A Utopian Moment: Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, and the Negotiation of Utopia and Tragedy in 1 Kgs 1-11

by

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ABSTRACT

The Solomonic era represents a period of respite within Israel's imagined history. In contrast to the general tendency towards social entropy that otherwise characterizes the biblical story, Solomon establishes a golden age in which Israel occupies an ideal state of existence. As such, this thesis explores the potential to view the Solomonic narrative in 1 Kgs 3-10 as a space in which the utopian desires and critiques of the Yehudite literati could be negotiated. After considering the applications of concepts such as utopia and golden age structures to the Solomonic narrative in 1 Kgs 1-11, I look at the importance of the temple's construction in the utopian conceptualization of the era. Next, I discuss the narrative of the queen of Sheba's visit in 1 Kgs 10:1-13 and its role in contributing to a utopian dialogue within the imagined trajectory of Israel's history. Lastly, I consider the tragic element that pervades the Solomonic narrative in the book of Kings and the implications of delineating an idealized period that is nevertheless doomed.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Solomon, among other things, is a ladies' man. Myself being a woman who is fascinated with Solomon, what has drawn me to him is a sort of mimesis: Solomon's figure has a certain magnetic effect on female characters, and powerful and intriguing ones at that. To be sure, these women who propel Solomon's reign in 1 Kgs 1-11 are perhaps not all powerful in official terms. Bathsheba, for instance, whose influence in the kingdom proves to be one of the most pivotal in the course of the history of the Davidic dynasty, first appears in the text in a compromised situation: her fate will either be that of the "great lady" (גְּבִירָה), or that of the mother of a potential rival to the king—a dangerous position to be in. It is the savvy of this woman, along with the prophet Nathan, that sees Solomon, an unlikely successor to the throne, secure the kingdom.[1]

Pharaoh's daughter likewise lurks behind the scenes of the kingdom. Or rather, as Solomon's trophy wife, she is constantly put on display throughout the text (1 Kgs 3:1; 7:8; 9:16, 24; 11:1), a silent testament to Solomon's wisdom, wealth, and glory, and to his fateful love for foreign women. Two liminal women who represent the most marginal figures in Solomon's kingdom, both prostitutes and mothers, present Solomon with the seemingly impossible judicial riddle by which he

[1] Stories about the king as an unlikely candidate to the throne who nevertheless succeeds in doing so and has divine support are common within ancient near eastern literature (See William W. Hallo, "The Birth of Kings" in *The World's Oldest Literature : Studies in Sumerian Belles-lettres* [Culture and History of the Ancient Near East. Leiden: Brill, 2010], 223-238 [228-229]).

must prove himself before all of Israel (1 Kgs 3:16-28). Solomon's divine insight and justice in solving this initial enigmatic case is counterbalanced by the visit of a riddle-bearing woman which comes towards the end of the depiction of his kingdom (1 Kgs 10:1-13). It is this story of the queen of Sheba that most piques my interest.

Solomon is the king of possibilities. A great king and self-described "small child" (1 Kgs 3:7), the world becomes his plaything. Small though he may proclaim to be, everything he does is big. His provisions are big (4:22-28), his wisdom as limitless as the sand on the seashore (vss. 29-30), and silver is considered to be nothing, so common is gold in Solomon's kingdom (9:21). Indeed, Solomon the prodigy becomes the paragon in all endeavors that he sets out to do. He is an emblem of wisdom, and becomes known for his proverbs and songs (4:32). And he is a prolific builder: notes of his fervor for building appear throughout 1 Kgs 1-11 as he builds palaces, walls, cities, store-houses, and most importantly, the temple.

The enlarged possibilities represented by his person pave the way for the creation of a utopian space in thinking about Solomon and his kingdom. In this thesis I will consider the applications of utopian theory to the interpretation of the Solomonic narrative with particular focus on the ways in which the account of the queen of Sheba's visit in 1 Kgs 10:1-13 reflects the negotiation of utopian sentiments in the memory of Solomon's kingdom in the book of Kings.

The account of the queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem is recounted almost verbatim in 2 Chr 9:1-12 and is alluded to in Ps 72 (vss. 10 and 15). Arguably, all three occurrences of the story are characterized by utopian negotiations of the memory of the Solomonic era. However, I have chosen to focus on the queen of

Sheba's particular contribution to the depiction of Solomon's golden age in the book of Kings for a few reasons. While the narrative itself is nearly identical in 1 Kgs 10:1-13 and 2 Chr 9:1-12, significant differences in the surrounding narratives of which the story of the queen of Sheba is part create some nuances between the two texts.

Most conspicuously, in Chr's version of events, the loss of Solomon's golden age is not a result of his apostasy as it is in Kgs. Indeed, the suggestion that the kingdom is not an ideal one is first introduced during the reign of Rehoboam when Jeroboam returns from Egypt (2 Chr 10:2), and 2 Chr 10:15 explains Israel's sudden revolt as "a turn of events brought about by God." Up until ch. 10, Solomon's reign is portrayed in wholly positive terms and is therefore often understood to be an idealized version of history.

In 1 Kgs 1-11, on the other hand, tragedy is inscribed in the narrative even at the very moment when Solomon's kingdom reaches the height of its glory upon the completion of the temple (1 Kgs 9:6-9). To be sure, the golden age achieved under Solomon is depicted as unsustainable in both Kgs and Chr and in this sense, Solomon's kingdom cannot represent an ideal state in either account. However, the emphasis in the account in Kgs on the doomed nature of what otherwise appears to be a utopian state of existence perhaps complicates the queen of Sheba narrative in 1 Kgs 10:1-13, particularly because Solomon's downfall following the queen's visit involves his love for foreign women (1 Kgs 11:1-2). Thus, while such a project could also be undertaken in the case of Chr, by looking at the Solomonic narrative in the book of Kings I would like to explore utopian thought as a discursive tool that may

have applications even to the conceptualization of a period which was necessarily lost.

Utopian Discourse within Biblical Thought

Before discussing the potential to view the Solomonic account in 1 Kgs 1-11 in terms of utopian and dystopian categories, it is important to define the terms. Much of the research in utopian studies has been developed with specific modern utopian literature in mind and either does not consider or even excludes ancient thought from its scope, taking More's *Utopia* as the starting point of the phenomenon.[2] Of course, the applications of utopian theory to ancient literature have revealed interesting insights into the thought of ancient societies.[3] While utopia can be understood in a number of different ways in its various manifestations, for the purpose of the present discussion I follow Levitas in viewing utopianism as an expression of a desire for a better state of existence in the form of visionary explorations of an ideal world. Through the process of imagining an ideal

[2] Most prominent amongst these is Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 2-9 who views utopianism as strictly modern phenomena which was "invented, more or less single handedly" by More.

[3] See Steven James Schweitzer, *Reading Utopia in Chronicles* (LHBOTS 442. New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 19-20 for a discussion of utopianism as an element within classical and biblical literature. Of course, the book itself contributes a detailed examination of utopianism in Chronicles. See also the collected volume *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi. Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2006). Most recently, see Ehud Ben Zvi,"Reading and Constructing Utopias: Utopia/s and/in the Collection of Authoritative Texts/Textual Readings of Late Persian Period Yehud," *SR* (2013): 1-14 for a discussion of utopian thought in the late Persian period Yehud as well as bibliography of recent applications of utopian theory to biblical studies, and Frauke Uhlenbruch, "Reconstructing Realities from Biblical Utopias: Alien Readers and Dystopian Potentials," *Biblical Interpretation*, forthcoming.

existence, a utopia highlights and criticizes the shortcomings of the world as it is actually experienced. Such a definition allows for a vast range of utopian expressions employed for different purposes and in different socio-historical settings.[4] A Marxist mural depicting the proletariat's joy in his or her work[5] may be radically different from Hesiod's epic *Works and Days*, but both may be expressions of their own utopian sentiments and may be analyzed according to their critical and visionary qualities.

While utopias may do different things within different social contexts, one common feature of utopias is that they serve as imaginative spaces in which identity and values are mediated through the process of delineating the integral characteristics of the community in its ideal state. Utopian configurations involve negotiations: of perceptions of current flaws plaguing the community and their appropriate corrections, of values (one must determine which needs to focus on in one's imaginative establishment of a better, visionary world), and of a group's identity and role within its present state of affairs and its version of its more perfect world order. Rather than an absolute ideal or a static image of how the world "should" be, utopias reflect multiplicity. Common themes and patterns may therefore emerge to form a broad and flexible picture of the community's ideals.

A utopian vision thus inherently delineates a social identity: it is intelligible to those within a particular discursive community who are aware of the broader

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[4] Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 9.

[5] Cf. Max Lingner's communist mural "Aufbau der Republik" at the Detlev-Rohwedder-Haus in Berlin.

social negotiation of values and discussion concerning perceived problems in the community's actual situation. Further, the characteristics which make the narrative utopian are accepted only by those within the group in whose discourse the utopian vision is situated. A utopia is not a utopia for everybody; a utopian text elicits the imaginative participation in the logic of the utopian world, but only for those who are part of a social group that shares the values, aims, and identity that are promoted by the utopia. Indeed, as Uhlenbruch argues, a text can have the "potential to be understood as a dystopia or a utopia, depending on the reader's point of view."[6] This observation that utopian and dystopian narratives each contain the potential for the other certainly rings true in the range of scholarly interpretations of the portrait of Solomon in 1 Kgs 1-11 as utopian, dystopian, and everything in between, as we shall see below.

Lastly, utopia may function in contrary ways in different circumstances, and may interact differently with different audiences. Thus, the relation between utopia and power is not rigid, and utopias may be engaged in order to subvert dominant groups or to support them. For example, utopias may operate in periods of social revolution to bring about change, they may be utilized to unite the members of underdog groups, or they may be used in order to advance the ideals of groups in power—a scenario which we can see for example in Assyrian or Achaemenid images of subdued peoples bringing tribute to the king, which contribute to an imperial

[6] Uhlenbruch, "Reconstructing Realities," draws upon Atwood's contracted term "ustopia," which suggests that utopia and dystopia each contain a latent version of the other (cf. Margaret Atwood, *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* [First Anchor Books edition. New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2012]).

utopian ideal of a world characterized by harmony and submission on the parts of the lands which the empire would seek to conquer.

Golden Age and Utopia

Utopias are defined by their reference to and imaginative estrangement from the reality of the community engaged in utopian imaginative activities. The utopia offers an ideal set of circumstances, and thus criticism of actual circumstances become apparent. In engaging with the contours of the utopia, the reader must fill in the reality which the utopia criticizes and from which it estranges itself. Meaning is therefore derived from an interaction between the utopian critique and the way that the reader views the utopia as engaging with the assumed reality. Thus, as Schweitzer notes, although we cannot reconstruct the exact historical reality with which a utopia engages, we can identify the problems with the society with which it engages and the social critiques it makes; for example, we cannot reconstruct More's contemporary England from his *Utopia*, but "the *problems* of his contemporary English society (at least in More's own view) would become accessible to the reader."[7]

Utopias which contribute to a golden age narrative set the utopia in dialogue with a complex, multilayered reality. The reader always constructs the reality to which the utopia refers as he or she engages with and participates in the utopian logic through the act of reading or listening. Golden age utopias refer to a reality

[7] "Reading Utopia," 39.

that makes up the world of the text within the overall narrative outside of the golden age period in addition to any other aspects of reality that the reader contributes as he or she engages with the utopia. Thus, the utopia partly criticizes the world it depicts in the surrounding narrative, and not only the reality of the outside world of which the text and reading community are a part.

The utopian negotiations in the Solomonic narrative in the book of Kings are utopian in relation to the literary character of Israel which is developed throughout biblical literature in addition to being utopian in relation to the experienced reality of the reading community. That is to say that the utopian discourse in the Solomonic narrative does not only criticize the reading community's immediate reality, but also criticizes the realities within the world of the text that the literary creation "Israel" is generally conveyed to occupy. For example, depictions of the Solomonic era's wealth, glory, peace, and unity amongst Israel may be criticisms of the Yehudite reading community's reality, but they are also surely criticisms of the fact that the literary Israel is depicted with a relatively lowly status, lack of social and political stability, lack of unity between Judah and Israel, lack of peace, lack of adherence to YHWHism, etc.

The utopian ideals which are negotiated within 1 Kgs 1-11 must therefore also be understood within the golden age narrative structure in which they are located. Like Jobling,[8] I use the concept of the golden age, which properly belongs to classical mythology, to explore the literary creation and loss of an idealized period

[8] David Jobling, "'Forced Labor': Solomon's Golden Age and the Question of Literary Representation" *Semeia* 54 (1992): 58-59.

of time within the Solomonic narrative. While several prominent scholars within utopian studies do not consider golden age narratives to be properly utopian, the employment of golden age structures to criticize and mobilize desires for an ideal community in a visionary exploration is a common format through which ancient texts negotiate utopian thought.[9] Thus, I see utopia and golden age narratives as potentially overlapping but different concepts; the former being means of discursive negotiation and the latter being a structural device. On their own, utopias simply reflect a discursive attitude, a vision about how things could or should be. They express an alternative society in the past, present, or future, and can take on a number of different shapes within different discursive contexts.

Golden ages contribute to a narrative structure which highlights movement between an ideal state and a less than ideal reality within a larger continuum of time according to general rise or decline narrative trajectories. Golden age narratives are constructed in relation to a present society and highlight differences between current times and a remote time when ideals and possibilities were (or will be) realized, thereby construing the present as less desirable. Golden ages may belong to a particular group's past history, or may depict a golden age that is yet to come in the future, but they invariably imply a trajectory in time. A utopian vision does not have to entail a narrative history and may be situated in the past, present, or future; it may simply reflect a discursive vision about how things could or should be.

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[9] A point also made by Rhiannon Evans, *Utopia Antiqua: Readings of the Golden Age and Decline at Rome* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2, who argues that golden age narratives are "important in harnessing the political and cultural potential of the utopian" in her exploration of Roman thought literature.

Golden ages, on the other hand, imply and belong to a larger temporal narrative framework that demonstrates a continuous but evolving group identity throughout a narrated history. Utopian discourse can certainly be employed within a narrative structure that makes use of golden ages. Indeed, the Solomonic narrative contributes to the structure of Israel's imagined history as a lost golden age, and also serves as grounds for the negotiation of utopian and dystopian categories within biblical thought.

CHAPTER 2

The Solomonic Narrative's Problematization of Utopian and Dystopian Categories

Understandably, the constitution of utopian categories is not necessarily straightforward. With the exception of a minority of scholars who assert that 1 Kgs 1-11 depicts Solomon in thoroughly negative terms,[10] the Solomonic narrative in 1 Kgs is widely understood to reflect an idealized portrait of the Solomonic era and the subsequent loss of this ideal state. There is much debate as to when exactly the narrative shifts from its depiction of an idyllic kingdom to a problem-ridden state whose collapse is inevitable.[11] Several influential studies have argued that the Solomonic period is depicted as a utopia until ch. 11.[12]

While it is undisputed that ch. 11 is not part of the idealized depiction of the Solomonic era, in my view chs. 1-2 also are not part of the idealized portrait of Solomon's reign but proceed it. Thus I would identify three strata of periodization in 1 Kgs 1-11: the chaotic succession period of chs. 1-2, the subsequent golden age

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[10] See John A. Davies "'Discerning Between Good And Evil': Solomon as a New Adam in 1 Kings." *The Westminster Theological Journal* 73 (2011): 39 for a good summary of recent scholarly interpretations of 1 Kgs 1-11.

[11] See Jerome T. Walsh, "The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5." *CBQ* 57 (1995): 472 for a summary of different scholarly opinions on the matter.

[12] Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies* (HSM 52; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993), 77-134 argues that the Solomonic kingdom is depicted as a golden age which comes to an end in chapter 11. David Jobling, "'Forced Labor': Solomon's Golden Age and the Question of Literary Representation." *Semeia* 54 (1992): 57-76 argues that chaps. 3-10 repress negative elements (which surface in chapters 1-2 and in the kingdom's downfall in chapter 11) in order to depict a golden age. Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson, "Did Biran Kill David? The Bible in Light of Archaelogy," *JSOT* 19 (1994): 16 also assert that the United Monarchy was remembered as a golden age in Israel's imagined history.

that is established in chs. 3-10 and which falls under my consideration of utopian negotiations in the memory of Solomon's reign, and ch. 11, which details the loss of the ideal period.[13] However, given the complicated and negotiatory nature of utopian discourse within any particular social group, the task of determining whether Solomon's reign in 1 Kgs 3-10 is depicted as a utopia does not do justice to the complexity of the text at hand; therefore, I will take up Uhlenbruch's suggestion that scholarly discussion move towards "measuring degrees to which certain aspects of a text might be like or unlike utopia, rather than merely deciding whether it is or is not a utopia."[14]

1 Kgs 1-11 displays a literary dependence upon common ancient near eastern markers of the ideal monarch and kingdom for its depiction of the Solomonic era,[15] as Lasine succinctly demonstrates:

> On the surface, the report of Solomon's prosperous reign seems to meet all the expectations raised by these biblical and extra-biblical texts. Like Azitiwada and the king of Ps 72:8 Solomon greatly extends the boundaries of his rule (1

[13] Of course, periodization is a construct which pertains to how the past is organized and conceptualized. As I am concerned with utopian negotiation in the memory of the Solomonic narrative, this identification of three periods of Solomon's reign according to their potential to be read as utopian, chaotic, or even dystopian is not the only way to view Israel's imagined past and at times in this thesis I also periodize the Solomonic era in different ways when it is useful to do so, taking chs. 1-10 as a unit preceding the division of the kingdom, for instance.

[14] Uhlenbruch, "Reconstructing Realities."

[15] For a detailed examination of this literary reliance, see K. Lawson Younger, Jr., "The Figurative Aspect and the Contextual Method in the Evaluation of the Solomonic Empire (1 Kings 1-11)" in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: essays in celebration of forty years of biblical studies in the University of Sheffield* (eds. David J.A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter. JSOTSup 87. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 157-175. For a detailed comparison between the portrayal of the ideal monarch in Solomon and that in Shulgi, see S.N. Kramer, "Solomon and Sulgi: A Comparative Portrait," in *Ah, Assyria…: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (eds. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Ephal. ScrHier 33. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1991), 189- 195, particularly p. 192.

> Kgs 5:1,4 H). Like Hatshepsut he has no enemies (1 Kgs 5:18 H). And like Naram-Sin and Azitiwada he brings peace of mind, security, and happiness to the land (1 Kgs 5:4-5 H) so that the people of Judah and Israel can eat, drink, and make merry (1 Kgs 4:20), as did Panammu's people. As was the case with Panammu, Solomon is wealthy because of his wisdom; he displays the "wide understanding" sought by Sargon and his successors (1 Kgs 5:9 H; AR II, 127; 670). Like many of these kings, Solomon receives tribute from all lands (1 Kgs 5:1 H) and engages in trade with another monarch who satisfies his desires (1 Kgs 5:22- 23). As was the case with Gudea, to whom a god also appeared in dreams (Jacobsen: 389-403), trees and precious metals are brought to Solomon from foreign lands for the erection of a temple (1 Kgs *5-6* H; cf. 10:14-25).[16]

One interpretive possibility is to understand 1 Kgs 1-11's employment of standard ancient near eastern markers of excellency as indicating that Solomon was not only an exceptional king within Israel's history, but that his kingship excelled that of Israel's neighbors, propelling Israel's status in the world and creating a golden age in its history.

However, the suggestion that the book of Kings depicts Solomon's kingdom prior to its downfall in utopian terms raises red flags for many scholars. These scholars appeal to certain so-called anti-monarchic texts such as 1 Sam 8, Deut 17:14-20, and Judg 8:22-23 in order to argue that the portrait of Solomon's worldly success is in fact a critique. Lasine notes the fundamental indeterminacy of the employment of utopian configurations in the Solomonic narrative: although there are strong affinities between 1 Kgs 1-11 and other royal ancient near eastern texts, this does not necessarily mean that we "should read the biblical text in terms of the

[16] Stuart Lasine "The King of Desire: Indeterminacy, Audience, and the Solomon Narrative." *Semeia* 71 (1995): 94. However, Solomon does differ from the ideal ancient near eastern monarch in one significant sense: he is not depicted as a fearsome military power but is associated with peace, as I shall discuss below.

genre conventions which govern such texts" as "in the immediate context of the Deuteronomistic History these features could also be interpreted as examples of parody, irony, or hyperbole."[17] The latter reading strategy is preferred by scholars such as Eslinger,[18] Hays,[19] Miles,[20] and most extensively, Brueggemann, who argues that irony is employed "to articulate elements of incongruity, complexity, and paradox that lie below the surface of what seems to be a single, tranquil, harmonious utopia."[21] According such a reading, 1 Kgs 1-11 employs all the literary devices of a standard ancient near eastern royal account only so it can undermine the royal ideology which underlies it.

However, the extent to which texts such as Deut 17:14-20 or 1 Sam 8 shape the characterization of Solomon in 1 Kgs 1-11 is a contested issue. In particular, studies by Knoppers and Levinson have convincingly argued that there is a substantial difference between the monarchic ideals expressed in Deuteronomy and those which we find in the so-called Deuteronomistic History, and that we cannot simply judge the behavior of kings described in the Book of Kings according to

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[17] *Ibid.,* 90.

[18] Lyle Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God* (Bible and Literature Series. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 123-181.

[19] J. Daniel Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him? Narrative Subtlety in 1 Kings 1-11." *JSOT* 28 (2003): 149- 174.

[20] Johnny E. Miles, *Wise King-- Royal Fool: Semiotics, Satire and Proverbs 1-9* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 44.

[21] Walter Brueggemann. *Solomon: Israel's Ironic Icon of Human Achievement.* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), xii.

Deuteronomic values.[22] What we have instead are several key texts with their own distinct voices. While the assumption of a consistent ideology between these divergent texts in no longer tenable, it is nevertheless clear that they stand in dialogue with one another. The highly intertextual nature of 1 Kgs 1-11 creates a multifaceted and complex portrait of Solomon and his kingdom. As Lasine notes, our identification of and priority given to different potential intertexts plays a significant role in shaping interpretation.[23]

There is yet another factor contributing to the complicated account of the Solomonic era. The Solomonic narrative draws upon many well-known utopian tropes which depict the Solomonic monarchy as Israel's prototypical utopian kingdom. However, this otherwise glowing portrait of the period is replete with undeveloped references mentioned almost in passing to what appears to be condemnable activity, which has lead to an interesting discussion as to how to read a text that at once reads like a utopia, but also seems to contain several flaws in the vision. Do these small suggestions of flaws within the utopian vision undermine the otherwise seemingly laudatory account of Solomon's reign, revealing cracks in the façade, as some suggest?[24] Fox argues that many scholars are too quick to scour the text for contradictions or what he considers to be unintended ambivalence.

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[22] Gary N. Knoppers, "The Deuteronomist and the Deuteronomic Law of the King : A Reexamination of a Relationship," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 329–346 and Bernard M. Levinson, "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah." *VT* 51 (2001): 511-534.

[23] Lasine, "King of Desire," 85-118.

[24] Cf. Hays, "Has the Narrator Come," 149-174; Terrence Fretheim, *First and Second Kings* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 20; Jerome T. Walsh, *1 Kings* (Berit Olam. Collegeville, Minn. : Liturgical Press, 1996), 130.

According to Fox, such an approach results in a misreading due to an overemphasis placed on flaws above the overall picture created by the text:

> The roughnesses that do exist are largely residues of compositional history and do not constitute the meaning of any synchronic level in the text's development. In fact, this story provides a good illustration of how authors (including active redactors, such as the Deuteronomist [Dtr]) foreclose potential indeterminacies with constraints on reading.[25]

Fox's reading, however, actively disregards elements of the text based on his assessment of what the Deuteronomist intended to portray and include in the text. Identifying the intentions of the author (or authors) of the text is a speculative and ultimately impossible task. In my view, Fox's view that we should not focus on textual roughness to the exclusion of seeing the predominate idealized nature of the kingdom's depiction can be accommodated by an approach to the text that factors in the roles of the *epoché* and disbelief that figure into a mode of reading which is particular to utopian texts. The utopian logic of the text asks that the reader suspend any disbelief in the vision in order to share in the fantasy world which it creates, though elements of disbelief find expression in several hiccups throughout the text.

Such hiccups do not go unnoticed in a genre which depends upon the maintenance of a certain level of *epoché* on the part of the reading community in

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[25] Michael V. Fox, "The Uses of Indeterminacy." *Semeia* 71 (1995): 182. Fox nevertheless identifies certain ambivalent elements throughout 1 Kgs 1-10 which he claims prepare the way for Solomon's explicit downfall in 1 Kgs 11, such as the "conjunction of a foreign marriage (permitted) and worship at the local Yahwistic altars before the Temple was built (illegitimate, in the Deuteronomic view, but widespread and tolerable)," which "sows the seed for Solomon's corruption reported in 11:4-7" [p. 187].

order to become immersed in the imaginary world of the text. But significantly, these hiccups are not removed from the text altogether. 1 Kgs 1-11—and biblical literature in general—indicates a general preference within biblical tradition to smooth over and direct the reader past a few textual bumps rather than create a flat and untroubled portrait of monarchic glory. This is not because the writers and redactors responsible for these texts were incapable of creating an entirely laudatory account, as we can see by looking at the portrait of the Solomonic period in Chronicles, which is entirely positive.[26]

Rather, the text ventures to negotiate utopian ideals with a level of self-reflection, outlets for questioning, and criticism of said ideals which makes the text complex. The utopia makes an attempt at envisioning its ideal but then asks of its proposed answer, *is* it really ideal? Thus, it is my opinion that we *should* look at the roughness and contradictions in 1 Kgs 1-11, but we should also take note of the ways in which the text attempts to mitigate or justify these small and intermittent details which interrupt the logic of the utopia lest we fail to see the process of utopian negotiation which shapes the text.

The Solomonic Era as a Golden Age

[26] In Chronicles, however, this portrait of glory is associated with the temple rather than the king. Cf. Mark A. Throntveit, "The Idealization of Solomon as the Glorification of God in the Chronicler's Royal Speeches and Royal Prayers," in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium* (ed. Lowell K. Handy. New York: Brill, 1997), 426; Zipora Talshir, "The Reign of Solomon in the Making: Pseudo-Connections Between 3 Kingdoms and Chronicles." *VT* 50 (2000): 243.

Not all scholars are in agreement that the Solomonic era is presented as a golden age in the Book of Kings. Linville, for instance, argues that whereas Chronicles depicts a monarchic golden age, the account in Kings does not. Linville notes that David is depicted as an ambivalent figure in the Book of Samuel and that suspicion is likewise cast on Solomon's reign.[27] Linville suggests that although many heroes are cast throughout the Primary History, "the authors seem quite unwilling to build this sequence into a Utopia," but instead "offer, in place of a clear 'golden age', at least an assortment of 'golden (or better, sacred) moments'" within a structure that conveys "play between social and political entropy and revival that carries the reader to the ultimate destruction of Judah and Israel."[28]

Linville is quite right that Israel's past is depicted with flaws and play between entropy and progress. However, I would argue that the presence of ambivalent elements within the Solomonic narrative does not exclude it from golden age or utopian categories, which often contain traces of disbelief in their own portrait, or the seeds of their undoing. Indeed, according to Jobling, imperfections are a crucial part of golden age narratives. Because golden ages must be lost, Jobling argues that

> All Golden Age mythology entails, in one way or another, an essential contradiction, a rift in the mythic logic.' If the Golden Age represented the absolute ideal, then it could not have come to an end. For if it came to an end,

[27] James Richard Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings: The Past as a Project of Social Identity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 90.

[28] *Ibid.,* 91.

> there must have been something in it that was susceptible of change, of turning into its opposite; but this implies that it was not the absolute ideal.[29]

The flaws which trouble the portrait of the Solomonic narrative are significant and warrant attention, and I will discuss these later. First, however, I would like to propose that the book of Kings depicts Solomon's reign as a culmination of Israel's preceding history from the times of Moses to David, and likewise serves as a precursor to a future golden age in Israel's imagined history. Indeed, the major figures and promises in Israel's history are evoked in the portrait of Solomon's reign in order to create a sense that Solomon has fulfilled a divine purpose initiated in Israel's beginnings. As Parker notes, the borders of Solomon's kingdom depict it as the promised land which has been anticipated since the time of Abraham:

> The text relates that the territory over which Solomon ruled extended 'from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt' (1 Kgs 5.1 [RSV 4.21]). This description matches the ideal of Israel's dominion as given to Abraham (Gen. 15.18) and reiterated by Moses (Deut. 1.7) and Joshua (Josh. 1.4). The boundaries of the kingdom are repeated again in 1 Kgs 5.4 (RSV 4.24), as if to emphasize that the promise to Abraham has been fulfilled during the reign of Solomon. [30]

Significantly, Solomon shows no interest in expanding his empire beyond these ideal borders. His empire is not characterized by progress, innovation, or imperial

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[29] "Forced Labor," 58-59. One notable exception is the depiction of Solomon's golden age in Chr. Solomon's golden age does not end due to internal problems which had been present in his golden age all along, but because YHWH inexplicably brought about a turn of Israel's fortunes due to no fault of Solomon, and indeed, after Solomon has died (2 Chr 10:15).

[30] K.I. Parker, "Solomon as Philosopher King? The Nexus of Law and Wisdom in 1 Kings 1-11," *JSOT* 17 (1992): 79

ambition to conquer new territories,[31] but by the materialization of a divine order established long ago.

The regional Solomonic empire is thus crucial in supplying Israel with a history and in exploring its ideals through the construction of a past utopia. Solomon's golden age therefore represents the telos towards which Israel's previous history has been moving and the starting point for visions of a future empire which will go beyond these dreams of regional hegemony, instead imagining Israel at the center of a global empire. The result is a helical construction of time, whereby the future is in some ways a restoration of the past but nevertheless implies a trajectory of progress. Of course, the Solomonic empire does include elements of a world empire, even if this fantasy can only be fully explored in the construction of Israel's imagined future empire. At a few points in the utopian vision of the Solomonic era, Jerusalem is imagined not only at the center of a regional empire, but as an *axis mundi*. While Solomon's kingdom may only cover the defeated Canaanite territory, his wisdom—and the name of YHWH—extend a global influence, and the whole world draws to Jerusalem in search of this wisdom (5:14 [Eng. 4:34] 10:23-24). The arrival of ships from Ophir (9:28; 10:11) and Tarshish (10:22), and a queen from Sheba also serve as images of world hegemony that will come to typify Israel's glorious future.

Solomon's kingdom therefore is a golden age in which Israel thrives within the land which has come to represent an ideal state of existence. The promised land

[31] Though Solomon does display imperial ambitions in other ways, namely in exerting ideological influence over other peoples, as I will explore below.

is characterized by a lack of want, a land flowing with milk and honey. It is here that Israel will find rest and security, which the Solomonic account emphasizes has come to pass in Solomon's time with the statement that "during Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan to Beersheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees" (5:5; Eng. 4:25). The land is also associated with the promise of abundant progeny to fill it. Thus whereas the theme of barrenness and the threat of not having progeny is prominent throughout the narratives of Israel's first patriarchs and matriarchs, under Solomon YHWH's promise to Abraham that his descendants will be "as numerous as the sand on the seashore" (Gen 22:17) is achieved (1 Kgs 4:20; cf. 1 Kgs 3:8, 5:21 Eng. 5:7), and Israel becomes a "great people" (3:8; 5:21 Eng. 5:7).[32]

As with many societies ancient and modern, the stories within biblical literature define Israel according to its association with a particular deity and connection to a particular land.[33] The exodus is construed as the foundational event which established Israel's identity as YHWH's chosen people, as Ben Zvi notes,[34] and

[32] Cf. Parker, "Solomon as Philosopher King," 79, who suggests that the fact that "the narrative consistently emphasizes great numbers of people *('am râb)* indicates that Solomon's kingdom represents a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham."

[33] Katherine M. Stott, "A Comparative Study of the Exilic Gap in Ancient Israelite, Messenian and Zionist Collective Memory," in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* (ed. G.N. Knoppers and K.A. Ristau; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 41-48 argues that the centrality of the land to the construction of the identity of Israel within biblical literature contributes to the "exilic gap" see esp. pp. 55-57. "The identity of the communities examined in this essay is very much based on a connection to the homeland. As a result, periods of the past in which this bond is broken are deemphasized/shortened."

[34] Ehud Ben Zvi, "Exploring the Memory of Moses 'The Prophet' in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah" in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian & Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (eds. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 340.

likewise, YHWH is often constructed within biblical narratives as "the one who brought Israel out of Egypt."[35] Israel's establishment within the borders of the land promised to it represents a closure to the overarching metanarrative of deliverance from Egypt and the accompanying promise of inheritance of the land (Ex. 3:8). [36] The narration of Solomon's glorious kingdom portrays the united kingdom as the endpoint towards which Israel's history has been directed and therefore an actualization of identity as the community imagines it "should" be. Of course, the ideal state of the Solomonic era is quickly lost (1 Kgs 11) and projected onto a final, future utopian time which will embody the sense of completion and harmony achieved in the Solomonic kingdom, but without the flaws that led to its collapse.

The Memory of Egypt and the Exodus in the Construction of Solomon's Golden Age

It is no surprise therefore that the memory of the exodus is evoked throughout the Solomonic narrative in 1 Kgs 1-11 in order to negotiate the ideal state that would characterize Israel's deliverance and also to contribute to the

[35] Cf. Deut 20:1; Josh 24:17; Judg 2:1; 6:8; 1 Sam 8:8; 10:18; 12:6; 1 Kgs 8:21; 9:9; 2 Kgs 17:7, 36; Jer 16:14; 23:7; Hos 12:13; Amos 2:10; 9:7; Mic 6:4; Ps 81:10.

[36] That the completion of the temple symbolizes the completion of Israel's exodus from Egypt and inheritance of the land is suggested in 1 Kgs 6:1 and 8:21. 6:1 presents the temple's construction in relation to the exodus, stating that work on the temple began 480 years after the Israelites came out of Egypt and only after this continuing with the more standard building formula which places the construction of the temple within a certain year of the king's reign. Nevertheless, the temple's completion, together with that of the palace, is presented as having occurred exactly halfway through Solomon's reign as Edward Lipinski, "Hiram of Tyre and Solomon" in *The Books of Kings: Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception* (eds. Baruch Halpern and André Lemaire. Boston: Brill, 2010), 256.

depiction of the loss of this golden age. Solomon's memory is strikingly intertwined with Egypt throughout 1 Kgs 1-11 (3:1, 15; 5:10, Eng. 4:30; 6:1; 8:9, 16, 21, 51, 53; 9:9, 16, 24; 10:28-29; 11:17-22, 40) with his alliance with Pharaoh through marriage (3:1), Egyptian horses (10:28), references to his wisdom as surpassing that of the people of the East and Egypt (5:10; Eng. 4:30), and strong assertions that the temple represents YHWH's completed delivery of Israel from Egypt and into the promised land. Immediately following the announcement that "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" (2:46), the first action Solomon makes is a marriage alliance with Pharaoh (3:1), the significances of which are multiple.

In the preceding chapters, Solomon's odds as a monarch are not good. He is not the successor to the throne and his kingship is gained through the covert measures of the prophet Nathan and his mother Bathsheba. Saulide support is still present within the narrative, as represented by the reappearance of Shimei in the story,[37] and Solomon also has a familial contender for the throne, with Adonijah's attempt to take the throne from David paralleling Absalom's.[38] Lastly, Joab, a symbol of David's lack of control over even those who are loyal to him, poses a threat to Solomon's succession with his support of Adonijah. When Solomon arises as king out of this murky scenario following a chaotic bloodbath of the potential

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[37] Shimei's importance as lingering Saulide support in the story is argued by Serge Frolov, "Succession Narrative: A 'Document' or a Phantom?" *JBL* 121 (2002): 99-100.

[38] Claudia V. Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible.* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 163, has pointed out the similarity between Adonijah's attempt to take Abishag, a source of sexual humiliation for David, for himself, and Absalom's shaming of David through violating David's sexual property.

threats to the throne,[39] the resolute statement that "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" (2:46) creates a sense of dramatic suspense. Solomon has obtained full control of the throne: now what?

The next verse signals a dramatic reversal of the kingdom's fate. Israel has quickly gone from being ruled by a weak, feeble, and senile king whose grasp of what is going on in his kingdom is seemingly limited[40] to being a people significant enough to warrant a marriage alliance with Pharaoh. Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter signals Israel's suddenly elevated status given the prestige associated with such a marriage alliance. The esteem of a marriage alliance with Egypt is particularly elevated due to Egypt's general refusal to marry Egyptian royal women to foreign monarchs.[41] Indeed, Egyptian royal policy makes it clear that while Egypt would gladly accept foreign women in diplomatic marriage, Egyptian royals were generally not willing to reciprocate, allowing them to symbolically

[39] Though it is crucial to note that Solomon himself is always one element removed from the violence himself and unlike David, never slays one of his enemies.

[40] Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy*, 161 notes that David's inability to know is a leitmotif throughout 1 Kgs 1: his inability to know Abishag (1:4) mirrors the fact that he doesn't know about Adonijah's play for power (1:11, 18).

[41] There are, however, exceptions to this rule. Notably, the widowed queen Ankhesenamun requested a Hittite prince in marriage, supposedly in order to supply Egypt with a king as she states that she herself has no sons (cf. "Suppiluliumas and the Egyptian Queen," translated by Albrecht Goetze [*ANET*, 319]). This situation, however, is certainly not normative and possibly is an act of desperation in the face of internal political intrigue due to a vacuum of power and external threat, as Alan R. Schulman, "Diplomatic Marriage in the Egyptian New Kingdom," *JNES* 38 (1979): 179-180 proposes. Whatever motivated Ankhesenamun to seek out a foreign marriage, Musilis's writings ("Plague Prayers of Mursilis," translated by Albrecht Goetze, [*ANET*, 395]) indicate that the Hittite prince selected to marry her was killed before reaching Egypt. The other proposed instance of Egyptian royal women marrying into foreign courts are the possible cases of Tany and Herit, as Schulman, "Diplomatic Marriage," 181-182 has also proposed. However, Kim S. B. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt During the Second Intermediate Period, c. 1800-1550 B.C* (CNI Publications 20. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1997), 257 has since challenged the proposal that Tany and Herit were of Egyptian origin and has also proposed that there is no indication that either were married to Hyksos kings. It seems that so long as Egypt was in a position to do so, it generally refused to marry its own royal women to foreign monarchs.

communicate a sense of superiority over other monarchs.[42] Not in Solomon's case, however. The newly crowned king is given Pharaoh's own daughter in marriage even before he has had any significant accomplishments, and he brings Pharaoh's daughter to Jerusalem before having finished (or even started, for that matter) the building projects required of a king:[43] his palace, the temple, and a wall around the city (3:1).

Nevertheless, we may wonder about Solomon's alliance with Pharaoh, particularly because the inheritance of the promised land is to represent Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Does Solomon's alliance with Pharaoh indicate that Israel's bondage to Egypt will continue in the promised land? Whatever reservations we might have about Solomon's alliance with Pharaoh appear to be assuaged. An enormous figure in the history of the ancient near east, Israelite historiography imagines Pharaoh as having been a minor figure in the region, imagined as having been absent in Canaan prior to Israel's conquest of the land as Ben Zvi notes[44] and certainly not intruding on the reign of Solomon. In the idealized depiction of Solomon's reign in 1 Kgs 3-10 it is clear that Solomon alone is the monarch who is responsible for the fate of the region.

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[42] Amenhotep III's supposed response to the King of Babylon's request for an Egyptian daughter for marriage that "from old, the daughter of an Egyptian king has not been given in marriage to anyone," EA 4.6-7 (translation taken from William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* [Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992], 8-9), is interpreted as a slight, particularly since the Babylonians have already agreed to send one of their royal women to the Egyptian court.

[43] Arvid S. Kapelrud, "Temple Building, a Task for Gods and Kings," *Or* 32 (1963): 56.

[44] Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Study of Forgetting and the Forgotten in Ancient Israelite Discourse/s: Observations and Test Cases" in *Cultural Memory in Biblical Exegesis* (eds. Pernille Carstens, Trine Hasselbach and Niels Peter Lemche. Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts 17. Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2012), 11. Indeed, in the world of the text, Egypt does not express interest in conquering the region until the time of Josiah.

Indeed, in Israel's imagined history, the world seems to revolve around Solomon: Pharaoh's only exertion of influence in the region contributes to the text's utopian vision of the nations lining up to exalt Israel and bring gifts to the cosmic center in Jerusalem (10:25; 5:14, Eng. 4:34). In one of the boldest expressions of this utopian desire to see the nations act according to and even willingly participate in the ideal order of YHWH, Pharaoh's sole role in the united kingdom acts in order to further the aims of the Solomonic empire, giving Solomon the last piece of territory which will complete Solomon's dominion of the promised land as a wedding gift (9:16). Rather than representing a threat to Israel, even Egypt acts on its behalf according to YHWH's plans and as Ben Zvi notes, the symbolism is strong: in the idealized Solomonic era, "the symbol of Israel's servitude ("Pharaoh") is of service to Solomon."[45] Solomon's alliance with Egypt is therefore utopian, imagining even the greatest world power as working in service of the Israelite empire and representing a complete reversal of Israel's enslavement in Egypt.

The most prominent symbol of Israel's deliverance and reversal of its enslavement in Egypt is the temple.[46] With its association with permanence (2 Sam 7:6), the temple is the official marker that Israel's years of wandering are over and its deliverance from Egypt is truly complete.[47] Indeed, the tent is associated with

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[45] *Ibid*., 13.

[46] Indeed, the beginning of the construction of the temple is set in time in relation to how many years after the exodus (480) had passed before the temple, only then stating the year of Solomon's reign in which construction began.

[47] Michael Avioz, "The Characterization of Solomon in Solomon's Prayer (1 Kings 8)," *BN* 126 (2005): 22 notes that the temple officially symbolizes the end of the period of Israel's wandering and the establishment of a more permanent situation, but sees other allusions to Eygpt as signs that Solomon becomes a second Pharaoh of sorts, oppressing Israel. Like Pharaoh, Avioz maintains that

wandering (vss. 7, 9), whereas YHWH will "plant" Israel in the appointed place (i.e. Jerusalem; vs. 10) and both the Davidic house and YHWH's house will also be established (vs. 13), associating the house with permanent settlement. The dedication of the temple in 1 Kgs 8 thus continually employs the memory of the exodus in order to depict the temple's erection as the long-awaited final antidote to Israel's enslavement in Egypt, as Knoppers notes:

> The major movements in 1 Kings 8—the *mise en scène,* the elevation of the ark, the appearance of the (divine) cloud, the offering of thousands of sacrifices, the Solomonic discourses on the Davidic promises and the Torah of Moses, and the celebration of the festival—all serve to integrate the temple and Solomon's prayer itself into Israel's corporate life. The Deuteronomist portrays the dedication of the temple as the culmination of Israelite history since the exodus and as the dawn of a new era for king, cult, and people.[48]

Solomon himself clearly communicates that the rest achieved in his era represents the achievement of the longed for state of existence and the fulfillment of the promise under which Israel's previous history operates: "blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel according to all that he promised; not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke through his servant Moses" (8:56). This state of fulfillment reaches its heights with the image of a united Israel

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Solomon marries an Egyptian royal, that the store cities in 1 Kgs 9:19 allude to Exod 1:11, and that the people's complaint in 1 Kgs 12:4 about "hard service" allude to enslavement under pharaoh in Exod 1:14; 6:9, Deut 16:6.

[48] Gary N. Knoppers, "Prayer and Propaganda: Solomon's Dedication of the Temple and the Deuteronomist's Program," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 232-233.

rejoicing at the completed temple and offering hundreds of thousands of sacrifices (8:63) in a scene of immense joy.[49]

However, whereas the golden age may be constructed as a delivery from and reversal of Israel's enslavement in Egypt, the loss of this ideal in the eventual destruction of the temple and exile are construed as a new sort of exodus, but with the Babylonians assuming the role of the Egyptians and the exile taking the place of servitude in Egypt as Linville proposes.[50] This reversal is signified immediately following Solomon's descent into folly in ch. 11. Pharaoh's utopian role as a facilitator of Solomon's reign is reversed in ch. 11 where Solomon and his kingdom's glory are undone. It is no coincidence that it is Pharaoh who harbors Solomon's adversaries Hadad and Jeroboam in Egypt (11:17-22, 40). Further, the favor Pharaoh had previously extended to Solomon in granting him a rare and sought-after diplomatic marriage is now instead offered to Hadad, who is given an Egyptian royal wife (11:19). Thus, it would seem that while reference to the exodus and Israel's standing with respect to Pharaoh are integral in the conception of Israel's attainment of the ideal state of existence so crucial in the construction of its identity

[49] Although this is not the place to explore this issue in detail, it is worth noting that while 1 Kgs 8 strongly construes Solomon and the completed temple as representing a fulfillment of the promises made to Moses and the completion of Israel's deliverance, Solomon and his wisdom are a radical departure from Moses and Mosaic wisdom. Although the Mosaic tablets are placed in the ark in the temple (8:9) and are thus at the symbolic center of the kingdom, Solomon is never imagined as disseminating wisdom from the torah, but his wisdom is manifest in other ways, such as his wise judgment (1 Kgs 3), his ability to compose 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs (5:12 [Eng. 4:32]), knowledge of flora and fauna (5:13 [Eng. 4:33]), temple-building, and so on. Nevertheless, the strong link between wisdom and torah that we see in Ben Sira (cf. Sir 24:23) is already hinted at in the Book of Proverbs, suggesting that torah and wisdom were associated long before the composition of Ben Sira as is often suggested. If this is the case, Solomon's wisdom, while not Mosaic, need not be viewed as being opposed to Mosaic wisdom, either.

[50] Cf. Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings*, 266.

as a people chosen by YHWH for a glorious future, the role that Pharaoh and Egypt play in the exploratory experience of this golden age is precarious. Pharaoh, along with the rest of the world, must accept and contribute to YHWH's world order in Israel's envisioned utopian scenario, but the close proximity to Pharaoh and Egypt are—at least in Solomon's doomed golden age—a source of tension.

The Peace of the Solomonic Empire

While Solomon is a paradigm of royal success according to ancient near eastern standards, his character lacks one significant quality that is typically associated with kingship: Solomon is a king who has never known war. Whereas the ideal ancient near eastern king is often imagined in combat lions, or fighting a battle parallel to a cosmic counterpart being fought by the gods, or boasting about his fearsome qualities or how many he has subdued,[51] Solomon is depicted as a man of peace. To be sure, harmony and order are common themes which depict good rulership, as we can see in Assyrian and Achaemenid reliefs which depict subjugated peoples lined up in an orderly fashion before the emperor and contributing gifts to

[51] Thus within Assyrian ideology, the king is presented as working on Assur's behalf to conquer chaos. In Achaemenid thought, the king is conceived of as warrior despite the empire's emphasis on peace and harmony in its domain (hence the quintessential image of the king carrying a bow; for more on which see Mark B. Garrison, "Archers at Persepolis: The Emergence of Royal Ideology at the Heart of the Empire," in *The World of Achaemenid Persia : History, Art and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of a Conference at the British Museum 29th September-1st October 2005* [eds. John Curtis and St. John Simpson; London: I.B. Tauris, 2010], 337-359.). Ancient near eastern art consistently depicts the king as a warrior with the exception of Neo-Babylonian art, though few Neo-Babylonian royal reliefs have been found. (cf. Erica Ehrenberg. "Dieu et Mon Droit: Kingship in Late Babylonian and Early Persian Times" in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (Chicago, Ill: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 104.

the center. No empire imagined chaos or constant warfare as its ideal endpoint.[52] However, imperial might was imagined as playing an important role in enforcing and maintaining this state of order. In contrast, Solomon's ideal state of harmony cannot be induced by military intervention and instead arises organically as a product of Solomon's peace and wisdom.[53]

The quality of rest within the Solomonic golden age in 1 Kgs 3-10 serves to demarcate a sense of sacred time and space. Rest represents both the ultimate fulfillment of Israel's deliverance and inheritance, but is also a quality that is fundamental to the establishment of the temple. Indeed, it is not simply because Israel realizes YHWH's promises that the state of rest is achieved in Solomonic times, but more so because within biblical thought, the building of the temple can only be conceptualized within certain parameters. One such characteristic that must define the story that recounts the temple's establishment is that the temple must arise out of a state of rest. This conceptualization of the temple stands in contrast to Assyrian understandings of conquest as preceding and following temple building.[54] Indeed, when Solomon begins his preparations for the temple, he evokes

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[52] Lasine, "King of Desire," 93 notes several instances of ancient near eastern kings emphasizing the same sense of order and security that one finds in the Solomonic narrative in the book of Kings.

[53] The lack of bloodshed that is fundamental to the construction of Solomon's golden age is not the only way that YHWH's order is imagined as being precipitated. Visions of might which bring about harmony are also present within biblical literature, particularly in YHWH's depiction as a warrior king.

[54] Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos, Temple, House: Building and Wisdom in Ancient Mesopotamia and Israel," in *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible* (eds. Mark J. Boda and Jamie Novotny. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010), 403 notes that the pattern of military victory and temple building are common in Assyrian inscriptions and reflect the ideology that the temple god ensures military victory which will sustain the temple.

and reinterprets the memory of 2 Sam 7 in order to stress a connection between peace, rest, and temple building, stating that "David could not build a house for the name of YHWH his god because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until YHWH put them under the soles of his feet. But now YHWH my god has given me rest on every side" (1 Kgs 5:17-18; Eng. vss. 3-4).

Chronicles develops the contingency of temple building on peace and rest to the fullest by explicitly stating that David was not permitted to build the temple because he shed too much blood (1 Chr 22:8), which as Niditch notes, reflects a purity ideology which sees blood as defiling.[55] In Chronicles, Solomon is "the man of rest" (vs. 9) to build "the house of rest" (1 Chr 28:2), expressions which Jonker notes are unique in the Hebrew Bible and develop a prominent theological theme of rest within Chronicles,[56] creating a portrait of a peaceful king resembling Achaemenid and Greek royal *Pax* discourses.[57]

The importance of peace and rest as precursors to the establishment of the Jerusalemite temple extends beyond practical concerns and is part of a conceptual set of conditions in which the establishment of the temple can be conceived. Indeed, 1 Kgs 3-10 goes far beyond merely establishing that there is enough stability that such a building project could plausibly take place and instead depicts a mythical and

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[55] Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 140.

[56] Jonker, Louis C. "The Chronicler's Portrayal of Solomon as the King of Peace Within the Context of the International Peace Discourses of the Persian Era." *OTE* 3 (2008): 657.

[57] Cf. *Ibid.*

active sense of peace as an agent within history, not as a mere indication of the absence of war.

Peace as a Condition of Temple Building

The building of the temple is envisioned as being fundamentally inimical to violence.[58] Just as no iron tool can be used in building the altar in the tabernacle (Exod 20:25; cf. Deut 27:5), so too was the temple "built with stone finished at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built" (1 Kgs 6:7). During his reign (leaving aside the enemies that arise after his "fall"), Solomon has no enemies or misfortune (1 Kgs 5:18; Eng. 5:4),[59] and the end of Solomon's golden age is therefore demarcated by the onslaught of adversaries who plague Solomon towards the end of his rule.[60] As previously mentioned, even the ultimate would-be "Other" in the story, Pharaoh,

[58] This association of the temple with non-violence is consistent throughout a variety of genres and books within biblical literature. Cf. the vision of weapons being turned into farming implements as they gather to hear YHWH's instruction in Isa 2:2-4 and in Micah 4:1-5; Isa 11:1-9; 60:17-18; 65:17-25. Of course, this ideological construction of the temple in non-violent terms does not mean that the reading community was not aware of the fact that the actual temple existed in times of war and violence.

[59] However, of Solomon's adversaries who are introduced in the narrative in 1 Kgs 11, Rezon is said to have been an adversary all the days of Solomon (11:25). This "contradiction" is part of the logic of the text. The depiction of Solomon's reign in 1 Kgs 3-10 is, as Solomon boasts to Hiram, free of conflict—a portrait which is emphasized by the amount of turmoil that characterize the period leading up to the establishment of the golden age (within the Solomonic narrative itself in chs. 1-2 and within the Davidic reign preceding Solomon) and which reappears as part of the fall. However, the narration of Solomon's fall creates the sense that it was inevitable and transposes many symbols of previous success into symbols of failure, undermining the previous utopian portrait of the era.

[60] A point also made by Gary N. Knoppers, "'There Was None Like Him' : Incomparability in the Books of Kings." *CBQ* 54 (1992): 416.

becomes familiarized.[61] All threat is removed when dealing with foreigners, who to some extent become "Israelitized," helping Israel, praising YHWH (cf. Hiram and the queen of Sheba), and having a share in the temple when Solomon asks that foreigners who recognize YHWH be heard by him (8:41-43).[62]

Indeed, foreign powers do not represent potential threats but for Solomon, all the world seems to be a potential friend. Everyone who comes into contact with Solomon seems to become instantly enchanted by his brilliant wisdom. Solomon starts by winning over his own people: all of Israel stands united in awe (3:28) of his wise judgment in a seemingly impossible case between two liminal and outwardly indistinguishable prostitute mothers (1 Kgs 3:16-28).[63] He achieves peace in the vast dominion that he rules over (5:4, Eng. 4:24). The major blessings of Solomon's kingdom, wealth and glory, are wisdom's accompaniments which YHWH uniquely grants Solomon (3:12-13). Thus, notices throughout 1 Kgs 3-10 that state that YHWH gave Solomon wisdom (5:9, Eng. 4:29; 5:26, Eng. 5:12; 10:24) contribute to the sense that YHWH continually imbues the king with divine wisdom which propels this utopian state.

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[61] As Lasine, "King of Desire," 90 notes, not all pharaohs are cast in the same light as the antagonist of Exodus. Nevertheless, the helpful role of Pharaoh in 1 Kgs 3-10 surely takes on significance in contrast to the strong association of the figure of Pharaoh with oppression.

[62] Of course, Solomon's reference to the acceptance of the prayers of foreigners in the temple does not refer specifically to Solomon's times, but is a prayer of a universal nature.

[63] As Phyllis Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts" in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (ed. Alice Bach; New York: Routledge, 1999), 110 notes, the case is portrayed as seemingly impossible partly due to gender assumptions and constructions of prostitutes as untrustworthy or tricky women. Solomon's display of wisdom depends "on [the women's] marginal status and their reputation for lying and self-interest. It is these commonly shared presuppositions about the harlot that make this case an ideal test, one by which extraordinary wisdom might be demonstrated."

This period of peace, rest, and wisdom does not merely create a golden age within Israel's history, but serves to create a setting within which the building of the temple can take place. The completion of the temple is the central event within the Solomonic narrative and the bulk of the Solomonic narrative recounts the preparations for, construction of, and dedication of the temple. Once Solomon establishes the kingdom in his hands, the need for the temple immediately comes to the foreground of the narrative with remarks that Pharaoh's daughter was brought into Jerusalem until Solomon had completed building his palace, the temple, and the city wall (3:1), followed by a notice that "the people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of YHWH" (vs. 2), and then that in the absence of a temple, even Solomon sacrificed at the high places (vs. 3).[64] Following these three reminders that the temple must be built, Solomon has a dream at Gibeon, where he has been sacrificing in the absence of a temple and consequently receives divine wisdom (3:12).

Solomon's gift of divine wisdom encompasses all faculties, and is immediately demonstrated in the ingenuity he displays in rendering justice (3:16-28). Wisdom (חָכְמָה) serves as a *leitwort* throughout the Solomonic narrative, and this use of wisdom vocabulary to portray Solomon's reign gives it a distinct nature from the preceding and proceeding periods in Israel's imagined history. As Lemaire notes, the strong associations of the term חָכְמָה with the Solomonic reign is unique,

[64] In 2 Chr 8:11, however, Pharaoh's daughter (and all women in general, for that matter) is distanced from the temple. Indeed, Ehud Ben Zvi, "Purity Matters in the Book of Chronicles: a Kind of Prolegomenon," in *Purity, Holiness, and Identity in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Memory of Susan Haber* (eds. Carl S. Ehrlich, Anders Runesson, and Eileen M. Schuller. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), [10] 37-52 argues that 2 Chr 8:11 links the house Solomon builds for Pharaoh's daughter to notions of purity by which women may not enter places where the ark of YHWH has been.

appearing 19 times in 1 Kgs 3-11 but otherwise "absent from the DtrH except for the Succession Narrative" and the song of Deborah (Judg 5:29).[65] 1 Kgs 1-11's depiction of Solomon as a paragon of wisdom took flight within Israelite imagination, resulting in Solomon's character developing into a wisdom figure invoked in multiple contexts in which the community's rich wisdom tradition was being negotiated, which is witnessed by the association of texts pertaining to wisdom with Solomon,[66] including Proverbs, Qohelet, and the Song of Songs.

Solomon's greatest display of divine wisdom, however, is in building the temple. According to Van Leeuwen,

> Kings (human or divine) or their counselors archetypically demonstrate their wisdom by building (big) houses and providing for them. The profound association of (building) great houses and royalty is evident in the semantic history of Semitic and other languages. The metaphor of creation as building has left its traces in the history of the common Semitic root *bny*, "build/create.[67]

The wisdom associated with temple building is emphasized in a number of ways in the Solomonic narrative. When Solomon commissions the temple's construction with King Hiram, Solomon's wisdom is highlighted through Hiram's praise of David's "wise son" (5:21, Eng. 5:7). Those who are involved in the construction of the

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[65] André Lemaire, "Wisdom in Solomonic Historiography," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel* (eds. John Day et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 106-118 [108].

[66] It is clear that there was a tendency for certain genres of literature to become associated with a particular biblical figure as we can see from other biblical texts. For instance, many psalms are identified as "Davidic" with the superscription (לְדָוִד), and others have superscriptions associating them with figures such as Heman (Ps 88), Ethan (Ps 89), Moses (Ps 90), and Jeduthun (Ps 39), one of David's musicians.

[67] "Cosmos," 405.

temple are likewise portrayed as being wise, including Hiram, the artisan commissioned to build the temple, who is described as being "full of skill, intelligence, and knowledge in working bronze" (7:14), a description which Van Leeuwen notes is strikingly similar to Bezalel's qualifications in building the tabernacle (Exod 31:3; 35:1) and to Prov 3:19-20's description of YHWH's creation of the earth. [68]

Indeed, in building the temple, Solomon most closely approaches divine wisdom as the building of the temple reenacts the divine creation of the earth.[69] The temple itself is a cosmogram[70] which represents the world as it should be and as it was at creation. Filled with flower and fruit decorations, the temple represents a garden and invokes the memory of Eden.[71] Building the temple consequently recalls YHWH's creation of a paradisiac world at the beginning of time, delineating a sense of sacred time. The temple's construction in seven years parallels the world's

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[68] Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos," 416

[69] Cf. *ibid.*, "Cosmos," 413.

[70] Dan Lioy, *Axis of Glory: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Temple Motif in Scripture.* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2010), 36.

[71] Davies, "Solomon," 48-49, summarizes the plant imagery succinctly: "The temple decorations enhance the royal garden theme. Pomegranates (the flowers or the fruit; 1 Kgs 7:18, 20, 42) were a popular form of decoration in the ancient Near East, and were used in adorning the priestly garments for the tabernacle service (Exod 28:33-34). They are listed as part of the produce of the Promised Land (Deut 8:8), and hence represent the fruits of the restored Eden in this microcosm. Similarly lotus-shaped designs (traditionally "lilies"; 1 Kgs 7:19, 22, 26), garlands (1 Kgs 7:29, 30, 36), open flowers (1 Kgs 6:18,29,32,35), gourd-shaped reliefs (1 Kgs 6:18; 7:24), palm trees (1 Kgs 6:29, 32, 35, 7:36), a bud-shaped implement (ladle? 1 Kgs 7:49), lions (1 Kgs 7:29, 36), and oxen (1 Kgs 7:25, 29, 44) embellish the temple and its furnishings. The temple also had cherub figures (composite animal forms), not merely in more decorative contexts (1 Kgs 6:32,35; 7:29,36). In a more specific reference to the guardians of the Garden following the expulsion of the first humans, Solomon installs cherubs to guard the access to the throne of God (1 Kgs 6:23-29; 8:6, 7)." See also Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "YHWH's Exalted House—Aspects of the Design and Symbolism of Solomon's Temple," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (ed. John Day. New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 63-110.

creation in seven days (Gen. 1:1-2:4). According to Levenson, the completion of the temple and the sense of rest that accompanies it portrays the construction of the temple as representative of the Sabbath, the crown of creation:

> The two projects cannot ultimately be distinguished or disengaged. Each recounts how God brought about an environment in which he can find "rest." According to Exod. 20:11, "He rested (וַיָּנַח) on the seventh day"; Ps. 132:8 calls on him to rise from his "rest" (מְנוּחָה), identified as the Ark (verse 6) and the Tabernacle (verse 7). The Sabbath and the sanctuary represent the same moment in the divine life, one of exaltation and regal repose, a moment free of anxiety. Thus, the account of the construction of the Tabernacle is punctuated by the injunction to observe the Sabbath in *imitatione Dei* (Exod. 31:12-17, 35:1-3).[72]

This depiction of the establishment of the temple as the crowning moment of creation and the telos of all of Israel's preceding history thus characterizes the surrounding Solomonic order as representing YHWH's creative order as it should be, and Solomon's kingdom becomes a paradise at the center of the world.

Solomon: Man of Peace and Wisdom? 1 Kgs 1-2's Destabilizing Portrait

Solomon's embodiment of wisdom and peace is crucial to his portrayal as the legitimate temple builder both in Kings and Chronicles. Indeed, Weitzman proposes that amongst other things, Solomon's name may refer both to the peace which characterizes his reign and to his role as the offspring of David who is destined to

[72] Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World." *JR* 64 (1984): 288.

complete the temple (2 Sam 7:12).[73] However much the peace and rest of the Solomonic era are stressed as the stage is set for the narrative of the temple's construction, the events leading up to Solomon's consolidation of power and the start of his idyllic reign are a source of unresolved narrative tension.

The shocking portrait of the king who is so deeply associated with peace engaged in the execution of political enemies in 1 Kgs 1-2 does not go unnoticed. Whereas Solomon receives divine approval from birth (2 Sam 12:24-25), as Hays notes, "[n]owhere in the story of Solomon's succession to the throne does the narrative include anything at all resembling Yahweh's direct selection of Solomon."[74] Rather, Solomon's succession to the throne is the result of the initiative of Bathsheba, Nathan, David, and only lastly, from 1 Kgs 1:52 onward, does Solomon actively assert himself in his acquisition of power. Solomon's ascent to the throne is highly ambivalent and it is unlikely that scholarly agreement as to whether Solomon's actions are presented as being legitimate or whether he is depicted as a usurper will be achieved—nor is this the place for a full discussion of the matter. What is important for the present discussion is the fact that 1 Kgs 1-2 presents the establishment of Solomon's reign as chaotic, blood-filled, and undirected by a divine plan--although as Mulder notes, he is also depicted with peaceful imagery, riding a mule (1 Kgs 1:38), which is juxtaposed to the warlike imagery of chariots and horses which surround Adonijah.[75]

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[73] Steven Weitzman, *Solomon: The Lure of Wisdom.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 11

[74] Hays, "Has the Narrator," 158.

[75] Martin J. Mulder, *1 Kings.* Trans. John Vriend. (Leuven: Peeters, 1998): 65.

But his characterization as a man of peace is not the only defining trait of Solomon that 1 Kgs 1-2's depiction of his reign's beginnings destabilize. With his miraculous wisdom, Solomon becomes the prototypical sapiential figure within biblical thought. However, David's ominous command to Solomon to act according to his wisdom (2:6) and his affirmation that Solomon is "a wise man" (2:9) creates a sense of disaccord with the things we usually associate with Solomon's paradigmatic wisdom.

David's foreboding recognition that Solomon is a wise man surely does not have in mind images of the sage king who delights audiences from among all nations with his talk about "trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall; […] of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish" (5:13-14, Eng. 4:33-34), or the legendary stories of Solomon's infinite riddle-solving capacity (10:1-3; cf. 2 Chr 9:1-2). While Solomon's wisdom is presented as being all-encompassing, ranging from judicial insight (3:16-28), trade and economics, composition of songs and proverbs (5:12, Eng. 4:32), encyclopedic knowledge of flora and fauna (5:13, Eng. 4:33), temple building (6:1-7:51), and piety (3:3-15; 8:1-66; 9:25), the inclusion of the political wisdom to which David refers within our characterization of the wise king gives pause.

Indeed, there is a clear contrast between Solomon's wisdom within the chaos preceding his firm establishment of the kingdom and the idealized golden age era that emerges. It may be true that this difference is due to different authorship of the succession narrative as is often thought, but this does not help us understand how

Solomon and his wisdom would have been understood by the reading community in Yehud which would have been reading the story as a coherent narrative, not in terms of redactional layers as certain modern scholars do. Taken as a whole, the text transitions from an ambivalent portrait of Solomon to an idealized one. Acting upon the advice of David, the period following David's death sees Solomon as a shrewd king using last resort tactics to secure his power. A pair of inclusios demarcates Solomon's elimination of rivals to the throne in 2:12 and 2:46b.[76] Once the kingdom is finally fully established in Solomon's hands in vs. 46b, the period of violence in Solomon's reign comes to a close and Solomon thereafter rules over an orderly kingdom as a king of peace.

While utopias are defined by their critique and desire for improvement of a current society, perhaps part of the utopian schema of Solomon in 1 Kgs 3-10 offers a radical break from and therefore critique of the portrait of *realpolitik* in the preceding two chapters. Indeed, while there is a shift in tone and style between chs. 2 and 3, the latter takes up the main concerns of the first two chapters from an idealized perspective. The categories of wisdom, good, and bad which are called into question in 1 Kgs 1-2 are now treated in a visionary, utopian light. Whereas we may wonder what it means to be wise or how to act properly in the context of 1 Kgs 1-2, in 1 Kgs 3-10 wisdom is not a troubled category but a divine gift, and it may be used to discern between good and evil (3:9). Thus, while 1 Kgs 3-10 does not directly answer the questions which become complicated in 1 Kgs 1-2, it also draws upon and reformulates the same concerns but from a utopian perspective.

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[76] As has also been noted by Walsh, *1 Kings*, 45 and Cogan, *1 Kings*, 175.

CHAPTER 3

The Queen of Sheba

Thus far I have discussed utopia as a vehicle for social desire and criticism, and have argued that the memory of the monarchic glory achieved under Solomon may be analyzed in terms of utopian discourse. I would now like to look in detail at the account of the queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem in 1 Kgs 10:1-13. This story addresses many of the elements that factor into the negotiation of utopia in 1 Kgs 3-10: the international repute of Solomon's wisdom, the wealth and glory that accompany said wisdom, and the construction of a sense of sacred time and space. The story also serves as good grounds for discussing the slipperiness of these elements.

A secondary character in the Solomonic narrative, the queen of Sheba is not developed beyond the purpose she serves in the text in the negotiation of the Solomonic utopia. What is remarkable about the queen is the extent to which she has captured the imagination of proceeding readerships.[77] On the most basic level,

[77] The story has been retold in a number of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic texts. See, for example, *Ant.* 8.5, the Midrash Mishle, the Midrash ha-Hefez, the Targum Sheni to the Book of Esther, the Stories of Ben Sira, the Qur'an (Sura 27:15-45), Tha'labi's account in the Ara'is al-majalis, and the Kebra Nagast. The riddles that the Queen puts forth in these subsequent traditions generally require that Solomon display expertise in matters of gender and sexuality. For a good overview of the development of the story of Solomon and the queen of Sheba in Jewish and Islamic thought as well as translations of relevant texts, see Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba : Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam*. CSJH. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) and Alice Ogden Bellis, "The Queen of Sheba: A Gender-Sensitive Reading," *JRT* 51 (1994): 17-28. For a comparison of the version of the story in the Qur'an to that in 1 Kgs 10, see Toni Tidswell, "A Clever Queen Learns the Wisdom of God: The Queen of Sheba in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Qur'an," *Hecate* 33 (2007): 43–55. See also the volume of collected essays on the queen of Sheba, James Bennett Pritchard, *Solomon and Sheba* (London: Phaidon, 1974).

the biblical accounts of the queen's visit serve to reinforce the illustration of Solomon's incomparable wisdom, wealth, and glory which is depicted throughout the Solomonic narrative; it does not differ from the rest of the Solomonic narrative in this respect. And yet, its afterlife has far exceeded any other section within the Solomonic narrative in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, and it remains one of the most prominent biblical stories within western collective memory judging by the popularity of its depiction in art and literature.[78]

Unpacking the Queen of Sheba

The queen's name and identity remain, as Selman puts it, "tantalizingly unknown."[79] The queen of Sheba is characterized by and embodies a series of abstract ideals. She remains anonymous, which as Hens-Piazza notes, "suggests the diminished emphasis upon her actual identity."[80] As Weitzman notes, names in the Hebrew Bible are often crucial in characterization, and alert the reader to a fundamental trait in a character's identity or fate.[81] This, of course, only applies to

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[78] Cf. Nicholas Clapp, *Sheba: Through the Desert in Search of the Legendary Queen* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 60-76 for a good overview of the queen of Sheba within western literature, cinema, and music. See also David J. Shepherd, *The Bible on Silent Film: Spectacle, Story and Scripture in the Early Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. pp. 144-148, 201-208 for an overview of the Queen of Sheba within silent film, and Jon Solomon, *The Ancient World in Cinema* (rev. ed. Chelsea, Mich.: Yale University Press, 2001), esp. pp. 171-173.

[79] Martin J. Selman, *2 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary* (*TOTC* 11. Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1994. Repr., 2008), 370.

[80] Gina Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville, TN : Abingdon Press, 2006), 98.

[81] See Weitzman, *Solomon*, 1-15 for an exploration of the symbolic importance of names within the Solomonic narrative.

characters with names derived from Hebrew words, which we can assume a foreign queen would not possess.[82] That she is designated throughout the text by her title, the queen of Sheba (מַלְכַּת־שְׁבָא), may flesh out her literary character more than if she were referred to by a foreign name that would not signify any particular meaning about the queen's character to a Hebrew reading audience, particularly because her designation as "the queen of Sheba" is especially evocative. Both components of her appellation, "queen" and "Sheba" (מַלְכָּה and שְׁבָא respectively) are words that instantly serve to shape our impression of the curious queen given the associations that biblical thought ascribes to Sheba, and the relatively rare appearance of a woman with the title מַלְכָּה.

The term מַלְכָּה is used only 40 times in the Hebrew Bible, [83] appearing elsewhere only in (the much later text) Esther to describe Esther and Vashti, in Jeremiah to describe the abominable goddess the Queen of Heaven (Jer 44:17),[84] and in the Song of Songs (vss. 6:8-6:9) to refer to queens in general. In the case of the queen of Sheba, the use of the term מַלְכָּה seems to refer to a sovereign female ruler, but its infrequent use has left much room for debate amongst scholars as to its precise role and connotations, as well as any nuances or differences between מַלְכָּה

[82] Although it should be noted that biblical texts take a great deal of artistic license with characters' names, as names contribute to characterization or foreshadow plot developments.

[83] As compared to the 2710 times that the term מֶלֶךְ is used. It is nevertheless used more commonly than other royal terms for women such as "great lady" (גְּבִירָה), used 15 times, "queen" (שַׁגַּל), which appears 3 times in biblical Hebrew and 2 times in aramaic, and "mother of the king" (אֵם הַמֶּלֶךְ), used twice.

[84] Using what Weninger et al., *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011), 267, has identified as an older form of מַלְכָּה, which is מְלֶכֶת.

and other terms associated with royal women in the Hebrew Bible, such as "great lady" (גְּבִירָה), "queen" (שֵׁגַל)[85] and "mother of the king" (אֵם הַמֶּלֶךְ).

Indeed, several scholars consider the queen of Sheba's designation as מַלְכָּה to be a reflection of her foreign status.[86] Most influentially, Brenner argues that within the imagination of the biblical texts, a מַלְכָּה is a foreign concept, and an Israelite מַלְכָּה cannot be conceived of except, as Brenner argues is the case in Esther, if she were acting as מַלְכָּה according to the customs within a foreign court. [87] It is possible that the designation as מַלְכָּה therefore did not exist within the Israelite or Judean courts but that there were other concepts of Judean and Israelite female royal status, though this is not certain, particularly because of the inconsistent usage of official titles in identifying royal women. [88] In any event, royal women within the stories of the Judean and Israelite monarchies are often portrayed as powerful

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[85] As Simo Parpola, "The Neo-Assyrian Word for 'Queen.'" *SAAB* 2 (1988): 73-76 demonstrates, the Hebrew term (שֵׁגַל) likely derives from the Neo-Assyrian word for queen.

[86] Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 17; Nancy R. Bowen, "The Quest for the Historical Gĕbîrâ," *CBQ* 63 (2001): 599; Ktziah Spanier, **"**The Queen Mother in the Judean Royal Court: Maacah—A Case Study,**"** in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*. (ed. Athalya Brenner; FCB 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 186.

[87] Brenner, *The Israelite Woman,* 17.

[88] As Elna K. Solvang, *A Woman's Place Is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and Their Involvement in the House of David*. (JSOTSup 349. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 16 notes, it is not unusual that the precise position and status envisioned for women within the Israelite or Judean courts is unclear, as "a striking feature that appears across cultures of the ancient Near East—including the Egyptians, Hittites, Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians and Israelites—is the *lack of consistency with which administrative titles are applied to women.*" Likewise, Hennie J. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East* (Boston: Brill, 2003)*,* 338 points out that Ugaritic literature also avoids referring to wives of kings or acting regents with the term for queen, *mlkt*, and concludes that "[i]t remains to be seen, therefore, whether any special significance should be attributed to the similar situation in the literary texts of Israel."

figures,[89] as is suggested by the ascription of the term "great lady" (גְּבִירָה) from the root גבר to certain female royals,[90] which may refer to a specifically Israelite and Judean position of power for female royals within their respective courts.[91] The unusual appearance of a queen with a title which is never ascribed to Israelite or Judean queens, מַלְכָּה, is striking and represents an alternative form of power.

Of course, Arabians were widely known to have sovereign queens as rulers. Accounts of at least four Arabian queens are recorded in Assyrian texts from the eight and seventh centuries BCE.[92] While rule by a female sovereign is foreign to the imagined biblical system of rule, it would of course be understood that an Arabian queens were part and parcel of the Arabian kingdoms. The story of the

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[89] Bathsheba in particular is a queen mother who plays a pivotal role in the establishment of the Davidic house and throne. Jezebel and Athaliah are likewise depicted as very powerful female royals. As Carol Smith, "'Queenship' in Israel? The Cases of Bathsheba, Jezebel and Athaliah," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. J. Day; JSOTSup 270. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998)," 161-162 notes, female royals have a great deal of potential power that certain, but not all, characters seize.

[90] Solvang, *A Woman's* Place, 73 notes that "the *gebira's* status in society and her ruling authority as parallel to that of the 'master' (*'ddori)* are demonstrated in Ps. 123.2, Prov. 30.23 and Isa. 24.2. This parallelism is carried onto the political stage in Isa. 47.5, 7 where Babylon is represented as the 'mistress of the nations' *(geberet mamldkof).* The term also has a specific royal use."

[91] See Bowen, "The Quest," 599-600 ftn 9 for a summary of scholars who have addressed the issue. Amongst those who argue that the gebira was an official position see Tivka Simone Frymer-Kensky, "The Bible and Women's Studies" in *Studies in Bible and Feminist Criticism* (1st ed. JPS Scholar of Distinction Series. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 166; Solvang, *A Woman's Place*, 78; Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, "The Role of the Queen Mother in Israelite Society," *CBQ* 45 (1983):182; and Gösta W. Ahlström, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion* (Trans. E.J. Sharpe. Horae Soederblomianae 5. Lund: Gleerup, 1963), 61. On the contrary, Zafrira Ben-Barak, "The Status and Right of the Gebîrâ," *JBL* 110 (1991): 34. Repr. *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*. Ed. Athalya Brenner. FCB 5. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), argues that the gebira or queen mother was not an official position.

[92] The queens Samsi and Zabibe are mentioned in the annals of Tiglath-pileser III. See "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts," Translated by A. Leo Oppenheim (*ANET*, 283-86) and p. 301 for a reference Te'elkhunu in the annals of Ashurbanipal. The annals of Sennacherib also make reference to Queen Yati'e as well; see BM 113203 in Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 51.

queen of Sheba which we find in several biblical texts (1 Kgs 10:1-13; 2 Chr 9:1-12; and Ps 72:10, 15) thus suggests that such stories of Arabian queens likely abounded within the imaginations of the Jerusalemite literati.

Ultimately, then, the appearance of a queen in 1 Kgs 10 draws considerable attention to itself because through her, a foreign and exotic culture which is known to be ruled by women at times (a rarity in the ancient near east) comes into contact with the world of Solomon. However, she is not just any Arabian queen: she is a queen of Sheba. While Arabia is not an immensely long distance from Jerusalem, it is worth noting that this queen comes from Sheba, which is on the southwestern end of the Arabian peninsula, and not from one of the northern tribes where Arabian queens for whom records remain ruled.[93] The queen of Sheba occupies a kingdom that is geographically farther from Jerusalem than those of the Arabian queens who are actually known from Assyrian sources, and that, more importantly, occupies a quasi-mythical status within biblical literature, which contributes to her characterization as an exotic figure.[94]

Indeed, the account of the queen's visit makes use of the associations surrounding Sheba which are developed in biblical thought in order to portray a fantastic scene. The queen arrives in Jerusalem as a figure associated with great wealth and wisdom, which is appropriate because her character serves to reinforce and legitimize the portrait of Solomon as the wealthy and wise ruler *par excellence*.

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[93] I thank Ehud Ben Zvi for this insight.

[94] Contra Weitzman, *Solomon*, 137, who asserts that "[t]he Bible itself does not seem particularly interested in where the Queen comes from, however, nor does it make her any more exotic than the other rulers who pay their respects to the king," I contend that it *is* important that the queen comes from Sheba and that her land is portrayed as being exotic.

A survey of the appearances of Sheba within the texts of the Hebrew Bible reveals a strong association between Sheba and wealth.[95] The biblical portrait of Sheba is that of a land known for its gold (cf. Isa 60:6; Ezek 27:22; Ps 72:15; 1 Kgs 10:2, 10/2 Chr 9:1, 9), frankincense (Isa 60:6; Jer 6:20), precious stones (Ezek 27:22; 1 Kgs 10:2, 10; 2 Chr 9:1, 9), and spices (1 Kgs 10:2, 10; 2 Chr 9:1, 9; Ezek 27:22). Sheba is also remembered for its merchants and trade (Ezek 27:22, 23: Ezek 38:13), though in the account of the queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, it is important that the queen does not come to Jerusalem as a merchant, but as a monarch who is motivated first by curiosity, and then freely chooses to contribute her wealth to Solomon's kingdom out of admiration.

The queen's visit thus represents a meeting of two worlds. The kingdom of Solomon, intimately familiar to the biblical reader for whom biblical texts animate an imagined reality comes into contact with the wholly Other world of the queen of Sheba. The queen of Sheba plays the role of the utopian traveller, as Uhlenbruch suggests.[96] The queen, flanked by a large entourage and camels bearing the exotic riches that Sheba has to offer, brings the exotic world of Sheba into contact with Israel. She does so as an equal Other. Like Solomon, she has great wealth and glory as signified by her grand entrance with a "very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones" (10:2). She is a parallel figure to

[95] Sheba is mentioned a total of 23 times in the Hebrew Bible; 6 of these are in genealogical lists and 10 are in connection with the account of Sheba's visit (1 Kgs 10:1-13; 2 Chr 9:1-12; and Ps 72:10, 15).

[96] Frauke Uhlenbruch, "King Solomon or King Utopus? – A Game of Utopian Pastiche in 2 Chronicles 1-9." Paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Baltimore, 2013.

Solomon in one other major respect: the queen of Sheba is also a wisdom figure,[97] and she speaks in the wisdom forms of riddles (vs. 1), beatitudes (vs. 8) and blessing formulas (vs. 9).[98] As Reinhartz notes, the nature of the narrative assumes the queen's wisdom: only a figure whose wisdom is almost equal to that of Solomon's would be appropriate to test and ultimately legitimize his wisdom.[99]

The queen is the first figure since Solomon has established the throne to challenge Solomon's greatness, and the excessive display of gold, rare spices, and precious stones with which she is equipped suggests that she does so boldly; the queen sets the stakes high. A great deal of wealth--and more importantly, reputation given the fact that the queen's dramatic entrance is bound to draw attention to her person and her challenging of Solomon's wisdom—is at stake. Who is this queen surrounded by exotic wares and excess who so pompously dares to challenge Solomon, the wisest and wealthiest monarch the reading community has ever heard of?

The text plays on shifting focalization in order to settle the challenge put forth of Solomon's purported greatness. The queen enters into the Solomonic narrative as a curious character, and we begin by gazing upon her, a fantastic and foreign figure. She tells Solomon all that is on her mind (10:2), but to the reader

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[97] Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy*, 175 even sees the queen of Sheba as an embodiment of Lady Wisdom.

[98] Carole Fontaine, *Smooth Words: Women, Proverbs and Performance in Biblical Wisdom* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 206.

[99] Adele Reinhartz, "Anonymous Women and the Collapse of the Monarchy: A Study in Narrative Technique" in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings* (ed. Athalya Brenner. FCB 5. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 50.

remains enshrouded in mystery. She then begins to see Solomon's profound wisdom to which the reader has been privy all along (10:3). The suspense is not created by any question as to who will win the battle of wits, but when the queen will come to recognize what the reader already knows: Solomon is the sole possessor of a unique, divine wisdom. The focalization switches, and we see along with the queen the sights by which the queen is overcome with Solomon's astonishing wisdom: Solomon has answered all of her riddles with almost prophetic insight and "there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her" (10:3). The queen, seeing the wisdom of Solomon, turns to gaze upon his house (10:4), the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his valets, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of YHWH" (10:5), and these displays of order and wisdom leave the queen breathless (10:5).

The change of focalization allows the reader to relate to utopian desire for Solomon and his kingdom from various vantage points. At the outset, the arrival of a curious but skeptical foreign queen to test whether Solomon is as glorious as he has held to be within the reading community allows for a strong identification of the inside group of readers with the Israel of the text in contrast to an Other, outsider group. The insider group has information as to how the wisdom contest between the two monarchs will end, and waits for the queen to arrive upon the information that the audience already knows. A sense that the truths of the inside group will triumph is reinforced through the telling and retelling of the narrative, as the group

imaginatively experiences and reaffirms that the knowledge that they alone are privy to will be manifest.

However, a change in focalization allows the reader to "see" the miraculous wisdom of Solomon's kingdom through the foreign eyes of the queen and to momentarily become a utopian traveler of the imagined society with which he or she already identifies before returning the focalization back to that of the narrator. The reader and the queen's assessments of the Solomonic kingdom converge and there is a shared desire for Solomon and his kingdom. On the part of the reader, this desire is that which is expressed throughout the utopian negotiations in 1 Kgs 3-10; the reading community yearns for a world in which YHWHism is the central, defining order, in which wisdom, justice, and righteousness rule, which is glorious, wealthy, and pervaded by joy, and so on. The queen likewise desires to occupy this world: how happy those who surround Solomon and continually hear his wisdom must be (10:8)! How YHWH must love his people (vs. 9)!

Thus, as Lasine notes, a triangularity of desire is created:

> "The Queen of Sheba shows that when someone is attracted to Solomon's visible wealth and wisdom, she or he may also assume that others experience the same desire" and says how happy wives, servants must be. "This rhetorical strategy is an invitation to readers, asking them to join this mutual admiration society. To put it in terms of Girardian 'triangularity of desire' (1966, 1-52), readers are being invited to desire what these other desirable people desire. And if they *do* respond in the same way, their response would be in full accord with the many ancient Near Eastern reports of awe-inspiring royal wealth, prosperity, and divine favor."[100]

[100] Stuart Lasine, *Knowing Kings*: *Knowledge, Power, and Narcissism in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: The Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 155.

By briefly assuming the perspective of the queen, the sense of alienation between the reading community in their present society and the utopian one which is narrated in 1 Kgs 3-10 finds imaginative expression. For the queen, too, Solomon's magnificent kingdom far surpasses the world she occupies—though Sheba is thought of as an idyllic and lavish land itself. As with Sheba, Solomon's kingdom leaves the reader breathless (10:5).

Seeing Solomon for Herself: The Queen as a Means of Legitimation

As already suggested, the queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem is an important passage in the negotiation of utopian sentiments within the Solomonic narrative in 1 Kgs 3-10. The memory of Solomon's era, a time when Israel achieved the peak of its past history, serves as a site through which values and identity may be negotiated, and various utopian desires may come in dialogue with one another and experience imaginative fulfillment. Solomon and his kingdom become grounds for a complex social process of collective and individual dreaming of a better world, and of identifying and imaginatively correcting social ills. The text as we have it is a carefully crafted literary piece which is all that is left of the dynamic social space that the imagined kingdom of Solomon conjured within a community who read, imagined, redacted, engaged, and struggled with this period of a glory lost.

Primarily, the account of the queen of Sheba's visit is a strong affirmation of the wisdom, wealth, and glory which characterize Solomon's utopian reign. The

queen testifies to Solomon's incomparable wisdom (10:6) and wealth (10:7), and her praises (10:6-9) contribute to the picture of Solomon's glory. The interweaving of these three qualities is portrayed as something of a miracle within the imagined history of Israel, as YHWH personally bestows the young king with wisdom in a dream with wealth and glory as accoutrements (3:12-13).[101] The implication that wealth and glory follow wisdom is affirmed throughout the Solomonic narrative,[102] notably by the Queen of Sheba, as a wealthy and wise figure herself, who contributes to Solomon's wealth and glory in praise of his wisdom. The queen of Sheba affirms the fulfillment of the divine promise, enthusiastically exclaiming that the report she heard of King Solomon's unparalleled wisdom is true, and also drawing attention to the wealth and glory of Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 10:6-7).

The queen's pursuit to test Solomon's wisdom is a means of placing various facets of Solomon's wisdom on display.[103] The queen sees (and allows the reading community to also see) manifestations of Solomon's wisdom in his godlike ability to

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[101] Stories of kings receiving divine gifts within dreams are commonplace within ancient near eastern literature. See Lasine, "King of Desire," 92 for a summary of accounts of divine gifts granted monarchs in dreams within ancient near eastern literature. Stories of a divine appearance to a monarch within a dream which precedes and legitimizes temple building is also attested, but as Arvid S. Kapelrud, "Temple Building, a Task for Gods and Kings." *Or* 32 (1963): 59, notes, in Solomon's dream in 1 Kgs 3:5-14 wisdom is emphasized rather than temple building, which is not explicitly mentioned in the passage but nevertheless follows the account.

[102] Cf. Knoppers, "Incomparability," 416-147; Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings* (trans. Anselm Hagedorn. Continental Commentaries. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2003), 126. Some scholars, however, view the binding of wealth to wisdom in this narrative as a negative depiction of Solomon's reign. The relation of wisdom with wealth and glory is complex and will be discussed at length below.

[103] While no such connotations are developed here, it should be noted that the queen's boldness to test the wisdom of Solomon—and by extension, YHWH—has the potential to be interpreted as maleficent and to contribute to certain characterizations of the queen of Sheba as a demonic figure which are pursued in later traditions. For an overview of demonic interpretations of the queen of Sheba, see Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba*, 24-35.

solve riddles, his house and its order, and his burnt offerings at the temple. The queen is compelled to travel to Jerusalem upon having heard of Solomon (10:1). These two wisdom figures *par excellence* share the immediate connection of a wisdom that is directed by hearing. Whereas the queen's hearing motivates her to pursue potential paths of knowledge and piques her desire to see for herself (10:7), Solomon's wisdom also lies in his hearing: at the outset of his reign, Solomon sets out to be a king with a (לֵב שֹׁמֵעַ) "listening mind" (1 Kgs 3:9), a desire which leads to Solomon's request of YHWH's wisdom. Both Solomon's wisdom and the glory and wealth of his kingdom, therefore, are inseparably connected to Solomon's listening mind. According to Cogan, this association between wisdom and perceptive hearing is common amongst ancient near eastern cultures:

> In Akkadian, wisdom is ascribed to the ear (*uznu*); cf. *ina uzni rapastim hasisi palke sa isruka apkal ilani*, 'with the great wisdom and wide understanding that the wisest of the gods presented me' (CAD S/2, 46a). In Egyptian, the expression 'hearing heart' refers to the agent for attaining understanding (see Shupak 1985). Throughout the ancient Near East, the ability to listen was seen as the source of wisdom.[104]

When Royals Riddle: Riddles and Ideological Imperialism

The queen's initial means of assessing Solomon's wisdom is through testing him with *hida* (חִידָה), most often translated as "riddles." According to Selman, the

[104] Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* (The Anchor Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 187.

meaning of חִידָה is broad and "includes not only popular riddles (cf. Judg. 14:12-18), but the difficult issues of Old Testament wisdom such as the meaning of life and death (Ps. 49:4) or God's unfathomable wonders (Ps. 78:2; 'hidden things', NIV)."[105] The queen of Sheba's visit thus in part serves to highlight the sage-like wisdom for which Solomon becomes known through his association with the diverse wisdom traditions within biblical literature, most pertinently, with the book of Proverbs.[106] Camp and Fontaine have proposed that the numerous "degenerated riddles" in Proverbs suggest that riddles were an important genre in wisdom literature,[107] and indeed, the book of Proverbs opens with the exhortation to "let the wise person hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill; to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles" (1:5-6).

Riddles, as Perdue notes, may be used for various ends within literature: "entertainment, the acquiring of status and honor, wagers, and even serious contests that could involve life and death."[108] It is likely that, as later traditions

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[105] Selman, *2 Chronicles*, 370-371. Azzan Yadin, "Samson's *Hida*," *VT* 52(2002): 412, even goes so far as to argue that חִידָה does not signify a "riddle" at all, warning that ascribing "riddle" as the primary definition for חִידָה results in a situation in which scholars must "characterize the majority (!) of the term's occurrences as having a secondary or derivative meaning." Instead, *ibid.*, 414, suggests that "a reasonable provisional translation might be 'saying, proverb' with an accompanying sense of 'a saying that requires explication or interpretation.'"

[106] Within the wisdom tradition, Solomon becomes cast as the sage par excellence. By testing Solomon through wisdom, the queen's visit evokes Solomon's sage-like qualities, as riddles belong to the type of proverbial wisdom characteristic of the wisdom schools (cf. James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* [3rd ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010], 31).

[107] Claudia V. Camp and Carole R. Fontaine, "The Words of the Wise and Their Riddles" in *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore* (ed. Susan Niditch. Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 127.

[108] Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs* (IBC; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 74.

assume,[109] the queen of Sheba's visit was interpreted as a riddle contest by primary readers, a literary genre which features an intellectual competition between two parties in the ancient near east.[110] A riddle contest is in part, as Mulder notes, a form of entertainment, and certainly this entertainment factor accounts in part for the abundance of literature on the subject.[111] However, this entertaining narrative also depicts an imagined social performance which places two or more parties in a liminal space, and from this liminal situation a clear social order is established as one party emerges as irrefutably superior, and other parties sometimes even shamed.

Riddle stories often depict awe-inspiring and dramatic displays of wisdom in order to attribute a quasi-divine sagacity to the hero (and often the reading community who identifies with the hero) of the story, who demonstrates total mastery of that which is hidden and obscure—a superiority which is then

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[109] Thus, texts such as the Midrash Mishle and the Midrash ha-Hefez imagine that elaborate riddles pertaining to gender, sexuality, and nature were posed to Solomon.

[110] See Ioannis M. Konstantakos, "Trial by Riddle the Testing of the Counsellor and the Contest of Kings in the Legend of Amasis and Bias," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 55 (2004): 87 for an outline of the development of the theme in the ancient near east and Egypt from the 2nd millennium BC onward. The earliest example of riddle contest literature occurs in the Sumerian epic *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta.* Further examples can be seen in the 13 century Egyptian text *The Quarrel of Apophis and Sequenre*, *The Tale of Ahiqar* of which the earliest extant copy dates to the 5th century BCE, the riddle contest between Samson and the Philistines (Judg 14:10-20), the contest between the three guards in 1 Esdras 3-5:3 in which Zerubabbel's superior wisdom is put to use in convincing Darius to initiate the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, Josephus's account of riddle contests between Solomon and Hiram (*Ant.* 8.5), and the contest between the king of Babylon and Pharaoh in the Aesop Romance (ch. 102-8, III-23). Riddle contests also feature in Greek conquest literature and of course, the many different versions of the Queen of Sheba's encounter with Solomon.

For an opposing viewpoint to the widely accepted interpretation that 1 Kgs 10:1-3 refers to a riddle contest, see Yadin, "Samson's *Hida*," 412, who argues that "the statement in v. 2, that the Queen of Sheba 'spoke to him all that was in her heart' suggests that the meeting was not devoted to a formulaic exchange of riddles and their solutions."

[111] Mulder, *1 Kings,* 511.

acknowledged by his or her less worthy opponent(s) who lose the competition. According to Weitzman, the capacity for riddles to play with fundamental truths partly accounts for their use in literature which seeks to legitimate a group's sense of superiority over their rivals.[112] The use of riddles as a means through which different peoples competed to assert the superiority of their own people over a rivaling group is also attested in biblical literature in the battle of wits between Samson and his Philistine bride-to-be's family (Judg 14), in which as Niditch observes, Samson's riddle "is the attempt to have power over his inlaws [and] their desperate efforts to uncover his riddle secret is an attempt to prevent themselves from losing status."[113]

Stories of riddle contests may therefore exploit the associations of riddle-solving capacities with godlike insight in order to reinforce constructions of social identities, and to imaginatively stage a recognition of the perceived superiority of the insider group to that of other groups. The use of shared narratives such as riddle contest stories to affirm social truths and identities may operate in a number of social contexts. The intellectual prowess which the genre of riddle contest literature puts on display may be used to legitimate claims to power: the party with godlike insight and understanding is the one who is fit to rule. This assertion of

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[112] Cf. *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta, The Quarrel of Apophis and Sequenre,* Judg 14, and *The Tale of Ahiqar.*

[113] Susan Niditch,"Samson as Culture Hero, Trickster, and Bandit : the Empowerment of the Weak." *CBQ* 52. 4 (1990): 620-621. While this is not the place for a full exploration of the subject, Judg 14 is an interesting usage of the riddle contest narrative in which the party with which the reading community identifies, Samson, loses, albeit his opponents win through treacherous means. The preservation and continual retelling of a story which is not flattering to the reading community here serves to create an ambivalent portrait of the "heroes" of Israel's past.

superiority may also, however, be communicated not to legitimate power of the conquerors, but as an imaginative attempt to correct perceived problems with the current world order by underdog groups, as Hasan-Rokem points out in relation to rabbinic literature, as "narratives, and especially orally transmitted ones, are often the arena where the losers in military and political struggles have the upper hand. These tales convey the paradox of a narrative victory in the midst of an experience of physical and political destruction."[114]

1 Kgs 10:1-13 makes use of the riddle contest genre in order to reinforce the superior wisdom of Solomon and the Israelite empire. As Fontaine notes, "[t]he brief biblical text clearly favors Sheba's capitulation (w . 6-10) over her competition;"[115] for the reading community, it is already clear who will win. The scene thus enacts a fantasy of cultural/ideological conquest.[116] Thus through the queen of Sheba narrative, the community imagines one potential scenario whereby a foreign power, which itself is wealthy and wise, comes to acknowledge Israel not only as equal to it in rank, but as being so impressive that the queen, herself no stranger to riches and greatness, is left breathless (10:5)[117] —though with just

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[114] Galit Hasan-Rokem,*Web of Life : Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature.* Trans. Batya Stein. Contraversions. (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 2000), 230.

[115] Fontaine, *Smooth Words*, 231.

[116] Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Yehudite Collection of Prophetic Books and Imperial Contexts: Some Observations" in *Divination, Politics and Ancient Near Eastern Empire* (eds. Jonathan Stökl and Alan Lenzi. Ancient Near East Monographs / Monografías sobre el Antiguo Cercano Oriente. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 139-164 explores in detail the ways in which an ideological empire is reflected within prophetic literature. His conclusions are also very pertinent for the discussion of utopian discourse within the construction of the Solomonic empire in the book of Kings.

[117] As Selman, *2 Chronicles*, 371 notes, the expression that (וְלֹא־הָיָה בָהּ עוֹד רוּחַ) "there was no more spirit in her" occurs elsewhere only in Josh 2:11 and 5:1, "and on each occasion it is used of non-Israelite amazement at what God has done."

enough breath left, it would seem, to praise Solomon and his kingdom, culminating in the blessing, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king to execute justice and righteousness" (10:9).

The Sabeans, Tall of Stature, Will Come: 1 Kgs 10:1-13's Contribution to Conceptions of a Utopian World Order

The story broadly expresses an imperial utopian desire on purely ideological levels. The wisdom and greatness of the YHWHistic empire are recognized by a foreign ruler who is herself admirable, wealthy, and wise. In a twist on the riddle contest genre, Solomon does not merely win the praise and gifts due to the sage who has proven himself most in the competition, but his wisdom attracts praise and gifts freely. The superiority of the Israelite world order is championed in a fantasy that dreams that foreign nations need only witness the wisdom of the Israelite world order in order to accept, contribute to, and benefit from its greatness.[118]

The queen of Sheba's visit thus contributes to a larger utopian vision of a perfectly Israelite-ordered world achieved in the Solomonic period, which itself serves as an image of utopia upon which Israel's conception of a future (and final)

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[118] Furthering upon the fantasy for recognition of ideological superiority, later traditions imagine the queen of Sheba converting to Solomon's religion. Cf. Qur'an 27:44, the Kebra Nagast, and Matt 12:42 and Luke 11:31 assume her conversion. Of course, the concept of religious conversion is later than the original Hebrew versions of the queen of Sheba narrative, becoming an issue in the Hellenistic period as is best illustrated in the Hasmonean conversion of Idumeans and Itureans (cf. Jacob Milgrom, "Religious Conversion and the Revolt Model for the Formation of Israel." *JBL* 101 (1982): 169-176).

period of utopia is based. The logic of such a utopia sees Jerusalem and its temple at the center of a stable and peaceful cosmos. The queen of Sheba comes from far away and showers Solomon with riches, drawing upon and contributing to similar fantasies of all the kings of the earth flocking to Jerusalem to hear Solomon's wisdom and bringing him gifts "—articles of silver and gold, and robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules" (1 Kgs 10:25; 2 Chr 9:24), and images in the prophetic books of the wealth of the nations streaming into Jerusalem in the future (Isa 66:12, 20; Hag 2:6-9).[119] Further, the queen's visit to Jerusalem to hear Solomon's proverbial wisdom is a specific illustration of the text's fantasy that "the whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart" (1 Kgs 10:24; cf. 2 Chr 9: 23; 1 Kgs 4:34), and recalls other narratives in which Jerusalem is imagined to be the center of the world's wisdom in the future (Isa 2:3).[120] Indeed, just as the queen of Sheba praises YHWH when she sees the wisdom and order upon which Solomon's kingdom runs (1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr 9:8), the nations will gather to Jerusalem to praise YHWH in the future, as well (Jer 3:17; Isa

[119] Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 208, notes that this biblical trope of building materials flowing into the capital from foreign nations is also attested widely in other ancient near eastern literature. The effect of this trope is that the whole earth and the exotic riches that it has is symbolically contained in the center, as suggested by Carol L. Meyers, "The Israelite Empire : in Defense of King Solomon." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 3 (1983): 422.

[120] There is, however, a difference in the type of wisdom that draws the nations to the center: in Isa 2:3, the torah is imagined as being the source of wisdom, whereas Solomon's wisdom in the book of Kings is not that of the torah. To be sure, the torah is not completely absent from Solomon's reign; Solomon states that he has provided a place for the ark, "in which is the covenant of YHWH which he made with our fathers" (8:21), symbolically placing the torah at the heart of the temple and kingdom. Likewise, his blessing to the assembly upon the completion of the temple emphasizes the importance of torah obedience (8:56-61). Otherwise, Solomon's wisdom is charismatic and not specifically based in torah.

45:14, 66:18). The story thus draws upon a common fantasy of YHWH's re-creation of a new world order, in which YHWH and Israel's greatness receive due recognition.

Foreign Allies and the Solomonic Utopia

The appearance of the queen of Sheba within the Solomonic narrative contributes to a trope of "the friendly foreigner" who participates in the creation of a utopian Israelite world order. Throughout the Solomonic account, Solomon is depicted as having many friends who recognize him and sometimes even YHWH and who are eager to further Israelite aims in building the temple, establishing Israel's territory, and contributing wealth and prestige. Indeed, Solomon has Pharaoh as a father in law (3:1)[121] and Pharaoh gives him Gezer, allowing Israel to achieve its ideal borders while allowing Solomon to be a king who has never fought in a war, as Ben Zvi notes.[122] King Hiram of Tyre comes to Solomon's assistance throughout Solomon's reign, supplying Solomon with labor and wood to build the temple,[123]

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[121] Notably, in the notice of Solomon's diplomatic marriage, stress is placed on Solomon's new relations with Pharaoh rather than with his new wife: the text states that Solomon became Pharaoh's son in law (וַיִּתְחַתֵּן שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת־פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרָיִם) (3:1) rather than choosing language that would emphasize the fact of taking a wife, as we would find in a more typical marriage notice using a variation of the phrase "he took a wife" (וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה) or a use of the verb בעל.

[122] Ben Zvi, "The Study of Forgetting," 12-13.

[123] Some scholars contend that the relationship between Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre is not as positive as it may seem. Walsh, "The Characterization of Solomon," 491 and Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 195-197 both suggest that there is tension in the negotiations between Solomon and Hiram as Solomon initially offers to pay for the provisions of Hiram's workers and to send his own workers as well (5:20; Eng. 5:6), but Hiram responds by saying that his servants will fulfill Solomon's needs and that in return Solomon must provide food for Hiram's household (5:22-23; Eng. 5:8-5:9). Hiram's response to Solomon does not mention Solomon's servants working alongside Hiram's and also

luxury goods that are essential for building projects of prestige to the extent that the acquisition of lumber from foreign lands composes part of the narrative pattern within ancient near eastern literature of temple, palace, and ship building accounts.[124]

Solomon's foreign allies thus play crucial roles in every aspect of the establishment of his utopian kingdom and reappear throughout the narrative in order to sustain and affirm the grandeur of Solomon's empire. The image of the Israelite king surrounded by his royal sidekicks from neighbouring nations, including even Pharaoh, contributes to an idealized portrait of Solomon's kingdom. Solomon does not seek to conquer surrounding peoples, and the threat against Israel from foreign powers also is unimaginable within this vision of world harmony; there is "peace on all sides" (5:4; Eng. 4:24).

This emphasis on the fact that leaders of surrounding nations constitute an aid and not a threat to Solomon's sovereignty is crucial in the utopian vision of Israel occupying its ideal land within a YHWHistically ordered world. The dream of foreign monarchs who are eager to contribute to the Israelite empire is an insistence that Solomon's golden age, and this vision of grandeur, cannot come to an

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requests a substantially greater payment than simply the wages of his workers. However, the narrative emphasizes a mutually positive tone rather than a tense one between the two allies. Hiram sends servants to Solomon to affirm a continued alliance between Tyre and Israel that had been established under David (5:15; Eng. 5:1) and Hiram rejoices upon receiving Solomon's request for Hiram's assistance in gathering wood for building the temple and praises YHWH and Solomon's wisdom (5:21; Eng. 5:7). The text further stresses that "there was peace between Hiram and Solomon and the two of them made a treaty" (5:26; Eng. 5:12). Solomon's arrangements for his workers are described (5:27-31; Eng. 5:13-17) and his builders work together with Hiram's builders as well as the Giblites (5:32; Eng. 5:18) as Solomon proposed. The two kings thus fulfill one another's requests and are portrayed as being happy to do so.

[124] For more on the importance of the trope of the collection of wood from foreign lands in building accounts, see Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 204-223.

end. However, this insistence in the vision of an existence characterized by harmony and lack of external threat is counterbalanced by a casual reference made to a curious incident between Solomon and Hiram which gives expression to a sense of disbelief in such a utopian scenario.

At what should be the height of Israel's glory, the dedication of the temple, Israel's downfall is already foretold both by Solomon and YHWH (1 Kgs 8:46-53; 9:6-9). Following YHWH's ominous reference to the heap of ruins that Israel will become, Solomon cedes 20 cities from his kingdom to King Hiram (9:10-14). In contrast to the dramatic passages surrounding it which respectively imagine total devastation and unparalleled glory, any implications of Solomon's transfer of land to Hiram are not elaborated upon and the tension that we find in this passage between Hiram and Solomon appears to have no impact on their future relations (9:26-28; 10:11-12, 22).

Nevertheless, Solomon's ceding of cities to Hiram interrupts several of the premises upon which Solomon's utopia is constructed. In the first place, whereas both Solomon and YHWH foreshadow the destruction of the temple and exile, Solomon's relinquishment of territory already represents the loss of the promised land. Thus while Solomon's golden age definitively falls apart in 1 Kgs 11, it begins to erode even before its conclusive loss.[125] Hiram's reaction to the land he receives suggests that this part of the land, at least, is not as glorious as one might expect; this part of Israel is not worthy of Hiram. In this sole instance, Solomon is not the

[125] In 2 Chr 8:1-2's version of events, Hiram gives 20 cities to Solomon, leaving Chr's wholly utopian portrait of the era untarnished by the small hints of trouble that surface throughout the account in Kgs.

charismatic prodigy who is adored by all. Rather, Solomon's gift to Hiram comes up short, a major source of humiliation within the diplomatic world of the ancient near east in which gifts play an important role in establishing status and reputation,[126] and must befit a monarch's assumed sense of grandeur.[127] This incident certainly balances the utopian depiction of Solomon's cooperative and harmonious empire, even if it seems to be forgotten about in Solomon's subsequent dealings with Hiram.

King Hiram, the Queen of Sheba, and the Davidic Temple

Whereas King Hiram of Tyre and Pharaoh directly aided in establishing his borders and building the temple, the queen of Sheba appears in the narrative after Solomon's work is complete. The queen attests to Israel's greatness at the height of its glory and represents the nations of the earth who marvel at the creation of such a magnificent kingdom (10:23-24). As Reinhartz notes, the queen of Sheba's character is deeply intertwined with King Hiram of Tyre's, and accounts of the two characters' contributions to the Solomonic empire converge in 1 Kgs 10:11-12.[128]

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[126] See Christer Jönsson, "Diplomatic Signaling in the Amarna Letters," in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (eds. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), especially pp. 194-197. See also Amanda H. Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings: How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press), esp. p. 244.

[127] Chr also develops the motif exchange of gifts in order to bolster prestige. In Chr's version of the queen of Sheba's visit, Solomon's ability to surpass the queen of Sheba in the extravagance of gifts offered (2 Chr 9:12) is a symbol of prestige.

[128] Adele Reinhartz, *Why Ask My Name?: Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 71.

The figure of the queen of Sheba is linked to that of Hiram of Tyre, contributing to the narration of the construction of a Davidic temple.

As previously noted, the temple construction narrative is the dominant concern of the Solomonic narrative, the preparations, construction, and dedication of which make up the bulk of the account of Solomon's reign. Divine wisdom is reinforced throughout the account as the foundation and sustaining force of Solomon's golden age. Following Solomon's initial receipt of divine wisdom and the wise judgment he subsequently executes in illustration of this wisdom, several wisdom formulas are repeated at crucial points in the Solomonic narrative and situate Solomon's empire as being the center of the world's wisdom, attracting admiration and lavish gifts from all corners of the globe. Following by a glowing description of the organization and administration of his kingdom (4:1- 5:8; Eng. 4:1-28), one such formula appears in 5:9-14 (Eng. 4:29-34) and particularly verse 14 (Eng. 34):

> People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

וַיָּבֹאוּ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים לִשְׁמֹעַ אֶת חָכְמַת שְׁלֹמֹה מֵאֵת כָּל־מַלְכֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־חָכְמָתוֹ

King Hiram of Tyre is introduced in the narrative (5:15; Eng. 5:1) immediately following this wisdom formula in order to praise Solomon's wisdom (5:21; Eng. 5:7) and arrange the preparations for the construction of the temple (5:15-32; Eng. 5:1-18). The reiteration of Solomon's divine wisdom which directly

precedes the temple building account is paralleled by a similar wisdom formula which closes the utopian depiction of Solomon's reign in 1 Kgs 10:23-24: [129]

> Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. The whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.

וַיִּגְדַּל הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה מִכֹּל מַלְכֵי הָאָרֶץ לְעוֹשֶׁר וּלְחָכְמָה׃
וְכָל־הָאָרֶץ מְבַקְּשִׁים אֶת־פְּנֵי שְׁלֹמֹה לִשְׁמֹעַ אֶת־חָכְמָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן אֱלֹהִים בְּלִבּוֹ׃

Both the queen of Sheba and Hiram of Tyre serve as illustrations of Solomon's international recognition, and the two echoing wisdom formulas which loosely demarcate the beginning of building Solomon's kingdom and the end of the glorious depiction of the era are clustered around these two foreign allies. Respectively, they represent a two-part process: Hiram appears in order to help with the royal building projects, and the queen of Sheba comes to affirm, admire, and contribute wealth to Solomon's projects upon their completion. Their roles are discrete but mutually contribute to a sense of movement from undertaking to completion, with the temple narrative at the center.

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[129] Several scholars have noted that there is a connection between 1 Kgs 10:23-25 and 3:12-14, with Knoppers, "The Deuteronomist," 337 ftn 38 (cf. Knoppers, "Incomparability," 416) proposing that the two form an inclusio representing the "introduction to and the realization of the divine promises to Solomon." Knoppers' suggestion creates a tidy marker in the text that signals a shift between the culmination of the Solomonic golden age as promised by YHWH from the advent of Solomon's reign, and the downfall which follows in 1 Kgs 11. As appealing as this suggestion is, 5:14 (Eng. 4:34) echoes 10:23-25 much more closely than 3:12-14, interrupting Knoppers' proposed unit demarcating promise and fulfillment.

Solomon's arrangements with King Hiram of Tyre for the construction of the temple immediately follow the praise of his wisdom in vss. 9-14, which implies that the building of the temple is the logical consequence of wisdom imparted by YHWH; the link between wisdom and temple-building is standard throughout ancient near eastern historiography, and parallels the divine wisdom through which the world was created.[130] Solomon's interaction with Hiram stresses several elements that are central to Israel's temple ideology, including YHWH's promise to David that David's son would build the temple (2 Sam 7:12-13; 1 Kgs 5:19, Eng. 5:5) and that YHWH would grant Israel rest (נוח) before the erection of the temple (2 Sam 7:11;[131] 1 Kgs 5:18, Eng. 5:4; 1 Chr 22:9[132]). The figure of Hiram creates a sense of continuity between David and Solomon, as the text recalls Hiram helping David in the

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[130] According to Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos, Temple, House: Building and Wisdom in Ancient Mesopotamia and Israel" in *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible* (eds. Mark J. Boda and Jamie Novotny. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010), 413, "the divine building of the cosmic house by wisdom is the model for human house building; human culture is a form of the *imitatio dei,* especially with reference to God's creation of the cosmos as the house in which all houses are contained." The temple is the most emphasized example of a man-made "house" that is the reflection of the cosmic one. Indeed, as Robert L. Cohn, "Characterization in Kings" in *The Books of Kings: Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception* (eds. Baruch Halpern and André Lemaire. Boston: Brill, 2010), 94, notes, the language used in the description of the construction of the temple is similar to the creation language in Gen 2, and even argues that " by concluding the description of Hiram's work with phraseology nearly identical to that used to conclude the story of creation ("And Hiram finished [HEB] doing [HEB] all the work [HEB] which he had done [HEB] v. 40; cf. Gen 2:2), the narrator implicitly casts Hiram as creator in the image of Yhwh."

[131] Admittedly, the rejection of David's proposal to build a temple in 2 Sam 7 is more complex than can be addressed here. 2 Sam 7:11 implies that rest is a necessary condition before construction can begin, but does not point to David's failure to establish rest as the reason he could not build the temple, as 2 Sam 7:1 announces that YHWH had granted David "rest on every side from his enemies." Indeed, 2 Sam 7 does not appear to offer a rational explanation as to why David is not allowed to build the temple.

[132] In Chr the link between Solomon, temple building, and rest is developed further than that in the deuteronomistic history. As Jonker, "The Chronicler's Portrayal," 657 notes, 1 Chr 28:2-12 calls temple a "house of rest," which represents "a deliberate attempt by the Chronicler to associate the 'house of rest' with the 'man of rest'."

construction of his palace (2 Sam 5:11) and comments that Hiram was "one who had always loved David" (כִּי אֹהֵב הָיָה חִירָם לְדָוִד כָּל־הַיָּמִים) (1 Kgs 5:15; Eng. 5:1).[133] Hiram further emphasizes the link between temple building, wise rule, and proper Davidic succession by praising YHWH for having "given David a wise son to rule over a great nation" (1 Kgs 5:21; Eng. 5:7). Hiram thus acts similarly to the Queen of Sheba in that both outside figures are used in order to contribute to the connection between the Davidic monarch, wisdom, and temple building, and to contribute to the text's depiction of Israel's golden age.

The next chapters outline the temple's construction and dedication,[134] followed by YHWH's appearance to Solomon to acknowledge Solomon's dedication prayer. YHWH announces that he has consecrated the temple by putting his name there forever (עוֹלָם) (1 Kgs 9:3) and stresses that the Davidic line and the temple will continue forever under his divine favor only if the king walks before him and keeps his statutes as David has done (1 Kgs 9:4-5), issues that the queen of Sheba touches upon.

The queen of Sheba highlights and affirms the beliefs which are most central to the community's identity: that YHWH elected and "loved Israel forever" (1 Kgs 10:9), and that YHWH set Solomon on the throne as a reflection of this love. Of

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[133] Chr accentuates the seamless transition between David and Solomon's rule even further. As Zipora Talshir, "The Reign of Solomon in the Making: Pseudo-Connections Between 3 Kingdoms and Chronicles," *VT* 50 (2000): 243 notes, Solomon is presented as "the direct continuation and fulfillment of David's preparations for the Temple."

[134] With a partial interruption in 1 Kgs 7:1-12 to describe the palaces Solomon builds for himself and for Pharaoh's daughter. This section does not divert into completely different subject matter, as the palace and temple are both royal building projects, duties that are deeply implicated in constructions of proper kingship.

course, the idea that YHWH elected Israel because he loved the community was widely accepted in Persian Yehud,[135] but the queen's statement connects the ideas of the deity's love and election of his people and his election of a monarch:[136] YHWH loves and elects Solomon as king, but it is equally because he loves and has elected Israel that he has set Solomon over them as king.

The divine love which is bestowed upon Solomon is reflected in the special name that YHWH gives him from birth, a name which indicates that he has been born for a life governed by a special sense of divine purpose. Solomon's birth follows in a long ancient near eastern and biblical tradition of a genre of literature which seeks to set apart an important figure as having been born for greatness, so to speak.[137] Within biblical literature, further examples can be found in the birth stories of Moses, whose survival despite the Pharaoh's command to kill all newborn Israelite males signifies that YHWH has great plans for him and has intervened in order to spare his life, and Samuel, whose birth story has been classified by Alter as typical of the "annunciation type-scene" the "the birth of the hero to his barren

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[135] As Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Memory of Abraham in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah" in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian & Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (eds. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3-37 [21] notes, citing the examples of Deut 4:37; 7:7–8, 13; 10:15; 23:6; Isa 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7; cf. Hos 11:1; Hos 14:5; Ps 47:5; Mal 1:2, and see also, among others, Jer 31:2; Hos 2:16–17).

[136] As William L. Moran, "Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy." *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77–87 has illustrated in his now classic essay, the deuteronomic concept of love is constructed based on the image of ancient near eastern vassal treaties and the sense of covenantal obligation involved in such commitments.

[137] Stories about the king as an unlikely candidate to the throne who nevertheless succeeds in doing so and has divine support are common within ancient near eastern literature (See William W. Hallo, "The Birth of Kings" in *The World's Oldest Literature : Studies in Sumerian Belles-lettres* [Culture and History of the Ancient Near East. Leiden: Brill, 2010], 223-238 [228-229]).

mother" scenario.[138] We see non-biblical variations on the use of the "miraculous birth" motif which marks a particular character as extraordinary from birth in the stories of Sargon, Cyrus, Romulus and Remus, Darius, and much later, about Jesus.

Thus, while a riddle contest may have been the premise for the queen's journey, the narrative purpose and real focus of her visit is her utility in affirming that Solomon has fulfilled the requirements of ideal kingship. We may expect that a narrative about Solomon's wisdom would feature Solomon speaking, but here it is the queen's speech which is prominent.[139] Whereas lengthy descriptions of the manifestations of Solomon's wisdom, justice, or righteousness are not developed, the queen's discourse on Solomon's kingship and her subsequent offering of praise and gifts is given center stage. That the queen's praise makes use of standard biblical discourse on proper Davidic kingship is striking. Whereas some of the queen's observations are quite unique, such as her interest in Solomon's cupbearers and the clothing his servants wear (10:5), at other times she becomes a mouthpiece for royal Davidic ideology.

The queen of Sheba attests to the fact that Solomon possesses the qualities that are referred to when YHWH warns that he must be like David[140] by exclaiming

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[138] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (2d ed. Rev. & updated. New York: Basic Books, 2011), 103-109.

[139] However, later traditions such as the Midrash Mishle and ha-Hefez, the Targum Sheni to the Book of Esther, and the Stories of Ben Sira have picked up on the potential to develop dialogue between the two monarchs in order to illustrate Solomon's wisdom.

[140] As is standard throughout the book of Kings, fidelity to the ways of David serves as a means of assessment of Solomon's performance as a king. Establishing that Solomon is "like David" is important from the beginning of his reign, and Solomon's legitimacy is asserted through the statement that "Solomon loved YHWH, walking in the statutes of David his father" (1 Kgs 3:3). As Amos Frisch, "Comparison With David as a Means of Evaluating Character in the Book of Kings." *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 11 (2011): 7-8 has demonstrated, comparisons made between Solomon

that the king's rule is characterized by "justice and righteousness" (1 Kgs 10:9),[141] a word pair that generally refers to social justice but that also refers to a royal ideal.[142] Elsewhere in historiographical literature David is the only other king who is described in terms of justice and righteousness (cf. 2 Sam 8:15; 1 Chr 18:14)[143] even if it is an ideal for kingship within prophetic literature, and the phrase therefore does not go unnoticed. The queen's attribution of justice and righteousness to Solomon also evokes the memory of his display of social equity in his wise judgment in the case of the prostitute mothers following his gift of divine wisdom (1 Kgs 3). Additionally, her comment that because "YHWH loved Israel forever, he has made [Solomon] king to rule in justice and righteousness" (10:9) also recalls YHWH's promise that the Davidic line will endure forever as she highlights the connection between YHWH's eternal love and his establishment of the throne. Lastly, the Queen contributes to the fantasy of the eternal reign of the king when she exclaims that "happy are Solomon's attendants, who stand before him and hear his

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and David delineate Solomon's positive evaluation at the beginning of his reign (1 Kgs 3:3) and a condemnatory evaluation at the end (11:4-6).

[141] Several scholars suggest that the queen's praise of Solomon's justice and righteousness is in fact a subversive comment which draws attention to the lack of these qualities in his kingdom. Eric A. Seibert, *Subversive Scribes and the Solomonic Narrative : A Rereading of 1 Kings 1-11*. (T & T Clark Library of Biblical Studies. New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 178 summarizes the arguments of these scholars, which include Fretheim, Brueggemann, Eslinger, and Walsh.

[142] Cf. Moshe Weinfeld, "'Justice and Righteousness'--משפט וצדקה —the Expression and Its Meaning." In *Justice and Righteousness*, 228–46. Sheffield, Eng: JSOT Pr, 1992), 230-231.

[143] Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (1st American ed. OTL. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 637 suggests that "[o]ne may of course attribute [the word pair's] absence for the other kings to the literary idiom of Deuteronomistic vocabulary which has other phrases for describing righteous rulers, e.g. 'he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord' (II Kings 18.3, etc.), while the evaluations of David and Solomon are of a non-Deuteronomistic origin."

wisdom continually" (1 Kgs 10:8), creating an image of peace and timelessness which echoes that which characterizes the temple itself.[144]

The Queen's affirmation of proper Davidic kingship also contributes to the text's temple ideology. The temple is immediately hinted at when we learn that the Queen's curiosity is piqued by "the report about Solomon to the name of YHWH," *leshem YHWH* (1 Kgs 10:1). The phrase *leshem YHWH* occurs five other times in the Solomonic narrative in Kgs, and all refer to Solomon's mission to construct a temple "to the name of YHWH" (לְשֵׁם יְהוָה) (cf. 1 Kgs 3:2, 5:3, 5:5, 8:17, 8:20),[145] which also fulfills Nathan's prophecy that David's son will build a house for YHWH's name (2 Sam 7:13). The six occurrences of this phrase in Chronicles also all refer to the construction of the temple (cf. 1 Chr 22:7, 19; 2 Chr 2:1, 4; 6:7, 10).

Outside of the Solomonic narratives in Kgs and Chr, the phrase "to the name of YHWH" (לְשֵׁם יְהוָה) appears four times, and in a similar vein, all contribute to the image of peoples gathering around a common center, the name of YHWH: in Ps 122 the tribes ascend to the Jerusalemite temple to give thanks "to the name of YHWH" (לְשֵׁם יְהוָה), the nations gather to the throne of YHWH in Jerusalem (alluding to the temple) "to the name of YHWH" (לְשֵׁם יְהוָה) in Jer 3:17, and ships from Tarshish are depicted as "bringing your children from afar" with their wealth "to the name of

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[144] John D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) illustrates the fact that images of timelessness, eternal joy, and redemption are deeply connected with the temple, which is the antipode to Sheol with its associations with death, melancholy, and isolation.

[145] While it is not my own intention to propose emendations, several scholars have proposed emendations which make the connection between this phrase and the temple more explicit. As Mulder, *1 Kings,* 511 notes, "Klostermann, followed by Benzinger, Kamphausen and Skinner (et al.) emended: 'and the fame of the temple which he (i.e. Solomon) had built for the name of YHWH.' The suggestion is, therefore, that a piece of the text has dropped out."

YHWH" (לְשֵׁם יְהוָה) in Is 60:9. Josh 9:9 invokes the phrase in its parody of the usual scenario of foreigners gathering in in awe of YHWH, as the Gibeonites avoid their destruction during Joshua's cleanse of the people of the land by pretending to have traveled a great distance because of the name of YHWH (לְשֵׁם יְהוָה) (Josh 9:9). The Queen's opening statement that she has traveled after hearing the report about Solomon in the name of YHWH thus strongly alludes to the completed temple in its immediate context, and outside of this context belongs to a group of texts depicting tribes and foreigners who draw towards Jerusalem from far places "to the name of YHWH."

There is a pause before Solomon reciprocates the queen's generosity and offers her "all that she desired" (10:13)[146] which announces that Hiram's ships also brought riches such as bring gold from Ophir and precious stones (10:11). This intertwining of Solomon's relations with Hiram and the queen of Sheba is also found in the account in Chr (2 Chr 9:10-11). The Queen serves to illustrate the grandeur that characterizes Israel's golden age: the magnificent building projects, the glory of the king, his people, and YHWH, and the vastness of Solomon's wisdom and his seemingly limitless wealth. Solomon's irresistible wisdom and dazzling riches only attract more glory and wealth to his figure and his kingdom. In an illustration of this tendency of Solomon's miraculous wealth to continue to multiply, Hiram of Tyre makes an appearance in the middle of the narrative of the queen of Sheba, contributing to the weightiness of the wealth bestowed upon Solomon and his

[146] As Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 186-187 notes, the reference to the fulfillment of desire is common commercial language which we also see in Solomon's deals with Hiram (1 Kgs 5:22-24; Eng. 5:8-10; 9:11)

kingdom and creating a sense of his excess being added upon her excess. As if the Queen's bestowment of riches upon Solomon were not enough to demonstrate that Solomon's wealth has the tendency to beget more wealth, the reference to Hiram's shipload of gifts creates a superlative scene.

Further, as a character whose identity within the text is defined by his role in building YHWH's temple, Hiram's appearance further invokes the temple in the utopian narrative. Hiram brings wood which we are told will be used for supports for the temple and palace (10:12) and to fashion instruments, further contributing to the sense of Israel's glory and joy.[147] Hiram and the mention of his wood which is used to support the temple thus explicitly brings the temple into a story[148] that otherwise alludes to the temple's glory.

Although some scholars read criticism into the queen's praise of Solomon's house, suggesting that she praises things that are of superficial significance, such as the clothes his servants wear and his cupbearers,[149] Solomon's wisdom throughout 1 Kgs 3-10 is largely demonstrated through house-building. The mundane aspects of Solomon's kingdom that the queen is impressed by therefore reflect an ancient near eastern perspective which places great value on the display of wisdom in

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[147] As the Queen of Sheba emphasizes how happy those in Solomon's kingdom are, music would seem to highlight the aspect of celebration in the kingdom, as when David and Israel danced and played music before YHWH (2 Sam 6:5; cf. 1 Chr 13:8). Music can also highlight the joy of the utopia in connection to the temple, as music can be used in cultic contexts in what Levenson, *Resurrection*, 95, refers to as a sense of a 'temporary immortality' in which worshippers '[were] praising God forever (Ps 84:5).'

[148] Though we might expect more overt praise of the temple by the Queen herself given its centrality to the utopia that she is commending, particularly because she has been shown some of Solomon's burnt offerings—elsewhere infamous due to their overwhelming amount (1 Kgs 8:63)—and thus Israelite ritual is part of the spectacle brought out to dazzle the Queen.

[149] Cf. Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 119; Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 151.

ordinary aspects of life. Such practical aspects of wisdom that lead to the smooth functioning of the domain in which wisdom operates—a house, temple, kingdom, or the entire cosmos—reveal a conception of wisdom is not merely theoretical, but that is operative in day to day life.[150]

In biblical literature, such an understanding of wisdom is advanced in Prov 9:1-6, for example, which envisions a good house as one that is built by wisdom. Wisdom is manifest not only in the pillars, but in the smooth running of the household in the preparation of food and drink, and setting of the table (9:2)—things that sound strikingly similar to the things that the queen of Sheba comments on during her visit.[151] The exquisite order of Solomon's house is a reflection not only of the order of his own house, but as houses were viewed as microcosms of the world, it also is a reflection of a perfectly ordered world beyond the palace doors which characterizes Solomon's reign as a golden age and Solomon himself as an ideal monarch.[152] The queen of Sheba's praise could thus be interpreted as contributing to the text's depiction of Solomon's kingdom as a utopian one in which even the most minute aspects run according to its perfect order.

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[150] Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos," 407. As Van Leeuwen also argues, wisdom was not seen as a merely intellectual or philosophical endeavor as it often is today, but was equally reflected in practical tasks such as weaving and house-building (416-417).

[151] Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings* (OTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 150, also notes that the Queen's praise of Solomon's household items fall within our expectations based on wisdom literature: "Such concerns are typical of wisdom literature, which frequently focuses on the proper means to conduct oneself before the king or other superiors (e.g., Prov 23:1-2; 25:1-7)."

[152] Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos," 399.

Expressions of Disbelief in Solomon's Empire

To the same extent that the Solomonic portrait in the book of Kings is an exploration of an imagined ideal in Israel's history, it is also a meditation on loss. To be sure, the Solomonic narrative is not unique in biblical literature in this regard; Israel's imagined history, in the words of Landy, "is an attempt to create a story, and thus an identity, from the complicated facts and tensions of the past, and an interpretation, or set of interpretations, of the failure of the story, of why history refuses to accommodate itself to human desire."[153] Part accolade and part elegy, the story of Solomon in the book of Kings ruminates on loss even at the moment when the heights of Israel's fulfillment are achieved in the establishment of the temple.

As the fatal tree of knowledge and harbinger of humanity's fall from paradise is located geographically and symbolically at the core of Eden, so too does the loss of the dream embodied by the Solomonic kingdom stand at the very heart of the fantasy. In the midst of Solomon's dedication of the temple, its destruction and Israel's exile is already evoked (1 Kgs 8:46-53), an omen that is again repeated by YHWH to Solomon in a divine revelation (9:6-9) with the warning that if Israel strays from YHWH, they will be cut off from the land to become "a proverb and a taunt among all people," and the newly completed temple will become a heap of ruins (9:7-8). Indeed, Camp notes the irony involved in the warning that "Israel will become a proverb among all the peoples," as "proverbs are the hallmark of

[153] Francis Landy, "Notes Towards a Poetics of Memory in Ancient Israel" in *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah* (eds. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin. FAT 85. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 321-345 [336].

Solomon's wisdom, that which people came from all nations to hear."[154] Proverbs, which serve as one of the main symbols of Solomon's wisdom, become a symbol of peril and folly, and the temple, which embodies the peace, rest, and fulfillment becomes a symbol of tragedy in YHWH's premonition.

Given Solomon's culpability in the loss of this longed-for state of existence, it is unsurprising that some breaks in the utopian depiction of his golden age appear in order to express disbelief in an entirely flattering portrait that a heroic and culpable figure such as Solomon engenders. However, the ambivalence present in the largely utopian negotiation of the Solomonic golden age in the book of Kings goes deeper than the need to account for the tragic loss of the longed-for state of existence that is portrayed. The negotiation of a utopian ideology within the Solomonic narrative takes on a particular complexity that one does not find in other Israelite utopian narratives due to the fact that the monarchy occupies an ambivalent place within Israelite thought and within Israel's memory of its past.[155] Indeed, if utopias are a means of imaginatively addressing problems which prevent a current society from existing in its ideal state, a quite complex and tension-filled utopian portrait emerges when an already problematic institution such as kingship is employed as the central, defining element which propels and characterizes the imagined ideal.

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[154] Camp, *Wise, Strange, and Holy*, 171.

[155] For a detailed exploration of the place of the monarchy within Israel's memory of its past, present, and future, see Ian D. Wilson, "Kingship Remembered and Imagined: Monarchy in the Hebrew Bible and Postmonarchic Discourse in Ancient Judah," Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, forthcoming 2015.

In particular, as previously mentioned, the significantly different utopian conceptions of the role of the monarchy within Israelite society that are conveyed by the DtrH and Deut come into contact with each other in 1 Kgs 10:26- 11:10. In this section, Solomon's acquisition of 1400 chariots and 12 000 horses, creation of chariot cities, and importation of horses from Egypt certainly contribute to a sense of status, as does the fact that "he made silver as common as stones" (10:27), accumulates a great deal of gold (10:14, 16-17, 21), and has the means to obtain and sustain a harem of 1000 foreign women (11:1). However, the correlation between Solomon's achievements in this section and the things forbidden to the king in Deut 17:16-20 is too strong to pass as innocent praise.

Indeed, many scholars have commented on the interdependence of these two texts:[156] Deut 17:14-20 clearly evokes the memory of Solomon and the account of Solomon's downfall evokes Deuteronomy's stipulations on the king.[157] The vision

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[156] It is unclear whether 1 Kgs 10:26-11:10 was written with Deut 17:14-20 in mind or if the reverse is true. For arguments that 1 Kgs 10:26-11:10 was shaped with the law of the king in mind, see Kim Ian Parker, "Repetition as a Structuring Device in 1 Kings 1-11." *JSOT* 42 (1988): 19-27 [23]; idem, "Solomon As Philosopher King," 85; Eslinger, *Into the Hands,* 152-53; Walsh, *1 Kings,* 137-38; Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBCOT; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 87-88; Marvin A. Sweeney "The Critique of Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History." *JBL* 4 (1995): 607-622 [615-17], and Marc Brettler, "The Structure of 1 Kings 1-11." *JSOT* 49 (1991): 87-97 [97].

For the view that the law of the king made use of Solomon in its construction of royal abuses of power, see Eric William Heaton, *The Hebrew Kingdoms* (The New Clarendon Bible, Old Testament 3. London: Oxford U.P., 1968), 226; Thomas Römer, "Moses, The Royal Lawgiver" in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian & Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (eds. Diana Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 81-94 [86]; Ernest Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and the Judaean Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 109.

[157] Karl William Weyde, "The Narrative of King Solomon and the Law of the King: On the Relationship between 1 Kings 3-11 and Deut 17:14-20" in *Enigmas and Images: Studies in Honor of Tryggve N.D. Mettinger* (eds. Goran Eidevall and Blazenka Scheuer. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 86 even suggests that Solomon's narrative is presented in the reverse order of the law of the king and that 'this inversion would, then, be another argument in favour of the assumed close connection between the law of the king and the Solomon narrative."

put forth in the law of the king is strikingly different from that of the Solomonic portrait in 1 Kgs 1-11. Whereas the DtrH sees the king similarly to surrounding ancient near eastern cultures as a powerful figure who administers justice, is the patron of the cult, and is the adoptive son of god, Deut 17:14-20 promotes a radical vision of a society governed by torah, with a king whose principal task is imagined to be studying the torah (17:19). And yet, the stipulations of the law of the king inform the presentation of Solomon's downfall as towards the end of his reign Solomon amasses Egyptian horses, gold and silver, and foreign women. Solomon's wealth and horses otherwise seem to point to his success and divine favor. His riches, at least, are necessary for building a temple befitting of YHWH's glory. However, these elements that could easily contribute to Solomon's glory quickly become transposed to signify the opposite, and elements that might otherwise symbolize Solomon's status within the world now expose him for having become too much like it.

Nevertheless, despite the affinity between Solomon's downfall and the monarchic abuses of power outlined in the law of the king, 1 Kgs 1-11 stresses that Solomon's apostasy is the fatal flaw which results in the loss of Israel's idyllic kingdom. Notably, while Solomon embodies the type of monarch that Deut 17:14-20 warns about, 1 Kgs 1-11 only explicitly condemns Solomon's worship of the gods of his foreign wives. To further complicate matters, despite providing an independent interpretation of Solomon's transgression, the portrayal of Solomon's

apostasy in 1 Kgs 11:3 is described in terms that echo the law of the king, as Brettler notes:

> Deuteronomy prohibits having too many wives, using the verb רבה, "to increase," the same root used in 11.1, נשים נכריות רבות, 'many foreign wives'. Deuteronomy, in its motive clause, warns, ולא יסור לבבו "so his heart will not stray;" paralleled by 1 Kgs 1.2, יטו את־לבבכם "[the nations... who] will sway your heart," v. 3 ויטו נשיו את־לבו "his wives swayed his heart," v. 9 כי־נטה לבבו, "because his heart swayed" and perhaps the mention of לבב, twice in v. 4b. These literary connections suggest a genetic relationship between 1 Kgs 11.1-10 and Deut. 17.17a.[158]

Kgs thus evokes the memory of the law of the king in narrating Solomon's folly while shifting the nature of the criticism on Solomon. Because 1 Kgs 11:3 clearly points to apostasy as Solomon's problem, it is the foreign nature of his wives and not their quantity which paves the way for Solomon's dereliction.[159] Ultimately, the law of the king is neither utilized to condemn Solomon nor is it refuted; the two utopian proposals surrounding kingship are permitted to remain in dialogue with each other, revealing the negotiatory nature of utopian discourse within a reading community that accepts multiple perspectives.

Leaving aside the ambivalence created by intertexts with different conceptions of utopia, the fact that the symbols which marked Solomon's success in chs. 3-10 are reversed to contribute to his downfall complicates the idealized portrait of Solomon's kingdom. For instance, whereas Solomon's marriage to

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[158] "The Structure," 91-92.

[159] A point also made by Gary N. Knoppers, "Rethinking the Relationship between Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History: The Case of Kings." *CBQ* 63 (2001): 393-415 [410].

Pharaoh's daughter and his close relationship with Pharaoh in chs. 3-10 is a symbol of Solomon's success, both of these figures are equally implicated in the loss of the golden age as Pharaoh's daughter's role in Solomon's foreign marriages which lead to his apostasy is highlighted (1 Kgs 11:1)[160] and Pharaoh harbors Solomon's enemies. Likewise, despite the fact that high places are generally a source of tension within biblical literature, one of our opening glimpses at Solomon's kingdom following his complete consolidation of power is his sacrifice at the high places (1 Kgs 3:2). The text excuses this behavior in multiple ways; note is made of the fact that the temple had not yet been built (vs. 2), which presumably makes these sacrifices more acceptable, and then emphasizes that Solomon loved YHWH and "walked in the ways of his father David" (vs. 3). While Solomon's activity at the high places is not initially viewed as condemnable, its inclusion in the text raises suspicion about Solomon only to urge the reader to suspend his or her doubt in Solomon's piety, and then ultimately implicating the high places in Solomon's downfall (11:6-8). Indeed, Solomon's infamous high places continue to be a source of discomfort in the monarchic period until they are ultimately removed by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:13).

In some ways, the inclusion of the seeds of Solomon's undoing within his golden age serves to preserve the basic hopes and desires expressed in the depiction of his kingdom: a longed-for state of existence is presented, but with the knowledge that it will not last. Its destruction is woven into its very fabric. Solomon's empire

[160] Pharaoh's daughter stands out in the list of Solomon's foreign wives, which has the double effect of separating her from the others (thus perhaps suggesting that she is an exception, particularly because Solomon does not worship Egyptian gods) but also drawing attention to her.

could not represent Israel's absolute ideal or it certainly would not have ended. Instead, the Solomonic period represents a wish for something that could have been, allowing the objects of desire which characterized the vision of the account to be held out for a future state of existence which will be free of the fatal flaws which were the undoing of Solomon's glory. Reading the Solomonic narrative, therefore, is reading of a glory lost, while also expressing a hope for a similar but better future. At the same time, reading the Solomonic narrative involves entering a space in which the truly desirable aspects of Solomon's larger than life kingdom are up for discussion and interpretation. A general picture of the ideal is presented, but in such a way that a degree of flexibility and a number of viewpoints within that general ideal can be accommodated, allowing for greater social cohesion within the utopian dialogue.[161]

Happy Are Your Wives!: The Queen's Critical Lens on Solomon

Given the fact that the Solomonic narrative expresses a utopian vision that also contains skeptical or critical comments on Solomon and his kingdom, it is appropriate to re-examine the account of the queen of Sheba's visit to see if it also conveys any of the ambivalence or premonitions of loss that we find elsewhere. And indeed, as flattering as the queen of Sheba's assessment of Solomon's kingdom

[161] Cf. Ehud Ben Zvi, "Utopias, Multiple Utopias, and Why Utopias at All? The Social Roles of Utopian Visions in Prophetic Books within Their Historical Context," in *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi. Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2006), 79-80.

appears to be, we do witness an expression of doubt in this seemingly utopian portrait of Solomon in the LXX B which is adopted by the Antiochian texts, the Vetus Latina and the Peshitta. This version of the story contains a degree of irony to the Queen's praise of Solomon, confronting the reader with the question as to the extent to which the story should be read entirely uncritically as a depiction of the glory of Solomon's kingdom. In the Hebrew version Sheba expresses her amazement over Solomon's wisdom and kingdom, declaring "happy are your men, happy are your servants, standing before you continually, hearing your wisdom" (1 Kgs 10:8). In the Septuagint, however, the queen comments on how happy Solomon's wives (γυναῖκές) and servants (παῖδές) must be, who stand before Solomon and hear his wisdom.

Some scholars point out that the discrepancy between the Hebrew and Greek versions could be due to a scribal error, since the orthography of (אֲנָשִׁים) "men" and (נָשִׁים) "women" or "wives" is similar. Even if this contradiction can be attributed to an error in transmission, it is impossible to determine with certainty which of the two statements is original.[162] Furthermore, the question as to whether "wives" or "men" is original may be less important than the question as to which of these two readings was more accepted and left a greater impact on the community. Of course, with its idealized depiction of the Solomonic period, the account of the queen of Sheba in Chr opts for the more positive reading of "your men" (2 Chr 9:7).

[162] See P.S.F. Van Keulen, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative: An Inquiry into the Relationship Between MT 1 Kgs. 2-11 and LXX 3 Reg. 2-11* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 108-109's overview of the discussion on the subject.

The queen's comment about Solomon's happy wives in the Greek text introduces an element of criticism into the text,[163] for Solomon's wives do not listen to his wisdom. In the next chapter Solomon's love for his thousand foreign wives[164] marks his loss of wisdom as his wives turn his heart to other gods (1 Kgs 11:4). Deemed as no longer having a heart fully devoted to YHWH, as David had been,[165] the forewarned loss of divine favor occurs and YHWH determines to divide the kingdom under Solomon's son, leaving him with half of the kingdom only "for the sake of David" (11:11-13). The Septuagint thus casts doubt upon the glory attributed to Solomon and his kingdom by the queen of Sheba.

The Queen as a Double-Pointed Signifier

[163] That being said, other readings have been proposed. Roland Boer, "King Solomon Meets Annie Sprinkle," *Semeia* 82 (1998): 164 for instance, reads the LXX version of Sheba's comment as reflexive of "a nervous mood about Solomon's absent libido" and the Hebrew version as an instance of silencing any potential references to sexuality. Van Keulen, *Two Versions*, 108, does not read too much into her comment, noting that "in the mouth of the Queen of Sheba the reference to Solomon's wives sounds quite natural, as she may identify herself more readily with women than with men," a sentiment that is also proposed by Lasine, "King of Desire," 102, and Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings,* 120.

[164] Contrary to van Keulen, *Two Versions*, 204, who asserts that "The bare fact that Solomon was a lover of women and consequently had a very extensive harem is not censured in the LXX-version," I propose that in the Greek this is condemned even more strongly than in the Hebrew as being a character flaw—Solomon is labeled a (φιλογύναιος), a lover of women.

[165] Weitzman, *Solomon*, 13 notes that there is a wordplay between "full" and "Solomon" within the statement that (וְלֹא־הָיָה לְבָבוֹ שָׁלֵם עִם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו כִּלְבַב דָּוִיד) "his heart was not full with the Lord his God as the heart of David his father": "those letters are preceded by a *not.* It is as if the narrative is telling us that Solomon has stopped acting like Solomon." In addition to informing us that Solomon's actions at the end of his life are untrue to his character, the text also emphasizes that they are not true to the standards set by David, again linking Solomon's success or failure to Davidic kingship. The emphasis on love in Solomon's success and failure also creates a Davidic connection. As Weitzman notes, Yedidyah, the name given to Solomon at his birth (2 Sam 12:24-25) is "a name that recalls David ('David' and 'Yedidyah' derive from the same root), but what is most relevant is the way it anticipates Solomon's future, the fateful role of love in his life—the love of God, and the love of women."

Leaving aside the criticism of Solomon that is implied in the Greek text, the queen herself takes on a double role, as Lemche suggests,[166] both representing a utopian wish fulfillment and highlighting the inevitable loss of Solomon's utopian empire. Her character serves to exemplify the repeated claims that all the kings of the earth came to hear Solomon's wisdom (1 Kgs 5:9-14, Eng. 4:29-34; 10:23-24)—except for the fact that here it is a queen and not a king from a far away land who comes to see Solomon's wisdom and bestow wealth upon him. The question that arises, then, is why is the figure who embodies the stories of the kings drawing near to exalt Solomon's wisdom a woman?

The exercise of rule by a female monarch does not appear to be an issue in the text. Certainly, the queen is depicted no differently than a male counterpart would be. And yet, her femininity is crucial to the text; the introduction of a feminine figure to the story is a literary choice which contributes to the narrative in a different manner than would be communicated by a male monarch in the same narrative position. As Camp proposes, the queen of Sheba very strongly alludes to Lady Wisdom.[167] Like Lady Wisdom, the queen of Sheba is flanked with riches (cf. Prov 8:18) which she endows to the wise, filling their treasuries (8:21); she speaks

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166 Niels Peter Lemche, "Solomon as Cultural Memory," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian & Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (eds. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 175-176.

[167] Camp, *Wise, Strange, and Holy*, 175-176.

in wisdom forms, and is deeply concerned with wise house building (9:1). The queen delights in wisdom and it leaves her breathless (10:5).[168]

However much the wise queen may resemble Lady Wisdom praising Solomon and YHWH's wisdom, she also retains her identity as a queen from a foreign land who witnesses and consequently acculturates to the YHWHistic order. Total assimilation to the Israelite/Yahwistic identity, as previously discussed, is not a possibility within this context. Rather, she is an example of a foreigner who recognizes the wisdom and glory of YHWH but never entirely becomes a member of the insider group devoted to YHWHism.

Herein lies her double significance. On the one hand, the foreign woman's recognition of the Jerusalem/YHWH centered order proposed in 1 Kgs 3-10 certainly contributes to the logic of its utopian vision. Indeed, the contrast between the queen of Sheba's interaction with Solomon whereby she recognizes YHWH's greatness and Solomon's later interactions with foreign women which lead him to

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[168] Likewise, happiness is associated with wisdom in Prov 3; Alfred Marx, "Salomon, Ou Le Modèle de L'homme Heureux (Prov. Iii 13-18)," *VT* 58 (2008): 420–423 even suggests that Prov 3's depiction of the happy man is modeled on Solomon due to the emphasis of joy in his kingdom.

That the story of the visit of a wise queen who bears some resemblance to Lady Wisdom has proved to have such deep mnemonic sway within proceeding reading communities is not surprising given the fact that in other biblical and post-biblical texts, the figure of Solomon is deeply intertwined with that of Lady Wisdom. This association between the figures of Solomon and Lady Wisdom stems from the characterization of Solomon as a paragon of wisdom and of the personification of wisdom as a woman, particularly in the book of Proverbs and in later works such as Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon. Within Proverbs, "Woman Wisdom gives body to the king's voice," as Camp puts it (cf. *Wise, Strange, and Holy*, 185) , though she has been around for much longer than Solomon and was present at the creation of the world (8:22-31). One of the implications of Wisdom's personification is that rather than merely talking about wisdom as an object to be possessed, wisdom can also be depicted in alluring terms as she is frequently in Proverbs, and as a consort of those who embrace her. Indeed, the later text of Wisdom of Solomon exploits this sexual imagery to a further extent, and the Solomonic figure proclaims that he "loved [Wisdom] and sought her from [his] youth" and desired to take her as his bride (Wis 8:1). Of course, I do not mean to suggest that the Queen of Sheba is an allegory for Lady Wisdom, but that the figure of Solomon became intertwined with women, wisdom, and especially, wise women.

follow their gods (11:1-8) underscores the respective wish-fulfillment served by the queen of Sheba and the dystopian scenario created at the end of Solomon's reign.

On the other hand, the queen Sheba's femininity may not be as innocuous as it seems. That the image of Lady Wisdom here is also that of a *foreign* woman complicates matters in a narrative in which Solomon's love for foreign women leads to the loss of his golden age. Of course, Solomon's encounter with the queen of Sheba is not a love story. The queen and Solomon are both motivated by their love of wisdom. And yet, a subtle flirtation with sexual desire is present. Wisdom is portrayed as an alluring woman in Proverbs in quite sexual terms which, as Aletti proposes, counter those which characterize Folly.[169] The tendency to sexually convey wisdom, albeit particularly when speaking of wisdom's quasi-divine form as Lady Wisdom, may shape the interpretive possibilities of the queen of Sheba's visit within the reading community given the fact that the Queen of Sheba so strongly recalls Lady Wisdom.[170]

In addition, the queen's encounter with Solomon conveys an overwhelming mood of pleasure, joy, and excess. Indeed, the queen is a figure in whom pleasure and wisdom meet. The queen of Sheba is immediately introduced as a curious individual, both in the sense that she is an enigmatic figure and also in the sense that

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[169] Jean-Noël Aletti, "Séduction et Parole En Proverbes 1-9" *VT* 27.2 (1977): 129-144 [133] proposes that Lady Wisdom and Folly are described in nearly identical terms and imagery. Both stand in the streets and squares (7:12; 1:20-21; 8:1-3) beckoning those who pass by. Whereas the two may look similar, the message is that discernment must be used in embracing wisdom rather than folly.

[170] And indeed, later traditions often took considerable liberties in developing an amorous interpretation of the visit and the queen and Solomon are credited or condemned for their resulting offspring (Menelik in Ethiopian traditions, Nebuchadnezzar in Jewish ones, and Rehoboam in Islamic writings).

she displays a thirst for knowledge. Rumors of Solomon's legendary wisdom pique the queen's curiosity to the extent that she would travel from Sheba to Jerusalem--a journey that surely would have been arduous—simply to see it for herself (1 Kgs 3:1). The queen represents a pure devotion to the pursuit of wisdom. For the queen, wisdom is a pleasure pursuit. The effects of wisdom leave her breathless (vs. 5), and she assumes that all those around Solomon who also hear his wisdom experience similar pleasure, exclaiming how happy Solomon's wives/men and servants must be to hear him (vs. 8).

Despite the depth of Solomon's ability to "know" the queen--or at least, to know what was on her mind [10:2]--, satisfy all of her desires (vs. 13), and to leave her breathless (vs. 5), there is no sexual or romantic encounter. Indeed, it has been suggested that her ability to spar equally with Solomon lies in the fact that, unlike the women of his harem, he does not and cannot possess the Queen of Sheba.[171] Nevertheless, Solomon's penchant for foreign women is certainly a source of tension even in a text which, despite subtle sexual suggestions, is decidedly devoid of sex. Solomon's encounter with the queen of Sheba is therefore an encounter with wisdom, but perhaps one that below the surface resembles a dalliance with folly, as well.

[171] Cf. Reinhartz, *Anonymous Women*, 49.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

Solomon is a figure around whom the world seems to turn in uttermost fascination. Or rather, with their creative endeavors at work in imagining and re-imagining an ideal time in the past when the temple was built, it is the mnemonic communities[172] responsible for the various biblical accounts available to us who are drawn to Solomon. Solomon is a figure for whom the extraordinary becomes ordinary. The space created by such an incomparable figure occupying incomparable times is a utopian space, which invites those who imaginatively engage to participate in the exploration of desire—desires which are very much situated in the needs of the present.

As historiographical approaches to history writing such as those advanced by White stress,[173] it is the interests and values of the present story (re)tellers and reception communities that determine which stories to tell and which details to include or exclude, how to tell the story, and what potential messages to illustrate through reimagining and recounting the past. When that time in the past which is being recalled is demarcated as occupying a utopian space, the story of Israel's past

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[172] A mnemonic community is a social group with a shared set of collective memories. Mnemonic socialization of members is crucial in shaping and perpetuating this sense of collective identity based in a common understanding of what is significant from the past in shaping the social group at hand and how these past events are to be interpreted. For more on the concept of mnemonic communities see Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 81-100, esp. pp. 80-91 and Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Theorizing Society. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2003), 15-19

[173] Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact." *Clio* 3 (1974): 277-303.

also becomes a story that highlights the role of desire in the construction of identity, on the kind of society the mnemonic community centered around the biblical narratives desires to have been. Nostalgia is of course present in such an endeavor, and a version of the past becomes a prototype to be reworked into a locus of desire for the future.

I have looked specifically in the role that the account of the queen of Sheba's visit plays in constructing Solomon's kingdom as one in which the utopian desires on which the imagined kingdom is built are expressed alongside the knowledge that such a state must be lost. The queen represents the nations who come to Jerusalem in awe of Solomon and his wisdom, and recalls Lady Wisdom, by whom kings reign (Prov 8:15). Yet despite the utopian significances of her visit, she is nevertheless a foreign woman who desires Solomon. The queen therefore represents the paradox of a utopia which was not meant to be.

Likewise, Solomon too reflects both the utopian desires and inevitable sense of tragedy that characterize his golden age. From his birth and ambivalent succession to the throne, Solomon is depicted as the unlikely hero. Following the atoning death of David and Bathsheba's firstborn, Solomon is marked as the one that YHWH loves—so much so that he names him Yedidyah (יְדִידְיָה) , "loved by YHWH" (2 Sam 12:24-25).[174] The name given Solomon at birth by YHWH proves to be fateful.

[174] Interestingly, in Chr, Solomon is also given a name by YHWH himself, but this name is Solomon (1 Chr 22:9) and there is no mention of the name Yedidyah. Nevertheless, Chr also creates the sense that Solomon is destined for greatness by YHWH, as YHWH foretells his future and names him before he is born in an annunciation-style formula: "see, a son shall be born to you." As Isaac Kalimi, "The Rise of Solomon in the Ancient Israelite Historiography," in *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Tradition : King, Sage, and Architect* (ed. Joseph Verheyden. Themes in Biblical Narrative Jewish and Christian Traditions 16. Boston : Brill, 2013), 7-44 [22], notes, "The motif of being divinely appointed for a position while still in the mother's womb is known from

In addition to signifying that Solomon has been selected for divine purposes, Solomon is also initially characterized by his love for YHWH and similarity to David (3:3). However, as Weitzman notes, that Solomon's downfall reverses the theme of love in Solomon's life: Solomon's fate ends with his love for his foreign wives (11:1) and we learn that his heart was is no longer full with YHWH.[175]

But ultimately, the temple is the central site in which tragedy is integrated into the utopian vision in the Solomonic narrative. The space occupied by the Solomonic narrative within Israel's imagined history represents a mythical foundational period in which Israel's long-awaited and most defining institution, the temple, is constructed. But it is equally a lost golden age which accounts for the discrepancy between modest state of affairs experienced by the reading community and their imagined glorious origins. The Solomonic narrative is as Landy proposes, very much a story that is preoccupied with the question as to "why history refuses to accommodate itself to human desire."[176] The utopian desires that underlie the Solomonic narrative express a longing for a transcendent, eternal state of existence associated with the temple. However, the temple in the Solomonic narrative embodies the tension between the sacred, timeless order of the temple and the transience of its place in history.

In particular, Solomon's prayer and dedication of the temple mixes the atemporal and historical conceptions of the temple which are expressed in the

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prophetical literature (Jer 1:4–5 and Isa 49:1)—from where the Chronicler probably took the notion—, as well as from ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions."

[175] Weitzman, *Solomon*, 10-13.

[176] Landy, "Poetics of Memory," 336.

Solomonic narrative. On the one hand, he declares that he has built YHWH a place to dwell in forever (8:13) but also advances the perspective that YHWH does not dwell in and cannot be contained by the temple (8:27). His prayer is universal and timeless (vss. 28-53) but anticipates the exile (vss. 46-47). The temple-ordered world with its vision of peace, rest, prosperity, and joy is therefore an eternal truth while at the same time being a historically doomed state. But the projection of this utopian state of existence into the future suggests that this true state of existence will reassert itself against the entropic effects of history.

In some ways, the inscription of a fatal flaw in the fantasy may allow for the desires underlying it to be channeled towards the future, where presumably the fatal failings of history will not bring destruction upon the timeless truths expressed in the utopian world order. Nevertheless, utopian visions of a future empire that are based in the general principles of Solomon's kingdom are never fully developed. Different visions of the future golden age take combinations of aspects of the Solomonic empire, resulting in multiple sketches of a utopian future, as if the failures of the imagined ideal past create a sense of hesitancy about imagining how the desired future state will function in detail.

The doomed utopia is a contradictory concept; what is doomed, logically speaking, seems to have little to do with the unrestrained desire of the utopian. Indeed, tragedies are stories in which what is desirable is lost. If historiography and utopias reflect the societies that invent them, 1 Kgs 1-11's invitation to its reading community to continually relive a yearned for state and to vicariously experience the loss of the desired object makes for an interesting self-construction. It is a

community that constructs its autobiography in terms of sober reflection, as a community that chooses to view itself as one that is picking up the pieces of a lost dream and that nevertheless displaces the desires implicit in this ill-fated history onto the future.

Perhaps, then, the recounting of Solomon's kingdom, both longed for and tragic, also implicitly involves a sense of wish-fulfillment. In Solomon's kingdom, Israel experienced the height of its glory. The kingdom, of course, was filled with silver and gold, joy and security, and most importantly, the king was wise beyond compare. The knowledge of this king of course spread amongst the kings of the world, but is also possessed by the reading community. The story of both the divine wisdom and tragedy of Israel's history is itself a source of insight in understanding the failure of even the wisest of kings, and of strength in the persistence of the desire of the kingdom in spite of the failings of history. The wisdom implicit in the retelling of the story is that which Solomon himself did not have: the wisdom of experience and of knowing one's own history, and of the failings of the wise.

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