

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Kings, Lecture 7

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Solomon – Back to Egypt, Heart turns Idolatry

F. 1. Peace with a Flaw

2. The Turning Point -- 1 Kings 9:26-10:25

3. Back to Egypt – 1 Kings 10:26-29

We're still under "F." We've looked at "Peace with a Flaw," 1 Kings 9:10, to 2 and "The Turning Point," 9:26-10:25. Let's go on to "3" under "F." which I will call "Back to Egypt."

Alright, chapter 10: 26-29 is our next section. We read there "Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had 1400 chariots, 12,000 horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue--the royal merchants purchased them from Kue. They imported a chariot from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver and a horse for 150. They also exported them to the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans."

Now it seems that what's going on here is that Solomon is a middle-man in the trade of chariots and horses. He bought the horses at 150 shekels a horse, but I think there's more going on here than just a business arrangement. What Solomon's actual doing is profiting from what today you might call the international sale of weapons and armaments. These were military armaments-- the chariots of that time were the tanks of today. They were military implements. Solomon was supposed to be a king of peace but he's involved in this trading of chariots and horses. In Deuteronomy 17 it says that the king is not to acquire great numbers of horses for himself, or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them. That's verse 16: "A king must not acquire great numbers of horses for

himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, ‘You are not to go back that way again.’”

Solomon not only is involved in this trade of horses, but you’ll notice in verse 26 he accumulated horses and chariots for himself; he had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horses. I think you can understand his reasoning. The neighboring nations around Israel had significant numbers of chariots and horses, and Solomon apparently wanted to have horses equivalent to what the neighboring nations had. But I think you have to put that into biblical perspective. If you go back to the time of the Exodus, you’ll remember the Egyptians pursued Israel with chariots and horses. Israelites didn’t have any, so they were very fearful, of course. But we know what happened; the Egyptian army was destroyed in spite of the fact that the Israelites were helpless from a strictly military standpoint. The Lord intervened. We discussed earlier that during the conquest, Israel came against armies that had great numbers of chariots and horses.

If you look at Joshua 11, you read in verse 4 of this coalition of kings, headed by Jabin King of Hazor who came out against Joshua with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots, a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. But again, the Lord gave those kings into the hands of Israel, even though Israel didn’t have any chariots and horses. If you read down later in the chapter, what the Israelites carried off for themselves, that’s verse 14: “All the plunder and livestock of these cities and all the people they put to the sword until they completely destroyed them.” I think I mentioned to you before, in the context of this chapter, the Lord on that occasion gave instruction to Joshua, verse 6: “Do not be afraid of them because by this time tomorrow I will hand them over to Israel. You are to hamstring their horses and to burn their chariots.” It’s a direct command. The Lord did not want the Israelites at that point to take these chariots and these horses and to integrate them into their own military force. Now, by human standards, I think you might say that’s foolish, but that’s what the Lord commanded.

Trusting the Lord is the Real Issue: Strength in Weakness

It seems to me that behind that is the concern that Israel trust in the Lord rather than in a military force and their own strength and their own might. If Israel builds an army equal to the armies of all the peoples around them, inevitably there's going to be a shift and they'll come to put their trust for their security in military might rather than in the Lord. And I think the point is the Lord didn't want them to do that. He wanted the people to trust exclusively in him. So Israel wasn't to build a military establishment. In comparison with the peoples around them, they were to remain weak, precisely so they would put their trust in the Lord.

Again, I think in that idea you have a principle that sort of runs through all of Scripture. You find it there in this Old Testament context, but Paul spoke to the same principle in 2 Corinthians 12:10. He says, "When I am weak, then I am strong." And I think the point is, when we have nothing on which we can fall back on and put our trust in other than the Lord, it's at that exact point that God's power becomes evident. It's when we are in that kind of situation that we live depending on God's love and grace, rather than on our own resources, our own whatever. But as we look to our own resources and put our dependence in them, then God's power becomes hidden and becomes unimportant to us. So that principle takes on a lot of forms, a lot of variations. You find in Scripture that God normally chooses to use what is helpless and weak, and so doing to confound that which is strong and mighty.

But to get back to the context here, Israel was to be different from the other nations. She wasn't to build a military force; she was to remain in a relationship of complete trust in the Lord for her security, and the Lord guaranteed that security as long as they were obedient and faithful.

Horses and Chariots in Scripture

It seems that Israel took that command to heart for a long time. If you look

in Judges chapter 4, you have another reference to chariots. Judges 4:3, Sisera the Canaanite came against Israel, and you read in verse 3: “He had 900 iron chariots and cruelly oppressed the Israelites for 20 years. And they cried to the Lord for help.”

Israel had to go against Sisera who had these 900 chariots with only foot soldiers. Yet the Lord says in verse 7, “I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give them into your hands.” If you read through the narrative, that is exactly what happens. And you read in verses 14 and following: “Deborah said to Barak ‘Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?’ So Barak went down to Mount Tabor followed by 10,000 men. At Barak’s advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim. All the troops of Sisera fell by the sword; not a man was left.”

If you go a bit further when the kingship is established, there’s no record that Saul had any chariots. David was confronted with horses and chariots. You read in 2 Samuel 8:3, 4, David fought Hadadezer son of Rehob king of Zobah when he went to restore his control along the Euphrates River. David captured a thousand of his chariots, 700 charioteers, 20,000 foot soldiers. He hamstringed all but a hundred of the chariot horses. So David also didn’t have any comparable counterforce, but he trusted the Lord, and the Lord gave him victory. Then, for the most part, he destroyed all those chariots and the horses. He saved a hundred of them.

Psalm 20 says something to us about the way in which David viewed these things. In Psalm 20 the people address the king and sort of add their prayers to the king’s prayer for victory. And you read in verse 7 where the king is speaking, which undoubtedly is David, he says: “Some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They are brought to their knees in full,

but we rise up and stand firm.” So David hamstringed all but a few of those horses and, presumably, he destroyed the chariots, just as Joshua had.

So it wouldn't seem that David came into conflict with that Deuteronomic law of the king concerning multiplying horses. His force was nothing comparable to what surrounding nations had, but things are changed here. Solomon has 1400 chariots and 12,000 horses. It's really comparable to surrounding nations from what is known of armies of that time. So I think for Solomon this principle is no longer “When I am weak, then I am strong.” He's acting on a different principle, and the principle is if I have a big enough military force, then I'm strong. So I think Solomon takes on one of the characteristics of a worldly king. Again, that's behavior that's the opposite of what a true covenantal king should have.

Solomon reflects a pattern here that continues with all the kings that, for the most part, follow him. So if you look at Isaiah chapter 2, Isaiah says in verse 7 and following: “Their land is full of silver and gold; there's no end to their treasures. Their land is full of horses; there is no end to their chariots. Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the works of their hands, to what their fingers have made. So man will be brought low and mankind humbled; do not forgive them.” And there again it's interesting you see what Isaiah mentions there: silver and gold, horses and chariots, and idols. These are the very things again that are reflected in that law of the king back in Deuteronomy 17 that were things that Israel should turn away from. But Solomon sought to increase wealth, establish a strong military force, and eventually he, too, turned to idols.

G. Conclusions – 1 Kings 11

1. Solomon's Defection from God: Heart Turned Away

Okay, let's go onto “G,” which is “Conclusions”; that's chapter 11. I have two sub-points that are on your sheet there. One is Solomon's defection from God, verses 1 to 13. Seeing how Solomon violated two of the prohibitions in the law of the king in Deuteronomy 17--multiplying horses and multiplying wealth--and

when you get to chapter 11, it's quite clear he violated the third one also--not to multiply wives. So if you read, "Solomon loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter: Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. These were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites 'You must not intermarry with them because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had 700 wives of noble birth, 300 concubines, and his wives led him astray."

That's a large harem, to put it mildly. But again, what you see is his kingship is conforming with the pattern and practices of other Ancient Near Eastern courts. It seems that for the most part these women were foreign women, probably many of them being brought into Solomon's harem in connection with political alliances. But it seems there were also Canaanites because it says, "They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites 'You must not intermarry.'" That was the Canaanites, if you go back to the Pentateuch. He violated that. And in verse 2b it says, "Solomon held fast to them in love." So it seems that there's more than just a political or economic arrangement here. It's striking how many times in verses 2 to 4, the term "heart" is used--it's five times. The Lord says, "They will surely turn your hearts after their gods," and verse 3: "He had seven hundred wives of royal birth, three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of David his father had been." That expression at the end of verse 3, "His wives led him astray," literally in the Hebrew that is "His wives turned his heart away." It doesn't come out in the NIV translation. The New King James has, "Turned his heart away." But you see "heart" five times there in those few verses.

The heart is the center, or core, of our being. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well-spring of life." In other words, what is decided in the heart works itself out in life. When a person's heart is right, the life will reflect that. But when something turns the heart astray, then that's going to

also be reflected in the life; and I think that's what happened to Solomon. The failure began with the heart. In other words, these wives began to influence his thinking and his inner person. Under their influence, he began to follow their heathen deities and to build altars for them.

As you go further, and you read verse 5, "He followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely as David his father had done." He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods." So he began to build these altars for the heathen deities. You don't read explicitly that Solomon himself brought sacrifices on those altars, but what he did, I think, was serious enough. He gave heathen worship a legitimate place in the vicinity of the temple, east of Jerusalem, and that's a direct violation of the covenantal commandments that said that all heathen altars in the land should be destroyed. Instead of destroying them, he provides for their construction.

At that point you see that there's been a radical change in Solomon's life from his earlier days. Verse 9 says, "The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice." His heart had turned away from the Lord God of Israel.

Verse 4 says, "His heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been." It's interesting that the Hebrew term there, "his heart was not fully devoted," for those of you who have had some Hebrew, it's *shalem*, that's the same root as "shalom," and the same root as Solomon's name. The basic root word is the word *shalem*. Well, I don't know if it's deliberate, but I think the point is the root means to be complete, sound, or wholesome, harmonious. It has the idea of absence of strife.

Certainly, early on in Solomon's kingdom, his kingdom reflected peace in the sense of absence of strife, wholeness, soundness, completeness. So you might say Solomon's name, which is related to that root word, represents his mission, or

his task, to bring those conditions about of wholeness and absence of strife. He was to rule in a way that would create wholesome conditions, a kingdom of peace; but now his heart is no longer wholesome itself, *shalem*; it's not fully devoted to the Lord, so harmony and peace in his heart have disappeared. And I think that there, when that division enters his heart, it works itself out and brings division and discord in the kingdom as well.

God's Warning – 1 Kings 9:4

Again, that's not something that happens overnight, it didn't happen suddenly, it was a process. One thing led to another. The Lord had appeared to Solomon (we can look at that passage in chapter 9) and warned him. Notice 9:4: "If you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, I will establish your throne forever as I promised David; but if you turn astray, then I'll cut Israel off from the land," and so forth. He'd been warned about that, but it fell on deaf ears.

So that when you go back to chapter 11 and look at verse 11: "The Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.'" The Lord said, "You have not kept my covenant and my decrees." That's quite explicit. Solomon fell short of being a true covenantal king. You see that after he married these many women, his heart was led astray, and then he provided for the worship of heathen deities.

2. Solomon's Adversaries – 1 Kings 11:14-25

That brings us to number "2" under this conclusion, and that's "Solomon's Adversaries, verses 14 to 25, chapter 11." In this section you get a signal given of the Lord's displeasure with Solomon, and that signal is in the activities of these adversaries. The first one is Hadad the Edomite, verse 14: "Then the LORD raised

up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom.” We read of this man that during the time of David, he had fled from Edom and taken refuge in Egypt and married, in fact, into the family of the Egyptian pharaoh. At this point he has returned from Egypt to Edom and he wants revenge on Israel because David had subdued the Edomites. That was one adversary, then, that the Lord raised up against Solomon as a signal of his displeasure.

The second one is Rezon son of Eliada, which you read of in 1 Kings 11, verse 23: “And God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah.” And he took control of Damascus, and you read in verse 25 that Rezon was Israel’s adversary as long as Solomon lived. Now Damascus is, of course, to the north. Edom’s sort of to the south-east. So on two fronts, you might say, Solomon had adversaries. Damascus, where Rezon was, remained an adversary of Israel throughout history, it was always a source of struggle. It remains that today. Damascus and Israel are still at odds. Now, I think the rise of those two opponents in Solomon’s times indicates that all is not well in Israel.

The principle is that when Solomon makes room for idols, then the Lord makes room, you might say, for Israel’s enemies to begin to put pressure on Israel. He uses them, as it were, against his own people. You find that consistently throughout Israel’s history where the Lord will use a heathen nation to bring judgment on his own people. Later he uses the Babylonians and the Assyrians.

Rising of the Messianic Ideal King

Okay, I think we’ll stop at that point. That brings us to the end of Solomon’s kingdom. I’ve spent a fair amount of time on Solomon because I think Solomon’s kingdom really sets the stage for all the followers in the books of Kings. You see from Solomon that even though God has given his promise to David of an eternal dynasty, and there were great expectations for Solomon, that Solomon was unable to live up to that ideal of that covenantal king and that there

are flaws in his kingdom. Those things will become more pronounced and more serious, and it's almost inevitable, you could say, that the covenant judgments of the book of Deuteronomy are going to be realized. Then as that trend sets in, it's in that context that the Messianic ideal of the true covenantal king rises, particularly among the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, and others of the prophets. They cause Israel not to look to these human, earthly rulers so much, but to look ultimately to the time in which God himself will come and sit on the throne of David, as the son of David, and establish that kingdom.

Okay, let's stop here. We'll go on to Roman II next week, and I hope we can get down to the dynasty of Omri and Ahab next week, but we'll have to see how it goes.

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