

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990 USA
 © ASK, January 2020 • All rights reserved • Number 1/20

Telephone: 503 292 4352

• Internet: www.askelm.com •

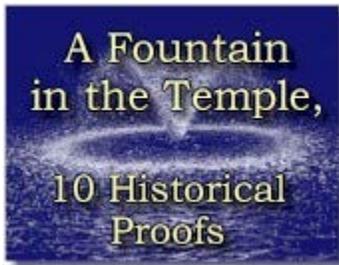
E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

A Fountain In the Temple, 10 Historical Proofs

by David Sielaff

Read first the January 1, 2020 Commentary, "[Water to Solomon's Temple](#)"

Then read the "[January 2020 Newsletter](#)"



In this article I point out 10 historical sources that show a fountain or a spring of running water was inside the sanctuary of the Temple. These sources expand upon the important biblical sources. Most all this material is in Dr. Ernest Martin's book, [The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot](#), especially Chapter 20: "[The Original Temple Over the Gihon Spring](#)" and Chapter 21, "[Necessary Spring Waters Within the Temples.](#)" Focusing on the historical information strengthens the evidence that the site of all the Temples was above and west of the Gihon Spring in the City of David.

On November 22, 2019 I presented at a meeting of the Near East Archaeological Society. My presentation was titled "~~Si~~ Nine Historical Sources of a Fountain in the Temples in Jerusalem."¹ Originally I was to present on six sources, then I decided to present more and changed the title (and now another one to make ten). All but one of the sources are to be found in Dr. Martin's *Temples* book. In this article I am expanding on Dr. Martin's information. While the biblical information is most important, non-biblical historical sources help us to "lock down" the evidence of the Temple(s) at the Gihon location.

A Quick Review about the Temple(s) in Jerusalem

Remember, there were four (4) Temple constructions and reconstructions in Jerusalem throughout the 900+ years that Temples of God were on earth in the City of David in Jerusalem. All the Temple(s) were in the same location. Those four were:

1. Solomon's original construction of the first Temple, begun ~950 BC, later destroyed by the armies of Babylon (~586 BC).

¹ In November 2007 I gave a presentation to the same organization, the NEAS. Professor George Wesley Buchanan presented on "The True Location of the Temples of Zion," published in written form as "[In Search of King Solomon's Temple.](#)" His research supported and expanded Dr. Martin's evidence. Following Buchanan, I gave my lecture, "[The Location of King David's Tomb.](#)"

2. Zerubbabel's reconstruction of the Temple by returning Jewish exiles 70 years after the Temple destruction. This is called "the second Temple." It lasted with modifications until 70 AD.
3. Simon the Hasmonean's destruction, reconstruction, and expansion of Zerubbabel's Temple.
4. King Herod the Great further expanded Simon's reconstruction. It was destroyed in 70 AD.²

There was only one authorized Jewish Temple in Jerusalem at a time. Evil kings of Judah raised altars to pagan gods. They were eventually torn down. When the Temple of Solomon was desecrated by pagan symbols and idols, they were removed. Unfortunately the kings, rulers, religious officials, and the people retained their desire to worship foreign gods which led to the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah (Exodus 22:20; Ezekiel 20:7).

Centuries after 70 AD, Roman emperors twice permitted the Jews to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple³:

- In the reign of Emperor Constantine from around 313–325 AD. Constantine later withdrew his authorization in 326 AD.
- During his 3-year reign, Emperor Julian the Apostate (361–363 AD) again authorized and allowed the Jews to rebuild the Temple. Julian died in 363. His successor withdrew the authorization.⁴

Four Evidence Categories of a Gihon Temple Location

Four categories of evidence demonstrate that the Temples all were above and west of the Gihon Spring (rather than the traditional site "somewhere" on the Haram esh-Sharif).⁵ The evidence categories are:

1. Evidence from Jesus' prophecies, eyewitness accounts of Josephus during and after the Roman siege of Jerusalem, and eyewitnesses (Jewish and Gentile) to conditions where the Temple was truly located after the destruction of 70 AD.
2. **Evidence of a source of water going into and flowing out of the Temple.**
3. Evidence of the location of Zion when the Solomonic Temple was built.
4. The description of Fort Antonia in Scripture and in the writings of Josephus the Jewish historian, as well as descriptions through the centuries that fit a Gihon location for the Temples.

All four are discussed in *Temples*. This article details the historical evidence of the second class of evidence listed above, the source of water. The biblical evidence is proven in Dr. Martin's book.

Water in the Temple

With this background in mind, I will present the ten non-biblical historical references to a fountain within

² See my May 2018 article "[A Short History of God's Temples](#)." For a detailed history, see "Part Three: A Biblical History of the Temples unto Herod the Great," pages 247–407 in [Temples](#).

³ Read about the two failed attempts in *Temples*, Chapter 12, "[Ruins of the Temple in Southeastern Jerusalem](#)."

Although no direct historical writings stating say so, later Jewish writings indicate a great desire to begin a Temple reconstruction during the Jewish Bar Kochba revolt from 132–136 AD in Judea, 60 years after the Temple was destroyed. The Jewish rebels issued coin illustrating the façade of the Temple from before its destruction in 70 AD. The city of Jerusalem may have been captured by the Jews in that war, but the evidence is not clear.

The Jewish rebellion against Roman rule was successful at its beginning, but the war ended in a very bloody Roman victory. There was no victory "triumph" celebration put on by Emperor Hadrian for his troops in Rome. Not to have a triumph was very unusual. The lack of records and almost no discussion of this victory by Roman historians may indicate the Roman military suffered horrific losses. Some historians wonder if the records were purged, even though Rome won the war.

⁴ *Temples*, Chapter 13, "[The First 'Western \(Wailing\) Wall](#)."

⁵ Do not believe anyone who says they "know" where on the Haram esh-Sharif the Temples were located. In *Temples*, chapter 8, "[Many Modern Sites for the Temples in Jerusalem](#)," Dr. Martin lists 7 locations on the Haram where the Temples were supposedly located on the alleged "Temple Mount." Since *Temples* was published in 2000, at least two other theories has been proposed.

the sanctuary of the Temple in a “rough” chronological order. The dates of some of these references are unclear, as you will see. There were two water systems at the Temple(s).

1. One system provided fresh free-flowing **“living water.”**⁶

“Washing with water held a considerable place in the Jewish temple-ceremony (Lev 11:32; 16:4; 17:15; 22:6; Nu 19:7; Ex 30:18; 40:7). Sacrifices were washed (Ex 29:4; Lev 1:9; 6:28; 14:5).”

“Water,” ISBE (7)⁷

“Living water” was also for ritual purification and cleansing those cured from illnesses and those defiled by touching an unclean body or other ritual impurity (Leviticus 15:16–22, 27). Living water was also used for ritual baths (*mikvaot*) for those entering the Temple environs. These were used from before the Herodian period.

2. The second water system used water collected in cisterns to flush and remove blood and waste residue from the sacrificial areas to the Kidron Valley to flow to the Dead Sea. Such cisterns were above the Temple area to allow further cleansing by pure “living water.”

I concentrate on the first **“living water”** system. The water systems were kept apart for ritual purity. I present these historical sources in rough chronological order.

First Historical Temple Fountain Reference — 3rd–2nd Century BC

The first and oldest non-Biblical historical reference to a fountain in the Temple is from the Greek Septuagint translation from the Hebrew of the Old Testament (hereafter the LXX). It tells us that Solomon built access for water to be within the sanctuary of the Temple along with other constructions. That water construction was translated to be a “fountain.”

The LXX was the first Jewish translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to a different language.

“[That] translation was taken over from the Jews by the Christian church. It was the Bible of most writers of the New Testament. Not only are the majority of their express citations from Scripture borrowed from it, but their writings contain numerous reminiscences of its language.

Its words are household words to them. It laid for them the foundations of a new religious terminology. It was a potent weapon for missionary work, and, when versions of the Scriptures into other languages became necessary, it was in most cases the Septuagint and not the Hebrew from which they were made.”

- **“Septuagint,” ISBE, Section 1, “Importance”**

That being said, Hebrew is the language of the Old Testament, and the Hebrew writings are the authoritative texts.⁸ When New Testament authors use the LXX or make their own translations from Hebrew, (1) they had the authority through inspiration to use the LXX, and (2) they had the right and authority to translate the Hebrew texts as their situation warranted and as they understood the texts, particularly prophetic fulfillment about Christ. To understand how this worked, read Dr. Martin’s article **“God’s Inspiration Made Clear,”** especially the portion, “Part 2. The Inspiration of the Bible.”

Extended Passages in the LXX, and One Important Passage

In the Septuagint are some extended or expanded passages containing information not found in the Hebrew

⁶ In Genesis 21:19 (Greek LXX), 26:19 (“**living water**” in most modern English translations); Numbers 19:17; Song of Solomon 4:15; Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13; Zechariah 14:8; John 4:10–11, 7:38; and Revelation 7:17).

⁷ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition, James Orr and Melvin Kyle, editors (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939).

⁸ Dr. Martin’s book *Restoring the Original Bible: the Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures*, explains why all the Scriptures are authoritative for living and for teaching others about God. His book also describes the process on how those compiled writings of both the Old and New Testaments became the Scriptures.

Masoretic text. Parts of the extended LXX passages have verses from other parts of the Bible inserted into the extended passages. One expanded LXX text is 1 Kings 2:35, composed mostly with added verses from elsewhere in 1 Kings. One portion in 1 Kings 2:35f is of interest regarding the Temple.

As an example of the difference, the King James Version of 1 Kings 2:35 has 28 English words. The English NETS (*New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 2008) text of 1 Kings 2:35 translated from the extended Greek LXX text has 407 English words. The original Greek text of the extended passage has 328 words.⁹

Most of the words and sentences in the extended 1 Kings 2:35 are from verses brought from elsewhere in the Old Testament and attached to 1 Kings 2:35. In fact, little information is unique, except for one phrase in what is designated as 1 Kings 2:35e.

Below are 151 of the 407 English words of the LXX 1 Kings 2:35 in the NETS translation. I quote it at length to show how unusually large this one verse is. In the passage there are no misspellings. This is how the NETS translates the names:

“(35a)¹⁰ ([1 Kings] 4.29) And the Lord gave Salomon discernment and very great wisdom and breadth of mind like the sand which is by the sea, (35b) and the discernment of Salomon was greatly multiplied above the discernment of all ancient sons and above all prudent ones of Egypt. ...

(35c) (3.1) And he took the daughter of Pharaoh and brought her into the city of Daud until he first finished his house and the house of the Lord and the wall of Ierousalem round about; in seven years he made and finished them. (35d) And Salomon had seventy thousand bearing a burden and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country.

Now comes the important and unique part of the verse, in (35e):

(35e) (7.23) And Salomon MADE the sea and the great washbasins and the pillars and THE FOUNTAIN OF THE COURT and the bronze sea. (35f) And he built the citadel and its defenses, and he cut through [cut in half] the city of Daud; ...”

• LXX, 3 Reines [Kings] 2:35a–35f, NETS

The context is all about the Temple. How did Solomon “make ... the fountain of the court” operational?¹¹ We do not know, but this historical passage says it was so. Solomon must have accessed a vertical channel (perhaps Warren’s Shaft), and opened the top of the hill of the City of David. He did this so the Gihon water, under great pressure was propelled up to the Temple, built on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite as God told David (2 Samuel 24:18, 21, 24; 1 Chronicles 13:9, 21:15, 18, 21–22, 28; 2 Chronicles 3:1). The same system could provide water to Solomon’s palace near the Temple and to the terraced hillsides of the City of David as he turned it into an area for his pleasure and for food production:

“I made me great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that brings forth trees.”

• Ecclesiastes 2:4–6

Solomon’s Engineering Wisdom?

Solomon performed an engineering marvel without ruining the syphon pump structure of the Gihon spring.

⁹ The English translation (by Brenton, 1851) and the Greek text can be read side-by-side at <https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=11&page=2>.

¹⁰ The numbers in parentheses with “35” such as (35e) break up the extended English translation into sections. When two numbers are in parentheses, such as the first set: (35a) (4.29), the (35a) indicates the “a” portion of the extended passage. The (4.29) indicates the text is taken from or relates to 1 Kings 4:29 of the Hebrew text. This is the standard system for LXX English translations.

¹¹ The phrase “the fountain of the court” occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew or Greek Old Testament.

The water normally flowing south and east into the Kidron Valley must have been directed so it would flow upward to the top of the hill.¹² (The word “Gihon” in Hebrew means “gusher” in English.) The fountain’s flow would have been intermittent, like a geyser (like at Yellowstone National Park) but without the steam. The hydraulic principal is much the same.

The extended LXX verse continues with 247 more English words. The information contained in section (35e), “**And Salomon made the sea ... and the fountain of the court and the bronze sea,**” directly states that there was a fountain in the court of the Temple. That “**fountain**”:

- was distinct from “**the sea**” (requiring a great amount of water) “**... and the supports**” of the sea;
- was different from “**the great washbasins**”; and
- was not “**the bronze sea.**”

The Masoretic Hebrew text does not contain the phrase “**the fountain of the court.**” Therefore, the phrase is not biblical, but it is historical from the 2nd century BC.

The LXX **Greek** text of 1 Kings **2:35**, particularly (35e) corresponds roughly to both the **Hebrew** text of 1 Kings **7:23** and the **Greek** text of 1 Kings 7:23, more so than any other biblical text. The Greek (and English) phrase “**the fountain in the Temple**” is rendered the same in three translations:

- [1] the 1851 *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Lancelot Brenton [see footnote 7 above],
 [2] the NETS 2008 English translation, and
 [3] *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear Septuagint*.

Here is the morphological breakdown of the phrase “**the fountain of the court**” of the Temple¹³:

καὶ	τὴν	κρήνην	τῆς	αὐλῆς	
C	DASF	NASF	DGSF	NGSF	
and	the	fountain	of the	court	

C = conjunction
 DASF = Definite Article Accusative Singular Feminine
 NASF = Noun Accusative Singular Feminine
 DGSF = Definite Article Genitive Singular Feminine
 NGSF = Noun Genitive Singular Feminine

What does this phrase about “**the fountain of the court**” tell us?

1. This phrase was purposely inserted by Jewish scholars translating into Greek.
2. The phrase is unique. It is not referred to in any Hebrew text, nor in the Jewish Talmuds, Philo, Josephus, New Testament, nor in any of the early Christian Fathers.
3. The translation may have been done from Hebrew manuscripts that contained the phrase, but were not of the Masoretic Hebrew texts.¹⁴
4. The translators knew about a Temple fountain and thought it important to insert it into the extended passage.
5. Its inclusion is a simple, straightforward statement, not embellished in any way.
6. There would be no reason to make up an untrue statement about the fountain in the Temple.
7. There was biblical support in Ezekiel and Joel describing a present and future Temple fountain

¹² For more information, see Professor George Wesley Buchanan’s, “[Running Water in the Temple of Zion](#)” for details besides Dr. Martin’s *Temples*.

¹³ Randall Tan and David A. deSilva, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear Septuagint; Ralphs Edition* (Logos Bible Software, 2009), 3 Kingdoms 2:35e.

¹⁴ The Masoretic text is the authoritative Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

that could be seen in Solomon's Jerusalem and in the second Zerubbabel Temple.¹⁵

8. This fountain provided the great amounts of the "living water" necessary for ritual purification.
9. There is no evidence of aqueducts bringing water to the Temple from outside Jerusalem.
10. The Gihon Spring was the only source of water for the entire city of Jerusalem in Solomon's time and in Nehemiah's, Ezra's, and Zerubbabel's time.

Dr. Martin commented on the 1 Kings 2:35 LXX passage in *Temples*, Chapter 22: "[Where Was the Akra?](#)"

The Jewish Encyclopedia Acknowledges There Was a Fountain in the Temple

The concept of a fountain in the Temple in Solomon's time has long been understood by Jewish scholars. The 1906 edition of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* tells of a fountain in the Temple in relation to the Holy of Holies:

"Another phenomenon was the water-supply. A spring rising below the Holy of Holies from an opening as narrow as the antenna of a locust increased when it reached the entrance to the Hekal to the size of a warp-thread; at the entrance to the vestibule it assumed the size of a woof-thread; and at the house of David it became an overflowing brook ([Babylonian Talmud,] Yoma 77b, 78a).

This spring is referred to in the [biblical] passage 'And behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house ... at the south side of the altar' (Ezekiel 47:1-2); it was the mysterious spring that filled the bath of Ishmael the high priest, situated by the attic of Abtinas on the south of the court, at the water-gate."

• *Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906, article "Temple, Administration and Service of"*

While this *Jewish Encyclopedia* article confirms a "spring" in the Temple, it misidentified the major source of water for the fountain in the Temple. It was not possible for dew collected to provide sufficient quantities of water, certainly not for all the water requirements during the feast days of Israel. And dew quantities in the arid climate of Jerusalem diminishes greatly during the dry autumn and winter months. That being said, Dr. Martin explained the ingenious collection system of water from the "air fountain" of the Temple structures on the outside walls of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

Almost two years after *Temples* was released, Dr. Martin published his last article in January 2002 titled, "[Water Management in Herod's Temple: There Was an Atmospheric 'Spring' within the Temple.](#)" He wrote that there were two fountains in the Temple. One fountain source of water was more reliable, and provided a far greater quantity of water than the other. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* article properly identified the minor source that produced super-pure water that was collected on the outside of a Holy Place and Holy of Holies using a remarkable process of the collection of dew. But that was not the major source of water in the Temple.

Dr. Martin was trained as a meteorologist in the Air Force. In *Temples* he explained the errors in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* article. Indeed, a source of water for the Temple was collected from dew formed on a lattice of

¹⁵ Note two prophecies that speak of future water coming from under the Temple, the future millennial Temple after Christ's return. The information of the prophecies were understood because the same thing happened in the Temple of Solomon. Ezekiel 47:1-4, 9, 12:

"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house [the Temple]; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Then brought he me ... by the way that looks eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side [of the Temple]. ... his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters ... every thing shall live where the river comes. ... it shall bring forth new fruit ... because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary."

Joel 3:17-18:

"I am YHWH your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, ... And it shall come to pass in that day, ... and a fountain shall come forth of the house of YHWH, and shall water the valley of Shittim."

tiny threads in the spring and early summer mornings of the Temple buildings. That water collection was secondary and minor. Dr. Martin distinguished the atmospheric spring of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* article from the water referred to in Ezekiel chapter 47:

“There was, however, another minor (though important) water source within the enclosure of Herod’s Temple where sanctified water of the purest kind could be collected and then used. It could be designated an ‘atmospheric spring.’ The later Rabbis of the Talmudic period mention this ‘spring’ in the Temple (and they accepted its designation as being properly called a ‘spring’). This is recorded in the *Babylonian Talmud* [Yoma 77b and 78a]. A reference to this ‘water source’ is also mentioned in the *Mishnah* [Middot 3:2], compiled about 200 AD.

Where did the water originate? It came from a manufactured ‘spring’ that brought forth very pure sanctified water. This type of ‘water source’ for the Temple was situated in the area of the Holy of Holies. The source can be shown to be an engineering device manufactured within the architectural design of the Temple in order to create water from the evening and morning dew that is prominent in the Judean hill country in the late spring and early summer.”

*Martin, “[Water Management in Herod’s Temple](#),”
brackets and emphasis mine*

Both sources of water qualified as “living water,” but the major source of water for the Temple was from **“the fountain of the court”** which gushed from below into a fountain on the Temple platform. The source of that water was the Gihon Spring. It was so for all the Temples in Jerusalem for the 900+ years, from the Solomonic Temple, through the Zerubbabel reconstruction, to the reconstruction and expansion by Simon the Hasmonean, and the Herodian Temple expansion. Note what the Mishnah Middot says¹⁶:

“The southern [gates] were [thus] reckoned counting from the west: the Upper Gate, the Kindling Gate, the Gate of the Firstlings, and the Water Gate. And why was it called the Water Gate? Because through it they brought in the flagon of water for the libation at the Feast [of Tabernacles]. R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: ‘Through it the waters trickle forth’ [quoting Ezekiel 47:2], and hereafter they will ‘issue out from under the threshold of the House’ [quoting Ezekiel 47:1].”

• *Mishnah Middot 2.6, Danby Translation*

In his “Water Management” article, Dr. Martin explains that most English translations of the Mishnah Middot (including Danby’s translation) understood that Ezekiel’s prophecies were to be understood only in a future sense and not present observation. In fact, the opposite was true:

“And while the whole of Ezekiel’s description of this ‘water source’ from the Holy of Holies has a thoroughly future prophetic significance, we should not forget these references in Middot that early Jewish Rabbis knew that there was an actual ‘water source’ originating in the shrine area of Herod’s Temple. It served as a literal parallel to what Ezekiel described prophetically.

Sadly, the future prophecy in Ezekiel gave the translators of Middot in the other versions (Soncino, Danby, Neusner [all modern translators of the Middot into English]) the erroneous impression that the author of Middot was simply referring to Ezekiel’s Temple alone. And since Ezekiel put his prophecy into the future (of course), the translators above avoided the simple grammar of the actual Middot and erroneously worded the teaching of the Middot into being a prophecy of the future.

[Jewish-to-Christian convert Alfred] Edersheim, however, DID NOT MAKE THIS ERRONEOUS grammatical change. He left the text in Middot just as the author of Middot wrote it. Edersheim translated the words precisely how the text renders them. There was nothing future about the

¹⁶ The Mishnah is the basis of the Jewish Talmuds. It is an explanation and commentary on the ritual laws of the Old Testament. The Middot is the portion of the Mishnah which describes various aspects of the physical layout and function of the Temple. See my explanation in my July 2004 Commentary, “[Signs at Christ’s Crucifixion](#)” which explains the basics of the Jewish rabbinical writings.

discourse. What this means is the fact that Middot is actually giving a description of Herod's Temple, and NOT the future one of Ezekiel. ...

But Edersheim still DID NOT erroneously translate the text of Middot into being a future prophecy (as the others) to make Middot to equal Ezekiel."

- **Martin, "[Water Management in Herod's Temple](#)," capital letters Dr. Martin's, underlining mine**

Second Historical Temple Fountain Reference — 3rd-2nd Century BC

Yes, the first fountain reference took a long time to explain. The other historical references are shorter. There is another use of the word "fountain" from the Greek LXX translated to English of 4 Reines (2 Kings) 20:20 in the NETS translation:

"Hezekias and all his dominence and what he made: [1] the fountain and [2] the conduit and [3] brought water into the city ..."

The Breton 1851 English translation translates the phrase somewhat differently, but it also uses "fountain" like the NETS: **"the fountain and the aqueduct."** The conduit or aqueduct likely refers to "Hezekiah's Tunnel" because the context is the review of Hezekiah's life and works with the Gihon water system. Of course, the fountain is extremely likely to be the Gihon Spring in the Temple. No other fountain is mentioned anywhere else. The same Greek word is translated "fountain" as in 1 Kings 2:35.

This phrase in the Masoretic text is usually translated as the King James Version renders it, **"the POOL and the conduit,"** and it also is part of Hezekiah's review of his life accomplishments.

Third Historical Temple Fountain Reference — 2nd Century BC

Timochares of Alexandria (ca. 320–260 BC), Greek astronomer and philosopher is referred to by Alexander Polyhistor. Polyhistor is referenced by Eusebius of Caesarea in his book [Evangelicae Praeparationis Libri XXXV](#), E.H. Gifford editor (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1903), 480.

"TIMOCHARES, in his Life of Antiochus, says Jerusalem has a circuit of forty furlongs, and is difficult to take, being shut in on all sides by abrupt ravines: and that the whole city is flooded with streams of water, so that even the gardens are irrigated by waters which flow off from the city. But the country from the city as far as forty furlongs is without water: but beyond the forty furlongs again it is well watered."

Fourth Historical Temple Fountain Reference — 2nd Century BC

This passage is in "[The Letter of Aristeas](#)" 1:88 (2nd century BC), Charles translation (1913). The Charlesworth (1985) is almost identical for this section of Aristeas account:

"The HOUSE faces the east and its back is toward the west. The whole of the floor is paved with stones and slopes down to the appointed places, that water may be conveyed to wash away the blood from the sacrifices, for many thousand beasts are sacrificed there on the feast days."

- **The Letter of Aristeas, 1:88**

The "house" is identified as the Temple (*ὁ οἶκος*) in Aristeas 1:88; it is the same Greek expression used in Matthew 21:13 where it also refers to the Temple.

In "The Letter of Aristeas" 1:89, the Charles translation says: **"there is an inexhaustible supply of water, because an abundant natural spring gushes up from within the temple area. ..."** The "spring" exits from within the Temple just as 1 Kings 2:35, LXX said.

"⁸⁹ ... There are moreover wonderful and indescribable cisterns underground, as they pointed out to me, at a distance of five furlongs all round the site of the temple, and each of them has

countless pipes⁹⁰ so that the different streams converge together. And all these were fastened with lead at the bottom and at the sidewalls, and over them a great quantity of plaster had been spread, and every part of the work had been most carefully carried out.

There are many openings for water at the base of the altar which are invisible to all except to those who are engaged in the ministration, so that all the blood of the sacrifices which is collected in great quantities is washed away in the twinkling of an⁹¹ eye.

Such is my opinion with regard to the character of the reservoirs and I will now show you how it was confirmed. They led me more than four furlongs outside the city and bade me peer down towards a certain spot and listen to the noise that was made by the meeting of the waters, so that the great size of the reservoirs became manifest to me, as has already been pointed out.”

The details of the statement of Aristeas read like that of an eyewitness, and not something invented from one’s imagination. He describes the underground cisterns “all round the site of the temple.” The cisterns were connected by “countless pipes so that the different streams converge together.” The waters from the cisterns supplied water for the second system to “flush” the blood and small waste particles from the Temple sacrifices.

There are remains of the cisterns that Aristeas describes. They are up hill to the north on the Haram esh-Sharif. The water could flow down to the Temple at the top of the hill above and west of the Gihon Spring.

The “living water” for purification was provided by the Gihon. Rain runoff collected into the cisterns “all around” on the west and north of the Gihon Temple site was used to wash away the blood from the sacrifices. Aqueducts later helped fill the cisterns which at first was called the Baris. It was expanded and renamed Fort Antonia (*Temples*, Chapter 2: “The Roman Fortress at Jerusalem”).¹⁷

Fifth Historical Temple Fountain Reference — 2nd Century BC

This historical source is from the Book of Enoch, written in the 2nd century BC. The author of Enoch (not the patriarch Enoch) describes Jerusalem and the Temple as they were when he viewed the city:

“And there I saw a holy mountain, and underneath the mountain to the east there was a stream and it flowed towards the south. And I saw towards the east another mountain higher than this, and between them a deep and narrow ravine: in it also ran a stream underneath the mountain.”

• *1 Enoch 26:2–3, Charles translation*

The “**holy mountain**” is the Temple in the City of David as seen in the author’s time. Again, the water flows from underneath the Temple sanctuary just as described in Ezekiel, as prophesied in Joel, and in the Mishnah 2:6 and 3:2 and as commented on in Babylonian Talmud Yoma 77b and 78a (considered below).

Sixth Historical Temple Fountain Reference — 1st Century BC

Eusebius of Caesarea was a Christian historian who died in 340 AD. In his books Eusebius quotes at some length from a prolific 1st century BC author Alexander Polyhistor. Eusebius in his book *Preparation of the Gospel* gives Polyhistor’s quote about water on the Temple. Polyhistor himself is quoting another author who is not named, but the name of the book is given:

“The author of the *Metrical Survey of Syria* says in his first book that Jerusalem lies upon a lofty and rugged site: and that some parts of the wall are built of polished stone, but the greater part of rubble; and that the city has a circuit of twenty-seven furlongs, and that there is also within the place a spring which spouts up abundance of water.”

• *Eusebius, Preparation of the Gospel, Book 9, chapter 36*

This short paragraph is all we know about the book, *Metrical Survey of Syria*. A “furlong” is 220 yards or 660 feet. The circumference of the city of Jerusalem therefore was 660 x 27 = 17,820 feet or 3.375 miles. This

¹⁷ Today we call it the Haram esh-Shari. Muslims prefer it be called Al Aqsa or the Al Aqsa Mosque platform.

would approximate the City of David, excluding the Haram.

Seventh *Historical Temple Fountain Reference — 1st Century BC*

Eusebius then quotes Alexander Polyhistor who again cites another writer who is named Philo about water on the Temple. (This is not Philo of Alexandria the 1st century AD philosopher). Polyhistor writes,

“Philo too says, in his *Account of Jerusalem*, that there is a fountain, and that it is dried up in winter, but becomes full in summer. ... he adds to these a description of the refilling:

**‘For flashing from on high the joyous stream,
Flooded by rain and snow, rolls swiftly on
Beneath the neighbouring towers, and spreading o’er
The dry and dusty ground, far-shining shows
The blessings of that wonder-working fount.’**

And the rest that follows. Then again, concerning the High Priest’s fountain and the canal that carries off the water, he proceeds as follows: ‘A headlong stream by channels underground The pipes pour forth.’”

- *Eusebius, [Preparation of the Gospel, Book 9, chapter 37](#)*

Eighth *Historical Temple Fountain Reference — 60s AD*

This historical source is contained in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls called the Copper Scroll 3Q15 (c. 60s AD). The scroll purports to be a compilation of treasures from the Temple and it describes where the treasures are buried. The Copper Scroll was written in Hebrew characters pressed into the copper metal with a stylus. In the 63rd Cache the Copper Scroll talks about a “fountain” within the Temple:

“In the mouth of the fountain of Beth Shem silver and gold votive vessels, and silver coins ...”

The phrase “Beth Shem” means the “House of the Name” and refers to the Temple. It occurs in many passages.¹⁸ See my September 2002 Commentary, “[A Name for the Temple of God](#).” Once again, a “fountain” is mentioned in relation to a Temple during the life of the writer.

Ninth *Historical Temple Fountain Reference — Before 117 AD*

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote in Latin a brief description of the fountain in the Temple. He wrote after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD:

“The temple resembled a citadel, and had its own walls, which were more laboriously constructed than the others. Even the colonnades with which it was surrounded formed an admirable out-work.

It contained an inexhaustible spring; there were subterranean excavations in the hill, and tanks and cisterns for holding rain water. The founders of the state had foreseen that frequent wars would result from the singularity of its customs, and so had made every provision against the most protracted siege.”

- *Tacitus, [Histories Book 5, para.12](#)*

Tacitus was not an eyewitness. He must have used written sources or spoke to older combatants of the Jewish Wars and conquest of Jerusalem. The brief description by Tacitus matches Aristeas in important details: he mentions a spring, hill excavations, tanks and cisterns. Tacitus died after 117 AD (see, “[Tacitus, Roman Historian](#)”).

¹⁸ Reference to the Temple being referred to as “**the house of the name**” and the place where YHWH placed His name is made in 2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Kings 3:2, 5:3-5, 8:16-20, 29, 43, 48, 9:3, 7; 2 Kings 21:4, 7, 23:27; 1 Chronicles 22:7-10, 22:19; 2 Chronicles 2:1, 4, 6:5-10, 6:20, 6:33-34, 38, 7:16, 20, 20:9, 28:3, 29:16, 33:4, 7; and Jeremiah 7:10-14, 32:34, 34:15-16.

Tenth *Historical Temple Fountain Reference — Sometime during 300–500s AD*

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 77b, was compiled in the 300s AD from older accounts, and editing was completed in the 600s. They also tell of water coming from below the Temple:

77b “*R. Phineas in the name of R. Huna of Sepphoris said: The spring that issues from the Holy of Holies in its beginning resembles the antennae of locusts; as it reaches the entrance to the Sanctuary it becomes as the thread of the warp; as it reaches the Ulam, it becomes as the thread of the woof; as it reaches the entrance to the [Temple] court, it becomes as large as the mouth of a small flask, that is meant by what we learned:*

78a *R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: [Hence] go forth the waters which will bubble forth from under the threshold of the Sanctuary. From there onwards it becomes bigger, rising higher and higher, until it reaches the entrance to the House of David. As soon as it reaches the entrance to the house of David, it becomes even as a swiftly running brook, in which men and women afflicted with gonorrhea, menstruating women, and women after childbirth bathe, as it is said:*

‘In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for purification and for sprinkling.’”

- *Soncino Babylonian Talmud, [Yoma 77b–78a](#) (scroll down)*

This was “**living water**” not waste flush water. The water is used for “**purification and for sprinkling**” [or cleansing]. The prophecy quotes Zechariah 13:1. Yoma 78a, references a prophecy in Zechariah that describes what their rabbis told them about the water in the Temple. They understood a later verse in Zechariah 14:8: “... **living waters shall go out from Jerusalem.**”

When Were the First Aqueducts to Jerusalem Built?

In *Temples* Dr. Martin addressed the issue of aqueducts that, in addition to the water of the Gihon Spring, brought water to Jerusalem from well-watered areas south of Jerusalem, particularly near Bethlehem.

“True, we know that in the time of the Hasmoneans (the Maccabees) and also in that of Pilate, there were two aqueducts that brought water from south of Bethlehem to the Temple and the Fort Antonia area to supplement the ordinary water sources found in Jerusalem.

But these two aqueducts were built because of an expanding population and they were built after the time of Aristees.”

- *Martin, [Temples, 434](#)*

In 2014 David Amit and Shimon Gibson published a retrospective survey of articles about ancient aqueducts bringing water to Jerusalem. Their article was “[Water to Jerusalem: The Route and Date of the Upper and Lower Aqueducts.](#)”¹⁹ They found no evidence of aqueducts before the Hasmonean period.

Let me repeat this. No evidence indicates that aqueducts from the Bethlehem area (or from elsewhere) came to Jerusalem or the Haram before the Hasmonean period. They state their conclusions, but they approach the subject with the thought in mind that the Temples were on the Haram esh-Sharif, the “Temple Mount.”:

“The Date of the Aqueduct

The sizeable urban expansion of Jerusalem in the Second Temple period, particularly from the mid-first century BCE, with a population of at least 50,000, resulted in a growing demand for larger supplies of water not just for the personal needs of its inhabitants, but also for those attending the extensive public and ritual areas of the Temple Mount, especially at times of the Jewish festivals when Jerusalem filled up with thousands of pilgrims from Palestine and abroad.

¹⁹ David Amit and Shimon Gibson, “Water to Jerusalem: The Route and Date of the Upper and Lower Aqueducts” in *Cura Aquearum in Israel II: Water in Antiquity*, Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on the History of Water Management and Hydraulic Engineering in the Mediterranean Region, Israel 14–20 October 2012.

In the Temple area substantial quantities of water were needed not just for basic drinking purposes and for ritual cleansing procedures, but also for the washing of the areas where sacrifices were conducted next to the altar. With the construction of one aqueduct all the needs of the city could be addressed with a supply of some 230 liters of water per minute.”

• Amit and Gibson, 32

Amit and Gibson describe the Lower and Upper Level aqueducts:

“Water at this time would have been conveyed from the spring of Etam situated on the southern side of Bethlehem. Later Rabbinic literary sources mention the Lower Level aqueduct, such as the reference in the Jerusalem Talmud (Yoma 3, 8, 41, 1) to ‘the aqueduct [that] went to it [i.e. to the Temple Mount] from Etam,’ that ‘the Etam Spring is higher than the level of the Temple court by 23 cubits [c. 30 m.]’ (Bab. Tal. Yoma 31a), and that using the aqueduct waters derived from the Etam Spring the ‘high priest would immerse himself on the Day of Atonement’ (Bab. Tal. Zebahim 54b).”

• Amit and Gibson, 33, words in brackets are theirs

Regarding the Upper Level aqueduct, the authors later concluded:

“The argument that Herod the Great was the original builder of this [Upper Level] aqueduct has to stand, otherwise his massive palace and gardens in the Upper City [to west Jerusalem near the Jaffa gate] would have remained largely waterless; an unlikely scenario we believe. The palace subsequently became the seat of the Roman governors in the first century CE, and they too would have wanted the praetorium to be provided at all times with large quantities of water.

The Upper Level aqueduct was subsequently a major source of water for Aelia Capitolina.²⁰ The Lower Level aqueduct it would appear was abandoned following 70 CE, and only rebuilt some four centuries later in the Byzantine period.

• Amit and Gibson, 37

There was no evidence in any of the studies that proposed a Solomonic or any other aqueduct during the First Temple period. Nor was any aqueduct built before the Hasmonean period.

Fountains on the Haram are presented on the website “[Fountains of Temple Mount](#),” some with photos. (Remember that none of those fountains is the fountain in the Temple, because the Haram is not where the Temple was located). There are 17 fountains on the Al Aqsa platform (the Haram esh-Sharif) originally constructed by King Herod who tore down an earlier fortress to construct Fort Antonia (*Temples*, Chapter 1: “[What Was the Haram Esh-Sharif?](#)” and Chapter 20: “[The Original Temple Over the Gihon Spring](#)”).

A fortress needs water to survive during a siege. Fort Antonia was built upon a smaller fortress called the Baris. There was no independent supply of water to the fortress on what later became the Haram esh-Sharif. Rainwater stored in the many cisterns underneath were not enough to supply Fort Antonia and provide water for the original purpose of the cisterns, which was to supply flush water to the Temple down 1/3 of a mile to the south. The aqueducts brought water from Etam near Bethlehem to supply Herod’s palace, the newer western part of Jerusalem, and to carry water to the Baris and later to Fort Antonia. Yes, one portion of the aqueduct did go to the Temple to provide additional water during the feast days, when the number of people in Jerusalem swelled to 5x to 10x its normal size. During the feasts, a large percentage of pilgrims stayed in temporary lodging outside the walls of the city (see *Temples*, Chapter 22: “[Where Was the Akra?](#)”)

All This Information Is a Problem for the Traditional Site of the Temple

If someone believes the Temples were at one of the 10+ proposed locations on or near the so-called “Temple Mount” (the Haram esh-Sharif), then they need to answer some questions:

- Where was “the fountain of the Temple” on the Haram? Evidence is abundant that there was such a fountain, locating its outlet to the surface would give the precise site of the Temple sanctuary.

²⁰ Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina by Emperor Hadrian in 130 AD. The name remained until 638 AD.

- What was the source of the water for the fountain? The atmospheric spring does not qualify. The fountain existed before any aqueducts came to Jerusalem.
- Was there a second major source of water in Jerusalem? Water for the Temple required great quantities of water. A major second source of water for Jerusalem is unknown to Scripture, Jewish writings, Christian writings, Islamic writings, to all secular history, and to archaeology. No such idea has ever been proposed.
- If a second source of water existed at the “temple mount” on the Haram, why bring even more water from Bethlehem by aqueducts? Two major sources of water (not just one) would have been insufficient to supply Jerusalem’s needs. Yet there is no mention of such a thing in any sources.
- Did water from the Gihon Spring pump water to the Haram? No, but such a syphon pump spring like the Gihon could pump water to Temples in the center of the City of David just to the west of and 40 stories above the Gihon Spring.
- Jesus said He was the source of true **“living water.”** His audience correctly related His words to the fountain of “living water” at the Temple and initially liked His words (John 7:37–53).
- Why was there great excitement in the late 1990s when water appeared on the Haram? It was because Jewish and Christian groups understand there is a requirement for **“living water”** in the Temple.²¹ That water was from a broken pipe seeping through stones of the Western Wall north of the Wailing Wall.
- I have asked several archaeologists, all of whom believe the Temple was on the Haram esh-Sharif, whether the Gihon Spring was the only water source in Jerusalem. They all agreed with Nahman Avigad who wrote in 1983:

“The Gihon Spring is Jerusalem’s only supply of fresh water in early antiquity. South of this hill is another minor water source, the Rogel Spring, which is actually only a well.”

- *Avigad, Discovering Jerusalem (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 26*

A Fountain on the Haram?

Water was part of God’s presence in Eden. The River Gihon was one of four rivers flowing from where God’s presence was seen in the Garden in Eden (Genesis 2:10, 13). Flowing water was a necessary and important part of every location the Tabernacle halted at, sometimes for years. Flowing water also was associated with God’s presence at the location of all the Temples of God in Jerusalem — all at the same place, overlooking the Gihon Spring. Note this Davidic psalm:

“How excellent is your loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house [the Temple at Zion]; and you, shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures. For with you is the fountain of life [from the Temple]: in your light shall we see light.”

- *Psalm 36:7–9*

Dr. Martin comments that YHWH, **“the fountain of life,”** is symbolized by a fountain in the Temple.

“The simple fact is that no Temple on earth can be a proper replica of God’s Temple in heaven without having within its precincts a fountain of life representing the true fountain of life in God’s heavenly Sanctuary.”

- *Temples, 299 (Martin’s italics)*

²¹ Regarding waters on the Haram, see [“Rumors Continue to Flow”](#) (scroll down). Dr. Martin gives the reasons for this in *Temples*, Chapter 21, [“Necessary Spring Waters Within the Temples.”](#)

If the Temple was on the Haram, there should be a fountain underground somewhere at that location, not cisterns, not an aqueduct system bringing water from miles away to “simulate” a system of flowing water.

Show me the fountain that comes from under the Haram (not from an aqueduct) and you will locate the Temple. No one can do so because the Haram location is false. Its primary hold on the psyche of so many people is not evidence, it is emotion based on tradition.

An Eleventh Historical Source? — 150–125 BC

This source could be an eleventh historical source for a fountain in the Temple. It comes from the Temple Scroll purported to be from the Essene community near the Dead Sea. The scroll was translated by archaeologist Yigael Yadin. Yadin did not ask important questions about water in the idealized prophesied Temple told of in the Temple Scroll.

Professor George Wesley Buchanan in his article “[Running Water in the Temple of Zion](#),” wonders about Yadin’s singular lack of interest in the source of water so necessary to the operations of the ideal sanctuary of the Temple Scroll. Yadin believed the Temple Scroll was written about 150–125 BC, toward the end of the Hasmonean period. Yadin writes about water (but not a fountain) in the Temple Scroll. The visionary Temple was not on the Haram esh-Sharif. It was much too large to fit there, but was smaller than Ezekiel’s Temple. Buchanan quotes Yadin:

“These baptismal installations are quite different from the ritual baths (*mikvaot*) of the period found, for example, at Masada, in the Jericho area, and in Jerusalem. The normative Judaism ritual baths had to contain ‘living water’; that is, water either [1] from the rain or [2] from a flowing stream or river.”

Yadin speculates on how the water was purified:

“Since this [water] was not available year round, especially in the desert, ritually pure water was saved and preserved in a reserve pool adjacent to the ritual bath. A channel led from the reserve pool to the bath pool so that a small amount of the LIVING WATER would be added to each bath to purify it, so to say. The Jewish ritual baths are characterized by these twin pools. At Qumran, however, there is only a single pool (with steps) in which people could be baptized.”

• *Yigael Yadin, 1984*²²

Yadin writes about “**living water**” but does not say where the water comes from. If it comes from a fountain in the sanctuary, then the same principle should apply to a Temple on the Haram. Contrary to Yadin’s assertion, there is no allowance in Scripture or Jewish tradition that allows pure “**living water**” to be added to polluted water to make it ritually pure. Professor Buchanan uses Yadin’s own words to show how wrong that thinking was. In his article Buchanan shows that the Gihon can be the only site for the Temples in Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Water, water everywhere, but no one seems to find it. That is because people are looking in the wrong place. Some people today expect God to open a great fountain of water somewhere on the Haram because their traditions cannot be wrong. Tradition without evidence can become a curse that enslaves minds. With regard to a fountain in the Temple, “**you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**” (John 8:32). Look toward the Gihon Spring in the City of David for the Temple. The evidence has pointed there all along. I thank God that he led Dr. Ernest Martin to begin the process of recovering this truth.

David Sielaff, January 2020

²² Yigael Yadin, “[The Temple Scroll: The Longest and Most Recently Discovered Dead Sea Scroll](#).” *Biblical Archaeology Review* Sep-Oct 1984. Yadin’s quote is toward the end of the article.