
Chapter 32

THE COLONNADES FROM THE TEMPLE TO FORT ANTONIA

WE ARE TOLD by Josephus, when you read his accounts carefully, that the whole northern wall of the Temple was parallel to and flanking the full length of the southern wall of Fort Antonia. He said there was an open space of 600 feet (a *stade*) between the two walls.⁶¹⁸ Note that when Titus, the Roman General, was overseeing his soldiers fighting in areas associated with the Temple and its courtyards, he was able to view these events from the southern wall of Fort Antonia.⁶¹⁹ The view was like a stage (a theatre) in front of him.⁶²⁰ Titus could observe everything happening within the Courts of the Temple. In fact, once Fort Antonia was taken by the Romans and part of its

⁶¹⁸ *War* VI.2,6.

⁶¹⁹ *War* VI.1,8.

⁶²⁰ *War* VI.2,6.

north wall was demolished under orders from Titus,⁶²¹ this rendered Fort Antonia a useless fortress to Jewish defenders when they still had possession of its quarters. But once the Romans took control of Fort Antonia from the Jewish revolutionaries, Titus then made it the Roman headquarters for subduing the Temple and the rest of the City of Jerusalem. "Through the tower of Antonia [the Romans could subdue] the temple itself."⁶²²

Recall that Herod built the Tower of Antonia as a fortress to protect the Temple and the City of Jerusalem. In order to render direct protection to the Temple from Fort Antonia, Herod built a causeway of two colonnades (situated alongside one another — one on the west and another adjacent to it on the east with a narrow open space in between). They spanned a distance of one *stade* (600 feet) from the southwest angle of wall of Fort Antonia directly southward to encounter the northwest angle of the northern and western colonnades of the outer walls of the Temple. Remember that Josephus himself stated that the distance between the southern wall of Fort Antonia and the northern wall of the Temple was exactly one *stade* (600 feet).⁶²³

⁶²¹ "And now Titus gave orders to his soldiers that were with him to dig up the foundations of the tower of Antonia, and make a ready passage for his army to come [into the fortress]" (*War* VI.2,1). And a short time later (as Whiston correctly interprets Josephus) we read: "In the meantime, the rest of the Roman army had, in seven days' time, overthrown [some] foundations of the tower of Antonia, and had made a ready and broad way to the temple. Then did the legions come near the first court" (*War* VI.2,7). Note that Whiston correctly inserted the bracketed word "some" to show that only a part of the northern wall of Fort Antonia was demolished. This is because we later find Titus taking refuge in Fort Antonia itself and viewing the battles in the Temple from its southern wall. Josephus stated:

"So Titus retired into the tower of Antonia, and resolved to storm the temple the next day, early in the morning, with his whole army, and to encamp round about the holy house.... And now a certain person came running to Titus, and told him of this fire, as he was resting himself in his tent [in Fort Antonia] after the last battle; whereupon he rose up in great haste, and, as he was, ran to the holy house, in order to have a stop put to the fire; after him followed all his commanders, and after them followed the several legions" (*War* VI.4,5–6).

⁶²² *War* VI.6,2.

⁶²³ *War* VI.2,6.

Each colonnade had a roof that served as the upper roadway. This roof formed the broad roadway that was used by the troops. Josephus said these two colonnade roadways were each one *stade* in length (and, by combining both, they represented in length two *stades*). The roofs of the colonnades of the Temple were no doubt level with the roofs of the colonnades that reached northward to Fort Antonia. This meant that the troops were spared the inconvenience (and even the outright danger) of having either to ascend or to descend roadways that spanned the distance of 600 feet between Fort Antonia and the Temple. This is why the platform of Fort Antonia was level with the roofs of the colonnades in the south that surrounded the foursquare Temple.

These two colonnades were prominent in the geography of early Jerusalem. After all, they were two appendages of the Temple that were each a *stade* in length (600 feet). Indeed, Josephus likened these two colonnades to two limbs attached to a body. Josephus illustrated their positions in relation to the Temple by stating that the Temple represented the “body” and the side-by-side colonnades represented the two “limbs,”⁶²⁴ like two straight outstretched “arms” attached to a human body. They were reckoned part of the Temple itself.⁶²⁵ Josephus said in the same reference that the “limbs” were “adjoining” one another at intervals. That is, they were alongside each other with bridges to each other at intervals in their courses from the Temple to Fort Antonia (or, vice versa). The top part of these two colonnades (that is, their flat roofs) were reserved as roadways for the Roman troops so they could have easy access to the Temple and to the colonnades around the Sanctuary.

So, the two colonnades from Fort Antonia attached themselves to the colonnades that surrounding the Temple Square. The Temple colonnades formed a perfect square — one *stade* on each side (or, four *stades* altogether). “The whole enclosure [of the Temple], having a circumference of four *stades*, each side taking up the

⁶²⁴ *War* VI.2,9.

⁶²⁵ It is interesting that Josephus considered the two bridges to be a part of the Temple.

length of a *stade*.⁶²⁶ But in another place, Josephus wanted to include the two colonnade roadways that reached from the Temple to the entrance of Fort Antonia. Speaking of the colonnades of the Temple, Josephus said: “The colonnades were thirty cubits broad [45 feet], and the complete circuit of them, embracing [the colonnades to] the Tower of Antonia, measured *six stades*.⁶²⁷ The two colonnades were the northern “arms” of the Temple. Embracing them added *two stades* to the circumference of the Temple colonnades. These two appendages to the Temple were like the arms of a human body that would reach northward to grasp (embrace) with the arms the entrance to Fort Antonia.

When one counted together the four *stades* for the colonnades that surrounded the square of the Temple with the two colonnades (of two *stades* — one *stade* each) that were like two appendages extending northward to the entrance to Fort Antonia, the combined length of those colonnades equaled six *stades*. This is what Josephus said. Those northern colonnades were like bridges for the Roman troops. They were double causeways from the Temple to Fort Antonia.

Strangely, you will not find these two colonnades from the Temple to Fort Antonia illustrated in maps of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus nor in any drawings of Fort Antonia. Scholars avoid mentioning them. Why? It is because scholars are puzzled by Josephus’ references to them. In fact, modern scholars simply do not know where to place them (nor do some consider they even existed). The two colonnades, however, are amply described by Josephus in various and separate contexts as a cardinal feature of the Temple complex.

⁶²⁶ *Antiquities* XV.9,3 Loeb translation, italics mine.

⁶²⁷ *War* V.5,2. Note that Josephus in reaching the dimensions of six *stades* includes the two colonnades of one *stade* in length (two *stades* in all) that extended up to Fort Antonia. He attached these two *stades* to the four *stades* of colonnades surrounding the square-form Temple. Most scholars have not noticed that these two colonnades are appendages that extended northward from the Temple to Fort Antonia. He said the two colonnades resembled two side by side arms (or limbs) of a body that were attached to the colonnades surrounding the Temple (*War* VI.2,9).

These side-by-side bridge type colonnades must have been built to avoid confusion in transporting troops and armaments from Antonia to the Temple. One colonnade was used for ingress into the Temple while the other was for egress in leaving the Temple, much like our freeways. These colonnades (with their flat roofs) were used as roadways exclusively by the Roman troops to control activities in the Temple. The ordinary public used the sheltered roadway at the base of the columns if they wished to enter the Temple from that quarter. The lower part of the two colonnades had a walkway at ground level that protected the people from the elements, etc.⁶²⁸

Two Colonnade Bridges from the Temple to Antonia

The two side-by-side colonnades were similar to a modern freeway with two roadways each 45 feet wide to agree with the width of the colonnades encompassing the Temple Square. The flat roofs on the top were the roadways.

These two colonnades mentioned by Josephus were one *stade* long and provided a bridge type of causeway — one for north-bound traffic from the Temple to Fort Antonia and the other for

⁶²⁸ We can understand what these two colonnades looked like by referring to a colonnade Josephus said Herod built for the people of Antioch in Syria. Note what Josephus said about the generosity of Herod to foreign areas. "For the people of Antioch, the inhabitants of the principal city of Syria, where a broad street cuts through the place lengthwise, he built colonnades along both its sides, and laid the open road with polished stone, which was of very great advantage to the inhabitants" (*Antiquities* XV.5,3). Describing this in another place, he said:

"For that large open place belonging to Antioch in Syria, did he not pave it with polished marble, though it were twenty furlongs long [over two miles long]? This is when it was shunned by all men before, because it was full of dirt and filthiness, he [then] adorned the same place with a cloister [a colonnade] of the same length" (*War* 1.21,11).

If Herod provided such a beautiful and costly amenity to those in the foreign city of Antioch, what would he have done in his own capital city? These colonnades in Jerusalem were actually roadways that could be used both in the lower portions in the sheltered area, or on top as a roadway with balustrades providing private and secure movements for troops. It is this latter reason that Herod built the two colonnades from Fort Antonia to the Temple. Not only were they practical, they were beautiful and impressive.

southbound traffic from Fort Antonia to the Temple.⁶²⁹ The entrance to Fort Antonia from the Temple was from the northwest corner of the outer walls that formed a square around the Temple. "Now as to the Tower of Antonia, it was situated at the corner of two cloisters [colonnades] of the court of the Temple, of that on the west, and that on the north."⁶³⁰

Josephus was speaking about the entrance to Fort Antonia being at the northwestern corner of the Temple colonnades, not that Fort Antonia was situated as a small fortress precisely at that northwest corner. One has to look for the walls of Antonia beginning at the northern terminus of those colonnades. Thus, the entrance to Fort Antonia was situated where their ramps impinged upon Antonia. It was common at the time to say an "entrance" represented its site.⁶³¹

⁶²⁹ When people entered the Temple, it was custom to turn to the right (and stay to the right) as one went about the Courts of the Temple (Mishnah, *Middoth* 2:2). This rule applied to all individuals no matter who they were (priests or laity). People entered the Temple on the right hand side of the gate and went around the Temple in a counterclockwise direction. This rule applied even if one's immediate destination in the Temple was to the left of the entrance gate. People also exited from the Temple on the opposite side of the gate that they entered. This rule no doubt applied to the ingress of troops from Antonia to the Temple colonnades or to the egress of troops from the Temple to Antonia. It stands to reason that the eastern colonnade to Fort Antonia was for northbound traffic and the western colonnade that led to the Temple was for southbound traffic. Besides these ritualistic rules, the separation of traffic on the two colonnades made good military sense. It prevented "traffic jams."

⁶³⁰ *War* V.5,8.

⁶³¹ It is easy to discover the intention of Josephus. Suppose you were standing close enough to have your hand on the northern wall of early Jerusalem. If there was no gate into Jerusalem where you were, you were still not reckoned (in the early way of looking at things) at being at Jerusalem. If the Damascus Gate (let us say) was still a third of a mile east from where you were standing, then you were yet a third of a mile away from Jerusalem. Thus, the distance between cities was measured from gate to gate of the cities, not from wall to wall. A further illustration involves a modern point. Route 66 is a highway from Chicago to the Pacific Ocean at Santa Monica, California. If you were on Route 66 ten blocks inland from its termination in the west and you asked a person where the Pacific Ocean was, you could rightly be told that it was ten blocks west at the end of Route 66. This, of course, would be correct. But if you were in San Francisco (400 miles north of Santa Monica), and someone asked you where the Pacific Ocean was located, it would make no sense if you said it was at the end of Route

Fort Antonia was located on the north side of the Temple. The two roadways encountered Fort Antonia at its southwestern angle. The whole of the Temple's northern wall was parallel to the southern wall of Fort Antonia with the length of the two colonnades occupying the space between the two structures. This span represented a *stade* in distance (600 feet). Josephus said it was the destruction of these two side-by-side colonnades by the Jewish revolutionaries that led to the ruin of the Temple. Note how Josephus stated it. "So they got immediately upon those cloisters [colonnades] that joined to Antonia, and cut them down."⁶³²

This destruction of the colonnades from the Temple to Antonia was looked on as a major disaster by anyone wishing a peaceful settlement with the Romans. All knew the Romans would severely punish such an action. It was early in the war the revolutionaries cut down the colonnades, but they later rebuilt them when those who promoted peace urged them to do so. The moderates among the Jews at that early time told the more adventurous:

"You have cut off the cloisters [colonnades of the Temple] from joining to the Tower of Antonia. You will therefore prevent any occasion of revolt if you will but join these together again."⁶³³

In this earlier period of the war, the militants acceded to the warnings of King Agrippa and the moderates. They repaired the colonnades (the two roadways). But this was not the conclusion to the matter.

66 in Santa Monica. Though this would indeed be correct, no one in San Francisco would use that vantagepoint. Indeed, if you were in Tokyo, Japan or Sydney, Australia and asked where one could find the Pacific Ocean and one said it was located at the end of Route 66 in Santa Monica, California, your remark would be considered absurd. Though true, only if you are in or near Santa Monica, California does the use of such an illustration to locate the Pacific Ocean make sense. And so it is with locating Fort Antonia in the area of Jerusalem. Josephus said it was at the juncture of two colonnades that reached northward from the northwest corner of the Temple Mount. Yes, but (like the Pacific Ocean) Fort Antonia was a large place. What Josephus meant was that a person will find the entrance (the gate) into Antonia at the northwest angle. It is just that simple.

⁶³² *War* II.15,6.

⁶³³ *War* II.16,5.

Later, as the war neared its end, the Jewish forces again set fire to the two colonnades and this time the damage was not repairable.⁶³⁴ When this occurred, Josephus then stated a prophecy that he thought forecast the destruction of the Temple and its walls. He said God intended the complete end of the Holy Sanctuary.

“For the Jews, by demolishing the [colonnades to the] tower of Antonia, had made their temple four-square, while at the same time they had it written in their sacred oracles, ‘That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should become four-square.’”

This prophecy of the Scriptures can be known.⁶³⁵

Those side-by-side colonnades were reckoned to be like a pan-handle appendage to the Temple (two “limbs attached to a body”). They were the “Arms of the Temple.” In essence they were Temple property but the Roman military used the roadways. With the destruction of those two colonnade roadways, the Temple was

⁶³⁴ *War* VI.2,9.

⁶³⁵ *War* VI.5,4. We may be able to discover the prophecy that Josephus meant. Dr. James Tabor of the University of North Carolina informed me Josephus must have been referring to what is known as the Seventy Weeks’ Prophecy. In that prophecy are, as Josephus himself related, vague indications dealing with the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. One should note that the word “street” in Daniel 9:25 often refers to a “broad courtyard” which could be construed as being a “square” or “plaza.” Daniel 9 also states that a Messiah would be cut off (that is, die). Now look at Lamentations 4:18–20 (which many Jews in the first century applied to their own time because of amazing similarities in detail between the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and that by Titus). It states in verse 20 that “the Messiah of the Lord was taken in their pits” [which means the Messiah was killed]. This happened when “we cannot go in our streets [squares]” [this is the same word as in Daniel 9:25, but in Lamentations the word is plural]. This word “street” could be construed as being a “square” in Hebrew. We are told that the Temple walls surrounding the Temple were a square, and also the “Temple Mount” itself was a square. The prophecy in Lamentations stated that when Israel would be cut off from their “squares,” then verse 4:18 goes on to state: “our end is near, our days are fulfilled; our end has come.” As Josephus saw it, when the two colonnades from the Temple to Fort Antonia were destroyed, this made the Temple itself to be a perfect square and its entrance was cut off from Israel. This meant: “our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.” It is to this section of Scripture in Lamentations 4:18–20 (associated with Daniel 9:25) that Josephus probably referred when he spoke about this prophecy of the Scriptures.

made to stand alone as a square edifice. When this occurred it was evident to Josephus that the war would not last much longer. And this was the case.

This shows how important were those roadways from the Temple to Fort Antonia in the history of the war. It is because of this significance that I have taken time to describe them as Josephus records. That is because most scholars today are not even aware that these two colonnade roadways existed. The next chapter will show how different the Temple was from Fort Antonia, and how the Haram esh-Sharif cannot be the remains of the Temple.