



DISCOVERING THE BIBLE & OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGES

Learning about the histories of Bibles, beliefs, movements, institutions, events, and leaders of our Judeo-Christian Biblical Heritages.

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What Really Happened at YAHWEH's House?

By Jim Myers

According to I Kings, 480 years after the Israelites came out of Egypt King Solomon began building **The House of YAHWEH** (The First Temple). ^{1 Kings 6:1} This is what YAHWEH said to Solomon about His house:

As for this house you are building, **if you** follow My statutes, observe My judgments and keep all My commands and obey them, **I will** fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And **I will** live among the Israelites and will not abandon My people Israel. ^{1 Kings 6:11-13}

Seven years later, **The House of YAHWEH** was finished ^{1 Kings 6:38} -- it was 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high. ^{1 Kings 6:2} Solomon immediately began his next project, building his palace. It would take thirteen years to build. It was 100 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and 30 cubits high. ^{1 Kings 7:1-2} It took Solomon twenty years to complete both two buildings. Solomon summoned the elders of Israel, the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families to come to Jerusalem. He commanded the priests to bring the ark of to the House of YAHWEH. The gathering took place in the seventh month. ^{1 Kings 8:1-2} Solomon blessed the people, dedicated the House, and led the sacrificial ceremonies. The festivities lasted a full fourteen days. ^{1 Kings 8:16-65}

On the following day he sent the people away. They blessed the king and then went home, joyful and glad in heart for all the good things YAHWEH had done for his servant David and his people Israel. ^{1 Kings 8:66}

After the people left, YAHWEH spoke to Solomon again:

I have heard your prayer and your supplication which you have made yourself before Me. I have caused this House to be consecrated, which you have built, and put My Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there all of the days. As for you, **if you** walk before Me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all I commanded you, guarding My statutes and My ordinances, **I will** cause to establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David

your father, saying, 'There shall not fail you a man upon the throne of Israel.'

But **if you or your sons** turn away from after Me and do not observe My commandments and My statutes, which I have given you, but go and serve other gods and make themselves bow to them, then **I will** cause to be cut off Israel from the land which I have given them and the House I have caused to be consecrated for My Name. **I will** really cast out Israel of My sight and Israel will become a proverb and among all peoples. This House will become high. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss and they will say, 'Why has YAHWEH done thus to this land and to this House?' And they will say, 'Because they have forsaken YAHWEH their god, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have caused the laying hold of other gods, bowing to them and serving them. Therefore, YAHWEH has brought this evil upon them all.' ^{1 Kings 9:3-10}

YAHWEH made it very clear that the destiny of the Israelites rested in the hands of Solomon and his sons who would become king after him. If they failed to do what YAHWEH commanded, they would be remembered as the ones who caused YAHWEH to bring evil upon Israel:

Because they (Solomon and his sons) have forsaken YAHWEH their god, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have caused the laying hold of other gods, bowing to them, and serving them. This is why YAHWEH brought this evil upon them.

What does YAHWEH require of Solomon and his descendants?

- *Walk before Me with integrity of heart and uprightness.*
- *Do according to all I commanded.*
- *Guard My statutes and My ordinances.*

What will happen if Solomon or his descendants are unfaithful to YAHWEH and serve other gods:

- *Israel will be cut off from the land.*
- *Israel will be cut off from the House of YAHWEH.*
- *YAHWEH will cast Israel out of His sight.*
- *Israel will become an ancient memory.*
- *YAHWEH's House will become a high pile.*
- *Everyone passing by the pile will be astonished and hiss.*

What would you do if YAHWEH gave you that message? Wouldn't your focus on what He wanted you to do? Solomon decided to do something else. He created a trading network that brought huge amounts of wealth from merchants, traders,

Arabian kings and the governors of the territories -- *44,672 pounds of gold annually.* ^{1 Kings 10:14} What did he do with all of that gold? He used it to acquire:

- *200 large shields (600 measures of gold in each shield)*
- *300 small shields (3 minas of gold in each shield)*
- *a throne covered with ivory, overlaid with gold*
- *all of his goblets and household articles were made of pure gold*
- *created a fleet of ships to carry gold, silver, ivory, apes and baboons*
- *1,400 imported chariots*
- *12,000 imported horses*
- *so much silver it became as common as stones*
- *so much cedar it became as plentiful as sycamore trees* ^{1 Kings 10:16-29}

But Solomon wasn't only interested in acquiring things – *he also acquired 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines.* ^{1 Kings 11:1-3} His women came from the families that governed lands that bordered his kingdom. Each marriage added to his network of alliances with kings, pharaohs, tribal chiefs and powerful families, which included:

- *Egyptians*
- *Moabites*
- *Ammonites*
- *Edomites*
- *Sidonians*
- *Hittites*

As Solomon grew older his wives pressured him to recognize and worship their gods and goddesses too. ^{1 Kings 11:4} Ultimately Solomon became involved with all of them and even appointed the priest who served at their deities. What did his subjects think when they saw their king worshipping foreign deities? Would they do the same and simply view YAHWEH as just another god? Solomon began by recognizing:

- **Ashtoreth** *the goddess of the Sidonians*
- **Molech** *the god of the Ammonites*
- **Chemosh** *the god of the Moabites*

He built a high place for **Molech**, the god of the Ammonites, where he burned incense and offered sacrifices. Molech required the sacrifice of children. **Ashtoreth** was the wife **Baal** in Canaan; in Moab she was the wife of their chief god, **Chemosh**. 400 of Jezebel's priests worshipped Ashtoreth, who was also known as the "**Queen of Heaven**." Her rituals involved the sacrifice of chastity and hair by women.¹ Temple prostitutes played a major role in her rituals and the hair that was collected was woven into sacred ritual objects. Ashtoreth and Chemosh both required that children be sacrificed.²

However, as the end of his reign approached Jeroboam, one of his officials, rebelled and wanted to take the kingship from him. Pay close attention to how YAHWEH viewed this situation:

About that time Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him on the way, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone out in the country, and Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what YAHWEH the god of Israel, says:

‘ See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon’s hand and give you ten tribes. But for the sake of My servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe. I will do this because they have forsaken Me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molek the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in obedience to Me, nor done what is right in My eyes, nor kept My decrees and laws as David, Solomon’s father, did.

But I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon’s hand; I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David My servant, whom I chose and who obeyed My commands and decrees. I will take the kingdom from his son’s hands and give you ten tribes. I will give one tribe to his son so that David My servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put My Name.

However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever I command you and walk in obedience to Me and do what is right in My eyes by obeying my decrees and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you. I will humble David’s descendants because of this -- but not forever.” ^{1 Kings 11:29-39}

Take another look at what YAHWEH offered Jeroboam:

- *You will rule over all that your heart desires.*
- *You will be king over Israel.*
- *I will be with you.*
- *I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David.*
- *I will give Israel to you -- but not forever.*

However, as in the case of Solomon, there were conditions:

- *If you do whatever I command you.*
- *If you walk in obedience to Me.*
- *If you do what is right in My eyes by obeying my decrees and commands.*

Soon after Solomon died in 930 BCE, the chiefs of the ten northern tribes chose **Jeroboam** as their king. The northern tribes became the **Kingdom of Israel**. The two southern tribes, the **Kingdom of Judah**, were ruled by Solomon's son **Rehoboam**. The **United Kingdom** existed for 120 years under three kings -- *Saul, David & Solomon* – each of whom ruled for 40 years. But it no longer existed because Solomon had been unfaithful to YAWHEH.

Jeroboam had a kingdom, but he didn't have the House of YAHWEH to worship Him. What would he do? Would he go to Jerusalem to fulfill the commandments, laws and statutes of YAHWEH? Would he send his people there too? Would Rehoboam allow them to enter his kingdom?

Jeroboam decided to do something else. He set up altars at the **House of El** (Bethel) and **Dan**, and he placed a golden calf at each location. They became the chief gods of the Kingdom of Israel. He also established the eighth month as the most holy days in his kingdom, one month later than in Judah. He also built shrines at high places and appointed priests to officiate them. ^{1 Kings 12:29-33a}

In the Southern Kingdom, Rehoboam was busy creating his own problems. He rejected the advice of the elders – *the men who had been Solomon's advisors* – instead he turned to young men he had grown up with for advice. They wanted him to "lighten the yoke his father put on them," but Rehoboam continued to impose heavy tax burdens on the people.

Next, Rehoboam sent 180,000 soldiers to attack the north. But, when he didn't achieve a quick victory, he withdrew and brought his army back to Jerusalem. He then changed to a defensive strategy and built elaborate strongholds along with fortified cities. The Judah and Israel were engaged in a civil war throughout all of Rehoboam's 17 year reign. The Kingdom of Israel would continue to exist until 722 BCE when the Assyrians conquered it. Eighteen kings followed Jeroboam and they were all described as "bad" in the biblical text.

In Judah, the House of YAHWEH and the high places continued to be where many gods and goddesses were worshipped. It was still that way in 640 BCE when Josiah became king. Between Rehoboam and Josiah there would be fourteen kings – *seven "bad" kings & seven "good" kings*. Josiah was eight years old when he began his reign -- *291 years after the death of Solomon*. Keep in mind that the United States is only 237 years old now. It was during Josiah's reign that one of the most significant events in the Hebrew Bible took place.

In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah . . . to the House of YAHWEH. He said: "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him **get ready the money** that has been brought into the House of YAHWEH, **which the doorkeepers have collected from the people**. Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the House. And have these men pay the workers who repair the House of YAHWEH — the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the House. But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are honest in their dealings." ^{2 Kings 22:3-7}

When Josiah's secretary delivered the message to the high priest, he was told about a discovery that the workers had made while they were working.

Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the **scroll of the TORAH** in the House of YAHWEH." He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. . . **When the king heard the words of the scroll of the TORAH, he tore his robes.** ^{2 Kings 22:8, 11}

Most scholars agree that the scroll they found was **Deuteronomy**. When Josiah understood the words recorded on the scroll – *his whole reality instantly changed. He saw his world in a completely different way.*

Below is an account I created from information in the biblical text about what a trip made by Josiah to the House of YAHWEH would have been like prior to the discovery of the scroll. It was the world that Josiah thought was normal before. Keep in mind what you are about read describes what had been going on for centuries in the House of YAHWEH and on the high places in Judah – *some of the things had been instituted by Solomon, others added by "bad" kings*. Take time to visualize the scenes the following words describe:

As Josiah approached the House of YAHWEH he saw three poles – **Jachin, Boaz** and **Asherah**. Just outside the entrance, were horses and chariots, which had been dedicated to the **sun god**. Every morning at sun rise, the sun god's priests would drive the horses and chariots toward the sun as ritual act of worship. Josiah had seen this ceremony many times during his lifetime. As he approached the door, the doorkeepers stationed there to collect money from visitors, greeted him. Anyone that paid the entrance fee could roam through the holy places inside.

As soon as he entered the House of YAHWEH, he saw articles made for **Baal, Asherah** and **all the hosts of heaven** openly displayed. In the area known as the "Holy Place," he saw the quarters for the male temple prostitutes on one side, and on the other, he saw the quarters for the women who wove ritual objects from the hair collected from young women as they participated

in **the loss of chastity and other fertility rituals** as they worshipped Asherah. The smell of incense was everywhere. Different groups of priests burned incense to honor **Baal**, the **sun god**, the **moon god**, the **gods of the constellations** and to all **the hosts of heaven** – and **YAHWEH**. Along with YAHWEH’s altar in front of the House of YAHWEH, there were altars for other gods in the two courts, as well as on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz for other gods and goddesses.

When Josiah came back outside and look down in the **Valley of Ben Hinnom**, he saw **Topheth** in the distance – *a place where **children were regularly sacrificed to Molech***. When he looked up at the high places on the hills and mountain tops surrounding Jerusalem, he saw other altars made of sacred stones, along with their own Asherah poles, where incense and sacrifices were burned to worship other foreign deities. He could point out those built by Solomon for the goddess Ashtoreth, and the gods Chemosh and Molech – *because they were still there and being used*. He had probably participated in many of those rituals too. He knew that there were many other places like them located throughout Judah and Samaria. Even the altar built by Jeroboam to worship the Golden Calf was still being used at the House of El (Bethel). It had been in operation for almost 300 years. This was the familiar reality in which Josiah lived.

Think about how “religious” Josiah’s world was before he read the scroll. He was surrounded by priests, sacred spaces, religious rituals, and sacred objects. He and his people were constantly involved in religious activities. Their gods were important parts of their lives. Some parents even offered their children as sacrifices to the gods, especially Molech. Other, bought their daughters to the House of YAHWEH to undergo the prestigious “loss of chastity” ritual. Statues of gods and goddesses were everywhere, including their homes. Josiah was doing everything he thought the gods required – even YAHWEH. If he wanted to know where he stood with the gods, all he had to do was look around or ask the priests. He was emerged in religion, gods, goddesses and sacred rituals.

But then -- *after hearing the words of the scroll of the Torah* – **Josiah saw his world completely different**. He then saw a world of idolatry inhabited by idol worshippers who were unfaithful to YAHWEH. The scroll gave Josiah a new standard to measure the acts of those taking place in his world. He could use it to judge his actions and those of anyone else. Josiah destroyed the idols, defiled their holy places and shrines, and executed their priests. He restored the House of YAHWEH to the ritual purity required by YAHWEH. He live his life in accordance the YAHWEH’s standard of commandments, laws, and statutes recorded on the scroll of the Torah. Josiah died in 608 BCE and was followed by four kings -- all were “bad kings.” In 586 BCE, the Kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians and the House of YAHWEH destroyed. *It became a “high pile” that reminded everyone of what YAHWEH had spoken to Solomon.* **BHC**

October Memorials

In Loving Memory

**JEWELL G.
PATTERSON**

**March 14, 1907
October 1, 1995**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*



In Their Remembrance

*May their memories inspire us to
seek those qualities of mind and
heart which they shared when we
walked life's journey together.*

*May we help to bring closer to
fulfillment their highest ideals and
noblest strivings.*

*May their memories deepen our
loyalty to those things which we
valued and shared --
faith, love, peace and devotion
and our biblical heritage.*

*As long as we live, they too will
live; for they are now a part of us,
as we remember them.*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor
Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer
Book Press)

In Loving Memory

Calvin P.
**A SPECIAL FRIEND
OF BHC**

**1914
October 17, 2003**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

שלום

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¹ <http://www paranormal-encyclopedia.com/a/ashtoreth/>

² <http://kukis.org/Doctrines/Ashtoreth.pdf>

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