

Day 50 – Apr. 7

We tend to walk a fine line between relating to God as Lord and relating to Him as a genie freshly freed from a lamp. We flit between submission and requisition, spending as much time asking God for things as offering Him praise, confession, and listening for His voice combined! Some have called God, “Our great vending machine in the sky” meaning if we just deposit enough good deeds then He’ll spit out an answered prayer (or “wish” as the genie metaphor requires). Unfortunately, there are enough passages like today’s reading that seem to justify this behavior that it becomes very hard to fight.

Solomon has eliminated his political rivals, and begun to form political alliances with other nations, in this case Egypt. But without a temple, people are worshiping all over the place, disunified in their religion and relationships. We are beginning to see the need for a central temple, which (spoiler alert!) Solomon will build soon. It is interesting that when Saul sacrificed offerings on altars even though he wasn’t a priest, God punished him for it. But when Solomon does it, God offers him a wish (or is it a test?).

“Ask whatever you wish and I will grant it,” Genie... I mean God says. And Solomon shows that he already has what he most desires – wisdom. Rather than asking for military power, or wealth, or immortality, Solomon asks for wisdom so he might rule well. And God grants him wisdom – “a wise and understanding heart such as no one has or ever will have”. And then since Solomon has passed the test and proved his wisdom already, God grants him fame and wealth, too.

And then immediately we get a story of Solomon using that wisdom to rule well. The story of the prostitutes and baby conundrum is famous even in our day, but Solomon’s solution became known far and wide, and his fame begins to spread. And as we see in today’s world, fame leads to wealth. But the difference between Solomon and Saul, and between Solomon and the Rich and Famous of today (did you read that in Robin Leach’s voice?) is that Solomon pleased God, for that was his goal. While his wisdom brought him fame and wealth, that was not his goal. His goal was to use it to understand and rule with God’s justice. And indeed he did.