

Solomon

in All His Glory

From his father David, Solomon inherited a united nation that had conquered, or was at peace with, its neighbors (1 Kings 4:25). Still, Solomon had to fight his older brother Adonijah for the throne (1:5–2:25), and he realized early that he needed God's wisdom to rule the nation. God granted him that wisdom (3:1-15), and further showered Solomon with great wealth and prosperity. Solomon's kingdom took in more than 666 talents (about 25 tons) of gold per year in revenues from taxes, from merchants whose caravans passed through Israel, and from his fleet of trading ships (10:14-22). His legendary wealth increased as visitors, such as the Queen of Sheba, brought him gifts to seal trade agreements with him.

Solomon's greatest accomplishment—the construction of the temple in Jerusalem—began in the fourth year of his 40-year reign. Its interior was lined with expensive cedar overlaid with gold, and Solomon led the nation in offering sacrifices to the Lord at its altar (8:62).

Behind the prosperity, however, were signs of the kingdom's corruption. Solomon married the daughters of the pagan rulers around him and then built temples for his wives to worship their gods. When Solomon himself joined in their idolatrous worship, God's judgment came upon that glorious kingdom (11:7-13).



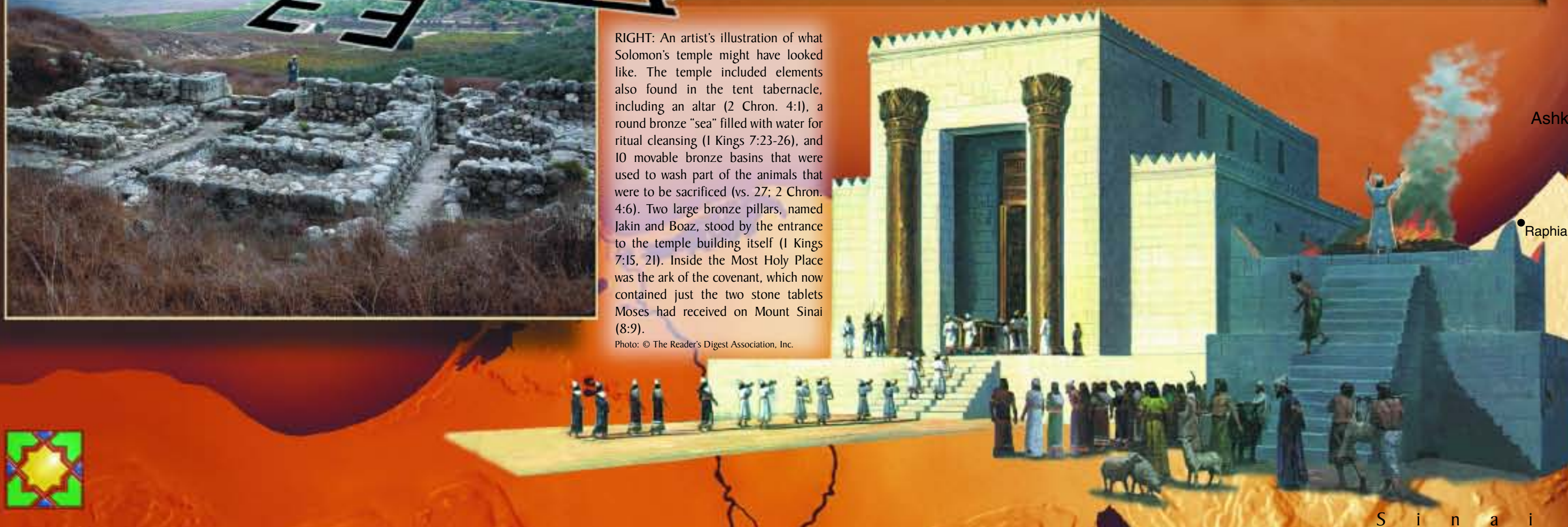
ABOVE: This movable bronze basin on four wheels has been dated to about the eleventh century B.C. and was found on the island of Cyprus. It resembles the 10 basins that Solomon made for the temple (1 Kings 7:27-37).
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RIGHT: An artist's representation of Solomon meeting the Queen of Sheba at his palace (1 Kings 10:1-13; 2 Chron. 9:1-12). The queen likely came from the area we now call Yemen, at the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, to listen to Solomon's God-given wisdom. Solomon's fleet of trading ships may have threatened the trade of the kingdom of Sheba, whose caravans transported luxury goods from India and Africa north across the Arabian Desert to markets such as Damascus. Nevertheless, the queen willingly listened to Solomon's wisdom, unlike those who, centuries later, refused to listen to the even greater wisdom of Jesus (Matt. 12:42). Photo: © Superstock

BELOW: The remains of a triple gate at the site of the ancient city of Gezer, one of the cities Solomon fortified along his border with the Philistines (1 Kings 9:17). The foundations of similar gates, with two outer towers and six flanking guardrooms, have been found in two other cities Solomon rebuilt: Megiddo and Hazor (vs. 15).
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RIGHT: An artist's illustration of what Solomon's temple might have looked like. The temple included elements also found in the tent tabernacle, including an altar (2 Chron. 4:1), a round bronze "sea" filled with water for ritual cleansing (1 Kings 7:23-26), and 10 movable bronze basins that were used to wash part of the animals that were to be sacrificed (vs. 27; 2 Chron. 4:6). Two large bronze pillars, named Jakin and Boaz, stood by the entrance to the temple building itself (1 Kings 7:15, 21). Inside the Most Holy Place was the ark of the covenant, which now contained just the two stone tablets Moses had received on Mount Sinai (8:9).
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ABOVE: A model of a ship from the time of Solomon. He created the first Israelite trading fleet, with the help of sailors from King Hiram of Tyre. The fleet brought gold from the mines of Ophir, ivory, and even exotic animals back to Solomon (1 Kings 9:26-28; 10:22).
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