

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Hiram, king of Tyre, sends to congratulate Solomon on his accession to the kingdom, 1 Kings 5:1. Solomon consults him on building a temple for the Lord, and requests his assistance, 1 Kings 5:2-6. Hiram is pleased and specifies the assistance which he will afford, 1 Kings 5:7-9. He sends cedars and fir trees, 1 Kings 5:10. The return made by Solomon, 1 Kings 5:11. They form a league, 1 Kings 5:12. Solomon makes a levy of men in Israel to prepare wood and stones, 1 Kings 5:13-18.

Verse 1

Hiram king of Tyre - It must have been at the beginning of Solomon's reign that these ambassadors were sent; and some suppose that the Hiram mentioned here is different from him who was the friend of David; but there seems no very solid reason for this supposition. As Hiram had intimate alliance with David, and built his palace, 2 Samuel 5:11, he wished to maintain the same good understanding with his son, of whose wisdom he had no doubt heard the most advantageous accounts; and he loved the son because he always loved the father, for Hiram was ever a lover of David.

Verse 2

Solomon sent to Hiram - Made an interchange of ambassadors and friendly greetings. Josephus tells us that the correspondence between Hiram and Solomon was preserved in the archives of the Tyrians even in his time. But this, like many other assertions of the same author, is worthy of little credit.

Verse 4

There is neither adversary - אֵין עֹשֵׁי עֵין שָׂטָן (eyn satan), there is no satan - no opposer, nor any kind of evil; all is peace and quiet, both without and within. God has given me this quiet that I may build his temple. Deus nobis haec otia fecit.

Verse 5

A house unto the name of the Lord - The name of God is God himself. I purpose to build a house to that infinite and eternal Being called Jehovah.

Verse 6

Any that can skill to hew timber - An obsolete and barbarous expression for any that know how to cut timber. They had neither sawyers, carpenters, joiners, nor builders among them, equal to the Sidonians. Sidon was a part of the territories of Hiram, and its inhabitants appear to have been the most expert workmen. It requires more skill to fell and prepare timber than is generally supposed. Vitruvius gives some rules relative to this, lib. ii., cap. 9, the sum of which is this:

1. Trees should be felled in autumn, or in the winter, and in the wane of the moon; for in this season the trees recover their vigor and solidity, which was dispersed among their leaves, and exhausted by their fruit, in spring and summer; they will then be free from a certain moisture, very apt to engender worms and rot them, which in autumn and winter is consumed and dried up.

2. Trees should not be cut down at once; they should be cut carefully round towards the pith, that the sap may drop down and distil away, and thus left till thoroughly dry, and then cut down entirely.

3. When fully dried, a tree should not be exposed to the south sun, high winds, and rain; and should be smeared over with cow-dung to prevent its splitting.

4. It should never be drawn through the dew, but be removed in the afternoon.

5. It is not fit for floors, doors, or windows, till it has been felled three years. Perhaps these directions attended to, would prevent the dry rot. And we see from them that there is considerable skill required to hew timber, and in this the Sidonians excelled. We do every thing in a hurry, and our building is good for nothing.

Verse 7

Blessed be the Lord this day - From this, and indeed from every part of Hiram's conduct, it is evident that he was a worshipper of the true God; unless, as was the case with many of the heathens, he supposed that every country had its own god, and every god his own country, and he thanked the God of Israel that he had given so wise a prince to govern those whom he considered his friends and allies: but the first opinion seems to be the most correct.

Verse 9

Shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea - As the river Adonis was in the vicinity of the forest of Lebanon, and emptied itself into the Mediterranean sea, near Biblos, Hiram could transport the timber all squared, and not only cut to scantling, but cut so as to occupy the place it was intended for in the building, without any farther need of axe or saw. It might be readily sent down the coast on rafts and landed at Joppa, or Jamnia, just opposite to Jerusalem, at the distance of about twenty-five miles. See 2 Chronicles 2:16. The carriage could not be great, as the timber was all fitted for the building where it was hewn down. The materials had only to be put together when they arrived at Jerusalem. See 1 Kings 6:7.

Verse 11

And Solomon gave Hiram, etc. - The information in this verse of the annual stipend paid to Hiram, is deficient, and must be supplied out of 2 Chronicles 2:10. Here twenty thousand measures of wheat, and twenty measures of pure oil, is all that is promised: there, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, twenty thousand measures of barley, twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil, is the stipulation; unless we suppose the first to be for Hiram's own family, the latter for his workmen. Instead of twenty measures of oil, the Syriac, Arabic, and Septuagint, have twenty thousand measures, as in Chronicles. In 2 Chron., instead of cors of oil, it is baths. The bath was a measure much less than the cor.

Verse 13

The levy was thirty thousand men - We find from the following verse that only ten thousand were employed at once, and those only for one month at a time; and having rested two months, they again resumed their labor. These were the persons over whom Adoniram was superintendent, and were all Israelites.

Verse 15

Threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens - These were all strangers, or proselytes, dwelling among the Israelites; as we learn from the parallel place, 2 Chronicles 2:17, 2 Chronicles 2:18.

Verse 16

Besides - three thousand and three hundred which ruled over the people - In the parallel place, 2 Chronicles 2:18, it is three thousand six hundred. The Septuagint has here the same number.

Verse 17

Great stones - Stones of very large dimensions.

Costly stones - Stones that cost much labor and time to cut them out of the rock.

Hewed stones - Everywhere squared and polished.

Verse 18

And the stone-squarers - Instead of stone-squarers the margin very properly reads Giblites, גִּבְלִיטִים (haggiblim); and refers to Ezekiel 27:9, where we find the inhabitants of Gebal celebrated for their knowledge in ship-building. Some suppose that these Giblites were the inhabitants of Biblos, at the foot of Mount Libanus, northward of Sidon, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea; famous for its wines; and now called Gaeta. Both Ptolemy and Stephanus Byzantinus speak of a town called Gebala, to the east of Tyre: but this was different from Gebal, or Biblos. It seems more natural to understand this of a people than of stone-squarers, though most of the versions have adopted this idea which we follow in the text.