

On The Location of the
First and Second Temples in Jerusalem
by Lambert Dolphin and Michael Kollen

Because of our sins we were exiled from our country and banished from our land. We cannot go up as pilgrims to worship Thee, to perform our duties in Thy chosen house, the great and Holy Temple which was called by Thy name, on account of the hand that was let loose on Thy sanctuary. May it be Thy will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, merciful King, in Thy abundant love again to have mercy on us and on Thy sanctuary; rebuild it speedily and magnify its glory. (The Jewish Prayer Book)



View of the Temple Mount looking towards the southeast.

Under the level pavement at the top left of the photo are vaulted chambers known as "Solomon's Stables," traditionally said to date from Herod's enlargement of the Mount. To the right, at the top, is the gray dome of Al Aqsa Mosque. The far right hand edge of the photo shows the Western Wall (the Kotel), the Jewish prayer area. The Dome of the Rock is especially beautiful because of the recent addition of new gold leaf to the anodized aluminum dome. The traditional location of the First and Second Temples lies in the immediate vicinity of the Dome of the Rock. The proposed Northern site for the Temples is just to the left at the stairs in the bottom left of the photo. The southern Site for the Temples lies midway between the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa mosque, under an Islamic ablution fountain known as El Kas. The level of the bedrock of Mount Moriah outcrops within the Dome of the Rock and is just beneath the paving stones of the surrounding platform. However, to the south the bedrock drops steeply towards the City of David and the junction of Hinnom and Kidron Valleys.

The Temple Mount: Site of the Ancient Jewish Temples

The Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem measures today approximately 45 acres in extent. It is surrounded by a trapezoidal wall: The south wall measures about 910 feet, the North about 1025, the east wall about 1520 and the west wall about 1580 feet in length. The average height above sea level on the platform is about 2400 feet above sea level. Most of the buildings and surface features are Islamic - no visible traces of the First or Second Temples can be found on the platform today. The area is park-like in its settings with plants of trees and shrubs and many ancient buildings and monuments added over the past 1300 years of Moslem stewardship of the site.

The present-day platform area of the Temple Mount lies topographically just below the peak of a Jerusalem ridge system known as Mount Moriah. This is the site David purchased from a Jebusite named Ornan late in his reign. King David prepared the area in order build a permanent House of God to replace the Tabernacle of Moses which accompanied the Jews after their Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. David had the plans drawn up for a building whose dimensions were twice those of the Tabernacle, and he amassed great quantities of building materials: stone, cedar, and much gold and silver. However, it was his son Solomon who actually built the First Jewish temple (1 Chronicles 22:14-15, 28:11-20).

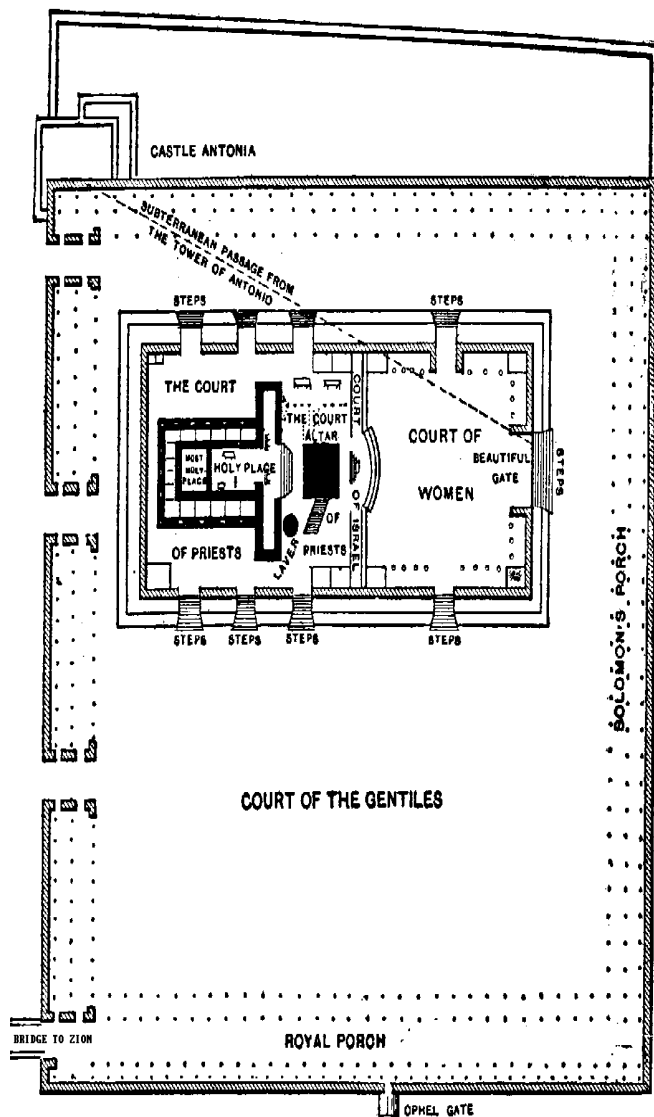
The ridge system where the Temple Mount is now located is believed by many reputable sources to be the site where Abraham was told to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:1-2). While Solomon built the First Temple about 3000 years ago, Abraham's visit to Mt. Moriah was about a thousand years earlier.

Consecrated Ground

According to Rabbinical sources both the First and Second Temples were built on the same foundations, at the same location somewhere on the Temple Mount. The site had to be consecrated ground that had not been previously used for tombs and that was not a previous pagan worship site ("high place"). The innermost sanctuary of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, or Kodesh Hakodeshim, where the Ark of the Covenant was placed, marked the exact center of the world, and was the innermost zone in holiness or sanctity in Jewish thought. The manifest presence of God, the Shekinah, was centered between the cherubim of the Ark and especially noted at the dedication of the First Temple---

When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. When all the children of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the earth on the pavement, and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever." (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

Moving outwards from the Holy of Holies one came to The Holy Place, and then to the Courts of the priests, and of the women and of the Jewish people, then the Court of the Gentiles, and so on, out into the world in decreasing degrees of holiness.



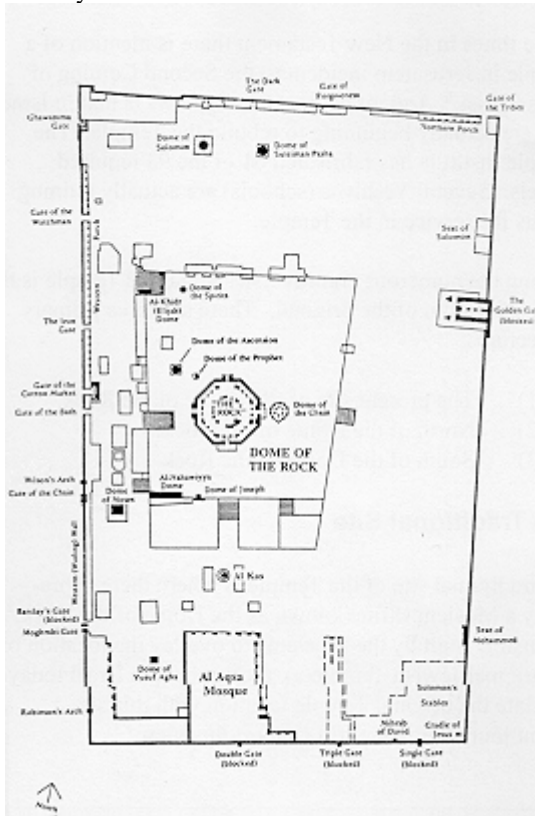
PLAN OF TEMPLE

The long history of the First and Second Temples is detailed both in the Bible and in many extra-biblical sources. For more details on the history of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount see the separate historical essays listed on the main menu.

Both ancient Jewish Temples are of interest to Christians as well as to Jews. The Second Temple was modest in size and furnishing until Herod the Great began his grand remodeling plans which continued for 40 years. It was in this enlarged and

expanded Second Jewish Temple and its grand courts where the naming and circumcision of Jesus took place (Luke 2:21-39). Later, Jesus astonished the religious leaders with his understanding and insight as a twelve-year-old boy (Luke 2:41-50). On two separate occasions Jesus entered and cleansed the temple by throwing out the money changers and commercial vendors from the courts. (John 2:12-25; Matthew 21:23-26)

In one of his final discussions with his disciples (Matthew 24), Jesus predicted the destruction of the Second Temple. It was in fact leveled to the ground on the 9th day of the month of Av in 70 C.E. The temple was thoroughly razed and the site has been so extensively modified during the late Roman, Moslem and Crusader eras that considerable doubt exists as to where the temples actually stood.

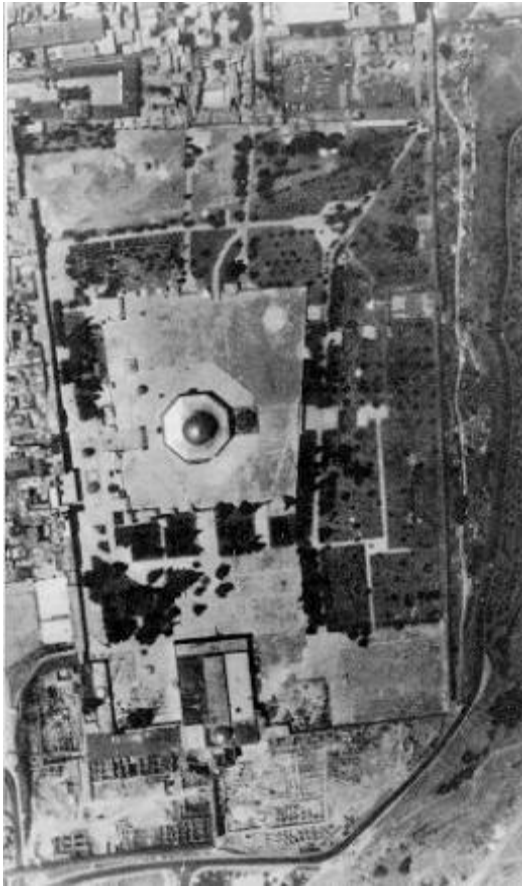


Map of the Temple Mount Today

Where did the Temple stand?

Among the numerous controversies about the Temple is the precise location of the original. There are three primary conjectures under active discussion in recent years. These three areas of interest on the Temple Mount have been the focus of intense investigation, much debate and discussion, and growing controversy. Behind many of these discussions lie serious plans by a number of Orthodox Jewish groups for the building of a Third Jewish Temple on the site when political conditions will permit this. The primary areas on the Temple Mount which are seriously discussed in regard to the actual location of the First and Second Jewish Temples are:

1. The present site of the Dome of the Rock. This is the so-called "traditional location." There are two variations on this model.
2. North of the Dome of the Rock. Physicist Asher Kaufman proposed the Northern location about two decades ago.
3. South of the Dome of the Rock. Tuvia Sagiv, a Tel Aviv architect, has proposed a Southern location for the Temples with extensive documentation and research during the past five years.

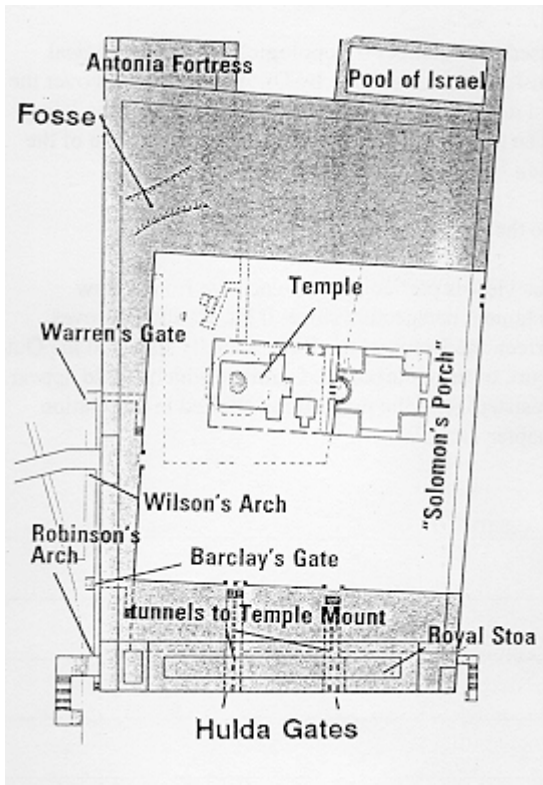


Aerial Photo of the Temple Mount Today

The Traditional Site

The traditional site of the Temple is said to lie beneath or very near to the Moslem shrine known as the Dome of the Rock. Certain historical accounts say that this building was built by the Moslems to overlay the location of the original Jewish Temple(s) and most rabbis in Israel today associate the original Temple location with this site. Dr. Leen Ritmeyer has researched and written on the original 500 cubit square boundaries of the original Temple Mount site based on this assumption.

Recent journal articles still support this view. (1) Former Jerusalem District archaeologist Dr. Dan Bahat vigorously defends the traditional location - drawing on his years of experience and study of the entire city and its history. His lectures on the subject are thorough, convincing and captivating. However, so also are the alternative theories currently proposed!

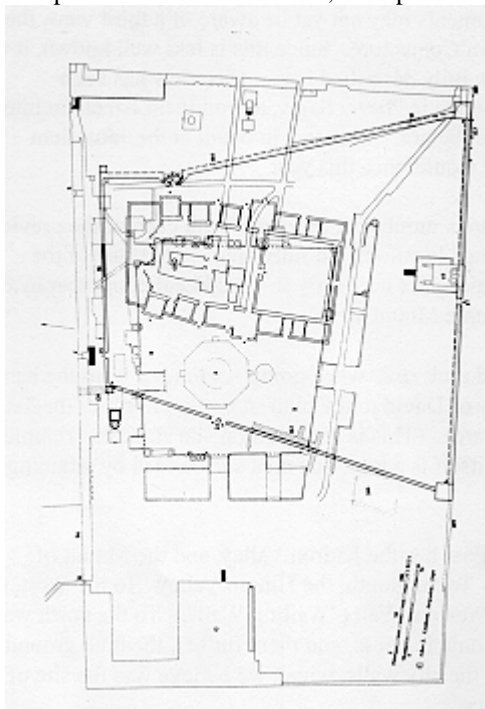


Traditional Site of the Temples

The Northern Conjecture

Based on a number of topological and archeological considerations, research by Dr. Asher Kaufman over the past two decades has resulted in serious consideration being given to a site 330 feet to the north of the Dome of the Rock.

The Mt. Moriah bedrock outcrops within the Dome of Rock, as is well known. Although the bedrock elevation drops sharply to the south in the direction of the City of David, the level of the bedrock is just beneath the paving stones for over 100 meters to the North of the Dome of the Rock shrine. One particular level outcropping of this bedrock lies under a small Islamic shrine known as "The Dome of the Tablets" or "The Dome of the Spirits," to the Arabs. Both names suggest an association with the Jewish Temples. It is under this small, unimpressive canopy supported by pillars that Dr. Kaufman locates the Temple site. (2)

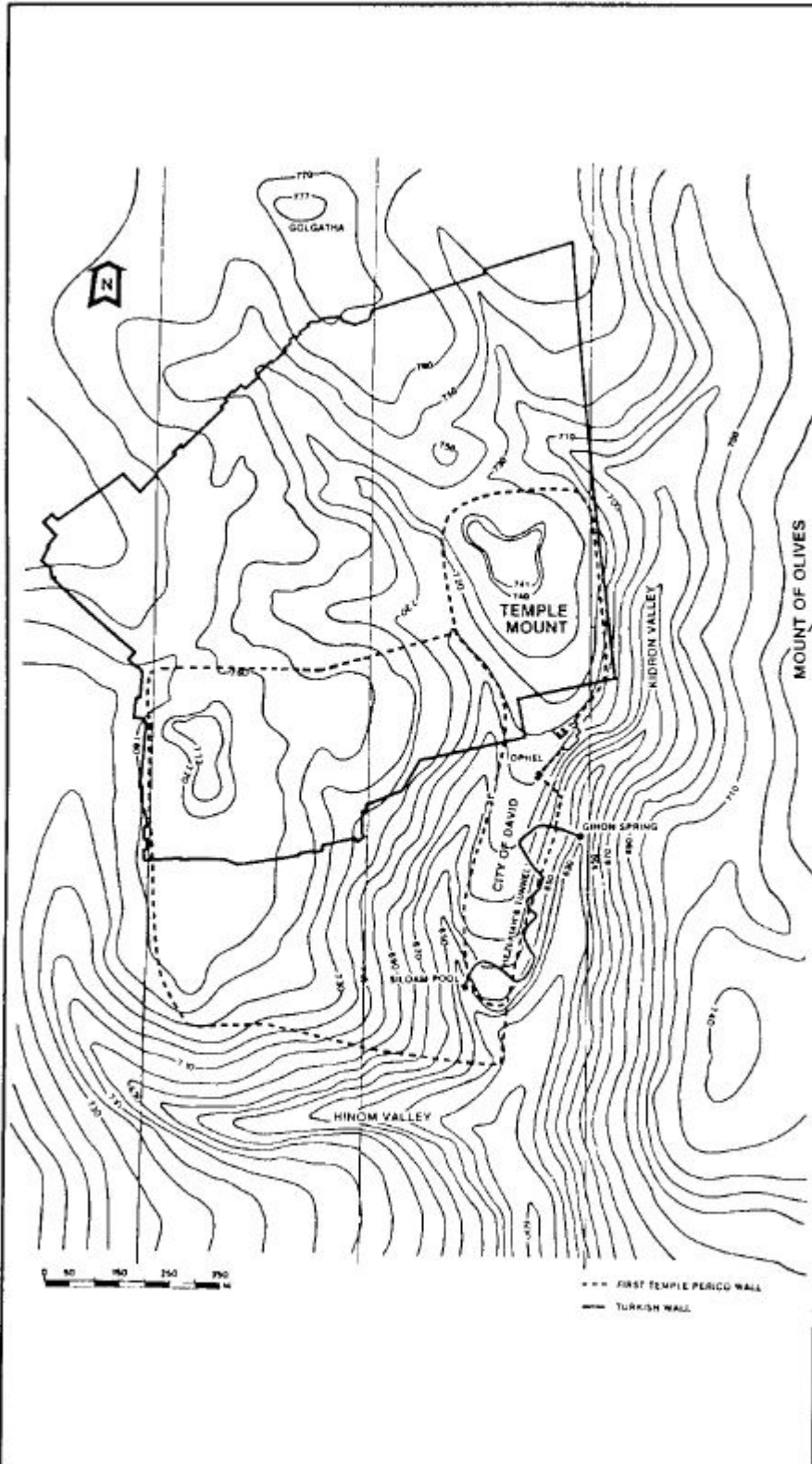


The Northern Placement of the Temples

The Southern Conjecture

Many people who have been following these developments may not yet be aware of a third view, which might well be called "the Southern Conjecture." Since this model is less well known, it will be more fully described here and on these web pages. This view has been championed in the past five years by Tuvia Sagiv, a prominent Israeli architect.

There are a number of problems with each of the previously mentioned locations. To fully appreciate some of the difficulties, it is necessary to visualize the topography of the Temple Mount area.



Topographic Map of Jerusalem
(Contour interval 10 meters)

North is at the top of the map. The Mount of Olives is on the far right, Mount Zion on the left. Mount Moriah rises as a long ridge at the south end of the City of David and continues on past the present Temple Mount, and reaches its highest point outside the Northern walls of the Old City, at the top of the map.

The bedrock rises when going northward from the base of the City of David to highest ground north of the Temple Mount area. (This is obscured on site since the Temple Mount Platform itself is a large flat area surrounded by retaining wall.) The southern end of the Platform is actually built up on tall underground pillars and arches.

To the east of the Temple Mount lies the Kidron Valley, and the Mount of Olives. To the south, the City of David and the Hinnom Valley. To the west, the famed Western Wall (called in earlier times the "Wailing Wall"). To the north of the Temple site was the Roman military Antonia Fortress, and then, further, the high ground outside the city walls, which many believe was the site of Golgotha. The bedrock of Mt. Moriah continues to rise to the north - outcroppings in the Northern wall reveal road cuts that have been made in the bedrock at the North end of the Old City outside the Damascus Gate and along the main road to the east. The crest of Mt. Moriah is just above the present Garden Tomb.

Critical Issues in Locating the Temple Site:

When one compiles all the known factors into a three-dimensional computer model of the Temple Mount area, several problems emerge:

1. Where was the Antonia Fortress?

Ancient Jerusalem was protected on the east, south, and west by valleys. The Antonia Fortress was located to the north to protect the weaker north side of the city. (In fact, it was from the north that Titus Vespasian breached the walls in his famous attack in 70 C.E.)

According to ancient sources, the fortress was on a hill about 25 meters high. The current El Omriah school building is on a rock only 5 meters high. From many stratigraphic and other considerations it is doubted by some experts that this was the actual location of the Antonia Fortress. Tuvia Sagiv's papers discuss the critical issue of the actual location of the Fortress Antonia, which he believes was well to the south, perhaps at the location of the Dome of the Rock.

2. The Location of the Ancient North Moat (the *Fosse*)

Traditional renderings show a deep, filled-in fosse (moat), north of the Temple Mount, lying south of the Antonia Fortress, between the fortress and the Temple Mount.

According to ancient sources, however, the Antonia Fortress and the Temple Mount were adjacent to each other. The moat should be to the north of the Tower for protection, placing the Antonia about where the Dome of the Rock stands today! Asher Kaufman's location of the Temples places the moat immediately to the North of the spot where the Temples stood. In fact, Dan Bahat jokes that Kaufman's temple would "fall into the moat!"

3. The Hulda Gates

The Hulda Gates were the primary access to the Temple area from the south. According to the Mishna, the difference in heights between the Hulda Gates and the Holy of the Holies was approximately 10 meters, with about 39 m between the entrance to the Temple mount and the level of the Temple itself. The traditional Dome of the Rock proposals require 20 meters and 80 m separations.

The current assumptions regarding Hulda Gate tunnels are not mentioned in the ancient sources. The discrepancies suggest a lower, and therefore, more southerly, location. Tuvia Sagiv in his essays discusses the problem of the Southern Gates and their elevation with respect to the Temples.

4. The View from the North

Josephus Flavius describes the fact that the Bizita Hill (Golgotha?) was located north of the Temple Mount and obscured the view of the Temple from the north.

If the Temple stood at the Dome of the Rock, it would be visible from as far away as the town of Ramallah. In order to obscure the view from the north, it would have to be at a lower level, that is, to the south.

5. King Herod Agrippa's View of the Temple from the West

Josephus, in *The Jewish Wars*, describes the fact that King Herod Agrippa could look out from his Hasmonean Palace (at or near the present Citadel at the Jaffa Gate), and view the sacrifices at the Azarah, at the altar of the Second Temple. This incensed the Jews, who then built a wall extending the height of the western rear wall of the Temple proper in order to block the view. Roman soldiers, patrolling the western threshold - thus unable to view the Azarah - demanded that the wall be demolished. The Jews objected, and even obtained the consent of Emperor Nero to leave the wall in place.

If the Temple were at the location of the Dome of the Rock, it would have required a Palace tower height of 75 meters to view into the Azarah. There never was a building of such a height in Jerusalem. This all implies a lower, more southern location of the Temple.

6. The Jerusalem Water Aqueduct from the Judean Hills

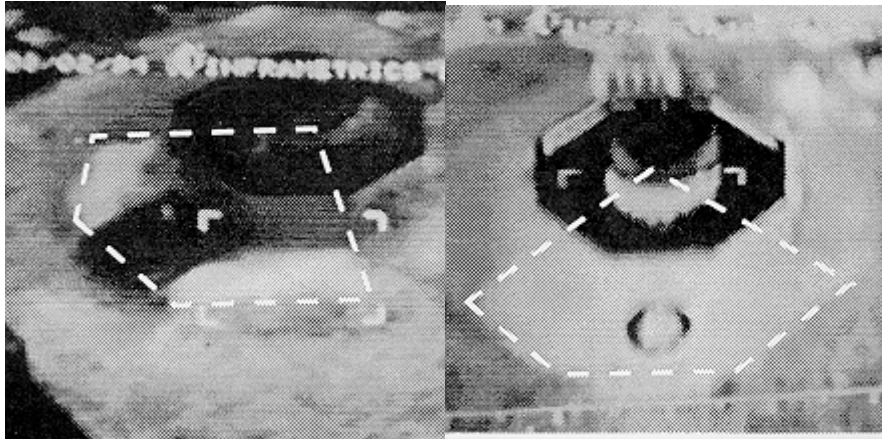
The water canals that supplied Jerusalem began in the area of the Hebron mountains, passed through the Solomon's Pools near Bethlehem, and flowed to Jerusalem. The lowest canal reached the Temple Mount through the Jewish Quarter and the Wilson Bridge. According to the ancient authorities, the water conduit supplied water to the High Priests' mikveh (ritual bath) located above the Water Gate, and it also supplied water for the rinsing of the blood off the Azarah. Portions of this aqueduct are plainly visible to this day.

"Living water," that is, fresh, flowing water, not water from a cistern, was required for the ritual bath (mikveh) used by the temple priests, and for the washings of the temple in connection with the sacrifices.

A survey of the level of the aqueduct reveals that if the Temple had been located at the same elevation as the present Dome of the Rock shrine, the aqueduct would be over 20 meters too low to serve either the Azarah or the Water Gate. From this survey, it appears that the Temple must have been 20 meters lower, and, thus, to the south.

7. Electronic Measurements

Preliminary ground penetrating radar probes by Tuvia Sagiv, while not conclusive, suggest vaults, perhaps "kippim" (rabbinical arches), and other structures which one would expect below the Temple, to the south. The northern sites are virtually solid rock. More recently Sagiv has conducted thermal-infrared scanning of the walls and the platform. During the day the sun heats the Temple Mount uniformly, but at night the cooling (by conduction and radiation) is not uniform, thus revealing subsurface anomalies. In the images shown below, "hotter" areas are bright indicating massive foundations beneath the paving stones. The radar and IR research is discussed in Sagiv's third paper, *Penetrating Insights Into the Temple Mount*.



Nighttime Thermal Infrared Imagery of the Dome of the Rock

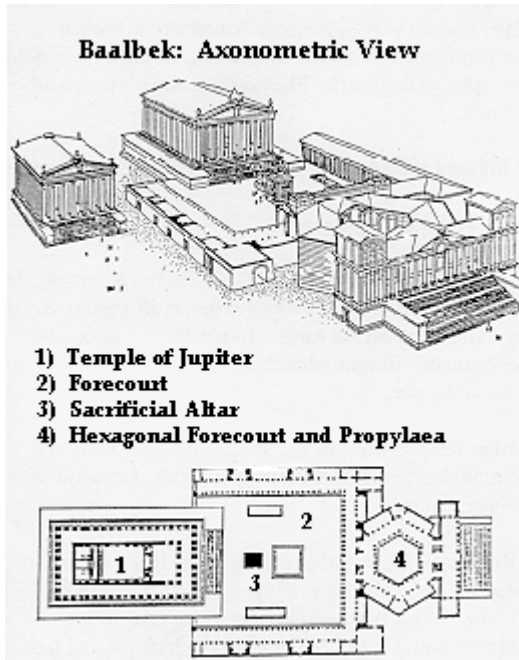
These black-and-white images taken from the original false-color IR scanner images clearly reveal a pentagonal ancient foundation under the Dome. These results are discussed by Tuvia Sagiv in his papers.

8. Research into Later Roman Temple Architecture

After the Bar Kochba revolt in 132 C.E., the Romans leveled the entire city of Jerusalem and built a Roman city, Aelia Capitolina, on the ruins. To obliterate any Jewish presence on the Temple Mount, they built a temple to Jupiter on the site. A similar temple, built by the same builder at about the same time, has been discovered at Baalbek, Lebanon.

The Roman architectural practices of the time featured a rectangular basilica, and a polygon structure opposite a courtyard. When this architecture is overlaid on the Temple Mount, it matches the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock exactly.

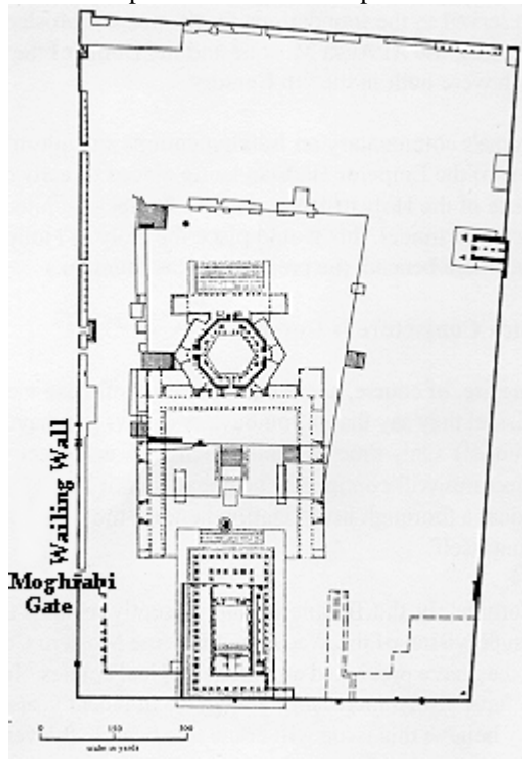
This unique architectural similarity suggests that the Roman Temple to Jupiter may have been on this very site, converted for Christian purposes in the 4th Century, and then served as the foundation for the present Moslem structures, the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, which were built in the 7th Century.



The Roman Temple at Baalbek, Lebanon

Jerome's commentary on Isaiah mentions an equestrian statue of the Emperor Hadrian being placed directly over the site of the Holy of the Holies. If the Baalbek architecture is the correct model, this would place the Holy of the Holies somewhere beneath the present El Kas foundation.

When a map of the Baalbek Temple is overlaid on the present structures of the Temple Mount a striking similarity can be seen:



**Baalbek Temple plan overlaid on the Temple Mount
 Which Conjecture is Correct?**

In Israel it is often said that if you have two Jews you will have three opinions! Only time will tell which of the above views is correct. These conjectures will continue to be debated until Israel is able to conduct a thorough archaeological investigation beneath the Temple Mount itself. (3)

Unfortunately, the Temple Mount presently remains under the supervision of the Waqf, the Supreme Moslem Council, and they have prevented any systematic archeological studies. In fact, the Waqf has gotten increasingly resistive to investigations of any

kind on the Platform - which they consider to be a huge outdoor mosque sacred to Islam.

Who knows what events developing in the history of Jerusalem will one day change the status quo, allowing scientific investigation of the entire Temple Mount, below ground as well as above? Then, according to the hopes and dreams of devout Jews for centuries, a Third Temple can be built on the foundations of the First and Second Temples and temple worship according to the Torah restored.



If Tuvia Sagiv is correct, the Temple site lies due east of the Western Wall, under the clump of trees between the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque.

Addendum: Personal Notes

For more than twenty years one of us (Dolphin) has maintained an active interest in archaeology in Israel, and especially in the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Dr. Asher Kaufman, retired Professor of Physics at the Racah Institute of Physics of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and I began corresponding in the early '80's and have been good friends ever since.

I have followed with great interest Asher's hypothesis that the First and Second Temples were located 110 meters North of the Dome Rock on the Mount. The area in question would put the Holy of Holies and the Foundation Stone under a small Islamic structure known as the Dome of the Tablets or the Dome of the Spirits. Exposed bedrock outcrops beneath this small structure.

Dr. Dan Bahat, former District Archaeologist for Jerusalem, and now Professor at Bar Ilan University, is also a good friend. His arguments, vast knowledge, and experience convince him that the First and Second Temples are located in the immediate vicinity of the Moslem Dome of the Rock. His case is also a persuasive one. Dr. Leen Ritmeyer's PhD thesis involved his research delineating the original 500 cubit square Temple Mount.

Several years ago my good friend (since 1982), Stanley Goldfoot in Jerusalem introduced me to Tuvia Sagiv, a talented and enterprising Tel Aviv architect. Tuvia has spent hundreds of hours and many thousands of dollars of his own money researching the temple locations and has now built a strong and convincing case that the Temples were immediately east of the present Western Wall, with the Holy of Holies probably located under the El Kas Fountain. This fountain lies approximately midway between the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque.

The bedrock drops rapidly just south of the Dome of the Rock. If Tuvia's model is correct the Temples would be lower than the outcropping bedrock under the Dome of the Rock. In fact, Tuvia's recent research suggests the Dome site may have been originally a Canaanite High Place with tombs beneath, and later (until the reforms of Josiah) the location of an Ashoreh pillar.

For further information on the political, religious and archaeological aspects of the Temple Mount in our time, we recommend the briefing package *The Coming Temple* by Chuck Missler, available from [Koinonia House](#). This briefing package contains two audio cassette tapes and 22 pages of notes with 30 diagrams.

Each year for four years (1992-1995) Chuck Missler and Lambert Dolphin co-hosted an annual International Conference on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in conjunction with Chuck Missler's tour group visit to Israel. Video and audio tapes of speakers at these outstanding meetings are also available from Koinonia House and are highly recommended.

For further information on ground penetrating radar and other modern geophysical methods useful in archaeology see [Lambert Dolphin's Library](#).

Nancy DelGrande, a former physicist at Lawrence Livermore Labs, has been for many years the principal advisor to Tuvia Sagiv and others in Israel, concerning the science of Thermal Infra-Red Imaging. An excellent recent paper showing the potential of this sensing technique is to be found at

http://www.llnl.gov/IPandC/opportunities93/08-NDE/NDE_Overview.shtml

Endnotes:

1. Leen Ritmeyer, Biblical Archeological Review, March/April, 1992. Email to Dr. Leen Ritmeyer (ritmeyer@dial.pipex.com).
2. Dr. Asher Selig Kaufman, Biblical Archeological Review, March/April 1983; *Tractate Middot*, Har Yearíeh Press, Jerusalem, 1991.
3. Audio tapes featuring speakers at recent Temple Mount Conferences in Jerusalem defending all three proposed locations for the Temples may be obtained from [Koinonia House](#), PO Box D, Coeur d'alene, Idaho 83816-0347.

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by Lambert Dolphin and Michael Kollen

Email: (dolphin@best.com)

(mkollen@primenet.com)

Lambert Dolphin's Web Pages: (<http://ldolphin.org/>)

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