

I am the Queen of Sheba

and I am not impressed. Remember my visit to Solomon, that most revered King of Israel? Oh I know, you thought I went away full of respect and admiration. That's what you were supposed to think. Then, not now. Then, well, if I had told him I thought his priorities immoral and his policies shallow and ineffectual--well, I would've put the lives of my queendom in danger: he would've attacked, like most leaders, provoked by mere insult and offensive opinion. But now, now the truth can be spoken.

Solomon was praised for his wealth and his wisdom. Well, the first part is accurate, for what this wisest of kings values most is gold. He drinks out of gold cups, he shoots at gold targets, he fights with gold shields, he sits on a gold throne... He also has a fondness for ivory and pure linen, cedar, stone, and brass.¹

What he values next is food. He has divided his kingdom into twelve areas, one for each month for the year; during 'their month', each area must provide food for Solomon and his court. Most areas spend the whole year in preparation for that month, for "Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meat, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, besides harts and roebucks, and fallowdeer, and fatted fowl" (1 Kings 4:22-23)--*for one day!* Since a land can produce only so much, it isn't hard to figure out what's left over for the people.

Also high on his list of priorities is military power. He has 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. That's enough to conquer every neighbouring nation not just once but twenty times. And since any conquered nation takes *at least* ten years to rebuild to strength, this amount of force is simply superfluous--it's overkill. His 'defence' policy is based on incredible paranoia and insecurity, and it's a ridiculous waste of man-ability.

Let's look at another example of his questionable policy-making. His idea of a

job creation program is to build a magnificent house--*in the name of the Lord*, of course. Oh sure, he created 180,000 jobs. But (a), the jobs created were in only three sectors of the market--woodcutters, carriers, and stone hewers (sectors dominated by men); and (b), the end product (after *seven* years) was *one* building--*to house no one*. Not a very wise use of resources, to say the least.

But then, Solomon simply was not a very wise man. With respect to his judgements, his only claim to fame was that of a custody conflict--two women declared a child to be their own. His proposal to cut the child in half revealed the true mother as the one who cried out for the child's life to be spared even if it meant giving it to the other. Well, it was a neat solution. But it wasn't his. During the recess just before the judgement, he met with his mother, Bathsheba, in his chambers--it was *her* idea.²

And with respect to his proverbs, consider the following--perhaps his most famous:

"To everything, there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven
A time to be born, and a time to die
A time to plant,
and a time to pluck up that which is planted
A time to kill, and a time to heal
A time to break down,
and a time to build up
A time to weep, and a time to laugh
A time to mourn, and a time to dance
A time to cast away stones,
and a time to gather stones together
A time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing

A time to get, and a time to lose
A time to keep, and a time to cast away
A time to rend, and a time to sew
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak
A time to love, and a time to hate
A time of war, and a time of peace."

By saying everything, it says nothing. Like many of his 'words of wisdom', these are perfectly empty of substance. Solomon does not, can not, answer the *important* questions: *When* is the time to give birth, to be born? *What* seeds do we plant, and *where* do we build up? *Why* must there be a time to kill? *Who* do we embrace and love? *How long* is the time to keep silence? And *how* do we achieve that time of peace?

¹ His house is incredibly extravagant, lavishly decorated with brasswork of cherubim, palm trees, lion, oxen, and row upon row of lilies and pomegranates. His wife's house is the same.

² If you recall that she was the one responsible for Solomon's becoming King in the first place (if she hadn't gone to David to speak for her son, he would never have been appointed), this will not surprise you. Also, that kind of solution would work only with women: men (like Abraham) will sacrifice their own child in order to fulfil a principle, but women choose to sacrifice the principle (in this case, truth) instead of a person--and only a woman would realize that difference.