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Item Type	Article
Authors	Arrais, Paula L. M.
Publisher	Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo (Unasp)
Rights	Creative Commons Copyright (CC 2.5)
Download date	2026-07-10 18:09:16
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/228848

THE ORIGIN AND ESTABLISHMENT OF ANCIENT SANCTUARIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN YAHWEH AND BAAL

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Abstract: Scholars in different fields of study recognize significant differences between the Canaanite god called Baal, and the Israelite God, Yahweh. Knowing then that there are differences between these two deities it is important to point out that there are also significant similarities between them. Amongst these significant similarities is the imagery of their particular sanctuary, or dwelling place. For this reason, this study will compare the construction and structure of both Baal and Yahweh's sanctuaries.

Keywords: Baal, Yahweh, Sanctuary, Differences, Similarities.

A ORIGEM E O ESTABELECIMENTO DE ANTIGOS SANTUÁRIOS: UM ESTUDO COMPARATIVO ENTRE YAHWEH E BAAL

Resumo: Estudiosos, em diferentes áreas de estudo, reconhecem diferenças significativas entre o deus cananeu, chamado Baal, e o Deus de Israel, Yahweh. Sabendo, então, que existem diferenças entre essas duas divindades é importante salientar que também há semelhanças significativas entre eles. Entre essas semelhanças significativas está a imagem do seu santuário particular, ou lugar de habitação. Por essa razão, este estudo irá comparar a construção e estrutura dos dois santuários – o de Baal e o de Yahweh.

Palavras-chave: Baal, Yahweh, Santuário, Diferenças, Semelhanças.

As the Israelites settled in Canaanite territory they were surrounded by a people quite different from them – a people that had a god of their own, the god Baal.¹ I concur with Mark Phelps as he recognizes that “with the obvious exception of Yahweh, Baal is the most significant deity in the OT.”² In fact some scholars state: “Of all the gods in the ancient world, Baal was the one who was the most tempting for the Israelites to worship.”³

¹ FANT, C. E. and REDDISH, M. G. *Lost Treasures of the Bible: Understanding the Bible Through Archaeological Artifacts in World Museums*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008, p. 83.

² PHELPS, M. A., “Baal (Deity)”, in: FREEDMAN, D. N., MYERS, A. C. and BECK, A. B. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, p. 134.

³ FANT and REDDISH, *Lost Treasures of the Bible, op. cit.*, p. 83.



Scholars in different fields of study recognize significant differences between the Canaanite god called Baal, and the Israelite God, Yahweh.⁴ Knowing then that there are differences between these two deities it is important to point out that there are also significant similarities between them.⁵ Amongst these significant similarities is the imagery of their particular sanctuary, or dwelling place. For this reason, this study will compare the construction and structure of both Baal and Yahweh's sanctuaries.

Problem

Knowing that the Bible presents a detailed description of the origin and establishment of Yahweh's earthly sanctuary, the question this study attempts to answer is, was the building of a temple a common practice among other deities such as Baal? Were there also commands directly from Baal for the building of his temple? What are the similarities and differences between Baal and Yahweh when it comes to the construction and building of their particular sanctuaries?

Method and purpose

My purpose with this paper is fourfold. First I will investigate the narrative of the process of construction of Baal's palace found in the Ugaritic texts. Secondly I will examine the general contours of the structure of Baal's temple. Thirdly, I will analyze some of the biblical narratives pointing to the process of construction of Yahweh's sanctuary in the

⁴ Some see this clash between deities as a socioeconomic ideology issue, see "Yahweh and Baal", In: *The Urantia Book: A Revelation*. New York: Uversa Press, 2005, p. 910. Others scholars see the differences between deities centered in the fact that Baal had a female counterpart and Yahweh did not; see Celia Brewer Marshall, *A Guide Through the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989, p. 71.

⁵ About the similarities between Baal and Yahweh Phelps writes: "That Yahweh and Baal are both pictured as storm-deities (Job 38; Ps. 29) is expected in similar ecological niches, with similar epithets. Both are warriors who "ride the clouds". [...] The two share common enemies, Leviathan [...], Tannin [...], and Yamm [...]. The latter examples best exemplify the event, as the mythic battle of Baal and Yamm is reduced in an act of creation. Order is a part of creation for the Israelites, as the universe was created and controlled by Yahweh from void to completion. His enemies in the OT are mortals, who reject him or try to thwart his plans in the mundane realm." See in Mark Anthony Phelps, "Baal (Deity)", in: FREEDMAN, D. N., MYERS, A. C., and BECK, A. B. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, p. 134.



wilderness and in Solomon's temple.⁶ And finally, I will study the structure of Yahweh's temple proper. I will attempt to provide a contrast and comparison analysis of both temples, from its origins to its construction.

The construction of Baal's palace in the Ugaritic mythology

Baal was the most prominent deity in the Canaanite pantheon. Most bible students know this god from the stories contained in the Old Testament, but is it the Ugaritic texts found at Ras Shamra in 1931 that shed the most insight of him⁷. Baal is described as the storm and fertility god, the one responsible to cause the rain to fall upon the earth, making the land productive: "In the old Canaanite mythology, Ba'al was the 'Cloud Rider,' the weather god who rode across the heavens daily in his chariot, governing wind and weather."⁸

The Ugaritic cuneiform tablets found at Ras Shamra describe the Baal Cycle, which is divided in three main sections⁹ in the following order: the battle between Baal and Yam; the building of Baal's palace and finally the battle between Baal and Mot, "the God of Death and king of the Nether World".¹⁰ This section will analyze the second main event related in the Ugaritic texts, the building of Baal's palace.

Curiously, Baal is the only god in the Canaanite pantheon that does not have a palace of his own¹¹. Umberto Cassuto states that when the "epic begins, Baal has not yet a palace of his own. He still lives in his father's house, while the dwelling place of his mother serves for his wives also."¹² Cassuto adds that since Baal was in the middle of his conflict with Mot, having a palace would place him in a better position before his enemy.¹³

⁶ The biblical narrative portion will not attempt to provide a complete exegetical analysis since it falls out of the scope of this archaeological paper.

⁷ FANT and REDDISH, *Lost Treasures of the Bible*, p. 86.

⁸ DEVER, W. G. *Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, p. 157.

⁹ DAY, J. "Baal (Deity)", in: FREEDMAN, D. N. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, A – C*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, 546.

¹⁰ CASSUTO, U. "The Palace of Baal", in: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, v. 61, Nº 1, (March, 1942), p. 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹³ CASSUTO, U., "The Palace of Baal", p. 52.



When he finally decides that it is time for him to have a palace he cannot begin the construction of it without El's approval, that is, he must gain his father's authorization. Interestingly, he is not the one that makes the request to his father, instead, he asks Anath, his sister, for help, but ultimately she fails. Baal now turns to his mother, Asherah, who intercedes for him and gets El's approval. The interesting facet in this preliminary analysis is that a god like Baal did not have the authority to build his own house.

When El finally consents to Baal's wish, the preparation for the building of the palace begins. Kathir, the architect god, is the one responsible for it: "He poured out gold and silver in large quantities, and made vessels and furniture for the palace. [...] a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp."¹⁴ Everything was extravagant and grand. Furthermore, extra objects were included in the palace: "a canopy over the throne, a footstool before it, and all sorts of vessels for the use of the king and his family."¹⁵ It is reasonable to conclude that this is a residential palace, not a temple for worship, as some scholars have argued for before.¹⁶ The texts also mention that Kathir builds Baal's palace using "cedar trees brought from Lebanon and Sirion, the wooded mountains mentioned in Ps 29:6."¹⁷

Some interpreters propose that the construction of Baal's palace is an allegory for the creation of the world: "Ewa Wasilewska and others suggest that the building of Baal's palace, like the building of Marduk's temple and Yahweh's temple (2 Samuel 5-7, 1 Kings), is a metaphor for the creation process..."¹⁸ Cassuto also indicates this possibility as he makes a parallel between the creation process and the construction of Baal's palace: "Then he kindled a powerful fire in order to melt down the silver and the gold. For six days the fire burnt continually, and on the seventh day the silver and the gold poured themselves into sheets of their own accord to decorate the cedar planks on the walls."¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁸ LEEMING, D. A., "Canaanite Mythology", in: *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 61

¹⁹ CASSUTO, U., "The Palace of Baal", p. 55.



Cassuto comments that using cedar planks to cover stone walls and then ornamenting it with gold was a “Canaanite mode of construction”²⁰ and he links this happening with the construction of the Solomon’s temple: “This [...] mode of construction is mentioned in the Book of Kings with regard to the building of the Temple of Solomon by Canaanite craftsmen, while the details of the silver and gold assuming shape and occupying their place of their own accord, run parallel to the late Jewish legend about the golden calf taking shape of itself, and about the Tabernacle and the Temple being build of themselves.”²¹

At one stage in the construction, Baal and Kathir have a minor, but at the same time significant, discussion about opening or not a window in the palace:

“Kôtaru-wa-Hasisu replies:

Listen, O Might Ba’lu,

Understand, O Cloud Rider:

Must I not put a latticed window in the house,

A window-opening in the palace?

Might Ba’lu replies:

You must not put a latticed window in [the house],

[no window-opening] in the palace!”²²

The reason why Baal was reluctant in having a window in his palace was because he was afraid of Mot: “The Ugaritic myth reveals a conception that Mot could not enter a sealed temple, but Baal could,”²³ and some say the reason not to open a window was because “Mot should enter by one of them and kill his wives.”²⁴

To celebrate his new palace, Baal hosts a banquet and invites the other deities to come. Later in the text Baal agrees in having an opening in his palace, showing that he

²⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

²¹ Ibid., p. 55.

²² HALLO, W. W. and YOUNGER, K. L. *The Context of Scripture*, v. 1. Leiden: Brill, 1997, p. 261.

²³ ZEVIT, Z., *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* (New York, London: Continuum, 2001), 238.

²⁴ CASSUTO, U. “The Palace of Baal”, p. 54.



was no longer afraid of Mot: “It is only after more military victories and a great celebratory banquet in the palace that the god agrees to a window,”²⁵ as the Ugaritic text makes clear:

“(Then) Ba’lu [returns] to (his) house.
Might Ba’lu speaks up:
I am going to charge Kôtaru, this very day,
Kôtaru, this very moment,
With opening up a window in (my) house,
a latticed window in (my) palace,
With opening up a rift in the clouds,
according to the pronouncement of Kôtaru-wa-Hasisu.
Kôtaru-wa-Hasisu breaks out laughing,
he raises his voice and says:
Didn’t I tell you, O Might Ba’lu,
(that) you, Ba’lu, would come around to my word?”²⁶

In this section I attempted to present a brief description of the construction of Baal’s palace found in the Ugaritic texts. This data will be the basis for the comparisons between Baal and Yahweh later in this study.

The structure of Baal’s temple in Ras Shamra

Some Biblical texts attest that the temples of Baal were situated on the “high places” (Num 22:41; 2 Kings 21:3, 23:5; 2 Chron 33:3; Jer 19:5, 32:35)²⁷. Also, the worship of Baal was frequently linked to the fertility goddess Asherah²⁸ (Judges 3:7; 1 Kings 18:19; 2 Kings 23:4) thus objects related to her are likely to be found in the surroundings of the

²⁵ LEEMING, D. A., “Canaanite Mythology”, p. 61.

²⁶ HALLO and YOUNGER, *The Context of Scripture*, p. 261.

²⁷ Throughout this study all biblical references will be taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless indicated otherwise.

²⁸ Even though the connection between Asherah and Baal is significant, to address this issue would be to depart from the original intention of this paper, this way, these connections are the object for further study.



temples of Baal. ²⁹Edmund Buckley writes: “In connection with the *Baal* sanctuary there was usually a grove, tree, pillar, or obelisk sacred to *Astarte* or *Ashera* (plural *Ashtaroth*), whose seductive and licentious cult proved the most debasing influence of the age.” In view of the fact that there are many Baal temples, this paper will analyze the structure of the Temple located in Ras Shamra, Syria, ancient Ugarit.

Claude Schaeffer, a French archaeologist, directed the excavation at Ras Shamra, which began in 1929. ³⁰ Baal’s temple is located in the tell’s acropolis along with other two significant buildings: Dagan’s temple and the library of the high priest. ³¹ William Schniedewind writes: “The temples of Baal and Dagan overshadowed the physical space of the city of Ugarit with their size and location. [...] These large temples would have required considerable support staff including priests, scribes, musicians, singers, and maintenance personnel.” ³²

In the book *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*, Marguerite Yon states that both Baal and Dagan temples had the same plan: “The two monumental temples are built according to identical plans, and each was surrounded by an enclosure delimiting the sacred area. Their tower stood high above the ancient city of Ugarit.” ³³ On the one hand, the “monuments and objects found in this area of the acropolis have been mentioned in many reports,” ³⁴ on the other hand “the architecture and urban planning of the area have not been analyzed.” ³⁵ Yon adds that the study of both buildings was “recently resumed, and the results will be published in a forthcoming report.” ³⁶ Bellow is the topography of Tell Ras Shamra:

²⁹ BUCKLEY, E. *Universal Religion: A Course of Lessons Historical and Scientific on the Various Faiths of the World*. Chicago: University Association, 1897, p. 479.

³⁰ SCHNIEDEWIND, W. M. and HUNT, J. H. *A Primer on Ugaritic: Language, Culture, and Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

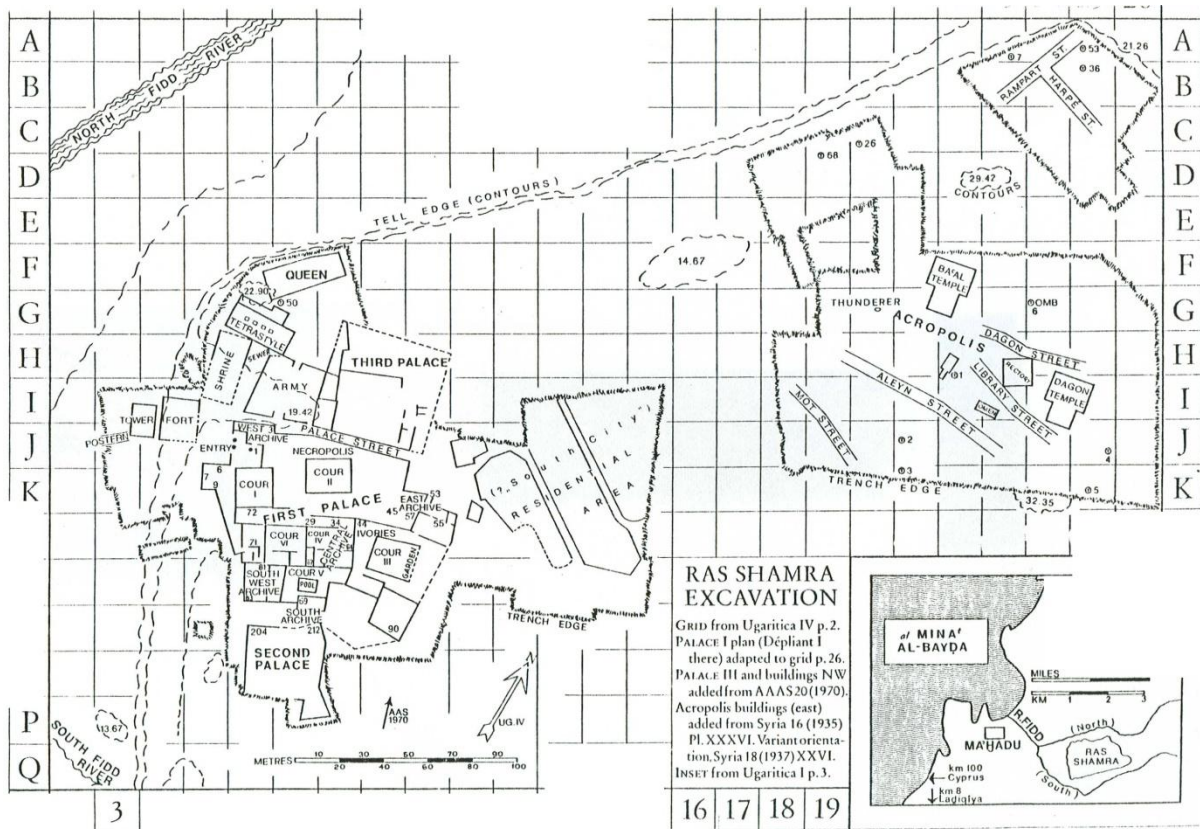
³² *Ibid.*, 17.

³³ YON, M. *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006, p. 106.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 106.



Based on the ruins of both Baal’s and Dagan’s temples scholars certify that they were magnificent buildings.³⁷ The steles found in its surroundings indicated which god was adored there. A large stele with the inscription “Baal with Thunderbolt”, an Egyptian stele having a dedication to “Baal of Sapan,” and an image of Baal’s sister, the goddess Anat, helped to identify the west temple as the one belonging to Baal.³⁸ Even though the Temple of Baal is the most conserved one, what was left of it was damaged since its discovery, making it “extremely difficult to grasp the design of the building at first sight.”³⁹

What scholars do understand is that Baal’s temple had a rectangular shape⁴⁰ and “its enclosure cover an area of about 850 square meters.”⁴¹ Yon describes the dimensions of the building: “16x22 meters, composed of two adjoining, rectangular different sizes: a

³⁷ YON, M. *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*, p. 106.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

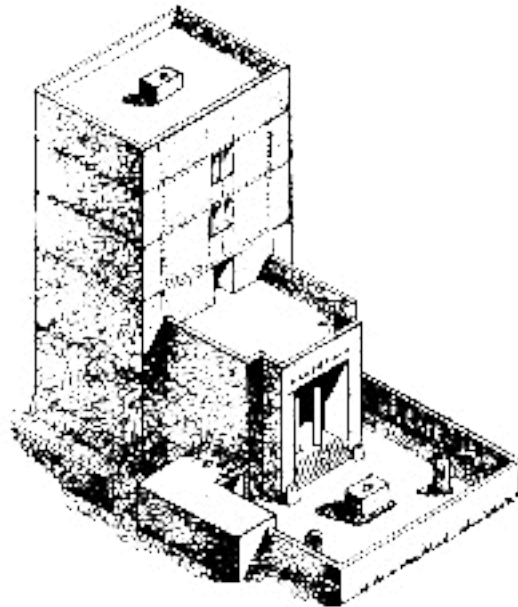
⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

vestibule to the south and a rectangular room or 'cella' to the north, with a door between the two rooms and a stone sill, the blocks of which have collapsed. A stairway led from the courtyard to the vestibule, which provided access to the temple's 'cella.'"⁴²

Because of the presence of stairways found in the place, it is possible to speculate a design for the temple.⁴³ A square altar (2 meters in width) made of large stone blocks was found in front of the temple, well preserved, but since then it has been ruined.⁴⁴ Yon writes that it is likely that there was a place for possibly cult image in one of the temple's rooms: "upon entering the temple, one can see an enormous foundation made of ashlar blocks that supported the first flight of a stairway along the eastern wall. It is possible that there was a niche (perhaps for a cult image) framed by the stairway's posts on the ground floor."⁴⁵

In sum, this section presented a brief overview of the structure of Baal's temple and its location. Below is an artistic reconstruction of the possible structure of the Temple of Baal:



⁴² Ibid., p. 109.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 110.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 110.

⁴⁵ YON, M. *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra*, p. 110.



The construction of Yahweh's sanctuary in the wilderness

This section will analyze the textual details in the construction of Yahweh's temple in the wilderness. First I will address the Divine intent and idea for the construction; secondly, I will address the free will of the people in the construction of the sanctuary; and finally I will address the role of the "Spirit" in the construction.

After the Israelites left Egypt Yahweh decided that He would live amongst His people, thus, He commanded Moses to build him a Sanctuary. The biblical text says: "*Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them*" (Exod 25:8). It is significant to notice that the initiative to build a temple came from Yahweh itself and not from Moses. God instructed Moses as to how to build the temple indicating that Moses did not build it out of his own creativity⁴⁶ but "*according to all that I [God] show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it*" (Exod 25:9). Moses was given detailed instructions of how the sanctuary should be. Measurements, materials, colors, and dimensions to the point that there were no details left for Moses to impose upon the plan. Richard Davidson writes: "He [God] is the Great Master Designer! As we read through the book of Exodus, we may tend to get bogged down and even bored by all the details, but God deliberately lingers over the details! He wanted everything to be built "just right" —beautiful in every detail."⁴⁷

The Biblical text also indicates that Yahweh's earthly sanctuary was a copy of another original temple, possibly a temple in heaven. The word "pattern" comes from the Hebrew *ty[^]nbt* (*tabnit*) and has other different meanings such as "plan;" "form;"

⁴⁶ Ellen G. White reaffirms the idea that Yahweh was the one responsible for the coordinates and the details for the construction of the sanctuary: "The tabernacle constructed by the Hebrews in the wilderness was made according to the divine command. Men called of God for this purpose were endowed by him with more than natural abilities to perform the most ingenious work. Yet neither Moses nor these workmen were left to plan the form and workmanship of the building. God himself devised and gave to Moses the plan of that sacred structure, with particular directions as to its size and form, the materials to be used, and every article of furniture which it was to contain. He presented before Moses a miniature model of the heavenly sanctuary, and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount. And Moses wrote all the directions in a book, and read them to the most influential of the people." See in Ellen G. White, "The Sanctuary", *The Sign of the Times*, June 24, 1880 par. 1).

⁴⁷ DAVIDSON, R. "Beauty of Israel's Sanctuaries", in: *A Song for the Sanctuary*, unpublished manuscript 2.



“image;” and “likeness.”⁴⁸ To argue that the word in the text of Exodus 25 implies a pattern of heavenly nature is not contradictory to the definition of the word in itself. The Theological Wordbook also indicates that the same word was used in 1 Chr. 28:11 and 19 as David provided a *tabnit* for Solomon in the building of the Solomonic temple. Therefore, the word in itself indicates that it points to a previous reality, just as David showed an early model of the temple to Solomon, God unveiled a “pattern” to Moses.⁴⁹ It is important also to emphasize that the *tabnit* for the sanctuary also pointed to all the furnishings to be set inside it (cf. Exod 25:9).

The construction of the sanctuary, then, began with a description of God’s willingness to dwell among His people. Consequently to this Divine initiative was the “freewill” giving of the people. The text says: “*speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering*” (Exodus 25:2). The list of materials to be “given” by the people included: “*gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats’ hair; ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate*” (Exodus 25:5-7). This way, the construction was not to be seen as a Divine action by itself, but it represented a unified effort that came from God and was also dependent upon the “freewill” of the people.

It is also significant to become aware of the role of the Holy Spirit in the building of the sanctuary in the wilderness. The Holy Spirit was sent to all artists involved in the process of construction of the wilderness sanctuary. The text says: “[...] *the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all*

⁴⁸ HARRIS, R. L., ARCHER, G. L., WALTKE, B. K. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980, p. 117.

⁴⁹ For more on the evidence that indicates a possible the heavenly sanctuary motif in the Old Testament and the implications of the word *tabnit* see: DAVIDSON, R. *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typological Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, v. 2. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1981, p. 367-388; DE SOUZA, E. B. *The Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple Motif in the Hebrew Bible: Function and Relationship to the Earthly Counterparts*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, v. 7, p. 164-173.



manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship” (Exodus 35:30-33). Davidson points to the remarkable fact that the very first person to receive the Holy Spirit was an artist involved in the construction of the wilderness temple.⁵⁰ This way, the influence of the Spirit upon the construction of the sanctuary was also fundamental in the construction of the sanctuary. In fact, this is the first time the Spirit acts in a “creation process” since creation itself. This shows that Yahweh’s involvement in the construction of the sanctuary was not merely “external” or absent but “internal” and present. This involvement was not self exclusive but reliant upon the freewill of the people and their opening to the influence of the Spirit.

The structure of Solomon’s temple

Unlike the wilderness temple in which Yahweh ordered the building process, the temple in Jerusalem was idealized by David.⁵¹ While David had a palace, Yahweh did not have a temple of His own. It was a customary to the ancient nations to build temples to its gods after they had granted them victories over other nations in war. Emanuel Schmidt writes: “Among the ancient nations there is a close connection between wars of conquest and building of temples. A solemn contract is entered upon between the king and his god. The deity grants victories to the warrior king, the latter shows his gratitude by either building or adorning ‘the house of god’ by means of the spoils of war.”⁵² The building of Solomon’s temple, also known as the First Temple,⁵³ took seven years to be

⁵⁰ DAVIDSON, R. “Beauty of Israel’s Sanctuaries”, p. 2.

⁵¹ Even though David idealized the construction of a new sanctuary to God, Ellen G. White writes: “It was Christ who planned the arrangement for the first earthly tabernacle. He gave every specification in regard to the building of Solomon’s temple. The One who in His earthly life worked as a carpenter in the village of Nazareth was the heavenly architect who marked out the plan for the sacred building where His name was to be honored.” See in WHITE, E. G. *Christ’s Object Lessons*. Washington: Review and Herald, 1941, p. 348.

⁵² SCHMIDT, E. “Solomon’s Temple”, in: *The Biblical World*, v. 14, nº 3, September, 1899, p. 164.

⁵³ GOLDWURM, H. and FRIEDNER, Y. *History of the Jewish People: The Second Temple Era*. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, in conjunction with Hillel Press/Jerusalem, 1982, p. 11.



accomplished.⁵⁴

This section, then, will address the structure of Solomon's temple as a basis for comparison with Baal's temple. At this time I will follow the order already used by Emanuel Schmidt⁵⁵ to categorize the essential elements to be observed in the data, namely, the location, the materials and the arrangement of the temple.

Solomon's temple was located in Jerusalem, on the top of Mount Zion, also known as the Temple Mount. Schmidt states: "This new sanctuary, which was to outshine all others in the land of Canaan, was situated in the capital of the nation, on the sacred spot where tradition fixes the place of Abraham's serious trial, where David had seen the vision of the angel of pestilence on the threshing-floor of the Jebusite king Araunah."⁵⁶ The site where the temple was build was not as high as the surrounding hills and Schmidt goes on to add that it stood "opposite to the Mount of Olives."⁵⁷ Some scholars have contested the veracity of the biblical description of Solomon's temple since "no physical evidence of the Temple has survived."⁵⁸ Even so, it seems that this evaluation is largely based upon source criticism, this way, undermining the biblical evidence as it is.⁵⁹

The text of Kings 5:6 indicates that the stones used in the construction of the temple came from the Lebanon. Schmidt agrees and adds that a small part of the stones were taken from the "royal caverns" on the mount hill.⁶⁰ All stones were cut away from the construction site in a way that "no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built" (1 Kings 6:7). The materials list included "hewn stones and cedars, cypress, and sandal woods"⁶¹ and for the temple's ornamentation and furniture,

⁵⁴ HUROWITZ, V. "Solomon's Temple in Context", in: *Biblical Archaeology Review*, v. 37, nº 2, March/April, 2011, p. 46.

⁵⁵ SCHMIDT, E. "Solomon's Temple", p. 164.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁸ GONEN, R. *Contested Holiness: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Perspective on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem*. Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2003, p. 50.

⁵⁹ For more on the dating of 1Chronicles see: ARCHER, G. L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007, p. 383-385.

⁶⁰ SCHMIDT, "Solomon's Temple", p. 164.

⁶¹ SCHMIDT, "Solomon's Temple", p. 165.



“metals, particularly bronze and brass, were used by the Phoenicians artists.”⁶² Davidson writes that the architecture and the artistic work of Solomon’s temple were even more spectacular, utilizing vast quantities of gold, silver, bronze, iron, woven tapestry with rich fabrics and textures and colors, giant quarried ashlar stones, massive cedar and cypress timbers, olive wood for the doors not to speak of the “glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance” (1 Chron 29:2; cf. 1 Chron 22, 28; 1 Kings 5 and 6).⁶³

The text of 1 Kings 6-7 provides a detailed report of materials used for the construction of the temple, as it was pointed in the previous paragraph. Yet the text also provides the dimensions of it. Solomon’s temple was twice the size of the wilderness tabernacle, however it had the same “structure of holiness,” that is: an outer court, a holy place, and a most holy place. The temple was essentially divided in three spaces: “(1) a portico or forecourt (*ulam* in Hebrew) with two pillars (named Yachin and Boaz); (2) the main interior hall or outer sanctum (*heikhal* in Hebrew) where daily rituals would be performed; and (3) the inner sanctum or holy of holies (*debir* in Hebrew), where God was believed to reside and the Ark of the Covenant was kept.”⁶⁴

Even though the actual temple of Solomon has not been found to this day, the Biblical texts provide plenty of information as for its details: “the presence of an altar, a large bronze basin (*yam*) and ten wheeled carts, or *mekhnnot*, in the courtyard in front of the building.”⁶⁵ The temple’s “length was sixty cubits, its width twenty, and its height thirty cubits” (1 Kings 6:2) and archaeologists call it “long-room” building, meaning “its long axis runs from the entrance to the back.”⁶⁶ Though the temple “was of a modest size”⁶⁷ its interior, thoroughly adorned with gold and carved figures in its wall, made it magnificent. Kitchen writes: “the carved cedar paneling of walls and floor and the gold

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 165.

⁶³ DAVIDSON, “Beauty of Israel’s Sanctuaries”, p. 5.

⁶⁴ HUROWITZ, “Solomon’s Temple in Context”, p. 46.

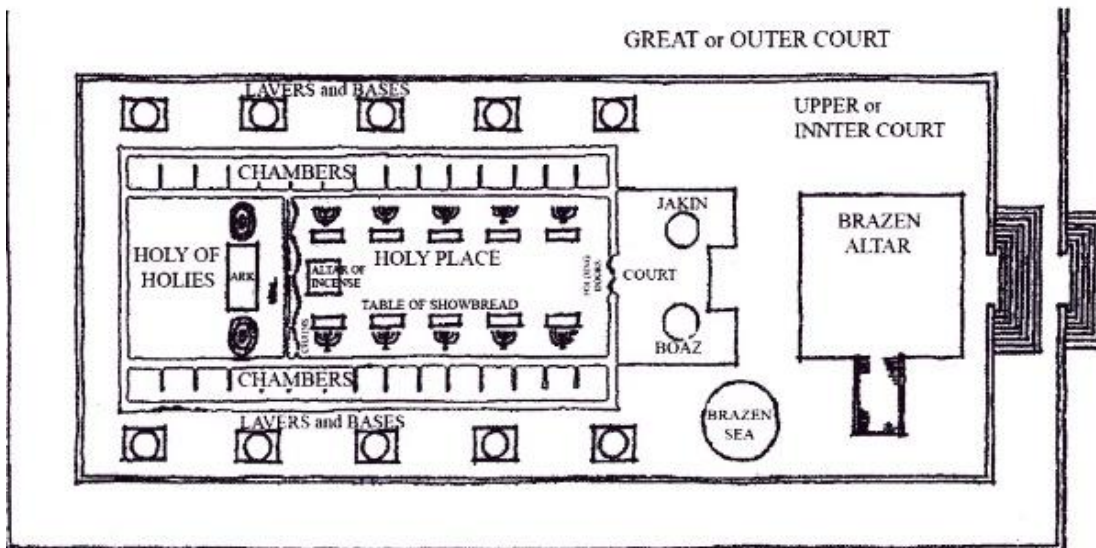
⁶⁵ HUROWITZ, “Solomon’s Temple in Context”, p. 47.

⁶⁶ HUROWITZ, “Solomon’s Temple in Context”, p. 46.

⁶⁷ KITCHEN, K. A. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, p. 86.

overlay of the interior made it opulent.”⁶⁸ The text says that the walls of the temple were ornamented “with carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers” (1Kings 6:29). The text adds that the floor of the temple was coated with gold (1Kings 6:30).

This section attempted to clarify the details in regard to the temple of Jerusalem and its structure. Below is a detailed floor plan of Solomon’s Temple, including the arrangement of its furnishings:



Similarities and differences between Baal and Yahweh

This section will first present a brief comparison between the construction of the wilderness temple and the construction of Baal’s palace in Ugaritic mythology; and secondly a comparison between the structures of both Baal’s temple in Ras Shamra and the temple of Solomon.⁶⁹

I will begin by presenting a few similarities between the construction of the temple of Baal and that of Yahweh. When the construction of the wilderness tabernacle was completed, a cloud - the glory of the Lord – filled the tent (Exodus 40:34-35). The same

⁶⁸ Ibid., 86.

⁶⁹ This summary will present the similarities and differences as it relates to archaeology. Any philosophical or theological comparisons are object of further study. Among these, is a comparison between the Garden of Eden motif found in each narrative.



occurred when the Ark of the Covenant was carried to the Most Holy Place in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10). In fact, some affirm that the construction was only accomplished once the Lord made Himself present inside the temple: "In each setting, the nearly tangible manifestation of the Lord's presence, called the "glory" (the Hebrew term *kabod* carries a connotation of weight and forceful presence), is said to "fill" the sanctuary. Only then is the sanctuary truly complete."⁷⁰ Likewise, in the Canaanite mythology when the palace of Baal was finally complete, "the storm god, rejoicing, moves in as soon as the structure is completed."⁷¹ Like Yahweh's temples, the temple of Baal in Ras Shamra also had an altar in front of the main entrance.

Some of the differences are also in place. While Baal's temple was situated in the high places, the palace of Baal in the Canaanite mythology on Mount Zaphon,⁷² and the temple of Baal in Ras Shamra on the highest location of the city, the wilderness temple was positioned amongst the Israelite camp, because Yahweh desired to "*dwell among them*" (Exodus 25:8). Also, in the Jerusalem temple, the tabernacle was not built upon the highest mountain but on the temple mount. Another distinctive fact is that while the biblical text states that the order to build a sanctuary on earth came from Yahweh Himself, there is no evidence that the same happened in the temple of Baal in Ras Shamra. And even in old Canaanite mythology, where Baal is the one that realizes the need of a residence, he still does not have the sovereignty to have his palace build before the authorization of El, his father. In fact, the mythology demonstrates the initiative to build as very complex since it was up to Baal and his sister, Asherah, to convince El to authorize the construction of his palace.

⁷⁰ TUELL S. S. *First and Second Chronicles*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001, p. 129.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁷² Leslie Hoppe points out to the fact that Mount Zaphon was Yahweh's: "The Psalter, however, claims Mount Zaphon for Yahweh. Psalm 89:13 asserts that God created this mountain along with three others: Yamin, Tabor, and Hermon. Psalm 48:1-2 speaks of Mount Zion as the sacred mountain of Yahweh, though Zion is not much of a mountain. It is not even the highest mountain in Jerusalem, rising just 2,460 feet above sea level." See in HOPPE, L. J. *The Holy City: Jerusalem in the Theology of the Old Testament*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000, p. 25.



Finally, the most significant dissimilarity between Baal and Yahweh's temple is that while Baal's temple normally had a sacred space for a statuette of Baal and/or a pole for Asherah, Yahweh also had a sacred room, the Most Holy Place, but instead of having an image of a god, it had the very presence of Yahweh, the only true living God. Thomas Dozeman expounds on this idea:

In keeping with the concerns of the early rhetorical critics, the comparative activity of genre criticism always involves attention to both similarities and differences. This is particularly important in the comparative study of biblical literature, which often employs generic traits and features from the ancient Near East but also subverts or reverses them in certain ways. The cela or holy place in the Exodus space for God's dwelling stands very close to ancient Near Eastern practice, the absence of a divine statue in the central cela of the temple was unique in the ancient world.⁷³

This evidence presents an important detail as for the difference between Yahweh and Baal, that of their reality. While Baal had to be represented by images, and graven objects, there was no such representation for Yahweh meaning that either the temple was always empty, or that the divinity was present with the people as the biblical texts indicate: *"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle"* (Exodus 40:34).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study attempted to provide a comparison between the construction and structure of the temples of Baal and Yahweh. The first sections analyzed the mythology surrounding the origin of Baal's temple and the biblical evidence toward the origin of Yahweh's temple. Secondly I attempted to provide the archaeological findings that shed light into the structure of both Baal and Yahweh's temples. And finally,

⁷³ DOZEMAN, T. B. *Methods for Exodus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 66.



a brief comparison between both Baal and Yahweh was given in order to illustrate how Yahweh's temple presented significant contrasts in regard to Baal's temple.

Even though this study presents an introduction as for the comparisons between the temples of Yahweh and Baal, much more study is still to be done since "the discoveries of other Iron Age temples from Near East continue to shed light on Solomon's Temple and its real-world context."⁷⁴

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⁷⁴ HUROWITZ, V. "Solomon's Temple in Context", 47.



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