

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 and 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 harkens 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, yesher, 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 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 (*rahah*) “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 vs. 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 almuq 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

Chapter Eleven

The conjunctive *v-* beginning this new chapter translated as "now" is significant insofar as it signals King Solomon's long-anticipated fall from grace. In the past lay the highlights of his reign: his judgment between the two harlots, his building projects and the queen of Sheba. The opening verse says simply that he "loved many foreign women," *'ahav* (cf. 5.1) being the verb which means an intense longing with the adjective *nakry'* (cf. 8.41) having a certain air of hostility about it. Next we have a list of these women from five nations but nations within the conquered territory of Canaan. Then of course, we have Pharaoh's daughter as noted in 3.1. The Lord turned a blind eye towards that marriage since it was an alliance with Egypt and thus a means of maintaining peace with that superpower to the south. As for the others—and we don't get the exact number which is staggering until vs. 3—the five peoples from which Solomon got his wives were condemned roundly by the Lord. They are the *goy* or nations whom the Lord said would turn Solomon's heart (*lev*, cf. 11.2) away, preferring instead their gods, the verb being *natah* (cf. 8.58). The adverb *'aken* or "surely" is thrown in for good measure.

This turning away as it impinges upon the heart of the king suggests a whole series of intimate, sexual relationships. The women must have taken turns, one for each night it seems. Certainly they were chosen for their seductive beauty matched only by their ability to wean Solomon away from the Lord to their own gods. Their practices must have been quite esoteric compared with the stark oneness of the Lord. Therefore it was one easy step for Solomon to shift his allegiance to their gods. While he was enjoying a different woman for each night, his conscience must have reminded him of Israel's tradition of worship of the one Lord, that he was violating it big time. Yet his behavior which started off more or less innocently with the daughter of Pharaoh devolved quickly into a trap he couldn't escape even if he wanted to. At this point Solomon may have wished for Nathan the prophet to come along and set him straight, but he passed off the scene long ago.

Assembling such an entourage of foreign women didn't happen overnight. Mention of Pharaoh's daughter means that she may have been the first to lead him to acquire a taste for these so-called foreign women. Interestingly the peoples from which Solomon procured his multitude of wives mirror Israel's earlier seduction to Canaanite divinities against which Joshua had railed and warned about by the Lord himself in Dt 7.1 where they are to be cleared away, *nashal* meaning to draw out or fall off. Despite valiant efforts both by Joshua as well as later by Israel's judges, never could the command be carried out in full. Failure lay squarely at the feet of the Israelites who found these foreign gods too irresistible due to their exotic forms of worship compared with the rather stern monotheistic worship of the Lord. The most recent example of this confusion of gods vs. God was Solomon's visit to Gibeon when "he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places" [3.3]. So all along Solomon was no different from any other Israelite. The problem is that he has to set an example to his people, and that's what really angered the Lord.

As for the warning in vs. 2 presented coming from the Lord directly, it's a reminder with regard to Israel's checkered past when dealing with the Canaanite inhabitants. At the end of this verse are the simple yet direct words summing it all up: "Solomon clung to these in love." The verb is *davaq* which suggests stickiness, not unlike glue, from which it's impossible to free oneself. The noun 'ahavah (cf. 10.9) serves to compound the matter. As for the context, *davaq* can apply to both the foreign women and their gods, many of which may have had sacred prostitution as part of their rites.

Vs. 3 gets down to the gritty details, namely, that King Solomon had seven hundred wives, princesses and three hundred concubines. A number is given to the first and third but not the second. Excluding them we have a total of some one thousand women frequenting the palace, that being a less than accurate total number.

Vs. 4 is a jump from the above mentioned wives turning away Solomon's heart or *lev* (cf. vs. 2) to his old age or when they carried on the same activities. It adds the fact that this same heart wasn't true to the Lord, the adjective being *shalem* which means to be at peace or to be perfect. So it seems that these foreign women both at the beginning as well as the end of Solomon's life did a real number on him, his middle years naturally included. It's hard to conceive how long one's heart or *lev* could hold out against such a continuous onslaught, *lev* being mentioned twice to show the gravity of the situation. Then vs. 4 throws in what Solomon dreads but never admits, another comparison with his father King David, especially with reference to his *lev* which remained faithful to the Lord.

In the next few verses King Solomon "went after (*halak*, cf. 10.13; plus *'acharey*) Ashtoreth and Milcom, this verb clearly indicating that he pursued their worship on his own. Surely those wives and others associated with these two gods were pleased to have subverted Israel's king. If they and others kept it up, they just might bring about the downfall of the kingdom which, despite being well established, can be subverted and driven out...all the way back to Egypt. Ashtoreth is a goddess and Milcom an abomination or *shiquts* which is even worse, the last time this word being mentioned is way back in Dt 29.17 in reference to both Egypt and nations through which Israel had passed en route to Canaan: "and you have seen their detestable things, their idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold which were among them." Being an absolute ruler, nobody could check Solomon unless a prophet rose up, but none was on the horizon.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "so," this being the fifth consecutive instance thus far in Chapter Eleven with the exception of vs. 2. If you look at them all as in this instance (more to come, of course), they are indicative of Solomon's rapid fall from grace due to having so many foreign women around him...and foreign women, of course, equals foreign gods. Here the turning away of King Solomon's heart by these women makes him do not just evil or *rah* (cf. 9.9) but in the Lord's sight which literally means eyes. In other words, the Lord is not absent through all this but is keeping tabs on Solomon who didn't follow after him,

this being rendered literally as “did not fill (*male*) after.” Once again, the standard of King David is brought up who did this *male*’ after.

Vs. 7 continues to recount the cascading negative effect of the foreign women and their gods upon King Solomon...not just that but to the whole house of Israel. His next move is to build a high place or *bamah* to both Chemosh and Molech which this verse calls the *shiquts* (cf. vs. 5) of Moab and the Ammonites. As for Chemosh and Molech, no need to offer an explanation. Their very names have an alien ring to it. To add insult to injury, Solomon erects one high place for both on a mountain east of Jerusalem, most likely today’s Mount of Olives. That means it stared right down at the recently built temple of the Lord which Solomon himself had erected. No doubt, he recalled his experience at Gibeon where he worshiped the Lord. If that place had a *bamah* as well as one to sacrifice to the Lord (so thought Solomon), why not the new *bamah* and temple opposite it in Jerusalem? Now his foreign wives had a place to freely offer incense and sacrifices. Although this was a *shiquts* as just noted, chances are that a good many Israelites joined them since the practice of dual worship, if you will, remained prevalent.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 9 continues the fast pace of successive events saying that the Lord was angry with Solomon, ‘*anaph* (cf. 8.46 but not noted there) being a vivid way to express this anger by breathing through the nostrils. One can imagine that such ‘*anaph* was done quickly and rather noisily. The fact that the Lord had appeared to the king twice aggravates the situation further referring to 3.4-5 and 9.1-9. The first was with regard to Solomon asking for an “understanding mind” and the second, more conditional in the sense that several times the Lord uses the conjunction “if” with respect to following his ways. So in a short time the foreign wives along with their gods undid all this, Solomon seemingly oblivious to what had brought it about.

In vs. 10 reference is made to “this thing” or this *davar* or the Lord commanding King Solomon not to follow other gods. Instead, he failed to *shamar* (cf. 9.6) this or failed to *shamar* the *davar*, a word-as-expression uttered by the Lord. Now the Lord decided to step in and give vent to his anger or ‘*anaph* by speaking to him, the nature of which isn’t specified, dream or vision. He begins by saying that worship of other gods has been in Solomon’s mind or literally as “with you” and throws in another failure to *shamar* the covenant and statutes. While the Lord was uttering (‘*anaph*) these words, Solomon knew what was coming next and braced himself for the impact.

Just as strong as the verb *'anaph* is *qarah* which means to tear or rend as a garment, this concerning the kingdom over which Solomon is presiding. An example is found a bit later in vs. 30, the current one predicting what follows here: "Then Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him and tore it into twelve pieces." Once the kingdom is so torn, the Lord will hand it over to Solomon's servant or *heved* (cf. 10.8) also as a slave; his identity isn't specified but doesn't forebode well. One possibility which turned out to be true is Jeroboam who later became first king of the divided northern kingdom of Israel, he being "the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a *heved* of Solomon" [cf. vs. 26].

After this threat, the Lord relents for one reason only that's now very familiar to Solomon. The Lord won't bring about a rupture in Solomon's lifetime because of David. In a sense, this is the first time Solomon could breathe a sigh of relief, having been compared constantly to his father. Because of him, the Lord divine *qarah* will happen after Solomon's death or when his son becomes king, that being Rehoboam (cf. vs. 43). As for his mother, her name is Naamah (cf. 14-21-31) of whom we know next to nothing. Yet Naamah must have stood out in some way among the hundreds of Solomon's wives and consorts. As for the memory of King David, it's brought up again in vs. 13 where the Lord says that he'll give one tribe to his son out of respect for him.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 14 shows that the trouble which the Lord had spoken of in the past few verses is finally at hand. It takes the form of an adversary which will rise up against King Solomon by the Lord with the implication that this *qum* (cf. 9.5) is destined to be permanent in one way or another. *Satan* (cf. 5.4) is the noun for adversary which literally will be "to (*l-*) Solomon." The *satan* turns out to be Hadad the Edomite. This fellow of royal affiliation understandably bore a grudge against Solomon going back as vs.s 15-16 recounts to when Joab, under the command of King David, had slain all the men, *karath* being the verb which means to cut off. However, Hadad's family managed to escape to Egypt when he was very young.

A retinue of Edomites along with Hadad found favor with Pharaoh of Egypt who gave him a house, food as well as land. Note that early in King Solomon's reign an alliance of marriage was made between him and Pharaoh's daughter. It seems that somewhere along the line that had fallen apart, possibly due to Solomon's penchant for foreign women. In fact she may even had conspired with her father to assist Hadad when he got older, one way of getting revenge for her husband's infidelity. As for Hadad, he and his host, Pharaoh of Egypt, got along so well that

he married the queen's sister. After some time, King David had died which seemed to offer an opportunity for Hadad to return home and take out his vengeance. Pharaoh was reluctant to have him leave but in the end relented. So much for the first *qum*.

The second *qum* is Razon in vs. 23 who becomes king in Damascus over Syria, this verse, of course, beginning with the conjunctive *v-*. Like Hadad, his gripe goes back to King David ('after the slaughter of David') and takes out his hatred on Solomon. Similar to Hadad, Razon becomes a *satan* (cf. vs. 14) for the duration of Solomon's reign and has an unremitting abhorrence for Israel, *quts* meaning a sickening dread.

Along with the conjunctive *v-*, vs. 26 has a third *qum* with regard to Jeroboam, a servant (*heved*) of Solomon referred to in vs. 11 who is yet to be named. As for *qum*, it's with respect to the hand of Jeroboam against or literally "in (*b-*) the king." Vs. 27 begins an account (*davar*, here as 'reason why') of this *qum-plus-b-* which stems from Solomon's construction of the Millo noted in 9.15 as an earthen work south of the temple area. In addition to this he closed a breach belonging to Jerusalem here described as "the city of David his father," yet another reference to Solomon's father.

In order to carry out these two projects, Solomon puts Jeroboam in charge, seeing that he was both able and industrious, *gibor chayl* and *hasah mela'kah*. The first pair consists of two nouns, *gibor* as one who is might as a warrior and *chayl* (cf. 10.2) as faculty or power. The second pair contains the common verb *hasah* (to make, to do; cf. 8.59) and the noun *mela'kah* or handiwork, craftsmanship. As for *paqad*, the verb pertaining to be put in charge, it has a certain military sense such as to muster. This fits in well with what it refers to, namely, forced labor or *sevel* which connotes bearing a burden compared with *mas* (conscription) as found in 9.21. *Sevel* pertains to the house of Joseph, Joseph being the one who had gained Pharaoh's favor and had brought his family to Egypt where they stayed for some four hundred years. Toward the end of this stay the Pharaoh afflicted the Israelites which led to their dramatic departure. Before that, everything seemed to go well.

One day when Jeroboam left Jerusalem, Ahijah who is called a prophet came across him on the road, vs. 29 saying that they were in open country or literally "alone in the field." Obviously this wasn't a chance encounter but one Ahijah was inspired to arrange, he being clothed in a new garment or *simplah*, usually a large

outer piece of clothing. So there they were, two men on an isolated section of the road, Jeroboam not knowing if this man were a robber or the like. Without saying a word, Ahijah cuts *simlah* into twelve pieces. The number twelve was familiar to most people as pertaining to Israel's twelve tribes, so Jeroboam must have known it had political consequences.

Ahijah tells Jeroboam to take ten pieces of the garment, symbolic of the ten tribes over which he will rule, the other two along with the ten, not being described at this point (one tribe is Levi which has not territorial inheritance). And so the prophet leaves the choice up to Jeroboam, this in anticipation of the Lord about to tear the kingdom from Solomon. Actually Ahijah goes into some detail as to the prophecy related to what will happen, all the way through vs. 39. As for the verb to tear, it's *qarah* as noted in vs. 11 when the Lord is speaking to Solomon in reference to the yet to be identified servant. However, the Lord will leave the king one tribe (again, as yet to be identified) for the sake of David. Chances are when Solomon heard this he was enraged by the fact that the revolt is compounded by yet another reference to his father. It seems never can he escape from under his influence.

The reason for this division of Israel is obvious, that King Solomon worshiped foreign Gods as a result of the foreign women with whom he consorted. Ahijah as mouthpiece of the Lord puts this in personal terms of Solomon having forsaken him, *hazav* as loosening bonds noted in 9.9. Such words imply the loosening of the covenant. As for *hazav*, it extends to the two verbs, *halak* and *hasah* (cf. vs. 5 and vs. 28 respectively) or to walk and to do. The former suggests going to a place, and upon having arrived, engage in activity. The English "keep" is absent in the Hebrew text. Walking is with respect to the following three: 1) The Lord's ways (*derek*) whereas doing is with respect to what is right or *yashar* which connotes straightness. 2) Commandments (*choq*, cf. 9.6) and 3) statutes (*mishpat*, cf. 10.9). Such is the sorry state of affairs made worse by the renowned wisdom with which Solomon was endowed. Yet again, the Lord makes reference to David who had maintained all three.

Vs. 34 has the conjunctive *v-* for "nevertheless" with respect to the Lord not taking the entire kingdom of Israel from Solomon. Instead, he will allow him to exercise his rule for the duration of his life, again—and by now we can sympathize with Solomon—for the sake of his father David. In a sense, Solomon is to be pitied, having to live out his life with this hanging over his head, never having the chance to come into his own despite his earlier reputation for wisdom. What's personally

galling is the Lord saying that David had kept (*shamar*, cf. vs. 10) his commandments and statutes, *mitsvah* and *choq* (cf. 9.6 and vs. 33 respectively). To Solomon there will be given one tribe (unspecified at this point) in order that David—yes David yet again—will have a lamp before the Lord in Jerusalem, *nyr* also as candle, this having three other biblical references. Implied is that this tribe will be present in the temple as a kind of sanctuary lamp.

In vs. 37 the Lord says to Jeroboam through the medium of Ahijah that he will reign over the ten kingdoms represented earlier by the prophet's cut up garment or more specifically, he will rule over all that his soul desires, *nepesh* (cf. 8.48) and the verb '*avah* which also means to lust after. The Lord continues to speak to Jeroboam in words he had done to Solomon, again walking in his statutes and commandments (*choq* and *mitsvah*, cf. vs. 34 for both) and, of course, with reference to David. And so observance or *shamar* (cf. vs. 34) of *choq* and *mitsvah* will result in the Lord building for Jeroboam a sure house (as with David) and giving Israel to him, '*aman* (cf. 8.26) being the participle here, to be faithful, firm.

Vs. 39 contains the last words of Ahijah's prophecy to Jeroboam, again with the conjunctive *v-*, where the Lord says that he won't afflict (*hanah*, cf. 8.35) David's descendants forever. In other words, this is the first time the Lord has modified Nathan's prophecy quoted above, a significant development. It's even more significant insofar as Jeroboam is about to bring Israel down a path of rebellion that will change everything.

As for the prophet Ahijah and Jeroboam, all this occurred on an empty stretch of road somewhere outside Jerusalem (cf. vs. 29). Now the two men parted, Ahijah not being heard again until Chapter Fourteen and Jeroboam overseeing the forced labor mentioned in vs. 28. Somehow, somewhere word leaked out about this meeting on the road and reached the ears of King Solomon. One possibility is that Jeroboam discussed the matter among his associates upon reaching those being forced to work. Once Solomon heard this plot by the king, Jeroboam fled to the refuge of Egypt and remained there until the death of Solomon.

Vss. 41-43 or through the rest of Chapter Eleven mention the death of King Solomon. It's done in a rather matter-of-fact way, offering no high praise because of his descent into darkness brought about by having a whole retinue of foreign women and more importantly, the influence of their gods upon him and through him upon Israel. In short, these gods made it all the more easier for the people to succumb to them instead of remaining faithful to the Lord. Vs. 41 is a rhetorical

question in that the reader presumably knows about what King Solomon had done, his wisdom, etc., by consulting the “acts (*davar*) of Solomon.” Then vs. 43 concludes with the simple but ominous words, “and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.”

1) ‘ahav, nakry’ 2) goy, lev, natah, ‘aken, nashal, davaq, ‘ahavah, 4) lev, shalem, 5) halak, 5) shiquts, 6) rah, male’, 7) bamah, shiquts, 9) ‘anaph, 10) shamar, 11) qarah, heved, 14) qum, satan, 16) karath, 23) qum, 25) satan, quts, 26) qum, 28) gibor, chayl, hasah, mela’kah, paqad, sevel, 29) simlah, 31) qarah, 33) hazav, halak, hasah, derek, yashar, choq, mishpat, 34) shamar, mitsvah, choq, 36) nyr, 37) nephesh, ‘avah, 38) shamar, choq, mitsvah, ‘aman, 39) hanah

Chapter Twelve

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated in the **RSV** and as it usually does, shows the close connection between events, King Solomon’s death and the tragic ascension of King Rehoboam to the throne as his successor. Furthermore, it serves to show the already mentioned slide into chaos which continues in tragic fashion until the advent of the prophet Elijah. Even then the political situation doesn’t improve but at least bottoms out for the rest of First Kings.

Rehoboam becomes king upon the death of his father King Solomon with apparent little or no fanfare. It’s as though the author of Kings wanted to put down the facts and have memory of him pass off the scene as quickly as possible. His formal installation takes place at Shechem, the chief town of the northern tribes with “all Israel” being present. Plenty of rumors must have swirled about as to Rehoboam’s identity...why Solomon picked him...and other sons didn’t fit the bill although there’s no mention of them. Given the amount of wives and concubines belonging to Solomon, you’d think a whole slew of sons would be in contention for the throne. Perhaps they were, that inconvenient fact being passed over.

Word of King Solomon’s death reached Jeroboam who had fled into Egypt to escape his clutches meaning that there was an interval between his death and the ascension of his successor. The words “then Jeroboam returned from Egypt” are an understatement; better to say that he rushed home as quickly as possible, delighted at the news and the possibility of restoring credibility to the throne...he, of course, having in mind as being the next king. Also he went as Pharaoh’s ears

and eyes to keep watch on developments. As for this verse (i.e., 2), it reads literally “he dwelt in Egypt” instead of the RSV’s “returned from Egypt.”

Vs. 3 reads “they sent and called him” (literally ‘to him’), that is, Jeroboam. This is different from vs. 2 where he got word in Egypt, so summoning him refers, for example, to him being within the borders of Israel. Jeroboam had been in charge of the forced labor of the house of Joseph (cf. 11.28). Despite his rush home and this summoning to Shekem, he must have had some fear and hesitancy because he had been a task master over the house of Joseph as noted in 11.28. In short, some among those calling him just might have revenge on their minds. It turned out that Jeroboam’s well-founded doubts dissipated, for he and the entire assembly of Israel have their attention centered upon Rehoboam. *Qahal* (cf. 8.65) is used here suggesting that this was a formal event where the people were about to bring up a matter of national as well as religious interest. Compare use of *qahal* with “all Israel” in vs. 1.

Vs. 4 has this *qahal* speaking with Rehoboam, possible Jeroboam acting as their mouthpiece, rehearsing their request and debating over how to best present the way King Solomon had exerted his rule over Israel. That is to say, they claim his rule put in terms of a yoke (already heady enough) as heavy, *qasheh* also as stubborn or heavy. Interestingly the verb “make” is absent from the original. The first words reads literally and tellingly as “your father hard our yoke.” It’s as though Solomon himself = the yoke. Chances are that Jesus had this in mind when in Mt 11.29 he calls his yoke easy and his burden light, *chrestos* and *elaphros*. The first adjective means manageable, fit or useful and the second, quick or agile.

The *qahal* continues with their request to have this lifted or lightened, *qalal* with the alternate meaning of to curse, cursing a kind of making light (cf. 2.8) of a situation or the like. The noun *havodah* means service, implying slavery. That must have been very difficult for Jeroboam to say because he had been in charge of the forced labor or *sevel* of 11.28 which connotes bearing or carrying. In this same verse the adjective *kaved* (cf. 10.2) or heavy describes the yoke imposed by King Solomon, this countering *qesheh* or hard. Should Rehoboam comply, the *qahal* will serve him readily, *havad* (cf. 9.21) being the verb from which the just mentioned *havodah* is derived. In other words, the *havad* won’t be a *havodah*.

The response to this carefully thought out proposal which seems so reasonable? Rehoboam tells the *qahal* to go away for three days and return. Just hearing this summarily delivered statement with no expression of sympathy was proof enough

of his decision. The *qahal* did go away but with a sense of disappointment and fear for the future. Jeroboam knew this would provide him with a unique chance: either usurp the throne or break away and form a new kingdom, the latter eventually being the result.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” implying that indeed Rehoboam had made up his mind. Unfortunately an alternative never was in question. Although eager to give a response without wanting to wait three days, he was bound to do so for the sake of outward appearances. However, the three days afforded him opportunity to take counsel (*yahats*, cf. 1.12) with the elders, a more or less *pro forma* way of doing things. Actually these are the same men who had advised King Solomon which brings up the question whether they advised he imposed the hard service and heavy yoke or he did so on his own. Possibly they did and had come to regret it. Regardless, this put them in an awkward position. They came off with the diplomatic response of asking Rehoboam to be a servant or *heved* to the people who serves them, *heved* and *havad* (cf. 11.11 and *havad* (cf. vs. 4). Thus we see a frequency of the verbal root *havad* and derivatives from it early on in this new chapter because work vs. slavery is of chief concern at this juncture. In addition, the elders advised Rehoboam to *davar davar* or to speak good words. In response to this proper use of *davar*, the Israelites will be his servants...his *heved*...forever or literally, “all days.” They advised this in light of hard personal experience under King Solomon, of how he had subjected his people.

The advice of the elders was, to be sure, sound and would go a long way to restoring the people’s faith in the monarchy. However, the conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 8 translated as “but” may be taken as the decisive point in that Rehoboam forsook the elders’ counsel, *hazav* (cf. 11.33) suggesting abandonment of it. Perhaps he didn’t inform them outrightly in order to maintain appearances but simply dismissed them, they knowing full well his decision. Without missing a beat, Rehoboam sought the advice of those young men with whom he had been raised, some of whom may have been his brothers as a result of King Solomon’s relationship with so many wives. Already they had been corrupted, that is, they had gone over to the false gods of their mothers and were primed to agree with their master who similarly had been corrupted. Note the difference between these young men and the elders. The former “stood before him” whereas the latter “”had stood before Solomon.” Implied is that the young men were ready and eager to follow Rehoboam whereas the elders, by reason of their association with King Solomon, were not...all this even before both groups uttered a word of advice.

The young men advised Rehoboam with the dramatic comparison of his finger being thicker than his father's loins as well as beating the people with scorpions in place of whips. A lot of anger and resentment went into this advice which simply mirrored the state of Rehoboam's mind. In fact, even when he was speaking with the elders he was planning, if you will, to beat both them and the people with scorpions. So from Solomon's long, drawn-out association with foreign women and their gods this is what Israel is destined to inherit, all, of course, to the chagrin of the elders who had to mediate between the people and their king as best as humanly possible.

Vs. 12 speaks of the eventful day...the third day...when "all the people" (cf. vs. 1; i.e., *qahal* not used) assembled to meet Rehoboam. Then in vs. 13 which begins with the conjunctive *v-* he answered harshly or *qasheh*, the same word as in vs. 4, "heavy." Even before he spoke the people could perceive this *qasheh* on his face. Clearly Rehoboam had rejected the elders' counsel, *hazav* used again as in vs. 8 and proceeded to speak in accord with what the young men had advised. Chances are some of them were present, standing in the background and even armed in case a riot ensued. Also some of the elders must have been present, being embarrassed by this charade in that it reminded them of when they had advised King Solomon to adopt a harsh rule such as forced labor, etc.

After having communicated his decision using the example of whips and scorpions as means to govern the people, surely Rehoboam anticipated a strong if not violent response. That's why vs. 15 says that he didn't hear the people but simply walked away accompanied by his young men. *Sabah* (only found here in the Bible) is the word for "turn of events," It derives from the verbal root *savav* meaning to turn around which literally is "from the Lord" and reflects a similar *sabah* of Rehoboam from the people and the people from Rehoboam. It's to fulfill the *davar* which the Lord had *davar*, *qum* (cf. 11.26) being the verb which fundamentally means to rise. One way of looking at it is that the *sabah* is rising from the Lord and results in a *davar*. Vs. 15 refers this *davar* to Ahijah as recounted in 11.31-39 when he prophesied to Jeroboam who interestingly isn't mentioned at this critical meeting.

In vs. 16 the people first see and then hear (*rahaḥ* and *shamah*, cf. 10.4 and 10.6 respectively) before giving their response: seeing in the sense of grasping the gravity of the situation and hearing that Rehoboam spurned them. Next follows a kind of rhetorical question the people exclaimed both among themselves as well as

in the presence of King Rehoboam. We don't have his response, but up to this point he must have thought the people to be compliant to his outrageous proposal, not realizing the violence and determination manifest in their words. The people exclaimed that they have no portion in David, *cheleq* also as a lot. The same goes for inheritance or *nachalah* (cf. 8.53).

After this declaration of rebellion someone—and it could be Jeroboam—shouts out that everyone must go to their own tents and abandon the house of David. Note the contrast between *'ohel* and *bayth* or tents and house (cf. 8.65 and 10.12 respectively). The former suggests impermanence and the latter, stability, this reflective of what is happening to the kingdom being fractured before everyone's eyes. Vs. 16 concludes with the fact that “Israel departed to their tents.” A similar situation happened with the disaffected tribe of Benjamin: “We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel” [2Sam 20.1]!

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 17 translates as “but” as applied to Rehoboam ruling over Israel—distinct from Israel which went to their own tents—who lived in the cities of Judah. These are places as opposed to the transitory nature of tents (reference to people of the northern tribes who had settled in Judah). And so everyone wasn't onboard with the rebellion, some loyal to King Rehoboam and by that, to his father Solomon and David before him. Others perhaps decided simply to wait things out and see if the nation would indeed go the route of division as well as how long Rehoboam would last.

The new king's next move was to implement his promise put in turns of whips and scorpions, that is to say, he sends a very disliked fellow by the name of Adoram. He's a taskmaster of the forced labor, *mas* being the word for both (cf. 9.21). This implies the forced labor that had been in place since Solomon's time, Jeroboam fulfilling that role as noted in 11.28. However, as soon as Adoram showed his face, “all Israel” stoned him, the verb *ragam* intensified by the preposition *b-* or “in him” with added mention of stones...i.e., they stoned him with stones. Then by way of footnote we have “and he died,” words which make sure the deed was carried out. Also the rapid-fire use of the conjunctive *v-* which occurs three times in vs. 18 reveals the suddenness and fury that was unleashed against a despised agent of the king.

This stoning took place at Shekem, and once King Rehoboam got word of it, he fled to Jerusalem. *'Amats* is the verb as used in conjunction with a chariot to show

how dire things had become and more so, his fear and inability to confront the growing rebellion. This is noted in vs. 19 with the verb *pashah* meaning to fall away or to transgress. As for the rebellion, it's still going on when First Kings was written: "to this day." Clearly Rehoboam had made the biggest miscalculation of his life and was now beginning to pay for it though in the end it didn't cause him his life. The response to his flight is that "all Israel" summoned Jeroboam to the assembly, *hedah* (cf. 8.5) implying the giving of testimony compared with the more sacred nature of *qahal*. The phrase "all Israel" is used a second time in this verse pretty much for emphasis compared with Rehoboam as king over Judah and Benjamin. As for the latter, the **RSV** notes that its "inclusion is editorial to support the idea that there were exactly ten tribes in the north and two in the south."

With the prospect of civil war threatening to spread out of control and Rehoboam having assembled an army, in vs. 22 the *davar* of the Lord came to Shemaiah. He comes on the scene for a brief moment and disappears suddenly. Despite his obscurity, he's called a "man of God" chiefly responsible for preventing civil war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. This is stated clearly in vs. 24 where Shemaiah tells everyone to go home because kinsmen fighting kinsmen is so terrible and will weaken Israel. He puts it simply and expressively as "this thing is from me." This *davar* of peace is what the Lord wants, not the *pashah* of vs. 19. People on both sides were disposed to hear the *davar* of the Lord, complied and returned home which vs. 24 is careful to put as "according to the *davar* of the Lord."

Despite a tentative peace having been put in place, vs. 25 through the rest of the chapter puts in motion a series of events where Jeroboam leads the people into an apostasy worse than his former employer, King Solomon. Throughout his years of service to the king he must have fallen prey to false gods not all at once but little by little. Then one day he woke up and was fully converted to that cause, having the support of Solomon's multitude of wives and concubines.

The very first act of Jeroboam was to built Shechem with the intent of dwelling there as well as constructing Peniel, the former first mentioned in vs. 1 and the latter (with an ironical twist) first mentioned in Gn 32.30: "So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel saying 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.'" At this juncture nothing is said of his intent with regard to these two places. However, vs. 26 reveals what's really on Jeroboam's mind when utters aloud what was in his heart (*lev*, cf. 11.4) after these two projects were complete. That is to say, he fears the people will get tired and return to offering sacrifices in

the Lord's house at Jerusalem...Jerusalem under the control of Rehoboam despite his threat to use whips and scorpions which, of course, he did carry out. Jeroboam does acknowledge the very real threat—and essentially this was his real motive—that the people will kill him.

Now what had laid dormant comes to light in vs. 28 where Jeroboam pretty much follows the example of Aaron in Ex 32+ by making two calves of gold. Note that before doing this he got some advice (*yahats*, cf. vs. 6). Could this be from the former wives and concubines of King Solomon in whose employment he had been? After all, they numbered in the hundreds (cf. 11.3), and some...even a handful...must have swayed Jeroboam. He proclaimed that the people have been going to Jerusalem long enough to offer sacrifices, many being fleeced by the temple priests. Now with one golden calf in Bethel and the other in Dan, there was no need to put up with such abuse.

Everyone knew the story of Eli's two sons who had “no regard for the Lord” [1Sam 2.12] and abused their priesthood. Chances are erection of the two calves were well received by many. After all, Gibeon was a “great high place” already in operation as noted in 3.4. To rival, even flaunt, the most basic tenet of Israel's faith, Jeroboam exclaimed in vs. 28, “Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up of the land of Egypt.” Such words are literally a copy of Ex 32.4 in reference to the above noted golden calf fashioned by Aaron: “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”

Vs. 30 says in a matter-of-fact way that this thing or this *davar* which, of course, is an utterance, which became a sin or *chata'th* (cf. 8.35) by reason of the people frequenting both calves or one in Bethel and the other in Dan. As for Bethel which translates as “House of God,” it's the first place where Abram had built an altar (cf. Gn 12.8), so to have it defiled is an especially egregious sin. Then again, most people didn't care. They were engrossed with the more elaborate, even spectacular forms of worship which they had craved. Now this was unleashed and given full reign. Rehoboam also did the following which were considered abominations:

- 1) He appointed priests who weren't Levites to become stationed at such places of worship.
- 2) Appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month to offer sacrifices.
- 3) Appointed priests in Bethel.
- 4) He took it upon himself to offer sacrifices in Bethel on a specific date.

5) Ordained a feast or *chag* (cf. 8.65) for the people and on it burned incense.

The concluding words of vs. 33 sum up the apostasy now given official approval. With regard to an altar in Bethel, Rehoboam “devised alone” a month of his choosing, *bada’* being the verb also meaning to feign. Such arrogance is amplified by the phrase “in his heart or *lev* (cf. vs. 26). Neh 6.8 has the only other biblical reference to this verb, so it’s quoted here: “No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind.”

3) qahal, 4) qasheh, qalal, havodah, kaved, havad, 6) yahats, 7) heved, havad, heved, 8) hazav, 13) qasheh, hazav, 15) sabah, qum, 16) rahah, shamah, cheleq, nachalah, ‘ohel, bayth, 18) mas, ragam, ‘amats, 19) pashah, 20) hedah, 26) lev, 28) yahats, 30) chata’th, 33) chag, lev, bada’