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## Chapter 9

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# THE *REAL* JEWISH SITE OF THE TEMPLES

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**A**T THE TIME OF OMAR AND SOPHRONIUS, the Jewish authorities that lived in the Holyland *had their own area* in mind as the actual site of the Temple. It was certainly not in the region of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or the later Mosque of Omar, or at any spot on the traditional Mount Zion that was then situated on the *southwest* hill. The Jewish site for the Temples was over and near the Gihon Spring in the *southeastern* part of Jerusalem, the original site of “Mount Zion” with its northern extension called the “Ophel.” Since the terms “Mount Zion” and the “Temple Mount” were synonymous in several biblical contexts, the original Temples were located on the *southeast* ridge where “Mount Zion” and the “Ophel” extension were first situated, and not in the *northeast* area of Jerusalem where the Haram esh-Sharif was located. In this chapter I will give evidence that clearly supports this conclusion.

## **Omar Allowed Jews to Return to Jerusalem**

Though Omar made a firm covenant with Sophronius that he would build only *one mosque* in Jerusalem and that no Jews were allowed to enter the City of Jerusalem, Omar relented on the latter agreement. We have documented evidence that just after Omar established his residence in Jerusalem in 638 C.E., Jewish authorities approached him from Tiberias. They petitioned him to allow them to return to Jerusalem and live in the city. Omar thought about the matter and he stated that 120 families could come to Jerusalem. Sophronius heard about this allowance and hurriedly reminded Omar of his sworn testimony that he would not allow *any* Jews to live in Jerusalem. Omar convinced Sophronius that it would be to everyone's advantage if some Jewish families could return to their metropolis. While Sophronius finally agreed that 40 families could come to the city, Omar in the end got Sophronius to accept a compromise figure of 70 families. This is when 70 Jewish families returned to Jerusalem from Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee.

Now note an important point. Those 70 families of Jews told Omar they wanted to reside *near their former Temple*. It is remarkable to note that these Jewish people selected the spot *south* of the Haram (near the Pool of Siloam) in order to be in the area of their former Temples. Omar knew where they meant because he had taken the stone from the area over the Gihon Spring (which Sophronius said was the site of the Jewish Temple) and placed it at the end part of the Al Aqsa Mosque as a part the *qibla* pointing to Mecca. (This would have meant praying *through* the site of the actual Temple of Solomon.)

## **Jews Wanted to Settle Near the Temple in Jerusalem**

Let us look at this matter closely. It has great bearing on locating the true site of the Temples that once existed in Jerusalem. After Omar conquered Jerusalem in 638 C.E., the Jewish people in Palestine (from the region of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, the center of Jewish patriarchal authority for so many years) were then allowed by Omar to take up residence in Jerusalem. They told Omar they wanted to live in Jerusalem near their former Temple.

And they told Omar where they wanted to settle — on and around the *southeast ridge*.

The Jewish authorities did not believe that Omar had the power to build a new Temple of Solomon at the southern Haram by the simple transference of a stone from the area of the true Temple to the site that was to become a Muslim Mosque. They did not believe the visionary information that Omar accepted, that satisfied Muslims. It was that the Temple of Solomon was now located at what became known as the Al Aqsa Mosque when the stone from the Temple area was transported to where the Mosque was to be built. After all, Jews were not Muslims. They did not receive the visionary experiences of Omar as valid; indeed, they considered his visions as emanating from the Devil.

These Jewish authorities from Tiberias also had a different site in mind for the Temple than Ka'ab's "Rock" at what was to become the Dome of the Rock. That northern "Rock" was actually a site that Christians held in high esteem, NOT Jews. That northern "Rock" within the Haram esh-Sharif was NOT the site of the former Temples of the Jews, and the Jewish authorities were well aware of this fact. We now have precise information of what these mainline Jews from Tiberias requested of Omar when they settled in Jerusalem. Let us look at the historical evidence. It shows in no uncertain terms that the official Palestinian Jews at the time of Caliph Omar looked on the site of the Temple as being *near the Gihon Spring* in the southern part of Jerusalem.

### **The Geniza Documents from Egypt**

The modern world has been blessed with a new discovery as important as the Dead Sea Scrolls. For the past hundred years the scholarly world has been able to read many thousands of letters and documents (and scraps of literary material) that were discovered in a synagogue in Cairo in what was called the Geniza (a room for old and unused literary documents). Over 200,000 pieces of literary material have been recovered from this one synagogue alone. Much of it is yet to be translated. In this horde of manuscripts written mainly in the 11th century (but giving historical information back to the period of Omar the Second Caliph) there is

considerable information to show *where* the official Jewish authorities thought their former Temples were located in Jerusalem. In no way did they consider the region of the Haram esh-Sharif as the former place of their Temples. Neither did they think the eastern part of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was the site. Nor did they think the region of "Mount Zion" on the southwest ridge was the true area of the Temples. Let us note the following information that comes from this horde of early Jewish writings from the Geniza in Egypt.

In a book called the *Sefer HaYishuv*, compiled from some of the documents of the Cairo Geniza, we read about Omar the Second Caliph settling those 70 families of Jews from Tiberias in his new city of Jerusalem just after 638 C.E. Note carefully *where* those 70 Jewish families from Tiberias wished to anchor themselves in the Holy City. One specific Geniza document shows *where* they wished to reside and a great deal of other later material from the same Geniza collection substantiates their quest to be near the Temple site, which they believed to be the *southeast ridge* of Jerusalem. Indeed, the Jews looked on the area *south* of the Haram and near the Gihon Spring as the place of their former Temples. Look at the account as quoted in the *Sefer HaYishuv*:

"When the Caliph Omar visited Jerusalem shortly after the conquest [of Islam over the Middle East], he asked the Jews: 'Where would you wish to live in the city? And they answered, *in the SOUTHERN part*; and that is the marketplace of the Jews [the central trading area for Jews in Jerusalem].' Their intention *was to be CLOSE TO THE TEMPLE AND ITS GATES*, as well as the waters of Siloam [in the *southeast* portion of the city] for ritual bathing. The Emir of the Believers granted this to them."<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> See *Getting Jerusalem Together*, Archeological Seminar Ltd., by Fran Alpert, p.32 for the quote from the *Sepher HaYishuv*, emphases and brackets mine. Another important reference to this document is found in Reuven Hammer's *The Jerusalem Anthology*, p.148. It says:

"Omar decreed that seventy households should come. They agreed to that. After that he asked: 'Where do you wish to live within the city?' They replied, 'In the southern section of the city, which is the market of the Jews.' **Their request was to enable them to be near the site of the Temple and its gates, as well as to the water of Shiloah, which could be used**

Note carefully that those Jewish families from Tiberias wanted to live in the *southern* part of Jerusalem near *the waters of Siloam* [the Gihon Spring and the Pool of Siloam] in the ancient area of early Jerusalem on the *southeast* ridge where David had built the original Zion with its northern extension, the “Ophel.”<sup>187</sup>

This is a most important point to recognize. Only in the last hundred years have archaeologists and historians determined that the original Zion of King David was located near the *southern* end of the *southeast* ridge of Jerusalem. The 1880 C.E. discovery of the Hezekiah tunnel constructed in the eighth century B.C.E. (from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam under the *southeast* ridge) was instrumental in convincing scholars that a mistake had been made.

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for immersion. The Emir of the Believers granted them this. So seventy households including women and children moved from Tiberias and established settlements in buildings whose foundations had stood many generations.”

Note that the remains had been in the region for many generations. These were remnants of the partially built Temples that I will show were started in the time of Constantine (313 to 325 C.E.), added to and refurbished in the time of Emperor Julian in 362/3 C.E. These ruined buildings were located on the former Temple Mount that existed in the time of Herod and Jesus, south of the Haram and near the Gihon Spring and Siloam pool. Among these ruins associated with the “Constantine/Julian Temple” was a part of the “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies that had been partially constructed in the fourth century. The Jews in the time of the Talmuds (5th century) believed this “Western Wall” still had the Shekinah hovering around its eastside. They often quoted the Song of Songs to substantiate this identification. Still, this particular “Western Wall” was NOT of the Temple that existed in the time of Herod. It was part of the Julian Temple built in 363 C.E.

<sup>187</sup> The Jewish authorities were well aware that the Gihon Spring was the central source that supplied water to the Pools of Siloam. In Temple times there was an external stream (“the waters of Shiloah,” Isaiah 8:6) that left the spring to douse the Kedron Valley with water down to the Pool of Siloam, and there was also an underground stream (Hezekiah’s tunnel, II Chronicles 32:30). These waters were essential for certain Temple rituals, and Jews before the Crusades knew the difference between the Gihon Spring and the waters of Siloam (Sukkah 4:9–10; Parah 3:2; yHag. 1:1), though they often used just the word “Siloam” to describe the whole system. After 70 C.E., Christian sources did not use the name “Gihon,” they used “Siloam,” until modern times. But for Jews until the Crusades, the Temple site was known to have caves and tunnels that humans could use to reach the Gihon Spring. This was convenient for fetching water to use in Temple services. Those caves and tunnels are there for all to see today.

wrongly identifying the *southwest* hill as original “Zion.”

Yet early Jews (before the Crusades) had no problem locating biblical “Zion” on the *southeast* ridge, analogous with the general area of the Temple. The Geniza records show they knew it was the correct spot for “Mount Zion” and the “Ophel” associated with the original Temples.

So, those Jewish families from Tiberias established themselves in that *southeastern* region of Jerusalem (even south of the present Turkish wall farther south of the Haram esh-Sharif). They also settled farther south than the palatial Islamic buildings immediately south of the southern wall of the Haram that Professor Mazar uncovered in the area about thirty years ago. This means the Jews from Tiberias made their abode in Jerusalem at least 600 to 1000 feet *south* of the southern wall of the Haram esh-Sharif.<sup>188</sup> In fact,

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<sup>188</sup> These seventy Jewish families settled at an area where they could see an outcropping of rock where there was a cave. This “cave” is mentioned by the early 6th century Christian pilgrim who wrote a short account (the Breviarius) of the sites of Jerusalem. The pilgrim said the only thing left of Solomon’s Temple was this single “cave.” See Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, p.61. We will see later excellent evidence that the Jews made a “cave” their synagogue that they connected with the site of the Temple. This “cave” was in a rock outcropping (but NOT at the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock).

The second Muslim leader that followed Omar in Jerusalem was named Mu’awiya, Caliph from 661–681 C.E. We read an account about this Caliph in a prophecy written by an early Jewish sage, Simon ben Yohai (whose tomb is still shown near Merom in Galilee), who wrote,

“The second king who arises from Ishmael will be a lover of Israel; he restores their breaches and the breaches of the Temple. He hews [cuts down and levels] Mount Moriah and makes it all straight and builds a meeting hall on the Temple rock.”

See Peters, *Jerusalem*, pp.199–200 for the translation. This prophecy shows Israel was given a new foundation and even the Temple was provided with the same blessing in the view of Israelites. Mu’awiya, however, built nothing at the “Rock” where the Dome of the Rock was built some thirty years later. Indeed, his building the “meeting place” over the “Temple Rock” pleased the Jews. This particular rock of the Temple was the same “rock” that the Christian Arab historian Eutychius said Sophronius showed Omar. Omar then “cut away” a part of that “rock” from near the Gihon Spring and placed it in his new “temple” in the southern area of the Haram esh-Sharif. This rock was NOT the “Rock” underneath the Dome of the Rock.

The European pilgrim named Arculf about 680 C.E. described a wooden

they were not the only Jews who settled in this *southeast* region of Jerusalem. Later in the ninth century Karaite Jews moved into the Jerusalem area in numbers. They also established their living quarters near the Rabbinic Jews in the same *southeastern* section of the city in the vicinity of the Siloam pool and the village of Silwan east of the Kedron Valley. This also put them in close proximity to the Temple site.

Indeed, later evidence (much of it from the Geniza documents) shows that this *southeastern* region of Jerusalem, the former area of the City of David, became the “Jewish Quarter” during the early Islamic occupation of Jerusalem — for over 400 years, from the time of the Emir Omar, the Second Caliph in 638 C.E. to 1077 C.E. I will detail later why the Jews abandoned this region just before the period of the Crusades. For now, however, it should be mentioned that a major earthquake occurred in 1033 C.E. that devastated the wall protecting the southeastern region. After the Seljuk Turks conquered Jerusalem in 1071 (at the beginning of a new Millennium from the Temple’s destruction), we find this was a momentous time for Jews in Jerusalem who thought that the End of the World was upon them. With the arrival of the Seljuks, the Jews in Jerusalem came in contact with invaders who were a very different type of people than they were used to being around. So, in 1077 C.E. a major decision was made by Jewish authorities. They moved the Jewish Academy at Jerusalem from this *southeastern* area and establish it in Tyre, and soon afterward to Damascus.

A short time after this exodus of the Academy, the Jews abandoned Jerusalem and left it void of Jewish inhabitants for a span of about 50 years. For that half century no Jews lived in Jerusalem.

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building erected as a Muslim mosque [the Al Aqsa Mosque] at the place Omar placed his qibla and where he established the “stone” from the original Temple site. But Arculf did NOT say one word about any “Rock” north of the Al Aqsa Mosque. Neither Omar or Mu’awiya, who followed Omar, showed any religious interest in the “Rock.” The Dome of the Rock was not built until the time of Abd al-Malik from 689 to 692 C.E. Mu’awiya, whom Jewish authorities called “a lover of Israel,” also helped Jews to settle in the area south of the Haram esh-Sharif. The Caliph visited Christian sites in Jerusalem, but showed no interest in the Haram area. He built a “meeting place,” with Jewish approval, at their former Temple site, but NOT at the “Rock” north of the Al Aqsa Mosque.

nor do we have records showing Jews even visiting the city. When Jews did return to Jerusalem, they took up with different geographical places for buildings and walls associated with the former Temples. I will show why they altered their Temple site in later chapters.

The truth is, the Jews long knew in the centuries prior to the Crusades that this *southeastern* region just west of the Gihon Spring was the site of the true “Mount Zion” and of the former “Temple Mount.” That is why in the time of Omar they asked to live in that *southern* region. It allowed them to be near the real Temple site (and not the areas accepted by Muslims and Christians).

There is much evidence that the Jews were well aware of the proper spot of the actual Temples. The central proof revolves around the Jews’ recognition that all their Temples had within their precincts a single natural spring. They also knew there was only *one such spring* in Jerusalem. It was the Gihon Spring. There are even two accounts from eyewitnesses who lived 400 years from one another that show the Temples were situated at and around the Gihon Spring. Many biblical references show the need for such a spring. These two Gentile eyewitnesses showing an “*inexhaustible spring*” located *within* the Temple perimeters were Aristeeas and Tacitus.

Aristeeas in about 285 B.C.E. personally saw the Temple and he stated that a *natural spring* was emanating from its interior.<sup>189</sup> This was long before any aqueducts brought spring water to Jerusalem from south of Bethlehem. Also, Tacitus the Roman historian 400 years later (quoting eyewitness sources) said there was an *inexhaustible spring* located *within* the Temple at Jerusalem.<sup>190</sup> Throughout history the only spring in Jerusalem was recognized as the Gihon Spring. Historical and even geological sources show there *never* was a spring within the region of the Haram esh-Sharif. The Haram had cisterns, but *no springs*. But *within* the Temples at Jerusalem there was a single, natural, fresh water spring — the

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<sup>189</sup> See *Letter of Aristeeas*

<sup>190</sup> *History*: V.11,12.

Gihon. This spring was a cardinal feature of the Temples and its presence was indispensable for the symbolism of the Sanctuary to be in force.

Let me be dogmatic. There can be no proper Temple without a natural spring emanating from its center. All biblical symbolism concerning God's abode on earth *demands* this water source as a cardinal part of the Temple itself. Indeed, this spring (the Gihon) is referred to many times in the Psalms and Prophets of the Holy Scriptures (as I will show later).

But something remarkable happened to that natural spring. It was a most important event that had a profound effect upon the Jewish population at Jerusalem and the need for their presence in the Holy City. In the year 1067 C.E., another major earthquake hit Jerusalem. It was so devastating that the records show 25,000 people died in Jerusalem alone, and only two houses remained standing in the Jewish quarter of the city on the southeast side.<sup>191</sup> A few years before this time, the Gihon Spring was referred to as having good waters, but after 1067 C.E., the waters of the Gihon Spring turned bitter and unpalatable for normal drinking. All historical works (including Greek, Roman, Jewish and Muslim) show evidence that demonstrate the freshness of the Gihon Spring waters prior to this date. Indeed, those waters from time immemorial had been fresh waters that were the envy of all. So pure were they that they symbolically came to represent the "waters of salvation" that issued from the throne of God in the Temple (mentioned many times in the Scriptures).

All of a sudden those "holy waters" became brackish and unsuitable for normal drinking. The earthquake may have moved underground strata introducing impurities into the water, or seepage from the city sewage areas. The change from fresh, pure water to a brackish and tarnished state had a mystical and prophetic sig-

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<sup>191</sup> Joshua Prawer states: "The city [of Jerusalem] suffered badly during the eleventh century from a series of earthquakes — in 1016, in 1033, and again in 1067. In the last, it is reported, 25,000 people were killed and only *two houses* [emphasis mine] remained." *The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Clarendon, Oxford), p.15.

nificance to the Jewish people of Jerusalem. The original “Mount Zion” had become polluted, and it reminded them of the same type of description in the prophecies of Jeremiah that also occurred at the time of Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>192</sup>

This pollution of the Gihon Spring waters was of strategic moment to the Jewish community in Jerusalem. This failure of the natural spring to provide suitable water for drinking as well as for ritualistic purposes caused the Jews in Jerusalem to re-evaluate their need to live in the *southeast* region, where they had lived for 400 years.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> The waters of the Gihon turned bitter at least once in the time of Jeremiah. The prophet told the Jews of his time that God sat on “a glorious high throne from the beginning in the place of our sanctuary [which had a fountain of living waters but] they have forsaken the fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 17:12–13). Back in Jeremiah 2:12 the prophet had said:

“They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters [in order] to drink the waters of Sihor [the Nile] [and] to drink the waters of the river [the Euphrates] know therefore and see that it [your own fountain – the Gihon Spring at Jerusalem] is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God” (Jeremiah 2:18–19).

“For the Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord” (Jeremiah 8:14).

“Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink’” (Jeremiah 9:15).

“Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets: ‘Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall’” (Jeremiah 23:15).

This condition happened just before the destruction of the Temple in the time of Jeremiah. Later, the Gihon Spring that came from the throne of God within the Temple precincts again became fresh and clean.

But sometime after 1067 C.E. and before the Academy of the Jews at Jerusalem moved to Tyre about 1077 C.E., the waters again became bitter. Even today, only after heavy rains or snow do the waters temporarily come forth abundantly and the bitterness is lessened; but for the last 900 years the waters of the Gihon Spring have always shown a bitterness and even a septic condition.

<sup>193</sup> Any observant Jew would instantly recognize the symbolic significance of the fresh waters of the Gihon/Siloam system turning bitter. It would have inspired a certain devastating and humiliating interpretation. Indeed, as a notable punishment for secret sins (especially if a husband suspected his wife of committing secret adulterous acts), there was a Temple ritual to discover such hei-

Not long after the earthquake and the invasion of Palestine in 1071 C.E. by the Seljuk Turks (a very strange people to the Jews even in a physical sense), the Jewish Academy of Jerusalem (the Jewish religious headquarters in Palestine) thought the End of the World was upon them. They moved to Tyre in 1077 C.E. and then immediately to Damascus to anticipate the End-Time prophecies to be fulfilled. (Remember, the coming of the Seljuk Turks in 1071 C.E. was a scant more than a Millennium since the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E.) The eschatological beliefs of the Jewish people at the time were firmly fixed on the soon arrival of the Messiah to redeem them from their exile and their Diaspora. After a short stay in Tyre, the authorities of the Academy decided to move to Damascus. They placed the Academy at Damascus for a particular reason that was most important. I will place this information on my Internet Web Page. The move of the

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nous sins. The priest was to take holy water (in Temple times from the Gihon/Siloam water source) and mix some dust of the Temple floor with it and have the accused woman drink the liquid. If it turned bitter in her stomach and caused her belly to swell, it was deemed as proved that the woman was adulterous (see Numbers 5:11-31).

The prophet Jeremiah (who by the way was a priest) used this very ritual to accuse ancient Judah of harlotry. Jeremiah taught that the Jews had drunk water that had turned bitter (Jeremiah 2:19) and this proved that they were "playing the harlot" (Jeremiah 2:20). As a result of this, Jeremiah said they would soon be drinking the stinking and polluted waters of the Nile and the Euphrates (verse 18). The early Talmudic Jews knew how to interpret this symbolism. Quoting the Midrash Lamentations R. proem 19, the *Jewish Book of Legends* records:

"Jeremiah said to Israel: Had you been worthy, you would be dwelling in Jerusalem and drinking the waters of Siloam, whose waters were pure and sweet. But now that you are unworthy, you are being exiled to Babylon, where you will be drinking the water of the Euphrates, whose waters are impure and ill smelling, as Scripture says, 'And now, what is the good of your going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? And what is the good of your going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates?' (Jeremiah 2:18)" (p.380).

But then, even the pure and sweet water of the Gihon would turn bitter as gall. This happened in Jeremiah's time, and again in the 11th century the waters of the Gihon/Siloam source returned to bitterness. The biblical symbolism associated with this change in the characteristics of the water at the Gihon (within the very precincts of the Temple) had even a greater effect upon the Jewish people at the time. Now, even their "Temple waters" had turned bitter.

Jewish Academy to Damascus was because of a very significant prophetic belief of the Jewish people that centered the domicile of God within the city of Damascus just before the advent of the Messianic period on earth (as shown in Zechariah 9:1).

Be that as it may, the remnant of Jewish people left in Jerusalem uprooted themselves from their former quarters in the *southeast* sector (which had no wall around it since its destruction in 1033 C.E.) and moved to an area just *northeast* of the Haram esh-Sharif (a region never held in honor by Jewish people).<sup>194</sup> Then, in 1099 C.E. when the crusading Europeans took control of Jerusalem, the Jews were plagued even more. They lost all possessions in Jerusalem and were banned from entering Jerusalem for over 50 years.

Note what this means. While Jews were given permission to live in Jerusalem from the start of Islamic times until the Crusades (over 450 years), with the capture of Jerusalem by the crusading armies, the few remaining Jews were compelled by force of arms to leave the city — an evacuation and prohibition that lasted a little over 50 years. This enforced abandonment was the end of an era for Jewish people in their attitude toward Jerusalem, and even in their theological thinking about the city. Indeed, for a little over five decades after the coming of the crusaders, no Jews were allowed to reside in the City of Jerusalem or, as far as the records go, even to enter the city of their fathers. This “abandonment of Jerusalem” was a turning point in the history of Judaism. When the Jews finally returned after 50 years, they adopted a different approach to the significance of the City of Jerusalem. I will show what happened in later chapters.

### **Jews Permanently Forsook the Southeastern Quarter**

Twenty years before the First Crusade the Jewish people moved *northeast* of the Haram esh-Sharif as their place of residence in the Holy City. This forsaking of their long-established presence in the *southeastern* quarter of the city (the original Zion) has surprised Jewish scholars. But it happened. We can understand why when we realize this was the time they also gave up the site of their for-

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<sup>194</sup> Prawer, *The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, p.49.

mer Temples over the Gihon Spring. After all, the waters of the spring had turned bitter and salty when the waters had normal flow (and not temporarily giving floodwaters from wet winters). The pitiful condition of the Gihon caused them to renounce the sanctity of the area. From then on they began to look for *other symbolic areas* to satisfy their religious needs. All these tragedies converged with the start of the devastating earthquakes in 1033 C.E. And, when the waters of the Gihon Spring became bitter and salty, it was a turning point for Jewish authorities. It caused them step-by-step to abandon that *southeastern* region as their official residence in Jerusalem and they terminated the Jewish Academy in the city.

Even more important, when they returned to Jerusalem, after an absence of over 50 years, the Jewish authorities began to acknowledge another area as *their* Temple site. I will explain on my Internet Web Page why the Jewish authorities from the time of the Crusades onward resigned themselves to accept the region of the Dome of the Rock as a Temple site that Muslims and most Christians were then acknowledging. But such acceptance was *not* the mainline Jewish opinion for the first thousand years of our era. After all, the original Mount Zion (where the Temples once stood) was located on the *southeast* hill.

Indeed, before the time of the Caliph Omar in 638 C.E., there is *NOT one clear reference* from the thousands of pages of historical and theological documents at the disposal of scholars today (from Christian, Jewish or secular sources) that dogmatically states or even suggests that the site of the Temple of Herod or other Jewish Temples were located within (or even near) the Haram esh-Sharif. When Omar himself went to Jerusalem for the express purpose of praying at the spot where David knelt, Omar showed clear evidence that he *did NOT know* where the Temple once stood. All the Caliph had as proof for the site were nebulous factors associated with a visionary episode he experienced. But the Caliph wanted practical and historical proof for the holy spot, and Sophronius gave it.

Sophronius took him to two different places on the western hill of Jerusalem before Omar was finally shown the area over and around the Gihon Spring. This was the original Mount Zion of the

Bible (and the true location of the Temples) as all modern historians and archaeologists will come to see. The Jews for centuries knew this fact and steadfastly looked at the *southeastern* hill as the place for their former Temples. This place completely satisfied Omar in his quest for the place of David's altar.

Only after Omar discovered the stone in the *southeast* hill, where the Holy of Holies had been, did he become interested in a particular gate of the city where the Prophet Muhammad was supposed to have entered during his Night Journey. Omar then looked north and saw the southern gate within the southern wall of the Harem esh-Sharif. After entering the enclosure Omar witnessed what he thought to be the geographical environment of the Haram that answered to his visionary experience and to his theological beliefs concerning the Night Journey. Indeed, this supernatural revelation provided all the evidence Omar required and it settled the matter for the Caliph once and for all. Omar's decision has satisfied most Muslims ever since.

### **The Jewish Quarter Had Been the Southeast Sector**

It is most important to realize that when those 70 Jewish families came from Tiberias to settle in Jerusalem in the same year as Omar's visit (in 638 C.E.), they requested of Omar (and they got his permission) to dwell near *their* Temple in the *southeastern* part of the city. This is where Omar was shown the "stone" that he took into his new area for the Mosque. The region the Jewish authorities wanted for their residence was near the Gihon Spring and the Siloam pool to be near (as their records clearly state) the site of *their* former Temple, the *original* "Mount Zion." So, to the Jews who lived in Palestine and were well acquainted with the region, *their* site for the Temple in this early period was *south* of the Haram esh-Sharif and over and around the Gihon Spring and its north mountain extension called the "Ophel."

This powerful evidence emanates from those Jews who lived within 80 miles of Jerusalem. These were Jews at the center of Palestinian Judaism from the early second century to the time of Omar. These were Jews having constant contact with *their* Holy City even when not allowed to live in the area. These were Jews

who wanted to live in the *southern* area to be near the ruins of their Temple.

These were *not* Jews from Arabia like Ka'ab and his colleagues who accepted Islam as their faith but had never been to Jerusalem. These were *not* Jews from Spain where many generations of Jews only had hearsay of what Jerusalem was like. They were *not* even Jews from Babylon where the Gaonic head of Judaism was located some 500 miles from Jerusalem. No, the Jews who wanted to live *south* of the Haram (and *south* of the grand Umayyad buildings later constructed along the southern wall of the Haram) to be near their former Temples were those *in constant contact* with Jerusalem. For over 400 years the *southeastern* part of Jerusalem was the Jewish Quarter of the city. Their *ruined* Temple was there.

Look at reality. Those Jews from Tiberias had social, religious and even commercial connections with Jews in Egypt and this meant a regular, persistent association with Jerusalem. They were in constant contact with the Holy City because it was located on one of the central highways between Tiberias and Egypt. These 70 families of Jews said the Temple was *south* of the Haram in the area of the Gihon Spring. Other Jews shared their conviction. They were joined in the 9th century by many other Jews known as the Karaites who also settled in this *southeastern* area (some east of the Kedron and others on the west side). All of the Jews together wanted to be in this *southeastern* region from 638 to 1077 C.E. because they knew this was the area of their former Temples.

When Omar set up his *qibla* in his new Sanctuary of Solomon (so called because it was constructed from ruined stones found on the Temple Mount over the Gihon Spring), it allowed him and the Muslims of Jerusalem to bow at prayers five times a day not only toward Mecca but also directly through the former site of the Jewish Temples. The location over the Gihon Spring was where David placed his altar — and this was the very spot Omar wanted to honor when he came to Jerusalem.

The “Rock” underneath what was to become the Dome of the Rock, *that* was a Christian holy place and Omar did not feel he had the right (and certainly not the motive) to construct any kind of

structure in that spot. Remember that Omar made a sacred commitment to Sophronius to build only *one shrine* in Jerusalem and that single “temple” or “mosque” would not be constructed on the site of any Christian Church or on property owned by the Christians. Note the words of the contract:<sup>195</sup>

It begins with the official statement: “In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the most Compassionate.” The text follows:

“This is the assurance of safety (*aman*) which the servant of Allah [the second Caliph] Omar, the Commander of the Faithful, has granted to the people of Aelia [Capitolina].

He has granted them safety for their lives and possessions; their churches and their crosses; the sick and the healthy of the city; and for the rest of its religious community. Their churches will not be inhabited nor destroyed [by Muslims]. Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their crosses, nor their possessions will be confiscated. They will not be forcibly converted, nor any one of them harmed. No Jew will live with them in Aelia.

The people of Aelia must pay the poll tax like the people of the [other] cities, and they must expel the Byzantines and the robbers. As for those who will leave [the city], their lives and possessions shall be safeguarded until they reach their place of safety; and as for those who remain, they will be safe. They will have to pay the poll tax like the people of Aelia.”

[Similar guarantees are given to villagers of Palestine. I omit that part as having no bearing on the people of Jerusalem.]

“[Finally], the contents of this assurance are under the covenant of Allah, are the responsibility of His Prophet [Muhammad], of the Caliphs [Muhammad’s successors], and of the Faithful. If [the people of Aelia] pay the poll tax according to their obligations.”

“The persons who attest to it are: Khalid ibn al-Walid, ‘Amro ibn al-‘Asi, ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf, and Mu’awiya ibn Abi Sufyan. This assurance was written and prepared in the year 15 [of the Muslim calendar].”

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<sup>195</sup> Dr. Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, Lecturer in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Stirling in Britain has ably constructed and recorded the official text (accepted by Muslim theologians and politicians) of Omar’s Assurance of Safety to the People of Aelia [Jerusalem]). This covenant is provided on the Web Site <[www.interx-me.com/jerusalem/society.htm](http://www.interx-me.com/jerusalem/society.htm)>. I am thankful to him for the fair manner with which it and other historical materials are presented.

To honor his covenant (made in the name of Allah) with the Christians of Jerusalem, he felt obligated to build only *one* Mosque in Jerusalem, in an area no Christian claimed as holy, or there was a Church or former Church. Since it was clear that the “Rock” north of the Al Aqsa Mosque was Christian property and the former site of the Church of the Holy Wisdom, Omar felt obligated (and he honored his obligation) *not* to build any structure whatever on *that* Christian site. He kept his word. So did the following Caliph, Mu’awiya, and so did Abd al-Malik until he made a further deal to build the Dome of the Rock (in the form of a Christian Church) over the northern “Rock.” This was accomplished by further negotiations with the Christians. This codicil to the original agreement was similar to that which Omar made regarding the Jews who wanted to return to Jerusalem.<sup>196</sup>

This divine covenant by Omar in the name of Allah caused him *not* to embrace the northern “Rock” within his building program in Jerusalem. But there was another factor regarding the gesture of Omar turning his back to the “Rock” now under the Dome of the Rock. That spot was still revered by Christians as the site where the *footprints* of Jesus were believed to exist from the time he was condemned by Pilate. We will see later that this belief was an essential reason for Muslims *not* to make that Christian holy spot part of their worship of Allah by placing the *qibla* over the “Rock.” Such action would mean that the “Rock” in Jerusalem could have a superiority over the *qibla* of the Al Aqsa Mosque in the *south* (the *new* “Temple of Solomon”) in the daily worship when Muslims faced the Ka’aba in Mecca.

Omar adamantly resisted the urging by some of his closest advisors to place the prime *qibla* to the north over the “Rock.” Had he done so, this gesture would have brought the role of “Jesus” to the forefront of Muslim thinking and worship. This was especially dangerous to do in Jerusalem where 90% of the people were still

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<sup>196</sup> Recall that Omar made a deal with Sophronius that instead of prohibiting that Jews could live in Jerusalem, he finally agreed with Omar that 70 families could return from Tiberias to Jerusalem and settle in the southern area of the city (on and around the southeastern ridge) to live near the former site of their ruined Temple over and near the Gihon.

Christian. Though Omar honored and respected Jesus as the Prophet next to Muhammad in Islamic theology, placing the *qibla* in front of an undeniable Christian holy site in Jerusalem would give Jesus a far greater measure of religious esteem than Omar was willing to provide. Besides, Omar covenanted with Sophronius to avoid any Muslim tampering with Christian churches or their property. So, Omar always turned his back on that “Christian holy site” in order to forbid any superiority from developing to the rank of Jesus. His successor Mu’awiya did the same thing, and (as we will see) so did Abd al-Malik 50 years later even when he deemed it necessary (even essential) to build the Dome of the Rock over the “Rock.” See the ASK Web Page on the Internet for details.

While Omar consistently prayed with his back to that “Rock,” he had not the slightest compunction in praying toward Mecca *through* the former site of the actual Temple of Solomon and that of Herod (over and near the Gihon Spring) with its ruins directly *south* of the Al Aqsa Mosque. It was *that* area in the *south* that the 70 Jewish families of the Jews from Tiberias wanted to live. Their descendants continued to reside in that quarter until the Jerusalem Academy moved to Tyre (then to Damascus) in 1077 C.E. For over 400 years, Jews in Jerusalem were able to reside around the former Temple site, while Muslims worshipped at their *new* “Temple of Solomon,” the Al Aqsa Mosque, erected in the south of the Haram. The evidence to support these matters is abundant and certain.

Some remarkable things began to take place *after* the Dome of the Rock was built by Abd al-Malik. There were numerous miraculous discoveries made by Muslim theologians inspired by the traditional folklore beliefs concerning the “Rock” that began to emerge. What was at first a purely and thoroughly Christian holy place (where Christians believed Jesus’ *footprints* were inlaid), the story of the “Rock” soon began to take on *new* embellishments. The first *new* belief was the discovery of “God’s *footprint*” on the “Rock.” That started the ball rolling. As time went on, an incredible amount of *new* beliefs began to be accepted by Muslims.

The “Rock” was soon transformed into a *new* and important Muslim shrine of immense significance. After it was determined “God’s *footprint*” was found on the “Rock” (and the first one to

suggest this was apparently Abd al-Malik himself), that important "fact" was followed by an avalanche of other miracle stories about the "Rock" that staggers the imagination. Indeed, by the time of the Crusades (400 years later), the "Rock" had been metamorphosed into being the literal site of the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temples.

Just as Christians after the time of Constantine started transferring events associated with the Temple (whether true or mere folklore) to the new Church of the Holy Sepulchre, now it was the Muslim's turn at doing the same thing. And they were very successful in the eyes of the general public. So complete was the transfer of past events and holy relics, that all of the traditions associated with the Temple of Solomon and the other Temples were transferred lock, stock and barrel to the "Rock." The Muslims were doing the same thing the Christians did to enhance the prestige of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre 300 years before.

So, what happened? The place of Abraham's trial in offering Isaac was transferred to the "Rock." Jacob wrestled with the angel on the "Rock." The events of Muhammad's Night Journey from earth to heaven were moved from the area of the Al Aqsa Mosque to the "Rock" under the Dome of the Rock. Muslims came to believe that the "Rock" was the gathering place of all the prophets and holy people of the past. They also found the *hand* print of the Archangel Gabriel on the "Rock," and Muhammad's *hand* print as well as Muhammad's *footprint*. They came to believe that the cave in the "Rock" in its southeast sector was caused by the "Rock" lifting itself up from the earth and being suspended a few feet above the ground hoping to accompany Muhammad during his Night Journey into heaven. However, Gabriel and/or Muhammad pushed the "Rock" back to earth. Yet, the "Rock" was stubborn and refused to return all the way back to earth. This reluctance created the *cave* at the southeast section there as proof that the "Rock" tried to go to heaven with Muhammad.

But it didn't stop there. Just as Christians came to believe that Adam's skull was found at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Muslims had their own similar account concerning Adam. They soon discovered Adam's *footprint* on the "Rock" alongside the

very *footprint* of God left at the time of His ascension to heaven after creating the earth.

What wonderful beliefs! Those accounts all started with the prime belief given by Abd al-Malik that “God’s *footprint*” was on the “Rock.” From then on, the miracles didn’t stop until the Muslims (like Christians before them with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) had moved every major holy event or artifact associated with the sanctity of Jerusalem and its area directly to the “Rock.” So certain were many of these beliefs by the end of the Crusades, that not only Muslims believed the “Rock” was the site of the former Temples, but even the Christians (and even the Jews, as I will show) came to believe it. Even our modern scholars and religious authorities accept the nonsense.

It was also in the period of the Crusades that the Jews began to accept that *their* Mount Zion was really located on the *southwest* hill. They did this (as I will explain) because an event occurred in the middle of the twelfth century convincing them that David’s Tomb was situated on the *southwest* mountain and that the Christians and Muslims were right to believe the *southwest* mountain was the original “Mount Zion.” How wrong they were.

I will explain in detail how the confusion got started. For now (and to close this section of the research) let me briefly state that the geographical confusion over the *southwest* mountain in its relationship with true history began as early as the time of Simon the Hasmonean (142–134 B.C.E.). This was because of major changes in the topography of Jerusalem accomplished in that early period. What Simon and the Jewish authorities did was systematically level to the very bedrock the original Mount Zion. They also cut down the Ophel Mound to the bedrock (to the very entrance to the caves and tunnels that led to the Gihon Spring).

It will surprise many, but documentary evidence shows that in the time of Simon the Hasmonean and his son John Hyrcanus, the Jewish people actually built a brand *new* Temple. It was built in place of the one that existed from the time of Zerubbabel until Judas Maccabees, a Temple different from the one defiled and destroyed in the time of Judas Maccabees. They also tore down

and removed the buildings on the former Mount Zion and on the Ophel Mound along with the transference of David's tomb (that is, all hewn stones and furniture) and rebuilt them all on the *southwest* hill. Simon renamed the area the *new* "Mount Zion."<sup>197</sup>

Nothing of the former grandeur can be seen in that earlier center of Jerusalem on the southeast ridge. That is why the present southeast ridge is bereft of any mountains whatever, and why it became known as the "Lower City" even by Herod's time. And after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., there were no longer the dual mountains to be seen that were once a prominent feature of the southeast ridge. Indeed, when a person looks at the region today, it is almost impossible to believe (if we did not have the biblical records that demand we accept it) that there were once dual mountains gracing the southeast ridge.

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<sup>197</sup> We have a good modern example of what Simon did. The stones of the original London Bridge were transported lock, stock and barrel to Arizona and rebuilt across the Colorado River for commercial and amusement purposes over thirty years ago. This "London Bridge" in Arizona is almost identical (but slightly smaller for engineering purposes) to the original bridge in London but it is now located some 6000 miles from where it once was. So, a person can now see "London Bridge" (with the very stones that once crossed the River Thames) at Lake Havasu in Arizona. In like manner, Simon the Hasmonean tore down the original Mount Zion and moved its buildings with their very government names (along with the Tomb of David) to the southwest mountain. A new Temple was then built in the place of the former. Herod later enlarged that Temple to twice its original size. The Romans destroyed that Temple in 70 C.E.