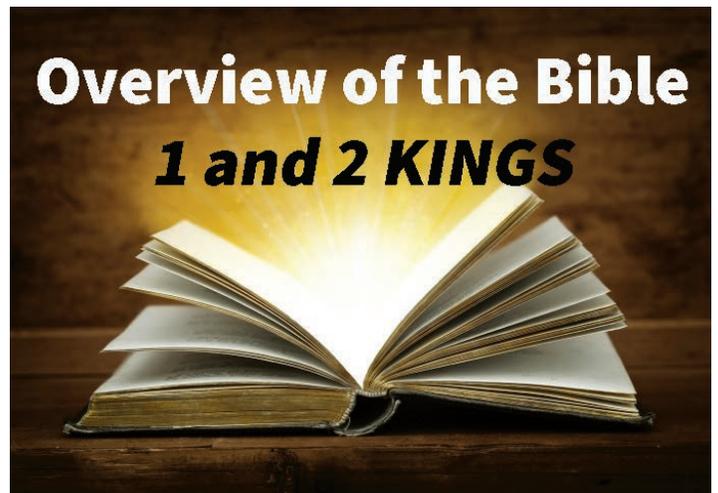


# 1 KINGS

## 1 Kings 7:1–8:21

### Lesson 96

Wednesday, July 27, 2022



#### **The Palace Construction (1 Kings 7:1-12)**

**7:1–12** Inserted between the building and furnishing of the temple, this palace construction story shows that Solomon’s secular interests never cease and that these interests cost more than his religious one. The palace takes nearly twice as long to finish. Presumably it is also larger and more costly. Some of these differences are natural, given the constant use of the royal residence and hall of justice. Still, the close proximity of 6:37–38 and 7:1 make the contrast quite obvious, even startling. The author again leaves doubt about the king in the reader’s mind, much as was done in the slave labor and taxation passages.

Solomon’s palace complex consisted of five parts: “the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon,” a hall of pillars, “the Hall of Justice,” a palace for himself, and a palace for Pharaoh’s daughter. Positioned adjacent to the temple,<sup>59</sup> these connected buildings provided living quarters for the royal family and their retainers as well as a place for the king to decide cases. Since she is given such preferential treatment, Pharaoh’s daughter is either the primary queen or simply a wife whose father must not be disappointed.

Fine stone and wood are used in these structures. Indeed, Solomon has built himself an impressive home. Is this project self-indulgence or another example of God’s blessing? The author does not comment, though readers must wonder if this extravagance is in keeping with Moses’ declaration that kings “must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold” (Deut 17:17). At least it is quite possible that DeVries is correct in writing: “He did everything imaginable to show that, as Yahweh was a great God, he was a great king. What is displayed here is far more Solomon’s ‘riches and honor’ than his ‘wisdom.’ His was undoubtedly the piety of worldly success.”

#### **Furnishing the Temple (7:13–51)**

**7:13–14** In order to furnish the temple properly, Solomon once again looks to Tyre for assistance. He secures Hiram, a workman of mixed Israelite and Tyrian descent. Hiram is “filled with wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge to do all sorts of work in bronze.”<sup>62</sup> This threefold ability is reminiscent of Bezalel and Oholiab, the men who made the furnishings for the tabernacle (cf. Exod 31:1–11; 35:30ff.) The author wants readers to know that a man of similar skill is on the job now. Careful artistry can be expected.

**7:15–22** Hiram fashions four basic items and their accessories in 7:15–47. Each of these items is cast in bronze. The first is “two bronze pillars,” which he fits with “bowl-shaped capitals,” “interwoven chains,” that fix the capitals on the pillars, and “pomegranates ... to decorate the capitals on top of the pillars.” These pillars are placed “at the portico of the temple.” One is placed to the south and is named Jakin, while one is erected to the north and is called Boaz. The name Jakin, which does not appear prominently elsewhere in Scripture, means “he establishes.” Of course, Boaz (“by him he is mighty”) is David’s grandfather, so this pillar most likely refers in some way to the Davidic dynasty.

It is not entirely clear what these pillars represent. Keil believes they symbolize the strength and stability of the kingdom of God in Israel. Gray suggests they “may symbolize the presence and permanence of Yahweh and the king.”<sup>64</sup> Jones combines these two ideas, for he argues that the pillars “symbolized the covenant between God and his people, and especially between him and the Davidic dynasty.” Certainly, worshipers would see the impressive monuments and reflect on all these ideas. God’s strength and Israel’s stability are both highlighted in the Davidic Covenant. Any real future the nation has depends on both God’s power and the line of David’s faithfulness to the Lord and the people.

**7:23–26** Next, Hiram fashions a large holding tank for water called “the Sea” (7:23). Round in shape and lipped at the top, this basin could hold about 11,500 gallons of water. Despite the Sea’s being seven feet high; 2 Chr 4:6 states that it “was used by the priests for washing” themselves. It therefore had the symbolic function of being the place where the priests could cleanse themselves before and after performing their duties.

Twelve bulls undergirded the Sea. Gray thinks these bulls represent the infiltration of Baal imagery into Israel's religion. It is more likely, however, that the twelve bulls represent either the twelve tribes of Israel or Solomon's twelve administrative districts.<sup>67</sup> Certainly Solomon was not above using patterns from other cultures, or the temple would never have been built. Still, the number of bulls cautions against automatically accepting Gray's interpretation.

**7:27–39** Hiram's third project was to make "ten movable stands" to hold basins for water needed in the various temple rituals. Bulls, cherubim, and lions appeared on carved side panels. Each of the stands had four wheels, so they could be used in different parts of the temple court. The top of the stand was decorated with cherubim, lions, and palm trees. Even these utterly functional objects were given elegance, style, and beauty. Holy objects in this temple were useful *and* attractive, a combination rare in the history of ritual and worship.

Ten bronze basins, each able to hold about 230 gallons of water, were then fashioned "to go on each of the ten stands." Five units were placed on the south side of the temple and five on the north. Along with the Sea, these vessels held sufficient water for priestly cleansing, the ritual washing of animals, and the removal of blood and refuse from the area.

**7:40–47** Fourth, and finally, Hiram made the smaller basins, as well as "shovels and sprinkling bowls." Such implements were used where temple ceremonies required less water. The summary of Hiram's work presented in 1 Kgs 7:41–45 reminds readers of the size of his task and of the quality of his work. His craftsmanship took planning and skill and required him to know how to transport his molds and finished products from "the plain of the Jordan" to the capital city. Surely this man on loan from Tyre deserves to be remembered with Oholiab and Bezalel as one whose wisdom was revealed through the artwork and practical items he creatively crafted.

**7:48–51** Solomon completes the temple's furnishing by having its internal utensils made. Most of these items correspond to virtually identical furnishings in the tabernacle. Four implements and two types of decorations are mentioned. First, "the golden altar" is not described at length but "probably was an altar of incense like that described in Exod 30:1–4, and it probably stood in front of the Most Holy Place." The Exodus passage indicates that this altar was "for burning incense" (Exod 30:1), a practice that most likely symbolized Israel's prayers rising to God, day and night. Second, Solomon made "the golden table on which was the bread of the Presence." This bread represented the Lord's presence among, and provision for, the chosen people (cf. Exod 25:30).

Third, ten lampstands are fashioned. Five were placed on each side of the "front of the inner sanctuary." A similar lampstand existed in the tabernacle (cf. Exod 25:31–40). R. Honeycutt concludes that that lampstand "served three purposes: (1) functional, for it gave light to an otherwise dark place; (2) aesthetic, lending 'glory and beauty' to the holy place, for which there is a proper and continuing need; and (3) symbolic, conveying the concept of life through both the tree of life and light." Certainly, this newer light source had similar significance. Gold floral patterns decorated the lampstand.

Fourth, "basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, dishes and censers" were made for the various rituals in the temple. Like all the other major furnishings and adornments, these small items were made of gold. Finally, the author notes the various "sockets for the doors" that were fashioned.

One last task remains. Solomon brings all the items David dedicated for the temple (cf. 2 Sam 8:11; 1 Chr 22:14) to the temple's treasury. This action was practical, since these riches were an endowment that helped with temple expenses. Solomon's act here also honors his father's long-term commitment to the Lord and the Lord's house. David's dream of building a temple is finally realized years after his death. Thus, his faith continues to be a witness to Israel and to the readers of 1, 2 Kings.

### **Solomon Dedicates the Temple (8:1–66)**

Chapter 8 is one of the most theologically significant texts in 1, 2 Kings. Here readers encounter more than the pomp, ceremony, and ritual associated with major religious building dedications. The author certainly includes these details yet also selects the aspects of the ceremony that underscore Israel's theological heritage. Whether in describing the procession to the temple, Solomon's prayers and speeches, or the Lord's reaction to the scene, the writer interweaves into the story awe, theological history, warnings, and encouragements. This chapter also acts as a completion of the promises God made to Abraham, Moses, and David as well as a warning of how the nation will disintegrate.

Two narratives frame three orations in this chapter. How the ark of the covenant was brought from the tent of meeting is described first (8:1–13), and the sacrifices offered after the orations complete the dedication (8:62–66). In between these accounts Solomon first gratefully tells the audience of God's greatness (8:14–21). Next, the king offers a prayer that contains seven petitions for himself and the people (8:22–53). These petitions contain a summary of the major elements of the Lord's covenant with Israel. Finally, Solomon exhorts the people to receive God's blessings by keeping their covenant with the Lord (8:54–61). Clearly, this section is carefully crafted to express the theological importance of an event that is historically significant in its own right.

### ***Bringing the Ark to the Temple (8:1–13)***

**8:1** Every segment of Israelite leadership—the “elders,” the “heads,” and the “chiefs”—helps bring the ark to its new resting place. Israel’s “elders” were older, respected leaders who advised the king on various national matters. The “heads of the tribes” were also mature older men. Hubbard says, “They were the titular ‘chiefs of the Israelite families,’ the ones responsible for learning the law and leading their families to obey it.” These individuals were to clans and villages what the elders were to the nation as a whole. All the common men join the procession too (v. 2), so Solomon clearly has broad-based support for moving the heart of Israel’s national worship to the new site.

The ark had previously been housed in “Zion, the City of David,” a fact already established by Solomon’s offering sacrifices there in 3:15. This description of Jerusalem again emphasizes God’s choice of Jerusalem and David as major theological ideas in 1, 2 Samuel and 1, 2 Kings (cf. 2 Sam 5:7). It also reminds readers that the temple and palace were constructed outside the confines of David’s Jerusalem. Solomon seizes this opportunity to enlarge the capital city’s borders.

**8:2** Solomon chooses to dedicate the temple during the Feast of Booths, which traditionally took place “in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month.” Patterson and Austel observe that this harvest feast “celebrated the end of the wilderness wanderings and the fact that God had brought his people home into the Land of Promise, i.e., had given them rest (Deut 12:8–11).” During this feast Moses renewed the covenant with the second generation of freed Israelites. He also commanded them to read the law at this observance every seven years (Deut 31:9–13). Solomon’s choice of the Feast of Booths for the dedication, then, was strategic in that it was a traditional time of national gathering, a reminder of Israel’s conquest of Canaan, and a time of religious renewal.

Commentators suggest three possibilities for the timing of this particular Feast of Booths. Certain factors figure in their calculations. First Kings 6:38 says the temple was finished in “the eighth month,” while 1 Kgs 8:2 states that the dedication took place in “the seventh month.” Thus, there is a gap in time between completion and dedication. Further, 1 Kgs 9:1 indicates that God approves of the temple only after the palace and temple are both finished, which could be understood as meaning many years passed before the temple’s dedication occurred.

Given these considerations, Ewald thinks that Solomon dedicated the temple a month before the building was finished. The main difficulty with this idea is that 1 Kgs 7:51 says the project was finished before the ark was brought to the temple. Keil first disagrees with Ewald based on 7:51. He then reads 1 Kgs 9:1–12 to mean that the dedication ceremony must have happened thirteen years after its completion, or when the palace was finished. Finally, Keil notes that the Septuagint prefaces 1 Kgs 8:1 with “and it happened that when Solomon finished building the house of the LORD and his own house after 20 years,” a phrase that harmonizes 8:1; 9:1–2, and 9:10. Thus, he concludes that the dedication took place twenty years after the project was begun. Most scholars accept the third possibility, which is that Solomon dedicated the temple eleven months after it was constructed. He simply waited until the symbolic Feast of Booths occurred and used the extra months to furnish the worship center and allow the priests to make necessary arrangements.<sup>75</sup>

This third possibility seems the most likely explanation. The first option does not square with the clear flow of the narrative. Keil’s arguments are not without weight but fail on two points. First, God could have waited some years to warn Solomon against idolatry, as 1 Kgs 9:1–9 indicates. Tentative divine approval of the project comes in 1 Kgs 6:11–13, so the comments in 9:3–10 may have other functions in the narrative, as is discussed below. Second, the Septuagint reference is an interpretative attempt to collate all the dates and is therefore most likely not in the original Hebrew text. An eleven-month wait for the dedication does not seem extreme given the practical and theological reasons for waiting.<sup>77</sup>

**8:3–5** With all the supportive secular leaders in place, it now becomes the priests’ privilege to carry the ark, and the Levites’ privilege to carry the sacred utensils, to the temple. Würthwein, Noth, and Jones believe that these details were added to the original text by priestly editors who desired to protect their role in Israelite society. These commentators think the priestly laws were mostly written in the fifth century B.C., rather than by Moses, and that the distinct separation of the priests’ roles in worship from those of non-priests was a later development in Israel’s history.

Though of obvious scholarly substance, this approach to the account does not fit the overall emphases of the former prophets or the practices of other ancient nations. The priests were the ones who carried the ark into the promised land in Josh 3:3. Eli and Samuel, both priests, care for the ark in 1 Samuel 1–6. Uzzah, a non-priest, was struck dead for touching the ark while it was being carried to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:1–8). Certainly, then, the information in 1 Kgs 8:3 coincides with the rest of the former prophets. Too, nations besides Israel had distinct roles for priests and non-priests. Such practices demonstrate a respect for the priest, the holy objects, and worship itself. They can degenerate into a power struggle but do not have to do so.

What emerges in 8:3–5 is a picture of a respectful, solemn people. Each person accepts a proper role. Solomon contributes money and expertise to the project. The elders and clan chiefs pledge religious and community support. Levites accept their responsibility for assisting the priests (cf. Num 4:15). The priests assume the awesome, even dangerous (cf. Lev 10:1–20), privilege of leading worship. Everyone involved offers sacrifices both in recognition of individual and national sin and in praise of the God who forgives, gives them a homeland, and provides a place for worship celebration.

**8:6–9** Now the ark reaches its destination. It is placed in the “inner sanctuary,” the chamber in the temple described in 1 Kgs 6:19–28. Indeed, with the ark there, the room becomes “the Most Holy Place,” the place where God will meet the high priest once a year and forgive Israel’s sins (cf. Lev 16). The ark comes to rest under the wings of the cherubim that stretch from wall to wall (cf. 1 Kgs 6:27). These cherubim cover the ark, thus protecting it and approximating God’s “throne room” in heaven.

It is not easy to grasp just how the ark’s carrying poles were visible in the sanctuary. Montgomery and Gehman suggest that perhaps the poles could have been seen “projecting right and left by one standing near the narrow door of the sanctuary, but not from a greater distance.” Maybe “the doors of the Most Holy Place were kept open so that a worshipper looking in could see the ends of the poles.”<sup>80</sup> Whatever the case, the author finds it necessary to stress that the poles are “still there today.” As the introduction to this commentary discusses, this reference is the author’s way of stressing the text’s accuracy.

Inside the ark there “was nothing except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb.” This emphatic comment probably is intended to clear up the possible misconceptions that Aaron’s rod (Num 17:10) and a jar of manna (Exod 16:33) were there as well. These items were placed alongside the ark but never in it, and by Solomon’s time they were no longer available for placement in the most holy place. The presence of Moses’ tablets underscores Israel’s ties to the Sinai (Horeb) covenant. God’s presence, God’s word, and God’s covenant with Israel are inextricably linked.

**8:10–11** Once the priests leave the ark in the most holy place, “the cloud” fills the temple, thus making their work impossible. This was the cloud of God’s glory that led Israel in the wilderness (Exod 16:10), the cloud that filled the tabernacle when Moses dedicated that earlier worship center (Exod 40:34–35). N. Snaith notes that the cloud of glory indicates the reality of the Lord’s presence. This presence protects (Exod 14:19–20) and guides (Exod 33:9) Israel in the Exodus stories. Here the glory demonstrates divine approval of Solomon’s temple. Just as God was with Moses, so now God is with this new generation of Israelites. Such continuity reaffirms the Lord’s never-changing character, desire to have fellowship with human beings, and ongoing commitment to the chosen people.

**8:12–13** Solomon responds in awe at God’s decision to descend to the temple. Normally the Lord dwells “in a dark cloud” or where human beings cannot see him. Such is the mystery of God’s ways (cf. Pss 18:11; 97:2). In this instance, however, the Lord chooses to descend to earth and relate to Israel directly. As Gray notes, he is the Creator and at the same time “the God of Israel who has condescended to fix his throne in the midst of his people Israel.” Consequently, “his nearness and readily-experienced power and grace never exhaust his revelation (cf. v. 27).”

Solomon has been faithful in providing a place for worship, and the Lord has been faithful in honoring the king’s commitment. God’s pledge made in 6:11–13 has been kept.

### ***Solomon’s Thanksgiving (8:14–21)***

Now Solomon explains to his people what he, the author, and the readers already know. He states that the events they are witnessing are part of God’s ongoing love for Israel. The completion of the temple marks the end of the striving for a homeland. It also stresses the Davidic covenant and the Lord’s presence among the chosen people. These affirmations set the stage for more detailed theological statements later in the chapter.

**8:14–21** All the groups and individuals described in 8:1–5 are addressed here. They hear the king give God credit for this significant day. His praise focuses on three significant concepts. First, he bases the Lord’s covenant with David on the earlier deliverance of Israel from Egypt. That concrete historical evidence of God’s commitment to saving the chosen people paved the way for future saving events. Included in these subsequent saving acts is God’s eternal covenant with David.

Second, Solomon reflects on the delay between Israel’s entry into Canaan and the building of the temple. Moses taught the people that eventually the Lord would choose a central place of worship (Deut 12:1–28), but before Solomon’s reign the nation was too preoccupied with external enemies and internal disorganization to have the luxury of building a temple. Further, Solomon indicates the delay also was tied to God’s plan to use David’s family to achieve this goal. Third, the king celebrates the Lord’s choice of him and his father to rule Israel and his provision of a central sanctuary for the people. David’s desire to build the temple was a God-honoring act of gratitude, and the Lord’s approval of Solomon’s accession to power and of his building plans are tied directly to David’s appropriate attitude. Solomon’s praise concludes with a reference to the ark of the covenant, which is yet another tie with the exodus heritage. Thus, he begins and ends with the historical basis of Israel’s relationship with God.<sup>1</sup>

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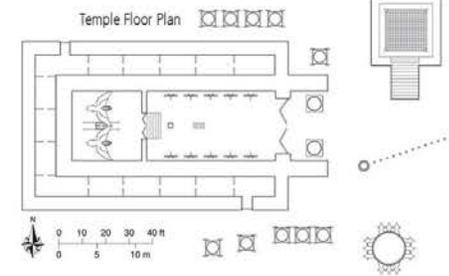
<sup>1</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, vol. 8, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 147.

A structure was built around the walls of the temple containing three levels. The lower chamber was 7.5 feet (2.3 m) wide, the middle chamber was 9 feet (9 m) wide, and the upper chamber was 10.5 feet (3.2 m) wide (1 Kings 6:5–6, 8, 10).

Two ornate wooden doors, overlaid with gold, separated the inner sanctuary from the nave (1 Kings 6:31–32).

The nave had clerestory windows with recessed frames (1 Kings 6:4).

The vestibule was 30 feet (9.1 m) wide and 15 feet (4.6 m) deep (1 Kings 6:3; cf. 2 Chron. 3:4).



The hollow bronze pillar on the north was called "Boaz," and the one on the south was called "Jachin" (1 Kings 7:21; cf. 2 Chron. 3:17).

The bronze altar for burnt offerings was 15 feet (4.6 m) high and 30 feet (9.1 m) long and wide (cf. 2 Chron. 4:1).

Two ornate wooden, folding doors, overlaid with gold, separated the nave from the vestibule (1 Kings 6:33–35).

The inner sanctuary (or Most Holy Place) was a 30-foot (9.1-m) cube (1 Kings 6:15–29; 2 Chron. 3:8–14). Such rooms were often elevated in temples of the ancient Near East. Two massive golden cherubim were on either side of the ark, each 15 feet (4.6 m) tall with 15-foot (4.6-m) wingspans (1 Kings 6:23–28). The ark of the covenant was between the two cherubim (1 Kings 8:1–11; cf. 2 Chron. 5:2–14).

The nave (or Holy Place) was 60 feet (18.3 m) long and 30 feet (9.1 m) wide (1 Kings 6:15, 17–18; cf. 2 Chron. 3:5–7). It contained the golden altar for incense; the golden table for the bread of the Presence; and ten golden lampstands, five on the north and five on the south (1 Kings 7:48–49; cf. 2 Chron. 4:7).

Ten bronze wheeled stands and basins held water for rinsing off what was used for the burnt offerings (1 Kings 7:27–38; cf. 2 Chron. 4:6).

The "Sea" was a metal basin 7.5 feet (2.3 m) tall and 15 feet (4.6 m) in diameter. It held 12,000 gallons (44,000 liters) of water for the priests to wash in. It was supported by twelve bronze oxen in sets of three, facing in each direction (1 Kings 7:23–26; cf. 2 Chron. 4:2–5).

### SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

Solomon began to build "the house of the LORD" in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah in the spring of 967 or 966 B.C. (1 Kings 6:1; 2 Chron. 3:1–2) and completed it seven years later, in the fall of 960 or 959 B.C. (1 Kings 6:38). The temple itself, not including the surrounding chambers on three sides, was 90 feet (27.4 m) long, 30 feet (9.1 m) wide, and 45 feet (13.7 m) high. It resided in the middle of a court with boundary walls.