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## Chapter 30

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# REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

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**S**INCE THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM was reckoned as being made *desolate* by Antiochus Epiphanes, Simon and the Jewish authorities decided to tear it down (in accordance with the Mosaic instructions regarding contaminated houses) and rebuild the Temple anew. Note that at this same period of time is when Onias made his appeal to King Ptolemy of Egypt to have his new Temple built at Heliopolis. Onias felt that the Temple in Jerusalem was so ruined that he interpreted the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 19:19) as a positive sign that a new Temple would be legitimate on the border of Egypt. Ptolemy gave permission for this new Temple of Onias. That, however, did not end the matter.

In this same period, a major controversy developed about the proper location for any true Temple of God. Where should any Temple be REBUILT? Since there were many Jews and Samaritans in Alexandria who were concerned about the state of the proper "House of God," a conference was convened with serious consequences for the adjudicators about the proper spot to REBUILD the Temple. The conference took place in Egypt before

King Ptolemy of Egypt (who was considered a neutral but interested arbiter regarding such important questions). The outcome of the conference resulted in Jerusalem being chosen as the proper place because of its long history as the site accepted by all peoples of the Middle East. Note, however, that the contention was over *where* a NEW Temple “was to be built” (at least, that is how the words in the context of Josephus state the matter).

The Jews and Samaritans (as Josephus states)

“disputed about their temples before Ptolemy himself, the Jews saying that, according to the Law of Moses, the temple *was to be built at Jerusalem*; and the Samaritans saying that it *was to be built at Gerizim*.”<sup>577</sup>

The conference was conducted for the purpose of discovering *where* a Temple “*was to be built*.” Indeed, Onias was already building his new Temple at Heliopolis. But *where* was the normal Temple to be built? True, the remains of the Temple at Jerusalem were still standing (in a *desolate* state) and the Samaritan Temple still existed, but the question argued before King Ptolemy was where the Temple “*was to be built*.” What concerned the conference was the proper location for building the Temple.

After much discussion, the official assembly before King Ptolemy selected Jerusalem as the proper site. Indeed, this is what Simon and the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem also decided was proper. They also believed the Temple “*was to be built*” in Jerusalem. Simon then tore down the *desolate* remains of the Temple and built a new Temple in the same spot over the Gihon Spring. Simon and the Jewish authorities then built their new Temple in the same area, but now made more level and enlarged.

### **Simon the Hasmonean and the Temple**

The one verse in First Maccabees that characterizes the rule of Simon is that of 14:15. It states: “He [Simon] glorified the Temple and enriched its equipment.” Some later Jewish authorities understood this to mean that all the implements of the Temple had been

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<sup>577</sup> *Antiquities* XIII.3,4 para.74–79, Whiston.

so thoroughly polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes that everything about the Temple services had to be replaced, not just the Altar itself.<sup>578</sup> Indeed, some Rabbis thought that what the Hasmoneans were doing was raising up a brand new Sanctuary like the Tabernacle had been built anew in the time of Moses.<sup>579</sup> This new dedication by the Hasmoneans was an added reason for celebrating a greater Hanukkah. And note this. With the renewal actions of Simon, there was indeed a *second call* to celebrate Hanukkah. This was in the first year of Simon the Hasmonean.<sup>580</sup> This was the very time that Simon decided to tear down the old "Mount Zion" and the "Ophel" (which had been thoroughly polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes and Alcimus) and to rebuild and dedicate a new sanctified Temple in the same spot on the Ophel, but with the area more leveled and enlarged.

Recall that it took three years to demolish the summits on the southeast ridge. It possibly took an equal time (or longer) to build the new Temple. This must be the case because in the year 124 B.C.E. (some nineteen years after Simon's first year of reign, during the reign of Simon's son, John Hyrcanus) the third and final call to celebrate the greater Hanukkah took place.<sup>581</sup> This means that *two further commands to celebrate Hanukkah* were given besides the original command by Judas Maccabeus.<sup>582</sup>

So, there were actually *three* occasions for ordering the sanctification of Hanukkah: *one* at the time of Judas Maccabeus (164 B.C.E.) when a partial purification was accomplished. But with the High Priest Alcimus and his outright pagan beliefs still in control and continuing to pollute the Temple and its furniture, Simon decided it was time to tear down the desecrated Temple and dedicate a new one. The *second* call for dedication was in 142 B.C.E. Then, finally, the Temple was completely finished and sealed by the arrival of a person with the prophetic spirit. That person came on the scene with the son of Simon, John Hyrcanus. He was the

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<sup>578</sup> See Zevin, *The Festivals in Halachah*, vol.II, pp.64–65.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.* pp.68–69.

<sup>580</sup> See II Maccabees 1:9.

<sup>581</sup> II Maccabees 1:10.

<sup>582</sup> This is discussed in the New Schurer, vol.I., p.211.

king who succeeded Simon, but he also had other powerful offices that Josephus thought essential to mention.

“He was the only man [in the history of Israel] to unite in his person three of the highest privileges: the supreme command of the nation, the high priesthood, and *the gift of prophecy*, for so closely was he in touch with the Deity.”<sup>583</sup>

It was in 124 B.C.E. (in the time of John Hyrcanus) when the final dedication of the completely renewed Temple was ordered.

This “renewal” of the Temple was remembered even in New Testament times. In the Gospel of John, the Festival of Hanukkah was called “The Feast of Dedication,” or in plain English, “The Feast of Renewal.”<sup>584</sup> This final call to celebrate the Festival of Hanukkah was in honor of the “renewed Temple,” NOT simply the renewal of the sacrificial services in the earlier time of Judas. It is important to realize that it was not until 124 B.C.E. that the final command to celebrate Hanukkah was given to the Jews. Hanukkah really celebrates the construction of the brand new Temple by Simon the Hasmonean and dedicated by his son John Hyrcanus. This new historical information makes Hanukkah to be far more significant than many Jews have thought.

### **Simon Changed the Geography of the Jerusalem Area**

What Simon did was a momentous historical and theological event for the people of Israel. He not only tore down the old city of Jerusalem (as it had existed back to the time of Solomon), but he built a “New Jerusalem” in the “Upper City” and he redesignated that area as the “New Zion.” The inhabitants of Jerusalem even had to give the southeast region a new designation because the area of Mount Zion was thoroughly cut down. They then began to call the area “the Lower City.” And so it became.

The upshot of the whole thing was a glorious new beginning for Israel with the construction works of Simon the Hasmonean. The author of the Book of Enoch said the building of this new enlarged Temple in the same spot as the former Temples was the initiation

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<sup>583</sup> *War* 1.68–69.

<sup>584</sup> John 10:22.

of a New Era for Israel. This fits the time of Simon the Hasmonean perfectly. Recall how the First Book of Maccabees stated that the years of the Jewish calendar were to be reckoned anew as beginning with the reign of Simon and that all contracts made between Jewish people were to be dated in accordance with this New Era (this new society) devised by Simon.

In a word, the author of the Book of Enoch was giving a description of the three years' demolition of the previous Temple and Citadel (the former *Akra*). He placed the whole affair occurring before his eyes into an eschatological framework to secure its acceptance with the people.

The author of the Book of Enoch thought this was the commencement of that New Era which his teachings in his Fourth Division disclosed. As a vindication of this belief, the dedication of this *new* Temple in 124 B.C.E. is what the Festival of Hanukkah actually celebrates in its complete format (when all the final embellishments were made to the *new* Temple structure). This information given in this book helps to provide a new dimension to the understanding of what the Festival of Hanukkah was all about.

### **The Later Desecration by Pompey in 63 B.C.E.**

There is an important reference in Josephus concerning the incursion of the Roman general Pompey into the inner Temple that bears emphasizing. This reference proves that a new Temple was built by Simon the Hasmonean and finished by his son Hyrcanus. Note that Josephus spoke of Pompey's unauthorized entrance into the holiest parts of the Temple in 63 B.C.E. by saying that this profanation had *never been done before*. Notice how Josephus stated the unusualness of Pompey's entrance into the Sanctuary. He said: "[The Temple] in former ages had been *inaccessible, and seen by none*."<sup>585</sup>

Note the blatant error of Josephus (at least, it looks like an error on the surface). Any Jewish school child would have known that Gentiles had entered the Holy of Holies in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and also in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and to have

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<sup>585</sup> *Antiquities* XIV.4,4.

viewed things that were forbidden to their eyes. Josephus also knew this. But Josephus appears to be making statements diametrically opposite to these well-known facts.

The truth is, however, Josephus gave a true account. He was referring to Simon's *new* Temple, NOT to the old ones of Solomon and Zerubbabel. The Temple that was built by Simon had truly been *inaccessible* to all unauthorized people before the time of Pompey and it had been *seen by none* before Pompey entered the Temple in 63 B.C.E. Josephus was telling the truth about Pompey in regard to Simon's Temple. Pompey was indeed the first person to enter *that new* Temple built by Simon. Pompey knew that his act was counter to the regulations of the Temple. So, Pompey ordered the cleansing of the Temple the next day after its desecration.<sup>586</sup>

The example of tearing down the Temple of God as shown by Simon and the Jewish authorities in their time was an incentive to Herod to make a brand new Holy Place and Holy of Holies and to enlarge the outer Temple regions even more than Simon and his contemporaries had done. There is historical proof from Josephus to support this valid conclusion. Just before Herod's death, he brought to trial in Jericho the perpetrators of tearing down a golden eagle over the eastern portal of the Temple that Herod had constructed and enlarged. In recounting his many benefits that Herod surmised he had lavished upon the Jewish nation, he singled out as supreme above all the fact that he had built and enlarged (and greatly adorned with costly gifts) the Temple "while the Hasmoneans, during the 125 years of their government, had not been able to perform any so great a work for the honor of God as that was."<sup>587</sup>

Note that Herod did not recount any refinements or additions done to the Temple *before* the time of the Hasmoneans. Why stop with the Hasmoneans? Herod had done much more than any of the people after the Babylonian Captivity had accomplished on building or decorating their Temple. Why did Herod not include that post-Babylonian Temple or the one built by Solomon? The reason is plain. The Temple that Herod had added to and decorated with

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<sup>586</sup> *Antiquities* XIV.4,4 para. 69–75.

<sup>587</sup> *Antiquities* XVII.6,3 paras. 162–3.

expensive gifts reached back only to the Hasmoneans. That is why Herod inquired back to that 125 years before his own government. All these matters prove that Josephus was accurate in his historical description of the event. Indeed, I have been showing in this book that it is often the scholars who assume certain chronological or geographical ideas to be correct who want to consign Josephus to the realm of “never-never” land. It is usually the scholars who are wrong in many of these matters, and not Josephus.

### **The Enlargement by King Herod**

The pollution by Pompey was not as severe and abominable as that of Antiochus Epiphanes and Alcimus. Yet, what Pompey did was a defilement. Indeed, in about 55 B.C.E., Licinius Crassus came to Jerusalem and took the gold and moneys from the treasury of the Temple, and this was also a defilement. But again, these pollutions were not in any way comparable to the violence done to the Temple in Antiochus’ day. Still, these two defilements gave Herod an ace in the hand for convincing the priests and other authorities in Jerusalem that a new Holy Place and a new Holy of Holies should be built in Jerusalem and that the Temple area itself should be enlarged. The authorities were convinced. Herod started his new Temple about 100 years after the Temple of Simon was finished by his son Hyrcanus in 124 B.C.E. (when the final Hanukkah was ordered).<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Recall that Josephus said that Herod doubled the size of the Temple (*War* I.21,1). This was doubling the size of Simon’s Temple. As I have shown, it did not mean the Temple that existed before Simon that reached back to the time of Nehemiah. The earlier Temple before Simon was, according to the eyewitness account of Hecateus of Abdera, on a platform that was 150 feet broad for its eastern wall and 500 feet in length for its southern and northern walls. Simon, however, built the Temple in the same place but made it larger. But if Herod “doubled” the size of Simon’s Temple, then Simon must have “doubled” the size of the pre-Simonian Temple (north to south) because Herod’s Temple was on a square platform that was a *stade* long (600 feet). We are told that Herod demolished most of the north wall of the Temple (no doubt, this was Simon’s Temple). Josephus said: “Later [in the time of Herod], the people made a breach in the north wall [of the Temple] and this took in an area as large as *that which the whole Temple subsequently occupied*” (*War* V.5,1). As the Temple platform became larger, it was necessary to reposition the Holy of Holies and the Altar of

Herod felt he had complete justification in enlarging the Temple area (even much more than Simon the Hasmonean). In the prophecies of Isaiah it stated that there would be a time when God's Temple in Jerusalem would be greatly enlarged and that even the eunuchs and Gentiles would find a justified position within the courts of that new Temple. Note the Scripture on this matter.

“Sing, O barren [because of the actions of the Suffering Servant], thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that dist not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate [women without children] than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent [make Zion larger to hold more people], and let them stretch forth the curtains [make the Temple curtains larger] of thine habitations [make larger your Temple courts]; spare not, lengthen thy cords [enlarge your Tent so more people can enter], and strengthen thy stakes [secure this enlarged habitation of God].”<sup>589</sup>

Herod convinced the Jewish authorities in his time that it was proper to enlarge the size of the Temple and to include sections in it that would pertain to Gentiles and others who were not ritualistically pure in all circumstances. Herod got his way and produced, according to Josephus, one of the most majestic buildings that mankind had ever seen.

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Burnt Offering to make these areas to be centralized within the new dimensions of the Temple. In a word, the Holy of Holies was extended northward in the time of Simon and that of Herod. It was not situated over any stationary “Rock” like that under the Dome of the Rock. Indeed, the Holy of Holies was located in the southern part of the Temple platform in Solomon's time. In the Temple of Nehemiah and Hecateus it was moved 75 feet north of the southern wall. In Simon's Temple, the Holy of Holies was moved 150 feet north of the southern wall. And in Herod's Temple it was moved 300 feet north of the southern wall (indeed it was in the center of the square platform which was 600 feet by 600 feet). This means that while Herod constructed his final chamber for the Holy of Holies, the former chamber remained in operation alongside until the new one was finished in eighteen months. When the new one was finally finished, it was then dedicated as a *new* Holy of Holies in the year 19 C.E. This *new* Holy of Holies is what the Jewish authorities in the time of Jesus said had been built 46 years ago (John 2:20). This means that the site of the Holy of Holies (as well as the Altar of Burnt Offering) has moved short distances from former sites as the Temple itself was extended in size. The final enlargement was in the time of Herod.

<sup>589</sup> Isaiah 54:1-2.

The structure he built to contain the Temple complex on its top platform was awesome indeed. We have the eyewitness report of Josephus concerning its dimensions and position. The Temple was actually built on the top of a 40/45 story *tower* that ascended above the floor of the Kedron Valley. It had the Gihon Spring within its confines and it reached up to a height that most people at the time (and even for us today) would have considered of utmost splendor and majesty. It is time that the modern world realizes just how magnificent the Temple of Herod was. Indeed, when its dimensions are given, any reasonable person would have to agree with Josephus (the eyewitness) that it is almost unbelievable that such a spectacular building could exist on earth in that time period. The fact is, however, the Temple on the top of that 40/45 story *tower* is fully proved by the eyewitness accounts who saw it in its glory.

### **The Shape and Dimensions of Herod's Temple**

Josephus plainly stated as an eyewitness that the southern wall of Fort Antonia was located about a *stade* (600 feet) *north* of the northwestern corner of the outer Temple walls (with an open space between the two structures that was bridged by two colonnade roadways about 600 feet long). I will give the details of these dimensions in later chapters of this book. The walls surrounding the Temple and supporting the platform on which the Temple itself stood were also a *stade* in length (600 feet) on each side, making a perfect square. On the east side, the foundation of the wall went down 100 cubits (150 feet) *below* the surface of the Kedron Valley, and there was a further 300 cubits (450 feet) up to the platform on which was placed the colonnades that were 20 cubits (38 feet) high built around the Temple. The Temple complex looked like a palatial *penthouse* on top of a square-shaped skyscraper that was 40/45 stories high.

In effect, the Temple and its four walls were *a single high TOWER* standing alone like any 40/45 story building now in New York or Chicago. It was 600 feet square and it occupied a whole square block. Practically the whole of the southern wall had a double storied colonnade from west to east (with the pinnacle at the southeast angle). This portico had a special name. It was called the

“Royal Portico.” This means it was related to royalty or in honor of royalty in some manner. We know in the New Testament that in the time of Herod and Jesus there was such a portico associated with a royal person. That individual was Solomon who began the building of the Temple in the first place. Since we are told by Josephus that the southern part of the east wall (and the east part of the southern wall) where the pinnacle was located was a section of the wall attributed to Solomon, it stands to reason that “Solomon’s Portico” (mentioned in Acts 3:11) must have been the two storied colonnade associated with those parts of the wall belonging to the first builder of the Temple — to Solomon himself. This means that the “Royal Portico” and “Solomon’s Portico” were one and the same. That part of the Temple was along the southern wall.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> There is another way to show this and one that gives more precision. It will be recalled that Josephus said Herod “doubled” the size of the Temple platform from that Temple which preceded him (*War* 1.21,1). Since Herod’s Temple platform was a square of 600 feet on each side, it stands to reason that the previous Temple built anew by Simon the Hasmonean was about 300 feet on each side. Recall, however, that Hecateus (who saw the Temple about 190 years before Simon) said the Temple was then only 150 feet wide and 500 feet long. “The Jews have only one fortified city; they call it Jerusalem. Nearly in the center of the city stands a stone wall [of the Temple], enclosing an area about 500 feet long and 150 feet broad, approached by a pair of gates” (Josephus, *Contra Apion* 1.22). This eastern wall of 150 feet was a part of Nehemiah’s Temple who rebuilt that of Solomon. Josephus said that only *this part* of the wall (restricted to 150 feet in the east and a longer stretch on the southern wall toward the west) was a part of Solomon’s former construction. So, in Herod’s Temple, the northern half of the wall of the Temple platform was built by Herod. The southern half was divided in two parts of 150 feet each — the northern 150 feet were those of the brand new Temple built by Simon the Hasmonean, and the southern 150 feet (that which was observed by Hecateus) was Nehemiah’s reconstruction of Solomon’s Temple walls. This means that “Solomon’s Portico” had to be restricted to this southern region of the Temple. And since Josephus said the extreme southern flank of the Temple platform was graced with the large covered area called the “Royal Portico,” this most likely is to be identified with what the New Testament called “Solomon’s Portico” (or “Porch”) where the apostles were accustomed to assemble to speak with the crowds in the Temple enclosure. Remember too, each time the Temple platform was extended northward, the Holy of Holies had to be moved *northward* each time to continue being in the center of the Temple in its north/south axis. The Holy of Holies was NOT positioned over a natural and stationary “Rock” like that now under the Dome of the Rock. That “Rock” was always a part of the Baris (and finally) Fort

On top of this 40/45 story skyscraper called the Temple, one found all the other buildings that made up the Temple itself. Imagine too that at the top, and at the northwest corner of this 40/45 story building, there were two colonnade roadways that led northward to a much larger building straddling about three square blocks in area. This northern building would answer to the Haram or Fort Antonia.

If you can visualize this scene (as we have illustrated in the pictures accompanying this book), then you have an idea of what Josephus (an eyewitness) saw before the Temple was ruined. Another eyewitness was Barnabas. He said 15 years after the war that the Temple was indeed *a SINGLE TOWER*: He called it "*THEIR TOWER* [the Temple] shall he give up to destruction; and it happened according to that which the Lord had spoken."<sup>591</sup>

On the other hand, the Haram was not a *single tower*, while the Temple was shaped like a 40/45 story *TOWER* [like a modern skyscraper in New York or Chicago] with the Sanctuary located on its top platform. Barnabas said it was a *tower*, and his description is backed up with the depictions of the Temple and its walls as shown by Josephus and others. It is time that the world realizes just what the actual Temple was like.

When we look further at the real dimensions of the Temple of Herod, it will be seen that the Temple had nothing to do with the Haram esh-Sharif, with the exception that it had two colonnade roadways (they were both 600 feet long) that led from the northwest Temple wall to the southwestern corner of the Haram. The Haram itself was Fort Antonia. There can be no doubt that this is true.

The Temple of Herod and Jesus was built on a platform on top of a 40/45 story *tower* that was 600 feet south of Fort Antonia. It is important in New Testament studies that the parameters of this *real* Temple that Herod built be understood and appreciated (and not the one that modern scholars and religious leaders falsely place at the Haram esh-Sharif). This will help us to comprehend the fun-

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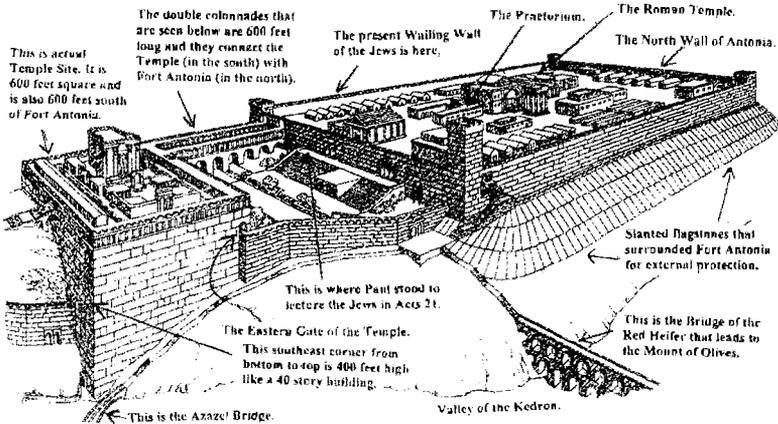
Antonia, NOT a sanctified "Rock" of the Temple.

<sup>591</sup> *Barnabas* 16:6.

damental teachings of early Christianity. The next section of this book will explain.

A Prospect of the Temple and Fort Antonia from the Mount of Offense (looking northwestward)

[If one will read the eyewitness accounts of Josephus, without preconceived ideas, the Temples and Fort Antonia will appear approximately as they are drawn below.]



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