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THE BACKGROUND AND NATURE OF TEMPLE MYTHOLOGY
IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

V. George Shillington

Thesis presented to the
Department of Religion and Culture
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the Master of Arts degree

Wilfrid Laurier University

Waterloo

1976

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BASOR Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research. New Haven: The American Schools of Oriental Research.
- BA Biblical Archaeologist. New Haven: The American Schools of Oriental Research.
- CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly. Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America.
- B.T. The Babylonian Talmud.
- Mid. R. Midrash Rabbah.
- M. The Mishnah.
- JQR The Jewish Quarterly Review, edited by I. Abrahams and C.G. Montefiore. New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1966.
- JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- IB The Interpreter's Bible.
- IDB The Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.
- JBL Journal of Biblical Literature. Philadelphia: The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis.
- TDNT A Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-1974.
- JE The Jewish Encyclopedia. New York: Ktav Publishing House, n.d.
- EJ Encyclopedia Judaica. Jerusalem: The Mac-Millan Co., 1971-1972.

Jos. Wars. Josephus, Wars of the Jews.
Jos. Ant. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews.

Biblical References

Gen. Genesis
Ex. Exodus
Lev. Leviticus
Num. Numbers
Deut. Deuteronomy
Josh. Joshua
Jud. Judges
Sam. Samuel
Chron. Chronicles
Neh. Nehemiah
Ps. Psalms
Eccl. Ecclesiastes
Is. Isaiah
Jer. Jeremiah
Lam. Lamentations
Ez. Ezekiel
Dan. Daniel
Hos. Hosea
Hag. Haggai
Zech. Zechariah

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rabbinic ideas concerning the Temple of Jerusalem captured the interest of the present writer as he was researching the biblical concept of sacrifice.¹ It was fascinating to discover that the rich symbolism of the Temple in rabbinic thought developed in a period when the Temple did not exist. The presence of the mythical Temple in the literature of the Rabbis began to raise certain questions: Why did the Jewish leaders of the post-Temple era develop such an elaborate mythology of the Temple? Why did they continue to imagine a cultus which had long since vanished? These questions are compounded by the fact that the Babylonian academies, separated as they were from Palestine, should contribute so significantly to the corporate mythology associated with the Temple of Jerusalem.²

¹Especially in J.R. Brown, Temple and Sacrifice in Rabbinic Judaism (Evanston: Seabury Western Theological Seminary, 1963).

²Jacob Neusner holds that the Babylonian Jews were more devoted to the Temple and its cult than the Palestinians. The extensive discussion of the Temple in the Babylonian Talmud was later espoused by the Palestinian group. See Neusner's "Foreword" to The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. ix-xii, and There We Sat Down (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), pp. 19-24.

A. Aim and Scope of the Study

The purpose of the research is to demonstrate the relationship of the mythical Temple in rabbinic literature both to its historical prototypes and to the conditions within which the myth developed. To accomplish this aim the history of the Temple will be examined to illustrate the backdrop against which the Temple of myth was construed by the Rabbis. Questions will be raised regarding the employment of mythic elements characteristic of ancient Near Eastern religion. It will be debated whether Israel borrowed and adapted the mythic ideas of her neighbours to suit her own purposes.³

The central aim of the thesis, however, will focus on the degree to which the political and socio-economic situations of the rabbinic period contributed to the rise of the mythic interpretations of the Temple. It should also become evident as the discussion progresses that the rich imagery associated with the Temple in rabbinic literature is due largely to the Rabbis' devotion to the Torah.⁴ Since the

³See S.H. Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East," S.H. Hooke, ed., Myth and Ritual (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 5. Cf. John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 155-6.

⁴See Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia, The Parthian Period, Vol. I (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), pp. 145-174. "The school . . . embodied the central myth of Pharisaic-Rabbinical Judaism, the belief that the Mosaic Scriptures constituted divine revelation in written form. The 'whole Torah' consisted of both written and oral

Temple cult was prescribed by Torah, the Rabbis had to justify Jewish life without the Temple. They did so by rationalization and imaginative explanation. This explanation, instead of diminishing the Temple's significant place in Judaism, greatly enlarged its mythological dimension.

The scope of the study is circumscribed by an intentional concentration on rabbinic materials and the events of the period within which they were written, A.D. 70-ca. A.D. 500. In establishing the historical antecedents of the mythical Temple of the Rabbis, it will be necessary also to investigate the record of the Temple in the Hebrew Bible. This endeavour will involve tracing the history of the Temple from the United Monarchy in the tenth century B.C. to the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C. Some apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works will be cited with reference to the history of the second Temple. Philo will also be consulted to acquire some insight into the symbolism connected with Herod's Temple in the first century of the Christian era. Josephus, who survived the Jewish War of 68-70, recorded some helpful information on the crises in first century Judaism. His discussion of the Tabernacle provides some clues to the symbolic meaning of the Temple at the end of the first century of this era. The views of the Rabbis will, however, occupy the primary position in the

parts which were embodied in the schools and by the rabbinical sages." p. 147.

investigation.

B. A Description of Primary Sources

The Hebrew Scriptures are fundamental to the literature of the Rabbis. For consistency, the citations from the Hebrew Bible will be given in the English translation of the Revised Standard Version, 1952.

"Rabbinic literature" is a generic term covering the literary achievements of the Rabbis in the Schools of Palestine and Babylonia. This literature had its beginning early in the second century. Writing and redaction continued into the seventh century, although most of the writing was complete in the early part of the sixth century. Rabbinic literature includes the Mishnah, Tosefta,⁵ Talmud, and Midrash.

The written Mishnah as we have it today is the outcome of oral Torah which developed during the period of Pharisaic Judaism. Strack adduces that it was categorically forbidden to commit the oral Torah to writing. It was to be Torah sheba-'al pe.⁶ This view was held particularly by the Sadducean party as Josephus points out:

The Pharisees have made many ordinances among the people, according to the tradition of their fathers, whereof

⁵The Tosefta, which is contemporaneous with the Mishnah, will not be used since its content is similar to that of the Mishnah.

⁶See Herman L. Strack, Introduction To the Talmud and Midrash (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959), p. 12.

there is nothing written in the law of Moses; for which cause they are rejected by the sect of the Sadducees, who affirm that they ought to keep the written ordinances and not to observe those that are grounded upon the tradition of the fathers.⁷

The Pharisees would probably have committed the oral Torah to writing before they did, had it not been for Sadducean opposition. After the destruction of the Temple, the Pharisees had the field to themselves. Gradually the oral tradition reached written form. Rabbi Judah, patriarch of Palestine, collected and promulgated the writings in ca. A.D. 200.⁸ The publication was thereafter called Mishnah.

The term "mishnah" means basically, "study".⁹ The Rabbis were actively involved in the exposition and application of their written Scriptures, particularly the Pentateuch. Changing conditions of life challenged the leaders of Judaism with the task of interpreting the Scriptures in the light of new situations. Strack maintains that some sort of organization must have existed in Judaism since the time of Ezra to make the law effective. The Rabbis not only preserved the law, but also widened its scope.¹⁰

Patriarch Judah's Mishnah gained immediate acceptance

⁷Jos. Ant. XIII, 10, 6.

⁸Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 141. The destruction of the Temple brought Sadducean power to an end. Hence the rise to power of rabbinic pharisaism. See discussion in Ch. 4.

⁹Strack, Introduction, p. 3.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 9.

as an authority for the interpretation of Scripture.¹¹ In the same way that the Scriptures required fresh application to changing situations, so did the Mishnah. The Rabbis continued to enlarge upon the Mishnaic code for several centuries into the Christian era. The finished product was called The Talmud, which means "instruction".¹²

The Talmud consists of two parts: Mishnah and Gemara or learning. The Gemara section elaborates the parallel theme in the Mishnah. According to Neusner, "the dialectical reasoning of the Talmud was shaped by Roman principles of legal codification and by Greek principles of rhetoric."¹³ Two Talmuds exist: The Palestinian Talmud and The Babylonian Talmud. Produced in the Babylonian Schools, the latter of these two collections was completed ca. A.D. 500.¹⁴ The Soncino edition in English consists of 35 volumes edited by I. Epstein. The Palestinian Talmud does not exhibit the same degree of careful redaction, possibly on account of the turmoil in Palestine during the fifth century.¹⁵ Unlike its Babylonian counterpart, The Palestin-

¹¹Morris Adler, The World of the Talmud (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 35.

¹²Strack, Introduction, p. 5.

¹³Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 141.

¹⁴Redaction probably continued throughout the sixth century. See Raphael Patai, Tents of Jacob, The Diaspora Yesterday and Today (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1971), p. 33.

¹⁵Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 141.

ian Talmud has been only partially translated into English.¹⁶

The last of these rabbinic collections is known today as the Midrash. The title designated a body of written expositions of Scripture passages carried out by the Rabbis from the second century A.D. to the Middle Ages.¹⁷ "Midrash" carried the idea of investigation both in the sense of theoretical study and in the realm of exposition. Specifically, the term Midrash was used with reference to the Rabbis' exegesis of Scripture.¹⁸

Two forms of instruction are distinguished in the Midrash: expository and homiletical. The first of these is merely a running commentary on the text according to the order of the verses. The homiletical, on the other hand, deals with individual texts from which the teacher built a homily directed at religious and moral instruction. To this latter group belongs the Midrash Rabbah.¹⁹

This brief description of the rabbinic literature used in this study merely acquaints the reader with the basic forms of the various collections, and with their time of

¹⁶The Babylonian Talmud will be used throughout the discussion.

¹⁷Strack, Introduction, pp. 6, 203. Cf. Raphael Patai, Man and Temple (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1967), p. viii.

¹⁸Strack, Introduction, p. 6.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 204-5. The Midrash Rabbah will be used throughout the discussion.

composition. The bearing which this survey has on the overall investigation should become clear as the discussion unfolds.

In the bodies of literature to which reference has been made above myth and history intermesh. Events, rulers, court procedure, etc., are enveloped with mythical statements of the Rabbis. Even the trivial affairs of daily life in the villages and towns were given supernatural importance in rabbinic discussions.²⁰ The ordinary was regarded as having an extraordinary dimension; the historical as having trans-historical meaning. Similarly, the historical Temple was complemented with highly symbolic meaning. There was an earthly Temple; there developed a Temple of myth. Since these two terms, "myth" and "history", occupy an important place in the chapters which follow, an understanding of their use is in order.

C. Myth and History

Our English word, "myth", is derived from the Greek, μύθος. In the early history of Greek philosophy μύθος signified thought or reason, much the same as λόγος did in a later period of Greek philosophy and in the New Testament.²¹

²⁰Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 45.

²¹See G. Stahlin, "μύθος," Gerhard Kittel, ed., G.W. Bromiley, translator and editor, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 762-95.

Any intellectual connotation is plainly refuted in the New Testament references.²² For example, the epistle to Timothy uses *μύθος* to denote a tale which has no basis in fact: "people will not endure sound teaching . . .; [they] will turn away from listening to the Truth and wander into myths" (*μύθοι*).²³ The context leaves little doubt that the author does not associate *μύθος* with truth (*ἀληθεία*). The Authorized Version translates *μύθοι*, "fables", a rendering which does justice to the meaning current in first century Christianity. Kirk finds that as early as Plato, mythology (*μυθολογία*) meant only the telling of stories.²⁴ Moreover, the etymology and derivation of the word represents only one facet of the present meaning in English, and not a very helpful one at that. The fact that the story was believed by the community in which it was told must be regarded as central to the present understanding of the term "myth". The Jews, for example, did not consider their explanations of the Temple as fables.

Eliade's observations and conclusions substantiate

²² *Ibid.*, p. 771. See I Timothy 1:4; 4:7; Titus 1:14; II Peter 1:16; II Timothy 4:5.

²³ II Timothy 4:3-5. See J.H. Moulton and George Miligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1952), p. 418. Cf. G.S. Kirk, Myth, Its Meaning and Function (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 8.

²⁴ Kirk, Myth, p. 8. Cf. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 1151.

the idea that in ancient societies the myth lay at the very foundation of social life and culture. He explains that

. . . in such societies the myth is thought to express the absolute truth, because it narrates a sacred history; that is, a transhuman revelation which took place at the dawn of the Great Time, in the holy time of the beginnings (in illo Tempore).²⁵

The story of an historical event or person would undergo transformation into myth. In this process of mythopoeic activity, the initiator of the myth was seeking meaning beyond profane time which is without meaning. Man in ancient culture endured history with difficulty, and at times attempted to erase it.²⁶ This notion can be applied to the Jews both in Palestine and in Babylonia during the period in which their literature was being written.²⁷ Myth validated their existence. This validating process in ancient Near Eastern cultures was accomplished by "imitating a divine archetype", by building into profane time and profane space, mythical time and mythical space.²⁸ The archetypal structure of myth comes into sharp focus in the Temple myth of the Rabbis.

S.H. Hooke affirms that those involved in myth-making

²⁵Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries (London: Harvill Press, 1960), p. 23.

²⁶Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return (Princeton: University Press, 1971), pp. 34, 36.

²⁷This theme will be developed further in Chapter IV.

²⁸Eliade, Eternal Return, p. 36.

in the ancient east were, at the same time, struggling with the problems of this life. That is, the originators of myth and ritual were not so much occupied with general questions concerning the cosmos as they were with pressing issues of their present life.²⁹ Myth and ritual provided meaning. The meaning in myth was symbolic rather than actual, analogical rather than logical. But the myths were believed; that is, the realities represented in the symbols were thought to exist beyond the historical context. In post-Temple Judaism these symbols comprised the tools of the survival system so striking in Jewish life then and now.³⁰

Myth and history were woven together in ancient Near Eastern cultures. The modern historian, in his attempt to retrieve historical data, uses his skills to remove the mythological sheath to which events, movements and men of the past were attached. But even the modern historian, conscious of the limitations, brings to the investigation of history the milieu of his own inheritance, his religion, nationality, social class, etc.

Thus, historical syntheses depend to a very large degree not only upon the personality of their authors but upon all the social, religious, or national environments which surround them.³¹

²⁹S.H. Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East," S.H. Hooke, ed., Myth and Ritual (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 2.

³⁰See Herman Wouk, This Is My God (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1961), p. 40.

³¹Henri Pirenne, "What Are Historians Trying To Do?"

While it is true that the historian is subject to the influences of his contemporary situation, he is called upon to master and understand the past and use his findings as a key to the understanding of the present.³² But even after the data of the past have been mastered they do not speak for themselves. The historian selects and arranges them according to his own judgment. The facts are given a frame of reference, a context within which they speak concerning the past.³³ Thus, history, Jewish or otherwise, is a record of the past interpreted by the historian.

The myths of the Jews as they appear in rabbinic literature are entrenched in Jewish history; the mythical Temple rests upon the historical Temple. The present investigation will therefore give attention to this latter in an attempt to gain an understanding of the historical background upon which the Temple mythology of the post-Temple era developed.

The Philosophy of History In Our Time: An Anthology (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1959), p. 97.

³²Edward H. Carr, What Is History? (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 29.

³³Ibid., p. 9.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL TEMPLE OF THE JEWS

An adequate treatment of the Temple of myth in rabbinic literature requires the perspective of the Jerusalem Temple in Jewish history. The biblical view of the Temple occupied the thinking of the Rabbis much more than the tradition associated with Herod's Temple. Their concentration on their Scriptures was, in large measure, the means by which they authenticated their claim to power. They claimed to possess God-given ability to interpret Scripture and discover the secrets of life.¹ Moreover, the historical elements related to the Temple were subjected to imaginative interpretation. The end result was an elaborate mythology far surpassing the biblical understanding.

The Hebrew ancestors of the Jews did engage in mythopoeic activity. For this reason, it is important to examine the significance of the Temple in its various stages of historical existence. The mythical Temple of the rabbinic literature constitutes an evolutionary climax of many years of myth-making. In other words, the actual Temple had more and more mythical elements attached to it during its one-

¹See Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 58.

thousand-year history. It was a common practice in ancient Near Eastern cultures to apply mythical qualities to historical phenomena, especially if the historical entities played a significant role in the society.² Sociological factors tended to induce the addition of stratum upon stratum to the original myth.³

It may be argued that ancient Hebrew religion was devoid of significant mythology. Yahweh was transcendent; his image could not be made nor his presence limited.⁴ But even Yahweh was not free from myth, as Henri Frankfort points out. Hebrew thought created the myth of the will of God and a chosen people. Eventually the chosen people recognized a holy city and a sacred house for Yahweh.⁵ Thus, the discussion of the historical Temple which follows will incorporate

²Ignaz Goldziher, Mythology Among the Hebrews and its Historical Development (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1967), p. 23. George Widengren evaluates the merits and defects of Goldziher's theory regarding the historical development of Hebrew mythology in Myth, Ritual and Kingship, H.S. Hooke, ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 38-45.

³Goldziher, *ibid.*, pp. 35, 44.

⁴E.g., Isa. 6:1-4 implies that Yahweh's glory is greater than the Temple. The dedicatory prayer of I Kings 8:22-53 affirms that even the heavens cannot contain Yahweh, much less the Temple. Cf. Phythian-Adams, The People and The Presence (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 51, 46, 96.

⁵Henry Frankfort, ed., Before Philosophy (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1946), p. 244. The formula "House of Yahweh" occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., Ps. 23:6.

the relevant mythology associated with each phase of the Temple's history.

The historical Temple of Jerusalem existed in three stages. The Jews recognized only the first and second Temples, but three distinct buildings can be identified: the pre-exilic, the post-exilic and the Herodian.⁶ David was said to have established the foundation; therefore, the discussion begins with the contribution attributed to him.

A. The Foundation: Davidic Contribution

1. The City and the Sanctuary

The Israelites worshipped at several shrines at various locations in Palestine during their pre-Temple history.⁷ Jerusalem was the last site of the sanctuary as far as the Jews were concerned.⁸ David's capture of the Jebusite city of Jerusalem using his own personal militia constituted the site as "the city of David". He transferred his residence from Hebron and established Jerusalem as the capital of his kingdom. The central location of the new capital probably served to elevate the authority of the King

⁶See W.F. Steinspring, "Temple Jerusalem," IDB, Vol. VII, p. 534.

⁷Roland de Veau postulates this thesis convincingly in Part IV, Chapter 2 of his Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co. Inc., 1961).

⁸After the division of the Kingdom, the northern tribes worshipped at their own shrines which Jeroboam I set up.

above tribal interests.⁹

Added to its political prestige, the new capital gained a religious significance of far-reaching consequences. The event which led to this religious recognition was David's transfer of the Ark of the Covenant from Kirjath-Jearim to Jerusalem. He pitched a tent designed specifically for the Ark.¹⁰ The insight of Kraus in this connection deserves mention. He writes:

By its installation in the city of David the Ark elevated Jerusalem to the status of an amphictyonic cultic centre and brought the ancient Israelite traditions and institutions of the tribal confederacy to the 'chosen place'. . . . We can well imagine that the ark narrative had a great importance as the basic document concerning the elevation of Jerusalem and was passed on to the pilgrims and expounded by the priests as evidence of the amphictyonic status of the new sanctuary.¹¹

Thus, the Jews had in II Samuel 6 a document which depicted David as the patron who protected the sacred institutions of Hebrew history.¹² He was the founder of the myth of the holy city, the centre of the earth.¹³ Accordingly, David's "leaping and dancing before the Lord"¹⁴ as the Ark entered

⁹See II Sam. 5:6-10. Cf. Bright, History, pp. 195-6.

¹⁰II Sam. 6:1-19.

¹¹Hans-Joachim Kraus, Worship In Israel (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 182.

¹²Cf. Bright, History, p. 196.

¹³See B.T. Sukkah, 49a; Mid. R. Ps. 91:1 and discussion in Chapter III.

¹⁴II Sam. 6:16.

the city and his cultic sacrifices after its arrival marked the beginning of a complex ritual which pertained to the Temple. Indeed, the assumption of Kraus that there was a cultic repetition of the transference of the Ark is reasonable.¹⁵ The fact that I Kings 8 narrates the bringing of the Ark into the Temple of Solomon supports this argument. That the divine choice of Jerusalem for the Israelite sanctuary was celebrated in ritual repetition is further substantiated by several Psalms. The Songs of Ascents were very likely sung in ritual commemoration of the election of Jerusalem and the Temple. Psalm 132 is one example:

Remember, O Lord, in David's favour, all the hardships he endured;
 how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,
 "I will not enter my house or get into my bed;
 I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids,
 until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for
 the Mighty One of Jacob."

Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah, we found it in the fields of Jaar.

"Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!"

Arise, O Lord, and go to thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy might.
 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy.
 For thy servant David's sake do not turn away the face of thy anointed one.
 The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back:
 "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.
 If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies which I shall teach them,
 Their sons also for ever shall sit upon your throne."

¹⁵ Kraus, Worship, p. 183.

For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation:
 "This is my resting place for ever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
 I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread.
 Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy.
 There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.
 His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon himself his crown will shed its luster."

Considerable agreement exists among a number of scholars that the royal psalms, such as the one quoted above, celebrate three important aspects of Israelite religion: the founding of the Davidic dynasty, the founding of the holy city, Zion, and the establishment of the central sanctuary.¹⁶ Rather than the concept of founding the city and the sanctuary, Kraus prefers the more cultic notion of election: "The real main themes are not 'founding' or 'consecration', but the election of Jerusalem and of David."¹⁷

From the evidence in the Psalms and in I Kings 8 it is quite probable that the Ark was carried up to the holy mount in ceremonial procession in the month Etarrim. This ritual would have opened the week-long Sukkoth festival, and would, therefore, have acknowledged annually the divine right

¹⁶Cf. A.R. Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," S.H. Hooke, ed., Myth, Ritual and Kingship (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 215-21; R.E. Clements, God and Temple (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), pp. 48-62; and Kraus, Worship In Israel, pp. 183-8.

¹⁷Kraus, Worship, p. 185.

of the Davidic dynasty and the city which bore David's name.¹⁸

The Sukkoth ritual as it appears in the Mishnah occupied a very important place in the Temple festivity and mythology of later Judaism. It was a festival of joy which included a ritual procession up to the Temple; it echoed the initial procession led by David. The Mishnaic description opens with the words: "whoever has not seen the joy of the house of water-drawing has never seen real joy in his life."¹⁹ The rejoicing, it would seem, reflected the attitude of the Jews toward the divine election of King David, of the holy city and of the religious centre, Zion. Through David, Yahweh chose Jerusalem as his dwelling place among his people.

2. The Altar and the Sacrifices

Another major step was taken when David erected an altar on the site of the Temple of Solomon, i.e., on the so-called threshing floor of Araunah.²⁰ Kraus advances the theory that David utilized a Jebusite shrine for his worship of Yahweh. The threshing floor could have been a sacred area of Jerusalem during the Jebusite period. Kraus argues

¹⁸Cf. *ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁹M. Sukkah, 5:1. A more detailed discussion of the Sukkoth festival will be given in Chapter III.

²⁰II Sam. 24:16-25. de Veau suggests that this account "may perhaps combine two traditions which the parallel passage in I Chron. 21:15-22:1 harmonizes and explains." Ancient Israel, p. 309.

that the site was an acropolis with two main buildings, palace and temple. The sacred rock over which the house of Yahweh was erected was acknowledged in pre-Israelite times as a cultic centre.²¹

For rabbinic mythology of the Temple, this foundation-stone account served as a basis for the rich symbolism which the Rabbis attached to the rock on which the sanctuary stood. The narrative of II Samuel 24 bears the essential marks of a foundation story: the appearance of a divine being, the erection of an altar on the site of the experience, and the offering of the first sacrifices.²² Clements calls attention to the fact that such foundation stories of ancient Near Eastern sanctuaries formed an integral part of the mythology. They accounted for the first recognition of the place as the abode of the god who was worshipped there.²³

Why David was prohibited from building a permanent house for Yahweh is not made clear in the biblical narratives.²⁴ It is quite possible, as Bright proposes, that the tribes had become accustomed to the tent of meeting rather than a solid structure. To break a strong tradition would

²¹Kraus, Worship, p. 186.

²²R. de Veau, Ancient Israel, p. 309.

²³Clements, God and Temple, p. 1.

²⁴Cf. II Sam. 7:1-17; I Kings 5:17-19; 8:15-21; I Chron. 22:8-10; 28:5. See R. de Veau, Ancient Israel, p. 112.

have thwarted David's attempt to consolidate the kingdom.²⁵ Nathan's prophecy was possibly representative of the feelings of an anti-temple party among the people. David did, at least, lay the ground work for what was to become a great national and religious symbol, the Temple of Jerusalem.

B. The First Building: Solomonic Contribution

The two basic sources of information on the Solomonic contribution to the Temple and its cult are the biblical record and publications of archaeological discoveries.²⁶ Of lesser importance are the rabbinic materials. These are highly mythological with the result that only a minimum amount of historical data can be gleaned from these sources.²⁷ The focus of the discussion which follows will be on aspects of architecture and symbolism.



Architecture

If Solomon's death can be dated, as Kenyon suggests,²⁸

²⁵ Bright, History, p. 196.

²⁶ Archaeologists have been able only to compare the literary evidence with archaeological discoveries at sites other than Jerusalem. "The area of the Temple and that of the extension of the city under the Israelites lie beneath modern Jerusalem, beyond the reach of the archaeologists' spade." Kathleen Kenyon, Archaeology in the Holy Land (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1970), p. 245. Cf. Kathleen Kenyon, Digging Up Jerusalem (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), pp. 55-57.

²⁷ Concerning the post-exilic Temple and the Herodian one, both the Rabbis and Josephus offer fairly reliable allusions. See Steinspring, "Temple: Jerusalem," IDB,

in the year ca. 935 B.C., it is safe to say that the Temple was built in the middle of the tenth century B.C. Several attempts have been made at reconstructing the Solomonic Temple from the biblical narratives and archaeological finds.

One scholar postulated that Solomon's initial building was a kind of storehouse. The debir, holy of holies, was an afterthought.²⁹ Another scholar published his reconstruction in the spring of 1951. He relied primarily on the texts of Kings and Chronicles, and supplemented these with archaeological evidence.³⁰ Wright and Albright acknowledged the effort, but added that too much stress was placed on Kings and Chronicles and not enough on Ezekiel. It would certainly be wrong, they said, to suppose that the entire description in Ezekiel 40-43 is strictly imaginary. The wealth of exact data does not allow such a supposition.³¹ Wright then published what he called "The Stevens Reconstruction of the

Vol. 4, p. 534.

²⁸Kenyon, Archaeology, p. 259. Cf. M.B. Rowton, "The Date of the Founding of Solomon's Temple," BASOR, 119, 1950, pp. 20-22.

²⁹Leroy Waterman, "The Treasures of Solomon's Private Chapel," JNES, Vol. 6, 1947, pp. 161-163. Wright discounted this view in his article, "Dr. Waterman's View Concerning the Temple," JNES, Vol. 7, 1948, pp. 53-4.

³⁰P.L. Garber, "Reconstructing Solomon's Temple," BA, 14, 1951, pp. 2-5.

³¹G. Ernest Wright and W.F. Albright, "Reconsidering the Reconstruction of Solomon's Temple," JBL, 77, 1958, pp. 123-33.

Solomonic Temple". This product has become an accepted model of the exterior design of the building³² (see Appendix A).

From the foregoing it is evident that in spite of the extensive information in I Kings 6-7, II Chronicles 3-4, and Ezekiel 40-43, the reconstruction of Solomon's Temple is, in many respects, a matter of conjecture.³³ Thus, attention will be given only to those architectural points which can be stated with a degree of certainty.

David determined the site of Solomon's Temple. It probably lay to the west of the rock now covered by the great dome of Abd el Melek. The rock may well have been the site of David's altar of sacrifices.³⁴ The building, rectangular in shape and erected on a platform,³⁵ consisted of three main rooms: a porch (ulâm), an outer chamber (hekal) and an inner chamber (debir).³⁶

The porch, or vestibule, was about ten meters³⁷ wide

³²G. Ernest Wright, "The Stevens Reconstruction of the Solomonic Temple," BA, V. 18, 1955, pp. 41-44. Cf. Wright, Biblical Archaeology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 137-140.

³³Cf. André Parrot, The Temple of Jerusalem (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1957), p. 23.

³⁴See II Chron. 3:1; Cf. Kathleen Kenyon, Jerusalem, 110-115; Kenyon, Archaeology, p. 245, and Parrot, Temple, p. 17.

³⁵See Ez. 41:8. Cf. Kenyon, Archaeology, p. 247.

³⁶I Kings 6:1-13; II Chron. 3. Cf. G.E. Wright, BA, Vol. 7, 1944, pp. 73-77.

³⁷One cubit = 50 centimeters.

and five deep. Two highly-adorned pillars flanked the entrance which faced the rising sun. Each pillar was capped with a lotus form, and each had, presumably, a dynastic oracle in front of it.³⁸ Behind the vestibule lay the main room of the sanctuary, the hekal, holy place. It measured 20 meters long, 10 wide and 15 high. The walls were panelled with cedar and decorated with carvings of palms, flowers, and cherubim. Small windows under the roof provided light for the room.³⁹ The holy place led into a smaller, dark room, the debir. This holy of holies was a windowless room of 10 cubic meters. It housed the Ark of Yahweh. Two sphinx-like creatures, the cherubim, guarded the sacred chest as if it were a throne.⁴⁰

Several golden articles of furniture were placed within the holy place: an altar of incense, and two candelabra, one on each side of the entrance to the holy of holies. A table for the Bread of Presence also stood in the holy place.

South-east in the court of the Temple stood a bronze sea. This huge basin was supported by twelve bulls arranged

³⁸I Kings 7:15-22; II Kings 25:17; II Chron. 3:15; 4:12-13; Jer. 52:17-23. "Jachin" and "Boaz" may be interpreted otherwise. See Bright, History, pp. 213-214.

³⁹Bright, *ibid.*

⁴⁰See G. Ernest Wright, "The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East," BA, Vol. 7, 1944, p. 74. Cf. Parrot, Temple, p. 36.

in four groups of three, each group facing a point on the compass. The dimensions are given as ten cubits (five meters) in diameter and five cubits (two and a half meters) in height. Its capacity, according to I Kings 7, was 2,000 baths.⁴¹ Wylie rejects the conclusion of some scholars that the 2,000 baths equals 20,000 gallons. After a rather ingenuous deduction, Wylie arrives at a capacity of 8,000 imperial gallons.⁴² Bagnani reduced the capacity still further by suggesting that the depth of the sea was only one cubit, and that the base of the bowl rested directly on the pavement. The bulls merely steadied the bowl. Bagnani allows only 1,280 imperial gallons on the grounds that this volume of water would have been ample for the purposes intended.⁴³

In the court, as well, there stood the altar of sacrifices. The Chronicler seems to connect the bronze platform with this altar. Reference to Solomon's prayer before Yahweh is probably to his position on the platform of the

⁴¹I Kings 7:23-26; Cf. II Chron. 4:2-5. The account in Chronicles has 3,000 baths. C.C. Wylie favours the 2,000 of Kings and concludes that a bath equals four imperial gallons. See his article, "On King Solomon's Molten Sea," BA, XII, 1949, p. 90.

⁴²Wylie, *ibid.*

⁴³Gilbert Bagnani, "The Molten Sea of Solomon's Temple," W.S. McCullough, ed., The Seed of Wisdom (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), pp. 116, 117. The Chronicler reported that the function of the sea was for priestly ablutions.

altar.⁴⁴

To this purposely selective description of Solomon's Temple may be added the point that the structure, plan, and motif were not uniquely Israelite. Similar sanctuaries have been discovered in other parts of the ancient Near East. The Jerusalem Temple, built as it was by a Tyrian architect, was characteristically Phoenician.⁴⁵ While archaeological excavations in Phoenicia have not produced a structure similar to Solomon's Temple, other locations have. The results of C.W. McEwan's work at Tell Tainat in northern Syria were published in 1937. They reveal that the temple there, though smaller, was a ninth century link to the Solomonic Temple. Rectangular in form, the Tell Tainat temple was divided into three compartments: a porch with two columns in front, a main room, and a cellar with a raised platform at the back. The entrance faced the east.⁴⁶

But this Syrian temple of the ninth century was built subsequent to Solomon's and could therefore have been a copy of the Jerusalem complex on a smaller scale. Yadin's excavations manifested more clearly that the motif of the Solomonic Temple was already present in the surrounding areas. Writing

⁴⁴I Kings 8:64; I Kings 9:25; Cf. II Chron. 6:12-13 and Parrot, Temple, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁵See W.F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 143. Goldziher, Mythology, p. 236.

⁴⁶W.F. Albright, Archaeology, p. 143.

in 1959, Yadin stated that the temple plan of the Hazor sanctuary broadly resembled that of Solomon's Temple. At that time, the Hazor sanctuary was the only known structure prior to Solomon's period which could be acknowledged as a kind of prototype of Solomon's Temple.⁴⁷

Some nine years after Yadin's publication, Aharoni excavated what he called "the most surprising discovery at Arad: the Israelite temple."⁴⁸ He noted, among other points of similarity, the east-west axis and the two stone slabs flanking the entrance. He concluded that these likely were bases of free-standing pillars, similar to the biblical Jachin and Boaz.⁴⁹ Thus, from the archaeological evidence the implication is clear that Solomon had the Temple of Jerusalem designed and built after the pattern then present in the ancient East. A question arises concerning the symbolic significance of the Solomonic sanctuary to the worshipping Israelite. He may or may not have associated the mythology of the surrounding religions with the architectural motif.

⁴⁷Y. Yadin, "The Fourth Season of Excavations at Hazor," BA, 22, 1959, p. 4. He dates the temple in Late Bronze.

⁴⁸Y. Aharoni, "Arad: Its Inscriptions and Temple," BA, 31, 1968, p. 19.

⁴⁹Ibid. This temple was built, apparently, in the 10th century and remained in use until the 8th.

2. Symbolism

Several attempts have been made to establish the symbolism connected with the Temple of Solomon during its term of service, ca. 959-587 B.C. W.F. Albright's view that the Temple of Solomon "possessed a rich cosmic symbolism"⁵⁰ has been widely held among scholars of ancient Near Eastern culture. His discussion focuses on the various parts and furniture of the Temple, a brief summary of which will serve to illustrate this view.

The two free-standing pillars were huge cressets or fire altars⁵¹ which had some cosmic significance.⁵² The molten sea may be compared to the Mesopotamian apsû, says Albright. Apsû was the name given to the subterranean fresh-water ocean, and also to the basin of sacred water in the Babylonian temple. Both waters carried the notion of fertility. The bulls supporting the sea may also have represented fecundity.⁵³ The altar of sacrifices with its

⁵⁰Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, p. 154.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 144. Robertson Smith first proposed this view in which he maintained that they were "fed with the suet of sacrifices." Lectures on the Religion of the Semites (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), pp. 487-9.

⁵²Albright, *ibid.*, p. 148. "i.e., they may have been regarded as the reflection of the columns between which the sun rose each morning to pour its light through the portico of the Temple into its interior."

⁵³Ibid., p. 149. Albright is uncertain about the designation of yam, "sea". The bull "was almost invariably associated with the rain-giver Hadad (Baal), but also appears in connection with the life-giving waters of rivers and the underworld."

platform (kîyôr) also had its counterpart in the Mesopotamian ziggurat which had cosmic significance. Albright contends that the form of the altar together with its symbolism, as derived from Phoenicia, can be traced to the older Canaanite adaptation of the Mesopotamian ideas.⁵⁴ Concerning the lamp stands, Albright merely alludes to representations found in Southern Palestine and in Phoenicia. Graffiti of candelabra found at these sites led to the conclusion simply that the objects occupied an important place in the worship of the given culture.⁵⁵

Not every scholar would subscribe to Albright's application of ancient Near Eastern symbolism to the Solomonic Temple. Bright, for example, acknowledges the inevitable influence of a pagan background, but affirms that Israel's religion remained definitely Israelite in nature. The Temple and its priesthood preserved a generally conservative influence in the life of Judah.⁵⁶

de Veau rejects strenuously the cosmic symbolism attributed to the first Temple by Albright and others. According to him, there is not a single reference in the Hebrew Bible which even suggests that the Solomonic Temple ever had a cosmic significance. The symbolism, says de Veau,

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 145. Cf. A. Parrot, Temple, pp. 50-1.

⁵⁶ Bright, History, p. 214.

which Philo and Josephus projected back to the Temple of Solomon would have been foreign to the Israelite's concept of Yahweh as Lord of the universe.⁵⁷ Part of his argument is as follows:

Right to the end of the monarchy, the Israelites were confronted with the paradox that here was a man-made house in which there dwelt that God whom the heavens could not contain (I Kings 8:27); consequently, they distinguished between the Temple, where they prayed, and heaven, where God dwelt (I Kings 8:30 etc.). They did not think of the Temple as representing the universe, and ideas of cosmic symbolism emerged only long afterwards.⁵⁸

By contrast, Albright believes that the rich cosmic symbolism of Solomon's Temple practically disappeared from later Israelite and Jewish traditions.⁵⁹ An examination of rabbinic literature reveals that later Judaism developed a symbolism of the Temple which finds no equal in the statements of the Hebrew Scriptures on the Solomonic Temple.⁶⁰ The next chapter proposes to demonstrate this affirmation.

Some cosmic significance doubtless became attached to the first Temple building during its history. With even more certainty it can be affirmed that the Solomonic Temple was both a dynastic sanctuary and religious centre of Israel.⁶¹

⁵⁷ de Veau, Ancient Israel, p. 328.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 329.

⁵⁹ Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, p. 154.

⁶⁰ See Patai, Man and Temple, p. 139.

⁶¹ See J. Pedersen on community life and covenant. "Blessing does not abide everywhere. There are spots where

It was not only the locus of the divine presence,⁶² but also a royal chapel.⁶³

The building itself as it was originally conceived and built remained virtually intact until its destruction in 587 B.C. Some of the rooms were slightly modified,⁶⁴ and at times valuable fittings had to be used to pay tribute,⁶⁵ but in the main, the Temple of Solomon continued unchanged for four hundred years. The reforms of Jehoshaphat (843-814), Hezekiah (715-687/6) and Josiah (640-609) helped to keep the building in good repair as well as to preserve it from the influences of the Canaanite cults.⁶⁶ Finally, in 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar captured and destroyed Jerusalem and its

the curse acts, and there are others where the blessing is concentrated." E.G., the Temple. Israel: Its Life and Culture, Vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 475.

⁶²Cf. W.J. Phythian-Adams, The People and the Presence (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 57-8. "First this presence is conceived quite naively as Jahweh himself. . . . The second stage begins with a gradual realization [that] heaven becomes the dwelling-place for such a God. . . . So we reach the third stage in which the Name is 'caused' by Jahweh to 'tabernacle' in the 'place' which he has chosen."

⁶³See Bright, History, p. 324.

⁶⁴de Veau, Ancient Israel, p. 321.

⁶⁵E.g., Ahaz paid Tiglath-Pileser III. II Kings 16:17.

⁶⁶Manasseh erected Canaanite altars and installed an idol of Asherah in the sanctuary. II Kings 21:4-5, 7. Cf. II Kings 12:4-16; 18:1-8; 22:1-23:27.

Temple. The great national symbols, the city of David and the Temple of Solomon, lay in ruins.

C. The Second Building: Post-exilic Contribution

Little is known of the Second Building, as compared with the available information on Solomon's Temple.⁶⁷ The main sources consist of some post-exilic canonical books, I Maccabees and Josephus.⁶⁸ The information in these materials tends to be general, except in areas where the authors have particular interests. Serious reconstructions are seldom attempted in view of the sparseness of data.⁶⁹ In light of this limitation, the present treatment of the history of the post-exilic Temple will be confined to a discussion of some of the favourable conditions which promoted the building of the Second Temple, and of pertinent aspects of Temple function in post-exilic Judaism.

1. Conditions Favourable to the Restoration of the Temple

a) Persian Policy

In prophetic style, Second Isaiah declared that Cyrus, king of Persia, would accept a divine charge to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem.⁷⁰ The records tell that

⁶⁷ de Veau, Ancient Israel, p. 324.

⁶⁸ The Yoma tractate of the Mishnah also sheds some light on the references in the other sources to the stone which remained after the Ark had disappeared in 587 B.C.

⁶⁹ Cf. note in IDB, Vol. 4, p. 550.

⁷⁰ Isa. 44:24-28.

Persian rulers were favourably disposed to such a measure of restoration. The victory of the Persian ruler, Cyrus II, over the neo-Babylonian empire in 539 B.C. brought with it the hegemony in which the policy of the Medo-Persian empire allowed captured peoples to return to their homelands with the loot confiscated by the neo-Babylonian rulers. The Jews fell heir to the clemency of Cyrus, especially following his edict of 538 B.C. The decree granted freedom to the exiles in Babylon to pick up the pieces of their ancestral tradition in their native land.⁷¹ Many of the Jews in exile, not willing to embark on a repatriate mission in a pillaged land, remained in Babylonia where they established themselves in comfortable and, in some cases, lucrative positions.⁷² These Jews, while they were not willing to participate personally, doubtless supported the venture financially.⁷³

The first exiles to accept the challenge returned to Jerusalem with their flocks and herds and erected an altar on the site of the old one.⁷⁴ With little delay they began work on the foundation of the second sanctuary. Sheshbassar

⁷¹Cf. R.K. Harrison, Old Testament Times (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 276-7. The narratives of II Chron. 36:23 and Ezra 1:2-4 "are an accurate reflection of the policy Cyrus adopted towards all those who had been expatriated under the new Babylonian regime."

⁷²See Jos. Ant. XI, 1, 3.

⁷³Cf. Bright, History, p. 363.

⁷⁴Ezra 3:2-6.

directed the operation.⁷⁵ The mixed feelings expressed in Ezra 3 need not mean that the measurements of the foundation were much smaller than those of the first building. Ezra's account shows that some returnees remembered the glory of Solomon's Temple. The nostalgic sorrow was probably because they envisaged a new building of very modest decoration as compared with the extravagance of the first building.⁷⁶

A serious set-back came from the Samaritans when they frustrated the efforts of the Jews. The returnees were hardly in a position to withstand political opposition. Bright argues rather convincingly that the Jews, not much over 22,000 in 522 B.C., were preoccupied with survival in a time of poor harvests and limited resources. Their energies were directed away from the Temple project to the business of staying alive.⁷⁷ Under the influence of Darius the great (522-486 B.C.) the Jews were encouraged to complete the work of rebuilding the Temple. After he had found the original decree which authorized the project, Darius provided a substantial subsidy to be given to the supervisors of the project, presumably at this time, Zerubbabel and Jeshua.⁷⁸

⁷⁵Ezra 5:16. Cf. Ezra 3:8-13.

⁷⁶Cf. Steinspring, "The Temple: Jerusalem," IDB, Vol. 4, p. 550. "The new temple was somewhat less rich and costly than the old, though this difference has been exaggerated by some writers, both ancient and modern."

⁷⁷Bright, History, p. 366. See also Ezra 4:1-5.

⁷⁸Ezra 6:1-12.

Thus, the policy of the Persian ruler aided greatly in the fulfilment of the Jewish aspirations for a restored Temple.

b) Prophetic Impetus

The restoration of the Jerusalem Temple and cult was also stimulated by prophetic influence. The role of the exilic and post-exilic prophets will be considered only as it applies to the reconstruction of the second building. The discussion will be taken up again in Chapter IV where the prophetic role will be examined in terms of an antecedent to the rise of rabbinic mythology of the Temple.

Ezekiel's vision of the Temple would surely have inspired the later reconstruction.⁷⁹ The returning exiles could hardly have followed his ideal blueprint, but they would most likely have espoused the religious tradition inherent in the description of the Temple and cult. The precepts of the Torah of that day can be traced throughout Ezekiel's prophecy, and would undoubtedly have been propagated among the exiles in Babylonia. Notions of holiness, purity and spirituality were very much a part of Ezekiel's moral instruction, but the Temple would give concrete expression to the Yahwistic morality.⁸⁰ His priestly conviction saw the

⁷⁹ de Veau, Ancient Israel, p. 323. Cf. Parrot, The Temple, p. 61.

⁸⁰ Ez. 33:24-29 and Isa. 57:3-13. These references provide a clue to the religious laxity which had settled upon the Jewish community.

future of the nation in the restoration of the theocratic ideals of earlier Jewish history. The Temple was necessary to this political structure, and the worship thereof would require careful regulation of an organized priesthood responsible for the performance of ritual law.⁸¹

Ezekiel's ideal Temple reflects the Solomonic sanctuary in which he himself had worshipped. It is instructive to note that the imaginary temple is not associated with a royal palace as the first Temple had been.⁸² Neither is the same emphasis given to the furnishings. The great altar of sacrifices is the only item which he describes in detail.⁸³ It is clear that Ezekiel had in mind a temple for the priests and their services, not for a king and his politics.

The Ark of Yahweh, a symbol which had long represented God's presence, does not appear in the vision. The omission is striking yet purposeful from Ezekiel's vantage point. He saw that "the glory of the Lord entered the Temple by the gate facing east . . . , and behold the glory of the Lord filled the Temple."⁸⁴ The sacred character of the visionary precincts is further exemplified in the sharp distinction

⁸¹Cf. Harrison, Old Testament Times, p. 266.

⁸²See Ez. 40:1-44-9.

⁸³Ez. 43:13-17.

⁸⁴Ez. 43:4-5.

between the most holy area and the surrounding territory. This distinction illustrates the prophet's view of the distinction between priests and people; between pure and impure.⁸⁵ The Torah was the base for Ezekiel's religious instruction concerning priests and people, and the Torah called for a cult and a cultic centre. Thus, the prophet's conviction and instruction helped to promote the rebuilding of the sanctuary in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

Prophetic impetus came even more directly from the post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai rebuked Zerubbabel and Jeshua for heeding the voice of the people who said: "The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord."⁸⁶ The prophet countervailed the protests of the struggling Jews of Palestine by pointing out that the poor economic conditions were the result of slackness in building the Temple. Haggai associated the presence of the Temple in the land with the prosperity of the land.⁸⁷

Zechariah supported the views of Haggai and further spurred Zerubbabel to complete the task.⁸⁸ The promise of national and personal blessing was linked with a thinly veiled element of messianic aspirations.⁸⁹ The promised

⁸⁵ Ez. 43:6-12; 44:1-31.

⁸⁶ Hag. 1:2.

⁸⁷ Hag. 1:1-11; 2:1-9.

⁸⁸ Zech. 4:7-10; 8:1-23.


⁸⁹ Cf. Bezabl Porten, "Second Temple," EJ, Vol. 15, p. 956.

blessings both of prosperity and of Messiah were contingent upon the presence of the Temple and the practice of its cult. The people were thus encouraged to complete the reconstruction and establish their religious tradition in the land once more.

The conditions in Palestine in the Persian period, unlike those which prevailed after the Roman destruction of A.D. 70, favoured the restoration of the Jewish community and Temple. The political arrangement together with the prophetic influence of the period, furthered the task of rebuilding a successor to Solomon's Temple to the time of dedication in 515 B.C. The Temple cult flourished thereafter with little interruption until the destruction of A.D. 70.

② Function and History of the Temple After Restoration

As pointed out earlier, repatriate Jews first erected an altar for sacrifice. The reconstructed Temple continued to function as a shrine at which sacrificial offerings were presented for the transgressions of the people. No other ritual surpassed that of sacrifice in importance.⁹⁰ One offering seemed to take precedence over the others, the tamid, or continual offering celebrated morning and evening. This daily sacrifice was accompanied by praise, the reading of the Decalogue, prayers and, at the end, the priestly

 ⁹⁰ Werner Foerster, From Exile To Christ (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 153.

blessing.⁹¹ Sirach describes in glowing terms the Tamid service, and the pomp which attended the high priest whose privilege it was to officiate. In benediction the high priest

. . . lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, to pronounce the blessing of the Lord with his lips, and the glory in his name; and they bowed down in worship a second time, to receive the blessing from the Most High.⁹²

Such was the solemnity of sacrificial service in the Second Temple. But the Temple cult conveyed its brilliance particularly at the great festivals. The most prominently joyful of these was the Sukkoth, feast of booths.⁹³ In addition to the ritual celebration of the ingathering of harvest, the Sukkoth was a festival of joy and illumination conducted in the forecourts of the Temple.⁹⁴

The Sukkoth together with the feasts of Atonement, Unleavened bread, Pentecost and Passover brought great fame to the Second Temple. As Foerster points out, literally multitudes of Jewish pilgrims flocked to Jerusalem from every Jewish community in the world to celebrate the great

⁹¹See *ibid.*

⁹²Sirach, 50:20-21.

⁹³Foerster, Exile, p. 154.

⁹⁴See Jos. Ant. VIII, 4:1 and George MacRae, "The meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 22, 1956, pp. 267-9.

festivals.⁹⁵ At the centre of all of the festal activity stood the Temple.

This devotion to the Temple cult was no longer stimulated by the thought of a dynastic shrine of the house of David. It was the Torah law which charged the post-exilic Jews with responsibility for the Temple and its cult. The high priest of the house of Zadok presided over the Temple services, acted as spiritual leader of the people, and performed, to a degree, the functions of political ruler as well.⁹⁶ Since the fortunes of the high priesthood were so intrinsically bound to the Temple, the prestige and influence of the office collapsed with the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. The religious leadership was then taken over by the Pharisaic Rabbis.

The history of the post-exilic Temple was somewhat chequered following the favourable rule of the Medo-Persian government. With the victory of Alexander the Great (334-323) the destiny of the Jews and their Temple entered upon a more precipitous phase. Hellenism infiltrated Jewish communities of the dispersion,⁹⁷ and, by the time of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV (175-164 B.C.), had penetrated

⁹⁵Foerster, Exile, p. 152.

⁹⁶Cf. Lev. 23:27-32; 16-17, and Bright, History, p. 437.

⁹⁷Cf. Foerster, Exile, pp. 31-33.

the priesthood of Jerusalem.⁹⁸ In addition, the Palestinian Jews were not united in their understanding and practice of the law.⁹⁹ The teaching and enforcement of Ezra and his disciples during the Persian period had not carried over into the later Greek times.¹⁰⁰

Corruption in the high-priesthood was rampant in the reign of Antiochus IV. Jason purchased the position of high-priest from the King with the understanding that Hellenistic customs would be inculcated in Palestine.¹⁰¹ Jason and his supporters had been strongly influenced by Hellenism. Their attitude and approach are graphically described in I Maccabees:

In those days lawless men came forth from Israel, and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us." This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king. He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined

⁹⁸See *ibid.*, p. 23. "But in one essential point Jerusalem remained distinct from the other cities: in these the indigenous religious heritage was immediately swamped by Hellenism; this did not happen in Jerusalem until the beginnings of the Syrian period."

⁹⁹The apocryphal writings, especially I Maccabees, reveal this tendency.

¹⁰⁰See W.O.E. Oesterley and T.H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development (London: SPCK, 1930), pp. 277-281. Cf. Ezra 7:25.

¹⁰¹Cf. H.H. Milman, History of the Jews (London: Ward, Lock and Co., n.d.), p. 163.

with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.¹⁰²

The struggle for the high priesthood was also within Judaism. The loyal Jews sought to gain control of the office to ensure the sanctity of the sacrifices and the keeping of Jewish law. Antiochus IV suspected an element of sedition from within Judaism, and consequently punished Jerusalem, plundered the Temple and desecrated the holy places.¹⁰³ This action of Antiochus IV (ca. 169 B.C.) brought with it the cessation of sacrifices and festivals for more than three years. The practice of Jewish law was forbidden; idol-worship was obligatory; copies of the Hebrew scriptures were destroyed and faithful Jews martyred.¹⁰⁴

Under the leadership of Judas Maccabee the insurgents reoccupied Jerusalem and purged the Temple (164 B.C.). The pagan altar was destroyed together with the former Jewish altar which had been defiled. A new altar of uncut stones was erected and dedicated, and the entire Temple mount was fortified against future invasions.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²I Maccabees 1:11-15.

¹⁰³I Maccabees 1:20-40, and Jos. Wars, I, 1, 2.

¹⁰⁴I Maccabees 1:54-64.

¹⁰⁵I Maccabees 4:36-61. Cf. Jos. Wars, I, 14. "Judah also fortified Mount Zion, surrounding it with a wall in order to defend the Temple especially from danger from the west, where the Greek-held Acra fortress was situated." Michael Avi-Yonah, "Temple," EJ, Vol. 15, p. 958. The dedication was initiated on the festival of Hanukkah. See II Maccabees 1:9; 2:18.

This re-establishment of Jewish independence allowed Judaism to continue without serious interruption until the invasion of Pompey in 63 B.C. After a three-month siege Pompey entered the sacred sanctuary,¹⁰⁶ and murdered the priests where they stood at the altar.¹⁰⁷ He left the Temple furnishings intact. As the political upheaval of the Roman occupation of Palestine began to settle, leading Jews again purged the Temple and reinstated the sacrificial system.¹⁰⁸ In the Roman period the Temple underwent a major, physical transition: reconstruction by Herod. This last phase of the historic fortunes of the Temple was one which Avi-Yonah calls "an important landmark in Temple-history."¹⁰⁹

D. The Third Building: Herodian Contribution

When the Idumean Herod had succeeded in gaining the confidence of the Roman authorities, he was made king of the Jews.¹¹⁰ Herod's passion for power manifested itself in his

¹⁰⁶Jos. Wars, I, 7:6. "There was nothing that affected the nation so much, in the calamities that they were then under, as that their holy place, which had been hitherto seen by none, should be laid open to strangers." See also Rupert Furneaux, The Roman Siege of Jerusalem (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1972), pp. 191-209.

¹⁰⁷Many other Jews lost their lives as well. See Jos. Wars, I, 7, 4-5. Cf. Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, A History of the Jewish People (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1965), p. 163.

¹⁰⁸See discussion in Margolis and Marx, A History, p. 163. Cf. Parrot, Temple, p. 75.

¹⁰⁹Avi-Yonah, "Temple," EJ, Vol. 15, p. 959.

¹¹⁰For a fuller discussion of how Herod secured the

enormous building operations in several cities of his domain.¹¹¹ Hellenistic influence was evident both in the motif and in the purpose of the magnificent gymnasias, theatres, amphitheatres and temples to pagan gods.¹¹² The Jews of the Herodian period looked upon such edifices as objects of degradation.¹¹³ The Jews' disdain of Herod was intensified when he built a theatre in the holy city of Jerusalem. They despised him on several other counts as well. He was an Idumean,¹¹⁴ unscrupulous¹¹⁵ and self-honouring.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, he sought to ingratiate himself with the Jewish people by building a magnificent Temple in Jerusalem.¹¹⁷

Jewish crown for himself. See Jos. Ant. XV, 1:1-5. Cf. Judah Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," Louis Finkelstein, ed., The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion, Vol. I (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1960), pp. 125-6.

¹¹¹Cf. Jos. Ant. XV, 8.

¹¹²Cf. Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," p. 128.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 129.

¹¹⁴Jos. Ant. XV, 1:2. "By no torments could they be forced to call him king, so great a fondness they had for their former king."

¹¹⁵Ibid., XVI, 5:4. "He was brutish and a stranger to all humanity."

¹¹⁶Ibid., XIV, 9:4. "He is more concerned for himself than for the laws."

¹¹⁷The building of the Temple also marked the crowning achievement of Herod's building operations, and thus satisfied his own passion for fame and glory.

1. Purpose for Reconstructing the Temple

Its five-century history left the Second Temple building in a dilapidated condition. Against the context of Herodian architecture in Jerusalem the run down state and modest proportions of the Jewish Temple would have been accentuated. The Jews were not in a position politically or economically to refurbish the building, but they were not prepared to permit a Gentile king to renew it.¹¹⁸ Herod required the consent of his Jewish subjects before he could begin to build, and he had to convince them that the new Temple would be theirs, not his. In a speech to the Jews¹¹⁹ he attempted to persuade them that the Temple would be dedicated to the glory of the Holy One, not to the honour of himself. Reluctantly the Jews accepted the proposal on the conditions that the divine service continue without interruption and that priests be trained for building the most sacred parts.¹²⁰ The Jews seemed to recognize the need to

¹¹⁸Cf. Milman, History, p. 198.

¹¹⁹Jos. Ant., XV, 11. "[Herod] knew the multitudes were not ready nor willing to assist him in so vast a design." Cf. M. Stern, "The Reign of Herod," M. Avi-Yonah, ed., The World History of the Jewish People: The Herodian Period, Vol. VII (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1975), p. 111.

¹²⁰Avi-Yonah, "Jewish Art and Architecture in The Hasmonean Period," Jewish People, Vol. VII, p. 254. Josephus says that Herod "chose out ten thousand of the most skilful workmen, and bought a thousand sacerdotal garments for as many of the priests, and had some of them taught the arts of stone-cutters, and others of carpenters, and then began to build," Ant. XV, 11-2.

restore the Temple, as long as the restoration did not involve the destruction of the old building.¹²¹ Consent was granted, and Temple construction began (ca. 19 B.C.), a construction which was to become as Herod intended: his crowning achievement.¹²²

2. Size and Beauty of the Reconstructed Temple

The Mishnah and the works of Josephus are the two main sources for a description of the Herodian Temple.¹²³ A problem exists in that these sources differ in many details, especially in those concerning the dimensions of the various parts of the complex. Several efforts have been made to reconstruct Herod's Temple using the various sources according to their own merit (see Appendix B3¹²⁴). Josephus, writing ca. 95, gives dimensions which are somewhat smaller than those of the Middoth tractate in the Mishnah. The author of the Middoth, writing ca. 150, tended to idealize

¹²¹Jos. Ant. XV, 11, 2. "He told them he would not pull down their temple till all things were gotten ready for building it up again."

¹²²See Margolis and Marx, A History, p. 173.

¹²³According to Samuel Safrai the Mishnaic source ranks first in importance. See "The Temple and Divine Service," M. Avi-Yonah, ed., Jewish People, Vol. VII, p. 283. Philo is less reliable than Josephus. He visited the Temple once. The New Testament contains oblique descriptions.

¹²⁴Safrai's plan of the Herodian Temple (Appendix B3) relies more heavily upon the account in the Mishnah, since, according to him, "the main source of knowledge concerning the Temple . . . is the Tannaitic literature, especially the Mishnah. Idem, p. 282.

and exaggerate Herod's Temple, even as Ezekiel did with respect to Solomon's. Both authors mourned the loss of the old sanctuary and looked forward to a glorious restoration.¹²⁵ The account of Josephus, therefore, may be more reliable historically than that of the Mishnah in view of its temporal proximity to the historical Temple of Herod.

Josephus informs us that Herod planned to build the Temple according to the dimensions given for Solomon's Temple.¹²⁶ But the fact is, as Avi-Yonah argues, that Herod did everything in his power to build the Temple as close to the magnificent ideal of the great Hellenistic-Oriental sanctuaries as he could.¹²⁷ He even chose the variant of II Chronicles 3:4 to make the facade of the vestibule as high as possible. Because of some structural problems he was able to raise the porch to only 100 cubits instead of the 120 of II Chronicles 3:4.¹²⁸

The old foundations were replaced by larger ones. The new sanctuary measured 100 cubits (approx. 50M) in length and the same in height. The central part of the structure seems to have been higher than the sides. A paved court

¹²⁵ Steinman, IDB, Vol. 4, p. 553.

¹²⁶ Jos. Ant., XV, 9:1. Avi-Yonah maintains that Herod was "bound to preserve the dimensions and general layout as set forth in the Scriptures." "Jewish Art and Architecture," Jewish People, p. 255.

¹²⁷ Avi-Yonah, *ibid.*

¹²⁸ Jos. Ant., XV, 9:3.

surrounded the entire structure, and elaborate colonnades bounded the court. The circumference of the total complex was 4 stadia (approx. 800M), each side being one stadia. Josephus goes on to describe the 162 columns, the two outer walkways, the Royal Portico, the deep valley below this Portico, and the veils and gates of the Temple. In his The Wars of the Jews, written earlier than The Antiquities, the descriptive account is particularly valuable for an understanding of the size of the sanctuary itself.

The cubit measurements of the various parts of the sanctuary are given as follows: entrance, 70 high and 25 wide; interior porch, 90 high, 50 wide and 20 deep; main room (Solomonic hekal), 40 long, 20 wide and 60 high; inner room (Solomonic debir), 60 high and 20 square. Twelve steps led to the main entrance of the Temple. Two large double doors opened into the Temple proper from the outer porch. Above the doors great clusters of grapes on a vine were formed into the stone work. The main room, or holy place, was separated from the most holy place by a colourful veil. This most holy room was completely unfurnished.¹²⁹

The stone masonry of Herodian architecture had a distinguishing mark of strength. Massive blocks, many of them ten to twelve meters long and one meter high, formed the

¹²⁹ Jos. Wars, V, 5:4-5. Cf. Safrai, "The Temple and Divine Service," Jewish People, pp. 284-8, and Parrot, Temple, pp. 92-7.

huge solid walls of masonry. These great stones were subdivided by their drafted edges.¹³⁰ Herod spared no expense in building the Temple. He used marble of various hues as well as an abundance of gilt.

The outer face of the Temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men's minds or their eyes; for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight. . . . This Temple appeared to strangers, when they were coming to it at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow; for as to those parts of it that were not gilt, they were exceeding white.¹³¹

The beauty of the whole was equal to the sum of its parts. The embellishments would probably have reflected Alexandrian and Parthian design in deference to the many donors of the Diaspora.¹³² The lustre of the Temple buildings was very evident. Even the Rabbis who lost no love on Herod were obliged to admit that "he who has never seen [Herod's Temple] has never seen real beauty in his life."¹³³

3. Popularity and Destruction of Herod's Temple

The Sanctuary itself was dedicated about eighteen months after the foundations were laid. The ceremonies were conducted in a fashion similar to those associated with

¹³⁰ See Avi-Yonah, "Jewish Art and Architecture," Jewish People, Vol. VII, p. 254.

¹³¹ Jos. Wars, V, 5:6. Cf. Matthew 24:1.

¹³² Cf. M. Middoth, 2:3; B.T. Yoma, 38a; see also Avi-Yonah, "Jewish Art and Architecture," Jewish People, Vol. VII, p. 255.

¹³³ B.T. Battrra 3b.

Solomon's Temple, except that Herod did not preside as did Solomon.¹³⁴ Parts of the buildings continued under construction for half a century or more.¹³⁵ At one point Herod incurred the indignation of devout Jews when he installed a golden eagle over the gate of the Temple.¹³⁶ His action ignored Jewish law. The Jews persuaded some youths to tear down the eagle. This event was indicative of the Jews' determination to maintain the sanctity of the Temple of Yahweh for the pure worship of the elect of the world.

Concerning the popularity of this Temple and the city in which it stood, Philo affirms that the numerous Jews in countries of Europe and Asia held the "Holy City where stands the Temple of the most high God to be their mother city."¹³⁷ Philo and his fellow Jews of Egypt bypassed the Jewish temple in Leontopolis so great was the magnetism of the Jerusalem sanctuary. Even the Ethiopian treasurer came to Jerusalem to worship.¹³⁸

The fame of Herod's Temple, however, resulted more

¹³⁴Jos. Ant., XV, 9:5. The dedication coincided with the anniversary of Herod's inauguration thus making the occasion more grand.

¹³⁵Steinman suggests that it "may not have been entirely finished when the destruction came in A.D. 70." IDB, Vol. 4, p. 550. Cf. Jos. Ant., XX, 9:7, and John 2:20.

¹³⁶Jos. Ant., XVII, 6:2-3; Wars, I, 33:1-2.

¹³⁷Philo, Flaccus, VII, 45-6.

¹³⁸See Acts 8:27, and Foerster, Exile, p. 152.

from its religious significance than from the extravagance lavished upon it by Herod. Josephus points to the popularity and centrality of the Temple in 66 B.C., a number of years before the Herodian Temple was built.

When Cestius had marched from Antipatris to Lydda, he found the city empty of its men, for the whole multitude were gone up to the feast of tabernacles.¹³⁹

Further testimony to the religious importance of the Herodian Temple comes from the New Testament¹⁴⁰ and from the early rabbinic writings. One rabbinic source states that "on Sabbaths and festivals they would enter only into the place of study on the Temple mount."¹⁴¹

The strong bond which attached the Jews to their Temple became abundantly apparent in their defence of the sacred precincts. During the wars against the Romans, 66-70, the Jews fought many a bloody battle in an attempt to save the holy city and its Temple. Many of the loyal Zealots believed that Yahweh would intervene.¹⁴² Such was not the case. Titus besieged Jerusalem and after four months of fierce battle in A.D. 70 he stormed the Temple and left it in ruins.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Jos. Wars, II, 19:1.

¹⁴⁰ E.g., Matthew 12:12 and parallels.

¹⁴¹ Tosefta, Sanhedrin, 7:1 cited by Safrai, "Temple and Divine Service," Jewish People, Vol. VII, p. 286.

¹⁴² Jos. Wars, VI, 5:2 and 6:3.

¹⁴³ See Jos. Wars, VI, 4:5.

The Jewish faith survived the destruction of the Temple and prevailed without it. Something even more central to the religion remained: the whole Torah. The Temple was gone, but it could not be forgotten. Constantly the Rabbis were confronted with the Temple cult in the Torah which they studied and taught diligently. In the post-Temple period the Rabbis wrote concerning the meaning of the Temple. Many from the early years of the period wrote out of memory; the later ones added imagination. They grounded their ideas on the historical Temple, and proceeded to construe a mythical one to which attention will now be directed.

CHAPTER III

THE MYTHICAL TEMPLE OF THE RABBIS

When Adam and the Temple were created, they were created with both of God's hands. . . . How do we know that the Temple was created with both his hands? For it is said, 'The Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.' (Exod. 15:17)¹

This statement, like many others in rabbinic discussions, ascribed a distinct significance to the Temple, a significance which was not superseded by the synagogue.² To the Greeks and Barbarians, says Josephus,³ the Temple of Jerusalem was a delightful object of their esteem; to the Jews it was a central symbol of their religion. They integrated their lives around its elaborate service and festivals. On one occasion when Festus the procurator ordered the Jews to pull down a wall which was obstructing his view of the nearby Roman palace, they refused adamantly: "they said they

¹Judah Goldin, trans., The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 16. This volume is a collection of sayings from the so-called extracanonical Minor Tractates of the Talmud. See n. 1, p. xvii.

²Paul E. Dion, "L'usage de la Terminologie Sacrale des Temples a Propos des Synagogues" (Unpublished, 1976), pp. 1-2. Cf. Isaac Levy, The Synagogue: Its History and Function (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1963), pp. 21-5; Azriel Eisenberg, The Synagogue Through the Ages (New York: Block Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 43-61.

³Jos. Wars, V, 1:3; IV, 4:3.

could not endure to live if any part of the Temple should be demolished."⁴ Thus, it is clear that the Jews must have experienced a serious break in their religious consciousness when the Temple was destroyed. Had the Jews regarded the Synagogue as a viable substitute for the Temple⁵ they would hardly have developed such an elaborate mythology of the Temple after its destruction. The Jerusalem Sanctuary did persist, not in reality, but in the mythopoeic thinking of the Rabbis and in the Torah.

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together various mythic elements of the Temple in Rabbinic literature. The result should be a synthesis of cogent statements which will be used in a collective sense. The idea is to present the Temple of myth as it appears in rabbinic literature as a whole. Critical aspects, date, authorship, etc., will be given minimal treatment, since that complex investigation is beyond the scope of this study.⁶ This discussion of the mythical Temple, then, will concentrate on mythical statements associated with the site and the building, with the furnishings, the service, and the celestial archetype.

⁴Jos. Ant., XX, 8:11. Cf. Brown, Temple and Sacrifice, p. 5.

⁵As Levy seems to suggest. The Synagogue, p. 21.

⁶Chapter IV gives more latitude to critical investigation. On complexity of critical questions see Julius Kaplan, The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud (New York: Bloch Pub. Co., 1933), pp. 1-2, 43-70.

A. The Site and The Building

1. Microcosm

Rabbinic cosmology was expressed in a mythological framework. The reference point was the Jerusalem Temple, the terrestrial throne of Yahweh.⁷ The Rabbis conceived of the Temple as a microcosm, each part representing some part of the world. Yahweh's control of the whole cosmos was focused in the Temple. He had chosen to dwell in the Holy of Holies and control the affairs of his people from that throne. On Numbers 13:19 the Midrash comments: "The court encompassed the Tabernacle as the sea encompasses the world."⁸ In this case the Rabbis projected back to the nomadic Tent of Meeting a cosmic notion which was more applicable to the later Temples, particularly the Herodian model. Patai cites a second-century sage whose comment on the cosmic significance of the Tabernacle reflects a similar mode of thought:

The Tabernacle was made to correspond to the creation of the world. . . . The heaven, earth and sea are houses with bolts. The house of the Holy of Holies was made to correspond to the highest heaven. The outer Holy House was made to correspond to the earth. And the courtyard was made to correspond to the sea.⁹

⁷ See Yves M.J. Congar, The Mystery of the Temple (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1962), pp. 92-3. Cf. Phythian-Adams, The People and the Presence, p. 46. Isa. 6: 1-4 infers an ambiguous tension involved in the terrestrial Temple for the transcendent Yahweh. The Rabbis experienced the same tension.

⁸ Mid. R. Numbers 13:19.

⁹ Rabbi Pinhas ben Ya'ir, cited in Patai, Man and Temple, p. 108.

This "correspondence" of the Temple to the cosmos seems to point to the two aspects of Yahweh's ruling presence: in the universe and in the Temple. The Rabbis appear to be saying that the Temple symbolized, or represented the universe which was created by God, and sustained by him.

Even as early as Josephus this belief was in circulation in Judaism. With regard to the tripartite structure of the Tabernacle Josephus writes:

Moses parted its length into three partitions . . .; this proportion of the measures of the Tabernacle proved to be an imitation [μίμησις] of the system of the world; for that third part thereof which was within the four pillars, to which the priests were not admitted, is, as it were, a heaven peculiar to God. But the space of the twenty cubits is, as it were, sea and land, on which men live, and so this part is peculiar to the priests only.¹⁰

Josephus used "imitation" in a way similar to that of Philo. The idea of a cosmological original and a copy is evident.¹¹ The Temple was a smaller representation of the larger model, the cosmos. This idea is brought out even more distinctly in another section of The Antiquities:

If anyone do without prejudice and without judgement, look upon those things, he will find they were every one made in a way of imitation and representation of the universe. When Moses distinguished the Tabernacle into three parts, and allowed two of them to the priests, as a place accessible and common, he denoted the land and the sea, these being of general access to all; but he set apart the third division for God, because heaven is inaccessible to men.¹²

¹⁰ Jos. Ant., III, 4:4.

¹¹ See W. Michaelis, "μίμησις," TDNT, Vol. IV, pp. 664-6.

¹² Jos. Ant., III, 7:7.

It needs to be emphasized that this microcosmic symbolism which Josephus and the Rabbis imposed upon the sacred Tent was done from the vantage point of Herod's Temple with which they were more familiar. The Temple had three distinct parts; the Tabernacle proper had only two.¹³

With regard to Herod's Temple itself, the Rabbis saw it as possessing cosmic symbolism. The statement concerning the variegated hue of the marble walls is indicative of this view:

[Herod] intended at first to overlay it with gold but the Rabbis told him, 'Leave it alone for it is more beautiful as it is since it has the appearance of the waves of the sea.'¹⁴

There was a keenness in Rabbinic minds to find in the various parts of the Temple appropriate representations of areas of the world. The microcosmic symbols could have been the rabbinic way of resolving the tension of Yahweh's presence in two spheres. He was God of the universe and at the same time God of the Jews, enthroned in the Temple.

How far back in Jewish history this symbolic interpretation goes is difficult to determine. Even more difficult to discover is the extent to which the Chosen People were influenced by their ancient Near Eastern neighbours. As

¹³See Ex. 26:33-36; 27:9. The sacred Tent itself consisted of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The court was not part of the Tent. The Temple court, on the other hand, was considered part of the Temple. Cf. Brown, Temple and Sacrifice, p. 16.

¹⁴B.T. Sukkah 51b.

the last chapter indicated, Albright sees a rich cosmic symbolism in the Solomonic Temple, a symbolism which can be traced back to Sumerian religion.¹⁵ The literary evidence for such cosmic representation in the first Temple is not as clearly discernible as that which can be found in the rabbinic tradition.¹⁶ It seems reasonable to assume that the appearance of the microcosmic mythology of the Temple in rabbinic literature is, to a certain extent, drawn from a common fund of Temple mythology in existence in the ancient Near East.¹⁷

2. Centre of the Earth

The microcosmic symbolism can be further exemplified in the belief concerning the Temple as the navel of the earth. Ideas of fertility were involved in the mythic interpretation of the Temple as a centre. Eliade summarizes the principal ideas involved in such symbolism:

1. The sacred mountain--where heaven and earth meet--is situated at the centre of the world.
2. Every Temple or palace--and by extension, every sacred city or royal residence--is a sacred mountain,

¹⁵Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, pp. 154-5.

¹⁶Oesterley and Robinson see a Babylonian influence on the exilic community. The evidence, they maintain, can be found in Ezekiel and Second Isaiah. Babylonian ideals about God were adopted and applied to the post-exilic understanding of the Temple.

¹⁷Cf. Erwin R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, Vol. 4 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), pp. 136-8, and Neusner, Early Rabbinic Judaism, pp. 174-8.

thus becoming a centre.¹⁸

3. Being an axis mundi, the sacred city or temple is regarded as the meeting point of heaven, earth and hell.¹⁹

These concepts are reflected in rabbinic sources relating to the Temple of Jerusalem. The Rabbis gave the myth of the centre their own Jewish slant. The sacred mount, Zion, was designated the centre of the earth. The huge native rock on the floor of the Holy of Holies was adorned by Jewish stories with features characteristic of an Omphalos, a navel of the earth.²⁰ The Talmud gives an explicit example of this kind of belief. The pits and channels in the rock, according to tradition, extended outward from the Holy of Holies to the area of the altar.

The pits (Shithim) have existed since the six days of creation. . . . It has been taught, Rabbi Jose says, 'the cavity of the pits descended to the abyss.'²¹

Thus, the sacred rock was related to the underworld. One source says that this rock, or stone of foundation, was the first solid thing created by Yahweh; it was placed by God in

¹⁸Yet this is hardly the case with the temple at Leontopolis in Egypt. "Compared with the [Jerusalem Temple] the temple in Leontopolis in Egypt had no particular importance." Foerster, Exile, p. 152.

¹⁹Eliade, Eternal Return, p. 12.

²⁰Cf. Patai, Man and Temple, p. 85 and Congar, Mystery of the Temple, pp. 90-103.

²¹B.T., Sukkah, 49a. This notion will come under discussion again in conjunction with the ritual of the water libation.

the midst of the primeval waters, and around this first mass of matter the whole earth was arranged concentrically.²² The "secret place" of Psalm 91:1 was said to be the floor of the Holy of Holies. The explanation was given the context of a Davidic foundation story. While David was tending his flock

. . . he climbed upon the reem [wild ox] which was asleep (Cf. Ps. 92:10), and then discovering what he had mounted, he was exceedingly afraid and vowed to the Holy One, blessed be He, that if God would bring him safely thence, he would build the Temple to the height of the reem, one hundred cubits. . . . The secret place is the Holy of Holies.²³

As pointed out in the previous chapter, David built only an altar in Jerusalem; the Temple structure was the achievement of his son, Solomon. Of Solomon the Midrash testifies that "in his Wisdom he stood on the centre of the earth" and built the Temple there.²⁴ This central rock, on which the Temple is said to have stood, covered the tehom, the Deep. Tehom waters were believed to possess both chaotic qualities and life-giving powers as well.²⁵

Thus, the Temple building and its geographical location together represented the sacred centre of the earth in

²²Adolf Jellinek, Bet ha Midrasch, Vol. 5 (Leipzig: C.W. Vollrath, 1877), p. 63, cited in Patai, Man and Temple, p. 85. A similar myth was adopted in connection with Egyptian Temples. See Harold H. Nelson, "The Egyptian Temple," BA, Vol. 7, 1944, pp. 46-8.

²³Mid. R. Ps. 91:1.

²⁴Mid. R. Eccl. 2:5.

²⁵B.T., Ta'an, 25b.

rabbinic thought. It was a source of fertility and blessing.

3. Source of Fertility

The Tehom beneath the sacred rock was understood as both beneficent and destructive. Its benefits extended beyond Israel to the nations of the world. If the nations had only known, said the Rabbis, that the Sanctuary in Jerusalem offered them health and success they would have guarded it with great fortifications.²⁶ However, the tehom required a proper control, or ritual, to divert its destructive energies to good use. The flood of Noah was the result of the destructive power of tehom. The Talmud gives Rabbi Johanan's story of how David was able to bring the chaotic waters under his control.

Rabbi Johanan said. . . . When David dug the pits (that is, the perpendicular shafts reaching down under the Temple to the Deep), the Deep arose and threatened to submerge the world. 'Is there anyone,' inquired David, 'who knows whether it is permitted to inscribe the [Ineffable] Name upon a sherd, and cast it into the Deep that its waves should subside?' There was none who answered a word; Said David, 'Whoever knows the answer and does not speak may he be suffocated!' Whereupon Ahitophel . . . said to him, 'It is permitted.' [David] thereupon inscribed the [Ineffable] Name upon a sherd, cast it into the Deep and it subsided sixteen thousand cubits. When he saw that it had subsided to such a great extent, he said, 'The nearer it is to the (surface of the) earth, the better the earth can be kept watered,' and he uttered the fifteen songs of Ascents and the Deep reascended fifteen thousand cubits and remained one thousand cubits (below the surface).²⁷

²⁶Mid. R. Num. 1:3; Mid. R. Lev. 1:11.

²⁷B.T., Sukkah, 53a-b.

The Midrash has a similar account, but emphasizes that the Temple stands directly over the tehom.²⁸ These rabbinic versions of primordial waters have their counterparts in the mythology of ancient Babylonian culture. The positive and negative qualities of the rabbinic tehom have a parallel in the Babylonian Ti'amat and apsu.²⁹ Burrows sees a definite similarity between powers of fertility in the apsu and those of the tehom.³⁰ Similar conceptions existed in Indo-European cultures, as for example among the Romans in their ritual of the mundus. The mundus, a deep trench dug around the site of a proposed city, constituted the place where the subterranean and the terrestrial worlds met.³¹

The fertility of water was a prominent concept in the ancient Near Eastern mind. One can understand how such water mythology developed in lands where so much depended on the rainy season. For the Jews, Yahweh sent rains from heaven to bring fruitfulness to the land, and Yahweh's throne was in the Holy of Holies which stood over the tehom waters.³²

²⁸Mid. R., Sh'mu'el, 24.

²⁹See Eliade, Eternal Return, p. 15.

³⁰Eric Burrows, "Some Cosmological Patterns in Babylonian Religion," S.H. Hooke, ed., The Labyrinth (London: SPCK, 1935), p. 55.

³¹Eliade, Eternal Return, p. 16.

³²See Ps. 29; Ps. 93. Cf. W. Robertson Smith, The Semites, p. 190, and Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, pp. 30-1.

The rabbinic belief that the site of the Temple was the centre of fertility was expanded further. The Rabbis conceived of water issuing from the Temple to fertilize the land and to bring health to the world. The subterranean irrigation system of all lands was connected intricately to the tehom waters beneath the native rock of the Temple. Each country had a particular channel connected to the central supply and could therefore grow fruit peculiar to its own supply of water. Solomon's wisdom, the Rabbis said, permitted him to know the network of underground aqueducts. Consequently, he was able to grow samples of fruit from the whole earth.³³ There were other variations of the mythic interpretation of the underground water. In the following two examples the vital water is imagined as flowing out from the Temple underneath the threshold of the door.

Why was the watergate so called, Because through it the waters trickle forth and hereafter they will issue out from underneath the threshold of the house to fertilize the land so that the crops will grow.³⁴

The Watergate of the Herodian Temple probably received its name on account of the Water-drawing festival on the Feast of Tabernacles. The second example pictures the tehom water beneath the rock as a sacred spring with powers of life and healing in it.

³³B.T. Yoma, 21b; 39b; Mid. R. Canticles 3:9. See also Jos. Ant., VIII, 5:2.

³⁴M. Middoth, 2:6. Cf. Smith, The Semites, p. 107.

Rabbi Phinehas in the name of Rabbi Huma of Sepphoris said: The spring that issues from the Holy of Holies in its beginnings resembles the antennae of locusts; [hence] go forth the waters which bubble forth from under the threshold of the sanctuary. From there onwards it becomes bigger, rising higher and higher, until it reaches the entrance of the house of David. As soon as it reaches the house of David it becomes even as a swiftly running brook in which men and women afflicted may bathe and be healed. As it is said, 'In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for purification and sprinkling.'³⁵

The water-fertility motif includes also the so-called marriage of the upper and lower waters. As one might expect, the underground water was seen as the female, and the rain, or upper water, as the male. This myth, which was fairly widespread in the traditions of the ancient Near East,³⁶ was adopted among the Rabbis with remarkable agreement. The following statements from both Midrash and Talmud will illustrate their interpretation:

Rabbi Levi said: The upper waters are male while the lower are female and they say to one another, 'Receive us; you have been created by the Holy One, blessed be he': Immediately they receive them. Thus it is written, 'Let the sky pour down righteousness; let the earth open (Isa. 45:8) like a female who receives the male; that they may bring forth salvation in that they are fruitful and multiply.'³⁷

The day when rain falls is as great as the day on which heaven and earth were created (Isa. 45:8).³⁸

³⁵B.T. Yoma, 77b, 78a. Cf. Ez. 47:1-12.

³⁶See S.H. Hooke, Middle Eastern Mythology (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 81-2.

³⁷Mid. R. Gen. 13:13.

³⁸B.T. Ta'anith 7b.

Rain is the husband of the soil. Rabbi Abbahu said: When do we [begin to] recite the benediction over rain? When the bridegroom goes forth to meet the bride.³⁹

In these examples it is instructive to observe the way in which the Rabbis grounded their views in their Scriptures and then proceeded to expand the biblical idea freely. Isaiah 45 speaks of the greatness of Yahweh in delivering his people by the hand of Cyrus. But the Rabbis felt at liberty to interpret the imagery of verse 8 in terms of the procreative marriage of male and female waters. The verse is quoted in full here to illustrate the extent to which the Rabbis would expand a biblical statement.

Shower, O heavens from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness;
let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth,
and let it cause righteousness to spring up also;
I the Lord have created it.⁴⁰

Rabbinic mythology of fertility applied to the Temple in yet another manner. The Talmud refers to golden fruit trees which Solomon planted in the area of the Temple. Notice in this Talmudic exposition the unexplained shift of emphasis from the forest of Lebanon to the golden fruit trees:

Rabbi Isaac ben Zakkai said: Why is its name called Lebanon? Because it makes white the sins of Israel. Rabbi Zutra ben Tobiah said: Why is it called 'Forest,' as it is written, the house of the forest of Lebanon? (I Kings 10:21). To tell you that just as the forest

³⁹ Ibid., 6b. Cf. Gaster's treatment of the fertility myth in the ancient Near East, especially the Baal myth of Canaanite religion. Thespis (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1961), pp. 196-244.

⁴⁰ Isa. 45:8.

produces sprouts, so does the Temple. For Rabbi Hosea said: when Solomon built the Sanctuary, he planted therein all sorts of precious golden trees, which brought forth fruit in their season.⁴¹

Fruitfulness of the Solomonic Temple was further seen from rabbinic perspective as a nuptial room, i.e., the abode of Yahweh was compared to a marriage bed. The erotic imagery of the canonical Song of Solomon was increased greatly by the Rabbis and applied to the Temple, as the following quotation illustrates.

Behold it is a litter (bed) alludes to the Temple; as the bed serves primarily for the purpose of enabling one to be fruitful and multiply, so all that was in the Temple used to be fruitful and multiply; as it says, 'And the staves grew long' (I Kings 8:8).⁴²

The sexual imagery in this comment is self-evident. Phallic associations could be deduced from the idea that the staves which transported the Ark grew long. However, the Talmudic view is that the two staves pressed against the curtain separating the two holy rooms, and the protrusions were "as the two breasts of a woman."⁴³ The Rabbis gave symbolic meaning to all of these sexual elements in Temple mythology. They conceived of Yahweh as Israel's husband, and provider of material blessings such as bountiful harvests.⁴⁴ Their

⁴¹B.T. Yoma, 39b.

⁴²Mid. R. Canticles, 3:7. Cf. Mid. R. Num. 11:3.

⁴³B.T. Yoma, 54a. Cf. B.T. Menahoth 98a-b.

⁴⁴See Hooke, Myth and Ritual (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 85.

forebears had experienced his presence while the Temple was still standing, and had pledged their loyalty to his covenant. The Rabbis' belief in the Temple of Yahweh as a fertility centre was strong. It expressed itself also in terms of what might be called a source of light energy.

4. The Source of Light

Fertility was also symbolized in terms of light⁴⁵ which had its origin in the Jerusalem Temple. The Midrash describes the way in which the Holy One created light. The explanation assumes the prior existence of the Temple which Yahweh occupied in majesty. This majesty, or glory, of the Holy One became the life-sustaining light of the world.

As I have heard that you are a master of haggadah, tell me whence the light was created! He replied: The Holy One, blessed be he, wrapped himself therein as in a robe and irradiated with the lustre of his majesty the whole world from one end to the other. . . . Rabbi Berekiah said in Rabbi Isaac's name: The light was created from the place in the Temple, as it is said, 'and behold the glory of God of Israel came from the east; and his voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth did shine with his glory' (Ex. 43:2). Now his glory is naught else but the Temple, as you read, 'Thou throne of glory, on high from the beginning, Thou place of our sanctuary' (Jer. 17:12).⁴⁶

There can be little doubt that the light to which the Rabbis referred was sunlight. The glory of God came from the east,

⁴⁵Patai affirms that "light in the biblical as well as rabbinic conception is the symbol of life and health, of joy and success." Man and Temple, p. 84.

⁴⁶Mid. R. Gen. 3:4.

the point of the rising sun. They may have contemplated "light" in the metaphoric sense of knowledge, reason or wisdom, but the text itself indicates that the Rabbis had in mind the light necessary for everyday life. Either way, the source was the Temple. Even the site of the Temple was considered sacred because it was the geographical location of the origin of light. The place of Abraham's altar on Mount Moriah was sacred, says the Midrash tradition, because that was "the place whence light (orah) goes forth to the world."⁴⁷

Another comment from the Midrash on Leviticus affirms that the light originated in the Holy of Holies, the chamber of Yahweh's throne. It radiated from there to the rest of the Temple building and thence through the windows to the rest of the world outside.⁴⁸

There were windows in the Temple, and from these light used to emanate for the world; as it says, 'and for the house he made windows broad and narrow (I Kings 6:4). They were transparent and opaque; narrowing towards the inside and broadening towards the outside so as to let the light out to the world.'⁴⁹

In this reference, "light" is clearly understood in the literal sense of daylight. The Temple was the source of this light energy so essential to the health and prosperity

⁴⁷Mid. R. Gen. 55:7. Cf. G. Vermes, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), pp. 23-6.

⁴⁸Note the reversed function of windows. Normally they allow light to shine in; in this case light shines out.

⁴⁹Mid. R. Lev. 31:7.

of life.

5. Light and Water Ritual of the Temple

Symbols of both light and water were clearly in focus during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth). Throughout the week-long festival the priests and people engaged in "the Rejoicing at the place of Water-Drawing."⁵⁰ The joy of the festivity connected with the ritual water-libation was said to be the greatest of all the feasts of Judaism. "He that never has seen the joy of the Beth La-She'ubah," says the Mishnah, "has never in his life seen Joy."⁵¹ Snaith argues that the water-drawing and lamp-lighting rituals were celebrated in conjunction with the harvest moon as a form of mishnaic denial of sun-worship rituals practiced by other

⁵⁰B.T. Sukkah, 53a; M. Sukkah, 4:8. The biblical basis for the "rejoicing" festival is the Priestly Code of Lev. 23. The ritual, set in the context of the Feast of Booths, is not specifically mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. To what extent it was practiced in the post-exilic Temples may be deduced from the Talmud and Mishnah. However, these sources tend to over-state the role of the festivals in the history of the Temple. Josephus makes only brief mention of the "rejoicing" festival in Antiquities, XIII, 13.

⁵¹M. Sukkah, 5:1. There is good evidence to support the thesis that this was the most popular feast of the Jews. Note John 7:2 where the writer refers to it as "the feast of the Jews" (ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων). See Norman H. Snaith, The Jewish New Year Festival: Its Origin and Development (London: SPEK, 1947), pp. 25-26, and George W. MacRae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," CBQ, Vol. 22, 1959, pp. 269-76. Cf. Kraus, Worship In Israel, pp. 67-8 where he says that the autumn festival, Tabernacles, was "the main festival of the year."

religions.⁵² However, he does find traces of rituals from neighbouring cultures in the water-drawing festival of the Jews.⁵³ The drawing and pouring of the water together with the lighting of the lamps were rituals associated with the belief that agricultural fertility was dependent upon the Temple and its cult.

The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the ingathering of the harvest at the beginning of the Jewish New Year, a time which marked also the beginning of the rainy season in Palestine.⁵⁴ At the end of the first day of the feast, as darkness approached, the lamplighting ritual began.

They went down to the court of the women. . . . There were golden candlesticks there with four golden bowls on the top of them and four ladders to each candlestick, and four youths of the priestly stock and in their hands jars of oil holding a hundred and twenty logs which they poured into all the bowls.⁵⁵

The Talmud gives the height of each lamp as fifty cubits,⁵⁶ hence the need for ladders! When the lamps were aflame, "there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the Beth ha-She'ubah."⁵⁷ The light was such

⁵² Snaith, New Year Festival, pp. 88-94. Cf. M. 'Sukkah, 5:4.

⁵³ Snaith, *ibid.*, pp. 81-88. On fertility rituals of the ancient world see Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough, Vol. I (New York: McMillan Co., 1955), pp. 247-51.

⁵⁴ MacRae, "Feast of Tabernacles," pp. 256-9.

⁵⁵ M. Sukkah, 5:2.

⁵⁶ B.T. Sukkah, 52b.

⁵⁷ M. Sukkah, 5:3.

that "a woman could sift wheat by the illumination of the place of the Water-Drawing."⁵⁸

It is recorded that "pious men" sang and danced around the candlesticks with burning torches in their hands.⁵⁹ Some sages entertained the audience by throwing the torches in the air and catching them. Others would recite riddles. Levites mounted the fifteen steps leading from the lower Woman's court to the upper court of the Israelites, and sang there the fifteen Songs of Ascents.⁶⁰ The illumination and accompanying merriment continued throughout the whole night. As the dawn approached, two priests in position at the upper gate watched for the first glimmer of daylight and listened for the first cock-crowing. As soon as they heard the cock crow they blew their trumpets and the illumination festivities ceased.⁶¹

The illumination ritual as it appears in the Mishnah and Talmud seems to have represented a re-enactment of the first day of creation when God created light. In the first place, the lamp-lighting ceremony was performed during the New Year festival, Sukkoth, when the people anticipated the

⁵⁸B.T. Sukkah, 53a.

⁵⁹M. Sukkah, 5-4.

⁶⁰B.T. Sukkah, 53a; M. Sukkah, 5:4. The Mishnah (Sukkah 4:4 and Middoth 2:5) states that the fifteen steps corresponded to the fifteen Songs of Ascents in the Psalter (Ps. 120-34).

⁶¹M. Sukkah, 5:4.

beginning of new life.⁶² Cosmic light would have been represented by the four bowls, four ladders and four priests, the number four symbolizing the four cardinal points of the earth. The dance of the torch-bearing priests could have been a sympathetic attempt to induce lightning which accompanies rain.⁶³ This view is substantiated by the fact that the whole illumination festival was closely connected with the water-libation. In short, the ritual of lamp-lighting in rabbinic literature speaks of re-creation and fertility. To what extent the fertility myth of the Temple, discussed earlier, developed from this ritual, or the ritual from the myth, is hard to ascertain. It can be affirmed with a reasonable degree of confidence that the myth of the Temple as the source of cosmic light was intimately bound up with the illumination ritual.⁶⁴

After the trumpet-blast the priests marched through the Women's court to the eastern gate where they stopped, turned towards the entrance of the Temple and said:

Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the

⁶²Cf. Frazer, The Golden Bough, Vol. I, pp. 247-58; Hooke, Myth and Ritual, p. 8; A.M. Hocart, Kings and Councilors (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 220. These authors draw attention to an illumination festival in other ancient Near Eastern cultures in which the ritual was connected in some way with rain-making.

⁶³See Patai, Man and Temple, p. 34.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 85. Cf. MacRae, "Feast of Tabernacles," p. 276.

east; but as for us, our eyes are turned toward the Lord.⁶⁵

Here is a distinct denial of sun-worship and an indication that life and prosperity have their source in the Holy One of the Temple. Immediately following their declaration of loyalty to the Lord, the priests led a procession down to the well of Siloam. There they filled a golden pitcher full of the water from the well and proceeded back to the Temple carrying the water. In the inner court, a priest ascended the ramp of the altar and poured the water into a bowl on the west side of the altar. Into another bowl on the east side he poured wine. The people participated by saying: "Lift up thine hand."⁶⁶ Each bowl had a spout in the bottom; corks stopped the spouts while the priest filled the bowls. When he had finished the ritual pouring, he removed both corks simultaneously so that both water and wine would run underneath the altar in channels cut in the rock. The collecting pits (Shithim) to which the water and wine flowed were believed to be connected to the Deep.⁶⁷

The water-libation of the Feast of Booths was the

⁶⁵M. Sukkah, 5:4. The reference is to Ez. 8:16. Cf. Snaith, New Year Festival, p. 90.

⁶⁶M. Sukkah, 4:9. The Talmud explains that the exhortation became a custom after one priest spilled the water on his feet. The people thereupon pelted him with their "ethrogs", or citrons.

⁶⁷B.T. Sukkah, 49a.

Jewish way of bringing down the fertile rain and raising the tehom to meet it. It was mentioned earlier that the Rabbis believed in a correspondence between the upper male waters and the lower female waters. The water-pouring ritual was simply an imitation of the rainfall which supposedly met the Deep and resulted in fertility of the land. The Talmud explains it thus:

Not a handbreadth of rain coming down from above but that the deep with three handbreadths comes up from below to meet it. . . . When on the Feast of Tabernacles the water libations are carried out, Deep says unto Deep, 'Let thy waters spring forth', I hear the voice of two friends.⁶⁸

This passage leaves no doubt concerning the relation between the myth and ritual of water fertility in the Jerusalem Temple. As for the two friends, water and wine, suffice it to say that the sacrificial use of wine often accompanied the rain-making ritual in countries where the grape was grown.⁶⁹

B. The Furnishings

Within the Temple complex certain items of furniture were used in the performance of Temple service. The Rabbis looked upon the furnishings as having symbolic significance to correspond with their mythological interpretation of the site and the building.

A second-century Rabbi summarized the symbolism of

⁶⁸ B.T. Ta'anith, 25b.

⁶⁹ Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 220. Cf. Patai, Man and Temple, p. 37.

the paraphernalia as follows:

The eleven hangings of the Tabernacle were made to correspond to the highest heaven. The table was made to correspond to the earth. The two shewbreads were arranged to correspond to the fruit of the earth; 'In two rows, six in a row', [were set the twelve cakes] to correspond to the months of summer and winter. The laver was made to correspond to the sea and the candlestick was made to correspond to the lights [of heaven].⁷⁰

The cosmic symbolism attached to the site and the building is here associated with the articles of furniture. That the Jews consciously acknowledged this mythic implication while the Temple was still standing cannot be stated with certainty. As early as Josephus and Philo a symbolism was acknowledged. When it is compared with that of the second-century sage the similarities are counterbalanced by several differences.

Josephus' understanding of the furnishings of the Temple may not have been shared completely by the contemporary Rabbis. Nevertheless, his summary probably reflects the general opinion among the Jewish teachers of the first century of this era. The fact is that such a complete list of symbols is not given in the rabbinic materials. His description of the furnishings begins with the veil in front of the entrance into the Holy of Holies.

Before these doors there was a veil of equal largeness with the doors. It was a Babylonian curtain, embroidered with blue, and fine linen, and scarlet, and purple. . . . Nor was this mixture of colours without mystical inter-

⁷⁰Jellinek, Bet Ha Midrasch, Vol. III, p. 34 cited in Patai, Man and Temple, p. 108.

pretation, but was a kind of image of the universe; for by the scarlet there seemed to be enigmatically signified fire, by the fine flax the earth, by the blue the air, and by the purple the sea. . . . Now the seven lamps signified the seven planets; for so many there were springing out of the candlestick. Now the twelve leaves that were upon the table signified the circle of the Zodiac and the year; but the altar of incense, by its thirteen kinds of sweet-smelling spices with which the sea replenished it, signified that God is the possessor of all things that are both in the uninhabitable and habitable parts of the earth.⁷¹

The symbolic correspondence between the altar of incense and God's possession of all things in the earth is somewhat hard to follow. Perhaps Josephus meant, as Philo did, thankfulness to God for the blessings of the products of the earth. Philo's symbolic meanings (τὰ σύμβολα) resemble those of Josephus; the difference is merely in his application. For example, Philo speaks of

. . . the symbols of heaven and earth . . . , heaven being signified by the candlestick, earth and its parts, from which rise the vapours, by what is appropriately called the vapour-keeper, or altar of incense.⁷²

His Hellenistic influence can be detected in his interpretation of the seven lamps which represent heaven. They were "symbols of what men of science call planets."⁷³ Concerning the altar of incense he referred to it as a symbol

⁷¹Jos. Wars, V, 5:4-5. Cf. Ant., III, 7:7 where he explains further how the four colours signify the four elements (earth, air, fire and water) and the seven branches of the candelabra, the seventy divisions of the planets in their seven courses.

⁷²Philo, Life of Moses, II, XXII, 105.

⁷³Ibid., II, XXI, 103.

of thankfulness for earth and water.⁷⁴

The comparison of interpretation between Philo and Josephus may be illustrated in chart form thus:

<u>Josephus</u>	<u>Philo</u>
Candlestick = 70 divisions of the planets in their 7 courses.	Candlestick = the heaven of the planets.
Altar of incense = God's possession of all parts of earth.	Altar of incense = thankfulness for benefits of earth and water.

The difference can be noted, but the striking similarity of symbolic meanings expressed by both men points to a widespread acknowledgement of the symbolism in the first and second centuries.

Some rabbinic sources, apparently influenced by Hellenism, speak of the body and soul as a microcosm related to the Temple. For example, the candelabra symbolised the great light which was created on the first day of the world and is preserved in the body; i.e., the spirit in man is the light. Evidence to this effect is advanced in the following:

In the world there are seven stars which shed light and the world is in need of them ever since the seven days of creation, and in the body there are seven servants which are: the eyes, the ears, the nostrils and the mouth.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ibid., II, XXI, 101.

⁷⁵ Midrash Rabbi Sehma 'ya Hashoshani, Monatschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums, p. 229 cited in Patai, Man and Temple, p. 115.

Another rabbinic comment compares the altar of incense to the soul in man's body. "The soul is within the body corresponding to the altar of incense which is within the Temple."⁷⁶ It is difficult to discover how far back this somatic symbolism of the Temple goes, or to what extent the Rabbis drew on earlier references.⁷⁷ The Corinthian letters of the New Testament contain a symbolic analogy between the Temple and the body of the Christian believer. The Christian's body is the abode of Yahweh, even as the Jewish Temple was. One of the most outspoken affirmations of this kind appears in the first letter to Corinthians. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you."⁷⁸ One could speculate that the first century Christians who were obliged to worship without the Temple developed substitutes such as the one above, i.e., the body is a temple. Likewise the Jews, when their Temple was in ruins, evolved a microcosmic, somatic substitute which acted as an equivalent of the Temple cult.⁷⁹ Indeed such speculation is

⁷⁶Midrash Zan huma, Pequed, Sec. 3, *ibid*.

⁷⁷See Kaplan, Redaction, pp. 148-9.

⁷⁸I Cor. 6:19. Cf. I Cor. 3:16-17. The RSV renders ναός as "temple"; in the early Greek period the word denoted the inner shrine set apart for the god. The N.T. uses ναός in two senses: the sanctuary proper and the whole Temple precincts. See O. Michel, "ναός". TDNT, Vol. 4, p. 882.

⁷⁹George F. Moore, Judaism in The First Centuries of the Christian Era, Vol. I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 505. Cf. Brown, Temple and Sacrifice, p. 26.

not unwarranted when some of the rabbinic ideas of substitution are considered.

Rabbi Johanan, to cite a case in point, believed that after the altar for the atonement of sins was destroyed, a man's own table became an altar. He could share his food with guests and with the poor and thereby atone for his sins.⁸⁰ Moreover, the importance of the Temple furniture in rabbinic thinking can hardly be over-stated. If the items of furniture could not exist in actuality, as in the case of the altar, substitutes had to be found. So great was the belief in the importance of Temple service that some exponents of Judaism considered the service necessary for the sustaining of the cosmos.⁸¹

The furniture, probably because of its great importance in the worship of Judaism, embodied a cosmic symbolism of elaborate proportions. A prime example of this interpretation can be found in statements related to the laver used for priestly ablutions. The following example from the Midrash is set in the context of the Solomonic Temple. The discussion concerns the Bronze Sea of that Temple:

The sea encompasses the world and resembles a dish. Solomon added a sea for the service of the Temple. . . . And as a symbol of the 30 cubits that made up the circumference of the sea which Solomon constructed, 30 shekels

⁸⁰B.T. Berakoth, 55a.

⁸¹M. Aboth, 1:2. "By three things is the world sustained: By the Law, by the Temple-service, and by deeds of loving-kindness."

were added to the weight of the dish so as to correspond to Solomon's seas. Thus the weight of the dish was a hundred and thirty shekels corresponding to the seas (100) and Solomon's seas. . . . Accordingly they [the Princes] brought a dish to symbolize the sea and a basin to symbolize the land. Both of them were full, since the nations brought gifts to Solomon and will in time to come bring gifts to the King Messiah.⁸²

Messianism, an important subject of the rabbinic period, quite often entered the discussion of another subject, especially if it related to the Temple. Another expression of the symbolism was cast in a more existential mold:

'Ten cubits from one brim to the other'; these are the ten spheres of the void upon which the world stands . . . ; round about all the firmament is round, 'and his height was five cubits' corresponding to the walking distance of five hundred years which separates the earth from the firmament, 'a line of 30 cubits' corresponding to the ten commandments and the ten pronouncements . . . and the ten spheres of the void. . . .' 'It stood upon twelve oxen', these are twelve constellations by which the world is governed. . . . And the sea is above them [the oxen] because the world is set upon the seas.⁸³

This rabbinic source recognizes the twelve bulls as symbols of the seas. Such cosmic symbolism had its heritage in Baal religion and perhaps even further back to the Mesopotamian mythology of apsu. Apsu was the name which designated the basin of holy water set up in the Babylonian Temple and also the sub-terranean fresh-water ocean from which all life and fertility were derived.⁸⁴ The bull was a popular symbol of

⁸²Mid. R. Num. 13:14.

⁸³Midrash Tadshe, Adolf Jellenik, ed., Beth Hanudrish, cited in Patai, Man and Temple, pp. 110-11.

⁸⁴See Albright, Religion of Israel, pp. 148-9.

fecundity in the ancient Near East. This animal appears in Canaanite mythology in connection with the rain-making Baal and the life-giving waters of the underworld.⁸⁵ The rabbinic mythology of the Temple and its furnishings exhibits a similarity with these other myths.

The furnishings of the Temple and the rituals conducted in association with them were believed to be necessary for the life and fertility of the world; the idea of re-creation, new life, was inherent in the service of the Temple, especially in the various sacrifices offered.⁸⁶ Certainly the water libation, discussed earlier, was a fertility ritual associated with the tehom of the Temple. The present discussion of the giant laver of the Temple indicates also the life-force associated with the Temple. Both water mythology associated with fertility and the microcosmic symbolism together form a large part of the mythical Temple of the Rabbis. Robertson Smith proposed a general principle which underlies the water myths and rituals, namely, that the sacred waters are charged with divine life and energy.⁸⁷

C. Temple Service

Symbolic meanings were intrinsically bound up with

⁸⁵ See Hooke, Middle Eastern Mythology, pp. 81-2.

⁸⁶ Cf. B.W. Anderson, Creation Versus Chaos (New York: Association Press, 1967), pp. 109, 113.

⁸⁷ Smith, The Semites, p. 173.

the priestly service of the Temple. It was noted previously that one of the world-sustaining principles was Temple service.⁸⁸ The Rabbis taught that the blessing of Yahweh was not experienced to the same degree since the Temple service had ended. Other forms of service,⁸⁹ while they availed much, were not as efficacious as Temple service. "When the Temple service is not maintained," said one Rabbi, "the world is not a blessing to its inhabitants and the rains do not come down in season."⁹⁰ The poor harvests which the Jews experienced on a number of occasions during the two centuries following A.D. 70 were believed to be the direct result of the destruction of the Temple and the cessation of the cult. Set in the context of Haggai 1 and 2, Simon the Righteous expressed this sentiment thus:

If you busy yourselves with the service of the Temple, I shall bless you as in the beginning; . . . Thus thou dost learn that there is no service more beloved of the Holy One, blessed be He, than the Temple service.⁹¹

The seed of this thinking lay in the Hebrew Scriptures. Fruitfulness and blessing were associated with the first Temple in the prayer of dedication:

When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against thee, if they pray toward this place [the Temple] then hear thou from heaven . . . and grant

⁸⁸M. Aboth, 1:2. Cf. Sirach, Chapter 50.

⁸⁹E.g., almsgiving, prayer, deeds of mercy.

⁹⁰Goldin, The Fathers, p. 33.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 34.

rain upon the land.⁹²

The same was true of the post-exilic Temple, only to a greater degree. Haggai insisted that the reinstatement of Temple service would renew the land to its former fertility. The Lord of hosts withheld the rains because his house, the Temple, lay in ruins.⁹³ It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Rabbis writing after the cessation of service in the Herodian Temple with the same kind of fertility motif in mind. Rabbi Joshua, a survivor of the onslaught of A.D. 70, said that

Since the day the Temple was destroyed there has been no day without its curse; and the dew has not fallen in blessing and the fruits have lost their savour.⁹⁴

In other words, the end of Temple service meant the end of the rich blessing from the "good storehouse"⁹⁵ in the heavens. The autumnal rains were not sufficient to produce good crops.

To summarize the points thus far on the Mythical Temple of the Rabbis, it may be said that they viewed the Temple of Jerusalem as the strategic centre of the cosmos. This earthly dwelling place of Yahweh was situated over the Deep and thus ensured fertility as long as the priestly functions were performed. It must be understood, however,

⁹²I Kings 8:35.

⁹³Hag. 1:7-9.

⁹⁴M. Sotah, 9:12.

⁹⁵B.T., Baba Bathra, 25b.

that, for the Rabbis, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple did not leave Yahweh without a house. The indestructible Sanctuary was still in the celestial region; the earthly Temple had a celestial archetype.

D. The Celestial Archetype

Yahweh's willingness to meet his people in a man-made Temple was a sign or seal of his covenant relationship with Israel.⁹⁶ But he was not confined exclusively to the earthly Sanctuary. It remained for rabbinic Judaism to develop a myth of a celestial archetype of the Temple, a myth already present in religious literature of the ancient Near East.

1. Background

The celestial archetype was not unique to the Jews, as Eliade demonstrates.⁹⁷ He calls attention to Gudea's inscription concerning the Temple at Lagash as the earliest reference to an archetype of a sanctuary. He notes also that all Babylonian cities had their archetypes in the constellations. These celestial cities were situated in an ideal region of eternity. Plato's philosophic system also postulated the concept of an ideal archetype.

As one might expect, the celestial archetype of the Temple of the Jews appeared first in the Hebrew Bible. The

⁹⁶Osterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, pp. 139-40.

⁹⁷Eliade, Eternal Return, pp. 7-9.

rabbinic myth was developed from biblical statements.⁹⁸ Some apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books also exhibit the presence of the celestial archetype. One of the Sibylline Oracles, for example, pictures the New Jerusalem as a celestial city at the centre of which stands a "great temple . . . exceeding fair," shining forth "the glory of the invisible God."⁹⁹ In Wisdom also, the writer addressing God says: the Temple in Jerusalem is "a copy of the holy Tabernacle which thou preparedst aforehand from the beginning."¹⁰⁰ II Baruch, written shortly after A.D. 70, has an even more developed idea of the heavenly Jerusalem:

Dost thou think that this is that city which I said: 'On the palms of my hands have I graven thee? This building now built in your midst is not that which is revealed with me, that which was prepared beforehand here from the time when I took counsel to make Paradise . . . and showed it to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed to him the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. And now behold it is preserved with me, as also paradise.¹⁰¹

There is little doubt, therefore, that the theme of the celestial archetype existed in various quarters before and after the destruction of the Herodian Temple. The letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament certainly acknowledges the

⁹⁸These will be discussed in connection with the rabbinic interpretations in the section following. Isa. 6:1-4 seems to refer to a Temple other than the physical one on Mount Zion, although the prophet's statement is somewhat ambiguous. The Rabbis seemed to be silent on an archetypal interpretation of this passage.

⁹⁹Sibylline Oracles, Book V, 414-32.

¹⁰⁰Wisdom, 9:8.

¹⁰¹II Baruch, 4:2-7.

heavenly prototype of the Jerusalem Temple.¹⁰² It remains now to examine some of the rabbinic accounts of the heavenly prototype.

2. Yahweh's Relation to Both Temples

It would appear that Yahweh exercised a unique role in relating to both Temples in both cities, the heavenly and the earthly. Rabbi Johanan worked on two texts from the Scriptures (Hos. 11:9 and Ps. 122:3) to arrive at the conclusion that Yahweh is as much related to the earthly Temple as he is to the heavenly one. He interpreted "the city" of Hosea 11:9 as the heavenly Jerusalem, and expanded the text to indicate that Yahweh exercised the same care for one as the other; he will not enter the heavenly unless he can enter the earthly:

The Holy One, blessed be he, said: 'I will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem until I can enter the earthly Jerusalem.' Is there then a heavenly Jerusalem? Yes; for it is written, 'Jerusalem, thou art builded as a city that is compact together.'¹⁰³

After the destruction at the hands of Rome, the only Jerusalem which could be considered absolutely established was the one in the realm of eternity. The text from Hosea declared Yahweh's covenant loyalty for Israel; the Rabbis saw a quality of steadfastness demonstrated in his willingness to dwell in his earthly Temple in the Holy City. The

¹⁰²Heb. 9.

¹⁰³B.T. Ta'anith, 5a.

destruction of the earthly sanctuary was attributed to a breach of covenant on the part of the Jews, more particularly the priesthood. When the Temple went up in flames,

The priests who were in the Temple took their keys in their hands and threw them up to the sky, saying to the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Master of the Universe, here are Thy keys which Thou didst hand over to us, for we have not been trustworthy custodians to do the King's work and to eat at the King's table.'¹⁰⁴

But when the earthly Temple was destroyed the celestial one remained intact. Other sources support the idea that Yahweh lived in the heavenly precincts prior to his presence in the earthly Temple.

Using the account of Exodus 25 as a base, some Rabbis implied, at least, that a tension existed between the abode of Yahweh in the heavenly Temple, and his abode in the earthly. The following comment from the Midrash illustrates this tension:

God said to Moses: 'And see that thou make them after their pattern!' Moses expostulated: 'Lord of the Universe! Am I a god that I should be able to make one exactly like it?' The divine reply was: 'Make after their pattern in blue, purple and scarlet, as thou hast seen above, copy the pattern below; for it says, 'Of Acacia wood, standing up', that is, Just as it appears in the heavenly precincts. If thou wilt make below a replica of that which is above, I will desert my heavenly assembly and will cause my Shechinah to dwell among you below.'¹⁰⁵

Several dynamics can be identified in this myth. The man of earth, Moses, was to build a temple according to a

¹⁰⁴Goldin, The Fathers, p. 37.

¹⁰⁵Mid. R. Ex. 35:6. Cf. Anderson, Creation, p. 117.

heavenly plan. More than that, the Lord of the Universe was to occupy the earthly sanctuary after having lived in the heavenly courts. But in the end the Lord of the Universe causes only his "Shechinah" to dwell in the Temple. The exposition seems to say that the total Yahweh was not confined to the earthly Sanctuary. His permanent, or ideal, home continued to exist in the celestial sphere as it always had. The Rabbis had to exercise a considerable amount of imaginative thought to rationalize the destruction of the Temple of Yahweh on Earth. They recognized that it was a concrete symbol of their covenant relationship with the Lord of the Universe. Its destruction was a sign that in their humanness they had violated the covenant agreement.

3. The Relation of Both Temples to Each Other

Yahweh's relation to the earthly and heavenly Temples included what may be called a phenomenological correspondence between the two sanctuaries. This correspondence can be seen in the rabbinic discussion of Abraham's sacrifice on Mount Moriah. The Midrash states that the place on which Abraham built the altar corresponded to the site of the celestial Sanctuary.¹⁰⁶ That is, they were exactly opposite each other. In the same vein, the comment on the story of Jacob's ladder which reached into heaven pictures the ladder as having

¹⁰⁶Mid. R. Gen. 55:7.

rested on the Temple site.¹⁰⁷ Canticles 3:10 is said to refer to "the celestial Holy of Holies which is exactly opposite (mekuwan) the lower Holy of Holies."¹⁰⁸

The relation between the two Temples was also set in terms of distance. The earth was believed to be separated from heaven by 500 years walking distance, except at the site of the Jerusalem Temple. There the distance was reduced to a mere eighteen miles.¹⁰⁹ The Rabbis arrived at this conclusion by using a numerological method of exegesis on the text of Genesis 28. Their exposition is as follows:

The celestial Temple is higher than the terrestrial one only by 18 miles. What is the proof? 'Wezeh (and this is) the gate of heaven,' 18 miles being the numerical value of Wezeh.¹¹⁰

The correspondence extended even to the priestly service. Michael served as high-priest at the heavenly altar and offered sacrifices to atone for the sins of Israel.¹¹¹ In a sense, the Rabbis solved the problem of a people without a temple by setting up the myth of the celestial Temple. Substitutes for Temple service were found, to be sure, but the belief that a heavenly service still continued would have

¹⁰⁷Mid. R. Gen. 69:7.

¹⁰⁸Mid. R. Cant. 3:10.

¹⁰⁹Mid. R. Gen. 69:7. Cf. Patai, Man and Temple, pp. 110, 131.

¹¹⁰Mid. R. *ibid.* By "numerical value" is meant the total of the alphabetical numbers of each letter of Wezeh.

¹¹¹B.T. Hagigah, 12b.

provided an element of solace for the grieving souls of the Jews. The offerings, of course, had changed since the destruction of the earthly Sanctuary. Before destruction, the earthly high-priest offered oxen, sheep and goats, but after destruction the sacrifices of praise, loving kindness, prayers, etc., replaced the old sacrifices. But the sins were still forgiven, especially since the new sacrifices were offered at the heavenly altar. Consider the account from a Midrash at Patai's disposal:

In the days when the Temple existed the High Priest sacrificed and burned incense in the lower Temple, and the archangel Michael the high priest stood opposite him and sacrificed and burned incense in the upper Temple. And when the [lower] Temple was destroyed the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Michael. Michael! Since I have destroyed my House and burned my sanctuary and laid waste my Temple and thrown down my altar, do not [continue to] offer sacrifices [which have the] form of oxen or the form of sheep or the form of goats. He [Michael] said unto him: Lord of the world Your children, what will happen to them? (i.e., how will the sins of Israel be expiated failing sacrifices?) The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Offer up before me their merits and prayers and the souls of the righteous men that are hidden under the seat of Glory and [the souls] of the school children¹¹² and with them I shall expiate the sins of Israel, for as long as this rejoicing¹¹³ existed below, there was rejoicing above; now that the one below is in mourning, this of above is in mourning too.¹¹⁴

But the Jews waited for the kairotic moment to build

¹¹²Possibly the children involved in the study of Torah in the rabbinical schools.

¹¹³Probably the "rejoicing" of the Temple at such festivities as the Water-drawing ceremony.

¹¹⁴Seder 'Argim, Eisenstein, ed., Otyar Midrashim, p. 70, cited in Patai, Man and Temple, pp. 131-2.

anew the real Temple on earth, and as they waited, the mythical Temple continued to occupy the minds of the Rabbis. It developed as the centre of the cosmos, the earthly home of Yahweh, the source of fertility, the focus of ritual, and the replica of the celestial archetype. The next chapter will attempt to discover factors involved in the development of this Temple of myth.

CHAPTER IV

FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE RISE OF TEMPLE MYTHOLOGY

Rabbinic authorities embellished the various aspects of the historical Temple in colourful religious language and thought. They idealized the Temple of history to such an extent that it became increasingly a Temple of myth. The burden of this chapter is to discover some of the key factors underlying the mythopoeic activity of the Rabbis in relation to the mythical Temple of rabbinic literature.

While the Temple stood on the holy mount, it was, as much as anything else, a great national symbol.¹ It aided the Jews in preserving their national identity and their religious distinctiveness as the people of Yahweh. After the return from the Babylonian Exile, the Second Temple served as a rallying point in the re-establishment of the Second Commonwealth.² Destruction of the national shrine, first in

¹Solomon Grazzel, A History of the Jews From the Babylonian Exile to the Establishment of Israel (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of American, 1952), p. 24.

²Martin Noth, The History of Israel (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958), p. 317, and Bright, A History of Israel, p. 379.

587 B.C. and again in A.D. 70, generated an identity crisis which could very well have resulted in the extinction of the Jewish religion. Had it not been for the Torah and its teachers, the Jews would very likely have been absorbed by the overpowering cultures of their victors.³

In the absence of the Temple, the Torah was the chief means by which Jewish identity was maintained. Ironically, the Torah, which became so essential to the preservation of the Jews, demanded the Temple cult. This incongruity persisted after the destruction of A.D. 70. In the rabbinic age when the Temple could not be realized, it became more and more idealized in rabbinic literature. But the mythical Temple of the Rabbis⁴ was never completely divorced from the Jerusalem Temple of history.

In the emergence of the mythical Temple a number of factors were involved. These fall into two main categories: antecedent and contemporaneous.

³S.W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 118. The alternatives, according to Baron, were either assimilation or preservation. Cecil Roth also subscribes to this view and adds that the Jews, "contrary to all historical precedent and actual expectation, had not lost their distinctiveness." A History of the Jews (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 57.

⁴Other myths important to rabbinic Judaism developed simultaneously with the myths related to the Temple. See Neusner, There We Sat Down, pp. 73-90.

A. Antecedent Factors

The fact that the Temple was destroyed and the Jews oppressed on an occasion prior to A.D. 70 gave the Rabbi's a precedent for the situation they faced after A.D. 70. The teachers and prophets who survived the first destruction conceptualized and idealized the future of the impoverished land and the ruined Temple. Their thought patterns provided a ready-made mold for the rabbinic process of six centuries later. The examination of these antecedent factors begins with the exilic view of the land of Judah.

1. The Homeland Inheritance

Israel's national history began with the possession of the land of Canaan.⁵ Bit by bit the Hebrews laid claim to Palestine as the land of their inheritance.⁶ They considered it a land flowing with milk and honey, and a land of promise.⁷ The homeland sentiment probably began some time before the Exile. But it was after the deportation, in a time of separation from the land, that feelings of nationalism and inheri-

⁵See Noth, Israel, p. 149, and Jacob Neusner, The Way of Torah: An Introduction to Judaism (Encino: Dickenson Publishing Co. Inc., 1974), pp. 24-5.

⁶Deut. 3:18, 28. Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, The History of Israel: Its Facts and Factors (London: Duckworth, 1938), pp. 45-48.

⁷Ex. 3:8; 6:8; Deut. 6:18. Palestine was hardly as fertile as some of the lands of the ancient Near East, but to a desert people it was a rich land, especially as they came to consider it theirs by divine promise.

tance ran high among the deportees.⁸ The Jewish people by the time of Exile had developed a history which began to take on particular significance as they found themselves living on alien soil. David had settled the question of Jewish nationalism when he selected Jerusalem as the capital of his kingdom.⁹ His son, Solomon, had built the great religious centre of worship in the chosen city.¹⁰ The four hundred years of tradition stimulated in the Exiles a deep sense of national pride.

The Jews who survived the destruction of 587 B.C. came to see Judah as the land of their fathers.¹¹ Jeremiah made reference to the land as Yahweh's special gift to his elect people.¹² As such it was intended to provide security and prosperity. The promised land had become intrinsically bound together with the holy city and the sacred Temple. While the land and its associated symbols existed, the Jews were assured that the covenant with Yahweh was still intact,¹³ and they were to some extent insulated from the forces around them.¹⁴ Without this insulation, which included also

⁸Cf. Robinson, Israel, p. 137.

⁹II Sam. 7:8-17; 23:5-7.

¹⁰I Kings 5:1-9:9.

¹¹E.g., Num. 15:2.

¹²Jer. 7:7; 11:4-5.

¹³See Noth, Israel, pp. 289-90, and Bright, Israel,

independent political organization in the land, the Jews of the Exile were exposed to the influences of an alien land and culture.

The Exiles, under the direction of their leaders, were obliged to find suitable substitutes¹⁵ for the national identity which they had enjoyed before the Temple was destroyed and the land pillaged. Even if they had been granted the privilege of building a temple in Babylonia, they would have declined. Their ties with the past which gave them their identity involved the territory prescribed in the Torah.¹⁶ The temple of the Torah could be built only in Jerusalem.

Questions arise concerning the response of the Jewish leaders in Exile to the loss of the land and Temple. The answer must be sought in the area of psychology as well as

p. 350.

¹⁴As Baron sees it, the major issue was that the Jews in Exile without a land and Temple were in a state of "uninsulated contact" with the outside world, and were therefore in a position in which their nationalism could be submerged in the surrounding culture. A Social and Religious History, p. 102.

¹⁵Cf. Isidore Epstein, Judaism (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 74, where he argues that the Temple required adequate substitutes in Exile. His language tends to be too strong: "The shool took the place of the Temple; the teacher or scribe that of the sacrificing priest; the religious observances--sabbath, prayer and fasting--that of sacrificial rites."

¹⁶Cf. Baron, A Social and Religious History, p. 123.

religion. Separation from the real experience in the homeland gave way to a process of phantasizing. Baron enlarges this view and affirms that the length of time in which the people were separated from the homeland inheritance contributed to the idealizing process. With reference to the Exile he says:

The longer the Jews were separated from their country, the more they idealized Jerusalem and its Temple, and precisely therefore they rejected the practice of sacrificial worship on any other earthly spot.¹⁷

When their dreams of a restored land and Temple were being fulfilled under Persian rule, some expressed their emotions in idyllic psalms.

Lord, thou wast favourable to thy land;
thou didst restore the fortunes of Jacob.¹⁸

On the holy mount stands the city he founded;
the Lord loves the gates of Zion
more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.¹⁹

The Rabbis living after the second destruction had an antecedent model with which they could identify. They could

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ps. 85:1.

¹⁹ Ps. 87:1-2. With respect to both Psalm 85 and 87 Oesterley questions the validity of dating them in the post-exilic period. He prefers to date Ps. 85 in the exilic period and apply its message to "the re-establishment, or restoration, of the primeval age of bliss." This conclusion is based on the idealism of the content. The Psalms, Vol. II (London: PSCK, 1939), pp. 381-386; 390-392. Cf. Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship (New York: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 89 where he suggests that the Temple Psalms, e.g., 87, were composed by those "living in the Temple" and "thinking and expressing themselves in the notions of the Temple and cult." See also pp. 198-201.

authenticate their elaborate symbolism of their lost inheritance. In a manner similar to that of their forebears they dreamed of the restoration of the land of promise and the cult of Torah. The Rabbis enlarged the earlier views. They conceived of the promised land as the first land mass ever created. The rock upon which the Temple rested was the first solid mass in the midst of the primordial fluid, and the rest of Palestine was formed around the central rock. By virtue of its primacy among God's creative acts Palestine was viewed as Yahweh's special gift to his chosen people.²⁰ This consciousness of the homeland inheritance, already embedded in the traditions of the cult, was a basic factor responsible for the identity crisis which befell the Jewish community after destruction. In turn, the identity crisis led to an idealistic view of the land and its symbols, the Holy City and Sanctuary.

The exilic responses to the destruction of 587 B.C. sprang from a situation analogous to that of the Rabbis. The post-exilic Temple cult was something for which the Exiles yearned because of its requirement in the Torah. Both the exilic and post-exilic experiences will be examined in terms of antecedent factors which played some part in the rise of Temple mythology in rabbinic literature.

²⁰B.T. Ta'an 109; Yoma, 54a. Cf. Roy A. Stewart, Rabbinic Theology (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), p. 67.

2. Exilic Analogy

Neusner finds it remarkable that historical events have the capacity to produce recurrent, consistent responses in the mythical life of Judaic tradition.²¹ The exiled community in an alien culture was certain to produce responses both positive and negative. The accounts of Ezekiel and Second Isaiah provide representative responses to the event of Exile.

a) Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel and his colleagues aimed at the preservation of Jewish identity in the Babylonian culture. Baron submits that it was Ezekiel, more than anyone else, who favoured the preservation of distinctive Judaism. His teaching encouraged the creation of an artificial state until the time of restoration.²² The community was artificial only insofar as it substituted for the Temple worship other religious activities, perhaps some which evolved into the institution of the synagogue.²³ Ezekiel did not propose the continuance of life apart from the land and the Temple. The Law came into greater prominence, and on that account

²¹Neusner, The Way of Torah, p. 22.

²²Baron, A Social and Religious History, p. 122. Cf. Walther Eichrodt, Ezekiel (London: SCM Press, 1966), pp. 27-29.

²³Cf. Robinson, History, p. 138. "We cannot say exactly when and where the synagogue began, for the only possible reference to it in the O.T. comes from a Maccabean psalm (74:8)."

precisely the Temple and its cult began to take on increasing significance.²⁴ In his visionary message Ezekiel encouraged his fellow-exiles to prepare for the crucial moment of divine deliverance and restoration.²⁵

Certain influences helped to shape the thinking of the prophet-priest.²⁶ Presumably he was deported with a segment of the aristocracy in 597 B.C. His wife died during the siege of Jerusalem.²⁷ His priestly background can be detected in his meticulous regulations. His prophetic imagery represents the introduction of a genre which came into more widespread use in later apocalypses.²⁸

Ezekiel was engaged in a fight against hopelessness. His teachings added some new insights to the Hebrew religion, not the least of which was a transformed concept of Yahweh. As a national deity Yahweh had been exclusively the God of the Hebrews. Universal qualities were attributed to him by Ezekiel and his contemporaries. He became the God of universal power:

²⁴Ibid., p. 139.

²⁵Ez. 33:1-39-29. Cf. H.L. Ellison, Ezekiel: The Man and His Message (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 117-128, and Eichrodt, Ezekiel, p. 454.

²⁶See Wheeler Robinson, Two Hebrew Prophets (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), pp. 92-3 for discussion of the prophetic and priestly interest in the book.

²⁷Ez. 24:15-26.

²⁸See Eichrodt, Ezekiel, pp. 14-17.

All flesh shall know that I the Lord have drawn my sword out of its sheath; it shall not be sheathed again.²⁹

He controlled alien nations as well as Israel:

[The armies of Nebuchadnezzar] worked for me says the Lord God.³⁰

His Judgement will be meted out to all nations:

They shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken in my jealousy, when I send my fury upon them.³¹

This view of God as the cosmic ruler found its way logically into the symbolism of the Temple. Yahweh's house was destined to become a microcosm in which the God of the whole world would make his will known to his people. In Ezekiel the cosmic symbolism of his visionary temple can only be inferred. In rabbinic materials it is affirmed.

Despite the degree of obscurity in the Temple vision, chapters 40-42 of Ezekiel give a reasonably descriptive picture of the ideal Temple of the future. The vision was set in the Jerusalem environment, but the messenger who revealed the new Temple belonged to the supernatural realm.³² The survey complete, Chapter 42, Ezekiel could see that the Sanctuary was vacant. It awaited the presence of Yahweh to

²⁹Ez. 21:5. Cf. Eichrodt, *ibid.*, p. 290.

³⁰Ez. 29:20.

³¹Ez. 5:13.

³²E.g., Ez. 40:3. See also G.A. Cook, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936), p. 425.

consecrate it. Then the prophet saw the glory returning by the eastern gate and filling the Sanctuary. Yahweh then spoke of the holiness of his house, and the regulations which must govern the worship therein.

The prophecy concludes with a vision of water issuing forth from the Temple. The image is clearly one of fertility.³³ The prophet saw the water trickling under the threshold of the Temple to the east. From thence it increased into a river of life. "Wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live."³⁴ The fertile waters provided life for the surrounding land:

On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail . . . , because the water for them flows from the Sanctuary.³⁵

Two conclusions may be made from Ezekiel's prophecy concerning the Temple of Jerusalem. The first is that the land of promise and the holy Sanctuary are inextricably related to each other. The vision of the renewed Temple is followed by the boundaries of the land.³⁶ It would appear that in Ezekiel's system the fortunes of the land depend upon

³³Ez. 47:1-12. Cf. S. Fisch, Ezekiel: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary (London: The Soncino Press, 1960), pp. 323-326.

³⁴Ez. 47:9.

³⁵Ez. 47:12. Cf. Ps. 1:1-6, and E.L. Allen, "Ezekiel," IB, Vol. 6, p. 328.

³⁶Ez. 47:13-48:35. Cf. Eichrodt, Ezekiel, pp. 590-4.

the appropriate functioning of the Temple cult.³⁷ A second conclusion is that the fertility of the land and the health of the people depend completely upon the Sanctuary of Yahweh. This particular interpretation of the power of the Temple constitutes a significant enlargement of prior ideas in Hebrew history.³⁸ The fact of the Exile itself, i.e., separation from the land etc., would have stimulated this idealistic interpretation. In addition, the religion of the exiled community which was focused on the Torah was by its very nature focused on the Temple in the promised land. The circumstances of the Exile, while they were probably not physically adverse, did not permit the religion of the Torah to function in relation to the Temple. Ezekiel would have remembered the Temple, but he expanded his image of the Sanctuary far beyond his recollection of the historical building and its service. There was a tension: the Torah did not allow the Temple to be built on alien soil, but the Babylonian government did not permit it to be built on its native location. Consequently, the exilic leaders experienced a lack of religious fulfilment, and the result, in

³⁷ See Eichrodt, *ibid.*, p. 586.

³⁸ Concerning the first historical Temple, G.E. Wright remarks: "How the priests who cared for the Temple and its services, interpreted its meaning is not entirely clear. Central to priestly theology was the conception of God's presence in the midst of his people." Biblical Archaeology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 146; Cf. W.F. Albright, "The Biblical Period," Louis Finklestein, ed.,

Ezekiel's case at least, was an idealized Temple in which elements of the real and visionary were mixed.³⁹ Ezekiel's interpretive experience in the exilic situation was antecedent to the rabbinic experience after A.D. 70. Even the messianic nature of rabbinic hope of restoration bears several marks of the messianic vision of Ezekiel.

The anointed king of Hebrew tradition was a national figure whose political role had to have divine endorsement. In Ezekiel's system the Prince (מֶלֶךְ) ⁴⁰ occupied a leading role. From his exalted position within the Davidic dynasty he would guide the chosen nation in peace. In the reference which follows, the leadership of the Prince and the presence of Yahweh in the Sanctuary are fused together:

They shall dwell in the land where your fathers dwelt . . .; and David my servant shall be their prince for ever. I will make a covenant of peace with them . . ., and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.⁴¹

The exilic experience stimulated the messianic hope which,

The Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), p. 49.

³⁹Cf. Cooke, Ezekiel, p. 397; Eichrodt, Ezekiel, p. 541.

⁴⁰In Ez. 32:30 the term, מֶלֶךְ, "anointed" is applied also to the princes of the north. מְשֻׁמֵּשׁ, "anointed" does not appear in the prophecy. On the Messianic program of Ezekiel see Moshe Greenberg, "Ezekiel," EJ, Vol. VI, p. 1094; Ellison, Ezekiel, pp. 117-130; Robinson, Two Hebrew Prophets, pp. 119-125.

⁴¹Ez. 37:25-27. "The term prince in this context is a designation for the Messiah." Fisch, Ezekiel, p. 252.

according to Neusner, lies at the heart of the mythic life of Judaism, and "illuminates every moment of it."⁴² This messianic hope of deliverance and restoration involved the people, the city, the Temple cult and the house of David. Not one without the others.⁴³ Therefore, the messianic myth in Judaism, which found expression in times of captivity and oppression, was a key factor in the rise of the Temple mythology in the same period.

The rabbinic group in Babylonia identified with Ezekiel. His visions were used frequently in sermons in such a way as to indicate that Ezekiel's visionary message was contemplated with particular interest.⁴⁴ That Babylonian Jewry related itself to this exilic prophet is further substantiated by the discovery of a whole wall in the Dura synagogue apparently devoted to Ezekiel.⁴⁵ There is little doubt, therefore, that the event of exile after the destruction of 587 provided a reference point for rabbinic Judaism in the post-Temple era. The Babylonian community in particular would have felt a kindred spirit with their exilic

⁴²Neusner, The Way of Torah, p. 23.

⁴³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁴E.g., Mid. R. Lev. 25:7; B.T. Megillah, 29a; Rosh Hashanah, 24b.

⁴⁵Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews In Babylonia: The Parthian Period, Vol. I (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), p. 162. Cf. Wilhelm Bacher, "Academies In Babylon," JE, Vol. I, pp. 145-47.

predecessors.

b) Second Isaiah

The message of Second Isaiah, like that of Ezekiel, was optimistic with regard to divine deliverance. This unknown prophet probably lived in the last phase of the neo-Babylonian empire under the rule of Nabonidus (ca. 556-539 B.C.). Nabonidus promoted the worship of the moon-god, Sin, and had little sympathy for the Jews and their invisible God, Yahweh. The Jews may have suffered some persecution during his reign.⁴⁶ If they did suffer, it was not for long, because the victory of Cyrus brought religious autonomy to the Jews.

Part of the prophet's message appears in the canonical book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-55. It was addressed to a community in despair. They sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion.⁴⁷ The prophet was to be Yahweh's herald of good news to the despondent people. He received his message, Isaiah 40:1-11, in the context of a celestial council. In that sense, his call was similar to that of Isaiah of Jerusalem, Isaiah 6:1-12. The Temple setting of Isaiah 6 is ambiguous in that heavenly and earthly elements are present.⁴⁸ In Isaiah 40 the voice speaks from

⁴⁶See D.S. Russell, Two Refugees: Ezekiel and Second Isaiah (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1962), pp. 103-4 and Noth, History, pp. 298-9.

⁴⁷Ps. 137:1.

⁴⁸Robert W. Fisher, "The Herald of Good News in

the heavenly realm only. The exilic experience in an alien land without a Temple deepened the consciousness of heavenly realities. While the prophets and priests may have prayed toward Jerusalem, they probably found themselves looking upward, and receiving messages from the celestial spheres.⁴⁹

Second Isaiah spurned the religion of Marduk and Sin, and proclaimed instead the creative might of Yahweh. Beside him, said the prophet, "the nations are like a drop from a bucket,"⁵⁰ and their idols lifeless matter.⁵¹ As the prophecy unfolds Yahweh's words of comfort are brought to the grieving community. The Messianic hope is also evident, not in the guise of an exalted prince, but in the humility of a suffering servant. When the prophet wrote his four poems on the Servant of Yahweh he was empathizing with suffering Jews in Exile, himself being one of them.

The subject of the Servant Songs is complex and cannot be discussed adequately within the limits of this study. One point is clear from the four songs: suffering is more redemptive than punitive. The Exiles were to take comfort in the fact that their suffering would bring eventual restoration. The Jewish exiles would have understood their

Second Isaiah," Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honour of James Muilenburg (Pittsburg: Pickwick Press, 1974), p. 125 and notes.

⁴⁹E.g., Is. 40:26.

⁵⁰Isa. 40:15.

⁵¹Isa. 40:20.

redemption in an actual return to national independence and Temple worship.⁵²

After the destruction of A.D. 70 many Jews under Roman oppression saw themselves in the light of Second Isaiah's suffering servant. The Rabbis offered encouragement to their fellow Jews by interpreting the purpose of suffering. Some Rabbis taught that the suffering of Israel was the sign of imminent deliverance and restoration of the worship prescribed by Torah.⁵³ But the Temple cult was not restored, and as time went on the leaders in Judaism were obliged to provide substitutes in daily life for the religion of the Temple. Simultaneously, they re-interpreted the meaning of the non-existent Temple, so that it became more and more a Temple of myth. The seedbed for this rabbinic process lay in the exilic and post-exilic developments.

3. Post-Exilic Prototypes

In several areas the rabbinic writings combine the prophetic and priestly injunctions of the post-exilic period. Taken together, the messages of Haggai and Zechariah, Ezra and Nehemiah, are reflected in the rabbinic statements on the same subject matter. It is as if the post-exilic authors were prototypes of the Rabbis.⁵⁴ It will be instructive to

⁵²Epstein, Judaism, p. 80.

⁵³E.g., B.T. Yoma, 39b.

⁵⁴The high esteem with which the Rabbis held the

examine briefly the views of these post-exilic founders of classical Judaism as they undertook the re-establishment of the Jews in the promised land. Their task had only begun when the first repatriates arrived in Judah in 538 B.C.⁵⁵

a) Haggai and Zechariah

Both Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple in preparation for the dawn of the renewed kingdom of God.⁵⁶ Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest,⁵⁷ were cast in the role of Messianic deliverers, Haggai looked upon Zerubbabel as the servant of Yahweh whose capable leadership bore the marks of God's approved one: "I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, says the Lord, and make you like a signet ring."⁵⁸ Zechariah did not hesitate to name Joshua highpriest who would occupy a seat of religious authority next to the Messiah. However,

post-exilic writers can be discerned from the direct rabbinic statements to this regard. E.g., the Talmud asserts that with the death of the post-exilic prophets the Holy Spirit departed from Israel; that Ezra was the one responsible for calling the attention of the Jews to the significance of Torah. See B.T. Sanhedrin, 93a; Peshah, 14a; Mid. R. Num. 20:20; Jos. Ant., Book XI. Cf. Eli Cashdan, "Haggai: Introduction and Commentary," A. Cohen, ed., The Twelve Prophets (London: The Soncino Press, 1948), pp. 253-4.

⁵⁵See Ezra 2:3, 64-64; Bright, History, pp. 363-7.

⁵⁶Hag. 2:4-9; Zech. 8:9-17. Cf. Cashdan, "Haggai," pp. 253, 269-70.

⁵⁷A parallel in post-Temple rabbinic Judaism in Palestine would have been Patriarch and Rabbi.

⁵⁸Hag. 2:23.

Zechariah was not so ready to name Zerubbabel the anointed one for the future kingdom of peace and righteousness. His name is simply, "the Shoot" ($\Pi \text{זֶרֻבָבֶל}$). The appellation had previously designated Israel's ideal ruler and appears quite naturally in Zechariah as an appropriate name for the King, Messiah.⁵⁹ Whether the prophet equated the Shoot with Zerubbabel is of little consequence. The point he was making involved the revival of the Jewish state to a new existence in the land. The leader of the new movement would be from the house of David. Nations of the world would flow to the capital of the kingdom of God on earth. They would worship the God of Israel at the Temple.⁶⁰ Both prophecies regard the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple as necessary preparation for the age of Messiah.

The prophetic prototypes of the Rabbis had the distinct advantage of the Decree of Cyrus. Their hopes could be realized. Their ideas of the Temple may have developed to a much greater extent had their aspirations not been fulfilled. They would probably have construed an even more mythical Temple as did their rabbinic successors whose messianic hopes were constantly frustrated.

⁵⁹ Zech. 3:8; 6:12. The R.S.V. translation, "Branch," has some merit with reference to the Davidic dynasty. "Shoot" or "sprout" is perhaps a more suitable rendering in that it denotes a new branch of the Davidic house. See Cashdan, "Zechariah," p. 282, and D. Winston Thomas, "The Book of Zechariah," IB, Vol. 6, p. 1070.

⁶⁰ Zech. 8:1-23.

In addition to the pronounced notion of Messiah in both prophecies, fertility is also associated with the prospective Temple. Yahweh of hosts asked the people through the prophet why the harvests were so poor. The Lord answered for the people:

Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house. Therefore, the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.⁶¹

The roots of the rabbinic centre of fertility can be detected in this passage. Statements from Zechariah reveal the same motif: when Jerusalem is restored "the vine shall yield its fruit, and the ground shall give its increase, and the heavens shall give their dew."⁶² In the second part of the book, Chapters 9 to 14, the author⁶³ refers distinctly to the Temple as the source of fertility. The people were invited to:

Ask rain from the Lord . . . who makes the storm clouds, who gives men showers of rain, to everyone the vegetation in the field.⁶⁴

They could look forward to the Messianic kingdom when

⁶¹Hag. 1:9-10.

⁶²Zech. 8:12.

⁶³Scholars attribute Chapters 1-8 to the sixth century prophet; Chapters 9-14 appear to have been added to the original work. Their authorship is uncertain. See Thomas, "Zechariah," IB, Vol. 6, pp. 1089-1091; Hinckley G. Mitchell, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai and Zechariah," A Critical and Exegetical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1961), pp. 232-59.

⁶⁴Zech. 10:1.

. . . living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter.⁶⁵

This fertility also demanded a ritual on the part of the people. Every family would be expected to observe the Sukkoth. Should any family of the earth neglect the festival of booths and the worship of Yahweh, the life-giving rains would cease.⁶⁶

Thus, the post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, set a precedent for the Rabbis. There is every reason to believe that the Rabbis looked back in their history to the only situation which was similar to their own, and found in the sacred records the fundamentals of their mythological interpretation of the Temple. Two very important post-exilic models, for the Rabbis were Ezra and Nehemiah.

b) Ezra and Nehemiah

Both men were involved primarily in priestly reforms during the formative period of the Second Temple. Nehemiah's intention initially was to repair the defensive walls of Jerusalem. As it happened, the building of the walls was only part of his mission. As governor of the community, he revived the law, restored the Temple finances to a sound basis, and saw that the new commonwealth had political unity

⁶⁵Ibid., 14:8.

⁶⁶Ibid., 14:16-19.

and religious purity.⁶⁷

Nehemiah's twelve-year term as governor of the new community terminated in ca. 433. During that time he had succeeded in stabilizing the commonwealth along the lines of Torah. Coming from the community in Exile, he recognized the need for a strict observance of the Jewish law to maintain identity. The Temple in itself did not guarantee the kind of religious and national distinction which Nehemiah had in mind. The laxity of the restored community appalled Nehemiah, and he was not able to combat it completely within the time of his leave of absence from the Persian court.

It was during his second term in Jerusalem that Nehemiah implemented strong reform measures. He purged the Temple of pollution, part of which involved the eviction of Tobiah from a room in the Temple previously set apart for cultic use. He stopped business on the Sabbath and punished those who dared to violate his rule. He outlawed mixed marriage with stern conviction.⁶⁸

Ezra's mission would have gained the approval of Nehemiah. Both leaders had the same goal: the preservation of Jewish identity and independence. Ezra's mission differed from Nehemiah's in that Ezra's singular purpose was religious

⁶⁷Neh. 8:9-12; 9:1-5, 38; 10:1; 13:10-30. Cf. Jacob M. Meyers, Ezra-Nehemiah (New York: Doubleday Co. Ltd., 1965), pp. 149-154.

⁶⁸Neh. 5:1-5, 15; 13:1-31. Cf. Bright, History, pp. 385-6.

reform, and he had the full support of the Persian government in implementing the Law. He entered the scene in Jerusalem (428 B.C.) bearing a copy of the law which he had power to enforce. He did not, however, act as a politician or judge in bringing the community under the control of Torah. His commission was to instruct the people in Torah regulation and organize the religious affairs of the community.⁶⁹

On the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles, Ezra stood before the assembly and read the Law from early morning till noon. To ensure that everyone understood, he and his colleagues gave an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew text. The people were moved to tears.

This initial response of the people to the teaching of the Law soon gave way to laxity as before. They began to work on the Sabbath and to marry foreign women. Ezra rebuked them severely and confessed to Yahweh the sins of the community. The people joined Ezra in solemn confession, and thereafter agreed to live according to the Law. Part of the covenant involved the levy of an annual tax for the upkeep of the Temple, and the presentation of the first fruits and tithes as the Law demanded.⁷⁰ Thus, the Law, as Ezra had it, became the accepted constitution of the community.

The significance of Ezra's work in preserving Judaism

⁶⁹ See Ezra 7:1-28. On the date of Ezra see Bright, History, p. 385.

⁷⁰ Ezra 9 and 10; Neh. 9 and 10. Cf. Neh. 13, and Charles W. Gilkey, "Ezra," IB, Vol. 3, pp. 644-648.

from extinction cannot be overestimated. "When the Torah was forgotten from Israel, Ezra came up from Babylon and established it."⁷¹ Jewish legend made of him a second Moses. By divine inspiration he allegedly re-created the Scriptures which had been destroyed.⁷² The Talmud says that "Ezra would have been worthy of receiving the Torah for Israel, had not Moses preceded him."⁷³ The Rabbis thought of themselves in the tradition of Ezra. They extolled his piety and cherished his work of re-establishing the Torah in Israel.⁷⁴

The Temple became the rallying point for the repatriates, but it was the Torah that brought the religion of Judaism into the stream of everyday life in the community. Both Temple and Torah functioned interdependently, not exclusively. The reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah left no mistaking the connection between the two. Similarly, the message of the post-exilic prophets made a connection between Messiah and Temple. The Rabbis believed firmly both in Torah and Messiah, but they were powerless to unite them with the actual Temple in Jerusalem, since it had been destroyed and could not be rebuilt. Therefore, as these prophetic and

⁷¹B.T. Sukkah, 20a.

⁷²IV Esdras, 14:18-26.

⁷³B.T. Sanhedrin, 21b. Cf. Judah J. Slotki, Daniel Ezra and Nehemiah (London: The Soncino Press, 1951), pp. 108-9.

⁷⁴E.g., B.T. Sukkah, 20a; Megalloth, 31b; 15a; 16b; Mid. R. Ps. 105:2. See also Meyers, "Ezra," EJ, Vol. 3, p. 1122.

priestly strands entered rabbinic thought in the post-Temple era they constituted important factors in the rise of Temple mythology.

In addition to these antecedents, a number of contemporaneous conditions made a significant mark on the thinking of the Rabbis.

B. Contemporaneous Factors (A.D. 70-ca. 500)

Rabbinic literature did not emerge in a vacuum; its authors lived in the midst of events which helped to shape their ideas. From the destruction of the Temple to the final redaction of the Babylonian Talmud (ca. 500), Jewry experienced repeated frustration, especially with regard to its hopes of restored independence and national identity.⁷⁵ Both of these required the Holy City and the Temple. Furthermore, the Torah, which came into unprecedented prominence in the absence of the Temple cult,⁷⁶ demanded the sacrificial system of the Temple for the remission of the sins of the people. Like their predecessors in the exilic and post-exilic times, the Rabbis longed for the day when the Jewish nation would function according to the prescribed pattern in the Torah.

⁷⁵ See Baron, A Social and Religious History, Vol. II, pp. 97-102. Cf. Roth, A History, pp. 100-4.

⁷⁶ B.T. Sukkah, 28a; Gitten, 56a-b; Mid. R. Lam. 1:5. Cf. G.F. Moore, Judaism In the First Centuries of the Christian Era, Vol. I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 83-7, and Baron, A Social and Religious History, p. 119.

But they hoped and dreamed in vain.

Several political and socio-economic factors were involved in the process of creating the Temple mythology of rabbinic literature. Each of the geographical areas, Palestine and Babylonia, within which the mythology developed had factors peculiar to itself. Therefore, the discussion which follows will focus first on Palestine and then on Babylonia.

1. In Palestine

Wherever the Jews of the Diaspora lived, they thought of Palestine as their religious homeland, graciously granted to them by their God, Yahweh. As such, it became the centre of authority for all Jewry.⁷⁷ After the devastation of the great war which ended in A.D. 70, Jewish scholars in Palestine still sought to give leadership to their co-religionists the world over, and they did so in the face of desperate adversity. For purposes of the present discussion, five factors will be examined: the aftermath of destruction, Roman taxation, crop failure, occasions for reconstruction, and Messianism.

a) Aftermath of Destruction

The Zealots who defended the sacred precincts to the death believed all along that God would not allow his

⁷⁷ See Jacob Neusner, A Life of Rabban Yohanan Ben Zakkai (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962), pp. 123, 127, 128, and Michael Grant, The Jews in the Roman World (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 207.

Sanctuary to fall into pagan hands. They were convinced that in the blackest hour their loyalty would be rewarded by divine intervention.⁷⁸ When the last blow fell and their Temple went up in flames, the Jews who survived the slaughter of Titus' army felt the agony of defeat and despair.⁷⁹ Some, however, had expected the downfall of the existing political and religious system in Palestine and prepared themselves for reorganization even before the destruction.⁸⁰

Chief among the propagators of post-Temple Judaism was Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai. His escape to Jamnia was the first step towards the establishment of a new institution in Palestine: the school of the Rabbis. Vespasian's authorization of the school allowed its immediate recognition as the seat of Jewish authority. "The battle cries on Mt. Zion had not yet subsided when from Jamnia the voices of the scholars could be heard."⁸¹

But their task was not a pleasant one. The people were accustomed to the Temple, the priesthood and the Sanhed-

⁷⁸Josephus, Life, VI. Cf. Roth, A History, p. 109 and Judah Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," Finkelstein, ed., The Jews, pp. 143-4.

⁷⁹Josephus gives an extensive discussion, perhaps with some exaggeration, on the ignominious way in which Titus and his army treated the surviving Jews. War, VI, 414-22; 428-32 (Loeb edition).

⁸⁰B.T. Yoma, 39b; M. Sotah, 9:9 and Jos. Wars, IV, 3:2. See also Neusner, Rabban Yohanan, p. 105.

⁸¹Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," pp. 147 and 75.

rin. Prior to A.D. 70 they had enjoyed the privilege of limited autonomy and the traditional leadership of the high priest. Now they had neither. With the Sadducean individuality gone, the Pharisaic Rabbis had the field to themselves. Moreover, the authority which had resided in the Temple and Sanhedrin Council was transferred to the School.⁸²

Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai won the confidence of the Jewish people, and it was therefore expedient for the Roman government to recognize him as Patriarch. He was allowed to judge in local Jewish affairs, but Rome still maintained a firm political hold on the country. The limited power of the Patriarch was evident from the fact that Vespasian claimed Palestine as his own private property.⁸³ There was little doubt in the minds of Palestinian Jews that even while they continued to live in their land they were divorced from it. Their national independence was lost. Hence, they mourned the loss of their Temple, their national and religious symbol. The ninth of Ab was set aside each year to commemorate the disaster.

The lamentations of the Jews had become so serious that the Rabbis found it necessary to instruct them against excessive grief. It was more important to survive as a people than to drown in sorrow for the Temple. Some ascetic

⁸²Roth, A History, p. 113; Cf. Grant, The Jews, pp. 207-8.

⁸³Jos. Wars, VII, 6:6. Cf. Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," p. 145.

types refrained from eating meat and from drinking wine because both of these had been used for sacrifice in the Temple. The Rabbis answered these extremists thus:

Not to mourn at all is impossible, because the blow has fallen. To mourn overmuch is also impossible, because we do not impose on the community a hardship which the majority cannot endure.⁸⁴

The determination of the Rabbis to preserve the Jewish tradition saved Jewry from annihilation. With Palestine in the hands of the Romans, the written traditions of the Rabbis came to be "a portable homeland,"⁸⁵ within which the Temple was exquisitely mythologized. Palestinian Jews could retreat from the vicissitudes of life under Roman oppression into a utopian land and Temple of rabbinic invention.

In the aftermath of the war against Rome the Jews were in a state of political powerlessness. The expressions of power associated both with the Torah and with the Temple compensated for the futility which the Jews must have felt. Powers of fertility and success quite naturally were attached to the existing meaning of the Temple.

b) Taxation

Jewish despondency in Palestine following the destruction of the Temple was compounded by the Roman imposition of taxes. The economic condition of the Jews could ill afford

⁸⁴B.T. Baba Bathra, 60b.

⁸⁵Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," p. 146.

the tribute money for the Roman treasury. To make matters worse, the wars in which Rome increasingly became engaged required more and more tax money to support the legions. But even more debilitating to the Jewish spirit was the decree of Vespasian which transferred the Temple tax to the upkeep of the Temple Capitoline of Jupiter in Rome.⁸⁶

Before destruction the leaders of the Jewish community had collected a voluntary half-shekel for the maintenance of the Temple of Jerusalem. The anguish which the community must have suffered as they paid the special tax for the pagan temple is self-evident. The fiscus Judaicus, as it was called, could have served a worthy purpose in the repair of damage done during the war. Instead, the Jews became a special source of revenue for the Empire.⁸⁷

Tribute money which the Jews had paid to Rome before A.D. 70 now went into the personal account of Vespasian, because he claimed Palestine as his own personal conquest.

⁸⁶Dio Cassius, Dio's Roman History, E. Cary, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), LXV, 7:2; Jos. Wars, VII, 216-17. The limits of this tax were extended by Vespasian and Domitian beyond the biblical prescription. It was imposed on all Jews over 20 and also on slaves of Jews. Cf. Baron, A Social and Religious History, Vol. II, p. 105, and for Vespasian's policies in general, see M. Rostovtzeff, The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957), pp. 106-118.

⁸⁷Adolph Büchler adduces ample evidence to this effect. "The Economic Condition of Judea After the Destruction of the Second Temple," Jacob B. Agus, ed., The Foundations of Jewish Life (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 63-8.

Consequently, the funds which had previously gone into improvements were no longer available for that purpose.⁸⁸ To add to the financial burden on Palestine, Patriarch Gamaliel II, who succeeded Rabbi Johanan at Jamnia, found it necessary to set a head tax for the maintenance of the academies and Patriarchate. Jewish reaction to Gamaliel's policies led to his dismissal from office. He was, however, reinstated after a time when the people recognized the need for his strong leadership. Again the people were in a dilemma. They could not afford the tax necessary for the Patriarchate, but they could not afford to be without the institution.⁸⁹

In the centuries that followed, taxation continued to burden Palestinian Jewry.⁹⁰ After the division of the Empire between east and west, Emperor Honorius in the west (A.D. 399) prohibited the voluntary tax from the Jews in Italy for the support of the Patriarchate in Palestine. The termination of this source of revenue from the Diaspora in Italy dealt a severe blow to the little court which, at this time, was operating in Tiberius. One adversity after another weakened

⁸⁸Baron, *ibid.*, p. 107. Cf. Roth, *A History*, p. 97.

⁸⁹B.T. Baba Kamma, 38a. Cf. Baba Mezia, 50a. After Gamaliel was reinstated he concerned himself with his impoverished people. See Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," pp. 150-2.

⁹⁰In the 50 years between A.D. 235-285 there were 26 Emperors with the result that taxes on lands, profits, professions, etc., went higher and higher to support the army and officials. See Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," pp. 167-8.

the Patriarchate. Finally, in 425, when Gamaliel IV died without leaving an heir, Emperor Theodosius II (408-450) seized the opportunity to abolish the office completely.⁹¹ The efforts of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai four centuries earlier to restore order and maintain Jewish identity in Palestine were reversed when the Patriarchate came to an end. "The last vestige of Jewish independence, the last shadow of the glories of the past age was swept away."⁹²

With the Patriarchate abolished, the taxes which had previously gone to that office and the affiliated academies was directed into the Imperial treasury. A situation parallel to that of Vespasian's time developed. In A.D. 429 those Jews still remaining in Palestine became subject to a direct tax, the aurum coronarium, to be collected as it had always been, by the leaders of the people.⁹³

One can imagine the sense of hopelessness which must have gripped the Jews in Palestine. Even so, the scholars continued to support themselves at Tiberius and other centres;⁹⁴ they continued to hold the Torah up before the

⁹¹Roth, A History, p. 118.

⁹²Ibid., p. 119.

⁹³Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry From Justinian to the Fourth Crusade (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 192 and n. 14.

⁹⁴"It was not until the time of the Crusades that the dwindling Jewish settlement in Palestine finally decayed." Roth, A History, p. 119.

people and to call for obedience to its every precept. They thought that the trials of economic pressures would eventually give way to victory, and the land and Temple would be restored to their rightful owners, the Jews.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, the Rabbis occupied themselves in understanding and interpreting the Temple in light of their economically depressed condition. More and more the Temple was visualized as a paradigm of success. Every nuance in the rabbinic writings on the Temple was certain to express elements of the prosperity for which the people longed. The economic privation which resulted, in part, from the heavy taxation, was intensified by the natural hazard of crop failure.

c) Crop Failure

The ravages of war during the rabbinic period wasted much of the resources which could otherwise have been used to cultivate the soil. Dio Cassius stated that as a result of the war of 132-135 almost all of Judaea was made barren.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the oppressed spirit of the people doubtless was reflected in their agricultural efforts of the period.⁹⁷

⁹⁵The final redaction of the Palestinian Talmud could possibly be related to the abolition of the Patriarchate in 425. In any case, "the love and reverence for Zion never diminished." Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," p. 172. On the idea of repentance and obedience to Torah as prerequisites for the restoration of Zion, see Moore, Judaism, pp. 117-9.

⁹⁶Dio Cassius, Roman History, LXIX, 14:1.

⁹⁷Cf. Büchler, "The Economic Conditions of Judaea After the Destruction of the Second Temple," p. 46 and n. 2. See also Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews,

Even more menacing to the production of crops were the frequent droughts which hit Palestine and the surrounding areas. Rabbi Simon ben Gamaliel, citing Rabbi Joshua who survived the destruction of A.D. 70, said that the diminished rainfall was a result of the curse which had been in effect since the Temple was destroyed. The rain did not fall in blessing and the produce had lost its flavour.⁹⁸ In addition to this mishnaic understanding of the crop failure, there is the Talmudic word of Rabbi Eleazer ben Parta who lived through the Bar Kocheba revolt. He also attributed the irregular and scanty rainfall to the destruction of the Temple.⁹⁹

The sterility of the land led to poverty, starvation and even death in many cases. A Roman governor taunted the Jewish leaders by asking why God did not sustain the poor in Israel if he loved them.¹⁰⁰ Rabbi Akiba believed poverty to be the ornament of Israel.¹⁰¹ Even the poor, he said, are nobles.¹⁰² Teachers in the academies complained that they

pp. 100, 117.

⁹⁸M. Sotah, 9:12.

⁹⁹B.T. Ta'an, 19b. On the association of the poor crops with the destruction of the Temple, cf. Brown, Temple and Sacrifice, p. 16 and Büchler, "The Economic Conditions of Judaea After the Destruction of the Second Temple," p. 46.

¹⁰⁰B.T. Baba Bathra, 10a.

¹⁰¹Mid. R. Lev. 35:6.

¹⁰²M. Baba Kamma 8:6.

were forced to make charcoal and needles to survive in their profession.¹⁰³

The lean years apparently occurred repeatedly during the rabbinic period. In the reign of Diocletian (284-305), for example, droughts and famines were prevalent in Palestine.¹⁰⁴ The poverty of the Jews became so conspicuous that one of the Sages felt it necessary to re-interpret the law pertaining to the sabbatical year. Farmers were allowed to cultivate their crops in that year in an attempt to overcome the agricultural hardships.¹⁰⁵ The land of milk and honey to which the ancient Hebrews had journeyed was, by the time of Diocletian, worth less than the taxes.¹⁰⁶

Prayers were offered daily for abundant crops, and no doubt some years produced enough food.¹⁰⁷ But more often than not the prayers were not answered. Many public fasts were proclaimed to pray for rain. After praying unsuccessfully at several fasts, Rabbi Eliezer asked the congregation

¹⁰³B.T. Berakoth 28a.

¹⁰⁴M. Ta'an 1:4; B.T. Ta'an, 64b. For those who were hard pressed in Palestine an elaborate system of charity was developed. See M. Peah 8:7-9.

¹⁰⁵B.T. Berakoth 26a. Cf. Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-3; Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," p. 167.

¹⁰⁶Goldin, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷In the Benedictions and Tefillah formalized by Gamaliel II at Jamnia abundant crops and the restoration of the Temple occupied an important place. Moore, Judaism, pp. 293-296.

if they had prepared graves for themselves.¹⁰⁸

It is not difficult to see how the fertility mythology of the Temple could grow in such periods of materialistic sterility. The scarcity of good harvests and the absence of the Temple were linked together in rabbinic thought. Thus, "the yearnings for the Temple had not languished."¹⁰⁹ The Rabbis hoped increasingly for divine favour in the restoration of the Holy City and the Temple, and indeed some opportunities for rebuilding did appear on the horizon.

d) Occasions For Rebuilding

The immediate response of the Rabbis to the destruction of the Temple seems to have been one of resignation and rationalization. The event was explained in terms of religion rather than politics. Neusner supports this view with reference to a story concerning Johanan ben Zakkai and his follower, Joshua ben Hananiah:

Once, as Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was coming forth from Jerusalem, Rabbi Joshua followed after him and beheld the Temple in ruins. "Woe unto us," Rabbi Joshua cried, "that this, the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for, is laid waste!" "My son," Rabban Yohanan said to him, "be not grieved. We have another atonement as effective as this. And what is it? It is acts of loving kindness, as it is said, 'For I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'"¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸B.T. Ta'an, 25b.

¹⁰⁹Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," p. 152.

¹¹⁰Goldin, The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan, p. 34. Cf. Neusner, Rabban Yohanan, p. 35, and for Neusner's interpretation of the rabbinic response to the destruction of the Temple see his Early Rabbinic Judaism (Leiden: E.J.

What Neusner calls "rationalization" may also be understood as the interpretation of events in the light of existing circumstances. The requirement of Temple worship had to be revised, since the Temple lay in ruins. But the evidence in rabbinic writings indicates that the Rabbis still hoped for the restoration of the Temple cult. Both Jewish independence and Messianism required the rebuilding of the Holy City and the Temple. And, as might be expected, the Jews interpreted every occasion for reconstruction as an indication of divine favour in response to their petitions.¹¹¹ What follows is a brief examination of three such occasions.

Half a century passed after A.D. 70 before any overt acts of rebellion erupted in Palestine. Then in A.D. 115 while Trajan was exerting his military ambition on Parthia, the Jews of Egypt, Cyrene and Cyprus rose up in defiance of the Roman control of the diasporan communities.¹¹² Palestine, on the other hand, played the part of the hopeful onlooker.

Brill, 1975), pp. 46-49.

¹¹¹See Roth, A History, pp. 114, 118, and Stewart, Rabbinic Theology, pp. 46-8. After Bar Kocheba's defeat by the Romans, some disillusionment existed concerning Messiah and Temple. In the third century as well some expressed their feelings against the rebuilding of the Temple. Rabbi Eliezer, for example, said that the Temple was an iron wall between Israel and their Father in heaven. The wall had been removed when the Temple was destroyed. Mid. R. Lam. 2:5. This view was not shared, however, by the majority of Rabbis. Indeed, Eliezer in other places favours the Temple cult.

¹¹²Grazzel, A History, p. 179, and Baron, A Social and Religious History, p. 96.

Although the record is not completely clear, it would seem that Trajan held out to the Palestinian Jews the promise to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple in return for their peaceful acceptance of Roman rule.¹¹³ Such a bargain hardly met all the conditions the Jews had in mind. Nevertheless, they seem to have rejoiced in the hope of the restoration of their national and religious symbol. Possibly the semi-holiday on Adar 12 which the Jews declared a "Day of Trajan" celebrated the permission to rebuild.¹¹⁴ Before the plans could be drawn, Trajan had revoked his promise, and the hopes of the Palestinian Jews were frustrated.

When Hadrian succeeded Trajan in A.D. 117, he too made some vague offers to reconstruct the Holy City and Temple.¹¹⁵ He visited as many parts of the Empire as he could to gain an insight into ways of consolidating the provinces of his Empire. At the same time that he favoured the rebuilding of Jerusalem he passed laws forbidding certain Jewish practices which he considered barbaric. Chief among

¹¹³ See Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," p. 153, and n. 15. Cf. also Grant, The Jews In the Roman World, p. 237.

¹¹⁴ B.T. Resahim, 50a. Grant questions whether the 12th of Adar was remembered because the execution of the rebels was averted by Trajan's death. The commemoration of Trajan's overtures to rebuild Jerusalem is still a live option. The Jews In the Roman World, p. 315, n. 19 and 23.

¹¹⁵ B.T. Sanhedrin, 105a. Cf. Baron, A Social and Religious History, p. 97. The writer of the Sibyline Oracle V, 46-50 gives the distinct impression that the Jews favoured Hadrian at first.

these was circumcision. It soon became evident to Palestinian Jews that Hadrian had in mind a new Jerusalem of Greek character.¹¹⁶ Hadrian's policies and promises became less and less tolerable to the Jews. Perhaps the most aggravating event occurred when "on the site of the Temple he raised a new Temple to Jupiter."¹¹⁷ Hadrian's insult and injury brought on a war of no small proportion,¹¹⁸ inspired by Bar Kocheba. His name, which means Son of a Star, was given to him by his followers. From A.D. 132-135 attempts were made to establish Jewish independence. Coins were struck bearing such inscriptions as "Redemption of Zion". There is some evidence that the foundation of the Temple was started. Rabbi Akiba, an outstanding Sage of the time, supported the revolt and hailed Bar Kocheba as the deliverer of Israel.¹¹⁹ But in spite of the degree of success achieved in the three and a half years, the revolt was crushed in 135 when Hadrian's general Severus and the tenth legion fell upon Jerusalem. The city was thereafter named Aelia Capitolina and the Jews

¹¹⁶Mid. R. Gen. 78:1. Cf. Grant, The Jews In the Roman World, p. 244. On Hadrian's visit to Palestine see W.F. Steinspring, "Hadrian In Palestine," Journal of the American Oriental Society, LIX, pp. 360-365.

¹¹⁷Dio Cassius, Roman History, LXIX, 12:1.

¹¹⁸Ibid. As Dio describes it, the war was similar to the previous conflict of A.D. 66-70.

¹¹⁹Mid. R. Lam. 2:2. Goldin suggests that the majority of Jews in Palestine "saw in Bar Kocheba more than a commander." "The Period of the Talmud," p. 154.

were barred from entering it.¹²⁰ The cost of the Bar Kocheba rebellion was high economically, politically and spiritually. The people were subjected to ill-treatment, higher taxes and religious restriction. Many Jews left Palestine to take refuge in Babylonia and other diasporan centres.¹²¹

A repeal of Hadrian's edicts was not obtained until after his death. The Talmud records the plea of a Palestinian representative before Antonius Pius in Rome thus:

Alas in heaven's name, are we not your brothers, are we not all sons of one father, and are we not sons of one mother? Why are we different from every other nation and tongue that you issue such harsh decrees against us.¹²²

The edicts were subsequently amended. But the Jews in the homeland again suffered serious disappointment. Another occasion for rebuilding the house of Yahweh had passed, and again the Rabbis had to return to their academies and meditate, teach and write. Their interpretation of the Temple would have added another shade of symbolic meaning. The further removed they became from the reality of the Temple, the more inclined they seem to have been to enlarge upon its total significance.

¹²⁰Dio Cassius, Roman History, LXIX, 12:1. R. Harris advances strong evidence substantiating Hadrian's decree of expulsion. The Jews were allowed to visit the fragmentary wall of the Herodian Temple once a year to mourn. "Hadrian's Decree of Expulsion of the Jews From Jerusalem," Harvard Theological Review, XIX, 1926, pp. 199-206.

¹²¹Cf. B.T. Berakoth 63a, and Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," p. 155.

¹²²B.T. Rosh Ha Shanah, 19a.

One final glimmer of hope came to Palestinian Jewry before the end. Emperor Julian (A.D. 361-363), otherwise known as "the Apostate", did more than abolish the special Jewish taxes paid to Rome. He proposed to rebuild Jerusalem and allow the full practice of Judaism. In a letter to the Jews he wrote:

[Pray to the Mighty God] in order that, when I have successfully concluded the war with Persia, I may rebuild by my own efforts the sacred city of Jerusalem which for so many years you have longed to see inhabited.¹²³

That the building was started is attested by the story in Sozomenus' Ecclesiastical History written between A.D. 443 and 450. Sozomenus, a Palestinian, claimed to have the story from eyewitnesses. The work was brought to a halt probably as a result of Julian's death in 363 and the coming to power of a Christian Emperor.¹²⁴

The Rabbis doubtless had difficulty reconciling the fact that their deliverer was a Roman, but they seemed to be prepared for a second Cyrus and the establishment of a third Temple and commonwealth. Bacher demonstrates convincingly that Rabbi Acha, an important figure in Tiberius and contemporary of Julian, endorsed, on the authority of the Mishnah, the plan to rebuild the Temple. Acha's rationale affirmed that the Temple had to be rebuilt before the kingdom of the

¹²³ Jacob R. Marcus, The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book, 315-1791 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 9. See also "Introduction," p. 8.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 10-12.

house of David would be restored.¹²⁵

Any additions or revisions in the developing literature of the Palestinian Rabbis after 363 had in the background another abortive attempt at reconstructing the City, the Temple and the cult. As each occasion for rebuilding was repulsed, the unrealized Temple of Torah became more and more a temple of myth. The importance of the heavenly archetype would, in all probability, have become more meaningful as successive attempts at rebuilding the earthly Temple failed. The celestial ideal lay beyond the military legions of an earthly empire. Quite naturally the non-existent earthly Temple would have taken on more and more characteristics of the powerful model in heaven. As pointed out in Chapter three, the two Temples became closely related.

The occasions for reconstruction were simultaneously associated with the eschatological Messianism. The Temple was required not only by Torah, but also by Messiah.

e) Messianism

Various notions of Messianism permeated the religious and political atmosphere during the rabbinic period. Always the Messiah was deemed to be a personal deliverer of Israel, not merely a concept.¹²⁶ Messianism had remained in focus

¹²⁵W. Bacher, "Statements of a Contemporary of the Emperor Julian on the Rebuilding of the Temple," JQR, X, pp. 168-72.

¹²⁶See Stewart, Rabbinic Theology, p. 46. Cf. Neusner,

throughout the Second Commonwealth. After A.D. 70 the Rabbis, headed by Johanan ben Zakkai, tried to soften the political overtones of a Messianic conqueror. Rabbi Johanan's teaching opposed the kind of apocalyptic longing in circulation during the first and second centuries.¹²⁷ Before his death (ca. 80-85), however, he changed his thinking and confessed to a belief in an ultimate Messiah who would appear as a second King Hezekiah of Judah.¹²⁸

Two apocalyptic works appeared, one, II Esdras, at the end of the first century, and the other, II Baruch, at the beginning of the second century. II Esdras exhibits a perplexity concerning the triumph of Rome, but envisions a Messiah, pictured as a lion, who will bring the earthly kingdoms to an end and will establish the new incorruptible Jerusalem.¹²⁹ The visions in II Baruch differ only in the images employed; the meaning is the same as II Esdras.¹³⁰ Both works are indicative of the mood in Jewry following the defeat of A.D. 70, but the setting is the analogic situation of the Jews after the first destruction in 587 B.C.

Yohanan ben Zakkai, pp. 132-146.

¹²⁷Apocalyptic Messianism tended toward political subversion. See Neusner, Yohanan ben Zakkai, pp. 147-156, and Grant, The Jews in the Roman World, pp. 228-9.

¹²⁸B.T. Berakoth, 28b.

¹²⁹E.g., II Esdras, 12:2; 13:1-58; 14:16.

¹³⁰E.g., II Baruch, 70:1-10; 72:1-6; 76:1-4.

The supernatural character of apocalyptic Messianism and the intensity with which it was expounded were not always adopted by the Jewish leaders of later years. For example, the influential Rabbi Akiba who promoted Bar Kocheba as the Star of Jacob had in mind a human being endowed with divine gifts. The emphasis, apparently, was on the emancipation of the Jews from Roman domination, and their restoration to national and religious freedom.¹³¹ Some sources in Palestine insisted that the Messiah must be from the Davidic dynasty. Little wonder, then, that Vespasian and Domitian tried to wipe out those who claimed such descent.¹³²

Suffering came to be explained as the birth pangs of Messiah's coming.¹³³ Drawing, no doubt, on the teaching of Second Isaiah, the Rabbis developed an eschatology by which the Jewish people could accept their oppression as divine service in preparation for the Kingdom of God.¹³⁴ But the Rabbis added an important component: that Messiah's coming is influenced by practical faith and conduct. Thus, they encouraged repentance and good deeds, because, they said, the

¹³¹That Messiah was an ordinary man, see Mid. R. Ex. 1:26; Ruth 5:6; B.T. Sanhedrin, 98b. Cf. Moore, Judaism, pp. 89-90 and Stewart, Rabbinic Theology, p. 49.

¹³²M. Eduyoth 7:7. Cf. Grant, The Jews in the Roman World, and Mid. R. Num. 14:1; Ruth 7:2.

¹³³See especially B.T. Sanhedrin, 97a and 98b.

¹³⁴Cf. Mid. R. Gen. 82, and Zeitlin's discussion of the rabbinic acceptance of "The Assumption of Moses" with regard to suffering. Studies in the Early History of Judaism,

observance of the precepts of the Torah will hasten Messiah's coming.¹³⁵ As this doctrine was expounded it logically included the rebuilding of the Holy City and Temple because the Torah called for the ritual of the Temple cult.¹³⁶

Messianism was a doctrine in Judaism which was characterized by glorious success for the chosen people. Messiah's coming not only presupposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem, but also guaranteed the fertility of the land:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. . . . They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.¹³⁷

This description of fertility in Isaiah 35 was part of the eschatological tradition of the Rabbis. As Messiah's coming was repeatedly postponed and as the Temple continued to be desolate, the belief in the fertility power of the Temple would have tended to become more mythological than real. In other words, the constant contemplation of Messianic blessedness in the midst of adverse conditions would have heightened the Rabbis' image of the Temple towards the ideal.

Attention will now be given to the other main centre

Vol. II (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1974), pp. 34-37.

¹³⁵B.T. Sanhedrin, 97b; Mid. R. Ex. 25:12; Deut. 6:7.

¹³⁶E.g., Rabbi Akiba, an important teacher of Torah, supported Bar Kocheba in his attempt to rebuild the Temple.

¹³⁷Is. 35:1-2.

of Jewish learning from which a significant body of rabbinic literature came.

2. In Babylonia

The Babylonian Rabbinate was the outgrowth of the Palestinian schools. Gradually the Babylonian tradition influenced the Jewish communities throughout the world. When the Babylonian Talmud was finally completed (ca. A.D. 500)¹³⁸ it began to circulate throughout Jewry and be used as an authority on Torah and Mishnah. Its references to the Temple are numerous, many of them mythological. The centuries in which this tradition developed saw the Babylonian community in a variety of critical situations. Out of their experiences under Parthian and later Sasanian rule the Rabbis explained life and history in relation to Torah, never apart from it. Their explanation, therefore, necessarily involved the Holy Land and Sacred Temple. The critical experiences in which the Jewish authorities in Babylonia found themselves contributed largely to the development of the beliefs associated with the Temple of Jerusalem. What follows below is an

¹³⁸Scholarship is generally agreed that A.D. 500 marked the close of Talmudic additions. Redaction probably continued throughout the sixth century. See Kaplan, The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud, pp. 148-194. Cf. Raphael Patai, Tent of Jacob: The Diaspora Yesterday and Today (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1971), p. 33, and Gerson D. Cohen, "The Talmudic Age," Leo W. Schwarz, ed., Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People (New York: The Modern Library, 1956), p. 145.

examination of these factors under three basic headings: the migration of the rabbinate, the power struggle between Exilarch and Rabbi, and the crises of Sasanian measures.

a) The Migration of the Rabbinate

Babylonian Jews did not participate in the Palestinian war against Rome, A.D. 66-70. Neusner makes the point that if the Jews had known the Temple would be destroyed their attitude would not have been as passive.¹³⁹ Vespasian's action in hiring Josephus to write an account of the war for the Jews beyond the Euphrates constituted an attempt to absolve the Romans from guilt concerning the destruction of the Temple.¹⁴⁰ With the authority of the Temple abolished, the Babylonian Jews were deprived of spiritual leadership. Previously the Temple leaders had exercised significant control over the Diaspora in religious affairs. The newly formed Patriarchate in Jamnia was not able to exercise the priestly authority which the Babylonians once knew.¹⁴¹

Neusner contends that the Parthian government established the Exilarch shortly after the destruction of A.D. 70.

¹³⁹Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia: The Parthian Period, Vol. I (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), pp. 67-70. "Babylonia Jewry simply could not have forseen the destruction of the Temple in Jcrusalem, and having no immediate interest in the war, remained quiescent."

¹⁴⁰Jos. Wars, VI, 340-350. Cf. Neusner, *ibid*.

¹⁴¹See M. Hullah, 4:11; Yoma, 6:4; Sheqalim, 3:4. B.T. Shebbat, 26a. Cf. Neusner, Parthian Period, p. 45.

While he has no historical warrant for such a claim, his assumptions are logical. The Jews in the Parthian Empire constituted a powerful force. Without its own native government the community would have been more likely to revolt. Vologases (A.D. 51-79), recognizing the strategy of Rome in setting up the Patriarchate, would have followed that example. In so doing he maintained order in his realm and satisfied Jewish interest. Clear evidence does exist for the rule of the Exilarch at the time of the Bar Kocheba rebellion.¹⁴²

This reorganization of government both in Palestine and in Babylonia seriously affected the Palestinian influence over the Golah. While the Temple service existed that influence was strong. Regular pilgrimages were made, sacrifices offered and festivals celebrated.¹⁴³ Palestinians visited their fellow Jews in the Parthian region. After A.D. 70, messengers were sent from the Palestinian court in an attempt to maintain ties and exercise some of the previous priestly authority.¹⁴⁴ Jews migrated to Babylonia where the political situation was less disruptive and the economic

¹⁴²Neusner, The Parthian Period, pp. 53, 103-118. Cf. W. Bacher, "Exilarch," JE, Vol. 5, pp. 288-290.

¹⁴³See Jos. Wars, VI, 490-3. Two million seven hundred thousand pilgrims attended the festivals, says Josephus.

¹⁴⁴For the authority of the Palestinian court see B.T. Sanhedrin, 5a; Shabbat, 156a; Cf. Eliezer Bashan, "Exilarch," EJ, Vol. 6, pp. 1023-1034, and Samuel Kraus,

conditions more favourable.¹⁴⁵ By the time of the Palestinian revolt under Hadrian (132-135), the academic institution of Judaism, the Rabbinat, was a fact of Jewish life in Palestine. But the Jews of Babylonia had no such institution.¹⁴⁶ As a result of the Hadrianic persecution many Jews fled to the Babylonian community for refuge. Among the refugees were a number of Rabbis from the academies in Palestine. These students of the Palestinian masters settled at Nisibis and Huzel and thus opened the way for the migration of more scholars of Torah.¹⁴⁷

By the end of the second century, Palestine had gained a reputation as the seat of learning. The efforts of Rabbi Judah the Prince were acknowledged by Jews everywhere.¹⁴⁸ Babylonian Jews sent students to the academies in Palestine to study law. Many of these native Babylonians returned to their homes and put into practice the training they had received. Patriarch Judah's promulgated Mishnah found ready acceptance in the court of the Exilarch. With the endorse-

"Apostle and Apostleship," JE, Vol. II, pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁵Mid. R., Lev. 34:12; Gen. 77:2; B.T., Babba Bathra, 22b-23a. Cf. L. Jacobs, "The Economic Conditions of the Jews in Babylonia in Talmudic Times Compared with Palestine," Journal of Semitic Studies, Vol. 2, 1957, pp. 350-353.

¹⁴⁶Although there would have been some form of instruction on Jewish Law. Cf. Neusner, The Parthian Period, p. 156.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 173-4.

¹⁴⁸See B.T. Shabbat, 156a.

ment of the Exilarch, third-century Rabbis enlarged the Babylonian schools. Gradually the Rabbinat of Palestine was duplicated in Babylonia.¹⁴⁹ Rabbi Abba Arika, designated in the Talmud with the honourary title, Rav, and Rabbi Samuel were responsible for the inauguration of the institution of the Rabbinat in Babylonia. After his studies under Rabbi Judah, Rav returned to Nehardea in 219 and established an institution there. The building was later destroyed and a new one built at nearby Pumbedita. Rav established another at Sura, leaving the former in Samuel's hands. Thus, two important centres of learning were established in Babylonia. Both of them had the approval of government and the respect of the community.¹⁵⁰ Before this time rabbinic instruction was piecemeal, as was the migration from Palestine. The letter of Sherira Gaon confirms that official recognition was granted to the Rabbinat in Babylonia:

No doubt here in Babylonia public instruction was given in Torah; but besides the Exilarch there were no recognized heads of schools until the death of Rabbi Judah I.¹⁵¹

When the Rabbinat was first established the Exilarch welcomed the excellent legal advice of the doctors of the law.

¹⁴⁹"It was only with the promulgation of the Mishnah in Palestine and its acceptance for, and then in, Babylonian Jewry by the Exilarch's Palestinian representatives, that the rabbis day dawned." Neusner, The Parthian Period, p. 177.

¹⁵⁰Bacher, "Academies in Babylonia," JE, Vol. I, p. 145. Cf. Goldin, "The Period of the Talmud," pp. 173-6.

¹⁵¹Cited in Bacher, "Academies in Babylonia," p. 146.

He appointed them as judges, and employed them in his court in positions of leadership. At the same time, the Exilarch maintained tight control over the academy, a control which included the appointment of academic heads.¹⁵² Palestine now had a counterpart. Ideas and skills picked up in Palestine developed on Babylonian soil. At the beginning of the third century, Rabbis were applying the Torah and Patriarch Judah's Mishnah to situations in Babylonia. In their expositions they were confronted repeatedly with the Holy land and the sacred Sanctuary. Nowhere in the Babylonian Talmud is the theology of the Holy Land abandoned in favour of the land of Babylonia.¹⁵³ Palestine continued to be the land of promise, and the Temple continued to be the central symbol in the midst of the land. The Rabbis followed the example of their biblical antecedents, the exilic prophets, in looking to the land of promise for the hope of redemption. It is not correct to say that the teaching of the academies was Torah-centred rather than land-centred. To be Torah-centred was to be land-centred. Cohen substantiates this argument thus:

The sizable bulk of the Law which Scripture had explicitly associated with the land--fully one third of the Halakha--the Rabbis not only did not attempt to abolish, but actually strengthened and amplified.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Neusner, A History of the Jews In Babylonia: From Shapur I to Shapur II, Vol. III (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), pp. 44-45.

¹⁵³ See Cohen, "The Talmudic Age," p. 201.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 202.

To fulfil the Torah completely demanded living in the land of promise and observing Temple service.¹⁵⁵ As Palestine became less populated and less attractive economically, the Holy land became increasingly a theoretical reality to the Babylonian Rabbis. More and more it became a symbol of a glorious past and prophetic future. As stated earlier, the land and the Temple were inextricably connected in the theology of Talmudic Judaism. Even as the land was not separable from the Torah, neither was the Temple. The migration of the Rabbinate to Babylonia brought with it the mishnaic foundation of the mythical Temple. The Babylonian expansion of the myth came out of profound emotion as well as theological ties with the Holy Land. Geographical separation from the land added to the nostalgia. In the absence of the land and Temple the Babylonian Rabbis idealized them as Ezekiel had done centuries before. Through the Rabbis the indispensable Temple of Torah underwent a metamorphosis to become an even greater Temple of myth. From the vantage point of Babylonia the Temple of Jerusalem took on a significance equal to or even greater than any temple in the foreign culture. The cosmic symbolism would not have been difficult for the Babylonian Rabbis to conceive. Yahweh was the Almighty God of the cosmos, and his earthly dwelling place would therefore be modelled after the cosmos.

¹⁵⁵E.g., B.T., Berakoth, 29a; Mid. R. Lev. 29:1. Cf. Neusner, There We Sat Down, pp. 40-41.

The migration of the Rabbinate to Babylonia, and any resulting interpretation thereof, was reversed as time passed. Before the end of the fourth century the flow of influence between the Palestinian and Babylonian Rabbinate was directed towards Palestine and beyond.¹⁵⁶ The scholarship which had developed in the Babylonian academies moved back to the homeland and throughout the Diaspora. Kahle and Weinberg discovered texts of the Mishnah in a Cairo genizah which they identified as Babylonian. These fragments showed a number of variations from the Palestinian recension of Judah's publication. The conclusion is that the Babylonian schools functioned independently, and eventually gained acceptance in Jewish communities beyond Babylon.¹⁵⁷ It seems reasonable also that the Babylonian approach to Scriptural exegesis and mishnaic expansion would have found its way into Palestinian academies. Temple mythology, together with many other facets of Rabbinic theology, evolved in this cross-current of experiences and ideas between Babylonia and Palestine.

The Babylonian Rabbinate of the latter half of the third century found itself competing for power resident in

¹⁵⁶ See Moshe Beer, "Academies in Babylonia and Erez Israel," *EJ*, Vol. 2, pp. 202-3.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Kahle and J. Weinberg, "The Mishnah Text In Babylonia," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. 10, 1935, pp. 185-189. Cf. M. Schachter, "Babylonian-Palestinian Variations in the Mishnah," *JQR*, Vol. XLII, 1951, pp. 1-35.

the Exilarchate. The resulting power struggle left its mark on the thinking of the Rabbis as they expounded the Torah, and became a factor in the development of the meaning of the Temple.

b) The Power Struggle Between Exilarch and Rabbi

From the beginning of the third century to the end of the Sasanian Empire four basic forces shaped the destiny of the Jewish community in Babylonia.¹⁵⁸ The first of these was the Sasanian government whose ruler referred to himself as the king of kings. Every minority community was obliged to abide by the law of the ruler, and the Jewish community was no exception. The Rabbis respected the state laws, and encouraged the people to do likewise. Their attitude is illustrated in the following:

Rav said, "On account of four things is the property of the householders confiscated by the state treasury. On account of those who defer payment of the labourer's wages; on account of those who remove the yoke from off their necks and place it on the necks of their fellows and on account of arrogance. And the sin of arrogance is equivalent to all the others, whereas of the humble it is written [Ps. 37:11], 'But the humble shall inherit the land and delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'"¹⁵⁹

Moreover, the first force, the Sasanian government, called for obedience to its laws from all the subjects. The Exilarch who excised local authority over Jewish affairs

¹⁵⁸ See Neusner, From Shapur I to Shapur II, pp. 95-102.

¹⁵⁹ B.T. Sukkah, 29b.

represented the second power in the Jewish community. The institution was set up after the destruction of the Temple to accommodate both the Jewish people and the Parthian government. The Exilarch governed the Jewish people with a considerable amount of autonomy. His court was independent of Palestine and he conducted Jewish affairs according to Torah and Iranian rule. The institution survived the conquest of the Sasanian dynasty in A.D. 226 and developed a working relationship with the more recent Rabbinate. The Rabbinate was the third force, and it captured the honour of the ordinary Jew so that the functional authority of the Exilarch became overshadowed by the Rabbis. The last power in Babylonian Jewry was the Jewish people at large. Because they came under the direct control of Exilarch and Rabbi, they represented a power of minor importance.

With this background in mind, consideration may be now given to the competition for power between the Exilarch and Rabbi.¹⁶⁰ The Exilarch authenticated his claim to power by his alleged Davidic ancestry. The origin of this ideology can be traced back to the time of Patriarch Judah.¹⁶¹ The

¹⁶⁰ Cohen affirms that the "ever-growing number of Rabbinic schools and the establishment of academies in the second century created a polarity of powers within the community," "The Talmudic Age," p. 171.

¹⁶¹ Rav speculated that if Messiah is alive he is Judah the Prince, scion of David. B.T. Sanhedrin, 98b. Cf. Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia: The Early Sasanian Period, Vol. II (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. 52-57.

following dialogue between Judah and Hiyya reveals the background of the Davidic claim of the Exilarch:

Rabbi [Judah the Prince] inquired of R. Hiyya [a Babylonian related to the Exilarch], "Is one like myself to bring a he-goat [as a sin offering of a ruler, according to Lev. 4:23]?" "You have your rival in Babylonia," he replied.

"The Kings of Israel and the kings of the house of David," he objected, "bring sacrifices independently of one another." "There," Hiyya replied, "they were not subordinate to one another. Here [in Palestine] we are subordinate to them in [Babylonia]."

R. Safra taught thus: Rabbi [Judah] inquired to R. Hiyya, "Is one like me to bring a he-goat?"

"There is a scepter, here is only the law-giver, as it was taught, 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah,' refers to the Exilarch in Babylonia who rules Israel with the scepter, 'nor the ruler's staff between his feet' [Gen. 49:10] refers to the grandchildren of Hillel who teach the Torah to Israel in public."¹⁶²

This kind of alliance between Exilarch and Rabbi became intolerable to the Rabbis. They were not content to be "the ruler's staff between his feet." Because of their knowledge of Torah and the status they assigned to it, the Rabbis aspired to the position of Exilarch.¹⁶³

The Rabbis' view of the law compelled them to think as they did. In the first place, they believed the Oral Law to have been given to Moses with the written edition. Both were passed down to the Rabbis. Congruent with that belief was the aim to reform the life of Israel to conform to the whole Torah. By reforming Israel the Rabbis thought they were preparing the way for the reign of the Messiah.¹⁶⁴ The

¹⁶²B.T., Horayot, 11b.

¹⁶³Neusner, From Shapur I to Shapur II, pp. 44-45.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 46-47. Cf. Beer, "Academies In Baby-

Exilarch, on the other hand, was convinced that Davidic descent of his office ensured the appearance of Messiah in God's time.

The Rabbis' passion for Torah and their conviction concerning its pre-eminent role in the life of Israel militated against the power structure of the third century. They opposed the Exilarch at every conceivable point. They rebelled against the taxation levied on them.¹⁶⁵ They resented the power of the Exilarch in appointing them as judges and administrators in the court.¹⁶⁶ The most explicit evidence for the power struggle between the two offices comes from the Talmudic story of Rabbi Geneva's trial and conviction.

Geneva was a master of Torah respected by many of his fellow Rabbis.¹⁶⁷ Some in the employment of the Exilarch, however, did not subscribe to the views of Geneva.¹⁶⁸ The story of his trial and execution is as follows:

lonia and Erez Israel," EJ, p. 204.

¹⁶⁵Tax-exemption was claimed on the basis of the biblical precedent concerning priests (Ezra 7:24). See B.T. Nedarim, 62b; Baba Bathra, 8a. Cf. Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia: The Age of Shapur II, Vol. IV, pp. 85-90.

¹⁶⁶"The great problem faced by the Exilarch was the growing independence of the academies." Neusner, From Shapur I to Shapur II, p. 92.

¹⁶⁷B.T., Berakoth, 25a, 27a.

¹⁶⁸B.T., Gitten, 31b.

Mar 'Uqba sent to R. Eleazer [ben Pedat], "Men are standing against me, and it is in my power to hand them over to the government. What is to be done?" He drew a line and wrote to him, "'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep a curb upon my mouth while the wicked is before me' (Ps. 39:2), that is, eventhough the wicked is against me, I shall guard my mouth with a muzzle." Again he said to him, "They are greatly troubling me and I cannot overcome them." He replied, "'Resign thyself unto the Lord and wait patiently for him' (Ps. 37:7), that is, wait for the Lord and he will bring them down prostrate before you. Arise early and stay late in the academy, and they will perish of themselves." The matter had scarcely left the mouth of R. Eleazer when they placed Geneva in a collar [to be executed].¹⁶⁹

The problem which Exilarch Mar 'Uqba faced was probably one of subversion. Geneva and his group thought of themselves as the leaders of the community and may have propagated that claim to the detriment of the status of the Exilarch. This conclusion can be documented from another episode in Geneva's life.

Two Rabbis were seated as Geneva passed by. He greeted them thus: "Peace be unto you, kings; peace be unto you, kings." When they enquired as to why the Rabbis should be called kings, he replied: "As it is said, 'By me kings rule'."¹⁷⁰ The quotation from Proverbs 8:15 substantiated Geneva's claim to power. The Rabbis were those on whom God had bestowed extraordinary wisdom by which to rule the elect. Such teaching constituted subversive activity, and the Exilarch found it necessary to eliminate such extremes.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 62a.

¹⁷¹ Cf. E. Bashan, "Exilarch," EJ, Vol. 6, pp. 1026-7,

The political authority vested in the Exilarch drove the Rabbis to find other means to authenticate their right to power. Their professed ability to understand and teach the whole Torah was complemented by the further claim to possess secret knowledge of the universe.¹⁷² They could understand the mysteries of astrology, perform miracles, practice medicine, and work magic.¹⁷³ Furthermore, the academy itself possessed unusual powers by virtue of its peculiar relation to Torah and to God. The academy on earth had its archetype in heaven. The decisions and teachings on earth corresponded with those going on in the celestial school under the leadership of Moses. When the Rabbis died they were transported to the heavenly academy:

A slip of paper fell from heaven into Pumbedita [on which was written], "Rabbah b Nahamni has been summoned to the heavenly academy."¹⁷⁴

The Rabbis did not merely invent these ideas as a modern novelist would invent characters in a fiction. The concepts grew out of real-life situations, and were added to the fund of beliefs which gave meaning to the critical events and experiences. Psychological frustration gave place to

and Neusner, From Shapur I to Shapur II, pp. 75-81.

¹⁷² See Neusner, From Shapur I to Shapur II, pp. 46-7.

¹⁷³ Each of these is discussed in depth in Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia: Later Sasanian Times, Vol. V (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), pp. 178-216.

¹⁷⁴ B.T. Bava' Mezia', 86a. Cf. Neusner, Later Sasanian Times, pp. 178-216.

mythological expansion of religious ideas. By this process the Rabbis were able to explain the incongruous. In Neusner's words, "the myths that explained and shaped history served to reconcile the Jews to their situation of weakness."¹⁷⁵ In relation to the Exilarch, the Rabbi was in the weaker position politically, and he was powerless to change the structure of the government. He compensated for his political weakness by an appeal to his great intellectual and religious powers. These powers of understanding by which the Rabbis supposedly could discern the deep secrets of existence were applied to the meaning of the Temple. They astonished the ordinary Jews by their ability to explain how the universe was created. Their powers of understanding and interpretation were also applied to the Temple of Torah. They were able to discover, for example, the distance between the Temple at Jerusalem and the Temple in heaven. Thus, the power struggle between Exilarch and Rabbi, which resulted in the Rabbis' emphasis on intellectual and religious powers, became a factor in the development of Temple mythology.

Reconciliation between Rabbi and Exilarch came as the two entered the fifth century. The Exilarch maintained control as head of the community by becoming more like the Rabbis in his knowledge of Torah. The Rabbis reciprocated by becoming more like the Exilarch in their Messianism.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 71.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 66-71 and Neusner, Later Sasanian

One other force confronted both Rabbi and Exilarch: the Sasanian government.

c) The Crises of Sasanian Measures

Ardashir conquered the empire of the Parthian Arsacids in A.D. 226.¹⁷⁷ The new Sasanian dynasty, called after its eponymous hero-priest Sasan, was essentially religious in nature and goals.¹⁷⁸ Ardashir employed every means to centralize the bureaucracy and unify the empire. A state church was established to consolidate the pyramid-like social structure. The Sasanians were agriculturalists. They built elaborate irrigation systems and founded cities in the fertile regions.¹⁷⁹ Despite the increased productivity of the land, Rav lamented the change in government:

Antonius served Rabbi [Judah the Prince]. Ardavan served Rav. When Antonius died, Rabbi lamented, the bond is snapped. When Ardavan died, Rav lamented, the bond is snapped.¹⁸⁰

This reference indicates first that Rav had close relations with the Parthian government under Ardavan, and also that the

Times, pp. 45-60.

¹⁷⁷ Percy Sykes, A History of Persia (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1969), p. 394.

¹⁷⁸ See Clement Huart, Ancient Persian and Iranian Civilization (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), pp. 121-2.

¹⁷⁹ Walter Fischel, "Persia," EJ, Vol. 13, p. 318. Cf. Neusner, The Early Sasanian Period, pp. 12-13.

¹⁸⁰ B.T. 'Avodah Zarah, 10b-11a.

relation had been severed. The early policies of the Sasanian government were highly inimical to the Jewish way of life. Adashir annulled the measure of Jewish legal autonomy in force under Parthian rule. Founded as it was on Zoroastrian religion, the Sasanian government issued decrees against a number of Jewish practices which offended the Magi. For example, the Jewish practice of lighting the Hanukkah lamp near the street was changed to protect the sanctity of fire in the Mazdean state-church.¹⁸¹ Other Jewish customs were also negated by the state:

They decreed thrice on account of three things. They decreed concerning meat because of the priestly gifts. They decreed concerning the baths on account of ritual immersion. They exhumed the dead, because they [the Jews] rejoiced on their festivals as it is said (I Sam. 12:15): "Then shall the hand of the Lord be against you and against your fathers." For Rabbah b. Sammu'el said, That [against the fathers] referred to exhumation of the dead, for the master said, "For the sins of the living are the dead exhumed."¹⁸²

The exhumation constituted an attempt to force the Jews to conform to the Mazdean custom of burial. The bodies were left to the vultures; the bones were buried later.¹⁸³ To compound the miseries which the Jews experienced, the Sasanians destroyed synagogues¹⁸⁴ and punished individuals who

¹⁸¹ See B.T. Shabbat, 45a. Cf. Neusner, The Early Sasanian Period, pp. 35-6.

¹⁸² B.T. Yevamot, 63b.

¹⁸³ A.V.W. Jackson, "Zoroastrianism," JE, Vol. 12, p. 696.

¹⁸⁴ B.T. Yoma, 10a, see below.

were seen practicing the rituals of the Jewish faith.

Neusner's estimate of the critical nature of early Sasanian measures captures the severity of their imposition on Babylonian Judaism:

Between the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 and the rise of Islam six centuries later, no event bore greater significance, nor made a deeper impact upon the Babylonian Jews' consciousness, than the rise of Sasanian power and the concomitant establishment of Mazdaism.¹⁸⁵

But the repressive decrees of the first Emperor, Adashir, were modified by his successor, Shapur I (A.D. 242-247). The change of attitude represented an attempt to conciliate the Jewish community to Sasanian rule. Jewish support did not come easily, but by the end of the third century and in the course of the fourth, the Jews had little cause for complaint against Sasanian rule.¹⁸⁶

Judaism's response to historical events of a critical character followed the path of renewed messianic speculation and a fresh examination of Scripture. Certainly, the Sasanian take-over was one of those events. The Rabbis were not always agreed in their messianic views,¹⁸⁷ but the hope of divine deliverance was shared by all. As stated earlier, the Messiah myth was integrated with the Temple myth. Their

¹⁸⁵Neusner, The Early Sasanian Period, p. 52.

¹⁸⁶See *ibid.*, pp. 45, 67, 119-125.

¹⁸⁷For the variance between Rav and Samuel see B.T. Sanhedrin, 97b; Ketuvok, 112b. Cf. Neusner, The Early Sasanian Period, pp. 52-57.

existence together, and some of the early Sasanian tensions which contributed to their production, can be seen in the following excerpt:

Rav said, Persia will fall into the hands of Rome. Therefore R. Kahna and R. Assi asked Rav, Shall builders [of the Second Temple] fall into the hands of the destroyers [thereof]? He said to them, Yes, it is the decree of the king. Others say, he replied to them, They too are guilty, for they destroyed synagogues. It has been taught by a Tanna: Persia will fall into the hands of the Romans, first because they destroyed synagogues, second because it is the king's decree that the builders shall fall into the hands of the destroyers. Rav further said, The Son of David will not come until the wicked kingdom of Rome will have spread over the whole world for nine months, as it is said (Micah 5:2), 'Therefore will he give them up until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth, then the residue of his brethren shall return with the children of Israel.'¹⁸⁸

The destroyers of the Temple and the destroyers of synagogues were equally guilty. Israel's hope of restoration was seen in Messiah, son of David.

Babylonian Messianism reached its climax half a century before the completion of the Talmud. Yazdagird II (ca. 439-457) reversed the policy toward the Jews. Judaism became an illicit religion, and anyone found practicing it was severely punished. A situation as critical as the Hadrianic repression in Palestine fell upon the Babylonian community. Sabbath observance was prohibited, Jewish schools were closed, and Iranian law was strictly enforced.¹⁸⁹ The

¹⁸⁸ B.T. Yoma, 10a.

¹⁸⁹ See Fischel, "Persia," EJ, Vol. 13, p. 319. Cf. Neusner, Later Sasanian Times, pp. 60-64.

Rabbis were convinced that the end of the age was approaching. Some revived a messianic tradition which said that the Messiah would come 400 years after the destruction of the Temple.¹⁹⁰ The date of his appearance was estimated at A.D. 468. Yazdagird's measures were intensified under Peroz (ca. 459-484) who is referred to in the Talmud as "Peroz the wicked."¹⁹¹ His punitive measures inflicted on the Jews may have been incited by Jews' mistreatment of the Magi. The Rabbis taught that Messiah's coming required the preparatory overthrow of pagan cults. It may have been in reaction to the Jewish uprising that Jewish children were captured and used in fire temples.¹⁹²

After the unfulfilled hope of Messiah's coming to end the cruel world system, the Rabbis again searched the Scriptures and their souls for answers to the dilemma. Additional interpretations of the Temple were doubtless added to the mythological matrix by which the Jews met the critical events of the time. The Babylonian Rabbis could not change political history by their Torah, but they could and did exercise

¹⁹⁰B.T. 'Avodah Zarah, 9b. "From the year 400 after the destruction of the Temple [dated by the Rabbis in 68] if someone says to you, 'Buy a field worth a thousand dinarii for one denar', do not buy it," i.e., the Messianic age will begin in that year.

¹⁹¹B.T., Hallin, 62b. Cf. Sykes, Persia, p. 436; Neusner, Later Sasanian Times, p. 65.

¹⁹²See Neusner, Later Sasanian Times, pp. 65-67.

their interpretive powers within the context of their own theology. The power myths of the Temple are reflective of this endeavour which would have persisted until the close of the Talmud.

C. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to identify some of the key events and experiences which shaped the mythology of the Temple in rabbinic literature. By way of conclusion, it may be observed that the Babylonian schools, in their peak of brilliance, probably exerted an intellectual and religious influence on the Palestinian Rabbinate. This would have been especially true of the years between 200 and 300. In the third century, except for the first decade of Sasanian rule, the Babylonian schools flourished. There was frequent intercourse between the Palestinian Rabbinate and the Babylonian one. But the oppressive conditions in Palestine were not conducive to creative activity. Therefore, it is quite possible that much of the mythopoeic creation had its origin in Babylonia and was modified in Palestine. This idea is presented here merely as a personal observation with some relevance to the over-all conclusions which follow. It would be difficult to prove its validity conclusively.

The final redaction of the various sources included literary fragments from the sages of the centuries following the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In some passages

the date of writing can be determined with a degree of accuracy, but in many cases the time of writing is highly uncertain.¹⁹³ It can be affirmed with confidence, however, that the Rabbis wrote progressively from A.D. 100 to the completion of the various works. The composite picture of the Temple which appears in the editions was created against the backdrop of the biblical antecedent, and in the midst of critical, frustrating circumstances.

¹⁹³Kaplan, Redaction, pp. 43-70.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The intention of the investigation has been to demonstrate how the mythical Temple of the Rabbis was related both to the Jewish Temple of history and to the conditions within which the Temple myths evolved. Several conclusions were drawn throughout the discussion. This summary should bring them into sharper focus.

Rabbinic teaching rested on the authority of the Jews' canonical Scriptures and the Oral Law. Because of their devotion to both sources they were unable to relegate the Temple to a minor position in their thinking. In the canonical source they were confronted with an historical Sanctuary, a concrete symbol of a covenant agreement between Yahweh and his people. In their oral tradition also they were faced with the Temple and its cult. The conclusions may be summarized under three main headings: the place of the historical Temple in the Temple of myth, contributing factors internal to rabbinic Judaism, and contributing factors external to rabbinic Judaism.

A. The Place of the Historical Temple in the Rabbinic Temple of Myth

The history of the Temple as it stood in Jewish traditions became the core for post-Temple mythology. Layer upon layer of symbolic meaning was added to the historical data. Foundation stories associated with David in the biblical narratives no doubt sprang from an historical base. But even as early as the writing of the books of Samuel, mythical elements were attached to the historical events. David was the chosen king, Jerusalem the chosen city, and the place of David's first sacrifices the chosen site of the Temple.

By the time the Davidic foundation stories had reached rabbinic literature they had gone through several stages of metamorphosis. The Holy City had become the highest point on the earth. The giant rock on which the first sacrifices had been offered had become the navel of the universe and the spot from which fertility flowed to the countries of the world.

The symbolism linked with the historical Temple of Solomon also underwent evolution. There was, to be sure, a degree of symbolic significance attached to the Solomonic structure during its history. The Temple motif from neighbouring religions was incorporated into the magnificent Solomonic building. Phoenician artisans applied their skills in making the Temple of Israel a superb representative of the

temples in the ancient Near East of that time. Elements of cosmic symbolism could be seen in giant free-standing pillars and in the great bronze Sea which had its counterpart in the Babylonian apsû. Fertility symbols were present not only in the Sea itself, but also in the bulls supporting it. How much symbolic significance the contemporary Israelites saw in the Temple and its furniture can not be determined with certainty. The Temple did, however, bear the marks of a microcosm and a fertility centre. Moreover, it is clear that the Solomonic Temple was a great national symbol. It became the material sign of Yahweh's presence with his chosen people in the land of promise.

From the account of the Solomonic Sanctuary with its rudimentary mythology the Rabbis created a much more highly developed fertility Temple with cosmic significance. Solomon, they maintained, was able to grow fruits from every country of the world because he knew the exact spot of ground under which the water supply flowed to the various countries from the Temple source. Solomon's bed, the place of sexual intercourse, was compared to the Holy of Holies. Yahweh's dwelling place on earth was the so-called nuptial chamber of the universe.

While the Temple of Solomon was esteemed by the Rabbis, they identified more closely with the post-exilic Temple. Several arguments could be advanced as to the reasons for their attachment to the Second Temple. One that presents

itself as logically consistent is that the Rabbis were in a situation similar to that which preceded the construction of the Second Temple. Then when the Temple was built Ezra and Nehemiah enforced the Torah with a conviction very much like that of the Rabbis. Moreover, their admiration for the Second Temple and its service corresponded with their devotion to the Torah which the Ezra school regulated and taught. The extent of the symbolism inherent in the post-exilic Temple is hard to discern on account of the limited references in the available sources. But of its popularity there is little doubt. Jews from all over the Mediterranean basin flocked to the great festivals.

The influence of Hellenism was felt throughout Jewry, and many Jews of the period of the Second Temple blended elements of Greek culture with their Jewish faith. Hellenism was even more pronounced in the Herodian period. The embellishments of Herod's Temple synthesized motifs from cultures of the Diaspora. Furthermore, there can be little doubt that many of the ideas of Hellenism infiltrated even the more conservative groups in Judaism of that time. Philo, for example, strove to synthesize the best of Greek philosophy with Hebrew religion. The conclusion is that the Hellenistic influence which permeated Jewry throughout the Greek and Roman periods of the Temple's history left its mark on the minds of rabbinic leaders of Judaism. Plato's concept of the ideal archetype is clearly evident in the celestial archetype

of the Jerusalem Temple in rabbinic literature. Granted, the Rabbis already had the idea of the archetypal motif in their Scriptures. God instructed Moses to build the Tabernacle after the pattern which he saw on the mountain.¹ One finds, however, that the rabbinic exposition of the Exodus account is clearly reflective of the Greek archetypal structure promulgated by Plato. Of course, numerous religions of the ancient Near East adopted this mythology. Its origin is difficult to trace. As far as the Rabbis' version is concerned it is quite likely that their ideas stemmed from those which had already circulated in Judaism during the Hellenistic period of the Second Temple, and more particularly during the Herodian period.² The history of the Jewish Temple assuredly was the soil from which rabbinic myths concerning the Temple grew.

B. Contributing Factors Internal to Rabbinic Judaism

After the destruction of A.D. 70 Judaism was forced to embark on a new course. Two factors internal to Judaism began to shape the destiny of the Jewish community and the development of Temple mythology.

The first of these was the Torah. With the Temple

¹Ex. 25:8-9.

²Reference was made earlier to the letter to the Hebrews in which the heavenly archetype is clearly evident. The idea was circulating before the Rabbis were beginning to write.

gone, the attention of the Rabbis became more intensely focused on Jewish Law. They studied it assiduously and became expert at interpreting and teaching it. Torah had power, the Rabbis taught. And those who set themselves to studying it diligently would gain powerful insights into the many secrets of the universe. Moses was the first Rabbi, and even as the Holy One bestowed unusual powers upon him, he also graced the Rabbis with the power of Torah. Students were encouraged to enter the rabbinic academies, first in Palestine and later in Babylonia.

The flames of destruction had scarcely subsided when the voice of the Rabbis and the teaching of Torah were felt throughout Jewry. The Torah myth, as Neusner calls it,³ became the controlling force in the life of Judaism. The question is, why then did they continue to venerate the Temple when they had found ways to live without it? They did not maintain their regard for it merely because it had played a part in their history. The fact is that the Rabbis had no alternative but to teach the worth of the Temple as a major symbol of Judaism. The Temple cult was deeply embedded in the Torah. It could not be explained away, so they explained it more fully. Rabbi after Rabbi, generation after generation, added to the symbolic understanding of the Temple. And the longing for the Temple grew along with the mythology. To

³Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 81.

restore the Temple to its historic location was impossible. The Jews lacked the political and military strength to rebuild the Holy City and the Sanctuary. This point introduces the other internal factor which contributed to the evolution of Temple mythology: Messianism.

Messianism had existed in Judaism long before the destruction of the Temple. New Testament Messianism, for example, was reflective of a tradition which went back to the Hebrew Bible. The Rabbis who survived the destruction tried to control messianic feeling among some radical elements of Judaism in view of the volcanic nature of Roman politics at that time. Their attempts to control the feelings did not mean that they had abandoned the idea of a Messiah-deliverer. Their Scriptures and tradition taught that Messiah would come. They believed both sources implicitly, and were thoroughly convinced that Yahweh would send his anointed servant to deliver his people and restore the land, the City, and the Temple.

Judaism did not conceive of a Messiah without a Temple. He was to be from the line of David, and rule as the Davidic dynasty had done before: in conjunction with the Temple cult. Both of these forces, Torah and Messianism, within Judaism had repeated confrontations with antithetical powers external to Judaism. These powers were within the cultural environment but outside the religion of Judaism. It was out of these confrontations, more than anything else,

that the Rabbis continued to multiply the myths associated with the Temple.

C. Contributing Factors External to Rabbinic Judaism

A cloud of despair settled over the Jewish communities after the humiliating experience of A.D. 70. Palestinian Jews suffered most during and after the war. They felt the scourge of political oppression in the aftermath of destruction. The Rabbis experienced the oppression and felt the despair, but they were able to rise above the situation. They devoted themselves to the study of the greater power, the Torah. And they had a precedent in their history.

The Temple of the Jews had fallen prey to alien hands 600 years previous, but the gallant exiles prevailed because they had the Torah. The Rabbis were able to look back to that context similar to their own. They could see in history that the antecedent exiles and repatriates survived and prevailed. The Law took precedence then and the commonwealth was restored. The Rabbis were able to take their cue from their prototypes in this parallel situation.

But as the Rabbis studied and taught they saw little opportunity for the realization of their dreams of independence and national identity. The great national symbol, the Temple, was in the Torah but not in Jerusalem. The early Rabbis of post-Temple Judaism soon began to compensate for the frustration of Imperial opposition to the rebuilding of

the Temple. Little by little they produced a Temple of myth. By the time Patriarch Judah had published the Mishnah (ca. A.D. 200) many pieces of the mythical Temple of the Rabbis had taken shape. Various factors in Roman Palestine contributed to the mythical additions.

First, the frustration of economic privation tended to generate idealistic interpretations. Destruction in Palestine generally had placed many towns and villages at a serious economic disadvantage. In addition, Rome continued to demand taxes which became increasingly higher. Jewish identity was severely crushed when the Roman government forced the Jews to pay the Temple tax to support a pagan sanctuary. Their longing for deliverance must have intensified under such duress, and their desire for the restoration of their own Temple must have increased. But the messianic deliverer did not come; the Temple tax still had to go to a pagan temple during those economically lean years. The Rabbi could do little else but imagine a Temple and cult which had powers of prosperity inherent in them, but which, at that time, did not exist in Jerusalem.

The economic difficulty was compounded by repeated crop failure in Palestine. Some rabbinic authorities blamed the condition, not on the Roman government or on natural phenomena, but on the absence of the Temple from the holy mount. The water libation about which they wrote was a form of sympathetic rain-making ritual. The ritual could not be

performed in any other but the Temple in the Holy City. Since the Temple was destroyed, the Rabbis taught, the fertile rains have been withheld. Since there was nothing they could do materially to restore the Temple, they engaged in mythopoeic activity. Their expansion of the myth of the Temple as a centre of fertility is understandable in light of their economic handicap.

The Palestinian Jews, at times, attempted to effect some political reverses. One which presented some prospect was the Bar Kocheba revolt under Hadrian's regime. The undertaking had the support of Rabbi Akiba. This leading Rabbi hailed Bar Kocheba as the Messiah. The success of the uprising was extremely limited. The brief control of Jerusalem was crushed in A.D. 135, and again Jewish hopes were dashed. The disappointment, as well as the political subjugation, must have engendered imaginative interpretations as the Rabbis settled in again to a renewed study of Scripture and Torah. As the task of rebuilding appeared less and less possible, the heavenly archetype would have become more and more regarded as the true Temple beyond the reach of the Roman legions.

Jewish hopes reached great heights under the reign of Emperor Julian (A.D. 361-363). Julian's favour toward the Jews and his promise to rebuild the Temple appeared to many as the fulfilment of their dreams. But Julian's premature death extinguished the glimmer of hope which had appeared on

the horizon. The political fortune of Palestinian Jewry became worse and worse, so that the only hope left on which the people could depend with certainty was heaven. The celestial ideal presented itself as a more reliable option than the spatial/temporal sanctuary of Jerusalem.

These external factors were important stimuli for Jewish religious thought to produce a mythical Temple. But they would not have had the same result had it not been for the central position which Torah and Messianism occupied within Judaism. The internal and external forces upon the rabbinic Judaism of Palestine helped to generate the mythical Temple described in Chapter III.

The Babylonian schools also contributed significantly to the development of the Temple of myth. The literature produced in those schools bears many marks of an antagonistic environment which doubtless gave impetus to the development of a mythical rather than an actual Temple. But again, the two internal factors, Torah and Messianism, operated in the Babylonian community as they did in Palestine.

It was from Palestine that the Rabbis migrated following the destruction of Jerusalem. In itself, this migration of the Rabbinate to Babylonia constituted a factor in the evolution of Temple mythology. Separation from that to which an individual is peculiarly attached tends to heighten the admiration for the object of devotion and to elevate it to a higher plane of the understanding. So it was

with the Rabbis in Babylonia. They were without the Temple even when they were in Palestine, but in Babylonia they were removed completely from the land of promise. The Holy City and the Temple were viewed from the vantage point of the Babylonian culture through the eyes of the mind. Against the background of temples in Parthian and Sasanian culture the Temple of Torah was seen as surpassing anything produced by pagan hands. If pagan temples and their gods had power, Yahweh had more. Even though the Temple did not exist in history, its archetype existed in eternity. Yahweh was Lord of the universe, and as such he brooked no rival. His Temple had to possess powerful qualities of life, whether in heaven or on earth.

The power of the Rabbis in Babylonia was seriously challenged by the authority vested in the Exilarch. The Exilarch authenticated his right to political control over the Jewish community by his appeal to Davidic descent. Allegedly he could trace his lineage back to the deported king Jehoiachin who was believed to be the first Exilarch. Furthermore, he had the support of the Parthian and Sasanian governments. Against this authority of the Exilarch the Rabbis stated their claim to power on the basis of Torah. They alone were endowed with special insight to understand and interpret its intricate pattern. The Holy One had also granted them special gifts to perform miracles and solve the riddles of the universe. With such a claim to power operative

in the Babylonian Rabbinate, the Rabbis' interpretation of the meaning of the Temple was bound to receive the kind of expansion for which they claimed to be divinely qualified. Indeed, the wealth of cosmic symbolism associated with the Temple in rabbinic literature was a logical outcome of the interpretive powers which the Rabbis applied to the Torah generally. Torah power, of course, was acknowledged in Palestine before the schools of Babylonia began to function. But it was the Babylonian struggle between Exilarch and Rabbi which accentuated the Rabbis' power to discover the hidden meanings in the Scripture and tradition.

After their differences were settled, the Exilarch and Rabbi together faced extremely critical times. The Sasanian rise to power in A.D. 226 brought with it a religious drive to unify the empire around a Sasanian state church. Messianism surfaced as the Jews suffered persecution under several of the Sasanian rulers. By the time Babylonian Messianism had reached the critical proportions of the holocaust of 468, the Rabbis had already uttered and written many mythical statements concerning the glories of the coming age of Messiah. This Messianism and the crises which set it on fire, together gave impetus to mythopoeic activity in Babylonian schools. Messianism and the mythical Temple had much in common. Both were super-natural in character. They shared the Davidic foundation motif. Messiah's victory guaranteed the glorious restoration of the Temple. As

messianic expectations were shattered by Sasanian might so also were the hopes of a restored Temple.

In these times of political powerlessness, the Rabbis reverted to the only power they had left. They entered their world of the academy and used their creative imagination to produce more and more of the pieces of the mythical Temple⁴ and added them to the collection. Finally, the pieces were gathered together in the vast Babylonian Talmud.

How much the Rabbis were influenced by the religion and culture of their Parthian and Sasanian neighbours remains very much a matter of conjecture. However, such an influence is well within the realm of possibility. For example, the Sasanian accession to power was as much a religious victory as it was a political one. The Persian God of light received credit for granting success to the Sasanian devotees. All minority communities such as the Jews were, at first, required to acknowledge the supremacy of the state church and the god, Ormuzd, supreme god of light.⁵ The Rabbis could not accept the claim that a god other than Yahweh could have such power. The Holy One of Israel was Creator of all things, including light. The light of the world had its source in the Holy of

⁴Their mythic interpretation applied to many other aspects of their experience. Even the every day routine was given supernatural significance.

⁵See Jackson, "Zoroastrianism," JE, Vol. 12, pp. 696-697; Knopf, Ancient Persia, pp. 168-176; Sykes, A History of Persia, pp. 106-107.

Holies, not in the sphere of the pagan god of Persia. It may be argued, of course, that the light myth had its origin in another quarter altogether.⁶ But it seems reasonable that the Rabbis in Babylonia, surrounded as they were by anti-religionists who worshipped the god of light, should employ some of the ideas of that religion to their mythical Temple, Yahweh's sanctuary.

In looking back over the study as a whole, we conclude that Temple mythology in rabbinic literature developed from a combination of internal and external forces working on the creative thinking of the Rabbis. The Jerusalem Temple was part of an intricate symbol system within which the Jewish community lived. The Jewish people believed the meaning of the Temple to be true. The rabbinic leaders would not have considered their interpretations mere fictional inventions, and they would certainly not have referred to them as myths. Each generation of Rabbis added its own interpretations according to its own frame of reference. And for the believing Jewish community the interpretations were true.

⁶E.g., the fourth Gospel refers to the *λόγος* as the source of light. John 1:1-5.

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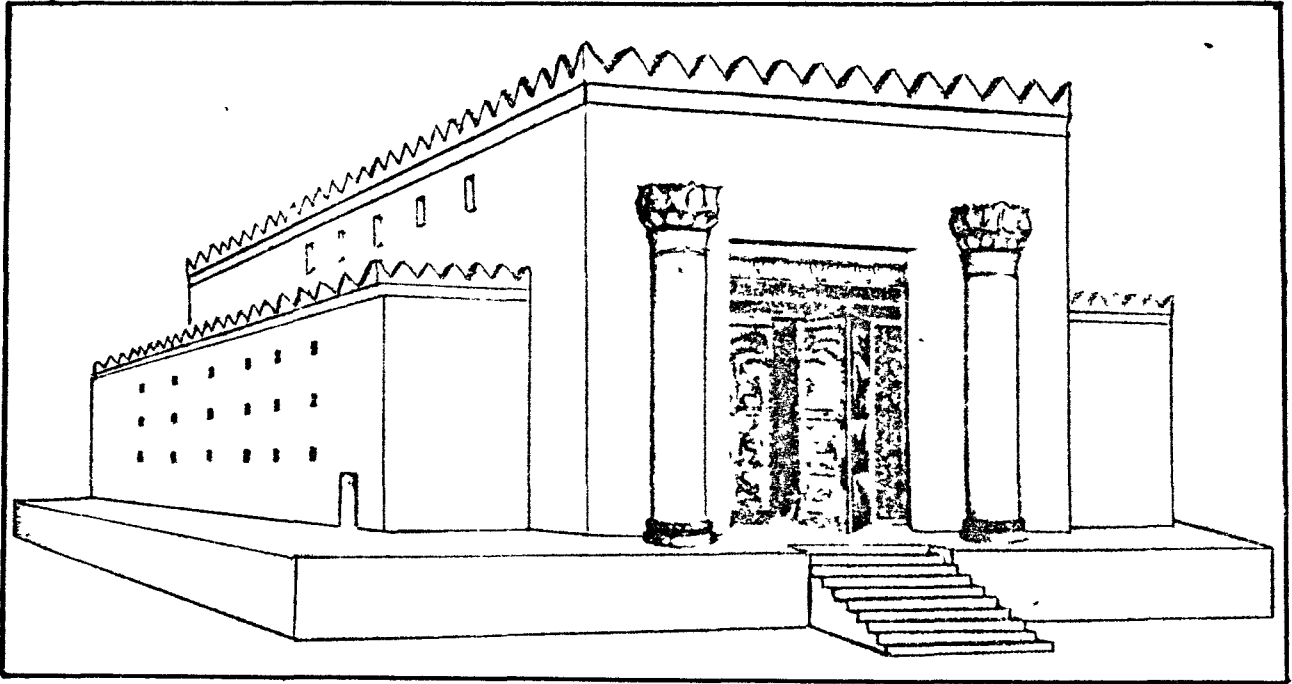
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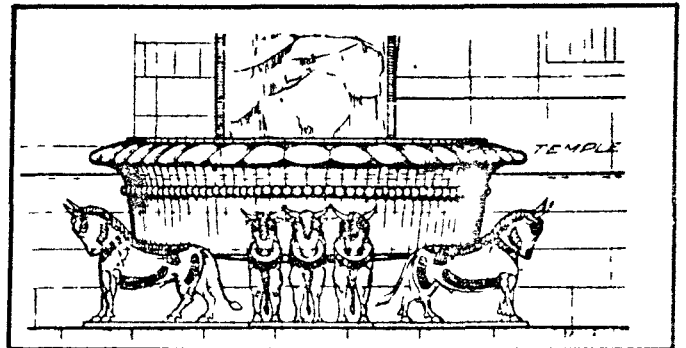
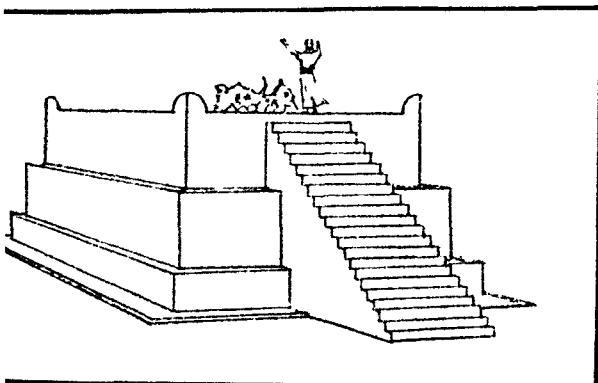
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APPENDIX A

The Solomonic Temple



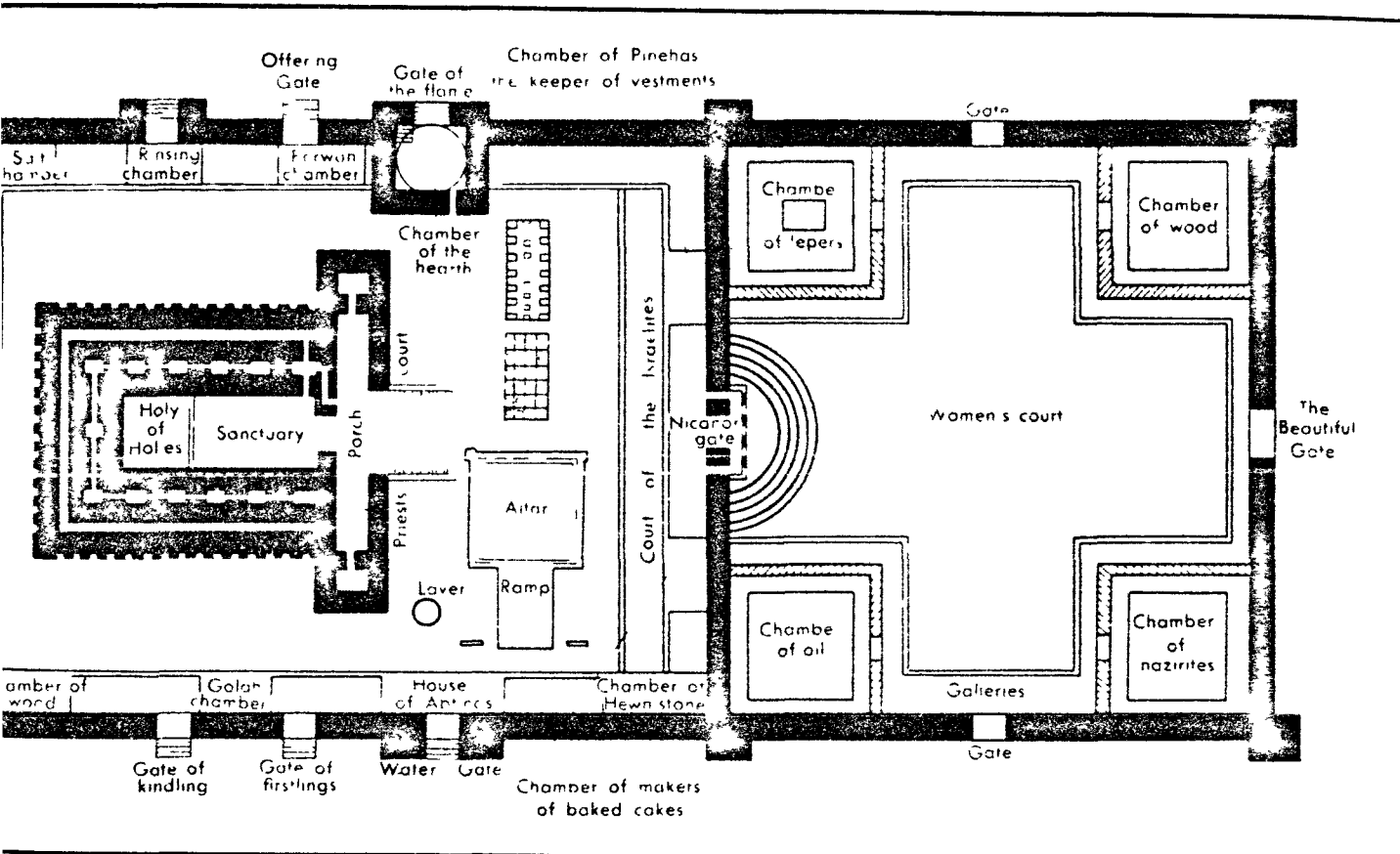
1. The Stevens reconstruction of the outer design of the Solomonic Temple as drawn from specifications prepared by W. F. Albright and G. Ernest Wright. (Wright. Biblical Archaeology, P. 139)



2. Stevens' reconstruction of the great altar of the Solomonic Temple (left), and Morden's reconstruction of the bronze Sea (right). (Wright. Biblical Archaeology, p. 140.)

APPENDIX B

The Herodian Temple



3. Samuel Safrai's suggested reconstruction of the ground plan of the Herodian Temple according to the Mishnah tractate, Middoth, and Josephus' Antiquities. (The World History of the Jewish People: The Herodian Period. Vol.7, P. 283.)

APPENDIX C

CHRONOLOGY

B.C.

- ca. 1000-961 David's reign--the founding of Jerusalem as the religious centre.
- ca. 955-948 Solomon's Temple built by Phoenicians.
- 597-ca. 575 Ezekiel in Exile.
- 587 Destruction of Solomon's Temple by Babylonians.
- 545 Second Isaiah in Exile.
- 538 The Decree of Cyrus to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple.
- 520-515 The Second Temple rebuilt--Haggai and Zechariah.
- ca. 458-420 The work of Ezra and Nehemiah.
- 167/8 The Temple polluted by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes).
- 164/5 The Temple rededicated--Judas Maccabee.
- 63 Pompey in Jerusalem--Jewish independence lost--Temple profaned.
- 19 The building of Herod's Temple.

A.D.

- 66-70 First Jewish rebellion against Rome.
- 70 Jerusalem and Temple destroyed--rabbinical Patriarchate in Palestine.

- ca. 70-80 Parthians establish Exilarchate.
- 132-135 Second Jewish Revolt of Palestinian Jews against Rome--Bar Kocheba begins restoration.
- 135 Palestine defeated--Rabbis migrate to Babylonia.
- ca. 226 Rise of Sasanian government in Persia--
Babylonian Jews persecuted.
- 425 Patriarchate abolished.
- ca. 450-470 Renewed Persecution of Judaism.
- 468 Messiah expected--Jews attack local Magi
--synagogues destroyed--Rabbis and
Exilarch killed.
- ca. 500 Jewish autonomy restored--redaction of
Babylonian Talmud.

