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# THE elusive TEMPLE

Carol L. Meyers

*The constant refashioning of ancient Israel's shrine has obscured the permanent symbols and images in sacred architecture.*

"The Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem." Saying those words causes images to flash through one's mind, images evocative of oriental mystery and golden splendor, of richly paneled sacred chambers illuminated by flickering lights atop ornate and gleaming metal stands, scented with the smoke of exotic incense. Yet such products of the imagination are vague, romantic, and illusory, colored more by historical novels and cinematic reconstructions than by the scriptural records.

When it comes to defining the reality of the Israelite temple and the appurtenances within—and there has been no dearth of such attempts—both popular and scholarly conceptions over the years have tried to utilize biblical and archeological materials (e.g., Wright 1941; Gutmann 1976). However, the results of such studies, or reconstructions, tend to run into some critical methodological snags.

Most of the difficulty comes from a failure to recognize the discrete nature of the series of national sanctuaries of ancient Israel. These sanctuaries are described in the Bible and in discussions of the temple in postbiblical Jewish sources, such as Philo, Josephus, Ben-Sira, and the Talmud. These sources cannot be merged. They cannot be understood as referring to a single Jerusalem sanctuary, but as dealing with different sacred buildings, constructed during the course of three

major time periods. The situation is complicated by the fact that within each major period repeated and often substantial changes, or rebuildings, took place. Thus it is hardly appropriate to speak of only three main shrines of ancient Israel, since, as will become clear, there was actually a succession of discrete structures within each time period.

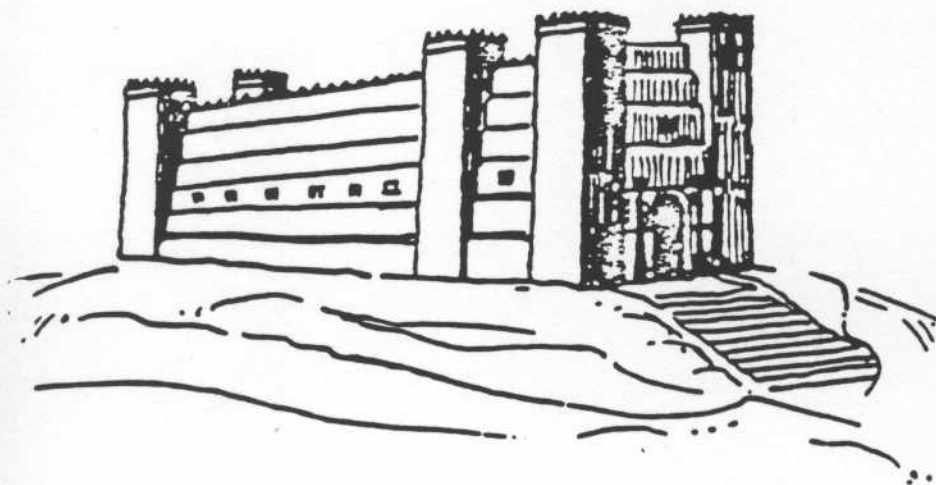
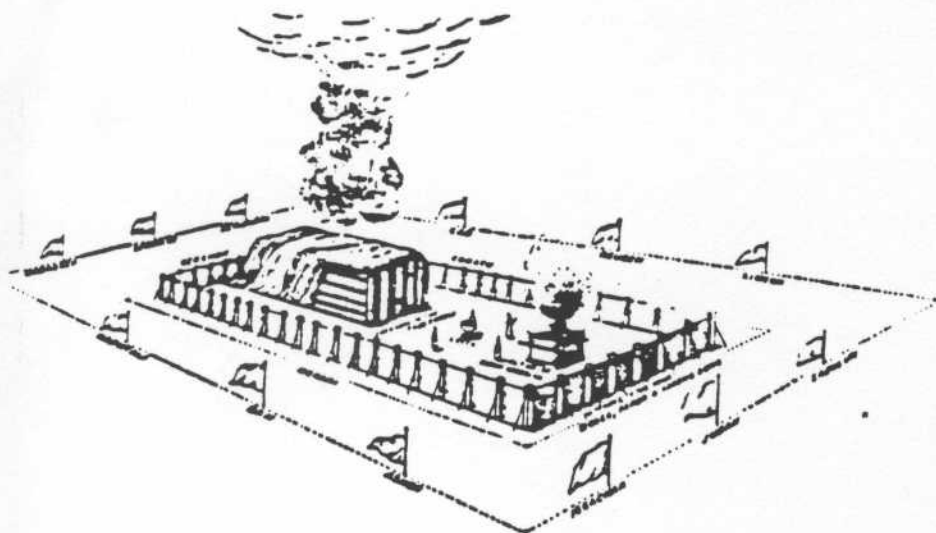
Historically, the most recent of these shrines was the building known as the Second Temple. This temple was built in the Persian period, after the Babylonian Exile, by the restoration community in Judah. According to at least one biblical passage (Ezra 1:2-4), Cyrus the Great himself ordered the rebuilding of the Temple. After considerable difficulty, the reconstruction of the House of Yahweh seems to have been completed around 515 B.C.E. A great dedication then took place (Ezra 6:13-18).

This Second Temple was destroyed in the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Yet it should not be presumed that the building erected in the 6th century B.C.E. is the same building that the Romans destroyed. The "Second Temple" was clearly subject to repeated refurbishings, refurnishings, and refabrications during its nearly six centuries of existence. The repeated plunderings by the Greeks (cf. 1 Macc 1:21-22, 54; 4:38) were responsible in part for this. The urge to glorify and elaborate the

modest structure of the Persian period which reached a climax in the enormous projects of Herod in the 1st century B.C.E. likewise led to significant, if not to radical, changes in the original Restoration Temple and its artifacts (cf. Josephus). Thus, "Second Temple" really refers to a chronological span of nearly six centuries. During this period an incalculable number of changes were effected, resulting in a series of distinct different sanctuaries.

An early major temple in Jerusalem, which, in terms of its designation, attracts the most attention. The temple called Temple of Solomon was built in the middle of the 10th century B.C.E. Its construction was part of the extensive program of building projects and commercial enterprises that made Israel a dynastic state, if not a minor Levantine empire. Such a polity demanded a suitable capital. Jerusalem was transformed into a cosmopolitan cultural center with lavish buildings and a splendid palace.

Perhaps the most important of these buildings, in a symbolic if not a pragmatic sense, was the Temple of Yahweh. There the invisible God of Israelites found his earthly "house." His first permanent national structure. God's ties with Israel, the nation, Jerusalem, its capital, were cemented with "bricks and mortar," with imported cedar and cypress, with olive wood, with specially hewn stone, with



Top: Reconstruction of the tabernacle and its courtyard, based on the description in Exodus. Banners mark the places of assembly of the twelve tribes of Israel. Center: Temple of Solomon, with crenelated towers and six-tiered walls, as conceived by the German theologian-archeologist K. Möhlenbrink in 1932. Bottom: Postexilic temple of Zerubbabel, with a three-tiered facade as suggested by Möhlenbrink in his *Der Tempel Salomos* (Stuttgart: Neumann, 1932).

and silver and bronze, and with the best workmanship of Solomon's artistically sophisticated Tyrian allies (1 Kings 5-7) (Wright 1944: 70-75).

Solomon himself presided at the elaborate dedicatory ceremonies in ca. 952 B.C.E. In so doing he forever linked his name to the First Temple, along with the glory, peace, and internationalism of his empire. However, just as the Second Temple was not unchanged from beginning to end, the Solomonic Temple was likewise subject, for a variety of reasons, to periodic restoration, renewal, and reequipment during its nearly four-century history. At least four different kinds of circumstances led to changes in the original Solomonic structure and its contents.

First, the biblical record shows that economic problems and bureaucracy in the southern kingdom sometimes led to neglect and disrepair. The story of the repairing of the Temple by Jehoash (2 Kgs 12:4-16) indicates how extensive such restoration could be. Carpenters, builders, masons, and stonecutters were all called into service for structural matters. Yet work was halted as funds ran out. The internal furnishings, which were also in a condition of neglect, were not similarly updated or replaced.

Incursions by foreign nations in the form of taxes, tribute, or even actual raids, also effected changes in the Solomonic Temple. For example, in the reign of Solomon's successor Rehoboam, Shishak of Egypt carried away the treasures of the house of the Lord (1 Kgs 14:25-26). Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18 informs us, stripped all the gold from the doors of the Temple and handed it over to the Assyrian king. He also presented Sennacherib with all the silver from Yahweh's house and its storerooms. This presumably included many of the cultic vessels. The temple with which Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, was familiar was different from that which Hezekiah had inherited from Ahaz his father some 29 years earlier.

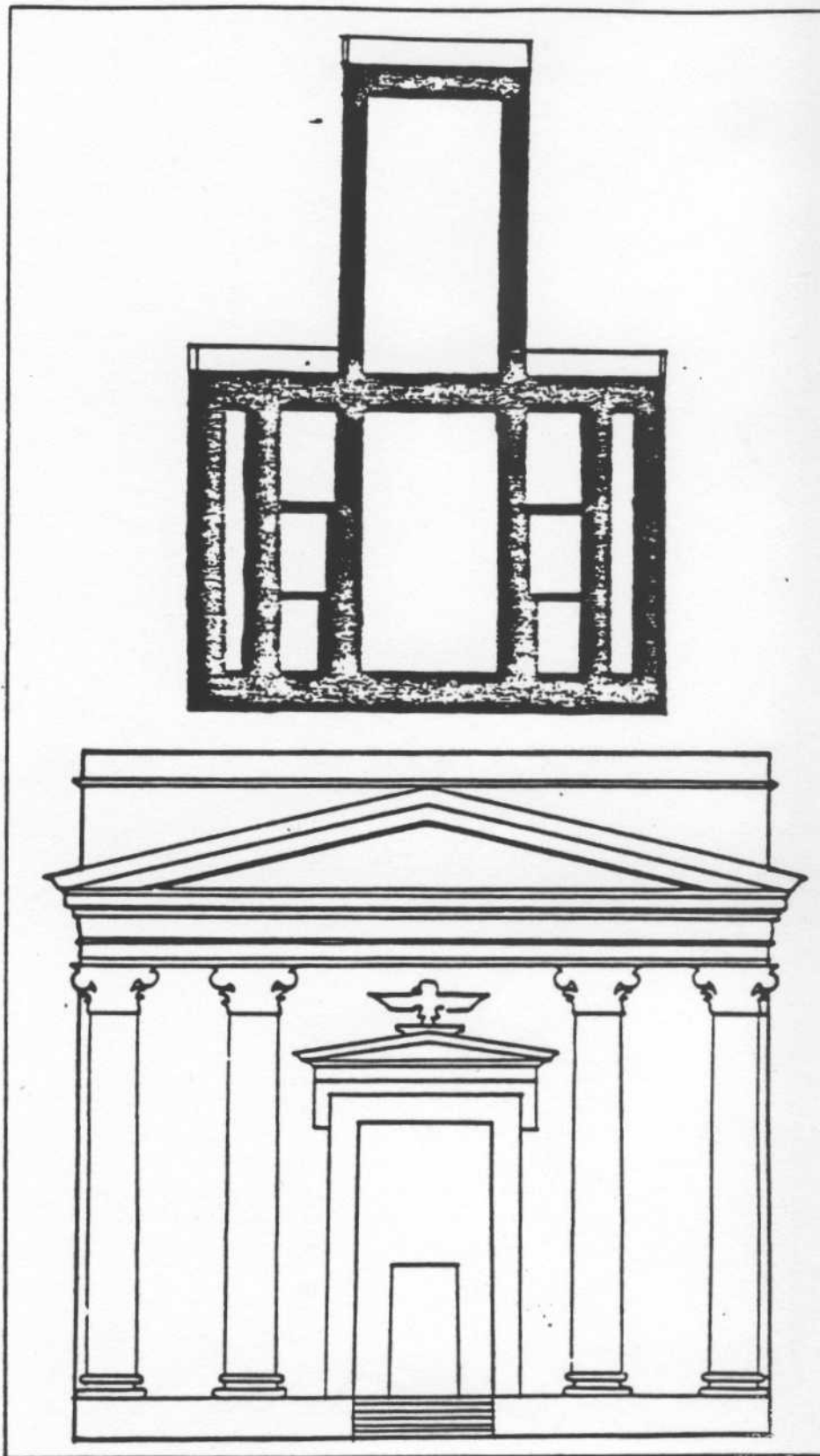
Still another factor created changes in the original Solomonic building. Beginning already with Solomon, the Judean kings were not always faithful to the cult of Yahweh alone. Their political entanglements led them into religious syncretism, and other gods were worshipped even in the Temple in Jerusalem. This required changes or additions to the internal furnishings if not to

the structure itself. Ahaz, for example, was so impressed with the altar he saw in Damascus after his visit with King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria that he immediately ordered one to be built for the Temple in Jerusalem. He dispatched a "model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details" to Uriah the priest with instruction that a copy of this altar be built at once (2 Kgs 16:10-11). He then had the new altar installed where the old bronze altar had been. The bronze altar and its structural elements were removed forthwith (2 Kgs 16:14, 17).

Similarly, Manasseh built altars in the house of the Lord and in its courts and even erected an Asherah (2 Kgs 22:3-5). We are informed of the installation of non-Yahwistic cult instruments by Josiah's action in having them removed (2 Kgs 23:4). That actual architectural alterations had been made is also demonstrated by Josiah's order to break down the "houses of the male cult prostitutes which were in the house of the Lord" (2 Kgs 23:7).

Finally, changes or additions seem to have been carried out for functional or modernizing purposes of keeping up-to-date with developments in Near Eastern cultic architecture and furnishings. The above-mentioned case of Ahaz and the Damascene altar may reflect such a motivation as much as it is an indication of syncretistic forces. We also learn in the description of Ahaz's activities that at some earlier time an "outer entrance for the king had been built" (2 Kgs 16:18); Ahaz proceeded to remove it because of what he had seen on his trip to Damascus. Jotham, Ahaz's father, had perhaps built this entrance: "he built the upper gate of the house of the Lord" (2 Kgs 15:35). Even Solomon, at some point following the Temple's dedication, added to the decoration of the building. As commercial expansion and ties with Africa developed, foreign products poured into the capital: "and the king made of the almuq wood [from Ophir] supports for the house of the Lord . . . lyres also and harps for the singers; no such almuq wood has come or been seen, to this day" (1 Kgs 10:11-12 = 2 Chr 9:10-11).

Therefore, because of lack of funds, difficulties with foreign powers, the effects of religious syncretism, and the influence of technological innovations



Frontal elevation and facade of the Herodian Temple according to C. Watzinger *Denkmäler Palästinas* (Leipzig, 1933).

stylistic trends, the Temple built by Solomon underwent many changes during its centuries of existence. Referring to the Solomonic building does not automatically mean the original Temple, unless one speaks of the very beginning of the reign of Solomon himself. Rather, with many of the successive monarchs came alterations so that again we are speaking of a series of "Solomonic Temples."

The first and earliest national shrine which influences our image of the Temple of Jerusalem is not a permanent building but rather a movable structure. This is what is known as the Tabernacle (*miškān*), and it consisted of an elaborate tent and a full complement of furnishings as well as implements for its transport. The term "Tent of Meeting" is also used in connection with the tabernacle, although the exact relationship between those two terms is not clear (Haran 1960). The former seems to refer to the actual tent-shrine within a larger compound that, in its entirety, is designated "Tabernacle." Its function within the community was that of a temple. Thus it was actually a portable temple, as befits a community without a fixed geographical locale, central government, or permanent capital.

The so-called "tabernacle texts" of Exodus 25-31 (prescribing its construction) and Exodus 35-40 (describing its construction) provide extensive information about the layout, materials,

decorations, and appurtenances of the Tabernacle (Levine 1965). In addition, priestly sources in the Pentateuch scattered in Leviticus and Numbers repeat or add to the Exodus materials (Haran 1965). The Tabernacle, according to these sources, was assembled under the instructions of Yahweh to Moses during the wilderness period. It housed the Ark of the Covenant, the physical record and symbol of the extraordinary covenantal relationship between a motley group of refugees and a powerful salvific deity.

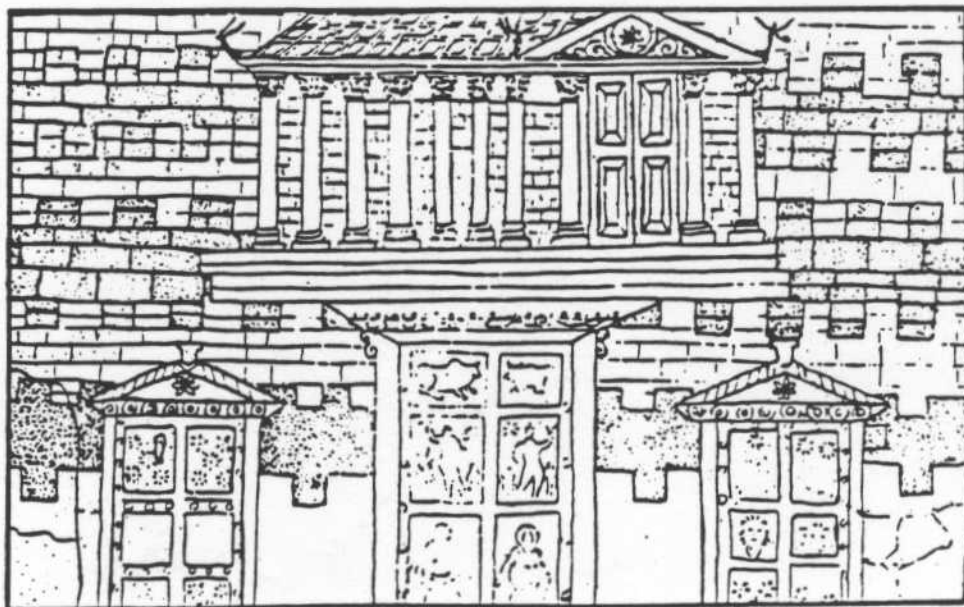
The subsequent history of the Tabernacle is difficult to trace. Yet various references in the Former Prophets, particularly Samuel, indicate its fate. It may have stood at Shechem for a while and later at Nob, but its appearance at Shiloh was especially prominent. The capture of the Ark by the Philistines and the subsequent destruction of Shiloh (cf. Jer 7:12 and 26:6) in ca. 1050 B.C.E. ended its Shilonic period. Subsequent reference to the "Tent of David" in 2 Samuel 7 obviously links the Davidic shrine with the wilderness tabernacle. That they were one and the same, however, is extremely unlikely.

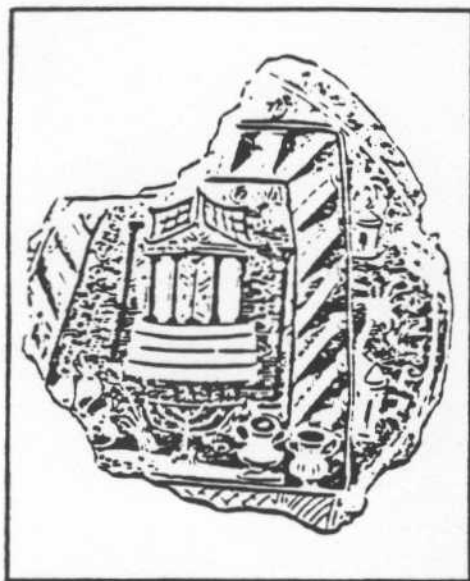
The wear and tear of an oft-disassembled and reassembled structure along with the effects of repeated military crises including its ill-fated sojourn in Shiloh must be taken into account. This indicates that we are dealing with a series of portable shrines, each no doubt utilizing as much as possible of the previous ones yet nonetheless discrete.

At this point the matter of placing the "Tabernacle" in the pre-Solomonic period dating back to Moses deserves some attention. In the early years of modern biblical scholarship, it was widely held that the Tabernacle texts along with much of the priestly materials in the Pentateuch constituted a pious fraud. At the end of the 19th century, the giant of German biblical scholars, Julius Wellhausen, insisted that the cultus originating in the wilderness period was really a retrojection made in an attempt to legitimize the theocratic concerns of the postexilic community (Wellhausen 1957: 38-51).

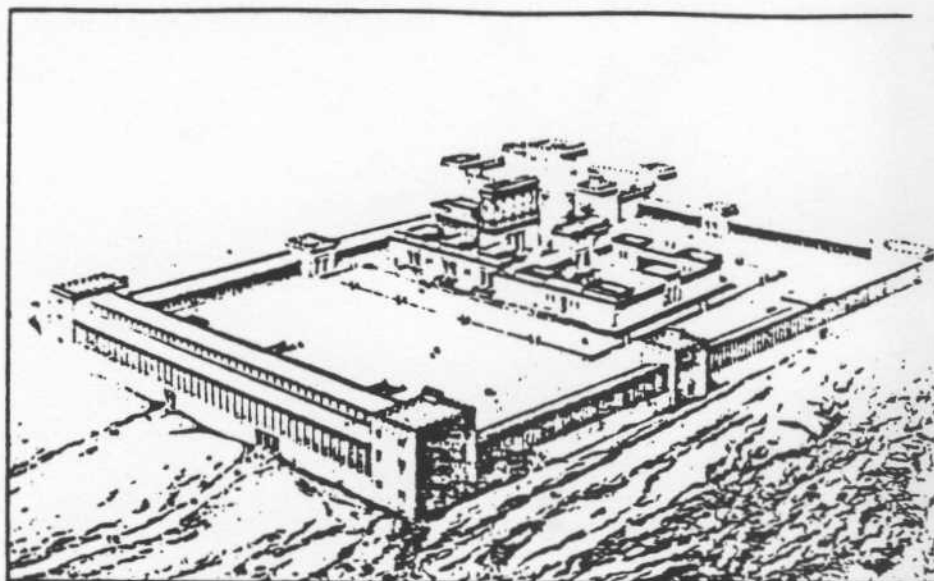
This view has been subjected to increasing modifications and evidence to the contrary by subsequent generations of biblical scholars (e.g., Cross 1947). The appearance of a cultic center

Left: Two silver tetradrachms of Bar Kokhba (133-134 C.E.). These are probably the earliest post-70 C.E. renditions of the Jerusalem temple. The symbols of the lulav and ethrog on the reverse represent the hope of the freedom-fighters that the building would be restored. The obverse depicts the facade of the temple with an arcuated Torah Shrine between two pairs of columns. On the coin below, the podium is indicated by two horizontal lines joined by ten vertical stripes. Right: Wall painting from the 3rd-century synagogue of Dura-Europas on the Euphrates River. This most static rendering consists of two planes. A formal triple gateway is depicted beneath a Hellenistic-style temple on a two-stepped crepidome with the doors of its cella shut. The latter has been interpreted as a symbolic portrayal of the Jerusalem temple (from Z. Vilnay's *Holy Land in Maps and Prints*, 1963).





Left: Fourth-century plate discovered in the Via Labina cemetery in Rome. The temple facade has four columns, rests on a stepped platform, and shows double-hung doors (Ark?) between the middle two columns. Right: The Herodian temple as depicted by the 19th-century explorer de Vogüé.



from the very beginnings of corporate Israelite existence has been demonstrated in a variety of ways. Archeologically, linguistically, and historically, many of the features of the movable shrine can be shown to have been rooted in the Near Eastern culture of the end of the Late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age, the period of Moses, Joshua, and the Judges (e.g., Hurwitz 1967; Milgrom 1972).

Consider, for example, the shape, details, and materials involved in the construction of the golden lampstand or menorah as stipulated in the Exodus texts. The extensive and precise description of this object reveals a particular technological and artistic orientation. The combination of details, examined one by one, produces a picture of a cultic object derived from Near Eastern methods and styles of the end of the Late Bronze Age (Meyers 1976).

Furthermore, the specific influence of Egyptian technology and design, which was spread throughout the Aegean-Levantine sphere in that period, can be discerned. A distinctly botanical terminology—stem, branches, almonds, flowers (and “capital” = rounded fruit)—is found in the description of the parts of the menorah. This kind of language preserves an artistic background strongly similar to the preserva-

tion of natural forms in the architectural elements of Egyptian art and architecture. The detailed floral capitals and treelike columns, especially those of the end of the 18th Dynasty (14th century) are echoed in the particular combination of botanical terms in the menorah’s description.

Thus the presentation of the menorah in its tabernacle setting hardly can be dependent upon the “Solomonic” lampstands, even though this has been supposed until recently. Close examination of the information in 1 Kings 7 reveals important differences between the *menoroth* of the first of the “First Temples” and the particular tabernacle described in Exodus (Meyers 1979).

To begin with, in Solomon’s sanctuary there were ten golden lampstands, in contrast to the single stand of the tent shrine. In addition, the Solomonic stands are not said to be branched, whereas branches constitute the outstanding design feature of the tabernacle object. Admittedly, the brevity of the Kings text does not rule out the possibility that branches existed. However, they certainly would be more obvious and important parts of the menorahs’ fabrication than “flowers,” which *are* specified. Thus the omission of “branches” surely reflects their absence in the Solomonic lampstands.

Finally, the Hebrew term for “pu gold” in the Kings account (*zāhā sāgūr*) is different from that in the priestly account (*zāhāb iāhōr*). Since the former term has northern affinities and the latter has Egyptian affinities, least technologically, the distinct Tyrian workmanship and design of the First Temple can be seen. The Solomon menorahs, while related to that of the tent shrine in ways that will be considered below, were hardly identical in material way to their tabernacle for bears.

This brief look at the complicated menorah history provides only one example of the authentic antiquity of the tabernacle traditions as illuminated by textual and archeological investigations. Studies of the actual cultic acts that were performed in the premonarchic shrine have produced similar results. Parallels to Near Eastern ritual practices of the Late Bronze and early Iron Age can be detected. In particular, an Egyptian influence, such as could have been effected only during the immediate post-Exodus period, can be discerned in the configuration and identity of certain cultic acts and personnel.

In short, there can be no doubt that a portable sanctuary, or actually a series of such shrines, existed in the pre-Solomonic period. More and more evidence of the kind indicated above can be expected to corroborate this; future studies illumine the ancient cult setting.

Thus far three series of national shrines of ancient Israel have been

described. Each of these has been presented as the place of Yahweh's "dwelling" within the midst of his people. To this list must be added yet another sanctuary, which may in fact be the precursor of all succeeding Tabernacles, Solomonic Temples, and Second Temples. Certain of the oldest poetic texts of the Hebrew Bible refer to a mountain sanctuary, somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula, which was apparently the immediate goal after the Exodus of the refugees escaping from the Egyptian armies at the Reed Sea (Freedman 1975: 79).

The Song of the Sea in Exodus 15 mentions Yahweh's leading of the people of Israel to his "holy abode" (v 13) and to the "sanctuary" on Yahweh's own mountain. While this may refer to the eventual settlement of the Mosaic groups in Palestine, the possibility that a Sinai shrine, perhaps originally Midianite, is indicated is attractive since

Levens' reconstruction of Solomon's Temple. This drawing was commissioned by G. E. Wright for use in an article on biblical times that appeared in *National Geographic Magazine*. The artist was a seminary student who based his sketch on instructions provided by W. F. Albright. The fortresslike quality of the building with crenelated parapets, the Phoenician influence on the doors and capitals, and the free-standing pillars are all interpretative features. Cf. *BA* 18 (1955): 41-44.

the Song as a whole does not deal at all with the future Canaanite territory of Israel. Ps 78:54, in its reference to God's mountain and its sacred area, likewise may reflect a pre-Tabernacle stationary shrine that was the premier focus of Israel's relationship to a God dwelling in their midst.

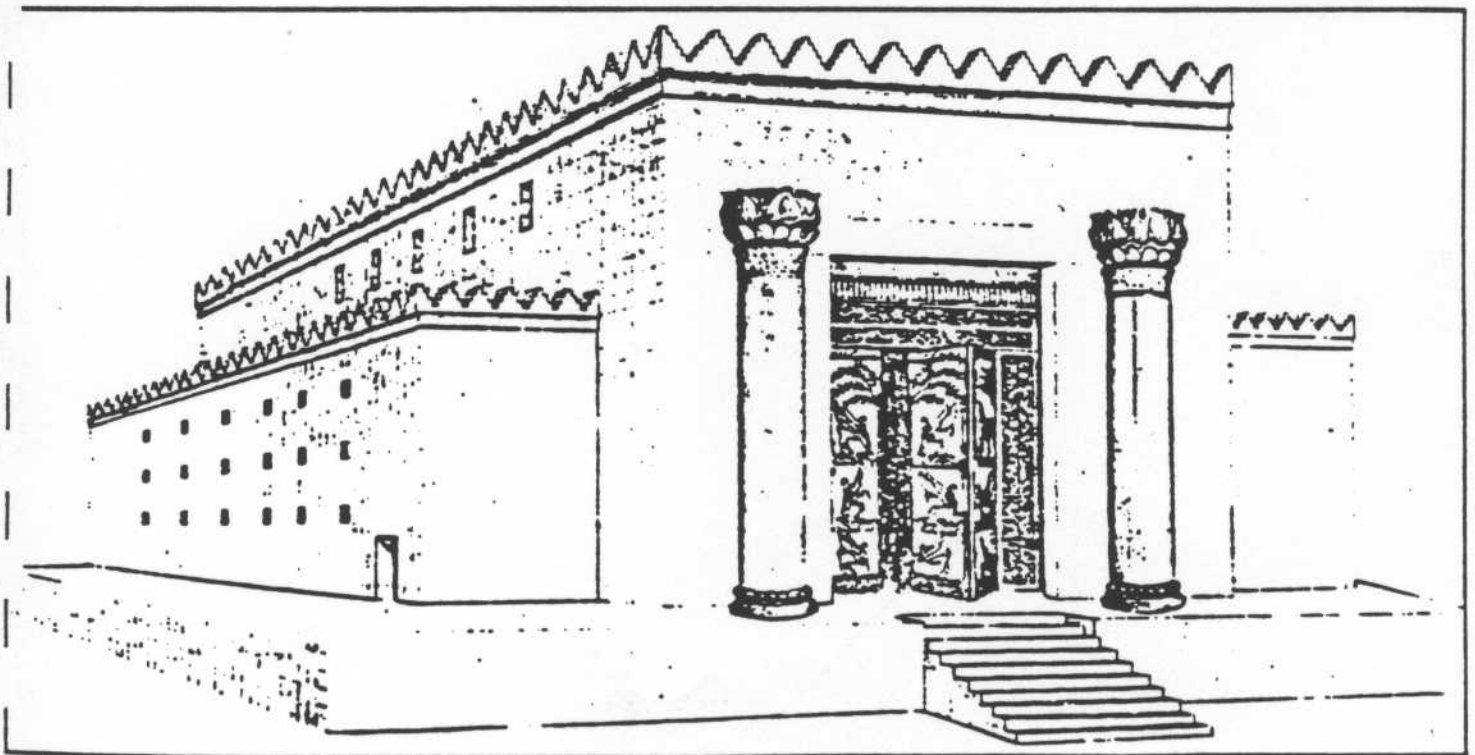
The "Temple of the Lord," then, has a long and complicated history stretching from the time of Moses to the Roman conquest of Jerusalem. Three major periods, as well as a possible precursor, can be isolated within this long stretch: a Sinai sanctuary, the Tabernacle, the Solomonic or First Temple, and the Second Temple (including the Herodian Temple). The existence of differences within the structures of each period already has been delineated. It remains to reiterate that these designations clearly represent structures that differ one from the other. A later shrine was not always intended to be a replica of a previous one, despite the tendency toward conservatism often apparent in religious architecture, as the biblical descriptions demonstrate. The biblical writers were conscious of the distinctions between one shrine and the succeeding one.

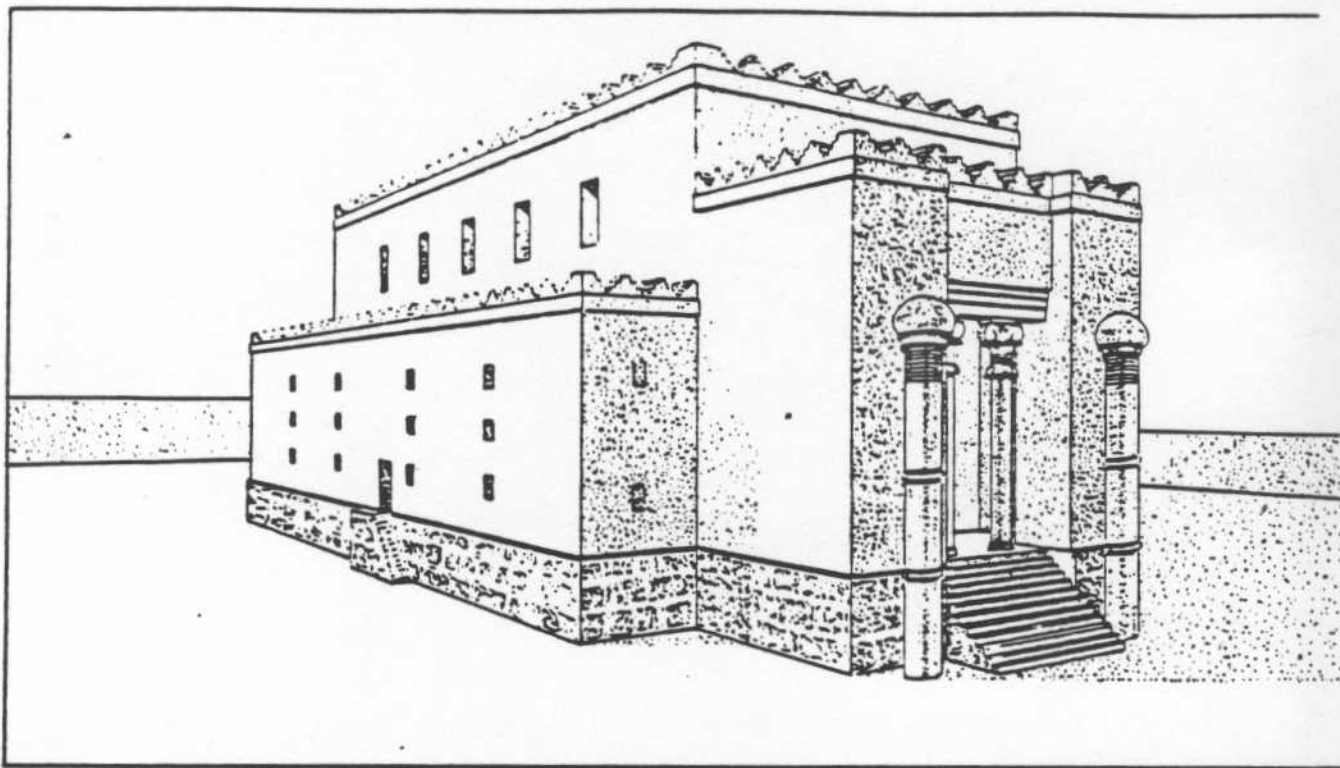
In the case of the Second Temple, the contrasts between the building erected with great difficulty by the impoverished postexilic community and

the remembered splendor of the First Temple were a source of considerable anguish. Ezra and Haggai both report the discrepancy and the popular reaction to it (e.g., Hag 2:3, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?"). With respect to the Solomonic Temple, the Bible reports that its very construction was predicated upon a rejection of certain aspects of its precursor, the Tabernacle, or, by that time, the Davidic tent shrine. Nathan's oracle in 2 Samuel 7 records Yahweh's statement, almost a complaint, that he had not had a proper house to dwell in since the days of the Exodus. A permanent house—"a house of cedar"—was called for.

Thus three or four rather different shrines, each with its own development, existed in the overall duration of an ancient Israelite cult. As we have seen, some of these changes were undoubtedly minor; some were evidently quite substantial. In any case, modifications of the architectural, decorative, and artifactual elements of the central sanctuary were recurring events within the history of any of the major cultic centers.

The fact of divergencies has been stressed, since that tends to go unnoticed even though the biblical sources clearly preserve a record of recurrent





changes. Our position at the end of the second millennium C.E. seems to have created a propensity to telescope what transpired during the second millennium B.C.E. An awareness of the basically conservative nature of any religious tradition reinforces this tendency. Thus it is not always easy to recognize and to separate out the successive physical receptacles for ancient Israel's spiritual life.

Still, it must not go unsaid that the successive shrines of the biblical period, whatever their differences, also exhibited similarities in structural or architectural features. Likewise there can be no question of the continuity involved in the decorations and furnishings of these central shrines. Yet even when conscious attempts were made by the architects and craftsmen to replicate features of a previous structure, such attempts could never succeed.

The reason for this lies in the mistaken notion that similarity and continuity constitute identity. This is never true in the physical sense, though it may be profoundly valid in the psychological sense. Successive shrines, by their very nature, can never really be exact replicas of the preceding shrines upon which they are modeled. New techniques and new styles invariably affect the work of an artist or an artisan despite attempts to re-create an object

or building from the past.

When the workmen of antiquity sought to recapture objects and buildings from the past, they looked to foundations of ruined buildings or to verbal descriptions such as those in the priestly writings of the Bible. Let it not be forgotten that rebuilding, or reduplication, is undertaken only when the original is somehow lost, damaged, stolen, or destroyed. Even if, in addition to eyewitness recollections or recorded verbal descriptions, there were architectural "blueprints" available of buildings erected decades or centuries before, such plans themselves would be subject to a variety of architectural interpretations. Exact reproduction of a shrine on the basis of a hypothetical plan hardly can be assumed.

Further, as has been pointed out, exact replication ordinarily was not sought. Economic and political considerations dictated otherwise. A solid, permanent structure built of stone suited the Solomonic nation-state and imperial capital far more than the relatively fragile and vulnerable tent shrine. Similarly, the limited resources of Judea during restoration precluded the construction of as splendid a structure as the preexilic Temple.

"Temple of Yahweh" as the designation of a physical reality cannot therefore draw uncritically on the

The Solomonic Temple in a reconstruction by T. A. Busink, a leading expert in ancient architecture, is in considerable agreement with Stevens' reconstruction. C. Brill.

variety of biblical and postbiblical sources which contribute information, even when such sources are directed toward only one of the major shrines. (In addition to the passages already cited from biblical sources, the biblical sources of Chronicles, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, as well as the recently published Scroll from Qumran, preserve a variety of architectural materials—albeit divergent—materials which are based upon archeological "paraphrases" of ancient artistic renditions, which in the way of compensating for the limitations of the written word carries with it similar methodological problems. These problems must be subjected to close scrutiny.

The artistic renderings of the Temple building and its contents provide assistance in recovering the Temple. With few exceptions, the artistic representations of the Temple postdate the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. Therefore these representations are subject to inaccuracies as the actual Temple rebuildings. At best, the evidence of the mosaics, coins, and tombstones of the Roman-Byzantine period



## Reconstructions of the Temple

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the Mountain of the Lord, has been a treasury of tradition and a focus of religious fervor and interest for three millennia. The extensive development of sacred architecture there did not conclude with the ending of a thousand years of Israelite and Judaic temples when the Romans took over Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The sanctity of the Haram area has continued, and Islamic shrines have developed their own rich architectural history on the traditional site of the Temple Mount.

The biblical Temple of the Lord, however, was never rebuilt on its site. Yet it has been restored and rebuilt in countless models and depictions which began to appear not long after the final destruction of the Temple in the 1st century. The history of these attempts to capture, on the small scale of artistic reproductions of various sorts, an image of the Temple is as fascinating and as broad as is the attempt to trace the long development of the central Israelite shrine itself.

These reproductions can be categorized in two ways. First, they can be grouped according to the literary source, and therefore the specific biblical structure, from which the artist or artisan is drawing his information. Some try to reconstruct the tabernacle according to the Exodus accounts; others focus on the Solomonic structure; still others use Ezekiel's or Zechariah's comments; and many more use Josephus' accounts of the Herodian building.

A second grouping represents a chronological or historical ordering of the attempts themselves. This is somewhat more difficult to achieve, since the line between imaginary drawings and text-based renderings is not always apparent. Yet an overview can be rather simply stated. The ancient attempts can be found on coins, mosaics, wall paintings, glass, sarcophagi, and other such archeologically recovered artifacts. Medieval reconstructions exist chiefly as manuscript illustrations. Many of these are intricate and colorful examples of folk art appearing on various forms of Hebrew literature, with some of the finest depictions portrayed in Passover Haggadahs. Certain other medieval and later renderings can be found in the writings and guides prepared by travelers and pilgrims, mainly Christian. These tend to be drawings of what the pilgrims actually saw, although occasionally a traveler's view is supplemented by his familiarity with the biblical descriptions.

Finally, there are the modern and/or scholarly renditions. Included in these are the works of the early explorers of the 19th and 20th centuries, which may overlap to some extent with the illustrations produced by pilgrims, as well as with the detailed architectural drawings and actual models prepared by archeologists, biblical scholars, and architectural historians. Perhaps the most elaborate and famous of this last assortment is found in the elaborate scale model of the entire Herodian city built near Jerusalem in the 1960s with the scholarly assistance of the late Professor Avi-Yonah.

In short, countless generations of draftsmen, painters, artisans, archeologists, and photographers have sought in their pictorial efforts to immortalize the building on the Temple Mount. In some ways, the motivations which led to the original construction of tabernacle and then temples have been continued in these postbiblical efforts to secure visual witness of a religious concept.

a dim recollection of the last physical temple. And even this is colored by the variety of images the artists have drawn from the multiplicity of written descriptions available by that time.

Comparative analyses of the architectural plans of sacred buildings, recovered from excavations all over the ancient Near East, likewise have their limits. True, some clear parallels can be established between certain Syrian temples, for example, and the Solomonic building described in 1 Kings. Yet the most exhaustive search for an exact architectural prototype proves to be as futile as the assumption that one Jerusalem shrine reproduces an earlier one. At any given period, the central sacred building of Israel drew upon certain imported styles, techniques, and even workmen of the contemporary world. Yet as a total entity it expressed its own unique interests and traditions and hence would be expected to differ in a variety of ways from the temples and cultic instruments of the other nations of the biblical world.

The Temple of Jerusalem, in any of its successive renderings over the centuries of its existence, is indeed an elusive creation. Discontinuity appears on all sides under the kind of scrutiny applied above. Yet we would be remiss if we did not conclude this elucidation of the disparity among all the individual sacred structures with a confirmation of the underlying continuity involved.

Over and over the same terminology is found. We read or we say, "House of Yahweh," "Golden Lampstand," "Ark of the Covenant," "Bronze Altar," "Table of the Bread of the Presence," "Incense Altar," and more. The terminology in its broad outline, though not always in its technical detail, persists over the centuries. The physical properties of the entities so designated never repeat themselves in successive reproductions. Still, the very survival of the various designations, however divergent their renderings may have been, indicates a strong force of continuity (Ackroyd 1972).

The nature of this continuity does not lie in the physical, material world. Rather, it operates within the symbolic sphere, in the realm of ideas rather than in the realm of artistic or architectural constructions (cf. Haran 1969; Levine 1968). The earlier verbal description of

the house of God and its artifacts, which was preserved by the priests within the Tabernacle texts, formed a kind of ideological mold or model. Successive generations seeking to reestablish God's presence in a sacred dwelling used that verbal model to cast their own physical expression of that model. A subsequent place called "House of Yahweh," a subsequent object called "menorah," by the very equivalency in designation created an ideational identification of one entity with its predecessor.

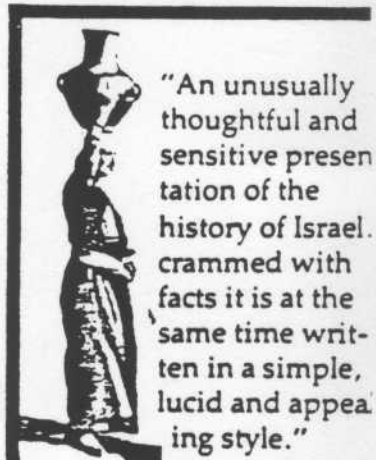
Thus the various temples of Israel, while different in a variety of significant and insignificant ways, were also identical. The continuity in symbolic function provided the crucial and unbroken link from one concrete rendition to the next. The chain of actual buildings was often broken in the unstable environment of Palestine in the second millennium B.C.E. The chain of verbal images transmitted in the biblical canon was never lost. The latter then could be utilized afresh as each building or rebuilding, each furnishing or refurbishing, was initiated.

In a sense even today we are heirs to that consecutive imagery. As the biblical record survives into the Judeo-Christian West, the erection of religious edifices and the selection of their interior decoration and objects hardly ignore the canonical descriptions of the earliest Israelite places of worship. While this is more directly observable in synagogues, churches too in some way or other are likely to express some reminiscence of the biblical shrines. The linkage is no more direct now than it was in the past. The connection now, as in the past, is in the symbolic expression of the continued tradition of the divine presence in human lives.

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