

# *The Link*

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What if the ruins of  
King Solomon's Temple  
are **NOT** under the  
Dome of the Rock?

**By George Wesley Buchanan**

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# About This Issue

Tradition has it that Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque were built upon the ruins of King Solomon's Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70AD.

But what if the ruins aren't there?

That, in fact, is the conclusion drawn by Dr. George Wesley Buchanan, Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

We planned on publishing his findings as a *Link* issue several years ago, but decided against it for two reasons: First, his manuscript seemed better suited for an archaeological magazine and, secondly, we didn't want to give religious extremists another excuse for demolishing yet more Palestinian homes.

It is still true that some of the terminology found in this article might be more at home in a professional journal; the reality, however, is that few, if any, such journals would touch the subject. It's just too politically charged. *The Link*, on the other hand, does not have to worry about getting work permits or study grants.

The second reason for not publishing it is the one we debated the most. Dr. Buchanan posits that the original site of King Solomon's Temple is south of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque in an area where today Palestinian homes are being bulldozed to make way for a park over what is now considered by many archaeologists the old City of David.

Dr. Buchanan has long been a critic of Israel's colonization of Palestinian land. His hope now is that his find-

ings might deter the extremists for whom all settlements lead inexorably to tearing down the Dome and the Mosque and rebuilding Solomon's Temple. His message to them is this: don't defile these magnificent edifices; the Temple was never there.

Dr. Buchanan has presented his findings at five regional meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, and at meetings of the Society of New Testament Studies in Romania, the Near Eastern Archaeological Society in San Diego, and the University of Dundee in Scotland.

In 2011, we published Dr. Buchanan's findings in booklet form which was distributed to faculty members in 55 theological seminaries. We also placed an ad for the booklet in a major archaeological journal and received over 150 orders.

Dr. Buchanan invites our readers to contact him if they have comments or questions. He can be reached at gwesb@comcast.net.

On page 14, we note the passing of Sister Miriam Ward, RSM, a longtime member of our National Council.

On page 15, we list books and videos available at special discount prices.

A complete listing of all our resources, including books, videos, past *Links* going back to 1968, and our Public Affairs pamphlet series is found on our website, www.ameu.org.

Our cover photo is by Khaled Zighari.

**John F. Mahoney**  
Executive Director

## Timeline

1200 BC	The Jebusites, a Canaanite people, who had been in the area some 2,000 years, by now had constructed the fortress city of Jerusalem, which they called Jebus.
1000 BC	David conquers the Jebusite city and installs the altar and Tent of God at Gihon in what is now the City of David.
968-935 BC	Solomon, David's son, builds his Temple over the Gihon Spring.
586 BC	Solomon's Temple is destroyed by the Babylonians.
520-518 BC	Zerubbabel, a descendent of David, rebuilds the Second Temple.
20 BC-AD 63	Herod, king of Judaea under the Romans, builds the Antonia Fortress just north of David's City, to accommodate a legion of Roman soldiers. In the City, over Gihon Spring, he rebuilds the Temple.
AD 70	The Romans destroy Herod's Temple.
AD 691	Completion of The Dome of The Rock over the Antonia Fortress.

## In Search of King Solomon's Temple

By George Wesley Buchanan

**I**t was August 2000. I was standing alone in the Kidron Valley at the edge of Jerusalem, gazing at the long, steep western bank of the valley, at the place where the Spring of Siloam used to pour out tons of water each minute into Hezekiah's Tunnel. See Fig. 1 on following page.

Suddenly, I remembered Ezekiel 47 and realized that the temple at Jerusalem had to have been located right there near the Spring of Siloam and not up the hill in the heavily walled area about 600 feet to the north where the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque are now located.

This was important. I had just come from examining the ruins of the Tower of Siloam, about 500 feet to the south and had not foreseen this experience as part of my itinerary.

The reason this was so surprising was that the Dome of the Rock, also known as the Haram al-Sharif or Noble Sanctuary, has been believed for more than 1,000 years to have been located on the very place where Solomon's temple was originally located. It is the oldest extant Islamic building in the world, whose construction was completed in 691 AD.

There are ultra-Orthodox Jews today who are intent on rebuilding the temple, even if that means destroying Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock. This makes this 45-acre plot of land arguably the most explosive tinderbox in the world.

Today this area is part of Upper Jerusalem where the ancient places are held to be located, as shown in Fig. 2 on page 5.

The English scholar, Dame Kathleen Kenyon was a leading archaeologist of the 20th century. Most of her work was done in the Fertile Crescent, but the last years of her life were spent in

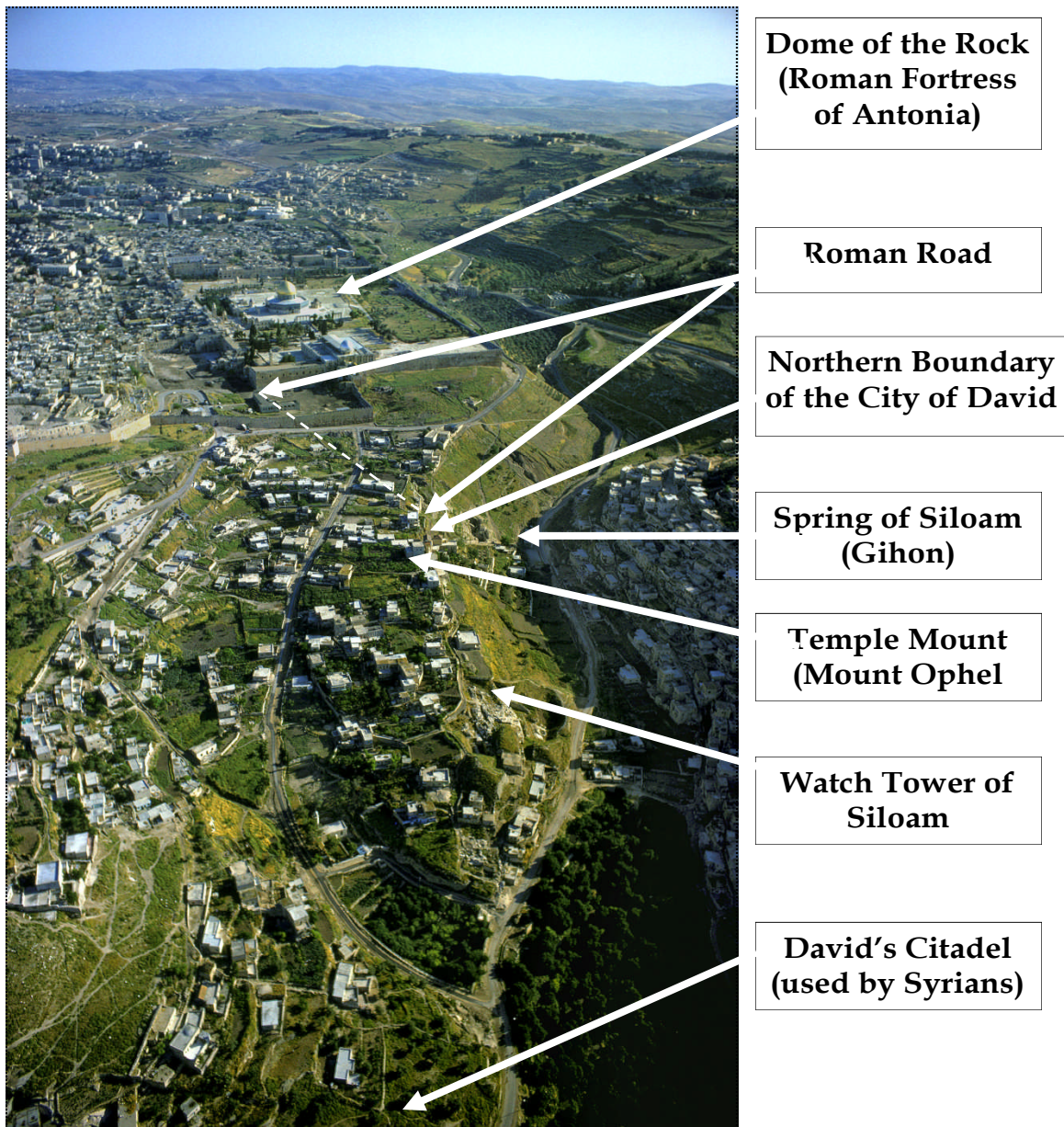


Figure 1

Photo credit: Rohr Productions

Jerusalem. She made some important discoveries. She learned that before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, the center of Jerusalem was only that small stone ridge on the west bank of the Kidron Valley. She also realized that the huge Spring of Siloam, called the Gihon Spring in biblical times, was the real reason that there ever was a city in that place. It became famous because the entire city had running water three thousand years ago. Kenyon shocked the scholarly world with her publication in 1962, but soon all scholars agreed with her that this little ridge was the City

of Zion that David renamed the City of David.

After her publication Hershel Shanks, Esq., who had founded and always edited the famous Biblical Archaeological Review (BAR), said: "Everything you ever knew about Jerusalem is wrong" (BAR 25.6 [1999], 20-29 and 30-35). It was clear that Kenyon's insights had changed our knowledge of the City of Jerusalem which, for more than one thousand years, had been understood as shown in the sketch in Figure 2 on the opposite page.

The Kidron Valley where I was standing, on the other hand, has not been well developed since AD 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed. Some maps of Jerusalem do not include it at all, even after Kathleen Kenyon's claim, more than 40 years ago, that this small unattractive ridge was the entire City of David before AD 70.

I have lived in Jerusalem at different times and was there in 1967, just a few years after Kenyon exposed a part of the Jebusite wall that surrounded Jerusalem when David took the city near the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC. From this and other archaeological finds Kenyon concluded that the City of David excluded all of the popular Upper City of Jerusalem. It consisted only of this 10-acre ridge alongside of the Kidron Valley.

I agreed with Kenyon and went down to the Kidron Valley to see some of the ruins for myself.

I did not come to Jerusalem to see the City of David, but I had learned that archaeologists had only recently discovered a wall nearby that was 5,000 years old, and that enabled them to identify some ruins as those belonging to the Tower of Siloam reported in Luke 13. My purpose in coming to Jerusalem was to examine these ruins on the western bank of the Kidron Valley.

The ruins had been first uncovered in 1920 by the French archaeologist Raymond Weill, a member of the first Jewish archaeological initiative in Jerusalem. At that time, he did not know what they were, listing them only as "a circular structure." When the archaeologists Eli Shukron of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Ronny Reich of the University of Haifa discovered a wall more than 5,000 years old that had once circumscribed the ridge that forms the western bank of the Kidron Valley, they

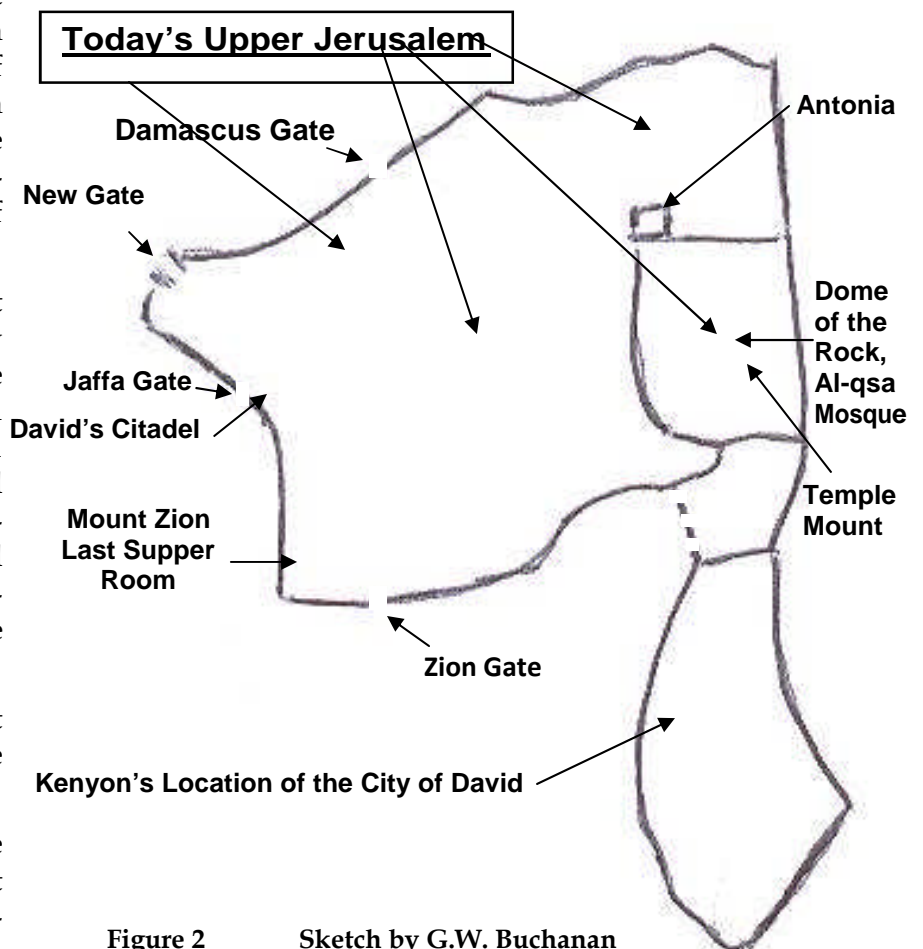


Figure 2 Sketch by G.W. Buchanan

**The above sketch is to help orient readers familiar with present-day Jerusalem. Note:**

1. David's Citadel or Tower, believed to be the site of King David's palace, is located close to the Jaffa Gate.
2. Mount Zion is the tallest point of the Upper City.
3. The room where Jesus conducted the Last Supper is across the road from the place we had called Mount Zion.
4. The Temple Mount where tradition has long held that all three Temples of Jerusalem had been erected on the large heavily-walled area where today the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque are stationed, the area that Muslims refer to as the Haram al-Sharif.
5. Just off the northwest corner of the Haram al-Sharif to the north are the ruins of a small building that has been called the Roman Fortress of Antonia. The entire city of Jerusalem is called both "Zion" and "the City of David."

realized that this circular structure, with its interior diameter of 19 feet, constituted the remains of the Tower of Siloam. The old wall made the identification certain.

But it was not the old wall that held my attention. It was the Tower of Siloam. The only time that tower is actually mentioned in the New Testament is in Luke 13:1-5. Jesus was being questioned about the divine justice involved in the recent deaths in Jerusalem; the text reads:

They were going along at that time when some of them mentioned the Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices. He answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were the worst criminals of all Galileans, because they suffered this way? No, but I tell you, if you do not repent, all of you will likewise perish.

Or those 18 on whom the Tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you repent, all of you will likewise perish. "

This text was preserved in two chreias—a literary form used *only* to remind readers of something *they already knew*. Chreias were just reminders. The Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices are nowhere else mentioned in scripture or surrounding literature. The 18 who were killed when the Tower of Siloam fell are mentioned nowhere else. Both events occurred around Jerusalem, not far from one another, during Jesus' ministry, when Pilate was the Roman governor (26-36 AD).

We don't know all the details: Who were these Galileans? Who were the 18 on whom the tower fell? Were they both involved in an insurrection against the Romans, of which there were many? The details aren't given, because they didn't need to be given. It was that day's "hot news." These reports were written down at a time when the people who read the chreias knew the details, but not everyone in the world knew them. These lines were written for contemporary local people.

Now, 2,000 years later, we can see the connection between the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifice in the temple and the 18 who were killed when the nearby tower fell on them.

The ruins of the tower have been discovered inside the City of David, near the old wall and about 500 feet south of the Spring of Siloam, confirming validity of Luke 13:1-5. I had come to see the ruins of the tower, but I was suddenly distracted by the realization that the temple had to be located very close to the spring and the tower; see Fig. 1.

After viewing the footings of the tower, I stood in the Kidron Valley, just 500 feet north of the tower, and looked at the area where the Spring of Siloam ran into Hezekiah's Tunnel, the 1,750-foot aqueduct carved around 701 BC to bring water to Jerusalem. Suddenly, I remembered a passage in Ezekiel 47: 1: "Look! The water was pouring out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east." That's when the insight came to me: Follow the water!

I knew the rest of the Ezekiel account. It told how the water ran all the way down the streambed to the Dead Sea, where it sweetened the salty water of the Dead Sea, so that fish could survive along the western bank, all the way from Ain Eglaim to Ain Gedi. These were the two springs on the western shore of the Dead Sea. The streambed began at the Kidron Valley and followed all the way to the Dead Sea, just as Ezekiel said.

I knew at once that Ezekiel was describing a situation with which he was familiar, and he had described it accurately. The water from the two springs near the Dead Sea would have been supplemented by the huge addition of water from the Spring of Siloam in Ezekiel's day. Ezekiel said this was possible because of the water that flowed out from under the temple. This meant the temple had to have been just above that Spring of Siloam that ran under the temple threshold. The text shows that the temple and the Tower of Siloam were not more than a city block apart from one another.

I realized that there was more to this story than I could see at once, but it meant that the temple could not have been on the dry hill about 600 feet to the north that had been called the Temple Mount. The water that supplied that unit came only from the 37 cisterns in the ground under the buildings. That is when my research began.

My next step was to search the scriptures for more references to the spring and the temple.

## Biblical Evidence

The first tent (tabernacle) of God that David brought up to Jerusalem was placed right there, near the spring. Events that occurred while David was dying show where he had the first tent installed. When Adonijah was celebrating his succession to the throne at Ain Rogel—about 600 feet south of Ain Gihon—Solomon, Nathan, and the priest Zadok were gathered at Ain Gihon. Ain Gihon was the earliest name given to the spring that was later called the Spring of Siloam.

While there, “Zadok, the priest, took the horn of oil from the tent”—that is the tent of the Lord that David established for the chest containing the covenant between Yehowah and his people. He placed the tent adjacent to the altar near Ain Gihon, and Solomon later had the temple built at the same location. This location is confirmed by other texts.

The temple was the place where “Yehowah sits over the flood,” where he is “enthroned as king for the age” (Ps 29:10). “The voice of Yehowah is over the water; the God of glory roars; Yehowah over much water.”

The flood was the huge fountain of water pouring tons of water through Hezekiah’s tunnel every minute under the temple. Hezekiah’s Tunnel is 1,750 feet long, about three feet wide, and roughly six feet tall. (Fifty years ago the water in that tunnel was between waist and shoulder deep.) This prompted the Psalmist to write, “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling place of the Most High” (Ps 46:5). “The dwelling place of the Most High” was the temple positioned near the streams that “make glad the city of God.” The City of God, of course, was the City of David, the little ridge alongside of the Kidron Valley, where water flows freely from the spring.

One of the factors Zechariah anticipated in the future restoration, when Yehowah would become king over all the land, was having “the water of life flowing out from Jerusalem” (Zech 14:8-9). The Jerusalem he pictured was Zion, near the Gihon Spring (Siloam)—not the hill to the north that later became Herod’s city.

Similarly, in the New Testament, when the seer of

the Book of Revelation looked forward to a new Jerusalem, he anticipated a heavenly city that had come to earth from God in heaven, prepared as a bride for a new wedding contract. In this new city one of the basic descriptions was, “The river of the water of life going out from the throne of God” (Rev 22:1). The Throne of God was one of the names given for the temple at Zion. It was known both in Greek and Hebrew.

Those who had come up out of great tribulation would be before the “throne of God,” where “the Lamb would lead them to the springs of the water of life” (Rev 7:15, 17). These “springs of water” were Ain Gihon and Ain Rogel, the two springs at the base of the temple mount in Zion, where the Gihon Spring streamed from the altar of the temple down the Kidron Valley to the south. The seer related the temple to the area near the Gihon Spring, the spring that was later called Siloam.

## Ernest Martin’s Contribution

I had not yet begun to study the Roman historian Josephus, the rabbinic literature, the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, or other historical reports when I saw advertised a new book by Dr. Ernest Martin, “The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot” (Portland: ASK Publications, 2000).

I had known Ernest Martin for about 30 years. From 1960 to 1972 he taught history, theology and elementary meteorology at the Ambassador College in Bricket Wood, England, where he became Dean of Faculty. In 1961, he visited Jerusalem where he met Israeli archeologist Benjamin Mazar and his son, Ory. It was Ory who told him that both he and his father believed that the Temple of Solomon was located on the Ophel mount to the north of the original Mount Zion.

Between 1969 and 1973 Ambassador College partnered with Hebrew University in Israel, providing millions of dollars to undertake a five year archaeological excavation near the Western Wall of the Temple Mount.

After I had read about half-way through his excellent book, I phoned Dr. Martin. I was delighted to learn that he reached some of the same conclusions that I had, beginning from a different perspective. I

agreed with him that Solomon's temple had to have been west of the Spring of Siloam, rather than up on the Dome of the Rock. I also thought David's altar and tent had to have been there.

At that point, however, I thought that Herod's temple was probably inside Herod's city, and I told him that. He said, "Read the rest of the book," and I did. He had collected literary evidence, both contemporary and later Jewish, Christian and Muslim literature, and had proved that Herod's temple was also down, behind the Spring of Siloam.

I should have realized that at once, but I did not. As soon as the City of David is known as only that little ridge, it becomes clear that all of the temples belonged there. The Dome of the Rock area is out of bounds; see Fig. 1.

I sent Martin the results of my research at that point, and we were both thrilled at the notion of working together to bring this insight to the attention of scholars. We planned to read papers together at academic meetings and publish together.

Our first step was to offer papers at the next Middle Atlantic States regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Baltimore. He would present the archaeological evidence, and I would give the biblical evidence for the true location of the temple.

I called him to make continued plans, but even though he had four telephone lines and I called them all, I received no response. I sent him e-mail messages, but he did not reply. So I offered a paper at that meeting alone.

Martin, I learned, had died. Later, his assistant, David Sielaff, who has proofread several of the papers that I delivered before academic meetings and later published, accompanied me to Jerusalem to revisit the relevant area. We were both invited to speak at the University of Dundee, Scotland graduate school.

Immediately after Easter, 2007, I went again to Jerusalem and spent several days taking pictures, checking distances and measurements, comparing the work of archaeologists with the facts on the ground and the available literature and history of the area.

It is normal for people to be slow in giving up old

notions even after they have new data. Kenyon herself continued to think that David's Citadel was near the Jaffa Gate. But Mount Zion, David's Citadel, and the Temple Mount all belonged inside that little ridge of land that was the City of David. This makes it necessary to start all over again and reexamine the discoveries of archaeologists and the literature related to Jerusalem in order to learn what was told about these units in biblical times.

## Changes with History

Part of the reason that it took so many years for an archaeologist like Kenyon to recognize the importance of that small body of land as the earlier famous City of David is that it does not appear very attractive today. It has endured several changes over the centuries.

The Israelites captured it from the Jebusites sometime around 1000 BC, when David was king. During the eighth century BC, Hezekiah built his huge tunnel from the spring to a pool in the Tyropoeon Valley. During the Maccabean period, the Syrians took control of the citadel, the point from which it controlled the entire city. Jews hated that intrusion, and as soon as the Hasmonean, Simon, gained freedom from Syria in 142 BC, he spent three years removing the entire hill, down to bed rock, dumping the rocks and soil into the Tyropoeon Valley and filling in the canyon between Zion and the ridge to the west, leaving only a tunnel where the canyon had formerly been. The tall Mount Zion that had been the tallest part of the ridge and city was removed and the area that was formerly Mount Zion became the lower city. In AD 70, the Roman soldiers destroyed this city so completely that no one would ever realize that a city had been there. And after the Bar Kochba Revolt, the Roman emperor, Hadrian, completed the desolation in 135 AD by ordering that the city become a place where the trash and garbage from the upper city would be thrown.

Back when the Jebusites first moved into this area, however, they recognized its potential and developed it wonderfully. From nature they inherited a small, 14<sup>th</sup> century BC stone ridge on the Kidron Valley side, and a perpendicular sinkhole, about 35 feet deep between the spring and the center of the ridge. They deepened the cliff on the northern border to

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## Ernest Martin's Drawing of Herod's Temple

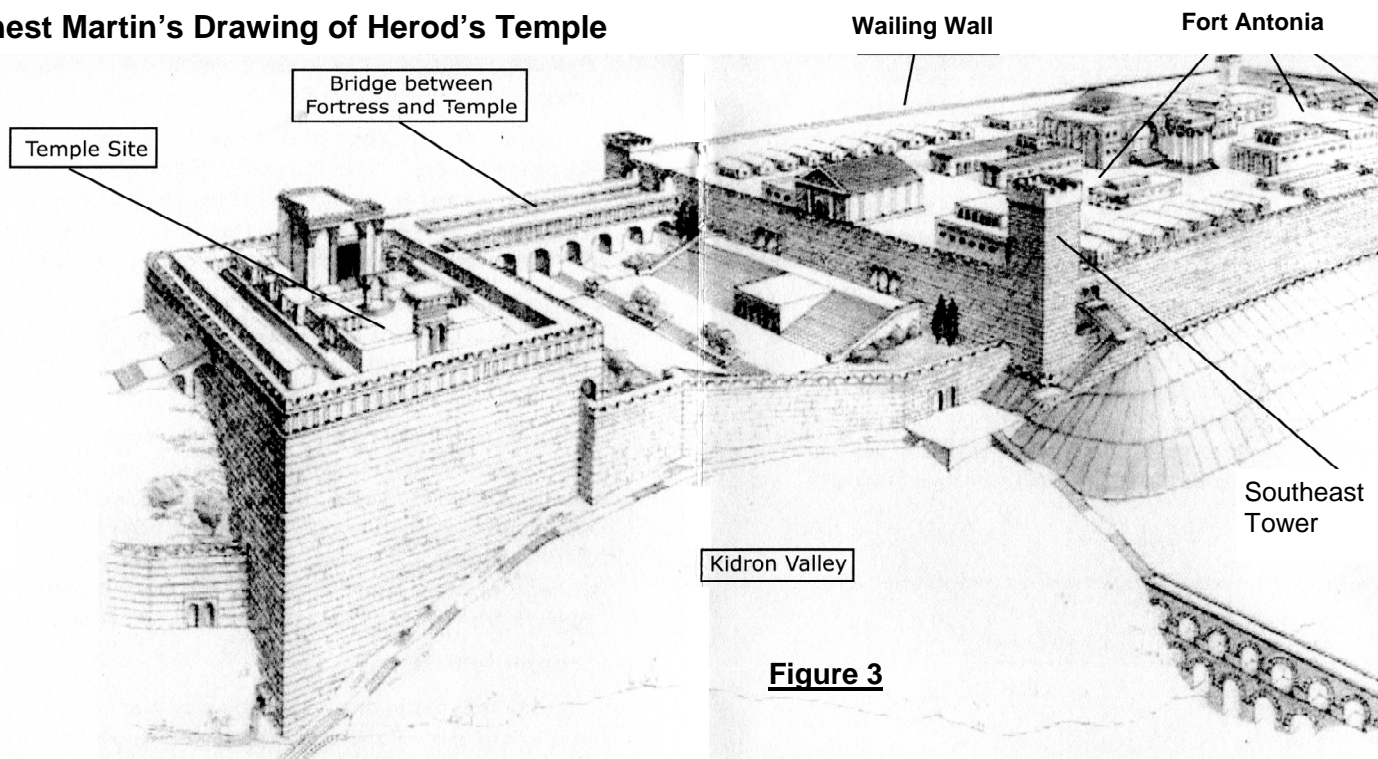


Figure 3

The drawing above shows the design that Martin directed about 15 years ago. It is generally valid, but I am sure if Martin were alive he would make some of the following interpretations and corrections.

In the picture of the Antonia, that tall tower is correctly placed on the SE corner of the Haram. To the left of the tower is the southern wall between the Antonia and the temple, showing one set of doors and the stairs. The wailing wall was the western wall. The long wall with the tower on one corner is the eastern wall on the Kidron Valley side. The Antonia had towers on all four corners. The one shown was 105 feet tall. The other three that are not shown were each 75 feet tall. The walls around the Antonia were 60 feet tall.

Martin's picture shows the temple site and the space between the temple and the Antonia. Instead of two bridges connecting the temple to the Antonia, as shown, there was one bridge 45 feet wide that was supported with two rows of pillars. This drawing does not show the 200 foot altitude difference between the ground level of the Antonia and the ground level of the temple area. Nor does it show the 500-600 foot distance between the temple and the Antonia. The temple would have been placed at the eastern end of the temple site rather than the western. At the western end was probably Herod's large altar. It was square, 75 x 75 feet in size and 22½ feet tall. Herod's temple was correctly shown as a very tall building, 15 stories high, taller than the surrounding walls.

make it a deep moat with a wall to the south. The spring offered enough water to keep this moat filled.

According to the Greek historian Strabo (64/63 BC–24AD), the Maccabees made this moat 60 feet deep. The Jebusites raised walls 105 feet tall on all three sides of the ridge. Then they filled in the spaces between the walls and the ridge with rocks and stones, making the entire city one solid wall.

This was the foundation that the author of Hebrews 1-12 described to his monastery brothers when he reminded them, "You have come to Zion, City of the God of life, heavenly Jerusalem." Zion, he said, was the "City that had the foundations, whose

builder and maker was God." What other city was artificially constructed on a foundation such as this?

The Jebusites built on the floor of this tall, solid foundation. There was no source of water on the top of that foundation, but they had plans to correct that problem. Between the spring and the ridge there was a deep, natural, perpendicular sink hole, about 35 feet deep and big enough for a person to crawl through. They dug a deep tunnel through that rocky ridge from the floor of the city to the top of the sink hole. Then they dug another tunnel at the bottom of the sink hole that connected it to the spring that had poured out all that water into the Kidron Valley. They

diverted the spring so that the water would flow up the shaft, through the tunnel, to bring fresh water up to the floor of the city, from which it could be piped to cisterns wherever they needed it, with the surplus flowing down to the Dead Sea.

The sinkhole is now called “Warren’s Shaft,” named after the English archaeologist Charles Warren who discovered it in the 1860s. People who have walked through the upper tunnel and have seen “Warren’s Shaft” usually doubt at first that there could ever be a spring with enough power to force water all the way up from the spring to the top of the tunnel; see Fig. 4.

That is the normal first response. But the literature is consistent. There was water brought up to the floor of that city. That is because the huge spring that poured out tons of water every minute was a siphon spring. Of all the springs in the world there are only 30, about 2 per cent, that are siphon springs to varying degrees. In these cases there is somewhere upstream a subterranean cavern, and it is connected downstream by a “pipe, crack, or tunnel” that is roughly an upside-down U shape. The water feeds into the cavern slowly. Once the water level reaches the top of the upside-down U, the water is siphoned out of the cavern until it reaches the inlet that breaks the suction. This was a huge spring, strong enough to fill Warren’s Shaft and bring water up to the top of the ridge.

Gushers, like Old Faithful in Wyoming and the Spring of Siloam at Zion, are related to siphon springs and are not restricted in the extent of their flow to the immediately surrounding sea level. Anyone who has seen Old Faithful knows that water can be forced to a great height, regardless of the local sea level—not only by steam but also by siphon power.

To be able to force water to the top of the ridge, there would have to be an airtight, watertight system, as there obviously is for a siphon spring. And we know from Aristetas, the emissary of King Ptolemy to

Palestine in the third/second century BC, that there was an “inexhaustible” spring water system, gushing into the temple for sacrifices at the City of David. This report is supported by the scriptural report of Hezekiah’s tunnel. When it was constructed, Hezekiah had to cut off “the upper outlet of the water of the Gihon” (2Chron 32:30). There was both an upper outlet and a lower outlet for the Gihon Spring before Hezekiah constructed the tunnel. The upper outlet took the water up Warren’s Shaft and the Jebusite tunnel to the top of the ridge. The lower tunnel, now called the Tunnel of Siloam, ran along the bottom of the ridge from the spring to the south end of the ridge. Heze-



Figure 4

Warren’s Shaft

Source: G. W. Buchanan

kiah planned his tunnel so that the water would run down to it and avoid the other lower tunnel, but he had to block off the upper outlet that had been bringing water up to the temple area.

The sacrifices at the temple could never have depended on rain water cisterns, such as those 37 cisterns established at the site of today’s Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. Aristetas said that the water system was under the temple and that it was “indescribably” well developed, with lead-lined, plastered cisterns, and countless pipes. Running wa-

ter could be heard underground even from the surface, directing water to the various places the city needed. Aristes further explained how the landscape of the temple area was designed with paved stones and gutters to carry away the blood washed down from the sacrifices.

From the Book of Enoch, written between 200 BC and 100 BC, the prophet claimed to have seen the holy mountain with a stream that flowed underneath that mountain toward the south (1Enoch 26: 2-3). There is no such stream flowing underneath the Dome of the Rock. Hezekiah's tunnel, however, does flow south-west. The holy mountain was obviously the Temple Mount, located just above Ain Gihon. This is the location of which Ezekiel spoke, where the stream that flowed underneath the mountain also flowed underneath the temple near Siloam. This suggests that part of the temple was built over the spring or else the temple was so close to the spring that water could be directed from it into the temple itself.

The temple scroll gives directions for establishing a place near the temple where priests could bathe and change into priestly garments before participating in the temple services. This bathhouse required flowing water with a canal around it so the bath water, like the blood, could flow away into a drain that escaped into the ground (1 Qumran Temple 32: 11-15; part of the Dead Sea Scrolls). This mixture should not be touched before it vanished into the ground, because it would be defiled with blood. Rabbis said it would flow into the brook Kidron (Mishnah Middoth 3:2).

The more superlatives I read in biblical, rabbinic and apocalyptic literature as well as secular sources from Rome and Egypt, the more I realized that, without the huge Gihon Spring, there could have been no Jerusalem. There is nothing in that little ridge by itself that could have become Zion and the City of David or could have inspired their creation.

It is true that the land between Egypt and Syria is an important land bridge that almost demanded that some city be placed somewhere in the area, but a harbor area would have satisfied that need better than Jerusalem. That little ridge was difficult to defend. It was lower than surrounding hills. The city had to be designed so that its floor was 50 feet higher than the bottom of the Kidron Valley. That means it had to

have walls that were 105 feet tall to protect the city. Not any of the following—the little city of Zion, the suburb that became the upper city of Jerusalem, or the hill that became the Roman fortress—was topographically or geographically suitable for a large city without the presence of that huge spring that the Jebusites developed into the famous city with running water 3,000 years ago.

David was interested in confiscating Zion for his capital city because the Jebusites had already made it famous.

It was the huge siphon Gihon Spring that made all of this difficult construction worthwhile.

The Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin noticed that there was a great deal of agreement among the sources regarding the necessity of flowing water for sacrifices, but he evidently did not think of all the ramifications related to his discovery. He continued to think of the Haram Al-Sharif as the Temple Mount, where there is no water flowing. All of this literature shows that the Temple Mount is really Mount Ophel, near the Spring of Siloam.

Still, we must ask the question: Is there any evidence to show that the Temple Mount is under al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock?

## **The Antonia**

When Herod became king (around 20 BC), the Romans took control of Palestine. More than a century earlier, the Syrians had strengthened David's citadel and used it to subdue the Jews of the City of David. Herod wanted to make the city subject to the Romans in the same way the Syrians had done more than a hundred years before, but the citadel was no longer there. Mount Zion itself was gone, so Herod was not motivated to reestablish all of that, but he wanted to control the City of David. He turned his attention to the Baris, a fortress that the Maccabees had constructed, that was located in a better place and was much stronger than David's Citadel. The Baris was in a choice position for controlling the city. It was about 200 feet north of the northern border of the City of David at the ground level.

Herod named his fortress after his patron Mark Antony, and it was one of his crowning achievements, reflecting the grandeur of his native ability.

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Much larger than the Syrian citadel had ever been, its location, however, could not provide fresh water as Ain Rogel had supplied for David's citadel, or the Spring of Siloam that supplied water for the temple. So either the Maccabeans or Herod had 37 cisterns installed to provide water for the troops. This was the normal solution for fortresses without direct water supply from springs or underground water veins.

The Antonia had all of the necessities of a city and resembled a palace in spaciousness. It had numerous rooms and apartments of every kind, including cloisters, baths, and large courtyards for the accommodation of troops. That meant that the troops were quartered there. Josephus said that the Romans "always" kept a whole legion of soldiers there.

Josephus also noted that when Herod built the Antonia he used stones in the walls that were 30 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 7 ½ feet deep. Most scholars used to think Josephus had exaggerated the facts, but that is true no longer. Since the Israeli archaeologist Benjamin Mazar's excavation, these stones are there for everyone to see, precisely the size the Roman historian described. One is even 42 ½ feet long. *Josephus described these stones not as those to be used for the temple, but for the Roman fortress.*

A wide bridge joined the Antonia to the temple, and stairs led *down* to this bridge from the Antonia that enabled Roman guards to come *down* the stairs and cross the bridge to the temple to prevent any kind of rebellion, such as the one that occurred when Pilate mixed the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. These were the stairs that went under Robinson's arch at the southwestern corner of the Haram. The Romans needed troops to deal with all of the militant resistance in Jerusalem. They were not in Jerusalem to defend it from outside enemies. They *were* the outside enemies. They were the invaders who had entered the area and occupied the country by force. Jews resented their presence and would have driven them out if they had not been securely defended both by the Roman troops and the fortress.

When the Haram was thought to be the Temple Mount, the Sisters of Zion, a Catholic order of nuns who excavated the small building just off the northwest corner of the Haram, declared that their little building was the Roman Fortress. But it could not

hold 500 troops, much less a whole legion (5,000-6,000), as the Romans always kept in the Antonia. It was also at the same level as the Haram, so the troops could not have gone *down* from there to the Haram. There is no room between that little building and the Haram for a bridge and road to have been built. The only sizes, descriptions, and locations that fit the literature are those that place the temple behind the Spring of Siloam and the Roman fortress 600 feet to the north and more than 200 feet higher in altitude.

From the death of Herod until the end of the Jewish-Roman war in Jerusalem (AD 70), thousands of Jews fought thousands of Romans. In AD 66, Jews grew so skillful, militarily, that they massacred the Romans in the Antonia and took over the fortress. The Romans brought in four legions of foot soldiers and hundreds of cavalry and spent 4 years in siege to regain control of the Antonia. The Antonia is the only place in Jerusalem where that many soldiers could have been quartered.

Moreover, archaeologists have discovered no ruins in the Haram that might have belonged to the temple. Instead they have found an image of a soldier on a horse, a brick with the mark of the 10<sup>th</sup> legion on it, and an image of Mars, the Roman god of war.

They have also found in the Haram an inscription once carved over an arch, honoring Titus, Vespasian, and probably Silva for their leadership in the war of AD 66-72. That was confirmed by a fragment of a column found honoring the same three leaders. This would not have been made until the war was over in AD 72.

Another inscription that was intended to fit on the interior wall of the Haram honored Hadrian, the Roman emperor who defeated Bar Kochba in the revolt that ended in 135 AD. The temple was one of the earliest buildings destroyed in the City of David (around AD 70). One of these inscriptions was made and installed at least 65 years after the temple had been destroyed. They could not have belonged to a non-existent temple. They were only appropriate in a Roman fortress, the Antonia. In response to the question, "Is there any evidence that the Haram was ever the Temple Mount?", the answer is clearly, "No!"

After the Romans finally regained control of the Antonia, the war was nearly over. The Jews fled to

the temple and set it on fire. At that time Josephus said the Jewish general, Simon, and a few of his soldiers fled underground. Then Josephus said, after they were sufficiently starved, Simon reappeared above ground and surrendered *at the very place where the temple had formerly stood*. This is the most precise location of the temple that is reported. Simon had obviously been hiding in that tunnel that normally brought water up to the City of David and the temple.

What happened to the water in that tunnel? That is easily explained. With thousands of Roman soldiers in the Haram, Pilate knew he could not rely on 37 cisterns to provide all the water required, so he brought water from south of Bethlehem through qanats and pipes. The pipe and aqueduct system that Pilate confiscated for only Roman use was probably constructed initially by the Hasmonean leader, Simon, when he removed Mount Zion, and filled in the canyon between the City of David and the Tyropoean Valley with a tunnel and surrounding soil from Mount Zion. This was an enormous and judicious undertaking that was well designed.

There were two reasons why the Jews were angry with Pilate for undertaking his water project: 1) He probably took the running water from the city and diverted it all to the Antonia, and 2) He used money that was stored in the tomb of David to pay for the construction. Recently, Israeli archaeologist Amihai Mazar has traced that aqueduct to Jerusalem and conjectured that it entered the Haram over Wilson's Arch.

During the last year of the war of AD 66-70, there was a serious drought in Jerusalem. The Roman historian Cassius Dio said that all of the cisterns in the Haram were dry, and water had to be hauled to other fortresses in the city (Book 65). And Josephus said that even the Spring of Siloam stopped flowing, but the Romans had water when no one else did. That means that the people of the city no longer benefited from the aqueduct from Bethlehem. Romans had not only enough water for themselves but, according to Josephus, also for their animals and their gardens. They were supplied by the water that was piped in from south of Bethlehem. That is why the tunnel was dry for Simon to escape temporarily from the burning temple.

## How Did the Confusion Occur?

How did the location of the temple get confused? Why did Christians, Jews, and Muslims not realize that it had really been behind the Spring of Siloam? How did they lose their bearings about this area in the first place? Martin found the answer to that question. It all happened rather accidentally—and reasonably.

After the soldiers had destroyed the City of David, as Titus ordered, the only clean place to rebuild was in the Upper City around the Haram. The City of David was a garbage heap. Jerusalem continued to be an important city both for Jews and Christians, and later for Muslims, but no one was attracted by the trash heap that the Roman soldiers had left. They did not try to rebuild the temple; they built churches and monasteries nearby in places that were easy to construct. This was in and around the former Roman fortress, the Antonia, and the Upper City of Jerusalem.

At first the religious locations were not called the temple. They were places where Jesus or Mohammed had ascended into heaven, but people still knew where the temple had been. When, in AD 638, the Muslim leader, Omar, wanted to know where the temple used to be, so that he could build a Muslim institution at the same site, the Christian leader, Patriarch Sophronius, took him to a place near the Gihon Spring. Omar was not impressed with the trash heap, but he found some stones that had been part of the temple. These he carried up to the clean area that had been the Antonia and there he had the Al-Aqsa Mosque constructed in a clean place where worshippers could face Mecca when they prayed, and at the same time pray through the temple area. People at that time still knew where the temple had been. Later Omar allowed 70 Jewish families to settle at the south end of the City of David, because they wanted to be near the temple and the spring.

The Persians ruled Jerusalem for a short time, and during that time they, too, allowed Jews to begin to rebuild their temple there, west of the spring. But the building stopped when the Persian rule ended. Jews remained there until the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when an earthquake made the spring water brackish, so they moved away. By the time they returned after the Crusades the Muslims and Christians had begun to think

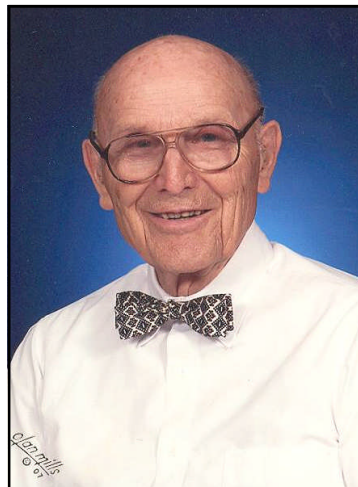
that their religious institutions in the Antonia were in the temple area, and returning Jews accepted that conclusion. No one has bothered to examine that conclusion in relationship to the literature and the topography of the land until recently. But now we know better.

## Looking Past the Past

Two thousand years ago this Roman fortress, the Antonia, was a despised area for Jews. Orthodox Jews would not willingly enter that area. Archaeologists have recently uncovered a large *mikwah* or ritual bath in front of the area. It was placed there so that if any Jew was required to enter the Antonia, he or she could immediately be cleansed afterward from that defilement as soon as he or she exited the area. Jesus was taken by force into the fortress to be tried before Pilate, but his apostles were not allowed to follow because it was Passover, and they would not dare defile themselves.

It is because of the mistaken notion that the Haram was the former temple area that Jews today come from all over the world by the thousands to worship at the western wall. They believe that God will listen to their prayers, because his presence is just on the other side of the wall. Now, the evidence informs us that on the other side of that wall dwelt Mars, the Roman god of war. ■

*George Wesley Buchanan, Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C., is the author of 19 books and 61 articles on both testaments of scripture, theology, and rabbinic literature. He is also on the Editorial Advisory Board of the Biblical Archaeological Review.*



## In Memory Of Sister Miriam Ward, RSM



She was "a treasure," according to Sen. Patrick Leahy, who had her as a teacher in high school.

Sister Miriam—it was always Sister Miriam or Miriam despite her PhD—also taught Religious Studies at Trinity College in Burlington, Vermont where, it was said, no classroom could contain her clamor for justice.

She founded Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel and for many of her 88 years she penned voluminous letters and essays to editors and public officials. She did not hide her light under a bushel.

When we invited her to join our National Council, she joyfully accepted—but with one request: Would you be able to add RSM after my name?

Sister Miriam died on Jan. 17 of this year, one month shy of her 70th anniversary as a member of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, a group of Catholic women who vow to serve the less fortunate.

*John Mahoney*

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