

# 1 KINGS

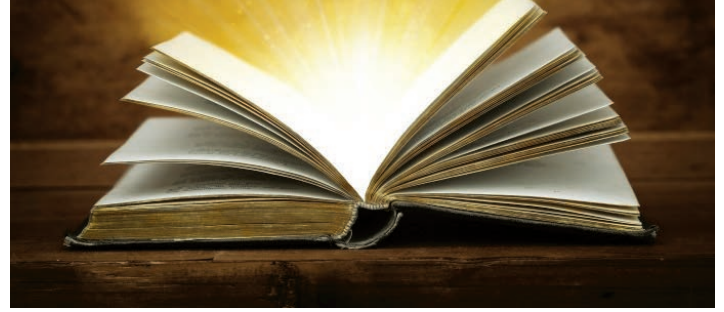
## 1 Kings 7:1–8:21

### Lesson 97

Wednesday, August 3, 2022

# Overview of the Bible

## 1 and 2 KINGS



### ***The dedication of the temple (8:1–9:9)***

The center of 1 Kings' record of Solomon's reign is the building and dedication of the great temple in Jerusalem, into which the ark was carried to mark continuity with the Tent of Meeting which was the previous symbol of the divine presence (vv. 1–13). The ceremony was marked with prayer (vv. 14–61) and sacrifice, as well as a fellowship meal in which all the people participated (vv. 62–66). In this way the Covenant of God (lodged in the ark) was linked both with the temple as a precursor of the synagogue and church and with David's dynasty.

Reference to the books of the law, especially Deuteronomy and Exodus, abound but there is no direct reference to the destruction of the temple or to the exile in 587 bc which would make this account a post exilic redaction.

### **The introduction of the ark (8:1–13).**

1. To unite the nation a solemn assembly (*qhl*—hence the traditional association of Solomon with Qoheleth [Ecclesiastes]) was called to witness (v. 3) and mark their agreement to the new location of the national shrine. David had moved the ark from Obed-Edom's house to newly captured Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1–12; 15:24–29) and now it moved on from Zion on the south hill of Jerusalem to the 'citadel' (JB 'city', cf. 2:10) to the new city extension to the north. The whole city would from now on be referred to as *Zion* (2 Kgs 19:31; Ps. 9:11).

2. The date is given as September/October (*Ethanim* by the old local calendar, i.e. Bab. Tishri) and the *festival* would be the Feast of Tabernacles (Ingathering or harvest; Deut. 16:13–15) which normally lasted a week (15th–21st day). As an additional week's festival was added (see on v. 65), some conclude that this must have been one year after the completion of the building (6:38, the eighth month, i.e. Bul).

3–4. The *Tent of Meeting* (AV 'tabernacle'; NEB 'Tent of the Presence'; Exod. 33:7–11) was brought in from Gibeon (3:4; 1 Sam. 7:1; 2 Chr. 5:4–5) and would remind the people of the festival 'booths' and Exodus tents (Lev. 23:42) at the pilgrim festival time. The *priests* carried the ark and probably the *Levites* (from the country cities) the Tent, apart from furnishings, for the former alone would enter the inner sanctuary. The theory that the historian gives prominence to the role of the Levites here is disputed.

5. *Sacrificing* (the subject is indeterminate, and the verb indicates repetition or intensity) does not necessarily mean that individuals did the slaughtering themselves. Possibly sacrifices were made at each stopping-place following David's action (2 Sam. 6:13). For the *assembly of Israel* (RSV 'congregation') is more than just the priests (see Num. 14:35; 16:11). The lack of accounting does not mean this was an exaggeration (cf. vv. 63–64; 7:47).

6–8. The positioning between the cherubim (cf. 6:23–28; Exod. 25:15, 20) meant that the ends of *the poles* of the ark were visible only from just outside the inner sanctuary (*Most Holy Place*, v. 8), either because the drawn curtain was hung inset from the opening or, less likely, because the poles pressed against the curtain as placed east-west. *There today*, i.e. before the ark and the covenant tablets were lost in the destruction of 587 bc. The absence of reference to Aaron's rod and the urn of manna (cf. Num. 17:10; Exod. 16:33; Heb. 9:4), originally lying alongside the ark (cf. Exod. 25:16; 40:20), could be explained by their earlier removal with other items 'laid up' with the ark (1 Sam. 6:3–5).

9. *Horeb* was another name for Sinai or a specific place within it (cf. Deut. 1:2). For the covenant made there. see Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 4:13.

10–13. The *glory of the LORD* always marks his presence just as at Sinai (Exod. 24:15–17) and later in the tabernacle when the cloud (Heb. *ʾārāpel*; Exod. 20:21; Deut. 4:11), a thick cloud whether of darkness or light, signifies that God was now possessing his house. It was not present all the time (Isa. 6:3–4; cf. the transfiguration of Jesus, Mark 9:7; 2 Pet. 1:17). The poetic fragment of verse 13 has been taken by some to come from the book of the Song (*šîr*) possible reference to 'The Book of Jashar' (*yāšār*, Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18) and the RSV, NEB and Gk. add 'The LORD who has set the

sun in the heavens' after *the dark cloud* (v. 12, RSV 'thick darkness') which shrouds God (Exod. 24:15; Deut. 4:11; Ps. 18:10–11) had *filled the temple of the LORD*. This is no evidence for sun worship, as some suggest.

**13.** The *magnificent temple* (RSV 'exalted house', AV 'settled house'; *bêt zēbul*) attempts to translate a difficult word, taken either as 'royal (princely) house' (Ugar. *zbt*), 'lofty abode' or, by change of text, as 'sitting enthroned' (*lěšibtēkā*). In Hebrew though there is no incompatibility between divine omnipresence and a local dwelling-place on earth where he made himself known (Isa. 8:18; Ps. 76:2).

**b. Solomon's declaration (8:14–21).** This begins with verse 12 but launches into a review of acts of God in the nation's history in choosing a people, a place (Zion) and a person (through David's line, cf. Ps 68; 89; 132). Facing the assembly, the king stands to greet them (*blessed*, *brk*, a gesture that does not apply only to a priest; for *praise*, v. 15, RSV reads 'blessed'). God's promise to David came through Nathan (2 Sam. 7:5–16).

**16.** *My Name* denotes the LORD himself (5:5). David had planned it but been told that Solomon would be the builder (5:5; 2 Sam. 7:13). The family line is associated with the temple.

**c. Solomon's prayer of dedication (8:22–61).** This prayer was made not only for himself but for the royal family and the nation that it would remember the true significance of the temple as showing God's presence even amid national calamity.

- i. *The approach to God (8:22–31).* **22.** *He stood before* is used of being 'in attendance on' (10:8), the place was on a platform near the bronze altar in the outer court used for mass worship (cf. 2 Chr. 6:12–42). Standing is not as common an Old Testament attitude for prayer as is kneeling (cf. v. 54) and the spreading out of both hands (v. 38, Exod. 9:29; Isa. 1:15). Prayers of dedication were commonly made at the opening of temples and palaces (e.g. Esarhaddon in Babylon).

Effective prayer is based on three facts about God:

- (i) His incomparability (Exod. 15:11; Deut. 4:39; Ps. 86:8–10).
- (ii) His trustworthiness to fulfil his covenant, never failing to keep his word (v. 24; Deut. 7:9), or to show his covenant love (*hesed*, cf. 3:6). For the promise of verse 25, cf. 2 Samuel 7:5–16. The answer to prayer depends also on the obedience of the person who prays (v. 25, cf. 9:4–9; 2 Chr. 7:14, 17).
- (iii) His transcendence (vv. 27–30). God is both up there and down here. Where he is (his Name, Deut. 12:5), there is the answer (cf. Matt. 18:19–20), and God's temple will not limit or localize his activity.

**28.** Three different words for prayer are used here:

- (i) *Prayer (tēpillâ)*: intercession and praise (vv. 29–30, 33, 35, 38, 42, 44–45, 48–49).
- (ii) *Plea for mercy (teḥinnâ)*: earnest prayer for help (vv. 45, 52), 'entreaty' (JB; REB v. 52), 'supplication' (AV, REB).
- (iii) *Cry (rînnâ)*: ringing cry of joy or sorrow, petition (vv. 28, 52).
- ii. *'The sevenfold petition' (8:32–53).* Within each of the seven parts of the prayer is a sevenfold reference or key phrase relating to the temple's place as God's 'house of prayer' (Isa. 56:7; Luke 19:46) and to the answer needed. This should be so in our homes also. *Towards this place*, cf. verses 29–30, 33, 35, 38, 42, 45, 48; and as did Daniel (Dan. 6:10). *Hear ... and forgive* (vv. 30, 34, 36, 39) / *judge* (v. 32) / *restore* (v. 34) / *teach* (v. 36) / *act* (v. 39) / *do what he asks* (v. 43) / *uphold their cause* (vv. 45, 49). The format of the seven requests is that used in case law, i.e., *when a man* (RSV 'should a man ...'); *if / when a man ...*, cf. the Laws of Hammurabi, which assumes that he has or will so act. These show seven common instances in which people would turn to God:

**31–32.** I. When a man wrongs a neighbour: When this was alleged to have happened he had to submit to an oath to show his innocence. Before the altar in the outer court, he would swear an oath (v. 64) to prove innocence (cf. Exod. 22:7–12) and God as judge would declare him innocent (מִן 'righteous') or guilty (cf. Deut. 25:1). Whatever the means of discerning the truth, following the use of the high priests' Urim and Thummim to provide the answer (Exod. 28:29–30), which now may have been displaced by a legal judgment, this is ratified in the temple's sacred precincts. A guilty person finds that this is self-judgment (Heb. 'bring his way [of life] on his own head'). Romans 6:23.

**33–34.** II. When the nation is defeated: Such disaster is taken to be the result of sin against God by disobeying or departing from his covenant (Josh. 7:11–12). The only way of restoration is to repent (*turn back* to God), *confess* (RSV 'acknowledge') and pray. *Bring them back to the land* does not itself imply that they were in long exile (see on verse 46 below).

**35–36.** III. Disaster following drought: When the blessing of rain was held back, as periodically, this was to be taken as a sign of sin against God (Deut. 11:13–14; 28:23–24). The purpose of divine punishment is to 'make humble' (cf. *afflicted*)

and to educate (*teach* or direct *the right way to live*; MT, REB 'The good way which they are to follow')—that is, according to God's covenant plan (Deut. 6:18; 1 Sam. 12:23).

**37–40.** IV. Other natural disasters: Famine (Deut. 32:24; Lev. 26:19–20) and plague (Deut. 28:21–22; 32:24; Lev. 26:25) are taken to be another sign of divine displeasure even though the fault of ruler or people. As verse 37 shows, there were many 'natural' causes: (a) The *blight* (*šiddāpôn*) due to the scorching east wind (Deut. 28:22; Hag. 2:17). This is usually taken as a plant disease called 'paleness' or 'the green disease'. The word is also used of jaundice. (b) The *mildew* (*yērāqôn*) caused by rain too abundant or at the wrong time. These are also taken to be 'blight either black or red' (REB). (c) Attacks by flying insects on growing crops, e.g., *locusts* (*'arbeh*). (d) Crawling insects such as the 'caterpillar' (RSV; *hāsîl*, cf. NIV *grasshoppers*, so Deut. 28:38, 42). Some take this as another stage in the life cycle of the locust (see commentaries on Joel 1:4).

Man-made curses include famine due to siege (Deut. 28:52) *in any of their cities* (LXX; MT 'in the land, in the gates' may denote 'in country or in town'). For *disaster* harsh and prolonged see also Deuteronomy 28:59–61; 32:23–25 and for *disease* severe and lingering see Deuteronomy 28:22.

The reference to an individual (v. 38, *any of your people*) and conscience (*affliction of his own heart*, NEB 'remorse') need not be a later addition. God alone knows the *heart* (v. 39, cf. Jer. 17:10). One aim of punishment is reverent loving submission following forgiveness (Ps. 130:4).

**41–43.** V. The need of non-Jews: The foreigner (*nākrî*, as opposed to the resident alien, *gēr*) is the subject of the next prayer. Many non-Jews would be attracted to the LORD through his widely known mighty deeds and fame (*Name*). They were to be allowed to worship (Num. 15:14) and acknowledge God's saving power (*outstretched arm* is not an attitude of prayer). Many would hear and respond (see on 9:9; 10:1, cf. Josh. 2:9–11). The LORD's house was to be a 'house of prayer for all nations' (cf. Isa. 56:7; Mark 11:17).

**44–45.** VI. Success in war: Military action might be taken with divine sanction ('holy war') in punishing evildoers (Deut. 20; 26:10; Lev. 26:7; 2 Sam. 5:19, 24). Even in this God must be constantly in mind so that God will *uphold their* (righteous) *cause* (MT 'do their [right] judgment', *mišpaṭ*).

**46–51.** VII. Defeat in war: This too may be attributed to sin and God's consequent anger (cf. Deut. 4:21). From the ninth century BC, if not earlier, exile was known to the Israelites as common among ancient Near Eastern peoples, and to *take captive* (*šābāh*), which is here used with a play on the word *repent* (*šûb*), does not necessarily imply a reference to the later exile in Babylon (so *far away or near*). Return of captives is mentioned in early Babylonian texts, cf. the Laws of Hammurabi S 27, c. 1730 BC. Prayer always demands action by the suppliants to rethink the situation (Heb. *av* 'bethink themselves'), *repent* (change of heart), *plead* (as v. 28), and confess their sin.

Verse 47 has different words for *sin(ner)* (*hāṭā'*, 'miss the mark'), *done wrong* (*'āwā*, 'acted perversely', RSV, a deliberate action) and *acted wickedly* (*rāšā'*, doing what is against the accepted, right way). In verse 50 *offences* (*pēšā'*) denotes rebellion against God and his law.

*Toward the land ... city.* This practice (v. 48) could have begun before the Babylon exile (cf. Dan. 6:10; Jon. 2:4). *Uphold their cause* (v. 49, NEB 'grant them justice', cf. v. 59) does not specifically imply the grant of freedom but cf. verse 51. *Show them mercy* (v. 50), better 'grant them compassion' (MT, AV, RSV) in the presence of those who took them away.

**52–54.** The prayer ends with reference to the Sinai Covenant (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6) as it began with the Davidic Covenant (vv. 23–30). *You singled them out* (*hibēdîl*), separated them (RSV, AV), a verb used of the veil dividing the Most Holy Place from the sanctuary (Exod. 26:33). There is no direct allusion here to the so-called 'Holiness Code' (*qdš*).

*iii. The concluding act (8:54–61).* The 'Blessing of Solomon' is not strictly a blessing but a prayer for the continuing close relationship between God and his people. If taken as a blessing, this is not always an act exclusive to priests (v. 14, cf. Num. 6:23). True prayer rests on God's promise *never to leave or forsake us* (v. 57, so Deut. 31:6–8; Ps. 94:14; Heb. 13:5). God does not do what men are prone to (cf. Deut. 32:15, 'not forsake' is taken as 'heal'). For God leaving his people because they abandon him see 2 Kings 21:14–15; Psalm 27:9; Jeremiah 2:13; 5:7, etc.

**58.** To keep us close God turns *our hearts to him* (Ps. 119:36) to enable us to keep his covenant (Deut. 30:6; Ps. 51:10; Phil. 2:13), i.e., *to walk in all his ways*.

**59–61.** Reference to Solomon's own prayer is not unusual (cf. v. 57). Prayer for *each day's need* (RSV 'as each day requires'), as in the Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:11). The purpose of God's choice of his people (v. 60) is *that all peoples of the earth may know that he alone is God* (cf. Deut. 4:35; Isa. 45:5). For this to happen they must be *fully committed* (*šālem* 'im, cf. REB 'in perfect loyalty'), i.e., in covenant relation (peace) with the LORD.

**d. Solomon's feast (8:62–66).** This inaugurates the temple as the place of sacrifice. That all *offered a sacrifice* means that they brought their offerings (12:27). *Dedicated:* *hānak* is literally to 'begin, inaugurate, initiate'; of a child, Prov. 22:6; or a home, Deut. 20:5. Later the Feast of Hannukah commemorated the rededication of the temple in 164 BC. The large number of sacrifices is given in general terms, but details of similar acts at the opening of new buildings at Nimrud, Ashur



and Nineveh<sup>82</sup> also tell of many sacrifices and participants. The *fellowship offering* (AV, RSV 'peace offerings', *šēlāmîm*; cf. JB 'communion sacrifice offerings', REB 'shared offerings', others 'thank offerings') was shared by God, priests, and worshippers. Some argue that this offering was the last offered and listed, hence 'concluding sacrifice', and see in Ephesians 2:14 Christ's final sacrifice for humankind (cf. Heb. 9:27; 10:12–14).

**64.** The number of offerings required greater space (and altars), so the whole courtyard was consecrated (*qdš*) and used. The *bronze altar* is now introduced (cf. 9:25). The other offerings were part of the regular daily sacrifice.

**65.** *At that time.* See Introduction, p. 61 (iv). From *Lebo-Hamath* in the Beqa' valley on the north boundary (i.e. Assy. *Laba'u*; modern Labweh), mentioned in eighteenth-century BC Egyptian execration texts. For Solomon's dominions see 4:21. The south boundary was the *Wadi of Egypt* (Assyr. *Nahal-Muṣri*, modern Wadi al-'Arish).

**66.** *They blessed the king*, i.e., thanked him (*brk*). Misunderstanding this, the LXX makes Solomon give a final blessing of dismissal. As in the Assyrian examples, the crowds left 'happy in heart' (JB, MT *tôb lēb*, 'goodness of heart' ranges from *joyfulness* and contentment to pleasure at the covenant relationship being celebrated). All the people recognized the good that Solomon had done as the LORD's action.

**e. The LORD appears to Solomon again (9:1–9).** Cf. 2 Chronicles 7:11–12. An empty temple would be meaningless. Solomon is told again that the continued presence of God with his people will depend on obedience to his requirements and trust in his promises. The promises made to David and reaffirmed to his son at *Gibeon* (3:4–15) refers back to Solomon's *prayer and plea* (v. 3, 8:25–30). The LORD God answers the 'dedication' of the temple to him by Solomon (8:63–64) by the statement *I have consecrated this temple* (v. 3, *qdš*). Only God can make a person or place holy. He *put his Name* and reputation *there* (cf. 8:10–13). That God's Name 'will be fixed on it' (v. 3, NEB) answers 8:29.

**4.** The reference to what *David did* (15:5, 11) will be a yardstick judging future kings in a dynasty which will be named by David, not Solomon. The rest of Kings will be preoccupied with the blessing which follows obedience and the curses enacted after any failure to obey. The reference point will be to God's revealed word and the language is that of Deuteronomy.

*Walk before me* is to conduct oneself (live) in the presence of God and his law. This is timely advice because Solomon, now in his twenty-fourth regnal year, is pressed by his own desires (vv. 1, 19, *hāpēs*, 'what he took pleasure in, ambition'; cf. 2 Chr. 7:11, 'all he had in mind to do') which led to wealth and fame and then to self-reliance. The latter can be the enemy of *integrity of heart* (v. 4, 3:6, *tām lēbāb*), 'completeness' in the sense of being in accord with truth, not perfectionism. *Uprightness* includes honesty. There are qualities which must distinguish God's covenant-keeping people.

**6–7.** If you ... The glory and continuance of the temple and dynasty are conditional. This is a warning, not a threat. The plural is used here as ruler and people are involved equally in maintaining the distinctive tenets of Israel's faith (cf. Rom. 9:4).

The fate of the temple will be the opposite to that prayed for (cf. 8:43). The *byword* (*māšāl*, 'proverb') and *object of ridicule* (*šēnînâ*, RSV 'byword', NRSV 'taunt', REB 'object-lesson') are used of taunt-songs. For this fate see Deuteronomy 28:37; Jeremiah 24:9. These terms, with *appalled* and 'scoff' (NEB 'gasp', Heb. 'hiss'), are expressions of the utmost surprise and horror (cf. Jer. 18:16).

**8.** *This temple*, far from being *imposing* (cf. AV 'high', *elyôn*, 'the lofty one'), will become a 'heap of ruins' (NEB, RSV by reading 'iyyîm unnecessarily).

**9.** *The LORD brought disaster* (Heb. 'evil', cf. Isa. 45:7). That this was foretold emphasizes that it is, in effect, self-judgment. AV, RSV make this a question.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 9, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 126–135.