

and six-chambered gates.

After the Late Bronze Age, both the Hittites and Egypt went into decline allowing for the polities, on both sides of the Jordan River, to develop to a new level of complexity. Multiple conflicts are known in this region. Shishak's invasion in 925 B.C. was for the purpose of weakening both Judah and Israel and to destroy the lucrative trade network that linked goods from Africa and Arabia via the Gulf of Aqaba and the Negev, where he destroyed numerous sites, to Judah. These trade routes were the financial backbone of the economy of Judah. Moab, in the meantime, had been a vassal to Israel, under David and Solomon, and then under the northern kingdom of Israel in the early years of the divided monarchy.

Shishak's invasion must have significantly weakened Israel, because at some point before end of the reign of Ahab, Moab began to assert itself. The Omride response was to place new levies on Moab. Hence, Mesha rebelled and took back northern Moab, fortifying it extensively. Israel, needing the tribute from this rich agricultural land to help fund its expansionist policies, chose to come with its ally (Judah and their vassal Edom) and retake Moab. Since northern Moab was so well-fortified, the attack came from the south at Kir Hareseth (2 Kgs 3). The battle ended in a stalemate, with Mesha sacrificing his son and Israel with its allies leaving for an unspecified reason (2 Kgs 3:26-27). That reason, Graham suggests, was the coming of Assyrians, which was a more pressing threat. (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)



Sumerian Lecture

Richard Averbeck, professor of OT and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School presented lectures on Sumerian Language and Culture at Andrews University between March 10-13, 2003, as well as a lecture for the Horn Museum lectureship entitled, *Building a*



Richard Averbeck

House for God in the World of the Bible.

The temple building hymn, recorded on Gudea Cylinders A and B, is a skillfully crafted masterpiece of Sumerian literature. Written at the end of the Sumerian period (ca. 2100 B.C) in parallel lines, this narrative poetic hymn contains figurative language that commemorates the construction and dedication of a new Eninnu temple for the god Ningirsu, the patron deity of Lagash by Gudea, the governor of Lagash. The blueprint for this temple has been found in the lap of a seated figure of Gudea.

According to Averbeck, the construction of a temple was a ritual process that involved complicated formulas. In Cylinder A, the first formula begins, "the faithful shepherd Gudea had come to know what was important" and "proceeded to do it." He received a revelation in a dream to build a temple. The goddess Nanshe interpreted it and told him how to proceed. Then, Gudea presented a gift to Ningirsu and incubated a second dream to get further instructions and details about the temple's construction. Later, Gudea persuaded the people of Lagash to cooperate in its construction.

The second formula of Cylinder A begins, "for the faithful shepherd, Gudea, it was cause for rejoicing." During the construction process, Gudea, performed various rituals, gathered the workmen, surveyed the site, laid out the sacred area and made the first brick. Then he returned to the temple to incubate another dream to

receive further instructions before he began to outfit the temple with its various sacred furnishings.

Cylinder B describes the dedication of the new Eninnu temple and its occupation by Ningirsu and Baba his consort. Gudea invited the gods to enter the temple and take possession of it, then hosting a celebration in their honor.

Averbeck believes there are many similarities between the Gudea Cylinders and the biblical temple building accounts. He identifies five stages in the Ancient Near Eastern temple building process that can be compared to the Bible. First, a king makes the decision to build a temple that is sanctioned by a divinity. David sought permission from God (1 Kgs 5) to build a temple as Gudea sought permission from Ningirsu. Second, the king makes preparations for the building project by gathering materials, finding workers and laying the first brick. David and Solomon collected the materials (1 Kgs 5) and prepared the sacred site for construction just as Gudea did. Third, the construction narrative is a detailed description of the building process, the buildings themselves and the furnishings of the temple. The detailed account of the temple and its furnishings (1 Kgs 6-7) is similar to those found in Cylinder A. Fourth, when the temple is completed the king gives a prayer of dedication and initiates a celebration or festival (cf. 1 Kgs 8, and Cylinder B). In the final stage of the building process, the divinity consecrates the holy spaces of the temple and blesses the king. The god promises to hear those who enter the temple and support the king who built it (1 Kgs 9 and Cylinder B).

Some scholars have voiced concern about making direct comparisons with other temple building accounts in the Ancient Near East. Averbeck points out that caution should be taken when discussing similarities with the biblical text because there are equally compelling differences and that the structure of the text and the cultural context are also needed for proper understanding. (Robert D. Bates)

