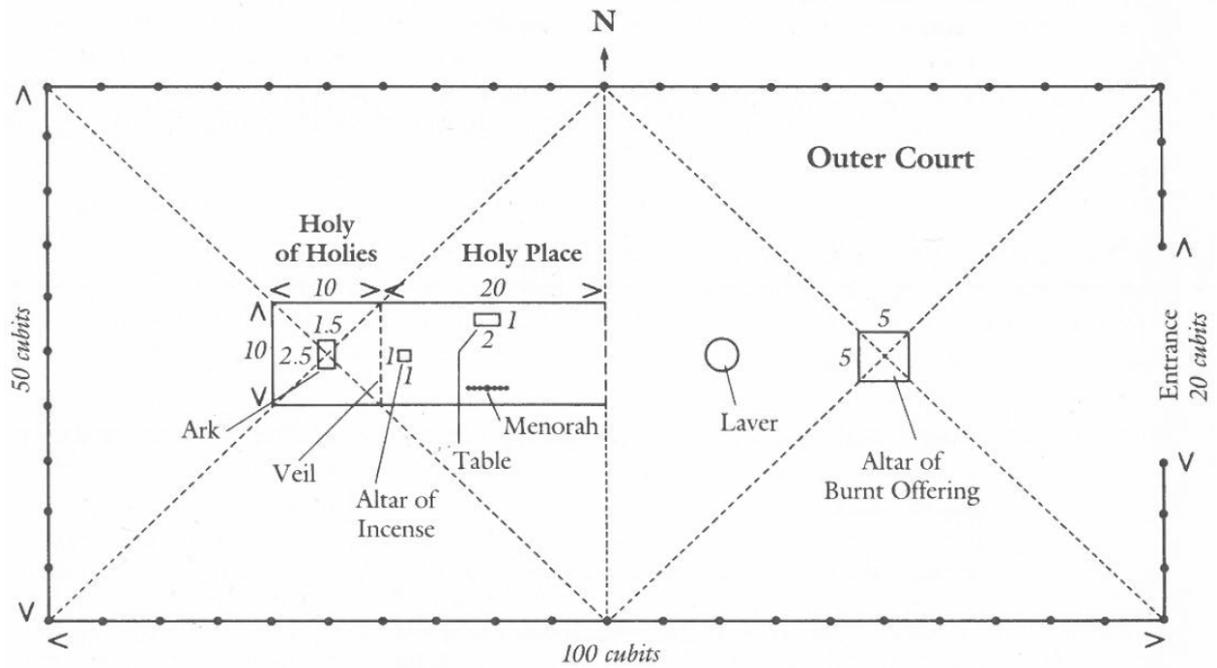
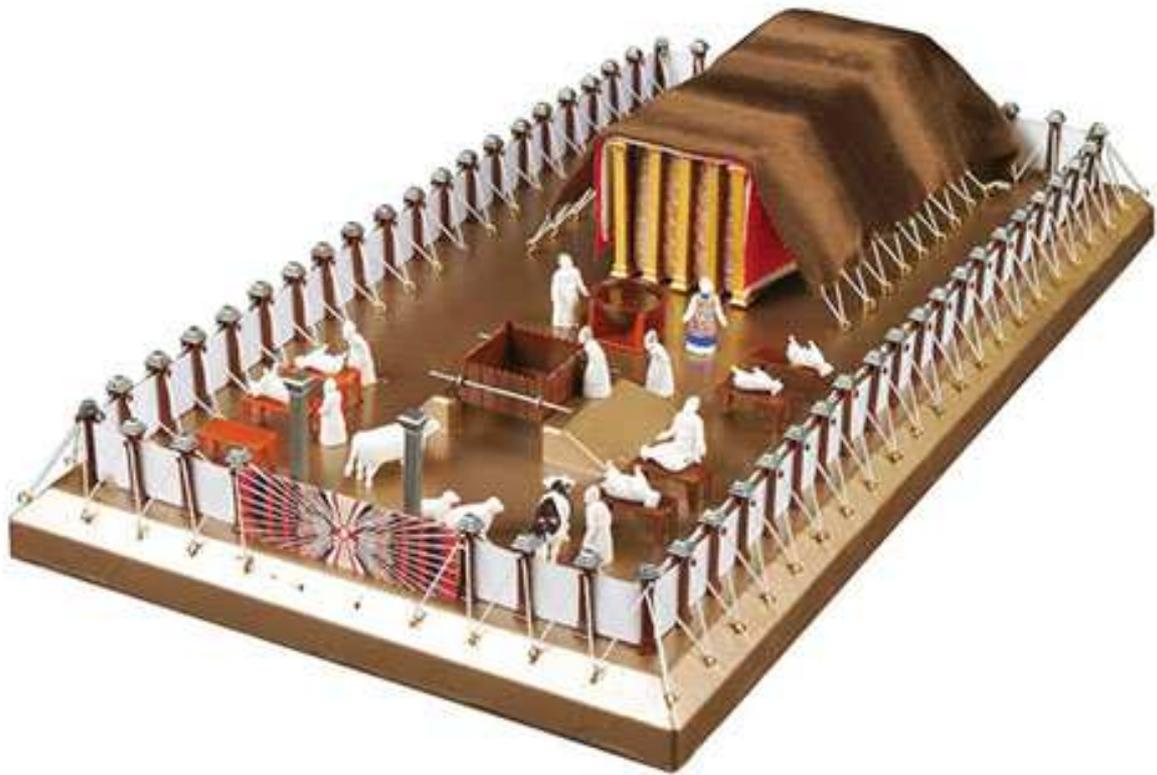


YLJC Judaism 101

**WHY AREN'T
RABBIS CALLED
PRIESTS?**

Study pack



THE ZEROETH TEMPLE

A HOUSE FOR GOD

In Exodus 25:8 we read: “And they shall make Me a holy place and I will dwell among them/ in them.” The notion of God dwelling among/ within the people of Israel is given a name, one found extensively in rabbinic literature post-70CE – Shechinah.

The Shechinah is an explicitly feminine aspect of God.

According to the Babylonian Talmud, the Second Temple lacked five things which had been in Solomon’s Temple, namely, the Ark, the cherubim, the sacred fire, the Shechinah and the Urim and Tummim.

It is easy to see that the Ark of the Covenant, the Cherubim, the sacred fire and the Priestly and mysterious Urim and Tummim were lost by the time of the second Temple; they were artefacts which could disappear. But the Shechinah – that fascinates me.

When people pray and study together, when they enact law to help the society, when they are sick and frightened and when they are doing mitzvot that bring joy and comfort, there the Shechinah will be. But when they abuse their power, ignore the other, hold only disdain and triumphalism as their values, it is no wonder that the Shechinah finds it hard to hang around. She wasn’t there in the Second Temple, rife as it was with political machinations and abuses of power.

Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild, 2017

A WONDER OF THE WORLD

Making the tabernacle provided the Israelites with the most surprising thing of all in the wilderness – a lavish building. There was nothing make-shift about the tabernacle. Except that it was portable, it had all the features and solidity of a real permanent building – and it was dramatic: colourful, multi-textured, gleaming and glittering in the sun, glowing in the sunset, casting the one non-fluttering shadow as the sun rose across the camp.

What wonder it must have provoked! Did the Israelites grow used to it, always around, just another feature of the landscape, or was it always so unlikely, so incongruous, that spotting it out of the corner of your eye, or walking across its shadow as you went to fetch water or share a spot of manna with a neighbour, it always carried a challenge and a demand?

Clive Lawton, 2016

THE SPLENDOUR OF THE PRIESTS

God brought Aaron to the fore in splendour
and enveloped him in an aura of majesty.
God clothed him with sublime magnificence
and adorned him with the glorious vestments:
Breeches and tunic and robe
with pomegranates around the hem,
And a rustle of bells round about,
which made pleasing sound at each step.
Majestic, glorious, renowned for splendour,
a delight to the eyes, beauty supreme.
Before him no one was adorned with these,
nor may they ever be worn by any
Except his sons and them alone,
generation after generation, for all time.

The Wisdom of Ben Sira (2nd century BCE)

THE FIRST TEMPLE

MEET THE CASTE

- Kohein Gadol: the High Priest. Traditionally a hereditary position, however politics often wasn't that simple... Chief religious official and, for a while, presided over the rabbinical court. Male, obvs.
- Kohein: a Priest. Traditionally considered a direct descendant of Aaron, and often surnamed Cohen, Kohn, Kahn, Cowan etc. Only those who were not physically "blemished", ie disabled, could serve. Becomes "defiled" and thus disqualified from office upon entering a graveyard or marrying a convert, divorcee or widow.
- Levite: a Temple functionary. Traditionally considered a direct descendant of Levi, and often surnamed Levy, Levene, Levin etc.
- Yisraeli: the rest of the Israelites.

THE SCAPEGOAT

On Yom Kippur, the High Priest would bind a thread of crimson wool on the head of the goat which was to be sent away, and he placed it at the gate where it was to be sent away, and for the goat that was to be slaughtered, he placed a thread of crimson wool on its neck, at the place of the slaughtering.

Then he slaughtered a bull and collected its blood in a bowl, and he gave it to one up on the fourth terrace within the sanctuary who would continually stir it so that it should not congeal. He took the coal-pan and went up to the top of the altar, cleared the coals to both sides and took out coals from the glowing middle of the fire on the altar. They would then bring him the goat. He would slaughter it and collect its blood in a bowl.

He sprinkled the goat's blood once upwards and seven times downwards, then he would go out and place [the bowl] on the second stand in the Temple. Rabbi Yehudah said: there was only one stand there. He would take the blood of the bull and put down the blood of the goat, and sprinkle from the bull's blood upon the curtains facing the Ark outside, once upwards, seven times downward.

Then the High Priest would come to the goat for release and place his two hands on it, and confess. The Priests and the people standing in the courtyard, when they heard the explicit Name from the mouth of the High Priest, would bend their knees, bow down and fall on their faces. They then passed the goat to the person who would lead it out to the wilderness. Anyone could lead the goat out; however, the leading Priests fixed a procedure that a Priest would lead it out, and would not allow a non-Priest to lead it out.

mYoma 4

THE SECOND TEMPLE

SACRIFICING SACRIFICE

Once Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was leaving Jerusalem, followed by Rabbi Joshua, when he saw the Temple in ruins. "What a disaster for us," said Rabbi Joshua, "that this place where atonement was made for Israel's sins lies in ruins!" But Rabban Yochanan comforted him: "Do not be distressed, my son, for we have another means of atonement, no less effective, and that is the practice of lovingkindness, as the Book of Hosea tells us: "For I desire lovingkindness, not sacrifices."

Avot d'Rabbi Natan (c7th century)

THE RISE OF THE RABBIS

There was an incident involving one High Priest who exited the Holy Temple, and everyone followed him. When they saw Shemaya and Avtalyon, the heads of the rabbinical court, walking along, they left the High Priest by himself and walked after the rabbis in deference to them.

Eventually, Shemaya and Avtalyon came to take leave of the High Priest before returning to their homes. Envious of the attention they received, he angrily said to them: "Let you who are descendants of converts go in peace."

They said to him: "Let the descendants of converts go in peace, as we perform the acts of Aaron, who loved and pursued peace; and let not you, a descendant of Aaron, go in peace, as you do not perform the acts of Aaron and you speak condescendingly to descendants of converts."

bYoma 71b

THE THIRD TEMPLE?

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SYNAGOGUE

The Temple did not last for ever:
the Second, like the First, came to an end,
and all its splendid rituals
became a wistful memory.
But when it fell, a new and greater institution
stood ready to take its place: the Synagogue,
house of the people's assembly.
No sacrifices were offered here,
no Priests performed mysterious rites
while the laity watched in silent awe.
Here Israel's people met as equals,
together studying the word of God,
so that the Torah which had been taught to Moses and the Prophets
became in truth the heritage of the congregation of Jacob.

Rabbi John D Rayner

A NEW BUILDING PROJECT

The Temple Institute isn't shy about advocating what many see as a radical goal: replacing the mosque at the Dome of the Rock with a new Jewish Holy Temple. A painting in the institute's exhibition depicts this scenario, with the city's light rail line taking residents to the Temple Mount.

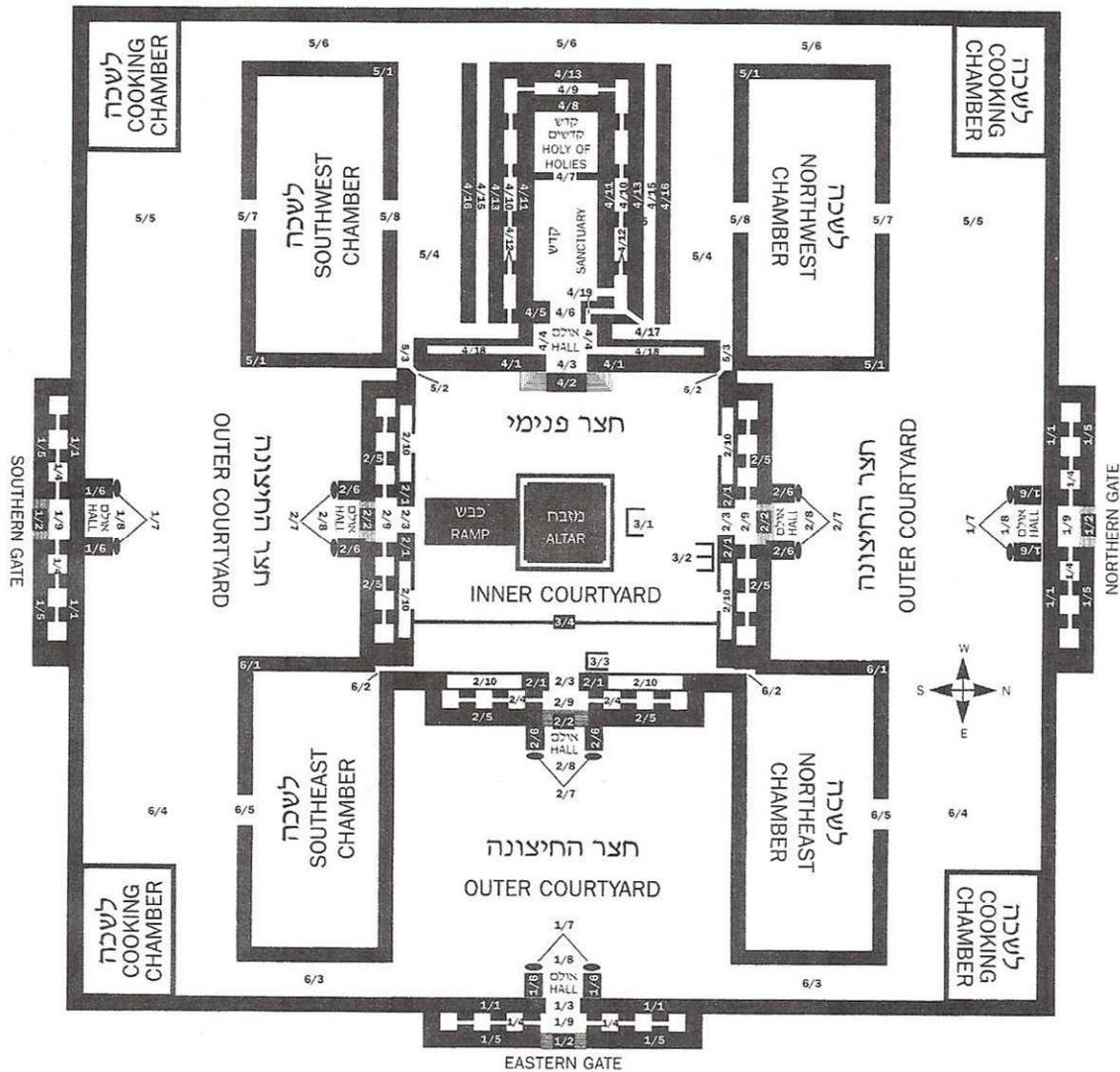
The organisation has formulated a program for where the temple will stand and what its vessels will look like, aided by 20 men who study Temple law full-time. The products of this research – 40 ritual objects – are on display in Plexiglas cases at the Institute's headquarters in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Silver trumpets to be blown by priests and a wooden lyre are perched next to two deep pans with long handles – one for collecting blood from small sacrificial offerings and another for large sacrifices like the Passover lamb.

In another room, mannequins with beards wear the respective vestments for deputy priests and the high priest. The high priest's outfit, with azure weaves, gold thread and a breastplate with 12 precious stones, took 11 years of research and \$150,000 to complete. Next to it stands a massive 12-spigot sink with electric faucets – technology that the Institute's research says will be permitted in the Third Temple.

The crowning achievement – a golden, 200-pound, seven-branch menorah – stands outside in a case overlooking the Western Wall. Unlike art or history museums, the Institute's goal is to remove the objects from their cases and bring them to the mount for use as soon as possible.

'Times of Israel', 2013



PROGRESSIVES AND THE TEMPLE

Rabbinic Judaism believed that with the coming of the Messiah, the Temple would be rebuilt and animal sacrifices would again be offered by Priests. As Liberal Jews, we affirm our belief that the Synagogue has permanently replaced the Temple. Accordingly, we recognise no distinction between persons of Priestly descent (kohanim) and other Jews.

Affirmations of Liberal Judaism #30