

JOSEPH PATRICH

# The Jerusalem Temple and the Temple Mount

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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Joseph Patrich

# The Jerusalem Temple and the Temple Mount

Collected Essays

Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

My occupation in the study of the Second Temple and the Temple Mount began more than forty years ago. It was never motivated by any messianic aspiration that a new Temple should be rebuilt. My interest was purely academic; I approached it as I would any other ancient temple, addressing all available sources of knowledge – literary and archaeological. The literary sources pertaining to the period at our concern – from the time of its restoration in year 538 BCE, to its destruction in year 70 CE – are variegated: Jewish, Pagan and Christian, written in a variety of languages: Greek, Latin, Aramaic and Hebrew. The archaeological remains are quite few, since the Temple itself was long destroyed; only the impressive remains of the walls of the Herodian precinct survive, but, surprisingly, also many underground water cisterns; and their story is very telling.

Chronologically, my research on the Temple and its precinct can be divided into two stages.<sup>1</sup> My first paper on this topic (Chapter XV, first published in 1982), was an outcome of a seminar course on Talmudic Archaeology given by my teacher Prof. Lee Israel Levine; this was my first introduction to this fascinating field, that later nourished many other chapters of the book, as well as my academic work at large. The second paper, published in 1986 (Chapter XIII), was the outcome of a fruitful discourse with the late Prof. Yigael Yadin, on the occasion of a meeting at his home related to an entirely different subject: my Survey of Caves in the Judean Desert (he had kindly assisted in organizing and materializing this project). Following this study I became aware of the fact that m. Middot actually provides a blue-print, permitting a most detailed 3D reconstruction of the Temple. This resulted in Chapter XI (1994). Reading the description of the Sanctuary portal and the golden vine in the Latin version of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 15.394–395 (the Greek version being corrupted), led to Chapter XII (1993–94).

Some 15 years had elapsed until the second stage had started. The breakthrough came while writing a general paper on the Second Temple at the invitation of my dear late teacher, Prof. Yoram Tsafrir, for the book edited by Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Zeev Kedar (2009).<sup>2</sup> On that occasion, I first realized that Water Cistern no. 5 was the water cistern that fed the Laver by means of a water wheel

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<sup>1</sup> A Hebrew version generally preceded the English one by a year or two.

<sup>2</sup> *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, eds. Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem and Austin, TX: Yad Yizhak ben Zvi and University of Texas Press, 2009). I am deeply indebted to Prof. Kedar for his encouragement throughout.

(Chapter X, 2008), and that it actually is a precise extant pointer of the location and orientation (9.7° south of due east), of the altar, the Temple and some of the Gates (Water) and Chambers (Wood, *Gullah*) of the Inner Court (‘*Azarah*) (Chapter VI, 2011). This was a real enlightenment that led to many of the other chapters in this book. A fresh reading of the passages pertaining to the House of the Laver and the House of Utensils in the Temple Scroll, pertaining to the Pre-Herodian Temple (Chapter IX, 2009), added literary evidence to the said conclusions, and most recently these were corroborated by an astronomical evidence (Chapter VII, 2023).

Little attention was given in the past to the building project of Simeon the Just on the Temple Mount (Chapter III, 2011). This study permitted to differentiate four stages in the architectural evolution of the Temple Mount (Chapter II, 2013), not just three (as was earlier claimed by Leen Ritmeyer).<sup>3</sup>

Locating the chambers and gates of the Inner Court (‘*Azarah*) according to Water Cistern no. 5 – an archaeological relic – permitted to conclude (unlike Maimonides and most later commentators) that m. Mid. 5:3–4, not b. Yoma 19a, is the correct version pertaining to the Chambers of the South and North of the ‘*Azarah* (Chapter VIII, first published here in English). Three other water cisterns located under the NE corner of the upper platform of the Temple Mount (Cisterns nos. 2, 34, 37), point upon the location of the Chamber called House of Stone (*beth even*), mentioned in m. Parah 3:1 (Chapter V, first published here in English). A special study is devoted to the Railing that barred access of gentiles beyond this fence, and to its gates (Chapter IV, first published here in English).

During the four decades of my studies of various aspects of the Temple and its precinct, I was assisted by several gifted architects, whose figures, drawn following my instructions, illustrate this book. These are (in a chronological order) Leen Ritmeyer, Idan Rabinowitz, Marcos Edelcopp and Roy Elbag. Thanks are due to them. I am also deeply indebted to Dr. Ruth Clemens for her translation and style editing of some of these essays, and for her useful comments.

\* \* \*

The book, comprised of sixteen chapters, is divided into three sections arranged from the outer perimeter to the center; from the evolution of the Temple Mount to the Temple itself. The third section, comprised of two chapters, pertains to structures outside the temple precinct: A composite triclinium with a fountain located to the west of Wilson’s Arch (Chapter XIV), and the Lower Level aqueduct in the context of a legal controversy involving the Sadducees that is recorded

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<sup>3</sup> *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006).

in m. Yadayim (Chapter XV). Chapter XVI is the concluding chapter. Three chapters (IV, V and VIII), as well as the Introduction and the concluding chapter are first published in English here.

For the sake of uniformity, the references and footnotes of all chapters were modified to conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style*<sup>2</sup> (2014). A common bibliography, a list of abbreviations and index of literary sources, personal and geographical names, and subjects, were added to the book. Few sections were omitted in some chapters, in order to prevent repetition, but inevitably some still remain. For this end, some figures were also omitted.

I am indebted to my dear friend Prof. Jan Willem van Henten of the University of Amsterdam, for useful advice on various aspects related to these studies of mine, and for directing me to publish this book of collected essays in the WUNT I series of Mohr Siebeck. Thanks are also due to Mohr Siebeck staff for their efficient and attentive work and to the previous publishers of some of these essays for allowing them to be reproduced here.



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## Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BALAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
b.	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
Ber.	Berakhot
Bik.	Bikkurim
<i>BT</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
CAD	A. Leo Oppenheim et al., eds., <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , 26 vols. Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–2010.
<i>CIIP</i> 1.1	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae / Palaestinae</i> . Jerusalem. Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2010.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>DWhG</i>	<i>Schriften der Deutschen Wasserhistorischen Gesellschaft</i>
‘Ed.	‘Eduyyot
‘Erub.	‘Erubin
<i>ESI</i>	<i>Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
<i>HA</i>	<i>Hadashot Arkheologiyot</i>
Hag.	Hagigah
Hor.	Horayot
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>INJ</i>	<i>Israel Numismatic Journal</i>
IOSOT	International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJA</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Art</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
<i>JQR</i>	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament supplement series</i>
<i>JSPSup</i>	<i>Journal for the study of the Pseudepigrapha supplement series</i>
<i>JT</i>	<i>Jerusalem Talmud</i>
Ketub.	Ketubbot
KJV	Bible, King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
m.	Mishnah
<i>Macc.</i>	<i>Maccabees</i>
<i>Matt.</i>	Matthew
Meg.	Megilla

Menah	Menahot
Mid.	Middot
Miqw.	Miqwaot
Neh	Nehemiah
NJPS	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text</i>
NSAJR	<i>New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region</i>
’Ohal.	’Ohalot
PEFQS	<i>Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
Pesah.	Pesahim
PJb	<i>Palaestinajahrbuch des Deutschen Evangelischen Instituts für Altertums- wissenschaft des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem.</i>
Qadmoniot	<i>Qadmoniot: A Journal for the Antiquities of Eretz-Israel and Bible</i>
Qidd.	Qiddushin
RA	<i>Révue Archéologique</i>
RB	<i>Révue Biblique</i>
RQ	<i>Révue de Qumran</i>
RSV	Bible, Revised Standard Version
Sam	Samuel
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
SCI	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
SCM	Publisher (London)
Shabb.	Shabbat
Shebu.	Shevu’ot
Sheq.	Sheqalim
STDJ	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
t.	Tosefta
Tehar.	Teharot
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplements</i>
y.	Jerusalem Talmud; <i>Talmud Yerushalmi</i>
Yad.	Yadayim
Zebah.	Zebahim
Zech	Zechariah
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

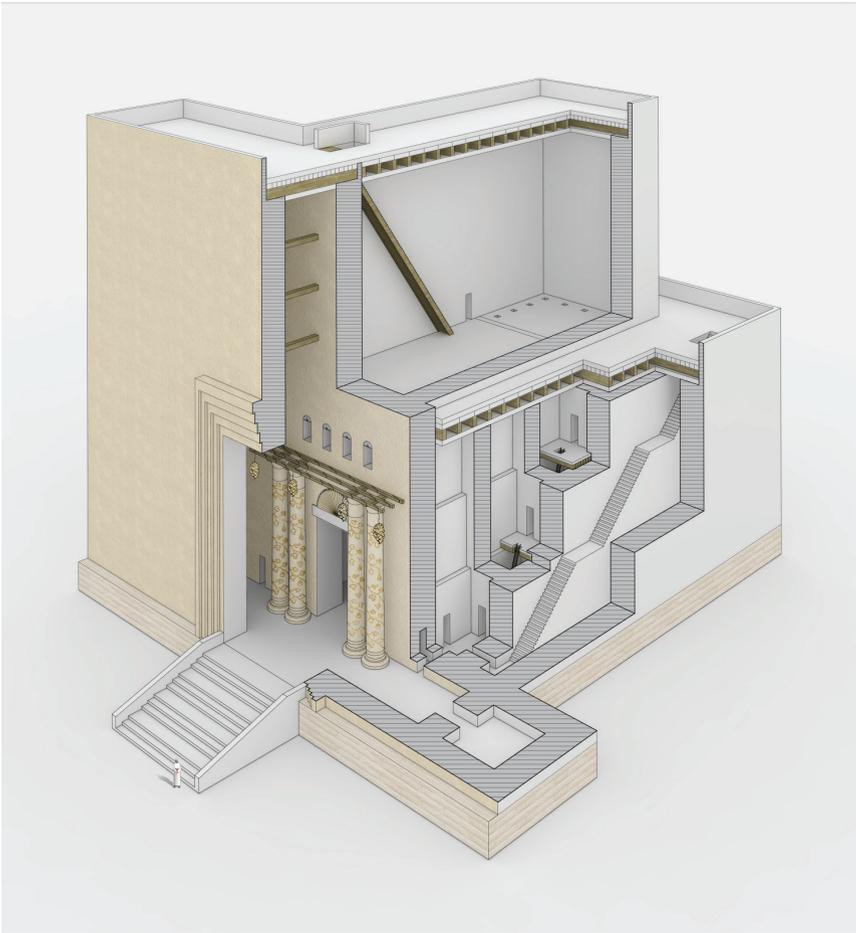
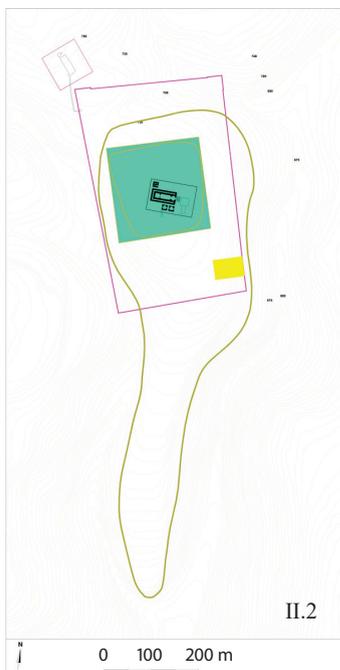
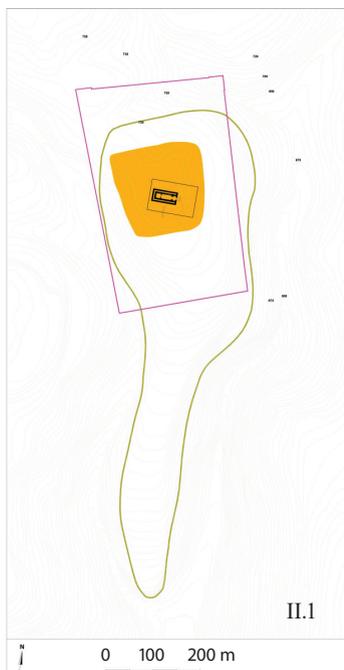


Plate I. Reconstruction of the Temple according to tractate Middot (drawn by L. Ritmeyer and I. Rabinowitz according to the instructions of the author).

Plate II (back). Maps of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount (the course of the city wall is conjectural) (drawn by M. Edelcopp according to the instructions of the author).

1. In the Restoration Period.
2. In the time of Simeon the Just and the Seleucid Acra.
3. The Temple Mount of the Hasmonaeans.
4. The Herodian Temple Mount.



Jerusalem and the Temple Mount  
 – in the Restoration Period (II.1)  
 – in the time of Simeon the Just (II.2)

The Temple Mount  
 – in the Hasmonaean Period (II.3)  
 – in the Herodian Period (II.4)

# Introduction



# I. Historical and Geographical Introduction

## 1. A Historical Sketch

The prevalent name of the period in the history of the Jewish people – The Second Temple Period – reflects the centrality of the Temple in the life of the Jewish nation in this era. It began with the restoration of the Temple under the Persian Achaemenids and ended with its second destruction by the Romans. Its apogee was during its final century, better known as the Herodian Period. During this lengthy period, the Jews enjoyed political independence only for a short time, under the Hasmonaeans; the Herodians were client kings of Rome. But Jewish religious autonomy, including conduct of the Temple service according to their Law, was maintained almost throughout without any hindrance on the part of the Persians, Greeks, or Romans.

According to the Roman author Pliny, at the time of its destruction Jerusalem was “by far the most famous city of the East and not of Judaea only.”<sup>1</sup> The Temple was the largest and most impressive structure therein, the center of religious and national life and a goal of pilgrimage. In its splendor and importance, it eclipsed all other institutions of the Jews, both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora. It was the one and only Temple of the entire nation. The Greek historian Polybius, writing in the second century BCE, noted that Jews were a nation residing around a Temple called Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The Roman historian Tacitus wrote: “Jerusalem is the capital of the Jews. In it was a temple possessing enormous riches.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Natural History* 5.70 (Pliny, *Natural History*; English translation by Harris Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, 10 vols. [London and Cambridge, MA, 1938–63]); Menaḥem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem 1974–84), no. 204, 1:471, 1:477–78.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Josephus, *Ant.* 12.136 (trans. Ralph Marcus, Loeb Classical Library [London and Cambridge, MA, 1943], 68–9). An English translation of all the writings of Josephus is in the Loeb Classical Library series. The English translation of *Jewish Antiquities*, Books 12–13 was done by Ralph Marcus; that of Books 14–17 by Marcus and Allen Wickgren; and that of Books 18–20, by Louis H. Feldman; the English translation of *The Jewish War*, *The Life*, and *Against Apion* was done by Henry St. J. Thackeray.

<sup>3</sup> *The Histories* 5.8.1 (Tacitus, *The Histories*, with an English translation by Clifford H. Moore, Loeb Classical Library, 4 vols. [London and New York, 1925–37]); Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, no. 281, 2:28, 2:46–47.

### 1.1 The Persian Period (538–332 BCE)

After thirty years of exile, the Achaemenid Cyrus, who united the Persian and Median Empires, expanded his realm westward. He conquered Babylonia from king Nabonidus without resistance and was accepted unanimously as king. The so-called “Cyrus Cylinder,” discovered in 1879, asserts that he returned all of the deities “misplaced” by Nabonidus to their respective temples. The biblical Book of Ezra quotes, in Hebrew, the decree Cyrus issued to the exiled Jews in Babylon in 538 by which he permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem, rebuild the Temple, and restore its cult:

Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Anyone of you of all his people – may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the Lord God of Israel, the God that is in Jerusalem; and all who stay behind, wherever he may be living, let the people of his place assist him with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, besides the freewill offering to the House of God that is in Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

In a parallel, more official memorandum, written in Aramaic and addressed to Cyrus’ administration, the goal of restoring the Temple and renewing its cult is more specific. Details are given about the Temple’s structure, dimensions, building materials, financing, and vessels:

Memorandum: In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued an order concerning the House of God in Jerusalem: “Let the house be rebuilt, a place for offering sacrifices, with a base built up high. Let it be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, with a course of unused timber for each three courses of hewn stone. The expenses shall be paid by the palace. And the gold and silver vessels of the House of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from the Temple in Jerusalem, and transported to Babylon shall be returned, and let each go back to the Temple in Jerusalem where it belongs; you shall deposit it in the House of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Some of the vessels pillaged by Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian king [605–562 BCE] responsible for the destruction of the First Temple), were entrusted by Cyrus to Sheshbazzar, the newly installed governor of the province of Judaea. Sheshbazzar rebuilt the altar on its earlier base and the sacrifices were renewed, though the foundations of the Temple were not yet laid. Then the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated and sacrifices associated with other feasts and new moons were resumed, as well as freewill offerings.<sup>6</sup> Fifty years after the de-

<sup>4</sup> Ezra 1:2–4. All quotations from the Old Testament are based upon the translation of the Jewish Publication Society.

<sup>5</sup> Ezra 6:2–5.

<sup>6</sup> Ezra 1:8–10, 5:13–16; in Ezra 3:1–8 this is attributed to Zerubbabel and Jeshua, under Darius, ca. 20 years later. See also Zech 4:9; Josephus, *Ant.* 11.11–13. Diana V. Edelman, *The Origins of the ‘Second’ Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2005), questions the historicity of Ezra 1–6, Haggai, and Zechariah as sources for

struction of the First Temple, the initial foundations of the Second Temple were laid by Sheshbazzar in 536 BCE. At the foundation ceremony priests officiated in their ritual apparel, with trumpets, cymbals, and songs of praise.

However, full realization of Cyrus' declaration was much more difficult to achieve due to the hardships of life in the deserted city, administrative obstacles, the animosity of neighboring nations, and friction between the returnees and those who were not exiled. These impediments led to a delay of over fifteen years in the construction of the Temple. Only after a copy of the official memorandum cited above was found in 520 BCE in the Persian royal archives, did Darius I (522–486) allow the resumption of construction. Darius issued another decree, instructing his officials that supervision over the work be entrusted to the hands of the governor of the Jews, together with their elders, and that state funds be provided for the construction and daily provisions of sacrificial animals, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, so that they may pray for the life of the king and his sons.<sup>7</sup> A service for the welfare of the supreme foreign ruler of the time, be he Persian, Greek, or Roman, became common practice throughout the Second Temple period. The regular provision of offerings by the central authorities was a privilege of the Temple city Jerusalem had become. This was a means of guaranteeing the loyalty of the priests, headed by the high priest, and of the people.

Darius' decree, together with the exhortations of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, expedited the completion of the Temple. On 12 March 515 BCE, more than twenty years after the restoration of the altar and the renewal of sacrifice and about seventy years after the destruction of the First Temple, the Second Temple was completed. Built of stones, with timber laid in the walls, it reached a height of 60 cubits (ca. 30 m in present-day units).<sup>8</sup> With its completion, the rite was better organized, according to the Law of Moses; priests were set in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses.

The new Temple evidently lacked the splendor of the previous one. Describing the rededication ceremony of the Temple, the Book of Ezra contrasts the ecstatic joy of those who were too young to remember the First Temple with the mournful weeping of the old priests and Levites who had served in it.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, several focal objects were not recovered from the pillaging of the First Temple: the Ark of Covenant, the two tablets of the Law, and the oracle of the high priest.<sup>10</sup>

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the "origins" of the Second Temple. She maintains that both the rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem's refortification took place at the time of Nehemiah, and that the return from exile under Zerubbabel and Jeshua should be dated around 465 BCE. Peter R. Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), attributes the beginning of works of restoration to Zerubbabel and Jeshua, under Darius I.

<sup>7</sup> Ezra 6:8–10.

<sup>8</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 11.99.

<sup>9</sup> Ezra 3:12–13.

<sup>10</sup> M. Sheq. 6:1–2; m. Yoma 5:2; b. Yoma 21b. (For an English translation for all references to the Babylonian Talmud, see *The Babylonian Talmud*, translated into English with notes, glos-

The sources are largely silent about the fifty years following the completion of the Second Temple. In the wake of a decree of King Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE) which invited the Jews of his empire to return to Jerusalem, Ezra, a royal scribe and priest, led a group of some 1,500 returnees in 458 BCE. A letter carried by Ezra containing a record of the decree also bears witness to the king's gifts to the Temple and to the authority bestowed upon Ezra. The king recognized the lofty status of Temple personnel by exempting them from tolls, tributes, and customs.

Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra was distressed to discover that the Jews had been intermarrying with the indigenous nations, in direct violation of biblical law. Ezra's public display of mourning stirred the people to repent and to enter into a new covenantal relationship with God, beginning with the banishment of their "foreign" wives. The covenantal ceremony presided over by Ezra, reading the Pentateuch in a street remote from the Temple courts, marks the emergence of a new expression of Jewish religiosity, alternative to the Temple. In later generations of the period that is at our concern, it evolved into the institution of the synagogue.

Nehemiah, a cupbearer in the court of Artaxerxes I, took leave of his position with the king's blessing and made the trek to Jerusalem. Serving as governor of Judah for twelve years (445–433 BCE) he presided over the restoration of the city walls and gates and the rebuilding of the gates of the *bira* – a citadel of the period of Persian rule in Jerusalem – that was first built by an earlier governor. (The First Temple, being a part of the royal palace, did not have a separate citadel; this was an innovation of the Second Temple.) By the end of his tenure, the Temple was surrounded by a precinct wall with lockable doors.

Nehemiah, like Ezra, emphasized separation from the Gentiles, refraining from mixed marriage, and keeping the Sabbath. Equally emphasized were laws which facilitated the Temple service and provided for the wellbeing of those entrusted with its administration and operation. The most basic of these contributions was the obligation to contribute yearly one-third of a sheqel for the Temple service.<sup>11</sup> The constant need for wood, used in copious amounts for sacrifices, was met by choosing lay families by lot. Finally, the people also affirmed their commitment to provide for the priests and Levites through tithes of both produce and animals.

Under Nehemiah and the prophet Zechariah we already hear about the courts of the House of the Lord, in the plural, indicating that by this time the built complex had already been expanded, including now more than an altar and a Temple. Around the courts were chambers which functioned as storage rooms

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sary and indices under the editorship of Isidore Epstein [London, 1935–48]. Further references to the Babylonian Talmud will be marked b.).

<sup>11</sup> In later years it was raised to half a sheqel (equivalent to two Roman dinars) for every adult male; women were not obligated to contribute.

for various offerings or served high priests and other Temple officials. Since the people gathered in the “Street of the House of God,” there was not as yet an outer court for this purpose.

Our next piece of information dates from about a century later. Under the Persian King Artaxerxes III (358–338 BCE), an internal dispute erupted over the high priesthood, as a result of which the high priest John II murdered his elder brother Jeshua. Bagoses, the chief military officer of the Persian king, who had supported Jeshua, defiled the sanctuary by entering the sacred precinct and imposed on the Jews a penalty of 50 drachms (a Greek silver coin) for each lamb of the two daily sacrifices. This penalty continued in force for seven years.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.2 The Hellenistic Period (332–37 BCE)

The imperial and religious stability which typified the waning years of the Persian Empire in the first half of the fourth century BCE ended in a series of bloody bids for royal succession. Simultaneously, Alexander “the Great” of Macedon embarked on an ambitious mission of territorial conquest that would bring an end to the Persian Empire in 330. That same sweeping campaign brought Judaea under Alexander’s control in 332 BCE, without encountering any resistance. Thus ended more than two centuries of Persian rule over Jerusalem and the Temple.

The tumultuous aftermath of Alexander’s death witnessed wars between his successors. Judaea’s strategic location between Egypt and Syria turned the area into a flash-point for the succession battles between the Ptolemaic dynasty which controlled Egypt and the Seleucid dynasty which controlled Syria. Judaea was first under Ptolemaic rule (301–198 BCE) and then under the Seleucids (198–142 BCE).

Though information about the condition of Jerusalem and the Temple during the Ptolemaic period is scanty, we do know that the high priest was appointed to serve as governor of Judaea, his principal responsibility being the collection of municipal taxes. The Ptolemies initiated the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Legend has it that it was commissioned by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 BCE), with great ceremony and at great expense, and carried out by seventy sages from the Temple circles; hence it is called the Septuagint. It is also said that he contributed to the Temple many golden and silver vessels, and an elaborately worked golden table.<sup>13</sup> Even if a legend, this reflects the Ptolemaic custom of presenting gifts to the Temple, as is attested by other sources.

<sup>12</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 11.297–301.

<sup>13</sup> The entire story of the Bible translation is given in the Letter of Aristeas. For an English translation see Moses Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates: Letter of Aristeas* (New York: Ktav, 1951); Rowland James Heath Shutt, “Letter of Aristeas,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:7–34.

The reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–205 BCE) is best known for Ptolemy's sound defeat of the Seleucid king Antiochus III the Great (223–187 BCE) at the Battle of Raphiah (217 BCE), on the border with Egypt. After routing Antiochus and his army, Ptolemy continued on an extensive campaign northward, reconquering his territories. He is said to have reciprocated for the gifts bestowed upon him by Jews in celebration of his victory at Raphiah by visiting Jerusalem and offering sacrifices in the Temple. Impressed by the Temple's beauty, he wished to enter the Holy of Holies, a request which was summarily denied by the priests because of the biblical injunction against anyone entering this sacred precinct except for the high priest, and even that only on the Day of Atonement. Ptolemy's insistence on entering aroused a great turmoil among the people who wept and prayed for salvation. Ultimately, legend has it that Ptolemy fell ill, had to be pulled out of the Temple by his bodyguards, and returned to Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

In 198 BCE Jerusalem and the Temple fell to Antiochus III, and after over a century of Ptolemaic control Judaea was now part of the Seleucid Empire. As the Jews came to the aid of Antiochus in his conquest of Jerusalem, the king rewarded his supporters accordingly, granting tax exemptions to Temple personnel, earmarking provisions for the Temple service, and – most importantly – guaranteeing freedom of religion for the Jewish people.<sup>15</sup>

Antiochus III also issued two edicts to guarantee the state of purity of the Temple and city. First, Gentiles were prohibited from entering the Temple, a ban that was in effect also in the Herodian period (see below). Second, Antiochus forbade the breeding of impure animals within Jerusalem, alongside a ban on bringing their skins or meat into Jerusalem. Antiochus issued a permit for the completion of the restoration of the Temple, including the porticos, and exempted all necessary materials from customs.<sup>16</sup>

That the Temple required renovation is but another testimony to the damage inflicted on Jerusalem during the tumultuous years preceding Antiochus III's decisive victory, in which Jerusalem passed back and forth between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.<sup>17</sup> The high priest, relegated to cultic duties by the later Ptolemies, returned to prominence under Antiochus III with new diplomatic and economic duties. Simeon II (d. ca. 196 BCE), the high priest who served during Antiochus' reign, is credited with repairing the damage sustained as a result of

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<sup>14</sup> Ptolemy IV Philopator's failed attempt to enter the Holy of Holies is documented in the apocryphal book 3 Maccabees (1.8–2.24). For discussion see Hugh Anderson, "3 Maccabees: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:510–12.

<sup>15</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 12.138–146. The custom of providing allocations for the Temple service is first attested under Cyrus and Darius and seems to have been maintained by the Ptolemies, as well as by the later Seleucids (2 Macc. 3:3 – pertaining to Seleucus IV; see also 2 Macc. 9:16; 1 Macc. 10:39–44; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.55, all relating to Demetrius I, 152 BCE).

<sup>16</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 12.141. See also *infra*, Chapters III and IV.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.129–144.

the wars. The extent of Simeon's renovations features prominently in the Book of Ben Sira – a work written in the first quarter of the second century BCE – which provides an elaborate and detailed description of the glorious Simeon arrayed in his vestments, officiating at the altar surrounded by his colleagues, radiant “like the sun shining resplendently on the king's Temple, and like the rainbow which appears in the cloud.”<sup>18</sup>

Simeon's renovations included fortification of the Temple, building high retaining walls, and digging a cistern (*miqveh*), which Ben Sira described as vast like a sea.<sup>19</sup> The retaining walls are the deep and high quadrangular foundations for the Temple courts, usually identified with the basic square of the inner court whose dimensions were 500 × 500 cubits,<sup>20</sup> which was later encompassed within the outer court of the Herodian precinct (see below). The hewn-out reservoir may be one of the huge cisterns under the Ḥaram.

The contemporary Letter of Aristeas, written in Greek, provides much information regarding the Temple structure and furnishings. According to the *Letter*, the Temple, built on a grand scale, occupied a prominent position and was enclosed within three precincts. A curtain drawn downward from above, of exquisite workmanship and impressive in its strength, was laid over the doorway of the Sanctuary. The House faced eastward. It was surrounded by a floor paved with sloped stones to permit easy drainage of the water used for cleansing the blood of the sacrifices. Hidden openings installed in the base of the altar also assisted the drainage. Seven hundred priests ministered there. The Temple had an abundant supply of flowing water, as if emerging from a spring located within the precinct. There were also magnificent underground, well-leaded, and plastered reservoirs placed around the foundations.<sup>21</sup>

Antiochus III mounted a final military campaign in 192 BCE which brought Asia Minor and Greece under his control. But a series of defeats at the hands of the Romans nullified Antiochus' newest territorial gains and compelled the latter to accept the terms of the peace treaty of Apamea (188 BCE), by which the Seleucids were forced to pay heavy tribute to the Romans. His treasuries depleted by the costly wars, Antiochus was compelled to loot temple treasuries

<sup>18</sup> *Ben Sira* 50:1–12. English translation of the Hebrew text in *The Jewish Temple: a Non-biblical Sourcebook*, ed. Charles T.R. Hayward (London: Routledge, 1996), 41–43. See also *infra*, Chapter III.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 50:1–3. For an English translation of the Greek version see Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 73–75.

<sup>20</sup> *M. Mid.* 2:1. These dimensions are in accordance with the LXX to Ezek 42:15–20; 45:2. But see *infra*, the more updated Chapters II and III, according to which the 500 × 500 cubits square should be attributed to the Hasmonaeans.

<sup>21</sup> Letter of Aristeas, paragraphs 84–91. Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates*, 14–15, has suggested that the curtain may have been the one looted by Antiochus IV and donated by him to the temple of Zeus at Olympia.

throughout the kingdom. In 187 BCE Antiochus III was murdered while seeking to loot a temple in Susa.

Despite the circumstances surrounding his father's death in Susa, Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175 BCE) set his eyes on the treasures of the Jerusalem Temple where, in addition to the funds allocated for the daily sacrifices and Temple maintenance, donations, incomes, and deposits were accumulated there along with the trusts of widows and orphans.<sup>22</sup> In 176 BCE Seleucus sent Heliodorus, his highest ranking minister, to confiscate the treasury under the pretext that donations from the royal treasury went well beyond the needs of the Temple. By this action the asylum right of the Temple was violated. The lone account of this episode relates that Heliodorus was stopped by supernatural intervention and punishment so severe that he urged the king to send one of his enemies should he decide to plunder the Temple again.<sup>23</sup> Heliodorus murdered Seleucus IV in 175 BCE, though not before he repatriated his brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE), the younger son of Antiochus III, who had been held hostage by the Romans pursuant to the treaty of Apamea.

Under Antiochus IV the high priesthood became a commodity, sold to the highest bidder with the most rigorous program for the Hellenization of Jerusalem, that is, imposing Greek culture. The first was Jason, who offered the exorbitant sum of 440 gold talents for the privilege of serving as high priest. Jason's tenure (175–172 BCE) ended when the priest Menelaus pledged to the king 300 talents over above and above Jason's payments. Antiochus acceded, and Menelaus, following the example of prior Seleucid kings, stole gold vessels from the Temple to guarantee his ability to pay. As if this wasn't enough to spark the rage of Jerusalem's Jews, Onias, who publicly exposed Menelaus' misdoings, was murdered at the latter's urging. Riots ensued in Jerusalem resulting in some fatalities, but Menelaus was acquitted of any misdoing after bribing the appropriate authorities.<sup>24</sup>

Antiochus IV mounted a successful preemptive invasion of Egypt in 169, and turned the Ptolemaic stronghold into a puppet regime. In the autumn of 169, on his way back from Egypt, he stopped in Jerusalem, where Jason, the former high priest, had stirred up a revolt against Menelaus. Driven to avenge Jason's uprising or, perhaps, by the heavy expenditures entailed by the war, and guided by Menelaus, Antiochus plundered the Jerusalem Temple, taking the golden incense altar and the lampstand (*menorah*), with all its vessels, the table and other vessels of gold, as well as the curtain over the sanctuary en-

<sup>22</sup> See 2 Macc. 3:10–11. Some donations were placed in the open, to be seen and admired (Josephus, *War* 2.413; idem, *Ant.* 12.249–250).

<sup>23</sup> 2 Macc. 3:7–30. On the historicity of this event relating to Heliodorus and his role in the Seleucid administration, see Hannah M. Cotton and Michael Wörrle, "Seleukos IV to Heliodoros: A New Dossier of Royal Correspondence from Israel," *ZPE* 159 (2007): 191–205.

<sup>24</sup> 2 Macc. 4.

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