

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

By EMANUEL SCHMIDT,
Chicago.

AMONG the ancient nations there is a close connection between wars of conquest and building of temples. A solemn contract is entered upon between the king and his god. The deity grants victories to the warrior king, the latter shows his gratitude by either building or adorning "the house of god" by means of the spoils of war. This thought stands out prominently, not only in the text, but also in the arrangement, of Seti's inscriptions on the walls of Karnak. So also in Israel. Yahweh had granted to David many victories and the extension of the kingdom's boundaries. In return David made extensive preparations for the erection of a magnificent temple, though it was left for his son to continue and complete the glorious undertaking.

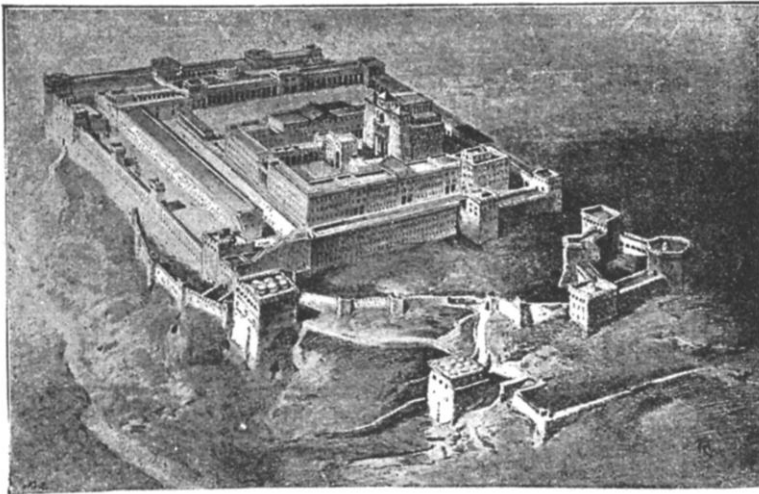
I. THE LOCATION.

This new sanctuary, which was to outshine all others in the land of Canaan, was situated in the capital of the nation, on the sacred spot where tradition fixes the place of Abraham's serious trial, where David had seen the vision of the angel of pestilence on the threshing-floor of the Jebusite king Araunah. This place was a little lower than the surrounding hills, on which the city was built, and opposite the Mount of Olives. The ground was uneven and had to be leveled by cutting off protruding points and filling up deep cavities.

II. MATERIALS USED AND MEN EMPLOYED.

A part of the stones used were taken from the "royal caverns" on the mountain slope, on which the temple was to be erected, but the bulk of the materials came from the Lebanons. David had made a contract with Hiram of Tyre, by which the

necessary materials, consisting of hewn stones and cedar, cypress, and sandal wood, were secured. By the order of Solomon these things were dragged down the Lebanon slopes to the coast. Then they were transported on great, improvised rafts one hundred miles along the coast to Joppa, whence they were dragged again thirty-five miles to Jerusalem. Tradition has preserved the story that the stones and the beams were prepared in their final shape in the quarries and on the Lebanon, so that the structure could be erected silently without a blow of ax or ham-



THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

Restored after a model by Baurat Schick in Jerusalem

[From Riehm, *Handwörterbuch des biblischen Altertums*, 2d ed., Vol. II, p. 1649]

mer. For the decorations and furniture of the temple, metals, particularly bronze and brass, were used by the Phœnician artists.

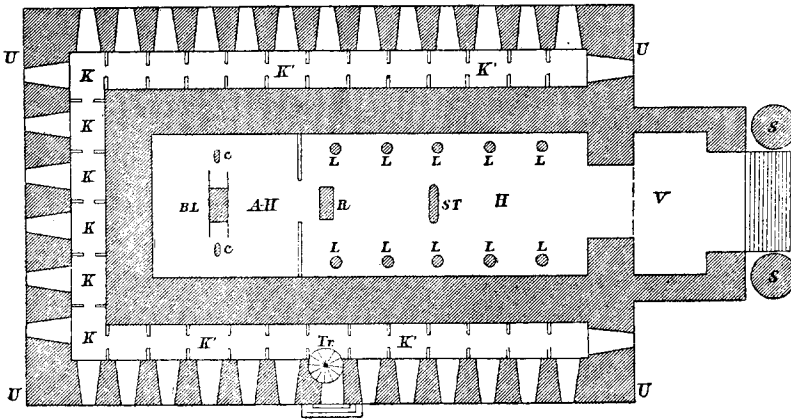
Though Solomon's temple must have been insignificant as compared with the Karnak or Luxor temples, or even those of Phœnicia, it was great enough to necessitate the employment of a large body of workmen for a number of years. The Israelites were not sufficiently skilled in craftsmanship for such an undertaking as this, and hence Phœnician workmen were employed.

The master-workman or "father" was Hiram, a man whose

father was a Tyrian and mother a woman of Naphtali. He seems to have been proficient in almost all branches of work. Under his superintendence vessels of brass were cast in the clay-pits of the Jordan valley between Succoth and Zarethan (1 Kings 7:45, 46). He made the brasswork of the two pillars, the lavers, pots, shovels, and flesh-hooks.

III. THE PROBABLE ARRANGEMENT OF THE TEMPLE.

There are not data enough in the biblical literature accurately to reproduce the appearance and arrangement of the temple. But we have many statements given which clearly indicate that the



THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON. DIAGRAM OF THE PLAN OF THE SANCTUARY

[From Riehm, *Handwörterbuch des biblischen Altertums*, 2d ed., Vol. II, p. 1652]

AH, Holy of Holies. *H*, The Holy Place. *V*, Entrance Hall. *UUUU*, The Building proper. *K* and *K'*, Chambers. *SS*, Pillars of Jachin and Boaz. *Tr*, Winding Staircase. *BL*, Ark of the Covenant. *CC*, Cherubim. *R*, Altar of Incense. *ST*, Table of Showbread. *LL*, Candlesticks.

foreign artisans, who had charge of the work, had also introduced many distinctive features of the temples in their own land. Thus with our knowledge of Phœnician, which was simply a modification of Egyptian, architecture, together with the Bible account, it is possible to get a general idea of the arrangement and furnishing of the temple of Solomon.

1. *The lower court.*—The whole temple was laid out in the direction of east and west, the building itself also, like most oriental

temples, facing the rising sun. Approaching from the east, we first come to the lower court, which was accessible through numerous gateways. This was a quadrangle, inclosed by colonnades. It is quite probable that Solomon built only the eastern side, which afterward was called Solomon's portico, even in the second and third temples, and that later kings completed the colonnade all around. In this court were planted various kinds of trees, such as cedars, palms, and olive trees, in whose shadows in the time of degeneracy were performed the licentious rites of the Aštarte cult.

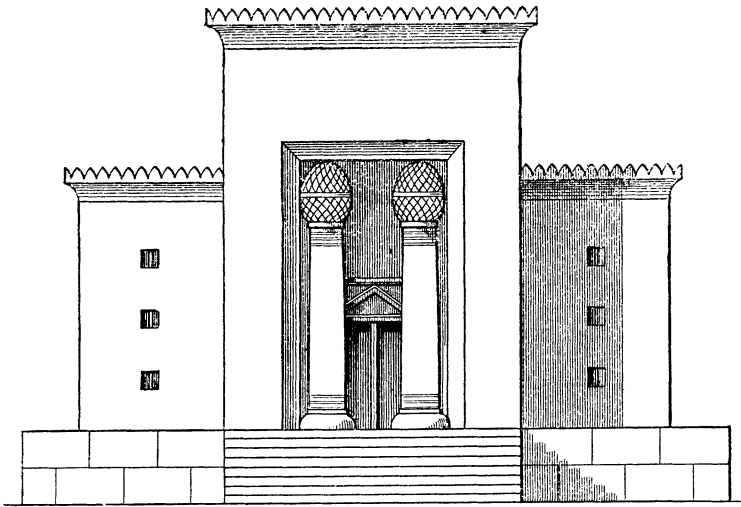
2. *The higher court.*—A flight of steps led over a stone wall to the upper court, which is sometimes called the "court of the priests" (Jer. 26: 10). Here stood the rock which David had bought from the Jebusite king. On its top was the huge, brazen altar, visible to the multitude in the lower court. It was a square chest of wood, overlaid with brass and filled with stones and earth. At each corner of this "table and hearth of the Lord" was a projection, called the "horn" of the altar, to which the animal was fastened during the sacrifice.

Southeast of this elevated altar stood the great molten sea, the masterpiece of Hiram of Naphtali. This enormous basin is calculated to have held 850 gallons of water. It was supported by twelve brazen oxen. Its shape was that of an open lotus flower, and it was profusely ornamented. On each side of this basin were ten smaller, movable ones, which were used in the sacrificial rites.

3. *The holy place.*—Moving farther west, we come to the holy place. This was a massive stone structure with wooden trimmings and splendid decorations. In front of it on a porch rose two elaborate, isolated pillars, called Jachin and Boaz. Their golden pedestals, their brazen shafts, their rich lily-shaped capitals, their brilliant festoons made them artistic works of remarkable beauty.

We then enter through a pair of folding doors into the holy place, which is a square hall, with beautiful decorations of expensive wood. The floor was of cypress, and the walls were trimmed with cedar. The sculptured decorations represented cherubs,

human and animal faces, and mysterious trees, all overlaid with gold. This room would have been in perfect darkness but for the small loopholes, sometimes called windows, near the ceiling. In this hall we find ten tables, five on each side, on which stood ten golden candlesticks. Here also were kept the consecrated loaves, and from the gilded altar rose daily a cloud of incense.



THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON. FRONT VIEW OF THE SANCTUARY

[From Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie*, p. 245]

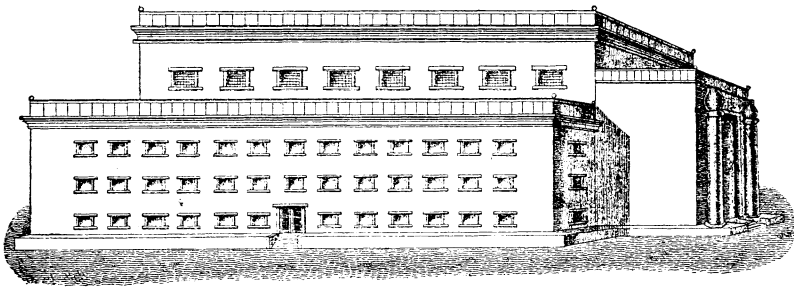
4. *The holy of holies.*—In the center of the holy place stood a dark chamber, called the holy of holies, over which hung a colored curtain, embroidered with cherubs and flowers. This corresponds to the Egyptian adytum. In its midst was a low rock, on which the ark rested. Overshadowing the ark were two huge cherubs with outspread wings. This was the most sacred spot in the whole temple.

5. *The chambers.*—On the north and south side—and some claim even on the west side—of the holy place was a series of chambers, in three stories, for the use of the priests. The walls grew thinner with each floor, so that the upper chambers were the largest. On the side was an entrance, from which a winding

staircase led to the upper floors. They correspond to the numerous smaller chambers in every Egyptian temple.

IV. THE STYLE.

There have been many different theories as to the origin of the plan of this temple. Some hold that it was distinctively Hebrew and based on the plan of the tabernacle of the wilderness period. It is more likely that the late historian formed his idea of the



THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON. SIDE VIEW OF THE SANCTUARY, FROM THE SOUTH

[From Riehm, *Handwörterbuch des biblischen Altertums*, 2d ed., Vol. II, p. 1657]

tabernacle and the worship in the desert from observations of Solomon's temple, just as it formed the basis of Ezekiel's ideal temple. Others think that it was of a foreign origin, and there are many strong arguments in favor of such a view, but they disagree as to the nation from which it had come.

1. *Assyrian architecture*.—The thing common to this temple and those of Assyria was the mixture of stone, wood, and metals. But we find the same in the Egyptian temples, according to their own inscriptions.

2. *Phœnician architecture*.—It is very natural to suppose that the Tyrian skilled workmen, who were employed in the erection of the temple, must have contributed a great deal to the plan of the building. That would only be analogous to the Alcazar at Seville, built by workmen of Granada, and the English cathedrals built by artisans of France. But this is not only a supposition. A comparison of Solomon's temple with those of Phœnicia, particularly of Byblos and Paphos, will show many points of resemblance,

as far as may be judged from representations on ancient coins. While it is true that Solomon's connection with Egypt renders it probable that he received some of his ideas directly from Egypt—and it was quite common in those days for a small nation to imitate a powerful neighbor—yet it is most likely that whatever similarities to Egyptian architecture may be found in his temple must be due to Phœnician influence.

3. *Egyptian architecture.*—Still, for the origin of the plan we must turn to the ancient nation on the banks of the Nile. And we must remember that, while from a study of remaining ruins we can trace certain resemblances, there may in reality have been many more, which during the passing centuries may have been lost, while in the time of Solomon, when the Egyptian temples were comparatively well preserved, they may have been very prominent. (*a*) The gateways leading to the lower court correspond to the enormous pylons of the Egyptian temples. (*b*) The colonnade is the same as the peristyle halls. (*c*) The shadowy groves in the lower court remind us of the temple gardens of Egypt. (*d*) The enormous molten sea is the best counterpart possible of the artificial lakes which were found in almost all Egyptian temples. We must remember that Solomon's temple was situated on a high rock, and that this arrangement was the most convenient for the necessary ablutions. (*e*) The huge pillars in front of the holy place are unique as to their shape, but as to position, like those of the temple of Byblos, they serve apparently the same function as the obelisks. Had they been of the same shape as the obelisks, there would have been little doubt as to their Egyptian origin. But it is quite likely that the northern Semites, though imitating their southern neighbors in the custom of erecting such monuments in front of their temples, showed their individuality in modifying their form. This is clearly a Phœnician contribution to the decoration of the temple. (*f*) The relative position of the holy place and the holy of holies is exactly the same as the Egyptian "house of god" and the adytum. The "oracle" always stood in the center with a narrow path all around it. (*g*) As to the cherubs and the ark inside the holy of holies, they remind us of the winged sun-disk and the sacred bark; the latter was

also carried in solemn processions. (*h*) The custom of decorating the walls with pictures of men, beasts, and trees, though perhaps not distinctively Egyptian, yet is very common there, for on the temple walls the king would make his victories and his achievements immortal. (*i*) Finally, the presence of the numerous small chambers betrays the Egyptian architecture, for they are found not only in Karnak and Luxor, but in all the temples of Egypt.

Though insignificant when compared with the shrines of other oriental nations, the temple of Solomon was magnificent enough for Israel, and served its purpose well in the days of the kingdoms. Subsequently it became the basis of Ezekiel's ideal picture, still later it was restored at the return from the Babylonian captivity, and finally it was made the type of Herod's splendid temple.