

The Description of the Tabernacle in Ex. 25-40

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A. Introduction

The re-dating of the Torah to a period after the Prophets was an important step in the original formulation of the documentary hypothesis. Wellhausen writes, “In the course of a casual visit in Gottingen in the summer in 1867, I learned through Ritschl that Karl Heinrich Graf placed the Law later than the Prophets, and almost without knowing his reasons for the hypothesis, I was prepared to accept it; I readily acknowledged to myself the possibility of understanding Hebrew antiquity without the book of the Torah.”¹ The implications of this re-dating of the Law relative to the Prophets cannot be overstated. Laws once thought to have regulated worship and service of the temple priesthood were now attributed to a priestly school writing retrospectively in the exilic and post-exilic periods. According to Wellhausen, the lengthy description of the tabernacle found in the concluding chapters of Exodus was no more than an “elaborate fabrication - the invention of a priestly hand.”²

Wellhausen’s theory reflects a somewhat negative view of the Priestly document. It was characterized by ‘technical minutiae and wearisome style’ that was produced by a new elite

¹James Karl Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai : The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).11

² Frank Moore Cross, ed. *The Priestly Tabernacle*, vol. 1, The Biblical Archaeologist Reader (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961).

priestly class that had stepped into the vacuum created by the exile of the Judean monarchy.³ M. Buber succinctly summarizes this view of the Priestly document when he states, “the tabernacle was part of a priestly recasting of history that occurred after the exilic period in which the prophet became the priest; the leader’s tent became the tabernacle; Divine Speech was replaced by the Urim and Tummim; etc.”⁴

Wellhausen’s late date for the tabernacle received widespread support among scholars but others called for a reassessment. Y. Kaufmann accepted the idea that the Torah was composed of contiguous sources – one of which was P - but turned Wellhausen’s theory on its head by arguing that the Priestly document is earlier than the material attributed to the Deuteronomist. Kaufmann looked for the roots of Yahwistic monotheism in the Sinai theophany and therefore argued that, “P’s tent is a priestly-prophetic vehicle, with the prophetic, the oracular, predominating. The lustrations performed in the tent are designed to make it fit for divine revelation, for lawgiving, for judgment, for guiding the people through the desert, for the Urim and Thummim. None of this is a reflection of the situation in the age of the Second Temple.”⁵

Haran likewise argued that P must be an early, contiguous source. He noted that there is much in the tabernacle description that is “ancient and quite authentic” and suggested that the tabernacle described in the last chapters of Exodus was the tent shrine established at Shiloh during the period of the Judges.⁶ However, Haran argues that the current form of the text did not “attain literary crystallization until a relatively late period, and hence later details were superimposed on

³ Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel : An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford Eng.: Clarendon Press, 1977).

⁴ Martin Buber, ed. *Holy Event (Exodus 19-27)*, Exodus, Modern Critical Interpretations (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987).

⁵ Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* (The University of Chicago, 1960).184

⁶ References to the shrine at Shiloh having a door post and lintel suggest that the shrine at Shiloh was not a tent. It is also referred to in one place as a ‘temple’ (*heikhal*). Haran does not think that either of these references outweigh the numerous references elsewhere to the shrine at Shiloh being a tent. Most significant, is the statement made by Nathan that “Yahweh dwelt in a tent”.

it with the result that its ancient aspects were largely blurred.”⁷ Haran compares the authors of P to renaissance artists who “painted biblical figures and early Christian saints with countenances and attire typical of their own time, one cannot be surprised that the authors of P paid no attention to historical accuracy.”⁸

Unlike Haran or Kaufmann, F. M. Cross does not consider P to be a contiguous source but rather the hand of a late redactor. According to Cross, the tabernacle description ‘utilized’ older material that was expanded upon and incorporated into the Torah in a later period. Cross suggests that the original tent was a simple structure built by David to house the Ark in Jerusalem.

Thus, while it is clear that a number of scholars rejected Wellhausen’s theory of the post exilic ‘invention’ of the tabernacle, the elaborate description of the structure is still considered to be the product of a late hand. It follows from this that that the tabernacle description relies on the description of the temple in 1 Kings 6 and 7 and perhaps even on the description of the eschatological temple in Ezekiel. Thus V. Hurowitz writes, "The image of the Tabernacle probably represents a phase in the Jerusalem Temple, between its original form, as described in Kings, and its final form, as reflected in Ezekiel's description.”⁹

This paper will argue that linguistic analysis of the tabernacle description rules out a post-exilic date for its composition. Furthermore, the description of the tabernacle has too many distinctive features for it to stand in a literary continuum between the description of Solomon’s temple and

⁷ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel : An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School*. 195

⁸ Ibid. 195

⁹ Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, ed. *Yhwh's Exalted House: Aspects of the Design and Symbolism of Solomon's Temple*, Rev. ed., Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel : Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2007).

the idealized descriptions of the temple found in Ezekiel or the Temple Scroll. To the contrary, the description of Solomon's temple relies on information contained in the description of the tabernacle. This leads us to conclude that a significant portion of the elaborate description of the tabernacle found in the last chapters of Exodus predates the description of Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 6 and 7.

B. Linguistic Analysis of the Tabernacle Description

The amount of detail incorporated into the description of the tabernacle is unparalleled in ancient temple descriptions. The technical terminology used to describe the tabernacle offers linguists the opportunity to determine the period of time in which the description was composed. In an important article, Avi Hurvitz demonstrated that the vocabulary used by P is characteristic of Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH).¹⁰ A number of the terms discussed in the article by Hurvitz belong to the description of the tabernacle and are summarized below:

- *nəḏāb* – "to do willingly" (cf. Ex 35:5; 21,22) Late Biblical Hebrew and Rabbinic Hebrew uniformly use the hithpael form *hītnaddeb* instead of the qal form (1 Chron 29:17), even when directly quoting P. Thus Hurvitz writes, "If the hypothesis is correct, that the Priestly Code reflects the post-exilic period, it will be difficult to account for P's striking divergence from the accepted norm *hītnaddeb*, employed throughout Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), Biblical Aramaic, Rabbinic Literature and inscriptional material. The best way to explain this discrepancy in terminology is to assume that at the time of

¹⁰ Avi Hurvitz, "The Evidence of Language in Dating the Priestly Code," *Revue Biblique* 81(1974).

the formularization of the Tabernacle section in Exodus, the later term *hītnaddeb* had not yet been fixed.”¹¹

- *šippā^h* – “to cover” (Ex 36:34; cf. 1 Kings 6:22); The parallel term *wayəḥappēhū* (2Ch 3:8) is common in LBH and Rabbinic Hebrew. Priestly texts describing the construction of the tabernacle are completely unaware of the term as is the account of the building of the temple.
- *šēš* – “Byssus” (Ex. 36:35); the parallel term in LBH is *būš* (cf. 2 Ch 3:14). In parallel descriptions of the *pārōket* “the curtain” that divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, LBH uses *būš* instead *šēš*. The Mishnah universally uses *būš* in place of *šēš*.
- *wāmā^ʿlā^h* – “and upward” (Exo 30:14); LBH uses *lāmā^ʿlā^h* (1Ch 23:27).
- *wərəḥaštā* – “and you shall wash” (Exo 29:4; cf. Is. 4:4); LBH uses *yādīhū* (Eze 40:38)
- *sābīb* – “around” (Exo 38:16); LBH uses *sābīb sābīb* (Eze 8:10; 2 Chr 4:3; Ez 40:16).

This doubling of the word has a close parallel with Aramaic שכור שכור.

- *ḥāšar* – “court”; in LBH we also find *āzārā^h* (cf. 2Ch 4:9 where both words for court appear in reference to a ‘court for the priests’ and a ‘great court’.
- *wəlqāḥtā ʿet-dāmō* – “you shall take its blood” (Exo 29:16); in LBH we find *wayəqabbəlū hakkōhānīm ʿet-haddām* – “and the priests received the blood” (2Ch 29:22)

Hurvitz uses three types of criteria to determine whether a linguistic element can be termed a neologism: 1) What is the distribution of the proposed neologism? *As a first step*, a neologism should primarily be attested in texts that are known to be late. 2) What classic linguistic element

¹¹ Ibid.

is being replaced by the new one? If it does not replace an older, well established term, then no conclusion can be made about the diachronic development of the language. 3) Is the proposed neologism attested in extra-Biblical sources? If extra Biblical sources reflect a similar linguistic change, then we may begin to draw conclusions about the date in which our text was written.¹² By employing this methodology Hurvitz concludes that, “P invariably takes sides with the pre-exilic group. Ezekiel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles may avail themselves of the earlier terms; but P is alone in its systematic preference for them.”¹³

M. Ehrensvarð disagrees with Hurvitz that Biblical texts can be dated according to linguistic criteria. He argues that post exilic writers were capable of writing in a style virtually indistinguishable from CBH.¹⁴ Using statistical data (ie. - number of LBH’isms per page of text), Ehrensvarð argues that Zechariah displays few of the characteristics of LBH despite its post-exilic date. In response, Hurvitz notes that Zechariah *does* display features of LBH and that it should be expected that Zechariah will have more in common with CBH since it was composed at a time (520 BC) when LBH was “just making its debut on the Biblical scene and had not yet acquired a defined habitat in the newly developing linguistic landscape.”¹⁵

The accounts of the building of the tabernacle and temple offer a much better test for Hurvitz’s methodology than Zechariah. The reason for this is that the terminology employed in the tabernacle / temple building accounts is technical in nature and more likely to reflect the historical context in which it was composed. Descriptions of the tabernacle (Exodus), the 1st

¹²“The Recent Debate on Late Biblical Hebrew: Solid Data, Expert’s Opinions and Inconclusive Arguments,” *Hebrew Studies* 47(2006). 194

¹³ Avi Hurvitz, “The Evidence of Language in Dating the Priestly Code,” *Revue Biblique* 81(1974). 26

¹⁴ Martin Ehrensvarð, “Why Biblical Texts Cannot Be Dated Linguistically,” *Hebrew Studies* 47(2006).

¹⁵ Avi Hurvitz, “The Recent Debate on Late Biblical Hebrew: Solid Data, Expert’s Opinions and Inconclusive Arguments,” *ibid.* 206

temple (2 Kings and Chronicles), Ezekiel's eschatological temple (Ezekiel), and the 2nd temple (Ezra) as well as the detailed descriptions of a temple in the Temple Scroll provide a unique opportunity to compare not only the evolution of a structure but also the language used to describe it. In this regards, A. Hurvitz has convincingly demonstrated that the description of the tabernacle does not contain any of the characteristic linguistic features of LBH and may therefore be assigned to a period before the exile.

C. Comparisons of Tabernacle and Temple Descriptions in the Bible

I. Introduction

It is generally thought that the tabernacle description relies on that of the temple. V. A. Hurowitz lists a number of literary parallels between the building descriptions of the temple and that of the tabernacle.¹⁶ However, many of those listed are more likely to be coincidence. For example, one would expect that the description of the doors and curtains of the structure would come after the description of the structure itself, etc. It is the differences between the two accounts that are more noteworthy. We will discuss some of the more notable similarities and differences below:

II. Layout and Proportions of the Structure

The temple is divided into three major sections (*ulam, heikhal, debir*). The tabernacle has two (*māqôm qāḏōš* and *qōḏeš qoḏāšîm*). These divisions are discussed below:

¹⁶ Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "The Priestly Account of Building the Tabernacle," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 1 (1985).

ulam – vestibule; Akk. *ellamu*; a term used to designate a throne hall. Septuagint transliterated it as *ailam* rather than provide the approximate Greek equivalent – *pronaos*.¹⁷ According to Kings, the vestibule (*ûlām*) of the temple was 10 cubits deep. However, this dimension was not included in the overall dimensions of the temple (60 cubits x 20 cubits) given in Kings. According to Chronicles, the vestibule was lined with Cypress and overlaid with pure gold. However, there are several indications in Kings that the vestibule was not enclosed but was rather a porch. Kings states that the three tiered side structure only extended alongside the nave and the inner sanctuary but not the vestibule. Neither is any mention made of doors for the vestibule. It is likely that the pillars, Boaz and Joachin, stood in the opening of the vestibule. The fact that this room was not included in the overall dimensions of the temple is likely because the layout and proportions of the temple are based on a two room structure (ie. the tabernacle) to which the vestibule was a later addition.

heikhal - Akk. *ekallu*; Sumerian - *e-gal*; Ugaritic – *hkl*; In Nuzi texts *e-gal* describes the admin room of a house. Marduk's temple in Babylon is called “*Esagil ekallu same u erseti*” (Esagil, palace of heaven and of earth). The basic meaning is that of a ‘house’. It is translated as *naos* in LXX. However, the *heikhal* was not the cult chamber of Solomon’s temple, and so it did not function as the *naos* of a Greek temple. The *heikhal* of Solomon’s temple is the counterpart to the ‘*māqôm qāḏōš*’ (Holy Place) of the tabernacle.

debir – ‘inner sanctuary’ – The etymology of this word is not clear. It is sometimes translated as ‘oracle’, perhaps connecting it to the root *dbr* (word). *debir* presented the Greek translators of

¹⁷ William E. Mierse, *Temples and Sanctuaries from the Early Iron Age Levant : Recovery after Collapse*, History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant (2012).

the LXX with the same problem as *ulam* and was therefore transliterated. The *debir* has its counterpart in the *qōdeš qōdāšîm* (the Holy of Holies).

No overall dimensions are given for the tabernacle. We know that each side was comprised of 10 *qārāšîm* and the end of 6 *qārāšîm* + 2 corners. The *qārāšîm* were 1 ½ cubits wide. A number of different configurations have been suggested. However, the overall proportions are very close to those of the temple, and may have been exactly the same depending on how the corner frames fit with the sides and end. It is reasonable to assume that Solomon's temple was twice the length and twice the width of the tabernacle but was three times its height. Despite the extra height of Solomon's temple, the inner sanctuary (*dbîr*) was 20 x 20 x 20 cubits. These cubic proportions match that of the 'holy of holies' (*qōdeš haqqōdāšîm*) in the tabernacle.¹⁸ It seems that the cube was important enough that a 10 cubit space was left above the inner sanctuary of Solomon's temple (or the inner sanctuary was raised by 10 cubits). One reason for this may be that Solomon's temple wished to maintain certain ideal proportions (the cubic proportions of the inner sanctuary) while taking liberty with others (such as the height of the building). If the cube is the ideal proportion for the inner sanctuary, then it is more likely that the temple gets its proportions from the tabernacle than vice versa.

III. Layout and Proportions of the Courtyard and Auxiliary Structures

So far, we have discussed the main divisions of the structure but the courtyards and auxiliary structures were also an important part of the sanctuary complex.

liškāṭā^h – According to Haran, this was an “auxiliary structure which, in the course of time, could be put up beside the high-place to provide comfortable quarters for gatherings and

¹⁸ cf. 2Ch 5:7, 1 Ki 7:50 where *dbîr* and *qōdeš haqqōdāšîm* are used in parallel.

overnight visits.”¹⁹ The Vulgate translates *liškātā^h* (in the context of 1 Sa 9:22) as ‘*triclinium*’ while in the LXX *liškātā^h* is translated *exedra* 18 times.²⁰ There was a *liškātā^h* at the high place in Ramah where Samuel ate with thirty other invited guests (1 Sam 9:22). It has been suggested that the meal Hannah ate after she prayed at Shiloh was a ceremonial meal eaten in a *liškātā^h* (1 Sam 1:18) but there is no textual support for this. According to its excavator, the temple at Dan possessed a *liškātā^h*.

The three tier structure (*yāšō^{ac}*) that extended around the back and sides of the temple may have functioned as *liškātō^t*. Josiah is said to have removed ‘horses for the chariot of the sun’ (2 Ki 23:11) from a *liškātā^h* of the temple thereby suggesting that the chambers assumed cultic significance at some point. Jeremiah was commanded by God to bring the Rechabites into a *liškātā^h* that belonged to the sons of Hanan, in order to offer them wine to drink. It appears that the chambers may have belonged to certain dignitaries who frequented the temple. Ezekiel’s visionary temple describes cells or storerooms that are not mentioned in the description of Solomon’s Temple (1 Ki 6 & 7).²¹

The tabernacle description makes no mention of auxiliary structures. Commenting on the lack a *liškātā^h* in the tabernacle, Haran states, "It is not surprising that P does not mention the *liškātō^t* since P maintains the fiction associated with the wilderness sanctuary, namely, that no ancillary

¹⁹ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel : An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School*.

²⁰ G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974). 34

²¹ The description of the temple in Chronicles mentions ancillary rooms used as treasuries or for storage (1 Chr 28:12 and 2 Chr. 31:11).

buildings were necessary.”²² It would seem that in the account commonly attributed to P, the entrance to the tent of meeting (*peṭaḥ ʾōhel mō‘ēd*) seems to function as the *liškāṭāh*.

In 1 Ki 6:5 it states that the *yāšō^{ac}* (three-tiered side structure) was built against the house (*‘al-qīr habbāyit* - 1Ki 6:5). This suggests that, like the vestibule (*ūlām*), the *yāšō^{ac}* was never considered to be a part of ‘the house’. Waterman notes that both Kings and Ezekiel are, “at particular pains to indicate that the three-storied structure around the two sides and rear of the house was no real part of the house itself.”²³ This further strengthens the theory that the design of the temple was based on a two room structure that consisted of only the inner sanctuary (*debir*) and the sanctuary (*heikal*).

Courtyard Divisions - Both Ezekiel and the Temple Scroll spend more time on the layout and division of the temple courtyards than on the temple structure. Although they differ on some important points, both describe a series of three square, concentric boundaries. For Ezekiel, the outermost boundary is the city. The Temple Scroll cordons off the temple with a third courtyard that is not mentioned in Ezekiel. The outermost walls of Ezekiel’s and the Temple Scroll’s courtyards have 12 gates named after the tribes of Israel. The Temple Scroll purposefully switches the order of the names for the gates as given in Ezekiel so that the tribe of Levi is given the prime location at the center on the east side of the temple.²⁴ Otherwise, Ezekiel and the Temple Scroll agree on the order of the tribes. The tabernacle differs on all of these points. 1) It has only one boundary fence. 2) The tabernacle courtyard is rectangular (2:1) and not square. 3) It has only one gate, on the east side instead of three (Ezekiel) or four (the Temple Scroll). 4)

²² Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel : An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School*. 34

²³ Waterman L, "The Damaged "Blueprints" of the Temple of Solomon," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (1943).285

²⁴ Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1977). 121

The description of the arrangement of the tribes around the tabernacle in Num 2:3-31 does not match Ezekiel or the Temple Scroll. Based on the evidence from the courtyards, the description of the tabernacle appears as an independent witness that does not stand within exilic or post-exilic traditions.

ḡārōket - the veil in the tabernacle. Used specifically of the veil that separates the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Freedman suggests that the *ḡārōket* was a canopy. However the curtain must have created separate rooms of equal width rather than a canopy hanging on a pillar at each corner that creates a ‘room within a room’. It is more likely, therefore, that the *ḡārōket* (Exo 26:31) was similar in function to the *miššāh*²⁵ that hung in the entrance to the tent. *miššāh* and *ḡārōket* form a construct phrase in Ex 35:12; 39:34; 40:21; Nu 45 (HALOT). The Septuagint translates both of these curtains with the same word - ‘*katapetasma*’.²⁵ A. V. Hurowitz notes that the veil is said to hang on four pillars under the golden clasps (Ex. 26:33).²⁶ Solomon’s temple has doors of ‘oil wood’ (sometimes translated as olive wood) for the doors of the inner sanctuary while the main doors to the temple were made of cypress.²⁷

IV. Furnishings

The Laver- The bronze sea was located on the south east corner of Solomon’s Temple.

Likewise, the Temple Scroll describes a structure that housed a laver on the ‘south side of the temple on its eastern side’.²⁸ There is no laver in Ezekiel’s eschatological temple. Instead, a

²⁵ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990). 2762 *καταπέτασμα*

²⁶ Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "The Form and Fate of the Tabernacle: Reflections on a Recent Proposal," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 86, no. 1/2 (1995).

²⁷ Chronicles is clearly drawing on the Exodus tradition in describing the veil Solomon placed in the temple. (2 Chron. 3:14)

²⁸ Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*.

trickle of water issues out of the side of the temple, “south of the altar” (Ezek 47:1b) in the place where the laver once stood. All of these differ from the tabernacle description which locates the laver in the middle of the courtyard “between the tent of meeting and the altar (Exo 30:18).”

The Altar – No detailed description of the altar is found in the description of Solomon’s temple.²⁹ This is remarkable considering the importance the altar plays in the temple service. That such an altar existed is confirmed by a passing allusion to a bronze altar “that was before the LORD (2Ki 16:14 ESV)”. This was the altar king Ahaz removed so that he could install a bigger one patterned after an altar that he saw in Damascus.

The Altar of Incense - According to Exodus, the altar of incense was placed in front of the curtain. Kings associates the altar with the *debir* although it is not clear whether it intends for us to understand the altar of incense as being located inside the *debir* or simply associated with it (1 Ki. 6:22). Kings states that the altar was made of cedar instead of acacia (1 Kings 6:20) and was covered in gold but provides no further details. The proportions of the altar of incense given in Exodus match those of altars from Megiddo and Arad that date to the Iron Age.³⁰

V. Decoration

Floral Motifs - The descriptions of Solomon’s Temple in Kings and Chronicles give detailed descriptions of two pillars, *yāqîn* and *bō‘az*, that stood in the entrance to the temple.^{31 32} The

²⁹ Chronicles mentions that the altar built by Bezalel was at Gibeon (2 Chron. 1:6) and that Solomon built another altar that was 20 x 20 x 10 cubits (2 Chron. 4:1). cf Ex. 27:1 – Brazen Altar 5 x 5 x 3 cubits.

³⁰ Raanan Eichler, "The Meaning of Zer," *Unpublished* (2012).

³¹ Herodotus mentions two pillars that stood before the temple of Heracles – a god whom Herodotus believed to be an Olympian deity rather than the hero of later Greek tradition. The Greeks were probably referring to the Phoenician god Melkarth – “lord of the city”. Herodotus believed the temple to be as old as the city itself – 2300 years old at the time Herodotus wrote. It is noteworthy that Herodotus singles out the two great pillars as the distinguishing characteristics of the temple. He says that one was gold and the other emerald. Solomon’s temple would have been non-descript except for the doors and the pillars that stood in the porch of the building. According to the Biblical account, the pillars were the work of ‘Hiram of Tyre’. Chronicles states that the pillars stood 35 cubits high with capitals of 5 cubits. It is not clear if the pillars therefore stood 40 cubits high or if the capital should

level of detail in the description of the pillars is similar to the level of detail in the description of the menorah. Both designs were based on floral motifs. The singular floral motif of the menorah is the almond tree whereas the dominant floral motifs of the pillars in Solomon's temple are the pomegranate (*rimmōn*) and lily-work (*ma^{ʿāśē^h}* šôšān). The doors of Solomon's temple were also decorated with palms (*tīmōrōt*) and open flowers (*pəṭûrê šiššîm*).³³ Gourds (*pəqā^ʿîm*) are also mentioned carved into the cedar work inside the house together with open flowers (1Ki 6:18). Lilies decorated the rim of the bronze sea in Solomon's temple. The singular floral motif in Ezekiel's temple is the palm.³⁴

The decoration of the tabernacle differs markedly from Ezekiel's temple and Solomon's temple. It alone draw's inspiration from the almond blossom and makes no use of the lily or the palm. The tabernacle description does not look like it is drawing inspiration from the temple. This is significant in as much as the choice of decorations is easily transferable from tent to temple even if other architectural features, such as the pillars, are not.

zer – This is an architectural term used exclusively in the tabernacle description for a molding or crown that encompassed the Altar of Incense, Table of Showbread and the Ark of the Covenant. The derivation of this term is unknown. It may refer to the cavetto cornice (cove profile) that was a common decorative feature of Egyptian tables and chests.³⁵ This suggestion is supported

be included in the height of the pillar (35 cubits). Kings, on the other hand, gives a height of 18 cubits for the height of the pillars. (1 Kings 7:15) (Herodotus and George Rawlinson, *The Histories*, Everyman's Library (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1997). 143)

³² Pillars and an ornately carved door were also a noteworthy feature of an ancient Phoenician temple in Gadir (Gades, on the western coast of Spain). The temple was also noted for its lack of an image. (William Edwin Mierse, "The Architecture of the Lost Temple of Hercules Gaditanus and Its Levantine Associations," *American Journal of Archaeology* 108, no. 4 (2004).545)

³³ It has been noted that some of these motifs are also found carved on the temple walls at Ein Dara.

³⁵ Eichler, "The Meaning of Zer."

by the discovery of incense altars at Megiddo and Arad that have a similar molding.³⁶ Kings uses another architectural term, *lōyōt* (1Ki 7:36), to describe a decorative feature that encompassed the bronze bases that held the bronze water basins in Solomon's temple.

kērūbīm - the tabernacle does not use cherubim as a decorative motif except for those parts of the tabernacle that adjoin the Holy of Holies (Ex 26:31). In Solomon's temple, cherubim are found 'throughout the house' (1 Ki. 6:29, 34) and even on the bronze stands in the courtyard. The cherubim of gold that rested on the cover of the ark of the covenant face each other (Ex 25:20) whereas the cherubim in the *debir* of Solomon's temple probably faced the veil, with the tip of one wing touching the wall of the *debir* and the tip of the other wing meeting that of the other cherub (1 Ki. 6:27).

Gold - The description of the tabernacle, of Solomon's temple and the temple of the Temple Scroll make lavish use of gold. Ezekiel's temple, on the other hand, makes no mention of gold. Ezekiel's temple is decorated with cherubim and palms throughout. It seems therefore, that the incorporation of palms and cherubim throughout Ezekiel's visionary temple and courtyard gates indicates that the level of holiness once limited to the sanctuary now includes the entire sanctuary and its courts. This is also probably why there is no Ark of the Covenant in the *debir* of Ezekiel's temple and why there is no mention of gold. Ezekiel has done away with, or expanded, the gradations of holiness that characterized Solomon's temple and, to an even greater degree, the tabernacle. God's glorious presence is no longer confined to the *debir*.

³⁶ Ibid.

D. Conclusion

Avi Hurvitz demonstrated that the language attributed to P gives no indication of being an exilic or post – exilic work.³⁷ The use of Egyptian loan words in the tabernacle description and the use of a technical term for ‘boards’ (*qerashim*) further supports Hurvitz’s conclusions. References to the sanctuary at Shiloh, and later at Gibeon, are important narrative details that offer supporting evidence for the existence of an important tent sanctuary before the temple in Jerusalem was built. The shrine was important enough that Solomon dedicated his temple on its altar. Perhaps most importantly, the description of the tabernacle does not look like it borrows from the description of the temple. This is especially true when one begins to compare the finer points of the description.

When considered alone, the description of Solomon’s temple has gaping holes in it. For example, it goes into great detail in describing the pillars that stood in the *ulam* of the temple, the cherubim that stood in the *debir*, the bronze sea and stands but it gives no description of the altar, the ark of the covenant, the tables, the incense altar, or the menorahs. The detailed parts of the descriptions are limited to those items that are not already described in the tabernacle pericope. It seems that the temple description relies on the *elaborate description* of the tabernacle found in the last chapters of Exodus.

Moreover, there is no indication in the account of the building of the temple that it was made according to a divinely revealed pattern. The reason for this may be that the account in Kings assumes that the pattern was already given in the Sinai theophany. The temple simply follows an already established tradition. This is indicated by the fact that the layout of the temple is built on a two room design. The *ulam* and the side chambers of the temple are clearly considered to be

³⁷ It has been argued elsewhere that Ezekiel relies on P.

additions to a ‘house’ that consists of a *debir* and a *hekal* (which literally means ‘house’). The cubic proportions of the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle were clearly important enough that they were imitated in the *debir* of the temple – despite the fact that it required the incorporation of a ceiling or podium.

While the description of the tabernacle and that of the temple agree in broad outline, there are numerous differences in the details of the descriptions that indicate that the tabernacle is an independent account. Evidence for this assertion may be found in the choice of decorative motifs, the placement of the brazen altar, the proportions of the court, the number, names and order of the gates. The tabernacle lacks features central to the descriptions of Solomon’s temple, Ezekiel’s temple and the Temple Scroll and vice versa. It may therefore be concluded that the tabernacle description in Exodus not only preserves the memory of a tent that existed in hoary antiquity – but that the account as a whole, in all of its elaborate detail, predates the description of Solomon’s temple.

E. Appendices

1. Literary Analysis of Tabernacle Description

Moses is commanded by God to build a tabernacle on his 7th time up Sinai (according to a straightforward reading of the account). It is noteworthy that while on other occasions Aaron was present with Moses on the mountain, on this occasion only Moses and Joshua were on the mountain. According to the Exodus account, Moses received instructions for the construction of the tabernacle over a period of 40 days and 40 nights. This was the longest period of time Moses was on the mountain and it was during this time that the people began to believe that Moses was not coming back and built the golden calf. Moses broke the tablets, written by the hand of God, and spent another 40 days and 40 nights on the mountain – this time Moses did the writing.

The command by YHWH to build the tabernacle is followed by a description of the fulfillment of the command. In the fulfillment section, lengthy portions of the tabernacle description are repeated verbatim. This repetition seems redundant to the reader. Its preservation is striking testimony to the conservative tendency of the scribes. According to Wellhausen, the earliest form of the text consisted of a command to Moses to build a sanctuary, followed by a short statement that they did all that they were commanded, and finally a description of the dedicatory ceremony.³⁸ Wellhausen suggested that the altar of incense was a late addition to the text and for this reason it was not described together with the other furniture items of the sanctuary in the command section of the text. Only in the fulfillment section does the altar of incense appear in the expected place, together with the other tabernacle furnishings. Wellhausen concluded that the entire fulfillment section was a late addition.

³⁸ V. A. Hurowitz notes that this reconstruction finds no precedent in the descriptions of other temples in the ANE (Hurowitz, "The Priestly Account of Building the Tabernacle." 1)

C. Nihan agrees with Wellhausen that the altar of incense is a late addition. He further argues that all of chapters 30 and 31 are a late addition, noting that the concluding instructions for the Sabbath in 31:12-17 are “reminiscent of the language of H and probably represents a late insertion by a redactor for the school which composed this code.”³⁹ It should be noted, however, that the altar of incense is not the only item that seems to be out of place in the text. For example, instructions for the construction of the bronze basin do not appear alongside the brazen altar or the courtyard. Similarly, the instructions for the construction of the furniture in the command section are given before the instructions for building the tent, whereas in the fulfillment section, the description of the tent is given before that of the furniture. It is not clear what can be learned from the organization of the text, except that it does not follow a set pattern. If the text were heavily edited at a late date then one would expect it to look more polished than it is.

Interpreters have also noted the alternating use of *miškan* (dwelling) and *ʾōhel* (tent) in Exodus 26:1-14. It has been suggested that the use of these two terms reflect separate strata within P. However, as Nihan notes, Exodus 26:1-14 must certainly be understood as a unified text.⁴⁰ Any attempt to associate certain materials with varying stages in the evolution of the tent cannot account for the overarching scheme of the tabernacle description in which the value of the materials and the level of craftsmanship increase according to their proximity to the Holy of Holies. Moreover, the interchange of *miškan* and *ʾōhel* is not unique to Exodus 26. Haran notes

³⁹ Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch : A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus*, *Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 2 Reihe*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* in loc.

that these two terms are commonly found in parallel in other places in the Bible as well as in Ugaritic literature (Jer. 30:18; Ps 78:60; Job 21:28).⁴¹

2. The Historical Tradition from Tent to Temple

The history of the tent is complex and must be gathered from numerous texts. Two tents are mentioned in the Desert narrative. One was located outside of the camp and was the place Moses went to meet with the LORD. The other is the tabernacle revealed to Moses on Sinai that was to be carried by designated Levites and erected at the center of camp.⁴² Its description is found in the last chapters of Exodus and is commonly attributed to P. The tent of Moses is never mentioned again after the tabernacle is completed.

One year transpired from the Exodus to erection of the Tabernacle (Ex 40:2). Israel left Sinai 19 days after the census (Nu, 10:11). They encamped at Qadesh and from there sent spies into Canaan. (Num 13:26) Homan notes that the tabernacle remained at Qadesh-Barnea for 38 years.⁴³ Israel moved from Qadesh-Barnea to the plains of Moab (Numbers 20-36) and then across the Jordan to Gilgal. Kaufmann notes that in Joshua, the people are never said to have decamped at Gilgal. He writes, “The first phase of the conquest did not involve the occupation of land but rather the defeat and destruction of their enemies. After each campaign, the people

⁴¹ Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel : An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School*. 196

⁴² The reference to this tent outside of the tabernacle pericope is similar to that of an ark built by Moses on the mountain to house contain the tablets of the covenant (Deut. 10:2-5).

⁴³ Michael M. Homan, *To Your Tents, O Israel! : The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient near East*, Culture and History of the Ancient near East (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2002).

returned to Gilgal. Only after the tribes disperse, each to their inheritance, do we find mention of the setting up of the tabernacle at Shilo.⁴⁴

The transition from tent to temple was a complex and difficult affair. The Biblical text seems to reflect a struggle to move the primary locus for worship from a more northern location in Benjamin to the new capital established by David. At one point, there appears to have been some form of accommodation in which David brought the Ark of the Covenant to a tent (*hāʾōhel*) ‘stretched out’ on the threshing floor of Onan while the tabernacle (called *ʾōhel mōʿēd* *hāʾēlōhîm* in 2 Chron. 1:3 and *miškan yhwh* in 1 Chron. 16:39; 21:29) remained at Gibeon. Zadok and his brothers, who were priests, continued to minister at Gibeon while Asaph, Obed-Edom and their brothers, who were Levites, continued to serve before the Ark that was now housed in the City of David. One may argue that Chronicles has conflated two different traditions but this is unlikely inasmuch as Kings presents a similar picture. It is true that Kings does not specifically mention that the tabernacle was at Gibeon but it agrees with Chronicles that the Ark of the Covenant alone was transferred to Jerusalem. Furthermore, it states that Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices on a great altar (the altar of the tabernacle?) after he received a vision from the LORD at Gibeon. That Solomon would go to Gibeon to dedicate the new temple in Jerusalem is evidence that the tabernacle resided at Gibeon at this time. It was probably moved there after the sanctuary at Shiloh was destroyed or abandoned.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Canaan*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1985).

⁴⁵ Gibeon was the largest and best known among the cities of Benjamin. Shalom Brooks states, “Gibeon should be seriously considered as having played an important role in Israelite cultic life in the time of Saul.” He notes that it was a Levitical city and that the Chronicler places the Tent of Meeting there. Saul built an altar to YHWH in Gibeon that may be identified with the ‘the great stone’ at Gibeon. (2 Sam 20:8) Saul is said to have taken part in an ecstatic ritual and offered a sacrifice without waiting for Samuel. (1 Sam 10:9-11) These actions may hint at Saul’s connection to the high place at Gibeon. See: Shalom Brooks, ed. *From Gibeon to Gibeah*, Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel : Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2007).

The history of the tent is complex and must be gathered from numerous texts. It is too complex to be the invention of a priestly school writing in the exilic or even late monarchic period. A ‘central’ shrine with a great altar must have existed before the temple. The tradition that it was a tent was very strong (2 Sam. 7:6). It was important enough that Solomon felt it necessary to dedicate the new temple in Jerusalem at this sanctuary and thereby to provide continuity between the old and the new.

3. Vocabulary denoting Tent Shrines

The rich vocabulary found in the Bible for the tent shrine suggests that a tent shrine existed before a permanent temple structure was established.⁴⁶

1. *ʾōhel mōʿēd* – tent of meeting - (Ex 30:36; 2 Sam 20:5; cf. also Isa 14:13 - *har mōʿēd*) –

The verbal form means to make an appointment that may refer to a specified time (2 Sam 20:5) or place (Ex 30:36).⁴⁷ The origin for the name as it is applied to the tent in Exodus is found in the conclusion to laws concerning the daily sacrifice in Exodus 29:42b. Here the two 1st person verbs *ʾiwwāʿēd* (‘I will meet’ - Exo 29:42) *wəšāʾkanti* (‘I will dwell’ Exo 29:45) are used in parallel. In Ex. 29:42-46 it is said that God will meet with the people directly. Similarly, in Ex. 25:22 the LORD promises to meet (*wənoʿadtî*) with the priest above the cherubim in the Holy of Holies and there the LORD will command him “concerning the sons of Israel”. The word is also found in cultic contexts outside of Israel. For example, graffiti on a temple wall at Tel Deir Alla in Syria report of a vision

⁴⁶ This list is adapted from a list prepared by M. Homan. (Homan, *To Your Tents, O Israel! : The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East.*)

⁴⁷ Offerings made on appointed days are required while others are voluntary.

by a seer named Balaam, son of Beor, in which the '*shaddai*' (gods or cult servants) "take their places at the appointed time of meeting (*wnsbw mwd*)."⁴⁸

2. *miškan* – tabernacle; derived from the root *skn*, meaning to “dwell, settle down”; Akkd. n. *maskanu* – “tent house canopy and sanctuary”; vb. *sakanu* – to put, set in place, can also be used idiomatically meaning “to pitch camp”. The use of the word is not limited to sacred tents. It is also used of the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abriam (Num 16:24,27), the abode of a wild ass (Job 39:6),⁴⁹ secular Israelite abodes (Num 25:4, Isa 54:2, Jer 30:18), graves (Isa 22:16; Ps 49:12, etc).⁵⁰ The word is used extensively in passages often considered to be archaic. Thus it is found in the Noachic Oracle (Gen 9:27), Jacob’s Blessing (Gen 49:13), the Blessing of Moses (Deut 33:12, 16, 28), and the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:17).⁵¹ Later, the temple was often called a *miškan* thereby reflecting its earlier existence as a tent shrine. Likewise, in Aramaic *miškan* designates a general holy place and not just a tent shrine. *miškan* often appears in construct with other nouns: Tabernacle of the covenant (Exodus 38:21 and Number 1:50, 53; 10:11; Lev 26:11) Tabernacle of Yahweh (Lev 17:4); Tabernacle of the tent of the appointed time (Ex 39:32; 40:2,6,29); Tabernacle of the covenant (Ex. 38:21 and Num. 1:50, 53; 10:11; Lev. 26:11); Tabernacle of your glory (Ps 26:8); That Tabernacle of your name (Ps 74:7); Tabernacle of the house of God (Chr. 6:33).

⁴⁸ Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.

⁴⁹ It is remarkable that the word is used this way in Job considering the word became the standard word used to describe Israel’s most sacred structure.

⁵⁰ Homan, *To Your Tents, O Israel! : The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*. 12

⁵¹ F.M. Cross argues that although the Priestly redaction should be dated to the exilic or post exilic period, it adopted the archaic term *shacen* instead of *yoshev* and *gur* to describe Yahweh’s dwelling among his people. The use of this term in P reflects the temporal nature of God’s dwelling with his people. According to Cross, this usage reflects an exilic or post-exilic date of the Priestly strata. See: (Cross, *The Priestly Tabernacle*.) For a rebuttal of this position, see (Benjamin D. Sommer, ed. *Dating Pentateuchal Texts and the Perils of Pseudo-Historicism*, vol. 78, *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). 88ff)

3. *qubbā^h* (Num 25:8) - Phinehas pursues an Israelite man and a Midianite woman into a 'tent' or 'chamber' and executes them. The sin here seems to be compounded in that the tent may have been a sacred shrine or even the 'tent of meeting'.⁵² *qubbā^h* is only found here. It is noteworthy that a similar word is used to describe the most sacred Islamic shrine in Mecca – the *Kaaba*. It also appears in an Arabic dedicatory inscription on a wall mosaic in the Dome of the Rock where the Dome of the Rock is referred to as a 'kubba' – a word that apparently refers to a sacred shrine. More research is required to determine whether these terms are etymologically linked.
4. *nāwe^h* can refer to a pasture (1 Chron. 17:17); the holy abode of God (Ex 15:13); or to a tent used to house the ark (2 Sam 15:25). The Akkadian form, *nawu*, refers to the lands inhabited by nomads, most often the Amorites.⁵³
5. *huppā^h* – a bridal chamber (Joel 2:16, Ps 19:5-6); used in Isa. 4:5-6 to describe the canopy that will cover Zion like the cloud that over shadowed Israel in their desert wandering.
6. *sēter* – hiding place; used in construct with tent (*bəsēter ʾohōlō* - Ps 27:5 cf. also Isa 4:6)
7. *yiriah* – a curtain or tent; the coverings of the tabernacle. (Ps 104:2)
8. *succa* - Ark dwells in a *succa*. Jacob builds *succot* for his cattle.
9. *məʿōn* - habitation or dwelling place. It is used of the dwelling place of God in heaven (2 Chr 30:27) and of his dwelling place *məʿōn bēteḳā* on earth (Psa 26:8, 2 Chr 36:15).

⁵² Homan, *To Your Tents, O Israel! : The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*.

⁵³ *Ibid.* in loc.

Tents were such an ingrained part of Israelite culture that the call to revolt in the early monarchic period was, “To your tents, oh Israel” (2 Sam 20:1; 1 Kgs 12:16). Following Malamat, Homan argues that the cry to return to one’s tent was “an archaic vestige of former days of tent dwelling, legally signifying the end of the assembly.”⁵⁴ Thus *ōhel* (tent) and ‘*bit*’ (house) were interchangeable terms in some contexts. Further evidence for the continued importance of the tent in Israelite culture are the multiple places where the *hēkāl* (temple) continued to be called a *miškan* (tent house canopy and sanctuary).^{55 56}

4. Egyptian Loanwords

The language of the tabernacle description utilizes a number of Egyptian loanwords. The following list is based on the work of T. Lambdin, “Egyptian Loanwords in the Old Testament”:⁵⁷

1. *’abnēt* – part of the priestly garments; may be derived from Eg. *bnd*.
2. *aḥlāmā^h* – “amethyst” (Ex. 28:19); precious stone used in Egypt for scarabs and amulets.
3. *léšem* “amber” or “jacinth” (Ex 28:19; 39:12); Eg. *nsmt* “a white-blue felspar”.
4. *ketem* – “precious gold” – attested in Egypt as *ktm.t*; Albright argues it is ultimately of Sumerian origins; cf. Akk. *kutummu* – “goldsmith”.
5. *nōpēk* – “turquoise” or “malachite” (Ex 28:18)
6. *neter* – “crown”; attested in the Pyramid texts.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 189

⁵⁵ Akkadian *maškanu*; the verbal form of *skn*, *šakanu*, can mean “to pitch camp”.

⁵⁶ Freedman cites this as evidence that a much reduced in size tabernacle may have been placed inside the debir of the temple. It seems more likely that the term *mskn* simply reflects an earlier, portable form of the sanctuary and not a tent within a temple.

⁵⁷ Thomas O. Lambdin, "Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 73, no. 3 (1953).

7. *shesh* – “byssus” “fine linen” - attested since the Middle Kingdom; gained widespread usage among Semitic language; eventually made its way into Greek.

It is noteworthy that several of these words relate to precious stones incorporated into the clothing of the High Priest. Eight of the twelve gemstones that appear in Exodus 28:17-20 also appear in the adornment of the ‘king of Tyre’ in Ezek. 28:13. Two of the four gemstones not repeated in Ezekiel are in our list of possible Egyptian loanwords. The absence of these terms may suggest that they were no longer familiar to Ezekiel.⁵⁸ The appearance of Egyptian loanwords in the tabernacle description suggests an Egyptian rather than Mesopotamian influence.

5. The Tabernacle in its ANE context

The relationship between tents and sacred space is not unique to the Biblical description of the tabernacle. For example, a tablet from Ras Shamra has the gods residing in tents or tabernacles.

"The gods bless, they go,

The gods go to their tents

The circle of El to their tabernacles” (CAT 1.15.III.17-19)⁵⁹

In Mari, we find a description of a tent constructed with the structural element ‘*qersu*’ (the word is related to the *qərāšîm* in the tabernacle) that was erected on the day of *gimkum* for a donkey

⁵⁸ These are: אֶחָלְמָה, שָׁבוּ, לְשֵׁם, סְפִיר

⁵⁹ Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai : The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition*. 98

sacrifice. After the donkey sacrifice “the gods and their paraphernalia departs from the *qersu*. [Each deity goes to his temple, and the king goes to his palace.” (FM III.4.ii.7-14)⁶⁰

F.M. Cross argues that the transition from the tent to the temple reflects a transition from a federation of tribes bound together in a conditional covenant to a nation ruled by a king. He notes that the same transition is found in Ugaritic literature where the aging god, ‘El’, sits in the assembly of the gods in his ‘tent’. Cross contrasts the ‘tent’ of El with the ‘temple’ of Baal founded on Mt. Zaphon. He further relates these two forms with the political and social organization of the society. The kingship of Baal which establishes cosmic order was directly connected with the rule of the earthly king who establishes order within his domain. The temple of Baal was just an extension of the king’s palace (or vice versa).⁶¹ On the other hand, Cross relates the tent of El to an earlier form of governance. Cross states, “El’s tent was the divine patriarch, god of the father, of the league, of covenant. El sits as judge in the assembly of the gods. In Israel the political counterpart was the tent of assembly, the shrine of the federated tribes bound together in a conditional covenant. The “temple of Ba’l” and the “tent of El” thus symbolize alternate political ideologies.”⁶²

It is not clear why a tent shrine could not simply be understood as the nomadic equivalent to the temple rather than a reflection of a political ideology. If El was the chief deity while people resided in tents, then El may have continued to be associated with a tent long after society had

⁶⁰ Homan, *To Your Tents, O Israel! : The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*. in loc.

⁶¹ Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon : History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University press, 1998). 91

⁶² *Ibid.* 91

transitioned to more permanent dwellings and the king / Baal had taken residence in the palace / temple.⁶³

The use of a portable shrine by those on journeys, or by nomads, may be illustrated by the tale of Wenamun, an Egyptian official (1100 BC), who took the god named "Amon-on-the-Road" with him on a voyage. At Byblos he erected a tent on the beach to house the idol. Homan concludes, "Thus, Egyptian officials on journeys seem to have brought their religion along with them, in this case, a portable tent for an idol."⁶⁴ It follows from this survey of tents in the ANE that the description of the tabernacle in Exodus is in broad harmony with aspects of ANE customs.

6. Comparisons Between the Layout of the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple and other ANE temples

Solomon's temple and the tabernacle are symmetric structures built on a long axis with a completely enclosed inner sanctuary. This differs from Greek and Babylonian temples which were designed so that the first rays of the morning sun illuminated the inner sanctuary and the cult statue was readily visible to onlookers from the temple courtyard.⁶⁵ The layout of Solomon's temple shares more similarities with Assyrian temples in as much as the inner sanctuary of Assyrian temples was likewise hidden from view. However, Assyrian temples were

⁶³ Is Baal a new god who replaces 'El' in the Canaanite pantheon like Marduk is a new god who replaces An in the Babylonian pantheon? Marduk was specifically associated with the founding of Babylon - the place of his temple. Perhaps the founding of cities was connected with the adoption of new deities that supplanted older deities (associated with the sky). Is it possible that the myths related to the supplanting of An, El, Ra and Chronos, with Marduk, Baal, Horus and Zeus, respectively, are related?

⁶⁴ Homan, *To Your Tents, O Israel! : The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*. 110

⁶⁵ As a matter of fact the entire architectural set-up of the Babylonian sanctuary is actually based on the very same trend of thought. The image is effectually displayed to the gaze of the worshiper by placing it in a shallow room opposite a monumental door shaped like a city-gate in order to create a magnificent frame for the statue. (A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Mesopotamian Temple," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 7, no. 3 (1944). 60)

generally built on a broad room plan in which the doorway was at a right angle to the inner sanctuary and they did not usually have a courtyard.⁶⁶

Several temples found in Syria and Palestine share features similar to those of Solomon's temple.

- 1) The Late Bronze temple at Ein Dara has a tripartite layout, two front pillars and side chambers.⁶⁷ However, the 'inner' sanctuary of the temple at Ein Dara is no more than a podium within the *heikhal*. A niche in the back of the temple likely held the cult statue and would have been visible to anyone inside the *heikhal*.
- 2) It has been suggested that the Early Iron Age temple at Arad bears similarities to the tabernacle. According to the excavator, the temple at Arad was built in the 10th century B.C. together with the first Israelite fortress. Before the construction of the temple and fortress, the hill at Arad was a high place that belonged to a smaller open settlement that Aharoni suggests may be identified with the Kenites who settled in the region (Judges 1:16).⁶⁸ The temple from the Israelite period had a courtyard in which was found an altar with dimensions similar to those of the tabernacle altar. Two incense altars were found in front of the inner sanctuary of the temple. Two or three standing stones were found inside the inner sanctuary. The comparison between the temple at Arad and the tabernacle becomes problematic when one takes into account that the temple is a broad room design and the inner sanctuary is no more than a raised podium that protrudes into the main part sanctuary.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Oppenheim notes that, unlike the Babylonian statues which were carried in procession from the temple, the Assyrian cult statue were left in the adyton of the temple. (ibid., 57)

⁶⁷ John Monson, "The 'Ain Dara Temple Closes Solomonic Parallel," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26, no. 3 (2000).

⁶⁸ Yohanan Aharoni, "Arad: Its Inscriptions and Temple," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 31, no. 1 (1968). 26

⁶⁹ Attempts to make the tabernacle fit the proportions of the Arad temple are unconvincing. Even if one were to say that the dimensions of the tabernacle were 20 cubits x 6 cubits – the same dimensions of the *heikal* in the Arad

- 3) The temple at Tel Tayanit is perhaps closest in design to that of the temple but it is later (8th century BC).
- 4) Excavators at Elephantine have discovered a temple that may be the Israelite temple mentioned in the Elephantine Papyri. Based on Rosenberg's reconstruction, it had two rooms with a layout similar to that of the tabernacle.

In summary, it may be stated that the layout of Solomon's temple and the tabernacle shares certain similarities with other temples but, to this author's knowledge, a completely partitioned inner sanctuary finds no ANE parallels.

7. Quantities of Gold

It has been suggested that the quantities of gold used in the temple are an exaggeration and that Ezekiel's more modest temple is closer to reality. This argument tends to presuppose that Judea was a small, and relatively weak chiefdom until the time of Hezekiah. Although the arguments based on archaeological evidence cannot be addressed here, it should be noted that the lack of gold in Ezekiel's temple is probably intended to make a theological point.⁷⁰ From a literary perspective, one of the few data points we have are the quantities of gold and silver taken as bribes or tribute. Thanks to the discovery of Assyrian inscriptions, the amounts of tribute mentioned in the Bible can be cross checked and compared to the amounts of tribute paid by other kings in ANE. This tribute represents the relative wealth of the kingdom and provides some indication of how much gold and silver decorated their temples and treasuries. The

temple - one cannot ignore the fact that the Arad temple is built on a broad room plan and the *dbir* is not a separate room but a projection within the *heikal*.

⁷⁰ Ezekiel's temple is decorated with cherubim and palms throughout. It seems therefore, that the incorporation of palms and cherubim throughout Ezekiel's visionary temple and courtyard gates indicates that the level of holiness once limited to the sanctuary now includes the entire sanctuary and its courts. This is also probably why there is no Ark of the Covenant in the *debir* of Ezekiel's temple and why there is no mention of gold. Ezekiel has done away with, or expanded, the gradations of holiness that characterized Solomon's temple and, to an even greater degree, the tabernacle. God's glorious presence is no longer confined to the *debir*.

following list is by no means exhaustive, but it at least provides some context for the quantities of gold and silver mentioned in the description of the tabernacle.

1. Rehoboam paid tribute to Shishak – (1Ki 14:26 ESV) “He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made.”
2. Jehu paid tribute to Shalmaneser III (*RT* Text No. 2 – The Black Obelisk) – I received tribute of Jehu, son of Omri: silver, gold, a gold bowl, a gold vase (?), gold goblets, gold buckets, tin, a royal scepter (and) javelins.” There is no mention of the payment of this tribute in the Bible.
3. Jehoash paid tribute to Hazael – (2Ki 12:18) “Jehoash king of Judah took all the sacred gifts that Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah his fathers, the kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own sacred gifts, and all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent these to Hazael king of Syria. Then Hazael went away from Jerusalem.”
4. Asa paid tribute to Ben-had - (1Ki 15:18 ESV) Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house and gave them into the hands of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad...”
5. Menahem paid tribute to Tiglath Pileser III – (2 Ki 15:19-20) “1000 talents of silver” (cf. *Annal Fragment RT* - No. 9 & No. 10 where ‘Menahem of Samaria’ is one of the tribute bearers listed in a annal fragment dating to 738 BC)
6. Hoshea paid tribute to Tiglath Pileser III – (RT No. 13 – Summary Inscription No. 4 – 729 BC) – “10 talents of gold, x talents of silver...” (cf. 2 Ki 15:30)

7. Hezekiah paid tribute to Sennacherib (*RT* No. 28 – Sennacherib’s Campaign to Judah – 701 BC) - “30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver...” - (cf. 2 Ki 18:15,16) – “30 talents of gold, 300 talents of silver...” This amount added up to 900 kg of gold and 24,000 kg of silver.⁷¹ 2 Ki. 18:16 states that Hezekiah had to strip the gold off of the door and door post of the temple which “King Hezekiah had overlaid”.
8. Jehoiakim paid a yearly tribute to Pharaoh Neco - (2Ki 23:33 ESV) “a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.”

The amount of tribute paid by the Judean and Israelite kings may also be compared with the amount of tribute paid by foreign kings to Assyria.

1. Metenna of Tyre paid tribute to Tiglath Pileser III (*RT* No. 11 – Summary Inscription No. 7 - 734 BC) “150 talents of gold, [(and) 2,000 talents of silver].
2. Hulli, king of Tabal, paid tribute to Tiglath Pileser III (*RT* No. 11 – Summary Inscription No. 7 - 734 BC) “10 talents of gold, 1000 talents of silver, 2000 horses,...”
3. Hiram of Tyre – (*RT* No. 12 – Summary Inscription No. 9 – 729 BC) “[Hi]ram of Tyre, who conspired together with Rezin... he came before me and kissed my feet. 20 talents [of gold...]
4. Gaza, paid tribute to Tiglath Pileser III after Hanunu fled to Egypt – (*RT* No. 14 – Summary Inscription No. 8 – 734 BC) – “x talents of] gold, 800 talents of silver...]

According to Exodus 38:24, the construction of the tabernacle required 29 talents of gold and 730 shekels of silver. This is approximately the amount Hezekiah paid in tribute to Sennacherib – an immense weight of gold and silver – but not out of touch with historical reality.

⁷¹ Mordechai Cogan, *The Raging Torrent* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008). 121

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