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Materials and Labor for the Temple

First Kings 5:1-18 and

Second Chronicles 2:1-18

Materials and labor for the Temple DIG: Why did Solomon build the Temple? What kind of help did Solomon request from King Hiram of Tyre? Who became the chief craftsman for the Temple's construction? How did Solomon procure the necessary labor to build the Temple? Do you think this was wise or fair? How does conscription differ from slavery?

REFLECT: What would you like to construct for ADONAI? How must you prepare for this endeavor? Whose assistance do you need to enlist? If you had unlimited resources, what would you like to build for the Lord this year? For yourself? Is it ever permissible to use people to accomplish worthwhile goals as Solomon did? Has that ever happened to you?

What am I doing for the glory of God?

On the seventh day of the seventh month in the seventh year of the new millennium (July 7, 2007), officials in Lisbon, Portugal, announced the “New Seven Wonders of the World.” More than one hundred million voters selected these man-made structures to replace the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The winners included the Taj Mahal, the Roman Colosseum, the Great Wall of China, Petra, Machu Picchu, Chichen Itza, and Christ Redeemer, the statue that towers over Rio de Janeiro.

However, the contest was not without controversy. The Great Pyramids at Giza were among the original nominees, but the Egyptian officials were understandably offended that they were up for a vote at all. In the end, everyone agreed that the Great Pyramids should be honored separately as the only original Wonder still standing. Many other famous monuments failed to make the top seven, but some people still think that Stonehenge, or the Hagia Sophia, or the Statue of Liberty deserve a higher ranking.

All of these famous structures show what human beings can do. Each one stands out as an enduring tribute to human creativity and ingenuity. Yet, as famous as these monuments are, none of them is the most important building ever made. That honor belongs to a building that was not as big as the Colosseum, as high in the mountains as Machu Picchu, or visible from outer space like the Great Wall of China. It belongs instead to the only building in the world that the living **God** came down to use for **His** personal dwelling place: **the Temple of Solomon** in Jerusalem. **The Temple** was the major public construction project of **Solomon's** reign, one of the great accomplishments that secured **his** lasting fame. Here, we learn how **Solomon** prepared to build **the Temple**, and more importantly, why **he** decided to build **it**.

Practical details about the materials and labor for an ancient building project may not seem very interesting to some Bible readers. Yet we believe the words of the apostle Paul, who said that **whatever was written in former day was written for our instruction (Romans 15:4)**. Therefore, like everything else in Scripture, the construction of **Solomon's Temple** is for our edification. When we study this passage carefully, we can connect the construction of **Solomon's Temple** to the building project that **God** is doing in us today by the saving work of **Yeshua Messiah** and the sanctifying work of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**.¹¹²

Solomon's alliance with Hiram: When Hiram, king of Tyre, heard that **Solomon had been anointed king to succeed his father David, he sent his** official envoys to **Solomon** to honor the coronation of **the new king**. That was standard protocol for diplomatic relations. When a new leader comes to power, the other world leaders send formal greetings to renew the friendly relationship between the two countries. But in addition, **Hiram had always been on friendly terms with David (First Kings 5:1; Second Samuel 5:11)**. Both **Solomon** and **Hiram** were young, aggressive, and wished to make their countries wealthy without military conquest. Both expanded their capitals and both built central worship shrines. This was a healthy alliance since **Tyre** controlled the shipping lanes of the Mediterranean Sea, and with **David's** defeat of the Philistines, this removed the main competition for Tyre. **David**, then **Solomon**, controlled the three major trade routes as well as a number of minor ones. Together, **Isra'el** and **Tyre** formed a near monopoly since **Isra'el** controlled the land routes and **Tyre** controlled the sea routes. Thus began a very profitable alliance between the two men.¹¹³

Solomon sent back this message to **the king of Tyre**, **“You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a Temple for the Name of ADONAI his God until the Lord put his**

enemies under his feet” (First Kings 5:2-3; Second Chronicles 2:3). Even though **David** had fought **his** many battles in **the Name of the LORD**, **he** was still a man of war, not a man of peace. Thus, it was not suitable for **him to build God’s** holy **Temple**.

This helps to put some of our own disappointments into perspective. We all have things that we hope to accomplish in this lifetime. Some of our dreams have not yet become realities, and sometimes we doubt they ever will. Where our ambitions coincide with the will of **God**, we should continue to pursue them. But sometimes **God** says “no” to us as he said “no” to **David** – even for things that are good in themselves and that we want to do for his glory. When this happens, we should follow **David’s** example by accepting **God’s** “no” for an answer. We should also take a long-term view of the Kingdom and help other people do the work that **God** has called them to do, even if it happens to be the work that we were hoping to do. **David** is a good example, because when he recognized what **God** was calling **Solomon** to do, **he** gave **him His** royal blessing: **Now, my son, may ADONAI be with you and give you success as you build the house of ADONAI your God (First Chronicles 22:11a).**¹¹⁴

But now ADONAI my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster. I intend, therefore, to build a Temple for the Name of ADONAI my God as He told my father David, “Your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the Temple for my Name.” This, of course, was based on **God’s** Covenant with **David**. **And to dedicate it to Him for burning fragrant incense before him, for setting out the consecrated bread regularly, and for making burnt offerings every morning and evening and on the Sabbaths, at the New Moons and at the appointed festivals of the Lord our God. This is a lasting ordinance for Isra’el (First Kings 5:4-5; Second Chronicles 2:1 and 4-6).**

Notice **Solomon’s** motivation. **He** didn’t build **the Temple** for political reasons, hoping to unify the twelve tribes of **his** kingdom. **He** didn’t build it for financial reasons, thinking that the project of that magnitude would strengthen **Isra’el’s** economy. **He** didn’t build it for personal reasons, desiring to build something that people would remember, bringing glory to **his** own name. No. **Solomon** built **the Temple** for the best of all reasons: **he** did it for **the Name of ADONAI, his God**.

What is the desire of your heart? What is the motivation for the decisions you make about what to do with your time and your money, your body and your soul, your

present is not your future? The apostle Paul said: **Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God (First Corinthians 10:31)**. This becomes the spiritual test for everything in life. Am I doing what I am doing for the glory of **God**?¹¹⁵



Then **Solomon** made a specific request: **So, give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. Send me cedar logs as you did for my father David when you sent him cedar to build a palace to live in (First Kings 5:6a). Send me also cedar, cypress and sandalwood logs from Lebanon, for I know that your servants are skilled in cutting timber there. My servants will work with yours to provide me with plenty of lumber, because the temple I build must be large and magnificent. I will give your servants, the woodsmen who cut the timber, 100,000 bushels of ground wheat, 100,000 bushels of barley, 100,000 gallons of wine and 100,000 gallons of olive oil (2 Chronicles 2:3 and 8-10). Isra'el's king** was proposing a cooperative venture based on a balance of trade. Skilled **craftsmen** from the kingdom of **Tyre** would provide some of **their** world-famous lumber, and in return, **Solomon** would pay fair wages.

My men (Hebrew: *mas*, meaning *temporary laborers*) **will work with yours** for three months, **and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set. You know that we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians, Phoenicians, named after their principle city Sidon (First Kings 5:6b). Send me, therefore, a man skilled to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, and in purple, crimson and blue yarn, and experienced in the art of engraving, to work in Judah and Jerusalem with my skilled workers, whom my father David provided (2 Chron 2:7). When Hiram heard Solomon's**

message, he was greatly pleased over **Solomon's** friendship, the compliment paid to **his** countrymen, and the prospect of a new source of revenue. **He** said: **Praise be to the Lord today, for he has given David a wise son to rule over this great nation (1 Kings 5:7).**

The king of Tyre readily agreed to those terms, saying: **I have received the message you sent me and will do all you want in providing the cedar and juniper logs.** But **Hiram** proposed two adjustments to **Solomon's** proposal. The first adjustment: **the men of Isra'el and Tyre** would not work together. **Tyre** would bring **the logs to the Israeli port**, then **Isra'el** would take over from there. **My men will haul them down from Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea, and I will float them as rafts by sea to the place you specify. There I will separate them and you can take them away.** The second adjustment was that **Hiram** wanted **food for the royal household** instead of wages for **the workers.** **And you are to grant my wish by providing food for my royal household."** **Because the Lord loves his people, he has made you their king.** And **Hiram** added: **Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth! He has given King David a wise son, endowed with intelligence and discernment, who will build a temple for the Lord and a palace for himself (First Kings 5:8-9; Second Chronicles 2:11-12).**

So King Hiram did as **Solomon** requested, saying: **I am sending you Hiram-Abi** (the **Abi** suffix meaning *master*), **my master craftsman, whose mother was from Dan and whose father was from Tyre. He is trained to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, and with purple and blue and crimson yarn and fine linen** (see similar comments in the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click [Ew](#) - The Appointment of Bezalel and Ohaliab**). **He is experienced in all kinds of engraving and can execute any design given to him. He will work with your skilled workers and with those of my lord, David your father (Second Chronicles 2:13-14).** In return, **King Hiram** requested: **Now let my lord send his servants the wheat and barley and the olive oil and wine he promised, and we will cut all the logs from Lebanon that you need and will float them as rafts by sea down to Joppa**, modern Jaffa, was the port of Jerusalem until superseded by Tel-Aviv. **You can then take them up to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 2:15-16).**

In this way Hiram kept Solomon supplied with all the cedar and juniper logs he wanted, and Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand cors (about 3,600 tons) of wheat as food for his household, in addition to twenty

thousand baths (about 120,000 gallons) of pressed olive oil. Solomon continued to do this for Hiram year after year (First Kings 5:10-11; Second Chronicles 2:10). The Lord gave Solomon wisdom, just as he had promised him. There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty (First Kings 5:10-12; 2 Chronicles 2:10). This became a very profitable relationship for both men.

Solomon's forced labor: King Solomon temporarily conscripted thirty thousand foreign laborers. He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand a month, so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home. The king also conscripted 153,600 Israelites from the census his father David had taken. He assigned 70,000 of them to be carriers and 80,000 to be stonecutters in the hills, with 3,600 foremen over them to keep the people working. At the king's command they removed from the quarry large blocks of high-grade stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the Temple. The craftsmen of Solomon, Hiram, and workers from Byblos cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the Temple. The men of Gebal were from a Phoenician city not far from the coast, about twenty miles north of Beirut. They must have been famous stonecutters. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor (First Kings 5:13-18; 2 Chronicles 2:2 and 17-18).

The true Temple: As Philip Ryken relates in his commentary on **First Kings**, **Solomon** helps us see how to glorify **God**. But **he** also does something more important than simply to set a good example: **he** points us to **Yeshua Messiah** as the greater **Solomon** of the Kingdom of **God**. Every time we think about **Solomon** and the greatness of **his** kingdom, we should remember what **Yeshua** said, namely, that **He** is **greater than Solomon** (**Luke 11:31**).

One of the ways to see the superior greatness of **Yeshua Messiah** here is to consider what **He** said about **the Temple of God**. **Yeshua** always loved to go to **the Temple** – not the one **Solomon** built, but **the Second Temple**, commonly known as Herod's **Temple**, which was built after **Isra'el's** exile in Babylon (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**). **Yeshua** went there as a young **boy** and called it: **My Father's house** (**Luke 4:49**). **He** often visited **the Temple** when **He** went up to Jerusalem, right up until the last week of **His** earthly life, when **He** was **teaching daily in the Temple** (**Luke 19:47**).

“The Temple,” is an appropriate word to use for the physical body of **Yeshua Messiah**. **A Temple** is a dwelling place for **YHVH**; it is a place where **God** lives. Thus, **Solomon** often referred to **his Temple** as **the house of God**. But since **Messiah** is **God** incarnate – since **He** is not merely human, but also divine – **His** physical body *is* a **Temple**. The body of **Messiah** is the true **Temple**, since it is the dwelling place of **God**. **Paul** tells us that **in Messiah all the fullness of the Godhead lives in bodily form (Colossians 2:9)**.

Then **Yeshua** took **the Temple** of **His** physical body and offered it as a sacrifice for our sin, giving **Himself** up for our salvation. And **He** did this for the best of reasons. **He** did it to honor **the Name** of **ADONAI**. In doing **His** Kingdom work, **He** was motivated by **His Father’s** glory. So as **He** prepared to offer **His** body for crucifixion, **He** said to **the Father**: **Look! I have come to do Your will (Hebrews 10:7)**, which is another way of saying: **I am doing this in the Name of ADONAI**. **Yeshua** used **the Temple** of **His** body for the glory of **God**. In the supremely selfless sacrifice of **His** death on the cross, **He** glorified **God** by saving **His** people.¹¹⁶

The wonder of the world: Again, Ryken’s comments are helpful. Now **God** is busy working on a new construction project. It is another **temple**, constructed with even more surprising building material. This **temple** is not physical, but spiritual, because now the dwelling place of **ADONAI** is the Church, made up of Jewish and Gentile believers (**Ephesians 2:14**) – not just a physical building, but as a living community. Consequently, the B’rit Chadashah often uses temple language to describe the church of **Yeshua Messiah**. As Paul wrote to **the Corinthians**: **we are the temple of the living God (Second Corinthians 6:16)**.

Surely this is the least likely material that anyone has ever used for a major construction project. What could be more difficult to work with than people in the Church? We are not beautiful like cedar, but ugly in our sin. We are not solid like stone, but weak and unstable. Nevertheless, **ADONAI** is using us to build a holy **temple** – a spiritual house in which **He** lives by **His Ruach**. **You are God’s temple**, the Scripture says of the Church, **God’s Spirit lives in you (First Corinthians 3:16)**. This is true of us individually: as believers in **Messiah** we are indwelt by **the Spirit**, and thus we are holy to the Lord (First Corinthians 6:19-20). It is also true of us corporately: the Church of **Yeshua Messiah** is the temple of the living **God**.

Truly, the church of **Yeshua Messiah** is the wonder of the world, the most

extraordinary edifice that anyone has ever constructed. The stones in this massive building come from all over the world as people from all the nations come to worship **Messiah**. We are **living stones** – not stone-cold like ordinary construction materials, but alive with the power of **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh (First Peter 2:5)**. Furthermore, despite the weakness of its materials, this new and living temple is built to last. It is constructed on **the precious cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16; First Peter 2:6), Yeshua Messiah**, who is the solid foundation of the Church (**First Corinthians 3:11**). The Bible says that in **Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:21-22 NIV)**. As living stones, we are the construction materials that **God** is using to build **His** spiritual **temple**.

Knowing what kind of **temple God** is building puts our own ministry into perspective. It gives us an important question to ask about any service we offer **the Lord**, or any ministry we consider as a church: Will this help to build up **the spiritual temple** that is the people of **God**, and by doing so, to bring honor to the name of **the Lord**? When we can answer “yes,” we are ready to make wise decisions about the way we live and what we are prepared to do with our future.¹¹⁷

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** never grow old. **Your wisdom** is as fresh today as it was the day **You** created the world. Sometimes days seem long but the truth is our lives are short and will be over in a blink. It is so important that we have lived our lives for **You**. Eternity’s joy is based on how I love **You** now. The Great Wall of China has had to be rebuilt because it was crumbling, but **You, God**, are always great, strong, and eternal! When all the armies of the world come against **You**, there will be no battle at all, for you will easily destroy them by **the sword** of **Your** mouth. **From His mouth comes a sharp sword - so that with it He may strike down the nations (Rev 19:15)**.*

You not only are physically stronger than anyone, **Your wisdom** far surpasses any person or any computer. What a joy to listen and follow **You** for **Your** love and **wisdom** are totally trustworthy! As I commit my life to **You** and trust in **Your** love and **wisdom**, I can rest in knowing that **You** are in total control. **Trust in ADONAI and do good. Dwell in the land, feed on faithfulness. Delight yourself in ADONAI, and He will give you the requests of your heart (Psalms 37:3-4)**. We do delight in you! We praise **You**. **You** are Holy, Almighty, All-Powerful, All Wise, Forgiving **Savior** and Loving **Father**! What a pleasure to meditate on **Your** many wonderful characteristics. **You** are Fantastically Wonderful!



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*Praise and love **You** always! In holy **Yeshua's** name and power of **His** resurrection.
Amen*