**1 Kings Commentary**

**1 Kings Chapter 1**

1Ki 1:1

**“years.”** The literal is “days,” but in this context we would say “years.”

1Ki 1:2

**“stand before.”** In this context, this is an idiom meaning “attend to,” “serve,” “care for.” It was a general custom for people to stand before the king (see commentary on Isa. 14:13).

1Ki 1:5

**“Adonijah, the son of Haggith.”** This formula, “person, the son of someone,” usually designates the son and who is their father, but David was Adonijah’s father; Haggith was his mother. David had a number of wives, and their children became rivals.

**“chariots.”** This could also be translated “a chariot” but it is likely a collective singular.

**“he prepared chariots and horsemen for himself, and 50 men.”** Similar to what his half-brother Absalom had done (2 Sam. 15:1).

1Ki 1:6

**“His father had never rebuked him at any time.”** The Hebrew word translated “rebuked” is *atsab* (#06087 עָצַב). The *TDOT*[[1]](#footnote-31687) says that the root “indicates a state of mental or emotional distress.” Here it means to be hurt or grieved (*NIDOTTE*),[[2]](#footnote-31078) or “pained” (BDB).[[3]](#footnote-14872) The *HALOT*[[4]](#footnote-26550) says “hurt,” but also says “rebuke,” which would be the cause of the emotional pain. David had never rebuked Adonijah and caused him emotional pain, but that was a failure on David’s part. It is a parent’s job to train a child and that means rebuking the child when it is appropriate. Rebuking a child usually causes some emotional pain, but it is necessary to bring the child to maturity.

Throughout the record about David, there are indications that he was not a good disciplinarian as a father, and that his sons got away with a lot, which later led to trouble in the family. Poor parenting was one of the terrible consequences of the harem system and having multiple wives. It is hard to be a good Dad when your children live in a harem and every rival wife is jealous of any time you spend with a son who is not her son. In this verse we see that David had never corrected Adonijah, which eventually led to Adonijah being executed by Solomon (1 Kings 2:25). Furthermore, the fact that in many cases the son who became king killed off his brothers meant that every child in the harem was raised to be an enemy of every other child.

We see more consequences of David’s poor parenting that may well have contributed to disaster when he allowed Solomon to marry a pagan wife. Before he became king, Solomon married Naamah, an Ammonite woman, and had his son Rehoboam by her (1 Kings 14:21). The fact that David did not forbid that marriage may have contributed to Solomon marrying many foreign wives once he became king, and those wives turned his heart away from God (1 Kings 11:1-6), leading to the destruction of the United Kingdom of Israel.

David had other family troubles as well. His eldest son, Amnon (2 Sam. 3:2), raped Tamar, one of his daughters (2 Sam. 13:14). David was angry about it (2 Sam. 13:21), but did nothing. This led to David’s son Absalom, the full brother of Tamar, murdering Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28-29). Again David was angry, but after a few years, he forgave Absalom and allowed him back into his graces, at which point Absalom rebelled against David and tried to take over the kingdom, but Absalom was killed.

1Ki 1:7

**“He conferred with Joab.”** The Hebrew text is literally, “And his words were with Joab,” but that is not clear in English.

1Ki 1:11

**“David our lord.”** The word “lord” is a grammatical plural, “lords.”

1Ki 1:12

**“give you counsel.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “counsel you with counsel.”

1Ki 1:13

**“Didn’t you yourself, my lord king, swear to your servant.”** See commentary on 1 Kings 1:17.

1Ki 1:14

**“and confirm your words.”** The Hebrew is more literally “and fill up your words.”

1Ki 1:15

**“inner room.”** The Hebrew word refers to an inner room, which in this case would be the bedroom.

1Ki 1:16

**“kneeled and bowed down.”** This kneeling preceded bowing down to the ground. The two actions, kneeling and then bowing to the ground blended into one act of homage or worship. The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth. Also, instead of “kneeled and bowed down,” the text could be translated “bowed down and worshiped,” with “kneeling” being understood as part of the process of bowing down, and “bowing down” was the act of worship. The same Hebrew verb, *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

**“What can I do for you?”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “What to you?” David recognizes that Bathsheba had some kind of petition.

1Ki 1:17

**“you yourself swore by Yahweh your God to your servant.”** That David said Solomon would reign on his throne is not recorded anywhere in Scripture. David must have said that privately to Bathsheba and anyone who was with her at the time. Furthermore, although Nathan did not mention David making such a promise to Bathsheba when he spoke to David (1 Kings 1:27), he did know about it when he spoke to Bathsheba (1 Kings 1:13). It seems that the reason that Nathan did not mention David’s promise to Bathsheba when he spoke to David is that David made the promise privately. Also, it is likely that Nathan wanted David’s decision to move quickly and crown Solomon king to come directly from David so no one could say that David was just doing what Nathan said. However, word of David’s promise to make Solomon king, though not public and thus not generally known, was known to some. For example, it would explain why Adonijah invited David’s other sons to his inauguration banquet but did not invite Solomon (1 Kings 1:9-10). In fact, the people who Adonijah did not invite to his inauguration feast is very telling, and lets us know that Adonijah knew he was not supposed to be king but, like Absalom before him, planned to take the throne by stealth and force. Years earlier when David’s son Absalom had rebelled against David, David was younger and his army more intact and loyal to him. Now David was close to dying and he had not gone out with his army in some time, and that fact may have emboldened Adonijah to act to try to take the throne.

The fact that David had not made any kind of public announcement about who would be king explains why so many people would come to Adonijah’s inauguration feast. Adonijah was David’s fourth son, and the first three sons were dead so Adonijah was next in line to be king. However, when they realized that David had just crowned Solomon king they had no motive for a coup against David and left the banquet (1 Kings 1:49).

Some scholars think that Nathan invented the story of David promising Bathsheba that Solomon would be king, and he worked to influence the old and supposedly senile king to crown Solomon, and Bathsheba was a willing participant in the plot simply to get her son on the throne, but that is unlikely. There is no evidence that after being a prophet who was faithful to God for many years that Nathan would suddenly become a deceiver, and furthermore, that good men like Zadok the priest and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and others, would go along with such a plot. Also, if Adonijah believed he was supposed to be king, then tell David and invite Solomon to the banquet.

1Ki 1:18

**“but you.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads “but now,” but many Hebrew manuscripts and the LXX, Syriac, Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate read “you,” which is almost certainly correct.

1Ki 1:20

**“the eyes of all Israel are on you.”** An exaggeration to get David to move forward quickly.

1Ki 1:21

**“lies down with his fathers.”** A euphemism for death.

**“guilty.”** That is, guilty of trying to usurp the throne, and therefore executed.

1Ki 1:23

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth, as we see in this verse. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

1Ki 1:25

**“Long live King Adonijah!”** The Hebrew is idiomatic, “May Adonijah the king live!”

1Ki 1:27

**“who will sit on the throne of my lord the king.”** See commentary on 1 Kings 1:17.

1Ki 1:31

**“kneeled and bowed down.”** See commentary on 1 Kings 1:16.

**“Let my lord King David live forever!”** This is an idiomatic blessing, and also points to a statement that the king will have life beyond the grave, thus pointing to the hope of the resurrection. In his physical body, David was very close to death.

1Ki 1:33

**“mule.”** See commentary on 2 Samuel 13:29.

**“Gihon.”** That is, the Gihon Spring, which was on the eastern side of the city, and it would have been surrounded by a large and well-fortified gate area. Also, this was only about 650 yards from En-rogel, which is on the southeast end of the city where Adonijah was proclaiming himself king. The two opposing groups could quite easily hear each other.

1Ki 1:34

**“will anoint him.”** The verb is singular, giving precedence to Zadok who will do that actual anointing. Translations that say “they are” to anoint him lose that clarity.

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet. The shofar would clearly be heard by Adonijah and his supporters.

1Ki 1:35

**“come up after him.”** That is, come up from the Gihon Spring into the city of Jerusalem.

1Ki 1:36

**“So says Yahweh, the God of my lord the king!”** God had spoken that Solomon was to be king, and now King David is setting Solomon on the throne. Here Benaiah is stating that putting Solomon on the throne is what God had already decreed.[[5]](#footnote-27844) Translations such as the NIV, “May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so declare it,” make it sound like now that David has said it, may God say it too. But that is misleading. God had already said it.

1Ki 1:37

**“make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David.”** Benaiah likely had in mind an expansion of the territory of Israel and also that there would be more peace in the kingdom; David had been a man of war.

1Ki 1:38

**“went down.”** The entourage went down from the city of Jerusalem to the Gihon Spring.

1Ki 1:39

**“the tent.”** The “tent” is not the Tabernacle, which was at Gibeon, but it was the tent that David had set up in Jerusalem for the ark of the covenant (see commentary on 1 Chron. 16:1).

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

1Ki 1:40

**“All the people went up after him.”** Solomon and the people return up the hill to Jerusalem after anointing Solomon.

**“the earth split.”** This is hyperbolic, describing the huge sound.

1Ki 1:41

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

1Ki 1:43

**“lord.”** This is a grammatical plural, “lords” in the Hebrew text, but for good reason, no translator takes this as a plural. Every English Bible says “lord.” The text in 1 Kings 1:43 and 1:47 is adonaynu (or adoneinu), “our lord,” a grammatical plural that is referring to one person, David. Nabal is also referred to with the grammatical plural but is accurately called “lord” in Bible versions (1 Sam. 25:14, 17). The exact same title, adonaynu, is used of Yahweh in Psalm 8:1, showing that Yahweh is not a plurality of persons or “lords.” (see also Ps. 8:1, 9; Ps. 135:5; Neh. 10:29, which also have the grammatical plural). The “grammatical plural” is often referred to by scholars as a “plural of majesty,” a “plural of emphasis,” or a “plural of excellence,” because the plural adds emphasis and/or majesty to an individual. It is important to understand that the grammatical plural is not a plural of number, as if there was more than one individual being referred to. The plural form of the noun is used, but it is used to add emphasis.

1Ki 1:47

**“to bless.”** In this context, the Hebrew can also mean “to congratulate” (NET, NIV).

**“lord.”** This is a grammatical plural, “lords” in the Hebrew text.

1Ki 1:49

**“all those who were called.”** Adonijah had called (invited) a great many people to the feast (1 Kings 1:9).

**“and each one went his way.”** It seems that most of the guests at Adonijah’s feast thought that David supported him being king, but when they found out that was not the case they simply left (see commentary on 1 Kings 1:17).

1Ki 1:53

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

**1 Kings Chapter 2**

1Ki 2:3

**“injunction.”** An injunction is a judicial order that compels a person to carry out a certain act. God had given a specific injunction to kings (cf. Deut. 17:14-20).

**“according to that which is written in the Law of Moses.”** This verse shows that David and Solomon were aware of, and lived by, the Law of Moses.

1Ki 2:4

**“your sons.”** This refers to the “sons of David” who take the throne; David’s descendants. Jesus is rightfully called “the Son of David.”

1Ki 2:5

**“on his belt.”** That is, on Joab’s belt and on Joab’s shoes. Joab killed both Abner and Amasa up close with his sword.

1Ki 2:10

**“and was buried in the City of David.”** This was a first, because tombs made people “unclean,” so people were buried outside of cities so the inhabitants of the city would not become unclean by touching them. However, David was so honored and loved that they buried him inside the “City of David” which is the original Jebusite city below (south of) what is now the Temple Mount. There is good evidence that this tomb has now been found, but it was not recognized for what it was, and the limestone above it, including the roof of the tomb, was removed many centuries ago.

1Ki 2:12

**“Solomon sat on the throne.”** The Bible never says how old Solomon was when he became king, but for reasons why he seems to have been 20 or a little older, see commentary on 1 Kings 3:7. Also, it was common when a king began to reign that the Bible stated whether he did what was evil or what was right in the eyes of Yahweh (cf. 2 Kings 13:1-2, 10-11; 14:23-24; 1 Kings 15:11; 2 Kings 12:2; 14:1-3). However, the Bible does not say that about Solomon. It does say that Solomon disobeyed God concerning his material wealth and where he got it, and he also became an idolater later in his life (1 Kings 10:14-11:13). The Bible does say how long Solomon reigned: 40 years (1 Kings 11:42).

**“and his kingdom was firmly established.”** This is also stated in 1 Kings 2:46, and the two verses, 1 Kings 2:12 and 2:46, form a kind of inclusio, an enclosing envelope that surrounds and groups the accounts between them. Between the two verses are four accounts of Solomon dealing with potential enemies. He deals with his older brother Adonijah, an unfaithful priest Abiathar, Joab, one of David’s generals who supported his rival and not Solomon, and Shemei, a man from the tribe of Benjamin who showed up as a disobedient and threatening subject. On a macro scale, this inclusio seems to very much be a kind of type of the start of the Messianic Kingdom of Christ. When Christ conquers the earth and sets up his kingdom he will separate the “goats,” people who have not supported him or his people, from the “sheep,” people who have supported him, and have the goats thrown into the Lake of Fire for destruction (Matt. 25:31-46, see commentary on Matt. 25:31 and Matt. 25:32). One of the things that makes a kingdom safe and prosperous is getting rid of potential internal rebellion and strife, and Christ will do that and then rule his kingdom with a rod of iron.

1Ki 2:14

**“I have something to say to you.”** The Hebrew is more idiomatic: “I have a word for you.”

1Ki 2:15

**“the kingship was mine and that all Israel set their faces on me.”** This is a huge exaggeration to pressure Bathsheba.

1Ki 2:16

**“Do not turn me down.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “Do not turn my face.”

1Ki 2:17

**“turn you down.”** The Hebrew is “turn your face.”

1Ki 2:18

**“Very well.”** The Hebrew is simply, “Good.” We might idiomatically say “Okay.” Bathsheba knew Adonijah was a rival to Solomon, and almost certainly knew that her speaking to Solomon about Adonijah’s request would result in Adonijah’s death. She spoke to Solomon “about” Adonijah, not “on his behalf” as some versions say.

1Ki 2:19

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

1Ki 2:20

**“do not turn me down.”** The Hebrew is, “turn me away.”

1Ki 2:23

**“life.”** The Hebrew word “life” is “soul” the animating life of the body.

1Ki 2:24

**“made me a house.”** That is, continued the Davidic dynasty through him, Solomon.

1Ki 2:25

**“And King Solomon sent.”** The text puts the death of Adonijah clearly as the will and responsibility of Solomon, who in this case dealt firmly and decisively with an enemy.

1Ki 2:26

**“you are deserving of death.”** The Hebrew is, “a man of death,” that is, a man who deserves to die.

1Ki 2:27

**“Solomon expelled Abiathar from being priest to Yahweh.”** Abiathar was the High Priest, and he was of the line of Ithamar, Aaron’s son. Aaron, the first High Priest, had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar (Exod. 6:23). Nadab and Abihu died (Lev. 10:1-2) and the high priesthood went back and forth between the line of Eleazar and Ithamar, although how or why that happened is not stated in Scripture. Eli, the High Priest at the time of Samuel’s childhood, was from the line of Ithamar, as were the next four High Priests after him, When Abiathar was High Priest, Solomon deposed him and replaced him with Zadok (1 Kings 2:27, 35), who was from the line of Eleazar, and descendants of Eleazar remained the High Priests for generations after that.

1Ki 2:33

**“on the head of his seed forever.”** This is a way of saying that the responsibility for the act of killing Amasa and Abner will be attributed to Joab’s house forever, and not David’s house.

1Ki 2:34

**“in his own house in the wilderness.”** So Joab owned a house somewhere in the Judean wilderness.

1Ki 2:35

**“in Joab’s place.”** The Hebrew is literally, “in his place,” meaning in Joab’s place as head of the army.

1Ki 2:37

**“know, yes, know that you will die, yes die.”** The repetition of the verbs “know” and “die” are the use of the figure of speech polyptoton for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16). Solomon may have mentioned the Wadi Kidron because Shimei would likely have crossed it to get back to his hometown in Benjamin.

1Ki 2:38

**“*Your* word is good.”** The Hebrew text is “The word is good.” Shimei was of the house of Saul, and he realized that his cursing and throwing stones at David (2 Sam. 16:5-7) warranted the death penalty. However, Solomon was willing to let him live in Jerusalem where he was not in much of a position to start a rebellion, and there was no prohibition against Shimei being visited by family members if they wanted to come. Solomon knew that the house of Saul was still a potential threat and did not want to have to keep tabs on Shimei; he was free to live in Jerusalem but not free to leave.

1Ki 2:44

**“You knew all the wickedness that your heart knew that you did to David.”** Although this reads in a seemingly unusual way, it makes perfect sense. It was three years earlier Shimei took the oath, and it was some years before that when he cursed David, which he would have known was wrong; you don’t curse God’s anointed king. So the text is saying, “You knew three years ago when you took the oath all the wickedness that your heart knew when you cursed David, but you cursed him anyway.”

**1 Kings Chapter 3**

1Ki 3:1

**“made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “became a son-in-law to Pharaoh,” but in this context, it means to make an alliance via marriage.

**“took Pharaoh’s daughter.”** We should note that Solomon did not marry Pharaoh’s daughter because he loved her, this was a commercial and perhaps military alliance with Egypt that was sealed by marriage, which was a common custom at that time.

Thus, even though the Bible says at this time in his life Solomon loved God (1 Kings 3:3), he was demonstrating some behavior characteristics that would eventually lead to his downfall. He compromised on the Word of God for “good reasons,” for example, in this case, it seemed to him that an alliance with Egypt would be good for Israel. But his father David did not compromise that way; he made treaties without compromising the Scripture by marrying pagan women. But Solomon had already married at least one pagan woman and had a child by her. Before Solomon even became king he married Naamah, an Ammonite woman, and had a son (Rehoboam) by her (1 Kings 14:21).

As we follow Solomon’s life through Scripture, we can see he made a number of compromises and bad decisions. For example, he ignored God’s commands about who to marry. Solomon eventually had 300 concubines (a concubine is a “lesser wife,” a wife from a lower class who was likely given to him as a present to gain influence or perhaps a girl of particular beauty who he noticed and took into his harem) and 700 wives of royal birth who were likely given to him to gain influence with him or as part of an alliance just as Pharaoh’s daughter had been. Solomon’s pagan wives eventually turned his heart away from the true God, and he ended up doing evil in the eyes of God (1 Kings 11:4-6).

1Ki 3:2

**“at the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

1Ki 3:3

**“burned incense into smoke.”** See commentary on Exodus 29:13.

**“at the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

1Ki 3:4

**“the most important shrine.”** The shrine at Gibeon was the most important shrine in Israel because that is where the Tabernacle of Moses, with its bronze altar and other furniture of the Tabernacle, was located (1 Chron. 16:39). However, the ark of the covenant was not with the Tabernacle; David had taken it to Jerusalem (for more on the travels of the ark, see commentary on 1 Chron. 16:1).

**“shrine.”** The Hebrew word translated “shrine” is *bamah* (#01116 בָּמָה), and the plural, “shrines,” is *bamot*. The *bamah*, often translated as “high place,” referred to a place that was built up so that it was a little higher than the ground around it and then it was leveled out and sometimes paved. Then various objects of worship were placed on it, such as idols, and thus many of the shrines were used in the worship of pagan gods. Larger shrines even had temples to various gods on them. Many of the towns had such shrines (for more on the shrines, see commentary on Num. 33:52).

1Ki 3:5

**“appeared to Solomon.”** God personally appeared to Solomon on two different occasions (1 Kings 3:5; 9:2; 11:9). It seems they both were in a dream, but God showed Himself nevertheless; it was not a figment of Solomon’s imagination. But in spite of his personal and intimate experiences with God, Solomon turned away from Him and did evil in His sight. Solomon is one person who shows us that knowledge does not equal commitment. We can know a lot about God without being committed to him.

[For more on God appearing to people, see commentary on Acts 7:55.]

1Ki 3:7

**“I am a young lad.”** The statement, “I am a young lad,” while being true to a degree considering the culture, is in this context actually more of a hyperbole, an exaggeration, used to express how he felt. Solomon is one of the few kings in the history of Judah and Israel whose age when he began to reign is not given in Scripture (cf. 2 Sam. 2:10; 5:4; 1 Kings 14:21; 22:42; 2 Kings 14:1-2; 21:1, 19; 22:1; 23:31). The date Solomon came to the throne is debated. Some Jewish scholars say around 12 years old, and Josephus says at 14 (*Antiquities*, 8.7.8; but in the same sentence Josephus contradicts Scripture and says Solomon reigned 80 years and died at 94, cf. 1 Kings 11:42), but Solomon’s actual age was likely closer to 20.[[6]](#footnote-26486)

There are a number of reasons to believe that Solomon was about 20 or perhaps even a little older when he took the throne. He had already had at least one son (Rehoboam) by the Ammonite woman Naamah before he became king (1 Kings 14:21). Also, in his first year as king, he showed unusual maturity and decisiveness in the way he handled men who had become his adversaries. He executed his older brother Adonijah and also Joab the captain of David’s army, and he removed Abiathar from being the high priest (1 Kings 2:25, 27, 34). Also, there is no indication that he had any advisors or mentors help him run the kingdom, even from the very start.

Furthermore, Scripture says he reigned 40 years, but if he was only 12 or so when he started reigning as king, then he would have died at 52 or so. However, Scripture says, “when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4). However, it seems clear that it took a number of years for Solomon’s heart to turn to other gods and for him to have time to build temples to Moloch, Chemosh, and other gods and establish sacrificial practices for them, which would involve the gathering and participation of at least some pagan priests (1 Kings 11:7-8). To be considered “old” in that culture it would seem Solomon would have had to have been at least 50.

“**I don’t know how to go out or come in.”** The phrase “I don’t know how to go out or come in” is the figure of speech polarmerismos. Polarmerismos occurs when two extremes are used to represent a whole. Here, “go out and come in” represents the two extremes of life, when a person goes out in the morning and comes back in at night. Thus, in this context, the idiom means, “live life.” Solomon could have said, “I am but a young lad, I don’t know how to live life as a king,” or, “I am too inexperienced to be king,” but he used the idiom.

[For more on polarmerismos, see commentary on Josh. 14:11.]

1Ki 3:9

**“an understanding heart.”** The Hebrew is literally, “a listening heart,” and the word “listening” can have the meanings of listening, understanding, and obeying, and likely all three meanings are in play here.

1Ki 3:15

**“banquet.”** The Hebrew word is literally, “to drink,” but it was used of a banquet with lots to drink.

1Ki 3:16

**“Then.”** Here meaning at some later time, not during the banquet. This would have likely been when Solomon was sitting on his throne and judging the people.

1Ki 3:26

**“heart.”** The Hebrew uses the word for insides, gut, or womb. Her insides were stirred up for her son (cf. Gen. 43:30).

1Ki 3:27

**“the first woman.”** The text just says “her;” “Give her the living child,” but Solomon could point, but it helps to make the written version more clear, and many English versions do that.

1Ki 3:28

**“feared the king.”** Here in 1 Kings 3:28, “feared” is the verb *yare* (#03372 יָרֵא), and in this context, it primarily carries the emphasis of “held in awe,” then “respect.” There would also be a subtle underlying sense of fear, since the King brought the judgment of God to the people.

[For more on the biblical use of “fear,” see commentary on Prov. 1:7.]

**“the wisdom of God was in him to carry out justice.”** The wisdom of God to judge justly is an attribute associated with the Messiah as well (Isa. 11:2-4; Acts 17:31).

**1 Kings Chapter 4**

1Ki 4:1

**“over all Israel.”** Thus emphasizing the centralized government of Israel as it moves out of a more tribal mentality.

1Ki 4:6

**“Over the House.”** This is a title. The king’s “house” was the palace, so the Hebrew phrase could also be translated “Over the Palace,” but “house” is more literal. Here in 1 Kings 4:6, Ahishar was the man who was the administrator over the palace of King Solomon and oversaw what went on there. The title “Over the House” also occurs in 1 Kings 4:6; 16:9; 2 Kings 10:5, 15:5; 18:18, 37; 19:2; Isaiah 22:15; 36:3, 22; and 37:2. Although the person who was “Over the House” changed, the title lasted year after year. For example, Ahishar was the one who was “Over the House” during the reign of Solomon (c. 975 BC). and Shebna and then Eliakim were “Over the House” during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah (c. 725), some 250 years later. “Arza” was Over the House in the reign of King Elah of Israel (c. 895; 1 Kings 16:9).

The king would be too busy to oversee the palace staff and what was going on in the palace, as well as special events that were held there, and besides, the king was often gone, so the kingdoms of Israel and Judah had an administrator called “Over the House” to be in charge of the things that occurred in the palace. The office of “Over the House” was powerful and could be abused, and during the reign of Hezekiah, Shebna abused the office and was removed and replaced with Eliakim (Isa. 22:15-21). The evidence is that there was also an administrator who was referred to as “Over the City,” basically the mayor of the city (2 Kings 10:5).

1Ki 4:9

**“Ben-deker in Makaz and in Shaalbim and Beth-shemesh and Elon-beth-hanan.”** These cities are in the original tribal location of Dan, before the Danites moved north. The locations of Makaz and Elon-beth-hanan are unknown.

1Ki 4:10

**”Arubboth.”** The location of Arubboth is unknown, but Socoh and “the land of Hepher” (cf. Josh. 12:17) are in the territory of Judah. Thus, it is very likely that the section that Ben-hesed oversaw was in Judah.

1Ki 4:11

**“all the height of Dor.”** Ben-abinadab had the section around Dor, a city on the Mediterranean coastal plain south of Mount Carmel.

1Ki 4:12

**“below Jezreel.”** That is, lower in elevation; closer to the Jordan River Valley.

1Ki 4:13

**“bars.”** The “bars” were strong beams that were placed behind the doors so they could not be opened and could withstand pounding from the outside without giving way. Those bars were the origin of the shout “Bar the doors!” when an enemy would approach.

1Ki 4:16

**“Bealoth.”** The name occurs in Josh. 15:24. The reading “Bealoth” is disputed.

1Ki 4:19

**“the land.”** The verse is problematic. The Septuagint adds Judah, which could have been dropped. It is hard to imagine Solomon’s officers being over “all Israel” but omitting Judah, and that surely would have caused bad feelings between the tribes if everyone but the Judeans had to provide for Solomon’s household. On the other hand, as the text now stands there are 12 officers, and if you add one there will be 13.

1Ki 4:20

**“Judah and Israel were as many as the sand that is by the sea in abundance.”** God made good on his promise to Abraham and Jacob about how numerous their descendants would be (Gen. 22:17; 32:12).

**“eating and drinking and rejoicing.”** Here in 1 Kings 4:20, “ate and drank” is used idiomatically as a kind of polarmerismos to express living life in general. The text could have said more literally, “the people lived their lives and were happy.” (Polarmerismos occurs when two extremes are used to represent a whole, such as in the southern expression, “that is the long and short of it,” meaning, “that is all there is.” We see the same figure in 1 Kings 3:7).

[See Word Study: “Merismos.”]

1Ki 4:21

**“the River.”** The Euphrates, but this is the upper Euphrates in Syria.

**“the border of Egypt.”** Most likely the Wadi el-arish in the Sinai.

1Ki 4:22

**“30 cors.”** The records of biblical weights and measures (especially measures) are not exactly known and somewhat disputed. At best we have rough estimates (estimates of the size of a cor range from 3.8 to 6.5 bushels, a huge difference, although the measure near 6 bushels seems to be more accurate; a bushel is about 9 gallons, or 36 quarts, or 34 liters). The evidence is that a “cor” is a very large measure and contained about 6 bushels (or about 54 gallons (205 liters). According to Ezekiel 45:14, the cor equaled the homer (and the word “homer” apparently referred to a donkey’s load). If a cor was about 54 gallons, then 30 cors is in the neighborhood of 1,620 gallons, so 1,620 gallons (6,132 liters) of fine flour. Similarly, then, “60 cors of flour” would be about 3,240 gallons of flour (12,264 liters). So the grain provided to Solomon for one day was about 4,860 gallons of grain (18,397 liters). It has been estimated that this amount of flour and grain could feed something like 20,000 people (although estimates range widely, for example, from 14,000 to 22,000 people). It is extremely unlikely that all these people were in Jerusalem. Solomon had staff and wives all over his kingdom that would have needed to be supported.

Thus, in a biblical lunar calendar year, which was 354 days, Solomon would provide 31,860 cor of grain for his household. Interestingly, according to 1 Kings 5:11, Solomon also provided 20,000 cor of wheat to Hiram king of Tyre for his household for a year. Given that the Israelite lunar year was 354 days, that would mean that Solomon provided about 56.5 cors of wheat per day to Hiram, quite a bit less than the 90 cors of grain he provided each day for his own household and extended kingdom staff.

1Ki 4:25

**“every man under his vine and under his fig tree.”** Saying that people were under their vine and fig tree was an idiomatic way of saying that people lived in peace and safety, and enjoyed abundance in their lives (see commentary on Mic. 4:4).

1Ki 4:26

**“40,000 stalls of horses.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads 40,000 stalls, but this could well be a copyist’s error. The truth may well be 4,000, which is what 2 Chronicles 9:25 says. Also, this is the number of “stalls,” the number of horses may have been less, but that number is not given. However, Solomon was not supposed to have many horses (Deut. 17:16) (see commentary on 2 Chron. 9:25).

1Ki 4:28

**“hay.”** Although most versions read “straw,” typically straw was not fed to horses, but “hay,” which included the grain and the stalk, was.

1Ki 4:29

**“depth of knowledge as vast as the sand on the seashore.”** The Hebrew text is more literally, “width of heart like the sand that is on the edge of the sea.” Here in 1 Kings 4:29, “heart” refers to the contents of the mind, i.e., “knowledge,” and not what “heart” often means in the English spoken on the street, where “heart” often means more like “resolution,” or “courage,” or “character.”

[For more information on “heart,” see commentary on Prov. 15:21.]

1Ki 4:30

**“the Children of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.”** The Children of the East would be the Assyrians and Babylonians, and perhaps the Arabs, those ancient eastern cultures, and Egypt was the wisdom of the West.

1Ki 4:31

**“Ethan the Ezrahite.”** Ethan wrote Psalm 89.

**1 Kings Chapter 5**

1Ki 5:5

**“Your son whom I will set on your throne.”** Cf. 2 Samuel 7:13.

1Ki 5:11

**“20,000 cors.”** A cor is about 54 gallons, so this would be 1,080,000 gallons of wheat each year (4,088,244 liters of wheat per year), somewhat less than Solomon provided for his own household (see commentary on 1 Kings 4:22).

1Ki 5:13

**“numbered 30,000 men.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “were 30,000 men.”

1Ki 5:18

**“Gebalites.”** From Gebal in Lebanon.

**“carved them.”** After the stones got to Jerusalem they had to be carved for the Temple.

**1 Kings Chapter 6**

1Ki 6:1

**“In the four hundred eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt.”** This is 975 BC according to the calculations done by Spirit & Truth, and 966 BC done by many other scholars (cf. NIV Study Bible text note). Thus, according to the STF chronology, the Exodus was in 1454 BC (the NIV chronology has 1446 BC). This is the early chronology based on biblical data. Many scholars reject the biblical chronology and date biblical events from an Egyptian chronology that has been constructed and thus have a later Exodus date of about 1250 BC, but there is good reason to reject the later chronology and accept the biblical chronology. A number of books have been written about this.[[7]](#footnote-17546)

**“in the month Ziv, which is the second month.”** The month Ziv is approximately our May. So Solomon started building just as the rainy season in Israel came to an end.

1Ki 6:2

**“was 60 cubits long and 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high.”** The “house” is the Temple proper, consisting of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The vestibule (which some translations call a porch or portico, but it was a room, with walls and a roof) was not part of the Temple proper. The Temple was roughly 90 feet (27.5 m) deep from front to back, 30 feet wide (9 m), and 45 feet (13.7 m) high. The REV is using the approximate measure of 18 inches for a cubit (see commentary on 2 Chron. 3:3).

1Ki 6:3

**“The vestibule at the front of the Holy Place of the house.”** The Temple Solomon built had three rooms: the “vestibule” was the outermost room, and it was the first room a person entered when going into the Temple. As we see from 1 Kings 6:2, the vestibule was not considered part of the Temple proper. The Temple proper consisted of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies. After the vestibule were two more rooms: the Holy Place and the most inner room, which was the Holy of Holies. The Tabernacle of Moses only had the Holy Place and Holy of Holies; it did not have an outer vestibule, but Solomon’s Temple and Herod’s Temple had a vestibule, and so will the future Temple described in Ezekiel 40-43. 1 Kings 6:3 is giving the size of the vestibule. The “house” in 1 Kings 6:3 is the entire Temple, consisting of the three rooms.

Many English versions do not read “vestibule,” but that does seem to be the meaning of the word and that meaning is supported by many scholars. The problem with translating the sections of the Bible that speak of the Temple (including Ezekiel’s Temple) is that many of the terms are specific architectural terms, and it can be difficult to determine what they refer to, or if they are used in different ways in different contexts. To use a modern example, some buildings have “vestibules,” some have “lobbies” and some have neither; also, typically doors have “jambs” and many doors have a “lintel” (but if it is part of the frame it is more often called a “head jamb”). Buildings have specific terms with specific meanings, and the Hebrew text has architectural terms with specific meanings, but there is not an “Ancient Hebrew Dictionary of Architectural Terms” that scholars check, so they often disagree on the meanings of the words and build different models of the buildings based on their understanding of the terms. Many English Bibles translate the vestibule as “porch,” but that term does not seem accurate because a porch is typically open or has just a roof, but the vestibule had walls; it was a room.

**“Holy Place.”** The Hebrew word translated “Holy Place” is *heykal* (#01964 הֵיכָל), and in this context, it refers to the Holy Place, where the menorahs, the tables of the Bread of the Presence, and the golden altar of incense were. The Hebrew word *heykal* has at least three distinct meanings in the Bible: the palace of a king or ruler (2 Kings 20:18), the Tabernacle or Temple as a whole (1 Sam. 1:9; Jer. 7:4), and the Holy Place of the Temple, that is, the main room that had the menorah and the tables with the Bread of the Presence (1 Kings 6:3, 5; 7:50; Neh. 6:10). This main room, the Holy Place, is called a “nave” in some English Versions because the nave of a church is the main room in which the congregation sits during a church service, and the Holy Place is the main room in the Temple. However, there is enough difference between the “Holy Place” of the Temple and the “nave” of a Church that the word “nave” can be confusing, and furthermore, most Christians do not know what a “nave” is.

1Ki 6:4

**“framed niches.”** It is unlikely that these niches are “windows,” even though many versions read that way and the Hebrew word can mean “window.” However, there is no evidence that the Temple would have had windows that people might peer through. The Tabernacle certainly had no windows. These were likely some kind of window-size niches that were recessed and had frames, and the fact that they were described as being “shut” would indicate that the niche did not go all the way through the wall. Our Western culture loves windows because they let in light and make a room look larger, but the Temple was different. It was designed to keep God and the priests separate from the outside world. Any peering in from the outside would have been considered a great intrusion. Furthermore, the walls of the Temple had side rooms or stories all around it, and there would be no point in having a window in the Temple that looked out into a side room. However, we must allow for the possibility that the Temple had windows that were above the side rooms and thus more than 22 feet above the floor of the Holy Place (and therefore more than 12 feet above the floor of the Holy of Holies. Those windows could be covered, but then what would have been the purpose of having them to begin with?

For a window, there are “frames,” whereas for doors there is a “lintel” above the door (1 Kings 7:4).

1Ki 6:5

**“he built stories all around.”** There were side rooms on the north, west, and south sides of the Temple. These side rooms were built such that there were three levels or “stories” of side rooms. The Bible never says what they were used for, but they could have been for storage and also used as rooms for the priests who were serving in the Temple. Two times a year the priests served for one week, and they also served at all three of the major feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Especially at the feasts, there would be very many priests and a great need for housing. As this verse says, the side rooms were against the outer wall of the Temple proper, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. They were not built against the wall of the vestibule at the front of the Temple.

[For more on the Holy Place, which is the *heykal* in Hebrew, see commentary on 1 Kings 6:3].

1Ki 6:6

**“so that the beams would not have to be inserted into the walls of the house.”** The Temple (the “house”) did not have outer walls that went straight up and down. The outer walls of the Temple stair-stepped upward with three stair steps or insteps, so the outer wall of the Temple at the top was three cubits thinner than the wall at the bottom. That meant that the side rooms that were against the outside wall of the Temple could be built one above another in stories against the outer wall of the Temple with the beams of the roof of the first story (which was also the floor of the second story) set on top of the stair-step wall of the Temple. Such a roof/floor structure could bear the weight of the stories above it, and the beams that were the roof of one story (and the floor of the next) did not have to be inserted into the wall of the Temple. The wall of the Temple itself was thick enough that even though the upper wall was three cubits thinner than the lowest section of the wall, the upper wall could still support the weight of the Temple roof.

The outer wall of the side rooms went straight up. That meant the rooms of each story had to be longer from the outer to the inner wall than the story below it. As the outer wall of the Temple stair-stepped inward, the beams that had to reach from the outer wall of the side room to the outer wall of the Temple had to be longer than the beams of the story below it. As the Temple wall stair-stepped in by one cubit with each story, the rooms in those stories had to be longer by a cubit too. That is why the first-story rooms were only 5 cubits from the outer wall to the inner wall, the second story was 6 cubits from wall to wall, and the third story was 7 cubits from wall to wall. As the Temple wall stair-stepped inward, the roof/floor beams and the rooms had to be made longer and longer.

So, the lowest part of the outer wall of the Temple was six cubits thick (9 feet), and the lowest story of side rooms that were outside that lowest part of the wall were five cubits (7.5 feet) from front to back (that is, from outside wall to inside wall). All the side rooms were 5 cubits high (7.5 feet) (1 Kings 6:10), so after going up for 5 cubits, the 6-cubits-thick outer wall of the Temple was stair-stepped inward by one cubit (so the Temple wall was now one cubit thinner), and was only 5 cubits thick. The beams that were both the roof of the first-story rooms and the floor of the second-story rooms rested on that one-cubit offset instead of having to be cut into the outer wall of the Temple. The one-cubit instep in the outer wall of the Temple made the second story one cubit longer from front to back, which was why the first story rooms were only 5 cubits from front to back but the second story rooms were 6 cubits from front to back. After the second story, the outer wall of the Temple was stair-stepped inward again by one cubit, so that the roof of the second-story rooms, which was the floor of the third-story rooms could be set on that offset. That offset made the outer wall of the Temple adjacent to the third story of the side rooms only 4 cubits thick, and it also meant that the roof beams of the second story, which were the floor beams of the third story, had to be seven cubits long and the third story room 7 cubits in length from front to back. Then the Temple wall stair-stepped inward a third time creating a third one-cubit-wide ledge. At that point, the outer wall of the Temple was only 3 cubits thick (4.5 feet), and the roof beams of that third story of the side rooms had to be eight cubits long and they were set on the ledge of the Temple that was created by that third stair-step inward.

This architecture created a very pleasing look. Looking from east to west, the Temple itself (a person would be looking directly at the vestibule) was 20 cubits (30 feet, 9 m) wide. Then there would be side rooms visible on both the north and south side of the Temple (the side rooms on the west side of the Temple could not be seen from the east). The side rooms went straight up and down and were 15 cubits high (22.5 feet. 6.8 m). One could not see from the outside that the outer wall of the Temple was stair-stepped inward to support the beams of the side rooms, nor could one see from the outside that each story of the side rooms was one cubit larger than the story below it.

1Ki 6:7

**“was built of stone prepared at the quarry.”** The stones for the Temple were quarried and then worked to an astounding degree of accuracy right where they were quarried. Then, when they were taken to the building site of the Temple they fit together perfectly; they were not “adjusted” to fit when they got to the building site.

1Ki 6:8

**“The entrance.”** It does not seem to make much sense that the three stories of rooms around the south, west, and north sides of the Temple would only have one entrance, which was on the south side, but that is what the text says and there does not seem to be any variation or reason to question the accuracy of the text. But it would mean that the only way to get to a room on the north side of the Temple would be to enter the entrance on the south and walk all the way around the Temple. Also, the Bible does not explain how a person could get to any individual room, and scholars debate about it. It does not seem at all likely that the rooms had doors in the sides and people had to walk through a room to get to the next one. There must have been some kind of hallway at each level, but whether that hallway was on the outside or inside of the rooms is not described.

**“lowest side rooms.”** Although the Masoretic Text reads “middle,” that is a scribal error as can be seen from reading the verse. The Septuagint and Aramaic Targum read “lowest,” and how “lowest” could have been miscopied into “middle” is explained in many commentaries.[[8]](#footnote-23863)

**“right side.”** The right side was the south side.

1Ki 6:9

**“roofed the house.”** The Temple roof, its “cover,” was cedar beams covered with cedar planks (for translations that use “roof,” cf. BBE, CEB, CJB, GW, NAB, NIV, NRSV).

**“beams and planks of cedar.”** In 1929 there was an earthquake in Jerusalem that caused great damage to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and there were dozens of huge cedar beams exposed, at least one of which was carbon-dated to as early as the First Temple period, the period of Solomon’s Temple. Since Solomon’s Temple and Herod’s Temple were both burned, it is quite unlikely that the beams in the mosque came from those temples, but they could easily have come from some of the other buildings of that time period. Pictures of those beams can be found on the Internet.

1Ki 6:10

**“And he built the stories along the entire house.”** The three stories of rooms have already been described in 1 Kings 6:5-8, except 1 Kings 6:10 gives the height of each story as five cubits. Also, “the entire house” does not include the east side, as is explained in 1 Kings 6:5. The three-story side rooms were only around the Holy Place and Holy of Holies, and on the north, west, and south walls of the Temple.

**“five cubits.”** Five cubits is 7 ½ feet, or about 2 ¼ meters. A 7 ½ foot ceiling is lower than a standard eight-foot ceiling today, but the average Israelite was shorter than the average American.

1Ki 6:14

**“So Solomon built the house and finished it.”** This is very similar to 1 Kings 6:9.

1Ki 6:15

**“of the house.”** The “house” is the Temple.

**“to the rafters of the ceiling.”** The Masoretic text reads, “to the walls of the ceiling,” but that is an apparent scribal error where “rafters” was miscopied to “walls,” which in Hebrew was an easy mistake. The Septuagint also reads rafters.

1Ki 6:16

**“he built it on the interior *of the Temple* as an inner sanctuary.”** So Solomon built a wall of cedar boards inside the Temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

**“an inner sanctuary; the Holy of Holies.”** There are two names here for the Holy of Holies, the “inner sanctuary” (the *debir*, #01687 דְּבִיר), and the Holy of Holies (the *qodesh ha qodeshim*, #06944 קֹדֶשׁ). The “inner sanctuary” (the *debir*) is from the root DBR, which is related to the word speech or speaking (cf. *dabar,* “word”), thus the translation “oracle” in some English translations.

1Ki 6:17

**“In front *of the Holy of Holies*.”** The “front” of the Temple was the east side, so in front of, or east of, the Holy of Holies was the Holy Place. That is where the menorahs and the tables for the Bread of the Presence were. The Holy Place was 40 cubits (60 feet; 18 m) from front to back. The Hebrew word translated “Holy Place” is *heykal* (#01964 הֵיכָל), and it is called a “nave” in some English Versions because the nave of a church is the main room in which the congregation sits during a church service, and the Holy Place is the main room in the Temple.

[For more on the Holy Place, see commentary on 1 Kings 6:3.]

1Ki 6:19

**“the inner sanctuary.”** Also called “the Holy of Holies” (cf. 1 Kings 6:16).

1Ki 6:20

**“The interior of the inner sanctuary.”** The “inner sanctuary” is the Holy of Holies.

**“and 20 cubits in its height.”** The Temple was 30 cubits high (1 Kings 6:2), so if the Holy of Holies is only 20 cubits high, then either the ceiling is lower or the floor is higher. The floor height of both rooms may be the same and there may be upper chambers above the Holy of Holies (2 Chron. 3:9), or the floor of the Holy of Holies is ten cubits (15 feet) higher than the floor of the Holy Place. That would be quite a stairway up, but it would set the Holy of Holies apart as an especially holy place.

1Ki 6:21

**“and he drew chains of gold across the front of the inner sanctuary.”** If this reading is correct, the Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy Place by doors, a curtain, and gold chains. It is possible that the text could be saying something like, “and he passed chains of gold *back and forth* across the front of the inner sanctuary.”

1Ki 6:22

**“that belonged to the inner sanctuary.”** The golden altar of incense was just in front of the Holy of Holies (the inner sanctuary), and burned incense in honor of God. The altar could not have been in the Holy of Holies, or only the High Priest could have lit that altar and only on the Day of Atonement (see commentary on Heb. 9:4).

1Ki 6:23

**“pinewood.”** The Hebrew is not the normal word for “pine” or “pine tree,” but is more literally “oil tree.” However, an “oil tree” would fit the Allepo pine, which is a very good possibility for this tree. The Allepo pine is very sappy, which is why it might be called an “oil tree.” Furthermore, the wood of the Allepo pine would be much better for making the cherubim and the wooden doors of the Temple than olive wood would be. It is worth noting that the tree here in 1 Kings 6:23 is distinguished from the olive tree in Nehemiah 8:15, where this tree and the olive tree are two different trees. It should also be noted that while the wood of the olive tree is very beautiful, the olive tree is not large and is very twisty, so trying to make planks for doors or large carvings such as a 15-foot by 15-foot cherubim would be extremely difficult, whereas the wood from the Aleppo pine is much more fitting for that kind of woodwork.[[9]](#footnote-25001)

1Ki 6:27

**“cherubim.”** See commentary on Exodus 25:20 and Ezekiel 1:5.

1Ki 6:29

**“he carved all around the walls of the house with carved figures.”** Solomon carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers all over inside the wooden walls of the Temple, both in the Holy Place and Holy of Holies. Solomon carved (a verb) carved figures (nouns) on the Temple walls; the double use of “carved” in both the verb and noun forms emphasized the intricate work that went on in decorating the Temple. This work, especially in the Holy of Holies into which only the High Priest went and only one day a year and no one else could ever see, was clearly an act of worship and love for God.

**“*both* the inner and outer *rooms*.”** That is, both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

1Ki 6:31

**“pinewood.”** See commentary on 1 Kings 6:23.

**“the doorframes had five recesses.”** See Yosef Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu.[[10]](#footnote-21381) Note also the CEB translation: “He made the doors of the inner sanctuary from olive wood and carved the doorframes with five recesses.”

1Ki 6:32

**“pinewood.”** See commentary on 1 Kings 6:23.

1Ki 6:33

**“And also he made door frames of pinewood with four recesses.”** See Yosef Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu.[[11]](#footnote-15197) Note also the CEB translation: “He made the door of the main hall with doorframes of olive wood with four recesses.”

1Ki 6:34

**“pivoted on sockets.”** Doors in the ancient world pivoted on sockets. Effective hinges were not invented yet. The door would have a pin at the top and bottom that fit into a socket, and the pins would turn in the socket as the door opened and shut. Some translators see these doors as folding doors, but how that would happen is unclear, and the archaeological and historical evidence favors there just being two doors that pivoted on pins and sockets.

1Ki 6:35

**“palm trees.”** The word for palm tree refers to smaller palm trees, likely shorter from top to bottom.

1Ki 6:36

**“He built the *wall of the* inner court.”** There was a wall around the inner court, but the height of that wall is never given. The inner courtyard would have the altar of sacrifice in it. The inner court is the “Court of the Priests,” and there was a larger court outside of it (2 Chron. 4:9).

**“three courses of cut stone and a course of cedar beams.”** The wall built like this would have to be large enough that people could not look over it. But we cannot tell from the text if the stones were thick, or if the three courses of stone and then a cedar beam repeated itself to get to the desired height.

1Ki 6:38

**“So he was building it for seven years.”** The time was actually seven and one-half years. Usually, a half year is rounded up to the next year, and we would expect the Bible to say Solomon was building the Temple for eight years. Why the number is rounded down is not explained.

**1 Kings Chapter 7**

1Ki 7:1

**“his own house.”** Solomon’s palace was made up of five different sections, and how they were connected and the pattern they formed is not known.

1Ki 7:2

**“For he built the House of the Forest of Lebanon.”** This is not a separate building, but a wing of Solomon’s palace; in fact, it is likely that it is the first entrance into the palace, which is why weapons and armor were stored there (cf. 1 Kings 10:16-17). It is much larger than the Temple, which was 60 by 20 cubits.

**“four rows of cedar pillars.”** It was because this building had four rows of cedar pillars, not stone pillars, that it resembled a forest and was known as the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

**“cedar beams.”** From recent archaeological discoveries, these are beams above the pillars.[[12]](#footnote-19369) Christopher Eames wrote in the [Aug. 21, 2023 report](https://armstronginstitute.org/935) from the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology[[13]](#footnote-29811) that professor Yosef Garfinkel, while excavating Khirbet Qeiyafa, discovered models of buildings, one of clay and one of carved stone, which had what archaeologists and architects refer to as “triglyphs.” These models are the earliest known triglyphs in the ancient world. Eames quoted the 2016 book *Solomon’s Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries* by Professor Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu in his article: “The triglyph decoration in the temple model from Khirbet Qeiyafa predates the Greek temples several centuries; for example, it predates the Acropolis temples of Athens by about 500 years. Our new find revolutionizes the understanding of the development of public construction in biblical times and attests that it began as early as the late 11th-to-early-10th-centuries b.c.e. It also shows that architectural phenomena that developed in the East migrated and influenced Greek Classical architecture. Various scholars have pointed out the strong influences of the ancient Near East on elements of the culture of Classical Athens; we can now add triglyphs as one of these elements.”

Quoting the book, *Solomon’s Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries by* Professor Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu, the article says, “Now we see that the biblical tradition [describing the construction of the house of the forest of Lebanon] presents four architectural elements one of top of the other from bottom to top: columns, cedar capitals (*krutot* or *kotarot*), *slaot* (45 planks, 15 in each row) and a roof made of cedar beams. A schematic section of the structure shows how well the components fit together using this interpretation, and there is no need to change the *number* of rows of columns (from four to three or to any other number).”

It is very difficult to translate architectural terms because they usually only occur once or twice in the Bible and are not commonly found in other ancient literature. So having models that allow us to get an idea of what the terms might mean is very helpful.

1Ki 7:3

**“roofed with cedar *planks that were set* on the roof beams.”** The translation of 1 Kings 7:3 comes from new discoveries about ancient architecture.[[14]](#footnote-22324)

1Ki 7:4

**“opening.”** The word comes from the word for “sight” or “light,” and apparently it was used as an opening that was a window (1 Kings 7:4) and an opening that was a door (1 Kings 7:5). The word only occurs in these two verses in the Old Testament.

1Ki 7:5

**“and opening was opposite opening three times.”** The house of the Forest of Lebanon was 150 feet long, and it seems to have had three doors on each end (or side), each door opposite the door on the other end (or side). Whether the doors were on the long side or the short side is not stated.

1Ki 7:6

**“the Hall of Pillars.”** This is another wing of Solomon’s palace.

**“a vestibule​ in front of it.”** The Hebrew is plural, “in front of them,” that is, in front of the pillars, but we think of the “Hall of Pillars” as a singular building, thus “it.”

1Ki 7:7

**“Hall.”** In other contexts the Hebrew word is translated “vestibule” in the REV, but we would not normally say, “the Vestibule of Judgment.” “Hall of Judgment” is clearer.

**“from floor to floor.”** The Hebrew text is clear but the meaning is unclear. The Syriac and Vulgate support the emendation, “from floor to [ceiling] beams” (cf. 1 Kings 6:16). However, that would make the verse about the wall covering, not the floor covering at all. The emendation may be the correct reading, but it is also possible that the Hebrew text is describing something that we do not yet clearly understand.

1Ki 7:9

**“All these.”** The three wings of Solomon’s palace: the Hall of Judgment, Solomon’s living quarters, and the house for Pharaoh’s daughter.

**“inside and outside.”** Both the inside wall of the buildings and the outside walls were cut with saws so that they were smooth.

**“from the foundation to the coping.”** The “coping” is the uppermost course of stone in a stone wall. The walls of Solomon’s buildings were smooth all the way from the foundation up to the very last course of stone, thus, to the roof.

**“the great courtyard.”** Exactly what the “great courtyard” refers to is not known, but it likely refers to the large enclosure around the entire palace complex. It is compared to the inner courtyard of the Temple (1 Kings 7:12).

1Ki 7:14

**“bronze.”** The same Hebrew word can mean copper (cf. Deut. 8:9).

**“his works.”** That is, Hiram did all his metalwork that he was skilled to make.

1Ki 7:15

**“and the circumference was 12 cubits​.”** The Aramaic Targum, the Syriac, and the Septuagint add, “It was hollow, and its thickness was four fingers.” Jeremiah 52:21 says the same thing. It is likely that this phrase was omitted in the copying of the Hebrew text.

1Ki 7:19

**“four cubits.”** This seems to be saying that the lily work went up four cubits, while the capital itself was five cubits (1 Kings 7:16).

1Ki 7:21

**“Jachin.”** This means, “He will establish.” This was the pillar on the south side. The names would honor God, and speak of the Davidic monarchy and establishing it.

**“Boaz.”** This means, “in Him is strength.” This was the pillar on the north side.

1Ki 7:23

**“brim to brim.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “lip to lip.”

1Ki 7:24

**“gourds that encircled it, ten to a cubit.”** The gourds were very delicate work. For there to be ten gourds to every 18 inches, the gourds could only be a little over an inch apiece.

1Ki 7:25

**“west.”** The Hebrew is “seaward,” that is, toward the Mediterranean Sea.

**“east.”** The Hebrew is “sunrise,” which is to the east.

1Ki 7:26

**“held 2,000 baths.”** This is about the amount of liquid that the tanker trucks that deliver gas to gas stations hold. The largest trucks can carry somewhere around 11,000 to 11,500 gallons. The record in 2 Chron. 4:5 is that the sea held 3,000 baths. Different people have given different explanations for the difference. One is that Chronicles was written later than Kings and the later “bath” measure was smaller. Another explanation is that when filled normally the sea held 2,000 baths, but if filled to the brim it would hold 3,000. The Bible does not explain the reason for the different measures.

1Ki 7:31

**“And the opening of it *was* on the inside of the crown.”** On top of the stand was a round projection that is called the “crown” because it was round like a crown. Into the crown went the basin, which was supported on the projections that came out from the legs of the stands.

1Ki 7:32

**“the axle struts.”** The Hebrew word is literally “hand.” The strut that connected the axle to the stand was part of the stand and “grabbed” the axle so that it stayed under the stand like an auto strut grabs the axle of a car so the wheels stay in place under the car.

1Ki 7:34

**“There were four supports at the four corners of each stand.”** If the supports held the basins in place, then the verse would likely read something like, “There were four supports for the water basins at the four corners of each base.” The basins would have weighed almost a ton (2,000 lbs) each, so there would have been a need for extra supports.

1Ki 7:39

**“the right side of the house.”** The “right side” is the south side in the biblical culture. The sea was placed east of the Temple and on the south side of it.

1Ki 7:40

**“the pots.”** Although the Masoretic text reads “basins,” there is good evidence that reading was miscopied and 1 Kings 7:40 is speaking of Temple implements that have not been mentioned earlier. For one thing, the Hebrew word for “basins” and the Hebrew word for “pots” are very close, the difference being only one letter that gets mistaken for the other.[[15]](#footnote-31419) In fact, many Hebrew manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate all read “pots,” not “basins.” Also, the context reads like this is a new subject, and the “basins” had been discussed earlier, but the pots had not. Also, the parallel verse in 2 Chronicles 4:11 reads “pots,” not “basins,” and there does not seem to be a reason that there would be a contradiction between Kings and Chronicles when it comes to pots. Also, five verses later, in 1 Kings 7:45, the list clearly seems to be repeated, with “pots” and not basins.

1Ki 7:41

**“two...two...two.”** The repetition of “two” emphasizes the fact that there were two similar pillars in front of Solomon’s Temple.

1Ki 7:46

**“The king cast them in the plain of the Jordan.”** This is in the Transjordan. The location of Zarethan is debated but Sukkoth is north and east of where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea, so Zarethan would be close by. It is unclear why the implements for the Temple would have been cast in the Transjordan, east of the Jordan River. The alluvial soil east and west of the Jordan River is very similar since the Jordan flooded its banks and covered much of the rift valley floor almost every year (cf. Josh. 3:15). Getting heavy bronze articles up the more than 3,000-foot climb in elevation from the Jordan Valley to Jerusalem would be difficult enough, but getting the heavy articles across the Jordan River would seem to be a major problem. Any wheeled device would have almost certainly sunk in the mud of the river bottom unless a great effort was made to create some kind of road through the river.

**“in the thickness of the ground.”** The meaning of the Hebrew text is uncertain. The translation “in clay molds” is preferred in some translations (cf. CEB, CSB, NIV, NKJV, NLT). However, some translations have “in the clay ground” (cf. CJB, ESV, KJV, NASB, NRSV). But the translation “in the clay ground” is somewhat suspicious because the ground in the Transjordan is not known for having thick clay, and in fact, the soil on both sides of the Jordan River is very similar. Also, the soil is full of rocks of various sizes that have been deposited in it over thousands of years of flooding, so any clay that was used would have to be cleaned and screened for rocks before it could be used in making a mold.

The Hebrew “in the thickness of the ground” could refer to some kind of mold, but it also could refer to man-made furnaces that were in the ground. Furnaces were dug in the ground to keep them hot and unaffected by wind-blown sand and such. Air was blown into these furnaces by bellows to keep the fire as hot as needed. It is also possible that the Hebrew is referring to the whole process of smelting the metal and then making the molds and casting the vessels, but the text does not give us the details of the whole process.

**“Sukkoth and Zarethan.”** These towns are in the Transjordan, east of the Jordan River. The reason why Solomon would cast these heavy articles on the east side of the Jordan River and then have to bring them back across the river is not understood.

1Ki 7:48

**“the Bread of the Presence.”** The Bread of the Presence was large cakes of bread that were in the Tabernacle and Temple (see commentary on Exod. 25:30).

1Ki 7:49

**“the menorahs, five on the right side and five on the left.”** Moses’ Tabernacle had one menorah (Exod. 37:17-24). Solomon’s Temple had ten.

**“before the inner sanctuary.”** The lampstands (the “menorahs”) were in the Holy Place, before the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies.

**“the lamps.”** These were the oil lamps that were set on the menorahs. The menorahs were “lampstands,” but they did not have the lamp itself as a built-in part of them. The oil lamps had to be set on the menorahs.

1Ki 7:50

**“panels.”** The meaning of the Hebrew word is unknown. It is not part of the structure of the Temple, but goes inside the Temple. Although “hinges” or “sockets” are popular translations in the English Bibles, a hinge or door socket made of gold would not work at all, gold is simply too soft to be workable with the heavy doors of the Temple.

**1 Kings Chapter 8**

1Ki 8:2

**“the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.”** The feast in the seventh month is the Feast of Tabernacles (also called “the Feast of Booths,” or Sukkoth).

1Ki 8:4

**“the Tent of Meeting.”** The “Tabernacle” (“Dwelling Place”) is also referred to as the “Tent of Meeting” because it was the place where people met with God. The Hebrew phrase is *'ohel mo'ed*, in which *'ohel* (#0168 אֹהֶל) means “tent,” and is followed by *mo'ed* (#04150 מוֹעֵד or מֹעֵד), which means a “meeting” or a “place for a meeting.” Thus, the *'ohel mo'ed* is the “Tent of Meeting” (see commentary on Exod. 27:21).

1Ki 8:6

**“ark of the covenant.”** The ark of the covenant that Moses made was placed in Solomon’s Temple. However, there will not be an ark of the covenant in the Millennial Temple (see commentary on Jer. 3:16).

**“under the wings of the cherubim.”** Even before Solomon’s huge cherubim, during the time of the Tabernacle of Moses, Yahweh dwelt “between” the cherubim that were on the atonement cover of the ark of the covenant (see commentary on Num. 7:89).

1Ki 8:8

**“to this day.”** This tells us that at least this part of 1 Kings was written before the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in 586 BC, because when this was written the Temple was still standing.

1Ki 8:9

**“There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone.”** The manna was likely all eaten up (Exod. 16:32)

1Ki 8:10

**“the holy *place*.”** The context indicates that in this case “the holy” was the Temple itself, and the priests came out of the Temple and were in the courtyard.

**“the cloud.”** The “cloud” was the cloud of bright light that surrounded Yahweh and indicated His presence. The “glory of Yahweh” was the bright cloud, sometimes called the “shekinah” or “shekinah glory” that surrounded God and veiled His presence so that people could not see Him directly (see commentary on Ezek. 1:4 and Ezek. 1:28). That bright light was sometimes referred to as a “cloud.” The cloud of light that filled Moses’ Tent and Solomon’s Temple was so bright that the priests could not minister there (Exod. 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14; 7:1-3). It is noteworthy that both 1 Kings 8:10-11 and 2 Chronicles 7:1-3 describe what happened at the dedication of the Temple, and from comparing the two accounts it is clear that the “cloud” and the “glory of Yahweh” are closely associated. In that situation, the “cloud” is the glorious cloud of light that surrounds Yahweh and both expresses and veils His presence.

[For more information about the “glory of Yahweh” and the bright cloud that surrounds God, see commentary on Ezek. 1:28.]

1Ki 8:11

**“because of the cloud, for the glory of Yahweh filled the house.”** In this context, “the glory of Yahweh” was the glorious light that surrounded Yahweh, which is sometimes described as a “cloud.” The glorious brilliant light is called “the glory of Yahweh,” and it indicates the personal presence of Yahweh.

[For more on the glory of Yahweh and the cloud, see commentary on Ezek. 1:28.]

1Ki 8:12

**“the thick cloud.”** In this context, the cloud that Solomon referred to was the cloud of light that had just filled the Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11).

[For more on the “cloud,” the brilliant light that surrounded God, see commentary on Ezek. 1:4.]

1Ki 8:13

**“built, yes, built.”** This is the figure polyptoton for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

**“dwell.”** This word for dwell is not the same as the word translated as “dwell” in verse 12, but it is similar enough that many English versions translate them both as “dwell.”

1Ki 8:19

**“who will come from your body.”** The throne of David was passed from physical father to physical son for generations, and it was Solomon, the physical son of David, who built the Temple.

1Ki 8:28

**“Yet have respect for.”** The literal Hebrew is “turn your face to,” but it is idiomatic for having respect for something, paying attention to something, having regard for something.

1Ki 8:29

**“this house.”** That is, the Temple.

**“night and day.”** The Jewish day started at sunset, so in Jewish reckoning, “night” came before “daytime.” Then, at sunset a new day started.

**“pray toward this place.”** This is literal. Once the Temple was built in Jerusalem, it became a custom to pray in the direction of the Temple (see commentary on 1 Kings 8:30).

1Ki 8:30

**“when they pray toward this place.”** Since God said he would dwell between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies (cf. Num. 7:89), it became customary to pray in the direction of the Temple. In this prayer, Solomon mentioned praying toward the Temple several times (1 Kings 8:29, 30, 35, 38, 42, 44, 48). Praying toward the Temple is also mentioned in Psalm 28:2 (cf. Ps. 5:7). Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem from Babylon (Dan. 6:10). James Montgomery wrote: “The custom is alluded to in the Mishna, *Berak*, iv, 5.6. Mohammed borrowed the custom from the Jews, and first made Jerusalem the *kiblah*, later Mecca; the Christians did not follow this example….”[[16]](#footnote-14117)

**“Yes, hear in heaven, your dwelling place.”** Even at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon recognized that the true dwelling place of God was in heaven, not in the Temple he had just built.

1Ki 8:31

**“If a person sins against his neighbor.”** The Hebrew text is hard to understand because the pronouns are not clear as to who they refer to. But in any case, this seems to be a request for justice and for the guilty party to be punished and the innocent party to be vindicated (cf. 2 Chron. 6:22).

1Ki 8:32

**“condemning the wicked person by bringing his way on his own head.”** It is a consistent theme throughout Scripture that evil people bring evil upon themselves (see commentary on Prov. 1:18). The Hebrew word translated “way” is literally “road,” which is used here as an idiom for a person’s way of life.

1Ki 8:35

**“because.”** Here the people turn from their sin “because” God afflicts them. The people realized that what they were going through was no accident, but was due to their disobedience to God.

1Ki 8:38

**“everyone who knows the affliction of his heart.”** The promise in the Law of Moses was that if the people were obedient to God that they would be protected by Him. So the assumption behind Solomon’s statement is that the reason there are famines, plagues, and enemies afflicting Israel is that people are sinning. Then, the people who are sinning know in their hearts that they are sinning and so they repent and pray to God.

1Ki 8:44

**“Yahweh...your name.”** Solomon speaks to Yahweh in both the second and third person: “Yahweh...your.” The third-person reference is more respectful and the second-person usage is more personal and intimate.

1Ki 8:45

**“hear in heaven.”** The Hebrew text does not have a preposition, whereas 2 Chronicles 6:35 does.

**“do what is right *for* them.”** Israel was fighting its enemies; this is holy war, and Solomon prays that God will “do” justice for Israel, in this case by giving them victory.

1Ki 8:46

**“for there is no person who does not sin.”** Ecclesiastes 7:20 says basically the same thing (cf. Rom. 3:23).

1Ki 8:60

**“There is no other.”** The Bible has many verses that say there is only one God, “Yahweh.”

[For more on Yahweh being the only God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son,” point 11, and commentary on Deut. 6:4.]

1Ki 8:61

**“as it is today.”** There was a lot of emotion and devotion to God that day, and Solomon prays that it will last (he needed to pray more that it would last in him!).

1Ki 8:63

**“the house of Yahweh.”** See commentary on 2 Chronicles 7:5.

1Ki 8:64

**“the middle of the court that was in front of the house.”** This was the inner courtyard, the Court of the Priests (see commentary on 2 Chron. 4:9).

**“the bronze altar that was before Yahweh was too little.”** As large as it was, Solomon’s altar was too small to hold all the offerings at the dedication of the Temple.

1Ki 8:65

**“from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt.”** This is a reference to the borders of the Promised Land, and a fulfillment of God’s promise about the land. Lebo-hamath is at the northern end and the Brook of Egypt is at the southern end of Israel.

**“seven days and seven *more* days; 14 days.”** There were in effect two feasts, a first “feast” of seven days to dedicate the altar of sacrifice (this was not one of the normal “feasts” of Israel), then the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, which had an eighth day added onto the end of it (cf. 2 Chron. 7:9). The Feast of Tabernacles started on the fourteenth day of the month and was celebrated for seven days, and then an eighth day was added. In 1 Kings 8:66 the “eighth day” is the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:39).

**1 Kings Chapter 9**

1Ki 9:2

**“appeared to Solomon.”** What Yahweh said to Solomon is recorded in 1 Kings 9:2-9 and 2 Chronicles 7:12-22, and there is more information in Chronicles than in Kings. God personally appeared to Solomon on two different occasions (1 Kings 3:5; 9:2; 11:9; and see commentary on 1 Kings 11:9).

[For more on God appearing to people, see commentary on Acts 7:55.]

1Ki 9:3

**“and my eyes and my heart.”** The meaning of this is that God’s attention and love will be on the Temple.

1Ki 9:5

**“a descendant on the throne.”** The Hebrew is “a man,” but the promise was to David so the meaning is “a descendant.” The Hebrew text makes that more clear: “There will not be cut off from you a man from the throne of Israel.” That no one would be “cut off” from David points to the men on the throne being his direct descendants.

1Ki 9:6

**“turn, yes, turn away.”** The Hebrew text uses the figure of speech polyptoton for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

**“worship.”** The Hebrew verb is *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), and it is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.” The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth. *Shachah* is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

1Ki 9:12

**“they did not please him.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: the towns “were not right in his eyes.”

1Ki 9:13

**“Cabul.”** This could mean “good for nothing.”

1Ki 9:16

**“dowry.”** The Hebrew word is from the word “send,” a dowry is like a “send-off” gift that goes with the bride.

1Ki 9:17

**“Gezer and Lower Beth-horon.”** By fortifying the cities of Gezer, Lower Beth-horon, and Baalath (Kiriath-jearim), Solomon was protecting the main approach to Jerusalem from the west. Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon are on ridge routes leading from the west coast of Israel into the hill country, and Gezer was in the Shephelah along the approach to Jerusalem from the west that came from the Mediterranean Coast up the Vally of Aijalon.

Gezer was a Canaanite city (Josh. 10:33) and when Gezer was excavated by archaeologists some of the strongest Canaanite defensive walls and towers ever discovered were found there. God allotted the town of Gezer to the tribe of Ephraim (Josh. 16:3), but the Ephramites could not drive out the Canaanites who were there (Josh. 16:10; Judg. 1:29), and one of the reasons likely had to do with the strength of the defensive walls that intimidated the men of Ephraim. That Gezer was not conquered by Israel was problematic because Gezer had been allotted to be a city for the Levites (Josh. 21:21). Gezer remained unconquered for some 500 years until Pharaoh of Egypt recognized the value of Gezer to Solomon’s kingdom and conquered it and presented it to Solomon as a dowry when Solomon married Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kings 9:16).

1Ki 9:18

**“Baalath.”** This is the other name for Kiriath-jearim. Here, 1 Kings 9:17-18 name three very important cities for the defense of central Judah and Jerusalem. Gezer, Lower Beth-horam, and Baalath (Kieriath-Jearim). These are three cities that are on important routes leading from the Philistine coast up into central Judah and to Jerusalem. It might be said that Gezer, the westernmost of the three, was an important way that Israel could “shine its light” to other nations because it was a large and important city on the main trade route from Egypt to points north such as Damascus.

1Ki 9:20

**“the Perizzites.”** A tribe of unknown origin in the hill country of Judah and Ephraim. See commentary on Joshua 9:1.

1Ki 9:21

**“devote to destruction.”** That is, kill.

[For more on things “devoted” to Yahweh and devoted to destruction, see commentary on Josh. 6:17.]

1Ki 9:22

**“and his servants.”** The word “servants” is the same as “slaves” in the first part of the sentence, but obviously it has a different meaning here.

1Ki 9:23

**“550 *men*.”** The record in 1 Kings 9:23 says “550,” while the record in 2 Chronicles 8:10 says “250.” There is a textual variant based on a scribal error, and which number is correct is not known.

1Ki 9:24

**“came up out of the city of David to her house.”** So the house Solomon built for Pharaoh’s daughter must have been north of the city of David, between the city of David and where the Temple was to be built.

1Ki 9:25

**“burned incense into smoke.”** See commentary on Exodus 29:13.

**“thus Solomon gave completeness to the house.”** The Temple was built so that people could worship God in a personal way, and so the offerings that Solomon offered gave a completeness to the Temple that it did not have without them.

1Ki 9:26

**“Eloth.”** Today this city is called Elat.

**“Red Sea.”** The Hebrew is “Reed Sea.” The designation “Red Sea” came from the Septuagint.

1Ki 9:27

**“Hiram sent *some of* his servants in the fleet.”** The Israelites were not seafaring people, but the Phoenicians were, so Hiram sent sailors to help Solomon’s men sail the Red Sea.

1Ki 9:28

**“Ophir.”** The exact location of Ophir is not known. Suggested ideas are east Africa or the Arabian peninsula.

**“420 talents.”** The Hebrew word translated “talent” is used to refer to a standard unit of weight, which in a context like this would generally be the “talent.” At this time in Israel’s history, the talent is estimated to be about 75 pounds (each pound being 16-ounces). So the 420 talents in 1 Kings 9:28 would be about 31,500 pounds of gold (15.75 tons), which is more than 14,000 kilograms.

**1 Kings Chapter 10**

1Ki 10:1

**“Sheba.”** The exact location of “Sheba” is not known and is debated by scholars. In Matthew 12:42, Jesus referred to her as “the Queen of the South.”

**“difficult questions.”** The Hebrew is “riddles,” but that has a different meaning in the Hebrew culture than it does in the Western culture. In the West, a “riddle” is something that I know the answer to and see if you can figure it out. In the biblical culture, a “riddle” is a difficult question, in this case, it would be things she did not know and wanted information about (cf. 1 Kings 10:2). This is a Gentile queen being drawn to the God of the Jews.

1Ki 10:4

**“the house that he had built.”** The Hebrew is ambiguous, however, the way 1 Kings 10:4-5 is worded, the “house” is more likely Solomon’s palace than the Temple.

1Ki 10:5

**“the attendance of his waiters.”** The word “attendance” is more literally, “standing.” Solomon’s officials sat at the table while the waiters stood and served.

**“burnt offering that he offered up.”** The Hebrew words regularly refer to a burnt offering. However, they could be taken as referring to the “ascent,” the stairway by which he went up to the house of Yahweh, but that is unlikely. Of all the great architectural wonders that might impress the Queen of Sheba, the stairway from Solomon’s house to the Temple would not seem to be one of them; it is not even mentioned in other verses.

**“she was left breathless.”** The Hebrew could also be translated as, “there was no more spirit in her,” but the meaning of that phrase would be unclear at best.

1Ki 10:6

**“words and of your wisdom.”** The Hebrew word for “words” can also be “matters” “situation,” and some versions go that way.

1Ki 10:12

**“staircases.”** The Hebrew word translated “staircases” is apparently an architectural term that only appears here in all of the known Hebrew literature, so the English versions differ as to what it refers to. 2 Chronicles 9:11 has a Hebrew word that can be more easily understood as being a staircase.

**“no such almug wood.”** The Hebrew text is ambiguous as to whether “no such almug wood” refers to the quality of the wood or the quantity of the wood, however, the parallel verse, 2 Chron. 9:11. seems to refer to the quality of the wood.

1Ki 10:13

**“in addition to what Solomon gave her of his royal bounty.”** 2 Chronicles 9:12 makes it clear that Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba more than she brought.

1Ki 10:14

**“Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon.”** 1 Kings 10:14-11:8 records an overview of the downfall of Solomon as he repeatedly disobeyed God. In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 God gave regulations for any king who would reign over His people. The king was not to amass silver and gold, or have many horses, or get horses from Egypt, or have many wives. And he was to write his own copy of the Law so that his heart would not be lifted up above his fellow Israelites. Solomon broke all of those commands. He amassed silver and gold (1 Kings 10:14-17, 21-23, 27). He gathered a large number of horses and chariots (1 Kings 10:26). He had horses brought from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28-29). He had a great many wives: 700 royal princesses and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:1-3). Also, he made a huge elaborate throne of ivory that was elevated above the people (1 Kings 10:18-20). Beyond that, not only did he have many wives, in disobedience to God, but the women he married were foreign women, which was also against the will of God (Deut. 7:1-4). The conclusion of Solomon’s downhill slide was that he did evil in the eyes of Yahweh (1 Kings 11:6).

**“666.”** This is a clear indicator that Solomon’s heart had changed. The 666 figure shows us that Solomon had turned away from God and had gone over to “the dark side.” The number 666 is not a factual number; it is not the actual number of talents of gold that came to him, because 1 Kings 10:15 says that in addition to the 666 talents of gold that came to him, he also got gold from the taxes on the traders and the *traveling* merchants, and the taxes imposed on all the Arabian kings and the governors of the country. With all that extra revenue, Solomon would surely have gotten much more than one extra talent of gold, making it 667, or 668, or even 673 talents of gold. So for God to say Solomon got 666 talents in addition to such and such amount more, tells us God really wants us to see the number 666 in relation to Solomon here. As we read on in the chapter, God tells us openly that Solomon did evil in the sight of Yahweh (1 Kings 11:6).

1Ki 10:16

**“600 shekels.”** Six hundred shekels is roughly 15 pounds (6.8 kg). A shekel was roughly .4 ounces (11 or 11.5 grams). See commentary on Genesis 24:22, “shekel.”

1Ki 10:20

**“lions.”** The Hebrew text specifies male lions.

1Ki 10:27

**“the Shephelah.”** The Shephelah is the area of rolling hills east of Israel’s coastal plain and between the coastal plain and the hill country (see commentary on Josh. 9:1).

1Ki 10:28

**“Kue.”** Kue has been historically understood to be in what is central Turkey today.

1Ki 10:29

**“600 shekels.”** Six hundred shekels is roughly 15 pounds (6.8 kg), and 150 shekels is roughly 3.75 pounds (1.7 kg). A shekel was roughly .4 ounces (11 or 11.5 grams). See commentary on Genesis 24:22, “shekel.”

**1 Kings Chapter 11**

1Ki 11:1

**“loved.”** The word “loved” in this verse is not the true love between a devoted husband and wife, but rather “love” has the meaning “paid attention to.” Solomon paid attention to his pagan wives and listened to their requests.

**“Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, Hittites.”** This list of pagan nations in 1 Kings 11:1 is not a complete list, but a sample list of some of the pagan nations. It is the figure of speech asyndeton, or “no ands.” In normal grammar, when a list occurs, an “and” is placed in front of the last item in the list. For example, we might say, “I am going to the store to buy milk, butter, bread, and eggs.” The “and” before “eggs” is normal grammar in most languages. However, normal grammar is modified to good effect in the figures of speech polysyndeton and asyndeton. The figure polysyndeton places an “and” between each item in the list and by that literary device emphasizes each thing in the list, and makes each item a thing to notice and ponder. Thus, when Jesus says to love God “with all your heart, **and** with all your soul, **and** with all your mind, **and** with all your strength,” he is specifically emphasizing each point in the list.

In contrast to polysyndeton and normal grammar, the figure asyndeton does not have an “and” in the list, not even the standard “and” between the last two items of the list. By doing that, the figure asyndeton does not place specific emphasis on any item on the list, but rather places the emphasis on the conclusion that will be drawn. The reader is to read through the list and notice what is there, but move on to the conclusion, which is where the asyndeton is leading and which is what God wants emphasized. Here in 1 Kings 11:1, God does not want the reader to focus on any particulars about the pagan nations, but rather to emphasize the conclusion, which is that God told the Israelites not to marry women from these pagan nations—a command that Solomon was simply ignoring.

Furthermore, in the figure asyndeton, the list is not complete—there are other things that could have been on it. For example, when God uses the figure asyndeton to list the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, the asyndeton tells us that there are fruit that are not on the list (humility is a good example). Here in 1 Kings 11:1, there were lots of pagan nations that were not on the list, which is obvious from the fact that if Solomon had 700 wives of royal birth, they did not all come from just five pagan nations; many more pagan nations contributed wives than just those five.

When studying asyndeton and polysyndeton, it is important to read the lists in the original Hebrew or Greek. It often occurs that translators “correct” the lists so that they fit the standards of correct grammar and for ease of reading, but that “correction” removes God’s emphasis from the text. Other examples of asyndeton in Scripture are Mark 7:21-23; Luke 14:13-14; 17:28-30; 1 Corinthians 3:12-13; and 2 Timothy 3:10-11. Examples of polysyndeton (when an “and” separates each item in a list and emphasized each one) include, Genesis 8:22; Joshua 7:24; 2 Kings 5:26; Haggai 1:11; Luke 14:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 4:31; Revelation 6:15.

[For more on the figures asyndeton and polysyndeton, as well as other figures of emphasis, see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*.[[17]](#footnote-14927)]

1Ki 11:2

**“You are not to go among them, and they are not to go among you.”** The law of Moses forbade marriage with the Canaanite women (Deut. 7:1-4), and that was expanded here in 1 Kings 11.

1Ki 11:4

**“when Solomon was old.”** The Bible does not tell us how old Solomon was, but no doubt his turning away from Yahweh to the worship of pagan gods was a process. God warns us that “Bad company corrupts good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33) but it is not an overnight process, it takes time. Over the years, Solomon’s pagan wives turned him away from Yahweh, which will have serious consequences on Judgment Day.

1Ki 11:5

**“Milcom.”** This is a different god than Molech (1 Kings 11:7), and very little is known about Milcom. The word is related to the word for “king” (*melech*).

1Ki 11:7

**“mountain that is before Jerusalem.”** That is, the Mount of Olives. In this context, the word “before” indicates “east of,” because the culture was oriented to the east, and the Temple of Yahweh faced east.

1Ki 11:9

**“he had turned his heart away.”** In the Hebrew text, the verb “turned” is active, not passive. It was Solomon who, by his thoughts and actions, turned his heart away from Yahweh. It was not that Solomon’s heart “was turned away” as if someone or something else had turned it; Solomon, by his thoughts, actions, and desires, turned his heart. God holds Solomon responsible for his turning away.

**“appeared to him twice.”** God personally appeared to Solomon on two different occasions (1 Kings 3:5; 9:2), but in spite of his personal and intimate experiences with God, Solomon turned away from Him and did evil in His sight. Solomon is one person who shows us that knowledge does not equal commitment. We can know a lot about God without being committed to him.

[For more on God appearing to people, see commentary on Acts 7:55.]

1Ki 11:11

**“Since this is what was in your mind​.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “Since this was with you,” but it seems to be referring to what Solomon had in his mind.

**“tear, yes tear.”** God uses the figure polyptoton for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

**“servant.”** Here “servant” is used of Jeroboam, one of Solomon’s officials (see commentary on 2 Sam. 11:1).

1Ki 11:13

**“one tribe.”** This is apparently the tribe of Judah (1 Kings 12:20), but it still does not answer the question as to why Yahweh said “one” tribe instead of two. Also interesting is that Benjamin was the full brother of Joseph, who became the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and yet the tribe of Benjamin sided with Judah in this split. It is interesting that there is no recorded response from Solomon. We do not know how he reacted to what Yahweh said to him, almost certainly through a prophet.

1Ki 11:14

**“an adversary.”** This is the regular use of the Hebrew word “*satan*,” adversary, where Satan gets his name, which means “Adversary.”

1Ki 11:18

**“And they arose out of Midian.”** So the group with young Hadad stopped in Midian for a short time.

1Ki 11:19

**“great favor in the eyes of Pharaoh.”** Pharaoh was likely covertly angry with Solomon for taking over some of his international business dealings, so Hadad, an enemy of Solomon, was favored by Pharaoh.

**“the sister of Tahpenes the queen.”** The word for “queen” is not the regular word, but one that more means “high queen.” Although some scholars assume this is the queen mother, that is highly unlikely. The queen mother is the mother of the king, in this case, the mother of Pharaoh. But Pharaoh would have been quite a bit older than Hadad, who was young, and Pharaoh’s mother would have thus been very much older than Hadad. It makes more sense that this refers to Pharaoh’s favorite wife.

1Ki 11:23

**“*another* adversary to him.”** That is, to Solomon.

**“his lord.”** This is a grammatical plural, “lords,” but it refers to a singular lord.

**“Hadadezer.”** An opponent of David that David defeated (2 Sam. 8:3-12).

**“Zobah.”** Zobah is north of Israel in the general area of Damascus.

1Ki 11:24

**“Rezon.”** The Hebrew text reads “he,” but the REV reads “Rezon” for clarity.

**“and they ruled in Damascus.”** The Hebrew is “they ruled.” Some scholars emend the translation to “he [Rezon] ruled,” but there is no justification for that. Rezon and his men ruled Damascus.

1Ki 11:25

**“loathed.”** He hated Israel; the Israelites loathed manna (Num. 21:5).

1Ki 11:26

**“whose mother’s name was Zeruah, a widow.”** It seems clear that Jeroboam was raised by a single mother, which may explain some of his work ethic. He likely had to start working very young to help his mom and the family.

1Ki 11:27

**“lift up his hand.”** Many English versions use “rebel” instead of translating the idiom literally, and thus read that Jeroboam “rebelled against the king.” The Bible does not tell us exactly why Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon. Certainly, the prophecy of Ahijah that God had given him a kingdom was the culminating motivation, but Jeroboam had to have been thinking about it already because Ahijah’s prophecy was immediately accepted and acted upon. One possibility is that Jeroboam was from the tribe of Ephraim and was over the brother tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and saw and disliked Solomon’s harsh policies (cf. 1 Kings 12:4).

1Ki 11:28

**“someone who could get work done.”** For the translation, see De Vries (WBC).[[18]](#footnote-27176) Apparently, Jeroboam was not only a hard worker, but one who could manage others as well. There are many people who can work hard but cannot manage others, and the fact that Jeroboam could do both caught the attention of Solomon. We also see Jeroboam’s organizational skills in the way—sadly, the ungodly way—he organized and ran his kingdom.

**“the house of Joseph.”** The “house of Joseph” is the two tribes that descended from Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh.

1Ki 11:29

**“met him on the road.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “found him on the road,” and indicates that Ahijah was purposely looking for Jeroboam. But without more explanation, we would say that he “met” him on the road. To simply say in English that Ahijah “found” him on the road makes the meeting seem more like an accident. What is unstated but certain due to the language is that God had given Ahijah a prophetic word about Jeroboam, and so Ahijah went looking for him.

**“the field.”** The jump from the “road” to the “field” is easily explained by the fact that every road went through fields and open country at one time or another.

1Ki 11:30

**“and tore it into 12 pieces.”** Clothing was very valuable in the ancient world because it was all made by hand and took quite a bit of time to make, so the fact that Ahijah would tear up his new garment was very graphic and would have riveted Jeroboam’s attention to what Ahijah was doing and then saying.

1Ki 11:31

**“for yourself.”** So the word of Yahweh was for Jeroboam to be king, the tribes were to be “for” him, and would be given “to” him.

**“I am about to tear.”** The Hebrew is literally, “I am tearing,” and the present participle is quite often used to express an imminent event.

1Ki 11:32

**“my servant David’s sake.”** The word “sake” in this context refers to purpose or end. God had a plan and purpose for David’s descendants and a purpose for Jerusalem that Solomon’s sin could not undo; God’s plan and David’s dynasty would continue even though the United Kingdom of Israel would be divided into the two smaller kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

1Ki 11:33

**“because that they have forsaken me and have worshiped Ashtoreth...Chemosh...and Milcom.”** We would think that the message that Solomon lost the kingdom due to his idolatry would be so deeply burned into the soul of Jeroboam that when he was king he would not worship idols. But instead, he did worse than Solomon, and many of the idolatrous practices that he started lasted for some 250 years until Israel was conquered by Assyria and carried away from the Promised Land.

**“worshiped.”** The Hebrew verb is *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), and it is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.” The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth. *Shachah* is translated as both “bow down” and “worship”; traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship. God’s people were bowing down before pagan gods.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship” and commentary on 1 Chron. 29:20.]

**“goddess...god...god.”** All three of these references to deity are grammatical plurals; literally “gods” The feminine “goddess” is understood from the fact that Ashtoreth is feminine.

1Ki 11:35

**“kingship.”** This is a different word than “kingdom” in 1 Kings 11:34. The “kingship” that Solomon had will be taken from his son, who will have a considerably smaller and less powerful kingdom, while “kingship” will be given to Jeroboam, even though two kingdoms from the twelve tribes was not God’s original plan.

1Ki 11:36

**“one tribe.”** The “one tribe” is Judah (1 Kings 12:20), but as we see from 1 Kings 11:37, Benjamin is considered to be with Judah. The reason for the preeminence of Judah seems to be that the Messiah will come out of Judah.

**“so that there will be a lamp of David my servant.”** The “lamp” is the man in the line of David who is ruling as king on David’s throne. The NET text note reads that the Hebrew text says, “‘so there might be a lamp for David my servant all the days before me in Jerusalem.’ The metaphorical ‘lamp’ symbolizes the Davidic dynasty. Because this imagery is unfamiliar to the modern reader, the translation ‘so my servant David’s dynasty may continue to serve me’ has been used” in the NET. In 2 Samuel 21:17, David’s men referred to him as the “lamp” of Israel, and so it makes sense that his descendants in the Davidic Dynasty are also referred to as lamps.

1Ki 11:38

**“if you will listen.”** In a context like this, the word “listen” can also be used idiomatically and have the meaning “obey.” Some scholars refer to this as the “pregnant sense” of the word. In this verse, it has the meaning “listen to and obey.” Many Hebrew words are used with an idiomatic or pregnant sense (see commentary on Luke 23:42).

1Ki 11:39

**“because of this.”** Because of Solomon’s disobedience.

1Ki 11:41

**“the rest of the acts.”** The Hebrew word translated “acts” is *dabar*, more commonly, “words” but also “things, matters,” and in this context, likely, “acts.” *Dabar* occurs twice in the verse. The breadth of meaning of *dabar* makes it hard to translate in this context; but it includes his words, acts, and things he was involved with.

**1 Kings Chapter 12**

1Ki 12:1

**“Rehoboam went to Shechem.”** That Rehoboam felt he should go all the way north to Shechem to be crowned king likely shows that he thought there was already trouble brewing between the north and south, and he was going to solidify his support in the north. But because of his harsh policies, any effort like this failed.

1Ki 12:7

**“a servant to this people.”** This is the real role of the king, to serve the people by leading them in a godly way. This is good advice from the elders. Jesus certainly felt that way (Matt. 20:28).

**“always.”** The Hebrew is literally, “all the days,” referring to all the days of your life.

1Ki 12:8

**“the young men.”** The Hebrew is more literally “children”; Fox (The Schocken Bible) has “youngsters.” These men and Rehoboam grew up together as children, but now they were older. Rehoboam was 41 when he became king (1 Kings 14:21), and so the men who grew up with them would have been about the same age. Given that, the fact that the Bible refers to them as “children” is clearly sarcasm, and is pointing out their mental immaturity.

1Ki 12:10

**“My little *thing*.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “my little,” and what it refers to is unstated. Tradition is that it refers to the little finger, but many scholars see this as a sexual euphemism for the penis. This seems likely for several reasons. These men are ungodly and arrogant, and it can be seen that they would talk that way; also, whatever this “little” was, it is associated with the waist, and also, when Rehoboam went back to the people he did not repeat this part of the conversation.

1Ki 12:20

**“except the tribe of Judah only.”** In this case, the tribe of Judah is mentioned likely because it was so dominant. But Benjamin is noted too (cf. 1 Kings 12:21).

1Ki 12:23

**“and to the rest of the people.”** These are the Israelites who have moved into the tribal areas of Judah and Benjamin (cf. 2 Chron. 11:3).

1Ki 12:25

**“built up Shechem.”** That is, he built more structures in the city and fortified it.

**“Penuel.”** Near the Jabbok River in the Transjordan. Jeroboam wanted an administrative center east of the Jordan River.

1Ki 12:26

**“Now the kingdom will return to the house of David.”** Jeroboam begins his reign by showing that he did not believe the prophecy of Ahijah the prophet (1 Kings 11:29-40).

1Ki 12:27

**“turn again to their lord.”** The word “lord” is a grammatical plural, “lords,” but meaning “lord,” i.e., Rehoboam.

**“and they will kill me.”** If the people did return to Rehoboam, then Jeroboam would be considered an enemy and would be killed.

1Ki 12:28

**“two calves of gold.”** We do not know the size of these calves, or if they were solid gold or gold covering wood or something else.

**“Here are your gods, O Israel.”** The Hebrew is very close to what people said when Aaron made a golden calf (Exod. 32:4). Jeroboam may have been trying to anchor his reign in the priesthood of the Exodus. He made calves of gold and named his sons the names of Aaron’s sons. The Exodus was over 500 years earlier than Jeroboam. Things such as the Passover celebration kept the idea of the Exodus clearly in the minds of the people.

**“that brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”** In stating “here are your gods, O Israel,” while referring to the golden calf, Jeroboam was breaking the first of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:2-3; Deut. 5:6-7).

If Jeroboam was saying that these calf gods were not Yahweh, but were the gods who brought the people out of Egypt, then Israel does indeed have other gods besides Yahweh. If, on the other hand, Jeroboam was claiming that these calf gods were in fact Yahweh, the Yahweh that brought Israel out of Egypt, then he is still breaking the first commandment, but in another way—he is calling an idol god “Yahweh,” which is also forbidden in the first commandment (see commentary on Exod. 20:3, “besides me”).

1Ki 12:29

**“Bethel.”** Originally a town in Benjamin (Josh. 18:22), but it was a border town and changed the tribal area it was originally assigned to. It apparently was taken over by Ephraim when the tribe of Benjamin was reduced to 600 fighting men (Judg. 20:47; cf. 1 Chron. 7:28). The fact it was on the border between the country of Judah and the new country of Israel made it a strategic place to put a worship center, and the fact that it had been a worship center since at least the time of Abraham (Gen. 12:8) gave it credence as a worship center. It is interesting that Jeroboam did not make three calves and put one in Shechem, which was his capital.

1Ki 12:30

**“This thing.”** This matter of idolatry, the sin of idolatry.

1Ki 12:31

**“temple shrines.”** The Hebrew text is more literally, “houses of *bamot*,” “*bamot*” being the plural of *bamah*, a cultic word for a raised platform on which a god or gods would be placed, and also likely an altar. The reference, therefore, is to temple areas. The Septuagint has “houses over the high,” where the “high” is the platform for the god. Jeroboam spread idolatry all over Israel. Sometimes some of the versions translate *bamot* as “shrine,” cf. 1 Kings 12:32 (CEB); “worship sites” (GW); “pagan shrines” (NLT).

[For more on the shrines, see commentary on Num. 33:52.]

**“the people.”** The people of Israel were called “the people,” and that is what this verse is referring to.

1Ki 12:32

**“in the eighth month.”** The Feast of Tabernacles instituted by Moses was in the seventh month (Lev. 23:34), so Jeroboam reordered the calendar.

**“and he went up to the altar.”** Jeroboam is acting as a priest and the king.

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew is *bamot* (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**1 Kings Chapter 13**

1Ki 13:1

**“out of Judah to Bethel.”** In this context, “Judah” most likely refers to the Kingdom of Judah, which had stayed more faithful to the Law than Israel, the kingdom north of Judah. The man of God came from Judah, but would have had to travel through the tribal area of the tribe of Judah to get to Bethel. The town of Bethel originally was given to the tribe of Benjamin, but became part of Ephraim over time (see commentary on 1 Kings 12:29).

Bethel was a place of the perverted worship of Yahweh. Jeroboam had recently set up a golden calf there and manned its worship sites with priests who were not Levites (1 Kings 12:28-31). God called a man of God out of Judah to confront the false and perverted worship of Yahweh. That perverted worship was so new that it seemed logical that at least some of the people would return to Yahweh, and perhaps they did.

1Ki 13:2

**“Josiah.”** The Hebrew text uses the longer name of Josiah here: “Yoshiyyahu.”

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

1Ki 13:3

**“ash heap.”** The Hebrew word is hard to translate into English because it is related to “fat” and refers to the ashes mixed with animal fat that clump up and collect at the bottom of the altar. Although “ash heap” is not exactly correct, it gives more of the idea of the chunks of ash, fat, and animal parts that end up on the altar.

1Ki 13:4

**“Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, ‘Seize him!’”** Jeroboam was an ungodly person at this point in his life, but an effective leader. He realized that if his leadership, decisions, and the worship he had initiated were allowed to be challenged that his kingdom, which was only a couple of years old at this point, would be in danger of collapsing, so he ordered the man from Judah to be arrested, but God intervened.

**“but his hand dried up.”** This is almost certainly the more inclusive use of “hand” that is allowed by the Hebrew language, which includes the hand and forearm at least up to the elbow. That is why the king could not draw his arm back to himself.

1Ki 13:8

**“nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place.”** To God, Bethel was an abomination, a place that turned people away from the worship of God and led them astray to the point that no doubt many of them would not be saved and live forever. What Jeroboam did at Bethel was a terrible sin in God’s eyes, incredibly evil, and God did not want to legitimize it in any way. So he commanded the man of God from Judah not even to drink water in Bethel. The man of God would have understood God’s command, a point that is made even clearer by the fact that this man of God is never named in Scripture, but instead is called the “man of God” 14 times in 1 Kings 13 alone. It is also clear that the man of God knew how serious in God’s eyes it would have been for him to stay and eat in Bethel because he said that even if Jeroboam would give him half his house, i.e., half his kingdom, he would not eat or drink in Bethel.

The man of God was clear about what God had commanded him to do. He told it to King Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:8-9), and he told it to the old man who lied to him (1 Kings 13:16-17). Yet in spite of the revelation that he received from God, he disobeyed it when the old man lied to him. The Bible does not explain why he did that, and it does not seem logical, but clearly, the man of God knew he was disobeying God when he returned to the idolatrous city of Bethel because when God gave the prophecy to the lying old man, he called what the man of God did “rebellion” against the mouth of God (1 Kings 13:21).

For a man of God to rebel against God is very serious. And that is particularly the case if that rebellion could possibly play a part in people not obeying God—in fact abandoning God—and thus not receiving everlasting life, which is the case in this record. By returning to the town of Bethel and eating and drinking in it, and especially sharing a meal with that old “prophet” who had apparently quit representing Yahweh years before, the man of God contributed to the legitimization of the idolatrous activities going on in Bethel. Bethel was not a very large town, and people would have known this old lying prophet and seen how he had not stood up against Jeroboam and his evil activities. So when the man of God from Judah went to his house and shared a meal with him, that would have seriously weakened the effect of the miraculous signs that God had done in Bethel and the prophecies the man of God has spoken. Furthermore, it would have made it seem like less of a sin to follow King Jeroboam in his idolatrous practices.

The rebellion of the man of God led to his death. The fact that it was a lion that killed the man of God, yet the lion did not eat the man of God or his donkey, sent a clear message to the people in Bethel—as it should to us today—that there are severe consequences for disobeying God. Sadly, the most severe consequence for disobeying God and abandoning God is not receiving everlasting life on Judgment Day, and that consequence cannot be seen in this life. But what often can be seen is that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), and the death of the man of God portrayed that, and hopefully some people learned a lesson about the seriousness of disobeying God from what happened to him and then took God and His commandments more seriously as a result.

1Ki 13:9

**“the road.”** The “road” would have been just a dirt road or path.

1Ki 13:13

**“Saddle the donkey.”** The Hebrew word translated as “saddle” is actually “tie” or “tie up.” This is one of the places in Scripture where translating the Hebrew literally would confuse the modern reader, because if the verse read that the man said to his sons, “Tie up the donkey for me,” we would think the donkey was loose and needed to be tied up. But that is not the case at all. In this time in history, donkeys and horses were ridden by putting a thick blanket on the back of the animal and tying it on with a rope, much like the American Indians did many years ago. So, “tie up the donkey” meant “put a blanket on it and prepare it for me to ride it.” The “saddle” that we have today, complete with stirrups, was a late invention, after the time of Christ, and likely even after the time of Paul. So, although the English translation “saddle the donkey for me” can give the wrong impression, it is better than “Tie up the donkey for me.” A possible suggestion to get away from the word “saddle” might be “Prepare the donkey for me to ride it,” but exactly what that would mean would not be clear to the reader, and words like “prepare” and “ride” are not in the Hebrew text.

1Ki 13:14

**“an oak.”** The Hebrew reads “the oak,” which could possibly refer to a well-known oak. The exact type of tree is debated. For example, the CJB has “pistachio” tree.

1Ki 13:24

**“When he went, a lion found him on the road and killed him.”** On the surface, this seems like too severe a consequence for disobeying God, but the sin of the man of God was very, very serious (see commentary on 1 Kings 13:8).

1Ki 13:28

**“went...found.”** The same two verbs are in 1 Kings 13:24.

1Ki 13:32

**“all the temples at the shrines.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “the houses of the shrines,” and it refers to the temples that were built at the local shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“come, yes, come.”** The Hebrew uses the figure of speech polyptoton for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

1Ki 13:33

**“shrines...shrines”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“ordained.”** The Hebrew uses the idiom, “he filled his hand” (see commentary on Exod. 28:41).

**1 Kings Chapter 14**

1Ki 14:1

**“Abijah.”** The name seems both appropriate and ironic at the same time. Jeroboam turned away from Yahweh in many ways, and did evil in Yahweh’s sight, but he named his son “Abijah,” “My father is Yahweh.” As it turned out, however, Abijah was a godly person and was good in the eyes of Yahweh (1 Kings 14:13).

1Ki 14:4

**“Ahijah...Ahijah.”** In the Hebrew text the name is spelled two different ways, but they refer to the same person.

**“his eyesight was gone.”** The Hebrew is a strange idiom, literally, “his eyes stood up” because of his age. But it means he could not see.

1Ki 14:5

**“request a word.”** Jeroboam’s wife was coming to get a prophetic word about her son.

1Ki 14:6

**“I am sent to you.”** Although it was Jeroboam’s wife who came to Ahijah, Ahijah was sent by God with the hard message.

1Ki 14:9

**“making me angry.”** For this translation, see commentary on Deuteronomy 32:21.

1Ki 14:10

**“I will cut off from Jeroboam everyone.”** Ahijah the prophet foretold that the house of Jeroboam would be completely destroyed, and that occurred during the reign of his son Nadab. Baasha the son of Ahijah (not Ahijah the prophet; another Ahijah) from the tribe of Issachar killed the entire house of Jeroboam, who apparently was from either the tribe of Ephraim or Manasseh (1 Kings 11:28).

**“who pisses against a wall.”** A crass idiom and cultural way of referring to the men, but as we learn from the verse, the women were killed also.

**“he who is slave or free in Israel.”** The meaning of this phrase is debated because the words themselves have a range of meanings. There are six major ideas as to what the phrase means that have been set forward by scholars. The ideas are: “slave and free men;” “those who are still under taboo and the pure;” “the controlled (or obligated) and the liberated (or independent);” “the military conscript and the one whose duty has been deferred;” “the one under the protection of the family and the one deprived of such protection;” and “the one under the authority of the father and guardian and the one released from it,” i.e., “the minor and the adult.”[[19]](#footnote-25368) Although the exact meaning of the phrase is not known, it is clear that it seems to refer to people who are restricted in some way and those who are not, and the point of the prophecy is that no male who is of the family of Jeroboam will escape being killed no matter what their circumstances in life. The same phrase is used in 1 Kings 21:21. See commentary on Deuteronomy 32:36.

1Ki 14:11

**“the dogs will eat.”** In a culture where family ties were strong and family tombs common, to not have anyone bury your dead body was considered a terrible curse. In fact, many people believed (falsely, but it was a very widely held belief) that a proper burial was important for a comfortable existence in the afterlife. Thus, the threat of not being buried but having one’s dead body eaten by animals, birds, and vermin was a horrifying threat of unspeakable loneliness and rejection, both on this earth and in the afterlife (see commentary on Jer. 14:16).

1Ki 14:13

**“he only of Jeroboam will come to a tomb, because in him there has been found some good thing.”** Occasionally it seems God could prolong a good person’s life but instead protects them from evil by not prolonging it (Isa. 57:1). In this case the premature death of the boy is said to be a blessing.

1Ki 14:14

**“who will cut off the house of Jeroboam.”** In this context, “house” means “dynasty,” and it refers to the reigns of Jeroboam and his son Nadab. This prophecy was fulfilled by Baasha of the tribe of Issachar (1 Kings 15:29).

[For more on the first three dynasties in Israel, see commentary on 2 Kings 9:9.]

1Ki 14:15

**“he will root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their fathers and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River.”** This amazing prophecy by Ahijah the prophet was spoken during the reign of Jeroboam I of Israel, and far enough into his reign that the evil set in motion by Jeroboam would have had some time to be ritualized and set in the culture. So this prophecy would likely have occurred somewhere around 930 BC, a full 200 years before Israel was finally destroyed by the Assyrians and carried away captive to parts of Assyria in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:6-23).

The Hebrew text just reads, “the river,” not the Euphrates River. In biblical times, the Euphrates was often just referred to as “the River,” and that is the case here. This prophecy of Ahijah was fulfilled when the Assyrians conquered the country of Israel and carried them beyond the Euphrates (2 Kings 17:1-23).

1Ki 14:17

**“Tirzah.”** The capital of Israel had moved from Shechem to Tirzah at this time.

1Ki 14:19

**“Book of the Chronicles.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic and literally reads, “the book of the events of the days” of the kings of Israel. The Schocken Bible reads, “the record of yearly events of the kings of Israel.”[[20]](#footnote-25422)

1Ki 14:20

**“Nadab.”** Jeroboam named his sons the same as Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu.

1Ki 14:21

**“Now Rehoboam.”** The text shifts from following the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

**“Rehoboam was 41 years old when he began to reign.”** The fact that Rehoboam was 41 when he became king the year Solomon died, and Solomon had reigned 40 years, means that Rehoboam was born before David died and Solomon became king. So Solomon already had at least one wife, Naamah, who was an Ammonite, before he married Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kings 3:1).

**“and his mother’s name was Naamah the Ammonite.”** Naamah apparently had a very special relationship with Solomon, because she is the only wife of Solomon who is named in the Bible, and here in 1 Kings 14 she is listed twice (1 Kings 14:21, 31).

[For more information on Naamah, see commentary on 2 Chron. 12:13.]

1Ki 14:23

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“standing-stones.”** Standing-stones were set up for various reasons, some of them being godly memorials, but here the context is pagan worship. Standing-stones would often be set up as part of the worship of pagan gods, and God has no tolerance for idols. They are harmful in many different ways and are to be destroyed.

[For more on standing-stones, see commentary on Gen. 28:18. For more on idols being harmful, see commentary on Deut. 7:5.]

1Ki 14:25

**“Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.”** The attack by Sheshak is given in more detail in 2 Chronicles 12:2-9.

1Ki 14:26

**“of the house of Yahweh and the treasures of the king’s house.”** The house of Yahweh is the Temple, and the “king’s house” is the palace. Some of the treasures of the Temple went back to Egypt, which is ironic since some of those treasures may have come from Egypt at the time of the Exodus.

**“he *also* took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made.”** This is quite an irony. Israel left Egypt with their gold because Pharaoh had hardened his heart against God, and now Rehoboam and Judah hardened their hearts against Yahweh and so the gold went back to Egypt. Pharaoh Shishak took away the gold weapons that were stored in the Temple, but he must have left the bronze ones because there were weapons from the time of David still in the Temple many years later at the time of Joash (2 Kings 11:10; 2 Chron. 23:9).

1Ki 14:27

**“the guard.”** The Hebrew is strange, literally, “the runners.” It may be that these guards ran with the message that there were people coming.

1Ki 14:29

**“are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles.”** That is, in 2 Chronicles 10, 11, 12.

1Ki 14:31

**“Abijam.”** He is called Abijah in 2 Chronicles 12:16.

**1 Kings Chapter 15**

1Ki 15:1

**“Abijam.”** In 2 Chronicles 12, Abijam is called “Abijah.”

1Ki 15:2

**“Absalom.”** The Hebrew text uses a variant spelling of the name, spelling it Abishalom, but it is the same person as Absalom (cf. 1 Kings 15:10 also).

1Ki 15:4

**“for David’s sake.”** God had made a promise to David that he would have descendants sitting on his throne in Jerusalem.

**“God gave him a lamp.”** The “lamp” is tied into the promises God made to David, that he would have descendants on his throne and Jerusalem would be established as the capital of his kingdom (see commentary on 1 Kings 11:36).

1Ki 15:6

**“Rehoboam.”** Rehoboam had died back in 1 Kings 14:31, and Abijah took his place as king. So why is Rehoboam mentioned here? Some Hebrew manuscripts and the Syriac text read “Abijam.”

1Ki 15:7

**“There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.”** One of those wars is described in 2 Chronicles 13.

1Ki 15:9

**“Asa became king over Judah.”** The reign of King Asa is covered in 1 Kings 15:9-24, and 2 Chronicles 14:2-16:14.

1Ki 15:10

**“mother’s.”** The Hebrew text is “mother,” but “father” and “mother” were also used for grandparents and ancestors. Normally verses such as this tell us the name of the actual mother of the king (cf. 1 Kings 15:2; 2 Kings 8:26; 12:1; 14:2; 15:2, 33; 18:2; 22:1, etc.). The fact that this verse gives us the name of the grandmother shows the tremendous influence she held in the kingdom. But she was an idol worshiper and Asa removed her from her royal position (1 Kings 15:13).

1Ki 15:12

**“male *and female* cult prostitutes.”** There is little doubt that both male and female cult prostitutes were included, but the noun is masculine, so male prostitutes were involved.

Asa cleansed the land of Judah from much idolatry and evil (2 Chron. 14:2-5).

1Ki 15:13

**“mother.”** The Hebrew text is “mother,” but “father” and “mother” were also used for grandparents and ancestors.

**“queen mother.”** The Hebrew word translated “queen mother” is *gebereth* (#01404 גְּבֶרֶת), and in this context, the “queen mother” is the mother of the king.[[21]](#footnote-15677) The queen mother was the most powerful woman in the kingdom, much more powerful than any of the wives of the king, who often did not have much real power at all.

1Ki 15:14

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

1Ki 15:17

**“Ramah.”** Ramah was a city on the central ridge of the mountains leading to Jerusalem, about six miles north of Jerusalem.

**“in order to prevent anyone from going out or coming in to Asa.”** This would choke Judah in many ways. The main entrance to Jerusalem was from the north. In part this would stop defectors from Israel from going to Judah (cf. 2 Chron. 15:9). But it also hampered trade.

1Ki 15:18

**“the king’s house.”** That is, the palace.

1Ki 15:19

**“There is a treaty.”** There may have been a treaty between Asa and Ben-hadad. Or it may be his way of saying “Let there be a covenant,” but he says it in such as way as to make it happen.

**“gift.”** In the culture, a “gift” was a bribe.

**“depart.”** The Hebrew is literally “go up,” as if Baasha was a weight that needed to be lifted off of Asa.

1Ki 15:20

**“Ijon and Dan and Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth.”** The Syrians attacked from the north right down the Jordan Valley. “all Chinneroth” likely refers to the area around “Chinneroth,” the Sea of Galilee.

1Ki 15:21

**“Tirzah.”** Tirzah was the capital city of Israel. It had been the capital since the time of Jeroboam.

1Ki 15:22

**“Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah.”** These are two sites in northern Benjamin and are accesses to Israel, the Northern Kingdom. By this act, Asa created a more permanent border between Judah and Israel.

1Ki 15:23

**”the cities that he built.”** The Hebrew can also mean, “the cities that he built up (or fortified),” and that is likely part of the meaning here, rather than referring to cities that Asa built from the ground up, although he might have built a few cities in strategic locations.

1Ki 15:25

**“Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel.”** Nadab reigned before Baasha, the king of Israel who warred against Asa, king of Judah. The record in 1 Kings can be confusing because in 1 Kings 15:24, Asa is recorded as dying, but then in 1 Kings 15:32-33, Asa is still king of Judah when Baasha is king of Israel. The solution to the apparent problem is realizing that 1 Kings 15 summarized Asa’s reign and death and then covers the reigns of Nadab and Baasha even though Asa reigned during the reigns of both Nadab and Baasha.

1Ki 15:27

**“Gibbethon.”** A city on the coastal plain of Israel, a few miles west of Gezer. The importance of that spot is that it is an entry point from the coast into Judah. Baasha may have also been looking for a way to attack the Philistines from the west.

1Ki 15:29

**“as soon as he became king.”** This is the natural understanding of the text. Baasha did not just kill all the descendants of Nadab, but all the descendants of Jeroboam. Baasha did not want any person who might be considered a legitimate ruler of Israel and who thus could be a rival to him to be left alive. The phrase “did not leave anyone breathing” indicates that Baasha killed off both the men and women who were descendants of Jeroboam.

**“according to the word of Yahweh that he spoke by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite.”** Ahijah gave that prophecy in 1 Kings 14:14.

**1 Kings Chapter 16**

1Ki 16:1

**“Jehu.”** Not the Jehu who would become king of Israel. This is the prophet Jehu (1 Kings 16:7) the son of Hanani, who was also a prophet (2 Chron. 16:7).

1Ki 16:3

**“I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam.”** The house of Jeroboam was totally destroyed.

1Ki 16:4

**“The dogs will eat anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city.”** In a culture where family ties were strong and family tombs common, to not have anyone bury your dead body was considered a terrible curse. In fact, many people believed (falsely, but it was a very widely held belief) that a proper burial was important for a comfortable existence in the afterlife. Thus, the threat of not being buried but having one’s dead body eaten by animals, birds, and vermin was a horrifying threat of unspeakable loneliness and rejection, both on this earth and in the afterlife (see commentary on Jer. 14:16).

1Ki 16:7

**”because he struck it down.”** Baasha not only murdered Nadab the son of Jeroboam to become king (1 King 15:27), he went on to murder all the house of Jeroboam (1 Kings 15:29). But then, after killing all the dynasty of Jeroboam, Baasha went on to sin in the same way Jeroboam and Nadab sinned.

1Ki 16:9

**“Over the House.”** “Over the House” was the title of the palace administrator (see commentary on 1 Kings 4:6).

**“who was Over the House in Tirzah.”** “The House” was the palace in the capital city of Tirzah, and so Arza had the title of palace manager; “Over the House.” Like the “Chief of Staff” (cf. 1 Kings 4:6).

1Ki 16:11

**“he struck down all the house of Baasha.”** In this context, “the house of Baasha” is the dynasty of Baasha. Zimri did not kill Baasha, he had died earlier. Zimri killed Elah, Baasha’s son, but Zimri did not want any rivals to arise from Baasha’s descendants, so he killed them all and thus destroyed the house of Baasha. The dynasty of Baasha was the second dynasty to arise in Israel. The first was the dynasty of Jeroboam I, the second was the dynasty of Baasha, and the third was the dynasty of Omri, which is sometimes referred to as the dynasty of Ahab, Omri’s son, due to Ahab’s prominence (see commentary on 2 Kings 9:9).

**“who pisses against a wall.”** A crass idiom and cultural way of referring to the men. 1 Kings 16:11 seems to indicate that Zimri killed all the men related to or close to Baasha, but left the women alive.

**“kinsman-redeemers.”** A kinsman-redeemer could avenge Baasha’s death, so Zimri had them all killed.

1Ki 16:15

**“seven days.”** Zimri had the shortest reign of any of the kings of Israel or Judah.

1Ki 16:24

**“built on the hill.”** Omri fortified the hill and built his capital city, Samaria, there. It was so well fortified that when it finally fell to the Assyrians, it took the Assyrian army three years to siege it. Samaria so dominated the region that it became the name of the region itself as well as the name of the city.

**“lord of the hill.”** Here, “lord” is used of the landowner, and Shemer was the owner of the hill. The word “lord” is a grammatical plural, “lords,” but it refers to Shemer the lord.

1Ki 16:25

**“Omri.”** Omri was politically astute. He aligned with Judah and Phoenicia because his main enemy was Syria (Aram). He was also a great military strategist. His purchase of the hill of Shemer, which became named Samaria, was a powerful military position.

1Ki 16:29

**“Ahab the son of Omri.”** Omri is one of the kings of Israel whose tribe of origin is not mentioned; this lack of clarity would also be true of Ahab. However, it has been proposed that Omri came from the tribe of Issachar, but this has not been proven.

Ahab is one of the kings of Israel who is attested to in the secular records. For example, he is mentioned in the Assyrian records of Shalmanezer III, and he is also mentioned in the Mesha Stele.

1Ki 16:31

**“the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.”** “Jeroboam the son of Nebat” is Jeroboam I, the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel (after Solomon died, the United Kingdom of Israel split into the kingdom of Judah in the south and the kingdom of Israel in the north). Jeroboam was ungodly and he rejected the Temple and the Laws of Moses and set up golden calf idols in the cities of Bethel and Dan, replaced the genuine Levites and priests with his own people, and modified the God-given religious calendar (1 Kings 28-32). His sins became the tradition in Israel; they were added to, like the worship of Baal in Israel, but they were never eradicated.

**“worshiped.”** The Hebrew verb is *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), and it is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.” The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth. *Shachah* is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

1Ki 16:32

**“temple.”** The Hebrew is “house,” and the “house of Baal” is the temple of Baal. In the biblical culture, temples were commonly referred to as the “house” of the god (or God), and the Temple of God is often called the “house of God.” This was common knowledge in biblical times, but not well-known today. Good evidence of that fact is reflected in Christian tradition, which teaches that the experience of the tongues of fire on the Day of Pentecost happened in the upper room of a “house,” because Acts 2:2 says the sound filled the “house.” Thankfully, modern scholars are beginning to realize the “house” in Acts 2 is the Temple (see commentary on Acts 2:2). Ordinarily the REV would leave the word “house” in the text and not translate it “temple,” but in this case, the sin of Ahab is so egregious that it is important that the English reader understands that Ahab actually built a temple for Baal in his capital city.

1Ki 16:33

**“the Asherah.”** The Hebrew has the definite article and the direct object marker, and “the Asherah” may then refer to the well-known one in Samaria.

1Ki 16:34

**“he laid its foundation…he set up its gates.”** After a miraculous victory and destroying the city of Jericho, Joshua spoke a curse over the destroyed city: “Cursed is the man before Yahweh, who rises up and builds this city Jericho. With his firstborn *son* will he lay its foundation, and with his youngest *son* will he set up its gates” (Josh. 6:26). That curse, which was also a prophecy, was fulfilled over 500 years later when Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho and offered his oldest and youngest sons as foundation sacrifices.

Hiel lived during the time of Ahab and Jezebel, the king and queen of Israel, so it is helpful to know about them, because that is the environment Hiel lived in. Ahab did more evil than all the kings before him (1 Kings 16:30). He worshiped the golden calves that Jeroboam had made (1 Kings 16:31). He married Jezebel, who was the daughter of the King of Phoenicia (1 Kings 16:31 says king of Sidon, but that seems to be a general term for Phoenicians), and worshiped her gods, Baal and the Asherah, even making a Temple for Baal in his capital city (1 Kings 16:32). Jezebel was an idolater, witch (2 Kings 9:22), and murderer. She supported hundreds of prophets of Baal and the Asherah, and killed the prophets of Yahweh (1 Kings 18:4, 19), and would kill innocent families just to get a piece of land she wanted (1 Kings 21:1-16; 2 Kings 9:26. It is not well-known that Jezebel killed all of Naboth’s family, but she had to in order to get clear title to his land).

The god Baal was infamous for human sacrifice, especially child sacrifice, which is specifically mentioned in the Bible (Jer. 19:5), and in the reign of Jezebel and Ahab, Israel was permeated with the worship of Baal. Besides that, Hiel came from Bethel, which was one of the two centers of idol worship in Israel, a city where Jeroboam had set up his golden calves (1 Kings 12:29). So Hiel was almost certainly a worshiper of Baal, and the evidence is that he participated in child sacrifice.

We learn from archaeology and ancient texts that one of the most common types of human sacrifice was “foundation sacrifice,” where children or adults were executed and placed, sometimes in jars, under the walls and gates of cities. The British anthropologist and historian, Nigel Davies writes:

“Another very common form of human sacrifice was the rite of interring adults or children in the foundations of new buildings of under city gates or bridges. Foundation sacrifice springs from a primitive fear of anything new or doing an act for the first time. A new building is also a form of intrusion on the domain of the local spirit, whose anger may be aroused and who therefor has to be appeased. The buried person is not only a peace offering to this local spirit; his soul becomes a protective demon for the building. When the city of Tavoy in the extreme south of Burma was built, an eyewitness was able to testify that a criminal was put into each post-hole in order to become a guardian spirit. …Archaeology supports the Bible’s account of such foundation sacrifices [as that of Hiel the Bethelite]. In the sanctuary in Gezer were found two burnt skeletons of six-year-old children and the skulls of two adolescents that had been sawn in two. At Megiddo a girl of fifteen had been killed and buried in the foundations of a large structure. Excavations show that the practice of interring children and adults under new buildings was widespread and some were evidently buried alive.”[[22]](#footnote-29518)

The way the Hebrew text is worded, that “in [or “with”] Abiram his firstborn he founded her [Jericho], and with Segub, his youngest, he set up her gates,” makes it quite clear that Hiel did not have two tragic accidents while building Jericho, but rather sacrificed his sons to appease the gods and to become protective demons for his newly rebuilt Jericho.

In contrast to our Heavenly Father, who is loving and protects the innocent, the god of this world and his followers, even those who follow him out of ignorance, are blinded by their false religion and participate in terrible acts of cruelty and injustice. Jesus made it clear that we shall know evil by its fruit.

**1 Kings Chapter 17**

1Ki 17:1

**“Elijah the Tishbite.”** This is the first time Elijah is mentioned in the Bible. His ministry was in the late 800s BC.

**“there will not be dew or rain these years except by my word.”** Why would God call for a famine upon Israel? It caused a huge amount of hardship for the people. The answer is to be found in understanding how the people of Israel had turned away from Yahweh and were worshiping Baal. The word *baal* (pronounced baa-al) means “lord, master, owner, and husband,” and it is used many different ways in the Old Testament. As a god, “Baal” sometimes referred to a local god who was the lord of an area or people. However, here in 1 Kings, Baal refers to the great Canaanite storm god who controlled the rain, winds, and clouds, and thus fertility, and was known throughout the Middle East. A tablet found at Ras Shamra depicts Baal holding a lightning bolt.

Queen Jezebel obviously worshiped Baal, and supported 450 prophets of Baal with public funds (1 Kings 18:19). Also, apparently, many of the people of Israel worshiped Baal as well, and prayed to him for rain and abundant crops. So as long as the rain came and the crops grew, there would be no reason for the people to doubt Baal or turn away from him. The most effective way to get the people of Israel to turn away from Baal and turn back to Yahweh was to show that Baal did not have power over the rain and fertility, Yahweh did. Thus Elijah’s statement that unless he said so, there would be no rain or even dew. The reason for mentioning dew is that dew produced a lot of fertility in the dry months, from May until October. It was only when the people could clearly see that Baal was powerless to bring rain or fertility that their hearts were inclined to turn back to Yahweh and get rid of the prophets of Baal.

It is a sad commentary on humanity that often the only way God can get people to pay attention to Him is when the other things that people depend on for success or prosperity fail. However, that is the way life is, and because of that God’s prophets, like Elijah, sometimes had to pray for people’s idols to fail, so they would be humble and return to God. James 5:17 mentions the prayer of Elijah, and sin is mentioned both before it, in James 5:15, and after it, in James 5:19-20. Elijah’s prayer of trust caused a lot of temporary hardship, but it also caused many people to turn back from the error of their ways, and saved their souls from death. For more on God using problems to turn people from evil, cf. Deut. 4:25-30; Isa. 31:1-2, 6-7; Jer. 5:1-9 and 36:3.

1Ki 17:3

**“east of the Jordan.”** The literal Hebrew is “upon the face of the Jordan.” But what that means is unclear and debated, including if Elijah was to go east of the Jordan or stay west of it. It likely was a place east of the Jordan, thus the REV translation. The phrase “the face of the Jordan” has the idea of being near to the Jordan, connected to it, so it seems even if Elijah went east of the Jordan he was not far from where the Cherith Ravine ran into the Jordan River.[[23]](#footnote-32359)

**“Wadi Cherith.”** A “wadi” is an Arabic word (Hebrew is “*nahal*” #05158) that refers to anything from a deep canyon or ravine to a quite shallow riverbed. It likely most often refers to a valley or ravine that had a river or brook that ran wet during the rainy season but would dry out in the dry season.

1Ki 17:6

**“bread and flesh.”** The use of “bread and flesh” here in 1 Kings 17:6 is interesting wording in light of John 6, where Christ said that his followers would eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6:53-58). God temporarily sustained Elijah with bread and flesh, but the bread and flesh of Jesus Christ results in everlasting life.

1Ki 17:9

**“that belongs to Sidon.”** Zarephath was in the territory controlled by Sidon. Here we see another parallel between Elijah and Jesus Christ, because Jesus went there (Luke 4:26).

1Ki 17:12

**“Yahweh your God.”** The woman would have known Elijah was an Israelite by the way he spoke and the way he was dressed. She may have also noticed more specific things than that as well.

**“two sticks.”** It was not necessary to have a huge fire to cook on—a couple of sticks would be enough wood to bake the little dough that she had.

1Ki 17:13

**“loaf.”** The “loaf” would have been like a small pancake—a piece of flatbread.

1Ki 17:14

**“For this is what Yahweh the God of Israel says.”** Yahweh may be the God of Israel, but His power extends over Phoenicia, the territory of Baal. Yahweh, not the storm-god Baal, sends the needed rain.

**“until the day that Yahweh sends rain.”** Here Yahweh speaks of Himself in the third person.

1Ki 17:15

**“for *many* days.”** The Bible does not give the amount of time, but it was likely quite a long time because it did not rain in Israel for over three years. It would have likely taken a year or perhaps—but less likely—even two for the Wadi Cherith to run dry, but that would still leave a year or more for the flour and oil to be multiplied.

1Ki 17:17

**“there was no breath left in him.”** A euphemism for the fact that the child died.

1Ki 17:18

**“What have I to do with you.”** An idiomatic phrase that in essence means “What do we have in common.” The woman now saw herself as very different from the man of God, who in her mind has brought the wrath of God upon her house.

**“bring my sin to mind.”** The specific sin or sins the woman had in mind is not important. The point is the humble people are aware of their sins and shortcomings, and this woman was too. Everyone sins, but humble people take responsibility for their sins and try to rectify them.

1Ki 17:20

**“also.”** Elijah loved Israel and was acutely aware of the pain and suffering there that the famine was causing, and now he is distressed by the death of the child of the woman with whom he was staying.

1Ki 17:21

**“please let this child’s life return within him.”** Elijah prayed for Yahweh to give the child life again. Elijah did not believe he had the authority of life and death, but knew that power came from God. The life had left the child’s body and he was dead. Elijah was simply asking for his life to return; for the boy to be alive again. When the child was dead he was dead in every way, he was not alive somewhere else in some incorporeal form.

[For more on dead people being dead in every way, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.” For more on “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

1Ki 17:22

**“And Yahweh listened to the voice of Elijah.”** Verses such as this show how important our prayers are. As the Bible says, believers are fellow workers with God.

1Ki 17:24

**“Now indeed.”** The Hebrew adds a word that can be translated “indeed,” and which indicated that although the woman had proof from the flour and oil that Elijah was a man of God, when he raised her son back to life she had even more proof, and definitive proof, that he was a man of God, and as the agent of God could raise a person from the dead.

**1 Kings Chapter 18**

1Ki 18:2

**“Samaria.”** This use of “Samaria” likely referred to the region around Samaria; it would not have referred to the city of Samaria. However, the horrific sin against Yahweh was headquartered in the capital city, Samaria, so the use of Samaria is well justified here.

1Ki 18:3

**“Over the House.”** Obadiah was the palace administrator. The word “house” was often used in more contexts in the biblical culture than it is today. The “house” of God was the Temple, the “house” of the king was the palace, and so the “household” was the palace and all the goings on there. “Over the House” was most likely a title for the person who was the palace administrator, like being the Chief of Staff in the White House today.

**“Obadiah feared Yahweh greatly.”** The great reverence that Obadiah had for Yahweh is that he hid the prophets of Yahweh and sustained them at the risk of his life. Had he been discovered he would have certainly been executed.

1Ki 18:4

**“cut off.”** Killed. Jezebel was a murderer. The Devil and his people hate truth, and will kill to suppress it. There is no freedom of religion with the Devil or his people. However, all kinds of witchcraft, superstitions, and hurtful beliefs are allowed. Jesus said we would know them by their fruit and that is certainly true with religion.

1Ki 18:5

**“brooks.”** The Hebrew is *nahal* (#05158 נַחַל), the wadi, the riverbed that can flow with water but is usually dry during the dry season.

**“so that we do not have to slaughter some of the animals.”** The Hebrew word translated “slaughter” is the same root as “cut off” in 1 Kings 18:4 when Jezebel “cut off” (killed) the prophets of Yahweh. Ahab knew if the animals were starving that they would slaughter them (cut them off; kill them) so that at least they could get meat from them rather than let them starve to death and be of no value to anyone. Although some versions read “lose” (“that we lose not all the beasts,” KJV), the idea in the text is not just that the animals would die, but rather that some of them would have to be slaughtered (cf. NAB: “and not have to slaughter any of the beasts.” See also NASB, NET, NIV, NJB).

1Ki 18:7

**“Obadiah.”** The Hebrew text reads “he,” but that could be confusing in this sentence, so we substituted the name for the pronoun.

**“Is it you, my lord Elijah?”** This is a rhetorical question. Obadiah recognized Elijah. This is more like, “Wow! Is it really you, here now? Now what?”

1Ki 18:8

**“your lord.”** The Hebrew is a grammatical plural, “lords.”

1Ki 18:10

**“swear that they had not found you.”** The nature of the imperfect verb, “find” in the Hebrew text is that Elijah had not been found, but if he were to be found in the future, the nation that found him would turn him over to Ahab. Finding Elijah was an international issue for Israel.

1Ki 18:11

**“your lord.”** The Hebrew is a grammatical plural, “lords,” but it refers to the singular lord, Ahab.

1Ki 18:14

**“your lord.”** The Hebrew is a grammatical plural, “your lords,” but referring to just King Ahab.

1Ki 18:15

**“before whom I stand.”** This is an idiom meaning “whom I serve.” The servants stood before their lord.

1Ki 18:19

**“who eat at Jezebel’s table.”** Although this statement could be literal and those prophets actually ate in the royal dining room, the phrase is also to be understood more idiomatically and means that these prophets were supported by Queen Jezebel; they were professional prophets who supported Jezebel’s reign and were in turn supported by her.

1Ki 18:20

**“So Ahab sent.”** Ahab offers no resistance to Elijah’s demand. He was overconfident of the power of Baal and his prophets.

1Ki 18:21

**“leap.”** This same word is used in 1 Kings 18:26 for the false prophets leaping on the altar they made.

**“the two sides.”** The Hebrew word can mean “branches” (YLT) or crutches made from branches (*HALOT*), which seems unlikely here. The ASV uses “two sides,” which makes sense. The idea seems to be the very concrete mind picture of a person leaping back and forth between two branches in a tree or two sides of an issue. One thing seems clear from the context, and that is that no one can support both sides because the sides are opposed.

**“Baal.”** The Canaanite god of rain and fertility. See commentary on 1 Kings 17:1.

1Ki 18:22

**“I am left of the prophets of Yahweh.”** This was not true, and no doubt Elijah knew that. For example, not long before this event, a servant of Ahab, Obadiah, hid 100 prophets in a cave and told Elijah about it (1 Kings 18:4, 13). Elijah’s statement could easily have been hyperbole (exaggeration), which was common in the culture, mixed with Elijah’s feelings that no other prophet of Yahweh was taking a stand against the king and queen like he was doing, so in that sense, he was the only prophet of Yahweh around. Also, however, and easily as likely, Elijah may have been purposely hiding what he knew about other prophets of Yahweh, knowing that if Jezebel knew that there were other prophets of Yahweh alive who had escaped her persecution she would try to find them and kill them. In that case, Elijah was only repeating what Ahab and Jezebel thought, that Elijah was the last prophet of Yahweh left, which would help to keep the other prophets safe.

1Ki 18:24

**“the name of your god.”** The word “god” is Elohim, a grammatical plural, and here it refers to the singular god Baal.

1Ki 18:25

**“your god.”** The word translated “god” is *elohim*, which can be translated as “god” or “gods,” but here, even though Elohim is a grammatical plural, the scholars realize that Elijah is referring to Baal, a singular god in the Canaanite pantheon, and so they translate it as “god” (see commentary on 1 Kings 18:27).

1Ki 18:27

**“Either he is thinking.”** The Hebrew can also mean, “he is in a discussion.” The Hebrew word can refer to thinking and also to discussing something.

**“or he stepped out *for a moment*.”** Some scholars take this as a euphemism for going to the bathroom, but that may be taking the text too far.

**“he is a god.”** Here we have the grammatical plural *elohim* with the singular pronoun “he.” The translators realize that this is referring to the singular god Baal, and so translate the phrase as “he is a god.”

1Ki 18:28

**“cut themselves.”** God made humans in His own image, and we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (or “remarkably and wonderfully made,” Ps. 139:14 HCSB). It seems to be both logical and instinctual to protect one’s body and feel good and healthy, yet the Devil has been successful in getting humans to practice self-mutilation under a number of circumstances.

Self-mutilation is an attack on God’s love for people and a person’s relationship with God. It never makes a person more righteous or holy in God’s sight, and it does not bring His grace or favor to bear in any situation. Neither does God want people to somehow punish themselves for being “not good enough” or for any other reason. It is also important to keep in mind that in that culture, cutting oneself not only needlessly harmed the person, and from the Devil’s point of view defaced God’s wonderful creation, but it was a genuine danger because the people had no effective way to fight infection if the wound should become infected. Thus, every cut was a very real danger to the person. The custom of cutting oneself for various “religious” reasons was so widespread that there can be little doubt that occasionally someone would get infected and die—a great coup for the Devil who comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

Self-mutilation is practiced in a number of religions, just as human sacrifice is, usually in the name of a god or as a demonstration of devotion or piety. Here in 1 Kings 18:28, the pagan priests used self-mutilation to get the attention of Baal and win his favor. Cutting oneself was also a pagan custom that was done as part of mourning for the dead (Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37; see commentary on Jer. 41:5), but God never wanted people to mourn that way and forbade it in the Law of Moses: “do not cut yourselves…for the dead” (Deut. 14:1).

The Devil works hard behind the scenes to get to the point that people call good “evil,” and evil “good” (Isa. 5:20). Often, he gets “evil” to become embedded in the culture as something “good.” That is clearly the case with many superstitions, which honor him and take glory away from God. The wise Christian studies the Scripture to get to know the character of God and His commands, and thus can avoid participating in the evils the Devil has managed to embed in the culture. For example, Jesus knew the character and commands of God, so he did not keep the cultural dictate not to heal people on the Sabbath—he just ignored it (Luke 13:10-17).

The pagans, worshiping the Devil in disguise, had various religious reasons for cutting themselves. Sadly, the Jews did not understand the character of God, and some of those pagan and demonic practices became part of the customs of Israel.

1Ki 18:29

**“the *evening* offering.”** The evening sacrifice and offering included the sacrifice of a lamb and a grain offering and also a drink offering (Exod. 29:38-42; Num. 28:3-8).

1Ki 18:31

**“sons of Jacob.”** God does not call them “the tribes of Israel” here. They are the “sons of Jacob;” Jacob, that “heel snatcher,” who was on and off for Yahweh and wavered just as his descendants were now doing toward Yahweh.

**“to whom the word of Yahweh came.”** God chose Israel as His people and guided them with His Word, which was a special blessing to those people (cf. the special blessing on people who received specific revelation (John 10:35; Jer. 1:2)).

1Ki 18:32

**“and he built the stones.”** In the Hebrew text, the “stones” are the direct object of the verb “built.”

1Ki 18:34

**“a third time.”** So he used twelve stones for the twelve tribes of Israel, and now he had used twelve jars of water, no doubt also pointing to the twelve tribes of Israel.

1Ki 18:40

**“slaughtered.”** The Hebrew word is usually used in a sacrificial sense, to kill as a sacrifice, although it is sometimes used for just “killing” people.

1Ki 18:41

**“there is the sound.”** At this point, there was not even a cloud in the sky, as we learn a couple of verses later (1 Kings 18:43), but God showed Elijah there was going to be an abundance of rain by making him hear the sound. This is audible revelation; revelation hearing.

1Ki 18:42

**“So Ahab went up to eat and to drink.”** Ahab shows no reaction to the fact that 450 prophets of Baal were just executed.

1Ki 18:45

**“in a little while.”** The Hebrew text is idiomatic, literally, “by then, by then,” referring to a little while.

1Ki 18:46

**“And the hand of Yahweh was on Elijah.”** This phrase indicates that Elijah was under the direction and empowerment of Yahweh.

**“tucked his cloak into his belt.”** The custom was to lift up the long robe one was wearing and tuck it into a sash of some sort to keep it up, and the shorter robe allowed the man to run (Luke 12:35; 1 Pet. 1:13).

**“to the entrance of Jezreel.”** This is a long run. It would have been at least 15 miles, and it could have been even more.

**1 Kings Chapter 19**

1Ki 19:1

**“and above all.”** As per Fox, following the ancient versions and not the Masoretic text.

1Ki 19:2

**“life.”** The Hebrew is often translated as “soul,” but here “soul” means “life.”

1Ki 19:3

**“And he was afraid.”** The reading “and he was afraid” is almost certainly the meaning of the original text. The Masoretic Hebrew Text is vocalized as “he saw,” meaning that the vowel points are put in the text (they were not in the original text) in such a way as to form the word “he saw.” However, there are ancient versions and medieval manuscripts that are vocalized differently, and thus read, “he was afraid.” This is a matter of vowel points, and not the way the consonantal Hebrew text—which all scholars agree on—reads. Thus, understanding the context of 1 Kings 19:3 is the only way to tell whether a version such as the King James is correct, which reads “and when he saw…” or a version such as the NASB is correct, which reads, “and he was afraid.” Given that Elijah had just executed 450 of Jezebel’s prophets, and given that Jezebel had vowed to kill Elijah within one day, and given that Elijah ran for his life, the translation that is in many modern versions, that “he was afraid,” is almost certainly the original meaning of the text. Elijah was afraid and ran away.

**“to Beer-sheba that belongs to Judah.”** Elijah left Israel and went south into Judah.

1Ki 19:4

**“he asked that he would die.”** The literal text is, “he asked *for* his soul [his life] to die.”

**“take my life.”** The Hebrew uses the word for “soul,” meaning “life” in this context. Thus, the sentence could also be translated as, “Now, O Yahweh, take my soul, for I am no better than my fathers.”

1Ki 19:5

**“an angel.”** The Hebrew word translated “angel” can also refer to a messenger, and this could be a human being that God sent to help Elijah.

1Ki 19:6

**“loaf.”** The “loaf” would have been like a small pancake—a piece of flatbread. This is the same word as in 1 Kings 17:13. In fact, this “loaf” may have reminded Elijah of Yahweh’s provision that he had experienced earlier with the widow in Phoenicia.

1Ki 19:7

**“too much for you.”** That is, “too much for you in the condition you are in, not having eaten in so long.”

1Ki 19:8

**“40 days and 40 nights.”** The journey from south Judah to Mount Horeb would not have taken even close to 40 days and nights, but Elijah made the journey take that long. This could well be tying Elijah to Moses and Christ.

1Ki 19:9

**“the cave.”** The use of the definite article makes it sound like this was a specific cave that was known or known about. It is uncertain, but possible that this “cave” was the “cleft” or “hole” that Moses was in when Yahweh passed by (cf. Exod. 33:22).

**“What are you doing here, Elijah?”** The Hebrew is idiomatic, “What do you have here, Elijah?”

1Ki 19:10

**“zealous, yes, zealous.”** This is the figure of speech polyptoton for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

1Ki 19:11

**“Go out.”** Go out of the cave he was in.

**“Yahweh passed by.”** This is similar wording to Exodus 34:6 when Yahweh passed by Moses.

1Ki 19:15

**“return on your way toward the wilderness of Damascus.”** Elijah would have begun his journey north the way he came down, but then veered off to head toward Damascus. The phrase “wilderness of Damascus” is not clear in Hebrew. It could be more like, “toward the wilderness, *toward* Damascus,” meaning the wilderness and then on to Damascus. Hazael would have been in Damascus. Interestingly, the Douay-Rheims version (NT AD 1582; OT AD 1609) reads, “through the desert, to Damascus” which is likely what happened.

1Ki 19:16

**“Abel-meholah.”** About nine miles southeast of Beth-shean, on a ford of the Jordan.

1Ki 19:17

**“he who escapes from the sword of Jehu.”** This whole verse is ominous as to the coming judgment on the house of Omri. Jehoram (son of Ahab) and Jezebel were killed by Jehu, as well as the worshipers of Baal.

1Ki 19:18

**“will preserve 7,000.”** More than 7,000 people would be protected and remain alive in Israel, no doubt in part because these 7,000 had not worshiped Baal.

**“every mouth that has not kissed him.”** Kissing the feet of the statue of the god was an act of submission.

1Ki 19:19

**“and found Elisha.”** To some extent, Elijah would have had to look for Elisha. Elijah would have had a general idea of where he was, but since Elisha was plowing, he could have been in a number of places in the general vicinity.

**“12 yoke of oxen before him.”** For fellowship and protection, it was the custom for farmers to work together to get the farm work such as plowing done. Elisha was not driving 24 oxen. He was plowing with 11 other men, each of whom had a yoke of oxen.

1Ki 19:21

**“using the oxen’s *plowing* equipment.”** The “equipment” would include the plow, the yoke, the goad, and perhaps any threshing equipment Elisha might have owned. But even if Elisha burned all of those things, it would not have been nearly enough wood to cook an “ox” (which would have been male or female cows; they would not have been donkeys because donkeys were “unclean” and could not have been eaten by the people). So the point of saying Elisha burned his plowing equipment was to emphasize that Elisha totally gave up his previous life in order to follow Elijah as a full-time prophet.

**1 Kings Chapter 20**

1Ki 20:6

**“of your servants.”** This is a case where the exact meaning of “servants” is ambiguous, and it has been suggested that Ahab’s “servants” are the people of wealth and power in Samaria, i.e., military and political leaders, or it could refer to the people of the city of Samaria, all who were technically servants of the king. Given the context, however, and the fact that many of the people of Samaria would have been poor, there would be no reason to search all their houses.

[For more on “servants” being high officials, see commentary on 2 Sam. 11:1.]

1Ki 20:12

**“at Sukkoth.”** The Hebrew can, and likely should, be translated as a place name, Sukkoth. The Hebrew text has the definite article before “Sukkoth,” which is often indicative of a place name. Furthermore, as Everett Fox points out, the town of Sukkoth was just east of the Jordan River and was “used as a base of operations east of the Jordan.”[[24]](#footnote-19183) It also makes sense because Ben-hadad, coming from Damascus in Syria, would likely encamp east of the Jordan, close to his home and not in the territory controlled directly by Samaria. Although most versions have “in tents,” these were armies in the field, so they would have been in tents, and likely would not have taken the time to build “sukkoth,” temporary shelters (“sukkoth” is the same word as “booths” in the “Feast of Booths” (“Tabernacles”). There is access to Samaria from Sukkoth. Robert Alter[[25]](#footnote-25644) also sees “Sukkoth” as a place name, as does the JPS Tanakh.

1Ki 20:13

**“you will know that I am Yahweh.”** You will experience that I am Yahweh (see commentary on Exod. 6:7).

1Ki 20:15

**“7,000.”** Interestingly, this is the number of people that Yahweh told Elijah had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). It is highly unlikely that none of these 7,000 warriors were among the 7,000 that God mentioned, and their purity of heart to follow Yahweh may have been why God wanted them to participate in the battle.

1Ki 20:17

**“Now Ben-hadad had sent out *scouts*.”** This shows that Ben-hadad was not in sight of the city. The distance between Samaria and Sukkoth could have been covered reasonably quickly by horseback (cf. 1 King 20:20).

**“out from Samaria.”** “Samaria” is both the name of the capital city of Israel and the region the city is in, but here in 1 Kings 20:17 “Samaria” refers to the capital city of Israel.

1Ki 20:18

**“take them alive.”** The Hebrew uses a word that means “seize” or “grab.”

1Ki 20:20

**“struck down.”** That is, “killed.”

1Ki 20:21

**“the horses and the chariots.”** The Hebrew is a collective singular: literally, “the horse and the chariot.” This could be seeing the horse and chariot as one war weapon, or “chariot” could be a metonymy for the charioteer, or Israel could have destroyed the chariots as well as killed the soldiers.

**“with a great slaughter.”** The Hebrew is “with a great striking down,” so the verb “strike down” occurs three times in the verse for emphasis.

1Ki 20:22

**“at the return of the year.”** The exact time of the year that this phrase refers to is not known and is debated by scholars. However, both the prophet and King Ahab knew what the phrase meant.

1Ki 20:23

**“servants.”** In this context, “servant” refers to high officials and military commanders (see commentary on 2 Sam. 11:1).

**“Their god is a god of the mountains.”** The Hebrew word translated as “mountains” has a broad meaning and can refer to a hill or a mountain. However, the Syrians were attacking the city of Samaria, which is near the heart of the mountainous area of central Israel, and it is both surrounded by mountains and is on a mountain itself. The Syrians believed that Yahweh, the God of Israel, also called El Shaddai (“God, the One of the mountain”) was a mountain God. In contrast to Samaria in the mountains, Damascus, the capital city of Syria and where the leadership and much of the army likely came from, is on a plain. So it made sense to the Syrians that if they fought Israel in the mountains, Israel would be stronger, but if they fought them on a plain, they would be stronger.

The belief at the time, and throughout most of the Old Testament, was that the various gods lived in specific places on earth. This belief shows up in a number of different verses in the Old Testament, and was even believed by many Israelites, even though God revealed that He was the only true God, and God over the whole earth. The belief that the gods lived in specific places likely developed because demons do indeed live in different places and so when they manifest themselves or influence a culture, they influence that culture in their own particular place and way. Demons are not omnipresent, and they control different places in different ways. Furthermore, the demons are in a hierarchy, with some being more powerful than others. That was the way God arranged the angelic world, and when some of the angels fell (those we now often refer to as demons), they maintained their hierarchy. Daniel 10:12-14 reveals a powerful demon that resisted the angel who God sent to answer Daniel’s prayer.

The belief that Yahweh was the God of Israel and lived in Israel explains a number of Bible verses. For example, it explains why when Jonah got a revelation from Yahweh that he did not want to obey, he left Israel. Jonah thought that by leaving the land of Israel he could get away from Yahweh (Jon. 1:3). Also, Naaman the Syrian wanted to worship Yahweh, but how could he do that in Syria? Naaman’s solution was to take some of the land of Israel back with him to Syria and worship Yahweh on the dirt from Israel (2 Kings 5:17). Also, when the king of Assyria moved people into Israel they did not know how to please Yahweh and so had troubles (2 Kings 17:26). It was in large part because of the belief that certain gods lived in certain places and could affect the weather, crops, and animals in that place that Israel was often drawn to worship the ancestral gods of the lands that they conquered (see commentary on Deut. 12:30).

One unknown in this verse is what the Syrians thought about the “god” or “gods” of Israel. The Hebrew word *elohim* is a plural form, and in the Bible, it is used of “God,” “a god,” or “gods.” The debate between scholars as to how to understand the verse and translate it in this context has gone on for centuries. Did the Syrians recognize that Israel only had one God, or did they realize that in the Northern Kingdom of Israel the people worshiped Yahweh, Baal, Jeroboam’s golden calves, and other deities as well, in which case “gods” is more appropriate than “God” or “a god.” Because of the lack of clarity as to exactly what the Syrians were saying about Israel, some English Bibles have, “Their god is a god of the hills” (ASV, CEB); others have, “Their God is a God of the hills” (CJB, JPS); others have, “Their gods are gods of the hills, (ESV, CSB, DBY, KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NLT, NRSV); and still others have “Their God is a god of the mountains” (NET). The REV has “Their god is a god of the mountains,” which seems to fit best with what Yahweh said in 1 Kings 20:28.

1Ki 20:24

**“commanders.”** This is an Aramaic (or Assyrian) word for a person of authority. Technically a governor of some sort, but the title was applied to various kinds of leaders. These are Syrians speaking, which accounts in part for the different word for commanders.

1Ki 20:26

**“Aphek.”** There are three possible locations that have been suggested for Aphek. One is near Ein-gev on the Golan Heights, one is on the plain of Acco near the coast of Israel close to Phoenicia, and one is near the Yarkon River that runs through Tel Aviv. None of these locations is at the foot of Samaria, but are miles away from it.

1Ki 20:27

**“two little flocks of goats.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “two exposed (or “bare”) goats.” The word “flocks” is supplied from the Septuagint.

1Ki 20:28

**“so that you will know that I am Yahweh.”** That is, you will experience that I am Yahweh (see commentary on Exod. 6:7). God gives people many chances to recognize who He really is: the One God of all the earth.

1Ki 20:31

**“sackcloth around our waists and ropes on our heads.”** The sackcloth around the waist would mean the upper body was exposed, as if they were stripped as prisoners, and because prisoners were usually tied with ropes, the ropes on their heads was an admission of defeat and being at the mercy of the Israelites. They removed all evidence of military clothing, showing that they were not in a position to fight, and had no desire to.

**“go out to the king of Israel.”** That is, go out to surrender.

1Ki 20:32

**“He is my brother!”** It seems that Ahab had wanted to have a tighter relationship with the Syrians, and saw this as his chance.

1Ki 20:33

**“and they quickly picked it up from him.”** The idea of the verse is that Ben-hadad’s men were looking for an omen or sign, and when Ahab said, “He is my brother,” they quickly picked that up as the omen they had been looking for. This translation also is quite close to the idea in the Septuagint.[[26]](#footnote-14794)

**“Then he said.”** That is, Ahab the king of Israel said.

1Ki 20:34

**“I will set you free with this covenant.”** Here the text abruptly changes and King Ahab of Israel is speaking (at that point Ben-hadad was still a prisoner of war). Ahab set Ben-hadad free, and that is why he was confronted by the prophet in 1 Kings 20:41-43 for letting Ben-hadad go. It is not uncommon for the text to switch speakers suddenly and without informing the reader.

1Ki 20:35

**“said to another one.”** In this verse, one prophet says to another one that God said to strike him, but the other prophet refused.

1Ki 20:36

**“have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh.”** This is a good example of the Jewish law of agency. The prophet is speaking, but it is called “the voice of Yahweh” (cf. Isa. 7:10).

**“a lion found him and killed him.”** In 1 Kings 13, the prophet who disobeyed the word of Yahweh was killed by a lion.

**“struck him down.”** That is, killed him.

1Ki 20:37

**“another man.”** This would be another one of the prophets, not just any person.

1Ki 20:39

**“to weigh out a talent of silver.”** Silver was in bars and such, not coins, and had to be weighed. An Israelite talent at this time was about 66 pounds.

1Ki 20:40

**“That is your sentence; you yourself have decided it.”** In other words, “You agreed to this so you decided your own sentence.”

1Ki 20:43

**“went to his house.”** So Ahab returned to his palace in Samaria.

**1 Kings Chapter 21**

1Ki 21:1

**“Jezreel.”** Jezreel in the Megiddo Valley was the northern place of Ahab and Jezebel.

**“next to the palace.”** This is not the normal word for “palace,” which is just the word “house.” It is often used for a temple. However, 1 Kings 21:2 says “house.”

1Ki 21:3

**“Yahweh forbid me from giving the inheritance of my fathers to you!”** The Law of Moses forbids people from selling their land to others outside the family (Num. 36:7).

1Ki 21:4

**“I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.”** The Mosaic Law forbid passing property from one tribe to another (Lev. 25:23; Num. 36:7). Although the Bible does not say what tribe Ahab was from, some scholars have proposed his family was from Issachar. In any case, because Naboth refused to sell his land to Ahab, it is certain that Ahab and Naboth were not from the same tribe, and Naboth’s family inheritance would go back to Joshua’s division of the land.

**“So Ahab came into his house sullen and angry.”** Ahab had the same emotional response to the word of the prophet (1 Kings 20:42-43) and what Naboth had said to him based on the Law. King Ahab was not humble and wanted to do things his way, not God’s way.

1Ki 21:5

**“Why is your spirit so sullen.”** Here we see the word “spirit” referring to one’s attitude and emotions.

1Ki 21:7

**“Now you exercise your kingship.”** This phrase can be a question or command, and a command seems to fit better with Jezebel’s personality. The tense of the verb is future, “Now you will exercise….” The word “kingship” is Ahab and Jezebel trying to prove they had dynastic authority, but their view of kingship was different than Yahweh’s. They were supposed to reign with humble obedience to Yahweh, but instead, they elevated themselves above Yahweh and did immoral and illegal things.

1Ki 21:8

**“and sealed them with his seal.”** The “seal” of the king of Israel would be a signet ring or cylinder seal that was personally identified with him in some way, by a symbol or letters. These signets were usually made of stone and had a name or title engraved on them. These were very common in the ancient world and identified the owner. If someone was given the signet of the king, they were authorized to do business in the king’s name. Here we see that Jezebel was, as was Joseph (Gen. 41:42), and Haman and then Mordecai (Esther 3:10; 8:2).

[For more on seals and signets, see commentary on Gen. 41:42.]

**“to the elders and to the nobles who were in his city who lived with Naboth.”** It is a sad testimony about people that they are so evil, or so fearful of authority, that they would support killing an innocent man and his sons (2 Kings 9:26) just so a ruler could take his property. These people were not the dregs of society, but the “elders and nobles” in the kingdom of Israel. But the truth is that these people seem to live in every society throughout history. With the Devil’s help, godless people (they may be very religious but they are God-less) rise to leadership positions in society and then control and afflict people.

[For more on the Devil being the ruler of the world, see commentary on Luke 4:6.]

**“nobles.”** The more literal meaning of the Hebrew word is “freemen,” but in this context, it refers to those free men who were higher up in society, who we could refer to as “nobles.”

1Ki 21:9

**“Proclaim a fast.”** It was common that if some kind of disaster was coming, or had come but the cause was unknown, or if there was some offense to God that had become known, rulers would proclaim a fast to seek the will of God and reconciliation with Him. Esther proclaimed a fast to avert the disaster that Haman’s proclamation would bring up the Jewish people (Esther 4:16). That Jezebel proclaimed a fast would get people thinking, “What have Jezebel’s prophets revealed to her about someone offending God or about an upcoming disaster in the kingdom?” Jezebel’s plan was very sly, because if Jezebel was asked why a fast was being proclaimed she only had to say, “It has come to my attention that someone has offended God, and I want to protect the kingdom from His wrath.” At that point, when two men accused Naboth of cursing God and the king, Jezebel, or her evil stooges, could point at Naboth and say, “He is our problem,” and have him executed.

1Ki 21:10

**“sons of Belial.”** This is a designation of sons of the Devil.

[For more on sons of Belial, see commentary on 1 Sam. 2:12. For more on the unforgivable sin and children of the Devil, see commentary on Matt. 12:31.]

**“You cursed God and the king!”** This is quite the irony. Jezebel accuses Naboth of cursing God and the king when in fact she is the one cursing God by her actions and words. Also ironic is the false witnesses’ use of the word “curse,” which is actually the Hebrew word “bless,” but is sometimes used euphemistically for “curse” as we see here,[[27]](#footnote-22360) sort of in the same way that in today’s culture the word “bad” is sometimes used for something good, as in “O, that’s bad!” [meaning, “O that is very good.”] Also, to “bless” sometimes meant to send away, such as a person would send someone away from him with a blessing, so it can mean “dismiss” (or curse) and that is the underlying meaning it has here, Naboth supposedly cursed God and thus dismissed Him. The word “bless” is used to mean “curse” in other places in the Bible as well (cf. Job 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9).

1Ki 21:13

**“Naboth cursed God and the king!”** It was not just Naboth that was stoned, but his sons as well, because if only Naboth died his sons would inherit his property. So Jezebel murdered Naboth and his sons, but we don’t know how many sons Naboth had (2 Kings 9:26). The accusation was that Naboth cursed God and the king (see commentary on 1 Kings 21:10).

1Ki 21:19

**“even yours.”** Interestingly, the Septuagint has, “and the prostitutes will wash in your blood,” which is what happened (1 Kings 22:38), even though that phrase is not in the original text here.

1Ki 21:20

**“you have sold yourself.”** Ahab wanted certain things in the flesh, and he “sold himself” to get those things, and it also seems to have the connotation of having given himself totally to the flesh in the sense that he was “sold out” to the flesh.

1Ki 21:21

**“will utterly burn up.”** The Hebrew is more literally “burn up” meaning eradicate (cf. 1 Kings 14:10).

**“*those coming* after you.”** The Hebrew is literally, “burn up after you,” but the rest of the verse and the context indicates that those coming after are descendants and those who would have been part of the dynasty of Ahab. They were all killed.

**“who pisses against a wall.”** A crass idiom and cultural way of referring to the men.

**“slave or free in Israel.”** The meaning of this phrase is uncertain, and there are at least six different possibilities that have been postulated by scholars. The same phrase is used in 1 Kings 14:10 (see commentary on 1 Kings 14:10).

1Ki 21:22

**“house.”** In this context, “house” refers to the dynasty, not just the immediate household of Ahab.

**“like the house of Jeroboam...and Baasha.”** Both of those dynasties were wiped out by rivals (see commentary on 2 Kings 9:9).

1Ki 21:23

**“Yahweh also spoke about Jezebel.”** Yahweh spoke via the prophet (cf. 1 Kings 21:19). He did not speak directly Himself. This is a case of the Jewish custom of author-agent.

**“The dogs will eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel.”** In a culture where family ties were strong and family tombs common, to not have anyone bury your dead body was considered a terrible curse. In fact, many people believed (falsely, but it was a very widely held belief) that a proper burial was important for a comfortable existence in the afterlife. Thus, the threat of not being buried but having one’s dead body eaten by animals, birds, and vermin was a horrifying threat of unspeakable loneliness and rejection, both on this earth and in the afterlife (see commentary on Jer. 14:16).

**“rampart.”** In this case, the “rampart” was the outer wall of the city, often associated with a moat (cf. Darby and JPS, “moat”). Here, it more likely just means outer wall. It makes sense that Jezebel would have her personal quarters in the outer wall of the city, which would give her a good view of the area around the city, and when she was pushed out the window, she would fall to her death at the base of the wall.

1Ki 21:24

**“the dogs will eat.”** In a culture where family tombs and burial plots were common and family and community ties were strong, to not have family or friends bury one’s dead body was considered a terrible curse. In fact, many people believed (falsely, but it was a very widely held belief) that a proper burial was important for a comfortable existence in the afterlife. Thus, the threat of not being buried but having one’s dead body eaten by animals, birds, and vermin was a horrifying threat of unspeakable loneliness and rejection, both on this earth and in the afterlife.

[For more on the curse of not being buried, see commentary on Jer. 14:16.]

**“the heavens.”** In Hebrew, the word “heaven” is always plural, i.e., “heavens.” The birds “of the heavens” is perhaps more commonly stated in English as “the birds of the air,” but it is important to note that to the Hebrew mindset, any space above the earth was “the heavens.”

1Ki 21:26

**“idols.”** This is not the standard word for “idol” but a derogatory word related to dung.

**“from the presence of the children of Israel.”** Although most English versions say “before the children of Israel” that makes it sound like Yahweh removed the Amorites before the Israelites got there, which was not the case. The Israelites removed them from their presence by defeating them in battle and killing them off. In this verse, God uses the idiom of Author-agent by saying that Yahweh removed them when it was the Israelites, the agents of Yahweh, who defeated them in battle, with God’s help of course.

1Ki 21:27

**“softly.”** Ahab walked around “softly,” without pride or arrogance. Although nuances such as “depressed” and “dejected” have been suggested, and may be partially true, the Hebrew reads “softly” or “gently,” and indicates a meekness brought about by the prophecy of a terrible future.

1Ki 21:29

**“Because he is humbling himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days.”** God responds to repentance even for the most egregious of sinners.

**“but in his son’s days.”** See 2 Kings 9.

**“house.”** In this context, “house” means “dynasty.”

**1 Kings Chapter 22**

1Ki 22:1

**“they sat *peacefully*.”** For three years Syria and Israel were at peace. The Hebrew text has the word “sat” (or “dwelt”) with the idea of it being a time of some peace; the idea being that when a country is not at war the people can sit and rest and take care of domestic necessities.

**“there was no war between Syria and Israel.”** Most scholars feel that this time was when Israel and Syria put aside their differences and fought against Assyria. Ahab is mentioned in the chronicles of Shalmaneser III, when he fought Syria and Israel.[[28]](#footnote-18156) That chronicle is the most ancient text mentioning a king of Israel by name.

Apparently, it was during this time of peace that Jehoshaphat and Ahab made a marriage alliance (2 Chron. 18:1), but that marriage alliance is not mentioned in Kings.

1Ki 22:2

**“Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, went down.”** The Bible does not give a reason why king Jehoshaphat of Judah would visit the wicked king Ahab. However, there is one very likely possibility. The annals of king Shalmaneser III of Assyria show that Ahab participated in a war that a coalition of 12 kings, including both Ahab of Israel and Ben-hadad of Syria, fought against Assyria at Qarqar on the Orontes River. Although the Assyrian records claim the victory, that is almost certainly not the case since the Assyrians withdrew. The northern victory over Assyria would give Jehoshaphat a reason to visit Ahab because stopping Assyria would have been in his interest too. If Assyria took Israel, Judah would be attacked next, which is actually what happened, but later on in history (2 Kings 17-18).

Jehoshaphat was reproved for joining this coalition (cf. 2 Chron. 19:1-3).

**“the king of Israel.”** This is Ahab (cf. 1 Kings 22:20).

1Ki 22:3

**“his servants.”** In this context, Ahab’s “servants” were his high officials, particularly the commanders in his army (see commentary on 2 Sam. 11:1).

**“Ramoth Gilead is ours.”** Ramoth Gilead was technically given back to Israel in the treaty of 1 Kings 20:34, but the Syrians never actually returned it. Now Ahab would have to fight for it, and was killed in the battle.

1Ki 22:4

**“I am as you are.”** This is the kind of answer we would expect from someone in a marriage alliance (2 Chron. 18:1). This is almost certainly political maneuvering because Jehoshaphat likely thought that in the future he would need Israel’s help against Syria or Assyria.

1Ki 22:5

**“first.”** The Hebrew is “today,” thus, “Please, today, seek the word of Yahweh.” The kings were not going to war that day, so the idea of “today” is before we go to war, or “first,” and many versions go with that translation.

1Ki 22:6

**“the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about 400 men.”** These prophets claimed to speak for Yahweh even though they were not prophets of Yahweh (cf. 1 Kings 22:11, 12, 24). The chapter never says these were prophets of Baal, even though they likely were, because they lived in the kingdom of Ahab and Jezebel.

**“Go up.”** Ramoth-gilead was in the Transjordan and up on the heights of Gilead on the way to Bashan.

**“Lord.”** The prophets do not use the word “Yahweh,” but the more generic word “Adonai.”

1Ki 22:7

**“another prophet of Yahweh.”** Jehoshaphat does not challenge the claim of the false prophets to be prophets of Yahweh, even though he likely suspected they were not true prophets of Yahweh. Instead, he asked if there was another prophet of Yahweh who could ask Yahweh about the wisdom of going to war at Ramoth-gilead.

1Ki 22:10

**“at the entrance of the gate of Samaria.”** The iron age gate of Samaria has not been found. There is a large Hellenistic gate and it is possible that it was built where the earlier city gate was. It was customary for kings and officials to sit in the gate and judge the people of the city and conduct business (e.g., 2 Sam. 19:8; 1 Kings 22:10; 2 Chron. 18:9; Esther 2:21; Jer. 38:7; Dan. 2:49), so the fact that these two kings sat at the gate of Samaria was a gesture showing they were in charge.

1Ki 22:15

**“Go up and succeed.”** This is irony. The prophet Micaiah is mocking the false prophets who had been saying that (1 Kings 22:6, 12). What he really knew from God is in 1 Kings 22:17, which was a prophecy that the king would be killed in the battle (to understand that clearly, we have to know that culturally the king was referred to as the “shepherd” of the people, so for the people to have no shepherd meant the king had been killed; see commentary on Jer. 2:8). Micaiah’s prophecy came true, and Ahab was killed by an archer (1 Kings 22:34-35).

Verses like 1 Kings 22:15 require careful reading and an understanding of the context and the culture. The context reveals the irony to us because we cannot hear Micaiah’s tone of voice when he spoke. However, Ahab and Jehoshaphat did hear his voice and perhaps other gestures as well and immediately knew he was mocking the false prophets (1 Kings 22:16). Culturally, prophets did occasionally use irony to make their point emphatic (cf. Amos 4:4).

1Ki 22:17

**“lord.”** The Hebrew is literally “lords,” which is a grammatical plural, in this case, the idiom of the “plural of emphasis,” here used when speaking of the king. The king (singular) is the “shepherd” (singular) of the previous phrase.

1Ki 22:19

**“all the army of heaven standing by him.”** This scene in 1 Kings 22 depicts a large meeting of God’s spirit beings. The word “army” is translated from the Hebrew word *tsaba*’ (#06635 צָבָא) and it refers to an “army” or an “organized army.” *Tsaba*’ is used of an “army of angels” and also of other groups that are organized because an army is very organized, hence it is used to refer to the stars which are organized, and other large organized groups that are not necessarily a military army but are organized, and that is the case here—God’s assembly is an organized meeting.

In many cases, however, *tsaba*’, the “army,” does refer to, or emphasize, the military aspect of some group. In fact, God’s angelic “army” is, like the rest of His creation, in a war against evil. The world is a war zone. Ever since the fall of the Devil and his rebellion against God, Good and Evil have been at war. This verse in 1 Kings shows God in front of a huge assembly of spirit beings. God also has an intimate divine council with whom He works to govern His creation.

One thing worth noting is that God’s army of spirit beings is standing by God, they are not being dispatched to help Ahab and Jehoshaphat. As we know from the record, Ahab died fighting at Ramoth-gilead. Ahab had been against God for many years, and now he ignores God’s prophet and follows the advice of his false prophets which resulted in his death.

[For more on God’s divine council, see commentary on Gen. 1:26. For more on the larger assemblies that God holds with His spirit beings, see commentary on Job 1:6.]

1Ki 22:25

**“that day.”** In this context, “that day” is the day of battle.

1Ki 22:27

**“the prison.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “the house of confining.”

**“only a little bread and water.”** The Hebrew is literally, “the bread of oppression and the water of oppression,” which refers to meager amounts of bread and water, such as one would have if they were afflicted by a famine or a siege. In other words, do not give Micaiah much to eat.

1Ki 22:28

**“return, yes, return.”** Micaiah emphasizes that Ahab will not return from this battle by using the figure of speech polyptoton, in which the verb is repeated twice but in a different case, in this case, an infinitive paired with an imperfect.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

1Ki 22:29

**“went up.”** The subject is plural but the verb is singular, this happens occasionally in Hebrew (see commentary on Gen. 48:16).

1Ki 22:30

**“I will disguise myself and go into the battle.”** See commentary on 2 Chronicles 18:29.

1Ki 22:34

**“severely wounded.”** The word “severely” is not in the Hebrew text but is expressed in the verb translated “wounded,” because that is a word that means “sick” or “diseased,” and is not the normal word for wounded or hurt.

1Ki 22:35

**“to the bottom of the chariot.”** There was so much blood from the wound that Ahab’s clothing did not absorb it all and it ran down to the bottom of the chariot.

1Ki 22:38

**“the pool of Samaria.”** When Samaria was excavated, a large pool (16 feet by 33 feet) was discovered inside the northwest corner of the wall by the palace. However, there is no way to say with certainty that that pool is the one being referred to in 1 Kings 22:38, but it could be. No other pool has been found. Today the pool is filled in and would only be noticed if one knew where to look.

**“the prostitutes washed *in it*.”** The Septuagint adds “in it,” but we are not told whether the “it” refers to the pool or the blood. However, it likely refers to the blood. It does not make much sense to define the pool by saying that it was the pool the prostitutes bathed in, because that pool would have had many uses given that it was in the capital city of Israel. It makes more sense that along with the dogs licking up Ahaz’s blood, the prostitutes bathed in it in some kind of act of superstition connected with the blood of the king.

**“that he had spoken.”** The referent could be Yahweh or Elijah. Elijah spoke the prophecy in 1 Kings 21:19.

1Ki 22:39

**“the ivory house that he built.”** The house was not built of ivory but was decorated with so much ivory that it was called “the ivory house.”

1Ki 22:41

**“​Jehoshaphat.”** Jehoshaphat is mentioned here in 1 Kings, and is spoken of in more detail in 2 Chronicles 17-20. In spite of many notable things that happened during his reign, there is no mention of him in any secular writings from the ancient Near East.

**“in the fourth year of Ahab.”** Ahab reigned 22 years (1 Kings 16:29), so Jehoshaphat was king of Judah for most of Ahab’s reign.

1Ki 22:43

**“the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

1Ki 22:44

**“the king of Israel.”** This would be Ahab for the first 18 years of Jehoshaphat’s reign. He is reproved by the prophet for it (2 Chron. 19:1-3).

1Ki 22:46

**“male cult prostitutes.”** The noun is masculine, but there is a possibility it is including both male and female cult prostitutes.

1Ki 22:47

**“Now there was no king in Edom.”** This is likely because Judah was ruling over Edom and would not allow it to have a king, but Jehoshaphat appointed a governor to reign over it.

1Ki 22:48

**“at Ezion-geber.”** Ezion-geber is most likely Eilat and Aquaba.

1Ki 22:51

**“he reigned two years over Israel.”** The Northern Kingdom of Israel used a non-accession counting system for their kings in which any part of a year was counted as a year (in contrast to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which used an accession-year counting system, in which any part of the first year of a kings reign was not counted because it was counted as part of the final year of the previous king). Ahaziah reigned at least six months in his first year but likely only several months in his “second” year, making his total reign perhaps even less than 12 months, although it could have been a few more months than that.

1Ki 22:53

**“worshiped.”** The Hebrew verb is *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), and it is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.” The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth. *Shachah* is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

1. Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-31687)
2. VanGemeren, New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-31078)
3. Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon. [↑](#footnote-ref-14872)
4. Koehler and Baumgartner, Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-26550)
5. Cf. YLT; Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, 3:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-27844)
6. James Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-26486)
7. Cf. David Rohl, Pharaohs and Kings. [↑](#footnote-ref-17546)
8. Cf. Walter Maier, 1 Kings 1-11, Concordia Commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-23863)
9. Mordechai Cogan, 1 Kings [AB], 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-25001)
10. See Yosef Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu, Solomon’s Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-21381)
11. See Yosef Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu, Solomon’s Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-15197)
12. Yosef Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu, Solomon’s Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-19369)
13. Christopher Eames, “The ‘House of the Forest of Lebanon,’ an Impossible Equation, and the Danger in Trying to ‘Fix’ the Bible,” Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology, Aug. 21, 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-29811)
14. Yosef Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu, Solomon’s Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-22324)
15. Cf. Walter Maier III, 1 Kings 1-11, Concordia Commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-31419)
16. James Montgomery, Daniel [ICC], note on Dan. 6:10, 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-14117)
17. E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, 137, “asyndeton”; 208, “polysyndeton.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14927)
18. Simon J. De Vries, 1 Kings [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-27176)
19. Cf. Walter Maier, 1 Kings 12-22, Concordia Commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-25368)
20. Everett Fox, The Schocken Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-25422)
21. Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon. [↑](#footnote-ref-15677)
22. Nigel Davies, Human Sacrifice in History and Today, 21,22,61. [↑](#footnote-ref-29518)
23. See a discussion in: Walter Maier, 1 Kings 12-22 [ConcC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-32359)
24. Everett Fox, The Schocken Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-19183)
25. Robert Alter, The Hebrew Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-25644)
26. See W. Maier, 1 Kings 12-22 [ConcC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-14794)
27. Cf. Koehler and Baumgartner, HALOT Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon. [↑](#footnote-ref-22360)
28. James B. Pritchard, ANET, Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 278-279. [↑](#footnote-ref-18156)