

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Thesis:

**A Comparison of Sinaitic Language In Support Of Jewish Claims Concerning The
Presence Of God In The Second Temple**

Submitted to Dr. Anthony Thornhill,

by

Sally Cox

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Contents

Chapter 1	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Literature Review.....	1
Statement of Purpose	6
Statement of Importance of the Problem	6
Statement of Position on the Problem.....	7
Limitations/ Delimitations	8
Research Methods	8
Data Analysis	9
Proposal for Chapter Division	10
Chapter 2	11
Introduction.....	11
Defining the Presence of God	11
Manifestations of the Presence of God	14
Significance of the Presence of God	23
Conclusion	26
Chapter 3	28
Introduction.....	28
Background	28

Conversations of Glory	37
Questions.....	40
Chapter 4	42
Those Who Worshipped at the Temple	42
Conclusions on Those in Favor of Temple Worship	49
Those Who Refused to Worship at the Temple	50
Conclusions on Those in Favor of Alternative Temple Locations	55
Chapter 5	56
Avenues for Further Research.....	59
Bibliography	60

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

The Temple stood as the center of cultic Jewish life. It was their location for worship and where God had placed His name. It was a space where sacrifices were offered, and prayers heard. This sacred place was a permanent reminder that God had chosen to dwell among the people of Israel. As long as His presence remained among them, the people knew there was somewhere they could go to find and approach Him. Yet with the devastation of Solomon's Temple and Ezekiel's vision of the glory departing prior to its destruction the question remains how did the Jewish people justify their return to worship at this desecrated Temple-less spot? Did the Jews during this time believe the presence of God to again dwell in the Jerusalem Temple? Did they have historically recorded miraculous or theophanic type events that gave them confidence in their ability to worship there? If the Jews perceived the presence of God to be at the Second Temple what evidence did, they point to and did the literature of the Second Temple support this belief?

Literature Review

Several scholars have discussed the concept of the presence of God both in a Jewish context and in the larger background of the ancient near east. Some of this research has been connected to the Tabernacle, some to Solomon's Temple, but very little has been connected to the Second Temple. Most research in the Second Temple is connected to answering whether God dwelled in the Second Temple, but few have tried to discuss it from the perception of the Jewish people in an attempt to provide clarity in how the Jewish people justified their return to the

Temple. The following will survey the scholarly works that most closely discuss this topic in relation to the Second Temple and the Jewish perception of the presence of God.

R. E. Clements

R. E. Clements in his book *God and Temple* was one of the first modern scholars to approach the topic of the presence of God amongst the people of Israel. His work primarily deals with the presence of God as it is connected to the Old Testament. He addresses ancient near eastern concepts of sacred space and the importance of the presence of God in early Israelite worship both in the event recorded at Sinai and later at Solomon's Temple. He also includes chapters on the devastating effects the loss of Solomon's Temple had on Israelite worship. His final chapters point the renewed hope of the returned exiles as the prophets encourage them to rebuild the Temple. However, Clements notes there is a distinct shift in focus. While the Temple was rebuilt, the post exilic community began to view the Temple through an eschatological lens. The Second Temple is physically here but the people look forward to a day when complete restoration will happen, and the presence of God will dwell amongst His people in fullness. Clements concludes that the primary question that remained for the Jews in the post exilic communities was this: Will God dwell on the earth? To which he responds, for the Jew "the old answers were no longer valid, and Judaism resorted to its eschatology to provide the solution, or gave up altogether seeking the answer in this world, and averred that only in heaven would the ancient promises be fulfilled."¹ According to Clements research it 'was in the coming eschaton that the Jews would find ultimate fulfillment. While Clements' research lays the foundation for this thesis, he does not proceed further into the Intertestamental Period to understand why the

¹ R. E. Clements, *God and the Temple*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 134.

Jews would continue to worship at a temple that held no lasting answers to the potential perceived absence of God in their midst.

Craig Koester

Craig Koester also delves into this concept of the presence of God, but he takes a different approach than Clements. Koester views divine presence through the Tabernacle motif found in the Old Testament, throughout the Intertestamental period, and even into the New Testament. He chooses to focus on the importance of the Tabernacle in early Jewish belief and the recurring role it plays in later Jewish and Christian writings. Koester theorized that the Tabernacle was viewed as the pinnacle of divine presence. It far superseded either Temple; thus, it was held to as the standard to which all other sacred places were to be judged. Koester's research contributes to the topic of divine presence, but it fails to discuss the Second Temple in conjunction with that presence. The only time it is truly mentioned is when its inferiority is being compared with the superiority of the Tabernacle. His book therefore leaves the question about Jewish perceptions of the presence of God in the Second Temple untouched.²

Michael Hundley

Michael Hundley takes the divine presence and helps place it in the context of the ancient near eastern world. His work *Gods in Dwellings: Temple and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East* functions as a survey of the various perceptions and beliefs that different people groups took when considering their gods and the dwelling place of the gods. *Gods in Dwellings*

² Craig R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature and the New Testament*, Washington, DC: Cath. Biblical Assoc. of America, 1989.

does not deal exclusively with the nation of Israel; it is a culmination of research on the prominent people groups in that area of the world. His work is excellent at providing a glimpse into the ancient near eastern mindset, but he does not fully carry that into the Intertestamental world. Therefore, like the previous sources, Hundley's work is incredibly helpful but fails to specifically answer why the Jews would continue to worship at the Second Temple.³

Remus Onișor

Remus Onișor's initial work in this area is one of the closest in its topic to this thesis. In his work, he surveys the types of divine presence and divine images specifically found in the books of the Apocrypha. His criteria are not limited to the Second Temple but to the types of theophanic events that are described in the literary works. He groups these happenings under several distinct categories including, theophanies, apocalyptic visions, angels, the audible voice of God, and the images of God in eschatological thinking.⁴ Onișor's work is incredibly helpful due to its contributions in understanding divine nature in the Apocrypha. He demonstrates that while the Second Temple literature may not carry the same authority as Scripture it does provide evidence that the people during that time were struggling to reconcile the concept of the presence of God and their current post-exilic condition. Onișor's work stays within the literary realm therefore he does not take his methods one step further and apply them to the reality of the Second Temple nor the validity of the Jewish worship happening there. His work is useful in

³ Michael Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient near East*, Williston, United States: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013.

⁴ Remus Onișor, "Divine Images and Presences in the Intertestamental Apocrypha." *Altarul Reîntregirii*, no. 3 (2017), 187.

understanding the literary ideas present but it still leaves one to wrestle with how the presence of God in the Second Temple was treated in the Jewish mind.

Joseph Greene

Joseph Greene's journal article, "Did God Dwell in the Second Temple? Clarifying the Relationship between Theophany and Temple Dwelling," is one of the closest scholarly sources to this thesis. He offers viable evidence from both Intertestamental sources and New Testament sources in support of the presence of God dwelling in the Second Temple. He argues that "dwelling in the temple included a much wider set of ideas than simply the manifestation of the glory cloud."⁵ In accordance with this statement, he puts forth evidence to support that the Jews could believe in the divine presence in the Second Temple without the typical manifestations seen in Israel's history such as the glory cloud at the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. He also carries his theory forward to briefly touch on the eschatological focus of later Judaism and the increased spiritualization of the Temple. Greene's article attempts to give a wide view of the topic of Jewish perceptions of the presence of God in the Second Temple. However, this thesis will attempt to provide a unique perspective on the literature of the Second Temple era. Where Greene attempts to prove the presence of God to be in the Temple, this thesis attempts to understand the language used to support or deny that presence using the theophany at Sinai as a typological lens.

⁵ Joseph Greene, "Did God Dwell in the Second Temple? Clarifying the Relationship Between Theophany and Temple Dwelling," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61, no. 4 (December 2018), 767.

Statement of Purpose

Christians today who are predominantly Gentile and far removed from the era of the Temple often approach this topic from the perspective of attempting to deduce if God dwelt in the Second Temple as He did in the Solomon's Temple. For some scholars, the lack of a major theophany at the dedication described in Ezra 6 implies that God never dwelt in the Temple. However, many Jews continued to worship there and kept it as one of the primary focal points of their religious faith up until its destruction in A.D. 70. If the majority continued to see it as a valid avenue of worship surely there would be historical evidence to support such a belief. This thesis will seek to explain that the theophanic event at Sinai was used as a typological motif and replicated in the Intertestamental Period both in support of and evidence against the presence of God in the Jewish mindset as demonstrated and giving validation for the legitimacy of continued Jewish worship at the Second Temple or evidence against the sacred space.

Statement of Importance of the Problem

As mentioned above the primary topic of discussion concerning the Second Temple is not whether God dwelt there as He did in Solomon's Temple rather if the Jews of the Intertestamental Period used similar language in their depiction in Exodus 19 which is later mimicked in stories concerning Solomon's Temple. The events of the dedication of the Second Temple as briefly covered in Ezra 6:13-18 do not mirror those of Solomon's Temple, the first indwelling that happened at the Tabernacle, or Exodus 19 and God's appearance on Mount Sinai. Modern scholarship appears to be leaning towards the belief that the larger Jewish belief system concerning the Temple was comprised of multiple beliefs and attitudes when it came to proper

worship.⁶ When looking at these various beliefs shared by one people with a common history it stands to reason that both sides (those who chose to worship at the Temple and those who refused) may have had shared reasons. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume there is gap in the research around Jewish worship and the influence the Jewish perception of the presence of God would have had on these two specific areas. Is there a connection between the Jewish perception of the presence of God as defined by Sinaitic language and as recorded in the Intertestamental Literature that helps to validate the continued worship at the Second Temple? Researching this question would help provide further background for New Testament studies and perhaps provide a clearer image of the culture into which the Jewish New Testament writers were born.

Statement of Position on the Problem

Based on the research available that will be discussed and analyzed in the following chapters there is reason to believe that the Jewish decision to continue to worship in the Second Temple was directly linked to their perception of the presence of God in that sacred space and that the theophanic motif given at Sinai either strengthened or weakened this perception. While the historical accuracy of some of the Intertestamental works may be questionable, they still manage to provide the cultural backdrop into which the Jews grew, learned, and worshiped. The circumstances surrounding the command to build the Second Temple and the cultic legends that then sprung up around it emphasize this point. While the contributions of the settlements at Qumran have given to the field of biblical studies have been incredibly revealing caution must still be exercised. Background on the early Jewish people has steadily been growing, but there is

still much to learn, and this includes their perceptions about the presence of God in their religious focal point the Second Temple.

Limitations/ Delimitations

Tackling the concept of the presence of God is far too great an undertaking for this thesis therefore limitations as to its scope must be made. First a filter must be developed, and definitions must be given as to what qualifies as a miraculous or theophanic type event. Second this will only be applied to Second Temple literature that uses words and terms connected to the miraculous events at Sinai as initially recorded in Exodus 19. This is a pivotal moment in Israelite history and is one of the first moments the presence of God interacts with the entirety of the nation of Israel. After the theophanic language markers have been pinpointed a search will be conducted for these terms in conjunction with specific references to the physical Second Temple. Finally, the documented beliefs of those at Qumran and others who would argue against the legitimacy of Temple worship must be considered and evaluated to see if they used the same language to support their views.

Research Methods

This thesis is an analytical style research thesis that will explore current literature on the chosen topic and investigate primary sources in hopes of providing a fuller picture of the Intertestamental Jewish mind. For the purposes of this research, literary data will be limited to instances where the language used directly corresponds to the theophany that occurred at Sinai in Exodus 19, specifically Exodus 19:16-21. Therefore, theophanic language will be limited to instances of fire, the voice of God, earthquakes, thunder, lightning, glory, and the glory cloud. Not every one of these will need to be present; however, the more that are present and more

closely they mirror the Exodus 19 narrative. Later research will reference other theophanic language recorded in these texts however any language they use outside of the Sinai model will be considered secondary. Research will be limited not only in its use of language but also when the literature was composed. The search criteria will specifically focus on any legends or literary portrayals that would have occurred prior to the destruction of the Temple. There must also be a direct connection to the physical Second Temple prior to its destruction in A.D. 70. This can be literature in favor of or against the Temple and the ceremonies being performed there. Once this research has been filtered through these criteria it will be evaluated based on its level of contribution to the argument. Finally, the relevant data will be synthesized into a conclusion on the Jewish perceptions of the presence of God as they related to the Second Temple.

Data Analysis

Research material for this thesis will come from a variety of sources available through the Liberty University Library and its fellow university partners. These sources will include journal articles on specific topics from databases such as JSTOR, ALTA Religion, Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library, ProQuest, and EBSCO. Commentaries and background sources will be used for broader perspectives. These can be found in physical form in the Liberty Library or through the Interlibrary Loan. Online sources can be found through one of the databases listed earlier. Primary sources directly from the Intertestamental Period will also be included. These will be key in pinpointing Jewish thoughts, giving insight as to cultural importance of various events in the development of the Jewish religious life.

Proposal for Chapter Division

Moving to the chapter division of this thesis, this section hopes to progressively demonstrate the validity of Jewish worship in the Second Temple due to its direct links to their perception of God's divine presence in the Temple. Chapter 1 begins with an introduction to the thesis itself, the ramifications, proposed question, limitations, and earlier research. Chapter 2 will provide the ancient near eastern background of sacred spaces and divine presence. It will also define theophanies in connection to the Israelites' early history and their first Temples and places of worship. Chapter 3 will shift focus to the Second Temple itself. The historical background will be considered as will the events surrounding the dedication. Chapter 3 will introduce the larger questions concerning the lack of theophanic activity as defined in Chapter 2 as well as the influence that exilic and post exilic prophets had on the perception of God in the Temple. With the foundation laid by other Intertestamental scholars, Chapter 4 will turn its attention to the primary sources in search of divine presence recordings in conjunction with mentions of the Second Temple. As discussed in the limitations the key theophanic events that are culturally significant will be analyzed as will the circumstances of those events. Scholars will be referenced to theorize how these instances enforced the idea of the divine presence and its connection to the Second Temple, either in favor of designation as a place of worship or against it. The culmination of the previous chapters will come in chapter 5. Here the thesis will propose that the theophany that happened at Sinai intertwined the concepts of divine presence and sacred space which influenced the Second Temple writers to continue the motif either in favor of or against the Temple. Thereby connecting the Jewish perception of the presence of God with the continued worship by the Jewish people at the Second Temple.

Chapter 2

Introduction

It is often said that God dwells amongst His people. This is common for modern Christians to speak about this spiritualized concept of sacred space, but for the cultures of the ancient near east this sacred space concept took on a more concrete expression. It appears that the spiritualization of the presence of God comes later. At the dawning of Israel's history, when God appeared to Moses, he was warned to remove his sandals due to the holiness of the place; a holiness only made possible because of the presence of God (Ex. 3). Israel experienced God dwelling in their very midst first in the Tabernacle then in Solomon's Temple. The New Testament sees the Word becoming flesh and dwelling amongst people (Jn. 1:14) and finally, the Holy Spirit takes up residency in believers as His own temple made of flesh (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19). Despite these specific examples, the presence of God is an often spoken of yet vaguely defined term. What does it truly mean to be in the presence of God? The following will seek to discuss the definition of the presence of God, investigate the marks or indicators of His presence, and begin to delve into the significance of this phrase.

Defining the Presence of God

In the simplest of terms, one could say that the presence of God is the space in which God interacts with humanity in varying levels of proximity. Yet this wording is far from clear and leaves much to be desired. Because of the natural limitations of man, humanity's efforts to describe the divine presence consistently fall short. To put it simply, "humans can hear, see,

taste, and recognize god, but human limitations complicate human-divine communication.”⁷

Because of these limitations man often looks for tangible ways to point to the manifestation of the divine presence, such as temples, sacred spaces, theophanies, cosmic events, theriomorphic and anthropomorphisms.⁸

Joseph Greene attempts to clarify the terminology surrounding the concept of the presence of God knowing full well there is overlap in the terms presence, dwelling, and glory.⁹ He concludes that “the overlap in terminology reflects the fact that God’s presence means different things in different contexts, and the same can be said of dwelling and glory.”¹⁰ Greene uses Terence Fretheim’s concept of a moving continuum to help narrow down and clarify the terminology surrounding the presence of God. His summary of Fretheim’s work states:

On one end of the continuum resides God’s general presence in all of creation. On the other end resides the intensive world-wide theophany promised on the Day of the Lord. Between these poles are what Fretheim dubs God’s accompanying presence (his presence with his people as he binds himself to them in their journeys) and tabernacling presence (God’s choice to focus his presence and provide access to that presence in a particular place).¹¹

Based on this summation, the words used to describe the presence of God could be used as contextual clues that provide insight into the purpose of the presence of God in a particular instance as well as the anticipated or proper response on behalf of those experiencing such a phenomenon.

⁷ Angelika Berlejung, “Divine Presence and Absence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ritual and Worship in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Samuel E. Balentine (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 347.

⁸ Ibid., 347.

⁹ Greene, “Did God Dwell ...,” 768.

¹⁰ Ibid., 768.

¹¹ Ibid., 769.

Now it is not enough to simply define the presence of God it is also important to understand why the location or circumstances would impact the phrase and meaning. In the ancient world it was not enough to know that a god existed or that access to his presence was possible. Ancient cultures longed to find a location whereby man could interact with the divine presence. These cultures acknowledged that a powerful deity could not and should not be limited to an earthly location but perhaps it was possible for an earthly dwelling to be suitable place for worship. Clements writes, “Unless the presence of a god could be found, and its locality made known, then no possibility existed of establishing a fruitful communion between him and his worshippers.”¹² Worshippers needed to know both the name and the proper place to worship their god so that he could be visited, prayed to, and receive assurance that their prayers would be heard. This concept of ancient near eastern thought also surfaces in Israelite religious beliefs as demonstrated in King Solomon’s speech at the dedication of the Temple. King Solomon says this:

But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! Yet give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, ‘My Name shall be there,’ so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.” (1 Kgs. 8:27-30 NIV).¹³

While ancient cultures instinctively knew that no earthly sanctuary would function as the permanent abode of a god, that was reserved for the cosmos, an earthly sanctuary filled with the

¹² Clements, *God and Temple*, 1.

¹³ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

symbols representing the divine abode could be fashioned.¹⁴ Mark Smith describes Israel's use of symbolic representation as a recapitulation of various divine narratives and by extension recapitulating the understandings of the deities.¹⁵ Examples of these recapitulations include Yahweh's victory over the sea, His acceptance of the people's offerings, the model of the divine king ruling His subjects, and even the craftsmanship pointed to the original earthly temple-like abode, the Garden of Eden.¹⁶ Israel demonstrates, just as her neighbors acknowledged, that God could not be confined to a building made with hands yet the Temple would serve to function as the earthly location of the presence of God to which the people could direct their worship and thus find the divine presence.

Manifestations of the Presence of God

With the presence of God and the importance of a tangible location or symbol discussed, it is time to move on to the various manifestations of the presence of God. The divine presence was not limited to a single entity. As mentioned earlier, manifestations came in all different manners and methods. From grand theophanies to simple stone altars, the Israelites consistently interacted with God even in their earliest history.

Markers as Places

One of the most common indicators that a person was in the presence of the divine was through physical markers. These markers often stood as physical reminders to the unexpected

¹⁴ Clements, *God and the Temple*, 2-3.

¹⁵ Mark S Smith, "Like Deities, Like Temples (Like People)," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

appearance of God but there were also geographic locations where the deity was believed to reside while on earth. For the Israelites, these could be physical locations, such as Jerusalem and the Temple or portable sanctuaries and icons such as the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant.

Patriarchs

For the nation of Israel, her history is filled with manifestations of Yahweh's presence. In the earliest recordings of Israel's history, the patriarchal period, manifestations of the divine presence are indicated through standing stones called *mazzebot*.¹⁷ These stones were typically erected after an encounter with the divine being or as methods of human-divine communication. Abraham builds a stone altar upon arriving in Bethel for the first time after the initial calling of God to leave everything (Gen. 12:8). Jacob later leaves behind a stone as a marker of his encounter with the Lord also at Bethel (Gen. 28:18). Berlejung notes that these stones "have clear cultic functions and attest intact human-divine communication: they receive offerings (Gen. 35:14), can be anointed (Gen. 28:18), can function as witnesses (replacing the deity Gen. 31:51f) and are interpreted as a kind of forerunner to a later temple building (Gen 28:22)."¹⁸ These stone altars or sacred places were tangible markers that reminded the people of or facilitated interaction between mankind and Yahweh's divine presence.

Tabernacle

The second form of physical markers of the presence of God included portable sacred items and places including the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. The Tabernacle served

¹⁷ Berlejung, "Divine Presence and Absence," 349.

¹⁸ Ibid., 349-50.

as the sanctuary dwelling for God in the midst of Israel during their wilderness wanderings and into the period of the judges until it began to fade at the dawning of Israel's dynastic period. The Tabernacle served three different yet congruent functions within the nation of Israel in their relationship with God. It functioned as the place of divine revelation, it was the place where sacrifices were offered and atonement made, and finally, God's presence was said to dwell there as a sign of God's covenant faithfulness to Israel.¹⁹ In tandem with God's presence in their midst Israel was expected to express covenant fidelity to God via their obedience to His commandments and stipulations. The first seeds of disobedience in Israel's fickle heart were revealed shortly before the construction of the Tabernacle. With the building of the golden calf, Israel risks losing God's presence. He currently had been meeting with Moses on Mount Sinai and at the Tent of Meeting (Ex. 19:1-25; 33:7-11) but had promised to come and dwell among them. However, when they built the golden calf, the Lord threatened to remove His presence from their midst (Ex. 32:1-35). Koester notes that "the building of the calf led to a withdrawal of God's presence from the camp (33:7), but at the completion of the tabernacle God's glory filled the tent and remained there day and night (40:34-38)."²⁰ This foreshadows later encounters between Israel and God when their disobedience will ultimately cost them the thing, they once desired more than anything else.

Solomon's Temple

Solomon's Temple constructed in 1 Kings served as Israel's first permanent location for the dwelling of God. Like the temples in other ancient near eastern cultures that were discussed

¹⁹ Craig R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature and the New Testament*, (Washington, DC: Cath. Biblical Assoc. of America, 1989), 7.

²⁰ Ibid., 8.

earlier, Solomon's Temple functioned as the place where the people knew they could worship and where their prayers were more likely to be heard. When Solomon dedicates the temple in 1 Kings, the Ark of the Covenant is placed into the Holy of Holies beneath the Cherubim. Upon its placement the glory cloud that was seen during the Exodus (Ex. 13:21-22; 24:15-17) and over the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-37) once again appears, filling Solomon's Temple. "When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple." (1 Kgs. 8:10-11). One visual indicator of the presence of God was this cloud. Members of the Jerusalem priesthood perceived it as a "dangerous, contagious sanctity emanating from the divine Majesty, *kabod*, present therein."²¹ Later, God would verbally confirm His presence in the Temple in 1 Kings 9:1-9. He states that His continued presence in the Temple will be contingent upon the covenant obedience of the Davidic kings. He warns that if they are unfaithful then the destruction of the newly built Temple is guaranteed. It is after this dedication moment that the Temple is seen as the primary place of worship for Yahweh and all other forms of worship are outlawed including worship of other gods and worship of Yahweh in locations other than the Temple. The Temple is now viewed as the divine residence of God. Michael Hundley summarizes this well when he writes:

In short, the temple was the site of a semi-permanent theophany, one that would remain as long as the deity remained content. It was the controlled and isolated environment that enabled divine presence on earth and mediated contact between the resident deity and its human servants. By serving the deity in this consistent and controlled environment, people could bring divine power to bear on their lives and even influence cosmic events.²²

²¹ Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "YHWH's Exalted House - Aspects of the Design and Symbolism of Solomon's Temple," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day, (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 98.

²² Michael B. Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East*. (Williston: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 140.

Now that the physical residencies of God have been described (aside from the Second Temple which will be discussed in later chapters), it is time to move the more miraculous indicators of the presence of God.

Markers and Theophanies

It is interesting to note that these physical places where the presence of God was said to dwell were often validated or received official acceptance through the appearance of one or more miraculous markers of the presence of God. The Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple both received the glory cloud. Mount Sinai experienced fire and earthquakes. Abraham and Jacob both had dreams. Either in response to these encounters or in tandem with them the physical location was often marked by a visible miraculous event.

Theophany Defined

Simply defined a theophany is the appearance of God; however, the appearance of God and His presence are closely intertwined. Vern Poythress defines theophany as “a manifestation of divine presence accompanied by an extraordinary display mediating that presence.”²³ Poythress' definition allows cosmological events and supernatural moments to be categorized as theophanies. In his research, a “theophany represents an intensive form of the presence of God.”²⁴ In order to limit this introductory discussion on theophany, the theophanies that will be discussed will be those which fit the following parameters including those with direct links to the Exodus narrative as it is foundational to understanding the origins of the Israelite cult. Later

²³ Vern S. Poythress, *Theophany: a Biblical Theology of God's Appearing*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2018), 30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

theophanies will be evaluated through the Exodus motif. This will help evaluate if the theophanies from Exodus were later viewed in Israel's history as definite ways to ascertain the acceptance of a sacred space. It will also be limited in scope as this nature of this thesis prevents an extensive investigation of every single time a divine marker appears in Israel's history. Therefore, to best utilize research, the theophanies will be limited to the those that occur in conjunction with the Tabernacle or Temples as they were key sites in Israel's corporate worship and will share the closest set of variables with the Second Temple.

Sinai

Mount Sinai is the location for one of the most famous theophanies in Israelite history. It is here where Moses first experiences an encounter with God at the burning bush (Ex. 3). It is also here where Israel meets their God as a newly freed people, and it is the birthplace of the covenant between God and His people. Those at Sinai experience a huge theophany that can be divided into a few key components that reoccur in other Israelite stories. There is a thunderstorm with thunder and lightning (Ex. 19:16), a massive fire and thick smoke (Ex. 19:18), an earthquake which shook the mountain (Ex. 19:18), and the voice of God speaks from its midst (Ex. 19:19). These impressive displays of creation stand as a warning to the people. God is holy and the people cannot come near to his presence without a mediator on their behalf.²⁵ Later in Exodus 24, the seventy elders of Israel along with Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu all witness what appears to be a brief glimpse of the feet of God and under them a pavement made of lapis lazuli (Ex. 24:9-10).

²⁵ Poythress, *Theophany*... 34.

This is truly one of the most fantastic encounters with the presence of God. As God's voice rumbles through the Israelite camp there is a distinct fear in the people's response. "When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die'." (Ex. 20:18-19)

This is a fear brought about by the holiness and awesome power that is God. This encounter and response set the tone and standard for future generations. "For the rest of history, the people look back on this event as a founding event, defining them as a nation...The God who appeared at Sinai is the God who claims the people of Israel as his own, and who is *with* the people, in his authority and power and presence, for the rest of the Old Testament."²⁶

Tabernacle

The Tabernacle also finds itself as a central and defining moment in Israelite history. This is the first building in which presence of God will rest with the temporarily nomadic people of God. This is a revolutionary moment for it is the first time since Eden where God will seek to actively dwell in the midst of sinful humanity. In order to allow Israel to experience this level of presence without consuming them, the Tabernacle functioned as a place where sin in the camp of Israel would be addressed. Because of this the theophanies that indicate the dwelling of God in such a place are key. They serve as visual reminders that God was indeed still present amongst the people. In the Tabernacle narrative, one can see the presence of the glory of God and a cloud. There is also a fire within the cloud during the night. As the glory of God fills the Tabernacle it

²⁶ Poythress, *Theophany*...274.

is impossible to not be overwhelmed. Even Moses God's chosen leader could not enter before it (Ex. 40:34-37).

As one can see the events of the Exodus were pivotal moments in the development of Israelite tradition and understanding of their religious beliefs. This is why the Exodus motif can be traced through many Old and New Testament writings. Clements summarizes this best when he says, "The primary Israelite conception of the presence of Yahweh as coming to them from Mount Sinai, came to possess its own distinctive cult-furniture [the Ark of the Covenant] with which this theophany was regularly associated."²⁷

Solomon's Temple

The final theophanic event to discuss that directly impacted and influenced Israelite worship is the glory cloud manifestation at the dedication of Solomon's Temple. Here the Israelites complete the building of the Temple. Its dedication is surrounded with sacrifices, praises, and miraculous wonders. 1 Kings 8-9 describe the festivities of that day. The Ark of the Covenant is brought into the Temple where the cloud descends, and the glory of the Lord fills the Temple preventing the priest from finishing out their duties (1 Kgs. 8:10-11) just as even Moses could not enter the Tabernacle in the Exodus narrative. The dedication of Solomon's Temple sees three major theophanies. First the cloud and the glory of the Lord. Second is the presence of fire from heaven which consumes the sacrifices. This is recorded in 2 Chronicles 7:1 and is reminiscent of the activities that take place on Mount Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18:16-40). The third and final theophany is a private moment between God and Solomon. After the dedication God speaks to Solomon saying to him,

²⁷ Clements, *God and Temple*, 39.

I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there... ‘But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. This temple will become a heap of rubble. All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, ‘Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?’ People will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them—that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them.’

Because the Tabernacle and the Temple are more permanent structures, they continued to symbolize the ongoing character of God presence with his people and his covenantal commitment to be with them.²⁸ However this does not mean that God is somehow locked into this single dwelling place. God warns Solomon that even though the people have seen the acceptance of this Temple as permanent dwelling for His name amongst His people, it might not remain that way. God’s presence amongst His people in the Temple is contingent upon their continued faithfulness to the covenant made at Sinai.

Even though the presence of God dwells and appears in various places in Scripture, it is important to note that it still possesses a transitory nature. Even though these theophanies often appear in conjunction with a permanent dwelling the theophanies themselves are not permanent. These various different miraculous manifestations of the presence of God emphasize the ancient near eastern belief that God cannot be contained in a single earthly dwelling. “YHWH’s intrusion into human habitation is semipermanent, and only continues as long as his people

²⁸ Poythress, *Theophany*...57.

correctly serve him.”²⁹ Glory, fire, and clouds are all transitory and do not need to be carried, nor can they be deported or destroyed. “They oscillate between *stabilitas loci* and mobility.”³⁰

Significance of the Presence of God

Now that the groundwork has been laid it is time to ask one of the most vital questions of this section of research. Why does the presence of God matter, especially when creeping closer to the turbulent Intertestamental Period? It is important to note that the concept of the presence of God in the Old Testament lays the groundwork for the New Testament writers understanding and interpretation of the divine-human relationship that exists under the new covenant of Jesus’ blood. Thus, any discussion of the New Testament writers use of the presence of God amongst believers or indwelling believers might be better understood after studying the presence of God in the Old Testament. However, this should be taken one step further and carried into the Intertestamental Period. It is important to note that the New Testament writers not only drew from Old Testament works but they were also shaped by the beliefs, thoughts, historical occurrences, and interpretation of these events which sprung up during the Intertestamental Period. To put it simply, the New Testament was not written in a vacuum. The Intertestamental viewpoints on the presence of God, its connection or potential disconnection from the Temple along with the cultural repercussions of such beliefs would have influenced the Jewish mindset that shaped many New Testament writers. In light of this, it is important to note why the presence of God as a theme throughout Scripture is vital, especially concerning the Jewish people and the Intertestamental period.

²⁹ Berlejung, “Divine Presence and Absence,” 356.

³⁰ Ibid., 357

When observing the Bible in its entirety, both New and Old Testaments, it is clear that there are thematic connections between salvation and the presence of God. Hays would say that the presence of God runs parallel to salvation in Scripture.³¹ This is seen in Genesis 3. In this first instance of God's presence, He walked in the Garden of Eden the language of which mirrors later language used to describe God in the Tabernacle.³² Genesis 3 also records the story of how the divine-human relationship was first broken by sin. This divine-human relationship is an important key in understanding the significance of the presence of God. In Genesis 3, it is recorded that man can no longer enter into the presence of God due to the disobedience. Thus, the presence of God remained lost to humanity after the Fall. In fact, it can be argued that many times the concept of the presence of God is linked to the divine-human relationship (Gen. 3:8, 15:17-18, 28:15, Ex.19:16-21, 1 Kg. 9:3). Throughout the Old Testament the presence of God is spoken of within a relational context. This means that often when God chose to reveal His presence or mark a place as sacred, He did so with the intention of building or providing a path to have a relationship with man. This would have directly influenced Israel's concept of why the presence of God in their sacred places was crucial. There was a direct correlation between His presence and the divine-human relationship that Israel relied on.

This lines up with many of the ancient near eastern beliefs on sacred space. While ancient near eastern peoples would agree that a deity could not be contained to a single earthly abode, knowing the specific location where one could encounter the divine consistently was crucial both for cultic rituals and worship. More importantly people needed to know where to find a deity and

³¹ Daniel J. Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 165.

³² Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle*, 19.

how to approach him. The nation of Israel was no different. By providing His people with both miraculous temporary manifestations and lasting permanent residences God accomplished several different purposes. First, He provided a physical space whereby the people could approach Him in worship. This is something that was considered vital in the ancient near eastern mind and was discussed in the earlier research. Second, the miraculous manifestations served as seals of approval marking these physical localities as official places where the presence of God could be found. Not only were these manifestations of God's presence seals of approval concerning the location, but they were also a visual marking of divine favor on the nation. The presence of the deity actively residing amongst a people was seen as divine favor and promise of blessing. Hundley explains that "if the gods were dissatisfied, they could always move out, which would signal disaster on a national level."³³ Moses makes note of this in his conversation with God in Exodus 33. "Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" (Ex.33:15-16). When God chose to reside amongst Israel throughout her history it was a good thing. When Ezekiel sees a vision of God's glory departing the Temple and is given a subsequent prophecy of judgment on the people, he expresses sorrow before the Lord. "...Then I fell facedown and cried out in a loud voice, 'Alas sovereign Lord! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?'" (Ez. 11:13).

Moving beyond simple favor, the presence of God was seen as a symbol of God's covenant relationship with Israel. When He miraculously appears to the patriarchs, He does so to

³³ Michael B. Hundley, "Divine Presence in Ancient Near Eastern Temples." *Religion Compass* 9, no. 7 (2015): 205.

make or reiterate the covenant established between them. When He appears to Israel at Sinai, He is establishing the covenant relationship between Himself and the nation. The Tabernacle and later the Temple would stand as locations where the relationship between God and man that was lost in the Garden could be temporarily restored.³⁴

Finally, it is also interesting to note that as the nation of Israel moves out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land the people and land, both key fixtures of the covenant, become increasingly intertwined with the Temple and the presence of God located there. The decisions of the people will dramatically impact the fate of the other two. “The people’s disobedience binds their fate together with the fate of the land and the temple – two identifiers of their chosen status before YHWH. The interwoven nature of the fate of Israel– land– temple becomes apparent, as vv. 7– 8 frequently mention each in interrelated judgment.”³⁵ With the consecration of the Temple in 1 Kings, God effectively binds the people’s fates with their most important cultural identifiers. It was these identifiers that stood as physical reminders of the presence of God, thus when harm would come to a physical marker the implication would be passed onto the intangible identifiers, such as the presence of God.

Conclusion

The divine presence was vital to worship in the ancient near east and without its appearance the people would be in confusion about where they could properly worship and interact with their deity. Miraculous markers appeared at critical moments in the development of

³⁴ For more information on the Garden of Eden symbolism in the Tabernacle and Temple see the works of Beale, Kim, and Gladd in *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*.

³⁵ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 149.

Israel's religion. Sinai, the Tabernacle, and the Temple are three pivotal examples of this. It is because of this evidence, that the apparent lack of miraculous markers at the dedication of the Second Temple leaves room to speculate whether God's presence resided there. While this paper will not seek to answer that question, it does cause one to wonder why certain Jewish sects would choose to continue their worship at the Second Temple without these markers. Did they believe the presence of God to be there and what was the reasoning for their answer?

Chapter 3

Introduction

With the historical foundation of the presence of God and its connection to sacred places such as the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple established, the focus of this thesis now turns to the Second Temple. Soon the question of Jewish perspectives of the presence of God will be addressed but before that can happen the historical background and circumstances surrounding the Second Temple must be discussed. Therefore, the following section will cover a short introductory background on the construction and authorization of the Second Temple, with an emphasis on its dedication. This section will then conclude with the main research question of this thesis.

Background

Prior to the building of the Second Temple, it is important to know what happened to Solomon's Temple. With the reign of Solomon, Israel began to forsake the singular worship of Yahweh and went after other false gods. This behavior eventually cost Solomon's descendants the kingdom. God told Jeroboam,

See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes... I will do this because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molek the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in obedience to me, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my decrees and laws as David, Solomon's father, did. (1 Kg. 11:31-33).

Throughout the rest of the divided kingdom era, Israel and Judah were in constant religious upheaval. The prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, and numerous others all attempted to warn Judah and Israel about the consequences of their disobedience. Unfortunately, their warnings are ignored and in the end, Jerusalem is sacked, Solomon's Temple destroyed, the

skilled craftsman are exiled, the leadership stripped, and the population decimated in 587 B.C.E.³⁶

With the destruction of the Temple one would think the death toll had sounded for the nation of Israel and any hope of regaining the sacred space that was once among them. However, Ezra and Nehemiah both record the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. As they return, they carry with them their newfound freedom and permission to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

Date

The dating of the construction of the Second Temple spans just over a twenty-year time period. With the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C.E., Cyrus as leader of the Medo-Persian forces became the new ruler.³⁷ After his ascent to power the 70-year captivity of the Jews ends. With this change in leadership, Cyrus crafts a proclamation that sets in motion the events leading up to the construction of the Second Temple. The scribe Ezra records this proclamation writing:

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing: “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them.’ (Ezra 1:1-4).

³⁶ Frederick James Murphy, *Early Judaism: the Exile to the Time of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2010), 20.

³⁷ Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: the History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 70.

Cyrus not only gave the Jewish exiles permission to return home, but he also gave them permission to reconstruct their temple in its previous sacred space in Jerusalem. This is the catalytic moment. However even though permission seems to be given around 538 B.C. shortly after Cyrus' ascension in 539 B.C., the Temple was not completed and dedicated until 515 B.C.³⁸

Authorization

Answering the question of who authorized the building of the Second Temple, does not just provided context to the event, it also aids in comprehending the Jewish decision to continue worshipping at the previous location of the destroyed Temple. The first step in unraveling this tangled web lies with Cyrus and Ezra's recordings of the king's decree.

As mentioned earlier, Ezra records Cyrus' decree allowing the Jews to return home and begin rebuilding their Temple. There is some discussion in academic circles as to whether this decree was a specific decree given for the Jews or if it was part of a more general decree that Cyrus extended to numerous peoples within his domain.³⁹ There is evidence that the Persians took an approach common in the Ancient Near East. They would have their own gods, temples, and established religion but they would allow their subordinates to practice their own tribal and regional religions as long as they did not threaten insubordination or threaten rebellion.⁴⁰ While Ezra may have overemphasized Cyrus' specific care for the minority of Jews within his new kingdom, the impact of even a general decree was seen as a fulfillment of what had been

³⁸ Albartz, *Israel in Exile...*, 119-29.

³⁹ For further discussion of this see historical evidence for the Cyrus Cylinder, and Rainer Albartz's, *Israel in Exile: the History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 121-3, and Lester L. Grabbe's, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, (London : T & T Clark, A Continuum imprint, 2004), 209-216.

⁴⁰ Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, (London: T & T Clark, A Continuum imprint, 2004), 215.

promised prior to the Babylonian Exile. Not only is Cyrus credited with allowing the Temple to be rebuilt but he also orders that the Temple vessels taken during Nebuchadnezzar's sacking of Jerusalem be returned to them. The potential importance of this will be discussed later.

Cyrus may have been the human authority that gave permission for the Jews to begin to restore their lives in Judah, but Ezra's recording of Cyrus' decree reveals who he believed to be behind this. It is important to remember that biblical historians, like most historians of the ancient world had a distinct theological lens through which they viewed historical events. To this end, the writer of Ezra sees the hand of God influencing and moving through Cyrus to accomplish His promises and desired will. "The author of Ezra-Nehemiah, with his biblical view of history, challenges us also to believe that God works within a specific time frame, that he has a plan, that he keeps his word, and that his prophecies will be fulfilled."⁴¹ Keeping this theological interpretation in mind allows modern scholars to account for the Jewish specific perspective that the writer takes and also allows for a glimpse into the developing Jewish perspective of a presence of God that had less physical manifestations but was still active.

Circumstances

After Cyrus gives his decree and gifts the vessels of the Temple of Solomon back to the Jews, plans are made to return to Jerusalem and begin construction. Ezra mentions an interesting character here in his recording of the event. He says that "Cyrus king of Persia had them [the Temple treasures] brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah." (Ez. 1:8). There is some confusion over who this Sheshbazzar character may be since Zerubbabel is the more famous builder and leader of the post exilic Jews. But again, it is

⁴¹ Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1993), 33.

important to mention that whoever Sheshbazzar is, he received the Temple vessels from Cyrus' treasurer, Mithredath. These returned vessels will later be discussed as potential markers for the presence of God returning to the Temple.

Moving to the more well known and most famous builder of Second Temple, Zerubbabel, is credited with leading the building project to its completion. Sheshbazzar and a few others may have begun the initial building of the Temple however things began to proceed more quickly with the arrival of Zerubbabel and Joshua the future high priest (Ez. 3). Once the foundations begin to be laid the Jews encounter opposition from the surrounding peoples. They question the validity of the building project and imply that by rebuilding the Temple the Jews are acting seditiously (Ez. 4:11-16). According to Ezra's records the prophets Haggai and Zechariah step up and goad the people out of their apathy and into completing the project. Chastening them for allowing the house of the Lord to sit in disrepair (Hag. 1:3, 9, 13-15). Just as the work resumes more opposition from the surrounding peoples arises. This time Tattenai a governor of the Trans-Euphrates and his associates write Darius who is now king; however, Darius searches the records of his predecessors and discovers the decree issued by Cyrus permitting the rebuilding of the Temple. Thus, Darius blesses the continued building effort and most believe the Temple to be completed shortly thereafter in 515 B.C. It is on the foundation of this Temple that Herod would later add multiple additions including the version of the Second Temple that Jesus and His followers interacted with in the New Testament.

Dedication

With the completion of the Second Temple, it needed to be dedicated. This dedication ceremony raises multiple questions that contribute to the nature of this thesis. As seen in a brief survey of the history of construction, the Second Temple faced opposition from outside sources

and from internal apathy. It also struggled to possess the same status as the previous Temple. At the laying of the foundation under Zerubbabel it is recorded that some who remembered the former Temple under Solomon wept. “But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.” (Ez. 3:12). While it is not clear what caused the older generation to express such distress, it is safe to assume the Temple foundation before them paled in comparison to the former one they had seen prior to their exile.⁴² As the once sacred space where divine theophanies had occurred seeing such a poor reflection would have caused pain to those who remembered the first Temple.

With the dedication of the Second Temple in view, it may prove fruitful to draw some comparisons between the dedication of Solomon’s Temple and the Second Temple. There are multiple differences between the two events. To begin with Solomon’s Temple went up smoothly and without opposition, while the Second Temple faced outward opposition (Ez. 4-5) and inward apathy (Hag. 1:3-11). At the first dedication, the King and the whole assembly of Israel are in attendance (2 Kg. 8:22). Ezra only records that the priests, Levites, and exiles were present at the dedication (Ez. 6:16). Some scholars believe this to be a description of the whole people of God. Fyall writes, “This is a celebration by *the people of God*, the whole people of God, and as such looks back to the great celebration of Solomon’s time...”⁴³ Other scholars see this as a description detailing who is not there thus potentially pointing to a difference between the two events. “In the description there is no place for Samaritans, or for the Jews who were not exiled. We must also keep in mind that it is the exiles who received permission to rebuild the

⁴² F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1983), 64-5.

⁴³ Robert Fyall, *The Message of Ezra and Haggai*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 93.

temple, and not other groups. So only the exiles had the right to celebrate.”⁴⁴ There is also a noticeable difference between the sacrifices that are offered. Solomon sacrifices thousands of animals at his dedication (2 Chr. 7:5, 1 Kg. 8:63) while the returning exiles are only able to offer a few hundred. There is also a direct emphasis placed on the goats given as a sin offering (Ez. 6:17). As there had been no sin offering given during the period of the exile thus something needed to be done about the sins that the nation had accumulated during that time. But the most intriguing connection is made with Hezekiah’s rededication of the first Temple. This emphasis on sin offerings could be reminiscent of Hezekiah’s rededication of Solomon’s Temple during his period of reform. This type of ceremony would have been done to cleanse a space, taking it from profane to divine.⁴⁵ However despite all of this Ezra records no divine markers or theophanies reminiscent of those found at the Tabernacle or Solomon’s Temple or Mount Sinai.

Potential Markers

While there is a distinct lack of obvious divine markers such as the glory cloud, fire, or voice of God seen in earlier Israelite lore, some could argue that there were still markers of the presence of God. They were less obvious but just as culturally significant for the returning exiles. One such potential marker are the words spoken by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai 1 recounts the Lord’s words to His people through the prophet Haggai:

Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the people: “I am with you.” declares the Lord. So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. (Hag. 1:14-15).

⁴⁴ Fensham, *The Books of Ezra...*, 94.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

These two men had active prophetic roles while the Second Temple was under construction and even Ezra credits them with helping to spur the people to action (Ezra 5:1-2, 6:14-18).

Functioning as God's messengers it is logical to draw a connection from their prodding to build the Temple and God's approval of such activities. If God had desired something different, it is likely that he would have used His spokesmen to inform the people otherwise.

The second potential marker is a unique take on the conversations surrounding the use of sacred vessels and any type of connection between them and the deity in whose sacred space they were placed. At one time the Ark of the Covenant functioned as a vessel type marker for the presence of God amongst Israel. When the Ark is returned by the Philistines in 1 Samuel the people rejoice and offer sacrifices at its return, yet when the Lord strikes down some of the people for attempting to look into the Ark this is what they say, "Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?" (1 Sam. 6:20). The people connect the Ark with the presence of God. When the Ark is placed in Solomon's Temple that is when the glory cloud descends and fills it (1 Kg. 8:6-11). Yet the Ark is not placed in the Second Temple. There are numerous theories as to what happened to the Ark but the primary point to made here is that it was not located in the Second Temple.⁴⁶ However the lack of the appearance of the Ark does not deter Lisabeth Fried from arguing that the Temple vessels returned by Cyrus to the exiles at the beginning of Ezra held cultic significance. Because the Chronicler includes the Temple alongside the Ark of the Covenant in the retold history of the first Temple dedication Fried's sees this as the author's attempt to give standing to the returned Temple vessels.

According to Fried, the Israelites would have accepted the ancient near eastern ideology that "a

⁴⁶ For a brief overview of 12 different views concerning the disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant see John Day's chapter "Whatever happened to the Ark of the Covenant?" in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*.

destroyed shrine can be restored only if there is evidence that the god who abandoned it has reconciled with his people and is willing to move back into his temple. This means that the cult statue has been returned.”⁴⁷ Not only does Fried argue this point, but Bob Becking also argues that the Temple vessels returned in Ezra 1 function as a symbolic presence. He states that, “these vessels need to be construed as aniconic representations of the divine and hence as silent witness to the inscrutable presence of God.”⁴⁸ If the vessels are viewed as representations of the divine in the same way cultic images would have been viewed then one could trace the divine presence from Israel through the exile and back to Jerusalem. Becking describes it this way:

The cultic vessels for the temple symbolize continuity with the period before the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. In the discourse that is reflected in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, these vessels function in the same way as the divine images discussed above. They indicate how YHWH disappeared in exile and the way He returned from exile as an inconceivable mystery that can be represented by an image, an icon, his Glory or by the cult vessels.

With the return of the Temple vessels the exiles could have been justified in their building of the Temple as a resting place for the vessels thus signifying the return of God’s presence.

The third and final piece to consider is the concept of sacred space remaining sacred once it has experienced a theophanic event. Greene uses this as one of his primary arguments in justifying that the presence of God did in fact dwell in the Second Temple despite the lack of a major theophanic event.

Another common aspect of theophany was that once a theophany (of any kind) occurred, that location was considered a place of connection to the heavenly realm. Jacob built and maintained an altar at Bethel because of the theophany that took place there (Gen 28:11–22; 35:1–15). Jeroboam most likely erected his illegitimate temple at Bethel because of

⁴⁷ Lisbeth S Fried, “Temple Building in Ezra 1-6,” in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel* ed. William Horbury and Ernst Bammel, (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 319-338, 321.

⁴⁸ Bob E.J.H. Becking, ed., “Temple Vessels Speaking for a Silent God: Notes on Divine Presence in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah,” in *Reflections on the Silence of God* (BRILL, 2013), 28.

the previous theophany and Bethel's continuing status as a sacred place of connection (1 Kgs 12:28–33). Solomon's temple was built on Mount Moriah, upon Ornan's threshing floor. This location experienced two previous angel of the Lord theophanies. The first occurred when Abraham sacrificed Isaac (Gen 22:2–18), and the second occurred when David built an altar for sacrifice in order to stop the angel of the Lord from destroying Jerusalem (1 Chr 21:15–30; 2 Chr 3:1). Because the second temple was rebuilt upon this place of multiple theophanies, it most likely continued to be considered a special connecting point to God's heavenly presence, even if the glory cloud was never manifested again.⁴⁹

While the goal is not to answer the question did God's presence return to the Second Temple, the theories mentioned above each point to potentially valid reasons for the Temple to have been rebuilt and worship continued. These examples do not mirror the major theophanic language and motifs of the Old Testament, but they provide cultural basis for the continued worship at the Temple.

Conversations of Glory

The attention of this thesis will briefly turn from the dedication of the Second Temple to the influence that the exilic and post exilic prophets had on the conversations surrounding the concept of God's presence in the Temple. Ezekiel and Haggai are two of the primary prophets whose prophetic words directly speak to the glory of the Lord departing and returning to the Temple and Jerusalem.

Ezekiel

Ezekiel is considered an exilic prophet. He was taken captive during the initial deportations thus his time as prophet is spent in Babylon amongst the Jewish exiles. Ezekiel 10 records the magnificent vision of the glory of God in the Temple. Sadly, this vision is preceded by judgment and examples of idolatry amongst the Jewish people remaining in the land. As the

⁴⁹ Greene, *Did God Dwell...* 775

vision continues Ezekiel sees the glory of God depart from Solomon's Temple. This vision and the later vision of the glory returning greatly influenced the later Jews perception of the Temple and also fits with Mesopotamian beliefs concerning divine abandonment.

Glory Departure and Eventual Return

Block has an extensive article that discusses the Mesopotamian religious beliefs concerning divine abandonment. He then compares these to Ezekiel's vision of divine abandonment.⁵⁰ One of these comparisons is the idea that God has moved His divine abode into exile, choosing those who had been carried off over those who remained in the land. "Breaking with convention, YHWH promises to follow the exiles and become a sanctuary for them in small measure (מְלֶכֶת מְקוֹמָם) 'in the lands where they have arrived' (11:16)."⁵¹ A second interesting comparison to note is that it is the people rather than the deity who will experience a change in order for the divine presence to return to its earthly abode. "Instead of having his subjects polish a dirtied image (as in the Erra and Ishum composition), YHWH declares that he will cleanse his subjects of their iniquity and give them a new heart so that they will walk in his ways, and he may renew the covenant."⁵² One of Block's final observations and the one that is most influential for this thesis is "the links between Ezekiel's vision of YHWH's departure from the temple and chapters 8 through 11 and extra biblical accounts of divine abandonment suggests to the reader

⁵⁰ For a complete review of Mesopotamian and ancient near eastern views on divine abandonment see "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an ancient near eastern Motif" in *By the River Chebar* by Daniel Block.

⁵¹ Daniel I. Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an ancient near eastern Motif," in *By the River Chebar*, 1st ed., Historical, Literary, and Theological Studies in the Book of Ezekiel (The Lutterworth Press, 2013), 96.

⁵² Block, *Divine Abandonment*... 96.

that the prophet's story cannot end with YHWH's exit from the land (17:22-23)."⁵³ With this in mind and with Ezekiel's later prophecies one could deduce that in the ancient near eastern mind when a deity abandoned his or her dwelling place there is an implication that it will one day return. Ezekiel's prophecies would have cultivated this belief in the post exilic Jewish mind as they enter the Second Temple Period. The question that would later plague ancient minds and modern scholars is the timeframe in which this return would happen.

Haggai

The prophet Haggai lived and prophesied after the return of the exiles. His time as prophet was spent encouraging the people to follow through and rebuild the Temple. He speaks of the returning glory of God's presence to His Temple. Haggai writes,

Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? But now be strong, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord. 'Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the Lord, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty. 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.' "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty. 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty. 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty." (Hag. 2:3-9).

Haggai like Ezekiel promises the Israelites that the former glory of the Temple will be established. The Lord implies that the people will be able to complete the Temple because of His

⁵³ Ibid., 97.

presence among them. This presence is noted here as something that has a lasting permanence to it rather than a single or momentary event.⁵⁴

Based on the words of Ezekiel and Haggai there is an interesting theme of the continued presence of God. The presence seemed to have left Solomon's Temple and traveled with the exiles as a sign of continued covenant despite their rebellion. Upon their return the people are once again assured that they will be able to rebuild this Second Temple because of God's continued presence. Although the current Temple was far less than the previous Temple this does not negate the prophets' encouragement nor God's promise concerning that which was to come. With the promises of future glory and current endurance ringing in their ears and the ears of their descendants, it is easier to see how the Temple continued to be a major focus in the Jewish religion. The exilic and post exilic prophets helped to influence the people's perception of God in the Temple.

Questions

As demonstrated in the earlier section of this thesis the divine presence amongst the people of Israel has a long history and it functioned as a vital part of the Israelite belief system. But in light of this evidence, what continued to carry this belief through the Intertestamental Period? Clearly, there are records of Jews continuing to worship at the temple until its destruction in A.D. 70. Why would they continue to do so? Is there more in Israel's Intertestamental history that would further justify such single-minded devotion toward the Temple? How is this reconciled with the archeological evidence found in places like Qumran where there were clearly Jewish sects that existed without worshiping at the Temple? How did

⁵⁴ Richard A. Taylor, *Haggai, Malachi: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2004), 25.

they justify the practice of their faith removed from the Temple and did the presence of God play a role in their decisions? Were there recordings of miraculous events like those of old that would have arisen during this in between period which influenced either those in favor of or opposed to the Temple? Was the Jewish people's perception of the presence of God in the Temple influenced by legends of theophanic events during this time? The next portion will seek to compile evidence for theophanic type events directly connected to the Second Temple that is recorded in the literature of the Intertestamental Period.

Chapter 4

With all the questions swirling around the Second Temple, it's very different dedication and the lack of recorded theophanic markers the question must be asked, why did worship continue during the Intertestamental Period? In the broadest sense there are two categories of Jews in the Intertestamental Period: those that chose to worship there and those that chose not to. What did these two groups base their practices on and were there instances of Sinai like theophanies that the groups used to justify their places of worship as recorded in the Intertestamental literature available to modern scholars today?

Those Who Worshipped at the Temple

For a vast majority of the Jews both in Palestine and those scattered abroad the Second Temple was the central cultic sacred space that they looked to. It was their place of worship, where sacrifices could be offered and where God had previously appeared throughout Israel's history prior to the Babylonian exile. In light of the catastrophes that had occurred there why did the Jews continue to return there to worship? What were their reasons? Specifically, did they use theophanic language similar to that of Sinai and the first Temple in their defense of the second Temple during the Intertestamental Period?

2 Maccabees

2 Maccabees is a short book in the Apocrypha and speaks of the Hasmonean Period of Israel's history. Unlike 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees takes on a distinctly religious perspective. Despite the differences in focus, it still follows the events of Judas Maccabeus and the circumstances surrounding the Maccabean revolt under the Seleucids. There are 2 sections or episodes to 2 Maccabees. There are two introductory epistles followed by the story of Judas

Maccabeus.⁵⁵ These writings record several theophanic type events in connection with the Temple.

The first historical legend recorded is that of the sacred fire that supposedly happened during the time of Nehemiah. According to 2 Maccabees, prior to the destruction of Solomon's Temple several priests had hidden fire taken from the altar. With the return of the exiles, Nehemiah sent the descendants of the original priests to retrieve it. Upon attempting to retrieve it here is what is recorded,

But after many years had passed, when it pleased God, Nehemiah, having been commissioned by the king of Persia, sent the descendants of the priests who had hidden the fire to get it. And when they reported to us that they had not found fire but only a thick liquid, he ordered them to dip it out and bring it. When the materials for the sacrifices were presented, Nehemiah ordered the priests to sprinkle the liquid on the wood and on the things laid upon it. When this had been done and some time had passed, and when the sun, which had been clouded over, shone out, a great fire blazed up, so that all marveled. (2 Mac. 1:20-22).⁵⁶

This story echoes several other stories from Israel's Old Testament history. The first is recorded in 2 Chronicles 7:1 at the dedication of Solomon's Temple where fire from heaven consumes the sacrifice.⁵⁷ This is also reminiscent of Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel as recorded in 2 Kings. A sacrifice consumed by miraculous fire would have been viewed as having been accepted by the deity to whom it was being offered. Thus, 2 Maccabees recasting of this theme in the context of the Temple would help serve to legitimize worship at the Temple to those of the Jewish religion. Despite the questions surrounding the fabrication of these

⁵⁵ Michael David Coogan, ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version Bible Apocrypha: an Ecumenical Study Edition*. 5th ed. (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 249-50.

⁵⁶ Translation of the Apocrypha unless otherwise noted are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that this is a post exilic retelling of the dedication. The dedication recorded in 1 Kings does not record this theophanic event.

stories and their legitimacy they do provide insight into the perspective of the author and their desire to draw connections between Solomon's Temple, the legends of Jeremiah hiding the sacred Temple objects, and the current Temple of his day. Goldstein argues that the forger of epistle two was in favor of the exclusive legitimacy of the Temple in Jerusalem.⁵⁸

Goldstein states, "The point of the legends of the miraculous fire in the time of Nehemiah (1:19–36) and of the hiding of the tabernacle, ark, and incense altar (2:4–8) is to show from authoritative tradition that the second temple, whatever its deficiencies, still is chosen and favored by God, Who in His own time will restore what is lacking."⁵⁹ However as Goldstein notes, the fact that even in such a pro-Temple writing the author was willing to admit to the missing Temple furnishings speaks to the dissatisfaction that persists in regards to the Second Temple.

Moving from the epistles at the beginning of 2 Maccabees, there is a second theophanic type event recorded during the time of the Seleucid occupancy of Judea and Jerusalem. This theophanic event record, a Seleucid official named Heliodorus and his attempt to enter the Temple to confiscate the funds in the treasury. The following events speak of "the Sovereign of spirits and of all authority" causing a massive manifestation so that those who saw it were astounded. There is a record of a magnificent rider clothed in armor and weapons of gold whose horse attacks Heliodorus. This is followed by the arrival of two young men who are splendidly dressed and beautiful and proceed to continue the attack on Heliodorus. When the attack finally ceases and Heliodorus lies gravely injured, the author records the response writing, "they praised the Lord who had acted marvelously for his own place. And the temple, which a little while

⁵⁸ Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 1st ed., (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1983), 163.

⁵⁹ Goldstein, *II Maccabees*...160.

before was full of fear and disturbance, was filled with joy and gladness now that the Almighty Lord had appeared.” (2 Mac. 3:30).

This appearance of angelic beings is one of the most obvious theophanic events that occur in direct connection to the Second Temple. Once again it is not the historical accuracy of these events that needs to be considered. It is only necessary to acknowledge that such a legend would have encouraged fellow Jews to see the legitimacy of the Second Temple because of a theophanic type event. Thus, connecting the presence of God with the Temple as demonstrated by the perceived protection of it through angelic hosts.

After this point there are a few more briefly mentioned theophanic type events in 2 Maccabees. In these events it is both the Temple and Jerusalem that come under threat. However, these are usually reference the larger city of Jerusalem and are connected to battles outside the Temple walls; therefore, they will not be discussed in greater detail here (2 Mac. 5, 11, 15). Overall, 2 Maccabees stands as a testament of what has been termed “Temple propaganda, the defense of the temple and its surroundings by the patron deity.”⁶⁰ As such the theophanic type events that are recorded are unlikely to contain historical accuracy, but they do work to prove that one definite way to help validate the worship of the Second Temple would be to link it to stories of an active divine presence.

Wisdom of Ben Sira

The next source to evaluate is commonly referred to as the Wisdom of Ben Sira. Written between 195-175 B.C. E., Ben Sira takes a decidedly pro-Temple perspective in his synthesis of

⁶⁰ Robert Doran, *Temple Propaganda: The Purpose and Character of 2 Maccabees* (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Assoc. of America, 1981), 114.

law, history, wisdom, Jewish tradition, and select elements from Greek thinking.⁶¹ Ben Sira was a Hebrew sage and the first to attempt to make the Jerusalem temple central.⁶² In his attempt to do so he poetically describes Simeon, a high priest of the Second Temple, painting him as an upstanding representation of Jewish piety and an upstanding Jewish religious leader. The reason this portion is briefly discussed is because of Ben Sira's description of Simeon as he leaves the Temple. Sira writes,

How glorious he was, surrounded by the people, as he came out of the house of the curtain. Like the morning star among the clouds, like the full moon at the festal season; a like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High, like the rainbow gleaming in splendid clouds; like roses in the days of first fruits, like lilies by a spring of water, like a green shoot on Lebanon on a summer day; like fire and incense in the censer, like a vessel of hammered gold studded with all kinds of precious stones; like an olive tree laden with fruit, and like a cypress towering in the clouds. When he put on his glorious robe and clothed himself in perfect splendor, when he went up to the holy altar, he made the court of the sanctuary glorious. (Sir. 50:5-11).

Now this is not a direct theophanic type event as the criteria of this thesis requires, but language of a high priest being glorified and shining after leaving the Temple is reminiscent of Moses and his face before the people of Israel after spending time in the presence of God.⁶³

In the pivotal portion of Ben Sira's work Sirach 24 discusses the time when personified wisdom chooses to set up her dwelling place in Jerusalem. Prior to this moment wisdom has described her wanderings and claimed that her throne was in a pillar of cloud such as in the Exodus account. This pillar cloud was one of the fundamental theophanic events in the Exodus wanderings, as it guided the Israelites in the wilderness. Wisdom then says,

⁶¹ Jeremy Corley, "Sirach," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Apocrypha*, ed. Gerbern S. Oegema (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 284-285.

⁶² Ibid., 284

⁶³ David A. Renwick, *Paul, the Temple, and the Presence of God*, (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1991), 33.

Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway. Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose territory should I abide? Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.’ Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be. In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion. Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my domain. I took root in an honored people, in the portion of the Lord, his heritage.

Wisdom is instructed to make her place in Jerusalem. In the discussion of wisdom literature some scholars such as Samuel Terrien have argued that the search for wisdom discussed in Hebrew wisdom literature is in fact a search for the presence of God.⁶⁴ David Renwick connects wisdom and the presence of God by pointing to the work of Maurice Gilbert. “If ‘wisdom’ can be understood here as a manifestation of God’s presence, then Maurice Gilbert is surely correct in regarding Ben Sira as presenting ‘une théologie de la Présence.’”⁶⁵ This is by no means conclusive evidence for a theophanic event signaling the presence of God at the Second Temple. For as Michelangelo Priotto notes in his brief comments on Sir 24:10, “It [the description of wisdom] affirms the presence of Wisdom in the Jerusalem Temple, but also suggests her presence in all of creation and, in particular, her presence in the land of Israel.”⁶⁶ All of this to say, while Ben Sira does not appeal to a historic theophany like the abridger of 2 Maccabees does, he does utilize previous theophanic events in Israel’s history to connect wisdom with the presence of God. From here modern scholars can then attempt to infer that the search for wisdom

⁶⁴ Renwick, *Paul, the Temple, and the Presence of God*, 33.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁶ Michaelangelo Priotto, “Building a Temple to Wisdom (Wis 9:8),” in *Wisdom for Life: Essays Offered to Honor Prof. Maurice Gilbert, SJ on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Nuria Calduch-Benages (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 265.

is the search for the presence of God. Therefore, Ben Sira in his perception sees that as wisdom dwells in the Temple then surely the presence of God should be there.

Josephus

The final source to be investigated is that of the Jewish historian Josephus. He recorded the events leading up to the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70 including several strange instances shortly before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple that mirror the visions of Ezekiel prior to the Babylonian destruction.

In his writing, *The Jewish War*, Josephus records that a light could be seen in the Temple near the altar, the eastern gate opened of its own accord, and an earthquake that could be felt at the Temple followed by a voice speaking. Each of these events happened on the years leading up to the fall of the Temple in A.D. 70. He uses all of these events to point out that the destruction experienced in A.D. 70 was foretold. He speaks of the elders who contrary to the misinformed hopes of others knew that these omens signaled that the end was near. “But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared that the signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming upon them.” (*J.W.* 6.295-296).⁶⁷

Some of these appearances sound strikingly familiar especially those of the voice speaking and the eastern gate being opened. Ezekiel’s vision of the glory of God departing prior to the destruction of the first Temple has similar markers. In Ezekiel’s vision he sees the glory of God depart from the threshold of the Temple and leave through the eastern gate.

Then the glory of the Lord departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the

⁶⁷ All translations concerning the works of Josephus are taken from *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, Revised and expanded edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999).

ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. (Ez. 10:18-19).

Josephus also records the voice that was heard during the earthquake. The entire event is described as follows:

Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the temple,] as their custom was to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove from here." (*J.W.* 6.299-300).

While these phenomena certainly fit the theophanic event criteria and are connected to the Second Temple the historical reliability of these events is questionable. Since Josephus appears to write from a post destruction perspective and is under the authority of his Roman benefactors his histories while considered significant Jewish writings of the Second Temple period are not without bias. With all of this it is interesting to note that the belief of divine abandonment that would have given confidence to the conquerors of Solomon's Temple, also seem to give confidence to the Roman conquerors of the Second Temple. For those that experienced this destruction it would have been devastating as the center of worship for their religion was irradicated.

Conclusions on Those in Favor of Temple Worship

Unfortunately, as demonstrated above there is limited evidence that Second Temple writers attempted to use theophanies to depict the presence of God in the physical Second Temple when recording events and ideas. However, the fact remains that those who viewed the Temple as a sacred place where the presence of God may have dwelt did not mind linking the two through the use of theophanic language and building on the foundation of the Old Testament concept of sacred space and theophanies. However there are few instances outside of Josephus'

histories and the Wisdom of Ben Sira that point to the Jewish literature of the Intertestamental Period using the theophanies prescribed in Exodus 19 to validate continued Temple worship.

Those Who Refused to Worship at the Temple

Even though many Jews still practiced at the Temple as recorded in the Gospels and seen in the works of Josephus and other Intertestamental writers, there were others who refused to worship at the Temple for various different reasons. Some groups refused to acknowledge the validity of the Temple, arguing that there was an alternate sacred space or that the Temple was desecrated as a sacred space. In response to these beliefs, those who refused to worship at the Temple had to find an alternate way to worship God and locate His presence. Just as the previous section sought to understand the reasoning for Jewish worship at the Temple by searching for theophanic language similar to what is found in Exodus at Sinai, the following sections will investigate those who refused to worship at the Temple and justified their decision based on the same theophanic language.

Negative Depictions of the Second Temple

Just as there were many types of Jews who chose to worship at the Temple, there were some sects of Judaism that refused to worship at the same Temple. Their reasons for refusing to worship were varied; however, Sanders notes that the difference between those who would be classified as exclusive versus sectarian was determined on their relationship to the Second Temple. “While exclusivism and sectarianism have partially to do with the theology ... and partially with general social behavior ... acceptance or rejection of the temple and its sacrifices finally determined whether a group was ‘sectarian’ or not.”⁶⁸ The reason for the rejection of the

⁶⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE- 66 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 569.

Temple could most likely be summarized in one word, defiled. For many of the sects there was a lack of purity in regard to the Temple, both the sacred place and the priesthood that served there. With the Second Temple no longer an option, a substitute needed to be put forward. Options for alternate sacred places included but were not limited to: several alternate Temples located outside of Israel in the diaspora or internal recognition of community as a divine dwelling place, as demonstrated in early Christian writings and in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁶⁹

Several Intertestamental sources record the dissatisfaction some had with the Temple and the corruption that existed within its courts. Jesus famously chases out the money changers from the Temple courts, claiming “‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’” (Matt. 21:13). Josephus records the corruption of the high priesthood and “believe[d] that Jerusalem and her Temple were destroyed and leveled because of Israel’s gross sin and folly, and that the Temple was burned and leveled as purification.”⁷⁰ Pseudepigraphal accounts after the destruction of the Second Temple reflect back on the sins of Israel, the false stewards (priests), and others as contributing factors or causes to the destruction of the Temple. The communities at Qumran sought separation rather than to participate in worship at a corrupt and defiled Temple. Therefore, it is evident that the Second Temple and its rulers faced scrutiny and dissatisfaction amongst the various sects of Judaism.

Alternate Temples And Sinai Theophanies

With the perceived corruption happening in the Second Temple, groups who refused to worship there (sectarians) had to find an alternate solution to the issue of the presence of God.

⁶⁹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 590-3.

⁷⁰ Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, (Boston: Brill, 2001), 324.

There are several broad categories that most solutions can be grouped into. These categories are: the community as the location of the divine, an eschatological Temple, and alternate Temple locations. The documents recovered at Qumran and the surrounding areas seem to speak of the community as an alternative to worshipping at the Temple. Eyal Regev explains in detail how the sectarians of the Qumran communities viewed the corruption of the Temple in light of the moral impurity amongst the priesthood rendering the Temple temporarily irrelevant while simultaneously demonstrating that the same rituals paved the way in creating an alternative system of holiness.⁷¹ Risa Levitt makes a similar conclusion on the concept of community as an alternative Temple however she reminds researchers that “we have been unable to identify any texts that explicitly state that God dwells in the community, and so we essentially are extrapolating this view from the texts that speak about the holy house that has been created within and by the community.”⁷² The concept of God dwelling amongst the community of His people as an alternative to the Temple in Jerusalem is based on holiness codes and not on theophanic language similar to that found in Sinai.⁷³

The second category for alternate Temple locations is the eschatological depictions of a future Temple. These depictions are a bit more complex to understand. There are several sources that utilize the theophanic language of Sinai, including Revelation, 1 Enoch, the Temple Scroll, and others; however, each of them is limited in the scope to which they apply to the thesis question. Revelation, 2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse), 2 Esdras all utilize theophanic language as

⁷¹ Eyal Regev, “Abominated Temple and a Holy Community: The Formation of the Notions of Purity and Impurity in Qumran,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10, no. 2 (2003): 243–78.

⁷² Risa Levitt, *Divine Presence in the Absence of the Temple*, (Brill: 2020), 176.

⁷³ The presence of God amongst the community of Christians will not be researched in this paper as many still participated in worship at the Temple; therefore, the term sectarian would not apply to them.

markers of God's presence, yet they were all written after the destruction of the Second Temple. Therefore, they cannot be considered as alternate hopes for the Temple since the Temple had already been destroyed by the Romans. 1 Enoch and 4Q530 both use theophanic language and would have been penned prior to the destruction of the Temple; however, their language is tied to a vision of God's throne room similar to Daniel 7.⁷⁴ James VanderKam demonstrates the similarities between 1 Enoch 1:3b-7,9 and the Old Testament Theophany at Sinai, concluding that the writer of 1 Enoch heavily relied on the Sinai narrative and Old Testament texts for its Theophany motifs and vocabulary.⁷⁵ However 1 Enoch 1 is also limited as it does discuss the presence of God however not in the context of a Temple either physical or eschatological. Finally, there is the depiction of an eschatological Temple in 11QT. This fragment speaks of a time when God will once again dwell amongst His people in a house that will bear His name. This fragment from 11QT does speak of a future Temple and does use one instance of theophanic language. "And I shall sanctify my [sanc]tuary with my glory for I shall cause my glory to dwell upon it until (?) the day of blessing (?) on which I shall create (anew) my san[ctuary (?)] to prepare it for myself for all [t]ime according to the covenant which I made with Jacob at Bethel." The glory of God mentioned at Sinai, the Tabernacle, and Solomon's Temple once again makes an appearance in the eschatological depiction of this future Temple. Of all the theophanies to be present signifying the presence of God the glory of God is likely the most

⁷⁴ For a more detailed explanation of the similarities between the throne visions of Daniel 7, 4Q530, and 1 Enoch 14 see "Throne Theophanies, Dream Visions, and Righteous Seers: Daniel, the Book of Giants, and 1 Enoch Reconsidered" in *Ancient Tales of Giants from Qumran and Turfan Contexts, traditions, and Influences*.

⁷⁵ James C. VanderKam, "Theophany of Enoch 1:3b-7, 9." *Vetus Testamentum* 23, no. 2 (April 1973): 130–50.

crucial. It is deeply embedded into the Sinai narrative therefore it is easy to see why the Intertestamental Jews would desire to see such a presence in the future Temple.

The third category that needs to be discussed is alternate temples. One such alternate temple site existed on Mount Gerizim in Samaria. The existence of a temple of Mount Gerizim is briefly alluded to in the works of Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (A.J. 13.8.2-7). Josephus records that it was destroyed by John Hyrcanus; however, based on the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4 it appears that religious rituals continued on Mount Gerizim even without their temple.⁷⁶ Like the Jews in Jerusalem worshipping in the Second Temple, the Samaritans appealed to earlier Israelite history for validation of their chosen location. This is seen in John 4 when the Samaritan woman asks Jesus, “Our ancestors worshipped on the mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem” (Jn 4:20). This instance could have been referring to the worship site that once sat on Mount Gerizim before its destruction under John Hyrcanus. However, Gary Knoppers does discuss the potential interpretation differences located in the Pentateuch that could have led the Samaritans to consider their sacred space on Mount Gerizim.⁷⁷ In addition, the finds of Israeli archeologist Yitzhak Magen as summarized in the article, “Who were the Samaritans?”, point to inscriptions found at the site acknowledging an understanding of divine presence. These inscriptions mirror language used in Deuteronomy to describe the Tabernacle as a house of sacrifice.⁷⁸ In this same article Magnar Kartveit states, “By echoing Deuteronomy command, the inscriptions define

⁷⁶ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, (Chicago: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 197.

⁷⁷ Gary N. Knoppers, “The Torah and ‘the Place[s] for Yhwh’s Name’: Samaritan-Judean Relations in Hellenistic and Maccabean Times.” In *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations*, (Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁸ Sara Toth Stub. “Who Were the Samaritans?” *Archaeology* 74, no. 5 (October 9, 2021): 32–35.

Mount Gerizim as the chosen place in distinction to Jerusalem.”⁷⁹ Archeological evidence would suggest that the Samaritans used Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch to support their concept of sacred space when setting up a temple for worship; however, the evidence does not substantiate a definitive answer.

Conclusions on Those in Favor of Alternative Temple Locations

The theophanies that occurred at Sinai were the first instance of God directly speaking to and interacting with His people. It was during these moments that the Israelites first experienced His presence and when the covenant was formed between God and the nation. These theophanies then appeared at the Tabernacle and again in Solomon’s Temple; however, as Israel transitioned into the Intertestamental Period these markers became less defined and connected to the Second Temple. Those in favor of Temple worship seemed more inclined to use theophanies, theophanic language or legends of miraculous events to support their belief that God dwelt in the Temple. Evidence of those who distanced themselves from the Temple seemed to rely more on the laws and purity aspect to make the argument that God was not in the Temple rather than rely on a theophanic marker or point to a lack of such markers. However, in writing of an eschatological hope the divine presence was a necessity.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 33.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and potential later research

From the beginning of Jewish history God has sought to dwell amongst His people. Just as the Old Testament records God's desire to dwell amongst His people, research on ancient near eastern cultures explains the desire that those cultures had to find or establish an earthly dwelling place for their gods.⁸⁰ The nation of Israel was no different. As demonstrated by the research in chapter 1, Israel had a history of recording theophanies that functioned as markers of sacred space. The appearance of an angel, the location of a particular vision, or some version of a divine encounter all indicated that the area was now set apart due to its connection with the divine.

As Israel grew and sought to establish itself as a nation there was a single defining theophany that developed into a thematic motif for the rest of Israelite history. This theophany was the interaction between God and Israel at Sinai. The theophanic events that occurred at Sinai and in the first Tabernacle functioned as motifs that would be repeated when discussing the presence of God. Therefore, when Israel becomes established in the land of Canaan and Solomon, as heir to the Davidic dynasty, builds the Temple it was important that the divine presence be established at this location.

As Solomon's Temple is dedicated, it can be noted that the sacred vessels are placed in the Temple, the glory cloud descends, fire consumes the sacrifices, and the voice of God confirms His intention to dwell in Solomon's Temple. Therefore, this location bares great weight and cultural significance as the only authorized sacred space in all of Israel. It is here where God had chosen to place His name. "The Lord appeared to him at night and said: I have heard your

⁸⁰ Michael B. Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient near East*. (Williston: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 140.

prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices...I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.” (2 Chr. 7:12-16).

Unfortunately, Israel failed to remain faithful to God and in doing so forfeited their connection to the divine presence. The destruction of Solomon’s Temple and subsequent exile dramatically impact Israel’s perception of the presence of God and their ability to worship. The Temple no longer existed during this period thus access to God seemed denied. Upon return to the land, the Old Testament closes with the rebuilding of the Temple at the command of the prophets although there are no recordings of any grand theophanies following the motif set down in Exodus.

Moving into the Intertestamental Period, there were recordings of divine moments in connection with the Second Temple. Some of these moments are spectacular such as recorded in 2 Maccabees. Others are more subtle recordings of legends or religious myths that would have fed the belief that the Temple was a sacred place. Unfortunately, the evidence provided in the Second Temple literature is insufficient to definitively claim that the recording of theophanies was an avenue used to maintain the sanctity of the Temple as the sight of the presence of God. While some writers may attempt to leverage this historical motif, more often theophanies were used in connection to the spiritualized or heavenly Temple as recorded in the visions written in 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Often these visions contain the appearance of angels, glimpses of the throne room of heaven, and future promises of a fully restored Temple that is far beyond the Second Temple of the time.

Being able to enter the presence of God was an important part of religious life in the ancient near eastern world including the Jews, thus the temple location and its prior title as that

place would have caused controversy.⁸¹ Many Jews actively participated in the worship taking place at the Temple, while others sought to remove themselves from what they viewed as a corrupted entity. However, while this thesis has been unable to definitively connect the theophanic language of the Old Testament to the Intertestamental writers, it has revealed the importance of the presence of God in relation to the area of the Second Temple. In order to access God's presence something that was considered of vital importance in the ancient mind, there must be a sacred space on earth where the divine being could dwell. The location of the Second Temple had been that prior to the destruction of the Babylonians. Therefore it has been noted that the connection of the Jewish perception of the presence of God was inexplicably intertwined with the Second Temple location. Thus, there was historical precedents based on previous theophanies that would have supported the worship taking place there. For those that refused to worship at the Second Temple, they needed to find a way to decouple the sacred space once verified by Old Testament theophanies and the presence of God that had been once said to dwell there. Instead of looking to completely reject the Temple, many of these groups longed for a day when the defilement of the Temple was removed and proper worship at the Jerusalem sacred space would be renewed. Therefore, the Jewish perception of the necessity of the presence of God did influence the various Jewish sects' ability to worship at the Second Temple. For some the historical theophanies that had once appeared there and its prior designation as a sacred space justified their continued worship. This can be seen in works that view the Temple in a positive light and attempt to defend the worship taking place there such as 2 Maccabees and the Wisdom

⁸¹ For an overview of this conversation see C.C. Rowland, "The Second Temple: Focus of Ideological Struggle," in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 175-198, and Martha Himmelfarb, *Between Temple and Torah: Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and Beyond* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 79-92.

of Ben Sira. However, for those that struggled with the worship at the Second Temple, they needed to find a way to temporarily separate the perception of the presence of God and the sacred space where the Temple sat. The theophanies of the Old Testament while not extensively repeated in the Second Temple literature, did set a historical precedent for the understanding of the presence of God there by influencing the ability of the Jews to worship at the Second Temple location.

Avenues for Further Research

This paper has been far from exhaustive concerning this topic of the Jewish perception of the presence of God and its connection to the theophanies of the Old Testament. There is potential to take the theophanic markers from Exodus 19 and compare them with the events that happened in Acts 2. There is also room for further research in refining the markers of the presence of God. It is possible to attempt to categorize the various beliefs concerning the Second Temple and how those beliefs were interwoven into the eschatological Temple or even how the Temple articles are linked to sacred space. There are multiple avenues from which a discussion of the Jewish perception of the presence of God and its interaction with the Temple could impact New Testament studies.

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