Inside Solomon's Temple

I would like to take you on a tour of God's house in Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon, and afterward talk a little about its significance. The only minor inconvenience to our tour is that this famous edifice, otherwise known as the First Temple, was plundered and destroyed by the Babylonians nearly 2,600 years ago, in 586 B.C.E. We must therefore proceed indirectly, with the aid of various sources, not all equally reliable. Before beginning, let's review these sources.

We are fortunate that 1 Kings 6-7 has preserved a remarkably meticulous description of the Temple and some of its appurtenances. Compared with other descriptions of temples in ancient Near Eastern literature, this account is exceptional in its detail and realism. A careful reader can pick up pencil and paper and begin to sketch the architecture! Any attempt to reconstruct the Temple must start here, although this account is also full of difficulties. While the overall picture is realistic, it contains gaps. The author has emphasized certain features and ignored others. The description includes technical terms that we barely understand, and the text is sometimes corrupt.

Other references important to our understanding of the Temple are scattered elsewhere in the book of Kings and in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who knew the Temple firsthand.

The book of Chronicles also contains an account of the Temple, but this description can be used only with utmost caution. Chronicles was written in the post-Exilic period, when Solomon's Temple had already been destroyed. The author's primary source was probably 1 Kings 6-7. Moreover, the Chronicler distorted the picture by merging the Temple and the desert Tabernacle where the tablets of the law were originally housed. He may have enhanced his picture with details of the Second Temple. And he simply left out details he either did not understand or did not find interesting.

http://www.bib-arch.org/br494/inside.html
Even less reliable are the pictures of the First Temple found in later rabbinic literature and medieval exegesis. Although we may appreciate and occasionally rely on the exegetic sense of the traditional commentators, we must be constantly vigilant, guarding against the anachronistic imposition of details from the Second Temple on our picture of the First Temple.

In addition to these sources, the Bible contains descriptions of other temples that, whether they existed or not, are literary and ideological reflections of Solomon's Temple. With scholarly discretion and critical acumen, we may use these accounts to fill in gaps. The temple described by Ezekiel in his vision of the future (Ezekiel 40-48), for example, is not identical with Solomon's Temple and clearly shows the prophet's inclination to improve on the First Temple. But Ezekiel's representation is certainly based on the Jerusalem Temple of the early sixth century B.C.E., which he, as a priest, knew firsthand.

The Tabernacle described in the book of Exodus 25-31 and 35-40 is obviously not Solomon's Temple, but is closely related to it. Jewish tradition rooted in the Bible regards the Tabernacle as a prototype and forerunner of Solomon's Temple—whatever Solomon built imitated the Tabernacle in some way (see for example, Rashi's commentary on Exodus 29:9). Modern scholars view the account of the Tabernacle skeptically. In its extant form, the Tabernacle description is a reflection of the Solomonic Temple, rather than a forerunner of it. The priestly writer who describes the Tabernacle depicts it in the image of the Jerusalem Temple. The description of the Tabernacle can illuminate certain details of the Temple because the Tabernacle, in its biblical description, is the Temple's idealized predecessor.

What can archaeology contribute to our knowledge of the Temple? Unfortunately, not much. Archaeologists have not uncovered, nor can they hope to uncover, remains of the Solomonic Temple. Although parts of the outer retaining walls of Herod's Temple (the rebuilt Second Temple) are visible today, nothing remains of the original Solomonic Temple.

The only evidence archaeology can offer about Solomon's Temple is indirect, in the form of analogous structures from other sites. But even this evidence is scanty. The only temple found so far that has a plan nearly identical to that of Solomon's Temple is the famous temple from Tell Ta'anyat in Syria.
**YHWH, the so-called "Tetragrammaton," is the four-letter name of the God of Israel. Its pronunciation is uncertain, but it is often rendered "Yahweh" or "Jehovah," and is usually translated "the Lord" in English Bibles.

The late Yohanan Aharoni excavated an Iron Age building at Arad that he identified as an Israelite temple of YHWH, but it differs substantially in overall architectural conception from Solomon's Temple. The final excavation report on the Arad temple has never been published, and archaeologists at the University of Tel Aviv are re-evaluating the dig results. Aharoni's own attempts to draw connections between the Arad temple and both the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple are imaginative and thoroughly unconvincing. (4)

But the archaeological contribution is not as negative as I have suggested. Although whole temples with architecture resembling the Jerusalem Temple are rare, many individual features of Solomon's Temple and its cultic appurtenances find intriguing parallels in excavated finds.

Also important for reconstructing Solomon's Temple is inscriptive evidence from all over the ancient Near East. Even if these extrabiblical texts do not help us understand the physical aspects of the Temple, they are often vital to our understanding of the cultic function and symbolism of Temple fixtures and decorations.

Solomon's Temple was located north of the quarter of the city known as 'Ir David, the City of David. It was part of the royal compound; the same wall surrounded both the Temple and the royal palaces, as was typical of ancient Near Eastern cities.

According to a biblical tradition, the Temple was built on the site of a threshing floor owned by the Jebusite Araunah. David bought the threshing floor and some cattle for 50 shekels of silver; he built an altar on the site and sacrificed the cattle (2 Samuel 24:18-25).

In fact, this site was chosen for the Temple because it was outside the city and was elevated. In ancient Israel, as in the modern world, threshing floors were located at places where the wind would blow freely to facilitate winnowing. (5)

In 2 Chronicles 3:1, the Temple Mount is identified with Mount Moriah, where Abraham bound his son Isaac to sacrifice him as the Lord had commanded, until an angel of the Lord stopped him (Genesis 22). Later tradition tries to lend antiquity and authenticity to the site by saying that Noah, Cain and Abel, and Adam also sacrificed there, and that the dust from which Adam was created was taken from there. (6)
To enter the Temple compound, we must go through a gate. This may be no simple matter: According to Psalm 118:19-20, only the righteous may enter through the gate of the Lord. Even if the guard deems us righteous and allows us through, we must first find the gate. Unfortunately, the description of the Temple in 1 Kings 6 does not indicate how many gates there were or where they stood. We must look elsewhere.

Ezekiel's vision of the future temple prescribes six gates—three gates to the outer court and three to the inner court. As a priest, Ezekiel was especially interested in defining sacred space and ritually significant areas. That is no doubt why he gives such a detailed description of the gates and the courtyards around the temple he envisions. The author of 1 Kings, on the other hand, was more interested in portraying Solomon as a great king who built a fabulous building; describing the gates was less important to him.

Ezekiel prescribes gates in the middle of the north, east and south walls. These gates—to the inner and outer courts—are aligned. Ezekiel's passion for symmetry, however, both here and elsewhere, casts doubt on his reliability.

Temple gates are mentioned elsewhere in Kings (2 Kings 11, 15:35) as well as in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7:2, 20:2, 26, 38) and elsewhere in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 8-11). These occur in descriptions of events that took place on the eve of the Temple's destruction by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. Some of the gates mentioned must have been built by Solomon, but others are explicitly attributed to later monarchs (2 Kings 15:35). Some gates connected the Temple directly with the palace compound, while others led to the outside, either into the city or into the countryside bordering the Temple.

Problems arise when trying to identify the gates. Not only were gates added over the course of the Temple's history, but the Temple precinct itself seems to have expanded. Originally the Temple had only one court, but in time a second court appeared. The part of the court that originally encompassed both the palace and Temple was apparently altered in such a way that the Temple was given a second court. Moreover, the biblical references make no clear distinction between a Temple gate and a city gate. For example, the Benjamin Gate, which Jeremiah refers to specifically as a Temple entry (Jeremiah 20:2, 38:7), may be the one referred to by Deutero-Zechariah as a gate of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:10). First Kings 6:36 mentions an "inner courtyard," but describes only the courtyard wall, made of three layers of hewn stones and one layer of cedar.
logs. This courtyard was also paved with hewn stones. But no corresponding outer court is mentioned.

The Tabernacle, which sometimes reflects aspects of the Temple, had only one court, indicating that an outer court had little cultic significance. Nonetheless, 1 Kings 7:9-12, which describes the different kinds of stone employed in the Temple construction, mentions a "great court." This great court encompassed both the Temple court and the royal palace buildings.

Certain prophetic and poetic passages speak in the plural of "courts of God," "courts of the House of the Lord" and "My courts." Other biblical narratives are more specific and envision a Temple with two courts, an outer and an inner. Second Kings 21:5 and 23:12 mention specifically the "two courts of the House of the Lord."

Perhaps originally the Temple had only one court, but at a certain point the Temple area was decisively split off from the palace, so that the great court was divided into an outer court for the Temple and a palace court. According to 2 Chronicles 20:5, Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah and Jerusalem stood in the Temple before the "new court" to pray.

Only priests could enter into the court of the Tabernacle. Laymen could approach the Tabernacle court entrance with their sacrifices, but were not permitted to cross the threshold into the court (Leviticus 1:5, etc.; Joel 2:17). Ezekiel also limits access to the inner court of his visionary temple to the priests.(8)

As for the Temple itself, 1 Kings 8:64 mentions that, at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon "sanctified the center of the court that was before the House of the Lord" and that the people sacrificed there because the bronze altar was too small for the thousands of offerings performed on that particular occasion. This probably refers to the outer court; the inner one had no doubt already been sanctified.

According to Psalms (for example, Psalms 106, 116:17-19), the people brought their sacrifices, made vows, offered prayers and sang hymns praising God in the Temple courts. The ancient Israelites would come to the courts of the Temple to enjoy a special intimacy with God.

Other features of the Temple courtyards, not mentioned in Kings but described in Chronicles, are the so-called leshakot, or chambers. The Akkadian cognate ashlukkatu designates a
storeroom in a temple. Ezekiel mentions dozens of *leshakot* at regular intervals around the outer walls of both courtyards of his visionary temple (Ezekiel 40:17, 45:5, etc.). In them priests perform various functions such as eating sacrificial flesh or guarding. An additional 20 *leshakot* are for the Levites, who are one step lower than the priests (Ezekiel 45:5). Jeremiah mentions three *leshakot* occupied variously by a "man of God," "officers" and a "threshold guard" (Jeremiah 35-36, *passim*).

Let us now go to the Temple itself.

The Temple building proper was made of unhewn stone (1 Kings 6:7). Solomon seems to have applied to the Temple the ancient prohibition forbidding the use of hewn stones for an altar (Exodus 20:22; compare with Deuteronomy 27:6).

The Temple was laid out on an east-west axis with the entrance on the east. Some have suggested that this permitted the sun to illuminate the inside of the Temple on the first day of autumn and that this was related to a solar cult or festival of YHWH's enthronement.(9)

The external design of the Temple is somewhat obscure. The building was surrounded by something described with the enigmatic words *tsela'ot and yatsia'*(1 Kings 6:5-10). These words are often taken to refer to three levels of side chambers, the bottom row 5 cubits wide, the middle row 6 cubits wide and the top row 7 cubits wide (a cubit being about 18 inches). The structure thus seemed to get wider as it rose from the ground. For this reason, it is sometimes portrayed as a reverse pagoda-type structure. Another view is that these structures were associated with the roof of the building.(10)

A more likely view, espoused by Hebrew University scholar Menahem Haran, explains these terms in quite a different manner.(11) The *yetsi'ot* were horizontally laid boards and the *tsela'ot* were vertical, standing panels, says Haran. The stone structure, according to this interpretation, was actually stepped within the wooden covering. The wall was progressively recessed 1 cubit, 2 cubits and 3 cubits. The horizontal boards rested on the recesses so that they increased in length in a corresponding manner. The stone Temple was thus encased in a cedarwood crate, divided into three stories. The roof or ceiling of the Temple was also made of cedar boards laid widthwise (*gebim*) and lengthwise (*sederot*) (1 Kings 6:9).

A building encased in cedarwood would have reminded
the ancients of the forests of Lebanon, which, in the mythologies of surrounding peoples, were considered holy forests and gardens for the gods. Solomon's Temple thus provided the Lord with a natural habitat.

Whether the Temple had windows in it remains a question. First Kings 6:4 is usually translated as "He made windows for the House, recessed and latticed" ("wayya'as labbayit halloney shequfim 'atumim"). This traditional understanding—that the Temple had windows that were narrow on the outside and wide on the inside—has been challenged by a number of scholars. It has been suggested that the Hebrew refers to some type of structure at the entrance to the Temple that is related to the type of building referred to in Assyrian inscriptions as a bit hilâni. If this is the case, the Temple would have lacked natural light. Certain Mesopotamian texts describe other temples as dark inside. For example, a Sumerian hymn describes the Temple of Enlil in Nippur:

"The House of Enlil—it is a mountain great.
The House of Ninil—it is a mountain great.
The House of Darkness—it is a mountain great.
The House which knows no light—it is a mountain great."(13)

In the composition known as the "Curse of Aggade," the king of Akkade Naram-Sin (2254-2218 B.C.E.) desecrates this temple with disastrous effects: "The people now saw its cella [inner sanctum], the house that knew not light."(14) Solomon says, when dedicating the new Temple, "The Lord decided to dwell in a dark cloud" (1 Kings 8:12).

In front of Solomon's Temple was an enclosed area called the ulam, which was 20 cubits wide and 10 cubits deep. Carol Meyers has recently suggested that it was an unroofed forecourt surrounded by a low wall the same height as the courtyard walls (1 Kings 7:12).(15)

In the ulam stood two bronze pillars named Yachin and Boaz. Each column was 18 cubits high and 12 cubits in circumference. On top of each pillar was a lily-shaped capital 5 cubits high (1 Kings 7:15-22). Many have tried to explain these freestanding pillars. They seem to have had no architectural function. They have been described as incense altars, as symbols of the tree of life or as standing stones (matsebot).(16) Carol Meyers has suggested that they were silent monuments recalling the entrance of God into the Temple and thus testified to His presence there.(17)
The names Yachin and Boaz are also enigmatic. In the ancient Near East, city walls, gates and cult objects were often given names. According to the Bible, Jacob erected an altar or pillar in Shechem that he called El Elohey Yisrael (El [is] God of Israel) (Genesis 33:20). Moses called the altar that he erected at Rephidim after the Israelite victory over the Amalekites YHWH nissi (YHWH [is] my standard) (Exodus 17:15).

Before entering the Temple, we should look at the colossal works of bronze in the courtyard. Here, lined up in front of the Temple on either side of the entrance, were ten immense bronze wagon-like stands called mekhonot, literally "bases." Each mekhonah was 4 cubits on a side and 3 cubits high. They had wheels like those on a chariot and were decorated on the sides with lions, cattle and cherubim. On each mekhonah rested a large basin (kiyyor) 4 cubits in diameter with a capacity of 40 bat. (A bat equals about 21 liters or 5.5 gallons.) The description of these items is extremely difficult to understand, but excavations in Cyprus have yielded several small wagons from the 11th century B.C.E. displaying a similar construction and decoration. These relics give us a rather good idea of what these objects looked like, even though we are still unable to reconstruct the biblical mekhonot with the accuracy we would like.

Slightly to the right of the entrance, somewhat in front of the row of mekhonot, was the great bronze yam (literally, "sea"; also translated "tank"). It measured 10 cubits in diameter and 5 cubits high, and it held 2000 bat. It rested on the hind quarters of 12 bronze bulls, three facing each direction of the compass (1 Kings 7:23-39).

The function of all these water containers can be conjectured from other sources. According to the description of the Tabernacle, the priests used a single basin (kiyyor) to wash their hands and feet before entering the Tabernacle or approaching the altar. Second Chronicles 4:6 says that the kiyyorot were used for washing burnt offerings, while the water for priestly ablutions came from the yam.

These enormous vessels undoubtedly had symbolic meaning. Ezekiel's temple of the future has a river flowing from under the threshold (Ezekiel 47:1). This river will fertilize its environs and be a source of life. Ezekiel (see also Joel 4:18) in effect transfers the four rivers of the Garden of Eden into the temple and transforms them into a single life-giving river that emanates from the temple. The river envisioned by Ezekiel seems to replace the basins in Solomon's Temple—basins that may have symbolized the...
rivers of a divine garden.

The yam in Solomon's Temple was comparable to the large water basins known from Mesopotamian temples. These basins may have represented the cosmic sea upon which the water god Ea/Enki founded the first temple, a temple that became a prototype for all subsequent temples in Mesopotamia.

An altar must have stood in the Temple's courtyard, even though the description in 1 Kings makes no reference to it. However, the altar was apparently not the one set up by David (2 Samuel 24:25). A bronze altar is mentioned in passing in 1 Kings 8:64 ("the bronze altar...was too small"). Ahaz (743-727 B.C.E.) replaced this altar with a large new altar modelled after one he had seen in Damascus (2 Kings 16:10-17). In 2 Chronicles 4:1, we are told that Solomon built an altar 20 cubits on each side and 10 cubits high. Although 1 Kings 6-7 makes no mention of this altar, it does report that Hiram of Tyre manufactured bronze pots, shovels and basins (sirot, ya'im and mizraqot) (1 Kings 7:40) that were surely used in association with the altar. So there must have been an altar.

To enter the Temple, we go through a doorway. The doorway leading from the forecourt (ulam) into the outer sanctum (heikhal) was surrounded by four interlocking and recessed doorframes made of olive wood. Interlocking doorframes like these are illustrated by examples in tombs from Cyprus, as well as by depictions of doorframes and window frames found among the Nimrud ivories in ancient Mesopotamia. (20) The two doors of the Temple entrance were each made of two boards of juniper wood. Engravings of cherubim, palmettes and buds with gold pounded onto them decorated the doors (1 Kings 6:33-34).

The heikhal was a long-room 40 cubits deep, 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high. Cedarwood panels covered the walls from floor to ceiling. The floors of the heikhal were made of juniper wood. The two side walls and the front wall (the wall between the heikhal and the ulam) were engraved with vegetable motifs, buds and blooms, and were covered with gold (1 Kings 6:18).

In the heikhal stood an incense altar, a table for bread and beverage, and ten lamp stands, all of gold and said to have been made by Solomon (1 Kings 7:48-50). These furnishings indicate that the ritual performed in the Temple was quite similar to that performed in the desert Tabernacle, which also had a table for bread, an incense altar and a lamp...
(Exodus 25:30, 27:20, 30:1). But some of the small golden utensils mentioned in the Temple and Tabernacle descriptions suggest differences in the rituals. For example, the Temple's *mezamerot* (1 Kings 7:50), usually mistranslated as "snuffers" or "shears," can only be rendered properly as "musical instruments." The Tabernacle, by contrast, was a place of silent worship. Also, the use of drinking vessels in the Temple rather than the use of libation vessels, as in the Tabernacle, implies a slightly more anthropomorphic cult in the former.

The back wall of the *heikhal* was decorated differently from the three other walls, for behind it was the Holy of Holies, or *dvir* (usually translated "shrine"). This wall was engraved with cherubim and palmettes (1 Kings 6:29); and, rather than buds and blossoms, it had only blossoms. It was thus considerably more ornate that the other walls. The cherubim probably represented God's heavenly retinue or royal guards flanking the entrance to his throne room.

The entryway to the *dvir* had a more elaborate door than the entryway to the *heikhal* (1 Kings 6:31-32). The doorframe was of five interlocking parts rather than four, and the doors were made of olive wood, rather than juniper. Each door was apparently made of a single board rather than two, as with the doors to the *heikhal*, and thus would have looked more massive. They were certainly more expensive to manufacture. The doors were engraved with cherubim, palmettes and blossoms, and were covered with gold. The application of gold to the inner doors of the *dvir* was apparently more sophisticated than its application to the outer doors of the *dvir*.

The *dvir* was a cubical chamber, measuring 20 cubits in each dimension. Its walls, engraved with cherubim, palmettes and blossoms, and its gold-plated floor were made of cedar.

Whether the *dvir* was raised—that is, whether one needed to ascend some stairs to enter it—remains a question for some, although a close examination of the relevant texts provides an answer. The question arises because of a 10-cubit difference between the height of the *dvir* (20 cubits) and the height of the *heikhal* (30 cubits). This difference can be reconciled either by raising the floor of the *dvir* and adding a "basement," or by lowering its ceiling vis-à-vis the *heikhal* and putting in a loft. Which option is preferable? First Kings 6:30, in its present form, suggests that the floor of the *dvir* was gold-plated on top and underneath. Some English translations of 1 Kings 6:30 mistakenly refer to gold plating of the floors of the "inner and outer rooms" (see, for
example, the Revised Standard Version). However, the Hebrew phrase here is *lipnimah welahitson*, which means "inside and outside" and not "the inner room and the outer room."

The existence of a double-plated floor would imply a lower chamber and speak in favor of the first option, a basement below the *dvir*. This would require steps leading up to the *dvir*, but the text does not mention any. The Holy of Holies in Ezekiel's temple also had no steps (Ezekiel 41:3). These facts seem to indicate that there were no steps and that the *dvir* was not raised. How can we interpret this evidence for a raised floor with no steps leading to it?

It may be that the text in its present form has fallen victim to a common form of textual corruption called a vertical dittography. The two words indicating the double-plated floor (*lipnimah welahitson*) may be an inadvertent and mistaken repetition of the nearly identical words *millipnim welahitson* that appear in the previous verse, verse 29. If these words were deleted from verse 30, there would be no indication of a double plating of gold, a lower chamber or a raised floor. The 10-cubit difference in the heights between the *dvir* and the *heikhal* would then suggest that an empty space lay above the *dvir*, rather than below it.

In the *dvir*, or Holy of Holies, two huge, gold-plated, olive-wood cherubim stood side-by-side, with their outstretched wings touching at the center of the room. Each cherub was 10 cubits tall and had two wings, with a wingspan of 10 cubits, so that their outer wings touched the opposite walls of the *dvir*. Under their outstretched wings stood the Ark.(23)

The Temple as a whole was called Bet YHWH, the House of the Lord (see, for example, 1 Kings 9:1). This name should be taken literally, at least in the original conception of the building. God was resident here. Solomon's dedication of the building was consummated by the entrance of God's kavod, a radiant, visible presence, usually translated "glory" or "majesty." The Ark had always been the physical symbol of God's presence (1 Samuel 4:7). Where went the Ark, there was the Lord. Later, in the seventh century B.C.E., under the influence of reformist theologians of the Deuteronomic school, the conception of the Temple was redefined as a place where God's name was found and where prayers could be directed so that they could be channeled to a God living not in the Temple, but in the heavens (see, e.g., Deuteronomy 26:15 and 1 Kings 8:27, part of the so-called Deuteronomic History [Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings].
edited finally in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E.). Still the original concept of the Temple as the divine residence dictated all aspects of its architecture.

As we proceed into the Temple, and finally into the Holy of Holies, we find increasingly valuable, sophisticated and elaborate decoration. This gradation corresponded to a progression from profane space to sacred space and finally to most sacred space. The material gradation focused attention on the divine presence resident in the divine palace.

The furnishings in the heikhal were those of a house—a table, lampstands and an incense altar. The cult sustained by such implements would be similar to the daily routine of a resident.

Since God was king, and kings lived in palaces, the Temple was not just a simple house. It was God's palace; the Holy of Holies was His throne room. The immense cherubim, similar to cherubim found on royal thrones from neighboring peoples, represented the divine throne on which the deity sat. The Ark was the divine footstool. It contained the tablets of the covenant. In a similar fashion in foreign temples, treaty documents were deposited at the feet of divine statues. The cherubim engraved on the doors kept watch over the palace, just as the cherubim who guarded the way to the Garden of Eden acted as its gatekeepers (Genesis 3:24). In a cuneiform inscription from Sippar, the Babylonian king Nabonidus (555-539 B.C.E.) describes the mythical representations he set up as guards of the Sin (moon god) temple at Harran:

"A wild ox of pure gold which gores my enemies I set up mightily in its cella, two lahmu-demons of eshmaru-gold which topple my foes I set firmly to the right and left of the eastern gate." (27)

The cherubim on the doors of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple served the same function. The cherubim engraved on the walls may have represented the angelic ministers of the royal council, like the seraphim witnessed by Isaiah in his great throne vision (Isaiah 6:1-2):

"I beheld my Lord seated on a high and lofty throne; and the skirts of His robe filled the Temple. Seraphs stood in attendance on Him. Each of them had six wings: With two he covered his face, with two he covered his legs, and with two he would fly."
The houses of gods and kings were often surrounded with gardens, and the floral motifs that covered the walls and doors of Solomon's Temple, as well as the lampstands decorated with flowers, represented the vegetation of such a garden. The pillars Yachin and Boaz, crowned with lilies and pomegranates, may have represented the trees in the Garden of Eden (1 Kings 7:20). The *mekhonot* or bases for the water basins (*kiyyorot*) were decorated with both lions and cattle, perhaps symbolizing the co-existence of wild and tame animals, typical of divine gardens in the past, as well as in the eschatological future as portrayed by the prophets. The wood with which the Temple was panelled was reminiscent of the Lebanon mountains that were the traditional dwellings of deities in the ancient Near East. Nabonidus tells how the cedar doors in the Sin (moon god) temple in Harran exuded sweet fragrance. Nebuchadnezzar uses the same expression in his description of the forests of Lebanon. A cedar-panelled temple not only looked like the natural divine habitat but smelled like it too.

Divine palaces were also situated on the sea, at the confluence of rivers. This too was represented in the Temple courtyard by the great bronze sea (*yam*) and the water basins (*kiyyorot*).

Between the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E., when the Deuteronomic History was taking form, the Temple as God's dwelling was considerably spiritualized. In the Deuteronomic historian's account of the Temple dedication, Solomon asks rhetorically, "Will God really dwell on earth?" (1 Kings 8:27). If the historical Solomon could answer he would reply, "But of course, for the Temple I have built is Heaven on Earth." 


2 There have been occasional suggestions to the contrary, such as Ernest-Marie Laperrousaz, "King Solomon's Wall Still Supports the Temple Mount," *Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR)*, May/June 1987, pp. 34-44 (This issue is out of print. To order a photocopy of this article call 800-221-4644 or email us at merchandise@bib-arch.org.). We may also mention the famous tiny ivory pomegranate that was purchased at an exorbitant price on the assumption that its partially broken inscription indicated that it came from the
First Temple. The true provenance of this item and the restoration of its inscription have been the subject of scholarly controversy (see "The Pomegranate Scepter Head—From the Temple of the Lord or from a Temple of Asherah?" BAR, May/June 1992 (Order this issue), pp. 42-43). (Back)


5 Although Ruth goes down to the threshing floor for a rendezvous with Boaz (Ruth 3:3,6), David goes up to Araunah's threshing floor (2 Samuel 24:19). (Back)

6 See Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 31.29; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Sepher Ha-cAvodah, Hilkhoth Bet-Ha-Behirah 2, 2; and Nachmanides on Genesis 22:2. Cf. also Isaac Kalimi, "The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah, and the Site of Solomon's Temple in Biblical Historiography," Harvard Theological Review 83 (1990), pp. 345-362. (Back)


8 He makes a minor concession to the nasi (Ezekiel's term for the future elevated, highest-ranking, secular leader—usually translated "prince"), whom he permits to enter the east gate of the inner court to eat or observe the performance by the priests of his own sacrifices (Ezekiel 44:3, 46:2). (Back)

9 Julian Morgenstern, "Amos Studies III. The Historical Antecedents of Amos' Prophecy," Hebrew Union College


14 Kramer in ANET³, pp. 649, line 128. (Back)


16 Meyers, "Jachin and Boaz." (Back)

17 Meyers, "Jachin and Boaz." (Back)


21 See Meyers, "Was There a Seven-Branched Lampstand in Solomon's Temple?" BAR, Sept./Oct. 1979, pp. 46-57. (This issue is out of print. To order a photocopy of this article call...

http://www.bib-arch.org/br494/inside.html

23 Richard Elliott Friedman, under the entry "Tabernacle," The Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 6, pp. 292-300, has again repeated his highly imaginative proposal that the Mosaic Tabernacle stood within the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple beneath the wings of the cherubim. This odd theory is totally and absolutely without foundation. For a detailed refutation of it, see Hurowitz "The Form and Fate of the Priestly Tabernacle—Remarks on a Recent Proposal," Jewish Quarterly Review, forthcoming. See also my comments in Israel Exploration Journal 34 (1984), pp. 67-69. (Back)


26 Haran, Temples and Temple Service, pp. 246-259. (Back)


29 See Isaiah 11:6. (Back)

30 Langdon, Die neubabylonische Königsinschriften, p. 222, lines 11-12. (Back)

31 Langdon, Die neubabylonische Königsinschriften, p. 174,

(Back)