

Jachin and Boaz

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7.5 cm thick and weighing 35 tons. Each pillar was surmounted by a double capital giving the complete pillar a height of about 13.5 m. The capitals consisted of a floral network with pomegranates at the bottom and an opening lotus at the top reflecting Egyptian tradition. The pillars are interpreted either as structural elements supporting the roof of the front hall or as symbolic elements denoting the presence and life-giving power of God. Parallels for pillars fronting a temple have been found at Tell Ta'yīnāt and 'Ain Dāra suggesting a structural function. However, two pillar bases in front of the temple of Arad point to freestanding pillars. Maybe Jachin and Boaz were symbolic gateposts proclaiming that YHWH had entered his earthly dwelling. The decoration (lotus and pomegranates) symbolizes the regeneration of life and fertility whereas their names refer to the creative power of YHWH, the guarantor of life. Jerome translates *Iachon* – preserving the LXX transcription *ιαχουμ/ν* – with “preparation” (*Nom. hebr.* 42.12) and Boaz with “in strength” (*Nom. hebr.* 41.9). Jachin and Boaz are symbols of strength and stability in Christian tradition. They are comparable to prophets, apostles, saints, and missionaries. In the Middle Ages freestanding pillars fronting churches were architectural elements representing the presence of God as well as protecting and legitimizing the church as true successor of the Solomonic temple. Furthermore, Jachin and Boaz are symbols used by the Freemasons for stability of their doctrine and humanity.

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Jachin and Boaz

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Judaism
- III. Visual Arts

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Jachin (MT *Yākin*, “He shall establish”) and Boaz (MT *Bōʿaz*, “in it is strength”) are the names of two bronze pillars made by Hiram of Tyre at the entrance of the Solomonic Temple. Jachin, the name of the southern pillar, is a semitic personal name, whereas Boaz, the name of the northern pillar, is difficult to explain. It could be an alteration for Baʿal, an abbreviation for “Baal is strong” (*bʿl ʿz*) or related to Arabic *barzun* “sharpness of mind.” These pillars are described at length in 1 Kgs 7:15–22, 41–42 and in 2 Chr 3:15–17. They are also mentioned in the context of the destruction of the temple (2 Kgs 25:16–17; Jer 52:17, 20–23). The biblical texts present many problems due to their technical language, textual corruption of the sources, contradictory information and the possible alterations of the pillars until their destruction. Both pillars were about 9 m high and 2 m in diameter. They were hollow with the cast bronze being about