

FIRST KINGS 1-11
&
SECOND CHRONICLES 1-9

¹King David was old, advanced in years; and although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. ²So his servants said to him, "Let a young virgin be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king, and be his attendant; let her lie in your bosom, so that my lord the king may be warm."

³So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

⁴The girl was very beautiful. She became the king's attendant and served him, but the king did not know her sexually.

The powerful, virile, David, who had known many military victories and a number of wives and concubines (see 1 Samuel 25:42-44; 2 Samuel 3:14; 5:13) is now feeble and impotent.

We have witnessed the rivalry between his sons Amnon and Absalom. David's condition prepares us for the final struggle and the victory of Solomon.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler passes over these verses.

The assassination of David's firstborn son, Amnon (see 1Samuel 3:2; 2Samuel 13:28-29), and the tragic death of Absalom (2Samuel 18:15) left Adonijah (also born in Hebron (2Samuel 3:4) as the obvious candidate to succeed David. He is determined to have himself crowned and sets about gathering support without consulting David. His actions recall those of Absalom (see 2Samuel 14:25; 15:1). Among his supporters are Joab, the commander-in-chief of the army (see 2Samuel 3:23-39; 11:14-25; 18:9 – 19:8), and Abiathar, priest of the line of Eli (see 1Samuel 22:20; 2Samuel 15:24-29), both leaders of the old guard.

However, a rival group 'did not side with Adonijah' (verse 8). This included Benaiah, a hero of the army (see 2Samuel 8:18; 20:23; 23:20-22), Zadok, who appears to be David's favoured priest (see 2Samuel 8:17; 15:24-37) and Nathan, the prophet (see 2Samuel 7:1-16; 12:1-15, 24-25). Ominously for Adonijah it included also David's warriors (verse 8).

This rival group favoured Solomon, son of Bathsheba (2Samuel 12:24), born in Jerusalem (2Samuel 5:14).

It is Nathan who sets things in motion, contriving with Bathsheba to trick the ailing David into thinking that he has already promised the throne to Solomon (verses 11-14).

The Chronicler

The Chronicler passes over the whole of chapter 1. He has no interest in the struggles to succeed David, and has the throne pass peacefully from David to Solomon (1Chronicles 23:1).

⁵Now Adonijah son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king"; he prepared for himself a chariot and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. ⁶His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?" He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom.

⁷He conspired with Joab son of Zeruah and with the priest Abiathar, and they supported Adonijah.

⁸But the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the prophet Nathan, and Shimei, and Rei, and David's own warriors did not side with Adonijah.

⁹Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fatted cattle by the stone Zoheleth, which is beside En-rogel, and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, ¹⁰but he did not invite the prophet Nathan or Benaiah or the warriors or his brother Solomon.

¹¹Then Nathan said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, "Have you not heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has become king and our lord David does not know it? ¹²Now therefore let me give you advice, so that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. ¹³Go in at once to King David, and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then is Adonijah king?' ¹⁴Then while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words."

¹⁵So Bathsheba went to the king in his chamber. The king was very old; Abishag the Shunammite was attending the king. ¹⁶Bathsheba bowed and did obeisance to the king, and the king said, "What do you wish?" ¹⁷She said to him, "My lord, you swore to your servant by YHWH your God, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne. ¹⁸But now suddenly Adonijah has become king, though you, my lord the king, do not know it. ¹⁹He has sacrificed oxen, fatted cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the children of the king, the priest Abiathar, and Joab the commander of the army; but your servant Solomon he has not invited. ²⁰But you, my lord the king—the eyes of all Israel are on you to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. ²¹Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his ancestors, that my son Solomon and I will be counted offenders."
²²While she was still speaking with the king, the prophet Nathan came in. ²³The king was told, "Here is the prophet Nathan." When he came in before the king, he did obeisance to the king, with his face to the ground. ²⁴Nathan said, "My lord the king, did you say, 'Adonijah shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne'? ²⁵For today he has gone down and has sacrificed oxen, fatted cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's children, Joab the commander of the army, and the priest Abiathar, who are now eating and drinking before him, and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!' ²⁶But he did not invite me, your servant, and the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon. ²⁷Has this thing been brought about by my lord the king and you have not let your servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

Bathsheba carries out her part of the intrigue as plotted by Nathan (see 1:11-14). She is, however, more forthright, portraying David's supposed vow as a fact.

Nathan comes in on cue, and is more deferential, appealing to David's power to appoint whoever he wants to succeed him, and painting Adonijah's actions in the worst possible light

David is fooled by the plot and rises to the occasion determined to demonstrate the power Nathan has reminded him of, and to fulfil the vow he has been told that he made.

David is determined to appoint his successor, and in a public way that allows for no argument. Solomon is to be solemnly anointed king (see 1Samuel 2:10). We recall Saul's anointing (1Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 15:1, 17; 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2Samuel 1:14, 16), as also the anointing David himself received (1Samuel 16:12-13; 2Samuel 2:4, 7; 5:3, 17; 12:7; 19:21).

The Cerethites and Pelethites (verse 38), are David's personal bodyguard (see 2Samuel 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23).

²⁸King David answered, "Summon Bathsheba to me." So she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. ²⁹The king swore, saying, "As YHWH lives, who has saved my life from every adversity, ³⁰as I swore to you by YHWH, the God of Israel, 'Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne in my place.' This I will arrange this very day" ³¹Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground, and did obeisance to the king, and said, "May my lord King David live forever!"

³²King David said, "Summon to me the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada." When they came before the king, ³³the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. ³⁴There let the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan anoint him king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' ³⁵You will go up following him. Let him enter and sit on my throne; he shall be king in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah."

³⁶Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May YHWH, the God of my lord the king, so ordain. ³⁷As YHWH has been with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

³⁸So the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and led him to Gihon. ³⁹There the priest Zadok took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" ⁴⁰And all the people went up following him, playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth quaked at their noise.

⁴¹Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished feasting. When Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, "Why is the city in an uproar?" ⁴²While he was still speaking, Jonathan son of the priest Abiathar arrived. Adonijah said, "Come in, for you are a worthy man and surely you bring good news." ⁴³Jonathan answered Adonijah, "No, for our lord King David has made Solomon king; ⁴⁴the king has sent with him the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and they had him ride on the king's mule; ⁴⁵the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan have anointed him king at Gihon; and they have gone up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is the noise that you heard. ⁴⁶Solomon now sits on the royal throne. ⁴⁷Moreover the king's servants came to congratulate our lord King David, saying, 'May God make the name of Solomon more famous than yours, and make his throne greater than your throne.' The king bowed in worship on the bed ⁴⁸and went on to pray thus, 'Blessed be YHWH, the God of Israel, who today has granted one of my offspring to sit on my throne and permitted me to witness it.'"

⁴⁹Then all the guests of Adonijah got up trembling and went their own ways. ⁵⁰Adonijah, fearing Solomon, got up and went to grasp the horns of the altar. ⁵¹Solomon was informed, "Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; see, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not kill his servant with the sword.'" ⁵²So Solomon responded, "If he proves to be a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die." ⁵³Then King Solomon sent to have him brought down from the altar. He came to do obeisance to King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, "Go home."

Adonijah and his guests are told of Solomon's anointing (verses 41-28).

Had Adonijah become king, Solomon's life would have been in danger (see 1:12,21). Adonijah knows that it is his life now that is in a precarious situation. He goes to the sanctuary to claim asylum. Solomon does not profane the sanctuary, and, for the moment, spares Adonijah. Adonijah has no choice but to submit to his younger brother.

The Deuteronomists present, on the lips of the dying David, their essential message: divine blessing depends on the faithful observance of the Torah ('the law of Moses' verse 3). There are echoes here of the words spoken to Joshua after the death of Moses (see Joshua 1:6-7).

Notice the 'if' in verse 4. God's promise to David appears to be unconditional (see 2Samuel 7:11-16), but see Psalm 132:11-12; Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

Though David has been lenient in the past with Joab (see 2Samuel 3:39; 16:10; 19:22), and with Shimei (see 2Samuel 16:5-14; 19:18-23), he tells his son to avenge the wrongs they have done. By contrast he tells Solomon to honour Barzillai's loyalty (see 2Samuel 17:27-29; 19:31-40). The year 970 is a likely date for the death of David and the beginning of Solomon's reign.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler records David's death in I Chronicles:

David son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. The period that he reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. He died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour; and his son Solomon succeeded him.

– 1Chronicles 29:26-28

¹When David's time to die drew near, he charged his son Solomon, saying: ²"I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, ³and keep the charge of YHWH your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. ⁴Then YHWH will fulfil his promise that he spoke concerning me: 'If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.'

⁵"Moreover, you know also what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether, whom he murdered, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet. ⁶Act therefore according to your wisdom, so that his gray head will not go down to Sheol in peace. ⁷Deal loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from your brother Absalom. ⁸There is also with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a terrible curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim; but when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by YHWH, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' ⁹However, now do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and you will know what you ought to do to him so as to bring his gray head down in blood to Sheol."

¹⁰Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ¹²So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

Solomon has Adonijah killed

¹³Then Adonijah son of Haggith came to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. She asked, "Do you come peaceably?" He said, "Peaceably." ¹⁴Then he said, "May I have a word with you?" She said, "Go on." ¹⁵He said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel expected me to reign; however, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from YHWH. ¹⁶And now I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me." She said to him, "Go on." ¹⁷He said, "Please ask King Solomon – for he will not refuse you – to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife." ¹⁸Bathsheba said, "Very well; I will speak to the king on your behalf."

¹⁹So Bathsheba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. ²⁰Then she said, "I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you." ²¹She said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to your brother Adonijah as his wife."

²²King Solomon answered his mother, "And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? You may as well ask the kingship for him as well! For he is my elder brother; ask not only for him but also for the priest Abiathar and for Joab son of Zeruah!" ²³Then King Solomon swore by YHWH, "So may God do to me, and more also, for Adonijah has devised this scheme at the cost of his life! ²⁴Now therefore as YHWH lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of my father David, and who has made me a house as he promised, today Adonijah shall be put to death." ²⁵So King Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he struck him down, and he died.

In spite of Adonijah's attempt to claim the throne (see 1:5-10), Solomon spared his life on condition that he 'proves to be a worthy man'(1:52); that is that he supports Solomon.

David had ten concubines (see 2Samuel 5:13; 15:16; 20:3). Having concubines is one example of Israel having a king 'like other nations'(1Samuel 8:5, 20). His last concubine was Abishag (1:1-4).

Adonijah approaches the queen-mother, Bathsheba (see 2Samuel 11:3; 12:24), asking her to intercede with Solomon to grant him Abishag as a wife.

Taking possession of a king's concubine is a way of laying claim to the throne (see 2Samuel 12:11-12; 16:21-22). Solomon does not miss the implication (verse 22), and sees in it the hand of his rivals Abiathar and Joab (verse 22; see 1:8).

Solomon sees himself as king by YHWH's will (verse 24), and has Adonijah killed by Benaiah. Behind this lies the naked use of power politics. The authors of this narrative are doing their best to put a spin on it that is favourable to Solomon.

The priest Abiathar was in the Adonijah party (see 1:7, 19, 25, 42). Solomon sees him as a threat (verses 26-27). Because of Abiathar's faithful service of David (verse 26; see 1Samuel 22:23) he does not have him killed but banishes him to Anathoth. He is the last of the descendants of Eli to hold a position as the king's priest (see the oracle of 1Samuel 2:27-36). Zadok can now exercise the power of the priesthood (see verse 35) without being under the shadow of the priestly line of Eli.

Was Abiathar opposed to the ruthless abuse of power associated with Solomon? It is interesting that centuries later the priest Jeremiah came from Anathoth (Jeremiah 1:1). He was critical of the temple and the monarchy (see Jeremiah 7:1-15; 22:13-19).

Solomon now turns to Joab, David's chief of staff, who was the strong man behind Adonijah's claim to David's throne. David's dying wish was for Solomon to avenge Joab's killing of Abner, the commander of Saul's army, and Amasa, Absalom's commander-in-chief. Though David claimed no part in these acts (see 2Samuel 3:37), he certainly benefited from them. Solomon is more interested in assuring control of the army by having Joab eliminated in favour of Benaiah (verse 35)

²⁶The king said to the priest Abiathar, "Go to Anathoth, to your estate; for you deserve death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord YHWH before my father David, and because you shared in all the hardships my father endured." ²⁷So Solomon banished Abiathar from being priest to YHWH, thus fulfilling the word of YHWH that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

²⁸When the news came to Joab – for Joab had supported Adonijah and not Absalom – Joab fled to the tent of YHWH and grasped the horns of the altar. ²⁹When it was told King Solomon, "Joab has fled to the tent of YHWH and now is beside the altar," Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, strike him down." ³⁰So Benaiah came to the tent of YHWH and said to him, "The king commands, 'Come out.'" But he said, "No, I will die here." Then Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, "Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me." ³¹The king replied to him, "Do as he has said, strike him down and bury him; and thus take away from me and from my father's house the guilt for the innocent blood that Joab shed. ³²YHWH will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head, because, without the knowledge of my father David, he attacked and killed with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself, Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. ³³So shall their blood come back on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David, and to his descendants, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace from YHWH forevermore." ³⁴Then Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up and struck him down and killed him; and he was buried at his own house near the wilderness. ³⁵The king put Benaiah son of Jehoiada over the army in his place, and the king put the priest Zadok in the place of Abiathar.

Solomon has Shimei killed

³⁶Then the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and live there, and do not go out from there to any place whatever. ³⁷For on the day you go out, and cross the Wadi Kidron, know for certain that you shall die; your blood shall be on your own head." ³⁸And Shimei said to the king, "The sentence is fair; as my lord the king has said, so will your servant do." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days. ³⁹But it happened at the end of three years that two of Shimei's slaves ran away to King Achish son of Maacah of Gath. When it was told Shimei, "Your slaves are in Gath," ⁴⁰Shimei arose and saddled a donkey, and went to Achish in Gath, to search for his slaves; Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath. ⁴¹When Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and returned, ⁴²the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by YHWH, and solemnly adjure you, saying, 'Know for certain that on the day you go out and go to any place whatever, you shall die'? And you said to me, 'The sentence is fair; I accept.' ⁴³Why then have you not kept your oath to YHWH and the commandment with which I charged you?" ⁴⁴The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your own heart all the evil that you did to my father David; so YHWH will bring back your evil on your own head. ⁴⁵But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before YHWH forever." ⁴⁶Then the king commanded Benaiah son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died.

So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

David had also entrusted to Solomon the task of avenging the way Shimei insulted David when he was escaping from Absalom (see 2:8-9; see 2Samuel 16:5-13; 19:16-23).

Shimei does not pose the same threat to the regime as Adonijah or Joab, but Solomon finds a way to carry out his father's wish, and also to assert his authority, by have Benaiah kill Shimei (verse 46).

Here again, Solomon supports his ruthless behaviour with a claim to YHWH's special blessing: 'King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before YHWH forever'(verse 45)

This section concludes with the words: 'The kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon'. Solomon's name [שְׁלֹמֹה] derives from the word for peace [שָׁלוֹם]. The 'peace' achieved by Solomon (see 2:33) is based on violence. Hanging over his reign are the ominous words spoken to David: 'The sword shall never depart from your house'(2Samuel 12:10).

David told Solomon to 'act according to your wisdom'(2:6). If wisdom means self-interested calculation, Solomon is starting well.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits the whole of chapter two. He has no interest in the rivalry for the throne among David's sons. He begins 2Chronicles with the words:

Solomon son of David established himself in his kingdom; YHWH his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

- 2Chronicles 1:1

Having consolidated his hold on power, Solomon's first act is to look to Egypt and to forge an alliance through marrying the Pharaoh's daughter. In light of Israel's historical relationship with Egypt, as slaves there, this appears to be another step away from dependence on the Mosaic Torah.

Verse 2 hints at an involvement also with other 'gods'. This impression is confirmed by the negative judgment of Solomon by the Deuteronomists in 1Kings 11. These hints are balanced by an assertion of Solomon's loyalty (the meaning of 'love' in this context) to YHWH.

Though the ark was in Jerusalem, there was as yet no central temple there. The most important place of royal worship appears to have been at Gibeon, 8ks northwest of Jerusalem and half-way between Jerusalem and Bethel.

The Chronicler (2Chronicles 1:2-6)

The Chronicler does not mention Solomon's Egyptian wife, and leaves out anything that might compromise the cult. Though he acknowledges David's act in taking the ark into Jerusalem, he places the 'tent of meeting' at Gibeon. He states that the altar at Gibeon (see 1Chronicles 16:39-40; 21:29) was built by Bezalel (see Exodus 31:2-11; 38:1-2). Zadok was the officiating priest at Gibeon (see 1Chronicles 16:39-42).

²Solomon summoned all Israel, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, the judges, and all the leaders of all Israel, the heads of families. ³Then Solomon, and the whole assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for God's tent of meeting, which Moses the servant of YHWH had made in the wilderness, was there. ⁴(But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.) ⁵Moreover the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made, was there in front of the tabernacle of YHWH. And Solomon and the assembly inquired at it. ⁶Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before YHWH, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

¹Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt; he took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David, until he had finished building his own house and the house of YHWH and the wall around Jerusalem.

²The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of YHWH.

³Solomon loved YHWH, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places.

⁴The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

⁵At Gibeon YHWH appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast loyalty to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast loyalty, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, YHWH my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore a listening heart to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. ¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honour all your life; no other king shall compare with you. ¹⁴If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will give you a long life."

¹⁵Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the YHWH. He offered up burnt offerings and communion offerings, and provided a feast for all his servants.

In the ancient world dreams were understood as conveying messages from the gods.

Solomon's response to God's offer is to acknowledge God's fidelity to David, and the importance of 'faithfulness, righteousness, and uprightness of heart'(verse 6). He acknowledges also God's fidelity to his promise regarding David's house – a promise realised in Solomon himself (verse 6).

Solomon highlights his need (verses 7- 8), and prays for a 'listening (obedient) heart'(verse 9). God promises him this and much more besides, but note that it is conditional (verse 14; see 2:4).

In gratitude Solomon engages in a more elaborate cult-worship of YHWH (verse 15). The Deuteronomists recount the cult at Gibeon because it was in their source. They can't resist situating the main cult back in Jerusalem before the ark.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler gives a condensed version of this scene (2Chronicles 1:7-13). God appears to Solomon directly, not in a dream. Solomon asks for 'wisdom and knowledge' [חֵכֶם וְדַעַת, ḥokmāh w^e maddā']. Since the Chronicler has already placed the tent of meeting at Gibeon (1:6), he also omits 1Kings 3:15, and concludes:

So Solomon came from the high place at Gibeon, from the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem. And he reigned over Israel.

– 2Chronicles 1:13

The purpose of this scene is made clear in the final verse (verse 28). It demonstrates that Solomon did, indeed, receive ‘the wisdom of God’ (verse 28). Furthermore, ‘all Israel’ heard about it, and they recognised that the wisdom given to the king was ‘to execute justice’ [מִשְׁפָּט, *mišpāt*], that is, to pronounce judgments that are in accordance with the Torah.

A negative note is heard when, once again, we see that Solomon’s decision involves the threat of a ‘sword’ (verse 24).

The longing for the exercise of God’s justice is picked up beautifully in Psalm 72, the title of which reads: ‘Of Solomon’:

Give the king *your* justice, O God, and *your* righteousness to a king’s son. May he judge *your* people with righteousness, and *your* poor with justice.

May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

– Psalm 72:1-4

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits this scene.

¹⁶Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.

¹⁷One of the women said, “Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house.

¹⁸Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house.

¹⁹Then this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him. ²⁰She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. ²¹When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne.”

²²But the other woman said, “No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours.” The first said, “No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine.” So they argued before the king.

²³Then the king said, “One of you says, ‘This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead’; while the other says, ‘Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one.’” ²⁴So the king said, “Bring me a sword,” and they brought a sword before the king. ²⁵The king said, “Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other.” ²⁶But the woman whose son was alive said to the king – because compassion for her son burned within her – “Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!” The other said, “It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it.” ²⁷Then the king responded: “Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother.”

²⁸All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.

¹King Solomon was king over all Israel, ²and these were his high officials: Azariah son of Zadok was the priest; ³Elihoreph and Ahijah sons of Shisha were secretaries; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; ⁴Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in command of the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; ⁵Azariah son of Nathan was over the officials; Zabud son of Nathan was priest and King's Friend; ⁶Ahishar was in charge of the palace; and Adoniram son of Abda was in charge of the labour force.

Solomon set about creating a workable, centralised state out of tribes who were used to eking out a living from subsistence farming in the hill country. To do so he needed a bureaucracy. It is likely that he was attempting to copy Egypt.

His father, David, set this in motion (see 2Samuel 8:15-18; 20:23-26). Here we have developments under Solomon. Note that the officials include a son of Zadok, and two sons of Nathan.

It is surprising to see Abiathar included as he was banished to Anathoth (see 2:26-27). The 'King's Friend' appears to have designated a special office (perhaps the equivalent of today's 'Secretary of State' (see 2Samuel 15:37; 16:16; 1Chronicles 27:33)).

The presence of secretaries and a recorded (verse 3) point to the beginnings of the keeping of royal records, and likely sources for some of the stories we find in the Books of Kings.

To have someone in charge of the labour force (verse 6) is ominous in view of the beginnings of Israel, when God freed his people from forced labour in Egypt (see Exodus 1:11-14; 5:4-19). Samuel warned against such a practice (see 1Samuel 8:12-17).

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits the whole of chapter 4.

A centralised state needs taxation. Samuel had also warned of this (see 1Samuel 8:11-17). The administrative districts are not identical with what we are used to considering the tribal areas. Perhaps the tribal areas were a later construct.

The fact that two of Solomon's sons-in-law were among the tax officers (see verses 11 and 15) points to it being a privileged and lucrative position.

⁷Solomon had twelve officials over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one had to organise provisions for one month in the year. ⁸These were their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; ⁹Ben-deker, in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and Elon-beth-hanan; ¹⁰Ben-hesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh and all the land of Hephher); ¹¹Ben-abinadab, in all Naphath-dor (he had Taphath, Solomon's daughter, as his wife); ¹²Baana son of Ahilud, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, and from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, as far as the other side of Jokmeam; ¹³Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (he had the villages of Jair son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, and he had the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars); ¹⁴Ahinadab son of Iddo, in Mahanaim; ¹⁵Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he had taken Basemath, Solomon's daughter, as his wife); ¹⁶Baana son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; ¹⁷Jehoshaphat son of Paruah, in Issachar; ¹⁸Shimei son of Ela, in Benjamin; ¹⁹Geber son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of King Sihon of the Amorites and of King Og of Bashan. And there was one official in the land of Judah.

²⁰Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea; they ate, drank and were merry.

²¹Solomon was sovereign over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

²²Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of choice flour, and sixty cors of meal, ²³ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.

²⁴For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates; and he had peace on all sides.

²⁵During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees.

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

²⁷Those officials supplied provisions for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table, each one in his month; they let nothing be lacking. ²⁸They also brought to the required place barley and straw for the horses and swift steeds, each according to his charge.

There is a problem here in the numbering of the verses. The English is following the Latin Vulgate. 1Kings 4:21-34 = 5:1-14 in the Hebrew and Greek, and 1Kings 5:1-18 = 5:15-32 in the Hebrew and Greek.

Verses 20-21 have Solomon fulfilling ancient promises. 'As numerous as the sand by the sea' recalls Genesis 22:17; 323:17. 'From the Euphrates ... even to the border of Egypt' recalls God's promise in Genesis 15:18-21.

When verses 20 and 21 are read together, we are led to suspect that the improvement of the standard of living in Judah and Israel, especially for 'the king and his household' (verse 7), was at the expense of taxation in the other kingdoms that had been colonised by David.

We get the same impression when we read verses 22 and 23 together. The luxury of the king's household is made possible by his 'dominion' over neighbouring kingdoms. Likewise the 'safety' of Solomon's kingdoms is not unrelated to his war machine (see verses 25-26). See Samuel's warning in 1Samuel 8:11-17.

It is interesting to compare the city luxury of verse 22 with the simple bucolic peace of verse 25 (compare 2Kings 18:31; Isaiah 36:16; Hosea 2:12; Micah 4:4; Zechariah 3:10).

It is significant that Solomon's son, Rehoboam, will later make the following claim:

My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.

– 1Kings 12:14

All is not well in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel under Solomon.

This is numbered 5:9-14 in the Hebrew and Greek Versions.

It gives an idealised portrait of Solomon. It is consistent with the tradition that links the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes to Solomon as their patron. The Introduction to the Book of Proverbs opens with the words: 'The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel' (Proverbs 1:1). The Heading of the Song of Songs reads: 'The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's' (Song 1:1). Ecclesiastes begins: 'The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem' (Ecclesiastes 1:1).

Similarly in the Greek Bible, there is a book called 'The Wisdom of Solomon'.

We find this tradition present also in the Newer Testament.

The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!

– Matthew 12:42

In the light of the Deuteronomists' judgment of Solomon, whom they blamed for the schism between Israel and Judah that erupted when he died, we are perhaps meant to read this passage with a sense of irony. Ultimately his 'wisdom' was statecraft based on violence and power, not 'breadth of understanding' (verse 29; literally 'a broad heart'). He asked for 'a listening heart' (see 3:9), but there is little evidence that he was listening to YHWH or the Torah.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits the whole of chapter 4.

²⁹God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, ³⁰so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations.

³²He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³³He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish.

³⁴People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

Preparations for building the temple

^{5:1}Now King Hiram of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father; for Hiram had always been a friend to David.

²Solomon sent word to Hiram, saying, ³“You know that my father David could not build a house for the name of YHWH his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until YHWH put them under the soles of his feet. ⁴But now YHWH my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. ⁵So I intend to build a house for the name of YHWH my God, as YHWH said to my father David, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.’ ⁶Therefore command that cedars from the Lebanon be cut for me. My servants will join your servants, and I will give you whatever wages you set for your servants; for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians.”

We know from 2Samuel 5:11 that Hiram had in the past supplied cedar for David’s house. Now he sends a diplomatic envoy to the new king, Solomon, with a view to continuing the treaty he had with his father.

In light of the severe prophetic critique of Tyre as found, for example, in Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 26-28, an ominous note is struck here. Alliances with foreign nations are seen as contributing to Israel’s failure to observe its covenant with YHWH (see Isaiah 2:6-22).

In 2Samuel 17:6-7 YHWH declared he did not want David to build a temple. He wanted to move with his people and to avoid the notion that he can be controlled by being located in a place chosen by the king. Such a practice smacks too much of the gods of the surrounding nations. However, with this present passage in mind, in 2Samuel 17:13 YHWH says a temple can be built by David’s son.

Here, the reason for the change of plan is related to war and peace (verses 3-4). Also we are reassured that it is a house for YHWH’s *name*, not for YHWH himself (verse 5). In other words, YHWH is present in the temple and can be called upon there, but he is not confined there.

‘Sidonians’ (verse 6) was a term used to describe the inhabitants of Phoenicia.

The Chronicler

After telling us that Solomon took up his duties as king over Israel (1:13; see page 46), and before homing in on the building of the temple, the Chronicler speaks of Solomon's extraordinary wealth (2Chronicles 1:14-17). Most of this material is copied from 1Kings 10:26-29 (see page 79). He wants to portray Solomon, the builder of the temple, as one especially blessed by God.

The Chronicler opens his narrative (verse 2) with a statement about Solomon's conscripted workers and supervisors (see 2Kings 5:13-16, page 54).

The Chronicler's account of Solomon's message to Hiram, the king of Tyre, enlarges on the text found in 2Kings in a number of ways. Firstly, he reminds Hiram of his friendship with David, and how he sent cedar to David to construct his house (verse 3). Secondly, he speaks of the cult that is to take place in the temple (see verse 4), and underlines the importance of a temple for a God who is 'greater than other gods' (verse 5). Thirdly, he makes explicit what was implied by 1Kings 5:5, acknowledging God's transcendence. Fourthly, he has Solomon ask, not only for timber, but also for artisans (verse 7). In referring to the provisions he refers back to his earlier account of David's plans for the temple (see 1Chronicles 28:11-19).

The Chronicler also includes in Solomon's initial message the details of the contribution Solomon is willing to make (verse 10; see 2Kings 5:11, page 54).

¹Solomon decided to build a temple for the name of YHWH, and a royal palace for himself. ²Solomon conscripted seventy thousand labourers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country, with three thousand six hundred to oversee them.

³Solomon sent word to King Hiram of Tyre: "Once you dealt with my father David and sent him cedar to build himself a house to live in. ⁴I am now about to build a house for the name of YHWH my God and dedicate it to him for offering fragrant incense before him, and for the regular offering of the rows of bread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed festivals of YHWH our God, as ordained forever for Israel. ⁵The house that I am about to build will be great, for our God is greater than other gods. ⁶But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him? Who am I to build a house for him, except as a place to make offerings before him?"

⁷So now send me an artisan skilled to work in gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and in purple, crimson, and blue fabrics, trained also in engraving, to join the skilled workers who are with me in Judah and Jerusalem, whom my father David provided. ⁸Send me also cedar, cypress, and algum timber from Lebanon, for I know that your servants are skilled in cutting Lebanon timber. My servants will work with your servants ⁹to prepare timber for me in abundance, for the house I am about to build will be great and wonderful.

¹⁰I will provide for your servants, those who cut the timber, twenty thousand cors of crushed wheat, twenty thousand cors of barley, twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil."

⁷When Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he rejoiced greatly, and said, "Blessed be YHWH today, who has given to David a wise son to be over this great people."

⁸Hiram sent word to Solomon, "I have heard the message that you have sent to me; I will fulfill all your needs in the matter of cedars and junipers. ⁹My servants shall bring it down to the sea from the Lebanon; I will make it into rafts to go by sea to the place you indicate. I will have them broken up there for you to take away. And you shall meet my needs by providing food for my household." ¹⁰So Hiram supplied Solomon's every need for timber of cedar and juniper.

¹¹Solomon in turn gave Hiram twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty cors of fine oil. Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year.

¹²So YHWH gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him. There was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and the two of them made a treaty.

¹³King Solomon conscripted forced labour out of all Israel; the levy numbered thirty thousand men. ¹⁴He sent them to the Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts; they would be a month in the Lebanon and two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the forced labour. ¹⁵Solomon also had seventy thousand labourers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country, ¹⁶besides Solomon's three thousand three hundred supervisors who were over the work, having charge of the people who did the work.

¹⁷At the king's command, they quarried out great, costly stones in order to lay the foundation of the house with dressed stones. ¹⁸So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Giblites did the stonecutting and prepared the timber and the stone to build the house.

Hiram is impressed with Solomon's God (verse 7) and accepts Solomon's terms (verses 8-9).

The contract is agreed to.

A 'cor'(verse 11) is about 400 litres.

Already in 4:6 we heard that Adoniram was in charge of the forced labour. Now we see it in operation on a grand scale (verses 13-18). There are echoes here of the Pharaoh's treatment of the Hebrew slaves (see Exodus 1:11) – something from which God was determined to liberate them (see Exodus 3:7).

The Chronicler

The Chronicler expands on 1Kings 5:7.

He also mentions, not only the temple, but also the 'royal palace'(verse 12).

He names the skilled artisan requested by Solomon (verses 13-14).

In 1Kings Solomon offered wheat and oil (see 1Kings 5:11) for the workers. The Chronicler adds barley and wine (2Chronicles 2:10, 15). A 'bath'(verse 11) is about 40 litres (about 1 tenth of a 'cor').

Hiram will ship the timber to Joppa (verse 16), the port nearest to Jerusalem (compare 1Kings 5:9).

In verse 17 the Chronicler speaks of a census taken by Solomon. There is no equivalent in 1Kings.

Verse 18 repeats information already supplied in verse 2.

¹¹Then King Hiram of Tyre answered in a letter that he sent to Solomon, "Because YHWH loves his people he has made you king over them." ¹²Hiram also said, "Blessed be YHWH God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for YHWH, and a royal palace for himself. ¹³I have dispatched Hiram-abi, a skilled artisan, endowed with understanding, ¹⁴the son of one of the Danite women, his father a Tyrian. He is trained to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood, and in purple, blue, and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and to do all sorts of engraving and execute any design that may be assigned him, with your artisans, the artisans of my lord, your father David.

¹⁵Now, as for the wheat, barley, oil, and wine, of which my lord has spoken, let him send them to his servants. ¹⁶We will cut whatever timber you need from Lebanon, and bring it to you as rafts by sea to Joppa; you will take it up to Jerusalem."

¹⁷Then Solomon took a census of all the aliens who were residing in the land of Israel, after the census that his father David had taken; and there were found to be one hundred fifty-three thousand six hundred. ¹⁸Seventy thousand of them he assigned as labourers, eighty thousand as stonecutters in the hill country, and three thousand six hundred as overseers to make the people work.

6:1In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of YHWH.

2The house that King Solomon built for YHWH was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. **3**The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits wide, across the width of the house. Its depth was ten cubits in front of the house. **4**For the house he made windows with recessed frames. **5**He also built a structure against the wall of the house, running around the walls of the house, both the nave and the inner sanctuary; and he made side chambers all around. **6**The lowest story was five cubits wide, the middle one was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide; for around the outside of the house he made offsets on the wall in order that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the house.

7The house was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built.

8The entrance for the middle story was on the south side of the house: one went up by winding stairs to the middle story, and from the middle story to the third. **9**So he built the house, and finished it; he roofed the house with beams and planks of cedar. **10**He built the structure against the whole house, each story five cubits high, and it was joined to the house with timbers of cedar.

The number 480 (verse 1) is 40x12 – clearly a symbolic number, as is the 7 years Solomon is said to have taken to build the temple (see verse 38). We are reminded of the seven days of creation (Genesis 2:2).

Verses 2-10 give the basic plan, beginning with the 'vestibule' [אֹיָלָם, 'ulām, verse 3), then moving to the 'nave' [הַיִּכְלָל, hēkāl, verse 3; otherwise known as 'the holy place'], and ending with the 'inner sanctuary' [דְּבַיִר, d'ebīr, verse 5; otherwise known as the 'most holy place', see verse 16]. This division into three chambers of increasing 'holiness' was typical of Canaanite temples at that time.

The order and symmetry help accentuate the hierarchical structures, social structures and control that demonstrated that Israel had a king 'like the other nations' (1Samuel 8:5, 20). The number of stories, the magnificent windows and the use of cedar all underline the luxurious nature of the temple.

The fact that the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was blamed largely on the infidelity of most of the kings, raises a question. Are the Deuteronomists expecting their readers in exile to marvel at Solomon's achievement, or are they encouraging them to wonder whose glory was the temple for: YHWH or Solomon? After all, the text is describing what was, in fact, a royal chapel.

A cubit [אַמָּה, 'amāh] is the length from the elbow to the tip of the fingers. A rough estimate would be something in the order of 40cms. When all measurements are taken into consideration, it is estimated that the temple was in the order of 100 cubits long and 50 cubits wide (about 40 metres long and 20 metres wide).

If we are wondering about the Deuteronomists' view, verses 11-13 leave us in little doubt. Once again we have the important 'if'(verse 12). God's dwelling among his people, and his promise not to forsake them is conditional on their living according to the Torah.

In verses 14-18, the accent on the use of cedar (see 5:6) is intended to highlight the beauty of the temple.

The Chronicler (2Chronicles 3:1-7)

In view of his interest in the temple, it is perhaps surprising that the opening 18 verses of 1Kings are reduced to 7 verses in 2Chronicles. His introduction is different:

Solomon began to build the house of YHWH in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where YHWH had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had designated, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

– 2Chronicles 3:1

Moriah is the scene of Abraham's sacrifice (see Genesis 22:2). This is the only verse in Chronicles where it is mentioned, and it is found nowhere in Samuel or Kings. The Chronicler wishes to associate the place of sacrifice with Abraham.

The Deuteronomists give the name of the Jebusite who owned the threshing floor as 'Araunah'(see 2Samuel 24:16-24).

In verse 2 the Chronicler makes the point that the measurements are '**cubits of the old measure**' – a warning for us not to be too precise in looking for equivalents in our measures.

¹¹The word of YHWH came to Solomon, ¹²“Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David. ¹³I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.”

¹⁴Solomon built the house, and finished it. ¹⁵He lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the rafters of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood; and he covered the floor of the house with planks of juniper.

¹⁶He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the rafters, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the most holy place. ¹⁷The house, that is, the nave in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long. ¹⁸The cedar within the house had carvings of gourds and open flowers; all was cedar, no stone was seen.

The inner sanctuary

¹⁹The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of YHWH. ²⁰The interior of the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high; he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar. ²¹Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, then he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. ²²Next he overlaid the whole house with gold, in order that the whole house might be perfect; even the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

²³In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cubits high. ²⁴Five cubits was the length of one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the length of the other wing of the cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. ²⁵The other cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had the same measure and the same form. ²⁶The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. ²⁷He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house; the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one was touching the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall; their other wings toward the center of the house were touching wing to wing. ²⁸He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

Already in verse 6 the ‘inner sanctuary’ has been mentioned. In verse 16 it is called ‘the most holy place’. This is the most important chamber of the temple, and in verses 19-28 its furnishing are described.

Most importantly, it is there that is located ‘the ark of the covenant’, understood to be the earthly throne of YHWH the king (see 1Samuel 6:10-12; 2Samuel 6:12-19).

Everything is overlaid with gold.

Verses 23-28 focus on the cherubim, representing mythical creatures attendant on the deity, and forbidding unauthorised approach. Ezekiel, writing in exile, has the cherubim carrying the divine presence from the destroyed temple into exile, reassuring the exiles that they are not abandoned by their God (see Ezekiel 10:1-22; 43:1-7).

The Chronicler (2Chronicles 3:8-14)

Here, too, the Chronicler reduces the description of the inner sanctuary from 10 verses in 1Kings to 7 verses. He specifies the amount of gold used to overlay the most holy place as ‘**600 talents**’(verse 8) – in excess of 20 tons!

He states that the cherubim were ‘**facing the nave**’(verse 13).

He adds the following:

Solomon made the curtain of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and worked cherubim into it.

– 2Chronicles 3:14

In verses 15-17 the Chronicler speaks of pillars. He borrows this from 1Kings 7:15-22 (see page 61).

In verses 29-35 we are given more details of the furnishings.

²⁹He carved the walls of the house all around about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms. ³⁰The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, in the inner and outer rooms. ³¹For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood; the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided. ³²He covered the two doors of olivewood with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; he overlaid them with gold, and spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees. ³³So also he made for the entrance to the nave doorposts of olivewood, four-sided each, ³⁴and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. ³⁵He carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, overlaying them with gold evenly applied upon the carved work.

In verse 36 we are given our first detail of the use of 'stone' (see 5:18; 6:7, 18).

In relation to the picture of the kingdom of David and Solomon being an idealised portrait of a Golden Age, it is of interest that, even though archeology has unearthed evidence of the pre-Israelite city of Jerusalem, there has been as yet no evidence of Solomon's temple or palace.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits any mention of the construction of the king's palace.

³⁶He built the inner court with three courses of dressed stone to one course of cedar beams.

³⁷In the fourth year the foundation of the house of YHWH was laid, in the month of Ziv. ³⁸In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it.

¹It took Solomon thirteen years to build his house. He completed his entire house.

²He built the House of the Forest of the Lebanon one hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high, built on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars.

³It was roofed with cedar on the forty-five rafters, fifteen in each row, which were on the pillars. ⁴There were window frames in the three rows, facing each other in the three rows. ⁵All the doorways and doorposts had four-sided frames, opposite, facing each other in the three rows.

⁶He made the Hall of Pillars fifty cubits long and thirty cubits wide. There was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy in front of them.

⁷He made the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, the Hall of Justice, covered with cedar from floor to floor.

⁸His own house where he would reside, in the other court back of the hall, was of the same construction.

Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken in marriage.

⁹All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws, back and front, from the foundation to the coping, and from outside to the great court. ¹⁰The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits. ¹¹There were costly stones above, cut to measure, and cedarwood. ¹²The great court had three courses of dressed stone to one layer of cedar beams all around; so had the inner court of the house of YHWH, and the vestibule of the house.

The Deuteronomists describe the various buildings that made up Solomon's palace. That it took almost twice as long to construct as the temple says something of Solomon's priorities.

Chapter seven has been described as the worst preserved of all Old Testament texts.

The 'House of the Forest of Lebanon' (verse 2) appears to have been the king's formal throne room, where he met ambassadors from foreign lands (see 1 Kings 10:14-20).

We do not know the purpose of the 'Hall of Mirrors' (verse 6).

The purpose of 'the 'Hall of Justice' (verse 7), of Solomon's residence and the residence of his wife 'Pharaoh's daughter' (verse 8; see 1 Kings 3:1) is obvious.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits this section on the construction of the king's palace.

The Deuteronomists acknowledge that Hiram, the main artisan, is ‘from Tyre’ (verse 13). They are, at the same time, keen to establish his Israelite pedigree by claiming that his mother is ‘a widow of the tribe of Naphtali’ (verse 14). His skill recalls that of Bezalel and Oholiab, who were named as responsible for the construction of the tabernacle (see Exodus 36:1-7).

His first artistic achievement is the casting and erecting of two pillars with capitals (verses 15-22). One pillar is called ‘Jachin’ [יָחִין, verse 21], a word that speaks of stability [יָחִין], both of the temple and also of the dynasty. The other is called ‘Boaz’ [בּוֹאֵז, verse 21], a word that speaks of strength [בּוֹאֵז].

The Chronicler

The Chronicler introduces the skilled artisan from Tyre in King Hiram’s initial response to Solomon’s request (see page 55):

I have dispatched Hiram-abi, a skilled artisan, endowed with understanding, the son of one of the Danite women, his father a Tyrian. He is trained to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood, and in purple, blue, and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and to do all sorts of engraving and execute any design that may be assigned him, with your artisans, the artisans of my lord, your father David.

– 2Chronicles 2:13-14

He follows this with an abridged version of the pillars (2Chronicles 3:15-17; see page 58).

¹³Now King Solomon invited and received Hiram from Tyre. ¹⁴He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, whose father, a man of Tyre, had been an artisan in bronze; he was full of skill, intelligence, and knowledge in working bronze. He came to King Solomon, and did all his work.

¹⁵He cast two pillars of bronze. Eighteen cubits was the height of the one, and a cord of twelve cubits would encircle it; the second pillar was the same. ¹⁶He also made two capitals of molten bronze, to set on the tops of the pillars; the height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits. ¹⁷There were nets of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars; seven for the one capital, and seven for the other capital. ¹⁸He made the columns with two rows around each latticework to cover the capitals that were above the pomegranates; he did the same with the other capital.

¹⁹Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work, four cubits high. ²⁰The capitals were on the two pillars and also above the rounded projection that was beside the latticework; there were two hundred pomegranates in rows all around; and so with the other capital. ²¹He set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple; he set up the pillar on the south and called it Jachin; and he set up the pillar on the north and called it Boaz. ²²On the tops of the pillars was lily-work. Thus the work of the pillars was finished.

²³Then he cast the Sea; it was round, ten cubits from brim to brim, and five cubits high. A line of thirty cubits would encircle it completely. ²⁴Under its brim were panels all around it, each of ten cubits, surrounding the sea; there were two rows of panels, cast when it was cast. ²⁵It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set on them. The hindquarters of each were toward the inside. ²⁶Its thickness was a handbreadth; its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily; it held two thousand baths.

²⁷He also made the ten stands of bronze; each stand was four cubits long, four cubits wide, and three cubits high. ²⁸This was the construction of the stands: they had borders; the borders were within the frames; ²⁹on the borders that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. On the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work.

³⁰Each stand had four bronze wheels and axles of bronze; at the four corners were supports for a basin. The supports were cast with wreaths at the side of each. ³¹Its opening was within the crown whose height was one cubit; its opening was round, as a pedestal is made; it was a cubit and a half wide. At its opening there were carvings; its borders were four-sided, not round. ³²The four wheels were underneath the borders; the axles of the wheels were in the stands; and the height of a wheel was a cubit and a half. ³³The wheels were made like a chariot wheel; their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast. ³⁴There were four supports at the four corners of each stand; the supports were of one piece with the stands. ³⁵On the top of the stand there was a round band half a cubit high; on the top of the stand, its stays and its borders were of one piece with it. ³⁶On the surfaces of its stays and on its borders he carved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, where each had space, with wreaths all around. ³⁷In this way he made the ten stands; all of them were cast alike, with the same size and the same form.

Hiram's second artistic achievement was to cast a huge metal bowl, large enough to symbolise the sea that God contained in his act of creation (verses 23-26). It is mounted on 12 oxen, symbolising power and fertility. A 'bath' is about 4 litres. The bowl could hold about 8,000 litres, and was probably used for ritual washing.

His third artistic achievement was to make ten stands (verses 27-37). The lions symbolise power, the oxen symbolise fertility, and the cherubim speak of the divine presence.

The wheels remind us of Ezekiel's vision (see Ezekiel 1:15-21).

The Chronicler

The Chronicler inserts here a statement concerning the altar:

He made an altar of bronze, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and ten cubits high.

– 2Chronicles 4:1

He then speaks of 'the molten sea' (2Chronicles 4:2-6), and follows with a description of 'ten golden lampstands' and 'ten tables' (4:7-8).

In verses 38-45 are listed the rest of Hiram's artifacts.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler lists 'one hundred basins of gold' (4:8).

The Chronicler quotes 1Kings 7:40-45 (see 2Chronicles 4:11-16). He adds:

He made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court; he overlaid their doors with bronze.

– 2Chronicles 4:9

Though it was Hiram of Tyre who did the work, it is Solomon who takes the glory (verses 46-50). There was too much bronze to measure (verse 47), and there is gold in abundance everywhere (verses 48-50).

The Chronicler

The Chronicler quotes 1Kings 46-51 (see 2Chronicles 4:17 – 5:1).

³⁸He made ten basins of bronze; each basin held forty baths, each basin measured four cubits; there was a basin for each of the ten stands.

³⁹He set five of the stands on the south side of the house, and five on the north side of the house; he set the sea on the southeast corner of the house. ⁴⁰Hiram also made the pots, the shovels, and the basins.

So Hiram finished all the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of YHWH: ⁴¹the two pillars, the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars, the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars; ⁴²the four hundred pomegranates for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates for each latticework, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars; ⁴³the ten stands, the ten basins on the stands; ⁴⁴the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath the sea. ⁴⁵The pots, the shovels, and the basins, all these vessels that Hiram made for King Solomon for the house of YHWH were of burnished bronze.

⁴⁶In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan.

⁴⁷Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because there were so many of them; the weight of the bronze was not determined. ⁴⁸So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of YHWH: the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the Presence, ⁴⁹the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north, in front of the inner sanctuary; the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of gold; ⁵⁰the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and firepans, of pure gold; the sockets for the doors of the innermost part of the house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the nave of the temple, of gold.

⁵¹Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of YHWH was finished. Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of YHWH.

^{8:1}Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of YHWH out of the city of David, which is Zion. ²All the people of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the festival in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. ³And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests carried the ark. ⁴So they brought up the ark of YHWH, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up.

⁵King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. ⁶Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of YHWH to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles.

⁸The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside; they are there to this day.

⁹There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses had placed there at Horeb, where YHWH made a covenant with the Israelites, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

The presence in the procession of 'the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes' (verse 1) demonstrates the desire to link the temple with earlier tribal customs.

'Ethanim' is a Phoenician name for the seventh month (see also 'Ziv', 6:1 and 'Bul', 6:38).

Verse 8 states that the poles for the ark 'are there to this day'. This may have been part of the source. If it is an editorial note from the Deuteronomists, it must belong to their first draft during the time of Josiah.

Verse 9 makes it clear that God is not in the ark, only the Torah, which expresses God's covenant with his people and Israel's expected response (see Deuteronomy 10:2-5).

A late tradition (see Hebrews 9:4) spoke of a jar of manna (see Exodus 16:33) and Aaron's staff (see Numbers 17:25) also being in the ark.

The Chronicler

This whole passage is copied by the Chronicler (see 2Chronicles 5:2-10). He speaks of the seventh month, but does not give it the Phoenician name, Ethanim. In post-exilic Judah the seventh month was called 'Tishri'.

The ‘cloud’ (verses 10-11) is a way of stating the presence in the temple of the transcendent God (see Exodus 20:21; Deuteronomy 4:1; 5:19; 2Samuel 22:10). This is projected back in the description of the tabernacle (see Exodus 40:34-38). The verb used to speak of God’s dwelling in the tabernacle [מִשְׁכָּן, miškān] is שָׁכַן [šākan]. It is replaced in verse 13 by יָשַׁב, [yāšab], for the temple is envisaged as God’s final and permanent resting place.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler in 5:11 – 6:3 copies this passage, except for the following expansion of 1Kings 8:10.

¹¹Now when the priests came out of the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to their divisions, ¹²and all the levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kindred, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with one hundred twenty priests who were trumpeters). ¹³It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to YHWH, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to YHWH, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,” the house, the house of YHWH, was filled with a cloud.

– 2Chronicles 5:11-13

¹⁰And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of YHWH, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of YHWH filled the house of YHWH. ¹²Then Solomon said, “YHWH has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. ¹³I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.” ¹⁴Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood.

¹⁵He said, "Blessed be YHWH, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David, saying, ¹⁶'Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.'¹⁷My father David had it in mind to build a house for the name of YHWH, the God of Israel. ¹⁸But YHWH said to my father David, 'You did well to consider building a house for my name; ¹⁹nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.'²⁰Now YHWH has upheld the promise that he made; for I have risen in the place of my father David; I sit on the throne of Israel, as YHWH promised, and have built the house for the name of YHWH, the God of Israel.

²¹There I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of YHWH that he made with our ancestors when he brought them out of the land of Egypt."

²²Then Solomon stood before the altar of YHWH in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven.

²³He said, "YHWH, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ²⁴the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand.

²⁵Therefore, YHWH, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.'²⁶Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David.

In his address to the congregation in the temple (verses 15-21), Solomon states that the temple is the fulfilment of a promise made to David by YHWH. He selectively quotes from 2Samuel 7, focusing on verses 12-13, which declare that David's son will build YHWH a house.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler is content to copy 1Kings 8:15-21 (see 2Chronicles 6:4-11). In addition to saying that God chose David, he quotes God as saying that he chose 'Jerusalem' (2Chronicles 6:6).

Solomon's prayer (verses 22-26) repeats the themes of his address, stressing YHWH's commitment to David's dynasty (and so to Solomon).

The Chronicler

The Chronicler copies 1Kings 8:22-26 (see 2Chronicles 6:12-17), with a small addition describing the platform on which Solomon was kneeling as he prayed (see 2Chronicles 6:13).

Verses 27-30 highlight God's transcendence. God's 'name' will be pronounced in the temple (verse 29; see 5:5). God dwells 'in heaven' (verse 30). The prayer is that he will look with care on his house, and heed the prayers that rise up to him from it (verse 29). The plea is that God will hear, heed and forgive (verse 30).

From verse 31 to verse 53, the focus is on forgiveness. Verses 31-32 plead with God to hear his people's pleas. These verses recognise the place of condemnation, but from verse 33 on the whole thrust of the prayer is on forgiveness.

Verses 33-34 are the link between prayer 'in this house', and the situation of being in exile. They speak of the need for repentance, and pray that God will 'bring them again to the land'.

It is this situation of exile that pervades the section from verse 35 to verse 53. This is the prayer of the Deuteronomists for forgiveness, without which the exiles can have no future. The first situation envisaged in verses 35-36 is drought, understood to be divine punishment for sin. The prayer is that if they pray towards the temple (turn back to God), God will forgive their sin, show them how they should live, and pour rain on the land.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler repeats these verses (see 2Chronicles 6:18-27).

27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! **28** Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, YHWH my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; **29** that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. **30** Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive.

31 "If someone sins against a neighbour and is given an oath to swear, and comes and swears before your altar in this house, **32** then hear in heaven, and act, and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding them according to their righteousness.

33 "When your people Israel, having sinned against you, are defeated before an enemy but turn again to you, confess your name, pray and plead with you in this house, **34** then hear in heaven, forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land that you gave to their ancestors.

35 "When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this place, confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you punish them, **36** then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk; and grant rain on your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

Plea for forgiveness

³⁷“If there is famine in the land, if there is plague, blight, mildew, locust, or caterpillar; if their enemy besieges them in any of their cities; whatever plague, whatever sickness there is; ³⁸whatever prayer, whatever plea there is from any individual or from all your people Israel, all knowing the afflictions of their own hearts so that they stretch out their hands toward this house; ³⁹then hear in heaven your dwelling place, forgive, act, and render to all whose hearts you know – according to all their ways, for only you know what is in every human heart – ⁴⁰so that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our ancestors.

⁴¹“Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name ⁴²– for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm – when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, ⁴³then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

⁴⁴“If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to YHWH toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ⁴⁵then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.

In verses 37-40, the prayer turns to situations of famine, siege, plague, or any affliction. The plea is that if the people as a body or as individuals ‘stretch out their hands towards this house’ (verse 38), God, who is in heaven, will hear, forgive and act.

In verses 41-43, a prayer is offered for foreigners. It was in exile in Babylon that the people came up against the poverty of the Babylonians’ image of God. This led to a renewed sense of mission. They wanted others to come to know YHWH.

Verses 44-45 speak of the need for YHWH to ‘maintain their cause’ in time of war.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler copies these verses (see 2Chronicles 6:28-35).

The situation of exile becomes more explicit in verses 46-53. It concludes in verses 52-53 with a passionate plea for Israel.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler copies from verse 46 to the first part of verse 50 (see 2Chronicles 6:36-39).

The Chronicler omits the second part of verse 50 and all of verse 51.

He replaces verses 52-53 with the following, taken from Psalm 132: 8-10.

⁴⁰Now, O my God, let your eyes be open and your ears attentive to prayer from this place. ⁴¹“Now rise up, YHWH God, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests, YHWH God, be clothed with salvation, and let your faithful rejoice in your goodness. ⁴²YHWH God, do not reject your anointed one. Remember your steadfast love for your servant David.

– 2Chronicles 6:40-42

⁴⁶“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; ⁴⁷yet if they return to their heart in the land to which they have been taken captive, and repent, and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, ‘We have sinned, and have done wrong; we have acted wickedly’; ⁴⁸if they repent with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies, who took them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name; ⁴⁹then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, maintain their cause ⁵⁰and forgive your people who have sinned against you,

and all their transgressions that they have committed against you; and grant them compassion in the sight of their captors, so that they may have compassion on them ⁵¹(for they are your people and heritage, which you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron-smelter).

⁵²Let your eyes be open to the plea of your servant, and to the plea of your people Israel, listening to them whenever they call to you. ⁵³For you have separated them from among all the peoples of the earth, to be your heritage, just as you promised through Moses, your servant, when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, O Lord YHWH.”

⁵⁴Now when Solomon finished offering all this prayer and this plea to YHWH, he arose from facing the altar of YHWH, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven; ⁵⁵he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice: ⁵⁶“Blessed be YHWH, who has given rest to his people Israel according to all that he promised; not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke through his servant Moses. ⁵⁷YHWH our God be with us, as he was with our ancestors; may he not leave us or abandon us, ⁵⁸but incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commands, his statutes, and his ordinances, which he commanded our ancestors. ⁵⁹Let these words of mine, with which I pleaded before YHWH, be near to YHWH our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires; ⁶⁰so that all the peoples of the earth may know that YHWH is God; there is no other.

⁶¹Therefore devote yourselves completely to YHWH our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.”

⁶²Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before YHWH. ⁶³Solomon offered as communion sacrifices to YHWH twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of YHWH.

⁶⁴The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of YHWH; for there he offered the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat pieces of the communion sacrifices, because the bronze altar that was before YHWH was too small to receive the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat pieces of the sacrifices of well-being.

⁶⁵So Solomon held the festival at that time, and all Israel with him – a great assembly, people from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt – before YHWH our God, seven days. ⁶⁶On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents, joyful and in good spirits because of all the goodness that YHWH had shown to his servant David and to his people Israel.

The theme of ‘rest’ (verse 56) recalls 5:5 and 2Samuel 7:1. That not one word of God has failed (verse 56) echoes Joshua 21:45.

For the people’s part, they must ‘incline their hearts to him’, ‘walk in his ways’ and ‘keep his commands, statutes and ordinances’ (verses 58 and 61).

Solomon began the day with sacrifice (see 8:5). He concludes it in the same way (verses 62-64).

Verses 65-66 sum up the occasion. The assembly embraces the whole of the promised land from north to south, and goes away rejoicing in ‘the goodness of YHWH’.

The Chronicler

Verses 1-3 are quite different from the account in 1Kings 8:54-61 opposite. The Chronicler has fire coming down from heaven to consume the sacrifices, and the glory of YHWH filling the temple as it had filled the most holy place when the ark was placed there (see 2Chronicles 5:13-14=1Kings 8:11). The prayer in the second part of verse 3 also comes from 2Chronicles 5:13.

Verses 4-5 repeat 1Kings 8:62-63.

The Chronicler adds verse 6.

Verse 7 repeats 1Kings 8:64.

Verses 8-9 enlarge on 1Kings 8:65.

¹When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of YHWH filled the temple. ²The priests could not enter the house of YHWH, because the glory of YHWH filled YHWH's house. ³When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of YHWH on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshiped and gave thanks to YHWH, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."

⁴Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before YHWH. ⁵King Solomon offered as a sacrifice twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

⁶The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to YHWH that King David had made for giving thanks to YHWH – for his steadfast love endures forever – whenever David offered praises by their ministry. Opposite them the priests sounded trumpets; and all Israel stood.

⁷Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of YHWH; for there he offered the burnt offerings and the fat of the offerings of well-being because the bronze altar Solomon had made could not hold the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat parts.

⁸At that time Solomon held the festival for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. ⁹On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly; for they had observed the dedication of the altar seven days and the festival seven days. ¹⁰On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their homes, joyful and in good spirits because of the goodness that YHWH had shown to David and to Solomon and to his people Israel.

God's blessing is conditional : 1Kings 9:1-9

¹When Solomon had finished building the house of YHWH and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build, ²YHWH appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon.

³YHWH 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 forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

⁴As 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, ⁵then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised your father David, saying, 'There shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.'

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, ⁷then 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. ⁸This house will become a heap of ruins; everyone passing by it will be astonished, and will hiss; and they will say, 'Why has YHWH done such a thing to this land and to this house?' ⁹Then they will say, 'Because they have forsaken YHWH their God, who brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, worshiping them and serving them; therefore YHWH has brought this disaster upon them.'"

What we have here in verses 1-9 is a restatement of Deuteronomic theology. Verse 1 recalls God's words to Solomon at Gibeon (see 3:5).

Yahweh begins by assuring Solomon that he has heard his prayer (see 8:29): his 'eye', indeed his 'heart' and his 'name' will be in the temple (verse 3).

Verses 4-9 underline the conditional nature of God's commitment to Solomon and his successors. Verse 5 recalls the commitment made by God to David (see 2Samuel 7), but it hangs on an 'if' (verses 4 and 6; see already 2:4; 3:4; 6:12; 8:47; see also Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15). It is interesting to picture how this passage would have been read by the exiles in Babylon.

The Chronicler

Except for the insertion reproduced here, the Chronicler repeats 1Kings with minor variations (see 2Chronicles 7:11-22).

¹³When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

– 2Chronicles 7:13-14

9:10 At the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of YHWH and the king's house, ¹¹King Hiram of Tyre having supplied Solomon with cedar and juniper timber and gold, as much as he desired, King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. ¹²But when Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities that Solomon had given him, they did not please him. ¹³Therefore he said, "What kind of cities are these that you have given me, my brother?" So they are called the land of Kabul to this day. ¹⁴But Hiram had sent to the king one hundred twenty talents of gold.

¹⁵This is the account of the forced labour that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of YHWH 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; ¹⁷so Solomon rebuilt Gezer), Lower Beth-horon, ¹⁸Baalath, Tamar in the wilderness, within the land, ¹⁹as 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.

²⁰All 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 – ²¹their 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. ²²But 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.

Verses 10-14 summarise Solomon's relations with King Hiram of Tyre (see 5:1-12). The temple took seven years to build (see 6:38), and the palace took thirteen (see 7:1). Scholars do not know the significance of the term 'Kabul'(verse 13). If it means 'worthless' this may be a pro-Solomon insertion to underplay the giving away of part of Israel to a foreign ruler. From this passage Solomon appears as the dominant power in the region.

Verses 15-22 reiterate the details of Solomon's recruitment of forced labour (see 5:13-18), and his ambitious building program. The 'Millo'(verse 15) is mentioned also in relation to David (see 2Samuel 5:9). It may derive from the Hebrew word 'to fill' [מָלֵא, mālē']. If so it may refer to an area of land fill in the area of David's city and the temple mount.

Excavations have discovered impressive constructions at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer (cities that control important trade routes). However refinements in carbon 14 dating techniques make it likely that the monumental constructions unearthed in these sites are from the ninth not the tenth century.

Verses 20-21 offer the reassurance that the conscript labour came from conquered minorities, not from Israelites. 5:3 puts a question mark over this reassurance.

The Chronicler

Verse 1 copies 1Kings 9:1.

Verse 2 replaces 1Kings 9:11-14. The Chronicler has King Hiram giving territory to Solomon, not the other way round. The Chronicler is trying to ensure that Solomon is not put in bad light (see comment on 'Kabul' on page 74).

The Chronicler's account of Solomon's building program (verses 3-6) is quite different from 1Kings 9:15-19. Note the absence of any mention of the Millo, Hazor, Megiddo or Gezer (though these may be included in 'all the towns for his chariots').

Hamath-zobar is well north of Damascus. Tadmor (later to become Palmyra) was east of Zobar on the caravan route to Mesopotamia.

2Chronicles 8:7-9 copies 1Kings 9:20-22.

¹At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon had built the house of YHWH and his own house,

²Solomon rebuilt the cities that Hiram had given to him, and settled the people of Israel in them.

³Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and captured it. ⁴He built Tadmor in the wilderness and all the storage towns that he built in Hamath. ⁵He also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities, with walls, gates, and bars, ⁶and 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.

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

²⁴But 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.

²⁵Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt offerings and communion sacrifices on the altar that he built for YHWH, offering incense before YHWH.

So he completed the house.

²⁶King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.

²⁷Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, sailors who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon.

²⁸They went to Ophir, and imported from there four hundred twenty talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

Verse 22 picks up what was said earlier about Solomon's roster of officials (see 4:1-6). Such a large number of supervisors gives an indication of the extent of the building program (see 2Chronicles 8:10).

On Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter (verse 24) see 3:1 and 7:8.

On sacrifices (verse 25) see 3:3; 8:5, 62-63. Solomon is portrayed as the one presiding at these liturgical ceremonies.

Verses 26-28 speak of international commerce (see 4:21, 24).

'Ophir' (verse 28) is renowned as a source of gold (see Job 28:16; Psalm 45:10; Isaiah 13:12). It is likely to have been either in South Arabia or the Horn of Africa.

Verse 10 follows 1Kings 9:23.

¹⁰These were the chief officers of King Solomon, two hundred fifty of them, who exercised authority over the people.

Verse 11 follows 1Kings 9:24. The Chronicler adds an explanation as to why Pharaoh's daughter did not live in the king's palace complex. She was a woman!

¹¹Solomon 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 YHWH has come are holy."

The brief statement in 1Kings concerning sacrifices (verse 25) is expanded by the Chronicler in verses 12-15. This is typical of his interest in the temple and the cult. Note, too, the reference back to David.

¹²Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to YHWH on the altar of YHWH that he had built in front of the vestibule, ¹³as 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. ¹⁴According 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. ¹⁵They did not turn away from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites regarding anything at all, or regarding the treasuries.

Verse 16 expands on the last statement in 1Kings 9:25.

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

Verses 17-18 copy 1Kings 9:26-28.

¹⁷Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea, in the land of Edom. ¹⁸Hiram 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 fifty talents of gold and brought it to King Solomon.

Fifteen tons is a lot of gold!

¹When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, (fame due to the name of YHWH), she came to test him with hard questions. ²She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind.

³Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. ⁴When the queen of Sheba had observed all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, ⁵the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his valets, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of YHWH, there was no more spirit in her. ⁶So she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your accomplishments and of your wisdom, ⁷but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. Not even half had been told me; your wisdom and prosperity far surpass the report that I had heard. ⁸Happy are your wives! Happy are these your servants, who continually attend you and hear your wisdom! ⁹Blessed be YHWH your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because YHWH loved Israel forever, he has made you king to execute justice and righteousness." ¹⁰Then she gave the king one hundred twenty talents of gold, a great quantity of spices, and precious stones; never again did spices come in such quantity as that which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. ¹¹Moreover, the fleet of Hiram, which carried gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir a great quantity of almug wood and precious stones. ¹²From the almug wood the king made supports for the house of YHWH, and for the king's house, lyres also and harps for the singers; no such almug wood has come or been seen to this day. ¹³Meanwhile King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed, as well as what he gave her out of Solomon's royal bounty. Then she returned to her own land, with her servants.

It is likely that Sheba is in the southern part of the Arabian peninsula (today's Yemen).

Solomon's 'wisdom' and 'wealth' are on display.

Note that there is no mention of the ordinary people being 'happy' (verse 8).

'Justice and righteousness' (verse 10) are at the heart of Yahwism (see Isaiah 5:7; Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12; Jeremiah 22:13, 15).

'Almug wood' (verse 12) may be the highly prized wood of the elammakku tree.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler copies the account as found in 1Kings (see 2Chronicles 9:1-12).

Trade brings prodigious wealth to Solomon's kingdom

¹⁴The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred sixty-six talents of gold, ¹⁵besides that which came from the traders and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land.

¹⁶King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each large shield. ¹⁷He made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield; and the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

The House of the Forest of Lebanon is Solomon's formal throne room (see 7:2-5).

¹⁸The king also made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with the finest gold. ¹⁹The throne had six steps. The top of the throne was rounded in the back, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests, ²⁰while twelve lions were standing, one on each end of a step on the six steps. Nothing like it was ever made in any kingdom.

²¹All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver—it was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.

²²For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

We are not certain where Tarshish was, but it was clearly way out west somewhere (see Isaiah 66:19). Some suggest Spain; others somewhere in the Aegean.

²³Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. ²⁴The whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his heart.

Solomon's 'wisdom' (organisational expertise) is a gift from YHWH (see 3:9).

²⁵Every one of them brought a gift, objects of silver and gold, garments, weaponry, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

²⁶Solomon gathered together chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

²⁷The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as numerous as the sycamores of the Shephelah.

²⁸Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Cilicia, and the king's traders received them from Cilicia at a price. ²⁹A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred fifty; so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

The Chronicler copies this section (2Chronicles 9:13-28).

¹King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which YHWH had said to the Israelites, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you; for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods"; Solomon clung to these in love. ³Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to YHWH his God, as was the heart of his father David. ⁵For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of YHWH, and did not completely follow YHWH, as his father David had done. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods. ⁹Then YHWH was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from YHWH, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what YHWH commanded. ¹¹Therefore YHWH said to Solomon, "Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. ¹²Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³I will not, however, tear away the entire kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

We should begin our commentary on this passage with verses 11-13. The fact is that the kingdom inherited from David was torn in two at his death. Only Judah was inherited by Solomon's son. This is because YHWH is faithful to his commitment to David and to Jerusalem. Typically, the Deuteronomists saw this as divine punishment, and, since YHWH is just, they had to find a reason.

In the Torah we read:

Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of YHWH would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

– Deuteronomy 7:3-4

The number of Solomon's wives is the measure of his diplomatic agreements with foreign countries. The real problem is religious compromise. Solomon failed to remain faithful to his first 'love' (see 3:3). Yahwism was less important to him than his wealth and power. His real worship was of the values of the non-Israelite world of Sidon (Astarte), Milcom/Molech (Ammon) and Chemosh (Moab).

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits this passage.

The first ‘adversary’ (𐤇𐤍𐤁, śāṭān] to be mentioned is Hadad (named after the storm god), a member of the royal house of Edom who escaped the massacre instigated by David’s chief-of-staff, Joab (see 2Samuel 8:13). We are not told of any action that Hadad undertook against Solomon.

The second adversary, reminds us of David when he was escaping from Saul. Rezon fled from King Hadadezer of Zobar (verses 23-25). When the king and his army was slaughtered by David (see 2Samuel 8:3-10), Rezon escaped to Damascus and became king of Aram (Syria). Once again there is no mention of any action against Israel, but we are being alerted to the fact that not everyone is happy with Solomon’s aggressive policies outside Israel.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits any mention of either of these adversaries.

¹⁴So YHWH raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal house in Edom. ¹⁵For when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the dead, he killed every male in Edom ¹⁶(for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had eliminated every male in Edom); ¹⁷but Hadad fled to Egypt with some Edomites who were servants of his father. He was a young boy at that time. ¹⁸They set out from Midian and came to Paran; they took people with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, assigned him an allowance of food, and gave him land. ¹⁹Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him his sister-in-law for a wife, the sister of the queen mother. ²⁰The sister of the queen mother gave birth by him to his son Genubath, whom the queen mother weaned in Pharaoh’s house; Genubath was in Pharaoh’s house among the children of Pharaoh. ²¹When Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his ancestors and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, “Let me depart, that I may go to my own country.” ²²But Pharaoh said to him, “What do you lack with me that you now seek to go to your own country?” And he said, “No, do let me go.”

²³God raised up another adversary against Solomon, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah. ²⁴He gathered followers around him and became leader of a marauding band, after the slaughter by David; they went to Damascus, settled there, and made him king in Damascus. ²⁵He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, making trouble as Hadad did; he despised Israel and reigned over Aram.

²⁶Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, rebelled against the king. ²⁷The following was the reason he rebelled against the king.

Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the breach in the wall of the city of his father David. ²⁸The man Jeroboam was very able, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious he gave him charge over all the forced labour of the house of Joseph.

²⁹About that time, when Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Ahijah had clothed himself with a new garment. The two of them were alone in the open country ³⁰when Ahijah laid hold of the new garment he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. ³¹He then said to Jeroboam: Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says YHWH, the God of Israel, "See, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and will give you ten tribes. ³²One tribe will remain his, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. ³³This is because he has forsaken me, worshipped Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and has not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, as his father David did. ³⁴Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom away from him but will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of my servant David whom I chose and who did keep my commandments and my statutes; ³⁵but I will take the kingdom away from his son and give it to you – that is, the ten tribes.

The real problem for Solomon came from inside Israel. It was Jeroboam who, on the death of Solomon, led the northern tribes to break away from Judah. In keeping with their understanding of divine control over the events of history, the Deuteronomists saw this rebellion as instigated by YHWH in fulfilment of his words to Solomon (see 11:11-13).

YHWH chooses 'the prophet Ahijah' from the ancient northern shrine of Shiloh to reveal to Jeroboam the mission to which YHWH calls him.

The prophet tears his garment into twelve pieces, one for each of the tribes, and instructs Jeroboam to lead the breaking away of the ten northern tribes from Judah. Benjamin, which is the area just north of Jerusalem, seems to be treated as part of Judah.

The reasons given for the split in verse 33 repeat the reasons already given in verse 10 (see page 80).

God will leave Judah with the house of David (verses 34) because of his commitment to David (see verse 12).

The Chronicler

None of this is included by the Chronicler.

Another reason for Judah remaining with Solomon's son is because of the presence of the temple in Jerusalem. We recall David's prayer:

You are my lamp, YHWH.
YHWH lightens my darkness.

– 2Samuel 22:29

The Deuteronomists see the breakdown of the united kingdoms of Judah-Israel as divine punishment for Solomon's infidelity to the covenant. It is YHWH who gives Israel to Jeroboam. Note the conditional element of the gift (see the 'if' in verse 38). Like David before him (see 2Samuel 7:16), Jeroboam is promised an 'enduring house'. It is he, not Solomon's son, who is to carry on the covenant with David. Jeroboam is the new David.

The Deuteronomists lived through the collapse of Israel 200 years after the split, and the subsequent years when Judah alone carried the tradition. Hence verse 39.

Solomon is still in power, and determined to put down any opposition by any means. Jeroboam flees to Egypt. What powerful irony. The land of Israel is less welcoming of God's word than the country from which YHWH liberated the Hebrew slaves. Solomon's forty year reign (verse 42) was from c. 970-931BC.

The Chronicler

The Chronicler omits verses 36-40, and replaces verse 41 with the following:

Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the history of the prophet Nathan, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of the seer Iddo concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat?

– 2Chronicles 9:29

The 'Book of the Acts of Solomon' is not extant. Nor are any of the 'sources' claimed by the Chronicler. The Chronicler concludes by repeating 1Kings 11:42-43.

³⁶Yet to his son I will give one tribe, so that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name.

³⁷I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires; you shall be king over Israel. ³⁸If you will listen to all that I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you, and will build you an enduring house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. ³⁹For this reason I will punish the descendants of David, but not forever."

⁴⁰Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam promptly fled to Egypt, to King Shishak of Egypt, and remained in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

⁴¹Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did as well as his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon?

⁴²The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. ⁴³Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

