



First Kings - Chapter Nine

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

I.i 1 Kings 8:54-9:14 - The Temple Narrative Ended (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Nine

After Solomon's building programme was complete the Lord appeared to him again as he had done at Gibeon. He stated that he had consecrated the temple that Solomon had built for his name and that he would be attentive to that house and his people for all time, providing they remained obedient. However, there was also a warning that if Solomon or the people went after other gods then they and the temple would be destroyed.

Twenty years after building commenced, Solomon offered King Hiram twenty cities in the region of Galilee as thanks for supplying the building materials and labour. Hiram was displeased when he visited the cities and so Solomon gave him a large amount of gold as well.

As well as the temple and palace in Jerusalem, Solomon built up many other cities for various functions. To do this he conscripted all the non-Israelite people who still lived in the land into slave labour but he placed Israelites in paid positions. In addition, Solomon built ships that were crewed by men from Tyre so that he could trade with other nations, particularly bringing in much gold from the land of Ophir.

I.i.iii 1 Kings 9:1-14 - God Appears Again to Solomon

God appears to Solomon to acknowledge the building of the temple, promising to be attentive to his people for all time providing they follow his ways alone. If they choose to follow other gods then the Lord promises to destroy the temple and make his people a byword among the nations.

¹ When Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build, ² the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. ³ The Lord said to him, 'I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you made before me; I have consecrated this house that you have built, and put my name there for ever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time. ⁴ As for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, ⁵ then I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever, as I promised your father David, saying, "There shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel."

1 Kings 9:1-5

When Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord. This seems to have been some 24 years after Solomon came to the throne. The temple and the palace work at Jerusalem were finished. Now Solomon had to deal with life after completing his greatest accomplishment.

The Lord appeared to Solomon a second time. The first occasion on which God appeared to Solomon in 1 Kings 3:4-15 marked the beginning of his rise to greatness. This second appearance marks the end point of his upward mobility, and points ahead to disaster.

This second appearance of God to Solomon was an act of grace for it gave Solomon the chance to change the ways he had already started to go away from the will of God. Charles Spurgeon commented on this gracious act, "We do not need to be converted again; yet we do want that again over our heads the windows of heaven should be opened, that again a Pentecost should be given, and that we should renew our youth like the eagles, to run without weariness, and walk without fainting. The Lord fulfil to everyone of his people tonight his blessing upon Solomon!"

I have heard your prayer and your plea. The great prayer of Solomon in 1 Kings Chapter 8 meant nothing unless God heard the prayer: <<*After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*>> (Exodus 2:23-24), <<*I have seen the suffering of my people, because their outcry has come to me*>> (1 Samuel 9:16b), <<*Turn back, and say to Hezekiah prince of my people, Thus says the Lord, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; indeed, I will heal you; on the third day*

you shall go up to the house of the Lord>> (2 Kings 20:5), and: <<*When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles*>> (Psalm 34:17). The true measure of prayer is if God in heaven answers the prayer. This answer seems to have come many years after the actual dedication of the temple. Yet God also gave Solomon an immediate answer of approval at the time of dedication, when the sacrifices were consumed with fire from heaven; refer to 2 Chronicles 7:1-7.

I have consecrated this house that you have built, and put my name there for ever. The building was Solomon's work, done in the power and inspiration of the Lord. The consecration of the building was God's work. Solomon could build a building, but only God could consecrate it. Man builds; God consecrates.

As for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked; then I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever. God's answer to Solomon's previous prayer had a great condition. If Solomon walked before God in obedience and faithfulness, he could expect blessing on his reign and the reign of his descendants, and the dynasty of David would endure forever. God did not demand perfect obedience from Solomon. David certainly did not walk perfectly before the Lord, and God told Solomon to walk before him as David had walked - a God-centred life, even though he was fallible on many occasions. This requirement was therefore not out of reach for Solomon.

There shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel. Messianic hopes for the continuation of the Davidic line continued to be affirmed in the author of Kings and the Chronicler's time, even though the last Davidic king had been deposed in 586 BC. The prophet confirms the promise of God: <<*A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots*>> (Isaiah 11:1), <<*The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness'*>> (Jeremiah 33:14-16), <<*But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days*>> (Micah 5:2), and: <<*Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak; say to him: Thus says the Lord of hosts: Here is a man whose name is Branch: for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. It is he that shall build the temple of the Lord; he shall bear royal honour, and shall sit and rule on his throne. There shall be a priest by his throne, with peaceful understanding between the two of them*>> (Zechariah 6:11-13).

⁶ ‘If you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, ⁷ then I will cut Israel off from the land that I have given them; and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight; and Israel will become a proverb and a taunt among all peoples. ⁸ This house will become a heap of ruins; everyone passing by it will be astonished, and will hiss; and they will say, “Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this house?” ⁹ Then they will say, “Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, worshipping them and serving them; therefore the Lord has brought this disaster upon them.”’

1 Kings 9:6-9

If you turn aside from following me, you or your children, then I will cut Israel off from the land that I have given them. The positive promise of vv.1-5 was followed by a negative promise. If Solomon or his descendants were to turn from following the Lord, God promises to correct a disobedient Israel. Although the place of the temple as a focal point for prayer has been assured by God, as Solomon had asked in 1 Kings 8:27-53 and v.3 above, and there was also a favourable response to his request about the future of the dynasty in 1 Kings 8:25-26 and vv.4-5, the future of the temple and the dynasty depends on the obedience of Solomon and of future generations of Israelites. The particular focus here is on the issue of idolatry: the people must not go and serve other gods and worship them. Unfortunately, it would not be long before they did exactly that!

The land that I have given them. This is a reminder that everything belongs to God: <<*The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it*>> (Psalm 24:1). Therefore, it is his to give and his to take away: <<*He said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord’*>> (Job 1:21).

The house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight. God answered Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kings Chapter 8, but it was not an unqualified promise to bless the temple in all circumstances. God blessed the temple and filled it with the glory of his presence, but he would cast it out of his sight if the kings of Israel forsook him. With such a glorious temple, Israel would be tempted to forsake the God of the temple and make an idol of the temple of God. Here, the Lord made them know that he could never bless this error.

Disobedience will lead to loss of the Promised Land, and the magnificent temple will become a heap of ruins to be scoffed at by those passing by as prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 29:22-28; it would later be recounted by the prophet Jeremiah after the people were taken into exile and the temple destroyed: <<*Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger*>> (Lamentations 1:12), and: <<*All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at daughter Jerusalem; 'Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?'*>> (Lamentations 2:15). Israel will be in fact transformed from a nation proverbial for its wisdom (1 Kings 4:21-34) into a nation that is itself a proverb and a taunt. This word pair comes directly from the list of covenant curses in Deuteronomy Chapter 28, specifically v.37, a chapter that lies behind so much of the prayer of 1 Kings 8:22-53. This prayer has assumed the inevitability of sin, especially: <<*If they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin – and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near*>> (1 Kings 8:46), making it clear that the 'if' in v.6 above cannot be anything other than a 'when' in reality; obedience will inevitably give way to apostasy. A dark cloud now looms over the Solomonic empire.

Under the Old Covenant, God promised to use Israel to exalt himself among the nations one way or another. If Israel obeyed he would bless them so much that others would have to recognise the hand of God upon Israel. If Israel disobeyed he would chastise them so severely that the nations would be astonished at the hard work of God among his disobedient people, and they would know that the Lord has brought this entire calamity upon them. The Living Bible has a vivid wording of v.7: <<*Israel will become a joke to the nations and an example and proverb of sudden disaster*>>.

¹⁰ At the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house, ¹¹ King Hiram of Tyre having supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber and gold, as much as he desired, King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. ¹² But when Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities that Solomon had given him, they did not please him. ¹³ Therefore he said, 'What kind of cities are these that you have given me, my brother?' So they are called the land of Cabul to this day. ¹⁴ But Hiram had sent to the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold.

1 Kings 9:10-14

At the end of twenty years would be circa 946 BC.

King Hiram of Tyre having supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber.

Tyre - the prominent city in the land just north of Israel, modern-day Lebanon, was noted for its fine wood. Hiram was first encountered in 1 Kings 5:1-18, where Solomon's wise dealings with him were described. In one sense these verses simply confirm the impression gained there, that Hiram is the 'junior partner' in his relationship with Solomon.

Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. The fortress at Rosh Zayit lay in the border area between Israel and Phoenicia at this time. Excavations there have found that spaces between walls have been filled in with wood from the cedars of Lebanon. The site perhaps represents a fortress built by Israel with Phoenician materials and then given to Hiram of Tyre along with 19 other cities.

The **gold** mentioned in v.11 was not referenced in the agreement struck between the two kings in 1 Kings 5:1-18, but Hiram nevertheless supplied Solomon with as much as he desired. Solomon in turn 'rewards' him with **twenty cities** of dubious worth. It should be noted here that the Hebrew word *irim* is used and this actually means habitation or settlement, which can range from hamlets up to large urban conurbations. This was not good. Hiram was indeed a friend to both David and Solomon, but the land of Israel was given to Israel by divine decree. Trading Israel's land for a glorious temple and palace was not a good deal. However, the transaction may be described here to show that Solomon was a shrewd dealer and got the better of Hiram in these arrangements. It seems that Solomon gave Hiram some fairly insignificant settlements and received a large amount of gold in return. The estimated value of the gold is placed at around £123 million or \$161 million (US) in late 2016.

So they are called land of Cabul. The name probably comes from Hebrew *kabal*, from which is derived the noun *kebel* meaning 'fetters' that is found in Psalm 149:8, a psalm that celebrates the supremacy of Israel over the nations. Hiram calls the land 'fettered' because this word reflects the nature of his relationship with Solomon, as can be seen in his continuing willingness, even though he is displeased, to send men to sea to bring back more treasures for the Israelite king (vv.26-28, and 1 Kings 10:11-12 and 10:22).

The references to **gold** in this Hiram story are only the first of many mentions of this metal in the current section of First Kings. Solomon accumulates gold in extraordinarily large and increasing amounts: **one hundred and twenty talents** in v.14; four hundred and twenty talents in v.28; a smaller yet valuable gift of one hundred and twenty talents from the Queen of Sheba in 1 Kings 10:10, and six hundred and sixty-six talents in 1 Kings 10:14. The gold is indeed collected from more and more exotic places (v.28 and 1 Kings 10:22). This emphasis on gold throughout 1 Kings 9:10-10:29 is striking when this section of Kings is compared with the description of Solomon's glory in Chapters 4-5. There, prosperity is described in terms of food rather than precious metals, and the emphasis lies not

on luxury at the royal court but on the way that prosperity was shared with the king's subjects. It is also striking that vv.6-9 has just warned about 'turning away from God,' and biblical texts associate the accumulation of wealth with apostasy, for example: <<*And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself*>> (Deuteronomy 17:17), and: <<*Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need*>> (Proverbs 30:8), as Jesus acknowledged when quoting from Deuteronomy: <<*But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"'*>> (Matthew 4:4). God may well have given Solomon riches, but will they lead him astray?

I.j 1 Kings 9:15-10:29 - Glory Under a Cloud

Solomon's rule over the surrounding kingdoms, combined with his status in the world in general (1 Kings 4:21-34), put him in a position to build and dedicate the temple (1 Kings 5:1-8:66). First Kings 9:15-10:29 now considers the glory of this Solomonic empire in the light of 1 Kings 8:22-53 and 1 Kings 9:1-9. Earlier themes are picked up again, i.e. Solomon's dealings with Hiram; his use of forced labour; and foreigners coming to listen to his great wisdom, but they are repeated in a way that hints not of wisdom but of foolishness. The glory of the Solomonic empire is glory under a cloud, destined to fade away.

I.j.i 1 Kings 9:15-25 - Other Acts of Solomon

This is another section that refers the reader back to 1 Kings 5:1-18. Here it is clarified that Solomon did not use his task force of 30,000 only for the temple but also for his other building operations, and that it did not include his Israelite subjects who had other jobs to do, but only Canaanite labourers. The significance of this delayed clarification becomes clear in the authors' associating these Canaanites with Pharaoh's daughter (v.24). She was first introduced waiting for her palace in 1 Kings 3:1, using language reminiscent of the Deuteronomic warnings about intermarriage with foreigners in Deuteronomy 7:1-6 because of the danger of apostasy; the foreigners here are precisely those Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites mentioned in v.20. Their appearance here along with Pharaoh's daughter serves to prepare the reader for Solomon's apostasy. He will be seduced by the other gods (1 Kings 11:2), even though he is for the moment an orthodox worshipper in the temple (v.25).

¹⁵ This is the account of the forced labour that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the Lord and his own house, the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer ¹⁶ (Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it down, had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his

daughter, Solomon's wife; ¹⁷ so Solomon rebuilt Gezer), Lower Beth-horon, ¹⁸ Baalath, Tamar in the wilderness, within the land, ¹⁹ as well as all of Solomon's storage cities, the cities for his chariots, the cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build, in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. ²⁰ All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel – ²¹ their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the Israelites were unable to destroy completely – these Solomon conscripted for slave labour, and so they are to this day. ²² But of the Israelites Solomon made no slaves; they were the soldiers, they were his officials, his commanders, his captains, and the commanders of his chariotry and cavalry.

1 Kings 9:15-22

This is the account of the forced labour that King Solomon conscripted. Solomon raised this massive labour force to complete his extensive building projects. Archæology is a witness to the ambitious and successful building projects of Solomon. In fact, excavations at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer have revealed extensive building for fortification and government from the Solomonic period. All three sites include four entry gates that are connected to an outer casemate wall system. Megiddo in particular, with its palaces and stables/storehouses, provides a good picture of a Solomonic royal city.



A model of Solomon's Gate at Megiddo

Hazor was strategically placed in the north approximately three miles north of the Sea of Galilee, being situated at the juncture of the two major highways

approaching from the north. It became Israel's chief bulwark against northern invaders until it was destroyed in the 8th Century by Tiglath-pileser III.

Megiddo was the great fortress that controlled on the major passes from the Plain of Sharon on the coast into the Valley of Jezreel through the Carmel range. It figures in prophecy as the staging area for the last great battle of Armageddon in which Christ will defeat the forces of the Antichrist.

Gezer, on the road from Joppa to Jerusalem, had been a powerful Canaanite city. Although it was included in the tribal territory of Ephraim, it was not occupied by the Israelites until the time of Solomon. Then it was given to Solomon as a wedding gift by Pharaoh to his daughter.

Solomon's storage cities, the cities for his chariots, the cities for his cavalry. A series of fortresses have been discovered in the central Negev, which appear to have been part of a defensive network built during the time of Solomon in the 10th Century BC. Their purpose was to provide a solid line of defence against invasion from the south, particularly from Egypt. The fortresses were occupied for only a short time, 50 years at the most.

All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, these Solomon conscripted for slave labour, and so they are to this day. This was another apparent compromise by Solomon. God strictly commanded that the remnants of these tribes be driven out of the land, not used as slave labourers in Israel. He also told them that their failure to do so would be costly: **<<But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides; they shall trouble you in the land where you are settling>>** (Numbers 33:55). Solomon did not make Israelites forced labourers, but used them to oversee the remnants of the Canaanite tribes.

To this day. This phrase appears a number of times in 1-2 Kings when connections are being made between past and present. Since such slave labourers had disappeared long before the period in which the Books of Kings reached their final form, however, the phrase represents here a survival either from the source documents used when the books were put together or from an earlier pre exilic version that was later expanded.

²³ These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work: five hundred and fifty, who had charge of the people who carried on the work.

1 Kings 9:23

These were the chief officers. As stated above, Solomon did not conscript Israelites but he did appoint them to paid positions to oversee the work or to serve in his

army. An Israeli could have Hebrew slaves or servants but they had certain rights under the law, specifically that they could have the right to freedom after six years of service; refer to Exodus 21:1-11 and Deuteronomy 15:12-18, which was binding according to the rules of the Sabbatical Year.

²⁴ But Pharaoh's daughter went up from the city of David to her own house that Solomon had built for her; then he built the Millo.

1 Kings 9:24

Then he built the Millo. The Hebrew term *millo* is probably a name for a prominent fortress near the temple and the palace. However, it most likely describes architectural terracing and buttressing along the north eastern slope of the east hill of Jerusalem, the city of David. The Hebrew word means 'the fill.' It was a series of terrace walls, built on a steep slope, supporting the fill behind it in order to create level areas. Houses were then built on these artificial platforms, which were connected by narrow staircases. It was apparently the king's duty to look after this construction. During heavy rainfall, the fill became heavy and increased the pressure on the terrace walls, thus requiring regular maintenance of these walls. When this construction was neglected, the houses would fall down the steep slope and the city would disintegrate. Remains of these supporting walls have been found on the eastern slope of the city of David.

²⁵ Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt-offerings and sacrifices of well-being on the altar that he built for the Lord, offering incense before the Lord. So he completed the house.

1 Kings 9:25

Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt-offerings and sacrifices of well-being on the altar. Although no specific details are given, it seems likely that these sacrifices were offered up as part of the three main annual festivals: the festival of unleavened bread, the festival of harvest, and the festival of ingathering; refer to Exodus 23:14-19.

Some commentators have suggested that this represents a further sin by Solomon for they assume he actually offered the sacrifices himself. However, it is best read that Solomon supplied the sacrifices to the priests who offered them to the Lord in accordance with the law.

I.j.ii 1 Kings 9:26-28 - Solomon's Commercial Activity

Solomon built a fleet of ships to be sailed by Tyrian sailors in order to trade with other nations, especially bringing in more gold.

²⁶ King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. ²⁷ Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, sailors who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon. ²⁸ They went to Ophir, and imported from there four hundred and twenty talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

1 Kings 9:26-28

King Solomon built a fleet of ships; Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, sailors who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon. Hebrews were not renowned as seafarers but the Tyrians were. Thus it seems that Hiram's men would sail the ships: <<*Men of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; your skilled men, Tyre, were aboard as your sailors*>> (Ezekiel 27:8 NIV), and the servants of Solomon would be the traders.

Many scholars have tried to identify Ezion-geber with the modern Tell el-Kheleifeh, but this site was not settled until the 8th Century BC, at least 200 years after Solomon's time.

They went to Ophir, and imported from there four hundred and twenty talents of gold. It is hard to say with certainty where the land of Ophir was. Some suggest it was somewhere in India, beyond the Ganges, on the eastern coast of Africa, or in southern Arabia near the country of the Sabæans. This shows the great enterprise and industriousness of Solomon's administration.

The gold of Ophir was certainly renowned for his fine quality: <<*If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored, if you remove unrighteousness from your tents, if you treat gold like dust, and gold of Ophir like the stones of the torrent-bed, and if the Almighty is your gold and your precious silver, then you will delight in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God*>> (Job 22:23-26), <<*It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire*>> (Job 28:16), <<*From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad; daughters of kings are among your ladies of honour; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir*>> (Psalm 45:8b-9), and: <<*I will make mortals more rare than fine gold, and humans than the gold of Ophir*>> (Isaiah 13:12).