

## INTRODUCTION

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There is probably no site in the world more frustrating to the modern archaeologist than the Temple Mount of the Hellenistic and Early Roman (Second Temple) period in Jerusalem. Though the rich history of millennia sits meters, at times only centimeters, from the surface, containing data that could in some cases rewrite history, religious and political activists prevent the archaeological community from excavating within the compound. This situation will remain unchanged in the foreseeable future and archaeologists will be forced to contain their frustration. Even so, archaeologists are a stiff-necked lot, and a substantial amount of research has been and is nevertheless being conducted on the subject. In addition to itself being an example of such research, this book brings together several examples of this kind of research (Fig. 1.1).

A brief introduction to place the ancient Temple Mount in its historical and geographical/urban framework is in order.

In the ancient world, building temples repeatedly on the same spot was a well-known phenomenon. This stemmed from the sanctity ascribed to a place (see, for example, Mazar 1992). The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is a case in point. It was considered the sacred ground where the spirit of the God of Israel dwelt and where His Temple was built. It became a religious tradition that continued uninterrupted for three millennia. This is undoubtedly due to two factors: first, Judaism is a monotheistic faith, and second, the biblical edict that the Temple, as the house of God, is the only place where sacrificial worship is permitted. This was reinforced by King Josiah's religious reform in the 7th century BCE (2 Kings 22:1–11; 23:1–30) when worship in Jerusalem was centralized, and it was intensified with the rise of the Hasmonean House to power in Judea in the middle of the 2nd century BCE (Rappaport 2004).

In his 18th regnal year (22 BCE), King Herod the Great, already known for his megalomaniacal architectural feats around the country, began a sacred expansion project of the area of the House of God, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 15.380). The project would last past his lifetime and would be completed by his heirs. The walls of the Temple Mount represent the final stage in the development of this sacred compound. Some of the remains from the previous phase of Herod's endeavor are evident in the Eastern Wall of the compound (Ritmeyer 2006: 102–105). All other details of the former architectural history are highly speculative, as the Herodian expansion covered everything. It is probable that many details preceding this expansion project, including the original topography, exist below the surface, but as stated above, archaeological excavation is barred.

The Herodian Temple Mount in Jerusalem is one of the largest construction projects in the Land of Israel up to the modern era, and the Temple was possibly the largest religious edifice of its time. The size is evident in the compound's dimensions, the size of the ashlar used, the time required for its construction and the size of the various architectural elements—bridges, gates, staircases, paved streets, etc. (Segal 2013: 266). It should be noted that throughout the period of the compound's expansion works, daily worship continued in the Temple and in the area nearby, which attracted tens of thousands of people in peak times during the main Jewish festivals. The expansion of the



Figure 1.1: Aerial view of the Herodian Temple Mount. Source: Bavarian State Archive, photo taken between September 1917 and September 1918 (Dalman, G. 1925. *Hundert Deutsche Fliegerbilder aus Palästina*. Gütersloh).

Temple Mount most probably affected the entire plan of the city of Jerusalem as a whole, and the daily routine within it.

Since the beginning of archaeological research in the middle of the 19th century, scholars have wanted to dig inside the premises of the Temple Mount and, as this has been prohibited by the local authorities, they turned their attention to documenting the walls of the Temple Mount and conducting minor-scale excavations (see Chapter 2). With the unification of the city in 1967 and up to today, large-scale archaeological excavations have been taking place outside the sacred compound.<sup>1</sup> These excavations have been adjacent to the Western and Southern Walls, that is, in relation to half of the circumference of the Temple Mount, which extends to 1547 m, circumscribing an area of 141.28 *dunam* (which is 14.13 hectares). These excavations and studies, some of which appear in this book, revealed a great deal of information about the construction of the walls themselves (see Chapters 4 and 16). It is hoped that additional methods of remote sensing will be developed to attain data that cannot be obtained through traditional archaeological methods, to enhance our knowledge of this extraordinary site.

This book deals with the Southern Wall as well as the southern segment of the Western Wall of the Temple Mount compound. It is one of four walls that formed the *temenos* or sacred enclosure of the Second Jewish Temple and may well have been the central structure of the complex. Two main

<sup>1</sup> *Hadashot Arkheologiyot Online*, on the Israel Antiquities Authority webpage, reports on all excavations carried out in Israel since 2004.



gateways to the compound were located on this wall—the Double Gate and the Triple Gate—both of which the Mishnah (*Middot* 1:3; 2:2) describes as main entrances through which the majority of pilgrims ascended to the Temple on the three main pilgrimage festivals and through which sacrificial animals were led to the altar. In addition to these gates, two more gates had been planned close to the corners of the compound: one near the southwestern corner (above Robinson’s Arch), leading directly to the Royal Portico, and another near the southeastern corner of the compound (Fig. 1.2; see Chapters 5, 27, 28).

No visuals or plans of the Temple Mount’s construction project have come down to us from antiquity and conjectures of the size of the sacred enclosure by historians, theologians and even archaeologists over the past 150 years have gone in numerous directions (see, for example, Ritmeyer 2006, with extensive bibliography on pp. 402–411). Our opinion is that the sacred space, at the size it attained during the days of King Herod the Great, must have included the architectural envelope that surrounds the Temple Mount proper and that the system of entrances, gateways and roads leading to the compound, as well as the outer faces of the compound walls, were all part of the sacred enclosure. The chapters in this book present the archaeological evidence of the excavations cited, follow-up research and our analysis.

The main objective of the present volume is to publish the results of various excavations that have been conducted in different locations along the walls. Moreover, we attempt to expand the view regarding the Southern Wall and the area close by, while widely referring to its physical aspects, and by doing so, assess the architectural changes that have occurred in the Southern Wall from the late Second Temple (Early Roman) period through to the end of the Early Islamic period.

This book is divided into five parts:



Figure 1.2: Robinson’s Arch prior to Mazar’s excavations.

Following this introduction, Part I presents a sweeping historical survey (Chapter 2) of archaeological activities carried out in this area over the past 150 years; it then offers a detailed topography (Chapter 3) of the area adjacent to the Southern Wall.

Part II presents three excavations reports: Excavations near the Southeastern Corner (Chapters 4–15); Excavations West of the Southwestern Corner (Chapters 16–25); and Excavations of an Early Islamic Cemetery (Chapter 26).

Part III offers several ongoing studies, some in breakthrough archaeoscientific fields that take our research on a quantum leap from the past into the future. Chapter 32 tracks the thickness of the Temple Mount walls with GPR imaging; and Chapter 34 describes a <sup>14</sup>C study of organic remains that enable precision dating of the Temple Mount walls. Other studies focus on architectural design (Chapter 27), inscriptions (Chapters 29–31) and scriptural decoration (Chapter 28).

As of the early 2000s, various large-scale conservation projects were carried out in different locations along the Southern Wall and its corners. The results of these projects are presented in Part IV. Advanced engineering, geophysical, chemical and physical examinations and thorough documentation technologies accompanied these projects.

Beyond their contribution to the improvement of the Temple Mount walls' physical condition, conservation projects have actually enabled the integration of advanced documentation methods. These methods have led to an up-to-date mapping of the walls' sections in the area of Robinson's Arch, including laser scanning and three-dimensional photogrammetric mapping of the arch's structure. This mapping became our basis for renewed research of issues relating to Robinson's Arch and to sections of the walls near it. We see this conservation project with a view to the future. We must study the past but we must also keep it safe for future generations.

Part V summarizes the entire volume.

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