Herod’s Roman Temple

By David Jacobson

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For King Solomon’s Temple, the Phoenician king, Hiram of Tyre, supplied not only construction materials and masons (*1 Kings 5:1–12*) but apparently the architectural plan as well. The structure, as it is described in the Bible, is clearly a Syro-Phoenician building, for which archaeology has found several parallels in that cultural sphere.[a] Solomon made use of the best skills and building techniques that he could obtain from Phoenicia, because they were not available locally.

A millennium later, Herod the Great followed his example, seeking state-of-the-art expertise and design for his rebuilding of the Second Temple. Only this time, it was not the Syro-Phoenician world but the Greek and Roman cultural sphere that was preeminent and that Herod adopted.

The Babylonians destroyed the First Temple, Solomon’s Temple, in 586 B.C.E. Within 50 years, the exiles returning from Babylon undertook to rebuild it, but what they built was a pale shadow of Solomon’s splendid edifice, and old men who remembered the venerable sanctuary of Solomon wept when they saw its successor.[1] This humble structure, known as the Second Temple, suffered considerable damage over the centuries that followed. It was desecrated by the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in 168 B.C.E.,[2] and violated by the Roman general, Pompey, when he conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E.[3] By the mid-first century B.C.E., the Second Temple had become somewhat decrepit.

Herod the Great undertook to “rebuild” it. Actually, it was an entirely new structure, but it is still known in Jewish tradition and in the scholarly literature as the Second Temple.

Herod had been appointed a client king of Rome (ruled 37–4 B.C.E.) and, with the help of his imperial masters, 020he succeeded in crushing his opponents, including the leaders of the Hasmonean dynasty, which had previously ruled Judea. A period of tranquility followed. An effective and loyal servant of Rome, Herod was soon rewarded with an expansion of his kingdom, which secured for him a degree of control over the lucrative trade route from Arabia to the Mediterranean. The Emperor Augustus also awarded Herod a valuable mining concession in Cyprus. Peace and prosperity led to financial surpluses, which Herod used to pay for an ambitious building program both at home and abroad.[4]

In emulation of the Emperor Augustus and the great Hellenistic monarchs of earlier times, Herod presented himself as a patron of Greek culture and benefactor of the great cities of the eastern Mediterranean. The first-century C.E. Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Herod’s twin aim was to earn a favorable reputation and future remembrance through ostentatious generosity (*euergesia*).[5] Accordingly, he generously endowed the Olympic Games, for which he was made life president of this venerable Greek institution.[6] At the same time he sponsored numerous building projects in such prestigious cities as Athens and Rhodes[7] as well as in his own kingdom, erecting splendid public buildings and palaces and even entire cities at Samaria (which he renamed Sebaste), Caesarea and Antipatris, the remains of which still astonish visitors.[8] In this endeavor, Herod was clearly inspired by his Roman overlord, Augustus Caesar, who had embarked on a vast building program as part of his own sweeping policy of cultural renewal. Augustus and his deputy, Marcus Agrippa, sponsored building projects throughout the empire, but nowhere was this activity more intense than in Rome. The Roman historian Suetonius remarks that: “He (Augustus) found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble.”[9] Some idea of this frenetic building activity is captured in Augustus’ account of his achievements,which were inscribed on bronze plates in front of his mausoleum and are engraved for posterity on the walls of several temples in the Greek East:

> “I built the Senate house and the Chalcidicum [an elaborate porch] adjoining it, and the temple of Apollo on the Palatine with its porticoes, the temple of the deified Julius 021and [here follows a list of 13 other major temples and different structures]. I restored the Capitol and the theatre of Pompey, both at great expense, without any inscription of my name on them. I repaired the conduits of the aqueducts, which in several places were falling into disrepair through age, and I doubled the supply of the aqueduct called Marcia by diverting a new spring into it. I completed the Forum Julium and the basilica which used to stand between the temple of Castor and the temple of Saturn, works begun and almost finished by my father [Julius] and when the same

basilica was destroyed by fire, I began to rebuild it on an enlarged site, in the name of my sons, and gave orders that if I did not live to complete it, my heirs should do so. In my 6th consulship [28 B.C.E.] by authority of the Senate, I repaired 82 temples of the gods in Rome, neglecting none then that were in need of repair. In my 7th consulship [27 B.C.E.] I rebuilt the Via Flaminia from Rome to Ariminum (Rimini) and all the bridges except the Mulvian and the Minucian. On my own land I built the temple of Mars the Avenger and the Forum of Augustus from the spoils of war. I built the theatre next to the temple of Apollo on a site largely purchased from private owners, to be named after my son-in-law Marcus Marcellus."[10]

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Like Augustus, Herod patronized religious cults by building temples, including at least three dedicated to the worship of the emperor at Samaria-Sebaste, Caesarea and Panium (modern Banias).[11] His temple at Panium, a building of "white stone" is portrayed on coins minted by one of his sons who had his seat there, Herod Philip.[12] It closely resembled at least one other temple dedicated to Augustus, the virtually intact Temple of Rome and Augustus at Pola (modern Pula, on the Croatian coast), illustrating how closely Herod's monumental buildings followed Imperial architectural practice.[13]

In those days, Judaism, like all ancestral religions, commanded the respect and patronage of the monarch. Herod saw an opportunity to gain a reputation among his Jewish subjects on a par with the illustrious King Solomon by rebuilding the Temple on a magnificent scale. In a remarkable speech to an assembly of his subjects, he made it clear that in his eyes it was an act of piety.[14]

Work on the Temple commenced in the eighteenth year of his reign (20/19 B.C.E.).[15] It was still not fully complete at the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt in 66 C.E. This was the largest temple complex built in classical antiquity. The work undoubtedly had Imperial sanction, a conclusion easily inferred from the fact that Marcus Agrippa, Augustus' deputy, attended the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Temple in 15 B.C.E. Agrippa also paid for the sacrifice of a hundred oxen (a hecatomb) and presented gifts to the Temple.[16] Augustus' wife Livia presented the Temple with golden 023vessels and other precious gifts.[17] (We may ruminate on the fact that, despite this Imperial support, this same edifice was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. after standing for less than a century.)

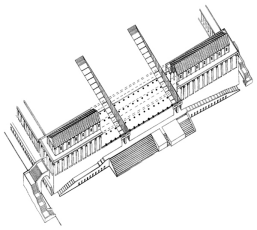
Although no indisputable remains of the sanctuary of Herod's Temple have come to light, the entire complex is discussed in detail by Josephus, in the Mishnah (the earliest rabbinic work) and by Philo, the first-century C.E. Jewish philosopher and diplomat from Alexandria.[18] Despite the discrepancies between and even within the sources,[19] there is sufficient consistency to obtain a fairly clear picture of Herod's Temple. Herod's architects were of course constrained to the form and dimensions of the sanctuary prescribed in the Bible, although they did deviate in detail from the blueprints given in *1 Kings 6–7* and *2 Chronicles 3–4*, just as the Biblical blueprints deviate from one another. (For example, the height of the sanctuary is given as 30 cubits in Kings and 120 cubits in Chronicles.) Fortunately for Herod, there are also important gaps in the Biblical description, which gave him considerable freedom to adopt Roman norms. Neither Kings nor Chronicles refers, for example, to the sacred area of the Temple enclosure or the courts in any detail. In sum, the design and construction of Herod's Temple represent a contemporary reinterpretation of the Biblical prototype.

The blending of local architectural and religious traditions with classical ideas was common in the East. For instance, the considerable remains of the temple of Bel in Palmyra show features of Roman Augustan architecture combined with others deriving from Egypt and the Orient.[20] As with Herod's Temple in Jerusalem, the design of the temple of Bel was adapted to suit local traditions of worship.[21]

Herod began his work by doubling the pre-existing area of the Temple complex, using the latest engineering and construction methods. The creation of the Temple 024platform required massive earth moving and excavation of rock. Roughly 1.1 million cubic feet of rock was removed on the northwestern end of the platform, leaving a scarp more than 30 feet high. At the southeastern end (where bedrock descended), the platform had to be raised and the Kidron Valley filled in. At the southeastern corner, the platform was raised almost 150 feet above bedrock, of which 107 feet is earth fill and the remaining height (41 feet) is provided by underground vaults that extend almost 200 feet to the north and 260 feet to the west.[22]

The creation of such a large terrace was a feature of late Republican and early Imperial Roman architecture.[23] The imposing temple complexes of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste (Palestrina) and Hercules Victor at Tibur (Tivoli) near Rome, both dating from the about the mid-first century B.C.E., are supreme examples of temple precincts

built on artificially leveled platforms, raised on vaulted substructures.



These temple complexes also exhibit the strict symmetry and strong axial emphasis that characterize monumental Roman architecture. For example, each has twin entrances symmetrically placed on either side of the principal axis. The double passages to Herod's Temple enclosure from the south—the ramps leading up from the so-called "Double" and "Triple" Gates—echo the twin entrances at Praeneste and Tibur and define the north-south axis of the Temple compound.

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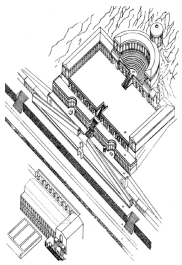
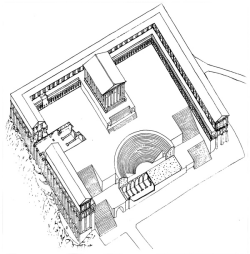


It is likely that the Temple Mount's "Triple" gate was originally double, like its counterpart. All other known Herodian gates on the Temple Mount or in his other monumental buildings are either double or single openings. The present triple archway, now blocked, is of early Islamic date, judging by the style of the *voussoirs*, or wedge-shaped blocks used to form the arch. (Only the western door jamb of the "Triple Gate"—with a quintessentially Attic-Ionic moulding—survives from the Herodian original.) The width of the passage behind the gate is almost identical (in fact very slightly narrower) to that behind the "Double Gate"—which we know was originally a double opening because both doorways, complete with their Herodian lintels, relieving arches and shared cornice, survive. The twin passages behind the gates began at the gate vestibules, underground, and rose, via steps or ramps, to the level of the esplanade of the Temple Mount.[24]



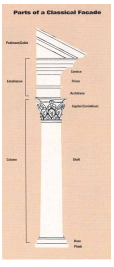
While internally conforming to the tripartite division (porch, main hall and holy of holies) prescribed in the Bible, from the front the Temple itself gave the illusion of a huge cube, 100 cubits on each side, although in plan it was actually T-shaped (it was wider in the front than in the back). To an approaching worshiper, this structure appeared to embody a prime regular solid, a cube, and a perfect Pythagorean number, ten (10 cubits multiplied by 10 cubits per side), thereby adhering to the aesthetic principles of classical architectural design.

Vitruvius, the Roman writer on architecture writes: "The design of a temple depends on *symmetria*, the principles of which must be most carefully observed by the architect … Without *symmetria* and proportion there can be no principles in the design of any temple; that is, if there is no precise relation between its members, as in the case of those of a well-shaped man."[25]

For the ancients, including Vitruvius, *symmetria* had a deeper meaning than our modern term *symmetry*; it denoted "mathematical harmony." In his concern for*symmetria* in temple design, Vitruvius is merely acknowledging the Décor Theory worked out by Greek philosophers and summed up by Plato in the statement: "Measure and *symmetria*, as it turns out, are everywhere identifiable with beauty and excellence."[26] The regular solids and perfect Pythagorean numbers were bound up with these aesthetic ideals.

The Herodian enclosure also conforms to a disciplined geometrical scheme, based on a pair of equilateral (60-degree) triangles, as pointed out in my earlier **BAR** article.[b] Precisely the same scheme governs the well-preserved enclosure built by Herod for the Tomb of the Patriarchs (*Haram al-Khalil*) in Hebron and the Herodian forum at Samaria-Sebaste.[27]

Ground plans designed using equilateral triangles occur in Greek architecture and, with even greater frequency, in Roman architecture. Vitruvius, who wrote his architectural treatise at about the time work began on Herod's Temple, specifically recommends laying out a plan for a Roman theater by drawing a series of four equilateral triangles at 30-degree intervals.[28]

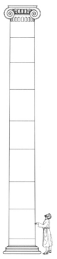


Like the enclosure of the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron (which still survives), the enclosure surrounding the Temple in Jerusalem was built of ashlars (squared stone blocks) with drafted margins (recessed edges) and smooth raised central bosses (faces), as well as regular pilasters (semi-columns projecting from a recessed wall) along the upper part of the retaining walls. These same features appear together, 027possibly for the first time, in a Greek building built two centuries earlier—the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens, dated 334 B.C.E.[29] They quickly became popular features of classical architecture, Roman as well as Greek. A well-preserved example showing walls with an upper pilaster course is the inward-facing enclosure within the temple of Apollo at Didyma, near Miletus (begun in the third century B.C.E.), where a pair of symmetrically placed ramped entrances, comparable to the Temple Mount's "Double" and "Triple" Gates, can also be found. The same style of masonry, with drafted margins and smooth bosses, can be found in contemporaneous Augustan temples, including the Temple of Mars the Avenger in the Forum of Augustus in Rome and the Temple of

Rome and Augustus at Angora (modern Ankara, Turkey).[30]

A further Roman influence on the architecture of Herod's Temple can be traced in the peristyle (colonnades on all sides) framing the vast enclosure, integrated with a triple-aisled basilica at one end. Although nothing remains of this construction, its existence is confirmed by the eyewitness records of Josephus and Philo of Alexandria. This represented the main type of Roman market scheme, and was widespread through the Imperial period. In Herod's enclosure, the basilica made up the southern end of the peristyle. Josephus describes this basilica (*basileios stoa*, often translated as "Royal Stoa")[31] as having aisles 30 Roman feet wide and 50 feet high (a standard Roman foot was roughly 0.295 meters, as compared with 0.305 meters for a modern foot) with a central nave 1.5 times as wide and twice the height. Its ceilings were coffered (having recessed panels) and decorated with deeply cut wood carvings "of all sorts of different figures." Each of the building's 162 columns had bases with double convex moldings of the Attic-Ionic type and Corinthian (acanthus-leaved) capitals, which were widely favored in Roman Imperial architecture.[32]

Column bases and capitals in similar style from the Herodian period were found in Nahman Avigad's excavations of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City during 1969–1971, and it has been speculated that these architectural elements were from Herod's Temple.[33] Incidentally, the basilica of the Civic Market in Ephesus (dedicated between 2 and 14 C.E.) had precisely the same ratio of the width of the nave to that of the aisles—3:2—but it was smaller than Herod's basilica. Just as his Temple complex was the largest in the classical world, so was Herod's basilica. Looking up at it from the Kidron Valley below was to see it rising about 100 feet above the Temple esplanade and standing 250 feet above bedrock, the equivalent of a 21-story building.



Thousands of pilgrims thronged the Temple precincts on Jewish festivals. Josephus speaks of 255,600 animal sacrifices being made during Passover—no doubt an exaggeration, but the figure certainly runs into many thousands.[34] Even at other times the Temple esplanade, ringed by porticoes, served as the city's marketplace (called *agora* in Greek and *forum* in Latin). The imposing enclosure not only dominated the Herodian city, it constituted its only sizable public square.

The idea of setting a dominant sanctuary inside a forum bordered by colonnades had been developed in Rome. It was used both in the Forum of Julius Caesar and the Forum of Augustus in the Imperial capital. This Roman elaboration of a scheme, which may have originated in Greece or Asia Minor, undoubtedly provided the prototype for Jerusalem, as it did elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, for example in the Civic 060Market (Agora) of Ephesus, which is of roughly the same date as the Temple compound.

Little of the decoration of Herod's Temple compound survives. The few fragments of relief decoration, including the cupolas (round vaulted ceilings) of the vestibule behind the "Double Gate" and the door frame moulding at the "Triple Gate," show once again that the designs owe a debt to Rome and the Greek East, although the detached rosettes on one of the cupolas appear to be uniquely Herodian.[35] Elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world, the rosettes are joined by stems to scrollwork relief ornaments. This type of vegetal decoration enjoyed popularity throughout the Mediterranean in the Augustan period. Many of the other designs were derived from pattern books that were widely used by decorative artists in the Roman Empire. A case in point is the hexagonal swastika pattern with rosettes that occurs on a decorative plaque from Herod's Temple found in Benjamin Mazar's post–1967 excavations. Almost exactly the same design was used in the stage wall of the theater at Ephesus, as reconstructed in about 140 C.E.

From an architectural point of view, Herod's Temple was a product of the Augustan period *par excellence*, no less than its illustrious Solomonic predecessor was Syro-Phoenician.

Footnotes:

a. See John Monson, "The New 'Ain Dara Temple—Closest Solomonic Parallel," **BAR** 26:03, and Lawrence E. Stager, "Jerusalem as Eden," **BAR** 26:03; Victor Hurowitz, "Inside Solomon's Temple," *BR* 10:02.

b. David Jacobson, "Sacred Geometry: Unlocking the Secret of the Temple Mount, Part 1, "**BAR** 25:04, and "Sacred Geometry: Unlocking the Secret of the Temple Mount, Part 2, " **BAR** 25:05.

Endnotes:

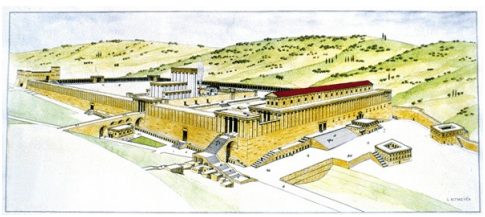
1. *Ezra 3:12*; *Tobit 14:5*. The Temple was begun in 538 B.C.E., less than 50 years after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. by Nebuchadnezzar.
2. *1 Maccabees 1:20–24*; *2 Maccabees 5:15–16*.
3. Josephus, *Jewish War* i 145–51; *Jewish Antiquities* xiv 61–71; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* xxxvii 16, 1–4.
4. Emilio Gabba, "The Finances of King Herod," in Aryeh Kasher, Uriel Rappaport and Gideon Fuks, eds.,*Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi/Israel Exploration Society, 1990), pp. 160–168.
5. Josephus, *Antiquities* xvi 150–60.
6. Josephus, *War* i 426–27; *Antiquities* xvi 149.
7. Josephus, *War* i 422–28; *Antiquities* xvi 147–49. See Duane W. Roller, *The Building Program of Herod the Great* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998), pp. 214–238.
8. See Roller, *Building Program*, pp. 209–212 (on Samaria-Sebaste); pp. 133–44 (on Caesarea); pp. 131–132 (on Antipatris). Roller cites the relevant references in Josephus relating to Herod's building activities.
9. Suetonius, *Augustus* 28.
10. Augustus, *Res Gestae* 19–21. On Augustan Rome, see Diana Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996).
11. On the Temple of Rome and Augustus at Caesarea, see Kenneth G. Holum, "The Temple Platform: Progress Report on the Excavations," in Holum, Avner Raban and Joseph Patrich, *Caesarea Papers 2: Herod's Temple, the Provincial Governor's Praetorium and Granaries, the Later Harbor, a Gold Coin Hoard and Other Studies* (Journal of Roman Archaeology Suppl. No. 35, 1999), pp. 12–34. On Panium see Zvi U. Ma'oz, "Banias," in Ephraim Stern, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 136–143. On Augusteum at Samaria-Sebaste see Dan Barag, "King Herod's Royal Castle at Samaria-Sebaste," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 125 (1993), pp. 4–8.
12. Josephus, *Antiquities* xv 363–64; Compare Josephus War i 404, where this temple is described as being built of marble.
13. The triangular pediments of both temples featured copies of the Emperor Augustus' golden shield, the*Clupaeus Virtutis*, which hung in the Roman Senate and was inscribed with his noble virtues, including "piety to the gods and the fatherland." See Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 86–88; Augustus, Res Gestae 34. The Emperor's shield can be discerned on the coin representations of the temple at Panium.
14. Josephus, *Antiquities* xv 382–87.
15. In Josephus (*Antiquities* xv 380) the start of this project is given as the 18th year of Herod's reign, whereas in War i 401, the date is given as Herod's 15th year. Emil Schürer (*The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973], p. 292, n. 12) has pointed out that the rebuilding of the Temple must have begun in 20/19 B.C.E. because we are informed in the passage from *Antiquities* that this event coincided with the visit of the Emperor to Syria, which took place in the spring or summer of 20 B.C.E., during the consulship of M. Apuleius and P. Silius, in 20 B.C.E.
16. Josephus, *Antiquities* xvi 14; Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 295–297. Philo provides additional evidence of Augustus' respect for the Temple and the Jewish cult. See Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 309–318.
17. Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 319.
18. Josephus, *War* i 401; v 184–247; *Antiquities* xv 380–425; Mishnah, *Middot* 1–5; Philo, *Special Laws* i 13.
19. Lee I. Levine, "Josephus' Description of the Jerusalem Temple: War, *Antiquities*, and Other Sources," in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith*, ed. F. Parente and J. Sievers (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 233–246.
20. Henri Seyrig, Robert Amy and Ernest Will, *Le Temple de Bêl à Palmyre* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1975).
21. Seyrig and Seyrig, *Temple*, pp. 41–42 and 61–62. See Henner von Hesberg, "The significance of the cities in the kingdom of Herod," in Klaus Fittschen and Gideon Foerster *Judaea and the Graeco-Roman World in the Time of Herod in the Light of Archaeological Evidence* (Acts of a Symposium Organised by the Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Archaeological Institute, Georg-August-University of Göttingen, Jerusalem, Nov. 3–4, 1988; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), p. 15.
22. The existing vaults, known as Solomon's Stables, are successors to the Herodian substructures, and they date from the early Islamic period. See Shimon Gibson and David Jacobson, *Below the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International Series 647, 1996), pp. 268–279.
23. Reinhard Förtsch, "The Residences of King Herod and their Relations to Roman Villa Architecture," in Fittschen and

Foerster, 1996, pp. 75–78.

24. On the similar character of the twin submerged entrances see C. Warren and C.R. Conder, *Survey of Western Palestine* (London: The Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1884), pp. 164–66; see also Gibson and Jacobson, *Below the Temple Mount in Jerusalem*, pp. 235–59. Warren's examination showed that the "Triple Gate" was "a gateway of about the same style as the Double Gate, and is very likely at that time to have exactly corresponded to it in only having two passages" ("Excavations at Jerusalem," in W. Morrison, ed., *The Recovery of Jerusalem: A Narrative of Exploration and Discovery in the City and Holy Land* [London: R. Bentley, 1871], p. 231; see also Conder in Warren and Conder, *Survey of Western Palestine*, p. 165). On the *voussoirs* of the "Triple Gate," see D. Bahat "The Western Wall Tunnels," in H. Geva, ed., *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), p. 182; Gibson and Jacobson, *Below the Temple Mount*, p. 268.
25. Vitruvius, *On Architecture* iii 1.
26. Plato, *Philebus* 64E. On *symmetria* and classical Décor Theory, see Jerome J. Pollitt, *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History and Terminology* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 14–22 and 160–162.
27. David Jacobson, "Geometrical Planning in Monumental Herodian Architecture," *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 17 (1999), pp. 67–76.
28. Vitruvius, *On Architecture* v 6.
29. Heinrich Bauer, "Lysikratesdenkmal, Baubestand und Rekonstruktion," *Mitteilungen des deutschen archaologisches Instituts, athenisches Abteilung* 92 (1977), pp. 203–207.
30. David Jacobson, "Decorative Drafted-margin Masonry in Jerusalem and Hebron and its Relations," *Levant* 32 (2000), pp. 135–154.
31. Josephus, *Antiquities* xv 411–16.
32. Josephus, *Antiquities* xv 413–14.
33. Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 151–152 and 161–165.
34. Josephus, *War* vi 424; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1969), pp. 77–84.
35. Mathea-Försch, 1996, p. 182.

David Harris

When Solomon built the First Temple, the king imported his masons, his materials and even the style of his sanctuary from the Phoenicians, the preeminent builders in the eastern Mediterranean world in the second and early first millennium B.C.E. A thousand years later, when Herod the Great sought to restore the Temple to its former glory, he followed Solomon's lead in using styles and techniques from the dominant power in the Near East at the time—Imperial Rome. Although nothing survives of the Second Temple and only fragments of the surrounding structures atop the Temple Mount have been found, it is possible to reconstruct what the building looked like—as in the model shown, from the Holy Land Hotel in Jerusalem.



Leen Ritmeyer

Making due allowance for adaptations in the design to satisfy Jewish ritual and Biblical tradition, Herod's Temple bore the typical hallmarks of Roman imperial architecture in the eastern Mediterranean. Jerusalem's Temple Mount was the largest temple complex in classical antiquity. It is estimated that over one million cubic feet of earth were removed from the area of the platform's northwest corner, shown at far left in the drawing, to lower it and provide a level surface on which to build. The lower southeastern corner, at the far right, on the other hand, was raised on earth fill and underground vaults.

Courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, NY

All the rage. Herod's adherence to Roman building models is shown in a coin minted by Herod's son Philip II. It depicts the temple Herod built at Panium (modern Banias, in northern Israel), also dedicated to Augustus.

Map showing locations of Herod's building projects.

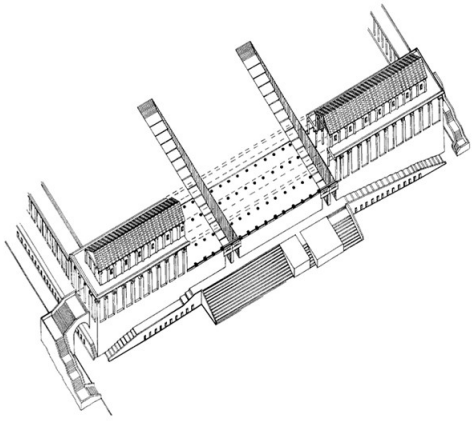
Corbis

The *tetrastyle* (four-columned) facade, columns with Corinthian capitals and triangular gable (or pediment) are typical of temples throughout the Roman world of the time. A better preserved example, also a temple dedicated to the cult of the Emperor, survives in the town of Pula on the Croatian coast. It is very similar in appearance to Herod's Panium temple as depicted on the coin, and was built at nearly the same time—between 2 B.C.E and 14 C.E.

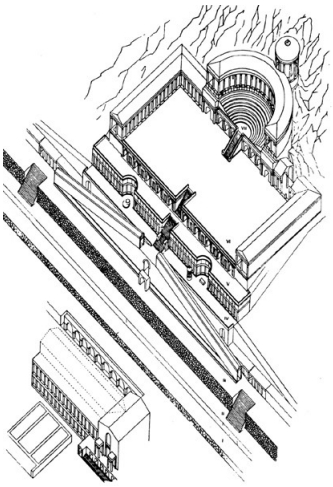
Richard Nowitz

A blending of styles. The partially reconstructed temple of Bel (Ba'al) at Palmyra, in Syria, displays a mixture of local and Roman architectural features, a combination found also in Herod's rebuilding of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. The Bel temple, built in the first century C.E., incorporates such Roman features as columns with Corinthian capitals, a matching entablature—consisting of the architrave and decorative cornice—above the columns, and also the design of the temple's doorway (not visible in the photo). There are also several local features, however, including the internal arrangement of the sanctuary: Whereas Romans typically set up their cult statues on pedestals in a niche, Semitic temples like the temple of Bel housed images of the deities in separate rooms or tabernacles. The interior space of Herod's (and Solomon's) Jerusalem Temple was likewise divided into a porch, sanctuary chamber and a smaller, separate Holy of Holies. There was, of course, no statue in Jerusalem Temple, but only cult vessels—including the gold lampstand (menorah) and table of showbread, which were housed in the sanctuary chamber while the Holy of Holies was left empty.

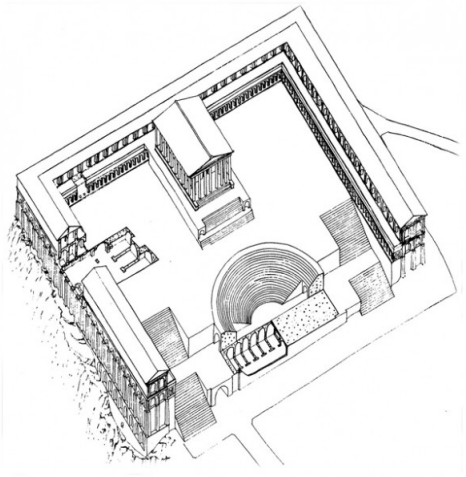
Another local feature of the Temple of Bel is the flat roof with crowstep merlons—the sawtooth feature that forms a parapet along the top. There is no archaeological evidence for a crowstep parapet crowning Herod's sanctuary, although crowstep blocks have been found among the remains of the temple of Kore at Samaria, which appear to be of similar date. Such a parapet is included in some reconstructions of the Second Temple. The Mishnah, the earliest compendium of Jewish law and one of our prime sources on the Temple, describes a rim with sharp edges to keep birds from alighting and soiling the building; this feature may have formed part of a parapet (*Middot* 4:6).



Enter here. A common scheme in Roman temple architecture was the elevated terrace with three prominent features—twin symmetrical entrances, a centrally-placed temple and enclosing colonnades. Herod's Temple complex fit this pattern. The Temple itself sat atop a huge platform, bounded on all sides by colonnades, accessed by symmetrically placed entrances in its southern wall—the "Double" and "Triple" (probably also double originally) gates, fronting passages of almost identical width and length. The colonnade surmounting the south wall formed a huge basilica known as the Royal Stoa: Two 50-foot-high side aisles flanked a central nave that rose to twice that height. As can be seen in this cutaway drawing, the vestibules of the "Double" and "Triple" gates were directly underneath the Stoa.



Two terraced temples from Italy, both built in the mid-first century B.C.E., are similar in design to the Temple Mount. The Temple of Fortuna Primigenia in Palestrina, shown here, has symmetrically placed dual entrances providing access to an upper platform enclosed on three sides by colonnades.



The second mid-first century B.C.E. Italian terraced temple, similar to the Temple Mount in its design, is the Temple of Hercules Victor in Tivoli. Like the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia in Palestrina, this temple has symmetrically placed dual entrances providing access to an upper platform enclosed on three sides by colonnades.

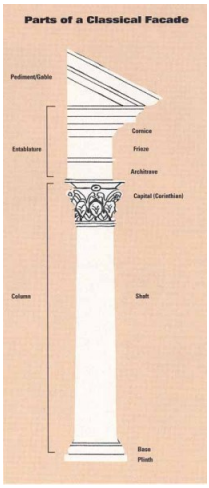
Sonia Halliday

Pilasters similar to those in the Temple Mount are a feature of the walls that enclose the inner courtyard of the influential Temple of Apollo at Didyma, Turkey, which was begun in the third century B.C.E.

Richard Nowitz

The high retaining walls of the Temple Mount incorporate another common feature of Roman architecture: The walls are divided horizontally into flat lower courses and upper courses with pilasters—shallow, flat pillars that project from the recessed wall. The same arrangement can be seen on another still-standing Herodian construction, the Tomb of the

Patriarchs in Hebron, seen here.



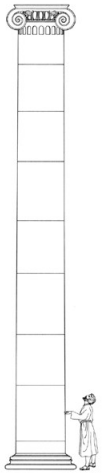
Parts of a classical facade.

Israel Exploration Society

Very few fragments of relief decoration survive from Herod's Temple compound, but what does remain clearly resembles Greco-Roman models. These two fragments found at the foot of the southwest corner of the Temple Mount may have formed part of the decoration of the the Royal Stoa and show a hexagonal swastika-and-rosette pattern that would have been taken from a standard pattern book used by decorative artists of the Roman Empire.

David Jacobson

The craftsmen employed on the stage walls of the theater at Ephesus (in Turkey), two centuries later, used relief decoration with same pattern as the relief decoration from Herod's Temple compound, as shown in this fragment.



Leen Ritmeyer

The columns of the Royal Stoa were of a similar scale to the Ionic capital fragments found in the Upper City, but bore Corinthian capitals.

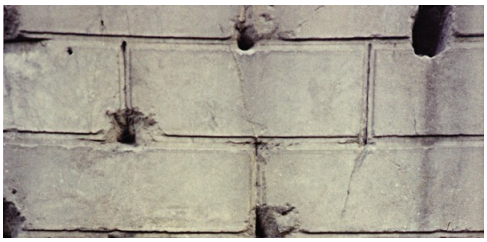
Nahman Avigad

Fragments of columns that came from monumental buildings in Herodian Jerusalem, possibly even from the Temple Mount, were discovered in the Upper City. The one shown here, topped by an Ionic (scrollwork) capital, would have been over 30 feet tall.

David Jacobson

David Jacobson

Like other features, the masonry of the Temple Mount is in a style that was familiar in Rome and the Greek East in the reign of Augustus. The ashlars (squared stone blocks) feature drafted margins (recessed edges) and smooth, raised central bosses, closely akin to the ashlars of other Roman sanctuaries such as the Temple of Rome and Augustus at Angora (Ankara), Turkey.



David Jacobson

An ashlar from the Temple of Rome and Augustus at Angora (Ankara), Turkey. These ashlars are similar to those found at the Temple Mount.

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