

## PART III



# The Preparations for the Last Days Temple

This is the statute of the law which the LORD has commanded, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel that they may bring you an unblemished red heifer in which is no defect, and on which a yoke has never been placed. Now a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place, and the congregation of the sons of Israel shall keep it as water to remove impurity; it is purification from sin.'

—Numbers 19:2,9

"If the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

—Hebrews 9:13-14



# Searching for the Sacred Site



## Preparing a Place for the Last Days Temple

*Once the site for the Miqdash [“Sanctuary”] was fixed in the days of Shemuel [“Samuel”] and King David, it is immutable. All that remains to do at a time such as the present is to rebuild the physical structure, and reinstitute the Temple Service....*

(MISHNEH TORAH, BETH HA’BEHIRA 1:3, 4)

*All these theories only do damage... because then the Arabs can say, “You yourselves are arguing about it. The Temple wasn’t even on the Temple Mount.”*

—DAN BAHAT, CONSULTING ARCHAEOLOGIST,  
WESTERN WALL TUNNEL EXCAVATION

Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build My church . . .” (Matthew 16:18). Ever since He stated those words, “the church” has been debating what “rock” Jesus was referring to. In a similar way the Temple was once built on a rock, the top of Mount Moriah, but exactly what “rock” that was is being vigorously debated by Jewish researchers, rabbis, and archaeologists. As Rabbi Reznick puts it, “The Dome of the Rock is a shrine built to protect the treasure within—the rock. But what, exactly, is that rock?”<sup>1</sup> Answering this, and a host of related questions, has made the search for the location of the ancient Temple the most controversial subject engaging students of the Temple today. It is considered a top priority, for if the prophecy concerning the rebuilding of the Temple is to be fulfilled by the efforts of Israeli Jews, then the exact spot of the sacred site must be determined.

Rabbi Nahman Kahane of the Young Israel Synagogue and head of the Institute for Talmudic Commentaries contends that the lack of certainty in identifying the proper location is one of the major obstacles to rebuilding today: “We have to know where the original place of the altar was. Since no one knows where the altar was, no one is going anywhere on the Temple now. . . . The Temple now . . . is off limits to everybody. All of the different opinions . . . all of the discrepancies . . . surround only one question: Where is the place of the altar? That’s the whole problem.” This problem, facing all who attempt to investigate the original location of the Temple, is caused by a lack of sufficient, objective, material evidence. However, if the Jews gained sovereignty over the Temple Mount in 1967, and consider this of utmost importance, then why are they unable to verify the exact location? To understand this, we need to consider the present-day situation concerning the Temple Mount.

## The Problems at Present

When the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile they were able to rebuild the Temple not only because they had access to the site, but because significant ruins remained and there were many people still alive who remembered the locations of the buildings of the former Temple. More important, as the Talmud notes, they were able to excavate and expose the foundations of the previous structures so as to know exactly where to rebuild (see Mishne Torah, *Beth Ha’behira* 1:4). However, no archaeological remains of Solomon’s or Zerubabel’s Temples are known to have survived Herod’s extensive rebuilding program,<sup>2</sup> and all the actual structures connected with the Herodian Temple itself appear to have been completely erased by the Roman destruction of A.D. 70 and subsequent attempts to further desolate the area (see chapter 5). So apart from

deductions that can be made from the extant surface structures of the Second Temple period, such as walls, stairs, and underground structures such as tunnels and cisterns, we are dependent upon biblical and extrabiblical descriptions of the building procedures (both Israeli and comparative regional temples),<sup>3</sup> topographical details, and the ceremonial ritual.<sup>4</sup> Even then, it has been difficult to pinpoint the location of this place.

The Temple Mount platform, built to support the Temple and its courts, has been preserved down through the centuries. While this has helped to limit the area of the search, it is impossible to resolve the matter until there can be more definite archaeological confirmation. However, access to the site for archaeological excavation or even the use of non-invasive high-tech devices that could reveal underground structures is firmly prohibited. The reasons for this restriction fall into two categories: political and religious.

### *Political Problems*

The Islamic occupation of the entire 35-acre Temple Mount platform (called by Muslims *Haram es-Sharif*—“the Noble Enclosure”) for most of the past 1,360-plus years has forced Israel to make a political concession of this site for the prospect of peace. The Islamic Wakf, the governing authority of the Temple Mount since 1967, prevents any incursion whatsoever onto the premises regarded as strictly for Muslims. If prayer at this site by non-Muslims is fervently fought against, how much more would excavations in search of a rival holy site be prohibited! The Wakf has consistently stated that the only purpose for Israeli archaeological excavations is to destroy the sacred structures of Islam in order to rebuild the Jewish Temple. However, most Israeli archaeologists are secular and have no religious agenda for building a Temple. What’s more, Muslims have no interest in any archaeological discoveries related to the Temple Mount because they have continually denied that the site has any connection with the Jewish people or their ancient Temples. They find the archaeological evidence around the site unconvincing because they interpret the data in conformity with their preconception that nothing Jewish is there. For example, in summarizing the Israeli excavations from 1968–1978 at the southwestern and southern walls of the Temple Mount and the excavation of the Western Wall Tunnel begun in the early 1980s, Adnan Husseini, Executive Director of the Islamic Wakf, stated: “They [Israeli archaeologists] have done 4 to 5 attacks on the mosque from their diggings under it. What they found under the Haram [Temple Mount] is 90% Islamic and 10% pre-Islamic. Now they are digging a

long tunnel [the Western Wall Tunnel] along the wall [of the Al-Aqsa compound] under the Moslem Quarter. Already seven buildings owned by Moslems have collapsed due to these diggings.”<sup>5</sup>

This same authority, along with Yasser Arafat, accused the Israeli government of actually attacking the mosques on the Temple Mount when it opened an exit to this Western Wall Tunnel in 1995. The investigations of former Jewish holy sites are interpreted by them as attempts to further a Zionist program to replace them on the Temple Mount. For this reason, the Israeli *Protection of Holy Places Law* supports their position, and makes it a crime to in any way desecrate or restrict access to the Muslim holy sites, which would certainly occur if archaeological excavation took place. For these reasons, no archaeological excavations have ever been, or are likely to be, conducted on the Temple Mount. At the same time, archaeological excavations are the only way anyone can decisively resolve the question of the Temple’s original location.

### *Religious Problems*

As we have already seen in chapter 6, the Rabbinate has forbidden any Jew from setting foot on the *‘Azarah*, the sacred precinct or enclosure of the ancient Temple. This was decided because it is held that the Ark of the Covenant, which is still believed to be attended by the divine presence, remains hidden somewhere beneath the Holy of Holies. Since all Jews today are in a state of ritual defilement, to inadvertently tread on this area would violate the sanctity of the entire Temple Mount. Therefore, observant Jews refrain from even entering the Temple Mount for fear they might happen to tread upon the site of the Holy of Holies. Many of those who have done extensive research in connection with the Temple’s location would never transgress by actually going to the places they have proposed. For example, Orthodox Jew Tuvia Sagiv, though zealous for rightly identifying the site of the Temple, and even so bold as to say that the revered Western Wall was actually connected to Hadrian’s Temple of Jupiter, insists that Jews must remain below the Temple Mount until the Messiah comes. From this viewpoint, archaeologists, like tourists who daily defile the site, have no business on the Temple Mount, even if their efforts could unravel the mysteries of the Temple’s location.

## **Why Not Build Somewhere Else?**

Given these problems, many people often ask, “If the Jews want a Temple so badly, and the attempt to wrest the ancient site from the Arabs would provoke a

war, why couldn't they just build the Temple somewhere else in Jerusalem?" This may seem reasonable to those outside of Orthodox Judaism, but those within deem it absolutely necessary that the Third Temple be rebuilt *exactly* where the former two Temples stood. As Temple movement writer Yirmiyahu Fischer affirms: "Certainly, understanding the true placement of the *Beit HaMikdash* ["Temple"] is of utmost importance. The *Beit HaMikdash* must be built not just where there is room for it, but on the exact original place. When King Shlomo ["Solomon"] sanctified the *Beit HaMikdash* and the altar, he sanctified the place for all generations, and it is hence forbidden to erect an altar any place other than where the original altar stood."<sup>6</sup>

One reason for this is because it is argued that the site for the Temple was divinely appointed. If one follows the chain of commands from the first appearance of Mount Moriah as the site of the *Akedah* ("Binding of Isaac"), a pivotal prophecy that is believed to have revealed God's choice for the Temple (Genesis 22:2-14), to the Red Sea miracle where another prophecy to Moses concerning the "mountain of My inheritance" (Exodus 15:17) is seen as the place ordained for Israel's worship and clarified even more by Moses before his death (Deuteronomy 12:5-19), to the final realization of the site through David's purchase of the place and erection of the altar (2 Samuel 24:18-25; 1 Chronicles 21:18-29), and Solomon's construction (1 Kings 6-8; 2 Chronicles 3-7), it is evident that a prophetic path led to only one spot. While this may give a biblical priority to the site, other explanations from history and Jewish oral tradition also support this conviction.

### *The Reasons for the Temple Mount*

Historically, the continuity between Temples was always preserved by building each one with its Holy of Holies enclosing the same rock protrusion of Mount Moriah known as *Even ha-Shetiyyah* ("The Foundation Stone"). This was the expected place for rebuilding, as Daniel's prayer in Babylon reveals (Daniel 9:16) and according to the Lord's command to Haggai to "rebuild the ruins" of the former Temple (Haggai 1:2-4,8-9,14). The Jewish sages followed this understanding and codified it in Jewish tradition: "Once the site for the *Miqdash* ["Sanctuary"] was fixed in the days of Shemuel ["Samuel"] and King David, it is immutable. All that remains to do at a time such as the present is to rebuild the physical structure, and reinstitute the Temple Service..." (Mishneh Torah, *Beth Ha'behira* 1:3, 4).

Another reason the exact site is so important is that it was upon the Foundation Stone that the Ark of the Covenant had been set and the *Shekinah* (divine presence) had descended (1 Kings 8:6-11), and from which it had later departed (Ezekiel 8:4; 11:23). Therefore, the place had a distinct sanctity that no other place ever had, and as Orthodox Jews believe, it still has that sanctity today. In addition, the literal fulfillment of the prophecies of the Temple's restoration require that it be rebuilt at the historic site. First, Bible prophecy says that the *Shekinah* that had departed in the past will return by exactly the same route that it departed from the Mount of Olives ("the way of the east") to the inner court to the Holy of Holies (Ezekiel 43:1-7). Second, how could any prophecy of the last days that spoke of going up to the "house of the LORD" (Temple) on the "mountain...of the LORD" or "My holy mountain" (Isaiah 2:2-3; 56:7) be understood other than by reference to the historic Temple Mount?

However, the primary reason given by Orthodox Jews to this question is that the building of the Temple and its service must be governed by Jewish Law as received throughout the generations. This precedent was established during the time of the Second Temple period, when the sect known as the Saducees (who believed their interpretation of the Torah was more correct than the accepted oral tradition) gained control of the Temple and its service. Despite this fact, the high priest, whom they appointed, was required to take an oath that he would still perform the service according to tradition, without changing anything. This was affirmed by one of the greatest of the codifiers of Jewish Law, the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Maimonides). Concerning the location of the Temple, he wrote, "The altar is in a very precise location, which may never be changed." He then went on to say that the altars that Avraham ["Abraham"], Noach ["Noah"], Kayin ["Cain"], Hevel ["Abel"], and Adam used for sacrifices were all on this exact location. Offering a sacrifice on any other location is considered to be a grave sin and a desecration (*Hilchot Beit HaBechirah* 2:1). In like manner, a rabbi writing in one of the journals published by a Temple movement organization wrote, "We are not required to build the *Beit HaMikdash* ["Temple"] according to Yechezkel's ["Ezekiel's"] vision. Even the prophets who lived in his time, Chagai ["Haggai"], Zechariah, and Malachi, did not build the *Beit HaMikdash* like Yechezkel. Rather, unless a prophet instructs us otherwise, we are to build according to the tradition that we have received, and only in its proper place."<sup>7</sup> For these reasons no other place can be substituted, which means that barring the coming of the prophet Elijah or the Messiah Himself, those who plan to rebuild the Temple intend to follow the time-honored tradition and rebuild it at the same location as the two previous Temples.

### *The Reason of the Temple Itself*

Another reason (as implied in the quote above) it is imperative that this exact site be recovered and then thoroughly explored is because Jews must not only build on the same spot, but they must also build the same Temple. According to the Rambam, the returning exiles decided not to build the Second Temple according to Ezekiel's plan because it was "neither clear or explicit," so they built the Second Temple "according to the outlines of Solomon's Temple, but with some modifications based on the book of Ezekiel" (Mishneh Torah, *Hilchot Beit HaBechirah* 1:4). When the Maccabees and later Herod the Great renovated the Second Temple, they did so without altering its basic form. The convictions about this were so strong that the Tosefot Yom Tov declared that even in the Messianic age the basic structure of the Temple will follow the vision originally revealed to King David. This means the Third Temple will have to be built according to the same pattern as well as upon the same place as the Second (Herodian) Temple.

Unfortunately, material evidence for the location of Second Temple cannot be obtained through archaeological research, so the only sources for information we can look to are historical writings and traditional Jewish sources. Yet there are many significant discrepancies between these sources. For example, the earliest recorded description of the Temple site is that given by Josephus. His measurements of the area conflict in many respects with those given in the Mishnah's tractate *Middot* ("Measurements"), which was composed at least 100 years later. In addition, one of the most detailed sources about the Temple Mount of the fifth-century A.D., *Nehemiah's Jerusalem Atlas*, has provided vital clues to archaeologists, yet its accuracy has been questioned, especially in its identification of surviving remains and the location of certain landmarks. To make matters worse, the second-century B.C. document known as the *Temple Scroll* (found in the caves above the Wadi Jaffet-Zaben and dating to the time of the Second Temple itself), which gives detailed patterns for the rebuilding of the Temple, differs dramatically from the patterns recorded in Scripture or any of the extrabiblical sources.<sup>8</sup> The only way to resolve these discrepancies is by actually uncovering and measuring the site itself. Although every trace of the Temple itself has been removed, much that pertains to its placement and the courts around it could be discerned from knowing where on the platform it actually resided and which underground structures were actually associated with it.

Despite the present-day inability of archaeologists to excavate on the Temple Mount (in the nineteenth century some limited excavation was permitted), since 1967 Israeli archaeologists have been able to dig in the shadow of the

Temple Mount outside and below the huge supporting platform. Before we move on to the various theories about the Temple's location, let's look at some of the discoveries that have greatly advanced our knowledge of the Temple—discoveries that tempt us to imagine what greater secrets could be revealed on and under the Temple Mount itself.

## What Archaeology Has Discovered

Back in 1887 J.L. Porter wrote pessimistically that “the Temple is gone. Not a stone, not a trace, remains.”<sup>9</sup> In the middle of the twentieth century Dame Kathleen Kenyon, a British archaeologist who has excavated extensively in the vicinity of the Temple Mount, concluded: “Absolutely nothing survives of the Temple built by Herod.”<sup>10</sup> Even the famous Israeli historian and archaeologist Michael Avi-Yonah stated, “The location of the actual Temple, the central problem, cannot yet be ascertained. . . .”<sup>11</sup> This, of course, is true concerning the Temple's actual structure, the destruction of which Jesus accurately predicted would “not one stone here shall be left upon another” (Matthew 24:2; see also Mark 13:2; Luke 19:44).

### *Archaeological Research on the Second Temple*

In the area of the esplanade on which the Temple had once stood, over a century ago extensive probes and tunneling excavations were conducted by British explorers. Though restricted by Moslem sensitivities, they were able to discover important structural remains that form the basis of our knowledge of the site today.<sup>12</sup> For example, in 1873–74 the Frenchman Charles Clermont-Ganneau, who had developed good relations with the Muslim Kadi in charge of the Temple Mount, was permitted to examine in detail the Dome of the Rock during a time of Muslim restoration work. When the ceramic tiles covering the floor were removed he was able to study the Crusader-period masonry, and was even able to look beneath the flagstone covering the Rock itself.

One of the greatest explorers to study the Temple Mount was Charles Warren, whose surveys and archaeological reports are indispensable primary sources for those seeking the Temple's location. Warren conducted extensive probes at the Eastern Gate and at the area below the Western Wall, revealing evidence of one of the five ancient gates to the Temple Mount (now known as Warren's Gate). These probes, as well as his extensive tunnelling, corrected earlier estimates of the true height of the Temple Mount's retaining walls, located the lost Tyropoeon (or Cheesemakers) Valley, and investigated many of the subterranean cisterns and passageways beneath the southern and central areas of the Temple plat-

form. One of Warren's helpful contributions to determining the Temple's location was his discovery that the platform on which the Second Temple had stood was not identical with the original square platform which was thought to have supported the First Temple, but had been extended by King Herod's engineers. He also proved that the southwest corner of the platform had been artificially constructed, a fact that has assisted later researchers in determining the history of structural changes on the Temple Mount.<sup>13</sup>

When excavation became possible around the outer perimeters of the Temple Mount in the twentieth century, Dame Kathleen Kenyon, who had earlier stated "no trace of the Temple remains," revised her verdict and declared, "Much of Herod's work can still be traced in the great platform that supports the Dome of the Rock, so from the present structure back to Solomon there is no real break."<sup>14</sup> After the Six-Day War, Israeli excavations were conducted in the City of David by Yigael Shiloh and revealed the extent and location of the original palace complex of David and Solomon. Closer to the Temple Mount, excavations at its southwestern and southern walls—first directed by Benjamin Mazar and then by Meir Ben-Dov—and those in the Western Wall Tunnel (directed by Dan Bahat) have greatly improved our understanding of the Temple's location. For example, Mazar discovered clues to the original square Temple Mount (dating to the time of Solomon) and revealed the location of important bridges, gates, and staircases leading from ground level to the area of the Temple above. More recently, Ronny Reich uncovered the original Herodian street that stretched alongside the lower west side of the Temple Mount, along with the merchants shops that lined the street.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the examination of old pictures of the site, such as German World War I reconnaissance photographs, have revealed structural elements no longer visible on and around the Temple Mount because of destruction or concealment by the Arabs.

Archaeology has also supplied from other cultures comparative examples of the form and design of the Temple. Archaeological examples of Solomonic-type temples have been found, such as the eighth-century long-room tripartite temple from Tel Tainat in the Amuq Valley at the northern Orontes in Syria, four other temples at two sites (Tel Munbaqa and Tel Emar), a poorly preserved temple at En Dara, two long-room temples of this type from the Middle Bronze IIB Period (1750–1550 B.C.) at Shechem and Megiddo, and an Israelite temple (from Solomon's time) within the Israelite fortress at Tel Arad (in the Negev).<sup>16</sup> And there's another recently excavated site in the Samaria region that promises to provide additional information about to the Second Temple's structure; let us consider it briefly.

### *An Archaeological Replica of the Second Temple*

From all indications, the Second Temple, originally built by Zerubbabel, was built according to the same plan and dimensions as the First Temple. While the later reconstruction by Herod completely erased all traces of this Temple, an extraordinary find in Samaria has opened up the possibility of recovering an exact duplicate of this Temple. The discovery was made by Israeli archaeologist Yizhak Magen on Mount Gerizim, the site sacred to the Samaritans as the place where their ancient temple once stood. According to the first-century historian Flavius Josephus, the Samaritan Temple was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 113 B.C. It was this temple that the Samaritan woman referred to as the place where her “fathers worshiped” in her dialogue with Jesus (John 4:20). What has been found are the remains of the Samaritan Temple, including its six-foot thick walls, gates, and altars complete with sacrificial ashes and bones. In addition two adjacent edifices, thought to be a royal residence and administrative building, were discovered. These buildings resemble the plan of the First Temple complex (1 Kings 7:1-12), which had a palace proper, throne room, House of Pharaoh’s Daughter, Hall of Columns, and House of the Forest of Lebanon. The Samaritan Temple was found beneath the floor of the fifth-century Byzantine church of Mary Theotokos, which was uncovered in excavations in the 1920s. The temple’s northern gate matches that of the Temple described in the *Temple Scroll*, a Dead Sea Scroll document written when the Second Temple of Zerubbabel was still standing. That the Samaritan Temple was most likely a replica of Zerubbabel’s Temple is implied by Josephus’ account of its origin.

According to his record, Menachem, a priest in the Jerusalem Temple, fell in love with a woman named Nikaso, the daughter of the Samaritan leader Sanballat. Because she was not Jewish, Menachem was told to choose between Nikaso and his priesthood. Menachem chose Nikaso, and Sanballat built his new son-in-law a rival temple on the sacred Mount Gerizim and made him its high priest. The only reference for this temple would have been the one served by Menachem in Jerusalem. Yitzhak Magen believes this implication from Josephus is correct, noting that second-century B.C. inscriptions discovered at the site confirm that “the Samaritans adopted everything from the Jewish prayers to sacrificial ritual.”<sup>17</sup>

At present, attention is being focused on the excavation of the two adjacent buildings, whose remains are more complete than those of the temple itself. However, when all is finally excavated, not only will our knowledge of this longest-lived phase of the Jerusalem Temple be immensely improved, but the dimensions of this temple may contribute to better discerning through compar-

ison the exact location of the Jerusalem Temple. With this in mind, let us now proceed to examine the various theories that have been proposed concerning the Temple's location.

## Theories on the Temple's Location

In the past two decades, the subject of the Temple's location has become a matter of intense investigation and debate. Meir Ben-Dov, one of the premier archaeologists of the Temple area, has noted: "...hardly a month goes by without at least one research paper being published on one aspect or another of the Temple Mount."<sup>18</sup> Bar-Ilan University archaeologist Aren Maeir adds, "If you ask 100 scholars, you'll get 101 opinions' on the Temple's precise location, but 'those who are dealing with the facts in a responsible manner' don't vary by more than 20 meters one way or another."<sup>19</sup>

The three leading theories among researchers today and their main proponents are 1) the Southern Location (Bellarmino Bagatti, Tuvia Sagiv); 2) the Northern Location (Asher Kaufman); 3) the Central Location (Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Leen Ritmeyer, David Jacobson, and most archaeologists). There are also variations on some of these theories, such as the far-Southern Location (Nathan Kaplan—below the Al-Aqsa Mosque at the southern wall), and the farther-Southern Location (Ernest Martin) of Solomon's and Ezra's Temples—just above the Gihon Spring on the southeast ridge of Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup> These scholarly theories vie for acceptance today as answers to the questions about the original site of the First and Second Temples.

While each of these proposed sites respect the dimensions of the Muslim *Haram*, which generally follows the square outer perimeters of the Temple complex (as given by Josephus and the Mishnah tractate *Middot*), and maintain the same east-west orientation, they differ significantly in their placement within this enclosure. Due to limited space I will discuss only the three main theories (south, north, central) and each proponent's major arguments without critique or the objections of the other positions. For these the reader should refer to the bibliography provided in the footnotes for each of the theorists.<sup>21</sup>

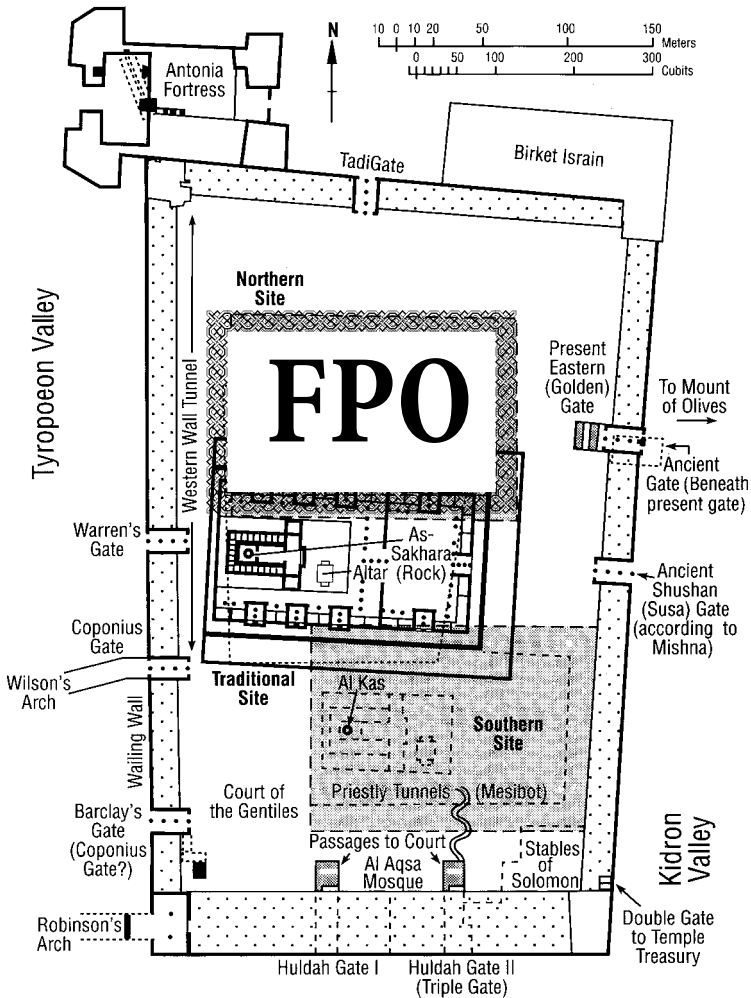
### *The Southern Location*

#### **Father Bellarmino Bagatti**

A Franciscan scholar, Father Bellarmino Bagatti, published his work *Recherches sur le Site du Temple de Jerusalem* in Jerusalem in 1979.<sup>22</sup> He concluded

# Three Suggested Locations for the Site of the Temple

(All Temples are arranged in an east/west orientation)



**Proposed Temple Sites**—Three proposed sites for the location of the ancient Temple. The Holy of Holies is indicated in each site by the Al Kas Foundation (southern), As-Sakhra “the [Sacred] Rock” (traditional), and the Dome of the Spirits/Tablets (northern). The location of the ancient Temple Mount gates are based on Mishnah (*Middot* 1:3), Joesphus (*Antiquities* 15:401), and modern excavations.

from his study of the ancient documents and his personal exploration and measurements that the ancient Temple must have occupied a site to the south, somewhere between the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This is not a new view, for it had been implied in the works of earlier researchers; however, Bagatti's arguments were supported with new and original data. His theory for the southern location of the Temple is based on several considerations. First, the ancient topography of the Temple Mount, as gleaned from historical sources, suggests that the Temple was situated at a lower elevation on the Temple Mount, rather than at the supposed highest point, the Rock under the Golden Dome. Included in this question of topography was Bagatti's contention that the rock face, which now has its boundary in the northwest corner of the Haram, originally extended further south and was cut back to its present line of scarp by either the Romans or the Arabs.

Second, in order to determine the square area that composed the huge platform upon which the Temple had stood, he measured the length of the southern Herodian wall beginning at the southeastern corner. Moving northward 920 feet, he came to a point in the eastern wall where the original line of the rampart ends and from which another wall, a short distance from the former wall, begins its northerly course towards the northeastern corner of the enclosure. This junction in the wall seemed to determine the course of an east-west wall, the northern boundary of the Temple. Looking across the present Haram in this direction, he saw that the ground revealed a definite depression along the supposed wall line. The fact that the area had been planted with trees by the Muslims further confirmed the absence of solid rock at this level. Apparently the area had been filled in by the seventh-century builders of the Muslim Dome of the Rock. Since this wall line was south of the present Eastern or Golden Gate, this gate was excluded from the Temple area, a fact which agrees with Josephus' description of the eastern Temple enclosure.

Third, Bagatti read in an account of a pilgrimage to the Temple site in A.D. 438—by a Christian named Barsauma—that the Jews gathered together to venerate their ruined Temple. While the exact place that they prayed was not given, Bagatti interpreted the statement “at the gates which lead to Siloam”<sup>23</sup> to refer to the Huldah Gate entrance at the southern wall (adjacent to the present Al-Aqsa Mosque), which indeed leads downward to the Pool of Siloam. From this he concluded that the Temple was situated nearby at this southern location.

Fourth, Bagatti claims that the Dome of the Rock had no real historical significance, neither being venerated by Israel during Temple times nor by Jews or

Christian pilgrims from the time of the Temple's destruction to the early Islamic period. In his opinion, the Rock beneath the Dome received its sacred character in the seventh-century only because of a political-religious rivalry between Jerusalem and Mecca. If the Rock had no prior religious importance, he reasons, it could not have been the site of the Holy Temple.

Two other lines of evidence have been advanced to support Bagatti's Southern theory. First, the presence of numerous underground reservoirs in the proximity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque agree with descriptions that such reservoirs were made to support the enormous amount of water needed for the Temple rituals. Too, many of these reservoirs were built using masonry and designed with vaults, suggesting that earlier they were used as secret escape tunnels or hidden chambers. The historical sources speak plainly of such hidden passageways and rooms, which were used by the Temple priests. The presence of these underground features at this site lends credence to a southern location for the Temple.

### Tuvia Sagiv

In recent years a Tel Aviv architect named Tuvia Sagiv (see photo section) has vigorously championed the southern theory and added significant new arguments for its support. He began by looking at the topography of the Temple Mount from the perspective of his architectural expertise. He found that, according to the Mishnah, the main entrance to the Temple area from the south and the Holy of Holies had a difference in height of about 10 meters with about 39 meters between the entrance to the Temple Mount and the Temple above. Yet when he compared these dimensions to the Dome of the Rock, the traditional site of the Holy of Holies, he discovered the difference was 20 meters and 80 meters respectively. This led him to the conviction that the Temple had to have been located at a lower, more southern position.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, according to Sagiv, the fosse (dry moat) that once existed north of the Temple Mount was also *north* of the Antonia Fortress. Based on this reasoning, he locates the Antonia Fortress where the Dome of the Rock is today. Sagiv further found that Josephus had stated that the Bezetha Hill, north of the Temple Mount, obscured the view of the Temple from the north. But if the Temple was located where the Dome of the Rock stands this would not be the case; therefore, the Temple would have to be lower (south) to be obscured by this hill.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, he discovered in his reading of Josephus that when King Herod Agrippa looked out the window of his palace (near the present Jaffa

Gate), he was able to see the sacrifices on the altar outside the Second Temple. However, if the Temple was located at the site of the Dome of the Rock, Agrippa's palace would have had to have been 75 meters high in order to see into the sacred precinct. Since no building is recorded to have been built to this height, the location of the Temple must have been lower.<sup>26</sup> One item of evidence that Sagiv finds particularly impressive is the remains of a water conduit (located in the side of the embankment near the southern stairs that ascend to the Jewish Quarter) that supplied water to the high priest's *miqveh* (ritual bath) situated above the Water Gate and to the Temple Mount for the purpose of rinsing sacrificial blood from the area. But a survey of the level of this aqueduct proved to him that if the Temple had been at the level of the Dome of the Rock, it would have been 20 meters too low to serve these sites. Again, the Temple would have had to be lower in elevation (to the south) for this to have worked.<sup>27</sup>

Sagiv has added to his research by non-invasive ground-penetrating radar probes (conducted in 1990) and thermal infrared fly-by scans (conducted 1993-1995) of the Western Wall, the open area behind the Wall toward the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Temple platform.<sup>28</sup> These revealed pentagon-shaped ruins beneath the Dome of the Rock, which Sagiv believes was a high place of Ash-toreth during the First Temple period, then became a part of Strabo's Tower in the Hasmonean period, and finally was incorporated into the Antonia Fortress in the Herodian period. He then assumes that the Muslims were either confused or deceived by the Jews into believing these remains were those of the Temple and built the Dome of the Rock over them.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Sagiv conjectured that if Hadrian's temple of Jupiter had been built over the ruins of the Second Temple, and the Temple was to the south, then perhaps the plans of the similarly built second/third century A.D. temple of Jupiter at Baalbek (modern Lebanon) would line up with this southern area.<sup>30</sup> It did, and proved to him that the Arabs had built both the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque over the remains of Hadrian's Roman temple. Based on this evidence, combined with the subterranean lines discernable in this area on the infrared scans, Sagiv was able to determine the Temple's exact location. This he places in the open area directly behind the Western Wall and between the present-day Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in the area of Al Kas, a sacred Muslim fountain that today sits on a north-south axis through the Dome and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. According to Sagiv's orientation, the Al Kas fountain would mark the site of the Temple's Holy of Holies (see diagram on page 338). Furthermore, passing down the length of this site, and possibly forming its axis, is the main east-west line of the Roman-

period street known as the *decumanus*, which stretched eastward from the Jaffa Gate along the line of the ancient first wall of David's city. East of the Temple Mount, in the Kidron Valley, the terminus of this line is marked by the prominent, 45-foot-tall monument popularly credited as Absalom's Tomb, but most likely built in the Herodian era toward the end of the first century B.C. The distance from the corner of the tower at the Jaffa Gate to Absalom's Tomb is 2000 cubits, measured by a cubit of 1.728 feet (0.526694 metres), the same as that by which the Temple was built.

### *The Northern Location*

The theory of a northern location has been proposed by Asher Kaufman (see photo section), a Scottish immigrant who is a professor of physics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Rachah Institute. In 1977 he published his defense of the northern theory in his paper, "New light upon Zion: the plan and precise location of the Second Temple," followed in later years by additional articles in numerous Israeli journals and American archaeological magazines.<sup>31</sup> His initial inquiry was stimulated by Ezekiel 8:16, where the prophet's view of the Jerusalem Temple gave an indication of the Temple's orientation. According to this text Ezekiel saw a vision of "about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and they were prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun." This indicated that the Temple was orientated eastward, directly facing the Mount of Olives.

Kaufman found another clue in Numbers 19, which describes the ceremony of the Red Heifer that took place on the Mount of Olives (for more on this ceremony, see chapter 16 of this book). At a special spot directly across from the Eastern Gate the high priest sprinkled the blood of the heifer directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times before burning the carcass to ashes. The Rambam records that all the walls of the Temple were high except the wall to the east, which was lower. "Thus, the priest [who offered the Red Heifer] could see the opening of the Temple when he sprinkled its blood, while standing on the Mount of Olives" (Mishneh Torah, *Hilchot Beit HaBechirah* 6:6). Therefore, this place must have been on the eastward extension of the Temple's axis, near the summit of the Mount of Olives. By further study of archaeological records and relics, Kaufman was able to identify the probable site of the Red Heifer ritual, to fix the line of the Temple's axis, and to discover the original ground plan of the building.<sup>32</sup> According to his measurements, a straight line runs from this point on the Mount of Olives through the Eastern Gate and to the top of a

small cupola at the northwestern end of the Temple platform. This eastern orientation had also been suggested by the Mishnah tractate *Middot*, and led Kaufman to conclude that this alignment removed the Dome of the Rock from consideration as the site of the Temple.

To support his theory Kaufman sought physical evidence from possible structural remains above and below the ground at this site on the Temple platform. While his only access to the evidence beneath the Temple Mount consisted of reports written by British explorers a century ago, his survey on the enclosed platform produced some relevant new discoveries. Of special merit was a bedrock mass near the northeastern steps leading up to a small Muslim cupola on the Temple Mount. He compared these remains and others shown on old German World War I reconnaissance photos and photos he took of rock outcroppings now concealed by the Arabs. Based on a study of these remains, which he concluded were originally the northwest corner of the Court of the Priests, he determined that the Temple was formerly at the place marked by a small, open, domed and pillared sixteenth-century Muslim cupola that covered a flat patch of outcropping bedrock (see photo section). Further confirmation of this seemed to emerge upon a closer examination of the nature of this cupola. The bedrock inside the cupola (and extending a little outside) is the only such bedrock appearing on the Temple Mount esplanade. Was it the *Even Shetiyyah* (“Foundation Stone”) had that protruded in the ancient Holy of Holies? Significantly, this bedrock appears to be pitted, a detail that agrees with the description by the fourth-century Bordeaux pilgrim of the Foundation Stone—called in his account the “Pierced Stone”—because it had numerous imprints of the hobnails of soldiers’ boots. Adding to this identification was Kaufman’s discovery of the Arabic names for this cupola: *Qubbat al-Arwah* (“the Dome of the Winds or Spirits”) and *Qubbat el-Aloah* (“the Dome of the Tablets”). We know that Arabic titles often preserve original place names; were these dual titles reminiscent of the divine presence that accompanied the Ark that once occupied the Temple? Kaufman believes that they are, and that this further confirmed that this cupola had been built over the spot of the ancient Holy of Holies.

Based on this evidence, Kaufman placed the location of the first two Temples approximately 330 feet north of the Dome of the Rock. As a result of this northern placement of the Temple, the Western Wall is no longer adjacent to the holy precinct but merely a supporting wall for the Court of the Gentiles. Concerning the historical identification of the Dome of the Rock with the Temple, Kaufman argues that the exact knowledge of that location was unknown to the

Muslim Caliph who erected the Dome in A.D. 691 and that the sources identifying the Rock under the Dome as the site of the Temple lack historical validity.<sup>33</sup> This agrees with an old story that the guide who directed the Caliph to the site of the Rock was a Jew who, knowing the original location, deliberately deceived him so that a Muslim mosque would not be built over the site of the holy Temple.<sup>34</sup> In Kaufman's view the Rock beneath the Dome is part of the Hadrianic temple of Jupiter, which this pagan emperor chose to place in the Second Temple's Court of the Gentiles because its central location on the platform followed the pagan placement of temples. Therefore, the Rock within served as a speaker's platform, as did Mars Hill in the Areopagus in Athens (see Acts 17:19-22). When Queen Helena, the mother of Christian emperor Constantine the Great, came to the Holy Land in A.D. 326 to restore the Christian holy places, she, Kaufman contends, was not interested in archaeological authenticity. Rather, she wanted to eradicate the existing pagan temples and shrines and replace them with Christian structures. Accordingly, she turned the temple of Jupiter into a monastery dedicated to Saint Jacob. When the Muslims conquered the city in A.D. 638, it was this monastery they turned into a mosque.

Kaufman's view has attracted the attention of prophecy-minded evangelical Christians who believe his theory removes the major obstacle for the rebuilding of the Temple today.<sup>35</sup> If, they say, the Temple could be built alongside the Dome of the Rock,<sup>36</sup> then the only obstacle preventing the construction of the Temple is negotiations with the Arabs to share the Temple Mount. Those who argue this position believe they have scriptural support for their view in Revelation 11:2, a passage that mentions leaving out "the court which is outside the Temple"—where, according to Kaufman's theory, the Dome of the Rock today stands. Because in Revelation this court is left out of the Third Temple's measurements ("for it has been given to the nations"), it is argued that it has been reserved for the "nation" of Islam, leaving the area to the north for Israel to rebuild the Temple. The objection raised to this interpretation is that simply moving the location of the Temple to the northwest for Jewish worship while leaving an area only 100 yards away for Muslim worship would not resolve the problem of the sanctity necessary for the rebuilding the Temple. Orthodox Jews believe that such a compromise would go against the commandment of not having other gods before the Lord (Exodus 20:3), which the presence of the Islamic deity Allah and his worshipers would represent. This would defile the Temple Mount and prevent Jewish worship, which requires ceremonial purity. Kaufman him-

self rejects this Christian interpretation and in fact distances himself from any speculation about the rebuilding of the Third Temple.

### *The Central Location*

The tradition that has come down through the ages from the reports of the earliest pilgrimages to the Temple has been of a central location for the Temple on the enclosed platform, almost always at the site of the Muslim Dome of the Rock. Because the central theory was also accepted and passed down by Torah sages, their rulings have largely settled the question of location for most Orthodox Jews, as one such writer explains:

Those faithful to the branches of Torah do not change the clear ruling of the Radbaz, on which the entire Jewish People has relied on all questions of the Temple and sacrifices. Once the Radbaz has sanctioned the central opinion, it is there, it was there, and it will be there until there is a Prophet in Israel or, alternatively, until another location is proven for sure to be the site—not different versions, not questions, and not estimates. Therefore, the Rock at the center of the Dome of the Rock is the center of the Holy of Holies, and it is the corner stone to all measurements—the locations of the inner and outer courtyard, the location of the altar, the *chel* [“rampart”], and the entire Mount, which is today three times as large as the original Sanctified Temple Mount (see Tractate *Middot*) G-d willing, when we will be able to dig and reveal our dear coveted glory in the depths of the Mount, we will be able to discuss whether it is the correct place. Until then, a judge can only rule based upon what his eyes see—the *halacha* is not in Heaven and not overseas. Since one can execute based on an established status, one should use the established status accordingly, whether regarding the sanctity of the location and the *mitzvot* of the *Mikdash* [“commandments of the Temple”].<sup>37</sup>

Archaeologists have generally agreed on the central theory and that the Dome of the Rock marks the site of the Temple. There has been, however, considerable debate as to whether the Rock within the Dome was very significant to the Temple itself. David Jacobson (more on this in a moment) has argued that the Temple was built over the Rock but that it lay between the Sanctuary floor and played no part in the Temple. Most Orthodox Jews in the Temple movement believe otherwise. They argue that the Rock protruded above the floor of the Holy of Holies and served as the site for the Holy Ark. On the other hand, the late

Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren argued that the Rock was the site of the Altar of Sacrifice. In his opinion, if the Rock was the *Even Shetiyyah* (“The Foundation Stone”), and the Holy of Holies rested upon it, then the entire Temple would have to be shifted to the east to accommodate the amount of room at the back of the Temple as is indicated by the historical sources. If the Rock is the site of the Temple’s altar (as the legitimate successor of David’s altar),<sup>38</sup> then the Holy of Holies would be located west of the Dome of the Rock, on or near the present fifteenth-century *Sebil of Qaitbai*.

Because of the importance of this debate, let’s consider these two theories concerning the Temple’s location at the center of the Mount with respect to the Rock within the Dome of the Rock, and examine some new evidence from experts based on their personal investigations and excavations.

### The Theory of the Rock as the Site of the Altar

Many Orthodox Jewish scholars follow Rabbi Goren’s conclusions and identify the Rock as the base of the great Altar of Sacrifices. Jewish tradition also lends support to this theory. For example, in the *Midrashim* it is written that the rock is the *Even Akedah* (“the Stone of Binding”) and marks the place where Abraham bound his son Isaac and laid him on an altar, but that the Holy of Holies was built over the place where the ram was caught in the thicket, a short distance away. Such tradition further identifies the Rock as not only the escarpment of Mount Moriah where the offering of Isaac was attempted, but also as the threshing floor of Arunah the Jebusite, which King David purchased and upon which he pitched the Tabernacle. Using figures of the *Shiltai HaGiborim*, based on tractate *Middot*, one scholar has sought to prove that the Rock is over the place of the Altar.<sup>39</sup> Structural features that seem to argue for the Dome of the Rock being the place of the Altar of Sacrifice are the bored hole for the drainage of blood and fluids; the cave directly below this perforation, which was said to collect the ash and drainage from above; and extensive reservoirs and aqueducts beneath the floor, including a canal running north that would carry away the refuse and water used in the rituals. How else, it is argued, can these features be explained if this is not the site of the Altar?

The material evidence for this view came immediately after the liberation of the Temple Mount in 1967, when Rabbi Goren assembled a team to carefully measure the distances from the outer walls (assumed to be the compound enclosure of the Second Temple) to the place of the inner walls (the Inner Court

or 'Azarah) within which stood the Temple. These measurements were compared against the standard of those given in Talmudic sources (principally *Middot* and *Shekalim*), and found to agree. Based on this survey, the location of the Temple, the Altar, and the Holy of Holies could be calculated. Rabbi Goren thus concluded: "The Holy of the Holies is not within, or beneath, nor is it located within the Dome of the Rock. The Moslems are mistaken. I made the measurements right after the Six-Day War, and I came to the conclusion, and it is one hundred percent [certain], that the Holy of the Holies is outside the Dome of the Rock, to the west side."<sup>40</sup>

Even though Goren was positive of his findings, he still believed it was necessary to await the prophet of the last days who would come and "confirm" his survey by personally identifying the exact locations. Therefore, the only use others have made of his survey has been to determine the boundaries of sanctity for those Jews wishing to pray on the Temple Mount. Even so, Goren's conclusion has been the basis of the Temple Mount Faithful's (see chapter 19) claim that the Temple could be built "tomorrow," since its exact location is known. However, some Israeli archaeologists, such as Dan Bahat, do not accept the accuracy of Goren's survey.

### The Theory of the Rock as the Site of the Holy of Holies

The most-recognized site of the Temple by Jews, Muslims, and Christians is the Dome of the Rock. As Rabbi Chaim Richman says, "We have a tradition that has been passed down in an unbroken chain from our fathers that the Rock, the stone underneath the Dome of the Rock, is the 'foundation stone.'"<sup>41</sup> While some have argued that Jews deceived the Arabs in the seventh century A.D. as to the true location of the Temple (as well as the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron), the Caliph Omar who first came to the stone had almost 700 years of Christian witness to confirm his choice. For all that length of time the stone had become the dumping place for refuse and garbage as a result of Christianity having adopted replacement theology. Thus, unless Christians themselves were deceived as to the ruins of the Temple, the Muslims identified the same spot but with the intent to revere it as the former site of Solomon's Temple. This was in keeping with Arab policy, as Yirmiyahu Fischer notes:

It is the custom of Moslems to erect shrines and mosques in places that other religions regard as holy. In Israel, this has been the case at the Machpela Cave (where the patriarchs and matriarchs are buried), at the

Prophet Shmuel's ["Samuel's"] grave site, at the the prophets Gad and Natan's grave site, etc. Even in India, Moslems have built mosques on the sites of Hindu temples. The fact that Moslems do keep a shrine there is a proof that this was considered to be the placement of the *Beit HaMikdash* ["Temple"].<sup>42</sup>

There was even a belief in the early Muslim period that the builder of the Dome of the Rock, the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, like the Persian king Cyrus, was prophesied to build this as a Temple for the Jewish people. As one Jewish commentator has noted:

Another work...attributed to the Jewish convert Ka'ab al-Ahbar, declares that he found a verse in one of the books saying, "Be it known to you, Jerusalem, *Bayt al-Maqdis* [Arabic term for Jerusalem = Temple], and *al-Sakhra* [Arabic term for the Dome of the Rock], and there are those who call it the Sanctuary. I will send you my servant, Abdel Malik and he will build you and decorate you. And I will return Jerusalem's government to her as it once was and...I will...place my Throne of Glory on *al-Sakhra*..." In these verses the Sanctuary is identified with the Dome of the Rock. Its construction by Abdel Malik was perceived as a fulfillment of this prophecy: ["I shall send you from your descendants kings and prophets of Mecca that his nation will build the Temple of Jerusalem..."].<sup>43</sup>

Israeli archaeologists, for the most part, agree that the First and Second Temples were on the site of the Dome of the Rock. This was stated as the official position of the Israeli Antiquities Authority when they sided against Asher Kaufman (in support of the Wakf!) in a legal dispute over the question of Islamic destruction of ancient remains on the Temple Mount.<sup>44</sup> For example, Dan Bahat, former district archaeologist for Jerusalem and consulting archaeologist for the Western Wall Tunnel excavation, has stated:

I will say right now that the Temple was standing exactly where the Dome of the Rock is today on the Temple Mount. I want to say explicitly and clearly that we believe that the Rock under the Dome is the *precise site* of the Holy of Holies. [To be more accurate], the Temple extended *exactly* to the place where the Dome is. The "Foundation Stone" [= Rock within the Dome] is actually that stone which comprised the Holy of Holies....

If this site were not the site of the Temple, we would not have the sanctity that has been bestowed upon that stone for centuries. The church

fathers describe how the Jews were coming every year to that place, and the Moslems chose to build their sanctuary on the very same stone because they were aware of the Jewish tradition. . . . Omar, the Moslem conqueror of Jerusalem, was brought by a Jew straight to that stone and not to another one. So the tradition is quite clear about the tradition of this place.<sup>45</sup>

However, a theory needs more than verbal affirmations for its support, and this theory has impressive evidence in its favor.

One of the best-known proponents of this view, Leen Ritmeyer, spent 22 years in Israel and 16 years in Jerusalem excavating below the Temple Mount with Benjamin Mazar and served as the archaeological architect to the expedition until its end in 1978. He then pursued a doctorate at the University of Manchester, completing his dissertation on the location of the Temple. Today he heads Ritmeyer Archaeological Design in England and has published his research in a number of publications and materials related to the Temple.<sup>46</sup>

Ritmeyer's research has weighed more heavily upon known archaeological evidence and deductions from identifiable remains than upon the historical sources. His approach was to first establish the original dimensions of the Temple platform, starting with an archaeological clue he discovered at the base of today's Muslim platform, and then work systematically from this evidence to pinpoint the Temple's location. He says of the superiority of this approach: "There are two other proposals for the location of the Temple. . . and both start their research in the Temple Mount by saying the Holy of Holies is here, or it is in another place. I don't think that it is the right approach, unless you could find definite archaeological evidence that this was the place where the Temple stood. It's a wrong methodology to start saying here is the Holy of Holies and then try to plot a Temple and then the courts around it. My methodology was completely the opposite."

Ritmeyer realized that although the Bible does not describe the shape of Solomon's Temple platform, it does refer to the large court set around the Temple and the Royal Palace (1 Kings 7:2). The plan of a royal residence and court in connection with a Temple edifice has parallels at other sites in Israel and may be patterned after the First Temple plan.<sup>47</sup> Such parallels reveal *square-shaped* enclosures for their sacred precincts. Moreover, the Mishnah tractate *Middot* (2:1) clearly specifies the square dimensions of the Temple platform, and records its measurements as 500 cubits (861 feet) on a side.<sup>48</sup> It also provides a crucial comparative ratio of the spacial dimensions on each side of the Temple.

*Middot* most likely preserves details about the rebuilt Second Temple, which in its pre-Herodian form did not differ from the First Temple plan, since the returning exiles were in no position to create new walls. Rather, they simply repaired those originally destroyed by the Babylonians.

If the precise measurements of the Temple platform can now be ascertained, then the location of the Temple itself can be successfully deduced according to this plan. Ritmeyer's evidence may be summarized as follows:

1. The original 500 cubit square platform has been determined after eliminating later extensions added during the Hasmonean period (second century B.C.) and the Herodian period (20 B.C.–A.D. 70). These reductions to the present platform, along with archaeological clues to the direction of the original walls, indicate that the Solomonic First Temple walls enclosing the Temple platform were on the *west* from step/wall remains at the northwest corner to approximately Barclay's Gate; on the *south* from Barclay's Gate to a bend in the present eastern wall north of the straight joint; on the *east* from this bend to an offset in the wall just north of the present Eastern Gate; and on the *north* from this offset back to the step/wall remains.

2. *Middot* 2:1 states that the Temple was situated so that the surrounding courts all had different dimensions. The largest open space was on the *south*, the next largest on the *east*, the next on the *north*, with the least space on the *west*. Kaufman had contended that this plan for the Temple ruled out the placement of the site at the Dome of the Rock; however, he was assuming that the present dimensions of the Herodian platform were original. Ritmeyer's demonstration that a substantial area of the Herodian platform to the north was a Herodian extension, and that to the south there was both a Hasmonean extension and a Herodian, has changed significantly the basis for this assumption. Ritmeyer utilized his expertise as an architect to draw the Temple to scale according to the measurements given in tractate *Middot*. In doing so he observed that in order to fulfill the requirements of the dimensional ratios with the southern court as the largest and the other parts diminishing in a counterclockwise direction, the Temple had to be built around *es-Sakhra* ("the Rock"). Thus, Ritmeyer reached his conclusion not by starting at *es-Sakhra*, but by working from the outside (the platform) toward the center (the Dome of the Rock).

3. Topographic studies have shown that *es-Sakhra* is a natural rock mass that constitutes the top of the middle part of the eastern hill of Jerusalem. As we have noted, Josephus records that the Temple was built on the top of the mountain,

and this precludes any spot other than that encompassed by the Dome of the Rock. Ritmeyer finds confirmation of this fact in Warren's plans. While *es-Sakhra* today stands about five to six feet above the floor of the Dome of the Rock, a short distance outside, in cisterns to the immediate north and southeast, Warren had measured the difference in height from the top of *es-Sakhra* to be between 13–15 feet. Ritmeyer observed that this bedrock gently sloped upwards from the points measured by Warren to the base of *es-Sakhra*, and determined that in relation to the immediately surrounding bedrock, *es-Sakhra* actually stands some ten feet above it. *Middot* specified that the height of the Temple foundations were six cubits (ten feet)<sup>49</sup>, which accords exactly with Ritmeyer's measurements. It appears that these foundations of 6 cubits height were necessary to bury *es-Sakhra* in order to create a level platform on which to build the Temple.

4. If the Temple is located on the site of the Dome of the Rock, then all of the underground cisterns (with one eastern exception) in the vicinity of *es-Sakhra* would fall outside the Sanctuary. This is to be expected, since no one would be drawing water within the Sanctuary itself. In addition, a large cistern in the southeastern corner of the square would ideally be situated in proximity to the Brazen Altar next to the site of the ancient Water Gate. This would have provided a convenient source for the water necessary for the service of the Temple.

5. A location of the Temple at *es-Sakhra* would correlate well with the historical and archaeological evidence of priestly exit tunnels. *Middot* 1:3 records that priests officiating in the Temple who happened to have a nocturnal seminal emission (and thus would become ceremonially defiled) would leave the Temple by means of a subterranean passageway that wound around until it reached a ritual immersion room (where he would become ceremonially pure again). The Tanaitic sage Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said, "He goes out by the passage which leads below the rampart, and so he came to the Tadi Gate." This same text refers to the Tadi Gate as being located *north* of the Temple and describes it as "serving no purpose at all." Ritmeyer's research has clarified this statement by showing that the northern extension of the Temple platform by Herod buried access to this gate, rendering it useless, although the underground passageway leading to this gate continued to be used by the priests. The British explorers Warren and Conder concluded that if two cisterns immediately north and west of *es-Sakhra* were extended farther north they would meet exactly at a point where the Tadi Gate was located. Ritmeyer has concluded that the northern cistern was prob-

ably the passageway reached by descending from the Chamber of the Hearth (one of three gates on the north of the inner court of the Temple), while the western cistern was the immersion room itself. In fact, the northern cistern is directly in line with the Rock under the Dome of the Rock and with the passageways of the southern Double Gate, which also may have passed between other immersion rooms.<sup>50</sup> Ritmeyer finds great architectural importance in this alignment, since pilgrims approaching from either the north (the Tadi Gate) or the south (the Huldah Gates), would always see *first* whatever was built on that Rock—by his reckoning, the Temple (and especially the Holy of Holies).

Further investigation of the Rock within the Dome of the Rock led Ritmeyer to the conclusion that he could not only identify indications of some of the walls of the Holy of Holies within the structure, but also the actual spot where the Ark of the Covenant had once rested on the Rock. Ritmeyer explains how he came to this determination:

It took me 20 years to figure it out. I was convinced that the Temple must have stood somewhere here. I started to look at the measurements of the Rock and the interior measurements of the Temple. We know that the interior measurements of the Temple were 20 cubits wide. The Holy [Place] was 40 cubits long and the Holy of Holies was 20 by 20 cubits. If you use the measurements of the 500 cubits measurements from the Mishnah it would measure 10.5 meters thereabouts. Comparing that with the size of the Rock, the Rock is larger than the Holy of Holies. Yet, the Mishnah [*Yoma* 5:2] says that this stone is called ‘*Even Ha-Shetiyah*, “the Foundation Stone.” Why would they call it the Foundation Stone? Because if the Holy of Holies was smaller than the Rock, then the Rock would have served as a foundation for at least one of the Temples. With that information in mind, I started looking closer at the Rock looking for a foundation.<sup>51</sup>

Ritmeyer’s look at the Rock began first by eliminating the signs of Crusader quarrying on the Rock, which in A.D. 1099 had been captured from the Muslims and converted into a Christian church called *Templum Domini* (“the Temple of the Lord”). He attributed cuts in the Rock on the north, south, and west sides to their actions. The Crusaders thought that the rock disfigured the Temple of the Lord and so shaped it into a more acceptable size and built an altar on top of the Rock. In 1187, when the Caliph Saladin recaptured the Dome of the Rock, they found it covered with marble slabs. Once they had removed the slabs they found that the Rock had been mutilated. This mutilation also affected the cave, and

deep tunnels dug beneath the Rock may indicate attempts by the Crusaders to locate the suspected hiding place of the Ark. The natural cave below the Rock was identified by the Crusaders as the Holy of Holies; there, they commemorated the angel's visit to Zacharias (Luke 1:11-20). They enlarged this cave in order to use it as a sanctuary. Because they burned candles and incense in the cave, it was necessary for them to cut a vertical shaft for ventilation (the present hole in the Rock).

Before the Crusaders, the upper level would have been larger and flatter and filled most of the Holy of Holies. Ritmeyer measured the flat areas at the southern part of the Rock, which formed foundation trenches, and found their combined dimensions agreed perfectly with the known thickness of the walls of the Second Temple (six cubits, or ten feet and four inches). This established the site of the southern wall of the Holy of Holies, with its back wall resting against the unchangeable natural rockscarp along the west. The northern wall would have been adjacent to the northern end of the Rock itself. The placement of these walls also agreed with Ritmeyer's earlier identification of the placement of the original Temple platform. He found that the direction of the western scarp was virtually identical to that of the step remains and of the eastern wall of the Temple Mount. Therefore, the First and Second Temples would have had the same orientation—the longitudinal axis of the Temple at right angles with the eastern wall. This axis is also aligned with the highest point on the Mount of Olives, where the sacrifice of the Red Heifer (necessary for ritual purification) took place (see next chapter). This became a further confirmation to Ritmeyer of his location of the Temple.

Having identified these structures, Ritmeyer began looking for additional clues that would help to position the Holy of Holies. He tells the story of how this happened:

Once I began to research this problem in the spring of 1994, the secrets of the *Sakhra* revealed themselves to me in such rapid succession that it was sometimes breathtaking. While flying to Israel, 30,000 feet high in the air, I got my first glimpse of the most spectacular of all the discoveries, namely that of the former location of the Ark of the Covenant! Averting my gaze from the in-flight video, I took out a large photograph of the *Sakhra* from my briefcase and tried to trace again those flat areas, which of course, were familiar to me as foundation trenches...I sketched over the flat areas on the photograph of the *Sakhra* the line of the southern wall of the Holy of Holies...I drew the western edge of the

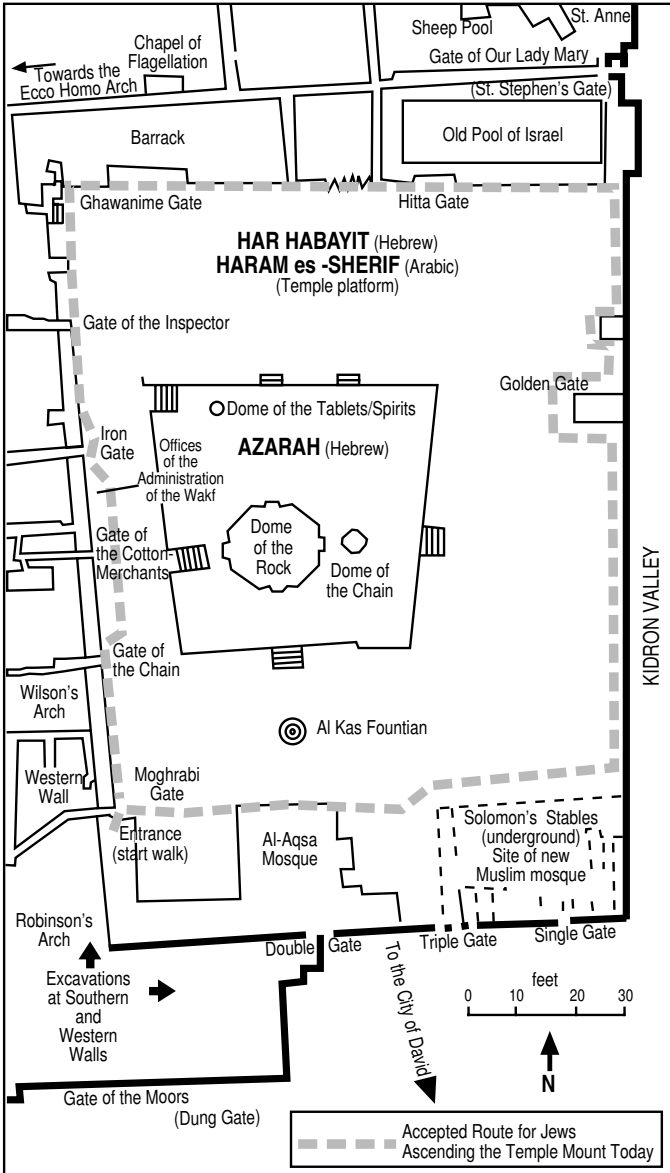
Rock and the northern wall at the northern end of the exposed rock. . . . I also drew a dotted line where the veil, which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy, would have hung. I did not expect to find any remains there as no wall existed there. I then suddenly noticed in the middle of this square a dark rectangle! What could it be? The first thing that came to mind was, of course, the Ark of the Covenant, which once stood in the centre of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple. But that surely could not be true, I thought. . . . [However,] according to my plan, it falls exactly in the centre of the Holy of Holies. The dimensions of this level basin agree with those of the Ark of the Covenant, which were 1.5 x 2.5 cubits (2'7" x 4'4" or 79 cm. x 131 cm.), with the longitudinal axis coinciding with that of the Temple. Its location is rather unique, as it could only have been the place where the Ark of the Covenant once stood. It is clear that without such a flat area the Ark would have wobbled about in an undignified manner, which would not conceivably have been allowed.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, according to Ritmeyer, this rectangular depression served as an incised base to secure the Ark within the Holy of Holies (see photo section). It could not have been a creation of the Crusaders because they covered the Rock with slabs to hide it. Moreover, they still would not have used it; they would have placed a statue in the middle of the Rock, but not in such a base at the north of the Rock (where the depression would have been at that time).<sup>53</sup> Only archaeological excavation will be able to conclusively confirm Ritmeyer's hypotheses, but his observations have added significantly to the theory that the Dome of the Rock is the site of the Temple.

### *The Theory of the Rock Beneath the Site of the Holy Place*

Another theory, advanced by David M. Jacobson, who holds a doctorate in materials science from the University of Sussex (England), also centrally locates the Temple on the present *Haram es-Sharif*, but differs from Ritmeyer in that his positioning of the Temple places the Rock within the main hall of the Holy Place, known as the *Hekhal*. However, he argues that the Rock lay beneath this floor of the Temple and therefore it, as other existing structures on the Temple platform, offers no help in the search for the Temple's true location. Thus, he sought to deduce the ancient site based on the large-scale features of the expanded platform, or *temenos* (enclosure), that Herod constructed around the Temple. Jacobson's published research<sup>54</sup> has led him to several conclusions:

# The Temple Mount Today



1. The shape of the Herodian Temple Mount enclosure was a trapezium (like a rectangle) and therefore is not coextensive with the present shape of the *Haram es-Sharif* platform as an irregular quadrilateral. The original outline is preserved in the present boundaries of the *Haram* on three sides (east, west, and south), but not on the north, where only the present northwestern corner of this wall can be identified as Herodian.

2. The position of both the Northern Wall and the Temple itself can be deduced based on the geometric order of construction governing the area of the enclosure. Jacobson first found a 60-degree angle was formed between the Southern Wall and the diagonal (hypotenuse) of a right-angled triangle created by drawing a line from the northwest corner to the southeast corner of the Herodian Temple Mount. This resulted in two discoveries that enabled Jacobson to pinpoint the Temple. First, he found that the ratio of the Southern Wall to the Western Wall (which created the right-angled triangle with the 60-degree angle at the southeast corner) was exactly the width-to-length ratio of the rectangular enclosure that Herod had constructed around the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Second, the geometrical plan of the 60-degree angle, which had governed classical architecture in the early Roman period, was especially a signature of Herodian architects, as examples in buildings at Masada and the Herodium, as well as the building's mosaic decoration (the rosette pattern), confirm. When this geometrical construction plan was superimposed on the Temple platform, it enabled Jacobson to locate the Northern Wall in its original alignment parallel to the Southern Wall as commencing at the eastern edge of the Antonia and terminating at the junction with the end of the Eastern Wall (discovered underground by Charles Warren in the nineteenth century). Jacobson then fixed the east-west axis of the Temple Mount halfway between the Southern Wall and his conjectured Northern Wall. Next he fixed the north-south axis midway between the passageways that led from two tunnel entrances at the Southern Wall (Double and Triple Gates). At the intersection of these two axes he conjectured that an important structure related to the Temple must have existed. This, he argues, must have been the Altar of Sacrifice, the central focus of public worship, rather than the Temple, because the placement of the Temple there would leave insufficient space for the Court of the Women to the east of the Temple's entrance. Starting with this location, Jacobson used the measurements provided in both the Mishnah and Josephus to draw a plan of the Temple outward from the Altar, based on a scale of one cubit equal to 18.55 inches. This plan centrally locates the Altar in front of the Temple, in a position that would

have allowed visibility of the Sanctuary entrance from the summit of the Mount of Olives (as prescribed by *Middot* 2:4).

3. The spots Jacobson identified for the Temple and the Altar are today occupied by the Muslim Dome of the Rock and the Dome of the Chain, a large cupola that sits directly east of the Dome of the Rock, sharing with it a raised inner asymmetrical platform. His measurements from the center of the Dome of the Chain to that of the Dome of the Rock were found to correspond almost exactly with those given in the Mishnah (*Middot* 4.6-7) for the distance between the Altar and the Temple. In addition, the dimensions of these two structures themselves almost precisely match those of the Temple and the Altar. Believing this indicated that the seventh-century Muslim Arabs that conquered the site intentionally preserved the memory of the original sacred construction, he found that other features of the present Islamic platform also duplicate elements of the Herodian Temple Mount and confirm the location of the Holy of Holies within the Temple. Measurements from the center of the Dome of the Chain to the northern and western edges of the inner platform produce a square whose dimensions (426 cubits) fall between the sets of measurements of the sacred square of the Temple precinct given by Josephus (400 cubits) and the Mishnah (500 cubits). Moreover, a terrace wall situated 121 feet south of the inner platform apparently marked the *Soreg* (boundary) of the Herodian Temple precinct. This was based on photographs from the early 1870s, which clearly revealed a flight of four monumental steps (no longer extant) ascending to a southern terrace that ran parallel to the Herodian monumental staircase at the Southern Wall. Jacobson identifies these steps with the *crediodoma*, a set of monumental steps found in classical temple design that symbolized the entry into the sacred precinct. Furthermore, Israeli archaeologist Ronny Reich had identified two underground structures immediately south of the *crepiodoma*, originally thought to be cisterns, as *miqva'ot* (ritual immersion pools). Jacobson believes that these pools, oriented on the same east-west axis as the Temple mount and parallel to the staircase at the Southern Wall, represented the last opportunity for those coming to the Temple to ritually purify themselves, thereby confirming his location of the Temple.

4. Aligning the Holy of Holies along a common axis with the Altar placed it a little to the west of the Rock within the Dome of the Rock, yet still within the Sanctuary itself. This coincides with Josephus' testimony that the Temple was built on top of the mountain (*Antiquities* vii. 97), and agrees with the tradition

that identifies the Dome of the Rock with the Temple. However, based on the remains of a pilaster course found near the northern end of the Western Wall, the Herodian enclosure was at the same level as the present *Haram es-Sharif*. In this case, the floor of the Temple, which would be still higher than the floor level of the outer court of the enclosure by an ascent of some 31 steps (about 24 feet), would completely bury the Rock within the present Muslim Dome of the Rock. Therefore, this underground Rock would not correspond to any feature of the Herodian Temple but simply mark the center of Mount Moriah, upon which the Temple was erected. According to Jacobson, the Rock's tradition as site of the Holy of Holies was due to its proximity to the original site and its identification by Christian pilgrims as the "Pierced Stone," a condition created as a result of the extensive construction efforts of Hadrian on the Temple Mount and the misidentification of the first Muslim conquerors. Consequently, though Jacobson diminishes the Rock's significance within the Temple, it serves for him as an additional confirmation of the site of the Temple at the summit of Mount Moriah, which underlay the Temple proper.

### **Conflicting Consequences of the Search for the Site**

Ironically, the search for the exact location of the Temple has resulted in problems for those whose ambition is to ascend the Temple Mount in preparation for the rebuilding of the Temple. For example, Michael Ben-Ari complains:

And now comes Sagiv and attempts to prove that "there is no way to know," for in his opinion, the location of the Temple was on the southern end of the Mount. Thus, today one must be wary of entrance to the Temple Mount at all. Indeed, in answer to the query why the Chief Rabbinate forbids entrance to the Temple Mount, the Office of the Chief Rabbinate relied on Sagiv's theory to "prove" and say "there is no way to know," and that there are "various opinions," etc.<sup>55</sup>

These various opinions have also created problems for those Israelis whose professional work (especially archaeology) requires them to avoid political and religious conflicts. Significantly, these theories are not treated as academic and theoretical but are taken quite seriously, and when used to support political activity, have the potential to overturn the present status quo on the Temple Mount itself! The problem here concerns both the Muslims, who do not want a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount, and the Jews, who are present daily at the

Western Wall at the foot of the Temple Mount. Concerning the Muslim problem, Dr. Dan Bahat, a lecturer in the Land of Israel Studies Department of Bar Ilan University and the consulting archaeologist for the Western Wall Tunnel excavation, has stated:

All these theories only do damage...because then the Arabs can say, "You yourselves are arguing about it. The Temple wasn't even on the Temple Mount." [For example] I once participated in a television show with Ziad Abu-Ziad [a prominent Palestinian public figure] and he said that Jerusalem is not the city of the Temple....Look, the connection of the Jews to Jerusalem is beyond all doubt. An observant Jew mentions Jerusalem three times a day [in the daily prayers]....the entire Bible talks about Jerusalem...[how] the Temple of the city symbolizes the presence of God....<sup>56</sup>

Bahat's concern is quite real. Since the Palestinian usurpation of the Temple Mount from the Jordanians, they have publicly charged that Israel has no right to their sacred site because it never had a connection to the Jews. They insist that there never was a Temple at this site and therefore no access should be granted Jews to pray at the holy places of Islam. Every competing view only increases the Palestinians' conviction that the Jews have no idea where their Temple was and strengthens their justification for keeping Jews off of the Temple Mount.

The Jewish problem has been created as a result of the archaeological data uncovered in researching the ancient location: The Western Wall (the famous "Wailing Wall," or the *Kotel*) to which Judaism has looked as the only remnant of the destroyed Temple and to which it longed to return for centuries, never was a part of the Temple complex at all! On the other hand, the evidence from archaeological research has confirmed that the eastern wall of the Temple Mount is the same wall that was present during the time of the Temple. Yet when the original measurements of the Temple Mount (500 cubits x 500 cubits) are considered, and when one measures the distance from the eastern wall, the Western Wall is not reached. It is parallel to the western wall of the original Temple Mount, but it is still further west of the sacred precinct. Again Dan Bahat comments:

With this supposition we present a problem for the observant Jew at the Western Wall. Why does he pray where he prays? Because he believes it is a part of the Holy Temple. Now we are showing him that he is really standing above a street that was built by Herod the Great. This was never a part of the sacred precinct. We are actually telling him that it

does not even follow the line of the boundary of the ancient sanctified Temple precinct, which was further to the east. In this sense, we are moving him away from his holy area.<sup>57</sup>

This fact is not in dispute among those who debate the various theories of location. Every view has demonstrated in their findings that the present Western Wall could not have had any relationship to the sacred area beyond it. The ramifications for this, as Bahat has stated, are that the Jewish people, and especially the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox in Israel, who practically live at the Western Wall, no longer have a holy site accessible to them. In 1967, when Israel captured the Temple Mount, the alternative to continuing Israeli control of the Temple Mount was to abandon it in favor of the Western Wall, since it had become traditionally established as the focal point of prayer and pilgrimage. But what will happen if these observant groups can be convinced that the Western Wall is in fact not holy and therefore not the God-ordained place for prayer? The conclusion is obvious—they will unanimously demand the Temple Mount! On the one hand this could cause greater problems—for Israel politically and for the secular Israelis' hope of peace in the Middle East—but on the other hand, it could be the very catalyst to bring resolution to the current question of the Temple's location. If the site were once again in Jewish hands, the location of the Temple could be confirmed archaeologically, and if this were to occur, how far behind would be the rebuilding of the Temple?

The answer to this somewhat rhetorical question is more complicated than it may at first appear. In the next chapter I will explain why, and reveal little-known “insider” information about what is being done to make possible a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount in preparation for the Last Days Temple.

# The Hunt for the Holy Heifer



## Purification in Preparation for the Last Days Temple

*In truth the fate of the entire world depends on the Red Heifer. For God has ordained that its ashes alone is the single missing ingredient for the restatement of biblical purity—and thereafter, the rebuilding of the Holy Temple.*

—RABBI CHAIM RICHMAN

*Nine Red Heifers were born during the time of the Tabernacle and the two Temples. The tenth, according to this tradition, will be born in the end-times for the Third Temple. Since the destruction of the Second Temple and in the time of the exile over the last 2000 years no Red Heifers have been born. . . . [But] now they are coming one after another, in Israel and on the ranches of friends of Israel. . . . It is a clear message from G-d to His people, Israel, that the time for the rebuilding of the Temple has come.*

—GERSHON SALOMON

The majority of Orthodox rabbis forbid Jewish entrance upon the Temple Mount on the grounds that someone might inadvertently tread upon the site of the Holy of Holies, which has retained its sanctity despite the loss of the Temple itself. Let us suppose, however, that all of the obstacles we have considered thus far were suddenly to be removed. The Muslims decided they were tired of the constant conflict with Jews and agreed to dismantle their mosques and go back to Mecca. The Israeli government encouraged Jews everywhere to ascend the holy hill and approved the rebuilding of the Temple. The archaeologists were able to excavate on the Temple Mount and resolve all questions as to exactly where the Temple stood. Could the Temple then be rebuilt?

Surprisingly the answer most rabbis give is no.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this may be illustrated simply: Someone may have use of the best recipe in the world, but if there is one ingredient missing, he cannot begin to cook. Leaving out even one essential would ruin the whole meal! In the same way, there is one essential in the mix of items necessary to rebuild the Temple that, if it is missing, prevents the project from ever getting started. Why is this missing ingredient so necessary?

## The Problem of Impurity

Israel's calling by God as a priestly Nation and the fact that God dwelt in the Nation's midst required the people to maintain a level of sanctity that made them distinct from the surrounding Gentile nations. The physical part of this distinction was ceremonial separation from all that represented sin and would render them unholy, thus disqualifying them from the divine service.

When it comes to sanctity, there are two Hebrew words that described the two opposite ends of the scale. At the top of the scale sanctity was *qadosh* ("holy"), and at the bottom of the scale was *tame'* ("unclean").<sup>2</sup> The term *qadosh*, the highest expression of holiness, is taken to the superlative degree with the place of God's presence—the Holy of the Holies (Hebrew, *Qodesh Qodeshim*) within the innermost part of the Temple. By contrast, the highest expression of unholiness also has a superlative level with corpse impurity, which is called "the father of fathers of impurity" (Hebrew, *'av 'avot ha-tumah*).<sup>3</sup> It is true that yet another Hebrew term, *hól* ("profane"), in fact constitutes the ultimate unholiness, but this is only because it *causes* corpse impurity to be incurred by the entire Nation of Israel, which results in destruction and exile (see this cause-and-effect relationship in Ezekiel 36:17-19). Therefore, as corpse impurity is experienced on a national level it affects the Temple, forcing the holy presence of God to depart from the Holy of Holies and therefore from the Nation

of Israel (Lamentations 4:13-16). It was this possibility that concerned the prophets when they leveled invectives against Israel's corrupt social and political life. Rather than abide by God's holy standards, Israel sought to imitate the surrounding nations, and consequently invited foreign invasion and the end of that which distinguished Israel's separateness: the Temple and its service. God had called the Land of Israel to be separated to Him and remain holy, and warned that any uncleanness would bring desecration. Therefore Israel was to remain clean by a constant adherence to God's own prescribed regulations for holiness (as given in the book of Leviticus). For this reason it was imperative that contact with the dead be limited, since such contact brought corpse impurity and made one unable to perform any holy service (Numbers 9:5-7). When a person died, he had to be buried immediately so as to limit the number of persons who could possibly incur this defilement, since contact with such persons brought ritual contamination that could spread to others. To be ceremonially cleansed from most kinds of ritual impurity one had to be immersed in spring water at a *miqveh* (ritual bath). But to be purified from defilement caused by contact with the dead, ritual immersion was not enough. Something special is required—something that is found in the 113th of the 613 Mandatory Commandments in Judaism. This commandment states: "The ashes of the Red Heifer are to be used in the process of ritual purification." According to Numbers 19, from which this commandment came, the only way to be cleansed from corpse impurity (including the case of unknown homicide, Deuteronomy 21:1-9) is to be sprinkled with water containing the ashes of a Red Heifer, and this water has to be handled by someone who is ceremonially clean.

Herein lies the problem: The state of corpse impurity has attached itself to every Jew in the whole Nation of Israel because all Jews have lived outside the Land among Gentile nations, where they have all incurred this defilement—without the means of the ceremonial system to restore their purity. Therefore, there does not exist today one single ceremonially clean person who can sprinkle everyone else with water containing the Red Heifer ashes. And there is another difficulty: There are no longer any Red Heifer ashes. After the destruction of the Temple no more Red Heifer ashes could be made,<sup>4</sup> making purification from corpse impurity harder and harder to do as the supply of ashes became depleted and the number of priests ritually qualified to perform the service diminished. Jewish tradition records that until the end of the period of the *Amoraim* there were still *Chaverim* (the name given to those who were very strict about avoiding defilement and who purified themselves from defilement

by the dead) remaining in Israel. But with the cessation and destruction of Jewish settlement in the country at the beginning of the Arab period, the ability to offer purification from corpse impurity died out completely. So today, with no means to ceremonially purify those who enter the Temple Mount area so that they don't defile the still-sanctified site of the Holy of Holies, there can be no Temple, priesthood, or sacrificial system. This, however, creates a catch-22, for in order to rebuild the Temple and restore the priesthood and sacrifices, Jews *must* be able to walk and work upon the Temple Mount!

The requirement to have a ceremonially clean priest on hand creates a problem in light of Exodus 25:8, which obligates the Jewish nation to rebuild the Temple whenever it becomes possible to do so. Activists in the Temple movement believe that despite the human condition, the Nation has sinned by not obeying this divine command. They argue that no Temple was ever built without human preparation (1 Kings 5-6; Ezra 3:7-11), and that this effort had divine approval (1 Chronicles 22:14; 23:4). They say that the Jews cannot simply wait for heaven to send the prophet Elijah and the Messiah as a sign of redemption, because this will not be done until there is national repentance and a willingness to begin the task of rebuilding (see *Yalkut Shimoni Samuel* 106). Neither Elijah nor the Messiah showed up at the previous rebuildings of the Temple. The only difference between then and now is that the Jews then had the ashes of the Red Heifer. Since the ashes are the means to reversing the present impurity of the Nation, those in the Temple movement have given top priority to restoring these ashes and reviving the ceremony of the Red Heifer.

## What is the Red Heifer?

Numbers chapter 19 specifies that only an unblemished Red Heifer (Hebrew *parah adumah*, "red cow") can be used for the ceremony—a Red Heifer without defect and on which a yoke has never been placed. The English translation of *heifer* denotes the animal as a young cow which has just reached maturity—the age (three years) at which it would be yoked for labor (see 1 Samuel 6:7). This is the age at which it can be slaughtered and burned and its ashes mixed with spring water to make the liquid used in the purification ceremony. The red color specified for the animal may symbolize blood, the agent of atonement. This symbolism was accepted by the rabbis, however, only as related to another calf—the golden calf—which had caused Israel to sin at the foot of Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:1-10). Rabbi Chaim Richman explains this connection: "It was this single event [sin of the golden calf] which introduced the concept of the impu-

rity of death into the world. . . . in the same way, the red heifer serves to atone for the spiritual chaos brought into the world through the golden calf.”<sup>5</sup> Through this symbolic association the rabbis also explained other details concerning this animal that were left unexplained in the biblical text. For example, the prohibition against the animal having a yoke symbolizes the yoke of God’s Law, which Israel threw off in the sin of the golden calf. The red color connects in this case with Israel’s sin, atoned for by the heifer’s ashes as described in Isaiah 1:18: “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they will be like wool.” The rabbis explained that the Red Heifer’s “red” must be perfect in its redness (no hairs of a different color), as Israel was faultless in its devotion to God before it sinned with the golden calf. Further explanation in connection with Mount Sinai, the incident of the golden calf, and especially the death of the high priest’s sons, has been offered by Martin Greenberg:

What can be the reasoning behind this seemingly arcane set of rules? . . . I suggest the following: The third-day sprinkling is intended to recall to the unclean person the three days of cleansing by the Israelites prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments. . . . The red heifer represents the golden calf. . . . The burning of the red heifer is equal to the grinding of the golden calf. The ashes mixed with water and the sprinkling of the water is equal to the drinking imposed by Moses. (Message: Eradicate idols and their worship.) . . . Aaron’s two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, then make an offering using “strange” (unauthorized) incense; fire comes forth from the Lord and consumes them. Thus, the burning of the red heifer also represents the burning of the wrongdoers, representative of violating the rules of worship. The sprinkling with the “waters of purification” on the seventh day of impurity is to impress on the individual the need for strict adherence to the rules of the sanctuary and need for preparation. . . . After the two sons are struck dead by “fire from the Lord,” Moses orders their dead bodies to be carried out of the camp by two of the Levite brethren (Lev. 10:4). The carriers became ritually unclean by reason of contact with the dead. Thus the burning of the red heifer and the use of the ashes for ritual purification is intended to recall for us the Nadab and Abihu event, and its lessons. . . . The statement of Moses to Aaron right after Aaron’s sons are struck dead, that God said, *Through those near to me will I be sanctified*, is memorized and carried out in the ritual of the red heifer. God and Moses did their utmost to bring some good out of this tragedy.<sup>6</sup>

While these explanations offer a biblical background for many mysterious aspects of the commandment concerning the Red Heifer, they do not explain them all. The unexplained nature of the command and its ceremony has spurred many stories in Jewish tradition in an attempt to perpetuate the inexplicable value of the Red Heifer not only in the present age, but also for the Messianic age to come.

## The Value of the Red Heifer

How much is a Red Heifer worth? Considering the fact that the Mishnah records that only nine of them were ever sacrificed in all of Israel's past history, they appear to be very rare. However, their value for the spiritual service they perform cannot be overvalued, and for this reason their incalculable worth became the subject of rabbinic midrash. In one story a Gentile in whose herd a Red Heifer was born wanted to deceive the Jews who wanted to buy it. He placed a yoke on it (which disqualified it), but then he presented it to the Jews as having never been yoked. However, the Jews discovered the deception and did not buy the animal. Because of the great loss, the Gentile committed suicide. Another story is told about a Gentile in Ashkelon named Dama ben Netina. He received messengers from the Temple who came to him to buy from his father a precious stone for the breastplate of the high priest. However, because his father was asleep and his father's legs were upon the chest which contained the precious stone, he chose to relinquish the deal rather than wake his aged father. Therefore, the Almighty repaid him by causing, in the following year, a Red Heifer to be born in his herd.

The point in these two stories is the lesson that the value associated with the Red Heifer should not be measured materially, but spiritually, since it is attached to the higher order of things in the heavenly realm.

## The Red Heifer and the Coming of Messiah

This explains the vital connection between the Red Heifer and the coming of the Age of Redemption. As already mentioned, the more than 1,500 years between the time Moses offered the first Red Heifer (Numbers 19:2) and the destruction of the Second Temple ended the possibility of continuing the practice, only nine Red Heifers (some say seven) had been necessary to produce the ashes sufficient for the needs of purification. The question for this age, as in all of the intervening ages, has been this: Will there be another Red Heifer, and if so, what should be expected of its appearance?

This was answered by the Jewish sage Maimonides when he wrote in his commentary on the Mishnah: "The tenth Red Heifer will be accomplished by the king, the Messiah."<sup>7</sup> It is believed that Maimonides, as an expert on Jewish Law, was making reference to an ancient tradition that the tenth Red Heifer will be associated with the Messianic era, during which the Messiah will officiate at its preparation (See Talmud, tractate *Parah*, *Yad, Parah Adummah* 3:4). Moreover, by tradition, only the son of David will be able to purify Israel with the ashes of a Red Heifer. According to Stephen Yulish, a former professor at the University of Arizona and former director of the Jewish federation of Phoenix, "the Red Heifer is but another piece in the prophetic timetable which is moving us closer to the end of the age and the return of Messiah." This belief, coupled with the resurgence of the Temple movement and its own preparations for the Messianic era, led Rabbi Richman to say, "We cannot help but wonder and pray: If there are now Red Heifers, is ours the era that will need them?"<sup>8</sup>

## The Importance of the Red Heifer

The obscure requirements connected with the Red Heifer ritual have been a problem for Jewish interpreters throughout the ages. As a ritual it was unique among all the ordinances given to Israel. It was the only sacrifice that required that the animal be a particular color. It was the only sacrifice that had to be offered outside the camp of Israel (later, outside the Temple precinct on the Mount of Olives). It was the only sacrifice in which the ashes were to be preserved after the sacrifice was burned.

What was the reason and purpose for these requirements? No explanation is provided at all for these rules or for how the ashes can clean the unclean. Many Jewish interpreters believe these mysteries will not be understood until all men attain to a higher plane of awareness. Otherwise, God expected Israel to implicitly obey this command with no questions asked, and by this to demonstrate to God how much they believe and obey all His commandments.

So mysterious is this ritual that a Jewish midrash observed: "Solomon was wiser than all men, but when he came to the section of the red cow, he admitted, 'I said, I will get wisdom, but it was far from me'" (*Qohelet Rabbah* 7:23). Some scholars have found parallels to the Red Heifer ceremony in the Mesopotamian *namburi* ritual, which had a concern over corpse contamination and a Hittite cleansing ritual that involved water to remove impurity. However, while there are similarities, these other rituals shed little light on the Israelite ritual.

Even though the particulars of the Red Heifer ritual are not given, the importance of the ordinance can be understood by examining the contexts in which it appears. According to Numbers 19:1-22, the practice of sacrificing a Red Heifer was begun in the wilderness of Sinai during the time of Israel's wandering. This wandering was a divine discipline, the result of Israel's sinful rebellion at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 14-15). Further rebellion by some priests (the sons of Korah) resulted in their deaths and the divine destruction of nearly 15,000 others (Numbers 16). Because of this judgment, the Israelites became greatly fearful about approaching the Tabernacle, where God's presence was manifested (Numbers 17:12-13). As a remedy, the Levites were appointed as the sole ministers of the Sanctuary, but they too would die if they defiled it through ritual uncleanness (Numbers 18:1,22-23,32). Consequently, a provision for the priest's purity had to be made, and it was provided in the ritual of the Red Heifer (Numbers 19). It is in this context of death and destruction that the Red Heifer ordinance was given. Sin had made the approach to a holy God impossible, and only a process of ceremonial sanctification could change the people's unclean status to one that enabled the priests to resume their job of intercession for Israel before the altar.

## Islam and the Red Heifer

Given the significance of the Red Heifer in Judaism, it is interesting that there is a similar understanding of the heifer's role in Islam. Vendyl Jones, who has been searching for an ancient vessel containing the last of the Red Heifer ashes since the 1960s, once made this statement in a Christian radio interview:

The first book in the Muslim Bible, the Koran, is called *Parah*, "the calf," and it pertains to the ashes of the Red Heifer. The Muslims believe whoever finds this will rule the world. So this could have political implications as well. This could settle the *jihad*, "the holy war."<sup>9</sup>

Such an allegation goes to the heart of Muslim fears about Judaism—that it promotes a conspiracy to take over the world and enslave the other religions. But does the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book, actually contain statements that could be construed to teach this?

The second Surah (chapter two) of the Qur'an is indeed called *al-Baqarah* ("the Heifer") and is based on Numbers 19 in *Parashat Chukat* (the Red Heifer chapter in the Torah). In this Surah, verses 67-71 refer to the characteristics required for a cow to be a legitimate "Yellow Cow" (the Muslim equivalent of the

Red Heifer). And verses 72-73 deal with the sacrifice of the Yellow Heifer in order to identify the killer when a dead body is found (see Deuteronomy 21:1-9 in *Parashat Shoftim* of the Torah). However, in these verses there is no mention of ashes, because in reference to the murdered man (verses 72-73), it states that he was resurrected from the dead when his body was touched with “a part of the cow.” Unlike the purification from corpse impurity symbolized by the Jewish ritual, the Islamic belief was that an actual reversal of death took place—yet “a part of the cow” is not the same as “the ashes of the cow.” Nevertheless, it is apparent that Muslim teaching concerning the Yellow Cow (Red Heifer) gives the impression that the heifer possessed supernatural qualities.

As to the origin of the statement that the discoverer of the ashes would rule the world, Islamic Imam Professor Abdul Hadi Palazzi of Rome acknowledges that the Qur’an does not support this idea. He suspects that it was invented by Muslim activists and circulated as anti-Israel propaganda to convince unlearned Muslims that the Jews’ search for the Red Heifer’s ashes is to acquire magical power for world domination.<sup>10</sup> This may be the case, yet such a statement is in harmony with the kind of things said by Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews in the Israeli and foreign press reports about the birth of a Red Heifer. In these reports they claimed that the Red Heifer would usher in the Messianic era, the age of Jewish dominance in the world. Perhaps such statements by Jews, along with the supernatural character of the Qur’an account and misinformation by Muslim extremists, could have created this belief on the popular level.

## The Red Heifer and the New Testament

The New Testament epistle to the Hebrews recognizes the historical validity of the Red Heifer ceremony when it asks, “For if . . . the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:13-14). The author of Hebrews is making a contrast here by means of a *Qal va-homer* (or *a fortiori*) argument that states, “If ‘A,’ then how much more ‘B.’” However, in regard to replacement theology, it should be noted that there is no concept here of Jesus’ work removing or replacing that of the Red Heifer’s. Rather, there is a concession that its work of ceremonial purification was effective: “sanctif[ies] for the purifying of the flesh” (verse 13).<sup>11</sup> The contrast here is

between two *different kinds* of purification—external and temporary (the Red Heifer’s), and internal and permanent (Jesus’)—both of which are considered necessary (see more on this in chapter 23). Therefore, the New Testament bases the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice on the efficacy of the existing sacrificial system,<sup>12</sup> and in this case on the efficacy of the Red Heifer.

## The Ceremony of the Red Heifer

In order to produce the mixture of water and ash required for the cleansing of those contaminated by a corpse, a Red Heifer must be slaughtered by the high priest<sup>13</sup> in a special ceremony on the Mount of Olives. In the time of the Second Temple an arched bridge stretched from the Eastern Gate (Shushan Gate) to a “clean place outside the camp” (Numbers 19:9) (see photo section). The specific spot for the sacrifice on the Mount of Olives was known as the “Mount of Anointment.” This bridge was also used on Yom Kippur to lead the scapegoat out of the Temple, over the Mount of Olives, and into the Judean desert. The spot of the sacrifice on the Mount of Olives faced the Eastern Gate and was aligned directly with the entrance to the Sanctuary where the purification ceremony with the ashes was performed. The heads of the Sanhedrin, the heads of the priests and Levitical shifts, and all the prominent people in Israel were present at the ceremony. The priests who participated in this ceremony had to be ritually pure, as the act of sacrificing the Red Heifer and the ingredients used in making the mixture rendered them ceremonially unclean. The animal was led to an altar and placed—with its head facing the Temple—on bundles of wood (cedar, pine, cypress, and fig) in order to increase the quantity of the ashes. Once the unblemished and unyoked Red Heifer was slaughtered, its blood was collected in the left hand of the high priest and sprinkled with his right index finger toward the entrance of the Temple seven times. Then the entire carcass was burned with a mixture of cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet-dyed wool. The ashes obtained from this burning were ground to a fine texture (including the wood and all parts of the animal) and divided into three parts. A mixture was then made from these ashes and blended with water flowing from a natural source (either a spring or running stream) and used as a ceremonial cleansing agent. One third of the ashes was preserved in the Temple precincts within a wall in front of the Women’s Court, a second third was given to the attendant priests so they could purify anyone who incurred impurity, and the third portion was

deposited at the site of the altar on the Mount of Olives to be used by the priests who burned the next Red Heifer.

## The Red Heifer Ashes

In Temple times, the ashes of the Red Heifer were stored in the “House of Stone”—in a stone jar called, in Hebrew the *klal* (see photo section). Even after the Temple was destroyed, a supply of the ashes was still available near the Eastern Gate and continued to be used as late as the Amoraic period (A.D. 200–500).<sup>14</sup> For water, the priests went to the Gihon spring at the base of the Temple Mount. The water was put in a stone jar that the Mishnah describes as having a thin neck. The vessels were made out of stone because, according to Jewish *halakha*, stone does not transmit ritual impurity (*tumah*). It should be remembered that the ashes themselves were not sprinkled, but the water containing the ashes. It was possible, then, to put only a speck of the ashes in a huge quantity of water for use in sprinkling. In this way a minute amount of ashes could be used to purify tens of thousands of people. Then a priest would dip a bundle of three stalks of hyssop into the mixture and sprinkle it onto a person on two different occasions (on the third day after having become defiled and then again on the seventh day), thus allowing him or her to enter the Temple in a state of ritual purity (*tahara*). This water mixture was also sprinkled on the clothing and vessels that became ritually impure as a result of being in the same house with a person who was impure. While this water “purified” the person or object that it touched, at the same time, the priests who officiated at this ceremony and their garments became ritually impure as a result of handling the waters of purification! This is one of the mysteries of this ritual—that the very agent that brings purity to those without it can make impure those who have it!

According to the biblical command, this ritual purification is still considered a prerequisite for any Jew today: “So it shall be a perpetual statute for them” (Numbers 19:21). How can modern-day Israel obey this command if it does not possess a Red Heifer? Because no one at present is qualified to begin the rebuilding of the Temple or to engage in priestly functions without the Red Heifer’s ashes, considerable effort has been expended on researching the ancient ceremonies and seeking a solution to the problem of ceremonial impurity that prevents Jewish access to the Temple Mount. In fact, one of the most controversial projects underway today in Israel involves an attempt to produce a qualified Red Heifer and reinstate the Red Heifer and purification ceremonies.

## Raising the Red Heifer and Restoring the Land

When I visited the Temple Institute in 1990 and spoke with Director of Public Affairs Rabbi Chaim Richman, he showed me photographs of Red Heifers recently received from a Gentile Pentecostal minister named Clyde Lott. This man bred Red Angus cattle by trade and had come to the Institute seeking to know if anyone in Israel was interested in obtaining them for purification purposes. According to Lott, the project to export Red Heifers to Israel had been developing since 1989, “when the Holy Ghost began to inspire [him] to research and contact Israel about the Red Heifer located in Numbers chapter 19.” As the rabbis of the Temple Institute began studying the issues involved with actually possessing a qualified Red Heifer, they began to see that importing hundreds of Red Angus cattle to Israel could help to restore both livestock and agriculture throughout the entire Land of Israel. They saw the importation as contributing to the total economic advancement of the State, and, because the one offering the heifers was named “Lott” (like the biblical “Lot”), Rabbi Richman considered it “an allusion to the fact that he, as a Gentile, could play an important role.”<sup>15</sup>

On November 11, 1994, Rabbi Richman traveled to Canton, Mississippi to personally inspect the Red Heifers on Lott’s ranch. The other reason for his trip, as he explained it, “was to enable me to carry the message of what is happening in Israel, and the prophecies concurring the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, to audiences in the United States.”<sup>16</sup> Rabbi Richman inspected four Red Heifers and was drawn to one in particular which Lott’s daughter had named Dixie. After he studied it for 10 minutes from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail, he declared, “This is the heifer that will change the world.” According to Rabbi Richman this was the first Red Heifer in 2,000 years that met the biblical requirements in Numbers 19 as verified by a rabbi.

The original agreement with Lott was to provide 200 pregnant red heifers that would be shipped via ocean liner to Israel. Statistically, these pregnant heifers would produce 100 bulls and 100 heifers. The resultant 100 heifers would become the “potential” sacrificial stock. Time went by, and this event did not occur. However, Lott’s plan has now reached a much grander scale. The goal now is to repopulate the herds of Israel with Lott’s breed of cattle stock. So instead of 200 heifers, he is planning to ship thousands of heifers. Currently, however, neither Rabbi Richman nor the Temple Institute are working with Clyde Lott, although “the Temple Institute is maintaining contacts with a number of cattle

producers, [both] Jewish and Gentile, and will do whatever is necessary to produce [qualified] cows.<sup>17</sup>

Another organization in the Temple movement seeking to obtain a Red Heifer is the Temple Mount Faithful. Gershon Salomon describes his organization's attempts in this regard:

One year ago a perfect Red Heifer was born on a ranch in Texas of a member and friend of The Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful movement. A few years ago when I used to speak in the area about the vision and activities of the movement for the rebuilding of the Temple and the need to renew the life of Israel as it was in the biblical times, this rancher used to come and take part in these meetings. Immediately, he and his family were very special to me. Their love for the G-d and people of Israel and the vision of the rebuilding of the Temple moved my heart. In the meetings I felt a deep need to ask him whether a Red Heifer had already been born on his ranch. It was G-d who pushed me to ask the question again and again. I knew, and it was a deep feeling in my heart which only G-d could have put there, that on his ranch a Red Heifer would soon be born. One day about a year ago when I was back in my lovely city, Jerusalem, I received a letter from this wonderful rancher and the exciting message was that "a Red Heifer has been born on my ranch." In what exciting and special ways G-d is acting! At the same time, I received a phone call from another member and friend, Sam Peak, who also brought me this joyful message. He also asked how to handle the heifer and how to raise her according to the godly Jewish law. A Red Heifer needs to be raised and handled in a very special way like a holy thing which is completely dedicated to G-d. It has to be raised in a very special, clean stall and to be fed with special food, and even to be spoiled. She cannot be raised with other calves and especially not with males. It is forbidden to use her for any work or any other needs of the rancher. I gave them all the details and I thanked G-d for His kindness towards His people, Israel, and those who are fighting for the rebuilding of the Temple.<sup>18</sup>

Once Red Heifers became available in the United States and the proper authorities in the Department of Agriculture in both countries were contacted and permissions were received, the problem became how to finance the purchase of the cattle as well as the cost of transporting them all to Israel.

## Financing the Red Heifer

The organizations promoting Red Heifers to Israel have posted their needs on the internet at some 100 million dollars. The main support for their project is expected to come from Christians; however, Jewish donors have also been approached. In a letter to potential supporters, the organization (see below) leading the way toward making it possible to transport the Red Heifers to Israel announced:

On March 7, 1998 Rev. Clyde Lott, Rev. Guy Garner, Jr., and Rev. Al Bishop met in Ripley, Mississippi to form a nonprofit/not-for-profit organization named Canaan Land Restoration of Israel, Inc. for the purpose of livestock and agricultural restoration according to biblical understanding located in the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel. A division of this organization was also formed and named *Emmet Bet Sheroot* (Faithful House of Service) for the purpose of exchanging biblical knowledge, and, perspective of the Bible to further develop the relationship between the Orthodox Jew and the apostolic Christian that will facilitate the ultimate reconciliation of mankind, fulfilling God's divine plan for this time period.

Clyde Lott, the Pentecostal Gentile rancher who has raised the Red Heifers, serves as the president of Canaan Land Restoration of Israel, Inc., an organization established for the purpose of bringing together the Red Heifers and the Israelis and advancing the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The suggested donation for bringing one Red Heifer is \$1000, one-half a Red Heifer \$500, one-fourth a Red Heifer \$250, and \$341 for the airfare of each individual animal. The original schedule for shipment was to have been on August 11, 1998, with 500 registered Red Angus Heifers going to Israel. Rabbi Richman told me that a new date has been set, but that it is not being publicly disclosed at the present time.<sup>19</sup>

## Cloning the Red Heifer

With the existence of qualified Red Heifers, it is now possible to produce a Red Heifer in Israel without the cost of shipping cattle and waiting for a qualified offspring to be born. New advances in the science of cloning have made it possible to produce genetic duplicates of as many qualified Red Heifers as desired, anywhere and at any time. Cattle have been cloned since 1994, but at that time the scientists didn't know what traits these clones would have because of the mix of genes from a father and mother mixing with the genetic material

of the cattle they were trying to clone. In 1998 researchers in Edinburgh, Scotland successfully cloned an exact duplicate of an adult sheep named Dolly. The scientists did this by taking an unfertilized egg, removing the egg's DNA, and then putting a full set of DNA from the animal to be cloned into the egg (embryonic growth begins once this full set of DNA is added to the egg). However, the donor cell must first be treated with chemicals to trick the cells into resetting the biological clock so that the DNA can begin initially to divide anew. Next, a spark of electricity is added to the egg to enable it to start dividing into an embryo. After a few days in the culture dish, the embryo is placed into the womb of the surrogate mother of the animal being cloned. The result is a clone that is genetically identical to the parent animal.<sup>20</sup> While Israel has set a five-year ban on research that involves cloning humans, nothing prevents the cloning of animals.

Whether actual herds of Red Heifers are transported to Israel or select Red Heifers are used as donor parents to produce genetic duplicates, the day in which Red Heifers are again on the scene and being readied for ritual use is possible at any time.

## **The Tale of the Birth of Israel's First "Red Heifer"**

In order to fulfill the biblical mandate as well as the prophetic one, the next Red Heifer that provides the ashes for the cleansing of the priesthood must be born in the Land of Israel. The problem with Clyde Lott's Red Heifers is that they must first be imported to Israel, then bred or genetically cloned. Only after a perfect Red Heifer is produced and is raised according to the strict standards required could it be accepted for the Red Heifer ceremony. The preference would be for a Red Heifer to be native-born, but up until 1997, that had not happened for two millennia. Then on March 16, 1997 a Red Heifer was said to have been born on the religious kibbutz Kfar Hassidim, near the northern Israeli port of Haifa.<sup>21</sup> It was immediately hailed by religious Jews as a sign from God that work can soon begin on the Third Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup>

That the Red Heifer was born to a black-and-white mother and a dun-colored bull was seen as a miracle by many in the Temple movement. Rabbi Yehuda Etzion, director of Chai veKaiyam, was quoted as saying: "We have been waiting 2,000 years for a sign from God, and now He has provided us with a Red Heifer."<sup>23</sup> The Red Heifer was named Melody, and its birth and the rabbis' startling claim sent shock waves around the world. Some euphoric rabbis rejoiced that God's will had been fulfilled and were excited that Messiah's appearance

could be imminent. The news media at once descended upon the kibbutz, all anxious to see what they had dubbed “the Holy Heifer from Haifa.” Not everyone was glad, however, and some people believed Melody was a threat to the peace process and threatened to kill her. Still others thought she was the Antichrist’s abomination of desolation since the words *Melody*, *Israel*, and *Temple* each have six letters—hence “666.”

Melody was closely guarded and all were waiting for her to reach her sacrificial age (in August 1999) when the unthinkable happened: Melody sprouted a few white hairs in her tail. Some came to her defense with a rabbinical loophole: She would continue to be qualified so long as no two white hairs proceeded from the same pore! Others claimed that the white hairs actually had red roots! However, in the end, the decision was made by her keepers at the kibbutz to reject Melody and hope for a successor:

Residents of the northern community of Kfar Hassidim announced with sorrow recently that the Red Heifer that they had been raising had become unfit for ritual use. Hairs on its tail were found to be whitening, rendering it not totally red, and therefore unfit to be used in the purification process for service in a future Holy Temple. The residents are hopeful that the cow will bear red calves that will be able to be used for this purpose.<sup>24</sup>

## Red Heifers in Israel Today

While the kibbutz members waited for Melody to become pregnant, new Heifers were announced to have been born in Israel. As with the birth of Melody, the birth of each of these heifers is considered a miracle and a sign that the Temple is about to be rebuilt. In 1998 the Temple Mount Faithful movement reported news of a Red Heifer that had been born in the Ayalon Valley, a site near Jerusalem famous for the biblical account of David’s defeat of Goliath. Again in 1999 another Red Heifer was reported born in northern Israel. Gershon Salomon inspected the heifers and stated with elation, “The Red Heifer which was born in Israel I named *Tsiona*—to Zion—the name of the Temple Mount, which is Mount Moriah. We are really living in very exciting days. It is such a privilege for this generation.”<sup>25</sup> These two Red Heifers were dedicated by The Temple Mount Faithful to be used for the preparation of the Red Heifer ashes when they are three years old—that is, if they continue to be perfect Red Heifers. As Salomon says: “We want to be ready for this moment, and we feel and

know that time is short and all the events are leading us to this moment. When G-d started to send these Red Heifers it was also a message from Him that time is short.” Even so, not everyone in the Temple movement agrees with Saloman’s assessment concerning the heifers. Rabbi Chaim Richman stated to me at the Temple Institute in August 1999 concerning Saloman’s claim: “No Red Heifers have been born in Israel!”

However, Salomon is also involved with the Texas rancher who has reported the birth of a Red Heifer. Salomon expects to receive this Red Heifer from him to be raised exclusively by The Temple Mount Faithful movement. Concerning this Red Heifer and The Temple Mount Faithful’s plans, Salomon has written:

My friend of the Faithful Movement, Ze’ev bar Tov and I had the privilege of seeing and checking for ourselves this special Red Heifer in Texas. She really looked perfect. Although we had not planned it, our visit to the ranch coincided with the week in which the Parasha Hukkat which deals with the law of the ashes of the Red Heifer was read in the synagogues. It was again a clear [sign] for us that the birth of the Red Heifer on this ranch was not an accident—even the timing was a godly timing. It was one of the most exciting moments in my life and I felt the presence of the G-d of Israel on this ranch and in this family. I immediately knew that G-d had brought me to the United States and to that place to see His miracles and these wonderful friends and lovers of the God and people of Israel whom I had met so often in various places in the United States. He wanted to show me in which wonderful miraculous ways He is fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 49:22-23; 66:18-24; Zechariah 8:20-23 and other prophecies of Isaiah and other prophets. So when the rancher and Sam Peak asked what name should be given to the heifer, the name *Geula*—“redemption”—immediately came to my mind. I really felt that this special event represents one of the most exciting events of the redemption of Israel at this prophetic end-time which we are now experiencing.<sup>26</sup>

According to Salomon, when this Red Heifer from Texas is ready, it will be brought to Israel and handed over to the Temple Mount Faithful in a special ceremony. Salomon believes that it is no accident that after 2,000 years without a single Red Heifer that in only a few short years Red Heifers have appeared in Israel and the United States in numerous places. For him there is no question that these appearances are prophetic signs that the time of redemption is near and with it the Messianic era and the rebuilding of the Third Temple:

What I wonder is how so many people are too blind to see what G-d is doing with Israel at this exciting time and even try to stop G-d from acting together with Israel to fulfill and accomplish His prophetic end-time plans together with His people, Israel. In Israel in the secular press and in other places in the world, articles have been published which stated that the birth of a Red Heifer is a big danger like an atom bomb because it will open the door and the ability for millions of Jews to purify themselves and to walk on the Temple Mount and in this way liberate it from the Islamic occupation and rebuild the Temple. I can only wonder how they can differentiate between day and night if they see so poorly and how they cannot see the appearance of G-d and His Word before their eyes at this exciting time. None of them or any of the enemies of G-d and Israel can stop the determined decision of G-d to accomplish His prophetic end-time plans with Israel, to very soon rebuild His house and to bring Mashiah ben David in our lifetime. The process of the redemption of Israel will continue and soon be accomplished. . . . It is a clear message from G-d to His people, Israel, that the time for the rebuilding of the Temple has come and G-d is no longer prepared to wait. More than this, He cannot wait. It is no accident that for almost 2,000 years no Red Heifers were born and now they are coming one after another, in Israel and on the ranches of friends of Israel.<sup>27</sup>

Whether Red Heifers have been born in Israel (or will soon be) or shipped from abroad, the possibility that one will be qualified as suitable for producing the ashes needed for the “waters of purification” grows nearer every day. When this finally occurs the Temple movement will at last have all the necessary ingredients for the recipe of rebuilding the Third Temple. In harmony with the day in the near future when a priesthood could be ritually purified to begin their work, numerous organizations have been actively preparing such a priesthood. In the next chapter we will reveal some of these little-known preparations that are moving the world closer to the prophetic reality of the Last Days Temple.

# Preparing a Priesthood



## Securing the Sacred Service for the Sanctuary

*A kohen [“priest”] is a reminder of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and what it means to us. They were employees of the sacred Temple who are temporarily laid off.<sup>1</sup>*

—RABBI YISROEL MILLER

*If it were not for Jews studying the laws of Temple sacrifices, Heaven and Earth would lose their right to exist.*

—RABBI YAAKOV BAR ACHA

When the Romans stormed the Temple Mount in A.D. 70, burning the Temple and slaughtering its priests, they destroyed in one moment not only the stored records of ancestral genealogy and of the secrets of reproducing certain priestly items, but also those who had the knowledge to pass these facts on to future generations. Although some essential priestly information was preserved and passed on through later rabbinic writings, many of the details described in these texts were already obscure to the rabbis who wrote them. After the Temple's destruction, even though priests no longer performed the traditional religious duties, the heritage continued to be preserved within families of priestly descent. But with the worldwide dispersion and cultural assimilation that took place afterward, no one could actually be *certain* of having a priestly lineage. Outside of Israel it was not possible to observe the festival calendar nor the prescribed rituals of *halakha*, which depend upon the presence of a Temple and functional priesthood. Therefore, the only hope that remained for Orthodox Jews was that a future generation of Jews might somehow revive a legitimate priesthood.

Over the last few decades, as Jewish people have returned to the land of the Bible in increasing numbers, many of them have become convinced that the time has arrived for a return to a more biblical lifestyle. At the same time, many technological breakthroughs have taken place that have provided the means to do the extensive research necessary to rediscover the lost knowledge about the priestly heritage. As a result, the pieces of the puzzle have been coming back together again, making it possible for the priesthood to be restored when the Temple is rebuilt in the future.

## The Purpose of the Priesthood

The purpose of the priesthood was to represent Israel before God at the Sanctuary (2 Chronicles 29:11; 35:2). Because God's presence was in the midst of the Nation at the Tabernacle and then the Temple, the priests' responsibility was to preserve the people in a state of ceremonial purity so that God's presence could remain and bless the Nation. The importance of God's presence, as well as the intricate nature of the ceremonial service, required that a separate class of people devote their constant attention to performing the required functions with careful precision. The Levite tribe was chosen to fulfill this role. They were not included in the national census. (which was taken for military purposes) because they belonged to God and to the service of the Tabernacle and Temple

(Numbers 1:47-51). However, their priestly function was as necessary to Israel's security as were the Nation's soldiers, for their work of maintaining sanctity protected Israel from God's wrath being unleashed on a sinful society (Numbers 1:53).

A number of different functions comprised this performance:

1. The priests carried out the daily, festival and Sabbath offering of sacrifices on the altar in the Temple's court of the priests. Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would offer the burnt offering and take the blood of the sin offering into the inner Temple (the Holy of Holies—Leviticus 4:3-21; 16:3-25).

2. The priests blessed the people in the divine name (Deuteronomy 10:8; 21:5). One of these priestly blessings or benedictions is recorded in Numbers 6:22-26, with verse 27 stating, "They shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and then I will bless them."

3. The priests blew the *shofar* (ram's horn) or trumpet on certain occasions such as festivals and new moons (Numbers 10:10), the Day of Atonement in a Jubilee year (Leviticus 25:9), and on the first day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1).

4. The priests, and especially a designated division known as the Kohathites, were responsible for transporting the Ark of the Covenant during times of war and previously when the Nation moved from place to place during the time of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:14-15; Numbers 3:30-31; 4:1-15; 7:9). Once the Ark was installed permanently within the Temple, it was not moved except on one occasion—when King Manasseh placed an idol in the Temple (2 Chronicles 33:7; 35:3).

5. The priests were responsible for the daily care of the Sanctuary, which included the burning of incense on the altar of incense (Exodus 30:7-9), refilling the oil in the lamps (Exodus 27:20-21; Leviticus 24:1-4; Numbers 8:1-3), and setting out fresh shewbread on the Table of Shewbread (Exodus 25:30; Numbers 4:7).

6. The high priest received divine revelation from the Lord under certain circumstances. To accomplish this he consulted the Urim and the Thummim (Numbers 27:21), dark- and light-colored stones that were located in a pouch underneath the breastplate on the ephod (Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8). These were used when a *yes* or *no* answer was needed to discern between two opposing options.<sup>2</sup> Lots were employed in more complex situations (Isaiah 34:17; Ezekiel 24:6; Micah 2:5) and in the Temple court for decisions of national

importance (Numbers 26:55-56; Joshua 7:13-18; 14:21; Judges 1:3; 20:9-10) and on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:7-10).

7. The priests were responsible for verifying the presence or absence of impurities or diseases that brought ceremonial defilement. Very specific instructions had to be communicated to those who were infected or suspected of impurity (Deuteronomy 21:5; 24:8; Ezekiel 44:23). This included special preparation of the ashes of the Red Heifer and their use in the ceremonial purification of the priestly personnel and the sacred vessels used in the ritual service (Numbers 19:4).

8. The priests were involved in judging and instructing the Nation. Litigants were to appear before the priests in appointed cities (Deuteronomy 17:8-13; 21:5; see also Ezekiel 44:24). Priests would also resolve doubtful legal cases through ceremonial means, such as the cases of those accused of adultery (Numbers 5:11-31).

## The People of the Priesthood

Some believe that originally, all the first born Israelite males were to be set apart to God as priests (Exodus 13:2; Numbers 3:40; see also Judges 17:5). However, the more certain origin stems from the incident involving the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. Because of the loyalty the Levites exhibited to Moses in this encounter, this tribe was accorded the unique privilege of priestly service (Exodus 32:26-29; Numbers 3:41,45; Deuteronomy 10:8-9). The biblical instructions concerning the priesthood are unequivocal in stating that the only legitimate source for priestly service are descendants from the tribe of Levi: "Aaron then shall present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the sons of Israel, that they may qualify to perform the service of the LORD.... Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine" (Numbers 8:11,14; see also Exodus 28:1; Hebrews 7:11).

Apparently one family within the tribe of Levi, the family of Aaron, was designated as *kohanim* ("priests") and was to be assisted in the maintenance work of the Sanctuary by those from other families among the tribe designated as *leviim* ("Levites") (Numbers 3:6-9). The office of high priest was derived only from the Aaronic priesthood (Numbers 3:10), although with the advent of the First Temple the legitimate priestly heritage was identified thereafter with the Aaronide high priest Zadok, who had faithfully served King David (2 Samuel 8:17; 15:24; see also Ezekiel 43:19). With the loss of the Temple the priesthood immediately ceased to have a practical service, and those of priestly descent,

which in the time of the Second Temple were from the sect of “the Sadducees,” were forced to assume other functions.

## How to Prove a Priest

Modern-day Israelis who have wanted to restore the priesthood have been confronted with one basic problem: With the loss of the genealogical records and the dissolution of the priesthood, how could the priestly order ever be reclaimed?

One answer, according to rabbinic tradition, is that even though the genealogical records of the Temple were lost and the Jews became scattered throughout Gentile lands, those of priestly descent were forbidden to change their names (which connoted their priestly heritage)—even when they assimilated into foreign cultures. Thus, we continue to this day to have *Levis* and *Cohens* (the Hebrew words for “priest”) and many derivatives of these names that were slightly altered as priestly families adopted different languages and cultures. For example, variations of the name Cohen appear as Kohen, Kohn, Kone, Cone, Kahn, Cahn, Kahane, Kagan, Kogen, Cogan, Kaplan, Katz, Katzman, Kaganoff, Kaganovitch, Cohan, and Coen. In addition, names like Mazeh, Adler, Rappaport and Shapiro are acronyms for or have associated meanings with a priestly heritage.

However, not all people with these names are of priestly descent. Many Gentiles also bear some of these surnames, such as the former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen.

In the past, the traditional method of passing on the knowledge of this patrilineal connection within priestly families has been by word of mouth. From generation to generation, fathers of priestly descent have told their sons about their special priestly inheritance. It is estimated that about 5% of the 7 million Jewish males alive in the world today (some 350,000) are of priestly descent.<sup>3</sup> Up until recent times this was the way in which Jewish males understood that they were *cohanim* (“priests”).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, owing to the multiple restrictions placed upon those of the priestly line (no marriage to certain persons, no attendance at funerals except family members), there was no advantage to admitting one was of such descent if, in fact, it were not so. Those who are thought to be priests are distinguished in Orthodox and some conservative Jewish circles and given the right to pronounce over the synagogue congregation the *birkat kohanim* (“priestly blessing”), also known as the ancient rite of

Duchan, which involves holding the hands with the fingers spread between the middle and ring fingers to form the Hebrew letter “shin” (the first letter in the word *Shaddai*, “Almighty,” one of the names of God). They are also given the honor of being called up first to read from the Torah during a service, as well as presiding over the traditional ceremony for firstborn boys.... Still, most of Judaism today has believed that the *kohanim* and *leviim* are of... doubtful lineage. Reform Judaism has abandoned any consideration of priesthood entirely, and conservative Judaism has done the same to a lesser degree. The general consensus has been that ultimately, only the Messiah can determine who is and who is not a true Aaronide. However, thanks to science, it appears that Jews won't have to wait for the Messiah's return in order to prove a priest.

## The Role of Genealogy and Genes

### *Determining the Priestly Lineage*

Recently, a scientifically controlled test to verify those of priestly lineage has been devised. The first published research on priestly identification appeared in 1996 and was based on a genetic comparison of 68 men who claimed priestly descent with 120 non-priestly Jews. This first test group included only men of priestly descent rather than just Levites (obstensibly because they represent a different and more genetically diverse priesthood). However, the next year a more comprehensive study included 306 Jewish men (including 106 from Israel, Canada, and England) who claimed priestly descent.<sup>5</sup> This time the test included 81 self-identified Levites. The method of DNA testing used on these men had previously been employed to link criminals to their crimes, to link fathers to babies in paternity cases,<sup>6</sup> and even to link together various fragments of Dead Sea scroll manuscripts (based on the unique DNA code of each sheep whose hide was used to make the scroll parchment). Because the common heritage of priestly descent linked all Jewish claimants to the office, they were the perfect candidates for this type of testing. Knowing that a bit of a man's identity is transmitted strictly from father to son by the Y chromosome (which carries the gene for maleness), and that this is the only chromosome that does not cross over and recombine, it was selected in the search for any unique genetic marker that might appear.<sup>7</sup> After scraping a few cells from inside each volunteer's cheek, the genetic analysis was performed. The result was the discovery that as a group, those who claimed priestly descent carried a dominant type of Y chromosome that marked them on the genetic level as distinct

from the rest of the Jewish population.<sup>8</sup> One of the researchers, David B. Goldstein of Oxford University, said, “Most had the same version of the Y chromosome or close variants that differ because of random mutations.” That shows there has been “reasonable adherence to the policy of father-son inheritance.” Since each person’s DNA is as individual as a fingerprint, this characteristic linked these men together as a separate and identifiable group that must be traced back to an original ancestor. Unfortunately, the study could not confirm with certainty those who identified themselves as Levites. The Levites showed too much variety in their Y chromosomes. According to Goldstein, “That could mean that non-Levite Jews took up the designation in the past, or that the original Levites had a lot of variety in their Y chromosomes.”

With respect to the verifiable priestly sampling, Dr. Goldstein believes that the fact that the genetic marker existed in Jews of both the Ashkenazi (European) and Sephardi (Spanish and Portuguese) groups led researchers to conclude that the shared genes predated the split of world Jewry into these separate ethnic groups more than 1,000 years ago. Furthermore, he observed that the fact that there was variation in the shared dominant Y chromosome proved that the genetic link was ancient rather than recent. He estimated that based on these variations that the *kohanim* line began no later than 700 years ago but could go back as much as 10,000 years. The average came out to about 3,000 years, a period that dates to the time of the Exodus.<sup>9</sup>

In support of this conclusion, the original research team’s leader, Dr. Karl Skorecki, head of molecular medicine at the Technion Institute of Technology in Haifa (and of priestly lineage himself), stated that “the simplest, most structured explanation is that these men have the Y chromosome of Aaron [the first high priest].”<sup>10</sup> Was this genetic marker placed in Aaron’s gene pool by divine design so that as the time for the rebuilding of the Temple and the re-constitution of the priesthood neared, there would be no doubt as to who would be qualified to serve? Whether or not it is of divine design, individuals at Biosciences West at the University of Arizona have designed a self-test kit whereby Jewish men who so desire (and test positive) can now prove their priestly status.<sup>11</sup>

### *Cataloging the Priestly Descendants*

Now that there is a scientifically verifiable method of tracing a person’s legitimate ancestry back 3,200 years, it is possible to test all those who today claim priestly descent and catalog them for future service. An early attempt at this can be traced back to *Agudat Anshei Emunim* (Society of Faithful Men), who in 1979

founded an international organization known as the *Shmirat Hamikdash Society* (“Guardians of the Holy Place”) with the goal of developing a computerized registry of qualified *Cohanim* and *Leviim* from around the world and assigning them a time of guard duty (*shmira*) to maintain the sanctity of the Temple Mount, which they believed would “hasten the establishment of the *Beit Hamiqdash*” (the Temple).<sup>12</sup>

This has also been the longtime goal of Rabbi Nachman Kahane, head of the Young Israel Synagogue (the synagogue closest to the Western Wall, located in the Muslim Quarter) and The Institute for Talmudic Commentaries. For many years before the discovery of the genetic marker, Rabbi Kahane, a priest himself, has sought to register all self-identified priests living in the Land of Israel. He has maintained a computerized database of known candidates, which now reaches into the thousands. Rabbi Kahane told me that he is keeping this list so that when the Messiah finally arrives he can go to his computer, print out the list, and say, “Here, Mr. Messiah, are your priests!” Recently, a new organization called Keter Kehuna Shevet Levi has been established by reputable Jewish leaders from around the world to begin to register all qualified priests and Levites on an international scale. This effort goes beyond the work of Rabbi Kahane in its attempt to make possible the universal ingathering of the priesthood in the event that the Third Temple becomes a reality.

With a test that can establish the identity of the priesthood and with a registration process underway whereby these individuals can be summoned for service, it would seem that the personnel for the Temple could be assembled without much difficulty. But as we learned in the previous chapter, without the ashes of the Red Heifer it is impossible for any priests to carry out their functions, for like all Jews today, they are not yet in a proper state of ceremonial purity. However, the solution to this problem has also been worked out.

## The Need for a Pure Priesthood

The problem of recovering a pure Jewish *Kohanim* is not new. In the Tosefta, Rabbi Yehuda records that when the Jews returned to Israel from the Babylonian captivity at the beginning of the Second Temple period, there was no one among them who had not been defiled by contact with the dead (corpse impurity).<sup>13</sup> How did they solve the dilemma of procuring a purified priest who could purify others? The Jewish sages explain that those returning from the exile constructed buildings whose foundations were raised off the ground to create a hollow space

between the floor and the Land of Israel. This prevented contact with any impurity that might rise from hidden graves underneath and defile those inside. It was necessary to build an entire complex of "courtyards," as the sages called them, in this special manner. It is said that these specially constructed buildings housed selected pregnant wives of the *Kohanim* so they could give birth to pure children. This follows, in a sense, the precedent set by Hannah, who presented her young son, Samuel, to Eli, the high priest, to be raised for the priesthood (1 Samuel 1:24-28). These women were brought before they gave birth in order to provide them with the appropriate medical treatment and to take the proper precautions in case a death occurred during birth and the whole system was defiled.

The children born to these women continued to stay at the courtyard after birth, and were raised by their mothers (who were supported by the Temple treasury) until they could perform the duty of producing the ashes of the Red Heifer and sprinkling the defiled remnant. Isolation might seem a likely problem in this arrangement, but it wasn't, for these courtyards could accommodate a large number of children. The number of children raised at any one time was based on the contingency of illness or death, so that there would always be a sufficient number present. Priestly education and health services were provided, but the children were not permitted to leave the courtyards, and rigid restrictions were placed on their families.

When these young priests had reached a sufficient age, preparations were made for them to perform the purification process with the ashes of the Red Heifer. The sages say that these ceremonially undefiled children were being transported on "doors" to the Pool of Siloam (the Shiloach spring). These "doors" were actually flat boards that were laid across the broad backs of oxen. They rode on the boards in such a way as to prevent any part of their bodies from touching the oxen, which served as a partition between them and the ground, in case they passed over any place where a grave was present. At the Pool of Siloam, the young priests dismounted from the oxen and filled special stone containers (which do not absorb defilement)<sup>14</sup> with the pure spring water. Once the vessels were filled, the children remounted the oxen and rode to the Temple Mount, where they could dismount from the oxen without fear of defilement because the platform that held the Temple complex was built with chambers of empty space underneath, like the courtyards in which the priestly children were brought up. They took some of the ashes stored in the Temple and, after sanctifying the water for use in the sin-offering, were ready to sprinkle those who were defiled. However, if no ashes were available, it was also

necessary for one of these priestly children to slaughter the Red Heifer, since this work can only be performed by an undefiled priest.<sup>15</sup> Otherwise, they mixed the water with the existing ashes and sprinkled the mix onto the high priest to purify him as he prepared the Red Heifer.

### *Producing a Purified Priesthood Today*

Surprising as it may seem, plans to produce a purified priesthood in this ancient manner are moving ahead today. Rabbi Yosef Elbom (see photo section), who directs the Movement for Establishing the Temple, has sought 20 couples to dedicate their unborn male children with the goal of raising a purified priesthood. Rabbi Elbom wants to raise newborn babies of Levitical descent in isolation from contact with ritual defilement. In November of 1998 I met with Rabbi Elbom to discuss his planned work. He explained that 95 percent of the observances performed in the Temple can't be carried out because of ritual impurity. His project would resolve this deficiency by taking the wives of *Kohanim* who volunteered to live at a secluded compound in the Jerusalem hills so their children could be brought up in the same kind of specially constructed buildings described by the sages of the Second Temple period. As in ancient times, this is thought important because the ground could contain unmarked graves which could cause defilement. Corpse-impurity is a ceremonial contamination that prevents the priesthood from functioning today. Daily contact with the dead (people, animals, or insects) as well as with those people or things in contact with them (such as workers in hospitals) has put every Jew today into a state of ritual defilement. The special compound necessary to help keep the children free from such defilement has already been donated by the ultra-Orthodox Jewish Idea Yeshiva. Too, four priestly families connected with the Kach movement have volunteered their unborn children for the purification project. According to Rabbi Elbom, his project will reverse the impediment that affects the present priesthood. When the boys reach their thirteenth birthdays, they will be qualified to collect water from the Pool of Siloam, burn the Red Heifer, and distribute its ashes. Members of Elbom's group were reported in the Israeli daily, *Ha-Aretz*, as saying, "The Temple is one of the central parts of our ideology; we view its rebuilding as part of Jewish experience, and its restoration is near at hand."

### *Protecting the Purity of the Priesthood*

Even though the priesthood cannot perform its purpose without a Temple, the expectation of a coming Temple requires each generation of those who are

of Levitical descent to preserve the original restrictions laid down in the Bible in order to maintain their qualification for the priestly office. One of these restrictions is that one who is of priestly lineage is prohibited from marrying a widow, divorcee, or harlot (Leviticus 21:14). Rabbinic tradition adds the prohibition of marriage to a “convert.” The application of this requirement to Jewish men today demonstrates the strength of the desire to safeguard the priesthood. In one 1994 case,<sup>16</sup> an Israeli couple’s 1982 marriage was ruled invalid because it was discovered that the wife, Shoshana Hadad, a Tunisian immigrant who had married Masoud Cohen, of priestly descent, was found to have had a relative who illegally married a divorcee in the year 580 B.C. Even though this sin was committed by the wife’s distant relative 2,574 years before, the Ministry of Religious Affairs said that Masoud Cohen could face criminal charges for misleading the rabbi who authorized their marriage. Because the transgression marked the entire family, the rabbinical court ruled that no daughter for succeeding generations, including Shoshana Hadad, could legitimately marry someone in the priestly line, such as a Cohen. Masoud’s act of marriage only became “criminal” when he claimed he was qualified to serve in the future Temple. This ruling shows the serious intent of the modern-day Israeli authorities who are preparing a priesthood for the anticipated Third Temple.

## Training the Priesthood

Today the training of priests for the Temple service is being conducted in Jerusalem, the city of the priests. The *yeshiva* (Hebrew, “sitting”) or college founded for this purpose is known as *Yeshiva Ateret Cohanim* (Hebrew, “Crown of the Priests”). It was founded in 1978 by Rabbi Motti Dan HaCohen in the Old City of Jerusalem near the western walls of the Temple Mount. The school trains its students in the order of priestly service, and posts a sign that it is not interested in activist attempts to enter the sacred precincts. Rather, their focus is on purely educational instruction. This instruction is for those identified as priests and who will commit to an eight-year program that includes courses in the ancient rites and regulations of the priesthood known as the “Order of the Sacrifices of the Temple.” It is, of course, remarkable that young men would spend so many years acquiring skills for a profession that does not yet exist! But this commitment is motivated by faith, not finances, and the young men in training earnestly believe that they will have jobs in their lifetime in the rebuilt Third Temple.

For Rabbi HaCohen, the motivation is Messianic. He contends that unless the Jewish People in Israel act proactively with respect to the coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple, the event will continue to be postponed: "If the Jewish People are not prepared, both physically and spiritually, for the coming of the Messiah, then they are in no position to demand of God that He should send the Messiah at all."<sup>17</sup> Although firm in his conviction, Rabbi HaCohen was surprised when more than 350 students showed initial interest in his school. Since the school began the enrollment has stood at a steady 200 students. They spend their days studying the large volumes of talmudic and midrashic texts on the sacrifices as well as newly written textbooks authored by Temple movement researchers who have gained extensive knowledge about the duties of the ancient Temple priests.

*Yeshiva Ateret Cohanim* is not only dedicated to academic study; with its sister organization *Atara Leyoshna*, it is involved in aggressive acquisitions of Arab properties in the Muslim Quarter next to the Temple Mount (as well as in the Arab Silwan village that occupies the western bank of David's City). Even though such purchases have countered Israeli government policies and put Arab sellers at risk of being punished by death, they have continued because of the overwhelming desire to establish a Jewish presence at the Temple Mount in preparation for the rebuilding of the Temple (see chapter 20).

### *The Preparation of the Levites*

During the time of the First and Second Temples, a number of the Levites played on two types of harps, singing arcane melodies that no one else was permitted to learn. This knowledge was passed from father to son, until the destruction of the Second Temple. Since that time the special knowledge of this music has been said to be "hidden." Because of the sacredness of the music of the Temple instruments, most Orthodox Jewish communities do not use any instrumental music in their synagogues. They do this as a sign of mourning over the destruction of the Temple.

However, Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, founder and director of the Temple Institute, has established a school of art and music which has restored the instruction of Levitical craftsmanship and music. The school, known as *Yeshivat D'vir*, has been designed as a high-school yeshiva "to educate youth who are faithful to the Torah, to the nation, and to the Land."<sup>18</sup> The school is looking for students who have artistic and musical inclinations or abilities that can be developed and pursued as a holy endeavor. The course offerings include study of the Bible

(chapters on the Land, Tabernacle, offerings, commandments dependent on the Temple), the Mishnah (*Seder Zra'im, Kodshin*), the Talmud (Gemara: Tractates *Brachot, Shabbat, Pesachim, Shekalim, Yoma, Succa, Ta'anit, Megilla, Hagigah, Tamid*), and the Judaic arts (playing, singing, instruments, drawing, architecture, woodworking, jewelry), with examinations in their chosen field(s) of emphasis. When I met with Rabbi Ariel and the principal of this school, Danny Zakaria, they stated that this school for youth was but a first step toward establishing a yeshiva of higher learning in the studies of the holy writings and art. As Rabbi Ariel explains:

The D'vir Yeshiva is a school with students for all kinds professions that are connected with the Temple. The students learn from those talmudic books that explain the details and plans of the Temple, what priests and Levites did all day, all year, and especially on the holidays. The students also learn the skills in connection with the Temple, such as developing music and learning in-depth about the music in the times of the Temple. . . . The students learn these subjects so that when the day will come, they will be able to produce these instruments and objects for the Temple exactly as they were in the First and Second Temple.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Performance of Priestly Service*

If members of the priesthood are being trained with a view to offering sacrifices in the future, is it possible that some of the individuals could offer sacrifices today? This question has been thoroughly examined by those in the Temple movement, with some giving an affirmative answer. For example, Rabbi Shlomo Moshe Scheinman wrote in an article entitled "It Is a *Mitzva* ["commandment"] to Attempt to Offer Sacrifices at This Time" that "there is a precedent in the history of our Nation for the offering of sacrifices upon an altar on the Temple Mount at a time that the Temple is not built." This was the case when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity before the Second Temple was constructed: "From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, but the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not yet been laid" (Ezra 3:6). Just as sacrifices were offered after the destruction of the First Temple, so sacrifices were attempted after the destruction of the Second Temple. This is documented in the book *Torat Habayit* ("Laws of the Temple"), which records in the name of the Kaftor VaPherach that more than 1,100 years after the destruction of the Second Temple Jews tried to offer sacrifices, even

though at that time the control of the Temple Mount was in the hands of the Gentiles and there was no Temple there: “My teacher, my rabbi Boruch Z.L., said to me that Rabbeinu Chananel [according to Rabbi Bar-Chaim it should be Yechiel and not Chananel] from Paris Z.L. sought to come to Jerusalem and he was in year 17 of the sixth millennium and he sought to offer sacrifices in this time” (1.6:7, page 15).<sup>20</sup> Likewise, in this same source are recorded the words of the author of the Chafetz Chaim and Mishna Brura: “And we sacrifice, even though there is no Temple.”

Shlomo Moshe Scheinman explains why sacrifices should be performed today in the absence of the Temple: God will permit the Temple to be rebuilt only when a portion of the Jewish people return spiritually “to the table of our Father” (the sacrificial altar).<sup>21</sup> The enthusiasm of this portion will influence others who are uncommitted to do the same.

## A Modern Passover Sacrifice

In order to fulfill the commandment to offer sacrifices, several organizations today have revived ancient sacrificial ceremonies and practices in anticipation of the rebuilding of the Temple. For several years the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful movement, together with the Chai va’Kaiyam organization, have sought to perform a Passover sacrifice on the Temple Mount on an altar which they have prepared.<sup>22</sup> One reason for this, Gershon Salomon says, is because “Major rabbis during the time after the destruction of the Temple, especially Rabbi Tucochinsky in Jerusalem in the 1930s, stated that the first Passover sacrifice which will be made on the Temple Mount will bring about the coming of Mashiach ben David and the rebuilding of the Temple.”<sup>23</sup> These groups each year have appealed directly to the Prime Minister and government of Israel for permission to conduct this service, claiming that the future of Israel itself is at stake:

The G-d of Israel returned Jerusalem and the Temple Mount to us through major miracles. Now He expects us to renew this sacrifice immediately, even before the Temple is rebuilt. Our tradition teaches us that once the sacrifice is reintroduced the redemption of Israel will be accomplished, the Third Temple will be built and Mashiach ben David will come. This was and is the dream and of all the generations of Israel since the destruction of the Second Temple as well as so many people all over the world. We are not allowed to disappoint the G-d of Israel and all those. We are not allowed to neglect what G-d commanded us to do especially at this time of redemption in Israel...The day when the

Passover sacrifice is performed will be a big day in the eyes of G-d and in the life of the people and land of Israel and many people all over the world.<sup>24</sup>

Although permission has never been granted for the groups to enter the Temple Mount, the sacrifice has been performed each year in the City of David before the Southern gates of the Temple Mount, the main gates used by the Israelites to enter the Temple Mount during the time of the First and Second Temples. Even though *halakha* requires the Passover sacrifice to be performed on the Temple Mount, the sacrifice in the City of David can be symbolic of this because, according to the Temple Mount Faithful, “King David was the greatest king of Israel, who liberated Jerusalem, bought the Temple Mount, built an altar to God on Mount Moriah, and prepared it for the building of the First Temple by King Solomon.”<sup>25</sup>

This was considered as a first step toward the fulfillment of the commandment and a prelude to the rebuilding of the Third Temple. However, according to Gershon Salomon, it would be possible for Jews to perform the rite on the Temple Mount even if the Temple is not rebuilt since the Pesach sacrifice had been offered long before the time of the First Temple. When I was taken by Yehuda Etzion to this place in the courtyard of a former monastery belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church in the Abu Tor quarter of Jerusalem, I stood on the ancient promontory overlooking the Temple Mount known as the Hill of Hania, named after a high priest who lived there in biblical times. It was obvious that from this point those offering the Passover sacrifice could also look onto the place where the Holy of Holies had been in the days when the high priest would enter that sacred spot carrying the blood to the Mercy Seat of the Ark. So, in their own symbolic way, those offering this present-day sacrifice are aligning themselves with the site of future fulfillment, awaiting the day when they themselves can follow the priests to the proper place of the altar.

The group offering this Passover sacrifice usually consists of about a dozen members with about twice that number of small children. They sacrifice a male goat and roast it over a wood fire in a large outdoor metal oven, according to biblical and traditional laws. Gershon Salomon explains the details of the sacrifice and its significance for the future:

The sacrifice was brought from one of the settlements in Samaria to symbolize the eternal link between Samaria, Judea, Gaza and Jerusalem and the Temple Mount as an undivided part of the promised land of Israel. During this special event the priest prayed the prayers and com-

mandments from the Torah which are connected to the Pesach sacrifice. A special oven which was built according to the godly Law was used to roast the sacrifice and while that was happening all the members who took part in this unique event sang songs and thanked the G-d of Israel, who gave all of us the privilege to perform the exciting Pesach sacrifice after 2000 years of destruction and exile, after so many generations of Jews dreamed and prayed to be a part of such a prophetic end-time event. During the history of the exile, many Jews have tried to come to Jerusalem and secretly perform the sacrifice on the Temple Mount which was controlled by their enemies but they could not do it, but here, in 1999, in the free State of Israel, the continuance of the Biblical Israel, a Pesach sacrifice was performed which was the biggest prophetic redemptional dream of the Jewish People. We could feel the significance of this godly, prophetic, exciting moment. It moved our hearts and the hearts of many Israelis who heard of this event through the media. One day soon, when the Pesach sacrifice will be performed in the Third Temple, G-d and history will not forget those who opened the door to an event which is one of the most significant events in the life of the people of Israel. Everyone of those who participated in the event received a part of the sacrifice and used it at their own Seder tables that every family held that evening and ate it before midnight and did not break any of the bones exactly as G-d commanded. For the first time everyone of them ate a real Pesach sacrifice, exactly as it has to be done in the Seder. In this way we renewed a deep and significant link between us and all the generations before us since the generation of Moses and the Exodus when the first Pesach sacrifice was held.<sup>26</sup>

Even though this Passover sacrifice was conducted by one small group, the event itself was carried by the international media around the world and via the internet. And although the sacrifice itself was only symbolic because no Temple yet exists, its symbolism reminds us that a priesthood is alive and well and that there are some who are looking to the future when another great exodus will change the status quo and return them to the Temple.

In order to bring the performance of the priesthood to reality, several organizations are busily preparing the equipment that they will be needed by the future priests. In the next chapter we will visit these sometimes public but most times private institutions and discover what they are doing to hasten the coming of the Last Days Temple.

# Provisions for the Priesthood



## Furnishing the Tools for the Last Days Temple

*We are working for the Temple-in-the-making just as we did for Zionism-in-the-making. Just as they did not establish a Jewish state right after the first Zionist Congress [1896], but built an organization that led to its establishment, so with the building of the Temple.<sup>1</sup>*

—RABBI YISRAEL ARIEL

Every job has its tools of the trade. The doctor needs his medical equipment, the lawyer his law books, the farmer his machinery for planting and harvesting, the painter his rollers and brushes, and the bricklayer his trowel. Likewise, the priests who will function in the coming Last Days Temple will need certain tools to carry out their work.

According to estimates by those who have the hope of rebuilding, the Third Temple is expected to employ some estimated 28,000 priests and 4,000 Levites, all of whom must have the proper equipment to carry out their respective tasks in the service of the Sanctuary. For every other profession in the world the necessary tools can be purchased, but not so for the priests. Where does one go to buy tools for a Temple that has not existed for 2,000 years? What store would manufacture and supply tools for a profession that today cannot even use them? While there is no shop to which prospective priests can go, the tools of their trade nevertheless now exist and are being produced in increasing quantity. They represent the provisions for the future worship that is a vital part of the preparation for the Last Days Temple. In this chapter, we will look at the organizations responsible for making these tools, the items they are making, and the practical use to which they are being put in advance of the Temple itself.

## Restoring the Tools of the Temple

Shlomo Moshe Scheinman, in an article addressing the commandment to offer sacrifices even before the Temple is rebuilt, asked, “Why should we prepare all the needs of the Temple and certainly all the more so of the sacrificial service immediately even though currently the government of Israel disturbs us from our efforts to offer sacrifices?”<sup>2</sup> In other words, is it good sense to manufacture products that have no present purpose? It may not seem good sense, but Mr. Scheinman believes it is good scripture. He points out the precedent, in the Bible, of King David, who although told by God that he could not build the Temple and that it would not be built in his lifetime (2 Samuel 7:5, 12-13; 1 Kings 5:3-5), prepared all the materials for building and all the furnishings of the structure. This preparation by David included his charge to his son to build the Temple (1 Chronicles 28:10, 20) and came with detailed plans for its construction (1 Chronicles 28:11-19). In addition, David started a building fund and lavishly provided out of his own royal resources the precious metals and other materials needed for the production of the Temple’s adornment and ritual vessels (1 Chronicles 29:2-5).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he directed a fundraising program among his subjects that resulted in even greater amounts being donated (1 Chronicles 29:1, 6-8).<sup>4</sup>

Based on this example, Mr. Scheinman explains: “If King David . . . prepared all the construction needs for the building of the Temple that were in his capacity to prepare, even though he received an explicit prophecy that the Temple would not be built in his days, how much more so is it fitting that we prepare all the needs of the Temple, when there is a possibility that the Temple will be rebuilt in our days.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, just as King David’s example motivated the Jewish people in his time to join in the preparations, the hope is that the enthusiasm of those in the Temple movement will influence “middle of the road” Jews to desire the same things.

## Preparing the Priestly Apparel

The priests who officiate in the future Temple will be required to wear garments that conform to the biblical specifications for representative purity. Unfortunately, both the exact method of weaving these sacred garments and the procedure for producing the special blue dye used the garments had been lost to time. This made it necessary to do extensive research in the hope of recovering this ancient knowledge. Some of the research began before the Second World War, but it wasn’t until the 1980s that the discoveries were able to be put to use. One of the first discoveries involved that of recovering the biblical blue dye.

### *The Rediscovery of Biblical Blue*

God commanded that the Tabernacle be constructed with a veil that included material dyed the colors of “blue and purple and scarlet” (Exodus 26:31). The same colors were prescribed for the garments of the high priest, including a sash of “fine twisted linen, and blue and purple and scarlet, the work of the weaver” (Exodus 39:29), and a “blue cord” fastened to the mitre or crown (Exodus 39:31). God also commanded that this blue be a part of the garment of every Israelite: “The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels [Hebrew, *tzitzit*] on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue” (Numbers 15:37-39). Since this command applies to all observant Jewish males, just as the former command applies to the priests, it was necessary for this exact blue color to be found if the commandment was to be obeyed. The problem was that the origin and manner of producing this biblical blue (Hebrew, *techelet*) had been completely lost; such a statement is recorded in the Midrash: “And now we have only white,

for the *techelet* has been hidden" (*Numbers Rabbah* 17:5). This loss occurred with the Muslim conquest of Israel in A.D. 638, when the oppression forced the Jewish dye industry underground and the process became obscured. Although the exact source for the biblical blue was unknown, the sages had left a name for it: *Hilazon*. But what was it? Some guessed it was a squid, and others a type of plant. But in the end, one rabbi unlocked the secret.

This was the Hasidic Rebbe and former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Isaac Herzog. He took seriously the comment in a letter written by Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Leiner, the Radzyner Rebbe, which declared: "It is obligatory for all who are capable to search for it [the *Hilazon*] to merit Israel with this commandment, which has been forgotten for the last several centuries. And he who succeeds in this will surely be blessed by God."<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Herzog's extensive investigation concluded that the biblical blue came from a sea snail known scientifically as *Murex Trunculus*.<sup>7</sup> Traces of this rare dye showed up in archaeological discoveries and confirmed his research. One sample of the stain was on a 3,200-year-old Bronze Age pottery shard found at Tel Shikmona, and another from the first century A.D. was found on a piece of clothing discovered at Masada. Archaeological excavations at Tel Dor on the Mediterranean coast have also revealed mounds of *Murex* shells dating from the biblical period. These shells were broken in the exact spot necessary to obtain the dyestuff. In addition, chemical analysis of the stains on ceramic vats from 1,200 B.C. have matched the modern-day *Trunculus*. The actual secret of producing the dye was rediscovered by professor Otto Elsner of the Shenkar College of Fibers. When he examined the snail that Rabbi Herzog had identified, he found that the hypobranchial gland, from which the dye was produced, held a clear liquid which, when exposed to the air, turned purple. But purple was not the correct color; where had the blue come from? Then he realized that those who worked at crushing the shells to extract the dye had done their work right on the seashore because the enzyme within the gland that turns into the dye material decomposes within minutes. Perhaps it had something to do with the bright Mediterranean sunlight. It did! In a cloudy climate the dye remains purple, but under Middle Eastern conditions it turns a brilliant blue.

Because of the rarity of the snails that produced this dye, the dyeing industry came under imperial control. The Romans issued edicts that only royalty could wear garments colored with this dye. Perhaps this was for the best, for one source written in A.D. 300 tells us that one pound of blue-dyed silk sold for the modern-day equivalent of \$96,000. So pretigious was this dye that the use of

this color on a single thread of the fringed garment of the common man gave him a touch of royalty.

### *The Hope Promised by the Blue Dye*

That this dye developed such special connections with nobility is interesting, for God had said that Israel was to be a kingdom of priests, a status greater than that of any king on earth. According to the Talmud (*Menahot* 44a), the shores of Israel are inundated with these snails only once every 70 years. Many thought this to be exaggeration, but in late October 1990, *Trunculus* snails in huge quantities were found all along beaches on the coast of Israel. This was hailed by some of the ultra-Orthodox as a sign of the imminent coming of the Messianic age and with it the revival of the priesthood and the building of the Temple. The same expectation was expressed long ago: “The revelation of the *Hilazon* is a sign that the redemption is shining near” (*Divrey Menakhem* 25). Today this hope is being communicated by an organization based on the research and work of Rabbi Eliyahu Tavger of Jerusalem, who applied the entire process of producing the techelet according to the traditional prescribed ritual. This organization, known as Amutat P’Til Tekhelet, with offices in both Jerusalem and New York, now produces after 1,300 years *tsitsit* with the elusive biblical blue-colored thread.

## Furnishing the Priesthood

In anticipation of the possibility of rebuilding the Temple in this generation, there are now organizations dedicated to furnishing the sacrificial requirements of the priesthood. One of these, known as Yeshivat Torat HaBayit (“School of the Laws of the Temple”), was founded, according to their own issued statement, “with the encouragement of the sages of the generation to train Torah scholars in the laws of rebuilding the Temple and the Temple sacrifices—*halacha lema’ase* (“applied Jewish law”)...and the design and manufacture of the priestly garments and service vessels, all of them kosher for use according to *halacha* and ready to be handed over for the Temple Service.”<sup>8</sup> So far they have made the four priestly garments, the Menorah, incense utensils, the *mizrak* (a sacrificial vessel), the *kiyor* (“sink”), silver trumpets, and measurement vessels. The organization has sought support from the Jewish community through donations made in remembrance of the annual half-shekel tax paid to the Temple treasury in Temple times. Since this practice ended with the destruction

of the Temple in A.D. 70, Jewish custom has been to donate to another worthy cause “in commemoration of the commandment of the half-shekel” (Hebrew, *Zecher leMachatzit HaSheqel*). Because the work of this organization is closer to the original purpose of the half-shekel donation than any other modern cause, they feel they are entitled to receive it. However, convincing other Jews of this could prove a more difficult task than rebuilding the Temple itself!

### *The Temple Institute*

Since 1986 a group of rabbinical scholars, researchers, designers, artisans, and craftsmen under the direction of Rabbi Yisrael Ariel have been involved in raising the awareness of and educating the Jewish public concerning the importance of the Temple to their heritage and hastening the building of the Third Temple. In 1988 they created, in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, what they call a “Temple-in-waiting”<sup>9</sup> in order to fulfill the biblical commandment of Exodus 25:8: to make God a sanctuary (Temple).” Known as The Temple Institute (Hebrew, *Machon HaMikdash*), this organization, located within view of the Temple Mount itself, has been at the forefront of the publication of Third Temple research. Rabbi Ariel and those connected with The Temple Institute believe that there is a direct correlation between the problems Israel has faced and the lack of a Temple. In fact, they contend that the problems that the world is suffering result as well from the Temple’s absence. Therefore, even though the time has not yet arrived to rebuild the Temple, the efforts of The Temple Institute are viewed as hastening that day and the coming of the Messiah.

### **The Temple Institute’s Founder**

Rabbi Ariel, who founded The Temple Institute, drew his inspiration from his involvement as part of the paratroop unit that captured the Temple Mount in the Six-Day War. The men in this unit were among the first Israelis to reach the Western Wall, and Rabbi Ariel was given the unique responsibility of guarding the Dome of the Rock the day after its capture. When Moshe Dayan returned custody of the Temple Mount to the Muslims, Rabbi Ariel decided to dedicate himself to reversing this “traitorous” decision and help prepare for the rebuilding of the Temple, which, from his perspective, had only been temporarily delayed. As Rabbi Ariel recounts:

The [Temple] Institute was founded after the Six Day War. From the moment that the Israeli soldiers took over the holy place about 30 years

ago, the need to find the exact location of the Temple, how the priests worked there, what the Levites sang and what kind of vessels were there, was revived.<sup>10</sup>

For this reason Rabbi Ariel moved to the Jewish Quarter, which at the time was in the process of restoration, and began studies with Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi (see chapter 19) whose teaching further fueled these ambitions. Rabbi Ariel became a biblical and Talmudic scholar and has paid special attention to the subject of the sanctity of the Land of Israel in connection to the Temple. In two published volumes (of a projected four-volume set) on this subject,<sup>11</sup> he argues that the original boundaries of the Land promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21) and never yet fulfilled in history<sup>11</sup> extend west to east from a point near the present Suez Canal to the Persian Gulf, and north to south from northern Syria along the Euphrates River to a boundary line running from Eliat on the Red Sea to the border with Persia. Within these boundaries today fall the countries of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and portions of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Rabbi Ariel's understanding is that when the Temple is rebuilt and all Jews presently resident outside the Land return, these lands will be necessary for the greater population of restored Israel. Moreover, he recognizes that while in 1967 the main spiritual center of Israel had been restored to the Jewish people, its treasures, believed to be hidden beneath the Temple Mount, had not. Ariel believes that the restoration of the objects used in the Temple service will cause Jews throughout the world to revive their desire for a Temple and ultimately will lead to its rebuilding.

### **Activity on the Mount**

Not all of Rabbi Ariel's pursuits with respect to the Temple have been scholarly. He was the chief organizer of a zealot group known as Tzfia, whose stated objective is regaining control of the Temple Mount. In March of 1983 Rabbi Ariel, with 38 of his yeshiva students and a group of Israel Defense Forces soldiers from Kiryat Arba and Jerusalem, organized a plan to tunnel beneath the Al-Aqsa Mosque for the purpose of holding Passover prayers.<sup>13</sup> Part of their plan may have been to create a settlement in this area of the Temple Mount in order to establish a Jewish presence at the site. The plans were never realized because the group was turned back before reaching the Temple Mount. However, in April of 1989 Rabbi Ariel and Joel Lerner, Director of the Sanhedrin Institute, were successful in gaining entrance to the Temple Mount. This time they hoped to offer a

Passover sacrifice on the Temple Mount, an act that they believed would begin the process of redeeming the site for the rebuilding of the Temple. The act would have great significance, since this particular offering historically *ceased* with the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, although the other Passover rites and ceremonies were continued as before. Their hope was that the first *korban Pesach* offered in 2,000 years on the Temple Mount would announce the imminent rebuilding of the Temple, which requires the return of the sacrificial system, and inaugurate the Messianic era that Jewish people anticipate each year at Passover in the hopes that the prophet Elijah will appear as the messenger of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6; see also Matthew 17:10-11). Behind these actions is the conviction that they can influence God to respond.<sup>14</sup> They believe that if there is to be a restoration of the Passover in all its fullness from heaven, then it can be hastened by taking the initiative on earth. However, on this occasion in 1989 Rabbi Ariel and his group were prevented from completing the ritual. Even so, their actions, joined six months later by those of the Temple Mount Faithful's attempt to lay a cornerstone for the Third Temple (see chapter 19), have been cited as the cause for the Arab riot of the following year, which left 17 Palestinians dead.

These “setbacks” have not led Rabbi Ariel to hide behind the walls of the Temple Institute nor the Institute of Talmudic Commentaries, where he also spends time. On Tisha B’Av in 1997, in an event sponsored by The Temple Institute but unreported by the media, thousands of religious Zionists, including rabbis and students from mainstream yeshivas, silently gathered in the vaulted, tunnel-like entrance to the Temple Mount’s “Cotton Gate,” intending to pray on the Mount.<sup>15</sup> They were blocked by a tight row of police officers. Undaunted, the mostly young men and some women prayed where they stood, and asked God to “undo Israel’s shame and restore the Temple: ‘Just as we’ve seen it in ruins, let us merit seeing its rebuilding.’” The dark tunnel was filled with piercing, brassy sounds when a man concluded the service by blowing one of the silver trumpets created by The Temple Institute for use in the Third Temple.

## Educating a New Generation

The Temple Institute has been credited with changing the attitude of Orthodox youth raised by a generation for whom the Temple was of little interest. Tens of thousands of religious Zionists—including students in state-sponsored religious high schools—have attended lectures and slide presentations by organizations like The Temple Institute. Today, as the result of years of

educational outreach and exposure to the history of the Temple, a new generation of Orthodox Jews has arisen for whom the goal of realizing the Third Temple is a major concern. The Temple Institute was begun for this very purpose, and today is visited by more than 100,000 people each year. Over the last decade it has developed affiliate organizations, including The Institute for Temple Studies, The Exhibition of Temple Vessels or Treasures of the Temple (a Jerusalem museum and gallery), The Academy of Temple Studies (a traveling branch of the Institute), and several Jerusalem area-based schools: Yeshivat Bet Habehira, Beit Hauman Ha'ivri, and Yeshivat D'vir (a school of Judaic Arts). It also has published numerous books and produced films in Hebrew and other languages about the Second Temple, the Temple ritual, and the Third Temple. These include titles such as *The Odyssey of the Temple* (1995) and a revised and updated edition entitled *The Light of the Temple* (1999), the *Temple Haggadah* (1996), which is a guide for the Passover seder, new versions of various tractates of the Mishnah which deal with the Temple service, and a series of *Machzorim* (holiday prayer books), all depicting observance in the days of the Temple through lavish illustrations and photos of the Institute. In addition the institute publishes the newsletter *On the Altar*, which reports on the progress of their work.

### Creating the Vessels of the Temple

However, the most highly profiled work of The Temple Institute, and the one for which it has gained notoriety,<sup>16</sup> is its authentic recreation of the 93 sacred Temple vessels necessary for resumption of the Temple services (see photo section). In addition, it has produced computerized visualizations and blueprints for building the Third Temple as well as created a scale model of the Temple (on display at the Institute's visitors' center). One of the first items created was a special computerized loom to manufacture the priestly garments that must be woven as a single piece in a complex "garment of six" pattern (in which each individual thread consists of six separate threads spun into one). Among the more than 60 items that have, or are in the process of being created, are the eight garments of the High Priest—four of woven white flax (inner robe or ephod, belt, turban, pants) and four of various materials—a golden crown with words "Holy to the Lord," a jeweled breastplate bearing the names of the tribes of Israel, an outer robe decorated with bells, and an apron. Additional items include the silver trumpets (for assembling Israel to worship at the Temple), the blue-purple dye (*techelet*) for the *tzitzit*, ritual and sacrificial items such as the

barley altar, the eleven sacrificial incense spices, urns, ewers, incense pans, forks, shovels, and carts (for burnt offerings), the gold and silver *mizraqot* (vessels used to catch and dispense the sacrificial blood on the altar), a copper laver or basin (for priestly purification), copper flasks and measuring cups (used in the libation offerings), vessels for the meal offerings, lottery boxes (for the Day of Atonement), the mortar and pestle and stone vessels (*kelal*) for grinding and holding the purifying ashes of the Red Heifer, the six-foot tall gold Menorah (lampstand),<sup>17</sup> the cleaning instruments, and oil pitchers for replenishing the oil for its light. In addition, the golden Altar of Incense and the Table of Shewbread were completed as of the Jewish New Year 5760 (September 1999). While a miniature replica of the Ark of the Covenant is prominently on display in the audio-visual presentation room of The Temple Institute's visitors' center, spokesmen for the institute publicly state that they will not need to reproduce the Ark as the original is believed to still exist only meters away in a secret chamber under the Temple Mount beneath the site of the Holy of Holies.<sup>18</sup> When access to this site is possible, and all the other ritual requirements have been met, they expect the Ark to be recovered and take its place within the restored Third Temple.<sup>19</sup>

On display as well in the institute's public exhibition is a growing collection of over 100 framed oil paintings by a Russian immigrant artist depicting various scenes of the Tabernacle and Temple's history and services. These paintings, as well as many of the ritual vessels listed above, can be viewed at the Temple Institute's web site ([www.temple.org.il](http://www.temple.org.il)), which also publishes articles about various aspects of Temple-related research.

In recent years The Temple Institute was involved in creating a full-size working model of the Temple's outer altar, known as the Altar of Sacrifices, that stood in the inner courtyard of the Sanctuary. This reconstructed altar, about the size of a two-story building, was made along the shore of the Dead Sea on the grounds of the Dead Sea Works. It was constructed out of scrap metal by plant workers during their free time on the orders of Avi ben Nun, former CEO of the Dead Sea Works. Its purpose, as Raphaella Tabak (the Temple Institute's Educational Director) says "is to learn the steps of the daily service [offering the *tamid*] in the Temple by walking through it."<sup>20</sup> It had been used to teach the functions of the Temple service to select groups of priestly students by helping them follow the course of those making the offerings through illustrated hand-outs. In November 1998 I met with Rabbi Ariel to discuss the altar and was able to take photographs of him and others ascending its ramp. However, that spring,

The Temple Institute's Director, Menachem Mackover, reported that it had been dismantled. According to Rabbi Chaim Richman, Director of Public Affairs for the Temple Institute, the successor of Avi ben Nun had it "plowed under completely."<sup>21</sup>

### *Yeshiva Beit Habechira*

The Judean settlement of Carmei Tzur currently serves as the location of Yeshiva Beit Habechira ("School of the House of the Choice"), one of the schools founded by The Temple Institute to do research on the Third Temple. The Yeshiva bases its purpose on a statement in the Talmud, which accords special merit to those who will dedicate themselves to this work: "Torah scholars that are involved with the *halachas* of the sacrificial service, the scriptural passage accounts them as if the Temple was built in their days" (*Menachot* 110). In particular, the task of the yeshiva is to raise up a generation of Torah scholars, lecturers, researchers, and experts on the Temple and its service in the hopes of hastening the hour of the building of the Temple. This work is done in accordance with the words of the sages: "Great is study that brings to action" (*Kedushin* 40b). The yeshiva is supported by private donations based on the teaching that it is an obligation to support Torah scholars that deal in-depth with the *halachas* ("laws") of the Temple and thereby bring nearer the hour of its rebuilding. The scholars of the yeshiva have already written many articles (published on the internet) on various topics, such as how sacrifices can resume before a Temple is rebuilt.

### **Micah and Shoshanna Harrari**

After a 2,000-year absence, the sound of the biblical harp has returned to Jerusalem. With the return of the Jewish people to Israel, and the recognition that they were on the threshold of the days of the Messiah, Micah and Shoshanna Harrari (see photo section) reintroduced the harp to their Land. It began while the Harraris were in California, building and repairing stringed instruments and studying harp-making. Planning to immigrate to Israel, they heard that Teddy Kollek, then mayor of Jerusalem, had said, "Jerusalem needs a harp-maker." Answering this need, the Harraris decided to research the biblical harp. They discovered that the ten-string harp of King David was considered a symbol of Israel (Psalm 144:9), and believed that its recreation would serve as a symbol of the future of Israel as foretold by the prophets of old. A story is told

that when they had first made their replica of the ten-stringed harp of David and tuned it to the ancient Hebrew mode, a rabbi came by to see it. When he saw and heard it, he exclaimed that this was a fulfillment of prophecy, for the Talmud said that this harp was a symbol of “The World to Come,” and that when this harp again was sounded in Jerusalem that the Messiah would come!

The Harraris met with Messianic believers when they first moved to Israel, but soon joined with the Orthodox and now share their beliefs. With this background they are perhaps the most able at conversing with Christians among those in the Temple movement. They believe that they are part of the divine plan in ushering in the days of the Messiah and world peace, for it is also written of this harp that the *Shir Hadash*, or New Song, whose main theme is a world of no more war, will be sung upon it. They believe that it is the *Asora*, the mythical harp spoken of in Jewish literature “whose song will rise on the day when the world that is to be will be recreated in one harmonious whole.”<sup>22</sup> They work in concert with most of the Temple movement organizations and are frequently a part of their demonstrations and activities. The ten-stringed harps manufactured by the Harraris are included among the vessels on display at The Temple Institute, and along with other models, are offered for sale at the House of Harari, a shop located near Zion Square in the center of Jerusalem’s new city.

### *House of Levi*

The *Kohanim* (“priests”) and *Leviim* (“Levites”) have traditionally been regarded as the spiritual and royal guides of the Jewish people. One organization known as the House of Levi believes that the future development of the Jewish people will not be guaranteed until all of those who are members of these divisions of the priesthood are fully aware of their priestly lineage and duties. Their call is for Levites the world over to join “the royalty of Keter Kehuna Shevet Levi, whose aim is to unify the people throughout the world.” They base this call on new genetic research (see chapter 17), which they believe has confirmed that they are the only authentic royal line in human history, “dating back 3,300 years when it was first established in Sinai by divine decree.” The organization’s particular concern is the need to stem the rising tide of cultural assimilation, which has distanced the *Kohanim* and *Leviim* from their unique heritage and significance as descendants of Levi. Because they do not know of their duties to the Nation of Israel, they and the Nation are suffering. The organization’s missions statement describes their purpose and their plan

for assembling and educating those who will comprise the future priesthood in the Third Temple:

The House of Levi is an organization aiming to raise the consciousness of today's *Kohanim* and *Leviim*. We intend to make this exclusive group a cohesive and unified family of royal *Kohanim* and *Leviim*, fully aware of their traditions dating back to the days of the Temple—and beyond, to their origins in the desert. Our purpose is to foster Jewish pride and unity among the Jewish people. We plan to issue informative booklets on historical aspects and contemporary customs of *Kohanim* and *Leviim*. We will establish chapters of *Kohanim* and *Leviim* around the world, complete with seminars, study groups and conferences.<sup>23</sup>

The organization's founding chairman, Abraham Yakov Hirschfeld Halevi, is joined in this mission by such notable Israeli Kohanim as the Chief Rabbi of Efrat, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Ron Nachman, the Mayor of Ariel, and a member of the Israeli Knesset as well as a host of other directors from the United States and Canada. Their first attempt at uniting the international community of *Kohanim* and *Leviim* has been through the official registry at the organization's website.<sup>24</sup> The education this organization offers is a vital part of the process to equip a priesthood, since those who serve must first understand the complex laws of the sacrificial service. If this knowledge is not precisely understood and followed, each priest and Levite risks incurring, even inadvertently, ceremonial impurity, the effect of which can disrupt their service and defile the Temple.

### *Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim*

#### Training Future Priests for Religious Rites

In 1978 Rabbi Matiyahu Dan HaCohen founded the Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim ("Crown of the Priests Seminary") for the purpose of educating those of the priestly order in the religious rites and regulations. In the beginning this organization was simply a yeshiva dedicated to instructing their students in the proper method of preparing the ritual vestments, using the sacred vessels, and how to sacrifice a menagerie of kosher animals. When I visited the yeshiva in 1995 I was told the coursework involved study of the various tractates of the Mishnah given to descriptions of the priestly service, Maimonides' *Laws of the Temple*, and various works by present-day scholars researching the priestly *halachic* requirements. Students have also built models of the Temple and the Ark of the Covenant for study. When the school was first advertised by Rabbi HaCohen, 350 prospective students came to the first meeting. Since then the

school has boasted a resident student body of between 50 and 75 individuals who live in buildings in the area, with as many as 200 men overall in active preparation for the priesthood.

Although Ateret Cohanim received much publicity when the Temple movement was first discovered by the media,<sup>25</sup> it has had a lower profile in the last decade, with people's attention diverted by the more activist organizations. One reason for this is because Ateret Cohanim's position on the Temple Mount has followed the strict rabbinic ban, discouraging their students from entering the Mount area. However, both Rabbi HaCohen and the spiritual leader of the yeshiva, Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, Chief Rabbi of Beit-El, a settlement in biblical Judea, are proponents of purchasing properties in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City which are situated adjacent to the Temple Mount. They share with leaders of the Gush Emunim a common heritage as students of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, who was the father of the modern settlement movement.

The Ateret Cohanim has argued that control of the area next to the Temple Mount is necessary to ensure the safety of Jews who worship at the Western Wall. They also say that the proximity to the Temple Mount makes these properties sacred, and as such they should be in the possession of the Jewish people. Moreover, they believe that it is imperative to conquer and hold this area and to establish an exclusive Jewish presence so that when the Messiah arrives Israel will be in a position to immediately rebuild the Third Temple. Another reason for their desire to acquire property rights has to do with concern over the present ritual impurity of the Temple Mount. In order to eventually cleanse the site in preparation for the rebuilding of the Third Temple, priests must establish residence near the site so they can perform the necessary purification work.

### Purchasing Property for the Priesthood

Ateret Cohanim was quite active in purchasing Muslim properties with the help of both Jewish and Christian contributions until the Rabin/Perez administrations froze all such activities and branded as terrorists Messianic Jewish organizations that attempted to upset the political status quo with the Arabs. This policy was relaxed somewhat by the Netanyahu government (though not officially), but Yasser Arafat and his Mufti Sheik Ikrama Sabri threatened a death sentence on any Arab (Muslim or Christian) who sold any property to a Jew. Since this sentence has been carried out in quite a number of instances, even when it was merely *rumored* that such a sale was under consideration,<sup>26</sup> the Ateret Cohanim was prevented from acquiring the property. Nevertheless, in

recent years they have made significant purchases (with great controversy) and settled students in buildings acquired in the City of David and on the Mount of Olives. Although they keep a lower profile than many of the more activist organizations (see chapter 19), they do join with these organizations, particularly the Temple Mount Faithful, for special services and demonstrations.

### *Atara Leyoshna*

Another organization that shares in the education and settlement work with Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim is Atara Leyoshna. Its name means “restoring the crown to its original form,” which has reference to reestablishing the royal priesthood to the Temple. The connection with Ateret Cohanim goes back to 1981, when the two organizations were one and met with Rabbi Nachman Kahane of the Young Israel Synagogue (located in the Muslim Quarter near the Temple Mount). In this same year they separated into independent but ideologically aligned groups. The group maintains an educational study and tourist center that houses their Temple Model Museum in the Jewish Quarter near The Temple Institute. Visitors to the center are offered a tour of the exhibits and asked to view a video presentation of the progress made by the group’s settlement activity. The museum’s guides explain the organization’s goals of creating a Jewish environment near the Temple Mount, the return of the property of Old Jerusalem to its rightful Jewish ownership through the process of legal purchase, and the ultimate goal of rebuilding the Third Temple. On display in the museum are model replicas of the First and Second Temples, replicas of various pieces of Temple furniture, including a full-scale Ark of the Covenant, a Menorah, a collection of incense spices, a model of Noah’s Ark (which includes dinosaurs!), and other items relating to Jewish tradition. The largest model, occupying center stage, is one clearly labeled “The Third Temple” (see photo section). Its placement is such that through the window behind the model one can look out upon the Temple Mount and catch a glimpse of the Dome of the Rock, the prospective site for this new Temple. Unlike most Temple movement models, this one is not based on the Second Temple but on the dimensions of Ezekiel’s Temple, and is accompanied by references to relevant Scripture passages from the book of Ezekiel.

### *Begeg Ivri*

Another Temple-related organization is a nonprofit outfit in Jerusalem by the name of Begeg Ivri (literally, “Hebrew clothing” or “Israelite garments”). The

organization is the brainchild of Reuven Praeger, an Orthodox immigrant from Miami, Florida. Of himself Praeger says, "I am a Levite, my father is a Levite, my father's father is a Levite, and I've been serving for the last 15 years as a Levite on duty. The tribe of Levi did not receive a portion of the Land of Israel, we received a duty. Our duty was to prepare the physical vessels that were necessary for the spiritual well-being of the people. And for the last 15 years we've been working 20 hours a day bringing back the physical vessels that will pave the way for the rebuilding of the Third Temple."<sup>27</sup>

## The Clothing

Praeger's shop, now in his flat in a business tower in the Harredi community of *Mea Shearim*, creates tailor-made "clothing for the Third Temple era." This clothing, made by Praeger as a levitical function, is designed according to biblical and historical sources, and purports to be authentically patterned after the dress worn in biblical times. As Praeger says, "It is our attempt to recreate a native Israelite's dress so that those of us who have returned to the Land can begin to dress and look like we live here. Now that we're back in the Land we should be making them magnificent as our ancestors did as a free people upright in our Land."<sup>28</sup>

Praeger's purpose for manufacturing the clothing is not simply economical, but spiritual—to revive Temple consciousness and pave the way for the establishment of the Third Temple: "This generation is different from the past one. Look at the creation of Israel. There are signs that ancient prophecies will be fulfilled, [of] the Jews returning from the four corners of the earth to Jerusalem, and [of] the rebuilding of the Temple."<sup>29</sup>

Beged Ivri has been producing fringed garments (*tzit-tzit*) as an outer garment as opposed to the small four-cornered undergarment that Orthodox Jews hid underneath their Gentile apparel during the 1,900 years of their exile. These garments, which have a twist of blue on the fringes of each corner, fulfill the biblical commandment to make such fringes on an outer garment (Numbers 15:37-41). However, it was the Temple, not simply a desire to adopt a more biblical lifestyle, that motivated Praeger. In a 1989 interview, *Hadassah* magazine reported of Praeger, "It is the image of the rebuilding of the Third Temple which led Praeger to wonder at the appearance of Jews when they came to Jerusalem to pray during the days of the First and Second Temples. Praeger believes that Jews should start dressing that way again in preparation for the Third Temple."<sup>30</sup> It

was Praeger's vision of seeing people coming to pray at the Third Temple that inspired him to create his fashions in the hopes of advancing that day.

### **The Biblical Incense**

Beged Ivri has also assisted in the research and restoration of the incense (Hebrew, *ketoret*) used in the Temple service. Various types of incense were essential to the sacrificial offerings, but the knowledge of what some of them were and exactly how they were mixed was lost in antiquity. Praeger explains their importance and use as well as the way they can exist today apart from a functioning Temple and priesthood:

In the Temple there were two altars; an outer sacrificial altar and an inner altar that was the altar of the incense. The inner altar was small and it was a golden altar. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Upon that altar they would burn an incense everyday that was a compound of eleven different ingredients. During the course of the last fourteen years we have identified and made once again available the eleven original ingredients that were compounded into the incense that was burnt daily in the Temple. We have made available as essential oils, each of the eleven individual ingredients. There is a biblical prohibition against preparing the incense in powder form the way it was done in the Temple. But by presenting it as an essential oil, as a pure sap liquid that comes directly out of the tree, it was never used in the Temple in that form, and, therefore, there is no prohibition against using them for either educational purposes or whatever.<sup>31</sup>

Although the powder form of the incense exists in locked cabinets at The Temple Institute and the offices of The Temple Mount Faithful, the liquid form is available not only from Beged Ivri, but also from gift shops throughout Jerusalem as well as in select kibbutzim throughout the Land.

### **The Biblical Marriage Customs**

Other items made by Beged Ivri are connected with the restoration of the ancient biblical marriage ceremony. One is the "Jerusalem of Gold Bridal Crown," a golden crown depicting the walls of Jerusalem. According to Praeger, it was the custom of the Jewish people from the time of the exodus up until the early second century A.D. that every bride in Israel on her wedding night wore this crown:

Between the First and Second Temple period, there existed an ancient marriage ceremony which was performed primarily in Jerusalem. This beautiful and colorful event fell into disuse after the destruction of the Second Temple and the loss of the Land. With the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, preparations are paving the way for the establishment of the Third Temple and with them, the revival of Temple consciousness—hence the...proposal for the reinstatement of the ancient Jewish marriage ceremony.<sup>32</sup>

In Song of Solomon 3:9-10 there is given a description of the ancient royal wedding litter (Hebrew, *Apiryon*) that King Solomon had made. It was comprised of the cedars of Lebanon, and had pillars of silver and drapings of gold with an “interior canopy” (Hebrew, *chupat chatanim*) of purple. Begeg Ivri has recreated this royal wedding litter for the first time in over 1,928 years and it has been in service for several years. At weddings patterned after the ancient ceremony, the Israelite bride is carried through the streets of Jerusalem on the litter to the accompaniment of shofar blowers and harp players (see photo section).

### The Holy Half-Shekel

Begeg Ivri's latest project, which Praeger finished in 1998 and which required 15 years of research and more than 71,000 man hours of work, was the restoration of the half-shekel coins used to fulfill the ancient requirement of redeeming the firstborn. According to Exodus 30:11-16, every male aged 20–50 was commanded to give a pure silver half-shekel to the Temple every year “to atone for one's soul.” This traditionally was done on the holiday of Purim (a postbiblical celebration of divine protection recorded in the book of Esther). Since the age range of 20–50 years is the same for those involved in military service, the sages taught that this donation was primarily intended for Israelite soldiers as an atonement for the potential liability of taking people's lives (in battle). However, it was also understood that anyone who so desired could give this donation. And, in fact, it was the almost universal payment of this as a Temple tax that unified the Jewish Nation in Israel with those in the Diaspora for 1,425 years. This practice continued annually even after the destruction of the Temple (except for some interruptions) until the Roman Emperor Hadrian banned it in A.D. 135. The reason the emperor did this, says Praeger, is “because he realized that as long as the Jews donated the half-shekel, they had a sense of sovereignty over Jerusalem.”<sup>33</sup> Another reason the Jews continued to collect the half-shekel tax was to rebuild a new Temple. In addition, there are other situa-

tions in which there was a need to use shekels to pay either a ransom or to fulfill a commandment, such as the commandment to redeem the first born with five shekels or ten half-shekels. Even though coinage was not introduced to the world until the sixth century B.C. with the Persians, prior to that stone weights were put on a scale and the equivalence in silver bullion was paid against their weight. Praeger's new half-shekel coins are based on originals in his possession from A.D. 45, which reflect a Hellenistic influence. His coins, however, have been modified to conform to a Jewish standard, with one set minted for military personnel and another for Jews in and outside the Land (see photo section). He has also constructed a gilded half-shekel chest that must be transported by the *Leviim* (Levites). This chest resides in the Herrari's harp shop in Jerusalem.

Concerning these items and their relationship to the Temple, Praeger says:

For the first time in 1,928 years, we have minted in Jerusalem a pure silver holy half-shekel, which we can use to fulfill the commandment from the book of Exodus. We've prepared this magnificent set of shekels as a set for the redemption of the firstborn. Congregations all over the world donated the means to create the master dies to mint the coins. People donated hundreds of ounces of silver that we used for the minting of the coins. [In ancient times as again today] the coins were produced in Jerusalem and distributed worldwide. People would then receive the coins and then contribute them back to Jerusalem. The coins were collected in Jerusalem in a special chest from the Temple courtyard that was used to collect the half-shekels. It was called the Chest for New Shekels (Hebrew, *Aron LeShekilim Hadashim*). Three times this last year we performed the *Trumat HaLishkah* ("separation of the office") ceremony by which the coins were removed from the golden chest and actually became the property of the Third Temple. As a result of the restoration of the giving of the holy half-shekel, the Third Temple now has a budget. The restoration of the half-shekel is but the latest sign that we're getting much, much closer to a period where we can actually begin to speak about rebuilding the Temple. In the last 15 years many, many things from the ancient days have been restored: biblical harps, biblical garments, biblical weddings, gold and silver vessels of the Temple, the spices of the incense, the biblical blue fringe, the Red Heifer. And, now, perhaps the theologically most significant occurrence in the last 50 years, the giving of the holy half-shekel.<sup>34</sup>

Praeger's excitement over the reinstatement of the *Trumat HaLishkah* ceremony stems from his belief that this has reversed two long-standing problems

that have existed in Judaism with respect to the Temple. The first has to do with the apathy of the Jewish people toward the rebuilding of the Temple. The problem here, according to Praeger, “is a *Galut* mentality”—that is, a way of thinking that opposes changes to the status quo (assimilated or Diaspora Judaism) rather than being willing to return to a more authentic form of Judaism. But with his re-creation of the holy half-shekel he says, “With the sound of this coin dropping, the exile officially ends!”<sup>35</sup> Evidence of this has been made by two public donations of the half-shekel coins collected from Jewish congregations around the world and brought by representatives to Jerusalem for deposit in his half-shekel chest. The first of these collections was presented in Zion Square in Jerusalem by members of a European congregation on March 26, 1998, and the second by Temple Beth-El in Anniston, Alabama (although collected from sources in Washington, Colorado, and Michigan as well) at the House of Harrari on September 17, 1998 (where the chest remains today).<sup>36</sup>

The second problem has to do with possession of Temple property without a Temple. Once this money was donated to God at the *Trumat HaLishkah* ceremony, it became *hekdes* (property sanctified to the Holy Temple) and could be used for no other purpose. However, goods imported into Israel are subject to a 17-percent “value added tax” (VAT). The coins are God’s property; can the Israeli government tax God? To resolve this dilemma, Praeger had the *hekdes* sent to the Chief Rabbinate, transported to their offices by two levitical-descended Brinks armored car guards. Praeger explains his plan in this transfer to the religious authorities:

By delaying the delivery of the coins until after the *Trumat HaLishkah* ceremony, we are forcing the hands of the Rabbanim to demand from the tax authorities to amend the law, to make *hekdes* exempt from VAT. From the moment that the VAT laws are amended to recognize *hekdes* as exempt from VAT, we have established the Temple in law. Who would have imagined that we would create the Temple in law, not by blowing up mosques, and not by sacrificing animals, but through the laws of VAT?<sup>37</sup>

Praeger, however, had already experienced the elation of this moment some time earlier. Of this he says, “On February 26 [1998] I faxed a copy of the check [that paid for the master dies for minting the coins] to Jerusalem to the offices of the minter, and asked that he please meet me in his office on March 23, on Purim, because I knew I needed to begin production on that date for historical reasons. As I handed over the check and received the receipt. . . I knew deep in

my being that I had just founded the Third Temple. The same feeling Herzl had exactly 100 years ago when he left the first Zionist conference in Basel and knew he had just founded the Jewish State, I had that day.”<sup>38</sup> Whether or not the rabbinic authorities agree with Praeger that the Temple has been legally established, Beged Ivri continues to mint the holy half-shekels, which sell for about ten dollars (U.S.), with the belief that his reviving this ancient tradition will eventually, as one writer put it, “buy admission to the Third Temple Era.”<sup>39</sup>

## Architectural Plans of the Temple

Until recent times there were no known models of the Temple. The etchings and paintings of those who depicted Jerusalem usually were either based on the architectural style of their day or were entirely romantic or imaginative representations. This is especially true of King Solomon’s First Temple. A special exhibit at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem entitled “Royal Cities of the Biblical World” makes this point for visitors who view both a model of Jerusalem in First Temple times as well as a superbly detailed computer visualization of the First Temple by three different designers. A disclaimer with these models emphasizes that “every model of the Solomonic Temple is theoretical, since no actual remains of the Temple have survived its destruction in 586 B.C.” This was once also true for the Second Herodian Temple, but that changed after 1967 when Israelis were able to begin archaeological excavations at the foot of the Temple Mount. Today, the Holyland Hotel, the Temple Model Museum, the Ateret Cohanim, and The Temple Institute have all created models of the Temple. The model of Rabbi Zalman Koren occupies a prominent place underground within the Western Wall Tunnel, and Catriel Sugarman, a Jerusalem artist, has created the latest (and some say greatest) model to date. There is also a computer-generated 3-D Temple available on CD-ROM in Hebrew and English that offers an interactive virtual reality “fly-through” tour of the Temple in four different directions as well as the opportunity to view its furniture and vessels and computer simulations of its services.<sup>40</sup> Most all of these models are of the Second Temple, the only Temple for which we have access to preserved records of the architectural details. The sources of these details include the Mishnayot of *Middot*, *Tamid*, *Yoma*, parts of *Sukkah*, *Shekalim*, and many others along with the appropriate Gemarot, the classic commentaries: Rashi, Rambam, Bartenura, Tosafot Yom Tov, Tiferet Yisrael, the Chanukat HaBayit, the writings of Josephus, the New Testament, Roman annals, the archaeological surveys of the nineteenth

century, and thousands of articles in archaeological journals and journals of biblical studies. In most cases the archaeologists, architects, engineers, or rabbis who created these models spent significant quantities of time studying these sources in preparation for their work.

The result has been a phenomenal increase in the knowledge of the architecture of the Second Temple. In many cases the written sources were ambiguous about exact locations or silent concerning certain minor features or functions. With the help of these models, key questions have now been resolved and have made it more possible for the construction of the next Temple to begin. The general consensus among those in the Temple movement is that the Second Temple must serve as the basis for the Third Temple if the Messiah does not arrive with plans for a different design. This is because in the succession of Temples built in Israel's history, each appears to have followed the basic structural outline of the former, beginning with the pattern that was given to Moses by divine revelation. The other reason is that the design preserved by the prophet Ezekiel is generally agreed to be for the eschatological age. While many are hopeful that the signs of the times indicate that the Messianic advent is near and that the Third Temple will be the Temple of Ezekiel, obedience to the command to rebuild requires the building of an interim Temple whenever possible. At this time, then, if it becomes possible to rebuild the Temple, the construction plans used will be those of the last Temple, the Second (Herodian) Temple. Do these construction plans already exist? When Rabbi Chaim Richman served as the executive director of The Temple Institute, he acknowledged (in 1995) that architectural plans for the Third Temple had then been ready for some time.<sup>41</sup>

## Drawing Closer to the Day

The plans and the artifacts produced by these various Temple groups have made it possible to provide the basic equipment priests will need in order to function when the Temple Mount is purified and the site of the altar discovered. The big problem, of course, is acquiring the Temple site so that all of these groups can realize their goals. In the next chapter we will get an inside look at some organizations endeavoring to liberate the Temple Mount so that the Third Temple can be built. Come join me as we march in step with these movements in order to see how they plan to get possession of the site of the Last Days Temple!

# Liberating the Temple Mount



## The Campaign for Control of the Last Days Temple

*The first nail in the Temple would start World War III . . . [to rebuild the Temple] you have to have the political background, you have to have the capability, but this could happen tomorrow.<sup>1</sup>*

—RABBI NAHMAN KAHANE

*The mission of the present generation is to liberate the Temple Mount and to remove—I repeat, to remove—the defiling abominations there. . . . The Jewish people will not be stopped at the gates leading to the Temple Mount. . . . We will fly our Israeli flag over the Temple Mount, which will be minus its Dome of the Rock and its mosques and will have only our Israeli flag and our Temple. This is what our generation must accomplish.<sup>2</sup>*

—GERSHON SALOMAN

I had been in the office of the Temple Mount Faithful movement for only a few minutes when a shiny red, white, and blue-colored card caught my eye. Seeing that I was interested, Gershon Salomon, the movement's director, proudly handed me one, saying, "These are our new bumper stickers! We want to get them all over Israel!" The Hebrew message on the stickers boldly declared, *Yeshuchrar Har-Habayit* ("Liberate the Temple Mount!"). These words are literally a battle cry (in Hebrew, the verb is used to speak of military action), and recall the momentous events on June 7, 1967, when then-Colonel Mordecai Gur led his 55th Paratroop Brigade into the Old City and up the steps of the Dome of the Rock to radio to General Uzi Narkiss the famous words, "The Temple Mount is in our hands. Repeat: The Temple Mount is in our hands!" That event is still referred to historically by Israelis as the "liberation of the Temple Mount."

The liberation of the Old City was especially significant to Jerusalemites who well remembered the date of May 25, 1948, when the Old City had fallen to the Jordanians. After weeks of desperate fighting, the defenders of the Jewish Quarter—local residents, Etzel members, and about 80 Haganah soldiers—found themselves outnumbered and outgunned by the Arab Legionnaires. They decided to surrender in order to save the more than 2,000 elderly Jews who still lived in that part of the city. For the next 18 years, Jews were forbidden to travel to the Temple Mount or even to the Western Wall. However, the depth of their loss in the Jewish Quarter was not realized until Israel's return in the Six-Day War. Only then was the rampant desecration and destruction of everything Jewish revealed. Although Israel retained access to the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall, it relinquished religious access to the Temple Mount on the condition that the Islamic Wakf would resume custody of the site, thus ending the brief "liberation of the Temple Mount." Although the Israeli government could have changed the status of the Temple Mount at any time, over the past 30-plus years there has never been the will to do so. And with each passing year, its authority to exercise any executive decision on the Temple Mount continues to diminish.

Today the Islamic Wakf (Muslim Supreme Council) has declared its sovereignty over the site and acts independent of the Israeli government in its activities (especially construction) on the Temple Mount. To Orthodox Israelis who fought in the 1967 war to bring about the liberation of the Temple Mount, this is an intolerable situation. Gershon Salomon, head of The Temple Mount Faithful Movement, has well expressed the feelings of many of his generation who fought for but failed to keep the Temple Mount: "We have lost the Temple

Mount. . . . after we heard, ‘The Temple Mount is in our hands,’ the situation is that it is not in our hands. Feisal Hussein [Palestinian Authority Minister of Jerusalem Affairs] orders the Israeli Police to close off the Mount [to Jews] and it is closed. We simply allow our sovereignty to disintegrate, and this is a terrible disgrace for the Jewish people.”<sup>3</sup> Although Salomon (and others in the Temple movement) is an Orthodox Jew, it did not help matters that Moshe Dayan’s decision to return control of the Temple Mount to the Muslims was supported by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, or that they ruled in July of 1967 (just one month after the capture of the Temple Mount) that Jews were forbidden onto the Temple Mount for fear that they would desecrate the Holy of Holies.<sup>4</sup> Even more distressing was the report that when Dayan returned custody of the site to the Wakf, the Wakf said it would have readily settled for only the area around the Al-Aqsa Mosque. However, once the Wakf was given control of the entire site, they immediately annexed the whole of the Temple Mount, claiming it was all part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque!<sup>5</sup>

Since then, many activist organizations—like the Temple Mount Faithful—have been formed to counter what they believe is a government that has betrayed God and the Israeli people. The common goal of these groups is to work toward once again liberating the Temple Mount so that the Temple can be rebuilt.

## **The Key to Liberating the Temple Mount**

### *Without a Prayer*

The first step these activists have taken toward liberation is regaining Jewish access to the Temple Mount. It is difficult for those outside of Israel to relate to the experience of the Jew who daily goes to the Western Wall for prayer but cannot ascend a few hundred meters to pray on the Temple Mount. Imagine holding one place on earth as holy for over 3,000 years, living in that place, and even gaining political sovereignty over that place, yet still being unable to physically go to that place simply to pray. Even worse, imagine that your government, who protects the worship of 300,000 Muslims (as at the annual feast of Ramadan, see photo section), will not permit a single Jew to enter for religious purposes. This is remarkable considering that the Jews have suffered so many deprivations among the nations of the world for so many centuries, and here they are denied a privilege in their own land! Even under the British Mandate, Jews in Palestine were permitted to mumble their prayers at the Temple Mount.

Israel is the Jewish homeland, the sole refuge in the world from Jewish persecution, the only democratic country in the Middle East, and by law guarantees residents the freedom of religion and access rights to the holy places of those religions. Yet in the holy city of Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish State, observant Jews three times a day face toward the Temple Mount for prayers with the knowledge that they cannot go there to offer them! One reason for this is that Muslim authorities do not recognize the Jewish claims on the Temple Mount: "There's no mention at all in Islam that this was the original site of the Temple," says Adnan Husseini, director of the Wakf. "If Jews were allowed up here to pray," warns Hassan Tahbub, the Palestinian Authority's minister of religion, "of course there'd be violence."<sup>6</sup> As a result, it has always been understood by the Muslims that a government ban existed against Jewish prayers at the site of their holy places.

However, it may be that the Israeli government never has officially forbidden Jews to pray on the Temple Mount! In August of 1967, just two months after the Six-Day War, when the Western Wall plaza was opened for thousands of anxious Jewish worshippers, the government denied a specific request by Rabbi Shlomo Goren to pray on the Temple Mount on Tisha B'Av. The government's decision mentions Rabbi Goren by name in the first two clauses, and only his followers in the third clause. Yehuda Etzion of the Chai V'Kayam organization has provided evidence that then-Jerusalem District Police Chief Aryeh Amit "blanked out the first two clauses, thus giving the impression that the decision was applicable for every request of Jews to pray on the Mount, for all time."<sup>7</sup> Ever since, this decision has been cited as binding, even by Israel's Supreme Court, and has served as the legal ground for preventing Jewish access to the Temple Mount for prayer. However, according to an official protocol from a meeting held a few weeks after the decision was first issued, when one minister cited it as grounds for preventing Jewish prayer, then-Minister Menachem Begin objected, saying, "I was the one who suggested the original proposal then, and the decision applied only to that specific case. We never made a decision to forbid Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount."<sup>8</sup>

The reason the government and the courts give for upholding this ban over the past 30 years is because allowing Jewish prayers at the Muslim holy places poses too great a security risk. However, according to Jerusalem Magistrate's Court Justice Shimon Feinberg, Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount would not constitute a significant danger to the well-being of the public.<sup>9</sup> Even so, the courts have argued that the problem is that the Temple Mount police are not

able to guarantee the safety of the Jews praying there. However, according to Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, “The police can do it, but the courts forbid Jews to pray on the Temple Mount.”<sup>10</sup> Despite this confusion over political precedence, there has been no confusion on how the police act when Jewish activists have attempted to exercise their right to pray. Arrests have occurred when Jews under police escort have requested to visit the site but have pulled out prayer shawls en route and attempted to pray.<sup>11</sup> These arrests are said to be for unruly behavior in a public place, disorderly conduct, incitement to riot, and disturbing the peace, and have resulted in those charged being permanently restricted from entering the site for even nonreligious purposes.

What is the real reason behind this enforced denial of Jewish access to the Temple Mount for prayer? To understand this, we need to review the history of this problem. When the Jewish people were under the British Mandate from 1918 to 1948, they were allowed to mumble prayers on the Temple Mount. The only period in modern times when Jews were prevented from praying freely in Jerusalem was 1948–1967, when the late King Hussein of Jordan controlled the holy sites. In violation of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement of 1949, which granted freedom of access to the holy sites by all religions, the Jordanians strictly prohibited Jewish access even to the Western Wall. In 1967, when Moshe Dayan returned day-to-day control over the Haram al-Sharif, it was with the condition that though Jews would be allowed to *visit* the site, they would be forbidden to *pray*. When the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat (Abdul Raouf al-Codbi al-Husseni) nullified the Jordanian jurisdiction of the Temple Mount and moved the office of the Grand Mufti to the Temple Mount, the demand that religious Jews be kept off the site grew stronger than ever before. This was demonstrated after the signing of the Wye Memorandum (which had promised significant additional territory to the Palestinians), when during a visit to Nablus, Yasser Arafat declared (on November 14, 1998): “Our guns are ready, and we are ready to use them against whoever would prevent us from praying in Jerusalem.”<sup>12</sup> Had such a declaration been made by the Israelis it would have been nothing short of an international incident. This, then, reveals the nature of the problem for Israel. Not only is there the threat of Arab retaliation, but there is also the political intimidation of a world that is largely supportive of the Arab agenda and suspicious of anything that appears as Israeli intolerance or imperialism. The Jewish passion to pray on the Temple Mount, then, has brought an added tension to the current conflict on the Temple Mount.

### *Fighting to Pray*

On June 17, 1967 then-defense minister Moshe Dayan removed his shoes and sat on a prayer rug in the silver-domed Al-Aqsa Mosque and told Muslim officials they would retain control of the Mount. By offering exclusive Muslim rights over the Mount, Dayan hoped to prevent the Arab-Israeli conflict from degenerating into a Muslim-Jewish holy war over the region's most sensitive ground. The condition for acceptance was a government compromise allowing Jews to have access to the Mount, but not to conduct prayers or religious activities. This was confirmed when, 12 days later, the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) declared the reunification of East and West Jerusalem. Because this act officially made the Temple Mount part of modern Israel, the Israeli leadership was being careful to assure the various religious groups of their good intentions. With that in mind, government officials met with both Muslim and Christian authorities to place the administration of the city's holy places under their respective jurisdictions.

Although the majority of religious Jews were content to pray at the Western Wall, others sought to establish a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount, now that it was officially owned by Israel. However, from the outset it was clear that the Muslims expected the Jews to abide by Dayan's pledged conditions and would not accept a religious Jewish presence. Between August 1-8 of 1967, Israeli police were repeatedly petitioned by the Wakf to enforce public order at the Temple Mount due to "improper visitor conduct." A temporary ban restricting Jewish entrance to the site was issued for "security reasons," and the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs committee was given oversight of holy places to maintain the status quo. However, at that time it was not imagined that this ban was meant to be binding or to apply to Jews going to the Mount for the purpose of prayer. Therefore, only a week later (on August 15, 1967), Israel Defense Forces Chief Chaplain Rabbi Shlomo Goren led a group of people, including army chaplains, up to the Temple Mount to pray. The Chief Rabbinate, however, wanted to enforce the ban for religious reasons in order to prevent the desecration of the unknown site of the Holy of Holies. So on August 22, 1967 signs were posted at a ramp leading to the Mughrabi Gate, the only Jewish entrance, that forbid "everyone" from entering the site "owing to the sacredness of the place." And so the fight was on for "Redemptionist Jews," who could not expect support from either their government nor their Chief Rabbinate, to save Israel from itself.

Despite government restrictions which limited prayer to the Western Wall, the first attempt by a nationalistic Jewish group to offer prayer on the Temple Mount took place a year and a half after the Six-Day War, on December 19, 1968.

The prayers were made at Hanukkah, in keeping with the celebration of the Temple's rededication, but the police stopped the service and arrested the members of the group. This resulted in a court action on April 15, 1969 as the Temple Mount Faithful brought suit against the arresting officers and petitioned the Lower Court for legal recognition of the rights of Jews to conduct Jewish prayer services on the Temple Mount. Before a decision could be reached, another incident took place on the Temple Mount—this time, an attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. As a result of the months of Arab rioting that followed, the court decided not to change the ruling and continued the restriction. In protest of the court's action, on March 11, 1971 Gershon Salomon of the Temple Mount Faithful led a group of students to pray on the Temple Mount, which resulted in some minor disruptions with the Muslims. Then on August 8, 1973, Knesset member Binyamin Halevi and Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz attempted to pray on the Temple Mount—also in protest of the ban.

A reversal of the ban came on January 30, 1976 when the Lower Court (Magistrate) acquitted several Betar youths who were arrested for holding a prayer service on the Temple Mount. This resulted in a ruling that Jews were permitted to pray there. Arab residents reacted to this, however—the very next week, Arab schools and shops closed in East Jerusalem, and riots occurred in the West Bank area. The result was over 100 arrests. Matters worsened on March 4 when United Nations Secretary Kurt Waldheim pledged to introduce Islamic contentions against Israel's interference with Muslim holy places. On March 8, Gershon Salomon and Rabbi Rabinowitz attempted to test the ruling in light of the Arab reactions and led a group to the Temple Mount. They were turned back by the Israeli police. Then, three days later, Muslim councils in Ramallah, El Bireh, and Nablus protested the police action that had been taken against Arabs who had demonstrated against the Lower Court ruling. Consequently, on March 17 the Lower Court overturned its ruling, although the District Court upheld "the historical and legal right of Jews to pray on the Temple Mount if the Ministry of Religious Affairs could regulate such activity to maintain public order." Using this proviso, the Ministry thereafter persistently has denied access to Jews who want to pray on the Temple Mount, stating that it did not have the ability to guarantee their safety or control Muslim protests.

The next conflict over prayer erupted on March 25, 1979, based on rumors that ultra-right-winger Meir Kahane, the leader of the Kach movement, and a group of yeshiva students would hold a prayer service on the Temple Mount. This provoked a general strike among West Bank Arabs, and 2,000 Arab youths

brandishing stones and staves rioted at Temple Mount. Then on August 3, several Jewish nationalist groups attempted to conduct a prayer service on the Temple Mount. They were not allowed to enter the site. This led the Israeli High Court to consider, a year later, an appeal to revoke the ban on prayer on the Temple Mount. This appeal was based on a law guaranteeing freedom of access to religious sites that was enacted with the formal annexation of East Jerusalem that same year. However, only four days later, the activist group *Gush Emunim* (“Bloc of the Faithful”), with over 300 supporters, attempted to forcibly enter the Temple Mount and were dispersed by the police.

Throughout the 1980s some alternative measures were taken for prayer, such as the September 17, 1983 prayer service conducted *beneath* the Temple Mount by Rabbi Shlomo Goren and Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Moshe Levy (this took place within the Western Wall Tunnel). Yet the desire to be on the Mount continued to drive activists. For example, on January 8, 1986 several members of the Knesset, led by Geula Cohen, attempted to hold a prayer service in the Temple area. As expected, the incident provoked an Arab riot and led to an altercation with the Arabs on the site. And the 1990s saw even more violent attempts by Jewish activists to take over the Temple Mount—all of which has kept the prayer issue deadlocked within the courts and kept the police constantly wary of individuals who might do something to stir up conflict.

In 1996, activists again sought to force the issue when Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to champion Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount. Netanyahu’s one-time Justice Minister Ya’acov Ne’eman vowed legal support for the move. Although forced to resign following allegations of wrongdoing, Ne’eman was the first serving minister ever to participate in prayers on the Temple Mount, joining a private afternoon prayer group on Tisha B’Av in the Makhkema, a building at the southern entrance to the Mount that serves as the headquarters for the border police. Afterwards, activists attempted to test the government’s resolve by openly ascending the Temple Mount for prayer. However, the danger of inciting the Arabs during a delicate time for the peace process—which is under the watchful eye of the United States and other allies—made it impossible for them to implement their stated intentions. As a result, the status quo continues today, with Jews wearing *kippot* (head coverings) allowed entrance for nonreligious visits only after registering their names with the Wakf guards and remaining under constant police escort. There are special Islamic officials posted throughout the area whose sole task is to ensure that any Jewish visitors are not moving their lips in prayer. The Jews regard this not only as a restriction

of their religious freedom, but an infringement on their basic dignity and human freedom as well as a violation of their civil rights.

Given the state of affairs on the Temple Mount, we need to ask an important question: Why do the Jews feel so strongly about praying on the Temple Mount? What compels them even in the face of so much resistance from their own government and the Muslim authorities?

### *Prayer Changes Things*

There is an old Christian slogan that says “prayer changes things.” Those who continue to force the issue of public praying on the Temple Mount are quite aware that prayer is the battleground for changing the status quo of a Muslim presence at the site. They know that it would be intolerable, and in fact impossible, for Islamic and Israeli worship to be conducted side by side on the Temple Mount. Even if some Islamic scholars can show that the Koran does not forbid it,<sup>13</sup> and even though there were brief periods where such coexistence under Muslim domination occurred, today the site is under Israeli sovereignty, not Islamic, and Muslims will not allow themselves to be ruled by non-Muslims or coexist on non-Muslim terms, since this would be considered a betrayal of Islam. The Jewish activists realize that gaining access to the Temple Mount for prayer would be a huge step forward in the direction of their goals of redemption. Since prayer is worship, all that would remain once it is approved would be to erect an altar, revive the sacrificial system, and rebuild the Temple. The activists see prayer as the war that must be won if they want to make progress toward rebuilding the Temple.

## **History of Attempts to Liberate the Temple Mount**

After 1,330 years in non-Israeli hands, the Temple Mount came back under Israeli sovereignty as a result of military action. For this reason Jewish activism understands that the only way to take back control will be by force. Therefore, within a short time after Jewish sovereignty was relinquished, activists began plans to remove Arab occupation. Ironically, the first act of aggression against the Muslim structures on the Temple Mount did not come from Jews, but from an Australian member of a Christian cult. In the early morning hours of August 23, 1969, Dennis Rohan, believing that his actions would hasten the return of Christ, set fire to the Al-Aqsa Mosque (see photo section). The fire ravaged parts

of the inner and outer structure, completely destroying a rare sixth-century A.D. wooden pulpit that had stood in the mosque. The Arab reaction, however, was not pitted against the psychologically unstable young perpetrator nor Christianity, but against the State of Israel. Wakf officials blamed the Israeli government and accused it of being behind a plot to destroy the Islamic holy places in order to make room for building the Third Temple. Four days later the Wakf closed the Temple Mount to non-Muslims for two months while thousands of angry Muslims in the Old City called for *Jihad* (holy war) against Israel. Even after the Israeli government denounced the action and swore it had no designs on the Temple Mount, the conclusions of an official Muslim inquiry continued to hold the government responsible and suspect. In light of this reaction and in fear of future repercussions, on September 9, 1970 the Israeli High Court decided not to take on the case brought forward by the Temple Mount Faithful and instead, allowed the government restriction against prayer to remain.

On August 28–30, 1981, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren and workers of the Ministry of Religious Affairs traced the trail of a leaking cistern and discovered one of the original entrances to the Temple Mount—an entrance known as Warren's Gate. Over the next 18 months Rabbi Goren, who was joined by Rabbi Yehuda Getz, dug a secret tunnel through this gate and underneath the Muslim Dome of the Rock in search of a hidden chamber containing the Ark of the Covenant. When news of the dig and its purpose was leaked by the media, the Arabs rioted in protest and sealed the cistern shut, preventing any further access to the tunnel. On September 2–4 some yeshiva students, under orders from Rabbi Getz, broke down the wall that sealed the tunnel. This led to a clash with the Arabs, and subsequent arrests by the police. On September 4 the Supreme Muslim Council ordered a general strike of all Arab schools and shops in East Jerusalem to protest the excavation efforts under the Temple Mount, and on September 10 the Wakf and the Israeli authorities jointly sealed the entrance.

The next attack came on April 11, 1982, when an American immigrant in the Israeli army named Alan Goodman opened fire on the Temple Mount as he said, "To liberate the spot holy to the Jews!" Although he was ruled mentally unstable by the Israeli courts and sentenced to life imprisonment, the incident set off week-long Arab riots in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, and even drew international criticism against Israel. Only two weeks later, Kach Party member Yoel Learner (later head of the Sanhedrin Institute, which seeks to return the government to a theocracy) attempted to sabotage a mosque on the Temple Mount. He too was arrested and sentenced to two-and-one-half years in prison. (How-

ever, Jewish activists are not the only ones who have been taking weapons to the Temple Mount. On December 9, 1982, Geula Cohen, a member of Israel's Knesset, raised the charge that the Muslims had caches of ammunition sequestered on the Temple Mount in preparation for the next war.

On March 10, 1983, Rabbi Yisrael Ariel and a group of more than 40 followers sought permission to pray on the Temple Mount at the Solomon's Stables area adjacent to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. However, after four youths connected with Yamit Yeshiva were caught breaking into the area, weapons and diagrams of the Temple Mount were recovered in a police search of Rabbi Ariel's base of operations, and many arrests made. Then on January 27, 1984, Temple activists were again arrested for attempting to blow up the mosques when a cache of explosives was discovered by a Temple Mount guard. Three years later, the Palestinian *Intifada* ("uprising") began, and the Temple movement developed organizationally to oppose the threat this uprising posed to the Temple Mount. In October 1989 The Temple Mount Faithful began carrying out demonstrations at the Temple Mount. And on October 8 of the following year, the Temple Mount Massacre occurred, in which 17 Palestinian Arabs were killed.

The *Intifada* precipitated the "peace process" negotiations, which raised hopes that a peace like that with Egypt could be negotiated with those Arab countries bordering Israel (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria) and with the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza. However, from the outset it became clear that the price of this peace would be too high, for the Arabs demanded the redivision of Jerusalem and the return of the Temple Mount. This was first stated on October 31, 1991 at the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, Spain, when Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara accused Israel of attempting to blow up the Al-Aqsa Mosque and proclaimed that there would be no free access to the religious sites on the Temple Mount unless Israel returned all of East Jerusalem to the Arabs. This same rhetoric was proclaimed in all of the speeches made by Yasser Arafat and his representatives.<sup>14</sup> Evidence of this Arab attitude revealed itself violently in September 1995 when the Israeli government opened an exit for the Western Wall Tunnel. The Wakf and Yasser Arafat publically charged Israel with attempting to destroy the Islamic holy places and rioted on the Temple Mount and throughout the West Bank, leaving some 58 people dead. By 1998, the peace process negotiations drew toward a standstill. So the tension had already been building when conditions in the peace process, on May 14, 1998, an arsonist set fire to one of the heavy wooden gates surrounding the Temple Mount. Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani reported that a firebomb

had been hurled at the door setting it ablaze and damaging several stones surrounding the gate.<sup>15</sup> In 1999, Ehud Barak was elected to replace Benjamin Netanyahu and lead Israel into the new century. And the Wakf continues to view all attempts by Jews to pray on the Temple Mount as invasions of sovereign Arab territory, vowing that bloodshed will be the final result.

Let's look now at the religious leaders and groups who have been and continue to be involved in clashes with the Muslims over ultimate control of the Temple Mount.

## Groups working to Liberate the Mount

### *The Chai VeKayam Movement*

The *Chai VeKayam* movement is an activist organization dedicated to reversing the lack of Jewish access to the Temple Mount for prayer as part of its overall plan to liberate the Temple Mount. Their vision is in keeping with the process of the redemption of the Land, begun in 1887 with the Zionist movement and actualized with the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. This group sees itself as the catalyst for a Jewish renaissance: a return to the Torah of Israel as the guide for the people, the kingdom, and the lifestyle in the Land of Israel. The organization publishes a magazine called *Labrit*, which deals with ideological discussions related to the Third Temple's culture and form of government. The organization has issued a public declaration expressing their intention to establish an alternative leadership and bring about a revolution that will lead towards the re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel and the building of the Last Days Temple:

...Now that the present leadership has agreed to recognize the liberation organization of the enemy which comes "to liberate" this country from us and in practice establishes its state, something has happened in Israel: With a handshake, with a light movement of a pen, the leadership, in whose hands the Zionist command and vision lies, brought us to the end of Zionism. . . . In opposition to this tendency of betrayal and rejection, we are raising the flag of the Hebrew revolution: a value-conceptual moral revolution which is intended to define and reform the aims of the return to Zion and the establishment of the State in the spirit of the Torah of Israel and the morality of the patriarchs and the prophets, while fitting the commandment and the dream to the understanding of our immediate obligation. . . . We are making this proclamation in order to publicize to the general public and to the political

leadership of the people that we are now standing up and taking responsibility for the cultural, political, new event: the culture of the Third Temple. . . . to take responsibility to form a new leadership, to form ranks as soldiers of the kingdom of the house of David, that fell and that shall arise again. . . . When it is completed, the future political event in the leadership and government and the new institutions shall express the kingdom of the house of David and all its ancillary functions, the Supreme Court in the hewn stone chamber in the Temple Mount and the presence of the Almighty shall exist over the whole people and its inheritance from the heart to the body, from the center—the Temple, which shall be rebuilt as in former days in its place—to the State and the entire Land which the Lord gave us, to be preserved. . . . we shall decide from now on which laws and regulations [of the present Israeli government] we shall no longer observe. The Torah of Israel shall be our guiding light, while constantly attempting to understand which things we are obligated to do. . . . We are coming to build a future leadership, to change the government in the State and the overall system, fundamentally, from inside and to remove them by means of developments and revolutions. . . .<sup>16</sup>

The founder and director of *Chai VeKayam* is Yehuda Etzion (see photo section), who was one of the organizers of the Macteret Yehudit, an underground “liberation” organization. The Macteret began in 1978 largely in reaction to Israel’s giving away of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in the Camp David Accords—an act Etzion and others viewed as a threat to the process of redemption. Etzion viewed this act as a divine punishment for Israel’s having permitted the Muslim presence or “abomination” to continue on the Temple Mount. He helped form the Macteret with the express purpose of destroying the Muslim structures of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque while preserving the integrity of the Temple Mount for the rebuilding of the Temple. A motivating factor for Etzion was his relationship with the late Shabatai Ben-Dov, a leading promoter of “active redemption.”<sup>17</sup> On his deathbed, Shabatai Ben-Dov is said to have charged Etzion (a distant relative) with the mission, saying, “If you want to act in a way that would solve all the problems of the people of Israel do this thing! [destroy the Dome of the Rock].”<sup>18</sup>

In 1984, after four years of planning (1978–1982), Etzion, in association with members of the settlement movement known as *Gush Emunim* (“Bloc of the Faithful”), set out to liberate the Temple Mount by forming a group of eight demolition experts and acquiring sufficient explosives to carry out the task. The

explosives were taken from a cache belonging to the Israeli Defense Forces. However, the plot was never carried out because the group could not persuade a rabbi to give them *halakhic* sanction. Etzion was later imprisoned for seven years for his role in the attempt. While in prison, he stated to reporters, “No...ownership claim, that is not made in the name of Israel and for the rebuilding of the Temple, is valid. The expurgation of the Temple Mount will prepare the hearts [of the Jewish people] for the understanding and further advancing of our full redemption. The purified Mount be—if G-d wishes—the hammer and anvil for the future process of promoting the next holy elevation.”<sup>19</sup> Because he made such statements during his prison term, he has still been regarded as “a member of the Jewish terror underground”<sup>20</sup> even though he claims to no longer have ties with his former associates since his release from prison. Moreover, because of his attempt to destroy the Muslim religious structures on the Temple Mount, he was banned by the Israeli government from ever entering the Old City, in which the Temple Mount is located.

On a windy day in November of 1998 I met with Etzion on the northern slope of the Mount of Olives, which overlooks the Temple Mount. As we talked about his concerns for the Temple Mount, he related to me his involvement in the effort to destroy the mosques (these are documented in the video *The Coming Last Days Temple*). He still believes that one day, these structures will be done away with. Here he explains his understanding of prophecies related to the Temple Mount and why he feels it is imperative to continue the efforts to liberate the site:

Without the Temple Mount we [the Jewish people] don't have any center, we don't have any core. We have only separate individuals spread throughout the world. But we are speaking as the prophets said to us that in the future all the Jews will come together to pray and three times a year they have to come this place [Temple Mount]. And in this place, the Temple Mount, we all believe that if we shall build, and when we shall build, our center in all its glory, it will be like a man and a woman who we meet after many years apart. This means the God of Israel and the nation of Israel will be here together like a couple. Then all the other nations will come and share with us in this experience. This meeting will not only be for the future of Israel, but for the future of all the world and all mankind.<sup>21</sup>

Later he took me to a site where he and other groups, such as the Temple Mount Faithful, have regularly offered sacrifices in token of the time when they

will again be offered on the Temple Mount. From my limited observation, Etzion seems genuinely motivated by his cause and has obviously paid a price for his convictions (whether justifiable or not). At our meeting his appearance was disheveled, his clothing ragged, and his vehicle old and in need of repairs. His activities in recent years have been focused on forcing the Israeli government to concede that Jews have rights on the Temple Mount, and to this end he has taken his case before the Israeli Supreme Court and won their support for Jewish prayers at the site. Yet despite such achievements, no practical gains have been experienced because of the threat of Arab riots by the Mufti and the Wakf, and because of the unchanged attitude secular Israeli leaders have toward achieving peace with their enemies.

### *HaTenu'ah LeChinun HaMikdash*

This organization, whose name means “Returning the Jewish People to the Holy Temple,” organizes mass group demonstrations to arouse consciousness among the people, the leaders, the Chief Rabbis, and the Government of Israel to rebuild the Temple and return the priests to their places of service.<sup>22</sup> One of the group’s purposes is to conduct national and regional conferences, such as the recent Temple Conference, and organizes ascents to the Temple Mount—ascents open to individuals, groups, and the public at large. They also put out a publication called *Yibane HaMikdash* (“Build the Temple”) and *Mikdash-Build*, the abridged English internet version. This publication serves as a forum of Jewish law and thought on subjects relating to the Temple Mount, the Temple, and renewing the Temple service. The group also sponsors rabbis and others who have taken upon themselves the task of teaching about the Temple Mount, its boundaries, its sanctity, and the laws related to entering it in holiness and purity. In its early years the organization was known as The Society for the Preparation of the Temple and stated that its goal was the establishment of a religious Jewish presence on the Temple Mount as “a preparatory step to the erection of the Third Temple.”<sup>23</sup>

This goal has continued to be a guiding purpose, and is put into effect by organizing groups of Jews to daily ascend the Temple Mount, thus creating a continual Jewish presence. This has not been the problem it has been in the past when the rabbinical ban was almost universally supported. Today, however, some of the most respected rabbinic authorities, including former chief rabbis Mordechai Eliyahu and Avraham Shapira, have allowed followers to go up to the Mount, provided they do so without provocation or demonstrations and they

avoid the Dome of the Rock (the place acknowledged as the former site of the Temple). While the current Ashkenazi chief rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau has not officially endorsed these ascents of the Mount, he will not condemn them, but only cautions against entering forbidden areas. Among those *HaTenu'ah LeChinun HaMikdash* has assisted with this action are rabbis, heads of religious academies (Hebrew, *roshei yeshivot*) and their students, and classes from half a dozen *hesder* (military schools). The procedure for making the ascent requires a strict adherence to *halakha*: after immersion in a *mikva* (a ritual immersion pool) to purify themselves from physical impurity, and after learning the rules of the permissible areas in which to walk, and other *halakhot* ("laws") about the Temple Mount, Jews go up every day (when the area is open to Jews: from 8:00-11:30 A.M. and 1:30-3:00 P.M. except on Friday, the Muslim holy day) via the Mughrabi Gate. In the time of the Temple the priests used to walk on the Temple Mount and especially in the Temple itself without shoes. In similar fashion, no leather shoes (because the act of tanning involves death) may be worn today by Jews walking in the permitted areas. Moreover, they are to enter with an attitude of prayer and dirge in their hearts. In this way they express their attachment to the Temple Mount, and demonstrate that the Temple Mount belongs to the Jewish people.

The point of these ascents of the Temple Mount is to prove that Jews can enter the area for religious purposes (since the very act of ascent is an act of worship), and to announce that such acts will eventually lead to a reclamation of the site and the rebuilding of the Temple. This purpose is well understood by the Palestinians who have taken charge of the area. As one of their representatives stated when Benjamin Netanyahu was Prime Minister and once pledged to restore Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount despite Muslim opposition:<sup>24</sup> "If he insists on praying here, he is just getting on the nerves of the Arabs and the Muslim world. And at that point there is no such thing as peace. The peace process that has been formed will be destroyed in a second."<sup>25</sup> Such threats, however, have no effect on Temple Mount movement organizations that actually welcome an end to the peace process. One such organization, whose demonstrations seek to provoke an end to the Muslim domination and bring about renewed liberation of the Temple Mount for Jews, is the Temple Mount Faithful.

### *The Temple Mount Faithful Movement*

The most visible activist organization today is the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful movement, or simply The Temple Mount Faithful (Hebrew, *Ne-*

*Emanei Har Habayit*). The central goal of this organization is “to liberate again the Temple Mount from Arab occupation, and then to rebuild again the Third Temple in its right place, on the Rock in the center of the Temple Mount, a Temple that will be again a center of religious, national, spiritual and moral life for Israel.”<sup>26</sup> More than any other activist organization, The Temple Mount Faithful has developed an outreach among not only Israelis and Jews outside the Land, but also a supportive network among Christians, some of whom are involved with the organizations outreach through newsletters, a web site, and lecture tours. In fact, the Temple Mount Faithful has recently been joined by a group of women (predominately Christian) in the United States (headquartered in Texas) which calls itself “The Battalion of Deborah.” This name was chosen because of the biblical Deborah, one of the Israelite judges in the book of Judges who was also a prophetess and general of the Israelite army. She saved the Israelites at a very dangerous time when the enemy tried to destroy them. In like manner, “these women decided to be like Deborah and to give themselves for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, the re-liberation of the Temple Mount, for Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and for the people and Land of Israel at a the critical time of the redemption of the people and Land of Israel.”<sup>27</sup>

The founder and leader of the Temple Mount Faithful is Gershon Salomon, a charismatic figure who by profession is an Orientalist and lecturer in Middle Eastern studies, specializing in the history of the national movement of the Kurdish people. Salomon is a tenth generation Jerusalemite. Two hundred years ago, the first of his forefathers came to Israel as a pioneer to redeem the land and the people of Israel and Jerusalem. One of his descendants was Rabbi Avraham Solomon Zalman Zoref, who settled in Jerusalem in 1811. Rabbi Zoref was one of the first Jewish pioneers in Jerusalem to start the redemptive process of the people and the Land in preparation for the coming of the Messiah on the Temple Mount. He was stabbed to death by Arabs in the Old City who were trying to prevent Jewish expansion. Solomon, who is still an officer in the Israel Defense Force, has witnessed or fought in most of Israel’s wars. He was involved as a youth in the War of Independence and arrested at age 11 by the British Mandatory police. Later when he joined the Israel Defense Forces, he led a company in the Golan Heights. In 1958, during a battle with the Syrian army, he was injured when he was run over by a tank. Salomon says he was miraculously rescued from death by angelic intervention; he relates that when he was approached by Syrian soldiers, who are trained to shoot to kill wounded Israeli soldiers, they all suddenly ran away. Later, he says, these Syrians soldiers reported to United

Nations officials that they had fled because they had seen thousands of angels around Salomon. It was at this time that Salomon says he also heard the voice of God speaking to him and telling him that He was not yet finished with him. Salomon understood this as a divine call to consecrate himself to the work of the Temple Mount.

Salomon feels that his calling was confirmed when, during his service in the Six-Day War, he was among the soldiers who participated in the liberation of the Temple Mount. He believes that at that moment, the circle was closed between his generation and the generation that was alive during the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. But the Temple Mount, as we know, was returned to Muslim control, and Salomon says his calling is to reverse this action (through the Temple Mount Faithful). According to his published statement of purpose, "he has dedicated himself to the vision of consecrating the Temple Mount to the Name of G-d, to removing the Muslim shrines placed there as a symbol of Muslim conquest, to the soon rebuilding of the Third Temple there, and the G-dly redemption of the people and the Land of Israel."<sup>28</sup>

Gershon Salomon and many other members of the Temple Mount Faithful movement are students of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the son of Rabbi Avraham Kook, the first chief rabbi of Israel in the early part of the twentieth century. He was the spiritual father of the religious Zionist redemption movement of Israel. Following in his footsteps, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook founded and defined the ideology of the *Gush Emunim* movement. This religious Zionist movement helped resettle the Land of Israel, but also was dedicated to bringing about the end-time redemption of the prophets. Salomon credits him as his inspiration for rebuilding the Temple and for liberating the Temple Mount, Jerusalem, and the Land of Israel. In keeping with this philosophy of religious Zionism, Salomon interprets current events in Israel and the nations in the light of what he understands as prophetic fulfillment in process. This can be seen by his exposition of three "signs of the times:"

We are now living in the most exciting time in the history of the Chosen People of G-d....All His prophetic promises to Israel are becoming a reality. According to the Word of G-d, three major events will occur in the end-times prior to the coming of Mashiach ben David. The first is the re-establishment of the State of Israel in the land of Israel. The second is the regathering of the Jewish people to the Promised Land from all over the world. The third is the rebuilding of the Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on the same place as the First and Second

Temples. The first condition has been fulfilled although not completely to the boundaries which G-d promised to Abraham. In the Six-Day War, G-d brought Israel to the Jordan River. The rest is soon going to be fulfilled. This is the Land which He chose for Himself and for His people.... The second condition is in the process of being fulfilled.... Everyday more Jews return home. Even lost tribes of Jews from the far corners of the world are being regathered by G-d. Parts of the ten lost tribes have also started to return. Groups like the Ethiopian Jews from the tribe of Dan and Jews from Asia who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh and others have returned. The third condition is soon to be fulfilled. As a result of the miraculous events of the Six-Day War of 1967, G-d brought Israel back to the Temple Mount, the whole of Jerusalem and the biblical areas of Judea, Samaria, Gaza, the Golan Heights and the Sinai peninsula. This was not an accidental event. G-d brought us back to the Temple Mount to build His House and to open another end-time era in the life of Israel. The terrible, sinful mistake of the then-Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, did not cancel G-d's plans [but they] were merely delayed to [that] generation.... [Now] a new generation has emerged... [and] the time is ripe for the Temple to be rebuilt. This is the climax of all the events before the coming of Mashiach ben David. G-d wants to again dwell in the midst of His beloved people, Israel.<sup>29</sup>

As Salomon's statement reveals, although the present secular government has prevented the immediate rebuilding of the Temple since 1967, he believes that the present generation will be the one to finally realize the prophetic dreams of his forefathers.

### **Laying the Third Temple Cornerstone**

In the previous chapter, we learned about the vessels being prepared by the Temple Institute—vessels that have been made with a rebuilt Temple in mind. The Temple Mount Faithful have also made preparations for the coming Temple in the form of a cornerstone. The Temple Mount Faithful brought this cornerstone to Jerusalem from Mitzpe Ramon in the Negev (a desert area to the south of Israel). It is one of the few places in the Land of Israel where the character and color of the stone are similar to that from which the First and Second Temples were made. There was also a symbolic reason for bringing the stone from this area: The Torah was given to the people of Israel in the desert at Mount Sinai, which today is in Egypt, but geographically is not far from Mitzpe Ramon. Because the divine instructions for building the First Temple forbade the use of

iron implements for shaping its stones, a flint rock that in Hebrew is called *even tzor* (also referred to by the special name of *Shamir*) was used to cut the soft limestone. However, no tools were used on the Temple Mount Faithful's cornerstone, for it was already adequate in its natural state. As Salomon puts it: "We brought it as is, as we found it. It was also a miracle. It was like it was ready and waiting for us!"<sup>30</sup>

The stone is not typical limestone but a harder marble and weighs almost four tons. When carried each year at Succot to the Siloam Pool, and then around the walls of the Old City, it is transported on a flatbed truck. In this way the stone is thought to bring a testimony to the rebuilding of the Temple and the coming of Messiah Ben-David (the ruling or King Messiah). According to Salomon, "This is a godly stone and it will begin the accomplishment of the end times in which we are living right now."<sup>31</sup>

Despite the "sanctity" of this stone, it lies today in one of the busiest traffic circles in the city, being soiled daily by exhaust fumes and littered by people walking the crosswalk next to it. It remains in this spot due to the police, who refuse to allow the stone to be brought inside the walls of the Old City for fear of another disaster like the "Temple Mount Massacre" that took place on October 8, 1990. The stone is located in a central square not far from the Temple Mount, so it's not far from its future resting place. From Salomon's perspective, this central square is a very historical place close to the third wall of Jerusalem and the memorial stone honoring the Israeli soldiers who died in the battle for the liberation of the Temple Mount. He also thinks it providential that the American consulate can be seen from the front of the stone, and suggests, "Maybe this is also a message for the American people, but mainly for the American administration, for the president to support the godly event [the process of redemption] that is taking place in the Land...to rebuild the Third Temple for Israel and for all the nations." Even so, the stone is even closer to the Christian sites of the Dominican Catholic *École Biblique* and the Protestant Garden Tomb.

Salomon, undaunted in his dream for the stone's future, declares:

The cornerstone is lying here temporarily... We shall continue to bring it to the Temple Mount... In the right day—I believe it is very soon—this stone will be put on the Temple Mount, and will be worked and polished... and will be the first stone for the Third Temple... It will be laid on the Temple Mount not far from the rock of Abraham and Isaac in the same line and location where the First and Second Temples were located... Just now this stone lies not far from the Temple Mount, very

close to the Walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, near Shechem [Damascus] Gate...and this stone watches over the Temple Mount. But the day is not far that this stone will be in the right place—it can be today...or tomorrow, we are very close to the right time.<sup>32</sup>

Until the right time comes, the cornerstone will play its part in the demonstrations carried out by the Temple Mount Faithful in and around the Temple Mount.

## **The Demonstrations of the Temple Mount Faithful**

### *The Controversy Surrounding the Demonstrations*

My first encounter with Gershon Salomon and the Temple Mount Faithful was at their first demonstration during the Feast of Tabernacles on October 16, 1989. I was present with the group when Gershon Salomon and Yehoshua Cohen, dressed in the priestly garments, led the group's members and supporters in an attempt to lay the cornerstone for the Third Temple at the entrance to the Temple Mount. A protest at an Arab school earlier in the day led police to rescind previously received permission to conduct the ceremony at the site, and the stone had to be left at a location near, but outside, the Old City. The next year (1990) the Temple Mount Faithful announced they would repeat the previous year's ceremony and attempt to lay the cornerstone. Although police had assured the Muslim authorities that the group would be prevented from entering the Dung Gate, which leads to the Western Wall plaza, rumors among the Arabs stated that the group was coming to pray on the Temple Mount, thus provoking a major riot. On the morning of October 8, during the opening of the Feast of Tabernacles celebrations, when more than 20,000 Jews were assembled for Kol Ha-Moed services at the Western Wall, more than 3,000 Palestinian Arabs on the Temple Mount above began to pelt the crowd with stones (see photo section). Official inquiry later found that this event had been orchestrated by Faisal Husseini, who is now the Jerusalem Administrator for the Palestinian Authority. He used the Temple Mount Faithful's march as an opportunity to attack the Western Wall worshippers and provoke a conflict.<sup>33</sup> As loudspeakers on the Temple Mount sounded a call for Muslims to come and kill the Jews who were "trying to take their holy places," the Israeli police first fired tear gas to dispel the rioters, then rubber bullets, and finally, live ammunition. When the fighting was over, some 17 Arabs were dead.<sup>34</sup> The United Nations, including the United States, voted to condemn Israel for the incident. However, Israeli investi-

gators uncovered the fact that the Palestinian provocation had been part of a plot masterminded by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. In August of that year, in an attempt to unite the Arab league against the United States and their allies opposed to his invasion of Kuwait, Hussin called for the Arabs to start an incident on the Temple Mount in the hopes of inciting a pan-Arab *Jihad* against Israel. This was intended by Saddam Hussein as the beginning of a Middle-East war that he would lead on behalf of all Arabs.<sup>35</sup> But for the restraint Israel showed—brought in part by the intense pressure and assurances of the United States—the Jewish Nation would have retaliated when Hussein bombed them with SCUD missiles. Had that happened, the entire region, if not the world, could have plunged into what the secular media fearfully predicted as “Armageddon.” Such is the potential of the Arab reaction to Jewish activism at the Temple Mount.

### *The Prophetic Significance of the Demonstrations*

The Temple Mount Faithful continue to hold annual demonstrations during the key Temple-related festivals on the Jewish calendar. Although the Temple does not exist today, it continues to overshadow aspects of the various commemorative feasts which also have Messianic or eschatological significance.<sup>36</sup> The group’s effort to lay the cornerstone each year is scheduled during Succot, one of the major feasts of the High Holy Days or Days of Awe (Hebrew, *Yamim Nora'im*), which occurs in Tishri, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar (September/October). Gershon Salomon explains the significance of this date for their action:

We brought the cornerstone to the City of David very close to the gates of the Temple Mount, to the same place where King David brought the Ark of Covenant and anointed it to be in the first Temple. In the same place where King Solomon decided to start the process of the building of the Temple we brought the cornerstone. A priest... was on this place and anointed the cornerstone. Levis with music instruments that were reconstructed also... played music. And we brought also the vessels that we reconstructed for the third Temple to this place. And the purpose was to say to everyone, we are ready for the rebuilding of the Temple.<sup>37</sup>

On each day of the month preceding the month of Tishri, the shofar is sounded at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount. At this time of national preparation for repentance, the reminder that God once revealed Himself at

Mount Sinai points to His promised return to Jerusalem to reveal Himself again at the end of days (Zechariah 8:3). The first day of Tishri, known as the Feast of Trumpets, signals the beginning of a solemn occasion of national repentance and spiritual return to the Lord. The shofar, a ram's horn that long ago was used to assemble the Israelite troops for battle, is sounded to issue a call for spiritual preparation. In Temple times, the shofar was blown (Leviticus 23:24) by a priest from the southwestern corner of the retaining wall surrounding the Temple. The people then offered a burnt offering at the Temple in token of their spiritual preparation. This points prophetically to the time of Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:27; 12:1), during which the Jewish remnant is prepared for national repentance through the persecution of the Antichrist at the close of this period (Zechariah 12:1-9; Matthew 24:31).

Immediately following the Feast of Trumpets, on the tenth day of Tishri, is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). This is the day on which Israel historically made atonement for their national sin. In ancient times both the act and fact of forgiveness was dependent upon a series of sacrifices in the Temple that were performed by the high priest on behalf of the people. The climax of the act of atonement was when the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies (the innermost and most sacred chamber within the Temple) with a sin offering and sprinkled its blood on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. On Yom Kippur, Jews fast as in Temple times, incorporate the high priest's sacrificial service into the synagogue ritual, and sing at the conclusion of the service: "Next Year in Jerusalem" (Hebrew, *Lashanah haba'ah birushalayim*). Prophetically, Yom Kippur looks forward to the great day of national redemption and spiritual cleansing that is to follow her repentance at Messiah's coming to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 12:10-13:1; Matthew 24:30; Romans 11:27).

The conclusion of this spiritual period of preparation for national repentance and spiritual cleansing comes only with the final day of the seven-day Feast of Succot (Tabernacles or Booths), also known as the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:15-16). In ancient times, all Jewish men were required to go to the Temple for this celebration, where 70 sacrifices were offered in atonement for the sins of the nations that had come from the sons of Noah. The final day (seventh day) of this feast is known as *Hoshana Rabbah* (The Day of the "Great Hosanna")—taken from liturgical passages recited throughout the feast which begin with the Hebrew imperative *hoshana* ("save now"). At this time the people waved their lulavs, or palm branches, while the Levites chanted the *Hallel*

(Psalms 113-118). The name of this day—*Hosanna*—comes from the closing words of Psalm 118, which reads: “O LORD, do save, we beseech Thee.... Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.” This prayer for the speedy advent of Messianic redemption accompanied a special ceremony known as the “water-drawing festival” (Hebrew, *simhat bet hassoevah*). At this ceremony water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam and poured on the corner of the altar in the Temple as a libation offering. This water was poured in connection with prayers for the annual rains, but it also had Messianic significance as well. It was here at the Siloam (Hebrew, *Shiloach*, “He sent”) that the fullers had washed their clothing (Isaiah 7:3), a figure drawn upon by the prophets to illustrate the Messianic purification of the Millennial Temple’s servants (see Malachi 3:2-3). Here, too, the prophet Isaiah challenged Ahaz to trust God, not man, and revealed a Messianic sign (Isaiah 7:7-14). Succot also celebrates God’s provision of refuge in the wilderness, recalls His prophetic promise of rescue at the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), and affirms His promise of restoration in the future kingdom of Messiah.

The water for Succot was taken to the Temple and poured over the corner of the altar, a ritual based on an oral tradition that dated to the time of Moses (*Ta’anit* 3a, *Succot* 44b, 44a). This pouring out of water was both *symbolic* and *prophetic*. Its *symbolic* purpose was that it served as a prayer for rain, since summer was about to end and the rainy season would soon begin. This prayer for rain demonstrated Israel’s dependence upon the Lord, an act of faith that will be required of all the nations who observe this ceremony in the Millennial Temple (Zechariah 14:16-19). Its *prophetic* purpose was Messianic, looking forward to the outpouring of the *Ruach Ha-Kodesh* (“the Holy Spirit”) upon Israel and the nations under the new covenant in the kingdom age (Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28).

This ceremony forms the backdrop for the New Testament account of Jesus’ arrival at Succot as described in Matthew 21:9 and John 7:37-39, when He rode through the Eastern Gate and entered the Temple precincts greeted by shouts of “Hosanna,” and then proclaimed to the crowds that He was the true giver of the “water” and the “light” of the world (John 7:37-38; 8:12). On this day during Temple times, willow branches were beaten against the pavement next to the Great Altar to symbolize the casting away of the Nation’s sins. In the future, the nations of the world will join with Israel in the ongoing celebration of Succot (Zechariah 14:16-19). It is also significant that the Scripture passage read in the synagogue on the Shabbat during Succot is Ezekiel chapter 38, which deals with

the future battle of Gog and Magog, a last-days war in which the Lord miraculously preserves Israel.

These details help give some insight into why the Temple Mount Faithful, at the conclusion of Succot, take their cornerstone to the Pool of Siloam. There they draw some water in a libation vessel (*mizraq*), pronounce the *shehehianu* blessing (thanksgiving for having reached a special occasion), and pour out the water as an offering on the cornerstone en lieu of the Altar, since it is considered the only existing part of the Third Temple. For the Temple Mount Faithful, this ceremony proclaims the prophetic promise that the Temple will soon be built and the water will then be able to be poured on the restored altar.

The Temple Mount Faithful announce these demonstrations via their web site, e-mail messages, and printed newsletter, often attracting international attention. For example, their announced intention to attempt to lay the cornerstone on October 6, 1998 brought a flurry of internet and radio speculations of apocalyptic proportions. In one report of the WorldNetDaily, writer Kaye Corbett penned the headline: "Temple plan could ignite WWII: Cornerstone to be laid today on explosive real estate."<sup>38</sup> He then went on to suggest that "a small religious group known as the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful movement, could bring this planet to the brink of World War III. . . ."<sup>39</sup>

## What Does the Future Hold?

The day the Roman Tenth Legion stormed the Temple Mount and set fire to the Sanctuary ended Jewish sovereignty over the site. From that time onward the names of the conquerors of Holy Jerusalem have changed, and control has remained in foreign hands. In 1967 Motta Gur proclaimed the Mount's liberation to recoup history's 2,000-year-old debt. Abraham Rabinovitch, author of *The Battle for Jerusalem*, recalls that Colonel Gur had been hoping for a chance to attack the Old City and regain the Temple Mount at the very outset of the threat of war in May. Being a man under command he refused to act independent of orders, even when then-Chief Army Chaplain Rabbi Shlomo Goren pleaded with him to "ignore orders" and goaded him by saying, "You're not afraid to take chances? We could fix it up afterwards!" Nevertheless, Rabinovitch writes, "Gur said no, but he had in fact been thinking of that very thing. What would history say, he wondered, if Israel turned away from this moment? What would history say about him as the commander who failed to seize this historic opportunity?"<sup>40</sup> On June 7 Colonel Gur got the chance to seize his opportunity,

and the Temple Mount finally fell into Israel's hands. Today it remains in Israeli hands, but it is Islamic hands that hold it, and new liberators again wonder what history will record of them in this moment and with this opportunity. Whether or not these present-day activists will realize their hopes, we can know for certain that there is a future Jewish Commander who will at last liberate the Temple Mount and prevent it from ever being lost again. But be warned—you must prepare yourself for war!

# The Coming War



## The Battle Over the Last Days Temple

*The time has come to rebuild the Jewish Temple destroyed two millenniums ago. We came to say to the whole world that the Arab occupation of the Temple Mount is finished forever!*

—GERSHON SALOMON, DIRECTOR,  
TEMPLE MOUNT FAITHFUL MOVEMENT

*The principle of negotiation on this piece of property is not acceptable in the Arab Islamic world. They can negotiate on East and West Jerusalem. But when it comes to the Temple Mount, there is no such negotiation—even if its going to get us into World War III.<sup>1</sup>*

—JERIES SOUDAH,  
LEADER IN THE PALESTINIAN PARTY

It is universally conceded that there is no more volatile acreage on earth than that of the Temple Mount. If the Temple Mount is dynamite, and the Temple movement has lit the fuse, how long will it be until an explosive situation is reached? There is no doubt as to the reaction of Islam. Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the Islamic spiritual leader of the terrorist Palestinian organization Hamas, has declared that any attempt by Jewish militants to seize control of the Temple Mount or to destroy Islamic shrines would lead to a bloodbath. He said, "They will start a fire in which they shall perish."<sup>2</sup> We have seen that Temple activism has raised the tension in the battle for the Temple Mount to a height never before realized in the past 1,362 years and Islamic reaction has followed suit. Whenever Temple groups act they are regarded by the Muslims as agents of the Israeli government seeking to destroy their holy places. Although the Israeli government repeatedly denies any association, Adnan Husseini, the executive director of the Islamic Wakf, still contends, "We [in the Wakf] see no difference between these two groups [The Temple Mount Faithful and Ateret Cohanim] and the government. We consider the government and these two groups as one body. The government leaves these persons working. What we can see today started in 1967 immediately after the occupation, when Jews cleaned the Wailing Wall plaza. . . . What the Jews want there is a pure Jewish country. If they want to fight us, they will have to fight Islam. . . . We are here because God sent us here. We cannot change. If they want to fight us, they have to fight God. But we are blaming the government. . . ."<sup>3</sup> In like manner, when two Israelis were detained in 1998 for allegedly plotting to throw a pig's head into the Muslim compound, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said, "We have always warned of this; many times, we have warned of the attempts of Israeli extremists to defile Al-Aqsa and destroy it."

On the other hand, the Islamic Wakf have destroyed ancient remains of the Temple around the Haram and in unauthorized construction projects for building new mosques inside the Huldah Gates and Solomon's Stables.<sup>4</sup> They say of any Jewish interference: "There will be massacres if there is any attempt to stop the opening of the mosque."<sup>5</sup> Yet the Jewish proposal to build a synagogue on the Temple Mount (presented by Knesset member Rabbi Benny Elon and Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, head of The Temple Institute), based on evidence from archaeologists and historians that such a synagogue once occupied the site,<sup>6</sup> was violently opposed by the Wakf as an attempt to subvert their sovereignty over the site. But on this issue the Wakf is clearly in error. The Temple Mount is still under Israeli sovereignty and Israel can do whatever needs to be done at this site when necessary. This was demonstrated in 1998 when Palestinian terrorists, who escaped from Israeli security forces in Jerusalem, ran to the Temple

Mount and received refuge from the Wakf who tried to prevent the Israeli police from catching them. However, Islamic jurisdiction did not stop the police from entering the site and arresting them—demonstrating Israel’s sovereign status and its ability to assert itself on the Temple Mount when it so chooses.

## The Battle Begins

### *The Conquest of the Mount*

When Israeli forces captured the Old City of East Jerusalem on June 7, 1967, the world watched in wonder. What would happen next? Would Israel annex East Jerusalem, demolish the Muslim mosques, and rebuild the Temple? Would the surrounding Arab nations retaliate and stage a massive invasion of Jerusalem to retrieve control of their holy places? Israel did indeed annex East Jerusalem, but returned jurisdiction of the Temple Mount to the Muslims and denied any government-approved intention to rebuild the Temple. Thus, at least for the time, a war was averted with the Muslim countries in the Arab League and Jerusalem could learn to respect the multiplicity of religions that had historically occupied its most holy site. But on the day Israel entered the Temple Mount after being exiled from it for a quarter century, Jewish expectations were for permanent possession of the site. The comments of Colonel Motta Gur, commander of the Reserve Paratroop Brigade which captured the Old City on the day they took the Temple Mount, represented the feelings of what is now described as a deprived generation: “I feel at home here. The object of all the yearnings. The Temple Mount! Mount Moriah. Abraham and Isaac. The Temple. The Zealots, the Maccabees, Bar-Kochba, Romans and Greeks. A confusion of thoughts. But there is one feeling that is firmer and deeper than everything. We’re on the Temple Mount! The Temple Mount is ours!... We are in Jerusalem to stay.”<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, no less sentiments were voiced by General Moshe Dayan, commander of the Israeli forces, who joined Colonel Gur’s paratroopers at the newly won Western Wall: “We have united Jerusalem, the divided capital of Israel. We have returned to our holiest of holy places, never to part from it again...”<sup>78</sup> He went on to assure Muslims and Christians that the Israelis would safeguard the holy places and grant free access to them, because no one imagined at that time that they would ever again be controlled by anyone other than Israel.

Nevertheless, Dayan, who had led in the Mount’s capture, felt that Israel could not justify maintaining Jewish sovereignty over the site in view of the greater threat from the Arab world. While Dayan believed the West Bank and Sinai, which had also been captured in the war, should be held in view of future

bargaining with the Muslims for peace, Jerusalem, and especially the Temple Mount, held a unique religious status for Muslims and would invite only war if Jews asserted their rights there. Dayan expressed his opinion within hours of the first day of conquest when he ordered the Israeli flag to be taken down from the Dome of the Rock, where triumphant soldiers had placed it earlier. In the days that followed, Dayan heard of religious Jews who wanted to destroy the Dome of the Rock and saw Teddy Kollek, Jerusalem's Jewish mayor, give the order to bulldoze all the Arab buildings in the Moghrabi Quarter to clear an area for the thousands of estatic Jews who were streaming to the Western Wall for prayer. Dayan also saw the Israel Defense Forces Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren open a synagogue on the Temple Mount itself.

Fearing that all of this would provoke Muslim hostilities, Dayan decided to take a controversial action of his own. Just ten days after Jews had recovered access to their Temple Mount for the first time in 2,000 years, Dayan entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque, sat on the Muslim prayer carpets in stocking feet with the Wakf (the Islamic trust responsible for managing their religious places on the Temple Mount) and returned to them control of the site. When I interviewed Goren in 1994, he told me that Dayan had acted on his own authority, but that no one in the government dared to oppose his action or attempted to reverse his decision. Only Rabbi Goren, as Dayan ordered him to remove the Jewish prayer books from the Temple Mount, reminded him of the gravity of his deed: "You gave away the Holiest of the Holies to the enemies of yesterday and tomorrow!" In time Goren's words proved true, for as Lawrence Wright, a writer for *The New Yorker* has pointed out, "Since then, the Temple Mount has been an Islamic island in an increasingly Jewish, and increasingly Orthodox city—and, as such, it has become a flashpoint for religious extremists of both faiths."<sup>9</sup>

### *Blow Up the Dome of the Rock!*

On June 7, 1967, Colonel Gur's belief that Israel had providentially won the Temple Mount was taken a step farther by Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces. When Goren blew the shofar and recited the first Jewish prayers heard at the newly recovered Western Wall in nearly a quarter of a century, he stated that he believed the taking of Jerusalem had begun the Messianic era. This belief motivated him to undertake a plan of action that would return Jewish worship to the Temple Mount and one day see the Temple rebuilt. Because Rabbi Goren was the military's Chief Rabbi, he was given complete authority over the Temple Mount in the first month after its capture. Therefore, he immediately ordered a team of army engineers to survey the Mount, in order

to and establish the perimeters of access without violating the rabbinic injunction against violating the holiness of the site by inadvertently treading upon the holy precincts, below which some people believe the Ark of the Covenant is still preserved within a secret chamber.

In May 1998 it was revealed for the first time that only hours after Israeli soldiers had captured the Temple Mount, Rabbi Goren had urged that the Dome of the Rock be blown up. Goren's remarks were quoted in an interview with retired Major General Uzi Narkiss, who led Israel's capture of Jerusalem's Old City.<sup>10</sup> Narkiss stipulated that nothing be published until everyone involved in the discussion had died.<sup>11</sup> According to the interview, Rabbi Goren said, "Uzi, now is the time to put 100 kilograms of explosives into the Mosque of Omar so that we may rid ourselves of it once and for all!" When Narkiss rebuked him, Goren persisted: "Uzi, you will go down in history if you do this!" When Narkiss again refused, Goren is said to have pleaded: "You don't grasp what tremendous significance this would have. This is an opportunity that can be taken advantage of now, at this moment. Tomorrow it will be too late!" At this point Narkiss said he told Goren that if he kept on persisting, Narkiss would put him in jail. Upon hearing that, Goren turned and walked away in silence.

Goren's former aide, Rabbi Menahem Hacoheh, who was present at this discussion, gave a slightly different account of the story to Israel's Army radio. According to him, "the rabbi told Uzi that if, during the course of the war a bomb had fallen on the mosque and it would have, you know, disappeared, that would have been a good thing. Uzi said, 'I am glad that did not happen.'" Furthermore, Hacoheh said Goren "did not suggest using explosives," and "Uzi never told him not to do it." Nevertheless, the Army radio played a tape of a speech Goren made in 1967 at a military convention, in which he called it a "tragedy" that Israel had left the Temple Mount in control of the Muslims. On the tape, Goren also said, "I told this to the Defense Minister (Moshe Dayan) and he said, 'I understand what you are saying, but do you really think we should have blown up the mosque?' and I said, 'Certainly we should have blown it up. It is a tragedy for generations that we did not do so. . . . I myself would have gone up there and wiped it off the ground completely so that there was no trace that there was ever a Mosque of Omar there.'"

Dave Dolan, a CBS radio correspondent in Jerusalem, has personally observed the major conflicts on the Temple Mount over the past two decades. He shares his thoughts concerning blowing up the Dome of the Rock, as well as other options for its removal:

There are those who are so extreme that they want to go and literally blow up the Dome of the Rock, which I don't advocate nor think is very wise. . . .but I do know that we are in a season today of wars and rumors of wars. I have been here for 21 years and I've seen the SCUD missiles flying over. Who's to know what could possibly happen and how destruction could come and clear the area? Something else could go up in its place. [Also] Jerusalem experiences a major earthquake every 50 years. The last major earthquake was in 1927. When I arrived here in 1977, we were told that we were already maxed out on the 50 years and that a major earthquake should hit Jerusalem any day now. Well, it never happened. Now it's much beyond [that time] and now we are looking to the [new] millennium and there still hasn't been a major earthquake. It wouldn't take much to shake the very foundations of the structures all around Jerusalem, including the mosques. I think God has His ways and when His time is right, the way will be made and God will take care of it and will show the people exactly when and how they can build this Temple.<sup>12</sup>

If a destruction of the Muslim structures would not make possible the rebuilding of the Temple, then could not the site be peaceably negotiated in view of preventing an inevitable war?

## Is the Temple Mount Negotiable?

Although peace proposals, plans, agreements, and accords have all been considered and tried, a formal, lasting peace between the present parties in the Middle East is an impossibility. The reason for this is religious, not political. If Israel withdrew from all of the disputed "occupied territory" it captured in the 1967 Six-Day War, peace could still not be secured with the Palestinians, since, according to its charter, the PLO was founded to liberate the lands occupied by the Jews *before 1947*! However, even if Israel were to abandon all the territory it occupied as a result of the war in 1948 and occupy only the territory allocated to it by United Nations Resolution 181 (section 2), there would still be no peace, since the Arab League rejected that original partitioning of Palestine and went to war in 1948 for the sole purpose of eradicating the very existence of a Jewish State in their midst. In every case the decisions of the Arabs were based on the inflexible dictates of their religion. Nothing has changed nor can change in the Islamic agenda because the Koran has commanded the faithful to *Jihad* ("holy war") with the world of non-Muslims, and once any land has been conquered by Islam, it is forever the possession of Islam, regardless of whether or not it is lost again to non-Muslims. It is for this reason alone that the Temple Mount, all of

Jerusalem, and all of Israel will remain on the Islamic agenda and why peace can never come to the region short of the Islamic threat being removed.

From time to time, except for offers in the past by Jewish groups or Freemasons to buy the Temple Mount from the Arabs (offers the Arabs have been quick to reject), the proposal has been put forth that the Temple Mount could be shared in some way by both the Jews and Muslims. However, such proposals fly in the face of the basic tenets of each of these religions—exclusivism. For Judaism, the Temple Mount must be under Jewish control in order to fulfill the prophecies that “many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [the Temple Mount], to the house of the God of Jacob [the Temple]; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths” (Isaiah 2:3). According to this passage, the whole world is to one day come to a rebuilt Jewish Temple situated on the Temple Mount in order to learn the truth of the Jewish God and follow His laws.

For Islam, the great Day of Judgment will take place before the seat of justice on Jerusalem’s Mount Moriah, where today the *al-Mizan* (the Balances)—pillars and arches on the Temple Mount—await the scales that will weigh the deeds of resurrected souls.<sup>13</sup> According to Islam, the whole world is to be subjugated to Allah and the Koran universally revered as the final revelation of God. This is why the chairman of the Islamic endowment in Jerusalem, Adnan Al Husseini, warned that Islam will never, under any circumstances, agree to allow Jews to pray on the Temple Mount. In an interview with Voice of Palestine Radio, Husseini threatened to use violence against any Jews who dare to pray on the Temple Mount. He accused the rabbis of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza of being responsible for past attempts by Jews to pray on the Mount. This basic Islamic theology also explains why the sheikh in the Al-Aqsa Mosque publicly attacked the Israeli Supreme Court’s decision to allow Yehuda Etzion to pray on the Temple Mount. In his Friday sermon broadcast live on Voice of Palestine Radio, he said, “We will not stand idly by.” He later added, “We refuse to obey the decisions of this racist court. The rabbis will not enter the Al-Aqsa mosque, not over our dead bodies and shrouds.”<sup>14</sup> If the differences in these religions make it impossible to negotiate even *prayer* on the Temple Mount, how can we ever expect that a Temple could be negotiated?

### *Can the Sacred Site Be Shared?*

For the same reason that neither peace nor prayer can be negotiated, it is also impossible that a Temple could be built anywhere on the Temple Mount alongside the Islamic Dome of the Rock or Al-Aqsa Mosque. Before the Temple

could be rebuilt the entire Temple Mount would have to be ritually purified. Foreign structures, especially pagan structures, such as the mosques and shrines of Islam, are considered abominations that have to be removed before the ceremonial system could function. In like manner, Muslims cannot allow non-Muslims to corrupt their worship by their presence. In light of this it is strange that rumors of deals being struck between the Muslims and Israelis continue to crop up. For example, Rabbi Simcha Pearlmuter published an article that reported that the Palestinians, in 1993, had offered to allow the Jews to build their Temple north of the Dome of the Rock in exchange for recognition of legal status in East Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> But if the mosques on the Temple Mount are holy to all Muslims everywhere, no single Muslim, not even an Imam or a sheik, and certainly not someone like Arafat, whose political clout is barely recognized in the Arab world, could authorize such a compromise of Islamic principles with the enemy of the entire United Arab Emirates! This point has been made clear by one of Arafat's own Palestinian leaders Jeris Soudah: "Everybody in Saudi Arabia has a one-hundred percent right to vote yes or no about what happens on the Temple Mount, and they are not going to vote yes. All the Muslim world is involved here. . . . The Arabs and the Palestinians have no problem with dividing the city [of Jerusalem] between the east and the west. The east was the Arab side and the west was the Israeli side. . . . the Temple Mount is in the east side and that is why we cannot negotiate on this."<sup>16</sup> Adding the Egyptian voice to this issue, Mohammed Abdul Koddus, a well-known Egyptian writer and prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood (an Islamic political group), has said, "There can be no peace so long as the Jewish state occupies Jerusalem."<sup>17</sup> Even though Egypt has had a formal peace with Israel since 1979, it can still hold out the prospect of war if Jews do not abandon their claims to the Holy City and the Temple Mount.

### *The Politics of the Temple*

The issue of rebuilding the Temple has been at the forefront (though often downplayed) of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Islamic authority (called in Arabic the *Wakf*) who maintains rigid control of the Temple Mount, blamed the Israeli government for starting a fire in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969 in order to destroy the structure and rebuild the Temple—despite the fact that a mentally unstable member of a "Christian" cult actually set the blaze! Ever since, the Muslims have assumed that every incursion in or near the area, whether for archaeological or religious purposes, has had negative intentions. For this reason riots followed

an excavation to uncover the subterranean Western Wall tunnel in 1982. Riots also followed a demonstration by the Temple Mount Faithful in 1990 (in which 17 were killed), excavations to reveal the Herodian street next to the Western Wall in 1995, and the opening of an exit tunnel to the Hasmonean tunnel in September 27, 1996 (in which 58 were killed). In March of 1997 Yasser Arafat was shown in a photograph, distributed internationally by the Associated Press, holding up an artist's rendering of a restored Jewish Temple and telling his people to "get ready for the next battle" (for Jerusalem). Similar calls for conflict were also issued from loudspeakers on the Temple Mount to Arabs in East Jerusalem during each of the aforementioned riots.

Scripture tells us we can expect a future war over the Temple Mount. When will it take place, and what will be its outcome? Let's look at that next.

## The Last-Days Battles for the Temple Mount

We know that observant Jews desire to take back the Temple Mount, but would the secular Israeli public also support a conflict on the Temple Mount? Secular Zionists might cringe at the thought, but the very word *Zion*, from which their political movement took its name, is a reference to the Temple that was built on Mount Zion.<sup>18</sup> Even so, Carrie Hart, an experienced news commentator and Israeli believer living in Jerusalem, contends that the present passion for peace has so consumed secular Israeli society that these people will make any concession to secure it:

There are some Israelis living here who will not be content until they go through the completed process of the peace accords. They will not be satisfied until they have tried every human effort to keep their sons from fighting and being killed on the battlefield. They will not be quiet, or hold their voices, until they see the outcome of their demands for two lands, two peoples, two flags, two anthems, peace within their borders, peace with their Arab neighbors. Even if it takes an internationalization of Jerusalem, they will not stop pushing their concept of peace...at all costs.<sup>19</sup>

Could the Temple Mount be taken and the Temple rebuilt by the minority of Orthodox Jews who support such a cause today? It seems that something will have to happen to change the attitude of the Israeli public so that both peace and possession of the Temple Mount is possible. Could a war occur in such a way that even the secular populace would be moved to acknowledge it was time for a Temple? The answer may be found by studying the biblical prophecies

concerning the Last Days Temple. They indicate that Israel will survive a great invasion from the north (Ezekiel 38–39)—completely unscathed in such a way that even the greatest of skeptical secularists will acknowledge it was a miracle of God. These prophecies also indicate that at least three more future battles are to be expected (Revelation 11:2 with Daniel 11:45a; Zechariah 12-14; Revelation 20:7-9), each relating to the Temple Mount and each setting in motion events that lead to the ultimate fulfillment of Israel’s destiny. Let’s consider these coming wars for the Temple Mount.

### *The Battle of Gog and Magog*

The “Battle” or “War of Gog and Magog”<sup>20</sup> appears between two Temple texts in Ezekiel (37:26-28 and 40–48) and therefore has some relationship to the Last Days Temple. The Temple described in these texts is the Final or Restoration Temple of the Millennial age. The placement of the Gog and Magog account in Ezekiel 38–39 could either relate to this Temple (in which case it would accord with the Millennium—see Revelation 20:8) or precede it (in which case it could be pre-Tribulational, Tribulational, or post-Tribulational). Without question this matter of chronological placement is one of the most difficult issues in prophetic interpretation.<sup>21</sup> There is no doubt that it belongs to the eschatological period, for the text makes this explicit: It will come about in the “latter years...last days...” (Ezekiel 38:7-8,16). It is also clear that the stage is the Land of Israel (Ezekiel 38:9-12,14,16,18-19; 39:11), and specifically northern Israel: “the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 38:8,21; 39:2-3,17-19). The reference to “unwalled villages” may also indicate a northern location (since Jerusalem, to the south, is a walled city),<sup>22</sup> as does the geography of the invaders “out of the remote parts of the north” (Ezekiel 38:6,15), and scene of the battle: “you shall fall on the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 39:4). There may also be an indication of this in the identification of the lands of the primary invaders (Ezekiel 38:2-3): Magog (after Josephus) with the land of the Scythians, and Meshech and Tubal with modern Turkey, as well as most of their allies (Ezekiel 38:5-6) all located north of Israel.

### **The Context**

#### *Problems with a Millennial Context*

The text further indicates that at the time of this invasion the people of Israel “have been gathered from many nations” (Ezekiel 38:8), inhabit the waste places (Ezekiel 38:12), have become prosperous (“gathered cattle and goods,” Ezekiel

38:12-13), and live securely (Ezekiel 38:8,11,14). While this description of Israel uses restoration language, the very fact that Israel is surrounded by hostile enemies prevents this time from being the time of the Restoration or the Millennial kingdom, when all of Israel's enemies (the nations) have been subdued and brought to honor Israel and her God (Isaiah 2:3-4; 19:16-25; 61:6; 66:18-20; Zechariah 8:20-23; 9:10; 14:16-19). In fact, in the Millennium, some of the very enemies listed here as attackers against Israel (Tarshish, Put, Meshech, Rosh) will receive a witness from converted nations of God's glory and come to the Millennial Temple to worship (Isaiah 66:19-20). Moreover, while the time of security described in this text seems to agree with the conditions of the Millennium, the reference to "unwalled villages" presents a condition opposite to that described for this period. For example, in Isaiah 26:1 we read, "In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: 'We have a strong city; He sets up walls and ramparts for security.'" The feeling of security that results from a lack of walls must be of a different kind than that which depends on their presence. This security seems to be connected with Israel's military existence in the Land, rather than reliance upon the Lord.<sup>23</sup> If this is the case, then Israel is here depicted as having returned to the Land and established a State in unbelief. This is confirmed by the fact that the outcome of the war appears to bring about for Israel a new understanding of God (Ezekiel 39:7), yet it is only afterward that Israel comes to "know" the Lord (Ezekiel 39:22) and His Spirit is poured out on them (Ezekiel 39:29). This argues that this war must take place before the Millennium.

### *Problems with a Tribulational Context*

This text also uses language that appears to fit the Tribulation period—such as the mention of God's "fury," and "wrath," "anger" (Ezekiel 38:18-19a; see also Revelation 6:17; 14:10; 15:1,7; 19:15)—as well as terrestrial judgments, such as "a great earthquake" (Ezekiel 38:19; see also Revelation 6:12; 11:13; 16:18) effects on fish and animal life (Ezekiel 38:20a; see also Revelation 8:8-9), "mountains thrown down" (Ezekiel 38:20b; see also Revelation 6:14; 16:20), "pestilence... blood... hailstones, fire, and brimstone" sent by God on His enemies (Ezekiel 38:22; 39:6; see also Revelation 6:8; 9:17; 11:6; 16:3-9, 21; 18:8), and scavenger birds and beasts called to feast on the corpses of the slaughtered dead (Ezekiel 39:4, 17-20; see also Revelation 19:17-18). Despite these similarities, which can be explained by the common use of apocalyptic "Day of the Lord" language (compare the use of these same elements in past divine intervention/retribution contexts: Exodus 9:15-34; Numbers 16:31-35; Joshua 10:11; Ezekiel 5:12-17; 14:21; Joel

1:15-2:11; Amos 1:7,10, 12, 14; 4:10-11;), there are significant differences. For one, the judgments during the Tribulation, except for the campaigns of Armageddon, are universal (affect all of mankind) and global (affect all physical environs) and not specific to a particular place, enemy, or battle as is the case with this war in Ezekiel 38–39. Furthermore, while in the Tribulation Period the armies of the world assemble for war in the northern part of Israel (Mount Megiddo, Revelation 16:14,16), the biblical text does not say that they will fight there. Rather, according to Zechariah 12–14, the scene of this final battle is Jerusalem. By contrast, Gog and his allies meet their doom “on the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 39:4). In addition, in Ezekiel 38–39 there are a definite number of allied nations that attack Israel in a time of “rest” to capture its wealth (Ezekiel 38:11-13), whereas at the battle of Armageddon it is “all nations” allied with Antichrist against Jerusalem to destroy the Jewish people, who are in distress (Zechariah 12:3; 14:2). Such differences argue against this war being the same as or a part of that battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation.

### *The Chronological Context for the War*

My preference is to place this battle *before* the Tribulation,<sup>24</sup> during the present-day period when Israel is experiencing the first phase of physical restoration—a period to which this restoration language could apply (see Ezekiel 36:24; see also Isaiah 11:11).<sup>25</sup> There is nothing in the description of Israel in Ezekiel 38–39 that does not fit the reality of the modern State of Israel today. This time frame also resolves the problem of how Israel disposes of the captured weapons and the slain bodies of Gog and his allies (Ezekiel 39:9-16). According to Jewish law, the dead must be buried immediately because exposed corpses are a source of ritual contamination. However, because of the vast number of corpses this will take “seven months” (Ezekiel 39:12). Furthermore, the destruction of the weapons will take “seven years” (Ezekiel 39:9). If this battle were to take place at any point during the Tribulation the Jews would run out of time to complete this task, for they will be persecuted during the last half of the Tribulation and most will have fled to the wilderness (Revelation 12:6) or remained in Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:7-8; 13:1; 14:2). But if this battle occurs before the Tribulation begins, there would be ample time for this job.

The other question concerns the conditions described for Israel at this time as “living securely.” Whether the “security” Israel feels at this time is the result of a negotiated pseudopeace in which Israel imagines itself “at rest...liv[ing] securely” (Ezekiel 38:11) or because Israel truly is secure, we can be certain this

peace occurs at a time *before* Israel faces persecution *in her Land*, such as it will experience from the midpoint of the Tribulation until the end (Matthew 24:16-22; Revelation 12:6, 13-17). It's possible the peace here refers to peace through military strength, which the Hebrew term *betach* ("security") can imply. Whatever the case, what we see in Ezekiel 38-39 does fit Israel's present conditions.

It is also significant that the word "peace" does not appear in the context, since it is clear from the fact of the invasion that Israel does not have peace in the sense of a cessation of hostilities or absence of war. Israel's setting in this text is one of confidence, even though it is apparently surrounded by enemies (as the geographical locations of these invading nations reveal).<sup>26</sup> However, the outcome of this war results in at least a temporary peace, as the nations are forced to reckon with the divine protection uniquely afforded Israel, as well as the consequences for any nation that goes against her (Ezekiel 38:23; 39:7). By contrast, the Tribulation begins with Antichrist's diplomatic conquest of the nations (Revelation 6:1-3), which results in a pseudopeace for the first half of the Tribulation period. The last half of the Tribulation will be marked by a series of wars, which will end with the climactic advent of the Messiah as a divine warrior (Zechariah 14:3-4; Revelation 19:11-15).

## The Specifics

### *The Connection with the Temple*

Real and irreversible peace is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Millennial kingdom (Isaiah 2:4; 9:7; 11:6-9; Micah 5:4-5) and as such contrasts with the conditions in Ezekiel 38-39. But, in my opinion, it is just such a contrast that Ezekiel has in mind with his placement of this passage between the two Millennial Temple texts. In Ezekiel 37:25-28 he has described the "covenant of peace" and promised that it will be "an everlasting covenant" (verse 26). The symbol of God's promise will be His presence, which will be realized through the Millennial Temple (verses 26-27), which is also promised "forever" (verse 28). However, Israel had been promised restoration and a Temple before, but the former was not realized in full and the latter was eventually destroyed. What assurance is there that this promise will be different? The reason this unspoken concern needs to be addressed is because before Israel receives the Restoration Temple promised in Ezekiel 37, it will go through the Tribulation. In the first half of the Tribulation Israel will see the rebuilding of the Temple and probably experience a time of national revival and regathering of Jews from among the nations. If the Temple is rebuilt through the covenant made with the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27),

who will be a global Gentile ruler, Israel may indeed experience an unparalleled period of peace and international respect. Since these conditions would appear to fulfill the restoration expectations of the prophets, many Jews will undoubtedly be deceived into believing that the era of the Redemption has finally arrived. Yet, at the midpoint of the Tribulation the Temple will be desecrated and the Jewish people persecuted, ending this illusion of restoration.

Before Israel comes to this time of trouble in which all of God's promises could be called into question, rendering the Jewish remnant more susceptible to the worldwide delusion of the signs and wonders of the Antichrist and his false prophet (see Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Revelation 13:3,13-14), God will leave them a lesson of His power and purpose in the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39. As they go back to the context of this Scripture text they will see the assurance God had in placing this account between the promise of the Restoration Temple and the plan for its realization. They will see that though an invasion of Israel by superior powers was still to be suffered in the last days—after the promise of the Restoration and its Temple were given—(Ezekiel 37:26-28), God would yet intervene to fight for Israel (Ezekiel 38:18-22; 39:2-6). Thus this future threat would not prevent the Nation from experiencing the promised fulfillment described in Ezekiel 40-48.

In addition, if the seven years during which Israel will burn the weapons of these nations is the seven years of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 11:2), then this, along with the burial ground of Gog and the slain multitude<sup>27</sup> (Ezekiel 39:11-16), serves as a witness throughout the Tribulation that beyond this time of final Gentile judgment waits Israel's Restoration and the Lord's return to dwell with them and reverse the Antichrist's desecration of the Temple. And, if this battle took place under the first stage of Israel's restoration (return to the Land in unbelief), it would provide both a witness to the means by which the second stage (return to the Lord in belief) would be effected (divine intervention for Israel) and the goal of restoration (divine dwelling with Israel). This is, in fact, what Ezekiel 39:21-29 reveals as it pictures the promised Millennial fulfillment. In verse 21 the statement "I shall set My glory among the nations" may refer contextually backward to Ezekiel 37:26-28 and forward to Ezekiel 43:1-7 and the return of the divine presence to the Millennial Sanctuary.

### *Gog and Magog Today*

We can rightly identify the modern nations listed in Ezekiel 38:2-6 as nations hostile to Israel and supportive of the Islamic Arab agenda and of the

Palestinian plan in particular. This can be seen by a quick look at the modern-day nations that occupy the ancient locations mentioned in Ezekiel's prophecy. Today the Magog ruled by Gog (the ancient land of the Scythians) is comprised of the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kirghiza, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, and Gog's allies are Meshech and Tubal (territories in Turkey), Gomer (Germany), Togarmah (Turkey), Persia (Iran), Cush /Ethiopia (Sudan), and Put (Libya). Just as the modern Israeli State fits the description Ezekiel gave of the Israel that will experience this battle, so these modern countries fit the details of enemy peoples who can and have formed alliances and have economic incentives for invasion. If the Gog and Magog war was predicted for a time such as this, it accords well with present conditions as the balance of power has shifted to Europe (EEC), Russia has become economically dependent, and Islam has become the fastest-growing religion, dominating the Middle East (for example, six of the former Soviet republics to the north of Israel have become independent *Islamic* nations: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan). Russia could easily fulfill the role of Gog, for its current economic hardships and political instability have led Russia to forge military alliances with Islamic powers that continually call for Israel's destruction.<sup>28</sup> As *U.S. News & World Report* editor-in-chief Mortimer Zuckerman has observed:

Russia is an economic free fall that threatens the coherence of the central state and the ability of the government to control its arsenal of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. Any time now they might become black-market items for rogue buyers. . . . And if the state disintegrates altogether, we could face the apocalyptic scenario of ultranationalists or some other faction challenging the command and control of nuclear weapons spread over 39 different Russian districts. . . . Russia is a tragedy on the way to a catastrophe that could envelop us all.<sup>29</sup>

Israel is without a doubt one of the most highly developed<sup>30</sup> and westernized countries in the Middle East, and its technological achievements (Israel is the Silicon Valley of the Middle East) and natural resources (water, chemicals in the Dead Sea, deep but vast untapped oil reserves) could meet the requirements of the "great spoil" Ezekiel 38:13 says these nations seek to steal. Today Turkey (Togarmah) has a military alliance with Israel and its million-man army is one of the factors keeping both Egypt and Syria (with whom it shares a border) at bay. However, even though Turkey is non-Arab and generally against militants, it is an Islamic country, and if it were called to an Islamic alliance at some future

time against Israel, it could be expected to join. Middle-East analysts have already predicted political instability as a result of the August 1999 earthquake in the Istanbul region of Turkey, which may lead to such an alliance. At the present time an axis is believed to have been formed between Russia and the Middle Eastern countries of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan, and Ethiopia with the goal of overthrowing the United States and its Zionist ally in the Middle East, Israel. Russia has already forged alliances with some of these countries and others: Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Libya, and Turkey. Moreover, the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tadjhikistan, Uzbekistan, and Krygzstan have signed a military assistance pact with the Russian Federation. These countries are all Islamic and have been confirmed to possess nuclear weapons. Iran and Iraq have been arming themselves with weapons supplied by Russia and China, and Iraq continues to issue threats to the West and Israel. This has led Palestinian Authority “President” Yasser Arafat to believe that “a Palestinian victory over Israel and Iraqi victory over the United States are mutually dependent.”<sup>31</sup> Whether or not the present alliances will have a role in the Gog and Magog war, we don’t know, but something like them surely will be. It is interesting to hear how Orthodox Jews—and especially those in the Temple Movement, understand Ezekiel’s prophecy.

### *Jewish Expectations of Gog and Magog*

Orthodox Jews see the “Wars of Gog” as a series of three assaults of Gog against Jerusalem, as recorded in the prophecies of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah.<sup>32</sup> The details of this interpretation are found in Jewish commentaries that discuss the afflictions Israel will undergo before the beginning of the Messianic era (known as the birthpangs of Messiah). Concerning this future time when war would be rampant, the Jewish Midrash states, “If you see kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah” (*Genesis Rabbah*). The expression “kingdoms rising against each other” reminds us of Jesus’ statement in the Olivet Discourse “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:7; see also Mark 13:8; Luke 21:10). This is an idiom for “world war,” and in the time of the Tribulation will be climaxed by the advent of the Messiah: “I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war” (Revelation 19:11).

According to Jewish interpretation, Targum Jonathan on the Prophets foretells that at the beginning of the Messianic era Israel will be punished for their

transgressions by the oppressions of Armelus, followed by the wars of Gog. The result of these sufferings will be that Israel and the nations turn to God with perfect faith. Armelus in Jewish interpretation (see *Yoma* 10), is “the future wicked king of Daniel’s fourth kingdom (Rome)” [whose] “Wicked Empire will have expanded its dominion over the entire world” . . . “during the era before the coming of the Messiah.”<sup>33</sup> While this would imply that the war comes at the end of what Christians refer to as the Tribulation, Rashi seems to have viewed the time as earlier. Basing his interpretation on Ezekiel 38:8, he says: “After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste. . . .” He also said, “Only shortly before Gog’s coming have the People of Yisrael returned to their land; until then it has ‘been continual waste’ and desolate.”

Rashi apparently understood that when the Jews returned to Israel from the Diaspora and replanted and rebuilt the Land (established a State), the war of Gog and Magog would soon follow. I have in my library a small book published in Hebrew in Tel-Aviv in 1973 entitled *The War of Russia and Israel: Gog and Magog*. In this book the Israeli author holds that this climactic conflict is imminent in Israel, and that the events of the Yom Kippur War set the process in motion. He teaches that a coming invasion of Israel will result in God’s intervention and the final redemption of Israel. Following somewhat this same interpretation, Rabbi Rafael Eisenberg summarizes the corpus of Jewish tradition on this matter:

Our prophets and sages have foretold that prior to the arrival of the Messiah, the Wicked Empire, Rome (which as we have already shown, is modern Russia), will regain its former greatness. In those pre-Messianic days, Russia will expand over and conquer the entire globe, and her ruler, “who will be as wicked as Haman,” will arise and lead the nations of the world to Jerusalem in order to exterminate Yisrael. . . . At that time, the overt miracles which will bring about the great retribution against Yisrael’s enemies and the final destruction of the Wicked Empire, will convince the world that God, alone, is the Judge and Ruler of the Universe.<sup>34</sup>

Orthodox Jews in the Temple movement in Israel generally agree that the war of Gog and Magog is to be the next of Israel’s wars, and believe that it will be fought over possession of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. For example,

Gershon Salomon, the leader of Israel's Temple Mount Faithful, writes concerning the imminency of this war:

I consider it my duty to warn my people and all the friends of Israel that a terrible war, the most terrible war of all the seven wars of Israel, is going to be perpetrated in this land against the people of Israel as a direct result of these terrible agreements and the giving away to the enemies of G-d our Holy Temple Mount and the most holy and important biblical areas of Israel...<sup>35</sup>

The prophet Ezekiel prophesied that in the end times of the redemption of the people of Israel, a terrible war will break out in the land when Gog and Magog with many other nations come to the land of Israel and try to destroy the people and State of Israel (Ezekiel 38–39). G-d said that He would bring this enemy from the far north against the mountains of Israel. The prophet Zechariah also spoke about the same event (Zechariah 12–14)... We have tried to understand how G-d would accomplish His end-time plans for Israel. The questions that arose were: Why, from the first moment of the redemptional process of Israel, would Israel be attacked again and again? Why, close to the end of this process, would the Gog and Magog war break out? Why could this wonderful process not be accomplished without wars? Why, as in biblical times, is Israel again surrounded by so many enemies who want to destroy her? Why does the small David, armed only with a small rock, again need to fight against giants? As we come closer and closer to the accomplishment of the redemption process we can begin to give answers to these questions. We only need to read Ezekiel and Zechariah carefully to gain understanding. The G-d of Israel will use this means to finally defeat all those many enemies of Israel who have continually tried to destroy the State and people of Israel and push them into the Mediterranean. Now...they prepare to destroy Israel with terrible weapons. Iran, with Russian help, has started to build an atomic capability with long-range missiles directed at Israel. Syria, Egypt and the other Arab countries are also preparing for an atomic, chemical and biological war against Israel... Russia is doing all it can to renew her political and military ties with the Arab countries around Israel. After helping Iran to become a nuclear power and also helping Iraq to develop her non-conventional arsenal, Russia is now doing the same with Syria. Are Russia and her Arab allies the enemy of the North that the prophets spoke about?! The Palestinian Authority has also started to prepare for a war against Israel. They have brought in weapons from

every direction to arm their forces. These are the forces that the former government of Israel, in a terrible and sinful mistake, helped to create. . . . The coming war will be the final war undertaken against Israel by her enemies. In it G-d will terribly defeat them. The prophet Zechariah describes the way G-d will defeat and punish them and it makes us think of a nuclear, chemical and biological war (Zechariah 14:13). After this war the new (G-dly) era will start. The Third Temple will be the House of G-d, the only building on the Temple Mount. Mashiach ben David will be the King of Israel and all mankind. We can see how the black clouds are coming closer and closer to Jerusalem and to the mountains of Israel. The march of Gog and Magog and all their allies has started in the direction of Jerusalem and Israel. . . . The time of judgment is close at hand. Israel will survive this war and become the nation which G-d and all the prophets dreamed about.<sup>36</sup>

Although Salomon (as other Jewish interpreters) in my opinion incorrectly equates the war of Gog and Magog with the end-time battle for Jerusalem in Zechariah 12–14, he correctly understands that if this war results in the miraculous deliverance of the Israeli Nation, it will have far-reaching consequences for its status among the nations. Rabbi Rafael Eisenberg explains this well when he writes, “The miraculous defeat of Gog (Russia) and her satellites in Jerusalem will reveal that it is God who guides the universe, punishing the wicked, and upholding His promise to His servant Yisrael.”<sup>37</sup> While it is not clear that the war of Gog and Magog takes place in Jerusalem, I propose that it might be the catalyst that brings about the Jerusalem covenant of Daniel 9:27, which seems to result in the rebuilding of the Third Temple.

### *A Possible Scenario with Gog and Magog*

If the next war is that of Gog and Magog, it may be the war that cripples Islamic control and begins the process of re-ordering the world powers. Daniel 7:23-24 indicates that a one-world government will first arise, which will then be divided into ten governments. If the war of Gog and Magog occurs first and puts down the Islamic power base, it is possible that a new world alliance—on the order of a United Nations, NATO-like organization—could assume control for global stability. However, because this occurs before the Antichrist’s rise to power, there will be no central figure to sustain this government, and it will be re-organized into the ten allied nations. This ten-nation confederacy will continue up to the middle of the Tribulation, and then the Antichrist will declare war on its ten kings (Daniel 11:40-45), killing three of them (Daniel 7:24; Revelation

17:12-13). However, during the time of this re-organization (before the Tribulation begins), there may be a time of relative peace. This will be short-lived, as the Antichrist's rise to power comes with war on a global scale (Revelation 6:2).

## The Antichrist and Israel

Sometime at the beginning of this period of war the Antichrist will seek to negotiate directly with Israel for normalized relations. In light of the situation created by Israel's stunning victory over the Russian-Arab alliance, the Jewish Nation will be perceived as a force to be reckoned with by all nations. This would mean that the Antichrist's global policy will have to include concessions to Israel. The Islamic powers will not protest, for having suffered a decisive loss at "the hand of God," they will wisely capitulate based on Israel's perceived (and the Antichrist's apparent) superior strength. The Antichrist's purpose in making a treaty (Daniel 9:27) with Israel may simply be part of a deceptive scheme to politically position himself in order to later carry out the Satanic goal of Jewish genocide (Revelation 12:13). However, the motivation may also be good strategic planning, since Israel will have gained a position of worldwide respect as a result of the "miraculous" victory in the Gog and Magog war. Any move the Antichrist makes to consolidate his leadership would be improved with Israel in his pocket. Therefore, like a mobster running a protection racket, the Antichrist may offer by this covenant a special guarantee of security that would enable Israel to act with an independence never previously known.

From the Israeli side, without the threat of Islam (the secular political objection to Israel asserting itself on the Temple Mount), and with the war's victory as evidence to Israel's leaders of the opening of a new spiritual era (which would resolve the religious rabbinic objection to a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount), nothing would prevent Orthodox Jews from successfully arguing for a rebuilding of the Temple. If the Antichrist's covenant confirms that the nations also support the rebuilding effort, most Jews in the Temple movement would likely believe that they were seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Messianic age.

The Jewish basis for this belief are prophecies made in the Oral-Torah (the Talmud), one of which says, "Jews will not have to fight a war against the non-Jewish custodians [of the Temple Mount] in order to take possession of it from them."<sup>38</sup> It is also stated in these sources that the Arabs will seek to destroy the Jews and that all the nations of the world will help Israel establish its state and

rebuild its Temple. Many believe that today's generation will see the fulfillment of these prophecies "because this century has been the only time that Arab countries have ever tried to destroy all the Jews of Israel,"<sup>39</sup> and the State of Israel came into being through the support of the United Nations. In accord with these expectations, the Gog and Magog war will be the first war that Israel wins without a fight, leading the nations to acknowledge the power of Israel's God (Ezekiel 38:16,23; 39:7). It will also be the first time in modern history that Israel will be able come away from the international negotiating table *getting* something instead of *giving up* something! And what Israel will appear to receive may be the freedom to build the Third Temple. Even if only a minority of Jews come to view the Temple as a place of worship, under these circumstances secular Israelis would probably not object to the rebuilding effort and might accept it as a national monument to Israel's sovereignty as well as a fitting religious tribute to God for the victory over Gog and Magog..

This rebuilding of the Temple by the Israelis most likely will be tolerated by the world's major powers because they will be preoccupied with the Antichrist's rise to power and their own problems stemming from various worsening conditions around the globe (Revelation 6:2-4). By contrast, during this period of three-and-one-half years (the first half of the Tribulation) Israel may appear as an "oasis of peace" in a world where material and environmental conditions will be rapidly deteriorating (Revelation 6:1-17). Since the Antichrist's covenant will protect Israel from Gentile incursion, it may be that Israel, or at least Jerusalem, will experience only a marginal Gentile presence. This seems to be implied in John's measurements of the Temple site in Revelation 11:1-2, where he is told to leave out the Gentile court. The exclusion of the Gentile court indicates that it was being reserved, along with the city of Jerusalem, for later Gentile invasion in the second half of the Tribulation, probably beginning with the Antichrist's desecration of the Temple (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

### *The Antichrist's First Assault on the Temple Mount*

Another battle that will take place on the Temple Mount will be for possession of the Temple at the midpoint of the Tribulation (this battle will be covered in more detail in the next chapter). As we already know based on Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4, the Antichrist will drive out the Temple priesthood, stop the sacrificial system, and seat himself in the Holy of Holies. We can be certain that when this takes place, some kind of a battle will be waged. This battle is implied in Revelation 11:2, which depicts the troops of

the Antichrist “treading underfoot” the city of Jerusalem, which, based on the reference to the Temple in verse 1, must include the Temple Mount. Another passage that mentions this invasion by the Antichrist is Daniel 11:44-45, where in verse 45 we read, “He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas at the beautiful Holy Mountain.” This tells us the Antichrist will set up his military and political base in Jerusalem (between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea), and particularly on the Temple Mount (“beautiful Holy Mountain”). It seems to me that this act will occur suddenly and without warning. The Antichrist may come to Jerusalem on a pretext—perhaps an inspection tour—but, of course, with his usual military entourage. Then, one day while the priests are carrying out their daily tasks, a unit of the Antichrist’s soldiers will invade the Temple Mount, expel the priests and Levites, and secure the area.

While everyone is in a state of confusion and protesting the action to the government, the Antichrist will parade onto the Temple Mount and into the Temple’s Holy of Holies. In an act of desecration that historically identifies him as a conqueror, but that he knows will disrupt the further functioning of the Temple, he will go beyond all previous conquerors and seat himself in the place of deity (2 Thessalonians 2:4). He may then indicate his continued presence there by installing a statue of himself (Revelation 13:14-15). Jewish believers, who will have been forewarned of the significance of this act by the New Testament words of Jesus and Paul (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:4), will attempt to flee from the city and take refuge in the wilderness (Revelation 12:14). Thus, the “Abomination of Desolation” (the act of rendering the Temple ritually defiled)—and the priests’ inability to remove the idol and reconsecrate the site—will end the sacrificial system and inaugurate the final period of Gentile domination over Jerusalem, which will be marked through the last half of the Tribulation by widespread persecution of Jews and battles for control of the city (Zechariah 12-14).

### *The Antichrist’s Final Assault on the Temple Mount*

The end-time battle for the Temple Mount that occurs in the last half of the Tribulation—in two separate invasions—is recorded in Zechariah 12-14. In harmonizing the events here with those in the book of Revelation, it appears that as the Antichrist moves his troops to join his international allies in the Valley of Jezreel (Revelation 16:14-16) that his enemies will launch an attack against his commercial center, Babylon, and destroy it (Revelation 18:1-24). Rather than move against these enemies who will have already finished their

work, the Antichrist will move against Jerusalem with all of his allied nations (Zechariah 12:1-3; 14:1). Perhaps his attack will be motivated by a Satanic hatred of the Jews as the people of God, or because Jewish forces will have re-taken control of the city, possibly with the help of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:4-9). Because the Antichrist set up his base on the Temple Mount (Daniel 11:45a), his attack will include the attempted recovery of this site. Because God will strengthen the Jewish fighters (Zechariah 12:5-9; see also Micah 4:11-5:1), the Antichrist will be able to recapture only half of the city (Zechariah 14:2). At this point Jerusalem will again be a divided city, and although the text does not explicitly state which section of the city this part of the Jewish remnant (the “one third” of Zechariah 13:8b = “all Israel” of Romans 11:26)<sup>40</sup> will control, it is possible to deduce this from the events associated with the final phase of this battle. I suggest it will be eastern Jerusalem and the Temple Mount for several reasons: 1) because of the presence of the Temple, this area might receive the greatest protection and may be the last to fall; 2) the fact that the part of the Mount of Olives specified in the text is that “which is in front of Jerusalem on the east” directly across from the Temple Mount; and 3) the Mount of Olives will split in two, with each side of the mountain moving north and south, creating an east-west escape route for the Jews (Zechariah 14:5). This east-west escape route would go directly from the eastern side of the city (and probably directly from the Temple Mount) across the Kidron Valley and through the Mount of Olives toward the Judean desert. Since the most direct access to this route would be from the eastern part of the city, it seems reasonable that this is the area that would be in the possession of the Jewish remnant.

The language of the original Hebrew text in Zechariah also implies that it may be the Temple Mount area where the Jewish remnant will be rescued. In Zechariah 14:3 we read that the Lord will “fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.” The Hebrew verbal form used here (Niphal infinitive construct) suggests a customary or traditional way of fighting as “on a day of battle”—that is, in the same way God fought for His people in the past.<sup>41</sup> There were many battles in the Old Testament in which God directly and miraculously intervened, but a Hebrew reader of the next verse would know exactly which one was meant here. In this verse we read that when the Lord’s feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, it will “split” (Hebrew, *baqa*). This is the same verb used of the first—and most famous—of Israel’s deliverances: when God “split” the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16,21; see also Nehemiah 9:11; Psalm 78:13; Isaiah 65:12). The use of this exodus motif fits

the situation precisely. Just as the children of Israel were surrounded by the armies of Pharaoh (a type of Antichrist), so here they are surrounded by the armies of the Antichrist (the antitype). Just as the situation in Exodus seemed hopeless, so will this future scene of a small remnant of Jews enveloped by “all the nations” in the Kidron valley seem hopeless. Just as God fought the Egyptians and then led the ancient Israelis safely through the protective valley of the waters He created, so the Messiah will lead His remnant to safety through the valley of rock He will create (Zechariah 14:4-5). This guidance imagery implies that the Messiah may rescue His people on the Temple Mount and escort them Himself from Jerusalem across the Kidron to the Mount of Olives. Just as God blocked the Egyptians from reaching the Israelites and destroyed them in the Red Sea, so will it be that when the Lord’s feet touch the mountain, it will both open a way of escape for Israel (see also Joshua 3:6-17), and block the Antichrist’s armies from escaping to the north or the south, leaving them alone in the Kidron Valley (also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat—“God will judge”) to be destroyed (Zechariah 14:12-15; see also Isaiah 14:3-21; Joel 3:12-13; Revelation 19:11-16). All this will occur when the Lord comes with His armies to bring judgment not only in Jerusalem, but throughout the world (Zechariah 14:5). Again, the language used of this judgment (Zechariah 14:6; see also Joel 2:28-32) parallels that of the divine warrior at the exodus and elsewhere (Isaiah 13:6-16; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:8; 2 Peter 3:16), which Zechariah has previously described (Zechariah 9:1-7; 10:4-5; 12:1-9).<sup>42</sup>

This event will fulfill Jesus’ promise that the Temple would be desolate and the leaders of Jerusalem would not see Him until they said, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matthew 23:39). When Israel beholds the Messiah coming in glory to rescue them, they will be moved to repentance in fulfillment of this prophecy (Zechariah 12:8-14; Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 1:7). Upon the conclusion of this battle for the Temple Mount, the Lord will enthrone Himself in a new Temple (Zechariah 14:9,16; see also Jeremiah 3:17) on a greatly restored Temple Mount (Zechariah 14:10; see also Isaiah 2:2-3). From there He will rule the world throughout the Millennial age (Isaiah 24:23). Yet there is still one more battle for the Temple Mount that awaits the culmination of history.

### *The Final Battle for the Temple Mount*

In Revelation 20:7-9 a more universal “Gog and Magog” appears as a symbol of the collective enemies of the Lord. It is obvious that a different “Gog and

Magog” are depicted, for in Ezekiel’s text the allied army was from neighboring countries, whereas here it is comprised of those from “the four corners of the earth” (Revelation 20:8). Also, in Ezekiel’s text the attack was launched from and fought in the north, but here the attack is in the south (Jerusalem). The setting for the war that follows is at the conclusion of Israel’s time of restoration. For 1,000 years the Millennial Temple will have been recognized as the Lord’s throne, and the world will have made annual pilgrimages to it in worship of the Messiah who reigns within. Peace will have prevailed on the earth, and Israel and the nations will have forgotten both the art and the horror of war (Isaiah 2:4). Satan will have been bound throughout this period, but God will release him for a short time of deception before the close of earth’s history. Knowing that the source of war is the evil still resident within mankind (James 4:1-3), Satan will gather to himself all of those who have conformed outwardly to the New Covenant, but not inwardly. These people will be the children born to the regenerate races that first populated the Millennial kingdom after the judgment of Jews (Ezekiel 20:33-38) and Gentiles (Matthew 25:31-46) in the Kidron Valley (Valley of Jehoshaphat—Ezekiel 34:17-24; Joel 3:2,12).

It may be that God’s purpose in this is to reveal that even in the most perfect environment—with a clearly visible manifestation of the Lord’s own presence and 1,000 years of instruction in God’s Word—the heart of unregenerate man will remain unchanged. Whatever the reason, Satan, in the guise of Gog, will lead his worldwide allied army against the Millennial Temple. The text identifies this place as “the broad plain of the earth...the camp of the saints and the beloved city” (Revelation 20:9). According to Zechariah 14:10, this broad plain was the result of the divine transformation of the topography around Jerusalem “from Geba [10 miles north of the city] to Rimmon [35 miles southwest of the city].” Isaiah 2:2 implies that this land was flattened in order to elevate and distinguish the Temple Mount in its center (see Ezekiel 48:21). Ezekiel 48:10-22 describes the “camp of the saints” as the divisions of land around the Sanctuary where the priests, Levites, and workers of the holy city will dwell. It is clear from these descriptions, then, that this attack will be upon the Temple Mount—the place of the Messiah and those who serve Him.

Just as Ezekiel’s war of Gog and Magog revealed to the whole world God’s protection of Israel before the great deception of the Tribulation, so its example will serve in the Millennium’s final hour to prove this point to a generation equally deceived and in need of defense. And just as the defeat of the enemies in Ezekiel’s Gog and Magog battle bore evidence of divine intervention, so here

those deceived are dispatched by “fire [that] came down from heaven” (Revelation 20:9). In like manner, the devil, the deceiver, is also judged by fire, joining the Antichrist and false prophet for eternity (Revelation 20:10). Therefore, even at the end of the world, the Temple remains intact and the Lord’s presence remains with Israel, fulfilling the promise made in Ezekiel 37:28 that both would be in Israel’s midst “forever.”

## The War Is Coming!

The Jewish Midrash states, “If the nations of the world had only known how much they needed the Temple, they would have surrounded it with armed forces to protect it” (*Numbers Rabbah* 1:3). Yet the nations of the world have not known this and will not know until they are brought under Messiah’s reign in the Millennial kingdom (Zechariah 14:16). Until that time, they will increasingly view the Temple Mount as a source of international controversy and conflict, and in the end times they will launch attacks against it. In fact, in 1998 some 5,000 Hamas supporters gathered in Gaza’s Shati refugee camp to mark the eleventh anniversary of the founding of the Islamic opposition movement. The Hamas’ spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, delivered the main address, promising that Israel would survive no more than three more decades: “It is our people’s right to oppose this and wage *Jihad* until our rights are restored and we establish our state.”<sup>43</sup> In a similar way, Palestinian leader Jeris Soudah has predicted that Israeli intransigence over East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount has made war inevitable:

When it comes to that sensitive point—Jerusalem, I think there will be another war. The Islamic and the Arab world just cannot compromise concerning Jerusalem. They just can’t....<sup>44</sup>

United Nations Resolution 242, which states that Israel has to pull out from the occupied territories, from the West Bank and Jerusalem, has to be taken into consideration. If this will not happen or if they will not at least negotiate about Jerusalem, another Civil War, another *Intafada*, will start.... This time the entire Arab world will participate in that *Intafada*. It will be Arabs, Muslims, Christians—a huge *Intafada* that Israel cannot resist. Arabs are not going to give up the holy place that easily. Palestinians and the whole Arab world are ready to go for a new civil war.... But talking about the Temple, Israelis say that it has to be built on the site of the Dome of the Rock. The Muslim community will not allow anything to happen to the Dome [of the Rock]....<sup>45</sup>

No one in the Arab world is waiting to see what will happen to the Dome of the Rock. They are preparing now to prevent Israel from ever changing the status quo on the Temple Mount by changing Israel's status quo in the Middle East. This can be seen in the inflammatory words of a sermon delivered in the Al-Aqsa Mosque on September 10, 1999:

Oh Muslims, do you want glory? Do you want to remove the corruption around you? Do you want victory? Do you want to be able to carry Islam to the whole world? Do you want to please Allah?... The Islamic state that the Prophet (may peace be upon him) established was able to carry Islam to the world by *Jihad*. Allah says, "And fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah together and everywhere" (al-Anfal 8:39)... Islam says about the Jews that they are enemies. Islam says about the Jews: "Fight them," "Kill them," "Drive them out." Islam says about the Jews that they are infidels.... I swear by Allah that the Islamic state is close and it will overthrow their thrones [and] it will overthrow this alleged peace process.... And we say to the rulers in the Muslim world, to the Jews, and to the rulers of the whole world, "We are coming to the promise of Allah about you!"<sup>46</sup>

The evidence to support such a contention is published regularly by Jewish organizations such as Flame (Facts and Logic About the Middle East). Their reports of the current Islamic agenda reveals that the coming war for the Holy Land closely parallels the conditions described for the world and the Middle East in the last days:

The Arab countries (and Iran) are frantically arming themselves with the most dreadful weapons of mass destruction. As the world knows, it is for one purpose only—their only political objective and their relentless obsession—namely, the destruction of Israel. Two or three nuclear weapons would wipe Israel off the map once and for all. Retaliation by Israel, the destruction of major Arab cities, and millions of Arab casualties would not deter the Muslim fanatics from pursuing their goal. For them, it would be a small price to pay. With Israel dismembered, with five or six Arab states poised to attack with weapons of mass destruction, with 40,000 Palestinian "police" armed to the teeth in Israel's midst, can anybody really doubt that a second Holocaust, even more terrible than the first one, is just about upon us?<sup>47</sup>

Is it really as bad as this? Are we on the brink of unparalleled days of trouble for the Jewish people in the Middle East? Recently I attended a secular

conference in Washington, D.C., to learn inside information about the problems facing the Middle East. The speakers were some of the world's leading political analysts. One of the men who lectured that day was Israeli Yohanan Ramati, who serves as Director of the Jerusalem Institute for Western Defense. I was so impressed by Ramati's comments that I decided to interview him myself a few months later in Jerusalem. Ramati, who served in the British Army during the Second World War and has witnessed from his home in Jerusalem every war fought in Israel over the past half century, and who has known personally Israel's past and present leaders, is an expert on the Muslim world. If anyone could accurately perceive the situation in the Middle East, I felt he would be the one. Ramati not only confirmed the worst for Israel, but warned that the western world shares the same threat:

Well, if I'm allowed to hope, I want to hope that we have at least as many years in front of us as we have behind us. [But] I'm not sure of that at all. If I'm allowed to hope, let me hope that western civilization will survive another 30 or 40 years, which at the moment I rather doubt. That is so much for hopes. I'm not giving any scenarios. All the scenarios I can see are too pessimistic to give. One thing I promise you: There is not going to be any peace here [in Israel]. There may be peace treaties [but] there will be not peace because the Arabs do not want peace with us. They are using the peace treaties as a means to create a situation in which they can wage a victorious war. . . . I don't know whether the Temple movement in Israel has any future. I can visualize an imaginary situation in a war where things could happen, but if that is to be we have to be in a situation to win a war. . . . [However,] everyone concerned, not only the Arabs, but [also] the [international] powers seem to be determined to put us in a situation in which we cannot win a war. Obviously this cannot have a good end.<sup>48</sup>

Such a statement may seem extreme to some, but according to the prophecies of the days to come and the wars to come, it is not only realistic, but reserved by comparison. In the next chapter we will take a closer look at those coming days of trouble for the Temple Mount, and the Tribulation that will come upon all of the Jewish people and the world. It will not be an easy journey but it is a necessary one, for we will not see the light of dawn until we've passed through the darkness that precedes it. So let us take a step into the darkness of the Last Days Temple that we may better see the light.

## PART IV



# The Program for the Last Days Temple

“For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,” declares the LORD, “so your offspring and your name endure....All mankind will come and bow down before Me,” says the LORD.

—*Isaiah 66:22-23*

I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them.”...And I saw no Temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its Temple.

—*Revelation 21:2-3,22*



# Trouble in the Temple



## The Temple in the Tribulation

*I find that Christians have almost a morbid view of the Temple. Most of them view it from the standpoint that the Antichrist is coming, and personally, I find the Antichrist to be repulsive. I find it repulsive that you believe he will kill so many people, especially Jews. . . this coming is something I find very difficult to accept.<sup>1</sup>*

—RABBI CHAIM RICHMAN

**T**oday the headline news from Jerusalem frequently includes accounts of trouble on the Temple Mount. At a time and a place where rival religions vie for control of sacred space, such is the inevitable heritage. As today, every past age has had its own set of circumstances affecting the outcome of events within it.

The First Temple was built by an Israelite king who lived at a time when his culture was surrounded by idolatry and forced to make political compromises with it. And with every idolatrous high place he constructed and every offering he burned to foreign gods (1 Kings 11:7-8), he sowed the seeds of the Temple's destruction.

The Second Temple was built at a time when most of Israel was captive and those left in the Land were still subject to foreign domination. In this era, the attempt to rebel and regain lost freedom doomed the Temple to invasion and destruction (see Daniel 8:9-13; John 11:48; Luke 19:43-44).

The Third Temple of the coming age will also follow the path of its predecessors. However, unlike any previous age, this one will be a time unparalleled in both idolatry and Gentile domination (Matthew 24:21-24). Built in such a time, there is certain to be trouble *for* the Temple, but surpassing this, the Bible predicts, also trouble *in* the Temple. This trouble will be the Antichrist's usurpation of the place of God within the Holy of Holies, bringing about the Temple's desecration and the outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth. This teaching is often misunderstood by Christians, which may result in an even greater misunderstanding of Christians among Jews in the Temple movement (for example, see Rabbi Richman's statement on page 475). In order to better grasp what the Old and New Testament texts actually say concerning this pivotal event in the Temple's future, let us consider the nature and role of the Antichrist in relation to the Temple, examine in detail the biblical accounts of his act (known as the "Abomination of Desolation"), and then discuss the legitimacy of the Tribulation Temple as a holy Temple and a place of worship.

## The Antichrist and the Temple

During the period of the Second Temple a host of actual and would-be desecrators of the Temple marched into Jerusalem and onto the stage of history. The Syrian-Greek ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes erected an "abomination" in the area of the Temple near the Altar of Sacrifice; the Greek world-conqueror Alexander the Great attempted to approach the Temple, and the Roman emperor Pompey actually entered the Holy of Holies. The Roman emperor

Gaius Caligula attempted to place Roman images in the court of the Temple, while the Roman emperor Vespasian and his general son Titus succeeded in destroying the Temple itself. All of these desecrators were types of the greater antitype to come. The designation “Antichrist,” appearing only in the epistles of John (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7), is made up of the Greek words *anti* (“against, in place of”) and *christos* (“Christ,” “Messiah”), and indicates any agent of the evil one (Satan) who acts contrary to or seeks to usurp the place of God’s Anointed who is destined to rule the world (Psalm 2:2, 6-8; 110:1-2; Isaiah 9:6-7, et. al.).<sup>2</sup> The figure identified with “the prince who is to come” (Daniel 9:26), who will make a covenant with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (see chapter 11) may be understood as the Antichrist and connects him with the activity of rebuilding and desecrating the Tribulation Temple. Daniel also presents other portraits of the Antichrist as an insolent, despicable, self-willed king (Daniel 8:23; 11:21, 36-45) also known as the “little horn” (Daniel 7:8, 24-27). In addition, Jesus’ reference to the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14), and Paul’s reference to the “man of sin,” “lawlessness,” and “son of destruction” who will defile the Temple (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), further support the identification of this “prince” with the Antichrist.<sup>3</sup>

Many have wondered how the Antichrist will be able to make a covenant with the Jewish leadership that will result in the rebuilding of the Temple. Some have proposed that the Antichrist will be Jewish and will be accepted by the Jews as the Messiah. What does Scripture tell us? The Old Testament predicts that the Messiah will build the Temple (Zechariah 6:12); therefore, many prophetic teachers believe that the Antichrist will seek to counterfeit this Messianic activity. Elwood McQuaid, Executive director of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, explains this position:

The building of [the Tribulation Temple] will be, I think, in the spirit of what Herod did on the Temple Mount. We call it Herod’s Temple [because] he refurbished that Temple; he embellished that Temple, [and] enlarged the Temple Mount. He was building something that was ostensibly for the Jewish people, but in actuality it was for himself. I think the Antichrist may participate in the building of the Temple for that very reason. . . . He is not really having that building constructed for the Jewish people and for Jewish worship, he is having it constructed for himself, because in the midpoint of the Tribulation period, he’s going to go to that Temple and raise the Abomination of Desolation and there declare himself divine.<sup>4</sup>

In line with this, other prophecy teachers, pointing to the worship of the Antichrist by the world (Revelation 13:4,16) think that he will head a world religion and that the Jewish religious leaders will have apostatized from Judaism and joined his ecumenical faith. However, if the Jews who have control of the Temple area at this future time have departed from the Jewish law, they would not care about rebuilding the Temple because the very purpose of rebuilding the Temple is to fulfill the Orthodox observance of Jewish law!

A number of prophetic teachers also believe that because the Antichrist will build the Temple he must be Jewish. The matter of the Antichrist's ethnic background and whether or not he will be accepted as the Messiah by his action in relation to the Temple is more complicated; however, it can be resolved by a careful study of his nationality.

## The Nationality of the Antichrist

Three basic arguments seek to establish the national or ethnic identity of the Antichrist. The first is the logical argument. It states that since the Jewish people claim that the definitive way the Messiah will be identified by the Jewish Nation is by his building of the Temple—that when the Antichrist makes possible the rebuilding of the Third (Tribulation) Temple, the Jewish people will accept him as the Messiah. Consequently, if the Antichrist is accepted as the Messiah, and the Messiah is Jewish, then the Antichrist must also be of Jewish origin. Would the Jewish people allow a non-Jew to be involved in rebuilding the Jewish Temple? A second argument is the lexical argument, a deduction drawn from the biblical text. In this case evidence of Jewish origin is said to be found in the words of Daniel 11:37 in the King James version: “And he will not regard the God of his fathers. . . .” Since the context of this verse describes the character of the Antichrist, and since the term “God of the fathers” is used elsewhere to refer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the Jewish patriarchs or fathers), some Bible teachers believe this must indicate that the Antichrist is an apostate Jew.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the linguistic argument contends that because of the Greek preposition *anti* in Antichrist, the Antichrist is a counterfeit of Jesus Christ, and since He was Jewish, so must the Antichrist be Jewish in order to claim this identity.

These arguments, however, need to be scrutinized in the light of other scriptural and historical factors. One reason for this, aside from the desire for biblical accuracy, is that this view, to a Jewish person, is tantamount to the blood libel under which generations of Jews were persecuted by Christians. In fact, in the

spring of 1999 Dr. Jerry Falwell was accused of anti-Semitism by the American Jewish Committee in New York for holding this view. He quickly became the target of pundits on national television talk shows, political commentary programs, and was widely denounced in newspaper editorials throughout the country.<sup>6</sup>

Few realize the history behind this view, which caused a major uproar when Falwell openly espoused it. One early proponent of this view was the church father John Crysostom (fourth century A.D.). He said that the Antichrist would be a Jewish dictator from the cursed tribe of Dan<sup>7</sup> and called the Jews inveterate murderers, destroyers, men possessed by the devil. The blood libel is based on this idea and claims such as these: that the Jews had sold themselves to Satan, that they had grown horns as a result of their pact with the devil, and that they are the architects of a worldwide scheme to enslave the non-Jewish races.

Because of the terrible history of anti-Semitism by Christians, it is incumbent for Christians who believe that the Antichrist is Jewish to thoroughly study their view. However, as we examine the arguments given earlier, we will find that this view is, in fact, quite doubtful. Let's consider the arguments one by one.

### *The Logical Argument*

Does the person who rebuilds the Temple have to be considered the Messiah? Note that neither the Jewish governor Zerubbabel nor the Judean king Herod—both of whom rebuilt the Second Temple—were thought by the Jewish people to be the Messiah. They understood that interim Temples could be rebuilt at any time before the final restoration and the erection of the Temple by Messiah in Zechariah's vision. Furthermore, the Jews have, in the past, accepted Gentile rulers as messiahs. One example was the Gentile Persian emperor Cyrus, who made possible the rebuilding of the Second Temple through his edict and provision of materials and funds (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-11). A notable modern example was the French general Napoleon Bonaparte. In fact, the very character of a covenant, such as that in Daniel 9:27, implies that it is with a foreign (Gentile) power. Jewish-Christian author Zola Levitt explains:

It is an outsider who has to sign a legal covenant with the Jewish people, not one of their own. If for example, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or David Bar-Illan of Israel came up with some idea for a seven-year peace plan, the Jews could adopt it or not. They wouldn't need a special covenant drawn up between them and one of their own citizens.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Lexical Argument*

As for Daniel 11:37, the verse could easily be translated “the gods of his fathers,” which is how it’s rendered in more modern translations (for example, the New American Standard and New International versions). Even so, the focus of Daniel 11:36-39 is upon the Antichrist’s usurption of deity and blasphemous actions against the true God. The only “god” he reveres is military power. His attack on the Holy Land, which includes Israel (verse 41), makes it clear that he has no special kinship with the Jews, but intends to control and ultimately destroy this Nation. Such actions are not usually taken against one’s own people. IN this light, since the object of Satan’s attacks during the Tribulation are all ethnic Jews (Revelation 12:13), it would seem unlikely that the one Satan empowers would also be Jewish (Revelation 13:2). What’s more, the description in Daniel 11:36-39 parallels the description given of a series of historical Gentiles who have persecuted the Jewish people (Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus iv Epiphanes, Titus, Hadrian, and other Roman, Muslim, and European rulers, such as Adolph Hitler, down through the centuries.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Linguistic Argument*

There is nothing in the use of the word *anti* in *Antichrist* that linguistically requires the Antichrist to be “a counterfeit Christ.” The word *anti* is a preposition that can have the possible meanings of 1) equivalence—one object set over against another as its equivalent (Matthew 5:38; 1 Corinthians 11:15); 2) exchange—one object opposing or distinct from another, or one object given or taken in return for the other (John 1:16; Romans 12:17); and 3) substitution—one object given or taken instead of the other (Matthew 2:2; Luke 11:11).<sup>10</sup> While the idea of *replacement* is denoted by these possible meanings, the idea of *counterfeit* is not. It must be derived from the context. But does any context indicate that the purpose or program of the Antichrist is to counterfeit Christ? It is stated that their will be “false christs” (Matthew 24:23-24), but this does not mean that the Antichrist will be one of these. His role seems to surpass these in both degree of deception and designated destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12). Rather, the very spirit of the Antichrist is that he rejects and opposes Christ as an adversary (1 John 4:3; Revelation 17:14). It is not that the Antichrist seeks to copy and reflect Christ, but to conquer and replace Him. In addition, passages such as Revelation 19:19 and Daniel 11:36-39 affirm that the Antichrist will war *against* both Christ *and* the Jewish people. This would be a strange incongruity if he were a Jew seeking to counterfeit the Jewish Messiah.

Perhaps one of the most significant arguments against this view is the fact that the Antichrist's rule takes place during the period of time known as the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) indicates that this one who is the final ruler of this period and epitomizes domination over Israel will be a Gentile. It would be contrary to the prophetic sequence revealed in Daniel to have a Jew rise to the status of a world ruler before the appointed time for the Jewish kingdom (Daniel 2:32-45; Romans 11:25). Furthermore, the Antichrist appears as the final ruler of this "times of the Gentiles." "If this is so," asks Arnold Fructenbaum, "how can a Jew be the last ruler at a time when only Gentiles can have the pre-eminence? To say the Antichrist is to be a Jew would contradict the very nature of the time of the Gentiles."<sup>11</sup>

We also need to remember that the Antichrist will lead a European alliance of Gentile nations (Daniel 7:8-24). In Daniel 2 and 7, all of the Gentile rulers mentioned come from within the boundaries of their empires. Would not the Antichrist, whose roots appear in the Roman empire (Daniel 2:40; 7:23-26; especially 9:26), also be circumscribed by his empire's ethnic Gentile boundaries? Moreover, the self-willed king and his actions, as described in Daniel 11:36-45, have remarkable similarities with the final remnant of the last Gentile kingdom of Daniel 2:42-45 and the fourth beast with its little horn in Daniel 7:8,19-27. These figures attack the God of Israel, the Jewish people, and the saints, and are interpreted as having an identity with the Roman empire. This fits Gentile action and origin better than Jewish. The same time period also seems to be described in Revelation 6-19, and the desecration of the Temple, described in Daniel 9:27, has parallel passages in Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, it would be out of character for a Jew to lead the nations against his own people when the Tribulation is, by nature, a time of Jewish distress (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1). This period is distinguished by the Gentile nations' persecution of the Jewish Nation (especially Jewish believers, Daniel 7:25; Matthew 24:9; Luke 21:12,17), even though there will clearly be Jewish defection (Matthew 24:10; Luke 21:16) and Jewish false prophets (Matthew 24:11,23-24; Revelation 13:11-17). In addition, in Revelation 13:1,11, two different beasts are described as arising from the "sea" and the "earth." The "sea" is a literary image that often indicates the "Gentile nations" (Daniel 7:2,3). This would mean that its opposite term here, "earth," would refer to "the Jews. There is support for this in that the Greek word can be used as a technical expression for the

Land of Israel.” If this is so, then the first beast, which is from the sea, the Antichrist, is Gentile. And the second beast, the false prophet, is Jewish.

Finally, even if the Antichrist does play a key role in rebuilding the Temple, it is not necessary that he be considered the Messiah because in Orthodox Jewish thinking, the obligation to rebuild the Temple rests on the Jewish *people*, not the Messiah. The Jerusalem Talmud, along with other authoritative Jewish sources, holds that the Temple can be rebuilt before the coming of the Messiah. Therefore, while the Antichrist’s association with the rebuilding of the Temple could be a means of identifying him as the Messiah, it need not be. While Zechariah 6:12 indicates that the Messiah (“the Branch”) will build the Temple, Zechariah is referring to the Millennial Temple. This allows for the Third (Tribulation) Temple to be built by someone else. Moreover, the text in Revelation 11:2 that identifies the Antichrist with the Temple in its desecration does so in terms of Gentile occupation of the site. This would imply that the leader of this action of “trampling the holy city” would also be of “the nations” (i.e., a Gentile).

## The Jewish View of the Antichrist during the Tribulation

In the final analysis, Scripture does not show the Antichrist to be Jewish or to have been accepted by the Jewish people as Messiah. He is simply regarded by them as another Gentile ruler who, like past Gentile rulers (for example, Cyrus), will be instrumental in effecting the conditions that enable the Jewish people to comply with their standing order to rebuild the Temple. For this the Antichrist will be given no greater acclaim than the previous pagans, who were considered unwitting agents of the Almighty (see Isaiah 44:28; 45:4-5). This is in line with the Jewish expectation for the future time of rebuilding. The Jewish sage Tosafot Yomtov, in a description of the Land of Israel at the end of days, says this in his commentary to the Mishnah: “It comes out that until the Davidic Kingdom, our enemies will have a little bit of rule over us, as was in the beginning of the Second Temple period” (*Ma’aser Sheni* 5:2). Temple activist Yirmiyahu Fischer explains that “here is where he deals with the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* [“Temple”]...and according to this a limited Jewish kingdom, even though not fully independent, is good enough to rebuild the *Beit HaMikdash* [“Temple”], as was the case in the time of Ezra [under Persian rule].”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, under the covenant of Antichrist, the Jewish people will be allowed a greater (though still limited) national sovereignty sufficient to rebuild the Temple—and there is no

evidence that he will be regarded by them with any religious affection. This fits with what we know about the first half of the Tribulation, during which the Antichrist has not yet “tread under foot the holy city” (Revelation 11:2) or performed miraculous “signs” (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:3, 13-15) to prove his religious status.

One reason that Orthodox Jews will probably reject the Antichrist when he reveals his true identity at the midpoint of the Tribulation is that their own rabbinic literature, as well as their scriptures (Tanach), has prepared them for such a figure. In the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Targum pseudo-Jonathan*, and the later Jewish apocalyptic *midrashim* (commentaries), a Jewish equivalent of the Antichrist appears by the name of Armilus. Works such as *Sefer Zerubbavel* and those by Saadiah Gaon reveal his characteristics in striking detail. According to these Jewish sources, Armilus will deceive the whole world into believing he is God and will reign over the whole world. He will come with ten kings and together they will fight over Jerusalem. Armilus is expected to persecute and banish Israel to the wilderness and it will be a time of unprecedented distress for Israel: There will be famine conditions, and the Gentiles will expel the Jews from their lands, and these Jews will hide in caves and towers. Then at the end, God will war against the host of Armilus, there will be a great deliverance for Israel, and the kingdom of heaven will spread over all the earth.

Other references further describe Armilus as arising from the Roman empire, having miraculous powers, and being born to a stone statue of a virgin (because of which he was called “the son of a stone”). It is also interesting that he makes this statue “the chief of all idolatry,” with the result that “all the Gentiles will bow down to her, burn incense and pour out libations to her.” This resembles Daniel’s wicked “king” and “coming prince” and his “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 18:1-31, 36-37), and especially the book of Revelation’s statue of the beast which is brought to life and made an object of worship (Revelation 13:4, 15). So even though Orthodox Jews are unbelievers from the Christian viewpoint, they believe their own Bible and have an “Antichrist” in their own traditions. For this reason, as Rabbi Richman states in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, they will be as opposed to the Antichrist’s pagan program and religious demands for worship, as will be the Tribulation saints.

## The Desecration of the Temple

The Antichrist’s desecration of the Temple—especially its Holy of Holies—will render the Temple inoperative due to ritual impurity, an act symbolized by

the cessation of the sacrificial system (Daniel 9:27). To understand why his future act will have such a consequence, let's consider what I in mind when the Bible speaks of the Temple's desecration.

According to the usage of the words used to speak of ritual impurity, the Temple can be the object of both "desecration" (Hebrew, *tame'*) and "defilement" (Hebrew, *chalal*).<sup>14</sup> The *defilement* of the Temple implies that a transgressor is in a persistent and deliberate condition of defiling. In Leviticus 15:31 the people of Israel are warned not to incur uncleanness lest they die in this state (having neglecting purification) and thereby "defile My tabernacle." The same is said for the person who incurs corpse impurity and fails to obtain purification (Numbers 19:13,20). And, idolatry indirectly defiles the Temple by directly defiling the idolater (2 Chronicles 36:14; Ezekiel 23:38-39). The presence of idols within the Temple can also bring defilement (Jeremiah 7:30; 16:18; 32:34). In each of these cases we have a deliberate act (called in Numbers 15:30 "the soul that acts with a high hand").

The chief agent of *desecration* is the invasion of a foreign element into the Temple. The Bible does not unambiguously support the notion that foreigners were intrinsically unclean;<sup>15</sup> however, the idea developed during the intertestamental period and appears in various forms in the first century A.D.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of whether a foreigner was considered to be unclean or not, his presence in the Temple was viewed as a form of desecration (see Ezekiel 25:3 of the Babylonians). We see this expressed in Ezekiel 7:21-24, where "foreigners" (verse 21) and "the worst of the nations" (verse 24) are pictured as "robbers" (verse 22) invading the Temple and entering into the Holy Place (called here "My secret place").<sup>17</sup> As a result, three times in these verses the Temple is the object of "defilement" (*chalal*). In like manner, in Psalm 74:7, the Temple, connected here with the divine name, is considered "defiled" by the invading Babylonians. While God Himself is sometimes seen as the *causative* agent of desecration (see Ezekiel 24:21), He is not the *responsible* agent, since He employs secondary agents (foreigners) to execute His judgment, and holds them accountable for any arrogance displayed in being so used (see Isaiah 14:4-6; Habakkuk 1:6; 2:4-5).

These descriptions indicate that the Temple is defiled by a descending degree of violations—from the highest degree (intentional acts that culminate in rebellion and the permanent presence of idols) to the least degree (the negligent acts of individual Israelites). The Antichrist's act, of course, will be of the highest order: an invasion of the Temple and the setting up of himself as an object of worship (2 Thessalonians 2:4). It is this act that is called, by Daniel and

Jesus, “the abomination of desolation.” In order to make the proper connection between this act and the horrific meaning this term has to Orthodox Jews, it is necessary that we first survey the use of the term “abomination” in the Bible.

## The Language of “Abomination”

“Abomination” language refers to a group of related terms all translated by the general word “abomination.” Members of this word group include 1) “abomination, detestable thing” (Hebrew, *piggûl*), used only four times (Leviticus 7:18; 19:7; Isaiah 65:4; Ezekiel 4:14) for edible meats that had become detestable (probably “rotten”) and were not to be eaten;<sup>18</sup> 2) “detestable, offensive, repulsive” (Hebrew, *to’ebah*) always used negatively to refer to acts that were foreign to Israelite ethical standards (see Genesis 43:32; 46:34) or of that which was repugnant to God, including the illegitimate use of “unclean animals” for sacrifice (Leviticus 14:3), pagan deities (2 Kings 23:13), idolatrous images (Deuteronomy 27:15), (cultic) prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:18), “false weights” (i.e., inaccurate accounting—Proverbs 11:1), perverse attitudes (Proverbs 11:20), lying speech (Proverbs 12:22), illegitimate sacrifices (Proverbs 15:8; Isaiah 1:13), sorcery (Deuteronomy 18:12), sexual deviations (often cultic—Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), and anything associated with Canaanite cultic activity (Leviticus 18:26; see also frequent uses in Ezekiel); and 3) “abominable act, wicked device” (Hebrew, *zimah*, from the root *zaman*), used of acts of lewdness such as unchastity and incest (Leviticus 18:17; 19:29; Jeremiah 13:27; Ezekiel 16:36,43,58; 22:9; 23:27-29,35,48-49; 24:13; Hosea 2:10), lustful crime (Judges 20:6), immorality (Leviticus 20:14), and evil machinations, plans (Psalm 140:8).

The term directly associated with the term “abomination” in the book of Daniel is a form of the Hebrew root *shaqatz*. Two nouns (*sheqetz* and *shiqqûtz*) are derived from this root—the first always related to unclean animals (for dietary purposes), especially loathsome creatures such as “swarming things” (Leviticus 11:10) and “creeping things” (Isaiah 66:17),<sup>19</sup> and the second for idols as “detestable things” and the idolatrous practices associated with them<sup>20</sup> (Deuteronomy 29:17; 1 Kings 11:5, 7; 2 Kings 23:13,24; 2 Chronicles 15:8; Isaiah 66:3; Jeremiah 4:1; 7:30; 13:27; 16:18; 32:34; Ezekiel 5:11; 7:20; 11:18,21; 20:7-8,30; 37:23; Nahum 3:6; Zechariah 9:7). The root *shaqatz* appears 45 times in the Old Testament primarily as a technical term denoting animals and other things that rendered the Israelite “unclean.” The term is used of any detestable thing (Hosea 9:10; Nahum 3:6; Zechariah 9:7), but predominately in connection with idolatrous practices. In Jeremiah 7:30-32 the prophet decries the desecration of the

Temple by the erection of “abominations” (*shiqutzim*) in the Holy Place. Here the reference must be to the images of idols, referred to by hypocatasasis as “detestable, or horrible things.” In its verbal form (occurring only in the Pi’el as *shiqqetz*) it appears seven times (Leviticus 7:18; 19:7; Isaiah 65:4; Ezekiel 4:14) with the factitive meaning of “abhor, detest,” but since what is detested is that which defiles, it has a causative connotation of “contaminate” or “make abominable.”<sup>21</sup>

From this technical survey of terms it can be seen that acts of ritual impurity and especially the threat of foreign invasion of the Temple were viewed by the Israelites as ultimate violations of sanctity and as a sign of judgment. For this reason, they were extremely careful to prevent such acts, and in the time of the Second Temple had erected a boundary fence, the *Soreg*, between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Israelites, with a warning inscription promising death to any non-Israelite who passed beyond it into the Court of the Israelites. The New Testament (Acts 21:27-28) records a Jewish crowd’s violent reaction to Paul when they mistakenly believed that he had taken a Gentile proselyte (Titus) into the Temple to offer sacrifice. The specific accusation against Paul was that he had “defiled this holy place” (the Temple—verse 28).

Knowing this, we can understand why the Antichrist’s act of desecration will be such a climatic event and why the desecration of the Temple appears as the signal event bringing the intensification of God’s wrath in the second half of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). However, these multifaceted elements of desecration were loaded into a single phrase by Daniel (and repeated in the New Testament by Jesus and Paul) to epitomize the highest expression of desecration—“abomination of desolation”—and to embody it in an eschatological Desecrator.

## The Meaning of the Phrase “Abomination of Desolation”

The phrase “abomination of desolation” or “desolating abomination” (Hebrew, *shiqqûtz m<sup>e</sup>shomem*) occurs in Hebrew only in Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). The form of the Hebrew term for “desolation” in this phrase is the *Pol’el* participle *shomem* or *m<sup>e</sup>shomem*, which has a range of verbal meanings: “devastate, desolate, desert, appall,” with nominal derivatives: “waste, horror, devastation, appallment.” Hermann Austel, in his study of this term, says that “basic to the idea of the root is the desolation caused by some great disaster, usually as a result of divine judgment.”<sup>22</sup> Perhaps for this reason it has also been used to

describe an attitude of appalling horror due to criminal and barbaric acts of idolatry.<sup>23</sup> The *Pol'el* here has a causative (or better, factitive) force similar to the use of the *Hiphil*, except that the *Hiphil* generally involves a physical devastation, while the *Pol'el* seems to put more stress on the fact that someone has caused (active) the Sanctuary or altar to be desecrated, thus rendering it unfit for the worship and service of God. In Daniel, two nuances of the term “desolation due to war” and “desolation due to idolatry” are combined in Daniel 8:13, which describes the condition of Jerusalem under foreign domination: “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?”<sup>24</sup> This is very similar to the description of Jerusalem in Daniel 12:11, where a foreign invader has both abolished the regular sacrifice and substituted it with “the abomination of desolation.” When combined with the Hebrew term for “abomination” (*shiqqûtz*), the idea of the forcible intrusion of idolatry into a place of sanctity in order to defile it is significantly intensified.

In the New Testament, the expression “abomination of desolation” appears in Greek as *bdelugma tes eremōseōs* (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20). The first part of this phrase, the word *bdelugma* (“abomination”), is used in the New Testament four times (Luke 16:15; Revelation 7:4,5; 21:27), and in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) 17 times to translate the Hebrew *shiqqûtz*.<sup>25</sup> The term *bdelugma* comes from a root term with the meanings “to make foul” and “to stink.” Thus it has the basic idea of something that makes one feel nauseous, and thus by transference, is psychologically or morally abhorrent and detestable. As with the Hebrew meaning in the Old Testament, the Greek term is applied particularly to idols or associated with idolatrous practices,<sup>26</sup> and in the Septuagint some usages are paralleled by the word “lawlessness” (Greek, *anomia*). This supports the allusion to the abomination of desolation in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, which describes the same figure using the phrase “man of lawlessness.”<sup>27</sup> In this regard *bdelugma* appears as an expression of antithesis between the divine and human wills, as well as denoting the repugnance of the ungodly to the will of God.<sup>28</sup> It is also used in Luke 16:15 to speak of God’s repugnance toward human pride (i.e., to things highly esteemed by men, which is tantamount to idolatry).<sup>29</sup>

The word “desolation” (Greek, *eremōseōs*) is the genitive feminine singular of a root which signifies “to lay waste, make desolate, bring to ruin” (see Matthew 12:25; Luke 11:17; Revelation 17:16; 18:17,19). It is used most commonly in the Septuagint for *m'shomem* or its cognates (see Leviticus 26:34,35; Psalm

73:19; 2 Chronicles 30:7; 36:21; Jeremiah 4:7), generally in reference to the desolation of the Land as a result of desecration and exile. Most likely this is the concept we see described in the Septuagint's use of *eremōseōs* in Daniel 9:27.

The form of the expression “abomination of desolation” (both in Hebrew and Greek) has been considered an anomalous construction in grammatical terms. A number of theories have been offered to explain this,<sup>30</sup> however, the literary and theological linkage of both the terms *shiqqûtz* (“abomination”) and *m<sup>e</sup>shomem* (“desolation”) in the prophetic writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel<sup>31</sup> appear to provide the best explanation. These texts, especially with their promise of a resolution of the dilemma for the Temple, which in part governed Daniel's concern (Jeremiah 25:11-12; Daniel 9:2), may well have influenced this. Thus we may find it helpful to do a brief survey of the usage of these terms in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

In both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, frequent mention is made of “abominations” and “desolations” (Jeremiah 4:1,27; 7:10; 44:22; Ezekiel 5:11,14-15; 7:20),<sup>32</sup> idolatry that has desecrated the Holy Place, and foreign invaders who will further desecrate and destroy the Temple (see Jeremiah 4:6-8; Ezekiel 6:11; 7:20-23). Jeremiah 44:22 in particular states that Israel's “abominations” have caused the desolation of the Land and made it “an object of horror” (see Ezekiel 5:11,15; 7:20-24; 36:19-21). Jesus' message was a continuation of what the biblical prophets proclaimed, and His frequent citations from Jeremiah and Zechariah make it certain that He and the disciples were evaluating their generation in light of the prophecies found in those books. As we saw in chapter 12, the background for Jesus' “cleansing of the Temple” was most likely Jeremiah's Temple sermon, and it was in this context that He made His predictions about the destruction of the Temple. The Olivet Discourse contains striking resemblances to the prophetic warnings of judgment found in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. If these are then linked with the citation from Daniel, we see a pattern of dependence upon collections of prophetic texts that were themselves dependent upon one another.

## The “Abomination of Desolation” in Daniel 9:27

In Daniel 9:27 we read that “on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate.” This wording is the basis for the term “abomination of desolation” that we find in the New Testament. Since we have already examined the meanings of the words for “abomination” and “desolation,” let's look carefully at

the meaning of this new term, “wing.” It is clear that this term (Hebrew, *kēnaf*) has a direct association with the “abomination of desolation” and most likely describes the *place* where it will occur in relation to the Temple. The word has been the subject of extensive controversy and fanciful interpretation in both ancient and modern commentaries. Among Jewish commentators, Abarbanel simply translated it as “because” (leaving the derivation of the term unexplained) and applying “abominations” to the sins of the Jewish Nation: “because of the abomination of the Jews, the city and the Temple are desolate.” On the other hand, Rabbi Avraham bar Chiya attributed the cause of “abomination” and “desolation” to the Gentile nations, rendering the clause “*to the corners of the world* they [the nations ruling the world after the destruction of the Temple] will spread abomination and desolation.” In a similar fashion, Radak interprets the term metaphorically as “spread” (after the imagery of “wings,” compare Ruth 2:12 with 3:9), but applies it loosely and thus avoids interpreting the cause of “abomination” and “desolation,” paraphrasing the clause as “the spread of abominations will cause people to be astonished” (*mēshomem*).

Christian scholars have exhibited no less diversity in their explanations for the form suggesting emendations to read “and in its place,” “on their base,” “lord of wing,” or “winged one” (on the model of “horned one,” a title of the Syrian god of heaven, see Daniel 8:6,20).<sup>33</sup> Other interpretations have ranged from the poetic “rapid flight” (see “wings of the dawn,” Psalm 139:9),<sup>34</sup> “shall rise up” (taking *kēnaf* as figurative of an image of an eagle which was placed above<sup>35</sup> and “over spreading” (κῑν), to the literal “pinnacle [of Temple],” the “horns [of the altar],” or as a “winged [statute or solar disk].” One plausible theory proposes that *shiqqûtz mēshomem* (“abomination that makes desolate”) is a word play on a foreign deity, and if so, it would be consistent to see *kēnaf* (“wing”) having a similar connotation. In this regard the idea of “winged” statues,<sup>36</sup> or as in the Syriac version, which adds to the term “abomination” the word “standard” or “emblem.”<sup>37</sup> The comparative Ugaritic term *Bʿl Knp* (“lord of the wing”) may support this since the image of the Syrian *Baʿal Shamīn* was generally represented on monuments in the form of an eagle.

Along this line of interpretation I suggest that *kēnaf* might suggest the location where the “abomination of desolation” is placed: in the Holy of Holies in relation to the winged cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant. The Septuagint (followed by the Vulgate) translated the Hebrew word *kēnaf* to the Greek word *pterugion* to designate any projecting extremity or “wing-like projections.” In addition, in the text of Daniel, the mention of “sacrifices” just before this term

may imply a ritual association. For this reason it is often connected with the “pinnacle” of the Temple (see Matthew 4:5; Luke 4:9) or the “horned” altar of the Temple.<sup>38</sup> However, Paul’s statement in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that the “man of lawlessness” will seat himself in the innermost part of the Temple (*naos*) may suggest another possibility. If the Antichrist follows the precedent of previous desecrators, such as Manasseh, who replaced the Ark of the Covenant with an idolatrous image of Asherah (see 2 Kings 21:7; 2 Chronicles 33:7; 35:3), such an action might be expected. Christian commentator Frederick Tatford proposed this when he wrote: “Evidently the audacious rebel will blasphemously take his seat in the *sanctum sanctorum* itself.”<sup>39</sup> In addition, if the Antichrist is enthroning himself to proclaim that he is deity, there is no better place for him to do this than between the wings of the cherubim atop the Mercy Seat of the Ark, where the God of Israel’s divine presence was manifested in ages past. Indeed, Paul states in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that he “seats himself *in the Temple of God, showing himself as God*” (emphasis added). In the days of the Tabernacle and the First Temple, the throne of the Lord was said to be “seated above or between the cherubim” (Psalm 80:1; 99:1),<sup>40</sup> and numerous archaeological reliefs portray rulers sitting on winged thrones. Therefore, for the Antichrist to usurp “the throne of the Lord” as his own would certainly be the height of blasphemy, desecration, and defilement for God and the Temple.

Some say that this would be possible only if the Ark of the Covenant were recovered. However, the Antichrist could create his own version of an Ark-throne and install it in the Holy of Holies. Whatever the case, if the Antichrist were to enter the Holy Place and approach the Ark without suffering physical consequences, he would be, in effect, declaring his superiority over the God of Israel. To those who believe the Temple is inviolable and the Ark an untouchable object of divine power, such a feat will prove to a strong delusion, and those who accept the Antichrist’s claim of divinity will have sealed their spiritual doom (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

## The Identification of the Abomination of Desolation

Most critical scholars have dismissed the eschatological interpretation of the Temple desecrator in Daniel 9:27 by claiming it refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who in December (25 Kislev) 167 B.C. committed a desolation in the Temple by setting up an idolatrous image and sacrificing an unclean animal on

the altar. Preterists seek to see the abomination of desolation and the figure of the desolator in Daniel 9:27 as fulfilled in the events of the Roman invasion of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. However, the Roman invasion, though a defiling act, does not match the idolatrous dimensions and specific nature of placement in the Temple as defined by the passages in Daniel, the Gospels, and 2 Thessalonians. The Roman conqueror Titus did not seat himself in the Temple as 2 Thessalonians 2:4 describes (some historical sources even record that he did not want to destroy it!), nor was he destroyed as described in Daniel 9:27. Rather, as the Arch of Titus' Triumph in Rome today still reveals, he paraded even the Temple vessels through the streets of Rome and lived on to enjoy the rewards of his victory.

The figure and activities of the "little horn," Antiochus IV Epiphanes, which were predicted in Daniel 8:9-25 and 11:5-20, contain much that is typical of the description of the "little horn" Antichrist of Daniel 8:8-13 and the agent of destruction in Daniel 11:31. And, the Roman conquest predicted in the Gospels (Luke 21:20-24) certainly has parallels to both previous and yet future invasions of Jerusalem. However, if we are seeking exact correspondences leading to a *complete* fulfillment in these events, we have no historical support for our identification.<sup>41</sup>

Other scholars have said, "As far as the use of *shaqatz* in Daniel is concerned, the meaning of the 'abomination of desolation' seems to go beyond the idea of idol with an eschatological dimension... To limit its interpretation to Antiochus Epiphanes... seems to contradict the [New Testament] use of the text in an eschatological perspective."<sup>42</sup> Rather, Antiochus Epiphanes is but another figure in a succession of anti-theocratic rulers whose acts of desecration move toward a climax of fulfillment in the last days.

Still other scholars have offered their interpretations for the "abomination of desolation" as a past fulfillment. I will simply list these with a brief observation about each: 1) *The Statue of Titus erected on the side of the desolated Temple* (popular in Patristic times) is more likely a tradition that developed from the memory of Roman standards erected in the Temple area by order of Titus. 2) *Statues erected by Pilate and Hadrian*. All we know for certain is that Pilate brought Roman standards into the Temple, which had medallions with an image of the emperor. As to the site of the equestrian statue, John Wilkinson argues that it would not have been at the site of the Temple itself, but that this area would have remained free of such objects so that the site could later be rebuilt by the Jews as a show of Roman benevolence.<sup>43</sup> 3) *Caligula's attempted*

*desecration*. The events of A.D. 33–40 are believed to have created a fear that although Caligula had attempted to erect a pagan statue in the Temple and failed, another might succeed. However, this whole theory has been shown to be implausible on textual and historical grounds.<sup>44</sup> 4) *The invading Roman army of A.D. 70*. If the Roman invasion that desecrated and destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70 was the fulfillment of the abomination of desolation, we are left without a complete correspondence with Daniel 9:27, for both the covenant is missing and the destruction of the desolator would have to be construed differently.

## The Eschatological Alternative

The only other alternative is that of an *eschatological* (future) desolator, identified by other texts as the Antimesiah or Antichrist.<sup>45</sup> In eschatological contexts, both Jesus and Paul refer to Daniel 9:27.<sup>46</sup> Jesus references the passage in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 in proclamations about future events (see chapter 12), and almost all of the details of Daniel 9:27 are explicitly or implicitly alluded to by Paul in his explanation of the Day of the Lord in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–9. With all the other views, we are left with unresolved details that either must be harmonized by reading the Bible in other than a literal, historical manner or by dismissing details altogether. One factor in favor of the eschatological view is that it has the precedence of types that await their antitype to ultimately fulfill them. Furthermore, John McLean, in his doctoral dissertation<sup>47</sup> at the University of Michigan, has demonstrated that Daniel’s “seventieth week”—and especially of the concept of the “abomination of desolation”—influenced the literary structure of the Olivet Discourse in the Synoptic Gospels and the judgment section of the book of Revelation.<sup>48</sup> Jesus’ interpretation of the order of the events of the seventieth week, in the context of prophetic history, appears to confirm an eschatological interpretation for Daniel 9:27. In Matthew 24:7–14 Jesus predicts that persecution, suffering, and wars would continue to the end of the age, climaxing in a time of unparalleled distress (verses 21–22—i.e., “the time of Jacob’s distress,” see also Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:7). Only *after* these events does Jesus make reference to Daniel 9:27 (see Matthew 24:15), or the abomination of desolation.

If the 70 weeks are supposed to run sequentially, without interruption, then why does Jesus place this intervening period *before* the fulfillment of the events of the seventieth week? Matthew in particular reveals that Jesus’ preview of the future was in the context of answering His disciple’s questions about His second

coming and the end of the age (Matthew 24:3). Jesus here explains why His coming is necessary (for divine intervention and national repentance, verses 27-31; cf. Zechariah 12:9-10) and when it will occur (“after the Tribulation of those days,” verse 29). According to Matthew,<sup>49</sup> the events described in this period prior to the Messianic advent could *not* have been fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem, since these events usher in and terminate with the coming of Messiah.<sup>50</sup> In the New Testament, Paul presents the most detailed treatment of Daniel’s prophecy related to the Temple. Let’s look to what Paul says, and see if he can shed further light on the desecration of the Temple.

## Paul’s Prophecy of Trouble in the Temple

Paul’s second epistle to the Thessalonians has been called “the tale of the two *parousias*,” because in it is contained both the “appearance” (Greek, *parousia*) of Christ and of the Antichrist.<sup>51</sup> Paul most likely wrote this epistle in response to a report he received<sup>52</sup> in response to his first epistle to the Thessalonians. In particular, word came to him of a group of Christian “negligents” who had abandoned the normal affairs of life because they understood that Paul had said Christ’s return was imminent (2 Thessalonians 2:6-15). Their erroneous application (not erroneous understanding) of Paul’s teaching about preparation for the last days (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11) was evidence of prophetic confusion. Apparently some were teaching that the end times were already at hand (2 Thessalonians 2:2), and therefore justified negligence in the normal affairs of life. In this epistle Paul offers a correction to this misunderstanding, explaining that before the appearance of the Messiah must come the appearance of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3-9). The setting for the discussion about “the apostasy” (verse 3a), “the man of lawlessness” (verse 3b), “the son of destruction” (verse 3c), and “that lawless one” (verse 8) is unquestionably eschatological, as are the references to the “coming” of Christ (verse 1—rapture of church; verse 8—revelation of Christ) and “the Day of the Lord” (verse 2b).<sup>53</sup> Further, the eschatological events Paul describes in verses 3b-12 clearly precede this “Day of the Lord” at which time the Antichrist will be destroyed (verse 8).

## The Nature of the Temple Desecrator

The nature of the Temple desecrator (Antichrist) is developed in Paul’s text by the phrases<sup>54</sup> “the man of lawlessness” and “the son of destruction” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The term “lawlessness” (Greek, *anomias*) describes his opposition

to the divine order (demonstrated in verse 4), while the term “destruction” (Greek, *apoleias*) refers to his destiny—namely, destined for “destruction” or “perdition” (see verse 8). The fact that this one is “revealed” (*apokaluphte*) in verse 3, and that the verb is in the emphatic position, may parallel Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 in their announcement of the Temple’s desecration as a signal event. It is by this act that the nature of the Antichrist is manifested to the world, although some argue that the term “revealed” could also imply the supernatural (satanic) character of the Antichrist’s coming as in a “revelation” or “manifestation” like that of Christ (verse 9).<sup>55</sup> In this light Frank Hughes notes, “Obviously the Man of Lawlessness . . . is a quasi-divine figure, a kind of evil ‘divine man,’ some intermediate figure between God and humanity.”<sup>56</sup> The Antichrist’s nature is further qualified by the term “[he] who opposes” (Greek, *antikeimenos*) in verse 4. The Septuagint uses this root in rendering the Hebrew noun *satan* (“adversary”) in 1 Kings 11:25, and the Hebrew verb *satan* (“prosecute”) in Zechariah 3:1. Elsewhere Paul uses this term to denote Satan as the supreme adversary of God and the saints (see 1 Timothy 5:14). A similar idea is expressed here in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 when it states that the Antichrist’s coming is “in accord with the activity of Satan.”<sup>57</sup> This offers another parallel to the Olivet Discourse and Jesus’ prediction that false prophets and false messiahs would arise before the advent of the true Messiah, showing “signs and false wonders” that lead people into deception (compare 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 with Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22).

## An Analysis of Temple Desecration

The act of Temple desecration is introduced in verse 4 by the use of the middle voice with its reflexive nuance to emphasize the autonomy of action: “exalts himself.” The sphere of the Antichrist’s self-elevation is specified as “over every so-called god or object of worship” (verse 4). Since the setting is Jerusalem during the Tribulation, this may mean that he not only ranks himself superior to every false messiah that has appeared in the first half of that period, but also to all the supreme beings worshiped by the various religions of the world (“so-called gods”). Yet the phrase “object of worship” may be pointing us to the Temple and its sacred vessels. The Antichrist’s ultimate offense, however, is that of elevating himself above the only true God by enthroning himself in the place of deity within “the Temple of God” to “display himself” (Greek, *apodeiknunta*) as God (Greek, literally, “that he is God”). This act fulfills Daniel’s prediction that the Antichrist “will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and

speak monstrous things against the God of gods” (Daniel 11:36), and has allusions to Isaiah 14:13-14 and Ezekiel 28:2, where we read about figures who seek to “raise [their] throne above the stars of God,” “make [themselves] like the Most High,” and declare, “I am a god; I sit in the seat of the gods.”

### *The Literal Nature of Temple Desecration*

It is significant to observe that Paul calls the Tribulation Temple “the Temple of God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Apparently this future Temple will be recognized as legitimate otherwise it could not be desecrated. John Townsend stated in his Harvard dissertation on this point: “Since Paul sets the desecration of the Temple beside the ultimate blasphemy of proclaiming oneself to be God and since he regards these acts as the climax of the evil which is to precede the *parousia* [Christ’s second coming], there can be no doubt of Paul’s veneration for this Temple.”<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, this phrase cannot be interpreted as metaphorical of the church, with the “man of lawlessness” as an apostate “Christian” or “Christianity” in the present age, as some have suggested.<sup>59</sup> Matthew and Mark are clearly speaking of a literal Temple when they write that the “abomination of desolation” will be “standing in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15) “where it should not be” (Mark 13:14).<sup>60</sup> To Mark’s first-century audience, this could only mean one place; the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.

There are additional reasons for rejecting the symbolic interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and accepting the fact that Paul is talking about a literal Temple: 1) In the few places where Paul used the Greek word *naos* (“temple”) to mean something other than the actual Holy Place within the Jerusalem Temple, he always explained his special meaning so that his readers would understand his metaphorical usage.<sup>61</sup> 2) The word “temple” is preceded by a definite article (“the temple”), which stands in contrast to Paul’s analogical usage, where “temple” is almost always anarthrous (“a temple”).<sup>62</sup> For this reason George Milligan states: “...the nature of the context, the use of such a local term as καθίσαι [“sits down”] and the twice-repeated def. art. (τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ) [“the temple of God”] all point to a literal reference in the present instance. . . .”<sup>63</sup> 3) “The temple of God” is the direct object of the verb “sits down” (Greek, *kathisai*), a verb suggesting a definite locality, not an institution. Another verb for “enthronement” or “usurpation” would have been used to express the symbolic sense had it, rather than the literal act of “taking a seat,” been intended. 4) Second Thessalonians 2:4 reflects a dependence upon Daniel (Daniel 9:27; 11:31-36; 12:11),<sup>64</sup> and the only Temple that could have been understood in Daniel

was the Jerusalem Temple. This would also be the case in Jesus' use of Daniel 9:27 (see Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14), with which Paul was undoubtedly familiar and which most likely informed Paul's eschatology on this point. 5) The ante-Nicene church fathers interpreted "the temple of God" in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 to mean the Jerusalem Temple, as well as to refer to a literal seating of the Antichrist. For example, in A.D. 185 Irenaeus wrote, "when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the Temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom." By contrast, the symbolic or "spiritual" use of the church for the Temple does not appear in developed form until the third century A.D. with Origen, who was influenced by the allegorical interpretations of the Hellenistic idealist school of Philo.

In like manner, just as 2 Thessalonians 2:4 must be understood to be speaking of a literal Temple, so must the Antichrist's action of seating himself and displaying himself as being God be understood as literal. The impossibility of taking this verse in a metaphorical sense can be demonstrated with two points: First, if part of the clause is literal (the phrase "the temple of God"), it would be inconsistent with the structure of the verse to make the whole clause figurative.<sup>65</sup> Second, the historical figures who desecrated the Temple in the First and Second Temple eras committed *physical* acts against a *material* Temple. If the Antichrist is the antitype of these previous desecrators, then his actions would need to precisely parallel theirs in order to adequately fulfill the correspondence.

### *The Antichrist as Temple Desecrator*

In Revelation 13:1-10 the ascent of the Antichrist and his usurpation of divine prerogatives is described with allusions drawn from the career of Daniel's "little horn" (Daniel 7:8,24-25).<sup>66</sup> The blended qualities of insolent blasphemy toward God and seductive religious influence over men are seen as traits common to both figures and characterize the Antichrist, like Satan, as "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4; see also John 12:31). Some scholars believe there is a reference to the Antichrist's desecration of the Temple in Revelation 13:6, where an exegetical clause develops the Antichrist's blasphemy against God: "...to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, [and or that is] those who dwell in heaven." In that citation of Revelation 13:6 I have deliberately included

the variants the original manuscripts give for this text to reveal the problem of how the phrase “His tabernacle” is to be understood. If we take the majority reading with the conjunction “and” included (which has extensive support in the versions), “His tabernacle” becomes another in the list of the objects blasphemed by the Antichrist: God’s name, God’s dwelling place, *and* God’s heavenly dwellers. In this case “His tabernacle” might have reference to the earthly Temple, and “His name” in apposition to “His tabernacle” might have reference to the *Shekinah*. If we take the witness of the “better manuscripts,” which omit “and”<sup>67</sup> (following the *UBS4* Greek text), the clause “those who dwell in heaven” is in apposition to “His tabernacle” as the place those in heaven occupy—namely, the heavenly Temple. In this case the Antichrist is pictured as attacking heaven as the source of the authority he is usurping on earth. Even so, this might imply that the next step from the desecration of God’s name and His heavenly Temple (by blasphemy) would be the actual desecration of the earthly Temple (by usurpation).

### *The Degree of the Antichrist’s Desecration*

The desecration (*chahal*) of the Temple does not necessarily *render* the Temple unholy (by the addition of the element of uncleanness), but only *deprives* it of holiness.<sup>68</sup> But desecration usually precedes defilement (*tame’*), which not only is the acquisition of a state of uncleanness, but also implies an alienation requiring a purification. The Sanctuary (as the representative place of God’s name), like the Land of Israel, remains holy even when desecrated and defiled because it, like the Land, is non-tangible and ultimately God’s possession. However, the vessels within the Temple and the physical structure of the Temple itself can become defiled.

Foreigners who enter the Temple generally bring about only desecration, not defilement, and for this reason the Second Temple could be rebuilt after its desecration and destruction by the Babylonians without requiring a purification ceremony (Ezra 3:2-13). However, the Second Temple later required purification (*channukah*, “dedication”) because an apostate Israelite priest sacrificed an unclean animal (a sow) on the altar (under orders of the Seleucid king Antiochus iv Epiphanes) and thereby brought defilement. In addition, the presence of idols or idolatrous practices is an “abomination” (*shiqqûtz*) that brings both desecration and defilement to the Temple and the Land, which has harbored such abominations. This is the ultimate loss, since now both the Temple and Land are rendered common (*chôl*) and can be violated as any other place.<sup>69</sup>

When the Antichrist enters the Holy of Holies, blasphemously establishes himself as god (an idol), and accepts worship (an idolatrous practice), then the Temple complex and the entire Land of Israel will be put into a state of ritual defilement. It is the immense gravity of the Antichrist's act that demands restoration and ritual purification, and which results in the Messiah's advent to destroy the desecrator (Daniel 9:27; Zechariah 14:3-4,12-13; Revelation 19:17-21), restore the Land (Zechariah 14:10), and rebuild and consecrate the Temple (Zechariah 6:12; Daniel 9:24).

## Building the Tribulation Temple

The restoration of the earthly Temple mentioned in Revelation 11:1 apparently will take place *prior* to the mid-point of the seventieth week, since at that point the "abomination of desolation" will have taken place in its Holy Place (see Daniel 9:27; Matthew 13:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). Accordingly, this interpretation envisions the building of the Third Temple and the reinstatement of the sacrificial service (note "the altar" in Revelation 11:1) at a time prior to the Messianic era, since these events are associated with the advent of the Messiah and the restoration of national Israel. If the attitude of that time is the same as that of Orthodox Jews in the Temple movement today, this Temple could simply be built in obedience to the standing command to "construct a sanctuary for Me" (Exodus 25:8), taking advantage of the pact made possible by the Antichrist, the Gentile world leader. As we saw earlier, the ability of the Jewish leaders to rebuild the Temple does not require that the Antichrist be accepted by them as the Messiah. Since the Temple and those who worship in it appear to have God's favor, and the two witnesses seem to be associated with it, it is also probable that this Third Temple will serve as a meeting place for Jewish believers just as the Second Temple did (Acts 2:46; 3:1).

On the other hand, based on the unparalleled deception predicted for this period (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12), it is also possible that those who build the Temple will have been deceived to believe that the covenant made with the "prince that shall come" (Antichrist) will have ushered in the Messianic era, since one of the signs of this era's arrival is the rebuilding of the Temple through Gentile assistance (Zechariah 6:12-13). We may add to this the works of the false prophet (Revelation 13:11-15), whose "great signs" (Revelation 13:13) may initially convince many Jews that their Messiah has arrived. This accords with the prediction of false messiahs who make their appearance during the first half of the seventieth week (see Matthew 24:5,11; Mark 13:5-6). However, the work of this

false prophet will be to lead the unbelieving world to worship the Antichrist as a god (Revelation 13:15). Despite the tremendous deception of this day, it appears that the Orthodox Jewish worshipers at the Temple (and especially Jewish believers) will reject the false prophet's claims, and this may be what prompts the Antichrist to invade and desecrate the Temple and trample down the Holy City (Revelation 11:2; see also Zechariah 12:2; 14:2). Jewish believers will recognize this as the sign of the "abomination of desolation" predicted by Daniel, Jesus, and Paul (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:4) and will flee the city (Matthew 24:16-20), except for the two witnesses, who remain to oppose the Antichrist and give a worldwide demonstration of God's power (Revelation 11:5-6, 11-12). Later, at the climax of the seventieth week, the Antichrist will be destroyed as the true Messiah appears, and ultimately restores the Temple (Revelation 19:11-21; see also Daniel 9:27d; Zechariah 14:3-11).

### *Will the Tribulation Temple be Sanctioned by God?*

If the Temple is rebuilt by unbelieving Jews who reject Jesus as their Messiah, is rebuilt during the time of worldwide delusion and Israel's judgment, and is destined to be desecrated by the Antichrist, will not this Temple be rejected by God and rightly called "Antichrist's temple"? Those who answer this question affirmatively may be critical of believers who have any relationship with Orthodox Jews in the Temple movement because they believe that such "support" endorses the false system of deceptive worship that will prevail in the Tribulation (as today) and thus prevent Jews from believing in Jesus as the Messiah. Scriptural endorsement for this view is argued from Isaiah 66:1-6, where, in the context of the dedication of the Temple (verses 1-2a), the Lord declares:

He who kills an ox is like one who slays a man; he who sacrifices a lamb is like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who offers a grain offering is like one who offers swine's blood; he who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol. As they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations, so I will choose their punishments, and I will bring on them what they dread... A voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple, the voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies (verses 3-4,6).

In chapter 10 we saw that the passages preceding and following this section (Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:7-24) are set in the Millennial kingdom. However, the reference to Israel's rebirth in verses 7-9 requires the present section, verses 3-6, to be

Tribunational.<sup>70</sup> If the Tribulation Temple is in view, the setting for this verse would be the completion of the Temple probably during the first quarter of the Tribulation (verse 1). While these verses pronounce a divine verdict against worshipers in the Temple, there is clearly a contrast indicated between the *kinds* of worshipers. In verse 2 the Lord commends “him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and trembles at My word,” but in verses 3-4 He condemns those who “have chosen their own ways” (verse 3). Careful scrutiny of this context reveals that the condemnation here is not related to building the Temple or the offering of sacrifices. That these are legitimate acts is seen in the previous chapter, where those condemned are the ones who “forsake the LORD, who forget [His] holy mountain” (Isaiah 65:11). Moreover, in the previous chapter of Isaiah we read the laments, “Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee [through sacrifices], has been burned by fire,” and we are further told that God Himself is properly incensed by this desecration (Isaiah 64:11-12).

The condemnation in Isaiah 66:3-4 is directed at self-reliant worshipers who presumptuously perform the Temple ritual in the belief that righteous acts are sufficient. But, the Lord desires worshipers who approach His Temple in humble, God-fearing dependence upon the promises of His Word (verse 2c-d). The text also reveals that the believing group is ostracized by the unbelieving group (verse 5), which would be expected if Jewish believers in Jesus joined with Orthodox Jews at the Tribulation Temple as the only place on earth where God was legitimately acknowledged and worshiped (as in the first-century—see chapter 7). Such a conflict is also mentioned in Jewish apocalyptic literature, which speaks of a final rebellion in the last day by “the wicked” in Israel against “the righteous” in Israel (see Jubilees 23:14-23; IV Ezra 4:26-42; 6:18-28).<sup>71</sup> The result for the unbelieving Jewish group, according to Isaiah, will be severe disappointment, for they will be confronted by “a voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple, the voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies” (verse 6).

When will this judgment from the city and Temple come upon Israel? According to Matthew 24:15-21, Mark 13:14-19, and Revelation 11:1-3, it will occur when the abomination of desolation desecrates the Temple and the Antichrist begins persecuting the Jewish people. The believing Jewish community, forewarned by Jesus (in the prophecy) to flee, will be spared, but the unbelieving Jewish people who remain to preserve a Jewish presence there will suffer in an earthquake (Revelation 11:13) as well as the Antichrist’s assault on the city (Zechariah 14:1-2). These judgments, however, may lead many of the unbe-

lieving Jews to repent and receive the Messiah at His return (Zechariah 14:4-5; see also 12:10-13:9). Yet despite this understanding that we see a group of true worshipers in Isaiah 66, there are still doctrinal concerns about whether the Temple in the Tribulation is sanctioned by God.

### *Is the Tribulation Temple a Legitimate Temple?*

Those who believe that the Tribulation Temple will be built with the help of the Antichrist and serviced by Christ-rejecting Jews deny that this Temple is a Temple of God. Among those in Israel and abroad who adopt this perspective are Messianic Jews,<sup>72</sup> or Jews who believe in Jesus (Yeshua) as their Messiah. Although they are part of the church they prefer to emphasize their Jewish identity and often express themselves in distinctively Jewish forms of worship. They share with Gentile Christians an evangelical faith as well as the same spectrum of perspectives on prophecy. However, being both Jewish and a believer makes the subject of the Temple more complicated. On the one hand there is a natural identification with Israel and its institutions, especially in the celebration of the biblical feasts that historically focused on the Temple. On the other hand, the Jewish community ostracizes Jewish believers because they view the latter as having converted to another religion and as being no longer Jewish. This is especially true of the Jews in Israel who are seeking to rebuild the Temple. As Orthodox Jews they have rejected Jesus as Messiah, and they consider Jewish believers to be traitors. In fact, one of the Temple movement's most prominent leaders said to me that he felt Jews who believed in Jesus were "worse than terrorists"! In addition, those in the Temple movement see the Temple as the means for bringing all Jews home to Judaism (as well as making Gentiles proselytes to Judaism). Rejecting any sense of a Messiah atoning for sins, they seek to revive the sacrificial system for this purpose. So on both theological as well as practical (and emotional) grounds, the Messianic believer struggles with the concept of building a Third Temple.

### **The Problem of a Third Temple**

Among Messianic Jews who adopt a consistently literal interpretation of the Scriptures there is a belief in both a Third (Tribulational) and Final (Messianic) Temple. The final (Messianic) Temple is viewed as sanctioned by God and offers no real problems, except for the question of the purpose of the sacrifices in this Temple (more on this in chapter 24). This Temple is accepted as the legitimate

Temple of God for the coming Millennial kingdom. However, there is an overwhelming rejection of the Third Temple as a legitimate Temple, and there is usually a negative reaction to the subject of rebuilding (except as a fulfillment of prophecy). This is particularly the case in Israel, where congregational leaders often disavow any interest in the Temple movement, even though Gentile believers in the Land and Christian tourists (such as those who annually gather in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles) often express great interest. The Messianic Jews who maintain a consistently literal interpretation of prophecy and feel negatively about the Third Temple have two biblical objections to its legitimacy.

### The Spiritual Nature of New Covenant Worship

First, if a Temple is rebuilt during the church age it would seem to be in conflict with the form of spiritual worship predicted by Jesus as part of the New Covenant: "An hour is coming when neither in this mountain [Mount Gerizim], nor in Jerusalem [the Temple Mount], shall you worship the Father. . . . But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers" (John 4:21,23). If Jesus' words here are interpreted to mean that Christians are to worship in *spiritual* rather than in *material* ways, this could forbid not only icons and crucifixes (which evangelicals reject), but also church buildings, hymn books, and bulletins (which evangelicals accept), and especially for messianic believers, kippot, prayer shawls, shofars, Torah arks and scrolls. However, Jesus' point has nothing to do with this. As Christian commentator Rudolf Schnackenburg points out: "A spiritualistic understanding, as though Jesus was contrasting the material place of worship with a purely interior worship of God in the mind of man, is excluded by the concept of *pneuma*, which according to v. 24 can only mean the Spirit of God, as it mostly does in the Johannine writings."<sup>73</sup> Rather, in harmony with Jesus' connection of "spirit" with "truth" and His words "an hour is coming," His meaning is that the prophetic Spirit will be, and now is, active. This is in accord with the use of similar expressions in the texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls (whose community believed the prophetic Spirit had not ceased with the close of the Old Testament canon) and with Samaritan theology, which awaited the *Taheb*, a prophet like Moses who would prophetically declare all things (see John 4:25). Jesus is the long-awaited prophet (verse 26) and is the way to the worship of God the Father. He demonstrates (particularly in this context) that the prophetic Spirit is active in Himself (see John 4:18-19).

But does Jesus' statement about worship in Jerusalem indicate that worship in the Temple is wrong? If so, Jesus' actions contradict His words, for just before saying the preceding words He and His disciples had gone to Jerusalem to observe Passover at the Temple (John 2:13-3:21), and after saying these words they again went back to Jerusalem to observe a feast (John 5:1). Evidently, Jesus' disciples, the early church, and Paul did not understand His words in this manner either, for they continued to pray and even offer sacrifices in the Temple. What Jesus was saying is that the *place* of worship is not as important as the *procedure* in worship—a principle that is in accord with the Old Testament concept that “to obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22; see also Psalm 40:6-8; 51:16-17; Isaiah 1:11-15; Jeremiah 7:22-23; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8). Although Jesus made it clear that “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22), His emphasis in verse 21 here is that through Him, worship may be offered to God in any place by any person. This does not exclude the Temple of God as a place of worship any more than it excludes at the present time a Messianic synagogue or church building. I believe that during the Tribulation the true church (composed of both Jew and Gentile) will have been removed and that the Holy Spirit will again work in believers' lives (both Jew and Gentile) in the same way as He did in the lives of the Old Testament saints. They worshiped in a Temple and were filled with the Spirit; it should not be any different in the Tribulation.

Even so, the early Jewish church—before the destruction of the Temple—was indwelt, sealed, and filled with the Spirit and yet *continued* to worship in the Temple! This would imply that a Third Temple could be built during the church age and even sacrifices commenced without there being a necessary conflict with “spiritual worship.” However, it seems to me that both the conditions for the rebuilding of that Temple (the covenant of Daniel 9:27a), as well as the nature of worship depicted in Revelation 11:1, would require a Tribulation setting.

### The Third Temple as the Tribulation Temple

A second reason that Messianic Jews may reject the legitimacy of the Third Temple is because it will be built by unbelieving Jews or even by the Antichrist and is destined to be occupied by the Antichrist at the midpoint of the Tribulation. Therefore, as the “Tribulation Temple,” how could it be something that believers, much less God Himself, would accept?

It is perfectly understandable that the Messianic community would not support the efforts of the Temple movement given their unbelief and hostile attitude

toward the gospel of the Messiah and Jewish believers. However, according to the New Testament, we should not be surprised that unbelieving Jews express this attitude toward believers in Jesus (Romans 11:28). Moreover, this has not prevented believing Jews from supporting unbelieving Jews in Zionist issues such as *aliyah* (returning to the Land) or developing and defending the State of Israel. Are not these things as much a part of the eventual fulfillment of the prophesied restoration of Israel as the rebuilding of the Third Temple? Therefore, with respect to the matter of the character of the Tribulation Temple and its association with the Antichrist, the following points should be considered:

1. The Tribulation Temple is called “the Temple of God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 11:1) in harmony with references to previous earthly Temples that were understood to have been “holy” as valid places of legitimate worship (Matthew 21:12; 26:6). While it may be objected that this designation was used to distinguish the Jerusalem (or Jewish) Temple from pagan temples for Gentile readers, it is unlikely that such a distinction was necessary since there was only one historic and legitimate Temple of God and that was the one in Jerusalem. But distinction in this manner cannot be defended in light of the fact that Paul and John also use the term “the Temple” (without distinction) in their writings to Gentile churches (1 Corinthians 9:13; Revelation 14:15,17; 15:8). Rather, Paul and John appear to use this term to distinguish the Temple as a place of special sanctity because it houses the presence of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; see also Ephesians 2:21; Revelation 3:12; 11:19). Therefore, the implication of this term for the Tribulation Temple is that it, as a Third Temple, is as approved and legitimate a Temple as the previous two Jewish Temples in Israel’s history.

2. The Tribulation Temple is regarded as an illegitimate place of worship because it will be built by unbelievers and have an idol (the abomination of desolation) placed in its Holy of Holies. However, both the First and Second Temples also knew false worship, unbelieving priests, idolatrous kings, and the rejection of God’s prophets. The Judean king Manasseh built idolatrous altars in the First Temple and placed an idolatrous image in the Holy of Holies (2 Kings 21:4-7; 2 Chronicles 33:4-7). Zechariah, son of Berechiah and grandson of Jehoiada the priest, was stoned in the Temple precincts for seeking to turn Israel away from idolatry (2 Chronicles 24:20-22; Matthew 23:35). In the Second Temple (built by Zerubbabel), which had none of the sacred objects of the First (such as the Ark of the Covenant), swine had been offered as sacrifices and an idol of Zeus Olympias was erected under the command of Antiochus IV

Epiphanes. In this Temple there was a politically appointed, non-Zadokite (illegitimate), and generally corrupt Hasmonean priesthood. The Herodian Second Temple had been built by the same unbelieving Judean king who sought to murder Jesus at his birth (Matthew 2:13-18) and who had permitted the placement of symbols of Roman domination on its façade and in its precincts. In addition, Jesus had been rejected in this Temple and threatened with a stoning (John 10:23,31-33). Note too that Jesus had pronounced God's judgment on Israel and the destruction of the Second Temple (Matthew 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6), just as Jeremiah (and other prophets) had prophesied the same for the First Temple (Jeremiah 7:1-8:3; Isaiah 39:6; Ezekiel 8-10). However, despite this history, Zacharias the father of John the Baptizer served in this same Temple as a priest and the angel of the Lord appeared to him there (Luke 1:11-20); Joseph and Mary dedicated Jesus there (Luke 2:22); and believers such as Simeon, Nicodemus, and all those in the early church worshiped and prayed there. If our Lord and these godly saints entered and worshiped in these Temples of the past, which had their own problems with unbelievers and desecration, then why should the Third Temple of the Tribulation be rejected as any less legitimate?

3. Why should not the Tribulation-period Jerusalem, which will be occupied by the Antichrist and used as his headquarters (Daniel 11:45), also be considered as rejected by God? Especially if the city hosts the Tribulation Temple. In fact, this appears to be the point of Revelation 11:1-2, where the Tribulation Temple is called "the temple of God" and Tribulation Jerusalem is likewise denoted as "the holy city." Ironically, those who reject the Tribulation Temple as a holy Temple accept Tribulation Jerusalem as a holy city. This, of course, they must do, since prophecy makes it plain that it is the city God has sworn to jealously protect (Zechariah 2:8-13; 8:2-23) and defend against the nations (Zechariah 12:8-9; 14:3,12) and that Messiah will return to redeem (Zechariah 14:4; see also Luke 21:28) and turn into the throne of His millennial government (Isaiah 2:2-3; Jeremiah 3:17; Zechariah 8:2-3; 14:9-11). We need to recognize that Tribulation Jerusalem and the Tribulation Temple will both share the same desecration and destiny. Tribulation Jerusalem will be invaded by foreign desecrators (Zechariah 14:2; Revelation 11:2). In the same way the Tribulation Temple will be invaded by foreign desecrators (the Antichrist and the abomination of desolation—Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). Each, in turn, shares the destiny of restoration: Tribulation Jerusalem is rescued from the onslaught of the Antichrist (Zechariah 14:3-5; Revelation 19:11,19-20; 20:1-3), and the Tribulation Temple is rebuilt to give universal access to a regenerate world of worshipers

(Isaiah 2:2-3; 56:6-7; Zechariah 14:16-21). Therefore, if “the city of God” that Messiah is coming to restore is holy, then “the Temple of God” that Messiah is coming to rebuild should also be holy.

4. The Tribulation Temple is depicted as being “defiled” or “desecrated” by the presence of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:4), the invasion of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount by Gentile nations (Revelation 11:2), and the abomination of desolation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). This is inferred not only from the fact that the sacrificial service is disrupted (Daniel 9:27), but from the obvious contrast that is being made in these texts: “the abomination of desolation...in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15), “where it should not be” (Mark 13:14), “man of lawlessness...who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god...takes his seat in the temple of God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), and “the Temple of God...they will tread under foot” (Revelation 11:1-2). Yet how can the Temple be considered desecrated if in fact it is already rejected by God as an unholy institution? If it were itself an abomination, why object that an abomination of desolation should be placed within it? Why are the believing prophets of God, the two witnesses (see chapter 14), wearing sackcloth as a sign of mourning over this desecration (Revelation 11:3)? They should rather be rejoicing that the false sacrificial system has been ended.

In response to some of these concerns CBS radio correspondent Dave Dolan, who has lived in Jerusalem for over 20 years, worships in a Messianic congregation, and is author of several books on the Middle East and Bible prophecy, has observed:

The Tabernacle in the midst of the people as they wandered in the desert was an opportunity for them to see the presence of God and always have His presence with them. A Temple in Jerusalem was also a recognition of God’s presence. Therefore, such a thing is going to draw people’s attention to the centrality and the necessity of the worship of God in a form that they understand as Jews, and, trying to keep faithful to what we call the Old Testament they have certain performances and prerequisites. It is not necessarily going to take them away from God, but would perhaps bring them to the place in God where they would see a greater need. I find the apostle Paul never stopped going into the Temple. He never stopped sacrificing. He never changed anything that he was doing even though he saw Jesus as his Messiah and the Messiah of Israel. Because the functions and the practices of the Temple were prerequisites that God had required of His people and led them to an

understanding of the need for a salvation that went beyond it but certainly didn't distract them....I think the Scriptures are clear that a Temple will be built....the Antichrist himself says he places his image [there] and defiles the Temple. Well, if he *defiles* the Temple, then it must be a *holy* place which is defiled.

Based on these arguments, it is preferable to view the Third Temple as a legitimate Temple in the succession of Temples for the Jewish nation. Its desecration by the Antichrist is a sign of his rejection of God (as represented by the Temple) and war against Israel (and especially the believing remnant), who brought forth the Messiah and to whom He will return (Revelation 12:5-6,13-17). The cessation of the sacrificial offerings (Daniel 9:27) is to be viewed not only as the result of this desecration but a violation against the sanctity of the Temple itself. This last point understands that the sacrificial system was for the maintenance of ritual purification—not for personal salvation—and therefore did not (and will not, in the future Temple) conflict with the atoning sacrifice of Jesus (see chapter 24). Even though the Tribulation Temple will be invaded by the Antichrist, it is not the Antichrist's Temple, but God's, which is what makes the invasion such an abomination and a clear sign to believing Jews that they need to flee the city of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-22). And, the Tribulation Temple will be replaced by Ezekiel's significantly greater Temple (the Fourth Temple) not because the Tribulation Temple is unholy, but because it is inferior (Haggai 2:9). The dimensions of the Millennial Temple, as well as the topographical changes that will prepare Millennial Jerusalem to be the throne of the Lord (Isaiah 2:2; Zechariah 14:10), will require that the previous Temple—and even the Temple Mount—be changed to accommodate the new situation and structures.

## The Tribulation Temple in Summary

In this chapter we have seen that the Tribulation Temple will be a Temple sanctioned by God. In Scripture, it is called the “temple of God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 11:1), even though it will be desecrated by the most sinister figure ever to appear on this planet. Ultimately this will call for a divine retribution, which will come with the coming of the Lord (Zechariah 13:3-4,12; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; 2:8-9; Revelation 19:17-21). Once the Messiah has returned to His city of Jerusalem, the desecrated Tribulation Temple will be replaced by a Temple unlike any ever seen in the past. It is this Final Temple in the divine program of the last days that we now want to explore.



# Measuring the Future



## Ezekiel's Vision of the Messianic Temple

*This incomparable prophecy. . . concludes with a description of the glory of the Lord in the glorified city of Jerusalem. . . with God dwelling with man in holiness and glory. Beyond this there is no greater goal of history and God's dealings with man.<sup>1</sup>*

—CHARLES LEE FEINBERG

The Greek tragedies are considered to be the most pitiable of human dramas in the literature of the past. But there is an even greater tragedy tucked away within the books of the Old Testament. While the Greek tragedies dealt with the loss of a lover or a life, this Hebrew horror story dealt with the loss of God. And for a people whose entire existence was defined by their relationship with God, no greater tragedy could be imagined. The name of this Israelite tragedy was called, in Hebrew, *Ichabod* (“The Departed Glory”). The book that records this drama is the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a Temple priest and prophet who lived through the last dark days of Israel’s slide into judgment, crying out his message of doom to an already deafened race.

As a priest, Ezekiel’s primary focus in life was the service of the Temple, and in this time of inward defection and outward invasion, the desecration that threatened the Temple became his consuming passion. He personally experienced God’s judgment against Jerusalem when in 597 B.C. he was taken captive with thousands of other Judean hostages in the second deportation to Babylon. Afterward, in exile from his native land, he served to deliver God’s word of correction and comfort to his fellow exiles.<sup>2</sup> As a prophet he saw beyond the gloom of decay and devastation to the brightness of return and restoration. In the twenty-fifth year of his exile and the fortieth chapter of his book, he received a vision of victory that turned his story’s tragedy of *Ichabod* (“The Departed Glory”) into the triumph of *Chabod* (“The Glory [Restored]”). In Ezekiel’s vision, the Angel of the Lord appeared with an object in his hand. It was not what one might expect for such a majestic figure—not a sword nor a scroll, but a measuring rod (Ezekiel 40:3). But with this simple tool Ezekiel was shown and assured of the all God’s promises for his people, for with it he measured the future.

## Measuring Ezekiel’s Message

Ezekiel’s plight as a priest was to have served in a day when both the kingdom and people’s consciences were corrupted and his priestly role compromised. In chapters 8–11, he chronicled just how wicked these worst of times had become. In the Holy Place of the Temple, where his priestly duties were performed, he was shocked to find every form of foreign idolatry and abomination (Ezekiel 8:5-16). If Ezekiel was disgusted by what he saw, imagine how much more so God felt, for it was His house that had been polluted and profaned! The desecration of His holy house was the final act of human injustice, forcing Him to enact the curses of His covenant and withdraw His presence. This had long

been the great fear that had faced Israel—to be a Nation without God—yet, by Ezekiel’s time, the divine departure didn’t seem a matter of concern to a sin-focused society. God’s departure was shown to have occurred in stages, going from the cherubim upon the Ark, to the entrance of the east gate, to the midst of the city, and finally, over the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:22-23). Because the people were away from God, they had not noticed that *He* went away. But God soon got their attention, for when His protective presence was gone, their enemies came calling.

After the fall of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the prophet Ezekiel wrote of Israel’s future restoration with a conviction equal to that which he had expressed when he penned word of their destruction. In Ezekiel 40–48, Ezekiel addressed the theological problem that resulted from the Temple’s desecration and destruction, the sign of which was the abandonment of the Sanctuary by God’s divine presence. Steven Tuell, author of a study on the laws of Ezekiel, has summarized well the theological purpose of this vision when he writes:

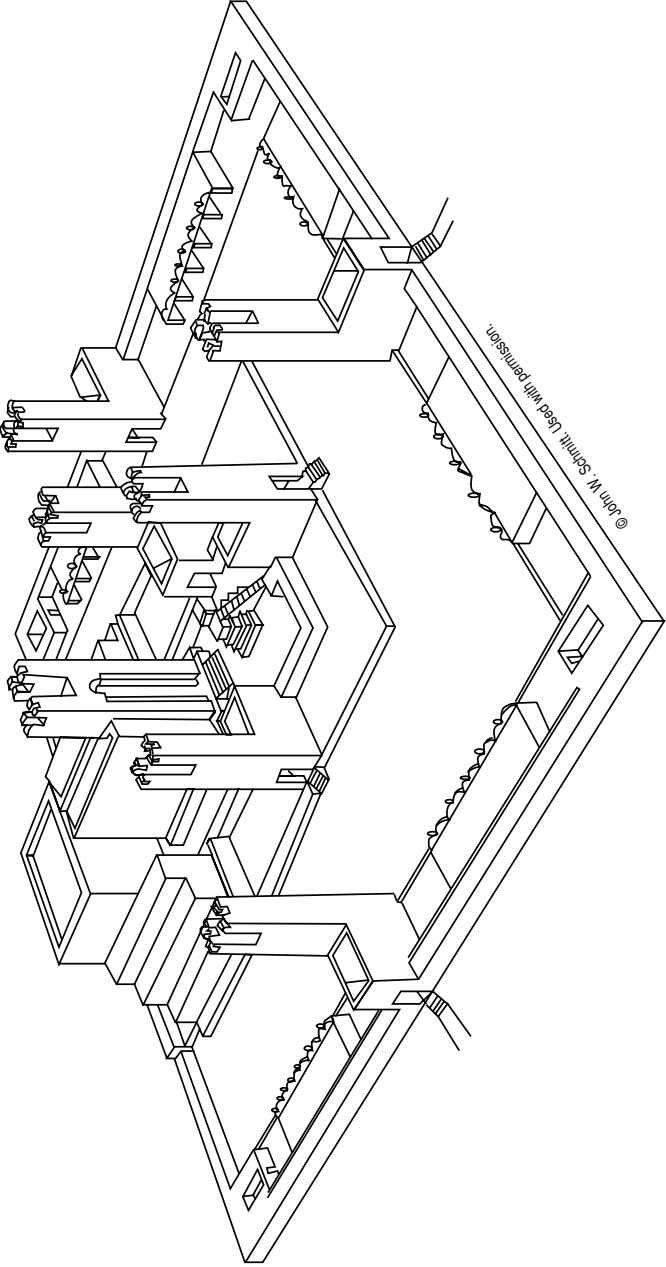
Though city, king, Temple, and cult be destroyed, this vision is a promise of  $\Upsilon\text{HWH}$ ’s continuing presence—a concrete demonstration of  $\Upsilon\text{HWH}$ ’s promise to be a sanctuary for Judah’s exiles (11:16). As the Jerusalem sanctuary had become, for Ezekiel, totally and irredeemably defiled, the perfect archetypal Temple of his vision is a place guarded from defilement, defended by massive fortified gates. Indeed, the gate by which the divine enters the Temple is sealed for all time. The glory [of God] will never leave again; the Temple will never again be defiled.<sup>3</sup>

*That* this theological restoration comes to be fulfilled is generally accepted by most interpreters, but *when* (past or future) and *how* (literally or figuratively) this is to be applied has remained the subject of much interpretive debate and resulted in at least five different views.

## Interpreting Ezekiel’s Prophecy

Interpreting Ezekiel’s prophecy has never been an easy task. The Talmudic rabbis struggled with the numerous textual difficulties and discrepancies from the Torah. Most decided that it was best to wait for the prophet Elijah, at the final Redemption, to explain them (Babylonian Talmud, *Menahoth* 45a). However, one rabbi named Chanina ben Hezekiah accepted the challenge and, sequestered in an upper chamber, expended over 300 jars of oil in his lamps before successfully reconciling them. Had he not, we are told, the entire book of Ezekiel might have

# Ezekiel's Temple



Drawing (to scale) of Ezekiel's Temple in preparation for a three-dimensional model construction by Messianic Temple ministries.

been excluded from the Hebrew canon!<sup>4</sup> Despite the obvious problems in interpretation, we should not despair at seeking to interpret these chapters, nor should the importance of the pursuit be underestimated. As Charles Feinberg advised, “Some may think it not germane to enter upon such a discussion... [but] great issues are at stake; good and sincere men differ widely in their interpretation; wisdom would dictate that time be allotted to some discussion of the views which are so determinative for such a long section of the Word of God.”<sup>5</sup> In addition, whether there will be a future Temple and how it could be built depends in large measure on how these chapters are understood. For example, the most generally accepted interpretation of this prophecy by critical scholars and non-futurists is that it was a literal description of the Temple (but described in hyperbolic or exaggerated language) of the past or of the Temple built shortly after the Jews’ return from exile, or conversely that it was intended to be understood and find fulfillment in a non-literal manner, as a spiritual ideal or as symbolic of some other spiritual reality (the church, heaven, or the eternal state). But if the literal interpretation is rejected there remains no portion of Scripture which supplies the instructions for construction of the future Temple and its service, and the way is open for the spiritualization of all of the restoration prophecies (including those concerning the coming of the Messiah!).

Therefore, let us survey these interpretations in order to see why there is such a lack of consensus in the belief of a coming Last Days Temple. We will first consider two interpretations of past fulfillment and then two interpretations of symbolic fulfillment.

### *A Look Back to Solomon’s Temple*

While the exiles were in captivity, those who remembered the Temple wept over its destruction, but those who were born in Babylon had no connection with the Temple of old. Some interpreters contend, then, that Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple was a *literary* look back to these glorious days. Ezekiel’s role, they argue, was to share his priestly memories of the Israelite monarchy in order to preserve the memory of the Temple and its services and to comfort the Jews with a message that God was still with them.

This view, however, runs into several problems: First, the prayers of the exiles, as illustrated by Daniel in Babylon, were for a *future rebuilding* of the Jerusalem Temple (see Daniel 9:3-19). Although the Jews did weep over the loss of Solomon’s Temple, the only reference to this, outside of Jeremiah’s lament, is when a comparison is made with the rebuilt Temple of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:12-13;

Haggai 2:3). Second, a description of the First Temple had already been preserved in the books of Kings and Chronicles. And third, the description that Ezekiel preserves differs radically from the description of Solomon's Temple, with unprecedented divergences in structure, style, and ceremony. Because Ezekiel's description also had immensely larger dimensions; some have objected that Ezekiel's Temple is too large to have fit on Solomon's (or even the present) Temple Mount site. For example, according to Ezekiel 48:9-10, the sacred area set apart for the Temple is 25,000 cubits (8.75 miles square) on each side;<sup>6</sup> according to Ezekiel 48:35 the city of Jerusalem measures 18,000 cubits (some 6 miles); and according to Ezekiel 42:20 the overall size of the Temple itself is "500 cubits" (875 square feet, or the equivalent of about three football fields).

The answer to this objection is provided by both Ezekiel and several of the other prophets, who report that extraordinary topographical changes will take place in the Land of Israel to accommodate these increased dimension of the Temple. During the Tribulation period the earth will experience violent changes as earthquakes alter both cities and terrain. One of the cities that will be hardest hit is Jerusalem (Revelation 11:13), which will also suffer a mountain-splitting earthquake at the end of the Tribulation when the Messiah sets foot again upon the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4). Zechariah also speaks of the flattening of huge portions of land and elevating the Temple Mount (Zechariah 14:4-10). Other prophets also say the Temple Mount itself will be raised up above all other mountains (see Isaiah 2:3; 60:14; 61:6). Ezekiel notes the enlarged territory for the tribal allotments (Ezekiel 47:13-23; 48:1-14, 23-29) and changes in the southern part of the country (Ezekiel 47:1-12). According to Jeremiah 3:17 the entire city of Jerusalem will become "the Throne of the LORD" and be a dedicated holy place. This means that Ezekiel's Temple will occupy a newly elevated and expanded Temple Mount that will include the former city of Jerusalem itself (Ezekiel 48:10). To the north of this will be the place of the priests (Ezekiel 48:11-12), to the south of the Temple will be the place of the Levites (Ezekiel 48:13-14), and to the south of this a new city will be built for workers out of the Israelite tribes (Ezekiel 48:18-19). To the east and west will be an administrative center for the prince (Ezekiel 48:21-22). Given the extensive topographical expansion that is predicted to take place, the new boundaries and dimensions of the Sanctuary are realistic.

### *A Plan for the Post-Exilic Temple*

Other interpreters argue that Ezekiel's description was a visionary plan for the rebuilding of the post-exilic Second Temple. This view says that since the

returning exiles expected to rebuild the Temple, these detailed instructions were provided by their priest-in-exile, Ezekiel, to enable them to erect the structure and properly perform its service. Typical of this view are the words of one Christian commentator: “With the exception of the Messianic section in chapter 47:1-12, the fulfillment of all the rest of the prophecy belongs to the times immediately after the return from the Chaldean exile. So must every one of its first hearers and readers have understood it.”<sup>7</sup> Although it is reasonable to assume that the builders of Zerubbabel’s Temple would have employed these plans, it is obvious that they did not. The fact is that none of those who led the rebuilding of Jerusalem—Ezra, Haggai, nor Nehemiah—made any reference to Ezekiel’s Temple. This is quite inexplicable if the purpose of the prophecy was to provide the exiles with a description that would enable them to start up the Temple and its services. Remember, Zerubbabel’s Temple was smaller than the Solomonic Temple, and the services were reinstated strictly in accordance with Mosaic law (Nehemiah 8:1-18; 10:28-39). That Ezekiel resided with the exiles in Babylon and personally communicated to them his prophecy only strengthens this conclusion. Why would they ignore it?

While some have sought to find some areas of compatibility, the greater differences in Ezekiel’s topography, dimensions, details, and priestly performance with that of the Second Temple argue that an alternate pattern was followed by Ezra and Zerubbabel when they rebuilt the Temple. In addition, the Land was never divided among the tribes, as Ezekiel’s prophecy required. And, many of the instructions given to Ezekiel contradict what was earlier stated in the Torah, and some even think Ezekiel spoke of the giving of a new Torah (see Ezekiel 43:12).<sup>8</sup> Some of the departures from the Mosaic law have been listed as the absence of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, no mention of the table for the shewbread or the lampstand in the outer Holy Place, no anointing oil within the Temple or its court, and no mention of the high priesthood. However, the most compelling objection is that the *Shekinah* glory failed to return to the Second Temple—and it is this *Shekinah* glory that is the focal point of Ezekiel’s Restoration Temple.

## A Symbol of a Spiritual Reality

Non-futurists hold that Ezekiel’s Temple is symbolic and not physical or literal. This view argues that because a literal fulfillment did not occur after the exile, the fulfillment must have been other than literal. However, the first advent

of Messiah (Jesus) did not historically fulfill all that was prophesied about the coming Messiah, either. The lack of Israel's political and spiritual redemption, the destruction of the Gentile nations, and His reign over a restored city in perfect, universal peace and undefilable holiness, was, and continues to be, a major stumbling block for Jews. Yet if these events will yet be fulfilled literally at His second advent, as were those at His first advent, then a prophetic postponement until the future, rather than a resolution to spiritual fulfillment in the past or present, is to be understood.

Regardless of one's interpretive stance, all evangelical interpreters still accept a literal return of Christ and resurrection of the dead, yet these are as inseparable from Israel's prophetic promises as those concerning the restoration of its Temple. Moreover, those who interpret Ezekiel's Temple symbolically do not agree on what these symbols signify. Therefore, Ezekiel's vision has been said to represent variously the returned Israelite Nation,<sup>9</sup> Jesus, the church, Christ and His community of believers, the new heavens and the new earth, and heaven. However, those who support a symbolic interpretation of this passage must also deal with the detailed architectural and geographical measurements, and the intricate instructions concerning priestly dress and the preparation of the sacrifices and offerings. Jon Levenson, a University of Chicago Divinity School professor of Hebrew Bible, makes this observation:

The highly specific nature of the description of the Temple, its liturgy and community bespeaks a practical program, not a vision of pure grace. For example, when the text says that eight steps led up to the vestibule of the inner court (Ezek. 40:31), can this be other than a demand that the new Temple be constructed just so?...what Ezekiel was shown is the divinely constructed model, the *tabnit*, like the one David showed Solomon (1 Chron. 28:11-19).<sup>10</sup>

How would one go about building a symbol? Yet, the "plan" (Hebrew, *tabnit*) and "design" (Hebrew, *tzurat*), the words used for this in Ezekiel 43:10-11 of this Temple, can be understood just as well as architectural language that expects the activity of literal construction. Moreover, the claim that Ezekiel is here using figurative language does not explain why his measurements differ so radically from those of the only Temple (Solomon's Temple) with which he and all the exiles were familiar. This detail alone has led prophetic authors such as Elwood McQuaid to state:

I believe that the Ezekiel Temple is a literal Temple that will be built during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. One of the reasons is

because the description that is given in the book of Ezekiel about this Temple has aspects to it that were not resonant in any of the other Temples: Solomon's Temple, Zerubbabel's Temple, nor the Herodian refurbishing of Zerubbabel's Temple. None of them had the dimensions and none of them lined up exactly. For that reason, among many others that could be mentioned, I think that without a doubt this is something that is in the future [as it is] unprecedented at any time in the past.<sup>11</sup>

The returning exiles were indeed familiar with the priestly language used by Ezekiel—which was based on the descriptions of the Sanctuary and its service in Exodus and Leviticus—and would have expected to fulfill these instructions literally in continuity with these previously revealed commands. Unless one is already predisposed to see the church in the Old Testament and view ritual language as spiritually anticipating the “New Israel,” there is nothing in Ezekiel's prophecy that corresponds to the New Testament church. Furthermore, if Ezekiel only intended to convey a spiritual truth through visionary symbols, why did he diverge from accepted ritual standards and established Jewish law? For these reasons, as one scholar has observed, Ezekiel 40–48 “really gives no textual clues that it is to be interpreted symbolically as other visions in the book should be by virtue of their unrealistic characters (e.g., ch. 1).”<sup>12</sup>

In fact, Ezekiel's early chapters represent one of the greatest use of symbols among the prophets. Beside the vision of chapter 1:4–28, Ezekiel is called upon by God to perform symbolic acts (concerning the siege and destruction of Jerusalem) such as eating a scroll (Ezekiel 2:8–3:3), writing on a brick and setting up an iron plate (Ezekiel 4:1–3), lying on his side (Ezekiel 4:4–8), cooking strange bread (Ezekiel 4:9–15), shaving his head and beard and burning the hair (Ezekiel 5:1–4), carrying baggage (Ezekiel 12:1–7), eating and drinking with trembling (Ezekiel 12:17–18), and restraint in mourning for his dead wife (Ezekiel 24:15–17). In addition, the book has a number of parables (chapters 15–17, 23–24, 34, 37). When one attempts to understand the many details symbolically they invariably have no control in their interpretation, and the meaning of the text varies from interpreter to interpreter. This results in many details in the text being assigned arbitrary meanings or becoming completely meaningless. Yet, this is the opposite of what Ezekiel himself states: “Then I said, ‘Ah LORD GOD! They are saying of me, “Is he not just speaking parables?”’” (Ezekiel 20:49). His concern was that they did not understand the literal interpretation of his symbolic acts, but only understood them as symbols, which would spell their doom. However, later the people came to their senses and asked for the literal meaning: “And the

people said to me, ‘Will you not tell us what these things that you are doing mean for us?’” (Ezekiel 24:19). Therefore, while Ezekiel could have continued his symbolic imagery in chapters 40–48, and still had in mind a literal structure, the absence of such language emphasizes the intention that this section not be misunderstood as anything but a literal promise for the future.

## A Preview of the Eternal State

One of the of symbolic views mentioned earlier sees Ezekiel 40–48 as figurative of the eternal state of the righteous in heaven. This argument is based on a number of correspondences (they would say parallels) that exist between this text and Revelation 21–22—texts which depict the New Jerusalem. While indeed there are a number of impressive correspondences, there are more differences than there are similarities.<sup>13</sup> The greatest of these are with the nature of the cities described. Ezekiel’s reconstruction of the earthly Jerusalem is quite ordinary, with its shape being square (Ezekiel 40:47) and built of common wood and stones.<sup>14</sup> The New Jerusalem, by contrast, is cubical and built of precious metals, pearls, and rare gemstones (Revelation 21:16–22). The most significant contrast is that Ezekiel’s city has a Temple that dominates the center, while the New Jerusalem has no such constructed Temple at all (Revelation 22:21). Finally, the reinstatement of blood sacrifices “for atonement” (Ezekiel 43:19–20) in Ezekiel’s Temple should alone be a sufficient contrast to preclude any identification with the eternal state. The similarities that exist are those that should be expected between the Millennial kingdom (during which Ezekiel’s Temple exists) and the Heavenly Temple and the eternal state, since these reflect the divine ideal: a restoration of what was lost in the Garden of Eden.

## The Promise of a Future Restoration Temple

Given the objections against the four views presented above, the only remaining option is to take the text literally and its application as eschatological—that is, to see it as describing the future restoration of national Israel during the Millennial reign of the Messiah. The late Jewish-Christian scholar Charles Lee Feinberg underscored the importance of adopting the literal view against all others when he wrote:

The concluding chapters of Ezekiel form a kind of continental divide in the area of biblical interpretation. . . . It is one of the areas where the literal interpretation of the Bible and the spiritualizing or allegorizing

method diverge widely...When thirty-nine chapters can be treated detailedly and seriously as well as literally, there is no valid reason *a priori* for treating this large division of the book in an entirely different manner...the literal [view] declares that the prediction speaks of the restoration and establishment of the people of Israel in their own land in the last days of their national history, their conversion to the Lord through faith in their long-rejected Messiah, and the manifest presence and glory of the Lord in their midst.<sup>15</sup>

There are a number of arguments that support the literal interpretation of this passage as a promise for the future:

1. *The literary unity of the book requires that a literal Temple be understood throughout its chapters.* Chapters 40–48 form an inseparable literary conclusion to the book. Although these chapters constitute a new vision in the prophecy, they are linked with chapters 1–39 because they repeat earlier themes in a more detailed fashion. This linkage may be seen in the fact that the beginnings of chapters 1 and 40 share a number of similar features. For example, Ezekiel's vision of the presence of God in Babylon (Ezekiel 1:1; compare 8:1) finds its complement and completion in the vision in the Land of Israel (Ezekiel 40:2). In like manner, the problem created by the departure of God's presence in chapters 8–11 finds its resolution with the return of His presence in this section (see Ezekiel 43:1-7).<sup>16</sup> In fact, the concern for the presence of God could be argued as "the uniting theme of the entire text of Ezekiel."<sup>17</sup> Without chapters 40-48 there is no answer to the outcome of Israel, no resolution to their history of sacred scandal, and no grand finalé to the divine drama centered from Sinai on the Chosen Nation.

Ezekiel's prophecy of the future Temple is the means to restoring the presence of God to Israel. Its focus in the book falls into three divisions: 1) prophecies of the Temple's desecration and destruction (Ezekiel 4:1-24:27); 2) prophecies of Israel's return and restoration (Ezekiel 33:1-39:29); and 3) prophecies of the Temple's rebuilding and ritual (40:1-48:35). Since it was a *physical* First Temple's desecration and destruction Ezekiel described in the first section of the book, the last section's discussion of a Temple's restoration would also expect a structure of the same kind. In view of the exilic understanding of a return from captivity necessitating a rebuilding of the Temple (Daniel 9:20; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:2-11; Haggai 1:2-2:9; Zechariah 1:16; 6:12-15; 8:3), would Ezekiel (or God) have attempted to comfort his people's loss with anything other than the literal restoration of a physical Temple to which the divine presence would return?

The literary structure of the book of Ezekiel argues against the possibility that chapters 40–48 are a spiritual vision. All interpreters are in agreement that in chapters 8–11 the literal Solomon Temple in Jerusalem is in view. Ezekiel’s description of its desecration is the basis for his explanation to the exiles about why God would have to remove His presence and destroy the structure. Also, we need to remember that Ezekiel wasn’t physically present in Jerusalem when he reported these things, but in Babylon with the Judean exiles. It was “in the visions of God” that he was spiritually transported to Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8:3). Everything he mentions there concerning the Temple, its “inner court” (8:3), “porch” (8:16), “altar” (8:16), “threshold” (9:3), and “east gate” (10:19) were all seen in a vision. Yet they are considered to have been a vision of the literal Temple. Why, then, when in a vision of the Temple (Ezekiel 40:2) in chapters 40–48 he mentions the exact same places—“inner court” (40:27), “porch” (40:48), “altar” (43:18), and “the gate facing toward the east” (43:4)—are they now only spiritual symbols? In summary we can say this in regard to the literary unity of the book: If the presence of God left a literal Temple and will return, it should return to a literal Temple. If the desecration and destruction of a literal Temple was described in a vision, then the vision of the restoration and reconsecration of a Temple should also be understood as literal.

2. *The context of the Temple’s restoration requires a literal interpretation.*

These chapters open with a contextual note concerning the specific date of Ezekiel’s vision—on “the tenth of the month [of Tishri]” (Ezekiel 40:1). The Jewish sages saw this as setting an eschatological context, since the tenth of Tishri is reckoned as a Jubilee year (Hebrew, *yovel*), and the date of Ezekiel’s vision was determined to be the first Day of Atonement (Hebrew, *Yom Kippur*) of the Jubilee year. Together, this date prefigured Israel’s Day of Redemption in both its physical (Land) and spiritual aspects, as Rabbi Joseph Breuer notes: “On that day, which summoned the subjugated and estranged among God’s people to accept freedom and called upon all the sons of Israel to return to their God, on that day it was given to the prophet to behold a vision of the rebuilt, eternal Sanctuary of the future and to receive the basic instructions for the establishment of the State of God that would endure forever.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, from the very first verse, the rabbis considered the passage’s context to be both literal and eschatological.

Daniel had also predicted that the Temple would be reconsecrated in the future as the climatic fulfillment of six eschatological restoration goals (see chapter 11). The reconsecration of Ezekiel’s Temple by the restored presence of

God appears as the climatic event in the restoration context of Ezekiel 37:25-28, which serves as an introductory summary of chapters 40–48:

They shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob [Israel] My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary [Hebrew, *miqdash*] in their midst forever. My dwelling place [Hebrew, *Mishkan*] also will be with [over] them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary [Hebrew, *miqdash*] is in their midst forever.

These verses reveal that the future restoration of the Nation will be in the same place (Israel) and in the same form (a Temple) as in the past. The geographical context for this prophecy is “the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived.” The mention of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, along with the historical habitation of “the fathers,” clearly distinguishes this place as the Land of Israel. Notice, too, that the covenant made between God and Israel is “a covenant of peace” (verse 26). No such covenant of security and well-being (the idea of the Hebrew *shalom* translated here as “peace”) was ever made with God during any time in Israel’s past, nor will it be made during the Tribulation period (the covenant of Daniel 9:27 is not stated to be a “peace covenant”). According to Ezekiel 34:25-29, this covenant is Land-centered, completely eliminating harmful animals, guaranteeing security from any foreign invasion, and bringing unparalleled agricultural renewal accompanied by divinely sent seasonal rains (see Zechariah 14:17). In addition, this covenant, unlike those of the past, is said to be “everlasting” (Ezekiel 37:26).

In Ezekiel 37:25-28 the Temple is described in terms that can only be realized in the future. First, the Temple is called a *mishkan*, the Hebrew word used formerly for the Tabernacle, and it is said to be “with [over] them” (Hebrew, *alithem*).<sup>19</sup> This pictures God’s “sheltering presence” as being protective in the same way that the Tabernacle was when Israel was in the wilderness. One of the false hopes the people had was that the Temple was inviolable and that it would preserve the Nation even in times of disobedience simply because it existed. In the future, however, the Nation will not sin and the Temple, with the *Shekinah*, will serve as the source of the Nation’s—and the world’s—prosperity and peace. The Temple is also called *miqdash* (“Sanctuary”), emphasizing its holiness, and

is said to be, like the covenant and the restoration of God's presence, "everlasting" (verses 26-28). Again, such a Temple could only find its fulfillment in the Millennial kingdom, where the protective "glory-cloud" of God will return to fulfill this concept of the Temple (see Isaiah 4:5-6). This Temple, presented as part of the eternal covenant, is that which is the same one that we see described in greater detail in the prophecy of chapters 40-48.<sup>20</sup> Professor Moshe Greenberg of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem offers this explanation:

The fivefold repetition of "forever" stresses the irreversibility of the new dispensation. Unlike God's past experiment with Israel, the future restoration will have a guarantee of success; its capstone will be God's sanctifying presence dwelling forever in the sanctuary amidst his people. The vision of the restored Temple (and God's return to it) in chapters 40-48 follows as a proleptic [anticipatory] corroboration of these promises.<sup>21</sup>

Based on the nature of the promised restoration as revealed in Ezekiel 33-37, the returning exiles surely must have recognized that the nature of Ezekiel's future Temple in chapters 40-48 was also eschatological. Therefore, those who rebuilt the Temple after the Babylonian captivity did not attempt to implement Ezekiel's architectural design or priestly instructions. Their assessment of the kind of restoration they were experiencing had to be weighed against several factors: 1) The larger proportion of the Jewish population had chosen to remain in Persia and Egypt; 2) the fact that only a paltry 49,897 Jews had returned to Judah (Ezra 2:64-65); and 3) the low level of spiritual life evident among the resident Jews in the Land (Ezra 5:16; 9:1-4; Haggai 1:2-6). These realities must have indicated that their return and rebuilding was not the fulfillment of the final restoration described in Ezekiel. This was probably most apparent when the foundation of Zerubbabel's Temple had been laid and the older people wept because it did not measure up to Solomon's Temple (Ezra 3:12-13; Haggai 2:3), much less to the Temple envisioned by Ezekiel. Therefore, it must have been understood that Ezekiel's Temple awaited the more complete promise of restoration, which included the coming of the Messiah (Ezekiel 34:11-31), a full regathering of the entire Jewish remnant (Ezekiel 36:24,28), and a national spiritual regeneration (Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:1-14).

If Ezekiel's readers were interpreting his restoration program as being for a future age, then they would have understood the interruption of Ezekiel's "Gog and Magog" battle (Ezekiel 38-39) between the discussions of the Temple in Ezekiel 37:25-28 and 40-48. This literary placement not only helped the readers

understand an eschatological context for the Temple prophecy, but added the assurance that, unlike the foreign invasions of the past, even this greatest of foreign invasions in the future would not disturb God's plans for the final Temple.

3) *The description of the Temple indicates that it is to be a literal construction.* This is the impression a reader gets as he reads about the Temple's measurements, structures, courts, pillars, galleries, rooms, chambers, doors, ornamentation, vessels, priests, and offerings. Yet one of the leading commentators on the book of Ezekiel has contended, "The description of the temple is not presented as a blueprint for some future building to be constructed with human hands," and that "nowhere is anyone commanded to build it."<sup>22</sup> However, in Ezekiel 43:10-11 we read, "As for you, son of man [Ezekiel], describe the temple to the house of Israel. . . and let them measure the plan. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the designs of the house, its structure, its exits, its entrances, all its design, all its statutes, and all its laws. And write it in their sight, so that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes, *and do them*" (emphasis added). These verses indicate that those Jews who are alive at the time that Ezekiel's prophesied restoration is fulfilled are the ones who are to build the Temple. Later in this context (43:13-27), when the same kind of architectural measurements and detailed instructions are given for the altar, it is stated that the altar will be built by "the house of Israel" (verse 10). If the altar of the Temple is to be built, then why not the Temple itself? This is in fact the case, for it is this same "house of Israel" to whom Ezekiel is commanded to "declare. . . all that you see" (Ezekiel 40:4). The command in Ezekiel 43:11 to "observe its whole design and all its statutes, and do them" is parallel in expression to God's original command to build a Sanctuary (given at Mount Sinai in Exodus 25:8-9). If the house of Israel interpreted the original command to Moses literally and thus built the Tabernacle and ordained the priesthood, why would they not likewise interpret the restatement by Ezekiel? This is the expectation of those involved in the Temple movement, who believe that while human hands will be employed, the command to build will be issued by the Messiah at His coming (Zechariah 6:12-13).

If we consider the detailed description of the Temple, we discover that the plans communicated to Ezekiel are so precise that blueprints could be drawn and a building constructed from them. In fact, a three-dimensional model of this Temple has already been made by John Schmitt, the executive director of Messianic Temple Ministries<sup>23</sup> (see the diagram on page 510). When a comparison is made between Ezekiel's details for the construction of the Temple buildings and

the sacrificial system and the details recorded elsewhere for the construction of the Tabernacle and First Temple and their service, there is no reason to take Ezekiel's instructions as less literal or historical. Would Ezekiel have been given such elaborate and practical instructions if only spiritual or symbolic realities were intended? Would the house of Israel be expected to interpret the details in a manner other than that which was consistent with God's revelation regarding previous structures—especially in the absence of any guidelines for an alternate (symbolic) interpretation?

Although it is possible that symbolical and spiritual significance can be discovered in the details of the Tabernacle and Temple's construction and ceremonies, it is interesting that such symbolism is not directly revealed in the Bible. Of course, there is an analogous use of ritual language in relation to the spiritual service of the believer (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19) and to the Spirit-filled church (Ephesians 2:21-22), but this is not the same as typology, where a type is fulfilled by an antitype. Even in a book such as Hebrews, in which a comparison is made between Israel's liturgical system and the believer's gracious access in Christ, and where such a symbolic significance might be expected, only a description of the Tabernacle and its furniture is given (Hebrews 9:1-5). This passage does refer to the "outer Tabernacle" as a "symbol" (or "figure, illustration"—Greek, *parabole*) for "the present time" (verses 8-9). The interpretation of these verses is much debated,<sup>24</sup> but their main point is that the Levitical system was weak in that it offered only limited and exclusive access to God's presence. But, as one writer has noted, "This does not mean that the Levitical system was bad or that it did not accomplish the purpose for which God instituted it."<sup>25</sup> However, even if the Scriptures were replete with symbolical and spiritual uses of the entire Levitical system and the Sanctuary, this would in no way affect their literal interpretation. John Whitcomb, longtime professor of Old Testament at Grace Theological Seminary, makes this point when he says:

The fact that its structure and ceremonies will have a definite symbolical and spiritual significance cannot be used as an argument against its literal existence. For the Tabernacle was a literal structure in spite of the fact that it was filled with symbolic and typical significance. Such reasoning might easily deny the literality of Christ's glorious second coming on the basis that the passages which describe His coming are filled with symbolical expressions (see Matthew 24 and Revelation 19).<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, even if one could impute symbolic meaning to the description of the Temple and its ritual service in Ezekiel 40–48 (in the Old Testament there is no precedence for this and in the text there is no guide for understanding the symbolism), there is no reason why the fulfillment should not be as literal as for every Temple and priesthood of the past.

4. *The eschatological interpretation of Ezekiel 40–48 is in harmony with other Old Testament prophetic passages.* The same text that commands the house of Israel to build the Temple also states the time when the people are to build it: after “they are ashamed of all that they have done” (Ezekiel 43:10–11). The time of this national repentance accords with the eschatological period previously described in the restoration text of Ezekiel 36:22–38, in which Israel has been made “ashamed” as part of the regenerative work of the Spirit (verse 32). Just because the exilic community expected restoration does not mean that what they experienced upon their return was what Ezekiel (and other prophets) had prophesied. Even the commentator cited earlier—who sought to place this prophecy’s fulfillment in the return of 538 B.C. and rebuilding of the Temple in 516 B.C.—still postponed the fulfillment of Ezekiel 47:1–12 to the time of the Messiah. But why should only this portion of the prophecy be considered as having its fulfillment in the Messianic age? The same question must be posed to those who believe that the form of government seen in these chapters reflects the religious polity of the restoration community under the Persian administration of Darius I.<sup>27</sup> This is unwarranted, for in other prophetic texts, this kind of restoration government is clearly reserved for the eschatological kingdom of Israel.<sup>28</sup>

If Ezekiel’s prophecies were meant to be fulfilled historically in the Second Temple, then they must be considered a failure. Any attempt to make the Second Temple fulfill these restoration prophecies forces us to either abandon literal interpretation (which, as we have seen, the details of the text do not allow) or admit that the Word of God itself has failed (which orthodox theology cannot allow). For this reason, Jewish interpreters have concluded that the Second Temple was not built according to Ezekiel’s plan because the people knew it was not yet time to build this Temple. Rashi, one of the greatest medieval Jewish commentators, explained this when he wrote:

The return to Israel in the days of Ezra could have been like the first time the Jewish people entered Israel in the days of Joshua. . . . However, sin prevented this, for their repentance was imperfect. Since they were not worthy, they did not have permission to build the Temple which was designated as the Temple for the eternal redemption, for when it will be

built according to this design, the [divine] glory will rest upon it forever.<sup>29</sup>

One objection to the eschatological interpretation of chapters 40–48 is the alleged absence of eschatological language—such as the phrase “on that day” and “in the latter days,” which appear in chapters 34–37 and especially 38–39. However, as noted above, the literary linkage to these chapters establishes an eschatological setting, as does the description of the transformation of the Land, the city of Jerusalem, the Temple, and the priesthood. The unprecedented change from the laws of the past, the return of the glory of God (Ezekiel 43:1-12), the extended holiness of the Temple Mount, the physical changes in the Land of Israel (Ezekiel 47:1-12), the enlarged boundaries of the Land (Ezekiel 47:13-23), and God’s presence dwelling in an enlarged Jerusalem (Ezekiel 48:35) all serve to indicate that the time of fulfillment is eschatological. This is clearly seen when these details are compared with similar Old Testament accounts of a future Temple, a raised Temple Mount, and restored conditions—most of which happen to include these eschatological time markers (such as Isaiah 2:2-4; 56:6-7; 60:10-22; Jeremiah 3:16-17; 31:27-40; 33:14-18; Joel 3:18-21; Micah 4:1-8; Haggai 2:7-9; Zechariah 6:12-15; 14:16,20-21. Specifically, we may categorize those related only to the Temple and its ceremonies as follows:

Prophecies of a Millennial Temple	Prophecies of Sacrifices in a Future Temple
Joel 3:18	Isaiah 56:6-7
Isaiah 2:3	Isaiah 60:7
Isaiah 60:13	Jeremiah 33:18
Daniel 9:24	Zechariah 14:16-21
Haggai 2:7,9	

When we consider Ezekiel’s remarks about the restoration of the Levitical priesthood, we find that not only do the other prophetic books agree in terms of the details, but that Ezekiel’s prophecy provides the most complete statement. In fact, the ancient promises to the Levitical priesthood cannot have a literal fulfillment unless Ezekiel’s prophecy is eschatological. God promised to Zadok, (the Aaronide high priest at the time of David and Solomon—1 Kings 1:34); and his descendants an everlasting priesthood (1 Samuel 2:35; 1 Kings 2:27,35). This promise was the reconfirmation of similar promises made to Zadok’s ancestor Phinehas (Numbers 25:13) and Phinehas’ grandfather Aaron, the progenitor of

the Israelite priesthood (Exodus 29:9; 40:15). The Zadokite priesthood was the dominant priesthood up until the time of the Maccabean revolt, after which the office became corrupted and the Hasmonean dynasty appointed the high priests with political purposes in mind. Thus, the priests serving in the Temple in the time leading up to its destruction in A.D. 70 were not of the legitimate Zadokite line. Jewish sects like those at Qumran, which had members claiming to be Zadokite priests (1QS 5:2, 9; 1Qsa 1:2, 24; 2:3; 1Qsb 3:22), rejected the Jerusalem Temple and its corrupt priesthood and expected their priesthood to regain its position of service in a future Temple that would be built after a climactic end time war in which the Hasmonean priests would be punished (1 QpHab 9:4-7; 4QpNah 1:11).<sup>30</sup> Only Ezekiel unequivocally states the fulfillment of God's promise that the Zadokite priesthood was eternal by stating that it is the Zadokites who will serve in the Millennial Temple (Ezekiel 40:46; 44:15). Ezekiel's contemporary Jeremiah linked the perpetuity of the Levitical priesthood with the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty and guaranteed it by comparing it to the perpetuity of the earth's rotation on its axis (Jeremiah 33:17-22). If we allow Ezekiel's prophecy of a future Zadokite priesthood to be spiritualized, then, according to the linkage in Jeremiah's prophecy, the promises of the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:13,16) could also be spiritualized. This would put all Messianic fulfillment in jeopardy (including anything fulfilled in Jesus)! So, if we accept a literal and eschatological fulfillment for the Levitical priesthood, then we must also accept it for the Temple in which they will serve. In addition, if 12,000 individuals from the tribe of Levi can be sealed during the Tribulation period (Revelation 7:7), then a literal restoration of the Levitical priesthood after the Tribulation is certainly plausible. In harmony with other prophets, then, Ezekiel depicts an eschatological restoration—of which the Temple and its priesthood are an essential part.

## **The Millennial Temple: From Iahabod to Chabod**

If Ezekiel 40–42 presented the “blueprint” for building, and Ezekiel 43:10-11 gave the “building permit,” Ezekiel 43:1-7 describes the “on site inspection.” Since these verses on the return and restoration of God's glory to the new Temple are one of the strongest evidences for the eschatological interpretation of chapters 40–48, it is important to give closer attention to this event. Nowhere in Scripture nor in extrabiblical Jewish literature is it stated that the Divine presence filled the Second Temple as it did the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35)

and the First Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:13). Rather, Jewish sources made a point of its absence (see *Tosefta Yom Tov*) and relegated such a hope to the eschatological period known as “the period of restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). That the Divine presence, or *Shekinah*, will only return in this future time of redemption is evident from the description of its return in Ezekiel’s 43:1-7:

Then he [the angelic guide of 40:4] led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east [Eastern Gate]; and behold, the Glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. . . . And the glory of the LORD came into the house [Temple] by the way of the gate facing toward the east. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold the glory of the LORD filled the house. Then I heard one [God] speaking to me from the house, while a man [the angelic guide] was standing beside me. And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name. . . .”

Ezekiel here presents the reversal of the *Shekinah*’s previous departure, carefully describing the order of return to match the order of abandonment detailed in chapters 9–11: *departure*—Holy of Holies to Inner Court to Eastern Gate to east; *return*—east to Eastern Gate to Inner Court to Holy of Holies. Notice, too, that this return fulfills the divine ideal of the Creator dwelling with His creation as first shown at Eden and then at Mount Sinai. In this respect note that the elements of God’s approaching presence in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2:8; 3:8) are repeated: an eastward orientation (verses 2,4) and the sound of God’s voice (verse 2), and the reference to “the glory of the God of Israel” (verse 2) reminding the reader of His original return (the Tabernacle in Sinai) and of His prophetic promise to return His glory (in the same way) to the Final Temple (Haggai 2:5,7,9). The last aspect of this description that confirms this is the future Messianic age is that the “sons of Israel” will be not be able to again defile the Temple as in the past (verse 7). This will be because they have been constitutionally changed to prevent this possibility (Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:14,23).

With the return of the *Shekinah* to the Millennial Temple, the condition of “no glory” (*ichabod*) became one of “glory” (*chabod*). The greater restoration of God’s glory to the Temple described by Ezekiel distinguishes the Jerusalem of the Millennial Kingdom and its recreated Temple Mount from that of any other

in history. Not only will it be physically elevated above all other mountains in the Land (Isaiah 2:2; 40:4-5; Micah 4:1; Zechariah 14:10), but it will shine out as a beacon to all the nations as the place where divine revelation now resides on earth (Isaiah 2:2-3; 49:6; Jeremiah 3:17; Zechariah 8:20-23).<sup>31</sup> So pervasive will the Presence of God be in the city (Ezekiel 43:12; see also Zechariah 8:3) that the city will be renamed *YHWH Shammah* (“the Lord is there”). This divine presence will also endue the city with perpetual holiness (Ezekiel 48:35; see also Zechariah 14:20-21). Isaiah describes in greater detail this holiness and the awesome appearance of God’s glory dwelling at the Temple Mount:

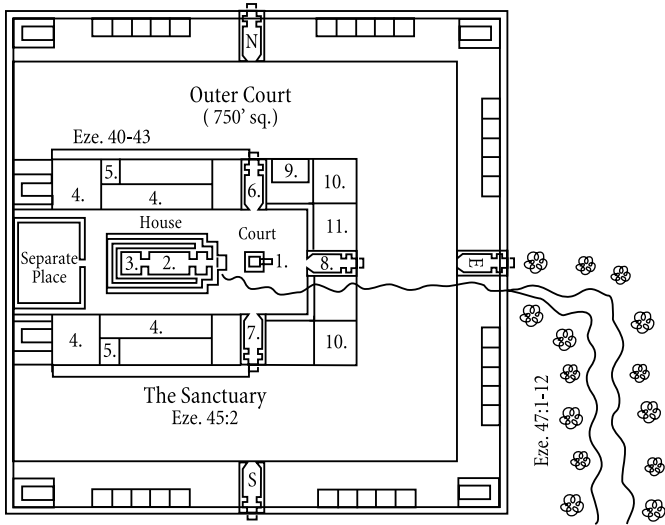
In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel. And it will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy. . . . Then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. And there will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain (Isaiah 4:2-3,6).

In view of the glory-cloud’s provision, Ezekiel 48:1-34 arranges the tribal territories around the Temple in such a way as to place it at the center (Ezekiel 48:35). Because of the sanctity of the site, even the king’s palace was not to be placed too close to the Temple complex lest it serve as a reminder of the past history of the apostate kings and idolatrous deeds of Israel, which were considered as abominations (Ezekiel 43:7-9). Likewise, the gradations of the Temple’s sacred space is greater than in previous Temples, allowing no uncircumcised foreigner to partake of Passover and no ordinary Israelite to enter the inner courtyard (Ezekiel 44:17-19; 46:20).

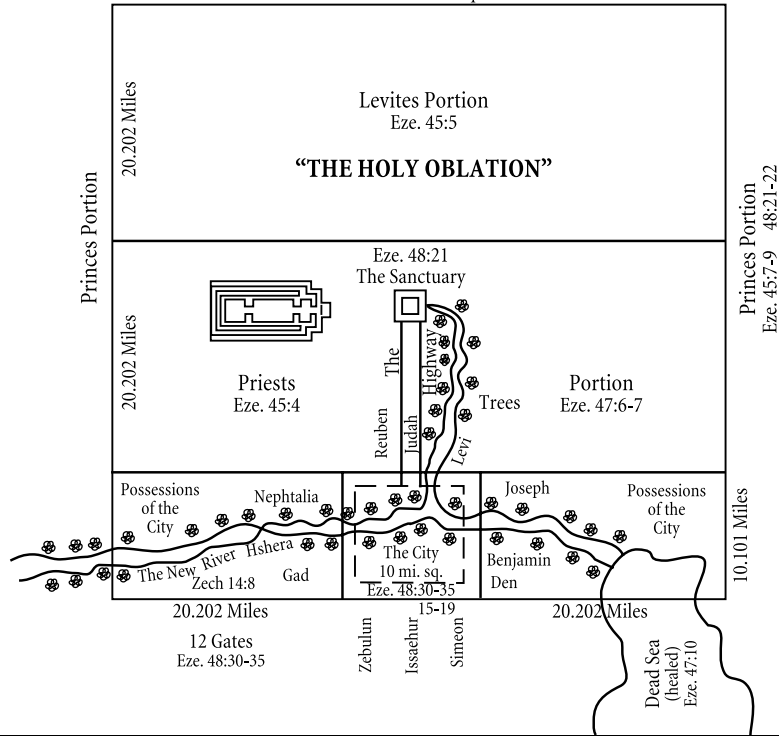
One of the most distinguishing elements of Ezekiel’s Temple is that the restoration of the rest of Land of Israel appears to be sourced out of the Temple. In Ezekiel 47:1-12 (see Joel 4:18) we read that fructuous waters will flow from beneath the Sanctuary, transforming the Dead Sea into a body of water teeming with aquatic life. That, in turn, could possibly renew all of the Land so that it becomes like the Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 36:35). As an interesting aside it should be noted that archaeological confirmation of such a subterranean water source that has occasionally erupted on the Temple Mount in past history was given by Edward Robinson based on his discovery of the Fountain Ash-Shafa, whose waters came from a spring 80 feet below the Rock of the Dome. The same

# EZEKIEL'S MESSIANIC TEMPLE

1. Altar of Burnt Offering
2. Holy Place
3. Most Holy Place
4. Priests East Holy Things
5. Boiling Places (for priests)
6. North Gate
7. South Gate
8. East Gate
9. For Singers
10. Priests Change Clothes
11. Offerings Washed



50.505 Miles Square



source of water is mentioned in the Mishnah (*Tamid* 1:1; *Middot* 1:6-9) and today is thought to be located not far from cistern # 30 (*Shakib Ka-it-Bey*) near the Western Wall.<sup>32</sup> In the spring of 1999 rumors abounded of a water flow on the Temple Mount, seemingly the result of the new construction on the Muslim mosque at the Southern Wall, but also reported near the Eastern Gate and Western Wall.

## Ezekiel's Prophecy Regarding the Eastern Gate

Every visitor to Jerusalem looks forward to seeing the famous Golden Gate situated proudly on the eastern wall of the Old City at the Temple Mount. It has been sealed shut for hundreds of years—since the Saracens conquered Jerusalem in 1187. Long ago a Muslim graveyard was placed across the gate's entrance in the hopes that the graveyard's defiling influence will prevent a Jewish Messiah from returning through this gate to reclaim Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Many Christians believe that the blocking of the Golden Gate is a fulfillment of Ezekiel 44:1-3, which reads:

He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east; and it was shut. And the LORD said to me, "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it, for the LORD God of Israel, has entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut. [It is] for the prince, he shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the porch of the gate, and shall go out by the same way."

This passage's association with this gate has a long tradition. Since the early days of the church Christians have believed that the path of Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem and onto the Temple Mount was through this gate, which lies on a direct east-west axis with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the traditional place where Jesus was crucified and buried. One of the last Christian monarchs said to have walked through the Golden Gate was the Emperor Heraclius, who, in A.D. 631, brought back to Jerusalem fragments of the supposed True Cross, which he had recovered from the Persians. When the Crusaders took over Jerusalem, they kept the gate shut except for Palm Sunday, during which they would allow processions. According to Muslim prophecy, on the Day of Judgment the angel Gabriel will sound three blasts on a ram's horn to announce the resurrection, all the peoples of the world will assemble on the Mount of Olives, and Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed will stand beside the scales of justice located on

the Temple Mount. The souls of those who have been granted eternal life will then pass along a tightrope stretched across the Kidron Valley and through the Golden Gate, which Muslims call in Arabic *Bab el-Dahabiveh* (“Eternal Gate”), but also by the names for each of its two arches, the northern *Bab el-Tobeh* (“Gate of Repentance”), and the southern *Bab el-Rahmeh* (“Gate of Mercy”).

Based on a similar theology, many evangelical Christian groups believe that Jesus, upon His return, will enter through this present-day gate. Such an understanding has caused one group, the end-time organization Daystar International Ministry, to provide continuous camera coverage of the Golden Gate in the event the Messiah might arrive and enter the gate at any moment. Internet users can access the current status of “Golden Gate news” from the “MessiahCAM” at [www.olivetree.org/webcam.htm](http://www.olivetree.org/webcam.htm).<sup>33</sup>

However, there is no conclusive evidence that the Golden Gate is the same gate as the Eastern Gate (or Shushan Gate) which opened onto the Temple Mount in the time of Christ. To be sure, there are stones in the wall beside the gate that may date to the time of Nehemiah, and the inside of the gate contains pillars from the Second Temple period. However, the Golden Gate that people see today was constructed by a fifth-century A.D. Byzantine emperor. It was known to have been in ruins by A.D. 629, when it was rebuilt by Emperor Heraclius. It was first closed by the Arabs in A.D. 810, reopened by the Crusaders in A.D. 1102, and walled up again by the Saracens in A.D. 1187. Apparently it was opened again during reconstruction work done by the Ottoman Turkish Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who rebuilt the present-day walls of the Old City. However, he closed it for the last time in A.D. 1546. As these facts reveal, its closing had nothing to do with prophecy, and despite popular stories to the contrary, there was nothing in the past—nor is there anything at the present—that would prevent it from being reopened by whatever power controlled the area.

A careful look at the context of Ezekiel’s prophecy, however, makes it clear that the sealing of the Eastern Gate will occur in the end times with the return of the *Shekinah* to the topographically altered Temple Mount and rebuilt Temple (Ezekiel 43:1-7). Therefore, Ezekiel’s prophecy cannot be interpreted to have been fulfilled during the Second Temple period at the time of Jesus’ so-called “Triumphal Entry” into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-38), even if this were the gate He used. The plain meaning of this passage is that the gate will be shut only after the *Shekinah* has reentered the Holy of Holies in the Temple—an act signifying the Lord’s uniquely holy status and perhaps the fact that He will never again depart, but remain forever (Ezekiel 37:28; 43:7; 48:35). This is in keeping with the

Near Eastern custom of showing special honor to a dignitary by restricting others from using the same gate the dignitary had used (see Exodus 19:9-23 and especially verse 24).

The “prince” who is mentioned here as sitting in this gate “to eat bread [a meal] before the LORD” (Ezekiel 44:3) is also prohibited from using this gate for entry. The rabbis identified him as the Messiah, but because he is not a priest, has no priestly rights, has sons (Ezekiel 46:16), and needs to offer a sin offering (Ezekiel 45:22), it is preferable to view him as someone of Davidic lineage who represents the Messianic government on earth.<sup>34</sup> The fulfillment of this passage will take place at the Eastern Gate of the new Millennial Temple, not the present-day Golden Gate, which will probably end up being torn down and reconstructed when the Third Temple is built during the Tribulation period, and it will certainly be leveled by the earthquake that accompanies the Messiah’s advent to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4) and the topographical changes that follow (Zecahriah 14:10).

In this chapter I have attempted to present the arguments for a literal interpretation of the future Temple described in Ezekiel 40–48. While the support for the Last Days Temple does not depend on this prophecy alone, it is the major text providing the details of its construction in the Millennial kingdom. However, one of the major objections against a literal interpretation is that Ezekiel’s description mentions the revival of animal sacrifices in the Millennial Temple. How does this fit in with all that we’ve considered so far? In the next chapter I will present this problem and its proposed solutions; join me as we seek the answers from Scripture.



# Blasphemy or Blessing?



## Sacrifices in the Last Days Temple

*Jesus Christ is the only Mediator, His blood the final sacrifice. There can be no going back. If there is a way back to the ceremonial law, to the types and shadows of what has now become the bondage of legalism, then Paul labored and ran in vain—more than that, Christ died in vain.<sup>1</sup>*

—EDMUND P. CLOWNEY

*Is it heretical to believe that a Temple and sacrifices will once again exist? . . . Ezekiel himself believed it was a reality and the future home of Messiah. Then, it becomes not heresy to believe that a Temple and sacrifices will exist; rather, it is almost a heresy to not believe this, especially because it is a part of God's infallible word. The burden on us is to determine how it fits—not its reality.<sup>2</sup>*

—JOHN SCHMITT

When the Temple was standing, its most central function was to serve as a site for sacrificial worship. Every Jew we read about in the Bible offered sacrifices—from Abraham, the father of the Jewish Nation, to Jesus, the founder of Christianity.<sup>3</sup> When the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 the sacrificial system came to an end. Despite this loss, Jewish liturgy preserved the ancient Temple services, recounting the sacrifices verbally in accord with Hosea 14:3: “So we shall render for bullocks the offering of our lips.” In the words of the Talmud, “The prayers were instituted in correlation to the tamid sacrifices.” The tamid, or *olat ha-tamid*, was a twice-daily offering, morning and evening, of a male lamb. Even though the sacrifices were continued in symbol only, Jewish orthodoxy maintained the belief that they would return in substance with the Third Temple. One basis for this belief has been the references to this practice in the prophecies of Jewish restoration and the Last Days Temple. In the last chapter we argued that Ezekiel’s prophecy of the future Temple will be a literal structure. If so, how should we understand the instructions in this prophecy prescribing blood sacrifice? After 2,000 years in which Judaism has gotten along perfectly well without sacrifice, and after which Christianity has been built on a finished sacrifice, is the return of sacrifices to be interpreted as a religious blasphemy or a restored blessing? Will there really be literal sacrifices in the Last Days Temple? Before we attempt to answer these questions, let’s survey the struggle both Christians and Jews have had with this issue.

## The Problem of Sacrifices for Christianity

The early Jewish Christians faced the problem of continuing life in the Jewish culture, which required offering sacrifices for acceptability. Initially there appears to have been little difficulty with this because such sacrifices were being made in faith to the true God and were not seen as conflicting with one’s faith in Christ. We read in Acts 21:20 concerning the testimony of the Jerusalem church that there were “many thousands . . . among the Jews of those who have believed, and they [were] all zealous for the Law” (which included sacrifices as a part of Temple worship). Furthermore, this same text shows that they considered sacrifices at the Temple as an evidence of fidelity as a Jew, and that even the apostle Paul complied with this practice (Acts 21:22-26). The Jewish Christians’ most significant problem with sacrifices was how to fellowship with their Gentile brethren, who were not required to offer sacrifices, but with whom they shared an equal access to God through faith in Jesus (Acts 15:11). Working through this

problem enabled Jewish Christians to make the spiritual adjustment to life without sacrifices after the destruction of the Temple.

By contrast, Gentile Christians who had no history in or access to the sacrificial rites in the Jerusalem Temple, faced a different problem. As Gentiles they lived in the cultural context of pagan sacrifices—from which they as Christians had to make an immediate break because these sacrifices represented offerings to idols (false gods—see Acts 14:15; 1 Corinthians 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 John 5:21). Their problem with sacrifices was reflected in the major concern they had about buying meat that had first been offered to idols as a sacrifice (see 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; see also Romans 14:13-23). Moreover, abstinence from eating sacrificial meat had been imposed as a social requirement for maintaining good relations with the Jewish Christians (Acts 15:20). Even though the Gentile Christians' lives had formerly been regulated by the pagan sacrificial system, and they must likely have faced immense pressure from relatives and business associates to continue this practice culturally, they adapted to spiritual worship without sacrifice by understanding that Jesus had made them acceptable to the true God by offering the ultimate sacrifice on their behalf.

Not until after the destruction of the Temple and the onslaught of Roman persecution against non-pagan religions did both Jewish and Gentile Christians find themselves facing a common problem in relation to sacrifices. Roman officials demanded that Christians living in Roman colonies offer sacrifices to Rome's pagan gods as a demonstration of loyalty to the emperor and the empire. No Christian could do this because to do so was to make a public acknowledgment of another god, which was tantamount to renouncing Christ.

It is interesting, then, that when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire, its institutional form that became Roman Catholicism renewed the practice of sacrifice on an altar at each celebration of the mass. Since the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation results in viewing the sacrifice as literal rather than strictly symbolic, it continues the sacrificial work of Christ and would not find a conflict with the idea of sacrifice *per se*. Rather, its rejection of a restoration of Israel and its sacrificial system is based on its doctrine of replacement theology.

It is Protestant and evangelical Christianity that has the greatest difficulty with the return of animal sacrifices in a future Temple. Here it is popularly assumed to be equivalent to a denial of the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. For example, Edmund Clowney, past president of Westminster Theological Seminary, a leading Reformed institution, has declared, "Jesus Christ is the only

Mediator, His blood the final sacrifice. There can be no going back. If there is a way back to the ceremonial law, to the types and shadows of what has now become the bondage of legalism, then Paul labored and ran in vain—more than that, Christ died in vain.”<sup>4</sup> In like manner, but more to the point, author Archibald Hughes affirmed that “to restore these things today . . . would be apostasy.”<sup>5</sup> These statements reflect the common contention that a resumption of the sacrificial system would contradict Hebrews chapters 7–10, which is interpreted to teach that all animal sacrifices were temporary types fulfilled by Christ’s ultimate sacrifice. If Christ’s sacrifice was the final sacrifice, it is argued, then the need for animal sacrifices ended at the cross, and any resumption of this system is a return to the Mosaic legislation which repudiates the completed work of Christ (see John 19:30). In Hebrews 10 we read that “the Law” is only “a shadow,” and that the “sacrifices” it prescribes “can *never* . . . make perfect” those who offer them (verse 1), nor “take away sins” (verses 4,11). Furthermore, it goes on to say—in relation to the sacrifices of the old covenant—that “He [Christ] *takes away the first* in order to establish the second,” that He “offered *one sacrifice for sins for all time*” and consequently, “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*” (verses 8-12, emphasis added). Therefore, “where there is forgiveness of these things, there is *no longer any offering for sin*” (verse 18). Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), and it was at His sacrificial death that the veil in the Temple was rent (Matthew 27:51; Luke 23:45). These passages appear to teach the irreversible cessation of the sacrificial system so clearly and plainly that any thought of future sacrifices is seen as scandalous. For this reason, it is thought, a return to sacrifices in the future can only be interpreted as a return to Judaism and a renunciation of Christianity.

## The Problem of Sacrifices for Judaism

Like Christianity, post-Temple Judaism also struggled with the concept of sacrifices. In the time of the Second Temple it is estimated that as many as 600,000 sacrifices took place annually. Therefore, when the Temple was destroyed, the issue of the loss of the sacrificial system was paramount for the Jews. As one Jewish writer explains:

How can we possibly sense the terror that must have gripped a person who had to atone for his sins but was unable to do so? The Jew who lived at the time of the Temple’s destruction did not have other methods of

atonement developed by generations of halakhic legislation.... That generation of Jews had to grapple with a new reality which appeared to deny any possibility of religious wholeness: An individual who sinned would have to continue to live with his sin. This factor contributed to the doubts which assailed many Jews of this period as to whether there was any point—or indeed any possibility—of maintaining a religious way of life.<sup>6</sup>

Some Jews, and even Jewish proselytes,<sup>7</sup> attempted to offer sacrifices even after the Temple's destruction, but this practice was eventually outlawed by the Romans. Even though Traditional or Orthodox Judaism continued the spiritual principle of worship (see Hosea 6:6) according to the modifications of Judaism by the Ta'anaitic Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, it has never adequately resolved the problem of handling the many commandments related to sacrifice. Over one-third of the 613 commandments, obligatory for observant Jews, are connected to the Temple and sacrifices. So central are these commands to Jewish life that modern Temple activist Binyamin Ze'ev Kahane declares, "While everyone understands that there is no Judaism without *mitzvot* ['commandments'] many do not grasp the fact that the Temple and sacrifices are also essential to Judaism, and without them, there really is no Judaism."<sup>8</sup>

But how would it be possible for Jews to perform sacrifices today? On the one hand the chief rabbinate of Israel has held that Jews who enter the Temple Mount in their present state of ritual impurity are liable for the punishment of *Kareit* ("cutting off") or banishment from the Jewish community. On the other hand, an equal risk of liability results from *not* entering the Temple Mount to perform the Passover sacrifice, for the same sentence is pronounced upon a ritually pure person who intentionally does not bring the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of Nisan (even when the entire Nation is impure from the contact with the dead).

Partly because of such seemingly irreconcilable difficulties, but mainly because of a denial of the binding nature of the Written and Oral Laws, the liberal branches of Judaism, the Reform and Reconstructionist movements, long ago abandoned the idea of attaching any significance to the matter of sacrifices. For them the sacrificial system was part of the primitive religion that more enlightened mankind has outgrown. In like manner, Conservative Judaism, though retaining Hebrew references to sacrifices in its old Conservative Siddur, meticulously omitted the translations in the prayer book. However, its newest Conservative Siddur, *Sim Shalom* (1985) has almost entirely rewritten, in alternative

versions, the festival Musaf liturgy, which explicitly recounts the sacrificial ritual and has put sacrificial references in the past tense. The reason for this, says conservative rabbi Elliot Dorf, rector of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, is because “the sacrifices were one stage in the development of Jewish ritual practice, and not something God wants us to do in the future. According to this view, God merely ‘tolerated’ sacrifices as a stage in religious development.” In general, four objections have been offered by Judaism to animal sacrifices:<sup>9</sup>

1. *The sacrifices seem mechanistic and meaningless.* The instructions in the Torah give this impression by providing little explanation of their significance. The instructions tend to emphasize what is being done rather than why it is being done or what is thought or felt by the one giving the offering. While the biblical condemnation of offering sacrifices mechanistically with an improper intent or in an unrighteous way implies that “a contrite spirit” (Psalm 51:19; Isaiah 66:2) and “obedient heart” (1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 40:6) was to accompany sacrifice, if this was all that God really wanted, then why were sacrifices ever necessary?

2. *The depictions of the sacrifices emphasize gore, not grandeur.* The sacrificial system essentially turned the Temple into a slaughterhouse, with the priests standing knee-deep in entrails and suet while pouring huge quantities of blood over the altar, sacred objects, and each other. What other image is possible when we read, for example, in 1 Kings 8:63 that at the dedication of the Temple Solomon offered “22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep”? Such a scene in our aesthetically clean, nonviolent, culture is not only alien, but offensive, and its vulgar and earthy image of a bloodthirsty God runs counter to the modern-day emphasis of God as a high and lofty figure filled with grandeur and glory.

3. *The notion that God “smells” and “eats” the sacrifices seems pagan.* When the Bible describes the sacrifices in respect to God it often uses anthropomorphic language to show His acceptance or rejection of them. Accordingly it is said that “the LORD smelled [the sacrifice]” (Genesis 8:21), or that the sacrifices are His “bread” (Leviticus 21:6), “the food” of God (Leviticus 22:25), “a soothing aroma” (Numbers 28:2), or that God was “filled...with the fat of...sacrifices” (Isaiah 43:24). Even though the Bible makes it clear that such terminology does not imply a pagan sense of God having need—“If I [God] were hungry, I would not tell you...shall I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of male goats?” (Psalm 50:12-13)—the imagery still conveys to the reader a sense that seems to conflict with the concept of God as a noncorporeal Being.

4. *It is morally wrong to kill an animal as an expression of religious feeling.* Perhaps the greatest objection to a restoration of the sacrificial system is that it represents the wanton, senseless killing of innocent and useful animals. Israeli society, like Western society, has its animal-rights advocates, who feel that the superfluous slaughter of animals is needless, abusive and criminal. For example, a daughter of one of the leading figures in the Temple movement (whose organization supports the return to sacrifices and even offers sacrifices on occasion) told me that she rejects the idea of returning to sacrifices because she views it as wrong to treat animals with such cruelty. Once the sacrifices are separated from worship and viewed as expendable, their ceremonial use appears not only as impractical, but immoral.

These objections, however, all disregard the fact that animals as sacrifices serve a higher purpose than man's convenience. As sacrifices they function in the service of their Creator to preserve sanctity and restore the divine order. Furthermore, they were not offered capriciously out of a desire to harm animals or for personal pleasure, since financial loss is incurred by their sacrifice, but in obedience to God's commandments and to please Him. For this reason, such objections are of no consequence to ultra-Orthodox (or Hasidic) and many Orthodox Jews. They accept Maimonides' 13 Articles of Faith and his legal code, which envision a return to animal sacrifice and the literal building of the Third Temple on Mount Zion. Not willing to bow to modern convention, and seeking to preserve the hope that sacrifices can once again be resumed (even though in the case of the ultra-Orthodox it is interpreted through a maze of mysticism), the Jews developed a custom in the Middle Ages of killing a chicken on the afternoon before the beginning of Yom Kippur ("Day of Atonement") and raising the bleeding carcass over their heads while saying a prayer for the atonement of their family's sins. And, as we have seen in a previous chapter, some in the Temple movement today have resumed the *korban Pesach* ("Passover sacrifice") overlooking the Temple Mount with a prayer that they soon will be able to offer sacrifices on the Temple Mount itself.

## Ezekiel's Statements on Sacrifices

Regardless of one's views on sacrifices, every interpreter of the last chapters of Ezekiel must wrestle with the fact that there is a statement concerning the sacrificial system in all of the nine chapters but one (chapter 47). These references include "new moons," "sabbaths," and "all the appointed feasts" (Ezekiel

44:24; 45:17; 46:3,11-12), “daily offerings” (Ezekiel 46:13-14), “burnt offerings,” “grain offerings,” and the “libations” (Ezekiel 45:17; 46:2,4,11-15), “blood sacrifices” (Ezekiel 43:20), “an altar for the burnt offerings” (Ezekiel 40:47; 43:13-27), “an altar for the incense offerings” (Ezekiel 41:22), “boiling places” to “boil the sacrifices of the people” (Ezekiel 46:23-24), a Zadokite priesthood to “offer... the fat and the blood” (Ezekiel 40:46; 42:13-14; 43:19; 44:15-16; 48:11), and a Levitical priesthood to slaughter the burnt offerings (Ezekiel 44:10-11; 48:22). Furthermore, the offerings are stated to be for “a sin offering” (Ezekiel 43:22, 25; 44:24,29) and to “make atonement” (Ezekiel 43:20; 45:25). Since the sacrifices and sacrificial personnel are so prominent throughout these chapters, the treatment of the sacrifices cannot be avoided as incidental.

Therefore, the first question we must answer is this: Were these references to sacrifice intended as symbol or substance? These options are not merely academic concerns, but have significant theological implications. As the late German prophetic scholar Erich Sauer stated, “We stand here really before an inescapable alternative: *Either* the prophet himself was mistaken in his expectation of a coming temple service, and his prophecy in the sense in which he himself meant it will never be fulfilled; *or* God, in the time of Messiah, will fulfill literally these prophecies of the temple according to their intended literal meaning. There is no other choice possible.”<sup>10</sup> However, the option most commonly resorted to by interpreters is to abandon a literal interpretation of all of Ezekiel’s prophecy in chapters 40–48 in preference of the symbolic (see chapter 22). This is at least a consistent interpretation, since we can hardly spiritualize the sacrifices and then literalize the Temple.<sup>11</sup> In the previous chapter I discussed the issue of symbolic and spiritual interpretations of the Temple, so let’s now consider the spiritual interpretation of the sacrifices.

### *The Spiritual Interpretation of the Sacrifices*

After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Judaism had no ritual access to the site of the Temple Mount, which prohibited the people from rebuilding the Temple and resuming the sacrificial system. Judaism was thus forced to prioritize the spiritual aspects of worship and reinterpret or abandon other commands that required a functioning priesthood. Jewish-Christianity historically faced the same situation, but had already adopted a spiritual priority. This was because it understood Jesus’ prediction that a day would come when worship in Jerusalem would be removed (John 4:23-24) and because Paul had taught that the Holy Spirit was spiritually building their community (with Gentile

believers) into a holy temple in Messiah (Ephesians 2:21-22). Rabbinic Judaism, which realized that the sacrifices were essential but unattainable, likewise reconciled this difficulty by substituting the study of the sacrifices for the sacrifices themselves. The Talmudic passage that teaches this presents the argument of Rabbi Yaakov Bar Acha, who wrote:

If it were not for Jews studying the laws of Temple sacrifices, heaven and earth would lose their right to exist, as the Torah states, “And he said, ‘How will I know that I will inherit it?’” (Genesis 15:8). Avraham said to G-d, if Jews sin, will You destroy them like the Generation of the Deluge of the Generation of the language separation? He meant, tell me with what merit shall my children inherit. G-d answered, “Take for yourself a calf” (meaning that the merit of Temple Sacrifice will sustain and atone the Jewish People). Avraham answered that this will suffice as long as the *Beit HaMikdash* [Temple] is standing, but when the *Beit HaMikdash* is destroyed, what will be? He answered, I have established the laws of the sacrifices. When you study them, I will consider it as if you performed the sacrifices, and I will forgive you (Talmud, *Ta’anit* 27b).

The spiritualization of sacrifices within Gentile Christianity arose because of several factors: the bitter encounters with pagan sacrifice, the theological interpretation of judgment on the sacrificial system with the Temple’s destruction, and the disappearance of Nazarene Jewish-Christianity in the fourth century. After this time the Christian interpretation of sacrifice became reduced to the concept of “forfeiture” and was embodied in religious “acts of sacrifice” such as personal piety: vows of abstinence, self-abnegation, renunciation of the world (monasticism), and even martyrdom. As a result, the only physical sacrifice that was necessary, or relevant, was the last and final sacrifice of Christ, which had forever ended the sacrificial system of the Jews. Even though this system had not actually ended with the sacrifice of Christ, but had continued for another 40 years, it was believed that from the divine perspective it had in fact ended along with His rejection of the Temple as demonstrated by the tearing of the veil in the Temple at the time of the crucifixion (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).<sup>12</sup> According to this interpretation of the symbolism of this event, what was torn was the *inner* veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:33), since this was the place where the atoning sacrifice was made. Even if this were the case, it need only symbolize that the *spiritual* (not ritual) barrier between God and man had been removed. However, there are three arguments against this meaning for the symbolism in this event:

1. A better case can be made for the veil that was torn being the *outer* veil that hung at the entrance doors to the Temple.<sup>13</sup> One reason for this is that Mark's account links this event with the response of the Roman centurion who watched Jesus die (Mark 15:39). While the text certainly links the soldier's confession of Jesus as "the Son of God" (verse 39b) to the *way* he saw Jesus die (in full command of His spirit, verse 37; see also Luke 23:46-47), Mark nevertheless mentions the tearing of the Temple curtain *in between* his statements about Jesus' final breath and the centurion's declaration. If the centurion's awestruck response includes his witnessing the rending of the veil, the only veil he could have seen "standing right in front of Jesus" (verse 39a) was the outer veil, since the inner veil was completely hidden from public view.

2. If we study this outer veil we have another clue as to what was symbolized by this event. The first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus tells us that this outer curtain was an 80-foot-high embroidered Babylonian tapestry that depicted "a panorama of the entire heavens" (*Jewish Wars* 5.5.4 §§212-14).<sup>14</sup> The significance of this for the symbolism here is unmistakable, especially in view of the fact that both the Matthean and Markan accounts specify that the direction of the tear in this curtain was "from top to bottom." This has been recognized by almost all commentators to symbolize the divine reaction "from heaven to earth." Therefore, we have the Temple itself<sup>15</sup> (which represented God's presence) dramatically symbolizing heaven's (the divine) response to the death of Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

3. While other motifs of "rending" have been suggested,<sup>17</sup> the Jewish context suggests that the one most common and universally recognized by a Jewish audience was the rending of garments as an official expression of extreme emotion such as grief or outrage (Judges 11:35; 2 Kings 19:1; Job 1:20; 2:12; Acts 14:14; 16:22). And, because of the nature of the garment, the specific direction of tearing in this custom is from the "top to the bottom."<sup>18</sup> It is significant that in this very same context of the Passion narrative, during Jesus' trial, the high priest "tore his garment" in response to Jesus' self-confession (which the high priest called "blasphemy") as the divine "Son of Man" of Daniel 7:13 (see Matthew 26:64-65; Mark 15:62-63).<sup>19</sup> Putting together these details, I suggest that the rending of the veil symbolized the Temple's (heaven's) response to the blasphemy of the Jewish leadership who delivered Jesus to the Gentiles ("wicked men who crucified the Lord of glory," see Acts 2:23; see also 3:15; 7:52). As such, it serves as an ironic contrast to the high priest (who represented the Temple), as

does the Gentile Roman soldier's statement of belief (Luke 23:47) to that of the Jewish high priest's statement of blasphemy. Accordingly, the very Temple that the Temple establishment claimed Jesus wanted to destroy and that formed their accusation (along with His divine confession) for His condemnation (Mark 14:58), stood against them as a witness to Jesus.

If this interpretation is valid, it excludes any negative idea of "the rending of the veil" as a divine attack on the institution of the Temple or a rejection of the sacrificial system which it embodied. Therefore, the fact that the evening sacrifice (3:00 P.M.) took place in the Temple at the very moment the veil was rent did not symbolize a rejection of the sacrificial system. Rather, it revealed that this divine demonstration, evidenced by the tearing of the outer curtain, concerned Christ's *sacrifice*. Without this additional witness of the Temple's sacrifice to Christ's sacrifice it would have been unclear as to what this event specifically pointed.

Nevertheless, those who adopt the non-literal, symbolic interpretation of the sacrifices have said that the literal interpretation of the sacrifices of Ezekiel's Temple is an "embarrassment"<sup>20</sup> to the consistently literal view, and that "it shows how *completely* this view misinterprets the significance of God's dealings with mankind."<sup>21</sup> This leads us to ask: What support is offered in favor of a literal interpretation? Though in the past consistent literalists have often had as difficult a time explaining these references as have the spiritualizers,<sup>22</sup> recent studies have produced some convincing arguments in support of the literal interpretation.

### *The Literal Interpretation of the Sacrifices*

Those who employ the literal method have responded to the spiritualizers' accusations by noting that theirs (the literalists') is the only system able to interpret the references to sacrifices in a manner that is consistent with the uses of these terms throughout the Old Testament. Where else in the Old Testament is the priesthood, the altar, the feasts, the offerings, and the sacrifices made typical or symbolic of any other truth? If the New Testament is suggested as the key to interpreting the sacrifices symbolically, then how did Jews, for whom the Old Testament was written, manage to understand and practice sacrifice for thousands of years without this key? But even if the New Testament suggests a spiritual pattern for interpreting the sacrificial system, it provides no specific pattern that enables one to interpret the sacrificial references in Ezekiel. For this reason, there can be no consistent interpretation of this text by the symbolic method

and therefore, no clear understanding of its message. Moreover, the symbolic approach has to deal not only with the references in Ezekiel, but with numerous other references to sacrifices within eschatological contexts (see, for example, Isaiah 56:6-7; 60:7; 66:20-21; Jeremiah 33:18; Zechariah 14:16-21; Haggai 2:7; Malachi 1:11). In Jeremiah 33:17-23 we find this prophecy: "Thus says the LORD, 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to prepare sacrifices continually'... Thus says the LORD, 'If you can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.'"

Can this prophecy be spiritualized to find fulfillment in David as Christ and the Levites as Christians? This is not possible because the fulfillment of the prophecy in Jesus depends upon a literal fulfillment as the "son of David" by physical lineage (see Matthew 1:1), which the symbolical school accepts. Now it would be hermeneutically inconsistent to take the prophecy to David literally and the prophecy to the Levites as spiritual, especially since they are bound together in a dual promise of perpetuity with a fulfillment that is divinely guaranteed. Therefore, in the same way, the fulfillment of this prophecy for the Levites depends upon their being the physical descendants of Levi. To take this other than literally would be to remove it (in the case of David) from the rank of Messianic prophecy, yet it is also obvious that to find a literal fulfillment in any time but the future would be to admit that this prophecy has failed. The fulfillment, then, must take place with Christ reigning on the throne of David in the Millennial Jerusalem and the Levites ministering through the sacrifices in a rebuilt Temple.

It is also remarkable, from the symbolic point of view, that the main passages dealing with the sacrifices in Ezekiel (the altar of burnt offerings, the priests and Levites, the sacrificial offerings) are introduced immediately after Ezekiel 43:1-12, in which the glory of God returns to the Temple Mount to restore its sanctity and bring a new, extended spiritual dimension to Israel (verse 12). The contrast with the old defiled order is described in terms of there no longer being any of the former abominations in the Temple (verses 8-9), and it is only on the condition that Israel is truly "ashamed of all that they have done" (verses

10-11) that the design of the Temple is to be made known and its statutes able to be performed (verse 11). If, according to the symbolic school, the old sacrificial system had truly been fulfilled by Christ's sacrifice, which, in the symbolic view, would be represented by the coming of the glory of the Lord into the Temple, then why would sacrifice symbolically follow as part of this new design? By this interpretation it should have been part of the old order of abominations for which Israel should have been ashamed.

Some have argued that Isaiah 66:3-4 depicts a condemnation of sacrifice itself, or else in its eschatological context, of future Temple sacrifices (see chapter 21). But in this passage, is it the reinstatement of the sacrificial system which is rejected? Rather, it is the attitude of unbelief, characterized by self-sufficiency and the arrogance of self-merit, that is condemned. This attitude, which is properly addressed at the rebuilding of the Temple and the reinstatement of the sacrificial system (verses 1-2), was also condemned at previous Sanctuaries (1 Samuel 3:22-35; 4:3-11; 6:19; 13:12-13; 2 Samuel 6:6-8; 2 Kings 15:5 and 2 Chronicles 26:16-23). This verse is saying what the prophet Samuel said to Saul about selective obedience based on one's own way: "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). It is saying the same thing as Solomon said when he wrote, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination..." (Proverbs 21:27), and, "He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9). Therefore, such biblical condemnations of ritual violations in sacrifice cannot be used as examples of a divine rejection of the sacrificial system. Instead, the importance attached to keeping the ritual pure only strengthens its significance for proper worship.

But was not Christ's sacrifice the end of all sacrifices? The answer to this requires us to consider the purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices as well as the nature of Christ's redemptive work (see below). However, whatever our conclusion for the present age, it should be remembered that "just because animal sacrifices and priests have no place in Christianity does not mean that they will have no place in Israel after the rapture of the church..."<sup>23</sup> The problem this statement raises is the failure to discern the distinction between the ages preceding and subsequent to the present age of grace. As Clive Thompson notes:

The basic error in this question is the assumption, usually unconscious, that the conditions which prevail in this age of grace must necessarily be the same in all future ages, that the relations between God and man

which exist now must continue to the end of time. . . . He will again bring forward His people Israel, the only nation He has ever recognized (Amos 3:2), and deal with them and with the Gentiles on a basis of law, although necessarily modified by grace as in the Mosaic dispensation. This follows for at least three reasons: 1) The age or dispensation of grace ends at the rapture and is never to be repeated. 2) In all other ages God deals with man on a law relationship. 3) All left on earth are God's enemies and must therefore be dealt with by law. Law is, and must be, accompanied by sacrifice. A repentant Israel must join in such sacrifices; and repentant Gentiles must conform and join therein also.<sup>24</sup>

The dispensation of the church is an eschatological interregnum that, by its nature of Jew and Gentile baptized by the Holy Spirit equally into position with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), could not fulfill the distinct restoration prophesies for Israel and the nations. The church age is not simply the *incorporation* of Gentiles (Romans 11:11-24,30) into the place of privilege (the "olive tree" of Romans 11:17-24) but the *integration* of Gentile and Jew in one body under the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 2:14-16). By contrast, the Millennium is an eschatological extension of the Jewish age, which involves the *inclusion* of Gentiles into an earthly Jewish economy (Isaiah 2:2-3; 56:6-7; 66:18-21) under the theocratic laws of the New Covenant, which includes physical sacrifices at a physical Temple (Isaiah 66:20-21; Zechariah 14:16-18). Therefore, in the present age the church serves as a "spiritual temple" (Ephesians 2:20-21) with "spiritual sacrifices" (Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15-16) and spiritual access through Christ to the Heavenly Temple (Hebrews 4:14-16; compare 12:22-24). However, once the church age has run its predetermined course (Romans 11:26), the spiritual temple will be replaced by the physical Temple, in conformity with the return of national Israel to the divine program (Romans 11:27). Accompanying this return will be many of the former physical elements that are essential to Israel's functioning as a theocratic Nation. The reason for this is that the church age is set between the failure of Israel under the Old Covenant and the restoration of Israel under the New Covenant. Unlike the church, which is governed indirectly by Christ through the Spirit and was not promised an earthly kingdom, Israel was governed directly by God (theocracy), and will be governed through the Messiah, and was promised an earthly kingdom. Israel's promised restoration in the last days will not take place within the church, but within the New Covenant. It is not the place of privilege promised to national Israel, the Temple or the sacrificial system that has been set aside by this New

Covenant, but the unattainable legal requirements of the old Mosaic Covenant. Even though this covenant had included this promise and sacrificial institution, by design these were pre-Mosaic, being included respectively in the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:2-3) and the divine design.

Moreover, this replacement was prophesied not in the New Testament but in the Old Testament. The two principal prophecies of the New Covenant in the Old Testament are in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:25-28) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34). According to the literal interpretation of these texts, national Israel will realize the spiritual and physical (Land) blessings of the New Covenant only in the eschatological age (Ezekiel 36:29-36; see also 34:25-29; 37:25-28; Jeremiah 31:31,33). The restoration the Nation will enjoy under this covenant will involve all Israel—the house of Judah and the house of Israel (Ezekiel 36:22,32; see also Ezekiel 37:19-23; Jeremiah 31:31, 37), with the corporate Nation experiencing individual spiritual regeneration (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27).

One example of Jesus' own understanding of this is His promise to His disciples at their last Passover together in the upper room. In each of the Synoptic Gospels, we read that Jesus takes the cup and pledges that He will drink it again with them in the Kingdom age (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18).<sup>25</sup> This implies that the Jewish festival of Passover will again be celebrated in the future Kingdom.<sup>26</sup> This implication is made explicit in Ezekiel 45:21: "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall have the Passover. . . ." It should be obvious that if the Passover will be celebrated in the Millennium, then the Passover sacrifice, the central feature of the feast, must also be resumed. Until then, even the church may celebrate the feast in its spiritual dimensions (without a sacrifice), as Judaism does today, since "Christ our Passover. . . has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

The problem with the Mosaic Covenant was not its ritual but its requirements. Israel could not keep its conditional regulations, and therefore a superior and unconditional covenant was necessary that could guarantee the fulfillment of its requirements. The New Covenant's provision of spiritual regeneration makes possible the spiritual obedience that was lacking under the Mosaic economy, thereby preventing any further loss of relationship with God, the Land, or the Temple. That certain ritual aspects of the Mosaic Covenant remain under the New Covenant is to be expected, since the divine ideal is for the Creator to dwell with His creatures in an uninterrupted relationship (see Zechariah 2:10-11 and 3). Even so, the significant legal differences in the ritual under the New Covenant confirms it is not a repetition of the Mosaic Covenant. This ritual,

the focus of which was the regulation of a relationship between God and man through sacrifice, as already mentioned, was initiated with Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:20; 4:3-7),<sup>27</sup> and continued on in the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15:1-18)—long before the Mosaic legislation was enacted.

The physical nature of life in the Millennial kingdom will require that there still be a regulation in this relationship (the Temple and ceremonial system), but the spiritual conditions of this period (a theocratic government, a regenerate populace, universal peace, no threat from the nations, etc.) will have made all other aspects of the Mosaic Covenant unnecessary and obsolete.<sup>28</sup> For example, Ezekiel 43:17 states that the altar of burnt offering in the Millennial Temple will have eight steps facing east. Under the Mosaic Law this altar would have been illegitimate, because its stipulations prohibited both going “up by steps to My altar” (Exodus 20:26) and an eastward orientation. That is why the altars in previous Temples were constructed with a ramp for priestly ascent (see Mishnah, *Middot* 3:4) and with a north-south orientation. The reason for this prohibition (as well as the commandment in Exodus 28:42 concerning the priests wearing linen underwear) was because of Israel’s proximity to the Canaanite culture, whose priests ascended stepped altars in order to reveal their nakedness during their sacrificial rituals, which involved the worship of nature and fertility deities. In addition, the Canaanites worshiped the god Shamash, who represented the sun, which rises in the east. The need for Israel to be separate both spatially and spiritually from Canaanite and other similar pagan cultures and rituals resulted in many of the requirements found in the Mosaic legislation. However, in the Millennial kingdom, there will be no foreign countercultures such as the Canaanites (see Zechariah 14:9). All the nations will worship the Lord (see Zechariah 14:16-19), and Jerusalem will be holy and beyond contamination (see Zechariah 14:20-21). Therefore, there will be no need to continue observing these types of regulations from the Mosaic economy.

In addition, it has been suggested that the reason for Ezekiel’s eastward orientation of the altar was so that the priests will be able to face in the direction of the Messiah, who will be enthroned in the Temple.<sup>29</sup> Incidentally, this reveals how radically the Millennial sacrificial system deviates from that prescribed under the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>30</sup> It was for this reason that post-exilic Judaism did not attempt to employ these new ritual commandments, because they understood them not as a reinstatement of the Mosaic system, but as functioning under Jeremiah’s prophesied New Covenant in the Millennial kingdom. This remains the best solution to resolving the contradictions with Mosaic Judaism in Ezekiel’s text.

With this understanding, let's consider the two ways in which the consistently literal school of interpretation has explained the nature of the Millennial sacrifices in light of the New Testament sacrifice of Christ.

### Sacrifices as Millennial Memorials

The majority of those who hold a consistently literal interpretation of this text maintain that the sacrifices will be memorials of the sacrifice of Christ. For example, John F. Walvoord, Chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, says, "The Scriptures also tell us that in the Millennial Kingdom, which begins with the Second Coming of Christ, there will be a huge Temple built as described in Ezekiel chapters 40–48. . . . And we learn here that there will be animal sacrifices offered. The question is often asked why this is necessary, and the answer is simply that it is a memorial, a reminder of the death of Christ, just like the Old Testament sacrifices were in anticipation of it."<sup>31</sup> As Walvoord's statement implies, this view finds scriptural precedent in the Lord's Supper, which was done "in remembrance" of Christ (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). Since this ordinance is only "until He [Christ] comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26), another such reminder of Christ's redemptive work will be necessary for the generation that populates the Millennium.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, in contrast to the Old Testament sacrifices, which were *prospective* (looking forward to the fulfillment of the cross), these millennial memorials will be *retrospective* (looking back at the accomplishment of the cross). Some have added that since the Lord's Supper also proclaimed the future coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26) and the kingdom (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18), these sacrifices will warn of future wrath at the coming Great White Throne judgment, especially for those who will rebel at the end of the Millennium and join in the satanic attack on the Temple Mount (Revelation 20:7–11).<sup>33</sup>

In line with this interpretation is the understanding that Old Testament sacrifices were only symbolic. The late commentator Charles Lee Feinberg states: ". . . the function of Old Testament sacrifices . . . were never efficacious; they were never meant to be expiatory, that is to care for the penalty of sin; they were never meant to be anything but symbolic of the forfeiture of life for sin. . . ." <sup>34</sup> While the memorial view has much to commend it, it does not adequately address the fact that Ezekiel (Ezekiel 43:20,26; 45:15,17,20), under the New Covenant, clearly says that the blood sacrifices are for "atonement" in just the same way that Leviticus (Leviticus 4:20,26,35; 16:27; 17:11, et. al) does under the Mosaic Covenant. Furthermore, nowhere in Ezekiel's prophecy concerning the sacrificial system is it ever implied that the sacrifices are "memorial" in nature. For

this reason, another literal view has been advanced which attempts to incorporate the concept of atonement in its interpretation of the millennial sacrifices.

### The Atonement View of Millennial Sacrifices

This view argues that it is insufficient to say that the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were only symbolic of the final sacrifice of Christ. First, it is apparent that when a worshiper in Old Testament times offered a sacrifice on the altar, he came away believing that something happened that was immediately and personally significant for his relationship with God. Second, there is simply no evidence in the presentation of the sacrificial worship of the Old Testament that indicates each and every Israelite offerer throughout the entire span of Old Testament times understood that his offering was anticipatory of a sacrificed Messiah. To argue this is to deny the nature of progressive revelation that unfolded the redemptive program throughout the ages. While God always had the death of Christ in view as the basis of eternal salvation, the faith of the Israelites rested on God their Savior, who promised life for life in the substitution of an animal's life-blood for their own (see Genesis 22:8, 13-14). Third, living so long with the historical loss of sacrifice has diminished the importance of the concept of sacrifice for us today. As E. P. Sanders, Oxford University Professor of Exegesis, reminds us: "Modern people so readily think of religion without sacrifice that they fail to see how novel that idea is."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, in order to understand Ezekiel's concept of sacrifice, it is necessary to understand the purpose of sacrifice as it was presented in the Old Testament.

### Making Sense of the Sacrifices

Both ceremonial purification and substitution is at the heart of the concept of sacrifice. The English word *sacrifice* hints at this dual idea in its original derivation. As Jewish scholar Joshua Berman, author of a major Jewish study on the Temple, explains:

The [English] word *sacrifice* is a conjunction of two Latin words, *sacer*—holy—and *facere*—to make. When one offered a sacrifice in the Greco-Roman world, it was viewed as the process of making something holy by offering it to the gods. . . . Sacrifice called upon the owner of the animal to *renounce* his ownership of the animal so that the gods could *receive* the animal in his place.<sup>36</sup>

When an Israelite in Old Testament times dedicated an animal as an offering, it was no longer his for personal use but was considered as *hekdesh* (“something made holy”). The primary Hebrew word used for offering is *korban*, which, coming from the root meaning of “close,” has the connotation of bringing something close to God. In the process of offering an animal as a *korban* the first step involved is an act of transference whereby the owner lays his hands upon the head of the animal (Hebrew, *semikhah*, “leaning”). This rite symbolized an investiture of identity (understood from transfers of human authority—see Numbers 8:5-11; 27:18-23) so that the animal now stood representatively in the place of the owner himself (see Leviticus 8:14,18,22). The Jewish sage Nachmanides explained this act as something of an “execution in effigy,” for the burning of each body part of the animal and the sprinkling of the blood is reckoned as if it were the person’s own. In his commentary on Leviticus 1:9 he then goes on to express the penal nature of the substitution involved:

All these acts should be performed in order that when they are done, a person should realize that he has sinned against God with his body and his soul, and that “his” blood should really be spilled and “his” body burned, were it not for the loving-kindness of the Creator, Who took from him a substitute and a ransom, namely this offering, so that its blood should be in place of his blood, its life in place of his life. . . .<sup>37</sup>

Here, according to Nachmanides’ interpretation, the sacrificial rite should be understood as the punishment the owner should have rightly received and viewed by him as a punitive act against his own body. This idea of substitution is strengthened by the fact that blood is shed as part of the sacrifice—especially the burnt offering (see below). Leviticus states that blood is required because “the life of the flesh is in the blood. . . for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement” (Leviticus 17:11). The term “the life of the flesh” is literally “the soul of the flesh” (Hebrew, *nefesh habasar*). It has been understood to mean that “it is not merely that the animal’s blood represents the blood of its owner, but because the *soul* of the animal represents the owner’s *soul*.”<sup>38</sup> While penal substitution lies at the heart of the sacrificial act, the purposes for which this substitution is made only becomes clear as we consider the five categories of the offerings (*korbanot*), all of which appear in Ezekiel 40–48 (see, for example the lists in Ezekiel 40:39; 45:25).

The first offering mentioned in our Ezekiel text is the “burnt offering” (Hebrew, *korban olah*—Ezekiel 40:38-39,42; 43:18,24,27; 44:11; 45:15,17,23,25; 46:2,4,12-13,15). The word in Hebrew for this offering is *olah*, which means “one

that rises,” which is literally depicted by the smoke of the totally incinerated animal rising upward toward God (see Leviticus 7:8). This offering portrayed the complete devotion of the one making the offering, since the animal, which represented the person, was consumed entirely (Leviticus 1:3). The purpose of this offering was “that it may be accepted for him to make *atonement* on his behalf” (Leviticus 1:4; see also Ezekiel 45:15,17). The burnt offering is also the first offering mentioned in the book of Leviticus, where the details of the sacrificial system are enumerated, although this sacrifice was commanded for Abraham in relation to his son Isaac (Genesis 22:2). In Jewish tradition, “the binding of Isaac” (Hebrew, *Akedah*) was one of the most significant acts in the Bible, for on the exact spot of the future Temple it was demonstrated that animal sacrifice (ram) substituted for the human sacrifice (Isaac).

The second offering that appears in Ezekiel is the “sin offering” (Hebrew, *korban chatat*—Ezekiel 40:39; 42:13,19,21-22,25; 44:27,29; 45:17,19,22-23,25; 46:20). The translation as “*sin* offering” suggests a derivation from the Hebrew word for sin (*chatat*); however, it is likely that it is derived from the Hebrew infinitive *lechatei*, which means “to purify through ablution.”<sup>39</sup> The support for this understanding is seen in Leviticus 4:1-5:13, where the sin offering is described not as overt “sin,” but as an inadvertent (unintentional) violation of a transgression due to ceremonial inattention. While this was an individual act (Leviticus 4:27-35), the whole community could be liable (Leviticus 4:13-21), as also in the case of a priest whose act brought guilt on the entire Nation (Leviticus 4:3-12), since he represented the people before God (Exodus 28:12,29,38). The primary purpose for this offering was the ritual purification or ceremonial cleansing of sacred objects on behalf of the person(s) who caused their contamination.<sup>40</sup> Even where people are the object, the idea is of a “cleansing of the spiritual defilement that their sin has engendered.”<sup>41</sup> In Ezekiel it is said, in relation to the altar, “to purify and make atonement...cleanse” (Ezekiel 43:20,22), “make atonement...purify...consecrate” (Ezekiel 43:26), and for the “house of Israel” “to make atonement” (Ezekiel 45:17).

The third listed offering is the “guilt offering” (Hebrew, *korban ‘asham*—Ezekiel 40:39; 42:13; 44:29; 46:20). The word “guilt” in the sense understood by the original Hebrew text is “liable to pay,” and according to its usage in Leviticus 5-6 looks at a legal reparation payment for the restoration of damages. This obligatory restitution was necessary for acts that violated sacred objects, transgressions against God’s commandments, and for offenses against fellow Israelites. Ezekiel always groups this offering with the sin offering, but gives no

explanation for the function of this offering, so its purpose is apparently assumed from Leviticus. Here it is seen as an inadvertent action (like that which required the sin offering), such as a person deriving benefit from resources dedicated to the Temple and therefore with his restitution a guilt offering must be made (Leviticus 5:14-16).

A fourth category of offering is the “grain offering” (Hebrew, *korban minchah*—Ezekiel 42:13; 44:29; 45:15,17,24-25; 46:5,7,11,14-15,20). The Hebrew term *minchah* literally means “gift,” but technically a gift given in recognition of the stature of the recipient (inferior to superior). This offering, in Leviticus, is always offered with the burnt offering, and less often with a peace offering (Leviticus 2:1-14). Whereas the burnt offering represented a complete dedication to God of the person, this offering represents a total dedication of the person’s possessions. And like the burnt offering, it will occupy a significant place in the ritual service of the Temple.

The final category of offering is the “peace offering” (Hebrew, *korban shelamim*—Ezekiel 43:27; 45:15,17; 46:2,12). This offering was strictly voluntary and is never mentioned in relation to transgression. Therefore the “peace” it represents is not one made with God, but an expression that one was already at peace with God. For this reason it is the only offering in which the owner of the animal offered partakes of the meat (Leviticus 3:17) and even shares it with others. In offering the animal to God, this communal meal symbolizes a “breaking bread with God” or a covenant partnership (see Exodus 18:12; 24:10-11; Deuteronomy 12:7,18; 14:23,26; 15:20). In the context of Ezekiel it is found offered by the prince (Ezekiel 45:17) and as part of the festivals and feasts (Ezekiel 46:11).

Summarizing these five offerings which make up the sacrificial system, we can see that they were offered by those who were in a covenant relationship with God that required obedience as part of its stipulations and especially the maintenance of ceremonial purity so that the relationship (or fellowship) could continue between a Holy God and a sinful people. In addition, it is clear that while the offerings *symbolized* something, they also *accomplished* something that was more than symbolic. They had a particular efficacy in either rendering the worshiper or the sacred objects of worship as ceremonially acceptable. In the Millennial kingdom they will also prove useful in the divine instruction of both Israel (Ezekiel 44:23) and the nations (Isaiah 2:3). In order to understand the nature of this efficacy and how it can be reconciled with the sacrifice of Christ, we need to look at the meaning of *atonement*, the word that most often is identified with the purpose of sacrifice.

## The Meaning of Atonement

The basis of the atonement view of the Millennial sacrifices is the proper understanding of the word *atonement*. Since Ezekiel states that these offerings “make atonement,” and it has been seen that these offerings actually *did* something, the question that now must be answered is this: Just what did atonement accomplish in the Old Testament, and what will be its function in the Millennial economy?

Two recent Christian studies of this word in the Old Testament—one with a concentration on its meaning in the book of Leviticus,<sup>42</sup> and the other paying special attention to Ezekiel’s usage in chapters 40–48<sup>43</sup>—have offered a re-evaluation of its meaning in the context of a theocratic government. Their research has determined that the understanding of the Hebrew term for atonement, *kipper*, should be “to purify” or “cleanse,” based on the Akkadian cognate *kup-puru*, rather than the traditionally understood meaning of “to cover,” borrowed from the cognate Arabic *kapara* or the ransom/propitiation view, which is based on the noun form *kopper* and sees atonement as the “averting of divine wrath by the payment of a ransom.”<sup>44</sup> The idea of “cover over,” which has been popularly expressed in Christian books treating this subject for over a century, is that the blood “covered up” or “hid” the offenses from the sight of God so that in not seeing them He would not exact punishment for them. In this light the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant, called in Hebrew the *kiporet* (from *kipper*, “to atone”), has been explained as a box containing objects connected with Israel’s past sins—which needed to be hidden from the presence of the Lord enthroned above the cherubim on either side of the Mercy Seat.<sup>45</sup> The concepts of divine wrath and payment are certainly present in the act of atonement, but the explanation of propitiation/ransom does not take into account the wider range of usage in Leviticus nor the syntax and synonyms of the verb *kipper*. For example, in Leviticus, where the meaning of the term is established, God never appears as the direct object of atonement, but only objects and persons (indirectly) that have become ceremonially impure. Therefore, contrary to the idea of propitiation and ransom, the act of “atonement” is not exercised on God nor something that directly affects Him. This is consistent with the purpose of “atonement” as it is used in Ezekiel 40–48. As Hebrew University professor Moshe Greenberg, author of a scholarly three-volume commentary on Ezekiel, explains:

This is done by purgation and whole offerings whose function is to *kipper* (purge), *hitte’* (decontaminate), and *tihher* (purify) the altar so as

to make it fit for the regular worship (43:20,22,26). These rites have...to do with...the very ancient idea that all pollutions...contaminated the sanctuary.<sup>46</sup>

According to this view, sacrifice accomplished the removal of ritual impurity in order to restore a worshiper's ability to approach God. This concept understands that ritual violations (such as those specified in Leviticus) result in a ceremonial condition of uncleanness that not only interrupts and restricts the worship of the one who has committed the offense, but by its contagious nature is able to contaminate other people and objects, disrupting the required service of God. The possibility then exists that not only could the entire Nation suffer uncleanness, but that also the Temple itself could be defiled. This would create a situation such as that reported by Ezekiel in chapters 8–11, which resulted in the departure of the *Shekinah* (divine presence) from the Temple. If this occurred, the promise of restoration would be reversed and the people would again suffer exile. However, the promise of the Millennial restoration is that this reversal will never again occur (Isaiah 2:4; 51:22; Jeremiah 31:34,40; Ezekiel 36:25-30; 37:23-28; Daniel 2:44; Joel 3:17,20; Zechariah 8:11-15). Therefore, to protect the holiness of the divine presence and to prevent problems associated with the human condition (unholiness), the safeguards of the New Covenant include both the external requirements necessary to create a sanctified status (Jeremiah 33:18; Ezekiel 44:23-25) and the internal provision of a new heart necessary to maintain it (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Zechariah 13:1).

In this light it is necessary to remember three facts about life in the Millennial kingdom. First, the presence of God will dwell literally in the midst of the people. As in the time of the Tabernacle and First Temple, God's manifest glory will be on earth (Ezekiel 43:1-7), but unlike those days, the glorified Christ will be resident in the Temple (Zechariah 2:10-11; 14:9), extending an unparalleled degree of sanctity to the entire city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 4:5; Jeremiah 3:17; Zechariah 2:5; 14:11, 20-21) and requiring sanctified conditions for the entire earth (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14; Zechariah 14:9, 16-18). Second, the unglorified human population will be capable of incurring ritual defilement and polluting the earthly Sanctuary. Even though those who initially enter the Millennial kingdom are all regenerate (Jews—Ezekiel 20:33-38; Gentiles—Matthew 25:31-46), they are still mortal beings who intentionally or unintentionally can violate ceremonial standards. Furthermore, they will produce children who may or may not become spiritually regenerate and receive a new heart (see Revelation 20:7-8), and therefore lack the inward restraint of sin. Third, the Millennial population will be under the New

Covenant and will be regarded as a holy and priestly Nation just as they were under the Mosaic Covenant. Whether or not this is individually so, it was and will be corporately required. Just as by grace the understanding of a penal substitution and faith in God as Savior resulted in personal spiritual salvation for the individual Israelite under the Mosaic system, so under the New Covenant grace through faith based on the universal and undeniable knowledge (Jeremiah 31:34) of the past work of the now resident and ruling resurrected and glorified Messiah (Jeremiah 33:15-16) will save in the Millennial kingdom. Even so, in both Jewish ages the Nation (and in the future, also the nations) must maintain a status of ceremonial purity. As argued above, this kind of sacrificial “atonement” is not for salvation nor for inward sanctification, but to preserve outward *corporate* “*sanctification*” (or ceremonial purification) so that a holy God can remain in the midst of an unholy people. Since every member of this theocratic kingdom will be required to conform to the ceremonial requirements, the sacrificial system will be necessary in order to sustain corporate sanctity.

### Millennial Sacrifices and Christ’s Sacrifice

Based on this discussion, then, it should be apparent that the act of offering sacrifices after the sacrifice of Christ does not present a contradiction. However, having said this it is now necessary to understand the relationship between these future sacrifices and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. First, it is important to note the contrasts between these two kinds of sacrifices, particularly as revealed in the book of Hebrews. While the Old Testament sacrificial system was *effective*, it was not *expiatory*. In the words of Hebrews, it was effective for temporary ritual restoration, the “cleansing of the flesh” (Hebrews 9:13; see also 9:10), but it could not permanently expiate guilt by “tak[ing] away sins” (Hebrews 10:4) or “cleans[ing] the conscience” (Hebrews 9:14). The ceremonial system was never meant to have this purpose; rather, it was to help the Nation (Exodus 19:6) outwardly conform to its holy status (Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7). This will be even more necessary when the glorified Lord returns to earth and establishes the Jewish people as a Nation of priests in the Millennial kingdom (Isaiah 61:6; see also 66:21). However, the penal substitution that was inherent in the nature of sacrifice and demanded an inward identification with sin and its punishment looked forward to an ultimate realization of this in God the Savior. Since this was only possible through substitution, the Savior offered Himself in place of guilty sinners to both *expiate* (remove guilt of sin) and *pro-*

*pitiare* (appease the righteous wrath of God against sin). Therefore, the outward and earthly character of the ceremonial sacrifices and the internal and spiritual character of Christ's sacrifice are of two different kinds, operated in two different spheres, and were for two different purposes. Under the present administration of grace—in which Christ is absent from the earth and our approach is in the heavenly realm—sanctification is possible under the spiritual provisions of the New Covenant (the Holy Spirit, the new heart). However, under the coming administration of the kingdom in which Christ will be present on the earth and the approach will be at the Temple in Jerusalem, outward corporate “sanctification” (or ceremonial purification) will be necessary, as well as inward personal sanctification, under the full terms (spiritual and physical) of the New Covenant.

Therefore, the literal interpretation of the sacrifices of the Temple of Ezekiel and their resumption during the Millennium have not been found to be blasphemous, but rather, to be the God-ordained means to blessing in the theocratic kingdom. And though this Final Temple and its priestly service will be at the center of the blessings of this Messianic age, its course will conclude when the 1,000-year reign of Christ over a restored Israel is complete (Revelation 20:7) and the eternal state has begun with the creation of a new heavens and earth (Isaiah 66:22; Revelation 21:1).

Yet this will not be the final chapter for the Temple. There's still more to come, as we will discover in the Temple beyond time.



# The Temple Beyond Time



## The Final Fulfillment of the Future Temple

*The Temple embodies Judaism's attempt to sanctify the material world: Just as Shabbat and the holidays are intended to create sacred time, so was the Temple meant to create sacred space. According to tradition, the Temple was the place where God violated His remoteness and revealed Himself to human beings. The yearning for the Temple is a longing for the renewal of the dialogue between God and Israel.*

—HANAN PORAT,  
HEAD OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT LOBBY IN THE KNESSET

**I**t has often been said that “without a heavenly hope man is of no earthly good.” The great hope of every good man, therefore, is of heaven—not because he loathes earth, but because he loves God, and heaven is where God dwells. From the beginning, when the Maker created man in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), He made him for a relationship with Himself. The Temple, in time, symbolized God’s dwelling with man, which made possible to a limited degree the experience of a relationship that was something more than merely spiritual. And just as the Millennium and its Temple will be a fulfillment of the divine ideal for the Nation of Israel, so the eternal state and the heavenly New Jerusalem will be the fulfillment of the divine ideal for all redeemed mankind. The first had its inception at Mount Sinai, but the second goes back to the beginning of God’s revelation of Himself in the Garden of Eden (see chapter 9). Even so, the historical Temples (Temples in time) all reflected something of the original divine ideal, the Heavenly Temple (Temple before time) although limited by the circumstances of the Fall and violations of the Mosaic Covenant. For this reason, under the New Covenant the description of the Temple of Ezekiel has parallels with Genesis just as does the New Jerusalem depicted in Isaiah and Revelation. These parallels establish the continuity in God’s purpose to dwell with man, yet only the ultimate relationship of man with God in the eternal state (the Temple beyond time) completes this purpose.

## Looking Beyond Time

Revelation 21–22 pictures a period *after* a new heavens and a new earth have been created (see also Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13) and a new state of existence will have begun. After the restoration has been fulfilled with the Millennial kingdom, there will come a new creation that better fits the divine design. That a re-creation, rather than a renovation, is in view appears evident from the language employed: “the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea...no longer...any death...making all things new...no need of the sun or of the moon...no night there...no longer any curse” (see Revelation 21:1,4-5,23,25; 22:3,5).<sup>1</sup> This is also apparent in the context of Isaiah 66 (from which this re-creation language is borrowed), where the theme of the restoration of Jerusalem is immediately associated with the theme of re-creation.<sup>2</sup> While this terminology is reminiscent of the original creation in the Garden of Eden (with its Edenic Sanctuary where God was able to dwell

with man), it is because we have now been transported to its archetypal setting, the heavenly Jerusalem, with its divine Sanctuary.

The debate over Revelation 21:9-27 being a chronological recapitulation to the Millennium or kept in the chronological progression of 19:11-22:6 as the eternal state is unnecessary for this discussion.<sup>3</sup> In Revelation 21:10 (see also 21:2, first appearance), the New Jerusalem is assumed by the text to have already been in existence. In Revelation 21:9-27, as far as the focus on the description of the city goes, whether it appears in the Millennium or the eternal state is not an issue (although verses 24-26 require a decision). Rather, because John centers on the *place* (descriptively) rather than its *position* (chronologically), the reference point is “beyond time.” In other words, the reality of which John is speaking is timeless and eternal—regardless of the time in which it appears. However, before we look in particular at the Temple in this New Jerusalem, let us look at the broader concept of the city as presented in the Old and New Testaments as well as in Judaism.

## Understanding the New Jerusalem

### *The New Jerusalem in the Old Testament*

The Book of Hebrews declares that those who follow God are headed toward the destination of a heavenly city (Hebrews 13:14). Hebrews indicates that this has been the aim of the faithful going all the way back to the fathers of the faith, beginning with Abraham: “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham, like all of the patriarchs, was nomadic and wandered the land, as do modern Bedouin, without respect to borders. The patriarchs lived a life of constant motion, always looking for a better place to live. The point in Genesis 12:1-3—where Abraham’s call was first given—is that God had a place prepared, and He would show it to the one who in faith obeyed (verse 1). That place was the place of promise, where ultimately all the families of the earth would be blessed (verses 2-3). Therefore, even though it’s not expressed in the text of Genesis, Abraham was looking for the city which had foundations, “whose architect and builder is God... a better country, that is a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:10,16). As God later revealed, this would be the place shown to Moses (Exodus 25:9,40) and David (1 Chronicles 28:11-19)—the place where the Heavenly Temple was found. This could only have been the heavenly Jerusalem, since the structures on earth were copied

after the heavenly (Exodus 25:9,40; Hebrews 9:23), and the divinely designated site of the Temple (progressively revealed) was Jerusalem (see Genesis 22:2, 14; Exodus 15:17; Deuteronomy 12:11; 2 Samuel 7:10, 13; 1 Kings 8:16-21).

When the psalmist refers to “the LORD, who dwells in Zion” (Psalm 9:11; compare 48:2; 74:2; 76:2), he is employing the language of heaven, the true dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8:30,39,43; 2 Chronicles 6:21,30,33,39) to describe the reality of God’s presence at His chosen place on earth (2 Chronicles 6:41). Since the Old Testament prophets clearly predicted that neither the present earth nor heaven would continue (Isaiah 34:4) but would one day pass away (Isaiah 65:17), Judaism projected the understanding of the earthly Jerusalem as God’s “dwelling place” heavenward (as the early Jewish-Christian epistle to the Hebrews reveals), forming the hope of an eternal Jerusalem where, in further contrast, there would be fullness of the presence of God (Isaiah 66:22). Whereas the earth was God’s footstool, heaven was His throne and the place where each of His subjects longed to be (see Psalm 23:6; 27:4).

Therefore, while the New Jerusalem is not *explicit* in the Old Testament, the concept of it is *implicit* in some passages—especially in those that proclaim the eternity and inviolability of Jerusalem. When the psalmist gives the assurance that “those who trust in the LORD are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever” (Psalm 125:1), his ultimate reference must be the New Jerusalem, since only it will abide forever. In the same way, when Ezekiel 37:28 promises that “My sanctuary” will be “in their midst forever” it can be understood as until the end of time, yet the focus is upon God dwelling in such a way that the ideal covenant relationship—“I will be their God, and they will be My people” (verse 27)—will be realized without interruption. This is exactly what the book of Revelation sees as fulfilled in the eternal state in the New Jerusalem: “And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven. . . . and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them” (Revelation 21:2-3). Although this understanding is the result of progressive revelation, surely the Old Testament saints must have reasoned (in light of the unseen city which Abraham sought) that if the old Jerusalem they knew was to remain “forever,” a New Jerusalem needed to exist to fulfill such prophecies. This is what is meant to be understood when Isaiah joins his eschatological description of a restored Jerusalem to passages that describe the new heaven and new earth:

Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice for-

ever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem. . . . My holy mountain Jerusalem. . . . I will also take some of them for priests and Levites. . . . For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me. . . . so your offspring and your name will endure (Isaiah 65:17; 66:20-22).

The association here of Millennial Jerusalem with the Jerusalem of the new creation, the heavenly Jerusalem, in the same contexts, may make the chronology of the passage seem ambiguous, but the point is to reveal future fulfillment. In Isaiah 65:17-25 and 66:10-21 the contexts reveal that in the Millennial kingdom—where there is still death, decay, and giving birth (Isaiah 65:20,22-23) as well as judgment and sacrificial offerings (Isaiah 66:14c-17, 20)—this fulfillment is partial, even though it has been realized on earth as promised (Genesis 12:3). However, with the new heavens and earth (the eternal state), every aspect of God's promise will be fully performed, both in the guarantee of an untarnished future (Isaiah 65:17) and the execution of eternal punishment (Isaiah 66:24). This foundational concept of the heavenly Jerusalem was developed in later Judaism, both between the testaments and in the Talmudic period, into a more elaborate eschatological hope.

### *The New Jerusalem in Judaism*

The first development of the concept of the New Jerusalem appears in the Jewish apocalyptic literature and the Jewish midrashim of the post-exilic Second Temple period. In these extrabiblical documents the heavenly Jerusalem, perfect in every respect, either replaces or transforms the imperfect earthly Jerusalem as the final fulfillment of the restoration period.<sup>4</sup> For example, in the apocalyptic writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a document preserved in several fragmentary copies (1Q32, 2Q24, 4Q554-555, 5Q15, 11Q18) presents a vision of the New Jerusalem. It is comparable to Ezekiel's vision of Jerusalem and the Temple in Ezekiel 40-48 as well as that of John's in the Apocalypse (Revelation 21-22), but differs in significant details. Like these familiar apocalyptic texts, the dimensions of the New Jerusalem are much greater than those of the ancient city, and we read a description of the 12 gates of the city, each named for one of the 12 tribes. This document also understands that the setting for this New Jerusalem is the eschatological period, after the final end-time battle in which Israel emerges victorious over the Gentile nations and Israel has been restored in glory.<sup>5</sup> This would place it, in our terms, in the Millennium and eternal state.

In postbiblical rabbinic Judaism, the sages faced the need to preserve the hope of Jewish restoration within the contradictory experience of losing the earthly Jerusalem, which the Jewish scriptures had said could not be lost or destroyed. To resolve this dilemma, the sages went back to the nascent concept of the New Jerusalem in the Old Testament and developed the idea of “Jerusalem the Lower” (Hebrew, *Yerushalaim Shel Matta*)—the earthly Jerusalem, and “Jerusalem the Upper” (Hebrew, *Yerushalaim Shel Maalah*)—the heavenly Jerusalem. Yitzhak I. Hayutman, Dean of Research and Development at the Academy of Jerusalem, explains the meaning of this dualism for Judaism:

In these legends the heavenly Jerusalem is the archetype of the good to come, which will be revealed to all at the redemption of the world. At present she hovers above the earthly Jerusalem, even when the latter lies in ruin or sin, but only the most righteous can see her, in moments of grace. In Christian tradition, she is described at the end of the New Testament as descending out of heaven perfect and complete at the consummation of history, while Jewish legends emphasize the building from below to actualize the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>

The consummation of history of which Dr. Hayutman speaks is known in Judaism as “the World to Come” (Hebrew, *ha ‘Olam habba’*) and is distinguished from “the days of the Messiah” (Hebrew, *Yemot ha-Mashiach*) and “the Redemption” (Hebrew, *Ge’ulah*), both terms for the Millennium, since in this age there will be “no eating and drinking, no begetting of children, no bargaining, no jealousy and hatred, and no strife; but the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads enjoying the effulgence of the *Shekinah*” (*Bab. Berakot* 17a). The Jewish Talmud states that the heavenly Jerusalem, although belonging to the World to Come, could already be seen in moments of grace by the righteous, who could receive heavenly inspiration from it. In some places the Talmud implies that the heavenly Jerusalem is not to be regarded as above the earthly Jerusalem. This was probably stated in reaction to disputations with Christianity where it had been argued that the heavenly Jerusalem (the church) had replaced earthly Jerusalem (Israel).

The heavenly Jerusalem also appears in the Zohar, the extrabiblical text revered by Kabbalistic (mystical) Judaism. It views the heavenly Jerusalem as the place created by God to house the souls of the righteous. It also makes a distinction between earthly Jerusalem, which it identifies with the kingdom<sup>7</sup> in which the *Shekinah* (the presence of God) is again present, and the heavenly Jerusalem which it identifies with the higher *Shekinah*, the *sefira* of *binah* (“level

of understanding”) of the World to Come. From this we can see that Judaism came to recognize that the New Jerusalem presently existed as the heavenly counterpart of the earthly Jerusalem, and would be realized in the ultimate age by the righteous as they collectively worked to effect its appearance by their spiritual and moral attainments in this world.

### *The New Jerusalem in the New Testament*

In the Bible, the use of the term “New Jerusalem” is exclusive to the book of Revelation. However, other New Testament writers were quite familiar with the *concept* of the New Jerusalem, although they preferred to use alternate expressions. In Galatians 4:26 the apostle Paul speaks of “the Jerusalem above” in distinction to “the present Jerusalem” (verse 25). Even though this is an analogical (not allegorical) use for the sake of comparison (see chapter 13), the concept clearly is present in Paul’s thinking. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, in using the term “heavenly Jerusalem,” accepts it as a concept readily understood by his Jewish-Christian audience. He provides a description of the heavenly Jerusalem when he contrasts it as the place of grace with the earthly Mount Sinai, the place of the law: “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant” (Hebrews 12:22-24).

According to this description, the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem are the angelic host (“myriads of angels”), the church (“the general assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven”), God (“the Judge of all”), the Old Testament saints (“spirits of righteous men made perfect”), and Jesus (“the mediator of a new covenant”). This agrees with the descriptions of the heavenly court and the New Jerusalem found in Revelation. In addition, the Hebrews passage places this New Jerusalem in the eternal state when it says, “Yet once more I [God] will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven” (Hebrews 12:26). The expression “yet once more” denotes the removal of those things which can be shaken, as in created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude...for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28). That the eternal state is in view is made certain by the references to a new heavens and earth and the removal of the old created order (both the earth and the heavens) by fire and its replacement by an indestructible kingdom. This follows the general outline

of Isaiah 65–66 and also harmonizes with the same cosmic dissolution spoken of by Peter as the climax of the Day of the Lord, which results in “new heavens and a new earth” (see 2 Peter 3:10–13). Therefore, the “kingdom which cannot be shaken” must be the eternal state.

Because the most significant text for the study of the New Jerusalem is the book of Revelation, let us now consider it as a prelude to the specific study of the Temple which it is said to “contain.”

### *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation*

Although the heavenly Jerusalem, and specifically the Sanctuary-court of God, appears at significant intervals throughout the judgment section (Revelation 6–19) to show the response of heaven to events on earth (see chapter 14), the most complete description of the New Jerusalem is in Revelation 21–22. John calls it “the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:9), and through the words that introduce this expression he explains to the discerning reader his intent. His words, “Come here and I will show you . . .” set up a direct contrast to this same introduction in Revelation 17:1 of the “great harlot.” The contrast then is between the city of Babylon, which, though a real place, symbolized the absence of God (Revelation 17:2–7), and the New Jerusalem, also a real place, which symbolized the presence of God (Revelation 21:3; 22:3–5).

Those of the symbolic school reject the New Jerusalem as a place and identify it as a person (God’s true people, the church).<sup>8</sup> They find it incredible that anyone could interpret the description of the New Jerusalem literally because it would result in it being “a city from outer space”! They point to its immense size, its cubical shape, its jeweled adornment, and its supernatural source of illumination all as symbols of the church (either as the redeemed on earth or in heaven). However, it is no less incredible to accept that heaven and hell are literal places, and this reference is most likely the use of an object for what it contains (the saints in the city), since in Revelation 22:3 the “bond-servants” of the Lamb (the saints) are separate from the city itself (so it cannot be a symbol of them). Moreover, despite its unusual features, this city qualifies in every sense as a *physical* reality, with measurable architectural structures, planned design, building materials, rivers, trees, and human inhabitants.

What appears to us as an incredible description is due to our present inability to grasp such future realities. As an eternal city for an eternal people, it is not of earth, but from heaven; the handiwork of an infinite God that should not be expected to conform in every respect to our conventional concepts (see Reve-

lation 21:5). The city is laid out as a square with connecting planes of equal size that form a cube. Its gates are inscribed with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel and the foundation stones of its wall with the names of the 12 apostles (Revelation 21:12-14). Even though these are all Jewish, they represent the two dispensations of Israel and the church (or the Old and New Testament saints, as in Hebrews 12:23). This accords with the fact that the church's "foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20) was Jewish, and reminds Gentiles who are grafted into the place of privilege or blessing (mediated to the nations through the Abrahamic Covenant) that they must not be arrogant toward the Jews, who are the natural branches (Romans 11:18-23). As such, it is fitting that it was still during the dispensation of Israel when Jesus, as the Jewish Messiah, announced to His Jewish disciples that He was going away (to heaven) to prepare a place (this city) for them as His bride (John 14:2). Part of that preparation may be His entrance into the heavenly Holy of Holies as a High Priest in order to bring His saints there to serve the living God (see Hebrews 9:11-14; Revelation 22:3).

The brilliant splendor of the inner city described by John—with iridescent stones of every color and hue, streets of pure gold like transparent glass—is again the language of accommodation in harmony with the vision of God's presence. In Exodus 24, when Moses and the elders of Israel were permitted to see the God of Israel, their vision was of His heavenly court, where the street was described as "a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky" (verse 10). John had described the New Jerusalem as "having the glory of God" (Revelation 21:11), and it is this that John emphasizes in his description of the city. The supernatural illumination of the city is also the result of the presence of God, and the reason why there can be no night there (Revelation 21:5; 22:5). The archetype of the Garden of Eden is also present in the city, complete with the tree of life and a river of the water of life (Revelation 22:1-2).

Because the presence of God is the chief concern of the New Jerusalem passages, let's consider this in greater detail.

## **The Presence of God in the New Jerusalem**

In Revelation 21:3, reference is made to the Tabernacle of God: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them." Interpreting this text literally, it is a fulfillment of the prophetic text from which it was taken, Ezekiel 37:27: "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and

they will be My people.” Again, the presupposition of the symbolic school of interpretation is that such apocalyptic description must be hyperbolic imagery.<sup>9</sup> Under this system Revelation 21:3 is interpreted as the church—either the church on earth in its universal dominion (postmillennialists), or the church in heaven (amillennialists). Based on the assumption that only the Christian community is in view, this meaning is read back into the Old Testament with the result being that Ezekiel 37:27 and 40–48 (its larger expansion) were originally intended to be typological descriptions of the church. This means that every nationalistic promise made to Israel (as a subservient part of the covenantal format) in an eschatological context is primarily soteriological in nature, and therefore applies spiritually (or soteriologically) to the church as the elect of God who inherits the covenant blessings.

However, if we take the New Jerusalem symbolically, there is no reason we should not likewise interpret symbolically “the new heavens and new earth” (Revelation 21:1), or for that matter, Christ as the “Alpha and Omega” who makes “all things new” (Revelation 21:5-6). Also, while the symbolic view has argued from Pauline usage that the church is the Temple, John here states that “the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22). How can the church and God symbolize the same thing? Interpreted literally, this text would understand the New Jerusalem as an eschatological city distinct from the terrestrial Jerusalem (since the New Jerusalem is said to have no Temple). Those who take Revelation 21:9-27 as Millennial would see this text supporting the idea that the New Jerusalem will be suspended over the earthly Jerusalem during the Millennial kingdom (Revelation 21:10). This understanding could explain how the “nations shall walk by its light” (Revelation 21:24)—as it illumines the earthly city and turns it into the Throne of God (Jeremiah 3:17), how the *Shekinah* fills the earthly Temple while also being the source of light in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:23), and how the Lamb can be with His resurrected saints above and His Millennial saints below. In the context of the eternal state it seems to have replaced the former Jerusalem as the abode of all the people of God (Revelation 21:3-8);<sup>10</sup> however, it may also be the conduit between the new heavens and the new earth, allowing God’s redeemed creatures, for whom this new world will be made, to enjoy its recreated wonders while dwelling securely in the place promised and prepared by the Savior (John 14:2).

While Revelation 21:2, as described in verses 9-27, is a literal structure, it is also a spiritual one, as this verse declares: God dwelling among His people. The correspondences between Revelation 21:11-21 and Ezekiel 40–48 (the eschato-

logical Temple) are the result of the common source—the pattern of the Heavenly Temple—from which Ezekiel also drew its structure, which as the courts of the Lord and His hosts, is itself a Temple, not needing to contain a separate complex. This may, in part, explain why John reports he saw no Temple there (verse 22—more on this in a moment).

It is the unique language of Ezekiel 37:27 which was the basis of the selection of this text for application to the ultimate manifestation of the Lord among men in Revelation 21. In addition to the usual term “sanctuary,” Ezekiel uses here and nowhere else the term *mishkan* (“dwelling place”). The association of these terms tied together all of Lord’s the “sanctuaries” throughout time (including the eschatological Temple of Ezekiel 40–48), because all were in some way linked to the *Shekinah*, the divine immanence.<sup>11</sup> Thus the terminology pointed to the divine ideal of an ultimate dwelling, which in John’s vision, best suited the final stage of divine manifestation. This prepares us for the concept of the Temple of the New Jerusalem.

## The Temple of the New Jerusalem

With Revelation 21:22 we finally come to a specific mention of the Temple in the New Jerusalem. As we have just seen, the city is described as having the *Shekinah* glory of God (Revelation 21:11), so the expectation is that a Temple is present. However, the opening words of this verse are, “And I saw no temple in it...” Such a statement would have been startling to those accustomed to viewing the Temple as the place of the divine presence. For this reason, Ezekiel used historic detail in keeping with the *Shekinah*’s manifestation in the Tabernacle (Exodus 19:9; Leviticus 16:2) and the First Temple (1 Kings 8:10-13; 2 Chronicles 5:13-6:2; 7:1-3) to depict the return of the *Shekinah* glory to the Millennial Temple (Ezekiel 43:1-7). Although John’s description of the New Jerusalem has allusions to Ezekiel, probably for ceremonial continuity (since the New Jerusalem is a “Temple-city”),<sup>12</sup> his declaration, intended for dramatic contrast, that there will be no Temple there, must be understood.

As we saw in chapter 9, when man as a creature dwelt with God the Creator in the Garden of Eden, even though there was no Temple, there was still a sanctuary structure. Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld explains that the recognition of the Creator by the creature and the relationship that should follow is the purpose for God’s desire to “dwell” with man:

The root of the Hebrew word “Shechinah” is the word “SHaCHaN,” or “dwell.” It appears to be based on the words of the verse, (Shemos 25:8),

“Let the Jewish people make for me a Mikdash [“Sanctuary”], and I will \*dwell\* (“v’SHaCHaNti) amongst them.” This verse itself leaves much to explain. If Hashem [God] fills all of creation, how can He be said to “dwell” in one particular place? The *Sefer ha’Chinuch* (Mitzvah #95) explains the reasoning behind the Mitzvah [“commandment”] to build Hashem a Temple. It is not in order to provide a place of dwelling for Hashem that we built the Holy Temple, he explains, but it is for our own benefit. The point of our prayers and sacrifices in the Temple (at least on a simple plane of meaning) is in order that we may bring ourselves closer to the service of Hashem. The magnificent Temple, the purity in which it is kept, the dedicated service of the priestly Kohanim [“priests”], all combine to instill in those who witness them the awe of the Almighty in a most tangible manner. This, he explains, is what is meant by saying that Hashem “rests his Shechinah” in the Temple. That is, the Temple is a place which “arouses us” to recognize our Creator. When we encounter places where Hashem’s presence is made more obvious to us, we may say that “Hashem’s Shechinah” rests there.<sup>13</sup>

After the Fall and its curse on mankind, there was no possibility that God could dwell with man without destroying man. The Temple was necessary for man to be protected from the glory of God, which is described as “a consuming fire” (see Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Isaiah 33:14; Hebrews 12:29; see also Exodus 19:18-24 for Israel’s experience). In the New Jerusalem, where the curse no longer exists and men will exist in glorified resurrection bodies, God is able to dwell with them face to face without any means of separation. This idea is drawn from the understanding in Revelation 21:3 (based on Ezekiel 37:26-28) that God would “tabernacle” or “dwell among” them. But because verse 22 says, “I saw no temple in it,” some commentators see here the passing away of “symbol for reality,” and “the breaking away of the author from dependence upon Ezekiel.”<sup>14</sup> While it is proper to observe the differences between the description of the New Jerusalem and Ezekiel’s Temple, this difference is not an exchange of symbol for reality, since Ezekiel’s Temple was not symbolic, but an earthly Restoration Temple. One must further take exception with the contention that the model of Ezekiel’s eschatological Temple has been discarded. For almost the whole of the chapter, John has been building his description from allusions to Ezekiel, and completes his description in verses 24-27 with both the worship of the nations being brought to the New Jerusalem (verses 24-26) and cultic exclusions to maintain absolute ritual purity (verse 27)—all patterned after Zechariah 14:16-21 (a previous allusion to Zechariah 14:7 appears in

verse 25). It is this use of the language of Ezekiel that continues the Sanctuary connection with the New Jerusalem and helps identify it as a Temple-city.

But how can the New Jerusalem be considered a Temple-city if there is no Temple in it? Remember that when John first introduced the New Jerusalem in Revelation 3:12, he used an illustration of honoring overcoming believers in the New Jerusalem as “a pillar in the temple of My God.” This statement refers to the ancient Grecian custom of placing a pillar in a temple in order to honor a dignitary. This is not in contradiction to the later statement omitting a Temple, but perhaps an implication that the New Jerusalem is something of a Temple itself. This is, in fact, what is stated in the very next words of Revelation 21:22—that there *is* a Temple, but it is *more* than any Temple envisioned through time. By comparison with all earthly Temples, including the Millennial Temple, the New Jerusalem is unique. It has no Temple in the sense that it contains one, yet it has a Temple in the sense that it is a part of one, namely “the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb” which “are its temple” (Revelation 21:22). All former Temples were the construction or reconstruction of an earthly structure, ritually restricted (even to the priests), and concealing the *Shekinah* from the view of man in its unlit innermost chamber. This New Temple, by contrast, has none of these former limitations, and goes beyond them in the same way that the archetype exceeds the model. These unique features are depicted as follows:

1. *An absence of ritual restrictions for the righteous.* In Revelation 21:7 “he who overcomes” is the individual (in opposition to the group, see Revelation 2–3) who will inherit or partake of eternal life (see verses 4,6) and especially the covenantal status of the “people of God” reflected in the phrase: “I will be his God and he will be My son” (see verse 3 for the group). What is particularly exceptional is the degree of this access: “and they shall see His face” (Revelation 22:4). This clearly indicates a new access without the former restrictions, in light of Exodus 33:20: “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” The text explains that the reason this is possible is because the New Jerusalem cannot be defiled *from within* because the curse is past (Revelation 22:3), nor *from without*, since all possible desecrators have been confined in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8, 27). Thus, as one commentator has pointed out: “In the eternal state God will dwell among His people in a direct unmediated communion.”<sup>15</sup>

2. *A transference from heaven to earth.* In Revelation 21:2,10 (see also Revelation 3:12) the New Jerusalem is described as descending out of heaven from God. The present participle in these verses indicates the city as being in the

process of descent, thereby characterizing it as a “descending from heaven” kind of city. This is further emphasized by the Greek prepositions *ek*, indicating origin (heaven), and *apo*, indicating the originator (God). This city is not of an earthly construction, but is a structure transferred from heaven. From the parallels between the description of this city and the Garden of Eden and Ezekiel’s Temple, we may conjecture a common source—namely, the archetypal Heavenly Temple, which John has previously depicted in his heavenly throne visions. Thus, we may have here a transference of the Heavenly Temple to the new earth to constitute a new Temple where the divine ideal of the Creator among His creation, lost at Eden (see Genesis 3:8), can be realized.

3. *A constitution as the Sanctuary par excellence.* In the previous descriptions of the descending city, it is stated that this city is “the holy city” (Revelation 21:2), “having the glory of God” (Revelation 21:11). These phrases indicate respectively the supernal holiness of the New Jerusalem and the presence of the *Shekinah*. This is reinforced by the announcement in 21:3: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them.” This “tabernacle of God” is the *heavenly* Tabernacle that has previously appeared (see Revelation 7:15; 13:6; 15:5) and has in view the Holy of Holies, as indicated by both “the tabernacle” and the verb “dwell.” I suggest this implies that the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Temple/Tabernacle may have been separated from its courts<sup>16</sup> and now constitutes the New Jerusalem. The intensive phrase “God Himself” emphasizes the presence of God without mediation or representation, because priestly performance within the courts and the Holy Place are no longer required.

This supposition may be supported by Revelation 21:16, which reveals the dimensions of the city as “laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width.” Here is a city said to be 1,500 miles in measurement, yet with all the measurements equal.<sup>17</sup> Since the Holy of Holies in the earthly Temples were built according to this design (see 1 Kings 6:19-20), it has been well recognized that what this depicts is the *entire city* as a Sanctuary, or rather, an immense Holy of Holies.<sup>18</sup> The original design of the Tabernacle was to allow God to dwell among His people (Exodus 25:8). This was also stated as the goal of the Restoration Temple (Ezekiel 37:27; Zechariah 2:10; 8:8). Here then is the Sanctuary *par excellence*, epitomizing the realization of the Temple’s most ideal function, the communion of God and man. Within this Temple is what has always constituted a holy place—the true Temple, God Himself. As Revelation 21:22 says, “for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.” Thus the divine presence

as Lord and Lamb (God and Messiah) in the midst of the New Jerusalem as the Holy of Holies constitutes it as the true and ultimate Temple.

This ultimate communion between God and man was the goal of the divine ideal for the eternal state. Although this concept appears in the Christian apocalypse, it is not an exclusively Christian concept. This has been pointed out by Hebrew University Professor Emeritus David Flusser, who has suggested that it reflects a Jewish concept.<sup>19</sup> He shows that a Jewish midrash on Isaiah 60:19 (which was fused with a midrash on Psalm 132:17) presents an almost identical parallel to this text (Revelation 21:22-23).<sup>20</sup> These parallel elements may be illustrated as follows:

<b>Revelation 21:22-23</b>	<b>The Midrash</b>
v. 22—"And I saw no temple in the city"	"In the world to come there will be no need of the light of the Temple"
v. 23—"The glory of God has illumined it"	"God will be the everlasting light of Jerusalem"
v. 23—"And its lamp is the Lamb"	"The Messiah is compared to a lamp"

This concept is also evident in this statement from Hanan Porat, who heads the Knesset's Temple Mount lobby and helped conquer the Mount, as a paratrooper, in 1967:

The Temple embodies Judaism's attempt to sanctify the material world: Just as Shabbat and the holidays are intended to create sacred time, so was the Temple meant to create sacred space. According to tradition, the Temple was the place where God violated His remoteness and revealed Himself to human beings. The yearning for the Temple is a longing for the renewal of the dialogue between God and Israel.

While Porat's comment was directed to the future Third Temple, it reveals that the understanding of the Temple as the place where all is holy and man meets God is paramount in the Jewish concept. If this can be understood as the goal of the earthly Temple, how much more and to what greater degree can it be imagined for the Temple beyond time?

With this final view of the fulfillment of the divine design and man's own dreams, John ends his vision of the last days with a holy city and Temple—as did the prophet Ezekiel, whose Millennial Temple set the precedent for the indwelling

presence of God in the Temple beyond time with the closing words “the name of the city from that day shall be, ‘the LORD is there’” (Ezekiel 48:35). This is precisely what John sees when he describes the New Jerusalem as the place where the saints not only “see His face,” but they also have “His name...on their foreheads” and with him they “shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:4-5).

## The New Jerusalem Today

Many scholars believe that the city of New Jerusalem exists right now, but that it won't descend to the earth until the Millennium or the beginning of the eternal state. If the New Jerusalem (as Hebrews 12:22 suggests with its wording “you *have come* to...the heavenly Jerusalem”) does exist, I have already implied that this city of the saints may be that place presently being prepared for believers by Jesus in fulfillment of His promise, “In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3). It is important to note that there is no conception here of individual dwellings *apart* from the Lord, as if He lived on top of a hill and we all had mansions (in ascending order of size and proximity) somewhere on His land. There is only one house—“the Father's house”—and all of the rooms are in it. This could give the impression of a gigantic apartment complex; however, because the function of believers will be to “serve Him day and night *in His temple*” (Revelation 7:15, emphasis added; see also 22:3), it is best to view “the Father's house” in its normal usage here as “His temple.”<sup>21</sup> In the Jerusalem Temple there were many dwelling chambers for the priests within the Temple precincts; this was necessary because the priests were on duty day and night. In Ezekiel's Millennial Temple the chambers for the priests and workmen surround the Temple-city (Ezekiel 48:11-20) and the throne of the Lord (Jeremiah 3:17), over which is God's canopy of protection (Isaiah 4:5-6). In the same way, in the New Jerusalem there will be places prepared for the saints so that all will be in the presence of the Lord, whose presence will abolish night forever (Revelation 22:5), making possible the unceasing service of the saints as priests. We are also told that the home of the saints will be “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” and that, as a result, “the tabernacle of God [will be] among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them” (Revelation 21:2-3). This is the same “Mount

Zion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” in which reside believers of both the Old and New Testament times (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Therefore, the New Jerusalem as the Holy of Holies, with God Himself constituting “the temple,” offers us some startling contrasts with the old Jerusalem and its Temple in time. Rather than one man serving as a high priest for the people of God, all of God’s people are priests. Unlike the earthly high priest, who could rarely enter the old Holy of Holies, the priests in this new Temple will ever remain there. Their service is not once a year on the Day of Atonement, but continuously and forever. The presence of God does not dwell within the Holy of Holies away from man, but God and the Lamb (Christ) dwell among all of the redeemed. This is the great and heavenly hope of all who “seek His face” (Psalm 17:15; 27:8; 42:2; 105:4), and the prophetic promise of a Temple beyond time.

Before this day of ultimate fulfillment comes to pass, however, there must first be the fulfillment of other yet future prophecies for the Temple. In our concluding chapter, we will consider just how ready Israel is to rebuild...and begin the final drama of the Last Days Temple.



## PART V



# The Progression Towards the Last Days Temple

“Behold, your House [Temple] is left to you desolate! For I tell you, .’”

—*Haggai 1:2, 4, 8*

[We should] probe the issue not as an exercise in apocalyptic forecasting, but with an eye toward those aspects of the Temple’s rebuilding that may contribute to ‘the fear of God and the love of Him.’”

—*Joshua Berman*



# Ready to Rebuild



## Significant Sign of the End Times

*What are the next steps of this process? How do we get from where we are to that which we pray for several times a day—the rebuilding of the Temple?*

—JOSHUA BERMAN

*We must. . . openly and unabashedly, over and over, declare the simple truth that the entire Temple Mount is ours. It is the site of the two destroyed Holy Temples, and is the place upon which the Third Temple will be rebuilt—soon, with the help of G-d. We have not given up on the Temple Mount, we have no authority to do so, and we will never do so. It is the heart of Jerusalem, of the Land of Israel, of the world—and it is the heart of the people of Israel.<sup>1</sup>*

—RABBI ZALMAN MELAMED

**B**efore he entered office, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wrote to one Temple activist, “The right of the Jewish people to its holy place—the Temple Mount—cannot be questioned.”<sup>2</sup> This statement from Netanyahu, though considered sensational by the press, could be made by any of Israel’s prime ministers, for to deny it would be tantamount to denying the Jewish heritage itself. The real statement that those in the Temple movement are waiting to hear is one that does not repeat old assurances about “rights” that have no reality, but one that declares, “We are ready to rebuild.”

As Orthodox Jews continue to prepare for the Third Temple, and Israel continues to be threatened by enemies within and without, a growing sense of readiness is filling the Land. More than ever before, voices are asking, “Are these signs of the end time? How near are we to these days? How much longer before Messiah comes?” With Israel tottering on the edge of decision, answering such questions while keeping a proper balance is the challenge of the day. For such a time as this the example of Rabbi Kook, the spiritual father of many people involved in the Temple movement, should be recalled:

Rabbi Kook’s perfect faith that the revealed End was indeed at hand in no way contradicts the notion that we may, heaven forbid, miss the mark. . . . We must act in full awareness of the mighty messianic potential of our era. . . . There is, however, a fine line between appropriate faith and false confidence, between true reverence that knows how great is the gulf separating it from its Creator and the arrogant certainty that presumes to know the mind of the Most High. . . . And we bear an exalted responsibility to see that the potential is realized.<sup>3</sup>

The words are fitting for those who eagerly expect redemption but are warned that they may be in their final hour. When people are ready, it is hard to wait!

## Restlessness on the Temple Mount

As the Millennial countdown began with the turn of the Gregorian calendar to its final year, fears of apocalyptic fever erupted in Israel. According to Jerusalem police commander Yair Yitzhaki, Israeli police were preparing for the possibility that messianists would attempt some violent action on the Temple Mount in the hopes of forcing the last days to come. Their fears were realized when on January 3, the Israeli government arrested and deported eight American members of a doomsday cult known as “Concerned Christians.” Linda

Menuhin, a spokeswoman for the Jerusalem police department, said the members were part of an apocalyptic sect based in Denver, Colorado. The sect's leader, Monte Kim Miller, a former marketing executive, claimed he could speak in God's voice. He prophesied that the world would end at the close of 1999, that he would die in Jerusalem and be resurrected three days later, and that only he and members of his flock would be saved in the Holy City. The group had sold all their belongings before going to Israel in November of 1998 and moving into a house in the Meveseret Zion neighborhood.

The police said that cult experts advised them that the members "intended to commit extreme, violent activity in Jerusalem[s] streets and possibly commit suicide on the Temple Mount towards the end of 1999 in order to initiate a procedure to bring back Jesus."<sup>4</sup> After the deportation of this group, more unsettling activity took place on the Temple Mount in that month and the next. During that time the police prevented five attacks on the Temple Mount by Jews and others.

As police commander Yitzhaki says, "There is nothing more sensitive than the Old City. We have invested unprecedented manpower and resources to secure it."<sup>5</sup> But it is just such an assurance that flies in the face of Temple Mount activists. Their response is, "Rather than investing in manpower and resources to secure the Temple Mount *from* Jews, they should be doing this *for* Jews!" For this reason, they would say, what the police fear most is still going to happen again and again—violence on the Temple Mount.

When Israel made its formal peace treaty with Jordan, U.S. President Bill Clinton, in an address to the Jordanian Parliament (which was half-empty due to Arab opposition to the treaty), said, "The conflict between fear and hope is the problem of the Middle East today. Extremists who clothe themselves in religion...seek to destroy the progress of this peace....you are the past, not the future."<sup>6</sup> But Clinton was speaking here as a politician, not a prophet. The path of the future will include religious extremists, for there will be no other way to move the moderate of this age to make the necessary changes. That is why the activists adhere to the motto "Make it happen!"

## Taking Action over the Temple Mount

The current generation leading the Temple movement is comprised largely of those who believe in "active redemption." It is not the individual Jew's responsibility to *wait* for the Temple, but to *work* for the Temple. The precedent for this

may be seen in the example set by King David, who took action even when circumstances did not yet permit him to build the Temple: "The king said to Araunah, 'No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing.' So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Thus the LORD was moved by entreaty for the land, and the plague was held back from Israel" (2 Samuel 24:24-25).

Shlomo Moshe Scheinman believes that there is a principle here that can be applied to the present day:

I suggest that we learn from David how to make an effort on behalf of the Temple and the sacrificial service in our days. I suggest that we donate fifty shekels to create the vessels that are needed for the sacrificial service, without waiting for national repentance, or the Messiah, or peace, etc. It should be plainly understood, that we donate the money without putting upon the money the sanctity of Hekdesh ("consecrated"). For we build in a state where holiness is lacking and afterwards we sanctify.

The imperative of doing this now has been well stated by Temple movement activists:

There is but one way to redeem the Temple Mount and but one way to renew the sacrifices and build the Temple. Action! Sitting in a state of atrophy will not only allow the status quo to continue, it will cause needless and unimaginable suffering to the Jewish people. Just as we witnessed the destruction of six million Jews because of inaction concerning the return to Zion, so will we endure terrible tragedy should we opt for the same inaction concerning the Temple Mount. The fate and destiny of the Jewish people and their redemption are in the hands of each and every Jew. All that is required is will and faith of Jews to enter the Temple Mount until we have the numbers to demand its return to its rightful owners. If every one would make the commitment needed to redeem the Mount it will surely be speedily in our hands.<sup>7</sup>

However, most Jews have not yet felt the imperative to commit to redeeming the Temple Mount. Binyamin Ze'ev Kahane summarizes why this need has not been felt, and adds a note of censure for those who are observant of the Torah but will observe nothing for the Temple:

There are no shortage of excuses, each camp offering its own explanation why we can't build the Temple today. Some say: "The Temple will fall from the sky, and it is none of our business." Others claim: "The Temple is a project for the Messiah." And then there is this gem: "We are on too low a level to deal with such a lofty topic." And there are more. For all these excuses, there are clear and powerful answers. . . . But there really is no need to, since the rebuilding of the Temple is one of the 613 commandments. That closes the case. Have you ever heard anyone say that eating *matzoh* [unleavened bread] on Passover is a job for the Messiah? Has anyone ever said: Family purity? *Mikveh* [ritual immersion]? What for?! Family purity will descend from the heavens! Or how about: Study Torah [Bible]!?! A lowly sinner like me should study the holy Torah!?! . . . did G-d allow us to conquer the Temple Mount thirty years ago just so that the Arabs can continue to desecrate His name on our holiest site, this time under Jewish sovereignty? Shouldn't we feel that this is the very last *mitzvah* [commandment] we should choose to ignore?<sup>8</sup>

For those who feel they should make it happen, the next question is this: How should they make it happen? On this there continues to be a significant differences of opinion. Some believe that war is the only course, while others still cling to the hope for peace. This has resulted in two different approaches to reversing the status quo on the Temple Mount and rebuilding the Temple.

## Perspectives on Reclaiming the Temple Mount

In the following discussion I am not attempting to be a prophet, but am simply showing the options that are presently being discussed within Israel and the Temple movement. From my prophetic perspective I can only see that the Third Temple will be rebuilt, according to the Scripture, and that terrible times of war and Tribulation must precede the better blessings of the Messiah and the Millennium. However, both ages will have a Temple, and in going from here to there, what is stated in the following paragraphs may surely happen, only some of it may happen in the Tribulation and some in the Millennium. Nevertheless, from the Orthodox Jewish perspective today, it is certain that something will happen soon.

### *The Mosques Will Be Moved to Rebuild*

If the Muslim mosques are in the way of the Jewish Temple, then one option is that they be moved. Yohanan Ramati, Director of the Jerusalem Institute for

Western Defense, while not in the Temple movement and certainly not advocating the destruction of the Muslim holy places, nevertheless argues for Israel's *right* to do so in light of the historical situation in which Islam has already done this to Israel:

If you allow your enemy to destroy synagogues and churches and build these mosques on top of them, then you must be allowed to do the same. And the fact that they are going to kick up God knows how much noise about this, should be disregarded. Because if you don't you are eventually going to cede them the right, and we are already ceding them the right. I'm not talking about Israel now. We're not intending to pull down any Muslim holy places. What I'm talking about is the world that regards it as perfectly normal and acceptable that the Muslims should build mosques where churches previously stood, but thinks it an outrage if Christians do it to Muslims. That sort of double standard only serves the people who are the enemies of your religion. The atheists and the agnostics are a growing part of the population all over the Christian and Jewish world.<sup>9</sup>

Gershon Salomon, director of the Temple Mount Faithful, does not want to continue a double standard either, but wants Israel to act as the independent and sovereign Nation it is supposed to be. His perspective is that if the Muslims don't like Israel changing the status quo on the Temple Mount, they should move back to where they have their own independent and sovereign state—and take their mosques with them! He says:

What must be done now is to take the Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, and with all respect, to move them from the Temple Mount. We live now in a time when we have very progressive mechanical systems and we could do it very easily, stone by stone, to take it and move it from the Temple Mount and rebuild it again in the right place, where [it ought] to be, in Mecca. This will be a place where every Arab, if they want, can come and pray in these buildings, in Mecca. The Temple Mount must be only a place for one thing, the Third Temple, as it was for the First and Second Temple. All...buildings that were built on this place [the Temple Mount] by strange occupiers, like the Arabs, must be moved...and as a vision of the prophets which spoke in the name of God, the Temple Mount will be—and very soon—the place for only one thing, the Third Temple.<sup>10</sup>

Christians, even those sympathetic to Salomon's cause, usually hold to yet another perspective, preferring to look to some other means of the inevitable being brought to pass. Sharing this conviction is CBS Radio Correspondent and author David Dolan, whom I quoted earlier with these words.

I have been here for 21 years; I've seen the SCUD missiles flying over. Who's to know what could possibly happen and how destruction could come and clear the area?...Jerusalem experiences a major earthquake every 50 years. The last major earthquake was in 1927....we are already maxed out on the 50 years [schedule] and there still hasn't been a major earthquake....I think God has His ways. And when His time is right... God will show the people exactly when and how they can build this Temple.<sup>11</sup>

However, Clarence Wagner, International Director of Bridges for Peace in Jerusalem, believes it won't be natural disasters that destroy the mosques. Like David Dolan, he believes that God will take care of the matter, in harmony with the end-time plan that He has revealed:

There's a lot of speculation that radical Israeli groups might destroy the mosques that are up on the Temple Mount and that would open the way for the Temple to be rebuilt. There's a big problem with that, however. The Muslims consider the entire Temple Mount a mosque, not just the buildings on it, but the site itself. Even if those building were destroyed in a earthquake, which is a possibility, or bombed out, they would still insist on rebuilding them. This leads me to the conclusion that it has to be a greater power that would impose a Temple on the Muslims and possibly on many Israelis who are ambivalent about a Temple being rebuilt. I myself believe that it will be the Antichrist who will rebuild this building. The Temple is mentioned in [2] Thessalonians [2:4], in Daniel [9:27], and in Revelation [11:1-2] in connection with this man of sin....I believe this is a hint as to who will build it. And politically speaking, only some great world power that was greater than the Muslims in the region, and even many Israelis, would be able to build such a thing and impose it, as it were, on the different peoples here. That's the scenario that I see unfolding. I think it will happen in time, but I don't think it will likely be at the hands of the Israelis and I certainly don't see the Muslims ever willingly giving up their claims to the entire Temple Mount or acceding to a Jewish Temple going up on the Temple Mount.<sup>12</sup>

While many are accustomed to see activism as the mark of the Temple movement, there are also those whose activism is couched in the hope that a God who could send an earthquake to move the Muslim mosques could also send a revival to move the Muslims minds to rebuild the Temple.

### *The Muslims Will Be Moved to Rebuild*

Haifa Chief Rabbi Sh'ar-Yashuv Cohen has emphasized that the Temple will not rise as a result of expulsion of the Arabs and the destruction of their mosques. In his view, it will be quite the opposite: The Temple will be rebuilt as a result of the fulfillment of Zephaaniah 3:9: "For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD." His view is that the nations of the world, including the Arabs, will invite the Jews to go up and build the Temple. Rabbi Cohen contends that anyone who has convinced himself that it is possible to speak of actually rebuilding the Temple under the prevailing circumstances without a miraculous change of heart on the part of the nations will be proven wrong. He argues that the Temple movement's goal of liberating the Temple Mount from Islam is not the way God intends to work. Rather, drawing an analogy from the text of Genesis 26:15-31, he claims that the Temple will be built when Israel understands its mission to develop a different attitude toward the nations and, as a result, there will be peace and a cooperative rebuilding of the Temple:

The Jewish rabbis and interpreters have not overlooked this vision [of rebuilding the Temple]. [Take] for example, the Rambam's (Nachmanides) interpretation of the conflict over the wells that the patriarch Isaac had with the Philistines and the king of Gerar. Each well, according to his exegesis, is analogous to one of the Temples. The first two wells were destroyed by them just like the first two Temples were destroyed. The third well—Rehovot, about which Abraham said "for now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land"—parallels the Third Temple. There was already an evident cooperation between the Children of Abraham and the people of the land (or, more specifically if you like, with the Philistines). And lastly, there is a point in remembering who was the "Messiah" who gave the order to build the Second Temple: the Persian emperor Cyrus (who saw himself as given "all the kingdoms of the earth" by the Lord God of heaven who chose Jerusalem). When all the peoples, including the Moslems, under-

stand the global benefit for building the Temple in Jerusalem, they will ask Israel to build it.<sup>13</sup>

From a similar perspective, Reuven Praeger of Begeed Ivri believes that the problem with activism is that it too often neglects the spiritual element. Such militaristic Jews do not look for God to bring about a change in those with whom they have problems in this world (the Arabs). Praeger argues that God will instead change the rabs at the appointed time:

People often ask me, How are we going to build the Temple? There's a mosque standing on the Temple Mount. Now normally I don't deal with political issues, but I do feel the need to respond. The only voice that we've heard for the last 50 years towards rebuilding the Temple has been the voice of let's take down the mosques and by force build the Temple. Or those who are waiting for an earthquake to come for the mosque to be tumbled down off the Temple Mount. Or some kind of miracle with the Temple falling down from the sky completely built. The Muslim world is not preventing us from rebuilding the Temple. If anything, it is we ourselves that are holding ourselves back. We have to keep in mind that a Muslim believes in God. And I know there is a popular movement right now to say that the Muslims don't serve God, they serve Allah. . . . [But] when a guy wraps himself with explosives and blows himself up screaming, Allah Ackbar ["God is great!"] or grabs a wheel of a bus and drives it off a cliff screaming, "God is great," these guys are crazy about serving God. They're [just] being misdirected towards how God wants them to serve. . . . [but] when God makes it manifestly clear that the time is come that He wants His house to be rebuilt, do you think a Muslim is going to stand before God and say, "No"? Can't be! Islam is submission before God. . . . [So] it is not the Muslim world that's holding us back from rebuilding the Temple; it's our own fear of taking responsibility for beginning the work to prepare for rebuilding the Temple.<sup>14</sup>

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, both of these proposals for dealing with the mosques and rebuilding the Temple may well take place, however, the biblical means and timing must be discerned. There will be war on the Temple Mount in the future (see chapter 20), so the activists are correct in understanding that the Muslims will not surrender their holy sites anytime soon. However, once all war is past, and the Messiah has come and restored all things, the non-Jewish peoples will willingly come and ask to be a part of the rebuilding of Messiah's Temple. So, those who hope for a spiritual change in the world are also correct. The prophetic confusion that has produced these two

viewpoints reminds us that in light of the rapid development of the prophetic program in our day, we must be discerning of the times, and especially the times for the Temple.

## Discerning the Times for the Temple

Rabbi Chaim Richman, Director of Public Affairs for the Temple Institute and director of Light to the Nations, believes that despite the world's opinion that Israel might not survive the current Middle East crisis, the Nation's present problems are but the preparation for prophetic fulfillment:

There are those of us who feel more strongly than ever that the appearance of Messiah is near. I would go further than that and tell you that, although there are those of us who are upset about the direction of things in Israel, this is not a cause for despondency or depression. On the contrary, the fact that things are going the way they are going here in Israel with this government, with the leadership, with the false peace, with the treachery, and with the terrorism, its nothing but another indication of the fact that God in His great mercy is bringing about all that which He from the beginning had in mind for His people and for His world. We feel that we are blessed to be living in this time. Perhaps this is more of a pivotal generation than any that has ever existed, and we feel that we, in fact, are seeing things that our fathers only dreamed of, and that we will be blessed to see the culmination of these things.<sup>15</sup>

However, before the Messiah appears, the Jewish people must find this "great mercy" of God of which Rabbi Richman speaks. Today, the day of redemption is nearer than ever before, but so is the time of Tribulation ("pangs of the Messiah"). Jews who look for the *Shekinah* must also remember that the *Sitra Ahra* looks for them. The *Sitra Ahra* (literally, "the Other Side") is a term used to describe the force of evil, sent by Satan, which according to Jewish legend, stands ready to pounce upon a Jew as soon as he sets foot on sacred soil. This was often used to dissuade Jews from immigrating to Israel, since the force would be more virulent there than in the foreign land from which they came. If setting foot on the sacred soil of the Holy Land was thought to be dangerous, what of setting foot on the soil of utmost sanctity, the holy Temple Mount?

The problem is deeper than the need for a ritual purification in order to serve God; it is a need for a righteous position in order to see God. Though the Lord declared, "No man can see me and live!" (Exodus 33:20), David longed to "dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of [his] life, to behold the beauty of

the LORD, and to meditate in His temple” (Psalm 27:4). The Temple for which David longed was the Heavenly Temple, where, no longer being a mortal man, he could behold the Lord in all His beauty. In like manner Moses beseeched the Lord, “I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!” (Exodus 33:18), yet the prophet Isaiah proclaimed, “Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together” (Isaiah 40:5). How can these things be? What is needed is more than a promise; what is needed is a position. Though one may have a position in this life as a child of Abraham, a son of the Covenant, one of the Chosen People, there is still the need for a position like this in heaven. The Prophets have said that what is needed for any Jew or Gentile is *teshuvah* (“repentance”) toward God and toward His Messiah (Yeshua=“Jesus”). The prophet Hosea made this future act by national Israel the key to experiencing the promised Redemption in Hosea 3:5: “Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.” The interpretation of this text in Yalkut Shimoni Samuel 106 understood that this Restoration in the last days included the Temple:

In the future, Israel is destined to show disdain for three things: the kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of David, and the building of the Temple. . . . Rabbi Simon ben Menasiah said: “Israel will never see a sign of redemption until they once again desire all three. This is what the verse [Hosea 3:5] states: ‘And afterwards the Children of Israel will return and seek out the Lord their God’—this is the Kingdom of Heaven, ‘and David their King’—This is the kingdom of David—‘And they shall come trembling to the Lord and His goodness in the Latter Days’—This is the Holy Temple.

What we learn from this is that the things most sought after, including the Last Days Temple, will only come as Israel returns to the Lord in national repentance in the last days. Clarence Wagner of Bridges for Peace reminds us that the One who will come and restore all things and reveal His glory to all flesh in the Temple will be none other than the Messiah Himself:

In Revelation 19–20 we read how in this area [of the Mount of Olives], He [Jesus] will come back on a white horse. He will come back into the city and the elders will be with Him and He will be judging from Jerusalem. Where is He going to be sitting? I’m sure [it will be] in His Temple. He will be worshiped in Jerusalem and be the central focus. Except this time instead of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the Holy of Holies, it will be Yeshua [Jesus] Himself who will be ruling and reigning

from Zion. There is no doubt in my mind that the place He will do this from is not the City Hall but will be the rebuilt Temple of God, sanctified for Him.<sup>16</sup>

## Beyond the Point of No Return?

We have come to a turning point on the prophetic path from which we will not likely turn back. The determination among Israeli Jews, and Jews worldwide, to see the coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple is resolute. To those of us who are able to see the future Temple in Scripture, we should see these activities of the Jewish people to prepare for the Temple as a present sign—in fact, one of the most significant signs of the end times.

The French General Napoleon Bonaparte once passed a synagogue on the ninth of Av and heard the Jews weeping. “What’s this weeping?” he asked. When told that the Jews were weeping about the destruction of their Temple, Napoleon said, “A people that longs so much for its city and its Temple are bound to restore them one day!” As weeping for the Temple has today turned to working for the Temple, may we not believe that the day of restoration is near? Clarence Wagner believes that the signs point to the nearness of that day:

It’s so exciting living just a mile south of the Mount of Olives because, of course, Zechariah told us, Jesus Himself told us, that this would be the spot that He’ll return to in the last days. And I believe that’s very, very soon. His feet will stand again on the Mount of Olives. And then He’ll go over to the Temple Mount, He’ll cleanse it, He’ll restore it, and of course the Scriptures tell us that water will flow from under the Temple out into the Kidron Valley down here and down towards the Dead Sea in the Millennium age. One thing we’re really lacking in Jerusalem today is water. We have no streams even; no rivers, no lakes, no oceans close by. But in that day it’s going to come from right here on the Temple Mount. And the Temple that will accompany that has got to be something fantastic. We have some description of it in the Bible. But it’s hard to even imagine. But sometimes as I drive along the ridge here south of the Temple Mount, I think about that and I try to picture what it might be like when the Lord returns and when that new Temple is here. I can’t even, frankly, imagine it. But I believe it will occur and all the signs are there that the Temple’s time is near. And the main sign is that this city is once again a thriving metropolis—over 500,000 people and the capital of a rebuilt, restored Jewish State, just as the prophet said it would be in the last days. So the day of His return has got to be drawing very, very near.<sup>17</sup>

Those in the Temple movement believe that the process of Israel's redemption began with the reunification of Jerusalem and the retaking of the Temple Mount in the Six-Day War. How well many of them remember that afternoon on June 7, 1967, when the leaders of Israel began to assemble at the foot of the newly won Western Wall and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan issued both a pronouncement and a prediction: "We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to part from them again."<sup>18</sup> They have returned, but not yet to the Temple Mount. The process begun on that day is deemed irreversible and will eventually culminate in the rebuilding of the Third Temple. All that remains, they say, is for the Israeli government to realize the terrible mistake made in returning custody of the site to the Muslims and to act in keeping with the historical reality of Jewish sovereignty over the Temple Mount. They are now ready to rebuild, and wait only for their Nation to catch up with them.

## The Final Steps of the Ascent

The goal to rebuild the Temple appears to be a mountainous task, and it literally is that! The Temple Mount is indeed a mountain with the Temple at the very top of its summit. In the days of the Temple a person who ascended the mountain began with a climb up the monumental staircase at the southern entrance, and then went up through an underground tunnel to the level of the Temple complex. Coming out the top of the tunnel, that person entered a large pavilion from which could be seen the Temple, high in the distance. The ascent to the Temple itself involved a series of steps that moved a person progressively upward from the Women's Court to the Israelite Court to the Inner Court, and finally, to the point where the Temple itself stood at the highest point.

In like manner, as we consider the ascent of modern Israeli Jews toward the goal of rebuilding the Temple today, there are also a series of steps that will move them toward their goal. The first step of this ascent was completed when they captured the Temple Mount in 1967. As a result, Israelis were able to actually unearth the ancient monumental staircase, but could not enter the underground tunnel because it is in the area controlled by the Muslims. Nevertheless, Jews have taken the next step and ascended to the pavilion. This occurred as Orthodox Jews began to walk a circuitous path on this level of the Temple Mount at the close of the 1990s.

The next step, and the most challenging, will be reached only when Israel regains full control of the Temple Mount itself. Only then will it be possible to

ritually purify the area and make it possible for sacrifices to be resumed at the place of the altar. However, once this has occurred, the summit will have been surmounted, and the next step of rebuilding the Temple assured.

What does this say to you and me? It says that not only have the Jews already begun the ascent to their goal, but they are only one step away from accomplishing it! As this book has shown, the current conflict over the Temple Mount and the resolve of Jewish activists to prepare for the conclusion of this conflict have provided the momentum for the short distance that remains of the climb. We live in a day that is on the brink of the rebuilding effort, and with it the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecies that will move the world rapidly to see as a reality the coming Last Days Temple.

In ancient times the Temple stood  
Clothed in stone and gilded wood;  
A symbol of the Maker's plan  
To dwell on earth with sinful man.

Though fallen long and desolate  
Its fall did not decide its fate,  
In days to come it will arise  
Though by the nations still despised.

Till when Messiah comes at last  
Its desolation will be past,  
Rebuilt in splendor it will shine  
In all the earth through all of time.

Then beyond time—the world to come  
Will need no Temple, moon, or sun,  
For greater Temple there will be  
The Lord, for all eternity!