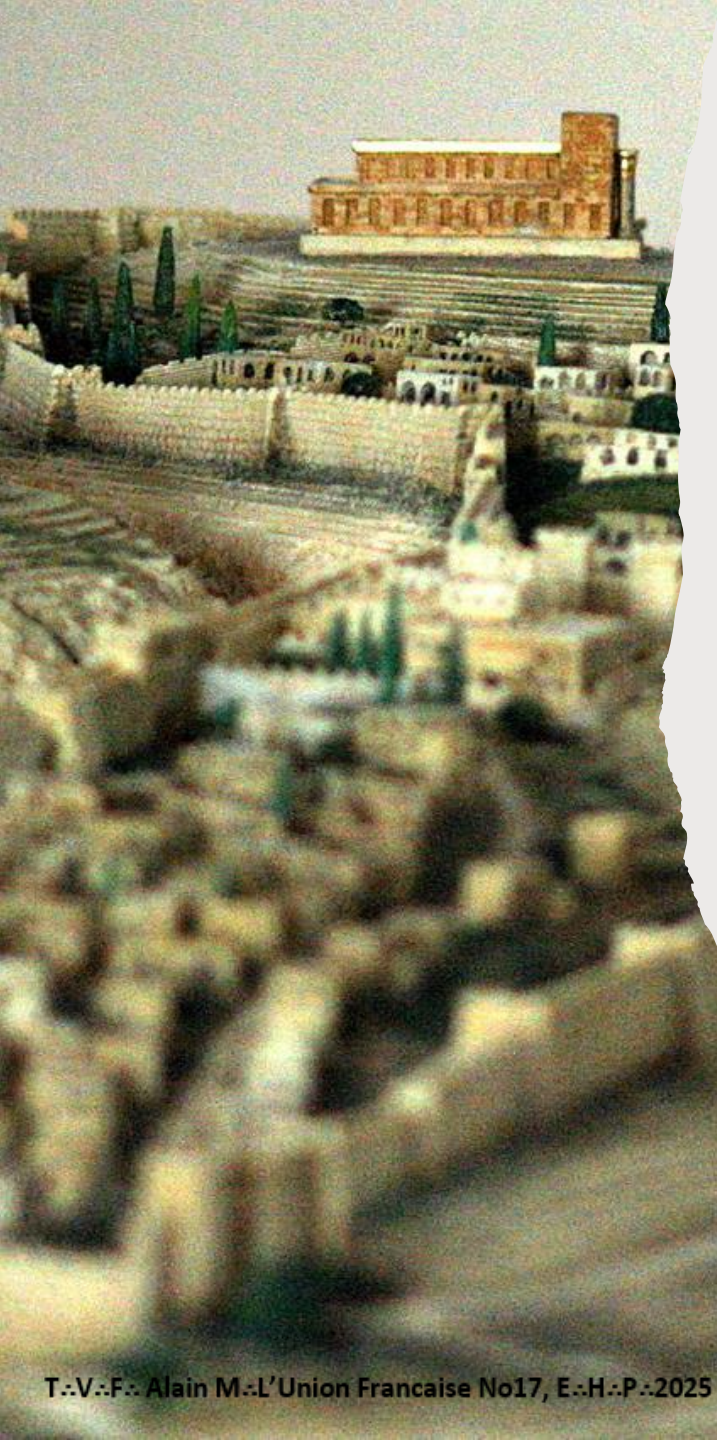


First and Second Temples of Solomon & Jewish Priesthood in Ancient Israël

Project



1st Temple of Solomon

1st Solomon's Temple, also known as the **First Temple** (Hebrew: בֵּית-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, *Bēt hamMiqdāš hārī'šōn*, transl. 'First House of the Sanctum'), was a Temple in Jerusalem believed to have existed between the 10th and 6th centuries BCE. Its presumed existence is largely based on narratives in the Hebrew Bible, in which it was commissioned by biblical King Solomon before being destroyed during the siege of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar II of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 587 BCE. Although most modern scholars agree that the First Temple existed on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem by the time of the Babylonian siege, there is significant debate over the date of its construction and the identity of its builder.

The Hebrew Bible, specifically within the Book of Kings, includes a detailed narrative about the construction's ordering by Solomon, the penultimate ruler of amalgamated Israel and Judah. It further credits Solomon as the placer of the **Ark of the Covenant [1]** in the **Holy of Holies [2]**, a windowless inner sanctum within the structure. Entry into the Holy of Holies was heavily restricted; the High Priest of Israel was the only authority permitted to enter the sanctuary, and only did so on Yom Kippur, carrying the blood of a sacrificial lamb and burning incense. In addition to serving as a religious building for worship, the First Temple also functioned as a place of assembly for the Israelites. The First Temple's destruction and the subsequent Babylonian captivity were both events that were seen as a fulfillment of biblical prophecies and thus affected Judaic religious beliefs, precipitating the Israelites' transition from either polytheism or monolatry (as seen in Yahwism) to firm Jewish monotheism.



1st Temple of Solomon

Location

According to the Bible, Solomon's Temple was built on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, where an angel of God had appeared to David (2 Chronicles 3:1). The site was originally a threshing floor David had purchased from Araunah the Jebusite (2 Samuel 24:18–25; 2 Chronicles 3:1).

Schmid and Rupprecht are of the view that the site of the temple used to be a Jebusite shrine that Solomon chose in an attempt to unify the Jebusites and Israelites.

The exact location of the Temple is unknown. It is believed to have been situated upon the hill that forms the site of the 1st century Second Temple and present-day Temple Mount, where the Dome of the Rock is situated.

The temple stands on the original Mount Moriah, as it looked prior to its expansion by King Herod in the 1st century BCE

According to 1 Kings, the foundation of the Temple is laid in Ziv, the second month of the fourth year of Solomon's reign and construction is completed in Bul, the eighth month of Solomon's eleventh year, thus taking about seven years.

1st Temple of Solomon

Destruction by the Babylonians

According to the Bible, the Temple was plundered by King Nebuchadnezzar II of the Neo-Babylonian Empire when the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem during the brief reign of Jehoiachin c. 598 BCE (2 Kings 24:13).

A decade later, Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem and after 30 months finally breached the city walls in 587/6 BCE. The city finally fell to his army in July 586/7 BCE. A month later, Nebuzaradan, commander of Nebuchadnezzar's guard, was sent to burn and demolish the city. According to the Bible, "he set fire to the Temple of Yahweh, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem" (2 Kings 25:9). Everything worth plundering was then removed and taken to Babylon (2 Kings 25:13–17).

Jewish tradition holds that the Temple was destroyed on [Tisha B'Av](#), the 9th day of Av (Hebrew calendar), the same date of the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabbinic sources state that the First Temple stood for 410 years and based on the 2nd-century work *Seder Olam Rabbah*, place construction in 832 BCE and destruction in 422 BCE (3338 AM), 165 years later than secular estimates. The Jewish historian Josephus says; "the temple was burnt four hundred and seventy years, six months, and ten days after it was built".

Solomon's Temple was subsequently replaced with the Second Temple in 516 BCE.



2nd Temple of Solomon

The **Second Temple** (Hebrew: *השני בית המקדש*, *Bēt hamMiqdāš haššēnī*, transl. 'Second House of the Sanctum'), later known as **Herod's Temple**, was the reconstructed Temple in Jerusalem between c. 516 BCE and 70 CE. It replaced Solomon's Temple, which is presumed to have been built at the same location before its destruction by the Neo-Babylonian Empire during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in c. 587 BCE. Construction on the Second Temple began some time after the Neo-Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Achaemenid Persian Empire; it followed a proclamation by Persian king Cyrus the Great (see Edict of Cyrus) that ended the Babylonian captivity and initiated the return to Zion. In Jewish history, the Second Temple's completion in Persian Judah marks the beginning of the Second Temple period.

According to the Bible, the Second Temple was originally a relatively modest structure built by Jews who had returned from exile in Babylon under the authority of Persian-appointed governor Zerubbabel, the grandson of penultimate Judahite king Jeconiah. However, during the reign of Herod the Great over the Herodian Kingdom of Judea, it was completely refurbished; the original structure was overhauled into the large edifices and façades that are more recognized in modern recreated models.

After standing for approximately 586 years, the Second Temple was destroyed by the Roman Empire during the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE



2nd Temple of Solomon

Destruction

In 66 CE the Jewish population rebelled against the Roman Empire. Four years later, on 4 August 70 CE¹ (the 9th day of Av and possibly the day on which Tisha B'Av was observed) or 30 August 70 CE,¹ Roman legions under Titus retook and destroyed much of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. The Arch of Titus, which was built in Rome to commemorate Titus's victory in Judea, depicts a Roman victory procession with soldiers carrying spoils from the Temple, including the Menorah. According to an inscription on the Colosseum, Emperor Vespasian built the Colosseum with war spoils in 79 CE – possibly from the spoils of the Second Temple.

The sects of Judaism that had their base in the Temple dwindled in importance, including the priesthood and the Sadducees.

The Temple was on the site of what today is the Dome of the Rock. The gates led out close to Al-Aqsa Mosque (which came much later). Although Jews continued to inhabit the destroyed city, Emperor Hadrian established a new city called [Aelia Capitolina](#). At the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE, many of the Jewish communities were massacred and Jews were banned from living inside Jerusalem. A pagan Roman temple was set up on the former site of Herod's Temple.

Historical accounts relate that not only the Jewish Temple was destroyed, but also the entire Lower city of Jerusalem. Even so, according to Josephus, Titus did not totally raze the towers (such as the *Tower of Phasael*, now erroneously called the Tower of David), keeping them as a memorial of the city's strength. The Midrash Rabba (*Eikha Rabba* 1:32) recounts a similar episode related to the destruction of the city, according to which Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, during the Roman siege of Jerusalem, requested of Vespasian that he spare the westernmost gates of the city (Hebrew: פילי מערבא) that lead to Lydda (Lod). When the city was eventually taken, the Arab auxiliaries who had fought alongside the Romans under their general, Fanjar, also spared that westernmost wall from destruction. Jewish eschatology includes a belief that the Second Temple will be replaced by a future Third Temple in Jerusalem.



Priesthood in Ancient Israel

High Priest of Israel

In Judaism, the High Priest of Israel (Hebrew: כהן גדול, romanized: *Kohen Gadol*, lit. 'great priest'; Aramaic: *Kahana Rabba*) was the leader of the Israelite priesthood. He played a unique role in the worship of the **Tabernacle** [3] and later the Temple in Jerusalem, as well as in some non-ritual matters. Like all priests, he was required to be descended from Aaron (the first biblical priest). But unlike other priests, the high priest followed more restrictive laws, wore unique priestly garments, and was the only priest allowed to perform certain ceremonies.

Priests in the Temple of Solomon

According to tradition, 18 high priests served in Solomon's Temple (c. 960–586 bc) and 60 in the Second Temple (516 bc–ad 70). Since that time, there has been no Jewish high priest, for national sacrifice was permanently interrupted with the destruction of the Second Temple.

The priesthood of ancient Israel was the class of male individuals, who, according to the Hebrew Bible, were patrilineal descendants from Aaron (the elder brother of Moses), who served in the **Tabernacle** [3], Solomon's Temple and Second Temple until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.





Rabbis in Ancient Israel

Rabbi, (Hebrew: “my teacher” or “my master”) in Judaism, a person qualified by academic studies of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud to act as spiritual leader and religious teacher of a Jewish community or congregation.

How did the role of the rabbis change after the destruction of the Second Temple?

Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and the expulsion of the Jews from the Roman province of Judea, Jewish worship stopped being centrally organized around the Temple, prayer took the place of sacrifice, and worship was rebuilt around rabbis who acted as teachers and leaders of individual communities.

Notes

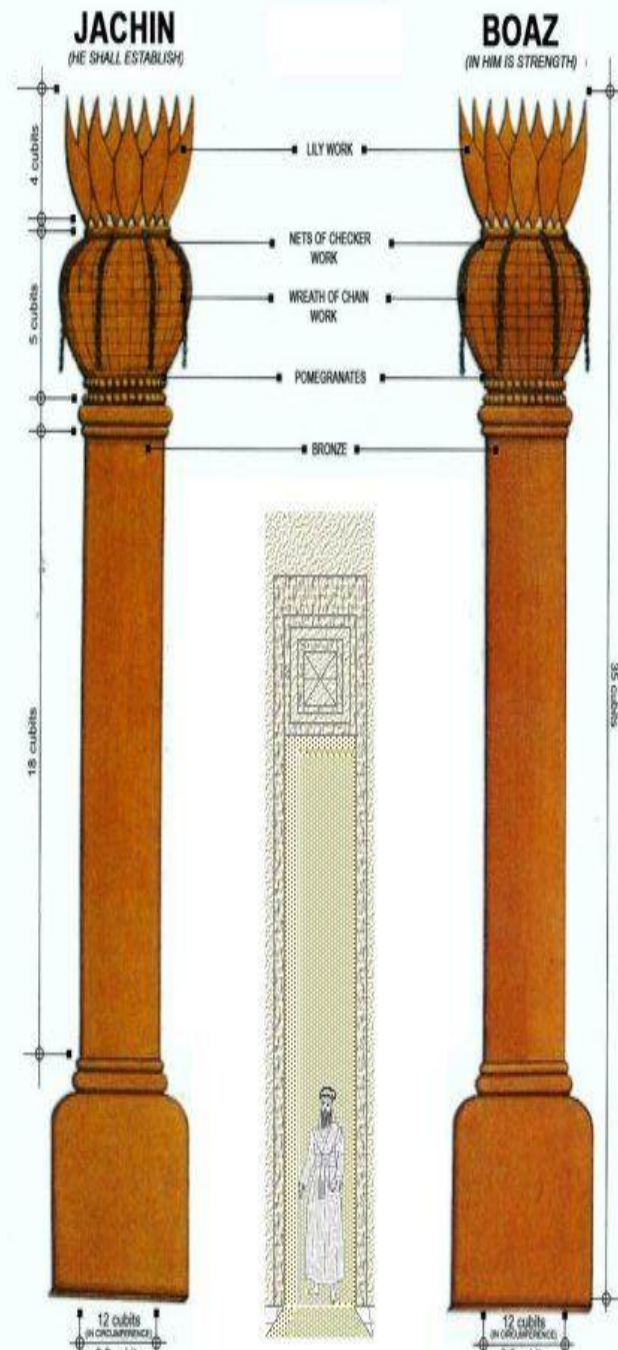
1. Ark of the covenant:

The **Ark of the Covenant**, also known as the **Ark of the Testimony** or the **Ark of God**, is a legendary artifact believed to be the most sacred relic of the Israelites, which is described as a wooden chest, covered in pure gold, with an elaborately designed lid called the mercy seat. According to the Book of Exodus, the Ark contained the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. According to the New Testament Book of Hebrews, it also contained Aaron's rod and a pot of manna.

2. Holy of Holies:

The **Holy of Holies** (Hebrew: קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים *Qōdeš haqQōdāšīm* or *Kodesh HaKodashim*; also, הַדְּבִיר *haDabīr*, 'the Sanctuary') is a term in the Hebrew Bible that refers to the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle, where God's presence appeared. According to Hebrew tradition, the area was defined by four pillars that held up the veil of the covering, under which the Ark of the Covenant was held above the floor. According to the Hebrew scripture, the Ark contained the Ten Commandments, which were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Temple in Jerusalem was said to have been built by King Solomon for keeping the Ark.

Ancient Jewish traditions viewed the Holy of Holies as the spiritual junction of Heaven and Earth, the "axis mundi".



3. Tabernacle:

According to the Hebrew Bible, the tabernacle (Hebrew: מִשְׁכָּן, *romanized: mīškān*, lit. 'residence, dwelling place'), also known as the Tent of the Congregation (Hebrew: אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, *romanized: 'ōhel mō'ēd*, also Tent of Meeting, etc.), was the portable earthly dwelling place of Yahweh (the God of Israel) used by the Israelites from the Exodus until the conquest of Canaan. Moses was instructed at Mount Sinai to construct and transport the tabernacle with the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness and their subsequent conquest of the Promised Land. After 440 years, Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem superseded it as the dwelling-place of God.

The main source describing the tabernacle is the biblical Book of Exodus, specifically Exodus 25–31 and 35–40. Those passages describe an inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, created by the veil suspended by four pillars. This sanctuary contained the Ark of the Covenant, with its cherubim-covered mercy seat. An outer sanctuary (the "Holy Place") contained a gold lamp-stand or candlestick. On the north side stood a table, on which lay the showbread. On the south side was the Menorah, holding seven oil lamps to give light. On the west side, just before the veil, was the golden altar of incense. It was constructed of 4 woven layers of curtains and 48 15-foot-tall standing wood boards overlaid in gold and held in place by its bars and silver sockets and was richly furnished with valuable materials taken from Egypt at God's command.



Sources

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[Monolatry - Wikipedia](#)
[Second Temple – Wikipedia](#)

[Siege of Jerusalem \(70 CE\) - Wikipedia](#)

