



CONTEXT FOR THE CHRIST EVENT:

Israelite II

UPON DAVID'S DEATH (ca. 969 BCE), Solomon took the throne of the United Kingdom of Israel (ca. 969-931 BCE). Soon thereafter Solomon negotiated with Hiram, king of Tyre, for the architects, artisans and essential materials needed to erect YHWH's Temple. Although the Scriptures provide an extensive description of the Temple, many

architectural terms remain vague (1 Kings 6, 7; 2 Chronicles 3, 4). Fortunately, a striking parallel to Solomon's Temple has been discovered at 'Ain Dara, in northern Syria. In fact, the temple at 'Ain Dara has far more in common with the Jerusalem Temple than with any other known building.

Archeological evidence strongly suggests that the 'Ain Dara temple was erected and dedicated to the pagan goddess, Ishtar, about the same time that Solomon's Temple was built — probably by the same Phoenicians that erected the 'Ain Dara temple! Explicit mythological evidence indicates that Ishtar took a mountain god, Ba'al-Hadad, as her lover. The 'Ain Dara pavement contains engraved footprints of this god standing before, and also entering, Ishtar's temple.

By comparing the biblical description of Solomon's Temple with the excavated remains of the 'Ain Dara temple, scholars have reached some stunning conclusions about the symbolic nature of Solomon's project. Solomon's Temple represented a reclining human form. The Holy of Holies symbolized the head. The staircase represented the neck. The Holy Place symbolized aspects of the chest/abdomen. The bronze pillars portrayed the legs. The priestly side chambers represented the two arms. Five layers on each

A striking parallel to Solomon's Temple has been discovered at 'Ain Dara, in northern Syria.

of the north and south sides of the Temple symbolized the fingers of the hands, while the Temple entrance represented the genital opening.

However, Solomon's Temple was not a metaphor for a reclining Adamic male. Rather, it was the metaphor for an androgynous parent (father/mother) awaiting the birth of the Adamic child as the human manifestation of God. This triune metaphor — father, mother, child — symbolized God's promised inaugural "fillment" of the covenant and God's Self-creation as human. This triune metaphor further implied that the totality of the Godhead participated in the human manifestation of God!

As a metaphor for an androgynous individual in pregnancy, the Temple has profound implications in Hebrew thought. In Hebrew (as well as Aramaic) the word *racham* or *rechem*, usually translated "compassion," is the plural of a noun that in its singular form means "womb." To say that God is compassionate is to say that God is "like a womb." It is distinctly counterintuitive to explicitly attribute the female womb to God as Father. Yet the biblical writers deliberately used this metaphor, since the term *womb* symbolizes the creative relationality out of which living entities are born.

The First Temple symbols were meant to convey that YHWH himself "is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory" (Matthew 6:13). YHWH is the ultimate "Actor" on behalf of mankind. YHWH is ultimate *kenosis* — self-emptying, self-limiting, self-giving. YHWH determined to be humanly embodied and born as the *Logos* (Word), then to become anointed as the messianic Human One and to effect a transformed Creation.

Thus, the sanctuary was designed to reveal YHWH's irrevocable promise, to anticipate his human disclosure, and to celebrate that epic historical event.

The sanctuary was designed to reveal YHWH's irrevocable promise, to anticipate his human disclosure, and to celebrate that epic historical event.

Endnote

1. For the full text and references, see "The First Temple: United Monarchical Period," *Outlook* (November 2001).