

Appendix

Did Solomon's Temple Have a Syrian Prototype?

Hiram, king of Tyre, worked closely with Solomon in the work of building a temple in Jerusalem (see 1 Kgs 5:1-18). Volkmar Fritz appeals to this fact in his effort to demonstrate that the temple in Jerusalem had a Phoenician or Syrian prototype.

[Solomon] . . . looked not to available Israelite prototypes, but to Phoenician exemplars, which in turn we can now trace back to long-room temples in northern Syria and eventually back to the *megaron* house in Anatolia, nearly 2,000 years before Solomon built his House of the Lord.¹

What prototypes does Fritz have in mind? If he is asserting that the small temple at Arad had no influence on the one in Jerusalem, that needs no asserting. It was built on a broad-room plan (i.e., it was rectangular and the entrance was on a side wall rather than on the end) and cannot be shown to antedate the temple of Solomon.² At most the two structures are contemporary with each other. But if the claim is that Solomon ignored the wilderness tabernacle in building its replacement, that raises at least the following two problems.

First, right from the start David had wanted to transfer the worship of God from a tent to a permanent structure (see 2 Sam 7:1-7). He was not permitted to carry out this plan, but that is a separate matter. Solomon was the one who did so. Fritz calls our attention to the importance of 1 Kgs 5, because that chapter tells us that Hiram helped build the temple. But 1 Kgs 8 is part of the same narrative. There the finished temple is dedicated. The central act of dedication consisted of transferring the ark from the "Tent of Meeting" to its new resting place in the second apartment of Solomon's temple.

When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the priests took up the ark, (4) and they brought up the ark of the Lord and Tent of Meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The priests and Levites carried them up, (5) and King Solomon and, with him, the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not recorded or counted. (1 Kgs 8:3-5)

To suggest, in this context, that the temple represents a break with the tabernacle services rather than a continuation of them is unreasonable.

And second, if Solomon did not draw from the tabernacle in designing his temple, how can we account for its unique features in contrast to the temples Fritz discusses? Why was not the first room much smaller than the second (as in temple D at Ebla)?³ Or if the comparison is between the main hall at Ebla and the main hall at Jerusalem, why was the second apartment not replaced by a niche in the back wall? (And in this event why was there no antechamber?) Alternatively, why was the second room not replaced by a raised platform (as at Emar or Hazor) or eliminated altogether (as at Shechem or Megiddo)? If this is the sort of material we are bringing forward for comparison with Solomon's temple, do not such glaring differences make the similarities between the earlier wilderness tabernacle and the later Jerusalem temple even more prominent?

Admittedly the front portico of Solomon's temple resembled that of contemporary Syrian temples, but that was not the most fundamental part of its design. It is superficial, i.e., on the surface, on the outside. The structure inside is much more significant for comparative purposes than the shape of its facade.

It is instructive to notice the assumption on which Fritz' argument is predicated. He begins by making the two rooms of Solomon's temple into one room plus a wooden shrine. If it has only a single room (a single long room), the comparisons he proposes make sense. And they are supported by the similarity between the portico of Solomon's temple and those of contemporary Syrian temples. But the starting point is wrong. Solomon's temple had two rooms.

¹"Temple Architecture: What Can Archaeology Tell Us About Solomon's Temple?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1987, p. 49.

²Israelite occupation of Arad begins in stratum XI, which dates from the tenth century B.C. (see Ze'ev Herzog, Miriam Aharoni, and Anson F. Rainey, "Arad: An Ancient Israelite Fortress with a Temple to Yahweh" (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1987, pp. 26-27). Solomon died in 931/30 B.C. after a forty year reign (see 1 Kgs 11:42). This brings us to approximately 971/70 B.C. He started building the temple in his fourth year and completed it in seven years (see 1 Kgs 6:1). Counting inclusively and using a fall-to-fall calendar, Solomon's temple was under construction from 966 to 960/59 B.C. To antedate and influence that structure the temple at Arad would have to have been completed in the first third of the tenth century. But in any event it was a a broad-room design and the other was a long-room design. There is no comparison between the two, as Fritz correctly points out.

³For ground plans of this temple and all those mentioned subsequently within this paragraph see Fritz, "Temple Architecture," pp. 46-47. In this argument against Fritz I am using materials that he himself provides.