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BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

Fourth Quarter.

Lesson I. Dec. 8. 1 Kings 10: 1-12.

SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"She came from the uttermost parts
of the earth to hear the wisdom of
Solomon; and beheld a greater than
Solomon is here."—Matt. 12: 42.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE FAIR OF SOLOMON. The fame
of Solomon's wisdom extended throughout
the then known world (1 Kings 10: 14),
and from all countries came persons to
hear him and to see his works. The mag-
nificent temple Solomon had built in the
name of the Lord, and in the building of
which was shown his surpassing wisdom
and skill, was the chief occasion of his
fame. It was recognized that his wis-
dom and knowledge were the gift of
God. In his earlier years his first thought
had been the glory of his God. Strangers
were expected to come "from a far
country, for thy name's sake; for they
shall hear of thy great name, and they
shall come, and of thy stretched-out
arm" (8: 41, 42).

SOLOMON'S MISSIONARY PRIVILEGE. Solo-
mon's marvelous wisdom and countless
wealth, and wide-extended kingdom,
were given him not for himself alone,
but as an instrumentality for making
known the true God and the true re-
ligion. This privilege was the noblest
gift of all. Had he continued to use it
aright, his missionary activity would
have kept him from falling, and the
glory would have remained to him and
to his successors.

APPLICATION. A GREATER THAN SOLO-
MON IS HERE. There is another king-
dom, of which a greater than Solomon
is king. Christ infinitely exceeds Solo-
mon in all his glory. (1) In wisdom.
He is "the wisdom and power of God" (1
Cor. 1: 24). (2) He is greater in
riches; in all spiritual gifts and bless-
ings, in joy, and peace, and love, all of
which are unsearchable and full of glory; he
is greater in worldly riches, for the east
is his and the fulness thereof. (3) He
is greater in power. He controls all the
forces of the universe. (4) His kingdom
is greater in extent, in value, in num-
bers, in blessings for his people. (5)
His fame is far more widely extended,
and all nations and peoples are coming
to him.

II. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA COMES TO SEE
SOLOMON. 1. And when the Queen of
Sheba, Sheba, or Saba, was a wealthy
queen in Southern Arabia. Josephus
calls this queen "the Queen of Ethiopia
and Egypt," and the Abyssinians claim
her as theirs. It is possible that her
kingdom may have extended to both
sides of the Red Sea, and thus included
part of Africa. Heard of the fame of
Solomon. Probably through the Ophir
fleet, which would naturally stop at her
seaport.

THE JOURNEY. She came. "We have
read of long voyages undertaken, and of
great hardships endured, by men who
were in search of gold. We do not read
of a traveller who brought gold and
sought wisdom."

THE OBJECT OF HER JOURNEY. She
came to prove (to test) him with hard
questions. With the riddles and enigmas
so common in the East.

THE PASSAGE. She brought. 2. And
she came... with a very great train, with
camels, with a very great store. "A very great
store" we are told in ver. 10. The
Arabian Sheba was the great spice coun-
try of the ancient world. These spices
were chiefly frankincense, myrror, opo-
balsam, gum tragacanth, and ladanum.
And very much gold. According to ver.
10, 120 talents. As a talent of gold is
worth \$250, her present of gold would
amount to over \$30,000,000. And precious
stones. The onyx, emerald, and turquoise
are still found in Arabia.

APPLICATIONS. (1) We should come to
King Jesus, even though, like the pro-
digal, we are in a far country, far away
in sin, in weakness, in unworthiness. (2)
We should come to Him with our hard
questions, and all that is in our hearts.
(3) We should prove Him; go to Him
and see (John 1: 46); "prove all things"
(1 Thess. 5: 21); search the scriptures
daily (Acts 17: 11). (4) We should
come at whatever peril or cost. (5) We
should come bringing the best gifts;
first of all our heart's love, and then the
treasures which will aid his cause.

III. SOLOMON'S WISDOM. (1) His wis-
dom in solving hard questions. 3. And
Solomon told her all her questions, etc.,
i. e., answered all her questions without
any mistake.

(2) His wisdom as a judge. An ex-
ample of his wisdom in dealing with the
difficult cases which came before him as
a judge, may be seen in his decision as to
the ownership of the child claimed by
two persons (1 Kings 3: 15-25).

(3) Knowledge and literature. Solo-
mon wrote three books of the Bible. We
are told that he spoke 3,000 proverbs
and 1,000 songs. He was versed in the
natural science of the day (1 Kings 4:
30-34).

(4) Private buildings. 4. And when
the Queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's
wisdom: i. e., the many different things
which manifested his wisdom. And the
house that he had built. By Solomon's
"house" we are not to understand his
private palace, or residence proper alone,
but a range of palaces, more or less con-
nected.

(5) Court splendors. 5. And the meat
of his table: i. e., both the great variety
of food that was placed upon the king's
table (1 Kings 4: 22, 23), and also the
costly furniture of the table (1 Kings 10:
21). The sitting of his servants. The
rooms of the courtiers in attendance.

APPLICATION: THE WISDOM OF GOD
SHOWN IN HIS WORKS. (1) The whole na-
tural creation is an expression of the wis-
dom of God. (2) Redemptive love in the
person of Jesus Christ, the breadth,
length, depth and height, of which pas-
sage knowledge (Eph. 3: 18, 19). (3) The
marvellous temple he is building, of
which his saints are the living stones
(Eph. 2: 20-22). (4) The city of God,
the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21: 10-27). (5)
Knowledge and wisdom given in the
Bible and the vast amount of literature
about the Bible. (6) The works of
Christ in the conversion of men.

IV. THE EMPY OF THE QUEEN. 5.

There was no more spirit (breath) in her.
A phrase idiomatically used in Hebrew
to describe an overpowering emotion;
here, of astonishment.

6. It was a true report. She is not hin-
dered by personal or national pride, or
by preconceived prejudices, from frankly
acknowledging Solomon's superior excel-
lence.

7. Howbeit, I believed not the words, un-
til I came, and mine eyes had seen. An
Oriental will believe any supernatural
wonders you may tell him about another
country than his own; but he is not so
credulous as to believe what you tell him
of the wonders of his own land. The half
was not told me. This confession of the queen
of the richest and most famous country
in the ancient heathen world was the
greatest homage Solomon had ever yet
received.

8. Happy are thy men. Not because
of their fine clothes, etc., but because
they could always listen to his wisdom.
9. Blessed be the Lord thy God. This
shows that the queen understood Solo-
mon to recognize all his wisdom and
wealth as the gift of God. The Lord
loved Israel forever: with a love which was
so strong as never to fail. Therefore
made he thee king. This was the highest
possible compliment to Solomon.

APPLICATION. (1) Only by giving to
him and experiencing for ourselves, can
we understand the fulness of blessing in
Jesus Christ. (2) The half has never
been told. Every one who visits the
kingdom of Religion joins with the
Queen of Sheba in saying that they did
not believe in his wisdom and wealth, but
they now find that all that was told
them was not half of the truth.

V. ROYAL GIFTS. 11. Vers. 11 and 12
form a sort of parenthesis, suggested by
the gold and spices mentioned above.
They also of Ophir. Hiram was king
of Tyre, and with him Solomon had a
joint commerce (2 Chron. 9: 21). Gold
from Ophir. It is perhaps impossible to
identify this place with any degree of
precision. The opinions of scholars may
be practically reduced to two. The first
would place the Ophir in India; the
second, in Southern Arabia.

12. Always tree. Probably red sandal-
wood, "very heavy, hard, and fine-
grained, and of a beautiful garnet color."
Furniture: probably railings or ballis-
trades for stairways. Palatiers: perhaps
lyres or guitars.

13. Solomon gave... whatever she
asked. Asking for presents is common
in the East, and is practised by persons
of all ranks. Besides that which Solomon
gave her of his royal bounty. That which
he had given her of his own choosing in
return for her rich presents. He as the
greater must give more generously than
she.

APPLICATION. (1) Christ expects to
receive gifts from every one he saves.
(2) Christ always returns more than he
gets.

A Story of India.

One bright summer morning every
street of Delhi (the ancient capital of
India) was in a bustle. Some great news
had evidently stirred the whole town, for
on every side the Hindoos were awar-
ning out of their houses, and ranging
themselves in crowds along the narrow,
crooked, dirty streets, till the whole
roadway, far as the eye could reach,
was a living forest of dark faces and
white turbans and bare brown limbs.

In truth, the sight which they were
waiting to see was one which was not to
be seen every day.

Lallajee Rao, the famous mountain
chief who had held out so long among
the western hills against the forces of
the Emperor of Delhi, Akbar the Great,
had been taken at last, and was being
brought to Delhi as a prisoner. That
very day he was expected to arrive, and
it was to see him that these crowds were
waiting so patiently in the heat and dust
of that burning summer day, which
seemed to grow hotter every moment.

"So the old wolf is trapped at last!"
cried a fierce-looking soldier with a
scarred face. "Long life to our great
Emperor, Akbar, the son of Humayun,
and may all his enemies be like Lallajee
Rao!"

"Yet even he hath done deeds of
kindness," said a gray-haired trader, who
stood beside him. "The hand of death
was stretched over my son Ishmael,
on the night when he lost his way among
the western hills. Then it was that
Lallajee Rao met with him. 'They
call me the enemy of thy people,' said
he, 'but all men are the friends of one
who is in trouble; follow me.' And the
good man gave me shelter, and
guided him into the right way. Was not
that well done, brothers?"

"Hark!" cried a third, "here they
come."

A distant sound of wild Eastern music
floated through the air, and up the
winding street came marching a
long train of soldiers, whose crimson tur-
bans and gay dresses, and glittering
spearheads and breastplates of polished
steel, made a gallant show in the midday
sunshine.

High above them all, on a black horse,
to the saddle of which he was tightly
bound with strong ropes of dried grass,
appeared a tall and powerful man, whose
thick black beard was just beginning to
turn gray. His dark face, firm and mas-
sive as if carved in granite, never
changed a whit at the taunting shouts
that broke from every mouth as he went
by; for this man was none other than
Lallajee Rao himself.

Winding slowly through the narrow,
crowded streets, the procession at length
reached the palace, under the marble
porch of which, with his guards around
him, sat the Emperor Akbar, a fine-look-
ing man of middle age, with an eye as
bright as the diamond in his snow-white
turban.

He listened in silence while the officer
in charge of Lallajee Rao, coming for-
ward with a bow, made his report of the
prisoner's capture. As the last word
was uttered, the Emperor waved his
hand, and instantly Lallajee, still bound
and gagged, was dragged from his horse,
and laid on the ground face up-
ward.

Then a solemn hush fell over the great
multitude, as if every one were holding
his breath in expectation of something
strange and terrible.

Alone in the crowd, seated, and a
huge elephant, with a native maulof
(driver) perched on its neck, was seen
coming slowly up to the spot where the
prisoner lay, the Hindoo custom being
that men condemned to die should be
trampled to death by elephants.

Lallajee Rao's stern eyes looked fear-
lessly at the moving mountain as it ap-
proached him, nor could the countless
spectators who were watching him so
keenly see the slightest change in his
iron face.

But just as the huge forefoot was
raised to crush out his life, he started
suddenly, cast a keen glance up at the
elephant, and shouted "Dekho chait; Lal-
lajee Rao!" (Look out, brother; it's
Lallajee Rao!)

At the sound of his voice, the elephant
started in its turn, drew back its uplifted
foot and bent down as if to look closer
into his face. Then it uttered a wild
cry, half snort and half scream; whisked
down its driver as if he had been a doll,
and taking up Lallajee in his trunk,
set him upon its neck in the driver's
place.

A murmur of astonishment ran through
the crowd, and the Emperor himself
rose to his feet in undisguised excite-
ment.

"Bring that man here!" cried he to his
guards.

But before they could obey, Lallajee
Rao (who bound though he was, pre-
served his seat on the elephant's neck
with wonderful skill) uttered a peculiar
cry, and instantly the mighty beast
moved forward with him right up to the
spot where Akbar was standing.

"What means all this?" asked the
Emperor.

"It means," answered the chief, "that
it was I who caught this elephant and
tamed him, and that although they say
he has no reason, he is more merciful
than some men who have."

Akbar bit his lip and was silent.

"You shall see how well he under-
stands my orders," said Lallajee. "Here,
Supramani, salute Lallajee Rao!"

The elephant lowered its head and
warbled in the air.

"Salute the Emperor Akbar!"

But the elephant remained immova-
ble.

"Do you hear?" cried Lallajee again.
"Salute the Emperor Akbar!"

This time the beast answered him with
a snort, and flapped its huge ears as if
to shake the very sound of the name away
from it.

The Emperor laughed.

Brave as a lion himself, he could see
and admire the courage of the prisoner,
and his heart was touched by the ele-
phant's grateful remembrance of its old
friend.

"It is well," said he, in clear, command-
ing tones of one accustomed to be obeyed.
"Lallajee Rao, thou art a warrior,
and I speak to thee as one warrior speaks
to another. If I spare thy life, wilt thou
be true to me henceforth?"

"No man ever yet said that Lallajee
breaks his word. Henceforth, I will be
true to thee, on the faith of a warrior,"
was the reply.

"So be it," rejoined Akbar. "From this
day thou art the captain of my guard,
and none but thyself shall ride the ele-
phant that has spared thy life."

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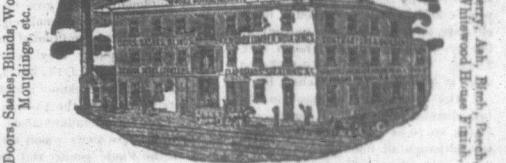
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