

Shepherds need to know the Biblical Definition of an “understanding heart”

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Undershepherd

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*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.
Samuel 15: 23*

*'Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may
discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?'*
1 Kings 3: 9

In the course of exploration on the subject of “stubbornness” in the context of Samuel’s pronouncement to King Saul, it became apparent that the question of discernment for shepherds/leaders as they deal with such issues needed further exploration. It was previously observed that many shepherds/leaders struggle with whether or not it is possible to rightly discern the heart motives of troublesome people. This uncertainty leads to two possible errors (among others): rushing in too quickly in faulty judgment or failing to intervene at all. I see these as “equal and opposite” errors.

In brief review, a stubborn person, in the Biblical sense, is one that raises up and speaks with deceitful motives to attempt to turn people to another direction, path. We saw that the rejection of wise counsel is equated with rejection of YHWH. Stubbornness can be a problem for both people and for shepherds/leaders. It’s bad enough if individuals live in stubbornness. If leaders remain ignorant of this heart motive and complacent toward that stubbornness could they not also in a sense be justifying the wicked? How much worse it is if the shepherds/leaders themselves exhibit stubbornness, as their visible position brings greater influence on larger numbers of people. Far be it from those who serve YHWH to want to fail in such a manner! The key question is that of discernment and the ability to rightly judge. Yet who can know the heart of another?

What then are shepherds/leaders to do as they walk out their responsibility for discernment and judgment for their people? Perhaps Solomon was paying attention to

similar concerns in his father's life. (1 Kings 3: 4-15) When YHWH appeared to him in a dream after Solomon had become King, and gave Solomon permission to ask of Him whatever he wanted, Solomon's response included this request: " *Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?*" This understanding heart was given to him along with wisdom, great wealth and honor as YHWH was pleased with his request. May we follow his example!

As we consider the shepherds/leaders role with their people, we see that there is a bigger picture here, too. It has to do with the Spirit's presence and work within Solomon and shepherd/leaders today. Like Solomon, we do need to ask Abba for His heart and Spirit in us in order to rightly lead, teach, discipline, nurture His sheep. If we try to do so in our own unsubmitted flesh nature, it is a given that we will fail and even cause further harm to those we try to help. As noted in the previous article, we recognize that immaturity and emotional woundedness can appear to be duplicity; and conversely, overtly gracious actions can come from a deceitful heart. I noted that King Solomon's prayer is a good model for us yet we know that he was not able to "run the race" with endurance and ultimately allowed his own heart to be divided. This larger picture may answer the question of how this wise man was still able to fail and fall, providing much needed direction for shepherds/leaders today.

What exactly does it mean that Solomon was given wisdom and an understanding heart? Our Western understanding of these English terms misses a great deal of the depth they contain. In the past, we have spoken of the *Ruach ha Kodesh*/Holy Spirit as the Helper; One with the Father and the Son. While this is true, there is more. In Isaiah 11:1-2 we are told about the Spirits that will rest on the Branch: wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge and awe/reverence. Revelation 1: 4, 5 and 13 also speaks of the Seven Spirits of YHWH in connection with the golden lampstand with has a central candle and six branches.

Messiah Yeshua is widely understood to be the Branch from the Root of Jesse as in Isaiah 11. He is further understood to be the Central figure of the pictures of the golden lampstand/*menorah* as in Revelation 1: 4, 5,13 which harkens back to Exodus 25: 31-40. He is One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is central to all Seven Spirits of Yah. As we have studied the seven Spirits of YHWH we have understood that they are to operate in us in one accord, not preferring one over another. This unity or *echad* in the Spirit is a primary concern in our teaching on "*The Importance of Echad for Messianic Communities.*" The *menorah* is one representation of the centrality of the *Ruach* governing the six Spirits as represented by each candle. They are to be present

and "all of one piece" just as the lampstand was constructed of one piece of gold. Taking it back to the Hebrew, as listed in Isaiah 11: 1-3 we see that these Spirits are likened to branches from a Root, namely: wisdom/*chokmah*, understanding/*bineh*, counsel/*etza*, Holy Spirit/ *Ruach ha Kodesh*, power/*g'vurah*, knowledge/*da'at*, and awe or reverence of God/*Yirat Adonai*. These Spirits have been foundational to the Creation and are also connected with the days and events of the seven creation days: Wisdom-separation of light and dark, Understanding-separation of waters, Counsel-trees and seed bearing fruit, Holy Spirit-sun, moon and stars, Power-birds and fish, Knowledge-man and beast, Fear/awe of God-rest. ¹ We highly recommend the Creation Gospel study which explores these topics with great depth and enlightenment both back to Creation and forward to the Final Days.

What do all of these seven Spirits have to do with Solomon and with shepherd/leaders today? In 1 Kings 4:24 it is noted that Solomon "*had peace on every side all around him.*" NKJV Scripture goes on to list the abundance of this life. Then come the words of interest to me today:

*And God gave Solomon **wisdom** and exceedingly great **understanding** and **largeness of heart** like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Hebman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. Also he spoke of **trees**, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of **animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish**. And men of all nations, from all the kings of the the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.*

1 Kings 4: 29-34 **emphasis added**

As I understand, this passage contains reference to the Spirits of YHWH that were prominent in Solomon. The first two Spirits are associated with the first two days of creation and are listed plainly; wisdom and understanding. The others noted are spoken of indirectly, by inference of the language and of the work of each Spirit. Trees are related to counsel and the third day of Creation and third Spirit. Birds, creeping things and fish refer to the fifth day of creation and power. Animals may refer to the sixth day of creation and knowledge. It is possible that the phrase "largeness of heart" refers to the Holy Spirit, since He is the central heart of this group of seven.

¹ Creation Gospel Study; Alewine, Hollisa, Rav., series of 4 workbooks; available at Hollisa@israelnet.tv

Rav. Alewine has noted that it is necessary for all Spirits to be working in accord, for if one or the other becomes more desirable than the whole, it can lead to idolatry. The one Spirit that is notably absent here is the seventh one; that of awe or reverence or fear of YHWH. Since the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, this seems a curious omission to me. I question the possibility then, that King Solomon for all his wisdom and blessing, was somehow lacking in fear/reverence for YHWH, which could explain his willingness to be influenced by his wives and tolerate idolatry. Though he demonstrated much wisdom and understanding in the judging/shepherding of the people it would seem that in his own life he was not so vigilant. Through the influence of his wives and concubines, he became involved in idolatry. It was not only his downfall, but that of the united kingdom as well. Stubbornness was working in his life and he tended to it rather than the way of righteousness.

Perhaps it was this failing that led to his son's downfall. (1 Kings 12: 1-16) Could it have been Rehoboam's personal stubbornness that caused him to reject wise counsel, raise his head and lead people away from the path of righteousness? The wise counselors of his father instructed him to be a servant to his people. He rejected their counsel in favor of the younger men who urged him to put greater burdens on them instead. In rejecting the wise counsel did he not also reject YHWH! He did not reverence YHWH enough to keep his own heart following after YHWH as his grandfather, David did nor even half-heartedly as his father, Solomon. Like Saul before him, YHWH used their circumstances to speak a message. One was to let the people live out their desire for a king through the experience of an earthly, fallable man (1 Samuel 7: 9); and the second was to allow the united kingdom to be torn in two for His purposes (1 Kings 12: 22-24).

As we stand in these last days coming nearer to the time of Messiah's return, I confirm once again that we will have to deal with many unpleasant and dangerous things: hostility, hard hearts, coldness, tares, wolves, wounded and immature people, false teachings and teachers; false shepherds. In all of the deception to come His true shepherds will need to stay close to Messiah in order to hear His voice, to not be enticed off the path and to be able to rightly discern and judge His people, however stubbornness appears. By the prophet Isaiah, He has spoken that He will raise up judges as at the first. (Isaiah 1: 26) I strongly suspect that shepherds and judges will need to have much in common in order to lead the "sheople" on the correct path. May we echo King Solomon's prayer **but may it be accompanied by all Seven Spirits of Yah in one accord in and through us** as we will stand before Him for our teachings and actions.

'Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?'

Abba, in Your mercy, please increase our knowledge of Your Word and Your Spirit within us that **we will walk in all of Your wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge and awe to rightly judge Your people.** May we not hesitate when we need to be bold nor rush in when we might cause further harm. Please show us the difference between immaturity or personal woundedness and the "stubbornness" Samuel spoke of as we need to see it today. Through your steadfast loving kindness and Messiah's work on our behalf, may we not walk a different path, tolerate stubbornness or fall into idolatry wherever it is found. We ask in the all powerful Name of our Messiah, Yeshua. May it be so.