

CHAPTER 8

Solomon and the Divided Monarchy

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

The greatest achievement of Solomon's rule as king of Israel was the establishment of the Temple. Here the nation offered sacrifices to God, and the rituals connected with the cult are recorded in the Book of Leviticus. In the ancient world such a practice was widespread. Yet, in the modern world such rituals are viewed as primitive and abhorrent. Is it truly consonant with God's benevolence that He would have demanded the slaughter of innocent creatures? And, does it make sense to believe – as Jews have done through the ages – that the Messiah will bring about the reconstruction of the Temple and the reinstatement of the sacrificial system? In Orthodox synagogues, Jews pray daily for these events to take place: is such a belief acceptable given contemporary attitudes about animal welfare?

In order to support his numerous projects, Solomon instituted a complex system of taxation. For the northern tribes, this levy was a major burden and they rebelled. When confronted by protestors from the north, Solomon's son Rehoboam rebuked them, promising that he would act even more harshly than his father. This act led to the succession of the northern tribes and the creation of the kingdom of Israel in the north. Increasingly, however, the inhabitants of the north were drawn to Canaanite worship and their king, Jeroboam I, placed golden bulls in a number of shrines. This was done to reconcile the faith of Israel with elements of Canaanite belief. While the Canaanites associated these idols with their own god Baal who was often represented as a bull, the Israelites regarded them as thrones for God. Such syncretism was bitterly denounced by prophets such as Elijah. Today some strictly Orthodox Jews regard non-Orthodox forms of Judaism as equally syncretistic. It is alleged, for

example, that Reform Judaism has combined Jewish practice with Christian forms of worship. Are such comparisons valid? (See Chapter 44.)

THINGS TO DO

- Go to Amazon.com. Search for books dealing with the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Using various sources, try to visualize what the Temple must have been like.
- Go to Google.com. Click on images. Type in 'Bible temple', 'temple Jerusalem', etc. See how artists and others have depicted the ancient Temple.
- Stay in Google. Type in 'Bible sacrifice', 'sacrifice Temple', etc. Imagine what the Temple service was like in ancient times.
- Go back to Amazon.com. Search for books dealing with ancient sacrifice. Then go to Google.com for websites dealing with animal welfare, such as <www.animal-info.net> and <[www.world animal.net](http://www.worldanimal.net)>. These books can be supplemented by material on the web concerning animal sacrifice and animal welfare.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Stage a debate concerning sacrifice. Ask one group to defend the ancient Temple practice. The other group should argue against such a form of worship on religious and moral grounds.

- Search for websites on Google dealing with the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of the sacrificial system such as www.mnment.com/judaism/moshiach.php. Read out relevant material dealing with this issue. Divide the class into groups and ask them to discuss whether the Jewish belief in the coming of the Messiah makes sense in the modern world. (See Chapter 70.)