



Second Chronicles - Chapter Eight

II 1 Chronicles 10:1-2 Chronicles 9:31 - The United Kingdom of David and Solomon (continues)

Summary of Chapter Eight

Solomon's further conquests and building projects are revealed, as well as his attention to matters of worship, both for himself and for the people. The success of Solomon's various building projects are seen as blessings that follow his obedience in building the temple which, along with his palace, took twenty years to complete.

II.i 2 Chronicles 8:1-18 - Various Activities of Solomon

This section generally follows 1 Kings 9:10-28, with a significant variation and addition in vv.2-4 and vv.12-16.

¹ At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon had built the house of the Lord and his own house, ² Solomon rebuilt the cities that Hiram had given to him, and settled the people of Israel in them.

2 Chronicles 8:1-2

At the end of twenty years. It took Solomon seven years to build the temple and thirteen years to build his palace. At the end of these twenty years his kingdom was secure, stable, and blessed.

Solomon rebuilt the cities that Hiram had given to him. According to 1 Kings 9:11-14, Solomon had actually given these cities to Hiram, perhaps as collateral for a loan or as part of the agreement to supply materials and labour for the building projects. The Chronicler would then be describing their subsequent reversion to Israelite control.

³ Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and captured it. ⁴ He built Tadmor in the wilderness and all the storage towns that he built in Hamath.

2 Chronicles 8:3-4

Hamath-zobah lay about 120 miles or 193 km north of Damascus: <<*David also struck down King Hadadezer of Zobah, towards Hamath, as he went to set up a monument at the river Euphrates*>> (1 Chronicles 18:3), while Tadmor lay about 125 miles or 201 km to the northeast. Control over these commercial cities represented the farthest extent of Solomon's power. First Kings does not mention these campaigns.

⁵ He also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities, with walls, gates, and bars, ⁶ and Baalath, as well as all Solomon's storage towns, and all the towns for his chariots, the towns for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build, in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

2 Chronicles 8:5-6

Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon were located on a ridge above the Valley of Aijalon northwest of Jerusalem. They were crucial to the security of the city and provided access to the international coastal highway; see also the comments made on 1 Kings 9:15-22.

Whatever Solomon desired to build. This passage reflects Solomon's great heart and ambition as a builder. He energetically settled new towns and built storage towns, fortifications, chariot towns, and towns for his cavalry.

Sadly, this new emphasis on chariots and cavalry shows that Solomon did not take God's word as seriously as he should have. God spoke specifically to the future kings of Israel: <<*Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself*>> (Deuteronomy 17:16a). It would be much better of Solomon had the heart reflected in: <<*Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God*>> (Psalms 20:7).

⁷ All the people who were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel, ⁸ from their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the people of Israel had not destroyed — these Solomon conscripted for forced labour, as is still the case today. ⁹ But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves for his work; they were soldiers, and his officers, the commanders of his chariotry and cavalry. ¹⁰ These were

the chief officers of King Solomon, two hundred and fifty of them, who exercised authority over the people.

2 Chronicles 8:7-10

All the people who were not of Israel. In keeping with an ancient practice of controlling enemies, Solomon conscripted the descendants of the Canaanites into forced labour for his construction projects throughout the nation.

But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves for his work. According to 1 Kings 5:13-18 Solomon imposed a less rigorous demand on the Israelites. They were used for the work of building the temple and Solomon's palace, but they were not forced labour. They were often used in the management of the forced labour, i.e. they were those who exercised authority over the people. Others served in the army or the administration of government.

¹¹ Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, 'My wife shall not live in the house of King David of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the Lord has come are holy.'

2 Chronicles 8:11

Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter from the city of David to the house that he had built for her. Solomon's Egyptian wife was kept in a separate house and away from the ark, probably on account of her paganism. This marriage to a princess of Egypt was the first of Solomon's many unwise marriages; refer to 1 Kings 11:1-3 and the associated comments. These unwise marriages launched the spiritual downfall of Solomon, leading to him building shrines to pagan gods and even worshipping them; refer to 1 Kings 11:7-8 and the associated comments.

My wife shall not live in the house of King David of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the Lord has come are holy. This is clear acknowledgement that she was not a believer in God and marrying her was against the commandments of God. However, Solomon decided that political expedience was more important than following the will of the Lord; it was a mistake he would come to rue: <<*Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity*>> (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

¹² Then Solomon offered up burnt-offerings to the Lord on the altar of the Lord that he had built in front of the vestibule, ¹³ as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual festivals – the festival of unleavened bread, the festival of weeks, and the festival of

booths. ¹⁴ According to the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their offices of praise and ministry alongside the priests as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers in their divisions for the several gates; for so David the man of God had commanded. ¹⁵ They did not turn away from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites regarding anything at all, or regarding the treasuries.

2 Chronicles 8:12-15

Then Solomon offered up burnt-offerings to the Lord on the altar of the Lord. In accordance with the commanded morning and evening sacrifices, i.e. as the duty of each day required which is written in Numbers 28:1-8, Solomon administered the burnt-offering for Israel. He also observed the other sacrifices commanded by the Law of Moses.

According to the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service. Solomon carried forth the administration for the temple service as it was originally organised by King David; refer to 1 Chronicles Chapter 24. The Chronicler expands the brief comment in 1 Kings 9:25, detailing the pattern of daily, weekly, monthly, and annual sacrifices and festivals instituted in the temple by Solomon, along with his organisation of the temple personnel. Solomon's fidelity to the instructions of Moses (v.13) and David (vv.14-15) is emphasised.

¹⁶ Thus all the work of Solomon was accomplished from the day the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid until the house of the Lord was finished completely.

2 Chronicles 8:16

Thus all the work of Solomon was accomplished. This was a reflection of his great wisdom and an answer to his prayer for help in leading the kingdom of Israel; 1 Kings Chapter 3.

Solomon's reign was about halfway through at this stage and it seems that much, if not all, of the good he would achieve has been completed. It is shown that in his old age he slipped into apostasy but it seems also that the time taken with his many wives and the high taxation he placed on the people were part of his demise. This latter issue is one that would lead to the split in the nation during his son Rehoboam's reign: <<*Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you*>> (1 Kings 12:4).

The house of the Lord was finished completely. The completion of the temple did not come with its building or dedication but with the institution of its regular services. Solomon proved himself faithful in his commission, and the subsequent details of his reign in 2 Chronicles 8:17-9:28 represent God's blessing on his obedience: *<<God answered Solomon, 'Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honour, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honour, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like'>>* (2 Chronicles 1:11-12).

¹⁷ Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea, in the land of Edom. ¹⁸ Hiram sent him, in the care of his servants, ships and servants familiar with the sea. They went to Ophir, together with the servants of Solomon, and imported from there four hundred and fifty talents of gold and brought it to King Solomon.

2 Chronicles 8:17-18

Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea. Israel thus forms the land bridge and the trade routes connecting the Mediterranean lands with the kingdoms on the Red Sea and beyond into Asia. This was unusual for an Israelite king because the people of Israel were not known for their accomplishments at sea. Solomon boldly led the people of Israel into new ventures. He profited from his control of these routes, and from his maritime partnership with Hiram, the king of Tyre. The Tyreans, a people of Phœnician stock, were renowned for their seamanship.

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.

Ophir was possibly in southwest Arabia, the Horn of Africa or in India. 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).