

PART ONE



The Wrong Site of the Temples

Chapter 1

WHAT WAS THE HARAM ESH-SHARIF?

ONE THING IS CERTAIN, since the time of the Crusades no one has doubted the opinion of all scholars and religious leaders (including me up to the early months of 1997) that within the area of the Haram esh-Sharif, where we see the magnificent structure known as the Dome of the Rock, is the former region where the Temple of Herod was built. This appraisal has been universal.

For example, the prestigious *Anchor Bible Dictionary* gives an up-to-date assessment of this ironclad assumption that synthesizes present scholarly and religious opinion. It states:

“The location of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and thus of the place where the three successive temples were built in biblical antiquity, has never been in doubt.”²

Prof. Avigad stated: “The [site of the] Temple Mount has never entered into controversy, as it [its location] is not in dispute.”³

² *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, p.354.

³ Avigad, “Discovering Jerusalem,” p.28.

The *New International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states:

“It is clear that the site of today’s ‘Dome of the Rock’ on Jerusalem’s eastern hill marks the location of Solomon’s temple (as well as that of the later structures of Zerubbabel and Herod); but it is difficult to be more precise.”⁴

If these references are not enough, the *New Bible Dictionary* relates:

“That it [that is, Solomon’s Temple] stood within the area now called ‘Haram esh-Sharif’ at the east side of the ‘Old City’ of Jerusalem is undisputed. The precise location within the vast enclosure is less certain.”⁵

The time has come, however, for us to change our minds. The present religious, scholarly and archaeological opinion is thoroughly in error and needs immediate revision. The region of the Haram (so confidently accepted as the site of the Temple) represents another important complex of buildings constructed and enlarged by Herod the Great. Those enormous facilities of the Haram are well defined in the eyewitness accounts of Josephus and other historical narratives, but they are not the ruins of the Temple of Herod.

The Jewish people knew, up to the period that Islam emerged even to the time of the Crusades, that the *southeast* ridge was the location of *their* “Mount Zion” and the site of all the Temples built in Jerusalem. Indeed, modern scholars realize that this is true for the real location of “Mount Zion,” but these same scholars and religious leaders fail to place the “Temple Mount” at that “Mount Zion” on the *southeast* ridge where it obviously belongs. The Holy Scriptures clearly place the “Temple Mount” over and around the Gihon Spring on the *southeast* ridge (on top of the original “Mount Ophel”). But scholars and religious leaders continue insisting (and even dogmatically *demanding*) that the Temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod were centered within the parameters of the Haram esh-Sharif. However, it is time to get back to rational thinking. Pure and simple common sense will show clearly that all

⁴ *New International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p.760.

⁵ *New Bible Dictionary*, p.1168.

the Temples and the original Mount Zion were adjacent to one another on the *southeast* ridge of Jerusalem, and in many biblical cases the sites were considered identical.

Let me start by mentioning a scene that usually occupies the attention of each person who visits Jerusalem for the first time (or returns year after year) to see the archaeological remains of the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus. That particular vista is observed from the Mount of Olives just in front of the Seven Arches Hotel. This is where people obtain the best overall view of the ancient and modern City of Jerusalem.

Before I present details concerning this inspiring and unforgettable prospect, let me relate a little about myself for some of you who only recently started to read my books in libraries, bookstores or through the Internet. This will allow you to understand my deep interest and my personal involvement with the City of Jerusalem over the past four decades. My professional career has centered on the Holy City.

My first visit to Jerusalem was in the year 1961. Since then I have returned to the city over thirty times from areas in Europe or America where I have lived. Though I am an American, I professionally taught at a Christian college near London, England (Ambassador College, later University) where I lived for fourteen years from 1958 to 1972. In Jerusalem, I worked personally on a daily basis with Professor Benjamin Mazar in the archaeological excavations at the western and southern walls of the Haram esh-Sharif. My working association with Professor Mazar on that site lasted for two months each summer during the years 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972 and 1973. Over that period of five summers, I was the academic supervisor for 450 college students from around the world digging at the archaeological excavation directed by Professor Mazar. *Time* magazine in its Education Section for September 3, 1973 featured my academic program for granting college credits for students working under my superintendence at Professor Mazar's archaeological excavation sponsored by the Israel Exploration Society and Hebrew University. Besides this particular professional association at the excavation, I have personally guided more than 800 people around all areas of Israel explaining its

biblical and secular history.

Though not an archaeologist by profession (my M.A. is in Theology and my Ph.D. is in Education), I have written several books and other major studies on the history and geography of Jerusalem especially in the periods of Jesus, the Roman Empire and Byzantium which have been acclaimed by top historians and archaeologists as first class discoveries in matters dealing with the history of Jerusalem.⁶ I mention these brief biographical points to show that I have had considerable opportunity to study and to know the early history of Jerusalem.

With this in mind, let's return to the top of the Mount of Olives to be reminded of the splendid panoramic perspective depicting the remnants of ancient Jerusalem as well as witnessing the vibrant and bustling modern City of Jerusalem. For the 800 persons I have guided in their visits to Jerusalem, I have always taken them to this spot on the Mount of Olives in order for them to visualize, as a beginning lesson, what early Jerusalem was really like.

Observing Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives

The view is spectacular. No scene from other areas of Jerusalem can replicate the grandeur of the ancient archaeological remains of

⁶ My book *The Star that Astonished the World* has been acclaimed by astronomers and historians as the best account of what happened at the nativity of Jesus in regard to historical, astronomical and geographical events. Professor Jack Finegan gave me a particular accolade in his new (second edition) *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* as one of the prime researchers in solving the matter of the timing of Herod's death. I showed in my book that Herod died after an eclipse of the moon of January 10, 1 B.C.E., and Professor Finegan states this discovery is a fundamental factor in straightening out the chronology of the nativity of Jesus as well as providing a proper chronology for the early years of the imperial period of Augustus Caesar. Over 600 Planetariums around the world now show this historical information which I have discovered.

I have also written a book titled *Secrets of Golgotha* showing clearly that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives (and not at the traditional site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Garden Tomb area subscribed by General Gordon). Professor Friend of Cambridge University said my conclusions were much better than those of Constantine and Helena who first selected the wrong spot in the western part of Jerusalem (*Journal of Ecclesiastical Hist.*, 40.3, July 89, p.449).

the city. What dominates the scene, as one looks westward, is a rectangular body of walls with gigantic stones perfectly aligned with one another in their lower courses. These four walls present to the observer a feeling of majesty and awe at what the ancients were capable of accomplishing by their architectural achievements. These walls surround the area presently known as the Haram esh-Sharif (the Noble Enclosure). The stones of the lower courses in those walls are in their pristine positions. They are still placed neatly on top of another without any major displacement from their original alignments. These lower stones are clearly Herodian in origin, and in some places in the eastern portion of the wall they are pre-Herodian. There are probably about 10,000 of these stones still in place as they were in the time of Herod and Jesus.⁷

The grand centerpiece within the whole enclosure is the Muslim shrine called the Dome of the Rock. It is centrally located in a north/south dimension within the rectangular area of the Haram. To the south of the Dome and abutting to the southern wall is another large building called the Al Aqsa Mosque with its smaller dome. And though from the Mount of Olives modern Jerusalem

⁷ No archaeological authority has been able to count all the stones of the four walls surrounding the Haram esh-Sharif because many of the stones are still hidden from view. But at the holy site at the Western Wall (often called the "Wailing Wall") there are seven courses presently visible within that 197 foot length of the wall in the north/south exposure. That section contains about 450 Herodian stones. There are, however, eight more courses of Herodian stones underneath the soil down to the ground level that existed in the time of Herod and Jesus. Below that former ground level, there are a further nine courses of foundation stones. If that whole section of the "Wailing Wall" could be exposed, one could no doubt count around 1250 Herodian stones (probably more) of various sizes. Most stones are about three to four feet high and three feet to twelve feet long, but there are varying lengths up to 40 feet, with the larger stones weighing about 70 tons. One stone has been found in the Western Wall that has the colossal weight of 400 tons (Meir Ben-Dov, Mordechai Naor, and Zeev Aner, *The Western Wall*, pp.61,215). To extend by extrapolation the number of stones making up the eastern, southern and western walls surrounding the Haram (there is little left of the northern wall), there has to be about 8 to 10,000 Herodian and pre-Herodian stones still in place as they were some 2000 years ago. Here I will state the number as 10,000 stones, but (as all should realize) this is simply an educated guess. The number, no matter what, is prodigious. All these stones in those four walls survived the Roman/Jewish War of 66-73 C.E.

can be seen in the background, the whole area is overshadowed and dominated by the Haram esh-Sharif with those walls that highlight the scene.

This is the view that modern viewers are accustomed to see. But let us now go back over 1900 years and imagine viewing Jerusalem from this same spot on the Mount of Olives. From this vantage point the Roman General Titus looked on the ruins of Jerusalem after the Roman/Jewish War in 70 C.E. The description of what Titus saw is very instructive. We should read his appraisal in the accounts by Josephus because they were both eyewitnesses.

Some scholars have been reluctant to pay attention to the narratives of Josephus because of a long-standing prejudice that accompanies his writings. This is because Josephus' descriptions of buildings and sites do not seem compatible with what we see today when we view the meager remains of the architectural sites he wrote about. This is unfortunate. This bias against Josephus is based on a desire for him to describe the Haram esh-Sharif as being the Temple site, when he was actually giving dimensions of a different building with very different measurements.

As Professor Mazar aptly showed in his many writings, his appreciation of the accounts of Josephus grew in admiration over the years. Many of Josephus' statements were clearly justified in several archaeological areas where he was an eyewitness when modern scholars thought he had to be wrong. The truth is, the erroneous modern appraisals of what we thought was the Temple site (and other buildings) give us problems, and NOT the accounts of Josephus who told the truth in great detail. It is not the fault of Josephus when he adequately and accurately describes the dimensions of the Temple, and we substitute another building instead of the one he intended.

Indeed, the first sources to consult for evidence are the eyewitness narratives of the destruction of the City of Jerusalem and the Temple of Herod in 70 C.E. That is why we should turn to Josephus, the historian/priest, who wrote two accounts in the Greek language within a period of twenty years concerning matters dealing with the Roman/Jewish War. He recorded with great detail

events involving the destruction of the Temple and the City. He also gave an appraisal by Titus the Roman General (and later Emperor) who saw the final ruin of Jerusalem. Besides this, Josephus recorded the eyewitness account of Eleazar, the leader of the last remnant of Jewish resistance at Masada, where 960 Jewish people died by their own hands in 73 C.E. There is also a Hebrew version of Josephus called *Josippon* that provides some interesting corroborative information.

These historical reports by eyewitnesses reveal the initial facts in discovering the actual site of the three Temples. They also inform us about the true identity and the early function of the walls that surround the Haram esh-Sharif presently enclosing the Dome of the Rock. These historical facts show that the Haram is NOT the former Temple site of Herod.

Let us notice what Titus observed when he viewed the city after the war. We should pay attention to what he stated he saw, and also what he left out.⁸ This omission will become of prime importance in our inquiry regarding the true location of the Temple. Titus commanded that only a part of a wall and three forts were to remain of what was once the glorious City of Jerusalem.

The Ruins of Jerusalem

Note what Josephus stated about the ruined condition of the City,

“Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done), Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and Temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminence; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison [in the Upper City], as were the towers [the three forts in the Upper City] also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued;

⁸ *War* VII.1,1.

but for all the rest of the wall [surrounding Jerusalem], it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that *there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited.* This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.”⁹

This eyewitness account about the total ruin of Jerusalem has given visitors a major problem in relation to what we witness today. The fact is, Titus gave orders that the remaining parts of the Temple were to be demolished. The only manmade structures to be left in Jerusalem were to be a portion of the western wall and the three fortresses located in the Upper City. This was Titus’ intention at first. But within a short time, even that portion of the western wall and the three fortresses in the west were so thoroughly destroyed that not a trace of them remained.¹⁰ At the conclusion of the war, the Tenth Legion left Jerusalem a mass of ruins. Stones from those ruins were in such abundance that they were even in use in the following century to build a new city called Aelia. But by late 70 C.E., there was nothing left standing of the Temple or the buildings of Jerusalem. Josephus stated:

“And truly, the very view itself was a melancholy thing; for those places which were adorned with trees and pleasant gardens, were now become desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down. Nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judaea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change. For the war had laid all signs of beauty quite waste. Nor if anyone that had known the place before, had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again. But though he [a foreigner] were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it [its whereabouts].”¹¹

What the Modern Visitor Observes

These descriptions of ruin and desolation stated by Josephus are

⁹ War VII.1,1, Whiston translation. Italics and bracketed words are mine.

¹⁰ Scholars consider the “Tower of David” near the present Jaffa Gate a part of the foundation of either the Hippicus or the Phasaelus towers.

¹¹ War VI.1,1.

what he and Titus saw from the Mount of Olives. But this is NOT what we observe today. Those of us today who look westward witness one of the grandest and majestic structures still intact from the ancient world (an edifice that survived the Roman/Jewish War of 66 to 70 C.E.) with 10,000 stones comprising its walls. This huge architectural wonder dominated the landscape as an outstanding example of the architectural genius that once embraced the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus. It represented an awesome manmade facility that occupied a great deal of the northeastern area of the Mother City of the Jews, admired by all who saw it.

It inspires us today and we gasp in amazement at its present splendor. When we view this panoramic vista from the Mount of Olives, the Haram esh-Sharif is the most conspicuous geographical aspect of the whole area, the grand centerpiece that graces modern metropolitan Jerusalem. The ancient structure is so large that it obscures much of the view of the present old city of Jerusalem.¹² Remarkably, its grandeur has even withstood two thousand years of weathering, earthquakes, wars and natural deterioration.

What is strange, and almost inexplicable at first, is the fact that Josephus mentioned the utter ruin of the Temple and all the City of Jerusalem, but he gave no reference that the Haram esh-Sharif was ordered to be retained or that Titus and his general staff commanded those walls should continue to remain intact. But they have survived unto our modern times. Through the centuries those 10,000 stones have remained in their original positions making up the four walls of the Haram as a prominent and dominant architectural facility in the City of Jerusalem.

As a matter of fact, in Titus' time there were probably another 5,000 stones left on the upper courses of the four walls. These

¹² The area inside the four walls of the Haram is so large that you could fit four Coliseums side by side (the one in Rome built by the same emperors who destroyed Jerusalem, Vespasian and Titus) and have a little room left over. That Coliseum in Rome is one *stade* long (600 feet) and 5/6th of a *stade* wide (500 feet). Or, for you Americans who watch football, the Haram could fit a Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California (900 by 700 feet in area) inside its walls and still have about 35% open space left. In short, the Haram is one of the largest and most majestic displays of architectural splendor from ancient times.

extra stones must have been dislodged and fallen to the ground since the first century. We have explicit statements of Josephus that the Temple and all Jewish Jerusalem were so destroyed that no one would imagine there was once a city in that area. (Josephus stated that all the walls were uprooted from their foundations, except at first, a portion of the western wall in the Upper City was retained). We are then left with the undeniable fact that Titus deliberately allowed the retention of the rectangular shaped Haram esh-Sharif and its walls practically in the state he found them when he and his legions first got to Jerusalem. Strangely, Titus must have ordered that those four walls of the Haram be retained for all future ages to see.¹³

Without doubt, the Haram esh-Sharif with its gigantic walls survived the war in 70 C.E. and those ramparts continue to exist to this day. But how could Josephus have failed to account for the retention of such a spacious and magnificent site that was clearly in existence in pre-war Jerusalem? The continued presence of those extensive remains of the Haram seem (at first glance) to nullify the appraisal of Josephus and Titus of complete ruin for Jerusalem. Remember, they said that nothing of Jerusalem was left.

“It [Jerusalem] was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited.”¹⁴

¹³ As soon as the war was over, Titus first thought to retain part of the western wall of Jerusalem and the three western forts as the place for the Camp of the Tenth Legion (*War* VII.1,1). But Titus changed his mind (as I will soon show). He decided instead to leave the walls of the Haram esh-Sharif as the Roman memorial. Later, in the early second century, both the emperors Trajan and Hadrian also left the lower courses of the walls of the Haram in their pristine condition. In the fourth century we also find that Constantine and Helena (his mother) also left the walls of the Haram as they found them. So did Justinian in the sixth century, as well as the Persians in 614 C.E, as did Omar, the Second Caliph. He allowed them to remain in the seventh century. It appears Omar and his successors restored the Haram walls to protect the new Al Aqsa Mosque on the south of the platform.

¹⁴ *War* VII.1,1.

What is even more strange is the modern belief that the Haram esh-Sharif must be reckoned as the site of the Temple Mount. If present scholarly opinion is correct, it means that Titus and the Roman legions did not destroy the outer walls of the Temple in its middle and lower courses. This belief by modern scholars and religious authorities (whether Jewish, Muslim or Christian) that the 10,000 stones of the Haram are the remnants of the Temple walls make descriptions of utter demolition by Josephus and Titus to be outlandish exaggerations. And true enough, this is precisely how modern scholars, theologians, religious leaders and archaeologists view the matter, with one recent commentator boldly stating that Josephus used “wild exaggerations.”¹⁵ In almost every historical book on the subject we have the scholar (or scholars) voicing an apology for the erroneous statements that Josephus wrote. Even his friends admit he *greatly exaggerates* the dimensions he attributes to particular buildings.

Our modern scholars and religious authorities consistently state that we cannot accept as truth the plain words of Josephus in the important descriptions he provides regarding the shapes of buildings and their dimensions. We will discover it is the scholars and religious leaders who are wrong — not Josephus.

The early Jewish historian/priest, in places that scholars say he exaggerated, was stating the exact truth. The fact is, the Jerusalem of the Jews and the Temple of Herod were indeed totally destroyed and not a stone of them was left in place. This problem we face today is not Josephus. It is modern scholarly opinion that the

¹⁵ Though Professor Williamson, who translated Josephus, did not use the term “wild” (it was another highly respected scholar), Williamson would have thought the evaluation appropriate (as I did before 1997). He remarked that the thorough desolation that Josephus recorded and Titus supposedly saw in front of him was:

“An exaggeration. A great deal of the southern part of the Temple enclosure was spared. The whole of the south wall of its successor, the present wall round the Haram esh-Sharif, the southern section of the west wall (the ‘Wailing Wall,’ where the fall of Jerusalem is still lamented) and a short stretch of the east wall running up from the southeast corner are Herodian to a considerable height” (*The Jewish War*, p.454, n.2).

Haram esh-Sharif was the Temple Mount. But this evaluation is NOT true.

That facility known as the Haram was officially reckoned as being beyond and *outside* the limits of Jewish Jerusalem. It was NOT reckoned as being part of the municipality of Jerusalem.

Josephus Was Not Exaggerating

Modern scholars are wrong, not the eyewitness accounts of Josephus and Titus. Jewish Jerusalem and the Temple were certainly destroyed to the bedrock just as they relate. While the Haram retained its four walls, Josephus was keen on telling his readers that all the walls around Jerusalem were leveled to the ground. Note his observation:

“Now the Romans set fire to the extreme parts of the city [the suburbs] and burnt them down, and entirely demolished its [Jerusalem’s] walls.”¹⁶

Those walls surrounding the Haram were NOT city walls, they were walls that protected something else altogether. The Haram area was not even a part of Jewish Jerusalem.

To reinforce the matter, Josephus buttressed his account:

“When he [Titus] entirely demolished the rest of the city, and overthrew its walls, he left these towers [the three towers mentioned above] as a monument of his good fortune, which had proved [the destructive power of] his auxiliaries, and enabled him to take what could not otherwise have been taken by him.”¹⁷

These two accounts by Josephus, along with the other previous observations, confirm that there was a literal destruction of all the walls surrounding Jerusalem. We will see even the small section of the western wall of the Upper City was later demolished. Indeed, not a trace of it was mentioned by later eyewitnesses, nor has any part of it been found by modern archaeologists. Simply put, after 70 C.E. there is no word in any historical record about a continuance of those three fortresses that Titus at first thought he

¹⁶ *War* VI.9,4

¹⁷ *War* VI.9,1.

would retain as monuments to the power of Rome over the Jews.

But these descriptions of Josephus and Titus of total ruin of the Temple and Jewish Jerusalem seem at variance with what we witness today. Let's face it. From the Mount of Olives we behold the four walls of the Haram still erect in all their glory, and they are prominently displayed with a grandeur that dominates present-day Jerusalem. The lower courses of those walls clearly have 10,000 Herodian and pre-Herodian stones still on top of one another. As a matter of interest, those rectangular walls are even functioning ramparts of Jerusalem today. They have been in constant use throughout the intervening centuries to protect the buildings that were constructed in the interior of the Haram esh-Sharif.

Again, if those rectangular walls of the Haram are those which surrounded the Temple Mount (as we are informed by all authorities today), why did Josephus and Titus leave out any mention about this magnificent Haram structure? They spoke of the utter ruin and desolation of Jewish Jerusalem and Temple, not the *survival* of any buildings that Jewish authorities once controlled.

On the other hand, it is certain that Josephus and Titus were aware that the walls of the Haram survived the war. After all, the walls are there for all to observe. Then why did Josephus and Titus not refer to the walls of the Haram that remained standing in their time? This book will soon explain the reason why, and clearly.

A Quandary for Modern Christians

These facts present a major problem for Christians. If those rectangular walls of the Haram are the same walls in their lower courses that formerly embraced the Temple Mount (as we are dogmatically informed), why are these stones still firmly positioned on top of one another? The continued existence of those colossal stones shows that Titus did not destroy the walls of the Temple after all — if those were the same walls. Why is this a difficulty for Christian belief? The reason is plain.

Christians are aware of four prophecies given by Jesus in the New Testament that not one stone would be left upon another either of the Temple and its walls, or even of the City of Jerusalem

and its walls (Matthew 24:1–2; Mark 13:1–2; Luke 19:43–44; 21:5–6). But the walls encompassing the Haram still remain in their glory with the 10,000 Herodian and pre-Herodian stones in place in their lower courses. If those stones are those of the Temple, the prophecies of Jesus can be seriously doubted as having any historical value or prophetic merit in any analysis made by intelligent and unbiased observers.

Indeed, the majority of Christian visitors to Jerusalem who first view those huge stones surrounding the rectangular area of the Haram (and who know the prophecies of Jesus) are sometimes perplexed and often shocked at what they see. And they ought to be. The surprise at what they observe has been the case with numerous people I have guided around Jerusalem and Israel. They have asked for an explanation concerning this apparent failure of the prophecies of Jesus. Why do those gigantic walls still exist when Jesus prophesied that not one stone would remain upon another? If those walls of the Haram represent the stones around the Temple, then the prophecies of Christ are invalid.

The usual explanation to justify the credibility of the prophecies is to say Jesus could only have been speaking about the stones of the *inner* Temple and its buildings, NOT the *outer* Temple and its walls that surrounded it. This is the customary and conciliatory answer most scholars friendly to Christian principles provide as their explanation. It is the same type of reasoning I adopted to explain this anomaly to my students and associates.

The truth is, however, this explanation will not satisfy when one looks at what Jesus prophesied. Observe the prophecies carefully. They plainly state that one stone would not rest on another of the Temple buildings, and his prophecies included its *outer* walls. The Greek word Jesus used in his prophetic context to describe the Temple and its buildings was *heiron*. This means the entire Temple including its exterior buildings and walls. Notice what Vincent says about the meaning of *heiron*.

“The word temple (*heiron*, lit., sacred place) signifies the whole compass of the sacred enclosure, with its porticos, courts, and other subordinate buildings; and should be carefully distinguished from

the other word, *naos*, also rendered temple, which means the temple itself — the ‘Holy Place’ and the ‘Holy of Holies.’ When we read, for instance, of Christ teaching in the temple (*heiron*) we must refer it to one of the temple porches [outer colonnades]. So it is from the *heiron*, the court of the Gentiles, that Christ expels the moneychangers and cattle merchants.”¹⁸

The exterior buildings of the Temple including its walls were always reckoned within the meaning of *heiron* that Jesus used concerning the total destruction of the Temple. There were several outer divisions of the Temple distinguished from the Inner Temple, and these outer structures were accounted as cardinal features of the Sanctuary. Note the New Testament account stating that Satan took Jesus to the “pinnacle of the Temple” (Matthew 4:5). The pinnacle section was the southeastern corner of the outer wall that surrounded the whole of the Temple complex. The wording in the New Testament shows that this southeastern angle was very much a part of the Temple — it was a pinnacle [a wing] “of the Temple.” That area was a cardinal attachment to the sacred edifice itself and an integral section of the Temple Jesus referred to when he prophesied that not one stone would remain on another.

Another important geographical factor proves this point. When Jesus made his prophecy, Matthew said that Jesus and his disciples just departed from the outer precincts of the Temple. This means all of them were viewing the *exterior sections* of the Temple and its walls (the *heiron*) when he gave his prophecy (Matthew 24:1). The Gospel of Mark goes further and makes it clear the *outside* walls of the Temple were very much in Jesus’ mind when he said they would be uprooted from their foundations. “And as he [Jesus] went out of the Temple” [note that Jesus and the disciples were standing *outside* the Temple walls and looking back toward the Temple enclosure],

“one of his disciples saith unto him, ‘Master, see what buildings are here!’ And Jesus answering said unto him, ‘Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’”

• *Mark 13:1–2*

¹⁸ Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. I., p.50.

Without doubt, when Jesus spoke in his prophecy about the destruction of the Temple, he included the stones of the *outer* walls enclosing the Temple as well as the buildings of the inner Temple.

All of Jerusalem Predicted to be Destroyed

Jesus went even farther than simply prophesying about the destruction of the Temple and its walls. He included within his predictions the stones that made up the whole City of Jerusalem (with every building and house that comprised the metropolis — including the walls that embraced its urban area). According to Jesus in Luke 19:43–44, every structure of Jewish Jerusalem would be leveled to the ground — to bedrock.

“For the days shall come upon thee [Jerusalem], that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.”

So, in the prophecies of Jesus, not only the stones that made up the Temple and its *outer* walls were to be torn down, but he also included within that destruction the stones that comprised the totality of the City of Jerusalem. We are left with no ambiguity. The prophecies about the Temple and the City of Jerusalem either happened exactly as Jesus predicted, or those prophecies must be reckoned as false and unreliable. There can be no middle ground. If one is honest with the plain statements in the texts of the Gospels, Jesus taught that nothing would be left of the Temple, nothing left of the whole City of Jerusalem, and nothing left of the walls of the Temple and the City.

Anyone with any common sense, and not having preconceived notions, will admit that Jesus’ prophecies intended to show the complete and utter destruction of the City of Jerusalem and Temple. The emphasis of Jesus was that not one stone would be left on top of another.

Josephus and Titus Agree with Jesus

Was Jesus correct in his prophecies? Was Jerusalem with its

Temple and walls leveled to the ground? What is remarkable is the fact that the eyewitness accounts given by Josephus and Titus agree precisely with what Jesus prophesied. Note what these two men observed.

“It [Jerusalem with its walls] was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited.”¹⁹

All the land surrounding the City of Jerusalem became a desolate and ruined wasteland. Note Josephus’ account.

“They had cut down all the trees, that were in the country that adjoined to the city, and that for ninety stadia round about [for nearly ten miles], as I have already related. And truly, the very view itself was a melancholy thing. Those places that were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens were now become a desolate country in every way, and its trees were all cut down. Nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judaea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change. For the war had laid all signs of beauty quite waste. Nor, if any one that had known the place before, and had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again. But though he were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it notwithstanding.”²⁰

After 70 C.E., people would have seen utter desolation in all directions. Every stone of every building and wall in Jewish Jerusalem was dislodged from its original position and thrown to the ground. Josephus provides reasonable accounts of later events after the war to show how this complete destruction was accomplished. Much of the destruction of the City of Jerusalem came after the war had ceased.

But with the Temple it was different. In regard to the total destruction of the Temple and all its outer buildings, a Hebrew version of Josephus (known as *Josippon*²¹) states that when the Inner

¹⁹ *War* VII.1,1, Whiston translation.

²⁰ *War* VI.1,1, Whiston translation.

²¹ *Josippon* is an anonymous historical narrative written in Hebrew somewhere in southern Italy in the tenth century and accepted as valid by the Jewish

Temple was set to the flames by the Romans, the Jews knew their end was near. So, to prevent the Romans from desecrating the Temple by erecting another “abomination of desolation” like that of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jews systematically tore down all of the Inner Temple and all its outer buildings and appurtenances in order to leave nothing of the former Temple for anyone to pollute. Notice what the historical account of *Josippon* states:

“So the flames destroyed the Holy of Holies. And when the [Jewish] leaders of the rebels and their followers who were still in the city [of Jerusalem] saw that the Holy of Holies had been burned, they burned the rest of the Temple together with every mansion in Jerusalem, so that the Romans should not rule over them. And **they also burned down the rest of the Temple buildings**, saying: ‘Now that the Holy of Holies has been burned, why go on living? Why leave house or building?’”²²

This teaching that the Jews themselves helped destroy the Temple so that it not be polluted is reflected in an early Jewish work called *Second Baruch*. All scholars realize this work was composed near the end of the first century, just after the destruction of

authorities during the Middle Ages. The work follows the literary arrangement of Josephus (with whom he was often identified) in 16 of his 20 books in *Antiquities* and also in an adaption of Josephus in his *Wars of the Jews*. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* states that for his time

“the author was a gifted historian, aware of his responsibilities and endowed with excellent historical insight. Fables drawn from obscure sources are only rarely found in his book.... The author also had great literary gifts. His narrative is filled with national pride and is written in an excellent biblical Hebrew style. In the Middle Ages, the book was already called *Sefer Josippon*; this is the Jewish/Greek form for Josephus” (vol.10, p.297).

By the time of Rashi the book was recognized as being a Hebrew version of Josephus. Until the 18th century it was looked on in Jewish circles as the work of Josephus and was favorably quoted. It contains some information not found in the Greek version of Josephus. It can be reasonably stated that its narratives were reckoned by Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages as a valid source of historical information coming from the pen of Josephus himself. It certainly gives us Jewish understanding of past events associated with early Jerusalem and the period of the Second Temple not found in the Greek version of Josephus.

²² This quote of *Josippon* is given in *Mimekor Israel* (Classical Jewish Folktales), collected by Micha Joseph Bin Gorion (Indiana University Press, 1999), p.117.

the Temple and Jerusalem. The authors state that angels on the side of the Jews in the war with the Romans ordered the Temple put to the torch to keep it from falling intact into the hands of the Romans. Here is what the author states:

“I heard this angel saying to the angels who held the torches: ‘Now destroy the walls [of the Temple and Jerusalem] and **overthrow them to their foundations** so that the enemies [the Romans] do not boast and say, ‘We have overthrown the wall of Zion and we have burnt down the place of the mighty God.’”²³

These early sources support the fact that the Jews themselves, in desperation and seeing that no hope of victory, took part in destroying the Temple and the buildings of Jerusalem.

The references in the *Book of Josippon* and *Second Baruch* confirm the prophecy of Jesus, who viewed with his disciples the outer buildings and walls of the Temple and stated that all before them would be utterly destroyed, with every stone dislodged and not a trace of the Sanctuary as a building would be left. And recall, Jewish authorities during the Middle Ages accepted this narrative of *Josippon* as that of Josephus, an eyewitness.²⁴ And in the Greek version that has become the main standard text for Josephus, the priest/historian states that for six months after the war, the Tenth

²³ Second Baruch 6:3–7:1. Note also R. Hammer, *The Jerusalem Anthology*, p.89 for more information on this early historical source.

²⁴ Note the comment of the modern Jewish historian Rabbi Leibel Reznick.

“Josephus wrote two accounts of Jewish history in general and of the Second Temple era in particular. The first, written in Aramaic, is called *Yosiphon* [*Josippon*] or *Sefer Yossef ben Gurion HaCohain*. It was later translated into Hebrew. The second work was written in Greek and consisted of two books, *Jewish Antiquities* and *The Jewish War*. They were composed primarily for the European intelligentsia. Some scholars believe that the Greek version contains hyperbole, unreliable historical data, and a condescending Roman bias. However, the reliability of the *Sefer Yosiphon* can hardly be questioned. The giant among biblical commentators, Rashi, quotes from the *Sefer Yosiphon* no fewer than nineteen times. Other respected rabbinic authorities who used the *Yosiphon* text include Rabbaynu Saadyah Gaon, Rabbaynu Gershon, the Baal HaAruch, Rasbam, Baalei Tosfos, Raavad, Baal HaMeor, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Abarbanel, Maharal M’Prague, Bach, and Tosfos Yom Tov” (*The Holy Temple Revisited*, [London, Aaronson, 1993], p.23).

Legion “dug up” the ruins of the houses, buildings and walls looking for plunder. They systematically excavated beneath the foundations of the ruined buildings and houses (and had many Jewish captives do the work for them).

They also had the whole area turned upside down looking for gold and other precious metals that became molten when the fires were raging. The Temple was one of their chief sources for riches. Josephus tells us the Temple was effectively the treasury for most of the Jewish people, whether they lived in Judaea or in the Diaspora, and that the Jewish authorities allowed people to have small chambers in various regions of the Temple enclosure (similar to what we today would call “safety deposit boxes”).²⁵ This is one of the principal reasons the soldiers after the war concentrated on tearing down every stone of the Temple in order to reach this abundance of hidden wealth.

We are told by Josephus that the whole City of Jerusalem was set to the torch. This burning of buildings caused precious metals to melt and flow into the lower crevices of stones. Even the lowest of the foundation stones contained melted gold from the great fires that devoured all the urban precincts. Also in Jerusalem, the inhabitants constructed a curious network of underground passages where a great deal of money and precious things had been hidden.²⁶ When the Romans discovered this labyrinth of passages, they systematically excavated every underground link in the city to extract the gold and other precious items. This plundering of every former building, wall and cavern in the municipality of Jerusalem resulted in the troops overturning (or having the remaining Jewish captives overturn for them) every stone within the city.

The Temple was especially vulnerable because the soldiers knew that was the central treasury of the nation. Such great quantities of gold were discovered in the ruins of Jerusalem in the sweep for riches that Josephus said the price of that metal in the eastern empire plummeted to half its former value.²⁷ This continual digging

²⁵ *War* VI.5,2.

²⁶ *War* VI.9,4.

²⁷ *War* VI.6,1.

up of the Jewish City of Jerusalem occurred over a period of months after the war. In the wake of extensive and systematic pillaging, the city was reduced to utter ruin and became a desert area. Indeed, after an absence of about four months, Titus returned to Jerusalem from Antioch and once again viewed the ruined city. Jerusalem was now turned upside down without a stone left in place (just as Jesus said). Josephus states what Titus saw.

“As he came to Jerusalem in his progress [in returning from Antioch to Egypt], and compared the melancholy condition he saw it then in, with the ancient glory of the city [compared] with the greatness of its present ruins (as well as its ancient splendor). He could not but pity the destruction of the city.... Yet there was no small quantity of the riches that had been in that city still found among the ruins, a great deal of which the Romans dug up; but the greatest part was discovered by those who were captives [Jewish captives were forced by the Roman troops to dig up the stones of their own city looking for gold], and so they [the Romans] carried it away; I mean the gold and the silver, and the rest of that most precious furniture which the Jews had, and which the owners had treasured up under ground against the uncertainties of war.”²⁸

Three Years After the War

We now come to the final appraisal of the complete desolation of Jerusalem. Note what Eleazar, Jewish commander at Masada, related three years after the war was finished at Jerusalem. Though Jewish Jerusalem and the Temple were then completely destroyed, Eleazar gave an eyewitness account of how the Camp of the Romans was preserved among the ruins. What Eleazar said to the 960 Jewish people (who were to commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of General Silva, on the verge of capturing the Fortress of Masada) is most important to our present inquiry. This final Jewish commander lamented over the sad state of affairs that everyone could witness at this twilight period of the conflict after the main war with the Romans was over.

Jerusalem to Eleazar had become a disastrous spectacle in thorough ruin. There was only one thing that remained of the former

²⁸ *War* VII.5,2.

Jerusalem that Eleazar could single out as still standing. Everything was gone except one facility. And what was that single structural vestige of the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus? It was the Camp of the Romans that Titus permitted to remain as a monument of humiliation for the Jews and a triumph for the Romans over the Mother City of the Jews. Eleazar acknowledged that this military encampment had been in Jerusalem before the war, and Titus let it continue after the war. The retention of this single Camp of the Romans, according to Eleazar, was a symbol of the victory Rome achieved over the Jewish people. His words are recorded in *War* VII.8,7. Several words and phrases need emphasizing, so I feel justified in being conspicuous.

“And where is now that great city [Jerusalem], the metropolis of the Jewish nation, which was fortified by so many walls round about, which had so many fortresses and large towers to defend it, which could hardly contain the instruments prepared for the war, and which had so many ten thousands of men to fight for it? Where is this city that was believed to have God himself inhabiting therein? *It is now demolished to the very foundations, and hath nothing left but THAT MONUMENT of it preserved, I mean THE CAMP OF THOSE [the Romans] that hath destroyed it, WHICH [CAMP] STILL DWELLS UPON ITS RUINS;* some unfortunate old men also lie upon the ashes of the Temple [then in total ruins — burnt to ashes], and a few women are there preserved alive by the enemy, for our bitter shame and reproach.”

What Eleazar said must be reckoned as an eyewitness account of the state of Jerusalem in the year 73 C.E. This narrative is of utmost importance to our question at hand. Eleazar admitted that the whole of the City of Jerusalem and all its Jewish fortresses had been demolished “to the very foundations.” There was nothing left of the City or the Temple. This is precisely what Jesus prophesied would happen.

Eleazar reinforced his appraisal of utter ruin. He mentioned there had been the “wholesale destruction” of the city. He said that God “abandoned His most holy city to be burnt and razed to the ground.”²⁹ A short time later, Eleazar concluded his eyewitness

²⁹ *War* VII.8,6 Loeb.

account by stating: "I cannot but wish that we had all died before we had seen that holy city demolished by the hands of our enemies, or the foundations of our Holy Temple dug up, after so profane a manner."³⁰ Note that he said "*the foundation of our Holy Temple [was] dug up.*"

Yes, even the very foundation stones that comprised the Temple complex (including its walls) had been *dug up* and the foundations destroyed. Note that Eleazar said even the substructural stones of the Temple had been destroyed and not even the lower courses of the base stones that made up the Temple were left in place. According to Eleazar, the only thing left in the Jerusalem area of the former city was a single Roman Camp that remained still hovering triumphantly over the ruins of the City and the Temple. That Roman Camp was reckoned as having been in existence in the Jerusalem area *before the war*, and now he said it was the only facility left that was relatively unscathed. What was this facility still remaining in the area? He was talking about the Haram esh-Sharif ("Fort Antonia"), the Camp of the Romans.

This means that the main early Roman Camp called Fort Antonia survived the war. But as far as Jewish Jerusalem was concerned, that Jewish metropolis was so demolished that it "hath nothing left." The only structure continuing to exist in the region was that enduring "monument" (a single monumental facility) preserved by Titus. Eleazar said that monument was "the camp of those that destroyed it [Jerusalem], which still dwells [continues to dwell] upon its ruins."

The former Roman Camp did not have to be demolished. It had not been a reservoir of hidden gold before the war in which Jews could hide their precious things either within its walls or underground passageways. Jews did not hide their treasures inside any former Camp of the Romans. This particular region prior to the war had been Roman imperial property. This is a prime reason why it did not come under the ban of destruction to which Titus and others in the Roman military subjected the Temple and the rest of Jewish Jerusalem.

³⁰ War VII.8,7.

With its walls left intact the Haram made a perfect complex of buildings, protected by four substantial walls, to be the Camp of the Romans for the Tenth Legion. When Titus viewed the Haram esh-Sharif (Fort Antonia) and saw its walls relatively unscathed (especially its eastern, southern and western walls) and with its 37 cisterns and a special aqueduct supplying it with water, he decided to retain that strategic area (with its military advantages) as his Camp for the Tenth Legion. It had been the Roman Camp before the war, and Titus decided to keep it as the Roman Camp after the war.³¹ What the Romans did was to permit this former Camp to remain as the principal fort to quarter the Tenth Legion for the security of the Empire. This is why the Haram esh-Sharif was left by Titus to dwell upon the ruins of Jerusalem.

But what happened to the Temple and its walls? Just as Jesus prophesied, there was not one stone left on another of the Temple buildings or walls. And as Eleazar observed, even the very foundational stones of the Temple and its walls had been completely “dug up” and the site was left in thorough ruins. In a word, nothing was left of the Temple once located just to the south and above the

³¹ In many ways it was like Fort Sumter in the American Civil War. The original fort that guarded Charleston harbor was Fort Moultrie built in the Revolutionary War. That fort had a problem as more population came to the area. It was too close to the sea for adequate protection of the area, so a new Fort Sumter was built more inland on the opposite side of the harbor. At the beginning of the secession, Union forces moved from Fort Moultrie into the unfinished and ungarrisoned Fort Sumter because it proved to be more secure. The first shots of the Civil War took place against Union forces at Fort Sumter in April, 1861 and soon after Confederate soldiers took over Fort Sumter. It remained as a Confederate fort until February, 1865, when it returned to Union governance. It continued as a Union fort for several decades until it became a national monument in 1948.

Becoming a “monument” was typical of major forts which had significant battles or wars associated with them in the history of a nation or empire. So, just as Fort Sumter became a monumental fort after the Civil War, Titus decided the same monumental status for Fort Antonia. And just as Fort Sumter remained active for decades after its historical battle, so did Fort Antonia. When Fort Antonia returned to Roman hands at the end of the Roman/Jewish War, it continued as a fortress for the Tenth Legion until 289 C.E. That is why the walls surrounding Fort Antonia (that is, the Haram esh-Sharif) were allowed to stand after the war.

Gihon Spring. All that remained of Jerusalem was the Camp of the Romans (Fort Antonia), the Haram esh-Sharif.

The evidence for this truth is so abundant that it is amazing that this conclusion has not been seen before. There cannot be the slightest doubt, the walls of the Haram esh-Sharif are those that once surrounded Fort Antonia. This was the fort 600 feet *north* of the Temple and it completely dominated the Holy Sanctuary.