

1 Kings 8:12-66

Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

Solomon speaks after the "glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." Remember that this was happening during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles celebration.

1 Kings 8:12 - "Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness."

That's unexpected! Why?

This is probably a reference to:

- **Leviticus 16:2** - "And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat."

The Targum relates this darkness to the Shekinah glory: "the Lord is pleased to cause his Shechinah or divine Majesty to dwell in Jerusalem."

Rashi - When he saw the cloud, he said, Now I see that the Divine presence is in the house which I built, for thus did He promise to come and dwell in it from the midst of a cloud and thick darkness. And where did he say this promise? "For in the cloud will I appear upon the ark-cover" (Lev. 16:12). Thus is this taught in the Sifrei.

Darkness and Light

We should be comforted that scripture says both that "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (**1 John 1:5**) and at the same time He "dwells in the thick darkness."

Like the pillar of cloud in the wilderness:

- **Exodus 14:20** - "And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night."

- **Psalm 139:11-13** - "If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me, and the light become night around me'— even the darkness is not dark to You, but the night shines like the day, for darkness is as light to You. For You formed my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb...."

- **Daniel 2:22** - "He reveals the deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with Him."

God knows the darkness of our hearts and has provided the remedy in redemption through repentance.

The scene of God's glory filling the Temple appears again in the Book of Revelation

- **Revelation 15:8** - "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed."

1 Kings 8:13 - "I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever."

Rashi - And from the time that this [place] was chosen, it would no longer be permissible [to offer sacrifices] on any strange altars, [except those in the temple,] and the Divine presence no longer dwelled in any other place.

1 Kings 8:22 - "And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:"

But in 2 Chronicles the scene is described slightly differently:

- **2 Chronicles 6:13** - "For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven,"

Spreading hands toward heaven represented both surrender to God and openness to receive from Him.

1 Kings 8:24 - "Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day."

Solomon reminds God (and the people) that God was fulfilling a promise made to David. Prayer allows us to claim, lay hold of and appropriate the promises God has made, and to possess them.

God's promises are not given so we can "leverage" or manipulate the Almighty. But they are opportunities for us to realize them in our own experience.

"Nothing pleases God better than to see his promises put in circulation; he loves to see his children bring them up to him, and say, 'LORD, do as thou hast said.'" - *Charles Spurgeon*

1 Kings 8:27 - "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"

i.e. all of Solomon's pageantry surrounding the dedication of the Temple he built

completely pales in comparison to the true majesty of God Himself.

Solomon puts the scene in perspective - although God's presence will be witnessed dwelling in the cloud above the mercy seat, in reality God is everywhere, and larger than our limited imaginations can conceive. His real dwelling place is in Heaven, and even that does not contain or restrict Him. This displays Solomon's humility before the Lord and also distinguishes Israel's God from the idols of the other nations.

God will indeed dwell on/in the earth - in the incarnation, the birth of Jesus the Messiah and His spiritual indwelling in each believer.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"
- (1 **Corinthians 3:16-17**)

Solomon's Petitions

First, he asks God to hear the prayers of Israel

1 Kings 8:28-29 - "Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to day: That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place."

When the prophet Daniel was in Babylon, he "went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open to Jerusalem; and he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously" (cf. **Daniel 6:10**)

When synagogues are erected, they are built to face Jerusalem. The Talmud (Berakhot 30a) instructs Jews outside the Land of Israel to face the Holy Land while praying; Jews residing in Israel should turn towards the city of Jerusalem; those living within Jerusalem should orient themselves towards the Temple Mount, and those next to the Temple Mount should turn towards the former site of the Holy of Holies.

Islam first copied this practice but later directed prayer toward Mecca.

Many early Christians faced east in prayer, based on scriptures like **Matthew 24:27** - "For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be" as well as reference to Christ as the "Sun of Righteousness" (**Malachi 4:2**) and "the Dayspring from on high" (**Luke 1:78**).

But Solomon also pointedly "spread forth his hands toward heaven" emphasizing the universality and omnipresence of God. Praying toward the Temple was symbolically acknowledging God's special dwelling there with His people Israel, but He would hear from His real home in Heaven.

His second petition is for God to forgive:

1 Kings 8:30 - "And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive."

Forgiveness is our most crucial need!

Solomon's next petition is for God to deliver justice.

1 Kings 8:22-23 - "If a man sin against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house; Then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head; and by justifying the righteous, by giving him according to his righteousness."

An "oath" means a curse. This describes legal case than needs to be adjudicated. Someone is forced to swear before God that what he says is true. Solomon asks that God deliver justice, condemning the wicked person and justifying the innocent.

The rabbis link this to the case of a wife suspected of adultery (**Numbers 5**) where it was up to God to reveal guilt or innocence. Since Israel is portrayed as God's wife, it is a prayer for us to be judged for any idolatry that takes us away from our true husband.

Similarly, the next petition foresees the result of spiritual adultery/idolatry -

if Israel is defeated in war...

1 Kings 8:33-34 - "When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers."

The petition is to grant forgiveness if there is repentance.

Then Solomon addresses natural phenomena - drought and famine caused by Israel's sin.

1 Kings 8:35-36 - "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance."

Again, forgiveness is paramount!

Then his petition expands to every possible kind of affliction:

1 Kings 8:37-40 - "If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers."

"the plague of his own heart" - This is a reference back to the plagues on Egypt

- **Exodus 9:14** - "For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth."

God hardened Pharaoh's heart, meaning he "squeezed" it to reveal the depth of his wickedness.

Solomon is proposing that when we recognize the wickedness in our heart - the plague that is consuming it - and we repent, that God would hear our cry and forgive and heal us.

This is a spiritual plague that leads to death unless we acknowledge "there is none like [God] in all the earth."

The ultimate fulfillment and answer to this prayer came with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. He expelled the plague on our hearts and healed the wounds that were inflicted there.

This frees us to love. Those who have been forgiven much are able to love much. (**Luke 7:47**)

Prayer for the Stranger

This is also unexpected. Solomon sees the Gentile nations coming to follow the Lord.

1 Kings 8:41-43 - "Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have

builded, is called by thy name."

This is a foretaste of the Gospel that is universal in scope.

- **Isaiah 56:6-7** - "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

Jesus concluded that self-seeking among the religious authorities had spoiled that purpose:

- **Matthew 21::13** - "... It is written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer;' but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Prayer for Success of Israel's 'Cause'

1 Kings 8:44-45 - "If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause."

Rashi - "maintain their cause - their vengeance against their enemy."

This was dependent on Israel following God's guidance, not a blanket endorsement of any military venture.

By using the phrase "maintain their cause" Solomon expands the possible meaning from simple military victory to the spiritual realm of assaulting the "gates of hell" as the mission of the church (**Matthew 16:18**).

- **1 John 3:8** - "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

"Maintain their cause" can also be translated "vindicate their cause or judgment." Show that their plan is right.

All Humankind Sins

1 Kings 8:46 - "If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;"

- **Romans 3:23** - "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Prayer for the Power of Repentance

1 Kings 8:47-50 - "Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them:"

To "bethink themselves" means they "came to themselves" i.e. to shake off the illusion and self-deception of sin and self-seeking - the same phrase used in the Parable of the Prodigal Son:

- **Luke 15:17-18** - "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,"

Moses had warned Israel of the dire consequences if they rejected the Lord (**Deuteronomy 28:15-68**).

Solomon asks that in such a situation that, if the people repent, God would forgive and cause their captors to show compassion.

By using the phrase "maintain their cause" again, it allows the prayer to transcend even the historical captivity and point us to freedom from spiritual captivity in Babylon.

Benediction

1 Kings 8:56 - "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant."

"There hath not failed one word of all his good promise!" - That's true then and now.

- **Hebrews 13:8** - "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Just as the Ark had come into its resting place, God's people could enter into His rest.

1 Kings 8:57-58 - "The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us: That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he

commanded our fathers."

- **Hebrews 13:5** - "...he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (also **Deuteronomy 31:6**)

"incline our hearts unto him" - God does this, we are incapable of doing it from our own strength. In fact, we have an "evil inclination" that pulls us in the opposite direction.

1 Kings 8:59-60 - "And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else."

Again "maintain the cause" - redemption is again projected as universal for "all the people of the earth."

1 Kings 8:61 - "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day."

When we "try" to make our heart perfect, we fail. When we surrender and "let," God does all that is required.

The Eighth Day

The seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles were combined with this dedication. The 8th day marked the "intimate supper" that corresponded to both the resurrection and the bridal chamber of the wedding night. Solomon sent the people away to their tents "joyful and glad of heart."

Perhaps echoing Ecclesiastes, a reading for Tabernacles, also written by Solomon;

- **Ecclesiastes 9:7-8** - "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy head lack oil."