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LITERARY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE LOCATION OF JERUSALEM'S JEWISH TEMPLE(S)

CRAIG A. EVANS AND D. SCOTT STRIPLING

Recently, it has become popular in certain circles to assert that the Jewish Temple(s) did not originally stand atop the historical Temple Mount, known today as Haram esh Sharif, but rather stood on the lower ground to the south in the City of David, covering the Gihon Spring and extending west between the Stepped Stone Structure and the Ophel (Proposal 1 – Martin's hypothesis) or north of the Stepped Stone Structure and south of the Ophel (Proposal 2 – Cornuke's hypothesis). Proponents for Proposal 2 insist that the Temple precincts housed a spring, but their schematics show a smaller Temple to the west of the Gihon spring. Advocates for this revisionist view appeal to literature from the Late Classical period, archaeological remains, and biblical passages to support their case. In the discussion that follows we review all the pertinent evidence. This includes (1) Late Classical literature, (2) historical and archaeological evidence, and (3) biblical data.

KEY WORDS: Temple, Temple Mount, City of David, Gihon Spring, Letter of Aristeas

LATE CLASSICAL LITERARY EVIDENCE

Several Late Classical writers refer to Jerusalem and/or the city's famous Temple. Some of them refer to water within the city, perhaps even within the Temple precincts themselves. Of all the testimonies on offer it is the description found in the *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*, written ca. 150 BCE, that has received the most attention with regard to a spring of water in the Temple precincts.¹ The author of *Aristeas*, whom we shall call Pseudo-Aristeas (hereafter Ps.-Aristeas), digresses in his account of the making of a Greek translation of the Hebrew law of Moses by describing at length Israel, Jerusalem, and its magnificent Temple (§§83–120). The most important section for our purposes is as follows:

When we reached the region we beheld the city situated in the center of all Judaea upon a mountain which rises to a lofty height.⁸⁴ Upon its crest stood the Temple in its splendor; and there were three encompassing walls, above seventy cubits

in height and of a breadth and length in keeping with the structure of the edifice. The whole was built with a lavishness and sumptuousness beyond all precedent. From the construction of the doorway and its fastenings to the door-posts and the solidity of the lintel it was obvious that no expense had been spared. The style of the curtain corresponded in every respect to the door; especially when the fabric was kept in unceasing motion by the current of wind beneath, since, the current being from below, the curtain bulged out from the bottom to its highest extent, the spectacle was highly agreeable and hard to tear oneself from. The altar was built in keeping with the size of the place and of the offerings consumed upon it by fire, and the ascent was on a similar scale. The ascent was gradual, from a proper regard for decency, and the ministering priests were swathed in "coats of fine linen" reaching to the ankles. The edifice looks toward the east, and its back to the west. The entire

¹ Dates for this letter range from the mid-third century BCE to the first century CE, but most scholars date it

to the second half of the second century BCE (Trotter 2019: 140, 159–60).

floor is paved with stones and slopes downward to the appropriate places, to admit the flushing with water in order to wash away the blood of the sacrifices; for many myriads of beasts are offered on the days of the festivals. The water supply is inexhaustible, for an abundant natural spring pours forth within (the Temple area), and there are furthermore marvelous underground reservoirs passing description, to a distance of five stades, as was pointed out (to me), round the foundations of the Temple; of these each had innumerable pipes, so that the various channels converged at the several reservoirs. The floors and sides of these reservoirs, they explained, were overlaid with lead, and above them a great mass of plaster was laid, everything being made secure. There are numerous outlets, they said, at the foot to the altar, invisible to all except those engaged in the ministrations, so that the vast accumulation of sacrificial blood is cleansed away in the twinkling of an eye. I am myself convinced of the system of reservoirs, and I shall show how my belief was confirmed. They took me more than four stades out of the city, and at a certain place bade me bend over and listen to the rushing noise of the meeting of the waters. Thus the size of the cisterns was made evident to me, as I have described them (*Aristeas* §83b–91).²

The claim that “an abundant natural spring pours forth within (πηγῆς ἔσωθεν πολυρρύτου φυσικῶς ἐπιρρεούσης)” (§89)—that is, *within the Temple precincts*, as the context suggests—could

² The translation is based on Gruen 2013: 2731–32. We have also consulted the translations in Andrews 1913: 103; Thackeray 1918: 40–42; Meecham 1932: 32–34; Shutt 1985: 18–19; and Wright 2015: 193, 200; as well as the German translations in Wendland 1900b: 12–13; Riessler 1928: 204–5; and Meisner 1973: 56–57. For Greek text, see Schmidt 1869: 269–70; Wendland 1900a: 25–27; Thackeray 1914: 566–67; and Meecham 1935: 15–16.

support the argument that the Jewish Temple was not located atop the historical Temple Mount, where there is no spring, but rather lower, to the south, where the Gihon Spring is located.³ If the Temple were located in the lower part of the city, then perhaps one could speak of a natural spring within the sacred precincts. But can this claim in *Aristeas* be trusted?

In the nineteenth century scholars were unsure what to make of the claims and descriptions found in *Aristeas*. For example, Moriz Schmidt admitted that it was far from clear to him how to assess the historical value of the writing.⁴ A generation later, H. Vincent (1908, 1909) tried to make the case that the vivid details of *Aristeas* pointed to eyewitness testimony and so shed helpful light on the Jerusalem of late antiquity, but not many historians have found his argument convincing.

While open to the possibility of accurate material in *Aristeas*, George Adam Smith (1907: 83–86) noted that there simply was no evidence of a spring of water within the old city itself. Herbert Andrews (1913: 103 n. 89) agreed, adding that the claim of the existence of a fountain within the Temple precincts is “very doubtful.” *Aristeas* should be viewed as a “romance,” opines Henry Barclay Swete (1914: 22). Norman Bentwich (1919: 205) describes Ps.-Aristeas as a “literary craftsman,” not an eyewitness. He adds (1919: 209) that as a written work *Aristeas* is a “specimen of the didactic novel.” Richard Ottley (1920: 33) states that the author’s “history is faulty,” while Moses Hadas (1951: 5) speaks of “errors and anachronisms.”⁵ Resisting the tide and appealing to F.J. Foakes

³ Pelletier (1962: 146 n. 3) thinks *Aristeas* §89 may have in mind the Gihon Spring.

⁴ Schmidt 1869: 252: “Die Frage nach der Glaubwürdigkeit des Mannes liegt mir fern.”

⁵ Additional *errata* are pointed out on pp. 7–8. Hadas finds that the author of *Aristeas* has constructed “an imaginary picture based upon various and perhaps discrepant sources” (p. 14).

Jackson,⁶ Henry Meecham (1932: 177), contends that Ps.-Aristeas “moves with a sure foot” when it comes to topography. But Meecham (1932: 179) then has to admit that Ps.-Aristeas makes a “perplexing” blunder in saying the Jordan River flows to the Mediterranean (§§116–117)! Someone with firsthand knowledge of Judea could not be so woefully ignorant of something that most Jewish children would have known. Ongoing study of the topography of the Jordan Valley, Jerusalem, and the area surrounding the historical Temple Mount has provided no support for Meecham’s defense of *Aristeas* unless one accepts that the author had in mind a stream which splits from the Jordan River and drains into the Mediterranean Sea.⁷ In our view, this idea conflicts with the plain meaning of the text. We base our assessment on what Ps.-Aristeas said, not speculation about what he may have meant. Although fiction and errors, here and there, do not rule out the possibility of the presence of credible, factual material, they do shift the burden of proof onto those who appeal to this work for support of a theory that finds little or no support elsewhere. Further considerations add to our skepticism.

Today it is universally acknowledged that the *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates* is a pseudepigraphon: Ps.-Aristeas “assumes the voice of a non-Jewish author.”⁸ Almost all modern scholars believe that the author was Jewish (and not a Greek official in the court of King Ptolemy) and probably a resident of Alexandria, that he wrote about one century after the time he describes, and that his eyewitness account of a visit to Jerusalem, where the Temple,

the gushing spring, cisterns, and water channels were observed, is fictitious. In his summary of the evidence—both rabbinic and Josephan—Shmuel Safrai (1976: 884–85) speaks of cisterns and pools in and around the Temple precincts, but no fountain or spring.⁹ John Barclay (1996: 149 n. 53) speaks of the author’s “wild inaccuracies” that “make one doubt that Aristeas had ever been to Judaea.” Sylvie Honigman (2004: 73–77) also thinks it unlikely that Ps.-Aristeas had ever visited Jerusalem. Russell Gmirkin (2006: 80) aptly describes Ps.-Aristeas as providing his readers with “a detailed, seemingly firsthand, if often incongruously inaccurate description of Judea, Jerusalem, and its temple.” Erich Gruen (2008: 141; 2013: 2711–12) classifies *Aristeas* as an example of “utopian literature,” which was common in the Hellenistic era. Ps.-Aristeas has, says Gruen (2013: 2711), infused his narrative “with colorful inventions and embellishments.” In his recent commentary on *Aristeas* Benjamin Wright III (2015: 37) rejects the author’s claim that he was an eyewitness. Rather, says Wright, Ps.-Aristeas plays the role of the “ideal Greek tourist” (2015: 195), whose “descriptions of the Temple and of Jerusalem in the travelogue bear little resemblance to what we know of these locales from other sources. The author certainly was not the eyewitness he claims to be” (2011: 303–4).

If *Aristeas* is a fiction, filled with anachronisms and inaccuracies, what was its purpose? Long ago Andrews (1913: 84) saw *Aristeas* as an apologetic designed to commend to Gentiles the Jewish people and their faith. Victor Tcherikover (1958: 60–63) believed the

⁶ Foakes Jackson (1926: 30) acknowledges that *Aristeas* is spurious but believes that it “is nevertheless a valuable document for its description of ancient Jerusalem.”

⁷ For an alternative viewpoint from the traditional understanding of the location of the Kishon River and how it drains from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, see McKinney (Lexham).

⁸ Wright 2013: 42. Honigman (2013: 213–30) shows that Ps.-Aristeas clearly demonstrates that he is an “insider” to the Hellenistic culture of Egypt. Meecham

(1932: 177–78) himself concedes the pseudonymous character of *Aristeas*.

⁹ In reference to Safrai’s two-page summary of the evidence, Natalio Fernández Marcos (1983: 33 n. 89) laments that Safrai “no tiene en cuenta este precioso testimonio de la *Carta de Aristeas*.” Fernández Marcos’s assessment of the testimony of *Aristeas* as “precious” is curiously atavistic. Safrai made no use of the testimony of *Aristeas* in his discussion of the Temple and water resources because he rightly recognized its dubious character.

apologetic thrust of *Aristeas*, which he describes as “an ardent panegyric” (1958: 63), was intended for the Jewish people, not Gentiles. Rowland James Shutt (1985: 11) wonders if part of the author’s purpose was to find a cultural compromise between Jew and Greek. In the updated version of Emil Schürer’s classic work (1986: 677) we are told that *Aristeas* “is a panegyric on Jewish Law, Jewish wisdom, and the Jewish name in general.” Against Tcherikover, Barclay (1996: 149) believes Ps.-Aristeas “seeks understanding and tolerance from interested Gentiles.” Barclay (1996: 148) admits, though, that it is “peculiarly difficult to discern the intention of a pseudonymous document.” Similarly, Gruen (2008: 41) concedes that the “question of motive admits of no easy answer.” We can agree with Gruen that at least part of the writing’s purpose is to “express the preeminence of Jewish values” (2013: 2714). Wright (2015: 62–67) believes the primary audience was Jewish and the purpose of Ps.-Aristeas was two-fold: (1) to reinforce Jewish identity in the Hellenistic world and (2) to construct a myth of origins for the primary basis on which such a Jewish identity could be built.¹⁰

Around 100 BCE the Hasmonean rulers constructed an aqueduct, generally referred to as “the lower aqueduct,” and ca. 80 years later Herod the Great built a second aqueduct known as “the upper aqueduct.” These aqueducts transported water from “Solomon’s Pools” near Bethlehem to the historical Temple Mount. Amihai Mazar (2002: 211–44) and Amit and Gibson (2014: 9–41) traced the course of the aqueducts, following the footprints of Warren, Wilson, Schick, and others. Wilson’s Arch carried the final section of the lower aqueduct across the Tyropean Valley and into the labyrinth of subterranean cisterns within the historical Temple Mount.¹¹ The upper aqueduct took a similar course as the earlier aqueduct but at a higher level (Amit and Gibson 2014: 13). It also

terminated at the historical Temple Mount. Billig and Dolinka recovered a coin of Agrippa I (40–44 CE) in the core plaster of a section of the aqueduct near Arnona to the south of Jerusalem (2012: 250), thus establishing a first century *CE terminus post quem* for that section of the aqueduct. However, Amit (2009: 96–100) demonstrated that the surviving section near the Mamila Pool, a short distance from the historical Temple Mount, likely dated to the late first century BCE.

Ps.-Aristeas wrote his now famous letter at least one generation before the Hasmonean construction of the lower aqueduct, so he does not have this water source in mind. However, the possibility exists that the abundant water from the Herodian period upper aqueduct as well as the lower aqueduct influenced Tacitus’s impressions which we will consider below.

From all this what becomes very clear is that *Aristeas* is anything but a piece of well-informed history that accurately and fairly describes the *realia* of Jerusalem and her Temple. The document’s pseudonymity and outlandish claims only compound the difficulty. Almost everything that is reported must be taken with a grain of salt, including the claim that a fountain or spring gushed in the very Temple precincts themselves. Nevertheless, some think other Late Classical texts may support this claim.

The most important of these texts is found in Tacitus. Writing in the early second century CE, the Roman historian says Jerusalem

stands on an eminence ... for the two hills that rise to a great height had been included within the walls that had been skillfully built ... The Temple was built like a citadel, with walls of its own, which were constructed with more care and effort than any of the rest; the very colonnades about the Temple made a splendid defense. Within the enclosure is an ever-flowing

¹⁰ Hacham (2005) wonders if Ps.-Aristeas was attempting to create a new Exodus story.

¹¹ Uziel et al. (2019: 241, 254, 262) recently confirmed the initial construction of Wilson’s Arch, Stratum 7C, in the Early Roman period.

spring [*fons perennis aquae*]; in the hills are subterranean excavations, with pools and cisterns for holding rain-water. The founders of the city had foreseen that there would be many wars¹² (*Historiae* 5.11–12)

What Tacitus says here closely conforms to what Ps.-Aristeas wrote some three centuries earlier. One wonders if we have here in Tacitus an echo of *Aristeas*. The “eminence” of Tacitus matches the mountain and lofty height of *Aristeas* §83. The skillfully-built walls approximate the well-built walls of *Aristeas* §84. The enclosed Temple and the spring within its precincts also approximate what is said in *Aristeas*. Hamilton Fyfe (1912: 215 n. 2) suspects that lying behind the reference to the “ever-flowing spring” is the “metaphorical prophecy that a fount of living water would issue from the Sanctuary.” This prophecy will be considered shortly. Moore (1931: 194 n. 4) thinks Tacitus has in mind the Pool of Siloam. Although it is uncertain that Tacitus had read *Aristeas* or was directly familiar with Jewish Scripture and interpretive tradition, he was familiar with the history of the Jewish war (66–70 CE) and knew of the oracle about a world ruler expected to arise in the east, perhaps in Judea (cf. *Historiae* 5.13.2).¹³ It is therefore possible he was familiar with some of the legendary traditions about Jerusalem and her Temple. The possibility exists that the abundance of water from the upper and lower aqueducts may have led Tacitus to conclude that a spring issued forth from the Temple precincts, but the visual prominence of the aqueduct would have been difficult for him to overlook. Either way, he was clearly referring to the abundance of

water on the Temple Mount, not the Antonia Fortress, the revisionist interpretation of the Haram esh Sharif.

Three more relevant fragments are preserved by the fourth-century Church historian Eusebius. In the first he appeals to a fragment of the *Schoinometrēsis Syriae* (“Land-survey of Syria”) preserved by Polyhistor,¹⁴ who says with reference to Jerusalem: “in that place there is a fount from which water spouts out in abundance [ὑπάρχειν δὲ καὶ πηγὴν ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ ὕδωρ δαψιλὲς ἀναβλύζουσαν]” (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.36.1). The fountain (πηγή) of the *Schoinometrēsis Syriae* could be the mythical fountain (πηγή) of *Aristeas* and the spring (*fons*) of Tacitus, but the statement “within that place” refers to the city itself, not the Temple precincts. Perhaps Polyhistor’s source envisaged the Pool of Siloam. The Herodian upper aqueduct was not yet built. Polyhistor wrote in the early first century BCE, and his source, *Schoinometrēsis Syriae*, dated to the second century BCE before construction of the lower aqueduct.¹⁵

The second relevant passage we find in Eusebius again comes from Polyhistor, who this time is quoting Herennius Philo of Byblos:

Philo also says in his *On Jerusalem* that there is a fountain [κρήνην εἶναι], and that it is dried up in winter but becomes full in summer. ... “far-shining shows the blessings of that wonder-working fount [κρήνης τηλεφανῆ δεικνυσιν ὑπέρτατα θάμβεα λαῶν].” ... Then again, concerning the high priest’s fountain and the canal that carries off the water, he proceeds as follows: “A headlong stream by channels underground; the pipes pour forth [αἰπὺ δ’ ἄρ’ ἐκπτύουσι

¹² Latin text and English translation are based on Moore 1931: 194–95. For notes, see Stern 1980: 57.

¹³ Tacitus may have learned of this prophecy from the writings of Josephus (*Wars* 6.289–291, 312–315). However, this oracle was so well known in the Middle East and the Mediterranean world that he may have learned of it from other sources. Suetonius also knew of the oracle (*Vespasianus* 4.5); also Appian, *Historia*

Romana 22 (apud Zanolis, *Epitome Historiarum* 11.16).

¹⁴ Stern (1974: 137) thinks the *Schoinometrēsis Syriae* was perhaps authored by Xenophon of Lampsacus.

¹⁵ For an assessment of what can be known of Alexander Polyhistor’s life, including his numerous writings, see Freudenthal 1875: 16–35. The medieval *Suidas* asserts: “Alexander (Polyhistor) wrote more books than one can count.”

διὰ χθονὸς ὑδροχόοισι σωλῆνες].”¹⁶ (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.37.1–3)

Although Philo does not explicitly state that the “wonder-working fount” was located in the Temple precincts, his description of it as the “high priest’s fountain” could imply that. Here again we seem to have familiarity with the idealist description found in *Aristeas*, who speaks of canals, underground channels, and pipes. However, Philo says the fountain is dried up part of the year, which is not consistent with *Aristeas* §89, which says the spring is “inexhaustible.”

The third testimony from Eusebius is taken from the *Historia Antiochi* by Timochares:

Timochares says in the *History of Antiochus* that Jerusalem has a circumference of 40 stadia. It is hard to capture her, as she is enclosed on all sides by abrupt ravine. The whole city has an abundance of running waters, so that the gardens are also irrigated by the waters streaming from the city [ἔλγην δὲ τὴν πόλιν ὕδασι καταρρεῖσθαι, ὥστε καὶ τοὺς κήπους ἐκ τῶν ἀπορρέοντων ὑδάτων ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἄρδεσθαι]. An area extending to a distance of 40 stadia from the city is waterless; beyond the 40 stadia the land becomes moist again.¹⁷ (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.35.1)

We again have a description that is reminiscent of the passages already considered. “The whole city has an abundance of running waters,” we are told. These waters stream “from the city.” But the geography in this passage lacks specificity. Outside the city, it is said, the land is “waterless.” This is more or less true if one is speaking of the arid wilderness to the east and southeast of Jerusalem, but in what sense does the land become “moist again” by moving further from the city in those directions? West of

Jerusalem is not waterless wilderness, so moving in this direction does not resolve the problem.

And finally, we have a relevant passage in Strabo’s *Geographica*. The geographer tells his readers that

Moses persuaded a large body of right-minded persons to accompany him to the place where Jerusalem now stands. He easily obtained possession of it, as the spot was not such as to excite jealousy, nor for which there could be any fierce contention; for it is rocky, and, although well supplied with water [αὐτὸ μὲν εὐδρον], it is surrounded by a barren and waterless territory. The space within [the city] is 60 stadia [in circumference], with rock underneath the surface.¹⁸ (*Geographica* 16.2.36)

The testimony here gives expression to the general idea of Jerusalem located in a dry, rocky place, though well supplied with water. The assertion that Jerusalem is “surrounded by a barren and waterless territory” is an exaggeration, for the territory to the north and west of Jerusalem is neither barren nor waterless. Nothing is said of a spring within the Temple precincts.

So, if the texts that speak of water flowing from the Temple or its precincts are dubious, what lies behind this tradition? Scholars suspect that claims of water issuing forth from the Temple precincts are surreal and probably derive from Jewish Scripture and perhaps also Aristotle’s description of the ideal city. Two details that recur in the descriptions of Jerusalem are (1) the claim that Jerusalem is situated on a high mountain and (2) that water issues forth from the Temple. Both details probably derive from Scripture, not from topographical and geological realities. There is a third detail that

¹⁶ Translation based on Gifford 1903: 481.

¹⁷ Translation based on Gifford 1903: 480; cf. Stern 1974: 135.

¹⁸ For Greek text and English translation, see Jones 1930: 282–85. For notes, see Stern 1974: 306.

seems to contradict eyewitness descriptions of the second Temple. Let's review these details.

According to *Aristeas* §§83–84 Jerusalem is located “in the center of all Judea upon a mountain which rises to a lofty height [ἐπ’ ὄρους ὑψηλὴν ἔχοντος τὴν ἀνάτασιν] ... and upon its crest [ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς κορυφῆς] stood the Temple.”¹⁹ Some interpreters suspect that the inspiration of this somewhat inaccurate description²⁰ is the eschatological picture found in Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1–2.²¹ According to the former, “in the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, and the house of God shall be on the tops of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills [ἐπ’ ἄκρων τῶν ὀρέων καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ὑπεράνω τῶν βουνῶν]” According to the latter, “it shall be in the last days, the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, prepared on the crests of the mountains [ἐπὶ τὰς κορυφὰς τῶν ὀρέων], and it shall be elevated beyond the hills [μετεωρισθήσεται ὑπεράνω τῶν βουνῶν].”

The second debatable claim made by *Aristeas*, echoed by one or two other Late Classical writers, concerns the spring of water that issues forth from the Temple. The origin of this tradition, like the description of Jerusalem perched atop a lofty mountain, is once again Scripture. In this case it is the vision of Ezekiel:

And he brought me in by the entry of the house, and behold, water was flowing underneath the atrium by the east, because the front of the house was looking to the east, and the water was descending from the right slope, from the south by the altar.

² And he brought me out by way of the gate to the north and led me around the outside

way to the gate of the court that looks to the east, and behold, the water was flowing down from the right slope. (47:1–2)

Notably, both Ezek 47:1 and *Aristeas* §88 state that the temple “looks toward the east.” Accordingly, several scholars have suggested that *Aristeas* §89 reflects this prophetic passage, not the geographical and hydrological realities of late Second Temple period Jerusalem and the Temple.²²

There is a third detail that should be considered, a detail that actually stands in tension with Scripture. *Aristeas* §84 speaks of the Temple “in its splendor,” lavishly built, with no expenses spared. But this hardly comports with the description of the second Temple that we find in Hag 2:3, where the prophet asks the people, “Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? And how do you see it now? As though it does not exist before you?” The implication is that the Second Temple is not much to look at.²³ According to 1 Esdr 5:63 (cf. Ezra 3:12), “old men who had seen the former house, came to the building” of the second Temple “with outcries and loud weeping.” They reacted this way, Josephus explains, because they remembered the “former temple which had been very great and costly.” The second Temple “fell short of the old one because of their poverty” (*Ant.* 11.81). The description found in *Aristeas* seems to reflect the glorious first Temple, rather than the plainer, less impressive second Temple.²⁴

But it is not only Israel's Scriptures that contributed to the surreal description of Jerusalem that we find in *Aristeas*; it seems that

¹⁹ See Ritmeyer (2006: 207–219) for a discussion of the Hasmonean square Temple Mount which perched atop Mt. Moriah prior to Herod's massive expansion.

²⁰ Jerusalem is not in the center of Judea and, strictly speaking, the city does not rest atop a high mountain. Gruen (2013: 2731) rightly remarks that “Jerusalem rests on a relatively modest ridge.” Ps.-*Aristeas*, however, “prefers a utopian image, suggesting the vertical heights of Near Eastern shrines.”

²¹ Gruen 2013: 2731; Church 2017: 46–51.

²² Among others, Meisner 1973: 57; Zwickel 1995: 148; Wright 2015: 202; Church 2017: 51. How much *Aristeas* §§83–120 depends on Ezek 40–48 is explored in Tilly 1997.

²³ Henshaw 1958: 243.

²⁴ The Temple described in *Aristeas* is so magnificent that Graetz (1876: 295–97, 343–44) thinks Herod's temple is in view, but for many compelling reasons *Aristeas* cannot be dated that late. Among others, see Pelletier 1962: 181–82.

Aristotle's description of the ideal city also contributes. The ancient philosopher says:

We have already said that the city should be open to the land and to the sea, and to the whole country as far as possible. In respect of the place itself our wish would be that its situation should be fortunate in four things. The first, health—this is a necessity: cities which lie towards the east, and are blown upon by the winds coming from the east, are the healthiest; next in healthiness are those which are sheltered from the north wind, for they have a milder winter. The site of the city should likewise be convenient both for political administration and for war. With a view to the latter it should afford easy egress to the citizens, and at the same time be inaccessible and difficult of capture to enemies. There should be a natural abundance of springs and fountains in the town, or, if there is a deficiency of them, great reservoirs may be established for the collection of rain-water [ὕδατων τε καὶ ναμάτων μάλιστα μὲν ὑπάρχειν πλῆθος οἰκεῖον, εἰ δὲ μή, τοῦτό γε εὕρηται διὰ τοῦ κατασκευάζειν ὑποδοχὰς ὀμβρίοις ὕδασι ἀφθόνους καὶ μεγάλας], such as will not fail when the inhabitants are cut off from the country by war.²⁵ (*Politica* 7.1330)

²⁵ Translation based on Barnes 1984: 2:2111.

²⁶ Gruen 2013: 2731; Wright 2015: 202. The description of Jerusalem and her Temple in *Aristeas* was calculated to impress Greek readers. The parallels with *Politica* 7 would have helped fulfill that purpose.

²⁷ As Edlund-Berry (2006: 179) comments: “every spring [was] considered sacred ... all forms of water and bodies of water figure in the religious practices of the peoples of Italy” (and Greece, it should be added). A classic example in Israel is found in Caesarea Philippi (or Panias), where temples and shrines were built at the base of and atop the ridge where spring waters gush forth and feed the Sea of Galilee to the south. Most if not all Asclepieia healing sanctuaries were located adjacent springs or other bodies of water. In his *Oratio* 39 Aelius Aristides (2nd cent. CE) offers

The ideal city faces the east and is benefitted by winds from the east. In *Aristeas* Jerusalem enjoys a current of wind and also faces the east (§§86, 88). The ideal city is “inaccessible and difficult to capture.” In *Aristeas* Jerusalem is on a high mountain and her temple is encompassed by high, well-built walls (§§83–84). And very importantly, the ideal city of Aristotle enjoys “a natural abundance of springs and fountains in the town” itself, as well as “great reservoirs.” In *Aristeas* Jerusalem enjoys the same advantages, for its “water supply is inexhaustible” thanks to “an abundant natural spring” within the Temple Mount, in addition to “marvelous underground reservoirs passing description” (§89). Noting these parallels scholars think Ps.-Aristeas’s description of Jerusalem is based on Aristotle’s *Politica*, as well as some of the prophecies that have also been mentioned.²⁶ It should also be mentioned that in late antiquity it was widely believed that springs were sacred, so the mere presence of a spring in Jerusalem’s Temple precincts suggested divine blessing if not divine presence.²⁷

Taken as a whole, the Late Classical descriptions of Jerusalem and her Temple appear to reflect literary, idealistic, and mythical elements.²⁸ The description we find in *Aristeas* §§83–91 departs from topographical and hydrological *realia* and indulges, rather, in the

readers two panegyrics for the Asclepian wells of Epidaurus and Pergamum. These wells, says Aelius, can heal those who drink the water or bathe in it.

²⁸ Another example of idealism is found in *1 Enoch* 26:1–5, where in a vision Enoch looks upon Jerusalem. He says, “And from there I looked into the middle of the earth, and I saw a blessed place, having been destroyed. I also observed a holy mountain; under the mountain was water from the east, and it ran from west to south [ὑποκάτω τοῦ ὄρους ὕδωρ ἐξ ἀνατολῶν, καὶ τὴν δύσιν εἶχεν πρὸς νότον]. And I saw to the east another mountain loftier than this, and between it a deep valley, not very wide, and through it water proceeds beneath from the mountain [καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς ὕδωρ πορεύεται ὑποκάτω ὑπὸ τὸ ὄρος]” (*1 Enoch* 26:1–3). Jerusalem is said to be the “center of the earth” in

hyperbole of Jewish prophetic Scripture and the idealism expressed by Aristotle. *Aristeas* itself probably influenced later writers, including Philo of Byblos, Tacitus, and the author of the *Schoinometrēsis Syriae*. It is interesting to observe that Josephus, who was quite familiar with Jerusalem and makes use of *Aristeas*, omits some passages, including §§83–120. One of the reasons the Jewish historian and apologist did so was possibly because he recognized the inaccuracies and surrealism. In the next section we shall consider the historical and archaeological evidence that relates to the question of the Temple's location and the water sources in and around Jerusalem.

HISTORICAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL, AND BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

Archaeological evidence places the Jewish Temple(s) on the Temple Mount, not in the lower area of the Gihon spring or north of the Stepped Stone Structure. This evidence includes, but is not limited to, two inscriptions and three iconic objects from the area of Robinson's Arch, the "Gentile Prohibition" inscriptions, *opus sectile* paving stones, ritual baths, the southern wall of the Antonia Fortress, and a manmade rectangular impression on the top of the rock enshrined by the Dome of the Rock.²⁹

Ezek 5:5 (cf. *Jub.* 8:12 "Shem's lot is the center of the earth"). The "blessed place" is Jerusalem. The "Holy Mountain" is the Temple Mount. The water "under the mountain" that eventually flows south, perhaps alluding to Joel 3:18 (see also Ezek 47:1–12), is the water from the Gihon Spring that flows into the Kidron Valley. See Nickelsburg 2001: 318. The text says nothing about water issuing forth from the Temple precincts.

²⁹ While *opus sectile* pavers and *miqva'ot* do not by themselves prove that the Jewish Temple(s) stood on the Temple Mount, they do strongly suggest that the historical Temple Mount was not the site of the Antonia Fortress as posited by Temple Mount revisionists.

Inscriptions and Iconic Objects near Robinson's Arch

Benjamin Mazar excavated the areas south and west of the historical Temple Mount, including the Ophel, from 1968 to 1978 without interruption.³⁰ At the southwest corner of the Temple Mount, he found a large, worked ashlar with an inscription, sitting on smashed paving stones of the first-century street which abuts the massive platform. The stone clearly fell from the top of the southwest corner, a distance of ca. 138 feet (Ritmeyer 2006: 58). The inscription, now housed in the Israel Museum, reads ...לְבֵית לְהַב הַתְּקִיעָה לְהַב, "to the place of trumpeting."³¹ This matches Josephus's description in *Wars* 4.582 of a trumpeter signaling the beginning and ending of the sabbath from the Temple Mount's southwest corner. Mazar found similar ashlar covering the inscribed stone, indicating that it lay *in situ* (Ritmeyer 2006: 58). The inscription likely provided directions for the Temple masons, not the passersby. While Welty (Cornuke 2017: 213–215) argues that the inscription was too small for passersby to read, the remnants of plaster on the inscription suggest that it was not intended to be read by passersby, rather masons covered it once they positioned the stone correctly (Ritmeyer 2006: 59). If the Second Temple was located near the Gihon Spring or north of the Stepped Stone Structure, then someone pushed these megaliths up a steep hill for no apparent reason.

³⁰ Ophel, as we use it in this article, follows the standard archaeological parlance for the area between the southern wall of the historical Temple Mount and the northern boundary of the modern City of David. Those who place the Temple(s) around the Gihon Spring or the Stepped Stone Structure, incorrectly use the term Ophel to refer to that area (Cornuke 2017: 76).

³¹ The Hebrew text reads *l'bet hatqia l'hakh* The last word is incomplete, and scholars disagree as to its reconstruction. The most probable ending is "to announce," thus the entire reading is "to the place of trumpeting to announce."

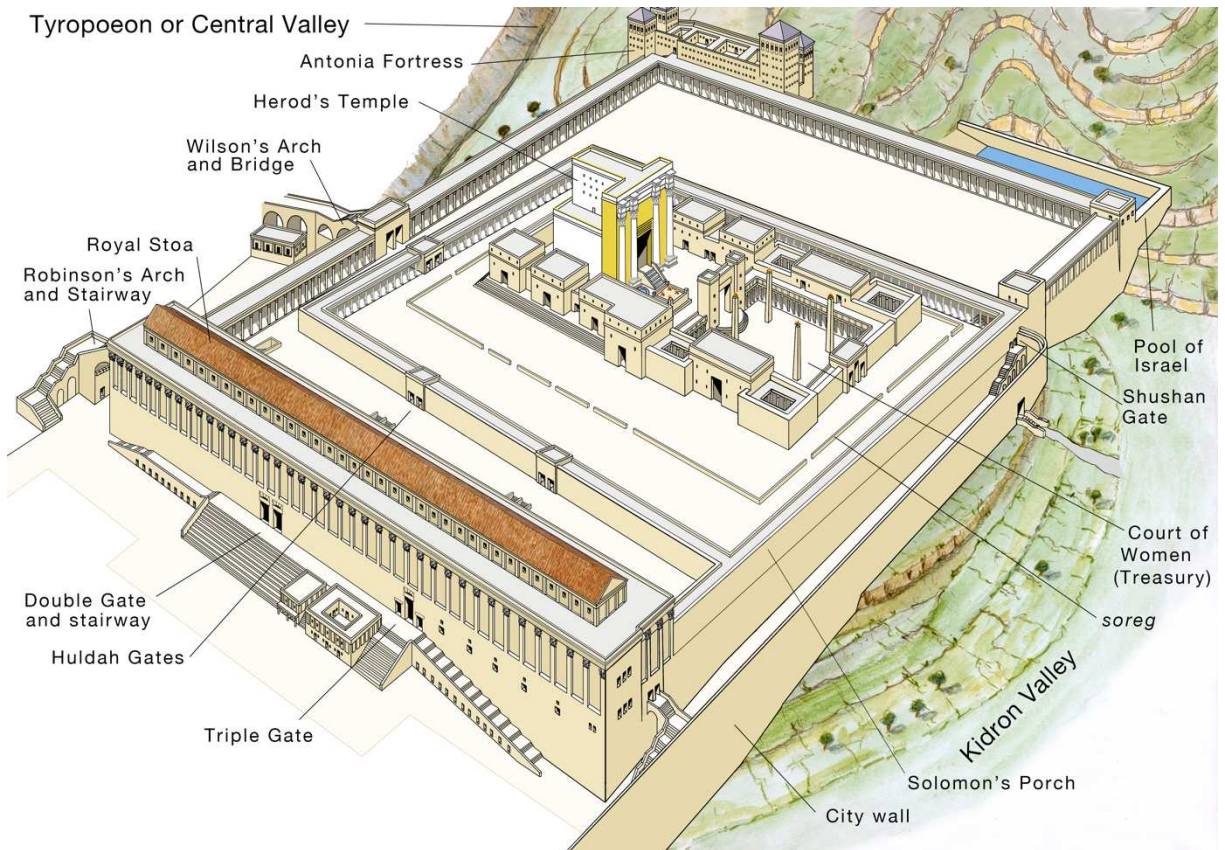


Figure 1: The First Century CE historical Temple Mount. Drawing by Leen Ritmeyer.



Figure 2: Late second temple period *Opus Sectile* tiles from the historical Temple Mount. Photo by Frankie Snyder.

In the renewed excavations of the area of Robinson's arch (southwest corner), Reich and Shukron excavated the drainage channel and the Western Wall foundation beneath the street's massive paving stones from the first century CE (Shukron 2012: 13*–27*). These loci yielded three small artifacts which indicate immediate proximity to the Jewish Temple: a ritual purity token, a golden bell, and a menorah depiction. The Mishnah (Tractate *Shekalim* 5:1–5) mentions ritual purity tokens which could stamp items to indicate their purity or prove that a pilgrim had ritually bathed and could thus enter the Temple precincts. The Aramaic inscription reads *לֵיה לֵיה*, “Pure unto Yah.” The miniature golden bell had an attachment prong. Exodus 28:34 and 39:26 note that bells hung from the high priest's robe. Although we cannot be certain that this bell served that lofty purpose, the plausibility of such an identification seems reasonable. Along with the ritual purity token and the golden bell, the excavators recovered a crude etching of a menorah.³² The menorah is ubiquitous in Jewish art as evidenced by depictions on ossuaries, tombs, the Magdala synagogue stone, and the Arch of Titus. The discovery of these unmistakably Jewish religious objects, in front of shops with numerous stone vessels (a hallmark of Jewish ritual purity), further establishes that the historical Temple Mount on the Haram esh Sharif was the biblical Temple Mount, not a pagan platform as posited by revisionists.³³

“Gentile Prohibition” Inscriptions

According to Josephus (*Wars* 5.194) Gentiles could not enter the Temple's inner court on penalty of death. Two inscribed slabs, recovered from the area north of the historical Temple

Mount, verify his account. Charles Clermont-Ganneau (1872: 214–34) discovered a complete Greek version of this inscription in 1871 in the al-Atim Gate, on the northern perimeter of the historical Temple Mount. It reads as follows:

No foreigner [Gentile] may enter within the fence and enclosure around the temple, and whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues.

In 1936, J.H. Iliffe (1938: 1–3) recovered a more fragmentary version of the same warning in secondary usage near St. Stephen's Gate to the north of the historical Temple Mount. Importantly, both inscriptions came from north of the historical Temple Mount, not south of it where Temple Mount revisionists claim the Temple(s) stood (Martin 2000: 262–70; Cornuke 2017: 63–71).

Opus Sectile Paving Stones

As of 2021, the Temple Mount Sifting Project (TMSP) has recovered at least 100 finely cut, Early Roman geometric paving stones from the destruction debris from the historical Temple Mount's southeast corner.³⁴ These polished, polychrome stones are identical to those recovered at contemporary Herodian sites such as Jericho, Cypros, Masada, and Herodium. Frankie Snyder, who is publishing the *opus sectile* pavers from multiple Herodian sites, has successfully recreated the paving patterns on the historical Temple Mount in the first century (cf. Snyder et al.). Mazar and Mazar (1989: 4) excavated a Greek inscription inside a *mikveh* which was part of a first century CE mansion on

were all found in the immediate vicinity of Robinson's Arch, not further south. He also rejected all claims that the Jewish Temple(s) were located in the City of David.

³⁴ From 1996–1999, the Muslim Waqf authority illegally removed 400 truckloads of fill to increase access to the underground el-Marwani mosque in the so called “Solomon's Stables.”

³² On the menorah etching, see Reich 2014: 96–101. Reich and Shukron also recovered a first century CE sword from the drainage channel. As Josephus (*Wars* 6.7.1) and the four gospels (Mt 26:51, Mk 14:47, Lk 22:50, Jn 18:10) make clear, Roman soldiers and Jewish radicals both armed themselves with swords, likely of the same type.

³³ In personal communication with Eli Shukron on March 15, 2021, he confirmed that these three objects

the Ophel.³⁵ The inscription documents the dedication of a pavement, probably on the southern portion of the Temple Mount. If this is indeed the case, it corroborates Josephus's account of this elaborate paving:

The open court [of the Temple Mount] was from end to end variegated with paving of all manner of stones. (*Wars* 5.192–193)

For over a century, the areas of the Gihon Spring and north of the Stepped Stone Structure have undergone extensive excavation without producing *opus sectile* pavers from the late Second Temple period. It would not be surprising for future publications from this area to document random *opus sectile* tiles due to the steep decline from the historical Temple Mount to the Hinnom Valley. The *opus sectile* tiles recovered by the TMSP could not have ended up on the Temple Mount if it was not the platform for the Second Temple. Archaeological remains migrate downhill, not uphill.

Ritual Baths

A wave of ritual purity observance swept through late Second Temple period Judaism in the first century BCE, reaching its apex in the first century

CE. These purity regulations (*halakhot*) included ritual immersion in a stepped *miqveh* (plural *miqva'ot*) or other water source. The approximately 1,000 known ritual baths indicate the ubiquity of the practice among the Jewish population (Adler 2021: 45).³⁶ Not surprisingly, 36 *miqva'ot* populate the perimeter of the historical Temple Mount, including in the Ophel and on the Temple Mount itself (Reich 1989: 63–65; Adler 2011: 333). These *miqva'ot*, likely filled by the abundant water from the late Second Temple period aqueducts previously mentioned, enabled priests and petitioners to achieve and maintain ritual purity during performance of their temple activities. Pilgrims approaching the Temple from the south could have immersed themselves in the Pool of Siloam while those approaching from the north could have achieved ritual purity at the Pool of Bethesda (Gibson 2005: 270–93; 2009: 65). The only possible explanation for the *miqva'ot* that are on and around the historical Temple Mount is that the Temple(s) occupied its apex. Roman military camps did not have *miqva'ot*, so it defies logic to locate the Antonia Fortress on the historical Temple Mount as Temple Mount revisionists argue (Martin 2000: 33–92; Cornuke 2017: 43–49; cf. Franz 2019: 246).

³⁵ This inscription lies 90 meters downhill from the historical Temple Mount's Triple Gate (Issac 1983: 86) and uphill from where revisionists conjecture the Temple(s) would have stood. Since other late Second Temple period inscriptions were found north of the historical Temple Mount, as noted above, it is perfectly logical that similar inscriptions would be found south of the historical Temple Mount. The

argument (Cornuke 2017: 131–32) that the inscription came from the revised Temple location seems unlikely because archaeological remains typically migrate downhill.

³⁶ Adler (2011: 319–43) estimated 850 *miqva'ot* in his 2011 PhD dissertation, but archaeologists regularly excavate new *miqva'ot*; hence, his current estimate is 1,000 (Adler 2021: 45).

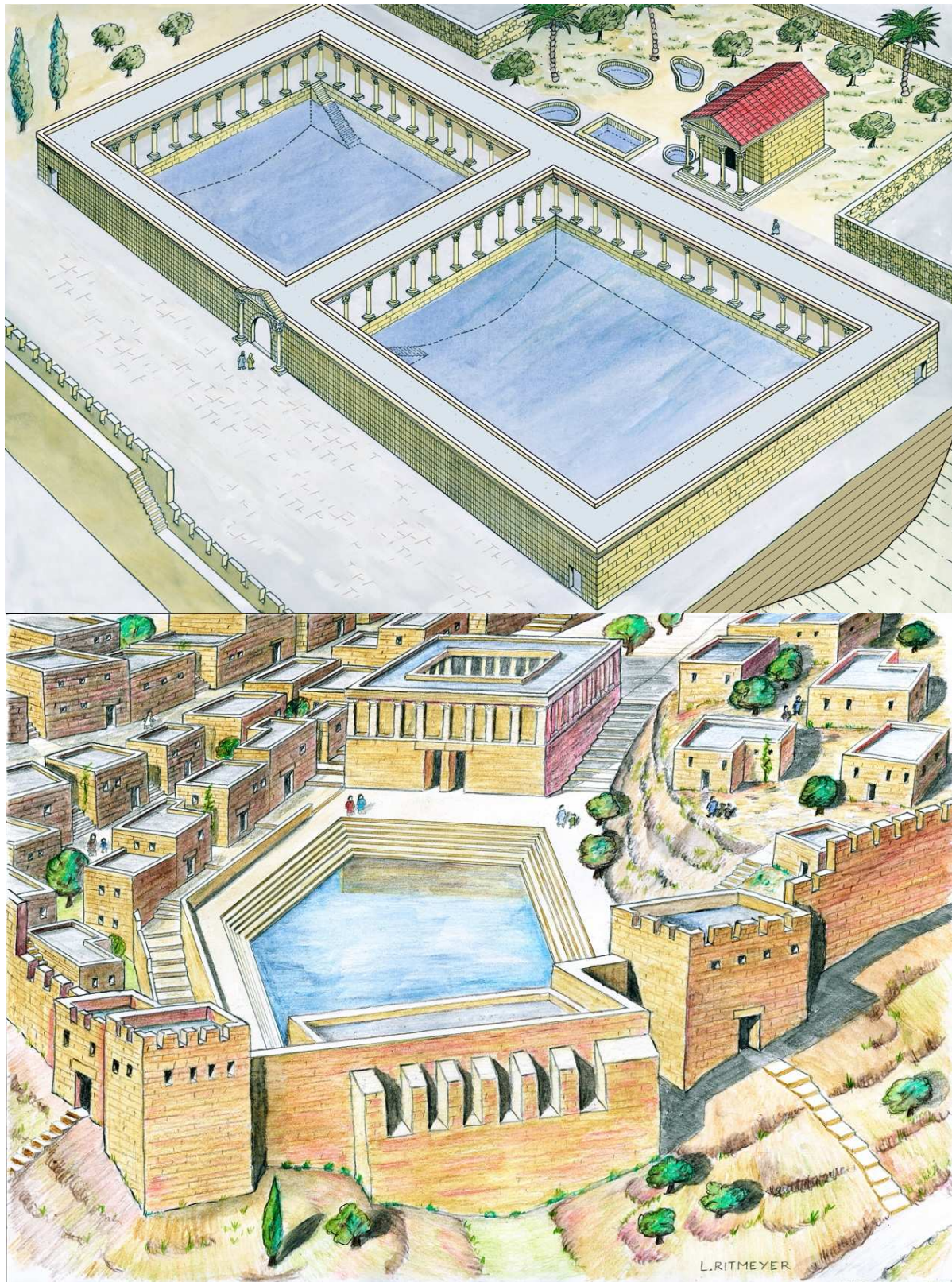


Figure 3: The Pool of Bethesda (top) and Pool of Siloam (bottom) functioned as public ritual baths. Drawing by Leen Ritmeyer.

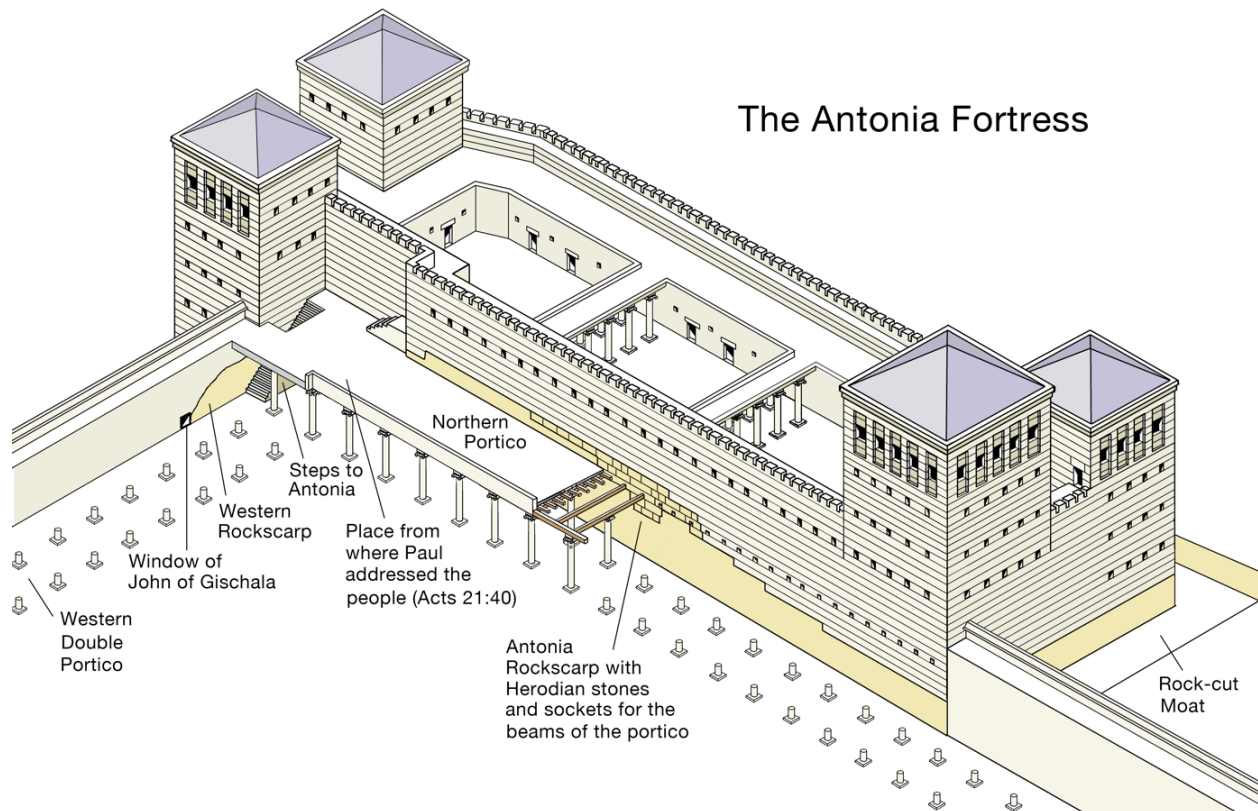


Figure 4: Remnants of the southern wall of the Antonia Fortress. Drawing by Leen Ritmeyer.

The Antonia Fortress's Southern Wall

Josephus (*Wars* 5.238) is clear that the Antonia Fortress abutted the northwest corner of the Temple Mount. From here, the Roman military monitored activity and discouraged seditious actions by their very presence. Five courses of the southern wall of the Antonia Fortress still sit atop the elevated and uneven bedrock at the northern boundary of the historical Temple Mount. Although Josephus (*Wars* 6.93, 149) describes the total destruction of this fortress down to bedrock, he was apparently unaware of these surviving Herodian ashlar, probably because destruction debris buried them.

Five parallel sockets, each measuring 19 in (48.26 cm) square, pock these *in situ* ashlar. These sockets supported the beams of the northern portico (Burgoyne 1987: 44; Murphy-

O'Connor 2004: 87–89; Pl. 1). This wall served as the nexus between the Second Temple and the Antonia Fortress. Thirty courses of ashlar remain in place in the historical Temple Mount's western wall, so the historical Temple Mount platform could not have possibly been the location of the Antonia Fortress as posited by the Temple Mount revisionists.³⁷ If the historical Temple Mount were the site of the Antonia Fortress, there would be no viable explanation for the structure abutting its northwest corner.

³⁷ Eleven courses are visible in the Western Wall Plaza, and nineteen courses lie below the plaza.

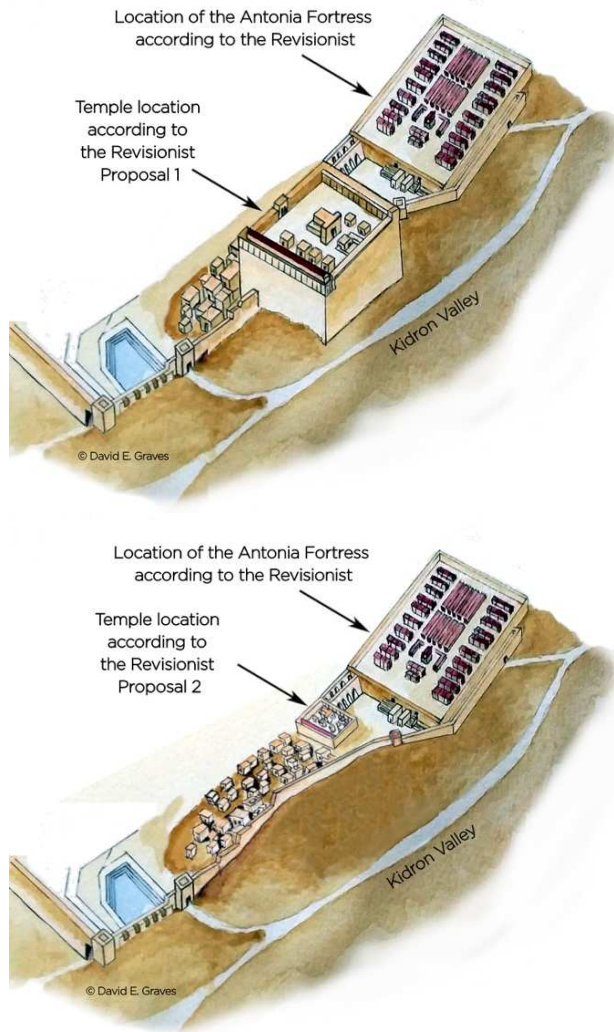


Figure 5: Area of the Gihon Spring (Proposal 1) and north of the Stepped Stone Structure (Proposal 2) where revisionists place the temple(s). Drawing by David Graves.

Temple Mount revisionists use the diminutive size of the historical Antonia Fortress to negate its authenticity (Martin 2000: 54; Cornuke 2017: 46–48). They argue from a false premise, namely that the structure would need to lodge an entire legion of 5,000–6,000 men, but no record exists of Rome assigning a full legion to Jerusalem until the second century CE. Josephus (*Wars* 5:244) notes that they sent a *tagma Rômaiôn* after taking direct control of Judea and Samaria in AD 6. *Tagma* is nonspecific and can refer to hundreds or to thousands. Context determines size. The officers likely lodged in the

Antonia Fortress while enlisted men camped to the north of the fortress around the Strouthion Pool (Ritmeyer 2006: 129–31). Additionally, a cohort likely camped in and around Herod's palace and the three massive towers which abutted it. Other camps may have also existed following the Masada enclosure paradigm. Finally, hundreds of soldiers were perpetually on patrol.

The Ark of the Covenant's Resting Place

The rock enshrined inside the Dome of the Rock bears a manmade, rectangular impression on its upper surface. This impression measures 2.6×4.3 ft, the exact dimensions of the Ark of the Covenant (Ritmeyer 2006: 247). This alone suggests beyond a reasonable doubt that the Temple(s) once stood where the Dome of the Rock now stands. The Umayyads knew this well as evidenced by an 8th century Arabic endowment inscription by the second caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (reign 634–644 CE), in a mosque near Hebron which refers to the rock inside the Dome of the Rock as "Bayt al-Maqdis" equal to the Hebrew "Beit Ha Mikdash" which means the "Holy Temple" (Avraham and Reuven 2016: 55–70; cf. Franz 2019: 241–43). This contradicts the revisionist argument that early Muslims saw no connection between the two structures (Cornuke 2017: 83–91). This tradition extended into the Crusader period. When the Crusaders controlled the Dome of the Rock, they called it "The church of the temple of the Lord" (Schein 1984: 181).

THE TEMPLE MOUNT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN THE CITY OF DAVID

In addition to the literary and archaeological evidence noted above, numerous flaws exist in the theory that Jerusalem's Jewish Temples existed near the Gihon Spring or north of the Stepped Stone Structure rather than on the historical Temple Mount. These include the supposed need for proximity to the Gihon Spring, the presence of an ancient garbage dump, and several exegetical fallacies.

Proximity to the Gihon Spring

Temple Mount revisionists posit that the biblical sacrificial system could not operate without immediate proximity to a natural spring (Martin 2000: 288–321; Cornuke 2017: 83–92).³⁸ They cite *Aristeas* §89 and Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.12 to support their case. In the first section of this article, we demonstrated the problems with reliance upon these literary sources. Importantly, the Bible never states that the ancient Israelite cult required a natural spring. Ezek 47:1–12 and Joel 3:17–18 refer to the future, not the past. Before Jerusalem, the Tabernacle rested at Shiloh for over three centuries. The Shiloh spring (Ein Seilun) lies ca. 0.9 kilometers from the closest possible location of the Tabernacle at Shiloh. Jerusalem's Gihon spring is only ca. 0.5 kilometers from the center of the Temple Mount. The same logic that would move the Jerusalem Temple(s) next to the Gihon spring would require moving the Tabernacle at Shiloh next to the Shiloh spring. We have examined the area around the Shiloh spring and can attest that no archaeological remains exist there. While the remains of a massive tower probably dating to the Middle Bronze age surround the Gihon Spring, no remains of *in situ* or destroyed walls from the late Second Temple period exist there. The historical Temple Mount cisterns had a capacity of ca. 10,000,000 gallons of water, which was more than adequate for cleansing after sacrifices, even during the Jewish feasts (Wilson and Warren 1871: 17).³⁹ They remained full thanks to rainfall and water that was manually hauled from the Gihon Spring (later from the Pool of Siloam), about half the distance from the Tabernacle at Shiloh to the Shiloh spring. Additionally, by the late Second Temple period two aqueducts transported water from south of Bethlehem to the historical Temple Mount (Edersheim 1992: 56). The remains of those aqueducts, including Wilson's Arch, remain visible. Furthermore, after

³⁸ Oddly, after arguing this point, Cornuke does not place his revisionist Temple over or adjacent to the Gihon Spring. See Figure 5B.

construction of Hezekiah's tunnel in the 8th century BCE connected the waters of the Gihon spring to the Pool of Siloam, residents of Jerusalem paid little attention to the Gihon spring, even covering the eastern slope where it was situated with a massive garbage dump.

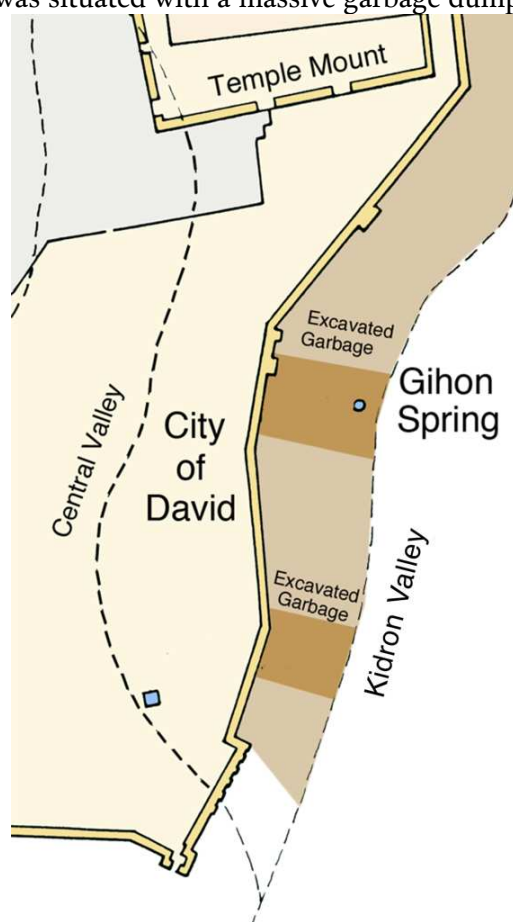


Figure 6: Garbage dump on the eastern slope of the City of David. Drawing by Leen Ritmeyer.

An Ancient Garbage Dump

A garbage dump from the late Second Temple period covers the entire eastern slope of the City of David, north and south of the Gihon Spring; the date of the artifacts within the dump is indisputable (Reich and Shukron 2003: 14; Gadot and Adler 2016: 202–19). If the Temple Mount stood where Martin claimed it stood (See Figure 5A), over a century's worth of garbage, 10 meters

³⁹ The hydraulic plaster dates the cisterns to the late Second Temple period. It is difficult to know with certainty which ones were also used in the First Temple period.

deep, could not have possibly accumulated underneath it (Franz 2019: 238–39). Reich and Shukron (2003: 14) conservatively estimate the deposit to be 400 × 50 × 10 m (200,000 cubic meters). Furthermore, in July 2019 the Israel Antiquities Authority announced the outcome of a new excavation on the eastern slope of the City of David. Archaeologists confirmed the location of Jerusalem's eastern city wall from ca. 700 BCE, the time of Hezekiah.⁴⁰ Kathleen Kenyon and Yigal Shiloh had exposed portions of this same wall in their respective excavations. The newly announced find removes any doubt that Jerusalem's eastern wall in the First Temple period stood precisely where proponents of Proposal One claim the temple stood. It is impossible for the city's eastern fortification wall and Solomon's temple to simultaneously occupy the same space. Likewise, it is impossible for the eastern slope to be a garbage dump in the Second Temple period and the location of the Jewish Temple. No evidence of any kind exists to suggest that this area once supported a Temple platform.

Exegetical Fallacies

The Temple Mount revisionists are guilty of numerous exegetical fallacies. We will briefly discuss three of these.

First, they claim that in the Olivet Eschatological Discourse (Matt 24:1–2; Mark 13:1–2; Luke 21:5–6), Jesus predicted that not one stone of the temple, including the enclosure walls of the historical Temple Mount, would be left upon another (Cornuke 2017: 41–42).⁴¹ In a type of syllogism, they deduce that since thirty courses of stone survive in the enclosure walls of the historical Temple Mount, it could not possibly be the biblical Temple Mount.⁴²

⁴⁰ Filip Vukosavović of the Ancient Jerusalem Research Center and Joe Uziel and Ortal Chalaf on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority directed the excavation. Academic publication is forthcoming.

⁴¹ Eschatology motivates the revisionist hypothesis. They seek a scenario in which a third Jewish Temple can be built without destroying the Dome of the Rock, an impossibility in the present geopolitical environment (149–158).

However, they fail to grasp that the Temple Mount was a platform for the Temple's buildings, not an actual building. The buildings to which Jesus referred were the Temple, its ancillary structures, and the Royal Stoa which occupied the southernmost portion of the Temple Mount.⁴³ Ironically, they ignore Josephus's testimony (*Wars* 6.93, 149) that the Tenth Legion destroyed the actual foundations of the Antonia Fortress. The Antonia Fortress could not have been on the historical Temple Mount since thirty courses of its foundation remain *in situ*. Paradoxically, the revisionists incorrectly assert that Jesus predicted the Romans would destroy the foundations of the Temple Mount while ignoring the eyewitness account of Josephus that the Romans destroyed the foundations of the Antonia Fortress, which they claim is the historical Temple Mount. In an attempt to strengthen their “not one stone left standing” argument, Temple Mount revisionists cite Jesus's rebuke of Jerusalem in Luke 19:41–44. In verse 44, Jesus indicts Jerusalem: “They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another” Jesus's listeners clearly grasped his point. Their city was going to be demolished by a foreign army. And it was. Nonetheless, the foundations of countless buildings and walls survived the Roman assaults in 70 and 135 CE. Some of the more notable ones include the following: the historical Temple Mount, Herod's three towers (Phasaël, Hippicus, and Mariamne), mansions in the Jewish Quarter and outside Zion Gate, Herod's palace, and portions of the third wall that run through the Russian Compound and the Albright Institute. By appealing to Luke 19 they undermine their own position.

⁴² In defense of the revisionist view, Welty (Cornuke 2017: 218–19) argues that the Greek diction of Matthew 24:1 is generic and thus must be inclusive of the Temple Mount's foundation. He offers no reason other than his opinion.

⁴³ For a list of the ancillary structures, see Franz (2019: 233–34).

Second, the Temple Mount revisionists misinterpret the biblical description of Solomon's repairs to the *millo* (1 Kgs 9:18; 9:24; 11:27). In an enormous exegetical leap, they claim that the temple could not have been on the historical Temple Mount because when 1 Kings 11:27 mentions that "Solomon built the *millo*," it means that he filled in the ravine to create a retaining wall for the Temple near the Gihon Spring (Martin 2000: 332). The Jebusites who controlled the stronghold before David were likely the first to build the *millo* (a massive terrace), known in archaeological parlance as the Stepped Stone Structure.⁴⁴ Since Jerusalem lies in a seismic zone, the *millo* required periodic maintenance. Solomon performed this maintenance. That is all the writer of 1 Kings was communicating to his readers.

Third, the Temple Mount revisionists incorrectly exegete several passages (2 Sam 24:18–25; 1 Chron 21:18–30; 2 Chron 3:1) relating to the location of Araunah's agricultural processing precinct which David purchased and on which Solomon constructed the First Temple in ca. 967 BCE. They claim that the Temple could not have been on the historical Temple Mount because Araunah was a Jebusite; therefore, his threshing floor would have been inside the fortress of Zion (Cornuke 2017: 64, 66, 79). They further assert that since the rock inside the Dome of the Rock, the historical spot of the Holy of Holies, is not level, it could not have been the threshing floor of Araunah (Martin 2000: 86).

⁴⁴ For the alternate view that the *millo* was the massive tower around the Gihon spring, see McKinny et al. (2021.)

⁴⁵ Archaeologists have failed to locate the northern wall of the City of David, so it is unclear how far north the original fortress of Zion extended.

⁴⁶ The ESV translation of 2 Chronicles 5:2 accurately captures the original intent: "Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city

of David, which is Zion." The standard verb for "go up" (הָלַךְ) is used in the hiphil stem (infinitive construct), to "bring up" (לְהַעֲלוֹת). The preposition modifying City of David is מִן "from" or "out of." The LXX translation affirms this understanding of the Hebrew: ἐκ πόλεως Δαυιδ. If the Ark were being taken to the City of David, the preposition would be ἐν. The City of David cannot be in view here as the final destination for the Ark.

However, the agricultural precincts in ancient cities lay outside the city walls; this is especially true of threshing areas, as Borowski makes clear (1987: 62–63). Furthermore, as Ritmeyer (2006: 312–315) indicates threshing floors were never located inside cities or on mountain tops, due to the strong wind which would blow away chaff and grain, thus undermining the objective of accumulating grain. Franz (2019: 225–31) demonstrates the futility of attempts to argue otherwise. It is impossible to know if Araunah lived inside the fortress, but his threshing floor certainly was outside the fortress. Similarly, Boaz lived in Bethlehem, but his threshing floor was outside the city (Ruth 2:4, 18; 3:15). The extramural Jebusites shared a symbiotic relationship with the intramural Jebusites. This is a basic anthropological and sociological paradigm. Araunah apparently owned Mount Moriah since David annexed all this area after his purchase.⁴⁵ The biblical text does not require that the rock at Moriah's summit was the epicenter of Araunah's threshing floor although it was almost certainly part of the overall agricultural processing precinct. Regardless of the exact spot, it was near the famous rock on the summit. David's tent, which temporarily housed the Ark of the Covenant, was in Zion (i.e. the City of David), but it is abundantly clear (1 Kgs 8:1; 2 Chron 3:1; 5:2, 5) that the Ark was taken up out of the City of David to its permanent home on Mount Moriah (Franz 2019: 224–25).⁴⁶

of David, which is Zion." The standard verb for "go up" (הָלַךְ) is used in the hiphil stem (infinitive construct), to "bring up" (לְהַעֲלוֹת). The preposition modifying City of David is מִן "from" or "out of." The LXX translation affirms this understanding of the Hebrew: ἐκ πόλεως Δαυιδ. If the Ark were being taken to the City of David, the preposition would be ἐν. The City of David cannot be in view here as the final destination for the Ark.

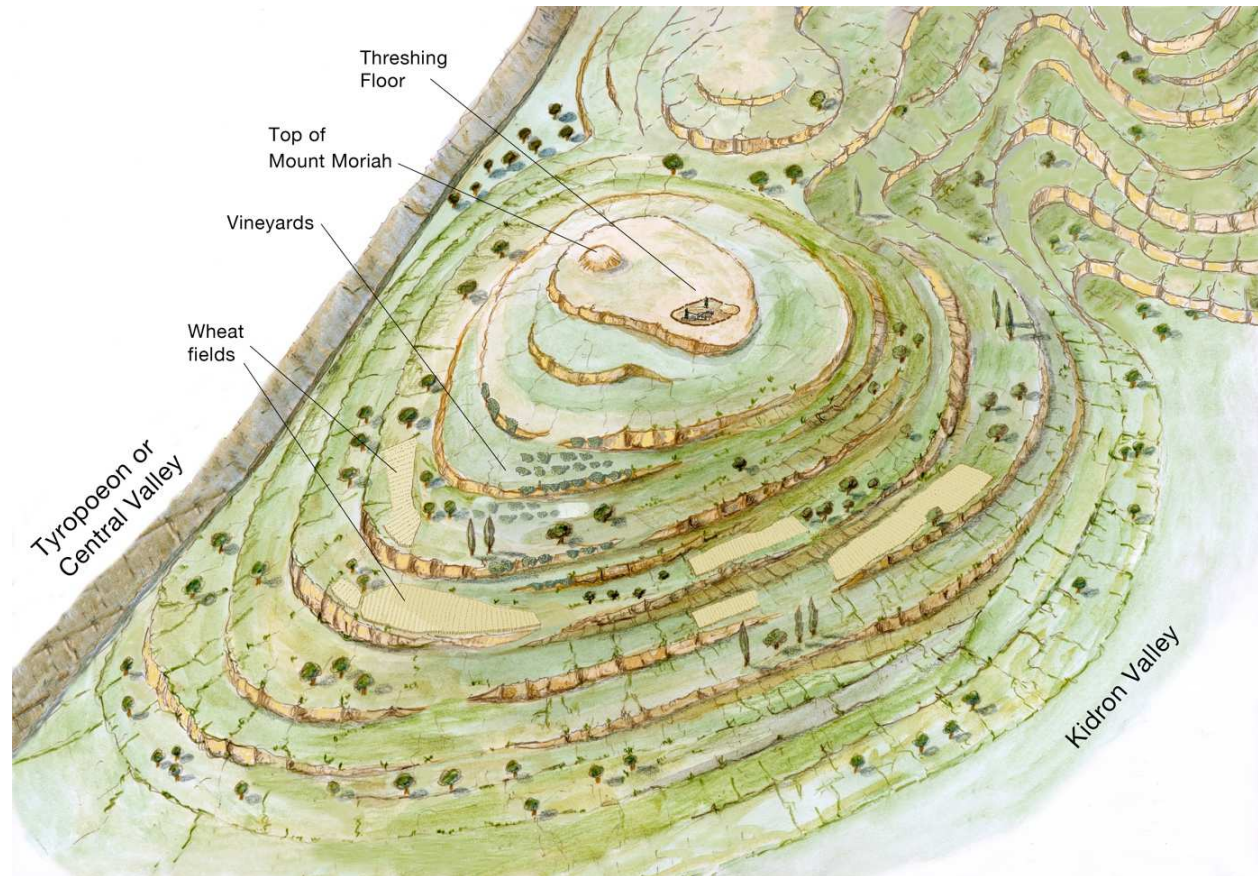


Figure 7: Mount Moriah before David's purchase. Drawing by Leen Ritmeyer.

CONCLUSION

Although not a single archaeologist, to our knowledge, believes that the Jewish Temple(s) in Jerusalem were near the Gihon Spring (Proposal 1) or north of the Stepped Stone Structure (Proposal 2), a growing number of amateur enthusiasts have embraced this rogue idea. As we have demonstrated in this article, the literary evidence from the Late Classical period, the archaeological evidence, and the biblical accounts all nullify the revisionist claims.

A centerpiece of the revisionist proposal is the statement in *Aristeas* §89 that a spring flowed from the Temple precincts. The credibility of this statement must be determined in light of the statement of Ps.-Aristeas that the Jordan River flowed to the Mediterranean Sea (§§116–117). One could hardly agree that the pseudonymous

author understood the hydrology of the southern Levant in the Second Temple period. Likewise, the claim that the ancient Israelite cultic system required immediate proximity to a spring makes no sense because 0.9 kilometers separated the Shiloh spring from the closest possible location of the Tabernacle at Shiloh. Furthermore, the historical Temple Mount could not have been the Antonia Fortress since its foundations are intact and Josephus documents that its foundations were razed in 70 CE. Concomitant with this is the presence of 36 *miqva'ot*, opus sectile tiles, and inscriptions and artifacts from on and around the historical Temple Mount which demonstrate the Jewish character of the massive platform. Considering the weight of evidence we present in this article, we reject the revisionist claim that the Jewish Temple(s) were not built atop the historical Temple Mount.

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