



## First Kings - Chapter Six

### I 1 Kings 1:1-11:43 - The Reign of King Solomon (continues)

#### Summary of Chapter Six

This chapter describes in detail the building and ornate decor of the temple. The building commenced in the fourth year of Solomon's reign and took seven years to complete.

#### I.f 1 Kings 6:1-7:51 - Solomon's Buildings

With preparation for the temple building complete, the narrative moves on to a detailed description of the building itself and its furnishings, interrupted in 1 Kings 7:1-12 by a description of the building of the royal palace complex. The authors seem to suggest that Solomon's concern for his own house delayed the completion of the temple.

#### I.f.i 1 Kings 6:1-22 - Solomon Builds the Temple

This subsection provides details of the building of the temple in Jerusalem.

<sup>1</sup> In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord. <sup>2</sup> The house that King Solomon built for the Lord was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. <sup>3</sup> The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits wide, across the width of the house. Its depth was ten cubits in front of the house. <sup>4</sup> For the house he made windows with recessed frames. <sup>5</sup> He also built a structure against the wall of the house, running around the walls of the house, both the nave and the inner sanctuary; and he

made side chambers all round. <sup>6</sup> The lowest story was five cubits wide, the middle one was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide; for round the outside of the house he made offsets on the wall in order that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the house.

### 1 Kings 6:1-6

The four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt and the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel was around the year 967/966 BC. This marking point shows just how long Israel lived in the Promised Land without a temple. The tabernacle served the nation well for more than 400 years. The prompting to build the temple was more at the direction and will of God than out of absolute necessity.

This text is important in relation to the date of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Taken at face value, the figure of 480 years would support the traditional 'early' date for the exodus, circa 1446 BC. On the other hand, if one allows for some symbolism in understanding the 480 year figure, e.g. supposing it to result from 12 generations, with a generation taken symbolically to be 40 years, although it is actually about 25, one would arrive at a 'late' date for the exodus of about 1260 BC, which some feel allows for greater agreement with Egyptian history. For further discussion concerning the date of the exodus, refer to the Introduction to the Book of Exodus and the Exodus Date under Miscellaneous on the web site.

The month of Ziv, the second month in the Hebrew calendar, was equivalent to mid-April to mid-May. It was the pre exilic name and was later called Iyyar following the return from Babylonian captivity.

He began to build the house of the Lord. After a note about the dates involved, the description of the temple begins with its external structure. This was when the actual construction began. Solomon probably started to organise the work right away. There is some evidence that it took three years to prepare timber from Lebanon for use in building. If Solomon began the construction of the temple in the fourth year of his reign, he probably started organising the construction in the very first year of his reign. Yet the work was carefully organised and planned even before Solomon became king. First Chronicles 28:11-12 states: <<***Then David gave his son Solomon the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy-seat; and the plan of all that he had in mind: for the courts of the house of the Lord, all the surrounding chambers, the treasuries of the house of God, and the treasuries for dedicated gifts***>>. David had wanted to build the

temple for God but was denied this privilege but it did not stop him from making plans and preparations.

The writer of First Kings never reveals exactly where the temple was built, but the writer of 2 Chronicles 3:1 clearly states that it was built on Mount Moriah, the same place where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis Chapter 22), and where Jesus would be crucified, although that was on another part of the hill: <<So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha>> (John 19:16b-17).

The house that King Solomon built for the Lord. This chapter describes the building of the temple and its associated areas. There are four main structures described:

- The temple proper (the house), divided into two rooms - the holy place and the most holy place.
- The vestibule or entrance hall on the east side of the temple proper, i.e. the vestibule in front of the nave of the house, also called the sanctuary. It was 30 feet or 9.1 metres wide and 15 feet or 4.5 metres long, and the same height as the temple proper.
- The three-storied side chambers all around, which surrounded the temple proper on the north, south, and west sides. These seem to be side rooms adjacent to the temple, yet not structurally part of the temple. The NIV translates v.5 as: <<***Against the walls of the main hall and inner sanctuary he built a structure around the building, in which there were side rooms***>>.
- A large courtyard surrounding the whole structure, i.e. the inner court mentioned in v.36.

The house that King Solomon built for the Lord was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. Assuming that the ancient cubit was approximately 18 inches, this means that the temple proper was approximately 90 feet or 27 metres long, 30 feet or 9 metres wide, and 45 feet or 13.7 metres high. This was not especially large as ancient temples go, but the glory of Israel's temple was not in its size. Allowing for the outside storage rooms, the vestibule, and the estimate thickness of the walls, the total size of the structure was perhaps 75 cubits long (110 feet or 33.5 metres), and 50 cubits wide (75 feet or 23 metres). The dimensions of the temple also reveal that it was built on the same basic design as the tabernacle, but twice as large. This means that Solomon meant the temple to be a continuation of the tabernacle.

<sup>7</sup> The house was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built.

## 1 Kings 6:7

The house was built with stone finished at the quarry. The work was carried out with reverence, avoiding the use of iron tools at the temple site: neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built. The prohibitions that appear to be in mind here are drawn from: <<*But if you make for me an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn stones; for if you use a chisel upon it you profane it*>> (Exodus 20:25), <<*And you shall build an altar there to the Lord your God, an altar of stones on which you have not used an iron tool. You must build the altar of the Lord your God of unhewn stones*>> (Deuteronomy 27:5-6a). Refer to the illustration near the end of this document.

This speaks to the way God wants his work done. The temple had to be built with human labour. God did not and would not send a team of angels to build the temple. Yet Solomon did not want the sound of man's work to dominate the site of the temple. He wanted to communicate, as much as possible, that the temple was of God and not of man. This speaks of the way God works in his people. Often the greatest work in the Kingdom of God happens quietly. Yet the building site of the temple was only quiet because there was a lot of noise and diligent work at the quarry. This speaks to God's work in the church. But why is this so particularly marked? It is not because the temple was a type of the Kingdom of God; and the souls of men are to be prepared here for that place of blessedness. There, there is no preaching, exhortations, repentance, tears, cries, nor prayers; the stones must be all squared and fitted here for their place in their New Jerusalem; refer to Revelation 21:9-27.

<sup>8</sup> The entrance for the middle story was on the south side of the house: one went up by winding stairs to the middle story, and from the middle story to the third. <sup>9</sup> So he built the house, and finished it; he roofed the house with beams and planks of cedar. <sup>10</sup> He built the structure against the whole house, each story five cubits high, and it was joined to the house with timbers of cedar.

## 1 Kings 6:8-10

He roofed the house with beams and planks of cedar. These were some of the finest building materials available. The impression is of a magnificent building.

It was joined to the house with timbers of cedar. The structure of the three storied side chambers were immediately adjacent to the main temple building but not actually part of it and thus was joined to it in this way.

<sup>11</sup> Now the word of the Lord came to Solomon, <sup>12</sup> 'Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my

ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David.

<sup>13</sup> I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.'

### 1 Kings 6:11-13

Now the word of the Lord came to Solomon. The writer gives no indication as to how this word was given to Solomon and whether it was at this point in the construction or at an earlier time. Perhaps it was given to him by a prophet, in a dream or a vision.

Concerning this house that you are building. The temple is placed firmly in its proper theological context.

If you will walk in my statutes. This was a conditional promise to Solomon and his descendants. God would keep his promises but it also depended on the obedience of Solomon and his descendants.

I will establish my promise with you. God promised an obedient Solomon that he would reign and be blessed, fulfilling the promises God made to David about his reign in 2 Samuel 7:5-16. He also promised that his special presence would remain among Israel as a nation. God will certainly dwell among his people once the temple is built, but this 'dwelling' will be on the same basis as before: the people's obedience to the law: <<*I will place my dwelling in your midst, and I shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people*>> (Leviticus 26:11-12). The temple itself, for all its splendour, does not change anything about the nature of the divine-human relationship. This was something that the Israelites were apt to forget after the temple had been built and had become a centrally important aspect of national life; refer to Jeremiah Chapter 7. God is not as impressed with structures as he is with obedience, a point made later by Stephen in his speech to the Sanhedrin in Acts Chapter 7; and the beauty of temples is never any guarantee that God will not leave them or bring judgement on them: <<*When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, 'As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down'*>> (Luke 21:5-6). It can be said that there was nothing particularly new in this promise. These are essentially the same promises of the Old Covenant made to Israel at Sinai. However, this was an important reminder and renewal of previous promises.

<sup>14</sup> So Solomon built the house, and finished it. <sup>15</sup> He lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the rafters of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with

wood; and he covered the floor of the house with boards of cypress.<sup>16</sup> He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the rafters, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the most holy place.<sup>17</sup> The house, that is, the nave in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long.<sup>18</sup> The cedar within the house had carvings of gourds and open flowers; all was cedar, no stone was seen.<sup>19</sup> The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the Lord.<sup>20</sup> The interior of the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high; he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar.<sup>21</sup> Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, then he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold.<sup>22</sup> Next he overlaid the whole house with gold, in order that the whole house might be perfect; even the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

### 1 Kings 6:14-22

Solomon built the house and finished it. The repetition of v.9a in v.14 indicates a resumption of the main story line of vv.1-10 after the digression of vv.11-13, and is also a change of focus. Now the inside of the temple is described.

Most attention is paid to the inner sanctuary (v.16 and vv.19-32), which is not surprising since it was the most holy place, or the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant was to be placed. It was a 30 foot or 10 metre cube, completely overlaid with gold. It also had two large sculptures of cherubim each 15 feet or 4.5 metres in height, which were overlaid with gold. Compared to this place, the other parts of the temple were less significant, and they receive only the limited attention due them – although there is much interest in the splendour of the decoration. It was within the inner sanctuary that the Lord sat, enthroned on the cherubim: <<*So the people sent to Shiloh, and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God*>> (1 Samuel 4:4), <<*Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth*>> (Psalm 80:1), and: <<*The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!*>> (Psalm 99:1).

He drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. There were gold chains across the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. The gold chains, stretched across the front of the inner

sanctuary, served to strengthen the concept of the inaccessibility of this Most Holy Place.

An inscribed ivory pomegranate has been found that was thought to have come from Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The inscription reads, 'Belonging to the temple of Yahweh, holy to the priests.' However, the pomegranate is unprovenanced and first came to the attention of scholars after being found in an antiquities shop in Jerusalem. At the time of writing, scholars are undecided whether or not it is a forgery. The authenticity of the ivory pomegranate is not in doubt, but that of the inscription has yet to be determined.

#### I.f.ii 1 Kings 6:23-38 - The Furnishings of the Temple

This subsection provides details of the ornate decorations and carvings within the temple building.

<sup>23</sup> In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. <sup>24</sup> Five cubits was the length of one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the length of the other wing of the cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. <sup>25</sup> The other cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had the same measure and the same form. <sup>26</sup> The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. <sup>27</sup> He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house; the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one was touching one wall, and a wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall; their other wings towards the centre of the house were touching wing to wing. <sup>28</sup> He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

#### 1 Kings 6:23-28

In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. These two large sculptures inside the Most Holy Place faced the entrance to this inner room, so as soon as the High Priest entered he saw these giant guardians of the presence of God facing him. These were strange, winged creatures that could take various specific forms, combining features of different known earthly creatures, somewhat akin to the multifaceted beasts of Assyrian art. Cherubim thrones are well attested in Syria-Palestine. These particular Jerusalem cherubim dominated the sanctuary, reaching halfway to its ceiling and all the way across from wall to wall.

<sup>29</sup> He carved the walls of the house all round about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, in the inner and

outer rooms.<sup>30</sup> The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, in the inner and outer rooms.

### 1 Kings 6:29-30

He carved the walls of the house all round about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms. This was after the pattern of the tabernacle, which had woven designs of cherubim on the inner covering. The entire building was ornately carved by some of the best craftsmen of their generation. This building would rank among the wonders of the world.

The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, in the inner and outer rooms. There was gold everywhere in the temple. The walls were covered with gold, the floor was covered with gold and gold was hammered into the carvings on the doors.

<sup>31</sup> For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood; the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided.<sup>32</sup> He covered the two doors of olive wood with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; he overlaid them with gold, and spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees.

### 1 Kings 6:31-32

The lintel and the doorposts were five-sided. This is a statement that has caused much debate. The Hebrew term here is *mezuzot* and is often translated as doorposts but this makes little sense to architects and archæologists. Some structures from the region and era have been discovered with interlocking door frames with often three or four interlocking sections. It would appear that this was the case in the temple with the outer structures have such doorways but the Holy of Holies having five interlocking sections because it was the most sacred place.

The number five symbolises God's grace, goodness and favour toward humans and is mentioned 318 times in Scripture. Five is the number of grace, and multiplied by itself, which is twenty five, is: <<*From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace*>> (John 1:16). The Ten Commandments contains two sets of five commandments. The first five commandments are related to a person's treatment and relationship with God, and the last five concern their relationship with others humans.

He covered the two doors of olive wood with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. As with the rest of the interior even the doors were decorated in keeping with God's original design for the tabernacle.

<sup>33</sup> So also he made for the entrance to the nave doorposts of olive wood, each four-sided, <sup>34</sup> and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. <sup>35</sup> He carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, overlaying them with gold evenly applied upon the carved work. <sup>36</sup> He built the inner court with three courses of dressed stone to one course of cedar beams.

### 1 Kings 6:33-36

He built the inner court with three courses of dressed stone to one course of cedar beams. Having toured the interior of the temple, the reader is again outside in the inner court that stands before it. This inner court was the court of the priests where the altar and laver or basins were set and sacrifice was conducted. Outside it was the great court, where the people came to pray. Outside it was the court of the women, and outside that was the court of the Gentiles. It must always be remembered that under the Old Covenant, the temple was not for the people of Israel. It was only for the priests to meet with God on behalf of the people. The people gathered and worshipped in the outer courtyard.

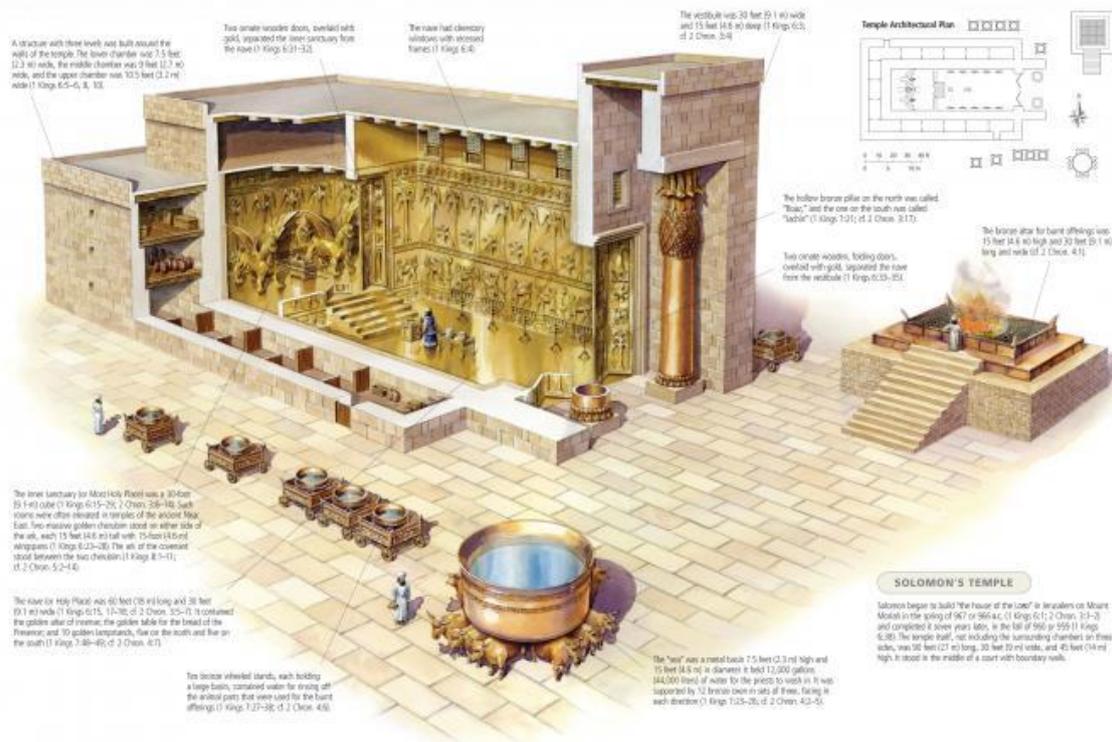
<sup>37</sup> In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid, in the month of Ziv. <sup>38</sup> In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it.

### 1 Kings 6:37-38

The house was finished. The Hebrew is ‘he completed [*kalah*] the temple [*bayit*],’ and it is followed by: he was seven years in building it [*banah*]. In 1 Kings 7:1 the account continues with the literal Hebrew, ‘But his own house [*bayit*] Solomon spent thirteen years building [*banah*]; and he completed [*kalah*] the whole of his house [*kol + bayit*].’ Two ‘houses’ are in view here and in the next chapter, and an emphatic contrast is being made between them. Solomon spent much more time building his own house or palace complex than he did building God’s house, another indication of his divided heart. The likely emphasis of 1 Kings 7:1 is in fact as follows: <<***Solomon was building his own house for thirteen years, and he finished his entire house***>>. The temple is not really ‘complete’ until all the work on its interior is complete and it is being worshipped in; and this is not the case until 1 Kings 7:51.

The month of Bul, which is the eighth month. This was generally from mid-October to mid-November and was again its pre exilic name. Following the return from Babylon it was renamed Marchesvan. Refer to the Hebrew calendar on the web site.

He was seven years in building it. When the temple was finished it was a spectacular building. It was easy for Israel to focus on the temple of God instead of the God of the temple. Yet without continued faithfulness to God, the temple's glory quickly faded. This glorious temple was plundered just five years after the death of Solomon; refer to 1 Kings 14:25-27.

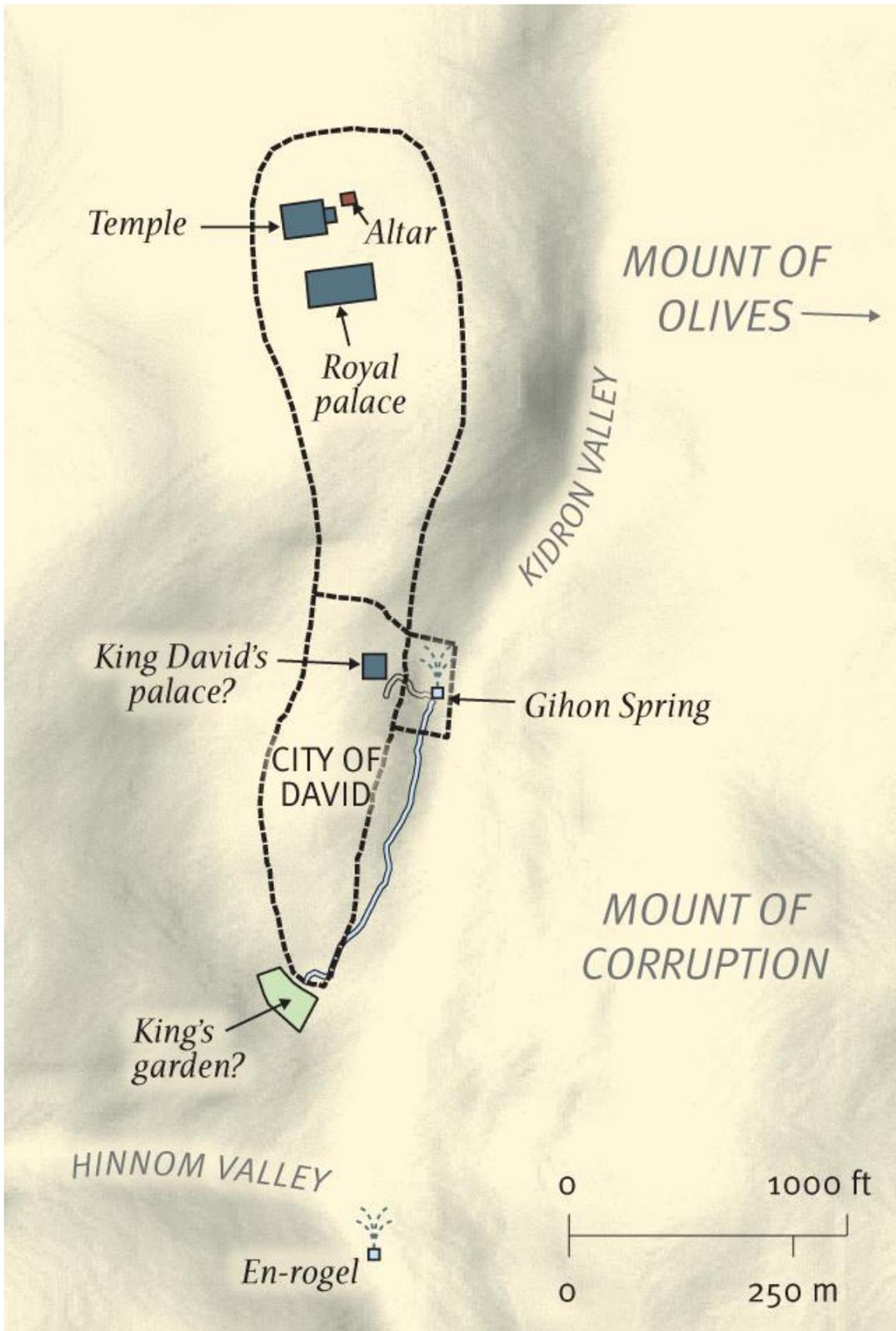


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## Solomon's Temple

Solomon began to build 'the house of the Lord' in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah in the spring of 967 or 966 BC and completed it seven years later, in the autumn of 960 or 959 BC. The temple itself, not including the surrounding chambers on three sides, was approximately 90 feet or 27 m long, 30 feet or 9 m wide, and 45 feet or 14 m high. It stood in the middle of a court with boundary walls.

Through various building projects Solomon began to transform the small military stronghold of the city of David into a full-scale city that would be the geographical centre of Israelite religion. He built the temple of the Lord and the royal palace complex on the hill to the north of the stronghold and encircled it with a wall. Ironically, Solomon also allowed his many foreign wives to establish pagan shrines on the hill to the east of the city, which would later be called the Mount of Corruption.



Jerusalem at the Time of Solomon circa 950 BC