

BIBLE SERIES: **"EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"**

by Mario Seiglie

OT-69 4-3-2008

1 KINGS 5-9 TEMPLE BUILT; HIRAM; OTHER PROJECTS



We are going over the golden period of Solomon's kingdom. We learn the wisdom God gave Solomon initially included humility and he was not too proud to learn from others or to seek advice.

One of the hallmarks of his success was establishing a commercial treaty (mentioned in 2 Chr. 2:3-16) with the Phoenician King Hiram of Tyre. Josephus, writing about this treaty 1000 years later, says, "The copies of these epistles (of the treaty) *remain to this day*, and are preserved not only in our books, but among the Tyrians also; insomuch that if anyone would know the certainty about them, he may desire of the keepers of the public records of Tyre to show him there, and he will find what is there set down to agree with what we have said" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, book 8, sec. 5).

Tyre, built on an isle, was already the commercial capital of the Mediterranean. The Phoenicians were ingenious entrepreneurs--selling glass, Tyrian purple, and scrolls. They streamlined the Hebrew alphabet and divided the circle into 360 degrees. Yet with so much of its territory covered with forests, it needed grain, wine, and oil. This is what Solomon abundantly provided—it was a win-win situation.

Historian Carl Grimberg says, "From their coasts, the Phoenicians sailed to find new trade routes along the Mediterranean. The first trade partner was Egypt, and then they reached Cyprus, the copper isle they could dimly see from their mountains. From there, they sailed into the Aegean Sea, going from isle to isle. They eventually reached Malta, Sicily, the North African coast and even southern Spain. It was in Spain that they discovered the precious silver mines and founded several colonies, the most important being Cadiz. In this way, the whole Mediterranean became a testing ground to develop their commerce and perfect their seamanship." Their only great setback was their atrocious Canaanite religion.

Solomon was an avid student of the Phoenician technology and soon had his own skilled craftsmen, copper smelting plants and a great fleet in Ezion-Gezer. He now focused on building God's temple.

We read in 1 Kings 5:17-18, "And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, and hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple. So Solomon's builders, Hiram's builders, and the Gebalites quarried them, and they prepared timber and stones to build the temple." *Expositor's*

explains, "Other stones were prepared along with wood beams by skilled craftsmen, some from Israel, but most from Phoenicia. The city Gebal (Byblos) is particularly mentioned as providing a large part of these artisans. These men performed their craft at a place apart from the building site itself. This required careful planning and measuring and illustrates how well organized the whole program was and how skillfully the work was done."

Next comes one of the key verses in the Bible to determine Old Testament chronology—1 Kings 6:1. "And it came to pass in the *four hundred and eightieth year* after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign (around the year 960 B.C.)...that he began to build the house of the Lord."

The temple was some 90 ft. long by 30 ft. wide by 45 ft. high. It was twice the dimensions of the Tabernacle. Also, the stones were all prefabricated at the quarry. As it says, "And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built" (1 Kings 6:7). *Expositor's* comments, "This indicates excellent organization and planning. The erection of the temple could go much faster and with far less confusion by utilizing precut and prefitted materials. In addition the relative quiet would be consistent with the sacredness of the undertaking."

At the end of the construction, which took seven years (1 Kings 6:38), God made a promise that if they were faithful to Him, He would place His presence there. But notice it was a *conditional* promise, based on *obedience*. It says, "Then the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying, 'Concerning this temple which you are building, *if* you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, *keep all* My commandments, and walk in them, *then* I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel'" (1 Kings 6:11-13).

It was a magnificent structure, overlaid in great part in gold (see 1 Kings 6:22). Halley says, "The gold, silver and other materials, used in building the Temple, is variously estimated to equal, in our money, from 2 to 5 *billion* dollars, no doubt the most costly and resplendent building on the earth at that time. The pomp and grandeur of the Temple may

have served a purpose, but its gold became an object of cupidity (lust) to other kings” (p. 218).

Where did Solomon get all the copper and bronze? The Bible answers, “In the plain of Jordan the king had them cast in clay molds, between Succoth and Zaretan. And Solomon did not weigh all the articles, because they were so many; the weight of bronze was not measured” (1 Kings 7:46-47). In the past decade, a huge copper and bronze smelting plant was excavated dating to Solomon’s time.

Finally, the Temple was finished, and now came the moment to move God’s sacred ark into it—and Solomon chose to do it in *the Feast of Tabernacles*!

The Bible says, “Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the city of David, which is Zion...So all the men assembled...at *the feast* in the month of Ethanim, which is the seventh month.” The parallel account in 2 Chr. 7:8-10 says, “At that time Solomon kept *the feast seven days*, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly...And on the *eighth day* they held a sacred assembly, for they observed *the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days*. On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their tents, joyful and glad of heart for the good that the Lord had done for David, for Solomon, and for His people Israel.”

Expositor’s points out, “The Feast of Booths was the last in the series of yearly feasts and was also known as the Feast of Ingathering. It was a harvest feast; but, more importantly it celebrated the end of the wilderness wanderings and the fact that God had brought his people home into the Land of Promise, i.e., had given them rest (Deut 12:8-11). Zechariah 14:16-21 singles out this feast as mandatory for surviving Gentiles as well as redeemed Israel in the Messianic Age. This is consistent with the understanding that it celebrates the fulfillment of God’s promise, the establishment of Israel in the land under God’s Messiah.

“For Solomon, the completion of the temple signified the fulfillment of God’s promise, not only to establish Israel, but also to dwell in their midst and be their God (cf. Rev 21:3). This latter aspect is often lost sight of. Without God’s presence Israel’s possession of the land would be an empty blessing. This was recognized by Moses in Exodus 33:12-16. It

is God’s presence that makes Israel uniquely blessed among all nations.”

After the ark was moved in (it only had the two tablets of the Ten Commandments in it), God’s presence appeared in a cloud. “And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord” (1 Kings 8:10-11). Then Solomon gave one of the great prayers in Scripture. He asked God to honor those who would come to Him and ask forgiveness, to be granted mercy—and his petition was answered.

Expositor’s adds, “All Israel joined Solomon in bringing sacrifices on this grand occasion. The large number (22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats) was appropriate both to the occasion and to the number of people present to participate in the fellowship offerings. For these offerings the fat, blood, and entrails belonged to the Lord; and the flesh was eaten by the offerer...The fellowship offering was a voluntary act of worship and was intended to testify to the fellowship between God and the man whose sin had been forgiven. After those portions belonging to God had been offered, a communal or fellowship meal was held for the offerer and his family and for the Levites...The large number of sacrifices and the involvement of the people attest to the unity of purpose and the wholeheartedness of the devotion of people and king.

“The Feast of Booths was in itself a grand occasion for rejoicing and for an enhanced spirit of community among all Israelites. The dedication of the temple made this occasion all the more joyful and memorable, and the time of celebration was suitably extended. When the people left, they went home rejoicing and with a great feeling of satisfaction in the realization that God’s blessing was on the king and on the nation as a whole. This was indeed a memorable and significant occasion.”

Solomon then had the privilege of having God communicate *directly* with him a *second* time. He was answering his dedicatory prayer and establishing the conditions to be blessed, for they had to do their part as well. God said to him, “I have heard your prayer...I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. Now if you walked before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according

to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and my judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.’ But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, ‘Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?’ Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity on them’ (1 Kings 9:3-9).

Solomon continued to prosper from the commercial treaty with King Hiram, but seems to have overspent at the end. “Now it happened at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king’s house (Hiram the king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress and gold, as much as he desired), that King Solomon then gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. Then Hiram went from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, but they did not please him. So he said, ‘What kind of cities are these which you have given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul, as they are to this day. Then Hiram sent the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold’ (1 K. 9:10-14).

The JFB Commentary notes, “According to Josephus, the towns were situated on the northwest of it, adjacent to Tyre. Though lying within the boundaries of the promised land, they had never been conquered till then, and were inhabited by Canaanite heathens (Jdg. 4:2-13; 2 K. 15:29). They were probably given to Hiram, whose dominions were small, as a remuneration for his important services in furnishing workmen, materials, and an immense quantity of gold (1 K. 9:14) for the temple and other buildings. Hiram having refused these cities, probably on account of their inland situation making them unsuitable to his maritime and commercial people, Solomon satisfied his ally in some other way;

and, taking these cities into his own hands, he first repaired their shattered walls, then filled them with a colony of Israelites (2 Chr. 8:2).

Solomon then continued with his huge building projects across Israel. He built up Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer (1 K. 9:13).

Expositor’s explains, “The term ‘Millo’ consisted of architectural terracing and buttressing along the northeastern slope of the east hill of Jerusalem, the city of David. This would have filled a considerable depression between the city of David and the temple and palace complex to the north. The purpose would have been to allow the construction of more buildings in the area and, perhaps more importantly, adequate fortifications as near to the water supply as possible. Its construction was a major undertaking, ranking in importance with the fortification projects of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.

“On the ‘wall of Jerusalem,’ nothing much can be said except that the fortifications of Jerusalem had to be extended considerably so as to include the temple and new palace. In addition to the expanding and strengthening of Jerusalem, three key cities were selected for rebuilding, as was the case with Gezer, or for enlargement and strengthening of fortifications. Recent work has demonstrated that these three cities had certain characteristics in common with regard particularly to their fortifications attributable to the Solomonic era. Noteworthy are distinctive casemate walls with the outer wall measuring five feet and the inner wall four feet thick. The interior chambers are seven feet wide (similar walls of the Solomonic era have been found in numerous cities throughout Israel). Most distinctive are the gate complexes, which are identical in plan and virtually of the same dimensions in all three cities. These gates feature a four-entry, six-chamber inner gate with twin towers at the first entry.” This is known in archaeology as “Solomonic architecture.”