
Chapter 24

CRITICAL PROBLEMS FACING SIMON THE HASMONEAN

LET US NOTICE some important historical observations from the Bible and secular history that explain what Simon the Hasmonean had to do in order to re-establish what he considered to be a proper divine worship for the Jewish people in Jerusalem.

The Book of First Maccabees tells us that at the beginning of Simon's reign (after he dislodged the Macedonians from the *Akra* on the southern tip of the crescent ridge), he first began to reinforce the *Akra* and the original Temple Mount.⁴⁸⁶ This initial action of Simon returned the geographical situation to the *status quo* that had existed before the time when Antiochus Epiphanes desolated the Temple in 167 B.C.E. But to Simon, this former

⁴⁸⁶ I Maccabees 14:37.

status quo presented a problem of the first magnitude concerning the security of the Jewish people at their capital of Jerusalem. This former geographical situation left the *Akra* in a location of invulnerability and potentially it was still a fortress that could be used to threaten Israel at a future time if the Gentiles would recapture it. It was because of this future possibility, among other things that I will soon relate, that Simon devised a momentous plan.

Simon decided to change his mind about the *Akra*. After securing all of Jerusalem, he stopped the rebuilding of the *Akra* (which the Jews were again fortifying). Josephus states that Simon consulted with the authorities in Jerusalem and they all confirmed it was better for the protection of the nation and the Temple that the *Akra* should have its summit reduced in size.⁴⁸⁷ They then assigned men to begin the destruction of that southern summit. As Josephus stated: "So they all set to and began to level the hill."⁴⁸⁸ After accomplishing this leveling, the result made the adjacent hill called the *Ophel* (on which the Temple stood) higher than the former *Akra*.⁴⁸⁹ But Simon went even further than this. He thought it was prudent if he thoroughly leveled the *Akra* to the ground, to the very bedrock. And this he did. Josephus said they continued their work and finally "razed the *Akra* to the ground."⁴⁹⁰ Josephus said: "So they all set to and began to level the hill [the *Akra*], and without stopping work night or day, after three whole years brought it down to the ground and the surface of the plain."⁴⁹¹

They cut to the bedrock the *Akra*. This meant that the *Ophel* knoll just to the north (on which the Temple stood) was then higher in elevation than the *Akra* as Josephus stated.⁴⁹² But this did not end the matter. With the *Akra* cut down, the Temple was now left without a fortress to protect it.

This new condition would have allowed the Temple to be completely vulnerable to enemy attack. There was, however, another

⁴⁸⁷ *War* V.4,1.

⁴⁸⁸ *Antiquities* XIII.6,7.

⁴⁸⁹ *War* V.4,1.

⁴⁹⁰ *War* I.2,2.

⁴⁹¹ *Antiquities* XIII.6,7 words in brackets mine.

⁴⁹² *War* V.4,1 see the Whiston and Cornfeld translations.

problem that Simon encountered. Besides the threat of Gentile enemies there was a domestic reason why the early Jewish authorities realized they needed a fortress next to the Temple. This was essential in order to protect ordinary law-abiding worshippers in Israelite society from unruly Israelites who may have had intentions to revolt and to go to war. A fortress next to the Temple was needed to supervise the crowds if they would become actively disturbed. Recall that vast crowds were accustomed to congregate in the Temple at the three festival seasons of the Jews. At times those crowds could become unruly or agitated and armed forces were necessary to quell the worshippers as the need arose.⁴⁹³

Simon was presented with a major problem. The original *Akra* (the City of David or Zion) had been leveled to the ground. There was no longer a fortress adjacent to the Temple for protection purposes and to supervise the worshippers. This new geographical situation was not conducive to maintaining a peaceful social existence in Jerusalem, even among Jews. This weak environment of insecurity could not be allowed to continue. Simon then made a significant decision.

Simon and the Jewish authorities noticed a prophecy in Isaiah 29 that the whole of the City of David (then called *Ariel*) was prophesied by God to be leveled to the ground. Indeed, such destruction of the original Zion is effectively what Simon and the people of Jerusalem had done. It took them three years of night and day work to chisel and to shovel the whole mountain of Zion down to the very ground. The prophecy may have given the authorities the vindication they needed to demolish the mountain of Zion (since it gave them God's approval in the enterprise).

The actual Mount Zion was effectively removed (demolished) from the surface of the earth. We will soon see that before Simon had Mount Zion destroyed, he moved as many (probably most) of the buildings (including David's tomb) up to the southeast ridge in what became known as the Upper City. In effect, Simon simply moved "Mount Zion" and most of its buildings directly west across

⁴⁹³ Josephus gave an astute observation that was always true. He said: "It is on these festive occasions that sedition is most apt to break out" (*War* 1.4,3).

the Tyropoeon Valley and up to the top of the western hill.

This accomplishment of cutting down to the ground the former Mount Zion with its citadel, though wonderful in its engineering feat, still left the Temple without a fortress to protect it or to supervise the crowds at the times when Israelites would come in droves to the capital city. Something more had to be done to re-introduce a new Citadel that Israelites could supposedly control.

In simple terms, Simon and the Jewish authorities had completely destroyed the original city of Jerusalem (with its Citadel and Mount Zion) and they left the southeast ridge without its former *Akra*. What an anachronism! What had once been a high area called "Mount Zion" and reckoned as being the "utmost heights," was so leveled to the ground that it now became known as "the Lower City." This was a major geographical alteration for the area.

The Building of a New Zion on the Western Ridge

Nostalgia as well as good common sense made Simon and the authorities at Jerusalem select a new area to be called "Mount Zion." They did this by tearing down many of the original buildings on the former Mount Zion and rebuilt them in a new area. They picked the region just to the west of the former (and original) Zion. As stated before, they transferred almost everything up to that new area. This included even the Tomb of David.⁴⁹⁴ They built a new cenotaph for David and from the time of Simon onward, it was this newly rebuilt area that became known as "Mount Zion" and the new official place for the "Tomb of David"⁴⁹⁵ They

⁴⁹⁴ Clearly, the original Tomb of David was located in the vicinity of the City of David on the southeast hill called the original Zion. But when Simon thoroughly demolished Mount Zion, a place had to be found for the Tomb of David that had become revered by the Jewish populace. A new tomb (or cenotaph) was constructed on the western hill and renamed the Tomb of David. When this new tomb was built, there may have been upwards of three thousand talents transferred to it because Josephus said John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon the Hasmonean, took that amount from David's Tomb to pay mercenary troops and he was "the first Jew to start this practice" (*War* 1.2.5).

⁴⁹⁵ When we are told by Josephus that in the time of John Hyrcanus (*Antiquities* XIII.8,4; *War* 1.2,5) and also in the time of King Herod (*Antiquities* XVI.7,1) that the Tomb of David was pillaged, it must be understood that the

did not stop with the moving of David's Tomb.

They continued their duplication of the new Zion on the western hill. They also built the Palace of the Hasmoneans on the slopes of that Upper City in the same south/north position that David's and Solomon's palaces had been positioned on the eastern ridge. Also, since the former home of the High Priest (such as Eliashib in the time of Nehemiah) had his home near David's former palace on the original Mount Zion on the southeast ridge, they now moved the new High Priestly residence up to the same south/north dimension in the Upper City. What they did, in essence, was to recreate a new *Mount Zion* in the region of the Upper City. Just like our ancestors in the New World wanted to perpetuate memories of their home city of York, they built a new city on lower Manhattan island and called it "New York." What Simon did was to make a "New Zion" when they completely destroyed the original Zion on the southeast ridge down to the very bedrock.⁴⁹⁶ Indeed, the first

region of the Tomb in those periods was in the Upper City. It had already been moved from its former area at the *base* of Mount Zion on the southeast ridge to the top of the southwest hill — the new burial site for David. We have the account mentioned in the travels of Benjamin of Tudela in the twelfth century that 15 years before the traveler got to Jerusalem the Rabbi Abraham of Jerusalem told him the story of two workmen who were helping to rebuild a wall of a church that had collapsed in the Upper City. About noontime, they found a cavern that they thought to enter. They said they peered in and saw a large chamber resting on pillars of marble overlaid with silver and gold. There was a table of gold with a scepter and crown. They also saw coffins [plural] in the chamber. At this moment they tried to enter the chamber, but they encountered a fierce wind that caused them to appear as dead men until evening. They aroused and heard a man's voice say: "Arise and go forth from this place." They immediately left and went to the Christian Patriarch and informed him of the incident. Benjamin then said the Patriarch summoned Rabbi Abraham who informed them that they had discovered the Tomb of David and other kings of Israel. Because the workmen who discovered the site were terrified, the Patriarch and the Rabbi decided to close up the area and to hide it. Rabbi Abraham told Benjamin of Tudela these things. Whatever one wants to make of the story (and Josephus tells us of similar miraculous events in Herod's time that frightened him when he opened the Tomb), it was thought by both Christians and Jews in the time of Benjamin of Tudela that David's Tomb was indeed located on the new Mount Zion in the Upper City. See Joseph Simon, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* (Malibu, CA: Pangloss Press), pp.84–86.

⁴⁹⁶ A further example is that of Constantine when he decided to make Byz-

Mount Zion ceased to be a mountain.

In a word, the Jewish authorities simply moved the whole of what was formerly "Mount Zion" westward across the Tyropoeon Valley and up to the Upper City. This was done in an official manner. That is why in the time of Jesus and Josephus, Mount Zion was no longer reckoned on the southeast hill (which had been totally obliterated). Mount Zion was then acknowledged by all in Jerusalem to be on the southwest hill. Since the word "Zion" came to mean something like our "Capital" (head of the government in Roman times), we find many areas and/or buildings that were located far from Rome (where the original Capital was located) were still called "capitals" in other areas of the world. Indeed, each of our fifty states in the United States of America has its "Capital," but these capitals are in different areas than the original Capital in Washington, D.C. (and far from the original "Capital" at Rome).

And so it was with the name "Zion." The new area for the government buildings in Jerusalem became the region of the southwestern hill (the Upper City). From the time Simon and the Jerusalem authorities moved the "Capital" to that area, this new site became known as "Zion" and the original site was forgotten. It made good sense to the ancients to re-name the southwestern area "Zion," and the procedure is not even foreign to us in modern times.

More than Zion was Moved

When the original Mount Zion was completely destroyed, this also removed the former *Akra* that was the main fortress that protected the Temple and helped to supervise the crowds that would come to Jerusalem for the festival periods. But the Temple still needed a fortress to protect it. That is when they noticed the area to the north of the Temple called the *Baris*. It was there that the Has-

antium on the Bosphorus to be the "New Rome." Constantine even chose the "seven hills" of Byzantium to duplicate the "seven hills" of Rome on the Tiber. Simon also felt that it was incumbent for the preservation of traditional and religious values that the geographical features of the original Zion (that he had effectively destroyed) should be perpetuated on the western slope of his "New Jerusalem."

monean began to build their fortress for the Temple. This was where the Dome of the Rock now stands.

It was Simon and his immediate successors who started to build the walls around the area and these were the first walls that made up what we call the Haram esh-Sharif today. When Herod came on the scene, he even enlarged the *Baris* and changed its name to honor Mark Anthony. So, Fort Antonia came into existence *north* of the Temple whereas the original fortress (the *Akra*) was in the *south* and on the original Mount Zion before the mountain was destroyed by Simon and the people at Jerusalem. This new northern fortress was located at a perfect spot for protecting the Temple just to its south.

Biblical Reasons for Building a “New Zion”

There were teachings in the Holy Scriptures that gave Simon and the Jewish authorities the permission they required to accomplish the task of rebuilding the Temple and constructing a “New Zion” in an area that was different from previous ages. Simon looked for biblical authority to accomplish the new building schemes he and the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem were planning.

Simon, being the High Priest and the king of the nation, knew that the former Tabernacle could legitimately move from place to place with God’s approval. This fact alone made it appear proper for Simon to enlarge the Temple and expand it into any area in Zion within the mountain district called *Moriah*. The Holy Scriptures made it clear that all mountains in the Jerusalem area were “the mountains of Zion.”⁴⁹⁷

Simon knew that Zion consisted of “mountains” (plural), not one single mountain. This fact also applied to the term “Moriah.” It is clear in the Holy Scriptures that every mountain in the Jerusalem area was also called “Moriah.” In Genesis 22:2 it shows that the whole district that later became known as Jerusalem was called “the Land of Moriah.” Abraham was told to take Isaac to “one of the mountains” in the area of “Moriah.” This indicates that the

⁴⁹⁷ Psalm 133:3.

term "Moriah" was the name of a mountain range in the area of Jerusalem. All the summits of those hills were designated as being a "Moriah." The term was not restricted to what later people called the Dome of the Rock.

Thus, the word "Moriah" refers to a *district* that encompassed Jerusalem, and the word "Zion" embraced all the mountains in the Jerusalem district. Simon and the Jewish authorities understood these geographical points. Indeed, "Zion" (often spelled "Sion" in Christian circles) not only signified all the mountains of Jerusalem, there are many biblical references that the whole of the city of Jerusalem became recognized as being "Zion." Besides that, the corporate nation of Israel (or Judah) was also called "Zion."⁴⁹⁸ Indeed, the name "Zion" was not even confined to the area of Jerusalem. Micah prophesied that "Zion" would leave Jerusalem and dwell in a field outside its walls. "You [Zion] shall go forth out of the city, and you shall dwell in the field."⁴⁹⁹ Even this did not limit its meaning because "Zion" would be transported farther afield. Micah said: "Thou [Zion] shalt go even to Babylon."⁵⁰⁰ The designation of "Zion" would stay in Babylon long enough to bear children.⁵⁰¹ The prophet Zechariah also confirmed this teaching of Micah by stating that "Zion" would finally be delivered from its residence in Babylon. "Deliver yourself, O Zion, that dwells with the daughter of Babylon."⁵⁰²

What the Holy Scriptures show is the fact that the name "Zion" as a topographical or spiritual designation was capable of moving around in a geographical manner into quite a number of areas. It was not even restricted to this earth. The word reached even into heaven. We find that "Zion" came to signify the heavenly Jerusalem where God had his dwelling. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."⁵⁰³

⁴⁹⁸ Micah 4:10.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰² Zechariah 2:7.

⁵⁰³ Hebrews 12:22.

In a word, “Zion” was able to denote *any place* that could designate an area (or a people) in which God dwelt. “Zion” really came to mean “the Dwelling Place of God.” From the scriptural point of view, it made no difference where on earth or in heaven God dwelt, that dwelling place was reckoned as being “Zion.” Simon the Hasmonean and the Jewish authorities were well aware of this biblical fact. They felt they had the biblical authority to name a new area of Jerusalem “Zion.” They knew that any place they selected in the Jerusalem area to build new government buildings and to build a new Citadel for the protection of the Temple could be justified by the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

The Prophetic Authority to Destroy Old Zion

The prophecies of Isaiah spoke of the City of David (its mountain and citadel called the *Akra*) being cut down and lowered to below bedrock. The utter destruction found in the prophetic statements in Isaiah about the City of David show that the very mountains themselves would be leveled to the ground and they would no longer exist. Indeed, the destruction would be so thorough that no plunder would ever be taken from the area of David’s former city. These prophecies of Isaiah (chapters 25 to 35) could not refer to the destructions of Jerusalem by either Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes (or even later by the Romans in 70 C.E.) because abundant plunder was taken on those occasions by the invaders. The original City of David, however, was to be destroyed “forever.” Simon the Hasmonean and the Jewish authorities were certainly aware of these prophecies in Isaiah about the destruction of the original Zion.

The prophecies of Isaiah in chapters 25 to 35 must have been the very predictions that prompted Simon the Hasmonean and the Jewish authorities to cut down the *Akra* (the City of David). They may have considered, at first, that they were within that period known as “the time of end.” Indeed, since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (to which I will soon refer), many of which were written at the time of Simon the Hasmonean, they speak about that period as being the End-Time. Simon and the Jewish authorities may at first have shared this belief. They could easily have imag-

ined that the prophecies of Isaiah about God having His hand in destroying Zion (even to below bedrock) could legitimately find fulfillment in their time. Whatever the case, they could read that God himself was not keen on the continuance of the original Mount Zion, and the Isaiahan prophecies proved this to Simon.

God Prophesied Cutting Down Original Mount Zion

The prophecy in Isaiah 29 that God gave against *Ariel* (another name for Jerusalem) is a prediction that many people have not understood. Indeed, in Isaiah 29 the text shows that “the vision of all” given in the first eight verses of the chapter would be closed and sealed so that even the educated and the uneducated in Israel would not be able to comprehend the prophecy’s full meaning. This is in spite of the fact that the vision of God’s destruction upon the City of David was written plainly in a book for all to read.⁵⁰⁴ The prophecy stated that only at a later time would God open the eyes and ears of Israel to realize what God meant about the destruction of the original Mount Zion.

According to the prophet Isaiah, God would take away the covering of blindness about these matters that God has placed over the eyes of all individuals on earth. At the End-Time people would begin to comprehend these prophetic and historical matters (which the New Testament said would come with the advent and the teachings of Jesus).⁵⁰⁵

It is a remarkable fact, when one reads the prophetic information recorded within those eleven chapters of Isaiah, it could easily have fit the historical period of Simon the Hasmonean in a manner verging on precision. So close to the historical accounts is this Isaiahan prophecy of eleven chapters with the events recorded in Maccabees, Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls regarding the period of Simon the Hasmonean, that one would be tempted to say those eleven chapters of Isaiah were even composed within the period of Simon. This, however, was not the case. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls was discovered a complete manuscript of Isaiah

⁵⁰⁴ Verses 8–17.

⁵⁰⁵ Isaiah 25:6–8.

that can be dated long before the time of Simon and it shows that these prophecies of Isaiah were predictions on the destruction of the original Zion were written prior to the period of Simon the Hasmonean. On the other hand, the fulfillment of many of those Isaiahan prophecies in the time of Simon makes perfectly good sense. The agreement of these eleven chapters of prophecy in Isaiah with the history in Simon's time is remarkably close.

What the Prophecies of Isaiah State

Look first at Isaiah 29. It begins by predicting: "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! Add ye year to year, let the feasts run their round" (verse 1, literal meaning). God stated that He would personally distress *Ariel* (a symbolic name of Jerusalem). This destruction was to happen when Israel was at peace and celebrating their feasts. God was going to place Jerusalem upon their own Altar of Burnt Offering (Jerusalem on the "Altar" would become itself an "Ariel") and the "sacrifice" of the original Zion would be consumed to ashes just like the fires on the Altar consumed the animal sacrifices.⁵⁰⁶

Look at the following verse. It shows God marshaling siege works to completely destroy (to bedrock) the City of David (*Ariel*).

"And thou shalt be *brought down*, and shalt speak out *of the ground*, and thy speech shall be *low out of the dust*, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit *out of the ground* [like a ghost out of the grave], and thy speech shall whisper *out of the dust*" (verse 4).

God then said,

"the multitude of *thy* [Zion's] strangers [the Gentiles occupying the Citadel of the City of David and dominating the Temple] shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones [then in Jerusalem] shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire."⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ Verse 2.

⁵⁰⁷ Verses 5 and 6.

This shows that a judgment from God would destroy the very foundations of the original City of David (*Ariel*) in order to prevent Gentiles from occupying Zion (the Citadel). This destruction was to occur at a peaceful time in Israel when the nation was celebrating their holy festivals without hindrance.

No other time in history fits the fulfillment of Isaiah 29 other than that of Simon, and it does so with remarkable similarities (at least Simon and the Jewish authorities must have thought so). The outcome was the total demolition of what was once Mount Zion. It was leveled to the ground — to the bedrock. Zion went underground. What was once a high and eminent mountain was utterly destroyed and the place became known as the “Lower City” of Jerusalem. We will soon see that Simon (and later kings) built a new Zion on the western mountain that became known as the “Upper City.”

Isaiah Said God Would Destroy Zion

Recall that Jerusalem is located in one of the most severe earthquake zones on earth. History attests to such devastating seismic disturbances striking the area from time to time. In the prophecies of Isaiah the initial phase of his predicted destruction of the City of David is attributed to such an earthquake and the flame of a devouring fire.⁵⁰⁸ Interestingly, I will soon show that there was a Psalm written by the “Teacher of Righteousness” of the Dead Sea Community that used the same type of judgmental language as that of Isaiah to describe (as an eyewitness) what was happening in Palestine at the very time of Simon. The Psalm describes in vivid detail an earthquake and a consequent fire that destroyed whole sections of the land in and around Jerusalem. The Psalm and Isaiah 29:6 dovetail in their themes in a precise way. I will record this Psalm of destruction later in this book when I discuss the Dead Sea Scrolls and their relevance for this historical period.

What do these predictions in the Book of Isaiah denote? The prophecies state that the City of David (*Ariel*) would be lowered in height and submerged to the level of the bedrock. Mount Zion

⁵⁰⁸ Isaiah 29:6.

would descend into an underground state. So destroyed would the area become that if Gentile nations in the future would assemble their armies to attack the City of David, the occasion would be like a hungry and thirsty man dreaming he was going to eat abundantly from the riches of Zion, but when he arrives at the geographical area of Jerusalem he wakes up and his armies find *nothing left* that could be plundered.⁵⁰⁹ In short, at the former site of the original City of David, God was going to cause a complete “emptiness” to exist.⁵¹⁰ The whole area was to be destroyed to below ground.

Simon the Hasmonean and the Jewish authorities could easily read these prophecies in Isaiah 29. Indeed, the prophecies seemed to fit perfectly with their time because the Syrian Gentiles had been housed in the Citadel (the very City of David) for some twenty years and they were constantly threatening the worshippers who tried to enter the Temple located alongside that City of David. But in Isaiah 29:5 God said he would make the strangers then located in the City of David to become like small dust and chaff, and that God would destroy them from Zion. This prophecy fits perfectly with the historical events. Recall that Simon had successfully captured the City of David (acting as God’s High Priest and as King of God’s children of Judah). Simon had thoroughly expelled the Syrian Gentiles from the Citadel (Zion). This action dovetailed precisely with the prophecy of Isaiah 29:5.

Other Isaiahan Prophecies About Mount Zion

The context of the eleven chapters of Isaiah (25 to 35) reveals the utter destruction of Zion and finally even the Temple Mount itself. Look at the beginning of the long prophecy in Isaiah chapter 25. Notice verse two. The Jewish Targum shows this prophecy to be a reference to Jerusalem. Isaiah said: “For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built [or, it will never be ‘rebuilt’].”

This prophecy of Isaiah fits the time of Simon the Hasmonean perfectly. The Syrian Gentiles were then (and had been for twenty

⁵⁰⁹ Isaiah 29:8.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

years) occupying the City of David (the Citadel), but Isaiah stated that the palace of the foreigners shall be destroyed and “*never be rebuilt.*” Notice the full prophecy of Isaiah 25:5. “Thou shalt bring down the noise of the strangers [the foreigners] ... the branch of the terrible ones *shall be brought low.*” Going on in verse 12 Isaiah predicts: “And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls *shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.*” This again is a prophecy of utter destruction of the fortress and the high fort of *thy walls* [of Judah’s walls, not Moab’s]. This is a prophecy about a cutting down to bedrock of a fortress — and the context of Isaiah 25 to 35 shows it refers to Jerusalem. Simon would have understood this prophecy as justification for cutting down Jerusalem’s Citadel in which the Syrian Gentiles had taken refuge [some of whose armed men could well have been from the territory of Moab to fit the context of the prophecy].

There is more. In the next chapter of Isaiah (chapter 26), Judah is finally provided with “a strong city” in which salvation will discover a foothold within its walls and bulwarks (verse 1). This new “strong city” will emerge once the original City of David (*Ariel*) had been cut down to the ground. This was after Jerusalem and its heights were lowered to the ground. Notice verse 5 (very similar in wording with Isaiah 25:12): “For he [God] *bringeth low* them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he *layeth it low*; he *layeth it low, even to the ground*; he [God] *bringeth it even to the dust.*” That does not end the words of judgment. In chapter 27 Isaiah states:

“He [God] maketh all the stones of the altar [the Altar of Burnt Offering in the former Temple] as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder [the Altar will be destroyed], the groves and images [once found in the Temple] shall not stand up. Yet the defended city [the City of David] shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness.”⁵¹¹

There is yet more. Even the Ophel hill (the hill on which the Temple stood that was located just to the north of the original Mount Zion) would become totally forsaken and made a place only for caves and dens. In the King James Version the word “Ophel” is

⁵¹¹ Isaiah 27:9–10.

rendered as “forts” in Isaiah 32:14. It reads: “The forts [Ophel Hill] and towers shall be for dens [caverns], a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks” (Isaiah 32:14). Yes, even the Ophel (the Temple Mount) would eventually become “a pasture of flocks” and a place of *caves*. This final chapter in the destruction of Ariel (Mount Zion) took place in 70 C.E. when the Romans destroyed the Temple to its very foundations. All that was left was a “pasture for flocks” and *caves* underneath the ground.

Later, when the prophecy states that Israel will be redeemed and brought back to their homelands, Isaiah predicted that Ariel (Mount Zion) would continue to remain “low.” “And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.... And the city [Jerusalem] shall be *low* in a *low place*.”⁵¹² This judgment against Jerusalem and the *Ophel* (as hewn-out caves) would last “forever.”

The prophecies of Isaiah stated that the original City of David would be ruined beyond repair. I will soon give evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls which gives eyewitness accounts that not only human destruction but “earthquakes and fire” did indeed rampage the area of Jerusalem in the time of Simon the Hasmonean. This physical destruction could have been another reason why Simon and the Jewish authorities deemed it necessary to apply human power to finally tear down to the bedrock the southeast ridge (the original Zion) and rebuild and enlarge the Sanctuary.

The historical accounts recorded in Josephus certainly support the fact that Simon the Hasmonean and the Jewish authorities did indeed demolish the entire hill that was formerly called Mount Zion. Before that hill was thoroughly destroyed, they moved what buildings and monuments that they could up to the western hill of Jerusalem in what later became known as the Upper City. They transferred as many of the former government buildings that they could and constructed even more new ones to beautify and to make practical the New Zion on the southwestern hill. They even built a new cenotaph for David that even the New Testament refers to as

⁵¹² Isaiah 32:18–19.

being in its new location in the Upper City.⁵¹³ This all makes sense when we realize all of the wonderful and grand building enterprises that Simon the Hasmonean accomplished under his rule.

In summary, what Simon the Hasmonean (and all the citizens of Jerusalem) performed was to cut down to the bedrock of the southeast ridge all the former building structures that had been erected upon that southeast ridge. For over a thousand years before David there was a city already built in the area (to take advantage of the Gihon Spring that was in the Kedron Valley) called *Migdal Edar* (Genesis 35:21; Micah 4:8) which no doubt produced many levels of occupation in the elevated *tel* that was established near the Gihon Spring. It was common in this era for cities to be built on top of older unoccupied or ruined cities, and in the same area (like being near a spring). The various cities would be increasingly elevated above the surrounding level ground. Note that the *tels* of Jericho, Megiddo and Hazor each had over twenty layers of occupation spanning many centuries of time, and *Migdal Edar* (a similar town) must have had layers of towns built on top of one another over several centuries. After *Migdal Edar* there was also the Canaanite city of *Jebus* built in the exact spot. That city could also have had several layers of occupation that raised the elevation of the *tel* even higher. When David conquered the city of *Jebus*, there could have been an accumulation of many earlier towns. What Simon the Hasmonean did was to destroy (cut down to the bedrock) the remains of those earlier towns of *Migdal Edar*, *Jebus* and the first *City of David* (up to Simon's own time). That whole elevated area would have been man-made (an artificial *tel*). Simon did not cut down a natural mountain. He only destroyed the layered remains of the former towns that existed in that singular area. The same was the case with the Ophel Mountain when the Romans later destroyed the Temple of Herod. And today, when we witness the area of the southeast ridge, we see it as it was first seen in its earliest historical period. Simon the Hasmonean and the people of Jerusalem leveled the former layers of various occupations of the earlier towns down to the natural bedrock. They actually took away "the Millo" (the great "fill-in" that helped to form the *tel*).

In the next chapter, I will show that Simon even built a brand new Temple in the same spot as *Migdal Edar*, *Jebus* and *Zion*.

⁵¹³ Acts 2:29.