

Questions to be addressed in interpreting 1 Kings 3-4

1. Why the immediate announcement of a “marriage alliance with Pharaoh” (3.10)?
2. What do we know about Gibeon, described as the “great high place” (3.4)?
3. Is the dream “real”? How would readers decide?
4. In 3.9, Solomon says that to govern God’s great people one must be able to discern “between good and evil”? How does this fit with Genesis 2.17?
5. How do we relate 2.13, “no other king shall compare with you” and 2 Kings 23.25, about Josiah: “Before him there was no king like him, who turned to YHWH with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him”?
6. In 3.16-28, Solomon judges a maternity dispute between two street prostitutes, in his only act of public engagement. What is this strange and unlikely story trying to convey?
7. In 1 Kings 4, we hear lists of Solomon’s officials and royal propaganda in support of Solomon. How is he presented here differently from his father David? What does that say about the direction of monarchy?
8. What pattern, if any, do we see in the territories which each official is “over” in 4.8-19?
9. In a short chiasmic passage (4.20-25), we are told that “Judah and Israel” are happy and safe. How do we relate this to what Israel says to Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, as soon as Solomon is dead: “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you” (12.4)?
10. In 4.24, we are told that Solomon’s dominion extended from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt, which was historically impossible. What do we make of this hyperbolic claim?
11. In 4.29-34, we hear of Solomon’s wisdom surpassing “all the sons of the east, all the wisdom of Egypt.” Why this comparison with foreign nations?