

Sefer Melakhim: The Book of Kings
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Shiur #5: Chapter 4-5 – Building an Empire

SHLOMO'S REIGN IN CONTEXT

In today's *shiur*, we will discuss the manner in which Shlomo turns his kingdom into an empire. We will examine chapters 4 and 5 of the *sefer* as it describes, stage by stage, the administration and rise of a national regime of power, wealth, and magnitude at a level that *Am Yisrael* had never previously experienced.

At the outset, it is important to put Shlomo's era in a wider context. *Am Yisrael* entered the Land of Israel to face the challenge of the conquest of Canaan and the creation of a new country. They succeeded in populating the land,¹ but what followed was instability and constant turbulence. With no system of national leadership and little tribal cooperation, Israel was constantly invaded, barely retaining independence for a period exceeding 300 years.² The tables turned for the better with the advent of the monarchy.³ Shaul Ha-melekh solidified the nation with secure borders and a respite from invasion and occupation. David Ha-melekh further advanced the kingdom, fighting wars on every front and thus bringing the kingdom to unprecedented regional hegemony. David created a new capital – Jerusalem – earmarked as a religious center. Shlomo builds on Shaul and David's firm foundation; now, for the first time, we have a king who has inherited the throne, an heir to a dynasty.

Shlomo assumes the leadership of a powerful and expansive empire:

He controlled the entire region west of the Euphrates – all the kings... from Tiphseh to Gaza... and he had peace on all his borders roundabout. All the days of Shlomo, Judah and Israel from Dan to Beer-Sheva dwelt in safety, each under his own vine and under his own fig-tree. (5:4)

What is Shlomo Ha-melekh to do with this unprecedented situation of power and stability? What can he do to take advantage of this historic opportunity?

A CIVILIAN AGENDA

¹ This is the story related in *Sefer Yehoshua*.

² These 300 years are described in *Sefer Shoftim*.

³ The era of Shmuel-Shaul-David is detailed in the books of *Shmuel*.

Chapter 4 opens with what at first glance appears to be a tedious list of government officials. They appear in the chart below in comparison to the presentation of David's cabinet in *Sefer Shmuel*.

	Melakhim 4:2-6	Shmuel II 20:23-26
1	<i>Kohen</i>	Army – Chief-of-Staff
2	<i>Soferim</i> (scribes?)	Kreti and Pleti
3	Secretary	Tax Minister
4	Army – Chief-of-Staff	Secretary
5	<i>Kohanim</i>	<i>Sofer</i> (scribe?)
6	Minister for the provinces	<i>Kohanim</i>
7	"Friend" of the king ⁴	<i>Kohen</i> for David
8	Minister of the Palace	
9	Tax Minister	

What can we decipher through the details of this list? By comparison with David's cabinet (and assuming that the order here is significant), we observe that for David, the leading official was the head of the military.⁵ David's second position is reserved for the "*Kreti* and *Pleti*," viewed by many as David's personal guard.⁶ In Shlomo's government, the military (Chief-of-Staff) is far lower in the listing. The King's guard is absent. We can thus surmise that national security is not the most critical item on Shlomo's agenda.

In contrast, Shlomo's top government position is occupied by a *Kohen* – not surprising for a king who plans to build the *Beit Ha-Mikdash*. The image that is reflected in Shlomo's list is that of a relaxed, stately, civilian agenda. Even the tax collectors are listed towards the end (#6, #9), indicating an absence of financial tension and urgency. The "*sofer*" is described by Rashi as the king's chronicler and by *Da'at Mikra* as a sort of Home Secretary. There is good reason to adopt the latter view, as the role of scribe occupies a central role in the government. For our purposes, let us note that the job fulfilled by David by a single scribe (*sofer*) has been expanded and now demands two ministers (*soferim*). We can attribute this to the expansion of the scope of Shlomo's kingdom, with its increased regional jurisdiction and bureaucratic workload. Even the palace – the royal family and the protocols of

⁴ This is a very mysterious position; we have little information about it. The *targum* translates it with the phrase "*shoushbin*," which is usually used in a wedding context as one who is a close friend of the groom. Radak talks about some sort of companion who is a personal assistant to the king. We might apply this title to Yonadav (see *Shmuel* II 13:3, 32), who is described as "an exceptionally wise man." Chushai Ha-Arki, another consultant or advisor, is mentioned in *Shmuel* II 15:37, 16:16, and 17:5. Perhaps this phrase refers to a close advisor to the monarchy?

Some have pointed to the phrase "*mere'ehu*" that appears in *Bereshit* 26:26, *Shmuel* II 3:8, *Melakhim* I 16:11. Is there a connection?

⁵ This is true also in another list of David's ministers in *Shmuel* II 8:16-20.

⁶ *Targum Yonatan* translates this phrase as "bows and slingshots," whereas Josephus talks about this group as David's bodyguards. See *Daat Mikra Shmuel* II 8:18, which supports the opinion that this is the king's personal security regiment.

the royal court – has its own minister (possibly related to the needs of Shlomo's 1,000 wives).

From all the above, we gain the clear understanding that Shlomo's government, free of military conflict, can turn itself towards a different set of priorities; it is primarily engaged in the Temple and affairs of State. This constitutes a shift from earlier periods.

THE TWELVE ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS (4:7-19)

From here we move on to the demarcation of the twelve administrative regions with which Shlomo finances the country. (See map: http://www.ohelshem.com/subjects/bible/Shlomo/b/map_big.jpg)

The number twelve is striking in that it recalls the classic tribal division that we have been accustomed to throughout Jewish History since the Exodus and through the settlement and Judges. But examine the list closely. You will discern that only five regions (Har Efrayim, Naftali, Asher, Yissachar, Binyamin) correspond to tribal identities. It would appear that Shlomo has remodeled the tribal borders and generated new regional boundaries.

What is the motive behind this division into administrative counties? What purpose does it serve? The text tells us that their tax money paid for the king's expenses:

These officers (*nitzavim*) financed King Shlomo and all those who sat at King Shlomo's table, each one for a month; they let nothing be lacking. Barley also and straw for the horses and swift steeds... every man according to his charge. (5:7-8)

So these are regional tax divisions.

But is the burden shared fairly? What are the national implications of this new division? What Shlomo's motives were in shaking up the ancient tribal divisions we can merely speculate. One theory views the new division as a response to the capture and settlement of new areas, previously unpopulated by Israel. Population shift requires the drawing of new civic lines. Some of these areas, such as the region of Dor on the coast, are actually small in size, and yet seemed to have generated significant revenue, capable of competing financially with provinces much larger in area and population. Scholars assume that this is thanks to the lucrative port that functioned in this area. Shlomo, understanding the new economic realities of Israel, restructured his country accordingly.

Some suggest that we are witnessing here an attempt to modernize the kingdom and to do away with the tribal division.⁷ After all, the tribal period of the *Shoftim* had closed. Now, with one king and a united nation, the tribal identities may have seemed archaic and superfluous. Shlomo retained five

⁷ See Oded Bustenai's comments in the *Olam Ha-Tanakh* volumes.

tribal units, but created seven new regions that muddle and modernize the old traditional boundaries.

But re-zoning the country has its hazards. Notwithstanding Shlomo's intent, the tribal identities endured, their independent status intact, despite him. To illustrate this, we can take the tribe of Yosef, Efrayim and Menashe. Shlomo's changes were most severe for the tribes of Yosef, as they suffered from a more invasive subdivision, and hence a disproportionate tax burden. We will see that this uneven policy, possibly even deliberately designed to weaken the tribes of Yosef who represented a potential source of opposition to the king, had a devastating ripple effect in later years.⁸ The act which finally tore Shlomo's kingdom into two after his death was a direct result of the overbearing tax burden felt most strongly by Efrayim.⁹

A further significant and troubling detail is that the tribe of Yehuda is not specified in this list of tax colonies. Some suggest that this is evidence that Shlomo's own tribe was excused absolutely from the tax burden, granted a total release from tax. *Da'at Mikra* refuses to accept this favoritism on Shlomo's part, asserting that this detail would have been so significant a point that it would have surfaced in Yerovam's rebellion if it were true. *Da'at Mikra* therefore adopts an unconventional reading that merges *passuk* 4:20 with 5:1 to read: "And one prefect who was in the land (of) Yehuda." This proposes that Yehuda constituted a thirteenth province and that Yehuda had its own tax-collector.

INTERIM SUMMARY

Through the lens of chapter 4, we have gained some perspective upon transformations that are taking place in Shlomo's era and the manner in which new realities are taking shape in the nation. We will now engage in a reading of Chapter 5 with parallel texts. **Please follow along in a Tanakh as we read Chapter 5.** As we walk through the *perek*, we will highlight the manner in which it depicts the development and flowering of Shlomo's kingdom into an imperial power.

PEACE AND SECURITY

And Shlomo ruled over all the kingdoms from the River unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt; they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life... For he had dominion over all the region 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 round about him. (5:1-4)

Shlomo controls a vast tract of the Middle East. He rules an expansive empire stretching from the border of Egypt to Mesopotamia. His power is uncontested; it includes "dominion over the entire region... peace on all sides

⁸ <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/tanach/rishonim/grosman2.htm>

⁹ See *Melakhim I* 11:27-28, 12:4

round about him." All nations "brought gifts and served Shlomo all the days of his life"(5:1).

Shlomo allies himself with Egypt – "Shlomo married [the daughter of] Pharaoh, King of Egypt" (3:1). Scholars suggest that the marriage of Pharaoh's daughter to Shlomo, as well as the gift of the city of Gezer (9:16-17), reflect the fact that Shlomo is the dominant regional power-player.¹⁰ Furthermore, Shlomo's role as the market-maker for Egyptian horses (10:28) demonstrates his regional financial influence.

THE ARMY – BUILDING PROJECTS

Shlomo had forty-thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve-thousand horsemen. (5:6)

Whereas David's army was primarily made up of reserves,¹¹ Shlomo supports a sizeable standing army of 12,000 horsemen and 40,000 horses¹² that provide him with defense and a ready deterrent capability. The retention of such large forces is a colossal undertaking in that it necessitates the building of army bases and the employment of an enormous staff to service the military, beyond the fighters themselves - cooks and maintenance staff, the food for the soldiers, staff, and horses, as well as military hardware. The administration of this system expands the role of central government and its consumption greatly.

Three chariot cities are built:¹³ Hazor, the Northern Command, Megiddo in the center of the country, controlling Emek Yizrael, the trade routes, and the coastal plain, and Gezer, the Southern Command controlling the southern approach to the country. Shlomo builds Beit Horon (10:17) to defend the capital; Beit Horon is the mountain pass that leads to Jerusalem. Further cities give him greater control over the trade routes (9:18). Shlomo also constructs store cities (10:19) in order to ensure the resilience of the imperial center. A strong country must have the wherewithal to withstand prolonged drought or siege; Shlomo's warehouses and silos serve this objective.

¹⁰ See Garsiel in *Olam Ha-Tanakh*

¹¹ *Shmuel II* 24:9

¹² Many note the flagrant violation of the directive addressed to Israelite kings that "he may not exceed in horses," as mentioned in *Devarim* 17:17. This is highly relevant here. Furthermore, we may add the continuation of the verse there - the prohibition of trade with Egypt in order to procure horses – and see Shlomo's obvious contravention of that law in *Melakhim I* 10:28. These issues are not incidental and go to the heart of the excesses and ensuing downfall of Shlomo, which we shall examine at some length. In the meantime, see Hanan Gafni's article, "The Reign of Solomon – The Failure and its Reasons," in *Megadim* 31.

¹³ 9:15, 10:26. In the late 1950's and '60's, Yigal Yadin uncovered impressive six chambered gates in Tel Hazor, as well as in Megiddo and Gezer, and declared that they dated to Shlomo's period. Since then, Amnon Ben Tor has verified these findings, discovering a fortified outer wall of the city that dates to the 9-10th century BCE. See Ben-Tor, "Excavating Hazor: Solomon's City Rises from the Ashes," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25:2 (1999): 26-37, 60.

Shlomo builds a port at Etzion Gaver, Eilat of today (9:26-28; 10:11). This is a formidable undertaking that could only be achieved by the very strongest and most powerful of Israelite kings. The expense involved, the technical expertise and industry needed to build and navigate huge sea-faring vessels, as well as the defence of the route - the supply line stretching long distances through the Arava to Eilat - exceed the economic and logistical capability of the average king.

This huge military commitment and the extensive building projects demonstrate and reflect the extraordinary might of the Kingdom.

CENTER OF WORLD KNOWLEDGE

And God gave Shlomo wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea-shore. Shlomo's wisdom exceeded the wisdom of all the children of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men... his fame was in all the nations round about. And he spoke three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs from the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. All peoples came to hear the wisdom of Shlomo, [sent by] all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom. (5:10-14)

Shlomo was undoubtedly an impressive thinker, and his 1,005 songs and 3,000 parables¹⁴ may indeed accord with at least some of the content of the books of *Shir Ha-shirim* and *Mishlei*, which are attributed to him.¹⁵ *Chazal* add *Kohelet* to his repertoire.¹⁶ But his wisdom goes further than that. *Sefer Melakhim* here mentions his knowledge of trees and animals and his superiority over all other known scholars. Rashi interprets this as referring to his knowledge of natural science:

TREES: the health of each plant and the constitution of the timber – which is suited to what type of construction, what soil it needs. AND ANIMALS: their medicinal needs, reproductive techniques, nutrition.

Thus, we have the clear impression that Shlomo was the master of philosophy and literature, botany and zoology and that there was not a sphere of human wisdom that eluded him. But, we may ask, how could Shlomo have

¹⁴ See Y. Kil's commentary in *Da'at Mikra*. He details four possibilities as to the definition of the term "*mashal*":

- 1) Proverbs and idioms – wisdom in concise phrases
- 2) A prophetic vision – such as Bilaam's *mashal* (see *Bamidbar* 23:7, 18; 24:3,15).
- 3) A philosophical musing (as in *Iyov* ch.27, ch.29).
- 4) A victory song (see *Bamidbar* 21:27)

What these all have in common is the song-like, poetic, figurative form of illusory and symbolic evocative language. In addition, there is frequently a message, a practical outcome, of the "*mashal*."

¹⁵ See the opening verses of *Mishlei* and *Shir Ha-shirim*.

¹⁶ *Bava Batra* 15a. Anyone who reads *Kohelet* 2:4-10 gets the distinct impression that we are dealing with Shlomo. Moreover, see *Kohelet* 12:9, which emphasizes *Kohelet*'s "*meshalim*."

amassed this huge knowledge base? And if everyone came to seek wisdom from the king, how could they all study with a single man, who had many other responsibilities, let alone be mentored by him? Can all this knowledge be possibly concentrated in one man?¹⁷

Let us answer a question with a question! When we say that Shlomo's wisdom exceeded every civilization and scholar, are we talking about Shlomo the individual or his kingdom? When we say "King Shlomo built," one assumes that the King planned, supervised, and financed the construction, not that he actually chiselled the stonework and cut the wood. Likewise, when we discuss Shlomo's wisdom regarding trees, beasts, and fowl, do we refer to Shlomo himself or to the men that he chooses? We propose that we are talking about the regime that Shlomo creates, the momentum that he galvanises in Jerusalem. Not all of the wisdom and scientific prowess need be attributed to Shlomo personally.

R. David Netiv once suggested that Shlomo's genius lay in his plan to harness all worldly knowledge and to make Jerusalem the hub of all wisdom, be it scientific, artistic, technological, or intellectual. He did this at times by importing experts and foreign expertise. Let us illustrate this point.

When approaching Hiram, the King of Tyre, in order to procure huge wooden tree trunks for his wood panelling, Shlomo specifies that "there are none who know how to cut timber like the inhabitants of Sidon." (5:20). Yet, Shlomo insists, "My servants will work with yours." His intention is that his men should learn this art, the work and skill of the lumberjack. He imports not only wood, but also the technical know-how, thus expanding the knowledge-base and the skill-set of the nation.

Similarly, Shlomo imports artisans and experts in their various fields, appreciating their intellectual edge and their technological advantage. An example:

King Shlomo sent for Hiram and brought him over from Tzor. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naftali and his father had been a Tyrian coppersmith. He was endowed with skill, ability, and talent¹⁸ for executing all work with bronze. He came to Shlomo Ha-melekh and performed all his work. (7:13-14)

We are suggesting that beyond Shlomo's personal genius and prowess, he pooled the most advanced knowledge and scholarship in his kingdom. He established Jerusalem as the center of global expertise. He turned it into the Yale and Harvard, the Oxford and Cambridge, of the ancient world. It thus

¹⁷ *Shir Ha-shirim Rabba* 1:8 suggests that Shlomo's genius lay in the connections that he made between disparate disciplines. It was his multi-disciplinary approach that granted him his uniqueness.

¹⁸ This language is a direct parallel to the depiction of Betzalel in *Shemot* 31:3. The obvious intent is to portray Shlomo's *Mikdash* as reflective of and equivalent to Moshe's *Mishkan*.

became a magnet for intellectuals and students who would seek to further their education in this crucible of knowledge.¹⁹

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

King Hiram of Tyre sent his officials to Shlomo when he heard that he had been anointed in place of his father, for Hiram had always been a friend of David. (5:15)

International relations play a significant part in Shlomo's empire. Shlomo's relationship with Hiram is a close one and they collaborate in many areas, among them timber and shipping. We have already mentioned Shlomo's alliance with Egypt. Later, we will hear of Shlomo's wives from surrounding nations, clearly a reflection of the political ties that he has forged throughout the region. Later in this *shiur*, we will read of the Queen of Sheba, who visits Shlomo in order to consult with him.

SURPLUS AND PROSPERITY

Hiram, the King of Tyre, makes a deal with Shlomo, supplying him with timber for his building projects. How does Shlomo repay Hiram? With

20,000 *kor* of wheat, provision for his household, and twenty *kor* of fine pressed olive oil. This is what Shlomo provided each year. (5:25)

Shlomo pays for his timber in farm produce. This business transaction gives us a clear understanding that the country has surplus produce. The country – in a clear reflection of the divine blessings listed in the Torah²⁰ – produces vast excesses of grain and oil.²¹ Israel is described as sitting "under their vine and fig tree" (5:5), a metaphor for calm and serenity and a high living standard.

Moreover, "the drinking cups of King Shlomo were gold, and all the tableware of the Lebanon Forest house were gold... there was no silver; it was not counted for anything in Shlomo's days... The king made silver as plentiful as stones in Jerusalem, and cedars as plentiful as the sycamores in the coastal plain" (10:21, 27). The king organized expeditions to Africa to procure exotic birds and animals, gold, coral, and precious stones (10:11-12, 22.)

The entire edifice of the country bespeaks power and plenty, maybe even an atmosphere of opulence.

¹⁹ Although we are based here on 5:14, note the parallel with the Messianic vision of *Yishayahu* 2:2-3.

²⁰ Examples include the second paragraph of the "*Shema*" (*Devarim* 11:14) and *Vayikra* 26:5, 10. In the context of the "blessings" of *Parshat Bechukotai* (*Vayikra* 26), note *Melakhim I* 6:12: "*Im telekh be-chukotai*."

²¹ The inverse image is presented in 9:11, which means that the nation is no longer producing these vast quantities of surplus goods. In a future *shiur*, we will examine this contrast.

IMPOSING AND IMPRESSIVE STRUCTURES

70,000 porters and 80,000 quarries in the hills... 3,300 supervisors... huge blocks of hewn stone. (5:29-31)

Everything with Shlomo is on a grand scale. We would be remiss if we did not mention his spectacular building projects as well.

We will talk about the Temple in detail in the upcoming chapters, but for now let us mention that the Temple is made with the finest stonework (5:31), overlaid with imported wood panelling (6:15), engraved with intricate carvings (6:29), and plated with Gold (6:21)! The Temple took seven years to build.

The king's lavish royal buildings are equally impressive: The House of the Lebanon Forest, the hall of pillars, the throne courtroom, and the royal residence, with massive stones, mirrors, and enormous dimensions. All of these were designed to project the grandeur and luxury befitting an emperor of Shlomo's repute.

THE FOCAL POINT OF THE EMPIRE

After this lead-up, this detailed imperial spectacle, we may well wonder as to its purpose, the objective behind this colossal enterprise. Why does Shlomo need this empire? What is his motivation, his master-plan?

I think that Shlomo informs us quite clearly as to his aim when he dedicates the Temple. In his inaugural prayer, he says:

If the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel comes from a distant land **for the sake of Your Name – For they shall hear about Your Great Name** and Your mighty hand... when he comes to pray towards this house, listen in Your heavenly abode, and grant all that the foreigner asks You for. **Thus, the peoples of the earth will know Your Name and revere You ... and they will recognize that Your Name is attached to this house that I have built.** (8:41-43)

Shlomo views the *Mikdash* as open to the non-Jewish world. He believes that many foreigners, gentiles, will hear about God and come to find our more, to pay homage to the Almighty. Shlomo repeats this point later in his prayer:

That **all** the peoples of the world may know that the Lord alone is God, there is no other. (8:60)

A classic illustration and living example of Shlomo's thesis is the visit of the Queen of Sheba.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Shlomo concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions; there was not any thing hidden from the king which he told her not. And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all Shlomo's wisdom and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord - there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, "It was a true report that I heard in my land of your acts and of your wisdom. But I did not believe the words, until I came, and my own eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told to me! Your wisdom and prosperity exceeds the fame which I heard. Happy are your men, happy are your servants who stand continually before you and that hear your wisdom. **Blessed be the Lord your God, who delighted in you, to set you on the throne of Israel. For the Lord loves Israel forever;** therefore he made you king, **to do judgment and justice.**" (10:1-10)

This is an unbelievable story. Here is a powerful queen of a neighboring country. However she has "heard" about Shlomo. How does she hear? What does she hear? His reputation has spread, his power and wealth is apparent and his famous genius, his wisdom. Clearly, people tell stories and legends about him ("It was a true report I heard in my land... the half was not told to me"). It would appear that she visits Shlomo as part of a state visit, similar to the visits of world leaders today, to discuss regional politics, trade and economy, and what have you. She comes to the world's political and economic centre, and this same impressive imperial metropolis is designed to attract tourists and intellectuals, world leaders and monarchs. Jerusalem is a magnet for those seeking the corridors of power, the halls of wisdom, art, trade and wisdom. Even this queen, who is clearly a wealthy lady herself,²² is dazzled. Is she overwhelmed by the beautiful architecture and avenues of Jerusalem? Possibly, but examine her response closely. She responds by praising God, by recognizing God's gift of wisdom to Shlomo and his vision of justice and judgment. Jerusalem itself reflects *mishpat!*

Shlomo prays that foreigners **hear** about his fame and God's reputation and that they come to seek God. This is precisely the manner in which events transpire. He dreams that foreigners would begin to see God through the prism of Shlomo's empire, through Jerusalem. This story testifies that it worked!

IN SUMMARY

²² Witness the gifts that she brings. Historians say that the area that she governed in Arabia would have given her significant wealth.

Shlomo carefully constructs his magnificent empire. The aim is clear. He seeks to create a national enterprise that is so impressive, that is so imbued with God and so reflects His presence, that people will be amazed and inspired by Jerusalem and be in awe of God.²³ He seeks to crown God at the pinnacle of his empire. This is the vision that Shlomo devises. He seeks to galvanize worldwide homage to God. Maybe we should not be surprised of the Rabbinic tradition that Shlomo's times produced a surge in interest in conversion to Judaism!²⁴

But we may well ask if this vision gained momentum. Did Shlomo's ambition, his master-plan, succeed in the long term?

We will, please God, pick up these questions in a future *shiur*.

²³ To read more of the vision here, see Joshua Berman's article, "David's Request to Build the Temple," in Yeshivat Chovevai Torah's *Tanakh Companion to the Book of Samuel*, ed. Nathaniel Helfgot.

²⁴ See Rambam, Mishne Torah, Hilchot Issurei Biah 13:14, where he tells us that people were converting in huge numbers because of the wealth and prestige of the times.