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Solomon's Choice

First Kings 9:1-28 and Second Chronicles 7:11-22

Solomon's choice DIG: What happened at Gibeon? How did God dedicate the Temple? Was He more present in the Temple than anywhere else? How so? What would happen if Solomon or his descendants were disobedient? Why would God say that? Who will scoff? Why?

REFLECT: What choices are you facing right now? How can the blessings and cursings of the Torah affect you today? Does that mean that God's love is conditional? Why or why not? What modern day gods compete for your allegiance? Which road are you on right now?

Everyone has a choice to make in life, and this choice is always before us, even if we have made the right choice before.



There are only two **roads** to go by - two paths to follow in this life - and everyone must choose which one to take. **Yeshua** said it this way: **Go in through the narrow gate; for the gate that leads to destruction is wide and the road broad, and many travel it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matthew 7:13-14).** According to **Yeshua**, everyone must choose which **road** to follow,

and taking the narrow gate and **the hard road** makes the difference between eternal life and everlasting destruction. Some believers seem to think that this is a choice we make only once in life, when we first decide to follow **Messiah**. But, in fact, we face this choice every day, at every moment. Will I choose **God's** way or my own way, **His** Kingdom or my kingdom, **His** sovereign plan or my personal agenda? Which **road** will I take and how I handle my work, my free time, and how I treat people I live with? Which way will I go, and which **road** will I take? Where in life am I facing the choice between **God's** way and the wrong way?

One way or another: The choice came to **Solomon** at the apex of **his** achievement: **After Solomon had finished building the house of ADONAI, the royal palace and everything else he wanted to build for himself (First Kings 9:1; Second Chronicles 7:11), ADONAI appeared to Solomon by night a second time, as He had appeared to him in Gibeon (to see link click As - Solomon's Wish). Solomon had asked for many blessings to come to the royal family and the nation through the Temple. He looked to the Temple as the source of divine help whenever the people strayed or faced hardships.**¹⁹⁴

There were common elements to both visions. First, both begin with a positive answer to a previous request by **Solomon**; secondly, in both cases, **God** goes beyond the actual request that **Solomon** makes. In the first request **ADONAI** gave **him** wealth and honor, which **he** did not ask for; in the second request is the dedication of **the Temple**. Thirdly, **Ha'Shem** makes a conditional gift. In the first case, long life for obedience, and in the second case an unending dynasty.¹⁹⁵

At some unspecified time after the dedication services, **ADONAI** spoke to **Solomon** and said to him, **"I have heard your prayer and your plea that you made before Me: I have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice forever.** This made it clear that **God** approved of the hopes **David** and **Solomon** had placed in **the Temple**. But **God** gave specific instructions to **the nation** when **she** faced hardships in the future. **If I shut up the sky, so that there is no rain; or if I order locusts to devour the land; or if I send an epidemic of sickness among my people; then, if My people, who bear My Name, will humble themselves and acknowledge their completed dependence on Me, pray, seek My face, repent and turn from their evil ways, I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their Land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears will pay attention to the prayer made in this place. For now, I have chosen and consecrated this house, so that My Name can be there forever; My eyes and heart will always be there (First Kings 9:2-3; Second Chronicles 7:12-16).** More than any other portion of this section, these verses spoke directly to the post-exilic community.

ADONAI would honor the eternal side of the Davidic Covenant; the temporal side of the covenant, the part about **Solomon** and **his** descendants, however, was dependent on human obedience.¹⁹⁶ If **Solomon** chose to follow in **David's** footsteps, **he** would be going down **the right road**. **As for you, if you will live in My presence, as did David your father, in pureness of heart and uprightness, doing everything I have ordered you to do, and observing my statutes and ordinances ; then I will establish the throne of your rulership over Isra'el forever** (see the commentary on [the Life of David Ct - The LORD's Covenant with David](#)), **just as I promised David your father when I said, 'You will never lack a man on the throne of Isra'el.'** (**First Kings 9:4-5; Second Chronicles 7:17-18; Micah 5:1-5**). Those words guaranteed that despite the fact that a **king** may not always sit on the throne of Jerusalem (as in the post-exilic period), **the nation** should look for the rightful heir of **David** and follow his leadership. In **the Chronicler's** day that man was none other than **Zerubbabel** and/or **his** descendants (see the commentary on [Ezra-Nehemiah Ag - The First Return](#)).¹⁹⁷

The same principle also applies to us: if we follow **ADONAI** in the way of obedience, we will have **His** blessing. Obedience itself will be a blessing, as we experience the joy of walking with **the Lord**. Virtue really is its own reward. But obedience also leads to many other blessings. If we work the way **God** wants us to work, we will have something to share with others (**Ephesians 4:28**). If we love the way **God** wants us to love, we will be able to make strong relationships that last a lifetime. When we feed the hungry, help the sick, and visit people in prison, we will enter into our **Father's** joy (**Matthew 25:31-40**). These and many other blessings will be ours if we travel down the **road that leads to life**.¹⁹⁸

But there is another way to go in life, the way of disobedience that leads to destruction. Here is how **Ha'Shem** posed the choice to **Solomon**. **But if you** (the singular is now changed to the plural because the fate of **the nation** as well as that of the dynasty is dealt with) **turn away from following Me, you or your children, and do not observe My mitzvot and regulations which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, worshiping them; then I will pull them up by the roots, cut off Isra'el from the Land I have given them. They will not lose ownership of the Land**. Under the Abrahamic Covenant their ownership is unconditional (see the commentary on [Genesis Eg - I am the LORD, Who Brought You Out of Ur of the Chaldeans to Give You This Land](#)), but they will lose the enjoyment of **the Land**, based on obedience. **This house, which I consecrated for My name, I will eject from my sight; and Isra'el will become an example to avoid and an object of scorn among all peoples**. So this changes from conditional blessings above to conditional cursings here.

This house, now so exalted - everyone passing by will gasp in shock at the sight of it and will ask: Why has ADONAI done this to this land and to this house? But the answer will be, 'It's because they abandoned ADONAI their God, who brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, and took hold of other gods, worshiping and serving them; this is why God brought all these calamities on them" (First Kings 9:6-9; Second Chronicles 7:19-22). Like Sodom and Gomorrah, Isra'el would become an example of divine judgment, a permanent object lesson of what happens when people make the wrong choice and turn away from **God**.

Without question the book's intended audience would have understood this warning as **God's** grace to **Solomon**. All **the king** had to do was remain obedient to **ADONAI**, shun **idols**, and continue to enjoy **God's** favor.¹⁹⁹ But what started out as **Solomon's** foolish choice (see [Bx - Solomon's Wives](#)) would become a national disaster. Then the whole world would know that **the king** and **his** country had **sinned** by worshiping **idols**.

This is also a gracious warning to us about where our own **idols** will lead. Choose **the** wrong **road** in life, and it will end in such disaster that even people outside your congregation will know you have taken a wrong turn. However attractive other **gods** may seem to us - money and material possessions, sex and physical pleasure, power and interpersonal control - they will lead to our own destruction. **The road** to a life of deception begins with one little lie. **The road** to bankruptcy begins with one foolish indulgence. But before long, our **sins** will be exposed, we will suffer the consequences of our own wrong choices. **Sin** always takes you further than you wanted to go and costs you more than you wanted to pay.

Solomon's past success: Over the course of his reign, **Solomon** did all the things that kings hoped to do. Consider a few of **Solomon's** many accomplishments. **At the end of twenty years, during which time Solomon had built the two buildings, the house of ADONAI and the royal palace, King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of the Galil (recall that Hiram the king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress logs and with all the gold Solomon wanted).** Which once again shows that the Abrahamic Covenant has not been fulfilled. **Hiram came over from Tyre to see the cities Solomon had given him, but he was not satisfied with them. He said: What kind of cities are these which you have given me, my brother? So, they have been called the land of Kabul [good for nothing] till this day, for Hiram had sent the king four tons of gold (First Kings 9:10-14).** **Solomon** was a total success, a man who accomplished everything **he** wanted in life and received all kinds of accolades. **God** would do whatever **Solomon** asked. But for all **his** past success, **Solomon** still had to choose for

God every day, and every moment of every day. We face the same choice - the choice of daily obedience. What we did for **God** yesterday will not answer the demand **He** places on us today. No matter how well we began our walk with **the Lord**, no matter how faithfully we answered **ADONAI's** call to service, no matter how earnestly we turn to **YHVH** in prayer, no matter what we have accomplished in ministry, the choice is still before us today and every day the rest of our lives.²⁰⁰

Solomon's future accomplishments: **Solomon** was also a success at completing huge building projects. **The king** had a passion for building, and in addition to **the Temple** and **his palace** complex, **his** massive **labor force** constructed extensive military fortifications. **Following is the account of the forced labor levied by King Solomon for building the house of ADONAI, his own palace, the Ophel or the terraces** to fortify the southern slope of **the Temple** compound, **the wall of Yerushalayim, and the chariot cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, taken Gezer, burned it to the ground and killed the Canaanites living in the city; then he had given it as a dowry for his daughter, Solomon's wife.** This was an important city because it was a Canaanite blockade on the Via Maris road, the main trade route of that day, and when this was cleared out by **the Egyptians** it was able to add wealth to **Solomon. So Solomon rebuilt Gezer; he also built Lower Beth-Horon, Ba'alath, Tadmor in the desert, in the Land, as well as all the cities that Solomon had for storing supplies, the cities for his chariots, the cities for his horsemen, and the other buildings Solomon wanted to build for himself in Yerushalayim, in the Lebanon and throughout the land he ruled (First Kings 9:15-19). Solomon built whatever he wanted to build.**

In addition to all **his** wealth and military might, **Solomon** also had power over **his people**. Thousands of workers came from other nations. **All the people still left from the Amorites Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who were not part of the people of Isra'el, that is, their descendants remaining after them in the land, whom the people of Isra'el were not able to destroy completely - from them Solomon levied his permanent forced laborers.** Other workers were **Israelites**, who did not labor as slaves, but as temporary **servants of the king** (see [Az - Materials and Labor for the Temple](#)). **But Solomon did not raise any of his forced labor from the people of Isra'el; rather, they were the soldiers, his servants, administrators and commanders, and the officials in charge of his chariots and horsemen. There were 550 chief officers over Solomon's work, in charge of the workers (First Kings 9:20-23).**

Even though there was peace throughout **Solomon's** reign, **he** maintained a standing army. **The king** felt that was necessary to deter other **nations** from attacking **Isra'el**. **However, Deuteronomy 17:16a** says that **he** was **not to acquire many horses for himself**. The principle reason for acquiring **horses** was related to warfare, specifically chariot warfare. But **the Israelite** form of warfare was not supposed to be in the number or type of troops but in the strength and presence of **their God**. **They** had already experienced **YHVH's** aid against an enemy equipped with **horse-drawn** chariots at the Sea of Reeds. In the days ahead, there would be similar occasions. For example, in **Debra's** war (**Judges 4-5**), **the Israelite** forces were at a strong disadvantage in facing the chariot-equipped Canaanite forces, but once again victory was achieved through the intervention of **Ha'Shem**.²⁰¹

Solomon also had a beautiful **wife**, who was well cared for, with a palace of **her** own, due to **her** special status. **Pharaoh's daughter came up from the City of David to her house, which Solomon had built for her. After that he built the Ophel terraces (First Kings 9:24).**

The king also fulfilled **his religious** duties. **Three times a year, at Pesach, Shavu'ot, and Sukkot, Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he had built for ADONAI, offering incense with them on the altar before ADONAI (First Kings 9:25).**

There is more. **King Solomon** also had a royal navy, which enabled **him** to form lucrative shipping partnerships that gained **him** even more **gold**. **He built ships at Ezion-Geber, which is near Elath in Edom, on the shore of the Red Sea.** Archeologists have discovered the remains of chariot wheels at **Ezion-Geber** at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba. This site, on the eastern arm of **the Red Sea**, gave **Isra'el** access to trade routes of the south and Ophir, apparently a location in Southern Arabia where the children of **Isra'el** crossed **the Sea of Reeds** (see the commentary on **Exodus Ch - The LORD Will Fight for You, You Need Only to Be Still**). **Hiram sent some of his own servants, experienced sailors who understood the sea, to serve with Solomon's servants. They went to Ofir, today called Yemen, and that was probably how the Queen of Sheba learned about Solomon (see Bu - Solomon and the Queen of Sheba). They took from there gold, fourteen tons of it, which they brought back to King Solomon (1 Kings 9:26-28).** This is the first of three agreements of a navy agreement between **Hiram** and **Solomon**. It is also mentioned in **First Kings 10:11-12** and **10:22**. This shows that the disagreement over the land of **Kabul (1 Kings 9:14)** did not annul the treaty between **them**.²⁰²

In short, **Solomon** had everything that **a king** could ever want out of life; money, property,

possessions, servants, and beautiful women. It was **his** kingdom, and **he** was living in it, with more of everything than anyone else in the world. Yet every day **he** still had to make a spiritual choice. No matter how successful **he** was - no matter how much money **he** had, how much power over other **people** - **Solomon** still had to choose for **God** or choose against **Him**. Would **he** thank **the LORD** for all **his** money, and then put it to use for Kingdom work? Would **he** exercise **his** power to serve the poor and protect the weak? Would **he** grow proud of what **he** had accomplished, or would **he** give all the glory to **ADONAI**?

The more we have of what this world has to offer, the easier it is to think that we are on the right track, even when we are wandering down **the road** to idolatry. What really counts in life is not academic success, or athletic accomplishments, or a bigger bank account, or reaching the top of our profession, or taking pride in our family, but the spiritual choice we make in our hearts every single day for **God** or against **Him**.²⁰³

What Yeshua chose: To see what is at stake in this choice, we need only to consider what happened to **King Solomon**. **He** didn't finish nearly as well as **he** started as we will discover when we get to Chapter eleven and read about **his** spiritual bankruptcy. **Solomon** didn't stay on **the** right **road**, but chose to turn in another direction. So even when the Bible records the splendors of the Solomonic age, it is setting the stage to show how even the greatest earthly glories are lost when people stop choosing the one true **God**.

How can we avoid **Solomon's** folly and keep choosing **God**? It would be nice to think that we will make the right choices in life, and keep on making them, but this will take more than our good intentions. Not everyone makes the right choice in life. Indeed, not everyone can. In fact, there is a sense in which no one can.

This was the lesson that **Isra'el** learned in the last days of **Joshua**, and afterward. The choice that **God** gave to **Solomon** was very similar to the choice that **Joshua** gave **the people** of **Isra'el** just before **he** died. That day **Joshua** challenged **the people** to choose which **God** they would serve. **They** chose wisely saying: **We will serve ADONAI, for He is our God**. It was a promising beginning. But **Joshua** believed in the doctrine of depravity, and thus **he** responded with a reality check: **You can't serve ADONAI; because He is a holy God (Joshua 24:18-19)**. **Joshua** was right in saying that **sinful people** are really incapable of making all the right choices in life. So even if we begin with the best of intentions, without the grace of **God** we still end up on **the road** to destruction. **Joshua's** warning turned out to be the story of **Solomon's** life. It also happens to be the story of our own lives; not always choosing for **God**, but often going in the wrong direction, even to our

own destruction.

Praise **God** that we have a **Savior** who always made the right choice in life, going down **the road** that led to the cross. **Yeshua** had to make the same choice that we have to make. There were always two **roads** before **Him**, forcing **Him** to choose for, or against, the will of **the Father**. **He** had to make the choice when **He** was a little boy and needed to learn obedience. **He** had to make it again when **He** was attacked by the devil in the wilderness, facing all the temptations of hell. **He** had to make it when **He** was with **His Father** in the garden, wondering if there might be some alternative to crucifixion.

Yeshua chose God. **He** chose **God** every moment of every day, even when it cost **Him His** life. But because **He** is the only person who ever did choose **God** - all the time . . . every time - **He** was able to make perfect atonement for our **sins**. Now **Yeshua** is able to bring us all the way down **the road** to salvation. **He Himself** is **the road to God**, the way of eternal life. If we trust in **Him, His** right choices count for us, even when we make the wrong choice. And when the choice comes to us again, as it does every day, and we are struggling hard to choose for **God, Yeshua** is there to keep us on **the road** that leads to life.²⁰⁴