

FAITH LESSONS
On the Prophets and Kings of Israel
(vol 2)

Innocent Blood (1/5)

The great north-south roadway is the via Maris (the way of the sea). The eastern empires of Mesopotamia and Egypt must pass through this way on the plain of Jezreal – it is guarded by Megiddo (Armageddon). It constitutes control of the world!

More battles have been fought here than anywhere else in the world known to history.

1King 9 – Solomon's power and glory spread from here ... he asked for wisdom and God gave him both wisdom and greatness ... his kingdom stretched as Solomon fortified Megiddo, Gezer, and Katsur.

King **Solomon** (Hebrew: **שְׁלֹמֹה**, Standard *Šelomo* or *Šlomo* Tiberian *Šəlōmōh*; Arabic: سليمان, *Sulayman*; all essentially meaning "peace") is a figure described in Middle Eastern scriptures as a wise ruler of an empire centred on the united Kingdom of Israel. Legends say he was born in Jerusalem about 1000 BCE and reigned over Israel from about 970 to 928 BCE.

The scriptural accounts identify Solomon as the son of David. He is also called *Jedidiah* in the Tanakh (Old Testament), and is described as the third king of the *United Monarchy*, and the final king before the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah split; following the split his patrilineal descendants ruled over Judah alone.

The Bible accredits Solomon as the builder of the First Temple in Jerusalem. The Bible portrays Solomon as great in wisdom, wealth, and power. Solomon is the subject of many other later legends.

Evidence of a historical figure comparable to Solomon, independent of religious accounts, is scarce. The period of his rule was a period recognised as a "Dark Age" - a period in which centralised Empires of the Late Bronze Age had collapsed, and the new Iron Age monarchies had yet to grow. Archaeological excavations at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer have uncovered structures that some attribute to the reign of Solomon based on Biblical accounts. These structures, however, are now generally dated to the Omride period, more than a century past Solomon's reign. Excavations on such sites are ongoing. So far nothing indisputably of Solomon's reign has yet been found.

The association of Solomon with the city of Jerusalem may have preceded this period. The name Jerusalem, attested since the time of Ebla, 2350 BCE, by some etymologies means "The City of Solomon" (=Uru Sholom/Shalim).

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The name Solomon, in Hebrew *Shlomo* (Gurdoup) roughly translates to “peaceful,” “complete” or “prosperous,” from the Hebrew *shalom*. The name given by God to Solomon in the Bible is Jedidiah, meaning “friend of God” or, more precisely “beloved of Yah” (variant form of “Yahweh”), (2 Samuel 12:25).

God made Solomon rich by giving him control of the trade route ... and the world. This is the scene of the battle between good and evil (Revelation). Mount Megiddo ... Har Megiddo ... harmageddon ... Armageddon.

Examples of Megiddo in today’s culture:
NYC, DC, Family, Politics, Hollywood, Wall Street

As Christians, we stand here today to say a battle rages. Not a battle where history will end, but a battle between good and evil ...

Where do we stand?

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Who is God? (2/5)

Who were the prophets? Spoke to people—people unwilling to like the lifestyle God called them to—to bring them back to God's way.

Mount Carmel (God's vineyard)

Three characters (Israel divided at Solomon's death):

850BC – Omri (king of 10 tribes) established new capitol at Samaria

Omri (Hebrew: עֹמְרִי, Standard 'Omri Tiberian 'Omri; short for Hebrew: עֹמְרִיָּה, Standard 'Omriyya Tiberian 'Omriyyāh ; "The LORD is my life") was king of Israel and father of Ahab. William F. Albright has dated his reign to 876–869 BC, while E. R. Thiele offers the dates 885–874 BC. He was "commander of the army" for Elah when Zimri slew Elah and made himself king. The troops at Gibbethon chose instead to elect Omri as king, and he led them to Tirzah where they trapped Zimri in the royal palace, and where Zimri died (*1 Kings* 16:15-19).

Although Zimri was eliminated, "half of the people" supported Tibni in opposition to Omri. It took Omri some years to subdue Tibni and at last proclaim himself undisputed king of Israel in the 31st year of Asa, king of Judah (*1 Kings* 16:21-23).

Because Omri was not a devout follower of God, the writer of the *Book of Kings* minimized his accomplishments. While the writer acknowledges Omri built his new capital Samaria on a hill he bought from Shemer (16:24), he omits any mention of the widespread public construction both Omri and his son Ahab commissioned during their reigns. Israel Finkelstein and his student Norma Franklin have identified monumental construction at Samaria, Jezreel, Megiddo and Hazor similar in design and build, including twelve sets of mason marks shared between the archaeological sites.

Omri's rule over Israel was secure enough that he could bequeath his kingdom to Ahab, thus beginning a new dynasty (sometimes called the **Omrides**), and his descendants not only ruled over the kingdom of Israel for the next forty years, but also briefly over Judah.

1Kings – Omri reigned in Samaria 22 years ... he did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any previous king (married Jezebel, worshipped Baal, provoked God to anger, took 10 tribes away from God's way).

Enter first great prophet – Elijah (YHWH is God).

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Elijah (Hebrew: אליהו, *Eliyahu* ; also known as **Elias**) was a prophet in Israel in the 9th century BC. He appears in the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, Mishnah, Christian Bible, and the Qur'an. According to the Books of Kings, Elijah raised the dead, brought fire down from the sky, and ascended into heaven on a whirlwind. In many parts of the New Testament, both Jesus and John the Baptist are frequently thought to be Elijah. Based on a prophecy in Malachi, many Jews still await his return as precursor to the coming of the Messiah.

Elijah is introduced in 1st Kings 17:1 as Elijah "The Tishbite." He gives a warning to Ahab, king of Israel, that there will be 3 and a half years of drought, a drought so severe that not even dew will fall. This catastrophe will come because Ahab and his queen--Jezebel--stand at the end of a line of kings of Israel who are said to have "done evil in the sight of the Lord." In particular, Ahab and Jezebel had encouraged the worship of Baal and killed the prophets of the Lord. There will be no rain except at my word (Baal is their god of rain!).

In what is a characteristic of Elijah, his challenge is bold and direct. Baal was the local nature deity responsible for rain, thunder, lightning, and dew. Elijah not only challenges Baal on behalf of the God of Israel, he challenges Jezebel, her priests, Ahab, and the people of Israel.

The strategic situation in Israel

By the 9th century BC, the united kingdom of David and Solomon had broken up into northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) kingdoms. With the Temple in Jerusalem, Judah had both the seat of government and the focus of religion within its borders; Israel did not have this advantage. It was in this situation that Omri became king of Israel.

As a purely practical matter, Omri had to take steps to contain both government and religion within the borders of Israel, lest the loyalties of his subjects be divided between Israel and Judah. The task of centralising the government had a relatively straightforward solution: Omri built a new capital at Samaria on a hill 300 feet above the countryside. The religious problem posed more of a challenge, as the requirements of Temple worship were firmly focused on Solomon's Temple.

To break Israel's religion away from the control of the priests of the Temple in Judah, three solutions were pursued. The first was to encourage the building of temples (altars where sacrifices could be offered) at local sites within the borders of Israel. Secondly, priests were appointed from outside the family of the Levites. And finally, temples dedicated to the Canaanite god, Baal, were alternately allowed and encouraged. All three solutions were contrary to the laws of Moses, and were guaranteed to bring the wrath of the prophets of the God of Israel.

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When Ahab confronts Elijah, he refers to him as the "troubler of Israel." Elijah responds by throwing the charge back at Ahab, saying that it is Ahab who has troubled Israel by allowing the worship of false gods. Elijah then berates both the people of Israel and Ahab for their acquiescence in Baal worship. "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal then follow him" (1st Kings 18:21). And, the people were silent.

At this point Elijah proposes a test of the powers of Baal and the God of Israel. The people of Israel, 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Asherah are summoned to Mount Carmel. Two altars are built, one for Baal and one for the God of Israel. Wood is laid on the altars. Two oxen are slaughtered and cut into pieces; the pieces are laid on the wood. Elijah then invites the priests of Baal to pray for fire to light the sacrifice. They pray from morning to noon without success. Elijah ridicules their efforts. They respond by cutting themselves and adding their own blood to the sacrifice. They continue praying until evening without success.

Elijah now orders that the altar of the God of Israel, and its sacrifice, be drenched with water (twelve barrels of water). He asks God to accept the sacrifice. Fire falls from the sky, igniting the sacrifice. The people who witness this immediately begin worshiping the God of Israel, saying the Lord He is God!. Translated ... Elijah! Elijah seizes the moment and orders the death of the prophets of Baal. This episode ends with the return of rains to Israel, signaling the end of the famine. Neither Ahab, Jezebel, nor the people of Israel are persuaded.

- FL: We have access to the same power/relationship that Elijah shared with God!

Do we want people to watch us to see God!!? If others want to know what God is like, they should be able to see Him in us.

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Wages of Sin (3/5)

When a culture violates the standards revealed in God's word, the results can be disastrous.

920B – northern 10 tribes = Israel, southern 2 tribes = Judah

2 Kings 17 – the people of Israel would not listen

722BC – Assyria decimated northern 10 tribes—they disappeared from history!

Hezekiah reigns Judah. He acted upon his faith.

Hezekiah (or **Ezekias**) (Hebrew: חזקיהו or חזקיה, "the LORD has strengthened") was the 13th king of independent Judah and the son of King Ahaz and Abijah (2 Chronicles 29:1), who was a daughter of a man (who was not the prophet) named Zechariah. (Abijah was also known as Abi (2 Kings 18:1-2).) He reigned twenty-nine years (2 Kings 18:2). He is also one of the kings mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.

Scholar have dated his reign to 715 BCE-687 BCE. Hezekiah ruled the southern kingdom of Judah during the conquest and forced resettlement of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyrians. Judah absorbed many refugees from the northern kingdom during Hezekiah's reign, about a hundred years before the destruction of Solomon's Temple by Nebuchadrezzar's Babylonians.

The account of this king in the Hebrew Bible is contained in *2 Kings* 18-20, *Isaiah* 36-39, and *2 Chronicles* 29-32. These sources portray him as a great and good king, following the example of his great-grandfather Uzziah. He introduced religious reform, reinstated religious traditions. He set himself to abolish idolatry from his kingdom, and among other things which he did for this end, he destroyed the "brazen serpent" (bronze snake Moses had made?), which had been relocated at Jerusalem, and had become an object of idolatrous worship. A great reformation was wrought in the kingdom of Judah in his day (*2 Kings* 18:4; *2 Chronicles* 29:3-36). The author of *2 Kings* ends his account of Hezekiah with praise (18:5).

King Hezekiah introduced substantial religious reforms during his reign. They included the following:

- Hezekiah concentrated worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem, suppressing the shrines to him that had existed till then elsewhere in Judea (*2 Kings* 18:22).
- He abolished idol worship which had resumed under his father's reign. He abolished the shrines and smashed the pillars and cut down the

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sacred post. He also broke into pieces the bronze serpent which Moses had made, for until that time the Israelites had been offering sacrifices to it "(2 Kings 18:4).

- He resumed the Passover pilgrimage and the tradition of inviting the scattered tribes of Israel to take part in a Passover festival (2Chronicles 30:5, 10, 13, 26).
- FL: We need to be prepared. Beyond that, our devotion to God is at the heart of being effective—there's no ay anyone/anything can end what God is doing.

“Deliver us ... so that ... all the world will know that you alone are God.”

Prophet Isaiah – by the way he came, he shall leave.

Isaiah (Hebrew: **יְשַׁעְיָהוּ**, Standard *Yəša 'yáhu* Tiberian *Yəša 'ăyāhû* ; Greek: **Ἰσαΐας**, *Ēsaiās* ; Arabic: **إسعي اشع**, *Ash-ee-yaa* ; "Salvation of/is the LORD") is the main figure in the Biblical Book of Isaiah, and is commonly considered to be its author.

Isaiah was born in the 8th century BC to a man named Amoz. He married a woman known as "the prophetess" (8:3). Isaiah had by her two sons, who bore symbolic names (Isa. 8:18) - Shear-jashub, 'Remnant will return' or '[Only] a remnant will return' (7:3) and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, 'To speed the spoil he hasteneth thy prey' (8:1-4).

He exercised the functions of his office during the reigns of Uzziah (or Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1), the kings of Judah.

- FL: some things try the patience of God to the point there is no escape from His judgment ... when this occurs, the entire culture is put asunder. Not one of us will be spared when a culture disintegrates.

When a culture fails, and God judges the culture, all of us are destroyed ... BUT ... not necessarily condemned. Each of us faces God individually even if we die a horrid death with our culture.

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The Lord is My Shepherd (4/5)

Israelites were a desert people. Desert = wilderness.

Neger = south = dry.

Psalms 23 – goats divide a flock and sheep will run from a stranger. Jesus is the chief shepherd. “Follow me.” The disciples recognize His voice – as one of his sheep, they would consider nothing else.

God’s battle plan:

Give yourself to others in love and meekness.

Shepherd finds enough grass to fill my mouth right now—not going to get tomorrow’s green pastures until tomorrow—give us this day our daily bread.

Quiet water = peaceful. God says to follow Him and he will show us the quiet water. ... a tree (e.g., Icatia trees in the wadi) planted by the still waters (Psalms).

What is worry? To think of tomorrow without tomorrow’s pasture.

Are your roots in the still water?

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God With Us (5/5)

586BC – Babylon destroyed Jerusalem.

Temple = worship place
Priest court
God's home

Covenant – I (the senior party) will give my life if EITHER of us breaks this covenant!

Think of Jesus' mission – if this covenant is ever broken by me or you, it is my blood that must be shed.

God's old covenant is not the 10 commandments; instead, it is the first five books of the Bible.

10 commandments = God's statement = I love you.

- FL: The way the pressure of God is brought to our culture is through us.

Moses' two tablets (commandments) do not represent a division of the commandments in any way; instead, it is two copies of God's law (Moses' copy and God's copy!) ... covenants were copied and both parties put their copy in a sacred place ... turns out God's sacred place and Moses' sacred place are the same place!

We are god's sacred temple