

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14ⁱⁱ

Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David.

The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes

and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.”

ii About 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

Today’s reading comes from the beginning of the narrative of Solomon’s reign, based largely upon the “Book of the Acts of Solomon” (11:41). After forty years as king, David dies and his son Solomon succeeds him as king over Israel. Solomon is described as a generally a faithful king, but his willingness to offer sacrifices in “high places”—which refers to older shrines not dedicated to worship of Yahweh—reveals a serious character deficiency that caused continual problems.

During a time of worship, Solomon has a dream, a customary form of divine communication (Genesis 20:3, 28:12, 31:11; Matthew 1:20, 2:19). Solomon expresses a due sense of humility before the Lord and is already prudent enough to ask for “an understanding mind,” the grace of practical and judicial wisdom, rather than for wealth or long life. To later generations Solomon was the epitome and patron of all wisdom (Matthew 12:42), and the Jewish wisdom tradition was often associated with his name.