

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TEMPLE MOUNT



I have believed and studied for many years now that both the Temples of King Solomon and also of Herod were not on the structure in Jerusalem that most are calling the Temple Mount, but were actually in the City of David about 1/3 of a mile away down the slope of the Kidron Valley.

I have written ample proof of this and the best proof available is the 485 page book by Ernest Martin called, "The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot." I was also featured recently in a new documentary on the Temple along with David Sielaff, who took over Dr. Martin's foundation after he died, that can be seen at the following link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90XSXEfelj>

I believe the difficulty with some understanding this subject is because, the Temple of Yahweh was completely destroyed by the Romans and even the walls of the Temple were dug up to their foundations, so the physical proof of a temple being in the City of David is hard to find, but is existent. However, on the Harem Esh Sharif, or current place in Jerusalem being called the Temple Mount, there are many ancient remains, including about 10,000 Herodian stones that make the walls of the encampment, which are about 1200 feet by 600 feet, which was the standard size of almost every Roman fort in the Roman Empire.

So if it can be proved exactly what the structure of the Harem Esh Sharif was used for in the 1st century AD, then the dilemma of where exactly the Temple of Yahweh stood will become much more evident. That is precisely what I want to achieve in this article. Because if it can be conclusively proven that the structure that can be seen today still standing, which is thought to be the Temple Mount of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem is actually the Roman Fort Antonia, then, as mentioned, the only other place the Temple could have stood would be in the City of David just south of the Harem Esh Sharif.

If we are using both physical evidence and also historical records, then it is virtually impossible to come to the conclusion that the Harem is where both Solomon's and Herod's Temples stood. First of all the dimensions of the temple platform on the Harem are almost double the dimensions given to us by Josephus and other historians. Also, when we look in Scripture at where Nehemiah is rebuilding the fallen walls from Solomon's Temple, he is clearly rebuilding these walls in the City of David, which is about 1/3 of a mile from the Harem.

Neh 2:13 And I went out by night by the Valley Gate, even before the Jackal Fountain, and to the Dung Gate. And I examined the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down, and its gates which were burned with fire.

Neh 2:14 Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate, and to the King's Pool. But there was no place for the animal that was under me to pass.

Neh 2:15 Then I went up in the night by the torrent, and examined the wall, and turned back, and entered by the Valley Gate, and returned.

Nehemiah left the city by the Valley Gate entering into the Kidron Valley, which is east of Jerusalem. Then, he passes the fountain continuing southwest and comes to the Dung Gate. The Dung Gate is called this because this is where they used to burn the garbage and is located where the Kidron Valley ends and the Valley of Hinnom begins. This is below the City of David to the west and is the place the New Testament calls Gehenna or the Lake of Fire where the incorrigible wicked will be burned. Now let's continue to see where Nehemiah and his cohorts are rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Neh 3:13 Hanun, and the dwellers of Zanoah, made strong the Valley Gate. They built it and made stand its doors, its locks, and its bars, and a thousand cubits on the wall **to the Dung Gate.**

Neh 3:14 And the Dung Gate was made strong by Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-Haccerem. He built it, and made stand its doors, its locks, and its bars.

Neh 3:15 And the **Fountain Gate** was made strong by Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah. He built it and covered it, and made stand its doors, its locks, and its bars, **and the wall of the Pool of Shiloah by the King's Garden, and to the stairs that go down from the City of David.**

Neh 3:16 After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Beth-Zur, made strong in front of the Tombs of David, and to the pool that was made, and to the house of the mighty men.

Neh 12:37 **And at the Fountain Gate across from them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall above the house of David, even to the Water Gate eastward.**

So, we see that all the places that Nehemiah mentions where the city walls are being rebuilt around Jerusalem and the Temple are around the City of David and not at the Harem, which is 1/3 of a mile away. As a matter of fact it was a miracle that with as few men as Nehemiah had and the fear of being attacked as they worked that they could rebuild both the walls and doors of the city all around in only 52 days.

This would be a feat even today with all the advanced equipment that we have to rebuild all the walls and doors and gates around the City of David, but it would have been impossible if you include the area of the Harem, which is twice the size as the City of David and much broader. Just look at the walls in the picture at the top of the article, and remember the walls of the Temple were much taller than the current walls.

Another point, which is most interesting, is that the archaeologists that have been digging in the City of David have found one of the towers that Nehemiah rebuilt. They know it is from Nehemiah because it is the only place in the City of David where they found Persian pottery and oil lamps from the very time of Nehemiah, the very place that Nehemiah came from to rebuild the walls.

Another point that is crucial to point out here is that the walls of the city of Jerusalem were not completely destroyed by the Babylonians, only damaged. When Nehemiah came many stones were in the Kidron Valley where he could not even pass with his mule. Nehemiah had to take those stones from Solomon's Temple and rebuild the walls around the city.

So wherever the true Temple Mount is, it should have these Solomonic stones from the rebuilt wall around the base of the wall as there is no historical or Biblical record that after Nehemiah someone else destroyed the rebuilt wall that Nehemiah restored, before Herod came and expanded the Temple Mount platform.

And yet there are Solomonic stones in the City of David as they dig below the Herodian period and come to the Solomonic period, and yet no Solomonic stones at the Harem. At the Harem there are around 10,000 Herodian stones, but no Solomonic stones. And since Josephus stated that the structure around the temple was completely destroyed in the days of Herod, then those 10,000 Herodian stones could not be from the Temple of Herod. But, if the Harem is not the place of the Temple, then what exactly is the structure that those 10,000 massive Herodian stones is made up of? It can be no other than the Roman garrison Fort Antonia.

First of all, unlike the place of the Temple itself, which was completely destroyed and no artifacts remained behind, Fort Antonia was used by the Roman 10th legion and remained as a base for the Roman soldiers for several hundred years, and the outer structure remains until today. In 2005 a commemoration stone to Flavius Silva, the commander of the 10th Roman Legion, was found near the Harem. Roman forts were owned by the Roman Empire and the size of the forts were stationary at 1200 feet by 600 feet, this is almost exactly the size of the Harem Esh Sharif in Jerusalem today with a few percent adjustment due to the natural rock that Fort Antonia is built on.

Which brings us to the second point of evidence that can be seen, which is that Fort Antonia was also called "The Rock" due to the large protruding rock that it was built upon. Josephus tells us that the large protruding rock on Fort Antonia was the most predominant feature of the fort. Let's see what Ernest Martin wrote about this in his book called, "The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot."

"Josephus says that Antonia was situated north of the Temple There was an outstanding feature of Fort Antonia that characterized its location. He said the Fortress had a prominent rock formation associated with it.

Josephus said the rock associated with Antonia was 50 cubits high (75 feet). The text shows Fort Antonia was built over and around a rock. Josephus was talking about a type of rocky ridge oriented north to south. From the base of this ridge of rock, Herod placed smooth flagstones in a slanted angle that surmounted the slope of the rocky surface to a height of 50 cubits (75 feet).

The description of Josephus concerning Fort Antonia must allow the height of the rock formation (the visible portion being the "Rock" itself) to protrude slightly above the platform as we see the rock now located underneath the Dome of the Rock. The only outstanding geological feature involving a 'rock' on the eastern ridge in that area of Jerusalem is the "rock" under the Dome of the Rock. Anyone with common sense would admit this to be true. This is another clue that the description of Josephus that the Harem represents the remains of Fort Antonia and not the site of the Temple of Herod." (End of quote)

So there is no denying the fact that Fort Antonia was connected with and built upon and around a large 75 foot rock with the top of the rock protruding out as we see today in the Dome of the Rock. And yet when we look at all the records of the Temples of Solomon and Herod in Jerusalem, we never even once have any mention of a rock, such as is in the Dome of the Rock.

When you really think on this one point for a minute it is quite an overwhelming piece of evidence. There is so much written about the Temple in Scripture, and in the Talmud and Mishna, also in Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and yet in all the minute details that these writings give us they never mention even once about a large protruding rock being on the platform, which is called the Temple Mount.

Even today, anyone in the world (religious or not) associates Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock. It is the major edifice that is shown when one is speaking about Jerusalem today. And it would be inconceivable that if the Temple was really on the Harem, as most think, in all the many writings about the Temple Mount as stated above, that not even once this large 58 foot by 51 foot outcropping, protruding rock would ever be mentioned.

And yet Josephus very clearly mentions this very rock being associated with Fort Antonia, which was also called the rock because of the large protruding rock on its surface. If we remain true to the very facts that our eyes can see today, such as the size of the compound called the Harem Esh Sharif in Jerusalem today being almost exactly the very size of Fort Antonia, and also that Fort Antonia, which was called "**The Rock**" due to the large protruding rock that it was built on and around, and that there is only one rock like this there in Jerusalem today, which is the Dome of the Rock on the Harem, then the only logical conclusion one could come up with is that the Harem Esh Sharif is indeed the remains of the Roman Fort Antonia.

This is not theory, this is not conjecture, but the very facts that any human being can go to Jerusalem today and see with his very eyes as the 1200 by 600 foot compound still remains, and the rock under the Dome of the Rock also remains until today. But, I want to even give more conclusive proof that the Harem Esh Sharif was indeed Fort Antonia, also called in the New Testament, the praetorium where Yahshua was taken before Pilate to be judged before being taken to be crucified.

Joh 18:28 *And then they led Yahshua from Caiaphas into the **praetorium**, and it was morning.*

The praetorium was a judgment hall area inside Fort Antonia where prisoners were tried. In the first century when a criminal was on trial he was taken to the praetorium to stand trial before the governor. He would then mount himself up on the rock that was in the center of the praetorium to give his defense before the governor.

This is the very rock that is today underneath the Dome of the Rock and it was the very rock that Yahshua would have mounted when he stood before Pontius Pilate, the governor of Jerusalem, at the time of His trial. Below is an amazing quote from a 5th century pilgrim called the Piacenza Pilgrim.

"We also prayed at the Praetorium, where the Lord's case was heard: what is there now is in front (north) of the Temple of Solomon located below the street which runs down to the spring of Siloam outside of Solomon's porch, (which is the eastern wall of Solomon's Temple).

*In the Basilica is the seat where Pilate sat to hear the Lord's case, and there is also the **oblong stone** which used to be in the center of the Praetorium. The accused person whose case was being heard was made to mount this stone so that everyone could hear and see him. The Lord mounted it when He was heard by Pilate, and His footprints are still on it. He had a well shaped foot, small and delicate."*

The above quote can be found in Ernest Martin's temple book on page 97 and is quoted from Wilkinson's work called, "Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades." It is an extremely important quote to prove that the rock under the Dome of the Rock today was indeed the very rock that was inside the praetorium, which was the courthouse of Fort Antonia.

Now, whether the footprints were really from Yahshua or not is not really the issue as later the Muslims claimed what looked like footprints on the rock were Mohammed's, even though he never actually came to Jerusalem. The real point of the matter is that the pilgrim clearly defined the place where the Dome of the Rock is today as the praetorium of Fort Antonia.

And he was not the first person to write about this. Actually, as early as the mid 4th century after Constantine made Christianity the state religion of Rome, Constantine's mother Helena built an octagonal church around the rock that is in the Dome of the Rock today. The church was called the Church of Saint Cyril and Saint John.

Then, as the Byzantine era grew the Church of Saint Cyril and Saint John was expanded in the 5th century and called the Church of the Holy Wisdom, and also called by the Piacenza Pilgrim, Sofia's Basilica. However, it is important to note that it continued to be an octagonal shaped building just as it is today. As a matter of fact, from the mid 4th century all the way until the 7th century and the Muslim

conquest, Christians continued to build many octagonal churches in Israel. They built the eight sided buildings because of the resurrection taking place on the first day of the week or the 8th day.

This is an extremely important point as this clearly shows not only that the Dome of the Rock was indeed an octagonal church for several hundred years before it was converted into a mosque, but it also shows that it was indeed the very place of the praetorium and the Roman Fort Antonia, and that was the belief of Christians going back to the second and third centuries. Take a look at some of the other Octagonal Churches that were also built in Israel during this time period.

OCTAGONAL CHURCHES IN ISRAEL FROM 4TH TO 7TH CENTURIES

Mount Gerazim 5th Century Christian Octagonal Church

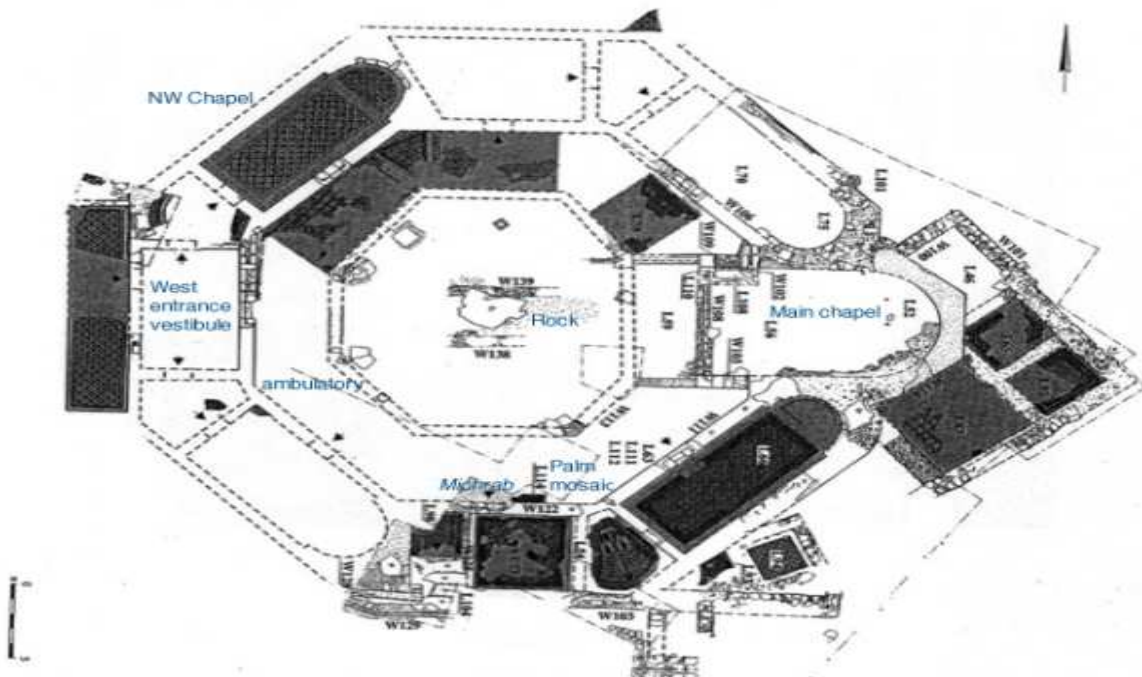


Aerial photo of Kathisma site, IAA a 5th century Byzantine octagonal church and monastery.



Most Byzantine churches are in the shape of a basilica, a rectangular plan with a central nave and two aisles, with a semicircular apse at the far end. Not exactly a church, the Kathisma is a *martyrium*, a

special structure that functions as a church (or mosque) and marks the site of a holy event. Rather than a basilica, the church is octagonal shaped and built over a flat, protruding rock in the center, similar to the Dome of the Rock, which was another 5th century church called the Church of the Holy Wisdom, which was built upon a 4th century church. There are 3 concentric octagons, the innermost one around the rock, the second a walkway (*ambulatoria*) with one chapel and the outer one made up of 4 chapels and smaller rooms. See the floor plan below.



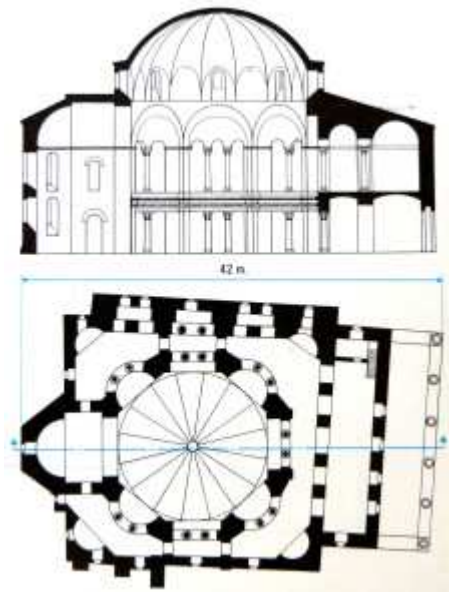
According to our understanding, the Kathisma Church was renovated in the 6th century and used as a mosque in the 8th century, after which it was destroyed. A *mihrab*, or prayer niche, facing Mecca was built into the southern wall of the outermost octagon. This means that the church was not destroyed during the Persian conquest and existed at the time of Abdal-Malik who commissioned the building of the Dome of the Rock, a *martyrium* in octagon shape over a rock.



There are ruins of another octagonal shaped church at Capernaum. The remains of a 5th century church were uncovered that consist of a central octagon with eight pillars, an exterior octagon with thresholds still *in situ*, and a portico. Later an apse with a pool for baptism was constructed in the middle of the east wall. The central octagon was placed directly on top of the walls of Simon Peter's house with the aim of preserving its exact location.



The famous Church of the Holy Sepulchre was also originally made in an octagon shape, as was the famous Christian Church of Caesarea shown below.



In the 4th century, the site converted to Christianity and became a major center of the Christian Roman Empire. In the 6th century, an elegant Byzantine church was built over the site of Herod's Temple. The Martyrion of the Holy Procopius (a martyr who was executed under Diocletian c. 303 AD) was an octagonal 39 m. wide church standing within a square precinct measuring 50 x 50 m. surrounded by rooms along its walls. The floor was paved with marble slabs in a variety of patterns. Of the rows of

columns in the building, several Corinthian capitals decorated with crosses were found. The site, used by Herod for his pagan temple, then reconsecrated as a church, would in time be re-occupied, this time by a mosque.

Then, of course the most famous octagonal church of them all is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, which was originally called the Church of Saint Cyril and John, and then, later, the Church of the Holy Wisdom. Notice that it still retains its domed top just like other basilicas during the Byzantine era.



Also, if you look at the actual rock below that is inside the Dome of the Rock you will see several crosses that were carved into the rock over the years, showing that it was a church.



The Dome of the Rock does not resemble any other mosque in the world. Mosques are not eight sided octagonal buildings. Also, the dome on top of the Dome of the Rock is typical of domes that were built on tops of churches during that time period and clearly shows that the Dome of the Rock was never believed by early Christianity to be the place where Herod's Temple stood, but they firmly believed that it was the place of Fort Antonia and the praetorium where Yahshua gave His defense before Pontius Pilate.

When the Islamic conquest came and Omar the Caliph conquered Jerusalem in 614 AD, they converted most of the churches into mosques. You can still see many remains today all over Israel of places that were originally a church, then converted to a mosque, and sometimes converted back to a church later during the Crusader time period or even later, such as in Caesarea. This is exactly how the Church of the Holy Wisdom became the Dome of the Rock mosque.

It was only after the Crusaders took back control of Jerusalem for a short period in the 11-12th centuries that the Crusaders converted the Dome of the Rock into what was called the Temple of Domini. When Saladin defeated the Crusaders in 1187 he turned it back into a mosque. However, the Jews that just started to return to Jerusalem after about a 1,000 year absence, when they heard that the Crusaders called that area the Temple of Domini, they assumed that this was where Solomon built his temple. And only starting in about the 13th century did the Jews start to give reverence to the western wall and start to believe it was the outer wall of the Temple, when in reality it was the outer wall of the Roman Fort Antonia. The actual Temples of Solomon and Herod were built above the Gihon Spring in the City of David about 1/3 of a mile south of the Harem.

I believe that the evidence and the facts are absolutely overwhelming proving that the area in Jerusalem today known as the Harem Esh Sharif was not the place of Solomon's and Herod's Temples, but was the place of the Roman Fort Antonia. The fact that the retaining walls are still there today and they are the same size as Josephus tells us that Fort Antonia was is clear proof for any opened minded person to see.

Also, the fact that the eight sided octagonal Dome of the Rock is still there today and can clearly be proven to originally have been made as a Christian church to commemorate the place of the praetorium that was inside of Fort Antonia, because Yahshua of Nazareth was tried there, is undeniable proof that the Harem was indeed Fort Antonia and not the Temple Mount.

For a more in depth study into this subject I would suggest to read Ernest Martin's book called "The Temples That Jerusalem Forgot" and also to search the many articles on this subject at their website, www.askelm.com.