



The Fall of King Solomon

Dramatization by Christian Lanciai (2016)

The characters:

King Solomon
Nathan the Prophet
Sadok the Priest
Two mothers
Hiram
Ebjatar the Priest
The Queen of Sheba
Asarya, son of Nathan
Melissa
Jerobeam

The action is in Jerusalem in the tenth century B.C.

Act I scene 1.

Solomon Do you reproach me for anything I have done?

Nathan My son, I reproached your father and almost cursed him for having at all brought you into existence. I almost had you damned before you were born, which only made you even more a love child. You do think of your brother Adonia sometimes, don't you?

Solomon He was older than I and had greater right than I to inherit the throne. You can't ignore that fact. You can't blame him for what he did. He was perfectly right. Did I have any right?

Nathan Your father had every right to give over his throne to whoever he might choose. He chose you. Adonia had no right to oppose his decision and try to make himself king. He thought he could avail himself of that you were weak and inexperienced. You had no choice. You had to put him off.

Solomon You can never feel right about a fratricide.

Nathan What do you think your father felt about having to sacrifice Absalom, his most beloved son?

Solomon He wanted to spare him at any price.

Nathan It is the power that demands such victims. They are never voluntary. King David's course to the throne was long and arduous and cost many lives, and if Saul and Jonathan had not fallen at Mount Gilboa, he would perhaps never have got there. That's how the power works. It demands blood and sacrifices and whatever you never would wish.

Solomon I could have spared my brother.

Nathan Then he would have intrigued to have you overthrown. He had many followers, and your lack of position was to your disadvantage. If you had allowed him to live, the realm would probably have separated.

Solomon But this evil necessity does not feel right.

Nathan You have to live with it, if you wish to remain king.

Solomon Someone has to be, and Adonia is dead. I brooded much on this dilemma. The other night I had a remarkable dream.

Nathan Dreams are usually revelations of eternity.

Solomon I dreamed that God the Father came to me and told me, that whatever I wished I would have, in order to make my rule long, happy and enduring. I felt it like a test and immediately realized the importance of making a right choice. So I asked him for the capacity to always be able to distinguish between right and wrong and to always be able to do the right thing.

Nathan What did God the Father answer to that?

Solomon He was pleased with my wish and granted it. Do you think it was a true dream?

Nathan Dreams are always true. The difficulty is in understanding them. But sometimes they are so concrete that they can't be misunderstood. What you dreamt,

Solomon, was a seal on the success of your government. You will probably stand the test and always be able to do what is right.

Solomon Thanks, father, for this. I feel it as an endorsement of my own revelation, that this dream if anything inspired me with the definite intention to always only try to do what is right for me and for Israel.

Nathan That gives me pleasure, my son. Carry on like that.

Solomon Thanks, father, for your moral support. (*kneels to Nathan, who blesses him.*)

Scene 2. Enter Solomon taking his seat on the throne.

Solomon What's this about the two ladies?

Sadok A tricky business, my lord. These two ladies are prostitutes.

Solomon So what? They are still ladies.

Sadok They have a small child together, and their fight is about who is the mother.

Solomon A child cannot have two mothers. One of them has to be the right one.

Sadok They both feel they are.

Solomon So let them argue their case. You first. You seem to be most keen.

1st mother My lord, we both had a child almost at the same time, two small boys, but one of them died. When we were asleep, my sister took the opportunity to change child with me, so she took my living child and placed her dead child with me. You must not do such a thing.

Solomon No, you must not do such a thing. And what do you have to say for your defence?

2nd mother My lord, it was the other way around. She stole my living child and tried to get rid of her dead one by placing it with me. But I could see that the dead child was not my own. She was the one who tried to steal my child by cunning only because she had smothered her child by lying on it and did not want to accept her own mistake.

Solomon Have you brought the child here?

Sadok Yes, the first mother brought it.

Solomon So fetch an executioner here. Let him cut the child in half, so they can share it equally.

2nd mother No! Anything but not that! Let her keep the child then, if only it may live!

1st mother That's right. Let her comfort herself with half of the other child instead of her own dead one.

Solomon Give the child to the second mother. She is the right one.

Sadok King Solomon has judged the case, and the sentence shall be carried out. (*to the 1st mother*) We are sorry about your loss, madam.

1st mother It isn't fair! (*rushes out*)

Solomon Yes, it was not fair that she should lose her child, but it was nobody's fault if not her own.

2nd mother Thanks, my lord and king!

Solomon The case was obvious. But I would advise you not to live together any longer.

Sadok (gives the child to its mother) Take well care of it now, my lady, and try to get him a father.

2nd mother I think I know who the father is. *(receives the child thankfully, curtseys and leaves.)*

Sadok My lord, your judgement of this case will be spoken of. Another king would have allowed the two strumpets to be stoned and saved the child from them.

Solomon I think it was better this way.

Sadok Absolutely, my king.

Scene 3.

Hiram It is almost too good to be true. I always had good relationships with king David, who now has turned his realm over to a certain Solomon, who has proved himself wisest in the world, and he is asking for my help! What on earth could I help him with? Of course I will do it gladly, if only it's in my power. Here he is at last. What kind of an impression could such a king give?

Solomon (enters with retinue) King Hiram of Lebanon, I presume?

Hiram My brother, it's a great honour and joy for me that we could meet. I understand that you have some urgent business to discuss with me.

Solomon I do so indeed, my good Hiram. It is about the greatest of contemporary projects, and only you could help me with it.

Hiram How exciting! What is it about?

Solomon You know perhaps that my father David intended to build a house for the God of Israel which would surpass the glory of all other temples in the world. Nothing became of that project, mainly because of the civil wars with my elder brother Absalom, if I have got it right. That crisis shattered him, and he lost all his zest for the project. But I think now I have the means and resources to carry it through, if you would help me.

Hiram How?

Solomon I need a greater number of the greatest cedars of Lebanon for building material.

Hiram They are growing way up in the mountains. To bring them down and transport them down to the coast will be a tremendous enterprise. Does that mean the temple is already planned in detail with drawings?

Solomon Exactly. The temple is already finished on paper and theoretically accomplished to perfection. It only remains for us to make it real. What would you charge for a recompense for the work and the logging?

Hiram I need no money nor riches, and payment in natural means would practically be the most favourable for all parts. I would gladly offer you as much

cedar and cypress wood as you would need, which at the same time would give me a share in the temple.

Solomon So what is your pleasure?

Hiram Support for the rest of my life for my entire household.

Solomon Your household is almost as extensive as mine, but it is a fair and practical price which I would gladly be obliged to pay.

Hiram It's simply a practical exchange – my woods and workers for your lifetime support of all of us. Are we agreed?

Solomon Perfectly agreed.

Hiram My brother, in your young years as the most glorious king of the Orient, you have already struck the world dumb by your wisdom and unlimited knowledge. It is my honour to be able to play a vital part in your life.

Solomon My brother, we need each other. There may be no end to the talents of the Israelites, but they lack certain abilities. We don't have many woodcutters, seamen and artisans. With your seamen and practical artisans you have succeeded in colonising the entire western sea by your business aptitude and expert management of metals. This is the general practical knowledge that is lacking in Israel, who are mainly soldiers and farmers. We need to develop by you, and only with your help can we build the temple.

Hiram Naturally I must be able to examine the drawings and approve of them before we launch the project.

Solomon Of course. I have brought them with me.

Hiram Perfect. Then I will carefully scrutinize them with my engineers, so that we could get started on the project as soon as possible.

Solomon It pleases me that you are so positive.

Hiram What else can you be at the prospect of such a project, which promises to be a glorious monument on our age and government for all times?

Solomon It will be dedicated to the God of Israel exclusively.

Hiram Of course, to all you Jews. But I think it might become more than that.

Act II scene 1.

Sadok Could the glory of Israel be greater? We have consummated the most glorious temple in the world and have the wisest man in the world for our king. We dominate the entire Orient up to the Euphrates and down to Egypt and are allied with Egypt by king Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter and with the Phoenicians, who dominate the entire western sea, by his friendship with Hiram. Could it possibly be any better?

Ebjatar It took the king seven years to build the temple, and there could hardly be any greater accomplishment anywhere in the world, except possibly among the pyramids of Egypt and in Babylon. We have crowned history and crowned Israel as the leader among nations.

Sadok But the best thing of all is that our God now is established as the highest of gods and resident in our temple, where he shall remain forever. It is almost too good to be true. It promises a prosperous future for Israel without limits, and our God is not the one to go back on his word.

Ebjatar But what will Solomon do now when he has completed his temple?

Sadok He has his own palace to think of, the planning and construction of which probably will take another seven years if not the double.

Ebjatar And then?

Sadok Don't worry. He will always keep himself busy. He will never get bored, and neither will we, as long as he lives.

Scene 2. The consecration of the Temple.

(Solomon appears officiating before the temple)

Solomon The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee a house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in forever. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which spoke with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying, since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel. And it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And the Lord said unto David my father, "Whereas it was in thine heart to build a house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name." And the Lord hath performed his word that he spoke, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promised him: thou spoke also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day. Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promised him, saying, "There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me." And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spoke unto thy servant David my father.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built? Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prays before thee today: That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, "My name shall be there: that thou may hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place."

And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.

If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gave unto their fathers.

When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.

If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou know; (for thou, even thou only, know the hearts of all the children of men;) That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gave unto our fathers.

Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this

house; Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have built, is called by thy name.

If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gave unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them: For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou brought forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron: That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee.

For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spoke by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.

And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice,

Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us: That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers. And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God

day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else. Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

Scene 3.

Sadok We are very happy with you, my king. This could be the peak of the history of Israel and its definite establishment as a paragon of nations to the whole world.

Solomon That was the intention. That's why I built the temple.

Ebjatar Israel has never had it better than today, and its constantly expanding trade connections by the Phoenicians across the world is steadily increasing its welfare and influence.

Solomon I didn't marry Pharaoh's daughter for nothing. It gave us the world's most important ally.

Sadok All Israel is happy with you and with themselves. You made your temple inauguration to a high holiday and a bookmark for eternity by its supreme worthiness in its dedication. You have built and consummated the holiest temple in the world. Congratulations.

Solomon I only did my duty. But it wasn't just to flatter me that you desired to speak with me?

Sadok King Solomon, we are faced with a challenge.

Solomon How exciting. Let's hear it. Have we got an enemy?

Ebjatar On the contrary. One of the most influential and celebrated royalties of the south has heard about your wisdom, and wishes to try it and has therefore decided to honour us by a royal visit.

Solomon Is it any king I know?

Sadok It is the queen of Sheba.

Solomon The queen of Sheba! A woman! And the most legendary woman of the world!

Sadok Exactly. And therein lies the danger. She is too wise to be a woman. She could lead you into temptation and make you apostatize from the Lord.

Solomon Impossible. I could impossibly fear any woman no matter how cunning she could be. I will gladly receive her, and since she really is a queen, her visit must be honoured by all means.

Ebjatar Of course. We just wished to warn you against an eventual alien influence from that of our God.

Solomon But what are you afraid of?

Sadok My king, she is the only one in the world who could vie with you in both glory and reason.

Solomon Even better! Then we are equals.

Ebjatar She could talk you around.
Solomon The more a woman talks, the less she has to say.
Ebjatar Now at least we have warned you, so that you know what it is all about.
Solomon She is welcome to bring any challenges. We will at once start working on worthy preparations for her arrival. Send immediately messages to her that we look forward to her visit and that no one shall be more welcome than she.
Sadok It will be as you wish, king Solomon.



Act III scene 1.

Pomp and circumstance at the court of King Solomon.

Solomon in all his glory standing by his throne awaiting the entrance of the queen in equal splendour and glory, as she enters in procession with her court.

Solomon Greetings, queen of the southern lands, most honoured and praised of all queens!
Sheba Greetings yourself, most famous king in the world, highest praised in the world for your impressing wisdom and your great works of architecture.
Solomon It will be an honour for me to show them all to you, my queen.
Sheba They say your temple is more convincing than any other temple for its deep and sacred worthiness for a god.
Solomon He is the only God, the highest and the only true one, and he rules the entire world.
Sheba And you are his chosen people.
Solomon So it is written.

Sheba I would like to see that god what he looks like.

Solomon He is invisible and omnipresent. We have no images in our temple.

Sheba Isn't it rather void then?

Solomon You will see.

Sheba Your palace would interest me more. I guess there is no end to its ornaments.

Solomon It actually took double the time of the temple to construct.

Sheba I am naturally interested in both and also in learning something of your way of government. But most of all I am interested in probing your wisdom to perhaps learn something from it.

Solomon It will be entirely at your service. To your honour I have prepared a royal banquet with entertainment and sustainment of no end. May I escort you to dinner?

Sheba You are most welcome.

(Solomon descends from his throne, receives royally the queen's hand and escorts her out. Many are following of both Solomon's and Sheba's court.)

Ebjatar Do we have anything to fear?

Sadok Absolutely nothing. She has only come here to try and to learn from Solomon. She will soon have to go back home to her own country, so the whole thing is just a state visit.

Ebjatar I hope so, rabbi Sadok.

Scene 2.

Solomon My lady, you came here to listen to my wisdom and test my philosophy, but it feels as if there was more for me to learn from you than you from me.

Sheba Then it's mutual. It's called dualism.

Solomon What is dualism?

Sheba That someone finds another who is on the same spiritual level while at the same time they are opposite, so that they complement each other.

Solomon I never thought a woman could be so wise and knowledgeable as you are while at the same time so irresistible.

Sheba (smiles) Still you have known many women.

Solomon I thought I knew them all, but now I know I knew no one before you.

Sheba You flatter me. That could be dangerous. You know my visit is only temporary.

Solomon I would prefer that you stayed for good.

Sheba That's the very danger. You are the wisest man in the world and king of its leading realm with the greatest resources and riches at your disposal including access to any women of your desire, and then you happen to me who finds that you are really just a child who never learned anything.

Solomon That's exactly how I feel in your company, and only you could fill up that empty gap with all that I am missing.

Sheba You only miss one thing, king Solomon.

Solomon What's that?

Sheba Freedom.

Solomon What is freedom?

Sheba Freedom, my friend, is what we royalties lack most of all, and at worst we are not even aware of it. You are not aware of it, since you never went outside your realm, and since all your government with the Israeli mentality has from the beginning been shut up in the mental hothouse of a totalitarian religion.

Solomon What do you mean?

Sheba You have to admit it, Solomon. You have all submitted to your god as his thralls, which makes you all prisoners in a mental prison of regulations.

Solomon My priests warned me against you that you could suggest such dangerous free trains of thought. Would you suggest that our God is a lie and that Moses deceived us?

Sheba Not at all. Your religion is the best in the world and involves both discipline and order and is highly moral. But could you really be sure of that you are your god's only chosen people? Aren't we non-Israelites also human? Are we then a lower people than yourselves? You have turned all non-Israeli people within your borders to slave workers for Israel, while you are careful about letting only Israelis of your true race to be governors and sheriffs, and no one else can have a position in your government. Am I then for example, a non-Israeli woman, of lower rank and worth than you, an Israelite?

Solomon There is something in what you say. Our religion is not socially fair. But I can't do anything about it. It is deeply confirmed in the whole structure of the state of Israel. Nothing could disturb the order of our Israeli religion. The Law is written once and for all. We only have to follow it or fear the revenge of God.

Sheba That's exactly what I mean. Your god is not good, no human god and no reasonable god. The gods of other people are human, they have a human aspect, you can see from their paintings and statues what they look like, you can touch them, and they are never angry or threatening like your god always seems to be.

Solomon So you demand a humanization of our God?

Sheba No demands, no suggestions, just a hint. For the way your god is, it is unsustainable. It's a construction to bind your entire people in spiritual thralldom. He can't last at length. He is too absurd. And weren't all your sacred books, where God himself threateningly exhorts you, written by human hands?

Solomon That cannot be denied.

Sheba Therefore he is a fake.

Solomon You strike me dumb, dear queen. You must stay here and continue teaching me preferably for good.

Sheba I cannot do that. You know it. Your priests would become aware of my dangerous way of thinking and my evil influence on you, and they would persecute me and kill me. No, Solomon, you will have to live on my memories.

Solomon And I will. The memory of our love will be the warmer and more sincere and alive just because we never were allowed its consummation. All my ladies and wives pale to the one I never could get. You are still mine, sweet queen, by the fact that you still gave me my soul, which I always will carry with me as a more precious beauty and timeless perseverance than my favourite wife. You are mine, dearest queen, and I will never be or do without you no matter how much you have to go back to your country.

Sheba I wondered, my Solomon, the richest king in the world, the most glorious of princes, how naked and futile you were in all your dazzling splendour, You had everything except the most important thing. You had no peace, no patience and no detachment to yourself. You did not realize your own captivity. You were blinded by your god like all Israel in its momentary days of temporary success and could therefore not see beyond the horizon of yourself, your age and your country. You are so well off with your Israel that from now on it can only decline.

Solomon Are you prophesying?

Sheba I only see what I see. What do you think yourself about the future of Israel after yourself?

Solomon You touch a sensitive spot. I inherited the realm from my father, and my son Rehabeam will inherit it from me, but it is not good to have everything for nothing. I realize that now. My father had to struggle to reach his position, and Israel can never have a better king. I administered his legacy and made sure to make Israel flourish, but my son has no visions. He can't look beyond himself, and he is not really competent enough to be king, especially not for a leading state like Israel. I will never let you go or do without you. You fulfil my life by fulfilling all my wishes.

Sheba What do you really want?

Solomon Company. An equal. Someone to love like myself. Someone to trust. Someone to look up to. David had Samuel, I had Nathan to some degree, but after his death I never had anyone, until you paid me a visit.

Sheba My visit is only a moment of eternity, but it's up to you to take care of this moment and make it as enduring as possible in my absence.

Solomon I will write a book of our love.

Sheba It will be more interesting than all your sacred books.

Solomon Only love means anything. Everything else is worthless in its fleeting futility. My realm and wealth is of no importance compared to my love. I could abandon and discard it immediately if I could only keep my love. What is Israel? As you say, a conceited construction blinded by its own vanity personified by its absurd god. I don't reject him. He is indispensable for the sustained survival of Israel, but I don't need him myself. I need you.

Sheba You have only just set out on your new development to become a better man. King Solomon, you have embarked on your enlightenment.

Solomon Thanks to you.

Sheba I am just a woman.

Solomon No, you are The Woman, whose forbidden fruit has opened my eyes. You are a goddess, and a goddess is as important as a god. I realize that now.

Sheba No, I am just human. What you need to do is to waive divinity to instead just become more human as a human being.

Solomon What should I do?

Sheba Love. Love the whole world. Embrace also other religions than your own. You have numerous mistresses. Let them show you the way. *(smiles)* There could be other goddesses like me. At least there are other established goddesses in the other religions. I return to this point. Your religion is not the only religion. Your people doesn't have to be the best in the world because you have your special god. Your tribal god is no more than a tribal god, who by his identification to a certain tribe restricts himself to a racist tribal egoism, which only can lead to war with others. You have your history, it is fantastic and educating, continue working on it, and the world will always be fascinated by it and learn from its continued development and progress, but there is always a world beyond this one, an age beyond your own, other peoples at least as good as your own and a greater world than the one you rule and know about. Never stop. Always carry on further, and you will always find new guides as long as you search further enlightenment.

Solomon You make my fall from the Lord inevitable.

Sheba That's my joy and honour.

Solomon Was that the only reason why you came here?

Sheba My friend, I came here for you. The reputation of your awesome wisdom and justice reached me, but what really raised my interest was your writings. They will always be read and studied. You are of eternity and have left a footprint of eternity in your world by your proverbs, and by that you also will remain immortal as a mortal. The prospect of perhaps getting a foothold in this eternity fascinated me, to share it and at best become part of your eternity. Have I succeeded in this ambition?

Solomon At best. But carry on. Was that all?

Sheba My friend, I am no wise guy myself committing myself to proverbs, but I am sensible and as a woman more cunning than anyone else, and therefore I could become queen of Sheba and have some respect, but in that capacity only I had no chance against eternity. By you I saw my chance.

Solomon So you came for your own sake?

Sheba To make the long voyage here from Sheba was no light endeavour. Every journey is a self-sacrifice costing effort and ordeals, but if you venture on it with a good will and decision, it will always give fair exchange with lasting profits. Do you find me an opportunist?

Solomon You are a heroine who ventured on the enterprise.

Sheba It gives me pleasure that you think so.

Solomon It does not matter for what reasons you came here, if it was by opportunism, if it was to take advantage of my wisdom or get yourself a place in eternity by me, all that matters and the only meaning in your coming here was that you gave me someone to love for serious. I don't know how many I made love to, I lost the count when they became too innumerable, but you are the first one I really loved.

Sheba You felt in my arms like a virgin.

Solomon So did you in my arms.

Sheba And we haven't gone too far. We must not annoy your priests. This is just an official state visit, and we must not violate its rules and haven't even risked it.

Solomon It's still not too late.

Sheba You really intend to fall?

Solomon Why not? Do you have anything against it? No one cares. It's our private affair. Eternity brought us together. Should we then refuse an offer from eternity? Wouldn't that be rather stupid?

Sheba If you feel like it, Solomon, I would not decline.

Solomon I knew it.

Sheba But then I have to go back to my own country.

Solomon Yes, you must. But you will remain with me. And we are in no hurry. You can extend your visit here as long as you wish. There are no limits to eternity.

Sheba Only mortality sets a limit, but we are disciplined by it.

Solomon It turns life into a meaningless moment of only vanity, but that mortal moment could turn into an incorruptibility, but only by love. In this case, our love.

Sheba My master and king, thanks for your confidence.

Solomon Thanks for coming.

Scene 3. The farewell banquet.

Asarya (rising) It is with the greatest joy and gratitude that we ask to celebrate our visiting queen of Sheba by this festive banquet. You have bestowed abundant gifts on us, praiseworthy Queen of splendour, and I doubt that I will ever see the like of a sumptuous visit. You have brought us a shining glory which ever will remain with us after your departure, as if you imparted a higher culture on us and enriched our Jerusalem with a superior spirituality. Ever be praised and honoured in our memories, noble and beautiful, grand and magnificent queen of Sheba. *(sits down)*

Solomon (rising) I beg to agree in full with the statement of our minister of finances Asarya, Nathan's son. I must confess, that I in vain tried to persuade our Queen to stay longer and permanently, and she has gracefully compromised with our pleadings and at least prolonged her visit with five months but can't neglect her duties as queen, to be obliged to go home to take care of her own country. I ask you all to toast the most beautiful queen Israel ever shall see! *(raises his cup, and all share the toast with pleasure.)*

Sheba (rising) A small word of humility as a contrast to all these lavish speeches that only overwhelm me by their exuberant exaggerations – I am the one to be grateful for having been able to share king Solomon’s extraordinary learning and wisdom, for having been treated and entertained with the most generous possible hospitality and to have enjoyed the grace to be regarded as a friend and equal by king Solomon. We are colleagues, we are both royal, but I am still only a woman completely in the shadow of a man, whom I nevertheless feel like having been uplifted for the rest of my life by this the foremost and wisest of all worldly lords king Solomon. I beg to return the toast so brimmed with joy to my person by drinking to you all with my heart brimmed with humility and gratitude! (*raises her cup, and all cordially share the toast.*)

Ebjatar (aside) What do you think, Sadok?

Sadok I am happy to see her go.

Ebjatar Do you think her influence could have been damaging to the king?

Sadok It could have been if she had stayed longer.

Ebjatar She is a queen though and has to think of her own country, which saves Solomon.

Sadok Exactly, but I sincerely hope there will be no more female state visits from even more exotic countries.

Ebjatar What is wrong about Sheba?

Sadok It’s the felicitous part of Arabia, but they keep busy trading contacts with India and other dangerous countries even further east with philosophies and religions that could be really harmful to our now so well established religion.

Ebjatar Why? What are these exotic religions dealing with?

Sadok Polytheism. Spiritualism and demonic sects with any number of gods and with a powerful philosophic literature supporting them, but they have no structure or clarity. It’s all just fluff and twaddle with no system or method. The advantage of our religion is that it is so simple. There is only one god, and he is universal and omnipresent. That’s all. We need nothing further.

Ebjatar Do you think the queen of Sheba gave Solomon other gods to think of?

Sadok No, I think the danger is over by her definite departure.

Act IV scene 1.

Melissa What does he expect of me, this king of ours? Naturally it was an extraordinary honour for me to be so elevated as his favourite, but I did not ask for it and had no ambitions, and he is getting old. Here he is now.

Solomon How is my dearest flower today?

Melissa Thank you, my lord, I want nothing.

Solomon I am curious to know more about the mythology of your home country.

Melissa I am at your service with all the little I know.

Solomon Tell me again, how did you get here?

Melissa It was a Median conqueror who overran our country and abducted us as slaves. I was sold a slave to a local king with many wives and concubines, and I became one of them. By having my own mind I failed to please and was sold on, and that happened again wherever I landed. Finally I was given a present to you. You had so many, so I thought I would probably vanish here. But you discovered me.

Solomon You were different. You were no ordinary obsequious flatterer who only pretended but had an integrity of your own which you rarely find in women.

Melissa It is naturally an honour for me to be so favoured by you, but I have to insist that I never asked for it and never had any ambitions.

Solomon That's what I find so appealing in you. You are honest and have a mind and will of your own and are even sensible. No ruler fancies a wilful woman with a temper, but your genuine modesty appeals to me. You are also of an alien culture which interests me.

Melissa Aren't your own bad enough?

Solomon What do you mean?

Melissa You have one single god who is intolerant, sinister and threatening and who never stood for anything but power. In our countries we never liked any imposition of power. We enjoyed and liked each other, while hardness only created enmity.

Solomon But you did have cruel gods also?

Melissa Babies were sacrificed to Baal, but most of us kept to Astarte.

Solomon A goddess?

Melissa Yes, the goddess of love.

Solomon That's what interests me in your religion. You have a goddess of love. We don't.

Melissa Would you be able to accept her?

Solomon With all my heart. I think it could enrich our religion.

Melissa We used to bring her sacrifices just like you do to your god, but we also had ceremonies and love rites.

Solomon Love rites are for me.

Melissa Before the sacrifice some virgin always used to perform a rite of love on the altar to consecrate herself to the goddess.

Solomon You must instruct me in this and show how it is done.

Melissa Do you really dare to introduce such a cult in Israel?

Solomon There is nothing wrong with multiculturalism. It's already present. We have several subcultures here with hills of sacrifice where other gods are worshipped that existed long before the children of Israel invaded the country.

Melissa But you will challenge your priesthood.

Solomon They have no say concerning my life and my regulations.

Melissa It will make you popular among other peoples who don't like Israel.

Solomon That's the intention. Come, my love, and teach me. *(leads her out.)*

Scene 2.

Ebjatar What do you think about his fall?
Sadok It is worrisome.
Ebjatar To say the least.
Sadok I was worried already when he could not satisfy himself enough with constantly more wives and concubines.
Ebjatar And now he has elevated a pagan worshipper to his favourite mistress.
Sadok That's going over the top.
Ebjatar To say the least.
Sadok And it is only getting worse. He is bolting and can't see the abyss. In his immoderate thirst for love he unbleses himself.
Ebjatar What shall we do?
Sadok What can we do? He is Solomon.
Ebjatar The world's wisest and most glorious king is going gaga.
Sadok And it will hardly pass.
Ebjatar And his son is conceited and haughty and lacks any trace of his father's sense of justice and wisdom.
Sadok The risk is that the realm will decay when Solomon is gone.
Ebjatar Then we will be gone as well.
Sadok That's just it. It is not our problem.

Scene 3.

Solomon Why? Why? Why has this division occurred between myself and God's priests? It's only in the search for happiness that I got myself a thousand wives and concubines and surrounded myself with blinding splendour and riches. It's only from love and generosity that I allow my women to honour their gods and sacrifice to them and that I share these festivities and rituals. Why cannot the Levites understand me and show some tolerance? They will not grant me the happiness, joy, immoderation and pleasure of the unlimited ecstasy of love. They will not allow me the only thing that matters in life, which is to have fun. For everything else in life, all man's wishes and works and anything a man could do and find on earth is meaningless, vain and worthless. All is vanity except to have fun, which the Lord's priests won't allow me.

Never has the Lord loved a king like he has loved me. Why else would I have received all this glory, splendour, unlimited happiness and incredible riches and affluence? I had the world's highest happiness bestowed on me since I in my wisdom, virtue, justice and honour deserved it. The Levites are wrong in claiming that I have fallen from the Lord, for the more I love my wives, my people, my world and the universe, the more I love the Lord to an even higher degree. The Lord is everything, and I am nothing to him. My happiness is my reward for my passion,

and as long as I live I will continue making myself deserving and with me my children, my future kin and all Israel.

I should devote myself to God, but instead I devote myself to my ladies. That gives me a bad conscience. But I love the women. They charm me, they enchant me, they love me, they teach me to enjoy reality, they make me discover nature, and they are only good for me. How could I then do without them? But I should do, without them for my own sake. They only endure for a moment, while God lasts forever. They deceive me by their love, they tempt me away from God to their carnal lust, they catch me in their webs by their parties, their sweet music, their softness and their pleasures, they entangle me in a net of beauty that is false, since God created man to be free. I should absolutely give more time to God and less to the women, but how is it possible, when the whole world is full of women and love?

Act V scene 1.

Jerobeam Are you sure he is not suspecting anything?

Melissa He has complete confidence in me.

Jerobeam And you still dare to deceive him? Although he made you his favourite concubine and really gave you his love?

Melissa His love is not enough any more. He is too old. He doesn't realize himself how pathetic he is. He fancies himself still young and virile and perhaps feels like that, but his looks betray him. I assume he never consults any mirror. He is a grey old whimsical man on the verge of the withering whiteness and zero setting of impotence.

Jerobeam You if anyone have seen him through.

Melissa I have known so many men. I was raped from the start and was then dispatched from villain to villain, from a general to a prince and from a prince to a king and from a king to Solomon himself, who all dispatched me for my seeing through their ridiculous manliness. Solomon will probably one day dispatch me as well, and then perhaps I will at last be able to live in peace.

Jerobeam But what turned on your interest in me?

Melissa You were everything Solomon fancied himself to be but no longer was: young and virile, active, potent and competent, physically attractive and popular among the Israelites, a born leader, while Solomon never was a popular leader.

Jerobeam You are just the sort of woman I always dreamt of.

Melissa And you are just the man who can give me everything that old Solomon never could give. I would like to bear you children, so that I could start living for youth and beauty again, as I did once upon a time.

Jerobeam It can't be helped. We are like made for each other.

Melissa Come on then, Jerobeam, and let's do it. (*leaving together.*)

Solomon (is visible not until now) So it's still as the priest said. I thought he spread a rumour to separate me from Melissa, but unfortunately the rumour was true. They

have spied her out since long to find a way to separate her from me, and finally they found something to make them drivel from malicious joy. Alas, Jerobeam, my most trusted and reliable officer, that you thus could betray my confidence! So I must send you out of the country, which then will start a rebellion against my government to favour him. And Melissa? I can never see you again. I will have to send you back to your own country with a generous maintenance and a staff of guards for your safety. Alas, this is a knife in my back cutting my heart into slices! I loved both of you, and you have both betrayed me, me, the world's leading and highest developed king of all ages, reduced to an old deceived and pathetic fool, who thought that I in my age still could win a young fresh beauty by certainly a sincere and true love although I no longer could give any satisfaction!

Is then the spiritual love, that rose between me and the queen of Sheba to stand firm by the fact that fate decided different destinies for us, the only one that counts and works in reliable endurance? All love I ever made with all my ladies sinks to the bottom like sand to the true love I still feel for my Queen, which constantly keeps raising me above this squalid reality of only futility, faithlessness, ruthless egoism, mortal vanity and the inhumanity of man as a cheat?

Scene 2.

Solomon Israel has no king, for the king there was is no ruled by women. They govern me, and therefore I cannot govern. A man in the power of women has no God, no power, no soul no heart and nothing at all. No matter what his position in the world is, he is nothing, for woman is not God, and she is even less the image of God. On the contrary she has the power to separate men from God. She is not God's death, but she makes her lover imagine that she is God's death. Sirens, witches, harpies, shrews, vixens, presumptuous whores and destroyers of men are all women, except the sacred virgin.

I am a heavy burden to Israel. They work for my pleasures, they toil for my splendour, they sustain my thousands of wives, and they suffer gravely under my heavy yoke. But if I am a heavy burden to them, so is God, since I am God's son. The Lord told my father: "When your time is out I shall raise the son who shall proceed from your life, and I shall consolidate his kingdom. He shall build a house in my name, and I shall fortify his throne forever. I shall be his father, and he shall be my son, and my grace will never abandon him." If I am a heavy burden to Israel, God is even more so.

O Jerobeam, you are stronger than I, although you are a wicked accursed villain, who with all your strength will be a damnation for Israel. While I enjoy the sweetness of life, you build your rebellion by intrigues, and while I love, construct, admire and wallow in beauty and culture, you sharpen your swords and gather hard criminals, who only wish to seduce and dissolve Israel. I am still just, good, human and loved while you only made yourself a cheat and traitor. Still you will have all the

power in the future, for God will take his revenge on me for having deserted him for the sake of culture and alternative gods. What you love you lose, and it will be trampled down by those who follow. That has always been the fate of all good human people, and so it will be for me. Since I am weakened by my love of the good things, evil will destroy me, all I have, my world and my realm of Israel. But God's son will still rule the entire earth.

I have been the happiest man in the world and perhaps in history, and my happiness has been shared by my country, my Israel and my people. We have shared our happiness with the world with Phoenicians, Egyptians and Ethiopians, and this historical chapter has been magnificent. The world has been so happy that it could hardly ever be any happier. But it can grow unhappy, and when the universe no longer can grow happier, it has to change course to unhappiness. Israel has reached its peak. From now on it has to go down. God has done what he could for Israel and can no longer make it happier. Still his creation has to go on. When he no longer can build in Israel, he has to start creating something else. And to do so he has to leave Israel, which consequently has to fall. It is not my fault, and it is not the fault of my thousand consorts or the fault of my love or my weakness. It's a natural development. Israelites, God has made you the proudest people in the world, and you can't reach any higher. By his love for you, God has separated you from other people and made you different, and when God now has to turn to other peoples to further development you will have to suffer for it, for you are so proud and different from others that you will never be able to understand them, and even less they will understand you. Therefore you are facing a future of trials. For God has loved you so well that you will never be able to forget it or do without that memory, and for that all other people will find you intolerable and consequently detest and harass you until the end of time.

Scene 3.

Ebjatar King Solomon is dead, and we have no king. What do you think about Rehabeam?

Sadok A hopeless case. He couldn't have started worse.

Ebjatar Is Jerobeam any better then?

Sadok No, even worse. He is a villain and rebel. He was competent and started well, and therefore king Solomon gave him his confidence and that of the people and a high position of responsibility, which he abused to seduce the king's favourite wife. You don't do a thing like that. Naturally he was forced into exile, where he joined the king's enemies. And now he gets all the power of Israel for nothing as a gift by the folly and stupidity of Rehabeam, which naturally he will do nothing but abuse.

Ebjatar Jerusalem will remain loyal to the house of David and will probably carry on like that, but what about Israel? Is it done for?

Sadok At length, yes. Nothing good can come out of this.

Ebjatar What can we do?

Sadok All we can do, *Ebjatar*, is to slow down the downfall and prolong it as much as possible, like keeping a dying patient alive by any means as long as possible.

Ebjatar So our downfall is inevitable?

Sadok We shall never again see the like of king David or Solomon. Yes, it is inevitable in the long run, but we priests could by our priesthood make it last as long as possible, maybe for several hundred years, while we in the mean time could devote ourselves to consolidating our religion, preserve our sacred writings and maintain it, educate the youth and future generations and make sure that Jewry never fades.

Ebjatar Is that all? Administration and preservation?

Sadok Yes, my son. And if we succeed with that, then at least we Jews would have succeeded with something.

*Leh, 23.8.2016,
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