

## 1 Kings 4:1-34

### The Greatness of King Solomon

#### The List of Solomon's Princes

**1 Kings 4:1-2** - "And King Solomon was king over all Israel. And these were the princes which he had;..."

**Verses 2-19** list the chief officers and governmental authorities, people responsible for carrying out Solomon's orders and other tasks. These verses constitute a separate chapter in the Jewish Bible.

"king over all Israel" - David ruled only over Judah at first. Solomon begins his reign as king over all Israel.

#### Reflections of Christ's Kingdom

Since Solomon is a type of the Messiah, some of these details are prophetic glimpses of Christ's Kingdom or the situation in heaven or in the New Jerusalem described by the prophets and by John in the Book of Revelation.

For instance:

**1 Kings 4:7** - "And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision."

Here, 12 officers brought sustenance and provisions to the King's table, each assigned a month. Compare that to these passages:

- **Ezekiel 47:12** - "And by the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

- **Revelation 22:1-2** - "Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

There are actually 13 men named. The extra man, the Rabbis say, would be responsible for the intercalated extra month Adar 1, which occurs seven times in a 19-year cycle (approximately once every three years). This corrects the lunar calendar to keep the feasts in the right seasons. (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, fol. 12. 1.)

Christian commentators also see in all this a representation of the 12 apostles providing spiritual food for the church, with Paul being the 13th.

**1 Kings 4:20** - "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry."

This was a promise to Abraham after the Akedah, his binding of Isaac:

- **Genesis 22:16-18** - "By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

Repeated by the prophets:

- **Isaiah 10:21-23** - "A remnant will return — a remnant of Jacob — to the Mighty God. Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord GOD of Hosts will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land..."

Quoted by Paul:

- **Romans 9:27** - "Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites is like the sand of the sea, only the remnant will be saved."

Hosea, according to Rashi and other rabbinical commentators, sees this as a promise of the Days of Messiah:

- **Hosea 1:10** - "Yet the number of the Israelites will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted. And it will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.' Then the people of Judah and of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and will go up out of the land. For great will be the day of Jezreel."

With Gentile believers joined to Jewish believers in the new Israel, members of the church throughout history would fulfill this prophecy.

"eating and drinking, and making merry." - This is the spiritual joy that we express realizing that all our enemies have been defeated and all our needs are being met.

- **Song of Solomon 2:3-4** - "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

What is preventing us from experiencing this "great delight" and "making merry" in His presence?

**1 Kings 4:21** - "And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life."

The extent of his kingdom was from the Euphrates River in the east to the coast of the lands formerly held by the Philistines, and from Dan in the north to the "border of Egypt."

### 'They Brought Presents' - Psalm 72

In one of the last psalms of David, titled "for Solomon" (**Psalm 72**) the worldwide extent of God's kingdom is prophetically described in terms of Solomon's reign.

- Psalm 72:1 - "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son."

The Targum renders: "O God, give the decrees of thy judgments to the king Messiah, and thy righteousness to the son of David the king." The Midrash refers this to the Messiah with reference to Isaiah 11:1, 5 (fol. 27, col. 4). (See Yalkut Simeoni, par. 2. fol. 112. 2.)

- **Psalm 72:10-11** - "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him"

Of course, the queen of Sheba famously visited Solomon. Messiah will be brought gifts according to the Talmud: "Egypt will bring gifts to the Messiah." And Seba is associated with Egypt and Ethiopia.

Recall that Jesus had gold presented to him in his infancy by the Magi (**Matthew 2:11**).

The rabbis said Solomon ruled over the whole world, probably based on these scriptures regarding the Messiah:

- **Isaiah 49:22-23** - "This is what the Lord GOD says: "Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations, and raise My banner to the peoples. They will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders. Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow to you facedown and lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in Me will never be put to shame."

- **Isaiah 60:3** - "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

- **Revelation 21:24** - "By its light the nations will walk, and into it the kings of the earth will bring their glory."

## Solomon's Provision

In a time when drought and famine were real concerns, the reign of Solomon is described as overflowingly abundant with supplies.

**1 Kings 4:22-23** - "And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallowdeer, and fatted fowl."

This is a picture of God's provision in David's psalm:

- **Psalm 23:1-2, 5** - "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want (lack). He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters....Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

This is echoed in the description of Jesus' Parable of the Wedding Feast, which in turn a picture of the marriage supper of the Lamb:

- **Matthew 22:4** - "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage feast."

And in the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 by Jesus:

- **Luke 9:7** - "And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets."

Or even more pointedly:

- **John 6:50-57** - "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die,"

Solomon's table was open to anyone.

See **1 Kings 4:27** - "And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing."

It was "an open table for all comers, as there were some from all parts of the earth" - *John Gill*

## Solomon's Peace

With no enemies or battles to win, peace prevailed during Solomon's reign.

**1 Kings 4:24-25** - "For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

This is a reflection of the Messiah:

- **Isaiah 9:6-7** - "...For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this..."

To "dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree" was a popular idiom for perfect peace, security, lack of fear and social contentment.

The prophets related this to the times of Messiah:

- **Micah 4:3-4** - "Then they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer take up the sword against nation, nor will they train anymore for war. And each man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, with no one to frighten him. For the mouth of the LORD of Hosts has spoken."

### Provision Even for the Horses

**1 Kings 4:26-28** - "And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing. Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where the officers were, every man according to his charge."

"every man in his month" - i.e. the 12 (or 13) men previously described above.

In **2 Chronicles 9:25** it says Solomon had only 4,000 horses. But still, a lot of horses.

Recall that Israel's kings were not to multiply to themselves horses or wives. Solomon apparently started veering off course with the horses.

- **Deuteronomy 17:16-17** - "But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold."

### More on Solomon's Great Wisdom

**1 Kings 4:29** - "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore."

This is more and wider in scope than what God first promised him - originally wisdom to judge and discern in legal and governmental affairs.

The manifold wisdom of Solomon is described in the same way as the promise of the multitudes of Israel - as the sand of the sea. His understanding and knowledge was vast and comprehensive; from plants, animals and insects to philosophy, practical knowledge and philosophy.

Tradition also includes his knowledge of and control of demons.

**1 Kings 4:32** - "And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."

Most of his proverbs and psalms have been lost. Those extant are in the book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon and some of the Psalms.

**1 Kings 4:33** - "And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes."

The Targum interprets it allegorically, that he prophesied of the good and bad kings of the house of David in this world, and in the world to come of the Messiah.

### **The Limits of Solomon's Wisdom**

But Cedar, hyssop and a scarlet thread are also ingredients used in the cleansing of lepers and in the preparation of the Ashes of the Red Heifer.

The Ashes of the Red Heifer is described in **Numbers 19**. While the heifer was being burned to ash outside the Temple, a branch of cedar and a piece of hyssop were tied together with a scarlet wool yarn and tossed onto the burning heifer. When the entire sacrifice was reduced to ash, the ash was mixed with water and sprinkled to remove uncleanness.

Cedars, the tallest trees, were a symbol of pride, and the hyssop was the smallest tree and represents humility. Hyssop was also used to smear the Passover lamb's blood on the doorposts (**Exodus 12:22**). The scarlet thread represents Christ's blood shed on the cross.

The Red Heifer sacrifice was puzzling to the rabbis. Why did contact with the red heifer cause uncleanness to those who prepared and performed the rite when the ashes of the red heifer mixed with water cleansed everything? It was classed among four laws beyond human reason "which must be obeyed even though not understood.

Even the wise and venerable King Solomon purportedly said, "All these I have comprehended," speaking of ordinances, "but as regards the section dealing with the Red Heifer, I have investigated and inquired and examined: 'I said: I will get wisdom; but it was far from me' "

We have speculated that the Red Heifer represents the church - the body of Christ surrendered and completely consumed as a living sacrifice, which brings Christ's cleansing to the world by preaching of the cross.

Next week we'll pause and examine more closely the Ashes of the Red Heifer.

**1 Kings 4:34** - "And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom."