THE REVELATION OF JERUSALEM
A Review of Archaeological Research

FRANCES JAMES

Ever since the year 587 B.C. when the Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the 18-year-old Jehoiachin of Judah led off to exile in Babylonia, the reign and works of Solomon have represented the classic peak of human well-being—spiritual and material—to much of humankind. Needless to say, during the millennia the size and magnificence of both kingdom and works ensuing have not suffered in imagination from the absence of hard facts.

Early in the 19th century, it was realized that the ruins of the past nearly always underlie the structures of the present; almost continuously since then, one learned group or another has been making great efforts to trace Solomonic Jerusalem. For many years, much was attempted but little learned. Or, if discoveries were made, they were misinterpreted, one of the main misleading factors being the understandable tendency to identify sophisticated Roman work—especially that of Herod, who, in fact, did build a Temple—the Third—as Solomonic.

By the 1920's and '30's, enough information had piled up to yield the beginnings of a picture of Old Testament Jerusalem: for instance, Mt. Ophel, the smaller and more easterly of the two hills on which the city lies, was firmly identified as the site of the Temple and the Solomonic city, suggesting that the latter, covering an area of just under 11 acres, had had a curious profile rather like that of the state of Florida.

Since World War II, large-scale excavations in Jerusalem and elsewhere have added further information and have made it possible to put together much detail on Solomon's empire. We now believe that Solomon's palace was a type of building known as a *bit hilani*, as stereotyped a construction over much of the ancient Near East as the later Christian church, and we can (we think) even understand and explain his construction of the enigmatic *millo*. Prototypes and parallels for the Temple crop up from time to time all over the Levant.

Elsewhere, the circumvallations of a number of Solomon's "fenced cities" have been identified—their stumpy but splendid remains suggesting that the ancient chronicles were quite right to describe them with awe. Finally, we have much information on the everyday objects of the middle years of the 10th century B.C. when Solomon ruled the Ancient East, and so can flesh out the bare bones of architectural plan and Old Testament narrative.

Yet there is also much that we will never know. This is partly because what remains for archaeology to find is in itself limited and partly because, even finding all of this, the whole story still cannot be told by material remains. In this particular case, a further difficulty exists in that the nucleus of the fabled kingdom—the palace, Temple and associated buildings—lies buried beneath Jerusalem's beautiful Dome of the Rock, the mosque of Omar, a site sacred—
and therefore inviolable—to Christians, Jews and Muslims alike, though for slightly different reasons to each group. This inviolable area is unfortunately expanded from the relatively small space actually occupied by the Dome (which tradition alternately identifies as the site of the threshing floor of Araah, the Jebusite or the altar stone on which Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac to include the whole acreage of the Haram esh Sharif or Sacred Enclosure within Herod’s massive boundary wall. In short, we cannot get at what we most want to know because of its very sanctity; further, this sanctity beams out from the enclosed area to take in its periphery. Recent excavations not far beyond the boundary wall have inevitably brought protests.

The story of the ongoing discoveries here, as everywhere in the Holy Land, is a funny, glorious, heroic one, one of the true labors of love which all good research represents. You can say that it started in 1863 with the first efforts of the young Royal Engineers lieutenant who informed the British Palestine Exploration Fund, or you can say that it started an age ago with the Empress Helena, another saint or two, and a handful of pilgrims.

Strictly speaking, Helena was not looking for the Temple but for the site of the crucifixion. Going out to Jerusalem in A.D. 326 shortly after the assumption of Christianity for Rome by her son Constantine the Great, Helena found the three crosses beneath a temple to Venus erected by the exasperated Emperor Hadrian after the second Jewish Revolt of A.D. 135. Helena had no trouble in identifying the cross of Christ: a sick man carried before the three, like Lazarus, rose and walked as its man touched him.

From that time onward, through the whole of the Dark and Middle Ages, saints and pilgrims explored all four corners of the Holy Land, jotted down itineraries, built shrines or monasteries to commemorate sacred events, and considerably improved on biblical tradition. With Napoleon’s Egyptian expedition, the aim of exploration changed from an exercise in inquisitive and imaginative piety to a search for scientific information, and with the lightning trip of the American, Edward Robinson, through Palestine in the 1840’s in which he correctly identified many of the Old Testament sites, some framework was erected on which to hang the information soon to be yielded by excavation.

The earliest effort to trace the outline of the Temple is, in retrospect, an example of Victorian doggedness and ingenuity which is both amusing and impressive. It occurred in the 1860’s when the Turks would not allow any Christian near the Haram but did give them access to the upper slopes of Ophel. Lt. [later General Sir Charles] Warren, the first of the young Royal Engineers sent here to cut their teeth in doing the impossibly, explored the underpinnings of the Haram by the original method of sinking deep vertical shafts some hundreds of feet away from the great enclosure wall and then tunneling up to it at right angles.

By chance, one of Warren’s tunnels reached the Haram foundations at a colossal stone bearing ancient inscription’s marks. For a time, deciphering these provided an exciting sort of international cryptogram for the 5,000 readers of the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly. The letters today would seem to mean nothing at all but the illusion of the “inscriptions” together with the approaching shaft and tunnel has made a delightful frame for the Quarterly’s title page for nearly a century.
atop the hogback ridge of 'Ophel? Even allowing for the minimum populations and maximum structural concentrations of the time, there is little room for dwellings here. And this brings us to the enigmatic millo—which is said to have been built "round and about" by David, Solomon, and some of the later kings of Judah.

Practically all the stout gates, towers, and other substantial structures discovered on Ophel between 1885 and 1980 have in turn been identified as millo, however unconvinced.

In the 1960's, the late Dame Kathleen Kenyon uncovered a tremendous cascade of field stones flowing down the Kidron slope. It was an extremely puzzling discovery until further excavation made it clear that the stones represented the collapse of a great number of retaining walls. Some of the walls paralleled the slope; others ran up and down the hill at right angles to the first series. Together, they produced a honeycomb, the interstices of which were packed with still more rough stones; in places, this fill remained in situ to a height of about six meters. The whole had formed the underpinnings of a series of terraces which provided a horizontal extension to the eastern side of the area on which houses on the Kidron side of Ophel were erected.

Since the root of the Hebrew verb forming millo means something like "filling," this great stone network seems the best candidate for millo yet put forward. It would have needed much building and rebuilding round and about over time, as a check anywhere in the complex would have brought down great stretches of walls and houses. In fact, after millo perished in Nebuchadnezzar's savage sack, the Kidron slopes of Ophel were never recaptured. Though a small settlement again rose on the crest in the period of the Second Temple. Potholders and other archaeological material show that the stone network originated in the Late Bronze Age, four or five hundred years before the time of Solomon; about the period, in fact, when the Bible suggests the Israelites were in Egypt. The builders of millo were the Canaanite predecessors of Ammon, the Jebusite and the construction was, perhaps, maintained by the conquering Israelite kings. A great defensive wall ringed the city still further down the slope. This was shown to have been still earlier, built in the Middle Bronze Age nearly a millennium before the time of Solomon.

Jerusalem which is not buried beneath the Haram lies on the fragile stone underpinnings of millo on the Kidron slope. Even so, thanks to millo's instability, the buildings found here by excavation are in the main to be dated only to the final period of the First Temple, ca. 587 B.C.

The houses which occupied millo in Solomon's day and later may well have been what archaeology has found to be typical Israelite houses, following a uniform plan. These consist of three long, parallel rooms, the center one sometimes used as a courtyard. This usually contains the entrance at its narrow end. A fourth long, narrow room runs across the back of the building (or occasionally across the front when it would contain the entrance) at right angles to the other three. Sometimes rows of stone pillars divide the central room from the rooms on either side; sometimes the dividing is made with solid mudbrick walling. Whatever the origin of this house plan, many of Solomon's subjects, especially those in the northern part of his kingdom, lived in such dwellings.

At the north of Ophel, Solomon built the Temple and his palace—which at this point in history would naturally have included offices of the administration as well as the royal living quarters. If much of this today lies beneath the Haram enclosure, other Israelite precincts have been found over the years at such diverse sites as Hazor and Megiddo in northern and central Israel, and southern Palestine, all built by Solomon; at Samaria to the north, a similar enclave constructed by Omri and Asaiah of Israel about 930 B.C. has been excavated. Yet another, of uncertain date, has been found very recently at Ramat Rachel in the southern suburbs of Jerusalem.

Closely related plan, masonry and decorative elements occur at all five sites, suggesting incoming new ideas and new practices at the time of Solomon. Borrowing elements from one or another of them (and from a few sites in Syria and Assyria) we can get some idea of the grandiose "new Jerusalem" of this fabled monarch.

One and all the quarters reserved for royalty at these scattered sites were demarcated by an enclosure wall utilizing casemates. That is to say, there was a double wall with inner and outer faces set some six to ten feet apart. The intervening space sometimes was filled solidly with earth or rubble, sometimes was divided into storage compartments, depending, perhaps, on whether a fortress or "store
city" was enclosed. This type of wall seems to have been introduced into Palestine about the time of David, in the first half of the 10th century B.C.

Just enough of such a casemate wall was found on Ophel to establish its presence to the immediate north of the city proper. Such walls and, in fact, all structures enclosed by them would seem to be the creation of sophisticated Phoenicians, not Levittes, builders. We know from the Bible that Solomon's building program was largely designed and carried out by the men of Hiram of Tyre who were sent to Jerusalem for this very purpose. One or two sites in the Phoenician area have produced parallel architecture.

In short, Solomon was attempting to move quickly into a more sophisticated milieu than that of his predecessors by calling outside specialists in to erect capital and provincial centers which would incorporate the latest architectural developments and utilize the latest technological improvements.

THE ROYAL ENCLOSURE

Putting together the information given in the Old Testament or obtained archaeologically from Jerusalem itself or the group of parallel sites noted, we know that Solomon's buildings within the casemate walling at the summit of Ophel would have included his palace, or hibhul; the "hall of the cedar of Lebanon," or hypostyle hall; the "house of Pharaoh's daughter"; and possibly other dwellings, administrative buildings and storerooms. To their north was the Temple.

Excavation suggests that Solomon erected this group of structures to the north of the northern wall of Davidic Jerusalem. On the parallels given, a casemate wall would have been flung around those new buildings and, indeed, a fragment of such a wall was found on the right line. Since the royal enclosure was presumably beyond the limits of mills, the first of the series of great retaining walls bounding first the Temple and later repeated around the Haram layout must have been constructed at this time, both to provide for east-west expansion and to demarcate the royal and sacred area.

As it stands today, the lower courses of the Haram enclosure are mostly of Herodian work, large blocks of stone with smooth, flat bosses; but along the east, some 100 feet north of the southeast angle, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in a clearance project in 1966 uncovered a straight joint with very different types of masonry to its north and south.

To the south of this joint was the Herodian work; but to its north was rather smaller, coarser work, which may well date to the 5th century B.C. to the enclosure of Ezekiel's, or Second, Temple. This must have been founded on Solomon's enclosure wall, however, and, if so, marks the southeast corner of the latter. There was then an area 232 meters from north to south between the Temple and the southern wall of the city for Solomon's palace and administrative buildings.

It would seem simple enough to uncover buried buildings in the open space existing today south of the Haram wall. Unfortunately, Dame Kathleen Kenyon's excavations in the 1930's showed that virtually all traces of the Solomonic period (and therefore of later periods as well) had been removed by Roman quarrying when Hadrian was attempting to obliterate the Jewish capital by founding Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina on the usual Roman city plan.

We can nevertheless get a very good idea of the individual buildings of Solomon's Jerusalem from the provincial sites mentioned, as well as from a number of Syrian sites, where the architectural forms seem for the most part to have originated.

Just as Palladian architecture became the vogue all over Europe in the late 17th century A.D., so palaces of the Hellenistic form spread throughout the Levant in the Iron Age. We do not yet know why they
Reliefs from Ashurbanipal’s North Palace at Nineveh give a roughly contemporary illustration of the façade of a bit hiliya. Here both pilasters and free-standing columns have proto-ionic capitals. (Photo, courtesy of the British Museum)

were “in” but they certainly were. Whether a matter of fashion or of one king keeping up with another, a number of these palaces dating to the 1st millennium B.C. have been found in northern Syria, as well as in Palestine. For example, at Tell Taidanat near Antioch, we have not only a typical bit hiliya but an associated chapel which answers quite well to the ground plan of Solomon’s Temple as given in 1 Kings viii. Probably rather later than the time of Solomon, the hiliya form was taken eastward with great enthusiasm by the Assyrians.

As seen at Solomon’s Megiddo and Zincirli in northwestern Syria, the essential elements of the hiliya are portions of two or three columns set into the long side of the building. These lead directly into a long, narrow hall designated for royal audiences and paralleling the portico. Another constant element is a staircase to one side or the other of the long room, presumably leading to a tower or second story. These rooms represent the public part of the palace, while behind on to one side of the throne room is to be found a courtyard leading to the king’s private apartments which consisted of four or five small rooms.

In some of the Syrian and Assyrian hiliyas, daises were found at one end of the throne room, together with curious parallel grooved tracks set at right angles to the dais. The latter seem to have been used to move a brazier nearer to or further from the enthroned king; a square, iron container on wheels was found still on its tracks at Tell Halaf. At Tell Taidanat and some of the Assyrian palaces, the cast-bronze feet of (mostly wooden) furniture have been found. These feet often copy a bull’s hoof or a lion’s paw or a griffin’s claw (like Queen Anne furniture to which they may be distantly ancestral). A not too dissimilar setting must have provided the background to many of the judgments of Solomon.

The ornamentation of the portico and audience halls was impressive but probably not elaborate. With the bit hiliya, columns or pillars in number are introduced into Palestine. These are probably topped with the great proto-ionic or proto-Aeolic capitals found on many excavations. On the hiliya portico the columns would have been free-standing with the capitals carved on both faces; elsewhere, attached pilasters occur, in which case the capitals were carved on one face only. Over thirty of the proto-ionic capitals have been found since the 1930’s; thirteen at Megiddo, seven at Samaria, ten at Ramat Rahel, and one each at Hazor and Jerusalem.

We have illustrations of hiliya porticoes from Assyria to be dated somewhat later than the time of Solomon. One shows the feature as used by Sargon, the conqueror of Samaria, about 720 B.C. Here two columns support a lintel, in turn supporting a row of crenellations. Carved blocks for the latter have been found on Israeli sites producing the hiliya, as Megiddo, Samaria, and Ramat Rahel.

Yet another hiliya façade from the time of Asurbanipal, about the middle of the 7th century B.C., comes from reliefs found in the palace of this “King of the four quarters” at Nineveh. Here both columns and pilasters are incorporated; the latter, at the outer edges of the portico, while the columns are shown forming the central entrance. Since more than four (or five)
capitals were found at three of the Israelite sites, either several portions are represented at each (as occurs at some of the Syriac sites) or the proto-italic capitals were used for a type of ornamental embellishment as yet unknown to archaeologists. It has been suggested that in Assyria the portions may have opened on little gardens, and this custom, too, may have been incorporated into Solomon’s palace installation.

Small, inset windows with grids of vertical bars placed near the top of the external walls are yet another architectural feature of this building style. Windows are mentioned in the Bible, but we know about them not from their direct archaeological discovery, but from the excavation of carved ivories depicting a woman gazing out of a window surrounded by concentric insects. One of the earliest discoveries of ivories with this motif was made at Samaria in the 10th century B.C., though just such a window Jezebel, trying to entice Jelus as described in II Kings ix: 30, might have looked down at the murderer of her son. When Jelus came to Israel, Jezebel heard of it and she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out at the window.”

“The woman at the window” is seen to be a very popular ivory carving motif. A number of examples show the lady gazing over a row of small proto-italic columns set just below the window opening. These small balustrades seem also to be represented on the Assyrian reliefs showing houses in Phoenician cities. Remains of a number of the little palmette balustrades in stone were found at Rameses Rabbel a few years ago by Yohanan Aburani, adding one bit more to our knowledge of the architectural detail of Israelite buildings—to say nothing of verifying the accuracy of the Assyrian artists.

We know much less of the internal appearance of the secular buildings of Solomon and other Israelite rulers than of their exteriors. As with the furnishings of today, internal fittings were probably more often of perishable materials than those used for the external. Movables items, also, seem to have been in any case rather sparse.

We have one or two details, however. The ‘carved paneling’ noted in the Temple of the First Storax-King of Egypt from Egypt, translated into terms of Lebanon cedar and then introduced into Palestine with Solomon. There were no parallels for such a hall have been found in any of the royal Israelite compounds, carved on to the wall of the ‘woman of the window’ (T. Aburani, Excavations of Rameses Rabbel 1910-11, Rome, 1914, fig. 45).

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13 Immovable examples of ivory carving showing “the woman at the window” have been found during excavations of buildings dat- ing to the first millennium B.C., in an area stretching from Samaria to Jerusalem. These show inset windows with grids of vertical bars, an architectural detail of the period. This example comes from Nimrud, in the Old Testament (G. R. B. Burnett, A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories with other Objects of the 13th- and 12th- Century BCE Near Eastern (ivories in the British Museum, 2nd ed.).

for marriage within the Israelite religion. Dame Kathleen Kenyon has suggested that this, taken with the supposition that the lady was Solomon’s principal wife, may account for her having a household of her own. Quite possibly, her building was joined to Solomon’s bit hilel and other structures as the various palaces at Zincerni were built together.

This brings us at long last to the Temple, the structure of which the chronicler describes in considerable detail, but unfortunately, rather ambiguous and less than full detail. Each year I ask my students to make plans and drawings of the Temple from its description in I Kings; and each year they reproach me to a degree impossible to be asked of the obvious impossibility. Admittedly we do have full details of the internal gold, bronze and cedar fittings of the building, but to what extent this gives us a description of the interior of a typical Phoenician temple, or is unique to Jerusa- lems, further excavation on the Phoenician coast will tell us.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the absence of discoveries of the actual remains of the Temple itself, various scholars have come to various conclusions about it. So I will not attempt to reconcile the Bible with modern scholars nor one modern scholar with another. In fact, many of the archaeological discoveries of secular architecture, or their reconstructions as described, have occurred so recently that this has been little time to incorporate them into up-to-date reconstructions.

Our knowledge really raises as many problems as it looks to solve. Did, for example, the highly ornamental capitals of the cast-bronze pillars of Jachin and Boaz, which are said to have stood in front of the Temple, utilize the proto-italic motif? What actually remains of the Temple is today buried deep beneath the Haram, unlikely to be disturbed. Archaeology thus cannot provide a ‘visual’ restoration of the vision that we keep in our hearts. And this is perhaps just as it should be. Each of us may thus keep intact our own picture and continue to cherish it.

Atop the Temple, we see a honey-colored building gleaming in the vibrant light of the Mediterranean. Undoubtedly, it will be hailed by one of those very special double or triple rainbows which occur in this area during the spring and winter and which have always seemed to me specifically sent to underscore Jerusalem’s unique position as the emotional center for much of the world.