



THE TEMPLE & TEMPLE MOUNT

March 1, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Due to current world events such as the continued isolation of Israel, the global growth and influence of the Arabic/Muslim peoples along with their desire to control the Land of Israel, and the Temple Mount with a renewed interest in "*The Last Days*," it seems as though this generation is watching world events unfold unlike any other prior generation. Consequently, it seems like a natural progression to continue with our discussion of Israel and History from our previous program and overview the biblical account and history of the Jewish Temples and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

With these thoughts in mind, let's begin this discussion by specifically looking at the Tabernacle, the Jewish Temples, and then focus on the importance of the Temple Mount. As most students of Bible prophecy are well aware, biblical Scripture indicates a Temple must be built to re-institute the Jewish sacrificial system and be prepared for the desecration of the Antichrist and the coming of the Messiah. However, the existing potential inflammatory tensions between Jews and Muslims/Arabs over the Temple Mount area currently make the construction of a Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount seem an impossibility. Additionally, we will discuss what the religious Jewish leaders have been accomplishing to restore the Third Temple and the sacrificial system. Another item of extreme interest that we will briefly discuss is the Ark of the Covenant and its place in end times as there has been a substantial amount of conjecture regarding its location and possibly even its existence.

THE TABERNACLE

Let's begin by considering the tabernacle as it was the forerunner of four stationary Temples in Jerusalem. The word "*tabernacle*" means "*sanctuary*" or "*place of dwelling*" and was a *mobile* (or portable) sacred place of meeting between God and His people during the Israelites 40 years of wandering in the desert under the leadership of Moses. The tabernacle was initially erected for service in the desert



Figure 1. The Tabernacle

wilderness one year after the Passover when the Israelites completed their Exodus from Egypt (about 1450 B.C.) and was constructed from precise instructions by God to Moses. It was a mobile tent with specific contents that the people traveled with and set up wherever they pitched camp (Figure 1). The tabernacle was surrounded by an exterior linen fence perimeter that was 75-feet wide, 150-feet long, and 7.5-feet high supported by 60 pillars. The tabernacle tent was 45-feet long, 15-feet wide, and its intricacy is illustrated in Figure 2. Although the complete story of God's direction to Moses regarding the tabernacle begins in Exodus 25:1, the specifics of the tabernacle construction and its many facets begin in Exodus 25:9. As directed by God, the tabernacle would travel with the Israelites to wherever they pitched camp, would always be the center of their camp, and was surrounded by the tents of the 12 tribes of Israel specifically placed according to each tribe.

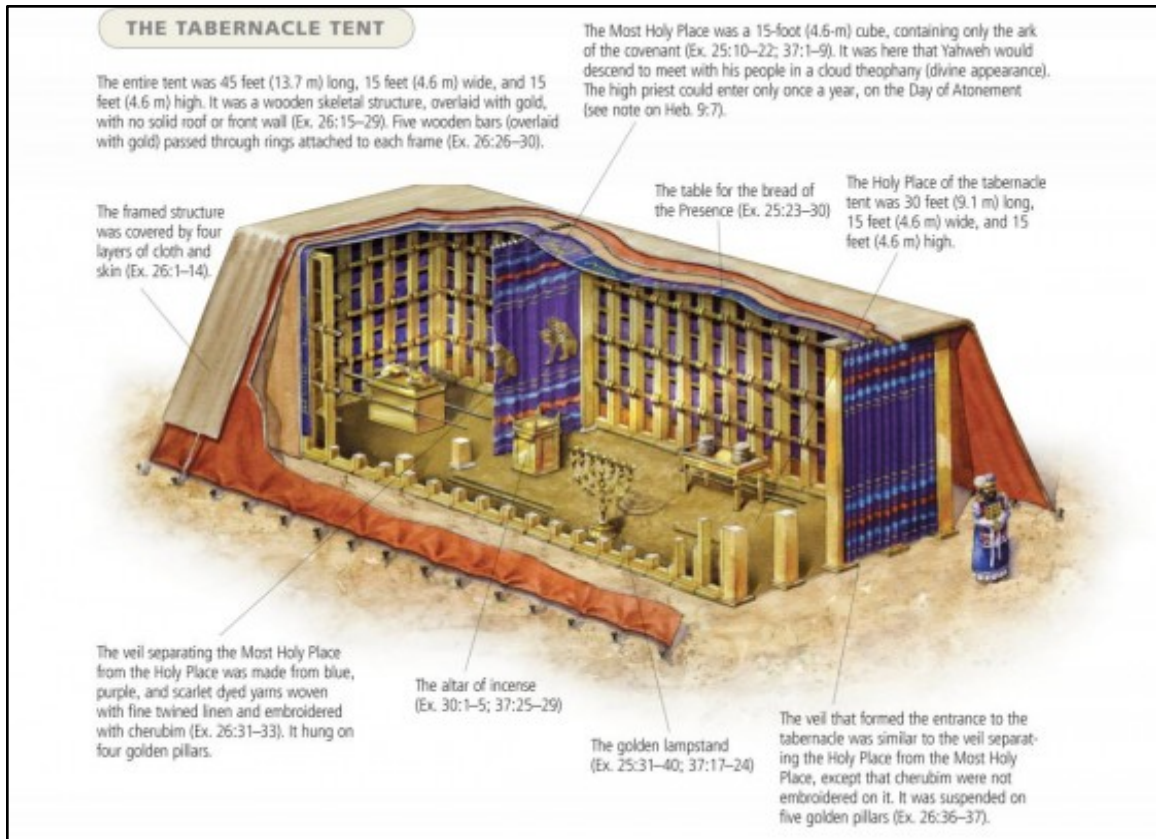


Figure 2. The Tabernacle Tent

According to Numbers 2:2; *“Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard (flag or banner), beside the emblems of his fathers house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting,”* followed by Numbers 2:3-54 that gives specific instructions for tribal placements around the tabernacle. Because God directed the placement of the tribes in relation to north, south, east, and west around the tabernacle, the overall image would have appeared as a cross (with the tabernacle at the junction of the horizontal and vertical elements) when viewed from above as illustrated in Figure 3.¹ This would have been readily apparent when considering the number of people in tribal placement as follows:

- Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh; 108,100
- Reuben, Simeon, Gad; 151, 450
- Dan, Asher, Naphtali; 157,600
- Judah, Issachar, Zebulun; 186,400
- The Levite tribe, positioned around the tabernacle; consisted of 22,000 males, so the actual number of the Levite tribe would have been much higher with women and children. Numbers 1:53 indicates that the purpose of setting the Levites apart and arranging them around the tabernacle was to (1) keep the wrath of the Lord from consuming Israel and (2) to keep charge of the tabernacle

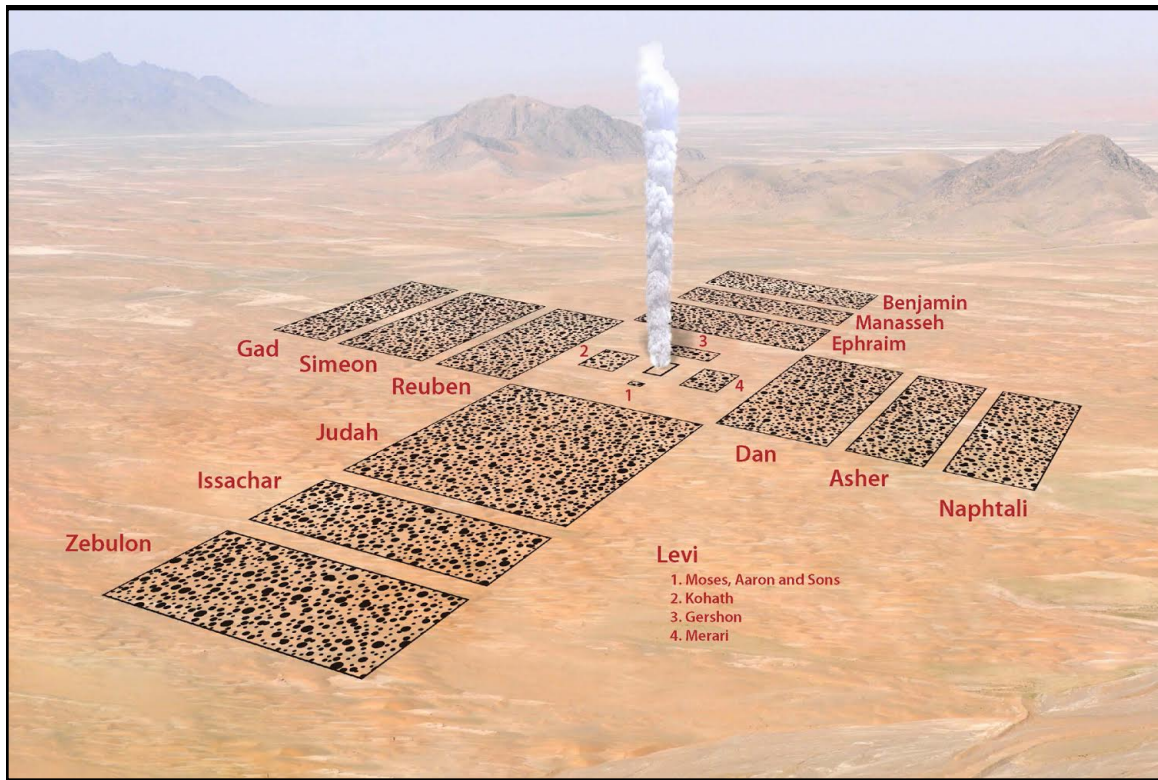


Figure 3. Placement of the tabernacle and tribes of Israel appeared as a cross when viewed from above

As a visual image, God appeared as a pillar of smoke over the tabernacle by day and a pillar of fire by night over the tabernacle. The Israelite people would not move their location unless the pillar of smoke/fire moved thus making an unmistakable and visual statement indicating the presence of God *within* His people.

An illustration of God and the tabernacle appears in the New Testament in John 1:14 that says; “*The word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.*” The word *dwelling* in the New Testament is the same word as *tabernacle* in the Old Testament. So, God came in living flesh to dwell among His people. As applied to His 33 years on this earth, Jesus Christ fulfilled the picture of the Old Testament tabernacle. The tabernacle was also a prophetic version of the Lord’s redemptive plan for his people and mankind. Also, remember that using a pillar of smoke/fire was not limited to guiding the Israelite people in the desert for 40 years. God also used a pillar of smoke/fire in:

- The Exodus and protection from the advancing Egyptians; Exodus 13 and 14
- When Moses entered the tabernacle; Exodus 33:9-10
- Miriam, Aaron, and Moses by the tabernacle; Numbers 12:5
- Remembrance of Moses interceding for the people; Numbers 14:14
- The inauguration of Joshua; Deuteronomy 31:15

- The time in Sinai remembered; Nehemiah 9:12&19
- Remembrance of the Lord's divine direction; Psalms 99:7

THE TEMPLES

The word *temple* is derived from the Hebrew word "*hekal*." In the Bible, Temple normally refers to the Jerusalem Temple or a Temple in Jerusalem. According to the revered Rabbi Moses Maimonides, the purpose of the Temple was two-fold:²

- The divine presence of God was revealed to mankind (the Glory of God dwelt above the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant)
- Provided a selected place for offering divine sacrifices

From a practical perspective, the Bible refers to *four* distinct stationary Temples in Jerusalem plus an Eternal Temple. Let's look at each one in detail.

THE FIRST TEMPLE

After the Israelites entered the Promised Land and David became king, God discussed a new stationary Temple with David but did not allow him to build it because he was a man of war and had shed blood (I Chronicles 28:3). Although

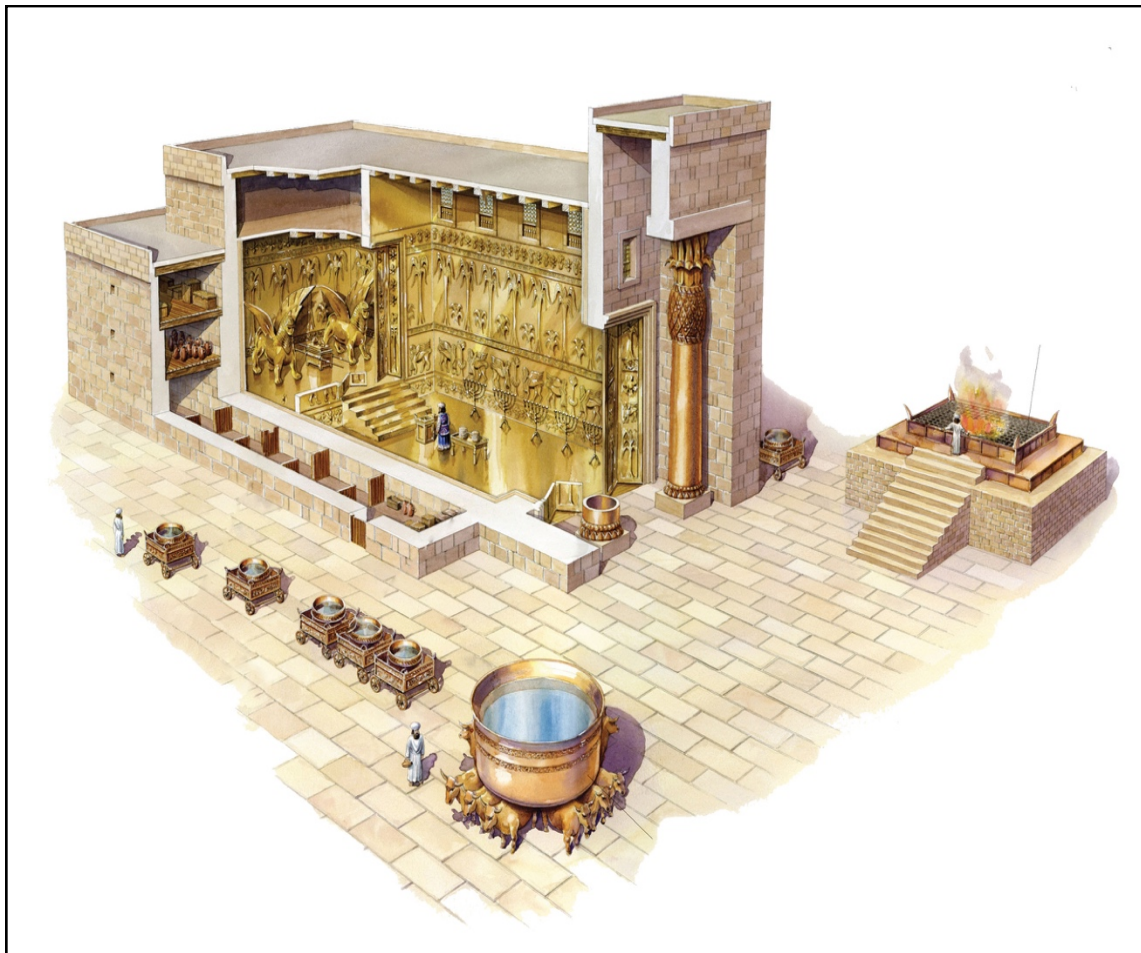


Figure 4. The *First* Temple constructed by King Solomon

God allowed David to begin collecting the necessary materials for construction, the *First Temple* was actually built by King Solomon, completed in 957 B.C. on Mount Moriah (also known as the Temple Mount), and totally destroyed by the Babylonians (Nebuchadnezzar II) in 586 B.C. The First Temple complex was significantly larger and grander than the Tabernacle and the construction details are found in I Kings 6. King Solomon spared no expense in building the Temple (Figure 4) as evidenced by the distinguishing fact that he overlaid the entire inner sanctuary (walls, floor and ceiling) of the Temple with pure gold (I Kings 6:20-39).

King Solomon also sustained other expenses to the point of incurring a significant debt that resulted in the necessity of repaying King Hiram of Tyre with 20 towns in Galilee as found in I Kings 5:10-11. The following is a brief overview of the amount of gold, silver, bronze and other precious materials used in the construction of the Temple with a basic understanding of one talent was equal to about 75-pounds:³

- 3,000 talents of gold and 7,000 talents of silver from King David's personal treasures; I Chronicles 29:4
- 5,002.5 talents of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of bronze and 100,000 talents of iron from the leaders of Israel; I Chronicles 29:7
- A great quantity of cedar trees from King Hiram of Tyre; I Kings 5:10

To build the Temple, Solomon used a combination of 30,000 Israeli workers with 153,300 non-Israeli laborers⁴ for 7 years. In total, over 8,002.5 talents of gold, 17,000 talents of silver, and vast quantities of bronze, iron and cedar were used for completion. As previously mentioned, as one talent equals 75-pounds, 8,002.5 talents of gold equals 600,187.5 pounds of gold, and 17,000 talents of silver equals 1,275,000 pounds of silver. Excluding the bronze, iron and cedar, the gold alone would be worth (\$2,000/ounce) about \$19,206,000,000, with the silver worth (\$23/ounce) about \$469,200,000 for a total worth of the gold and silver (today's economy) of \$19,675,200,000 or well over 19 billion dollars.

After the new Temple was consecrated, the visible presence of God moved from the Tabernacle to the new Temple (I Kings 8:10). This was accomplished by moving the Ark of the Covenant into the Holy of Holies where the Shekinah Glory of God was visibly displayed (pillar of smoke) above the Mercy Seat of the Ark. To describe the numerous highlights of King Solomon's Temple would go far beyond the boundaries of this discussion. However, let's briefly look at four features that are noteworthy from the perspective of the level of intelligence that was possessed during that time in history, regardless of secular beliefs regarding ancient mankind:

Metallurgy

I Kings 7:15-26 and 2 Chronicles 4:2-6 detail specific bronze articles made for the Temple. In the account, Hiram of Tyre *“had the skill and knowledge to make all kinds of works of bronze,”* and cast the following items (see Figure 4):

- Two pillars of 55 tons each
- Two caps at 20 tons each
- A laver at 13 tons
- The Great Molten Sea that weighed 72 tons
- Twelve oxen to support the Great Molten Sea
- Various ornaments

Of particular interest, the Great Molten Sea located in the southeastern corner of the inner court, was 7.5-feet high, 15-feet in diameter from brim to brim, and 45-feet in circumference. The underneath portion of the brim was decorated with 2 rows of gourds. It was placed on the backs of twelve oxen in four groups of three that were standing with their faces outward (3 facing east, 3 facing west, and so on). Additionally, the Great Molten Sea held approximately 15,000 gallons of water used for the priests to wash themselves before entering the Temple! The pillars and the Great Molten Sea were cast of bright bronze (primarily copper and zinc) and *“uniform”* in color that indicates they required a single casting or pouring per article to achieve the necessary clarity instead of visible layers between numerous castings.

Additionally, consider how Hiram built a foundry in the desert that was capable of smelting 72-tons of uniform bronze for a single casting (along with all of the other items) and then being able to transport the Great Molten Sea to Solomon’s Temple. After the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., the Great Molten Sea was later destroyed by the Chaldeans and taken to Babylon (2 Kings 25:13, Jeremiah 52:17).

Water For The Great Molten Sea And Temple

Solomon knew that an abnormally large amount of water would be needed to cleanse the Temple area from the blood of sacrificed animals and for the Great Molten Sea (I Kings 8 indicates that on the first day of the dedication of the First Temple, Solomon sacrificed 120,000 sheep and 22,000 oxen). Initially, water for the Great Molten Sea was supplied by the Gibeonites, but was later supplied by a conduit that began in the Hebron mountains east of Jerusalem, passed through Solomon’s Pools at Elam (which are still there), and flowed to Jerusalem.

To achieve this water transport, a special 40-mile aqueduct had to be constructed and portions of the stone aqueduct were sealed to be able to create a siphon effect to be able to traverse water down into valleys and back up again to

the end location of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Storage of water at the Temple site was accomplished by cisterns located in subterranean chambers deep beneath the Temple Mount. It has been calculated that more than ten million gallons of water were stored in a system of thirty-nine cisterns with the greatest cistern known as the “*Great Sea*” holding more than two million gallons of water.⁵

Advanced Masonry

Although it is well known in archaeology that the Egyptians were capable of moving and cutting large blocks of granite for the Pyramids that could maintain a tolerance of .10-inch, Dr. Grant R. Jeffrey personally states in his excellent book “*The New Temple and the Second Coming*,” that some of the foundation stones for the First Temple “*weigh up to 1,000 tons and are fitted together so perfectly that it is impossible to place even a razor blade between them. Modern machinery, including cranes and helicopters, would be unable to transport these stones the one-mile distance from the quarry where they were excavated to their ultimate location sixty-five feet beneath the current surface of the Temple Mount.*” Evidently the Temple artisans had access to the same technology of the Egyptians which surpasses modern explanations.

Mathematics

The dimensions of the Great Molten Sea are worth mentioning from the perspective of the history of Pi. When assessing the dimensions, it becomes apparent when the circumference is divided by the diameter, the result is Pi that math students know is 3.14159265358979. History records that Archimedes discovered Pi around 250 B.C., yet Solomon built the Great Molten Sea in 1,000 B.C. (I Kings 7:23), long before the Greeks rediscovered Pi. This is a possibility why some scholars have referred to this Temple as “*the house of Pi.*”⁶

THE SECOND TEMPLE

As previously mentioned, Solomons Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, when he conquered Jerusalem, as found in 2 Kings 25:8-9, Jeremiah 52:12-13, and 2 Chronicles 36:19. The *Second* Temple (also known as Herod’s Temple) replaced Solomons Temple (which occupied the same location) and was initially built by the Jews after returning from their Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. The Temple was a modest version of the First Temple and was constructed under the authority of Persian-appointed governor Zerubbabel, an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:12-13, Luke 3:27). This initial Temple followed the outline of Solomon’s Temple but was later enlarged (and significantly enhanced) by King Herod in 18 B.C. and then totally destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans at the height of the First Jewish-Roman War. During the construction and renovation of Herod’s Temple, (started in 20 B.C. and lasting for 46 years), the area of the Temple Mount was raised, doubled and surrounded by a wall with gates.⁷ The Temple itself was raised, enlarged, and faced with white

stone in addition to significant interior enhancements. It is believed the renovation by King Herod resulted in the Temple being regarded as one of the great marvels of the ancient world (Figure 5). Of particular interest is the fulfillment of Matthew 24:2 where Jesus stated “*not one stone here shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.*” When the Romans burned Jerusalem and the Temple, the gold overlay and figurines on the walls/ceiling/floor melted and ran between the seams of the stones, resulting in the Romans tearing all of the stones apart to recover the gold and thereby fulfilling the prophecy in Matthew 24:2.



Figure 5. The renovated *Second Temple* by King Herod

THE THIRD TEMPLE

The *Third Temple* is often referred to as the “*Tribulation Temple*” and/or the “*Antichrist’s Temple*” as there will be a Jewish Temple that is constructed by the Jews on the Temple Mount *at least* by the midpoint of the Tribulation, and is supported by Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 11:1-2. The Tribulation will begin with a deceitful peace treaty between the Antichrist and the Jewish people. Marking the mid-point of the tribulation (3.5 years), the Antichrist will compromise the peace agreement, taking a seat in the Temple himself and calling himself God, which in effect defiles the Temple as described in 2 Thessalonians. Obviously, it is clear that if the Antichrist defiles the Temple at the midpoint of the Tribulation, the Temple must be rebuilt by the Jews on the Temple Mount for these events to happen. Although the Bible does not

specifically describe what happens to the Third Temple, it will be removed/replaced/eliminated as part of the widespread topographical changes that will prepare Jerusalem for the Millennial Temple (Zechariah 14:10 & Isaiah 2:2). Of particular interest to prophecy enthusiasts, the Bible does not clearly define if the *Third* Temple will be built before or during the beginning of the Great Tribulation. This item of interest is mentioned in six Scriptural passages as follows; Daniel 9:27 and 12:11, Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 11:1-2. We will consider in detail the rebuilding of the Third Temple by the Jews and its tentative location in a later section of this discussion. As a side note, a proposed model of the Third Temple (Figure 6) will ready for viewing in a Visitor Center located in Jerusalem that is scheduled to be open in 2025.



Figure 6. Model of Proposed *Third* Temple

THE FOURTH TEMPLE

At the second coming of Christ, significant topographical changes will occur in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4) to accommodate the immense “*Millennial Temple*” (also known as “*Ezekiel’s Temple*”) as Jerusalem and the surrounding area will be elevated in preparation for the key role of Israel during the Messiah’s Millennial rule. Zechariah 14:10 and Ezekiel 47:13-48:35 further describes the topographical changes in Israel that are planned to accompany Israel’s new restoration of the land and subsequent dominance over all the nations.



Figure 7. The *fourth* Temple, also known as the Millennial Temple

Once the aforementioned topographical changes are completed, a *fourth* Temple (Figure 7) will be constructed north of Jerusalem, by Christ (Zechariah 6:11-13), at the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom (Ezekiel 37:26-28). It will serve as the center of worship for the world during the Millennium (Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4) where Christ will reign as both King and Priest, and will be much greater than the previous three Temples. As an example, the Temple will be one mile square, and likely be the most magnificent building in human history (see Ezekiel 40-48 for details). Animal sacrifices will follow other biblical prophetic predictions where the Millennial Temple will include a priesthood and sacrifices (Isaiah 56:7, 60:7, Jeremiah 33:18, and Zechariah 14:16-21). Ending the “*last days*,”

the Millennial Temple will be attacked by Satan and his army and will be removed at the time of the creation of the new earth (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, 2 Peter 3:12-13, Revelation 21:1) for the implementation of the Last Temple.

THE LAST TEMPLE

From a Scriptural perspective, there will be a *Last* Temple that will occupy the New Jerusalem throughout the balance of eternity (Revelation 21:2&10). Remember that all saints (who will be in resurrected bodies, devoid of sin, and will also be with Christ in eternity) will have no need for a physical Temple structure. Revelation 21:3 states; *“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the **tabernacle** of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God himself will be with them and be their God.’”*

The term “*tabernacle*” in verse 3 means place of abode as this is God’s house, the place where He lives.⁸ Therefore, John declares in Revelation that “*he saw no Temple there*” (Revelation 21:22a). However, John was quick to add that “*for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its Temple*” (Revelation 21:22b). This Temple will be comprised of God Himself and as a result, the saints will endlessly fulfill their function as priests, serving God (Revelation 7:15) in the New Jerusalem that will also be the Holy of Holies.

THE TEMPLE MOUNT

The 35-acre Temple Mount in Jerusalem (Figure 8) is without a doubt, the most controversial portion of real estate in the world. Since the Six-Day War of 1967 when the Israeli Defense Forces recaptured Jerusalem, and specifically the Temple Mount, Israel had (for the first time in almost two thousand years) controlled the city of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount area. However, Israel let the Supreme Muslim Religious Council (a Jordanian controlled Muslim trust referred to as *Waqf*) to control all religious activities and police all events on the Temple Mount that has resulted in the Temple Mount being used as an Islamic holy site.⁹ Additionally, there are severe restrictions for access to non-Muslims, particularly Jews, who are not even allowed to pray openly on the Temple Mount. Logically, this is a mystery but makes sense biblically and prophetically because of Ezekiel 44:8 as follows; *“And you have not kept charge of My holy things, but you have set others to keep charge of My sanctuary for you.”*

This conundrum was a result of Israeli Defense Minister General Moshe Dayan establishing this policy (in the interest of peace) with Muslim leaders at the conclusion of the 1967 Six-Day War. Nevertheless, it remains in effect today but has also resulted in the inability of Israel to readily excavate under the Temple Mount for historical purposes. This dual Temple Mount responsibility of Israeli



Figure 8. Temple Mount

ownership and supervision/management of Islamic edifices by the Jordanian Muslim *Waqf* has led to a highly flammable political viewpoint of *“the rebuilding of a Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount is only possible if something catastrophic or supernatural removes the Dome of the Rock from the Temple Mount.”*¹⁰ This common perception has put the Israeli religious leaders that support the rebuilding of the Third Temple on the Temple Mount in the proverbial position of *“between a rock and a hard spot.”*

Moses Maimonides was one of the greatest Jewish rabbis and taught that the Temple revealed the divine nature of God and His eternal covenant relationship to Israel. He declared that the 613 separate mitzvot (commandments) found throughout the five books of Moses and the Torah include God’s direct command for Israel to build the Temple¹¹ (Exodus 25:8-9). Maimonides noted that this divine covenant was never rescinded. Therefore, he taught that the rabbis living in exile in every generation should study and teach the sacred texts that deal with the Temple and its worship, and should look ahead to the day when the Jews would once again possess Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Only then could they fulfill God’s command to *“make me a sanctuary.”* As we have previously discussed, the Six-Day War in June 1967 reestablished Jewish sovereignty over the united city of Jerusalem (and the Temple Mount) for the first time in almost two thousand years. Although the conquest of the Old City of Jerusalem made it possible for the Jews

to rebuild the Temple, the predominant question is; *“will they and/or can they”* particularly when a Temple must be present by the mid-point of the tribulation to be defiled by the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15-22, 2 Thessalonians 2:3).

To answer that question, let's first familiarize ourselves with the Temple Mount by considering Solomon's Pre-Temple Mount Excavations and the resultant Mosques, Shrines and Gates, then we will consider if the Third Temple can be rebuilt on the Temple Mount and are Israeli Jewish religious leaders taking current steps to construct the Third Temple on the Temple Mount.

SOLOMON'S PRE-TEMPLE MOUNT EXCAVATIONS

Of noteworthy interest and according to the Jewish Parah, Chapter 3, Mishneh 3,¹² *“The entire earth below (the Temple Mount) was hollowed out, to prevent the possibility of impurity from a grave under the Temple courtyard.”* Additionally, the earth under the Temple Mount area was then artificially leveled and then enlarged by the construction of gigantic substructures according to the command of King Solomon.¹³ As a result, few researchers and archeologists guessed that the entire city of Jerusalem sits above a honey-comb of underground passageways and subterranean structures. The writings of the Jewish sages, including the Talmud and Moses Maimonides Mishneh Torah, refer to the construction and use of this underground complex at various times during Jerusalem's history. Also, excavations under the Temple Mount area have resulted in some significant archaeological discoveries such as:

- An elaborate complex network of tunnels and secret passages
- Numerous cisterns (one of which can hold over ten million gallons of water)
- Storage areas used to store grain and other items of interest
- Treasure rooms
- Guard rooms (financial items, Temple treasures, etc.)

In effect, there is a city that lies beneath the old city of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. This underground complex remained unknown until excavations began almost immediately after the Six-Day War of 1967 by Israel (and before control of Waqf) and it quickly became apparent that the magnitude of the underground complex defied description. It is currently estimated that in spite of the archaeological discoveries, only a small percentage (about 10%) of the complex has been investigated and/or is known. This is primarily a result of Israeli-Muslim tensions, the control by Waqf, restrictions due to Muslim resistance, and is not an item of common discussion even during the numerous tours to Israel by visitors. The multi-faceted purpose of this huge subterranean complex was as follows:

- Protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem during times of attack (Israel has been invaded over 27 times which is the most for any city in the world)
- Supply necessary essentials for survival
- Allow priests and other Temple personnel to easily access the Temple from below
- Provide for water and eliminate waste materials for Temple sacrifices. As an example, for the necessity of these considerations, over 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were sacrificed when Solomon dedicated the first Temple (Festival of Dedication), and over 250,000 sheep were sacrificed in one afternoon prior to the Romans attacking Jerusalem
- Provide escape tunnels for the Kings of Israel to the Kidron Valley (and beyond). As an example, one tunnel that has been excavated is known as King Herod's escape tunnel and is over ten miles long. Another escape tunnel was used by King Zedekiah to escape the Babylonian invasion and is mentioned in Jeremiah 39:4 and Jeremiah 52:7-11
- Likely hide and/or store Temple treasures. It is estimated the Temple collected about *one billion dollars each year*. It is known that David gave Solomon 3,000 talents of gold and 7,000 talents of silver for the Temple in addition to 5,002.5 talents of gold and 10,000 talents of silver from the leaders of Israel. As previously mentioned, and at today's standards, that is over 19 billion dollars in gold and silver (see page 6)

MOSQUES, SHRINES AND GATES

For this discussion, we will discuss four primary structures and one specific gate that occupy the Temple Mount. All are revered Muslim holy sites (*refer to Figures 8 and 9. Figure 9 is not to scale*).

Dome of the Rock¹⁴

A Muslim shrine that was built by the Islamic Calif-Abdal-Malik between 689 and 691 AD. It is *believed* to have been built (1) on the site of the Second Jewish Temple, (2) over a sacred stone which is the place from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended into heaven during his night journey to heaven, (3) believed by Jews to be over the place where Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac, (4) where God created the world and the first human, Adam, and (5) by some Jews to be directly over the site of the Holy of Holies of both Solomon's and Herod's Temple. In 1993, the dome was refurbished in gold plated tiles that gives the dome its characteristic "*golden appearance*" and is easily visible in Jerusalem and some surrounding areas.

Al-Aqsa Mosque¹⁵

Also known as the Noble Sanctuary, the Al-Aqsa Mosque was constructed after the completion of the Dome of the Rock and completed in 705 AD. Muslims

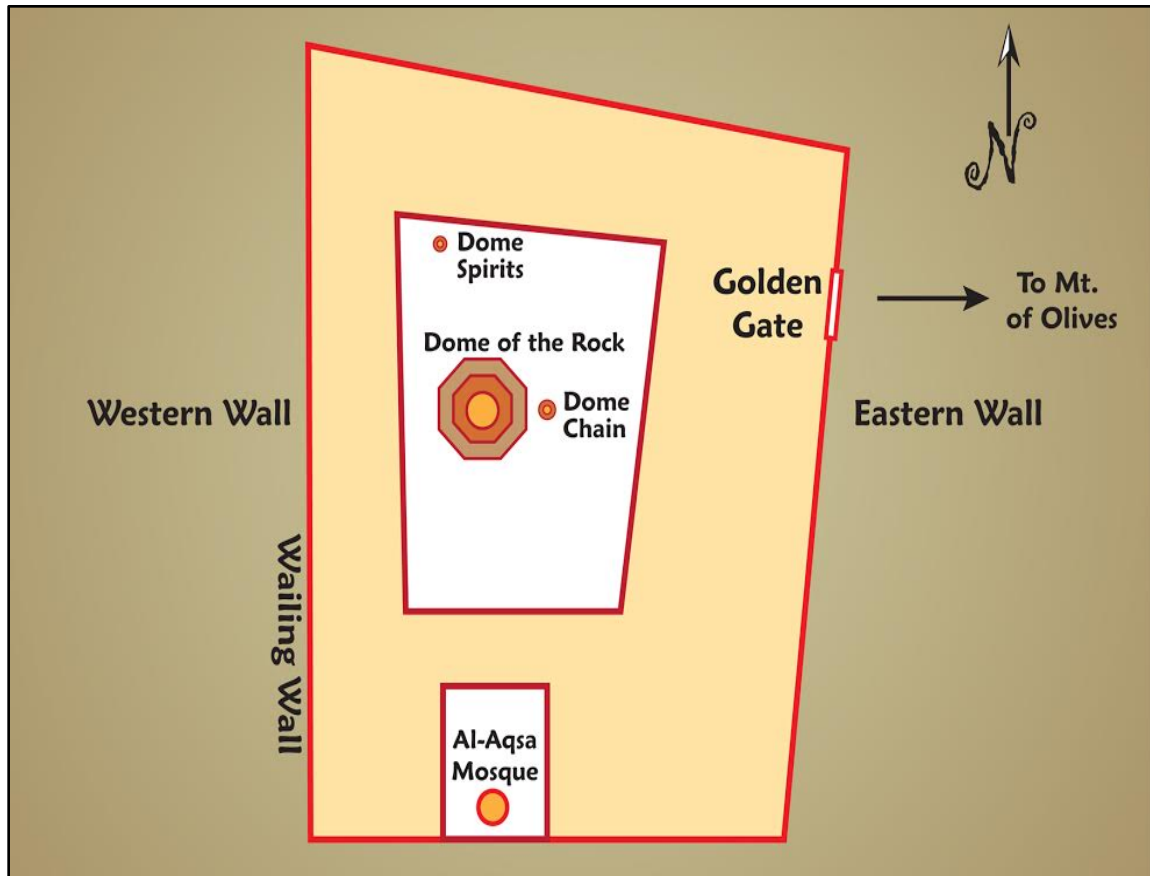


Figure 9. Temple Mount Map

believe that Muhammad was transported from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to Al-Aqsa during his “*night journey*” (which is defined as Muhammad traveling from Mecca to the furthest Mosque and then up to heaven). The Mosque is reported to accommodate more than 5,000 worshippers and is the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina.

Dome of the Spirits/Tablets¹⁶

The Arabic shrine acknowledged as the Dome of the Spirits/Tablets is a small dome resting on a hexagonal base (Figure 10). Its other name, Dome of the Tablets, allegedly comes from the Tablets of Stone kept in the Ark of the Covenant. However, recent analyses indicate that the Dome of the Spirits marks the ancient threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite (1 Chronicles 21:14-22:1).¹⁷ The importance of this point will be discussed in a later section of this discussion.

Dome of the Chain¹⁸

With a slight resemblance to the Dome of the Rock, there is a smaller free standing domed structure, supported by pillars, located adjacently east of the Dome of the Rock, and built in 691 AD. Often previously used as a prayer house and treasury by the Muslims, its name originates from the tradition according to King Solomon who would test the truthfulness of witnesses by having them hold a chain.

Through the chain, lightning would strike those who bore false witness while those who were truthful were left unharmed. In later times, Muslim tradition believes that on Judgment Day the chain will be hung from the center of the dome and will once again be used to judge the righteous from sinners.

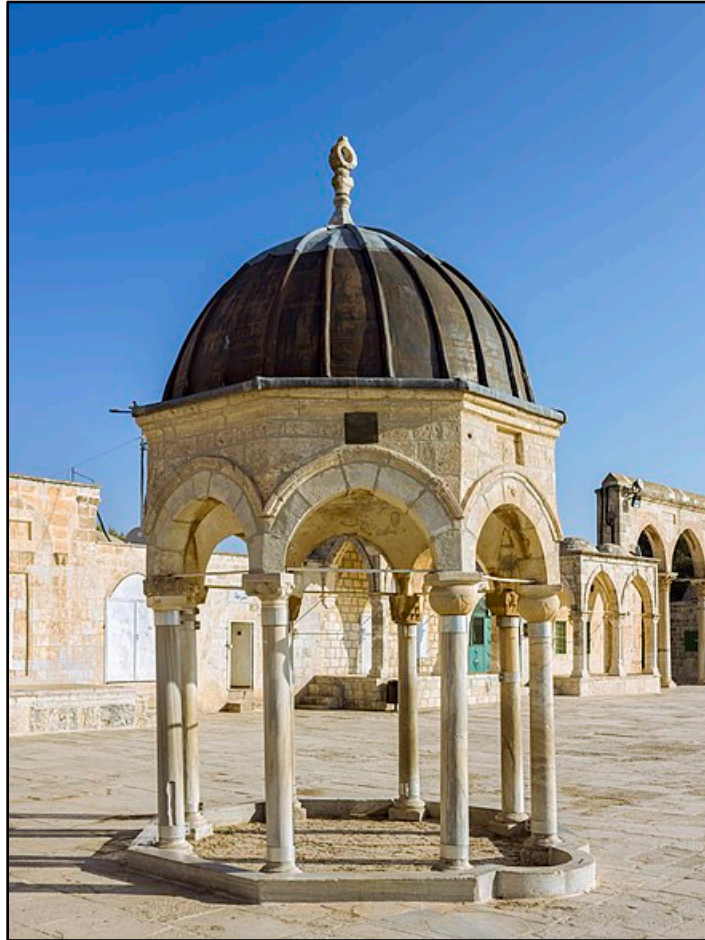


Figure 10. Dome of the Spirits/Tablets

The Eastern/Golden/Sushan Gate^{19,20}

The Eastern Gate is also known as the East Gate, Golden Gate, Sushan Gate, Gate of Mercy, Gate of Eternal Life, and is specifically mentioned in Acts 3:2 and 3:10 (NKJV) as the Beautiful Gate. Because there are multiple names for the Eastern Gate and it is the only eastern gate of the Temple Mount, let's use the name of Eastern Gate for simplicity for the balance of this discussion.

Although highly debatable, some believe that the original Eastern Gate was destroyed during the Roman conquest and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but was rebuilt around the sixth century by the Byzantines. Nevertheless, in 638 AD, Muslim armies conquered Jerusalem with the Crusaders capturing and plundering Jerusalem in 1099 AD. In 1517 AD, the Muslim Ottomans under the

leadership of Sultan Suleiman I, The Magnificent, conquered Jerusalem and began rebuilding the walls that had been destroyed. The Eastern Gate was then *sealed* in 1541 by Sultan Suleiman I and has remained sealed even to this day (Figure 11).



Figure 11. The Eastern Gate

As there is some disagreement among historians regarding the sealing of the Eastern Gate, it is traditionally believed that Sultan Suleiman I, wanted to ensure the Messiah did not re-enter through the Eastern Gate during his reign, hence the Gate was sealed up.²¹ Additionally, and for good measure, a Muslim cemetery was located directly in front of the Gate (reported in AD 1458)²² as conservative Jewish wisdom dictates a Jewish Holy man would not defile himself by walking through a Muslim cemetery. Currently, the Eastern Gate is considered by the Arabic/Muslim people to be their exclusive property, which is in direct conflict with biblical Scripture.

BUILDING THE THIRD TEMPLE

The Bible is clear that a Jewish Temple must be present on the Temple Mount before the key prophesied events of the *last days* can be fulfilled as found in Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15-16, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 11:1-2. Although building the Third Temple is central to the Messianic hopes of the Jewish people,

most students of Bible prophecy are well aware that this is currently perceived as an unapproachable task due to numerous factors such as the political and religious divide between Jews and Muslims and the current location of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. Additionally, even if all of these considerations were alleviated, the Third Temple cannot be rebuilt and worship re-instated unless the long inactive Jewish Sanhedrin is reconvened. The Sanhedrin was the highest Jewish Court, responsible to authorize the correct location of the Temple, establish the Levitical priesthood, institute the ancient rituals and administer the numerous details that are related to the Temple. As previously mentioned, it is fascinating to note that God never withdrew his command for Israel to build a Temple (Exodus 25:8). Therefore, God's command is still in effect in modern times.

Currently, if people who are familiar with the Bible were questioned about the building of the Third Temple on the Temple Mount, the common perception would likely be *"a new Temple cannot be currently built as The Dome of the Rock occupies the location for the new Temple. Therefore, before a new Temple is built, something must happen to the Dome of the Rock."* However, a basic Jewish law ensures that the Dome of the Rock is not going anywhere as follows:

- Israeli law demands that any significant religious site in Israel (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, etc.) cannot be altered/damaged in a significant way regardless of events, and is a criminal offense. This law was initiated by the Turks during their administration of the Temple Mount, was reinforced by the British Mandate (1921-1948), has been established in Israel's basic laws since 1948, and is known as the Protection of Holy Places Law 5727-1967.²³ Therefore, if the Dome of the Rock were ever damaged, Israeli law would dictate that it is returned to its original condition. Consequently, the common perception that the current location of the Dome of the Rock can be a major detriment to the rebuilding of the Temple on the same location as the Dome of the Rock is *true* as the Protection of Holy Places Law is still in effect and no one believes the Islamists will voluntarily surrender this land and/or The Dome of the Rock as any current attempt to seize Temple Mount land to build a Jewish Temple would result in bloody violence

Although nobody really knows where the First and Second Temples were specifically located on the Temple Mount,²⁴ it is generally accepted that no significant material remains have survived from these two Temples, making discovery of the Temples previous location challenging. Currently, there are four main viewpoints describing where the location of the First and Second Temples could have been located as follows:²⁵

- Area south of the Temple Mount
- Areas south of the Dome of the Rock

- Near the middle of the Temple Mount platform and in the same place where the Dome of the Rock is located today. This view currently enjoys the majority of popular opinion
- North of the Dome of the Rock, directly over the Dome of the Spirits, and in line with the Eastern Gate. This is the view (with the most merit) that we will consider in detail

As previously noted, popular opinion presumes that the Dome of the Rock is sited on the exact location of the previous First and Second Jewish Temples (Solomon and Herod), and building the Third Temple in the same location would currently be virtually impossible. But, with the aid of Scripture as a foundation, historic testimony and *two decisive landmarks*, the evidence points to the fact that the Third Temple can be built on the Temple Mount in an acceptable location without adversely affecting the current Dome of the Rock.

To identify the two decisive landmarks, let's begin by looking at First Chronicles as it specifically identifies the Araunah Threshing Floor as a *decisive landmark* for the location of Solomon's Temple that we will use as an initial reference point. Note: The following section on the Araunah Threshing Floor and The Eastern Gate has been adapted from the following published materials:

- *"The Temple Mount: Where is the Holy of Holies;"* by scholar Dr. Asher Kaufman, scientist and physics professor at the Hebrew University²⁶
- *"The Temple Revealed;"* by Christian Widener, Ph.D., biblical scholar, researcher and engineer²⁷

ARAUNAH THRESHING FLOOR

First Chronicles 21:14-22:1 describes the account of King David buying a threshing floor (used to separate wheat kernels from the chaff) from the Canaanite Jebusite, Araunah. The land that King David had just purchased is pledged for the First Jerusalem Temple to be built by King Solomon as follows:

*Then David said, "The house of the Lord God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel."
I Chronicles 22:1*

The next two verses give the Scriptural accounts of King David transferring the responsibility of building the First Temple to King Solomon and then King Solomon starting construction of the First Temple on Mt. Moriah (Temple Mount):

*If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it"
I Chronicles 28:9-10*

*"Then King Solomon began to build the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, Where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was **on** the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David. He began building on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign"*

2 Chronicles 3:1-2

From the previous three verses, we know that (1) King David purchased land with a threshing floor as a specific location to *"build the house of the Lord,"* (2) King David charged King Solomon to *"build a house for the sanctuary,"* and lastly, (3) King Solomon *"built the Temple of the Lord on the "threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by King David."* Notice that 2 Chronicles 3:1 specifically states that the Temple was built *"on"* the threshing floor, not *"by," "near," "next to,"* or *"in the vicinity of,"* but literally on the threshing floor. This verse provides the Scriptural authority and reliability for locating the starting point/location of Solomon's Temple. So, if King Solomon used the threshing floor of Araunah about 3,000 years ago as the starting point to build the Temple, then we can also confidently look for the threshing floor of Araunah to reestablish the correct location of the First Temple and thereby develop the precise site to build the Third Temple on the Temple Mount.

As there is a lack of *"absolute proof of identity"* for Araunah's 3,000 year-old threshing floor without identification labels, how do we establish and/or develop credible evidence for the true location of King Solomon's Temple? This question can be supported by the following factors:

- A threshing floor was commonly comprised of a hard, flat-area, about five to fifty-feet round or square and preferably on bedrock instead of an improvised area of paving stones and/or hardened clay. This viewpoint is consistent with Jewish rabbinic records and historical testimony
- We know from 2 Samuel 24:22-23 that Araunah's threshing floor was large enough for a threshing sledge to be used as Araunah offered to give King David his threshing sledge implements for making a burnt offering fire. If sledges were used, we should be looking for an area that is ten-feet or larger
- Over time and use, threshing floors of hewn stone (bedrock) became both polished and pitted from the teeth on the bottom of a sledge and repeated dragging with weights on the sledge. This resulted in a flat but pockmarked threshing floor surface
- Threshing floors were generally on an elevated location such as a hillside and/or a mountain where wind could assist in removing the chaff. The preferable location was not at the very top portion so as not to get too much wind

- Araunah's threshing floor was in existence before the construction of King Solomons Temple. Therefore, the threshing floor had to be located at the original ground level, squarely on the original formation/makeup of the Temple Mount (bedrock). This factor should draw attention to the northern and central portions of the Temple Mount
- The only evident candidates for a threshing floor on the Temple Mount are the al-Sakhra Stone (Noble Rock) under the Dome of the Rock, and the flat, large, pockmarked stone underneath the Dome of the Spirits (Figure 10) that is west and north of the Dome of the Rock. Of primary importance, the al-Sakhra Stone is not the proper configuration for a threshing floor as it is highly sloped with numerous irregular angles in its surface instead of a large flattened area suitable for threshing grain. Conversely, within the previous five criteria on threshing floors, the bedrock stone under the Dome of the Spirits meets the conditions of what a threshing floor should be and also look like:
 - The stone underneath the Dome of the Spirits is the correct configuration (flattened and pockmarked surface)
 - Large enough for a modern threshing floor (about ten-feet in diameter)
 - Below the top portion of the Temple Mount (about 90-feet below)
 - A quick side issue is; why was the Dome of the Spirits built over a large flattened rock area to begin with? The straightforward answer is, there is no historic record of its construction

THE EASTERN GATE

With a viable candidate for a threshing floor on the Temple Mount as specified in I Chronicles 21:14 - 22:1, let's turn our attention to the Eastern Gate (Figure 11) that will provide additional importance for the Araunah threshing floor and compelling evidence that the Eastern gate is the true Eastern Gate of the First and Second Temples in addition to the gate being *directly aligned* with the First Temple on the Temple Mount.

Although the Eastern Gate is a key element of the prospect of building the Third Temple on the Temple Mount, it is not without a large measure of controversy. We know from history that when Vespasian was declared Emperor of Rome on July 1, 69 AD, Titus was left in charge of ending the Jewish rebellion. In 70 AD, he besieged and captured Jerusalem, then destroyed the city and the Second Temple. However, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple has led to a common belief that the Eastern Gate (that is viewed today) was totally destroyed at some time in the past, and as a result, was rebuilt in a different location (post 70 AD) from the original location of the gate.²⁸ However, it is crucial to establish the fact that the current Eastern Gate is an original Temple landmark in the precise location to affirm the gate's Solomonic origins as this perspective

will also mark the original location of the Eastern Gate of the First and Second Temple. The following historic testimonies²⁹ clearly demonstrate the Solomonic origins of the Eastern Gate:

- Josephus, Jewish scholar/historian, 37-100 AD, wrote that the Eastern Gate was not totally destroyed during the destruction of Jerusalem and was in fact deliberately kept for its testimony to posterity and as a meeting place³⁰
- Prudentius, Christian Latin Poet, 348-405 AD, said that *“this gate was a great work of Solomon and was near the Pinnacle of the Temple”*³¹
- Piacenza pilgrim (570 AD) affirmed that it was a gate of the Temple saying *“this gate of the city is next to the Gate Beautiful which was part of the Temple, and its threshold and entablature are still in position there”*³²

These eyewitness accounts indicate that the Eastern Gate of today can be considered as the original gate of the First Temple period. With this thought in mind, we now need to consider if the Eastern Gate was *directly aligned* with the First Temple on the Temple Mount which is a fundamental consideration to also establish it as a landmark for the Second and Third Temple location.

Let's begin by looking at rabbinic testimony about the alignment of the Eastern Gate being located along an east-west axis with all the eastern gates of the First Temple and the entrance to the Temple Holy of Holies. The following historical accounts from the Jewish Berakhot, Mishnah, Sukkah and Talmud confirm that the Eastern Gate was aligned with the Temple:

- Berakhot 9:5 *“One should not show disrespect to the Eastern Gate, because it is in a direct line with the Holy of Holies”*³³
- *“One may not deport himself light-headedly opposite the eastern gate (of the Temple) [outside of the Temple Mount, in the lower wall at the foot of the Temple to the east], for it is aligned with the Holy of Holies”*³⁴
- *“When they reached the gate through which one exists to the east, they turned from facing east to facing west toward the Holy of Holies”*³⁵

In summary, and based on a review of rabbinic sources (such as the three preceding rabbinic sources), most Jewish scholars agree that the Eastern Gate was aligned with the First Temple.³⁶ Nevertheless, while the Eastern Gate of today was repaired and sealed off by the Ottomans, it is the Eastern Gate of the Solomonic First Temple as popularly reported for almost two millennia,³⁷ and the Eastern Gate of the Second Temple period. So, based on our previous discussion to this point, the Eastern Gate is aligned with the threshing floor-rock under the Dome of the Spirits, and a straight line passing underneath the center of the Dome of the Spirits (white arrow and blue line, Figure 12) will also pass through the center of the Eastern Gate.^{38,39} So, using the long cubit measurement of 20.67-inches (that is



Figure 12. Alignment of Eastern Gate with Dome of the Spirits

thought to have been used for the Temple measurements), there is room for a 500-cubit square (Third Temple) centered in-line with the Eastern Gate with about 50-feet to spare on the northern boundary of the Temple Mount platform.⁴⁰

WHY THE TEMPLE WAS NOT AT THE DOME OF THE ROCK

As the perspective of the Dome of the Rock is sited on the previous/same location of the First and Second Temples, let's look at six reasons why the Dome of the Rock is not sited on the previous location for the First and Second Temples, or, for the Third Temple:⁴¹

- The al-Sakhra rock (Dome of the Rock) does not match the characteristics of a threshing floor
- No evidence of a threshing floor near the Dome of the Rock
- Features of the al-Sakhra rock are inconsistent with scriptural and rabbinic sources
- Early Islamic sources identify the al-Sakhra as the place Muhammad ascended into heaven, not as the former location of the Jewish Temple
- The Eastern Gate is not opposite the Dome of the Rock
- There are no other verifiable and exclusive landmarks that support a Dome of the Rock location

In summary, the Eastern Gate is a true landmark of the Temple and therefore must have been in front of it. Consequently, the most logical place to look for the Temple is directly in front of the Eastern Gate, on the Temple Mount, which is in the northern third of the enclosure. Therefore, the Third Temple could be built on the Temple Mount north of the current location of the Dome of the Rock and

directly west of the Eastern Gate. However, it is the responsibility of the Sanhedrin to determine the final location.

CURRENT TEMPLE PREPARATIONS

In order for the building of the new Third Temple to commence, specific conditions must be met and/or in place. Let's look at Temple preparations that have actively been underway by Orthodox Jews and the Temple Institute in Israel.

The Sanhedrin⁴²

As previously mentioned, before the Temple can be rebuilt, the ancient Sanhedrin must be reconvened as one of their responsibilities was directing and supervising all matters pertaining to the restoration of the Temple. In the past, the last time the Sanhedrin convened was in AD 453. On October 13, 2004, over 70 of the most respected rabbis in Israel (appointed from the 12 tribes) were ordained to the new Sanhedrin and officially met in Jerusalem on January 20, 2005. They specifically considered the resumption of Temple worship and rebuilding the Temple. Three sites for a new Temple are currently being considered:

- Centered on the Dome of the Rock
- North of the Dome of the Rock
- South of the Dome of the Rock and near the Al-Asqa Mosque

Temple Institute⁴³

The Temple Institute is a dedicated group of orthodox rabbis that has been aggressively pursuing the completion of the many facets involved in the preparation of building the Third Temple. As an example, tentative blueprints have been completed and are ready to be used for the construction process and can be viewed on-line at TempleInstitute.org. A portion of the blueprints is illustrated in Figure 13. Beside the preparations for building the Third Temple, the Temple Institute is also aggressively researching and creating the sacred garments, vessels, and other items used for sacrifice and worship in the Temple, and is currently being undertaken as follows:

- Breastplate for the high priest (Exodus 28:29-30, Exodus 39:8-14)
- Linen robes (I Chronicles 28)
- Mizrak (capture blood from sacrificed animals and poured on corner of altar)
- Altar of Burnt Offering (2 Chronicles 4:1)
- Laver of Cleansing (Exodus 30:18-19)
- Golden Candlestick/Menorah Exodus (25:31-32)
- Table of Showbread (Exodus 25:23-24)
- Altar of Incense (Exodus 30:1-2)
- Two Silver Trumpets (Numbers 10:2)

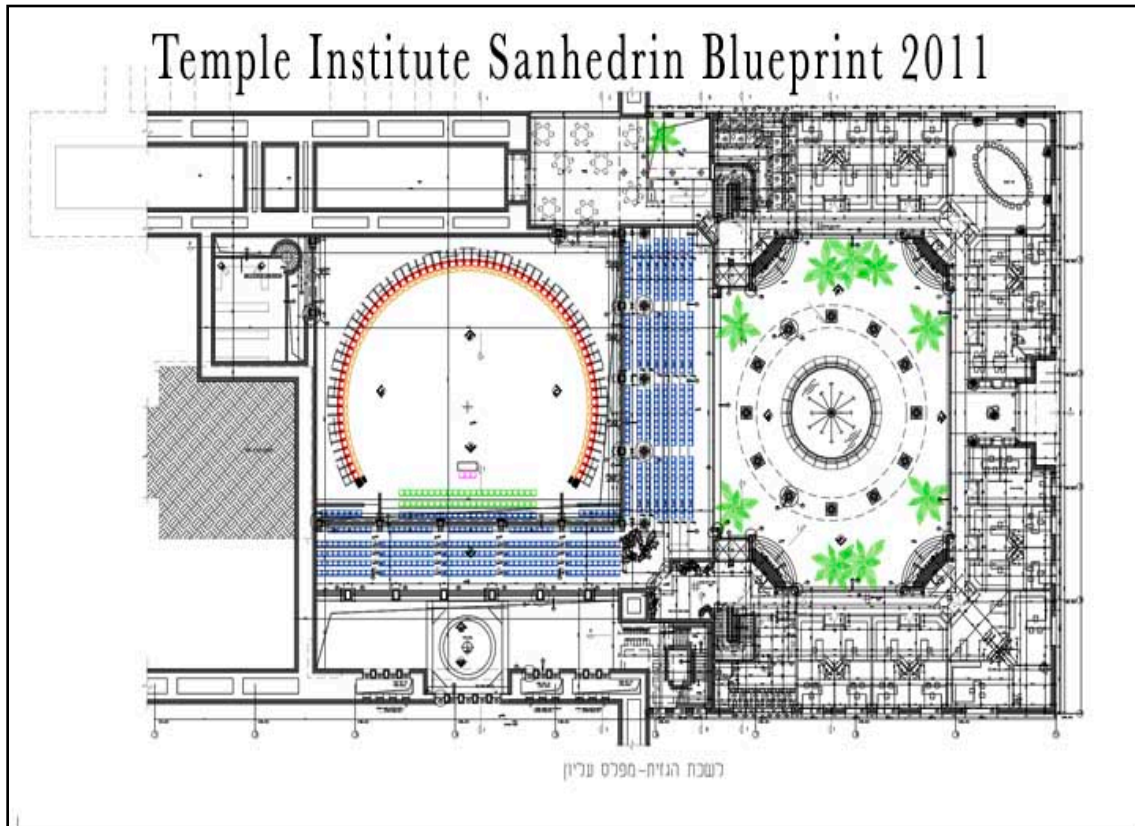


Figure 13. A portion of the blueprints for the Third Temple

Blue Dye for High Priests Garments⁴⁴

Among the many items that God specifically chose for the Israelites was the color blue (*tekhelet*) and is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible 49 times. This specific color was used in the tapestries in the Tabernacle, for the drapes in Solomon's Temple (Figure 14), and robes worn by the high priests of Israel (Exodus 28:31). Even common Israelites were commanded to tie one string of tekhelet to the tassels on the corners of their garments to remind them of their unique relationship with God. This commandment is found in Numbers 15:38-39; *"Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners."* This specific blue dye is only obtained from the digestive gland of a particular marine snail, the rare and small Chilazon snail that is only found in the Red Sea and long believed to be extinct. However, in the late 1990's, Israeli divers re-discovered the Chilazon snail in the Red Sea. As a result, it is now possible to use the exact same dye to color the robes of the high priests.

Oil of Anointing^{45,46}

The Oil of Anointing was used to anoint the Tabernacle, the high priest, the sacred objects of worship (Exodus 30:25-30), and will also be used to anoint the Messiah upon his triumphant return to this earth. This specific sacred oil – known as *shemen*



Figure 14. Tekhelet

afarsimon – originated during the Exodus but disappeared when the Romans destroyed Herod's Temple in 70 AD. However, a recent discovery has allowed the exact same ancient oil to be used in modern times.

Most people are familiar with the discovery of the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 but are not as familiar with a Copper Scroll that was discovered in Cave 3 near Qumran in 1953. The metallic manuscript, officially named 3Q15, was carefully restored and then opened to reveal a detailed list of 64 secret locations where Jewish Essene priests had hidden gold and silver treasures from the Temple. One of the key treasures mentioned was the Oil of Anointing. When Cave 11 in Qumran was searched, archaeological teams found a clay jar wrapped in palm leaves and buried three feet deep that contained an oil-type material that had turned into a gelatin-type substance. When the substance was analyzed, it was determined to contain the *exact* same five ingredients in the proper biblical ratios as delineated in Exodus 30:23-24 as God had commanded Moses. The five ingredients were composed of:

- Myrrh
- Sweet cinnamon
- Sweet calamus
- Cassia
- Olive oil

Further testing by the Pharmaceutical Department of the Hebrew University has determined this is the ancient Oil of Anointing and Carbon-14 radioactive dating confirmed its age as about 2,000 years old. This discovery now makes it possible to anoint the new Temple, sacred vessels, priests, and the Messiah!



Figure 15. The Copper Scroll, Jordan Museum in Amman

Interestingly, the Copper Scroll has been on display since 2013 at the Jordan Museum in Amman (Figure 15). It is noteworthy to remember that Jesus of Nazareth was never anointed during his 33 years on earth but it is now possible to do so on his triumphant return to Jerusalem.

Cohanim⁴⁷

The tribe of Levi is historically the priestly family of the Jewish people, responsible for blessings of the Jewish people, Temple service, and their responsibilities are described in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. The Jewish priesthood began when Moses anointed his older brother Aaron the first high priest (Deuteronomy 18:5). Since that time, the priestly status has been passed from father to son without interruption for over 3,000 years, or more than 100 generations (patrilineal). The direct descendants of Aaron the brother of Moses is referred to as Cohanim (plural for Cohen).

Modern genetic DNA studies have indicated that the Y chromosome in Cohanim has an unusual set of genetic markers that allows detection of a paternal and time connection for proper identification of priestly Jews that have descended from Aaron. Interestingly, the identification of Y chromosome markers has come to be known as the Cohen Modal Haplotype (CMH) that is the standard genetic

signature of the Jewish priestly family. Therefore, the CHM discovery has enabled the correct identification of direct descendants of Aaron to fulfill the requirements for the new Temple that will require a cadre of trained Levites for priests. Training of Levite priests for the new Temple is currently underway with over 700 candidates. Interestingly, I Chronicles 23:2-6 states that 24,000 Levite males were used just to oversee the First Temple.

Water of Purification/Red Heifer^{48,49,50}

The Water of Purification was used for cleansing (Numbers 19:1-10) which is another term for purification from sin. As applied to the Temples, it was also used at the consecration of the Levite Priesthood, ritual cleansing of the sacred vessels, and the Temple (previous and future). So, when the Third Temple is built, it cannot be used for worship until it is purified with the Water of Purification. However, the Water of Purification has to be specifically made from the following five ingredients:

- Natural spring water
- Scarlet thread
- Cedar
- Hyssop (known for its antiseptic properties)
- Ashes from a red heifer (a specific red cow)



Figure 16. Red Heifer

To qualify for the Water of Purification, a red heifer (Figure 16) that must meet the following biblical requirements must be available (Numbers 19:2):

- Pure red in color (even the hooves must be red)
- Not one black or white hair
- Without any blemish (wounds, blemishes, etc.)
- No yoke has ever been on its neck
- Female between the ages of 3 and 4 years old (this is the only female animal to be sacrificed). As a side note, Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver which was the price of a female slave
- Sacrificed *“outside the camp”*

A suitable red heifer is an extremely rare animal. As an example, and according to Jewish tradition, during the two thousand years from the time of this commandment and until the destruction of the Second Temple in the first century AD, there have been only nine red heifers that have qualified for the aforementioned biblical criteria. Currently, Jewish authorities are raising a herd of red cows in Israel for a qualified candidate. However, on March 17, 2023, five red heifers arrived in Israel and are now in a secure, undisclosed location in Israel. This project was a joint venture between the Temple Institute in Israel and some Evangelical Christian farmers in Texas/Nebraska who support the Jewish efforts. If one of these red heifers continues to be a suitable candidate, the necessary elements for the Third Temple will be in place.

Although there is an intensive search for the original red heifer ashes, it is not necessary to make the Water of Purification from the original red heifer ashes. As a side note:

- The sacrifice of a red heifer and the Water of Purification symbolize the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins (Hebrews 9)
- Without blemish signifies Christ was without blemish
- *Outside the camp* is the same way Christ was crucified outside Jerusalem. Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood (Hebrews 13:11-12)
- The shedding of blood by the red heifer was (and is) a foreshadowing of the blood Christ shed on the cross for sins

The Ark of the Covenant⁵¹

“Then Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits was its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. He overlaid it with pure gold inside and out, and made a molding of gold all around it. And he cast for it four rings of gold to be set in its four corners; two rings on one side, and two rings on the other side of it. He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with pure gold. And he put the poles into the rings at the sides of the ark, to bear the ark. He also made the mercy seat of pure gold;

two and a half cubits was its length and a cubit and a half its width. He made two cherubim of beaten gold; he made them of one piece at the two ends of the mercy seat. The cherubim spread out their wings above, and covered the mercy seat with their wings.

They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat"

Exodus 37:1-9

Of all the conditions that must be met to build the Third Temple and initiate the sacrificial system, the Ark of the Covenant (45" X 27" X 27") not only plays a key role in the Temple but also is perhaps the most familiar object associated with the Tabernacle and Temple (remember the movie Indiana Jones and Raiders of the Lost Ark?), and its current existence and/or location is definitely the most controversial. The original Ark began its existence in the Tabernacle and contained the following three items (Figure 17) as found in (Hebrews 9:4):

- The Ten Commandments (God's concern for his people and His law to guide Israel)
- The budded Rod of Aaron (displayed God's sovereign choice of Israel and supernatural deliverance from Egypt)
- Golden pot with manna (daily provisions from heaven for His people)



Figure 17. Ark of the Covenant and contents

Of notable interest, during the time of King Solomon, the Ark only contained the Ten Commandments (1 Kings 8:9) and also disappeared during this time in history. From the time of Solomon's reign until the present time in history, the Bible does not mention the location of the Ark. Scholars agree that it was not present in the Temple after the Jewish captives returned from Babylon in 536 B.C. The last time the Ark is mentioned in the Bible is in 2 Chronicles 8:11; *"Now Solomon brought the daughter of Pharaoh up from the City of David to the house he had built for her, for he said, my wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy."*

Although the current status of the Ark is unknown, many scholars agree the Ark will play a pivotal role in the Third Temple in the last days. As there is much speculation regarding the existence and/or the current location of the Ark, the four most popular viewpoints are as follows:

- The Ark does not exist (previously destroyed)
- The Ark was presently hidden in a secret location under the Temple Mount area from invading Babylonian armies
- The Ark is presently hidden in Ethiopia (allegedly under the church of St. Mary of Zion in Aksum)
- The Ark has been secretly moved from its location in Ethiopia to a secret location under the Temple mount area (at the end of the Ethiopian civil war)

Although the potential that the Ark does not exist and/or is presently hidden under the Temple Mount area is easily understood, its alleged presence in Ethiopia is not as well recognized. To clarify this issue from the perspective of ancient tradition and for *informational purposes only*, let's look at a brief history of why it is believed by some (and even some facets of the media) that the Ark could still be in Ethiopia:

- From biblical history, the queen of Sheba visited King Solomon during his reign as king of Israel *"And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which she had brought unto the king. So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants"* 2 Chronicles 9:12
- We also know that King Solomon desired female companionship, married foreign women (2 Chronicles 8:11) and had children by some of them
- According to Ethiopian history (Ethiopian Royal Chronicles), King Solomon married the queen of Sheba and they produced a royal heir, Prince Menelik I
- It is alleged that King Solomon educated the Prince in Jerusalem until he was nineteen with the prince becoming a strong believer in Jehovah
- It is also alleged the prince then returned to Ethiopia (becoming the first Solomonic Emperor of Ethiopia) with a large contingent of Jews and taking the

Ark of the Covenant with him where it is alleged to currently be hidden below a church in Aksum

- The preceding ancient tradition has appeared in many sources, some of which are:
 - National Geographic, 1935
 - Encyclopedia Britannica Online
 - Ethiopian murals in Ethiopia
 - Jewish magazine *B'nai B'rith*
 - Canada's largest magazine, the *Toronto Star*

CONCLUSION

Although the future of the Temple Mount and the location of Temple artifacts are intriguing, the real question is "*what is your future in life?*" If the Bible is true (and the evidence from science and Scripture indicate that it is), then each person should be concerned with their future destiny and specifically, where you will spend eternity. The Bible clearly says "*All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God*" (Romans 3:23), and those without a personal acceptance of God will spend eternity in a lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). However, God has provided an alternate choice, and that choice is a free gift that only needs to be accepted by you "*For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16), and "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13). This is God's message to you. So, have you accepted his free gift of eternal life?

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