Solomon's Temple – Myth and History by
William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely.
Thames and Hudson 2007.

Books by Thames and Hudson are a byword for beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated volumes, and Solomon's Temple is no exception. The authors are Professors at Brigham Young University in Utah, in Near Eastern History and the Crusades and Religion respectively, and though they bring a level of academic seriousness to the book that would be expected, they show themselves to be in touch with popular culture as well.

The book is divided into 5 chapters, Israelite Temples, Temple Traditions in Judaism, The Christian Temple, Islam and the Temple of Solomon and Modern conceptions of Solomon's Temple. The first sets the Temple of Solomon in the context of temple building in ancient Israel and elsewhere in the ancient Near East, explaining how cultural trends in the construction and accoutrements of other temples influenced the Solomonic version; the second goes into the ways in which the Temple and traditions associated with it have been described in Jewish literature throughout the ages and how they have influenced genre of Jewish thought and literature; the third explains the way in which the Solomonic Temple, and its Herodian successor influenced Christian thought and art; the fourth repeats the exercise, only with regard to Islam, particularly the close relationship between Islam and Jerusalem as a result of the Prophet Muhammad's ascent to heaven on his steed Buraq; the final chapter looks at the broader influence of the Temple on Judeo-Christian thought and culture, as well as church architecture and the temple dimension in modern Israeli politics.

This is an excellent, magnificently produced and detailed book that should be of interest to people of faith or of none; an ideal, if weighty, Chanukkah or Christmas present!

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh