

1 Kings 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

Analysis

In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. This divine encounter at Gibeon marks a pivotal moment in Solomon's reign and demonstrates God's gracious initiative toward the young king. The Hebrew Gibeon (גִּבְעון) was a high place, one of the most significant worship sites before the temple's construction. Though high places were later condemned, Gibeon housed the tabernacle and bronze altar (2 Chronicles 1:3-6), making it a legitimate worship center at this time.

God's appearance 'in a dream' (bachalom, בַּחֲלוֹם) follows the pattern of divine revelation in the patriarchal period (Genesis 28:12, 31:11). The phrase by night (hallaylah, הַלַּיְלָה) emphasizes the supernatural nature of this encounter—God meets Solomon in vulnerability and openness. The remarkable invitation 'Ask what I shall give thee' (sha'al mah etten-lach, שְׁאַל מָה אֶתֶּן-לָךְ) presents an unprecedented offer: the sovereign God of the universe invites a mortal king to request whatever he desires.

This divine blank check tests Solomon's heart and priorities. What we ask for reveals what we value most. Solomon's response (v. 9) will demonstrate wisdom before receiving the gift of wisdom—he asks not for personal gain but for ability to serve God's people justly. This passage establishes that true wisdom begins with proper priorities and humble recognition of one's inadequacy before God's calling.

Historical Context

Gibeon lay about six miles northwest of Jerusalem and served as an important cultic site in early Israel. Joshua had made a covenant with the Gibeonites (Joshua 9), and Saul's violation of that covenant required expiation during David's reign (2 Samuel 21:1-9). The 'great high place' (bamah gedolah) mentioned in verse 4 indicates Gibeon's prominence among worship sites. Archaeological excavations at el-Jib (ancient Gibeon) have uncovered evidence of extensive cultic activity during the Iron Age, confirming its religious significance.

Solomon offered this sacrifice early in his reign, probably around 970 BCE, shortly after consolidating power following Adonijah's rebellion. The thousand burnt offerings mentioned in verse 4 demonstrate extraordinary devotion and likely represent multiple sacrifices over a period of time rather than simultaneous offerings. This lavish worship expressed gratitude for God's provision and sought divine blessing for the new reign.

In ancient Near Eastern culture, dreams were considered significant channels of divine communication. Kings often sought guidance through dreams and visions, sometimes sleeping in temples to receive divine revelation (a practice called incubation). God's choice to meet Solomon through a dream followed cultural patterns the king would recognize while maintaining the supernatural character of genuine revelation from Yahweh.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. If God offered you a blank check as He did Solomon, what would you request, and what does this reveal about your priorities and spiritual maturity?

2. How does Solomon's dream encounter illustrate God's gracious initiative in revelation and blessing, and how should this shape our expectations of God's interaction with us today?
3. In what areas of your life do you need to ask God for wisdom rather than relying on your own understanding or worldly strategies?

Interlinear Text

הָלַלְתָּ יְהוָה	בְּחֵל וּמִ	שְׁלֹמֹה ה'	אֶל	יְהוָה ה'	נִרְאָה ה'	בְּגִבְעֹן וְ
by night	in a dream	to Solomon	H413	the LORD	appeared	In Gibeon
H3915	H2472	H8010		H3068	H7200	H1391
לָהּ:	אֶתֵּן	מָה ה'	שָׂא ל	אֱלֹהֵי יִם	וַיֹּאמֶר	
H0	what I shall give	H4100	Ask	and God	said	
	H5414		H7592	H430	H559	

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 9:2 (References Lord): That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon.

Numbers 12:6 (References Lord): And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

Mark 10:36 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

Matthew 2:13 (References Lord): And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

1 Kings 11:9 (References God): And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

Matthew 2:19 (References Lord): But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

John 15:16 (Parallel theme): Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Matthew 1:20 (References Lord): But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Mark 11:24 (Parallel theme): Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

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