



Dust with a Destiny

“Partakers in the divine nature”

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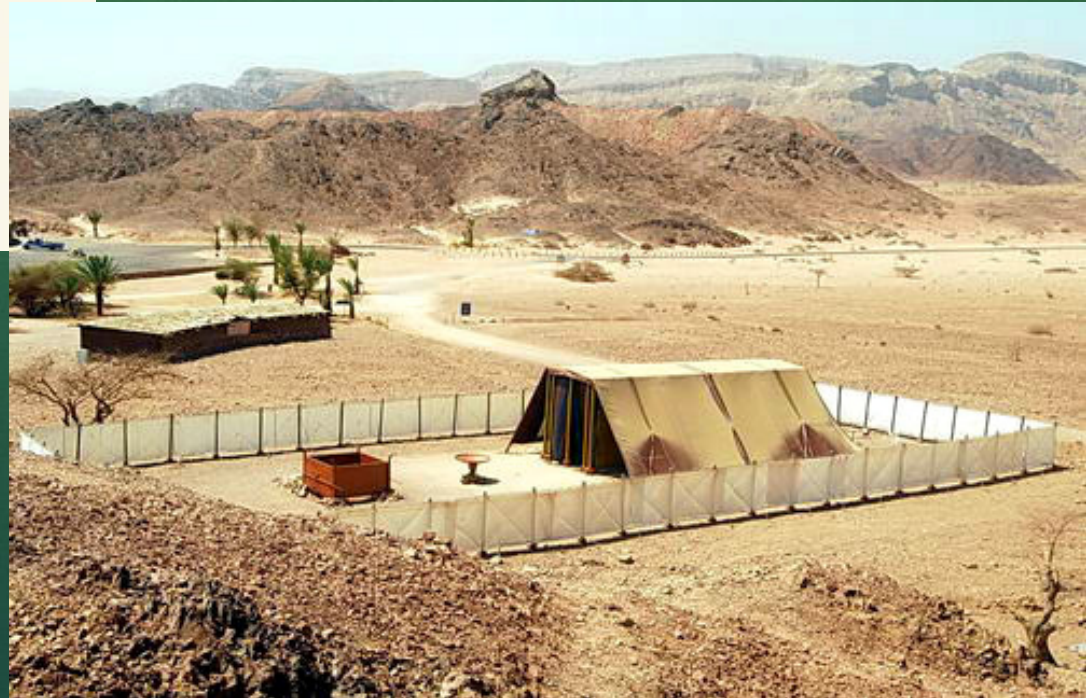
- **Psalm 8:** When I consider the heavens . . . What is humanity . . . ?
- Dust, vapour, chaff in the wind.
- Yet, the image of God, crowned with glory and honour.
- “What sort of freak then is man! How novel, how monstrous, how chaotic, how paradoxical, how prodigious! Judge of all things, feeble earthworm, repository of truth, sink of doubt and error, the glory and refuse of the universe!”

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*. Trans. A. J. Krailsheimer. New York: Penguin, 1995, 34

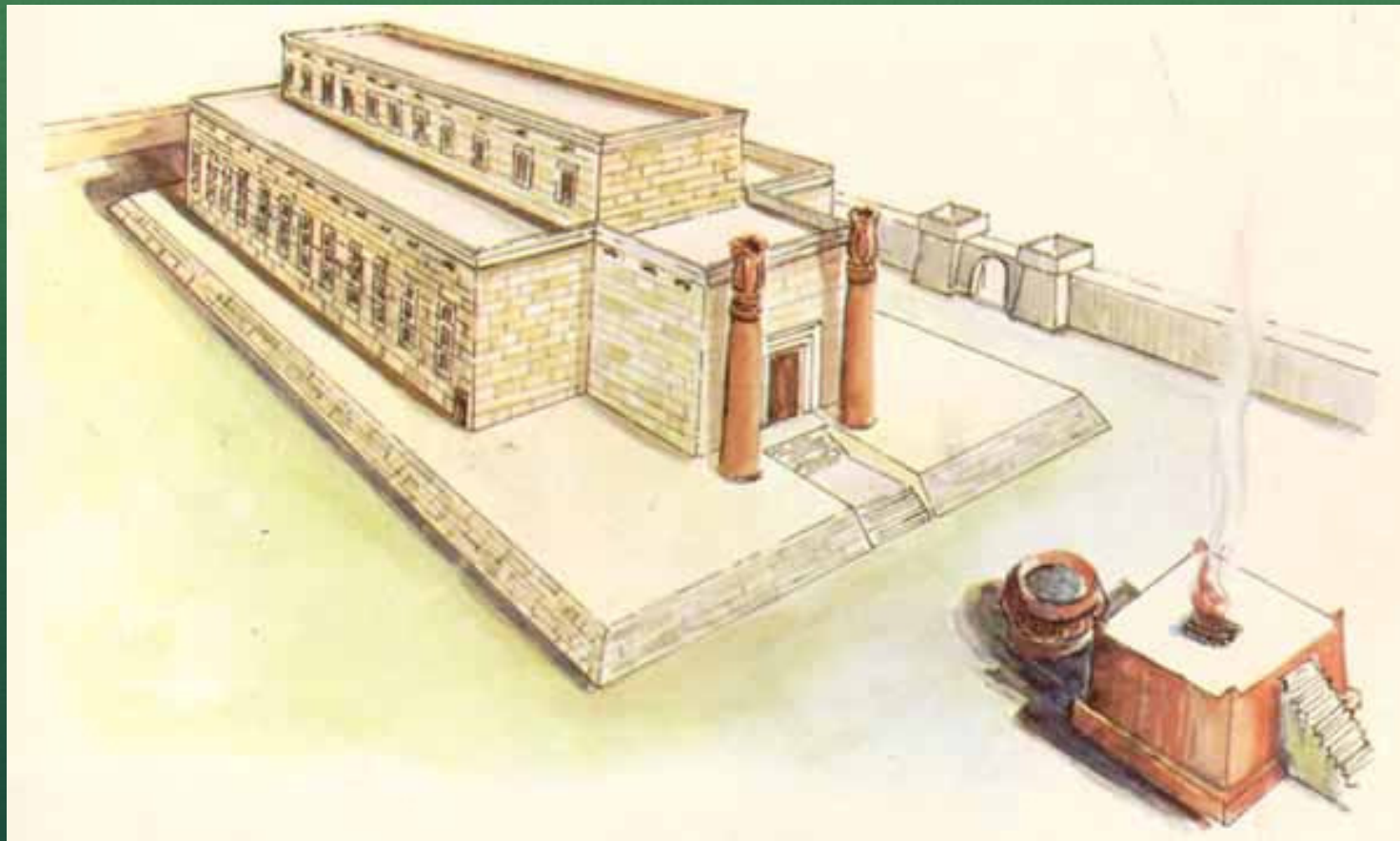
Partakers in the divine nature?

- Through [God's glory and goodness] he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2 Pet 1:4)
- What does it mean to participate in the divine nature?

The Tabernacle



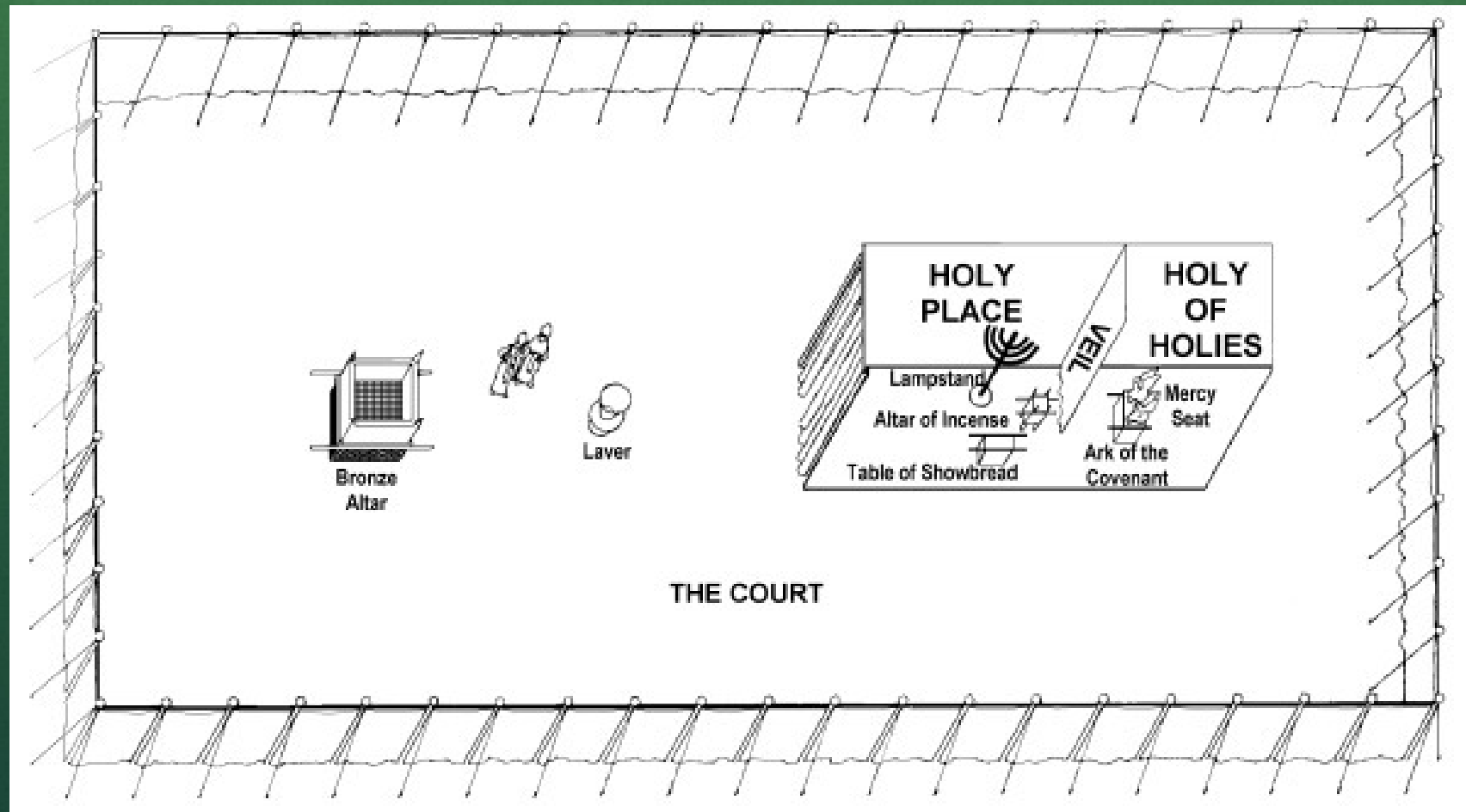
Solomon's Temple



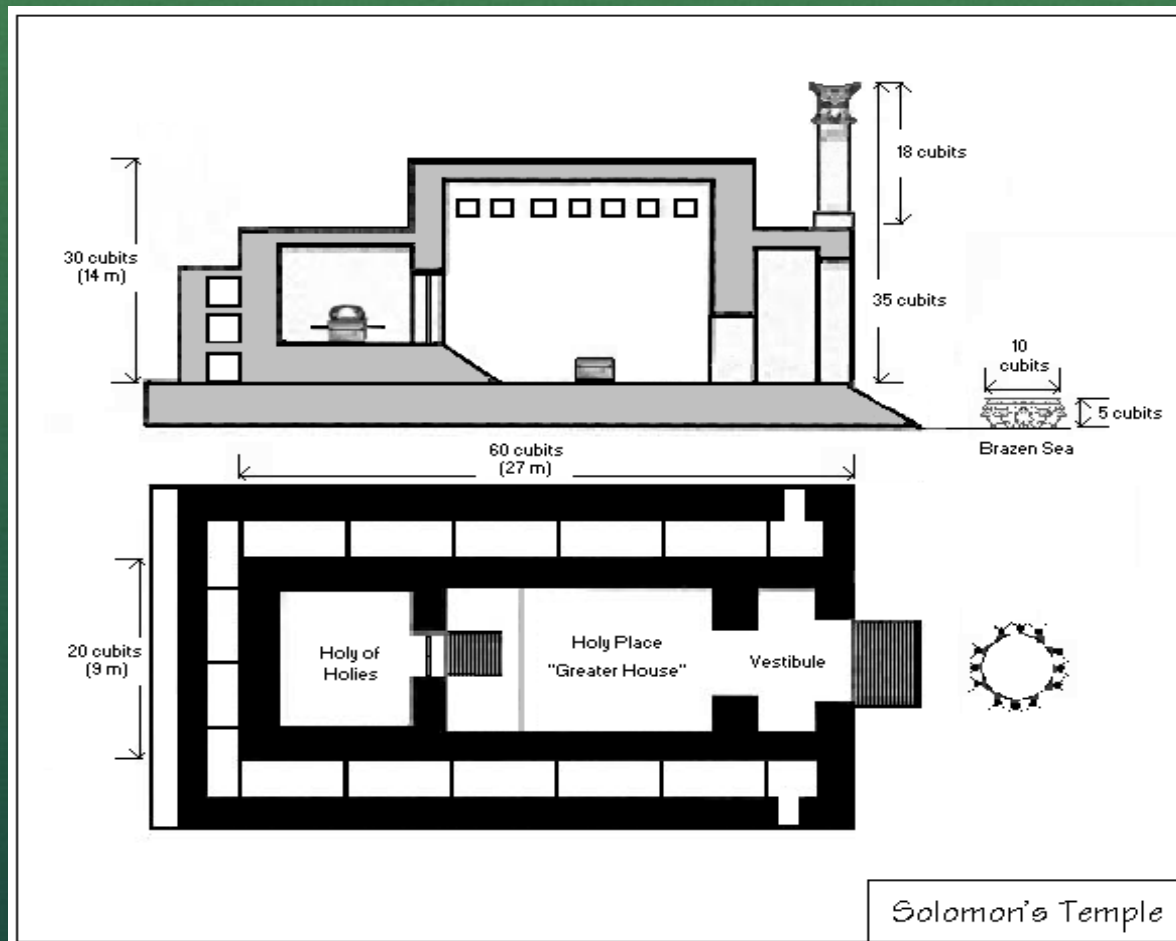
Herod's Temple



The Layout of the Tabernacle



Layout of the Temple



The Temple as a Microcosm of the Cosmos

- Temples in the ancient Near East (including the biblical temple) were thought of as symbolic scale models of the cosmos.
- **Psalm 78:69**: “He has built his sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which he founded forever.”

The Outer Court: the habitable world



- The washbasin is called the “sea” (1 Kgs 7:23-26) and the “bosom of the earth” (Ezek 43:14).
- Twelve bulls encircle the “sea” and it was decorated with lily blossom (2 Chr 4:2-5): animal and plant life.
- The bulls faced N, E, S, and W (four quadrants of the earth)
- The altar was made of “earth” or “uncut stone” (Exod 20:24-25) linking it to the natural earth.
- All Israelites could enter the outer court

The Holy Place: the visible heavens



- Seven lamps on the lamp-stand likely associated with the seven light-sources visible to the naked eye (sun, moon, and five planets) (*Philo and Josephus*)
- NOTE: the word “lights” is used in the Torah only for the tabernacle lamp-stand (*x 10*) and, in Gen 1, for the sun and moon (*x 5*).
- The curtains are sky-colours (blue, red, purple; *Josephus, Ant. 3.132*) and decorated with winged bird-like creatures (*Exod 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35*).

The Most Holy Place: the invisible heavens

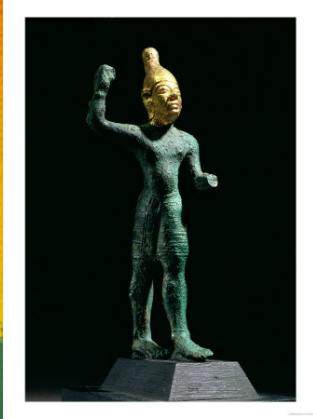
- God dwells in the Most Holy Place.
- The Ark was a footstool of his throne (1 Chr 28:2; Ps 99:5)
- There are sculpted cherubim (heavenly creatures) around the ark of the covenant (1 Kgs 6:23–28).
- Moses, in the first sections of the tabernacle, “signifies the earth and sea, since these two are accessible to all; but the third portion he reserved for God alone because heaven is inaccessible to men” (Josephus, Ant 3:181, cf. 3:123).

Building the Cosmos- Temple

- Parallels between the Genesis 1 account of creation and the account of the building of the tabernacle (**Exod 25–31**).
- Seven days of creation, each beginning, “And God said, ‘Let . . . ’” (**Gen 1**)
- Seven speeches of God to Moses about constructing the tabernacle, each beginning, “Yhwh said to Moses . . .” (**Exod 25–31**).
- Seven days to build cosmos as Solomon took seven years to build temple and dedicated it on seventh month in a seven day festival (**1 Kgs 8**).

The Cosmos as a Temple

- In ancient Israel the cosmos was seen as a giant temple in which God dwelt and “rested”: “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool” (*Isa 66:1*).
- “The whole universe must be regarded as the highest and, in truth, the holy temple of God.” (*Philo, De sepc leg 1:66*).
- The universe is God’s “house”.



Temples and Idols

- At the centre of *all* pagan temples in the ancient world stood the cult statue of the god of that temple – the idol.
- There was a ritual used by which it was believed that a cult statue was “activated” and moved from being a stone/wood carving to being indwelt by the god and functioning “as” the god.

God forbids idols

- Yhwh forbade Israel to worship idols – how could Yhwh be represented by statues that could not see, hear, speak, think, move, or act?
- such idols “have no [divine] breath/spirit (*ruach*) in them” (Hab 2:18–19; Jer 10:14)
- Yhwh’s temple was the only one in the ancient world that had no *manmade* cult icon.
- *But . . .*

Gen 1: God constructs his cosmic temple

- God constructs the cosmic house in which he will dwell and then . . .
- puts in his cult statue!!!

God's "idol" / icon

- ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man as our image, as our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
- ²⁷ So God created man as his own image, as the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Humans as God's Cult Statue

- Humans are made “as the image of God” (Gen 1:26–28)
- To an ancient Hebrew, an “image” (*tselem*) of a god was the statue representing that god (the “idol”).
- God's icon? – “That's you, that is!”

Images as Priest-Kings



- Human's are created to be God's "images", filled with God's own Spirit, representing God, and mediating God's good rule over creation.
- Humans are created as priest-rulers. Priests that mediate between God and creation within the temple/cosmos; rulers that benevolently reign over creation.
- Humans are created to be filled with God and clothed with divine glory (like priests in the temple).

Falling Short of the Glory

- Sin causes humans to fall short of the divine calling to serve as God's "image" – to fall short of the glory of God given to Adam (**Rom 3:23**).
- In Christ God restored the image of God in humanity.
- The Spirit is transforming us into the image of Christ
- As God's icons, humans can increasingly participate in God's own divine nature!!!

Seeing with Fresh Eyes

- *A new view on the cosmos: it is God's dwelling place. It is "sacred" and it has hidden, spiritual, depth-dimensions.*
- *A new view on humanity: created to serve as God's icon, filled with God himself.*
- *A new view on salvation: it is about restoring the image of God and the whole cosmic-temple so that "the earth will be full of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."*