

A New Temple Fountain Quote

Commentary for March 1, 2016 — From the Greek Old Testament

Besides the numerous biblical passages that tell of running water flowing from the Temple, five historical sources tell us there was a fountain within the sanctuary of the Temple in different periods.

1. The Letter of Aristeas, 250–180 BC, Charles' Translation, 1913, p. 89: **"an abundant natural spring gushes up from within the temple area."**
2. 1 Enoch 26:2–3, 2nd century BC: **"a holy mountain; under the mountain was water from the east, ... water proceeds beneath from the mountain."**
3. *Copper Scroll* 3Q15, 63rd Cache, c.60s AD: **"In the mouth of the fountain of Beth Shem [“Beth Shem” means the “House of the Name,” referring to God’s name, *i.e.*, the Temple]: silver and gold votive vessels, and silver coins ..."**
4. The Roman historian Tacitus, *History* 5.12, died 117 AD: **"The temple ... contained an inexhaustible spring."**
5. *Babylonian Talmud*, Yoma 77b, compiled 300s AD from older accounts: **"[Hence] go forth the waters which will bubble forth from under the threshold of the Sanctuary."**

A New Ancient Source (New to me that is)

I recently noted a **sixth** ancient historical source that also talks about a fountain within the Temple. The quote discusses the construction of the Temple by Solomon. It occurs in 1 Kings 2:35 in the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The text of this passage is longer than the Hebrew text and contains information only to be found in the Greek text (and **not** found in the Hebrew text of First Kings). Therefore, the Greek text is not Scripture, but it contains very important historical information. Note that in the English translation the spelling of some names differ from the King James Version.

"And the king [Solomon] appointed Banaeas son of Jodae in his place over the host [the army of Israel]; and the kingdom was established in Jerusalem; ... And Solomon son of David reigned over Israel and Juda in Jerusalem: and the Lord gave understanding to Solomon, and very much wisdom, ... And the wisdom of Solomon abounded exceedingly beyond the wisdom of all the ancients, and beyond all the wise men of Egypt: and he took the daughter of Pharaoh, and brought her into the city of David, until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the Lord first [the Temple], and the wall of Jerusalem round about. In seven years he made and finished *them*.

And Solomon had seventy thousand bearers of burdens, and eight thousand hewers of stone in the mountain [the Temple was up high, upon a mountain]: and Solomon made the sea [the largest basin of water], and the bases, and the great lavers, and the pillars, and the fountain of the court [of the Temple], and the brazen sea — and he built the citadel as a defence above it, ..."

• [1 Kings 2:35, LXX](#)¹

¹ *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, Brenton trans (London: Samuel Bagster, 1851).

There it is: Solomon built **“the fountain of the court”** along with other Temple items. Here is a shorter portion of a more recent 1977 translation from Greek to English:

“... And he took the daughter of Pharaoh and brought her into the city of David until he first finished his house and the house of the Lord and the wall of Jerusalem round about; in seven years he made and finished them. And Salomon had seventy thousand bearing a burden and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country. And Salomon made the sea and the supports and the great washbasins and the pillars and **the fountain of the court** and the bronze sea.”

• 1 Kings 2:35, NETS²

Here is the Greek of the relevant phrase:

<p>the fountain of the court τὴν κρήνην τῆς αὐλῆς</p>

Source: Rick Brannan et al., eds., *The Lexham English Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 3 Kingdoms 2: 35e.

There is no ambiguity of the common Greek words, “fountain” (or “spring”) and “court.” The passage tells of the construction of various items within the Temple. **“The fountain of the court”** is a source of water for the various uses for ritual cleansing using living water. In this account there is no mention of an aqueduct bringing water from miles away.

The Greek Septuagint of this First Kings passage was likely translated from the Hebrew some decades after 250 BC (before the time of #1 above, the Letter of Aristeas). While Greeks built aqueducts during this period, there is no evidence that Solomon or anyone else built aqueducts before the Hasmonean period.³ Those aqueducts from the Hasmonean and Roman periods did not supply water to the Temple, but they brought water to the western city and to Fort Antonia, which is currently where the “alleged Temple Mount” is located today.

All the biblical and historical information leads to the conclusion that the water that appeared within the Temple was in the form of a spring or a fountain from below, from the Gihon Spring, and not from an aqueduct. This was the case for all four of the Jerusalem Temples:

- the Temple of Solomon,
- the reconstruction by Zerubbabel when the Jews returned from Babylon,
- the destruction, cleansing, and reconstruction by Simon the Hasmonean, and
- the Herodian enlargement.⁴

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² *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc., 2007.

³ David Amit and Shimon Gibson, “Water to Jerusalem: the Route and Date of the Upper and Lower Level Aqueducts,” in *Cura Aquarum in Israel II: Water in Antiquity*, In Memory of Mr. Yehuda Peleg, Prof. Ehud Netzer, Dr. David Amit, Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on the History of Water Management and Hydraulic Engineering in the Mediterranean Region, Israel 14–20 October 2012, edited by Christoph Ohlig & Tsvika Tsuk, Siegburg 2014. It is the understanding of the authors of this latest article that the Hasmonean period was the earliest construction of the known aqueducts from Etam and the region south of Jerusalem.

⁴ For the full story, see Dr. Ernest L. Martin’s book [The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot](#).