



New Finds in Jerusalem

Commentary for December 19, 2011 — Dr. Martin's Research Validated?

Recent archaeological discoveries give indications of validating research published by Dr. Ernest L. Martin in November 2001, some two months before he died. The discovery involves one of the foundation stones of the Haram esh-Sharif near the southwest corner. This was above the spot where the excavation supervised by Professor Benjamin Mazar began in 1969, with Dr. Martin supervising students from Ambassador College in that summer and for four summers after.

If the digging had continued deeper at that time and at that same location, this recent discovery would have been made some four decades ago. (The photo on the right is from that excavation.)

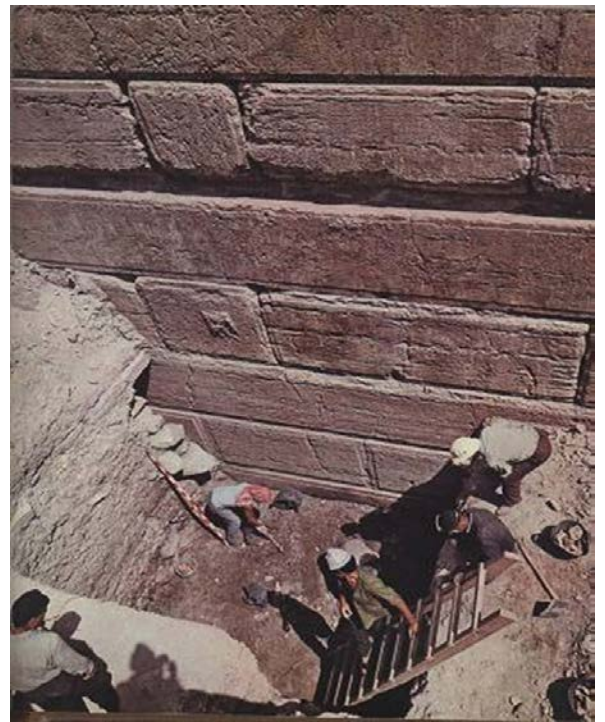
The 1969 excavation began under Robinson's Arch. The recent find also was discovered under Robinson's Arch but much deeper — at the level of the foundation stones.

The November 2011 Announcement

First read a major portion of the Israeli Antiquities Authority press release, "[Building the Western Wall: Herod Began It but Didn't Finish It \(December 2011\)](#)":

"... the archaeological excavations alongside the ancient drainage channel of Jerusalem a very old ritual bath (miqwe) was recently discovered that challenges the conventional archaeological perception which regards Herod as being solely responsible for its construction.

Recently, reinforcement and maintenance measures were implemented in the pavement of Jerusalem's main street from 2,000 years ago, used by pilgrims when they went up to the Temple Mount. This was done as part of the project to re-expose the drainage channel that passes beneath the street, running from the Siloam Pool in the City of David to the Jerusalem Archaeological Garden near the Western Wall. The excavations at the site are being conducted on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, in cooperation with Nature and Parks Authority and the East Jerusalem Development Corporation, and are underwritten by the Ir David foundation. The excavations are directed by archaeologist Eli Shukron of the Israel Antiquities Authority, with assistance from Professor Ronny Reich of the University of Haifa.



Students digging at the western wall of the Haram esh-Sharif

In an excavation beneath the paved street near Robinson's Arch, sections of the Western Wall's foundation were revealed that is set on the bedrock – which is also the western foundation of Robinson's Arch — an enormous arch that bore a staircase that led from Jerusalem's main street to the entrance of the Temple Mount compound.

According to Professor Reich, 'It became apparent during the course of the work that there are rock-hewn remains of different installations on the natural bedrock, including cisterns, ritual baths and cellars. These belonged to the dwellings of a residential neighborhood that existed there before King Herod decided to enlarge the Temple Mount compound. The Jewish historian Josephus, a contemporary of that period, writes that Herod embarked on the project of enlarging the compound in the eighteenth year of his reign (that is in 22 BCE) and described it as "the largest project the world has ever heard of."'

When it was decided to expand the compound, the area was confiscated and the walls of the buildings were demolished down to the bedrock. The rock-cut installations were filled with earth and stones so as to be able to build on them. When the locations of the Temple Mount corners were determined and work was begun setting the first course of stone in place, it became apparent that one of the ritual baths was situated directly in line with the Western Wall. The builders filled in the bath with earth, placed three large flat stones on the soil and built the first course of the wall on top of this blockage.

While sifting the soil removed from inside the sealed ritual bath, three clay oil lamps were discovered of a type that was common in the first century CE. In addition, the sifting also yielded seventeen bronze coins that can be identified. Dr. Donald Ariel, curator of the numismatic collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority, determined that the latest coins (4 in all) were struck by the Roman procurator of Judea, Valerius Gratus, in the year 17/18 CE. This means that Robinson's Arch, and possibly a longer part of the Western Wall, were constructed after this year — that is to say: at least twenty years after Herod's death (which is commonly thought to have occurred in the year 4 BCE).¹

This bit of archaeological information illustrates the fact that the construction of the Temple Mount walls and Robinson's Arch was an enormous project that lasted decades and was not completed during Herod's lifetime.

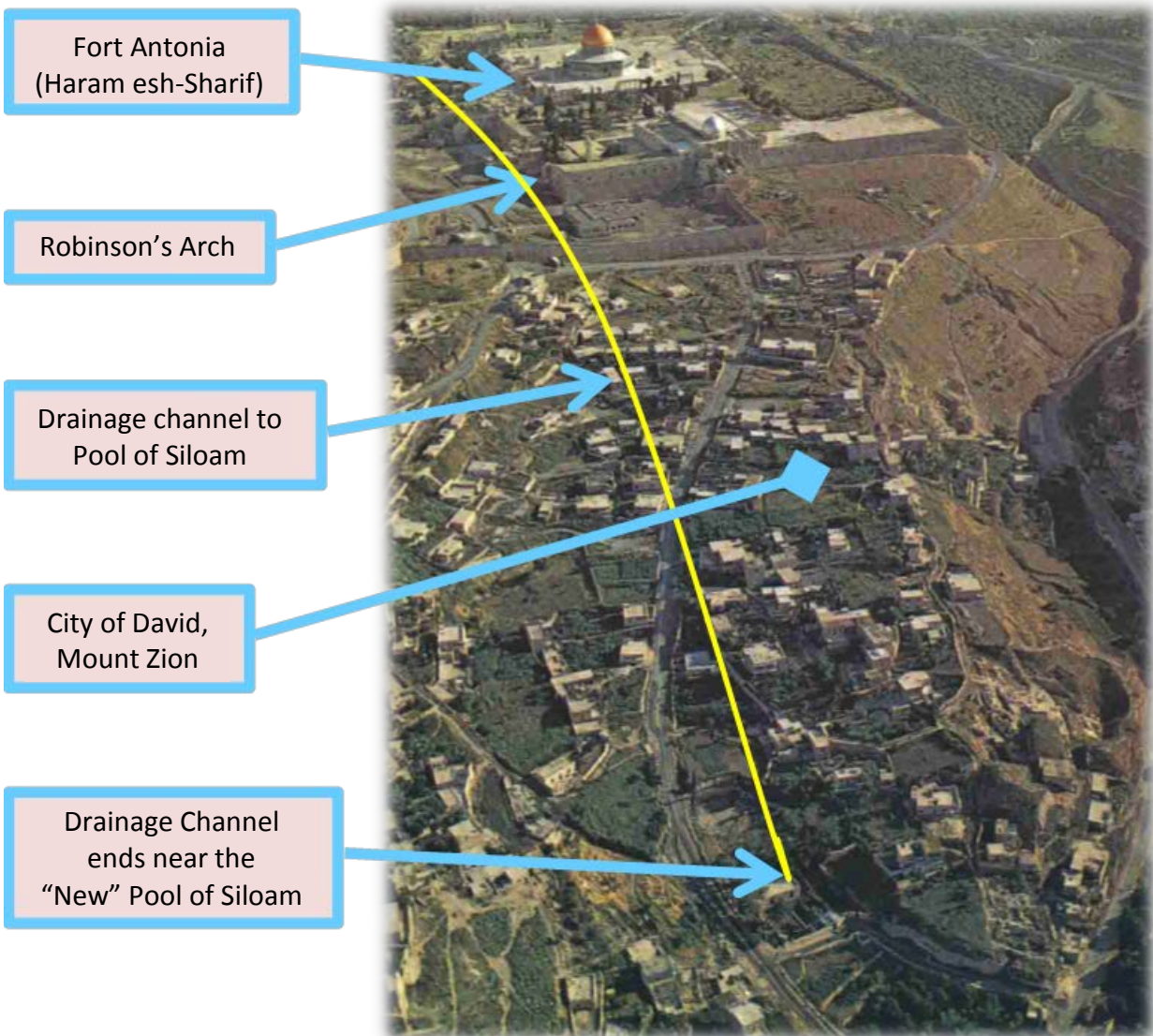


Dr. Eli Shukron and the steps of the mikveh

¹ Dr. Ariel states that the coins under the foundation stone were there 20 years after Herod's death. If Herod died in 4 BC and the coins were minted in 17 or 18 AD this would be correct. However, if Herod died in 1 BC these coins would be placed only 17 or 18 years after his death, not 20 years after.

This dramatic find confirms Josephus' descriptions which state that it was only during the reign of King Agrippa II (Herod's great-grandson) that the work was finished, and upon its completion there were eight to ten thousand unemployed in Jerusalem." [end press release]

I underlined the portion regarding the datable coins. As the press release indicates, the foundation stones near the southwest corner were placed after the coins were minted in the years 17 or 18 AD. The article also implies that the entire wall surrounding the Haram (incorrectly termed as the "Temple Mount" by Jewish authorities) was begun after that time. Dr. Martin's 2001 research article provides evidence that those stones on that portion of the wall were placed hundreds of years later than proposed in the article.



The **"ritual bath,"** a *miqwe* as the press release terms it, or *mikveh* as I will term it, is one of many around the Temple. Jews immersed themselves in mikvehs for ritual purification before entering the Temple. One of the large foundation stones of the Haram was placed directly on the steps to the mikveh.

The articles and the archaeologists are mistaken in that they assume that the portion of the wall where the coins and mikveh were found represents the date of construction for all of the walls surrounding the Haram. In fact it represented only a portion of the Haram walls.

How Was It Found?

The coins and the foundation stone over the mikveh were discovered near the northern end of the excavation of a long drainage channel that flowed down to the Pool of Siloam. The channel is dry now. It is uncertain whether this channel carried sewage or runoff water. It ends very close to the Pool of Siloam and the fresh water from Hezekiah's Tunnel. This channel was opened to the public by the Israeli Antiquities Authority this autumn of 2011.

The "new" Pool of Siloam was uncovered by construction in 1995. Work continued on this site and it was then opened to organized tours and the public. Excavation near the new Pool soon uncovered the drainage channel and the lengthy process of excavating (removing earth, rocks, etc.) that discovery began. From the pool at the south of the City of David, the channel proceeds north to the western wall of the Haram, and probably beyond the north wall of the Haram. On the surface, above of this channel in Christ's time, was a wide paved street probably for the same distance, so far as archaeologists can determine. (Read about an incident that occurred at the Pool of Siloam in John chapter 9.) Present-day political complications prevent the uncovering and restoration of the pavement for the entire length of the channel.

A *Jerusalem Post* article on the same subject and date, "[Herod began building Western Wall, but didn't finish it](#)," has a short video featuring archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron. The Jewish historian Josephus tells when the Temple construction began:

"And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build by himself the temple of God, and make it larger in size, and to raise it to a most magnificent height, as esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection, and that this would be sufficient for an everlasting memorial of him; ..."

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 15:380

A November 26, 2011 analytical article by Robert Waugh "[Coins from 17AD found under Jerusalem's Western Wall hints sacred site NOT built by Herod](#)" was published in the *Daily Mail Online* in the United Kingdom. The author questions whether the Western Wall possibly was not part of the original Harem. According to Dr. Martin this is a correct conclusion.

A Problem for the Traditional Temple Location

If this discovery of the foundation stone over the mikveh and the datable coins are legitimate (and I am confident they are), then this is a major complication for those who believe the Jewish Temples were constructed on the Haram. Contrary to Josephus' account (who had access to the records of Herod's historiographer, *Antiquities of the Jews 16:183*), King Herod did not build the walls of the Temple as the title of Robert Waugh's article seems to indicate. Waugh's article title is correct, but for the wrong reason. The problem is that scholars have

the wrong location for the Temple and Fort Antonia. The Haram esh-Sharif is thought to be the Temple Mount, when in fact it is the site of Fort Antonia.

The historical evidence shown in Dr. Martin's book *The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot* makes clear that all of the Israelite Temples through history were constructed above and west of the Gihon Spring. Josephus' account of the Temple construction and its timing has nothing to do with this recent find near the southwest corner of the Haram. Slowly the world is engaging Dr. Martin's Temple evidence, as well as the independently researched evidence by Professor George Wesley Buchanan. Additional evidence (mostly written after Dr. Martin's book was published) is presented in the "[Temple Update Articles Index](#)" on the ASK website. That webpage also links two articles by Professor Buchanan.

No Temples were built anywhere on the Haram. That massive structure is the site of Fort Antonia. It is easy to imagine that structure as a fortress. According to Josephus it was built at about the same time as Herod's Temple. This puts these new archaeological finds in a different perspective than the press articles or traditional archaeologists show.

We have a date marker in the Gospel of John telling us when construction of the Herodian Temple began:

"Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Then said the Jews, 'Forty and six years was this temple in building, and will you rear it up in three days?' But he spoke of the temple of his body."

• John 2:19–21

This incident took place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in 28 AD. That would mean the Temple was begun by Herod in 18 BC. He died in 1 BC (see footnote 1 above). The Temple was completed during the reign of King Agrippa II (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.219) just before the outbreak of the Jewish rebellion began in 66 AD.

It is uncertain how soon after Herod became king that he began construction of Fort Antonia to protect the Temple, although it is likely that both were begun around the same time:

"But when Herod came to be king, he rebuilt this tower, which was very conveniently located, in a magnificent manner; and because he was a friend to Antony, he called it [the tower] by the name of Antonia, ..."

Jewish Antiquities 18:92

A Portion Not Built by Herod

In fact, the portion of the wall under which the coins and mikveh were discovered was built in the 6th century AD by the Roman Emperor Justinian, some 500 years after King Herod. The Haram (Fort Antonia) **north** of the "seam" was built by Herod and his descendants. The portion of the western wall **south** of the "seam," under which the recent discovery was made, was added by Justinian.

Finally we come to the evidence developed by Dr. Martin and published in his November 2001. This article anticipated this recent archaeological find by some 10 years. In his detailed

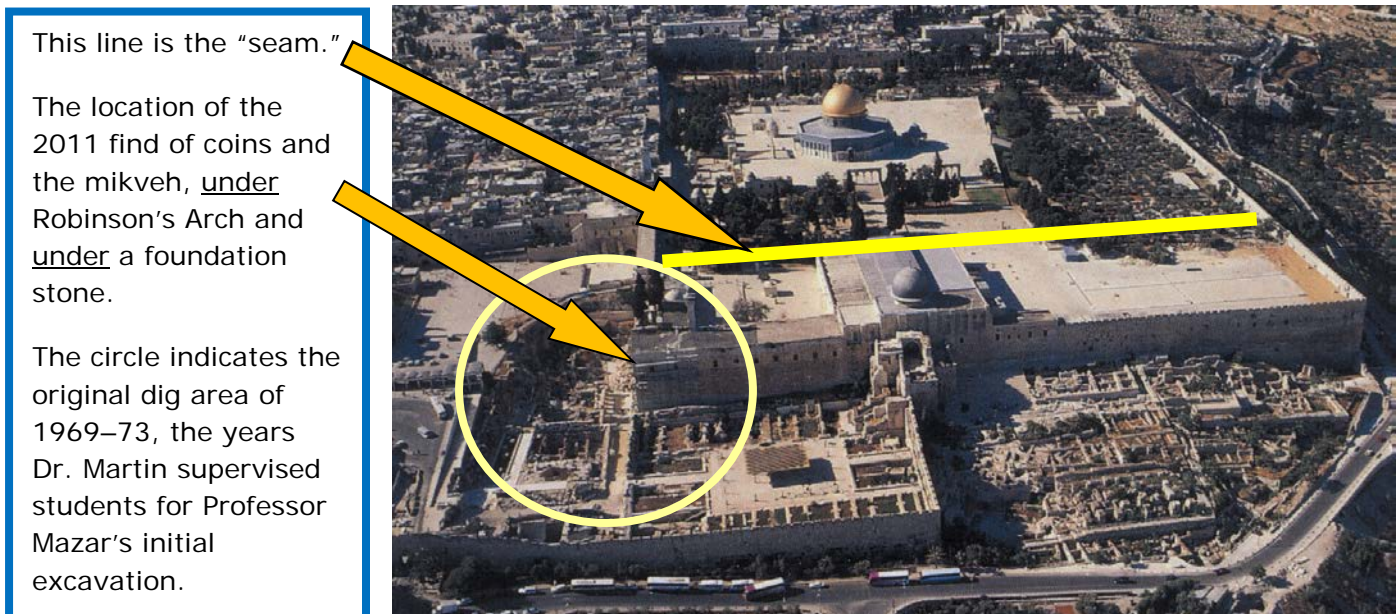
article, "[Major 'Keys' in Discovering the Lost Temples of Jerusalem](#)," Dr. Martin provides data that explain Justinian's construction of what was called the Church of the Holy Wisdom or the Nea Church on top of the remains of Fort Antonia (and older church structures) in the 6th century AD.² Here is a relevant portion from his article:

"From what is called the 'Seam' in the east wall (Kenyon said the 'Seam' was a little over 107 feet north of the southeast angle),³ Justinian appears to have built a southern extension and made a new southeastern angle. He then repositioned the whole of the southern wall that paralleled the former wall (some 107+ feet south) with refurbished and new stones (which were made to resemble all Herodian type of masonry).

This reconstruction formed a new southwestern corner about 107+ feet south of the former angle. From there his architects built a new part of the western wall about 107+ feet north to intersect with the former southwestern angle. If this is true, and it appears as though this is what Procopius is stating, then Robinson's Arch and its stairways were a creation of Justinian and not a part of the original wall build by Herod.

It will be noticed that the whole of the southern wall even today appears in a much newer condition than any of the stones in other parts of the Haram walls. It could well be that it was Justinian who re-positioned the south wall. Only extensive archaeological investigations can determine if this is true or not."

November 2001, Underlining mine, DWS



Fortress Antonia / Harem esh-Sharif / erroneous "Temple Mount"

² There was at least one other earlier church structure on that platform. Justinian's construction of the Nea Church took place about 100 years before the Muslims captured Jerusalem in 638 AD. The Nea Church was destroyed 16 years earlier by a combined Persian and Jewish army in 614 AD.

³ Kathleen Kenyon (d. 1978) dug extensively in the City of David a bit north of the Gihon Spring from 1961 to 1967. Regarding her mention of the "seam" on the Haram, footnote #18 from Dr. Martin's article says: **"Kathleen Kenyon in her work on Jerusalem said that the 'Seam' was 32.72 meters north of the southeast angle, or in English feet that answers to 107 feet 4.5 inches."**

Note Dr. Martin's reference to Robinson's Arch. If Dr. Martin's evidence and analysis is correct, then this explains why the stones brought by Justinian and shaped (with beveled facing like the other Herodian stones of Antonia) were on top of the Jewish mikveh and on top of coins, some minted in 17 or 18 AD. Procopius, the court historian of Emperor Justinian, wrote in detail about the extension of the platform (now called the Haram) to accommodate this massive structure of the Nea Church:

"For the Emperor Justinian gave orders that it be built on the highest of the hills, specifying what the length and breadth of the building should be, as well as the other details. However, the hill did not satisfy the requirements of the project, according to the Emperor's specifications, but a fourth part of the church, facing the south and the east, was left unsupported, that part in which the priests are wont to perform the rites.

Consequently those in charge of this work hit upon the following plan. They threw the foundations out as far as the limit of the even ground, and then erected a structure which rose as high as the rock. And when they had raised this up level with the rock they set vaults upon the supporting walls, and joined this substructure to the other foundation of the church. Thus the church is partly based upon living rock, and partly carried in the air by a great extension artificially added to the hill by the Emperor's power.

The stones of this substructure are not of a size such as we are acquainted with, for the builders of this work, in struggling against the nature of the terrain and labouring to attain a height to match the rocky elevation, had to abandon all familiar methods and resort to practices which were strange and altogether unknown. So they cut out blocks of unusual size from the hills which rise to the sky in the region before the city, and after dressing them carefully they brought them to the site ..."

• *Procopius, "[Buildings of Justinian](#)," 5.6.4–11*

Procopius goes on to say that each massive stone added to the southern portion of the structure was transported on a wagon pulled by 40 oxen.

Another Intriguing Discovery

I must mention yet another discovery in Jerusalem that was made public on December 7, 2011. Again, the announcement was made by archaeologists Eli Shukron and Ronny Reich. Here is a portion of the Associated Press article, "[Experts stumped by ancient Jerusalem markings](#)":

"Mysterious stone carvings made thousands of years ago and recently uncovered in an excavation underneath Jerusalem have archaeologists stumped.

Israeli diggers who uncovered a complex of rooms carved into the bedrock in the oldest section of the city recently found the markings: Three 'V' shapes cut next to each other into the limestone floor of one of the rooms, about 2 inches (5 centimeters) deep and 20 inches (50 centimeters) long. There were no finds to offer any clues pointing to the identity of who made them or what purpose they served.

The archaeologists in charge of the dig know so little that they have been unable even to posit a theory about their nature, said Eli Shukron, one of the two directors of the dig. 'The markings are very strange, and very intriguing. I've never seen anything like them,' Shukron said.

The shapes were found in a dig known as the City of David, a politically sensitive excavation conducted by Israeli government archaeologists and funded by a nationalist Jewish group under the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan in east Jerusalem. The rooms were unearthed as part of the excavation of fortifications around the ancient city's only natural water source, the Gihon spring. ...

Ceramic shards found in the rooms indicate they were last used around 800 B.C., with Jerusalem under the rule of Judean kings, the dig's archaeologists say. At around that time, the rooms appear to have been filled with rubble to support the construction of a defensive wall. It is unclear, however, whether they were built in the time of those kings or centuries earlier by the Canaanite residents who predated them. ..."

• *Matti Friedman, "Experts Stumped"*

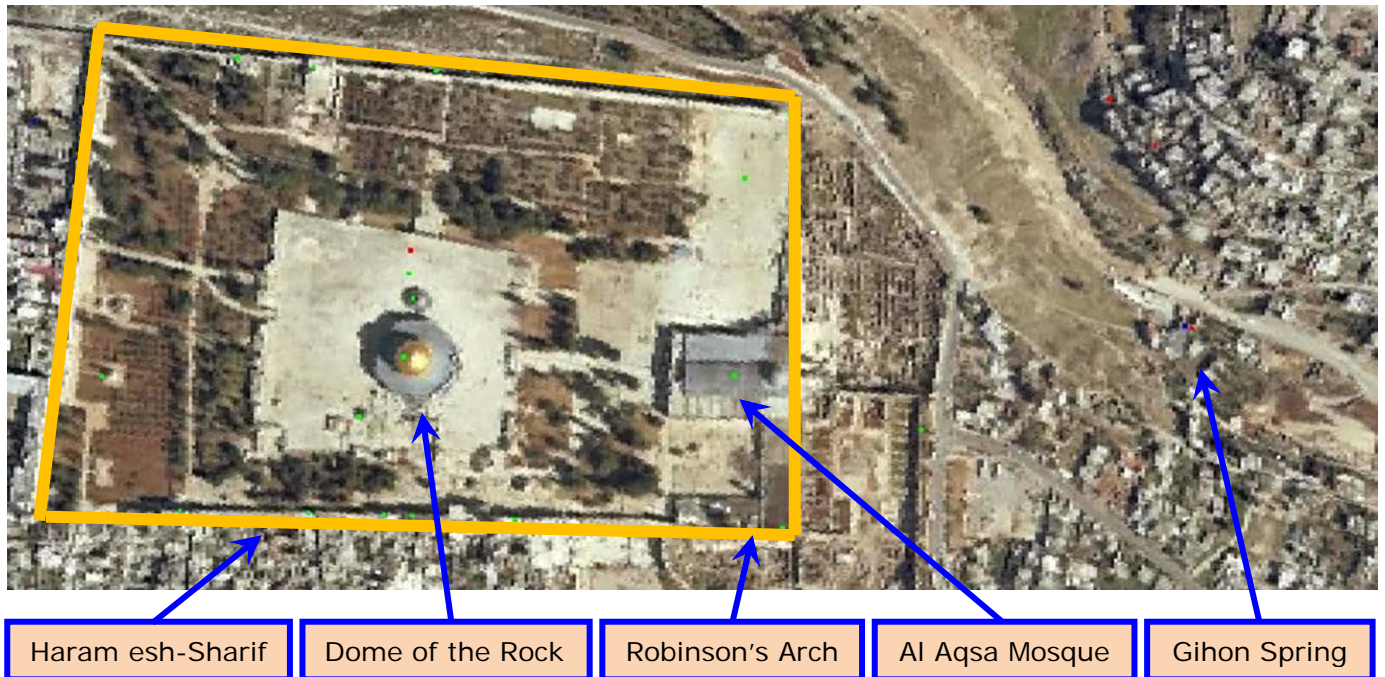


Dr. Eli Shukron with the strange floor markings

This discovery was not made near the Haram, but down inside the Gihon Spring water complex. This site has become a major tourist attraction for visitors to Jerusalem, with hundreds of thousands of tourists viewing the ancient water system every year. The article does not state how many rooms there were, but there are at least two rooms shown in the photograph and mentioned in the text. There may be more.

Digging has continued for decades at this Gihon location, and when these chambers were discovered (at a time not stated in the article) they were filled with rubble to add support to a defensive wall structure. After the chambers were cleared, it became evident that the room itself was carved out of the limestone bedrock. At some time after the room was carved from bedrock the strange cuttings in the floor were added.

I do not yet know precisely where within the Gihon complex these chambers are located, but that will become evident when these discoveries are presented and discussed in archaeological conferences around the world.



Readers familiar with the articles in the "Temple Update Index" page on the ASK website will understand the importance of this Gihon complex in regard to the Temple as well as what else may be near this location. It was Dr. Martin's understanding from the historical evidence published in his book *The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot*, that all the Israelite Temples were located above and west of this same Gihon Spring water system where numerous subterranean rooms have been uncovered. More discoveries will come from this site in the future.

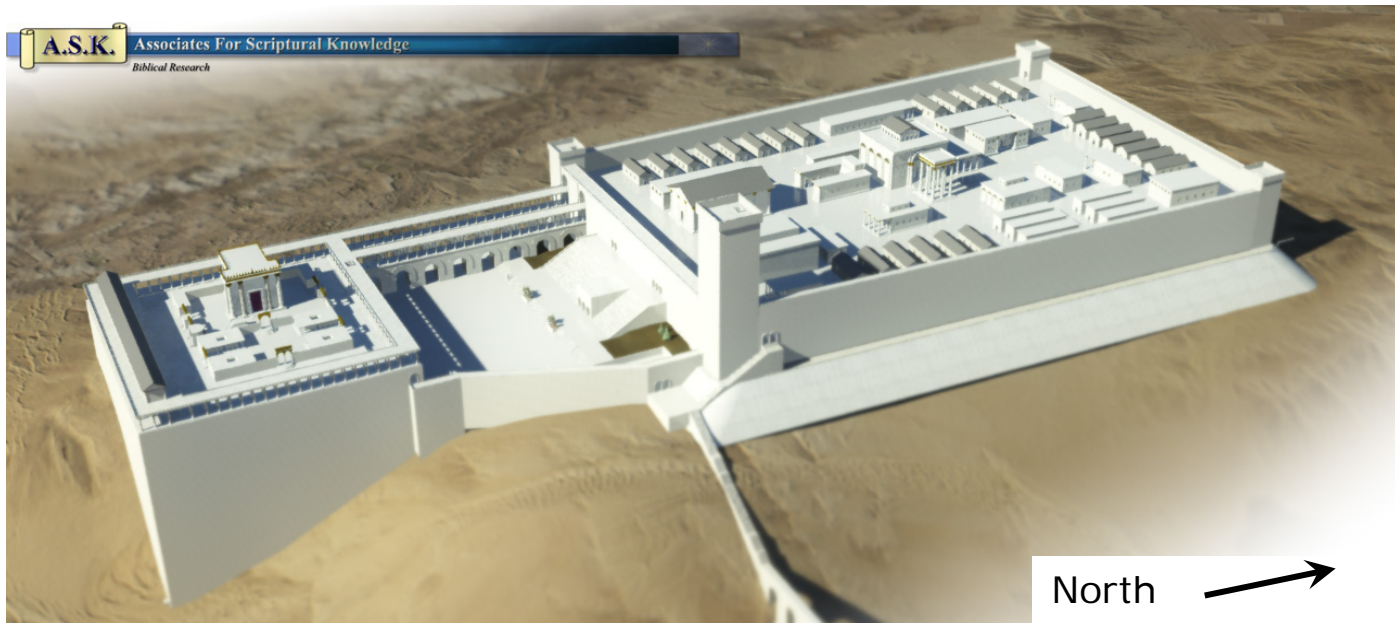
Besides the complex of water channels under the City of David (such as the old Canaanite channel, Hezekiah's Tunnel, and the newly discovered Siloam channel), and the newly discovered rooms, there are yet other tunnels or passageways that existed and history records them. Again, Josephus tells us explicitly that a tunnel existed between Fort Antonia (the Haram esh-Sharif) and the true site of the Temple above and west of the Gihon Springs:

"There was also an occult passage built for the king: it led from Antonia to the inner temple, at its eastern gate; over which [the eastern gate] he also erected for himself a tower, that he might have the opportunity of a subterranean ascent to the temple, in order to guard against any sedition which might be made by the people against their kings."

• *Antiquities of the Jews 15:424*

It is my understanding that these rooms or chambers are located south of what was originally the southern portion of the Gihon water complex just east of the loop that Hezekiah's tunnel goes around. This places the rooms in close proximity to the tombs of David, Solomon, and perhaps others. See my article "[The Location and Future Discovery of King David's Tomb.](#)"

Once you understand the proper location of the Jerusalem Temples, then the evidence for the location of these unopened tombs is clear.



The Future

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.”

• *Proverbs 25:2*

We are more than kings. We may be entering a time when fascinating discoveries such as these recent announcements, will come at an increasing pace. Discoveries about many biblical subjects, and not just about the Temple Mount and Antonia, may be forthcoming. Pray that more discoveries will be found and quickly made public so that an avalanche of information will excite the world. The Word of God does not need validation, but discoveries can attract attention and lead people to read His Word so God can act on the hearts and minds to fulfill the purpose of His will (Ephesians 1:11).

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com