

1 Kings Chapter 5

Verses 1-18

The LORD granted Solomon not only material blessing and a prosperous kingdom but favor with other nations.

“Tyre” was known for its wood, particularly Lebanon’s “cedar” and “cypress” trees.

The pagan Phoenicians helped “prepare” the temple for the worship of God.

1 Kings 5:1 "And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David."

The previous alliance between the Phoenician “king” and Israel in David’s day was continued with “Solomon” (verse 12).

Solomon’s good relations with the Phoenicians added to the prosperity of his kingdom (10:22). The name “Hiram” is probably an abbreviation of Ahiram (“My Father Is Exalted”), a royal name known in the Phoenician inscriptions.

“Hiram king of Tyre”:

Tyre was an important port city on the Mediterranean sea north of Israel.

Two towering mountain ranges ran within Lebanon’s borders, and on their slopes grew thick forests of cedars.

Hiram I ruled there (ca. 978-944 B.C.).

He had earlier provided building materials and workers for David to build his palace (2 Sam. 5:11).

Solomon maintained the friendly relations with Hiram established by David.

They were beneficial to both as Israel exchanged wheat and oil for timber (see verses 9-11).

Tyre was the capital of Phoenicia.

Hiram and David had been friends.

Tyre depended on Israel for much of its food, like corn; and Israel needed cedar trees from Tyre.

These servants were to tell Solomon how sorry they were that his father David was dead, but they were also to congratulate Solomon on his becoming king.

1 Kings 5:2 "And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying,"

Menander of Ephesus, who wrote a history of Tyre in Greek, founded upon native Tyrian documents, about 300 B.C., mentioned this Hiram as the son of Abibaal king of Tyre, and said that he ascended the throne when he was nineteen; that he reigned thirty-four years, and, dying at the age of fifty-three, was succeeded by his son Baleazar.

Menander spoke at some length of the dealings of Hiram with Solomon.

This is saying that Solomon sent a message back to Hiram.

Verses 3-5

Although "David" was not permitted to build the temple" (2 Sam. 7:13), he laid careful preparations for its erection (2 Sam. 24:18-25; 1 Chron. 21:18 – 22:19; 28:9 – 29:19).

Verses 3-18

Now that Israel was at peace ("rest on every side"), all available resources could be devoted to building the temple with excellence, in accordance with God's commands.

1 Kings 5:3 "Thou knowest how that David my father could not build a house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet."

As he designed, and was desirous of.

And which Hiram might know not only by common fame, but from David himself, between whom there was an intercourse.

And that in relation to cedars for building, which David had of Hiram (2 Chron. 2:3).

"For the wars which were about him on every side":

Or warriors, as the Targum, the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, and Syrians.

"Until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet":

Made them subject and tributary to him, as he did at length (see 2 Sam. 7:1), etc. So the "Cetib", or textual reading, is; but the "Keri", or marginal reading, is, "under the soles of my feet".

That is, Solomon's, which agrees with what follows; it was true of both.

Hiram probably was aware of the desire of David to build a temple to house the ark of God.

They were very good friends.

David did not hide his love and respect for God, and probably did not hide his desire to build the temple.

Hiram was also aware of the wars that seemed to be continuous during the reign of David.

About the time of the death of David the wars stopped, and now there is a time of peace.

1 Kings 5:4 "But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, [so that there is] neither adversary nor evil occurrent."

“Rest”:

The guarantee of peace with the peoples surrounding Israel allowed Solomon to build the temple (4:24).

We studied, in the last lesson, of the peace that all Israel was experiencing under the rule of Solomon.

It was not only a time of peace, but prosperity as well.

This would be the perfect time to build the temple.

“Evil occurrent” means misfortune.

1 Kings 5:5 "And, behold, I purpose to build a house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build a house unto my name."

“The name”:

“Name” represents the character and nature of the person indicated (see note on 3:2).

“Thy son”:

Solomon claimed to be the promised offspring of David, the fulfillment of the LORD’s promise to David (in 2 Sam. 7:12-13).

However, Solomon's later disobedience proved that he was not the ultimate, promised offspring (11:9-13).

The following Scriptures are what God said to David about the building of the temple.

2 Samuel 7:12-13 "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom." "He shall build a house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever."

1 Chronicles 28:6 "And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him [to be] my son, and I will be his father."

Solomon is determined to build the temple to the LORD in Jerusalem.

It is a permanent house, similar to the tabernacle God had commanded them to build in the wilderness.

1 Kings 5:6 "Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that [there is] not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians."

"Cedar trees out of Lebanon":

The cedars of Lebanon symbolized majesty and might (Psalm 92:12; Ezek. 31:3).

Because it was durable, resistant to rot and worms, closely-grained, and could be polished to a fine shine, its wood was regarded as the best timber for building.

The logs were tied together and floated down the Mediterranean to Jerusalem, 35 miles inland.

"Sidonians":

These are the inhabitants of the city of Sidon, located on the Mediterranean sea about 22 miles north of Tyre.

Here, the term probably referred, in a general sense, to the Phoenicians, who were skilled craftsmen.

The area where the cedars grew in Lebanon was under the rulership of Hiram.

These were some of the most beautiful cedar trees in the world.

The Phoenicians were well-known for their artistic woodwork.

Solomon had plenty of accumulated wealth.

It would be no burden at all to pay for the cutting of the trees.

The Hebrews were not skilled woodsmen, and Solomon wanted to get the men of Tyre to do this work.

The Sidonians were Phoenicians also.

Tyre and Sidon are both Phoenician cities.

Verses 7-10

“Hiram” not only provided for “Solomon” the fabled “cedars” from “Lebanon,” but he brought them to him and sent along skilled craftsmen to labor in the erection of the temple (verse 18).

The whole venture was profitable for Hiram as well (verse 11).

1 Kings 5:7 "And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed [be] the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people."

“Blessed be the LORD”:

Perhaps Hiram was a worshiper of the true God, but it is equally possible that he was only acknowledging Jehovah as the God of the Hebrews (2 Chron. 2:16).

“A wise son”:

Hiram recognized Solomon’s wisdom in seeking to honor his father David’s desires.

Hiram was pleased that Solomon intended to build the temple.

David had wanted so badly to build the temple himself.

Since he was not allowed to do it, Hiram is pleased that Solomon will.

Hiram was not a follower of the LORD himself, but he recognized the LORD of David.

1 Kings 5:8 "And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: [and] I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir."

A letter to him, to the following purpose.

"Saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for":

Whether he could, and whether it was fitting he should grant his request; which was acting like a wise and prudent prince.

"And I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir":

Or of cypress, as in Josephus's copy of this letter, and which grew on Lebanon; these were odorous, sound, and durable timber, especially the cedar, and therefore chosen by Solomon for building.

This was some of the finest timber in the world.

They will be called cedars of Lebanon.

At the time this request was made, these trees were in abundance.

In recent years, they are not in abundance.

God had given specific instructions to Solomon.

These trees are necessary.

1 Kings 5:9 "My servants shall bring [them] down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive [them]: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household."

"Food for my household":

Tyre's rocky terrain grew great trees, but little good food. Hiram asked Solomon for food for his court in exchange for his lumber.

We had mentioned earlier that they had been dependent on Israel for much of their grain.

This would be a wonderful swap.

Israel needs the trees and Hiram needs food for his people.

He explains to Solomon exactly how he will get them to Jerusalem.

Floating trees down rivers and large bodies of water is still being practiced today.

This is an inexpensive way to transport them.

1 Kings 5:10 "So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees [according to] all his desire."

Ordered his servants to cut them down from Lebanon, and sent them to him in floats, which he received.

"According to all his desire":

He had as many as he requested, and what he wanted.

There was such an abundance of trees that Hiram furnished all that Solomon needed.

1 Kings 5:11 "And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat [for] food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year."

This measure was the Hebrew measure "cor", or "corus", and, according to Bishop Cumberland, its contents were 17,477 solid inches.

It was equal to ten ephods, each of which held two gallons and a half, and the cor held seventy five wine gallons and five pints (and somewhat more).

According to some, what it held was equal to six hundred forty eight Roman pounds.

"And twenty measures of pure oil":

Squeezed out of the olives without breaking them.

The same kind of measure is here expressed as before, and the quantity answered to 12,960 Roman pounds.

Another writer reckons a cor to contain 1080 Roman pounds; so that Hiram had every year 21,600 pounds of oil.

In 2 Chronicles 2:10, it is twenty thousand baths of oil now not to take notice that the measures are different.

A bath was but the tenth part of a cor.

Reference is had to different things; here the writer relates what was given to Hiram for his own family, there what was given to the workmen, where several other things are mentioned besides these.

"Thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year":

So long as the building lasted, and the workmen were employed; but Abarbanel thinks that he gave it to him as long as he lived, out of his great munificence and liberality.

The household of Hiram was much smaller than that of Solomon and it took much less food.

The oil was from olives that were slightly green, mashed to make the beautiful white oil.

This would not have been enough to pay for the timber, but this was an amount given yearly for many years.

1 Kings 5:12 "And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together."

This among other things appeared in his preparations for building the temple; and in his agreements with Hiram for timber and workmen for that purpose.

And by continuing and confirming friendship between himself and Hiram, who was so serviceable to him.

"And there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together":

In order to continue and establish peace and friendship between them, which Solomon might lawfully do, the Tyrians being no part of the seven nations with whom alliances were forbidden.

This was a very serious treaty made between these two men.

They killed an animal and cut it in two, and walked between the two halves to have a blood covenant between them.

Solomon was filled with wisdom from on high.

The LORD had equipped him with the knowledge to build the temple, as well as rule the kingdom.

Verses 13-14

The instituting of forced labor by conscription (without pay), for work on public projects, while common in the ancient Near East, was an innovation in Israel.

It would prove to be a source of irritation and complaint for the northern tribes (12:4).

Samuel had given a prophetic warning concerning this social institution (1 Sam. 8:11-17).

1 Kings 5:13 "And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men."

"Raised a levy out of all Israel":

Literally "conscripted labor".

These 30,000 men who labored in Lebanon were Israelites of the land.

They were sent to Lebanon, 10,000 a month in rotation.

For every month they worked, they were off two months, which meant they worked only 4 months per year.

These Israelite laborers must be distinguished from the Canaanite remnant that was made into permanent slaves (see note on 9:21-22).

The 30,000 Israelites were free and performed the task of felling trees.

This is like the draft.

Solomon called for these thirty thousand men to come and work in his service.

This means he took a few qualified men from each tribe to help build the temple.

1 Kings 5:14 "And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, [and] two months at home: and Adoniram [was] over the levy."

In their turns; these are the servants of his he proposed to be with Hiram's servants, assisting in cutting down the trees, and squaring the timber in Lebanon (1 Kings 5:6).

"A month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home":

That they might not be overworked; for they wrought but four months in the year in the hard service in Lebanon, the rest of their time was spent in managing their domestic affairs; these were Israelites.

"And Adoniram was over the levy":

The same that was over the tribute or the collectors of the tax (1 Kings 4:6); and, according to the Targum, these were such persons.

The very first thing on the agenda was getting the supply of cedar and fir.

The ten thousand of the thirty thousand went to Lebanon and worked a month.

While they were resting at home for two months, the rest of the thirty thousand each took turns going to work in Lebanon for a month.

This way the men worked alternating shifts, so that they all would be home two thirds of the time.

This would allow them plenty of time to take care of their own affairs, while they were working for Solomon.

Adoniram saw that this levy was conducted fairly.

Verses 15-16

The large “work” force detailed here was made up of non-Israelites and constituted a permanent group of slave laborers (9:22; 2 Chron. 2:17-18).

(2 Chronicles 2:2 and 18), record the number of supervisors as 3,600 Canaanites.

To these were added 250 Israelite chief overseers (2 Chron. 8:10).

In (1 Kings 9:23), the report that there were some 550 chief overseers in addition to the 3,300 Canaanite supervisors mentioned (in verse 16).

Apparently, the total number of supervisors and chief overseers was 3,850.

Of the chief overseers, three hundred were Canaanites and 250 were Israelites.

1 Kings 5:15 "And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains;"

Seventy thousand to carry the stones from the mountains out of which they were dug, and which were near Jerusalem, to the city.

These were strangers in Israel, as were those that follow.

"And fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains”:

Eighty thousand that dug the stones out of the quarries, and squared them.

These, with the others, made 150,000 (see 2 Chron. 2:17).

According to Jacob Leon, the number of workmen at the temple for seven years was 163,600, and some make them more.

This means there were seventy thousand burden-bearers, and eighty thousand who cut the timber and worked in the woods.

1 Kings 5:16 "Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which [were] over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work."

"Solomon's ... three thousand and three hundred":

See note on 2 Chron. 2:2.

"The people that wrought in the work":

According to (2 Chron. 2:17-18), these 150,000 laborers (5:15), and their supervisors, were non-Israelite inhabitants of the land.

We see from this, there were three thousand and three hundred superintendents.

This is a tremendous undertaking.

Verses 17-18

These large "foundation stones" were cut to perfect size while still at the quarry (6:7).

1 Kings 5:17 "And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, [and] hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house."

Not in quality, but in quantity, large stones, fit to lay in the foundation.

Strong, and durable against all the injuries of time, as Josephus says.

"Costly stones":

Not what are commonly called precious stones, as gems, pearls, etc., but stones of value, as marble, porphyry, etc.

"And hewed stones":

Not rough as they were taken out of the quarry, but hewed, and made smooth.

"To lay the foundation of the house":

This, though out of sight, was to be laid with goodly stones for the magnificence of the building.

So the church of Christ, its foundation is said to be laid even with sapphires and other precious stones (see Isa. 54:11).

We must remember that all of this had to be done by hand.

They had no heavy equipment to help them.

This is not speaking just of the heavy stones, but this is also speaking of the precious stones which were adornments.

The foundation stones and the cornerstone must be perfect.

They would be very heavy as well.

Every stone had to fit exactly.

There are spiritual stones that God builds His house of as well.

Jesus is the cornerstone, and we Christians, are lively stones that fit together to make the house.

Ephesians 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone];"

1 Peter 2:5 "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

1 Kings 5:18 "And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew [them], and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house."

These "stonesquarers" were Gebalites which were inhabitants of Gebal; a town located about 60 miles north of Tyre.

Notice the close cooperation between Solomon's men and Hiram's men.

Each person did the job he was called to do, and did it well.

The end result is they have the material needed to build the temple.

We mentioned before that they were well-known for their beautiful artistry.

1 Kings Chapter 5 Questions

1. _____ sent his servants to help Solomon.

2. _____ was the Phoenician capital.
3. Why could David not build the house?
4. During the reign of Solomon, there was _____.
5. What did Solomon purpose to do?
6. Why had he chosen to do this?
7. What did the LORD tell David about Solomon?
8. What did Solomon want from Hiram?
9. Who would be the laborers?
10. The Phoenicians were well-known for their _____.
11. The _____ were Phoenicians, as well.
12. What did Hiram say about Solomon in verse 7?
13. Hiram was not a follower of the _____.
14. What did Hiram want in exchange for the cedar and fir trees?
15. How much wheat did Solomon give Hiram yearly?
16. What was the oil made of?
17. What was the league they made, really?
18. How many men did Solomon levy to work in Lebanon?
19. How long did each man work?
20. How many men did Solomon use for burden-bearers?
21. How many men cut timber and worked in the woods?
22. How many superintendents were there?
23. What were the stones?