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Architectural images of the Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple in the Bible

Abstract

Analytical research of the Holy Bible Text was carried out with the aim to get information about the architect aspect in the structure of the Tabernacle, which Moses had made, and the Temple in Jerusalem, built by King Solomon. Common principles of architect structure of this Temples are revealing. They became sacred prototypes for subsequent Christian churches.

Keywords: the Bible, information about the Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple, architectural aspects, image reconstruction.

It is relevant to research the texts of Scripture as a source of information in the different areas of knowledge. The Bible mentions various cult constructions. The most detailed information is found about the Jerusalem Temple and the Tabernacle as its prototype. Biblical texts were investigated in order to identify information about the architectural aspects of these sacred buildings. Research methodology is based on a systems approach. It includes: a method of historical and architectural analysis of biblical texts in order to identify descriptions of temple structures, structural and analytical method, search for archaeological evidence of the reliability of their existence, the method of architectural interpretation of identified information, the method of critical selection of graphic material according to the principle of the most probable the detected information from the texts of the Bible. Working with texts made in the following order: 1) when read 66 books of the Bible consistently found all the names and passages of Scripture relevant to the temple architecture and containing any direct or contextual information, 2) on the basis of architectural analysis clarified belonging parts. The work was carried out with the advice of the teacher of the Kazan Theological Seminary PhD. Theology I. Tsvetkov and the Chief Rabbi of Tatarstan I. Gorelik.

The Tabernacle is mentioned in 14 books of the Old Testament and in 3 books of the New Testament.

The Bible provides a detailed description of its purpose, three-dimensional spatial composition, architectural peculiarities, building materials, structural elements, fastening systems and the erection work and disassembling as dictated by the LORD to Moses. *«Set up the Tent according to the plan that I showed you on the mountain. Make a curtain of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool. Embroider it with figures of winged creatures. Hang it on four posts of acacia-wood covered with gold, fitted with hooks, and set in four silver bases. Place the curtain under the row of hooks in the roof of the Tent, and behind the curtain put the Covenant Box containing the two stone tablets. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Put the lid on the Covenant Box. Outside the Most Holy Place put the table against the north side of the Tent and the lamp-stand against the south side. For the entrance of the Tent make a curtain of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool and decorated with embroidery. For this curtain make five posts of acacia-wood covered with gold and fitted with gold hooks; make five bronze bases for these posts [Ex 26 (30-37)]».*

Thus, the internal space of the Tabernacle could be divided into two parts. The most important part is – the Most Holy Place – where was the Covenant Box with stone tablets in it. The second part was in front of it – the Holy Place, containing the table for the showbread, the menorah and the gold altar for burning incense in front of the entrance to the Most Holy Place. The Tabernacle had a sacral significance: it was a mobile Temple, where the Lord's presence became apparent as a pillar of cloud or a pillar of a fire [Num 14 (14)].

As follows from the descriptions the Tabernacle had a rectangular configuration. The entrance to the Tabernacle was from the eastern side, which is clearly apparent from the context [Ex 26 (22-29, 36-37), 36 (27-33)]. Said that horizontal connections between twenty vertical supports were poles, inserted into rings. Internal pole, according to the writings, was located «from one end to another». It seems that it could be considered a beam that was placed at the top and along the long axis of the Tabernacle. However, according to the translation from

Hebrew and explanation by Yitzhak Gorelik the chief Rabbi of Tatarstan, this structural connection was placed in a mounting hole inside of all supporting elements, at their mid height level, not at the top. There is no information about the type of covering of the Tabernacle had. However following to the text description, it was flat, multi-layered and spanned the Tabernacle without any beams: it did not sag, so that the edges hanging down to the ground. It is known from the descriptions, that the internal space of the Tabernacle was divided into two parts by a curtain supported with four columns; however, the position of the curtain as well as the dimensions of the columns were not specified. One can agree with V. Fartusov's assumption that four columns were not connected with each other nor with major structural elements, as the fitting joints were not mentioned (the curtain in this case was hanged on them loosely) [1].

According to the author, the Bible does not reveal enough information for an exact reconstruction of the interiors of the Tabernacle. This information may be hypothetical only. [fig. 1]. Only Moses knew everything about the Tabernacle as he was the only person who saw it the way it was supposed to be («God Said to him, «Be sure to make everything according to the pattern you were shown on the mountain» [Heb 8 (5), Ex 25 (40)]).

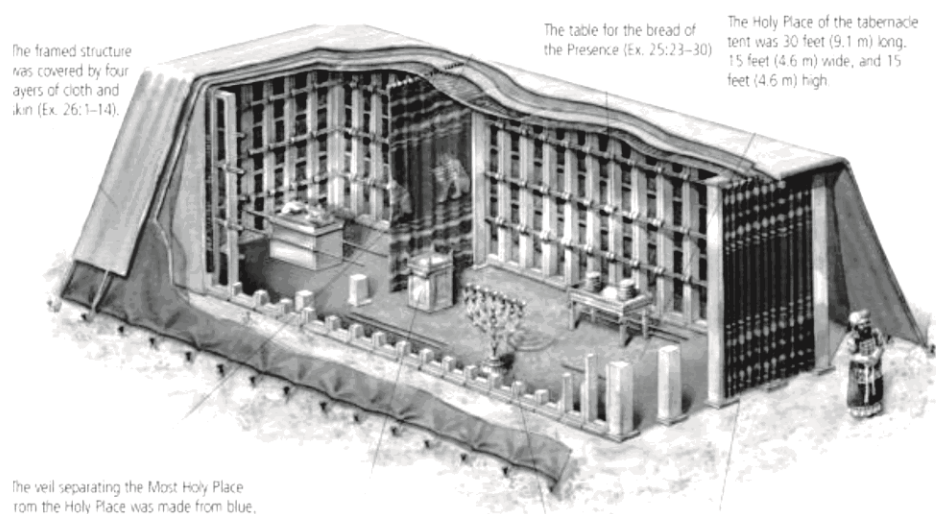


Fig. 1. The Tabernacle erected by Moses. znaki.opk.ru

The term «temple» is mentioned in 15 books of the Old Testament and in 10 books of the New Testament. The Jerusalem Temple (the LORD's house) is mentioned in 20 books of the Old Testament and in 11 books of the New Testament. King David came up with the idea of designing and building the Temple for the God. King Solomon, king David's son, was chosen for this mission by the God himself and realized his father's idea [1Chr 28(5,6)]. «As for the Temple, by my efforts I have accumulated more than 3,400 metric tons of gold and over 34,000 metric tons of silver to be used in building it. Besides that, there is an unlimited supply of bronze and iron... wood and stone... you must get more» [1Chr 22(14-16)] «David gave Solomon the plans for all the temple buildings, for the storerooms and all the other rooms, and for the Most Holy Place... He also gave him the plans... for the courtyards and the rooms around them... David also gave him the plans... [1Chr 28 (11-13)]». And gave stockpiled huge amount of gold, silver, copper, iron, wood, marble and other stones and expensive multi-colored stones for building the Temple [1 CrI 22 (14-16), 28 (15-18), 29 (2-5)].

«Inside it was 27 metres long, 9 metres wide, and 13,5 metres high. The entrance room was 4,5metres deep and 9 metres wide, as wide as the sanctuary itself. The walls of the Temple had openings in them, narrower on the outside than on the inside. Against the outside walls, on the sides and the back of the Temple, a three-storied annexe was built, each storey 2,2 metres high. Each room in the lowest storey was 2,2 metres wide, in the middle storey 2,7 metres wide, and in the top storey 3,1 metres wide. The temple wall on each floor was thinner than on the floor below so that the rooms could rest on the wall without having their beams built into it. The stones with which the Temple was built had been prepared at the quarry, so that there was no noise made by hammers, axes, or any other iron tools as the Temple was being built. The entrance to the lowest storey of the annexe was on the south side of the Temple, with stairs leading up to the second and third storeys. So King Solomon finished building the Temple. He put in a ceiling made of beams

and boards of cedar. The three-storied annexe, each storey 2,2 metres high, was built against the outside walls of the Temple, and was joined to them by cedar beams» [1 Kgs 6 (2-10)].

«The inside walls were covered with cedar panels from the floor to the ceiling, and the floor was made of pine. An inner room, called the Most Holy Place, was built in the rear of the Temple. It was nine metres long and was partitioned off by cedar boards reaching from the floor to the ceiling. The room in front of the Most Holy Place was eighteen metres long. The cedar panels were decorated with carvings of gourds and flowers; the whole interior was covered with cedar, so that the stones of the walls could not be seen. In the rear of the Temple an inner room was built, where the Lord's Covenant Box was to be placed. This inner room was nine metres long, nine metres wide, and nine metres high, all covered with pure gold. The altar was covered with cedar panels. The inside of the Temple was covered with gold, and gold chains were placed across the entrance of the inner room, which was also covered with gold. The whole interior of the Temple was covered with gold, as well as the altar in the Most Holy Place.

The walls of the main room and of the inner room were all decorated with carved figures of winged creatures, palm trees, and flowers. Even the floor was covered with gold. A double door made of olive wood was set in place at the entrance of the Most Holy Place; the top of the doorway was a pointed arch. The doors were decorated with carved figures of winged creatures, and the palm trees, and flowers. The doors, the winged creatures, and the palm trees, were covered with gold. For the entrance to the main room a rectangular door-frame of olive wood was made. There were two folding doors made of pine and decorated with carved figures of winged creatures, palm trees, and flowers, which were evenly covered with gold [1 Kgs 6 (15-22, 29-35)]».

In these detailed descriptions of the Temple the principal organization of its structure is obviously traced in the image of the Tabernacle.

The First Temple in Jerusalem was built in 10th century BC. It appeared in annals of universal history of architecture owing to the information from biblical texts only [2]. It tells about his Phoenician style. This statement is based on the Bible's mention about Phoenician craftsmen [2 Chr 2 (13-14)]. Many architectural and decorative elements of the Temple have similarities with the temples of Syria and Phoenicia. For example, it has an ivory reliefs in the form of cherubim and palm trees at the entrance of high columns with capitals with images of pomegranates [3]. The Temple has been repeatedly robbed and was burned and destroyed before the foundation by Nebuchadnezzar [2 Kgs 25 (9), 2 Chr 36 (19)] after 416 years of existence.

The detailed description of the First Temple in the Bible became result in numerous research studies and attempts to reconstruct it graphically image. (Newton, Allbright, Stevens, Borell, Fartusov, Dreier etc.). Discussion of these illustrations is beyond the scope of this article [4]. Graphic reconstruction presented in the article is most relevant to biblical description according to the author [fig. 2].

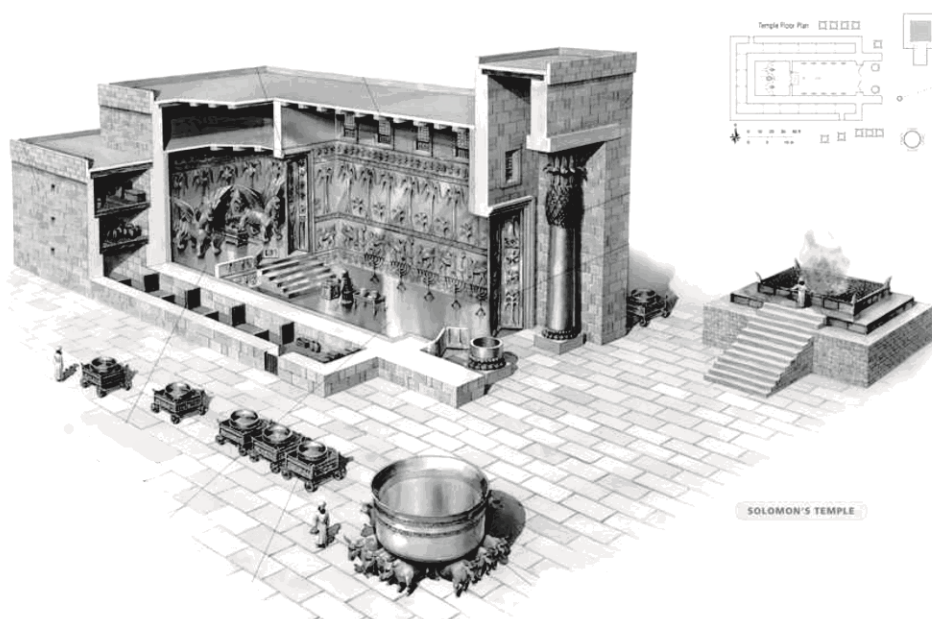


Fig. 2. The First Temple in Jerusalem. ancient-buildings.ru

King Cyrus ordered to rebuild the Temple when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity in 6th century BC. The Second Temple was built by Zarubabel. There is not a lot information about it in the Bible: «...in exchange for cedar-trees from Lebanon, which were to be brought by sea...the man started to lay the foundation of the Temple [Ezra 3 (7, 10)]; ... the Temple of the great God is being rebuilt with large stone blocks and with wooden beams set in the wall [Ezra 5 (8)]; ...Cyrus the emperor commanded that the Temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt as a place where sacrifices are made and offerings are burnt. The Temple is to be twenty-seven metres high and twenty-seven metres wide. The walls are to be built with one layer of wood on top of every three layers of stone [Ezra 6 (3-4)]».

It was greater in sizes than the First Temple, but it was less luxurious, judging by the words: «Many... had seen the first Temple, and as they watched the foundation of this Temple being laid, they cried and wailed» [Ezra 3 (12)] and «Is there anyone among you who can still remember how splendid the Temple used to be? How does it look to you now? It must seem like nothing at all» [Hag 2 (3)]. Well as the First Temple he had annexe with rooms and colonnades [1 Mac 4 (31)]. Later it has been also repeatedly robbed and desecrated by the heathen.

About 20 years BC Herod I the Great decided to reconstruct the Temple in order to make it more splendid and to enlarge the volume of the edifice and courtyards. Jews are not allowed to destroy their Holy Temple, therefore the new Temple was erected by stages – old fragments were replaced by the new ones. Here's what we know about the architecture of the Temple from the late of the first century BC to the beginning in the first century AD from the text of the New Testament: «...set him on the highest point of the Temple» [Mt 4 (5), Lk 4 (9)]; «... the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom» [Mt 27 (51), Mk 15 (38)]; «... were talking about the Temple, how beautiful it looked with its fine stones and the gifts offered to God» [Lk 21 (5)]; «It was taken forty-six years to build this Temple!» [Jn 2 (20)]; «... the Beautiful Gate, as it has called... he was carried to the gate... » [Acts 3 (3)]; «... the Temple doors were closed» [Acts 21 (30)]; «... do not measure the outer courts... » [Rev 11 (2)]. This information is not enough to recreate the image of the sacred complex. Probably it looked like this [fig. 3].

The very important artifact was discovered: last Temple is depicted on a coin – it is reliable evidence of its existence [5; fig. 4]. The real existence of the Temple of Jerusalem in the first century AD, is also confirmed by J. Flavius, who mentioned Temple and its attributes many times describing historical events as an eyewitness [6]. Tacitus also mentioned in his books about the Temple in Jerusalem, and noted that it gathers a huge wealth [7].

The Temple was not long permitted to exist. In 70 AD the Temple was destroyed by Roman warriors during Jerusalem capture by Titus. From the Temple complex only part of the Western Wall (the Wailing Wall) with surprisingly large stones remained [fig. 5].

Descriptions of the Temple can be found as well as in the book of Ezekiel [Ezek 40-43]. They are somewhat similar, but different from descriptions of the First Temple. Jews believe that one day the Third temple will be built on the same Holy places in Jerusalem.

Thus, we are convinced that the detailed description of the Biblical Tabernacle, which was built by Moses and the First Temple of Jerusalem, built by King Solomon, allows us to mention them similar compositional three-dimensional solution, the internal structure and interiors, as well as the used construction and decoration materials. About splendor of the last incarnation of the Temple, its architectural merits and design characteristics, the richest of the surface treatment on the organization of a terraced temple space, including multi-column portico and other buildings, we know from history books Flavius J. and P. Tacitus, who had seen this famous complex with their own eyes.. Proof of the existence of this temple is an artifact - an ancient coin with his picture.

The Tabernacle and the Temple, built according to the God's will, are sacral prototypes for subsequent Christian religious buildings. These ideas are covered in theoretical works of various authors (I. Svyatoslavsky, A.P. Golubtsov, N.I. Troitsky, A.S. Shenkov, etc.) [8]



Fig. 3. Model of the Temple Mount and the Second Temple [1Kgs 6(2-10)].
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Fig. 4. The coin with the Jerusalem Temple
in the first century AD

Fig. 5. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.
Photo by the author, 2012

Sources of the research

The Bible. Old Testament and New Testament. Canonical. Reprinted from Synodal Edition in Great Britain by HarperCollins Manufacturing, Glasgow, British and Foreign Bible Society, 1982. – 372 p.

Abbreviations:

Exodus (Ex), Numbers (Num), 1 Kings (1 Kgs), 2 Kings (2 Kgs), 1 Chronicles (1 Chr), 2 Chronicles (2 Chr), Ezra (Ezra), Ezekiel (Ezek), Haggai (Hag), Matthew (Mt), Mark (Mk), Luke (Lk), John (Jn), Hebrews (Heb), Acts (Acts), Revelation (Rev) and Apocryphal books: 1 Maccabees (1 Mac), 2 Maccabees (2 Mac).

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Архитектурные образы Скинии и Иерусалимского храма в Библии

Резюме

Библейские тексты исследовались с целью выявления сведений об архитектурных аспектах Скинии Моисея и Храма Соломона в Иерусалиме. Были обнаружены общие принципы формирования структуры этих храмов. Они стали прототипами для последующих христианских церквей.

В настоящее время стало актуальным обращение к текстам Священных Писаний как источникам сведений в различных областях знаний. В Библии упоминаются различные культовые сооружения. Наиболее подробные сведения встречаются об Иерусалимском Храме и Скинии как его прототипе.

Описания Храма позволяют судить о его композиционном объемно-пространственном решении, внутренней структуре и интерьерах, а также используемых строительных и отделочных материалах. Обо всем его великолепии, об архитектурных достоинствах и конструктивных особенностях, о богатейшей внутренней отделке, об организации террасированного храмового пространства, включающего многоколонные портики и другие постройки, мы узнаем также из описаний И. Флавия и П. Тацита, видевших этот знаменитый комплекс.

Скиния и Храм, сооруженные по Божьему замыслу, являются сакральными прообразами последующих христианских культовых сооружений.

Ключевые слова: Библия, информация о Скинии и Иерусалимском Храме, архитектурные аспекты, реконструкция архитектурного образа.