Jerusalem

Idea and reality

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4 The Temple Mount in Jewish and early Christian traditions

A new look

Yaron Z. Eliav

Holy sites have always been inseparable from religion (Eliade 1959, 20–65; Smith 1987).[1] One of the more famous places is the flat, walled trapezoid located on the eastern edge of Jerusalem's Old City. In English, it is commonly referred to as the Temple Mount, but the literal translation of the Hebrew would be the "Mount of the House." Judaism and Islam in particular, but Christianity also, still revere the site as holy. Consequently, the faithful are careful to observe special religious strictures and practices there.

The Temple Mount's stature, however, has long exceeded the bounds of its specifically religious significance. Over the years, it has been transformed into a national, cultural, and political symbol, deeply entrenched in the foundations of both the Jewish-Zionist and Arab-Muslim ethos. Poets have elegized it, writers have extolled it in essays and stories. The Mount has inspired spiritual leaders and has furnished countless images for artists belonging to many and varied schools and traditions. At the same time, however, it has, especially in recent times, cost political leaders many a sleepless night.

But what is the origin of the Mount's name, and what are the factors that have fashioned its physical and religious fabric? This chapter investigates the Temple Mount's origins and sketches out the formative stages of its unique status. It follows two basic principles. One is the fundamental ground rule of historical research, in that historians do not automatically accept statements found in ancient texts as historical truths, but rather strive to discern the entire range of factors that shaped the composition of ancient texts, including the complex, and at times contradictory, dynamics influencing them. The second is more concrete: to distinguish between the physical site referred to today as the Temple Mount, and the terms and names which signify this physical structure. Today, in using the term Temple Mount, we project onto the site all the ideas and images such an appellation evokes, which have varied over time.

A two-pronged question will thus accompany this entire discussion. First, what are the roots of the designation "Temple Mount," when was it coined, and what were the reasons for its appearance? Second, and more significant than the terminology, what consciousness does it represent? Was the site

always the Temple Mount in people's consciousness, or did it enter the public lexicon at a particular point in time, suggesting a change in their consciousness and in the way they grasped the reality of Jerusalem? If there was this kind of shift, then its nature, boundaries, and significance need to be determined.

The First Temple period

The word "House" in the literal translation of "Temple Mount" refers to either of the Temples that successively stood on the site in the ancient past. This was no ordinary house but rather "The House of God." According to biblical chronology, King Solomon built the First Temple around the middle of the tenth century BCE. The Second Temple, which can be dated more accurately, was erected during the return of Jewish exiles from Babylon in the second half of the sixth century BCE, and was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE at the climax of the Jewish rebellion. The very nature of the Temple Mount is firmly connected to these two Temples, as it is considered the hallowed ground on which they stood.

However, according to the books of Samuel and Kings, the earliest existing documents that relate the history of the Davidic dynasty, the location David and eventually Solomon chose for the Temple had no special prior status. The authors use no particular name for the site, nor do they associate it with any illustrious tradition. All that can be inferred from these accounts is that the Temple site lay above the City of David (e.g., 1 Kings 8:1). Mount Zion, which later would become one of the celebrated names for the Temple Mount, is not mentioned even once in the books of Samuel. In the books of Kings it appears only once, in the form of a quotation from the prophet Isaiah (2 Kings 19:31; Isaiah 37:32), but only as a synonym for the city of Jerusalem, and without any reference to the location of the Temple.

Another designation used by later generations to refer to the site of Solomon's Temple, lending it a special aura, was "Ornan's threshing floor." This appellation never actually appears in the book of Kings. Its source is in the book of Samuel (2 Samuel 24:18–25): David, heeding the instructions of the prophet Gad, purchases the plot from Ornan to build an altar for God in the aftermath of a deadly pestilence. Although the site of the threshing floor is described as being located above the city, there is absolutely no indication in the text that it is the same site where Solomon would later build the Temple. Moreover, scattered references indicate that the place in which Ornan did his threshing had no independent value in the eyes of these authors: the Ark of the Covenant and the venues at which sacrifices were offered were definitely located inside the City of David, both before David's purchase of the threshing-floor (2 Samuel 6:17–18) and afterwards during Solomon's time (1 Kings 2:28). According to a later source, the place was used to thresh wheat, just like any other threshing floor (1 Chronicles 21:20).

The books of Kings and Samuel (and Deuteronomy, which is closely related to their outlook) place enormous significance on the establishment of Jerusalem as the Jewish nation's sole ritual center. According to the views promoted by these books, sacrifice is not legitimate in any other location, even if intended for the God of Israel. This is closely connected with the House of David's desire to establish in perpetuity the political hegemony of both its capital and its dynasty. Pointed expression is given to this conception, which ties together the city, the Temple, and the House of David, in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple. There he cites the words of God: "Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel" (1 Kings 8:16).

Such a conception does not, however, endow the Temple Mount with any independent status. As noted, the Temple's location in Jerusalem is of utmost importance, and is in fact essential, to the Davidic ideology. Its location on this hill or that, however, is inconsequential. The significance of Solomon's Temple as the ritual center for the God of Israel is similarly beyond doubt. It is quite possible that some of the kingdom's governing institutions—such as the "House of the King" (1 Kings 9:1–10), the "House of the People" (Jeremiah 39:8), and the "House of the Forest of Lebanon" (1 Kings 7:2; Isaiah 22:8)—were situated close to the Temple or even on the territory presently referred to as the Temple Mount. From that generation's point of view, however, these buildings were situated there not on account of the importance of the mountain itself, but by dint of their proximity to the Temple.

The literary image of the Temple's location as a holy mountain first emerges in Psalms and in the prophetic books. Woven repeatedly into these works are names and descriptions reflecting the idea that the Temple is located on a "mountain" possessing special qualities. For instance, the famous prophecy of peace at the end of days, in the books of Isaiah and Micah, describes the "mountain of the Lord's house" as "established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills." The gentiles that stream to the place proclaim, "Let us go up to the mountain of God . . . and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths" (Isaiah 2:2–3; Micah 4:1–2). This verse crystallizes the visual impressions that existed in the consciousness of the authors and their audience. Along these same lines, the place of the Temple is frequently represented in the works of the prophets in a series of appellations in which the common element is the mountain image: "holy mountain," "mountain of God," and, combining them both, "My holy mountain."[2] These works are also the first to designate the Temple's location "Mount Zion," whereas in Samuel (2 Samuel 5:7) and Kings (1 Kings 8:1), "Zion" was the name of the City of David. Moreover, in these latter books the image of the mountain is not to be found at all in reference to Zion.

The same tendency to exalt the Temple's location and represent it as a special mountain—as Mount Moriah—is also found, somewhat later, in the book of Chronicles' retrospective description of Solomon's Temple project: "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah, where the Lord reappeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (2 Chronicles 3:1). In what appears to be a brilliant intertextual maneuver, the author is obviously linking the name "Moriah" to the only other place where it appears in the Bible—the narrative about the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:2).

In the binding of Isaac story, however, there is absolutely no mention of a specific mountain. All that is noted is that there is a region known as the "land of Moriah," and God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son on "one of the mountains" in that region. Certainly there is no indication in the sacrifice story, or in any other of the early traditions of the Bible, that this site was in any way related with the territory on which the future Temple would be erected. This attempt by the author of the book of Chronicles to bind Moriah with the site of the Temple and Ornan's threshing floor clearly reveals the hidden, interpretive trend embodied in this verse. The Temple, according to this writer, was located on the site of the binding of Isaac, which is also the site of Ornan's threshing floor that David bought. Underlying all three is the cultic concept of sacrifice as the ultimate manifestation of the encounter between God and his people. According to the author of Chronicles' interpretation, the binding of Isaac presents the primordial prefiguration of this ritual model.

The pair of words "Temple Mount" also debuted in the works of the prophets. The "copyright" for this name is reserved to the prophet Micah, who incorporated it into his famous admonitory prophecy: "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the *mountain of the house* as the high places of the forest" (Micah 3:12). It is quite doubtful, however, that the book of Micah preserved a concrete name that was actually used in the day-to-day lexicon of the prophet's generation. A close-reading of this passage shows that the phrase "Mountain of the House" is a literary variation of a longer term, the "mountain of the House of the Lord" (three words in Hebrew), which appears in verse 4:1. The author places the complete term in the middle and "plays" with its constituent parts (both pieces come out to two words in Hebrew) in the previous and subsequent verses (3:12; 4:2). In verse 4:1 the name Lord is deleted, leaving the term "Mount of the House," or Temple Mount.

This, then, is not a case of terms taken from the vocabulary of daily life but rather variations characteristic of the common literary diction used by the prophets. Furthermore, nearly one thousand years will pass from the alleged time of Micah until the specific term "Temple Mount" reappears in the Mishnah. In the interim, the term "Temple Mount" is not used in even one of the numerous existing sources, except in works quoting and using the

entire phrase from Micah. This is conclusive evidence that the name "Temple Mount" was not used in earlier periods, even though the image of a mountain as a place for a temple was both known and probably, at least to some degree, widespread.

The image of a mountain as the proper location for temples has its roots in the ancient Semitic idea of the "cosmic mountain": a lofty place where the heavens and the earth meet and at which the "divine" manifests itself in the universe (Clements 1965; Clifford 1972). The concept of the cosmic mountain was prevalent in different forms throughout the ancient Near East: from Mesopotamian and Ugaritic cultures, and as far as Egypt and Greece. One of its central aspects is the congruence between "mountain" and "temple" (Parry 1990). It is reasonable to assume that this notion inspired the beliefs and values that fashioned the biblical images of the holy mountain.

It is in this light that the idea of the mountain is employed in the language of the biblical poets and functions in eschatological and apocalyptic visions of that time. It is only natural, then, that the prophets' hopes for the future, as expressed in their poetry, should be uttered as a longing that has political connotations with reference to the Temple's mountain. The Psalms provide us with examples of these aspirations: "Yet have I set my king upon Zion my holy hill" (2:6). The mountain is even linked to acts of worship, as found in Isaiah's vision: "Even [the gentiles] will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar ..." (Isaiah 56:7). However, the mountain itself does not constitute a concrete political term in the world of the First Temple period nor is it a palpable factor in the ritual framework of those days.

The Second Temple period

The special status of Jerusalem and the Temple during the First Temple period takes on redoubled significance in the days of the Second Temple. In fact, Jerusalem and the Temple took on as many shades of meaning as there were groups and sub-groups of Palestine and Diaspora Jews at the time. There is, for example, a wide gap between Josephus, who highlighted the building's detailed physical dimensions, and Philo, who "stripped" the Temple and its constituent elements—such as the priesthood and the hallowed curtain—of their tangible form and fashioned them into allegoric motifs in his concept of the logos. The common denominator of such varied and conflicting attitudes is that they all pointed to Jerusalem and the Temple as being the focal points of Jewish consciousness in this period.[3]

The Temple rounded out Jerusalem's centrality by giving it a "religious" dimension. It was the primary ritual center for Jews in the land of Israel and throughout the world, as well as the spiritual focus of their worldview. The "half shekel," a levy that all the Jews of the ancient world collected and

sent to the high priesthood in Jerusalem, was one practical expression of the central status of the Temple. The large number of pilgrims who flocked to Jerusalem and the Temple for the three major festivals from throughout the Roman and Persian empires is a further indication of this same inclination. The city and the Temple occupied, along with other fundamental elements of Jewish thought and symbolism such as the House of David and the messianic idea, a leading position in the cluster of terms that shaped the historical image, as well as the hopes for the future, of Jews of all sects in the Second Temple period. They were also transformed into spiritual motifs that came to define the Jewish experience in its entirety.

And what of the Temple's mountain during the Second Temple period? How was this mountain crest conceived, if at all, by that generation? Are there Second Temple sources that point to a prevalent mind-set regarding this site? If so, what was this perception? Furthermore, from a terminological standpoint it was Micah, as noted above, who coined the term "Temple Mount," but what of its further historical development? Was the expression in use during the Second Temple period? How was it related to the other, popular terms that existed in the period's lexicon? From a more functional angle, what was the status of the location on which the Temple stood, its surrounding space?

Much of the writing of the Second Temple period was conducted within the contours marked out by the literature of the biblical period. Those acquainted with the texts of the Bible (which had not then reached their final form as we know them today) and writing under its influence could hardly conceive or imagine Jerusalem in any but mountainous terms. This mountainous picture is also supported by the topographic reality with which many of these writers were familiar. Anyone who has ever climbed from the bottom of the hill—the area known as the City of David, or the Lower City—and ascended to the peak where the Temple stood knows by the weariness of their feet that this is a mountain. It is no wonder, then, that images of mountains are sprinkled over many of the texts that deal with Jerusalem (Judith 5:19; Fourth Baruch 3:21; Josephus, *Jewish War* 5:137 and 184).[4]

Terms from the "mountainous lexicon" of the biblical period, both borrowed from the ancient texts and created during the Second Temple period, continue to appear in the literary works of that era in many descriptions of Jerusalem and the location of the Temple. For example, in the apocalyptic chapters of the book of Daniel, the term "Thy Holy Mountain" (9:16) is synonymous with Jerusalem.[5] The author of the text known as the Apocryphal Psalm borrowed the term "the mountain of the height of Israel" from the book of Ezekiel, where it appears several times. Similarly, the term "Thy Holy Mountain," found in the Wisdom of Solomon (9:8) and 1 Maccabees (11:37), refers to the location of the Temple. In the book of Jubilees (1:2, 18:7), however, the term "Mountain of God" refers to both Jerusalem and Mount Sinai. The term "Mount Zion" was routinely used throughout

the entire period, from books written at the height of the era such as Jubilees (1:28) and 1 Maccabees (4:37), in which it was the usual toponym for the Temple's place, to books written after the destruction such as Syriac Baruch (13:1) and Fourth Ezra (13:35).

The reliance of Second Temple-period authors on ancient biblical texts goes beyond terminology, and many ideas conceived during the First Temple era or in the early generations that followed it were adopted and elaborated. A prime example is the identification of the site of Isaac's binding, "Moriah," with Mount Zion. As mentioned above, this idea first appeared in Chronicles, but it was widely adopted by the authors of the Second Temple period and developed even further (Jubilees 18:13; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1:226). Similarly, the biblical idea of the cosmic mountain also resonates in some early Second Temple works. The most prominent example is the Epistle of Aristeas (83–84). There the author related the impressions of an Egyptian delegation with whom he arrived at Jerusalem: "We saw the city which sits in the center of the entire land of the Jews and it is a high and lofty mountain." On top of the mountain sits nothing less than a "magnificent temple."

That said, did the mountain on which the Temple stood receive some sort of political or ritual status in the Jewish world and consciousness of the Second Temple period? The very existence of an idea in the ancient books that came to be the Bible, even one that receives some attention in the Jewish writings of the Second Temple period, does not automatically imply that it is fully espoused by the people of that time or that it functions in any substantive way in their world. For example, from sources indicating how people spoke and thought of the Temple, laws they passed regulating it as an institution and molding its related activities, accomplishments they associated with it, the way they acted on its behalf, and the way they criticized it—all these serve as the basis for our conclusions concerning its status. Indeed, Second Temple liturgy (sacrifices, festivals, laws of purity and the like) is almost entirely based on Jerusalem's Temple, and thus affirms its ritual status. The Temple's political centrality is indicated by the plethora of political events, involving external factors from the Roman world or internal elements from within the Jewish world. All of the above could be said of Jerusalem as well.

Were there, however, similar notions and emotions regarding the mountain on which the Temple stood? The answer is no. The fact that there are sporadic echoes of biblical expressions and literary phrases does not prove that the mountain in and of itself had any political or ritual status. An integral part of the Jerusalemite experience is, as noted above, its mountainous scenery, and as part of that landscape the Temple's location was on one of the city's hills. A clear distinction must be made, however, between a physical reality that is essentially neutral and the existence of an ideological posture that may be granted to any particular component of that reality.

The claim that the mountain itself was not an independent category in the consciousness of Second Temple Jews is based primarily on a methodical examination of all the places in the texts from that time in which Jerusalem and its related sites are mentioned (Eliav 2005a, 12–23). Jewish writing during this period was prolific and extremely varied. Jerusalem and the Temple appear in these texts hundreds, if not thousands, of times. These sources, despite and perhaps due to their diversity, demonstrate that the mountain on which the Temple stood was devoid of any significant stature. The name "Temple Mount" appears but once throughout the multitude of available sources (in 1 Maccabees, which will be discussed below). Even there, it operates only as a literary construction, inspired by the biblical verse in Micah. This is a decisive finding, which proves that the term "Temple Mount" was not an integral part of the Second Temple period's lexicon.

The absence of the Temple Mount from the works of the period is especially pronounced when examining the manner in which the territories surrounding the actual Temple were conceived in the era's consciousness. The Temple structure never stood alone. From its earliest days there were always adjacent walled courtyards, and perhaps even buildings; the area was bursting with diverse and vibrant activity.[6] Some of this action was naturally connected to the Temple, such as the sale of sacrificial animals and the exchange of currency for the half-shekel levy. The site also attracted other activities that were not directly linked to the Temple. Sources such as Josephus and the New Testament's Gospels and Acts portray an array of events, among them preachers giving sermons and individuals and groups decrying the regime. Some gathered there to study the Torah, while others came to close business deals. There were periods when the court system operated on the Mount, or nearby.

The most important question, however, is: how was this surrounding territory perceived by those living at the time, and how did it rank, if at all, in their world-view? It seems to me that throughout most of the period, the area did not possess any independent identity and was considered an integral part of the Temple itself. From a semantic standpoint, the various names given to the compound—*hatser* (courtyard) in Hebrew, or the Greek *peribolos* and *temenos*—describe a space that surrounds another architectural element. The Temple, then, was perceived as an architectural complex containing different components. Just as the altar was part of the Temple structure, so were the surrounding elements—courtyards and galleries. This is not to say that all these parts shared an equal status or degree of holiness. There was a definite, hierarchical system: the outer enclosure was not on a par with the inner court, and the inner court was not equivalent to the Holy of Holies. They were all grasped, however, as parts of a whole, which together formed the Temple.

The sacredness of these territories is almost self-evident and is certainly no surprise. The expression "my holy courts" appears already in early, First

Temple texts (for example, Isaiah 62:9), and it is only natural that the areas that form part of the Temple should possess some of its holiness. For example, the codes of purity were strictly enforced in these courts, in order to prevent the penetration of defilement into the inner sanctuary. The compounds surrounding the Temple, then, did not possess an independent character, and constituted an integral part of the Temple. People didn't refer to these areas as the "Temple Mount," and they were not even perceived in their consciousness as a mountain.

The origin of the "Temple Mount" concept

The seeds of the Temple Mount concept may be found in some Second Temple sources; the earliest of these is 1 Maccabees. For the most part, this book remains faithful to the usual representations of Jerusalem during this period, which accentuate the dual centrality of city and Temple and neglect the mountain on which the latter stood. In several instances, however, a new, third element is introduced into Jerusalem's landscape, and given the traditional appellation "Mount Zion" (4:37, 5:54). It is clearly referring to the venue of the Temple. On other occasions, the author uses designations such as the "holy mountain" (11:37) and "mountain of the Temple" (16:20). In one instance he even assigns the site the actual phrase "Temple Mount" (4:46).

There are serious doubts, however, concerning the authenticity of the terms "holy mountain" and "mountain of the Temple" in 1 Maccabees. These terms were apparently later additions, most likely from the period after the destruction of the Temple, whereas the name "Temple Mount" was borrowed from the collection of literary images found in the book of Micah (Eliav 2005a, 29–33). Nevertheless, there is no denying that time and again 1 Maccabees conveys the image of a mountain when depicting the Temple's location.

The area's independent status is also reflected in the works of Josephus, at the end of the Second Temple period and thereafter. Josephus (*Jewish War* 4:388) describes the atrocities committed in the civil conflict that raged within the walls of Jerusalem, and includes a short quasi-prophecy whereby he views these sorts of events as foreshadowing the imminent catastrophe of the destruction. Included in this prophecy is the defilement of the area around the Temple by some of the local residents. One aspect of this account sets it apart from other descriptions of the Temple precincts: Josephus uses the expression "*Temenos* of God." In the common formulations referring to Jerusalem's Temple, the "*Temenos*" is subordinate to the Temple, not to God. In Josephus' expression the Temple itself loses its central role, and the *Temenos* is directly partnered with the source of holiness.

In the eyes of Josephus, then, spiritual and moral impairments to the *Temenos* bear their own negative weight and may at the end of the "prophetic accounting" bring tragedy upon the defilers as well as upon the

Temple and the city as a whole. To the best of my knowledge, this marks the first time that a writer of the Second Temple period attributes such an independent value to the area surrounding the Temple, and in which this area plays a self-sufficient literary role. Consciousness and terminology thus go hand in hand. With the rise of a new consciousness, a new term sprang forth—"*Temenos* of God."

A second source that sheds light on the inception of the concept of the Temple Mount as possessing an independent status is the New Testament. The city and its sanctuary rank quite highly in the writings of the New Testament, playing a leading role in its narrative that is unmatched by any other city or holy place.[7] Various passages of the New Testament use the images of the Temple and Jerusalem, whether to express the "Heavenly Jerusalem" or, on occasion, as a label for the actual community. And what of the Temple Mount? The word combination "Temple" and "Mount" is never to be found throughout the entire corpus of the New Testament. The term "Mount Zion," absent from the works of Josephus, appears only rarely in the New Testament—the Gospels do not mention it even once. All of this is true despite the fact that mountains do turn up in these texts, some of them quite intrusively: Mount Sinai, Mount Gerizim, and the anonymous mountain that is the site of the Sermon on the Mount. This is consistent with the world of Second Temple Judaism—Jerusalem in this context is the exclusive location of God's worship. The Temple is indeed the city's essence, but the mountain on which it stands has no function or status.

Nevertheless, the New Testament, like the works of Josephus, contains the seeds of the phrase "Temple Mount" and the concept it embodies. One example is Jesus's well-known prophecy, "there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mark 13:2), which was understood by many scholars to refer to the Temple itself. Originally, however, the verse pointed to the territory that the disciples encountered as they exited the Temple—the surrounding plateau, later to be called the Temple Mount.[8] In the description of Stephen's execution found in Acts (6:13–14), "holy place" replaces the usual expression "shrine." Additionally, in Revelation (11) the Temple court is given an independent and separate life from both the city and the Temple.

To conclude, these sequences from Josephus and the New Testament, and to some extent 1 Maccabees, are worthy of being considered as the nascent stages of the term "Temple Mount." Why nascent? Because the sources in which they are found are not unambiguous. On the one hand, they share many of the traits of the "classic" city-temple image found in the other sources of the Second Temple period; on the other hand, they indicate a change from the usual manner in which the area surrounding the Temple is treated. It is given new names, and it is apparently no longer portrayed as solely dependent on the Temple that stands at its center. This indicates the beginning of a change in the perception of reality. These accounts reflect a kind of intermediary stage, in which the previous consciousness is still

felt, but—be it consciously or unconsciously—they express a new concept as well.

Herod's project

What brought about the change in the way the Temple's surrounding area was perceived? The answer is to be found in the close interdependency of reality and idea, whereby a significant modification of the physical sphere entails a series of new perceptions, which in turn affect the way people visualize the new reality. What triggered such dynamics was the huge transformation of the Temple area during the last one hundred years of the Second Temple era. This project is entirely bound up with the inspiration and work of one man, King Herod, who more than anyone else was responsible for the present form of the compound we now call the "Temple Mount."

As part of Herod's efforts to beautify and glorify (and in fact to rebuild) Jerusalem's Temple, he expanded the area around it. In fact, he more than doubled its size, converting it into the largest temple complex in the eastern part of the Roman Empire at the time. Herod thus established an artificial topographic entity in the shape of a trapezoid, of an area and height never before seen in Jerusalem.

From an architectural perspective, not only did Herod strengthen and glamorize the Temple, but his project also gave a new look to the entire surrounding complex. Colonnades decorated the open courts that surrounded the Temple, and two huge buildings sheltered the Temple: to the south, Herod's royal basilica, which Josephus considered to be the most spectacular building on the face of the earth; and to the north, the Antonia—not quite fortress and not quite palace—held the entire area in thrall.

The area adjacent to the Temple compound also received a facelift during Herod's reign. Around the enormous walls of the Temple compound, which were made of huge stones, flattened and smoothed, a new urban multiplex was created. This enterprise had no equal in the land of Israel of those days: avenues of up to 23 meters wide were paved with large stones and bordered with curbstones; beneath the streets lay a drainage and sewage system, and above them piazzas, fabulous stairwells, and—a rare sight before Herod's time—an impressive interchange that sat atop arches, leading to the royal basilica (Ben-Dov 2002, 103–126).

This monumental architectural accomplishment was superimposed on the likewise newly-created topography, and together formed a new landscape for the city of Jerusalem. Change was flung at a population unaccustomed to such enormous dimensions, and consequently it radically transformed the physical reality in which they lived and worked. It is only natural, then, that this grandiose creation would engrave its markings on their innermost consciousness. It is these events that provided the concrete foundation for the change in consciousness, the seeds of which are to be found in Josephus and

the books of the New Testament. Paradoxically, this process would be fully concluded in the period following the destruction.

After the days of the Second Temple

The destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE opens a new chapter in the annals of both Jerusalem in general and the Temple in particular. Little is known about what transpired within the ruins of Jerusalem in the sixty-year period that followed the Great Revolt and ended with the initiation of Emperor Hadrian's building project in the beginning of the 130s CE (perhaps as late as 135). According to Josephus (*Jewish War* 7:1–2), the Tenth Legion was bivouacked next to the three towers that Herod constructed in the western part of the upper city (presently referred to as "David's Citadel"). Except for this note, there are no other written sources or archaeological discoveries that provide significant information, which may shed some light as to the site's characteristics during these years.

After the Bar-Kokhba revolt (132–135) Jerusalem was turning into a pagan city, at times practically off-limits to Jews. Indeed, its idolatrous image must have disgusted them. Further, their Temple's territory was left in its desolation outside the city limits.[9] These elements provided, in my view, the great impetus for the elevation of the Temple Mount's status. This development took place simultaneously among the various Jewish groups who still resided in Palestine. Ample information about two of these groups enables us to reconstruct part of this process.

The community of James brother of Jesus

The persona known as James brother of Jesus, as well as the characteristics of the group that banded around him, are shrouded in mystery. Over the years, the group came to be known as the "Jerusalem Church of the Circumcised." It was one of many Jewish factions that were active in Palestine in the days before the destruction of the Temple and in the first generations thereafter. In a previous detailed study, I argued that the "Temple Mount" played a significant role in this group's world (Eliav 2004).

The tradition that gave rise to this community's ethos recounts James's murder at the Temple court, where he was publicly preaching his faith. According to this account, one of the priests pushed him off what is called the Temple's *Pterugion* (usually translated as "pinnacle"), which formed part of the massive walls that bounded the Temple and separated it from the surrounding compound (the Temple was essentially a fortified unit within a fortified compound). The hostile mob pelted James's body with stones, and someone crushed his skull with a club. The tradition concludes with James's burial in the compound, in close proximity to the Temple. In the second century CE, about two generations after the destruction, the tombstone was still a gathering place for members of this community.

Given the lack of sources, it is difficult to verify whether or how these events unfolded. Was James really buried on the mountain? We cannot know, and for the purposes of this study it is irrelevant. Although it is hard to believe that the Jewish Temple authorities would permit the burial of anyone so close to the Temple, the fact remains that members of the so-called Judeo-Christian community revered James's tomb on the desolate compound of the destroyed Temple (whether or not he was actually buried there) as a holy place. Additionally, there are many other traditions linking persons who were venerated by the Judeo-Christian communities to events that took place on the Temple's territory: for example, Satan's seduction of Jesus at the same Temple's *Pterugion* and the murder of the prophet Zechariah next to the altar. These memories indicate that holy relics existed in the immediate area of the ruined Temple (such as the large cornerstone and the ruins of the *Pterugion*), which attracted worshipers and pilgrims.

The territory adjacent to the Temple appears, in the consciousness of the creators of the James tradition, as a site of religious significance. Not the Temple, but the "area next to it." The fragments of these traditions indicate the birth of a new location: not the Temple itself but the expanse on which it stands. The status of this place does not rely on Temple rituals, with their related laws of purity, nor on the classic objects that represent the Temple—the altar and the Holy of Holies. In this new spatial arrangement there are different corners and new objects: the *Pterugion*, a large stone, the grave and tombstone of James brother of Jesus. These elements reveal a new facet of the Temple Mount's history.

Rabbinic literature

Rabbinic literature is the largest—and to a great extent the only surviving—corpus of texts written by the Jews of Palestine (and Babylon) in the first centuries of the common era (a rough estimate dates these works to the second through the sixth centuries). These are the first sources that represent the Temple Mount as a fully and clearly defined physical entity possessing unique characteristics that give it an independent status in the Jewish experience of the time.

Tractate Middot (1:1–3, 2:1–2) of the Mishnah, one of the earliest texts of this literature, represents the Mount as a recognized territorial constituent within the Temple complex. Its location is clear, its dimensions are defined ("The Temple Mount was five hundred cubits by five hundred cubits"), and the names of its gates are known ("The Temple Mount had five gates"). Various guidelines are provided concerning the route pedestrians are to follow when entering this place and the manner in which people are to address one another while there. The tractate even recalls the "Temple Mount person," whose responsibilities included the rotation of the Levites who manned the five gates.

These examples are sufficient to ground the impression that the *Tana'aim*, the earlier rabbis who lived in the centuries that followed the destruction and produced, among other texts, the Mishnah, inherited this term from their predecessors of the Second Temple period. Similarly, many sources in rabbinic literature which seem to document rituals and celebrations that took place in Jerusalem during the Second Temple period frequently mention the Temple Mount as an operative reference point in such procedures and take for granted its familiarity to everyone.

According to the Mishnah (Parah 3:3), the Temple Mount served as the last station on the course of the bulls that bore the ritually pure children, who carried water from the Siloam fountain for the ritual slaughter of the red heifer. It also served as a starting point for the entourage that attended the heifer on its way to the Mount of Olives led by the priest who was to burn the slaughtered animal.

Another example is found in the description of the pageantry that marked the bringing of the first fruits (Mishnah, Bikkurim 3:4). The pilgrims' route and various phases of this ceremony are described in detail, including the verses recited, the people involved, and the customs observed. According to the itinerary laid out by the Mishnah, the Temple Mount was one of the stations along the route of this festive occasion, which the pilgrims would reach upon arriving in Jerusalem, after entering the city and before arriving at the inner Temple Court: "The flutes were played before them until they reached the Temple Mount. When they reached the Temple Mount even King Agrippa would take the basket on his shoulder and enter." On a different note, but consistent with the above portrayal, was the *halakha* (rabbinic law) stipulating that when the first group—out of three—finished slaughtering the Passover sacrifice, "the first group left and sat in the Temple Mount" (Mishnah, Pesahim 5:10).

Moreover, Tannaitic literature recounts a significant number of customs and policies pertaining to the Temple Mount during the Second Temple period. First and foremost is the ruling that set the Temple Mount's dress code. It lists the articles that may not be brought in (shoes, sticks, and more) and even sets several restrictions on those entering. The visitor's feet must be clean of dust, and one may not use the Temple Mount as a shortcut (Berakhot 9:5). Another example deals with the case in which the first day of the Feast of the Tabernacles falls on the Sabbath. According to the Mishnah, "they would bring their Lulavim [palm branches] to the Temple Mount and the Temple attendants received them and placed them in order on the top of the portico" (Sukkah 4:4). There were also special additions to the prayers that were recited on public fasts. The Sages linked these prayers to the customs on the Temple Mount before the destruction (Ta'anit 2:5). Other ordinances were concerned with the site's upkeep, such as the prohibition on planting trees on the Mount (Sifre Deuteronomy 145).

In addition to the array of laws and customs associated with the Temple Mount, the Mishnah also depicts actual scenes that occurred on the Mount

during the Second Temple period. On other occasions the Tannaitic Sages go so far as to represent the Temple Mount as a part of the Jerusalem reality of much earlier periods. For example, the deeds of the colorful figure known as Honi the circle-drawer are placed by the Mishnah on the Temple Mount (Mishnah, Ta'anit 3:8 and Nedarim 5:5). Many other rabbinic laws anchored the Temple Mount at the hub of day-to-day life in Jerusalem while the Second Temple still stood.

The status of the Temple Mount in Tannaitic literature reaches its zenith in the well-known passage in tractate Kelim (1:8), which classifies the ten levels of holiness: the structure of the Temple Mount is found between the city ("within the walls") and the Temple. "The Temple Mount is more sanctified than this [city], for males and females who have discharged, and women who have menstruated or given birth may not enter there." This affirmation should come as no surprise, and in fact logically reflects the Temple Mount's status in Tannaitic literature. To the Sages, the Mount was an integral part of the Jerusalemite reality of the Second Temple period, which preceded their time, and is consequently ranked among the period's sacred venues.

These circles of sanctity reflect a picture of the Temple as extant and active, as the focus and summit of holiness. This was not some spiritual-abstract idea, but a concept deeply rooted in practical life, which was the source of religious prohibitions such as the laws of contamination and purity that applied to visitors. At first glance, then, the post-70 CE Sages present a picture of the Temple Mount as an essential part of the earlier Second Temple period and an inseparable part of reality as perceived in that generation's consciousness. This literature suggests that the Jews of that time 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 familiar with its physical details. According to rabbinic sources, the Temple Mount was deeply anchored in Jewish experience of the Second Temple period.

All this, however, is only ostensibly true. 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 formidable gaps in the picture that emerged in the above discussion. These call into question the very validity and historical authenticity of this picture, at least in relation to the existence of both the term and concept "Temple Mount" in the Second Temple period.[10]

A close reading of this material can detect a literary process in which the term "Temple Mount" was added to earlier traditions of the Second Temple period. The essence of this phenomenon has to do with the insertion of the term "Temple Mount" by rabbinic Sages into their back-projected presentation of the earlier reality of the Second Temple. In so doing, the rabbis redesigned Second Temple appearances on both physical and conceptual levels. One who reads the dozens of sequences in which the "Temple

Mount" appears in rabbinic texts is likely to come away with the impression that it was an integral part of the reality of the Second Temple period. This, however, is false; the term was an integral part of the world of the rabbis.

Thus, the development of the concept that took form under the rubric "the Temple Mount" is an absorbing phase in the evolution of Jewish consciousness during the post-destruction generations. It is a process in which a new term, although with ancient roots, took shape and gradually captured an important position in the world-view of the Sages and, apparently, in that of other Jews as well. One aspect of this development is the growing independence of the term "Temple Mount" and the nature of its relationship with the Temple (now destroyed). In many rabbinic texts, the Mount is not just a plot of land that happens to be subordinate to the Temple. It rather enters the picture as an independent force that even occasionally shunts the Temple aside. At some point, for example, the ancient *halakha* that had directed all prayer toward the Temple and the Holy of Holies was rephrased. Instead of the Temple, the Mount became the focus; the Palestinian Talmud termed it "the mount to which all mouths pray" (Eliav 2005a, 179–180). It is in this light that one must understand the better-known sources unfolding the notion that God's divine presence (*shekhina*) never left the locality of the Temple, even after its destruction, hence the site's holiness is not dependent on the existence of the Temple.

The Foundation Stone

One of the clearest examples indicating the rise of the Temple Mount's independent status is the increased attention given to the so-called "Foundation Stone." The first mention of this stone is innocent enough and appears in the Mishnah's tractate Yoma (5:2), which describes the high priest entering the Holy of Holies: "After the Ark was taken away, a stone was there from the time of the early Prophets, called 'foundation,' three fingers above the ground, and upon it he would put [the incense]." In the Tosefta (2:14), the tradition of the stone is recounted nearly word for word, but its conclusion includes a passage that is absent from the Mishnah: Rabbi Yose interprets the name "foundation stone," claiming that "from it the world was carved." Many scholars see in Rabbi Yose's statement a manifestation of the well-known Omphalos concept—the "navel of the earth"—which glorifies the centrality of certain places. This idea can be found, in different forms, in ancient Semitic and Greek cultures. It was adopted by some Second Temple Jewish authors, such as the author of the Epistle of Aristeas and Josephus, and perhaps appears even earlier in the book of Ezekiel.

Rabbi Yose crafted his shrewd explication well. It plays on the ancient name of the stone, by taking the noun *shetiyah* (foundation) and changing it into the verb *shatat* (to found or create). There is no mention of a "navel" or

a "center"; the stone is, however, where the world was created. Admittedly, in ancient times all these expressions were members of the same family of ideas, and the Omphalos was defined as both the center of the world and the place of the creation. Despite this, one cannot ignore the fact that Rabbi Yose created a different terminological and ideological scale. The value attributed to the stone is what essentially differentiates the idea inherent in Rabbi Yose's position from the idea found in the Mishnah. Although in the latter, the stone is granted a certain significance—after all, the Ark was placed on it—this importance is measured within the framework of the Temple and the hierarchy of its articles. In contrast, Rabbi Yose's idea removes the stone from its Temple context and grants it a value in and of itself, measuring it in relation to the entire universe. This is the most important stone in the world.

This transition from the "Temple" stone to the "cosmic" stone signifies the conceptual process discussed above. The Temple's territory, and in this case a natural, physical element that occupied the area, replaces the actual edifice of the Temple, and is endowed with its own value. Although in some later rabbinic commentaries the stone is still associated with its function in the Temple (for example, with matters concerning the Day of Atonement), at other times, however, it is completely detached from its past. It is furnished with new substance and linked to new ideas: the foundation stone which is the navel of the earth.

The independence of the stone reached its apex among the Christians during the Byzantine era. The gist 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.[11]

Jewish sources also contain more explicit liturgical information: even after the destruction, Jews, although naturally on a diminished scale, maintained their visits to Jerusalem, either to fulfill the biblical requirement of the festival pilgrimage or simply to come and pray. One tradition speaks of Tannaitic rabbis "who reached the Temple Mount and saw a fox leaving the Holy of Holies." A later tradition, dating to the fourth century CE, similarly recounts the visit of Sages who left their sandals "under the gateway to the Temple Mount" (Safrai 1981; Wilken 1992, 105–108). Additionally, there are detailed descriptions of the mourning customs that the visitors observed, mainly the tearing of clothing, and perhaps even fasting. Some scholars have suggested that for some time after the destruction Jews continued to perform some of the 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 (Safrai 1981, 376–385). The sources, then, do indicate some sort of Jewish liturgical activity on the Temple Mount, but the picture remains incomplete, as many of its details remain a mystery.

Conclusion

The history of the Temple Mount and the growth of its religious and political eminence are more complicated than is commonly thought. In contrast to the widespread view, there is no homogeneous sequential process—from the ancient days of the Bible through the Second Temple period and up until the Late Roman and Byzantine periods—in which the essence of the Temple Mount's status remains more or less the same. The point of this study is to refute this convention. As was presented above, the process was a complex and dialectic one, of which only some of the contributing features are known.

Surprisingly, it was only in the aftermath of the Second Temple's destruction, when Jerusalem lost its own role as a political and religious center, that the Temple Mount gained prominence. Here, too, different factors combined or collided within the process. Paradoxically, Herod's massive building project and the destruction of the Temple, which prima facie would seem to cancel out each other, joined forces to shape both the Temple Mount's physical infrastructure and its consciousness as a sacred space independent of the Temple.

Notes

1 This article is based on my monograph (Eliav 2005a). Extensive comments and bibliographical references may be found there.
2 This generalization does not apply to later prophets. In the book of Jeremiah, for example, none of the terms appears even once, and an expression like "holy mountain," which in most of the prophetic writings almost always refers to the location of the Temple, is used in Jeremiah as a neutral name for the entire Judean mountain ridge (Jeremiah 31:22).
3 The research on Second Temple Jerusalem is too vast to be fully incorporated here. For an exhaustive bibliography, see Purvis 1988–91.
4 Mountainous scenery appears in other texts as well, but it is not always possible to pinpoint their source. For example, the beginning of 1 Enoch, also known as the "Book of the Watchers," takes place against the background of mountains, and Jerusalem is apparently alluded to. Yet it is difficult to establish the source from which the writer drew this scenery.
5 Also see the expression "holy mountain of beauty" (Daniel 11:45), which signifies the entire territory of Judah.
6 See, for example, the words of the Greek author Hecataeus of Abdera, in a fragment preserved in Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:198. See also Nehemiah 13:7–9, 8:16; Jubilees 49:20; Epistle of Aristeas 100. These territories, their components and contents, were frequently described in many of the studies dedicated to the Temple and its reconstruction (Busink 1970–80, 2:904–1016 and 1178–2000).
7 In the Gospel of John many of Jesus' deeds in Galilee are relocated to Jerusalem. For a detailed and updated summary regarding Jerusalem and the Temple in the New Testament, see Walker 1996; Eliav 2005a, 46–50.
8 The focus here is too narrow to discuss the parallels of this passage in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew 24:1–2; Luke 21:5–7) and the extensive research that has been published on this topic (Eliav 2005b).
9 According to the testimony of several sources, it is possible that the Roman legions that were stationed in Jerusalem in those days erected some statues in the

ruined compound. This, however, is not enough to alter the urban picture represented in this study (Eliav 2005a, 83–94). For a summary of scholarly opinions regarding the location of the Temple of Jupiter see Tsafrir 1999; Eliav 2005a, 76–100.

10 A significant portion of my earlier study is aimed at supporting this claim (Eliav 2005a, 189–236). It is obviously impossible to present all the evidence here.

11 For examples of Muslim traditions regarding the sanctification of that stone, see Chapter 6 by Suleiman Ali Mourad in this volume.

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