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# New Evidence for the Site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., December 2000

Edited by David Sielaff, May 2021

Read the accompanying "[Newsletter for May 2021](#)"



**A new and accurate evaluation is essential regarding the site of the former Temples in Jerusalem. Neither the Dome of the Rock near the center of the Haram esh-Sharif in Jerusalem, nor the Al Aqsa Mosque occupying the southern side (nor ANY area within the four walls of the Haram) was the real spot where the holy Temples of God were located. Biblical and literary accounts dogmatically place the site of all the Temples over the Gihon Spring just north of the ancient City of David (Zion) on the southeastern ridge of Jerusalem. All the antagonists fighting over the Temple site are warring over (and for) the wrong place. They need to turn their swords and guns into plowshares.**

**Editor's note:** Hopefully, this article will cause you to read or review Dr. Martin's book, [The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot](#).

- On page 5 of this article, I include a map of the major features in the city of Jerusalem. I did not include the location of the Temple, because that is the subject of this article.
- If you want to view the relationship of the Temple to Fort Antonia, go online to Dr. Martin's article "[The Temple Mount and Fort Antonia](#)." At the end of the article click on the two graphics to view different perspectives of the Temple-Fort Antonia complex as the historical records describe.
- It may also be useful to refer to my 4-page May 2018 Commentary, "[A Brief Temple Timeline](#)." It will help you keep track of the the Temples of God throughout history of. *David Sielaff*

The first source to discover the true site of the Temples in Jerusalem is to read the biblical descriptions about the location of Mount Zion because the term "Mount Zion" in many contexts is synonymous with the site of the Temples. Any modern map of Jerusalem will correctly give the true location of the original Mount Zion, also called the City of David.

Zion was situated at the southern end of the southeastern ridge of Jerusalem. This is the section of the city that Josephus (the Jewish historian of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD) called "**the Lower City**." The fact that the original "Zion" was described by Josephus as "**the Lower City**" became a geographical enigma to early scholars since

the Bible itself consistently described “Zion” as a high and eminent place. How could something “high” be legitimately called “low”?<sup>1</sup> This misunderstanding about the former eminence of the southeast ridge was the first confusion that caused even religious authorities to lose the true site of “Mount Zion” and the location of the Temples. But historical and biblical evidence reviewed and analyzed between the years 1875 and 1885 finally indicated that the southeast ridge was truly the original Zion. This mistake was rectified by W.F. Birch.

It was the indefatigable efforts by Professor Birch in England with his numerous articles in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* over that decade (along with the discovery in 1880 of the Hezekiah inscription about the construction of the tunnel from the Gihon Spring to the southern end of the southeast ridge) that settled the controversy over the true location of “Zion.”

Only then was it determined by the scholarly world that the former designation of the southwest hill in Jerusalem as “Zion” (written in Josephus) as the “City of David” being in the “Upper City” was not the correct evaluation for the original site of “Zion.” Thus, the world correctly and finally learned that the southeast ridge was the actual site of “Mount Zion” (the true City of David) and Jerusalem in ancient times was built around and over the Gihon Spring to access water from the only spring within a five-mile radius of the city. This correction was a major step to restore true geographical parameters to Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, when the scholars properly returned “Mount Zion” to the southeast ridge, the Temple location was not considered an issue in the matter. They continued to accept that the Temple site was somewhere within the Haram esh-Sharif. This was despite the many texts in the Holy Scriptures that identified “Zion” as equivalent to the “Temple.” The Bible even indicated the Temple was abutting to the northern side of the “City of David.” This should have been a significant clue to the 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars that the original Temples were positioned very near the “City of David” on the southeast ridge, but those historians failed to make the needed correction.

They retained the site of the Temple to be about 1000 feet to the north of the Gihon Spring and located somewhere within the confines of the Haram esh-Sharif. This region became the popular Temple site since the period of the Crusades (by Christian, Muslim and Jewish authorities).<sup>2</sup> The actual location of all the Temples, however, was over the Gihon Spring immediately north of and abutting the City of David. When the Temples are rightly placed at that site, the biblical and historical accounts about “Mount Zion” being equivalent to the “Temple Mount” consistently make sense.

### ***The Importance of the Gihon Spring***

The Gihon Spring is the only spring within the city limits of Jerusalem. We have the eyewitness account of a person from Egypt named Aristes who viewed the Temple in about 285 BC. He stated categorically that the Temple was located over an inexhaustible spring that welled up within the interior part of the Temple.<sup>3</sup> About 400 years later the Roman historian Tacitus gave another reference that the Temple at Jerusalem had within its precincts a natural spring of water that issued from its interior.<sup>4</sup>

These two references describe the Gihon Spring. It was because of the strategic location of this single spring that the original Canaanite cities of “Migdol Edar” and “Jebus” were built over and around that water

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<sup>1</sup> The original Mount Zion was cut down. The southeast ridge was once much higher in elevation than it is today (or even in the time of Josephus). Josephus explained that the high area was chiseled down to bedrock in the period of Simon the Hasmonaean about 140 years before the birth of Jesus (*Antiquities* 13:213–217). It took the Jews three years working day and night to demolish the original Mount Zion (the City of David). What was once an elevated citadel and city became known as **“the Lower City.”**

Because the Jewish people lowered the height of Mount Zion on the southeast ridge, it became common after the time of Simon the Hasmonaean to call the higher southwestern hill the new “Mount Zion.”

<sup>2</sup> Early Jewish authorities never accepted the Haram esh-Sharif as the site of the Temples until Benjamin of Tudela (a Jewish merchant of the 12<sup>th</sup> century who was not a trained historian or theologian). Other Jewish notables in this period disputed this Christian/Muslim identification. Benjamin did not argue the point but accepted it wholesale. This was a major mistake. It took scholars 800 years to rectify the error that prevailed in all academic and theological circles of the three Abrahamic faiths.

<sup>3</sup> Aristes, Eusebius translation, chapter 38. *ELM* (See David Sielaff’s January 2020 article **“A Fountain in the Temple.”** DWS)

<sup>4</sup> Tacitus, *History*, Bk.5, para.12.

source before the time of King David. That sole water source was the only reason for the existence of a city being built at that spot.

The Gihon Spring is located today at the base of what was called the “Ophel” (a swelling of the earth in the form of a small mountain dome) once situated just to the north and close to “Mount Zion” (the City of David). David soon began to fill in the area between the two summits with dirt and stones (calling it the Millo or “fill in”) to make a single high-level area on which to build his city and after his death to build the Temple (2 Samuel 5:9).

David’s son Solomon completed the “fill” between the two summits and also called that earthen and rock bridge the Millo (1 Kings 11:27). Solomon then built the Temple on the Ophel Mound above the Gihon Spring. This Ophel region became known as a northern extension of “Zion.” This made the Temple so close to the City of David (where the citadel or *akra* was located) that Aristéas said a person could look northward from the top of the City of David and easily witness all priestly activities within the Temple precincts.<sup>5</sup>

The area of the Dome of the Rock, however, is 1000 feet north of the original City of David and is much too far for anyone to look down into the courts of the Temple as Aristéas stated. Also, there has never been a natural water spring within the Haram esh-Sharif. Those facts disqualify the area around the Dome of the Rock from being the site of the former Temples.

### **The Ark of the Covenant and the Gihon Spring**

Most have not noticed important geographical indications in the Scriptures. When David took the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, he made a special tent (tabernacle) for it and pitched it over the Gihon Spring.<sup>6</sup> For the next 27 years of David’s reign and for the first 11 years of Solomon (38 years total) the Ark remained in this tent at and over the Gihon Spring, where Solomon was anointed and crowned king (1 Kings 1:38–39).<sup>7</sup> About 120 years later Joash was made king. His crowning was in the Temple beside the Altar of Burnt Offering where the laver of Solomon was positioned to hold and provide spring water from the Gihon from below the Temple platform (2 Chronicles 23:10–11 also shows Joash was anointed and crowned in the Temple).

Indeed, the Psalms show consistently that all Temples (called “God’s Houses”) had to have spring waters emerging from their interiors. Note Psalm 87:1–3 and 7:

**“His [God’s] foundation is in the holy mountain. YHWH loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God ...**

**The singers as the players on instruments shall be there** [in the Temple]: **‘ALL MY SPRINGS ARE IN YOU’** [in the Temple where God’s presence is].”

The Psalmist stating that **“ALL MY [God’s] SPRINGS”** (plural) were in Zion (NOT anywhere else), and though the Gihon is only one spring, that is no problem because the single Gihon is even called in the Scriptures **“springs”** plural in 2 Chronicles 32:3–4.

The fact that “one spring” is pluralized (if not an idiomatic usage) can be accounted for by the peculiar manner the Gihon produces its waters. Though it is a perennial spring, it was in the past a karst-type of spring that thrusts out its water as much as five times a day in the springtime when water is plentiful (with intervals when there is no water at all). Thus, the Gihon was at first a siphon type of spring that gushes forth intermittently. The word **“Gihon”** means “to gush.

<sup>5</sup> Aristéas lines 100 to 104 as translated by Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, chapter 38 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> Second Samuel 6:17 states that David pitched a “tabernacle” (tent) for the Ark. Solomon was taken to this same “tabernacle” (tent) to be anointed King of Israel (1 Kings 1:38–39) which the account states was at the Gihon Spring. Both 1 Chronicles 15:1, 16:1 and 2 Chronicles 1:4 mention this special “tent” for the Ark. This “tent” at the Gihon Spring (where David and Israel offered sacrifices and other Temple duties — 1 Kings 3:15) must not be confused with the “Tabernacle” constructed in the days of Moses, which in the time of David was located at Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39; 1 Kings 3:4) where YHWH spoke directly to King Solomon.

<sup>7</sup> This led Jewish authorities to demand that all later kings of Judah be crowned at a spring. **“Our Rabbis taught: Kings are anointed only by the site of a spring.”** (*Babylonian Talmud, Kerithoth 5b*. Scroll down to p. 22 for the quote).

In the dry season the flow may occur a few minutes once a day. This oscillating effect of the Gihon could be a reason the ancients termed this single spring with the plural word “springs.” Over the centuries the waters have lessened in quantity output and have assumed more of a constant flow.

All references in Psalms to waters coming forth from the throne of God refer in type to those exclusively from the Gihon Spring. This shows how significant it was to David and Solomon to have “spring waters” at the site of the Temple in Jerusalem. There is no doubt Solomon built his Temple on the Ophel mound just above the Gihon Spring!

Whatever the case, Aristeas and Tacitus both stated that the Temple of Jerusalem had an inexhaustible spring within its interior, and the Gihon is the only spring in Jerusalem as the Scriptures affirm. This spring water is mentioned in numerous ways throughout the Psalms as the “waters of salvation” that come from the Throne or House of God.<sup>8</sup> Spring waters were an essential part of Temple requirements and water springs will accompany future Temples that will be built.<sup>9</sup> And since there was only ONE SPRING in the Jerusalem area, all the Temples of God had to be constructed over that single spring associated with the southeast ridge. The Haram esh-Sharif region (though it has 37 cisterns — much inferior waters for ritualistic purposes) has NO SPRINGS and there is no historical or geological evidence that it ever had a natural spring!<sup>10</sup>

### ***The Temple Was Situated in the Center of Early Jerusalem on the Southeast Ridge***

There is another simple way of showing the location of the original Temples. Josephus said the “Lower City” which was once the site of the elevated Citadel (called the *Akra* or the City of David) was on a ridge shaped like a crescent moon.<sup>11</sup> That is, when one observed this ridge from the Mount of Olives, it appeared “crescent-shaped” in a north to south view and its “horns” pointed toward the Kidron Valley. The northern “horn” would have been near the present southern wall of the Haram esh-Sharif and the southern “horn” just north of the confluence of the Valley of Hinnom. The exact center of this “crescent-shaped” ridge would have been at the Ophel Mound directly over the Gihon Spring.

Remarkably, we have an eyewitness account by Hecateus of Abdera written near the time of Alexander the Great that informs us that the Temple was located “**nearly in the center of the city.**”<sup>12</sup> Coupled with this observation, we have other eyewitnesses in the Holy Scriptures telling us the same thing. Note, for example, Psalm 116:18–19 where it plainly states the Temple was in the *center* of Jerusalem (NOT in the extreme north part of early Jerusalem where the Haram esh-Sharif is located).

**“I will pay my vows unto YHWH now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of YHWH’s house [within the Temple], in the midst [center] of you, O Jerusalem.”**

The Psalmist knew that the Temple (just as Hecateus of Abdera said) was in the *center* of the City of Jerusalem. [In Hebrew, the English word rendered “midst” means “center” in geographical contexts and is so

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 36:7–9; 46:3, 5; 65:4, 9; 93:1–5. All these Psalms by David or his associates were penned before Solomon built the Temple on top of the Ophel mound above the Gihon Spring. They all refer to the temporary Temple (called a “tent” or “tabernacle”) at the Gihon Spring where David placed the Ark of the Covenant.

<sup>9</sup> See the following references to “spring waters” issuing forth from future Temples that are yet to be built: Ezekiel 47:1ff; Zechariah 14:8; Joel 3:16–18; Isaiah 30:19–26 (especially verses 19 and 25).

The apostle John wrote in the Book of Revelation about those who are thirsty that they could drink from the fountain (spring) of water that issued from the New Jerusalem that will come down from heaven to a new earth (Revelation 21:2–6; 22:1, 17). It is a consistent theme that spring waters were associated with the Temples on earth as well as the abode of God in heaven.

<sup>10</sup> The *EnRogel* water source is about half a mile walking distance south of the Gihon Spring. It is a well, not a spring.

Waters from cisterns were reckoned symbolically as far inferior to natural spring waters, because cistern waters could be contaminated by vermin and unclean things falling into and rotting in the waters. Cistern waters were stagnant, and this alone rendered them far less holy. Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13 say cistern water is far inferior to a “**fountain of living waters**” (spring water).

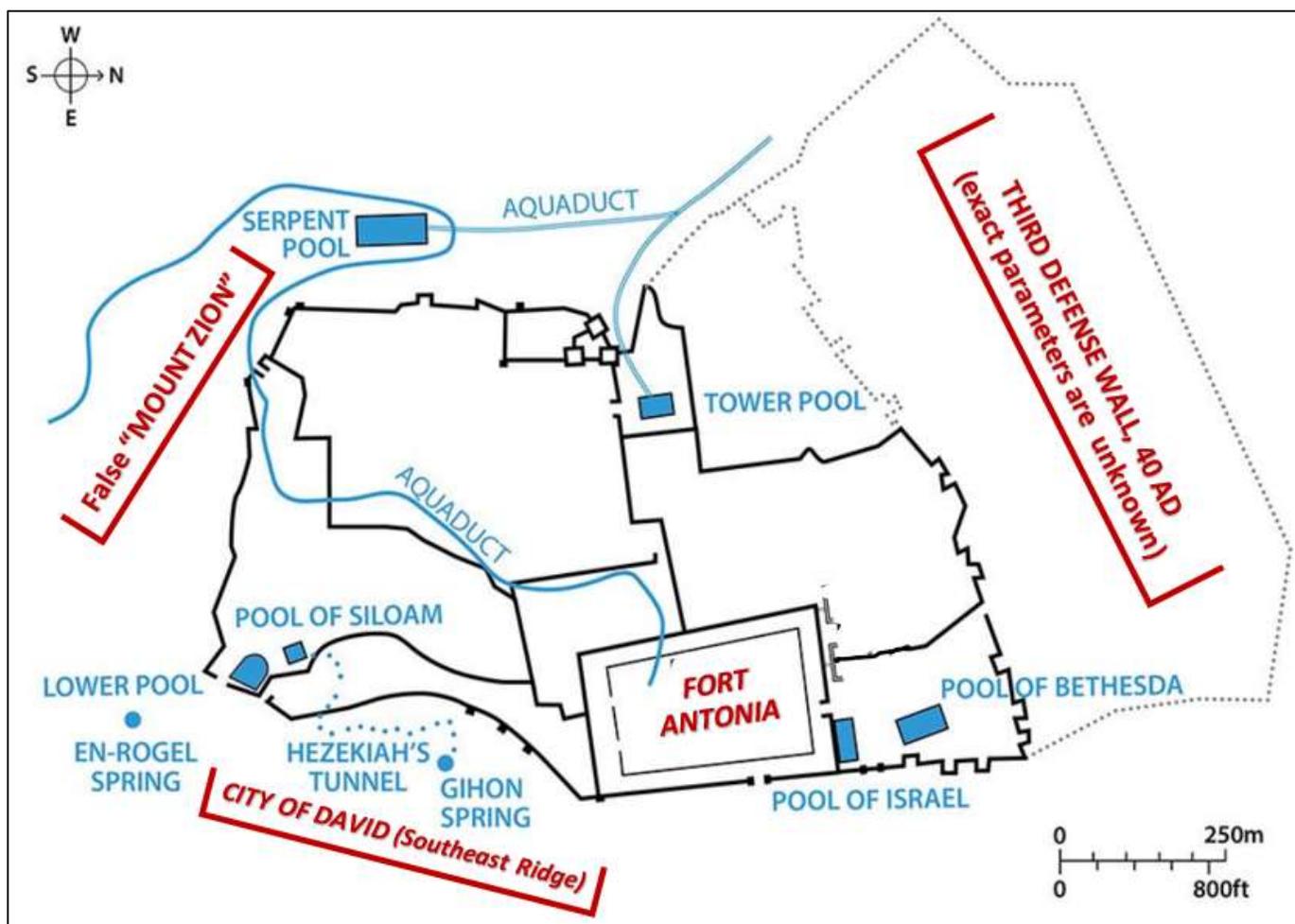
<sup>11</sup> [War 5.137–138](#) Loeb edition, footnote “c,” pp 240–241 says the Greek term is “**literally ‘gibbous,’ like the moon in its third quarter.**” The “crescent shape” can easily be seen on a map. It looked like a theatre style configuration and the horns of the crescent were directed east toward the spur ridge that was a part of the southern Mount of Olives.

<sup>12</sup> Hecateus of Abdera, see Josephus [Contra Apion 1.198](#).

translated by a number of versions.] Several Scriptures indicate the Temple to be situated directly in the *center* of Jerusalem,<sup>13</sup> because the original Jerusalem of David and Solomon covered only the southeast ridge, and the Temple was in the *precise center* of that ridge.

Interestingly, we also have in the Scriptures a geographical designation that confirms the centrality of the Temple on the southeast ridge. Second Kings 23:13 mentions a spot on the southern flank (or extended spur) of the Mount of Olives that was directly to the east of the Jerusalem that existed at that time. The text states: **“The high places that were before Jerusalem [that is, east of Jerusalem], which were on the right hand on the Hill of Corruption [on the southern right-hand spur of the Mount of Olives].”**

Since the highest point of the Mount of Olives is directly east of the Dome of the Rock (about 1000 feet north of the Gihon Spring), this Scripture must refer to a different area further south — an area directly east of Jerusalem of that time. This region was on the right-hand side of the Mount of Olives at a lower summit on the southern spur of Olivet. This southern summit was a separate and lower ridge called **“the Hill of Corruption.”** This also reveals the Temple (in the *center* of Jerusalem) as being directly west of the Hill of Corruption (about 1000 feet south of the central and highest summit of the Mount of Olives and consequently about 1000 feet south of the present Dome of the Rock).



**Geographic Map of Jerusalem (without showing the Temple)**

<sup>13</sup> Ezekiel 37:26, 28; also Ezekiel 48:10, 15, 21 has **“in the midst of ...”** (the *Catholic New American Version* correctly translates the Hebrew word as “center”); also see Zechariah 2:4–5; 8:3, 8. These verses in context show that biblical peoples knew that the Temple itself was positioned in the center of **“the crescent-shaped”** City of Jerusalem that was confined at that period solely in the southeast ridge.

The Haram esh-Sharif, where the Dome of the Rock is now, in no way was the *center* of early Jerusalem. In the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus, the Haram was some 36 acres of land located in the northeast part — one of the most northerly areas of the Jerusalem in David and Solomon’s time. (In the time of Solomon, and even in Herod’s time, this northeast area would have to be reckoned as a lop-sided northern extension to the southeast ridge.) The Temple, however, was situated in the *center* of Jerusalem (as several texts in the Holy Scriptures tell us), and not in the extreme north where the Haram esh-Sharif is found.

### ***What Happened to the Temple After the Jewish/Roman War of 66 to 70 AD?***

Jesus had important words to say about the future status of the Temple and its walls. Standing outside the east Temple walls, Jesus told his disciples that not one stone of the Temple and its support buildings would be left on top the other (Matthew 24:1–2; Mark 13:1–2; Luke 21:5–6).

In Luke 19:43–44 Jesus expanded the scope of destruction to include the city itself. He said:

**“For the days shall come upon you [Jerusalem], that your enemies shall cast a trench about you, and compass you round, and keep you in on every side. And [your enemies] shall lay you even with the ground, and your children within you: and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you know not the time of your visitation.”**

Even the most liberal of scholars admit that these statements were recorded in these Synoptic Gospels within a generation or two after the Jewish/Roman War. Had the statements not been true, hosts of hostile people to the teachings of Christianity to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and beyond would have gladly stated these prophetic utterances made by Jesus were an outright lie (if they were indeed a lie). But I record in my book numerous eyewitnesses over the next 300 years confirming the accuracy of the Gospel writings about the prophecies Jesus gave. (1) Jerusalem was leveled to the ground. No stone remained on top another, just as Jesus said would happen. (2) The Temple with its walls were demolished so that their foundation stones were uprooted and overturned as stated in Matthew, Mark, and Luke passages.

For prime evidence of this fact, we have eyewitness accounts of both Josephus and Titus (the Roman general leading the war against the Jews) who gave descriptions of utter ruin and thorough destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus and Titus mentioned that if they had not been in Jerusalem during the war and personally seen the demolition that took place, they would not have believed there was once a city in the area.<sup>14</sup> But they were eyewitnesses to its utter ruin. It is significant that Josephus used the exact words of Jesus’ prophecy to describe the uprooted condition of even the foundation stones that constituted Jewish Jerusalem. He said:

**“It [Jerusalem] was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was nothing left to make those that came there believe it [the city] had ever been inhabited.”<sup>15</sup>**

No one should pass over this eyewitness account in a trivial manner. Not a foundation stone was in place from all the buildings in Jerusalem, including the stones of the Temple. It is significant that Jesus said the same thing as Josephus. Jesus said that Jerusalem was to be **“laid even with the ground.”**

Josephus explained the reason why every stone was overturned in the city (including those that made up the structural foundations). The Jews were accustomed to hide their gold and other valuables in the walls of their homes. The Temple itself was the treasury of the Jewish nation.<sup>16</sup> When fires consumed the whole of the Temple and much of the city, the gold melted and descended into the cracks and crevices of the stone foundations. To recover this melted gold, the Tenth Legion had Jewish captives uproot every stone of the Temple and the whole of the City. So much gold was discovered in this fashion that the price of the metal in the

<sup>14</sup> [War 6.1–8; 7.1–4.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [War 7.1–4.](#)

<sup>16</sup> [War 6.281–282](#), similar to a bank depository today.

Roman Empire went down to half its pre-war value.<sup>17</sup> This action of looking for gold by overturning the stones (including foundation stones) left Jerusalem as a vast quarry of dislodged and uprooted stones in a state of unrecognized shambles.

There was such an abundance of various stones dislodged from their foundations that the emperor Hadrian sixty years later was able to build an entirely new city (Aelia) to the northwest of the former city by reusing many of those ruined stones. The original southeast area of Jerusalem remained an open quarry until as late as the time of Eusebius. He lamented that stones of Jerusalem and the Temple were in his day still being used for homes, temples, theatres, etc.<sup>18</sup> What must be realized is that *Jewish* Jerusalem and the Holy Temple were so torn down and dismantled that even the foundational stones of the buildings were uprooted and in complete ruin. These eyewitness descriptions contrast with one complex of buildings that almost completely escaped the destruction and continued to remain as functioning structures within the devastated area of Jerusalem. That complex of buildings was the Haram esh-Sharif that we still see standing to this day.

### ***Only One Architectural Facility Survived the Jewish/Roman War in Jerusalem***

The whole of the *Jewish* Temple and *Jewish* Jerusalem were leveled to the ground and not one stone even of their foundations remained on top of one another — just as Jesus prophesied, and Josephus and Titus attested. But one man-made construction came through the war relatively unscathed. That single structure is still with us today. Since Titus determined to leave the Tenth Legion in Jerusalem to prevent further revolutions, the Legion had to have military quarters in which to reside. At first, Titus thought of leaving three small fortresses in the Upper City as the forts to protect the Tenth Legion. But Josephus said that while Titus was away in Antioch, those “local fortresses” (as he called them) were demolished in the Roman quest for gold.<sup>19</sup> This western area as a place to house the Tenth Legion proved to be inappropriate and inadequate. Incidentally, archaeological surveys of the entire “Upper City” (as much as could be uncovered) have revealed that NO ROMAN TROOPS ever occupied the western part of Jerusalem after the Jewish/Roman War.<sup>20</sup>

Titus, however, had another fortress in mind that was more than adequate to house the Tenth Legion. The answer of where the Tenth Legion had its geographical headquarters is given by an eyewitness who should certainly have known the truth. Eleazer, the leader of the last remnant of Jews in Masada (who committed suicide rather than fall into the hands of General Silva of the Tenth Legion three years after the main war was over) said that the Temple then lay in ruins and the City of Jerusalem was destroyed. Note his comments:

**“It [Jerusalem] is now demolished to the very foundations [even the foundational stones were all overturned], and has nothing left but THAT MONUMENT of it preserved, I mean the CAMP OF THOSE [Romans] that has destroyed it [Jerusalem], WHICH [CAMP] STILL DWELLS UPON ITS RUINS: some unfortunate old men also lie upon the ashes of the Temple [then in total ruins — burnt to ashes], and a few women are there preserved alive by the enemy [for prostitution purposes], for our bitter shame and reproach.”**

• [War 7.375–377 \(7:8.7\)](#), *Whiston translation*.

So, only one architectural structure from the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus survived the war. It was the former Roman camp that Titus (the Roman general) allowed to remain of all the buildings of Jerusalem. And it is still in evidence today. That was Fort Antonia, built by Herod the Great, it was much larger than the

<sup>17</sup> [War 6.316–318](#).

<sup>18</sup> [Eusebius, Proof of the Gospel, Vol. 2, Book VIII, chapter 3 \(sect. 405–407\)](#), p. 140.

<sup>19</sup> [War 7.113–115](#).

<sup>20</sup> See the report of archaeologists Hillel Geva and Hanan Eschel in the November/December 1997 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*. They show no Roman army resided in any part of the “Upper City” where most scholars thought the Tenth Legion was housed. See also the research of archaeologist Doron Bar in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* for January/June 1998 where the same conclusion is made. There is no evidence the Tenth Legion was housed area in any part of the “Upper City” of Jerusalem.

Temple in size. Josephus said it was as large as a city and could hold a full Legion of troops.<sup>21</sup>

Titus thought at first to demolish this fortress, but on second thought he decided to put it to Roman use. He continued to use it as the Camp of the Romans in the Jerusalem area, and it housed the Tenth Legion unto 289 AD. Since its prodigious walls were still mostly in place after the war (and there were 37 large cisterns for an adequate water supply inside its walls), the Tenth Legion had a ready-built fortress to protect them. This is the obvious reason why Titus spared the Haram esh-Sharif and made it the permanent fortress of the Romans to house the Tenth Legion and all subsidiary inhabitants that normally accompanied a Legion in a permanent fort in a foreign area. It was most natural to continue using Fort Antonia as a vital and protective fortress.

Josephus said that Fort Antonia was built around a massive and prominent *outcropping of rock* that was a notable protective feature within its precincts.<sup>22</sup> That “rock” is still the centerpiece feature of the remains of Fort Antonia. Indeed, that “rock” is identified in later histories as important. This descriptions of Josephus fits perfectly the present Haram esh-Sharif with its majestic Herodian and pre-Herodian walls and with the present Dome of the Rock now covering that significant *outcropping of rock*. It was a natural place for the Tenth Legion to make their headquarters.

Fort Antonia was also called the Roman **Praetorium**, and it was the place where Pilate sentenced Jesus to crucifixion. That *central rock outcropping* was a significant spot in the fortress, as Josephus stated, and even the apostle John singled it out for comment regarding the judgment of Jesus. John called it the *lithostrothon* [a rock, on which people could stand and be judged,].<sup>23</sup> This “Rock” had a Hebrew name: *Gabbatha*.<sup>24</sup>

Fort Antonia (now the Haram esh-Sharif) was built around this well-known *rock outcropping* and it was the only structure with its four massive walls to survive the Jewish/Roman War. We can still see its stones in place in its lower courses (all 10,000 of them!). Those Herodian walls of Fort Antonia (including where the Jewish Wailing Wall is located) have withstood the ravages of time for centuries. But eyewitness accounts attest that all the inner and outer walls of the Temple and the walls that surrounded Jerusalem were dismantled, including their foundations. Not even those uprooted foundation stones were left in place, but the 10,000 stones of the Haram are in their pristine positions.

Those walls of Fort Antonia surrounding the famous “rock” in the center area were retained by Titus to protect the Roman Legion permanently encamped in the Jerusalem area. This was the “rock” in the **Praetorium** where Jesus stood when Pilate judged him.

### ***Events in the Bar Kochba Revolt Can Now Be Explained Rationally***

In the later Bar Kochba Revolt of the Jews from 132 to 135 AD, there is no mention of any battles being fought in Jerusalem or anywhere near the city. This has amazed Jewish scholars. But now that we realize the Haram esh-Sharif was Fort Antonia (the **Praetorium**) where the Tenth Legion was later headquartered, it is understandable that such a fortress was so impregnable that none of those Jewish revolutionaries dared attack the area. The Romans had one of the greatest forts of the east as their place of protection. The Haram, with its four massive walls defending it, was an invincible fortress with plentiful supplies of food and copious water supplies in its many underground cisterns. This fact allowed the Tenth Legion to stay in Fort Antonia [the **Praetorium**] until the Legion moved to Ailat in 289 AD.

### ***The Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 AD Describes the Haram esh-Sharif as the Praetorium***

When the unnamed “Bordeaux Pilgrim” came to Jerusalem in 333 AD:

(1) He first witnessed a “Temple” standing with associated buildings. The Pilgrim spoke of the remains

<sup>21</sup> Compare the main description of the large size of Fort Antonia (it was a vast area) given by Josephus in [War 5.238–247](#) with his illustration of all normal Roman military camps being like a city in [War 3.79–84](#).

<sup>22</sup> [War 3.79–84](#).

<sup>23</sup> In the Gospel of John 19:13 *lithostrothon* is translated “pavement” in most translations.

<sup>24</sup> *Gabbatha* meant an important “high place.”

of this “Temple.” It had been rebuilt by Jews in the time of Emperor Constantine, reigning 306 to 337 AD. This was on Jerusalem’s southeast ridge.<sup>25</sup>

(2) The Pilgrim then climbed the southwest hill and entered the walled city of Jerusalem. He stood between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (then being built by order of Constantine) in the west part of the “Upper City” and another structure to the east that had walls. The Pilgrim said the walls of this structure (east of the Holy Sepulchre) reached downward into the bottom of the Tyropoeon Valley. He correctly identified it as the **Praetorium**. The Pilgrim was clearly describing the remains of the Haram esh-Sharif (which does indeed have its western and southwestern walls reaching into the Tyropoeon Valley).

We now arrive at a major point that needs emphasizing. The Bordeaux Pilgrim understood this edifice that was opposite (east of) the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as being the Roman **Praetorium**. The word was a common term used by the public for a Roman headquarters fortress of a general and his staff. Because of the association of the **Praetorium** with Jesus’ trial before Pilate, the records show that Constantine’s mother built a small church within the confines of this **Praetorium**, and she called it the Church of St. Cyrus and St. John.<sup>26</sup> This church was enlarged later, certainly by the time of Justinian (reigning 527 to 565 AD), when it was called “The Church of the Holy Wisdom” (Saint Sophia).

### ***The Piacenza Pilgrim and Omar in 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD Jerusalem***

The Piacenza Pilgrim visited Jerusalem during the reign of the Christian Roman Emperor Justinian in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century. The Piacenza Pilgrim also identified this Church of the Holy Wisdom precisely. He said it was at the site of the former **Praetorium** of Pilate. He also mentioned a significant architectural feature over which that Church had been built. It was an “oblong rock” on which the people (in the 6<sup>th</sup> century) believed they could see the footprints of Jesus indented in the rock. That Church was built directly over that important “Rock.” The Church did not survive long, however. The Persians in 614 AD destroyed it. But Sophronius, the Archbishop of Jerusalem when the Muslims took over Jerusalem in 638 AD, remembered that Church when he was a young man and he singled out the prominent Stone that was at that Christian spot.<sup>27</sup>

When Omar, the Second Caliph, wanted to build a place to pray where David prayed (over which the Temple of Solomon was built), Omar avoided showing any attention whatever to this “Rock” over which a later Caliph in 692 AD built the present Dome of the Rock. And why was the “Oblong Rock” of the former **Praetorium** and the Church of the Holy Wisdom later honored by the Muslims? Because Jesus’ footprints were supposed to be on the “Rock.” This belief provided the prime religious significance for later development of many Muslim folklore tales that began to be associated with the “Rock” and its holiness. The “footprints” of Jesus started it all.

### ***Other Mentions of the Rock***

By the time of Saladin, the Kurdish commander of the Muslims who reconquered Jerusalem from the Christians in 1187 AD, Saladin’s court recorder praised the Commander of the Faithful for rescuing the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock on which the outline of Jesus’ feet were supposed to have been indented.<sup>28</sup> But it was not only the “footprints” of Jesus that were indented in its surface. Many other Muslim tales became attached to the “Rock.” By Saladin’s time Muslims also thought Muhammad’s feet and hand were indented in the “Rock.” It did not stop there. The feet of Abraham, the hand of the Archangel Gabriel and even the “footprints” of God himself were reckoned by later Muslims to be on the “Rock.”

Muslims added these later beliefs to gain prestige for Muhammad to accompany the Christian legend that the “footprints” of Jesus were found on the “Rock” underneath the Dome of the Rock. Muslims invented these

<sup>25</sup> Another attempt to rebuild this “Temple” was decades later in the short reign of Emperor “Julian the Apostate” (361 to 363 AD). DWS

<sup>26</sup> See the *Life of Constantine* recorded in Wilkinson’s *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, p. 204.

<sup>27</sup> See Sophronius, *Antacroeontica* quoted by Wilkinson in *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, p. 91.

<sup>28</sup> See the article “Saladin” in *Brill’s Encyclopaedia of Islam* (first five-volume edition, 1913–1932).

later stories to justify the existence of the shrine as then having some Muslim significance, and later Muslim scholars knew these folktales were mere fables without any historical foundation.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the folklore elements that later developed, this historical evidence shows that the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock was a well-known precise geographical site that people (throughout the early Byzantine period to the time of Saladin in 1187 AD) identified as the Dome of the Rock with the site of the *Praetorium*, the central part of Fort Antonia.

It was the former site of the Church of the Holy Wisdom (which enshrined the revered “oblong rock”) where Christians long believed Pilate sentenced Jesus. The feet of Jesus were believed to have stood on that very rock that the New Testament identified as the *lithostrothon* in John 19:13. And recall, Josephus made a significant point out of the fact that such a notable “Rock” was also located in the interior of Fort Antonia in his day. All these historical connections over the centuries show that the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock had been the main geographical feature of Fort Antonia in the time of Jesus. The historical documents are so clear on this matter that I am amazed this fact was not recognized before the publishing of my recent book on the Temples. The Haram esh-Sharif is the site of Fort Antonia (the *Praetorium* of Pilate).

This means that the area of the Dome of the Rock is really an original Christian holy site, and not a Jewish or Muslim site. Interestingly, when Omar made his covenant with Sophronius and the Christians at the time the Muslims conquered Jerusalem, Omar gave his solemn promise that he would not build any Muslim shrine or mosque over any former Christian holy place or any present one that then existed.<sup>30</sup> This is one of the main points why Omar paid no religious attention to the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock.

Omar kept his word and left that “Christian Rock/Shrine” alone. Only later when Muslim folklore stories began to develop regarding its sanctification did the “Rock” start to become important to those in Islam. That was in 692 AD when Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock over the “Rock” which was the “oblong rock” of the Wisdom Church. It is ironic that Muslim authorities today often show the Dome of the Rock as the central symbol of Islam in many of their political displays. The shrine, however, was a Christian Church that honored the kingship of Christ Jesus over the world. Remember, Pilate acknowledged Jesus at his trial as the messianic King of the Jews.

### ***The Scriptures Show that NO Stationary Rock Was Ever Associated with the Temples***

There was a significant “Rock” around which Fort Antonia (the *Praetorium*) was built on which Jesus stood before Pilate. But note this! It is essential to realize that *nowhere* in the Holy Scriptures do we find the slightest hint that a “Rock” (such as that under the Dome of the Rock) was ever a geographical feature of any Temple from Solomon to Herod. No stationary “Rock” was ever associated with the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>31</sup>

On the contrary, the significant feature of the Temple in any biblical description is that it was built over a “threshingfloor” (2 Samuel 24:16, 18, 24). All “threshingfloors” (as even the English rendering states and the Hebrew demands) were “floors.” That is, they were leveled areas like normal floors made by man that were usually of dirt or smooth manufactured stone or timber. Threshingfloors were not jagged and rugged natural outcroppings of rock). No one should think of the top part of a rugged outcropping of rock (like that under the Dome of the Rock) as a *level floor*.

There is another disqualification that the historical documents emphasize. Solomon’s Holy of Holies and

<sup>29</sup> See the critique by the Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiyya who wrote in 1328 AD (his English translation is found in Prof. F.E. Peters’ *Jerusalem*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 377).

<sup>30</sup> See the account by the first Christian-Arab historian by the name of *Said b. al-Bitrik* (whose Greek name was Euty chius) cited by Donato Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*, pp. 447–448 and further cited in Peters, *Jerusalem*, pp. 189–190.

<sup>31</sup> True, Jews tell us that Solomon later made a “foundation stone” that a few modern scholars have guessed may be the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock. It is called the *Even Shetiyyah*. But Jewish sources tell us this was a manufactured slab of stone (like a pavement stone) made in the days of Samuel and David that could fit snugly into the twenty cubit’s square floor of the Holy of Holies. Its smooth top was elevated three fingers above the level floor (See *Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin 26b; Yoma 53b). In no way could that *Even Shetiyyah* be considered a natural outcropping of rock almost twice as large as the Holy of Holies of Solomon (as is the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock). Neither could it be the “pierced stone” of the Bordeaux Pilgrim.

the Altar of Burnt Offering that he built were not located over a permanent outcropping of rock. We are informed in the historical documents that the Temples and their courtyards were made progressively larger over the centuries by being expanded further north at each move. The fact is, the Holy of Holies was relocated further north each time the Temple platform was enlarged.

While all ground features of the Temple courts remained static, buildings and Temple furniture on top of the expanded platform moved progressively northward at each extension.

- Solomon's Temple was about 100 feet wide from north to south with the Holy of Holies in the center of that width.
- We are later informed that the Temple in Alexander the Great's day was 150 feet wide with the Holy of Holies evenly spaced between the north and south walls (Josephus, [Contra Apion 1.198–200](#)).
- Even the Temple just before Herod's time was extended to be 300 feet wide with the Holy of Holies again evenly spaced between the north and south walls.
- We know this because Josephus, as an eyewitness, described Herod's Temple as a precise square of 600 feet on each side. Herod *doubled* the size of the Temple by tearing down its north wall and extending the linear measurements a further 300 feet north ([War 5.184–190](#)). This made the outer walls of Herod's Temple (in its final shape) to be a perfect square of 600 feet on each side.

The *Mishnah* (a Jewish document of the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD compiled from older sources) gave a further square measurement of 500 cubits (750 feet) on each of the four sides. This measurement DOES NOT contradict the dimensions given in Josephus because the *Mishnah* is describing a different feature of the Temple: the Levitical "camp" that surrounded the outer walls of the Temple. It was technically called "the Temple Mount." See my [Temples](#) book for the interesting and informative details which show the consistency in the dimensions of Josephus with those of the *Mishnah*.<sup>32</sup>

So, in the history of the Holy of Holies (including the Altar of Burnt Offering) this shows that they were at first located 50 feet north of the south wall in Solomon's time with the Holy of Holies in the center of that width. Later, in the time of Alexander the Great, the Sanctuary part of the Temple was then positioned 75 feet north from the south wall. Even later, the Sanctuary was again moved and was relocated 150 feet north of the south wall with the Holy of Holies evenly spaced between the north and south walls (Josephus, [Contra Apion 1.198](#)). Finally, the Holy of Holies at Herod's time was moved even further north and spaced 300 feet north of the south wall and equidistant from the north and south walls of the Temple square. We know this because Josephus [and this deserves emphasis] **described Herod's Temple as a precise square of 600 feet on each side with the Holy of Holies in its center** (north to south). Herod doubled the size of the Temple platform by tearing down its north wall and repositioning it 300 feet further north ([War 5.184–189](#)).

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<sup>32</sup> The largest size of the Temple was the Sanctuary begun in the time of Herod. Josephus said Herod doubled the size of the previous Temple and that its outer walls were a perfect square of 600 feet on each side ([War 5.190–200](#); [6:164–168](#) with [6:310–315](#) and [Antiquities 15.391–402](#), and [15.415](#)). He also said the Temple was a square tower that had its southeastern corner in the depths of the Kidron Valley, and from the valley floor to the top of the tower (it was a platform on which the Temple itself was built) 450 feet in elevation — or as high as a 40 to 45 story building in Chicago.

The *Mishnah*, however, shows another measurement of a perfect square also around the Temple of 750 feet on each side (*Middoth* 2:1 Danby trans, p. 591). This is not a contradiction of Josephus. The *Mishnah* recorded another squared area called "the Temple Mount" or "the Camp of the Levites" which was an unwallled imaginary limit around the actual physical walls of the Temple in which Levitical duties could be officially performed. This Camp of the Levites had "gates" into it like the Camp of the Levites did in the time of Moses while Israel was in the Wilderness, but these "gates" were mere designated entrances (not physical gates like those in the walls of cities). So, this 40 to 45 story high tower was the Temple of Herod and it is precisely described by Josephus.

The Haram esh-Sharif (Fort Antonia), however, is a trapezoid in shape with its corners not at the same angles of measurement. The Haram's measure is: East wall at 1556 feet; North wall at 1041 feet; West wall at 1596 feet and the South wall at 929 feet in length. In no way can the two structures be compared as being identical because the Haram is vastly larger than was the Temple, just as Josephus stated. The Temple and the Haram were two different buildings.

The Holy of Holies and Altar of Burnt Offering were positioned at different places within the platform of the Temple every time it was enlarged. Only the south wall from the time of Solomon to Herod remained static. This well-known fact **precludes any stationary rock on a ridge as being the prime object for the central placement of these holy parts of the Temple.** Such a stationary “Rock” as under the Dome of the Rock is disqualified as being *any part* of the Temples in Jerusalem.

Besides, there is NOT A WORD in Scripture that *any* stationary “Rock” was an essential sanctified spot of the Temples in Jerusalem. (See footnote 31 above.)

### ***Why Did Later People Select the Haram esh-Sharif as the Place of Solomon’s Temple?***

The reason why people in the period of the Crusades accepted the Haram esh-Sharif region as the Temple site was because Omar took a portable stone from the remains of two Jewish attempts to rebuild the Temples at the correct site over the Gihon Spring and brought that portable stone from those ruined Temples to his Al Aksa Mosque that he was beginning to construct. I already mentioned in brief these two attempts to rebuild the Temples by the Jews (**the first attempt** was from 312 to 325 AD in the time of Constantine and **the second** in the time of Julian the Apostate in 362 AD). Omar made that portable stone from this ruined Temple site into the *qibla* stone that pointed Muslim worshippers in his Al Aksa Mosque toward Mecca.

In the following century, by applying a Muslim belief called *baraka*, later Muslims felt that a stone from one Temple (or holy site) could be dislodged and taken to another place and that the latter place would take on the same degree of holiness as the former spot. So, a portable stone was used by Omar that was found in the ruins of the former Jewish Temples built in the times of Constantine and Julian. That stone was consecrated as a stone to re-inaugurate “Solomon’s Temple.” When Omar placed that stone in the holiest place of the Al Aksa Mosque at the southern end of the Haram esh-Sharif, Muslims could then (and from their point of view, legitimately) apply the custom of *baraka* to identify the site as being “Solomon’s Temple.”

Interestingly, when Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem, Christians also began to call the Al Aksa Mosque by the name “Solomon’s Temple” (the Muslim designation), while they felt that Herod’s extension of the Temple was located at the Dome of the Rock (which they then called the Lord’s Temple). The Christians already knew the tradition of Jesus’ footprints on the Rock. They cleverly altered the actors of the tale and made it the Rock on which the priest placed Jesus at his infant dedication.

### ***Jewish Authorities Finally Accept the Haram esh-Sharif as the Temple Site***

It was in this time of the Crusades (about 1165 AD), that a Jewish merchant by the name of Benjamin of Tudela made a visit to Jerusalem. He was neither a historian nor theologian. He simply reported in a chronicle of his journey what he saw and what he was told, without criticism. (He is also noted for some absurd geographical identifications of former biblical spots.) When he heard the Christian and Muslim accounts that the Haram esh-Sharif was the location of the former Temples, this Jewish merchant accepted their explanation — for the first time by any Jewish person. Benjamin did so without expressing the slightest historical criticism to justify such identifications.

There was an overpowering reason for this. Benjamin of Tudela was enthralled over a supposed discovery of the tombs of the Kings of Judah (King David, Solomon, and others). He was told the tombs of the Judean kings were supposed to have been found on the southwest hill about 15 years before he arrived in Jerusalem. Benjamin did not see the “Tombs,” nor has anyone else since that time. But this hearsay “story” so impressed Benjamin (and later Jews after the Crusades) that Jewish authorities quickly began to accept the southwest hill as being the original “Mount Zion” of the Holy Scriptures (and that Zion was not on the southeast ridge).

This false acceptance gave credence that the Haram esh-Sharif area might be the Temple Mount. After all, with the new “archaeological discovery” on the southwest hill — and they did not question its legitimacy — it meant that “Mount Zion” had been found on the southwest hill, and no longer over the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley. This was counter to all Jewish belief before the Crusader period. Because of this, even the location of the Gihon Spring was changed to be in the upper western extension of the Valley of Hinnom — at

least 2000 feet west from where the spring was truly located.

This hearsay account recorded by Benjamin of Tudela concerning the so-called tombs of the Judean Kings (and that is all it was — with not a tissue of evidence to back up the supposition) quickly spread far and wide. This *hearsay tale* of discovering David’s Tomb finally won the day. Thankfully, not all Jews at first accepted the new site for their former “Mount Zion” on the southwest hill (or the Temple site at the Haram).

Benjamin of Tudela was countered by the great Maimonides (though neither mentioned each other). Maimonides stated that the place of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was still in complete ruins,<sup>33</sup> while the Haram esh-Sharif was then the most built-up region in Jerusalem and was not in ruins.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the Haram was decorated and groomed as a prime holy site. Though Maimonides had no love for a physical Temple because it displayed an anthropomorphic belief in God (which he utterly repudiated), he knew that the Dome of the Rock and the lavishly built-up area around it was not the site of the Temple. This is because most of the Haram precincts were built up and paved over. They definitely were not ruins.

### *Rabbi David Kimchi’s Testimony*

This understanding was also believed by the Jewish authority Rabbi David Kimchi who (just after the time of Maimonides) stated that the Jewish Temple was still in utter ruins and that no Christian or Muslim had ever built over the spot where the true Temples stood. This express dogmatism of Rabbi David Kimchi, one of the great biblical commentators of the Jews (otherwise known as the RADAQ) who lived from about 1160 to 1235 AD, is of utmost value. Rabbi Kimchi said that as late as his time the region of the former Temples remained in ruins and that **NO GENTILES** (whether Roman, Byzantine or Muslim) **HAD YET BUILT ANY BUILDINGS OVER THE SITE OF THE TEMPLE** (emphases mine). Kimchi wrote (and I quote): **“And [the Temple] is still in ruins, [in] that the Temple site WAS NEVER BUILT ON BY THE NATIONS.”**<sup>35</sup>

These comments of Rabbi David Kimchi are first-class Jewish evidence in about 1235 AD, and they show in no uncertain terms that the built-up area of the Haram esh-Sharif (long built over by the Christians and Muslims) **WAS NOT** the Temple site. The real Temple area was over and around the Gihon Spring on the southeast ridge which, in Rabbi Kimchi’s time, was outside the walls of Jerusalem and an area used as a dump.

So, Rabbi Kimchi around 1235 AD states that **NO GENTILE BUILDINGS** were ever built on the site of the Temple — and this included the period 600 years before him when Muslims (and Christians during the Crusader period) had control over all areas of Jerusalem! In fact, Rabbi Kimchi said the exclusive region for the Temple **EVEN IN HIS DAY** was **“still in ruins.”** This historical observation by Kimchi is proof positive that many Jews were not being led to beliefs about the Temple site in the Crusade period, because it was obvious to Christians and Muslims that the Dome of the Rock had been built over the former Church of the Holy Wisdom which only later (in 692 AD) became the Muslim Shrine of the Dome of the Rock.

What the Muslims called Solomon’s Temple (and so did the Christian Crusaders) — that is, the Al Aksa Mosque, was also a Muslim building within the Haram esh-Sharif. David Kimchi, however, clearly taught that the original area of the Jewish Temples was in his time (about 1235 AD) still unoccupied by any Christian or Muslim buildings from the past and that the site was in Kimchi’s time in complete ruins.

### *Judaism Accepts the False Temple Tradition*

This true observation of David Kimchi, however, did not prevail in Judaism. The Jewish authorities became so impressed by the so-called “discovery” of the Tombs of all the Judean Kings (especially that of King David) on the southwest hill (which was given to them from hearsay alone, and we know now to be in complete error), that they became convinced that the southwest hill was indeed the original “Zion.” As a result, this made the Jewish people feel that the Haram esh-Sharif could probably be the site of their former

<sup>33</sup> See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, sect. 8, section on “Temple Service.”

<sup>34</sup> See Dr. Martin’s article, [“Maimonides - Saint and Heretic”](#) to learn about this Jewish theologian.

<sup>35</sup> “Commentary on Isaiah 64:10,” quoted by Prof. Kaufman in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April, 2000, p.61 — the letters in capitals are my emphasis.

Temples since the lower southeast ridge could no longer be reckoned as “Zion.”

This erroneous evaluation by the Jewish authorities of locating “Zion” on the southwest hill was a major geographical mistake. Indeed, archaeologists have proven that the so-called “Tomb of David” located on the southwest hill is of Crusader origin.<sup>36</sup>

This made little difference to those of that period. In the main, pure geographic nonsense then began to rule in Jerusalem. This was a period of religious “Dark Ages” that set in among all religious groups in Jerusalem and elsewhere. Christians, Muslims and yes, even Jewish authorities, lost all knowledge of where the former Temples were located when they erroneously accepted the “Upper City” as the site of Mount Zion.

This profound error locating “Mount Zion” on the southwest hill remained popular and even entrenched in the scholarly world until 1875 to 1885 AD when the outstanding research of W.F. Birch in England demolished its false credentials. Still, this mistaken acceptance of the southwest hill as “Zion” by Jewish authorities in Crusader times, and their recognition of the Haram as a contending site for the Temples, were in stark contrast to what the earlier Jewish authorities believed *before* the Crusades.

The fact is, Jewish authorities up to the time of the Crusades knew that the Temples were built over the Gihon Spring on the southeast ridge and that the real “Tomb of David” was in that southeast area. It was on the proper southeast ridge that the Jews started to rebuild the Temples in the time of Constantine and Julian. And later, when Omar let 70 families of Jews settle in Jerusalem in 638 AD (immediately after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Muslims), the Jews said they wanted to live near the ruins of their Temple they said were **“in the south part of Jerusalem”** (that is, further south from the Haram esh-Sharif where Omar prayed and wanted to build his Mosque).

### ***The Geniza Records from Egypt Confirm the Temple Site on the Southeast Ridge***

We have absolute evidence that the Jews in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD knew the location of their former Temples (and their former “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies from the Temples built in the time of Constantine and Julian). It was *south* of the Al Aksa Mosque and near the Siloam water system. It is found in a fragment of a letter discovered in the Geniza library of Egypt now in Cambridge University in England:

**“Omar agreed that seventy households should come [to Jerusalem from Tiberias]. They agreed to that. After that, he asked: ‘Where do you wish to live within the city?’ They replied: ‘In the southern section of the city, which is the market of the Jews.’ Their request was to enable them to be NEAR THE SITE OF THE TEMPLE and its gates, as well as [near] to the waters of Shiloah, which could be used for immersion. This was granted them [the 70 Jewish families, ELM] by the Emir of the Believers. So seventy households including women and children moved from Tiberias, and established settlements in buildings whose foundations had stood for many generations.”**

• **Hammer, *The Jerusalem Anthology*, p. 148**<sup>37</sup>

This southern area was very much south of the southern wall of the Haram (where Omar had his Al Aksa Mosque) because Professor Benjamin Mazar (when I worked with him at the archaeological excavations outside the southern wall of the Haram from 1969 to 1973) discovered two palatial Umayyad buildings close to the southern wall of the Haram that occupied a great deal of space south of that southern Haram wall.

Those 70 families certainly had their settlement further south than the ruins of these Muslim government buildings. Also, when Karaite Jews a century later settled in Jerusalem, they also went to this same southern area as well as adjacently across the Kidron into the Silwan area.

To these Jews in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, this is where the ruins of their Temples and the real “Tomb of David” were located — over and around the Gihon Spring. They even had a synagogue in a cave that led to underground passages in the area. And they were right.

<sup>36</sup> Read the excellent monograph by Dr. Michael Germano, “[The Ancient Church of the Apostles: Revisiting Jerusalem’s Cenacle and David’s Tomb](#).” It shows the historical evidence of the truth behind the false tomb of David. DWS

<sup>37</sup> Reuven Hammer, *The Jerusalem Anthology*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995.

Indeed, the Jewish authorities did not abandon the area around the Gihon Spring and its tributary waters of the Shiloah channel until the major earthquake of 1033 AD that destroyed the early Eudocian Wall constructed in the Byzantine period. That destruction by the earthquake made the southeastern region around the Gihon Spring to be **outside** the walls of Jerusalem. The whole *southeast* quadrant became unprotected. This opened the region to attacks by the Seljuk Turks and other enemies.

Then something else happened that was quite remarkable and ritualistically devastating. In that period, the waters of the Gihon Spring turned bitter and even septic (between 1033 AD and 1077 AD). The interpretation placed upon this event was as if God himself had turned the former “waters of salvation” into a corrupt liquid inside the precincts of God’s own House.

The Jewish authorities were aware of the account in Numbers 5:11–31 that showed bitter waters were associated with the adulterous woman in Tabernacle and Temple symbolism. With this final ritualistic setback to their religious customs, the Jerusalem Academy abandoned Jerusalem and moved to Damascus. To the Jewish authorities by 1077 AD there was nothing of contemporary holiness left to the former Temple area over the Gihon Spring. Jerusalem was later taken over by the Christian Crusaders in 1099 AD and no Jew was able to step inside Jerusalem for the first 50 years of the Crusades.

### ***How Josephus Described the Temple That He Saw***

There is another important observation that needs to be made. Josephus described the Temple as being a square (a precise square of one stadium length on each side — about 600 feet).<sup>38</sup> The *Mishnah* shows that there was another square measurement around the actual Temple square that measured 500 cubits or 750 feet (*Middoth* 2.1, Danby translation, p. 591). This was a different measure. It gave the dimensions of an imaginary camp area around the Temple known in the 1<sup>st</sup> century as the “Camp of the Levites,” or in simple terms “the Temple Mount.” The actual square of the Temple had two colonnade roadways from the northwest corner of the Temple porticos to the southwestern corner of Fort Antonia.<sup>39</sup> These roadways were a stadium in length. Combining the square lengths of the Temple square with the two roadways that led to Fort Antonia, the length was six stadia of 600 feet each.

The walls around the Temple were prodigious in height according to Josephus. The southeastern corner of the outer Temple walls was located directly over the very bottom of the Kidron Valley (the bedrock center) and extended upwards 300 cubits or 450 feet<sup>40</sup> where it reached the four-square platform on which the actual Temple stood and where its various courts were located. The northeastern corner was also located within the depths of the Kidron though not quite as high as the southeastern corner. This made the four Temple walls to be a 600 square foot TOWER (all sides were equidistant) like a 40-story skyscraper in Chicago that extended upward with its southeast section of the wall within the river bottom (its deepest part) of the Kidron Valley.

Barnabas described the Temple (15 years after its destruction) as a TOWER,<sup>41</sup> and the Book of Enoch and the Shepherd of Hermas give numerous references that the Temple was indeed shaped as a TOWER.

Let us now take those four-square walls of the Temple (each 600 feet in length) and transport them to center over the Dome of the Rock some 1000 feet north of the Gihon Spring. The TOWER would indeed fit well into the enclosure known as the Haram esh-Sharif. But its southeast corner would NOT be in the bottom of the Kidron Valley as Josephus said it was (it would be up on the level area of the Haram), nor would its northeast corner be precipitous and over the Kidron Valley as Josephus also reiterated.

Indeed, if the Temple stood over the Dome of the Rock, the Temple platform on top of a 40-story skyscraper would have been higher than the top summit of the Mount of Olives. In no way was this the proper scenario.

If, however, one returns the Temple and its dimensions (as Josephus gave them) to the Gihon Spring site,

<sup>38</sup> See [War 5.207–214](#) with [War 6.310–315](#) and [Antiquities 15.391–402](#), and [15.415](#).

<sup>39</sup> [War 2.330–332](#).

<sup>40</sup> [Antiquities 8.95–98](#).

<sup>41</sup> [Barnabas 16.4–8](#), particularly verse 5.

everything fits perfectly! What this shows is that the walls around the Haram esh-Sharif are NOT those of the former Temple. They are those of Fort Antonia (which are not a square of 600 feet, but *over double* the size of the Temple). Even the walls of the Haram are not precisely rectangular. The walls are a trapezoid in shape. It also makes sense that Titus would have wanted the Tenth Legion to be housed in this remaining fortress that survived the war that formerly overshadowed the Temple on its north side.

What happened to the stones of the Temple? All the Temple structure and walls were torn down to their foundations just as Jesus prophesied they would be. As a result of this fact, let us not get the two different buildings (Fort Antonia and the Temple) mixed up as all scholars and religious leaders have done since the time of the Crusades. It is time to get back to this truth of the Bible. The Haram esh-Sharif is NOT the site of the Temples. People in Jerusalem are now fighting over the wrong areas. All should read my book [\*The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot\*](#) where the historical evidence shows (without doubt) that the real place of the former Temples was over the Gihon Spring on the southeast ridge.

### *The Western (Wailing) Wall of the Jews*

This abridgment of my book on the Temples needs a concluding comment regarding the Western (or Wailing) Wall where the Jewish people now congregate as their holiest of places in Judaism. On the [ASK Temple Articles](#) page (where there is abundant historical information from early and even modern Jewish scholars), I show that the Jewish people paid no attention whatever to the present Western (Wailing) Wall until they finally took over the site from the Muslims (about 1570 AD). The Muslims in turn renovated it from being a Christian holy place where Christian women would discard soiled undergarments.

The Wailing Wall as a Jewish holy place is a modern invention that was selected for Jewish worship (without the slightest historical precedent) by one of the greatest mystics of the Kabbalistic age. His name was Isaac Luria (called “the Lion”) who in his many geographical mistakes (as I show in my research article, “[The Strange Story of the False Wailing Wall](#)”) selected the Western Wall as a holy place for the Jews to assemble. Rabbi Luria only sanctified and initiated this Western Wall in the last part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century — only 450+ years ago.

The Jewish people today at their Wailing Wall are NOT praying at a wall of their former Temples. They are sanctifying the western wall of Fort Antonia that was built by King Herod but taken over by the Romans as their prime fortress in Jerusalem in 6 AD at the end of the earlier Herodian dynasty.

The shrine on the other side of the Wailing Wall in the time of Jesus was NOT the Temple built by Herod. As a part of the Roman **Praetorium**, it necessarily possessed a Temple dedicated to the Roman Emperor and the Gods of Rome (or similar accepted divinities of the Roman pantheon) that all encampments of the Romans had near their center section. It is sad to see but the symbolic “heart and soul” of modern Judaism (as Jews are persistently calling it today) is the site of a former Roman Temple dedicated to Jupiter. The place was once holy to the very people who destroyed the real Temple in 70 AD. This is occurring while the true site of their Temples lies forlorn and languishing in utter ruin and degradation in the Ophel part of the southeastern ridge. How ironic!

Ernest L. Martin, December 2000

David Sielaff, May 2021