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The Temple Mount, the Rabbis, and the Poetics of Memory

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In a good deal of rabbinic literature the sages convey information, both directly and indirectly, about their past as individuals, a group, and a nation. Scholars in the last century and a half have invested tremendous effort in weighing the credibility of these records. This study explores a different angle of the historicity question, that of rabbinic collective memory, the set of conventions and images that organizes narratives and discourses about the past. Portrayals of the Temple Mount in tannaitic literature create the impression that they derive from the milieu of Second Temple Judaism. Rabbinic sages in the post-70 era present a picture of the Temple Mount as an essential part of the preceding Second Temple Jewish experience and an inseparable part of reality in that earlier generation’s consciousness. The current study refutes this wide spread notion; it maintains that the authors of rabbinic literature endowed a relatively peripheral biblical appellation, namely the term “Temple Mount,” with an aura of holiness and transformed it to represent a concept of sacred space. This innovative development led them to redesign their view of the present and at the same time remake their memory of the past.

Memory is always problematic, usually deceptive, sometimes treacherous.¹

In a good deal of rabbinic literature — generally seen as spanning the first few centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.) and usually subdivided into tannaitic (c. 70–220) and amoraic (roughly 220–600) texts — the sages convey information, both directly and indirectly, about their past as individuals, a group, and a nation. Scholars in the last century and a half have invested tremendous effort in weighing the credibility of these records. In particular the literature unearthed in Qumran has proven many of the views ascribed by the rabbis to early opponents in the Second Temple period rather accurate.² Consequently, the pendulum of the so-called historicity debate has swung from a romantic, and rather naïve, acceptance of most if not all the data to extreme skepticism and finally in the last decade or so has settled somewhere in between, ruptured into a variety of approaches and methodological models.

In this study I wish not to return to this intriguing discussion but rather to explore a different angle, that of rabbinic collective memory, the set of conventions and images that organizes narratives and discourses about the past.  

Habits of remembering have received a great deal of attention in modern scholarship. Advances, especially in the fields of psychology and neurology, have clarified the elusiveness of this practice and consequently blurred what was thought to be a clear-cut line dichotomizing the present from the past. We now know that these two seemingly separate elements of time (and factors of memory) constantly intermingle in a reciprocal dance, influencing and reshaping each other. Memory is one product of such processes, and history, in the words of one scholar, is the “art of memory.”  

Taking shape in assorted channels of expression, whether vocal, visual, or written, it is typified by its innovative character, which defines it as a separate entity, a third dimension of human experience.

In his monumental work Les lieux de mémoire, translated into English without catching the full sense of the phrase as “Realms of Memory,” the French historian Pierre Nora establishes the leading role of physical places in the creation of collective memory. In his words “La mémoire s’accroche à des lieux comme l’histoire à des événements” [Memory fastens upon sites, whereas history fastens upon events]. Although Nora assigns “places of memory,” the loci memoriae, a much wider definition than a particular confined space, he nevertheless devotes much of his discussion to untangling the convoluted interaction between inanimate sites and conscious recollections of people and communities about their past. Palpable objects, whether monuments, architectonic structures, or well demarcated areas, serve as magnets—organizing, classifying, and calibrating—for the more abstract reminiscences, as well as their spine, the internal adhesive substance that glues disparate details into cultural textures. Reading this model backward, one may use memorable places and the traditions configured around them as a kind of porthole that

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3 The most influential work on this topic remains Maurice Halbwachs’s *La mémoire collective* (I have used the 1997 edition, which was up dated by G. Namer and M. Jaisson). Already also a classic for Judaic Studies is Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*. For a more postmodern take on the same issues, see the variety of studies collected in M. Bal, et al., eds., *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 1999).

4 The bibliography on these topics is too vast to list here. Ample references are offered in the studies listed in the above notes as well as below in n. 5. For the scientific aspect a good summary may be found in M. A. Conway, ed., *Cognitive Models of Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).


allows a glance at the dynamics that shaped groups and societies. The following study attempts such a reading and explores the substance and nature of rabbinic memory regarding one such *locus memoriae* — an architectural structure called the Temple Mount.

Religion has always been inseparable from holy sites. One of the most famous among the sacred spaces is the flat, trapezoidal, walled compound located on the eastern edge of Jerusalem’s Old City (figs. 1 and 2:1). Commonly translated in English as “the Temple Mount,” the literal translation of the original Hebrew *har ha-bayit* would be the “Mount of the House.” The designation Temple Mount refers to both the topographical elevation, the hilly figure of the place, and to the architectonic layout in a shape of a huge precinct that sits on its top. Ancient Near Eastern monotheistic religions, Judaism and Islam in particular (but also Christianity), still revere the site as holy, and the faithful are careful to observe there special religious strictures and practices. How did this feature function in the world of the rabbis?

**INTRODUCTION**

It would be hard to overestimate the role of Jerusalem and the Temple in the worldview of the Jewish sages, also known as the rabbis, the famous group of Jewish intellectuals who produced the so-called rabbinic literature during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Large portions of this corpus are devoted to these two places. Admittedly, the hexagonal structure of the Mishnah — the prime tannaitic text, which, along with the biblical sequence, became the standard format for organizing rabbinic material — does not include a separate division of a “Temple Order,” comparable to, for example, the “Orders of Damages” for financial issues or “Women” for family matters. The division entitled “Order of Holy Things,” however, contains such tractates as “Daily Sacrifice” (*Tamid*) and “Dimensions of the Temple” (*Middot*). Likewise, although no ancient rabbinic text has ever been named “The Jerusalem Midrash,” there is, for example, the composition *Lamentations Rabbah*, almost entirely devoted

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9 An inclusive summary of the allusions to Jerusalem in rabbinic literature with references to previous collections and scholarly discussions is I. M. Gafni, “Jerusalem in Rabbinic Literature,” in Y. Tsafrir and S. Safrai, eds., *The History of Jerusalem: The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70–638 C.E.)* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsevi, 1999) 35–59 (Heb.). A few scholarly collections in recent years were also devoted to exploring the various facets of Jerusalem in ancient Jewish civilization. See for example, M. Poorthuis and Ch. Safrai, eds., *The Centrality of Jerusalem: Historical Perspectives* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996); L. I. Levine, ed., *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1999).
to contemplating the loss of Jerusalem and its Temple and consequently replete with motives that hinge on these two.

The rabbis produced innumerable passages relating to the reality, both physical and metaphysical, of Jerusalem, with the Temple at its core. The focus on these two entities is apparent throughout tannaitic and amoraic writings.
This is true in the halakhic (legal) sections — regulating the heave offerings and the tithes, or the celebrations of the various holidays, and even the tiniest details of the laws of ritual purity and impurity — all closely associated with the Temple. In the aggadic (nonlegal) portions as well, legends about the scholars and great men of Jerusalem, vignettes depicting life in the city and the Temple, and the vast numbers of interpretations of biblical verses dealing with these localities all attest to the importance of the Temple-city paradigm in collective rabbinic memory. Time and again the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud reilluminate various aspects of Jerusalem and the Temple, thus fixing them within the deepest layers of their consciousness and setting them as the perpetual background, if not the actual scenery, of their multifaceted literary enterprise.

This intense preoccupation of the sages with Jerusalem and the Temple occurs at a time when these places were in ruins or when a foreign regime — pagan and then Christian — presided over the area. At first, in the period between the destruction of the Temple and Bar-Kokhba’s revolt (70–135 C.E.), this paradox could be attributed to the genuine yearning to rebuild the city and its revered sanctuary and renew Temple worship — expectations that were a key factor in the atmosphere preceding the revolt of 132. For a comprehensive treatment of this aspect see I. Ben Shalom, “Events and Ideology of the Yavneh Period as Indirect Causes of the Bar-Kokhva Revolt,” in A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport, eds., The Bar-Kokhva Revolt: A New Approach (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak ben-Tsevi, 1984) 1–12 (Heb.).
cannot, however, account for the persistence of such attraction in subsequent years, when most, if not all, of the Jews in Palestine were remote from Jerusalem, many relocating to Galilee, and the palpable desire to renew the Temple cult gradually faded away.

It seems, therefore, that although the destruction of the Second Temple and its continued absence shook Judaism and its institutions, displacing some of its prominent spiritual and practical characteristics, this event did not by any means eliminate the Temple from Jewish experience. Even when the hallowed sanctuary in Jerusalem no longer existed, and the physical basis for the way of life that centered around it had been eradicated, the Temple, its practices, and symbolism remained vital: they fostered a wide range of rituals and liturgies, shaped prayers, and nurtured a long list of behaviors and activities that were established as "commemoration of Jerusalem/Temple." Artistic decorations of ancient synagogues feature close links with both Temple images and its paraphernalia. Likewise, the writings of the sages perpetuate the city and its shrine in rulings commemorating practices from the days of its glory and in stories and traditions expressing nostalgia to the people and places of Jerusalem. All these demonstrate that Jerusalem and the Temple remained part of these people's discourse even after they had disappeared in reality.

This does not mean, however, that the City-Temple image in this period was completely disembodied or that, for example, Jews were totally disengaged from the mundane features of its landscape. Many scholars in previous generations were of the opinion, maintained by some to this very day, that in the centuries following the Bar Kokhba revolt, an all-inclusive imperial ban forbade Jews from dwelling in the city and that, with short and limited excep-

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12 See, for example, _t. Sofah_ 15:12–14 (Lieberman, 243–44), and other sources listed in S. Lieberman, _Tosefta Kifshutah: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Tosefta_ (10 vols.; Jerusalem and New York: Bet ha-midrash le-rabanim shebe-Amerikah, 1955–1988) 8:774. The ramified connections between the synagogue and its prayers, on the one hand, and the Temple and its sacrifices, on the other, are discussed in many studies as well. See, for example, Cohen, "The Temple"; and more recently, S. Fine, _This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period_ (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1997); S. F. Reif, "Jerusalem in Jewish Liturgy," in Levine, _Jerusalem_, 424–37.

13 Fine, _This Holy Place_, 95–126.
tions, they were not even allowed to visit. Oded Irshay rightly rejected this view, showing at length that such a sweeping prohibition never really existed.\textsuperscript{14}

One custom the Jews continuously maintained, although naturally on a diminished scale, was pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{15} At least one Hebrew speaker, most probably a Jew, engraved the words of Isaiah 66:14, “And you shall see and your heart shall rejoice and your bones like the grass shall . . .,” on one of the stones of the western wall of the Temple Mount.\textsuperscript{16} Other Jewish visitors bought numerous glass-vessel souvenirs decorated with a menorah, a seven-branched lampstand known to be a Jewish symbol \textit{par excellence}, which archaeologists unearthed in Jerusalem and dated to the centuries prior to the Arab conquest.\textsuperscript{17} The same exclusively Jewish symbol also appears on lintels of houses from the same period that were excavated near the southwesterly corner of the Temple Mount, and in some cases it even replaces erased crosses.\textsuperscript{18}

Complementing the physical evidence are sporadic literary reports about Jewish life in the city. One such piece of information is the famous account by an anonymous early fourth-century traveler from Bordeaux describing a ceremony in the area of the ruined Temple during which Jews anointed a “perforated stone” (\textit{lapis pertusus}) with oil.\textsuperscript{19} The same author speaks of “seven synagogues” on Mount Zion (the southwestern hill), one of which was still


\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Itinerarium Burdigalense} 591:4–6 (Geyer and Cuntz, 16). For a more detailed consideration of the act described here, see below pp. 56.
accessible in his day. Based on the information discussed here pertaining to the Jewish presence in the city, the "Jewish-Christian" label ascribed to those structures by the so-called Testa-Bagatti school seems rather misleading. In subsequent generations, Jerome too refers to Jewish visitors in Jerusalem. Similarly, the biography of Barsama, a zealous Nestorian monk who came to the city in the middle of the fifth century, reports a large gathering of Jews on the platform of the ruined Temple, which was authorized by the empress Eudokia, at the holiday of Tabernacles.

Such evidence provides a concrete backdrop for the famous rabbinic legend about the tannaim who "arrived at the Temple Mount and saw a fox coming out of the (ruins of the) Holy of Holies," as well as for a similar, but less familiar, statement by a fourth-century amora who "affirms" seeing some rabbis visit the Temple Mount, take off their sandals, and store them "under the 'agof (i.e., in the doorway)." This is not to claim, in the old-fashioned positivistic manner, that these particular anecdotes are based on real historical events but only that the authors were not compelled to invent the very possibility that they occurred. Jews were visiting Jerusalem throughout the Roman and Byzantine periods, and perhaps some even resided in the city.

The available sources do not fully illuminate this phenomenon, and much remains unknown. It is difficult to determine the extent or frequency of such visits, and details about their substance, such as the length of stay in Jerusalem or the places where the visitors lodged, are rather scarce. The few sources that hint at the number of people who participated in these events, such as the traveler from Bordeaux and Jerome, make it clear that they were not isolated individuals but relatively sizeable groups. Barsama's gathering is huge, although his descriptions may be somewhat exaggerated. It can therefore be concluded that the arrival of Jews in Jerusalem during the Roman-Byzantine period is well documented and not a one-time event. Whether there were hundreds or even thousands (as the biography of Barsama states) of visitors on each occasion, however, or only a few dozen; whether Jewish residents were present in the city at all times, or whether they assembled there only on certain occasions, such as the Ninth of Av or the pilgrimage festivals — these questions, as well as others, do not have definite answers at present.

20 Itinerarium Burdigalense 592:6–7 (Geyer and Curtz, 16).
22 Jerome, Commentariorum in Sophoniam 1:15–16 (Adriaen, 673).
23 E. Nau, "Résumé de monographies syriaques: Histoire de Barsauma de Nisibe," ROC 19 (1914) 120.
24 Sipre Deut. 43 (Finkelstein, 95).
Even if various rabbinic scholars were at least somewhat familiar with Jerusalem and the area of the ruined Temple, they were not simply bystanders reporting what they observed. As is well known, rabbinic literature seamlessly amalgamates fiction and reality with perception, ideology, and hermeneutics, and those are just as central in their writings as actuality itself.

In accordance with the richness and diversity of the sources, modern scholars have devoted considerable effort to decoding the multifaceted function of Jerusalem and its Temple as reflected in the works of the rabbis. The inviolability of the city and the sanctuary, both in terms of the halakhah intended to preserve it and the ideas and concepts associated with it, have all been repeatedly surveyed.26 Other studies have examined developments in the rabbinic stance toward Jerusalem, the Temple, and a whole line of closely related categories (such as the priesthood and the sacrifices) against the background of the great historical changes that befell their society following the destruction of the Second Temple and the Bar-Kokhba catastrophe, and, even later, as a result of Christianity’s rise to power.27

But what about the Temple Mount? Here the picture is surprisingly different. The number of scholarly studies seems to be in inverse ratio to the frequent occurrences of this designation in rabbinic literature. The sages, as we shall see, adverted to the Temple Mount dozens of times in their work and in miscellaneous contexts. Yet, even though modern scholars have made occasional references to one or another of these sources (and some of these remarks are quite important), the phrase “Temple Mount” has not received the same attention as its fellow terms — “Jerusalem” and “the Temple.” To the best of my knowledge, there is still no comprehensive collection of rabbinic references to the Temple Mount that tries to assess the significance of this entity for those who used it. One exception is the repeated attempt to delineate the geographical boundaries of the mountain, especially by utilizing the tannaitic halakhah that defines it as a square each of whose sides is 500 cubits long (discussed in detail below, pp. 37–40).28 It is such deficiencies that the present study aspires to rectify.

My concern here is not the physical realm but rather the sphere of


28 References are provided below, n. 91, in my discussion of this Mishnah.
consciousness, images, and ideas. From a physical standpoint, it is obvious that the summit on which the Temple used to stand was still there in the days of the rabbis, on the ridge that divided the two eastern tributaries of the Kidron Valley — the Jehoshaphat Valley to the east and what is known as the Tyropoeon Valley to the west (see fig. 1). But how was this mountain crest perceived by the sages, and what role did it play in their lives? As we shall see below, the answers to these questions are far from being simple. Following the rabbinic (literary) engagement with the Temple Mount will unveil an absorbing process in which sacred space is re-organized, and both physical and spiritual landscapes are re-defined through memory and literature.

**Consciousness and Historical Context**

Portrayals of the Temple Mount in tannaitic literature create the impression that they derive from the milieu of Second Temple Judaism. Tractate Middot, for example, refers to the Mount as an established territorial entity within the larger Temple landscape: it clearly surrounds the central edifice (i.e., the Temple itself), its dimensions are meticulously demarcated (“The Temple Mount is 500 cubits by 500 cubits”), the names of its gates are well known (“The Temple Mount had five gates . . .”), some etiquette for visitors is also mentioned, such as the walking route at the site, along with the salutation for greeting people along the way. Also mentioned is “the officer of the Temple Mount (‘ish har habayit),” who is responsible for security and order at the site and whose duties include overseeing the Levite guards who were stationed at the five gates.29

The content of these passages implies that their authors wished to represent them as founded on Second Temple reality. Only such a reading explains the presence of pickets at the gates of the mountain simultaneously with the priests who guarded the Temple itself. The same holds true for the reply that the Mishnah prescribed for someone who encountered a mourner or an excommunicated individual while strolling the area — “May He who dwells in this house comfort you,” or “May He who dwells in this house put it into their hearts to draw you back” — which take for granted that “this house” in fact exists.

Other rabbinic sources support the notion of the Temple Mount as an integral element of Second Temple topography by documenting ceremonies and feasts that allegedly took place in Jerusalem at that time. The mention of the

29 *M. Mid.* 1:1–3; 2:1–2. The version of the Mishnah used throughout this study is checked against that of the MS. Kaufman A50 in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, facsimile edition, Jerusalem 1968. I do not generally use alternative readings unless they are important for the matter at hand. The translations into English are based on H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1933), but frequently I take the liberty of changing them where I feel they do not represent the original Hebrew precisely.
Temple Mount as a reference point in such procedures takes for granted its familiarity to the rabbinic audience. One example places the Temple Mount as the final station along the route of the oxen that brought the ritually pure children who carried the water from the Siloam fountain for the ceremony of slaughtering the red heifer; it was also the point of departure for the entourage that dealt with the heifer, which set out from the city for the nearby Olive Mount.\textsuperscript{30}

Another example features the vibrant description of the sacramental banquet celebrating the bringing of first fruits. The rabbinic text follows the pilgrims' route and enumerates various details of the festivity: the ox “whose horns were overlaid with gold and a wreath of olive-branches on its head” leading the procession, the flute “playing in front of them,” the biblical verses that were recited, and the various personæ who were involved in the ceremonies. One of the parade stations, after the pilgrims had already entered Jerusalem but before they arrived at the inner court of the Temple (the ‘azarah), was the Temple Mount: “The flute plays in front of them until they arrive at the Temple Mount. When they reached the Temple Mount even King Agrippa would take a basket on his shoulder and enter.”\textsuperscript{31}

Another halakhah from a different occasion that fits this pattern well prescribes that after the first group completed their Paschal offering (which, due to the vast number of participants, was carried out according to the Mishnah in three consecutive shifts), “they went out . . . to the Temple Mount.”\textsuperscript{32} In the same vein, a position attributed to the tanna R. Eliezer b. Yaakov locates on the Temple Mount the biblical reading, which according to the Mishnah is required from a Jewish king at the public convocation (hakhel) on the holiday of Tabernacles following the Sabbatical year.\textsuperscript{33} Other halakhot also place the Temple Mount at the hub of daily life in Jerusalem at the time when the Temple still stood. The decree concerning lost money found in the city expresses such tendencies. The Mishnah rules on this issue: “Coins that were found before cattle-dealers are always [considered to be second] tithe [coins]. [If they were found] in the Temple Mount [they are considered] profane (regular coins that were not sanctified for second tithe use). And in Jerusalem — [if found] during the rest of the year [they are considered] profane, and [if found] on a pilgrimage festival all [are considered second] tithe [coins].”\textsuperscript{34}

In addition to these halakhot, tannaitic literature records a considerable number of customs and policies pertaining to the Temple Mount during the Second Temple period. Hand in hand with the instructions in Tractate Middot

\textsuperscript{31} M.Bik. 3:4; t.Bik. 2:10 (Lieberman, 292).
\textsuperscript{32} M.Pesah. 5:10.
\textsuperscript{33} T.Sotah 7:13 (Lieberman, 195), also cited in b.Yoma 69a.
\textsuperscript{34} M.Šeqal. 7:2.
mentioned above, a tannaitic halakhah regulates the dress code on the mountain, forbidding certain objects (such as shoes and walking sticks) to be brought in, and imposing a number of other restrictions on those who enter (dust on one's feet is not allowed nor using the Temple Mount as a shortcut).\textsuperscript{35} Many other references associate the Temple Mount with the three pilgrimage festivals. It is said of the golden trays covering the porch (\textit{7ulam}) of the Temple, for example, that "on the pilgrimage festival they are folded and placed on the steps of the Temple Mount so that the people will see their workmanship that it is beautiful..."\textsuperscript{36} Another example explains that when the first day of Tabernacles falls on the Sabbath people would "bring their lulavim (palm branches) to the Temple Mount and the hazzanim (officials/supervisors) would take them from them and arrange them on the roof of the \textit{7istevah} (portico/stoa)."\textsuperscript{37} Also mentioned are special additions to prayer on public fast days, which the sages claim derive from what was customary on the Temple Mount.\textsuperscript{38} and various environmental enactments, such as the prohibition against planting trees on the Temple Mount\textsuperscript{39} or the decree that "stones and beams that one originally quarried [and hewed] for a synagogue should not be used for building on the Temple Mount."\textsuperscript{40}

The Temple Mount frequently appears in stories about Second Temple Jerusalem that are introduced into tannaitic literature. The Tosefta, for example, tells "of R. Gamaliel and the elders who were sitting on the top of the stairs in the Temple Mount," from which they dispatched epistles to all the "nation of Israel" about the removing of tithes from their houses and the intercalation of an additional month into the yearly system.\textsuperscript{41} To be sure, the source does not specify which R. Gamaliel this was, so it might have been R. Gamaliel of Yavneh, in which case the story would be about the time after the destruction of the Temple. But since it is unlikely that the sages who configured this tradition thought Jews still occupied official positions in Jerusalem at that time, we can assume that the R. Gamaliel mentioned here was the so-called R. Gamaliel the Elder and that the account, therefore, whether authentic, fictional, or just through confusion on the part of its transmitters, was attributed by its authors to the Second Temple period.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{35} This halakhah is fully discussed below, pp. 26–31.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{T.Mena\textsc{h}.} 13:19 (Zuckermandel, 533). See also \textit{b.Pesah.} 57a.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{M.Sukkah} 4:4.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{M.Ta\textsc{r}\textsc{a}.} 2:5. I discuss the parallels to this Mishnah below, pp. 23–24.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Sipre Deut.} 145 (Finkelstein, 200). More on this halakhah below, pp. 57–58.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{T.Meg.} 2:16 (Lieberman, 352).
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{T.Sanh.} 2:6 (Zuckermandel, 416); \textit{y.Ma\textsc{c}\textsc{a}.} 5:6 (53c); \textit{y.Sanh.} 1:2 (18d); \textit{b.Sanh.} 11b.
\textsuperscript{42} As concluded by many; see, for example, M. D. Herr, "The Calendar," in S. Safrai, et al., eds., \textit{The Jewish People in the First Century}, CRINT 1.2 (Philadelphia: Van Gorcum, 1976) 856–57; D. Goodblatt, \textit{The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity}, TSAJ 38 (Tübin-
Another anecdote with similar elements more clearly refers to the time when the Temple was still standing. In that case, R. Yose recalls his father, Halafta, informing R. Gamaliel of Yavneh about an edict issued by the latter's grandfather, R. Gamaliel the Elder, to put away a certain translation of the book of Job and doing so while sitting (or standing, according to a second version) "on top of a step in the Temple Mount." 43 In other instances the tannaim extend the chronological boundaries even further, depicting the Temple Mount as part of Jerusalem's reality in much earlier periods. Illustrating this tendency is the mishnaic tale about Ḥoni the circle drawer, a saintly figure active in Jerusalem toward the end of the Hasmonaean period (60s B.C.E.), which at one point refers to heavy showers persisting "until the Israelites went up from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount." 44

The conjunction of the Temple Mount with the Second Temple era extends beyond halakhah and "historiography." A string of rabbinic sources also interweaves this feature into the physical landscape of the pre-destruction period by juxtaposing it with other architectural elements that existed at the time. Scholars justifiably interpreted the tannaitic reference to the stoa on the Temple Mount (cited above, pp. 12) as deriving from the Greek and denoting either the royal basilica erected by Herod on the southern portion of the compound or the porticoes that encircled the compound. 45

A baraita (an "external Mishnah," i.e., a tannaitic pericope not included in the final edition of the Mishnah) in both the Babylonian and the Palestinian Talmuds portrays a similar layout outlining the Temple Mount as a "colonnade within a colonnade." 46 Also mentioned in rabbinic literature are a synagogue, a study-house, and a law court on the Temple Mount, although it is not clear whether the references are to architectural structures or, at least in the case

43 T.Šabb. 13:2 (Lieberman, 57). Other versions of this tradition are listed by Lieberman. It is the London ms. that has R. Gamaliel "standing," and in y.Šabb. 16:1 (15c) the location is said to be "the building on the Temple Mount" instead of the step, presumably to allow "a tier of bricks" for the stashing of the translation.

44 M.Ta'an. 3:8. Some of the textual witnesses, including the printed editions, have "went out" instead of "went up." In the Tosefta version of the story, the Temple Mount does not appear at all; see t.Ta'an. 2:13 (Lieberman, 334–35). For a discussion of the various versions, see Lieberman, Tosefta Kifshutah 5:1096–97.


46 Y.Ta'an. 3:11 (66d). The Bavli renders an elaborated version of this tradition and adds at the beginning, "The Temple Mount was a double colonnade"; see b.Ber. 33b. See also b.Pesah. 13b, 52b; b.Sukkah 45a.
of the last two, merely to the gatherings of people for such purposes.\textsuperscript{47} Other tangible elements, diminutive as they might seem, emerge throughout rabbinic texts, such as the step and tier used by R. Gamaliel for burying the copies of the translation of Job that he withdrew from circulation (see n. 43 above) or the tops of pillars in the Temple Mount, of which R. Eleazar b. Zadok said “that artisans sit on them and polish the stones.”\textsuperscript{48}

Culminating the tannaitic presentation of the Temple Mount as a Second Temple element is the famous Mishnah in Tractate Kelim that maps the hierarchy of spatial holiness by dividing it into ten consecutive degrees. Within that arrangement, between the city of Jerusalem (“within the city walls”) and the Temple structure itself stands the Temple Mount, which “is still more holy (than the city), for no man nor woman who has the flux, no menstruant, and no women after child birth may enter therein.”\textsuperscript{49}

Apparently, the sages considered the Temple Mount an integral part of Second Temple reality, and as such they were required to rank it among the holy features of that time. At the core of the degrees of holiness passage shines the Temple of Jerusalem, the focus and peak of holiness, as an accessible and functioning institution. Accentuating its elevated status in this literary piece, the house of God is encircled by other architectural elements of this time — the inner courtyards, Temple Mount, and the city of Jerusalem. Characteristically for the rabbis, they do not convey this concept in spiritual terminology but rather anchor it in mundane daily practices and engrave it in halakhic prohibitions involving the widely observed laws of ritual purity. By applying such language, the passage creates the impression that the various components on its list, including the Temple Mount, were fundamental to the awareness of Jews during the Second Temple period.

Amoraic literature proceeds along the same lines. The \textit{amoraim} too considered the Temple Mount to have been an established entity as well as a functioning site during the Second Temple period, constituting an essential part of Jewish experience at that time. They show concrete knowledge of the physical layout of the place — for example, when referring to “the \textit{7agof} (the doorway)\textsuperscript{47} Synagogue and academy house: \textit{t.Sukkah} 4:5 (Lieberman, 273). Parallels and a discussion of variants are found in Lieberman, \textit{Tosefta Kifshutah}, 4:888. Academy house and law court: \textit{t.Šeqal} 3:27 (Lieberman, 219); \textit{t.Hag} 2:9 (Lieberman, 383); \textit{t.Sanh.} 7:1 (Zuckerman, 425). For a full discussion of these sources with reference to their parallels in the New Testament, which reaches rather different conclusions about the actual situation, see S. Krauss, \textit{Synagogale Altärtümer} (Berlin: Harz, 1922) 66–72; L. I. Levine, \textit{The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years} (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000) 52–58.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{T.Kelim B. Bat.} 2:2 (Zuckerman, 591).

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{M.Kelim} 1:8, and also \textit{Sipre Zut. Nasi} 5:2 (Horovitz, 228); \textit{T.Kelim B. Qam.} 1:6–7 (Zuckerman, 569–70). I discuss this Mishnah and its parallels extensively below, p. 37–39.
of the Temple Mount” in relation to the sanctuary’s halakhic boundaries.\(^50\) The amoraic debate regarding a paschal sacrifice that had become ritually impure also evokes the scenery at the site. The Mishnah stipulates that it must be burnt “in front of the birah (castle/fort).” The amoraim in the Palestinian Talmud differ about the identification of this structure; R. Yohanan claims, “There was a tower on the Temple Mount that was called birah,” while R. Simeon b. Lakish contends, “the entire Temple Mount was called birah.”\(^51\)

Like the tannaim, the amoraim preserved “memories” — whether real or imagined — of scenes from the Second Temple period that had occurred on the Temple Mount. One example in the Palestinian Talmud features Bava b. Buta, a disciple of Shammai, who in his aspiration to follow the halakḥah of the rival school of Hillel, mustered three thousand animals intended for ritual offering, stood them on the Temple Mount, and called upon the Jews to sacrifice them in consistence with the ruling of the school of Hillel.\(^52\)

The amoraim also associated the Temple Mount with some official practices from the days of the Temple. Illustrating this trend a post amoraic compilation known as Midrash Tanḥuma details a custom forbidding a priest to leave the Temple Mount while dressed in his vestments.\(^53\) Furthermore, the amoraim resembled the tannaim in considering the Temple Mount to have been in service even during the earliest part of the Second Temple period and describing events of that time as having taken place there. For example, one version of the amoraic legend about Alexander the Great’s alleged arrival in Jerusalem maintains that when Alexander entered the Temple Mount, the Jewish protagonist of the story — a character named Gabiah (the Hunchback) — coaxed him to replace his shoes with some socklike slippers (from the Greek empilia).\(^34\) It is fairly clear that the author shaped this segment in accordance with the tannaitic halakḥah mentioned above (p. 12), which prohibits walking in the Temple Mount with shoes on.

\(^{50}\) Y.Pesah. 7:11 (35b).
\(^{51}\) Y.Pesah. 7:8 (35a). For further discussion of this halakḥah and its parallels, as well as the meaning of the word “birah,” see below, pp. 25–26.
\(^{52}\) Y.Besah 2:4 (61c); y.Hag. 2:3 (78a), and more about this source below, pp. 24.
\(^{53}\) Tanḥ. B. Ḥukat 40 (Buber, 124). Similarly in the printed edition of the Tanḥuma (Ḥukat 17), and Num. Rab. 19:19, which is known to be nearly identical to the Tanḥuma for these biblical portions. For early versions of this halakḥah see my discussion below, p. 57.
\(^{54}\) Gen. Rab. 6:7 (Theodor and Albeck, 668). For another version of this legend in the Scholion to the Scroll of Fastings (Megillat Ta’anit) and other parallel texts in amoraic literature see V. Noam, Megillat Ta’anit and the Scholion: Versions, Interpretations, History with a Critical Edition (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben Tzevi, 2003) 75–77. The designation “Temple Mount” only appears in what Noam calls the “patchwork version” of the Scholion and is thus influenced by Gen. Rab. Concerning the empilia, see: Krauss, Griechische, 61–62.
At first glance, then, rabbinic sages in the post-70 era present a picture of the Temple Mount as an essential part of the preceding Second Temple Jewish experience and an inseparable part of reality in that earlier generation's consciousness. This literature suggests that during the time of the Temple Jews were both familiar with and used the term "Temple Mount." They abided by customs linked to the Mount as well as the laws governing the area. People were also acquainted with its physical details.

But a more careful examination of the traditions regarding the Temple Mount in rabbinic literature — one that investigates the various versions of and changes in the texts over time — reveals deep fissures in the picture delineated above. Such an investigation raises serious doubts about the historical reliability of relating the term "Temple Mount" and its conceptual content to the Second Temple period. Its conclusions reverse the above model of the Temple Mount as a Second Temple feature, and present it as a conceptual innovation of the rabbis.

David Weiss-Halivni was, as far as I know, the first to point out the problems involved in the sources about the Temple Mount and to note that this term does not fit smoothly with the halakhic fabric depicted by the Mishnah. Halivni directs his attention to Mishnah Bikkurim, which presents the extent of first fruits liability beyond which the legal responsibility of the person bringing the offering does not extend. It reads as follows:

If they (the first fruits) contracted uncleanness while in the Temple Court (țazarah), he must scatter them and he may not make the Avowel. Whence do we learn that a man is liable for them until they are brought to the Temple Mount? Because it is written "The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 23:19, 34:26), which teaches that one is liable for them until they are brought to the Temple Mount.

Halivni is very much aware that the two designations in this passage — Temple court (țazarah) and Temple Mount (har ha-bayit) — signify different parts of the Temple complex; the first points to the inner court (fig. 2:B–C), and the latter to the outside precinct (fig. 2:D). He therefore notes that the change in name — from "Temple court" at the beginning of the halakhah to "Temple Mount," appearing twice in the exegetical (midrashic) segment following it — creates legal incongruity. The first part of the halakhah specifies that only if the pil-

56 *M.Bik.* 1:8–9; trans. (with minor changes) Danby, *The Mishnah*, 94.
grim brought the first fruits to the Temple court is he no longer responsible for them. And so, if at that time they contracted ritual impurity, "he scatters them" but is not required to bring "others instead of them (as demanded from someone whose fruits became invalid prior to his fulfillment of the obligation)."

The closing, midrashic, part, however, implies that as soon as the pilgrim has brought the offering to the Temple Mount, his obligation is fulfilled. Thus a person who has brought the offering to the Temple Mount maintains his liability according to the first part of the halakhah but is no longer responsible according to the last part. Halivi correctly notes that this last section contradicts not only the first section but also the accepted halakhah in rabbinic literature elsewhere. He calls attention to a midrashic segment in the Mekhilta of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, which is practically identical to the one in the above Mishnah, except that it ends, "thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God' teaches that people are bound to look after the bringing of (the first fruits) until they reach the chosen house (beit ha-beḥirah; the Temple)." In order to resolve the contradiction Halivi proposes the following:

Clearly, during the time when the continuation of the Mishnah Bikkurim (i.e., the midrashic segment in the second part, YZE) was composed, the Temple proper too was referred to (as in the Bible) as the Temple Mount.

Halivi claims that this time was the period before the reign of Herod. Underlying his interpretation is the assumption that the meaning of the term "Temple Mount" has changed over time. With this insight, Halivi provides the methodological foundation for a historical study of the expression "the Temple Mount" and its development in both rabbinic literature and Jewish civilization in general. His chronological model, however, may not be the only solution. Halivi mentions another source (discussed below) from Mishnah Hagigah that reflects the same development in the meaning of the term, but

57 Mek. R. Šim. 23:19 (Epstein and Melamed, 219). See Halivi, Midrash, 23. Actually, the classical commentators on the Mishnah had already noticed the internal contradiction in this halakhah. Halivi himself refers the reader to the famous eighteenth-century rabbinic scholar Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, the so-called Vilna Gaon, and even before Halivi, Lieberman reviewed other commentators who discussed this issue; see Lieberman, Tosefta Kifshutah, 2:828. As they generally do in such cases, traditional scholars take a harmonistic approach toward the sources. Thus, for example, the Vilna Gaon expunged the word "Mount" from the last part of the halakhah in Mishnah Bikkurim, suggesting that the proper wording is, "and how do we know that he is liable for them until he brings them to the house (Temple)," thus resolving the contradiction. Clearly, however, this correction has no support from any of the known textual witnesses, all of which read "the Temple Mount," and thus misses the historical aspect of halakhic development.

58 Halivi, Midrash, 23.
an examination of all the occurrences of the appellation "Temple Mount" in rabbincic literature shows this trend to be quite far-reaching. Halivni's model does not account for this widespread phenomenon.

A priori, there could be two possible, chronologically different, origins for the Temple Mount image in rabbincic literature. According to one option, the sages really did capture the essence and experience of the previous era — that is, the Second Temple period — and they preserved and documented it in their literature. According to this line of thought, the writings of the tannaim and amoraim genuinely display the Temple Mount as part of the Second Temple world. Consequently, Halivni proposes that the authors of the Mishnah retrieved the source about the Temple Mount from early layers of Second Temple literature, namely pre-Herodian times.\(^{59}\)

An alternative possibility, however, should also be considered. Perhaps the sages offer a new picture of the past based primarily on the concepts and images that were prevalent in their own time. If this is so, when the rabbis present the Temple Mount as an essential component of Second Temple experience, they are actually projecting their own images backward and sketching the past according to accepted notions of their own time. This view accepts Halivni's distinction between the various layers of the tannaitic literature dealing with the Temple Mount but differs with his historical conclusion. According to this line of thought, "the Temple Mount" in rabbincic literature is not an early conceptual entity that the rabbis incorporated into their writings but rather a later invention that was plotted into these texts by those who created them, namely the rabbis themselves.

How then is Mishnah Bikkurim to be understood? The midrashic segment at the end of the passage, which fixes the limits of first fruits liability at the Temple Mount, has a parallel in two other tannaitic works — the Tosefta and the Sifre to Deuteronomy. These texts, however, cite R. Judah's view, which demarcates the line of liability at a place called "the well (cistern) of the Golah," known from other sources to be located in the Temple, between the Israelite and Priestly courts (fig. 2:B).\(^{60}\) The Sifre discusses the liability limits of all offerings in general. It interprets the verse, "But such sacred donations that are due from you, and your votive gifts you shall bring to the place that the Lord will

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59 Halivni's thesis is even more far reaching since he claims based on this analysis that the genre of midrash predates the mishnaic form. My discussion below adds to doubts that were posed in regard to this preposition. On the whole subject, see R. Kalmin, "Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara: The Jewish Predilection for Justified Law," Conservative Judaism 39.4 (1987) 78–84 (on Halivni's discussion of the Temple Mount, see p. 82).

60 Sipre Deut. 77 (Finkelstein, 142); t.Bik. 1:5 (Lieberman, 287). On the location of this cistern, see m.Erib 1:14; m.Mid. 5:4. For discussion of the sources and earlier bibliography, see J. Schwartz, "Beër ha-Qar, Bôr Heqer and the Seleucid Akra," Cathedra 37 (1985) 14–16 (Heb.).
choose” (Deuteronomy 12:26), as, “One is bound to take care of the bringing (of the offerings) until they are brought to the Chosen House.” Following this general statement the above mentioned R. Judah locates the line of liability more specifically.

Clearly the general boundary for liability set by the Sifre, as well as the more specific location noted by R. Judah, agrees with the first part of Mishnah Bikkurim. Both “azarah,” inner courtyard, and “beit ha-behirah,” chosen house, even if not identical, point to the inner structures of the Temple, which stood at the time as a detached architectural unit, physically removed from the outer compound by a fortified wall (see fig. 2:A–B–C) and legally separated by a whole series of halakhot. R. Judah’s remark too, although a more focused clarification that marks the boundary for responsibility in exact terms, shares the view of the Sifre and the first part of Mishnah Bikkurim. All three disagree with the boundary designated by the midrashic segment in the mishnah – “Temple Mount” – which denotes the outer precinct (fig. 2:D) and therefore restricts the limit of liability less than all other passages.

The question is the relation between the three formulations that locate the boundary at the inner structure of the Temple on one hand and the midrashic segment at the end of the mishnah, which sets the boundary at the Temple Mount on the other. At first glance it might seem that the sources simply disagree about the liability boundary – one group locates it in the Temple, and another source at the Temple Mount. But, as Halivi showed, the wording of the Mishnah does not appear to indicate a difference of opinion between the first part and the second; rather, it seems to be presenting one view. Moreover, the use of a very precise designation, “the well of the Golah” (as opposed to naming a broader vicinity such as “the Temple” or “the Temple Mount”) demonstrates familiarity with the layout of the Temple area, thus attesting to the probable early date of this version.

It may thus be suggested that the expression “the Temple Mount” represents a later reformulation of the halakhot about the boundary of liability, reflecting a

61 Azara (which I have been translating as “inner Temple court”), at least in the Mishnah, always refers to the area west of the women’s courtyard, whether it includes only the so-called court of the Israelites or also the priestly court. Some typical examples of this terminological phenomenon are discussed below (the public reading of the biblical section concerning the king, the slaughter of the Passover sacrifice in three groups, and others). The history of the expression Beit ha-behirah (the chosen house) was recently discussed by Henshke, “The Sanctity,” 10–17 (Heb.), who showed that it originally did not mean “the Temple” but rather the area upon which the Temple was built. The following points are important for the present discussion: 1. Even Henshke admits that this term was later used only to refer to the Temple; 2. Even if the Mekhila of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai reflects the early use of the term here, this may be the source of the halakhah that places the limit of liability at the Temple Mount, but it then just corroborates the fact that “the Temple Mount” is a later expression that replaced “the chosen house.”
distant viewpoint from which this term came to encompass, and consequently replace, the particularities of the Temple reality. According to this interpretation, כזראות, inner courtyard, and the well of the גולה had been relevant when they were well known to everyone but lost their relevance once the Temple had been destroyed. The sage who coined this term in the midrashic segment of the mishnah adjusted his phrasing to the common vocabulary of his own day. From this point of view, he may not even have noticed the contradiction that this change created between the two parts of the Mishnah because in his time the term "Temple Mount" stood for a general, all-inclusive name for the Temple.

This is a theoretical model. Although it may be correct, alternative proposals can be offered as well. In what follows I therefore bring evidence in support of this thesis, demonstrating that the "Temple Mount" constitutes a later expression taken from the worldview of the tannaim and amoraim, which they used in reference to earlier times.

**The Direction of Prayer**

Numerous sources from the Second Temple period attest to an ancient custom of praying in the direction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The embryonic phases of this practice may already be spotted in the prayer attributed to King Solomon, said to be delivered at the dedication of the First Temple: "Hear the plea of your servant and of Your people Israel when they pray toward this place."62 In accordance with this tradition, the early halakhah, preserved in Sifre to Deuteronomy and in the Tosefta, as well as in a series of amoraic parallels and some fragments in the Geniza, calibrate the various directions of prayer:

Those who stand outside the Land direct their hearts toward the land of Israel... Those who stand inside the land of Israel direct their hearts toward Jerusalem... Those who stand in Jerusalem direct their hearts toward the Temple... Those who stand in the Temple direct their hearts toward the Holy of Holies.63

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62 1 Kgs 8:30; Dan 6:11; 3 Ezra 4:58 (Rahlfs, 884). This is also how the prayer of Sarah facing the window is interpreted: Tob 3:11 (Hanhart, 83). See also E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975) 54–63; U. Ehrlich, *The Non-Verbal Language of Jewish Prayer* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999) 64–96 (Heb.).

63 T.Ber. 3:15–16 (Lieberman, 15–16); Sipre Deut. 29 (Finkelstein, 47). Later versions and parallels from the Geniza are enumerated in Lieberman’s edition. Concerning the major difference in wording between the Tosefta and the Sipre, where the former has "they direct their heart" throughout, while the latter (as well as the Mishnah cited in the following note) has "they turn their faces toward..." in some of the instances; see Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifshutah* 1:44; Ehrlich, *The Non-Verbal*, 64–96.
The Mishnah presents an abbreviated form, mentioning only the final destination but with a similar orientation: "He should direct his heart toward the Holy of Holies." One source, however, deviates from this conventional pecking order and introduces a slight change into the hierarchy of places. A baraita cited by the Palestinian Talmud replaces "the Temple" with "the Temple Mount"; "Those who pray in Jerusalem turn their faces toward the Temple Mount... Those who pray on the Temple Mount turn their faces toward the Holy of Holies." Even those scholars who noticed this change paid no attention to its significance; indeed, from a practical viewpoint it makes no difference since people in prayer continue to face the same direction. But from a conceptual point of view, the change in the designation of the location suggests an essential development.

All versions of the hierarchal list of places, including the baraita in the Palestinian Talmud, coincide stylistically. Even more so, they concur about the identity of the various places, with only one exception — the Temple Mount in the baraita. The proximity in both style and wording deems it unlikely that the two versions were formulated concurrently. It is also rather implausible that the early version read "the Temple Mount" and that it was later altered to "the Temple." More probably, most of the sources in this case preserved the ancient and obvious version in which the direction of prayer points toward the Temple, as is also evident in all early Second Temple sources (see n. 62). Only the tannaitic source preserved in the Palestinian Talmud alters the location to "the Temple Mount."

A clue to the reasons for this modification may be found in the portion of the Palestinian Talmud following the baraita. In that passage, R. Joshua b. Levi interprets the verse, "For my House shall be called a House of Prayer for all the nations" (Isa 56:7), as follows, "It is the inner sanctuary towards which all faces

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64 M.Ber. 4:5
65 Y.Ber. 4 (8c). The fact that this source speaks about turning one's face, while the source cited above from the Tosefta is about the direction of one's heart, is not relevant for the present study. As mentioned above (n. 63), the parallels in the Tosefta already include turning one's face; the important point is that the hierarchy of places is the same in the two versions, except for the source in the Palestinian Talmud under discussion here. Another parallel version in Cant. Rab. 4:4 has preserved a mixed reading: "Those who stand in prayer in Jerusalem turn their faces toward the Temple... Those who stand on the Temple Mount turn their faces toward the Holy of Holies." This version may well reflect an intermediate stage in the transmission of the tradition, between the early versions and the one in the Palestinian Talmud.

66 See, for example, Lieberman, Tosefta Kilashutah, 1:44, who compares the Palestinian Talmud version to other readings but soon concludes, "They are the same"; L. Ginzberg, A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud (4 vols.; New York: KTAV, 1941) 3:379 (Heb.); Aderet, From Destruction, 103, "During the Second Temple period the Jews had the custom of praying while facing Jerusalem and the Temple Mount" (Heb.; my emphasis, YZE). This harmonistic approach illustrates the obliviousness toward the developments in meaning and significance of the Temple Mount that occurred over time.
turn [to pray].” When the talmudic author challenges the eternal veracity of this statement due to the realities of the time—“This applies when the Temple was standing, but how do we know [it is true when the Temple] is destroyed?”—the sugya introduces an alternative understanding. R. Bon discerns a play on the biblical image, “shapely built (talpiyot)” (Song of Songs 4:4). Splitting the Hebrew noun in two, he reads “the hill (tel) toward which (literally in Hebrew, “on top of which!”) all mouths (piyot) pray.” Even without solving all the textual uncertainties that arise from other versions of this segment, the gist of its textual moment is clear. It deals with the situation that came into being after the destruction of the Temple. In R. Bon’s formulation, the word “tel,” denoting the Hebrew hill or mountain, substitutes for the word “heikhal” in R. Joshua’s interpretation, which means shrine or Temple. Precisely the same change took place in the baraita: “the Temple” turned into “the Temple Mount.”

To unpack the narrative embodied in this passage: in the wake of the destruction of the Temple the sages were compelled to contemplate the issue of the direction of prayer and asked themselves if it still had any significance, now that the sanctuary was annihilated and the sacrificial process had ceased to exist. Shifting the destination of prayer from the Temple to the Temple Mount can easily be seen as part of this consideration. Whether or not this last proposal is correct, the baraita in the Palestinian Talmud provides a glimpse at the process by which “the Temple” was replaced with “the Temple Mount.” In the earlier era, rendered by the sources from the Second Temple period (see n.62 above), people directed their prayers to Jerusalem and the Temple. Only later “the Temple Mount” replaced “the Temple.” This change was not absorbed by most of the sources dealing with the direction of prayer, which thus remain faithful to the original hierarchy of locations, but it was preserved in the baraita quoted by the Palestinian Talmud.

This partial shift in the prescription for direction of prayer is by no means an isolated case. In the following, I wish to support my argument by showing that such phenomena circulate throughout rabbinic literature. Discerning similar literary and epistemological developments in seemingly unrelated instances reinforces the plausibility of such a dynamic.

Remembering Physical Reality

The mechanism laid out in the previous example for the evolution of both the term and image of the Temple Mount recurs throughout rabbinic literature. In some cases the change is readily apparent. One example from the sphere of

67 Other versions are Cant. Rab. 4:4; b.Ber. 30a. These are extensively discussed in Ginzberg, A Commentary, 3:398–99 (Heb.).
biblical hermeneutics comes in the course of a rabbinc discussion about places that are exempt from the requirement of having a mezuzah (a parchment scroll containing some biblical passages, which the halakkah requires to be affixed to the doorpost of rooms in Jewish buildings). Based on the scriptural verses that are commonly associated with affixing a mezuzah (Deut 6:9, 11:20), the Palestinian Talmud renders a tannaitic midrash on the word uvishec'arekha (and on your gates) — “except for the gates of the Temple Mount and the inner Temple courts.” Early tannaitic versions of this midrash, however, preserved in Sifre to Deuteronomy and in the Tosefta, do not mention the Temple Mount at all but rather make it explicit that the issue at hand relates to the gates of the Temple.

In a second example, a mishnaic passage detailing some rituals of fasting days records the disapproval of the majority view, which limits observance of these practices to what took place “at the Eastern Gate and in the Temple Mount.”

So says the printed version of the Mishnah, as well as the version in the Munich manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud, which quotes the Mishnah, and the Babylonian Talmud too cites this tradition in this way. But none of the Palestinian textual witnesses, known to represent the more original versions of the Mishnah, mention the Temple Mount in this passage — not the so-called Kaufmann manuscript, nor the one from Parma, nor the Cambridge manuscript published by Lowe. Citations of the Mishnah by the Palestinian Talmud show no awareness of this reading either. Most of these sources refer to “the eastern gates,” in the plural, not to the Temple Mount.

According to all available evidence, this decisive change occurred between the days of the tannaim and the time when the Babylonian Talmud alluded to this source (since the quotation of the Mishnah in the Bavli already has the Temple Mount). It seems plausible that “and the Temple Mount” represents a type of gloss — annotations commonly added by scribes to the margins of manuscripts (although here it could have been added orally) — meant to cope with the fact that the “gates” in the original version appear in the plural. According to this explanation, a later reader assuming only one eastern gate added the

68 Y.Yoma 1:1 (38c); b. Yoma 11b. I am not aware of any evidence to support Lieberman’s reading (Tosefta Kifshutah, 4:719) in the Palestinian Talmud “. . . to the gates of the Temple (habayit) and the inner Temple courts.” Perhaps it is a typographical error.
69 Sipre Deut. 36 (Finkelstein, 67); t. Yoma (Kippurim) 1:2 (Lieberman, 220).
70 m. Ta’an. 2:5. All variants mentioned in the following discussion are taken from H. Malter, The Treatise Ta’anit of the Babylonian Talmud, Publications of the American Academy of Jewish Research 1 (New York, 1930) 55ff. The Mishnah does not state what exactly was enacted by the two tannaim, and there were differences of opinion on the matter in the Talmud and among the Geonim; see, for example, A. Büchler, Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety from 70 B.C.E. to 70 C.E. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1922) 222–41.
71 B. Roš. Haš. 27a; b. Ta’an. 16b.
Temple Mount to sustain the mishnaic version of “gates” in the plural. Although it is difficult to reconstruct exactly the changes in wording that led to the one preserved in the printed edition of the Mishnah as we have it, the main stages of the process are quite clear, and it is fairly obvious that the expression “the Temple Mount” was not part of the original account.

A third case features similar developments, but this time within the narrative framework of a fictional story. A legend transmitted twice in the Palestinian Talmud (see n. 52) recounts the measures taken by Bava b. Buta to revitalize the deserted inner courts of the Temple complex and revive the neglected sacrificial process. According to the story, the fact that the ruling about laying of hands on sacrificial animals accorded with the school of Shammai resulted in people avoiding animal offerings altogether. Troubled by the empty inner court — the ‘azarah (fig. 2:B) — of the Temple but not dismayed, Bava b. Buta decided to reinstate the law according to the school of Hillel. Thus, the story concludes with the protagonist b. Buta bringing thousands of animals to display in the Temple Mount and calling upon the nation to renew the sacrificial process in accordance with the more popular Hillelite halakhah.

The literary structure of the Palestinian Talmud passage shows the final location, “Temple Mount,” to be out of place. The motif that shapes the plot centers on “the empty inner court (‘azarah),” and thus generates the expectation that Bava b. Buta’s actions will fill this void and that the story will conclude in the inner courtyard itself. Indeed, in another, apparently earlier version of this legend, in the Tosefta, the plot culminates in “he placed them (the animals) in the ‘azarah.”72 It seems that the process described above, in which “the Temple Mount” replaced early terms associated with the Temple, occurred here as well.

Finally, a fourth example of placing an authentic structure within a setting that did not prevail at the time involves the above-mentioned amoraic debate about the identification of the “birah.” R. Johanan maintains, “There was a tower on the Temple Mount that was called birah,” while R. Simeon b. Lakish contends, “the entire Temple Mount was called birah” (above, pp. 15). Undoubtedly, an architectural structure (tower, fortress, garrison?) by that name stood somewhere in the vicinity of the Temple during the Second Temple period; the Mishnah mentions it a few times, Josephus confirms it, and also provides its Greek transliteration “baris.” Its earliest usage in relation to the Temple in Jerusalem reaches back to the book of Nehemiah.73 But all early sources establish the location of the “birah” as simply next to the Temple — both in rabbinic literature, including the passage in the Mishnah about whose interpretation the amoraim were

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72 T.Hag. 2:11 (Lieberman, 389–86); also in b.Beisah 20a.
73 For example, Nehemiah 2:8, 7:12; m.Pesah. 7:8; m.Zebah. 12:5; m.Parah 3:11; m.Tamid 1:11; Josephus A.I. 15:403, 409 (Marcus, 8:194–96); Josephus, B.J. 1:75 (Thackeray, 1:38). For a full discussion of the numerous sources mentioning the term birah and the suggestions made by scholars for its
debating, as well as Josephus. It is entirely possible, as Paul Mandel claims in his study of the term *birah*, that at a certain stage during the Second Temple period the denotation of this name was extended to include the entire Temple area. This, however, only underscores the absence during that time of the term “Temple Mount,” which would have obviated the necessity for finding another term to describe exactly the same area. Apparently, here too the designation “Temple Mount” entered rabbinic discourse only at a later stage, and the *amoraim* introduced it into earlier memories of the Temple area. The “*birah*” represents an authentic structure of Second Temple landscape; the “*birah* on the Temple Mount,” however, pertains to an artifact of amoraic memory.

These four cases shed light on how the rabbis shaped their memory of physical space. How do architectural elements or spatial organizations from the past register in the mind of the individual or in the collective consciousness of a group? Unlike the earlier example discussed in this essay about the direction of prayer, the Temple Mount in the last few cases does not take center stage. Rather the gates and *birah* are the important features, either as halakhic categories or as venues for certain rituals and stories. The Mount is mentioned in passing and therefore in a way that allows a neutral glimpse into the inventive process of memory.

Clearly gates existed in the Second Temple complex as well as inner quads and other structures such as the *birah*, and later generations listed them in their literatures in a very inventorial way. That is to say: there were many physical features at that time, and only those that were associated with an issue worth remembering earned a spot in the traditions. The terminology utilized to present this area, however, dramatically altered with the addition of the Temple Mount. There is no hint that the people of the Second Temple period thought about the site on which these rituals and practices took place as “the Temple Mount.” All early versions of the traditions cited above allude to this area as an independent designation. The “eastern gates,” for example, probably pointed to the space between the two eastern gates leading to the Temple, the eastern entrance to the women’s court, and the gate leading from it to the Israelites’ court (often incorrectly called “the Nicanor gate”; see fig. 2). The same holds true for the *birah* and the *c’azarah*. Only at a later stage in the transmission of these *halakhot*, either in the tannaitic period or sometime between that time and the following amoraic era, were the traditions reworded and

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74 Mandel, “*Birah*,” 209–10 (Heb.).

the location "Temple Mount" introduced. Whereas in the early literary strata they were simply gates — eastern gates or the gates of the Temple — and a structure named birah, they were transformed over time into something new — the gates and birah of the Temple Mount. As a result, a new feature emerged that had not been part of the original cluster of memories.

The same process marks the shift of consciousness from the 'azarah as the physical destination of offerings to the Temple Mount. The story of Bava b. Buta shares common traits with the first fruits liability case, analyzed by Halivni, as well as with the destination of prayer case discussed above (pp. 20–23). Here too the introduction of the Temple Mount reshapes the memory of the physical layout of the Temple.

All in all, these sources indicate that a variety of physical elements, all remembered as associated with the Temple, changed at a certain stage to the realm of the Temple Mount. I have provided evidence to substantiate the claim that this change had a chronological dimension as well: at first these elements were all seen as related to the Temple and over time reallocated to the Mount. I call this process "innovative perception."

Reverence for the Temple and the Temple Mount

A series of tannaitic and amoraic sources cite an extract of a halakhic (legal) enactment that details the prohibitions applying to people entering the Temple Mount. The table on the following pages lists the main versions.76

The four documents clearly differ in both language and literary style: Sifra and Sifre to Deuteronomy interlace the legal segment into their homiletic discourse, while the Mishnah and the Tosefta list it within their halakhic inventory. The substance of the prohibition also fluctuates among the sources, and even the three similar versions — Sifra, Mishnah, and Sifre — enumerate different items (the traveling bag appears only in Sifra; the shortcut and spitting are

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absent from *Sifre Deuteronomy*), while the fourth source, the Tosefta, presents a different version, which resembles the others only partially (the dust on one's feet and one's money belt).

Nevertheless, all the sources share considerable ground. Structurally, all commence with the frame, "One should not enter ... the Temple Mount with ...", and three out of four conclude by forbidding spitting at the site (only in *Sifre* is spitting not mentioned, perhaps evidence that this item was added only in the second stage). Even more so, the three sources that include spitting all mention that it was taken into account due to a logical inference known in rabbinic hermeneutics as *qal va-homer*; namely, if a relatively innocent act with no explicit disparagement such as entering with dust on one's feet is prohibited, then logically a more serious act of contempt, such as spitting, must also be disallowed.

The general spirit of the prohibitions and their purpose are also identical in all sources. They are meant to establish a norm of respectful behavior, as manifested in the ban on bringing in mundane articles that people use in their everyday lives, the requirement of cleaning one's feet, and the proscription against acts that show disrespect for the holiness of the place (spitting and using the site as a shortcut). Finally, despite the differences listed above, the details of the prohibitions share a common core: the dust on one's feet and one's money belt are mentioned in all four, while one's walking stick, shoes, and spitting are in three out of the four.

Thus, the nucleus of all the traditions, on which variations were formulated over the years, is clear. The common features define an independent literary pericope within the larger literary units and distinguish it from adjacent components. Even though the various tannaitic compositions integrated this segment into larger textual contexts, it can be extricated and studied independently as the legal manifestation of "reverence for the Temple" — to use the terminology of the *Sifra*.

If such a *halakhah* had indeed existed in the days of the Temple, it would be a sound testimony that the Temple Mount, as both an ontological category and a physical structure, had been important in the objective and subjective reality of that period. But another adaptation of this passage voices a rather different version in one essential detail. This is a halakhic tradition in a group of closely related texts known as *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelamdenu*, and its early formulation may be found in a manuscript of *Deuteronomy Rabbah* published by Lieberman. It reads as follows:

What [is the law regarding] a person entering the Temple Mount with his staff and his footwear and the dust on his feet? This is what our sages
1. **Sifra** Is it possible that the building of the house of the sanctuary (beit ha-miqdash) will override the restrictions of the Sabbath? ... It is not the Sabbath that you fear but the one who gave the commandment concerning the Sabbath.

**Mishnah** One is bound to bless for the bad just as he blesses the good.

**Sifre to Deuteronomy**

**Tosefta**

2. **Sifra** I know that this is the case when the house of the sanctuary is standing; how do I know the ruling when the house of the sanctuary is not standing? Scripture says “You shall keep my Sabbaths and revere my sanctuary; I am the Lord.” Just as keeping the Sabbath is for all times, so the reverence for the Temple (miqdash) is to be forever.

**Mishnah** One should not behave frivolously while facing the Eastern Gate since it faces toward the Holy of Holies.

**Sifre to **“And your camp shall be holy” (Deut 23:15) — make it holy. 

**Deuteronomy**

**Tosefta**

...taught: It is forbidden for a person to enter the Temple with his footwear and the dust on his feet. And you must not say that since the Temple has been destroyed he (is allowed to treat it (the Temple) frivolously, but [rather the law is the same] if it is standing or destroyed.77

The author of this *midrash* quotes what he believes to be an early *halakhah* (This is what our sages taught). Its closeness to the versions presented above is unmistakable, if only from the items it includes — the shoes and the dust on one’s feet — which resemble almost verbatim the other traditions. The similarity, in

77 *Deut. Rab. Va-ethannen* (Lieberman, 34, 43). A similar passage of the same textual tradition is found in *Tanh. Leviticus* 8 (Buber, 5–6), and in the printed edition 6, but it would seem that these texts were already adapted to the accepted version throughout rabbinic literature, so that “the Temple Mount” appears there instead of “the Temple.”
3. **Sifra** What constitutes reverence? He may not enter the Temple Mount with his staff, and his traveling bag, and his footwear or his money belt or with the dust upon his feet, nor may he make of it a short by-path; still less (the rabbinic logical concept of *kal va-homer* — *a fortiori* reasoning) may he spit there.

**Mishnah** He may not enter into the Temple Mount with his staff or his footwear or his money belt or with the dust upon his foot, nor may he make of it a short by-path; still less (the rabbinic logical concept of *kal va-homer* — *a fortiori* reasoning) may he spit there.

**Sifre to** Hence [the sages] have said: One should not enter the *Deuteronomy* Temple Mount with his staff or his footwear or his money belt or with the dust upon his feet.

**Tosefta** One should not enter the Temple Mount with money tied in his purse or with the dust upon his feet, or with his money belt girded to the out side [of his garments]. As scripture says, “Guard your steps [“feet”] when you go to the house of the Lord” (Ecclesiastes 4:17). And spitting [is forbidden] by *a fortiori* reasoning — if a shoe that is not contemptuous . . . how much more so is spitting.

both literary format and language, between this passage and the other versions of the *halakhah* precludes the possibility of two distinct traditions with separate origins. One way that two unacquainted individuals could come up with the same wording and content is by sharing a mutual source. With no hint that such an *urtext* existed, it is safer to assume a literary development, namely that one version was changed into the other, even if not directly.

Profoundly different, the present source uses the designation “Temple” instead of “Temple Mount” to denote the place where these *halakhot* apply. A variety of reasons point to the “Temple” as the preferable, indeed more original, of the two versions. The “Temple Mount” formula uniformly prevails in all other tannaitic sources of this *halakhah*. The *amoraim* were well acquainted with it and not only quoted it many times but even used it as the contextual skeleton for some of their work, such as the legend about Alexander the Great
(cited above, pp.15), requiring him to follow such a halakhah when he entered the Temple Mount. Therefore, if the author of the Deuteronomy Rabbah passage, or anyone prior to him, had found the designation “Temple Mount” in the versions before him, he would not have changed it to “Temple.” Moreover, the question that introduces the passage shows clearly that he was seeking legal material concerning the Temple Mount, so that if he had stumbled across such a halakhah, he certainly would not have made the mistake of changing it to refer to the Temple.

The Deuteronomy Rabbah passage should therefore be seen as evidence of an early version of the ruling regarding “Temple reverence,” showing that at first it applied to the Temple itself rather than the Temple Mount. This would not be the first, and definitely not the only, case in which the relatively late Midrash Tanhumah-Yelamdenu collection in general, and in the Deuteronomy Rabbah text published by Lieberman in particular preserved primeval halakhic versions.78

If I am correct in this reconstruction and the halakhah in its early version indeed addressed behavior in the Temple rather than the Temple Mount, two fundamental phases in the history of the “reverence for the Temple” laws become apparent. Originally they were about the Temple itself, including its various chambers and inner courts, and the Midrash Tanhumah-Yelamdenu formulation in Deuteronomy Rabbah preserved an ancient version of this early stage. Only in a later revision was the halakhah rephrased, with the Temple Mount taking the place of the Temple. Various adaptations of this second version were embedded in the four different settings of tannaitic literature discussed above.

Indications of such a process may also be found in the overall design of the Sifra portions on this subject. The opening two sections of that midrash direct the reader’s attention to the Temple. In a hypothetical negotiation, very typical in rabbinic discourse, the first section of the passage weighs the magnitude of the Temple against the importance of the Sabbath. The second section associates the two, concluding that just as the observance of the Sabbath is everlasting, so too the “reverence for the house of the sanctuary (the longer name for the Temple) is forever.” As is common to the associative dialogue of the rabbis, a question follows: “What constitutes reverence?” While the reader expects details of halakhot dealing with reverence for the Temple itself, the subject of the previous discussion, the author diverges into prohibitions associated with the Temple Mount instead. The midrash begins with the Temple but ends unexpectedly with the Mount. This conceptual and substantive discrepancy

78 See, for example, Lieberman’s discussion in the preface to his Deut. Rab. edition, pp. xxii–xxiii; M. Bregman, “Early Sources and Traditions in the Tanhumah-Yelammedenu Midrashim,” Tarbiz 60 (1991) 269–74 (Heb.).
reflects a perspective according to which the Temple Mount and the Temple are one and the same.

The second segment of the midrash presents the literary moment in which this situation came to pass as the time in which "the Temple does not exist." It is from this perspective that the author lists the halakhot of reverence for the Temple Mount in the third section, as if saying, "Even now, when the Temple has been destroyed, we can carry out the precept 'reverence for the Temple is eternal' by applying the detailed halakhot for the Temple Mount."\(^{79}\) The "halakhot of reverence for the Temple" thus became "halakhot of reverence for the Temple Mount" only after the Temple no longer existed, representing the view that reverence for the Temple continued even in its absence.

The Sifra does not reveal to its readers what the halakhot of reverence for the Temple were like before the destruction of the Temple, but these are clear in Deuteronomy Rabbah. They were comprised of exactly the same requirements, except that they were carried out at the Temple rather than the Temple Mount.

Another tradition supporting the view presented here regarding dynamic developments in the laws of reverence for the Temple may be found in the Babylonian Talmud. R. Bibi issues a statement attributed to R. Joshua b. Levi according to which "Anyone who spits on the Temple Mount at this time is as if he spat in the pupil of His (God's) eye, as it is said, 'My eye and my heart will be there (in the Temple) forever' (1 Kings 9:3)."\(^{80}\) Even though the good textual witnesses do not support the temporal collocation "at this time," deeming it a later addition, scholars have noted that it probably represents R. Joshua's intention, since the verse he cites stresses God's presence there "forever."\(^{81}\)

The exact wording of R. Joshua's statement faded into what seems to be an intricate disarray of textual variants and conflicting versions.\(^{82}\) The present status of the sources does not allow a well-founded hypothesis about the original

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79 In one of the later parallels to the Sifra (b.Yebam. 6b), the amoraim no longer recognized the distinction made by the halakhah between the time that the Temple was still standing and the time after it had been destroyed, so they apparently changed the order of the segments and transferred the second part in the Sifra to the end of the passage. According to this ordering the halakhot prescribing reverence for the Temple Mount applied even at the time of the Temple, and the innovation in the interpretation is only that they continue forever. But it seems that this is a Babylonian amoraic interpretation that is no longer aware of the conceptual difference between the Temple Mount and the Temple. Cf. Safrai, "Pilgrimage," 385; in quoting this halakah from the baraita in the Babylonian Talmud, he seems to have missed the difference between the sources and their historical implications.

80 B.Ber. 62b. Textual variants are discussed in the following notes.

81 R. N. Rabinovicz, Dikdukei Soferim Berakhot (Munich: H. Roesl, 1886) 364, n. 40; Ginzberg, A Commentary, 2:309, n. 29 (Heb.).

82 A parallel text in the Palestinian Talmud applies the proscription to the synagogue; see y.Ber. 3:5 (6d). Other versions preserved in medieval literature replace the "Temple Mount" with either
formulation of the statement. Equally difficult would be to determine whether it was first associated with the Temple (as several medieval versions have it) and only afterward was altered into the Temple Mount and then to the synagogue, a logical sequence with no textual support, or whether it was about the Temple Mount from the start. Clearly, however, the version in which R. Joshua’s remark refers to the Temple Mount is well founded, thus further illuminating the process by which the halakhot about reverence for the Temple developed in the period after the destruction, even if it does not allow fixing with certainty the stages of this development.

**The Mountain Image**

To prescribe the celebration of the three major pilgrim festivals – Passover, Shavu’ot (the holiday of Weeks/Pentecost), and Sukkot (Booths) – the Bible uses the term “appearing” (re’iyah). One is obliged to appear in the chosen place – “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose . . .” (Deut 16:16; Exod 23:17). What is that place?

In the context of recording a tannaitic dispute about the obligation of a minor to embark on the pilgrimage journey, the Mishnah outlines the route that visitors take when approaching the Temple. It describes the final portion of this itinerary as “going up from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount.”\(^3\) Quite clearly, this constitutes an imaginary schematization of Jerusalem’s topography, which may be accounted for only when people approach the Temple from the so-called Lower City of Jerusalem (also known as the city of David; see fig. 1). Anyone who has ever stood in the section of town known as the “Upper City” (the so-called southwestern hill, which now pervades the area between the Tower of David and Jaffa Gate, on one side, and the Jewish Quarter, on the other) would recognize that it rises above the Temple area, so reaching it necessitates descent rather than ascent. The same holds true for the northern neighborhoods of Jerusalem. It would thus seem that the use of the term “mountain” accentuated an already existing image of a high place for the Temple. Such a fantastic topography of the city and the sanctuary could be traced back to early texts such as the famous depiction of Jerusalem in the Letter of Aristeas, which arranges Jerusalem’s landscape as a high mountain with the Temple on its

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\(^3\) *M.Hag.* 1:1.
top. The roots of this picture lay in the image of the cosmic mountain which various biblical authors bestow upon Jerusalem and its Temple.84

But in addition to the fanciful topography, this source provides an inaccurate picture of tannaitic halakhah. According to its prescription to fulfill the biblical injunction to appear, which, as mentioned, was the foremost manifestation of pilgrimage, one needs to arrive merely at the Temple Mount. Only one other rabbinic text supports this assertion. An early rabbinic fragment that was preserved only in the Yemenite medieval text Midrash ha-Gadol (from which Epstein and Melammed reconstructed the Mekhilita of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai) conveys a similar position: “And when you do not celebrate [the three pilgrimage festivals] properly, I consider it as if you unlawfully used (meʾilah) the Temple Mount and the [Temple] inner courts.”85 The Temple itself has vanished from the picture.

As Halivni pointed out, according to accepted rabbinic halakhah arriving at the Temple Mount (fig. 2:D) did not satisfy the injunction “to appear.” The very essence of pilgrimage ritual comprised of the individual entering the inner court of the Temple (the ʿazarah; fig. 2:B), where the first stages of the sacrificial process (known as the burnt offering of appearing— ʿolat reʾiyah) took place. One of the amoraim, R. Bun b. R. Hiyya, already recognized the halakhic inconsistency implied by this Mishnah, as if the injunction to appear could be achieved by arriving at the Temple Mount. He therefore questioned: “Where did they show their face (fulfill the injunction to appear)— in the Temple Mount or in the inner Temple courts?” The answer bounced back naturally: “In the inner Temple court they [were required] to show their face (fulfill the injunction to appear).”86

If so, why did the Mishnah present the Temple Mount as the final destination on the pilgrimage route? Recall that Halivni claims that this Mishnah reflects an early situation in which the appellation “Temple Mount” was synonymous with “the Temple.” In his view, when the tannaim spoke of “the Temple Mount,” they actually meant “the Temple.” I accept the essence of this solution but reverse the time frame he suggests. In my opinion, it is not the earlier glossary that reverberates in the Mishnah but rather the later one.

According to this reconstruction, the initial version of the halakhah presented the inner court of the Temple—the ʿazarah—or the Temple itself as the

final target for accomplishing the injunction to appear. Echoes of such an early form of the *halakhah* can be found in other sources discussing the pilgrimage commandment. A midrashic segment preserved in the Tosefta about the biblical directive, “You shall go there and you shall bring there [your burnt offerings and other sacrifices]” (Deut 12:5–6), reads, “Those that are fit to enter the inner court (*‘azarah,*”87 It shows the mind of its author to be set on the Temple and its inner courts rather than the Temple Mount. A passage in the Mekhila presents similar inclination when the same pilgrimage *halakhot* as in the Mishnah are discussed (but this time in the literary mode of halakhic *midrashim*) and the Temple Mount is not mentioned at all.88

It seems to me that the writer of the *halakhah* in the Mishnah under discussion rephrased the topographic expression according to what was accepted in his day, from Temple or inner court to Temple Mount. In his mind the Temple Mount functioned as a legitimate representation of everything associated with the Temple. The word *har* (mountain) also fits the content of the issue at hand, which deals with the arduous conditions involved in the pilgrimage (literally, “going up for the festival”) of a minor child. What could be more strenuous for a child than to climb a mountain? By making this substitution, the author deviated from both the topographical reality of the site and the halakhic definitions of the injunction to appear. He also reveals to us how the place registered in his mind.

An interesting parallel to this last case comes from a passage in the halakhic Midrash Sifre Zutah detailing actions that are usually forbidden on the Sabbath but are nevertheless permitted for the sake of maintaining the sacrificial process. Among the four activities allowed by R. Eliezer, known for his leniency on this issue, the *midrash* lists, “Loading it (the animal to be sacrificed, and carrying it) from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount,” as an example of allowing the normally prohibited deed of carrying in the public domain on the Sabbath.89 The halakhic context here offers a completely different set of circumstances than that of the previous *halakhah* about pilgrimage, and the article being transported is also dissimilar—a minor child in the pilgrimage instruction and an animal to be sacrificed in the present case. But the expressions used to describe the topography are identical.

The phrase in question, describing the route for transporting the animal from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount, breaks the monotonous arrangement of the list in the *midrash*. The passage does not provide any similar details about the context, whether topographic or other, of the three other actions permitted

87 *T.Hag.* 1:1 (Lieberman, 374).
88 Mek. Tractate Kaspa 20 (Horovitz and Rabin, 333).
by R. Eliezer — the two preceding the transporting of the animal and the one following it. In all those cases the passage offers merely a formula stating what is allowed. This deviation from the normal literary rhythm of the passage suggests, although without any definite proof, the interference of a later hand. Indeed, other versions of the list of four activities permitted by R. Eliezer — in the Mishnah and in the Palestinian Talmud (see n. 89) — mention only carrying the animal, and the phrase portraying the route is nowhere to be seen.

The proximity between the wording here and in the halakhah about pilgrimage, both in the action ("carrying") and in the route (from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount), even though the context is so different, suggests that the image of high mountain had become a familiar archetype in the language of the tannaim. A similar paradigm lies behind the famous legend cited above (see n. 44) about the rain that fell on Jerusalem in response to Ḥoni the circle drawer's prayer. According to the version in the Mishnah, when the heavy rain became unbearable, "they went up" (according to the good textual witnesses) to the Temple Mount. Here too, the tannaim communicate a mythic image of the Temple Mount as a high place, and they also utilize the literary model in which people climb from Jerusalem to the Mount. In Ḥoni's case, however, no decisive evidence remains about who formulated the story in this way or who introduced the term "Temple Mount" and its precipitous image. One hint that "the Temple Mount" might have been added at a later stage derives from other versions of the story, first and foremost that in the Tosefta, that do not mention the Temple Mount at all. According to the account in the Tosefta, the people of Jerusalem were sent out of the city to the "cliff of the Cophel."  

These minute details of halakhah, biblical hermeneutics, and legendary narratives accumulate to give shape to a sacred structure — the Temple Mount. The rabbis meticulously inscribe it into the spatial organization of ancient Jerusalem — they mold it to be part of the Temple and dress it in the customs, vocabulary, and traditions of their ancestral holy place. But if I am right in my analysis, this

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90 Also relevant here is the tradition rendered by the Yerushalmi in connection with the Ḥoni story, according to which the people "went up to the Temple Mount" because it was covered with a roof; see y. Ta'an. 3:10 (66d). This is clearly an exaggeration, or a late product of the imagination, since the sheltered portions of the Temple area included only a relatively narrow strip of surrounding colonnades and the Royal basilica to the south of the complex but surely not the entire compound. Also note that the description here is somewhat opposed to that in the Mishnah, where the reason for going up to the Temple Mount was its height; when Jerusalem was flooded, its inhabitants climbed up to the highest place. Why would someone change the description of the place from "high" to "covered"? Perhaps this derived from the acquaintance of the Palestinian amoraim with the area, which showed them that the Temple Mount is not the highest place in Jerusalem. To those who look at Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, as people in that period often did, this is very clear.
entity prevailed only in their own time, functioning in their consciousness and literature. The destruction of 70 C.E. stripped the Temple from its glory, leaving its compound orphaned and desolate. In ensuing years rabbinic literature endowed the ruined space of the Temple with a new life, labeling it with an ancient biblical name (see n. 148), presenting it as a mountain, and resuscitating its image with Second Temple oxygen. The Temple Mount therefore should be seen in this context as a sacred space in the landscape of memory.

Not all occurrences of the Temple Mount in rabbinic literature are as clear about the process embodied in this term as those discussed above. In a field of research where the preservation of sources is by nature fortuitous, it is not surprising that the various junctures in the composition of an entity often remain unknown or cryptic at best. Knowledge of anything beyond a reasonable doubt is a luxury seldom available to students of the ancient world. Consequently, extrapolation from one case to another, if responsibly handled and based on measurable criteria, is a legitimate means of scholarly reconstruction. The test for any theory involving the ancient world remains how sound its more substantiated parts are and, not less important, how far the less corroborated components are taken. The following example presents such a case, which will take the discussion of the Temple Mount a step further — from the realm of memory to its implementation in ideology and even day-to-day practices.

Conceiving the Sacred; Ideating the Mount

More than any other source, Mishnah Middot formulated the Temple Mount’s conceptual shape for future generations and established its image as an inseparable constituent of Second Temple Jewish experience. Time and again the text focuses the reader’s attention on this space, defining its dimensions and boundaries, listing its gates, detailing its customs and stationing its guards. Its descriptions lend more than just graphical flavor, as if invoking their addressees to shut their eyes and envisage the Mount in their minds. Consider the following passage:

The Temple Mount measured five hundred cubits by five hundred cubits. The largest [open] space was to the south, the next largest to the east, and the third largest to the north, and its smallest [open] space was to the west. The place where its measure was greatest was where its use was greatest.  

The precise measurements inscribe a perceivable physical unit. Next, the reader embarks on a panoramic tour of the grounds. The Mishnah stipulates the

91 M.Mid. 2:1.
proper rules for entering and behaving in this area: “Everyone entering the Temple Mount enters from the right and circles [the compound] and exits on the left.” It goes on to specify who the exceptions are (mourners and excommunicated persons), and it even regulates how people engage these individuals, laying down a set of formulas for inquiring as to their welfare and wishing them relief from their sorrow. Elsewhere in the same tractate the text enumerates five gates that were on the Temple Mount and details the protocol for maintaining order — the Levite sentinels who watched the gates as well as other places on the Temple Mount, the “Temple Mount man” who was in charge of the guards, and the extent of his authority. The outcome of this literary discourse is a tangible image, which is seemingly remembered from earlier times. The Mishnah weaves the physical structure named the Temple Mount into Second Temple landscape.

Furthermore, tannaitic literature takes its audience beyond the physical dimension of the place. The sages consider the Temple Mount not only a piece of land but hallowed ground, a sacred space. Expressing this notion is one of the most famous sources, often mentioned to support scholarly opinion about the dominant status of the Temple Mount in the Second Temple Judaic worldview. An excerpt in Mishnah Kelim, seemingly communicating Second Temple notions, enumerates ten gradations of holiness and features the Temple Mount as the centerpiece of this hierarchy (see above p. 14, and n. 49).

The Temple Mount is still more holy (than the city of Jerusalem). For no man or woman that has a flux, no menstruant, and no woman after childbirth may enter there.

A second, more condensed, three-tiered ladder of the sacred realm also appears in rabbincic texts. This classification equates the topography of Second Temple Jerusalem with the three camps of the wandering Israelites in the Sinai desert — priestly, Levite, and Israelite. The Temple Mount serves as a key factor in this list as well: “from the entrance to Jerusalem till the Temple Mount is [considered] the Israelite Camp; from the entrance to the Temple Mount till the inner Temple court is [considered] the Levite Camp.”

It is only natural that these texts drew most of the attention of scholars who investigated the Temple Mount. Archaeologists and historians as well as other people, mainly contemporary rabbis committed to disentangling matters of practical halakhah, spared no effort in trying to locate the exact site of the 500-by-500-cubit square mentioned in Mishnah Middot. The main obstacle for these

92 M.Mid. 2:2, 1:1–3.
93 Sipre Num. 1 (Horovitz, 4 line 7–9); t.Kelim B.Qam. 1:12 (Zuckerman, 570). References to later rabbincic compositions that incorporate this excerpt are listed in Horovitz's notes.
investigations lies in the fact that the area encircled by the wall that is visible today, and that everyone agrees corresponds by and large with the work of King Herod, does not fit the dimensions of the Temple Mount as delimited by the Mishnah. The varied creative ideas proposed for reconciling this discrepancy, and the perplexing geometric shapes that were drawn in an effort to locate the square "Temple Mount" of the Mishnah within the trapezoidal Herodian enclosure, deserve a study of their own. The dominant view interprets the mishnaic measurements as belonging to what scholars call the "early Temple Mount," from before the time of Herod's endeavor, and it is therefore customary to label them as marking the "Hasmonaean Temple Mount." As for why the sages should have preserved the dimensions of a place that had become insignificant even when the Temple still existed since Herod had built a much larger complex, the common answer surmises that even in Herod's time the early sacred zone continued to play an important role in the halakhic system that served the Temple.\(^{94}\)

It seems to me that these conjectures should be rejected for a number of reasons. First, the schematic nature of the formula "five hundred by five hundred" ought to arouse doubt in the mind of anyone trying to apply it to a particular historical moment. Second, several considerations call attention to the unrealistic disposition of these figures. The exact correlation with the dimensions

\(^{94}\) From among the numerous studies discussing this issue, see, for example, Ch. Albeck, Shishah sidrei Mishnah (6 vols.; Tel Aviv: Bialik Institute and Dvir, 1952–59) 5:431, who summarizes his discussion as follows: "It may be assumed that the measures in the Mishnah are consistent with the real situation" (Heb.); M. Avi-Yonah, "Beit ha-miqdash ha-sheini," in M. Avi-Yonah, ed., Sefer Yerushalaim (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Dvir, 1957) 394, 414–15 (Heb.). Avi-Yonah attributes the measure of 500-by-500 cubits to the days of the high priest known as Simeon the Righteous, at the beginning of the second century B.C.E. (394). In order to give meaning to these figures at the time of Herod, Avi-Yonah outlines a sort of "Temple Mount enclosure" on his map (414), between the Herodian enclosure and the Temple; he also moves the soreg (the stone railing) from the place assigned to it by the Mishnah and claims that it "apparently circumscribed the 500 x 500 cubit square" (414). The same proposal is taken up in S. Safrai, "The Temple: Second Temple," EJ 15 (1971) col. 965; Safrai, "The Temple," in Safrai, The Jewish People, 865–66. Such a claim totally contradicts m.Midd. 2:3, which states that the soreg was inside the Temple Mount and not surrounding it, and Avi-Yonah himself does not even apply it in his map, drawing the soreg in the customary way, as enclosing only the "rampart (keil)." He thus ends up with three areas: from the walls of the enclosure to what he calls the "Temple Mount area," from this area to the soreg, and from there to the walls of the Temple inner court. The harmonistic nature of such a reconstruction is obvious. For another fantastic reconstruction, see A. Z. Kaufman, "The meaning of the Temple Mount," Asaf 2 (1988) 7–16 (Heb.; esp. pp. 8–10, where he surveys medieval sages and present-day rabbis who discussed this issue). See also L. Rittmeyer, "Locating the Original Temple Mount," BAR, 18.2 (1992) 35–45 (esp. p. 44, where there is a concise survey of the suggestions that have been made for identifying the square in the past century). The very name of his article reveals the methodological blunder underlying it. Rittmeyer, like many other scholars, simply assumes that there was an ancient Temple Mount, which the Mishnah was referring to in its description of a 500-by-500-cubit square, and he channels his virtuoso architectural talents into locating it.
in Ezekiel's vision provides one example. Prophesying the ideal Temple of the future, Ezekiel exclaims, "He measured it on four sides. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide, to separate between the holy and the non-holy." A second example is the use by the author of the Qumranic Temple Scroll of these same numbers for his utopian "middle court" of the Temple. "Reverberations of a mythic square surrounding the Temple may also be found in Josephus's description of Solomon's Temple, in which he portrays the court as "in the form of a quadrangle." This line of reasoning supports the claim that schematic dimensions betray a lack of reality.

Third, the sources already discussed in this study make it plain that for the most part the sages too disregarded these dimensions. When rabbinic authors relate to the Temple Mount, they always presume the Temple compound whose boundaries were the walls surrounding the enclosure, not some other 500-by-500 square within this enclosure. Take, for example, the story of R. Akiva and the other sages who visited the Temple Mount and saw a fox coming out of the Holy of Holies (Sifre Deuteronomy 43 and parallels); the narrator does not hint that the sages were sojourning at a 500-by-500-cubit square within the larger complex — the story simply says that they entered the ruined compound which he calls Temple Mount. Or consider the tradition about the sages who left their sandals under the agof of the Temple Mount (above pp. 8); is it conceivable that in the mind of the raconteur some kind of an entrance stood in the middle of the ruined area, at some imagined 500-cubit line? The same applies to all the many passages cited above, in which the appellation "Temple Mount" clearly signifies the entire enclosure surrounding the place where the Temple had been; people approach it, entering and exiting its gates, and colonnades embellish its encircling walls. None of these texts hint at any 500-by-500-cubit square in the middle of this compound. The suggestion a certain sector called "the Temple Mount" operated within the Herodian complex and that only later on was this name extended to include the full area bounded by the walls is hermeneutic hair-splitting intended only to reconcile the words of the Mishnah with the obvious reality, and it cannot withstand criticism.

I therefore wish to claim that a 500-by-500-cubit square called "the Temple Mount" never really existed. Only after the designation "Temple Mount" was

95 Ezek 42:20. Even those scholars who noticed this parallel did not give it any weight in their historical reconstructions. See, for example, Albeck, Shishah, 5:431; Schwartz, "The Temple," 31, n. 9.
96 For the calculations leading to this conclusion, see Y. Yadin, The Temple Scroll (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1977–83) 1:242–43.
fashioned and began to play a significant role in the worldview of the *tannaim* was it necessary to demarcate its space in exact measurements, especially since the rabbis wished to present it in Tractate Middot, which devotes much attention to dimensional and spatial organization and was designed to depict the ruined Temple and features associated with it. At this point, the sages, like their predecessors during the Second Temple period, turned to the representation of the ideal Temple in Ezekiel, borrowing from it the numerical figures for the Temple Mount's size. Thus the biblical, mythic dimensions set down for this entity were purely imaginary.

It should be emphasized that the expression "Temple Mount" does not appear in any of the writings from the Second Temple period that allude to the squarish proportions of the Temple surroundings (the Temple Scroll and Josephus). As far as the authors of those texts were concerned, they were dealing with the court of the Temple, part of the Temple complex, and nothing else. Only when the term "Temple Mount" was coined did it too receive the utopian dimensions mentioned by Ezekiel. It is precisely the second part of Mishnah Middot cited above which scales the level of activity in the various sectors of the Mount according to their size — The largest [open] space was to the south, the next largest to the east, and the third largest to the north, and its smallest [open] space was to the west; the place where its measure was greatest was where its use was greatest (see n. 91) — that evinces some of the real asymmetries of Herod's enclosure, as they were etched in the memory of the *tannaim*. They then squeezed the genuine layout into Ezekiel's schematic dimensions.

In light of this reconstruction, other facets of Mishnah Middot's Temple Mount deserve reexamination as well. One such element emerges as "the officer (the Hebrew *'ish*) of the Temple Mount," who "used to track every watch" and oversee their performance. This clearly portrays a security position, responsible for the safekeeping of the sanctuary. The question arises, however, whether rabbinic sources preserve an original title for this vocation. Second Temple sources speak of various posts with responsibilities similar to those of the Mishnah's "officer." In 2 Maccabees, for example, in the course of relating the actions of one Simeon "from the tribe of Benjamin," the text assigns him the Greek title *prostatēs* of the Temple, which includes the meaning of "officer" or "guardian." Although 2 Maccabees does not spell out the extent of his authority, it ranks the *prostataes* high enough to challenge the High Priest.\(^98\) In the same vein, Josephus introduces the *stratēgos*, explicitly reporting that the Temple guards (the *phulakes*) were subordinate to him.\(^99\) Apparently, the book of Acts also mentions this same position

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88 2 Macc 3:4 (Kappler and Hanhart, 55). For the various suggestions raised by scholars as to the nature of this office and the extent of its authority, see J. A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983) 201–3.

twice, unequivocally referring to it as the *stratégos* of the Temple. 100

Rabbinic literature adds to the list of officials who are potentially associated with guarding the Temple. Some scholars identify the office of the "deputy (segan) [high] priest" with the above-mentioned *stratégos* of Josephus and Acts. But it seems to me that the duties of this man, which surface in rabbinic texts time and again, did not include security tasks but lay rather in the realm of worship — particularly because one holder of this title (Ḥanina, or Ḥananiah according to some textual witnesses) belonged to the circle of the Pharisees, and many rabbinic traditions are cited in his name. 101

Other epithets, however, may well have been the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek titles. One example involves the "officer (‘ish) of the birah." Mentioned rather obscurely in Mishnah ‘Orlah, it brings to mind a similar title in the book of Nehemiah, from the early Second Temple period — "the commander (sar) of the birah." 102 As recognized by previous scholarship (see n. 73), the birah clearly manifests military characteristics — sort of a stronghold or a fort contiguous to the Temple complex — and so it would be appropriate for the "officer of the birah" to oversee the picket of the Temple enclosure. Even if the birah, at least in the later Second Temple period, may be identified with the Antonia fortress, known to accommodate a Roman garrison, it is still plausible to associate with it the Jewish officer responsible for maintaining order at the Temple compound. A second candidate for correlation with the Greek *stratégos* may be the hero of the legend related above (n. 54) about Alexander the Great’s visit to the Temple. The story’s protagonist, Gabiah, who encountered the king upon his arrival and made sure his entrance would conform to rabbinic regulations, is said, according to one version, to hold the office of "guardian (shomer) of the house." 103

On the basis of these sources I contend that the title "officer of the Temple Mount" in Mishnah Middot mirrors a later formulation of one of the positions that prevailed in the Second Temple period. Linguistically, the shift from "guardian of the Temple" to "guardian of the Temple Mount," or from "officer of the birah" to "officer of the Temple Mount," is not radical. Conceptually, however, it represents the transmutation of post Second Temple public memory. If the general theory presented in this study is correct, and the image of "the Temple Mount" and its multi-facet dimensions in rabbinic literature was hammered out only after the destruction of the Temple, then the change in title of

102 M. Or. 2:12; Neh 7:12. For this identification, see Schwartz, "The Temple," 46–47 and n. 45.
103 Scholion to Megillat Ta’anit 25 of Sivan (Lichtenstein, 328 line 4). See also above n. 54.
the person responsible for guarding the area from one centered on either the Temple or the military stronghold adjacent to it to the "officer of the Temple Mount" seems reasonable.

The same holds true with regard to the instructions for walking about and greeting people on the Temple Mount that are listed in Mishnah Middot. As argued above (pp. 30), these rules originally applied only to the Temple. Likewise, the rules for walking about on the Temple Mount may have originally referred to the "area around the Temple," whatever it might have been labeled (see below, p. 44), and only after the rabbis crafted the image of the Temple Mount they also reformulated these customs to apply to the new entity.

What about the holiness of the Temple Mount? On a literary basis, one could argue that the extract in Mishnah Kelim introduces the list as consisting of ten gradations yet actually records eleven — a problem noticed and endlessly debated by scholars throughout the centuries.\(^\text{104}\) Such an inconsistency tempts me to speculate that the Temple Mount represents the eleventh item, which was added to the hierarchy of holiness only at a later stage.

A more substantial argument against the authenticity of the Temple Mount in the hierarchy list stems from content and comparative considerations. Structuring the realm of holiness in hierarchical terms, focusing on Jerusalem and the Temple, patterns on an ancient model: its roots are anchored in the prophecies of Ezekiel in the Bible, and it can be traced in many Second Temple sources, especially the Qumranic Temple Scroll.\(^\text{105}\) Among these, the ten-tier division maintains primeval pedigree and wider recognition. The number ten entertained a typological category in both Jewish and early Christian circles. Accordingly, miscellaneous inventories adhered to this numeration — the ten plagues, commandments, lost tribes, and days of repentance, to name just a few — and it served as a literary yardstick in texts ranging from the Jewish Egyptian composition known as the Sibylline Oracles to the fifth chapter of Mishnah \textit{Avot}.\(^\text{106}\) Other systems of gradation were prevalent as well such as the popular threefold scheme, which emerges in many forms, both in sources from the Second Temple period and in rabbinic literature. Although the above triad listed the Temple Mount, others omitted it, such as the threesome embracing all countries-the

\(^{104}\) See, for example, Albeck, \textit{Shishah}, 6:508; Guttmann, "Jerusalem," 269–70; Safrai, "The Sanctity," 364 (Heb.).

\(^{105}\) Ezek 5:5. The issue at hand is also related to the "navel of the Earth" paradigm, which is discussed further below in this study (pp. 51–55, and bibliographical references in n. 128). On the biblical conception, see G. Betzenzoli, \textit{Geist der Heiligkeit: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des QDS im Buch Ezechiel} (Florence: Istituto di linguistica e di lingue orientali, 1979) 105–51; M. Haran, \textit{Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 175–88. And in general, Smith, \textit{To Take Place}, 47–73; Wilken, \textit{The Land}, 11–14.

Land of Israel-Jerusalem or in another formula the Land of Israel-Jerusalem-
the Temple. Fivefold and sixfold groupings abounded as well.\textsuperscript{107}

A comparison of the names bestowed by the various sources upon the places
associated with the degrees of holiness reveals, however, important differences.
All documents attest to certain restrictions that applied to the populace beyond
the limited space of the Temple. All sources exclude people with insufficient rit-
ual purity from the vicinity of the sanctuary to prevent them from defiling the
sacred. But Josephus, the Temple Scroll, and other sources of the Second Tem-
ple period refer to the precinct surrounding the Temple edifice as part of the
Temple complex itself; it did not have a special name or a different status from
other parts of the compound. When Josephus, for example, lists the names of
the places that certain people were forbidden to enter, he asserts that people
suffering from certain venereal diseases were banned from entering the entire
city of Jerusalem, while menstruating women were only prohibited from enter-
ing the (inner courts of the) Temple.\textsuperscript{108} He does not mention any intermediate
space between Jerusalem and the Temple. This sharply contrasts the Mishnah,
which deems it illicit for people with these two impurities from entering the
Temple Mount. Thus, although the area might be physically the same, it regist-
ers in the mind of the authors rather distinctively. Josephus perceives it as the
Temple enclosure, part and parcel of the Temple, while the Mishnah sees it as
the "Temple Mount."

The transition from an external "innocent" area surrounding the Temple in
Josephus's writings, which, important as it might be, had no name of its own or
special halakhot, to a separate unit with a designated title, laws, and customs of
its own in the Mishnah, reflects the turning point at which the Temple Mount
came into being as an independent entity in the worldview of the rabbis. Ac-
cording to this analysis, the Mishnah's authors innovatively changed the name
of the area and in doing so crafted a totally different conceptual view.

Finally, an interesting question involves the name of the space surrounding
the Temple before the term "Temple Mount" was coined. Here too the answer
may be retrieved from Second Temple sources. Handed down mainly in Greek,
a variety of names labeled this area — hieron, temenos, peribolos, aulē; or simply
exōthen — all common Graeco-Roman appellations for an area subordinated to

\textsuperscript{107} Threefold divisions: 3 Macc 2:9 (Hanhart, 45); Sipre Deut. 152 (Finkelstein, 206, lines 8–9). Sixfold
divisions: Tanh. Qedoshim 10 (Buber, 78), as well as the printed version. Fivefold divisions are well
represented in the sources cited above (n. 63) on the direction of prayer. Concerning symbolic
numbers in Judaism and Christianity, see A. Yarbo-Collins, "Numerical Symbolism in Jewish

\textsuperscript{108} B. J. 5:227 (Thackeray, 3:268–70). Josephus' terminology in describing the various components of
the Temple deserves a separate discussion. See for now Y. Z. Eliav, "A Mountain Without a Tem-
ple?: The Temple Mount from the Destruction of the Second Temple Until the Middle of the Fifth
Century — Reality and Idea" (2 vols.; Ph.D. diss., Hebrew Univ. in Jerusalem, 1999) 1.37–41 (Heb.).
a Temple at its center. Accordingly, Hebrew names that correspond to the same model come to mind: "he-jašer," translated as "the courtyard" and compatible with the Greek aulē; "hašar ha-mikdash" (the court of the Temple) may match the Greek peribolos; "ha-ṣ azarah ha-hišonah," which is synonymous with the latter, may correlate with the Greek heiron and temenos; and finally "ha-hišonah" (the outer) may be the Hebrew counterpart of exōthen. Indeed the few Second Temple Hebrew texts that have survived, such as the Qumranic Temple Scroll, include such terminology in their Temple vocabulary.

I have argued that in traditions preserved by the sages, the earlier term that antedates the Temple Mount was many times simply the Temple. In other instances, if we were to extract the name "Temple Mount" from a rabbinic passage and replace it with the above Hebrew terms — "the outer enclosure," "Temple court," and others — then, according to the view advocated here, the formulations will be closer to the worldview of the Second Temple period.

To summarize this part of the study: The sources discussed thus far are neither of the same type nor uniform in their conclusions. Some articulate legal pronouncements and accordingly present their content in definite terms, while others stemming from the hermeneutical practice known as midrash preserve the dissonant yet vibrant atmosphere of disputing intellectuals. Several sources convey traditions about customs; others communicate memories; a third group depicts topographic and architectural details from the monumental to the diminutive, not to mention the purely fantastic. Other cases involve aggadic (i.e., non-legal) material, whether interpretations of difficult biblical verses or legends relating fictitious stories. The chronological spectrum of the material ranges quite broadly as well. Some date to the tannaitic period, others to the days of the amoraim, and some to as late as the medieval commentators.

Despite their generic diversity, I have tried to show that these texts partake in the same epistemological development, which may be discussed on both literary and conceptual grounds. From the perspective of textual criticism, the documents examined here exhibit a process by which their authors added a later designation — the Temple Mount — to early material. At times, these emendations are plain to see, with conspicuous differences distinguishing earlier versions lacking the Temple Mount from later versions including it. In other cases, however, the process has left only faint traces, with primitive readings concealed beneath more mature and elaborated formulations. In these instances considerable research is required to reveal the early phases of the literary process. Normally, this is carried out by meticulously tracking internal contradictions or literary inconsistencies created by the introduction of a later expression into an early text. At other times, it must be admitted, the early version may not be altogether recoverable, and one can only hypothesize about its existence.
But the essence of the phenomenon explicated in this study involves more than terminological developments. Philological changes are linked here to conceptual evolution. As mentioned before, by conceiving the name “Temple Mount,” shaping it as a sacred space, and then projecting it backward to describe the earlier period, the sages redrew the bounds of Second Temple landscape. Consequently, they have ushered in a new infrastructure for their shared memory. The many passages in rabbinic literature that refer to the Temple Mount lend the impression that this spatial entity was a central component of Second Temple consciousness. But this impression is only ostensibly true. It was only part of the rabbis’ perception of Second Temple times.

All in all, the evidence presented so far proposes that the expression “the Temple Mount” derives from the worldview of the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud and thus reflects the exigencies of their own time. The above discussion sets to reveal this process and locate places where traces of the older conceptuality are preserved. The variety of the sources strengthens the demonstration.

It is worth reiterating that this phenomenon has to do with the term and the cluster of images and notions associated with it rather than the events described in the sources. That is, even if the comings and goings related in rabbinic literature as happening in Second Temple times actually occurred (just as they might be purely fiction), the sources need not also have preserved the vocabulary used by the people of that period to describe these events. The heart of the issue is whether rabbinic literature faithfully reflects the consciousness of previous eras. I have suggested answering this question in the negative.

Furthermore, this process of shifting imagery was by no means an all-encompassing reform. Obviously no guiding hand supervised the penetration of the phrase and image “Temple Mount” into traditions produced and transmitted by the rabbis about the Second Temple period. On the contrary, many rabbinic passages follow earlier paradigms, which preceded the imagery, symbolism, and language of the newly born Temple Mount and remain congruent with writings of Second Temple times. The tripartite hierarchy of holiness—the Land of Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple—manifests one example. Lacking any awareness of the Temple Mount, this rabbinic gradation corresponds to early Second Temple expressions. A second good example of Second Temple phraseology may be found in a tannaitic pericope describing “R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai, who would sit in the shadow of the Temple and expound [the Torah] all day long.”109 In keeping with the ascent of the Temple Mount in the rabbinic worldview, one would expect to find this feature rather than the Temple as the location of R. Yoḥanan’s teaching activity, in line with traditions such as the one about the study-house on the Temple Mount (n. 47). R. Yoḥanan’s case, however,

109 B. Pesaḥ, 26a; ‘Abod. Zar. 3:13 (43b).
preserves an early formula that reflects the essence of Second Temple experience and vocabulary, fitting the picture of teaching that took place near the Temple that is conveyed by other sources as well, such as the Gospels and the book of Acts. None of these works ever mentions the Temple Mount.

**Conceptualizing the Mount**

So far this study has offered a new framework for understanding the notions and images associated with the Temple Mount in rabbinic literature. According to this thesis the “Temple Mount” falls short of representing the worldview of Second Temple Judaism. Rather it was a mostly unused phrase (although with ancient biblical roots that surfaced sporadically) that the *tannaim*, followed by the *amora'im*, applied to the old landscape of the ruined Temple area, thus reshaping how it was remembered and crafting for it a fresh perception.

Such inferences help us come to better terms with the Second Temple period and correct some widely held misinterpretations of this era. But they are even more important for what they can teach us about the world of post-70 rabbis. Even if the Temple Mount image was not a genuine Second Temple feature, it is of great interest for the story of subsequent generations, especially the religious and ideological facets of their narrative(s). The following discussion elaborates on this issue.

At the outset it is imperative to acknowledge that, like other writers and thinkers throughout the centuries — Jewish, pagan, and Christian — rabbinic sages employed mountain imagery and symbolism in their texts. Thus, for example, rabbinic literature occasionally portrays personae of considerable prestige and status, such as biblical patriarchs or even certain sages, through the use of mountain metaphors.

Furthermore, as in earlier literary circles, the sages well recognized the topography of Jerusalem as a city nesting among hills, and frequently alluded to this image in their prose. When a rabbinic commentator states, “The Temple is called possession,” supporting his assertion with a verse from Psalms (78:54), “The mountain (har) His right hand had acquired,” he reveals his regard for the place as a har. The same outlook fuels another midrash on the verse, “Bless the Lord your God for the good land” (Deut 8:10), which claims that “the good” refers to Jerusalem and then associates with this clearly non literal interpreta-

111 On the history of the term prior to the rabbis, see Eliav, “The Temple Mount.”
112 For example, Sipre Deut. 353 (Finkelstein, 414 line 2–3). For a generous collection of rabbinic sources using mountain images, see M. D. Gross, 'Otsar ha-ługadah ha-talmudit veha-midrashit (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Mosad ha-rav Kuk, 1961) 1:296–99 (Heb.).
113 Mek. Širata 9 (Horovitz and Rabin, 148–49).
tion the verse “this good mountain” (har) (Deut 3:25). The very possibility of performing such exegetical maneuvers points to the position of Jerusalem in the rabbinic mind as situated in a hilly setting. A passage in the Targum (Aramaic translation of the Bible) attributed to Jonathan on the same verse in Deuteronomy expresses the same notion when it construes it as, “That good hill on which is built the city of Jerusalem,” as does a phrase of Sifre to Deuteronomy, which puts it simply, “Everyone called it a har.” Whether such scenery came to the rabbis from biblical verses that depict this landscape or from first-hand encounter is of no concern to this study.

But it is important to note that such literary formulations relate to the mountain as a neutral topographical elevation with neither a special name nor a particular location. In this regard they follow Second Temple representations, especially Josephus’s, who spoke of Jerusalem and the Temple as being situated on a hill, mostly without endowing this physical fact with any conceptual significance. These and similar examples demonstrate an acquaintance with the topography of Jerusalem and its surroundings but fall short of alluding to an entity called “Temple Mount” or any of the ideas associated with this image. This, however, is not the case in all sources.

**The Individualization of the Temple Mount**

Many rabbinic texts present the Temple Mount as an independent element, distinguished from both the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. To be sure, the Temple towers in the background — as part of the name (the Temple Mount; har ha-bayit) as well as the ultimate goal in some accounts and the decisive purpose in others. For example, in the halakhot laying out the itinerary for the bringing of first fruits or the route for transporting the pure water for burning the red heifer (see p. 11 above), the mountain rests beside the Temple, the latter being both the final destination and the objective behind the whole venture.

But even in cases of this sort, the two are clearly distinguished, with the mountain presented as an area adjacent to but separate from the Temple. This is evident, for example, in the halakhot prescribing the obligation of pilgrims to “appear” at the Temple Mount rather than at the Temple itself (see pp. 32–33, nn. 83–84). In this source the independence of the Temple Mount strikes a clear tone since the Temple can no longer be found, so the Temple Mount cannot be subordinate to it. Other sources adhere to similar patterns. Consider, for example, the halakhah regulating the procedures for treating misplaced coins found

114 Mek. Piḥa 16 (Horovitz and Rabin, 60 line 19).
115 Tg. Ps.-J. Deut. 3:25 (Clarke, 213).
116 Sifre Deut. 28 (Finkelstein, 44).
on the Temple Mount (n. 34). The measures in that passage pertain to both Jerusalem and the Temple Mount with no sign of the Temple. Clearly the Temple provides the immediate context, since the incident adduced by the halakhah — bringing Second Tithe money to Jerusalem (and then losing it) — would not have come about in the first place but for the decree that this offering had to be eaten in the vicinity of the Temple. Nevertheless, although implied by the context, the Temple lacks any concrete role in the literary piece itself. The passage endows the space called “Temple Mount” with a life of its own and provides it with its own halakhot, without any explicit relation to the Temple.

The same phenomenon can also be discerned in the string of stories about Rabban Gamaliel that are said to take place on the Temple Mount and do not disclose any sort of connection with the Temple (p. 12–13, nn. 42–43) or in the traditions about a synagogue and a study-house located there (n. 47). In the same vein are halakhot such as the prohibition against planting trees in that enclosure (n. 39) or the ruling against using stones for construction on the Temple Mount if they had been prepared for another purpose (n. 40). All of the above sources establish the independence of the Temple Mount; they maintain no direct connection with the Temple, nor do they make any explicit reference to its existence.

This stand-alone status of the Temple Mount epitomizes an essential difference between rabbinic consciousness and that of Second Temple times. Not only are there no hints of the name “Temple Mount” in the period when the Temple was up and running, but the sources from that time always present the various components of the sanctuary as subordinate to the Temple itself. As I showed in an extended discussion of Second Temple sources, Jerusalem and the Temple monopolized the entire conceptual spectrum, leaving no room for anything else between them. 118 Conspicuously, rabbinic material strikes a rather different tone — Jerusalem and the Temple occasionally disappear altogether and the Temple Mount functions independently; at other times the texts link the Temple Mount directly to the city of Jerusalem, with the Temple being practically ignored. Such trends could not be dismissed as a mere literary nuance; revealed here is a change in perception, in the way people remembered the landscape of their sacred places.

**Replacing the Temple**

The rabbinic notion of the Temple Mount involves an intimate and rather complex relationship with the Temple. In many rabbinic texts, the Mount functions not just as a plot of land that happens to be next to the Temple and inferior

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to it in status but as an independent structure that occasionally even supersedes the Temple. As shown above (pp. 20–23), at some point, for example, the rabbis rephrased the ancient halakhah that had directed all prayer toward the Temple and the Holy of Holies. Instead of the Temple, the Mount became the focus; the Palestinian Talmud termed it “the mount to which all mouths pray.”

A similar amendment affected the rules prescribing the proper “reverence for the Temple,” which over time were modified into “reverence for the Temple Mount” (see pp. 30 above). Dissociating the procedures of reverence from the Temple, this source treats the Mount as if it were a sacred site for its own sake. The same views seem to be at work when the rabbis apply the ruling “utensils that were originally made for [the use of] an ordinary person cannot be converted to [the usage of] the High” to the above-mentioned decree, “stones and beams which one originally quarried [and hewed] for a synagogue should not be used for building on the Temple Mount” (n. 40). Normally one would read “the High” (gavohah) as the common, almost technical term for the Temple, yet here, surprisingly and very much unnoticed, the halakhah directs it at the Temple Mount instead. Striking the same chord, the rabbis denounced a person negligent about pilgrimage rites as sinning against the Temple Mount rather than, as seems expected, the Temple itself (n. 85).

Along the same lines, other anomalous halakhot also fall into place. One such example involves the proscription, rendered by Midrash Tanhumam- denu, forbidding priests to leave the Temple Mount dressed in their priestly attire and inadvertently allowing them to wear their hallowed vestments while in the Temple compound.119 No early source on the distribution of the sacrosanct wardrobe and the various limitations associated with it contains a halakhah of this sort, as they all focus on the Temple itself. Thus, for example, in relation to the biblical laws of Kilayim (the prohibitions against mixing certain “different kinds”), the Tosefta stipulates: “garments of the high priest — he who goes out [while dressed] in them to the provinces (i.e., outside the Temple) is liable, but [he who wears them] in the Temple, whether [he does so] to serve or not to serve is exempt [from liability] because they (the garments) are for the Temple service.”120 And the same holds true in the Yerushalmi’s assertion that “The (consent) for temporary wearing of Kilayim (does not take form) in the Temple.”121 Indeed, given the wide range of “secular” activities that took place in the large Temple enclosure, it does not make sense to allow holy garments to come in contact with the mundane nature of the area. Apparently, as in all other cases discussed above, here too the original version, although not preserved in

119 Tanh. H'uqqat 40 (Buber, 124); Num. Rab. 19:19.
120 T.Kil. 5:27 (Lieberman, 226); trans. I. Mandelbaum in Neusner and Sarason, The Tosefta, 1:274.
121 Y.Kil. 9:2 (32a).
any of our sources, forbade priests to leave the Temple in these clothes. In the rephrasing of these guidelines the Temple Mount replaces the Temple, thus raising it to the status of the Temple and more importantly replacing the Temple in the conceptual mapping of Jerusalem’s sacred grounds.

Aggadic sources express this same phenomenon when their authors replace the Temple with the Temple Mount. Legends produced by the sages introduce this change quite decisively. The tale cited above (n. 52) about the 300 sacrifices brought by Baba b. Buta provides a typical example of this process, in which the rabbis shifted the destination of the animals from the “inner Temple court” to the “Temple Mount.”

An equally emblematic example occurs in a story in Genesis Rabbah about a certain Joseph Meshitha, “when enemies desired to enter the Temple Mount, they said: ‘Let one of them (the Jews) enter first’… So he went in and took out a golden lamp (the candelabrum?).”122 The plot in this short fable centers on the verbs “entered” and “left,” which are used no fewer than five times in this short passage. The story explicitly names the place being entered as the Temple Mount, yet when Yosi leaves the site, he carries out an object that clearly belongs to the Temple— the candelabrum. Even if the story assumes the basic knowledge about the topography that locates the Temple on the Temple Mount, one cannot ignore the fact that the storyline fails to provide this detail, and thus the literal meaning of the tale situates the holy vessels on the Temple Mount itself. The Temple Mount had taken the place of the Temple in the perception of the storyteller who formulated this version of the legend.

The process by which the Temple Mount supersedes the Temple extends beyond halakhic and aggadic passages to excerpts pertaining to more spiritual issues as well. The passage cited above (pp. 22) in which “tel” (hill) replaces the Temple as the place “toward which all mouths pray” clearly expresses such conceptual changes in the status of the Temple Mount. It is in this light that one must understand the better-known sources expounding the notion that God’s divine presence (shekhinah) never left the locality of the Temple, even after its destruction. The amoraic sages disputed over this issue: Samuel b. Nahman opined that “until the destruction of the Temple the Divine Presence resided in the shrine (Heikhal) . . . and from the time of the destruction of the Temple he (the Lord) removed his Divine Presence to the heavens.” R. Eleazar b. Pedat, however, argued, “Whether [the Temple is] destroyed or not destroyed, the Divine Presence does not move from its place.” In support of his position he cited the verse, “I raise my voice unto the Lord, and he answers me from

his holy mountain" (Ps 3:5). The rabbinic teaching, "even when destroyed it retains its holiness," comports well with this view, as does the well-known saying of R. Ahा: "The Divine Presence shall never move from the western wall of the Temple."\

As many modern scholars have correctly acknowledged, these sources were not referring to the present-day "Western Wall," which was not a direct component of the Temple building but belonged to the outside walls encircling the Temple Mount compound. The sages were concerned with the site of the Temple itself, maintaining that the site's holiness did not depend on the existence of the Temple. It is fair to say that such ideas laid the foundation for the rise of the Temple Mount image as a sacred space in post-Second Temple Judaism.

**Even ha-Shetiyah**

Another example demonstrating the configuration of the Temple Mount as an independent holy place has to do with the increased attention given by the rabbis to the so-called "Foundation Stone." Rabbinic literature first mentions this feature in a segment in Mishnah Yoma that describes the high priest entering the Holy of Holies:

After the Ark was taken away, a stone was there from the days of the early Prophets, called 'foundation' (shetiyah), three fingers above the ground, and upon it he (the high priest) would put [the incense fire pan].

The Tosefta version of the tradition about the stone is nearly verbatim, but its conclusion includes a passage absent from the Mishnah: R. Yose interprets the name "foundation stone," claiming that "from it the world was founded." Many scholars identify R. Yose's statement as a manifestation of the ancient idea of

123 The entire series of interpretations presented here was preserved in Tanh. Shemat 10 (Buber, 5-6); Exod. Rah. 2:2 (Shinan, 104-5). See also Midr. Ps. 11:3 (Buber, 98-99). For a detailed discussion of the various opinions about the Shekhina and its location that were prevalent in antiquity, see Urbach, The Sages, 37-65.

124 The former was preserved in the so-called Rome MS (Cod. Vat. Ebr. 34) of the Tanhuma, a copy of which was used by Buber, as well as in Exodus Rabbah. Buber preferred it to the other textual witnesses (which read "mountain" — har — instead of "destroyed"/harev), asserting, "it is the correct version"; see his comments on the Tanhuma (ibid.), n. 48. R. Ahа's statement appears in all the above-listed sources (n. 123) as well as in Cant. Rah. 2:9.


126 M. Yoma 5:2.

127 T. Yoma (Qippurim) 2:14 (Lieberman, 238).
the Omphalos — the “navel of the earth.” Meant to elevate a certain space or site and glorify its centrality, this conceptual paradigm can be found, in different forms, in ancient Semitic and Greek cultures. As such, it was also adopted by some Second Temple Jewish writers, such as the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, Josephus, and perhaps even earlier in the book of Ezekiel.128

Indeed, considerable similarities link the two notions — the navel of the earth and the foundation stone. Focusing, however, on this comparative aspect of R. Yose’s interpretation has apparently inhibited scholars from appreciating its uniqueness and from distinguishing between his remark and other Jewish models of spatial centrality that preceded it. Unlike R. Yose, the *Letter of Aristeas* and Josephus unequivocally associate the Omphalos with the man-made city of Jerusalem and the Temple, describing them as being located at the earth’s center. These Second Temple authors articulated their ideas within the framework of the ancient Near Eastern/Hellenistic discourse about the Omphalos, either by defining a particular element in Jerusalem as being the Omphalos or by locating the city itself at the center of the earth. R. Yose, on the other hand, underscores the natural quality of a stone whose presence at the site predates the establishment of any mundane structures. He crafted a shrewd explication playing on the ancient name of the stone by taking the noun *shetiyah* (foundation) and changing it into the verb *shatat* (to found or create). Neither “navel” nor “center” are mentioned, nor is there explicit reference to the city and the Temple; only that the stone sits where the world was created.

Admittedly, in the ancient world all these expressions belonged to the same family of ideas, and many defined the Omphalos as both the center of the world and the place of the creation. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that R. Yose created a different terminological and ideological gamut. To stretch this argument a bit, the perception of the Temple as Omphalos and as center of the earth was widespread in Jewish circles, and R. Yose was therefore probably familiar with it. Why, then, did he decide not to name the concept explicitly by either

using the terms “Omphalos” or “naval” or by referring to one of the elements
that had been tied to it in the past (Jerusalem and the Temple)? Sometimes
omissions can be as significant as inclusions.

Although the silence of the source does not provide firm ground to recon-
struct R. Yose's stance, his interpretation quite evidently emphasizes a new ele-
ment: the foundation stone, which does not appear in any of the previous works.
Furthermore, the two presentations of the rock, in the Mishnah and in R. Yose's
formulation in the Tosefta, are essentially different. The Mishnah portrays
it as an ancient rock whose name simply derives from the fact that it served
as the foundation on which the Ark of the Covenant stood in the Holy of Hol-
lies until right before the destruction of the First Temple. Although such a for-
mulation grants the stone a certain significance — after all, the Ark was placed
on it — it nevertheless measures the stone's importance within the framework
of the Temple and the hierarchy of its articles. In contrast, R. Yose's idea re-
moves the stone from its Temple context and grants it a value in and of itself,
calibrating it in relation to the entire universe. To him, this is the most impor-
tant stone in the world.

This transition from the “Temple” stone of the mishnaic tradition and the
Temple-city domination of the Omphalos image in Second Temple writings, to
the “cosmic” stone in Rabbi Yose's presentation develops along the same concep-
tual contours discussed above. The Temple's territory, and in this case a natural,
physical element that occupied the area — a stone — replaces the actual edifice
of the Temple and is endowed with its own value.

Later developments in the image of the stone show that its separation from
its original Temple environment allowed it a life of its own, sort of an autono-
мous character. Some later rabbinic compositions still preserve the memory
of its function within the layout of the Temple or as part of the Day of Atone-
ment ceremonies; other instances, however, completely detach the stone from
its past, furnish it with new substance, and link it to new contexts that at times
even somewhat contradict the way it was originally perceived. The first
reference to the foundation stone as the “navel of the earth” appears only in
late rabbinic sources such as the Tanḥuma which also bestows this image upon
other constituents of their world (such as the city of Tiberias and the institu-
tion of the Sanhedrin). Over time, these two images were concocted into one

130 For example: Lev. Rab. 20:4 (Margulies, 453–55) = Pesiq. Rab. Kah. 26:4 (Mandelbaum, 391); the
stone obliterated with the destruction of the Temple: y.Pesah. 4:1 (30d) = y.Ta'an 1:6 (64c); Tanḥ.
Qadoshim 10 (Buber, 78); Num. Rab. 12:4; Can. Rab. 3:10.
131 As far as I know, this association was first made by the Tanḥuma (Qadoshim 10), and from then on
different forms of such amalgamation took root in various sources. See A. Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrash
(facsimile ed.; Jerusalem, 1967) 5:63; Midr. Ps. 91:7 (Buber, 400); Pirqe R. El. 35.
recipe — the foundation stone that is the navel of the earth. The independence of the stone reached its apex among Christians during the Byzantine era. The essence of the stone and the scope of ideas and imagery associated with it remained similar to its Jewish counterpart, but its actual spot was relocated to Golgotha, in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Early Muslim traditions embraced these notions as well but restored the stone to its original location.\textsuperscript{132}

Other traditions reflect similar conceptual dynamics, focusing on the space on which the Temple had stood rather than the Temple itself and picturing it as a mountain, as well as shifting images and perceptions originally linked with the Temple and re-associating them with the Temple Mount. For example, the notion of Mount Moriah — identified as the site of the "agidah (Isaac's binding) and considered to be the place where the Temple had been built — was well known during the Second Temple period and even earlier. Yet it was only Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel, when discussing the dust from which Adam was created, who presented Mount Moriah as the source of this soil and described it as a place of "worship" and "atonement," two terms that had generally been reserved for the Temple itself.\textsuperscript{133} The traces of a legend that Adam was buried under the foundation stone (see in the previous note) should be seen in the same light. Similar to the creation of the universe in R. Yose's formulation about the foundation stone, both the commencement and the conclusion of Adam's life are thus placed on Mount Moriah.

Another source, a tradition cited in the name of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, recounts the process by which God elected the people of Israel: "The Holy One, blessed be He, considered all mountains (harim) and found no mountain on which the divine presence (Shekhinah) should dwell other than Mount Moriah. The Holy One, blessed be He, considered all towns and found no city in which the Temple should be built other than Jerusalem."\textsuperscript{134} Although this passage enumerates


\textsuperscript{133} Midr. ba-Gadol Gen. 2:7 (Margulies, 78). Indeed, parallel traditions (which are listed by Margulies) associate these characteristics with the sanctuary itself, specifically mentioning the ashes (written in Hebrew with similar consonants as the word dust — "eini/aleph-peih-reish) on the altar and the Temple. Concerning midrashim about Adam's having been created from the dust/ashes of the Temple and the cultural context in which they were formulated, see I. M. Gafni, "Pre-Histories of Jerusalem in Hellenistic, Jewish and Christian Literature," JSP 1 (1987) 5–22, esp. p. 11. Regarding the Temple as a place of atonement, see Safrai, "The Sanctity," 356–57.

\textsuperscript{134} Lev. Rab. 13:2 (Margulies, 272–73); Pes. Rab. addendum 3 (Friedmann ['ish-shalom], 198–99). Other versions, which do not include the pericope about the Temple Mount, are listed by Margulies. More traditions of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai about Mount Moriah are listed and discussed in M. Beer, "Shim'on Bar Yoḥai and Jerusalem," in Oppenheimer et al., eds., Jerusalem, 361–75 (Heb.).
all three elements — Mount Moriah, Jerusalem, and the Temple (and later on the Land of Israel as well) — the two key factors that both frame the segment and lie at its nucleus include Mount Moriah and Jerusalem. It appears that this passage too endorses the new outlook that was taking shape as the Temple Mount gained import.

Practicing (on) the Mount — Customs and Liturgy

This discussion has so far focused on the consciousness of the Temple Mount and the ideas and symbolism that derived from it. The place of the Mount in post-Second Temple Jewish experience, however, was not limited to such abstract terms. It had more practical dimensions as well, which were expressed in the era’s liturgy.

A liturgical system spells out many intangible, and at times elusive, concepts for day-to-day life by channeling them into rituals, prayers, and customs. Characterized by its decentralizing tendencies, Jews conducted their post-Second Temple liturgy within the dispersed localities of Jewish communities. Its prime institution was the synagogue, which left little room for the Temple Mount. As discussed above, the Mount did play an important part in the rabbinic mind, historical memory, and conceptual landscape. Along the same lines, the direction of Jewish prayer as formulated by the rabbis centered on the Temple Mount, which obviously inscribed this site in the minds and hearts of the people. Beyond that, however, almost no records survived of any prayers referring to the Mount or ceremonies connected to it that were carried out in the synagogue. The reasons for this absence apparently derive from the very thesis presented in this study, namely that the Temple Mount achieved a significant life of its own only when it was bereft of its place of worship, the Temple. In the realm of day-to-day liturgy, the synagogue essentially filled the vacuum that was created by the destruction,¹³⁵ leaving no need for a “Mount.”

Predictably, then, the liturgy that did develop around the Temple Mount was destined principally for those occasions when Jews engaged directly with the absence of their Temple — that is to say, on visits to the site of the ruined Temple in Jerusalem. As described above (pp. 7–8), during the first centuries after the destruction a steady stream of Jews regularly frequented the demolished compound of the Temple, interrupted only rarely by occasional local bans. These visitors were not mere tourists in the modern sense of the word. As in ancient times, these excursions took on a religious dimension that was accompanied by customs, prayers, and liturgical rituals.

Various sources discussed above (p. 7–9), unequivocally refer to the practice of a Jewish liturgy at the place of the ruined Temple. The anonymous

¹³⁵ Discussed at length in Levine, The Ancient Synagogue; Cohen, “The Temple.”
pilgrim from Bordeaux describes a ceremony that the Jews observed every year at the site next to what he calls the "Pierced Stone," in which they anointed the stone with oil. This clearly portrays a ritual practice, although its exact nature remains uncertain.\(^{136}\) Four generations later, the monk Barsauma similarly reports that the Jews came to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles on the grounds of the ruined Temple. Jerome's account of the gathering of Jews on the Ninth of Av (the fast commemorating the destruction of both the First and Second Temples) to mourn the destruction also testifies to the existence of a Jewish ritual at the site.

Jewish sources also contain explicit liturgical information. Elaborating on the motivation to travel to Jerusalem, the rabbis speak of the desire either to fulfill the biblical requirement of pilgrimage or simply to come and pray. Additionally, they detail some of the mourning customs that were observed by the visitors, mainly the tearing of clothing but perhaps even fasting.\(^{137}\) Various scholars have suggested that for some time after the destruction Jews continued to perform various Temple rites, such as offering sacrifices and bringing the Second Tithe and eating it within Jerusalem. The majority of scholars, however, have correctly rejected these conjectures.\(^{138}\)

The sources, then, do indicate certain Jewish liturgical activities on the Temple Mount, but the picture remains incomplete. Aside from the basic fact that Jews indeed attended the Temple Mount, performed some ceremonies there, and observed the halakhot of mourning (which seems to go without saying), we know little about what transpired there. What sort of gatherings did they have? How often did they occur? What was said there? Were prayers uttered? Did other customs aside from the act of mourning for the destruction of

\(^{136}\) Scholars have generally tended to bring the traveler's testimony together with that of Jerome, considering the former also to speak of the Ninth of Av mourning. But, as Irshai correctly noted, "this has no real support from the text"; see Irshai, "Constantine," 173–74 (Heb.). Those who held this view are listed in n. 145. The fact that the traveler describes the rending of clothes and crying cannot be considered evidence since, as the sources discussed here show, Jews were required, at least by rabbinic halakha, to rend their garments whenever they entered Jerusalem. As for the anointing of the stone with oil, Ir-Shai suggests seeing it as an analogy to Jacob's act in Beth-El (147). See also E. W. Cohn, "Second Thoughts about the Perforated Stone on the Haram of Jerusalem," PEQ 114 (1982) 144–45. Cohn speculates that this was an act forced upon the Jews by the Christian authorities. The thesis of the current study suggests that the ceremony should be connected with the formulations about the foundation stone discussed above (pp. 51–55) and thus seen as a liturgical application of that image. This too, however, is only a hypothesis. Donner's position that the stone in the traveler's description must have been outside the Temple Mount altogether since the Jews could not have prayed on the site of the Temple is an obvious anachronism; see H. Donner, "Der Felsen und der Tempel," ZDPV 93 (1977) 8.

\(^{137}\) The main source for this is the baraita in y.Mo'ed Qat. 3:7 (8b); b.Mo'ed Qat. 26a; Minor Tractates Sema'hot 9:19 (Higger, 165–69). For a detailed survey and discussion of all sources pertaining to this issue, see Safrai, "Pilgrimage," 382–85 (Heb.).

\(^{138}\) Safrai, "Pilgrimage," 376–81 (Heb.).
the Temple develop on the site as a result of these visits? The answers to these questions together with many of the liturgical details are wrapped in mystery.

I contend that my thesis at least partially can augment the information about the liturgy performed on the Temple Mount after the destruction of the Temple. If we accept the line of reasoning that rabbinical sources about the Temple Mount were reformulated mostly after the destruction of the Temple, then perhaps some of the liturgical information in these documents (which the rabbis present as relating to the days of the Temple) also belongs to this post Second Temple period. To be sure, this kind of proposition is by no means flawless. Many of the details in these texts may very well be authentically anchored in Second Temple times, with the sages paraphrasing the wording and reshaping the picture of the past in order to integrate the element that had become dominant at their time, namely the Temple Mount. It is highly unlikely, for example, that the halakhah prohibiting priests from leaving the Temple Mount in their priestly robes (n. 53) could be recording actual regulations from the time after the destruction of the Temple, even if reworded by the tannaim and the amoraim. After all, as far as we know, there were no priests entering the Temple Mount in ceremonial attire once the Temple had been destroyed. Apparently in this case the only contribution of the rabbinic “designers” was to introduce “the Temple Mount” into the halakhah, while its content remained that of the Second Temple period (or what the rabbis thought should have been the practice at that time).

Yet this does not mean that all the details in all the sources pertain to the Second Temple period. If the Temple Mount could be incorporated into the sages’ retrospective picture of the past, then it is entirely possible that they also introduced other elements from the post-70 era into these traditions. The halakhah banning the planting of trees on the Temple Mount (cited above, n. 39) offers an interesting example. On the one hand, it closely resembles a different halakhah prescribing that “Trees should not be planted” in Jerusalem, and both directives are reminiscent of the testimony of Hecataeus of Abdera, preserved by Josephus, that Jerusalem lacked sacred groves around the Jewish Temple. On the other hand, sources from the Roman-Byzantine period attest that at the time when the Herodian Temple enclosure lay in ruins, neglected by the municipal authorities, the area was covered with agricultural plots and provided a haven for all sorts of peripheral groups, visitors, and pilgrims. This is a plausible background for a renewed enactment of the ancient halakhah forbidding the planting of trees in the Temple area and directing it at the new reality that took shape on the Temple Mount.

139 On the ban against planting trees in Jerusalem, see L.Neg. 6:2 (Zuckerman, 625); Abot R. Nat. A 35 (Schechter, 104); b.B.Qam. 82b; the fragment from Hecataeus is in Josephus C.Ap. 199 (Thackeray, 1:244).
140 See, for example, Eliav, “The Tomb of James.”
Thus it is not always easy to distinguish between simple paraphrasing of ancient material and incorporation of new substance, whether factual or fictional. Accordingly, determining whether the practical information in halakhic passages goes back to the times of the Temple or rather reflects the mores of the post-Second Temple era proves to be a grueling and at times sterile task. Every text must be carefully examined for its particular content, and even then the answer will not always be unambiguous.

Nevertheless, some rabbinic sources that mention the Temple Mount contain explicit evidence that the customs they render were observed, or at least were meant to be observed, in the period following the destruction of the Temple. Typical examples are the halakhot prescribing the proper reverence for the Temple Mount (discussed above, pp. 26–32). The Sifra cites these rules to illustrate the dictum that “reverence for the Temple is for ever”; the context indicates that “forever” (le’olam) is meant to imply “even when the Temple is not in existence.”\(^ {141}\) The same conclusion can be drawn from the closing line of the passage in Deuteronomy Rabbah (quoted on p. 29, n. 77), which states, “And you must not say that since the Temple has been destroyed he treats it (the Temple) in an unseemly way, but [rather the law is the same] if it is standing or destroyed.”

Such an understanding places this set of laws in the realm of the post Second Temple period as a series of regulations whose purpose was to create a norm of respectful behavior at the site of the ruined Temple: it was illicit to enter the area with shoes on, with one’s walking stick, with one’s traveling bag and money belt; one must clean the dust off his feet before entering; and it is forbidden to spit there or to use it as a shortcut. Evidence that these rulings were seen as potentially in effect, not to say actually carried out, in the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud can be found in the amoraic tradition cited above (n. 25), where the fourth-century scholar R. Pinḥas attests that he saw sages taking off their sandals and leaving them at the entrance to the Temple Mount.

The ban against using the Temple Mount as a shortcut concurs with my conclusions regarding the location of the site within the urban layout of the Roman colony Aelia Capitolina.\(^ {142}\) As argued there, the grounds of the Temple Mount remained outside the colony’s municipal borders. Over time, as the population increased and the town expanded along its southern and northern sides, cutting across the Temple Mount would have considerably reduced the walking distance for anyone who traversed the city from south to the north or vice versa.

Another post-Temple habit may be reverberating in the legend about Gabiah, who persuaded Alexander the Great to take off his shoes before entering the

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141 Already understood in this way by Safrai, “Pilgrimage,” 385 (Heb).
Temple Mount (pp. 15–16, n. 54). The story mentions a certain type of footwear, *empilia* (felt shoes), that Alexander wore in place of the shoes he had taken off. In light of the above it is worth considering, even without decisive evidence, whether this detail registers an actual custom practiced by the rabbis.

It is possible that an artistic source also displays post-70 awareness of the laws prescribing the proper reverence for the Temple Mount. Two panels in a recently excavated mosaic in a Sepphoris synagogue portray scenes associated with the binding of Isaac. One of the panels, although not well preserved, clearly depicts a ram tied to a tree, and two pairs of shoes, one large and one small, bunched underneath that tree. Weiss and Netzer, the archaeologists who excavated and studied the mosaic, identify the shoes as belonging to Abraham and Isaac. 143 They interpret this artistic representation of the footwear, which has no parallel in the iconography of the binding of Isaac, in light of the general assertion that “any contact with a higher power necessitates the removal of shoes.” Their evidence includes the biblical accounts of Moses and Joshua taking off their footwear at sacred sites all the way up to what was, and still is, conventional in Islam. As they see it, views such as those expressed in Midrash Genesis Rabbah that Abraham “saw a cloud enveloping the mountain” (referring to what came to be known as Mount Moriah) required the removal of one’s shoes in this case as well.

It seems to me, however, that the conclusions of the present study allow for a slightly different reading of the mosaic. As mentioned, the rise in the status of the Temple Mount in the Roman-Byzantine period generated intense preoccupation with the biblical associations of the site. A central piece in this endeavor was the story of the binding of Isaac (see above, pp. 54). Coinciding with this literary disposition, everyday visitors to the site of the ruined Temple adapted to removing their shoes before entering the enclosure. Originating before the destruction only within the Temple itself, this custom was transferred after 70, as described above (pp. 30), to the Temple Mount. The collections of shoes awaiting their owners’ return “under the ‘agof’” (the doorway) or in other corners outside the Temple Mount created a visual effect that was very likely etched into the popular memory, as in the case of R. Pinḥas described above. It is therefore quite possible that the mosaic of the binding of Isaac reflects this actual practice, and not only the symbolism stemming from the literary sphere, although admittedly the two are closely related.

The sources about reverence procedures demonstrate the dialectics of continuity and change that shaped the Temple Mount image after the destruction. Clearly, the core of these precepts applied, according to the rabbis, to the time when the Temple was still standing, and their purpose in that context was to

143 Z. Weiss and E. Netzer, *Promise and Redemption: A Synagogue Mosaic from Sepphoris* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1996) 30–31. All following quotations from their study are from these pages.
endorse its significance (see pp. 26–32). But the destruction of the Temple did not result in the abrogation of these laws; rather, they were resuscitated with their focus shifted from the Temple to the Temple Mount. This model of permanence and transformation may help us find other customs whose relevance did not fade away in the post-Temple era.

One version of a famous anecdote about R. Yoḥanan b. Zachai’s encounter with Nakdimon b. Gurion’s daughter, who had lost both her prominent social status and fortune, voices R. Yoḥanan’s lament over the girl’s indigence: “The family of this young woman would not enter to prostrate themselves in the Temple Mount until fine wool carpets were spread under their legs; and they would come in, prostrate themselves, and return joyfully to their homes.”¹⁴⁴ From a literary perspective, R. Yoḥanan’s remark contrasts the present crouching of the girl, which was marked by poverty and humiliation, and was performed before strangers (“She gathered the barley grains from under the feet of the Arab cattle”), with the prostrations of her family in the past, which had been accompanied by noble manners and carried out before the King of Kings.

But this story may also be concealing an amoraic custom. Rabbinic sources render bowing in the Temple as a typical Second Temple routine. Mishnah Ṣeqalim documents this custom (“There were thirteen prostrations in the Temple”), and it is mentioned twice in Mishnah Middot as well, which also offers various explanations for this practice. One suggests that, “It (the soreg, a stone latticework fence surrounding the Temple structure) used to have thirteen breaches broken by the Greek kings; later they were blocked again and thirteen prostrations were decreed [to be carried out] opposite them”; the other says, “Abba Yose b. Ḥanan says (the prostrations were taking place) opposite the thirteen gates (of the inner court).”¹⁴⁵

At first glance it would seem that the prostrations mentioned in the legend about R. Yoḥanan and Nakdimon’s daughter match the ones in the Mishnah. A second look, however, brings to light some subtle variations in the way the two sources present this act, in terms of both the location’s name and the role of prostration among the other activities that are said to take place there. Particularly relevant is the name used to mark the place of prostration; whereas the R. Yoḥanan legend labels it “the Temple Mount,” the mishnaic portions call it the Temple. One might argue that there is no real distinction between the two versions, as even in the Mishnah it is not clear exactly where the visitors

¹⁴⁴ Sipre Deut. 305 (Finkelstein, 325). This part of the narrative is missing from all its many and varied parallels listed by Finkelstein. Only the Babylonian Talmud (b. Ketub. 66b–67a) preserved a similar version, but in that case the destination of the Naḏdimon family is no longer “Temple Mount” but the “study house.”

¹⁴⁵ M. Ṣeqal. 6:1; m. Mid. 2:3. 6. R. Judah’s opinion in Ṣeqal. 2:17 (Lieberman, 212) — “opposite a gate [one would] prostrate; opposite a breach [he would only] bend his knees” — seems like mere harmonization of the two other explanations. See also y. Ṣeqal. 6:2 (49d–50a).
performed this activity; was it before they entered the actual Temple structure (fig. 2:b–c), as they passed the gates from the outside, a line of action that seems logical and appropriate, or was it only after they entered the area that was called "the Temple," that is, when they were already inside the ʿazarah (the inner court of the Temple), as is implied by the Mishnah in Tractate Middot? Nonetheless, the terminological disparity may not be dismissed without notice.

Moreover, in the Mishnah the act of prostration does not stand alone. It operates as one element within the wider set of measures carried out when entering the Temple. In contrast, the R. Yoḥanan story highlights the prostration as an end in itself — one arrives at the Temple Mount, prostrates oneself, and returns home happily. The Temple is nowhere to be found in that narrative. A minimal explanation for these discrepancies may well be, as argued throughout this study, that the narrator of the legend shaped it in light of the status of the Temple Mount in his own day. Still, this source may also echo a custom that did not terminate with the destruction of the Temple. According to this line of thought, to kowtow in front of the gates or the sealed breaches was a common act of courtesy and homage for visitors to the Temple. But this custom did not die out after the Temple itself had been destroyed. The prostrations in the Temple during the Second Temple period turned into prostrations on the Temple Mount in the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud. The following source provides ample support for this proposition.

Liturgical activities of the sort described thus far are attested in a fragment of prayer collections from Palestine discovered in the Cairo Geniza. It reads:

If you have the good fortune to go up to Jerusalem, when you look at it from Mount Scopus, if you are riding on a donkey step down, and if you are wearing shoes take them off, and rend your garments . . . and enter in mourning. When you arrive in the city make another tear [in your garments] for the Temple and for the nation of Israel. Then, say the following prayers: "Exalt the Lord our God and prostrate yourselves at His footstool . . . " (Psalms 99:5); "Exalt the Lord our God and prostrate yourselves at His holy mountain . . . " (Psalms 99:9); "Come let us prostrate ourselves, kneeling down before the Lord . . . " (Psalms 95:6); "And the king will desire your beauty; he is your lord, prostrate yourself before him" (Psalms 45:12); 'I prostrate towards Your holy Temple and give thanks to Your name . . . ' (Psalms 138:2); We thank you, you are the Lord our God who has given us life and assisted us and given us the good fortune to come near your House which you have chosen from all the dwelling places of Jacob, which your eyes and your heart focus on when it is in ruins and when it is built up. Just as we have seen it in its ruins, let us have the good fortune to see it built up. And give us a good portion . . . with the ones who bring sacrifices and first-fruit offerings to this mountain which your right hand has
acquired, the Temple of the Lord which your hands have built... And may You shake its dust off it and cleanse it of its impurities and fence it off from its breaches and restore it to its place of honor and its holiness and its built-up state, and then may you dwell in it as in the days of old, as it is written ‘I will bring them to my sacred mountain’ (Isaiah 56:7)... And then, return and circle all the gates and all the corners, as it is written, “Walk about Zion, circle it; count its towers” (Psalms 48:13).\footnote{M. Margaliot, *Hikhot ḥereg yisrael min ha-geniza* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-rav Kook, 1973) 139–40. See also Wilken, *The Land*, 105–7; Safrai, “Pilgrimage,” 381 (Heb.); E. Reiner, “Pilgrims and Pilgrimage to Eretz Yisrael 1099–1517” (Ph.D. diss., Jerusalem: Hebrew Univ., 1988) 163–64 (Heb.). Reiner dates the text to the thirteenth century, while Margaliot claims it was two centuries earlier. An interesting parallel to this fragment from a medieval account that was appended to a manuscript of Ecclesiastes Rabbah was published by M. Hirshman, “The Priest’s Gate and Elijah ben Menahem’s Pilgrimage,” *Tarbiz* 55 (1986) 217–27 (Heb.). But the ceremony there, despite its striking similarities to the description given here, as well as to what is related by Barsauma (see n. 23) about the assembly of the Jews on the holiday of Booths, took place outside the Temple Mount and was centered on the Mount of Olives to the east (for more information about the medieval assemblies on the Mount of Olives, see Hirshman’s bibliography). This source may reflect the Muslims’ occupation of the area, which undoubtedly put an end to the Jews’ assemblies there.}

Without making any firm commitment about the nature of this passage or the time of its composition — which would require a separate study — it would seem that something of the liturgical order I have attempted to reconstruct in my discussion above materializes in this passage. Through the clutter of details, excerpted biblical verses, and explicit or implicit references to rabbinic halakhot, a number of points stand out as directly relevant to the issue at hand. First, the concluding clause, “And then, return and circle all the gates and all the corners,” suggests some sort of liturgical procession. Second, the author negotiates the mountain imagery by repeatedly choosing verses alluding to it. Third, the passage explicitly lists two of the practices mentioned above — rending one’s garments and removing one’s shoes — although admittedly not in direct relation to the Temple Mount. Finally, prostrations are the common thread that crisscrosses the various quotations from Psalms, which might signal some actual behavior in this ceremonial context.

**Conclusions**

Lurking behind the appearances of the “Temple Mount” in rabbinic literature is an absorbing conceptual process that came to pass in Jewish circles during the generations following the destruction of the Temple. The sages revived a term whose roots lay in the primordial layers of Israelite literature. Accompanied by a set of fresh notions and imagery, it gradually crystallized into a distinctive entity and acquired an important place in the worldview of the rabbis.
and, it would seem, that of other Jews as well. This innovative development led them to redesign their view of the present and at the same time remake their memory of the past.

How did the rabbis perceive the Temple Mount? First and foremost, they identified it as a concrete, earthly place. In contrast to the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, which in the sages' mind were only partly earthbound — thus the expressions "heavenly Jerusalem" or "heavenly Temple" — they did not attribute any ethereal characteristics to the Temple Mount. Rabbinic literature communicates its essence not as a spiritual notion floating in the upper regions of abstract thoughts but as a worldly, tangible entity that could be seen and visited. Thus, the rabbis regulated everyday encounters with this area through a set of practical, detailed rules.

A new consciousness emerged around this experience. The Temple Mount supplanted the Temple in the conceptual framework of the time: vocabulary originally associated with the Temple was reassigned to the Temple Mount, halakhot that had been observed in the former were ascribed to the latter, and themes that had been part and parcel of the Temple were redefined as relating to the Temple Mount.

As I have stressed throughout this essay, this was by no means an absolute transformation, with the Temple obliterated overnight from the Jewish worldview and totally replaced by the Temple Mount. The sanctuary in Jerusalem and the elements associated with it — its paraphernalia, sacrifices, and priests — did not evaporate from Jewish experience of the Roman and Byzantine periods but maintained great significance for numerous facets of life. The argument here makes a case rather that alongside these Temple oriented features a new factor had now come into being — the Temple Mount. The claim that the Temple Mount became an important entity in and of itself is not meant to imply that it was completely detached from its Temple foundations. It is implausible to think that people who visited or contemplated the Temple Mount were unaware that this was the place where the ruins of the Temple were to be found.

In a convoluted process, most of which is now obscured, the Mount inherited several of the Temple's characteristics and acquired a status of its own. It was a dialectical paradigm in which the new and the old both competed with and supplemented each other at the same time. The various formulations used by the rabbis to negotiate this complexity — in halakhot, customs, legends, ideas, and messianic hopes — are detailed throughout this study. The outcome of this process was the reconfiguration of a new spatial organization in Jerusalem. By defining a new entity, endowing it with the vocabulary and images of the past, the rabbis redesigned their landscape of the sacred. Previously, in Jewish

experience of the Second Temple period, it centered on the city-Temple pair, now it shifted to the Temple Mount.

Another aspect of the consolidation of the Temple Mount’s image — and perhaps the most fascinating one — relates to its impact on shared Jewish memory. According to this cognitive model, people project a new element backward in time, reshaping their picture of the past. Inculcating a certain idea or image in the world of the present is often achieved by fixing its roots deep in the past. Applying this method, the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud perceived their past in keeping with the concepts prevailing in their own time. Since the Temple Mount had become a prominent category in their experience, they also wove it into their historical memories, as if it had always existed. Unveiling this process is the major challenge tackled in this study.

Who is behind this development? Who was the first person to apply the appellation “Temple Mount” to a concrete landscape as signifying the Temple enclosure? Who worked to introduce it into the Jewish worldview and experience — into halakhic formulations, legends, and everyday speech? I have no answers to these questions. This inability derives from the nature of conceptual dynamics, which can be identified only once an image is sufficiently consolidated, making the stages of its formulation hard to follow. Evidently, the tannaim already used the term and so the process under discussion was already under way during their time, but rabbinic material in itself provides no terminus a quo for the process. As a result, the discussion above suggests only a relative chronology for the evolution of the Temple Mount in rabbinic literature, namely that it is not an ancient concept inherited from their predecessors. It cannot, however, provide an absolute chronology, and consequently the question of who brought the ancient biblical term back to life, and even more so, endowed it with the content and stature of the Temple, remains unsolved.

It nevertheless seems feasible to identify one important element in the process, namely the source of the expression and the literary context that produced it. The phrase “Temple Mount” appears exactly once in the writings that came to form the Bible, in a passage attributed to the prophet Micah (Mic 3:12; Jer 26:18). Other biblical authors make use of the image of the mountain in connection with Jerusalem and the Temple, sometimes embellishing it with aspirations for the future. The sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud were well aware of such imagery, and it seems quite plausible to assume that this was

the source from which they drew the name “Temple Mount.” Striving to fill a vacuum in their suddenly crippling world, people frequently turn to their foundational writings, their ancient sacred texts, for both inspiration and terminology. I believe this is what happened in the case of the Temple Mount. I cannot say, however, why the specific expression “Temple Mount” was chosen rather than other biblical names with similar imagery, such as “Mount Zion” or “My Holy Mount.”

So, does rabbinic literature provide us with an accurate picture of the past? Are portrayals of the Second Temple period in this later corpus to be trusted? The answer of the current study is both yes and no. But isn’t that what memory is all about?

Many thanks to Martha Himmelfarb, Richard Kalmin, and Jeffrey Rubinstein who read earlier versions of this study and offered invaluable comments.