230200 - Was the Temple of Sulayman (peace be upon him) real or a myth?

the question

I read about the temple that was built by Sulayman (peace be upon him), and that the Jews are currently looking for its traces, and they want to rebuild it on the ruins of al-Masjid al-Aqsa. What is this temple? Does it have any sanctity?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

This temple which is mentioned in the question is what the Jews call Solomon's Temple.

The Hebrew word for the temple means the House of God.

According to Jewish narrations, David (Dawud – peace be upon him) was the one who lay the foundations for the building of the temple, but he died before he could begin its construction. His son Solomon (Sulayman – peace be upon him) is the one who undertook the building of the temple atop Mount Moriah, which is known as the plateau of the sanctuary. This is the place where al-Masjid al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock are located.

The Temple has a special place in the hearts and minds of the Jews, and they claim that it is the most important place of worship, and that Solomon built it for them and for their religion.

Secondly:

After the death of Sulayman (peace be upon him), his children disputed and his kingdom was divided into two kingdoms, each of which was ruled by one of the sons of Sulayman.

The first kingdom was in the north, and it was called the Kingdom of Israel or the Kingdom of Samaria; its capital was Nablus.

The second kingdom was in the south, and it was called the Kingdom of Judah; its capital was Jerusalem (al-Quds).

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 721 BCE.

Approximately 150 years after that, the other kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah, was destroyed and the Jews tried to restore their kingdom and rebuild the temple.

In the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1926 CE edn.) it says: “The Jews look forward to bringing the Jewish people together in Palestine, restoring the Jewish state, rebuilding the Temple and establishing the throne of David in Jerusalem once more, to be ruled by a descendant of David.” End quote.

Thirdly:

There is no historical book or authentic source which proves that Sulayman (peace be upon him) built the temple, and there is no proven date for that. But we will give a brief history of the supposed temple, as it is narrated in the books of the Jews, then we will explain after that that the temple of Solomon is no more than a myth, and in fact never existed.

- The one who lay the foundations for the building of the temple was David (Dawud – peace be upon him), and the one who actually built it was Solomon (Sulayman – peace be upon him).
- Its construction took seven years, and more than 180,000 men took part in its construction.
- The temple was destroyed for the first time by the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE.
- Several decades after that, the captive Jews in Babylon were allowed to return to Jerusalem, so they returned and rebuilt the temple circa 521 BCE.
- Then the temple was destroyed again at the hands of Titus, the son of the Roman emperor Vespasian. This was the second destruction of the temple.
- So that the Jews would not forget the temple, and so that it would remain alive in their memories, their rabbis introduced rituals and ceremonies that every Jew performs in order to remember the Temple, at the time of birth, at the time of death, at the time of marriage, when painting the house, and so on.

- The second destruction of the temple occurred on the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Ab. The Jews fast on this day every year, in commemoration of this event.
- In 135 CE (at the time of the Emperor Hadrian) the city was destroyed completely and the Jews were expelled from it. A new city was built in its place, which was called Aelia Capitolina. It continued to be known by this name until the Muslims entered it during the caliphate of the second caliph, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), when it became known as al-Quds or Bayt al-Maqdis.
- In 313 CE, the Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity, and began to build churches. The Church of the Resurrection was the first church to be built during that period, and the site of the temple became a rubbish dump, to spite the Jews.
- The Jews were scattered throughout the earth, because of their treachery, their killing of the prophets, and their disobedience toward God – as the Jews themselves say. So they went to Arabia, Iraq, Egypt and Europe, and the Jews forgot Jerusalem and forgot the temple, until the nineteenth century CE, when they began to leaf through the pages of history, looking for any Jewish claims that would justify their return to Jerusalem.
- They began to hold conference after conference. The first Zionist conference was held in the city of Basle in Switzerland in 1897 CE, led by Theodore Herzl, with the aim of establishing a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine, so that they would be able to rebuild the Temple.
- The Jews claim that the Wailing Wall [which is located on the western side of al-Masjid al-Aqsa] is part of the remains of the Temple of Solomon.
- The Jews claim that the restoration of their kingdom can only be brought about by returning to Jerusalem and rebuilding the Temple. They also claim that al-Masjid al-Aqsa is built on the ruins of the Temple. This means that there is no alternative to destroying al-Masjid al-Aqsa in order to rebuild the Temple, and that the kingdom of the Jews cannot be established unless that happens.
- They also claimed that the Temple is the holiest place on the face of the earth.

This in brief is the story of the Temple as the Jews believe in it.

Fourthly:

There is a great deal of evidence which indicates that it is incorrect to attribute the temple to Sulayman (peace be upon him), and that Solomon's building of the temple is just one of the lies of the Jews. The evidence for that is abundant, some of which may be deduced from what the Jews themselves have written about the temple!

This evidence includes the following:

1.

There is no authentic source to prove that Solomon (Sulayman – peace be upon him) built this Temple. The Holy Quran tells us the story of Dawud and Sulayman in numerous places, and it tells us the story of Sulayman and Balqis, and the hoopoe and the ant, and the jinn; some of these events would appear to be of less importance than the temple, so why does the Quran not speak about the temple, if it was as holy and significant as the Jews say?

2.

This temple is not mentioned anywhere except in the books of the Jews, the content of which cannot be trusted, even the Bible itself. Many Jewish and Christian scholars and historians have admitted that the Bible has been subjected to distortion, tampering, additions and subtractions, which means that it cannot be regarded as a reliable historical source. It has no chain of narration going back to Moses (Musa – peace be upon him) or to any of the prophets who came after him, and their history is written in that book.

Regarding the First and Second Books of Kings – which are the books that speak about the Temple – the Jews say that their author was Jeremiah the prophet, but this is false, because the events described in the second book go beyond the era of Jeremiah, so it does not make sense that he could have been its author. See: *al-Madkhil ila al-Kitab al-Muqaddas* by Habib Sa'id (p. 99).

Hence many scholars and historians expressed doubts about these two Books.

The French scholar Dr. Maurice Bucaille says that scholars doubt the historical value of the Books of Samuel and the Books of Kings, as they mix historical events with myths; they contain

multiple errors, and a single event may may be recounted twice or even three times.

Dirasat al-Kitab al-Muqaddas fi Daw' al-Ma'arif al-Hadithah (p. 34).

Moreover, the scholars doubt the first and second Books of Chronicles, which also mention the building of Solomon's Temple.

Many Jewish and Christian scholars also doubt the entire Old Testament and do not regard it as an authentic source. They include Will Durant, the author of the *Story of Civilization*, the Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza, the French doctor Maurice Bucaille, and others.

The author of *Mawsu'at Bayt al-Maqdis* says: The building of the Temple is the matter of myth and imagination. The Jews attributed it to Sayyiduna Sulayman, but the story of the building of the temple is not recognized by history, and there is no source for it except the books of the Jews. End quote.

3.

The books of the Bible which speak of the temple contradict one another, which indicates that it is not a holy book and was not revealed by Allah; rather it is the writings of human beings which is falsely attributed to Allah.

One of these contradictions is that the First Book of Kings states that the number of Solomon's chief officers or foremen, who supervised the workers, was 3300 men (1 Kings 5:14-16).

In the Second Book of Chronicles, it says that the number was 3600 (2 Chronicles 2:2, 18).

They claim that these books are a revelation from God to the prophets who came after Solomon, so it is impossible that there could be any difference or contradiction between them.

4.

The one who studies the Bible texts having to do with the building of the temple will be astonished and shocked, and he will be certain that the story of its construction is a myth and fable that has no basis in reality.

That is because the texts describe an immense structure, perhaps one of the greatest buildings known to humanity. The materials used in its construction and the number of workers are imaginary, exaggerated beyond the bounds of logic.

The amount of gold used was one hundred thousand talents [a talent is equivalent to approximately 16 g], in other words, 1.6 tons of gold!

The amount of silver was one million talents; in other words, 16 tons of silver!

The amount of iron and copper is not mentioned, because it was a huge amount, and the amount of wood and stone used was even more than that.

The number of workers who took part in the construction was 180,000, of whom 30,000 Solomon sent to Lebanon to cut down trees there.

They were supervised by chief officers or foremen numbering 3600 or 3400, according to differences in the texts about their number.

Despite all these materials and workers, how long, wide and tall was the temple?

The Bible says that the temple was sixty cubits long (approximately 30 metres); it was twenty cubits (10 metres) wide, and thirty cubits (15 metres) high. The porch (courtyard) in front of it was twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide.

1 Kings 6; 2 Chronicles 3.

In other words, the size of the temple was 30 metres x 10 metres x 15 metres, and the area it covered was 300 m^2, with a height of four or five storeys.

Does it make sense to suggest that all these materials were used, and 180,000 workers participated in its construction for a period of seven years, for the sake of such a small building?

These lies and exaggerations have no aim except to imbue this alleged structure with a kind of grandeur and majesty.

5.

The Jews themselves are not agreed on one temple or one location. The Jews of the kingdom of Samaria (Samaritans) say that their temple was in the city of Nablus, not in Jerusalem; others say that it was in the village of Beitin, north of Jerusalem; a third group say that their temple was built on the hill of Dan (the judge), and so on. All of this confirms that the story of the temple is a myth, because none of these structures exist and no trace of them has ever been found.

6.

Those who mention these structures affirmed that they were completely destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 CE and became ruins, including the temple. Searching for a building that was completely destroyed two thousand years ago is utterly pointless.

7.

The historical evidence indicates that the one who built al-Masjid al-Aqsa was Ibrahim or his grandson Ya'qub (peace be upon them both). That was hundreds of years before Sulayman. So it does not make sense to suggest that Sulayman would destroy a place that was built by a prophet like him for the worship of Allah, may He be exalted, for the sake of building a temple on it.

Al-Bukhari (3366) and Muslim (520) narrated that Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I said: O Messenger of Allah, which mosque on earth was built first? He said: "Al-Masjid al-Haram (in Makkah)." I said: Then which? He said: "Al-Masjid al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem)." I said: How long was there between the two? He said: "Forty years."

See: *al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah* (1/375); *al-Tahrir wa'l-Tanwir* (4/15).

See also question no. 224401 .

8.

Veneration of the temple is an ancient pagan belief that existed in the ancient pagan countries in Iraq, Syria and Egypt. They believed that the gods resided in heaven, and that if they wanted to come down to earth, they could only reside in large houses [temples].

One researcher, Ahmad Sousa, who converted to Islam from Judaism, questioned the idea of the temple as it is described in the Jewish Bible. He was of the view that it was an idea that was alien to Judaism, and that it was a pagan Canaanite idea.

9.

The Jews began to excavate underneath al-Masjid al-Aqsa to search for traces and remains of Solomon's Temple in 1968 CE.

The Jewish archaeologist Israel Flenkstein stated that archaeologists did not find any archaeological evidence indicating that the Temple actually existed, and he regarded the idea of the existence of the Temple as a mere myth that did not exist, and that the writers of the Torah in the third century added stories that did not happen.

This was also mentioned by other archaeologists who participated in the excavations beneath al-Masjid al-Aqsa. The American archaeologist Gordon Franz stated that there is no evidence of the presence of the Temple in this place (underneath al-Masjid al-Aqsa), and when he was asked: Where is the location of the Temple? He replied: I don't know, and no one knows.

Moreover, archaeologists have unearthed some things from a time before that of David and Solomon, and others from later times; this is one of the strongest proofs that the Temple of Solomon is nothing but a myth, written by the writers of the Bible who falsely attributed it to God, and these are the ones of whom Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

{ So woe to those who write the "scripture" with their own hands, then say, "This is from Allah ," in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn} [Al-Baqarah 2:79].

10.

The Jews claim that the Buraq Wall (which they call the Wailing Wall) is part of their alleged temple. This claim was disproven and demonstrated to be false by modern scientific studies. An international committee was sent to investigate the events of al-Buraq that took place in 1930

CE. The committee's work was scientific and historical, and the committee proved in its report that the Buraq Wall belongs to the Arabs (Muslims).

11.

No historian said that when the Muslims entered Jerusalem at the time of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, they found in it any Jewish place of worship and destroyed it, and built a mosque in its place.

12.

The building which it is proven that Sulayman (peace be upon him) built to be a place of worship is al-Masjid al-Aqsa, which he (peace be upon him) rebuilt and refurbished. Sulayman's rebuilding of al-Masjid al-Aqsa was confirmed by the Christian historian Ibn al-'Ibri (d. 1286 CE), who said: "In the fourth year of his reign, Solomon began to build Bayt al-Maqdis, which is known as al-Masjid al-Aqsa." End quote.

13.

If we assume, for the sake of argument, that this temple existed, and that Dawud (peace be upon him) is the one who lay the foundations for the building of this temple, and that his son Sulayman is the one who completed it, then we – Muslims – are more entitled to this temple than the Jews, because this temple was built by Dawud and Sulayman to be a place of worship for those who believed in them and in all the prophets and messengers, so it is a temple for the monotheists who believed in the prophets and worshipped Allah, may He be exalted, and affirmed His oneness, and it is not a temple for the killers of the prophets or for those who disbelieved in Dawud and Sulayman and denied their prophethood, and claimed that they were merely two kings, and even attributed to them polytheism and idol worship. We – the Muslims – have a greater right to that temple, if it exists, because we believe in them as two of the noble prophets of Allah, may He be exalted.

14.

What is known to the Jews is that the Bible was written during the period of captivity in Babylon, and we have noted above that the Jews were allowed to return to Palestine after many

years of captivity. Perhaps the writers added some fables about the temple so as to encourage the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

All this evidence – and more – indicates that the issue of the temple is mere lies that were written by the authors of the Bible and attributed to God, to connect the Jews to that city and encourage them to return to it, based on the argument that their kingdom could not be complete except by rebuilding this alleged temple.

There are many books and essays that have been written about the temple. For example, see: *al-Haykal al-Maz'um bayna al-Wahm wa'l-Haqiqah* by Dr. 'Abd al-Nasir Qasim al-Farra, and *Naqd al-Maza'im al-Suhyuniyyah fi Haykal Sulayman* by Dr. Salih Husayn al-Raqab.

And Allah knows best.