

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 31

The Divided Kingdom

The Power of Counsel

Hebrew review *Aleph - Mem*

Today was a fairly busy day; one filled with meetings. My breakfast meeting covered a number of issues, including the difficult decision I had to make over which event to attend Friday. (On Friday I was committed to be in two different cities at two different events at the same time). I received some wonderful counsel on what I should do.

From the breakfast meeting, I went into another set of meetings where we discussed decisions I must make about two cases coming up for trial. After those meetings concluded, I had a teleconference over my decisions about filing hip replacement lawsuits in Ohio, New Jersey, or California. This phone conference did not end soon enough, and I had to put it on hold while I took input from four lawyers in another teleconference on which speakers to put on an upcoming program in Kentucky.

Those calls were handled while driving to a lunch meeting where three others discussed whether I should follow the advice of one of my lawyers who had told me not to take a certain case (their case, actually). Following the lunch meeting, I had a follow-up discussion with my legal team over their counsel that I not take the case, weighing the different advice offered. Once this was over, I regrouped the teleconference I had been unable to complete earlier.

From there I had two other meetings over computer and equipment issues where the tech department recommended several changes in the way we are handling computer and Internet issues. (I have left out those meetings where we discussed who to invite to a New York event, how to proceed in a pollution case, and how to better ensure productivity for a few folks).

After that workday, I sat down and began writing this lesson. I looked forward to writing this lesson all day. This is a lesson that focuses on receiving counsel and advice. This was a day where I got to practice what I was writing about.

Writing up these lessons forces me to focus more carefully on my ideas and conclusions. I am educated and enriched as I put into words the thoughts and findings of not only my immediate study but also my experiences. During the day, as I listened to advice and counsel about a myriad of subjects, I could not help but wonder whether typing this lesson earlier would not have helped me in the day!

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This is a lesson for all of us. For whether we have the life of a lawyer or that of a homemaker, our lives are filled with decisions and advice from others. We all get advice and give advice. How we should process that advice is a focus of this lesson as we walk through the history of the monarchy and the divisions after Solomon.

SOLOMON

These stories begin with the end (some might say demise) of Solomon's reign. In 1 Kings 11:1, the text tells us "King Solomon loved many foreign women." This, in spite of the fact that God had warned against such practice lest the women "turn away your heart after their gods."¹ To emphasize Solomon's trouble, the text then adds "Solomon *clung* to these in love" (1 Kings 11:2). These were not a few women, but 700 wives and 300 concubines!

Exactly as God had warned, the "wives turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Kings 11:4). Because of this disobedience and the detestable idolatry, God sent a prophecy that after Solomon's death, all but one tribe of the kingdom would be torn away from Solomon's offspring.

God began raising adversaries against Solomon, including a servant named Jeroboam. Jeroboam had worked in Solomon's construction jobs, eventually holding a leadership position among the "forced labor" (1 Kings 11:28). One day outside Jerusalem, a prophet named Ahijah approached Jeroboam. Ahijah was wearing a new garment. Before Jeroboam, Ahijah took off the garment, tore it into twelve pieces (representing the tribes of Israel), and instructed Jeroboam to take ten of the pieces.

Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes" (1 Kings 11:31).

This story is full of imagery and plays on words. Tearing a garment to illustrate tearing the kingdom away was used two generations earlier in the life of King Saul. Samuel had told Saul that God rejected Saul as king, and then Samuel started to walk away. Saul grabbed the skirt of Samuel's robe, tearing it. Samuel then turned and told Saul, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours" (1 Sam. 15:28).

Not only does the Jeroboam story echo the garment tearing of Samuel and Saul, but it holds great play on words as well. The Hebrew word used for Ahijah's new

¹ Repeatedly in this narrative the verb "turn" נָטָה (*natah*) is used in the sense of steering sideways or guiding away. Solomon himself used the word in his dedication of the temple praying that

cloak is (שלמה - *slmh*). Solomon's name in Hebrew is the same four letters, but with different vowel sounds (שלמה - *slmh*). Just as Ahijah's *slmh* (*salmah*) is torn, so shall the kingdom of *slmh* (*S'lomoh*) be torn.

Ahijah then advised Jeroboam of God's promise that if Jeroboam would listen to God's commands and walk in God's ways, then God would build a sure house for Jeroboam over Israel just as he had David.

We do not know how word got out, but somehow Solomon found out about the promise to Jeroboam. We are told that as a result, Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam. Jeroboam fled the danger by moving to Egypt. Interestingly, Jeroboam was safe in Egypt, even though one of Solomon's wives had been daughter to a pharaoh.

REHOBAM

After Solomon died (which ends 1 Kings chapter 11), his son Rehoboam took over the kingship. Rehoboam began his reign going to Shechem for his coronation by "all Israel" (which at that time still meant all tribes). Jeroboam heard the news and returned from Egypt for the service. Before Israel would recognize Rehoboam as king, they had a demand:

Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you (1 Kings 12:4).

The people saw this as a chance to stop the hard "forced labor" of Solomon. Rehoboam responded that he would consider the demand and let them know his answer in three days.

During the intervening time, Rehoboam sought "counsel."² First he sought counsel from the "old men," those who had counseled Solomon before his death. These men recommended that Rehoboam honor the peoples' request, at least initially:

If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever (1 Kings 12:7).

² The root verb used here is *רָצוּ* (*y'rs*) meaning consult, advise, or counsel. It is used twice in verse six, twice in verse eight, in verse nine, and in verse thirteen. It is clearly a focus of the story. No other story or context in the Old Testament comes close to this repeated usage except the story of Absalom's rebellion against David.

Rehoboam did not heed the advice of the “old men.” Instead he took the counsel of the young men with whom he had grown up. Their counsel was the exact opposite:

Thus you shall speak to these people who said to you, “Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,” thus shall you say to them, “My little finger is thicker than my father’s thighs. And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:10-11).

Needless to say, this harsh answer did not go over well with the people. Led by Jeroboam, the people said, “What portion do we have in David?” They left the presence of Rehoboam and rebelled against his kingship. Rehoboam sent the boss over the forced labor (a taskmaster named “Adoram”) to the Israelite workers, still not quite getting the dire situation. The Israelites picked up stones and killed the man who had historically held the whip over them.

At this point, Rehoboam finally understood the danger; he got in his chariot, and hurried back to the protection of Jerusalem. The Israelites, except for the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, all pledged loyalty to Jeroboam and made him their king. From that time forward, the twelve tribes never reunited under a single monarch.

Rehoboam did gather an army to go fight the rebellious tribes. Before they marched, however, a man of God named Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and the troops and told them,

Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up or fight against your relatives the people of Israel. Every man return to his home, for this thing is from me (1 Kings 12:24).

This time, Rehoboam heeded the counsel and the troops returned to their homes. Israel is now split into the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom of ten tribes is henceforth known as “Israel.” The Southern Kingdom which is concentrated around Judah is simply known as Judah.

JEROBOAM

Jeroboam found himself king of ten tribes of Israelites, but without possession of the royal palace in the capital of Jerusalem. Jeroboam at first fortified and ruled from Shechem. This was smart strategically. Shechem was situated in a narrow neck of an west-east pass for Israel and was critical for guarding the roads through

the hill country of Manasseh and Bethshan.³ Subsequently, he fortified a town called Penuel, which guarded the kingdom from hostile attacks from the east and northeast.⁴ These moves were politically and geographically smart. They were moves to protect his fledgling new kingdom. Jeroboam was concerned not only about foreign invasions, but also about the internal security of his people's devotion. Because the people would continue to go worship the LORD at the festivals in Jerusalem, Jeroboam feared that over time, returning to the temple would turn the peoples' hearts back to Rehoboam.

Jeroboam then "took counsel" (*y'ats*⁵) and made two golden calves (1Kings 12:28). He then proclaimed these calves as representing the "gods" who brought the people up out of Egypt.⁶ One calf he set in Bethel, which, ironically, means "house of God," the other in Dan. He also made temples on the high places and set up priests who were not from the priestly tribe of Levi. A final touch was his changing the dates for worship festivals and setting a feast at a time "he had devised from his own heart" (1 Kings 12:33).

³ Gray, John, *1 and 2 Kings: A Commentary*, (Westminster 1970), at 314.

⁴ Keil, C. F. and Delitzsch, F., *Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Hendrickson Reprint 2006), Vol. 3 at 138.

⁵ This word for counsel or advice reappears here after the last story where it was used repeatedly. It is not a coincidence.

⁶ Scholars debate whether these calves were actually to represent God or whether they were meant as pedestals for an unseen God (much like the cherubim on the ark). It is clear that the bull was associated in the pagan culture surrounding (and infiltrating) Israel with the god Baal. (See, Bright, John, *A History of Israel*, (Westminster John Knox 2000), 4th Ed. at 238). Without regard to the full motive of Jeroboam, we are left with his idolatry that was contrary to the teachings and commandments of God. The irony (or stupidity) of this is magnified as we realize that when Jeroboam was first given his regal prophecy, he was told God was tearing the kingdom from Solomon because,

they have forsaken me and worshipped [idols]...and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules (1 Kings 11:33).

Scholars also note the many parallels in these stories to those of the Israelites in captivity and in the exodus. Solomon persecutes the people with whips in his building programs much as Pharaoh did in the days of Moses. God delivers the people from the bondage, but Jeroboam, like Aaron, then constructs idolatrous calves for worship. Jeroboam even names his sons Nadab and Abijah, reminiscent of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu (See, Ex. 6:23 and 1 Kings 14:1, 20).

One day when Jeroboam was standing by one of his idolatrous altars to offer sacrifices, a nameless “man of God”⁷ from Judah came up to the altar, and began to prophesy,

O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: “Behold a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who make offerings on you, and human bones shall be burned on you” (1 Kings 13:2).

The “man of God” then guaranteed the prophesy with a sign, that the altar was going to be torn down and the ashes on it would be poured out. Jeroboam took a hand off the altar and pointed at the prophet and yelled, “seize him!” That hand immediately withered before the eyes of the king and any looking to see whom the king was pointing out. The altar then fell down and the ashes fell out, fulfilling the prophet’s declared sign.

The king then sang a different tune. He begged the “man of God” to ask God to restore his hand, which the prophet did. With his hand restored, the king then asked the man to return to his palace for some refreshments. The “man of God” declined the invitation explaining that God had instructed him on his mission to finish and then return home by a different route than used for getting to Bethel, and without stopping to eat or drink.

THE “MAN OF GOD”

Word of the events quickly spread throughout Bethel. An old prophet who lived in Bethel found out about the events from his sons. They also told him of the conversation between the “man of God” and the king about God’s instructions that the man return home without eating or drinking.

The old prophet found out the direction the “man of God” went and rode on his donkey to find him. The old prophet found the “man of God” sitting under an oak tree. He confirmed his identity asking,

Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” (1 Kings 13:14).

The man identified himself as “one from God” saying, “I am!” The old prophet then invited the man back to Bethel to eat some bread. The “man of God” repeated his clear instructions from the LORD that he was not to do so. The old prophet then lied to the man of God saying,

⁷ Earlier Scripture identified the prophet who kept Rehoboam from invading Israel as “Shemaiah the man of God” (1 Kings 12:22). There is no indication that this was the same man of God.

I also am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, “Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water” (1 Kings 13:8).

Foolishly, the “man of God” returned with the old prophet to Bethel and dined in his home. It was then that the old prophet truly prophesied:

Thus says the LORD, “Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD and have not kept the command that the LORD your God commanded you, but have come back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which he said to you, ‘Eat no bread and drink no water,’ your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers” (1 Kings 13:21-22).

Interestingly, after delivering the prophetic deathblow, the old prophet saddled the donkey for the prophet (no longer called “the man of God” in the story) who had returned. And the prophet from Judah set out to return home. On the way, he was met by a lion who killed him, but did not eat the body.

The old prophet went and retrieved the body of the prophet from Judah and buried him in the grave planned for the old prophet himself. He then declared to his sons that upon his own death, his sons were to bury him right next to the ex-man of God.

Unfortunately, none of these events changed the idolatrous and disobedient practices of Jeroboam.

THE “MAN OF GOD” – BRIGHT LINE ANSWERS

What do we do with these stories, especially as we focus on the recurring idea of “counsel”? Where do we get our counsel, and how do we decide which counsel to take? These stories do not give us many bright line answers, but do offer some guidelines (and at least two bright line answers!). Let us first consider two bright line tests.

No one’s counsel should trump the instructions of God.

In the last story, that of the two prophets, we underscore that the prophet from Judah who came up to Bethel at the instruction of God is never called by name. He is simply and emphatically referred to as “the man of God”:

- 1 Kings 13:1, “And behold, a *man of God* came out of Judah...”
- 1 Kings 13:4 “And when the king heard the saying of the *man of God* ...”
- 1 Kings 13:6 “And the king said to the *man of God* ...”

- 1 Kings 13:6 “And the *man of God* entreated the Lord...”
- 1 Kings 13:7 “And the king said to the *man of God* ...”
- 1 Kings 13:8 “And the *man of God* said to the king...”
- 1 Kings 13:11 “his sons told him all that the *man of God* had done...”
- 1 Kings 13:12 “his sons showed him the way the *man of God* who came from Judah had gone...”
- 1 Kings 13:14 “And he went after the *man of God* ...”
- 1 Kings 13:14 “And he said to him, ‘Are you the *man of God* who came from Judah?’”
- 1 Kings 13:21 “And he cried to the *man of God* who came from Judah...”

In this last reference, the man of God himself receives judgment of his disobedience. From there, as long as the man lives, he is no longer called a “man of God,” but for the first time the word used for him is simply “prophet.”

As a man of God, this prophet from Judah had received explicit instructions about what he was to do. He was on mission from God, and his mission was specific. The mission was not simply to proclaim judgment on King Jeroboam, but was also to return in a manner and way specified by God.

One can reasonably conjecture that the man of God was emotionally depleted after his confrontation with the king. There was an effort by the king to seize the man, and his salvation came only after a miraculous intervention by the hand of the God upon the hand of the king. The man of God resisted the king’s offer that ran counter to God’s instructions. But in the emotional recovery that was likely part of the resting under the oak tree, the man succumbed to the deceit of the old prophet.⁸

⁸ Pamela Reis makes an argument that the man of God was actually entering into negotiations with Jeroboam. The refusal to stay in the Northern Kingdom was expressed as “not for half your kingdom.” A standard negotiation technique in Old Testament times included expressing one’s not willingness to sell out for a price. That would allow the other to take up the offer, or walk away with both sides saving face. This is similar to what we see in Abraham’s purchase of a burial plot in Gen. 23:4-16 and David buying the threshing-floor in 2 Sa. 24:21-24. Reis then argues that the man of God was taking the old prophet up on the offer to stay in the Northern Kingdom rather than return. If right, then this magnifies the offense and sin of the man of God. See, Reis, Pamela Tamarkin, “Vindicating God: Another Look at 1 Kings XIII,” *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 44, Fasc. 3 (July 1994), p. 376ff.

God had given instruction to the man of God from Judah, but when the old prophet came with contrary instructions (“Yes, God told you that, but he told me that he had changed his mind”), the man opted for the convenient and satisfying deceit. This is one of those stories where you want to shout into the pages, “What on earth are you doing? This is stupid, stupid, STUPID!!!” But even as I type this, and even as we read the words, we surely recognize the ease in our own life to let the advice of someone trump the instructions God has already laid down in his Word.

We get a similar lesson from the story of Jeroboam. Here was a new king with ten of the tribes of Israel pledging allegiance. God had given Jeroboam his rule; it was not won through military force or mental craftiness. God had proclaimed it before the death of Solomon and then brought it to fruition. What is more, God had assured Jeroboam that his kingdom would endure as long as Jeroboam followed the instructions and commands of the Lord.

Yet political realities seemed to militate against full obedience to God. After all, it seemed a serious problem to let the people continually go back to the kingdom of Judah and Rehoboam for the annual worship rites and feasts at the temple in Jerusalem. This could not be a safe thing for Jeroboam’s new national identity! He must have played the scene over and over in his head about what would happen to people who thought that God was still with Rehoboam, with his territory and temple, and with his priests.

We do not know the thoughts that went through Jeroboam’s head, but I suspect he might have decided that God surely wanted the people to stay in Israel; that God was not simply found in Jerusalem. That God was not associated only with the cherubim and the ark, and that God was not reachable only through the bloodlines of Levites. Surely God was bigger than this!

Then when Jeroboam “took counsel” he opted to disobey God’s clear instructions in favor of political realities. His situation and fears trumped his obedience. The Lord’s pledge was not enough to salve his worries.

Among these stories is at least one bright line test for considering the counsel and advice of others: No one’s counsel trumps the instructions of God. Counsel that contradicts the word of God is never good counsel!

Love God first

Is it not striking that the final downfall of Solomon came from love? The story emphasizes that Solomon loved his idolatrous, foreign wives. His love for these women was much stronger than his devotion and love for God. It infiltrated his own heart, and turned him away from the Lord, who was properly his first love.

Our hearts have an ability to move us in ways that are right and in ways that are wrong. For this reason, we should always be sensitive to what our heart is saying, but always moderate it with a strong dose of our mind and our understanding of God and his word. When advice and counsel comes from someone we love or someone we wish to please, it should always be checked against what we know is right from God's word.

This point is clear in a prophecy found later in Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet against the nation of Judah at a time when the nation was walking disobediently before the Lord. In Jeremiah 17, we have admonitions that cover this same idea. Jeremiah contrasts one who trusts in God against one who trusts in his own heart. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord," Jeremiah proclaims. To the contrary, however, he adds, "The heart is deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:7, 9). Jeremiah gets specific later in the chapter with God saying, rather than simply following their hearts and desires, the people should "listen to me, declares the Lord" (Jer. 17:24, 27).

The Word of the Lord, and love for him, must rise above all other loves and desires of the heart.

THE LESSONS OF REHOBOAM

Beyond these bright line answers, we are left with some interesting stories and helps, even if they are not bright line answers.

Consider the source

As noted in an earlier footnote, the Rehoboam story is centered on the Hebrew word for "counsel" or "advice." Rehoboam had good advice from the old men, and poor advice from the young men. The old men had been counselors to his father; the young men were his friends growing up. Does this tell us that we should heed to counsel of the old over against the counsel of the young? Not necessarily!

Unlike the earlier points made, this is not a bright line instruction from the story. We are fair in noting that the better advice was pointedly from elders while the wrong advice came from the young men. There is wisdom that comes with age and a certain impetuosity that comes from youth. This is perhaps underscored as the story uses the Hebrew word for "boys" for the young men (*yeled* לֵלֵךְ can mean a "boy", a "child", or a "young man"). Yet old men are also capable of deceit and error, as we witnessed in the story of the old prophet and the man of God. Perhaps we can best say, *be careful to consider the track record of those offering advice.*

Old Testament scholar Richard Nelson writes,

Rehoboam chooses slogans over wisdom, machismo over servanthood.⁹

This choice was brash and showed a lack of judgment. There is no magic bullet that says what advice is “winning advice” in this story. The counsel of the elders was better in touch with the atmosphere and mood of the people. The counsel of the young men seemed ambitious and bold, yet was clearly out of touch with reality.

The shocking reality is that this one poor decision seems to be the deed that overnight destroys the kingdom that David and Solomon spent 80 years building!¹⁰

Knowledge can influence the strength of the counsel

Solomon’s older counselors probably better understood the political history at play at this point in Rehoboam’s reign. The mere fact that Rehoboam had to travel to the northern area of Shechem to meet with the leaders of the northern tribes (rather than those leaders coming to Jerusalem) implies pre-existing tensions. Historically even David had been king over Judah for seven years before he was made king of Israel (2 Sam. 2:1-4; 5:1-5).

Any one who is going to offer advice, can better do it when more fully understanding the facts and circumstances surrounding the situation. While we might all love to have someone who can immediately deliver the perfect answer, perhaps to keep us from the anxiety and tension of making a choice, the insights of others are always limited by their access to information.

Be careful of advice that plays to ego

The arrogance is apparent when we inspect a bit more how the counselors suggested Rehoboam respond:

Thus shall you say to them, “My little finger is thicker than my father’s thighs. And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to

⁹ Nelson, Richard, *First and Second Kings*, (John Knox 1987) at 79.

¹⁰ We should note that there is a tension present in the Scripture about why Rehoboam made this unfortunate decision. Scripture clearly shows the decision to be his own. Yet it also notes that the decision was part of God’s sovereign plan to bring his prophecy to Solomon to fruition, “So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord that he might fulfill his word” (1 Kings 12:15). This is a constant tension of Scripture. Man chooses, yet those choices are always part of God’s sovereign control.

your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:10-11).

This is both arrogant and dishonorable. There is no honor paid to Rehoboam’s father Solomon. This instead dishonors his father as Rehoboam was claiming that he was twice the man his father was! Furthermore, if some of the scholars who suggest that the expression “my little finger is twice the size of my father’s thigh” are correct that “finger” is a euphemism for another part of Rehoboam’s anatomy, the advice then reeks of obscenity and sin.¹¹

Be careful of harsh advice

The younger counselors recommended communicating that the earlier whips were paltry compared to the punishment rod employed by Rehoboam (“I will discipline you with scorpions”). The harshness is emphasized when the king followed the advice of the young men,

And the king answered the people *harshly*, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him... (1 Kings 12:13).

Proverbs 15:1-2 would have served Rehoboam well:

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

CONCLUSION

We all make choices day in and day out. Many times these choices are not made in a vacuum. Frequently advice and counsel are offered, sometimes unsolicited! It would be nice to have a silver-bullet answer that is a definite winner every time a decision is needed. But life is not like that. God has not made us machines where we have no need to think, no need to learn, no need to process, no need to pray, and no need to grow. This life is one of decisions and one of learning how to make them wisely.

Part of that includes seeking and receiving counsel. But the counsel is rarely going to relieve us of the need and duty to decide faithfully and responsibly. From these stories, we get admonitions that help. They teach us to seek God and his will on matters. When we have his clear word, we should follow it. When we are not

¹¹ See the references and information at Cogan, Mordechai, *The Anchor Bible: 1 Kings*, (Doubleday 2000) at 348-349.

so clear on his instructions, as part of our decision-making process, we should seek out wise counselors with a good track record for the subject at hand. We should remember that more information could lead to better advice. Then as the advice is given, we should prayerfully compare it to God's character and will. Is it advice that might be overly influenced by our heart—either by what we want or by our ego? Is it advice that seems harsh or out of place in the actions of a Christian?

This entire approach underscores both the need to pray for wisdom (as discussed in an earlier lesson) and the need to study God's revelation. As we walk in these lessons, let us pledge to walk humbly before God seeking his will in this way.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. "*Solomon clung to these in love*" (1 Kings 11:2).

When Jesus was asked the greatest commandment, he immediately taught that it was to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Mt. 22:36). This commandment must precede loving your neighbor, loving your spouse, loving your job, or loving anything else. Without a greater love for God, one cannot hope to properly love one's spouse, family, or neighbor.

Solomon got in trouble because he loved his wives more than he loved the Lord. Marrying, whether for love or politics, trumped obedience to God. This set Solomon's up for trouble decades later.

Do we love God first? Do we see evidence of this love in how much time we spend with him in prayer and devotion? If not, let us make the change now! It affects not only our own lives, but kingdoms!

2. "*The king answered the people harshly*" (1 Kings 12:13).

I love the fruit of the Spirit explained by Paul in Galatians. Terms like: love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and gentleness amaze me. They soothe my soul. I want to be known for those. I do not want them flowing out of my strength; I want them growing from God's Spirit within me. I want to bear this fruit before the world for and to the glory of God.

Any advice that seems to run contrary to the fruit of the Spirit is not advice I want to follow. It is not the fingerprint I want left behind.

3. “Man of God” (1 Kings 13).

What an amazing story about the nameless “man of God.” He was known by the title as he obediently walked in God’s purposes for his life. His failure was to quit before he was done. This speaks to us in at least two ways. First, it should underscore the importance of studying God’s word, to better know what he has said! Second, it should encourage us to endure in obedience to the end.

I want to be a man of God. I want to be obedient to the end. Are not the words of Paul confirming,

The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

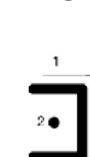
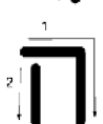
Lord, may it be so with us.

WANT MORE?

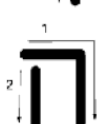
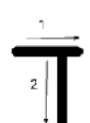
Do you have your Hebrew bookmarks handy? Can you write in the names of these letters? If they are a “final form” then write the name and put –F afterwards.

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| כ _____ | ך _____ | ג _____ | ם _____ |
| ל _____ | מ _____ | ל _____ | ו _____ |
| מ _____ | ד _____ | ז _____ | ט _____ |
| ם _____ | י _____ | ם _____ | מ _____ |
| ב _____ | מ _____ | ו _____ | כ _____ |

On the next pages, practice writing the letters as indicated, saying them out loud each time you write them. Then Email us at wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com and let us know how you are doing!



Handwriting practice lines for Hebrew letters X, K, G, T, H, V, Z, Het, L, M, N, S, and A. Each letter is followed by a set of three horizontal lines for writing practice.



Handwriting practice lines for Hebrew letters. Each letter is followed by a set of three horizontal lines (top, middle, bottom) for tracing and independent practice.