

THE UPPER CHAMBER OF THE HOUSE OF YHWH

by
Woodrow Edgar Nichols, Jr.

One of the more mysterious parts of the House of YHWH that Solomon built was the Upper Chamber immediately over the Oracle, the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies. This Upper Chamber contained a Throne upon which the Divine Christ King of the House of David Sat, Reigning over the Sabbath service of the Great Congregation (see below).

Although this Upper Chamber is specifically mentioned in later passages of the books of Kings and Chronicles, it is not specifically mentioned in the section detailing the construction of the House of YHWH in 1 Kings 6; in effect, its existence has been suppressed by scribal copying (although it is mentioned in a text preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1 Kings 7).*

It is mentioned obliquely in 1 Chronicles 28:11, but in the plural (“Upper Chambers”), in both the Hebrew and Greek (LXX); again in the plural of 1 Chronicles 28:20 of the LXX (omitted in the Hebrew); and in the plural of 2 Chronicles 3:9 in the Hebrew, but in the singular in the Greek (LXX; the Dead Sea Scrolls version of 1 Kings 7, mentioned above, is also in the singular).

Its dimensions can be inferred to be 20 cubits wide by 20 cubits long by 10 cubits high, since this is the remaining space unaccounted for in the description of the Oracle in the House of YHWH in 1 Kings 6:2,16-17 (the height of the House is omitted in 2 Chronicles 3:3), which states that the House was 60 cubits long (40 of which was comprised of the House and 20 of the Oracle), 20 cubits wide (the same width of the Oracle), and 30 cubits high, which, since the

Oracle was a cube, 20x20x20, leaves 10 cubits of height unaccounted for over the Oracle. It is noteworthy that the bronze altar Solomon constructed outside the House (unmentioned in 1 Kings 7, yet detailed in 2 Chronicles 4:1) is comprised of the same dimensions as the Upper Chamber, to wit, 20x20x10.

We are told that the Queen of Sheba was very impressed with what is called the “Ascent” that led up into the House of YHWH in the 1 Kings 10:5 account, but it is specifically referred to as the “Upper Chamber” in the 2 Chronicles 9:4 account (erroneously translated as “burnt offerings” in the LXX and some English versions). The Upper Chamber was reached by a special entrance, “the King’s Entry” (2 Kings 16:16:18), also referred to as the “third entry inside the House of YHWH” (Jeremiah 38:14). The first two entries were the main entry into the House from the Porch, and the one inside the House leading into the Oracle (1 Kings 6:31-35).

Since this third entry is stated to be “inside” the House, it must be distinguished with the door that led to the three-storied structure that was attached to the outside of the House, since the door to it was located in the right shoulder of the House (1 Kngs 6:8). This structure was not part of the House proper (6:6), and rose in such a manner that its beams were staggered half-way up the height of the outer wall of the House and not actually fastened to the walls of the House (the width of the lowest tier was five cubits, the middle six, and the top seven: 1 Kings 5-10). Since it was not part of the House, its entrance is presumed to have been likewise not part of the House. This outer entrance idea is supported further by the fact that the ten chariot-like lavers were placed outside of the House, five at the right shoulder of the House and five on the left shoulder (7:27-39).

The Upper Chamber is not referred to again until 2 Kings 16, where it is called “the covert for the Sabbath” in the Hebrew, and “the base /dais of the Throne” in the LXX, which appears to describe its exact purpose. However, in 2 Kings 23:12 it is mentioned as the “Upper Chamber of Ahaz which the Kings of Judah had made,” which, because there were altars above it, appears to have had a negative connotation. Since the Kingship did not exist during the construction of the Second Temple, there were probably more than one Chamber above the Oracle used by the Priests, which would account for the fact that it is referred to in the plural in both of the Chronicles passages in the Hebrew, and three out of four in the LXX., since Chronicles was written after the construction of the Second Temple.

The location of the Upper Chamber above the Oracle appears to designate the Divine nature of the Kingship, since, if it contained a Throne, would have placed it in the heavenly realm, that is, above the Earth and YHWH’s Throne, the Chariot of the Cherubim. This would have allowed the Divine Christ King to participate in the Heavenly Assembly with the Angels, the Sons of Elohim, on the Sabbath, the time of the Great Assembly (Congregation) of the House of Israel before the House of YHWH. It appears that the King of Israel, after the Kingdom of Solomon was split following his death, also had his own Upper Chamber, for we are told that King Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his Upper Chamber, resulting in his eventual demise (2 Kings 1:2).

The Upper Chamber was also solid visible proof that the Order of Melchizedek was higher and superior to the Order of Aaron (cf., Psalm 110:1-4; Hebrews 7). The Divine Christ King of David not only had sole access to the Upper Chamber (so that its existence was later

suppressed in the Scriptures by the Order of Aaron), but in the beginning he also could offer sacrifices on the outer altar, as well as burn incense on the golden altar before the Oracle (1 Kings 8:63-64; 9:25). The right to burn incense on this altar became extremely controversial during Judah's subserviency to Israel, especially under the reign of Queen Athaliah (daughter of Ahab and Jezebel), and the Order of Aaron revolted against Uzziah when he attempted to reintroduce it under his reign (2 Kings 11-15; cf., 2 Chronicles 26:16-21, which attributes Uzziah's leprosy to his alleged act of rebellion in attempting to burn incense on this altar.)

It is not clear whether any of the subsequent Kings were able to reinstitute this right, but some of them built altars above the Upper Chamber and used Solomon's outer bronze altar for personal inquiry (a new altar had been built by Ahaz for the Aaronic sacrifices: 2 Kings 16:10-16; cf., the "sun dial of Ahaz" in 2 Kings 20:11 & Isaiah 38:8, as well as the stepped altar described by Ezekiel 43:13-17, the steps of which can act as a sun dial). It is clear, however, that the son of Ahaz, Hezekiah, was able to go up into the House of YHWH and converse privately with God, either before the Oracle or in the Upper Chamber (2 Kings 19:1,14; 20:5; Isaiah 37:1); and Zedekiah met with Jeremiah at the "King's Entry" to the Upper Chamber for a private discussion (Jeremiah 38:14).

It is not surprising then that our Lord Jesus Christ, even though his Kingship was not recognized by the Aaronic Priesthood (Matthew 26:57-66; Mark 14:53-64; Luke 22:54-71; John 18:13-24), and thus was denied to any of the Upper Chambers that may have existed in Herod's Temple, also chose an Upper Chamber for his Last Supper and for his Second Coming Manifestation of the Outpouring of the Holy Pneuma (Mark 14:13; Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13; 2:1-

4), which made all present Christ Kings, to wit, Sons of God, making them all partakers of the Heavenly Assembly (Ephesians 1:3-5; 2:4-6; Colossians 1:13,25-27).

That the new Upper Chamber would not be located within any physical space, but would now exist in the hearts and minds of the Believers, was consistent with Christ's teaching that true worship of Father YHWH would no longer occur in Samaria or Jerusalem, but would occur in Pneuma and in Truth (John 4:19-24; 1 Corinthians 2:16).

*"The fragment with 7:25-27...offers an additional important clue about the pluriform text of Kings in antiquity. The fragment contains the left ends of the original lines of text but extends farther left to reveal the beginning of a line in the next column (which should contain the final verses of 1Kings 7). Only the single word for chambers (with the last letter missing) has been preserved from the passage, which describes Solomon's construction of the Temple and its vessels. In the Massoretic text of Kings (1 Kings 7:48-51) that word does not appear, but it does in the related passage in Chronicles (1 Chron 28:12-18). Just as 4QSam(a) does at several points, 4QKgs here shows that it had an expanded wording on which the author of Chronicles based his text. Though the evidence is slight, it tends to confirm that the text of Samuel-Kings that the Jewish author of Chronicles used was not the Masoretic Text but one similar to those documented at Qumran." (Note on page 262 of The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English [SF: Harper, 1999], ed. by Martin Abegg, Jr.; Peter Flint; and Eugene Ulrich.)