to her own land." First comes the turning (*panah*, cf. 8.28) followed by going back (*halak*, cf. 8.61). This turning or literally facing in one direction reveals both the high point of King Solomon's reign and the transfer of what's best in it to the queen of Sheba even though after this she disappears off the scene. As noted earlier, this is the precise point from which it's all downhill for Solomon. Such is the significance of the queen's *panah*.

Before King Solomon begins his ill-fated descent prophesied by Nathan, we remain at reasonably high level for some time which provides breathing space to pause and take in what had happened since the death of King David. The remaining verses of this chapter go into some detail as to Solomon's business dealings, the lavish throne, drinking vessels and a whole slew of essentially boring though lavish details. Among all this we have the final mention of Hiram with regard to his fleet of ships. Perhaps around this point Hiram not so much deserts his friend but withdraws gradually, parallel to the *panah-halak* of the queen of Sheba. As for the peak of Solomon's career, it can be summed up with vs. 24: "And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom." Both the queen of Sheba and Hiram can concur but soon were observers to the unfolding of events in Israel and obviously struck with great dismay with Solomon's downfall and the chaos that ensued.

1) shemah, shamah, nasah, chydah, 2) chayl, kaved, me'od, lev, 3) halam, 4) rahah, chakmah, 5) ruach, 6) shamah, chakmah, 7) chakmah, 8) 'ashrey, heved, 9) chaphets, 'ahavah, mishpat, tsedaqah, 12) bayth, 13) chaphets, panah, halak