
1KINGS 4: 1 King Solomon was king over all Israel.

An account of Solomon's chief officers, 1Kgs 4:1-6. Names of the twelve officers that were over twelve districts, to provide victuals for the king's household monthly, 1Kgs 4:7-19. Judah and Israel are very populous; and Solomon reigns over many provinces, 1Kgs 4:20, 1Kgs 4:21. The daily provision for his family, 1Kgs 4:22, 1Kgs 4:23. The extent and peace of his dominions, 1Kgs 4:24, 1Kgs 4:25. His horses, chariots, and dromedaries; with the provision made for them, 1Kgs 4:26-28. His wisdom and understanding, 1Kgs 4:29-31. The number of his proverbs and songs; and his knowledge in natural history, 1Kgs 4:32, 1Kgs 4:33. People from all nations come to hear his wisdom, 1Kgs 4:34.

1KINGS 4: 2 These were the princes whom he had: Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest;

Verse 2

These were the princes which he had; Azariah the son of Zadok the priest - These were his great, chief, or principal men. None of them were princes in the common acceptance of the word.

1KINGS 4: 3 Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder;

Verse 3

Elihoreph and Ahiah - scribes - Secretaries to the king.

Jehoshaphat - recorder - Historiographer to the king, who chronicled the affairs of the kingdom. He was in this office under David see 2Sam 20:24.

1KINGS 4: 4 and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the army; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests;

1KINGS 4: 5 and Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers; and Zabud the son of Nathan was chief minister, the king's friend;

Verse 5

Azariah - was over the officers - He had the superintendence of the twelve officers mentioned below; see 1Kgs 4:7.

Zabud - was principal officer - Perhaps what we call premier, or prime minister.

The king's friend - His chief favourite - his confidant.

1KINGS 4: 6 and Ahishar was over the household; and Adoniram the son of Abda was over the men subject to forced labour.

Verse 6

Ahishar was over the household - The king's chamberlain.

Adoniram - was over the tribute - What we call chancellor of the exchequer. He received and brought into the treasury all the proceeds of taxes and tributes. He was in this office under David; see 2Sam 20:24.

1KINGS 4: 7 Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household: each man had to make provision for a month in the year.

Verse 7

Twelve officers - The business of these twelve officers was to provide daily, each for a month, those provisions which were consumed in the king's household; see 1Kgs 4:22, 1Kgs 4:23. And the task for such a daily provision was not an easy one.

1KINGS 4: 8 These are their names: Ben Hur, in the hill country of Ephraim;

1KINGS 4: 9 Ben Deker, in Makaz, and in Shaalbim, and Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth Hanan;

1KINGS 4: 10 Ben Hessed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh, and all the land of Hepher);

1KINGS 4: 11 Ben Abinadab, in all the height of Dor (he had Taphath the daughter of Solomon as wife);

1KINGS 4: 12 Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth Shean which is beside Zarethan, beneath Jezreel, from Beth Shean to Abel Meholah, as far as beyond Jokmeam;

1KINGS 4: 13 Ben Geber, in Ramoth Gilead (to him belonged the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead; to him belonged the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars);

Verse 13

Threescore great cities with walls and brazen bars - These were fortified cities: their gates and bars covered with plates of brass. Such were the gates in Priam's palace: -

Ipse inter primos correpta dura bipenni

Limina perrumpit, Postes que a cardine vellit

Aeratos. Virg. Aen., lib. ii. ver. 479.

Fierce Pyrrhus in the front, with forceful sway,
Plied the huge axe, and hew'd the beams away;
The solid timbers from the portal tore,
And rent from every hinge the Brazen door.

Pitt.

1KINGS 4: 14 Ahinadab the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim;

1KINGS 4: 15 Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he also took Basemath the daughter of Solomon as wife);

1KINGS 4: 16 Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth;

1KINGS 4: 17 Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar;

1KINGS 4: 18 Shimei the son of Ela, in Benjamin;

1KINGS 4: 19 Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan; and he was the only officer who was in the land.

1KINGS 4: 20 Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry.

Verse 20

Eating and drinking, and making merry - They were very comfortable, very rich, very merry, and very corrupt. And this full feeding and dissipation led to a total corruption of manners.

1KINGS 4: 21 Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt: they brought tribute, and served Solomon all the days of his life.

Verse 21

Solomon reigned over all kingdoms - The meaning of this verse appears to be, that Solomon reigned over all the provinces from the river Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the frontiers of Egypt. The Euphrates was on the east of Solomon's dominions; the Philistines were westward on the Mediterranean sea; and Egypt was on the south. Solomon had, therefore, as tributaries, the kingdoms of Syria, Damascus, Moab, and Ammon, which lay between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean. See Calmet. Thus he appears to have possessed all the land that God covenanted with Abraham to give to his posterity.

1KINGS 4: 22 Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and sixty measures of meal,

Verse 22

Solomon's provision for one day: -

Of fine flour 30 measures, or cors. Of meal 60 ditto. Stall-fed oxen 10 Ditto from the pasture 20 Sheep 100; with harts, roebucks, fallow deer, and fat fowls. The כר cor was the same as the homer, and contained nearly seventy-six gallons, wine measure, according to Bishop Cumberland.

Sheep - צאן tson, comprehending both sheep and goats.

Harts - מאיל meaiyal, the deer.

Roebucks - צבי tsebi, the gazal, antelope, or wild goat.

Fallow deer - יחמור yachmur, the buffalo. See the notes on Deu 12:15; Deu 14:5.

Fatted fowl - ברברים אבוסים barburim abusim, I suppose, means all the wild fowls in season during each month. Michaelis derives ברברים barburim from ברא bara, which in Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, signifies a field, a desert; all that is without the cities and habitations of men: hence חיות ברא cheyath bara, wild beasts, Dan 2:38, תור בר tor bar, wild bull; and therefore barburim may signify creatures living in the fields, woods, and deserts, which are taken by hunting, and opposed to those which are domesticated; and, consequently, may include beasts as well as fowls. Many have translated the word capons; but, query, was any such thing known among the ancient Jews? Solomon's table, therefore, was spread with all the necessaries and delicacies which the house or the field could afford.

But how immense must the number of men have been who were fed daily at the palace of the Israelitish king! Vilalpandus computes the number to be not less than forty-eight thousand, six hundred; and Calvisius makes, by estimation from the consumption of food, fifty-four thousand! These must have included all his guards, each of whom received a ration from the king's store.

1KINGS 4: 23 ten head of fat cattle, and twenty head of cattle out of the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, and gazelles, and roebucks, and fattened fowl.

1KINGS 4: 24 For he had dominion over all on this side the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all the kings on this side the River: and he had peace on all sides around him.

1KINGS 4: 25 Judah and Israel lived safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.

Verse 25

Every man under his vine - They were no longer obliged to dwell in fortified cities for fear of their enemies; they spread themselves over all the country, which they everywhere cultivated; and had always the privilege of eating the fruits of their own labors. This is the meaning of the phrase.

1KINGS 4: 26 Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

Verse 26

Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses - and twelve thousand horsemen - In 2Chr 9:25, instead of forty thousand stalls, we read four thousand; and even this number might be quite sufficient to hold horses for twelve thousand horsemen; for stalls and stables may be here synonymous. In 1Kgs 10:26 it is said he had one thousand four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; and this is the reading in 2Chr 1:14. In 2Chr 9:25, already quoted, instead of forty thousand stalls for horses, the Septuagint has τεσσαρες χιλιαδες θηλειαι ιπποι, four thousand mares; and in this place the whole verse is omitted both by the Syriac and Arabic. In the Targum of Rabbi Joseph on this book we have מאה ארבע arba meah, four hundred, instead of the four thousand in Chronicles, and the forty thousand in the text. From this collation of parallel places we may rest satisfied that there is a corruption in the numbers somewhere; and as a sort of medium, we may take for the whole four thousand stalls, one thousand four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

1KINGS 4: 27 Those officers provided food for king Solomon, and for all who came to king Solomon's table, every man in his month; they let nothing be lacking.

1KINGS 4: 28 Barley also and straw for the horses and swift steeds brought they to the place where the officers were, every man according to his duty.

Verse 28

And dromedaries - The word רכש rechesh, which we translate thus, is rendered beasts, or beasts of burden, by the Vulgate; mares by the Syriac and Arabic; chariots by the Septuagint; and race-horses by the Chaldee. The original word seems to signify a very swift kind of horse, and race-horse or post-horse is probably its true meaning. To communicate with so many distant provinces, Solomon had need of many animals of this kind.

1KINGS 4: 29 God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and very great understanding, even as the sand that is on the seashore.

Verse 29

God gave Solomon wisdom, etc. - He gave him a capacious mind, and furnished him with extraordinary assistance to cultivate it.

Even as the sand that is on the sea-shore - Lord Bacon observes on this: "As the sand on the sea-shore encloses a great body of waters, so Solomon's mind contained an ocean of knowledge." This is a happy and correct illustration.

1KINGS 4: 30 Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

Verse 30

The children of the east country - That is the Chaldeans, Persians, and Arabians, who, with the Egyptians, were famed for wisdom and knowledge through all the world.

1KINGS 4: 31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations all around.

Verse 31

He was wiser than all men - He was wiser than any of those who were most celebrated in his time, among whom were the four after mentioned, viz., Ethan, Heman, Chalcol, and Darda. Ethan was probably the same as is mentioned in some of the Psalms, particularly Psa 89:1, title; and among the singers in 1Chr 6:42. There is a Heman mentioned in the title to Psa 88:1. In 1Chr 2:6 we have all the four names, but they are probably not the same persons, for they are there said to be the sons of Zerah, and he flourished long before Solomon's time.

Some suppose that **בני מחול** beney machol should be rendered masters of dancing or music, as **מחול** machol signifies not only a dance or choir, but also an instrument of music of the pipe kind. Perhaps a reference is here made to Solomon's skill in music and poetry, as he is compared to persons who appear to have been eminent poets and musicians.

1KINGS 4: 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs; and his songs were one thousand five.

Verse 32

He spake three thousand proverbs - The book of Proverbs, attributed to Solomon, contain only about nine hundred or nine hundred and twenty-three distinct proverbs; and if we grant with some that the first nine chapters are not the work of Solomon, then all that can be attributed to him is only about six hundred and fifty.

Of all his one thousand and five songs or poems we have only one, the book of Song of Solomon, remaining, unless we include Psa 127:1-5, Except the Lord build the house, etc., which in the title is said to be by or for him, though it appears more properly to be a psalm of direction, left him by his father David, relative to the building of the temple.

1KINGS 4: 33 He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, and of birds, and of creeping things, and of fish.

Verse 33

He spake of trees - beasts - fowl - creeping things, and of fishes - This is a complete system of natural history, as far as relates to the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and the first intimation we have of any thing of the kind: Solomon was probably the first natural historian in the world.

O, how must the heart of Tournefort, Ray, Linne, Buffon, Cuvier, Swammerdam, Blosch, and other naturalists, be wrung, to know that these works of Solomon are all and for ever lost! What light should we have thrown on the animal and vegetable kingdoms, had these works been preserved! But the providence of God has not thought fit to preserve them, and succeeding naturalists are left to invent the system which he probably left perfect. If there be any remains of his wisdom, they must be sought among the orientals, among whom his character is well known, and rates as high as it does with either Jews or Christians. I shall give some extracts from their works relative to Solomon when I come to consider his character at the end of 1Kgs 11:43.

1KINGS 4: 34 There came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

Verse 34

There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon - We learn from 1 Kings 10, that the queen of Sheba was one of those visitants, and perhaps the most remarkable, as we have the particulars of her visit, but not of the others.

It is astonishing that of a person so renowned for wisdom, so little should be left to prove the truth of a fact of which all the civilized nations of the world have heard, and of which scarcely any man has ever doubted. The people that came from all kings of the earth were probably ambassadors, who came to form and maintain friendship between their sovereigns and the Israelitish king. We cannot understand the place as speaking of people who, either through an idle or laudable curiosity, came to see and converse with Solomon; to give free access to such people would ill comport with the maintenance of his dignity.