

# 1 Kings 3-5 – Chapter Study

## INTRO

### I. DAVID'S LAST YEARS 1:1-2:12

### II. SOLOMON'S REIGN 2:13-11:43

#### A. *Political Maneuvers* 2:13-3:1

1. Adonijah's plot 2:13-25
  2. Abiathar removed 2:26-27
  3. Joab executed 2:28-37
  4. Shimei executed 2:38-46
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#### 5. Solomon marries Pharaoh's daughter 3:1

**<sup>1</sup> Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh's daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall all around Jerusalem.**

Throughout history, until recent times, it was a common political practice for members of royal families to marry into the royalty of other nations – thereby forging strong alliances.

Until the time of Solomon, Egypt was an exception.

She was a *proud* nation whose rulers, the Pharaohs, for centuries claimed to be gods.

They *refused* to enter into alliances with foreign kings or to give their daughters as wives because as gods they would not mingle with mere mortals.

But by now, Egypt had weakened & Pharaoh Siamun, the last of the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, saw an alliance with Israel as advantageous.

Egypt *needed* the vital trade routes that passed through Israel so Siamun gave his daughter to Solomon as wife.

This was a marriage of political expediency, not romantic love.

Solomon will enter into many more of these kinds of political marriages.

He followed his father David's unfortunate example of taking many wives.

It will be his many foreign wives who become the cause of Solomon's fatal downfall.

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BTW – this was not Solomon's first wife. As far as we know his first wife was an Ammonite woman named Naamah. [1Kings 14:21]

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Brief mention is made in v. 1 of Solomon's extensive building projects in Jerusalem.

Throughout *David's* time, Jerusalem had remained a small town on the southern ridge of Mount Moriah

It was Solomon who extended the city north & west, building the temple & his own magnificent palace.

The Queen lived in the little city of David until Solomon later built her, her

own palace.

## **B. Solomon's Request for Wisdom 3:2-28**

### **1. Worship in Israel 3:2-4**

**<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the people sacrificed at the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days.**

Though the ark of the covenant was in Jerusalem, the other pieces of the sacred furniture along with what was left of the tabernacle were in Gibeon, which was located 6 miles NW of Jerusalem.

The high priest lived in Jerusalem near the ark but didn't perform the daily rituals associated with the tabernacle service because the tabernacle was in a different place.

So the people erected altars on the tops of hills near their homes & worshipped there.

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The word used for 'high place' is *bamah* = A loan-word from the Canaanites.

The people of Israel restored the old pagan worship sites & used them as centers of the worship of Yahweh.

Like Solomon's foreign wives, this practice on the part of the people will become a cause of their later fatal departure from God.

**<sup>3</sup> And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.**

Solomon loved God & generally followed his father's example in following the Lord – "except . . ."

He worshiped God along with the people in the old pagan ways.

This was *not* something *David* had done, *because* he was a careful student of God's Word & knew that God had forbidden worship at any place but the tabernacle.

The *Psalms* are filled with *dozens* of references to David's *devotion* to the Scriptures.

We don't see that in Solomon's case.

The Proverbs he penned show an interest in *wisdom & understanding*; they promote a *close walk* with God, but they don't exalt His Word like David's Psalms do.

Because Solomon was less devoted to the Word, he didn't *know* the prohibition, or had *forgotten* it.

Undirected by The Word about *how* to worship, he made the mistake of thinking he could worship any way he wanted – all that mattered was that he be *sincere*, a grave error many people still make.

We cannot come to God any way we want to – we must come the way He's proscribed.

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**<sup>4</sup> Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.**

Gibeon was considered the greatest of the high places because that's where what was left of the tabernacle was located.

Let's do a brief summary of the tabernacle after Israel entered Canaan.

Joshua installed it at Shiloh. [Josh 18]

Under the judge & priest Eli, the Philistines captured the ark was captured & the tabernacle was torn down. [1 Sam 4, Psalm 78:60-64, Jer 7:12 and 26:9]

When the ark was returned, it settled at Kiriath-Jearim for a time, then went to the city of Nob where the rest of the tabernacle was rebuilt. [1 Sam 7:1-2, 1 Sam 21]

Then the tabernacle was moved to Gibeon while David brought the ark to Jerusalem. [1 Chr 16:39-40, 2 Sam 6:17, 2 Chr 1:4]

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In Chronicles we learn *all* the leaders of Israel went to Gibeon for this special event.

Though Solomon had been already been crowned, that was an emergency event precipitated by Adonijah's attempt to seize the throne.

This was Solomon's official coronation; in which all the elders & leaders of Israel would come & give their allegiance to him as the new ruler.

Solomon made a huge offering to the Lord as a way to let the people know he intended to follow the example of his father David.

## 2. God appears to Solomon 3:5-15

**<sup>5</sup>At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?" <sup>6</sup>And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day. <sup>7</sup>Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I *am* a little child; I do not know *how* to go out or come in. <sup>8</sup>And Your servant *is* in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. <sup>9</sup>Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"**

Solomon was only 19 or 20 when he assumed the throne of Israel, a nation that was quickly on the rise to become the premier civilization of the ancient Middle East.

As he's there in Gibeon with all of Israel's most powerful & influential leaders, the immensity of the task before him looms so great, it overwhelms him.

He falls into a troubled sleep on the night of his inauguration.

When God appears to him in a dream & asks what he wants, there's only one response that seems right; he asks for the wisdom & skill to rule God's people well.

You know what this tells us about Solomon? It tells us he already had a measure of wisdom.

And the wisdom he had told him he needed *more*.

He who seeks wisdom *first*, is already wise.

It takes wisdom to *see* its importance & the priority to pursue more.

Solomon asked *specifically* for the *practical* wisdom to rule.

As king he would need to serve as a judge, ruler, leader & captain.

Though young, he was mature enough to realize his lack of experience would hinder him in these roles.

So he asked for the practical wisdom to rule beyond what his years had taught him.

As most parents know, young people often think they *know better* than their parents how things ought to be done.

A young golfer signed up for a lesson with the club pro.

One of the pro's friend was there & went along to watch.

After a few swings, the pro started offering the novice some suggestions for improvement.

But each time, the pupil interrupted with his *own version* of what went wrong & how to correct it.

After a few minutes of this interference, the pro stopped making his suggestion & just nodded his head in agreement.

At the end of the lesson, the student paid the pro, congratulated him on his expertise as an instructor & left—clearly pleased with himself.

The pro's friend was astonished & asked, "Why did you just go along with him instead of correcting his errors?"

The old pro replied with a grin as he placed the hefty fee & tip in his pocket, "I learned years ago it's a waste of time to sell answers to someone who only wants to buy echoes."

Solomon's youthfulness didn't blind him to the reality & immensity of the task before him nor his own inability, so he asked for the skill to be a good & wise ruler.

**10 The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.**

**11 Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, <sup>12</sup> behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. <sup>13</sup> And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. <sup>14</sup> So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."**

God was pleased with Solomon's request and gave him his desire.

He also gave him the things he *could have asked* for but didn't; wealth, honor, & long life.

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As wise as Solomon's request was, was it the *best thing* he could have asked for?

It certainly was a *good* request—even God was pleased with it, but was it *the best*?

Solomon's request of wisdom was good but surely the deep longings of his father for intimacy with God were *better!*

Solomon sought *wisdom* / David sought He Who IS wise.

Solomon wanted to know *how to rule* / David wanted to know Him who rules.

Solomon wanted to know *how to judge* Israel / David wanted to know the Judge of Heaven & Earth.

Solomon asked for an *understanding heart* to know the people's need / David asked for a heart to understand God's desire.

In Proverbs 4:7, Solomon says –

**Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.**

In Psalm 27:4 David says –

**One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life.**

There's no sign in Solomon's story he ever had the deep inward devotion to God David displayed.

Solomon's wisdom remains a milestone & proverb in the history of man.

We still say someone who demonstrate remarkably good sense, has the "wisdom of Solomon."

Yet despite his wisdom, Solomon's later years were marked by gross apostasy & sin.

*Indeed*, it seems to the degree he possessed wisdom, to *that degree* of foolishness he fell when he turned his back on God.

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In Mat 6:33 Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

We seek the kingdom by staying close to the King.

If we have the King, then we have all we could ever need & truly want.

Psalm 37:4 promises . . .

**Delight yourself in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.**

Psalm 16:11 says . . .

**You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

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**<sup>15</sup> Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.**

There was no single item which was more closely identified with the presence of God than the ark; that's why David had had it brought to Jerusalem.

Solomon's devotion to the Lord is probably at it's greatest point now as he's just had this encounter with God & His amazing grace, so he gets as close to God as he can and worships.

Notice the overflow of his love for God – others are blessed as he puts on a feast.

One of the evidences of a genuine heart for God, one that is truly in communion with Him, is that others will be blessed by the overflow.

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Now we get a story that reveals God's answer of Solomon's request for wisdom in judgment has indeed come.

### 3. An example of Solomon's wisdom 3:16-28

**<sup>16</sup>Now two women *who were* harlots came to the king, and stood before him. <sup>17</sup>And one woman said, "O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. <sup>18</sup>Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we were together; no one was with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. <sup>19</sup>And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. <sup>20</sup>So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. <sup>21</sup>And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne." <sup>22</sup>Then the other woman said, "No! But the living one *is* my son, and the dead one *is* your son." And the first woman said, "No! But the dead one *is* your son, and the living one *is* my son." Thus they spoke before the king. <sup>23</sup>And the king said, "The one says, 'This *is* my son, who lives, and your son *is* the dead one'; and the other says, 'No! But your son *is* the dead one, and my son *is* the living one.'" <sup>24</sup>Then the king said, "Bring me a sword." So they brought a sword before the king. <sup>25</sup>And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other." <sup>26</sup>Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, "O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!" But the other said, "Let him be neither mine nor yours, *but* divide *him*." <sup>27</sup>So the king answered and said, "Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she *is* his mother."**

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Solomon devises a brilliant strategy for getting at the truth of the matter.

He knows that a mother's bond with her child is so fierce she would see it given to another mother than see it slain.

Whereas a woman bereaved of her child can show an inordinate amount of envy for a mother with a child of a similar age as her dead baby. It's not at all past her to be content with the death of another's child.

So he calls for a sword & it becomes immediately obvious who the real mother is.

**<sup>28</sup>And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.**

The fear they showed was the reverential awe that comes when you marvel at something.

The people realized Solomon possessed a level of wisdom well beyond his few

years.

It made them all the more ready to yield to his rule as king.

### **C. Solomon's Wise Administration Ch. 4**

#### **1. His officers vs. 1-6**

In vs. 1-6, we get a list of Solomon's court officers; guys that filled roles like, religious advisor, scribe, clerk, military adviser, chief of staff, and internal affairs.

These 11 men were similar in many regards to his *Cabinet*.

**<sup>1</sup> So King Solomon was king over all Israel. <sup>2</sup> And these were his officials: Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest; <sup>3</sup> Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder; <sup>4</sup> Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, over the army; Zadok and Abiathar, the priests; <sup>5</sup> Azariah the son of Nathan, over the officers; Zabud the son of Nathan, a priest *and* the king's friend; <sup>6</sup> Ahishar, over the household; and Adoniram the son of Abda, over the labor force.**

#### **2. His governors vs. 7-19**

Solomon divided Israel into 12 administrative districts & appointed governors over each one

These 12 districts were responsible for providing all of the food for Solomon's palace, one district per month.

Later, we'll see what the palace consumed in a month. Providing for the king's table was no small undertaking.

In vs. 7-19 we get a list of the 12 districts & their governors.

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What's interesting about this list is that Solomon didn't divide the land into its normal boundaries of tribal lands, making the lead elder of each tribe a governor.

He divided the land among 12 regions based on the ancient idea of the city-state.

We don't find borders listed here, just principle cities, which acted as regional centers or capitals.

The governors were the mayors/ the lead-rulers of these main cities.

And the region that's noticeably missing from this list is territory in the tribe of **Judah**.

They were exempt from this list of regions required to provide for Solomon's table.

This blatant favoritism on Solomon's part hints at one of the reasons for the later envy between Judah & the other tribes that splits the nation under his son.

#### **3. Israel prospers v. 20**

**<sup>20</sup> Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing.**

This was Israel's Golden Age – her absolute highest point in terms of wealth &

power.

And while her peace & prosperity are highlighted, nothing's said of their devotion to God in the midst of their celebrations.

The people are *living it up*, but no mention is made of *living up* to the Lord.

#### 4. Israel's hegemony (A) v. 21

**<sup>21</sup> So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the [Euphrates] River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.**

Just as God had promised in Deuteronomy, Israel was the head, not the tail.

Because up till now the people were following the Lord under the inspired leadership of David & Solomon, He was doing what He'd said He'd do – blessing them abundantly.

History tells us that at this time, the other nations of the Fertile Crescent that had been the traditional powerhouses were all in serious decline.

Internal problems had moved all of them to draw back their borders & recall their armies from foreign fields.

There was no one to stand in the way or questions Israel's expansion & launching out in building new economic ventures & trade routes.

Even militarily, Solomon was able to garrison key centers that allowed Israel to extend her influence well beyond her borders.

The results was that even without the need to engage in military conquest, other nations sent tribute to Israel.

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#### 5. Solomon's daily provision vs. 22-23

By way of example of just how prosperous Solomon & the nation was, a list is given of what the palace consumed in a day.

**<sup>22</sup> Now Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour,**

A kor equals about 6.2 bushels which is just shy of 50 gallons.

So every day about 25, 55 gallon drums of flour!

**sixty kors of meal,**

50, 55 gallons drums!

**<sup>23</sup>ten fatted oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures,**

10 were *pen-fed* & provided the best cuts of the most tender meat = kobe.

20 cattle were regular range-fed beef.

**and one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.**

It's estimated this amount of food would provide enough for 25,000 people which probably means Solomon staged daily state dinners in which he invited people from all over to sit at his table and enjoy his bounty.

#### 6. Israel's hegemony B vs. 24-25

**<sup>24</sup> For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River from Tiphseh [a city on the southern bank of the Euphrates] even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him. <sup>25</sup> And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as**



## **Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.**

To sit under one's vine & fig tree meant to be at ease in the midst of peace & prosperity.

It's an idiom for *the good life*.

### **7. Solomon's horses vs. 26-28**

#### **26 Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.**

The parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 9:25 says the number of stalls was, 4000; so what we have here is a scribal error, which isn't difficult to do when it comes to making numbers in ancient Hebrew.

Historically & archaeologically, there's plenty of evidence for 4000 horse stalls, but no where near the larger number.

In 2 Chr we read it was 4,000 stalls & Solomon possessed 1,400 chariots. <sup>[1]</sup>

Each drawn by 2 horses, with one in reserve = about 4,000.

Horse drawn chariots were THE power weapon of the day, equivalent to a modern battle tank.

The point is Solomon amassed a mighty cavalry & chariot force.

And it's right here that Solomon's story takes a clear turn south -

In Deut 17:16 we read "[The king] shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'"

God wanted Israel to put their trust in Him, not their military might nor technology.

Solomon grievously violated that rule.

#### **27 And these governors, each man in his month, provided food for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table. There was no lack in their supply. 28 They also brought barley and straw to the proper place, for the horses and steeds, each man according to his charge.**

### **8. Solomon's fame vs. 29-34**

**29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.**

**30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.**

The fame of Solomon's rule & exceptional wisdom spread throughout the ancient world.

Rulers & academics traveled from far & wide to hear him & see the glory of his kingdom.

This was a period in history when wisdom was prized as highly as gold & silver.

Solomon's could not have lived at a more fortuitous moment than this.

As Lord of History, God had arranged it so, so that His original plan & intent for Israel would be realized for a short time.

Remember, Israel was *meant* to be God's *light to the nations*.

She was meant to carry His testimony to others, not hoard it to herself.

During her Golden Age under Solomon, God brought the world to Israel to see what happens to a nation & people when they faithfully love & serve Him.

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Solomon's great wisdom wasn't limited just to ruling.

God gave him insight into nature & the workings of the earth & heavens.

**<sup>32</sup>He spoke 3000 proverbs, and his songs were 1005. <sup>33</sup>Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. <sup>34</sup>And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.**

#### **D. Hiram & Solomon 5:1-12**

**<sup>1</sup> Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, because he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always loved David.**

The relationship between David & Hiram had been close.

Hiram intended to maintain that closeness with David's son and sent ambassadors to renew relations with Israel.

**<sup>2</sup>Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying: <sup>3</sup>You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the LORD put *his foes* under the soles of his feet. <sup>4</sup>But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; *there is* neither adversary nor evil occurrence. <sup>5</sup>And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name." <sup>6</sup>Now therefore, command that they cut down cedars for me from Lebanon; and my servants will be with your servants, and I will pay you wages for your servants according to whatever you say. For you know *there is* none among us who has skill to cut timber like the Sidonians.**

Solomon wanted to get busy building the temple & needed a lot of cedar wood to do it so he asked for help from the king of Tyre where the cedars were grown.

**<sup>7</sup>So it was, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly and said, Blessed *be* the LORD this day, for He has given David a wise son over this great people!**

Hiram knew the key to David's successful reign was his devotion to God.

Hearing his son continued in the same faith cheered him greatly.

**<sup>8</sup>Then Hiram sent to Solomon, saying: I have considered *the message* which you sent me, *and* I will do all you desire concerning the cedar and cypress logs. <sup>9</sup>My servants shall bring *them* down from Lebanon to the sea; I will float them in rafts by sea to the place you indicate to**

me, and will have them broken apart there; then you can take *them* away. And you shall fulfill my desire by giving food for my household. <sup>10</sup>Then Hiram gave Solomon cedar and cypress logs *according to all his desire*. <sup>11</sup>And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand kors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty kors of pressed oil. Thus Solomon gave to Hiram year by year. <sup>12</sup>So the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty together.

Israel got premium lumber in exchange foodstuffs.

#### **E. Solomon's workforce 5:13-18**

<sup>13</sup>Then King Solomon raised up a labor force out of all Israel; and the labor force was 30,000 men. <sup>14</sup>And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts: they were one month in Lebanon *and* two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the labor force.

<sup>15</sup>Solomon had 70,000 who carried burdens, and 80,000 who quarried stone in the mountains, <sup>16</sup>besides 3,300 from the chiefs of Solomon's deputies, who supervised the people who labored in the work. <sup>17</sup>And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, *and* hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple. <sup>18</sup>So Solomon's builders, Hiram's builders, and the Gebalites quarried *them*; and they prepared timber and stones to build the temple.

Gebalites were special stone-masons from the region of Tyre.

They worked in the quarries of Israel training the Jews on how to work the stone for a special building like the temple.

This wasn't the kind of work the Israelites had any experience in so Hiram sent specialists to teach them.

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The building of the temple & Solomon's palace became ***THE*** major national projects for the next 13 years.

A good part of Israel's workforce went to work at it.

Over 183,000 men were involved, a good number of them would have been employed in doing little more than moving the massive timbers & stones across the hill landscape.

They didn't have the roads or vehicles we do today to move these things, which each weighed many tons.

They had to ***drag*** them across uneven landscape.

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Note in v. 17 the reference to "large, costly, hewn stones" for the ***foundation*** of the temple.

The point is that Solomon ordered that even the unseen, mundane parts of the temple were to be made of only the highest quality material.

In referring to Jewish folklore, Commentator Ginzburg says that during the entire 7 years it took to build the temple, not a single member of the workforce either lost his life or got sick.

They were all in the most robust health so that their energy never diminished and they were never tempted to do less than the best work.

It's even said that the tools they used never wore out or needed repair or sharpening. They stayed as sharp & solid as they day they were new-made. Whether or not that's true hardly matters. We do know that when finished, the temple was a mind-blowingly magnificent building.

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[\[1\]](#) 2 Chr. 9:25 1:14 10:26