

What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology

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As we attempt to determine what constitutes a temple and its ritual in the ancient Near East, it becomes evident that we find in the temple¹ of Solomon many kinds of archaeological problems, ones that involve architecture, interior and exterior furnishings, ritual installations, arrangements of courtyards, and relationships to other buildings—and yet, there are no archaeological remains of Solomon's Temple. The accounts of Solomon's Temple also present us with philological or text problems. We find in the Bible descriptions of building procedures and descriptions of the cult carried out within the temple. And yet the biblical material is beset with problems: it is diffuse, separated chronologically, and in some cases contradictory within itself, as is the case with the descriptions given in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles of various architectural details.² Rare indeed is an instance anywhere in ancient western Asia where we have the union of standing or excavated temple remains and texts that can be unequivocally related to the ritual practices of that temple.³ When we face these deficiencies with regard to the temple of Solomon, we are led inevitably to the comparative method, and we attempt to relate architectural remains and ritual texts from surrounding cultures to those descriptions

¹ I am not going to discuss the meaning of the term temple itself. For a rather standard definition of the term, see W. B. Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960), 369. It should be noted that the Greek root *temno*, from which *temenos* derives—"a piece of land marked off from common uses and dedicated to a god, precinct" (Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek English Lexicon [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968], 1774)—has a predecessor in Sumerian *temen* (Anton Deimel, *Sumerisch-Akkadisches Glossar* [Rome: Verlag des Pöpstl. Bibelinstituts, 1934], 206), which appears, for example, in the inscriptions of Gudea of Lagash. See SAK, 76 (= Statue C III 8), 78 (= Statue E II 13). For a discussion of Babylonian equivalents of temple, see Edmond Sollberger, "The Temple in Babylonia," in *Le Temple et le Culte* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Institut) 20 (1975): 31-34.

² For an excellent discussion of the various problems related to the study of the temple of Solomon, see Jean Ouellette, "The Basic Structure of Solomon's Temple and Archaeological Research," in *The Temple of Solomon*, ed. J. Gutmann (Missoula: Scholars, 1976), 1-20.

³ Such is not the case with Egypt, where a prominent example can be found in Eve A. E. Reymond, *The Mythological Origins of the Egyptian Temple* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969).

given in the Old Testament.⁴ As unsatisfying as the comparative approach often is, it can yield positive results if kept "within closely adjacent historical, cultural or linguistic units," and if "the comparison be between a total ensemble rather than between isolated motifs."⁵

When using the comparative method, the issue of cultural continuity versus discontinuity must be considered. In the light of the extraordinary cultural disruptions in the ancient world,⁶ it is important to note that there were areas of equally extraordinary cultural, historical, and religious continuity.⁷ I believe that the temple as an institution and the cult associated with it constitute one of the most interesting examples of such continuity.⁸ The following list of motifs attempts to focus on this continuity. It does not purport to be a complete motif list (hence the word "preliminary" in the title), nor to have identified all examples to which a given motif may apply. Nor is it my intention to claim that a common "pattern" can be applied indiscriminately to all ancient Near Eastern temples without regard to time, space, and cultural uniqueness. The full extent to which such a list can be applied to various temple traditions is a task worthy of continued research.⁹

Proposition 1. *The temple is the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain.*

⁴ See Theodor A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

⁵ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), ix.

⁶ See George E. Mendenhall, "'Change and Decay in All Around I See': Conquest, Covenant and the Tenth Generation," *Biblical Archaeologist* 39 (1976): 152-57.

⁷ Mendenhall has also been in the forefront of documenting such continuity. See "The Ancient in the Modern—and Vice Versa," in *Michigan Oriental Studies in Honor of George G. Cameron*, ed. Louis L. Orlin (Ann Arbor: Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan, 1976), 227-53.

⁸ See Arvid S. Kapelrud, "Temple Building, a Task for Gods and Kings," *Orientalia* 32 (1963): 56-62.

⁹ In compiling the following list of motifs, I have learned much from Hugh Nibley, "What Is a Temple?" in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, in CWHN, 4:355-90.

This theme is extremely common in ancient Near Eastern texts.¹⁰ From the time of Sargon II onwards, the cult room of Assur in the temple of Assur, ÉdAssur, was "House of the Great Mountain of the Lands."¹¹ This perception is very common in the Old Testament, as is seen in such passages as Isaiah 2:2 and Psalm 48:2. These conceptions of Zion as a holy mountain go back ultimately to the inner-Israelite experience at Sinai. The temple of Solomon would seem ultimately to be little more than the architectural realization and the ritual enlargement of the Sinai experience.

One need not be dealing with an actual building in order to be in what I would call a "temple" setting in the ancient Near East.¹² Ancient religious texts are permeated with temple symbolism. In many cases the texts describe an encounter between the deity and a person that did not take place within a building, and yet it bears all the earmarks of the "temple" relationship. Basic to temple ideology is the act of appearing "before the Lord." As Menahem Haran states it: "In general, any cultic activity to which the biblical text applies the formula 'before the Lord' can be considered an indication of a temple at the site, since this expression stems from the basic conception of the temple as a divine dwelling-place and actually belongs to the temple's technical terminology."¹³ In spite of the many vagaries involved in the textual analysis of Exodus 19-24,¹⁴ it would seem that in this case the "temple at the site" is the mountain itself. Geo Widengren compares the Sinai theophany with the text describing the enthronement of Enmeduranki of Nippur in the temple of Ebarra: "ascension to God, a meeting between Moses and God and a handing over to Moses of the tablets belonging to God." He further mentions the sacral

¹⁰ See SAK, 113 (= Gudea Cylinder A XXI 23), 141 (= Gudea Cylinder B XXIV 9); "Hymn to the Ekur," in ANET, 582-83 ("The great house, it is a mountain great / The house of Enlil, it is a mountain great/ The house of Ninlil, it is a mountain great," etc.).

¹¹ G. van Driel, *The Cult of Assur* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1969), 34-36.

¹² See Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, 257-58.

¹³ Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 26.

¹⁴ See Martin Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (Edinburgh/London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966), 36-41.

meal that Moses and the elders ate in the presence of God (see Exodus 24:11) following the sealing of the covenant with blood (see Exodus 24:8).¹⁵

Proposition 2. *The cosmic mountain represents the primordial hillock, the place that first emerged from the waters covering the earth during the creative process.*

In Egypt, for example, all temples are seen as representing the primeval hillock.¹⁶ "Practically every temple or shrine of this period [Late Period] was considered a replica of the first temple, built upon the primeval mound in the midst of the water of the Nun."¹⁷

The Eninnu temple, built by Gudea, is depicted as arising up out of the primeval waters (apsu) and raising its head to heaven.¹⁸ This same temple is called the "foundation of the abyss"—temen abzu—and the "house of the abyss."¹⁹ The Gudea Cylinders are filled with the motif of the house (= mountain) rising up out of the primordial waters. Indeed, it seems to me that the Gudea Cylinders are social and religious documents of inestimable value. They provide us the full scenario of temple building as it must have been perceived by many ancients. Parts of this scenario can be attested elsewhere,²⁰ but perhaps nowhere else in such complete form.²¹

Proposition 3. *The temple is often associated with the waters of life that flow forth from a spring within the building itself—or rather the temple is viewed as incorporating within itself or as having been built upon such a spring.*

¹⁵ AAHB, 24.

¹⁶ For Egypt, see Reymond, *The Mythical Origin of the Egyptian Temple*, 46-47, 59, 266, 305. See also J. A. Wilson, in ANET, 4 n. 7A.

¹⁷ J. Spencer, "The Brick Foundations of Late-Period Peripteral Temples and Their Mythological Origin," in *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt* (Fs. H. W. Fairman), ed. John Ruffle, G. A. Gaballa, and Kenneth A. Kitchen (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1979), 133. See also M. el-Din Ibrahim, "The God of the Great Temple of Edfu," in *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt*, 170-73.

¹⁸ See SAK, 113 (Cylinder A XXI 18-27).

¹⁹ SAK, 113 (Cylinder A XXII 11) and 127 (Cylinder B V 7), respectively.

²⁰ See Kapelrud, "Temple Building."

²¹ See also A. Falkenstein and Eva Strommenger, "Gudea," *Rivista Istituto di Archeologia* 3 (1971): 676-87.

The reason such springs existed in temples is that they were perceived as the primeval waters of creation—Nun in Egypt, Abzu in Mesopotamia. The temple is thus founded on and stands in contact with the primeval waters. According to Hugh Nibley, "at every hierocentric shrine stood a mountain or artificial mound and a lake or spring from which four streams flowed out to bring the life-giving waters to the four regions of the earth."²² Geo Widengren connects the water, tree, temple basin, and a sacred grove.²³ The theme occurs in Ezekiel 47:1 and, in all probability, in Psalm 29.

Proposition 4. *The temple is built on separate, sacral, set-apart space.*²⁴

Excavations at Eridu and Uruk and the Diyala Valley document the practice of incorporating the foundations of earlier temples into the platform of later ones. This practice was achieved by filling in the surviving chambers of the earlier temple with mud brick.²⁵ This same practice has been documented more recently in Syria.²⁶ Mount Moriah, the place where Solomon built his temple, carried of course the association of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. But the threshing floor, which David purchased from Araunah the Jebusite, may carry overtones more significant for the erection of a temple. And de Vries points out that "the threshing floor is an omphalos, at once a navel of the world (with the hub of ears in the middle) and a universe-emblem (a round piece of earth, with the earth in the middle, and the sun-oxen going round)."²⁷

²² Hugh Nibley, "The Hierocentric State," *Western Political Quarterly* 4 (1951): 235; reprinted in CWHN, 10:99-147.

²³ See Geo Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths and Their Interpretations," in *Myth, Ritual and Kingship*, ed. S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Oxford University, 1956), 168. For this theme at Ras Shamra, see Richard Clifford, "The Temple in the Ugaritic Myth of Baal," *Symposia*, ed. F. Cross (Cambridge: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1979), 145. For an Egyptian example, see H. W. Fairman, "Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple," *Bulletin, John Rylands Library* 37 (1954-55): 177.

²⁴ See AAM, 20 (the Temple Oval at Khafaje), 19 (fixing the building immovably in the earth by means of foundation figures).

²⁵ See Joan Oates, "Ur and Eridu, the Prehistory," *Iraq* 22 (1960): 45.

²⁶ See G. van Driel, "De Uruk-Nederzetting op de Jebel Aruda: een Voorlopig Bericht (Stand eind 1976)," *Phoenix (Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux")* 23 (1977): 46.

²⁷ *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam/London: North-Holland, 1976), 464. (I am indebted to Michael Lyon for suggesting this latter connection.)

The process of excavating an enormous trench, which is then filled with sand, the whole serving as the foundation for the temple, is known not only from Early Dynastic Mesopotamia (the Temple Oval at Khafaje), but also in Late-Period Egypt. Late-Period Egyptian texts give the mythological rationale behind this practice: the bed of sand represents the primeval mound, which is founded in the primeval waters of Nun.²⁸ A similar "mythological" setting for the practice documented at Khafaje would seem to be present in the temple of Enki at Eridu, which was also believed to have been founded in the primeval waters, in this case Abzu.²⁹ As A. J. Spencer states, "The effect of religious beliefs on architecture was not, as some have claimed, a vague symbolism, but was an important part of the construction of the temples, necessary for the buildings to fulfill their symbolic role."³⁰

Proposition 5. *The temple is oriented toward the four world regions or cardinal directions, and to various celestial bodies such as the polar star.*

As such it is, or can be, an astronomical observatory where sightings are made, the purpose of which is to help those who come to the temple orient themselves in the universe. The buildings might face the rising sun or other celestial bodies, for example.

There is an example of a long-maintained tradition of orienting the corners of temple buildings to the cardinal directions, as in the prehistoric temples of levels 11 through 6 at Eridu (Tell Abu Shahrain) and the partly contemporaneous northern Ubaid period temples of levels 14 through 12 at Tepe Gawra.³¹ The burials discovered in the Ubaid period cemetery at Eridu were oriented in the same direction as the temples.³² A

²⁸ See Spencer, "The Brick Foundations," 133.

²⁹ See E. Douglas Van Buren, "Foundation Rites for a New Temple," *Orientalia* 21 (1952): 293, and the discussion of proposition 7.

³⁰ Spencer, "The Brick Foundations," 133.

³¹ See Ann Louise Perkins, "The Comparative Archaeology of Early Mesopotamia," *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization* 25 (1949): 67-70, 87.

³² See Max Mallowan, "The Development of Cities from Al-'Ubaid to the End of Uruk 5," *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed., 2 vols./2 parts (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 1/1:347. For the possibility of a temple observatory at Akkad in the time of Sargon the Great, see John D. Weir, *The Venus Tablets of Ammizaduga* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Instituut, 1972), 40-47. For an extensive discussion of possible cosmic symbolism in the temple of Solomon, see W. F. Albright,

Seleucid period tablet for a temple ritual at Uruk reads in part, in A. Sachs's translation: "In the first watch of the night, on the roof of the topmost stage of the temple-tower of the Resh temple, when the star Great Anu of Heaven rises and the star Great Antu of Heaven rises in the constellation Wagon, (he shall recite the composition beginning? . . .)." And further on in the same text, "Upon seven large golden trays, you shall present water (for washing) hands to the planets Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Saturn, Mars, the moon, and the sun, as soon as they appear."³³

Proposition 6. *Temples, in their architectonic orientation, express the idea of a successive ascension toward heaven.*

The Mesopotamian ziggurat or staged temple tower is an excellent example of this architectural principle. It was constructed of three, five, or seven stages or levels. Monumental staircases led to the upper part of the tower, to a small temple that stood at the top.³⁴

Proposition 7. *The plan and measurements of the temple are revealed by God to the king, and the plan must be carefully carried out.*

Nabopolassar stated that he took the measurements of Etemenanki, the temple tower in the main temple precinct of Babylon, under the guidance of Shamash, Adad, and

Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, 5th ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 144-50. For an interpretation of evidence from Egypt and Mesopotamia in this light, see Andrzej Wiercinski, "Pyramids and Ziggurats as the Architectonic Representations of the Archetype of the Cosmic Mountain," *Katunob* 10 (1977): 71-87. (I am indebted to Professor John Sorenson for this reference.) For the orientation of the Ziggurat of Nanna at Ur, see AAM, 56.

³³ ANET, 338. For a discussion of the cosmic orientation of the Israelite tent shrine, see Hugh Nibley, "Tenting, Toll, and Taxing," *Western Political Quarterly* 19 (1966): 603-5. For an attempted refutation of the view that Solomon's Temple was oriented toward the sun, see H. Van Dyke Parunak, "Was Solomon's Temple Oriented toward the Sun?" *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 110 (1978): 28-33.

³⁴ See SAK, 77, 79 (Gudea Statue D II 11, Statue E I 16 = "e.PA, Temple of the seven zones"); but see also IGL, 132-34, which casts doubt on the traditional meaning (that is, a seven-tiered building) ascribed to these and similar passages. For the *gigunû* as the most holy and secret sanctuary of the sacred marriage, placed atop the seven-staged ziggurat, see Van Buren, "Foundation Rites for a New Temple," 301-2. And for a Sumerian sacred marriage text expressing the imagery of an ascent toward the chapel that stands atop the ziggurat, see Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven/London: Yale University, 1976), 126.

Marduk and that he kept the measurements in his memory as a treasure.³⁵ Gudea's well-known dream, which he received while in the temple of Baga, revealed to him the plan of the temple to Ningirsu, which he was to build. He was shown a lapis-lazuli tablet with the temple plan on it and was given a sacred brick mould that contained the bricks to be used in the building.³⁶ Moses was given the plans for the building of the tabernacle directly by God (see Exodus 25:9), and God appeared to Solomon at Gibeon before the building of the temple commenced (see 1 Kings 3:4-15) and after it was finished (see 1 Kings 9:3-9). Although the text does not say so explicitly, Kapelrud interprets the passages concerning Solomon in the light of the dream/revelations of Gudea and assumes that the plans of the temple must have been revealed to Solomon on the first occasion.³⁷

Proposition 8. *The temple is the central, organizing, unifying institution in ancient Near Eastern society.*

Solomon's dedicatory prayer for the Jerusalem temple in 1 Kings 8:22-54 is an extraordinarily clear expression of this idea. The same concept comes through clearly in the Gudea Cylinders.³⁸ Jonathan Smith says of the ancient world: "On three things the world stands: on the law, on the temple service, and on piety," and adds the comment that "the temple and its ritual serve as the cosmic pillars or the 'sacred pole' supporting the world. If its service is interrupted or broken, if an error is made, then the world, the blessing, the fertility, indeed all of creation which flows from the Center, will likewise be disrupted."³⁹

³⁵ For Nabopolassar's text, see Stephen Herbert Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 4 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912), 62-63. And see E. Douglas Van Buren, "Foundation Rites," 293 for an explanation of the "ordinances and ritual of Eridu," the "precisely ordained rites" that must be carried out in the construction of a temple in Mesopotamia.

³⁶ See SAK, 89-97 (= Cylinder A I-VII). See also AAHB, 30.

³⁷ See Kapelrud, "Temple Building," 59-61.

³⁸ As for example SAK, 101-3 (= A XI 18-27), and SAK, 123 (= B I 10).

³⁹ Jonathan Smith, referring to M Abot 1:2, in *Map Is Not Territory*, 118. For an excellent discussion of the economic and social role of the Mesopotamian temple, see J. N. Postgate, "The Role of the Temple in the Mesopotamian Secular Community," in *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, ed. P. J. Ucko, R. Tringham, and G. W. Dimbleday (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1972), 811-25.

Proposition 8a. *The temple is associated with abundance and prosperity, indeed is perceived as the giver of these. Conversely, the destruction or loss of the temple is seen as calamitous and fatal to the community in which the temple stood.*

One reads that abundance shall come from heaven when the foundation of the temple is laid, that there will be a fullness of water, oil, and wool and that harmony and light will influence people's lives.⁴⁰ The destruction is viewed as the result of social and moral decadence and disobedience to God's word. This latter idea is seen quite clearly in Lamentations and Haggai and in the Sumerian "Lamentation over the destruction of Sumer and Ur,"⁴¹ where, however, the destruction brought on Sumer and her temples and people is caused not so much by the people's wickedness as by a decree of Enlil that political power be shifted to another people.⁴² The Sumerian historiographic poem "The Curse of Agade" is another well-known example of the view that the desecration of a temple by a king (in this case Naram-Sin) brings destruction on his entire people.⁴³

Proposition 9. Inside the temple, images of deities as well as kings, temple priests, and worshipers are washed, anointed, clothed, fed, enthroned, and symbolically initiated into the presence of deity, and thus into eternal life. Further, during the New Year rites, texts are read and dramatically portrayed that recite a pre-earthly war, the victory in the war by the forces of good, led by a chief deity, the creation and establishment of the cosmos, cities, temples, and social order. The sacred marriage is also carried out at this time.

Images were manufactured, washed, anointed, clothed, and initiated.⁴⁴ The clothing of the goddess in a "priestly garment" is described in the "Blessing of Nisaba by

⁴⁰ See SAK, 101 (= Gudea Cylinder A XI 1-27).

⁴¹ ANET, 611-19.

⁴² See ANET, 646 n. 6.

⁴³ See ANET, 646-51.

⁴⁴ See Sidney Smith, "The Babylonian Ritual for the Consecration and Induction of a Divine Statue," *Journal of American Oriental Society* (1925): 37-60; O. R. Gurney, "Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and their Rituals," *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 22 (1935): 31-96; Edmond Sollberger, "The Temple in Babylonia," 33; and Fairman, "Worship and Festivals," 173, 180.

Enki."⁴⁵ The washing and clothing of Inanna in "garments of power" in preparation for the sacred marriage rite and of Shulgi in the me garment along with a "crown-like wig" are described.⁴⁶ Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8 and 16 describe the washing, anointing, and clothing in priestly garments, including the Urim and Thummim, which Widengren associates with the Tablets of Destiny of Babylonian traditions of the Aaronide priests of Israel.⁴⁷ The "people" are involved in washing and clothing rituals at Sinai, just as they are involved in the covenant ceremony that follows the giving of the law (see Exodus 19 and 24).

The question of the temple as a locus of initiation into divine life, something that has long been associated with Egyptian religion, is a question intertwined with the issue of the temple as a locus of vicarious cult drama. That such was the case in Egypt is well established.⁴⁸ It has long been assumed that the *Enuma Elish* was the "text" of the Babylonian New Year's festival carried out in the Esagila temple and in the akitu festival house, that is, that it was recited there.⁴⁹ That it was the text of a dramatic presentation, a dramatic recreation of the war in heaven, Marduk's victory, the creation of mankind, and the organization of the cosmos and of the earth has been assumed by some and doubted by many others.⁵⁰ An Assyrian building inscription of Sennacherib (K. 1356) states that the bit akitu festival house in Assur had bronze door plates on the central entryway that depicted the battle between Assur (taking Marduk's place) and Tiamat. Sennacherib is himself identified as a substitute for Assur in the battle.

Pallis affirms that the "king acts the part of the leading deity in the battle drama" and that "we cannot doubt that a religious battle drama took place in bit Akitu during the

⁴⁵ W. W. Hallo, "The Cultic Setting of Sumerian Poetry," in *Actes de la XVII Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, ed. Andre Finet (Bruxelles: Comite Belge de Recherches en Mesopotamie) 17 (1970): 129.

⁴⁶ S. N. Kramer in "The Dumuzi-Inanna Sacred Marriage Rite: Origin, Development, Character," *CRRRA* 17 (1970): 136-40.

⁴⁷ *AAHB*, 27.

⁴⁸ See the texts in *ANET*, 4-6 and 329-30, and Fairman, "Worship and Festivals," 193-96.

⁴⁹ As we see in *ANET*, 332.

⁵⁰ See Svend Aage Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival* (Copenhagen: Bianco Lunos, 1926), 248-67; W. G. Lambert, "The Great Battle of the Mesopotamian Religious Year, the Conflict in the Akitu House," *Iraq* 25 (1963): 189-90.

Akitu festival, in which the king acted the part of the divine victor." He further emphasizes that to assume that the bronze door plates described above are "a mere artistic decoration, independent of the cult, is out of the question here."⁵¹ H. Sauren attempts to demonstrate that the Gudea Cylinders form the text for a seven-day "mystery play," carried out each year at the temple dedication feast. He assumes that groups of actors, perhaps extending beyond priestly circles, would have been carefully chosen for each year's enactment.⁵²

The view has been fairly widespread that the Baal cycle from Ras Shamra, found along with the other mythological texts in the library or scribal rectory on the temple acropolis, was used by the priests of Ugarit as the text of a dramatic presentation carried out in the temple of Baal.⁵³ The presence in the Baal texts of the themes of council in heaven, battle between deities, creation, temple building, and sacral meal, among others, when coupled with the find spot of the tablets and the analogies with Enuma Elish and its role in the Babylonian New Year's festival, would seem to point in this direction, but we cannot certainly decide such an issue.⁵⁴ It seems to me that the Ur III and earlier cylinder seals that depict the "presentation, by an intermediary, of a worshipper to a god or a deified king," would prove to be a most interesting study from the point of view of their ritual setting. It is possible that the last preserved part of the Seleucid tablet from Uruk may be relevant in this regard.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival*, 260-65, and Walter Andrae, *Das wiedererstandene Assur* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1977 reprint [orig. 1938]), 223.

⁵² See H. Sauren, "Die Einweihung des Eninnu," *CRRRA* 20 (1975): 95-103.

⁵³ For a recitation of the views of many scholars who held this or similar views, see Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 103-5.

⁵⁴ See Richard Clifford, "The Temple in the Ugaritic Myth of Baal," 145; Loren R. Fisher, "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965): 313-24. And for a very important Ugaritic text that combines the themes of enthronement, mountain (temple), creation, ritual battle, and sacred marriage, among others, see Loren R. Fisher and F. Brent Knutson, "An Enthronement Ritual at Ugarit," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28 (1969): 157-67.

⁵⁵ See AAM, 68; ANET, 339. For an extensive discussion of the themes of baptism, anointing, clothing, enthronement, and initiation into divine life in Mandaean religion, and the Syrian and Mesopotamian background of such customs, see Geo Widengren, "Heavenly Enthronement and Baptism, Studies in Mandaean Baptism," in *Religions in Antiquity, Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, Studies in the History of Religions, vol. 14, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968): 551-82. Finally, for the sacred marriage drama in an Egyptian temple, see Fairman, "Worship and Festivals," 196-200.

Proposition 10. *The temple is associated with the realm of the dead, the underworld, the afterlife, the grave.*

The unifying feature here is the rites and worship of ancestors. The temple is the link between this world and the next. It has been called "an antechamber between the worlds." Tombs can be—and in Egypt and elsewhere are—essentially temples (compare the cosmic orientation, texts written on the tomb walls that guide the deceased into the afterlife, etc.). The unifying principle between temple and tomb is resurrection. Tombs and sarcophagi are "sacred places," sites of resurrection. In Egyptian religion Nut is depicted on the coffin cover, symbolizing the cosmic orientation (i.e., "Nut is the coffin").⁵⁶ One of the chapels in the Eninnu temple was called "é.ni.ki.sè 'the house in which one brings offerings for the dead.' " It carried the further description "it is something pure, purified by Abzu."⁵⁷ There is an intimate connection between burials and temples VIII and XI at Tepe Gawra, the latter of which, according to Arthur Tobler, "attracted considerable numbers of burials to its precincts."⁵⁸

Proposition 11. *Sacral, communal meals are carried out in connection with temple ritual, often at the conclusion of or during a covenant ceremony.*

Having attempted to establish the temple background of Exodus 19-24 above in discussing Proposition 1, I would like now to introduce 24:11, the meal that directly follows the covenant ceremony of Exodus 24:8, as the prime example of this point. The Gudea Cylinders end with the conjunction of a festive meal attended by all of the gods

⁵⁶ Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, 372-73. For the Hittite sphere, see O. R. Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University, Schweich Lectures, 1977): 61-63. For Egypt see Fairman, "Worship and Festivals," 200.

⁵⁷ IGL, 131. For a discussion of a sepulchral chamber to Marduk in Etemenanki in Babylon, see Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival*, 104-5, 108-9.

⁵⁸ Arthur Tobler, *Excavations at Tepe Gawra 2* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Museum Monographs, 1950), 98-101. At Ur, however, where we might expect spectacular support for such a connection, Woolley is at pains to dampen such speculation; see C. L. Woolley, *Ur Excavations 2, The Royal Cemetery, Text*, Publications of the Joint Exped. of the Brit. Mus. and the Mus. of the Univ. of Penn. to Mesopotamia (New York: Trustees of the Two Museums, 1934), 12-14. Isaiah 65:3-4 would seem to be relevant here, but see the discussion of W. Boyd Barrick, "The Funerary Character of 'High Places' in Ancient Palestine: A Re-assessment," *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 565-95. He does not, however, discuss this passage.

and the fixing of the destinies.⁵⁹ Pallis states that "the akitu festival was concluded by a great sacrificial meal of which all, the gods, the king, the priests, and the people, partook."⁶⁰ Enuma Elish III 128-38 contains the account of the gods entering the sacred chamber where the destinies are decreed, at which time they partook of a festive banquet.⁶¹ We have the recurring theme here of formal act and sacral meal, the same phenomenon that we see in 1 Kings 8 where, following Solomon's dedicatory prayer for the Jerusalem temple (a prayer carried out "with his hands spread up to heaven"), the king held a feast. This prayer fits in remarkably well with the form and the religiosity expressed in the Babylonian psalm cycle su-ila.⁶²

Proposition 12. *The tablets of destiny ("tablets of the decrees"⁶³) are consulted both in the cosmic sense by the gods, and yearly in a special chamber, in the Eninnu temple of Gudea's time.⁶⁴*

It is by this means that the will of the deity is communicated to the people through the king or the prophet for a given year.⁶⁵ The association of sacred meal and setting of the destinies in Enuma Elish and in the Gudea Cylinder B has been pointed out above in discussing Proposition 11. Widengren has an excellent discussion in which he interprets the association of heavenly council, enthronement, and tablets of destiny. He writes that "the tablets of Law, as well as the Urim and Thummim, play the same role as the tablets of destiny in being the instrument by which the will of the deity is communicated to the

⁵⁹ See IGL, 120.

⁶⁰ Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival*, 173.

⁶¹ See ANET, 64-66.

⁶² See Erich Ebeling, *Die Akkadische Gebetsserie 'Handerhebung'* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1953). See also AAHB, 24. For a Hittite text that conjoins the themes of blood, sacral meal, and covenant, see Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, 29-30.

⁶³ Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 178-79.

⁶⁴ See IGL, 141-42.

⁶⁵ Note Enuma Elish 4:22.

leader of the people, be it Moses or the king."⁶⁶ Both the Urim and Thummim and the tablets of destiny are fastened in a pouch on their possessor's chest.⁶⁷

Proposition 13. *There is a close interrelationship between the temple and law in the ancient Near East.*

The building or restoration of a temple is perceived as the moving force behind a restating or "codifying" of basic legal principles and of the "righting" and organizing of proper social order. The Old Testament "clearly associates the conceptions of 'covenant' and 'law' with one another in a definite relationship."⁶⁸ I would add "temple" to this pair. The act of Moses' appearing "before the Lord" in Exodus 19-24 produced the law, or rather what Mendenhall would call "policy."⁶⁹ The action that gives rise to the "codification" of the ancient collections of "royal judgments," or "just laws"⁷⁰ is, in my opinion, rebuilding or rededicating of a temple, or the appearance of the king in the temple early in his reign. The Prologue of the Code of Hammurabi places great emphasis on his concern for the temples and cult centers under his sway and finally states, just before the "laws" proper begin: "When Marduk commissioned me to guide the people aright, to direct the land, I established law and justice in the language of the land."⁷¹ This commission from Marduk would presumably have come to Hammurabi in Esagila, where in fact a stela containing the laws was placed.⁷² The Epilogue also states, "I, Hammurabi, am the king of justice, to whom Shamash committed law."⁷³ This is not to revive the

⁶⁶ AAHB, 27.

⁶⁷ See Geo Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths and Their Interpretation," in *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, ed. S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 167; see also Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival*, 193-94.

⁶⁸ Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch*, 39.

⁶⁹ George Mendenhall, "Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law," *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (May 1954): 26-28.

⁷⁰ See F. R. Kraus, "Ein zentrales Problem des altmesopotamischen Rechtes: Was ist der Codex Hammurabi?" *Genava* 8 (1960): 285-88.

⁷¹ ANET, 165.

⁷² See ANET, 178.

⁷³ ANET, 178.

largely outmoded ideas of Henry Maine and others that law derives from religion;⁷⁴ it is simply to look more carefully at what the texts themselves say, which is, I believe, that the impetus by the king to compile the existing body of judicial precedents was seen to come as a result of duties connected with the temple.⁷⁵

Proposition 14. *The temple is a place of sacrifice.*

The ubiquity of this aspect of temple worship in the ancient Near East is such that its mention here may seem superfluous. And yet sacrifice has been one of the most difficult, least understood, and most discussed of all religious phenomena.⁷⁶ In northern Mesopotamia the recent excavations at Tell Chuera in northern Syria have yielded one of the most important archaeological evidences for a sacrificial practice in ancient times. The Akkad period Nord-Tempel yielded remains of an offertory stairway at the east entrance along with what appeared to be an offering table and an adjacent Wanne, which would have received the blood of the offerings. The excavators of Tell Chuera compare the remains of this installation with the well-known scene of the White Obelisk of Assurnasirpal I, which shows an elaborate cult installation of sacrificial offering in front of a temple.⁷⁷

Proposition 15. *The temple and its ritual are enshrouded in secrecy.*

This secrecy relates to the sacredness of the temple precinct and the strict division in ancient times between sacred and profane space. Exodus 19:12-13, 21-24 apply here: there are certain precincts that are "off limits." To trespass sacred precincts, or to approach sacred objects without being ritually prepared, can result in disaster (see 1

⁷⁴ See William Seagle, *History of the Law* (New York: Tudor, 1946), 117-30.

⁷⁵ Mendenhall, "Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law," 11.

⁷⁶ For an excellent summary of the status questionis, see Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, 444-52 and 458-96. For a selection of sacrificial practices over a widespread geographical area, see, for Egypt, Fairman, "Worship and Festivals," 178, 180-84, 191, 198-202; for Assyria, van Driel, *The Cult of Assur*, 86-119; for Asia Minor, Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion*, 24-43.

⁷⁷ See Anton Moortgat, *Tell Chuera in Nordost Syrien, Vorläufiger Bericht über die dritte Grabungskampagne 1960* (Wiss. Abh. der Arbeitsgem. für Forsch. des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 24; Köln/Opladen; Westdeutscher Verlag, 1962): 13-14, with Plan II and Abb. 9-10. See also Dennis J. McCarthy, "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969): 166-76.

Samuel 6:19-20). A second century A.D. Aramaic inscription from Hatra invokes "the curse of Our L[ord] and Our Lady and the Son of our Lord and Shaharu and Baasham[en] and Atargatis [be] on [anyone] who enters past this point into the shr[ine]." ⁷⁸ The Neo-Babylonian tablet that describes the ritual for the consecration and induction of a divine statue concludes with the warning "let initiate instruct initiate, he shall not let the uninitiated see: it is a thing forbidden of Enlil, the elder, [and] Marduk." ⁷⁹

The problem of secrecy relates of course to the question of who was allowed access to the temple precincts, or, rather, to what extent the general populace was allowed access to the temple ritual. A series of inscriptions on doors of the Ptolemaic temple at Edfu in Egypt relates access to the temple to moral worthiness: "Everyone who enters by this door, beware of entering in impurity, for God loves purity more than millions of possessions, more than hundreds of thousands of fine gold." And again, "Do not come in sin, do not enter in impurity, do not utter falsehood in his house." And the admonition to secrecy: "Do not reveal what you have seen in the mysteries of the temples." ⁸⁰

Of course, these admonitions are directed to priests, for, as Fairman writes: "It is clear that for the majority of the people there was not direct contact with either daily service or with many festivals, and no participation in any intimate or sacred rites." ⁸¹ During the ceremonies connected with the New Year festival and the rededication of the temple, "the doors of the temple were shut while they were being celebrated, and no member of the general public witnessed them." ⁸² In Egypt, as well as in Israel and Mesopotamia, the primary way that the general populace would have taken part in temple ritual was through attendance at the great processions and the public banquets that would take place at the end of a ritual period. ⁸³ But all Israelite males were commanded

⁷⁸ Delbert R. Hillers, "Mskn 'Temple' in Inscriptions from Hatra," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 207 (1972): 54-56.

⁷⁹ Smith, "The Babylonian Ritual for the Consecration and Induction of a Divine Statue," 51-52.

⁸⁰ Fairman, "Worship and Festivals," 201.

⁸¹ In *ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 187.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 202-3; J. N. Postgate, "The Bit Akiti in Assyrian Nabu Temples," *Sumer* 30 (1974): 57-62; and 1 Kings 8:62-66.

to "appear before the Lord God" three times during the year (Exodus 23:17; 34:23), and this was expanded to include all members of the family, as we see in Deuteronomy 16:1, 14 and 31:11-12.⁸⁴ Inscriptions on the south gate of the temenos of the Edfu temple give further insight into what access the common people would have had to the temple, and what role it would have played in the religion of the people: "It is the standing place of those who have and those who have not in order to pray for life from the Lord of Life. . . . The place for hearing the petitions of all petitioners in order to judge Truth from Falsehood. It is the great place for championing the poor in order to rescue them from the strong. . . . The place outside which offerings are made at all times consisting of all the produce of the servants."⁸⁵

The Epilogue of the Code of Hammurabi states that a stele containing the Code was placed in Esagila, where any oppressed person could read the pertinent passages of the laws and thus understand his cause. But as Wiseman writes, it is unlikely that common Babylonians could have come into the sacred precincts of Esagila to examine the stele.⁸⁶ Copies of the stele would presumably have been available elsewhere. Yet another insight into the extent to which common people would have had access to temples comes from the countless votive sculptures that archaeologists find in the excavation of temple ruins. Such statues, meant to represent their human offerers, often inscribed, and presumably manufactured, in a temple workshop and available for purchase by the donor, would be placed in the temple, presumably by priests, and stationed on benches in the sanctuary, in an adjoining room, or in a courtyard. The statue would then stand perpetually before the effigy of the deity, representing the blessings the offerer hoped to obtain.⁸⁷ The Early Dynastic temples in the Diyala Valley give us classic architectural examples of temple precincts that are successively cut off from their

⁸⁴ See also Haran, *Temples and Temple Service*, 290-94.

⁸⁵ Fairman, "Worship and Festivals," 203.

⁸⁶ See D. J. Wiseman, "The Laws of Hammurabi Again," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7 (1962): 166.

⁸⁷ See Henri Frankfort, *Sculpture of the Third Millennium B.C. from Tell Asmar and Khafajah*, Oriental Institute Publication no. 44 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1939), 10-11.

immediate surroundings and made inaccessible to passersby by means of thick walls and elaborate series of courtyards.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ See AAM, 20-25.