

My elementary school was only a couple of blocks away from home, and I walked to school everyday. Once I crossed the only cross street, the entire street leading to the school gate was lined with sellers who distracted the kids on the way to and from the school. They sold toys, novelty items, low-grade, dubitable snacks, etc.

Of the snack vendors' wares, the cotton candy machine always fascinated me. The vendor poured in granules of rock sugar, and out came the thick spider web. It was like magic. The seller stirred a stick around the drum and gathered the web into a fancy, giant swab, then handed it to the wide-eyed customer. I only watched other kids buy and eat the candies. That was not because I heeded my parents' reminder every day not to buy any food from the sellers. Simply, I was broke. Allowance was unheard of in those days.

Everyday, I wondered how the candy tasted like. One day, I just could not take it any more. I had

to have one. I think I heard a piercing shriek and a commotion, but since I broke the speed of sound, the noises soon faded behind me. I ran like the wind. In my hand was the intercepted candy from one of the girls walking ahead of me.

Now you are the first group of people who heard my confession of the crime, and I believe that the candy heist was the first crime I have ever committed. The hard work involved in the crime was noteworthy, as I recall. The expert selection of the victim, the perfect timing of the strike, and the hypersonic getaway—all required a flawless execution of the eyes-hands-legs coordination.

I did not enter into the life of cotton candy robbery, however, because it turned out, disappointingly, that it did not taste as good as it looked. Besides, it was a sticky mess, and I did not like it. The reward did not match the effort.

I hope the revelation of my childhood rap sheet did not

change your favorable opinion of me. I mean it was just a cotton candy. It was not like having conspired to send a captain of the army to his certain death, and then taking his wife to be mine, like King David managed to do. Would you have changed your opinion of me, if I did that? Nowadays, a president could send not one, but thousands of soldiers to their deaths for wrong reasons, and his reputation remain intact in the eyes of the many. People seem to think such an act is not an offense at all.

Similarly, I mean, if I were a king, sending a Hittite to his certain death should not be a big deal—he was not even American, not even one of God's people; he was a non-Hebrew. And any macho-manly king would take the helpless, grieving wife and make her his queen, right? People should lighten up! You have to judge a king not by one minor blemish, but by the whole lifetime's work for the country, right? C'mon, what is the life of a foreigner worth?

Well, I do not know about you, but that seems to be exactly the mentality of the writers of the First Book of Kings. It has been only one generation, since the rape-and-murder conspiracy took place, and already the memory of the people changed. Let us listen to what Solomon said to God who appeared before him:

3:6 And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today.

Excuse me? "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you"? Wait just a minute here. What happened to the fury God directed against his father, what happened to Prophet Nathan's prophecy that sword

shall never depart from David's house (II Sam 12:10)?

In just one generation, the historians seemed to remember a completely different King David. And according to their narration, even God was going along with their version of history:

3:14 If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

Did I read it correctly, "As your father David walked"? Now even God recalls that Solomon's father, King David, was the exemplar of walking in God's ways.

The people who wrote the First Book of Kings were completely different from those who wrote the Second Book of Samuel. The frightful prophecy is in the Second Book of Samuel. Now we are reading the rosy account in the First Book of Kings. See how a rapist-murderer in the Second Book of Samuel suddenly becomes in the First

Book of Kings a "faithful, righteous, and upright-in-heart" individual? Talk about some convenient amnesia. This is flagrant revisionism of history at its worst.

If we accept the account of the writers of the First Book of Kings, our God loves so much the heads of the states that their crimes mean nothing, obviously. Their image of God is the God who is fast forgiving and forgetting of the sins that powerful people commit—especially, if the powerful one was the favorite one of those who wrote the history.

Who could have been so enamored with Solomon that they suffered the sweet amnesia of the history, and decided to revise anything that might have taint the image of the house of Solomon, and purge its previous skeletons from the closet?

It was probably the priestly class of people, namely the Levites. That is so, most probably because Solomon was the one

who built the temple. The cultus of the temple gave power to the priestly class who no longer had to drag around the frayed and moldy lump of the tent. Now they had a magnificent temple built with great stones, with cedars of Lebanon, and gilded in gold that became the ruling religion of the land. Solomon was the George Washington of the priestly causes.

The priestly class did not stop there. It did not forget who actually did all the work of constructing the temple. It was the Hebrew people (excluding the slaves) who actually paid for, and did, all the work. Naturally, the history writers extolled the greatness of the people through King Solomon's mouth. In fact, they were so great, that the new king felt that he was out of his league to rule them adequately:

3:8 And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. 3:9 Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern

your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

Maybe it was true that the new king assessed correctly how great the Hebrew people were. Maybe Solomon was indeed left wanting in his intellect and wisdom to rule them adequately. Maybe the beginning of wisdom is the realization that one lacks it.

To this preacher, it sounds like the writers of the First Book of Kings really felt the need to promote the pride in the Hebrew heritage, and celebrate King Solomon who was indeed the most favorite person to the priestly class, and promote the image of the benign God who forgives all, and suffers from a severe amnesia.

If things could be spun this sweet for the most favorite person or issues, you can imagine how vile things can become for the most unfavorable person or issues, as well. Just this week, I saw a picture that a man held up

in his hand at a town hall meeting. In that, President Obama grew a mustache that Hitler also sported. How did Obama end up becoming another Hitler?

A former governor of Alaska fed to the media her claim that had been since debunked. The media published nevertheless what she claimed—that the new, government-sponsored health plan would have the “death panel” that would deny proper care to the elderly and the sick, and that they would be given the minimal care. Once the story circulated in the mainline media outlets, the people actually believed that it was true. Now Obama seems intent to wipe out the society’s elderly and the sick with the final solution, uh, the new health plan. Suddenly, Obama begins to look like a Hitler.

If King Solomon needed an understanding mind to lead his people, President Obama certainly needs one. As a matter of fact, everyone needs the

understanding mind. You and I need the understanding mind. Solomon sought this understanding mind for himself, but there is a person who sought it for others—for the regular people like you and me.

Somehow, his words still apply to today’s generation. Jesus lamented because people lacked this understanding (underlines mine):

Matthew 13:15 - For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.'

Jesus taught that an understanding mind can bring the bounty of returns:

Matthew 13:23 - As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

One may vicariously feel the frustration and disappointment in Jesus, when he chided his disciples, because they lacked understanding:

Matthew 15:16 - And he said, "Are you also still without understanding?"

If an understanding mind could bring a hundred fold of fruit, what can the lack of the understanding mind do?

Surprisingly, Jesus declared that the lack of understanding mind, or foolishness, is what defiles a person:

²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness (Mk. 7).

Foolishness have the exactly same effect on the man's soul as the acts of murder, adultery, and deceit. Lack of the

understanding mind defiles a person.

It is significant that the Bible editors did not try to delete any contradictory passages, but preserved even the evidence of the political spin. The posterity has the better understanding of the human mind and behavior, as they study these verses of the Bible. It was no accident that Jesus tried so hard to awaken the minds of the followers. Jesus taught them:

Matthew 10:16 - "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be **wise** as serpents and innocent as doves.

Innocence does not mean one has to be gullible. Faith does require one to have the understanding mind. We are still living in the midst of the wolves. May God gift each one of us with the understanding mind, so that we may yield a hundredfold, a sixtyfold, and a thirtyfold of fruit in our faith journey.