

EXPRESSONS OF SACRED SPACE:

TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

by

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to identify, isolate, and expound the concepts of sacred space and its ancillary doctrines and to show how they were expressed in ancient temple architecture and ritual.

The fundamental concept of sacred space defined the nature of the holiness that pervaded the temple. The idea of sacred space included the ancient view of the temple as a mountain. Other subsets of the basic notion of sacred space include the role of the creation story in temple ritual, its status as an image of a heavenly temple and its location on the *axis mundi*, the temple as the site of the *hieros gamos*, the substantial role of the temple regarding kingship and coronation rites, the temple as a symbol of the Tree of Life, and the role played by water as a symbol of physical and spiritual blessings streaming forth from the temple. Temple ritual, architecture, and construction techniques expressed these concepts in various ways. These expressions, identified in the literary and archaeological records, were surprisingly consistent throughout the ancient Near East across large expanses of space and time.

Under the general heading of Techniques of Construction and Decoration, this thesis examines the concept of the primordial mound and its application in temple architecture, the practice of foundation deposits, the purposes and functions of enclosure walls, principles of orientation, alignment, and measurement, and interior decorations. Under the rubric of General Temple Arrangement are explored the issues of the tripartite and other temple floor plans, the curious institution of the ziggurat, the meaning of temple pillars, the presence of sacred groves and the idea of the Tree of Life, and temple/palace symbiosis. The category Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia deals with areas such as elevated statues of the deity in the innermost sanctuary, sources of water for ablutions, the temple as a site for a cult of the dead, and altars and animal sacrifice.

The concept of sacred space and its ancillary ideologies provided underlying justification and support for all the peculiar distinctions that characterised temple architecture in the ancient Near East.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ancient ideas of space and time were very different from those of the modern era.

Post-enlightenment humanity views the world in three dimensions of solidity and measures the passage of time by various movements of earth, moon, and sun. The laws of physics, geology, chemistry, and other physical sciences govern space and time and the interactions between elements; the laws of biology attempt to explain interactions among and between various forms of life. This modern outlook might well be termed *rational* and *scientific*.

In antiquity, people looked at the world differently, for they sensed another dimension or another world beyond the earth. This world was governed, not by gravity or magnetic or atomic forces, but by the emotions of love, hate, fear, obedience, and rebellion. *Time* was not linear but circular. Life was a series of cycles; *eternity* was viewed, not as an indescribably long period of time, but as an existence *without* or *beyond* time (Barker 2008b:59). There was a distinct correlation between the earth on which people actually lived and this other world, which may be better described as the world of the ‘other’. Thus the ancient world view was not rational and scientific, but *mythical* and *authentic*. Herein lies the crucial distinction: to modern people ‘mythical’ and ‘authentic’ are antonymous, while in the ancient world they were synonymous.

Furthermore, while modern ideas are expressed in formulae and dogmas, ancient ideas, especially the most deeply held, intimate beliefs, were expressed in myth, that is to say, stories and visions, or better, ‘parables’, stories with multiple levels of interpretation that could simultaneously convey simple meanings as well as lofty and exalted concepts. To the inhabitants of the ancient Near East, there was a sharp demarcation between the space of the present world, which was profane, and that of the world of the ‘other’, which was

sacred.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The foregoing statements reveal an acute divergence between the world views held in antiquity from our own. This schism is possibly of more than purely academic interest, for the ability to comprehend and evaluate our present ideas and attitudes is largely dependent upon a thorough knowledge of what preceded our modern world. The ideas and philosophies held by the ancients are too often dismissed out of hand as ‘primitive’ or ‘quaint’. A closer look may be worthwhile; perhaps we ignore the concepts and values of ancient humanity, which were maintained for thousands of years, at our peril.

This thesis is an attempt to explore, in depth, the exact nature of the crucial idea and its related concepts that formed the basis of the mind-set of the inhabitants of the ancient Near East. This underlying ideology, it is maintained, was the concept of *sacred space*, which was an integral force in the societies and cultures of the ancient Near East. To be more precise, the purpose here is to first determine the deeper meaning of the concept of sacred space as the underlying central ideology of ancient temples, and then to discover the extent to which it was expressed in architectural form and ritual.¹

As sacred space was not a monolithic doctrine, there were other sub-issues involved that require elucidation. For example, what was the nature of the role played by sacred time in the societies of the ancient Near East, especially as related to temple building and ritual? What were some of the other constituent features contributing to the underlying concept of sacred space, for instance, the extremely ancient and widespread identification of temples with mountains? How did the concepts of sacred space and its attendant corollaries relate to their environment? Areas of natural sacred space, such as mountains,

¹ Recent studies have produced a flurry of books and articles on sacred space in general, and a more limited output of scholarly effort regarding the application of sacred space specifically to ancient temples (see the section below on ‘Sources’). This thesis will initially identify, highlight and clarify the more important principles that are here involved; this effort is represented in chapters 2-4. In chapters 5-9, this work will apply those principles to determine whether these concepts were physically expressed in temple architecture in a consistent manner and portrayed in temple rituals in various areas throughout the ancient Near East.

springs, or large outcroppings of rock, were known and recognised; was it possible to artificially create sacred space where natural sacred space did not exist, and if so, were there specific architectural strategies that could be employed to this end? How could a nebulous and rather esoteric notion such as sacred space be expressed in temple mythology, ideology, construction, architecture, and ritual? Finally, were these expressions limited to a given area or were they consistent across the entire ancient Near East?

1.2 HYPOTHESIS

The central hypothesis of this thesis is based upon the preliminary identification, isolation, and exposition of the concepts of sacred space and its ancillary doctrines,² and to then determine how they were expressed in ancient temple architecture and ritual. In the ancient Near East, temples were constructed by the thousands. Some were simple, one-room affairs; others were monumental complexes. It is here postulated that the concept of sacred space, and the need to create areas of sacred space wherein rituals could be employed to recreate sacred time, were of sufficient compulsion in ancient societies to justify the expenditure of almost incomprehensible amounts of resources and labour in the construction, operation, and maintenance of these edifices. If the concept of sacred space was indeed the underlying essence of the temple, then it should have been depicted, perhaps figuratively, in liturgy and ritual, but in a solid and physical manner in the very architecture of these buildings. Architectural expressions of sacred space should be describable, quantifiable, and subject to organisation into categories. It should also be possible to trace these expressions, not only within individual civilisations, but across the entire Near East.

1.3 SOURCES

To review all of the pertinent academic literature regarding sacred space and temples in

² Whether these concepts were deeply embedded within the collective unconscious of antiquity or dispersed throughout the ancient world from a single prototypical temple whose genesis lay in the very moment of creation itself, is an argument that will need to be addressed elsewhere.

the ancient Near East would be daunting, as the quantity of material is immense. For purposes of this section, the discussion has been limited to those sources that have been most influential in addressing the questions raised in the hypothesis. These sources have been divided into two broad areas. The first is concerned with works dealing with the concepts of sacred space and its corollary ideologies; these sources have regard to mythology, temple ideology, social anthropology, and the history of religions. The second section focuses on sources connected with temple architecture and ritual; these are primarily archaeological and textual.

1.3.1 Sacred space in temple mythology

Sources used in this thesis specifically related to ancient Near Eastern temples, particularly within the disciplines of comparative religions and social anthropology, were based largely on the works of Eliade (1954; 1958a; 1958b; 1958c; 1959b; 1961; 1976) and subsequent works by Nibley (1972; 1975; 1984a; 1984b; 2005). Eliade's prolific pen produced his theory that hierophanies form the basis of all religion. One of his most influential contributions to religious studies was his theory of the Eternal Return, which held that myths and rituals do not simply commemorate hierophanies, but at least in the mind of 'religious man', actually allow participation in them. In academia, this concept has become one of the most widely accepted ways of understanding the purpose of myth and ritual, and remains one of the greatest recent contributions to the field of comparative religions. Eliade drew on the work of Durkheim (1915), Mus (1935), van der Leeuw (1938), and Kramrisch (1946) and further developed ideas of sacred space and sacred time that remain widespread and influential.

One of the most compelling results of Eliade's work in ancient religious studies was the fact that it placed the spotlight squarely on the institution of the temple. The temple was sacred space *par excellence*; it was an *imago mundi*, symbolising the cosmos, the sacred order which had been divinely imposed on the primordial chaos. But the temple was more than this: it was a celestial prototype that typified and defined the very act of creation itself by bringing order out of chaos. It was the scene of ritual conflict between

the gods and humans on the one hand, and the forces of chaos, darkness and death on the other. This stylised combat ended with the victory and coronation of the king and the performance of the sacred marriage, the *hieros gamos*, that brought in the new year with a promise of fertility and prosperity (Eliade 1954:5, 7, 12-17, 18, 36, 109). Despite variations in traditions, languages and cultures, everything in Eliade's work came back to the temple, which was 'suffused with "memories of paradise," the loss of which was the result of sin, converting this world into a testing ground in which "suffering always has meaning"' (Nibley 1984a:45).

Nibley's *magnum opus* (1975) described and analysed Egyptian temple ritual and compared it with early apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls. An expanded and revised edition (2005) was directed toward the temple and to a contemplation of the issues that constituted the essence of the temple, and in addition provided a solid foundation for further study in Egyptian temple ritual.

For a background in the concept of sacred space as applied to Israelite temples, the work of Smith (1978) was useful; Smith critically evaluated the notion of sacred space and time as these concepts were elucidated by Eliade. Smith also criticised the methodology of Eliade and dealt with the problem of comparing data from wildly diverse cultures (1969). This was followed with Meyers (1976; 1979; 1982; 1984). While Meyers is perhaps best known for her work on women and the Bible, she also contributed significantly to the subject of ancient Israelite temples through her work in archaeology as well as Biblical studies.

More up-to-date studies in the concept of sacred space and the temple are found in Levenson (1976) and (1985). The earlier work was especially valuable regarding the temple of Ezekiel. The latter work was important in terms of the idea of mountains as sacred space; in this book Levenson distinguished the mountain of the covenant, Sinai, from the mountain of the temple, Zion (Jerusalem), and detailed Israel's transition from one to the other.

Lundquist wrote his doctoral dissertation (1983) devoted to the development of a typology of ancient Near Eastern temples. Lundquist's other writings (1982; 1984a; 1984b; 1993; 2008) were extremely valuable in the preparation of this thesis inasmuch as several points of his temple typology dealt directly with the doctrines of sacred space and its corollary principles. Lundquist's efforts in categorising the features of ancient temples resulted in a flurry of articles and other publications in the following decades. Subsequent studies in temple typology and ancient temples ensued; especially helpful were those published by Parry (1990; 1994a; 1994b; 1994c; 1999) and Ricks (1994a; 1994b; 1994c). Parry, Ricks and Welch produced a monumental bibliography of ancient Near Eastern temples (1991), a work now in need of serious updating in order to encompass new material published over the last two decades.

Three other premier scholars of the Bible and the ancient Near East have published works that have been especially helpful in this study. They are Clifford (1972) for valuable information on the equation of the cosmic mountain with the temple; Hurowitz (1992), relevant for its comparisons between the underlying temple ideologies of Mesopotamia and Solomonic Israel; and Day of Oxford University for his work in editing seminars in Old Testament languages, literature, history, theology, religion and archaeology, and for his emphasis on the ancient Near Eastern facets of these disciplines (1998; 2000; 2004; 2005a; 2005b).

A number of writings dealing explicitly with the concept of sacred space should be mentioned here. Among them are Cohn (1981); Dorman & Bryan (eds, 2007); Gittlen (ed, 2002); Parry (1994b); Wasilewska (2009); and Wyatt (2001).³

³ Other significant works dealing with temple mythology, symbolism, and ritual that were profitable in the preparation of this work are listed here. For Mesopotamia: Black (1992), Brisch (ed, 2008), Corbin (1986), Fox (ed, 1988), Lundquist (1983; 1984a; 1994a; 1994b; 1994c; 1994d; 2008), and Widengren (1950; 1951; 1957). For Egypt: Lloyd (ed, 1998). For ancient Israel: Barker (2003; 2004; 2008a; 2008b; 2009), Bloch-Smith (1994; 2002; 2005), Hayward (1996), Johnson (1967), Lior (2010), Lundquist (2008), Madsen (1984a; 1984b; 1994; 2008), Parry (1990; 1994a; 1994c; 1999), Patai (1947; 1967), and Ricks (1994a; 1994b).

1.3.2 Temple architecture and archaeology

Sources in this area will be discussed in a geographical arrangement. Primary sources, specifically ancient documents and excavation reports, were used when possible; these were followed and strengthened by a judicious selection of secondary sources. Many of these were written by the original excavators and offer analysis and perspective beyond what was contained in the original reports. A number of general historical works for the area as a whole and for each individual region were also consulted.⁴

*1.3.2.1 Mesopotamia.*⁵ Excavation reports were consulted with regard to the following sites. For Eridu: Hall (1923), Lloyd (1960; 1974), Oates (1960), and Safar, Mustafa & Lloyd (1981). For Warka (Anu, Eanna): Lenzen (1960; 1964). For Tell Uqair: Lloyd, Safar, & Frankfort (1943), and Lloyd (1960). For Khafaje: Speiser (1937) and Delougaz (1940, 1942). For Tell Asmar: Evans (2007), and Frankfort (1940).

Secondary sources concerned with Mesopotamian temple architecture and archaeology include Badawy (1966a), Lloyd (1978), and Parrot (1955a; 1955b). Lloyd's work was especially valuable as it offered a synthesis and drew conclusions from nearly a century's worth of excavations in Mesopotamia. Henri Frankfort, in addition to original excavation reports at Tell Asmar (1940), produced an excellent source book (1954); this was primarily valuable for its sections on archaeology which included liberal drawings and analyses of temple floor plans. Deserving of special mention is Meyers (ed, 1997); this set was helpful by providing much in the way of the history and theory of the discipline and method of archaeology; furthermore, the index contained in the fifth volume was indispensable.

⁴ General historical works consulted regarding the ancient Near East as a whole include Albright (1957), Hallo & Simpson (1971), Knapp (1988), Lipinski (ed, 1979), Sasson (ed, 1995), Snell (1997), and von Soden (1985).

⁵ General historical works on Mesopotamia include Budge (2005), Kramer (1961; 1963; 1965; 1972; 1988a; 1988b), Oppenheim (1977), Jacobsen (1939; 1943; 1965; 1970; 1976), Postgate (1992), and Roux (1992).

*1.3.2.2 Egypt.*⁶ Primary sources consulted include the following excavation reports and journal articles. For Abydos: Baines (1984), Gardiner (1933), Naville (1914), and Petrie (1902). For Elephantine: Hammerschaimb (1957), Kenney-Herbert (1938), Kraeling (1952), Neugebauer (1942), Porten (1961), Rosenberg (2004), J. M. P. Smith (1908), Sprengling (1917-1918), and Torrey (1954). For Hierakonpolis: Fairservis (1971-1972), Garstang (1907), Lansing (1935b), and Weinstein (1971-1972). For Thebes: Davies (1923), Holscher (1932), Lansing (1935a), Petrie (1897), Winlock (1914; 1920-1924; 1926; 1928; 1930; 1932); for other temple-related themes from Theban archaeology, see Bell (1997), Blackman (1923), and Murnane (1979). For Amarna: Peet (1921), Pendlebury (1934), and Uphill (1970). For Edfu: Blackman & Fairman (1946), Fairman (1935), and Griffiths (1958).

For a foundation in Egyptian religion and religious practice, this study relied heavily on the works of Blackman as compiled, edited, and published by Lloyd (1998); this collection is a priceless boon to students of Egyptology. Other significant works produced by Egyptologists of the mid-twentieth century include Fairman (1954) and Frankfort (1951; 1978).

Reymond (1969) was of primary value in this thesis through its meticulous description of the Egyptian cosmogony as depicted on the walls of the temple at Edfu. MacRae (1984) did groundbreaking work in his studies on the New Testament, Gnosticism, and the texts discovered in the mid-1940s at Nag Hammadi. Also worthy of mention is Wilkinson (2000; 2003); these two books on ancient Egyptian temples and the gods worshipped therein are beautifully illustrated and contain a prodigious amount of valuable information. Also useful in the preparation of the present work were Arnold (1999; 2003); Badawy (1966a; 1966b; 1968; 1990), Baines (1995), and Shafer (ed, 1997a).

1.3.2.3 Anatolia. Primary sources, mainly excavation reports and articles in academic journals, included the following: Bittel (1976; 1981), Guterbock (1975), Haas & Wafler

⁶ General historical works consulted include Breasted (1964), Grimal (1992), Kees (1961), Kemp (1989), Manchip White (1970), Shaw (2002), and Silverman (ed, 1997).

(1974), McMahon (1995), and Winckler (1966). Secondary sources consulted include Boyce (1998; 2002), Ceram (1958), Gurney (1952; 1977), Hoffner (1998), and MacQueen (1996). Yener, Hoffner & Dhesi (eds, 2002) re-examines philological issues, offers new historical research, and updates archaeological evidence from the Hittite empire.

1.3.2.4 Canaanite and Israelite Territories. The following sources were of greatest help in this work: Albright (1949; 1968), Biran (ed, 1981), Comay (1975), Dever (1995; 2002; 2003), Hurowitz (2005), Mazar, Cornfeld, & Freedman (1975), Meyers (1976; 1979; 1982; 1984), Roitman (2003), Wright (1941; 1944; 1960; 1965a; 1965b), Van der Toorn (1995), and Yadin for his excavation reports at Hazor (1956-1959). Also helpful was Richard (ed, 2003a), which offers a wide variety of articles presenting an extensive range of issues and viewpoints on archaeology in the Syro-Palestinian region. Also very useful in providing a wealth of architectural detail was Zevit (2001), possibly the most extensive interdisciplinary work ever published on Iron Age Israel.

Haran (1985) offers an exhaustive examination of the various cultic and social phenomena connected with the Jerusalem temples. Cross (1973) was utilised for its enlightening research in the religions of Canaan and Israel and the interplay between the two.

(a) The Temple Scroll. De Vaux's work (1965) was unparalleled at the time for its comprehensive coverage of what archaeology seemed to reveal about ancient Israel. While later scholarship and archaeology have changed much of what is now believed about the Qumran area and the Dead Sea Scrolls, de Vaux's works remain useful reading. Gaster published a translation of the scrolls in 1976, and Levine contributed to the scholarly literature on Qumran in 1978. But it was Milgrom (1978a; 1978b; 1978c; 1980-1981; 1984) whose studies on the Temple Scroll defined all future scholarship on the subject, despite the fact that he is best known for his studies on Leviticus and priestly regulations. Bertil Gartner published a seminal work (1965) on how the temple as an institution was viewed by the Qumran community, comparing and contrasting it with

evolving conceptions of the temple in the New Testament Christian community. Yadin (1985) produced a one-volume edition in English on the Temple Scroll, condensed from an earlier three-volume work in Hebrew.

(b) Ezekiel's temple. This work benefited from Keil & Delitzsch (1889), volume seven of which was entirely devoted to Ezekiel. Other important books and articles consulted regarding Ezekiel include Cook & Patton (eds, 2004), Joyce (1998; 2005), Levenson (1976), Niditch (1986), Simon (2009), Tuell (1992), and Zimmerli (1983). Two rather obscure and esoteric works from the last century are interesting if not academically profound; these are Bezzant & Pridham (1952) and Sulley (1921).

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The institution of the temple is widely acknowledged as a significant feature of the ancient Near Eastern landscape, yet the systematic study of this phenomenon is difficult. While there is considerable consistency in temple architecture, there are also wide degrees of variation; and while it is maintained that temples were structurally designed to impart the perception that they were different from other buildings and set apart from their surrounding environments, distinguishing temples from other structures in the archaeological record is sometimes easier in theory than in practice. Furthermore, while there are some ritual and liturgical texts that attempt to describe what actually went on in these buildings, most of these accounts are esoteric and obscure. In the study of some ancient temples there are textual remnants, in others there are physical remains (some of which exhibit consistent architectural features and some of which do not), and in yet others there are artefactual relics that offer tantalising hints of the rituals once enacted inside temple walls. But in only the rarest of cases do we have all of these factors in place regarding the same temple. For the most part, the clues we possess about ancient temple architecture and ritual are scattered far and wide, and we must concede there are enormous lacunae in our understanding. These problems dictate the choice of methodologies used in this thesis; they also indicate the complexities surrounding the issues and explain the need for a combination of methods.

In attempting to comprehend the essence of sacred space in the ancient Near East and its application in temple architecture and ritual, the overall methodology will be qualitative rather than quantitative; beneath this, a comprehensive methodology based on cultural anthropology will be applied.⁷ With these statements in mind, the nature of the material and the objectives of the thesis may further require the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach with variegated sub-methodologies, which themselves may need to be refined through a number of subordinate approaches.

The thesis begins (chapters two through four) with the attempt to define and grasp the nature of the concepts of ‘sacred space’ and ‘sacred time’. The cultural anthropological methodology is appropriate here as this approach allows a certain amount of inherent ambiguity. Sacred space and its related mythologies are not scientific concepts that can be expressed in formulae, neither can they be subjected to laboratory experimentation and verification. Rather, they are of an intensely personal religious nature that defy verbal expression. What one may understand and know about the ‘holy’ is one thing; objectively describing and explaining it to others is something else entirely. Therefore the strategic cultural anthropology methodology outlined above will be refined by further employing both phenomenological and psychological tactics in presenting the nature of the divine. This scheme will allow an exposition of the definition of the overarching concepts of sacred space and its auxiliary tenets, and then the articulation of each of the related mythologies in terms of origin, application, and physical expression. Meeting these objectives will then permit an approach to the heart of the thesis: having accentuated sacred space and its ancillary mythologies, the focus will then be to determine precisely how these concepts were expressed in temple architecture as illustrated in the archaeological record.

Subsequent chapters (5-9), while still following an overall method based on cultural anthropology, will now involve the addition of a tactical archaeological methodology;

⁷ In using the term ‘cultural anthropology’, this thesis will follow the ‘American’ model, based on popular expression through art and myth, and not the ‘European’ model which is more concerned with societal roles and institutions.

this pathway will allow the use of the supplementary information supplied by the archaeological record to substantiate (and occasionally correct) the mythological underpinnings of the concepts under examination. The comparative method will be adopted here due to the enormous quantity of available information spanning the geographical area from Mesopotamia through the Fertile Crescent and the Anatolian Plateau down through the valley of the Nile, and covering a time span of over three millennia. Finally, the results achieved through a comparative scheme will be further refined using a consistent sub-methodology based on an amalgamation of historical archaeology and phenomenology. The latter is based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness; thus the evidence unearthed by archaeologists will be allowed to speak for itself. This will help avoid twisting the evidence to suit any pre-conceived theories.

This thesis allows a modest role for philology, for upon occasion this discipline can offer a valuable contribution. When appropriate, the text will incorporate explanations and insights from this field, primarily the inclusion of word origins, names, and usage of terms throughout the area of study to indicate the genesis and dispersion of common terms and concepts. Texts will be taken largely at face value; some of the trendier philological methodologies of the day (canonical criticism, rhetorical criticism, semiotics, structuralist and post-structuralist paradigms, etc), will not be employed.

This thesis, in essence, is an exposition of intellectual history; it is not, *per se*, a work of theology, archaeology, mythology, or philology. Nevertheless, the invaluable augmentations offered by each of these disciplines will be incorporated into this undertaking in an attempt to create a synthesised, *better* history of an idea. That idea is the supposition that the principle of sacred space, with all its attendant manifestations, constituted the underlying essence of the temple in the ancient Near East and was inherent in temple mythology, expressed in temple architecture, and portrayed in temple ritual.

1.5 THESIS OUTLINE

Chapter Two introduces the doctrine of sacred space, which is the most critical characteristic of ancient temples and lies at the very heart of temple symbolism and mythology; it is an ubiquitous concept in temple theology throughout the entire ancient Near East. The idea of sacred space represents the most valuable key in discerning the underlying ideology of the temple in the ancient world. This chapter will begin with an overview of the concept of sacred space and its application to the temple, including the etymology of the word *temple* itself. The concept of *holiness* in general and sacred space and time in particular will be defined. Further attention will be devoted to the concept of the temple as the centre place, and the idea of gradations in sacred space will be considered. Finally, the paradigm of *natural* sacred space vis-à-vis *socially constructed* sacred space will be examined, along with the architectural strategies that can be used to fabricate sacred space.

Chapter Three is dedicated to a discussion of the equivalence of temples and mountains, a theme so widely known and acknowledged that it can be accepted almost without question. When possible, temples were built on high mountains; in flat terrain, as in lower Mesopotamia, they were constructed on elevated platforms or ziggurats designed to resemble mountains. The relationship between temples and mountains runs through all ancient sacred literature, including the Bible. Temples as mountains bring us into intimate contact with ancient yet widespread notions such as the cosmic mountain, the primordial mound, and the navel of the earth; on the mountain are found the Tree of Life and the Waters of Life. Finally, the sacred mountain Zaphon in Canaan, the mountain home of Baal, and Mount Sinai, the mountain home of Yahweh, and the subsequent transmutation of its underlying mythology to Mount Zion, will be briefly discussed.

Chapter Four is dedicated to a brief examination of some of the other facets of the underlying concept of sacred space. Sacred space is not a monolithic principle; rather, it is a central concept that radiates in its various manifestations in all directions. These

'facets' or 'subsets' of sacred space are expressed in a variety of ways in temple ritual and architecture. Specific areas investigated in this chapter include (1) the role played by creation and cosmogonies in the temple, including the functions of water in temple mythology, and the meaning and purpose of the recitation of creation myths in temple ritual; (2) the idea of the heavenly temple and its correspondence with earthly temples; (3) the sacred marriage or *hieros gamos*, the highest of all temple rituals; (4) the relationship between the temple and the idea of kingship; (5) the issue of secrecy; (6) the symbolism and meaning of the Tree of Life; and (7) the motif of water coming forth from the temple.

Chapter Five deals with Mesopotamian temple architecture. This is the first of five, largely descriptive, chapters (chapters five through nine) concerning the archaeological evidence in various geographical areas of the ancient Near East. The earliest religious shrines in Mesopotamia consisted of fenced-off enclosures containing reed structures that housed an image of a deity. Monumental temple architecture became possible with the advent of mud brick as a building material. Early temples were rectangular and symmetrical. The floor plan tended to be linear and progressive, with the objective being the innermost sanctum. Over time auxiliary structures for administration, housing, and operational needs began to be constructed around the central courtyards. A final pattern emerged about the end of the third millennium which was perpetuated for the next two thousand years with relatively minor adjustments. The classic Mesopotamian temple eventually developed into a pair of temples, one at the top of a ziggurat and one at the base. The entire temple complex was surrounded by at least one enclosure wall, whose gates and entryways frequently resembled those of military installations.

Chapter Six revolves around the architecture of Egyptian temples. The earliest Egyptian temples, like their Mesopotamian counterparts, were built of reeds or reeds daubed with mud. The use of mud brick appeared almost spontaneously near the beginning of the third millennium. Soon temples were constructed of a combination of mud brick and ever-increasing amounts of stone. The New Kingdom saw a great expansion in the construction of temples and the replacement of earlier brick structures with those of

stone. The most recognisable feature of Egyptian temples was their massive pylons. The pylons were typically part of the enclosure wall but could be set within it. Passage between the pylons led the visitor to a hypostyle hall containing numerous pillars. Further progression led the visitor to the most sacred part of the temple, located at the rear of the building in the centre. The floor raised and the ceiling lowered as one approached the statue of the god that stood in a niche on a pedestal. The base areas of the temple represented the marsh land of the primeval world, the central areas portrayed the earthly world, and the upper regions and ceiling were carved and painted to represent the celestial realms. Egyptian temples were cosmic in intent and design.

Chapter Seven concerns the temple architecture of the Hittite empire, which was a significant force in the Anatolian plateau during the middle and latter portions of the second millennium. Hittite culture, including religion, was an amalgamation of surrounding influences; the Hittites seem to have had little in their society that was original. The Hittites did have a penchant for natural, open-air sites; early ‘temples’ were merely small open spaces in the mountainous terrain, taking advantage of large boulders and natural grottoes that required little if any modification. Subsequent buildings consisted simply of one- or two-room rectangular structures, identifiable as temples primarily by the votive and other offerings found within. Larger temple complexes developed in major urban areas, especially Boghazköy (Hattusas). These were marked by outer enclosure walls containing fortified gateways. Passage through the gateway led the pilgrim to a courtyard that contained a well or basins of water at which he could purify himself. Passage through the interior courtyard typically led to a smaller courtyard that might contain an altar; this smaller courtyard was more sacred than the preceding one. This courtyard afforded entrance into a small inner sanctuary that contained the divine image standing on a pedestal (or occasionally sitting upon a throne).

Chapter Eight focuses on Canaanite and, to a lesser degree, Syrian temple architecture. Here a primarily chronological approach will be adopted, beginning with the Chalcolithic Age, continuing down through the various subdivisions of the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Ages, and finally the Iron Age. Special emphasis will be placed on Iron Age

temple excavations at Arad and Hazor. The temple architecture of the ancient Levant, with rare exceptions, was quite modest compared to the monumental religious architecture in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Smaller shrines, sanctuaries, or holy places have often been difficult to identify as temples according to the archaeological record; larger shrines, on the other hand, tended to conform to a typology, and are thus easier to identify.

Chapter Nine deals with the primary biblical Israelite temples; the discussion will be widened to include some brief remarks regarding the Temple Scroll found at Qumran and the temple described by Ezekiel in chapters 40-48. These structures manifested certain architectural features in common. All of them featured the tripartite plan (but only by using a very broad definition of the 'porch' or 'vestibule' area). They all used essentially the same proportions between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, specifically, a ratio of 2:1. Each temple featured an outer enclosure wall (although in the case of the Tabernacle this took the form of curtains hung between pillars), and in the case of the Jerusalem temples there were multiple walls complete with massive, military-style gates. All temples had an exterior altar for animal sacrifices with the necessary appurtenances, and all were insistent on a basic east-west orientation. All were concerned about the maintenance of sacred space by restricting access to authorised personnel only. All seem to have shared a similar taste in interior decorating and used the same motifs: cherubim, gourds, flowers, pomegranates, and palm trees.

Chapter Ten will provide a short summary of chapters two through four. It will then tie together and draw conclusions from all of the seemingly disparate elements of temple architecture and construction in the ancient Near East, as described in chapters five through nine. These architectural features have been grouped into three main classifications: Techniques of Construction and Decoration, General Temple Arrangement, and Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia.

CHAPTER 2

TEMPLE AS SACRED SPACE

Abstract

When viewed through the prism of religious experience, not all space is created equal. It is often necessary to make a division or a distinction in space from that which is normal, or *profane*, and that which is *sacred*, which is somehow set apart from its surroundings. The definition of sacred space, together with the identification of a particular area as constituting sacred space, are integral concepts in the history of religions. The premier physical expression of sacred space is the temple.

The idea of sacred space represents the most valuable key in discerning the underlying ideology of the temple in the ancient world, for it lies at the very heart of temple symbolism and mythology. The doctrine of sacred space contains numerous component principles, including the theory of sacred time, the notion of the centre place, and the idea that gradations of sacred space exist. Sacred space may be either *natural* or *socially constructed*; in the case of the latter, certain architectural strategies can be used to fabricate and promote the reality of sacred space.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The words for 'temple' in the ancient Near East are innately tied to the identification of these edifices with the concepts of sacred space and sacred time. Following this discussion, the notions of sacred space and time will be defined as clearly as words will permit, though it is not always easy to describe the experience of the 'other' in the language of the present world. The sources of the distinction between sacred and profane space will be identified, and how one piece of land might come to be distinguished from another. With the foundations thus established, the ideas of sacred space and time may be amplified by the concept of the *centre place*; in particular, the frequent designation of

Jerusalem, due to the former presence of the temple, as the centre of both space and time, a status enshrined in ancient literature, cartography, and art, will be noted. The concept of gradations in sacred space will be addressed, using a typical Egyptian temple as an example. Finally, the issue of the differences between natural sacred space and artificially created sacred space will be discussed, and some of the architectural strategies that may be used to create sacred space will be elucidated.

2.2 ETYMOLOGY OF ‘TEMPLE’

Our English word *temple* derives from the Latin *templum*, found in ancient classical literature, often with cosmic implications.⁸ The Latin *tem-* and the Greek *temno-* (from which we derive the word *temenos*⁹) mean to *cut*, specifically to cut off a territory or to demarcate an area for a specific purpose. In turn, the Greek *temno-* can be traced back to the much earlier Sumerian *temen*, referring to a ‘heaped-up pile of earth, as in the name of the Neo-Babylonian ziggurat (the traditional Tower of Babel), the *E-Temen-An-Ki*, the “House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth.”¹⁰ The “cutting” element in the etymology may be graphically represented by the cross-hairs in a surveyor’s scope used as a calibration or sighting reference.¹¹

⁸ An early example is provided by Varro (116-27 BCE), who used the term to describe a building meant for interpreting heavenly signs or auguries. Varro also spoke of the three temples of the sky, the earth, and the underworld, along with the *axis mundi* that connected them, all of which are common themes in the study of temples in the ancient Near East.

⁹ Today we use the word *temenos* to indicate an area “cut off” and set apart for the use of kings and/or priests. It may take the form of a building, a sacred grove, or a sanctuary dedicated to some holy purpose. *Temenos* might also refer to the elevated base or foundation on which a temple might be built, and which served as an architectural feature to further set the temple apart from less sacred adjoining structures and areas.

¹⁰ Lundquist (1993:5-6). This ziggurat was 100 yards square at its base, and at least 100 yards high. The earliest references to it are in the 7th century BCE but it must have been in existence long before this date, for it was destroyed and rebuilt several times. The biblical tradition about the Tower of Babel (Gn 11:1-9) may refer to this or to some other similar ruined tower. While the concept in building this tower was to bring their deity closer to them, when the tower collapsed the ‘theological mind of the biblical author interpreted this disaster as a divine chastisement of men whose pride had sought to climb into heaven’ (de Vaux 1965:2:282).

¹¹ In Roman times, when laying out the plan for a new town or military camp or some other designated area, the common practice was to begin with the *cardo*, a north-south axis, and the *decumanus*, an east-west line. The intersection of these lines, or the place where one line “cut” the other, designated the centre place. This focal point became the site for the most important, or most sacred, buildings. The junction of the *cardo* and the *decumanus* also served to subdivide the surrounding locale into four equal quadrants, corresponding to the four points of the compass, or the four quarters of the earth.

The Latin root *tem-* also led to our English words *template*, a “pattern” or “model,” and *contemplate*, to “ponder” or “reflect upon.” Thus a *temple* came to be regarded as a pattern or model of the cosmos and was considered a place where one could go to orient oneself, to relocate oneself in the cosmic plan, or in modern parlance, to find oneself. It was a place to reflect, to consider, to scrutinise, to mull over the cosmos, and to regain one’s bearings. Sacred space ‘enables those who are lost or confused, desperately seeking a foothold in a chaotic and meaningless reality, to seize hold of a certain point in infinite space, and from that point to organise their life in society, as did the gods during the creation of the universe’ (Roitman 2003:12).

In the Old Testament the word *bayit*, standing alone, is the word most commonly used to refer to the various Jerusalem temples;¹² this usage occurs over a hundred times when referring to Solomon’s temple and fifty-three times when referring to Ezekiel’s temple (Parry 1994c:xiii). *Bayit* also appears in the construct form as *beit Elohim*, the house of God (Jdg 17:5), and *beit YHWH*, the house of Yahweh (Dt 23:19).

The older Semitic languages from which Hebrew descended have no specific word for “temple.” In Akkadian we find *bitu*, “house,” as the term used to designate a temple. In Sumerian the term is *e-gal*, meaning “big house,” from which derived the Akkadian *ekurru*, “palace,” and subsequently the Phoenician *hkl* and the Hebrew *hekhal*, “palace” (de Vaux 1965:2:282). Similarly, the Egyptian term *pr wr*, “great house,” also denoted both a temple and a royal palace, and furthermore was the expression from which “Pharaoh” was ultimately derived. Marduk’s temples at Babylon were called *Esagila*, “house whose top is high,” and *Etemenanki*, “house of the foundations of heaven and earth.” The Tower of Babel story (Gn 11:4), which may have been modelled on *Esagila* or *Etemenanki*, is another example, Babel being the Hebrew form of Babylon (Akkadian *bab-ili*), its top “reached to heaven” (George 1993:139-140, 149; Wyatt 2001:65).

¹² Dwellings of God in the Hebrew Bible are also described using a variety of other terms, for instance *naveh*, an abode or habitation (Ex 15:13), *makom*, a place (Gn 28:17; or 2 Sm 6:17, in which *makom* is a place within the tent), *chal*, a tent (Ex 29:44), and *mishkan*, or tabernacle (Ex 25:9; Ps 46:5). But it is the single word *bayit*, meaning simply a house (1 Ki, passim; Rosenau 1979:13-14), which is the most common.

The principal root in the Hebrew Bible dealing with affairs of the temple is *QDŠ*, “holy” or “sacred,” and is used to describe something set apart from the surrounding profane space.¹³ It is used with reference to God (Ex 15:11; Lv 20:3); the temples of God (Ex 38:24; 40:9; 2 Chr 29:5; Ezk 42:14); persons associated with temples, such as the priests (Lv 21:6) and the people of Israel (Jr 2:3; Ps 114:2); temple furniture (Ex 30:29; 2 Chr 35:3); altars (Ex 29:37; Dt 9:24); anointing oil (Ex 30:25); incense (Ex 30:35); priestly clothing and vestments (Lv 16:4); the bread of the presence (1 Sm 21:5); Jerusalem, the city of one of God’s temples (Is 48:2); and, finally, holy days and festivals that are connected to the temple (Is 58:13; Ex 35:2) (Parry 1994c:xii-xiii).

It is clear that the terminology used to depict a temple and its furnishings indicated the nature of the temple as sacred space, that is, space set apart from other profane space. At first glance it may seem odd that a simple word, *house*, was used to depict such a grand structure as a monumental temple. However, in its definition as a *house*, the temple was decidedly set apart, not as the normal house of an individual, but as the dwelling place of the deity. This definition of the temple as a special house was consistent throughout the ancient Near East. Furthermore, the temple furnishings, and all who came into contact with the temple, were designated as “holy” or “sacred,” set apart from other objects and persons.

2.3 SACRED SPACE DEFINED

When one has an encounter with the divine, when the natural world gives way to the supernatural, in short, when heaven and earth meet—however briefly—that location becomes sacred, set apart from other areas. It becomes sacred space.

One of the clearest examples of this distinction comes from Exodus 3:5, where the Lord told Moses: ‘Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on

¹³ This usage may have reached its peak in the great *trisaqion* or *tersanctus* of Isaiah 6:3 which, naturally enough, was part of the cultic formula taken directly from the Jerusalem temple ritual (Engnell 1949: 6, 13, 35-37).

which you stand is holy ground'. Earlier, Jacob was sleeping under the stars when he had a dream wherein he saw a ladder reaching up to heaven and angels ascending and descending. When he awoke, he exclaimed 'Surely the Lord is present in this place, and I did not know it!' The record goes on to tell us that Jacob was shaken, and he said 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven' (Gn 28:16-17). Formerly profane space was now sacred space, but there is more to it than that. Jacob called that place the 'gateway to heaven', i.e., an *axis mundi*, a place where worlds met and communed with each other. It was a 'doorway to new worlds' (Roitman 2003:12).¹⁴ The ladder in Jacob's dream corresponds to the world tree or the cosmic mountain in other cultural settings.¹⁵

'In the eyes of religious man', wrote Eliade (1958b:3-4; 1959b:20-65), 'space is not homogenous: it exhibits fissures; that is to say, portions of space exist that are qualitatively different from others. There is a sacred and therefore "strong," significant space, and there are others, non-sacred spaces, which consequently lack structure and consistency—in a word, which are amorphous'.¹⁶

14 Jacob's dream of a ladder was once thought to have represented a cosmic centre. Some scholars have attempted to interpret Jacob's dream with reference to the Mesopotamian ziggurat as a cosmic centre, inasmuch as Jacob's description of the place as the 'Gate of Heaven' bears some semblance to Babylon, 'Gate of God' or 'Gate of the High God'. This idea, put forth by von Rad (1961:279) and by Speiser (1964:218-220), was rejected by Gunkel (1964:318) and by Clifford (1972:103-105).

15 Eliade wrote that we must endeavour to imagine a "door" or "opening" between earth and heaven whereby communication from one sphere to the other is enabled. Some of the more archaic legends actually depict an opening or a doorway allowing access to a different world. This doorway or opening between earth and heaven, which facilitates communication between the two, is the temple (Eliade 1958b:5). The incident of Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord in Genesis 32 is not without interest in this regard. Nibley noted that the original text of this passage indicated that it was the Lord, and not one of his messengers, who contended with Jacob. Furthermore, the word translated as "wrestled" can just as easily be translated "embraced," and if we consider the matter in this light, we note that just after the Lord "embraced" Jacob he received a new name and the bestowal of priestly and kingly authority and power (Gn 32:24-30). These are classic features of temple initiation ritual. Nibley further noted that in this narration Jacob symbolised the figure of Adam, for in Jewish tradition 'the place where the dream of Jacob occurred is the place where Adam was created, namely, the place of the future Temple and the centre of the earth' (Altmann 1944-1945:390-391; quoted in Nibley 1994:580).

16 Eliade drew upon the earlier work of Emile Durkheim (1915); Paul Mus (1935), who introduced the complex symbolism of Borobudur to western scholars; Stella Kramrisch (1946), who investigated certain aspects of spatial and temporal symbolism in Hindu temples; and the Dutch historian of religions, Gerardus van der Leeuw, who wrote that 'parts of space... become "positions" by being "selected" from the vast extensivity of the world... the effects of power repeating themselves there, or being repeated by man' (1938:2:393). Eliade expanded the concept of sacred space *vis-à-vis* temples in three ways: (1) to build a temple is to repeat the creation of the world; (2) the temple represents the idea of the centre; and (3) the temple is an *axis mundi*, a sacred mountain, a point of passage and communication between worlds.

How are the elusive concepts of sanctity and holiness to be defined? One way is by the use of the term *numinous*, happily coined by Otto (1936). The purpose here is not to undertake a detailed analysis of Otto's work but merely to note the main points of his argument.

The concept of holiness in particular, like the subject of religion in general, contains both rational and non-rational components, and each must be given their due. Otto began by characterising the numinous as that which is holy, minus its moral and rational aspects. Expressed in perhaps a more positive way, holiness is the ineffable core of religion, for it cannot be described in terms of other experiences (Otto 1936:1-7).

One of the components of the numinous identified by Otto is the notion of *creature-feeling*. Those who experience the numinous become acutely aware of a sense of dependency on something external to themselves that is unspeakably greater than themselves (Otto 1936:8-11). Here we begin to sense the compulsive need of ancient humanity to reconcile themselves to the numinous.¹⁷ These thoughts and emotions, and more, constitute what Otto termed the *mysterium tremendum*, which is comprised of three elements: awefulness (that which inspires awe, and may produce a sort of profound unease),¹⁸ overpoweringness (that which generates a feeling of intense humility), and

Significant works on the concept of sacred space since Eliade include that of Guiseppe Tucci (1961), Wyatt (2001), Gittlin (2002), Wasilewska (2009), and Wheatley (1971). The first half of Wheatley's book deals with Chinese urban planning, while the second half deals with sacred sites across five continents and focuses on the concepts of the centre, the *axis mundi*, orientation, geomancy, and other ideas related to our inquiry here. For sacred space in Greek temples, see Scully (1979).

¹⁷ The following quote from Otto is included to aid in understanding the almost incomprehensibly powerful nature of human experience with the numinous. It is 'the deepest and most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotion;' it is to be found 'in strong, sudden ebullitions of personal piety... in the fixed and ordered solemnities of rites and liturgies, and again in the atmosphere that clings to old religious monuments and buildings, to temples and to churches;' it can be peaceful and 'come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship;' or faster moving, 'thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its "profane," non-religious mood of everyday experience;' even violent or erupting 'from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions' and may lead to 'the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy' (Otto 1936:12-13).

¹⁸ Otto here revealed some of his ideas regarding religious progress over history. "Awefulness" was a prominent feature in primitive religious experience: '...let us give a little further consideration to the first crude, primitive forms in which this "numinous dread" or awe shows itself. It is the mark which really characterises the so-called "religion of primitive man," and there it appears as "daemoniac dread." This

energy (creating an impression of immense vigour) (Otto 1936:12-24).

A religious experience involving the *mysterium tremendum* can only be described as “wholly other,” as it is entirely different from any rational or natural experience, and as a result provokes a feeling of irresistible “fascination” in the inner core of one who reacts to the presence of the holy (Otto 1936:25-40). The subject is ineffably aware of having been in contact with a world other than the natural one, and that the source of the religious experience is incontestably authentic and real. At the same time one is seized with an overpowering realisation of one’s own insignificance and of the profane nature of the world in which one lives. The religious world of the “wholly other,” which is real and authentic, thus serves to illustrate the natural world as the “wholly profane” and inconsequential (Otto 1936:50-51).

We do not know the depth of spiritual enlightenment or commitment of everyone who attended or participated in temple activities in the ancient world.¹⁹ It is likely that many people involved with the temple in antiquity were not necessarily caught up in a numinous experience, but were more interested in the pageantry and in the tangible physical blessings thought to proceed from the temple. Nevertheless Eliade, among others, contended that people in general have a predisposition toward religious experience that is present in all but only awakened in some. Therefore, in every generation, then as now, there were sober and spiritually-minded individuals, “religious man” (to use Eliade’s term), who understood, in some measure, the spiritual blessings that proceeded from the temple. These individuals understood, at least implicitly, that sacred space resulted from the presence of the holy. They recognised, in an ineffable

crudely naïve and primordial emotional disturbance, and the fantastic images to which it gives rise, are later overborne and ousted by more highly developed forms of the numinous emotion, with all its mysteriously impelling power’ (Otto 1936:15-16). Otto subsequently identified four stages of religious progress: the worship of “daemons,” followed by a higher level where “gods” become the objects of worship, a third (implied) stage where the worship of God is incomplete and/or impure, and finally ‘the highest level of all, where the worship of God is at its purest’ (p 17). Otto’s conception of religious development was thus linear and evolutionary, from an original, crude, and superstitious sentiment to the development of Christianity, which he considered the highest and ultimate reflection of religious thought.

¹⁹ Generally, in the ancient Near East, seeking the divine was not so much an experience wherein one might probe the depths of one’s inmost soul; rather, one sought for contact with the holy by the development of a symbolic relationship between the natural and the supernatural worlds (Clifford 1972:6-8). Image was as important as reality; in fact, image became the reality.

way, that the temple satisfied their deepest and innermost yearnings for communion with the divine. In essence, they perceived the temple as one of those “fissures” (again using Eliade’s term), that marked an entryway from the mundane world into that world of the “other” (Eliade 1958b:3-4; 1959b:20-65).²⁰ They glimpsed the *mysterium tremendum* (to use Otto’s term), and recognised the world represented by the temple as the *real* and *authentic* world.

2.4 SACRED TIME AND THE TEMPLE

Much of what has been said about sacred space might also apply to the concept of sacred time. Sacred time is traditionally defined in the literature as ‘a primordial mythical time made present’, which has the effect of ‘renewing time’ which, like space, can grow ‘old’ and ‘tired’ (Eliade 1959b:68-113). Within the walls of the temple, time transcends the present and sacred time is re-created, the time that was present when the world was first created, *in illo tempore* (“in that time”).²¹

Temple ritual was designed not only to re-create order and perfection by re-enacting the creation process, but it was also meant to bring back that time when everything was fresh

²⁰ As noted above, the concepts of sacred space and time received a significant development and impetus in the work of Mircea Eliade. While fully acknowledging our debt to Eliade, Jonathan Z. Smith, in an important paper, offered some criticism of Eliade’s methodology and suggestions for further refinements as well as contrary viewpoints. In particular, Smith made four main points. First, he questioned whether *chaos* was really the best word to describe the profane; Smith viewed *chaos* as a divine power in its own right, and that it is always a necessary counterbalance to the sacred. Hence chaos is frequently subdued but never destroyed; it is that element which provides opposition in all things. Second, Smith felt the concept of the *centre* has been too narrowly discussed in terms of geographical symbolism. Rather than regarding as the exact centre on either a horizontal or a vertical plane, the centre may instead represent the ‘scar, or navel, left behind when heaven and earth were forcibly separated in creation’. Smith felt that by concentrating so much on the centre, we tend to ignore or downplay the periphery. Third, Smith wondered if the recreation of sacred time by repetitive ritual was sufficient to reverse creation and thus return or re-create the sacred time of the beginning. He noted that Eliade alluded to but did not elaborate on alternative mythologies, where ‘the whole of creation, the world, the gods, and the structures of order and destiny are judged to be evil or confining and must be reversed or destroyed’. Fourth, Smith questioned Eliade’s propensity to categorise everything as either ‘archaic’ or ‘modern’. This type of dualism tends to force one to a centrifugal view of the world where the centre is the important thing and man’s constant effort is to return to an earlier time and place. In contrast, Smith offered a centripetal view of the world, where freedom and even rebellion are desirable qualities, and where men are continually called upon to ‘challenge their limits, break them, or create new possibilities’ (Smith 1978:88-103).

²¹ In the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma Elish*, “time” is created as a result of Marduk’s victory over Tiamat; the text goes on to detail various other subdivisions of time. Thus we see that both the material world and time itself were brought forth through the creation process (Wyatt 2001:65).

and new. The purest moment of time, the *illud tempus* (“that time”), was that first moment of creation when existence and order emerged from the non-existent and chaotic. The Egyptians, among others, were particularly anxious to recreate this first moment in time in their temple ritual, for they were well aware that sacred time was of a more fragile nature even than sacred space, and so both had to be ritually recreated on a regular basis.

Temples and rituals were loci for the creative interplay of sacred space and sacred time...[Sacred time was] a moment, or season, or cycle of such clarification and communication, orientation and immersion, experience and renewal... Egyptians experienced time as a spiral of patterned repetitions, a coil of countless re-births... Because of order’s ongoing vulnerability to chaos, Egyptians needed to conceive of creation not as a single past event but as a series of “first times,” of sacred regenerative moments recurring regularly within the sacred space of temples through the media of rituals and architecture (Shafer 1997b:2).

Sacred time may be represented and recreated in temple architecture and ritual in at least two ways. Firstly, recognising the temple as a miniature of the cosmos, it can be considered as representing the cosmic rhythms. Consider briefly some of the symbolism of the architecture and furnishings of Solomon’s temple. The temple was constructed on a cosmic mountain. The twelve oxen, ostensibly representing the twelve tribes of Israel, could have also represented the twelve months of the year and thus a full seasonal cycle. A similar symbolism might be implied by the twelve loaves of bread placed on the table. The seven branches of the candelabra might represent the Decans.²² The oxen were grouped in threes, each facing a cardinal direction, indicating world-wide dominance and influence. The brass sea could have represented the primeval waters, or the Waters of Life. The rim of the brass sea was decorated to represent an arboreal or agricultural paradise. The altar was thought to represent the mountain of God, and it rested upon a trench known as the ‘bosom of the earth’ (Ezk 43:13-17). The stone in the Holy of Holies was the Foundation Stone, capping the waters of chaos. The temple was thus not merely a building or a place that existed in the world; it was ‘the world in essence. It is the theology of creation rendered in architecture and glyptic craftsmanship. In the Temple,

²² The Decans were a group of stars or constellations in the ancient world whose rising and setting, and the space between the two, were used as a means of telling time and keeping a lunar calendar correlated to a solar one.

God relates simultaneously to the entire cosmos, for the Temple (or mountain or city) is a microcosm of which the world itself is the macrocosm. Or, to put it differently, the centre (or navel or axis or fulcrum) is not a point in space at all, but the point in relation to which all space attains individualisation and meaning' (Levenson 1985:137-142, but see esp 139-140). If the temple is thought to represent the cosmos, then it must also represent in some manner the original, unsullied moment when the cosmos came into being. This representation always took the form of circular, not linear, time (Barker 2008b:58-65). Thus, said Eliade (1958b:12), 'it is fitting to note that, by periodically repeating the cosmogony and by annually regenerating time, religious man is attempting to recover the original purity and holiness of the world as still preserved symbolically in the temple. In other words, religious man wants to live in a cosmos that is similar in holiness to that of the temple. The cosmogonic myth reveals for him how to rediscover this primordial holiness of the world.' After all, when reciting the cosmogonic (or any other) myth, 'it is the narrative, not the event, that creates meaning' (Wyatt 2001:212).

Secondly, the temple can represent sacred time by the use of sacred numbers with regard to its construction as well as the timing of its rituals. For example, it is maintained that Solomon's temple took seven years to construct. In reality it is highly doubtful that it would take so long, especially as we are told that David had all the materials prepared beforehand. But *seven* was a fortuitous number to use, as it corresponded with the seven periods of creation. If the temple represented the cosmos, then the period of time it took to build the one must correspond to the period of time it took to create the other. It is plausible, then, that however long it took in reality to construct the temple, it would be written in the annals that it took seven units of time. As a matter of fact, there is evidence that the temple was completed well before its dedication (Lundquist 2008:30; Zevit 2001:449). But Solomon waited until the Feast of Tabernacles, a seven-day event occurring in the seventh month of the year, before consecrating the building and offering a dedicatory prayer that contained seven specific supplications (1 Ki 8:31-53; Levenson 1985:142-145).

If the temple was meant to represent both the cosmos and the primordial time in which

the cosmos was created, then the lives of the deity and of the people could be ‘woven together in this sharing of the sacred time within the sacred space...And time segments of the gods are the markers on the clocks and calendars of the people’ (Knipe 1988:112-113). In the regular performance of temple ritual, the emphasis was on ‘recollection, anamnesis and renewal through the abolition of time. *Illud tempus* really does become “the Eternal Present”’ (Wyatt 2001:254). Such a close association of the temple with time as well as space gives an added dimension to the catastrophic nature of the destruction of the temple, especially a repeated destruction as in Jerusalem, for this calamity would indicate not only the victory of the forces of chaos and darkness over space but also the annihilation of time itself, rendering the whole creation null and void.

2.5 THE TEMPLE AS THE CENTRE PLACE

A corollary of the concept of sacred space is the notion of the *centre*, an idea whose development is one of the great contributions to the field of the history of religion. A centre point located on an *axis mundi*, though found in nearly all ancient traditions, may be expressed in a variety of ways, as noted above in the discussion of Jacob’s dream: ‘a pillar, ladder, tree, vine, and mountain can each symbolise the communication link between heaven, earth, and underworld at the spot where the sacred has manifested itself... [this sacred point] constitutes a break in the homogeneity of space’ (Cohn 1981:63). Depending on the tradition, the centre point may be considered the highest point on earth, the navel of the earth, the primordial mound, or the point at which the work of creation began. The centre place not only becomes sacred space, but becomes pre-eminently *real*.²³ From the centre the universe expands outward; thus the centre place becomes a type of navel of the universe (Eliade 1958b:7-8).

This is not a matter of theological speculation but of a primary religious experience which precedes any reflection about the world. The world can be constituted, thanks to the fissure affecting space, because it is this fissure which marks the “fixed point,” the central axis of all future orientation. Whenever the

23 ‘On the moral-spatial axis, proximity to the self as “centre” implies reality, commonly expressed as holiness... Temples, homes for the gods modelled on human houses, are places of “reality” and therefore sacredness. Distance from the self means a progressive approach to the “end of the world,” where reality breaks down’ (Wyatt 2001:39).

sacred manifests itself in any hierophancy, there is not only a split in the homogeneity of space but also a revelation of absolute reality which is in direct contrast to the non-reality of the vast, surrounding expanse... In the homogenous and infinite expanse, where no guidepost is possible and therefore no orientation can be effected, hierophancy reveals an absolute “fixed point,” a “center.” We can see the extent to which the discovery, or, one might say, the revelation, of sacred space holds an existential value for religious man; for nothing can begin, nothing can be done, without a prior revelation; and any orientation implies the existence of a fixed point. This is the reason why religious man has always endeavored to establish himself with the “center of the world.”... The discovery of projection of a fixed point – the “center”—is equivalent to the creation of the world (Eliade 1958b:4).

The concept of the centre was ubiquitous among all ancient peoples, not just those of the Near East. In south Asia, people have long conceptualised the idea of the centre as the ultimate reality, characterised as *Brahma*. If there was one deity that ordered the affairs of this earth, then that deity was the centre; if there were many gods managing this earth, then each one represented a facet of the godhead that was the centre. Nirvana was the union of man with the centre.²⁴ The overriding principle in the construction of south Asian temples, which prevailed for over two thousand years, was the principle of centrality.²⁵ Elsewhere, Clifford described Mesopotamian cosmic centres, where heaven and earth were united, in Nippur and Babylon (Clifford 1972:25, 74). In Egypt it was believed that there was one solitary place in the primordial world from whence all creation emanated (Reymond 1969:200). Even the ancient Greeks considered that a deity

24 Noble (1981:3-4, 6-8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 22). Hindu deities were often pictured as four-sided figures, thereby representing the four cardinal points or the four quarters of the earth (cf descriptions of the four-faced cherubim surrounding the throne of God in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1). Hindu temple complexes exhibited many of the characteristics of Near Eastern temples that are examined later in this work. They were usually surrounded by a wall to ensure separation of sacred from profane space. The most sacred area was typically the back central portion of the courtyard; in Egyptian temples and in Solomon's, the most sacred area was in the back centre. An altar was erected in the forecourt area and normally featured a flat space on top. When placing offerings on the altar at the festivals, the priests would circumambulate the altar until reaching the top. Temple grounds often contained a sacred grove where indigenous trees were nurtured, and were usually large enough to contain several wildlife habitats, thus allowing the priests to maintain ties with all types of animals and plants. Gargoyle-type heads, carved from solid rock, were placed before hidden streams or conduits; water used for oblations would spout from these carvings. There were areas set aside for temple visitors to sit and rest and meet with others prior to or after conducting their temple business (cf the “porches” in Ezekiel's temple). Mount Meru, the sacred home of the gods, was always represented.

25 Noble (1981:23) noted the central area of Hindu temple complexes, called the *srikovil*, contained the image of the temple deity, which was itself placed in the exact centre of the *srikovil*. Noble commented: ‘It is hard to imagine a more perfect architectural and organizational response to the basic guiding principle’.

located at the centre of the earth was more powerful than one located on the periphery.²⁶ The further back in history we go, the more uniform this concept of the centre becomes, until we reach that point where we find a ‘Neolithic culture that is the matrix of all the urban cultures of the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean world’ (Eliade 1982:21).

These sacred centres were real places that had concrete boundaries and dimensions. They were formed, in many instances, not just by drawing a circle and determining the middle, but by “squaring the circle” and thus creating a mandala.²⁷ The four points where the square intersected the circle conformed to the four cardinal directions.²⁸ Mandalas are found everywhere in religious iconography. Mandalas, noted Jung, may be regarded as ‘the haloes of Christ...in many cases the halo of Christ is divided into four... In non-Christian art, such circles are called “sun-wheels.” They appear in rock engravings that date back to the neolithic epoch before the wheel was invented’ (Jung 1964:267-269).²⁹ In all mandalas, the most important point is the centre.

2.5.1 Jerusalem as the centre of the world

A famous midrash states:

Just as the navel is found at the center of a human being, so the land of Israel is found at the center of the world...and it is the foundation of the world. Jerusalem is at the center of the land of Israel, the Temple is at the center of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is at the center of the Temple, the Ark is at the center of the Holy of Holies and the Foundation Stone is in front of the Ark, which spot is the foundation of the world (*Midrash Tanhuma*, Kedoshim 10).

²⁶ Hagedorn (2005:190) quotes Plato in his *Republic*: ‘For this God surely is in such matters for all mankind the interpreter of the religion of their fathers who from his seat in the middle and at the very navel of the earth delivers his interpretation’.

²⁷ Von Franz (1975:231). A *mandala* is ‘a schematized representation of the cosmos, chiefly characterized by a concentric configuration of geometric shapes, each of which contains an image of a deity or an attribute of a deity’ (<http://www.dictionary.com>).

²⁸ Note the mention of the four rivers flowing forth from Eden (Gn 2:9-14); the four winds of the earth (Mt 24:31); the four corners of the earth (Rv 7:1); or a blanket tied in four corners representing the earth (Ac 10:11).

²⁹ The mandala is at once an image of the world and also a pantheon. By entering a mandala, an initiate ‘in some sort approaches the centre of the world; at the heart of the mandala he can accomplish the rupture of planes and gain access to a transcendental mode of being’ (Eliade 1958c:162, n 5).

Jerusalem came to be the centre place after the time of David in three ways: (1) named the political, religious, and military capital of the Israelite kingdom, it thereby became the point from which Yahweh would go forth to battle against the enemies of Israel; (2) it was the site of the temple, which connected Zion with both the upper world and the netherworld; and (3) by its assumed eschatological role as the New Jerusalem and the site of the central focus of a new era of peace, prosperity, tranquillity, and fertility; in short, the site of the restoration of the paradisiacal era (Cohn 1981:68-70).

Whether in Jerusalem³⁰ or at other temple sites throughout the ancient Near East, temples always stood at the centre of their respective societies. This does not necessarily refer to the geographical centre, for it is certainly possible for a “centre” to be “off-centre;” the concept refers to the religious centre. A wide variety of images can be utilised to express the concept of the centre. It is in this respect that temples stood in the centres of ancient Near Eastern societies, including Israel.³¹

A pilgrim ascending to Jerusalem (and going to Jerusalem is always regarded as a spiritual as well as a physical ascent) is going to the centre place. A person going to that point will be closest to heaven, and will be in that *axis mundi* that connects the upper and lower worlds with the earth.³² The person is going to the very womb of creation, the cradle of life, the place pre-eminently real above all other places, the place from which edicts go forth to govern and control the entire world, the place from which all the world

30 The Hebrew word for “centre” is *tabbur*, which appears in the Old Testament only in Judges 9:37 and in Ezekiel 5:5 and 38:12. Some scholars, therefore, maintain that due to the paucity of sources, it cannot be proved that the concept of the “centre” or of the “navel of the earth” had any influence on the authors of the Hebrew Bible. But while Jerusalem is certainly not the geographical centre point of Israel, Zion (the Temple Mount) is frequently implied as the spiritual centre (e.g., Is 2:2). Furthermore, for hundreds of years, cartographers almost universally depicted Jerusalem as the centre of the earth.

31 ‘The central zone is not, as such, a spatially located phenomenon. It almost always has a more or less definite location within the bounded territory in which the society lives. Its centrality has, however, nothing to do with geometry and little with geography... The centre, or the central zone, is a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs, which govern the society. It is the centre because it is the ultimate and irreducible; and it is felt to be such by many who cannot give explicit articulation to its irreducibility. The central zone partakes of the nature of the sacred’ (Shils 1970:1).

32 In Jewish tradition, heaven is regarded as either two or eighteen miles directly above Jerusalem, while the dangerous waters of *tehom* are a mere thousand cubits below the temple floor. Some legends portray the existence of an invisible shaft between these three points, the *axis mundi*, converging in the temple (Smith 1978:113).

receives fertility and fruition.³³

The sanctity of Jerusalem was even recognised, albeit grudgingly, by the Dead Sea community at Qumran. The Temple Scroll contains an interesting prohibition against bringing the skins of un-sacrificed animals into Jerusalem due to the historically verifiable status of Jerusalem as a holy city in the third century BCE, a status confirmed, ironically enough, by a proclamation of Antiochus III (Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.3.3-4; all references to Josephus in this thesis refer to Whiston's translation [1960]). This prohibition, unattested in rabbinical literature, allows a glimpse of the real reason for the bitterness of the Qumran sectaries against the Jerusalem authorities: the holy status of Jerusalem, confirmed even by a pagan Seleucid monarch, had not been restored or observed by the Maccabees; hence, 'Jerusalem had been defiled by its own leaders' (Milgrom 1980-81:98).

The theme of Jerusalem as the centre of the world can be found in Biblical and pseudepigraphical literature as well as in rabbinical writings. For example: 'Thus said the Lord God: I set this Jerusalem in the midst of nations, with countries round about her' (Ezk 5:5).³⁴ In the *Book of Jubilees* (8:19), Mount Zion is called the centre of the navel of the earth, and in verse 12 of the same chapter the land of *Sem* (Palestine) is called the centre of the earth. The same idea can be found in early Christian literature, for example, in the *Book of the Bee*. There is an interesting symmetry among Jewish, Christian, and even Islamic apocalyptic writings that the great gathering of mankind at the end of the

³³ The idea of the temple as the source of fertility both led to and resulted from the myths of supernatural beings engaging in sexual intercourse in sacred space. There is both literary and archaeological evidence suggesting that the pose of the two cherubim atop the Ark of the Covenant was one of sexual embrace. In addition, there are persistent traditions of Yahweh having nightly intercourse with his bride on the couch in the Jerusalem temple (Goodenough 1954:4:131-132; Patai 1947:91-92; Seach 2008). Such doctrines are neither a sign of a corrupt belief system nor a lurid depiction of divine beings infected with mortal weaknesses; nor should they necessarily be viewed strictly as relating to the principles of sympathetic or homeopathic magic, where sexual union in the temple was thought to result in fertility among flocks and herds (and humans) in the temple district. On a loftier plane, these concepts may be viewed as the logical result of ordinances such as the *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage, which union was not complete until consummated. These doctrines can also be regarded as an acknowledgement of procreation as an entitlement of divine beings; even more so, they may serve to reinforce the idea that the legal right and the ability to reproduce in the eternal worlds was a defining attribute of deity.

³⁴ Levenson (1976:8-9) interprets this verse as meaning that Jerusalem is not only the centre of the world, but also the seat of political government, the seat of religious governance, and the fulcrum upon which the historical order of the world rests.

world will take place at Jerusalem, the centre place. Thus things are brought to an end even as they return to the state that existed in the beginning (Wensinck 1978:21-23).

2.5.2 Jerusalem as the centre of time

In some measure Jerusalem may be considered the centre of time as well as the centre place. As a result, Jerusalem was assumed to be the site of many of the principal events in the creation and in early human history.

The Foundation Stone, which stood at the very centre of the Jerusalem temple (perhaps not the geographic centre, but certainly at the most sacred spot), was the stone by which the unruly waters of *tehom* were capped. On this stone Yahweh stood when directing the creative process. From this stone was said to come forth the light that lighted the world.³⁵ The dust from which Adam was created was taken from scrapings of this stone; underneath this stone Adam was buried; on this stone Adam offered his first sacrifice; on this stone Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices; the waters of the flood burst forth from underneath this stone, and under it they were once again contained;³⁶ upon this stone Noah's Ark landed; upon it Noah offered the first sacrifice after the flood; here it was that Abraham was circumcised, and here is where he ate with Melchizedek; here is where Abraham attempted to sacrifice Isaac; here is where Jacob laid his head when he had his dream of the ladder.³⁷ As the Foundation Stone featured so prominently in sacred time as the location for many of the seminal events in the religious history of Israel, so it is destined to play an equally prominent role in the end times. It will be upon the Foundation Stone that Yahweh will come to announce the end of the current times and the beginning of the paradisiacal era. Furthermore, with only a couple of exceptions, all of the above events are purported to have occurred on the Foundation Stone during the

³⁵ The windows of ancient temples were designed to let light *out*, not *in*; *ergo*, the temple in Jerusalem was thought to be the source of the world's light.

³⁶ The cosmic sea was 'amorphous, uncontained and chaotic'...one of the purposes of the temple was to "tame" this chaos 'by containing it, and thus reducing it to order and manageability' (Wyatt 2001:181). This myth is reminiscent of Lucian's account of the receding waters of the flood that disappeared into a crevice in the ground at Hierapolis, over which Deucalion built the temple of Hera (Wyatt 2001:137).

³⁷ Smith (1978:116) compares the Foundation Stone to what the Australian aborigines called a 'dreaming', i.e., 'a track or sign left by a primordially significant being in mythic time'.

time of the Passover feast, making it, as Jonathan Z. Smith observed (1978:116), the ‘cosmogonic feast *par excellence*’.³⁸

If, then, you are fortunate enough to live in the Holy Land, and especially in the vicinity of Mount Zion, you find yourself in a horizontal and vertical spatial vortex where the veil between this world and others becomes thin indeed. But this is not all; you also find yourself in the centre of sacred time, caught squarely between the Creation and the mythical events that formed the basis of Judeo-Christian religious life and the equally significant future eschatological events that will determine the final destiny of the earth. This realisation can infuse a person with a tremendous appreciation of the responsibility that comes with living in such a spiritually-charged atmosphere, especially when coupled with a belief that the balance of both space and time rests on the fulcrum of the meticulous performance of religious ritual. There is a close correspondence between things that occur in Jerusalem and those that occur in heaven, and the actions of Michael the archangel in the heavenly temple are reflected in those of the High Priest functioning in the temple below. The cosmic ramifications of cultic obedience and potential cultic missteps were graphically described in the famous play *The Dybbuk*:

The holiest land in the world is the Land of Israel. In the Land of Israel the holiest city is Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the holiest place was the Temple, and in the Temple the holiest spot was the Holy of Holies. There are seventy peoples in the world. The holiest among these is the People of Israel. The holiest of the People of Israel is the tribe of Levi. In the tribe of Levi the holiest are the priests. Among the priests the holiest was the High Priest. There are 354 days in the year. Among these the holidays are holy. Higher than these is the holiness of the Sabbath. Among Sabbaths, the holiest is the Day of Atonement, the Sabbath of Sabbaths. There are seventy languages in the world. The holiest is Hebrew. Holier than all else in this language is the holy Torah, and in the Torah the holiest part is the Ten Commandments. In the Ten Commandments the holiest of all words is the name of God. And once during the year, at a certain hour, these four supreme sanctities of the world were joined with one another. That was on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and there utter the name of God. And because this hour was beyond measure holy and awesome, it was the time of utmost peril not only for the High Priest but for the whole of Israel. For if in this hour there had, God forbid, entered the mind of the High Priest a false or sinful thought, the entire world would have been

³⁸ While Passover may be regarded as the great cosmogonic feast, it is the Feast of Tabernacles, not Passover, that will play the most prominent role in the end times; indeed, Tabernacles is the only feast that will continue in the Millennial era.

destroyed (Landis 1966:51-52).

2.6 GRADATIONS IN SACRED SPACE

All sacred space is not identical. Sacred space comes in varied levels of sanctity, and care is taken to demarcate different areas from each other. Access to each level is meticulously guarded; passage from one area to another is usually accompanied by an ablution, initiation, or some form of cleansing ritual.³⁹

In addition, as one progressed through the temple complex and into the temple itself, increasing levels of sanctity were expressed by an escalating quality of materials and workmanship. The Tabernacle of Moses demonstrated different gradations of sacred space by using different materials and construction techniques. The courtyard enclosed by the outer wall was the least holy area. The entrance to the Tabernacle itself was more sacred, the Holy Place was more sacred still, and the Most Holy Place was the holiest of all. The outer layers of the Tabernacle, from the outside toward the inside, consisted of dolphin skins,⁴⁰ ram skins dyed red, goat hair, and fine linen. The “holiest” of these

³⁹ At Sinai, Israelites wishing to approach the mountain were commanded to undergo a three-day purification requiring ablutions, laundering, and abstinence from sexual intercourse (Ex 19:10-15). In the Temple Scroll, the requirements for admission to the temple city, let alone the temple itself, were even more strict. For example, at Sinai, a man with a nocturnal emission was prohibited from going near the mountain for one day; in the Temple Scroll, such an offence required a three-day wait. Again, a healed leper in the Torah underwent an ablution on the first and seventh day; after the first, he could enter the camp but not his home. He had to wait for the second ablution before going to his tent. In the Temple Scroll, a healed leper could not even enter the city until after the second ablution. In the Temple Scroll, passage from one state to another always required an ablution (Milgrom 1978b:513-518).

⁴⁰ The outer covering of the tabernacle was made of *tahas*, a term that has been the source of great puzzlement to scholars, though its meaning is normally beyond question. *Tahas* refers to a group of small aquatic cetaceans, or marine mammals, notably the dolphin. That is the clear and simple meaning of the word, but it does seem an odd choice of a substance from which to make a covering for a desert tabernacle. Cross wryly observed that if the story of Moses' Tabernacle was a fraud perpetrated by writers of the priestly school, it seems hard to believe that they would have chosen dolphins' skins as the outer covering of the tent (Cross 1984:95). However strange it may appear in the account of the desert Tabernacle of ancient Israel, the location of El's tent in the Canaanite documents 'in the midst of the sea' and at the source of the cosmic river at the 'pools of the double deep' makes a covering of dolphin skins a logical choice. The idea is further solidified by the fact that the dolphin is associated with El in Phoenician art. The translators of the King James Bible, for reasons unknown, preferred to think the term *tahas* referred to the skins of badgers (Ex 26:14). The New Jewish Publication Society Translation was the first English version to concede the argument and use the term “dolphin.” Another interpretation is offered by Isserlin (2001:42), who considers *tahas* to refer to the *dugong*, a creature closely related to the manatee, found in the Red Sea (although subsequently on p 174 Isserlin seems to revert back to the meaning of “dolphin”). Be this as it

materials, the fine linen, was reserved for the innermost curtains. Meanwhile, the entrance screen of the Tabernacle enclosure and the entrance to the Tabernacle itself were both made of the same material, viz., embroidered material of wool and linen, with more wool than linen, and were considered more holy than the dolphin skins, ram skins, or goat hair. As one penetrated deeper into the Tabernacle, the sanctity and quality of the materials consistently increased. There was an increasing use of gold as one moved closer to the Holy of Holies, and the gold itself increased in purity as one progressed into the Tabernacle (Milgrom 1980-81:90-91).

As in the desert Tabernacle, so in the temple of Solomon we can discern an increase in costly materials and superior workmanship as one progressed through that building. Hurowitz (2005:88-90) offers eight examples of how the material and technological features of Solomon's temple increased in quality, and thus increased in sanctity, when moving toward the *debir*: (1) in the courtyard, all the vessels were of bronze, and there was no gold, while in the temple itself there was gold and no bronze; (2) all the interior walls of the temple were made of cedar, but the floor of the *hekhal* was of cypress, while that of the *debir* was of cedar; (3) the floor of the *debir* was covered in gold plate; (4) the walls of the *hekhal* were engraved with gourds and calyxes, while the walls of the *debir* were engraved with the holier emblems of palms and cherubs; (5) the cherubs in the *debir* were made of olive, a most precious wood; in the *hekhal* the door posts were also made of olive wood, while the doors themselves were of cypress; (6) the doors of the *hekhal* were made of two planks of wood, while the doors of the *debir* were made of a single plank of olive wood—such a large plank would be extremely rare and valuable; (7) the doorposts of the *hekhal* were four, while those of the *debir* were five; and (8) the method by which the gold plate was affixed to the doors differed; in the case of the *debir*, the method used was technologically more sophisticated and expensive.

may, there is another school of thought that believes *tahas* refers not to an animal but to a certain orange or yellow dye (Roitman 2003:49, n 40). However, there is no need to wrest the literal interpretation. Temple traditions ranging from Greece, Mesopotamia, India, and the Bible itself echo an old theme where the original sanctuary of the supreme god was represented as a tent, the fabric of which was made from the skin of the vanquished sea-dragon (Wyatt 2001:64, 149). Further: 'We see how the tent, prototype of the temple, is made from the skin or the corpse of the primaeval dragon' (p 161); and 'The cosmic tent is made from the hide of the slain sea-monster. This corresponds to the construction of the world out of the cadaver of Tiamat in Mesopotamian tradition' (p 173).

The courtyards surrounding the Jerusalem temple were also subjected to differentiated levels of sanctity.⁴¹ In ever-increasing levels of holiness were the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel, and the Court of the Priests. Each area was contained within walls and gates that were carefully guarded (Bickerman 1947:387-405, but see esp 390).⁴² Signs were posted in several languages, warning that any unauthorised entrance would result in the direst consequences.⁴³

The boundaries between these various sacred areas caused endless debates and arguments. It was universally acknowledged that walls served to demarcate areas, but to which area did the wall itself belong? Did it make a difference if the gate swung inward or outward? What about a tree whose branches and fruit were in one area, while its roots were in another? What about the earth beneath a particular area? Did it absorb the sacred character of the structures on its surface? What about the aerial space above the temple? What was to be done if a person standing in one area stretched out their hand into the space of another? What about stairways connecting different areas? What about a door or a gate that swung on hinges? Did the hinges carry the same level of sanctity as the gate? What about roofs with eaves that might overhang a different level? What about windows that looked out onto a less sacred area below? As such thorny questions multiplied, the

41 Temple worship in ancient Israel was considered a high privilege and was not granted indiscriminately or lightly. Only those who had demonstrated their loyalty to Yahweh by their life and conduct could hope to enter the temple. ‘Who shall go up to the hill of Yahweh? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who does not take an oath by what is false, nor swear to a lie’ (Ps 24:3-4). A priest, acting as door-keeper, was always set in place to monitor the temple entrance to ensure that no unclean or unworthy person, also no foreigner, might gain entrance to the temple (Clements 1965:74). For entry restrictions in other temples of the ancient Near East, see the references in Hurowitz (1992:77, n.2). Profane space, on the other hand, is never demarcated as its very essence is that of chaos and disorder.

42 The penalty of death for an unauthorised presence in restricted areas, once thought to have originated with Solomon’s temple, has now appeared in sources much earlier than the Old Testament, for instance, in a Hittite document entitled *Instructions for Temple Officials*. Furthermore, among the Hittites, not only was the trespasser guilty of a capital offence; the temple guard that allowed the miscreant to enter, and also the overall temple official on duty at the time the offence occurred, were punished with death (Milgrom 1970:206).

43 Gentiles were permitted to enter the outer court, which was not really part of the temple proper, but they could penetrate no further. Even Roman citizens could be executed for violating this law. To avoid any accidental intrusion, notices in Greek and Latin were posted. One such notice, found at Jerusalem in 1871 and now housed in Istanbul, reads: ‘No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to thank for his ensuing death.’ When Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:14 regarding the ‘wall of partition’ between Jew and Gentile that was broken down by Christ, his metaphor was thought to have been derived from these temple barriers.

rabbis struggled to find answers to each of them.⁴⁴

Ezekiel, describing his vision of a future temple, designated the entire temple precinct as most holy: ‘Such are the instructions for the Temple on top of the mountain: the entire area of its enclosure shall be most holy’ (Ezk 43:12). This inclusion of both temple and temple-city as ‘most holy’ was usurped by the Qumran community in describing their future temple. But there still remained significant restrictions between those who could enter the city and those who could enter the temple proper (Milgrom 1980-81:90-91).

2.6.1 Case study: Gradations of sacred space in Egyptian temples

Every Egyptian temple was divided into zones of varying sacredness. The temple complex in its entirety, normally a rectangular area, was first of all set off by a wall, usually of mud brick, to separate the temple area from the surrounding profane space. The wall was perceived as a boundary between order and disorder, between organisation and chaos. The mud enclosure walls of some temples, particularly later ones, were sometimes constructed in an undulating fashion, and were intended to represent the waves of *Nun* approaching the temple but unable to pass the boundary (Wilkinson 2000:56-57, 133). Some of the walls, especially the gates and the areas surrounding the gates, were decorated with apotropaic art that portrayed the victories of the king in battle and his prowess in hunting. Presumably this type of decoration was intended to scare off enemies and keep evil at bay, and thus preserve the sacred nature of the temple courtyards.

The first area within the outer enclosure wall was a large, open courtyard. This area was largely transitional in nature and served as a ‘zone of interface’ between the inner, more sacred areas, and the profane space outside (Wilkinson 2000:62). The next courtyard

⁴⁴ It would be beyond my purpose here to go into these issues in detail; see Fisher (1963:36); Freedman (1981:24); and Parry (1994b:417-426, 433). The literalness and the sincerity with which these questions were debated somewhat resemble modern-day proposals for the Third Temple to be built somewhere other than the Temple Mount, thus leaving current buildings on the site untouched. These proposals have included the provision that an open-air shaft from the Temple Mount to the site of the new structure would be built and maintained in order to directly convey ‘sacred space’ from the old location to the new (Roitman 2003:148).

might be described as a tertiary level of sacred space. Here were located priests' quarters, gardens, workplaces, storage areas, slaughter yards, administrative chambers, schools, libraries, and all other facilities necessary for the normal operation and maintenance of the temple. Included here was usually a pond or sacred lake to serve as a source of water for ablutions and to represent the primordial waters.⁴⁵ This courtyard was open to every Egyptian—king, priest, and commoner—at least on festivals or special occasions.⁴⁶ It also appears that this area contained special places set apart for the hearing of petitions, for conducting temple business, and for presenting offerings to the priests.

From this area the king and priests could pass into an area of secondary sacredness through the pylon gateways of the temple complex, after undergoing the required ablutions. This was still an open-air area, but the common people were not permitted within except on the most important occasions, and even then access was limited to a few high-level representatives of the people.⁴⁷ This area was primarily a transitional area

45 If the temple is a microcosm of the world, then it must portray the essential dichotomy of dry land and water. The cosmic ocean, believed to encircle the land mass, was in constant opposition to the land, and was forever trying to overcome it and once again cover the whole earth as at the beginning. Temple ritual was believed to keep the waters in check and maintain the balance between land and sea. The cosmogonic myth about how the primeval ocean was repelled and overcome by the appearance of the dry land was told and retold in temple ritual. This myth was further reiterated in kingship rituals and within contexts such as the Babylonian *Akitu* festival, at which the *Enuma Elish* was recited in its entirety. An analogous ritual 'was performed daily in Egypt, in which the victory of Ra (or Seth as his agent) over Apepi, a subterranean monster, was celebrated and enabled by the destruction of a papyrus drawing of the monster, and the utterance of appropriate curses' (Wyatt 2001:113).

46 In Ptolemaic times this area was known as the "court of the multitude," suggesting that it was not particularly restricted (Wilkinson 2000:62).

47 It is evident that for the majority of Egyptians there was little or no direct contact with the temple and its services, and there was no common participation in its rites. On special occasions, as noted in the text, certain significant representatives of the people might be allowed access to the area described as of secondary sacredness, but they could never enter the temple itself. The Egyptian commoner had to be content with the faith that whatever was being done on the inside was for the good and betterment of the citizens. The ordinary people had to be satisfied with the occasional feasts and festivals where they might procure a free meal and avail themselves of whatever benefits were offered as a result of such festivities. But most assuredly, such benefits did not offer access to the inner workings of the temple. However, we must take care not to forget the simple faith and devotion of the Egyptian people. 'Though not admitted to the temple, to many the temple, its services and its god were real, and were needed. A series of texts on the south gate of the *temenos* shows us that this belief in the god did exist, and that provision was made for the needs of the people to pray and make their offerings... [thus] immediately outside the south gate of the *temenos* the ordinary people were able at all times to come to pray, to offer petitions, to appeal for justice, and to lay their own humble offerings before the god. The temple was a living entity, the varied activities that took place within it were for the common good, and the man in the street was not blind to his god but in his humble way saw in him a help and a support' (Fairman 1954:201-203).

from the outer court to the entrance into the temple proper.⁴⁸

From this open-air court the king and certain select priests could enter into the temple proper, the area of primary sacredness. This area was dark, with numerous and close-set columns holding up the roof. There were typically many more columns than were architecturally necessary, for they were symbolic as much as they were functional. They were intended to represent marsh plants, as can be seen from their capitals which were sculpted to represent lotus flowers or papyrus umbrels. This dimly-lit area, with an upward-sloping floor, was designed to represent the swampy, no-man's-land between the chaotic space outside and the primordial mound, found at the rear centre of the temple (Shafer 1997b:5-6; Wilkinson 2000:52).

The most sacred area within the temple itself was the sanctuary at the centre rear. While the entire structure was considered to be the god's home, this sanctuary was the most intimate and innermost chamber. This area stood on the main axis of the temple and was penetrated with light only once a year on New Year's Day. Inside this sanctuary the statue of the god, carved of stone, stood within doors of bronze or gilded wood. The shrine of the god, being the most sacred area of the entire structure, could be penetrated only by the king and by the highest level of the priesthood. Any desecration of this area, or any error in the performance of the rituals, required the rededication of the entire

⁴⁸ This clearly demonstrates the tremendous importance of the *temenos* as a strategy to add sanctity to a socially constructed sacred site. The *temenos* must be distinguished from profane space because of its function as the place for communicating with supernatural forces. 'The well-being of an individual and/or society depends on the success or failure of this communication. Thus, a special place must be selected and properly prepared to enhance the probability of a beneficial outcome of the "meeting" between the profane (people) and sacred (divine). During this communication one enters into a liminal stage of transformation in which both spaces are intermingled during a ritualistic performance after which they are separated again. The ritualistic paraphernalia for such an act might be simple and personal (e.g., clearing one's thoughts before prayer) or complex involving ritualistic ablutions, processions, elaborate "sacrifices," etc. The Little Tradition and private rituals might not be recognised in the archaeological record when they were performed in clearly but only temporarily delineated sacred space or within a *temenos* distinguished by perishable markers only... Since the Great Tradition sacred space is easier to document archaeologically, the elite's selection and delineation of *temenos* must be discussed. "Entrapping the space" and making a decision to erect a temple "in," "on," or "within" this space depends primarily on two factors: perceived divine manifestation (socio-religious aspect) and/or a physical planning of a larger space (socio-political aspect). This manifestation could have been considered a divine blueprint that needed to be followed, preserved, restored, re-enacted, etc., to preserve the original order as established and reinforced by creation myths" (Wasilewska 2009:399-400).

structure (Wilkinson 2000:70).

2.7 CREATING SACRED SPACE

Among the challenges facing those in the ancient Near East endeavouring to build a temple or some other holy place was the difficulty of creating a structure from commonplace elements, whether reeds, mud brick, or stone, that would be endowed with holiness and thus qualify as sacred space. Furthermore, the nature of sacred space is such that it can only be perceived intellectually or emotionally or spiritually, for often it is not visibly distinct from the surrounding profane space. The overall architectural goal of temple-building was to create an impression of greatness, holiness, and sanctity, a structure worthy of being called the House of God and a place suitably magnificent to host supernatural beings.

Sacred space is characterised by *order* and *organisation*; it is the antithesis of confusion. The primary description or characteristic of profane space is *chaos*.⁴⁹ Profane space is the realm of the natural man. It has to do with the mundane, ordinary activities of mortal life. It represents matter and space subject to the vicissitudes of life: decay, deterioration, and ultimately death.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The very word “profane” is derived from the Latin *profanus*, meaning “before” or “outside” the temple. The Hebrew equivalent, *hol*, similarly refers to that which is ‘outside the sanctuary’ (Jastrow 1975:433). Eliade (1961:39-40) wrote of profane space as ‘objective’, ‘abstract’, and ‘non-essential’.

⁵⁰ Profane space was frequently described in the experience of ancient Israel as the desert or wilderness, a land of chaos and darkness. The desert or the wilderness was a place of demons and monsters, a land void, empty, and waste; it was a lone and dreary world:

Its streams shall be turned to pitch
And its soil to sulfur.
Its land shall become burning pitch,

Night and day it shall never go out;
Its smoke shall rise for all time.
Through the ages it shall lie in ruins;
Through the aeons none shall traverse it.

Jackdaws and owls shall possess it;
Great owls and ravens shall dwell there.
He shall measure it with a line of chaos
And with weights of emptiness.

Man cannot create sacred space of his own accord; ‘it is merely discovered by him’, said Eliade (1958a:369), ‘in other words, the sacred place in some way or another reveals itself to him’. Eliade did not deny the concept of socially constructed sacred space, but merely observed that any attempt by individuals to create sacred space of their own volition will fail unless the act is consecrated by the deity. In Otto’s definition (1936:25-30), the sacred must be something wholly ‘other’ than the profane world. Meanwhile, de Vaux suggested that man, on his own resolution, may set apart an area of land and reserve it as sacred space. This might be done for either of two reasons: (1) as a kind of offering or tithe to the deity, thus freeing up all other land for profane use; or (2) as an incentive for the deity to further radiate his glory around a wider area, with a resulting increase in blessings (de Vaux 1965:2:276). The second reason is more in conformity with ancient texts and with the rites and spirit of Semitic religion.

2.7.1 Natural and socially constructed sacred space

In the ancient Near East, places of natural holiness, if available, were frequently utilised

It shall be called, ‘No kingdom is there,’
Its nobles and all its lords shall be nothing.

Thorns shall grow up in its palaces,
Nettles and briars in its strongholds.
It shall be a home of jackals,
An abode of ostriches.

Wildcats shall meet hyenas,
Goat-demons shall greet each other;
There too the lilith shall repose
And find herself a resting place.

There the arrow-snake shall nest and lay eggs,
And shall brood and hatch in its shade.
There too the buzzards shall gather
With one another (Is 34:9-15).

The desert is ‘an empty howling waste’ (Dt 32:10), ‘a land not sown’ (Jr 2:2). It is not a nice place. It is not a place where one should settle; rather, it is a place of initiation, a place of testing, through which one must pass before entering the promised land. Christ had to go ‘into the wilderness’ to be tempted of Satan. Could Satan not have done his work in Jerusalem? Or did the status of Jerusalem as sacred space prohibit the demon from exerting his full powers there?

as the sites of temples. If areas of natural holiness were not present, then a site had to be chosen and a temple had to be built; the building had to manifest the principles of sacred space and its corollary ideologies in its design and construction.

Some places in nature seem imbued with natural holiness. Consider the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in central Greece; poised on the precipitous slope of Mt. Parnassos, high above the gorge of the Pteistos River and the Bay of Krisa, this temple site occupies a forest glade adjacent to the spring Kastalia. Even today, tourists appreciate Delphi as ‘a place of luminous natural beauty and of transparent holiness’, as had the ancient Greeks and others before them (Holum 2004:184). Natural sites, particularly springs, hills, and mountains, are innate candidates for sacred space. The sacrality of a site is enhanced if it is perceived to be the location of a divine manifestation (Wasilewska 2009:397), or through limited building that preserves the open-air character of the area (as we shall see, for example, at Yazilikaya and also at an early sanctuary at Elephantine).

Sites of natural holiness in the ancient Near East were governed largely by topography. For example, the Levantine (except for the Syrian Desert) and Anatolian landscapes featured numerous springs and high mountains that offered almost unlimited areas for natural sacred space. In southern Mesopotamia, as in Egypt, the landscape was mostly flat and arid. As a result, areas of natural sacred space were limited, and planned construction soon superseded natural topography in the selection of sacred areas. As a generalisation, therefore, it may be stated that the ancient civilisations of the Anatolian plateau and the Syrian/Palestinian littoral relied largely on natural sacred space (although they did not hesitate to build sacred edifices in urban areas and elsewhere), while the denizens of southern Mesopotamia and Egypt were forced to ‘socially construct’ (to use the fashionable jargon of trendy social anthropologists) their sacred spaces and fit them ‘into an overall development plan’ (Wasilewska 2009:399). Like natural sacred space, socially constructed sacred space, once established, tended to persist (Holum 2004:190).⁵¹

⁵¹ It is possible that socially constructed sacred space could lose its holiness over time, for what one man can make holy, another can desecrate. Yet such instances are rare. Consider, for example, the situation in

2.7.2 Architectural strategies for socially constructed sacred space

The peoples of the ancient Near East used an assortment of architectural strategies in their attempts to socially construct sacred space. The following are some of the more common strategies as they relate to the construction of temples.

- Temples were built on elevated ground. If a mountain or hill was available in a suitable location, this was utilised as an appropriate temple site, thereby combining the best of both worlds: natural *and* socially constructed sacred space. If an elevated area was not available, then one might be built; hence, the ziggurat. At the very least, a temple would commonly be built on a raised platform, or *temenos*. The point was to delimit the temple area and set it apart by raising it from outlying, profane space (Wasilewska 2009:402). This principle also applied within the temple itself; the most sacred area within the temple would normally be raised relative to its immediate surroundings. A statue of the deity would be placed on an elevated platform or in a raised niche in a wall.
- The entire *temenos*-area would normally be surrounded by at least one outer enclosure wall which performed both symbolic and utilitarian functions.
- Temple builders considered the physical setting of the temple with regard to the surrounding city or area. The temple should be visible over as large an area as possible and dominate the “skyline” (but care was taken not to dwarf the king’s palace, for the king was the regent of the gods).

Jerusalem when the Romans destroyed Herod’s temple in 70 CE at the end of the First Jewish War. Subsequently, after smashing the rebellion of Bar Kokhba in 132-135 CE, the Roman Emperor Hadrian left the Temple Mount ‘definitively desolate’ (Holum 2004:191). But several centuries later, the Arabs still perceived the inherent holiness of the site and built the Dome of the Rock where the temple was believed to have stood. Centuries later the Crusaders fought for Jerusalem, which they too considered still holy, largely because it had been the site of the temple. Even today, nearly a millennium after the Crusades and two millennia after the destruction of the temple, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is arguably the most-recognised, most-revered holy site in the world today, venerated by the three great monotheistic faiths.

- Size matters. Temples, especially in major urban areas, were often of enormous dimensions. This in itself tended to create a sense of awe in the beholder and convey the impression that this was no ordinary building. In the ancient Near East, ‘temple builders...exploited a temple’s sheer physical bulk to create holiness’ (Holum 2004:187).
- The costliest and finest materials were used in the construction of a temple. Copious use of gold, silver, lapis lazuli and other precious stones, the finest woods, and elegant dyed and embroidered linens and fabrics all helped to convey a sense of the ‘other’. Interior and exterior decorations, with the prolific use of sacred symbols, added to the sacred quality of an edifice.
- Architectural embellishment, such as the use of colonnades with column bases, shafts, capitals and carved architrave blocks, tended to enhance (or even create) holiness.⁵²
- Access to the temple area was governed and controlled by gates leading to a hierarchy of courtyards. The temple complex therefore consisted of zones of varying levels of holiness. Access to areas of increasing sanctity was limited to ever smaller groups. Corollary to this was the architectural design (floor plan) of the temple proper and the use of space to facilitate cultic and purification rites associated with the temple. The stationing of temple personnel, the limiting of

⁵² The temple built by Herod at Caesarea featured a large number of columns, architraves, and other architectural embellishments, all of which were carved of the local kurkar sandstone. These items were then given a thick coat of hard, white stucco, with molded fluting in the case of the column shafts. This stucco covering had the practical function of protecting the stone from rapid weathering, but it also left the clear impression of construction in expensive imported marble. Indeed, Josephus declared that Herod built all of Caesarea, presumably including the temple, of ‘polished stone’ (*Antiquities* 15.9.6) and ‘white stone’ (*Wars* 1.21.5). Elsewhere he informs us that Herod’s temple to Augustus at Paneion (Banias) was of ‘white marble’ (*Wars* 1.21.3), that he made the porticoes surrounding the Jerusalem Temple of ‘white marble’ (*Wars* 5.4.4, 5.5.2), and that to visitors approaching from afar it had the appearance of a ‘mountain covered with snow’ (*Wars* 5.5.6). However, there is no doubt that Herod’s builders always used locally-available stones, not imported marble, when they built the temples and palaces for which Herod was justly famous. ‘Apparently Josephus was either misled himself, or he purposely misled his readers because he thought that buildings of such dignity and sacredness ought to be built of the most noble stone. Hence, in the absence of actual marble, the builders’ decision to imitate marble was itself an architectural strategy to create holiness’ (Holum 2004:188-189).

access to general worshipers, even the storing of materials and cultic paraphernalia—these issues and others were governed by the temple plan and its environs (Levine 2002:126).

- The holiness of a site could be created or enhanced if it claimed to be the scene of a miracle, a heavenly manifestation or vision, or if it was the depository of sacred relics. This technique was occasionally utilised to imbue a particular site with sacredness. For example, the very presence of Abraham served to sanctify various locations associated with his life, career, and death. Various sites in pre-monarchic Israel acquired sanctity due to the presence of the Ark of the Covenant.⁵³ This practice took the form in later Christian structures, including monasteries, of claiming the presence of the bones of some early saint; these relics would then be placed in the exact centre of the building.⁵⁴
- Certain architectural features were specifically designed to represent important symbols of temple mythology. Notable examples include a raised area within the temple representing the primordial mound, or a body of water to represent the primeval seas. The body of water could also be functional as it could be used in ablutions or as a source of water necessary in an environment engaged in animal sacrifice. Other architectural characteristics might include twin pillars, lions, griffins, or other fantastic creatures flanking and guarding the entrance.
- Certain practices and techniques in the layout and construction of the building could add holiness to the site. These procedures include foundation deposits and various measures having to do with orientation, alignment, and measurement. As the earthly counterpart of a heavenly temple, for example, it was crucial for the

⁵³ In 2 Chronicles 8:11 we read: ‘Solomon brought up Pharaoh’s daughter from the City of David to the palace that he had built for her, for he said, “No wife of mine shall dwell in a palace of King David of Israel, for [the area] is sacred since the Ark of the Lord has entered it.”’ Solomon recognised the impropriety of bringing one of his foreign wives into an area once touched by the Ark of the Covenant.

⁵⁴ Examples of this practice abound. For example, long after the Temple of Apollo at Caesarea had been destroyed, the local Christian community resurrected the holiness of the temple *temenos* by claiming the site as the home of Cornelius, the first gentile converted to Christianity by Peter (Holum 2004:194-195).

temple to be aligned with heavenly bodies and for its measurements to be mathematically sophisticated and precise.⁵⁵

- The building must allow for the appurtenances required for sacrifice and other cultic activities, especially altars, with accompanying sources of water, drainage systems, flailing and cooking areas.
- The grounds surrounding the building should be able to impress and inspire the visitor. The presence of sacred groves, botanical gardens featuring a wide variety of plant species (one of which might be specifically set apart to represent the Tree of Life), and a spring or source of pure water (representing the Waters of Life) will instil a sense of awe and wonderment in the visiting pilgrim.
- A building might acquire sanctity, or at least a sense of awesomeness, by virtue of its location adjacent to palaces and other buildings representing the political and military might of the ruler.

All of these architectural techniques for the creation of socially constructed sacred space will be demonstrated in chapters 5-9, where I will describe representative temples in various geographical areas of the ancient Near East. I will identify and classify elements of both natural and socially constructed space. These items will be analysed in depth in Chapter 10.

2.8 CONCLUSIONS

Religious experience is the deepest and most sublime manifestation of the human spirit. It requires the differentiation of sacred from profane space, and sacred from profane time. The source of this distinction springs from contact with the Holy, an event that can change profane space into the realm of the sacred. As the desert was the prototype of

⁵⁵ Eliade (1959a:17) observed that ‘the very conception of the temple as the *imago mundi*, the idea that the sanctuary reproduces the universe in its essence, passed into the religious architecture of Christian Europe’.

profane space, the temple was the essence of sacred space.

The temple was the central focus of the concepts of sacred space and sacred time. The term 'temple' itself reinforced the status of the temple as sacred space, for the very designation of the temple as the house of the deity was sufficient to impart that status to it. The temple, a model or representation of the cosmos, also reinforced the concept of the centre. The temple was a place of revelation, represented as the centre place on both the horizontal and vertical planes due to its respective locations at the centre of the earth and the centre of the *axis mundi*. The temple was the symbol of sacred time, that time in the beginning when all things were first created; temple ritual, including the frequent recitation of the cosmogonic myth, served to restore or re-create sacred time anew.

All sacred space was not equal; there were gradations, as some areas were considered more sacred than others. The multiple courtyards of the temple complex served as transitional areas from the outside profane space to the temple itself. The temple proper also consisted of multiple areas, each more sacred than the previous, culminating in the innermost chamber that was most holy as it symbolised the presence of the deity itself.

Temples could be situated on mountains or near springs or some other topographical phenomenon, thus utilising 'natural' sacred space. In the absence of natural aspects, various architectural strategies were devised to 'socially construct' sacred space.

CHAPTER 3

TEMPLE AS MOUNTAIN

Abstract

Mountains are often sites of natural holiness. For this reason and others, the identification of temples as mountains, and mountains as temples, runs throughout the Bible as well as other ancient literature. Sacred mountains were viewed as natural temples; their remoteness and rugged quality added to their sacred character and their status as sites of natural holiness. When possible, temples were built on high mountains; in flat terrain, as in lower Mesopotamia, they were constructed on elevated platforms or ziggurats designed to resemble mountains. Temples as mountains bring us into intimate contact with ancient yet widespread notions such as the cosmic mountain, the primordial mound, and the navel of the earth; on the mountain are found the Tree of Life and the Waters of Life.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Possibly no other characteristic of ancient Near Eastern temples is as widely known and accepted as the relationship between temples and sacred mountains. 'Mountains, real or constructed, crags, cliffs, even unprepossessing hillocks rising from an otherwise flat landscape, all are liminal spaces denoting points of contact with celestial realms and their divine inhabitants or sacred powers. They are focal points for the divine-human encounter, for illumination, transformation, and passage' (Knipe 1988:110). A mountain peak 'represents a pristine and therefore undesecrated region. It is a natural temple,' wrote Truman Madsen (1984a:107), 'a place of altar, of consecration, of ordination, even of coronation.'

The doctrine of mountains as sacred space was not limited to the Near East; it figured

prominently in virtually every culture where mountains were present.⁵⁶ The examination of this topic will commence by first considering the various words used in the Bible to indicate mountains or hills, and the sacred nature of mountains in general throughout the ancient Near East. It will be seen that the Garden of Eden was both a mountain and a temple, a concept easily demonstrated from both Biblical and non-Biblical sources.⁵⁷

Mountains are regarded as sacred space because they are often considered to be natural temples. One facet of temple/mountain symbolism originated from the perception of temples as built upon the primordial mound or hillock, the first land to emerge from the chaotic waters of creation. Related to this idea was the equally widespread notion of mountains as the navel of the earth. Yet another area of temple/mountain symbolism included the consideration of certain mountains as cosmic in nature. The characteristics and qualifications of cosmic mountains will be enumerated, and it will be seen that the Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, Mount Hamon, and Mount Zaphon all fit the qualifications of a cosmic mountain.

Finally, the theoretical concepts mentioned above, especially those of the cosmic mountain, will be applied to Mount Sinai, home base of Yahweh and the originating point of the Israelite national experience, and to Mount Zaphon, the headquarters of Baal as detailed in the Ras Shamra tablets. It will be seen that the cosmic nature of Sinai was

⁵⁶ Mount Meru in Asia is a symbolic cosmic mountain for both Hindus and Buddhists; it is regarded as the centre of the world, the home of the gods, and the *axis mundi*. The shamans of Central Asia believe their supreme god, Bai Ulgen, presides over the world from his home atop a golden mountain. Angkor in Cambodia, Mount Poppa in Myanmar, Vat Phu in Laos, Mount Agung in Bali, and Mount Lawu in central Java are all regarded as sacred by the local inhabitants. Mount Tai Shan in Shantung province once overshadowed 250 Daoist shrines and temples. In Japan, Mount Yoshino is regarded as the most significant of all sacred Japanese mountains, although nearly every high mountain in that country has its own shrines and throngs of worshippers. Mountains are especially sacred in Japan for a number of reasons. Volcanic remnants, such as Mount Fuji, Mount Chokai, and Mount Kaimon are worshipped in their own right. Other mountains are venerated as sources of water and thus life. Still others are considered as the realm of the dead, a meeting place between worlds. American Indians also have their sacred mountains. Bear Butte in South Dakota is venerated by the Sioux and Cheyenne, while the Navajos consider their lands to be bounded by four sacred mountains representing the cardinal directions. In ancient Greece and Rome we might consider the Punic temple of Tanit at Carthage or the temple of Jupiter on Mons Capitolinus (Hori 1966:1-23).

⁵⁷ Jubilees 8:19: 'He [Noah] knew that the Garden of Eden was the holy of holies and the dwelling of the Lord'. Hayward (1996:90) wrote: 'Both ben Sira and Jubilees, in their different ways, bring Adam into direct association with the temple understood as Eden. According to Jubilees, the first ritual act of worship was offered by Adam immediately after his expulsion from the garden'.

transferred to Mount Zion as the tribal league of the Israelites gave way to the monarchy; furthermore, Zion assumed many of the features assigned to Zaphon in the Ugaritic texts.

3.2 MOUNTAINS IN THE BIBLE AND OTHER LITERATURE

A glance at a concordance reveals the prolific use of terms meaning “mountain” or “hill” in the Jewish Scriptures. The most common Hebrew word for mountain, *har*, appears 520 times in the Hebrew Bible, and is found in every book of the Hebrew Bible save Ruth, Esther, Ezra, and Ecclesiastes. There are two prevalent meanings: one, a mountainous region in general, thus *har yehuda*, ‘the hill country of Judah’; two, a specific mountain, of which twenty-three individual mountains have names. Another Hebrew term, *gib’ah*, appears sixty times and is commonly translated ‘hill’. *Gib’ah* is more common in the prophets than in the historical books, and is frequently found in poetic passages. As a rule, *gib’ah* applies to smaller hills rather than mountains⁵⁸ and is never used to indicate a hilly region or a group of hills. Similar usage prevails in other Semitic languages.⁵⁹ Finally, the Hebrew word *bamah*, ‘high place’, is commonly used as a religious designation referring to hilltop sites used in Canaanite and other fertility cults.⁶⁰

Mountains were considered the ‘pillars of heaven’ (Job 26:11) as their tops were often lost in the clouds and were thus a natural point of contact or communication between earth and the upper world. Mountains were also considered the ‘pillars of the earth’, as they were thought to arise from the ocean floor, and thereby facilitated communication between earth and the netherworld (Wensinck 1978:5). Several scriptural sources suggest

⁵⁸ There is no predetermined point at which a hill becomes a mountain, and even small hills can occasionally be referred to as mountains. Consider the relative heights of Mount Lebanon (3000 meters), Mount Hermon (2760 meters), and Mount Zion in Jerusalem (743 meters, only 50 meters above the adjoining Kidron valley).

⁵⁹ Hebrew *sur*, ‘rock’, compares nicely with Ugaritic *gr* and Aramaic *tur*, and is often paired with *har* or *gib’ah*. Note also the Hebrew *sadeh*, ‘field’, with its cognate in Akkadian *sadu*, and Hebrew *gebul*, ‘border’, with Arabic *gabal*; these terms are some of the standard words for ‘mountain’ in these languages (Cohn 1981:26-27).

⁶⁰ These *bamot* (pl), often characterised by the presence of an altar or some cultic object such as a pillar or a sacred tree, were nearly innumerable in ancient Israel. Some of them enjoyed considerable prominence in the religious life of the nation and became the subject of legends associated with the patriarchs or other historical figures. They were open-air facilities and were generally found outside the main urban areas. They lacked many of the features of a temple, such as a permanent priestly cadre (Hurowitz 1996:xvi).

the ancient idea that mountains were the pillars or the foundations of heaven and earth (Pr 8:25-29; Ps 75:4; 104:5-9; Job 9:6; 1 Sm 2:8). It was in this sense that Micah and Isaiah spoke of ‘the mountain of the Lord’s House’ (Mi 4:1-2; Is 2:2-3).

The scriptures are replete with theophanies that occurred on mountains, e.g., Abraham’s interrupted sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah, Moses on Sinai, Elijah on Mount Carmel and later Mount Sinai, and Jesus and the three apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration. Mount Zion (adjacent to and contiguous with Mount Moriah) was the site of the temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, and Herod, and was a political as well as a religious centre.⁶¹ Mount Nebo was a site of vision and revelation for Moses. The Sermon on the Mount was the scene of one of the greatest sermons in all recorded history. The Mount of Olives features prominently in the New Testament as well as in the Apocalypse. Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, in the Samaritan highlands, played significant roles in the religious life of the Israelites and their predecessors, the Canaanites. The most important mountain in Canaanite religion was Mount Zaphon, the home of Baal, the Canaanite storm god.

From a very early period, mountains have been regarded as sacred places where kings and prophets could go to receive revelations. It was not particularly necessary to have any buildings or shrines constructed; the elevation itself was sufficient to impart holiness to the site.⁶² Yet the impetus to erect structures atop mountains, or to erect structures that resembled mountains where there were none, was compelling.⁶³

⁶¹ The characterisation of Mount Zion as sacred space derived from its being the site of the *Akedah*, the sacrifice of Isaac, as well as other events significant in the history of Israel. In reality these events occurred on Mount Moriah, not Mount Zion. The two mountains (both are physically insignificant hills) are adjacent to one another. As a result of the accumulated debris and rubble of centuries of habitation, and due to the building projects conducted by Herod, any sharp demarcation between the two elevations have long become blurred. In accordance with common usage, I will refer to Mount Zion as the Temple Mount, as it is so described in virtually all the literature on the subject.

⁶² This is certainly true of the Hittites and, to a lesser extent, of neighbouring civilisations as well. Mountains ‘were considered to be adequate in their natural shape’ and ‘the mere altitude of the summit [rather than any building or structure] was the decisive element’ (Bittel 1981:66).

⁶³ Hindu temples, among others, were constructed to require pilgrims or priests to circumambulate the building in ever-ascending spirals to reach the top, which was marked by the most sacred shrine. It is possible that part of this architectural pattern was intended to mimic mortal life, where we struggle with the challenges and vicissitudes of life before reaching death, that mysterious journey that reunites us with the gods. ‘Onward and upward’, the mantra of productive living, was a journey ritually and literally commemorated within the temple.

Those who live close to nature have an innate appreciation for the sanctity of mountains. There is something about mountains that tugs at our very core as we contemplate their majesty, their beauty, their raw sensuality:

Another time I stood by the river and looked up at the mountains, which rise almost another six thousand feet above the plateau. I was just thinking that this was the roof of the American continent, and that people lived here in the face of the sun like the Indians who stood wrapped in blankets on the highest roofs of the pueblo, mute and absorbed in the sight of the sun. Suddenly a deep voice, vibrant with suppressed emotion, spoke from behind me into my left ear: 'Do you not think that all life comes from the mountain?' An elderly Indian had come up to me, inaudible in his moccasins, and had asked me this heaven knows how far-reaching question. A glance at the river pouring down from the mountain showed me the outward image that had engendered this conclusion. Obviously all life came from the mountain, for where there is water, there is life. Nothing could be more obvious. In his question I felt a swelling emotion connected with the word 'mountain', and thought of the tale of secret rites celebrated on the mountain. I replied, 'Everyone can see that you speak the truth' (Jung 1965:251).

In short, sacred mountains figure prominently in all literature, in poetic imagery as in historical narrative. Mountains capture human imagination as obvious sites for divine intervention in human affairs. Israel's consciousness of the surrounding mountains included an awareness of their physical reality, their place in literature, and their nature as sacred space (Cohn 1981:25). Mountains were viewed as places of strength, security, and refuge,⁶⁴ and were associated with the protection of Yahweh.⁶⁵ In the various cosmogonies of the ancient Near East, mountains were regarded as symbols of the forces that controlled and contained the unruly primeval waters, while at the same time they were the source of that sweet water upon which all life depended. The prophets called upon the mountains to be witnesses of God's covenant with Israel,⁶⁶ but even the

⁶⁴ When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Lot and his wife fled 'to the hills' (Gn 19:17). On past occasions even the wicked have attempted to seek refuge in the mountains when hiding from the Lord, but to no avail (Am 9:3).

⁶⁵ 'I turn my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come?' (Ps 121:1). Clifford (1972:69) claimed that it is not unreasonable to maintain that a temple on a mountain, or a mountain as a temple, offered a logical point for reconciliation between heaven and earth.

⁶⁶ 'Hear what the Lord is saying: Come, present [my] case before the mountains, and let the hills hear you pleading. Hear, you mountains, the case of the Lord—You firm foundations of the earth!' (Mi 6:1-2).

mountains could not withstand the wrath of God.⁶⁷ In Israel mountains were the site of revelation, whether the giving of the Law at Sinai or the ceremony of divine blessings and cursings associated with Gerizim and Ebal (Dt 11:26-32; 27:11-13).⁶⁸

Due to their prominence in the natural landscape, mountains protruded into the religious thinking of other peoples of the Syro-Palestinian littoral,⁶⁹ as well as the residents of the Anatolian plateau.⁷⁰ In the Ugaritic texts each mountain featured a different deity (Clifford 1972:34-35). Among the Canaanites, mountains were venerated as the meeting places of the gods, the source of water and fertility, the battleground for conflicting natural forces, the meeting place of heaven and earth, and the place where effective decrees were issued (Clifford 1972:3). In Phrygia the presence of stepped altars suggests a cult that thrived in the free areas of the mountain, overlooking plains, forests, rivers, and the wildlife that were the concern of the Great Mother (Mellink 1981:102).

It is clear that the theme of mountains as sacred space was nearly universal throughout the ancient Near East. Wensinck (1978:11-12) flatly declared that ‘among the northern Semites it was essential that the sanctuary should be a high place or still better a mountain.’ However, there is some divergence of opinion regarding the importance of

⁶⁷ ‘... mountains melt like wax at the Lord’s presence’ (Ps 97:5); ‘When he stands, He makes the earth shake; When he glances, He makes nations tremble. The age-old mountains are shattered, the primeval hills sink low’ (Hb 3:6).

⁶⁸ Part of the intimate relationship between ancient Israel and mountains may be due to geographical exigencies. As the Israelites under Joshua invaded Canaan, it was easier to conquer and possess the sparsely-populated hill country of Judea and Samaria rather than confront the Canaanites in their fortified city-states on the coastal plain and in the Jordan Valley. This initial settlement pattern quickly became more or less permanent. The Israelites had great difficulty driving out the inhabitants of the coastal plain because they had chariots of iron (Jdg 1:9). This settlement and confrontation pattern continued during Israel’s conflicts with the Philistines. The Philistines were always described as *going up* against Israel (e.g., 1 Sm 7:7, emphasis added), while Saul’s advice to his soldiers was to *go down* after the Philistines (1 Sm 14:36, emphasis added). Israel was not able to successfully move out of the hill country and conquer the cities in the coastal region until the time of David (Cohn 1981:27-28).

⁶⁹ One characteristic of the Levant in the second millennium was to separate temples (and often palaces, for that matter) from densely populated areas (e.g., Nahariyah, Gerizim, Amman, Alalakh). It was thought that placing the temples in remote regions, away from polluted urban areas, somehow added to their holiness. This effect was heightened, one might say, by constructing temple sites on top of mountains or other areas of high elevation (Uziel & Shai 2007:165-166).

⁷⁰ Insufficient scholarly attention has yet been paid to the place held by mountains in Hittite and Hurrian religion. Hittite religion is known to have been strongly syncretistic and open to foreign influence; however, it is not easy to be definite about the role of mountains in this belief system despite the interchange known to have existed among the religions of the Canaanites, Hittites, and Hurrians (Clifford 1972:29, 31, 33).

sacred mountains in Mesopotamia.⁷¹ Another way by which the mountain functioned as a symbol in ancient temples was hidden in the mystical concept of attaining union with deity, an important role in some (particularly Asian) temple rituals. God was approached by rituals and rites of passage that caused the worshipper to ever ascend and approach the most holy place where one hoped to commune with the divine. In a word, a person underwent an initiation. Initiation was a journey to the “centre,” a belief and tradition common to all the great world religions. The mountain was the centre place because it was the first point to be created. As the cosmic mountain represented the *axis mundi*,⁷² the vertical plane connecting three worlds, one must climb the mountain to reach the throne of God. This can be accomplished in a literal sense, as Moses at Sinai, or in a figurative sense within a temple that represents the mountain.⁷³

71 S. N. Kramer (1972:39) allowed that mountains played a significant role in Sumerian mythology, but most modern students do not accept this hypothesis. Clifford (1972:9-12) holds that mountains were not central to sacred thought in Mesopotamia. Yet de Vaux (1965:2:281-282) maintained that ancient Mesopotamians felt compelled to build temples on mountains or high ground when it was available (Uruk, Khafajeh, El-Obeid, Uqair), and to build ziggurats when it was not. Ziggurats can be found in Assyria on the Syrian side of the Euphrates at Mari, at Susa and Tchoga-Zanbil in Persia, and elsewhere in the north, but they are most plentiful in the flat landscape of Lower Mesopotamia. The ziggurat itself was simply a substructure to support the real sanctuary, which was perched at the top. The deity was viewed as either residing in the upper sanctuary or merely using it as a resting place on his journey between heaven and earth. Either way, the ziggurat was an artificial mountain that facilitated contact between the two worlds.⁷² In India ancient texts speak of a great mountain representing the *axis mundi*. In Cambodia the Khmers, likely following an earlier Indian model, reproduced the Hindu world mountain (Mount Meru) with its five peaks at Angkor. Mystical Islamic traditions suggest that the Kaaba, which represents an image of the cosmos and has four sides representing the four elements (water, fire, air, earth), descended to earth from heaven and capped the primordial waters. The northeast side of the Kaaba is said to represent water, and it is there that we find the well Zamzam. Ancient Scandinavians and Germanic peoples had their legends regarding mountains as particularly sacred places; Wodansberge and Odinsberg, two sacred mountains dedicated to divinities, were sites of coronation and the locale from which important decrees were issued. In Scandinavian mythology we also find the legend of the Yggdrasil, the ‘world tree’, whose roots, trunk and branches represent the *axis mundi* and tie the three worlds together. In ancient America the Mayans viewed their temples as sacred mountains and also featured world trees in their midst (Lundquist 1993:6-10).

73 Asian temples are quite remarkable in this regard. Hori (1966:3ff) wrote that sacred mountains in Japan were believed to be ‘the center of the world, the cosmic mountain, the pillar supporting and linking heaven and earth, or the residence of a god or gods. . . The mountain is believed to be the world of the dead; or the meeting place of the living and the dead; or a passageway from this world to the next, from the profane to the sacred and from earth to heaven. . . [they are] the sites of religious services, in which sacrifices and prayers were offered and divine revelations and oracles received’. Notable examples of Asian temples featuring an ascending circumambulation include the temple complex at Borobudur in Java, Mount Kailash in Tibet (formerly Mount Meru), and the temple complex at Angkor in Cambodia.

3.3 THE GARDEN OF EDEN AS MOUNTAIN

In the Biblical record there is indirect evidence of mountains in the Garden of Eden, or that the garden was itself a mountain. Consider the following pericope where the king of Tyre is compared with Adam:

You were in Eden, the garden of God...
 And you resided on God's holy mountain...
 You were blameless in your ways...
 Until wrongdoing was found in you...
 So I have struck you down
 From the mountain of God (Ezk 28:13-16).

Here Adam is spoken of as dwelling on the mountain of God while he was in Eden.⁷⁴ But when he transgressed and became impure he was cast out, for no unclean thing can dwell in God's holy mountain. While the identification of the Garden of Eden as a mountain is not explicit, it remains the only instance in the Hebrew Bible where the two concepts of a holy mountain of God and a sacred garden of God are unmistakably associated (Clifford 1972:172, n 94). Levenson sees in this passage a commingling of the terminology used to describe Mount Zaphon, Mount Zion, and the 'old myth of the Garden of Eden' (Levenson 1976:26). Further identification of the Garden of Eden with Mount Zion is noted by the ideas of 'fabulous mineral wealth, great beauty, a miraculous stream, perhaps trees of greater than botanical significance, and certainly the unmediated accessibility of God' (Levenson 1976:31).

Extrabiblical sources contain some tantalising suggestions equating Eden with a sacred mountain (Barker 2008b:2, 57-103). Enoch is said to have beheld many mountains in Paradise, including the centre mountain that resembled the throne of God (1 Enoch 18:6-12; 24; 25).⁷⁵ An old legend indicates that Adam dwelt upon a mountain and walked 'among the stars' (Fawcett 1973:256). Widengren, meanwhile, observed that the

⁷⁴ While Ezekiel 28 equates the paradise of God with a holy mountain, Isaiah 14 tells of an unsuccessful assault on the throne of God itself, when an upstart deity attempted to enthrone himself over the divine assembly of the gods on the mountain.

⁷⁵ Enoch provided a rather unusual mountainous scene. In his vision of paradise, Enoch described several mountains that were arranged in groups of three, stacked on top of one another. These mountains were composed of precious stones and seemed to be pointing heavenward.

Assyrian garden of paradise was ‘situated upon the mountain of Gods’ (Widengren 1951:11).

In these legends several ancient yet widespread mythological themes come together, viz., the mountain as the Mount of God, the site of the assembly of the gods, the site of the Garden of God, and the springing forth of the cosmic river (often personified in the legends as *Judge River*⁷⁶) from the underworld to bring the waters of life to the four quarters of the earth. There is also the well-known myth of the Primordial Man as the Guardian and Gardener of paradise. The garden of paradise encompassed not only the Tree of Life but the Water of Life as well (Ezk 47:1-12; Jl 4:18; Zch 14:8; Rv 22:1). Thus there is a connection between water and tree, and between temple basin and sacred grove, which clearly reflects the Water of Life and the Tree of Life in paradise. It is easy to find similar ideas linked together in Mesopotamia in the Ea/Eridu circle. The king in Mesopotamia was the living representative of the mythical Gardener in paradise, while in the Ugaritic text depicting the life of the hero *Krt*, the high god El is called *ab adm*, ‘the father of Adam (Mankind)’. Thus Adam, the Primordial Man, is the son of El. The king’s position as the gardener is symbolised by his sceptre, taken from a branch of the Tree of Life. Speaking messianically, the coming Savior-King is often described as the Shoot, or the Branch [of the Tree of Life] (Jr 23:5; 33:15). This notion is found in Israelite, Syrian, Phoenician, and Mesopotamian inscriptions (Widengren 1958:168-169).

3.4 MOUNTAINS AS THE PRIMORDIAL HILLOCK

Mountains represented the primordial mound or hillock, that first piece of land that emerged from the chaotic seas that initially covered the earth. While vestiges of the concepts of mountain, primordial hillock, and their relation to sacred space can be found in the Hebrew Bible, these notions really came to full fruition in Egypt where ‘it would consequently seem that the Egyptians believed that the mound of the primaeval age was the original place of the temple’ (Reymond 1969:42). In Egyptian cosmogony the first act

⁷⁶ Cross (1981:171-172). The appellation of “judge” may have reference to ancient water ordeals, although this idea is much disputed. For information on these water ordeals, including water ordeals involving the cosmic river, see Johnston (2005:271-291, but esp 273-275); also Postgate (1992:280-281).

of the sun-god within the expanse of the primeval waters was to cause the dry land to appear; thus arose the primordial mound or hillock, which subsequently became the site of the first temple. All subsequent Egyptian temples claimed to have been built on that same sacred ground, though details might differ due to local traditions.⁷⁷ Each of the gods that later had any claim on creation were tied to this primordial mound in one way or another. In the Egyptian belief, the waters surrounding the primordial mound were the dark waters of chaos, personalised as the god *Nun*, which continued to surround the earth and which represented infinite amounts of latent life and fertility. The identification of the temple with the primordial mound was reflected not only by the name of the area within the temple but was also architecturally expressed.⁷⁸ The most sacred area of the Egyptian temple, located at the centre rear, represented the primordial mound and was always at a raised elevation compared to other areas within the temple and was approached with the aid of a ramp or with steps. The pyramid, introduced in the Third Dynasty and subsequently modified in the Fourth, was Djoser's contribution to temple architecture as it replaced the *mastaba* (a flat oblong mound which previously signified a burial area and which had been the customary form of tombs from the earliest beginnings of Egyptian history) with a stepped-pyramid structure meant to represent the primordial mound and corresponded with the hieroglyphic character of the same. The pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty modified this form into the true pyramid shape, which was the Heliopolitan form of the primordial mound, known as the Ben-ben (Frankfort 1978:153; Lundquist 1993:7).

⁷⁷ This applies even to temples of relatively late construction. The Ptolemaic-era temple of Philae carried the inscription: 'This [the temple] came into being when nothing at all had yet come into being and the earth was still lying in darkness and obscurity'. Hatshepsut stated in an inscription at Karnak: 'I know that Karnak is the Light Mountain [horizon] upon earth, the venerable hill of primeval beginning'. In Heliopolis was a place called the "High Sand" which appears to have represented the primordial mound. At Hermopolis there was actually an island in a lake that symbolised the primordial mound (Frankfort 1978:151-154).

⁷⁸ Sumerian temples contained certain areas known as the *adytum*, the *abzu*, and the *duku*. The *adytum* was the site of the statue of the god and the location of many of the rituals pertaining to it. The *abzu* and *duku* are more esoteric. The *abzu*, as its name suggests, was an actual pool of water in the temple, which could be used for representing the primordial waters as well as a source of water for libations. The *duku*, most mysterious of all, is usually translated 'holy mound' or 'holy hill'. While we cannot be certain that its function was to represent the primordial mound, it is certainly tempting to think so. The *duku* also appears to have been the site of a cultic meal, perhaps as part of a covenant renewal, and may have been a place of judgement (Wilson 1999:309-311).

The morning ritual of the temple at Edfu, as at other Egyptian temples, consisted of hymns, the washing and dressing of the image(s) of the god(s), anointings, and libations. These activities took place in the ‘sanctuary of the High Seat...which lay at the core of the temple naos’ (Finnestad 1997:205-206). The name of this location was supposed to connect it with the primordial mound that arose out of the waters of chaos and on which the Creator began his work by dispelling the darkness, introducing light, rebuking the waters of *Nun*, and constructing the initial shrine that imparted sanctity to the land and held the waters at bay:

Related to this [the *bamoth*] is the notion of the hill of Creation, where life arose in the beginning. The earth height which came up out of the primeval waters was the place where the earth began to live. There life arose and from there it spread. The life of the cosmos is thus conceived as the life of the earth. The light myth is also connected with this notion of the creation of the world; from the (sun) hill the sun arose in the beginning. The Egyptian texts call the day of Creation ‘the day of the elevation of the earth’ [Book of the Dead 1:19]. The height or hill as a sacred place is thus the place where the life of the earth reveals itself, the place of divine revelation in general. Here the altar was built, the altar which according to ancient belief was sacred because it represented the dwelling place of God, the altar which itself was the image of the high place (Kristensen 1960:106-107).

3.5 MOUNTAINS AS THE NAVEL OF THE EARTH

The myth of the temple-mountain as the site of the primordial mound led to another idea: as the primordial mound was the first area to appear from the waters of darkness and chaos, it held the key to maintaining control over these unruly waters, forever at enmity with the forces of light and order. Thus developed the concept of the Foundation Stone, often architecturally portrayed as a real stone, which was believed to be the seal or the cap over the turbulent waters. In the Jerusalem temple the Foundation Stone was in the most sacred place. A famous passage in Midrash Tanhuma (Responsa 691) reads:

Just as the navel is found at the center of a human being, so the land of Israel is found at the center of the world. Jerusalem is at the center of the land of Israel, and the temple is at the center of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is at the center of the temple, the Ark is at the center of the Holy of Holies, and the Foundation Stone is in front of the Ark, which spot is the foundation of the world.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ According to Jewish tradition, this rock was the one slept upon by Jacob when he had his vision at Bethel (Gn 28). In Islam, it is the rock housed in the Dome of the Rock from which Muhammed ascended

It was Wensinck who pushed the concept of mountains as the navel of the earth onto the agendas of English-speaking scholars with his seminal work, *The Ideas of the Western Semites Concerning the Navel of the Earth*, first published in 1916 (repr Wensinck 1978:1-65). The idea of the sacred mountain as a navel sprang from the concept of the sacred mountain as the primordial hillock. As the first mountaintop appeared from the depths of *tehom*, it became the centre point, or the initial site around which other land could appear. Thus the primordial mound became the navel of the earth, as the navel is the centre of the body.⁸⁰ And as the navel delivers oxygen and life-giving sustenance to the embryo, so the mountains deliver food and life-giving water to the people of the earth through the rain that falls on them. Mountains were considered to furnish both rain from above the earth and fertilising water from beneath the earth (i.e., ground water, whose sources were thought to lie under the mountains).⁸¹

A mountain on which stood a temple or sanctuary of some kind was considered to be not only the navel of the earth but also the highest mountain on the earth. This is a necessary corollary to the sacred mountain as a facilitator of communication and revelation from the heavens to the earth. These ideas are especially prevalent in eschatological literature

into heaven. This has led some individuals to conclude that the rock under the Dome of the Rock marks the site of the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple. Some have even claimed to see impressions in the rock from bearing the weight of the Ark of the Covenant (Ritmeyer & Ritmeyer 1998: *passim*, but see esp 95-110). Some supporting evidence can be found in Hollis (1933:87-110).

80 A navel-shaped stone, called the *omphalos*, housed in the adyton of Apollo's shrine at Delphi, was supposed to mark the centre of the earth. Delphi was once associated with Ge, the earth goddess. According to the legend, Zeus determined the location of the sanctuary by releasing two eagles, one from each end of the earth; the eagles met at Delphi. The *omphalos* was decorated with two birds, representing the two eagles. Regarded as the navel of the earth, this designation was unique among Greek temples. Greek temples, however, in general, were not like ancient Near Eastern temples. 'If we try to understand the design of a Greek temple as a "house of the god," it is advisable to refrain from delving into elaborate worlds of symbolism. The Greek temple could hardly be called the tomb of the god or the goddess's bridal chamber. It is not normally considered the center of the universe or the axis of heaven and earth, *pace* Mircea Eliade's phenomenology of the sacred. Delphi, called "navel of the earth," is a singular case. For the rest there is no Greek designation comparable to that of the temple tower of Babylon, *E-temen-an-ki*, "House of the foundation of Heaven and Earth"' (quote is from Burkert 1988:33-34; see also Brandon 1963:160; Cohn 1981:72-73).

81 Consider Jacob's blessing to Joseph (Gn 49:25): 'The God of your father who helps you, And Shaddai who blesses you with blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that couches below, Blessings of the breast and womb', in other words, blessings of abundant rain and subsequent fertility. Compare this with Deuteronomy 33:13: 'And of Joseph he said: Blessed of the Lord be his land with the bounty of dew from heaven, and of the deep that couches below'. Of rain in general as a great blessing, see Psalm 104:13: 'You water the mountains from your lofts; the earth is sated from the fruit of your work'.

(Is 2:2-3 and the corresponding passage Mi 4:1-2, for example). The theme of Jerusalem as the navel of the earth, however, was not limited to eschatology; it was a common motif in rabbinical literature as well. The earliest reference in the Bible to the navel of the earth is said to be in Judges 9:36-37; however, the mountain in this passage is Mount Gerizim (or Tabor?), not Zion or Sinai.

Wensinck (1978:xi-xii) specified five characteristics of the “navel of the earth” that occur in the literature of the Western Semites:

- Such mountains are considered to be exalted in elevation above the surrounding territories (both physically and spiritually), regardless of actual height.
- The navel of the earth is the primordial hillock and is the origin of the earth, as the navel is the origin of the embryo.
- The navel of the earth is the centre point of the earth.
- It is the place of easiest and most direct communication between the heavens, the earth, and the netherworld.
- It is the medium by which fertility and fruitfulness are spread throughout the earth.

3.6 THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN

The cosmic mountain, another factor adding to the status of mountains as sacred space, is one of the myths prevalent among the cultures prior to and concurrent with biblical Israel.⁸² Clifford defines the cosmic mountain as exhibiting the following features:

- The mountain must be the object of religious veneration.
- This veneration must be expressed by textual and artistic evidence.
- The mountain serves as the meeting place of the gods.
- The mountain is the source of water and fertility.

⁸² The term “cosmic mountain” itself is problematic inasmuch as many scholars consider that it is derived from a Mesopotamian origin, an assumption that Clifford (1972:2-3) asserts is false.

- The mountain is regarded as a battleground between natural forces.
- It is regarded as the primordial mound, the first earth to rise from the waters of chaos.
- The mountain is the meeting place of heaven and earth.
- Decrees are issued from the mountain.
- The mountain is involved in the government, direction, and stability of the cosmos.
- It is the centre place.
- It is the *axis mundi*.
- It is the location of a paradisiacal garden.
- It is the site where the waters of chaos are held in abeyance by the Foundation Stone or a similar means.
- It is the source of the issue and perception of time.⁸³

In biblical Israel these features were attributed to both Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, but especially the latter. Zion, a nondescript mound overshadowed by the much larger Olivet to the east, was nonetheless regarded as ‘the tallest mountain in the world, the place which God has chosen for his dwelling place, the place protected in a special way from enemies who can only stand at its base and rage, the place of battle where God’s enemies will be defeated, the place where God dwells, where fertilizing streams come forth’ (Clifford 1972:3). The discovery of the Ras Shamra tablets in 1928 shed further light on the mythical status of Mount Zion as a cosmic mountain, as we find that similar epithets were bestowed on Mount Zaphon, the home of Baal-Hadad.

A cosmic mountain falls squarely under the rubric of sacred space. The sanctity of the mount is not related to its geographical elevation but is inherent due to the mountain as the site of all the phenomena noted above. The cosmic mountain is viewed as the residence of God, the source of fertility, the meeting place of heaven and earth,⁸⁴ a place

⁸³ Clifford (1972:3). These characteristics of the cosmic mountain were expanded by Levenson (1985:111-137). All of these defining features of the cosmic mountain pertain to the temple as a religious institution.

⁸⁴ The temple was seen as an architectural representation of the cosmic mountain; thus the temple reached to heaven and had direct contact with the gods. This concept was graphically expressed in temple

of theophany and revelation from which decrees are sent forth to the world, a site upholding the order of creation, the place where life becomes most real⁸⁵ and most intense, the *axis mundi*, the centre place, the centre of the world, the primordial mound, the navel of the earth, and the place where the waters and forces of chaos are controlled (Clifford 1972:5-6). Peace and safety are to be found in their most vibrant and concentrated form at the centre point; as one wanders from here to the edges and extremities of the surrounding land, one comes perilously close to the formless and the chaotic.

The Garden of Eden, the earliest of all temple prototypes, contained the defining points of the cosmic mountain. Much evidence indicates that Eden contained, or even consisted of, a sacred mountain. A river originated in Eden from whence it flowed outward and parted into four streams to water and fructify the four quarters of the earth.⁸⁶ The symmetrical structure of the Garden suggests its role as a microcosm of the world, for from the Garden four rivers go forth, representing each of the cardinal points, and thus between them they irrigate the whole ‘garden’, that is, the whole earth.⁸⁷ The Garden of Eden has been an object of religious veneration through all ages of time. Eden was the meeting

architecture in Egypt, where the massive pylons of the great temples represented the mountains of the horizon, between which the sun rose each morning. This idea was also strikingly portrayed in the names given to Mesopotamian temple towers (ziggurats): ‘the temple of Ishtar of Nineveh at Babylon was called both *Ehursagankia*: “House, Mountain of Heaven and Underworld,” and *Egishurankia*: “House of the ordinances of Heaven and the Underworld.” Another temple of Ishtar at Kar-Bel-Matati, near Babylon, was called *Eanki*: “House of Heaven and Underworld.” The same name was given to the sanctuary of Anu at Uruk. The whole temple of Anu at Uruk was called *Eanna*: “House of Heaven.” It was also the name of a shrine of Inanna (=Ishtar) at Lagash, and of Inanna at Girshu, as well as of other shrines’ (George 1993:67-68, 95, 100; Wyatt 2001:178-179).

⁸⁵ The centre of the cosmos (the temple) was deemed the most *real* place, normally represented by a mountain, a prominent local landmark, or an artificial construction, as a ziggurat or even a temple platform. The centre place was the source of all blessings. On the horizontal plane, it was the intersection of the cardinal points; on the vertical plane, it was the *axis mundi*, with access to the blessings of heaven and of the underworld. Thus temples formed an integral part of creation theology, as all temples were theoretically built on the cosmic mountain; temples, established at the very centre of the universe, were sites of ‘ultimate reality’ (Wyatt 2001:80, 147).

⁸⁶ If a river is to flow *outward* from Eden, it must necessarily also flow *downward*, suggesting that Eden was higher in elevation than the surrounding territory.

⁸⁷ The Gihon is particularly interesting, for the text describes it as winding ‘through the whole land of Cush’ (Gn 2:13). Cush is Ethiopia, whose other name is Abyssinia, ‘the land of the abyss’. Thus the river Gihon, though it began in the Garden of Eden, became a source of the cosmic ocean. Gihon is also the name of an underground stream which flows beneath Jerusalem and has historically provided much of the city’s water supply, accessed by means of underground tunnels, such as the one commonly attributed to Hezekiah. Thus enhanced is Jerusalem’s claim to be the centre of the world (Wyatt 2001:172-173).

place of the gods; God walked in the garden during the heat of the day (Gn 3:8). The Garden was the location of the Fall of Man, and it was the site from which God issued many fundamental decrees concerning the human condition. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden marked the beginning of time.

A similar case can be made for Mount Sinai as a cosmic mountain. One of the common epithets applied to the Lord in the Hebrew Bible is *zeh Sinay*, ‘the One of Sinai’ (Jdg 5:5; Ps 68:9). Sinai is the quintessential holy mountain, and is forever linked with the birth of the nation of Israel. In the Pentateuch Sinai is the pre-eminent *axis mundi*; it also represents the *illud tempus*, the primeval time (Cohn 1981:54). Yet Sinai also stands in history; though it represented all the mythologies and all the symbolism connected with primeval space and time, it is an actual physical mountain and the cosmic events that occurred there can be historically dated.⁸⁸

The theophany at Sinai in the late Bronze Age exhibited many of the dramatic elements previously ensconced in Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and Egyptian mythologies. Yahweh at Sinai was the divine warrior; he was the god of storms; he was the sovereign and hidden deity who sat on a heavenly throne yet condescended and spoke with Moses face to face. From this mount Yahweh chose to reveal himself to his people, and it was from here that he issued decrees—essentially the Torah. From Sinai he set before his people the terms and stipulations of his covenant amid the numinous backdrop of clouds, fire, smoke, and other phenomena. It was a birth process and a birth ceremony fitting for the covenant people of Yahweh.

At Sinai Israel received a number of instruments: the Decalogue; the covenant code, including a preamble, historical prologue, terms and stipulations, blessings and cursings, requirements for documentation and for witnesses, and a ratification ritual (Palmer 1998:143-154, 340-344); a miscellaneous collection of casuistic law and priestly regulations; and the pattern for the Tabernacle, the Ark, and all their furnishings. All

⁸⁸ The actual location of Sinai and the specific date of the Exodus are unknown, but it is certain that we are dealing with an actual physical mountain and an actual date in human history. Dealing with Sinai does not involve the murky mists of prehistoric legends as does, for example, the Baal Cycle.

these things were considered written with ‘the finger of God’ (Ex 31:18). Sinai henceforth became the site where the divine plan for humanity was revealed to the rest of the world (Cohn 1981:52-53).

The supplanting of the centre place from Sinai to Zion under David necessitated the transfer of all these elements to Zion. At Sinai, Yahweh appeared as the divine warrior who dwelt in the burning bush and who was hidden by the clouds and by fire and smoke, and who made all nature convulse. These images were later associated with the dedication of Solomon’s temple as Zion attempted to become the legitimate heir of Sinai (Cohn 1981:57-58). The transition of the traits pertaining to the cosmic mountain from Sinai to Zion was a remarkable phenomenon that will be addressed shortly.⁸⁹

The Ras Shamra texts contain information regarding the tent of El, the father of the Canaanite pantheon, pitched in the far north on Mount Hamon. El’s dwelling was located at the mouth of the cosmic rivers, the ‘pools of the double deep’.⁹⁰ The mount was the site of the assembly of the gods and was also the site of the garden of El that featured the cedars of El. It was the source of Judge River, a place of questioning or judgement as one prepared to enter the underworld. Here several mythological themes are conjoined together.⁹¹

Thus the Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, and Mount Hamon each fulfilled many of the functions of the cosmic mountain. Mount Zaphon can be added to this list as narrated in the Baal Cycle. Furthermore, the inscriptions of Gudea of Lagash refer to his temple as a structure ‘like a mountain in heaven and earth which raises its head to

⁸⁹ Freedman (1980:136-137) has remarked that ‘the preservation of the terminology and its adaptation to other sanctuaries in other places is typical of the conservatism of all religious groups, and only serves to emphasise the antiquity and tenacity of these original traditions. Parallel to this phenomenon is the persistent assertion, found in several early poems...that Yahweh came from Sinai’.

⁹⁰ The exact location pertaining to this enigmatic description is an issue that has not been resolved. It may have reference to the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers as they enter the Persian Gulf. It was the belief of the ancients that rivers did not flow to the sea, but rather the sea flowed into the rivers; this belief may have originated in observing the estuaries of mighty rivers where sea water may be drawn into the river’s mouth by tidal forces. The depth of the sea was thought to be particularly great at these points, hence the ‘pools of the double deep’.

⁹¹ The abode of El on a cosmic mountain, either built over or adjacent to the subterranean waters, is mirrored by a similar motif regarding the Sumerian/Akkadian Enki/Ea.

heaven’, and as a structure ‘like a mountain of lapis-lazuli, standing on heaven and on earth’, and as a structure with its facade ‘a great mountain founded in the earth’ and ‘like a great mountain is built up to heaven’ (Lundquist 1984a:59-60).

The *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian epic of creation, indicates that Babylon (as well as Nippur) was regarded as a cosmic centre. Ea, the god of wisdom, bound and slew *apsu*, after which he built his temple upon the site and thereby kept *apsu* contained.⁹² Once again there is the conjunction of water and mountain. Clifford (1972:93-96) notes the conjoining of these different mythological motifs in various cylinder seals. The Hittite storm-god is found sitting upon a divinised mountain; Hurrian seals from Mitanni introduce the symbol of the winged disc, later adopted by the Egyptians; Assyrian seals portray the cosmic pillar, the sacred tree, the winged disc, and waters poured down from above; and a Phoenician seal shows a masculine deity holding a vase from which four streams flow forth.

In Canaan, temples were founded on New Year’s Day in commemoration of the cosmic temple built at creation at the victory of the Divine Warrior over the forces of death and chaos. Each mountain containing a temple was considered a symbol of the cosmic “mount of possession,” the site where the deity established his hegemony, built his temple/palace, and set up his cosmic government from which he issued decrees (Cross 1984:93). ‘We are inclined’, wrote Cross (1981:170-171; 1984:94), ‘therefore to understand the proportions of both the tent and the Temple [of Solomon] as derived from an older mythic convention, the earthly shrine as a microcosm of the cosmic shrine...the earthly shrine was conceived as preserving the proportions of the cosmic abode of deity in reduced measure’.

Mountains were a prominent feature of the geography as well as the religion of ancient Israel. Mountains that were considered sacred before Israelite occupation tended to retain their sanctity afterwards. Of all the mountains of Israel, Sinai and Zion stand out above

⁹² Cf Psalm 29:10, ‘Yahweh is enthroned on the flood’, and a similar sentiment from Ugarit, ‘Baal is enthroned, yea, [his] seat is the mountain... yea, [his seat is] the ocean...’ (Clifford 1972:16-17, also n 14).

the others in cosmic significance. Sinai roughly corresponds to Hamon, as both Yahweh at Sinai and El at Hamon dwelt in tents. Zion corresponds most closely with Zaphon, as Yahweh at Zion and Baal at Zaphon each took possession of the mount by conquest, temples were built, and the respective gods took up residence in their official abodes and issued decrees.⁹³ The temple of Solomon inherited many of the traditions of Sinai, Hamon, and Zaphon. In addition, the Jerusalem temple was clearly meant to be a representation of the heavenly temple, though direct references linking the Jerusalem temple with the cosmic mountain are lacking (Clifford 1972:180-181).

3.7 SINAI AND ZION

Prior to the time of David, Jerusalem was not holy to Israel, nor was there a central shrine there that commanded national allegiance. The tent and the ark were at Shiloh, but each tribe also had their own shrines: Dan in the north; Shechem, Gibeon, Gilgal, and Bethel in the center; and Hebron and Beersheba in the south. Each of these local shrines claimed a fair share of adherents from surrounding settlements. But none of these were the “centre;” none evolved into the political and cultic locus that Jerusalem eventually became. Seven years into his reign, David captured Jerusalem and elevated the city above all potential rivals; Jerusalem became the capital of an expanding empire and the spiritual rallying point for all Israel. The interesting point here is that of all the symbols Jerusalem could have offered to justify its new status, it was the presence of a sacred mountain that predominated, and this was despite the presence of other mountains in the periphery of

⁹³ The actions of Yahweh at Sinai and Baal at Zaphon foreshadowed, in some ways, the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites. In the search for a promised land, the Israelites had to forge a bond with the land, make it sacred, and then claim it as an inheritance. This was done by claiming to act under the command of a deity. Furthermore, there must be contention; the land must be fought for, and blood must be spilled. Here also it was necessary to claim that the forces fighting for the defence of the land were being led by the deity. Finally, they obtained a ‘charter’ for the land, a title deed, from the deity. All of these elements are present in the Israelite conquest of Canaan. But this is not all, for the land, once conquered and gained, must be retained. This was accomplished, first, by the periodic recitation of the myth and by the regular (typically annual) performance of a ritual wherein the creation and possession of the land were continually renewed, typically by a covenant renewal ceremony; second, by a periodic recitation of the lives and the deeds of the great ones who participated in the original events; third, by the proper care of the land, including observance of sabbatical years; and fourth, by upright and obedient living on the land, that is, according to the terms and conditions of the covenant that granted the land in the first place (Smith 1978:109-112). And finally, when a promised land has been obtained, consecrated, and retained, a temple must be built to secure one’s title to the land.

the country that were more majestic and more historically significant than Zion.⁹⁴ But it was Mount Zion that became the new centre for the following reasons: the geography of the area itself; the ancient Near Eastern penchant for considering mountains as the abode of gods; the possible subsuming of previous Jebusite sacred space under Israelite hegemony; and the fact, perhaps more critical than the others, that Israel had been born at a sacred mountain—Sinai—and now Sinai and its heritage had to be permanently transplanted into the heart of the Israelite state (Cohn 1981:64-68). The new royal ideology of king, temple, mountain, and city was solidified.

3.7.1 Sinai and Zaphon, Yahweh and Baal

Much has been written about the parallels existing between Yahweh as the resident deity of Sinai, Baal as the resident deity of Zaphon, and the subsequent transfer of Yahweh's seat of power from Sinai to Zion. A discussion of mountains as temples would be incomplete without an acknowledgement of these parallels.

*3.7.1.1 Yahweh and Sinai.*⁹⁵ From the beginning of Israelite religious history, from the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the law at Sinai, Yahweh was closely associated with a mountain (Clifford 1972:107). His appearance on Sinai was a theophany in the ancient tradition of a mountain storm-god and featured thunder, lightning, smoke, and the accompanying sound of trumpets, perhaps intended to imitate the sound of rolling thunder or the sound of a mighty wind rushing through mountain passageways. Earthquakes, imagined or real, were part of the experience.

⁹⁴ One might have expected greater veneration for, say, Mount Hermon, the snow-capped, highest peak in the entire country, and long sacred to the Canaanites; or perhaps Mount Carmel, the future scene of Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal; or perhaps Mount Gerizim in Samaria, the scene of a ceremony of blessings and cursings and the site of a shrine; or perhaps Mount Tabor in the lower Galilee, from where Yahweh launched a war against the Canaanites. All of these potential candidates for a sacred mountain central to all Israel were rejected in favour of Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

⁹⁵ Though the text consistently refers to *Sinai*, the Israelite experience attributed to Sinai actually occurred over a wider area known as *Horeb*, which had a diversity of settings and was considered to be a region or an area of the wilderness rather than a particular mountain. Horeb is associated with a number of traditions in Israelite history: a place of revelation where God spoke to the people in the midst of fire (Dt 4:15); the scene of the Covenant (Dt 4:10; 5:2; 28:69; 1 Ki 8:9; Ps 106:9); and a place of conflict (Ex 17:6; 33:6; Ps 106:19; Dt 9:8). See Clifford (1972:121-123).

On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder, and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the horn...
 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the Lord had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently.
 The blare of the horn grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder...
 All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking...
 So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was (Ex 19:16, 18-19; 20:15, 18).⁹⁶

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel were allowed to ascend the mountain to see the glory of God, standing upon a paved work of precious stones, and there partake of a covenant feast.

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel ascended; And they saw the God of Israel: under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity.
 ...they beheld God, and they ate and drank (Ex 24:9-11).

It is clear that Yahweh at Sinai bore the trappings of a mountain storm-deity whose appearance featured many of the dramatic forces of nature. His surroundings, according to those privileged few that saw him, were such as to warrant a description of incredible beauty and splendour beyond the ability of human language to convey. From his mountain Yahweh communicated his will to his people, issued edicts, and instituted his covenant. From there he accompanied his people⁹⁷ and marched at the head of Israel's armies.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Cf Revelation 1:7, where John saw the resurrected and glorified Christ as 'he cometh with clouds'; Revelation 4:1, where the voice of the Lord 'was as it were of a trumpet'; Revelation 8:2-5, where the seven angels 'were given seven trumpets' and the earth was filled with 'voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake'; Revelation 14:1-2, where the Lamb of God is seen standing upon Mount Zion, and where a voice from heaven is 'as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder'; Revelation 16:17-18, where a great voice is heard 'out of the temple of heaven' and where there are 'voices, and thunders, and lightnings', and 'a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty was the earthquake, and so great'; and Revelation 19:6, where another voice from the heavenly throne was 'as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders'.

⁹⁷ Yahweh's wanderings through the wilderness alongside his people Israel are well known. It is singular, however, that Yahweh is never mentioned as marching alongside or in front of his people after they reached the borders of Canaan. Nevertheless, Yahweh travelled through the wilderness and fought Israel's battles even though far removed from Sinai.

⁹⁸ Having abandoned his mountain sanctuary, Yahweh took up his abode in a tent. Inasmuch as he had not acquired a new temple during the conquest of Canaan and the subsequent period of the judges and the early

3.7.1.2 *Baal and Zaphon*. Baal's mountain, *Zaphon*,⁹⁹ is primarily known from the corpus of Ugaritic literature. Baal laid claim to Zaphon as it was his centre of operations in his battles against *Yam* (sea) and *Mot* (death). Zaphon thus became possessed 'inalienably, a patrimony, with the possible overtone of possession by conquest' (Clifford 1972:72). And it was on Zaphon that Baal sought to build his temple, for this was the place which he acquired as a result of his victory over the forces of evil and chaos, and this is the site from which he would restore harmony to nature (Clifford 1972:73, 75).

Like Yahweh at Sinai, Baal celebrated his kingship on Zaphon amid the presence of lightning and thunder, wind and rain.

Baal is enthroned, yea, [his] seat is the mountain...
 Seven lightnings...
 Eight storehouses of thunder,
 The staff lightnings... 100

Zaphon was the place where messages to Baal were delivered and where Baal worked to build his temple. The record is broken and difficult, but there seem to be references to a washing and anointing, perhaps to a statue of Baal, followed by ceremonies commemorating his enthronement and a *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage) between Baal

years of the monarchy, he could be worshipped anywhere and his presence could be manifested at any number of sanctuaries. But the construction of the Jerusalem temple and the establishment of the Davidic covenant officially and effectively displaced Sinai as the cult centre of the country and firmly transferred it to Jerusalem. The history of Israel moved at this point from one phase of its existence to another: 'one focusing on the revelation at Sinai, the tradition of the founding fathers, and the organization of the new order; the other arising out of the military, political, or religious circumstances of the monarchy' (Freedman 1981:27-29). Yet Zion could not permanently and effectively erase Sinai from the mindset of the nation; the temple made with hands at Jerusalem could not entirely supplant the temple made without hands at Sinai. An intrepid traveller like Elijah might still make a pilgrimage to Sinai and there receive revelation from the God of Israel (I Ki 19).

⁹⁹ While *Zaphon* is often translated "north," a convenient rendering due to its location with regard to Canaan, there are actually four possible meanings in Ugaritic more accurate than "north." The term *Zaphon* can refer to (1) Jebel el-Aqra, a mountain about fifty kilometers north of Ras Shamra at the mouth of the Orontes; (2) the mountain dwelling of Baal in the mythical texts; (3) a deified mountain (well known from Hittite and Hurrian mythology, where *Hazzi*, the equivalent of *Zaphon*, was paired with Namni/Nanni as a dwelling of the storm god); and (4) part of the epithet Baal-Zaphon (Clifford 1972:57-58, 61-62).

100 From the Ras Shamra texts (*RS 24.245*), translated in Clifford (1972:77).

and Anat.¹⁰¹

Baal's temple on Zaphon was built of bricks purportedly made of lapis lazuli, the Ugaritic equivalent of the sapphire seen under Yahweh's feet at Sinai (Clifford 1972:112). And as Moses and the elders of Israel partook of a covenant meal at Sinai, so we find Baal giving a feast on Zaphon to an assembly of the gods.

While all the features of Sinai are not duplicated at Zaphon, there are still many points of resemblance. Some features not found at Zaphon are present at Mount Hamon, the mountain of El, the site of the assembly of the gods where decisions were made respecting issues that affected the universe. El's mountain was the source of living water that went forth to fertilise and fructify the earth. El's mountain was the place from which edicts went forth to men. Baal's home on Zaphon was the site of the victory over the forces of evil and chaos, which victory was regularly commemorated, but Zaphon was not normally considered to be a source of revelation (Clifford 1972:57, 79, 97).

3.7.1.3 From Zaphon to Zion. Mount Zion inherited many of the qualities and appellations of Zaphon. Zion was the quintessential sacred mountain within the land of Israel.¹⁰² Zion, like Zaphon, was the scene of battle. Both mountains were ultimately considered impregnable; both were the locations where the respective deities built their temples; both were the sites from where kingship was exercised; both were cosmic mountains (Clifford 1972:3-4). In short, Zion attracted many of the qualities and characteristics of Zaphon and attached them to itself. In Psalm 48, Zion even assumed the name of Zaphon:

The Lord is great and much acclaimed
in the city of our God,

¹⁰¹ It is known that there were processions of the statues of the gods at Ugarit as we find elsewhere in the ancient Near East, and that these statues were regularly washed, anointed, and provided with new vestments. In the enthronement ceremony at Babylon, Marduk (in the form of his statue) was taken to the site of his victory over Tiamat; after returning in triumph to Babylon, a sacred marriage was performed (Clifford 1972:78-79).

¹⁰² While there were many sacred mountains in the land of Canaan (Hermon, Carmel, Gerizim, Tabor, Tahpanhes [in the Egyptian delta], etc.), none approached the three great sacred and cosmic mountains of Sinai, Zaphon, and Zion.

His holy mountain –
 fair-crested, joy of all the earth,
 Mount Zion, summit of Zaphon... (Ps 48:1-3).¹⁰³

In addition to the Psalms there are other Biblical passages referring to Mount Zion that have their roots in the traditions about Zaphon (Ezk 47:1-12; Zch 14:8; Jl 4:18). In time, Zion came to mean much more than simply Jerusalem or even the temple of Jerusalem. It also came to mean the ‘kingship and inviolability of Zion over against the nations; site of the Lord’s presence; simply a synonym of Jerusalem; place of liturgical worship; goal of restoration after the exile; place which the Lord has chosen; city which the Lord has founded’ (Clifford 1972:141).

While some passages in the Hebrew Bible can be traced directly from Zaphon to Zion, others are an attempt to usurp and transplant the character of Sinai directly to Zion. Psalm 50, for example, is a deliberate attempt to evoke the concepts and imagery of Sinai in the context of Zion (just as Yahweh shone forth from Sinai as he came to the aid of his people, so he now shines forth from Zion to judge his people). In Psalm 18 (cf 2 Sm 22), Yahweh rescues his favoured one from a storm reminiscent of the Sinai phenomena. In Psalm 97, Yahweh is again portrayed as a storm-god. Other passages in the Hebrew Bible, particularly poetic passages, invoke Sinai imagery in an apparent attempt to acquire legitimacy for Zion (Ps 18:8-20; 2 Sm 22:8-20; Ps 29; Hb 3:3-15; Ps 68:8-9; and Jdg 5:4-5).¹⁰⁴

Whether transferred from Sinai or inherited from Zaphon, the characteristics of these exalted mountains were assumed by Zion, which became the recipient of all these traditions. A classic example of synonymous parallelism runs, ‘God has made Himself

¹⁰³ Other epithets in this psalm about Zion include ‘City of our God’, ‘His Holy Mountain’, ‘the Beautiful Height’, ‘the joy of the whole earth’, ‘the city of the Great King’, etc. These are also expressions used to describe Zaphon that are attested in Ugaritic literature. Attacks against both Zion and Zaphon are attested in Psalms 2, 46, 48, and 76, and are also found in the Ugaritic texts.

¹⁰⁴ An important part of transferring the status of Sinai to Zion was the installation of the Ark of the Covenant in Solomon’s temple. In the Israelite model, the desert tabernacle itself acquired the holiness of Sinai. Later, when the heart of the shrine, the Ark of the Covenant, was relocated to Jerusalem under David, the resplendent glory of Sinai, represented by the Ark, was transferred to Mount Zion. This is an interesting example of the transference of sacred space. The natural holiness of Sinai was transferred to the socially constructed holiness of the Ark; subsequently the deposition of the Ark in the temple on Zion served as a medium in transferring the holiness of Sinai to Zion.

known in Judah, His name is great in Israel; Salem became his abode; Zion, his den' (Ps 76:2). 'Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion that cannot be moved, enduring forever. Jerusalem, hills enfold it, and the Lord enfolds His people now and forever' (Ps 125:1-2). Zion is the location from which Yahweh will come down and fight the enemies of his people (Is 30:4ff; Ps 48:4, 13-15; Is 4:5). Zion is the Lord's footstool (Ps 99:5, 9; Is 66:1). Zion even plays a crucial role in the apocalyptic writings of Ezekiel and Zechariah. After the final battle, when the enemies of the Lord have been destroyed, the earth will be levelled but Jerusalem will be raised (Zch 14:10). Ezekiel's temple will feature water flowing from the temple eastward to the Dead Sea, carrying life-giving water to the desert through which it flows and healing the waters of the Dead Sea, while Zechariah speaks of a river flowing both east and west from Jerusalem on that day when Yahweh comes to reign over the whole earth (Zch 14:6-9; Cohn 1981:38-41).

The New Testament continued the tradition of imbuing Zion as the representative of the new order, even as Sinai represented the old. While the Hebrew scriptures refer to Zion as the temple in which God dwelt, the Book of Hebrews (ch 12) mentions 'Mount Zion', 'the city of the living God', and 'the heavenly Jerusalem' consecutively, all three referring to the place where God dwells and from where he issues his decrees and from where he reveals himself. Thus the earthly mountain corresponds with the heavenly mountain, and the earthly temple with the heavenly temple. Christians are exhorted to be holy in order not to jeopardise their fellowship with the heavenly community (Hb 12:14-16).¹⁰⁵

Sinai and Zion stand like twin sentinels overlooking the history of Israel. Both mountains claimed to be the dwelling place of Yahweh; from both edicts were issued governing Yahweh's relations with his people. At Sinai, Yahweh dealt with the Israelite rabble newly emancipated from Egyptian slavery. At Zion, his people had attained nationhood and some degree of political and economic hegemony over surrounding peoples. Though it is admittedly an oversimplification, it might be said that at Sinai one looks backward,

¹⁰⁵ This is exactly the attitude that permeated the Qumran community. One of the principal themes defining that community was fellowship between the earthly and heavenly communities, a theme replete with temple imagery (Gartner 1965:90-92).

while at Zion the vision is always forward, even to the end of the world; unlike Zion, Sinai has no role in apocalyptic or eschatological literature.

It is fortunate that in addition to the Biblical accounts, there is another corpus of religious literature dealing with a sacred mountain, and one that is near the Biblical record in both space and time. The Ras Shamra tablets provide an account, written in a West Semitic tongue remarkably similar to Hebrew, of Mount Zaphon and Mount Hamon. There are striking similarities between Yahweh on his mountain and Baal and El on their mountains. While Yahweh and El dwell in tents, all three have feasts, issue decrees, preside or participate in the assembly of the gods, and proclaim their kingship against the dramatic backdrop of earthquakes and raging storms.

Yet there are significant differences. There is extreme polytheism on the Canaanite side and equally extreme monotheism on the Israelite side. The typical polytheistic world of the ancient Near East regarded unusual phenomena as the conflicts and resolutions of various deities interacting with one another, each of whom needed to be identified, placated, and mollified. Against this was the Israelite phenomenon of the One God who interacted with men and intervened in earthly history.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, there are essential differences in the stories themselves, for in the Baal Cycle all of the action involved conflicts, struggles, and negotiations among the gods assembled on the mountain; any poor mortals who might get caught in the fallout were really incidental to the main story. On the other hand, among the Israelites there were no competing gods, for there was only One, and the emphasis was entirely upon human events and interactions with Yahweh (Clifford 1984:108-124, but see esp 108-110).

¹⁰⁶ The temple is the locus for the intervention of Yahweh in human history, for it is the place designated for the cosmic deity to rule and judge righteously. The Hebrew Bible is replete with scenes and images of Yahweh going forth in battle to bless and protect his people and bring recompense to his enemies, whether they be foreigners or those of his own people who have adopted apostate practices (Is 66:6; Ezk 9:4-5; Jl 4:16; Am 1:2; Mi 1:2). The temple is the site from which all present distress is overturned and relieved (Middlemas 2005:180-181).

3.8 CONCLUSIONS

‘All sanctuaries are implicitly “navels of the earth”’ (Wyatt 2001:160). ‘The “center, or navel,”’ wrote Eliade (1958b:8), ‘is the place where a split in the ontological level was effectuated, where space becomes sacred, therefore pre-eminently real’. ‘Sacred space’ unites ‘earth to heaven’ (Terrien 1970:323). Again, ‘the hill is the site of the temple because the divine powers of the earth there reveal themselves...How could God better be depicted than by means of the mountain, that part of the world in which His activity and life is most visible? The constructed temple is the image of the universe, God’s real dwelling’ (Kristensen 1960:107, 109).

Sacred space lies at the heart of the mythological concepts that centred around mountains in the ancient Near East: the primeval garden as a mountain located at the centre of the earth, mountains as the pillars of heaven and earth, the idea of the primordial mound, the mountain as the *omphalos* (the navel of the earth), and the cosmic mountain, all relate to the underlying principle of sacred space. Mountains acquire sanctity from specific beliefs; actual height is irrelevant. Sacred mountains are considered to be the site of the assembly of the gods.¹⁰⁷ They are the source of life-giving water. They are the battleground of conflicting natural forces. From cosmic mountains edicts and decrees are issued that affect the cosmos. The fertility and stability of the world is determined upon these mountains. They are the *omphalos*,¹⁰⁸ the navel of the earth, the primordial mound, the centre place.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ For a complete treatment of the subject of the assembly of the gods, see Mullen (1980).

¹⁰⁸ The idea of the *omphalos* brings us full circle, for ‘the center of the mountain, which is the center of the world, is also our center’ (Wyatt 2001:148, 160).

¹⁰⁹ ‘The observations made of the mountain... all apply to the temple. As a human construction, it represents the epitome of all cultural and cultic activity. Its sacred nature is often represented in terms of its divine, rather than human, construction. At the least, the gods or a god chose it, as a point of self-disclosure to his or her worshippers’ (Wyatt 2001:159).

CHAPTER 4

SACRED SPACE AND THE TEMPLE

Abstract

Sacred space is a somewhat amorphous, multifaceted concept that defies simple definition. It includes a variety of elements, all of which are involved in the underlying mythology and ideology of the temple. Seven of these ancillary concepts, related to the overall doctrine of sacred space, will be examined in this chapter. These 'facets' or 'subsets' of sacred space are expressed in a variety of ways in temple ritual and architecture.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters the basic concept of sacred space was introduced and the symbolism of mountains as they relate to temples was discussed. In this chapter other facets of sacred space that directly relate to the mythology, ideology, ritual, and architecture of ancient Near Eastern temples will be reviewed. The list of features presented in this chapter that relate to sacred space is not comprehensive,¹¹⁰ but it does contain some of the more significant concepts. Seven underlying themes are presented in alphabetical order in order to avoid any suggestion of primacy: creation and cosmogony, the idea of the heavenly temple, the ritual of *hieros gamos*, the relation of the temple to the institution of kingship with its attendant coronation and enthronement ceremonies and rituals, issues of secrecy, the relation of the temple to the Tree of Life, and the concept of water issuing forth from the temple.

¹¹⁰ For example, the fact that temples, historically, were places of refuge will not be discussed here. This concept reinforces the notion that temples were unlike other buildings but were a place and a space set apart. Once again the clear demarcation of these structures is easily perceived.

4.2 CREATION AND COSMOGONY

Under this heading the following areas will be addressed: first, the concept of the temple as a symbol of creation and the creative process; second, the role played by water in the creation myths; and third, the rehearsing and retelling of the creation myth as an important part of temple ritual.

4.2.1 The temple as a symbol of creation

Within the context of ancient Near Eastern religions, the notion of *creation* implied a process of organising and regulating matter already in existence; there was not an iota of the *creatio ex nihilo* concept that sprang up in late Judaism and grew to full fruition in Christianity. ‘Creation does not necessarily mean the bringing forth of something out of nothing; to the eastern mind it contains the idea of regulation, of cosmos’ observed Frankfort (1978:150). ‘To a large extent the material is there already and the act of creation consists in forming the chaotic material into a living organism’ (Fisher 1965:315).

Creation accounts are linked to the construction of temples almost everywhere. Such cosmogonies are present in the rites at early Mesopotamian sites, such as the Temple of Inanna in Nippur, regarded as the site of the origin of mankind (Clifford 1972:14-15). Other Mesopotamian temples considered themselves as built on the site of the creation, as did virtually all Egyptian temples.¹¹¹ The Baal cycle from Ugarit provides a number of

¹¹¹ Shafer (1997b:1-2). The following excerpt is rather lengthy but is particularly poignant: ‘Temples and rituals [in Egypt] were loci for the struggle between order and chaos. At creation, the existent came into being amid the dark, inert, unbounded waters of the nonexistent (called *Nun*) and took a multiplicity of forms in space and time. At creation, the cosmos existed in perfect harmony with the Creator’s intention, the pristine state Egyptians called *ma’at*, order. But the nonexistent surrounded the existent and, true to its unbounded nature, penetrated the boundaries of the existent. The cosmos came to be shot through with “uncreated” elements representing the nonexistent. Some, like ground water and sleep, manifested the beneficent, regenerative aspect of the nonexistent; but others, like desert and darkness, manifested its hostile, threatening aspect—*isfet*, disorder, chaos. According to Jonathan Z. Smith, chaos is a sacred power, a creative challenge to order that is never completely overcome, a source of possibility and vitality that stands over against order but is inextricably related to it. Smith’s observation is perfectly true of ancient Egypt, where the sacred opposition between order and chaos found perpetual place in temples and rituals’. Two points in particular in this passage are quite striking. First, the penetration of the existent by the

analogies between creation and temple building.¹¹²

But it was among the Semites that this concept was most fully developed, with a variety of traditions that linked the beginning of creation with the construction of the temple. Many of these ideas and traditions can be traced back to the early connection of the sanctuary with the navel of the earth (Wensinck 1978:19). Biblical scholars have noted the Garden of Eden story as immediately following the creation account.¹¹³ Hurowitz (1992:94) observed that ‘temple building is represented as the climax or purpose of a creation story’. Other similarities between temple building and cosmogony include the concepts that the temple was the source of light even as the sun lighted the earth, the temple contained bodies of water representing the primordial seas, and that God was the source of each activity, and pronounced each work ‘good’. As the creation brought about order in the cosmos and overcame chaos, so the building of the temple brought order to the individual world. Indeed, any act of creation may be considered analogous to the building of a temple.¹¹⁴

nonexistent seems remarkably similar to the Kabbalistic concept of the ‘breaking of the vessels’. Second, the ideas of Smith go far in explaining one of the great mysteries in all theology, that is, the reconciliation of the existence of evil with the omnipotence of God. Smith’s idea of evil (or darkness or chaos) as an eternal presence, always in opposition to order and regulation, and the inability of either power to completely destroy the other, is worthy of further development. At any rate, creation may be defined as the (perhaps temporary) ascendancy of order and light (represented by the temple) over chaos and darkness.

¹¹² Of primary interest here is the idea that Baal knows the *word* of nature (the word that, when spoken authoritatively, will result in creation; perhaps the word(s) used by God in the Genesis cosmogony [‘And God said, Let there be light,’ etc.]), but Baal will only reveal that word to Anat in the sanctuary on Zaphon. Another interesting concept is the equation of the ‘Death of Mot’ with ‘creating order out of chaos’. Another is the distinction between different types of creation; for example, the theogonic creation of El vs. the cosmogonic creation of Baal (Fisher 1965:316-317, 320, 325). Furthermore, one cosmogonic text from Ugarit ends each period with the refrains ‘Day One’, ‘Day Two’, and so on, very reminiscent of the Genesis creation text (Fisher 1969:197-205). Fisher also pointed out (1965:315) that if we are not distracted by looking for *creatio ex nihilo*, we find that the Ugaritic texts portray an amalgam of creation, kingship, and temple building.

¹¹³ Parry (1994a:137-138). See also Weinfeld (1981:501-512), who compared the creation story with the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness, noting, among other points of interest, that the work in both instances took six days, after which God rested. Fisher (1965:318-319) added Solomon’s temple to this framework; as the creation was effected in seven periods of time, so Solomon’s temple was built in seven years; thus, building the temple was akin to creating the cosmos.

¹¹⁴ Cohn (1981:56) put it thus: ‘Mount Sinai represents the beginning of time because there creation occurs, the creation of Israel. Indeed, the giving of the law at Sinai is analogous to the act of bringing order out of chaos in creation myths’.

4.2.2 Water and creation

Virtually every ancient Near Eastern cosmogony began with a description of water covering the face of the earth, for ‘the belief that the world emerged from a primeval ocean has been one of those most widely held throughout the world, among all kinds of peoples and at all periods’.¹¹⁵ The name given to this watery entity differed from culture to culture but the underlying concept was relatively homogenous. Creation began with the Creator fighting the rebellious water. In many legends the nature of this combat took the form of the Creator fighting a dragon: in Mesopotamia Marduk defeated *Apsu* and *Tiamat*, while in Ugarit Baal defeated *Yam*. The Hebrew Bible contains imagery of Yahweh defeating the primordial seafaring monster *Leviathan* or *Rahab* (Is 27:1; 51:9-10; Na 1:3-4, 8-9, 12; Hb 3:8; Ps 74:13-14; 89:9-11; 93; Job 7:12; 9:13; 26:12-13; 41:17-26; Ezk 32:2-6). For good measure, the victorious Creator then built a temple on a propitious spot for holding down the unruly waters and, in essence, capping them.¹¹⁶

The Mesopotamian creation myths contained two watery elements, sweet water and salt water, represented respectively by the male *Apsu* and the female *Tiamat*. Ea eventually defeated *Apsu*, and the young god Marduk arose to defeat *Tiamat*, which allowed the creation of the earth to proceed. In the Mesopotamian legends, therefore, the creation story formed the *end* and not the *beginning* of the narrative.

Meanwhile, the early Egyptians did not have a creation myth of a combat with a seafaring dragon, for they could not conceive of anything violating the relative serenity of the

¹¹⁵ Frankfort (1978:232-233). The reason water was present in virtually all cosmogonies everywhere was simply the fact that water was the source of life—whether in the form of rain, annual floods, or amniotic fluid. Even heaven was regarded as a place of water; in Psalm 104:3 Yahweh is said to have set ‘the rafters of His lofts in the waters, makes the clouds His chariot, moves on the wings of the wind’.

¹¹⁶ In the case of the Jerusalem temple, this function was performed by the Foundation Stone. In Mesopotamia, the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish* states that Ea built his ‘dwelling place over the nether waters’ after defeating *Apsu*; Marduk did the same thing after defeating *Tiamat*. Similarly, the temple of Eninu at Lagash was said to have been founded on the nether ocean, while that at Eridu was termed ‘House of the Sweet Waters’ (*E-engur-ra*; George 1993:82). Analogous myths are found at Heliopolis, where Lucian was shown a chasm into which the waters of the flood receded, and at Athens in the sanctuary of Zeus (Gaster 1950:445-446; Wyatt 2001:137).

primordial waters.¹¹⁷ They therefore considered the creation of land, caused by the Creator forcing back the waters of *Nun* and building a rudimentary temple on the resulting primordial mound, as the *beginning* of their cosmogony. The common point between the Mesopotamian and Egyptian legends was water, or more specifically, the nature of this water.

Among the Semites, the primordial waters were known as *tehom*,¹¹⁸ often described as the realm of death (Wensinck 1978:44-49). *Tehom* was that wild and unruly element that had to be subjected before creation could proceed.¹¹⁹ *Tehom* as chaos was expressed as *tohu wawohu*, an untranslatable phrase indicating its wild yet inert nature. Rather than a fierce combat, Genesis (1:2) describes a most peculiar activity: the Spirit of God ‘swept’ (JPS *Tanakh*) or ‘moved’ (KJV) or ‘hovered’ (NIV) or ‘brooded’¹²⁰ upon the face of the waters. Wensinck declared that the Holy Ghost, a member of the Trinity, brooded upon the waters as a hen brooded her eggs: ‘And by the brooding on the surface of the waters they were blessed so as to become able to bring forth. And all the natural germs became hot and fervent, and all the leaven of creation became united with them’.¹²¹ While subdued prior to the creation, *tehom* again gained ascendancy during the deluge and will

¹¹⁷ Egyptian cosmogonies viewed the primeval ocean, *Nun*, as a fairly languid entity. Still, *Nun* had to be ‘moved’ before the creative process could begin, and *Nun* was perfectly capable of opposing this process and attempting to reclaim any land that had been ‘created’ by its forced withdrawal (Brandon 1963:16-17, 63).

¹¹⁸ Widengren (1958:173) considered *Tehom* to be the etymological counterpart of *Tiamat*; also Wyatt (2001:63).

¹¹⁹ *Tehom* is described in Job 38:16 and Proverbs 8:28-29. It is implied in the blessing of Joseph (Gn 49:25). *Tehom* was always threatening, even when held in check by the *Even Shetiya*, the Foundation Stone, which was the navel of the earth, the stone at the top of Mount Moriah. There is an ancient legend that when David dug tunnels under Moriah, the flood rose and threatened to overcome the earth; the staircase that connected two of the courts of Solomon’s temple was called the ‘steps of *Tehom*’. There is a partial cosmogony in Psalm 104:5-9 that implies the opposition of *Tehom* (cf. Pr 8:29; Ps 74:13-14; 89:9-10). *Tehom* plays a role not only in the creation and deluge stories but also in eschatology, especially in the Book of Isaiah (Is 40:3-5; 43:16-20; 41:18-20; 54:7-10; 51:9-11). It was *tehom* that was prohibited from harming the Israelites as they crossed the Red Sea but was allowed to swallow Pharaoh and his armies. There are passages in the patristic literature that portray the devil as a dragon in the waters of baptism; those who are baptised are considered as having conquered *tehom* (1 Pt 3:18-21; Ro 6:3-4; Wensinck 1978:15-16, 49-56).

¹²⁰ Brown, Driver & Briggs 934, ‘*rakhaf*’, meaning ‘hover’, ‘cherish’, ‘move gently’, ‘brood’.

¹²¹ Wensinck (1978:56-57). Wensinck quoted Jacob of Edessa: ‘...the spirit was like a cloud from which life and rain and humidity descends. In other words: the spirit fertilizes the waters and these conceive the germs of the created things’. Other ancient texts describe the Spirit as ‘fertilising’ the waters by infusing them with light; for ‘matter without light is inert and helpless’ (*Pistis Sophia* I, 55).

not be permanently defeated until the end of the world.¹²²

4.2.3 Cosmogony in temple ritual

The recital of the creation story in temple ritual is a widespread and ancient practice and deserves special mention. Eliade believed that the periodic recital of the cosmogonic myth was done in order ‘to serve as an exemplary model for the periodic regeneration of [sacred] time’ (Eliade 1958b:11). Ancient societies felt the need to re-create time on a regular basis. Time, like material substance, tended to become ‘worn’ and ‘tired’ and eventually lost its freshness and sanctity.¹²³ By entering the temple and reciting or rehearsing the creation story, the original time, the *illud tempus*, could be ritually renewed. For time that has been worn out is no longer sacred time but profane; and if ‘religious man’ wishes to live in sacred time as well as sacred space, then ancient time must be regularly renewed.

Furthermore, the creation of the world and the construction of a temple were considered synonymous events; hence the tale of one was also the tale of the other. The foundation of the temple coincided with the creation of the earth: ‘The first fixed point in the chaotic waters...is the place of the sanctuary, which becomes the earthly seat of the world-order, having its palladium in throne and altar. The foundation of the sanctuary, therefore, coincides with the creation’ (Wensinck 1923:160). It is more and more evident that as our knowledge of ancient temple ritual increases, we discover nothing more prominent or widespread than the repetitive recitation of the creation.¹²⁴ Mowinckel noted, ‘It is the

¹²² The water was tamed in the beginning, but only temporarily. The flood was regarded as a temporary return of the primordial ocean: ‘All the fountains of the great deep burst apart, and the floodgates of the sky broke open’ (Gn 7:11). Thus the element that was temporarily overcome during the creation returned in its wild fury and destroyed creation. After the deluge, Yahweh pushed the water back as before, and promised that the earth would not be destroyed by flood again. The final victory of creation over the chaotic waters will not come until the end of days when the earth is renewed and receives the glory it once had. Thus John: ‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea’ (Rv 21:1, KJV, emphasis added). See Wensinck (1978:13-14).

¹²³ Hence on the Iranian New Year’s Day the king would proclaim: ‘Here is a new day of a new month of a new year; we must renew what time has worn out!’ (Eliade 1958b:11).

¹²⁴ Gaster (1950) examined the role of cosmogony in the ritual dramas of the Canaanites at Ugarit, the Hittites, Egyptians, Greeks, Celts, and Hebrews, and compared these to certain Christian hymns and to medieval English mystery plays.

creation of the World that is being repeated... because the Divinity—the First Father of the Race—did so once in the beginning, and commanded us to do the same’ (quoted in Nibley 1984b:26).

Perhaps the best known cosmogony of the ancient Near East was the Babylonian creation story, the *Enuma Elish*, which was recited during the New Year’s, or *Akitu*, festival. It was the purpose of the *Akitu* festival to ‘re-establish the proper pattern of nature, with order prevailing over chaos, and to reaffirm the gods, the king, and his subjects in their respective roles in the cosmic order’. While it is true that the format of the *Enuma Elish* was not standardised until early in the first millennium and its origin is shrouded in mystery, reflections of it appear in the Sumerian rites at Ur and Erech as early as the third millennium (Ricks 1994a:119).

That the ancient Egyptians shared the Babylonians’ concern for ‘worn out’ time was evident from the *Opet*-festival, celebrated annually in Thebes during the New Kingdom period and later.¹²⁵ Among Egyptian temples, the cosmogony at Edfu is the best known and remains the most complete narrative available.¹²⁶ Reymond noted that ‘if we admit that in describing the creation of the Earth the texts record the stages of evolution of the Egyptian sacred places, it is evident that the Egyptian tradition was that the earliest cultus-places were founded near, or even enshrined, the piece of earth in which the symbols of the creative powers were believed to have been concealed’ (Reymond 1969: 102-103. This is a theme to which Reymond repeatedly returns; see also 12, 13, 55, 72, 80, 85-87, 104, 118-119, 185-186, 213-214, 258-259). Clearly, in Egyptian cosmology,

¹²⁵ ‘Gods became weary by the end of each year, when the agricultural cycle had run its course. They and their creation needed a recharge, a fresh input of energy. The dying gods needed to step outside the created world to tap the pure, uncontrolled power of the boundless chaos surrounding the cosmos, the seething miasma whence the cosmos had originated. Opening the door to the uncreated was no simple operation and was fraught with danger. Improperly done, it could unleash the full destructive potential of disorder. But properly done, through the prescribed rituals of the *Opet*-festival presided over by the divine king, the opening could produce rebirth and re-creation’ (Bell 1997:157).

¹²⁶ There are a number of other mythological texts in ancient Egypt, besides those at Edfu, that deal with the origin of sacred places and temples. One example is a text on a stela discovered at Hermopolis dating from the reign of Nectanebo II (360-342). The Tomb of Petosiris offers several allusions to the origin of a temple. Other locations include the Temple of Khonsu at Karnak (especially on the jamb of the main door in the second pylon), and the temples of Opet, Denderah, Esnah, El-Hibeh, and Medamud (Reymond 1969:48-52).

well attested in the Memphite Theology as well as in the texts at Edfu and elsewhere, the creation of the earth was intimately connected with the origin of the temple (Reymond 1969:46-47, 219).

Though the ancient Egyptians shared many ideas in common with their Mesopotamian counterparts, Egyptian New Year festivals did not include a recitation of the creation story such as we find in the *Enuma Elish* (Brandon 1963:62). Nevertheless, Egyptian cosmogonies shared much in common with those of other ancient Near Eastern civilisations.¹²⁷

Did the creation story play any role in the temple of Solomon? James (1969:29) suggested that the creation story in Genesis may have played a liturgical role in the first Jerusalem temple; the creation account itself, with its methodical order of progression and the repetition of main themes ('and God saw that it was good', 'and the evening and the morning were the third day', etc.) would lend themselves quite nicely to a liturgical environment. And there were certainly occasions, such as the New Year's Festival (Feast of Tabernacles) or the enthronement of a new king, where such a recitation would have been quite natural. Nevertheless, there is no hard evidence that such a practice existed in First Temple times. However, the Mishnah (*Ta'anit* 4:2-3) relates, regarding the Second Temple, that certain laymen were given the assignment to read the creation story while the priests and Levites performed sacrifices in Jerusalem, while other laymen, distributed throughout the towns and villages, read the creation account in their local areas. Even in modern times, Jews read the creation account in its entirety during the Feast of Tabernacles (Ricks 1994a:122).

¹²⁷ Two items are particularly noteworthy regarding Egyptian cosmogonies. First, the Egyptians did not consider the earth to have been created in a single action; rather, they believed creation to be a dual process, involving two distinct periods. In the first part, the earth was created by a physical and organic act; following this, the primeval waters were acted upon to allow the previously-created earth to emerge (Reymond 1969:92). Second, the Egyptians conceived the main factor in the creative process to be the pronouncement of a sacred word; this act, almost a type of magical spell, resulted in the metamorphosis of the primary matter. The Creative Being (the *Earth-Maker*) actually uttered the word(s) in the presence of other deities, who then went down to the earth and effected the actual work of the creation (Reymond 1969:275-276). This is reminiscent of the Baal Cycle from Ras Shamra, where Baal claimed to know the sacred creative word; Baal would reveal the word only to Anat, and only in the temple on Zaphon.

Creation and cosmogony, as they pertain to the temple, are integral parts of the overall concepts of sacred space and sacred time. The temple was considered to be a symbol of the cosmos. Furthermore, as the creation was thought to have brought about order and light in the cosmos, even so the temple was considered to have brought order and light to the world. The Creator was responsible for both the creation of the cosmos and the establishment of the first temple. Temples were thought to have been built on the first dry land created, or in other words, the centre place, the holiest of all ground. There was a convergence between cosmogony and temple building, for the time frame and characteristics of the one were also the time frame and characteristics of the other. Temples contained a symbol of the primordial ocean (the brazen sea in Solomon's temple, sacred lakes in Egyptian temples). The temple was thought to cap the unruly waters of creation (witness the Foundation Stone in the Jerusalem temple and similar motifs elsewhere). Finally, the regular recitation of the cosmogonic myth was an integral part of temple ritual and in the re-creation of sacred time. Cosmogony played an important role in the Babylonian *Akitu* festival, in the Egyptian *Opet*-festival, in New Year ceremonies and festivals throughout the ancient Near East, and likely formed part of the liturgy in the Jerusalem temple.

4.3 THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE

The ancients had a concept of a heavenly temple, and the earthly temple was considered to be a replica, a mirror, an exact image of the celestial structure.¹²⁸ Yet the earthly temple, while it cannot be sharply distinguished from its heavenly counterpart, is more than just a likeness; it is an arrow pointing upward to the real thing, even as the arrow of a compass points northward.¹²⁹ Thus the earthly temple must be built according to plans

¹²⁸ Clifford (1972:27, 106, 139) maintains that the simplicity of some of the earliest shrines argues against any elaborate mystical interpretation, and that only later did speculation come to regard the temple as a microcosm of the universe, or as a representation of the heavenly temple. However, he admits that such a representation was made regarding the sanctuary of Yahweh at Gilgal. He also regards this representation as valid in the case of the Temple of Baal on Mount Zaphon, for the union of temple and kingship resulted in the bringing forth of fertility and cosmic harmony, which was a function of both the earthly and the heavenly temples.

¹²⁹ When speaking of an earthly temple and a heavenly temple, or an earthly Jerusalem and a heavenly Jerusalem, we must bear in mind that it is always the upper world that denotes absolute reality, while the lower is but a type and a shadow of that which is to come; the lower is always a symbol of the higher, and

revealed from heaven.¹³⁰ As the heavenly temple was the centre of the cosmos and the source of order, arrangement and justice in the heavens, even so the earthly temple was the centre of the world and brought order where once was chaos on earth.¹³¹

The existence of the heavenly temple is mentioned in a plethora of ancient sources. The canonical Bible also contains a number of references.¹³² Extracanonical sources include 1 Enoch 14:16-18, 20 (where heaven itself is conceived as a temple), the *Testament of Levi* 5:1, and various statements in rabbinical and other literature (BT *Sanhedrin* 94; *Genesis Rabbah* 69:7; Aptowitz 1980:21-23; J Parry & D Parry 1994:515-520). Jewish literature ‘avers that in heaven there is a temple that is the counterpart of the temple on earth. The same sacrifices are said to be offered there and the same hymns sung as in the earthly temple. Just as the temple below is located in terrestrial Jerusalem so the temple above is located in celestial Jerusalem’ (Aptowitz 1980:1). An ancient Indian text states: ‘Once heaven and earth were united. Let what is suitable to the sacrifice [i.e., the

the higher is the ultimate reality. God lives in the heavenly temple; he does not live in the innermost sanctuary of the earthly temple, though that sanctuary may provide mortals a glimpse of that heavenly reality. This type of dualistic thought is typical of the ancient Near East. Furthermore, while that which is earthly serves as a symbol of the heavenly reality, the two were regarded as connected by a vertical shaft of sacred space, and the actions of the one directly affected the other (Levenson 1985:140-145; Lundquist 1993:11-12; 1994b:623; Wensinck 1978:23).

¹³⁰ This idea had deep roots in most of the ancient Near East. Obvious examples include the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the temple of Ningirsu built by Gudea of Lagash, and the temples of Solomon and Ezekiel, all of which claimed to have been built according to a heavenly blueprint. For information on the Tabernacle of Moses built according to a plan revealed from heaven, see Hayward (2005:396-397). Contrary to elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the early Egyptians did not so much believe in a heavenly temple as they did in a primordial temple, an initial monument or sanctuary that existed at the time of the first creation, and which was the predecessor of all subsequent Egyptian temples. Thus their temples were not a replica of a heavenly structure, but rather a concrete expression of what had existed much earlier on earth. ‘There is brief but undeniable evidence of the belief in a direct continuity and relationship between a mythical temple which had once existed and had disappeared, and the historical temple’ (Reymond 1969:4, 300-301).

¹³¹ The close interrelationship between the earthly and heavenly temples placed an ‘awesome responsibility’ upon those favoured to live near and worship in the temple, for their actions had a direct influence on the community and indeed the world at large. It was their responsibility to see to the precise performance of the rituals upon which so much depended due to the high correspondence between things which occurred in the earthly temple and actions in the heavenly temple. Peter was given the power that whatsoever things he bound on earth would be bound in heaven, and by the same token, the actions of the priest at the earthly altar might directly influence the actions of the heavenly high priest above (Smith 1969:116-117).

¹³² See, for example, Psalm 11:4; 102:19; 150:1. Micaiah (1 Ki 22:19) and Ezekiel (Ezk 1, 10) were among the biblical prophets who viewed the heavenly temple. In the New Testament, Paul had a great deal to say about the heavenly temple and about its great High Priest, even Jesus Christ (He 9:1-12, 24; 8:2, 5). But more than any other, it was John the Revelator who had visionary experiences dealing with the heavenly temple (Rv 1:5-6, 10, 12; 4:1-11; 5:1-14; 7:15; 8:1-5; 11:16-19; 14:15, 17; 15:1-8; 16:17; 19:1-6, and others).

temple] be common to both' (Lundquist 1993:11). The Kaaba, in Mecca, was built according to a heavenly pattern, which was first revealed to Abraham, and its design, cubed like the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple, is regarded as the exact image of the heavenly temple (Lundquist 1993:12; Strathearn & Hauglid 1999:287); the new Jerusalem is also shaped like a cube (Rv 21:16). Lundquist considers the Mayan temple builders of Mesoamerica as the people most profoundly influenced by the concept of a heavenly temple and the corollary feature of astronomical alignment of earthly temples.¹³³

The following table, much of which is taken from J Parry & D Parry (1994:521) indicates the many points of convergence between the heavenly temple and the (Biblical) earthly temples:

¹³³ The Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan ('the place where man becomes divine'), was built over a previous shrine, which was built in turn over a cave long used for cultic practices. The cave contained a seven-pronged chamber, featured in the Mayan cosmogony (the *Popol Vuh*) as the site where the first man emerged and later used by the Aztecs as a burial place for their kings. The earthly city 'was seen as the exact mirror image of the heavenly city, with the major axis—the Avenue of the Dead—and the temples and pyramids built along that axis oriented astronomically to the Pleiades, the four cardinal directions, and the surrounding mountains'. Thus we have 'the two main concepts... the sacred place rising up out of the underworld, the place from which life comes, and its architectural plan brought down out of the heavens' (Lundquist 1993:12).

Earthly Temple		Heavenly Temple	
Description	References	Description	References
called “worldly sanctuary”	Heb 9:1-2	called “temple in heaven” or “true tabernacle”	Rv 7:15; 14:17; 15:5; 16:17; Heb 8:2
seven-branched lampstand	Ex 26:35	seven-branched lampstand	Rv 1:12
trumpet	Ex 19:13, 16, 19	trumpet	Rv 8:2, 6
altar of sacrifice	Ex 27:1-2; 39:39	altar of sacrifice	Rv 6:9
sacral vestments	Ex 29, 39	sacral vestments	Rv 4:4; 6:11; 15:6
altar of incense	Ex 30:1-6; 39:38	altar of incense	Rv 8:3-5
four horns of the altar	Ex 30:10	four horns of the altar	Rv 9:13
ark of the covenant	Ex 25	ark of the covenant	Rv 11:19
golden censer	1 Ki 7:50	golden censer	Rv 8:3-5
incense	Ex 30:34-36	incense	Rv 5:8; 8:3-4
incense bowls	1 Ki 7:50; Nm 7:13, 19, 25, 31, 37	incense bowls	Rv 5:8
throne (mercy seat)	Ex 25:22; Lv 16:2	throne	Ps 11:4; Rv 7:9; 16:17
Holy Place	1 Ki 7:50	Holy Place	Heb 9:11-12, 24
Holy of Holies	Ex 26:25-33	Holy of Holies	Rv 4:1-10
high priest	Heb 4:14	high priest	Heb 9:6-7
priestly officiants	Ps 110:4; Heb 7:17	priestly officiants	Rv 8:2-5
rites	<i>passim</i>	rites	Rv 4:8-11; 8:2-5; 15:1-8
24 priestly courses	1 Chr 23:3-6	24 elders	Rv 4:4, 10; 5:8
cherubim	Ex 25:18, 22; 1 Ki 6:23-28	four living creatures	Rv 4:6-8; Ezk 1:10
worshippers	<i>passim</i>	worshippers	Rv 5:11; 7:9; 19:6
sacrifice of lambs	Ex 29:39	slain Lamb of God	Rv 5:6

For all the similarities between the earthly and heavenly temples, there are some essential differences. For example, earthly temples contained drawings or representations of cherubim, while cherubim in the heavenly temple were actually living beings of a type unknown on earth; again it is clear that the heavenly temple was the reality, while the earthly temple was a type. Earthly temples were built by man; the heavenly temple was built by God himself. God dwelled permanently in his heavenly temple, though he might

visit an earthly one on occasion.¹³⁴ On the earth, imperfect mortals congregated in or near the temple to worship; in heaven, celestial beings worship God throughout eternity (J Parry & D Parry 1994:522).

The concept of a heavenly temple, as mentioned earlier, is well attested in Biblical and early Jewish and Christian literature.¹³⁵ Another manifestation of the idea of the heavenly temple is represented in the *Fata Morgana* (a mirage; the view that the earthly temple is a reflection or an image of the heavenly temple), which was the driving force behind the development of the notion of vertical sacred space, for there must be some kind of conduit of sacred space connecting the two temples. This in turn fostered increased interest in heavenly phenomena, planetary movements, celestial observations and, eventually, astrology. Some ancient traditions carried the notion to an extreme length by declaring that there were seven different heavens and seven corresponding levels of earth. In these traditions there were fourteen sanctuaries or temples, all in a line, a grandiose *axis mundi*, and if one of the temples should fall, they would all fall. This would result in the worst form of cosmic chaos and would be a disaster of unmitigated proportions (Wensinck 1978:51).

The concept of a heavenly temple thus touches upon several of the points related to the underlying notion of sacred space: the cosmic mountain, the primordial hillock, the waters of life, the orientation of temples, temple plans revealed to their builder, and the frequent association of the temple with burial and ancestor worship. The concept of the heavenly temple is therefore directly relevant to sacred space. Earthly temples had to be built by a type of sacred architecture according to plans revealed from the gods. The

¹³⁴ The Psalms provide evidence of Yahweh's heavenly temple in addition to its earthly counterpart on Mount Zion: 'Yahweh is in his holy temple; Yahweh's throne is in heaven' (Ps. 11:4). Frequently there is an intermingling of the earthly and heavenly temples: 'Yahweh looks down from heaven upon mankind' (Ps 14:2), while just five verses later, 'O that Israel's salvation would come out of Zion' (Clements 1965:68).

¹³⁵ Jewish literature actually presents two different concepts regarding the heavenly temple. One of them, already discussed, is the idea of a temple in heaven that was reflected in temples on earth. The other idea, older and perhaps more radical, is the concept of the universe as a gigantic temple, with heaven representing the Holy of Holies of this great universal temple. References to this are found in the writings of Josephus, Philo of Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria, and in much of the gnostic literature, such as the *Gospel of Philip* (MacRae 1984:177-180, 183-186).

heavenly temple was thought to be the centre of the cosmos and the source of order, justice, and arrangement in the heavens; even so, the earthly temple was the centre of the world and was necessary to bring order and light where before existed chaos and darkness. The rituals and liturgy of the one bore direct resemblance to the rituals and liturgy of the other. Earthly and heavenly temples both existed astride the *axis mundi*, and a corridor of sacred space was thought to connect them.

The heavenly temple may be characterised as: (1) the ultimate in sacred space, for if earthly temples must be consecrated and holy, how much more the heavenly temple must be pure and holy; (2) the ultimate scene of mediation, for the annual scene of the high priest entering the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem corresponded to the ministering of Christ, the Great High Priest, in the heavenly temple, and without whose atoning sacrifice none could be saved; (3) the ultimate goal and destination of the saints, whose rites and worship in the earthly temple were but a type and a shadow of what was to come in eternity; (4) the ultimate site of covenant ratification, where the only deeds of mortal men that will be efficacious in the eternal worlds are those done under the authority given to Peter, that is, to bind on earth and have it bound in heaven; and (5) the ultimate source of all revelation, all knowledge, all gifts, and all mercies (J Parry & D Parry 1994:522-528).

People seek the heavenly temple because ‘the temple is the image of the sanctified world. The holiness of the temple sanctifies both the cosmos and cosmic time...Religious man wants to live in a cosmos that is similar in holiness to that of the temple’ (Eliade 1958b:12). ‘Religious man’ wants to live in a *real* world, and this mortal vale of tears, in the perspective of scripture, is ‘a poor substitute for Reality, which is to be found in heaven, where God lives. Life’s purpose is to return to this heaven. The difficult journey is made lighter by access to the temple, which mirrors Reality...The ultimate initiation, death, will, following the resurrection and judgement, bring the worthy into the presence of God, on an earth made heavenly by being turned into one vast temple. The symbol and its referent will merge into one. Reality will reign supreme’ (Lundquist 1994b:633).

4.4 THE RITUAL OF *HIEROS GAMOS*

The *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage) was the culmination of the temple drama that began with the creation story. As the drama progressed the king, usually representing the founder of the race, died and was then resurrected. His triumph over death cemented his position as priest and king; he then underwent the *hieros gamos* for the purpose of figuratively begetting the race and bringing fertility and prosperity to the land.¹³⁶

This scenario, or one very much like it, can be found throughout the ancient world. A long Sumerian hymn depicts the spreading of the nuptial couch for the sacred marriage of Idin-Dagan, third king of the Isin dynasty (ca 1918-1897) and the goddess Innini, the equivalent of the Semitic Ishtar. It is well attested in the Babylonian *Akitu* (New Year's) Festival.¹³⁷ There is an inscription on a statue of Gudea of Lagash, dating from the end of the third millennium, which speaks of him as 'bringing wedding gifts on New Year's Day'; a cylinder of the same ruler speaks of the sacred marriage between the god Ningirsu and the goddess Bau.¹³⁸ The marriage of Ningirsu and Bau was intended to bestow fertility upon the land and a good future for the city and its governor (Hurowitz 1992:45-46, see also n 1).

A Sumerian sacred marriage text describes the ascent to the chapel atop a ziggurat. In this

¹³⁶ The king, representing the deity, often underwent this ritual on an annual basis, taking a temple priestess as his consort; the repetition of the ritual was thought mandatory in order to guarantee fertility to the land for the coming year. Some early Mesopotamian versions of this ritual involved the use of a bedroom atop the ziggurat for the use of the king and the goddess (van Buren 1952:301-302, 305, 306; Wilson 1999:312, 328).

¹³⁷ For the *hieros gamos* as part of the New Year's Festival, see Frankfort (1978:330-331). For the deification of Mesopotamian kings as a result of their participation in the ritual, see pp 295-299.

¹³⁸ The importance of the *hieros gamos* in the Gudea Cylinders has long been established. The nuptials of the gods are alluded to in Cylinder B (XIV 21-23, XVI 7-XVII 2), and possibly elsewhere. These passages relate Ningirsu's entry into the innermost part of the temple, his confinement with Bau, and the marriage bed. In this scene Gudea played the part of Ningirsu and was subsequently reckoned among the gods. But scholarly opinion is varied on this subject. E. Douglas van Buren found allusion to the *hieros gamos* all through both cylinders, and considered that the entire temple construction and dedication process was carried out with the sacred marriage in view (1944:1-72, but see esp 46-48). Frankfort was uncertain; while not discounting the opinion of van Buren, neither would he endorse it (1978:297, 330, 405 n. 7). For his part, de Vaux would have none of it, and constructed his own arguments against the whole ritual myth of the new year enthronement of the king, his victory over chaos, descent into the netherworld, death, resurrection, and the *hieros gamos*, at least as far as it pertained to Israelite theology (1965:2:504-506).

text the moon-god Nanna (Sin) sends a message to his lover, the goddess Ningal, inviting her to come and be with him. She replies that she will not come until he has given fertility to the country and ‘filled the rivers with the early flood, has made grain grow in the field, and caused fishes to be in the marshes, old and new reeds in the canebrake, stags in the forest, plants in the desert, honey and wine in the orchards, cress in the garden, and long life in the palace’; only then, said she, would she be willing to come to his house:

In your house on high, in your beloved house,
I will come to live,
Nanna, up above in your cedar perfumed mountain,
I will come to live,
O lord Nanna, in your citadel
I will come to live,
Where cows have multiplied, calves have multiplied,
I will come to live,
Nanna, in your mansion of Ur
I will come to live,
O lord! In its bed I for my part will lie down too! (Jacobsen 1976:126)

Egyptian texts speak of a similar divine marriage ritual that took place during the *Opet* Festival. The religious rites of the *Opet* Festival, while still not completely understood, ‘may have included rituals intended to celebrate a sacred marriage which intimated the divine parentage of the ruling monarch’ (Wilkinson 2000:171). Other Egyptian texts refer to a sacred marriage between the god Horus and the goddess Hathor, celebrated annually at Edfu, in addition to the rites of the *Opet* Festival. The union of Horus and Hathor was impersonated in the temple by the mating of Pharaoh and his consort (Gaster 1950:413-415).

The ritual of *hieros gamos* appeared in a wide array of ancient civilisations.¹³⁹ There is

¹³⁹ The *hieros gamos* was not confined to western Asia. ‘When the royal duties at Athens were divided among nine archons—the three principals...and the six juniors...it is to be assumed that there was some special reason for maintaining this rite of the sacred marriage...It was an annual, seasonal rite, and its origin must be considered very early’ (Smith 1958:32). Aristotle wrote of Dionysus’ sacred marriage with the king’s consort at the Boukolikon at Athens; Lucian described a three-day festival celebrating the nuptials of Leto and the birth of Apollo, as also those of Koronis and the birth of Asklepios. The practice was also found among the Asian mystery religions; the titles *pastophoroi* and *thalamepoloi*, both meaning ‘bridesman’, were titles of the priests of Attis and Cybele (Gaster 1950:413-415). The *hieros gamos* was

evidence of this practice in Canaan and Israel as well, though in less detail than Egypt or Mesopotamia. Brick couches, apparently used in the ritual, have been found in the ruins at Mari, and a seal from Tell Asmar contained the ceremony itself (Gaster 1950:413-415). The rites depicted in the Ras Shamra texts featured a sham conflict followed by a washing with water and an anointing with oil, new vestments, an enthronement ritual, and a sacred marriage (Clifford 1972:78). The Hebrew scriptures offer allusions of a sacred marriage in the story of Adam and Eve.¹⁴⁰

The ritual of the *hieros gamos* was typically considered the most holy and sacred rite in ancient temples, and was performed in the most sacred area. In those temples constructed in the ziggurat style, the rite was performed at the upper temple. Gudea maintained that Uri-zid was sent by Ningirsu to preside over the sacred rite and to ensure its privacy; Uri-zid was depicted holding a vase from which a stream of life-giving water poured out, representing the fertility that would go forth over the land as a result of the successful completion of the ritual (van Buren 1952:301-302, 305, 306).¹⁴¹

The *hieros gamos* was a ritual that occurred in sacred space, and in its own way defined a portion of that space. The preliminary temple rituals known as initiation rites (washing, anointing, receiving a new garment, receiving a new name) culminated in the sacred marriage, the most sacred ritual of all. The rite was performed by the king who represented the god and a temple priestess who represented his consort, usually in

also found in the secular celebrations of the Romans, the Celtic mythological cycles, and in the medieval mystery plays (Nibley 1984b:25-26).

¹⁴⁰ The description of Eve as Adam's 'helpmeet' in the KJV is ambiguous; the word could just as easily be translated 'wife'. Later, after their transgression, Eve was referred to as the wife of Adam (Gn 2:23; 3:17, 20-21). Furthermore, according to *Jubilees*, aspects of the temple service were known from the time of Adam. *Jubilees* 4:26 speaks of four sacred places on the earth: the Garden of Eden, the mountain of the east, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion. *Jubilees* notes that Adam was introduced into the Garden of Eden forty days after his creation, and Eve eighty days after her creation; this indicates that Eden contained (or was itself) a sanctuary that had a good deal to do with the continuing stability and order of creation. 'Noah knew that the Garden of Eden was the holy of holies and the dwelling of the Lord. And Mount Sinai was in the midst of the desert and Mount Zion [was] in the midst of the navel of the earth. The three of these were created as holy places, one facing the other'. As far as *Jubilees* was concerned, then, introducing Adam and Eve into the Garden of Eden was synonymous with introducing them into the Holy of Holies (Brooke 2005:419-420).

¹⁴¹ This article concludes with a statement describing the importance of foundation rituals in the construction and dedication of a temple; if they were done incorrectly or incompletely, 'the sacred marriage or any other religious function performed in the edifice would be null and void'.

conjunction with annual vegetation and fertility rituals, in order to ensure abundant rainfall, fertility among plants (plentiful crops), animals (large flocks and herds), and humans (to overcome the barrenness and sterility of women).

4.5 KINGSHIP, CORONATION RITES, AND THE TEMPLE

In the Ras Shamra texts, Baal founded his temple on Mount Zaphon in order to manifest his kingship to the assembly of the gods. The building of a temple not only symbolised Baal's establishment of order in the cosmos, but also served to establish the rule of an earthly king. 'There is thus a tie', wrote Cross, 'between the temple as the abode of the king of the gods and the temple as a dynastic shrine of the earthly king, the adopted son of the god' (Cross 1984:97-98; 1981:174-176).¹⁴² The eternal kingship of the god is reflected in the earthly kingship of the god's chosen or anointed one, creating a strong link between temple and kingship.¹⁴³ The close tie between temple and kingship eventually led to the blurring of rituals between the two, wherein the rites of the temple and the rites of kingship, especially coronation ceremonies, began to mirror one another quite closely. Issues and practices dealing with temple ritual appeared in enthronement ceremonies as well. These shared rituals included ablutions and anointings, the taking of a new name, a new garment, a mock combat, the *hieros gamos*, processions, and more.¹⁴⁴

Indeed, the connection between ancient Near Eastern temples and the kings of the respective temple cities was so strong that temple-building became regarded as the legitimate task of kings as well as of the gods who ordered them (Kapelrud 1963:56-

¹⁴² Cross developed a linear progression of the idea of the temple as an institution granting legitimacy to the political ruler based on the evolution of Israelite shrines: the tent of the congregation became the tent of Yahweh, which in turn became the House of Yahweh. Thus the Davidic tent shrine formed a transition between the tribal shrine at Shiloh and the dynastic temple of Solomon.

¹⁴³ For the evolution of ancient Israelite society from a ragtag group of Egyptian exiles to a political entity under Davidic rule sufficiently sophisticated to regard the temple as a source of political legitimacy, see Lundquist (1982:179-235, but see esp 188-201).

¹⁴⁴ See Ricks & Sroka (1994b:260-262) for a list of twenty-seven features found to be common among ancient temple ritual and kingship coronation and enthronement ceremonies, many of which persist down to the present time. For more information on the anointing of ancient Near Eastern kings and their reception of a special garment, see de Vaux (1971:162-166).

62).¹⁴⁵ Even the relationship between the god and the king became blurred; kingship took on a type of divine, sacral character of its own.¹⁴⁶ Frequently the king himself was viewed as being of divine origin,¹⁴⁷ and the king who successfully built a temple to the god of the land was considered to be blessed with a successful reign and a long life (Kapelrud 1963:56, 58). The king was the only one allowed direct contact with the deity, and his authority was confirmed and reconfirmed upon a regular basis (Levi 1981:39).

Kingship and temple in ancient Israel was somewhat different than in Mesopotamia or Egypt. In Israel the temple symbolised above all else the kingship of Yahweh, his inviolability, and his ultimate victory over the world. Some psalms (particularly 46, 48,

¹⁴⁵ Another aspect to be considered here is the role of the temple in taking possession of new territory. This normally took one of two forms. Either the establishment of a sanctuary constituted the foundation of a new settlement, or the establishment of a sanctuary served to consecrate the seizure of territory. In the latter case, the building of the temple preceded all other new construction. In ancient Israel, the rules for seizing foreign territory and establishing Israelite hegemony were spelled out in Deuteronomy 12. The first five verses outlined the general process:

Yahweh promises the land to Israel;

Existing places of worship must be destroyed;

Yahweh chooses a new central place; and

Sacrifice is offered at the new location.

Thus the forceful taking of the land of Canaan was foreshadowed; there was no thought that the land might be taken peaceably (Hagedorn 2005:189, 193).

¹⁴⁶ 'King and temple belonged together as the pillars of state in Ancient Near Eastern Society... It was the inevitable step that David should have sought to secure his throne by the erection of a temple to the God who was believed to have established his right to rule' (Clements 1965:59).

¹⁴⁷ In Mesopotamia, few kings outwardly proclaimed themselves divine, but many claimed a status somewhere on the human-divine continuum. This position was acknowledged by placing their statues in the temples next to those of the gods. The king played a vital role in the enactment of the annual rituals of the *Enuma Elish*, performed during the New Year *Akitu* festival. In Egypt, by way of contrast, the divinity of the Pharaoh was assumed without reservations. The Pharaohs participated in the *sed*-festival and in the *Opet*-festival, which had many points in common with the Babylonian *Akitu*. Hittite kings also performed similar roles in the *sar puhi* festival which, like the others mentioned above, included fertility rites, coronation, and enthronement rituals. Similar practices are found among the Syrians and Canaanites. The situation was somewhat different in Israel, as there could be no question that the king was not one of many deities, for there was only one God. Be this as it may, there were still many features in the Israelite Feast of Tabernacles that correlated to the coronation and enthronement rituals in the surrounding civilisations, all wrapped up within annual fertility rites based on the agrarian cycle. The role of the king in the temple was crucial for the maintenance of order and stability, for peace and prosperity, and for fertility and abundance. The king (represented by the priests) performed the daily rituals in the temple, but our focus here is primarily on the role of the king in the great annual New Year festivals. In these festivals the king participated in mock contests and sham battles; he was subsequently humiliated, underwent death, and descended to the netherworld. This act represented the death of vegetation and the end of the agricultural year. The king was then resurrected; this action symbolised the return of fertility and fruitfulness and the promise of abundant rain and a bountiful harvest. The festival's apex was the divine union between heaven and earth, symbolised by the participation of the king (representing the god) and a temple priestess (representing the earth) in a divine marriage ceremony (Postgate 1992:260-263, 266-269).

and 76) spoke specifically of the kingship of Yahweh and his temple on Mount Zion. His temple [palace] signified his total triumph over all of the hostile forces that afflicted Israel and his eventual victory over the entire world with the establishment of Zion and the implementation of a new world order. Then his earthly temple will ‘become’ the heavenly temple that it now only resembles; then there will be no more distinction between the sacred and the profane; then a purified and sanctified mankind will go up to the mountain of the Lord’s house; and then worshipers at the temple will enter true sacred space and enter true reality (Clifford 1984:107-124, but see esp 117-119).

Kingship and coronation rites in the ancient Near East were an important part of temple activity. They had to be performed in sacred space in order to be efficacious, for the god whose rule over the universe was symbolised by the heavenly temple had his earthly counterpart, the king, the god’s regent, who ruled his earthly temple by virtue of the enthronement and coronation rites conducted in the earthly temple. These rites were typically performed on an annual basis, generally in conjunction with the New Year’s festival, to refresh the legitimacy of the king’s reign and his status as the earthly representative of the gods.

Temple building was recognised as the responsibility of gods and kings. Temples and palaces were often built adjacent to each other, with the king having his own personal entrance; sometimes the temple came to be viewed as nothing less than the royal chapel. In Jerusalem, the temple of Yahweh symbolised his ultimate victory over death, chaos, and evil, and the establishment of a new world order resulting in the eventual merging of the earthly with the heavenly temple.

4.6 SECRECY AND THE TEMPLE

Temple rites and ordinances have always been held in the utmost sanctity; hence, temple worshipers have always been admonished to guard them with secrecy. The objective was to keep them separate from the profane world. They were regarded as hallowed things that must be kept from a wicked world even as sacred space is demarcated from that

which is secular or profane.

Segregation from the world was the watchword; when one entered the temple one must have first separated oneself from worldly thoughts, words, and deeds. Temple worshipers were to be as clean and sanctified as the temple itself with its furnishings. Shrouding the rites and ordinances of the temple with secrecy was making a statement that what went on inside the temple had absolutely no point of contact with things that occurred in the profane world outside.¹⁴⁸

This has been the case from the beginning. After Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit (from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), she called out to Adam, ‘Adam, Adam, where art thou? Rise up, come to me and I will show thee a great secret’ (*Books of Adam and Eve* 21:1). The secret, of course, was the knowledge she had obtained by eating the fruit. The Tree of Life also had its secret, which it kept ‘hidden, unknown, sealed and unsuspected’; both of these trees, along with all the other trees in the Garden of Eden, were ‘fed from a secret spring’ (Gaster 1976:176). In fact, the whole of Eden was sacred and therefore secret.¹⁴⁹

Secrecy regarding temples and temple rites was a widespread feature of ancient temples and societies. Mesopotamian temple rites were closely guarded (Hooke 1963:47; Jacobsen 1976:16). An ancient Egyptian magical text warned the reader: ‘Thou shalt not divulge it. He who divulges it dies a sudden death and an immediate cutting-off. Thou shalt keep very far away from it; by it one lives and dies. It is only to be read by a scribe of the workshop whose name is in the House of Life’ (quoted in Lundquist 1993:26). The Egyptian Book of the Dead is full of warnings about secrecy. This from Spell 114: ‘I know it, for I have been initiated into it by the Sem priest, and I have never spoken nor made repetition to the gods...I have entered as a Power because of what I know, I have not spoken to men, I have not repeated what was said’. Spell 162 refers to a secret book:

¹⁴⁸ The *effects* of temple ritual might readily be seen outside the temple in terms of prosperity and the fertility of the land, but the rituals themselves must stay within the walls of the temple (Nibley 1992:61-66).

¹⁴⁹ Eve was said to have found the secret of the Old and New Testaments (Prest 1981:23). Adam received a secret name which he received from the ‘House of Life’, and the ‘House of Life’ was known as the ‘Secret Place’ (Drower 1960:36).

‘This is a book of great secrecy—let no one see it for that would be an abomination. But the one who knows it and keeps it hidden shall continue to exist. The name of this book is “Mistress of the Hidden Temple”’ (Faulkner’s translation, quoted in Lundquist 1993:26-27).

The question of secrecy was tied to the restrictions governing access to the temple and its surroundings. Temples and temple complexes were considered sacred space and off limits to unauthorised personnel;¹⁵⁰ this restriction was in effect as soon as the temple site had been demarcated and construction had begun.¹⁵¹ Entrance to the temple and participation in its rituals were governed by a number of factors, not least among them personal worthiness.¹⁵² Fairman (1954:201) offers a translation of an inscription on a door of the temple at Edfu:

Everyone who enters by this door, beware of entering in impurity, for God loves purity more than millions of possessions, more than hundreds of thousands of fine gold. His food is Truth, he is satisfied with it. His heart is pleased with great purity... Turn your faces to this temple in which His Majesty has placed you. He sails in the heavens while seeing what is done therein, and he is pleased therewith according to its exactitude. Do not come in in sin, do not enter in impurity. Do not utter falsehood in his house, do not covet things, do not slander, do not accept bribes, do not be partial as between a poor man and a great, do not add to the weight and measure, but (rather) reduce them; do not tamper with the corn-measure; do not harm the requirements of the Eye-of-Re (the divine offerings); do not reveal what you have seen in the mysteries of the temples; do not stretch

¹⁵⁰ To encroach unlawfully upon sacred space was a serious matter. The Lord commanded Moses to set bounds around Mount Sinai, lest the unworthy break through and touch it and die (Ex 19:12-13, 21-24). In another place, over fifty thousand of the men of Beth-Shemesh were smitten by the Lord for merely looking into the ark of the covenant (1 Sm 6:19-20).

¹⁵¹ Ancient Norse sanctuaries, known as *Ve*, were cordoned off by a strong rope (*vebond*) or by a fence. Greek shrines were marked by a red band. The Agora in Athens was surrounded by a special kind of rope, the *perischoinion*. The Greeks had no shortage of mystery religions and mystery rites protected by oaths of secrecy. In the New Testament the word *mystery* is expressed by the Greek word *musterion*, which is in turn derived from the Greek *muo*, meaning, bluntly enough, to ‘shut the mouth’ (Strong 1990: #3466). Kittel wrote that in the Hellenistic world the word *mysteria* was often used to describe ‘cultic rites... portrayed by sacred actions before a circle of devotees’, who ‘must undergo initiation’ and who are promised ‘salvation by the dispensing of cosmic life’, which is sometimes ‘enacted in cultic drama’, accompanied by a strict ‘vow of silence’ (Kittel [ed] 1977:4:803-806). The ancient Greek rites at Eleusis were so shrouded in secrecy that when two young men from a distant town inadvertently joined the rituals in 200 BCE and were discovered, they were promptly put to death.

¹⁵² This principle is applied in modern Mecca, where worship is restricted to Muslims only, and where checkpoints exist on all roads leading into Mecca to prevent non-Muslims from progressing further. Even those Muslims who pass the checkpoints must be in a state of ritual purity which is achieved by performing ablutions, wearing a ritual garment, offering prayers, and making a declaration of intention (Strathearn & Hauglid 1999:291).

forth the arm to the things of his house, do not venture to seize his property. Beware, moreover, of saying 'Fool!' in the heart, for one lives on the bounty of the gods, and 'bounty' one calls what comes forth from the altar after the reversion of the divine offerings upon them. Behold, whether he sails in the heavens, or whether he traverses the Netherworld, his eyes are firmly fixed upon his possessions in their (proper) places.¹⁵³

The secrecy common to temple rites and mystery religions in general eventually passed into many coronation and enthronement ceremonies. Even in modern times these rituals, dispersed around the world, still retain closely-guarded secrets; secrecy is an important element in enthronement rites in such far-flung locations as Japan, Thailand, Fiji, and among many African tribes (Ricks & Sroka 1994b:238-239).

Jung was struck by the practice of secrecy he observed among certain Indians in the south-western U.S.:

The Pueblo Indians are unusually closemouthed, and in matters of their religion absolutely inaccessible. They make it a policy to keep their religious practices a secret, and this secret is so strictly guarded that I abandoned as hopeless any attempt at direct questioning. Never before had I run into such an atmosphere of secrecy; the religions of civilized nations today are all accessible; their sacraments have long ago ceased to be mysteries. Here, however, the air was filled with a secret known to all the communicants, but to which whites could gain no access. This strange situation gave me an inkling of Eleusis, whose secret was known to one nation and yet never betrayed. I understood what Pausanias or Herodotus felt when he wrote: 'I am not permitted to name the name of that god'. This was not, I felt, mystification, but a vital mystery whose betrayal might bring about the downfall of the community as well as of the individual. Preservation of the secret gives the Pueblo Indian pride and the power to resist the dominant whites. It gives him cohesion and unity; and I feel sure that the Pueblos as an individual community will continue to exist as long as their mysteries are not desecrated (Jung 1965:249-250).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ It is clear that these directions were issued toward the priests, for the common man could not hope to actually enter the temple or participate in its ordinances. In Egypt, as in Mesopotamia, the nearest an ordinary man could come to entering the temple was participating in one of the annual public banquets with their accompanying processions. In Israel, only the priests and Levites could enter the temple, although all Israelites were to gather to Jerusalem three times a year for the great feasts (Haran 1985:290-294).

¹⁵⁴ Later on in this book Jung further developed his ideas regarding the importance of secrets to the strength and longevity of a community: 'There is no better means of intensifying the treasured feeling of individuality than the possession of a secret which the individual is pledged to guard. The very beginnings of societal structures reveal the craving for secret organizations. When no valid secrets really exist, mysteries are invented or contrived to which privileged initiates are admitted. Such was the case with the Rosicrucians and many other societies. Among these pseudosecrets there are—ironically—real secrets of

The need for secrecy regarding temple ritual was woven into the architecture of the temple itself. Perhaps the most interesting architectural symbol of secrecy was the *labyrinth*. Some ancient temples, particularly in Egypt¹⁵⁵ but also in Canaan,¹⁵⁶ featured maze-like paths, usually constructed according to a *mandala*, that led to the interior of the temple and could not easily be traversed by the uninitiated. The labyrinth was an architectural expression of a primitive temple myth concerning man's eternal search for a return to the centre place. The labyrinth was a deliberate attempt to create a difficult pathway into the temple for the express purpose of protecting the sacred mysteries inside from being stumbled upon by outsiders.¹⁵⁷

Secrecy in the temple was graphically portrayed by other features of temple architecture: high enclosure walls; multiple courtyards to facilitate transition from areas of lower to higher sanctity, with ablutions at every point of transition; the elevation of those areas of the temple complex of greater holiness, which not only symbolised a spiritual ascent by a physical climb, but also prohibited those on lower levels from observing much of the activity on higher levels; military-style gates and entryways ensuring controlled access, with only the king and selected priests and temple officials permitted into the most holy areas; and offset curtains or doors leading to the most sacred areas to prohibit inadvertent glances into the inner sanctum. Secrecy was also graphically portrayed in the literary record; the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* warned that the dead would have to pass multiple gates with sentries, and that they needed to know the names of the sentries and the passwords in order to progress on their journey (Allen 1974:120-122; Gee 1999:233-274).

which the initiates are entirely unaware—as, for example, in those societies which borrowed their ‘secret’ primarily from the alchemical tradition’ (p 342).

¹⁵⁵ One example is the remains of the mortuary temple of Amenemhet III at Hawara, described by Strabo as a labyrinth (Grimal 1992:170). The famous Labyrinth of King Minos on Crete was copied by Daedalus from this original labyrinth (Deedes 1935:16-21).

¹⁵⁶ For example, at Hazor and Ammon (Dever 1995:610).

¹⁵⁷ Other early labyrinths include those found in the Upper Paleolithic caves of France and Spain. Early European cathedrals, most famously the one at Chartre, featured labyrinths portrayed on mosaic floors. These mosaics were found at the crossing of the nave with the chancel, aligned with the main altar, thus symbolically protecting the Holy of Holies from “direct” access (Lundquist 2008:180-181).

Sacred space can be neither created nor maintained without the element of secrecy, for the primary purpose of secrecy in ancient temples was to separate the sacred from the profane. Secrecy was the single characteristic shared by all mystery religions; it was meant to guard sacred truths from those who had no use for them. Secrets of the temple, used properly, could be a source of rich blessing and comfort to the initiated. When revealed improperly to the profane, they lost all meaning and could only cause confusion and harm.¹⁵⁸

4.7 THE TEMPLE AND THE TREE OF LIFE

The Bible both begins and ends, one might say, with a description of the Tree of Life. In the second chapter of Genesis we read about this tree which was placed in the midst of the garden (Gn 2:9), that is, the centre of the temple, which was the most sacred area. In the book of Revelation we read about the Tree of Life that is said to exist on both sides of the river flowing out from underneath the temple (Rv 22:2). The Tree of Life is also spoken of frequently in non-canonical sources. The Nag Hammadi codices, for example, speak of this tree and describe its colour as like unto the sun, with beautiful leaves and branches, fruit like white grapes, and whose height reaches up to the heavens.¹⁵⁹ The *Book of Hymns* describes the Tree of Life as a true cosmic or world tree, an *axis mundi*:

... planted a tree
 which blooms with flowers unfading,
 whose boughs put forth thick leaves,
 which stands firm-planted forever,
 and gives shade to all
 whose branches tower to heaven,
 whose roots sink down to the abyss.
 All the rivers of Eden water its boughs;
 It thrives beyond all bounds,
 burgeons beyond all measure.
 Its branches stretch endless across the world
 and its roots go down to the nethermost depths (Gaster 1976:168).

¹⁵⁸ Christ's injunction to refrain from casting pearls before swine was neither an expression of contempt for the unworthy nor an aspersion on pigs. It was merely a 'commentary on the uselessness of giving things to people who place no value on them, have no use for them, and could only spoil them' (Nibley 1994:553-554).

¹⁵⁹ See Smith (1978:118) for the temple as a symbol of the Tree of Life, the *axis mundi*.

Enoch described the Tree of Life as ‘indescribable for pleasantness and fine fragrance, and more beautiful than any other created thing that exists. And from every direction it has an appearance which is gold-looking and crimson, and with the form of fire. And it covers the whole of Paradise. And it has something of every orchard tree and of every fruit’.¹⁶⁰

Eliade also places the Tree of Life at the centre of the world where it becomes the *axis mundi*. The sacred tree is always found atop a holy mountain where it ‘connects earth with heaven’ and enables ‘primordial man’ to climb the mountain and the tree to reach heaven, thus enabling him to commune with the gods (Eliade 1959c:257-260).

Mayan traditions speak about the re-creation of the earth after the flood. Four ‘trees of abundance’ were placed at the cardinal points, and a ‘Green Tree of Abundance’ was placed at the centre of the earth. The roots of this tree were said to be immersed in water, suggesting contact with the primordial waters.¹⁶¹

Widengren (1951:6-9) maintained that Mesopotamian temples contained a ‘sacred grove’ with one tree specially marked as the Tree of Life. Other temples, including Israelite temples, contained replicas.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ 2 Enoch 8:3-4. Elsewhere, 1 Enoch 1-36 (the *Book of Watchers*) is not explicitly concerned with the temple, but it does have a great deal to say about the Tree of Life: it is a fragrant tree on God’s holy mountain, at the centre of the earth. ‘As for this fragrant tree, no [creature of] flesh has authority to touch it until the great judgment in which [there will be] vengeance on all and a consummation forever. Then it will be given to the righteous and holy. Its fruit [will be] food for the chosen, and it will be transplanted to a holy place by the house of God, the king of eternity. Then they will rejoice with joy and be glad, and they will enter the holy [place]; its fragrance [will be] in their bones, and they will live a long life on the earth, such as your fathers lived, and in their days torments and plagues and scourges will not touch them’ (1 Enoch 25:4-6, Greek version). Thus the Tree of Life, presently out of human reach, will someday be transplanted near the temple in Jerusalem. This may be the idea behind the requirement of Solomon that palm trees be carved on the inside walls of his temple (Knibb 2005:404-405).

¹⁶¹ Early Spanish explorers were shocked to find Mesoamerican civilisations using the cross symbol in their religious practices. The Mesoamerican cross was actually a stylised representation of the Tree of Life, which was viewed primarily as a symbol of life and secondarily as a symbol of the ascendancy of good over evil (thus this symbol combined the aspects of the Tree of Life with those of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil). The origin of this symbol in the Americas dates back to the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era (Woodford 1953:7, 8, 14-15).

¹⁶² In the story of the burning bush the word translated “bush” could just as easily be translated “tree,” thus symbolising the presence of Yahweh as a tree that was burning but not consumed. This figure was later

The Messiah is often described in terms reminiscent of Tree of Life imagery (Wyatt 2001:169); he is variously referred to in the scriptures as ‘a tender plant’ (Is 53:2), a ‘Branch’ (Is 11:1), a ‘root out of dry ground’ (Is 53:2), and ‘the true vine’ (Jn 15:1).

The Tree of Life, a common motif in temple decoration and a fundamental facet of temple mythology, is inherently tied to sacred space. In the Garden of Eden, the tree was placed in the centre of the garden, and therefore in its most sacred spot. The tree was a symbol of the *axis mundi*, and also symbolised the Messiah and perhaps all righteous men and women. Temple complexes often contained sacred groves.

4.8 WATER AND THE TEMPLE

It was noted earlier that water played a dichotomous role in ancient Near Eastern creation mythology. On the one hand, it represented the waters of life, fruitful, healing, life-giving; on the other hand, it often represented chaos, evil, destruction. The many examples in the literature of water coming forth from underneath the Temple nearly always yield the benevolent interpretation. This is despite the fact that the Temple was considered to have its foundations in the primeval waters which were capped and controlled by a stone, such as the Foundation Stone, in the Jerusalem temple.¹⁶³

represented in the Tabernacle and in the Jerusalem temples by the menorah, a stylised tree that burned oil and illuminated the temple and gave light to everything within; thus we have symbol upon symbol of Israel’s God (Draper & Parry 1999:123-129, but see esp 129; Levenson 1985:20-21; Meyers 1976:95-164; Parry 1994a:127-129).

¹⁶³ De Vaux (1965:2:277-278) seems to suggest that there is no record of any spring or source of fresh water that existed under the successive temples at Jerusalem, and that any water required for ablutions or other purposes had to be brought into the temple precincts from outside. Yet the 2nd century BCE Letter of Aristeas indicates otherwise: ‘And there is an endless supply of water, as if indeed a strongly flowing natural spring were issuing forth from within [the Temple]; and in addition there exist marvellous and indescribable reservoirs underground—as they showed me—for five stades around the foundation of the Temple; and each of them has numberless channels such that the streams join up together with each other from different sides. And all these down to the bottom were leaded, and over the walls of these a vast quantity of plaster had been spread; everything had been done effectively. There were also very many openings at the base (of the altar) which were invisible to all except to those who have the duty of carrying out the Service, so that all the blood of the sacrifices, which is collected in huge amounts, is cleansed by the downward momentum and slope’ (Hayward 1996:28).

4.8.1 In the Garden of Eden

From earliest times, sanctuaries have been associated with a spring of water (Wensinck 1978:30-33). This idea may have sprung from the river that issued from Eden, formed perhaps by a mountain spring, to water the garden and from thence divided into four branches¹⁶⁴ that went forth from Eden to water the whole earth (Gn 2:10-14). These waters of Eden, representing the ‘quintessential sacred waters’ (Parry 1994a:129-131), were said elsewhere to have originated ‘opposite the throne of glory’.¹⁶⁵

Clifford tied the river(s) of Eden with ancient Mesopotamian poetry wherein paradise was proclaimed as the source of life-giving waters. These in turn were related with the waters of El and with the ‘pools of the double-deep’, identified by Kramer (1944:28, n 41) as the point where the Euphrates and Tigris emptied into the Persian Gulf, which coincidentally was the approximate location of *Dilmun*, the equivalent of Eden in Mesopotamian mythology.¹⁶⁶

Nibley (1951:235) wrote, ‘At every hierocentric shrine stood a mountain or artificial mound and a lake or spring from which four streams flowed out to bring the life-giving waters to the four regions of the earth. The place was a green paradise, a carefully kept garden, a refuge from drought and heat. Elaborate waterworks figure conspicuously in the appointments and the rites of the holy place’.

¹⁶⁴ The number *four* is normally indicative of an attempt to show totality, thus, the four winds or the four corners of the earth. The four branches of the river of Eden were the Pishon, the Gihon, the Euphrates, and the Hiddeqel, which is normally equated with the Tigris. In the Hebrew Bible ‘Hiddeqel’ is mentioned but twice, in Genesis 2:14 and in Daniel 10:4. The Masoretic vocalization of Hiddeqel is unsatisfactory; it was only with the discovery of the Ebla tablets that light was shed on this perplexing problem. In essence, the Eblaite tablets vocalised the name of the river as ‘Hiddaql’, which yielded the tentative interpretation ‘the Voice (thunder) brings joy’. Thus the Masoretic text supplied the consonants, while the Eblaite tablets supplied the vowels (Dahood 1984:88, n 10).

¹⁶⁵ 3 Enoch 18:19; 19:4. Here Enoch equated the rivers of Eden with four celestial ‘rivers of fire’, or ‘four heads of the river of fire’, that originated at God’s throne. In this viewpoint Enoch agreed with Daniel, who described a vision of the Ancient of Days sitting upon his throne of ‘fiery flames’ and flowing from his throne was a ‘fiery stream’ (Dn 7:9-11). The Qumran community knew of this legend and referred to this stream as a ‘fountain of light’ with ‘fiery sparks’ that emitted from it (Gaster 1976:169).

¹⁶⁶ Clifford’s analysis is interesting as it suggests a Mesopotamian rather than a West Semitic provenance for the setting of Genesis 2-3 (1972:50-51, 100-101, 158-160).

4.8.2 Water under the temple

The theme of water issuing forth from the temple and going out to provide fertility and life-giving and life-sustaining blessings to the four quarters of the earth had temporal as well as spiritual roots. On the temporal side, this motif represented the belief of the ancients that the physical well-being of the people, their health, their prosperity, the abundance of their flocks and herds, and the luxuriant richness of vegetation was directly dependent upon the temple, its proper functioning, and its meticulous observance of ritual. On a spiritual level, the water was a symbol of the spiritual blessings to be poured out upon all mankind, which were also dependent upon support given to the temple, worthy admittance to the temple, absolute fastidiousness in the observance of temple ritual, and obedience to the precepts and responsibilities as taught therein.

The theme of sacred waters issuing forth from underneath the temple was picked up by Joel, who taught that in the last days, rivers would flow from the mountain of the temple, and that they would flow with ‘new wine’ and ‘milk’, and that a fountain or ‘spring’ would issue forth from the house of the Lord:

And in that day,
The mountains shall drip with wine,
The hills shall flow with milk,
And all the watercourses of Judah shall flow with water;
A spring shall issue from the House of the Lord
And shall water the Wadi of the Acacias (Jl 4:18).

Water from under Ezekiel’s temple will flow forth to heal the salty waters of the Dead Sea, bless fishermen with an abundance of fish, nourish fruit trees along its banks whose leaves would have great medicinal value, and eventually become the source of fertility throughout the earth (Ezk 47:1-2).¹⁶⁷ Zechariah’s description of this river differs; Ezekiel describes the river as flowing eastward, while Zechariah says it divides, with one part flowing eastward and the other part flowing westward, presumably to the Mediterranean (Zch 14:8; cf Is 33:20-22). John’s vision describing the paradisiacal state of the earth in

¹⁶⁷ There is an opinion that the trees planted beside the river, rich in abundant fruit, are symbols of the righteous persons in the temple (Creach 1999:34-46).

the great millennial day included a ‘pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb’ (Rv 22:1-4). Psalm 36:9 speaks of a ‘refreshing stream’ from which God allows men to drink. Levenson (1976:28) compares this stream with the river of Eden. Other apocryphal and pseudepigraphical sources include similar ideas.¹⁶⁸

Fertility, health, and spiritual treasures were the blessings symbolised by the theme of springs or rivers coming forth from underneath the temple.¹⁶⁹ Many ancient legends testify that as in days of old, so in the coming days of the Messiah all the waters of creation will again spring up from under the threshold of the temple and go forth and cover the whole earth. In the New Sumerian period, on Gudea’s Cylinder B, which describes the sacred marriage between Ningirsu and Bau, the consummation of the marriage is followed by water streaming forth from a vessel placed next to the couch of the gods;¹⁷⁰ this water is said to then bring forth abundance like unto the Euphrates and the Tigris (Patai 1947:86-87). Jewish legends, speaking of the stream to come forth from under the millennial temple, describe it as splitting into twelve heads and going forth to the twelve tribes of Israel. ‘Every field and vineyard, which grow no fruit will be irrigated by these waters and they will bear fruit...and there, on the banks of the river, all kinds of fruit-bearing trees will grow...and they will bring forth their fruit each month anew...while these will be eaten those will bud forth...and whoever suffers of an ailment will take from their leaves and will be cured’.¹⁷¹ The Psalmist wrote, ‘Like the dew¹⁷² of Hermon that falls upon the mountains of Zion, there the Lord ordained blessing,

¹⁶⁸ The Mandaeanes went so far as to claim that the river of Eden was responsible for creating Adam, and referred to it as the ‘stream of living waters’, the ‘well-spring’, and the ‘womb of creation’. Thus the original man was created in the waters and eventually, when he had acquired sufficient strength, climbed out of the river and began his life on *terra firma* (Drower 1960:23-24).

¹⁶⁹ In Islam, the waters of life are said to flow from the well Zamzam, the ‘Well of Ishmael’, at the south-east corner of the Kaaba. Pilgrims to Mecca drink from the well to benefit from its health-giving powers, and they will even take some of it home to give to the sick (Strathearn & Hauglid 1999:283).

¹⁷⁰ Van Buren wrote that ancient legends of a vase and water issuing from it were symbols ‘of the perpetually recurring streams of living water productive of the fruitfulness and abundance bestowed by divine munificence’ (1945:124-125).

¹⁷¹ *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer*, ch 51; cf Y. *Sheqalim* 50a top. The type of ailments to be cured, while not explicitly stipulated in the text, are supposed to especially include dumbness and the sterility of women.

¹⁷² In Hebrew there is little distinction between dew and rain. In this passage Mount Zion is said to be blessed with life-giving water, even as Mount Hermon.

everlasting life' (Ps 133:3).

The future Zion spoken of by Ezekiel and others will be a source of physical and spiritual blessing for all mankind. It will heal both nature and human nature. The river issuing from the temple 'is an earnest of the coming serenity of the redeemed. Its placidity is a proleptic revelation of Israel's restored condition in the coming age' (Levenson 1976:12).

Water in temple mythology was a symbol of the primordial ocean (such as Solomon's 'brazen sea' or the lakes that are found in many Egyptian temple complexes). It has a definite relationship with sacred space. From Eden poured forth a river that divided into four heads and went out to water the whole earth; from Ezekiel's temple a river will issue forth that will heal the waters of the Dead Sea and bring forth fish and trees in abundance, bearing all manner of fruit and leaves of great medicinal value. It is clear that these streams are intended to represent the blessings that issue from the temple and go forth throughout the world.

The temple, in the ancient Near East and elsewhere, was viewed as the source of both physical and spiritual blessings. Temporal blessings were explicitly promised at the construction and dedication of a temple, and it was believed that blessings such as fruitfulness, abundance of rain, an ample harvest, peace, and safety would result from a methodical performance of ritual and the offering of appropriate sacrifices. The more spiritually-inclined among the people also recognised the temple as the place where worlds touched, where the presence of the holy resided, as the embodiment of sacred space, and as the fount of spiritual blessings so extensive as to be nearly incomprehensible. These blessings were available due to the nature of the temple as sacred space.

4.9 CONCLUSIONS

In its ultimate and purest definition, sacred space is created by an encounter with the divine. It is a place where worlds touch—however briefly—and thereby becomes set apart from the surrounding profane space.

As articulated in this chapter, sacred space can be created or revealed as a result of cultic or even liturgical activities. The periodic recital of the cosmogonic myth for the purpose of re-creating the sacred time of the *illud tempus* was an important ritual in the temples of the ancient Near East. This rite had to be performed in an area of consecrated, dedicated sacred space, for sacred time cannot exist in a profane environment. Other temple rituals, including kingship, enthronement, and coronation ceremonies and also the enactment of the sacred marriage (the highest ordinance performed in ancient temples), were executed in sacred space. There may have existed a sort of symbiotic relationship here as these rituals may have drawn a measure of sanctity from the temple environment, while at the same time they may have conferred a degree of holiness upon the site by virtue of their consummation within the walls of the temple.

The existence and propagation of various mythologies centred around the temple contributed to its status as sacred space. The idea, for example, that the earthly temple was a type and a shadow of the heavenly temple, and that the two were closely correlated, served to enhance the nature of the temple as sacred space. Other mythologies, such as the nature of the temple as the site of the Tree of Life and the concept of water issuing forth from the temple as a symbol of temple blessings spreading throughout the whole earth, also augmented the temple as sacred space. The sacred nature of many temple mythologies and rituals were protected by vows of secrecy and were also portrayed in temple architecture in various ways, as we shall now see.

CHAPTER 5

MESOPOTAMIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Abstract

There is evidence of experimentation and variation in early Mesopotamian temples, as though the temple was an evolving structure that had not yet found its true expression. These variations included room arrangement and the placement of doors. A final pattern emerged about the end of the third millennium which was perpetuated for the next two thousand years with relatively minor adjustments. The classic Mesopotamian temple eventually developed into a pair of temples, one at the top of a ziggurat and one at the base. The entire temple complex was surrounded by at least one enclosure wall, whose gates and entryways frequently resembled those of military installations.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Early religious shrines in Mesopotamia consisted of fenced-off enclosures containing reed structures that housed an image of a deity. Later, the advent of mud brick as a building material enabled monumental temple architecture.

Mesopotamian temples were typically built on mounds of clean earth with foundations of ritually pure sand. They were rectangular and symmetrical, often possessed a second story, and featured whitewashed exteriors. The floor plans tended to be linear and progressive, with the objective being the innermost sanctum. Auxiliary structures for administration, housing, and operational needs began to be constructed around the central courtyards.

Temples were visually prominent, as they were normally built on raised platforms, yet they were equally salient in their urban setting due to their significant role in economic,

political, and juridical affairs.¹⁷³ Major urban areas may have developed from an original core of a cluster of dwellings surrounding a central shrine.¹⁷⁴ In later times, when economies and polities were well established, temples continued to play a major role in society.¹⁷⁵

The temple existed to serve the deity, for keeping the deity content was thought necessary to preserve the town and its inhabitants.¹⁷⁶ In Mesopotamian theology men and earth were both created for the sole purpose of serving the gods and supplying their wants (Wyatt 2001:66, 67); maintaining the cult was therefore the paramount objective of the individual, community, and state. Building and maintaining temples were always royal prerogatives;¹⁷⁷ similarly, ensuring the appropriate performance of rituals and cult was a major responsibility of political rulers (Falkenstein 1974:11). If the deity was successfully placated, the people would enjoy life, health, and prosperity. If the deity decided to forsake the city—as occasionally happened—it spelled disaster. Consequently, if an individual refused to participate in and maintain the cult it was considered an act of high treason, for it was believed that chaos, disease, famine, war, and death would fall upon the community as a consequence (Wiggermann 1995:1857).

¹⁷³ It must be remembered that temples, ziggurats and palaces were the natural targets of the archaeologist's trowel, and the weight these institutions appear to have had in ancient society may be skewed by the fact that they have been excavated to a larger degree than smaller, less dramatic structures (Robertson 1995:443-444).

¹⁷⁴ The penchant for urban areas growing up around a central temple or temple/palace complex was not unique to Mesopotamia. In the Middle Bronze Age at Tell el-Hayyat, for example, the temple preceded all other building at the site; residential quarters only appeared much later. Many valley temples in Egypt were subsequently surrounded by residential growth. Similar phenomena have been noted in the Indus Valley, the North China Plain, and in Mesoamerica (Uziel & Shai 2007:169-170).

¹⁷⁵ Falkenstein (1974:5-7), like Nibley, maintained that the temple was at the heart of the development of civilisation, and that architecture, art, and even writing itself all developed to meet the requirements of temple administration. He regarded the temple as, in effect, the nucleus of the state in early Babylonia; however, by Ur III, the temple as the centre of the state had begun to be supplanted by the institution of kingship.

¹⁷⁶ Each city had a temple for its main deity, but larger cities had additional temples for lesser and even foreign deities. Major gods and goddesses might have temples in multiple cities, for as Mesopotamian society expanded northward additional temples were built for deities that already had temples in the south (Wiggermann 1995:1861).

¹⁷⁷ It is related with regard to the Sumerian king Gudea (who began his reign in 2143) that the god Ningirsu appeared to him in a dream and showed him the plans for the temple he was to build. This may have been the original source for the very ancient idea that temples were built according to plans revealed from heaven, and that earthly temples were intended to resemble a heavenly temple (Roitman 2003:50, n. 43).

The archaeological record provides valuable clues to the essential character of the temple in Mesopotamia. This chapter will describe the physical qualities of various temples that represent significant historical eras and exemplify certain noteworthy architectural features, some of which are exclusive to temples. The time span ranges from the early Ubaid Period, ca 4900¹⁷⁸, through the late Babylonian Period, ca 600. Following this descriptive section, the findings will be briefly analysed and it will be demonstrated how architectural features were used to embody the concepts that revolve around sacred space. The most significant features will resurface in Chapter Ten where they will be analysed in greater depth.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF REPRESENTATIVE TEMPLES IN MESOPOTAMIA

5.2.1 The Ubaid period (ca 5300-3500)

The Ubaid period began with settlement limited to the extreme south of Iraq on the shores of the Persian Gulf. Over time a fairly comprehensive canal system and a sophisticated irrigation network were developed, urbanisation began to expand into northern Mesopotamia,¹⁷⁹ and trade and commerce networks stretching from the Mediterranean in the west to Dilmun (Bahrein) and Oman in the east were established (Knapp 1988:43-46; Roux 1992:59-65, 67-68). Temples, particularly in lower Mesopotamia, developed concurrently with the urbanisation and political development that arose from earlier agrarian communities based upon clans (Roaf 1995:425; Robertson 1995:448). Representative of the Ubaid period are temple ruins from Eridu

¹⁷⁸ All dates in this thesis, unless other wise specified, are BCE. The dates of various periods in ancient Mesopotamia vary from one historian to another. Furthermore, different historians may use different terms for the same time periods. The dates used in this chapter represent general time frames only and should be considered approximate.

¹⁷⁹ At Tepe Gawra in northern Mesopotamia, at a time roughly contemporary with the earliest levels at Warka, the first important manifestation of monumental religious architecture appeared (for diagram, see Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:560-561). In Level XIII were found three contiguous temples: the Northern Temple, the Central Temple, and the Eastern Shrine, together forming a group unique at that early date (Frankfort 1954:18-20). Bricks of a special size were used for these three temples.

and Warka.¹⁸⁰

5.2.1.1 *Eridu*.¹⁸¹ The earliest temple at Eridu, found at level XVI (ca 4900), was a single-room affair, no more than a small chapel¹⁸² measuring only about three meters on each side, yet it already had a deep niche in its northwest wall for a statue and a table in the centre to receive offerings. This edifice was built of mud brick set in a clay-based mortar (Danti & Zettler 1997:259; Lloyd 1960:25; Roux 1992:62); this was peculiar as virtually all other buildings in Eridu from that same time period were constructed of reeds (Roaf 1995:423-424).

A later version of this temple reappeared on level IX (ca 4100) with a more ambitious architectural plan that included a central sanctuary and lateral rooms on the northwestern and southeastern sides. The identification of this building as a temple is based on its tripartite floor plan,¹⁸³ the presence of rabbets and niches,¹⁸⁴ and the remnants of altars and offering tables (Postgate 1992:110; Robertson 1995:449). Its mud walls were supported with buttresses (Danti & Zettler 1997:259) which were aesthetically pleasing as well as architecturally functional in strengthening thin mud walls where beams or rafters rested. Even at this early stage, temples showed increased evidence of central

¹⁸⁰ These sites originated in the Ubaid period. However, it must be kept in mind that many early temples were repeatedly remodelled, demolished, and rebuilt, and it was not uncommon for a building that first appeared in the Ubaid period to acquire greater status in a later era.

¹⁸¹ Some of the more valuable reports on the excavations at Eridu are those published by J. E. Taylor (1855), R. Campbell Thompson (1920), H. R. Hall (1923), Seton Lloyd (1960, 1974), and Fuad Safar, *et al*, (1981).

¹⁸² This early shrine at Eridu, discerned by deep sounding, was described by Postgate (1992:110) as ‘a small hut’.

¹⁸³ The tripartite pattern of ancient temples consisted of an entrance hall variously referred to as a porch, vestibule, or portico, a large room or antecella, and a smaller cella (about 4 x 4 meters at Eridu, Badawy 1966a:98) or main sanctuary. Later and larger temples tended to retain these three features and added other areas such as lateral chambers for storage or administration, additional forecourts, and residential areas for priests and other temple personnel. The tripartite pattern goes back to prehistoric times. Albright described a Neolithic structure found at Stratum XI in Jericho that ‘contained a portico originally supported by six wooden posts, a wide antechamber, and a large inner chamber’ (Albright 1957:135-136). In and around this building were found animal figurines and other votive items.

¹⁸⁴ Rabbets and niches were alternating grooves cut into the exterior walls of Mesopotamian temples to give beauty and variety to what would otherwise be a solid, monotonous surface of mud brick. Different types of items were displayed in the niches, such as small idols, royal insignia, or armaments captured in military campaigns.

planning¹⁸⁵ and the development of certain architectural features that persisted until the end of the protoliterate¹⁸⁶ period (Falkenstein 1974:5).

At level VII (ca 3800) appeared the end result of what was a succession of buildings, each more substantial than its predecessor (Falkenstein 1974:5; Frankfort 1954:18; Oates 1960:44-45; Postgate 1992:24; Roaf 1995:426). The latest temple at Eridu was dramatically different from its earliest predecessor (for a drawing of the floor plan of the later temple, see Frankfort 1954:19, fig 3). The temple rested on a large platform (Danti & Zettler 1997:259; Oates 1960:45). Inside the gate was a large central courtyard or antecella. The main cella, whose corners were oriented to the cardinal points (Badawy 1966a:98; Hall 1923:180, n 1 [Hall maintained that Babylonian temple towers were typically oriented in this fashion]), was the location of the central shrine and represented the heart of the temple complex, for it was clearly set off from the main subsidiary rooms which were located off the corners of the courtyard. The cella was a long rectangle with the entrance on one of the long sides, causing a visitor to turn ninety degrees in one direction in order to approach the god¹⁸⁷ that stood on a block (or sat on a throne [Postgate 1992:118]) before its niche, or in the other direction to the altar which stood at the other end of the cella.¹⁸⁸ Included in the cella was a free-standing table to receive

¹⁸⁵ 'The Eridu temple sequence provides archaeological support for a lengthy, in-place cultural development in southern Mesopotamia from the earliest-known prehistoric period to the point when the written language can be identified as Sumerian' (Danti & Zettler 1997:259).

¹⁸⁶ 'Protoliterate' is a term invented for the classification of materials from the late Uruk and Jemdet Nasr periods (Wright 1965a:129, n 36, which includes a bibliography for this term). The Jemdet Nasr period (ca 3200-2900) succeeded the Uruk culture and represented the final stage before the Sumerians appeared in southern Mesopotamia.

¹⁸⁷ It is believed that the deity worshipped at Eridu, at the temple of Abu Shahrain, was Enki (Akkadian Ea), god of the subterranean freshwater ocean, the chief deity of Eridu in historical times (Danti & Zettler 1997:258; Frankfort 1954:19; Lloyd 1960:30-31).

¹⁸⁸ This plan, typical of early Mesopotamian temples, is usually described as the 'bent-axis' approach, meaning that the worshiper did not approach the deity along a straight axis, but had to make a right or left turn upon entering the inner cella. This is contrasted by the 'direct-axis' approach where one progressed along a more-or-less straight line from the entrance of the temple complex to the door of the main cella. Here the entrance to the cella was on a short side and one could proceed directly ahead to the image of the god which was located at the far end of the room on the other short side. The direct-axis approach became the standard design in later Mesopotamian temples. A further refinement of this classification included the shape of the cella as well as the position of the door. Thus there were four possible arrangements: (1) a bent-axis style, where the principal entrance to the cella was on one of the long walls, and thus at a right angle to the short walls with the altar and the statue of the deity; (2) a direct-axis style, where the principal entrance to the cella was in a short wall and in a direct line with the altar and the statue of the deity at the other short wall; (3) a broadroom cella where the altar normally stood in the middle of one of the long

votive offerings which, from the excavated remains, apparently included fish (Danti & Zettler 1997:259; Oates 1960:45). The temple exterior walls, like earlier versions of this temple, featured buttresses and rabbets and niches, which were typical of Mesopotamian temples from this time forward (Frankfort 1954:18; Lloyd 1978:41-43; Oates 1960:45; Oppenheim 1977:326; Roux 1992:62).¹⁸⁹

Mesopotamian temples typically stood on a platform that elevated them above the surrounding landscape. The Eridu temples represented the ‘initial phase of the most characteristic temple type of the ancient Near East: that is, the high temple on an artificial platform, the Babylonian ziggurat’ (Falkenstein 1974:5).

Temple architecture at Eridu reached its peak in the Ur III period when it was dominated by a large ziggurat (61.8 meters long x 46.5 meters wide x 9.5 meters high), built of mud bricks and faced with baked bricks set in bitumen (Danti & Zettler 1997:259).

Eridu presents the first cogent example of traditional Mesopotamian architecture within a Sumerian matrix. The succession of temple remains excavated at Eridu go further back in time than any other Sumerian locale (Postgate 1992:24). Temple XVI, the earliest temple uncovered in totality, clearly exposed the central features of the typical Mesopotamian temple, including an inner cella with an altar, a niche, and a central table for votive offerings. Later temples at Eridu were on a much larger scale as they manifested the emergence of the tripartite plan, with subsidiary rooms on either side of the cella, a plan that quickly became standard. Also at Eridu appeared the first exterior embellishment with alternating niches and buttresses. Worthy of note is the fact that the corners of Mesopotamian temples, thus also the corners of their platforms, were commonly oriented

walls; and (4) a longroom cella with the altar either in the middle of the room or on one of the short sides (Roaf 1995:427).

¹⁸⁹ As noted earlier, Mesopotamian temple architecture featured, on the exterior walls, buttresses and rabbets and niches to relieve the monotony of mud-coated smooth walls. Buttresses and niches produced alternating areas of light and shadow. These distinctive architectural features, for reasons unknown, have been found exclusively on temples. These characteristics were not unique to the south but followed the process of urbanisation as it moved northward. Other attempts to break the monotony of walls included the use of alternating white and coloured plaster which evolved into the use of mosaics, and the development of murals (Tepe Gawra and Mari). Polychromatic glazes, as on the famous Ishtar gate at Babylon, were also used.

toward the cardinal points.

5.2.1.2 *Warka*. Much of what is known about Warka (*Uruk*, Biblical *Erech*) is due to its German excavators, who were fortunate because the ruins of this pre-dynastic city were accessible at no great depth below ground level; however, the deepest layers are under groundwater today. Warka, with a perimeter of over nine kilometres (Postgate 1992:74-75), was by far the largest of the Sumerian cities in the Early Dynastic Period (ca 2900-2340). The city measured about two hundred acres, of which fully one-third was covered with temples and other public buildings.

Archaeologists have concentrated their efforts on two sites within Warka: the *Anu* and the *Eanna* (Sumerian “House of Heaven”) Precincts. These districts were associated, respectively, with the sky god and the mother goddess. The city was of extreme antiquity, dating back to the late fifth millennium. By the late Uruk period the Eanna precinct contained an impressive grouping of temples larger than any previously built.

(a) Anu. The primary building of interest here is the White temple (for diagram, see Badawy 1966a:100; Frankfort 1954:20-22; Leacroft 1974:7), so named as its exterior walls were covered with a thin layer of white gypsum plaster (Roaf 1995:427). The temple, a gleaming, whitewashed shrine, stood upon an irregular surface of brick that rose forty feet above the surrounding plain. This building was a late reconstruction of a shrine very similar to that found at Eridu (Oates 1960:45), and whose origins extended back into the Ubaid period. While the White temple followed the basic plan at Eridu, it lacked the corner rooms; what remained was basically a rectangle with buttresses and niches on the exterior walls (Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:560). The real difference was the raised platform upon which the temple was constructed, for the height of the platform enabled the temple to be visible for miles around. The corners of the platform (and of the temple) were oriented to the four cardinal points (Badawy 1966a:99; Hall 1923:180, n 1). The later version of the White temple, dated ca 3200-2900, preserved all the main characteristics of Ubaid period temples. The temple itself was entered from the southwestern side. Passing through a vestibule, one reached the cella at the centre. The

interior room featured a small platform or altar in one corner and an offering table in the middle of the room, though at some distance from the entry point. The interior walls had alternating buttresses and recesses (Frankfort 1954:20).

The White Temple, the best preserved building at Anu with its imposing platform that stood thirteen meters high, illustrated what was possibly the origin of the ziggurat.¹⁹⁰ The platform was ascended by means of a triple stairway; in this feature also the White temple became a prototype of the later Sumerian ziggurat (Lloyd 1978:49; Postgate 1992:110).

The shrine atop the platform of Anu was known as the *shakhuru* ('waiting-room' or 'room one passes through').¹⁹¹ This was also the title for the antecella, the room prior to the holy of holies on temples at ground level, where the faithful "waited" for the unveiling of the god in the inner sanctum. It is not understood in what sense the upper temple might be considered as a waiting-room; perhaps it was thought that the deity, descending from the heavenly temple, "passed through" this temple on his/her way down, and perhaps rested there ("waited") before finishing the journey.

Subsequent Mesopotamian temples were given at least a token elevation by the architectural device of the platform, or *temenos*. Raising the temple above the level of the ground by placing in on a platform was a significant development in temple architecture, optional at first but *de rigueur* later (Badawy 1966a:98-99; Frankfort 1954:22).

¹⁹⁰ The Anu 'ziggurat' is in fact not a ziggurat at all, but a series of temples, each built on top of the preceding one and each on a high platform. This made the temple site so prominent that it is easy to imagine later architects building multiple platforms one atop the other to increase the visual effect of the temple on top. It is logical to assume that the platform came first and the ziggurat evolved later. Certainly the construction of a large ziggurat would require resources of men and materiel that only a large urban environment could provide. For example, a mud-brick terrace at the western end of the Eanna complex is estimated to have cost the exertion of 1500 labourers working ten-hour days for five years (Robertson 1995: 449). Postgate (1992:112-113) notes that the temples at Eridu and Uqair 'represent a significant input of communal resources' and that while not all temples were equal, the main ones were the 'focus not only of the city and its hinterland, but also of an entire state, the self-esteem of the state, and especially of its rulers, dictated a concentration of communal effort'.

¹⁹¹ Frankfort (1954:22). Parrot interprets this term as 'temple', for the same word is used to describe the building atop Etemenanki in Babylon (Parrot 1955a:22).

(b) Eanna. Fifty meters east of the White temple stood the outer walls of the Eanna Precinct, a large area of courtyards that surrounded a remarkable array of buildings dedicated to the Sumerian goddess Inanna, known to the early Semites as Ishtar, the Great Mother (Frankfort 1954:22).¹⁹² These buildings (for diagrams, see Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:560-561) date from the latter part of the fourth millennium and were repeatedly renovated and rebuilt. Each temple was built of mud brick atop the same site as the previous one, which caused considerable difficulty in modern excavation. In the end, archaeologists were left with remnants of half a dozen temples that overlapped each other, with the remnants of some walls only a few inches high.

A major architectural feature of interest at Eanna was the use of the cone-mosaic façade. In this technique the surfaces of columns and side walls were decorated with terra cotta stones that were thrust into a clay bed, thus forming geometrical patterns with their coloured ends (Badawy 1966a:98; Frankfort 1954:24-25; Van Buren 1946:323-345). Cone-mosaic decorations were used, although sparingly, on various temples excavated at Eanna. One temple of interest was the so-called Stone Cone Mosaic temple built on an isolated site west of the main Eanna Precinct complex (Boehmer 1997:294). Its outer wall featured buttresses and its interior walls were decorated in the cone mosaic fashion, except coloured stones were used instead of terra cotta pieces. It is thought that the coloured stone model may have been the original form of this decorative technique and that terra cotta was used later as it was much more economical (Lloyd 1978:50-52).

Another striking structure at Eanna was the so-called Pillar Temple, which stood on a terrace or platform and included two rows of massive columns 2.6 meters in diameter. The columns were constructed in a primitive fashion with bricks laid in a radial fashion to form an approximate circle, suggesting a hesitant and possibly experimental approach to an innovative building technique. Cone mosaics in the columns convey the image of palm trunks, the palm tree being a common ornamental motif in ancient Near Eastern temples.

¹⁹² One noteworthy early temple was the Limestone Temple (ca 3600), whose foundation was constructed of limestone quarried some 50 miles west of Uruk at the edge of the Arabian shelf (Boehmer 1997:294).

Temples excavated at Eanna exhibited two different plans. One plan was represented by the standard tripartite form like that found at Eridu and at the White temple at Anu. The second plan was an innovation featuring transepts that opened off the main sanctuary at one end, with a doorway between them, leading to a separate cella on the main axis. Thus the building acquired a T-shape. The best example of this was Temple D in the Eanna Precinct, found at level IVa. This building was also significant due to its impressive dimensions (80 x 55 meters).¹⁹³ The temple was entered through the transepts, which were themselves surrounded by lateral chambers on all four sides. The exterior walls alternated with deep niches and stairway chambers. The T-shape or cruciform plan became a staple architectural feature of some later temples (though not nearly so prevalent as the tripartite plan), with examples found in southern Mesopotamia, northern and eastern Iraq, and in northern Syria (Lloyd 1978:50-51; Roaf 1995:427-428).

5.2.2 The Uruk period (ca 4000-3100)

The Ubaid era was followed by the Uruk period, named after its largest and best-known city, described by Postgate (1992:112) as ‘probably the largest settlement in the entire world’. The Uruk era, corresponding to the beginning of the Early Bronze Age, saw the gradual emergence of cuneiform script. Temples began to dominate urban architecture in the Uruk period (Roaf 1995:425). Some Uruk temples exhibited the use of columns. While columns can be found in Mesopotamian temples of all ages, they never dominated temple architecture as they did, for example, in Egypt or Greece, probably owing to the scarcity of local stone suitable for such building (Roaf 1995:428). The principal site of interest from this period is Tell Uqair.

5.2.2.1 Tell Uqair. Fifty miles south of Baghdad are the remains of an Uruk period temple with a well preserved platform¹⁹⁴ and walls up to 3.8 meters high (Lloyd

¹⁹³ Temple D was twice as large as the Parthenon that would grace the acropolis in Athens three millennia later (Roaf 1995:428).

¹⁹⁴ The platform of this temple was irregular but it nevertheless featured three staircases, two on opposite sides and a third, halfway between the other two, which led to the uppermost level. This was akin to the

1943:137). The architectural floor plan had affinities with Eridu and Khafaje (Lloyd 1943:134; Postgate 1992:110-112) except that the ceremonial doorway at one end of the sanctuary of the Eridu temple was replaced here with a high altar on the main temple axis which was approached by a miniature flight of steps (Lloyd 1978:52). All of the interior walls were covered with mural paintings (Lloyd 1943:135). These murals continued the ‘monochrome treatment and rectilinear ornament’ that had long prevailed in southwest Asia, but there was also an innovation: pairs of human or animal figures were created that soon became typical in Sumerian and Mesopotamian glyptic art (Cagriota 1997:325). The walls of the temple at Uqair facing the entranceway were painted with spotted leopards which presumably guarded the entrance (Postgate 1992:112). This “Painted Temple” (for diagram, see Badawy 1966a:100 or Leacroft 1974:6), has been dated to the latter part of the Uruk period, ca 3250 (Lloyd 1978:53), though it was obviously the successor to a number of earlier temples that had stood on the same site (Lloyd 1960:29-30).

5.2.3 The Early Dynastic period (ca 3000-2340)

By 2900 the temple had emerged as a distinct and powerful institution inextricably connected with its urban environment, though we cannot yet ‘distinguish between “secular-political” and “temple-spiritual” spheres of power...’ (Robertson 1995:450). This period was architecturally defined by the introduction of the plano-convex mud brick as a building material (flat on one side and curved on the other, often containing finger marks from pressing the mud into the brick mould). The bricks were laid in a herringbone pattern or occasionally with three diagonally laid courses, all leaning in one direction, followed by two or three courses laid flat, with their convex sides upward, thus creating an imperfect bond. These bricks were frequently used to build arches and vaults over tombs, although temple architecture in Mesopotamia never included the use of the arch (Frankfort 1954:42). Plano-convex bricks became an identifying hallmark of Sumerian architecture as they were used neither before nor after the Early Dynastic

three earlier staircases found at Warka and a precursor to later stairways at Ur (Lloyd 1943:133-134, 143-145).

Period.

Further up the Euphrates the temple of Ishtar at Mari displayed an oblong shrine with an approach that followed a bent-axis plan, founded on layers of untrimmed stone. Its walls were flat and did not use plano-convex bricks. Columns, reduced in size from those found at Warka and Kish in the earlier period (from 5 ½ feet in diameter at the earlier sites to about 3 ½ feet in diameter at Mari), formed cloisters on both sides of the courtyard.

Temples surrounded by residential areas, and thus with limited opportunity for outward expansion, tended to develop irregular forms. On the other hand, when a temple was established in a new area and was not restricted by adjoining properties, the outer and inner walls of the complex tended to be either symmetrical, as a rectangle, or oval (the oval form is distinctive to the Early Dynastic Period).

Khafaje and Tell Asmar were prominent temple sites in the Early Dynastic Period.

5.2.3.1 Khafaje. This ancient site, east of modern Baghdad in the lower Diyala region, was the location of a major Sumerian temple dedicated to the moon-god Sin (Harris 1955:32). It has been excavated through many levels, down to its original foundation from the Jemdet Nasr period.¹⁹⁵ The site consists of four mounds, A through D, ranging from four to six meters high (for diagram, see Badawy 1966a:100; Frankfort 1954:42-43; Leacroft 1974:10). The largest of these, Mound A, dates from the Uruk and Jemdet Nasr periods and was the site of the Sin temple¹⁹⁶ and a second temple dedicated to Nintu. Mound D, the smallest mound, dates to the Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods; it contained private homes and yielded an archive of 113 tablets (Hansen 1997:288; Harris 1955:31-58, 59-88, 91-120).

¹⁹⁵ Khafaje was excavated for seven seasons in the early 1930s, mostly by a team from the Oriental Institute of Chicago. The team was led by Henri Frankfort with support from Thorkild Jacobsen and Pinhas Delougaz. For two additional seasons the site was worked by a joint team of the American Schools of Oriental Research and the University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁹⁶ Hansen (1977:289) states that it is 'most unlikely' that this temple was actually dedicated to the moon-god Sin, but the name is so entrenched in the literature that it would be confusing to rename it now.

The Temple Oval at Khafaje was an unusual complex. Within the oval the layout was rectilinear, with the corners oriented to the four cardinal points. Of the three ascending terrace levels, the lowest offered a forecourt approached through an arched and towered gateway from the town. The second terrace, wholly surrounded by rooms used as workshops and stores, had at its further end the temple platform about 3.6 meters high. Near its staircase, against the side of the temple terrace, was an external sacrificial altar, while elsewhere in the court were a well and two basins for ritual ablutions. Northeast of the Temple Oval stood the Sin Temple. Khafaje represents a fine example of the phenomenon of urban development centred around the temple, which had its beginnings in Sumer and later migrated northward.

The temple building process at Khafaje involved ritual and symbolic schemes as well as utilitarian methods. Before actual construction of the temple commenced, the area was demarcated and the topsoil removed down to virgin soil or bedrock.¹⁹⁷ This enormous cavity, up to seven meters deep (Hansen 1997:290), was then filled with clean (ritually pure) desert sand, which must have been transported a great distance.¹⁹⁸ The temple foundations were laid on this sand and packed in clay about 3 ½ feet thick. Some of this clay was occasionally above ground level and in some cases (though not at the Sin temple) could serve as a platform for the building itself. A flight of stone steps led up to an entrance in the outer wall that was flanked by twin towers. After entering the forecourt of the temple, the visitor could see on the left side a separate though small building, probably used for temple administration or as a priestly residence, and which likely contained a small shrine. From the forecourt one entered the spacious inner courtyard

¹⁹⁷ It was considered crucial, in temple construction, to found the building on bedrock below any signs of human habitation, for this would obviate any risk of pollution occasioned by the intermingling of ‘profane’ soil around the temple foundations. This principle applied to reconstruction and remodelling as well as to initial construction. In both cases, the practice of going down to bedrock and virgin soil was considered to re-establish the initial construction, done by the gods themselves in mythic time (Wyatt 2001:177, 224).

¹⁹⁸ Badawy (1966a:101) considered it ‘noteworthy that the whole structure is built within an excavation on a filling of “pure” sand for symbolical reasons similar to those noted in the construction of Egyptian temples’. The symbolism was meant to represent the primordial mound. This unusual style of construction was no doubt intended to confer some type of special sanctity on the Temple Oval as it assured the purity of the soil beneath the temple. Ancient Near Eastern temples were regarded as lying on the *axis mundi*, and their special holiness extended both above and below the actual building. The later temple at Ischali had similar arrangements though not within an oval perimeter.

through a heavily guarded entrance. At one end of the courtyard an altar stood before the steps that led up to the main temple platform, which was perhaps twelve feet higher than the inner courtyard.

There were a number of rooms surrounding the inner courtyard. These were not used for cultic purposes but were ancillary rooms: storerooms, kitchens, granaries (Harris 1955:39-41), bakeries, perhaps even blacksmith or copper-working areas. Inside the temple itself a statue of the deity stood in a niche at one end of a long and narrow cella. Entrance to the cella was via one of the long walls (the bent-axis approach), meaning the statue could not be seen until one entered the room and then made a 90-degree turn. The immediate area around the statue was considered even more sacred than the rest of the cella and could only be approached by authorised priests. Other temple furniture probably included a small altar, benches and tables on which offerings were placed, oil lamps, and small figurines of minor deities or important figures such as the king (Frankfort 1954:43-45; Speiser 1937:193).

The temple took the form of a long rectangular sanctuary and followed the tripartite plan (Hansen 1997:289). There was a podium on one end and an entrance, on a bent axis, at the other end. Lateral chambers could be found on every side. A subsequent rebuilding (Temple VI) saw the previously shapeless forecourt transformed into a walled enclosure, a formal gate-house, and other assorted outbuildings (Lloyd 1978:93). The temple at Khafaje, like those at Uqair and Warka, had a side entrance that opened into the central courtyard through one of the long walls. Along one of the long walls was a series of rooms and storage magazines; alongside the other was a narrow room that contained a stairway to the temple's flat roof. Other changes were made to the area at the entrance to the courtyard, such as a forecourt with tethering rings for animals destined for sacrifice along with additional storerooms, kitchens, offices, and perhaps residential quarters (Frankfort 1954:22-23; see diagrams of Khafaje on p 23, figs 6 and 7; Harris 1955:35, n 3). These seemingly small changes in architecture influenced later temples and caused them to similarly develop with the addition of forecourts, the blocking of certain areas, and the disuse of other space. Indeed, temple architecture at Khafaje in the third

millennium exhibited a remarkable degree of diversity and innovation.

Khafaje provides an excellent example of a temple in a heavily-settled urban environment, bounded on all sides by residential areas, that evolved into a temple complex with a well-contained central courtyard and with impressive stairways leading up to a monumental entrance flanked by towers.

5.2.3.2 Tell Asmar. This site was the capital of the state of Eshnunna in the Diyala Valley fifty miles northeast of Baghdad. Its temple, like the Sin temple at Khafaje, began with a small and rather shapeless chapel whose origins perhaps went back to the Jemdet Nasr era, although later rebuildings occurred in the Early Dynastic Period. At Tell Asmar three main sequences of temples span the Early Dynastic period. The first temple, dedicated to the local god Abu, appeared during the late fourth millennium. This temple was then rebuilt as the Archaic Shrine (Early Dynastic I), then the Square Temple, with three separate shrines arranged around a central room (Early Dynastic II) (Auerbach 1997:262; Lloyd 1978:97), and finally the Single Shrine (Early Dynastic III). Later versions of the temple exhibited a conventional form with a rectangular sanctuary and a row of lateral chambers (for diagrams of earlier and later versions at Tell Asmar, see Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:560-561).

Tell Asmar, like Khafaje, may have originated in Jemdet Nasr or Early Dynastic times but did not reach full fruition until the Sumerian revival at the end of the third millennium when a new temple was built and dedicated to Shu-Sin, the deified king of Ur. This temple was unique among all other Mesopotamian temples in that the object of worship was actually a living ruler at the time (Auerbach 1997:264-265). This temple was square, located in a square courtyard, with rooms arranged around it. The temple was a comparatively small structure, for Eshnunna was a provincial city whereas Ur was the capital of the land and the seat of the dynasty. Its exterior was adorned with buttresses and its entrance was flanked by two towers decorated with stepped recesses. The entrance gate led to a lobby with stairs on the right side that led to the roof. Past the lobby was a square courtyard with the cella at the far end. The cella contained the deity standing

before a niche. Typical of Early Dynastic temples, the altar was not in the cella but in the courtyard or antecella leading to it.

Against the Shu-Sin temple, at an acute angle, stood the palace of the local governor (for a diagram of the temple and the adjacent palace, see Leacroft 1974:18 or Lloyd 1978:155). The palace had its own private chapel which resembled the adjacent temple except it possessed an antecella, a bathroom, and other accommodations for the priests. The key point here was the fact that this private royal chapel was accessible both from the palace itself and from the street. Access to the chapel directly from the palace, still following the bent-axis plan, was the route taken by official processions, though these were actually side entrances. The direct palace-temple link had guard stations at both ends, for on the one end, limited entrance to the temple precinct had to be enforced, and on the other end, it was thought desirable to prevent unauthorised incursions into the palace via the temple. At the same time it was necessary to have direct access to both temples from the street inasmuch as the temples were critical sites of economic activity and a great number of transactions took place at the public entrances. Later temples eventually discarded the bent-axis approach altogether in favour of having the cella aligned with the axis of the main entrance (Frankfort 1954:106-107).

Following the tripartite plan, entrance to the temple was effected between two pillars or towers leading to a vestibule, then to an antecella, and finally to the innermost cella, with the god's statue at the far end. All of these features were on a direct axis terminating at the most holy spot. Later variations of this pattern led to the introduction of multiple antecellae, each with a dependent collection of ancillary rooms and courtyards, but the overall direct-axis plan of the temple was maintained (Lloyd 1978:155). Even small private chapels or sanctuaries that constituted part of the palace were built along the same direct-axis principle (Lloyd 1978:161).

Other significant temple sites representing the Early Dynastic Period include *Ubaid*, which boasted a distinctive entrance that contained a bronze lintel with a lion-headed eagle between two stags. This lintel was supported by two columns (Lloyd 1978:103).

These columns therefore possessed a structural function, in contrast to free-standing pillars flanking the main temple entrance, a feature of temple architecture rather common in early ages and ubiquitous in subsequent times. *Kish*, nine miles east of Babylon, once stood on the banks of the Euphrates, although the river has since shifted to the west.¹⁹⁹ *Kish* contains ruins of temples from Early Dynastic times that were built atop raised platforms (Lloyd 1978:105). *Nippur*, another temple site that originated in the Early Dynastic period but was subsequently rebuilt in Sumerian times, contained a temple dedicated to Inanna. The temple excavated at Level VII featured two sanctuaries at one end of a long area approached through a succession of courtyards and antecellae. Oddly, one of the cellae featured a bent-axis approach, while the other exhibited a direct-axis approach (Frankfort 1954:422; Lloyd 1978:107). *Ashur*, on the Tigris 188 miles north of Babylon, represented the northernmost limit of Sumerian authority. Ruins include three ziggurats and a temple, dating from Early Dynastic times, believed to have been dedicated to Ishtar. *Mari*, seven and one-half miles north of the present Syrian border, also contained an Early Dynastic temple dedicated to Ishtar along with a number of other temples.²⁰⁰ *Ashur* and *Mari* represent two more examples of small Sumerian temples in the Diyala region that conformed with the others in their architectural conventions. Both had rectangular sanctuaries with an altar at one end. Entrances were on the long sides, on the bent-axis principle. Side walls offered long, low benches on which large numbers of votive offerings were placed (Lloyd 1978:107-108).

¹⁹⁹ The Euphrates and the Tigris, which descend only 34 meters over the 350 kilometres from the point at which they enter Babylonia to their mouths, have continually changed paths and frequently caused viable settlements to be abandoned. The capricious tendency of the rivers to shift, along with the scorching summer heat and the occasional sandstorm, combined to make life in the alluvial plain inhospitable (Frankfort *et al.*, 1977:126-127).

²⁰⁰ *Mari* was founded in the late third millennium and endured until it was destroyed by Hammurabi (ca 1757). In addition to its temples *Mari* boasted a great palace. This great building functioned as a royal residence, as a centre for receptions and audiences, and contained offices, a school for the civil service, servants' quarters, and numerous store-rooms. In some of these rooms were found the thousands of cuneiform tablets that constituted the royal archives, one of the major sources of historical evidence uncovered in the Near East. The architecture of the palace demonstrated the indirect access that was characteristic of palaces in the ancient Near East, designed to prevent the shooting of missiles from outside the palace complex into the great forecourt. The section of the palace devoted to the private apartments of the royal family, like the walls of its temple, were embellished with mural paintings that indicate contacts with the contemporary Minoan civilisation in Crete (Frankfort 1954:124-126).

5.2.4 The Dynasty of Akkad and the Sumerian revival (ca 2350-2000): the institution of the ziggurat

The Sumerians brought their knowledge of the ziggurat (from the Akkadian *ziqquratu*, ‘Mountain Peak’), complete with the temple on top, to Babylonia. Ziggurats normally contained either four or seven layers, both being sacred numbers.²⁰¹ Most scholars believe the ziggurat to have been a symbolic or artificial mountain (Wyatt 2001:147); however, Budge (2005:186) argued that each layer was designed to represent one of the various heavens in Sumerian theology, with the god residing in the temple at the top, corresponding to the ‘heaven of heavens’ or the highest heaven.²⁰²

The ziggurat might involve more than one building, as there was frequently a “low temple” at the base and a “high temple” at the top.²⁰³ While both temples were regarded as resting places for the god, and the ziggurat itself as a staircase between heaven and earth (Badawy 1966a:102), there is evidence that the high temple was also used for cultic rituals (Oppenheim 1944:54-55; Ringgren 1973:78). Temples built atop ziggurats appeared around the end of the third millennium (Roaf 1995:425); even those that were built more or less at ground level still sat upon a raised platform. Very little is known about the planning or appearance of the high temples, for unfortunately none have survived. Any assumptions made about them must necessarily be based upon the plan and appearance of the low temples, as there is nothing else upon which to base speculation.

²⁰¹ Parrot (1955a:30) observed that ziggurats of three or five layers were known, and there was no sense of uniformity in the number of layers. He believed that Etemenanki in Babylon had seven, but admitted that while there was literary evidence of ziggurats with seven layers, there was no corresponding archaeological evidence.

²⁰² The German orientalist E. Unger opined that ziggurats could be classified into three categories: (1) rectangular, with access via staircases (Ur, Uruk, Nippur); (2) square, with access via ramps (Ashur, Nimrud, Khorsabad, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta); and (3) a combination of the other two, with stairs accessing the lower levels and ramps the higher ones, as at Etemenanki (Badawy 1966a:106; Parrot 1955a:40). Meanwhile, Davies & Jokiniemi (2008:562-563) limited themselves to two main categories, stepped (lower Mesopotamian) and ramped (Assyrian), and identified the traditional seven layers of a ziggurat with the sun, moon, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Venus, and Saturn (see diagrams of various ziggurats on p 563).

²⁰³ Parrot indicated that Etemenanki in Babylon had both an upper temple and a lower temple. The upper temple (*Hochtempel*) represented the habitation of the god; the lower temple (*Tieftempel*) was a place where the gods could descend and manifest themselves to men if they so desired (Parrot 1955a:23, 61). That the stairway on a ziggurat could be considered for the use of a god to ascend and descend was implied by the size of some of the steps; at the temple of Anu at Uruk, for example, the individual stairs were 3 feet 7 inches tall, a formidable step for a mortal man to negotiate (Parrot 1955a:43).

Fortunately, there are a large number of low temples to work with.²⁰⁴ Even more fortuitously, the extant examples tend to have many features in common, and thus our confidence is strengthened.

The most impressive temple architecture of the Sumerian period was undoubtedly the great ziggurat of the moon-god at Ur. This ziggurat was rectangular and not square as were later ziggurats, and measured 65 x 43 meters at its base. The corners, not the sides, were oriented to the cardinal points of the compass. The first layer was 9.75 meters high, the second 2.5 meters, the third 2.3 meters, and the fourth was four meters. A shrine was perched on top of the fourth layer. Because the underlying surface was not level, the ziggurat at Ur had four levels at the southeast corner, and only three at the northwest point. The ziggurat at Ur had a solid core of unbaked mud brick and was covered with a skin of burned or glazed brickwork 2.4 meters thick, laid in bitumen with layers of matting at intervals to improve cohesion. Its sides were slightly convex, giving an added effect of mass, with broad shallow buttresses to relieve the appearance of the outer surface. Provision was made for drainage and the slow drying of the interior by perforations in the brick facing.²⁰⁵

The lower courtyard on which the ziggurat stood was painted black, the glazed brick exterior of the ziggurat itself was bright red, and the temple standing atop the structure was covered in glazed brick of a sky-blue color (Budge 2005:186-187; Oppenheim 1944:54-55). It is suspected that when Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt this temple he covered it with blue glazed bricks, similar to the temple he rebuilt at Babylon (Frankfort 1954:104). The northeast side had no less than three stairways offering access to the first stage; the

²⁰⁴ The earliest such structure is considered to be that of Ur-Nammu, first king of the 3rd Dynasty of Ur (ca 2112-2095); other early examples can be seen at Eridu, Uruk, and Nippur. Ziggurats at times fairly dotted the Mesopotamian landscape, especially in the Old Babylonian period (Larsa, Borsippa, Babylon, Kish, Sippar, Ashur; Roaf 1995:429-431). See Leacroft (1974:11) for a drawing of the ziggurat of Ur-Nammu. Upper and lower ziggurat temples were but one type of Mesopotamian temple: there were also oval temples from the Early Dynastic period, which featured a large curving exterior enclosure wall (Khafaje, Tell al-Ubaid), and platform temples, mostly from the Ubaid period, built on large elevated platforms that were accessed by multiple stairways.

²⁰⁵ These were known as “weep holes” or “weeper holes,” which were small openings left in the outer wall of masonry to allow water inside a building to move outside and evaporate. The term itself was coined by C. Leonard Woolley after discovering their presence in ziggurats.

three stairways converged at a central point at a gate-house. Here the middle stairway continued through the gate-house and up to the second stage.

5.2.5 The second millennium

Sumerian and Babylonian cities did not normally feature a city centre where one would expect to find key buildings such as temple and palace or key activities such as a marketplace. Indeed, in the older cities in southern Mesopotamia's alluvial plain, temples and temple complexes, including sanctuary, storehouse, residential quarters, granaries and magazines, and all other ancillary buildings, were separated by a wall from the city without. Both temple and palace were frequently disconnected from each other, and each might be surrounded by residential areas and by narrow, crooked streets. As urbanisation proceeded in a northerly direction toward Assyria, Syria, and Asia Minor, the separation between temple and palace disappeared. In those regions the two institutions were usually adjacent to one another and together they formed a single and central position within the larger urban environment (Oppenheim 1977:129-130). It is possible that in the beginning the residents of the city lived in or near this central complex; it was only later, when the population expanded and additional room was required, that the main residential neighbourhoods began to encroach on outlying areas. These outlying residential areas then required a secondary wall for their defence. Depending on the local terrain, the original palace-temple complex area became located in the Upper City (Ashur or Hattusas)²⁰⁶ as the progressive accumulation of debris raised this area into an acropolis,²⁰⁷ while the outer, newer layers were known as the Lower City (Carchemish). This feature was exacerbated by the propensity to build the original palace and temple on high ground, a tradition moderated only by the inexorable requirement for water.

5.2.5.1 The Isin-Larsa period (ca 2017-1763). The finest religious monument of the Isin-Larsa period, after the fall of Ur, was the temple at Ischali (ancient Neribtum), east of the

²⁰⁶ This does not prohibit the building of additional temples in the lower city, for example, the great Temple 1 in the lower city area of Boghazköy.

²⁰⁷ A Hittite hieroglyphic pictogram for "city" includes an image of a steep hill (Oppenheim 1977:131).

Diyala River, in the vicinity of Baghdad.²⁰⁸ This temple was an exact rectangle and measured about 60 x 100 meters. It encompassed three separate shrines, the largest of which was dedicated to Ishtar-Kititum, the local equivalent of the Great Mother. The temple complex at Ischali dates from the early second millennium and featured a large main terrace court and an upper court in which the temple lay at right angles to the primary axis (Thuesen 1997:165). On the corresponding side of the main court there were two minor courts; all of the courts were lined with auxiliary rooms. Temple building in the Isin-Larsa period was characterised by ‘a consistent accuracy, with right angles and harmonic proportions’ (Badawy 1966a:105).

The temple at Ischali stood on a platform, not a ziggurat, about three meters high, finished with baked bricks set in bitumen (for diagram, see Frankfort 1954:108; Leacroft 1974:14). Baked bricks, in fact, were used generously throughout the entire temple complex, including a wide stairway leading from the outer courtyard up to the main shrine as well as pathways through three towered gateways. An interesting feature of this temple was the fact that one of the subsidiary sanctuaries was set lengthways on the main temple axis, a practice later adopted in some Assyrian temples (Lloyd 1978:162). Whereas at Khafaje, for example, a visitor to the main temple courtyard had to make a right angle in order to face the deity in her shrine (the bent-axis plan), at Ischali the plan was more complex. Here the temple courtyard led to another court, then to an antecella through which the deity could be accessed. Moreover, unlike Khafaje, the platform at Ischali had a gateway leading directly to the street. From the viewpoint of the street entrance, the temple at Ischali lay on a central axis, whereas accessing the temple through the courtyards and the antecella was on the older, bent-axis model. Again, due to the heavier volume of traffic and activity from the street, the direct axis route eventually supplanted the older bent-axis approach.

One other point needs to be made. Earlier temple plans had featured long and narrow

²⁰⁸ Ischali was excavated in the 1930s by Henri Frankfort and Thorkild Jacobsen. The results of the first season's work was described in OIC 20, *Progress of the Work of the Oriental Institute in Iraq, 1934-1935: II: Excavations at Ischali*, 1936, 74-100. Excavation plans are on pp 76 and 77. The report for the second season was never published, but the architectural remains excavated in both seasons are pictured in OIP 72: *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region*, pl 96.

cellae; later structures, such as Ishchali, had broad and shallow cellae (Frankfort 1954:109). In the earlier temples with their long cellae, the niche at the far end, before which stood the god, was regarded as the most sacred area of all, and attempts were made to set this area off from the rest of the cella, often by piers or the placement of tables and benches. The development of a broad and shallow cella was the eventual consequence of this process as the cella was virtually divided into two separate rooms. This is a fine example of the concept of gradation in sacred space reflected in architectural arrangement.

5.2.5.2 The Kassite dynasty (ca 1600-1100). Four and one half centuries of Kassite rule in Babylonia were generally undistinguished in art and architecture, although there were restorations at Ur and elsewhere. The royal palace at the Kassite capital of Dur Kurigalzu, thirty-two kilometres west of present-day Baghdad, received some new features, including a court bordered on two sides by an ambulatory with square pillars. The nearby ziggurat of Tchoga-Zanbil was built in the thirteenth century by Untash-Gal, and the Kassite king Karaindash (ca 1440) built a temple at Warka dedicated to Inanna, the mother goddess. At the entrance were two deities, one male and one female, each holding a flowing vase.²⁰⁹ These figures were not free-standing but were incorporated into the architecture of the temple itself as they were made of mud bricks. Immediately beyond the entrance, along the same axis, was a door through which one entered a long cella; the Kassites favoured deep cellae (Badawy 1966a:105; Boehmer 1997:296; Frankfort 1954:128). The Kassites also remodelled temples and other monumental architecture

²⁰⁹ The motif of vases of flowing water was omnipresent in temple and palace architecture and decoration throughout the ancient Near East. For example, the largest and most impressive mural in the palace at Mari was found on the wall adjoining the central entrance to the throne room. The mural consisted of upper and lower panels. In the upper panel the king was depicted in an elaborate fringed costume and headgear and was either touching or receiving a divine emblem held by Ishtar, who stood with one foot raised and resting on the back of a lion. Other deities, male and female, were in attendance. In the lower panel, two identical goddesses attired in flounced dresses held vases from which streams of water, teeming with fish, flowed in an undulating fashion around the mural. Both upper and lower panels were framed with palm and other stylised trees and were replete with images of birds, mythical animals, and other divinities. The meaning of the mural is not entirely clear, although it has been suggested that the painting depicted a ceremony or ritual that was effected in the cella or antecella of the temple. Later Assyrian temples also featured the motifs of flowing vases and artificial palm and other trees. Another example can be found at Khorsabad, where at least three smaller temples adjoined the palace, and one of these—the Sin temple—featured artificial palm trees and statues of females pouring water from vases (Leacroft 1974:15, with a diagram of the city on p 19; Lloyd 1978:166-167, 203).

originally built by Hammurabi (Badawy 1966a:105).

5.2.5.3 Early Assyria (ca 1350-1000). In general the Assyrians followed patterns of temple architecture that had developed in the south. The ancient shrine of Ishtar at Ashur, whose origin went back at least to Early Dynastic times, was rebuilt by Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207) in the same style, though a subsidiary shrine was added in honour of the goddess Dinitu (Lamprichs 1997:227). The statue of Inanna, as would be expected, was placed at the end of the cella, but it was now elevated much higher than the surrounding floor; this was an innovation. In Babylonia it was common for the deity to stand or sit on a pedestal before the niche and to have a small altar or other temple furniture arranged before the figure, thus separating or secluding it somewhat from the rest of the cella. But in Ashur the statue actually stood in an alcove at the top of a flight of steps, almost forming a separate room from the cella. This innovation became common in subsequent Assyrian temples. Perhaps it was meant to express the idea that the distance between man and god was great, a common motif in Assyrian art (Frankfort 1954:138).

It is possible that the Assyrians became attached to the ziggurat as an appropriate form of temple architecture for the same reason, namely, to put vertical space between man and god (Badawy 1966a:105-106). Another innovation tended to express the same idea; whereas in Babylonia three stairways typically offered easy access to the top of the ziggurat, these were replaced in Assyria by a more strenuous mode of ascent. Regrettably, owing to the deplorable state of preservation of many of these ziggurats, it is not possible to tell in many instances just how workers and patrons were enabled to get up to the top of the ziggurat and enter the temple there.

As a generalisation, Assyrian temples tended to favour shallow, broad cellae rather than the long, narrow type more common in the south. Also, the niche or alcove tended to be deeper than in the south, and in some instances was actually cut into the body of the ziggurat. Perhaps this was meant to express the idea of the god actually coming out of the mountain itself (Frankfort 1954:139).

(a) Ashur. Inscriptions record no less than thirty-eight temples in the Assyrian capital of Ashur, though only a few have been excavated. The more significant of these, all dating from 1813-614, are the Ashur Temple with its ziggurat, the Temple of Sin and Shamash—gods of moon and sun, the Temple of Ishtar, and the Temple of Anu and Adad—gods of the sky and of weather (Lamprichs 1997:226).

Ashur contained multiple ziggurats, the largest of which measured sixty meters on each side and was originally dedicated to Enlil, although subsequently it was re-dedicated to Ashur. This ziggurat was given its final form by Shamshi-Adad I (late 18th century). The ruins do not indicate how one was supposed to ascend to the top. It was part of an area that included two royal palaces (an Old Palace and a New Palace), a large public square, the temple of Sky and Storm with its two ziggurats, and the temple of Moon and Sun with two more ziggurats (Frankfort 1954:139-140). Whatever may have been the actual appearance of this massive temple-palace complex, it is clear that this entire area was the scene of several innovations on the part of the Assyrian builders as they attempted to integrate these structures to each other and to the surrounding city. Unfortunately, physical evidence of the architecture of this period is scanty. Another sanctuary was added on centuries later by Sennacherib (704-681), and was built lengthways to the existing one.

Two Ashur temples had dual deities and somewhat unusual floor plans. One, dedicated to Anu and Adad, had twin ziggurats, an enclosed forecourt, and two innermost cellae, both in the direct-axis tradition (Lamprichs 1997:227). The other temple was also dual, dedicated to Sin and Shamash. This structure was first built by Ashur-nirari I (ca 1500) but was later rebuilt by Sennacherib on a different plan. Both of its sanctuaries followed the direct-axis plan, each sanctuary with its own antecella and cella (for diagrams of this temple in both its original and rebuilt conditions, see Lloyd 1978:181-182).

Another of the excavated temples in Ashur, dedicated to Ishtar, was rebuilt no less than

six times, yet it always contained a small cella in the old Sumerian bent-axis style.²¹⁰

A curious example of religious architecture in Ashur was the *Bit Akitu* (German *Neujahrsfesthaus*), located over four hundred meters northwest of the city wall, to which statues were brought during the *Akitu* (New Year) festival, accompanied by throngs of worshipers. Cities with a *Bit Akitu* had a special gate, opened only on this occasion, and a special road linking this chapel to the city.²¹¹ This building cannot be considered a temple in the normal sense of the word. However, it did feature an oversized square courtyard with lateral colonnades and a sanctuary on the main axis that resembled a throne room more than a temple cella (Lloyd 1978:181-182). The *Akitu* festival, which developed its final form around the beginning of the first millennium, was celebrated for eleven days at the spring equinox.²¹² It either replaced or assimilated the previous festival which was held around the time of the winter solstice and which was basically a ritual of creation and fertility *a la* the Myth and Ritual school.²¹³ In its final form the *Akitu* festival saw the bringing of statues from a large surrounding area to the *Bit Akitu* so they could be present at the ritual of the “Fixing of the Destinies”²¹⁴ in which the king played a leading role.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Temples throughout Mesopotamia were continually rebuilt on their previous sites. To mention just two examples: the temple at Eridu continued to be maintained and rebuilt long after the city was abandoned, and no less than 17 temples were later found by archaeologists, all built on top of one another (Leacroft 1974:7); and the Lower Temple at Nippur was rebuilt by the Kassites. While earlier architectural plans and features were normally maintained, there were innovations over time (Roaf 1995:428).

²¹¹ Similar *Akitu* structures have been found outside the city walls in Uruk and Babylon (Roaf 1995:431).

²¹² In the *Akitu* festival a number of elements coalesced. Included were the *hieros gamos*, various royal elements (including coronation or enthronement rituals and a mock trial and humiliation of the king), and the complete recitation of the *Enuma Elish*. In effect, the *Akitu* festival amounted to a renewal of the entire world (by the ritual renewal of *illud tempus*) and the reaffirmation of the king’s role as Marduk’s representative on earth (Wyatt 2001:255).

²¹³ The “Myth and Ritual School” was the name given to a series of scholars who developed theories regarding the ritual purposes of myths. Some of the earlier members of this school developed and supported the idea that every myth was derived from a particular ritual and was inextricably tied to that ritual. In other words, myth and ritual did not stand alone as independent values but were linked together in a cause-effect relationship. The theories of the myth and ritual school, wildly popular in religious studies at one time, are now largely ignored if not entirely discredited (Fontenrose 1971). While it is perhaps too much to expect direct correlation between every myth and ritual, or to avow that every myth has its corresponding ritual and *vice versa*, it is also too much to go to the opposite extreme and claim that there is no connection between the two. There are, in fact, rituals ‘which presuppose a certain mythic element’ (Wyatt 2001:224).

²¹⁴ It was Widengren (1950:25) who, referencing 2 Kings 11:12, first linked the tablets of law, handed to the king at his coronation, with the ‘tablet(s) of destinies’ given to the king in Mesopotamia in conjunction with the *Akitu* festival, and then linked them in turn with the *Urim and Thummim*.

²¹⁵ Badawy (1966a:106-107) calls the *Bit Akitu* a ‘Feast House’. The gods were towed in boats from the temple to the Feast House outside the city; they were considered to be rowed ‘against the current’ to

It is not known why the *Bit Akitu* was built so far outside the city limits or whether it had any function during the remainder of the year (Lloyd 1978:181-183; Oppenheim 1977:115, 187).

5.2.6 The first millennium

Temples from this period are primarily found in Assyria in the north and Babylon in the centre of the region.

5.2.6.1 Late Assyria (ca 1000-612). Rulers in this era were more concerned with palaces and their fortifications than they were with temples, a fact especially apparent in the ruins of Nineveh and Nimrud (Lloyd 1978:201).²¹⁶ The greatest example of the architecture of this period belongs not to a temple but to a palace, the royal residence of Sargon II at Khorsabad (early 8th century), which has been systematically excavated and studied. Adjacent to the palace stood the royal temple of Nabu.

(a) Khorsabad. Following excavations,²¹⁷ the ziggurat at Khorsabad, adjacent to no less than six shrines, had three layers that could be seen in one area and four in another. It was reputed to have had seven altogether as did the ziggurat of Etemenanki at Babylon. Furthermore, each layer was a different colour, also following the pattern of Etemenanki. Its height is estimated at 143 feet, equal to one side of the base, following the same proportions as Etemenanki. Its most striking feature was the continuous ramp that wound, serpent-like, around the tower, connecting the various stages with a path about six feet wide; thus, this ziggurat did not have separate stages, like a layered cake, but presented seven vertical faces on every side. The ruins are very worn, but if the reconstruction is

symbolise the death of the old year. The return journey was by chariot along a paved processional road to represent the new year. This practice was borrowed from the cult of Marduk.

²¹⁶ Roaf (1995:245) observed that 'temples and palaces are the staple of the Mesopotamian architectural tradition and predominate over other building types'. Here we must again caution that temples and palaces have been excavated much more than other structures, and hence the popular opinion of their predominance over the Mesopotamian urban landscape may be skewed.

²¹⁷ Work at Khorsabad began in the 1840s under Paul Emile Botta, the French consul at Mosul, and continued under his successor, Victor Place, from 1852 to 1854. Systematic excavation did not resume until 1929, under the aegis of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

correct, the spiral stairway divided the ziggurat into four stages, each painted a different colour—white, black, red, and blue (Frame 1997:296; Lloyd 1978:203).

The temple of Nabu (god of writing and wisdom), the only independent temple in the citadel at Khorsabad, was situated at an awkward angle off a paved street. Indeed, the whole city plan of Khorsabad seems to reflect a curious lack of central planning, despite the fact that it was conceived and constructed in a short period of time. The temple, perched atop a platform about twenty feet above the surrounding area, was made of mud brick; the exterior walls contained the familiar buttresses and niches now recognised as a consistent feature of Mesopotamian temples. The entrance was flanked by two guard towers. The temple had forty-five rooms and corridors surrounding no less than five central courtyards. One of the main courtyards led to a smaller inner courtyard, which in turn led to the cella housing the statue of the god (Frankfort 1954:143-151), along with a smaller cella dedicated, most likely, to Tashmetu, consort of Nabu. Interior decorations included façades embellished with glazed bricks depicting lions, eagles, bulls, fig trees, and ploughs.

There were at least three smaller temples that adjoined the palace at Khorsabad, dedicated to Sin, Shamash, and Ningal. One of these—the Sin temple—featured artificial palm trees and statues of females pouring water from vases, familiar motifs of temple decoration. These three temples also featured interior decorations using glazed bricks portraying the same objects as the larger Temple of Nabu (Frame 1997:297).

One other temple was found and excavated at Khorsabad, dedicated to the *Sebittu*.²¹⁸ This temple contained ‘approximately fifteen stone altars of offering tables, each with the same shape: a round top and tripod base, with the bottom corners of the base carved in the form of a lion’s paw’ (Frame 1997:298).

5.2.6.2 *Late Babylon (6th century)*. Early Sumerian temples were generally small

²¹⁸ The *Sebittu* (Akkadian ‘seven’), represented a group of seven beneficial gods that could be manipulated, by means of incantations, to overcome evil spirits and demons. In Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian art, the *Sebittu* were typically represented by seven dots or seven stars (Black 1992:162).

buildings, but later Babylonian temples, during the time of Nebuchadnezzar II, were large structures indeed. These large temples typically contained several chapels arranged around a spacious inner courtyard. The main god to whom the temple was dedicated was placed at the entrance to the sanctuary; sometimes standing, sometimes seated on a richly decorated throne. Large temples might contain chapels or inner sanctuaries for a multitude of lesser deities. Even kings and nobles might have their statue placed in one of these temples. Colossal monsters or hideous animal forms frequently stood at the entrance to these temples to prevent devils or evil spirits from entering. The god typically had a couch on which its statue was occasionally placed to rest; these couches were ornate, often made of gold and inlaid with ivory or precious stones. The gods also had boats and chariots to facilitate moving them from one temple to another for various festivals (Budge 2005:137-138).

An important object in the temple was the altar, a low, rectangular object built of masonry and brickwork. Initially quite flat, later versions featured raised edges and a spout from which spilled blood could drain. Later altars also featured a raised pillar in the centre upon which the animal was perched and slain. The courtyard of virtually all temples had a well, small pond, or a large basin filled with water to be used for cooking, cleaning, oblations and other purposes. Of necessity, temples also had a large number of utensils and implements required for animal sacrifice and the presentation of offerings on the altar. Oil-filled lamps provided extra light in the interior and at night.

The two great temples of Etemenanki and Esagila²¹⁹ (both dedicated to Marduk) represented, respectively, two important concepts concerning the temple in antiquity, namely, the *hochtempel* (the idea of the temple being the residence or dwelling-place of the god) and the *tieftempel* (the idea of the temple being a site for cultic or ritual worship, which may or may not have the effect of causing the deity to visit the temple) (Parrot 1955a:61). These two great temples thus represented the crowning glory and achievement

²¹⁹ The names of temples in late Assyrian or Babylonian times often reflected their Sumerian heritage and their cosmic importance. For example, E-temen-an-ki, 'House, Foundation Platform of Heaven and Underworld'; E-kur, 'House, Mountain [of Enlil]' or 'Mountain House connecting heaven and earth'; E-sag-ila, 'House whose Top is High' or 'the Lofty House'. One room of the temple of Enlil was called Dur-an-ki, 'the bond of heaven and earth' (George 1993:149, 116-117, 139-140, 80).

of Mesopotamian religious architecture; greater the pity that neither one left ruins to be studied. Etemenanki has totally disappeared, the victim of too many brick robbers, while Esagila was buried under twenty-one meters of subsequent debris. The outer enclosure wall around these temples was more than five hundred meters on each side. Its partial excavation required the removal of thirty thousand cubic meters of earth (Klengel-Brandt 1997:254; Lloyd 1978: 229).

Etemenanki contained two doors and ten gateways. It was adjoined by a number of houses and other buildings used by the priests. Herodotus reported (i.181) that there were seven layers to the ziggurat in addition to the temple at the top. Another source, the so-called 'Esagil tablet' (AO, 6555), now at the Louvre (Parrot 1955a:20), gives us the dimensions of the layers:

- Layer 1: 90,000 sq. ft., 110 feet high.
- Layer 2: 67,600 sq. ft., 60 feet high.
- Layer 3: 40,000 sq. ft., 20 feet high.
- Layer 4: 28,900 sq. ft., 20 feet high.
- Layer 5: 19,600 sq. ft., 20 feet high.
- Layer 6: unknown; omitted on source tablet; conjectured as 20 feet high.²²⁰
- Layer 7: 5,600 sq. ft., 50 feet high. This was the site of the Temple of Bel which housed the statue of the god.

Esagila itself measured 86 x 78 meters but its architectural details remain the subject of vigorous debate. The northern side was the site of a statue of Ea while the western side housed one of Marduk. The wall surrounding Esagila contained three towers on each side, for a total of twelve, and each side wall contained a gateway flanked by towers

²²⁰ If Layer 6 was the same height as its predecessors (twenty feet), then the entire ziggurat was three hundred feet tall, which was the exact dimension of the length of the bottom layer. This entire calculation is based on the assumption that one *gar* = twenty feet, an equation that is not without dispute. These measurements, which are taken from Budge (2005:52-53), are just a little larger than Parrot's calculations. Parrot believed the base (Layer 1) measured 295 feet on each side, against 300 feet for Budge. Archaeological measurements at the site yielded a length of 298 feet (Parrot 1955:46). Parrot reconstructed the missing Layer 6 as 108 ½ feet square (11,772 sq ft) with a height of 19 ¾ feet (1955a:21).

(Budge 2005:53).

A number of other, smaller temples have been excavated at Babylon. They all conformed to the basic tripartite form of entry, courtyard, and sanctuary all on the same axis, though they offered some variation in the placement of subsidiary chambers.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIONS

5.3.1 Architectural features of Mesopotamian temples

In the Ubaid and Uruk eras there was a wide variety in the size and layout of temples. Small wayside chapels consisted of little more than a courtyard with a statue of a god and an altar. The earliest temples, such as Eridu Level XVI (ca 4900), were single-room affairs, albeit they already had offering tables and a statue of the deity standing in a niche. Within a few hundred years (Eridu Level IX, ca 4100), marked differences appeared as temples now began to feature buttresses to support and give variety to the mud brick exterior walls and support thin interior load-bearing walls. Furthermore, the main sanctuary began to be surrounded by lateral rooms used for ancillary purposes. By the time of Eridu Level VII (ca 3800), more innovations appeared: rabbets and niches in the exterior walls, a tripartite floor plan, and the practice of building temples upon elevated platforms.²²¹ Thus by the Early Dynastic Period, Mesopotamian temples had largely acquired the forms that would persist, with only minor innovations, for the next three millennia (Falkenstein 1974:5).

Mud brick remained the building material of choice, probably due to the lack of readily-available lumber and stone. Efforts were made to beautify the monotonous character of

²²¹ Parrot believed that the elevated platform was the forerunner of the ziggurat and cited as evidence excavations at Uruk, Khafaje, Ubeid, Tell Uqair, and Eridu. This thesis is entirely plausible. Others have suggested more utilitarian purposes of the elevated platform: (1) to protect the temple from the recurrent floods of the Tigris and Euphrates; (2) to facilitate the use of the temple as an astronomical observatory; (3) to allow the god (and the resident priests) to escape the searing summer heat at ground level and to enjoy the relatively cool breeze in the higher atmosphere; (4) to similarly allow the temple and its occupants to escape the plague of mosquitoes that afflicted the lower air; and (5) to remind the Sumerians of the hilly countryside from which they may have migrated on their way to Mesopotamia (Leacroft 1974:7; Parrot 1955a:41-42, 58; Wasilewska 2009:403).

the exterior walls by applying a coating of plaster, as at the White Temple at Anu, and by the use of other techniques such as the cone-mosaic facade (Eanna and elsewhere) and rabbets and niches. Later temples and their associated ziggurats often had an exterior coating of glazed coloured bricks or tiles.

Other minor innovations occurred over the centuries, including painted murals, columns, and an elevated altar in the main cella (Tell Uqair, ca 3000); plano-convex bricks and an oval exterior enclosure wall (Khafaje, ca 2500); additional cellae arranged around a central courtyard (Tell Asmar, ca 2300); a trend from long and narrow cellae to a broad, shallow design (Ischali, ca 1900); ornate entryways (Kassite Warka, ca 1400); and relocating the statue of the god from a floor-level pedestal to the top of an elevated niche accessed by a flight of stairs (Ashur, ca 1200). Another change over the years was from the bent-axis approach, favoured in earlier, southern Mesopotamian temples, to the direct-axis plan, common in later, especially Assyrian, temples.²²² Major temples had a long tradition of development and in their final form they reflected the complex and highly organised religious communities found in Assyrian and Babylonian society.

No expense was spared in the construction of large temples. Cedar beams supported the roof, large panels of precious wood formed the doors, and much of the interior was plated in copper, bronze, or gold. Many of these items had to be imported at great cost.

5.3.1.1 A typical Mesopotamian temple. Though the mass of evidence indicates a substantial amount of diversity, a large majority of the more significant Mesopotamian temples shared certain elements in common. In general terms, progressing from the outside to the interior, temples typically featured an exterior enclosure wall. Part of the outer wall consisted of towers and massive gateways; these became essential features of Mesopotamian temple architecture beginning with the Third Dynasty of Ur. The towers had steep outside staircases and were initially coated with coloured plaster and later with enamelled bricks. In Babylonia they were placed at the main entrance to the temple

²²² Oppenheim (1944:58-59) attributed this shift to the corresponding position of the king's throne in early Babylonian and in later Assyrian palaces.

complex, while in Assyria the towers were placed nearer the sanctuary. At times the sanctuary itself extended into the tower structure, causing the niche containing the god to actually be located within the base of the tower. The purpose of these towers remains unknown (Oppenheim 1977:327-328).

The main entranceway was flanked by pillars or towers. It was structured to block other courtyards and buildings from direct view. Access to smaller courtyards was usually at right angles, so one could not see directly into the next courtyard from the previous one.

Inside the main entrance was a large courtyard (*kisalmahhu*), which was itself encompassed within a multitude of small rooms used for administration, archives, storage, lodgings, libraries, schools, kitchens, bakeries, and other purposes. During the great feasts and festivals the resident statues were occasionally relocated to the main courtyard. On ordinary days the courtyard most likely resembled a mixture of marketplace and cloister, filled with pilgrims, merchants, temple personnel, and animals destined for sacrifice. Beyond the *kisalmahhu* was another, smaller courtyard, with an altar in the middle. Even further on was the temple proper (*ashirtu*) where only certain priests were admitted.

Larger and more developed temple complexes might include additional elements such as the presence of a well or large basins of water, a large altar, cloisters, one or more antecellae,²²³ and more elaborate entryways including guard stations, lateral chambers on either side of the cella and antecella, and a concealed stairway leading to the roof of the temple. Such architectural accessories were limited only by the size and configuration of the adjoining land,²²⁴ royal largesse, and a local population large enough to absorb the

²²³ The courtyard(s) were not part of the temple proper, for the temple existed independently of them. However, they were a necessary adjunct area where certain activities could take place. Courtyards represented zones of intermediate and transitional sacred space.

²²⁴ Additions and renovations were often made to large temples over the course of years, and thus they were frequently a hodgepodge of design. Smaller temples, built in their entirety at commencement, generally achieved a more unified pattern in their architectural design (Oppenheim 1977:326-327). The Sin Temple at Khafaje is an excellent example of a temple that started out small and simple and grew to be large and complex, due to its location in an urban environment, surrounded by other buildings and residential areas that forced it to adapt the size and shape of accessory areas. The same basic plan exhibited by the Sin temple was different in locations where the temple had more room for expansion, although the intrinsic

expense of the construction, maintenance, and operation of a large temple. Inside the walls, temple complexes were known to contain groves of trees that were considered sacred.

An open-air area was necessary for the altar²²⁵ upon which animals could be sacrificed; in areas where there were a number of temples, a single sacrificial courtyard might serve the needs of all, as seems to have been the case, for example, at the Red Mound (*massif rouge*) at Mari (Margueron 1997:166). Nevertheless, the sacrificial courtyards possessed a sacred character as demonstrated by their inclusion within the outer enclosure wall.

The *ashirtu*, or temple proper, had an exterior wall featuring buttresses, rabbets and niches to give beauty and variety to a surface of mud brick, hardly an aesthetic or decorative medium. These exterior accents are exclusive to temples throughout Mesopotamia. Interior walls also had façades decorated with niches and recesses. Interior columns were not common in Mesopotamian temples, unlike their Egyptian or Greek counterparts, although they first appeared at an early date (Tell Uqair, ca 3000). When columns were used they were frequently carved to represent, among other things, palm trees (Roaf 1995:426-427).

The *ashirtu* was typically divided into three rooms arranged along a central axis: the vestibule, the antecella, and the cella (holy of holies).

The vestibule was the preliminary area where the transition from the less sacred space of the courtyards to the more sacred space of the temple began. This transition was frequently marked by ablutions or some other ritual designed to impress upon the visitor

elements remained the same. Temples that were built in areas with open space tended to develop in a more symmetrical fashion (such as Tell Asmar, which was arranged around a central courtyard that allowed the addition of two minor sanctuaries at a later date). Perhaps the best example of a large temple with unlimited space to expand was the Shara Temple at Tell Agrab. Its massive exterior walls encompassed a number of self-contained units, each with their own chambers positioned around a central courtyard, and rather lavish accommodations for the priestly cadre (Lloyd 1978:120).

²²⁵ The most significant physical indicator of temple ritual was the structure of the altar which customarily featured a drainage system leading into a concealed pottery jar, presumably to entrap the blood of sacrificial victims or to catch water or oil used in ablutions. Both kinds of activities were pictured on cylinder seals (Lloyd 1978:119-120).

the fact that he was entering the world of the ‘other’.

The antecella was the location where some of the daily temple rituals, related to the god whose presence was symbolised by a statue, took place. Some of the more intimate portions of the rituals might encroach upon the cella.

The cella was the most sacred and transcendent area, where the tie between divinity and humanity could be established. The cella actually contained the statue of the god, which was normally made of wood and plated with gold, to whom the temple was dedicated. The statue stood on a pedestal in a niche on the back wall of the cella.²²⁶ Surrounding the statue were flower pots and incense burners (Khafaje, Ur, and others). There were low benches around both the cella and antecella upon which were placed other deities (Ashur), stelae, and assorted sacred objects. The remainder of the temple furniture included small altars, a table for sacred meals, basins of water for ablutions, and display areas for weaponry and perhaps royal insignia.

As Sumerian culture revived and reached its apex at the time of the Akkadian Dynasty (ca 2334-2112), temple architecture had essentially become crystallised, although one subsequent modification was the virtual abandonment of the bent-axis entry into the innermost cella of temples and the standardisation of the direct-axis form, with the doorway leading into the cella on the short side opposite the altar and the statue of the god. This led to an increased symmetry in the overall floor plan of the temple and temple complex. The direct-axis form prevailed, with only minor variations or exceptions, until the end of the history of ancient Babylon.²²⁷

5.3.2 Mesopotamian temples and sacred space

Earlier in this chapter a significant number of architectural features incident to

²²⁶ Larger temples might also contain images of the deity’s consort and of lesser deities as well.

²²⁷ Archaeologists have classified Mesopotamian temples primarily by the shape and furnishings of the interior cella, the means of access to the cella, and exterior decorations. These are generalisations only and are not inflexible rules. The cella was normally insulated from the exterior walls by long, narrow rooms. It was not unusual for temples to have more than one antecella and more than one courtyard.

Mesopotamian temples were identified. The purpose of this section is to organise these architectural features and determine their relationship to the concept of sacred space.

These architectural characteristics have been divided into three main categories: (1) Techniques of Construction and Decoration; (2) General Temple Arrangement; and (3) Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia.

5.3.2.1 Techniques of Construction and Decoration. In this category are included (1) the concept of the primordial mound; (2) the practice of foundation deposits; (3) the purposes and functions of enclosure walls; (4) principles of orientation, alignment, and measurement; and (5) exterior and interior decoration.

Mesopotamian temples exhibited a peculiar building technique involving symbols portraying the concept of the primordial mound. The temple building process at Khafaje, as noted in the text, is perhaps the best example of this. Before actual construction of the temple commenced, the area was demarcated and the topsoil removed down to virgin soil or bedrock. This action, vital in temple construction, was completed in order to found the building on bedrock below any signs of human habitation. The idea was to avoid any possible risk of pollution which might be occasioned by the intermingling of 'profane' soil with the temple foundations. This practice applied to reconstruction and remodelling as well as to initial construction. Going down to bedrock and virgin soil was considered to re-establish the initial construction, done by the gods themselves in mythic time (Wyatt 2001:177, 224). This enormous cavity, which at Khafaje in some areas was up to seven meters deep (Hansen 1997:290), was then filled with clean (ritually pure) desert sand, which must have been transported a great distance and at considerable expense. Badawy (1966a:101) considered it 'noteworthy that the whole structure is built within an excavation on a filling of "pure" sand for symbolical reasons similar to those noted in the construction of Egyptian temples'. The symbolism was meant to represent the primordial mound.

In Mesopotamia the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish* states that Ea built his

‘dwelling place over the nether waters’ after defeating Apsu; Marduk did the same thing after defeating Tiamat. The motif of the primordial mound appeared in temple myths from Babylon in the Gudea cylinders (Cyl A XXI 18-27, ‘foundation of the abyss’, and Cyl B V 7, ‘house of the abyss’, thus the “house (=mountain) rising up out of the primordial waters” (Lundquist 1983:208). The temple of Eninnu at Lagash was ‘said to have been founded on the nether ocean, while that at Eridu was termed "House of the nether sea (E-engura(k))” (George 1993:82; van Buren 1952:293).

Foundation deposits (*temenu*), boxes buried underneath the corners of the temple platform, served a purpose directly relevant to sacred space: to demarcate the boundaries of the temple, divide sacred from profane space, and keep evil forces and spirits of the underworld at bay (Roux 1992:210-211). They also served to assure that the temple had been built according to the revealed plan.

Mesopotamian temple complexes had exterior enclosure walls. These walls served multiple purposes in Mesopotamia as elsewhere throughout the ancient Near East. While undoubtedly useful for the promotion of security, it cannot be doubted that their primary function was to maintain the purity of the temple complex. Outer enclosure walls were the first barrier to be overcome when endeavouring to enter the sacred space of the temple grounds from the profane, outside world.

In Mesopotamia the enclosure walls contained temple towers that were remarkably ornate. Entryways were guarded by painted or carved griffins, lions, and other fantastic creatures, all of which served to instil within the visiting pilgrim a sense of leaving profane space behind and entering a space set apart, a world of the ‘other’.

Mesopotamian temples were *oriented* with either their four sides or their four corners aligned with the four cardinal directions. This is evident, for example, in the Ekishnugal complex (Wilson 1999:322), the temple of Enki at Eridu (Badawy 1966a:98; Hall 1923:180, n 1), and at other sites, such as prehistoric strata 11 through 6 at Eridu, or strata 14 through 12 at Tepe Gawra (Perkins 1949:67-70, 87). Measurement was a critical

factor in the construction of Mesopotamian temples. Nabopolassar (626-605) was said to have consulted an oracle before building a temple tower in Babylon. He received not only approval but also specific measurements which he kept 'in his memory as a treasure' (Ricks & Carter 1994c:158). Ningirsu showed Gudea in a dream the plans for the temple he was to build (Hurowitz 1992:38). Extreme care was taken to have the finished building conform meticulously to the architectural plan, for the temple was not a mere image of the heavenly temple; it was considered an extension of that heavenly temple, and received its power from it by a direct conduit (Nibley 1994:541). This could only occur if the layout and measurements of the earthly temple conformed to the revealed plan in every detail.

The use of mud brick as a building medium was well suited to the Mesopotamian environment. Mud brick was used in virtually all construction from the beginning of the historical period.²²⁸ Mud was plentiful and cheap; bricks dried in the hot sun formed admirable building blocks.²²⁹ Lumber had to be imported from Assyria or Asia Minor or even Lebanon in the west or from Persia or India in the east, while stone had to come from Egypt or Cilicia; efforts to obtain these goods were costly and risky. Yet it is true that in the construction of larger temples, at least, no expense was spared. Some lumber was used in the temples as rafters or support beams for the roof. Interior cultic objects were carved from wood and covered with gold plate. Doors were fashioned from large (and expensive) wood panels and covered in sheets of hammered copper or precious metals (Oppenheim 1944:58).

Nevertheless, mud brick was still the overwhelming vehicle used in temple construction. While its utilitarian nature cannot be doubted, it was not an aesthetic material. Therefore, from earliest times, attempts were made to decorate the exterior walls of the temple to relieve the monotony of large sections of mud brick. Such attempts at decoration included the use of a plaster coating of various colours, the cone-mosaic façade technique, the

²²⁸ Some of the earliest temples in the Ubaid period are thought to have been constructed of reeds; obviously, evidence of this does not appear in the archaeological record.

²²⁹ Mesopotamian temples continued to be constructed of sun-dried brick, even after the advantages of kiln-fired bricks had become well known. This can only be attributed to the force of conservatism typical of religious architecture everywhere (Oppenheim 1944:58).

development of plano-convex bricks, the use of enamelled bricks and tiles, buttresses, and the extensive application of rabbets and niches. Buttresses were appreciated for their aesthetic interest but were also functional in supporting mud walls, especially interior load-bearing walls which tended to be thinner than exterior walls. The use of rabbets and niches was exclusive to temples in Mesopotamia—not even palaces had them. The specific items placed in the niches are unknown, but it seems probable that they may have contained cultic or ritual objects, or perhaps images of various deities, royal insignia, or a display of war booty.

One of the architectural techniques to create sacred space, noted in Chapter Two, specified that only the costliest and finest materials were used in the construction of a temple. Copious use of gold, silver, lapis lazuli and other precious stones, the finest woods, and elegant dyed and embroidered linens and fabrics all helped to convey a sense of the ‘other’. In Mesopotamia this prescription appears to have been followed. Though destined to rely on mud brick as a building material, efforts were made to beautify this medium as much as possible. Larger temples, naturally, could afford more expensive embellishments of wood, stone, precious metals, and fabrics.

Information on interior decorations is meager. Columns were used sparingly, again probably due to the scarcity of stone suitable for such a purpose. However, their purpose was as much symbolic as it was functional, for on those unusual occasions when they were used, they were often carved to represent natural objects, especially palm trees.²³⁰ A few temples are known to have had murals painted on the interior walls; it is difficult to tell how widespread this practice might have been, as both archaeological and textual evidence is sparse.

5.3.2.2 General Temple Arrangement. This category includes items pertaining to (1) the tripartite floor plan, (2) the ziggurat, (3) pillars, (4) the Tree of Life, and (5) temple/palace symbiosis.

²³⁰ There were palm trees carved on the wooden partitions of Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem. The palm tree has long been regarded as a symbol of both creation and fertility.

While the earliest sanctuaries were mere one-room affairs, the so-called tripartite floor plan was quickly adopted and soon became widespread in temple architecture. Examples from early Mesopotamia include Eridu IX and the White Temple at Anu, Tell Asmar, and Khafaje (Hansen 1997:289). The tripartite floor plan was not unique to Mesopotamia, as this format was widely adopted throughout the ancient Near East. This floor plan implies an orderly and rational progression as one entered the temple complex; it also suggests an increasing level of sanctity when proceeding from one area to the next. Succeeding areas tended to become smaller and more 'holy' until reaching the main cella, which was the focal point.

The ziggurat was unique to Mesopotamia. The elevated platform upon which most temples were originally built, and the ziggurat which may have evolved from it, undoubtedly had practical purposes but its significance was largely symbolical. Elevated platforms were meant to suggest the temple as a mountain, the significance of which was discussed earlier in Chapter Three. Elevated platforms and ziggurats were among the architectural techniques outlined in Chapter Two to artificially create sacred space: these tactics increased the prestige of the temple by allowing it to be visible for miles around. Of further interest and pertinence is the orientation of the corners of the platform, or of the temple itself, toward the cardinal points of the compass; this is related to the concept of the earthly temple's relationship with the heavenly temple. It also pertains to the temple as a microcosm of the cosmos and suggests that the blessings emanating from the temple go forth and cover the whole earth.

The ziggurat consisted of three to seven ascending levels of decreasing area, with a flat surface on top. Mesopotamian ziggurats typically had an upper temple on the top level and a lower temple at the base. The lower temple featured a central courtyard surrounded by groups of rooms, of which one contained the sacred image. The image stood on a low threshold in front of a door that led to other transverse rooms; if all the doors were open, worshipers in the main temple courtyard could see the image of the god, dressed in its finery, in the innermost cella (Oppenheim 1944:55-56). The small temple at the top of the

ziggurat, known as the *gigunu*, was reserved for the most sacred ordinance of the temple, which was the *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage.

Ziggurats were numerous in Mesopotamia; examples include Eridu, Ur III, Ashur, Uruk, Nippur, Larsa, Borsippa, Babylon, Kish, Sippar, and Khorsabad. The ziggurat was a compelling architectural device designed to promote the concept of sacred space. It accomplished this purpose by raising the level of the temple above the surrounding area, thus increasing its visibility and physically demarcating the sacred space of the temple from the surrounding profane space. The ziggurat provided a buffer or spacing between the lower and the upper temples.

Regarding pillars, the issue here is not pillars or columns in general, but pillars flanking the main entrance to the temple. Temple pillars, though not widespread in Mesopotamia due to the scarcity of available stone, were still significant features of temple architecture; some were built of brick or wood. Good examples can be found at the Shu-Sin temple at Tell Asmar (Lloyd 1978:161) and the temple at Ubaid (Lloyd 1978:103). There was a bronze pillar that stood near the gate through which Ningirsu would have been led into the Eninnu temple at Lagash (Yeivin 1959:20, n 90).

Pillars guarded entryways through which only authorised personnel could proceed. Also occasionally found flanking the entrance to the temple were painted or carved griffins, lions, and other fantastic creatures, designed to ward off evil spirits and prevent them from entering the sacred areas within the temple complex; they also served to instil within the visiting pilgrim a sense of leaving profane space behind and entering a space set apart, a world of the 'other'. These are familiar architectural techniques used to create sacred space by governing and controlling access to the temple area.

Widengren was the first to propose that every Mesopotamian temple had a grove featuring a Tree of Life that was nurtured by the king, the 'master gardener'. His stewardship over the Tree of Life somehow granted him power over life (Widengren 1951: *passim*, but see esp chap 1).

A portion of Cylinder A from Gudea of Lagash describes the *kishkanu*, a tree whose species is unknown, whose roots were in the *apsu* and whose top was raised over the lands of the earth (Wyatt 2001:160). Assyrian reliefs depicted the king performing a ritual act around a tree, possibly having to do with the pollination of the flowers (Wyatt 2001:160), though others have disputed this interpretation. Ringgren (1973:77-79) claimed that the king practised some kind of fertility rite in the grove.

Temple/palace symbiosis was demonstrated in Mesopotamia by shared courtyards and entrances, the use of temple facilities and functions to perform services necessary for the state, and the building of temples to acquire political legitimacy.

Perhaps the best example of a temple and palace in close proximity, with shared facilities, was Tell Asmar, where the Shu-Sin temple stood adjacent to the palace of the local governor. Even though the palace had its own private chapel which resembled the adjacent temple, the king nevertheless had direct and private access to the temple also. The direct palace-temple link had guard stations at both ends, for on the one end, limited entrance to the temple precinct had to be enforced, and on the other end, it was thought desirable to prevent unauthorised incursions into the palace via the temple.

Some rooms and areas typically found in temple complexes, such as kitchens, living areas, and administrative buildings, were not directly related to sacred space; they were merely subsidiary areas necessary for administration, daily operations, and maintenance. However, certain auxiliary rooms found in temples, such as schools, libraries, and observatories do relate directly to sacred space even though their functions may appear to be quite secular. Schools were developed for the training of priests and scribes. Observatories were established to mark the passage of the seasons and the years and to demarcate the times for the feasts and festivals that centred around the temple. The temple was a repository for mundane economic records such as ordinary business transactions, land grants, and taxation receipts; the temple also served as a repository for sacred records such as holy books and texts, mathematical and astronomical treatises, and

important political records such as various forms of treaties. The temple was the site where covenants were made and renewed, and some of the ancillary rooms were no doubt reserved for this purpose.

The building of a temple by a king and the use of that temple as a tool in establishing political legitimacy was portrayed in Gudea's Cylinder B (Hurowitz 1992:56-57, 290-291, n 2; Lundquist 1982:277-297). Kingship in Mesopotamia may also have been tied to the Tree of Life, for Widengren asserted (1951:6-9) that the king's sceptre was taken from the Tree of Life.

All of the features included in this categorisation (the tripartite floor plan, the ziggurat, pillars, the Tree of Life, and examples of temple/palace symbiosis) were designed to protect and promote the sanctity of the temple and to safeguard it from impurity.

Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia. This category includes features such as (1) elevated statues for the deity, (2) water for ablutions, (3) cult of the dead, and (4) altars and animal sacrifices.

The statue of the deity in Mesopotamian temples initially stood on a raised pedestal. This feature later evolved, particularly in Assyrian temples (for example, the temple of Ishtar at Ashur (Frankfort 1954:138-139)), into an elevated pedestal that could only be accessed by a flight of stairs; concurrently, the niche in which the god stood was deepened to the extent that the god was deep within the wall of the cella, perhaps inside a temple tower. This movement of the deity above the level of the worshippers and deep inside the wall may have meant to portray the god as coming out of the mountain itself, and thus represented the god entering his earthly temple directly from his heavenly temple. At any event, this elevation served to remove the statue from immediate contact with the priests and increased its awesome character. This action also had the effect, whether intended or not, of creating a new division within the cella itself. Previously the statue of the deity had stood or sat enthroned on a small pedestal at one of the narrow ends of the cella, possibly surrounded by incense smokers, flower pots, tables, and other cultic items that

served to create the impression of a barrier between the god and his devotees. The transmigration of the deity's position to the top of a staircase further solidified this separation between the god and the mere mortals who were attempting to worship or serve it, and thus heightened the awareness of being in sacred space. Raising the niche in which the statue of the god stood was an effort to set apart the most sacred part of the temple by creating a sense of separation between god and worshiper. This increased the awe and the *mysterium tremendum* experienced by temple visitors.

Mesopotamian temple courtyards contained either a well or a spring or, at the very least, large basins of water that could be used for ablutions as well as the preparation of sacrifices and sacrificial areas. Smaller or poorer temples had water in stone and metal receptacles (Wyatt 2001:40, 85, 162, 180). Ablutions may have been required to pass from one courtyard to the next, indicating a linear or processional advancement in sacred space.

Pallis (1926:104-105, 108-109) described a sepulchral chamber belonging to Marduk in Etemenanki, one of the two great temples in Babylon, thus demonstrating that at least in this case a temple was used as a tomb. Such usage, however, is rare in Mesopotamia.

The archaeological record reveals the presence of a few items of cultic significance that may shed some light on ancient temple ritual in Mesopotamia and its relation to the concept of sacred space. At the heart of such ritual was the principle and practice of sacrifice, primarily the sacrifice of living animals. Mesopotamian altars had drainage systems whereby the blood of the sacrificial victims could be captured and disposed. Tables were used as a site upon which to place votive offerings, but they may also have been used for sacred meals, perhaps as a ratification of a covenant ceremony, although this proposition is rather speculative. Cultic items (altars, basins, shovels, hooks, tables, etc.) relate to sacred space as they were necessary for the fulfilment of temple and cultic ritual.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

Ancient Mesopotamian temples applied a large number of architectural techniques to create sacred space and to demarcate the sacred from the profane. One method used by temple architects was the development of a series of areas of graded sanctity. A way could not be conceived in which a person could move from profane to sacred space in one step; the boundary would be too strict, too sudden, too severe; the shock of moving from totally profane to totally sacred space in one step would be too great. It would be comparable to emerging from a totally darkened environment to face the blazing light of the noonday sun without time or opportunity to adjust. Consequently, architectural plans were devised wherein one could go through a series of graded sacred space, each area more sacred than the former, and thereby effect a safe transition from the outside profane world to the sacred innermost cella of the temple, where one was figuratively ushered into the presence of the god. These steps increased the sense of awe and magnified the *mysterium tremendum*.

Temples were built on a foundation of clean sand as an emblem of the primordial mound. Foundation deposits demarcated sacred space and protected the temple area from the incursion of evil forces. Enclosure walls fulfilled much the same purpose; in addition, they helped restrict access to authorised personnel only. Furthermore, high enclosure walls aided in preserving secrecy regarding the temple environment and the nature of its rituals. Temples were measured carefully in accordance with plans revealed from heaven, as they were extensions of the heavenly temple. They were aligned with the cardinal directions, the Polar Star, or other heavenly bodies to suggest their cosmic nature. Temple architects pursued a variety of techniques in both interior and exterior decoration, including wall colouring, niches and rabbets, mosaics, and other creative methods of adornment to alleviate the anaesthetic surface of uninterrupted mud brick.

The tripartite floor plan was instituted to provide areas of graded sacred space. The institution of the ziggurat, which could be seen from far distances, enhanced the prestige of the temple. Pillars and temple towers created a sense of awe in visitors; perhaps they also served other purposes of which we remain unaware. Temples frequently contained

sacred groves; a tree in the centre was designated the Tree of Life, thus symbolising the presence of the temple on the *axis mundi*. Temples and palaces developed close relationships; temples performed many functions that pertained to the state, and kings used temples to acquire or increase their legitimacy.

Inside the main cella, the statue of the god was elevated higher and higher to further separate it from other areas. Water for ablutions and for use in animal sacrifices was available in temple courtyards. There is limited evidence in Mesopotamia that temples were used as tombs. Altars and animal sacrifice, which are of the essence of sacred space, were featured in temple rituals.

CHAPTER 6

EGYPTIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Abstract

Temples were a vital part of the Egyptian landscape. 'From beginning to end, temples are vital to the comprehension of ancient Egypt' (Baines 1995:316). The earliest Egyptian temples, like their Mesopotamian counterparts, were built of reeds or reeds daubed with mud; unsurprisingly, no archaeological traces have survived. The use of mud brick appeared almost spontaneously near the beginning of the third millennium. Soon temples were constructed of a combination of mud brick and ever-increasing amounts of stone. The New Kingdom saw a great expansion in the construction of temples and the replacement of earlier brick structures with those of stone; this fortuitous use of stone as a building medium has provided an extensive number of ruins that can still be examined today. Egyptian temples were cosmic in both intent and design.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The archaeological record provides valuable clues to the way sacred space was portrayed by temple architecture in ancient Egypt. In this chapter the physical qualities of selected temples from representative periods in Egyptian history will be briefly described. As the field is wide and the time span immense, it will not be possible to offer much more than a cursory glimpse at a few well-known sites. This brief survey will include the pre-Dynastic era (prior to 3050), the Old and Middle Kingdoms, the New Kingdom, the Late Period, and the reign of the Ptolemies. After briefly describing some of the more consistent features of Egyptian temple architecture, these characteristics will be analysed to determine how they promoted the concept of sacred space within the temple complex.

6.2 DESCRIPTION OF REPRESENTATIVE TEMPLES IN EGYPT

6.2.1 Predynastic temples

The earliest sacred shrines in Egypt were constructed of reeds,²³¹ wood (Nelson 1944:44), and mud brick.²³² None of the reed shrines have survived as this is not an architecturally durable material. Royal cult complexes, however, even from a very early date, were made of stone, which is very favourable for architectural preservation, and stone as a medium for temple construction soon followed.

The texts at the temple of Horus at Edfu (Ptolemaic era) depict four stages in the building of the initial temple, the temple of *Wetjeset-Neter*. First, the temple consisted simply of a courtyard, in the northernmost part of which was erected a shrine indicating the resting-place of the god.²³³ This phase may have eventually included symbols, fetishes and images of the god. Second, a roof was constructed over the shrine. Third, an extension to this primitive building was made at the southern end, consisting of a hall with side-chambers. Fourth, this structure was then surrounded by yet another outer wall, larger in dimensions than the first (Reymond 1969:225-226).²³⁴ While there is no explicit mention about an inner enclosure wall, Reymond asserted that ‘such an inner enclosure must have

²³¹ Reed shrines are portrayed on cylinder seals, ivory, and ebony tablets (Shafer 1997b:4).

²³² The most common building material used during Pre- and Early Dynastic times was mud brick. This building material as it pertained to temples appeared suddenly, without any trace of evolution or development, in the First Dynasty. This has led to theories that knowledge of the use of this medium in temple construction may have been imported from Mesopotamia which had a long history in the development of mud brick as a construction material. By the First Dynasty in Egypt the use of mud brick in architecture, both sacred and profane, was well established, and temples constructed from this material appeared in a significant number of provincial towns (Baines 1995:304; Kemp 1989:92).

²³³ The area of the shrine in these primitive temples eventually evolved into the ‘holy of holies’, a small, elevated room at the back of the temple containing the statue of the god to whom the temple was dedicated. This area, the ‘Great Place’, though it lay on the main temple axis, was secluded and protected from impure eyes by a series of doors between it and the other areas of the temple complex (Nelson 1944:44).

²³⁴ Reymond reminds us that we cannot be sure that this prototypical temple of Horus ever existed, whether at Edfu or anywhere else. There is neither primary textual nor archaeological evidence of an archaic temple of Horus as the first sacred place in Upper Egypt. The text Reymond was dealing with may simply have been the work of someone’s vivid imagination, describing how, as they supposed, the first temple evolved. Nevertheless, this temple plan, going back to the mythical reign of Tanen, appears to have served as the model for the “second” temple built in Egypt, where the ‘chief sanctuary... was apparently placed on the main axis at the rear of the temple... there was a large courtyard in the front of this sanctuary, and perhaps some smaller sanctuaries along the two inner sides of this courtyard’ (Reymond 1969:28-29, 36-38, 220).

existed, [as] seems to be a logical deduction from the facts. It seems probable that the temple consisted essentially of three units' (Reymond 1969:240).

Enclosure walls deserve further mention as they were a vital component of Egyptian temples. Their function was fourfold. Their primary purpose was to demarcate the area within as sacred space to be set apart from profane space without. Secondly, the walls afforded a measure of physical protection in times of civil strife and invasion.²³⁵ Thirdly, enclosure walls helped to protect the secrecy of the rituals taking place within the temple. Finally, the walls were endowed with symbolical significance as they were thought to keep the chaotic waters of *Nun* from encroaching upon the sacred enclosure. Some walls were actually built in an alternating concave and convex pattern in order to represent the waves of the primeval ocean held at bay by the sanctity of the temple area. Walls of this fashion have been found only around temples or areas controlled by temples, giving the impression of the temple as conqueror over the waters and as fortresses that the waters could not overcome.²³⁶

6.2.2 The Old and Middle Kingdoms

The existence of royal mortuary temples is attested for the First and Second Dynasties at Abydos. These early dynastic royal tombs were located at some distance, perhaps a mile, from the main cult installation. No granaries, magazines, or residences were located near these early temples.²³⁷

Originally the royal funerary temples were large, complex, and functionally diverse, although pyramid complexes of the Old Kingdom, built as royal tombs, had developed a

²³⁵ Whereas the focus of this work is on the role of enclosure walls *vis-à-vis* the concept of sacred space, we must be careful not to minimise the function of these walls for security and defence. Arnold (1997:175) remarks, for example, that during the period from the 21st to the 30th Dynasties, 'the chaotic times required that gigantic enclosure walls surround sanctuaries and that the stone temple houses have few doors and openings'.

²³⁶ The first such undulating wall may be at Mazghuna, south of Cairo, where there are two unfinished temples whose builders are unknown. The southern temple features an enclosure wall exhibiting the aforementioned wavy pattern (Wilkinson 2000:56-57, 133).

²³⁷ In later eras Egyptian mortuary monuments became less important while temples became more central (Baines 1995:303).

sort of standard layout by the time of Khafre (Fourth Dynasty; for diagrams, see Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:570-571). Typically they contained two structures that may be referred to as temples in addition to a number of other buildings that were probably minor chapels or administrative areas. Burial was normally within or beneath a pyramid with a mortuary temple located on the east side of the pyramid. At the mortuary temple sacrifices were offered and other rituals were performed for the eternal welfare of the deceased pharaoh. The mortuary temple was connected by a causeway to another temple known as a valley temple (Winlock 1914:12), consisting of a number of sanctuaries, located on the valley floor nearer the river.²³⁸ Thus the entire pyramid complex could be conveniently accessed from the Nile (or a canal) through the valley temple and the causeway leading to the mortuary temple. Beyond the mortuary temple, on the same axis, were subsidiary buildings, granaries, magazines, and porticoed reception halls. Residences near the temple were relatively few in number and were used only by workers currently serving in their rotation.²³⁹

The earliest pyramid complexes²⁴⁰ were built on a north-south axis, paralleling the Nile, though after the Fourth Dynasty they began to be oriented on an east-west axis. They featured an entrance hall and a broad columned court leading to the rear area of the temple. Here were shrines or niches for the statue of the king as well as storage chambers and other auxiliary rooms.²⁴¹

Cult temple building in the Old Kingdom remained modest in both scope and materials, especially when compared with royal funerary complexes (Shafer 1997b:4).²⁴² Royal

²³⁸ Badawy (1966a:43) sees here an alternative manifestation of the tripartite temple plan: mortuary temple, causeway, and valley temple.

²³⁹ See Badawy (1990:89-114) for a full description of the development of the mortuary temple, with specific data on the temples at Zawyet el Arian, Dahshur, Meydum, Giza (Cheops, Chephren, Mykerinos), Saqqara (Shepseskaf, Userkaf, Unas, Pepi II Neferkare), and Abusir (Sahure, Neferirkare, Neuserre), including their attendant offering chapels and funerary cult temples.

²⁴⁰ Every pyramid was supposed to have had a temple complex attached to it, but many disappeared over the years due to denudation and dilapidation (Badawy 1990:68).

²⁴¹ Old and Middle Kingdom temples frequently were integrated structures that included the temple itself, storage facilities, administrative areas, ancillary structures, and residential areas for temple workers (Kemp 1989:157; Wilkinson 2000:20).

²⁴² Exceptions include the cult temples of the royal cities of Memphis and Heliopolis, which were rather grand affairs.

funerary temples have been excavated in abundance, while cult temples belonging to royal capitals and provincial towns have not.²⁴³

The Old Kingdom was the age of the pyramid builders and was characterised by ‘monumental stone edifices, mastabas, pyramids, sphinxes and the first sun temples with obelisks and lotus, papyrus and palm columns’, while the Middle Kingdom featured more modest ‘brick-filled pyramids, sun and mortuary temples, Hathor columns and the rock tombs of private citizens’ (Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:572).

6.2.3 Early cult temples in Upper Egypt

*6.2.3.1 Medamud.*²⁴⁴ Medamud, about eight kilometres northeast of Luxor, contains the ruins of temples covering several historical periods. The first temple at Medamud was an early mud brick building, ca 2500. The temple grounds, according to a preliminary excavation report, contained a grove of trees. Within the grove were two hillocks, initially thought to be merely mounds of soil, but which upon excavation were found to contain ruins of two chambers.

The main entrance to the shrine was on the south. This entrance, flanked by two pylons (Arnold 2003:142), opened into a large courtyard with altars on the left side. A gateway at the far end of the courtyard, flanked by two smaller towers, opened into a smaller courtyard. From this antechamber two paths were afforded: one straight ahead, and one to the right; each path led to the central chamber in each mound. The path to each chamber was a winding corridor, paved with bricks and covered with a layer of clean sand (Kemp

²⁴³ Very few cult temples belonging to a royal capital or a provincial centre or town have been excavated. There are a few exceptions from the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, for example, Medinat Madi. Tell al-Dab’a, the Hyksos capital in the delta, has ruins that are Canaanite rather than Egyptian in character. There is also a dearth of inscriptions regarding these early temples as most of the relevant texts were on the walls of the temples themselves. There are occasional royal inscriptions and the tombs of priests and other officials that refer to cult temples, but these are relatively few in number. For these reasons we must be cautious and not give an exaggerated emphasis to early cult temples (O’Connor 1995:324-325).

²⁴⁴ This site was first excavated by Fernand Bisson de la Roque in 1925. Medamud offers a good example of the many roles played by temples in ancient Egypt: it was built to serve the needs of a powerful central bureaucracy, it was a site of religious sacrifice, it was an instrument for promoting political stability, and it was an economic force to be reckoned with (Kemp 1989:66-67).

1989:66-69). The complex was situated within an outer enclosure wall constructed of mud brick.

The deity worshipped at Medamud and the exact nature of the cult²⁴⁵ practised there are largely unknown, though it is evident that this temple was built around the presence of the two mounds. These may have been regarded as architectural symbols of the primordial mound, that spot of earth that was the first to emerge from the waters of creation and which were considered to be the foundation of all Egyptian temples (Wilkinson 2000:22).

The temple at Medamud was rebuilt in the Middle Kingdom by Senusret III (1878-1839) using brick with columns and gateways of limestone. This version included a wall five and one-half meters thick that enclosed the cult building, statue pillars of the king, magazines, residential quarters for the priests, and granaries.

In the New Kingdom, Thutmose III (1479-1425) erected a new temple on the site of the original western mound (Arnold 2003:142-143). The New Kingdom temple was heavily built up on the northern side of the enclosure area, unfortunately destroying most of the brickwork from the earlier shrine. The later temple was subsequently destroyed also, most of its stone looted and carried away for use on other projects. Nevertheless, excavators have been able to reproduce a general idea of the floor plan of this temple, though much of this is subject to interpretation. The southern portion of the temple complex consisted primarily of rooms used for storage and for residences for the priests and other members of the temple community. The temple featured a triple-portal entry which led to a large courtyard, which in turn led to a conventional hypostyle (columned) hall. To the rear of the main temple was a small sanctuary, the holiest area of the temple (Wilkinson 2000:153). There was a sacred lake off the northwest corner of the complex measuring approximately 15 x 17 meters (Wilkinson 2000:73). The exterior of the temple at Medamud is believed to have had a fortress-like quality, perhaps inspired by Nubian

²⁴⁵ There is no definite information on the specific function of the early temple at Medamud, but it is generally considered to be an Osireion of the Old Kingdom. Despite its early date, it displays sophisticated architecture (Badawy 1990:115; Goedicke 1979:114).

forts further upriver (Kemp 1989:166-178).

Later, in the Ptolemaic era, a large courtyard was added with a double altar and double rows of columns. An avenue of sphinxes (for diagrams of various sphinxes, see Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:578-579) lined a processional route from the main gate to a platform on which stood twin obelisks. A sacred lake now occupied the southwest corner of the complex. A new outer enclosure wall, also of stone, surrounded the entire complex (Arnold 1999:162, 164, 194-195; 2003:142-143).

6.2.3.2 Elephantine. Seven hundred kilometres upriver from Cairo is the island of Elephantine near modern Aswan (Syene in Ezk 29:10) at the first cataract of the Nile. A fortunate circumstance of history affords a rare look at an early temple at Elephantine, for an early temple site destined for rebuilding was simply covered up and then paved over, leaving the original site in a fairly pristine condition for later archaeological excavation.

The site of what was perhaps the first shrine at Elephantine was set in a niche among large boulders. It was the presence of these boulders that discouraged later builders; it was easier to fill up the area and build over it than to try and remove them. There is no carvings on these boulders such as are found, for instance, at Yazilikaya in Hittite territory, nor is it certain which deity was worshipped here, though it was most likely Satis (Arnold 2003:81; Baines 1995: 306).²⁴⁶ At any rate the object of veneration was evidently protected by two small mud brick rooms constructed between the boulders, creating either a courtyard or a roofed area. The structure dates from the Early Dynastic period though pottery from the Predynastic era was found in the area (Kemp 1989:69).

The shrine retained its basic form throughout the Old Kingdom and into the First Intermediate Period. The temple at Elephantine was oriented not toward the sun but toward Sirius, whose rising announced the annual flooding of the Nile (Grimal 1992:51-52; Wilkinson 2000:37). During its existence, which spanned six centuries, the small

²⁴⁶ By the time of the Eleventh Dynasty the three principal deities at Elephantine (Khnum, his consort Satis, and Anuket [Greek *Anukis*, goddess of the Nile]) are well attested (Wilkinson 2000:212).

shrine was remodelled by a partition wall across the whole niche between the boulders; this had the effect of increasing the size of the forecourt. In the centre of the court was a square pedestal, about .95 x 1.1 meters, constructed of layers of brick, which could have served as the basis of an altar or of a statue, more likely the latter. An outer corridor and a second wall were added, thus enclosing and protecting the entire area.

The Eleventh Dynasty oversaw the construction of an entirely new building by Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II (2061–2010). There is little that remains, but it appears that the overall plan was simply a continuation of the previous shrine. This shrine in turn was replaced by a new one in the Twelfth Dynasty by Senusret I (1971-1926), this time built of stone (Arnold 2003:81). Yet even this latest temple kept the same lines as the earlier building, though the use of expensive decorated stone blocks indicates this temple may have been the beneficiary of royal largesse (for diagrams and plans of the early shrine at Elephantine and its later versions, see Arnold 2003:81-82 and Kemp 1989:61, 70).

There were major innovations at the site in the Eighteenth Dynasty under the reign of Hatshepsut (1508-1458). The existing stone temple was demolished and the ancient temple court was filled in with blocks of stone to create a foundation for a new temple on a higher, now level surface (for diagram, see Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:572-573). Here another large stone temple was built during the reign of Tuthmosis III (Maurizio Re 2006:220-221). Even here the builders attempted to remain somewhat faithful to the earlier shrine as the new building was constructed directly over the old site and a stone-lined shaft was sunk down to the foundations of the floor of the earlier structure, thus maintaining a conduit of sacred space from the old temple to the new. This is a fine example of the tenacious force of conservatism in religious architecture in Egypt (Kemp 1989:72).²⁴⁷

There were a number of other temples at Elephantine although none have survived intact. Due to the limited availability of agricultural land in the area, it is supposed that the

²⁴⁷ The temple of Hatshepsut gained its inspiration from an adjacent temple built six centuries earlier, the temple and tomb of the Mentuhoteps, the princes who founded Thebes (Winlock 1914:12).

temples at Elephantine were designed more for individual worship than as part of an established agricultural cult.²⁴⁸

(a) An Israelite temple at Elephantine. Aramaic papyri discovered in the area beginning in 1893 CE revealed the existence of an Israelite colony on Elephantine that served as mercenaries guarding Egypt's southern frontier. British and German scholars were eventually able to decipher these papyri,²⁴⁹ and by World War I it was known that this Israelite colony had lived on the island, along with a temple they had built, for well over a century. The garrison of Israelites at Elephantine seems to have got along well with the local inhabitants as there was intermarrying between them.

In 1969 German and Swiss archaeological teams were sent to excavate the many temples at Elephantine. The ruins of an Israelite temple were discovered in the late 1990s. The building had a chamber of two rooms surrounded by a courtyard paved with fine plaster. Its dimensions were much smaller than the Jerusalem temple; indeed, they were nearly the same as the Tabernacle of Moses (Rosenberg 2004:4, 10). The plans for the entire temple cannot be restored, but evidently it was a small structure about six meters wide and approximately fifteen to eighteen meters long. The temple courtyard was about 25 x 60 meters.²⁵⁰ Originally the Israelites at Elephantine sacrificed sheep at their temple, especially during the Passover festival; this practice was later abandoned due to the opposition of the local Egyptians who worshipped Khnum, the ram-headed god, as the main deity of the island (Rosenberg 2004:8).

The origin and destiny of the Israelites at Elephantine are unknown. Some suppose that they came from Jerusalem along with Jeremiah after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Others believe they may have come much earlier, perhaps from the time of

²⁴⁸ Goedicke (1979:114) suggests that the temples at Elephantine may have evolved as places of worship due to 'the psychic and physical strains of passing the cliffs of the First Cataract'.

²⁴⁹ The first complete English translation of these papyri was published by M. Sprengling (1917-1918). Subsequent works on the Aramaic texts at Elephantine were published by Kenney-Herbert (1938), Neugebauer (1942), Kraeling (1952), Torrey (1954), Hammerschaimb (1957), and Porten (1979), among others.

²⁵⁰ This favourably compares in size with the desert tabernacle which was 10 x 30 cubits (5m x 15m) in a courtyard of 50 by 100 cubits (25m x 50m). See Rosenberg (2001-2002:183-184).

the wicked King Manasseh (Rosenberg 2004:6-7).²⁵¹ The temple at Elephantine was destroyed by the Persians around 400 and the colony disappeared. It is not known whether they were killed, led away captive, or merely assimilated into the area. There is some speculation that these Israelites, since they could not escape to the north, may have migrated southward and formed the core of the future Ethiopian Jewish community.²⁵²

6.2.3.3 Hierakonpolis. Hierakonpolis (ancient Nekhen) was an important site in the early part of the Old Kingdom, a walled city with densely packed buildings.²⁵³ The city declined in importance around the middle of the Old Kingdom when its significance as a major urban centre was usurped by Edfu, fifteen kilometres to the south (Kemp 1989:39), although it continued to have an important temple that was rebuilt in both the Middle and New Kingdoms.

The southern corner of Hierakonpolis in the Old Kingdom featured a rectangular temple enclosure wall made of mud brick. Within the enclosure were three main parts: (1) the northwest portion, now empty as it has been eroded down to a level below that of the building; (2) the middle portion, which contained a large number of rectangular building walls that rested on a bed of sand held in place by a retaining wall; and (3) the southern

²⁵¹ Some scholars suggest that this temple was built before Josiah instituted his reforms in Jerusalem. The Jews at Elephantine evidently saw nothing wrong with building and operating a temple concurrently with the one in Jerusalem (Roitman 2003:57, n 1).

²⁵² There was another Israelite temple in Egypt at Leontopolis, the existence of which has been known for nearly two thousand years. Josephus spoke of it and it was also mentioned in the Talmud. In his *Antiquities* Josephus said it resembled the Jerusalem temple, but in his *Wars* he said it was built like a fortress with a tower sixty cubits high. The temple at Leontopolis was founded by Onias, probably Onias IV, whose father had been supplanted from the high priesthood by Jason. Onias IV went off to Egypt, secured the agreement of Ptolemy IV and his queen Cleopatra I, and began building his temple somewhat north of modern Cairo. The year was approximately 170. Onias had brought a small military force with him, and Ptolemy was glad to have it as reinforcement for Egyptian rule in southern Palestine. The temple at Leontopolis was legitimate, as far as the Talmud was concerned, as it was established by the son of a high priest and it fulfilled a prophecy of Isaiah: 'In that day, there shall be an altar to the Lord inside the land of Egypt and a pillar to the Lord at its border' (Is 19:19). This temple stood for more than two hundred years before the Romans destroyed it in 73 CE, just three years after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. In 1906 Sir Flinders Petrie claimed to have discovered the site of this temple on a sandy mound attached to the city of Ramesses III. He gave lectures on the subject to enthusiastic audiences in England and even constructed a model of this temple. Petrie's model, as well as the location of this temple, have since been lost. Rosenberg (2001-2002:182, 184) suggests that Petrie's optimism may have been misplaced, and that Petrie should have looked for a much more modest structure akin to the Jewish temple at Elephantine.

²⁵³ Archaeological excavations indicate that ca 3500 Hierakonpolis may have been the most important settlement in the entire Nile valley; indeed, the cult at this site goes back to the very roots of Egyptian religion (Wilkinson 2000:17, 203).

portion, which contained the remains of a stone temple built in the New Kingdom by Tuthmosis III. The heart of the shrine was Kom el-Ahmar, the 'Red Mound' (Wilkinson 2000:203).

The entrance was flanked by pylons; this was on the northeastern side of the temple area toward the Nile. Still visible are the brick pedestals on which columns rested. As elsewhere, the builders of this temple had levelled the earlier building on the same site and used the rubble for their new foundation.

The centre of the temple complex may well have marked the location of an earlier shrine. There was a central chamber; on its floor was a brick-lined pit covered with a basalt slab. The pit contained the divine image; in this case it was a falcon of thin copper plate with a golden head and plumes (Lansing 1935b:40).

Foundation deposits lay beneath the walls of the temple (Weinstein 1971-1972:133-135). Also beneath part of the walls were the remains of a yet earlier shrine, consisting of a circular mound of clean sand held in place by sandstone blocks.²⁵⁴ These remains date from the late Predynastic Period to the Second or Third Dynasty. The sandy mound is universally believed to have been the foundation of the earliest temple at Hierakonpolis (Fairservis 1971-1972:14-20).²⁵⁵ The shape and floor plan of this early temple are unknown, but it can be surmised that it was made of mud brick and was quite small (Kemp 1989:74-77).

West of Kom el-Ahmar, on the edge of the desert, was perhaps Egypt's earliest temple (Lansing 1935a). Constructed of wood with reed-matting, this temple consisted of a roofed, three-room sanctuary. The entrance contained four wooden columns at least twelve meters high which must have been transported a long distance. The interior court

²⁵⁴ Wilkinson (2000:76) believes that these mounds of sand, found at Hierakonpolis and elsewhere, reflect the mythical origin of the Egyptian temple as constructed on the primordial mound. Hierakonpolis was the home of Horus, the falcon god, whose primeval sanctuary stood on a sandy mound held in place by a sandstone retaining wall (Arnold 2003:108; Badawy 1990:24).

²⁵⁵ The temple at Hierakonpolis was dedicated to the earliest Horus, who was a cosmic deity and not a local agricultural deity. Horus's influence was not restricted to a local area but 'was conceived as permeating the world' (Goedicke 1979:115).

contained a mound of sand with a single pole set in it—no doubt topped by a fetish or some other symbol of the falcon god.

6.2.3.4 Abydos. Abydos was a provincial town that was probably already in existence during the First Dynasty. It is one of the principal archaeological sites in all of Egypt as it contains many important tombs, temples, and other ruins from the First Dynasty to the New Kingdom, including at least twelve royal cult complexes, notably those of Sethos I and Ramesses II (Negev 1980:10).²⁵⁶ Late in the Old Kingdom its main temple site, adjacent to a mound of earth, was renovated. The main focus of the renovation appears to have been the building of a new enclosure wall around the outer perimeter of the temple complex (Petrie 1902:90).

The temple proper was a modest structure of mud brick shaped as a rectangle measuring some eighteen by twenty-one meters. Its doorway was lined with stone. The temple was divided into more rooms than one but the ruins do not clearly define a coherent plan. There are indications that there was a courtyard; from the courtyard a narrow, brick-lined path led elsewhere, somewhat reminiscent of the temple at Medamud.

The temple itself was finally rebuilt in the Eleventh Dynasty under the reign of Senusret I, though it was still made largely of mud brick but with increasing use of stone (Naville 1914:5). This temple was completely demolished in order to make room for its successor during the reign of Seti I²⁵⁷ in the Nineteenth Dynasty (Arnold 2003:3-5; Kemp 1989:77-79; Maurizio Re 2006:118-119).

A Second or Third Dynasty temple at Abydos dedicated to Khentiamentiw exhibited a rectangular plan of two equal parts. There was a screen hiding the entrance to the second

²⁵⁶ Individual entries in Negev's encyclopedia are not attributed to any particular contributor. Some scholars dispute whether the royal tombs actually contain dead pharaohs from the First and Second Dynasties or whether they are merely cenotaphs, as the kings themselves may have actually been buried at Saqqara (Arnold 2003:3; Grimal 1992:49).

²⁵⁷ The dedication inscription of Seti I's mortuary temple at Abydos seems to symbolise the "centre place" implicitly rather than explicitly, as it 'sees the axis of divine father and son as reaching out to the underworld and the heavens', thus conferring upon Abydos the status of a 'region of eternity' and gives it the 'aura of a world-center' (Wyatt 2001:160).

part, which in turn led to a small sanctuary with two side chambers (a 1990:34-35).

6.2.3.5 Coptos. Sir Flinders Petrie first excavated the temple at this site in 1894. Most of the masonry was gone, but what remained was sufficient to suggest the presence of a stone temple from New Kingdom times built under Thutmosis III with the later addition of a portico in the Ptolemaic era. No earlier architecture was discovered, though the surrounding soil was replete with figurines and votive offerings. Petrie speculated that these discoveries pointed to the presence of an earlier temple, probably consisting of a courtyard with a low wall, perhaps on a natural or an artificial mound (Kemp1989:79-80).

6.2.3.6 Abusir. Abusir had a pyramid and a mortuary temple on its east side, built for King Sneferu of the Fourth Dynasty (2613-2589). It had an assortment of chambers, storerooms, a colonnaded forecourt, and an entranceway from the causeway which led from the corresponding valley temple (Reader 2004:69-70). When the causeway was later re-routed to serve the nearby pyramid of King Neusera, a formal columned entry portico was constructed. Along with this portico, an inner enclosure wall of mud brick was added.

The remains of the valley temple at Abusir are of limestone. The temple stood within a rectangular enclosure surrounded by a mud brick wall. The enclosure wall captured vacant space south of the temple which was eventually filled in with residences to serve as temporary housing for the phyle of priests currently serving in the temple. The remains of at least fifteen houses can be discerned, which would have provided living quarters for up to one hundred people if they were occupied by temple workers' families in addition to the workers themselves (Kemp 1989:141-148).

6.2.4 New Kingdom temples

By the time of the New Kingdom, Egyptian temple-building reached its peak and the basic model had crystallised. A set of pylons afforded entrance into an open court. Upon

entering the temple proper, there was a hypostyle hall featuring many columns, far more than architecturally necessary to support the roof; colonnaded courtyards were a favourite element in the design of Egyptian temple interiors (Kemp 1989:97). The hall led to the rear of the temple, the most sacred area, where there was a sanctuary or shrine of the deity to whom the temple was dedicated. This basic architectural plan, despite some variations involving elaborate size and ornate furnishings, remained in place throughout Greco-Roman times, and it was the floor plan of most of the Egyptian temples that managed to survive somewhat intact into the modern age (Wilkinson 2000:24). Also in New Kingdom times, the use of stone as the major material used in construction was manifested. The royal mortuary cult increased in significance. While these and other changes occurred, the basic vocabulary was maintained and attempts were made to demonstrate that new innovations were, in reality, linked to the past (Kemp 1989:26).

The primary philosophy underlying the temple in the New Kingdom declared that the gods had given Pharaoh the right to rule on earth and that it was the king's duty to maintain order (*ma'at*) and to ensure conditions necessary for agricultural bounty. To accomplish this it was thought necessary to build and furnish grand temples, filled with exquisite furnishings and rare and exotic materials and endowed with land and personnel for the maintenance of the temple cult (Baines 1995:308). As new temples were built and old ones were refurbished, it is possible that the majority of land in late New Kingdom times fell under the ownership of the temples.

Of the hundreds of New Kingdom temples (some estimates range over two thousand [O'Connor 1995:321]), only two will be briefly depicted here. One was perhaps the greatest of them all; the other was the product of a heretic king and provides some interesting points of contrast.

6.2.4.1 Thebes. The ruins at Luxor and Thebes provide the most dramatic example of

New Kingdom temple architecture.²⁵⁸ Like so many other temple sites in Egypt, Thebes was considered to be the primordial mound that arose from the chaotic waters of creation. The heart of Thebes, which was always a ceremonial and temple city more than a political capital, was the great temple of Amun at Karnak (for diagram, see Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:572-573). The New Kingdom enclosure wall encompassed an area of at least 400 x 400 meters; a later wall, built during the Thirtieth Dynasty, was even larger (Kemp 1989:201). The Theban temple complex on the east bank of the Nile included the Amun temple in the centre, the Monthu temple on the north, the Mut temple on the south, Akhenaten's temple to the Aten in the east, and Luxor, nearly three kilometres to the south. Across the Nile, thousands of tombs were cut into the rock at the base of the hills, including more than fifty tombs for kings and a large number for queens and royal children (Arnold 2003:244; Winlock 1914:10-23; 1924:217-277).

The Middle Kingdom city of Thebes was aligned perpendicular to the Nile while the main temple from the same era was aligned parallel with the Nile (although other buildings in the temple complex, such as the "Treasury" of Tuthmosis I and the southern part of the southward processional avenue, were aligned with the city and were thus perpendicular to the river). The main temple was rebuilt in the New Kingdom over the site of the previous temple, but its alignment was shifted to match the city and the rest of the temple complex. This shift of alignment, incidentally, allowed the transport of temple barks to and from the Nile in a straight line and hence offered a shorter course.

Egypt in the New Kingdom embraced monumental building on a grand scale as a national imperative. One effect of such massive building was a number of innovations designed for convenience and to facilitate the role of the temple in feasts and festivals. The temples at Karnak, like many New Kingdom temples, exhibited a number of new innovations, such as a significant trend toward smaller courtyards. The central element of the temple (previously the statue of the god in the rear area of the temple) was replaced by the shrine, now open at both ends, which contained the portable boat that would carry the

²⁵⁸ The site of ancient Thebes actually contained no less than six major temples. On the west bank of the Nile were the temples of Gurna, Deir el-Bahri, the Ramesseum, and Medinet Habu, while on the east bank were the great temple complexes of Luxor and Karnak. Karnak itself also contained multiple temples.

image of the god (Amun, in the case of the central temple at Karnak) to neighbouring areas during festivals and processions (Murnane 1979:11-27). The temple entrance was flanked by twin statues of the king appearing in his role as Osiris.²⁵⁹ Inside the entrance, a hall of columns represented the poles of an ancient tent shrine, an architectural gesture to the mythical origin of Egyptian temples.

At no other site in Egypt were the processions of the gods staged with as much pomp and circumstance as they were at Thebes. Festivals with their related processions dictated the architecture of the entire complex, including paintings and drawings on the walls (Maurizio Re 2006:126-149). Processional routes²⁶⁰ were paved with stones, lined with sphinxes or other statues, and included periodic numbered resting places or repositories (Badawy 1966a:37), called 'tent shrines of the god' (Kemp 1989:205). These were square stone pedestals, enclosed with walls on the sides but open on either end (Nelson 1944:44-45), on which the portable boat with its sacred cargo could be temporarily placed to allow the carriers to rest. One can only imagine the weight of the boat and its statue and the arduous task of carrying it long distances under the hot Egyptian sun.

At Karnak one processional route led from the front of the temple westward to the river and ended in a stone quay at the head of a canal. A second processional route led southward from the temple front. This route eventually passed through four sets of pylons, separating four different courts, with obelisks, flag poles, and statues lining much of the way. Beyond the last set of pylons the route continued for another 350 meters, flanked by sphinxes and containing an additional pair of rest areas, until it reached the temple of the goddess Mut, consort of Amun in the New Kingdom. A third processional route led to the temple of Khonsu, the son of Amun and Mut; the joining of these three processional paths thus completed the reunion of the holy family of father, mother, and

²⁵⁹ These statues have led to some speculation that the main function of this temple had to do with kingship, specifically, the renewal of the king and validation of his reign through identification of the king with Horus and Ra through the rituals of the *Sed* festival. Tuthmosis III claimed, at the stretching of the cord, that Amun himself desired to perform this important foundation ritual, thus further equating the king with Amun and suggesting the main function of the temple of Amun as a political shrine (Kemp 1989:202-205).

²⁶⁰ For drawings of the processional route at the temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak, see Arnold (1997:177; 2003:120, 135); and Kemp (1989:187).

son.²⁶¹ Yet another processional route ran southwards a distance of three kilometres and ended in front of the temple at Luxor. This was an ancient processional. It is lined today with sphinxes that date from the Thirtieth Dynasty, but surely it was marked in some manner in the New Kingdom as well (Kemp 1989:205-206).

The number and duration of these festivals, with their divine processions, put a serious strain on temple resources (Janssen 1979:509-515). A damaged text of Tuthmosis III from his Festival Hall at Karnak designates fifty-four feast days during the course of the year, an average of more than one per week.²⁶² The frequent processions, with everything choreographed to show off the deity to the best effect, the staged resting places, the religious excitement, and the hopes of the crowd to witness a “miracle,” all combined to make these festivals a time of excitement and joy in the drab life of the Egyptian peasant and added to the religious, economic, and political mystique of the temple.

The most important occasion was the *Opet* festival. It occurred in the second month of the Season of Inundation. In the Eighteenth Dynasty this festival lasted for eleven days; by the end of the reign of Ramesses III in the Twentieth Dynasty its duration had increased to a remarkable twenty-seven days. The core of the festival was a procession of the Theban holy family of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu to Luxor and back, three kilometres each way.²⁶³

Thebes suffered severe damage at the hands of the Assyrians in 661 and also during the anti-Ptolemaic uprisings in Upper Egypt in 207-206 and 187-186 (Arnold 2003:244). Nonetheless, the ruins at Thebes remain among the most impressive of any monumental

²⁶¹ The respective temples of the Theban Triad were otherwise self-contained; each had no relationship with the others except for the processions (Nelson 1944:44-53).

²⁶² No less than sixty feast days were celebrated annually at Medinet Habu in the time of Ramesses III. Some feast days involved larger celebrations than others, but for a large festival, the temple's expenditures were as much as 3,694 loaves, 410 cakes, and 905 jars of beer. In later times the *Opet* festival was said to have required the distribution of 11,341 loaves, 85 cakes, and 385 jars of beer (Kemp 1989:206).

²⁶³ The temple of Luxor faced Karnak instead of the Nile and thus announced its dependence on that temple rather than the river. The main purpose of the Luxor temple may have been to ‘create a suitably monumental setting for the rites in which the annual *Opet* festival culminated’ (Kemp 1989:206).

architecture from the ancient world.

(a) The Theban city of the dead. As the pharaohs tired of trying to keep their pyramid and temple tombs secret and secure from grave robbers (Maurizio Re 2006:150), dead rulers began to be secreted in hidden rock-hewn tombs in the Valley of the Kings west of Thebes while their mortuary and valley temples were kept closer to the river. One effect of this practice was a disconnect between the dead king and the subsuming of his body into the sun-cult that had been represented by the pyramid. The new temples made a token gesture of relating to the sun with their open courtyards²⁶⁴ and by stairs built into the back of the new mortuary temples, but they openly proclaimed the supremacy of Amun.

The dead king was now believed to fuse with Amun through the presence of his image in these shrines coupled with the king's devotion to Amun during his lifetime. Thus at Deir el-Bahari the shrine was known as Amun 'Holy of Holies', at the Ramesseum (the mortuary temple of Ramesses II) there was Amun 'within united with Thebes', and at Medinet Habu there was Amun 'of united with Eternity' (Kemp 1989:209). Each of the mortuary temples, in other words, became a temple of Amun in which the dead king had also taken up residence. The better-preserved of these temples, for example those of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (Seti I, Ramesses II, Ramesses III), reserved the rear of the temple, typically the most sacred part, for Amun; not just his image, but his image in a portable boat, was stored on a pedestal in a columned hall (Maurizio Re 2006:150-211).

Another connection between the east and west banks of the Nile was portrayed by a small temple at the southern end of Thebes, either built or rebuilt by Tuthmosis III, ca 1475.

This temple, with its rather ordinary architectural form, was yet regarded, in typical Egyptian fashion, as the site of the primordial mound. Called 'The Genuine Mound of the West' (Kemp 1989:210), it linked the rebirth of the dead king, buried in the west, with

²⁶⁴ As the sun-cult had no cult statue, a sun temple has a different design from a typical cult temple. In the former, the entire layout is open to the sky; rituals are performed at an altar with an obelisk, such as at Abu Ghorab, or without, as at Amarna (Badawy 1966a:39).

the original moment of creation.²⁶⁵

6.2.4.2 *Amarna*. It was at Karnak, the centre of the cult of Amun, that Akhenaten took the first steps to impose his religious reforms on Egypt. He built a number of temples at Karnak on the open-plan style that seemed more suited to the worship of the sun (Davies 1923:132-152; Kemp 1989:266; Wasilewska 2009:411), before establishing his new capital at Amarna..

At Amarna the heretic king constructed two stone temples on the other side of the road from his Great Palace; only their foundations remain.²⁶⁶ One of these temples, the Great Temple to the Aten, occupied a large area of 229 x 730 meters within its enclosure wall (Uphill 1970:151-166, but see esp 160-162).²⁶⁷ The interior had a great deal of open space but it is difficult to determine if this was in concert with being dedicated to the sun²⁶⁸ or if Akhenaten merely was unable to finish his design. It appears he initially constructed temples of mud brick, probably in order to establish them quickly, and then initiated a program of replacement with stone. The enclosure of the Great Temple to the Aten was entered between two pylons. First encountered was a stone building called the “House of Rejoicing.” While typical Egyptian temples began with an open court followed by a roofed area, at Amarna the plan was reversed; the visitor first entered a columned

²⁶⁵ ‘The integration of king and temple cult of Amun enveloped the person of the king in an elaborate cocoon of mystery and pageant. It successfully blurred the difficulty that people might have in reconciling the divine and earthly aspects of a ruler who was also the head of a series of powerful institutions’ (Kemp 1989:217).

²⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the stone structures at Amarna were completely demolished by Ramesses II for re-use in building projects at Hermopolis (Arnold 2003:9).

²⁶⁷ Akhenaten, early in his reign, had his architects draw up plans for the temple(s) at Amarna which were intended to dwarf earlier temples, as can be seen by the areas (in square feet) of other New Kingdom temples (these figures are from Uphill 1970:166):

Kom Ombo	39,436	
Edfu	62,608	
Luxor (Amenhotep III)	74,880	
Medinet Habu	79,204	
Qurneh	89,000	
Ramesseum	112,022	
Abydos (Seti I)	116,022	
Karnak (Amun Temple)	265,000	(Includes southern courts)
Amarna	487,792	

²⁶⁸ Temples to the sun-god featured large open courts, the absence of ceilings and roofs, great numbers of altars (some of which were atop high platforms), and an abundance of natural growth (Arnold 1997:177).

hall which led to a series of open areas featuring stone tables for offerings. The rear area, known as “The Aten is Found,” differed little from the rest of the temple except that some of its altars were protected by walls (Kemp 1989:281). The rear part of the Great Temple contained another small stone building whose main features were more open courts and more stone tables for offerings (Pendlebury 1934:129-136).²⁶⁹

The central part of Amarna possessed another, albeit smaller, temple to the Aten, called “The Mansion of the Aten.” It adjoined the king’s house and was essentially a smaller version of the Great Temple. It was surrounded by an enclosure wall with towers at regular intervals; the wall had battlements at the top that imparted an air of military fortifications. Entrance to this temple was, as usual, between two pylons, with flagpoles atop each. Passage through two more sets of pylons led one to the main sanctuary (Kemp 1989:283). In general, religious architecture at Amarna retained familiar features of traditional Egyptian temple design: an enclosure wall with towers, an entrance flanked by pylons, an open forecourt (perhaps with trees), large and small columned halls, all arranged around a central axis in a symmetrical fashion.

There was a small, isolated temple complex south of Amarna, measuring 108 x 191 meters (Arnold 2003:10). The complex consisted of three courtyards, entered through three sets of pylons. Its central feature was a stone temple surrounded by a grove of trees. Within the enclosure wall were a number of auxiliary buildings with workshops, storage and administrative rooms, and a surprisingly large bakery (Kemp 1989:285).²⁷⁰

The *Per Ankh*, “House of Life,” an important feature of Egyptian temples, was maintained by Akhenaten (Kemp 1989:288).

Oddly, unlike other New Kingdom temples, those at Amarna contained no granaries, although such storage facilities were found at the king’s house (Peet 1921:172),

²⁶⁹ Badawy (1966a:40) claims to find ‘calendric, harmonic, representational, and cosmic symbolism’ in the sanctuaries at Amarna.

²⁷⁰ The number of bakeries associated with the Great Temple of the Aten was more than a hundred (Kemp 1989:289).

suggesting direct personal control over the temple treasuries. This personal involvement in temple finances was consistent with the heretic king's overall demeanour. Even the temples at Amarna may be viewed as extensions of the king's house (Kemp 1989:289).²⁷¹

One advantage of a form of worship based on the sun is a ready-made liturgical calendar using the solstices and equinoxes. One would expect the temples at Amarna to have been aligned with the sun, but such was not the case; they were oriented to the city landscape and the surrounding urban topography. Earlier Egyptian religious architecture, notably the pyramids and their associated temples, were aligned with the sun and other celestial bodies; however, this is not true, for the most part, of New Kingdom (and later) temples (Kemp 1989:286); however, some New Kingdom pharaohs, building in Western Thebes, consistently followed an east-west orientation, reflecting the path of the sun (Maurizio Re 2006:154).

6.2.5 Ptolemaic temples

The Ptolemies encouraged the building of temples and set themselves up as the resident deities comparable to the pharaohs of old. The finest example of a Ptolemaic temple is probably that of Horus²⁷² at Edfu (ca 257-237).²⁷³ On the exterior, at least, the temple at Edfu resembled traditional Egyptian temple architecture, with a box-like or rectangular sanctuary entered through a doorway flanked by two pylons (Maurizio Re 2006: 214-215). Internally, however, the temple at Edfu was clearly a product of its age, and cannot be confused with the floor plans of earlier temples (for diagrams, see Arnold 2003:78 and Kemp 1989:102). 'The seven-fold cosmic symbolism of the structure at Edfu is clear, as you walk from the *temenos* entrance up the main axis to the shrine-room' (Wyatt 2001:160).

²⁷¹ The pharaoh had private living quarters, but as his life was ritualised, the palace was but one of the stages on which he acted (Baines 1995:305-306; Maurizio Re 2006:116-117).

²⁷² The Myth of Horus is not a simple story but an amalgamation of five distinct narratives (Fairman 1935:26-36; Griffiths 1958:75-85).

²⁷³ Due to the lack of excavation we have little information regarding previous temples at this site (Arnold 2003:78).

Ptolemaic temples displayed a new perception of architecture. Older Egyptian religious monuments featured hollow, almost cave-like areas enclosed by walls; the hollow spaces were balanced by massive masonry in the form of huge stone blocks. Ptolemaic architecture used meticulously-fashioned pre-cut stones, placed in regular courses of equal height. All rising joints followed one vertical line, and all bedding joints followed one horizontal line.²⁷⁴

The focus of the interior of Ptolemaic temples was a free-standing bark, enclosed on three sides by rows of chapels. This produced a sense of seclusion which was heightened by the darkness that pervaded the entire temple; this was the opposite of earlier temples with their colonnaded halls that allowed large amounts of sunshine to enter the temple interior (Arnold 1999:147).

Another Ptolemaic innovation was a separate structure, the *mammisi* (Coptic; Egyptian *per-meset*), or “birth-house,” outside the front entrance to the temple. The purpose of the *mammisi* was to represent the divine birth of the king (Arnold 1997:177).²⁷⁵ In form it resembled the semi-open, tent-walled desert shrine of antiquity (Arnold 2003:78; Kemp 1989:100).

Temple priests favoured religious conservatism and regarded any innovation as a potential threat to their long-established traditions, not to mention their livelihoods. Perhaps in an effort to retain the old doctrines and rites, the walls at Edfu, along with other Ptolemaic temples, were inscribed with Egyptian temple rituals and ceremonies.²⁷⁶ The wording was not verbatim but was a condensed version of the ancient rites. These

²⁷⁴ The resulting effect of this building procedure was either ‘clarity and precision, metallic sharpness’ or ‘monotony and rigidity’ (Arnold 1999:144-145), depending on the viewpoint and taste of the observer.

²⁷⁵ Badawy (1966a:37) states that the *mammisi* was ‘a chapel symbolizing the birth of the god’s son and his ascent to the throne of his father, correlated to the reigning pharaoh as successor of the god’. The *mammisi* typically contained several rooms surrounded by pillared halls; the roof was supported by floral columns. The *mammisi* was located inside the enclosure wall and on a right-angle to the primary processional avenue leading to the main temple. Examples of the *mammisi* can be found at Philae, Kom Ombo, Edfu, El-Kab, Armant, the Mut precinct at Karnak, Dendera, and Athribis (Arnold 2003:33).

²⁷⁶ Ptolemaic temples were extremely elaborate in their decorations and reliefs, using hieroglyphic script (Baines 1995:313). In addition to ritual text, temple scenes occasionally showed dancers, acrobats, singers, and musicians performing (Arnold 1997:177; 1999:148-150; Kemp 1989:89).

inscriptions would not necessarily have been read by the officiator but they could prompt his memory and thus help ensure the proper performance of the ancient ceremonies. The complete ceremonial texts were deposited in the main temple library.

Rich in symbolism and using carefully-chosen language, these temple texts assured the temple priests and patrons that the temple itself, though constructed in the contemporary era, nevertheless remained true to the mythical and symbolical origins of the old, genuine Egyptian temple. But the wall inscriptions were not entirely liturgical or mythical; they also contained useful information regarding the physical description of the temple itself, such as its dimensions in cubits (although where these measurements actually came from is often difficult to tell). Building specifications were thus interwoven with mythical material about ancient temples; the site of the first temple was referred to as the 'Seat of the First Occasion' (Kemp 1989:100). The creation of the first shrine was detailed, beginning with the time when the primeval mound first arose from the waters of creation. An initial sanctuary, consisting of reeds and dedicated to Horus, was built on the mound by the gods. This act sanctified the land and drove back the waters of chaos which threatened to submerge the new land. As the waters receded further other shrines were built until eventually the entire land of Egypt was created.

While Egyptian mythology describes the earliest temples as constructed of reeds, archaeology maintains that there was actually a great variety of construction materials and methods in early temples. Predynastic temples used mud brick and in certain instances the foundations, at least, of these structures have been excavated. The account at Edfu of early temples built of reeds is based on mythology and not archaeology, although reed structures from the Predynastic era may have existed; naturally, all archaeological traces have long eroded away. Apparently the builders of the temple at Edfu did not know that the myth upon which they claimed the temple to be based was of relatively late origin and did not go back to the mists of the prehistoric era (Kemp 1989:103). Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that historical Egyptian temple architecture was based on a mythical origin and was cosmic in its symbolism (Baines 1995:303). Subsequent innovations in design, building materials, and construction

methods were acceptable for religious architecture as long as the mythical origin on which they were based remained intact, for in matters of religious symbolism, it is not the symbol itself that is important but the meaning that is attached to the symbol. Egyptian religious architecture ‘well illustrates the Egyptian genius for clothing change in traditional costume’ (Kemp 1989:105).

6.3 ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIONS

6.3.1 Temple architecture in the Old and Middle Kingdoms

The best-preserved structures of the first two dynasties are the “fort” at Hierakonpolis and the Shunat al-Zabib at Abydos. High enclosure walls rendered these buildings visible from afar while simultaneously protecting the secrecy of what occurred within.²⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the famous Step Pyramid at Saqqara was developed during the Third Dynasty and featured full construction in stone (for drawings and diagrams, see Badawy 1990:68-89, 127-129; Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:568-569).

Most early temples were of modest size and simple materials. The temple of Satis at Elephantine was a small shrine between two granite boulders. Early First and Second Dynasty temples featured niche panelling²⁷⁸ and were likely to be built on large mounds (Baines 1995:306). Temples featured elaborate scenes of kings and gods on their walls along with other hieroglyphs. The earliest preserved temple with relief decorations was a mud brick structure of the Sixth Dynasty dedicated to the *ka* of Pepy I in the temple complex of Bastet at Tell Basta in Lower Egypt (Baines 1995:307). Drawings of pennants were likely the precursor to the flagpoles that topped the massive pylons of later temples. These flagpoles are distinctive to temples and are not found on palaces. These flagpoles were ‘the symbol of divine presence which fronted Egyptian temples and

²⁷⁷ Secrecy was an important feature of Egyptian temples as well as in temples throughout the ancient Near East. An inscription on a wall at Edfu reads: ‘...do not reveal what you have seen in the mysteries of the temple’ (te Velde 1995:1733).

²⁷⁸ A distinctive element of early temples was ‘an elaborate pattern of recesses, and salients forming “niche paneling” in a variety of styles’ (Baines 1995:304). Niche panelling was found in temple as in palace, and in later times was manifested in the architectural device of the false door, the meeting point between human and divine, where offerings were presented to the dead.

shrines back to predynastic times' (Wilkinson 2003:26-27).

Excavations at Heliopolis as well as literary evidence show that temples were built upon platforms filled with clean sand. Wall foundations were built upon a layer of sand placed at the bottom of deep trenches. This building procedure was not architecturally necessary and probably symbolised either purity or the primordial mound (Baines 1995:307).

The tripartite plan of Egyptian temples (open courtyard, columnar hall, and inner sanctuary) developed as early as the Old and Middle Kingdoms.²⁷⁹ The inner sanctuary might include a number of shrines or statues, but the most common number was three (Wilkinson 2000:23, 25). Still, the main scheme of later Egyptian temples was already apparent in many Old Kingdom temples. Two flagpoles with pennants, which in later times would be replaced by pylons with flagpoles, flanked the main entrance. Set on a longitudinal axis, these temples featured a fenced forecourt (which later became a hypostyle hall) and a walled sanctuary. The sanctuary retained its position at the rear of the complex. The position of the main sanctuary at the rear of the temple, protected by screens or moveable partitions, helped ensure the secrecy of the cult (Badawy 1990:36).

It is not possible to trace a linear development in Egyptian temple architecture from early simple shrines to later temple complexes. Early temple sites often included features that do not fit comfortably into a linear developmental theme. This is especially obvious in the ruins of the earliest temple sites, mostly in Upper Egypt (Kemp 1989:65).²⁸⁰

Old Kingdom temples eventually needed serious maintenance and renovation. There was

²⁷⁹ An early temple at Abydos 'already feature(d) the tripartite plan... with a forecourt, a central room, and a rear sanctuary flanked by two chambers' (Badawy 1966a:33).

²⁸⁰ Despite the lack of a clear linear development, it may yet be helpful to delineate different periods in Egyptian temple history. It is possible, for example, to speak of a Pre-Dynastic Period, although many shrines of this period lasted well into historical times. Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom temples were of an architectural fashion similar to those found in the New Kingdom, except the earlier temples were smaller, simpler, and a mixture of mud brick with limited stonework. The New Kingdom erected temples in the "typical" Egyptian fashion, made of stone and immortalised in countless textbooks. Finally, there are Ptolemaic or later temples from the time between the 30th dynasty and the Roman occupation. Whatever timeline is followed and whatever nomenclature is adopted, it is imperative to remember that these are guidelines created for modern students and not rules adopted and followed by ancient Egyptians.

no general maintenance policy in the Old or Middle Kingdoms. Renovations tended to be put off until a dire state of emergency was reached, at which point repairs were usually initiated by the priests, whose work was not always aesthetically pleasing nor did it necessarily reflect the highest building standards; at best, their efforts were a piecemeal approach to a general problem. The situation was not really resolved until the New Kingdom when a general policy of replacing old mud brick temples with stone edifices was put in place (Kemp 1989:143).

6.3.2 Temple architecture in the New Kingdom

The New Kingdom ushered in a new age characterised by massive temple construction in stone. Many of these sites are still preserved. Regardless of scale, these temples were surprisingly uniform in plan and architecture (O'Connor 1995:321); the cult building housing the statue of the deity was surrounded by the temple complex with facilities for administration, housing for officials, workshops, granaries, and other necessary adjuncts.²⁸¹

The New Kingdom also heralded two significant innovations in the form and purpose of the temple. These were (1) a reversal of emphasis regarding the core purpose of the temple, and (2) enhanced enclosure walls.

6.3.2.1 A reversal of emphasis: temple dualism. New Kingdom temples were characterised by a reversal of emphasis in their underlying theology. All Egyptian temples were based on a structured dualism that exhibited both hidden and revealed elements. This was not unique to Egyptian temples, for religious institutions are often based on an interaction between a hidden and a revealed element. In Egypt the hidden element was manifested in the sanctuary for the deity, inaccessible to the general public and virtually cut off from contact with humanity except for a very few authorised temple

²⁸¹ The entire temple estate was referred to as the god's *pr*, literally "house," meaning household or estate. The wealthiest temples, naturally, were those of the three royal capitals—Thebes, Memphis, and Heliopolis. Temple estates, especially large ones, included a wide variety of labourers, artisans, workmen, and facilities—craftsmen, herdsmen, vineyards, orchards, a fleet of ships, mines, quarries—even whole towns could be incorporated within a large temple complex and pressed into service.

priests and officials (Nelson 1944:50-53). The revealed element was manifested in festivals and public processions (Kemp 1989:94). This dualism was evident in religious architecture. In the Old and Middle Kingdoms, temples (and pyramids) emphasised the hidden element; in the New Kingdom this emphasis was reversed and a greater stress was placed on the revealed element in the form of the boat shrines and the portable barks that carried the images of the gods. Processions, not the daily rituals centred on the god, became the focal point of temple liturgy and ritual.

Sacred boats, while not new by any means, were given a much more prominent role in the New Kingdom era. Indeed, it is not an overstatement to claim that portable boats and river-worthy vessels lay at the very centre of temple design and temple celebrations in that period. Temples now included oblong chambers with doorways at each end and a raised stone pedestal upon which the boat rested when not in use (Kemp 1989:185). These pedestals are reminiscent of the raised pedestals in early temples upon which sat a figurative, not a real, boat.

The design of New Kingdom temples focused on how to best parade the boat before the worshipers during the festivals and how to display the boats in the temples to the best advantage. While temples still contained special places for the images of the gods, these places became secondary in importance to the boats and their resting places. The raising of the boat and its berth to a position of eminence contributed above all else to the monumental scale of New Kingdom temples.²⁸²

6.3.2.2 Enhanced enclosure walls. The second major innovation in New Kingdom temples concerned the external appearance of temples, especially how they appeared to people who would never have the opportunity of going inside. Outsiders could see the exterior mud brick enclosure walls; they might see a number of lesser shrines and even a series of courtyards. They could view the exterior surface of the temple with vivid murals

²⁸² The increasingly dramatic architecture of the temples contributed in turn to an increased public sense of ownership and participation in the great festivals. There was, no doubt, a great deal of manipulation of mass psychology at these festivals, causing the local townspeople to take pride in their celebrations and processions and leading, presumably, to an increased sense of 'patriotism' in the citizens and a larger sense of amity toward the leaders of both temple and state (Kemp 1989:188).

painted on glistening white stone; they could view the boats and the festival processions; and they could participate, in a very limited way, in these extra-temple activities. But it was the enclosure wall that told the real story, for New Kingdom enclosure walls, more than ever before, resembled military fortifications with towers and battlements, forever separating Egyptian common folk from a close association with the temple.

While archaeological excavations have revealed some data about the bases and foundations of these walls, there are other sources that offer evidence of the appearance of their upper portions. A limestone libation tank from a Nineteenth Dynasty temple at Memphis shows a picture of a crenelated enclosure wall with regularly-spaced towers. The sides of the wall were inscribed with prayers to Ptah of Memphis such as the following: ‘Praise to thee at the great rampart; it is the place where prayer is heard’ (Kemp 1989:189). To emphasise that the temple was meant to be a place where men could hear the voice of their god, a human ear was sometimes painted or carved near the top of each tower. To an ordinary citizen of Memphis, the temple was a citadel; he could stand before it in wonder and awe, but he could never pass through its imposing gates.

To summarise, innovations in New Kingdom religious architecture were characterised by (1) a distinctive dualism of a revealed element (the boats and temple processions) and the hidden element (the mysterious inner temple, off limits to ordinary Egyptians); and (2) a formidable outer enclosure wall with towers²⁸³ and a main entrance flanked with massive pylons,²⁸⁴ all suggesting a fortress-like quality. Furthermore, a mud brick outer enclosure wall was frequently paired with a stone inner enclosure wall.

6.3.2.3 A typical New Kingdom temple. The massive pylons of New Kingdom temples were topped by flagpoles with waving pennants. The pylons contained scenes of the pharaoh decimating his enemies; these images often continued around the enclosure wall and symbolised Pharaoh as the lead protagonist of human society and as the individual responsible for ensuring order (*ma'at*). Thus the temple unabashedly united the concept

²⁸³ The outer wall at Karnak, for example, featured square towers set at 17-meter intervals (Kemp 1989:188).

²⁸⁴ Baines (1995:309) regards the pylon as the most characteristic feature of Egyptian temple architecture.

of sacred space with the force of raw military power; the line between temporal and spiritual power was blurred. The temple facilitated the release of pressures of civic discontent and the economic distress of peasants with frequent communal celebrations. The role and duties of kingship were not separated from the role and duties of the temple.

Beyond the pylons was a courtyard, possibly multiple hypostyle halls, intermediate halls, and finally the sanctuary itself, circumambulated by a corridor. Some temples were built from gateway-to-gateway on an east-west axis so the sun could theoretically strike the image of the god while leaving the surrounding rooms in darkness, though many were oriented to the Nile or to the local topography and did not face east-west. A drain system collected rainwater (which was admittedly scarce and was considered an upsetting phenomenon) from the roof and ejected it through the mouth of gargoyle-like lions (Badawy 1990:189), inscribed with spells to ward off evil spirits and protect the sanctity of the temple interior. The sanctuary's floor elevated as one progressed inside while the roof simultaneously lowered. This portrayed the most sacred part of the temple as the primordial mound (Grimal 1992:265).

The temple was designed to represent a model of the world. Columns outside and in the hypostyle halls were carved to resemble marsh plants or palm trees (for diagrams, see Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:574-575). The tops of the walls represented the sky and often contained patterns of constellations or heavenly bodies, especially the image of the sun passing through the temple on its daily journey.²⁸⁵ Individual scenes on walls portrayed the pharaoh making offerings to the gods or having blessings bestowed upon him, such as life, prosperity, or power. Figures of the king faced toward the sanctuary while the features of the gods faced away from it. Colour added an additional layer of symbolism.

²⁸⁵ Nelson (1944:46-48) believed that the building came first, and that abstract mythological symbolisms were only developed later. The symbolisms, in other words, did not dictate the form of the temple; rather, the cosmic and other symbols were only developed after the temple had already been built and were derived from the structure at hand. Furthermore, these cosmic symbolisms played no role in the relation between the temple and society, nor did they have any significance to temple ritual. While this may have been true with regard to early shrines and primitive temples, it cannot be denied that New Kingdom temples exhibited a great deal of cosmic and other symbolisms in their architectural design and decorations. Nelson's opinion is contrary to general scholarly consensus that in religious architecture, form followed ritual.

Texts on the walls depicted captions and summaries of the speeches given during various rituals. Statues of various gods, used in daily temple rituals, were kept in special shrines within the sanctuary or in hidden spaces behind false doors (Baines 1995:309-313).

Egyptian temples were built according to the processional style along an axis that ran from the main entrance to the sanctuary. As one progressed through the temple, bright light slowly turned to shadow, and the main sanctuary stood in nearly total darkness.

Temples were normally rebuilt on the same location as the previous one. New Kingdom temples were built on surprisingly insubstantial foundations, while later Ptolemaic temples demonstrated remarkably advanced construction methods. The stone used in Egyptian temples was primarily limestone, common in the Nile Valley. Later sandstone was also used. The basic method of construction was successive layers of masonry laid on extremely thin layers of mortar, with the internal joints secured by wooden dovetail clamps. When the mortar set, the clamps were removed and the space filled with mortar. An exception was at Amarna, where Akhenaten used uniform blocks with generous mortar. Wall surfaces were jagged and irregular at initial construction; they were only smoothed and dressed and prepared for painting or carving after the construction was finished (Baines 1995:311).

Temple complexes were frequently linked with others, thus allowing the various resident deities to travel and visit one another. The great temple of Amon-Re at Karnak was linked on a north-south axis to the smaller temple at Luxor and on an east-west axis with various temples on the west bank. The Ptolemaic temple at Philae, at the first cataract, was associated with the temple of Horus at Edfu, about 120 miles north. Temples were frequently linked to palaces as well.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ The mortuary complex of Ramesses II (the Ramesseum) and the temple of Ramesses III at Medinat Habu were linked with small palaces within the outer enclosure walls (Baines 1995:309).

6.3.3 Egyptian temples and sacred space

Earlier in this chapter a significant number of architectural features incident to Egyptian temples were identified. These will now be organised and their relation to the concept of sacred space will be determined. These architectural characteristics have been divided into three broad categories: (1) Techniques of Construction and Decoration; (2) General Temple Arrangement; and (3) Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia.

6.3.3.1 Techniques of Construction and Decoration. In this category are included (1) the concept of the primordial mound; (2) the practice of foundation deposits; (3) the purposes and functions of enclosure walls; (4) principles of orientation, alignment, and measurement; and (5) exterior and interior decoration.

One architectural feature noted in regard to Mesopotamian temples, namely, the practice of building a temple on a base of ritually pure sand that represented the primordial mound, was everywhere present in Egypt, for example, Medamud (Wilkinson 2000:22), Hierakonpolis (Fairservis 1971-1972:14-20; Wilkinson 2000:76), Heliopolis (Baines 1995:307), Coptos (Kemp 1989:79-80), Karnak, Edfu (Maurizio Re 2006:154), and elsewhere. Each Egyptian temple was considered to have been constructed atop the primordial mound (Reymond 1969:46, 47, 59, 185, 261, 266, 305, 327; Frankfort 1978:151-154). This is merely one feature of the cosmogonic myth in ancient Egypt, namely, that every temple claimed to be built on the *ben*-stone, which was the first dry land to appear from the primordial ocean (*Nun*), and was comparable in its symbolism to sacred mountains and *omphaloi* found in other traditions. Egyptian temples were thus considered to represent the centre of the world and thus the centre of absolute reality.

Perhaps the primordial mound was natural to the Egyptians, for their land was subsumed annually under the flood of the Nile, and as the waters subsided they did not fail to note the appearance of the dry land once again. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that in ancient Egypt virtually all temples were perceived as having originated on the primordial mound that first emerged from *Nun*, and every temple in Egypt claimed to be the original

place of the creation of the Earth. Many temples were indeed built on or adjacent to real mounds (Medamud, 6.2.3.1). The primordial mound was most sacred. Furthermore, the Egyptian custom of raising the floor level of the temple as one approached the most sacred area in the rear was meant to symbolise the presence of the sacred mound (Grimal 1992:265). As the primordial mound was the first dry land to appear from the waters of darkness and chaos, it also held the key to maintaining control over these unruly waters, forever at enmity with the forces of light and order.

Foundation deposits, common in Egypt, were important as a symbolic marking off of the area of the temple as sacred space and protecting it from the incursion of evil forces (Grimal 1992:168-169). Foundation deposits at Hierakonpolis were described by Weinstein (1971-1972:133-135) and at Thebes by Winlock (1922:28-30).

Egyptian temples had outer enclosure walls which served four primary purposes: (1) to provide physical protection from invaders; (2) to protect the secrecy of the temple rituals performed within; (3) to clearly demarcate sacred space from the outer profane space; and (4) to keep the chaotic waters of creation (*Nun*) from encroaching upon the sacred temple precincts. Some walls were actually built in an alternating concave and convex pattern in order to represent the waves of the primeval ocean held at bay by the sanctity of the temple area; examples are found at Mazghuna (Wilkinson 2000:56-57, 133) and Karnak (Grimal 1992:306-307). Walls of this fashion have been found only around temples or areas controlled by temples, giving the impression of the temple as conqueror over the waters and as fortresses that the waters could not overcome. The functions of the enclosure walls surrounding Egyptian temples (typically there was a mud brick outer enclosure wall with one or more stone walls within) were enhanced by towers at regular intervals and gateways.

Temple alignment in Egypt was related to its role as a cosmic symbol. Temple alignment in ancient Egypt reaches back at least to Nabta Playa, between 6000 and 6500 years ago (Wilkinson 2000:16). Some temples were aligned on a north-south axis, parallel to the Nile, and some were aligned on an east-west axis, perpendicular to the Nile, representing

the path of the sun. Others were aligned with some other heavenly body; for example, the temple at Elephantine was aligned with Sirius, whose rising signalled the beginning of the annual Nile flooding (Grimal 1992:51-52; Wilkinson 2000:37). Some were aligned with local landmarks or to suit local topography. Others, such as those at Amarna, were not aligned in any discernible fashion at all; the devotion of Akhenaten to Amun as a solar deity was expressed with open spaces in the temple courtyards rather than solar alignment.

One of the most widely-known features of Egyptian temple measurement was the foundation ritual known as the stretching of the cord. See the *Excursus: Stretching the Cord* at the end of Chapter Ten.

Egyptian temples were known for their elaborate pattern of recesses and salients that formed ‘niche panelling’ (Baines 1995:304). Also characteristic of Egyptian temples was the prodigious use of columns, relief decorations, and the use of the ‘false door’, a place where worlds touched, where offerings could be presented to the deceased (Baines 1995:307). Paintings and hieroglyphics on the interior walls of temples were often not mere decorations, but clues to the nature of the rituals that transpired within. They consisted of a type of shorthand that transcribed the key points of the mysterious ceremonies whose complete texts were recorded and kept within the *Per Ankh*.

6.3.3.2 General Temple Arrangement. This category includes items pertaining to (1) the tripartite floor plan, (2) pillars, (3) the Tree of Life, and (4) temple/palace symbiosis.

The temple proper was the most sacred area within the temple complex. It consisted of two rooms in some temples, but more commonly there were three areas. In this respect, Egyptian temples followed the typical ancient Near Eastern tripartite pattern. These elements were a pylon-enclosed entrance, a courtyard, and a colonnade. The pylon was intended to represent the horizon. The courtyard led to a hypostyle hall with perhaps three rows of columns. The hypostyle columns were far more in number than were architecturally necessary. These columns were frequently carved to represent palm trees,

lotus or papyrus plants; in other temples they were designed to represent the tent poles of an ancient desert shrine. These features, again, helped to portray the temple as a symbol of the cosmos, and also preserved, in architecture, the mythical origin of the Egyptian temple. The middle row of columns was higher than the other two; this created the effect of three naves. The difference in the height of the ceiling allowed indirect light to be admitted into the hall through clerestory windows. The whole purpose of this arrangement, as of the tripartite plan everywhere, was to exemplify gradations in sacred space, in effect, to allow a gradual approach to the deity, 'thus allowing time for the successive stages of purity necessary to approach the god' (Grimal 1992:264-265).

It was an architectural tradition in Egypt to place twin pillars at the entrance to temples. Indeed, the two massive pylons that stood at the entrance of many Egyptian temples have been considered in some instances to assume the same function (whatever that might have been) as twin pillars. Wilkinson (2000:60) noted that these pylons 'clearly served a defensive and apotropaic function, not only physically defending the gateway from intruders, but also symbolically standing as a bastion repelling the inimical forces of chaos and evil in the outer world'. Wilkinson further noted (2000:57) that 'obelisks were often erected in pairs before the temple entrance proper', while at the same time pointing out that upon occasion a single obelisk was placed on the direct central axis of a temple and only came to be enclosed within the temple area as the complex grew and developed and more outward-lying pylons were constructed.

Two obelisks stood before the pylons at the Temple of Ramesses at Luxor (Bell 1997:151). In 1996 a previously unknown temple of Thutmosis III was discovered just southwest of the Osiris temple enclosure at Abydos. The excavations revealed the ruins of a small limestone temple with a twin-columned entrance. Other pillars stood at the entrance to a Middle Kingdom temple at Medinat Madi (Wilkinson 2000:137, 144). Two obelisks stood in front of the temple pylons at Heliopolis (Grimal 1992:169). Examples could easily be multiplied.

A common feature of Egyptian temples was the frequent presence of sacred groves and a

sacred lake within the temple complex. At Luxor, the leaves of the Persea tree were inscribed with the names of the Pharaoh, and in the Book of the Dead a tree-goddess nourished the dead (Wyatt 2001:160). Isis and Osiris were said to have emerged from the acacia tree of Saosis, which the Egyptians considered the tree of life, referring to it as the ‘tree in which life and death are enclosed’.²⁸⁷

The Pharaoh, as the divine regent, was the head of the temple as well as the palace. Temples and their staffs obeyed the Pharaoh as did all other branches of the government. It was the Pharaoh’s responsibility to maintain *ma’at* through the proper construction, maintenance, and operation of temples. Temple pylons typically were painted with scenes of the pharaoh destroying his enemies.

The temple complex contained a large variety of auxiliary buildings that were not sacred, in and of themselves, such as granaries and other storage magazines, residential quarters, administrative buildings, and offices. However, other internal institutions fulfilled roles related to sacred space. The *Per Ankh* was a mandatory feature in temples and could even be found in the temples at Amarna. These annexes were scriptoria where texts of all types were copied, studied, and preserved.

The *Per Ankh* was not just a scriptorium and archive; it also appears to have functioned as a centre of priestly learning in many fields. While not necessarily a school as we might think of a modern educational institution, the subjects of writing, art, theology, ritual, magic, astronomy, and medicine, among others, were certainly studied there. The large collections of books kept in the houses of life were famous throughout much of the ancient world, and in the 2nd century CE the medical writer Galen wrote that Greek physicians visited the library of the *Per Ankh* of Memphis to learn from its texts. Such libraries of the great temples were almost certainly the model upon which the famed Museion or Library of Alexandria was based. The idea of the university, later developed by Muslim and European societies, with its concentration of scholars and learned religious men, was to some extent the product of the ancient Egyptian tradition of the *Per*

²⁸⁷ I have been unable to find the original source of this quotation.

Ankh (Wilkinson 2000:74).

6.3.3.3 *Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia*. This category includes features such as (1) elevated statues for the deity, (2) water for ablutions, (3) cult of the dead, and (4) altars and animal sacrifices.

In Egypt the earliest cultic item was a simple pole topped by a fetish, around which the earliest sanctuaries are believed to have developed. As the more traditional form of the Egyptian temple evolved, the rear of the temple, the most sacred area, was the site reserved for the statue of the god, with niches and adjacent areas containing statues of lesser deities and kings. There may have been a small pedestal upon which the statue was placed, but instead of an elevated platform, the entire floor level rose as one approached the rear of the temple while the ceiling simultaneously lowered, thus adding to a sense of awe and naturally focusing the eye on the god.

Egyptian temples often contained or adjoined a sacred lake (Medamud (6.2.3.1) and elsewhere), sometimes considered a replica of the primordial ocean (*Nun*). There was a sacred lake at Hierapolis, which was considered to be a remnant of the subsiding waters of the flood, whose waters had drained through a rock or a crevice, representing the *omphalos* or navel of the earth, while still providing water to the temple for ritualistic purposes. There can be little doubt that sources of water must have been available for the use of both priest and pilgrim for personal cleansing and ablutions.

In the early history of Egypt, sacrifices and other rituals, especially the funerary cult, were performed solely in behalf of dead Pharaohs; subsequently they became available to other individuals as well. As just one of many examples, the funerary temple at Abydos was described by Davies & Jokiniemi (2008:570-571) and Winlock (1914:12). On the literary side, pyramid texts evolved into coffin texts, which evolved into hypocephali and various other literary documents (the Book of the Dead, the Book of Breathings, and more), all designed to aid the departed onward in their journey.

The architectural and physical features of Egyptian temples do not reveal a great deal of information regarding the rituals that were performed in these edifices. Egyptian daily temple ritual is largely known from papyri and temple reliefs from Karnak, Abydos, Edfu, and elsewhere. While these sources generally date from the New Kingdom and later, the temple service itself may have been much older, possibly dating back to the Old Kingdom or even to the predynastic era, to the earliest beginnings of Egyptian religion. Elements of Egyptian temple ritual can be found in other ancient rites as well as in more recent rituals.

Altars were located in temple courtyards, though the exact nature of the sacrificial rites performed there are uncertain. Fairman (1954:178, 180-184, 191, 198-202) has provided an excellent overview of sacrifice in ancient Egyptian temples; regarding Amarna, see Kemp (1989:281). Additional ritual paraphernalia included stone tables upon which votive and other offerings were placed.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

The earliest Egyptian temples were built of reeds, wood, and mud brick; stone was a later innovation. Reeds growing along the banks of the Nile presented themselves to builders in pre-Dynastic times; they were plentiful, cheap, and reasonably sturdy when bound and lashed together. They could also be used to construct a rudimentary shelter, shrine or sanctuary in a short amount of time; hence it was believed that the earliest shrines were fashioned of reeds, in order to quickly sanctify the land newly arisen from the waters of *Nun* and protect it from being submerged again. Literary evidence attests to the use of reeds in the earliest sanctuaries, although they are obviously absent from the archaeological record. Wood was available in very limited quantities and was used sparingly in early temples.

The use of stone in monumental architecture appeared in the Third Dynasty at Saqqara and was used in increasing proportions throughout the remainder of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. By the time of the building frenzy of the New Kingdom, stone was the

material of choice. It was massive, durable, and relatively abundant. The ubiquitous use of stone during the New Kingdom preserved temples for later generations of scholars and archaeologists. Stone was the ideal construction medium for Egyptians who were very concerned about the hereafter and to whom conservatism in religious affairs was of paramount importance. It may have seemed to the great builders of the New Kingdom and later times that their work would stand forever. As the temple was the abode of the god, it had to be built of 'materials of eternity' (Badawy 1966a:35). As we have seen elsewhere, using the finest materials available was an architectural technique for constructing sacred space. From our vantage point three or four millennia later, we can see the consequences of erosion and decay over long periods of time, not to mention the baneful effects of later generations of Egyptians who raided older buildings for stone to use in new construction. Nevertheless, the use of stone as a building material was a powerful statement by Egyptian builders of the stability and permanence of the cosmos and of the temples that represented the cosmos.

The powerful force of conservatism in Egyptian religion was also exhibited by the practice of building subsequent temples on the location of previous ones. As in Mesopotamia, this was also due to the idea of sacred space and the implied necessity of the new shrine remaining in contact with the old, thus preserving (if not amplifying) the sacred character of the space. Thus the rubble of a previous temple could serve as the foundation of its successor. The principle of the maintenance of sacred space was carried to an extreme by a stone-lined shaft cut by the builders of a temple at Elephantine to connect the new temple with the site of the old.

In Egypt, temple architecture (and to a lesser extent, ritual) were used to express the principles of sacred space and its corollary doctrines.

The concept of the primordial mound played a large role in Egyptian temple mythology, as every temple was considered to be built on it. Some temples were actually built on or near mounds. Other ways of physically expressing this concept was by building temples on a foundation of ritually pure sand, and by raising the floor level of the temple as one

progressed towards the most sacred part. Foundation deposits were utilised as a foundation ritual to ensure that temple measurement was correct and in accordance with revealed plans; they also served to protect the temple area from evil spirits and from the forces of chaos and darkness. Enclosure walls surrounded temple complexes to demarcate sacred space and keep the unruly waters of *Nun* at bay. Great care was taken at the foundation ritual of the stretching of the cord, to align the temple with the cardinal directions and/or with heavenly bodies. Egyptian temples were sometimes aligned with the cardinal points, sometimes with heavenly bodies, sometimes with the Nile, and sometimes with local landmarks or local topography. Exterior and interior decorations were everywhere to be seen; some were purely decorative while others portrayed scenes of *ma'at*, military victories of the Pharaoh, and even contained hieroglyphics representing a shortened version of temple ritual.

The Egyptians utilised temple floor plans that provided multiple areas of graded sacred space. Hypostyle halls were filled with columns carved to represent lotus or papyrus plants or palm trees. Twin pillars or obelisks frequently stood on either side of temple entrances; their exact function here, as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, remains elusive. Temple grounds contained sacred groves; there is limited evidence of the designation of one particular tree as the Tree of Life. Temple and palace were inextricably intertwined in Egypt; the Pharaoh was the undisputed head of both.

The elevation of the floor level as one approached the statue of the god, besides representing the primordial mound, also served to heighten the sense of awe as one neared the most sacred part of the temple. Temple complexes contained sacred lakes to provide water for ablutions and to aid in sacrificial procedures. Egyptian temples, more than any other in the ancient Near East, practised a cult of the dead, initially with regard to the Pharaoh and his family, later with other elite members of the society. Egyptian temple courtyards contained altars, and sacrifices were offered; the exact nature of these rites is not fully understood.

Egyptian temples were cosmic in intent and design. They exhibited distinct forms and

patterns which, when once developed, were repeated *ad infinitum* throughout ancient Egypt, while still allowing for minor variations. Egyptian temples, like their counterparts elsewhere in the ancient Near East, were considered to be a house for the god, and hence a microcosm of the universe. Thus Egyptian religious architecture ‘required a clearly calculated order, axial orientation, symmetry, dimensions, and proportions’ (Arnold 1997:174).

CHAPTER 7

HITTITE TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Abstract

The Hittite empire, based on the Anatolian plateau, was a significant force in the Near East during the middle and latter portions of the second millennium. Hittite culture, including religion, was a synthesis of influences from surrounding civilisations. The Hittites often preferred natural, open-air sites; early 'temples' were no more than small open spaces in the mountainous terrain, featuring large boulders and natural grottoes that required little if any modification. Subsequent temples were simple one- or two-room rectangular structures, identifiable in the archaeological record as temples primarily by the votive and other offerings found within or nearby. Larger temple complexes developed in major urban areas, especially Boghazköy. These were marked by outer enclosure walls containing fortified gateways. Passage through the gateway led the visitor to an outer courtyard that contained a well or basins of water at which he could purify himself. Passage through the interior courtyard typically led to a smaller courtyard that might contain an altar; this smaller courtyard was more sacred than the preceding one. From this courtyard entrance was afforded into a small inner sanctuary that contained the divine image standing on a pedestal (or occasionally sitting upon a throne).

7.1 INTRODUCTION

From the viewpoint of the ordinary Hittite citizen, temples were exclusive institutions. Temples were not built for common worship; they were built for the gods and not for the comfort or convenience of the worshipper. While worshippers could and did congregate in and around the temple, especially during festivals, most of the religious functions of the temple concerned the daily rituals involving the resident deities. While individual citizens could not participate in ordinary temple ritual, they were allowed to incubate when they had a special need (Engnell 1967:63; Gurney 1952:124-125). Otherwise,

entrance was strictly limited to cultic personnel and the royal family. There was some allowance for community participation in feast and festival activities, but otherwise, a person who entered the temple precincts without authorisation forfeited his life (Boyce 2002:153-154).

This examination of Hittite temple archaeology will be limited to the rock carvings at Yazilikaya, followed by a brief description of some of the temples excavated at Boghazköy,²⁸⁸ both in the Upper and Lower City areas. Following the pattern established in the previous two chapters, the physical features of temples in the land of Hatti will be described in general terms. Those architectural characteristics common to temples will be identified. Finally, there will be a short analysis of how temple architecture in the Hittite kingdom portrayed the concept of sacred space.

7.2 DESCRIPTION OF REPRESENTATIVE HITTITE TEMPLES

7.2.1 Yazilikaya

The open-air sanctuary of Yazilikaya ('Inscribed Rock') is about one and one-half miles northeast of Hattusas. It is unknown whether this area was considered sacred prior to the Hittite Empire; at any rate, in the 14th and 13th centuries reliefs were carved on the inner faces of the stone outcroppings and small buildings were constructed to isolate the area.

The entrance to Yazilikaya was through a gate-house on the northwest side. Stairs led to a higher level, somewhat enclosed by rock faces, thus creating a sort of natural courtyard. Another flight of steps led to an inner court. Here stood a separate rectangular building, comparable to similar (albeit later) structures at Boghazköy temples 1 and 5. There was a square pedestal before the building; this may have served as the base of an altar.

One would normally expect to find the holy of holies on the southeastern side, in a direct

²⁸⁸ Boghazköy is the name later used for the Hittite capital of Hattusas; in modern Turkey it is located some sixty miles from the Black Sea and 150 miles from Ankara.

axis from the entrance on the northwest. But the colonnade, which usually indicated the direction toward the holy of holies, was on the northeast side (to one's left as one entered the main courtyard, instead of straight ahead). Passing through this colonnade, a small flight of steps led to the main gallery, with rock carvings that portrayed a large gathering of the gods. Two great processions, numbering no less than seventy figures, were carved on the walls and converged on a wall at the back. Interestingly, gods and goddesses are segregated; gods approach from the left and goddesses from the right. Masonry filled in natural spaces and crevices among the rocks to allow the carving to continue. The large panel at the back shows the meeting of the supreme god and goddess with their close relatives, grasping Hittite hieroglyphic symbols representing their names.

Artistically, the rock carvings are primitive and unsophisticated, yet they are quite effective in their simplicity as the eye easily and naturally follows the procession to the climax on the back wall. The main deity, Teshub (Weather/Storm god of Hatti), stands astride the mountains; under his feet the mountains are animated. The gods wear pointed hats typical of Hittite deities (Ceram 1958:11). The main goddess, Hepat (the sun-goddess of Arinna, the protectress of the Hittite state) stands on a panther walking on mountains (Wasilewska 2009:398). The son of Teshub and Hepat follows, along with other gods and goddesses.²⁸⁹ Some gods are depicted as double-headed eagles; the panther and eagle were symbolic representations of the powers of the deities involved. The mountains, Frankfort declares, 'are visible here, as in Mesopotamia, as the specific setting of divine manifestations' (Frankfort 1954:228).

The carvings at Yazilikaya guided the visitor from the main gallery to the smaller one. But it is difficult to determine whether the small gallery actually represented a holy of holies, or if this outdoor sanctuary even had such an area. The small rectangular building in the inner court, alluded to earlier, is not from the same period as the rock carvings, and

²⁸⁹ Some scholars have maintained that Yazilikaya was a "Double Temple," meaning that two deities (Teshub and Hepat) were worshipped within (Haas & Wafler 1974). Others, however, have disputed this interpretation, one reason being that these deities were only 2 of 69 represented in the same room (Guterbock 1975:273). Hooke (1933:9) maintained that Yazilikaya was a pictorial representation of a sacred marriage ritual (the *hieros gamos*).

there are other features which make its classification as the holy of holies unlikely.²⁹⁰

Yazilikaya demonstrated the Hittite penchant for borrowing, as this open-air sanctuary represented a multi-ethnic pantheon borrowed from surrounding cultures. Hurrian and Luwian deities were assimilated into the Hittite pantheon, and their names at Yazilikaya continued to be written in Hurrian and Luwian hieroglyphs (Wasilewska 2009:398).

Frankfort believed that the main gallery may have been used for solemn political events, perhaps for rituals attending the ratification of treaties,²⁹¹ in the presence of ‘the thousand gods of the realm of Hatti’ (a common phrase in Hittite documents).²⁹² The smaller gallery may have been used for more intimate political events, perhaps the coronation of a new king. But this is speculative (Guterbock 1975:273-277), for our understanding of Hittite religion does not yet allow us to be more definite in surmising the function of this sanctuary (Frankfort 1954:231).

7.2.2 Boghazköy

The main objects of interest here are a few of the many temples occupying the upper city and also the great Temple 1 complex in the lower city.

7.2.2.1 Upper City. Of the many temples unearthed at Boghazköy, the larger ones tended

²⁹⁰ This building contained carvings that were less elaborate than the two open-air galleries; furthermore, they were carved on independent panels and did not create a coherent story or myth that can be identified.

²⁹¹ Treaties between the Hittites and their allies were kept in the Temple of the Storm God (Temple 1) in the Lower City. Treaties were considered sacred and were ratified under special divine supervision (Boyce 2002:64-65, 67). Hittite treaties followed a certain format. This format was found to be the same in many covenant-making instances in the Hebrew Bible (Mendenhall 1954).

²⁹² Egyptian and Mesopotamian temples were largely institutions of the central government, though they attempted to maintain a veneer of independence. In the realm of Hatti, the temple was an institution of the state, and the king controlled the temple, its activities, and its revenue, and presided over all priestly personnel who were unabashedly employees of the state. Whereas in Mesopotamia and Egypt there was occasional friction between temple and palace (for example, in Early Dynastic Sumer) as temple estates grew large and occasionally attempted to exert some measure of independence, this conflict did not occur among the Hittites, whose kings retained a firm grasp on temples as an institution of the state from the beginning (Boyce 2002:153, 242). In the Hittite kingdom there was no attempt whatsoever to separate the temple from the palace. The Hittite temple, without apology, was a department of the government as was the military or the judiciary; there was neither claim nor pretense to de-couple service of the god from service of the king.

to suggest a fortress in their general architectural lines, surrounded by a ring of magazines. But most of the temples did not exhibit this feature; while they were still enclosed by exterior walls, there was a great deal of empty space between these walls. This suggests that the walls may have originally enclosed a large plaza on which the temple stood (Frankfort 1954:217-218).

The smaller temples²⁹³ in the upper city resembled each other more than they resembled Temple 1 in the lower city. Many lacked the ring of storage magazines, although they were still enclosed by a large exterior wall. The temples in the upper city, said Frankfort, ‘sacrificed clarity to elegance’ (Frankfort 1954:220), for they were open on all sides, on irregular lines; courtyards were almost turned into cloisters by the colonnades and walls that surrounded them. Indeed, the upper city temples show a remarkable degree of inconsistency in their architectural plans and details.²⁹⁴ At present it is not known if these temples were constructed in such a haphazard fashion due to local exigencies or whether they reflected influences from elsewhere.²⁹⁵

Temples in the upper city, for the most part, were square or rectangular and followed the tripartite pattern. A pillared entry portal led to an inner courtyard which in turn offered access to the sacred inner court through a vestibule (Boyce 2002:241). Among the temples excavated in Boghazköy’s upper city were architectural patterns similar to religious structures in Mesopotamia, that is, a number of rooms arranged around a central courtyard. Such courtyards might range from two hundred to five hundred square meters in area. However, at this point the resemblance to Babylonian temples ends. In later Assyria an antechamber accessed from the central courtyard led to the main cella or holy

²⁹³ Larger temples in the Upper City ranged from 1,200 to 1,500 square meters, while smaller temples were in the 400 to 600 square meter range. The largest of the Upper City temples was Temple 5, with an area of nearly 3,000 square meters, and which may have been reserved largely for the personal use of the king. Compare this with Temple 1 in the Lower City which encompassed an area of over 20,000 square meters (Boyce 2002:241-243, 246).

²⁹⁴ Professor Neve, the excavator of the temples of the Upper City, disagreed with this assessment; he felt the city was planned this way (Boyce 2002:235).

²⁹⁵ A Syrian practice of the first millennium, for example, was the placing of columns on the backs of lions, as seen at the palace of Yaramlin at Atchana (Alalakh). This feature, however, was discovered at Temple 3 at Boghazköy, from the second half of the second millennium. Whether the Syrian practice was influenced by the Hittite temple or whether it was simply an accidental duplication cannot be determined at present.

of holies area; therefore, a worshipper in the courtyard might have a direct line of vision into the innermost recess of this area, provided both doors were open, and see the statue of the god standing in its niche at the back of the cella (the direct-axis model). At Boghazköy the entrance to the inner sanctum was not in the wall opposite the statue but on a side wall (on the bent-axis model typical of early Babylonia), and even then the door itself was approached indirectly by way of two other small rooms. Thus the statues of the gods at Boghazköy could not be inadvertently viewed by congregations in the courtyard (Boyce 2002:241). Only a select few of the priests or other temple staff would ever see the statue of the god in its niche. Nevertheless, in certain temples in the upper city it appears that the statue might have been visible from the courtyard through windows, although this was certainly not the case at Temple 1 in the lower city.²⁹⁶

Sphinxes and lions may have stood at the entrances of these temples and may also have been portrayed on the temple interior walls. Unfortunately, none of these *objets d'art* have survived. Only small remnants of cultic paraphernalia, such as small figurines, libation vessels, and votive objects have been found. Archaeologists have been somewhat compensated for this dearth of artefacts by the happy circumstance that many of the sanctuaries had basement rooms that served as archives. Some of these rooms have yielded a treasure-trove of clay bullae, seal impressions, and assorted clay tablets (Boyce 2002:242; Matous 1966:283, 287; Winckler 1966:280-281).

There is no detectable consistency in the orientation of the temples of the upper city. Temple One, for example, faced northeast, while Temple Two faced south, Temples Three and Four faced north, and Temple Five faced east (Gurney 1952:123).²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ In Babylonian temples windows were barred and placed high in the outer walls, while at Boghazköy the windows reached down to floor level, thus allowing a much greater quantity of light to illuminate the cellae. Even the holy of holies in the interior had four windows (Frankfort 1954:220; Gurney 1952:122; Wasilewska 2009:402). At Temple 1 the visitor was subjected to twists and turns at every opportunity so that one could never see anything beyond the immediate surroundings. It was not possible to stand anywhere that could give a view of the overall plan of the temple or comprehend the entirety of the layout. Boyce (2002:248) writes that 'each turn of the route brings into view something new—as if to intensify, by obscuring till the last moment what lies ahead, the sense of awe and mystery felt by those who were privileged to enter the temple's inner world'. This is a fine example of gradations in sacred space.

²⁹⁷ Despite the lack of apparent consistency in orientation, Professor Neve was firm in his belief that 'the layout of the whole city as symbolizing the cosmic world-form of the Hittites—with the palace as the

7.2.2.2 *Lower City*. The lower city occupied the northern section of Boghazköy; the southeastern portion of this area was dominated by the royal acropolis. Northwest of the acropolis was the great Temple 1 complex, arguably the greatest of all Hittite architectural accomplishments, sometimes referred to as the Temple of the Storm God.²⁹⁸ Temple 1 was a single architectural unit designed and built *in toto*; both architecture and text indicate this site to be a large, virtually self-contained city within a city. A large gateway firmly marked the central axis, and the single colonnade led in the same direction to two antecellae and two holy of holies with two cult niches in honour of the divine couple to whom the temple was dedicated.²⁹⁹ The architecture was designed so that one could not see the images from the courtyard areas (McMahon 1995:1983; diagram on p 1984). A large stone basin, partially preserved, stood at the entrance to the temple and served as a source of water for ablutions. The main sanctuaries were surrounded by archives, storage magazines, workrooms, and other auxiliary structures (Bittel 1976:69).³⁰⁰

In Temple 1 the inner sanctum and the rooms in its immediate vicinity were constructed of granite, while the rest of the buildings were of limestone. These inner rooms may have served as office areas for the main temple administrators and possibly government officials as well.

Temple 1 has been well excavated and can be easily described. It measured 160 x 135 meters (Boyce 2002:246). The main sanctuary, 64 x 42 meters, was situated on an artificial platform. It was surrounded on all four sides by paved streets to insulate it from

earthly world, the temple city as the godly world, and the cult district lying in between as providing the passage from the transient to the eternal' (Boyce 2002:235).

²⁹⁸ The name 'Temple of the Storm God' obscures the fact that this temple was actually dedicated to two deities, as it had two holy of holies and two shrines, one for each of the deities that stood at the head of the Hittite pantheon—the Storm God of Heaven and the Sun Goddess of Arinna, namely, Teshub and his consort Hapat (Boyce 2002:234, 246, 248).

²⁹⁹ But see Bittel (1976:67-68) who argued that there were other possibilities besides viewing Temple 1 as a 'double temple'.

³⁰⁰ The ring of storerooms around the temple, whose number was more than seventy (Ceram 1958:205), had great practical utility, but also served to insulate the temple from surrounding areas and gave it that sense of seclusion common to temples in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

the impurities of the city. Seen from the north, the temple would have been viewed as standing high above its surroundings; it would have been seen as a dominant architectural monument, a physical manifestation of great spiritual and political power.³⁰¹ There was a large entrance gate, an interior courtyard, and a pillared hall. As noted, the sanctuary was isolated from other buildings in the complex by paved roads. The other buildings formed rows or double rows of rooms, not all of which were the same size.³⁰² Small interior passageways facilitated the circulation of priests during the performance of the various rites. The foundations and a portion of some of the walls have been excavated, but it is not easy to determine the height or appearance of the upper stories. Furthermore, foundation deposits and inscriptions are missing, making it even more difficult to determine the appearance of the temple complex or the nature of the rites that transpired within (Bittel 1976:67).

The main entrance was through a gate-house which led onto a paved court. To the left stood a stone basin into which water was conveyed by pipes made of baked clay. There is a text describing the entry of the king and his ritual hand-washing at the stone basin (Bittel 1976:70). The king then entered the sanctuary and took his place upon a throne. Certain ceremonies were performed, after which a communal meal took place and food and drink were offered to the resident deities. This meal may have occurred in the central courtyard of the temple complex or in the adjoining colonnade. Near the colonnade was a small building; it has been supposed that this structure served as a location where further ablutions could be performed. But it also may have been the location where the king sat enthroned, after he had removed a cloth that covered loaves of bread, destined for sacrifice, and divided them with his spear. A similar structure was found at Temple 5 at Boghazköy and at Yazilikaya (Frankfort 1954:219-220).

³⁰¹ Temple 1 at Boghazköy is an interesting example of a socially constructed sacred site, whose location was marked by a physically elevated position and which was contained within an outer enclosure wall. In addition to the outer enclosure wall, the Hittites used a combination of ancillary structures, such as storage rooms, whose wall-like appearance and functionality served to 'enclose' the even more sacred ground within, where the main temple stood. These ancillary buildings also provided another line of defence for the temple (Wasilewska 2009:401-402).

³⁰² Bittel (1976:71) sees a great deal of correlation between the plan of the Great Temple and that of other temples of the second millennium elsewhere in the Near East. He especially sees Egyptian influence and finds the most parallels with the Ramesseum, where the main sanctuary is set in the centre of the complex and is similarly surrounded by streets and other buildings ancillary to the temple.

7.3 ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIONS

Hittite temples present a difficult subject for analysis. This is due partly to the derivative nature of Hittite civilisation and partly to inconsistency and irregularity in the ruins that have been excavated.

7.3.1 Temple architecture among the Hittites

Hittite temples ranged from the simple, open-air sanctuary at Yazilikaya³⁰³ with its stone walls featuring a carved procession of deities to the elaborate, Cyclopean-masonry temples at Boghazköy.

In the Hittite empire, places of worship often had the same basic architectural plan as contemporary homes and can only be distinguished from private residences by the nature of the artefacts found within. Nevertheless, between 1800 and 1200, there were four basic models of worship sites that can be distinguished in Hittite civilisation:

- A small, open space, surrounded by walls.
- A more evolved form that consisted of small shrines of one or more rooms which were adjacent to larger rectangular rooms. Some of these buildings, dating from the Middle or Late Bronze Ages, were merely large rectangular buildings that functioned as places of worship and cannot really be considered temples in a true sense. However, there were other structures that seem to fit the pattern observed elsewhere. These buildings were of two types: one form was a large rectangular building divided into three parts, the other was a large room directly behind an entrance facade.
- The Hittites were known to use large rocks or mountains in their natural state as

³⁰³ Other areas in Anatolia have similar rock reliefs, such as Eflatun Pinar, near Beysehir; indeed, it would not be incorrect to speak of a Hittite penchant for open-air worship, as demonstrated by the large number of sacred groves and stelae.

- sites for worship without any artificial constructions or additions.³⁰⁴
- Finally, there were large temple complexes consisting of many rooms. There is considerable literary evidence of this type of temple. Archaeologically this form is best exemplified by the ruins of the temples at Boghazköy (Bittel 1981:63-72).

Yazilikaya remains the best example of an open-air Hittite temple. Primitive yet effective, it exhibits no discernible axis or orientation.

The temples excavated in the upper city at Boghazköy were remarkable for their irregularity; the only traits they shared in common were an outer enclosure wall and an interior plaza. Many of them appear to have followed a Mesopotamian model in that they consisted of a number of rooms arranged around a single courtyard. Yet there were differences; temples in the upper city tended to favour the bent-axis approach rather than the direct-axis preferred by the Mesopotamians (especially the Assyrians) of the second and first millennia.³⁰⁵ Another difference existed in the windows. Babylonian temples had a limited number of small windows placed high in the walls, while Hittite temples had numerous windows that reached down to floor level that would have admitted considerably more light than their Babylonian counterparts. These windows, which were open spaces, may have reflected the Hittite preference for open-air sanctuaries (Boyce 2002:249).

Temple 1, in Boghazköy's lower city, provides the best example of a Hittite temple built in its entirety from the beginning, without being constrained by neighbouring buildings or residential areas. This structure exhibited a clear central axis with two antecellae and a double inner cella with two cult niches in which were placed statues of the two gods to whom it was dedicated. It was a complete temple site with a basin of water at the

³⁰⁴ This model can be seen in the *huwasi* stones of the Hittites in Anatolia. These were free-standing stelae that either depicted deities or were associated with them as markers (Gurney 1952:124, 127) and demonstrated the tendency of the Hittites to prefer sites of natural sacred space (Wasilewska 2009:398).

³⁰⁵ In Mesopotamia, with the direct-axis floor plan, it would be theoretically possible for a person in one of the outer courtyards to catch a glimpse of the statue of the god. At Boghazköy this would be impossible, for in addition to the bent-axis approach, Hittite temples often separated the outer courtyard from the main inner cella by one or more intermediate antecellae, each on a bent-axis. The function and purpose of these multiple cellae are not known. This format could be described as the "bent-axis plus" plan.

entrance, storage magazines, and other auxiliary structures. It was constructed mostly of limestone, with the inner, most sacred areas built of granite.

7.3.1.1 A typical Hittite temple. A typical Hittite temple, if there was such a thing, would have a *hilammar* ('gate-house') marking the entrance to the temple complex and representing the boundary between sacred and profane space. The gate-house offered entrance to a courtyard with water-filled basins where temple personnel and other participants could cleanse and purify themselves before proceeding to the temple proper. An interior courtyard contained an altar. Multiple courtyards, each constructed on the bent-axis plan, eventually led to the innermost cella, also on a bent-axis. Unlike their counterparts in Mesopotamia and Egypt, where the holy of holies were usually shrouded in darkness, Hittite cellae featured large windows that came down to the floor and admitted much light. Inside the cella, the statue of the deity normally stood on a pedestal. Unfortunately, no such images have survived, as they were usually constructed of either precious metal or wood with a metal coating. The statue typically held a weapon in its right hand, such as a club or a spear, and a symbol of its authority in its left hand. Smaller (and hence poorer) shrines might have a symbol or a fetish rather than a full-sized statue.³⁰⁶

7.3.2 Hittite temples and sacred space

Due to a comparative lack of archaeological and literary evidence, it is difficult to point out how Hittite temple architecture portrayed the concept of sacred space. Unlike Mesopotamia with its hundreds and Egypt with its thousands of temples, the land of Hatti offers only a few dozen, and even these were largely lacking in features which might be considered consistent or distinctive. Of course, Hittite civilisation lasted only a few centuries, and not three millennia as ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Had the Hittite civilisation endured longer, no doubt more consistent patterns of temple architecture would have developed.

³⁰⁶ A common example was the weather-god, often represented by a bull, which was his special symbol; cf the Canaanite Baal or the Israelite Yahweh, both weather gods, and both often represented by a bull.

Nevertheless, there are a few significant points. It is suggestive that the Hittites not only retained but often seemed to favour open-air sanctuaries and outdoor shrines on mountains, among boulders and other objects untouched by the hand of the artisan; as a generalisation it might be said that the Hittites preferred natural sacred space over socially constructed sacred space. Also, due to the local topography, the Hittites could use easily accessible mountainous areas and did not need to construct an artificial eminence such as a ziggurat. In an urban environment like Boghazköy, temples were built upon elevated platforms to increase their visibility and further set them apart from surrounding areas.

7.3.2.1 Techniques of Construction and Decoration. In this category are included (1) the concept of the primordial mound; (2) the practice of foundation deposits; (3) the purposes and functions of enclosure walls; (4) principles of orientation, alignment, and measurement; and (5) exterior and interior decoration.

There are no indications, in either the literary or archaeological records, of any acknowledgement by the Hittites of the concept of the primordial mound.

Foundation deposits are likewise not found in Hittite temples (Bittel 1976:67).

Enclosure walls, as elsewhere throughout the ancient Near East, surrounded the temples in urban locations (Boghazköy); it may be assumed that their purposes here were similar to enclosure walls elsewhere (Frankfort 1954:217-218). Enclosure walls were not constructed around areas of natural sacred space, as at Yazilikaya or the *huwasi* stones.

The Hittites did not seem troubled by any issues relating to orientation. Yazilikaya and other outdoor areas, naturally, contained few if any built-up areas; no attempt was made at alignment with celestial bodies. Temples built in already crowded neighbourhoods simply adapted to whatever space was available (Gurney 1952:123). There is no evidence indicating any particular concern with following a heavenly model; neither is there any

indication that the Hittites practised any foundation rituals.

With respect to exterior and interior decoration, the same paradigm applies; areas of natural sacred space were not enhanced, save by drawings of divine processions as at Yazilikaya (7.2.1). Yet the drawings at Yazilikaya are effective, even if artistically crude and primitive. The main goddess, Hapat, stood on a panther walking on mountains (Wasilewska 2009:398). Other gods were depicted as double-headed eagles, as the panther and eagle were symbolic representations of the powers of the deities. Temples at Boghazköy featured painted or carved sphinxes and lions guarding the entrance. Presumably the temple interiors also contained paintings and/or murals, but unfortunately none have survived. The outer, auxiliary buildings at Temple 1 were constructed of limestone, while the more sacred, inner structures were built of granite; this is an application of the strategy of using only the finest materials for the most holy areas of the temple complex. Also, due to its prominent location on an elevated platform, Temple 1 was visible for miles around.

7.3.2.2 General Temple Arrangement. This category includes items pertaining to (1) the tripartite floor plan, (2) pillars, (3) the Tree of Life, and (4) temple/palace symbiosis.

Temples in Boghazköy's upper city were square or rectangular and tended to follow the tripartite plan. An outer courtyard led to an inner courtyard, which in turn led to the sacred inner court which was preceded by a vestibule (Boyce 2002:241). Meanwhile, in Temple 1 in the Lower City, a large gateway firmly indicated the central axis, and a single colonnade led in the same direction to two antecellae and two holy of holies with two cult niches in honour of the divine couple to whom the temple was dedicated. Thus all of the Boghazköy temples were linear and processional. The upper city temples were related to religious structures in Mesopotamia, having a number of ancillary rooms arranged around a central courtyard. The entrance to the inner sanctum in the Boghazköy upper city temples was on the bent-axis model typical of early Babylonia; even so, the door itself was approached indirectly by way of two other small rooms (Boyce 2002:241). Thus only selected priests or other temple staff would ever see the statue of

the god in its niche. From this it might be inferred that the Hittites placed a great emphasis on secrecy regarding the rituals that occurred within the temple as well as a heightened sense of sacred space and the sanctity of the inner temple area. Yet this view is countered by the peculiar feature of large and plentiful windows, which would have admitted a great deal of light and may have inordinately exposed the statue of the god to public view. These extraordinarily large windows (four of them in the innermost cella) reached down to the floor level (Frankfort 1954:220; Gurney 1952:122; Wasilewska 2009:402).

The main temple gateways in Boghazköy were typically flanked by twin pillars, sometimes free-standing, sometimes perched on the backs of lions and sphinxes. Their purpose, which was undoubtedly symbolic rather than functional, remains unknown.

Neither the literary nor the archaeological records indicate that the Hittites were aware of the concept of the Tree of life.

In the realm of Hatti the temple was an institution of the state, and the king controlled the temple, its activities, and its revenue, and presided over all priestly personnel who were unabashedly employees of the state. Whereas in Mesopotamia and Egypt there was occasional friction between temple and palace (for example, in Early Dynastic Sumer) as temple estates grew large and occasionally attempted to exert some measure of independence, this conflict did not occur among the Hittites, whose kings retained a firm grasp on temples as an institution of the state from the beginning (Boyce 2002:153, 242).

7.3.2.3 Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia. This category includes features such as (1) elevated statues for the deity, (2) water for ablutions, (3) cult of the dead, and (4) altars and animal sacrifices.

The statue of the god was elevated in Temple 1 in Boghazköy's lower city (Wasilewska 2009:401-402), and normally stood or sat on a throne on an elevated platform in the innermost cella in the upper city temples.

Water for ablutions was typically available either from a fountain or from containers of water in the courtyards (Bittel 1976:69-70).

There is limited evidence regarding a cult of the dead among the Hittites, although Gurney (1977:61-63) suggests there may have been some burials within temples, with subsequent offerings and sacrifices in behalf of the dead. These practices were likely borrowed from the Egyptians.

Regarding sacrificial items, only small remnants of cultic paraphernalia, such as small figurines, libation vessels, and votive objects have been found. Horned altars have been found near Hittite temples. Archaeological finds in the vicinity of these exterior altars include shovels and other implements designed for use in handling large sacrifices and their remnants. Gurney (1977:24-43) has provided a more detailed look at Hittite sacrificial procedures.

7.4 CONCLUSIONS

Hittite culture was derivative; there was very little that can be deemed original. The Hittites tended to borrow from everybody, especially in matters of religion. This was true of religious architecture as it was of nearly everything else. Hittite writing, mythology, diplomacy, and forms of divination were essentially copied from surrounding cultures. Hittite systems of worship and theology were formalised during the 16th - 13th centuries as the Hittites amalgamated forms and concepts borrowed from Hattic, Hurrian, Luwian, and Mesopotamian sources (McMahon 1995:1985).

The Hittites had no distinctive word for “temple;” they simply referred to their temples as a “house,” meaning “house of the god” (Boyce 2002:154). Most of the important deities in the Hittite pantheon had their own temple. As the images of the gods were mobile, they frequently visited one another, particularly at festivals and auspicious occasions such as a solstice or an equinox or a coronation (Boyce 2002:154). The Hittite liturgical calendar

was filled with festivals and other cultic occasions; civic life was a constant cycle of special occasions as well.³⁰⁷

Hittite temples, especially the larger ones, were centres of economic, judicial, and political activity as well as religious functions, and had large staffs and economic holdings; in this respect Hittite temples followed the same pattern as those in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

The Hittites had a strong preference for natural, open-air sites; early ‘temples’ were merely small open spaces in the mountainous terrain. Some sacred sites took advantage of large boulders and natural grottoes that required little if any modification. Subsequent buildings consisted simply of one- or two-room rectangular structures, identifiable as temples primarily by the votive and other offerings found within. Larger temple complexes developed in major urban areas, especially Boghazköy (Hattusas). These are marked by outer enclosure walls containing fortified gateways. Passage through the gateway led the pilgrim to a courtyard that contained a well or basins of water at which he could purify himself. Passage through the interior courtyard typically led to a smaller courtyard that might contain an altar; this smaller courtyard was more sacred than the preceding one. From this courtyard entrance was afforded into a small inner sanctuary that contained the divine image standing on a pedestal (or occasionally sitting upon a throne).

Hittite archaeological features that are tied to the concept of sacred space are not as plentiful as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, but they are not lacking altogether. Hittite

³⁰⁷ There were numerous seasonal festivals; the *Instructions for Temple Officials* mentions eighteen in particular. These varied in length and relative importance. One of the major festivals involved the reciting, or acting, of the “Myth of the Slaying of the Dragon.” This festival was important enough that King Mursilis II returned to Hattusas in the middle of a military campaign in order to play his role. Such a pageant is reminiscent of the well-known seasonal festivals so favoured by the Myth and Ritual school. The purpose of the myth and its accompanying rituals was to renew life and vegetation after the cold of winter, thus portraying the ultimate victory of life over death, light over darkness, fertility over desolation, and order over chaos. Another festival seems to have had as its purpose the “fixing of the fates” akin to that known to exist at the Babylonian Akitu festival, although there is no direct evidence linking the two. Other festivals featured the familiar practice of a mock battle in which the forces of the king were eventually victorious. In this ritual the forces of the king had weapons of bronze while the “enemy” was relegated to using weapons of reeds (Gurney 1952:126-127; McMahon 1995:1993).

temples possessed exterior enclosure walls that no doubt fulfilled the same functions as elsewhere. Decorating techniques, especially at Yazilikaya, were archaic yet quite compelling.

Hittite temples utilised multiple courtyards and cellae to create a number of areas of graded sacred space. Temple entrances were marked by twin pillars, either alone or on the backs of lions and sphinxes. The temple made no pretence of independence from the state.

Statues of the god within Hittite temples stood or sat on a throne on an elevated platform within the innermost cella. Water for ablutions was available in wells, fountains, or containers within the various courtyards. There is limited evidence regarding burial practises in temples. It is obvious that animal sacrifice was practised to some degree, but both archaeological and literary evidence are scant.

CHAPTER 8

CANAANITE TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Abstract

The temple architecture of the ancient Levant, with rare exceptions, was quite moderate, if not austere, compared to the monumental religious architecture in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Smaller shrines, sanctuaries, and holy places abounded throughout Canaan. Such small edifices have often been difficult to identify as temples according to the archaeological record; larger shrines, on the other hand, tended to conform to a typology, and are thus easier to recognise.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Temples were an important institution in Canaanite history, just as they were in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Hittite Anatolia, and elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Yet Canaanite temples were not unaffected by the relative geography of Canaan and the mighty empires that lay to the southwest and the east. Occupying a middle ground between Egypt and Mesopotamia, the land of Canaan was an amalgamation of small and transient kingdoms that served as a buffer between the centres of the two great empires. There never was a single political entity or kingdom, much less an empire, in Canaan; instead there were city-states and petty kingdoms such as Mari, Ugarit, Syria, the Aramaeans, Phoenicia, Philistia, Israel, Judah, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and others. Due to shifting political fortunes and allegiances in Canaan, temples never developed into the supranational institutions found in the valleys of the Nile and of the Tigris and Euphrates.

This chapter will describe, in general terms, Canaanite temple and religious architecture on a chronological basis, from the Chalcolithic period through the Iron Age. It will be demonstrated that the concept of sacred space was the ideological factor that dictated significant architectural characteristics.

Smaller Canaanite temples often consisted of a single room, while larger structures exhibited a bipartite or tripartite arrangement. In the earliest examples (late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages), most temples exhibited a simple, one-room rectangular form in a broadroom style. This early plan, simple and convenient, later evolved into the equivalent of a broadroom cella (or possibly cellae) with a separate entryway. By the middle of the second millennium the broadroom pattern gave way to a longroom plan, which led in turn to a processional-style temple with a succession of rooms in a straight-axis, linear pattern. Some temples featured a façade with twin towers.

The Middle and Late Bronze Ages saw the development of another style, non-monumental, with an indirect entry and a sacristy located in the rear. The main hall featured benches around the wall; this type of temple was quite common throughout the eastern Mediterranean basin, including Cyprus and Mycenaean Greece.

In the Iron Age, temple complexes developed in the larger urban areas. Such complexes included the temple itself, ancillary structures, and one or more courtyards. All portions of the complex were considered sacred space, although there were gradations in sanctity, and all portions were included within an outer enclosure, or *temenos*, wall.

8.2 DESCRIPTION OF REPRESENTATIVE TEMPLES IN CANAAN

8.2.1 The Chalcolithic Age (ca 4500-3500)

The earliest monumental temple in Canaan was the hilltop sanctuary at En-Gedi, west of the Dead Sea.³⁰⁸ The sanctuary was located in an isolated area, apart from local settlements, suggesting that it may have served as a regional shrine, possibly in connection with the popular springs found in the wadi below. The En-Gedi sanctuary was actually a complex consisting of four individual structures in a rectangular courtyard

³⁰⁸ There was purported to be a Neolithic (ca 8500-4500) temple at Jericho, a small rectangular mud-brick structure that was regarded by Kenyon as a sanctuary. This identification was based on the form of the building and is not conclusive (Dever 2003:383; Margueron 1997:165).

surrounded by a stone enclosure wall. These four structures were a main gate-house, a postern or secondary gate, a lateral chamber, and a large sanctuary (Levi 2003:270-271). The sanctuary itself was a large broadroom structure with low benches and pits for offerings. An open courtyard in front of the temple contained a reservoir for water. Nearby, at Nabal Mishmar, a large cache of copper, stone, and ivory implements was found, which were probably used in the temple cult but hidden when the temple was abandoned and later forgotten.

At Tuleilat Ghassul in the lower Jordan Valley, several sanctuaries have been excavated. One temple in particular, located in Area E, resembled the En-Gedi structure discussed above. Remarkable wall frescoes depicted ceremonial processions, mythical figures, and strange animals. These frescoes were refinished, using rich mineral paints, suggesting that this temple was in use for a protracted period. Another building at the site contained no less than eight superimposed wall-paintings (Levi 2003:270).

A sanctuary at Gilat is the only Chalcolithic shrine found in the northern Negev. Seven strata and substrata have been identified; in two of these layers (IIb and IIc), the architecture was clearly related to the cult. The site yielded a temple complex consisting of rectilinear buildings constructed on circular platforms, cultic standing stones (*massebot*)³⁰⁹, large well-built mud-brick silos, open-air basins, and a large cache of cultic paraphernalia (Levi 2003:271).³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ Large standing stones, 'stelae' or, more commonly in the Bible, '*massebot*', are thought to be cultic in nature. Groups of stelae have been found in many very prominent places, including Byblos, Gezer, and in the cultic precinct at Megiddo. Their precise role is unknown. Popular theories suggest that these stones represented certain deities, commemorated ancestors or mythical events, or that they embodied astronomical observations and functions (Ilan 2003:339-340).

³¹⁰ The excavations at Gilat, though covering only a relatively small area (ca 1200 sq m), yielded an unusually bountiful collection of small cultic artefacts. These included over 200 fenestrated incense burners, about 60 violin-shaped figurines, animal and human statuettes, tokens of stone and clay, and other finds. Many of these objects were derived from a single room at the site, which served as the main cult room, a kind of *devir* or holy of holies. The site also provided burial finds that included (1) the earliest dog burial in Palestine in its own individual plot; (2) four complete ostrich eggs located in a pit beneath a public courtyard; and (3) a mass burial complex consisting of nine complete human skeletons in a mud-brick circular burial monument. All of the individuals died at approximately the same time and were buried on a layer consisting of hundreds of animal bones. A nearby pit was found containing a complete fenestrated stand and a collection of eight bone awls surrounded by ten gazelle horns. These objects were deliberately burned at the time of the mass burial (Levi 2003:271-272).

A temple existed at Nahal Hever, high on a cliff along the western shores of the Dead Sea. This temple was a broadroom structure with low benches and several *favissae* (pits in which outworn or broken cultic items were discarded). It was surrounded by an enclosure wall with a gate (Dever 2003:383).

An early Chalcolithic temple at Arad had an outer enclosed courtyard with a stone and mud-brick altar and an adjacent sunken pit lined with stones. A temple at Tel Yarmuth was heavily plastered, but the only significant furnishing was a low, simple altar on the back wall (Dever 1995:607-609). A temple at Beth-Shan displayed an innovation: a special cube-shaped room at the back of the temple, with steps leading to an elevated area where the divine statue was placed. This was a precursor to the *debir* of Solomon's temple (Wright 1944:70). Other open-air sanctuaries characterised mostly by standing stones and walls existed throughout the southern Negev and Sinai.

At Alalakh in Syria a series of mud-brick buildings have been deemed temples, though there is not a great deal of evidence to specify whether they were indeed holy places, palaces, or even large residences (Barnett 1941-1950:61). However, they do exhibit some interesting architectural details pertinent to our present study. A temple at Alalakh IV had a succession of broad rooms. The later buildings had entrances attended by two pillars and sculptured lions. Passage through the pillars led to a central courtyard which in turn led to a forecourt, consisting of two long rooms along a direct axis (Frankfort 1954:276-277).

8.2.2 The Early Bronze Age (ca 3500-2000)

The Early Bronze Age will be broken down into four sub-categories; the temple architecture in each period will be briefly described.

8.2.2.1 Early Bronze I (ca 3500-3100). The architectural temple format in the Early Bronze period remained the broadroom type, modelled after the Chalcolithic sites at En-Gedi, Tuleilat Ghassul, Gilat, and elsewhere. EB I structures retained the single-room

plan, with the entrance on the long side and an altar opposite the doorway (Bab edh-Dhra, Jericho, Megiddo). The EB I temple area at Megiddo was the first of several sanctuaries built on this site before the Iron Age. The shrine faced east, with a courtyard stretching eastward before it (Ussishkin 1997:461). EB I structures typically sat in a courtyard with an enclosure wall around the area to separate sacred space from profane. Cultic objects found in EB I sanctuaries, though few in number, place Canaan squarely within the Syrian/Mesopotamian religious sphere emphasising vegetation and fertility cults.³¹¹

8.2.2.2 *Early Bronze II (ca 3100-2650)*. The development of an elite, male-dominated priesthood, noticed in EB I, continued in EB II in both the political and religious spheres.³¹² Thus we begin to find temple and palace in close proximity,³¹³ as can be noted, for example, at both Arad and Megiddo. Temple and palace precincts were contiguous, similar in building type, shared common courtyards, and were segregated from the profane (common) space of adjoining neighbourhoods by a *temenos* wall (Ilan & Amiran 1997:171; Richard 2003b:290).³¹⁴

³¹¹ Textual and artefactual evidence, including ritual texts, myths, and pantheons, all attest to an elite, male-dominated, priestly/royal leadership in EB I. The unique collections of cultic and ritualistic implements found in Chalcolithic temples (Gilat) disappear in EB I. While there is also a dearth of cultic paraphernalia in EB II, such limited finds as do exist seem to indicate a possible connection with the Sumerian cult of Dumuzi. Richard suggests that this indicates a shift in Canaanite religious practices in EB I (and indeed, throughout the entire EB era) from earlier rituals based on a Mediterranean Mother Goddess to a theology more closely aligned with Upper Syrian and Mesopotamian religion. Nevertheless, the temple type in EB I maintained the style prevalent in the Chalcolithic era (Richard 2003b:286, 291).

³¹² The king, as the regent of the god, was the only one who could order the building of a new temple (Kapelrud 1963). Temple building was a major duty of the kings in ancient Syria as elsewhere in the ancient Near East. For this reason, palace complexes frequently contained a religious shrine, as at Jerusalem, Tell Tainat, and Mari. Fortress temples, such as Arad, were another manifestation of the king as temple builder (Ahlstrom 1995:596).

³¹³ Temple and palace treasuries were either one and the same or were periodically merged. Structures pertaining to judicial functions have also been found in these palace/temple complexes. It was important for the king to architecturally portray his status, wealth, power, and prestige in order to legitimise and centralise his authority (Dever 1995:611-612). This was, perhaps, an inevitable outgrowth of the inextricably intertwined roles of state and religion. Temples provided a source of national pride and identity. It was in the sanctuaries—both the small local sites and the large urban complexes—where social and national characteristics were imposed upon otherwise disparate groups of people. State and religious ideologies were developed and merged to form a national consciousness.

³¹⁴ Alalakh VII and the Northwest Gate at Shechem provide good examples of this feature from the Middle Bronze Age. A good Iron Age example is Solomon's palace/temple complex in Jerusalem, which included structures known as the 'House of the Forest of Lebanon', the 'Hall of Pillars', the 'Hall of the Throne', and the 'Hall of Judgement'. These buildings were generally linked together by open courtyards or plazas and reflected the virtual union of church and state in the ancient Near East.

An EB II temple at Arad characterised the sacred architecture of the era. The temple compound contained twin temples, one large and one small, each a broadroom structure with benches around the interior walls used either for the placement of votive offerings or for the seating of prominent officials, and another structure along with multiple courtyards. The doors to the twin temples were on the longer side, and altars along with a cult statue stood on the walls opposite the doors. The statues could thus be clearly seen from the outer courtyards when the doors were opened. One courtyard contained an outdoor altar (or possibly a *bamah*) and a large basin (possibly a *favissa*), while another courtyard contained a stela (Dever 2003:384). The EB II twin temples at Arad had much in common with the EB I twin temples at Megiddo (Aharoni 1968:3; Ilan & Amiran 1997:172).

At Yarmuth an EB II temple complex has been excavated that included a broadroom sanctuary (the White Building), a side altar constructed of plastered masonry (Dever 2003:383), and a spacious palace complex. The acropolis at Ai featured a monumental broadroom temple, a sacred *temenos*, and a courtyard that dominated the area.³¹⁵ At Khirbet ez-Zeraqun, near the city gate, a cultic complex included temples and an outdoor altar. One point all these sites held in common was a *temenos* enclosure wall that clearly demarcated sacred from profane space (Richard 2003b:290).

8.2.2.3 *Early Bronze III (ca 2650-2300)*. An EB III temple at Bab edh-Dhra was built on a site directly above a previous sanctuary, differing from it only slightly in orientation. There was an innovation in temple architecture in the EB III period characterised by this shrine: after entering the main sanctuary through a door on the west, which was a long side, a visitor would then have to turn left (toward the north) and proceed up a number of steps to a raised area that was the focus of religious activity, presumably a statue of the deity (Rast 2003:326).

Also in EB III, the sacred precinct at Megiddo was constructed adjacent to the palace;

³¹⁵ The palace/temple at Ai alternated as a royal residence and a place of worship at least three times over a six hundred year period (Callaway 1976:18-30; Dever 1995:612); the reasons remain unknown.

both structures were separated from secular neighbourhoods by an enclosure wall. This was a continuation of a practice established in EB II. The EB III temple at Megiddo also contained an exceptionally large stone outdoor altar (Altar 4017, eight meters in diameter, one and one-half meters high, with seven steps leading to the top) within the courtyard. The new sacred complex at Megiddo contained twin temples, as in EB I. These twin temples showed another innovation: they were *megaron* temples, that is, temples whose side walls extended to form an anteroom to the main cella (Dever 2003:384). This anteroom, or *porch*, included two pillars that served as roof supports. The twin temples at Megiddo, then, in essence, may be considered forerunners to the future tripartite temple plan consisting of a porch, an antecella, and a holy of holies; this tripartite temple plan became dominant in the second and first millennia. Later in EB III, at Megiddo XVII, no less than three temples, identical in plan and size, were built near the altar, which was the focal point of the entire complex. Each of these three temples exhibited a porch and a rectangular cella with a side room. A raised altar abutted the rear wall (Ussishkin 1997:461-462).

At Ai the sanctuary on the acropolis was relocated to a site adjacent to the fortification wall that was constructed around the city during EB III. This is another example of the tendency in EB III for temples to break out of the old simple broadroom pattern and experiment with new and multivariate styles. These new variations may be compared with similar changes in religious architecture during the same time frame in Syrian, Mesopotamian, Anatolian, and Aegean traditions (Richard 2003b:292).

8.2.2.4 Early Bronze IV (ca 2300-2000). The EB IV period was characterised by a regression from urbanism to dispersed settlement patterns, from political centralisation to decentralisation, and from planned urban economies to rural subsistence economies. Indeed, the entire EB age was one of ‘continuous indigenous oscillations along a continuum of higher to lower levels of complexity or from systemic specialization to despecialization’ (Richard 2003b:300). EB IV was a period of despecialisation. There were no discernible developments or innovations in religious architecture during this period that require attention here.

8.2.3 The Middle Bronze Age (ca 2000-1500)

In this section there will first be some general observations about the MB period as a whole, followed by cursory remarks specific to MB I, MB II, and MB III.

The lack of walled towns and monumental architecture at the beginning of this period, as a result of the regression of EB IV, indicates that society was less hierarchical than before and that political rulers—clan patriarchs, village headmen, and/or elders and tribal chiefs—had limited powers of coercion over their people. However, as MB progressed, large new temples did appear at Megiddo, Aphek, and Dan (Ilan 2003:338).

Temples from MB can be classified according to several basic models (Dever 1995:609-610):

- *Migdal* or *Fortress* temples. These temples had a longroom plan, rather than a broadroom, with an entryway in one of the short sides and a projecting altar or a recessed niche on the other short side, opposite the door. The entry portico or vestibule was normally flanked by two pillars or columns (Dever 2003:385). Some of these structures were large, with massive walls, and may have had two or even three stories. Larger temples were at Megiddo and Shechem; smaller sanctuaries were found at Tell el-Hayyat, Tell Kittan, Kfar Ruppin, and elsewhere (Ilan 2003:339).³¹⁶
- Another model was like the above except it expanded into two longitudinal rooms along the axis, and in so doing became more square than rectangular. Examples include temples at Ebla and Alalakh VII in Syria, and a temple at Hazor III, area H. The Hazor temple consisted of an entrance hall flanked by two small rooms

³¹⁶ Some of the smaller *migdal* buildings have been identified as temples primarily because of the cultic instruments found in them (esp Hazor, Tel Haror, and Shechem). Yet many sites were quite barren in artefacts, and ‘none contains any iconographic information that hints at which deity or deities were being worshiped’ (Ilan 2003:339). Buried items including metal objects, figurines (both male and female), and beads. Miniature votive ceramic vessels were found at Byblos, Ugarit, Megiddo, Tel Haror, and Tel Dan. While it is a reasonable assumption that these types of objects were associated with a shrine, this does not constitute irrefutable evidence (Ilan 2003: 339-340).

which led to a main room containing a rectangular niche in the wall opposite the entrance (Ben-Tor 1997:3).³¹⁷

- Another model extended into three rooms along a direct axis, or what has been described elsewhere as the tripartite form (a main entryway, variously represented as a porch or vestibule, an antecella, and the cella itself, which was the most sacred part); this became the prototype of subsequent Israelite and Phoenician temples. Examples can be found at Ebla, Hazor, Megiddo, Shechem,³¹⁸ and Tell el-Hayyat (Dever 2003:385).
- In addition to the above models, there was a collection of smaller MB temples that did not fit any of the above patterns; for example, the “Calf Sanctuary” at Ashkelon or the “Seaside Temple” at Nahariya. In the latter, in addition to the main structure, there was an altar in an open forecourt area surrounded by a circular arrangement of upright stones similar to the contemporary cultic installation at Gezer (Wasilewska 2009:397).³¹⁹

8.2.3.1 *Middle Bronze I (ca 2000-1775)*. Religious architecture in Canaan in MB I was defined by a number of sanctuaries at several small settlements (Megiddo, Byblos, Nahariya, and Ugarit). These sanctuaries were unique as they merged Egyptian influence (courtyard obelisks) with *massebot*, an indigenous Canaanite feature (Nakhai 1997:170). A fortress temple was built at Tell el-Hayyat in the Jordan Valley; this structure was similar to a contemporary temple at Ebla (Nakhai 2003:343).³²⁰

³¹⁷ In reality, there were four very different temples at Hazor during MB; indeed, the era provides multiple examples of a variegation in sacred structures whether found in public or private, urban or rural, venues (Ilan 2003:339; Nakhai 2003:343). Archaeological excavations provide silent yet eloquent witness of the diversity of ancient Canaanite religion, which was not static. Cultic remains, in particular, suggest a heterogeneous population, different religious beliefs, and a remarkable latitude for individual preference in religious expression.

³¹⁸ The *migdal*-temple at Shechem may have been the earliest tripartite temple in Canaan. It is also believed to be the first temple that used the longer or ‘royal cubit’ of Ezekiel, which was a traditional cubit plus a span (Lundquist 2008:51).

³¹⁹ The temple on the beach at Nahariya was particularly rich in cultic artefacts, including female and animal figurines (female figurines found at the site suggest this temple was dedicated to Asherah [in Ugarit, ‘she who treads upon/subdues the Sea’]), miniature votive vessels, weapons, and jewellery of gold, silver and bronze, and possible evidence for olive-oil production (Ilan 2003:339).

³²⁰ The discovery of a large cache of clay tablets at Ebla revealed the beginnings of Syrian religion back to the Middle Bronze Age. The evidence of Syrian religion in this early period must not be confused with that of the Iron Age (ca 1200-500), or roughly corresponding to most of Old Testament history (Van der Toorn 1995:2043).

8.2.3.2 *Middle Bronze II (ca 1775-1650)*. Temple worship continued throughout MB II at sanctuaries in Nahariya, Megiddo, Alalakh, Byblos, Ebla, and Ugarit, among other sites. At Alalakh a series of temples were built over one another, on the same site, during the second millennium (Nakhai 1997:170). The fortress-style sanctuary at Tell el-Hayyat from MB I was remodelled and enlarged. Similar fortress temples were built at Tell Kittan and Kfar Ruppin, both located in the Jordan Valley. These temples were not built in or adjacent to large urban centres; they likely served as regional cult centres. They had a professional cadre of priests and were frequented by groups either living nearby or travelling through the area (Nakhai 2003:343).

A Canaanite temple at Hazor dating to ca 1700 was uncovered in Area H. This temple consisted essentially of one room. It sat on a courtyard elevated about three steps up from the surrounding area; the courtyard was paved with fine, small stones, almost resembling a mosaic. This temple was rebuilt no less than three times over the succeeding centuries (Yadin 1959:8).

8.2.3.3 *Middle Bronze III (ca 1650-1500)*. MB III saw the proliferation of larger urban centres with defensive exterior walls. Many of these larger cities contained temples. Fortress-style temples were built in Shechem,³²¹ Hazor, and Megiddo (temple 2048). Shechem and Hazor contained additional sanctuaries as well as a fortress temple.

The earlier temple in Hazor (Area H) was rebuilt along the same lines, still with only one room and an adjacent niche that served as the holy of holies. At the southern end there was an open entrance flanked by twin towers similar to those found at Megiddo and Shechem. In front of the entrance was a courtyard, a *bamah*, and several altars. An important cultic find was a clay model of a liver, inscribed with omens for use by temple

³²¹ Temple V at Shechem, originally a fortress-type temple, was subsequently reduced in size and its orientation was shifted 28 degrees south of due east to align it with the autumnal equinox, which was often commemorated as a New Year (Bull 1960:111). Later still it was converted into a public Israelite temple with an outer courtyard containing altars (but see Anderson [1991] who disputes the very existence of a temple at Shechem). After its subsequent destruction it became merely a granary (Bull 1960:113-114), possibly at the instigation of the new cult centre at Jerusalem and its priesthood that wished to suppress all other Israelite centres of worship.

diviners (Lundquist 2008:52-53; Yadin 1959:6-8).

Smaller shrines from MB III have been found at Tel Mor, Ashkelon, and Tell el-Farah North. Regional sanctuaries at Nahariya, Tell el-Hayyat and Tell Kittan were still being used, while new ones were constructed at Gezer and Shiloh (Nakhai 1997:171; 2003:343-344). Gezer, with a favourable strategic location on the ancient route leading from Egypt to Anatolia, had one of the best known high places in Syria-Palestine. Its cultic installation, located at the centre of the northern part of the settlement, dates to ca 1600 and was used until the end of the millennium. It featured ten free-standing tall monoliths (*masseboth*), some of which were over three meters tall. In front of the stones was an altar, probably used for libation offerings. While the exact purpose and function of the Gezer shrine is unknown, it is believed to be a commemoration of a covenant between the gods and ten Canaanite cities, each represented by a stone (Wasilewska 2009:397).³²²

8.2.3.4 Summary of Middle Bronze period. Larger city-states, primarily in northern Canaan and Syria, undertook the construction of multiple temples as early as MB I (Ebla, Alalakh, Ugarit, Byblos, Mari). Meanwhile, southern Canaan featured mostly regional cult centres. These regional centres, accessible to the population at large, were often unfortified; this validates the general opinion that southern Canaan was a largely non-urban environment, at least in MB I and MB II. Cities in southern Canaan did not construct temples in urban areas until MB III; in addition, they did not have multiple temples as was common in the northern areas.³²³

8.2.4 The Late Bronze Age (ca 1500-1200)³²⁴

The aforementioned tripartite plan had now become more or less standard for Canaanite and Syrian temples (Alalakh), although some two-room temples from this period have

³²² The setting up of a stone, or a heap of stones (*cairn*), was a common method of ratifying covenants in the ancient Near East (Palmer 1998:32-33).

³²³ The number and type of temples from MB Canaan clearly indicate the forces of urbanisation, fortifications, religious centralisation, and the establishment of religious hierocracies that initially took root in northern Canaan and slowly spread southward (Nakhai 2003:344).

³²⁴ The Late Bronze Age was bracketed by the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt and the incursions of the Sea Peoples (Leonard 2003:349).

been found at Emar, Ebenda, and Tell Mumbaqaat.

Some structures do not seem to fit any particular pattern. The temple of Baal at Ugarit does not correspond with the temple as depicted in the Baal Cycle. Baal's temple at Ugarit was one of only four temples discovered at that site. It was located in the northeastern corner of the acropolis, near the temple of Dagon which dominated the city. Baal's temple was really a quite simple affair, with a traditional longroom with the entrance on a short side. This longroom led to an antecella and then to a larger cella that contained an image of Baal. The temple had massive walls, thus qualifying it as a *migdal*-type temple similar to contemporary structures at Megiddo, Shechem, and Hazor. Its tower, along with an additional stairway, suggest the likelihood of ritualistic or cultic performances on the roof (Wasilewska 2009:406).³²⁵

In Canaan the most representative temple from this period was the Orthostat Temple at Hazor,³²⁶ which was expanded from its original "one-room plus niche" format to the traditional tripartite pattern, along a linear axis, similar to the subsequent temple of Solomon (Lundquist 2008:53; Yadin 1959:3-6).

Canaanite temples from the late Bronze Age also include "bench temples," which were smaller sanctuaries featuring one or two main rooms, perhaps with a side room; these were so-named because of low mud-brick benches around the walls (generally used not for the seating of worshippers, but for the presentation and display of offerings). These

³²⁵ Rooftop rituals were a common feature of both east and west Semitic cultic practice in the ancient Near East. The Gilgamesh Epic describes how the great queen Ninsun ascended to the roof to offer incense to Shamash (*ANET* 81). In an Ugaritic text, King Keret went to the roof to offer sacrifice and prayer, after which he descended from the tower (Gitin 2002:99). Roof rituals are also mentioned in the Bible, where Josiah was described as the king that 'tore down the altars made by the kings of Judah on the roof by the upper chamber of Ahaz' (2 Ki 23:12). Burning incense and making offerings on the roof appear twice in Jeremiah: 'The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah shall be unclean, like that place Topheth—all the houses on the roofs of which offerings were made to the whole host of heaven and libations were poured out to other gods' (Jr 19:13); also 'And the Chaldeans who have been attacking this city and set this city on fire and burn it down—with the houses on whose roofs they made offerings to Baal and poured out libations to other gods' (Jr 32:29).

³²⁶ The Orthostat Temple in Hazor's Area H was named after the finely-cut orthostats in its walls, an influence derived from Alalakh in northern Syria. In its later version found in strata 1B and 1A, this temple featured a tripartite pattern similar in arrangement to the later temple of Solomon in Jerusalem—an entrance hall, a main hall, and a small rear hall (Ben-Tor 1997:3; Yadin 1958:34-39).

temples also featured an altar at the centre of the rear wall. Entrance to the main room was usually on one of the long sides, so that one could not see directly to the back wall altar (the bent-axis model). Examples of bench temples have been found at Beth-She'an, Tel Mevorakh, and Lachish.

Miscellaneous temple styles include the “labyrinth” temples at Hazor and Ammon, the “stelae” temple of area C at Hazor with its ten basalt standing stones (Ben-Tor 1997:3; Yadin 1956:10), and the “summit” temple at Lachish (Dever 1995:610).

8.2.4.1 LB IA (ca 1500-1450). Most of the temples and other shrines in LB IA are MB structures that remained in use. This is true even at Hazor (“Long Temple” [Area A] and the “Orthostat Temple” [Area H]), and Megiddo (migdal temple 2048), whose shrines managed to remain intact (though not unscathed), despite Egyptian military onslaughts under Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. Temple 2048 at Megiddo was eventually destroyed by fire at the end of the Bronze Age. A new urban sanctuary, with an unusual asymmetrical plan, was constructed at Beth-Shan, a city that was virtually an Egyptian garrison. Other new regional shrines were built at Shiloh and Deir Alla, whose sanctuary bore a strong resemblance to later Egyptian/Canaanite temples at Lachish and Beth-Shan (Nakhai 1997:171-172). Meanwhile, older structures at Tel Mor, Gezer, Nahariya, and Tell Kittan were abandoned by the end of the LB IA period (Leonard 2003:349; Nakhai 2003:344).

8.2.4.2 LB IB (ca 1450-1400). Relations with Egypt stabilised in LB IB; the military incursions of LB IA largely ended. Relatively peaceful conditions in LB IB allowed renovations at temple 2048 at Megiddo³²⁷ and at the Long Temple and the Orthostat Temple at Hazor. The fortress temple at Shechem was rebuilt (Nakhai 1997:172).

Continued Egyptian influence in Beth-Shan was portrayed by the construction of a new sanctuary there (Level IX, Building 10); this temple complex was a large and rambling

³²⁷ Temple 2048 had walls three meters thick and two towers in the front. A niche was cut into the back wall of the sanctuary to house the statue of the god. Thus the tripartite character of this temple, like many others, can be maintained only by considering the niche as a separate area (Lundquist 2008:52).

affair dedicated to “Mekal, Lord of Beth-Shan,” a deity that was a hybrid of Egyptian and Mesopotamian gods (Egyptian *Mekal* being a cognate of Semitic *Mukallim*, which in turn was related to Mesopotamian *Nergal*; *Mekal* was also related to Egyptian *Set* [Thompson 1967:120-121]).³²⁸ The temple had an enormous enclosure wall surrounding the temple except for the eastern side, apparently to allow unrestricted access to the sun’s rays. Thus the enclosure wall in this instance could not have served a defensive purpose; its primary function was to block visual access to the temple courtyard with its altar and *massebot*. The temple of Mekal at Beth-Shan, located in Canaan but heavily influenced by Egypt, also bore some resemblance to MB Shechem, LB Boghazköy, and even to the courtyards of the temple of Ezekiel 40-42 (Thompson 1967:115-123).

New temples were built at Lachish (Fosse Temple [Structure I])³²⁹ and at Tel Mevorakh XI. Both sites were along trade routes; the construction of these sanctuaries suggest the increasing importance of trade and commerce in LB 1B (Leonard 2003:351; Nakhai 1997:172; 2003:344).

8.2.4.3 LB IIA (ca 1400-1300). As in LB IB, relatively peaceful conditions prevailed in LB IIA. This allowed the undertaking of new construction as well as the renovation of older structures, such as those at Megiddo, Beth-Shan, Tel Mevorakh, Lachish, and Shechem (Nakhai 2003:344). Typical temple features in this era included multiple rooms, altars, and low benches around the walls (Lachish, Tel Mevorakh [Dever 2003:386]).³³⁰

At Hazor, the earlier temple in Area H was enlarged during LB IIA; the renovations included the installation of a pair of basalt orthostats, each carved with the image of a

³²⁸ While Egyptian influence can be seen in the temples at Beth-Shan, Lachish, and Shechem, there was also Canaanite influence on Egyptian temples. Thutmose III made detailed carvings of Canaanite flora and fauna in the festival hall that he added to the Temple of Amon at Karnak (Leonard 2003:351).

³²⁹ There were three successive versions of the ‘Fosse Temple’ in Lachish. The first temple was small, with two chambers and a few benches. The second temple was twice as large, with many additional benches and more elaborate side chambers. The third temple was similar to the second, except it added another side chamber and also made additions to the altar. Furthermore, temples two and three changed from a bent-axis entrance to a direct-access plan, thus giving more worshippers a direct view of the altar at the back of the temple (Seton-Williams 1949:83-85).

³³⁰ One of the cult objects found at Tel Mevorakh X was a bronze serpent; similar figurines were found at Gezer and the Hathor Temple at Timna.

lion. The Long Temple, the sacred centre of the Canaanite aristocracy since MB III, was supplanted by the Orthostat Temple as the main sanctuary in Hazor. New religious construction at Hazor included the Stelae Temple and Shrine 6211 in Area C, an outdoor area in Area F, and open-air installations near the gateways of Area P and Area K (Ben-Tor 1997:3). These temples, with their penchant for open-air and outdoor areas, exhibited no small degree of Syrian and Hittite influence (Nakhai 1997:172; 2003:344-345; Yadin 1958:35, 39).

Meanwhile, at Lachish, the Summit Temple featured a gold foil plaque depicting a nude goddess, probably Astarte, standing on a horse. She was worshipped together with a male god, probably Reshef. The image of Reshef brandishing a spear was found carved on a stone slab in the same temple (Leonard 2003:352). The Fosse Temple (Temple II) was rebuilt and enlarged.

8.2.4.4 LB IIB (ca 1300-1200). The total number of temples, sanctuaries and shrines in Canaan doubled in LB IIB compared with LB IIA (Nakhai 1997:172).

The LB IIB period saw an increasing encroachment upon Canaan by Egypt; new temples constructed during this period show marked Egyptian influence. Some were constructed for the main purpose of gathering and exporting grain to Egypt (Lachish, Beth-Shan, Jerusalem, Tell Abu Hawan,³³¹ Aphek, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza).

Egyptian influence was perhaps greatest in Beth-Shan; the Amenhotep III Temple (VII) and the Seti I Temple (VI) were both constructed during this period. The Amenhotep III Temple in stratum VII was quite different from the earlier one in stratum IX. The temple sat four feet above the surrounding courtyard. Remains of an altar were found in the courtyard; another altar inside the temple itself was not found but was presumed to exist as there was an interior altar in the level VI temple. The level VII temple closely resembled several of the Amarna sanctuaries, with benches around the walls and an

³³¹ Tell Abu Hawan was a small mound on the coastal plain near Mount Carmel. It was inhabited during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, from the 15th-10th centuries and again from the 6th-4th centuries (Negev 1980:9-10).

elevated area for the shrine (Thompson 1967:125-128).

The Seti I temple at Beth Shan VI was a rebuilt version of VII, with only a few minor modifications. The enclosure walls, thick and fortress-like in VII, were somewhat thinner in VI. One significant innovation in the new version was the addition of an outer ante-room or entrance court (Thompson 1967:128-129). Beth-Shan also produced a large number of Egyptian artefacts during this period, including many stelae and a full-sized basalt statue of Ramesses III in stratum V (Thompson 1967:132). Stratum V at Beth Shan also contained two temples connected by a pylon gateway: the temple of Ashtaroth and the temple of Dagon.³³² Both of these temples had an east-west axis, whereas the older temples (VII and VI) were north-south (Thompson 1967:129-133).

Even the old and revered temple 2048 at Megiddo fell under Egyptian sway as a private chapel was constructed in Megiddo's royal palace (Nakhai 1997:173). Despite Egyptian influence in the area, other Canaanite temples continued to function normally during LB IIB. The Fosse Temple at Lachish (Structure III) and the Orthostat Temple in area H at Hazor both continued to operate. The temple in area C at Hazor contained a niche wherein was found a basalt statue of a seated male flanked by no less than ten basalt *massebot*.³³³ The Fortress Temple at Shechem continued in use, and an additional sanctuary was established nearby. Texts found at the Deir Alla sanctuary were in an Aegean script, suggesting increasing trade with Greece as well as foreshadowing the approaching Sea People influx (Leonard 2003:354; Nakhai 2003:345).

8.2.5 The Iron Age (ca 1200-600)

This era saw the formation of a number of small regional states: the 'Sea Peoples' (Philistines, Phoenicians) on the coast, the neo-Hittites and Aramaeans in Syria, and the Israelites, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and others in Palestine and Trans-Jordan. Most of the excavated remains are from Canaan.

³³² These may be the structures referred to in 1 Samuel 31:10 and 1 Chronicles 10:10.

³³³ One of the *massebot* was carved with a pair of outstretched human arms reaching toward a disc and a crescent (Leonard 2003:354; Nakhai 1997:173).

Three of the more significant temples dating from the Iron Age were those at Arad, Hazor, and Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The first two will be discussed here; Solomon's temple will be covered in the following chapter.

8.2.5.1 *Arad*. South of Jerusalem, at Arad, archaeologists have unearthed a tripartite temple of the 10th-7th centuries.³³⁴ The temple plan at Arad was very similar to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (Aharoni 1968:1-32, but see esp 18-28). The significance of the Arad temple, however, lies not in its resemblance to that of Solomon, but in the fact that it was the first Israelite temple to have been uncovered by archaeological excavation (Lundquist 2008:53-54). It had an open-air forecourt with a large altar and a smaller central chamber with low benches. An inner sanctum (*debir*) was four shallow steps higher than the main broadroom; its entrance was flanked by a pair of stylised horned incense altars as well as a pair of standing stones (*massebot*), perhaps representing Yahweh and Asherah (Dever 2003:388). Other finds included incense stands and a bronze lion.³³⁵

Arad XII (11th to 10th centuries) revealed a number of semi-circular platforms bearing a rectangular surface that may have been the base of an altar. The temple area was surrounded by an outer enclosure or *temenos* wall three feet thick (Aharoni 1968:19). The likelihood of Arad XII as an early cultic site increased due to the presence of an altar from a subsequent temple (XI), presumably built over the same site as the previous altar, but this inference is tenuous. The tentative identification of the altar base in XII may have suggested itself to the excavators merely because it was under the altar in XI, rather than due to any compelling evidence in XII. Some scholars believe any interpretation of XII is speculative (Zevit 2001:156-158).

Stratum XI offered a clear temple outline. Entrance into a paved courtyard measuring

³³⁴ The site was excavated in 1962-1967 by Y. Aharoni. The preliminary excavation reports leave several questions unsettled regarding the development of the temple. Unfortunately, due to Aharoni's untimely death, a final report was never issued (Zevit 2001:156).

³³⁵ In terms of archaeological remains, those of the temple at Arad are quite extensive. This sanctuary provides evidence of another Israelite temple, besides Solomon's, featuring an altar, a first tent or curtain, a second curtain, and a holy of holies (Aharoni 1968:18-27; Nakhai 1997:174).

10m x 10m was effected by gates in the eastern and southern walls. In the centre of this courtyard stood an altar. The courtyard led to a broadroom 2.7 x 9 meters in area with a square niche of 1.2 x 1.2 meters in one wall. Plaster-covered benches lined the broadroom. Three steps led up from the broadroom into the niche (Aharoni 1968:20, figs 13, 22; Zevit 2001:160, fig 3.18). A low platform was built onto one end of the niche. This temple was destroyed by fire, presumably during the campaign of Shishak, ca 926 (Zevit 2001:159).³³⁶

A new temple was constructed in X, following the same overall plan as the previous one. There were, however, a few modifications:

- The northern wall of both the broadroom and the courtyard were extended northward by about 1.5 meters.
- A new entrance into the broadroom on the north side required an alteration in the benches.
- A new altar was constructed in the courtyard, a little north of the site of the previous altar. Its construction was of unhewn stones, earth, and clay, secured with mud mortar, thus fulfilling the prescription of Exodus 20:22. The altar had a large flint slab on top and two channels for draining liquids. No horns or remnants of horns were visible (Aharoni 1968:19). Using the royal Egyptian cubit of about 52.5 cm (21 inches), this altar was five cubits wide and five cubits long, the same dimensions as the altar in the desert tabernacle described in Exodus 27:1.
- An inner wall near the north area of the courtyard marked off a separate area thought to have been used for storage.
- A bench was placed in the courtyard near the northern entrance into the broadroom; this entrance was flanked by two slabs which may have supported pillars.

³³⁶ Herzog (1997:174) disputes that there was a temple in either Arad XII or XI. He sees nothing under the altar in XI to indicate that it was built over the site of a previous altar, as some had assumed. Furthermore, while there are substantial ruins in XI, Herzog believes they were part of a fortress. As there is no direct evidence of cultic activity in XI, Herzog believes it is safer to attribute the construction of a functioning temple only to stratum X.

A small chamber on the west side of the altar yielded a large lamp and lampstand (Zevit 2001:159-161). Additionally, two bowls were found on a step at the foot of the altar, inscribed with the Hebrew letters *qof* and *kaf*, presumably standing for *qodesh kohanim*, ‘holy [object of] priests’ (Aharoni 1968:20).

Aharoni dated this stratum (X) at ca 800; others have dated it to 848-841, the end of Jehoram’s reign, when Judah lost control of the Negev.

Stratum IX contained further revisions of the previous structure, the most significant of which included the following:

- Benches were completely removed from the broadroom.
- The small chamber west of the altar was eliminated.
- A small chamber was added on the east side of the courtyard, adjacent to the entrance into the broadroom.
- A small partition wall was built south of the altar, thus dividing the main courtyard.
- A stone basin was placed in the new divided area of the southern courtyard.
- A new entrance into the courtyard from the south, near the basin, was created.

This stratum (IX) is thought to have been destroyed during the reign of Ahaz, ca 753-732 (Zevit 2001:161).

In stratum VIII the courtyard, no longer enclosed, was now open to the east. The northwest wall of the broadroom was thickened, and the northern part of the broadroom was shortened. These changes may have resulted from Hezekiah’s cultic policies, instituted after his ascension to the throne and before the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib between 715-701 (Herzog 1997:175). The temple, reduced in size, continued to function even after Hezekiah’s attempted reforms (Aharoni 1968:26). This level (VIII) may have been destroyed by Edomites in the wake of the Assyrian campaign (Zevit

2001:161-162).

Stratum VII included the complete destruction of any remnants of the temple that may have been preserved from VIII. The two limestone incense altars were laid on the steps leading to the niche and plastered over, the upper courses of the temple walls were destroyed, and the whole area was buried under a layer of dirt. There is evidence that some kind of structure was built over the site where the broadroom and niche had been; this may date to the reforms of Josiah, ca 621 or shortly thereafter.

In VI a casemate wall was built around Arad to replace the defensive wall that was destroyed around 600. This level was itself destroyed around 586, possibly by Edomites taking advantage of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. A temple did not exist on this level.

The above description seems to suggest that there was a new temple for each strata from X to VII, but this may very well have not been the case. Surely it is possible that there were only one or two versions of the temple during this entire time frame. The Arad temple, like any other building, was subject to periodic renovations, repairs, and alterations that inevitably accompany such structures over periods of time (Zevit 2001:162).³³⁷

To briefly summarise the history of the Arad temple: the temple of XI (first half of the ninth century) was a broadroom with a niche, in a square courtyard, perhaps including an altar (if there was an altar in the courtyard, it was too small for the sacrifice of large animals; they would have been slain and dressed elsewhere). Two stelae stood in the niche and two small incense altars were placed on either side before the niche; thus two deities were possibly worshipped here. Benches around the broadroom collected votives and other offerings. The doors of the courtyard and of the broadroom controlled traffic flow. The temple was oriented towards the west, in the direction of the niche (Zevit

³³⁷ Despite all the renovations made to the Arad temple over the centuries, care was taken to maintain the altar and the *debir* in their original places as much as possible (Aharoni 1968:23).

2001:168-169).

The subsequent temple (strata X - IX, eighth century) was extended somewhat to the north and west. This was a rectangular structure, with the niche at one end of an east-west axis. The bench on the north side of the broadroom was rearranged. The niche now contained only a single stele with a single incense altar in front. The altar was paved with mud mortar; its top contained a flint slab and no horns. The altar, 5 x 5 cubits, was not a perfect square and its top was uneven (Zevit 2001:169).

As the first temple from the Israelite monarchy to be excavated in Palestine, the urge to compare the temple at Arad with Solomon's temple is quite irresistible. There are some notable similarities and also some significant differences. The Arad temple, like Solomon's, had its entrance on the east side and the holy of holies was on the western end of the structure. This westward orientation, quite rare in the ancient Near East, was also found in the desert Tabernacle as well as at Tell Tainat in Syria.³³⁸ Both the Jerusalem and Arad temples had altars and a courtyard east of the temple where cultic activities took place (Aharoni 1968:21-22).

While the Jerusalem temple exhibited the tripartite plan quite clearly, with the *ulam*, *hekhal*, and *debir* all lying along an east-west axis, the Arad temple presented a single broadroom with a small niche off the middle of the long wall.³³⁹ The pillars *Jachin* and *Boaz* stood at the entrance to the *ulam* in Jerusalem, while at Arad there were evidently twin pillars standing at the entrance to the *hekhal*; whether this is a significant variation or not has not been resolved (Aharoni 1968:22). In addition, the temple at Arad seems to have had a different cultic function than Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The former appears to be directed more toward a popular cult, while the latter functioned more as the

³³⁸ There was a reasonable degree of similarity between the temples at Hazor, Tainat, and that of Solomon. Each of these temples' main room was enclosed with walls and a roof rather than an open court. The general progression of altar-steps-shrine, a familiar pattern in Canaanite temples, can also be related to the temple of Solomon (Thompson 1967:126). It is also worth mentioning that Tainat, like Solomon's temple, was adjacent to a massive palace complex (Lundquist 2008:56-57).

³³⁹ This difference may not be insurmountable. Many scholars dispute the inclusion of the *ulam* as a part of the temple floor plan. Furthermore, some are disinclined to count the holy of holies as a separate cella, but rather regard it as merely an extension of the *hekhal* (Aharoni 1968:21-22).

centre of a royal cult (Uziel & Shai 2007:167).

8.2.5.2 *Hazor*. Only one of the several cultic structures excavated at Hazor dates to the Iron Age, found in stratum XI of area B, near the northwest corner. A complete temple was not found in this area as it was a site vital for defence, and military fortifications overtook part of the temple structure. Room 3283, 3.2 m x 5.2 m, was once longer; its northern end was destroyed by a casemate wall necessary for military defence. Its original length may have been seven or eight meters. Narrow benches ran along the walls.

A number of finds in room 3283 included a banana-shaped large stone about 2m high, the base of a chalice, an incense stand, a bowl, cooking pot, store jar, lamp, three basalt bowls, two basalt pestles, one basalt mortar, and one basalt scraper. A jar found underneath floor level (possibly a foundation deposit) yielded a collection of bronze objects: a seated figurine, an axe head, two parts of a sword, parts of two javelins, two fibulae, a bracelet, and assorted pieces of wire and other items not identifiable. The seated figurine was not complete, but it appears to have originally sat on a throne with a footstool, holding a spear in one hand with the other hand raised in greeting.³⁴⁰ Other articles found nearby were two incense stands (one fenestrated and one not), a bead, an arrowhead, ceramics, a bowl, a tripod bowl cooking pot, and an upper and lower mill stone.

The room was oriented toward the north³⁴¹ and rituals were performed while facing south. The clear implication is that cultic activities took place both in the temple and in the surrounding courtyard (Zevit 2001:202-205).

³⁴⁰ These finds are consistent with cultic instruments typically found in Canaanite temples: ceramic vessels (tableware, imported vessels, cultic vessels, lamps, cooking pots, storage jars, bowls), small statues (stone or precious metals), bronze cymbals, clay masks, ceramic livers, ceremonial weapons, jewellery, amulets, shells, scarabs, cylinder seals, floral and faunal remains, knives, altars, incense altars, offering stands, benches, obelisks, and stelae (Nakhai 2003:343-348).

³⁴¹ The temple itself was positioned on the northern side of the temple complex sites in Jerusalem, Arad, and Dan, as well as at Hazor. Two hypotheses for this have been suggested: (1) temples were built on the northern side due to religious or mythic reasons; and (2) temples were built on public land and the area designated for the building was on the northern side (Zevit 2001:250).

8.2.5.3 *Other Iron Age temple sites in Canaan.* A Philistine temple, revealed at strata XII-X at Tell Qasile at the mouth of the Yarkon River in Tel Aviv, combined the features of a bench temple with some Aegean features such as a roof column, a storeroom behind the altar for votive offerings, and a large outer courtyard (Mazar 1973:42-48; 1977:82-87).

A discovery at Dan, in northern Israel, revealed a large cult complex with a monumental open-air, stepped stone sacrificial altar or podium (*bamah*) and an adjacent two-room temple and another altar within. The altars had four horns. The finds at Dan included incense stands, a miniature horned altar, shovels for incense-offering, and many votives.

A pre-monarchic Israel cultic shrine is the "Bull site" in the Samarian hills consisting of an open-air altar and a standing-stone. The site derived its name from a fine bronze bull figurine (reminiscent of Canaanite "Bull El") found at the site (Yunker 2003:372).

An Iron Age temple at Beersheba has been reconstructed largely on the basis of a sizeable four-horned altar—possibly evidence of the cultic reforms of the Judean kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, in the 8th-7th centuries. At Beth-Shan V, a cultic complex included two adjacent temples known as the "Northern Temple" and the "Southern Temple."³⁴²

An enigmatic structure on top of Mount Ebal is thought by some to have been an altar of an early Israelite cult centre, but this is disputed by others (Yunker 2003:372). The debate over whether a temple existed on Mount Gerizim remains unsettled.³⁴³

³⁴² Objects found in these temples include round and square ceramic stands, some of which were decorated with human figures and snakes or painted in red and black geometric patterns. The continuing Egyptian influence in Beth-Shan was confirmed by the presence of statues and stelae. Both sites were destroyed in the 10th century, probably by King David (Yunker 2003:373).

³⁴³ A temple complex on Mount Gerizim, near Shechem, was believed to have had a courtyard measuring approximately one hundred cubits on its northern and southern sides and approximately one hundred fifty cubits on the east and west. It seems likely that this large foundation once held a Tabernacle-style sanctuary. The Samaritans subsequently built a temple on this site in the late fourth century BCE, probably intended as competition for the newly built temple of Zerubbabel in Jerusalem. The Samaritan temple was subsequently destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 127 (Cross 1984:101-102). But did such a temple exist in reality? A Samaritan temple was mentioned by Josephus (*Antiquities* 12.5.5; 13.3.4) but thus far this temple has eluded material confirmation. The argument began, in the modern era, when F. de Saulcy and later V. Guerin, during the late 1880s, discovered competing ruins that each thought to be the remnants of the elusive Samaritan temple. Earlier, in the mid-1870s, C. W. Wilson found ruins that he identified as a fortress and church and maintained that these had been built on the site previously occupied by the

The temple architecture of the Phoenicians of northwestern Syria (ca 850-650) is best represented by the temple adjacent to the palace at Tell Tainat (Wright 1941:25-27). The entryway was flanked by two columns, resting on the backs of lions, and led to a large central cella. This room was actually the antecella, for behind it was a smaller cella containing an altar and a pedestal for the statue of the god.³⁴⁴ As earlier Syrian temples are not well preserved, it is difficult to say if this pattern was derived from an earlier Syrian model; however, it is certain that this temple closely resembled the Assyrian temple at Khorsabad and a contemporary Syrian temple at Tell Halaf (Frankfort 1954:289-290).

Smaller Iron Age public or household shrines have been unearthed at Megiddo, Shiloh,³⁴⁵ Samaria,³⁴⁶ Ai, Lachish, Bethel (Herzog 1981:120), Tell el-Farah, Taanach, Kuntillet Ajrud,³⁴⁷ Nahariyah, Michal (Yunker 2003:377), Gezer, Ramat Rahel, and elsewhere

Samaritan temple. Wilson also mentioned another building on Tell er-Ras, but this structure was not excavated. This building was left substantially untouched until the 1960s, when R. J. Bull excavated this site (his "Building A") and discovered underneath it a large platform of unhewn stone built on bedrock. This large platform ("Building B") was subsequently identified by Bull as part of the Samaritan Temple and the remnants of a Samaritan sacrificial altar. However, Bull's identification of "Building B" as the Samaritan temple or altar has been challenged by subsequent excavations, and the actual existence of a Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim has been vigorously disputed. Beginning in the mid-1980s, I. Magen excavated Tell er-Ras on the main peak of Mt. Gerizim and could not find any evidence of a Samaritan temple. Subsequent excavations, however, revealed the foundation of a building whose dimensions were 400 x 560 feet. Remains found in this building included altars, gates, and inscriptions written in the Samaritan script (Giles 2003:413-417). That the site of Gerizim has been considered sacred for a long time was confirmed by a dedicatory inscription to Serapis and Isis, dating from the Hellenistic era, that indicated the possible site of a temple, perhaps built by the Macedonian garrison stationed on Gerizim since the late fourth century BCE (Berlin 2003:420).

³⁴⁴ In 1936 the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago excavated a small temple at Tell Tainat. This temple was rectangular in form and was built in the tripartite fashion encountered elsewhere: an outdoor portico (with two columns standing in front of the entrance), a main hall, and a smaller hall in the rear, which was higher in elevation than the rest. This temple almost exactly matched the same proportions as the temple of Solomon, though only about two-thirds as large. The interior featured Phoenician decorations, as might be expected from the fact that it was built by a Tyrian architect. Some scholars believe that this temple may have provided the inspiration for the plan of Solomon's temple (Albright 1968:139-140; Wright 1941:17, 19-31).

³⁴⁵ A number of ceramic fragments decorated with animal heads were found at Shiloh, suggesting cultic activity (Yunker 2003:372).

³⁴⁶ A shrine, possibly used for human sacrifice (a *tophet*), was found outside Samaria (Yunker 2003:378).

³⁴⁷ Dever (2002:26) believes that the archaeological artefacts at Kuntillet Ajrud alone have 'revolutionized our appreciation of monotheism, polytheism, and the prevalence of the cult of Asherah' in Iron Age Israel.

(Dever 1995:610-611; 2003:388-389).³⁴⁸ These sites provide ample archaeological evidence of the existence of the high places and unorthodox cults so severely castigated by later Biblical prophets.

8.2.5.4 Summary of Iron Age cultic topography. Following is a summation of the more significant cultic sites in Iron Age Canaan:

- (a) Cult rooms or cult corners: Ai (ca 1150); Lachish (late tenth century); Megiddo (last half of tenth century); Dan (8th century); and Kedesh (8th century).
- (b) Cult complexes: Ebal (12th century); Arad XII (ca 1150); Bull Site (12th century); Dan (10th to 8th centuries); and Jerusalem - 19 different sites (9th to 6th centuries).
- (c) Cult Caves: Tirzah (beginning of 9th century); evidence of a domestic cult at Beersheba (9th to 8th centuries); Tel Eton (9th to 8th centuries); Jerusalem (8th to 7th centuries); and Beit Lei (7th to 6th centuries).
- (d) Temples and temple complexes: Hazor XI (10th century); an undefined cult site at Lachish - locus 81 (late 10th to 8th centuries); Jerusalem (late tenth to early sixth centuries); Arad XI (9th century); Ajrud (ca 800); and Arad X-VIII (8th century) (Zevit 2001:652).

Paired appurtenances (altars, stands, stelae) at some of these sites indicate possibly more than one deity was worshipped there. In addition to archaeological evidence, there is literary (biblical) evidence confirming that Israelites engaged in cultic rituals ‘on every high hill and under every leafy tree’ (2 Ki 16:4; Jr 2:20); in caves (Is 2:10, 19); in tombs

³⁴⁸ Ruth Amiran has provided floor plans for temples at Megiddo, En-geidi, Jericho, Ai, and Arad. These ancient Canaanite structures exhibited common features and followed a very ancient and widespread architectural tradition. Typically they included a large broadroom hall (sometimes divided into two halls) that always faced east and opened onto a courtyard or group of courtyards. Interior furnishings consisted of benches along the walls and bases for columns that supported the roof. An altar normally faced the entrance on the east, occasionally accompanied by basins presumably filled with water (Amiran 1981:47-49).

(Is 65:4); in gardens (Is 17:10-11); in internal chambers (Ezk 8:7-12); in houses (Jdg 17:4); on rooftops (2 Ki 23:12; Zph 1:5); and in temples (Zevit 2001:653).

8.3 ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIONS

8.3.1 Architectural features of Canaanite temples

Architectural and textual evidence suggest that (1) temples in Canaan were modest in comparison with monumental structures in Mesopotamia or Egypt, though many rulers displayed wealth and sophistication in their building activities; (2) religious architecture, especially in central and northern Canaan and in Syria, implied a stratified society with centralised economies and governments; and (3) regional sanctuaries, primarily in southern Canaan, served caravan traders and nomadic groups and tended to resist the forces of urbanisation encroaching from the north. In the absence of hard literary or archaeological evidence, inference and deduction are sometimes used to determine the probable presence of a temple.³⁴⁹

Temples dotted the land of Canaan during the second and first millennia. These structures ranged from local sanctuaries and shrines, open-air places of assembly and sacrifice, and modest buildings, to grandiose temple complexes in major cities. Early shrines were simple and varied in their nature, from single longroom or broadroom affairs to double-roomed structures that might also contain ancillary rooms for storage, administration, and other purposes. By the late Bronze Age the familiar tripartite pattern had become the standard temple plan.

The simplest holy places might consist of only a stone or a tree or a source of water. Some possessed small buildings, almost like a modern sacristy, where cultic

³⁴⁹ For example, 2 Samuel 15:7-8 indicates that Absalom, David's son, had to pay a vow in Hebron. It might therefore be concluded there was a temple there because a vow could normally be paid only at a temple and not at a mere altar.

paraphernalia could be stored.³⁵⁰ Open-air sites or *bamot*, ‘high places’, were used for seasonal sacrifices and for various local festivals. Small sanctuaries in larger population centres might have one or more rooms. Such early and basic sanctuaries rarely featured an idol to represent the deity; neither was a local body of priesthood workers attached to the temple. Literary and archaeological data combine to suggest that these simple areas of worship and sacrifice were usually located outside town walls.³⁵¹

Within the cities, particularly the larger ones, special structures grew and developed for worship, sacrifice, and the performance of seasonal festivals. These structures were designated in most Semitic languages as simply a ‘house’ (meaning a house of the deity) or ‘palace’ (meaning the place from which the deity ruled). Archaeologically, it is not always possible to tell the difference between a temple, a palace, and an upper-class residence, for the same architectural form can have varied applications. A structure can only confidently be identified as a temple when the architectural form, its installations, and its furnishings are consistent with other known temples (Margueron 1997:165).

Eventually temples began to house images of the god(s) to whom they were dedicated. These images frequently took the form of a bull or a lion or some other animal; later these images became quite anthropomorphic. These images, statues, or idols were normally set up in the innermost area of the temple or towards the back, where they stood

³⁵⁰ The presentation of sacrificial offerings was the central motif of Canaanite temple ritual. Thus the remnants of offerings and the cultic paraphernalia connected with their preparation and presentation are the most common furnishings and artefacts found in Canaanite temples. The artefactual evidence is corroborated by the literary evidence unearthed at Ugarit (Nakhai 1997:169).

³⁵¹ Consider, for example, the ruins of the Canaanite temple at Tel Mevorakh (late Bronze Age), a small mound about a quarter of an acre in area, located on the south bank of the Crocodile River which divides the Plain of Sharon from the Carmel coastal region. This temple was a single rectangular room with an entrance on one short wall and a stepped mud-brick altar on the opposite wall. There were low mud-brick benches around the walls. There were no adjoining rooms, storehouses, or pits. Objects found by excavators were on or near the altar and the benches. These objects included votive offerings, vessels used for preparing or making offerings, and implements for various liturgical functions. Other finds included a snake figurine, arrowheads, a knife, a dagger, miniature bronze cymbals, an alabaster cup, a mortar, a mace head, a miniature libation table, glass and faience seals, beads, pendants, gaming pieces, large storage jars, cooking pots, serving bowls, platters, lamps, painted goblets, chalices, a crucible, and a cup. What can be deduced about temple ritual or worship from such a motley collection of artefacts? Tel Mevorakh was probably a simple public shrine belonging to a small village, most likely dedicated to Canaanite fertility deities, (El and Asherah, or Baal and Anat). Food offerings and other gifts were placed on the altar or the benches, either to placate the deities or to obtain some favour (Dever 1995:613).

in a setting that was dark, sombre, and silent.

8.3.1.1 A typical Canaanite temple. A typical large Canaanite temple complex included a sacred building and a number of surrounding courtyards, with the entire complex surrounded by an outer enclosure or *temenos* wall. The main temple building itself might be a single room or a number of chambers arranged along a direct axis. The most sacred area was a small ‘holy of holies’, while larger areas were utilised for the presentation of votive and other offerings and for the enactment of sacred rites. Auxiliary rooms were used for storage, administration, and to facilitate the operation and security of the temple. The courtyard might contain *favissae*, pits in which worn or outdated cultic objects and other refuse could be discarded. Foundation deposits, typically jars filled with bronze, silver, or gold statues and other precious objects, were frequently buried under sacred buildings to demarcate the area as sacred space, consecrate construction efforts, and to sanctify and protect the finished structure, similar to practices known to exist in Egypt and Mesopotamia and elsewhere (Nakhai 1997:170). Courtyards were used for animal sacrifice, burnt offerings, feasts and festivals, processions, and for other rites including the sharing of sacred meals.³⁵² Courtyards also provided a venue for various temple industries such as metal and ceramic production. Archaeological finds include stone moulds, ingots, crucibles, and metal residues, all indicating on-site workshops for the production of sacred metal objects, while clay moulds, kilns, and ceramic by-products represent the remains of pottery workshops (Nakhai 2003:345-346).

8.3.2 Canaanite temples and sacred space

In Canaan, as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, temples were regarded as houses of the gods; they were situated on holy ground, sacred space separated from profane space. A visit to the temple precinct was a journey that encompassed ever-increasing levels of

³⁵² ‘From archaeological discoveries and representations on coins we know that a [Canaanite] temple establishment generally consisted of an enclosure with an altar and a stone pillar together with the temple itself, which had an inner room in which the cultic image (or images) stood, and one or more outer rooms where apparently certain cultic activities took place. A number of temples display a ground plan similar to that of the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem’ (Ringgren 1973:159-160).

sanctity. Proceeding through an outer gateway, one might enter a large courtyard, which then led to a smaller courtyard, which in turn led to the main cella or holy of holies; this was the most sacred part of the entire complex. Access to this inner sanctum was sometimes on the bent-axis and sometimes on the direct-axis plan.

8.3.2.1 Techniques of Construction and Decoration. In this category are included (1) the concept of the primordial mound; (2) the practice of foundation deposits; (3) the purposes and functions of enclosure walls; (4) principles of orientation, alignment, and measurement; and (5) exterior and interior decoration.

There are no indications, in either the literary or archaeological records, that the Canaanites or Syrians maintained a belief in the concept of the primordial mound.

Some temples, as at Hazor, have been found to contain foundation deposits (Nakhai 1997:170).

Temple boundaries were clearly demarcated by enclosure walls, thus preventing a careless individual from straying into forbidden precincts. Stone enclosure walls surrounded even the earliest temples, as can be seen at Chalcolithic temples at En-Gedi, Nahal Hever (Dever 2003:383), and Arad (Aharoni 1968:19); even Chalcolithic open-air sanctuaries in the southern Negev and Sinai possessed outer enclosure walls. Other examples from the Early Bronze period include Alalakh VII and the northwest gate of Shechem (Dever 1995:611-612), Khirbet ez-Zeraqun (Richard 2003b:290), and Megiddo.

In general, Syrian and Canaanite temples were laid out on an east-west axis, but there were many exceptions due to local topography and other conditions. The purpose here was obviously symbolic rather than functional.

A Canaanite temple at Tel Lachish had a staircase with seven steps, oriented towards the east (Ussishkin 1981:118). Other Canaanite temples exhibiting strong orientation include Shechem temple V (Bull 1960:111), Beth-Shan (Thompson 1967:129-133), Arad (Zevit

2001:168-169), Tell Tainat, and Hazor (Zevit 2001:202-205).

Examples of exterior and interior decorations include wall paintings depicting mythical figures and strange animals at Tuleilat Ghassul (Levi 2003:270) and at Alalakh IV.

8.3.2.2 General Temple Arrangement. This category includes items pertaining to (1) the tripartite floor plan, (2) pillars, (3) the Tree of Life, and (4) temple/palace symbiosis.

The appearance and eventual predominance of the tripartite floor plan occurred in Canaan as in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Its primary purpose was to offer a series of areas with graded sanctity from the less to the more holy; the sanctity of the innermost cella was thus intensified by the presence of several intermediate ‘layers’ between it and the outside mundane world. Examples include Megiddo, Ebla, Hazor (Orthostat temple; Lundquist 2008:35; Yadin 1959:3-6), Shechem, Tell el-Hayyat, Alalakh, Arad (Aharoni 1968:18-27; Haran 1985:34-35; Nakhai 1997:174).

Gateways leading into a temple complex were almost always marked by the presence of two pillars or columns. In one case (Alalakh), at least, these pillars were on the backs of sculptured lions as at Boghazköy (Frankfort 1954:276-277). Their purpose was symbolic and not functional as these pillars were normally free-standing. Among other purposes, the pillars may have served as a final reminder that when visitors crossed the threshold they were leaving behind the profane world and entering the world of the ‘other’.

Two pillars stood at the entrance to temples at Byblos, Taanach, and Tell Tainat. Twin pillars at the entrance to a temple can also be seen on ancient coins, paintings, and clay models (Scott 1939:143-149). Two Phoenician temples discovered at Kition, dating from the 13th century, featured rectangular bastions, a courtyard, a sacred garden with a rectangular pool, and two free-standing pillars on either side of a holy of holies. After one temple had been abandoned for over a century and a half, the Phoenicians built another on the same site as the earlier one. It contained a holy of holies that was open to the sky and could be seen from the courtyard; it also contained two free-standing pillars

(Karageorghis 1981:82-86). Other examples are extant in Idalion, Tyre, Tell el-Farah, near Nablus (de Vaux 1965:2:314-315), Hazor (area H), Megiddo, Shechem, Arad (Aharoni 1968:22), and elsewhere.

Evidence concerning a strong belief in the Tree of Life in Canaan is sparse; the best example is a specimen of glyptic art from Ras Shamra, where Baal is depicted on a stone stele holding what appears to be a budding cedar tree in his left hand (*ANEP*, no. 501).

One way in which temple/palace symbiosis was demonstrated in Canaanite temples was by shared courtyards (Cross 1984:97-98; Smith 2005:9). Kingship was legitimised in the Baal Cycle. Palace and temple treasuries were merged in Arad, Megiddo and Ai (Callaway 1976:18-30; Dever 1995:611-612). Temple/palace symbiosis in Tel Yarmuth and Tell Tainat was demonstrated by Lundquist (2008:56-57).

8.3.2.3 Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia. This category includes features such as (1) elevated statues for the deity, (2) water for ablutions, (3) cult of the dead, and (4) altars and animal sacrifices.

The cella usually contained a statue of the god on a pedestal (set apart and elevated as a sign of its great holiness), a small altar with incense stands, and low benches around the walls to receive votive and other offerings. These features were noted in Beth-Shan (Thompson 1967:125-128; Wright 1944:276-277); in Bab edh-Dhra (Rast 2003:326); and in Arad (Aharoni 1968:20, figs. 13, 22; Dever 2003:388; Zevit 2001:160, fig. 3.18).

Canaanite temple courtyards typically contained a fountain or basin of water for ablutions; one who entered the sacred compound must be clean both physically and spiritually. Ritual washings, sometimes multiple ablutions, were required as one progressed higher (both physically and spiritually) into the temple complex. Visitors to the temple at En-Gedi utilised the nearby spring.

There is no evidence, either archaeological or literary, regarding a cult of the dead in

Canaanite temples.

Horned altars for animal sacrifices were typically found in temple courtyards in Canaan. Archaeological finds in the vicinity of these exterior altars include shovels and other implements designed for use in handling large sacrifices and their remnants. Prominent examples of altars in Canaan include Arad and Tel Yarmuth (Dever 1995:383, 607-609); other notable specimens have been uncovered at Bab edh-Dhra, Megiddo, Khirbet ez-Zeraqun, Ashkelon, Nahariya, Beth-Shan, Tel Mevorakh, Lachish, Dan, and Beersheba.

8.4 CONCLUSIONS

The temple architecture of the ancient Levant was nondescript compared to the monumental religious architecture in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Nevertheless, there are some typological patterns that can frequently be recognised (Wright 2003:99), although smaller sanctuaries, private shrines, or holy places are often difficult to identify. Larger cultic temples are easier to distinguish as they tended to conform to a typology and generally shared the following characteristics: (1) they were considered to be a house or palace, *hekhal*, for the gods (Wright 1944:68); (2) they were consecrated and set apart as sacred space; (3) they had priestly cadres for temple service (Nakhai 1997:169); and (4) they received gifts and offerings from worshipers, often connected with aspects of fertility (Dever 1995:607).

Canaanite temples might consist of a single room or they might exhibit a bipartite or tripartite arrangement. In the Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages, temples exhibited a broadroom form; they were simply one-room rectangular structures set at the rear of an enclosed area (Wright 1944:69-70). This plan was both simple and convenient, and there are several examples (Byblos, Megiddo, En-Gedi). This early plan later evolved into the equivalent of a broadroom cella (or cellae) with a separate entryway. The Porch Temples at Megiddo (XVII-XIV) featured columned porches, a structure at Kamid el-Loz had a

tower-like entryway, and a temple of Baal³⁵³ at Ras Shamra had an antecella and an *ulam*, similar to what Solomon would later build in Iron Age Jerusalem.³⁵⁴ The overall broadroom design eventually gave way, by the middle of the second millennium, to a longroom style; this led to structures exhibiting a succession of rooms in a straight-axis, linear pattern (Tell Kittan, the Long Temple at Hazor, and above all the Migdal temples at Megiddo and Shechem). The Shechem sanctuary featured an imposing entry with a twin-towered facade (Wright 2003:99-101).

Another temple format developed in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, almost parallel with the development of the longroom style. This temple type was non-monumental, with an indirect entry and a sacristy located in the rear. The main hall featured benches around the wall (the Lachish Fosse Temple and the Philistine temples at Tell Qasile). This type of temple extended throughout the eastern Mediterranean basin, including Cyprus and Mycenaean Greece (Wright 2003:101).

Temple complexes developed in the larger urban areas in later eras. Such a complex might include the temple itself, ancillary structures, and one or more courtyards. All portions of the complex were considered sacred space, although there were gradations in sanctity, and all portions were included within an outer enclosure, or *temenos*, wall (Nakhai 1997:169-170).

Temple building in Iron Age Canaan decreased after the conquest by Israel and the growing prevalence of monotheism in the period of the amphictyony³⁵⁵ and later under the monarchy. Yet smaller temples outside the boundaries of the Israelite tribes, such as

³⁵³ The main Canaanite god was Baal, 'lord', whose proper name was Hadad. As Canaan never developed a unified political organisation as in Mesopotamia or Egypt, under which Baal might have become a national deity, Baal was split up into local deities to protect individual towns and villages, each with a local temple or shrine. Thus we learn from the Book of Judges that there were many Baals: Baal-Peor (Moab), Baal-Zebul (Ekron), Baal-Hazor, Baal-Hermon, Baal-Meon, and Baal-Tamar. The same may be said of two feminine Canaanite deities, Asherah and Ashtoreth (Wright 1944:68-69).

³⁵⁴ Similarities between Phoenician and Cypriot temples (which were constructed under Sidonian direction) and Solomon's temple are not unexpected inasmuch as Tyrian supervisors and craftsmen laboured for Solomon in Jerusalem.

³⁵⁵ Noth's term for the Israelite tribal league, once widely accepted, has now been generally discarded; nevertheless, the term is not without usefulness. See Zevit (2002:39) and the references given there.

at Tell Tainat in Syria, continued to survive at least until the beginning of the first millennium. In addition, worship in a natural setting, according to the Biblical record, was prominent in the region both before and during the Israelite monarchy (Ackerman 1992). These rural sanctuaries, the ‘sacred groves’ (*Asheroth*) and ‘high places’ (*bamot*), were not built up to any degree and did not contain enduring construction materials; thus, in most cases, no traces of them remain (Wright 2003:101-102).

Archaeological and literary evidence in Canaan, as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, can provide us with valuable clues as to the nature of the ancient institution of the temple. These clues verify the essence of the temple as the physical expression of sacred space.

Canaanite temples exhibit no trace of the concept of the primordial mound, but at least one site (Hazor) produced foundation deposits. Enclosure walls were known throughout Canaan as elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Though there were many exceptions, Canaanite temples tended to favor an east-west orientation. Occasional examples of wall paintings exist, usually of strange, mythical figures.

Canaanite temples were linear and progressive; they featured multiple courtyards and multiple cella in order to create a number of areas of graded sacred space. Temple pillars flanking entryways were common. Evidence regarding a belief in the Tree of Life is limited to a carving of Baal on a stele holding what appears to be a budding cedar tree in his left hand. Temples in Canaan were closely allied with the palace; examples abound of shared courtyards, merged temple/palace treasuries, and private royal chapels. Temples were unabashedly used to secure and legitimise political power.

Statues of the god in Canaanite temples, as elsewhere, stood on raised pedestals. Water for ablutions was provided in containers if not in wells or fountains. While there is no evidence suggesting the existence of a cult of the dead in Canaan, there are a multitude of sites that have provided altars and their associated implements, indicating a common practise of animal sacrifice. Their presence was a symbol of life and death that was at the core of temple ideology, for in the temple and in its symbolism, the entire cycle of life

and land was bound up. The temple symbolised birth as a womb; it symbolised death as a tomb. It was a table laden with the bounties of life produced by the land; it was the scene of sacrifice.

CHAPTER 9

ISRAELITE TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Abstract

The temples described in this chapter all manifested certain architectural features in common. All of them purportedly featured the tripartite plan, though this is much disputed. They all essentially used a ratio of 2:1 between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was always represented as a cube, which was considered to be the perfect form. Each temple featured an outer enclosure wall (although in the case of the tabernacle this took the form of curtains hung between pillars), and in the case of the Jerusalem temples there were multiple walls complete with massive, military-style gates. All temples had an exterior altar for animal sacrifices with the necessary appurtenances, and all were insistent on a basic east-west orientation. All were concerned about the maintenance of sacred space by restricting access to authorised personnel only. All seem to have shared a similar taste in interior decorating and used the same motifs: cherubim, gourds, flowers, pomegranates, and palm trees.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

There are no archaeological remnants of either Moses' tabernacle or the Jerusalem temples; we must rely solely on literary records to describe these structures. Furthermore, two other temples that will be considered in this chapter, the temple described in the Qumran scrolls and Ezekiel's temple, were never built at all; whether they were ever intended to be built, or whether they were merely an idealised picture in the minds of their authors is a subject still debated among students and scholars of history and religion. Be that as it may, it is still possible to describe and analyse the architectural features of these temples and see if any clues exist that will illuminate how they portrayed sacred space in their projected designs.

There were other Israelite temples in the Iron Age in addition to the ones mentioned

above; the Bible mentions those at Bethel and Dan. Still more Israelite temples have been attested in excavations: Arad, Dan (a different structure than the one mentioned in the Bible), Gerizim, Hazor, Lachish, Megiddo. An additional eight temples suggested by Haran (see below) brings to seventeen the number of Israelite temples that are known, and since the evidence is yet incomplete, there may have been still more.³⁵⁶

Literary evidence suggests that temples were much more common in ancient Israel than previously thought. Haran (1985:26-37) believed that cultic acts performed in conjunction with taking a vow, or communal covenant-making and covenant-renewal ceremonies, were temple rituals; furthermore, any ritual performed after the expression *lipney Yahweh* (before Yahweh) was temple-based. If this is true, then there is literary evidence of Israelite temples at Shiloh (1 Sm 1:9; 3:3); Gilgal (1 Sm 15:12-21, 33; Am 4:4; 5:5); Mizpah (Jdg 20:1-3, 8-10; 21:1, 5, 8; 1 Sm 7:5-11; 10:17-24); Mizpah in Gilead (Jdg 11:11, 30-31, 34, 39); Hebron (2 Sm 5:3; 15:7); Bethlehem (Jdg 19:18); Nob (1 Sm 21:1-10; 22:16-19); and Gibeath Saul (2 Sm 21:9). Haran also claimed, though without any supporting evidence, that the cult places in Mount Ephraim described in Judges 17, which featured an ephod and teraphim,³⁵⁷ and the Manassite shrine alluded to in Judges 8:27, which featured an ephod, were temples.

In this chapter the physical characteristics and features of the main Israelite temples, especially the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Jerusalem temples in their various

³⁵⁶ Due to space limitations, the architectural details of these additional Israelite temples will not be discussed here, other than to remark how little they resembled one another. There was a surprising degree of variety in Israelite temple architecture during Iron Age Israel; this was different from Middle and Late Bronze Canaan where there was considerable conformity in temple architecture. The variation in Iron Age structures indicates a lack of centralised religious control as well as discontinuity between the Bronze and Iron Age cultures. (This is the opposite of the Aegean area, where there was discontinuity in the Bronze Age and conformity in the Iron.) However, the lack of uniformity in Iron Age Israelite temples does not necessarily imply divergence in myth and ritual also; the same rituals were performed in the desert Tabernacle and in Solomon's temple. All structures possessed an altar, which was the basic cultic appurtenance necessary for animal sacrifice. One further point regarding temples in Israel in the first millennium is the strong probability that they were all constructed in what were initially border areas; it has been suggested that the temple in ancient Israel was viewed as a royal/military installation near a border (Aharoni 1968:28; Zevit 2001:254-256).

³⁵⁷ *Ephods* were vestments, worn on the outside, by the high priest when serving in the tabernacle/temple (Ex 28:6-12; 39:2-7). A linen ephod was worn by servitors in the temple (1 Sm 2:18; 22:18). *Teraphim* were cult objects of various sizes, and were used for divination (Gn 31:19; 1 Sm 19:13-16; Ezk 21:21; Aharoni 1968:29-30; Zevit 2001:255-256, n 213).

stages, will be examined. The temple described in the Temple Scroll at Qumran and the millennial temple described in Ezekiel 40-42 will also be briefly covered.

9.2 DESCRIPTION OF REPRESENTATIVE TEMPLES IN ISRAEL

9.2.1 The tabernacle in the wilderness

The tabernacle of Moses was a portable shrine that could be collapsed and transported when occasion demanded.³⁵⁸ In its interior were three walls of gold-plated acacia wood (Ex 26:15-22) on the north, west, and south sides; inside these walls hung linen curtains embroidered with cherubs.³⁵⁹ The outside of the tabernacle was covered with three layers of material; the innermost was a covering of goats' hair, then another layer of rams' skins dyed red, and finally an outer layer of dolphins' skins.

The tabernacle consisted of an outer courtyard and the tabernacle proper, which was divided into two sections. The first section, the 'Holy Place', contained the table of the shewbread, the menorah,³⁶⁰ and the altar of incense. The second section, the 'Holy of Holies', contained the Ark of the Covenant topped by two cherubs shielding it with their outstretched wings.³⁶¹ The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies were separated by a screen or curtain of acacia wood suspended from pillars.

The tabernacle was rectangular and was approximately fifteen meters long and four

³⁵⁸ As a moveable tent, the Tabernacle has been compared with the *qubbah*, a pre-Islamic camel-borne tent shrine used by Arabs in processions, wars, and oracles, although the Tabernacle was far more elaborate and ornate than the typical desert shrine. More frequently the Tabernacle is compared to the Tent of El in the Ugaritic documents (Clifford 1972:124-126; Cross 1981:173).

³⁵⁹ The ubiquity of cherubim in the decoration of the Tabernacle as well as the various Jerusalem temples, despite the prohibition of images in both Judaism and early Christianity, prompted the famous pun of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) wherein he described the cherubim as 'these beautiful horrors and these horrible beauties' (Rosenau 1979:37).

³⁶⁰ The Menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum, was a stylised almond tree. Synagogue mosaics in Palestine depict two *menorot* flanking the scroll shrine. This was nothing less than a representation of the temple as the Garden of Eden with the two Trees, of Life and of Knowledge, as in Genesis 2-3. The trees were also messianic symbols. The Menorah was likely what Moses saw as the burning bush in the third chapter of Exodus, for the word translated 'bush' can just as well be translated 'tree' (Wyatt 2001:169).

³⁶¹ Lundquist (2008:65-70) provides an ancient Near Eastern milieu for the Ark of the Covenant in portable tent shrines.

meters wide. Using the Biblical measurements, the structure had the proportion of three cubes, two cubes making up the Holy Place and a perfect cube of ten cubits making up the Holy of Holies. These proportions were duplicated in Solomon's temple, though the measurements were considerably larger. This duplication was not due to chance. Either Solomon copied the proportions from the tabernacle or else both structures drew their proportions from an older model.³⁶²

The outer court was approximately fifty meters long and twenty-five meters wide and was surrounded by curtains hung from pillars (Ex 27:9-18). These outer curtains served as an outer enclosure wall and performed the same symbolic functions as the more solid enclosure walls encountered elsewhere. The tabernacle stood in the western part of the outer court. The eastern part contained the altar of burnt-offering as well as certain brass vessels (Ex 27:1-8). The eastern entrance to the outer court consisted of a curtain or a screen; a similar curtain served as the entranceway to the tabernacle itself (Roitman 2003:49-50).

9.2.2 The temple of Solomon

The Jerusalem temple, in its various manifestations, has attracted the attention of artists, archaeologists, and scholars for many centuries. The original temple, built by Solomon, was constructed sometime between 965 and 928 and was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586. After the exile the temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, ca 516, and this building in turn was restored/remodelled by Herod (73 BCE to 4 CE). Herod's temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. While each of these temples certainly underwent revisions and remodelling over the years, the following brief descriptions of the Jerusalem temples pertain to their structure and appearance at or near the time of construction.

Solomon's building project was substantial. In order to bring it to fruition, he extended the City of David (the *Ophel*) northward to incorporate within it both Mount Zion and

³⁶² Cross (1984:93-94) is of the opinion that both these temples drew their overall plan from an older, perhaps mythical model. In any event, the overall proportions and plans of both tabernacle and temple were considered to be derived from the heavenly temple.

Mount Moriah. On this area of six and one-half acres he oversaw the construction of his palace, the ‘House of the Forest of Lebanon’ (the state treasury), the ‘Hall of Judgement’, and the temple itself. Thus the entire complex contained the primary national institutions in addition to the temple,³⁶³ although the temple apparently stood on higher ground than the palace and the other buildings.³⁶⁴

The temple proper was constructed on an east-west axis with its main door on the east. It was built of unhewn stone.³⁶⁵ Its overall shape was rectangular, approximately ten meters wide, thirty meters long, and fifteen meters high.³⁶⁶ Like the tabernacle, its overall plan was that of three cubes, with the space of two cubes occupied by the *hekhal*, the ‘Great Hall’, and the third cube occupied by the *devir*, the ‘Holy of Holies’. The *hekhal* measured twenty meters in length, ten meters in width, and fifteen meters in height. It contained a golden incense altar, a gold table upon which offerings could be placed, and ten *menorot*. The walls of the *hekhal* were of cedar and were decorated with various floral and mythological motifs, including the omnipresent cherubim as well as palm trees, possibly intended to recreate the sacred trees in the Garden of Eden (Bloch-Smith 2002:87). The floor was made of cypress wood.

Between the *hekhal* and the *devir* was a wooden partition made of cedar overlaid with gold that featured double doors of olive wood. The double doors were offset so that someone in the *hekhal* could not inadvertently look into the *devir*. Furthermore, entering the *devir* required an ascent as the floor level was higher than in the *hekhal*,³⁶⁷ thus giving this most sacred area the dimensions of a perfect cube of roughly ten meters. The walls

³⁶³ In a tradition reported only in the Book of Chronicles the temple itself sat on Mount Moriah, the traditional site of the *Akedah* as well as the original site of the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

³⁶⁴ There are several verses which speak of *ascending* from the king’s house to the temple (1 Ki 12:11; 22:4; Jr 26:10), or *descending* from the temple to the palace (1 Ki 11:19; Jr 36:12).

³⁶⁵ See 1 Kings 6:7. In this fashion the temple of Solomon adhered to the ancient law regarding altars (Ex 20:22; Dt 27:5-6), wherein hewn stones, fashioned by men, were considered profane. Nonetheless, the foundation of the temple and the stones used to pave the courtyard were hewn (1 Ki 5:31).

³⁶⁶ These figures are based on the ratio 1 meter = 2 cubits. These are interior dimensions and do not take into account the thickness of the walls, of which we have no information. Ezekiel’s temple, by way of contrast, was largely based on external measurements, which were fifty meters long and twenty-five meters wide.

³⁶⁷ It was customary in much of the ancient Near East to raise the floor level of the temple’s most sacred area where the divine image stood (Hurowitz 2005:73-74).

and floor of the *devir* were overlaid with cedar and cypress wood. More cherubim and floral representations were carved on the walls. Inside the *devir* were two huge cherubim of olive wood overlaid with gold, who faced the *hekhal* and whose outstretched wings filled the entire dimension of the *devir*. Beneath their outstretched wings was the Ark of the Covenant (Wright 1944:73).

Adjoining the temple on the east was the *ulam*, an unroofed area separating the sacred space of the temple from the less sacred world further outside.³⁶⁸ In the *ulam* stood two large pillars, *Jachin* on the south side, that is, the left side as one entered the temple, and *Boaz* on the north, or right, side (1 Ki 7:15, 21; 2 Ki 11:14; 23:3).

The other three sides of the building were surrounded by a courtyard. In the courtyard were the altar, ten large brass lavers (vessels for water), ten brass carts that were used for transporting the lavers, and a large ‘brazen’ or ‘molten’ ‘sea’. The brazen sea and the ten lavers were enormous in size, considerably larger than parallel appurtenances elsewhere in the ancient Near East. The brazen sea, resting on the backs of twelve oxen, contained about ten thousand gallons of water. Each of the ten lavers, five on either side of the temple entrance, measured four cubits (approximately 6 ½ feet) square, seven cubits (over eleven feet) high, and contained about 3,248 gallons of water.³⁶⁹

Abutting the temple on the north, west, and south were auxiliary buildings used as changing rooms for the priests, kitchens, storage areas (Wright 1944:76-77), and other

³⁶⁸ The *ulam*, or porch, lies at the heart of what is probably the greatest problem in the textual interpretation of the architectural elements of the temple of Solomon. In 1 Kings 6:2 the height of the temple is given as twenty cubits, while no height for the *ulam* is mentioned. However, in 2 Chronicles 3:4 the height of the *ulam* is specified as 120 cubits. In both texts the width of the *ulam* is given as ten cubits (1 Ki 6:3) and its length as twenty cubits. This problem was discussed at length in the Babylonian Talmud (*Baba Menahoth* 45a) but results have been inconclusive. Attempts to reconcile the conflict by recourse to Ezekiel’s temple have not been successful (Hurowitz 2005:69-70; Jarick 2005:366-369; Rosenau 1979:38-39).

³⁶⁹ This calculation is based on the formula of 7 US gallons per cubic foot. The size of the ‘sea’ and the lavers makes it unlikely that they would be used for normal priestly ablutions, as the height of the lavers were well beyond human reach. Bloch-Smith (2002:83-85) argues that these facilities were intended for use by the gods. She finds a parallel in an 18th century letter from Nur-Sin of Aleppo to Zimri-Lim of Mari, wherein the god, having defeated the sea in the primordial combat, bestowed his weapons upon his earthly monarch. In her view, the sea and the lavers in front of Solomon’s temple symbolised Yahweh’s ‘triumphant enthronement with its implicit endorsement of the monarchy’ and the resulting blessings on Israel.

facilities required for the operation of the temple; the placement of these ancillary rooms around the temple proper are reminiscent of similar arrangements elsewhere. These auxiliary buildings were three stories high and communicated with each other through passages and spiral staircases.³⁷⁰

9.2.2.1 Solomon's temple in its ancient Near Eastern setting. Discoveries of numerous other Iron Age temples in Syria and Canaan illuminate and corroborate the Biblical text regarding Solomon's temple in surprising detail. The following points may be considered:

- The basic tripartite plan, with an entrance vestibule, large central chamber, and small inner sanctum, was well known by the time of Solomon. This temple floor plan in Syria/Canaan extended back to at least the end of the third millennium.
- The Solomonic temple dimensions are within the range of available comparisons. A temple almost identical in size and layout, and dating near the time of Solomon, has been excavated at Tell Tainat in Syria (Wright 1944:70).
- The basic internal construction and decoration are typical of the period, with stone orthostats around the lower walls and decorated wooden wall panels attached by mortise-and-tenon joints on the upper walls. The decorations—gourds, open flowers, cherubim, palm trees—are all found in comparable temples.
- The cherubim in the Holy of Holies—described as ‘large, ferocious winged lions, with bird, ram, or human heads’ (Dever 1995:608), are not uncommon. In the ancient Near East a pair of winged lions typically supported a throne on their backs; the Ark of the Covenant with its mercy seat was considered the throne of Yahweh. However, the deity worshipped by Solomon, an all-embracing god with universal jurisdiction that could not be portrayed in wood, metal, or stone,

³⁷⁰ These side chambers flanked only the *hekhal* and the *devir* and not the *ulam*, which was thus set apart from the temple proper. Indeed, there is considerable doubt as to whether the *ulam*, variously translated ‘portico’, ‘porch’, ‘vestibule’, or ‘entrance hall’, should be considered as part of the temple at all. It seems probable that the *ulam* was a type of buffer zone between the temple and the outer courts. A series of arguments in favour of this idea is presented in Meyers (1984:138-141). Generally, however, the *ulam* is considered a part of the temple, possibly in order to maintain the tripartite pattern. A more detailed description of Solomon's temple and its architecture and furnishings can be found in Albright (1968:138-150).

differed dramatically from other contemporary national deities. The bronze sea resting on the backs of twelve oxen was an innovation.

- Other furnishings, similar to decorated bronze wheeled carts or braziers, have been found in Syria, Canaan, and Cyprus in Iron Age times; the bronze shovels for food sacrifices have been duplicated by recent finds at Dan.
- The twin pillars at the temple entrance are typical, although their naming remains enigmatic and unique to Solomon's temple.
- Horned altars are now attested in many areas, including Beersheba.
- The temple was built on an elevated site for maximum visibility.
- The general Phoenician style of Solomon's temple is now incontestable.³⁷¹

9.2.3 The temple of Zerubbabel

After the Jews had spent nearly seventy years in exile in Babylon, Cyrus the Persian in 538 authorised them to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple, which had been destroyed by the neo-Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar II. A group of exiles led by Sheshbazzar, the 'Prince of Judah' (Ez 5:16), returned to Jerusalem and immediately built an altar and commenced rebuilding the temple. A series of obstructions hampered the work for some years. Later the rebuilding began again in earnest under Darius, who decreed that the restoration was to be financed by the royal treasury (Ez 6:1-5).³⁷² The new leader of the project was Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judea, and a direct descendant of David. With the help and encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the temple was completed and dedicated in a ceremony around 516 (Ez 6:15-18).³⁷³ The dedication festivities were decidedly lacking in any sign of God's acceptance

³⁷¹ 'Solomon, far from being original, simply borrowed a typical pagan, Canaanite-style temple and its paraphernalia from his Phoenician neighbours to the north. His genius lay, however, in adapting it so successfully to Yahwistic worship (witness the powerful statement of the empty cherub-throne), and in making Israelites accept it as well as gladly pay for it in increased taxes. This religious revolution, focusing the national cult now on a new, highly visible monumental temple in Jerusalem, was no doubt the work of Solomon himself, and it was no mean achievement' (Dever 1995:609).

³⁷² Darius' apparent largesse on behalf of the exiled Jews was not unique; it was the standard practice of the Persian emperors of the day. There is evidence that Darius followed similar policies on behalf of other displaced religious groups (Carter 2003:400-402; de Vaux 1971:63-96).

³⁷³ While the Jewish authorities attempted to put a happy face on the event of the temple's completion, those who were old enough to remember the grandeur of Solomon's temple are said to have wept bitterly

of the new temple when compared with the dramatic events that had occurred at the dedication of Solomon's temple.

Zerubbabel's temple was built according to the same plan as Solomon's, and presumably on the same exact site. Cyrus' original edict to rebuild the temple had specified its dimensions as thirty meters wide and thirty meters high. The building was to be constructed with three courses of hewn stone and one course of lumber (Ez 6:3-4; 5:8). Like the first temple, the new structure was reached via two courtyards, although this time the inner courtyard was not reserved for the priests. Other outbuildings were built for storage, the needs of the priests, and other important and necessary uses. The altar was rebuilt on the same site as the original. The *hekhal* contained the menorah, the table, and the incense altar. The *devir* was empty—there were no cherubim. The Ark of the Covenant had disappeared around the time of the Babylonian invasion, never to be seen again.³⁷⁴

Zerubbabel's temple experienced a troubled history. There were continual scandals affecting the prestige of the priesthood. The people were frequently lax in providing offerings and donations necessary for the operation and maintenance of the temple. Trouble with the Seleucids led to the plundering of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the establishment of a Syrian military colony on the temple mount. The re-assertion of sovereignty under the Maccabees and the rededication of the temple did not put an end to the problems as further corruption among the priestly families continued to plague the nation. Intrigues and personal ambitions within these families were a major factor in bringing the Romans into the area. In 63 Pompey captured the temple, slaughtered the guards and priests, and further desecrated the temple by personally entering the Holy of Holies. All of these events, and more, required the constant remodelling and repair of Zerubbabel's temple. Yet as far as can be judged, the basic plan was retained until the time of Herod (Roitman 2003:57-75).

over the comparative lack of splendour in the new building. Contemporary prophets tried to be encouraging, assuring the Jews that 'the glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former one' (Hg 2:9), but even they must have sensed that this prediction was not realistic.

³⁷⁴ A helpful summary of the various hypotheses as to the disposition of the Ark can be found in Day (2005b:250-270).

9.2.4 The temple of Herod

Josephus provided an eye-witness account of this building (*Antiquities* XV, xi, 1-7; *Wars* V, v, 1-6). There is also extensive tannaitic literature on the subject, especially in the Mishnaic tractates *Middot* and *Tamid*. Finally, modern archaeological excavations to the south and west of the Temple Mount have provided a wealth of information regarding the construction and appearance of Herod's temple.

The sheer size of Herod's building project was enormous. The imposing scale of the project, as in other massive temple complexes throughout the ancient Near East, served to contribute to the perceived sanctity of the site; as noted earlier, monumental magnitude is a prime architectural strategy for socially constructed sacred space. Herod enlarged the temple compound by filling in valleys to the south, north and west. He built gigantic retaining walls surrounding the enclosure. The temple complex area was expanded to a size of about thirty-six acres. The temple itself was surrounded by a huge array of courtyards, gates, shops, pillars, colonnades,³⁷⁵ and other structures for the needs of the temple and the convenience of visitors and pilgrims.³⁷⁶

The temple of Herod, like its predecessors, retained its basic east-west axis, but shifted slightly (about five degrees) to the northeast to catch the sun's first rays above the adjoining Mount of Olives during the spring and autumnal equinoxes, which roughly corresponded to the Feasts of Unleavened Bread in the spring and Tabernacles in the

³⁷⁵ Whether consciously or not, Herod's temple attained a measure of socially constructed sacred space by virtue of its physical setting upon the Temple Mount and its visibility throughout the city. In addition to the temple itself, the casual observer or visitor could hardly fail to be impressed by the *temenos* surrounded by the enclosure wall, and by the peristyles that often marked off sacred space in Greco-Roman architecture. The *stoai* on the Temple Mount were described in some detail by Josephus, who claimed that this feature alone 'caused an amazement [to the spectators], by reason of the grandeur of the whole' (*Antiquities* 15, xi, 5).

³⁷⁶ The *temenos* of a large and popular temple and its *stoai* provided a convenient setting for all kinds of public activity. Some of this activity, which might include buying and selling, public banquets, money-changing, and informal philosophical discussions between a teacher and his followers, could easily get out of hand and detract from the sacred character of the temple. Thus Jesus complained that 'money-changers' and 'pigeon-sellers' had transformed the House of God into a 'den of thieves' (Mk 11:15-16; Mt 21:12-13; Lk 19:45-46).

autumn (Hollis 1933:87-110; May 1937:309ff). It also retained the characteristic tripartite floor plan, including the *ulam*. The *ulam*, accessible to priests only, had no door and was wider than the main part of the temple. The *hekhhal* still contained the gold menorah, the table, and the golden incense altar. At the westernmost end of the temple stood the Holy of Holies, separated from the *hekhhal* by two curtains, and completely vacant of any furnishings. Exactly how far Herod's temple was a deliberate attempt to copy Solomon's is not certain, but there can be no doubt that Herod was determined to present himself as a legitimate and benevolent ruler over his Jewish subjects (Rosenau 1979:21). He was convinced that his extravagant buildings would enable the Jews to accept him, despite the fact that he was of mixed Jewish and Idumean lineage. He spared no expense either in the size or the magnificence of the materials and furnishings, another strategy for socially-constructed sacred space.³⁷⁷

Herod's temple, superior in size and cost to that of Solomon, nevertheless lacked the spiritual manifestations that accompanied the dedication of the first Jerusalem temple.³⁷⁸ While Herod's temple was grand and glorious in terms of its physical construction and appearance, it was sorely lacking in those key spiritual manifestations and qualities that define the very essence of a temple (Cohen 1984:151-174, but see esp 156-160). The construction of Herod's temple, which continued during New Testament times, was barely completed before it was demolished by the Romans in 70 CE.

9.2.5 The Temple Scroll at Qumran

The ancient sectaries at Qumran, perhaps a century prior to the Christian era, wrote of a temple they believed they had been commanded to build to replace the current Jerusalem temple which they considered corrupt. The Temple Scroll was the largest of the more

³⁷⁷ The splendour and glory of Herod's temple caused the rabbis to begrudgingly concede that 'He who has not seen Herod's temple has never seen a beautiful building' (*BT Baba Batra* 4a).

³⁷⁸ The discontent of some Jews that had begun with the dedication of Zerubbabel's temple continued with the renovations of Herod. Traditions arose regarding the items that were present in Solomon's temple but had not been seen since. Specific items varied in these traditions, but they included such vital components as the *Shekhinah* (the rabbinic concept of the Divine Presence), the Ark, the candlestick, fire, the Holy Spirit, the *Urim and Thummin*, and the cherubim. The missing Ark also included the items contained within it, namely, manna, Aaron's rod, the tablets of stone, etc. (Clements 1965:126, n 2).

than 950 scrolls and 15,000 fragments discovered at Qumran and the surrounding area beginning in 1947.³⁷⁹ The scroll's existence was unknown in the West until the early 1960s. The general contents of the scroll may be divided into four parts: (1) construction of the temple, the altar, the courts, and the various structures found therein (cols. 2-13, 30-45); (2) the sacrificial rites connected with the various festivals (cols. 13-29); (3) laws of purity and impurity, as well as general prohibitions and rules (cols. 48-51); and (4) a revised version of Deuteronomy (cols. 52-66) (Roitman 2003:23-25).

9.2.5.1 General plan of the temple. The plan of the temple, including the courtyards, auxiliary structures, and implements, takes up nearly half of the scroll. The attention to detail in the plan rivals that of Ezekiel's temple, with an inordinate amount of space relating to details of construction. The author of the scroll used two sources of inspiration for his design. On the one hand, he clearly borrowed many features from the tabernacle of Moses, the two Jerusalem temples, and the temple of Ezekiel.³⁸⁰ On the other hand, he was also influenced by the Hellenistic architecture of his own day.³⁸¹ In any event, he was meticulous in ensuring that the building would strictly adhere to Israelite laws and regulations (Roitman 2003:43).

The final plan encompassed an area of approximately eighty hectares.³⁸² This area was

³⁷⁹ Milgrom (1978c:106). Only about a dozen scrolls may be said to be well preserved.

³⁸⁰ The Qumran sectaries were well aware of the divine revelations authorising previous Israelite temples (1 Chr 28; Ex 25:9; Nm 8:4; Ezk 40-48). They were also acquainted with traditions and legends in the ancient Near East that required temple plans to be revealed from deity. Thus the author of the Temple Scroll maintained that his temple plan was based on both the plans for the construction and furnishing of the tabernacle and also on the plans for Solomon's temple which had been revealed to David. This is despite considerable architectural differences between them, for the Qumran temple, while roughly similar to Solomon's temple, was nonetheless unique. The Qumran temple contained features of Moses' tabernacle, Solomon's temple, the Herodian temple, and Ezekiel's temple, but it cannot be said to be a copy of any of them. The Qumran temple's most striking innovation was the organisation of the temple complex into three concentric courts, the outer one of considerable dimensions that would have been quite unrealistic atop Mount Zion. 1 Kings speaks of three-storied structures that surrounded the temple of Solomon (1 Ki 6:5-8; cf Ezk 41:5-9), while the buildings surrounding the Qumran temple were six stories high. Again, while the Jerusalem temple had ten *menorot*, the Qumran temple had only one *menorah* (Zahn 2005:448-451).

³⁸¹ It is possible that the author of the scroll was not only influenced by Hellenistic construction, but that he may have been trying to influence it, especially the Herodian temple reconstruction project. Depending upon which dating of the scroll one accepts, it is possible that the scroll was written near the time when the temple renovations began in Jerusalem (Brooke 2005:424-428).

³⁸² The hectare is a unit of area measurement one hundred meters on each side, thus, ten thousand square meters. Eighty hectares would therefore be the equivalent of about 197 acres. This calculation is based

arranged in three concentric courtyards of ever-increasing sanctity. In the centre of the innermost court stood the temple, with the altar and other structures nearby.

(a) The Inner Court. The Inner Court is described in cols. 36-38. It is a square containing a gate on each side.³⁸³ Each wall may be estimated at 294 cubits in length.³⁸⁴ Besides the temple itself with its familiar tripartite division into porch, Holy Place, and Most Holy Place, the inner courtyard contained a sacrificial altar made of stone (and possibly a second bronze altar),³⁸⁵ the house of the laver,³⁸⁶ and the house of vessels.³⁸⁷ Only priests were allowed entrance into the inner courtyard.

(b) The Middle Court. The Middle Court is described in cols. 38-40.³⁸⁸ It featured twelve gates, each named for one of the tribes of Israel. Admittance to this courtyard was available to males over the age of twenty who had deposited a half-shekel in collection boxes attached to the outside of the wall surrounding this courtyard. This courtyard was off-limits for women, children, and priests dressed in the sacred temple clothing.

(c) The Outer Court. The Outer Court is described in cols. 40-46. Like the Inner and Middle Courts, the Outer Court was also a perfect square. Also like the Middle Court, it

upon the rather arbitrary assumption that the cubit used in the Temple Scroll was the equivalent of half a meter.

³⁸³ The four gates were named after Aaron and the three principal families of the Levites: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

³⁸⁴ The text states that the distance from the corner to the edge of the gate was 120 cubits; therefore, the wall must have been 240 cubits long, plus the width of the gate. Yadin concluded that the gate was forty cubits wide, plus seven cubits on each side of the gate to account for the thickness of the walls of the gate, thus 294 cubits in all (Yadin 1985:120-121). By way of comparison, the inner courtyard of Ezekiel's temple was two hundred cubits, making the inner courtyard of the Qumran temple nearly 50% larger than its Ezekielian counterpart. Cf. Ezk 8:16; 44:17; 46:22-23.

³⁸⁵ Col. 12; cf. Ezk 43:13-17; 9:2; 2 Ki 16:14-15.

³⁸⁶ Cols. 31-33; cf. Ex 30:18; 40:7, 30; 1 Ki 7:39; 2 Chr 6:13. The House of the Laver was located fifty cubits from the sacrificial altar. It contained three gates or entrances and gold-plated cubicles for depositing priestly garments. A tunnel beneath the House of the Laver led to a drain where the waste water, mixed with the blood of the sacrificial animals, was absorbed into the ground. Cf. Ezk 42:14; 44:17ff; 47:1ff.

³⁸⁷ Cols. 33-34. The House of the Vessels was located seven cubits from the House of the Laver and was used for storing the vessels used in the services. It featured two gates, a window, and lockers for storing the vessels. Cf. 1 Ki 6:4; Ezk 40:16.

³⁸⁸ The length of each side of the wall surrounding the Middle Court, including the width of the three gates in each wall, was 480 cubits (Yadin 1985:147-150). This compares to a length of five hundred cubits for the corresponding wall in Ezekiel's temple. Thus while Ezekiel's inner courtyard was smaller, its middle courtyard was a little larger than that of the temple described in the Scroll.

contains twelve gates, each named for one of the tribes of Israel.³⁸⁹ Alongside the interior of the wall surrounding the Outer Court were three stories of chambers for use by the priests, Levites, and their families. Admittance to this courtyard was generally open to all Israelites, though with some sharp restrictions.³⁹⁰

9.2.5.2 Levels of graded sanctity. The Temple Scroll is quite remarkable for its severe demarcations between different areas of the temple complex, each with its own degree of sanctity. The scroll itself begins with a description of the temple, obviously the most sacred area, and then moves out into areas of ever-decreasing sacred space, thus progressing from the ‘more holy’ to the ‘less holy’ (Levine 1978:17; Milgrom 1978c:108;).³⁹¹ In addition there are lists of ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ animals that may or may not be brought within the temple complex.³⁹² There was a stoa west of the sanctuary for corralling the sacrificial animals; offerings for the priests and for the people had to be separated and kept apart.³⁹³ The entire outer wall, approximately sixteen hundred cubits on each side, was surrounded by a moat fifty meters wide to further separate the temple city from residential areas (Roitman 2003:45). The anonymous architect apparently intended to protect the temple complex from any impurity by restricting and controlling access through the gates.³⁹⁴ The profound concern for purity is also reflected in the

³⁸⁹ The length of each side of the wall surrounding the Outer Court is given in the scroll as ‘about 1600 cubits’. Yadin calculated the length of each side as 1604 cubits (Yadin 1985:150-152).

³⁹⁰ The requirements for ritual purity sufficient to enter the temple complex were stricter in the Qumran temple than in any of the other Israelite temples. At Qumran the following groups were singled out: those having nocturnal emissions or having recent sexual intercourse were banned for three days, with bathing and laundering required in the meantime; the blind and otherwise physically impaired were permanently banned; the gonorrhoeic was shut out for seven days; the leper, and those contaminated by contact with a corpse, could not enter as long as they were still ritually impure. In Mosaic times these types of restrictions normally applied to priests alone. Meanwhile, in the Temple Scroll, a special area three thousand cubits (almost a mile) from the city was reserved for meeting calls of nature. As this distance exceeded the allowable travel limit on the Sabbath, those attending the temple on that day would not have the luxury of relieving themselves. No information is given in the scroll about how, or if, this situation would be resolved. Josephus (*Wars* 2:147-149) maintained that the Essenes either ate special foods or otherwise trained themselves ‘to have no recourse to a privy on the Sabbath’ (Yadin 1985:179-180).

³⁹¹ The penchant in the Temple Scroll for describing sacred architecture beginning at the interior and moving to the exterior regions was consistent with the ancient Egyptians, for whom the centre of focus in a temple was the statue of the deity; all subsequent description and movement radiated outward in all directions. In contrast, modern people tend to describe similar structures by progressing from the outside to the inside (Arnold 1999:25-26).

³⁹² Col. 48. Also see Milgrom 1978c:111; cf Dt 14:12-19; Lv 11:20ff; Ezk 44:31.

³⁹³ Col. 35. Also see Milgrom 1978c:111; cf 1 Chr 26:18; Ezk 46:19ff; 42:13.

³⁹⁴ Like the gates around Ezekiel’s temple, the Temple Scroll gates were much larger and massive than

columns of the scroll (45-47) that were probably derived from Leviticus and Deuteronomy but whose restrictions were considerably tightened by the Qumran writer.

In the Temple Scroll, passage from one level of sanctity to the next was accompanied by an ablution, and to proceed all the way to the temple area required multiple ablutions. It would require an ablution, for example, to pass through a gate in the wall of the Outer Court, another to pass through a gate in the wall surrounding the Middle Court, and perhaps a third to enter the Inner Court, and possibly yet another to enter the temple itself. The purpose of each of these ablutions was to remove a layer or degree of impurity. The temple area was deemed to be so holy that it could not tolerate the slightest impurity; those pilgrims not meeting the requirements for entry were banished to outlying areas that were set apart to receive them (Milgrom 1978b:513-518).

In the Israelite camp at Sinai, women were only permitted within the camp; they could not progress outside the camp and toward the mountain. In the Temple Scroll, even the residential areas of the city were designed to maintain a level of sanctity higher than an ordinary city. Problems with the uncleanness and impurity of women were solved in the Temple Scroll by simply prohibiting women from living within the confines of the temple city at all. Even the king, were he to reside in the planned temple city, would have to maintain his queen in a royal palace somewhere outside the city limits. In this extreme view the Scroll may have taken its cue from Ezekiel, who separated the domain of the *nasi* from the city and temple areas (Ezk 45:1-8; 48:20-21; Milgrom 1980:100-101).

9.2.5.3 The Temple Scroll: a retrospect. The Temple Scroll described the main temple building surrounded by three concentric square courtyards; this feature alone sets this temple apart from any other known Israelite temple.³⁹⁵ In a sense, this was not a totally theoretical or imaginary temple, for in the view of the Qumran community this was the

ordinary entrances. They were, in fact, military fortifications, and each gate had guardhouses and small chambers that could be used to thoroughly check arriving pilgrims to ensure only the worthy entered and thus keep out any impurity.

³⁹⁵ See Levine (1978:21). It might be added that while the square courts may have been taken from Ezekiel, the rest was not his pattern at all. The temple itself as described in the Temple Scroll was Solomonic, but the rest of the design was not. In short, the Qumran temple contained an aggregate of features, some from Solomon, some from Ezekiel, some from the desert tabernacle, and some unique.

temple that *should* have been built in Jerusalem at the time of the conquest of Canaan or as soon thereafter as possible.³⁹⁶ Instead Solomon built his temple which was commendable at the beginning but soon degenerated into a profane and corrupt institution, rejected by Yahweh and destroyed by him through the agency of the Babylonians. This was followed by the temple of Zerubbabel and its remodelling by Herod; this temple, too, in the eyes of the Qumran community, was totally corrupt and unsatisfactory, and the priests officiating therein were usurpers of the worst sort.³⁹⁷ It was the belief of the Qumran sect that the temple portrayed in the Temple Scroll was to be built by men, and it was their intention to build it themselves as soon as the way was opened for them to do it.³⁹⁸ This temple, once constructed, would be pure and holy; the restrictions outlined in the scroll would guarantee its continued sanctity.³⁹⁹ This temple would then stand for the rest of earth's history until it would be replaced at the end of the world when God would redeem Israel, destroy the wicked, and cause the heavenly temple to descend to the earth.

³⁹⁶ Scholars at one time thought that this temple, or even a different one, might have been actually built in Qumran itself; this idea has now been discredited. There never was a temple at Qumran, and the temple depicted in the Temple Scroll was certainly not intended to be located anywhere but Jerusalem.

³⁹⁷ The sectarians at Qumran believed the current Jerusalem temple to be polluted beyond repair; it had the 'wrong priesthood, the wrong calendar, the wrong festivals' (Milgrom 1984:131; Wyatt 2001:88).

³⁹⁸ To the people of Qumran, as to the early Christians and other contemporary sects located throughout the Judean Desert, the end of the world was imminent. A great cataclysm was due any day; only the righteous would survive. The War Scroll uncovered at Qumran described this cataclysm as a forty-year war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. In the seventh year of this great war the righteous would regain control of Jerusalem and, presumably, build this temple at that time. This is particularly interesting in light of the dating controversy surrounding the Temple Scroll; Milgrom believes it to be the earliest of all the Dead Sea Scrolls, composed in the pre-Maccabean era, that is, at the beginning of the second century. Others dispute this and consider the Temple Scroll to be of later date, perhaps the second half of the second century (Roitman 2003:84-88).

³⁹⁹ The excessive concern of the author of the scroll with prohibitions and restrictions designed to preserve the sanctity of the temple and, indeed, the entire temple city as well, has been noted. These restrictions include the three walled courtyards, with restricted admission and mandatory ablutions at each point; stakes inserted into the walls and gates to prevent birds from lighting upon them and polluting them; public latrines far removed from the temple area; and the purity restrictions imposed on those wishing to gain admission, in the Torah pertaining only to the priests, but in the Temple Scroll applicable to all.

9.2.6 The great temple of Ezekiel⁴⁰⁰

Ezekiel's description of the temple is given with minute details as to certain measurements and features.⁴⁰¹ Yet despite the detailed information, there is no consensus as to the size or appearance of this structure, or if it is even meant to portray a real building or whether it is merely a utopian allegory of the paradisiacal condition of the earth during the Millennial era.

Nevertheless it is easy to discern that the plan of the temple and the temple complex was schematic and highly symmetrical. The temple itself sat upon a sacred inner courtyard⁴⁰² surrounded by two other courtyards, each containing walls, gates, and guards to ensure that access was strictly limited to authorised personnel. Every effort was made to guarantee that the temple and its immediate confines remained sacred space, buffered by other courtyards from coming into contact with the outside profane world.⁴⁰³ Near the temple stood the great altar, along with numerous blocks where sacrificial animals could

⁴⁰⁰ Ezekiel was the foremost spiritual leader of Israel during the exile; indeed, he is one of the great spiritual figures of all time. Though seemingly suffering from psychic abnormalities, a trait shared by many spiritual leaders, such 'abnormalities' are requisite if one is to be able to detach himself from the labours and rigors of everyday life and view the world through spiritual, even mystical eyes. As a poet Ezekiel was inferior to Jeremiah, who was himself poetically inferior to Amos, Hosea, or Isaiah. Ezekiel's strength lay not in eloquence but in a 'vivid imagination and profound moral earnestness' (Albright 1957:325-326).

⁴⁰¹ The exact date of Ezekiel's vision is given as the tenth day of the first month of the twenty fifth year of the captivity (573), either the 10th day of Abib or Nisan (March-April; cf Ex 12.2-3, which was the day of separating the lamb to make ready for the Passover), or the 10th day of Tishri (September/October) which was the Day of Atonement (Lv 23:27; 25:9), depending on which calendar was being used. The peculiar calendar used at Qumran featured two New Year's Days, one in the first month and one in the seventh. In his vision Ezekiel met a man with a measuring reed and a line of flax. The man ordered Ezekiel to accompany him on a tour of the temple complex and to pay special attention to the general incomings and outgoings and to the measurements given. The measuring reed was described as being six cubits long, with each cubit 'a cubit and a handbreadth'. While the exact length of this "royal cubit" cannot be ascertained, it may be rounded to approximately two feet in length; hence the measuring reed was about twelve English feet long. The length of the line of flax is not given, but it was obviously used for lengthy measurements that exceeded the capacity of the measuring reed.

⁴⁰² The inner courtyard was foursquare; this was considered to be a symbol of perfection. Compare Exodus 26 and 1 Kings 6:20 where the holiest shape of all was a perfect cube, with the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:16 which 'lay foursquare'. See also the two altars and the breastplate in Exodus 27:1; 28:16; 30:2; 37:25; 38:1; 39:9.

⁴⁰³ There were steps leading up to the sanctuary area; these steps indicate that the sanctuary was on a raised platform, thus denoting its increased holiness. The LXX says that there were ten steps leading up to it, in contrast with the Masoretic text which has seven steps. Seven and ten are each significant numbers in religious architecture. The increase in the number of steps would also suggest the increasing holiness of the place.

be slaughtered, flayed, boiled, and where dictated by the cult, consumed upon the altar as a burnt offering.⁴⁰⁴

Traditional interpretations of Ezekiel's blueprints suggest the familiar tripartite⁴⁰⁵ division of the temple itself with the 'porch' (*ulam*), the 'Holy Place' (*hekhal*), and the 'Holy of Holies' (*kodesh kodashim*).⁴⁰⁶ The entrance⁴⁰⁷ to the temple is flanked by two columns akin to Jachin and Boaz, although in Ezekiel's description the columns remain nameless and their specific function unknown. As in Solomon's temple, the walls of the *hekhal* and the *kodesh kodashim* are lined with wood on which cherubim and palm trees are intricately carved.⁴⁰⁸

Everything up to this point has indicated increased holiness, from the seven steps⁴⁰⁹ by which entry is first made into the entire temple complex, past the necessary guard rooms and after performing the required ablutions, to the eight steps leading to the foursquare inner courtyard and more ablutions, and then to the seven (or ten, according to the LXX) steps leading up to the sanctuary itself, with yet more ablutions. As a priest Ezekiel was able to enter the holy place, but even he could not enter the holy of holies, not even in vision. That was allowed to the supernatural visitor alone, for it was most holy.

⁴⁰⁴ It is obvious that the whole plan and purpose of Ezekiel's temple was to facilitate the offering of animal sacrifices. This fact has caused no small measure of angst among Christian theologians who view the atonement of Jesus Christ as the consummation of sacrifice by the shedding of blood. If it be allowed that sacrifice by the shedding of blood has ended, then how is this to be reconciled with a temple, supposedly meant to stand during the millennial era, whose sole purpose is to facilitate animal sacrifice?

⁴⁰⁵ The general plan of Ezekiel's sanctuary, like the temple of Solomon, may be compared with Tell Tainat on the Orontes where there was a small shrine dated ca 9th century, and also with similar excavations at Khorsabad and Hazor (late Bronze Age).

⁴⁰⁶ Ezekiel used the terms *p'nima* or *kodesh kodashim* to describe the most sacred area of the temple and not *devir*, the term used to describe the same area in Moses' Tabernacle and Solomon's temple.

⁴⁰⁷ The twenty cubits of the porch is what we today would call the 'breadth', but the Israelites always called the longest measurement the 'length'. This is another element that sometimes adds confusion to any attempt to understand the measurements described by Ezekiel.

⁴⁰⁸ All the interiors of the sanctuary and the rooms connected with it were panelled with wood from the ground upwards to a level above the doors. This probably means, as with Solomon's temple (1 Ki 6:18), that the walls were totally covered: no stonework must be observable within the sanctuary. Solomon's temple also had gold overlay (1 Ki 6:22); ivory inlaid decorations have been discovered in a temple in Samaria. There is neither gold nor ivory in Ezekiel's temple, for the temple in which YHWH resides has no need of such vanities.

⁴⁰⁹ An increase in height at each stage demonstrates the increasing holiness of the place in question. Seven, the number of divine perfection, is the number of steps leading to the first (outermost) courtyard. These might be compared with the seven gates leading to the underworld in Sumerian and Babylonian mythology, though of course the seven steps described here lead up to God.

Interior furnishings are sparse.⁴¹⁰ The *kodesh kodashim* does not contain the Ark of the Covenant; in fact it contains nothing at all. The *hekhal* contains a wooden altar, the ‘table that stands before the Lord’⁴¹¹ (Ezk 41:21-22); no other interior items are mentioned or described. In fact, there are a number of items pertaining to the tabernacle of Moses or the temple of Solomon that are not found in the temple of Ezekiel. These include the following: (1) there is no partition wall specifically excluding Gentiles as we know existed in Solomon’s and Herod’s temples, where Gentiles were welcome in the outer courtyard but could not enter the inner courtyard on pain of death; (2) there is no courtyard known as the Court of the Women, or restricted to women only (Gl 3:28); (3) there is no laver (Ezk 36:24-27; Jn 15:3); (4) there is no specific table of shewbread (Mi 5:4; Jn 6:35); (5) there is no *menorah* or lampstand (Is 49:6; Jn 8:12); (6) there is no specific Golden Altar of Incense (Zch 8:20-23; Jn 14:6); (7) there is no veil (Is 25:6-8; Mt 27:51); and (8) there is no Ark of the Covenant (Jr 3:16; Jn 10:30-33).⁴¹² There are side chambers, three stories high, for the use of the priests, and there are kitchens and other outbuildings to be used in the administration of the temple (Roitman 2003:53-55).

9.2.6.1 Ezekiel’s temple and the temple of Qumran. Both the temple of Ezekiel and the temple of the Dead Sea Scrolls were generally modelled after the existing Jerusalem temple (the destroyed temple of Solomon in the case of Ezekiel, and the corrupted temple of Zerubbabel/Herod in the case of Qumran). Both texts feature a messianic figure who would play a prominent part in their respective temples (the *nasi* in Ezekiel, and the *Teacher of Righteousness* at Qumran). And both temples included the restoration of ancient sacrifices, feasts, and festivals, though with significant differences from Mosaic

⁴¹⁰ For a rather detailed description of the interior of Solomon’s temple and some observations of its differences with that of Ezekiel, see Hurowitz (2005:73-77).

⁴¹¹ It is not clear if this wooden altar or ‘table’ refers to the shewbread table or the altar of incense, which were both found in Solomon’s temple, or whether it refers to something else altogether. The object in question is simply an ‘altar of wood’ that stands before the entrance to the Holy of Holies where the Zadokite priests will minister (Ezk 44:16). Perhaps this altar is meant to combine into one the table of the shewbread, the ‘table of the Presence’ (Ex 25:23-30; Lv 24:5-9; 1 Ki 7:48) and the altar of incense (Ex 30:1-7; 37:25-28; Lv 4:7; 1 Ki 6:22; 7:48; Rv 8:3).

⁴¹² Why is Ezekiel’s great temple so empty? Joyce suggests it is due to the ‘extreme anthropomorphism’ of Ezekiel that negates the need for superfluous cultic paraphernalia (Joyce 2005:150-152). There are contradictory views among scholars on this issue.

practices.

Other similarities exist. For instance, in the Temple Scroll the priests are the only ones who are permitted to cook the offerings that belonged to them in the inner courtyard; they were not to mix their portions with those belonging to the Israelites, which were eaten in the outer courtyard. The same restriction pertains to Ezekiel, who proscribed that non-priestly Israelites must remain in the outer courtyard and must eat their portion of the offerings there, as they were not permitted access to the inner courtyard (Ezk 46:19-24). Both the Temple Scroll and Ezekiel emphasised the size, description and purpose of the courtyards rather than the main temple building itself. Both temples featured square (not rectangular) courtyards. Both temples used many of the same technical terms in their descriptions. It is evident that the author of the Temple Scroll was familiar with the temple of Ezekiel and borrowed somewhat from its description (Lundquist 2008:89-93).

Yet there are significant differences between these temples. The most singular are the following:

- The exact geometric centre of Ezekiel's temple complex, and thus presumably the focal point and holiest spot of all, was the main altar, which was located in the inner courtyard near the temple.⁴¹³ In the Temple Scroll, the geometric centre of the whole complex was the temple building, or to be more specific, the porch of the temple, and not the Most Holy Place as one might expect (Milgrom 1978b:520).
- Ezekiel proposed two courtyards for his temple, while the Temple Scroll had three.
- The number and names of the various gates differ in each account, as do the number and distribution of various chambers (Milgrom 1978c:114).

⁴¹³ This curious feature may be a vestige of a very ancient idea. It is believed that an altar was the first structure normally built upon a sacred site, around which a temple may or may not subsequently be built. Thus the altar would tend to be located at the centre of the ensuing temple complex. When temples and their altars were constructed at the same time, the position of the altar tended to shift towards the east, leaving the temple to occupy the centre place. It is thus of no small interest that in Ezekiel's temple scheme the altar remained in the central position (Hagedorn 2005:203).

It appears that the primary driving force behind the blueprint described in the Temple Scroll may have been to imitate the arrangement and structure of the Israelite camp in the wilderness under Moses. After all, this was the primeval, heroic age of the birth of the nation when Israel was closest to its God. The Qumran temple was thus an attempt to re-create the relationship that existed between Yahweh and his people when his glory descended upon the desert tabernacle, to re-create the sacred time at the beginning of Israel's covenant history. If only a completely pure and holy temple and temple city could be built, if only this original closeness with Yahweh could be restored, then there was a chance that the Divine Presence, so obviously lacking in the Jerusalem temple of the day, could be restored to the Qumran temple, even as prophesied by Ezekiel with regard to his temple: 'And there, coming from the east with a roar like the roar of mighty waters, was the Presence of the God of Israel, and the earth was lit up by His Presence... The Presence of the Lord entered the Temple by the gate that faced eastward. A spirit carried me into the inner court, and lo, the Presence of the Lord filled the Temple...' (Ezk 43:1-5)

9.3 ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIONS

In the descriptions of the wilderness tabernacle and the various Jerusalem and literary temples above, a number of architectural characteristics that tend to promote the concept of sacred space have been identified. Some of these are exclusive to temples; the presence of one or two of these features would strongly indicate that a building was a temple, while the presence of a large number would be quite conclusive.

9.3.1 Israelite temples and sacred space

Those characteristics mentioned above that are most helpful in determining the application of sacred space and its associated ideas in Israelite temple architecture have been arranged into three general categories as was done earlier regarding temples in other areas of the ancient Near East: Techniques of Construction and Decoration, General

Temple Arrangement, and Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia.

9.3.1.1 Techniques of Construction and Decoration. In this category are included (1) the concept of the primordial mound; (2) the practice of foundation deposits; (3) the purposes and functions of enclosure walls; (4) principles of orientation, alignment, and measurement; and (5) exterior and interior decoration.

As the primordial mound was the first dry land to appear from the waters of darkness and chaos, it held the key to maintaining control over these unruly waters, forever at enmity with the forces of light and order. This was the source of the concept of the Foundation Stone, which was believed to function as a seal or cap over the turbulent waters. This idea was known in Israel, Mesopotamia, and later in Islam. In the Jerusalem temple the Foundation Stone, which capped and controlled the primordial waters of *tehom*, was located in the most sacred place, in the Holy of Holies. Whether real or figurative, the Foundation Stone was a physical expression of one of the constituent beliefs embedded in the concept of sacred space.

Raising the level of the Holy of Holies, in order for it to form a perfect cube, has also been seen as an expression of the primordial mound. This is comparable to raising the pedestal on which the god stood in Mesopotamia and Canaan, and the raising of the entire floor level in Egyptian temples as one approached the god in the rear of the temple.

There is no indication in any of the literature that the Israelites adopted the practise of foundation deposits.

The presence and functions of enclosure walls have been noted elsewhere. Their purpose was the same in Israelite temples, namely, to demarcate sacred from profane space, to protect the interior temple complex from unauthorised excursions into sacred areas, and to preserve secrecy regarding what transpired within the immediate environs of the temple. In the case of the tabernacle, a mobile shrine, the outer enclosure wall took the form of curtains hung between pillars. In the case of the Jerusalem temples there were

multiple walls complete with massive, military-style gates.

The temple of Herod at Jerusalem contained multi-lingual signs at all entrances, warning potential trespassers that ‘they would only have themselves to thank for their ensuing deaths’ (2.6). The temple of Ezekiel (9.2.6) and the temple of the Temple Scroll (9.2.5) are both notable for their enclosure walls featuring large, military-style gates, where visitors could be thoroughly checked for purity. High enclosure walls and the elevation of successive courtyards also contributed to the preservation of secrecy regarding what went on in the innermost sacred courtyards. Maintaining secrecy in temple ritual was also evidenced by the system of double walls or curtains, with offset doors, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, thereby preventing any inadvertent glances into the inner sanctuary.

Albright (1968:144-150) suggested the possible solar alignment of Solomon’s temple in conjunction with potential cosmic connotations. Gaster (1950:67) pointed out that the temple of Solomon was not quite on the axis of a true east-west line, but was constructed with a slight shift towards the northeast. The reason for this shift was to enable the temple to face the summit of the Mount of Olives, thus causing the morning sunrise on the autumnal equinox, the New Year, to shine directly upon the altar at the eastern entrance to the temple. Earlier work on this same question had been done by Morgenstern (1929:1-37, but see esp 17-19, 31-32, 35; 1935: 1-148, esp 76; 1952-1953: 1-74, esp 45-46, 55; and 1963: 7-8), Hollis (1933:87-110), and May (1937:309ff). The wilderness tabernacle was also pitched along an east-west axis.⁴¹⁴

The Garden of Eden, viewed by many as a prototypical temple, featured an eastward orientation. The garden itself was planted in the eastern portion of Eden (Gn 2:8). Furthermore, after the expulsion of Adam and Eve, flaming cherubim were positioned at the east entrance of Eden to prohibit the return of the prodigal couple (Gn 3:24); this suggests that the eastern gate was the primary if not the only entrance (Parry 1994a:131-133).

⁴¹⁴ So suggested Nibley (1966:603-605). For an opposing viewpoint, see Parunak (1978:28-33).

In the ancient Near East it was not unusual for the king or prophet to report being taken on a “tour” of a proposed temple complex, led by a man with a measuring reed, rod, or line, to enable him to visualise the final result. Solomon built his temple (1 Ki 6:2-36), purportedly following the measurements and plans that had previously been revealed to David. Also in the Biblical record, Ezekiel was conducted on a tour by an angelic personality who held in his hand a cord of linen and a measuring rod (Ezk 40:3). A similar individual, with a measuring line, appeared to Zechariah (Zch 2:5-9). Compare Job 38:4-7, where God asked Job, ‘Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundations?...Do you know who fixed its dimensions, or who measured it with a line? Onto what were its bases sunk? Who set its cornerstone? When the morning stars sang together, and all the divine beings shouted for joy?’

One of the architectural techniques to create sacred space specifies that only the costliest and finest materials are to be used in the construction of a temple. Copious use of gold, silver, lapis lazuli and other precious stones, the finest woods, and elegant dyed and embroidered linens and fabrics all help to convey a sense of awesomeness to the worshiper. The desert tabernacle followed this prescription as far as circumstances would allow. Solomon and Herod, naturally, could afford more expensive embellishments of wood, stone, precious metals, and fabrics in their building projects. Ezekiel’s temple is noteworthy for its comparative lack of precious metals and gems; the focus is on the resident deity and not the splendour of the temple itself (Hurowitz 2005:73-77).

All the Israelite temples discussed in this chapter shared a similar taste in interior decorating and used the same motifs, primarily cherubim, gourds, flowers, pomegranates, and palm trees (Bloch-Smith 2002:87; Dever 1995:608). The walls of Ezekiel’s sanctuary were all panelled with wood and decorated with palm trees and cherubim, the latter having two faces, thus representing both humans and beasts. The cherubim and the palm trees were spaced alternately. Thus the whole of creation—the human race, the animal kingdom, and the plant kingdom—was represented in the decorations (Rv 4:7; 5:14; cf. Ezk 1:5-10; 10:14). The drawings and carvings of cherubim represented images of

strange life forms, unknown on earth but believed to inhabit the heavenly temple. Pomegranates were traditional symbols of fertility, one of the explicit blessings tied to temple worship and sacrifice in the ancient Near East. Palm trees were a common decoration in Solomon's temple and symbolised creation, beauty, and fruitfulness (Lv 23:40; 1 Ki 6:29, 32, 35; 7:36; 2 Chr 3:5; Cn 7:7; Ps 92:12-14; Ne 8:15; Zch 14:16-21).

9.3.1.2 General Temple Arrangement. This category includes items pertaining to (1) the tripartite floor plan, (2) pillars, (3) the Tree of Life, and (4) temple/palace symbiosis.

Israelite temples did not undergo an evolutionary development in their basic architectural plan; the pattern was present in the beginning with the tabernacle. The desert tabernacle and the Jerusalem temples were rectangular structures divided into a 'Holy Place' and the 'Holy of Holies' and used essentially the same proportion between the *hekhal* (Holy Place) and the *debir* or *kodesh kodashim* (Holy of Holies), that is, a ratio of 2:1. The Holy of Holies was represented as a perfect cube. Furthermore, all were basically insistent on an east-west orientation.

Conventional wisdom maintains that the tripartite plan predominated; this assertion requires some additional clarification here. It is true that the Jerusalem temples, as well as the temple of the Temple Scroll and Ezekiel's temple, had a structure or area most often described as a 'porch'; this specification is necessary if the tripartite plan is to be maintained. But there is considerable scholarly discussion as to whether the porch should really be considered part of the temple proper, for it was not really a distinct structure but a rather vague area set aside in front of the temple as a buffer between the temple and the courtyards, which were themselves intermediate areas between the temple and the outer profane world. In the temple of Solomon the height of the porch is not known, nor is it known whether it was roofed or open. The desert tabernacle, meanwhile, had no demarcated porch; the tabernacle can only be considered to follow the tripartite plan if the eastern portion of the courtyard that included the altar and its attendant brass vessels and other ritual paraphernalia is considered part of the tabernacle itself. This is perhaps not too far-fetched, as the courtyard of the tabernacle was a restricted area and served to

buffer the tabernacle proper from outer profane space; in a sense the entire tabernacle courtyard thus performed, to some degree, the function of the porch. Nevertheless, the tabernacle courtyard resembled the inner courtyards of the other temples much more than it resembled their porches. The courtyard of the tabernacle is nowhere described as a porch or vestibule. Furthermore, if we consider the courtyard of the tabernacle to be one of the three areas of the tripartite plan, then what is to be done with the three courtyards of Solomon's temple or the three courtyards of the Temple Scroll or the two courtyards of Ezekiel's temple? If strict adherence to the tripartite plan is demanded, we are likely to wrest the evidence to suit the theory. It is far better to dispense with preconceived notions as to the supposed necessity of following a tripartite plan and simply acknowledge that temples, with multiple courtyards and sometimes additional arrangements such as a porch, created numerous buffer spaces of varying degrees of holiness separating the temple itself from the profane outside world.

The problems in maintaining a strict adherence to the tripartite plan are not limited to issues surrounding the porch; other questions have arisen in attempting to classify the Holy of Holies. The *debir* in Solomon's temple, according to the textual evidence, was a perfect cube of ten meters square, according to the interior measurements, but as the thickness of the walls was not mentioned, the exterior dimensions cannot be ascertained. It is likely that the foundation of the temple was rectangular. The *debir* was separated from the *hekhal* by a wooden door, of which no archaeological trace would likely remain. Therefore, bearing in mind that many archaeological excavations produce only a foundation, and walls, if any, may be only a few inches high, the foundation of a so-called tripartite temple such as Solomon's, when unearthed, would appear on the ground as a singular *langraum* structure with no differentiation between *hekhal* and *debir*. Based on the exposed remains, it would be easy to construe the original temple as a single room or perhaps a bipartite structure. Furthermore, while not an issue with Israelite temples, many other temples throughout the ancient Near East had a 'holy of holies' area that was not a separate room at all, but consisted merely of a niche in the wall of the *hekhal*. While the niche containing the statue of the god was unquestionably regarded as the holiest area within the temple, can it be said to have been a separate area, or was it merely an

extension of the main cella?

The obvious conclusion is that there was no particular reason for the tripartite structure *per se*. The important principle underlying this whole issue was to provide a framework for the gradation of sacred space. It would not be acceptable for a visitor to enter the temple from the street and immediately stand in the presence of the god; instead, it was necessary to conduct the worshiper through a series of areas, each more sacred than the other, in order to heighten the sense of awe and anticipation and thereby promote, by socially constructed models, the concept of sacred space.

This was accomplished, in part, by a system of successive courtyards of increasing levels of holiness. In the case of Solomon's temple, there was an outer court to which all worshippers, male and female, Jew and Gentile, were freely admitted. A more sacred and smaller courtyard was accessible to Israelites only, both men and women. A still smaller and more sacred courtyard was restricted to Jewish males only. Finally, the innermost courtyard was open only to priests. As elsewhere, controlling access to the temple and its environs to authorised personnel through a succession of courtyards and gates was a primary architectural strategy for creating and maintaining sacred space. A hierarchy of multiple enclosure walls, multiple gates, multiple courtyards, multiple ablutions, and multiple antecellae all conjoined to make the journey of the pilgrim one of increasing wonderment and awe.

This type of temple complex architecture lent itself nicely to a linear-based temple format. Israelite temples, like virtually all other ancient Near Eastern temples, consistently adhered to a processional style of temple architecture;⁴¹⁵ there are no traces here of the mandala-type temple architecture⁴¹⁶ found in the Indian subcontinent and in

⁴¹⁵ A *processional* temple was characterised by a longitudinal design leading from the entrance through the *ulam* (in Solomon's temple) or the porch (in Ezekiel's temple), through the Holy Place, and finally into the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies, symbolising the presence of God. This basic longitudinal pattern was later adopted by the synagogue and can also be seen in subsequent Christian churches, especially in western Europe. Processional temples are based on a dynamic religious experience that emphasises a goal.

⁴¹⁶ The *mandala* temple is much more common in central and eastern Asia, and therefore not much emphasis has been put upon it in this work as this area is generally outside the scope of this thesis. The mandala is often considered the premier expression of sacred geometry. A mandala is a sacred shape

the Far East. The processional style of Israelite temples featured an overall linear design, the cubical form of the inner sanctuary, the elevation of the most sacred area,⁴¹⁷ and an east-west orientation (Rosenau 1979:14-16). Furthermore, true processional temple plans tend to favour a direct-axis format, rather than the bent-axis model once popular in Sumeria and early Babylonia. In theory, one could stand at the entrance of a processional temple and see all the way back into the inner sanctum, although of course there would be several intervening doorways and thresholds; the bent-axis model, while making access slightly more difficult, compensated by offering greater privacy for the holiest area (Lundquist 2008:48-50).

The pillars that frequently stood at the doors of ancient temples were a significant architectural feature in Israel. In the case of Jachin and Boaz their function was clearly symbolic rather than functional, as they were most likely free-standing.⁴¹⁸ Jachin and Boaz stood in the innermost court of the temple at the very entrance to the temple itself. These pillars were made of brass and were very elaborately ornamented with pomegranates and lilies.⁴¹⁹ They were constructed by Hiram of Tyre—not the king by

created by the intersection of a circle and a square. A building constructed on the basis of a mandala would, by its very nature, be a cosmic structure, with the building as the centre point, the sides pointing to the cardinal directions, with a pillar or World Tree as an *axis mundi* signifying the unification of the upper, middle, and lower worlds. A mandala temple focuses inwardly on the individual; its design is intended to foster introspection and meditation. The mandala temple stresses complete enclosure; it contains within it the sacred centre place. Through meditation and other Tantric techniques the points of the mandala are transferred and then absorbed into appropriate places in the body, the *Chakras*. The ‘mandala then becomes what has been called a psychocosmogram’ (Lundquist 1993:17). Perhaps the most outstanding example of an ancient temple based on a mandala is the magnificent structure at Borobudur in Java.

⁴¹⁷ The original threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite rose 40-60 meters above the adjacent City of David, and thus presented itself as a logical site for a temple due to its natural elevation, when compared with the surrounding area, and thus it offered unparalleled visibility. Both features are important elements in an architectural strategy designed to impart holiness to a socially constructed site. The site chosen for Solomon’s temple might be compared with the site of the Greco-Roman Temple of Augustus, built by Herod at Caesarea. There a temple platform was constructed approximately eleven and a half meters above the sea level on the nearby coast. Thus its elevation was not nearly as dramatic as was the case in Jerusalem, a city of hills. But when we take into account the ambient terrain surrounding Caesarea, which is essentially flat as far as twenty kilometres inland, a large temple on a relatively low platform would still be imposing, as it would dominate the harbour area and dwarf nearby public buildings and residential areas. Furthermore, the temple would have been visible to sailors far out at sea to the west, and in the east, farmers in their fields would have been able to easily view the majesty of the temple and feel its *mysterium tremendum* (Holum 2004:187).

⁴¹⁸ While the scriptural text is not explicit as to whether these columns supported anything or were free-standing; the preponderance of academic discussion indicates that most scholars consider them to have been free-standing (Meyers 1984:135-150; 1982:33-41).

⁴¹⁹ Lucian described similar pillars at Canaanite temples as phallic symbols but did not consider Jachin and

that name, but a master-craftsman skilled in the working of brass (1 Ki 7:13-45). The pillars were twelve cubits in circumference and eighteen cubits high in addition to the height of the capitals.⁴²⁰ The name “Jachin” is interpreted to mean, ‘He (Yahweh) shall establish thy throne for ever’, and “Boaz” means ‘In the strength [of Yahweh] shall the king rejoice’.⁴²¹ These names indicate that a possible purpose of these pillars was to symbolise a reaffirmation of the Davidic covenant. Whatever may have been the ultimate symbolism of these pillars, it is unquestionable that they imparted a sense of strength, firmness, and solidarity.

While scholars generally agree that Jachin and Boaz were symbolic and not functional, there is little agreement on the precise nature of that symbolism. These twin pillars, after nearly a century of academic discussion, continue to intrigue and interest Bible students to the present day (Hurowitz 2005:82-84).

W. Robertson Smith noted that in Tyre, Melcarth was worshipped in the form of two pillars, and that twin pillars stood before the temples of Paphos and Hierapolis as well as in Jerusalem. Smith suggested that due to the interpretation of the names of the Jerusalem pillars (‘the stabiliser’ and ‘in Him is strength’), they were ‘doubtless symbols of Jehovah’ (1956:208, esp n 1). However, he later thought the pillars were meant to represent the sacred or cosmic tree due to the pomegranates engraved on their capitals. From there he connected the pillars to the menorah in the temple, and from this he concluded that the pillars were actually fire altars (Smith 1956:488; see also Patai 1947:109-110).

Albright (1968:140-144) considered three possibilities as to the symbolic meaning of

Boaz in this light due to their vegetable ornamentation. Perhaps he thought they meant to represent fertility and fruitfulness, considered to be two of the blessings emanating from the temple. Pomegranates have long been considered an emblem of fertility and were part of the decoration on the robe of the high priest in the tabernacle of Moses (Ringgren 1973:159-160).

⁴²⁰ That is, the pillars themselves were eighteen cubits high with a five-cubit capital on top. Everything that is known about Jachin and Boaz comes from literary sources; there is no archaeological evidence of their existence.

⁴²¹ Or, at least, words to this effect (Albright 1968:135; Talmage 1912:21; de Vaux 1965:2:314-315). For examples of named pillars in front of Mesopotamian temples, see Hurowitz (1992:257, n 2).

these pillars. First, they might have served as symbols of the two great mountains at the eastern end of the world, between which the sun was said to rise each morning and which guided its rays into the interior of the temple, at least on the equinoxes.⁴²² Second, like the Egyptian “*djed* pillar” which represented endurance and continuity, Jachin and Boaz might have represented dynastic strength and stability and thus served as sentinels standing as silent reminders and guardians of the Davidic covenant. Third, they might have commemorated the pillars of cloud by day and fire by night that led the Israelites through their desert wanderings (Patai 1947:109-110).

Meyers offered two interesting possibilities for interpreting the role of the pillars. First, the pillars provided a clear boundary between the sacred space of the temple proper and the less-sacred space of the courtyard, thus offering silent witness and warning to those who passed beyond those portals that they must be clean, prepared, and duly authorised to proceed into the interior of the temple. They may have symbolised entrance into the heavenly temple and offered an opportunity for a final self-assessment so that the ritually unclean might not pollute the holy place. Second, Meyers suggested that the twin pillars might symbolise the union of the priestly and royal functions that had merged under the Davidic covenant (Meyers 1984:141-145).

Lundquist (2008:63-64) considers Jachin and Boaz as fulfilling the same purpose as the pillars that stood before reed shrines in Sumer, or the flagpoles atop the pylons at the entrance to Egyptian temples, namely, to signal the presence of the deity. Whether this is the true interpretation or not, there can be no doubt that twin pillars at the entrance to a temple belong firmly within ancient Near Eastern tradition.

Another possible function of these pillars may have been to legitimise the new dynasty by serving as witnesses of the covenant God had made with David and, by extension, with

⁴²² Albright was not the first to suggest this idea. After describing the mountains that form the extreme ends of the earth at all points of the compass, Wensinck stated ‘that the columns found in some Semitic temples had a function parallel to that of the mountains characterizing the quarters of the world’ (Wensinck 1978:35). Wensinck did not concern himself whether the pillars, or the mountains he thought they represented, marked the transition from profane to sacred space or from worldly space to extra-terrestrial space.

Solomon. Lundquist (1982:293-295) noted that ‘covenants are sealed in temples or near pillars standing near temples, and thus derive their binding efficacy on the ancient society from the temple’s authoritative, legitimizing position within the society’. Widengren had earlier pointed out that king Josiah took his place near or upon the pillar, which appears to have been a place ordained by custom.⁴²³ During the covenant renewal ceremony held by the young Josiah after finding the Book of the Law in the temple, the king stood near the pillar (presumably Jachin or Boaz or both) to bind the people to obedience:

The king went up to the House of the Lord, together with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and prophets—all the people, young and old. And he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll which had been found in the House of the Lord.

The king stood *by the pillar* and solemnized the covenant before the Lord: that they would follow the Lord and observe His commandments, His injunctions, and His laws with all their heart and soul; that they would fulfill all the terms of this covenant as inscribed upon the scroll. And all the people entered into the covenant (2 Ki 23:2-3, emphasis added).

Some years earlier, when the priests escorted the young Jehoash to the temple to install him as king (despite the machinations of his grandmother Athaliah to murder all the royal progeny), Jehoash stood ‘by the pillar, as was the custom’ (2 Ki 11:14). The pillar in this case may be an outgrowth of the ancient practice of setting up a pile of stones as a covenant witness.⁴²⁴

Thus there are manifold opinions regarding the presumably symbolic function of temple pillars, yet all are related to the concepts of sacred space and its corollaries. The pillars

⁴²³ Widengren (1957:2-3, 5-7) pointed out three main elements in these early covenant-making and covenant-renewal ceremonies: (1) the king played a central role, calling the assembly and reading from the law; (2) the king himself appeared before the Lord, thus assuming a sacral or priestly role; and (3) the covenant was concluded in the temple.

⁴²⁴ Palmer (1998:32-34); see also Lundquist (1994a:284-286). I here digress to consider the New Testament story of the temptation of Christ, when Satan transported Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and commanded him to worship him. If Jesus had been whisked to the temple roof, this would not have had the desired effect of fear or trepidation as access to temple roofs, usually via spiral staircases, was a common feature of many ancient temples, and no doubt Jesus could have easily made his way down to safety. But if he had been placed on the top of a free-standing pillar, high enough to forestall any obvious means of rescue, a mere mortal might have cried out in fear and accepted Satan’s offer of safety. If Jesus had capitulated and agreed to worship Satan, while standing on a pillar whose function was that of a covenant witness, it would have had the effect of negating the Davidic covenant by the very Son of David himself and replacing it with a Satanic covenant.

may have represented the twin peaks at the eastern edge of the world, through which the sun's first rays appeared every morning; they may have been designed to attract the lightning god, who was considered a very powerful deity; they often bore representations of vegetation, suggesting something to do with fertility and abundance, two blessings closely associated with the temple; they may have provided a final opportunity for a visiting worshiper to check for purity before entering into the temple proper; they may have signalled the abode or presence of a particular deity; or they might have symbolised entrance into the heavenly temple. Regarding Jachin and Boaz in particular, they may have represented the merging of the royal and priestly functions under the Davidic covenant; they may have represented the pillars of fire and cloud that guided the Israelites during their wanderings; they may have represented the strength and stability offered by the Davidic covenant (these suggestions, applicable only to the Israelite culture, do not explain similar pillars elsewhere in the ancient Near East); or they may have been the site and subsequently the witnesses to covenant renewal and coronation ceremonies, known to take place in the temple 'near the pillar'. The exact meaning of temple pillars remains uncertain, but there can be no question that it was related to sacred space and its associated corollary principles.

The Tree of Life, a common motif in temple decoration and a fundamental facet of temple mythology, is inherently tied to sacred space. In the Garden of Eden, the tree was placed in the centre of the garden (Gn 2:9), and therefore in its most sacred spot. In the book of Revelation we read about the Tree of Life that is said to exist on both sides of the river flowing out from underneath the temple (Rv 22:2). The tree was a symbol of the *axis mundi*. The Messiah is often described in terms reminiscent of Tree of Life imagery (Wyatt 2001:169); he is variously referred to in the scriptures as 'a tender plant' (Is 53:2), a 'Branch' (Is 11:1), a 'root out of dry ground' (Is 53:2), and 'the true vine' (Jn 15:1).

Enoch described the Tree of Life as 'indescribable for pleasantness and fine fragrance, and more beautiful than any other created thing that exists. And from every direction it has an appearance which is gold-looking and crimson, and with the form of fire. And it covers the whole of Paradise. And it has something of every orchard tree and of every

fruit' (2 Enoch 8:3-4). Elsewhere, the Book of Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36) has a great deal to say about the Tree of Life as a fragrant tree on God's holy mountain, at the centre of the earth. 'As for this fragrant tree, no [creature of] flesh has authority to touch it until the great judgment in which [there will be] vengeance on all and a consummation forever. Then it will be given to the righteous and holy. Its fruit [will be] food for the chosen, and it will be transplanted to a holy place by the house of God, the king of eternity. Then they will rejoice with joy and be glad, and they will enter the holy [place]; its fragrance [will be] in their bones, and they will live a long life on the earth, such as your fathers lived, and in their days torments and plagues and scourges will not touch them' (1 Enoch 25:4-6, Greek version). Thus the Tree of Life, presently out of human reach, will someday be transplanted near the temple in Jerusalem. This may be the idea behind the requirement of Solomon that palm trees be carved on the inside walls of his temple (Knibb 2005:404-405).

There are numerous Hebrew Bible references to trees growing in or near a sanctuary (Ps 92:13-15; 52:10). The Hebrew prophets distinguished between trees in the temple area and those used in forbidden cultic activity (Is 40:19-20; 41:7-8; Jr 10:2-4).

The Jerusalem temples played a major role in the legal systems of the ancient Israel; one way this role was architecturally portrayed was by the shared courtyards and the close proximity of temple, palace, and judicial areas (for example, Solomon's temple complex, which included, besides temple and palace, the 'House of the Forest of Lebanon' [the state treasury] and the 'Hall of Judgement').

Temple construction or reconstruction was considered an auspicious time for a restatement of the national law code. In the case of Israel, the giving of the Law to ancient Israel at Sinai was in conjunction with the construction of the Tabernacle. The extensive renovations of the temple under Josiah were accompanied by a reading of the law and a covenant renewal ceremony.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the physical building of the tabernacle

served to cement the leadership role of Moses in the ancient Israelite polity. Likewise, David used the tabernacle to help secure his kingship by moving it from Shiloh to Jerusalem, thus tying it to his new political capital. Solomon, perhaps more than any of his predecessors, used the building of the Jerusalem temple to put the stamp of legitimacy on his kingship (Cross 1984:99-101).

9.3.1.3 Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia. This category includes features such as (1) elevated statues for the deity, (2) water for ablutions, (3) cult of the dead, and (4) altars and animal sacrifices.

In the Jerusalem temples there was a general elevation of the most sacred area; this was necessary for the holy of holies to acquire the shape of a cube, considered to be a symbol of perfection, while having the ceiling remain level with that of the *hekhal* (9.2.2). There were no statues of the deity in Israelite temples. However, the most sacred area in the temple of Solomon did contain the Ark which, in a sense, might be considered a sort of substitute for a statue representing Yahweh. Yahweh, in his invisible presence, was thought to sit enthroned on the mercy seat above the ark; in this way the ark served as a physical reminder of the presence of the invisible God. Also in this way his position would be elevated above that of the High Priest, who was the only authorised visitor. The mysterious vanishing of the ark at the time of the Babylonian exile and its conspicuous lack in subsequent temples was indicative, on the one hand, of the lack of divine approbation for the temples of Zerubbabel and Herod, and on the other, of a shifting of focus in the Temple Scroll and in Ezekiel away from the birth of the nation at Sinai and toward the eschatological reign of Yahweh in Jerusalem.

The basins of water placed near gateways for ablutions in the Jerusalem temples were consistent with those found elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Solomon's brazen sea and brass lavers, however, have been the subject of considerable speculation as to their function and symbolic meaning. Some have supposed they represented the primordial waters; others have considered them to represent the waters of life, or the four streams that poured forth from Eden, or to represent the water coming from underneath the

temple to fertilise the earth; still others deny them any symbolic value and believe them to be simply sources of water to be used for ablutions or in the preparation of sacrifices (Hurowitz 2005:78-82).

In the Temple Scroll ablutions were required of visitors as they passed through the gates in the various enclosure walls in order to maintain the level of temple purity with which the Qumran sectaries were so obsessed.

Ablutions were just one procedure undertaken to ensure cleanliness and holiness, for the holiness, purity, and sanctity of the gods required that these virtues also be present among their servants in the temples. A premium was placed on physical wholeness and cleanliness. Any physical deformity, blight, or blemish would disqualify one from temple entry or service, just as it disqualified an animal from sacrificial consideration. Blindness, paralysis, a club foot, a cleft palate, a hunched back—all these and more would cause one to be ineligible for temple service. There was a similar demand for sexual purity which applied to both priests⁴²⁵ and lay persons who were visiting or approaching the temple.

⁴²⁵ Temple personnel in the Hebrew Bible are rather indiscriminately referred to as *kohanim*, ‘priests’. The *kohen gadol*, ‘high priest’, was the primary temple administrator. The Hebrew *kohanim* is cognate with the Ugaritic *khnm* and the Phoenician *rb khnm*, ‘high priest’ or ‘chief of the priests’. Other priests served in a variety of capacities, mostly concerned with the daily temple rituals. In addition, there were priests whose responsibilities revolved around the offering of sacrifices. Oracle priests were skilled at various types of augury and adept at using certain oracular devices such as the *Urim and Thummin*. The *Urim and Thummim* was one of several mechanical means of obtaining divine guidance. The device appears to have consisted of two stones set in a bow. The stones were either inscribed or were different in colour so they could be distinguished from each other. The device was meant to respond to questions asked in a Yes-No format; the deity was supposed to answer the question by indicating one stone or the other. The precise methodology used is unknown (Wyatt 2001:273-274, 284). Other lower-ranking priests might be responsible for taking care of temple clothing or they might serve as slaughterers, doorkeepers, musicians, cooks, bakers, cleaners, and so on. Phoenician names of temple workers include *qdsim*, ‘consecrated ones’, *kmrm* (precise meaning unknown; cf Akkadian *kumru* or Hebrew *kemarim*, ‘idol-priest’), and *mqm ’lm*, ‘servant of the gods’. Texts from Emar elicit an even more diverse group of temple workers, including *zabihu*, ‘sacrificer’, *wabil ila’i*, ‘carrier of the [divine] statue’, *zammaru*, ‘singers’, *baru*, ‘diviners’, and a female office known as *mas’artu*, ‘spouse of the god’, so called because of her long hair (Van der Toorn 1995:2052). Women participated in the temple to a small degree; their rather esoteric function called for them to serve ‘at the door’. Women in most ancient Near Eastern temples were not known as priestesses, nor did they perform sacerdotal functions; they were regarded as wives or concubines of the god. Undoubtedly one of the main reasons why women were not eligible to serve as temple workers was the fact that they were often ritually, or at least potentially, unclean; hence their roles generally took them no further than the door of the temple. The apocryphal Letter of Jeremiah baldly stated that Babylonian gods were often impotent because sacrifices offered to them might have been ‘touched by women in menstruation or at childbirth’ (quoted in Van der Toorn 1995:2053). Nevertheless, as mentioned above, women served roles as the wives or concubines of the god. This practice is documented in northern Syrian

There is no indication that a cult of the dead, as such, was practised by the ancient Israelites in their temples. Nonetheless, temples frequently became popular burial sites; at the very least, people wanted to be buried as near the temple as possible.⁴²⁶ This concept is expressed in the Hebrew Bible (Is 25:6-8), where the connection between temple, death, burial, and resurrection is explicit. This imagery was not unknown to the early Christians (Rv 7:15-17).

Central to the sacrificial nature of Israelite temples was the altar itself, specifically, the great altars that stood outside the temple in the inner courtyards. These altars contained horns, presumably to aid in keeping the sacrificial victims in place, and drainage systems. Along with the altar were the necessary appurtenances for animal sacrifice (shovels, hooks, pots for boiling, knives, brass carts, a source of water for cleaning, and so on).

In Israelite temples there were no inner rituals of awakening, washing, dressing, and feeding the god as occurred elsewhere in the ancient Near East; indeed, in Israel there was no statue or representation of the god at all. In Israelite temple ritual the focus was on animal sacrifice and the central position of the altar in the inner courtyard. Sacrifices and offerings were the primary function of the desert tabernacle (Ex 27:1-8; 29:37; Hurowitz 1992:275-276), the Jerusalem temples (Kristensen 1960:444-452, 458-496), Ezekiel's temple (Ezk 43:18-27), and the temple of the Temple Scroll (cols 2-13, 30-45). While it is true that there were other temple rituals whose details are unknown, and although remnants of the Israelite temple service may be seen in the Psalms and elsewhere, the primary stress was on sacrifice. Indeed, the great temple of Ezekiel was structured around animal sacrifice as its *raison d'être*, with the altar being the geographic centre of the entire complex.

Of specific interest is the great altar of Ezekiel's temple. It was Albright who first

locales such as Ebla and Emar, and was likely found in Phoenicia (*khnt*) as well. Women also played a prominent role, though outside temple precincts, as soothsayers, necromancers, and mourners (Van der Toorn 1995:2052-2053).

⁴²⁶ The main axial street in Teotihuacan, the great Aztec city, was lined with 75 temples, and was known as the Street of the Dead. The street, incidentally, was aligned with the path of the sun.

suggested that this altar of burnt offerings reflected Mesopotamian cosmic ideas (Albright 1920:137-142). This was further implied by the shape of the altar itself which was to be built in three square stages, with each higher stage smaller than the one beneath.⁴²⁷ The altar therefore resembled a small ziggurat (Hurowitz 2005:94) and sat on a base or foundation-platform known as ‘the bosom of the earth’. Another interesting feature here is that Ezekiel’s altar was approached from the east and was ascended by stairs. Previous Israelite altars, such as Solomon’s, were always approached from the south and were ascended by means of a ramp. The summit of the altar, in typical fashion, featured four horns on the corners. The consecration of Ezekiel’s altar was to last for seven days (Ezk 43:18-27), the same as the consecration of the altar pertaining to the tabernacle of Moses (Ex 29:37; Hurowitz 1992:275-276).

The top layer of Ezekiel’s altar was given the curious name of *Ariel* or *Har’El*, normally translated as the ‘Lion of God’ or the ‘Hearth of God’ or the ‘Mountain of God’. As the vocalisation of this word is uncertain, some have speculated that the word ‘*r’l*’ may be related to the Akkadian *Arallu*, meaning ‘underworld’ or ‘denizen of the underworld’; in Akkadian this has the sense of referring to the cosmic mountain in which the gods were born.⁴²⁸ Similarly, the ‘bosom of the earth’ is a phrase of Mesopotamian origin (Akkadian *temennu*), and was employed by Nebuchadnezzar for the foundation of his royal palace and also the foundation of Etemenanki, the great temple of Marduk in Babylon. The tops of Babylonian altars were adorned with four horns, they were built in step fashion, and their bases rested on an area denoted the ‘bosom of the earth’. While a Mesopotamian influence on Ezekiel’s altar is undeniable, this influence might not have been direct but may have come to Israel by way of Phoenicia (Albright 1968:146-148).

⁴²⁷ The measurements given in Ezekiel for the three layers of the altar are sixteen, fourteen, and twelve cubits square, with a total height of ten cubits. This coincides substantially with the measurements of Solomon’s altar as given in Chronicles. The author of Kings, for some unknown reason, does not give the measurements of the altar in his account.

⁴²⁸ See, for example, de Vaux (1965:2:406-414, but esp 412). There is no evidence that the altar belonging to the temple of Zerubbabel, built after the exile, was fashioned after the altar described by Ezekiel.

9.4 CONCLUSIONS

Architectural and literary evidence in biblical Israel can provide us with valuable clues as to the nature of the ancient institution of the temple. As always, the functionality of this evidence is largely dependent upon our ability to properly analyse the available data.

Archaeology has begun to shed some light on cultural achievements in tenth-century Israel (the age of Solomon). While no physical traces of this temple remain, many details in the construction and ornamentation of Solomon's temple can now be clarified by comparison with contemporary shrines in Canaan and Syria. Solomon's temple was built by a Canaanite architect from Tyre who followed Tyrian models. Similar floor plans and temple appurtenances (twin pillars, portable lavers, the great altar, walls decorated with cherubim, lions, bulls, palm trees, etc) have been excavated in Cyprus, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Even the new name of the temple, *hekhal*, was a Canaanite word derived from the Sumerian *e-gal*, "big house." The only real difference was the *invisible* presence of Yahweh mysteriously enthroned above the cherubim in the main cella, the Holy of Holies; Canaanite iconography featured gods and kings sitting on thrones supported by cherubim (Albright 1957:292-294, 298).

Despite the Canaanite and Phoenician provenance of the temple of Solomon, almost all of its architectural features, its implements, and its decorations, can be shown to be embodiments of the many manifestations of the principle of sacred space. The same may be maintained with regard to the other temples discussed in this chapter.

The literature does not provide specific linkage between Israelite temples and the primordial mound, although the Holy of Holies in all of these temples (except the desert tabernacle) was elevated above the preceding cella. There are references to the Foundation Stone in the temple of Solomon, which could be considered a representation of the primordial mound. Enclosure walls played a significant role in the various Israelite temples in helping to restrict access to authorised visitors only, preserving secrecy, and helping maintain the necessary level of sanctity and purity. Exterior and interior

decorations were consistent with each other and with other temples throughout the ancient Near East. Filled with symbolism, these decorations contributed to the nature of the temple as sacred space.

While not adhering to a strict interpretation of the tripartite floor plan, Israelite temples did offer a series of areas of graded sacred space. Pillars stood at the entrances of the Jerusalem temples, the temple of Ezekiel, and the temple of the Temple Scroll; their exact function remains unknown, but it is probable their purpose was to act as witnesses of covenants and covenant renewal ceremonies. The Tree of Life played a significant role in the Garden of Eden, in messianic imagery, and in the Enoch literature. There was a high degree of temple/palace symbiosis, particularly with regard to the temple of Solomon.

There was no statue of Yahweh that could be elevated; however, the Holy of Holies itself was elevated, and the presumed position of Yahweh on the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant would have elevated his invisible presence. Water for ablutions, and also for use in the preparation and execution of animal sacrifices, was available in Israelite temples as elsewhere. There was no specific cult of the dead, but Israelites of the first millennium BCE desired to be buried near the temple; this longing was also expressed by the early Christians. Altars and animal sacrifices were performed at all of the Israelite temples; this appears to have been the primary function of these institutions.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Abstract

In this chapter, the concepts of sacred space and its corollary doctrines discussed in chapters two through four will be summarised. Afterward, the various elements identified in chapters five through nine regarding significant features of temple architecture will resurface. This chapter will synthesise all of these characteristics and demonstrate that they were not of limited or local application, but transcended boundaries of time and space. Additional examples will be cited along with an expanded commentary. These architectural elements have been grouped into three main classifications: Techniques of Construction and Decoration, General Temple Arrangement, and Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia.

10.1 SUMMARY OF THE CONCEPT OF SACRED SPACE

Sacred space was a sufficiently compelling factor in ancient societies and cultures that it justified the central role of the temple in civilisation.

Sacred space had to be distinguished from profane space. The source of this distinction sprang from contact with the holy. As the desert or wilderness was the image of profane space, the temple was the essence of sacred space.

The term 'temple' itself reinforced the status of the temple as sacred space, for the very designation of the temple as the house of the deity was sufficient to impart a degree of sanctity to it. The temple was a model or representation of the cosmos and was cosmic in nature, for it was a place of revelation from which decrees went forth. It was perceived as the source of all blessings. The temple was recognised as the centre place, both horizontally, as it stood at the centre of the earth, and vertically, as the centre of the *axis mundi*.

There were gradations in sacred space; some space was considered more sacred than others. Multiple temple courtyards represented transitional areas from the outside profane space to the temple itself. Even the temple building consisted of multiple areas, each more sacred than the previous, culminating in the innermost chamber that was most holy as it symbolised the presence of the deity.

Temples were frequently situated on mountains or near springs or some other topographical phenomenon; these areas were believed to be 'natural' sacred space. In the absence of natural aspects, various architectural strategies were devised to 'socially construct' sacred space.

The concept of sacred space included the ancient view of the temple as a mountain. The Garden of Eden, believed by some to be the first temple, was likely a mountain located at the centre of the earth. Mountains were symbolic of the primordial mound. Some mountains were regarded as cosmic; from them edicts and decrees were issued that affected the cosmos. The identification of temple as mountain caused the temple to acquire cosmic traits as well. Mountains were regarded as the pillars of heaven and earth; they were the *omphalos* (the navel of the earth).

Sacred mountains were considered to be the site of the assembly of the gods. They were the source of life-giving water. They were the battleground of conflicting natural forces. The fertility and stability of the world was determined upon these mountains. Mountains acquired sanctity from specific beliefs or events; actual height was irrelevant.

The construction of the temple, as a miniature replica of the cosmos, was akin to creation itself. As the creation brought about order in the cosmos and overcame chaos, so the building of the temple brought order to the earth. Temple ritual included the frequent recitation of the cosmogonic myth, which served to restore or re-create sacred time anew. The temple thereby symbolised not only sacred space but also sacred time, that time in the beginning when all things were first created, the *illud tempus*. Ritual became a vehicle

for imparting sacred status to the temple.

Temples were more than mere representations of the heavenly temple; they were regarded as actual extensions of that temple. The temple was built according to plans revealed from heaven. As the heavenly temple was the centre of the cosmos and the source of order, arrangement and justice in the heavens, even so the earthly temple was the centre of the world and brought order where once was chaos on earth. The rituals and liturgy of the one were representative of the rituals and liturgy in the other. Both the earthly and the heavenly temple resided on the *axis mundi*, with a corridor of sacred space connecting them. As an extension of the heavenly temple, the earthly temple was the ultimate corporeal expression of sacred space.

The temple was the site of the *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage. Preceded by rites of initiation, the *hieros gamos* was the culmination of temple drama and ritual. The *hieros gamos*, performed (in Mesopotamia) in the *gigunu*, the high temple atop the ziggurat, played a vital role in annual vegetation rites meant to ensure fertility and abundant rain.

The role of the temple regarding kingship was substantial. Even as the god ruled in the cosmos, the temple symbolised rule on earth for the god's regent, the king/pharaoh. As the representative of the god, the king was authorised to perform all temple rites and rituals. The distinction between temple rituals and kingship rituals became blurred until finally the rites of the temple and of kingship, especially coronation and enthronement ceremonies, began to mirror one another quite closely. Temple ordinances, especially those of initiation, appeared in coronation rites; these shared rituals included ablutions and anointings, the taking of a new name, a new garment, a mock combat, the *hieros gamos*, and processions.

Temple activities and ritual were governed by solemn vows of secrecy, for that which was sacred had to be kept segregated from the profane. The compelling requirement for secrecy in the temple was graphically portrayed by certain features of temple architecture. These included high enclosure walls to deflect the gaze of the inquisitive

and the curious, labyrinthine entryways, the elevation of those areas of the temple complex of greater holiness (which prohibited those on lower levels from observing much of the activity on higher levels), military-style gates and entryways that ensured controlled access to authorised personnel only, the bent-axis approach, and offset curtains or doors leading to the most sacred areas to prohibit inadvertent glances into the inner sanctum. Secrecy was strictly adjured in temple ritual as sacred teachings were given enabling one to progress in the next life (especially in Egyptian temples—witness the Book of the Dead that contained the names and passwords of the sentinels in the netherworld).

The temple was a symbol of the Tree of Life, originally placed in the centre of the Garden of Eden, and therefore it resided on the *axis mundi*, the place where worlds touch. It also represented tremendous fertility and abundance, as its roots reached down to the waters of life. The tree was tied to kingship and coronation ceremonies, as the king's sceptre was considered to be a branch taken from the Tree of Life.

Water in the vicinity of ancient temples was a symbol of the primordial ocean, as typified by Solomon's brazen sea or Egyptian sacred lakes. Four streams came forth from Eden, and one was depicted from underneath Ezekiel's temple, to provide fertility and abundance to the entire earth, a powerful symbol of the temporal and spiritual blessings streaming forth from the temple.

The doctrine of sacred space and its corollary ideologies, as outlined above, along with their geographical distribution, are included in Table 1 in the Appendix.

10.2 SUMMARY OF REGIONAL EXPRESSIONS OF SACRED SPACE

In Mesopotamia a number of architectural techniques to create sacred space and to demarcate the sacred from the profane were applied. One method was the development of a series of areas of graded sanctity; plans were devised wherein one could go through a series of graded sacred space, each area more sacred than the former, and thereby effect a

safe transition from the outside profane world to the sacred innermost cella of the temple. These steps increased the sense of awe and magnified the *mysterium tremendum*. Another method consisted in the creation of the ziggurat, which could be seen from far distances; this enhanced the prestige of the temple. Other techniques were pursued in both interior and exterior decoration, including wall colouring, niches and rabbets, mosaics, and other creative methods of adornment to alleviate the anaesthetic surface of uninterrupted mud brick.

The massive and majestic stones used in temple construction in ancient Egypt, by their sheer size, created a sense of awe in the beholder. Temple forms and patterns, when once developed, were repeated throughout ancient Egypt, while still allowing for minor variations. The Egyptian temple, like its counterparts elsewhere in the ancient Near East, was considered to be a house for the god and hence a microcosm of the universe. Egyptian religious architecture ‘required a clearly calculated order, axial orientation, symmetry, dimensions, and proportions’ (Nakhai 1997:174), and was filled with symbolism.

In Hittite Anatolia, the word used for “temple” was simply “house,” meaning “house of the god.” The images of the gods were mobile; they frequently visited one another, particularly at festivals and auspicious occasions such as a solstice or an equinox or a coronation (Boyce 2002:154). The Hittite liturgical calendar was filled with festivals and other cultic occasions suitable for processions. The Hittites displayed a strong preference for natural, open-air sites; early temples were merely small open spaces in the mountainous terrain. Larger temple complexes developed in major urban areas, especially Boghazköy (Hattusas). These were marked by outer enclosure walls containing fortified gateways. Progression through an interior courtyard typically led to a smaller, more holy courtyard that might contain an altar. From this courtyard entrance was afforded into a small inner sanctuary that contained the divine image standing on a pedestal (or occasionally sitting upon a throne).

In the Levant, temple architecture was quite nondescript compared to the monumental religious architecture in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Smaller sanctuaries, private shrines, or holy places are often difficult to identify; larger cultic temples are easier to distinguish as they tended to conform to a typology. Early temples exhibited a broadroom form, which eventually gave way, by the middle of the second millennium, to a longroom style. Other styles developed in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. In later eras, large temple complexes developed in urban areas. All portions of the complex were considered sacred space, although there were gradations in sanctity, and all portions were included within an outer enclosure, or *temenos*, wall. Temple building in Canaan decreased after the Israelite conquest, yet smaller temples outside the boundaries of the Israelite tribes continued to survive at least until the beginning of the first millennium. Additional places of worship in a natural setting ('sacred groves' and 'high places') were prominent in the region both before and during the Israelite monarchy.

Many details in the construction and ornamentation of Solomon's temple can now be clarified by comparison with contemporary shrines in Canaan and Syria. Solomon's only real innovation, though, was a significant one, for in his temple the *invisible* presence of Yahweh was mysteriously enthroned above the cherubim in the Holy of Holies, whereas non-Israelite Canaanite iconography featured gods and kings sitting on thrones supported by cherubim. Despite the Canaanite and Phoenician provenance of the temple of Solomon, almost all of its architectural features, its implements, and its decorations, can be shown to be embodiments of the many manifestations of the principle of sacred space.

10.3 ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION OF SACRED SPACE

Many architectural features were employed in ancient temples to portray the concept of sacred space in one or more of its many facets. Some of these features related to the mythological origins of the temple in the mists of pre-history; others related to the intrinsic functions of the temple in the religious, political, and cultural environments of the ancient Near East; still others related to the eschaton and the predicted millennial era. A thorough and comprehensive understanding of the temple in the ancient Near East

cannot be grasped without an awareness of the overarching role of sacred space as expressed in temple architecture.

The significant architectural attributes identified earlier in the thesis will resurface, with expanded commentary and examples. These attributes were symbols representing hidden meanings; these hidden meanings all revolve around the concept of sacred space and its ancillary mythologies, for they overarch and undergird all temple symbolism. It will become obvious that these architectural points were consistent throughout large areas of the ancient Near East.

In order to maintain a consistent flow in the text and avoid lengthy digressions, some of the relevant commentary has been removed and placed in two excursuses at the end of the chapter. These addenda provide additional enrichment material on their respective topics: (1) Angkor Wat and (2) Stretching the Cord. Both of these topics are concerned with the section on orientation, alignment, and measurement.

Architectural expressions of sacred space have been divided into three categories: (1) Techniques of Construction and Decoration; (2) General Temple Arrangement; and (3) Arrangement of Cultic Areas and Ritual Paraphernalia.

10.4 TECHNIQUES OF CONSTRUCTION AND DECORATION

In this category the following properties will be considered: (1) the concept of the primordial mound; (2) the practice of foundation deposits; (3) the purposes and functions of enclosure walls; (4) principles of orientation, alignment, and measurement; and (5) exterior and interior decoration.

10.4.1 The primordial mound

As noted earlier (3.4), it was a widespread belief throughout the ancient Near East that the temple represented the primordial mound or hillock, the first land that emerged from

the waters that covered the earth during the creation process. This initial outcropping of land in the midst of hostile, chaotic and unruly waters has long been considered sacred space (Burrows 1935:48-50). One component of this doctrine, namely, the practice of building a temple on a base of ritually pure sand that represented the mound, was clearly demonstrated in Mesopotamia, for example, Khafaje (5.2.3.1) and also in Egypt at Medamud (6.2.3.1), Hierakonpolis (6.2.3.3), Heliopolis (6.3.1), and elsewhere. This practice was not architecturally necessary but was deemed requisite despite the added time and expense entailed in this procedure. The added time and expense was justified because it had to be demonstrated that the temple was built on the primordial mound (Badawy 1966a:101), and was therefore sacred space.

The motif of the primordial mound appeared in temple myths from Babylon in the Gudea cylinders (Cyl A XXI 18-27, ‘foundation of the abyss’, and Cyl B V 7, ‘house of the abyss’, thus the “house (=mountain) rising up out of the primordial waters” (Lundquist 1983:208), but it was in the cosmogonies of Egypt that this idea reached full fruition.⁴²⁹ It

⁴²⁹ The following quotation from Frankfort (1978:151-154) is lengthy but expresses the point well: ‘Within the expanse of the primeval waters he [the sun-god] created dry land, the Primeval Hill, which became the center of the earth, or at least the place round which the earth solidified. Local traditions differed as regards the details; but everywhere the site of creation, the first land to emerge from chaos, was thought to have been charged with vital power. And each god counting as Creator was made to have some connection with this Hill. We have seen that Ptah, as earth-god, was actually declared to be the Hill itself as *Ptah-Ta-Tjenen*, for the notion of a primeval hill is not dependent on the belief that the Creator is a sun-god. In fact, each and every temple was supposed to stand on it—another instance of the primitive tendency to stress relationship and participation to the point of identity. This thought is applied even to temples built quite late in the history of Egypt... The Ptolemaic temple of Philae is inscribed: “This (the temple) came into being when nothing at all had yet come into being and the earth was still lying in darkness and obscurity.” And Hatshepsut states in an inscription: “I know that Karnak is the Light Mountain (horizon) upon earth, the venerable hill of primeval beginning...” The queen, by beautifying Karnak, honored the center from which the creation took its start...

‘The identity of the temples with the Primeval Hill amounts to a sharing of essential quality and is expressed in their names and in their architectural arrangements by means of ramps or steps. Each temple rose from its entrance through its successive courts and halls to the Holy of Holies, which was thus situated at a point noticeably higher than the entrance. There the statue, barge, or fetish of the god was kept, resting upon the Primeval Hill. There is some evidence to show that the throne of Pharaoh—himself a god—also imitated the Primeval Hill. It was reached by steps and was sometimes placed upon a double stairway. In writing, too, single or double flights of stairs symbolise the Primeval Hill.

‘Similar forms were used in funerary architecture, for the plot of ground from which creation proceeded was obviously a depository of creative energy powerful enough to carry anyone who might be buried there through the crisis of death to rebirth. It is for this reason that funerary figurines appear at the top of a flight of stairs. Originally this equation of the tomb with the Primeval Hill was effected by the king, the likeness of Re among men, and it found its clearest expression in the royal tombs. Even in the Nineteenth Dynasty, Seti I’s cenotaph at Abydos supported the sarcophagus upon an island rising from the subsoil water which was identified with Nun; and the island was made to resemble the hieroglyph of the Primeval Hill by the

is true that in all cultures of the ancient Near East the basic creation plot was the same: in the beginning the earth was covered with water, and darkness was upon the face of the deep (Gn 1:2). But these waters were not friendly, nurturing, life-giving waters; these waters were devoid of life, dark, foreboding, chaotic, and opposed to the organisation of the elements of earth.⁴³⁰ In Mesopotamia these waters were known as *apsu*, variously transliterated *apzu*, *absu*, *abzu*;⁴³¹ in Canaan they were *Yam*; in Egypt these waters were known as *Nun*; and in the Hebrew texts *tehom*. All these terms meant basically the same thing, that is, the primordial waters that ruled the earth before the creative process was initiated.

While many ancient cosmogonic texts refer to the initial outcropping of a spot of land called the primordial mound, it is only the Egyptian texts that offer a glimpse of how the actual creation process was believed to have occurred. This is despite the fact that even the Egyptian texts were more concerned with the *results*, rather than the *process*, of creation. The closest description of the actual event may be found in the texts from Edfu which related that the primordial mound somehow made its way above the surface of the waters. Almost immediately the waters of *Nun* rose up and attempted to deluge the small bit of land, but before they could overcome it, the Creator god seized possession of it and

addition of two antithetic dummy staircases. Another architectural symbol for the Hill, the pyramid, was introduced in the Third Dynasty and modified in the Fourth. Djoser changed the superstructure of the royal tomb from the flat oblong mound, the mastaba, in use at least from Menes' days, and realised the equation of his resting-place with the fountainhead of emerging life, the Primeval Hill, by giving his tomb the shape of a step pyramid, a three-dimensional form, as it were, of the hieroglyph for the Hill. The kings of the Fourth Dynasty substituted the true pyramid, which was the specific Heliopolitan form of the Primeval Hill, the Ben-ben.

'In Heliopolis there was a place called "The High Sand" which was part of the sun temple and no doubt counted as the Primeval Hill...

'Outside Heliopolis the Primeval Hill was differently conceived. At Hermopolis it was an island in a lake—which symbolised the primeval waters—and was called the "Isle of Flames" with a clear allusion to the glow of that momentous sunrise of the First Day...

'The waters surrounding the Primeval Hill were, naturally, the waters of chaos; these, personified in the god Nun, were still supposed to surround the earth, an inexhaustible reserve of latent life and fertility. And the subsoil water, as well as the Nile flood, was thought to flow out from Nun. Since the Primeval Hill was the place of sunrise and creation, and hence the place of rebirth and resurrection, the waters of Nun which surrounded it became those waters of death which, in the imaginations of many peoples, separate the world of the living from the world of the dead...'

⁴³⁰ Water played several roles in cosmogonies throughout the ancient Near East. Among these roles three in particular may be noted: (1) water's role in the initial combat when it was personified as a serpent or dragon; (2) its role as a boundary *vis-à-vis* the dry land; and (3) its role as a destructive agent, as in flood stories (Wyatt 2001:95).

⁴³¹ Thus the etymological origin of the English word *abyss*.

drove off the hostile *Nun*.⁴³² The Creator reinforced his possession and thwarted *Nun* by building a temple on the land; this temple was a mere shrine, neither large, monumental, nor ornate. But even this temporary shrine was sufficient to impart sanctity to the mound and forced the waters to subside. ‘From all this evidence we can conclude that the primeval mound... was indeed regarded as the original nucleus of the world of the gods in the primeval age, from which this world was created’ (Reymond 1969:59; M Smith 2002). This became the centre place, the site of the future temple, and indeed, in the curious way in which ancient Egyptian religion looked at these things, the site of all future Egyptian temples.⁴³³ This is merely one feature of the cosmogonic myth in ancient Egypt, namely, that every temple claimed to be built on the *ben*-stone, which was the first dry land to appear from the primordial ocean (*Nun*), and was comparable in its symbolism to sacred mountains and *omphaloi* found in other traditions. This concept placed Egyptian temples at the centre of the world and thus at the centre of absolute reality.

It has been suggested that the idea of the primordial mound was natural to the Egyptians, for their land was subsumed annually under the flood of the Nile, and as the waters subsided they did not fail to note the appearance of the dry land once again. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that in ancient Egypt virtually all temples were perceived as having originated on the primordial mound that first emerged from *Nun*.⁴³⁴ ‘There could, of course, have been only one such original place’, admitted Reymond (1969:185, 261, 327), but she went on to explain that ‘every cultus-place took this myth of creation and adapted it to local needs, and thus every temple in Egypt appears to have claimed to be the original place of the creation of the Earth’.⁴³⁵ Many temples were indeed built on or

⁴³² Similar ideas were expressed in the Hermopolitan doctrine of creation, in which the earliest phase of the terrestrial world was portrayed by a mound upon which the Sun god revealed himself.

⁴³³ Brandon (1963:18-20, and for particular application to Thebes, pp 52, 55); Wilkinson (2000:170); Wyatt (2001:57).

⁴³⁴ Egyptian cities actually competed with one another and attempted to augment their reputations by claiming to be the site of the original primeval hillock, the ‘holy places of the first time’ (Clifford 1972:25-27; Wyatt 2001:62-63).

⁴³⁵ Reymond (1969:266) also pointed out the well-known feature in the Osireion at Abydos, where a round stone had been carved as a water channel and placed before the sarcophagus, and suggested this might have been an attempt to recreate the myth of the primordial mound. A similar setting may be observed at the cultus-place of Osiris at Philae.

adjacent to real mounds (Medamud, 6.2.3.1). Furthermore, the Egyptian custom of raising the floor level of the temple as one approached the most sacred area in the rear was meant to symbolise the presence of the sacred mound (Grimal 1992:265).

As the primordial mound was the first dry land to appear from the waters of darkness and chaos, it also held the key to maintaining control over these unruly waters, forever at enmity with the forces of light and order. This was the source of the concept of the Foundation Stone, often portrayed as a real stone, which was believed to function as a seal or cap over the turbulent waters. This idea was known in Israel, Mesopotamia, and later in Islam. In the Jerusalem temple the Foundation Stone, which capped and controlled the primordial waters of *tehom*, was located in the most sacred place. In ancient Sumer the innermost, most sacred area of a temple was sometimes referred to as the “holy mound.”⁴³⁶ Islamic traditions suggest that the Kaaba, which besides taking the form of a perfect cube, represented an image of the cosmos and had four sides representing the four elements (water, fire, air, earth), descended to earth from heaven and capped the primordial waters (Lundquist 1993:6-10). In Mesopotamia the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish* states that Ea built his ‘dwelling place over the nether waters’ after defeating Apsu; Marduk did the same thing after defeating Tiamat. Similarly, the temple of Eninnu at Lagash was ‘said to have been founded on the nether ocean, while that at Eridu was termed “House of the nether sea (E-engura(k))”’ (George 1993:82; van Buren 1952:293). Here, as elsewhere, subsequent temples were built upon the same site⁴³⁷ and were based on platforms created by filling in the surviving excavations of the previous temple with mud brick (Oates 1960:45).

Analogous myths are found at Heliopolis, where Lucian was shown a chasm into which

⁴³⁶ The *abzu*, an area typically found in Sumerian temples, was an actual pool of water, which could be used for representing the primordial waters. Another area, the *duku*, is usually translated “holy mound” or “holy hill.” It is not certain that its function was to represent the primordial mound, but the name is suggestive (Wilson 1999:309-311).

⁴³⁷ The tenacity of maintaining the same site for successive temples was demonstrated in ancient Israel. Abraham was commanded to take his son Isaac and sacrifice him atop Mount Moriah. Later King David purchased the same site from Araunah the Jebusite, who had used it as a threshing-floor, as the site on which he wished to build the temple. This site was also the location of Zerubbabel’s temple, later rebuilt by Herod.

the waters of the flood receded, and at Athens in the sanctuary of Zeus (Gaster 1950: 445-446; Wyatt 2001:137).

The persistent and widespread beliefs that temples stood atop the primordial mound and that they capped the unruly primeval waters were thus expressed in temple architecture and construction in a number of ways: building upon a base of ritually pure sand (Mesopotamia and Egypt), raising the floor level as one approached the most sacred rear portion of the temple (Egypt), referring to certain areas within the temple as the “holy mound” or equivalent (Sumeria), and the presence of a real or figurative “Foundation Stone” (Israel). These features of building construction were not architecturally necessary; instead, they added substantially to the cost of the temple and the time it took to build. Collectively, these architectural features can be explained only in their relation to the concept of the primordial mound. These were powerful expressions of the concept of the temple as sacred space.

10.4.2 Foundation deposits

Foundation deposits were part of the foundation rituals that accompanied the construction of a new (or renovation of an old) temple. Foundation deposits, typically consisting of jars filled with bronze, silver, or gold statues and other precious objects, were frequently buried under sacred buildings. These deposits have been found primarily in Mesopotamia (Roux 1992:210-211) and Egypt (Grimal 1992:168-169; Weinstein 1971-1972: 133-135; Winlock 1922:28-30) but also in Canaan (Nakhai 1997:170), though not in Hittite Anatolia (Bittel 1976:67). In every location where they occurred, foundation deposits appear to have fulfilled a symbolic purpose not unlike that of the enclosure walls: to demarcate the boundaries of the temple, divide sacred from profane space, and keep evil forces and spirits of the underworld at bay. Like the primordial mound, foundation deposits contributed nothing to architectural necessity or integrity; their sole function was related to the concept of sacred space. Foundation deposits also possessed a certain historical value, but they were much more important as a symbolic marking off of the area of the temple and protecting it from the incursion of evil forces, thus helping to

establish and maintain the temple site as sacred space.

10.4.3 Enclosure walls

Exterior enclosure walls have consistently been found surrounding temples and temple complexes throughout the ancient Near East. With rare exceptions, their purposes were fourfold: (1) to provide physical protection from invaders; (2) to clearly demarcate inner sacred space from the outer profane space; (3) to keep the chaotic waters of creation from encroaching upon the sacred temple precincts⁴³⁸ (graphically represented in some Egyptian temples); and (4) to protect the secrecy of the temple rituals performed within.⁴³⁹ The first of these functions was purely pragmatic, as enclosure walls may be found around palaces, other important buildings, and even entire villages, for the same defensive purpose. The importance of maintaining secrecy within the temple was discussed earlier (4.6). The other two purposes of enclosure walls, deeply connected with the idea of sacred space, will be examined in more detail here.

In Mesopotamia the enclosure walls contained temple towers that were remarkably ornate. Entryways were guarded by painted or carved griffins, lions, and other fantastic creatures, all of which served to instil within the visiting pilgrim a sense of leaving profane space behind and entering a space set apart, a world of the 'other'. Towers were placed at regular intervals in the enclosure walls of Egyptian temples.⁴⁴⁰ Temples in Boghazköy were encircled by enclosure walls (Frankfort 1954:217-218). The temple of Herod at Jerusalem contained multi-lingual signs at all entrances, warning potential trespassers that 'they would only have themselves to thank for their ensuing deaths' (2.6). The temple of Ezekiel (9.2.6) and the temple of the Temple Scroll (9.2.5) are both

⁴³⁸ The temple of Solomon at Jerusalem did not depend on the enclosure walls to keep the primeval waters under control, but instead relied on the Foundation Stone in the Holy of Holies which capped the waters of *tehom*.

⁴³⁹ High enclosure walls not only aided in maintaining secrecy regarding what transpired in the temple courtyards; they also served to make the temple complex visible at a great distance, thus adding to the prestige of the temple. This was an architectural strategy for portraying sacred space.

⁴⁴⁰ As noted in Chapter Six, an increased emphasis on enclosure walls was a characteristic feature of temples in New Kingdom Egypt. These crenelated walls, with towers, gateways, and massive pylons flanking the main entryways, imparted a distinct military flavour to the temple area and, no doubt, suitably impressed Egyptian commoners who knew they could never enter within.

notable for their enclosure walls featuring large, military-style gates, where visitors could be thoroughly checked for purity. Ablutions were required of visitors as they passed through the gates in the enclosure walls in order to maintain the required level of temple purity.

There is literary evidence that temple enclosure walls in Mesopotamia and Israel were thought to withstand the waters of creation, but it is in Egypt that architectural expression of this idea may be seen by a wavy, undulating pattern visible in the remains of some of these walls. These walls were built in an alternating concave and convex pattern in order to represent the waves of the primeval ocean held at bay by the sanctity of the temple area. These “wavy” walls have been found only around temples or areas controlled by temples, giving the impression of the temple as conqueror over the waters and as fortresses that the waters could not overcome.⁴⁴¹

The enclosure walls of temples prevented a careless individual from straying into forbidden precincts. Enclosure walls were a major architectural strategy in portraying the concept of sacred space, as demonstrated by their often enormous size, military towers, crenelated walls, guarded gateways, the artistic rendering of fantastic animals as guardians, warnings of consequences for trespassing, and the fact that they were occasionally built in a wavy pattern to represent the primordial waters, held at bay by the sacredness of the temple precincts. Enclosure walls had genuine architectural functions, to be sure, but it is clear that they also had great symbolic relevance to the underlying concept of sacred space.

10.4.4 Orientation, alignment, and measurement

As a general statement, it may be posited that ancient Near Eastern temples were frequently oriented toward the cardinal points and/or to various celestial bodies such as

⁴⁴¹ In addition to the wavy enclosure walls of two unfinished temples at Mazghuna (Wilkinson 2000:56-57, 133), there is a late example from Karnak. The outer enclosure wall at Karnak, built during the Thirtieth Dynasty, consisted of mud bricks that were alternately concave and convex and were intended to imitate the undulating waters of *Nun*. Each of the five gates in the wall marked a point of contact with the waters (Grimal 1992:306-307).

the sun or the polar star. This facilitated the function of the temple as an observatory where astronomical sightings were made. An exception must be made for Hittite civilisation, whose temples exhibit no discernible orientation (Gurney 1952:123).

10.4.4.1 Orientation and alignment. The antiquity of the practice of aligning temples with heavenly bodies is beyond question. One of the earliest instances was found at Nabta Playa, in southern Egypt, with an astronomically-aligned stone circle dating between 6,000 and 6,500 years ago (Wilkinson 2000:16). In addition to being archaic, orientation and alignment were extremely widespread and can be found throughout the entire Near East, Persia, India, the Far East,⁴⁴² and Mesoamerica.

Mesopotamian temples are known to have either their four sides or their four corners aligned with the four cardinal directions.⁴⁴³ This is evident, for example, in the Ekishnugal complex (Wilson 1999:322). Other specific examples, such as prehistoric strata 11 through 6 at Eridu, or strata 14 through 12 at Tepe Gawra, have been provided by Perkins (1949:67-70, 87).

Albright (1968:144-150) provided an extensive discussion of possible solar alignment in Solomon's temple in conjunction with potential cosmic connotations. Gaster (1950:67) pointed out that the temple of Solomon was not quite on the axis of a true east-west line, but was constructed with a slight shift towards the northeast. The reason for this shift was to enable the temple to face the summit of the Mount of Olives, thus causing the morning sunrise on the autumnal equinox to shine directly upon the altar at the eastern entrance to the temple.⁴⁴⁴ Even the wilderness tabernacle was pitched along an east-west axis.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² The finest example of temple alignment with celestial bodies may be the great temple complex at Angkor Wat in Cambodia. See the *Excursus: Angkor Wat* at the end of this chapter.

⁴⁴³ This pattern was followed in the orientation of the Kaaba, whose corners point in the direction of the cardinal points. There is a *hadith* that the original alignment of the Kaaba when initially constructed by Abraham was much truer in its correspondence to the points of the compass (Strathern & Hauglid 1999:284-286).

⁴⁴⁴ Morgenstern had previously noted the alignment of Solomon's temple with the sun on New Year's Day, when the eastern gates of the temple were thrown open to allow the direct rays of the sun to penetrate the interior of the temple (Morgenstern 1929:1-37, but see esp 17-19, 31-32, 35; 1935: 1-148, esp 76; 1952-1953: 1-74, esp 45-46, 55; and 1963: 7-8; see also May 1937:309ff; Hollis 1933:87-110).

⁴⁴⁵ So suggested Nibley (1966:603-605). For an opposing viewpoint, see Parunak (1978:28-33).

The Garden of Eden, viewed by some scholars as a prototypical temple,⁴⁴⁶ featured an eastward orientation. Moreover, the garden itself was planted in the eastern portion of Eden (Gn 2:8). The four rivers that originated in Eden and flowed outward were presumed to flow to the four corners of the earth, meaning the four points of the compass. (While one of the four rivers is specified as flowing eastward, the direction of the other three is not explicitly stated.) Furthermore, after the expulsion of Adam and Eve, flaming cherubim were positioned at the east entrance of Eden to prohibit the return of the prodigal couple (Gn 3:24); this suggests that the eastern gate was the primary if not the only entrance (Parry 1994a:131-133).

A Canaanite temple at Tel Lachish was discovered to have a staircase with seven steps, oriented towards the east (Ussishkin 1981:118). In general, Syrian and Canaanite temples were laid out on an east-west axis, but there were many exceptions due to local topography and other conditions.

Egyptian temples were frequently oriented not toward the east or toward heavenly bodies but toward the Nile.⁴⁴⁷ Thus, while the typical orientation of ancient Near Eastern temples was on an east-west axis, Egyptian temples were commonly based on a north-south line. This may have been due to local topographical conditions or for aesthetic purposes with regard to the exterior of the temple; yet even when the temple exterior was aligned with the Nile, their interiors often conformed to the usual east-west orientation through the use of paintings, solar images, and other architectural features and designs. In

⁴⁴⁶ Parry (1994a:126-151). The Garden of Eden is described in *Jubilees* 4:26 as one of the four holy places that belong to the Lord, and in *Jubilees* 8:19 as the 'holy of holies'. This may be related to *Jubilees* 3:9-13, wherein a woman is prohibited from entering the sanctuary for forty days after bearing a son but must wait eighty days after giving birth to a daughter, for tradition states that Adam was created on the fortieth day after creation, while Eve was not created until the eightieth (Knibb 2005:410).

⁴⁴⁷ While Egyptian temple orientation appears to differ from elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the underlying psychological principles remained constant. In essence, 'orientation' was based simply on facing the most prominent feature of the outside world, thus, in most cases, the rising sun in the east. In Egypt, however, this was often replaced by the flow of the Nile. As Egyptians typically faced upstream (toward the south), the south sometimes replaced the east as the most important of the cardinal points. Nevertheless, Egyptians were also greatly concerned about the journey of life, from birth to death and then on to rebirth, and this frequently prompted an east-west temple alignment. Here the east represented the past and the west the future. This idea was reiterated on a daily basis by the passage of the sun across the sky (Wyatt 2001:50).

other cases, notably at Luxor and Edfu, the north-south line was maintained within the interior of the temple as well as the exterior; this was due either to the orientation of earlier temples built on the same site or by other geographical or topographical exigencies. Even so, more than a few Egyptian temples were oriented toward the sun or important stars.⁴⁴⁸ The shrines of Akhenaten or the Great Temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel were constructed to allow the maximum influx of sunlight.⁴⁴⁹ The temple at Elephantine was oriented toward Sirius, whose annual rising was a precursor to the yearly Nile flooding. Other temples were oriented toward some significant local point or determined by special needs, such as the Osireion in the temple of Sethos I at Abydos, which was oriented toward a natural spring on which it was dependent. Water from this spring was used to make a pool around the temple compound to symbolise the waters of *Nun*, from which emerged the primordial mound (Wilkinson 2000:36-37).

Temples were sometimes oriented to the North Star, the point around which the heavens seemed to revolve. In this manner the temple would be located along the *axis mundi*, thus facilitating contact between heaven, earth, and netherworld.⁴⁵⁰

The principles of orientation and alignment contributed to the portrayal of sacred space in the temple in a number of ways. Aligning the temple with various heavenly bodies facilitated the function of the temple as an observatory, where sightings could be made verifying the correct dates for feasts, festivals, new moons, and the New Year, and where eclipses, which were ominous omens, could be predicted. Alignment of the temple with the cardinal points suggested the world-wide effect of blessings emanating from the temple and further pointed out the temple as a cosmic structure. Solar alignment allowed

⁴⁴⁸ A recent study of 650 Egyptian temples, dating from the beginning of the third millennium down to the Roman era, suggests that astronomy played a large part in their construction and orientation. For example, the central sanctuary at Karnak was situated so that the sun shone directly on it during the winter solstice. These theories are bolstered by hieroglyphs on interior temple walls showing that the ceremony of stretching the cord was governed by astronomical considerations (Belmonte 2009:7).

⁴⁴⁹ The temples at Amarna were not aligned in any discernible fashion at all; the devotion of Akhenaten to Amun as a solar deity was architecturally expressed with open spaces in the temple courtyards rather than strict solar alignment.

⁴⁵⁰ Thus Burrows (1935:57-59) and Nibley (1984b:25): the keys of the kingdom given to Peter really designated the keys to the temple, since it was only within the temple, residing on the *axis mundi*, that a mortal like Peter could have power to 'bind on earth' and have it 'bound in heaven' (Mt 16:19).

the full sun to shine on the altar and/or the temple interior on auspicious occasions such as solstices and equinoxes. Alignment with the Polar Star accentuated the temple's position on the *axis mundi*.

10.4.4.2 *Measurement.* Ancient temples everywhere, not just in the Near East, were laid out according to a type of sacred geometry.⁴⁵¹ The purpose of this geometry was twofold: first, it was meant to be an accurate model of the heavenly temple, and second, inasmuch as the temple was considered a miniature model of the cosmos, it was necessary that it should be aligned with various heavenly bodies.⁴⁵² Accuracy in alignment and measurement was therefore vital; a misstep in either area would not only invalidate the legitimacy of the temple but could result in disaster instead of blessing. At the very least, rites and ordinances performed in such a temple would be null and void (van Buren 1952:293-306).

Descriptions of temple building often began by stipulating the measurements of the building, at least its external measurements and the size of the various courtyards.⁴⁵³ The measurements were theoretically made by king or pharaoh, though it may be assumed that their results were validated by professional surveyors, astronomers, and mathematicians (Hurowitz 1992:40, 62, 227-28). It was not unusual for the king or prophet to report being taken on a "tour" of the complex, led by a man with a measuring reed, rod, or line, to enable him to visualise the final result.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Specific temples in far-flung places conforming to this principle include Angkor Wat in Cambodia (which is oriented to heavenly bodies perhaps more than any other structure anywhere), the Kaaba in Mecca, Mayan temples at Tikal in the Peten region of Guatemala, and Germanic temples with their *Irmisul*, or sacred pole, thought to hold up the heavens (Lundquist 1993:12-16).

⁴⁵² Oppenheim (1944:58) noted that even in the case of rebuilding a ruined temple, the architects had to follow the measurements of the previous temple precisely, 'neither projecting nor recessing a finger's breadth'.

⁴⁵³ Attempts today to duplicate the exact measurements of ancient Near Eastern temples are nigh impossible, for there was no official standard of measurement across time and space. In practice, architects, masons and craftsmen often measured with their own arms, hands, and fingers. A simple answer to the question of "How long was a cubit?" is not possible, as there were at least a dozen different units of length corresponding to this term, and some of these are quite impossible to determine; for example, Arab metrology reports the establishment of a "black cubit," which was obtained from a 'tall negro in the service of the Caliph' (de Vaux 1965:1:197-198).

⁴⁵⁴ In the Biblical record, Ezekiel was conducted on such a tour by an angelic personality who held in his hand a cord of linen and a measuring rod (Ezk 40:3). A similar individual, with a measuring line, appeared to Zechariah (Zch 2:5-9). In Mesopotamia, a stele portrayed the presentation of a measuring rod and a

In accordance with these requirements, highly complex foundation rituals were developed, that is, rituals necessary in the initial planning stages of a temple and in laying its foundations. The best-known example is the so-called “stretching of the cord,” which is well attested in Egyptian (and Indian) temples (see the *Excursus: Stretching the Cord* at the end of this chapter). This rite was intended to orient the foundations of the building with the cardinal directions or to align it with a heavenly body. This step was critical, for an error in the foundation would only be compounded as the building progressed.

Another common foundation ritual involved carrying images of the god for whom the temple was being built around the site. This circumambulation, which proceeded in a clockwise direction, commemorated the journey of the sun around the heavens, and was further intended to “cosmicise” the building.

Ancient temples were typically built according to a heavenly pattern revealed from above. Nabopolassar (626-605) was said to consult an oracle before building a temple tower in Babylon. He received not only approval but also specific measurements which he kept ‘in his memory as a treasure’ (Ricks & Carter 1994c:158). Ningirsu showed Gudea in a dream the plans for the temple he was to build (Hurowitz 1992:38). This was another reason why such care was taken to have the finished building conform meticulously to the architectural plan. The temple was not a mere image of the heavenly temple; it was considered an extension of that heavenly temple, and received its power from it by a direct conduit (Nibley 1994:541). This could only occur if the layout and measurements of the earthly temple conformed to the revealed plan in every detail.⁴⁵⁵

measuring rope to the king, preparatory to his building a temple. Elsewhere, Nabu and Inanna were characterised as ‘carriers of the measuring rod’. In the days of Nabonidus, surveyors were used to uncover the foundations of Ebabarra built by Naram-Sin. During the construction of Etemenanki, experts surveyed the building site and the results were confirmed by Shamash, Adad and Marduk. Similar examples could be multiplied from Assyria and Egypt. The process of measurement and surveying was even incorporated into various cosmogonies including the *Enuma Elish*, where Marduk was portrayed as examining the heavens; he measured *apsu* and founded Esarra (Hurowitz 1992:326-327).

⁴⁵⁵ Note the account of the building of Solomon’s temple in 1 Kings 6:2-36, where each step of the construction process is described in minute detail, as though the account was meant to reassure us that the building had been constructed precisely according to plan. This is true, not only of Solomon’s temple, but of Moses’ Tabernacle and Ezekiel’s temple as well. While exact dimensions are not lacking in Mesopotamian temple-building accounts, and while it may even be acknowledged that neo-Assyrian texts displayed a tendency to provide detailed measurements, the dimensions in these texts are never sufficient to

The principles of orientation, alignment, and measurement were critical features relating to the temple as sacred space. These architectural practices and strategies contributed to the portrayal of sacred space in the temple in a number of ways. Aligning the temple with various heavenly bodies facilitated the function of the temple as an observatory.

Alignment of the temple with the cardinal points suggested the world-wide effect of blessings emanating from the temple and further pointed out the temple as a cosmic structure. Solar alignment allowed the full sun to shine on the altar and/or the temple interior on auspicious occasions. Alignment with the Polar Star accentuated the temple's position on the *axis mundi*. Meticulous attention to measurement related to the temple as an authentic replica of the heavenly temple, or even as an extension of it. The development of foundation rituals, such as foundation deposits, the stretching of the cord, or circumambulation with the gods, was meant to facilitate construction and further demarcate the temple area as sacred space. Architectural features and temple rituals concerning orientation, alignment, and measurement provide compelling evidence of the cosmic nature of the temple and its underlying essence of sacred space.

10.4.5 Exterior and interior decorations

Temples throughout the ancient Near East used a variety of strategies to beautify (and thus help sanctify) their exterior and interior surfaces.

In Mesopotamia, rabbets and niches, which were exclusive to temples, attempted to relieve the monotony of mud brick surfaces. Buttresses were also used, for aesthetic as well as structural purposes. Cone-mosaic decorations were used to beautify and give variety to surfaces of mud brick, although sparingly, on various temples excavated at

allow a reconstruction of the building. At best, they may provide external measurements for length, width, and height, often given in units of brick courses. Biblical temple measurements, in contrast, seem almost designed to enable the reader to picture the construction in his mind. Nevertheless, even here there are almost insuperable difficulties, for the language of the descriptions is detailed, technical, enigmatic, and at times totally incomprehensible. Furthermore, the Biblical text itself may not be in the best state of preservation, and essential architectural information, such as the thickness of walls or the placement of windows, is almost always lacking. Regrettably, the reconstruction of any of the Biblical temples is fraught with every conceivable difficulty (Hurowitz 1992:246).

Eanna, such as the so-called “Stone Cone Mosaic” temple (5.2.1.2) built on an isolated site west of the main Eanna Precinct complex (Boehmer 1997:294). Its outer wall featured buttresses and its interior walls were decorated in the cone mosaic fashion, except coloured stones were used instead of terra cotta pieces. It is thought that the coloured stone model may have been the original form of this decorative technique and that terra cotta was used later as it was much more economical (Lloyd 1978:50-52). A distinctive element of early Egyptian temples, particularly during the First and Second Dynasties, was ‘an elaborate pattern of recesses, and salients forming “niche panelling” in a variety of styles’ (Baines 1995:304). Niche panelling in later Egyptian temples was also manifested in the architectural device of the false door.

Columns were used sparingly in Mesopotamia, probably due to the scarcity of stone suitable for such a purpose. However, their purpose was as much symbolic as it was functional, for they were carved to represent objects, especially palm trees. The so-called “Pillar Temple” at Eanna (5.2.1.2) included two rows of massive columns 2.6 meters in diameter. The columns were constructed in a primitive fashion with bricks laid in a radial pattern to form an approximate circle, suggesting a hesitant and possibly experimental approach to an innovative building technique. Cone mosaics in the columns conveyed the image of palm trunks, the palm tree being a common ornamental motif in ancient Near Eastern temples. In Egypt, where stone was abundant, columns were used prodigiously, and were frequently carved to represent palm trees, lotus or papyrus plants; in other temples they were designed to represent the tent poles of an ancient desert shrine. These features helped to portray the temple as a symbol of the cosmos, and also preserved, in architecture, the mythical origin of the Egyptian temple.

Interior paintings and carvings were quite consistent across the temple landscape of the ancient Near East. A few temples in Mesopotamia (Tell Uqair [5.2.2.1], Mari) were known to have had murals painted on the interior walls; it is difficult to tell how widespread this practice might have been, as both archaeological and textual evidence is sparse. The interior decorations of the temple of Nabu at Khorsabad (5.2.6.1) included facades embellished with glazed bricks depicting lions, eagles, bulls, fig trees, and

ploughs.⁴⁵⁶ Three smaller temples that adjoined the palace at Khorsabad also featured interior decorations using glazed bricks, portraying the same objects as the larger temple of Nabu (Frame 1997:297). One of these three temples—the Sin Temple—featured artificial palm trees and statues of females pouring water from vases, both familiar motifs of temple decoration.

The earliest preserved Egyptian temple with relief decorations was a mud brick structure of the Sixth Dynasty dedicated to the *ka* of Pepy I in the temple complex of Bastet at Tell Basta in Lower Egypt (Baines 1995:307). Later Egyptian temples featured elaborate scenes of kings and gods on their walls along with other hieroglyphs. Drawings of pennants were likely the precursor to the flagpoles that topped the massive pylons of later temples, generally interpreted as symbols of the resident deities. Paintings and hieroglyphics on the interior walls of many Egyptian temples were not mere decorations, but were clues to the nature of the rituals that transpired within, written in a form of shorthand.

Art and internal decorations in Hittite temples were crude but effective, particularly the paintings at Yazilikaya (7.2.1). The main goddess, Hapat, stood on a panther walking on mountains (Wasilewska 2009:398). Other gods were depicted as double-headed eagles; the panther and eagle were symbolic representations of the powers of the deities. Sphinxes and lions may have stood at the entrances of many Hittite temples and may also have been portrayed on temple interior walls.

A temple located in Area E at Tuleilat Ghassul (8.2.1) in the lower Jordan Valley

⁴⁵⁶ The portrayal of ploughs on the interior walls of the temples at Khorsabad might seem odd as the Assyrians were hardly noted for their agricultural endeavours; they were much more adept at military manoeuvres. However, the plough was a common motif in the ancient Near East indicating sexual prowess, and it may be that this depiction should be interpreted in this light, particularly as ancient temples were believed to bestow fertility and fecundity on their worshipers. However, there is another possible interpretation. Reliefs on Egyptian temple walls frequently represented the king as he measured out the plan for a new temple and, taking plough in hand, he overturned the earth to begin the preparations for the foundation of the new temple. This motif may apply to either original construction or repair and renovation, which were also considered as a new foundation. This was part of the mythical view of temple-construction, wherein the original construction, as well as each remodelling or repair, all happened *in illo tempore*, thus going back to the beginning of the world (Wyatt 2001:176-177).

contained remarkable wall frescoes that depicted ceremonial processions, mythical figures, and strange animals. Another building at the site contained no less than eight superimposed wall-paintings (Levi 2003:270). A temple at Alalakh IV had two pillars and sculptured lions flanking the main entrance.

Solomon's temple at Jerusalem featured decorations—gourds, open flowers, cherubim, palm trees—that were all found in contemporary temples elsewhere in the Near East. Palm trees symbolised creation and were also symbols of beauty and fruitfulness (Lv 23:40; 1 Ki 6:29, 32, 35; 7:36; 2 Chr 3:5; Cn 7:7; Ps 92:12-14; Ne 8:15; Zch 14:16-21). Paintings and carvings of cherubim were found in the Holy of Holies. The cherubim atop the Ark were thought to represent the throne of Yahweh; in the ancient Near East a pair of winged lions typically supported a throne on their backs. The walls of Ezekiel's sanctuary were panelled with wood and decorated with palm trees and cherubim, the latter having two faces, thus representing both humans and beasts. The palm trees and the cherubim thus represented the whole of creation—the human race, the animal kingdom, and the plant kingdom (Rv 4:7; 5:14; Ezk 1:5-10; 10:14). Pomegranates were traditional symbols of fertility, one of the explicit blessings tied to temple worship and sacrifice in the ancient Near East.

Formats and images used in temple decoration have been found to be quite consistent across the entire spectrum of the ancient Near East and are represented in all time periods. They were both symbolic and decorative. This exemplifies one of the architectural techniques for creating socially-constructed sacred space, namely, the use of artistic styles to beautify the temple, and the use of costly and fine materials, including wood, stone, precious metals, and fabrics, to create significant symbols and motifs. Taken together, they provide elegant witness to sacred space as the underlying ideology of temples in the ancient Near East.

10.5 GENERAL TEMPLE ARRANGEMENT

This category consists of the following attributes of ancient temples: (1) the tripartite

floor plan; (2) the curious institution of the ziggurat; (3) the meaning of temple pillars; (4) the Tree of Life; and (5) temple/palace symbiosis.

10.5.1 The tripartite floor plan

There is no doubt that the tripartite floor plan became *de rigueur* in temple architecture at an early time in the ancient Near East. It was part of an overall convenient plan that provided an orderly and rational progression as one entered into the temple complex and passed through various courtyards and antecellae of increasing sanctity. The same pattern then continued after entering the temple itself: succeeding areas tended to become smaller and more ‘holy’ until one reached the main cella, which was the focal point.

However, as noted in the previous chapter (9.3.1.2), it is a stretch to claim that the tripartite plan was present in the tabernacle of Moses, and indeed, in the Jerusalem temples as well. This temple format can only be maintained if it is posited that the eastern portion of the outer court of the desert tabernacle was somehow more holy or more sanctified than other portions of the courtyard, or if it is insisted that the entire courtyard should be considered as the equivalent of the porch of Solomon’s or Herod’s temples. It is true that the priests regarded the area between the exterior altar and the opening of the tabernacle as their exclusive reserve, but this distinction is not recognised in the Bible or in later rabbinical sources. Theoretically, laymen had access to the entire enclosure area except, of course, for the tabernacle proper (Milgrom 1970:207, n 25). For that matter, it is arguable whether the porch of the Jerusalem temples (and of Ezekiel’s) constituted a separate area worthy to be included as part of a tripartite plan. Solomon’s temple was essentially a bipartite or two-room structure; many scholars are hesitant to include the porch as an integral part of the temple (Garber 1951:6). A similar issue arises regarding temples throughout the ancient Near East wherein the statue of the resident deity was placed in a niche in the main cella rather than in a smaller, separate cella; is this niche to be considered an entirely distinct area?

Nevertheless, it is certainly true that the so-called tripartite format, over a wide expanse

of time and area, proved itself to be a favourable arrangement for offering multiple areas of graded sacred space. Manifold and sundry areas of transitional sanctity were no doubt useful in the performance of interior temple rituals with synchronous exterior feasts and festivals. Be that as it may, the presence of the tripartite plan does provide an important clue to the overall purpose of a linear, processional temple, namely, to offer a succession of sacred spaces that ultimately led to the presence and worship of God (Grimal 1992:264-265), rather than a building, such as a mandala-type temple, architecturally designed for introspection, meditation, and the mystical union of oneself with the cosmos.

The tripartite pattern appeared at the earliest periods and was found in all areas of the ancient Near East. The number of courtyards and segments of the temple varied from place to place, but the underlying purpose was the same everywhere: to provide multiple areas of graded sanctity through which one could proceed safely from outer profane space into the innermost, holiest area of the temple.

10.5.2 The ziggurat

The ziggurat was a feature unique to Mesopotamian temples (5.2.4). The ziggurat is believed to have evolved from a simple platform or *temenos* which was incorporated in Mesopotamian temple building in the early third millennium. In the beginning the purpose of the temple platform may have been to simply raise the level of the temple to a point higher than the surrounding alluvial plain and thus cause it to be visible from a greater distance; this added to the prestige of the temple. It was then but a small step to build multiple platforms, each a little smaller than the one below it, until a tower was formed upon which a temple could be perched.

The ziggurat soon became the preferred form of sacred building in Mesopotamia. Often erroneously referred to as “stepped pyramids,” ziggurats are not pyramids in either form or function.⁴⁵⁷ The Mesopotamian ziggurat was not related to Egyptian pyramids, even

⁴⁵⁷ Clifford (1972:20-22) described four modern theories regarding the function of the ziggurat: a tomb of

stepped pyramids as at Saqqara; the Egyptian pyramid was peculiar to the land of the Nile and was not exported to neighbouring areas (Clifford 1972:28-29). While pyramids in Egypt were used as burial sites, ziggurats were not tombs but sites of cultic worship.⁴⁵⁸

The ziggurat consisted of three to seven ascending levels of decreasing area, with a flat surface on top instead of a pyramidion. Mesopotamian ziggurats typically had an upper temple on the top level⁴⁵⁹ and a lower temple at the base. The lower temple featured a central courtyard surrounded by groups of rooms, of which one contained the sacred image. The image stood on a low threshold in front of a door that led to other transverse rooms; if all the doors were open, worshipers in the main temple courtyard could see the image of the god, dressed in its finery, in the innermost cella (Oppenheim 1944:55-56). The small temple at the top of the ziggurat, known as the *gigunu*, was reserved for the most sacred ordinance of the temple, which was the *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage:

The *gigunu*, in which the most important rites of the sacred marriage were carried out, was a secret place into which mortal men were forbidden to look, as befitted the sanctity of the mysteries practiced within it. It was located on the uppermost of the seven zones of the temple-tower. It was built in a pure place like the *gigunu* of the temple of the Abyss, and like it was founded upon the *Lachmu*. This suggests that, owing to the extreme holiness of the *gigunu*, the chapel crowning the temple-tower was consecrated with a repetition of the foundation rites performed when Eninnu itself was founded... (van Buren 1952:301-302).

The ziggurat was a compelling architectural device designed to promote the concept of sacred space. It accomplished this purpose by raising the level of the temple above the

gods or kings; a site of cosmological and symbolical significance; a throne of a god and a true altar; and a gigantic base for the support of a sanctuary which in turn served as the habitation of a god. Clifford discounted the first interpretation but suggested that textual and architectural evidence offer some support for the other three.

⁴⁵⁸ There were no ziggurats in Mesopotamia prior to the neo-Sumerian period, ca 2200-2000. Some scholars have questioned whether the Biblical Tower of Babel story described a ziggurat in the Babylon area, as Babylon at that time was a mere hamlet unworthy of such a structure. They argued that the Tower of Babel was really the ziggurat at Ur, finished by Ur-Nammu who reigned between 2111 and 2094. This hypothesis also ties together the story of the Tower in Genesis 10 with the beginning of Abraham's story in chapter 11, chronologically speaking, and the presumed gap between these two narratives thereby disappears (Wilson 1999:305-309). Holding a different view, Clifford (1972:98) proposed that the story of the Tower of Babel was suborned by later Biblical redactors into an allegory of the effects of human sin rather than a tale preserving the ideology of the ziggurat.

⁴⁵⁹ Due to a lack of archaeological evidence, we are forced to rely on Herodotus' 'fanciful information that the lofty sanctuary contained a beautifully decked-out bed and a golden table, but no image, and that a priestess chosen by the god slept there' (quoted in Oppenheim 1944:55).

surrounding area, thus increasing its visibility and physically demarcating the sacred space of the temple from the surrounding profane space. The ziggurat provided a buffer or spacing between the lower and the upper temples. The upper temple was the site of the holiest and most sacred ordinance performed in the temple, that of the sacred marriage, upon which so much depended. The expense of building great ziggurats surely could not have been justified without considerations dictated by the underlying mythology of sacred space.

10.5.3 Pillars

Pillars, obelisks, or similar objects that flanked the main entryway into temples were not unknown in Mesopotamia, although they were not as ubiquitous there as in other areas of the ancient Near East. This may be due to the scarcity of stone available for such purposes in the land between the rivers. Examples include the Shu-Sin temple at Tell Asmar (Lloyd 1978:161) and the temple at Ubaid (Lloyd 1978:103).

Not surprisingly, it is in Egypt where these pillars were most common.⁴⁶⁰ Wilkinson noted that ‘obelisks were often erected in pairs before the temple entrance proper’.⁴⁶¹ Two obelisks stood before the pylons at the Temple of Ramesses at Luxor (Bell 1997:151). In 1996 a previously unknown temple of Thutmosis III was discovered just southwest of the Osiris temple enclosure at Abydos. The excavations revealed the ruins of a small limestone temple with a twin-columned entrance.⁴⁶² Two obelisks stood in front of the temple pylons at Heliopolis (Grimal 1992:169). Examples could easily be multiplied.

⁴⁶⁰ The two massive pylons that stood at the entrance of many Egyptian temples have been considered in some instances to assume the same function (whatever that might have been) as twin pillars. Wilkinson (2000:60) noted that these pylons ‘clearly served a defensive and apotropaic function, not only physically defending the gateway from intruders, but also symbolically standing as a bastion repelling the inimical forces of chaos and evil in the outer world’. A similar interpretation is feasible for Jachin and Boaz in Solomon’s temple.

⁴⁶¹ Wilkinson (2000:57). However, Wilkinson also pointed out that upon occasion a single obelisk was placed on the direct central axis of a temple and only came to be enclosed within the temple area as the complex grew and developed and more outward-lying pylons were constructed.

⁴⁶² Wilkinson (2000:144). Note the drawing on p 137 of a Middle Kingdom temple at Medinat Madi showing twin pillars flanking the entrance.

Elsewhere in the ancient Near East the same characteristic may be observed. Among the Hittites, temple gateways were almost always marked by the presence of two pillars or columns, sometimes perched on the backs of lions or other beasts. Their purpose was symbolic and not functional as most of the time these pillars were free-standing. Two pillars stood at the entrance to a temple at Byblos (modern Jbeil, in Lebanon, ca 1500), before another temple in what is now Jordan, at multiple temples at Khorsabad (northern Iraq), Taanach (Canaan), and Tell Tainat (ancient Syria, now Hatay province, Turkey). Twin pillars at the entrance to a temple can also be seen on ancient coins, paintings, and clay models (Scott 1939:143-149). Bronze pillars have been observed in the ruins of Cretan temples; some have thought the pillars functioned as lightning rods, designed to attract the god of lightning, a symbol of fertility and opulence (Levi 1981:40). Two Phoenician temples discovered at Kition (modern Larnaca), dating from the 13th century, featured rectangular bastions, a courtyard, a sacred garden with a rectangular pool, and two free-standing pillars on either side of a holy of holies. After one temple had been abandoned for over a century and a half, the Phoenicians built another on the same site as the earlier one. It contained a holy of holies that was open to the sky and could be seen from the courtyard; it also contained two free-standing pillars (Karageorghis 1981:82-86).⁴⁶³ Other examples are extant in Idalion (Cyprus), Tyre, and Tell el-Farah, near Nablus (de Vaux 1965:2:314-315).

The best-known pillars from ancient temples were undoubtedly Jachin and Boaz that stood at the entrance to the temple of Solomon (9.3.1.2), whose function was clearly symbolic rather than functional. Whatever may have been the ultimate symbolism of these pillars, it is unquestionable that they imparted a sense of strength, firmness, and solidarity.

⁴⁶³ This is significant as it was Phoenician architects and builders who supervised the construction of the temple of Solomon.

10.5.4 The Tree of Life

Temples in the ancient Near East have always been associated with the Tree of Life.⁴⁶⁴ This was a mythical tree intimately connected with the waters of life which were the source of its amazing fertility.

The motif of a tree in or near the temple whose roots reached down to the waters of life was one of the more ubiquitous forms of ancient Near Eastern temple symbolism, for it can be found in Mesopotamia, Canaan, Israel, and Egypt. In Mesopotamia, a portion of Cylinder A from Gudea of Lagash describes the *kishkanu*, a tree whose species is unknown, whose roots were in the *apsu* and whose top was raised over the lands of the earth. Assyrian reliefs depicted the king performing a ritual act around a tree, possibly having to do with the pollination of the flowers (Wyatt 2001:160). Furthermore, if Widengren was correct in his assertion that Mesopotamian temple complexes typically included a sacred grove of trees within their precincts, this is pregnant with implications for the nature of kingship in the ancient Near East as it tied the king directly to the deity; a twig or branch from the Tree of Life became a sceptre for the king. In Canaan, Baal is depicted on a stone stele from Ras Shamra holding what appears to be a budding cedar tree in his left hand (*ANEP*, no. 501). In Israel, there are numerous Hebrew Bible references to trees growing in or near a sanctuary (Ps 92:13-15; 52:10). The Hebrew prophets distinguished between trees in the temple area and those used in forbidden cultic activity (Is 40:19-20; 41:7-8; Jr 10:2-4). At Luxor, the leaves of the Persea tree were inscribed with the names of the Pharaoh, and in the Book of the Dead a tree-goddess nourished the dead (Wyatt 2001:160). Isis and Osiris were said to have emerged from the acacia tree of Saosis, which the Egyptians considered the tree of life, referring to it as the

⁴⁶⁴ Lundquist (1982:274) refers to the motif of the Tree of Life as one of the points that collectively constitute a 'primordial landscape', by which he means he expects to see these features expressed both architecturally and ritually. The Tree of Life was certainly one of the most consistent and persistent motifs in the iconography of the ancient Near East. The tree was both an *axis mundi* (as was the cosmic mountain), that is, the 'central pillar of the universe, supporting the sky, and separating it from the earth below, so that it maintains the cosmos in its created state (that is, as intended by the gods at creation); and an allomorph (alternative form) of the (androgynous) Primal Man. Thus goddesses are associated or identified with the tree, as are kings' (Wyatt 2001:166).

‘tree in which life and death are enclosed’.⁴⁶⁵

In addition to a specific tree, gardens were commonly found near temples in each of these cultures.⁴⁶⁶ Even in Mesoamerica, evidence of the Tree of Life motif may be found.

According to Mayan writings, when the earth was restored or ‘recreated’ following the flood, four trees of abundance, that is, trees of life, were placed in the four quarters of the earth, with a ‘Green Tree of Abundance’ placed at the centre point (Woodford 1953:6).

Nearly all of the great world religions have myths about a Tree of Life in which is concealed the power of youth and eternal life (Eliade 1958a:276-278). Whether clothed in simple or flowery language, the core concept is always the same: whoever possesses the fruit of the tree has the power of immortality. The tree is present partly in this world and partly in the heavenly world. It is found in Babylonian cylinder seals, in Assyrian palace reliefs, and in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. In India people venerate the Tree of Life whose fruit imparts immortality to those who partake. In Islam the Tree of Life is called *Sidra* or *Tuba*, and it stands at the very centre of Paradise, in the seventh heaven, at the right hand of God’s throne. The ancient Greeks regarded the Tree of Life as the apple tree which grew in the westernmost portion of the Garden of Hesperides; golden apples from this tree were presented to Zeus and Hera at their wedding (Woodford 1953:16-18).

The symbol of the Tree of Life, one of the oldest and most common subjects in Semitic art, had religious meaning in addition to its decorative value. It was found on the carved work of pillars, bas-relief sculptures, and in the formal dress of kings and priests.

Groves of sacred trees around the temple, often with a tree in the centre represented as

⁴⁶⁵ I have been unable to find the original source of this quotation.

⁴⁶⁶ Gardens were a common feature of temple grounds in the ancient world. As temples were houses for the gods, they were provided with comfortable leisure space, as existed in the home of any important person. Yahweh strolled in the garden (of Eden) during the heat of the day (Gn 3:8). These gardens were more like groves, for trees figured prominently in them; most significant of all was the tree of life, found at the very centre of the Garden of Eden. Actually there were two trees of great significance in Eden, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge; the tree of life survived in Jewish iconography in the form of the Menorah, symbolising creation, the Light of the World, and the King; both trees have been subsequently represented in iconography, on reliefs and in paintings (Wyatt 2001:159-161).

the Tree of Life, added to the character of sacred space in temple precincts. They represented the *axis mundi* and thus the position of the temple as a place where worlds touch. They also represented tremendous fertility and abundance, as their roots touched the waters of life. They were tied to kingship and coronation ceremonies, as the king's sceptre was considered to be a branch taken from the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life, a common motif in temple decoration and a fundamental facet of temple mythology, is inherently tied to the concept of sacred space.

10.5.5 Temple/palace symbiosis

Temple/palace symbiosis, to a large degree, characterised temples throughout the entire ancient Near East. The conjoining of temple with palace and the merger of the two into one complex is of great interest. It was noted earlier that Egyptian and Mesopotamian temples strove to maintain a veneer of independence from the state, with varying degrees of success, but in Syria and Canaan (and Jerusalem) all pretence was dropped as temples and palaces began to be built adjacent to one another and even went so far as to share courtyards.⁴⁶⁷ This was, perhaps, an inevitable outgrowth of the inextricably intertwined roles of state and religion. Temples provided a source of national pride and identity. It was in the sanctuaries—both the small local sites and the large urban complexes—where social and national characteristics were imposed upon otherwise disparate groups of people. State and religious ideologies were developed and merged to form a national consciousness.

The temple played a major role in the legal systems of the ancient Near East; one way this role was architecturally portrayed was by the shared courtyards and the close proximity of temple, palace, and judicial areas (for example, Solomon's temple complex,

⁴⁶⁷ See Uziel & Shai (2007:167). The temple/palace symbiosis exhibited by Solomon, where the structures were built as part of the same complex and thus created an impression of the temple as a royal institution, was mirrored by similar temple/palace complexes in Syria which were also designed to impress upon the populace the high status of the elite and the divine right of the king to rule and govern. In areas where the temple and the palace were not physically linked, other ways were found to stress the links between the king and the god. At Amarna, it was the ritual procession; elsewhere in Egypt, rulers placed stela before the doors of the temple; in the breakaway Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam felt obliged to adopt and annex existing shrines and holy places and associate them with the ruling elite (2 Ki 12:26-29).

which included, besides temple and palace, the ‘House of the Forest of Lebanon’ [the state treasury] and the ‘Hall of Judgement’). The building or restoration of a temple was often done in tandem with a restating or re-codifying of basic legal principles and the restoration of the correct organisation of social order. Throughout the ancient Near East, temples functioned as a ‘stabilizing, unifying, and empowering’ influence in society (Wyatt 2001:161).

The integration of covenant and law is a concept that has been widely discussed and accepted (Noth 1966:39; Palmer 1998:5-15). This conjunction is now enhanced by the addition of the concept of the temple. In the Prologue to the Code of Hammurabi it states:

When Marduk commissioned me to guide the people aright,
to direct the land,
I established law and justice in the language
of the land,
thereby promoting the welfare of the people (*ANET*, 165).

And in the Epilogue of the same document:

I, Hammurabi, am the king of justice,
to whom Shamash committed law (*ANET*, 178).

The presence of schools, libraries, and observatories was essential to the role of the temple in the economic, judicial, and political spheres. In the schools, scribes were taught and ancient texts were copied and preserved. Temple libraries were depositories for religious texts, international treaties, legal documents, business transactions, and even basic exercises used in teaching reading, writing, and mathematics. Temples contained observatories in which readings were taken and the movement of heavenly bodies noted; the sciences of astronomy and astrology reached new heights under Chaldean priests.

The temple was a centre where the multiform traditions of a culture were preserved and conveyed from one generation to the next. The temple complex was ‘a school for the servants of the deity, from priests and recitants to ...others’ (Knipe 1988:123-126). Nowhere were these concepts more vibrant than in the temples of ancient Egypt. Many

temples featured the *Per Ankh*, ‘House of Life’, an ancillary structure to the main temple (6.3.3.2). These annexes were scriptoria where texts of all types were copied, studied, and preserved. But that was not all:

The house of life seems to have been much more than just a scriptorium and archive, however; it also appears to have functioned as a centre of priestly learning in many fields. While not necessarily a school as we might think of a modern educational institution, the subjects of writing, art, theology, ritual, magic, astronomy and medicine, among others, were certainly studied there. The large collections of books kept in the houses of life were famous throughout much of the ancient world, and in the 2nd century AD the medical writer Galen wrote that Greek physicians visited the library of the *per ankh* of Memphis to learn from its texts. Such libraries of the great temples were almost certainly the model upon which the famed Museion or Library of Alexandria was based, and the very idea of the university as it was later developed by Moslem and European societies, with its concentration of scholars and learned religious men, was to some extent the product of the ancient Egyptian tradition of the *per ankh* (Wilkinson 2000:74).

As noted earlier, the building or dedication of a temple in the ancient Near East was often the impetus behind the collection, standardisation, and canonisation of the legal corpus of the time. The giving of the Law to ancient Israel was in conjunction with the construction of the Tabernacle. Temple building and dedication, or rebuilding and rededication, were opportune times for covenant renewal⁴⁶⁸ and provided an appropriate venue for the deity to reveal his will to the people. Hurowitz noted:

Temples were places of judgment throughout the ancient Near East. According to rabbinic sources, the Sanhedrin sat in the Chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple. Much earlier and far away, we find that in the temple of Assur judgment was carried out in the *muskilu*, ‘step gate’... The Ekur, temple of Enlil in Nippur, seems to have had a prison in it, as indicated by a hymn to the goddess Nungal... It is this judicial function of the temple which underlies the famous End of Days prophecy in Isa. 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5 which envisions the Temple as an international court of justice to which all nations will be able to appeal, thus alleviating the need for war (Hurowitz 1992:290-291, n 2).

⁴⁶⁸ Palmer (1998:342). Two of the important features of a covenant renewal ceremony were the document clause and the list of witnesses. The document clause specified the deposit of a written copy of the law or covenant in a central place (usually a shrine or temple), and for the periodic (usually annual) reading of the law in the hearing of the people. Such legal documents had to be validated by witnesses, sometimes the leading men of the community but often by various deities or even by natural features such as mountains, heaven and earth, or various heavenly bodies.

The temple played a legitimising political role in the ancient Near East, for the ideology of kingship was inextricably intertwined with temple building and temple ideology (Lundquist 1982:277-297). The building of a temple by a king and the use of that temple as a tool in establishing political legitimacy was portrayed in Gudea's Cylinder B, but Israelite temples may also be viewed through this prism.⁴⁶⁹ There is considerable evidence to suggest that the physical building of the tabernacle served to cement the leadership role of Moses in the ancient Israelite polity. Likewise, David used the Tabernacle to help secure his kingship by moving it from Shiloh to Jerusalem, thus tying it to his new political capital. Solomon, perhaps more than any of his predecessors, used the building of the Jerusalem temple to put the stamp of legitimacy on his kingship.⁴⁷⁰ Instructive here are the *Enuma Elish*⁴⁷¹ from Babylon and the Baal Cycle⁴⁷² from Ras Shamra. Both myths feature the transference of cosmic decisions from the heavenly realm to the earthly, and from the gods to their representative, the earthly monarch. Whether the temple preceded or followed the establishment of the state, whether the building of a temple was deliberately used by the monarch to entrench his dynasty or

⁴⁶⁹ For a comparison of Gudea's temple-building activity with Solomon's, see Hurowitz (1992:56-57).

⁴⁷⁰ There is no explicit evidence that any of these individuals callously and deliberately used holy objects or built sacred edifices solely for purposes of political advantage or hegemony. The process of state formation is an extremely fluid one, and it would be hazardous to assert that a state can be formed by merely following a checklist of requirements to be accomplished in a particular order. But it is certain that the construction or remodelling of a central temple may serve to unify a budding nation or solidify the position of a ruling dynasty, and it is not always easy to identify the true motives of the builder. For some incisive reflections on the possible political motives of David and Solomon, see Cross (1984:99-101). Meanwhile, Hurowitz noted that when the feasting that typically signified the end of a temple's construction was concluded, the god typically entered into his temple to 'rest'. The motif of a god resting in his temple may be related to David's 'rest' as described in 2 Samuel 7:1, or perhaps to Israel 'resting' after completing the temple of Solomon, or perhaps to the Sabbath command in the Tabernacle account (Ex 31, 35) or perhaps to God's rest (Ps 132:8, Is 66:1). As the temple was considered to be a microcosm of the universe, it was consistent that God would rest after his temple was built, even as he rested after Creation (Hurowitz 1992:95, 330-331).

⁴⁷¹ Jonathan Z. Smith has pointed out that in his view 'the Babylonian creation epic, *Enuma elish*, is not so much a cosmogony as it is a myth of the creation of a temple' (Smith 1978:99).

⁴⁷² Regarding the Baal Cycle, Cross wrote (1984:97-98): 'Ba'l founded his temple on Mount Sapon in order to make manifest his establishment of order, especially kingship among the gods. The earthly temple of Ba'l manifested not only Ba'l's creation of order, but at the same time established the rule of the earthly king. There is thus a tie between the temple as the abode of the king of the gods and the temple as a dynastic shrine of the earthly king, the adopted son of the god. The temple and kingship are thus part of the "orders of creation," properly the eternal kingship of the god of order, the eternal dynasty of his earthly counterpart'. Mark S. Smith pointed out that the Baal Cycle illustrates a constellation of temple-related themes. The palace narrative contains many of the temple themes found in Genesis 2-3, Ezekiel 28, and in many Psalms. For example, materials are gathered for Baal's temple: cedars from Lebanon, gold and precious stones, especially lapis lazuli, from far-away places. The Baal Cycle also 'embodies traditional themes of the temple as royal garden-sanctuary' (Smith 2005:9).

whether legitimacy followed the building of the temple as a matter of course, temples and temple-building were essential features of ancient Near Eastern states. The temple was often located in the geographic centre of the territory, though this was by no means necessary or even consistent. But what was both necessary and consistent was the fact that the temple was *considered* to be the spiritual, cultural and economic centre of the state, that it symbolised the values and world-view of the population, that it was regarded as the true centre of the kingdom, and that it provided tangible evidence of the divine mandate of the king.

The relationship between the king/palace and god/temple was portrayed architecturally in a number of effective ways. When both were built at the same time, they were usually in close proximity to one another and frequently shared courtyards and common entrances from public areas. In some areas, palace and temple treasuries were occasionally merged. The temple was tied to the legal system; the dedication or re-dedication of a temple was an auspicious time for a revamping and restating of the law code. Temple dedications were also times for covenant renewal ceremonies. There were unbreakable bonds between the concepts of covenant, law, and temple. Temples contained schools for the training of scribes, observatories for the pursuit of astronomical sightings, and depositories for religious texts, political treaties, covenant texts, economic records, and all manner of documents. The role of the temple in legitimising the rule of a king cannot be overstated. While many of the features related to temple/palace symbiosis were concerned with temporal affairs and *realpolitik*, others were related to the underlying concept of sacred space.

10.6 ARRANGEMENT OF CULTIC AREAS AND RITUAL PARAPHERNALIA

This category involves the following temple traits: (1) elevated statues of the deity in the innermost sanctuary; (2) sources of water for ablutions; (3) the temple as a site for a cult of the dead; and (4) altars and animal sacrifice.

10.6.1 Elevated statues of deity

The most sacred inner cella of Mesopotamian temples contained a statue of the god on a pedestal. This pedestal later evolved, particularly in Assyrian temples, into an elevated platform that could only be accessed by a flight of stairs, and the niche in which the statue stood also increased in depth to the point where the god was standing deep within the wall of the cella, perhaps inside a temple tower (5.2.5.3). This movement of the deity above the level of the worshipper and deep inside the wall may have been meant to portray the god as coming out of the mountain itself. At any event, it served to remove the statue from immediate contact with temple workers and attendees and may have increased its awesome character. This action also had the effect, whether intended or not, of creating a division within the cella itself. Previously the statue of the deity had stood or sat on a smaller pedestal at one of the narrow ends of the main cella, possibly surrounded by incense smokers, flower pots, and other cultic items that served to create the impression of a barrier between the god and the devotees. The transmigration of the deity's position to the top of a staircase further solidified this separation between the god and the mere mortals who were attempting to worship or serve the deity.

In Egypt the earliest cultic item was a simple pole topped by a fetish, around which the earliest sanctuaries are believed to have developed. As the more traditional form of the Egyptian temple evolved, the rear of the temple, the most sacred area, was the site reserved for the statue of the god, with niches and adjacent areas containing statues of lesser deities and kings. There may have been a small pedestal upon which the statue was placed, but instead of an elevated platform, the entire floor level rose as one approached the rear of the temple while the ceiling simultaneously lowered, thus adding to a sense of awe and naturally focusing the eye on the god (6.3.3.3).

Among the Hittites there is evidence of the cella containing a statue of the god on a pedestal, but there is no indication that it was raised over time (7.3.1.1); of course, Hittite civilisation was short-lived compared to Mesopotamia or Egypt.

In Canaan, the cella usually contained a statue of the god on a pedestal, set apart and elevated as a sign of its great holiness, with a small altar, incense stands, and low benches around the walls to receive votive and other offerings. This feature was noted in Beth-Shan (Thompson 1967:125-128; Wright 1944:276-277); in Bab edh-Dhra (Rast 2003:326); in Arad (Aharoni 1968:20, figs. 13, 22; Dever 2003:388; Zevit 2001:160, fig. 3.18).

In the Jerusalem temples there was a general elevation of the most sacred area; this was necessary for the holy of holies to acquire the shape of a cube, considered to be a symbol of perfection (9.2.2). There were no statues of the deity in Israelite temples. However, the most sacred area in the temple of Solomon did contain the Ark which, in a sense, might be considered a sort of substitute for a statue representing Yahweh. The ark was not only a repository of cultic objects that figured prominently in the history of Israel as a covenant nation but also served as a physical reminder of the presence of the invisible God. Its mysterious vanishing and its conspicuous lack in subsequent temples was indicative, on the one hand, of the lack of divine approbation for the temples of Zerubbabel and Herod, and on the other, a shifting of focus in the Temple Scroll and in Ezekiel away from the birth of the nation at Sinai and toward the eschatological reign of Yahweh in Jerusalem.

Raising the niche in which the statue of the god stood (Mesopotamia), or raising the floor level of the temple as one approached the most sacred area in the rear (Egypt), or raising the floor level of the holy of holies in Solomon's temple—all were efforts to set apart the most sacred part of the temple by elevating the area and creating a sense of separation between god and worshiper; all were variations of an architectural strategy to create sacred space. This increased the awe and the *mysterium tremendum* experienced by temple visitors.

10.6.2 Sources of water for ablutions

Major Mesopotamian temples had courtyards that contained either a well or a spring or,

at the very least, large basins of water that were necessary for ablutions and the preparation of sacrifices and sacrificial areas. Smaller or poorer temples had water in stone and metal receptacles (Wyatt 2001:40, 85, 162, 180).

Egyptian temples often contained or adjoined a sacred lake (Medamud [6.2.3.1] and elsewhere); at some temples this was considered a replica of the primordial ocean (*Nun*). Some of these are still visible, and one, the Olympic-size pool at Karnak, is still full. There was a sacred lake at Hierapolis, which was considered to be a remnant of the subsiding waters of the flood, whose waters had drained through a rock or a crevice, representing the *omphalos* or navel of the earth, while still providing water to the temple for ritualistic purposes. There can be little doubt that sources of water must have been available for the use of both priest and pilgrim for personal cleansing and ablutions, particularly in light of the hot Egyptian climate.

Hittite temples also had courtyards that typically contained a fountain or basin of water to be used for ablutions (7.2.2.2).

Canaanite temple courtyards typically contained a fountain or basin of water for ablutions; one who entered the sacred compound must be clean both physically and spiritually. Ritual washings, sometimes multiple ablutions, were required as one progressed higher (both physically and spiritually) into the temple complex. Visitors to the temple at En-Gedi utilised the nearby spring.

The most famous source of water in ancient temples was probably Solomon's brazen sea (9.2.2). There has been much speculation on the symbolic meaning of this brazen sea. Some have thought it represented the primordial waters;⁴⁷³ others consider it to represent the waters of life and the four streams that poured forth from Eden, or to represent the water coming from underneath the temple to fertilise the earth; still others deny it any symbolic value and believe it to be simply a source of water to be used with ablutions and

⁴⁷³ Wyatt (2001:162) compares the brazen sea to the primordial waters and also refers to a chasm underneath the temple which 'would provide access to the ocean through its crevices'. This chasm was capped by the *even shetiya* (Foundation Stone).

sacrificial preparations (Hurowitz 2005:78-82).

Water, both as a symbol and as a practicality, was an important part of temple construction and ritual. The myth of the cosmic ocean had an effect on temple architecture. Water representing the cosmic ocean was supposed to exist at the edges of the earth and not at the centre of the earth (the temple), but it was necessary to show that the temple was the site where the life-giving qualities of that ocean could be accessed and where the destructive nature of the primordial waters were controlled and contained (Wyatt 2001:113). In short, it was necessary to portray the temple's cosmic status and its ability to control and manage the environment.

10.6.3 Cult of the dead

The temple was frequently associated with the realm of the dead, the underworld, the afterlife, the grave. Tombs were often temples. Temples, tombs, and sarcophagi were considered sacred space in anticipation of their role in the resurrection. The temple on the *axis mundi* was the link between both the world that was before, and the world that is after, this mortal sphere.

Egyptian temples were especially concerned with the funerary cult for the king. The Egyptian temple, like Egyptian religion, was deeply concerned with the proper care of the dead and with the afterlife. Initially only the kings received such royal post-mortem treatment, but later other segments of society could participate in these cultic activities to the point where they became a major source of revenue to the temples. Pyramid texts evolved into coffin texts, which in turn evolved into hypocephali and various literary documents (the Book of the Dead, the Book of Breathings, and others), all designed to aid the departed onward in their journey.

A Babylonian application of a cult of the dead was provided by Pallis (1926:104-105, 108-109) who described a sepulchral chamber belonging to Marduk in Etemenanki. Egyptian examples abound (Fairman 1954:200). A cult of the dead, to some extent, was

practised in Hittite temples as well (Gurney 1977:61-63).

The Kaaba serves a similar function in Islam. The pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the pillars of Islam and a duty that is required of all Muslims at least once during their lifetimes, is considered to represent death and rebirth. Strathearn & Hauglid (1999:289) noted that ‘Muslims around the world reflect their desire to be associated with the Kaa’ba at death by being oriented in their graves to face the Kaa’ba’.⁴⁷⁴

It is perhaps only natural that the temple, built over the primordial mound of creation, was considered to be the site of resurrection as it had the power to restore life after death. The temple, built on a natural or artificial mountain, with the tree and waters of life, was the place where death could be overcome. It was the one place that could counter the effects of the initial separation and expulsion of the human race from the presence of deity. Temples frequently became popular burial sites; at the very least, people wanted to be buried as near the temple as possible.⁴⁷⁵ This concept is expressed in the Hebrew Bible (Is 25:6-8), where the connection between temple, death, burial, and resurrection is explicit. This imagery was not unknown to the early Christians (Rv 7:15-17).

Thus there is the motif of the ‘mountain as temple, with its life-giving waters bubbling up from sources deep within the primordial abyss, possessing the power to overcome death. The temple, perhaps the most powerful and all-encompassing expression of the sacred in human society, brings together in its architecture, its symbolism and its ritual the most central features of the religious life of humankind’ (Lundquist 1993:31).

10.6.4 Altars and animal sacrifice

A large amount of temple ritual revolved around the altar and the principle and practice of sacrifice, primarily the sacrifice of living animals, though grains, wines, oils, and other

⁴⁷⁴ An element of ancestor worship is also present here, to a degree, as Muslims are able to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in behalf of deceased ancestors.

⁴⁷⁵ The main axial street in Teotihuacan, the great Aztec city, was lined with 75 temples, and was known as the Street of the Dead. The street, incidentally, was aligned with the path of the sun.

agricultural products were occasionally involved.

In Mesopotamia altars have been found with drainage systems whereby the blood of the sacrificial victims could be captured and subsequently disseminated.

In Egyptian temple complexes, altars were located in the courtyard(s), though the exact nature of the sacrificial rites performed are uncertain. Fairman (1954:178, 180-184, 191, 198-202) has provided an excellent overview of sacrifice in ancient Egyptian temples.

Horned altars have been found near Hittite temples in Boghazköy, and also at Yazilikaya. Archaeological finds in the vicinity of these exterior altars include shovels and other implements designed for use in handling large sacrifices and their remnants. Gurney (1977:24-43) has provided a more detailed look at Hittite sacrificial procedures.

Horned altars for animal sacrifices were typically found in temple courtyards in Canaan; archaeological finds in the vicinity of these exterior altars include shovels and other implements designed for use in handling large sacrifices and their remnants. Prominent examples of altars in Canaan include Arad and Tel Yarmuth (Dever 1995:383, 607-609); other notable specimens have been uncovered at Bab edh-Dhra, Megiddo, Khirbet ez-Zeraqun, Ashkelon, Nahariya, Beth-Shan, Tel Mevorakh, Lachish, Dan, and Beersheba.

In Israelite temples there were no inner temple rituals of awakening, washing, dressing, and feeding the god that were common elsewhere in the ancient Near East; indeed, there was no statue or representation of the god at all. The primary rituals of Israelite temples dealt with the animal sacrifices performed in the inner courtyard. Exodus and Leviticus are filled with prescriptions for various types of sacrifices in ancient Israel. While it is true that there were other temple rituals (most of which are still obscure), and although there are perceived remnants of the temple service in the Psalms, it seems evident that the primary focus was on sacrifice. Indeed, the great temple of Ezekiel is structured around animal sacrifice as its *raison d'être*, with the altar being the geographic centre of the entire complex.

Even though Islam as a religion is opposed to the principle of blood sacrifice, there are traditions linking this practice with the Kaaba in pre-Islamic times, and there is one tradition that claims Abraham's father Terah made a sacrifice at the Kaaba.⁴⁷⁶

The principle of sacrifice is of the essence of sacred space. While the technical details of sacrificial performance may be interesting and indeed vital, it is far more important to grasp the essential underlying philosophy of this ancient and widespread practice.⁴⁷⁷

'Sacrifice', wrote de Vaux (1965:2:451), 'is the essential act of external worship. It is a prayer which is acted, a symbolic action which expresses both the interior feelings of the person offering it, and God's response to this prayer. By sacrificial rites, the gift made to God is accepted, union with God is achieved, and the guilt of man is taken away. But these effects are not achieved by magic; it is essential that the external action should express the true inward feelings of man, and that it should be favourably received by God. Failing this, sacrifice is no longer a religious act'.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶ Strathearn & Hauglid (1999:291-293). There is at least one *hadith* associating Muhammad with the sacrificing of camels, and another that describes Muhammad offering a sacrifice at the end of the *hajj*, a tradition that has continued down to the present era. While the animals are not sacrificed at the Kaaba itself, their faces are turned toward it prior to being slain.

⁴⁷⁷ See Kristensen (1960:444-452, 458-496) for an excellent summary of some of the issues involved in the concept of sacrifice.

⁴⁷⁸ De Vaux here identified the three primary purposes of sacrifice in ancient religions. (1) *To Offer a Gift*. The underlying principle here is that 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof' (Ps 24:1), in other words, everything really belongs to God. We are merely stewards over that which has been given (entrusted) to us. But why must we return a portion of what we have received? Because what was given us is holy, as God is holy, for God cannot give a profane gift. Therefore the question becomes, how can holy things be used for the mundane, profane purposes of life? The answer is, by offering a sacrifice! For when an offering to God is *consecrated*, the remainder is simultaneously *desecrated* and becomes available for temporal use. Thus, we are not permitted to actually use anything granted us by God until we have first offered a sacrifice. (2) *Achieve Communion with God*. In the eyes of many, the ultimate goal of religion is to achieve a oneness with God. Sacrifices offered under the rubric of achieving unity with God were partially eaten by the offerer and the priest, while the remainder was wholly consumed on the altar and thus became God's portion. By sharing a sacred meal with the deity and his representatives, a person can achieve a degree of union with God. 'Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?' (1 Cor 10:18). (3) *Expiation for Sin*. Unlike the communion-based offering just described, a sacrifice offered to obtain forgiveness of sin was not shared by the offerer, for how could one join with God in a sacred meal when, because of transgression, one had violated the covenant and hence was out of harmony with God? Blood played an important part in offerings for the expiation of sin, for blood represented life. 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar; it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation' (Lv 17:11).

10.7 CONCLUSIONS

Virtually all of the architectural features considered in this chapter have pointed to the great underlying temple ideology of sacred space. Architectural features of ancient temples portrayed the doctrine of sacred space and its associated corollaries in a number of ways. The concept of sacred space and its ancillary ideologies provided underlying justification and support for all the peculiar distinctions that characterised temple architecture in the ancient Near East. Architectural expressions of sacred space are summarised in Table 2 in the Appendix.

The temple was the physical embodiment of the concept of sacred space.

Excursus: Angkor Wat

The finest example of the alignment of a temple with celestial bodies may be the great temple complex at Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Though outside the purview of the ancient Near East, Angkor Wat is worth a closer look as an outstanding representative of the principles of temple alignment and measurement. This temple complex integrated astronomy and the calendar together with religious principles. Its architecture succeeded in tracking both solar and lunar movements; this was necessary in order to accurately predict eclipses which were regarded as signals of new cosmic creation cycles. The entire physical structure of the temple complex, even down to the extensive bas-reliefs, was correlated to solar movement.

At the spring equinox an individual standing at the southern edge of the first projection on the causeway (directly in front of the western entrance gate) will see the sun rise directly over the centre tower of Angkor Wat. Three days later, the sun will rise again directly over the central tower if one is standing in the centre of the causeway. This was critical inasmuch as the precise observation of the spring equinox indicated the beginning of the solar year, regardless of the lunar cycle. There were also two alignments marking the solstices, which meant that all four of the annual solar events could be observed by standing just inside the main western entrance gate. There were also various positions along the causeway that allowed for lunar measurements.⁴⁷⁹

Though both solar and lunar events could be observed and marked by the configuration of the causeway and towers at Angkor Wat, it is possible that this was not even the primary purpose of their alignment. Scientists measuring these dimensions in meters could initially discern no other purpose. But when the complex was measured, not in meters but in the original unit of length used in the temple construction, namely the *hat* or

⁴⁷⁹ The main Angkor Wat complex faces west, a peculiar characteristic that puzzled scholars for a long time until it was realised that a westward orientation (instead of the typical eastern) was necessary in order to determine these solar phenomena. Within the Angkor complex are hundreds of individual temples, and with only one or two exceptions, these all face east in the traditional manner. Most of these individual temples are funerary temples and contain the ashes or bodies of past rulers (Stencel et al 1976:281-282).

Cambodian cubit, very diverse and complete data on the calendar emerged. It would be beyond my purpose to go into these calculations in precise detail; here I will simply note the results of the exercise. When the complex was measured with the cubit,⁴⁸⁰ the numbers obtained correlated directly with key numbers in the Hindu calendar and in Hindu mythology. These results were particularly striking in measurements relating to the bridge, the central tower and its four surrounding towers, and the west-east axis of the main temple. The measurements of the temple signify important calendrical and cosmological dates and time cycles.⁴⁸¹

Angkor Wat, in its architecture, exhibits the full integration of astronomy, numerology, and religion. The main points may be summarised as follows:

- The equinoxes and solstices of the sun could be observed from the position of the sun over the main tower and the four surrounding towers when observed from just within the main entrance gate on the west.
- Lunar movements could be observed from a variety of positions within the temple complex; furthermore, lunar cycles were recorded in the libraries at Angkor.
- The bas-reliefs of the third gallery are related to the movements of the sun as it established their counter-clockwise direction.
- The measurements of the entire temple complex, calibrated by the Cambodian cubit, reveal key numbers in Hindu mythology and in the Hindu calendar.

⁴⁸⁰ The Cambodian cubit is estimated at .43545 meters, which converts to approximately 17.1437 inches. This figure was obtained by deriving the common denominator for the broadest range of measurements at the temple (Stencel et al 1976:285).

⁴⁸¹ Stencel et al 1976:286. The authors quote A. Boner and S. Rath Sarma in their introduction to a treatise on Orissan temple architecture between the 9th and 12th centuries: ‘... the temple must, in its space-directions, be established in relation to the motion of the heavenly bodies. But inasmuch as it incorporates in a single synthesis the unequal courses of the sun, the moon and the planets, it also symbolises all recurrent time sequences: the day, the month, the year and the wider cycles marked by the recurrence of a complete cycle of eclipses, when the sun and the moon are readjusted in their original positions, a new cycle of creation begins’.

Excursus: Stretching the Cord

The most important rite in the foundation rituals of Egyptian temples was that of ‘stretching the cord’.⁴⁸² This particular ritual was so vital that over time it came to signify the entire collection of foundation ceremonies, that is, those rites and rituals preceding the actual construction of a temple. The purpose of stretching the cord was to lay out the foundation of the building and make sure that it was oriented to astronomical bodies, observations and measurements. The procedure was accomplished with the aid of a notched wooden instrument called a *merkhet*. By using this instrument to sight the stars of a northern circumpolar constellation, a true north-south axis could be obtained, which was then used for the shorter north-south axis of the temple.⁴⁸³

The ritual of stretching the cord is attested in Egypt as early as the Second Dynasty (King Khasekhemwy) and lasted until the building of the temple at Edfu in Ptolemaic times, a period spanning three millennia.⁴⁸⁴ It was performed at night at the time of the new moon and required the sighting of *Ursa Major*. As the heavens were thus ‘stretched out’, a cord was stretched over the temple site and the four corners of the future building were established. The text at Edfu states, in part, ‘I have grasped the peg...I observe the forward-striding movement of the constellations. My eye is fixed on the Great Bear. I ...determine the corners of your temple’ (Lundquist 1993:13). With the rising of the sun the next morning, the chaos of night was once again overcome by the sun god Re; order was restored, the cosmos was re-established, and the future earthly temple was coordinated with the heavenly temple.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² Oppenheim (1944:58) provides a reference to a similar practice in Mesopotamia.

⁴⁸³ Wilkinson (2000:38) suggests that temple personnel may have established the true axis previously, and that the foundation rituals with the Pharaoh using the *merkhet* may have been more ceremonial than functional. It seems reasonable that in matters of such importance it would be better to rely on the skilled judgement of temple priests, astronomers, and mathematicians than upon the direction of Pharaoh, who may or may not have been competent in the use of such technical instruments.

⁴⁸⁴ The texts at Edfu attribute the origin of the stretching of the cord to Djoser, the legendary architect, sage, physician, and magician of the Third Dynasty (Lundquist 1993:13).

⁴⁸⁵ Tibetan temples were similarly drawn out following a mandala, using white cords and chalklines to imprint the image of the mandala on the ground. This process was only attempted after observing the heavens for favourable configurations of the stars (Lundquist 1993:14).

Reymond noted that the ritual of the stretching of the cord was preceded by the performance of a magical rite and followed by another ritual known as the ‘setting out of the four sides of the Enclosure’ (Reymond 1969:291; also 7, 36-37, 216). The setting forth of the enclosure wall was designed to help sanctify the area within by preventing the evil that was outside from coming in (Reymond 1969:251, 238-239). The importance of true and exact measurements was represented by a ritual text on the inner enclosure wall at Edfu which showed Thoth arriving at the temple ground and reciting: ‘I came here in my true form upon the foundation ground of the Great Seat of Harakhte. I cause its long dimension to be good, its breadth to be exact, all its measurements to be according to the norm, all its sanctuaries to be in the place where they should be, and its halls to resemble the sky’ (Reymond 1969:309). At the ritual of stretching the cord at the temple of Horus the Behdetite, Thoth certified that the ‘Builder Gods established the four sides of their Enclosure, [even] the Enclosure of 300 by 400 cubits...And all its sanctuaries are according to the norm’ (Reymond 1969:310-311). From this point of view, the foundation rites and the building of the temple were designed to renew and repeat the original act of creation.

The entire package of foundation rites—including the stretching of the cord—took place over a period of time lasting from seven to fifteen days. Borders had to be demarcated, land had to be consecrated, all of creation had to be renewed. The exact sequence or duration of these individual foundation rites are not known. It appears that toward their conclusion, when stakes or pegs had been driven into the ground and measuring cords stretched between them, the king and his followers then dug a trench along the foundation lines, deep enough to allow ground water to seep in. This water represented the beneficial and regenerative aspects of *Nun*.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ Shafer (1997b:7). When the temple was completed it was dedicated in a series of rituals lasting an entire month. The king or his representative would purify every room of the temple with natron and whitewash.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Distribution of the Component Ideologies of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Word for ‘Temple’ meaning ‘house [of the god]’	Akk. <i>bitu</i> , "house;" Sumerian <i>e-gal</i> , "big house;" also Akk. <i>ekurru</i> , palace	Egyptian <i>pr wr</i> , "great house"	“house” (meaning “house of the god” (Boyce 2002:154)	Phoenician <i>hkl</i> , “palace”	Heb. <i>bayit</i> , "house;" also <i>hekhal</i> , "palace"
Temple as the Center Place	Nippur, Babylon (Clifford 1972:25, 74)	All temples considered to be the Primordial Mound (Reymond 1969:200)			Jerusalem (Ezk 5:5; 38:12); Jubilees 8:12, 19; Book of the Bee
Sacred Mountains	De Vaux 1965:2:281-282; Widengren 1951:11; but see contra Clifford 1972:9-12		Bittel 1981:66; Clifford 1972:29, 31, 33; Mellink 1981:102	Zaphon, Haman; Clifford 1972:3, 34-35, 69; Frankfort 1954:228; <i>bamoth</i>	Sinai; Zion; Gerizim; Ebal; Hermon; Tabor; Carmel; Nebo; Moriah; Cohn 1981:25; Pr 8:25-29; Ps 75:4; 104:5-9; Job 9:6; 26:11; 1 Sm 2:8; Mi 4:1-2; Is 2:2-3; <i>bamoth</i>
Cosmic Mountains	Nippur; Babylon (<i>Enuma Elish</i>); Gudea Cyl A XXI 23; Cyl B XXIV 9; ANET 582-583		Clifford 1972:93-96	Zaphon; Haman (Clifford 1972)	Garden of Eden; Sinai; Zion; Widengren 1950:24; Clifford 1972

Table 1: Distribution of the Component Ideologies of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Temple as Site for Cult of the Dead	Pallis 1926:104-105, 108-109	Fairman 1954:200; royal funerary temples at Abydos (Davies & Jokiniemi 2008:570-571; Winlock 1914:12)	Gurney 1977:61-63		Is 25:6-8; Rv 7:15-17
Creation and Cosmogony	Temple of Inanna in Nippur (Clifford 1972:14-15); <i>Enuma Elish</i>	Shafer 1997b:1-2; <i>Opet</i> -Festival (Reymond 1969:92, 275-276)	<i>Puruli</i> Festival (Gaster 1950:245-267)	Baal Cycle; Gaster 1950:114-134; 406-435	Parry 1994a:137-138; Weinfeld 1981:501-512; Cohn 1981:56; Feast of Tabernacles (Ta'anit 4:2-3; Ricks 1994a:122)
Water and Creation	Marduk defeated <i>Apsu</i> and <i>Tiamat</i>	Waters of Nun (Brandon 1963:16-17, 63); Sacred lakes (Medamud (Wilkinson 2000:73), Thebes)		Baal defeated <i>Yam</i>	Yahweh defeated <i>Leviathan</i> or <i>Rahab</i> (Is 27:1; 51:9-10; Na 1:3-4, 8-9, 12; Hb 3:8; Ps 74:13-14; 89:9-11; 93; Job 7:12; 9:13; 26:12-13; 41:17-26; Ezk 32:2-6); <i>Tehom</i> (Wensinck 1978:44-49)

Table 1: Distribution of the Component Ideologies of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Heavenly Temple	Temple of Ningirsu (built by Gudea of Lagash)	Reymond 1969:4, 300-301		Temple of Baal on Mount Zaphon (Clifford 1972:27, 106, 139)	Tabernacle of Moses (Hayward 2005:396-397); Temple of Solomon; Ps 11:4; 102:19; 150:1; 1 Ki 22:19; Ezk 1, 10; 1 Enoch 14:16-18, 20; Testament of Levi 5:1; BT Sanhedrin 94; Genesis Rabbah 69:7; Aptowitzer 1980:21-23; J Parry & D Parry 1994:515-520
<i>Hieros Gamos</i>	Sacred marriage of Idin-Dagan and the goddess Innini; <i>Akitu</i> festival; marriage of Ningirsu and Bau (Gudea Cylinder B (XIV 21-23, XVI 7-XVII 2); Nanna and Ningal; Van Buren 1952:301-302; Jacobsen 1976:126	<i>Opet</i> Festival (Wilkinson 2000:170, 171); Horus and Hathor (Gaster 1950:413-415)		Ras Shamra texts (Clifford 1972:78)	Adam & Eve (Brooke 2005:419-420)

Table 1: Distribution of the Component Ideologies of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Kingship and the Temple	<i>Akitu</i> Festival (Kingship legitimised in <i>Enuma Elish</i>); Engnell 1967; Kapelrud 1963:56-62; Pallis 1926	<i>Sed</i> -festival; <i>Opet</i> -festival; Engnell 1967	<i>Sar-Puhi</i> Festival; Engnell 1967	Cross 1984:97-98; 1981:174-176; Engnell 1967	Clements 1965:59; Engnell 1967; Johnson 1967
Secrecy and the Temple	Hooke 1963:47; Jacobsen 1976:16; Smith 1925:51-52	Lundquist 1993:26-27; Fairman 1954:187, 201, 203; Allen 1974:120-122; Gee 1999:233-274; Grimal 1992:170; Badawy 1990:36; Text on walls at Edfu (te Velde 1995:1733)	Unauthorized entry a fatal mistake (Bittel 1976:67)	Labyrinths at Hazor and Ammon (Dever 1995:610)	Ex 19:12-13, 21-24; Haran 1985:290-294; Nibley 1992:61-66
Waters of Life	Clifford 1972:50-51, 100-101, 158-160; Gudea Cylinder B; Patai 1947:86-87	Fairman 1954:177		Cross (ed) 1979:145	Gn 2:10-14; Parry 1994a:129-131; 3 Enoch 18:19; 19:4; Ezk 47:1-2; Zch 14:8; Ps 29; Levenson 1976:28; Hooke (ed) 1958:168

Table 1: Distribution of the Component Ideologies of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Tree of Life/Sacred Groves	Widengren 1951:6-9; Gudea Cylinder A; Wyatt 2001:160; <i>kishkanu</i> tree; Tree of Life portrayed in Babylonian cylinder seals, in Assyrian palace reliefs, and in the <i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>	Medamud; Luxor: the leaves of the Persea Tree were inscribed with the names of the Pharaoh, and in the Book of the Dead a tree-goddess nourished the dead (Wyatt 2001:160); Isis and Osiris were said to have emerged from the acacia tree of Saosis		Baal, on a stone stele from Ras Shamra, holding what appears to be a budding cedar tree in his left hand (<i>ANEP</i> , no. 501)	Gn 2:9; Rv 22:2; 1 Enoch 1-36; 2 Enoch 8:3-4; Smith 1978:118; Ps 92:13-15; 52:10

Table 2: Architectural Expressions of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Altars and Sacrifice	Eridu IX (Postgate 1992:110; Robertson 1995:449); altars with drainage systems to capture and disseminate the blood of sacrificial victims; Tell Uqair; Khafaje; Tell Asmar; Khorsabad temple dedicated to the <i>Sebittu</i>	Altars in the courtyards; exact nature and purpose unknown; Fairman 1954:178, 180-184, 191, 198-202; Medamud; Amarna (Kemp 1989:281)	Altar found at Yazilikaya; horned altars near Hittite temples, also shovels and other implements for use in handling large sacrifices and their remnants; Gurney (1977:24-43)	Examples found at Arad, Tel Yarmuth (Dever 1995:383, 607-609); Bab edh-Dhra; Megiddo; Khirbet ez-Zeraqun; Ashkelon; Nahariya; Beth-Shan; Tel Mevorakh; Lachish; Dan; Beersheba	Desert tabernacle (Ex 27:1-8; 29:37; Hurowitz 1992:275-276); temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, and Herod; Ezekiel 43:18-27; Temple Scroll (cols 2-13, 30-45); Kristensen 1960:444-452, 458-496
Elevated Temple Platform (<i>temenos</i>)	Eridu VII (Danti & Zettler 1997:259; Oates 1960:45; Falkenstein 1974:5); White Temple (Anu); Tell Uqair; Khafaje; Kish (Lloyd 1978:105); Ischali; Khorsabad (Temple of Nabu)		Temple 1, Boghazköy (Wasilewska 2009:401-402)	Ai; Hazor (Area H); Beth-Shan (Thompson 1967:125-128)	Temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, Herod, Ezekiel, and Temple Scroll (cols 2-13, 30-45)
Measurement	Hurowitz 1992:38, 326-327; Ricks & Carter 1994c:158	Stretching of the Cord			1 Ki 6:2-36; Ezk 40-42

Table 2: Architectural Expressions of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Elevated Statues of Deity	Eridu; Raised niche, esp in Assyria, such as Temple of Ishtar at Ashur (Frankfort 1954:138-139)	Temple floor rises to cult statue in center rear	Cella contained statue of the god on a raised pedestal	Beth-Shan (Thompson 1967:125-128; Wright 1944:276-277); Bab edh-Dhra (Rast 2003:326); Arad (Aharoni 1968:20, figs 13, 22; Dever 2003:388; Zevit 2001:160, fig 3.18)	Holy of Holies elevated above Holy Place in Solomon's temple (Hurowitz 2005:73-74); also temples of Zerubbabel and Herod
Enclosure Walls	Ornate temple towers; entryways guarded by painted or carved griffins, lions, and other fantastic creatures; Khafaje	Towers at regular intervals in the enclosure walls; undulating walls (Mazghuna); Medamud (Arnold 1999:162, 164, 194-195; 2003:142-143); Hierakonpolis; Abydos (Petrie 1902:90); Abusir (Kemp 1989:141-148); Karnak (Kemp 1989:201); Amarna (Uphill 1970:151-166)	Boghazköy (Frankfort 1954:217-218)	Examples found at En-Gedi; Nahal Hever (Dever 2003:383); Arad (Aharoni 1968:19); EB 1 structures; Alalakh VII (Dever 1995:611-612); Shechem (Northwest Gate (Dever 1995:611-612)); Khirbet ez-Zeraqun (Richard 2003:290); Megiddo	Temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, Herod, Ezekiel, Temple Scroll (cols 2-13, 30-45); Desert Tabernacle (curtains (Ex 27:9-18)); Warning Signs

Table 2: Architectural Expressions of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Exterior and Interior Decorations	<p>Rabbits and niches: (Eridu IX; Eridu VII (Frankfort 1954:18; Lloyd 1978:41-43; Oates 1960:45; Oppenheim 1977:326; Roux 1992:62)); White Temple (Anu); Khorsabad (Temple of Nabu). Buttresses: Eridu IX (Boehmer 1997:294); White Temple at Anu (Frankfort 1954:20); Eanna; Tell Asmar; Ur III; limited use of columns. Cone Mosaics: Stone Cone Mosaic Temple at Eanna (Badawy 1966a:98; Frankfort 1954:24-25; Boehmer 1997:294; Van Buren 1946:323-345). Internal mural paintings: Tell Uqair (Lloyd 1943:135); Mari; temple of Nabu at Khorsabad (Sin Temple), females pouring water from vases, (Temple of Nabu), glazed bricks depicting lions, eagles, bulls, fig trees, and ploughs.</p>	<p>Elaborate pattern of recesses, and salients forming "niche panelling" (Baines 1995:304); false door; columns; relief decorations (Baines 1995:307)</p>	<p>Yazilikaya (Wasilewska 2009:398); sphinxes and lions</p>	<p>Wall paintings (mythical figures, strange animals) at Tuleilat Ghassul (Levi 2003:270); Alalakh IV</p>	<p>Desert tabernacle; Solomon's temple featuring gourds, open flowers, cherubim, palm trees (Bloch-Smith 2002:87; Dever 1995:608); Ezekiel's temple (Hurowitz 2005:73-77); Temple Scroll (cols 2-13, 30-45)</p>

Table 2: Architectural Expressions of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Foundation Deposits	Roux 1992:210-211	Grimal 1992:168-169; Hierakonpolis (Weinstein 1971-1972: 133-135); Thebes (Winlock 1922:28-30)	Not found in Anatolia (Bittel 1976:67)	Nakhai 1997:5:170	
Multiple Courtyards	Khafaje; Eridu VII; Tell Asmar; Nippur (Frankfort 1954:422; Lloyd 1978:107); Ischali; Khorsabad (Temple of Nabu)	Karnak; Amarna (Arnold 2003:10)	Yazilikaya; Boghazköy	Alalakh IV (Frankfort 1954:276-277); Arad	Temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, Herod, and Ezekiel; Temple Scroll (cols 2-13, 30-45)
Orientation	Temple of Enki at Eridu XI-VI (Badawy 1966a:98; Hall 1923:180, n 1); Tepe Gawra, XIV-XII (Perkins 1949:67-70, 87); ANET 338; Ekishnugal (Wilson 1999:322); White Temple (Anu); Khafaje; Ur III	Nabta Playa (Wilkinson 2000:16); Wyatt 2001:50; Temple of Sethos I at Abydos (Wilkinson 2000:36-37); Temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel; Elephantine oriented toward Sirius (Grimal 1992:51-52; Wilkinson 2000:37); Western Thebes (New Kingdom (Maurizio Re 2006:154))	No discernible orientation (Gurney 1952:123)	Lachish (Ussishkin 1981:118); Shechem Temple V (Bull 1960:111); Beth-Shan (Thompson 1967:129-133); Arad (Zevit 2001:168-169); Tell Tainat; Hazor (Zevit 2001:202-205)	Albright 1968:144-150; Nibley 1966:603-605 (but see Parunak 1978:28-33); Gaster 1950:67; Morgenstern 1929:1-37, but esp 17-19, 31-32, 35; 1935: 1-148, esp 76; 1952-1953: 1-74, esp 45-46, 55; and 1963: 7-8; May 1937:309ff; Hollis 1933:87-110

Table 2: Architectural Expressions of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Pillars	Eninnu temple at Lagash (Yeivin 1959:20, n 90); Pillar Temple (Eanna); Painted leopards guarding the entrance at Tell Uqair (Postgate 1992:112); Ubaid, bronze lintel with a lion-headed eagle between two stags, supported by twin columns (Lloyd 1967:103)	Wilkinson 2000:60; Temple of Ramesses at Luxor (Bell 1997:151); Temple of Thutmosis III at Abydos (Wilkinson 2000:144); Heliopolis (Grimal 1992:169)	Pillars or columns, often standing on the backs of lions; sphinxes and lions at temple entrances in Boghazköy	Byblos; Taanach; Tell Tainat; Tell el-Farah; Alalakh (Frankfort 1954:276-277); Hazor (Area H); Megiddo; Shechem; Arad (Aharoni 1968:22); Scott 1939:143-149	Jachin and Boaz (1 Ki 7:15, 21; 2 Ki 11:14; 23:3); Hurowitz 2005:82-84; Smith 1956:488; Patai 1947:109-110; Albright (1968:140-144); Meyers 1984:141-145; Lundquist (2008:63-64); Ezekiel's temple
Sources of Water for Ablutions	Wyatt 2001:40, 85, 162, 180; Khafaje	Sacred lake (Medamud, Karnak, Hierapolis)	Temple courtyards in Boghazköy typically contained a fountain or basin of water (Bittel 1976:69-70)	En-Gedi	Solomon's 'brazen sea' (Wyatt 2001:162; Hurowitz 2005:78-82); multiple brass lavers; Temple Scroll requires ablutions when passing from one area to the next

Table 2: Architectural Expressions of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Primordial Mound	Eninnu (Gudea Cyl A XXI 18-27); Khafaje (Badawy 1966a:101)	Reymond 1969:46, 47, 59, 185, 200, 261, 266, 305, 327; ANET 4, n 7; Frankfort 1978:151-154; ben-ben stone; Medamud (Wilkinson 2000:22); Hierakonpolis (Fairservis 1971-1972:14-20; Wilkinson 2000:76); Heliopolis (Baines 1995:307); Coptos (Kemp 1989:79-80); Karnak; Edfu (Maurizio Re 2006:154); represented by floor sloping upwards to statue of the god (Grimal 1992:265)			Foundation Stone in Solomon's Temple
Tripartite Floor Plan	Eridu, str IX; White Temple (Anu); Khafaje (Hansen 1997:289); Tell Asmar	Abydos (Badawy 1966a:33); used as gradation for sacred space (Grimal 1992:264-265)	Boghazköy (Boyce 2002:241)	Megiddo; Ebla; Hazor (Orthostat Temple (Lundquist 2008:35; Yadin 1959:3-6)); Shechem; Tell el-Hayyat; Alalakh; Arad (Aharoni 1968:18-27; Haran 1985:34-35; Nakhai 1997:174)	Temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, Herod, and Ezekiel; Temple Scroll (cols 2-13, 30-45)

Table 2: Architectural Expressions of Sacred Space

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	Hatti	Canaan/Syria	Israel
Temple/Palace Symbiosis	Hurowitz 1992:56-57, 290-291, n 2; Lundquist 1982:277-297; Gudea's Cyl B; Tell Asmar (shared courtyards)	Wilkinson 2000:74; Pharaoh responsible for <i>ma'at</i> ; pylons, painted with military scenes; military-style gates, walls, towers	Shared temple/palace courtyards; areas reserved for coronation and enthronement ceremonies; private royal chapels; temple a source of political power (Wasilewska 2009:401-402)	Shared temple/palace courtyards; Cross 1984:97-98; Smith 2005:9; Kingship legitimised in Baal Cycle; Arad; Megiddo; merging of palace/temple treasuries (Dever 1995:611-612); Ai (Callaway 1976:18-30; Dever 1995:612); Tel Yarmith; Tell Tainat (Lundquist 2008:56-57)	Solomon (Uziel & Shai 2007:167); Cross 1984:99-101
Ziggurat (as mountain)	Eridu Ur III (Danti & Zettler 1997:259); Oppenheim 1944:55-56; van Buren 1952:301-302; Falkenstein 1974:5; Roaf 1995:429-431; Ex. Ashur, Ur III, Uruk, Nippur, Larsa, Borsippa, Babylon (Etemenanki & Esagila), Kish, Sippar, Khorsabad				

Periodical Abbreviations

AA	<i>Artibus Asiae</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Literature</i>
ASAE	<i>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte</i>
AJT	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAAS	<i>Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BMQ	<i>British Museum Quarterly</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JARCE	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
MMAB	<i>The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin</i>
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
OA	<i>Oriens Antiquus</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
RC	<i>Religion Compass</i>
TBW	<i>The Biblical World</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WPQ	<i>Western Political Quarterly</i>

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