

News of the So-called "Temple Mount"

Commentary of February 13, 2007 — The Haram Is Still Wrong

News about the Haram esh-Sharif, the so-called Temple Mount, has appeared in several articles over the past few days. The most complete article has the headline: "[Temple's location found, says Israeli archaeologist](#)." The article states that a "study of ancient cisterns pinpoints sacred site — Muslim Dome of the Rock outside confines" of the supposed Temple site. Well, not exactly. Hebrew University Professor Joseph Patrich believes he has determined that the site of the Temple on the Haram esh-Sharif was positioned over one particularly large cistern under the Haram. There are in fact several cisterns under the surface of the Haram, exactly as history relates.

If you read the article and view the graphics drawn by Leen Ritmeyer that accompany the article (assuming the graphics accurately reflect the Professor's theory) it shows the supposed Temple location as being just southeast of the rock above which the Dome of the Rock is constructed. However, the proposed location of the inner Temple sanctuary (the Holy of Holies and Holy Place) would still require the destruction of the Dome of the Rock.

QUESTION 1: David, does this article line up with what Dr. Martin concluded or are we talking a different location? **QUESTION 2:** How does Dr. Martin's book and suggested location of the Temple fit in with the article in the *Jerusalem Post* this week about the location? Thanks.

ANSWER: This news essentially proposes that the Temple was in the central portion of the Haram esh-Sharif. This is not really new. This "new" theory moves the inner sanctuary of the Temple a bit further east than most locations, but essentially it fits into the category of the "central theory" of the Temple on the Haram.

In general there are three mistaken theories of the Temple location. All are on the Haram esh-Sharif. All three are wrong. Here are the three theories with the persons most often associated with the theories:

1. north of the Dome of the Rock (Kaufmann's theory),
2. at the Dome of the Rock, or very close by (the theory of Leen Ritmeyer, most rabbis, and Professor Patrich's new theory), and
3. south of the Dome of the Rock (Sagiv's theory).

The best place describing the three wrong Temple locations can be found at: <http://www.templemount.org/>.

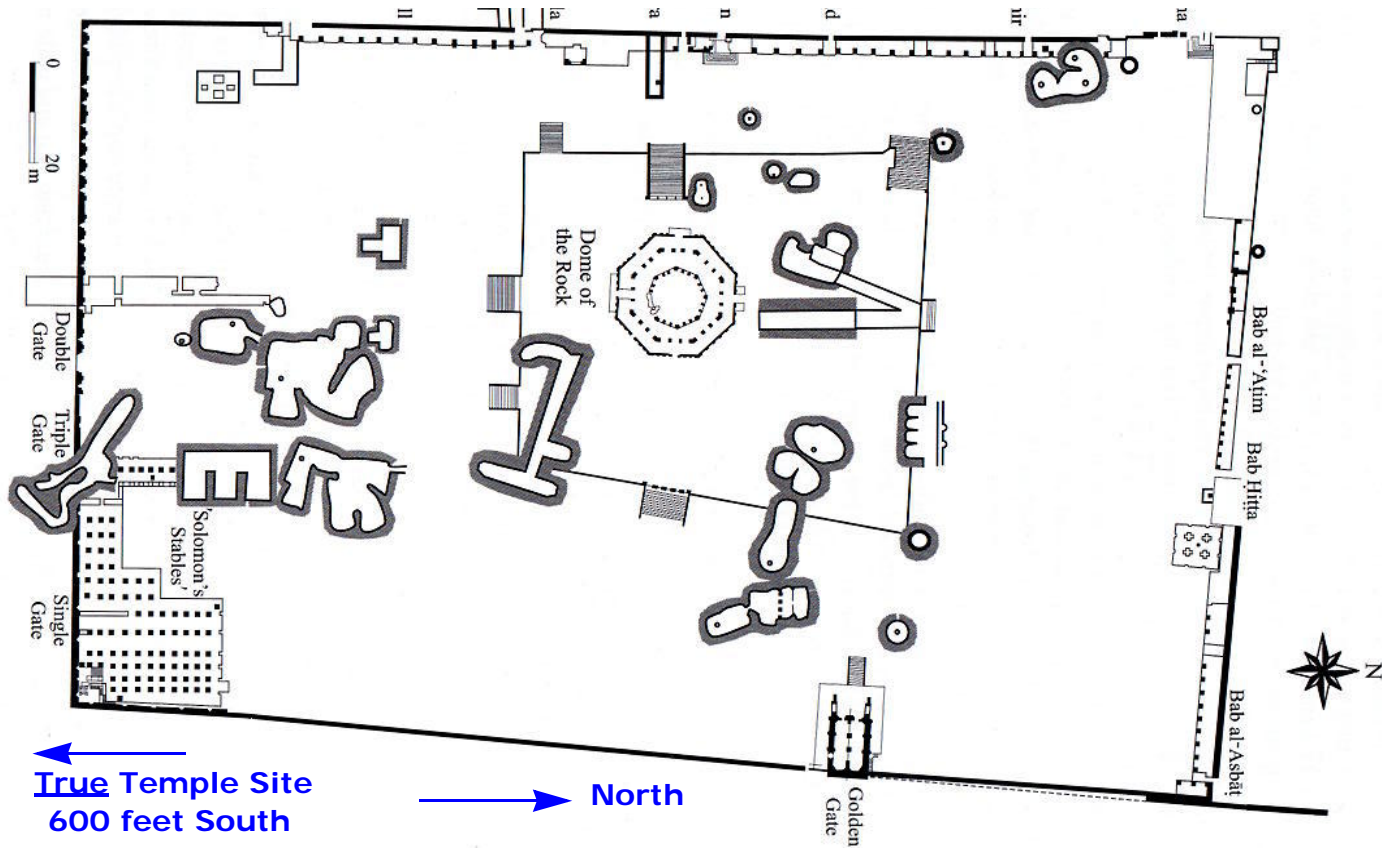
Professor Patrich's new theory also orients the Temple more southeast than others do. The usual orientation is that the Temple faced directly east. Dr. Ernest Martin considered the possibility that the Temple faced a bit north of directly east by some 10 degrees.

Dr. Martin's research (in Internet articles at <http://www.askelm.com/temple/index.asp> and in his book *The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot*) demonstrates from eyewitness biblical and historical sources that the Jewish Temples were above and west of the Gihon Springs, the only major source of water in the Jerusalem area. This correctly places the Temple 1/3 of a mile south of the southern wall of the Haram. Massive amounts of water were necessary for the sacrifices to be cleansed from the altar and environs (and the waste to be washed away). Thousands of animals were sacrificed on the feast days.

More importantly Jesus' prophecy indicates there would be not one stone upon another from either the Temple or the city of Jerusalem when they were destroyed. Look at all those stones! Many are understood to be Herodian.

QUESTION: So would there still possibly be cisterns at that location [on the Haram] proving they were beneath the temple? Have you personally traversed the area yourself?

ANSWER: No, the cisterns on the Haram do not prove the Temple was located there. Here is a diagram from the early 1900s of the cisterns on the Haram. The fuzzy irregular shaped objects are the cisterns:



The Jewish traveler Aristeas wrote about his trip to Jerusalem some 150 years before Herod began to enlarge the Temple, somewhere around 200–180 B.C.E. He states there were cisterns all around the Temple to a distance of 4 furlongs (as translated into English measure). This is about 1/2 around the Temple, at least to the north and west. Several cisterns from that period remain under the surface of the Haram esh-Sharif, some large and some small.

As Dr. Martin correctly shows, what we call the Haram esh-Sharif today was actually Fortress Antonia, as the Haram was called in the time of Herod, the New Testament, and Josephus, the Jewish historian. Antonia, as a fortress, needed cisterns to provide water in the event of an attack and prolonged siege. Because Antonia (the Haram) was built by King Herod, he did not anticipate his kingdom would be taken over by the pagan Romans. The cisterns on the Haram were part of the larger system (as Aristeas says) that flowed to the Temple to “flush the system” of the blood and gore from the sacrifices, several thousand during Jewish feasts. This was necessary for health/safety concerns as well as for ritual cleanliness. Aristeas writes:

“The whole of the floor is paved with stones and slopes down to the appointed places, that water may be conveyed to wash away the 89 blood from the sacrifices, for many thousand beasts are sacrificed there on the feast days. And there is an inexhaustible supply of water, because an abundant natural spring gushes up from

within the temple area. There are moreover wonderful and indescribable cisterns underground, as they pointed out to me, at a distance of five furlongs all round the site of the temple, and each of them has countless pipes so that the different streams converge together. And all these were fastened with lead at the bottom and at the sidewalls, and over them a great quantity of plaster had been spread, and every part of the work had been most carefully carried out.

There are many openings for water at the base of the altar which are invisible to all except to those who are engaged in the ministration, so that all the blood of the sacrifices which is collected in great quantities is washed away in the twinkling of an eye. Such is my opinion with regard to the character of the reservoirs and I will now show you how it was confirmed. They led me more than four furlongs outside the city and bade me peer down towards a certain spot and listen to the noise that was made by the meeting of the waters, so that the great size of the reservoirs became manifest to me, as has already been pointed out."

• *The Letter of Aristeas*¹

This eyewitness account does not fit a description of any Temple on the Haram. Quite the contrary. First, there is no evidence of any **"spring"** on the Haram. Second, the cisterns on the Haram are below the proposed sites on the Haram, not above it as Aristeas indicates. (Water flows downhill remember.) The Temple above and west of the Gihon Springs fits perfectly with this eyewitness account, because the Haram cisterns would be above the Temple. Josephus said that Antonia dominated the Temple. The waters were either siphoned or piped to flow down to cleanse the Temple environs south of the Haram.

Yes, I have been to Jerusalem and been both on the Haram and at the correct site of the Temple by the Gihon Springs several times.

Recent Disturbances on the Haram

There have also recently been disturbances recently on the Haram esh-Sharif. There are two causes of these disturbances. The first came about when the Islamic officials expressed a desire to construct a 5th minaret on the Haram. Jewish religious leaders objected but recently the Israeli government has allowed construction to proceed. See the February 13, 2007 article "[Israel Allows Minaret over Temple Mount](#)." The article presents information from both sides of the argument. Both are wrong.

In truth Jewish and Islamic religious leaders are fighting for no good reason. The Jewish religious claim on the Haram esh-Sharif is not valid because the Haram is not the site of any of the ancient Jewish Temples. As the article says:

"The Temple Mount's [the Haram's] first minaret was constructed on the southwest corner in 1278; the second was built in 1297 by order of a Mameluke king; the third by a governor of Jerusalem in 1329; and the last in 1367."

The Jordanian government is sponsoring and financing the construction of the minaret. The King of Jordan is the "Protector" of the Haram, much like the King of Saudi Arabia is "Protector" of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

In another issue involving the Haram esh-Sharif, there is a dispute over reconstruction of the entrance ramp from the Jewish section up to the Haram. The BBC News article "[Deep Tension Over Jerusalem Holy Site](#)" relates that the current stone ramp is deteriorating and requires

1. *The Letter of Aristeas*, Charles Translation, ¶¶88–91, 1913, can be read in its entirety at <http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/aristeas.htm>. Some scholars think this letter may have been written as early as 250 B.C.E. DWS

reconstruction. However, by Israeli law before any construction in Jerusalem can proceed an archaeological inspection must be made of the area.

Although the archaeological inspection will go only a few feet below the surface, Islamic officials claim that the reconstruction is a pretext for a dig to discover proof of Jewish claim to the Haram. This has inflamed the dispute because Islamic authorities are objecting to any Israeli excavations. Riots have ensued between 2,000 Israeli police and Palestinian demonstrators.

Riots have broken out with Palestinian youths throwing stones and bricks and the Israeli police firing rubber bullets and concussion grenades. Tensions are high. Dozens have been wounded. There is a real danger that someone could be killed. It is regular practice for Israeli police, and Israeli military, to be on constant alert to protect Jewish men and women who pray at what is called the Wailing Wall. Rocks could be dropped on worshippers and kill someone. Therefore a watch is constantly maintained as prayers are offered by Jews 24 hours a day. There is even a live camera of the Wailing Wall at <http://www.inisrael.com/3disrael/kotel/index.html>.

Once again, Abdullah, the King of Jordan has criticized the renovation as unnecessary and an attempt to impose Israeli sovereignty over an Islamic holy site:

“From around the Muslim world came condemnation. An Israeli colleague of mine — standing next to me watching the diggers do their work — simply didn't get what all the fuss was all about. ‘It's just a ramp,’ he said.”

Al Jazeera reports in its February 12, 2007 article [“Mayor Delays Al-Aqsa Dig”](#)² that construction was temporarily halted by the Mayor of Jerusalem. The halt was likely ordered to have relative quiet when a major conference occurs on February 19 with Secretary of State Rice, the Palestinian President Abbas, and the Israeli Prime Minister Olmert. The Al Jazeera article notes (as Dr. Martin pointed out for more than 35 years):

“The fate of Jerusalem and its holy sites is one of the most contentious issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has a history of triggering unrest across the Holy Land far beyond the confines of the Old City walls.”

Tensions Are Increasing

The author of the BBC News articles states: **“It [the Haram] is the beating vibrant heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”** This is certainly the case, but it is unfortunate and unnecessary. It is the case because control over the Haram is the goal of all parties — and it is all based on a falsehood! How sad!

This is again one of those impossible problems that only God can resolve. And He will resolve it in His own good time. Indeed, Jerusalem will become the center of world attention. We have the privilege of watching the process unfold, and if we are wise and study the Scriptures, we will understand what we are watching.

Dr. Martin wrote a controversial article in 1994 that many people do not like just because of the title: [“How Israel Will Conquer the Middle East.”](#) Israel will not conquer through military acts of war, but through giving of themselves things of great value: wisdom, understanding, and knowledge about God and the world. The emphasis is on the giving. By that means Israel actually will control, not conquer the Middle East, to the benefit of all participants. This will occur before the Second coming of Christ.

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2. “Al Aqsa” is what Muslims call the Haram esh-Sharif.