Old Testament Introduction
The Bible’s Buried Secrets
Chapter 25, The Temple

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/bibles-buried-secrets.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qalTJzk4kO0>

***About the Video***

What is for the most part an exact copy of the video script follows. There are a few places where individual speakers could neither be heard nor understood: for this we apologize. Every effort was made to be precise: there were just spots that defeated us. Since this is a quote in its entirety it seemed unnecessary to mark it with quotation marks. The notation for each speaker is tedious enough: Narrator, Reader, etc. If you discover bothersome errors, please reply to this website and point them out. You may verify the script more easily by starting to replay it where the “time” stamps indicate discussion begins. The second of the above links is free from advertising and thus easier to use.

***Overview***

There is no magic or magic bullet in the Temple. The Temple is simply the place where Yahweh’s Glory, the Shəkinah chooses to dwell. As soon as the Glory departs, Israel collapses into rubble, and all the “oneness” evaporates before our eyes.

If Yahweh’s Glory did not actually live in the Oracle of the Temple, on the Mercy Seat, then everything about the Jewish people is an elaborate folly. If, on the other hand, Yahweh’s Glory did actually live in the Oracle of the Temple, seated on the Mercy Seat, then we have some hard thinking before us. The point is that the evidence leaves no middle ground. You chose what you wish to believe, but the evidence does not stutter on this point, and it leaves no middle ground. Take it or leave it.

Since Yahweh’s Glory has not dwelt in the Oracle since 586 BC, the Oracle is no longer important as a sacred space, and it no longer exists as a physical building. We may still glean lessons from the Temple’s typology; yet, even if we rebuilt it in the correct location, there is no reason to believe that the Shəkinah would ever return to it. The Shəkinah has taken up residence elsewhere. Yahweh has simply made other means of access to Himself. Since Yahweh has moved on, so must we….

The great lesson of Ain Dara rests in its comparative typology, not in its comparative topology. Because Yahweh is so transcendent by nature, so different from His creatures; He must go to great lengths in order to speak with His creatures. The business of Yahweh’s immanence, appears to be quite difficult. Indeed, Yahweh Himself describes it as difficult.[[1]](#endnote-1) The whole point of the typology is to act and speak in a manner that people will understand. So, yes, God lisps to us in baby talk because that is all we are intelligent enough to grasp. The Shəkinah lives in the Temple, much like any other temple, so that we will “get it.”

“Oh, that’s a temple; now I know
what’s supposed to go on there!”

The Shəkinah rides around on the Ark, much like any Egyptian pharaoh, or other earthly potentate riding around on his sedan chair. The combined picture teaches us Who Yahweh is. There are no footprints in Yahweh’s Temple for obvious reasons.

Moreover, Yahweh’s Temple is not a display of physical intimidation; it is a display of Yahweh’s humbling himself so that He can draw near to hear and serve us, simply because we are His children. Yahweh is intimidating, He just doesn’t need to flaunt it. So, stairs have no place in the Oracle or at the Altar. The floor plan is all that is necessary, because the room is a simple rectangle attached to a cube.[[2]](#endnote-2)

If we are looking for sacred space today, we shall have to look elsewhere to find it. The Temple itself is all about nonverbal communication.

***Script***

The Temple (time 1:16:15)

Quote:

Shaye J. D. Cohen:[[3]](#endnote-3) The magic of Jerusalem is the magic of the temple. One temple for the One God. The result is that Jerusalem and the temple emerge as powerful symbols, not just of the oneness of God, but also the oneness of the Jewish people.[[4]](#endnote-4)

N: The worship of the ancient Israelites bears little resemblance to Judaism today. Centered around the temple, built by David’s son Solomon, and seen as Yahweh’s earthly dwelling.[[5]](#endnote-5) To understand how the ancient Israelites worshiped their God, scholars must discover what the temple looked like, and how it functioned. But although archaeologists know where its remains should be, it is impossible to dig there.[[6]](#endnote-6) It lies under the third holiest site in Islam, which includes the Dome of the Rock.[[7]](#endnote-7) Not a stone of Solomon’s Temple has ever been excavated. But the Bible offers a remarkably detailed description.[[8]](#endnote-8)

R: “The house which King Solomon built for YHWH was 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high…. In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim … each 10 cubits high…. He overlaid the cherubim with gold.” — 1 Kings 6:2, 23, and 28

N: The Bible’s description suggests a floor plan for Solomon’s Temple, and it is strikingly similar to temples built by neighboring peoples who worship many gods. The closest in appearance is a temple hundreds of miles to the north of Jerusalem at Ain Dara[[9]](#endnote-9) in modern day Syria. They have similar dimensions and the same basic floor plan. Guarding both temples are sphinxes or cherubim, as the Bible calls them.[[10]](#endnote-10) Unique to the temple at Ain Dara are the enormous footprints of the god who lived here. They mark his progress as he strode to his throne in the innermost sanctuary.[[11]](#endnote-11)

Lawrence Stager (Harvard):[[12]](#endnote-12) If we take the details that we find of Solomon’s Temple in the book of Kings and compare it with the Ain Dara temple, we can piece together a fairly good picture I think, of what this temple might have looked like in the age of Solomon.[[13]](#endnote-13)

N: Now it is possible to reconstruct with some confidence how Solomon’s Temple may have looked, and how the ancient Israelites worshipped their God.[[14]](#endnote-14)

Branham: Outside was an enormous altar. Beyond that was a porch area that led into the inside of the temple. There was a room, the holy place, and then beyond that the most sacred room, the holy of holies [The Oracle] where tradition says the Ark of the Covenant held the tablets of the Law. And this room was considered to be the most sacred site on earth, because it is the room where God’s Presence could be found.

Unquote.

***Stairs***

The model pictured by the video is marked by massive stairs. Yet there is no mention of such stairs in the biblical description.

There are no stairs visible in the pictures of Ain Dara: there are stairs leading to the main hall; but, none inside the main hall. Neither is there a distinction at Ain Dara between any Holy Place, and a Most Holy Place. In fact we learn nothing about Solomon’s Temple architecture from Ain Dara: thus the real lesson that might be gleaned from Ain Dara is glossed over with mirrors and smoke. Let is focus ourselves on the subject of steps and stairs.

* In Exodus 20:26 we learn that there is a general theological prohibition to the use of steps in worship, particularly in relationship to the stone altar. Evidently, the priests wore kilts in those days, kilts without underwear.
* In 1 Kings 10:18-20[[15]](#endnote-15) we learn that Solomon’s ivory throne only had six steps. Since Solomon himself is an icon of God the Son, we have to believe that the steps also have significance and we doubt that God would distance Himself from His people by multiplying steps. The obvious function of Solomon’s six steps is to raise him to eyelevel with the people while he is seated. So rather than making him more remote, to look down on others, the steps express a desire to enhance closeness, communication and contact. The Living God is the One Who makes Himself approachable and touchable in the Son.
* In Ezekiel 40:22, 26, 31, 34 we discover seven steps on the east, and seven steps on the south, leading up to a six-chambered gate; we discover eight more steps on the south, and eight more steps on the east, leading up to the inner court.[[16]](#endnote-16)
* In 1 Kings 6:8 we find a winding stair, either zig-zag or circular leading to the second story and continuing on to the third story of rooms outside of the Temple surrounding it.
* In Nehemiah 9:4 we find several people standing on the stairs outside of the Temple praying.

In all of the Bible there is no mention of a single stair or step into the Holy of Holies, Most Holy Place, Holiest, or Oracle, or anywhere else inside the Holy Place or Oracle. All the steps are outside, or used to ascend to the three stories of outer rooms. Neither is there any reference to approaching, ascending, building, or mounting an altar by stairs or steps. Psalms of ascent refer to the climb from Jericho to Jerusalem for the most part. Once inside, priests and Levites are elevated to the same level as God Himself.

The horned altar at Tel Be’er Sheva, Israel, is without steps, even though it is made of cut stones, which is also forbidden.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Even if we follow the pattern of Ain Dara, there is no justification for more than three or four outside steps.

There is no warrant whatsoever for the BBS display of a massive brazen altar reached by numerous steps; or for the oracle being reached by a stone stair, which is at least a story in height (time 1:16:44). Yahweh was approachable at the level of His people. “God became man so that man might become god.”[[18]](#endnote-18)

***Sacred Space***

Let us be careful with our definition of sacred space, less we lapse into some false superstition. Sacred spaces are all around us: sacred space means a space that is set apart for particular use. We have bathrooms, bedrooms, closets, dining rooms, kitchens, and the like in our houses which are all set apart for specific uses. Studying in a dining room is not a good idea, because one’s study thoughts are incessantly distracted by thoughts of eating.[[19]](#endnote-19) The only thing that makes one space more sacred than any other is the importance or priority of the activity or person for which that space is devoted. The Oracle in the Temple in Jerusalem, was[[20]](#endnote-20) “the most sacred site on earth.” This is no longer true. The physical Oracle of Yahweh on earth, no longer exists in the shape of a physical Temple in Jerusalem, and has not existed in such a shape since 586 BC, when Yahweh abandoned it, and then Nebuchadrezzar came and burned the buildings down, and broke down the walls.[[21]](#endnote-21) We no longer seek God’s Presence in sacred spaces made with human hands, with one exception.

***Significance***

We have looked in vain in several locations for the extent of Israel’s cultural, and international significance. This was not found in the City of David. Nor was it located in six-chambered gates. We did find considerable evidence of Israelite influence; still, the causes of that influence were not found. Some seek these things in David’s or Solomon’s prowess in waging war. The reality of world power is that David was not strong outside of Israel; yet Israel was not molested because neighboring nations were not at the peak of their power and able to deal with minuscule Israel. Even powerful Solomon is an Egyptian vassal. We need to look elsewhere.

The secret of David’s strength lies in his prayer. He defeated Goliath by prayer, not because he was bigger, or stronger, or a better combatant. His constant incessant time spent in prayer to Yahweh built in David the quiet confidence that Yahweh would accomplish what David could not accomplish himself. Moreover, somehow or other, Yahweh would frequently accomplish this with the simple tools He had placed in David’s hands: five smooth round stones and a sling.[[22]](#endnote-22)

The secret of Solomon’s greatness resides in his Yahweh given wisdom. Consequently, the whole world comes to his feet just to get their questions answered. Because Solomon’s wisdom is really Yahweh’s wisdom, no one is able to stump him: a fact that Daniel will later discover and build his life around. This is true of Joseph before both of them, and many who will come afterward.

The only real extent of Israel’s cultural, and international significance is found here, in this Temple, where the Shəkinah chooses to make His Presence known, in this Oracle, from which Yahweh choses to speak. We may or may not believe in this Yahweh, but the simple logic of the evidence shows us that if we would come to Yahweh, we will do so exclusively on His terms, not ours. Between 950 or so, and 586 BC, Yahweh’s terms were Jerusalem, Temple, Oracle, Ark of the Covenant. This was the only reason that Israel had cultural greatness and significance. This was the only reason that the Temple was “the most sacred site on earth.”

***Conclusion***

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The great lesson of Ain Dara rests in its comparative typology, not in its comparative topology. Because Yahweh is so transcendent by nature, so different from His creatures; He must go to great lengths in order to speak with His creatures. The business of Yahweh’s immanence, appears to be quite difficult. Indeed, Yahweh Himself describes it as difficult.[[24]](#endnote-24) The whole point of the typology is to act and speak in a manner that people will understand. So, yes, God lisps to us in baby talk because that is all we are intelligent enough to grasp. The Shəkinah lives in the Temple, much like any other temple, so that we will “get it.”

“Oh, that’s a temple; now I know
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Moreover, Yahweh’s Temple is not a display of physical intimidation; it is a display of Yahweh’s humbling himself so that He can draw near to hear and serve us, simply because we are His children.[[26]](#endnote-26) Yahweh is intimidating, He just doesn’t need to flaunt it. So stairs have no place in the Oracle or at the Altar. The floor plan is all that is necessary, because the room is a simple rectangle attached to a cube.[[27]](#endnote-27)

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[[28]](#endnote-28)

1. Psalm 50:1; Isaiah 65; Jeremiah 7:13 for example [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. 1 Kings 6 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Shaye J. D. Cohen (1948 …), professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy at Harvard with no other special qualifications in archaeology. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. We are not interested in the discussion of magic. It is not that we don’t believe in magic, or that magic is not a form of evidence: magic is a form of evidence. Magic can be one of two things: sleight of hand, or demonism.

What we believe about sleight of hand is that it has a scientific explanation. Since, this presents itself as a scientific discussion, we are not interested in sleight of hand without the attendant scientific explanation, or without logical connections to the topic at hand. Sleight of hand is simply not relevant to the current topic of discussion. If the Temple is an elaborate sleight of hand, it has no real interest for us as a subject of worship: it is merely entertainment. If worship is equated to entertainment, we don’t need it. Better entertainment may be found elsewhere.

What we believe about demonism is that the Temple exists to wage war against it. Pagans, for example, have been known to sacrifice children. Since demonism is the very thing the Temple claims to defeat, presentation of it here, no matter how logical or well-intended, represents an internal self-contradiction. This is also irrelevant, and has no place here.

It is true that the Temple is a powerful symbol. Mr. Cohen seems confused about what the biblical record claims for itself in that symbol. The Temple is the house of the living God, the place where His Shəkinah dwells. The symbology shows that just as the king dwells in the midst of his people, even so Yahweh, the Great King is pleased to dwell in the midst of his people. Symbols are worthless without the reality of what those symbols represent. Also, power does not reside with any symbol, but with the reality that symbol demonstrates.

There is no Oneness of God or oneness of the Jewish people without the reality of Yahweh’s presence in the Shəkinah. The Shəkinah is either present or not present; yet, if not present, this is sleight of hand: for in that case the Jews have claimed to worship that which does not exist. On the other hand, the record attests that millions upon millions of Israelites have witnessed this Shəkinah over the course of more than eight centuries: that is what the evidence says. Now, according to Mr. Cohen, we are compelled to believe that all of these many millions, over such eons of time, were all self-deceived, simply because Mr. Cohen holds the opinion that it’s magic.

Moreover, this symbol is not about the Jewish people, who didn’t even exist until 516 BC, or even about the Israelite people of 950 BC, when this Temple was dedicated. This Temple is about all people, and about God’s true dwelling place in heaven as Solomon himself notes. 1 Kings 8:30, 39, 41, 43, 49, 53, 60; 2 Chronicles 6:21, 30, 32-33, 39 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. “Seen as” not actually being the dwelling of the Shəkinah. The Shəkinah either dwells there or He does not dwell there. If the former, the phrase, “seen as,” is fatuous. If the latter, then all religious exercise is vacuous. Moreover, this discussion is farcical. One cannot deny half of the evidence and reach rational NPOV conclusions. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. The remains, if any, should be in a refuse site, where Nebuchadrezzar would have dumped them. So we should be excavating Gehenna, and other dump sites. There is little hope of finding anything on the Temple mount: at most a pebble or two. The rock has now been swept three times, it is probably clean. Any stones of value should be sought out in other buildings, as reused materials: so the question is, what did Nebuchadrezzar build immediately after the conquest of Israel. It is not unreasonable that we should look in Babylon, particularly in Babylon’s foundations. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Please note that the steps referenced by Josephus must be applied to Herod’s Temple and not to Solomon’s Temple.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dome_of_the_Rock>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_Stone>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Aqsa_Mosque> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. This is not just a “remarkably detailed description.” The Bible offers a complete description with detailed instructions for Temple use: an annual calendar, sacrificial system, orders for priests and Levites, furniture, clothing, washing requirements, incense manufacture, and an extensive hymnology, to cite a few things found in the specifications. The BBS assumption here, is that the instructions are inadequate, and must be filled in from other sources. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. The following discussion of Ain Dara is also disappointing; in fact it is defective. The floor plan presented is for Solomon’s Temple, not for Ain Dara. The floor plan also features a six-chambered gate, for which there is no evidence whatsoever: the six-chambered gate is an exclusive feature of Ezekiel’s Temple, which has not yet been built, which was revealed to Ezekiel via a vision he had in 572 BC (Ezekiel 40), fourteen years after Solomon’s Temple was destroyed.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ain\_Dara\_(archaeological\_site)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ain_Dara_%28archaeological_site%29)

This is a better presentation with the actual floor plan and elevation pictures at Ain Dara. Note that there are no six-chambered gates, and only three steps lead to the throne platform.

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-asia/ain-dara-temple-and-giant-footsteps-gods-001655>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem>

The following article is also somewhat imaginative.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon%27s_Temple>

<http://www.templemount.org/solomon.html>

The following plan is very possibly the most accurate, simply because it has the least embellishment.

<http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/king_solomons_temple/page_9.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The equation of sphinx with cherubim is insulting and troublesome. Sphinx appear as giant winged cats; while cherubim are only represented, being invisible “destroyers”, sometimes visualized as tetra-morphs with human like bodies: feet, legs, etc. Moreover, Solomon’s porch is guarded by pillars, rather than cherubim. Neither is there any real comparison with Assyro-Babylonian shedu.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherub>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tetramorph>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seraph> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. The differences at Ain Dara are more striking than the similarities. A mere tally of similar points does not begin to tell the whole story; it is, in fact, misleading. Forget the numerical tally and examine the two floorplans for yourself. One is simple and single-leveled. The other is ornate, stepped and platformed, embellished with mythic footprints.

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-asia/ain-dara-temple-and-giant-footsteps-gods-001655>

<http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/king_solomons_temple/page_9.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Lawrence Stager (1943 …), American archaeology professor at Harvard. Works: Gezer, Tell el-Hesi, Ashkelon. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence\_Stager [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Comical…. Ain Dara is not necessary for the construction of a complete model. The actual BBS portrayal is an abominable distortion of the biblical evidence. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Stairs are forbidden in Israelite altars and temples. Nor is there any warrant for such stairs from the ruins of the Ain Dara pagan temple. The Bible provides only a floor plan and a height because the Temple floor was most likely flat. There is no real point in excavating beneath the Dome of the Rock, because the preceding temple was Herod’s temple, which was levelled by the Romans. Herod’s temple was in turn preceded by other temples: we are not sure how many. Such temples were preceded by the second temple which dates just after 516 BC. We fail to see the benefit if a second temple excavation. Only after eliminating all such intervening obstacles can we arrive at artifacts of Solomon’s Temple which was thoroughly razed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. There is no reason to believe that the Babylonians did a sloppy job of this. So we expect that such an excavation would yield little or nothing fruitful. We already know that some of the foundation stones which level the temple platform, the top surface of the hill, are still in place and we know exactly where they are located. There is much dubious superstition associated with Western Wall.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Wall>

<http://jerusalemstone.theisraelboutique.com/what-is-the-jerusalem-wailing-wall.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Confirmed in 2 Chronicles 9:17-19 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. We make no claim to having these in the proper order and direction: the dream sequence is less than perfectly clear and requires further study by experts. The inner court indicates that we are still outside of the Temple. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Be%27er_Sheva#Horned_altar> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Athanasius (296/98-373)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius_of_Alexandria> [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. This is the science of objectics, which here merely highlights the necessity for sacred space.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonverbal_communication> [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Was! Not, “was considered.” It is either what it claims to be, or it is a fraud and a hoax. All of the provenance associated with this Oracle clearly claims that Yahweh meets with His people there in a special way. Moreover, Solomon, states for this Oracle that any person anywhere in the world, pagan, Israelite, or Jew may pray to this Oracle and the God Whose Glory (Shəkinah) lives in it, and their prayers will be answered (1 Kings 8:15-54). We have no reason to believe that Solomon received a negative response from Yahweh.

In 586 BC, this sacred space, the Oracle, ceased to be sacred: for as Ezekiel 10 declares, Yahweh abandoned it. Today, this sacred space is found elsewhere. The physical earthly Oracle always was an icon, a typology of the real immaterial heavenly Oracle. Today, this iconography, this typology is relocated. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. 2 Kings, Chapters 24 and 25. The text specifically says that he burned the Temple (25:9), and razed the city walls (25:10). We find it difficult to mean that he left the Temple walls standing. See also 2 Chronicles 36:19; Ezra 5:12, 14, 16 (note that the foundation had to be rebuilt); Jeremiah, Chapters 27, 28, and 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. 1 Samuel 17:40 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. We count both Daniel and Ezekiel as canonized Scripture: yet, on what basis? Both are written after Yahweh has abandoned Israel, as are several other books. Daniel and Ezekiel are sufficient evidence that the Shəkinah now speaks to people without the physical earthly Oracle. The old physical earthly Oracle is gone, and the second Temple did not bring it back. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Psalm 50:1; Isaiah 65: Jeremiah 7:13 for example [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. The pertinent difference is that what is supposed to be going on in pagan temples, is actually going on in the Temple: Yahweh, acts, listens, and speaks. Sometimes pagan temples falsify these things with trapdoors and speaking tubes. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Psalm 113:5-6 [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. 1 Kings 6 [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)