

JOSEPH PATRICH

The Jerusalem Temple and the Temple Mount

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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The Jerusalem Temple and the Temple Mount

Collected Essays

Mohr Siebeck

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ISBN 978-3-16-163269-3 / eISBN 978-3-16-163270-9
DOI 10.1628/ 978-3-16-163270-9

ISSN 0512-1604 / eISSN 2568-7476 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <https://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was typeset by Martin Fischer in Tübingen, printed by Gulde Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

Preface

My occupation in the study of the Second Temple and the Temple Mount began more than forty years ago. It was never motivated by any messianic aspiration that a new Temple should be rebuilt. My interest was purely academic; I approached it as I would any other ancient temple, addressing all available sources of knowledge – literary and archaeological. The literary sources pertaining to the period at our concern – from the time of its restoration in year 538 BCE, to its destruction in year 70 CE – are variegated: Jewish, Pagan and Christian, written in a variety of languages: Greek, Latin, Aramaic and Hebrew. The archaeological remains are quite few, since the Temple itself was long destroyed; only the impressive remains of the walls of the Herodian precinct survive, but, surprisingly, also many underground water cisterns; and their story is very telling.

Chronologically, my research on the Temple and its precinct can be divided into two stages.¹ My first paper on this topic (Chapter XV, first published in 1982), was an outcome of a seminar course on Talmudic Archaeology given by my teacher Prof. Lee Israel Levine; this was my first introduction to this fascinating field, that later nourished many other chapters of the book, as well as my academic work at large. The second paper, published in 1986 (Chapter XIII), was the outcome of a fruitful discourse with the late Prof. Yigael Yadin, on the occasion of a meeting at his home related to an entirely different subject: my Survey of Caves in the Judean Desert (he had kindly assisted in organizing and materializing this project). Following this study I became aware of the fact that m. Middot actually provides a blue-print, permitting a most detailed 3D reconstruction of the Temple. This resulted in Chapter XI (1994). Reading the description of the Sanctuary portal and the golden vine in the Latin version of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 15.394–395 (the Greek version being corrupted), led to Chapter XII (1993–94).

Some 15 years had elapsed until the second stage had started. The breakthrough came while writing a general paper on the Second Temple at the invitation of my dear late teacher, Prof. Yoram Tsafrir, for the book edited by Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Zeev Kedar (2009).² On that occasion, I first realized that Water Cistern no. 5 was the water cistern that fed the Laver by means of a water wheel

¹ A Hebrew version generally preceded the English one by a year or two.

² *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, eds. Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem and Austin, TX: Yad Yizhak ben Zvi and University of Texas Press, 2009). I am deeply indebted to Prof. Kedar for his encouragement throughout.

(Chapter X, 2008), and that it actually is a precise extant pointer of the location and orientation (9.7° south of due east), of the altar, the Temple and some of the Gates (Water) and Chambers (Wood, *Gullah*) of the Inner Court (‘*Azarah*) (Chapter VI, 2011). This was a real enlightenment that led to many of the other chapters in this book. A fresh reading of the passages pertaining to the House of the Laver and the House of Utensils in the Temple Scroll, pertaining to the Pre-Herodian Temple (Chapter IX, 2009), added literary evidence to the said conclusions, and most recently these were corroborated by an astronomical evidence (Chapter VII, 2023).

Little attention was given in the past to the building project of Simeon the Just on the Temple Mount (Chapter III, 2011). This study permitted to differentiate four stages in the architectural evolution of the Temple Mount (Chapter II, 2013), not just three (as was earlier claimed by Leen Ritmeyer).³

Locating the chambers and gates of the Inner Court (‘*Azarah*) according to Water Cistern no. 5 – an archaeological relic – permitted to conclude (unlike Maimonides and most later commentators) that m. Mid. 5:3–4, not b. Yoma 19a, is the correct version pertaining to the Chambers of the South and North of the ‘*Azarah* (Chapter VIII, first published here in English). Three other water cisterns located under the NE corner of the upper platform of the Temple Mount (Cisterns nos. 2, 34, 37), point upon the location of the Chamber called House of Stone (*beth even*), mentioned in m. Parah 3:1 (Chapter V, first published here in English). A special study is devoted to the Railing that barred access of gentiles beyond this fence, and to its gates (Chapter IV, first published here in English).

During the four decades of my studies of various aspects of the Temple and its precinct, I was assisted by several gifted architects, whose figures, drawn following my instructions, illustrate this book. These are (in a chronological order) Leen Ritmeyer, Idan Rabinowitz, Marcos Edelcopp and Roy Elbag. Thanks are due to them. I am also deeply indebted to Dr. Ruth Clemens for her translation and style editing of some of these essays, and for her useful comments.

* * *

The book, comprised of sixteen chapters, is divided into three sections arranged from the outer perimeter to the center; from the evolution of the Temple Mount to the Temple itself. The third section, comprised of two chapters, pertains to structures outside the temple precinct: A composite triclinium with a fountain located to the west of Wilson’s Arch (Chapter XIV), and the Lower Level aqueduct in the context of a legal controversy involving the Sadducees that is recorded

³ *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006).

in m. Yadayim (Chapter XV). Chapter XVI is the concluding chapter. Three chapters (IV, V and VIII), as well as the Introduction and the concluding chapter are first published in English here.

For the sake of uniformity, the references and footnotes of all chapters were modified to conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style*² (2014). A common bibliography, a list of abbreviations and index of literary sources, personal and geographical names, and subjects, were added to the book. Few sections were omitted in some chapters, in order to prevent repetition, but inevitably some still remain. For this end, some figures were also omitted.

I am indebted to my dear friend Prof. Jan Willem van Henten of the University of Amsterdam, for useful advice on various aspects related to these studies of mine, and for directing me to publish this book of collected essays in the WUNT I series of Mohr Siebeck. Thanks are also due to Mohr Siebeck staff for their efficient and attentive work and to the previous publishers of some of these essays for allowing them to be reproduced here.

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Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BALAS	<i>Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
b.	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
Ber.	Berakhhot
Bik.	Bikkurim
BT	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
CAD	A. Leo Oppenheim et al., eds., <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , 26 vols. Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–2010.
CIIP I.1	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae / Palaestinae</i> . Jerusalem. Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2010.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSO	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DWhG	<i>Schriften der Deutschen Wasserhistorischen Gesellschaft</i>
‘Ed.	‘Eduyyot
‘Erub.	‘Erubin
ESI	<i>Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
HA	<i>Hadashot Arkheologiyot</i>
Hag.	Hagigah
Hor.	Horayot
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
INJ	<i>Israel Numismatic Journal</i>
IOSOT	International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JJA	<i>Journal of Jewish Art</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JQR	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament supplement series</i>
JSPSup	<i>Journal for the study of the Pseudepigrapha supplement series</i>
JT	<i>Jerusalem Talmud</i>
Ketub.	Ketubbot
KJV	Bible, King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
m.	Mishnah
Macc.	<i>Maccabees</i>
Matt.	Matthew
Meg.	Megilla

Menah	Menahot
Mid.	Middot
Miqw.	Miqwaot
Neh	Nehemiah
NJPS	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text</i>
NSAJR	<i>New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region</i>
ʾOhal.	ʾOhalot
PEFQS	<i>Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
Pesah.	Pesahim
PJb	<i>Palaestinajahrbuch des Deutschen Evangelischen Instituts für Altertums-</i> <i>wissenschaft des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem.</i>
Qadmoniot	<i>Qadmoniot: A Journal for the Antiquities of Eretz-Israel and Bible</i>
Qidd.	Qiddushin
RA	<i>Révue Archéologique</i>
RB	<i>Révue Biblique</i>
RQ	<i>Révue de Qumran</i>
RSV	Bible, Revised Standard Version
Sam	Samuel
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
SCI	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
SCM	Publisher (London)
Shabb.	Shabbat
Shebu.	Shevuʿot
Sheq.	Sheqalim
STDJ	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
t.	Tosefta
Tehar.	Teharot
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplements</i>
y.	Jerusalem Talmud; <i>Talmud Yerushalmi</i>
Yad.	Yadayim
Zebah.	Zebahim
Zech	Zechariah
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

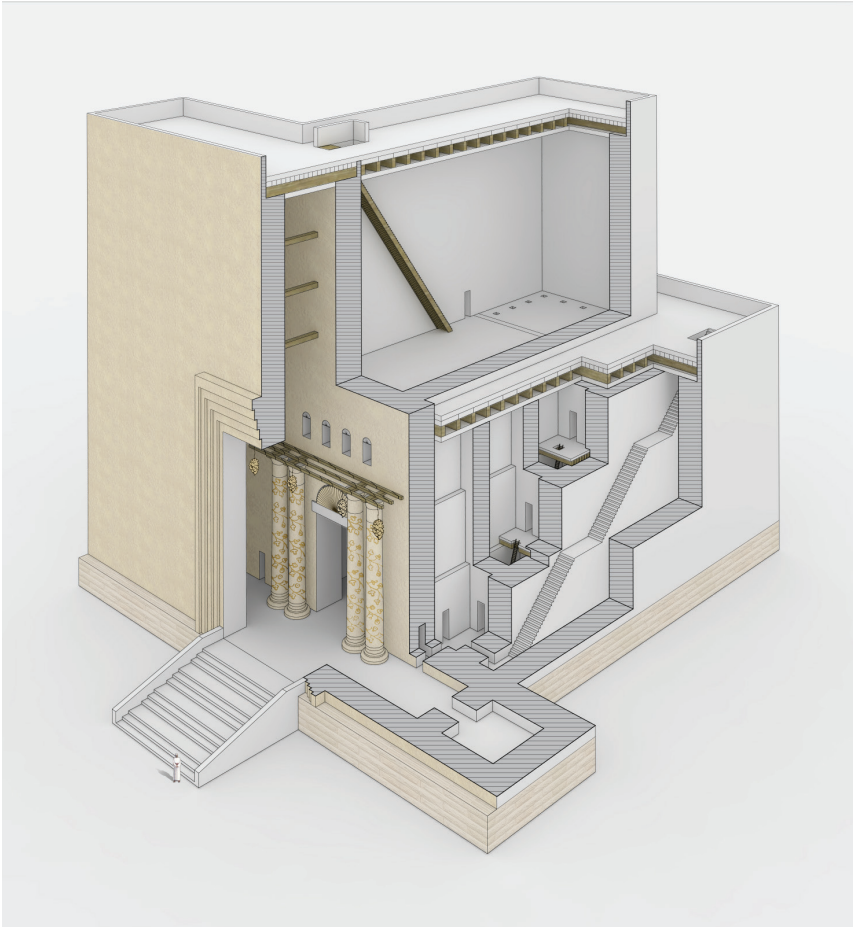
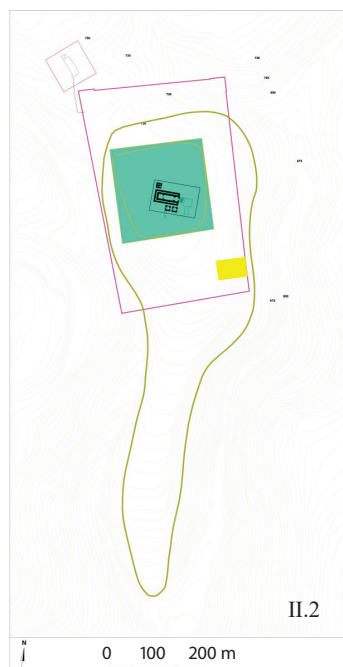
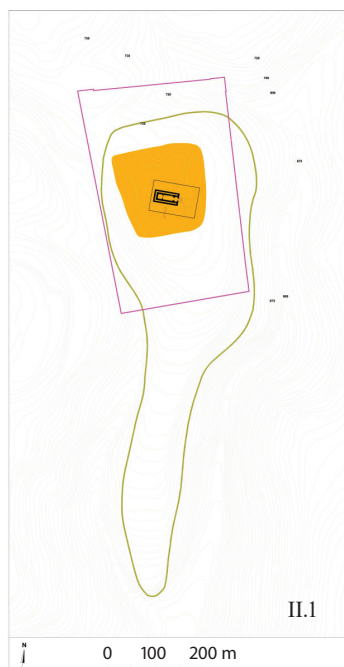


Plate I. Reconstruction of the Temple according to tractate Middot (drawn by L. Ritmeyer and I. Rabinowitz according to the instructions of the author).

Plate II (back). Maps of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount (the course of the city wall is conjectural) (drawn by M. Edelcopp according to the instructions of the author).

1. In the Restoration Period.
2. In the time of Simeon the Just and the Seleucid Acra.
3. The Temple Mount of the Hasmonaeans.
4. The Herodian Temple Mount.



Jerusalem and the Temple Mount
 – in the Restoration Period (II.1)
 – in the time of Simeon the Just (II.2)

The Temple Mount
 – in the Hasmonaean Period (II.3)
 – in the Herodian Period (II.4)

Introduction

I. Historical and Geographical Introduction

1. A Historical Sketch

The prevalent name of the period in the history of the Jewish people – The Second Temple Period – reflects the centrality of the Temple in the life of the Jewish nation in this era. It began with the restoration of the Temple under the Persian Achaemenids and ended with its second destruction by the Romans. Its apogee was during its final century, better known as the Herodian Period. During this lengthy period, the Jews enjoyed political independence only for a short time, under the Hasmonaeans; the Herodians were client kings of Rome. But Jewish religious autonomy, including conduct of the Temple service according to their Law, was maintained almost throughout without any hindrance on the part of the Persians, Greeks, or Romans.

According to the Roman author Pliny, at the time of its destruction Jerusalem was “by far the most famous city of the East and not of Judaea only.”¹ The Temple was the largest and most impressive structure therein, the center of religious and national life and a goal of pilgrimage. In its splendor and importance, it eclipsed all other institutions of the Jews, both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora. It was the one and only Temple of the entire nation. The Greek historian Polybius, writing in the second century BCE, noted that Jews were a nation residing around a Temple called Jerusalem.² The Roman historian Tacitus wrote: “Jerusalem is the capital of the Jews. In it was a temple possessing enormous riches.”³

¹ *Natural History* 5.70 (Pliny, *Natural History*; English translation by Harris Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, 10 vols. [London and Cambridge, MA, 1938–63]); Menaḥem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem 1974–84), no. 204, 1:471, 1:477–78.

² Quoted by Josephus, *Ant.* 12.136 (trans. Ralph Marcus, Loeb Classical Library [London and Cambridge, MA, 1943], 68–9). An English translation of all the writings of Josephus is in the Loeb Classical Library series. The English translation of *Jewish Antiquities*, Books 12–13 was done by Ralph Marcus; that of Books 14–17 by Marcus and Allen Wickgren; and that of Books 18–20, by Louis H. Feldman; the English translation of *The Jewish War*, *The Life*, and *Against Apion* was done by Henry St. J. Thackeray.

³ *The Histories* 5.8.1 (Tacitus, *The Histories*, with an English translation by Clifford H. Moore, Loeb Classical Library, 4 vols. [London and New York, 1925–37]); Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, no. 281, 2:28, 2:46–47.

1.1 The Persian Period (538–332 BCE)

After thirty years of exile, the Achaemenid Cyrus, who united the Persian and Median Empires, expanded his realm westward. He conquered Babylonia from king Nabonidus without resistance and was accepted unanimously as king. The so-called “Cyrus Cylinder,” discovered in 1879, asserts that he returned all of the deities “misplaced” by Nabonidus to their respective temples. The biblical Book of Ezra quotes, in Hebrew, the decree Cyrus issued to the exiled Jews in Babylon in 538 by which he permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem, rebuild the Temple, and restore its cult:

Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Anyone of you of all his people – may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the Lord God of Israel, the God that is in Jerusalem; and all who stay behind, wherever he may be living, let the people of his place assist him with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, besides the freewill offering to the House of God that is in Jerusalem.⁴

In a parallel, more official memorandum, written in Aramaic and addressed to Cyrus’ administration, the goal of restoring the Temple and renewing its cult is more specific. Details are given about the Temple’s structure, dimensions, building materials, financing, and vessels:

Memorandum: In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued an order concerning the House of God in Jerusalem: “Let the house be rebuilt, a place for offering sacrifices, with a base built up high. Let it be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, with a course of unused timber for each three courses of hewn stone. The expenses shall be paid by the palace. And the gold and silver vessels of the House of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from the Temple in Jerusalem, and transported to Babylon shall be returned, and let each go back to the Temple in Jerusalem where it belongs; you shall deposit it in the House of God.”⁵

Some of the vessels pillaged by Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian king [605–562 BCE] responsible for the destruction of the First Temple), were entrusted by Cyrus to Sheshbazzar, the newly installed governor of the province of Judaea. Sheshbazzar rebuilt the altar on its earlier base and the sacrifices were renewed, though the foundations of the Temple were not yet laid. Then the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated and sacrifices associated with other feasts and new moons were resumed, as well as freewill offerings.⁶ Fifty years after the de-

⁴ Ezra 1:2–4. All quotations from the Old Testament are based upon the translation of the Jewish Publication Society.

⁵ Ezra 6:2–5.

⁶ Ezra 1:8–10, 5:13–16; in Ezra 3:1–8 this is attributed to Zerubbabel and Jeshua, under Darius, ca. 20 years later. See also Zech 4:9; Josephus, *Ant.* 11.11–13. Diana V. Edelman, *The Origins of the ‘Second’ Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2005), questions the historicity of Ezra 1–6, Haggai, and Zechariah as sources for

struction of the First Temple, the initial foundations of the Second Temple were laid by Sheshbazzar in 536 BCE. At the foundation ceremony priests officiated in their ritual apparel, with trumpets, cymbals, and songs of praise.

However, full realization of Cyrus' declaration was much more difficult to achieve due to the hardships of life in the deserted city, administrative obstacles, the animosity of neighboring nations, and friction between the returnees and those who were not exiled. These impediments led to a delay of over fifteen years in the construction of the Temple. Only after a copy of the official memorandum cited above was found in 520 BCE in the Persian royal archives, did Darius I (522–486) allow the resumption of construction. Darius issued another decree, instructing his officials that supervision over the work be entrusted to the hands of the governor of the Jews, together with their elders, and that state funds be provided for the construction and daily provisions of sacrificial animals, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, so that they may pray for the life of the king and his sons.⁷ A service for the welfare of the supreme foreign ruler of the time, be he Persian, Greek, or Roman, became common practice throughout the Second Temple period. The regular provision of offerings by the central authorities was a privilege of the Temple city Jerusalem had become. This was a means of guaranteeing the loyalty of the priests, headed by the high priest, and of the people.

Darius' decree, together with the exhortations of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, expedited the completion of the Temple. On 12 March 515 BCE, more than twenty years after the restoration of the altar and the renewal of sacrifice and about seventy years after the destruction of the First Temple, the Second Temple was completed. Built of stones, with timber laid in the walls, it reached a height of 60 cubits (ca. 30 m in present-day units).⁸ With its completion, the rite was better organized, according to the Law of Moses; priests were set in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses.

The new Temple evidently lacked the splendor of the previous one. Describing the rededication ceremony of the Temple, the Book of Ezra contrasts the ecstatic joy of those who were too young to remember the First Temple with the mournful weeping of the old priests and Levites who had served in it.⁹ Moreover, several focal objects were not recovered from the pillaging of the First Temple: the Ark of Covenant, the two tablets of the Law, and the oracle of the high priest.¹⁰

the "origins" of the Second Temple. She maintains that both the rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem's refortification took place at the time of Nehemiah, and that the return from exile under Zerubbabel and Jeshua should be dated around 465 BCE. Peter R. Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), attributes the beginning of works of restoration to Zerubbabel and Jeshua, under Darius I.

⁷ Ezra 6:8–10.

⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 11.99.

⁹ Ezra 3:12–13.

¹⁰ M. Sheq. 6:1–2; m. Yoma 5:2; b. Yoma 21b. (For an English translation for all references to the Babylonian Talmud, see *The Babylonian Talmud*, translated into English with notes, glos-

The sources are largely silent about the fifty years following the completion of the Second Temple. In the wake of a decree of King Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE) which invited the Jews of his empire to return to Jerusalem, Ezra, a royal scribe and priest, led a group of some 1,500 returnees in 458 BCE. A letter carried by Ezra containing a record of the decree also bears witness to the king's gifts to the Temple and to the authority bestowed upon Ezra. The king recognized the lofty status of Temple personnel by exempting them from tolls, tributes, and customs.

Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra was distressed to discover that the Jews had been intermarrying with the indigenous nations, in direct violation of biblical law. Ezra's public display of mourning stirred the people to repent and to enter into a new covenantal relationship with God, beginning with the banishment of their "foreign" wives. The covenantal ceremony presided over by Ezra, reading the Pentateuch in a street remote from the Temple courts, marks the emergence of a new expression of Jewish religiosity, alternative to the Temple. In later generations of the period that is at our concern, it evolved into the institution of the synagogue.

Nehemiah, a cupbearer in the court of Artaxerxes I, took leave of his position with the king's blessing and made the trek to Jerusalem. Serving as governor of Judah for twelve years (445–433 BCE) he presided over the restoration of the city walls and gates and the rebuilding of the gates of the *bira* – a citadel of the period of Persian rule in Jerusalem – that was first built by an earlier governor. (The First Temple, being a part of the royal palace, did not have a separate citadel; this was an innovation of the Second Temple.) By the end of his tenure, the Temple was surrounded by a precinct wall with lockable doors.

Nehemiah, like Ezra, emphasized separation from the Gentiles, refraining from mixed marriage, and keeping the Sabbath. Equally emphasized were laws which facilitated the Temple service and provided for the wellbeing of those entrusted with its administration and operation. The most basic of these contributions was the obligation to contribute yearly one-third of a sheqel for the Temple service.¹¹ The constant need for wood, used in copious amounts for sacrifices, was met by choosing lay families by lot. Finally, the people also affirmed their commitment to provide for the priests and Levites through tithes of both produce and animals.

Under Nehemiah and the prophet Zechariah we already hear about the courts of the House of the Lord, in the plural, indicating that by this time the built complex had already been expanded, including now more than an altar and a Temple. Around the courts were chambers which functioned as storage rooms

sary and indices under the editorship of Isidore Epstein [London, 1935–48]. Further references to the Babylonian Talmud will be marked b.).

¹¹ In later years it was raised to half a sheqel (equivalent to two Roman dinars) for every adult male; women were not obligated to contribute.

for various offerings or served high priests and other Temple officials. Since the people gathered in the “Street of the House of God,” there was not as yet an outer court for this purpose.

Our next piece of information dates from about a century later. Under the Persian King Artaxerxes III (358–338 BCE), an internal dispute erupted over the high priesthood, as a result of which the high priest John II murdered his elder brother Jeshua. Bagoses, the chief military officer of the Persian king, who had supported Jeshua, defiled the sanctuary by entering the sacred precinct and imposed on the Jews a penalty of 50 drachms (a Greek silver coin) for each lamb of the two daily sacrifices. This penalty continued in force for seven years.¹²

1.2 The Hellenistic Period (332–37 BCE)

The imperial and religious stability which typified the waning years of the Persian Empire in the first half of the fourth century BCE ended in a series of bloody bids for royal succession. Simultaneously, Alexander “the Great” of Macedon embarked on an ambitious mission of territorial conquest that would bring an end to the Persian Empire in 330. That same sweeping campaign brought Judaea under Alexander’s control in 332 BCE, without encountering any resistance. Thus ended more than two centuries of Persian rule over Jerusalem and the Temple.

The tumultuous aftermath of Alexander’s death witnessed wars between his successors. Judaea’s strategic location between Egypt and Syria turned the area into a flash-point for the succession battles between the Ptolemaic dynasty which controlled Egypt and the Seleucid dynasty which controlled Syria. Judaea was first under Ptolemaic rule (301–198 BCE) and then under the Seleucids (198–142 BCE).

Though information about the condition of Jerusalem and the Temple during the Ptolemaic period is scanty, we do know that the high priest was appointed to serve as governor of Judaea, his principal responsibility being the collection of municipal taxes. The Ptolemies initiated the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Legend has it that it was commissioned by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 BCE), with great ceremony and at great expense, and carried out by seventy sages from the Temple circles; hence it is called the Septuagint. It is also said that he contributed to the Temple many golden and silver vessels, and an elaborately worked golden table.¹³ Even if a legend, this reflects the Ptolemaic custom of presenting gifts to the Temple, as is attested by other sources.

¹² Josephus, *Ant.* 11.297–301.

¹³ The entire story of the Bible translation is given in the Letter of Aristeas. For an English translation see Moses Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates: Letter of Aristeas* (New York: Ktav, 1951); Rowland James Heath Shutt, “Letter of Aristeas,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:7–34.

The reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–205 BCE) is best known for Ptolemy's sound defeat of the Seleucid king Antiochus III the Great (223–187 BCE) at the Battle of Raphiah (217 BCE), on the border with Egypt. After routing Antiochus and his army, Ptolemy continued on an extensive campaign northward, reconquering his territories. He is said to have reciprocated for the gifts bestowed upon him by Jews in celebration of his victory at Raphiah by visiting Jerusalem and offering sacrifices in the Temple. Impressed by the Temple's beauty, he wished to enter the Holy of Holies, a request which was summarily denied by the priests because of the biblical injunction against anyone entering this sacred precinct except for the high priest, and even that only on the Day of Atonement. Ptolemy's insistence on entering aroused a great turmoil among the people who wept and prayed for salvation. Ultimately, legend has it that Ptolemy fell ill, had to be pulled out of the Temple by his bodyguards, and returned to Egypt.¹⁴

In 198 BCE Jerusalem and the Temple fell to Antiochus III, and after over a century of Ptolemaic control Judaea was now part of the Seleucid Empire. As the Jews came to the aid of Antiochus in his conquest of Jerusalem, the king rewarded his supporters accordingly, granting tax exemptions to Temple personnel, earmarking provisions for the Temple service, and – most importantly – guaranteeing freedom of religion for the Jewish people.¹⁵

Antiochus III also issued two edicts to guarantee the state of purity of the Temple and city. First, Gentiles were prohibited from entering the Temple, a ban that was in effect also in the Herodian period (see below). Second, Antiochus forbade the breeding of impure animals within Jerusalem, alongside a ban on bringing their skins or meat into Jerusalem. Antiochus issued a permit for the completion of the restoration of the Temple, including the porticos, and exempted all necessary materials from customs.¹⁶

That the Temple required renovation is but another testimony to the damage inflicted on Jerusalem during the tumultuous years preceding Antiochus III's decisive victory, in which Jerusalem passed back and forth between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.¹⁷ The high priest, relegated to cultic duties by the later Ptolemies, returned to prominence under Antiochus III with new diplomatic and economic duties. Simeon II (d. ca. 196 BCE), the high priest who served during Antiochus' reign, is credited with repairing the damage sustained as a result of

¹⁴ Ptolemy IV Philopator's failed attempt to enter the Holy of Holies is documented in the apocryphal book 3 Maccabees (1.8–2.24). For discussion see Hugh Anderson, "3 Maccabees: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:510–12.

¹⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 12.138–146. The custom of providing allocations for the Temple service is first attested under Cyrus and Darius and seems to have been maintained by the Ptolemies, as well as by the later Seleucids (2 Macc. 3:3 – pertaining to Seleucus IV; see also 2 Macc. 9:16; 1 Macc. 10:39–44; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.55, all relating to Demetrius I, 152 BCE).

¹⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 12.141. See also *infra*, Chapters III and IV.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.129–144.

the wars. The extent of Simeon's renovations features prominently in the Book of Ben Sira – a work written in the first quarter of the second century BCE – which provides an elaborate and detailed description of the glorious Simeon arrayed in his vestments, officiating at the altar surrounded by his colleagues, radiant “like the sun shining resplendently on the king's Temple, and like the rainbow which appears in the cloud.”¹⁸

Simeon's renovations included fortification of the Temple, building high retaining walls, and digging a cistern (*miqveh*), which Ben Sira described as vast like a sea.¹⁹ The retaining walls are the deep and high quadrangular foundations for the Temple courts, usually identified with the basic square of the inner court whose dimensions were 500 × 500 cubits,²⁰ which was later encompassed within the outer court of the Herodian precinct (see below). The hewn-out reservoir may be one of the huge cisterns under the Ḥaram.

The contemporary Letter of Aristeas, written in Greek, provides much information regarding the Temple structure and furnishings. According to the *Letter*, the Temple, built on a grand scale, occupied a prominent position and was enclosed within three precincts. A curtain drawn downward from above, of exquisite workmanship and impressive in its strength, was laid over the doorway of the Sanctuary. The House faced eastward. It was surrounded by a floor paved with sloped stones to permit easy drainage of the water used for cleansing the blood of the sacrifices. Hidden openings installed in the base of the altar also assisted the drainage. Seven hundred priests ministered there. The Temple had an abundant supply of flowing water, as if emerging from a spring located within the precinct. There were also magnificent underground, well-leaded, and plastered reservoirs placed around the foundations.²¹

Antiochus III mounted a final military campaign in 192 BCE which brought Asia Minor and Greece under his control. But a series of defeats at the hands of the Romans nullified Antiochus' newest territorial gains and compelled the latter to accept the terms of the peace treaty of Apamea (188 BCE), by which the Seleucids were forced to pay heavy tribute to the Romans. His treasures depleted by the costly wars, Antiochus was compelled to loot temple treasures

¹⁸ Ben Sira 50:1–12. English translation of the Hebrew text in *The Jewish Temple: a Non-biblical Sourcebook*, ed. Charles T.R. Hayward (London: Routledge, 1996), 41–43. See also *infra*, Chapter III.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50:1–3. For an English translation of the Greek version see Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 73–75.

²⁰ M. Mid. 2:1. These dimensions are in accordance with the LXX to Ezek 42:15–20; 45:2. But see *infra*, the more updated Chapters II and III, according to which the 500 × 500 cubits square should be attributed to the Hasmonaeans.

²¹ Letter of Aristeas, paragraphs 84–91. Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates*, 14–15, has suggested that the curtain may have been the one looted by Antiochus IV and donated by him to the temple of Zeus at Olympia.

throughout the kingdom. In 187 BCE Antiochus III was murdered while seeking to loot a temple in Susa.

Despite the circumstances surrounding his father's death in Susa, Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175 BCE) set his eyes on the treasures of the Jerusalem Temple where, in addition to the funds allocated for the daily sacrifices and Temple maintenance, donations, incomes, and deposits were accumulated there along with the trusts of widows and orphans.²² In 176 BCE Seleucus sent Heliodorus, his highest ranking minister, to confiscate the treasury under the pretext that donations from the royal treasury went well beyond the needs of the Temple. By this action the asylum right of the Temple was violated. The lone account of this episode relates that Heliodorus was stopped by supernatural intervention and punishment so severe that he urged the king to send one of his enemies should he decide to plunder the Temple again.²³ Heliodorus murdered Seleucus IV in 175 BCE, though not before he repatriated his brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE), the younger son of Antiochus III, who had been held hostage by the Romans pursuant to the treaty of Apamea.

Under Antiochus IV the high priesthood became a commodity, sold to the highest bidder with the most rigorous program for the Hellenization of Jerusalem, that is, imposing Greek culture. The first was Jason, who offered the exorbitant sum of 440 gold talents for the privilege of serving as high priest. Jason's tenure (175–172 BCE) ended when the priest Menelaus pledged to the king 300 talents over above and above Jason's payments. Antiochus acceded, and Menelaus, following the example of prior Seleucid kings, stole gold vessels from the Temple to guarantee his ability to pay. As if this wasn't enough to spark the rage of Jerusalem's Jews, Onias, who publicly exposed Menelaus' misdoings, was murdered at the latter's urging. Riots ensued in Jerusalem resulting in some fatalities, but Menelaus was acquitted of any misdoing after bribing the appropriate authorities.²⁴

Antiochus IV mounted a successful preemptive invasion of Egypt in 169, and turned the Ptolemaic stronghold into a puppet regime. In the autumn of 169, on his way back from Egypt, he stopped in Jerusalem, where Jason, the former high priest, had stirred up a revolt against Menelaus. Driven to avenge Jason's uprising or, perhaps, by the heavy expenditures entailed by the war, and guided by Menelaus, Antiochus plundered the Jerusalem Temple, taking the golden incense altar and the lampstand (*menorah*), with all its vessels, the table and other vessels of gold, as well as the curtain over the sanctuary en-

²² See 2 Macc. 3:10–11. Some donations were placed in the open, to be seen and admired (Josephus, *War* 2.413; idem, *Ant.* 12.249–250).

²³ 2 Macc. 3:7–30. On the historicity of this event relating to Heliodorus and his role in the Seleucid administration, see Hannah M. Cotton and Michael Wörle, "Seleukos IV to Heliodoros: A New Dossier of Royal Correspondence from Israel," *ZPE* 159 (2007): 191–205.

²⁴ 2 Macc. 4.

trance.²⁵ A subsequent invasion of Egypt ended prematurely, with Antiochus retreating to Judaea after an embarrassing confrontation with a Roman general who demanded that Antiochus retreat or suffer Roman retaliation. Antiochus, reeling from the devastating ultimatum of the Romans, returned to Jerusalem in 168, and again pillaged the city.²⁶ Jerusalem's houses and walls were destroyed, and a Seleucid citadel (*Akra*) was built in the City of David, to the south of the Temple.²⁷ The Temple was desecrated and dedicated to the Olympian Zeus. The altar was desolated and an "abominating idol" placed there in 167. The perpetual daily offerings ceased for the first time in over three centuries.

Some Jews passively resisted the religious persecution of the Seleucids, preferring to die as martyrs rather than violate the laws of the Torah, while others displayed compliance with the program for Hellenization. A family of priests of the house of Jehoiarib, led by their patriarch Mattathias, embarked on a revolt for the preservation of the Jewish religion. Led by Judas Maccabaeus, one of Mattathias' five sons, this Jewish army emerged victorious in a series of engagements with Antiochus' generals. In 164 Jerusalem was recaptured.

Under the Hasmonaeans (164–37 BCE) a new chapter began. Judas found the Temple deserted, the altar defiled, the gates burnt, the courts covered by wild vegetation, and the chambers ruined. Judas purified the Temple, rebuilt its inner parts, restored the gates of the chambers, and installed their doors. He refortified it, blocking up the thirteen breaches caused by the Greeks.²⁸ The Temple Mount (that is, Mount Zion) was surrounded by a tall wall with massive towers that encompassed the outer court. It was garrisoned as a means of protection against the Seleucids, still in the *Akra*.²⁹ This wall was later removed by Herod.³⁰ New vessels and a curtain were provided by Judas and the Temple façade was decorated by golden crowns and tablets. The defiled stones of the altar were set in a separate chamber on the northwest of the inner court,³¹ a new altar was built, and the liturgy resumed. Exactly three years after Antiochus IV had defiled the Temple the altar was re-inaugurated in an eight-days-long feast, maintained to the present as the feast of Hanukkah, beginning on 25 Kislev 164 BCE.³²

Meanwhile, political rivalry in the Seleucid court caused a change of attitude towards the Jews. Rivals competing for the throne issued letters granting the Jews the right to conduct their rite according to their laws and privileges to the

²⁵ 1 Macc. 1:20–24, pages 102–7 in Rappaport's edition; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.83–84.

²⁶ 2 Macc. 5:11–16, 21; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.249.

²⁷ 1 Macc. 1:31–33.

²⁸ 1 Macc. 4:36–61; m. Mid. 2:3. See also *infra*, Chapter IV.

²⁹ 1 Macc. 4:60.

³⁰ The inner court had another wall, which Alcimus tried to tear to the ground in May 159, but his plan failed (1 Macc. 9:54–57).

³¹ M. Mid. 1:6.

³² 1 Macc. 4:52.

city and to the Temple, and acknowledging the status of the Hasmonaean ruler as high priest.³³ Thus did the high priesthood of the house of Zadoq come to an end.

In 142 BCE, as a result of the continuing disintegration of the Seleucid state, Simeon, the last brother of Judas Maccabeus, declared the independence of Judaea from Seleucid rule. The new status of Judaea was recognized by the reigning Seleucid monarch. This marked a new stage in the fate of the Temple, the city, the state, and the nation. In 140 BCE Simeon's position as high priest was confirmed by the Great Assembly.³⁴ From then on the high priesthood became hereditary in the house of the Hasmonaean until Herod's time, when it ceased to be so and became an issue of Temple politics. In 139 BCE the independent status of Jerusalem and the Temple was confirmed by a letter of the Seleucid king Antiochus VII Sidetes (139–129 BCE) to Simeon.³⁵

Gradually, mainly under the rule of Simeon's son John Hyrcanus I (134–104 BCE) and his grandson Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE), the Jewish state had expanded in all directions. Religious zeal led to the persecution of pagan cults, the destruction of alien cities, and annihilation of their population. Contacts with the Jewish communities in the Galilee and across the river Jordan were improved. Some of them, harassed by Gentiles, were transferred or immigrated to Judaea and into Jerusalem, which subsequently expanded topographically and demographically. The Temple had to serve an ever-growing population, and the rite became more and more intricately organized. This gradual process reached its apogee in the coming generations, under Herod the Great and his successors.

Imitating customs of the neighboring Hellenistic monarchies, Judas Aristobulus – Simeon's second son – was the first to assume a royal title in 104 BCE. The Hasmonaean state became a centralized quasi-Hellenistic kingdom, with the Temple city of Jerusalem as its capital. Its king served simultaneously also as the high priest, arousing protest in some circles. Thus, the demand of the Pharisee sages³⁶ that Alexander Jannaeus be content with kingship alone resulted in bloodshed.³⁷ It is also related that once, while officiating at the altar, he was insulted and pelted by the people with their citron fruits on the Feast of Tabernacles. He is said to have built a barrier around the altar so as to protect him from such further altercations with the people.³⁸ Dispute over the Temple rite as conducted by the Hasmonaean and the lunar calendar they had adopted in the Temple cult were the major reasons for the splitting off of the Dead Sea Sect and their formation as a separate sect some time in the second century BCE,

³³ 2 Macc. 11:25. See also 1 Macc. 10:18–20, 25–45, 11:27, 11:37, and 11:57; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.45–46.

³⁴ 1 Macc. 14:35, 41.

³⁵ 1 Macc. 15:7.

³⁶ The spiritual-religious leadership of the nation during the Second Temple period.

³⁷ B. Qidd. 66a.

³⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.372–373. See also b. Sukkah 48b.

when the Wicked Priest (apparently Alexander Jannaeus), had persecuted their Teacher of Righteousness. Under Salome Alexandra (76–67 BCE), the widow of Alexander Jannaeus, the non-priestly Pharisees, popular among the masses, assumed supremacy in regulating the Temple rite, which nevertheless continued to be conducted by celebrants of priestly ancestry, comprising mainly the Sadducees – the rival Jewish sect. Besides the high priest, the Temple also had a chief administrator,³⁹ both in the Hellenistic and the Herodian periods, treasurers, and officers, fifteen in number, in charge of specific tasks.⁴⁰ Unlike the regular priests, who served for a week, in rotation, these were tenure posts, some of them hereditary.⁴¹

The Hasmonaean sacred precinct covered an area of 500 × 500 cubits (infra, Chapter II). There were five gates: two to the south (the Hulda gates), one to the west (Kiponos),⁴² perhaps the one at the end of the bridge, one to the north (Tadi), and one to the east (Shoshan).⁴³ Being fortified, the Temple precinct could withstand a siege. After the death of Salome Alexandra, when the struggle over the throne and the high priesthood erupted between her two sons, the younger Aristobulus II found refuge there in 67 BCE in his struggle against the elderly brother Hyrcanus II. Later, in 63 BCE, he managed to escape there from Pompey, the Roman consul who converted Seleucid Syria into a Roman province. Pompey conquered Jerusalem and the Temple after a prolonged siege, bringing Judaea for the first time under the Roman yoke.⁴⁴ According to one tradition the sacred precinct was captured on the Day of Atonement. Pompey's forces breached the northern wall, entered the Temple, and are said to have killed 12,000 Jews, including priests in the midst of performing their cultic duties. With some of his men, he entered beyond the curtains of the Holy of Holies, the precinct so sacred that only the high priest was allowed to enter, and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. But not only did Pompey not touch the Temple vessels and treasures, he even ordered that the Temple be purified, cultic rites

³⁹ 2 Macc. 3:4 (“prostates”); Acts 4:1, 5:24–6; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.131; Josephus, *War* 2.409, 6.294 (“strategos”).

⁴⁰ M. Sheq. 5:1; m. Yoma 3:11; t. Sheq. 2:14; y. Sheq. 5, 49a. See also m. Tamid 7:3; m. Sheq. 5:2; y. Sheq. 5, 19a.

⁴¹ On the Temple officials, see Abraham Büchler, *Die Priester und der Cultus im letzten Jahrzehnt der jerusalemischen Tempels* (Vienna: A. Hölder, 1895), 90–118; Shmuel Safrai, “The Temple,” in Shmuel Safrai and Menahem Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976), 865–907; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, ed. Géza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 275–91; Jostein Ådna, *Jerusalem Tempel und Tempelmarkt im 1. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 91–95.

⁴² If named after Coponius, the Roman prefect of 6–9 CE, this will set our text in post-Hasmonaean context, unless it was an anachronistic name. The Herodian precinct had four gates on this side. For more about the Hasmonaean temple, see infra, Chapter IX.

⁴³ M. Mid. 1:3.

⁴⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.56–76; Tacitus, *Histories* 5.8.1.

be resumed, and that Hyrcanus II be reinstalled as high priest.⁴⁵ This example was not followed by another proconsul of Syria – Marcus Licinius Crassus – who plundered the Temple in 54 BCE, in preparation for an advance against the Parthians.

Sometime during the years 48–44 BCE Julius Caesar issued a decree confirming the high priesthood of Hyrcanus II and his sons, and the title of ethnarch, but no longer a king. Hyrcanus was also granted permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem which had been breached by Pompey in 63 BCE, and to fortify and control Jerusalem.⁴⁶

In 37 BCE Mattathias Antigonus, the grandson of Alexander Jannaeus and Salome Alexandra, was besieged in the Temple Mount by Herod, the former Hasmonaean governor of Galilee and now the newly nominated king of Judaea on behalf of the Roman senate, assisted by the Roman governor of Syria, Sosius. After the conquest Sosius offered a golden crown to the Temple.⁴⁷ In this siege damage was caused to some of the porticos (*stoai*).

Under the Hasmonaeans the city also largely extended over the western hill. A wooden bridge across the Tyropoeon valley connected the Temple with the upper city,⁴⁸ which was encircled by the First Wall – the wall which encompassed Hasmonaean Jerusalem according to Josephus.

1.3 The Herodian Period (37 BCE–70 CE)

Herod ruled as a Roman client king appointed by the Roman senate. After his death, and the short rule of his son Archelaus (4 BCE–6 CE), Judaea was administered by Roman governors. With a short interlude between 41–44 CE, when it was reigned by Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod the Great, Roman procurators continued to rule Judaea until the eruption of the Great Jewish Revolt against the Romans in 66 CE. However, religious autonomy relating to the Temple rite was maintained throughout, with one exception: Emperor Caligula (37–41 CE), in a radical departure from the imperial cult of the Roman empire, declared himself a living God, demanding of all – including the Jews – to worship him accordingly. As for Judaea and Jerusalem, in 40 CE he insisted that his statue be set up and worshipped in the sanctuary, even fetching Petronius, the governor of Syria, with an army to see it done. This menace of abomination roused a wide protest, and Agrippa I, who was a friend and confidant of Caligula in Rome, was moved to interfere to prevent it. This intention came to an end only when Caligula was

⁴⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.72–73; idem, *War* 1.152–154. But according to Dio Cassius, *History* 27.16.4, all the vessels were plundered. See Marcus' comment *ad. loc.*

⁴⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.190–200.

⁴⁷ Josephus, *War* 1.343–375; idem, *Ant.* 14.465–488.

⁴⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.58; idem, *War* 1.143.

assassinated in January 41 CE.⁴⁹ Claudius, his successor, issued a letter of toleration, thus restoring the former situation of religious freedom.⁵⁰

Under Roman rule a daily sacrifice for the welfare of the emperor was offered on the altar, comprising two lambs and an ox. This was first instituted by Augustus and financed by the imperial treasury.⁵¹ Its cessation in 66 CE (see below), was an expression of revolt.

The religious freedom, first conferred on the diaspora Jews by Julius Caesar and Augustus, had guaranteed, inter alia, that their sacred funds were to be inviolable and their right to send to Jerusalem legally, and without any hindrance on the part of Roman imperial or municipal authorities, the two drachms contribution to the Temple.⁵² However, from time to time, even before the imperial era, there were attempts to confiscate these sums.⁵³

1.4 Conclusion

The Temple was prominently located in the city, and in many respects – religious, political, judicial, social, cultural, and economic – it dominated and dictated the life of the city and of the entire nation. It was the only temple common to the entire nation. A tribute of half a sheqel was collected each year from every adult in the Land of Israel and abroad as tribute to the Temple. It was a meeting place for various sects and an objective of pilgrimage for Jews from Judaea, Galilee, and the Diaspora – especially since the time of Herod and later. Their number was especially numerous in the three annual pilgrimages of Passover, *Sukkot* (Tabernacles), and *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost).⁵⁴ This is well reflected in a passage of the philosopher Philo (ca. 20 BCE–45 CE):

Countless multitudes from countless cities come, some over land, others over sea, from east and west and north and south at every feast. They take the Temple for their port as a general haven and safe refuge from the bustle of the great turmoil of life, and there they seek to find calm weather [...]. In fact, practically in every city there are banking places for the holy money where people regularly come and give their offerings. And at stated times there are appointed to carry the sacred tribute envoys selected on their merits, from every city those of the highest repute, under whose conduct the hopes of each and all will travel safely.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Josephus, *War* 2.184–203; idem, *Ant.* 18.261–309; Philo, *The Embassy to Gaius* 181–261. For an English translation by Francis H. Colson, see *Philo*, vol. 10: *The Embassy to Gaius*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA and London, 1962), 92–135.

⁵⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 19.278–291.

⁵¹ Philo, *The Embassy to Gaius* 157, 317–319 (English translation, 80–81, 158–159).

⁵² Josephus, *Ant.* 14.216; 16.162–166; Philo, *The Embassy to Gaius* 156, 311–316 (English translation, 78–79; 156–159).

⁵³ Schürer, *History*, vol. 2, 1, 116–23; Edith Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 124–28.

⁵⁴ Safrai, “The Temple,” 898–904.

⁵⁵ Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.69 and 78 (English translation, 138–139, 144–145).

A lively description of a Pentecost pilgrimage to the Temple from towns and villages near and far, during the reign of King Agrippa I, is given in the Mishnah:

Those [who come] from nearby bring figs and grapes, but those [who come] from afar bring dried figs and raisins. And an ox walks before them, its horns overlaid with gold, and a wreath of olive [leaves] on its head. A flutist plays before them until they arrive near Jerusalem. [Once] they arrived near Jerusalem, they sent [a messenger] ahead of them [to announce their arrival], and they decorated their firstfruits. The high officers, chiefs, and treasurer [of the Temple] come out to meet them. According to the rank of the entrants, they would [determine which of these officials would] go out. And all the craftsmen of Jerusalem stand before them and greet them, [saying], “Brothers, men of such and such a place, you have come in peace.”

A flutist plays before them, until they reach the Temple Mount. [Once] they reached the Temple Mount, even Agrippa the King puts the basket [of firstfruits] on his shoulder, and enters, [and goes forth] until he reaches the Temple court. [Once] he reached the Temple court, the Levites sang the song, “I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast drawn me up, and has not let my foes rejoice over me” (Ps. 30:1).⁵⁶

The Mishnah also includes similar detailed descriptions of the ceremonies and the sacrifices pertaining to all other feasts related to the Temple rite. The broad, well-paved streets, wide staircases, and lofty gates allowed the pilgrims convenient access and easy circulation. The vast water cisterns on the Temple platform provided plenty of water for their needs, as well as for the rite. They could gather in the Royal Stoa and in the porticos before or after worship. There were people who ascended to hear the words of the Law. An academy (*beyt midrash*) was located on the Temple Mount, where the Sanhedrin used to convene on the Sabbath and holidays as an academic, rather than a judicial, body.⁵⁷

Several episodes in the life of Jesus Christ took place in the Temple courts. As a firstborn male Jewish infant he was presented in the Temple, dedicated to the Lord by a sacrifice of two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, as prescribed in the Bible.⁵⁸ The Firstlings Gate, on the northern side of the Railing (*Soreg*), was the site of registration associated with this sacrifice. The episode that follows – of Simeon, a just and devout man who foresaw the infant Jesus to be the Messiah – could have taken place nearby, outside this gate. Growing up, at the age of twelve, Jesus left his parents who were back home from a Passover pilgrimage to the Temple, impressing the Sages by his knowledge, listening to them and asking them questions.⁵⁹ This could have occurred near the stairs leading up from the south to the Triple Gate.⁶⁰ The eastern portico is Solomon’s Porch; there, during the feast of *Hanukkah*, took place the encounter between Jesus and

⁵⁶ M. Bik. 3:3–4.

⁵⁷ Safrai, “The Temple,” 865–66.

⁵⁸ Luke 2:21–24.

⁵⁹ Luke 2:41–50.

⁶⁰ Dan Bahat, “Jesus and the Herodian Temple Mount,” in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2006), 300–8.

Jews wishing to know if he was indeed the Messiah.⁶¹ The Beautiful Gate of Acts 3:2, where the apostle Peter, accompanied by John, cured a lame beggar, seems to be the adjacent gate, leading to the Women's Court from the east. The site of the temptation of Christ "on the pinnacle of the Temple,"⁶² should apparently be located in the southeastern corner of the Temple Mount, or perhaps in that corner on the roof of the Royal Stoa. The location of the stalls of the money changers, and of the vendors of pigeons and other sacrificial animals reproached by Jesus before the feast of Passover, his last feast,⁶³ seems to have been in the Royal Stoa. The next day, returning to the Temple where he was teaching the people, he gave his prophecy about the destruction of the Temple, after contesting there with the Pharisees and the Sadducees.⁶⁴

The Temple was destroyed some forty years later. On the 10th of Av (29 August) 70 CE the Herodian Temple was set afire by the troops of Titus.⁶⁵ Since then this event is commemorated by the Jewish People as a day of grief and fasting (set in later years on the 9th of Av – the date the First Temple was destroyed). This was the result of the Great Jewish Revolt against Rome that had erupted under the Roman emperor Nero, in 66 CE, when governor Florus stole seventeen talents from the Temple treasury and caused many other humiliations and much killing in Jerusalem.⁶⁶ As a result of all these, at the instigation of the son of the High Priest, it was decided to suspend the daily sacrifice for the emperor. This was a clear declaration of revolt against Rome, and all efforts of the peace party in the city to revoke this dangerous decision were fruitless. The people adhered to this decision.⁶⁷ Vespasian, sent by Nero to suppress the revolt, conquered Galilee, the Golan, and the whole of the northern parts of the province of Judaea. But suppression of the revolt was hindered as a result of struggles in Rome between four who claimed the throne after Nero committed suicide on 9th June 68. Meanwhile Jerusalem was struck by civil war. Many were killed in acts of terror as buildings were destroyed and stocks of food and other provisions were set on fire. When Vespasian ascended to the throne in 69 CE, the war was resumed.

After the conquest of Judaea came the turn of Jerusalem. The city was surrounded by three massive walls that seemed impregnable. Inside, the Herodian Temple Mount, with its prominent walls, resembled a fortress. It was the stronghold of the zealots, headed by John of Gischala, who erected there four towers:

⁶¹ John 10:22–24.

⁶² Matt 4:5–7; Luke 4:9–12.

⁶³ Matt 21:12–14; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45; John 2:15–18.

⁶⁴ Matt 21:18–24:2; Mark 11:27–13:2; Luke 20:1–21:38. Another account of teaching in the Temple, during the Feast of Tabernacles, is given in John 7:14–53.

⁶⁵ Josephus, *War* 6.252–266.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.293–308.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.408–421; Schürer, *History*, vol. 1, 486.

on the northeast and southwest corners, on the west controlling the bridge, and the fourth above the roof of the Temple chambers, overlooking the Antonia. The chief Roman commander was Titus, Vespasian's elder son. The Jewish historian Josephus, who surrendered to the Romans in Galilee, was now in the service of Titus, trying in long and articulate discourses to persuade the Jews to surrender, this being the will of God. He was an eyewitness to the events. The attack came from the north. The Third Wall was the first to be stormed, in the month of Iyar (April/May). Nine days later fell the Second Wall. The Antonia fortress, located in the northwestern corner of the Temple Mount, against which four ramparts were laid, was finally conquered by night when its wall were secretly scaled. After its capture, the Antonia was razed to the ground.⁶⁸ The day it was demolished, 17th of Tammuz (June/July), the daily sacrifices in the Temple ceased.⁶⁹ The way to the Temple was laid open. The gates of the outer court were set on fire on the 8th of Av. On the following day (9th of Av) Titus held a war council, attended by all his officers, to decide about the fate of the Temple proper. This is Josephus' narrative:

Titus brought forward for debate the subject of the temple. Some were of the opinion that the law of war should be enforced, since the Jews would never cease from rebellion while the temple remained as the focus for concourse from every quarter. Others advised that if the Jews abandoned it and placed no weapons whatever upon it, it should be saved, but that if they mounted it for purposes of warfare, it should be burnt; as it would then be no longer a temple, but a fortress, and thenceforward the impiety would be chargeable, not to the Romans but to those who forced them to take such measures. Titus, however, declared that, even were the Jews to mount it and fight therefrom, he would not wreak vengeance on inanimate objects instead of men, nor under any circumstances burn down so magnificent a work; for the loss would affect the Romans, inasmuch as it would be an ornament to the empire if it stood.⁷⁰

Titus decided to spare the Temple. But on the next day (10th of Av/August 29th), while repelling a Jewish attack coming out of the inner court, one of the soldiers threw a firebrand into the chamber of the Temple proper, and it was set on fire.⁷¹ Efforts to extinguish it by the orders of Titus were futile and the flames took an ever increasing hold as more and more firebrands were thrown in by the soldiers in the fury of battle. Titus managed to inspect the interior before it was entirely overwhelmed. Only the holy vessels were saved, to be demonstrated later to the

⁶⁸ Josephus, *War* 6.68–93.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 6.93–95; m. Ta'anit 4:6.

⁷⁰ Josephus, *War* 6.237–243. This account of Josephus, drawing a sympathetic portrait of Titus, his patron, is at divergence with other sources narrating the destruction of the Temple. Thus Sulpicius Severus, a fourth-century Christian historian who derived his narrative from Tacitus, and Orosius, another Christian author and a contemporary of Sulpicius Severus, report that in the war council it was Titus who decided to destroy the Temple; see Schürer, *History*, vol. 1, 506–7; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, no. 282, 2:64–67.

⁷¹ Josephus, *War* 6.244–253.

Roman populace in the triumphal parade. These are depicted to the present on the Arch of Titus in Rome. It took another month to conquer the upper city. Before leaving for Caesarea, Titus gave an order to raze the Temple to the ground.⁷² The deliberate destruction of the western portico can still be seen near the south-western corner – huge fallen stones lying over the paved street.⁷³

The destruction of the Temple marked a new stage in the history of the Jewish people and in the fate of its sacred precinct. A new, rabbinic leadership took the lead from the previous priestly elite. The synagogue replaced the Temple as the central institution of the Jewish nation. The Temple was never rebuilt, but its past grandeur nourished for generations hopes and aspirations for redemption.

2. The Temple within the city⁷⁴

During the 600 years of its existence (538 BCE–70 CE), Jerusalem gradually expanded over a vaster and vaster area. The returnees from the Babylonian exile resettled the south-eastern hill – “the City of David”. The Temple was located on a prominence to the north. In between stood a third hill which was occupied by the Royal Palace during the First Temple period. Antiochus IV Epiphanes erected there the *Akra* Fortress (168 BCE), which served as a stronghold for the Greek garrison and for the Hellenized Jews. The Fortress was conquered and destroyed by Simeon the Hasmonaeen (141 BCE), and the summit of the hillock was leveled in order that it might not block the view of the Temple from the city.⁷⁵ These three eastern hills, fortified by Nehemiah, were delineated on the east by the Kidron brook and on the west by its tributary – the Tyropoeon Valley.⁷⁶ Under the latter Hasmonaeans (John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus), the south-western hill – much moderate and larger in area than the other three – was settled. It was delineated on the west and south by the Valley of Hinnom and on the north by a western tributary of the Tyropoeon. This was the upper city, encircled by the First Wall. Under the Herodian regime the city expanded farther north beyond this tributary, being encircled by the Second Wall, and still farther north, beyond the Temple Mount. This new city was known as Bezetha.

⁷² Ibid., 7.1.

⁷³ Ronny Reich and Yaacov Billig, “Excavations near the Temple Mount and Robinson’s Arch, 1994–1996.” Pages 340–50 in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, expanded edition, ed. Hillel Geva (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000).

⁷⁴ For further details and bibliography see: Hillel Geva, “Jerusalem,” *The New Encyclopedia of Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993, 2008), Vol. 2, 698–804; Vol. 5, 1801–25; Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem. Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period (538 B.C.E.–70 C.E.)* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2002).

⁷⁵ *War* 5.137–139; *Ant.* 12.252.

⁷⁶ *War* 5.136–162.

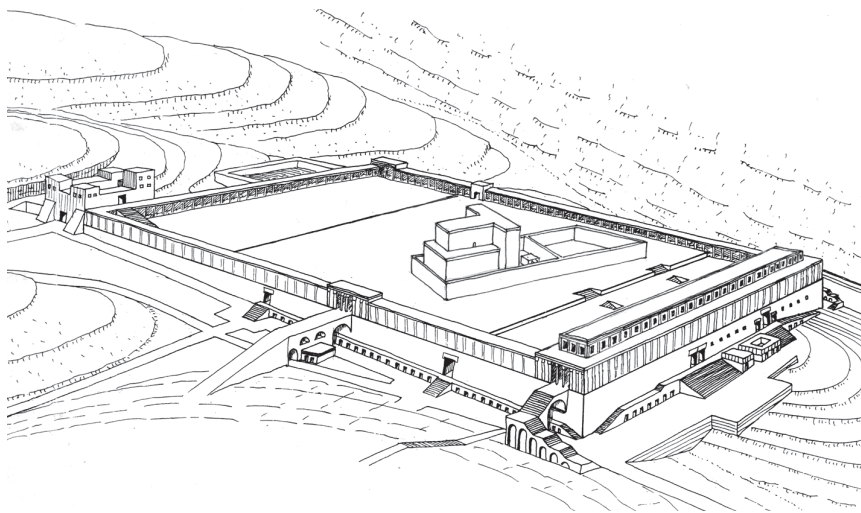


Fig. 1.1. Reconstruction of the Herodian Temple Mount and the Temple located therein. An aerial view from SW (drawn by L. Ritmeyer according to the instructions of the author).

The fortification of the northern suburb started under king Agrippa I (41–44 CE) and finished with the eruption of the First Jewish Revolt (66 CE). This was the Third Wall. At the time of its destruction, Jerusalem was “by far the most famous city of the East and not of Judaea only”.⁷⁷ It was encircled by three walls and at its center, within a walled precinct, stood the Temple that resembled a fortress (*arx*), to the besieging soldiers of Titus, with walls of its own.⁷⁸ The Herodian precinct, 144,000 sq m in dimensions, was one of the largest of its kind in the entire Roman world (Fig. 1.1). Its south-western foundations were laid to the west of the Tyropoeon Valley (Fig. 1.2). In early times the main access to the Temple Mount was from the south, where the early city extended. Under the Hasmonaeans, when the city expanded to the western hill, in addition to the two Huldah Gates, on the south, another gate was open to the west, and a bridge connected the Temple Mount with the Upper City. Under Herod the number of gates on the west increased to four, two (Warren’s Gate and Barclay’s Gate), from street level up, via a tunnel; the third opened to a new bridge, retained by Wilson’s Arch, and a fourth connected the Royal Basilica with street level by means of an elaborate stairway that was retained by Robinson’s Arch.

The city streets did not follow a grid pattern, like many Greco-Roman cities of the time. Rather, the topography determined their run. The main one, stone

⁷⁷ Pliny, *Natural History* 5.70.

⁷⁸ Tacitus, *Histories* 5.12.1.