

WHERE WAS THE TEMPLE LOCATED?

By Dr. Randall Price

Recently there has been a sensational claim made in the book *Temple: Amazing New Discoveries That Change Everything About the Location of Solomon's Temple* that the Temples constructed in Jerusalem were not located on the site that has been traditionally assigned to them, but were situated below the Ophel in the area above the Gihon Spring. The charge is made that there has been a cover-up, or least an unwitting deception, for the past 2,000 years that has prevented the Middle East Conflict from being resolved due to the religious rivalry between Jews and Muslims over the present Temple Mount. The advertising at amazon.com states: "In a book that is being heralded as 'an investigative masterpiece' with 'astounding archaeological and prophetic implications,' TEMPLE: Amazing New Discoveries That Change Everything About the Location of Solomon's Temple, by Robert Cornuke, is sending shockwaves through the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian worlds. Can you imagine the upheaval in political and religious thinking if the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is not the site of Solomon's and Herod's temples? And what if the stones of the Wailing Wall are not what tradition says? In this highly-researched, exciting book, the author proposes from current archaeological excavations and Scriptural corroboration that the true temple location is not where tradition teaches. This is must reading for anyone who wants to fit together the pieces of biblical records, current geo-politics, and prophecy."

These claims and charges were answered previously in reviews of an older book by Ernest Martin, *The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot* (1994). However, it seems this recent iteration requires a new response since the hype surrounding it has produced greater interest than generated by Martin's work and is based on later excavations. Such a response in preparation by Mr. Gordon Franz and will be published shortly and available on our website.

In the meantime, let me say this about Mr. Cornuke's book's claim that his sensational data for a "new location" for the First Temple would "change everything." Even if such a claim were correct (which it isn't), it would not affect the Middle East Conflict or its prophetic preparation in the present time, since the basis of the conflict is not over holy sites, but over the extension of an Islamic Caliphate and which branch of Islam will succeed over the others in achieving it. There are already Islamic states, but not an Islamic State, and that is an apocalyptic vision driving the conquest agenda. Israel is simply caught in the geography of this conquest and as the only non-Muslim entity in the midst of the sea of Islam, is subject to removal or subjugation according to the Islamic program dictated by Shariah law and the prophetic declaration of the last day. Modern Islamic doctrine denies the existence of a Jewish Temple in Israel in the past, and only recognizes the "so-called Temple Mount" as the place of the original mosque built by Abraham (site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque) and site of the binding of Ishmael (site of the Dome of the Rock). Therefore, it makes no difference to the Islamic Waqf or other Islamic authorities if non-Muslims place the location of the Temples in one place or another.

The second point to make is that Mr. Cornuke's location of the First (Solomonic) Temple is irrelevant because wherever it was built it was exactly on the same spot that the Second Temple later occupied: "And some of the heads of fathers' *households*, when they arrived at the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to restore it on its foundation" (Ezra 2:68). In similar wording, Ezra later recalls: "For we are slaves; yet in our bondage, our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem" (Ezra 9:9). The point of each of these passages is to note that the former foundations and ruins of the First Temple was the precise place where the Second Temple was erected. This was not simply a rebuilding, but a continuation of the structure commanded by God in perpetuity (Exodus 25:8) in continuity with the place chosen and

prescribed by God to build the Temple (see Exodus 15:17; Deuteronomy 12: 5-11; 2 Samuel 24:18-25; 1 Chronicles 21:18-29; 1 Kings 6-8; 2 Chronicles 3-7). This history of God's chosen location is summarized by the Chronicler at the time Solomon commenced the First Temple: "Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (2 Chronicles 3:1). Therefore, while evidence of the First Temple's construction is scarce (but still present as Eilat Mazar has demonstrated in her excavations of a Solomonic wall and 7th century AD hoard of Temple-related Jewish gold items in the Ophel and the recent discovery of a First Temple period water reservoir next to the Temple Mount), evidence for the Herodian Second Temple is replete, both in the original documentary sources and the archaeological remains. Therefore, if the evidence for these two sources agrees (and is interpreted accurately), there is little doubt that the location is correct. I will leave the issue of the accuracy of Mr. Cornuke's interpretation of the sources to the forthcoming review by Mr. Franz, but here I would like to briefly review recent data archaeologists have uncovered for the Herodian Second Temple and why they are unified in their declaration that the present Temple Mount is the site of the First and Second Temples. This is also supported by the off-site recovery efforts of the Temple Mount Sifting Project that has amassed an impressive collection of Temple-related artifacts over their ten years of analysis of debris, primarily from the southern end of the Temple Mount. We may add to this that the Orthodox Jewish organizations (such as the Temple Institute) that are preparing for the rebuilding of the Temple agree with the archaeologists and contend the rabbinic sources also affirm this location (such as Mishnah tractate *Middot*; cf. Mishneh Torah *Beth Ha'Behira* 1:3-4).

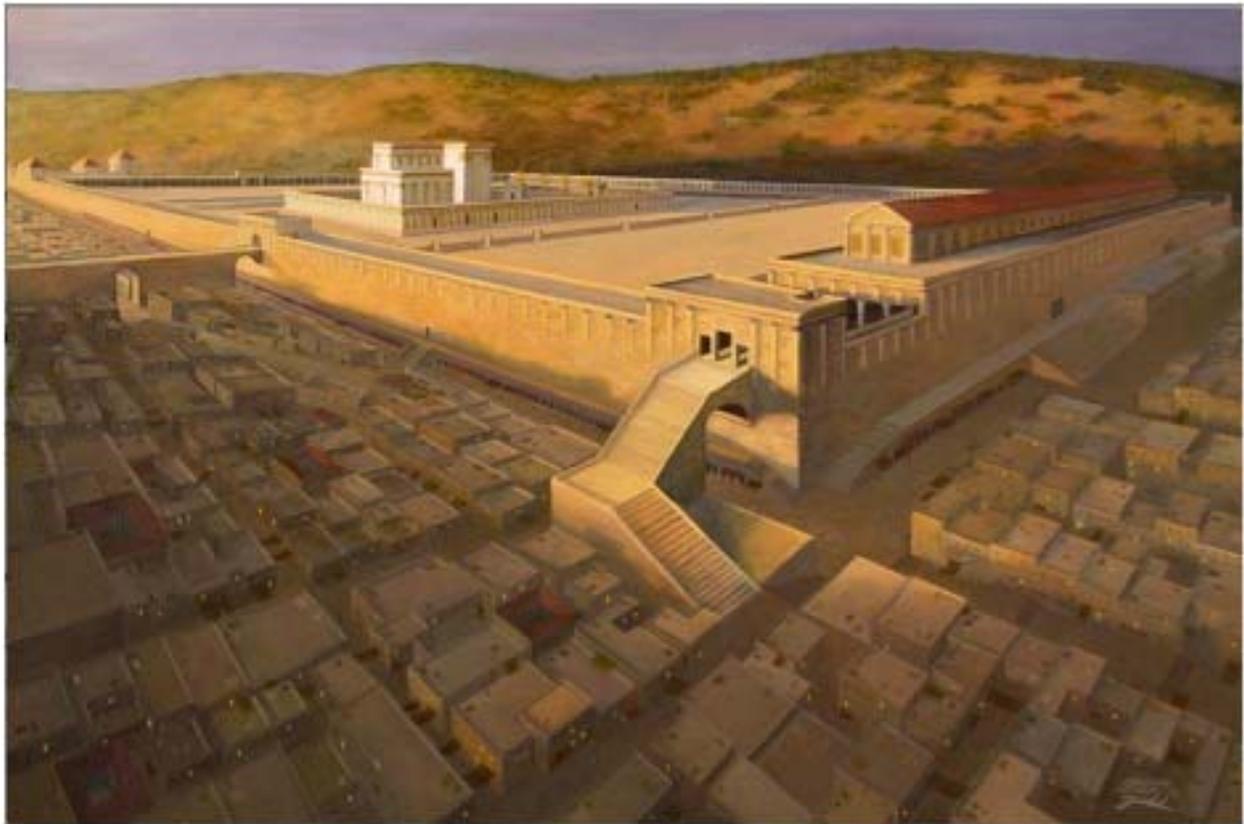
The Herodian Second Temple that occupied the Temple Mount from 20 BC until AD 70 was the central and most prominent structure in the Land of Israel and arguably one of the most impressive structures in the Roman empire. Herod's construction doubled the size of the previous Temple Mount. This extensive platform, with its huge retaining walls to bear the weight of the fill and of the structures to be built above, was trapezoidal in shape (*Antiquities* 8.97; 15.398, 400; 20.221; *War* 5.192). The dimensions of the south wall were 918 feet (280 meters), the west wall 1,591 feet (485 meters), the north wall 1,033 feet (315 meters), and the east wall 1,509 feet (460 meters). The total circumference of this sacred precinct was 5,052 feet (1,540 meters), and the total area 172,000 square yards (144,000 square meters). This made the Temple Mount the largest site of its kind in the ancient world. Its sacred area was twice as large as the monumental Forum Romanum built by Trajan, and three and a half times larger than the combined temples of Jupiter and Astarte-Venus at Baalbek. The surface area of the modern-day Temple Mount between 35 and 36 acres reflects a portion of this Herodian enlargement.¹

The Temple faced east according to the biblical precedent, and to pilgrims approaching from the Mt. of Olives the Temple's white polished limestone and imported marble gave it the appearance of a great snow-clad mountain. Anyone waking in the city saw a glowing golden mountain as its limestone absorbed the morning rays of the sun. Once the sun had fully risen, the sun reflected off the elevated upper exterior of the structure that was covered with gold. Josephus observed that Herod had applied so much gold that when the sun shone on it it blinded those who looked at it (*War* 5.5; 6.222). Walking the pedestrian street along the western side of the Temple Mount or striding within the Royal Stoa, Jews and Gentiles alike beheld highly decorated and brightly painted (red, yellow, blue, and purple) architecture. Recording the Jewish reaction to this splendor, the rabbis wrote "whoever has not seen Herod's Temple has not seen a beautiful building in his life," (*Sukkot* 51:2).

This was the magnificent building that Jesus entered for his dedication on the eighth day of his life (Lk. 2:21-39), visited three times a year in keeping with the custom for Jewish males living outside Judea (cf.

¹ For visual reconstructions of the Herodian Temple see Randall Price, *Rose Guide to the Temple* (Glendale, CA: Rose Publishing, 2012) and Leen Ritmeyer, *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006).

Lk. 2:41-49), and in which he completed the last week of his life daily preaching in its courts (Matt. 26:55; Lk. 21:37). Throughout his lifetime the Temple was continually being added to and remodeled so that each time Jesus visited the structure he was greeted with some new improvement. It is unclear how long the construction of the Temple and sacrificial area took, but Josephus records that the construction of Temple took a year and a half and that the stoa and the outer courts took eight years (*Antiquities* 15.11.5-6; 420-21). According to the statement of the Jewish authorities recorded in John 2:20, continued work on the Temple's structures had taken 46 years to that point (cf. *Sanhedrin* 41.2 and *'Aboda Zarah* 8.2) and Josephus reports that the Temple complex was still receiving further embellishments and repairs until the Jewish Revolt broke out in AD 66 (*Antiquities* 20.219). This fact, coupled with the magnificence of the Temple just described, helps us understand the Gospel accounts recording the disciples' pride in offering Jesus a private tour of the Temple (Matt. 24:1-2; Mk. 13:1-2; Lk. 21:5-6) and explains their astonishment at his statement that such an immense structure so much the focus of Jewish life and faith was to be completely destroyed (Matt. 24:3; Mk. 13:3-4; Lk. 21:7). Nevertheless, Jesus referred to the Temple as his "Father's house" (Lk. 2:49; Jn. 2:16) and it is recorded that "zeal for [the Temple] consumed him" (Jn. 2:17).



Herodian Temple (looking east) showing Herodian street along western and southern walls (Randall Price owns this original painting)

Evidence of Herodian Construction

The delapidated condition of Zerubbabel's Second Temple and Herod's plans to enlarge it on a scale equal to his ambition forced the complete dismantling of the former structure (*Antiquities* 15.391). For this reason most archaeologists do not expect any structures from either the first or second (Zerubbabel) Temples to have survived under the present buildings on the Temple Mount. This, however, does not

apply to parts of the retaining walls or the area of the Ophel that lay immediately to the south of the Temple Mount where remains from previous structures have been discovered. Nevertheless, part of a wall (possibly from the “house of oil” in the First Temple) was observed in a trench during construction work by the Waqf on the Temple Mount (see remarks on pages xxx). Pottery shards recovered from near this wall dated to the 8th century BC and possibly date the structure to the time of Hezekiah.

To build the Temple Herod brought in 10,000 skilled workers and employed 1,000 priests to serve as masons and carpenters in order to comply with Jewish law that required the construction of the Temple to be the work of the priests (*Ant.* 15.11.2; 389-90). Ancient quarries provide evidence of the source for the materials used for this construction. On the northern side of the Old City is a quarry known as Solomon’s Quarry and Zedekiah’s Cave that was used during the Herodian period and one dating to the end of the Second Temple period was found during a construction project in Jerusalem’s Shmuel HaNavi Street. The immense size of the stones suggests strongly that they were for use in the construction of Herodian projects in Jerusalem, including the walls of the Temple. Across the Hinnom valley from the Temple Mount at a site known as Ketef Hinnom, Gabriel Barkay excavated a First Temple tomb complex that had been used as a quarry in the Roman period (see remarks on Numbers 6:24-26). Several Second Temple period quarries (part of an ancient “city of quarries”) have also been discovered in the area of northeast Jerusalem’s ultraorthodox neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo. In total, archaeologists uncovered an area of around 11,000 square feet of quarry, as well as ancient pick axes and wedges. Visible at the quarry site are rock masses in various stages of quarrying, including some in a preliminary stage of rock-cutting prior to detachment. Most of the quarried stones weighed some tens to hundreds of tons and the largest was 26 feet in length. No stones this size had ever been found in an archaeological excavation anywhere in the country, except in the walls of the Temple Mount. The large number of outlines of the stone cuts in the white limestone at the quarry showed that this was a massive public program that had employed hundreds of workers at the site, exactly what is described in the sources for an imperial construction project such as Herod’s. Further proof came from artifacts found at the site such as iron stakes used to split the stone and datable finds like pottery and coins. These confirmed a date around 19 BC, the time of Herod’s expansion of the Temple. The use of such immense stones allowed construction without the need for cement or plaster, and maintained the stability of the structure of the walls of the Temple Mount for thousands of years. Josephus had described the stones used for the Temple’s construction as “hard and white” (*Antiquities* 15.11.3; 392) and of such strength that during the Roman assault on the Temple the military’s battering rams were unable to cause a breach in the outer wall (*War* 6.4.1; 220-22). The exceptional stones in the quarry gave evidence that this was indeed the site from which the stones for the Temple had been taken. Herod used a thousand oxen to transport the stones from the quarry to the construction site and archaeologists also uncovered a part of the ancient main road to Jerusalem used for this transport some 300 feet from the quarry. This road was located only two miles (four kilometers) from the Temple Mount.



Second Temple quarry at Ramat Shlomo

Evidence of Temple-related Structures

On the northwestern side of the Temple Mount Herod built the Antonia Fortress over the remains of the former Seleucid-period *Baris* to guard this weaker location and provide a watch and a station for troops to control the crowds on the Temple Mount. To the north of this structure he constructed an open-air reservoir called the Strouthion Pool that was originally built as part of an open-air water conduit by the Hasmoneans. On the northeastern side he constructed another reservoir pool known as *Birket Israel* (“the Pool of Israel”) to serve as a public cistern and a defense for the northeastern corner of the Temple Mount. The remains of most of these structures have been discovered and those of the Strouthion Pool can be viewed today near the exit of the Western Wall Tunnel and beneath the Sisters of Zion Convent. From the outside, a portion of the Antonia Fortress is visible within the structure of the building housing an Islamic boys school.

The most visible remains of a structure associated with the Herodian Temple are sections of the massive retaining walls still extant today. Herodian ashlar and masonry can be seen in the lower courses of the southern wall and eastern wall on either side of the Islamic period Golden Gate. However, the most impressive example is the exposed section of the Western (or Wailing) Wall (Hebrew, *Kotel*), which is more than 1,500 feet in length (north to south) and 900 feet in width (east to west). Its height is approximately 50 feet above the modern plaza with another course of stones continuing down at least another 50 feet (more in the southern end than the northern end). In the 1990’s a tunnel was opened alongside the underground course of stones to enable tourists to view the full extent of the Herodian construction. In the course exposed in this tunnel is one of the most massive of the foundation stones yet discovered. Its measurements are 45 feet (13.70 meters) x 11.6 feet (3.19 meters) x 14-16 feet (4.20-4.90 meters) and weighed nearly 600 tons.

Alongside the Western Wall wall (and also the southern wall) Israeli archaeologist Benjamin Mazar excavated revealed many structures related to the Herodian Second Temple including the great western staircase for entrance to the Temple known as Robinson’s Arch (due its initial discovery and report in the 19th century by British archaeologist Edward Robinson), and a monumental staircase stretching almost half a mile uphill from the Pool of Siloam to the Huldah Gates at the southern entrance to the Temple

carried the Jewish population (including Jesus and his disciples) through the Huldah Gates and onto the Temple Mount. Also here was found a public building that housed *miqva'ot* (ritual immersion pools) that were used by Jews requiring purification to enter the Temple precincts. These were mentioned in Acts 2:41 as the place of immersion for Jewish believers in Jesus during the Feast of Pentecost. Traces of gates from Islamic period construction (now sealed) called the Double and Triple Gates marked the sites of the Huldah Gates and the subterranean passages that still lay beyond them. Inside the interior of the Double Gate entrance archaeologists found Herodian columns that had supported portions of the ornate roof design (sections of which were recovered from the debris) and that had given the site the New Testament name “the Beautiful Gate” (Acts 3:1).



Inscription “to the place of trumpeting”



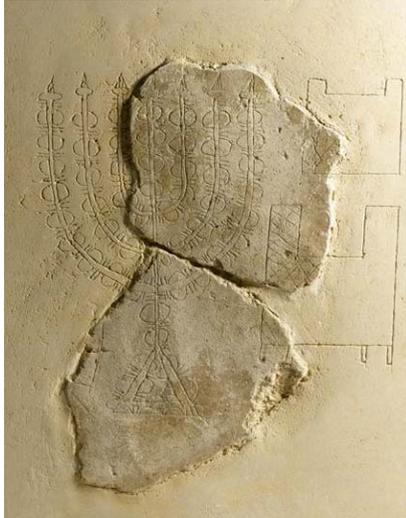
Artist conception of trumpeting place

Haifa University archaeologist Ronny Reich continued the excavations along the southwestern side of the wall and reached the ancient street 32 feet (10 m) wide and paved with large slabs up to a foot thick. The street was lined with shops (where Jews bought sacrificial animals for the Temple) and archaeologists found the remains of merchant activity such as weights and coins used for transactions. Also found here was the landing for Robinson’s Arch, more *miqva'ot* and an inscribed stone that instructed the priests where to stand to blow the trumpets signaling the beginning of the Sabbath. It had originally been located high above on the top corner of the southwestern wall. Within the context of these architectural structures was found a wealth of artifacts that demonstrated Jewish daily life in and around the Temple. Also of great significance was the discovery of the lid of a stone sarcophagus bearing the Hebrew inscription: “... *Ben HaCohen HaGadol ...*” (“son of the High Priest”). This name is known from the Second Temple literature as the son of the High Priest who had served in the Temple. One of the more moving archaeological finds for Jewish people were piles of Herodian stones still lying on this ancient street where they had landed after being thrown down from the western side of the Temple complex by Roman soldiers during their destruction of the Temple on the 9th of the month of Av, AD 70. Most of the stones weighed 2–4 tons each, but some were in excess of 15 tons. The force of impact had caved in the flagstones that formed the street, exposing an underground sewer channel, first excavated in 2007 by Reich and his assistant Eli Shukrun to its exit point deep in the Kidron Valley.



Herodian street with shops (left and right) and fallen ashlar stones (upper middle)

This sewer channel was under an aqueduct that connected the western plaza of the Temple Mount to the City of David, but according to Josephus (need reference), it had been used as an escape tunnel by Jews fleeing from the Romans. Inside this “escape tunnel” evidence was found of Jewish refugee life including cooking pots, oil lamps, a key, First revolt coins, and the remains of a 60 cm long iron Roman sword inside a decorated leather scabbard. In 2011 archaeologists found here a stone slab with an etching that depicted the Menorah that was used in the Temple’s holy place. It was probably sketched by a priest who had seen the sacred vessel while on duty and had taken refuge in the “tunnel” with other Jews. It is especially important because this sketch, like one found in the Jewish Quarter from the is period, shows the quadrapod base of the Menorah, a detail debated by scholars because the depiction of the Temple Menorah on the relief inside the Arch of Titus’ Triumph in the Roman Forum is of an octagonal base bearing mythological images.



Menorah from Jewish Quarter



Menorah from sewer tunnel



Menorah on Arch of Titus

In 2011 in Reich's and Shukron's excavation, soil sifted from the Herodian street beneath the Robinson's Arch produced a small stone seal with a two line Aramaic inscription אֲדָכָ לִיהָ ("pure") לִיהָ ("to/for God"). This seal certifying the ritual purity of an item to be used in the Second Temple is the kind of seal mentioned in the Mishnah (*Shekalim* 5:1-5). It is also recorded in the Gemara (TB *Shabbat* 2:21) that the only cruse of oil that was discovered in the Temple after the victory of the Maccabees over the Greeks, "lay with the seal of the High Priest," a seal that indicated the oil was pure and acceptable for use in the Temple. Such a seal would have been carried by Temple priest to identify items qualified as ritually pure.



"Pure for God" seal for Temple related items

Evidence from Temple-related Artifacts

Artifacts coming from the area of the Temple are extremely rare since archaeologists have never been allowed to excavate at this site. Even so, in 1871 French archaeologist Charles Clermont-Ganneau discovered in rubble from the Temple Mount a large limestone block with a seven-line Greek inscription. The translation revealed this was a warning against entering the ritually pure area of the Temple courts. In the Jewish sources, this stone balustrade (Hebrew *Soreg*) was said to have separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Women and was the main barrier beyond which Gentiles and the

ceremonially unclean were forbidden to pass (*Kelim* 1.8). According to Josephus it stood 5 feet 2 inches (1.57 meters) high. To insure this boundary was not improperly breached, large stone inscriptions in Greek and Latin that threatened death to violators were posted at each entrance to the courts (*Antiquities* 15.471). In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul was reported to have been accused of violating this prohibition because he had been earlier seen in the company of Trophimus, a non-Jew, and it was assumed he had brought him into the Temple (Acts 21:27-31). The riot generated from this accusation resulted in Paul's arrest and subsequent Roman trials (Acts 21:11, 32-28:31). This was the most complete example of this Temple warning sign known as the Soreg Inscription, which was taken to Istanbul and today is exhibited in the Museum of the Ancient Orient. A fragmentary example of this inscription was discovered near the Lion's Gate in Jerusalem and is on exhibit in the Israel Museum.

Put a photo here of this stone inscription from the Istanbul Museum

From the Temple Mount, but removed from the original context, are artifacts that have been recovered from construction debris by the Temple Mount Sifting Project. Among the some 6,000 coin finds from are the earliest Judean (Yehud) coin from the Persian period, coins of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175 – 163 BC) who desecrated the Temple, and hundreds of common Jewish coins from the Hasmonean and Second Temple periods. Of special note was the discovery of silver and bronze shekel coins minted by Jews during the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70) that contained inscriptions such as: "Holy Jerusalem," and "For the Freedom of Zion." Scores of iron arrowheads were also found as evidence of this Jewish war against the Romans. Among the inscribed finds is a clay bullae with an ancient Hebrew inscription: "Belonging to Gaalyahu son of Imer," who may have been a priest or high official, and a potsherd decorated with a menorah (Jewish ceremonial lamp) such as was used in the Temple. During Randall Price's group's work in the project (sifting dirt collected from the valley below the Golden Gate) there was discovered a murex shell, the very shell used by the Temple priests to dye parts of their priestly garments, unique tiles (*Opus Sectile*) that created a wave-pattern and came from one of the courts of the Temple, and a clay bullae containing an Israelite name written in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Egyptians had influence on Judean kings and officials throughout the First Temple period, beginning with Solomon who made an alliance with the pharaoh of Egypt and had an Egyptian wife (1 Kings 9:16; 11:1). Many Egyptian scarabs were also found in the Temple Mount rubble. In addition pieces of fresco from buildings within the Temple precincts, a column of a Doric Capital that may have been part of the Royal Stoa, a fragment of a sculptured stone engraved with an Acanthus Leaf (an Herodian style that may have been from the Temple itself). It must be remembered that all of these artifacts came from the Temple Mount and that still lying in rubble on the Temple Mount today are hundreds of columns, decorated building stones, and portions of other monumental structures that were part of the Temple complex, but are under the control of the Muslim authorities who continue to do construction and discard these such priceless relics as irrelevant junk from an unimportant past.

Another artifact found in excavations directed by Hebrew University archaeologist Eilat Mazar outside the southern wall area of the Temple Mount is a gold medallion, four inches in diameter with a menorah depicted on it. Though part of a late Byzantine-era (7th century AD) hoard, which included thirty-six gold coins, this adornment for a Torah-scroll (probably for a synagogue located in the area) reflects the Jewish continued reverence to the Temple Mount, even though destroyed centuries before.



Torah Scroll Medallion found near the Temple Mount

For Further Evidence See

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