



# Lessons from Solomon: Celebrating God's Provision (1 Kings 10)

*Notes: Week Eight*

## 1 Kings 10 (HCSB)

### The Queen of Sheba

**10** The queen of Sheba heard about Solomon's fame connected with the name of Yahweh and came to test him with difficult questions. <sup>2</sup> She came to Jerusalem with a very large entourage, with camels bearing spices, gold in great abundance, and precious stones. She came to Solomon and spoke to him about everything that was on her mind. <sup>3</sup> So Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too difficult for the king to explain to her. <sup>4</sup> When the queen of Sheba observed all of Solomon's wisdom, the palace he had built, <sup>5</sup> the food at his table, his servants' residence, his attendants' service and their attire, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he offered at the LORD's temple, it took her breath away.

<sup>6</sup> She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your words and about your wisdom is true. <sup>7</sup> But I didn't believe the reports until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, I was not even told half. Your wisdom and prosperity far exceed the report I heard. <sup>8</sup> How happy are your men.<sup>[a]</sup> How happy are these servants of yours, who always stand in your presence hearing your wisdom. <sup>9</sup> May Yahweh your God be praised! He delighted in you and put you on the throne of Israel, because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel. He has made you king to carry out justice and righteousness."

<sup>10</sup> Then she gave the king four and a half tons<sup>[b]</sup> of gold, a great quantity of spices, and precious stones. Never again did such a quantity of spices arrive as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

<sup>11</sup> In addition, Hiram's fleet that carried gold from Ophir brought from Ophir a large quantity of almug<sup>[c]</sup> wood and precious stones. <sup>12</sup> The king made the almug wood into steps for the LORD's temple and the king's palace and into lyres and harps for the singers. Never before had such almug wood come, and the like has not been seen again even to this very day.

<sup>13</sup> King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba her every desire—whatever she asked—besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she, along with her servants, returned to her own country.

### Solomon's Wealth

<sup>14</sup> The weight of gold that came to Solomon annually was 25 tons,<sup>[d]</sup><sup>15</sup> besides what came from merchants, traders' merchandise, and all the Arabian kings and governors of the land.

<sup>16</sup> King Solomon made 200 large shields of hammered gold; 15 pounds<sup>[e]</sup> of gold went into each shield. <sup>17</sup> He made 300 small shields of hammered gold; about four pounds<sup>[f]</sup> of gold went into each shield. The king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

<sup>18</sup> The king also made a large ivory throne and overlaid it with fine gold. <sup>19</sup> The throne had six steps; there was a rounded top at the back of the throne, armrests on either side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the armrests. <sup>20</sup> Twelve lions were standing there on the six steps, one at each end. Nothing like it had ever been made in any other kingdom.

<sup>21</sup> All of King Solomon's drinking cups were gold, and all the utensils of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. There was no silver, since it was considered as nothing in Solomon's time, <sup>22</sup> for the king had ships of Tarshish at sea with Hiram's fleet, and once every three years the ships of Tarshish would arrive bearing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.<sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>23</sup> King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the world in riches and in wisdom. <sup>24</sup> The whole world wanted an audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom that God had put in his heart. <sup>25</sup> Every man would bring his annual tribute: items<sup>[h]</sup> of silver and gold, clothing, weapons,<sup>[i]</sup> spices, and horses and mules.

<sup>26</sup> Solomon accumulated 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen and stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar as abundant as sycamore in the Judean foothills. <sup>28</sup> Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue.<sup>[j]</sup> The king's traders bought them from Kue at the going price. <sup>29</sup> A chariot was imported from Egypt for 15 pounds<sup>[k]</sup> of silver, and a horse for about four pounds.<sup>[l]</sup> In the same way, they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of Aram through their agents.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [1 Kings 10:8](#) LXX, Syr read *your wives*
- b. [1 Kings 10:10](#) Lit *120 talents*
- c. [1 Kings 10:11](#) = algum in 2Ch 2:8; 9:10-11
- d. [1 Kings 10:14](#) Lit *666 talents*
- e. [1 Kings 10:16](#) Lit *600 (shekels)*
- f. [1 Kings 10:17](#) Lit *three minas*
- g. [1 Kings 10:22](#) Or *baboons*
- h. [1 Kings 10:25](#) Or *vessels, or weapons*
- i. [1 Kings 10:25](#) Or *fragrant balsam*
- j. [1 Kings 10:28](#) = Cilicia
- k. [1 Kings 10:29](#) Lit *600 shekels*
- l. [1 Kings 10:29](#) Lit *150 shekels*

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Kings 10

**10:1-29** This chapter deals with Solomon's wealth, his international reputation, and his trade practices.

**10:1** The author begins with the the queen of Sheba (Sabea in the southwestern corner of Arabia) investigating Solomon's rumored wisdom. Perhaps other political and economic interests motivated her visit as well.

**10:2** Since the land routes were more convenient for traveling from southern Arabia, and perhaps because Solomon's fleets had cut her off from sea travel, the queen came with a camel caravan loaded with the luxury goods that made her land wealthy and famous. She and Hiram (**9:10-14**), in their dealings with Solomon, demonstrated one of the models for international commerce: that international trade could be conducted as gifts between heads of state. The gifts were delivered with all the generous appearances of real gifts, but the business managers probably were there to evaluate the real value of the exchanges. And, if an exchange was not fair, one of the partners could complain, as Hiram did (**9:13**).

**10:4-5** These verses demonstrate the moral complexity and depth of the Bible writer's vision. As a manifestation of God's good gifts to Solomon, all this luxury was God-given. However, being abused in practice, this luxury also demonstrated the sinful excess that burdened the people and helped to bring down Solomon's empire.

**10:6-9** There were two sides to the queen's glowing report of Solomon's greatness and the blissfulness of his servants. On the good side, it showed both God's glory and Solomon's glory and his capacity for producing wealth. But it also showed the short-sighted, luxurious misuse of those gifts.

**10:10** Sheba was famous for spice production and probably also had its own maritime trade with points further east. The gold that the queen brought was probably in payment for goods that Solomon was shipping south.

**10:11-12** In the absence of firm data about the technological status of the peoples and lands from which these items were imported, one can wonder if this trade was as exploitative as the early European trade with the primitive New World. From the biblical perspective this high-yield trade pictured Solomon's glory as well as God's glory.

**10:13** Again, these gifts probably involved some business-like bargaining.

**10:14-15** These verses give a broader perspective on the wealth, trading partners, and tributary areas of Solomon's empire.

**10:16-17** This hammered gold probably utilized a technology in which soft, nearly pure gold was hammered into thin sheets. Then this foil, because of its malleability, could be applied to almost any surface. This kind of fragile decoration was intended for purely ceremonial use. The large shields were modeled after the large rectangular shields more useful for heavy infantry lined up in formation in battle. The circular prototypes of the small shields were better suited for more mobile, light-armed infantry.

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1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "1 Kings 10".

**10:18** Like other luxurious trappings of glory already noted, this throne was decorated with ivory inlay and hammered gold overlay.

**10:19** Lions were a common motif associated with royalty in ancient times. For instance, the palaces of pagan kings often included carved lions representing supernatural beings who were thought to guard the king and his palaces. In Hebrew apocalyptic imagery, such creatures were more symbolic of God's glory. Thus they may here symbolize the king's glory, which ultimately derived from God's glory. Two lions here are described as beside the armrests. In some similar ancient thrones, the backs of the lions *were* the armrests while the legs of the lions formed the legs of the throne.

**10:20** This description closes with the writer's boast about the uniqueness of Solomon's throne and dais—an expression more properly taken to indicate the king's unique glory rather than the purported uniqueness of structures related to his throne.

**10:21** Pure gold is too malleable to use in table utensils; some variety of gold alloy is much more practical.

**10:22** That the mercantile expeditions were undertaken every three years indicates that they were far-reaching, perhaps even bypassing the seafaring interests of possible allies such as Sheba. The expeditions also imply the existence of firm alliances with distant trading partners since the fleets had to have access to friendly harbors during the annual monsoon winds. Tarshish was likely in Spain. The Hebrew word translated peacocks is difficult to interpret. In light of the close diplomatic and cultural connections between Solomon and Egypt, the word may actually refer to a type of baboon native to Egypt.

**10:26** In light of the data describing Solomon's imperial influence, this figure for a chariot army, 1,400, seems appropriate or slightly on the low side. About a century later, Assyrian documents assert that Ahab of Israel could mobilize 2,000 chariots. The 12,000 horsemen probably included the human handlers, trainers, other support personnel for the chariot horses, and the chariot warriors themselves.

**10:28-29** An important part of Solomon's trade and commerce was his trade in chariots and chariot horses. The best chariots were made in Egypt. One of the major suppliers of horses was a place in northern Egypt known as Mitsri. This indicates that Solomon had established himself as the middleman for much of the north-south arms trade of his day.

## The Apologetics Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

### 1 Kings 10

**10:11** "Almug wood" is traditionally identified as sandalwood (*Pterocarpus santalinus*), imported from India. Elsewhere almug was said to be native to Lebanon (see [2 Ch 2:8](#)), suggesting that it may refer to juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea excelsa*).

**10:26** A large part of Solomon's wealth came from taxes and tolls on international commerce. The army's primary mission was to protect commercial traffic on Israelite caravan routes.

**10:27** "Foothills", literally "Shephelah," the coastal plains lying below the Judean highlands.

**10:28** The Masoretic scribes may have misread the Hebrew word that is translated here as "Egypt." This Hebrew word differs by only one letter from a word that refers to "Mutsri," the Cappadocian seacoast in Anatolia (modern Turkey). This fits with the other source of import, Kue, which is also located in Anatolia. The kings of Israel were forbidden to import horses from Egypt in [Dt 17:16](#).

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### 1 Kings 10

**10:1-5** The queen of Sheba came to see for herself if everything she had heard about Solomon was true. Contests using riddles or proverbs were often used to test wisdom. The queen may have used some of these as she questioned Solomon ([10:1, 3](#)). When she realized the extent of his riches and wisdom, she was overwhelmed and no longer questioned his power or wisdom. No longer a competitor, she became an admirer. Her experience was repeated by many kings and foreign dignitaries who paid honor to Solomon ([4:34](#)).

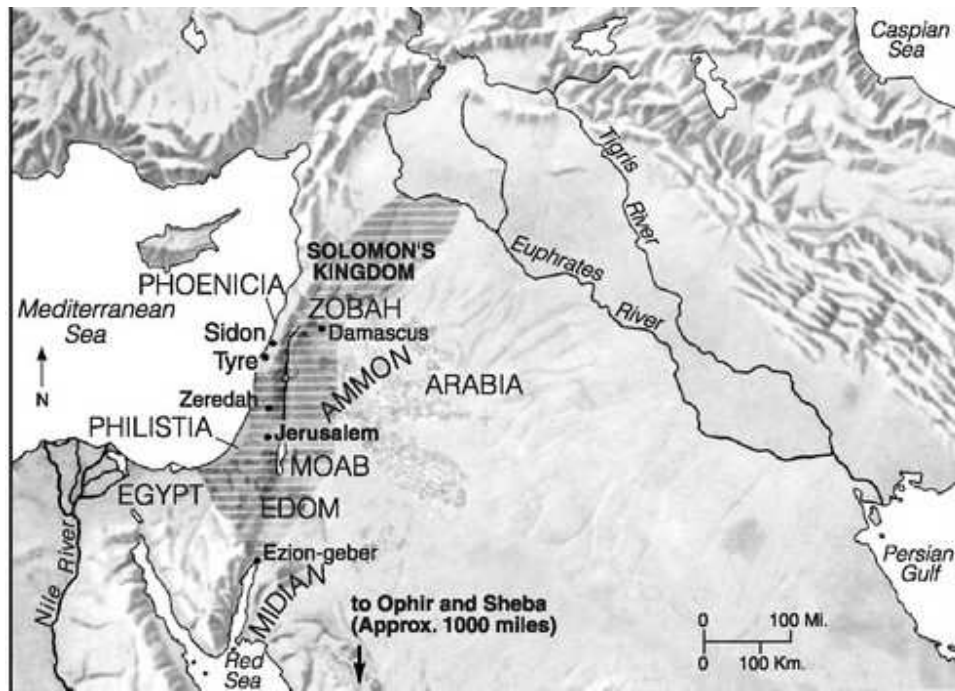
**10:14ff** When Solomon asked for wisdom, God promised him riches and honor as well ([3:13](#)). These verses show just how extensive his wealth became. Israel was no longer a second-rate nation, but at the height of its power and wealth. Solomon's riches became legendary. Great leaders came from many nations to listen to Israel's powerful king. Jesus would later refer to "Solomon in all his glory" ([Matthew 6:29](#)).

Solomon's reputation brought acclaim and riches from many nations, but he disobeyed God, marrying pagan women and worshiping their gods. So God raised up enemies like Hadad from Edom and Rezon from Zobah (modern-day Syria). Jeroboam from Zeredah was another enemy who would eventually divide this mighty kingdom.

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2. Kirk E. Lowery, "Notes on 1 Kings," in *The Apologetics Study Bible: Understanding Why You Believe*, ed. Ted Cabal, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 517-518.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 530.



*Friends and Enemies*

**10:23** Why does the Bible place so much emphasis on Solomon's material possessions? In the Old Testament, riches were considered tangible evidence of God's blessing. Prosperity was seen as a proof of right living. In the books of Ecclesiastes and Job this concept is placed in a broader perspective. In ideal conditions, people prosper when God runs their lives, but prosperity is not guaranteed. Wealth does not prove that a person is living right before God, and poverty does not indicate sin.

In fact, a greater evidence that a person is living for God is the presence of suffering and persecution ([Mark 10:29-31](#); [13:13](#)). The most important "treasure" is not earthly but heavenly ([Matthew 6:19-21](#); [19:21](#); [1 Timothy 6:17-19](#)). The gift of greatest worth has no price tag—it is the gift of salvation freely offered by God.

**10:26-11:3** In accumulating chariots and horses, a huge harem, and incredible wealth, Solomon was violating God's commands for a king ([Deuteronomy 17:14-20](#)). God prohibited these actions because he knew how they would hurt the nation both politically and spiritually ([1 Samuel 8:11-18](#)). The more luxurious Solomon's court became, the more the people were taxed. Excessive taxation created unrest, and soon conditions became ripe for a revolution. Having everything he wanted, Solomon forgot God and allowed pagan influences to enter his court through his pagan wives, thus accelerating the spiritual corruption of the nation.