

## Some Problems of Herod's Temple.<sup>1</sup>

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NOTWITHSTANDING the voluminous literature of this subject, there is still a surprising number of points on which no agreement has as yet been reached by scholars. The appearance of Professor George Adam Smith's great work on Jerusalem presents a suitable occasion for noting some of these still open questions, and perhaps an excuse for a fresh attempt to answer them.

It may be well, however, before proceeding further, to set down the main positions regarding which there is no longer serious controversy. These, I think, are three in number: (1) The temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, and Herod successively stood upon the same spot, somewhere within the area now covered by the great artificial platform known as the Haram esh-Sherif, or Noble Sanctuary. This is perhaps the one point as to which there has been entire unanimity both among Jews and among Christians. (2) These three temples all stood in close proximity to the sacred rock now enclosed within the mosque to which it gives its name, the Dome of the Rock. The site advocated by Fergusson, Robertson Smith, Sir Charles Wilson, and others (see Hastings' *D.B.* iv. 696) has no longer any prominent advocate. (3) The rock itself is the spot upon which stood the successive altars of burnt-offering. No student of comparative religion will now hesitate on this point, in view not only of the remarkable persistence of sacred sites in the East, but of the light which the recent excavations in Palestine have thrown upon the place of rock-altars in the early religion of Canaan (cf. also the unbroken Jewish tradition from

<sup>1</sup> The following contractions are here used for the most frequently cited authorities:—

*J.A.*—Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*.

*J.W.*—Josephus' *Jewish War*. Occasionally Niese's sections are added for both works.

*M.M.*—The Mishna treatise *Middoth*, or Measurements of the Temple, translated in *P.E.F.St.* 1886-87, in Barclay's *Talmud*, and elsewhere.

*Maim. B.B.*—Maimonides' treatise *Beth ha-Bekhira* (The Chosen House), trans. by Dr. Chaplin in *P.E.F.St.* 1885.

*S.W.P.Jer.*—The volume of the Survey of Western Palestine dealing with Jerusalem.

*P.E.F.St.*—The Quarterly Statements of the Pal. Explor. Fund.

1 Ch 22<sup>1</sup> to Maimonides, *Beth ha-Bekhira*, ii. 1, translated *P.E.F.St.* 1885, 37). The temple, it follows, stood immediately to the west of the rock. The way is now open for a renewed examination of some of the difficulties that remain.

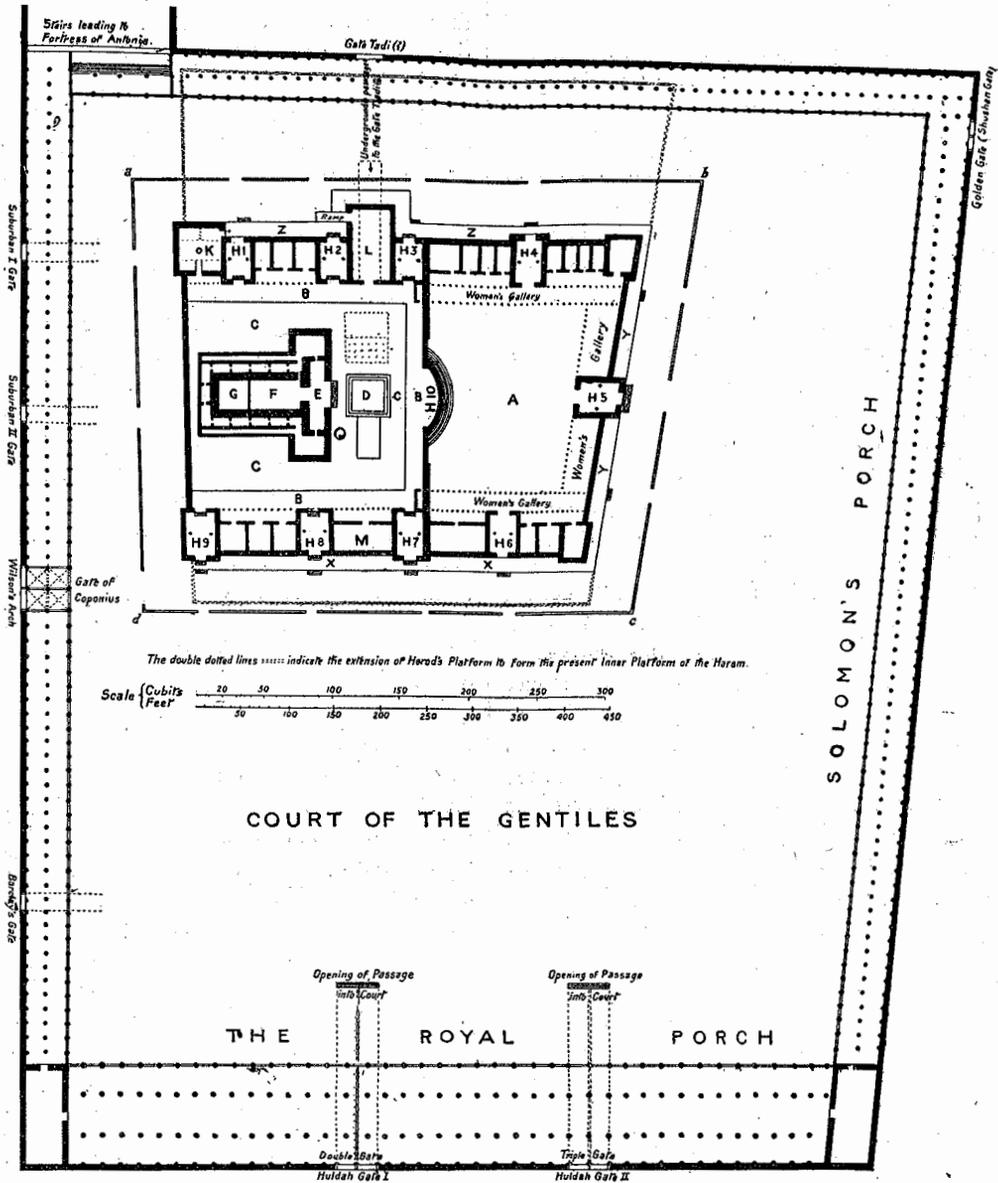
If I venture to claim that I have succeeded in determining, to within a few feet, the precise location of Herod's temple and its courts, the result is due to three circumstances,—to a more critical examination of the data of Josephus and the Mishna than these have hitherto received; to a careful study of the rock-levels of the Haram area, as determined by Sir Charles Warren and others, and of the remains of Herod's work still surviving in and around the Haram; and, finally, to a more exact determination of the length of

### I. THE CUBIT USED BY HEROD'S MASONS.

Since this determination is all-important for the conclusions reached in the following pages, it falls to be considered as the first of the unsolved problems connected with the temple. Now whatever dubiety may exist as to the length of the ordinary cubit in early times, the evidence of Josephus and other considerations (see 'Weights and Measures,' in *D.B.* iv. 908 f.) leave no doubt that in Herod's day the Hebrew cubit cannot have differed very materially from the contemporary Greek cubit, which is known to have been practically 17½ inches. Nor is there any question as to the then usual division of the cubit into 6 handbreadths of approximately 3 inches each (cf. Maimonides, *op. cit.* ii. 6).

With these facts as a general guide, let us examine the evidence furnished by the remains of Herodian and pre-Herodian masonry, such as (a) the heights of the courses in the retaining wall of the Haram, (b) the position of the gates therein, and (c) the dimensions of other acknowledged pre-Christian remains.

(a) A table of the heights of some 150 courses of drafted work of the 'first' and 'second' epochs (retaining without prejudice this distinction of the English engineers) is given on p. 120 of the Jerusalem volume of the Ordnance Survey. From the figures of this table it is evident that the



KEY TO PLAN OF TEMPLE AND COURTS.

*a b c d*, the surrounding balustrade (*soreg*). *X Y Z*, the terrace (*khēl*).  
**A**, Court of the Women. **B B B**, Court of Israel. **C C C**, Court of the Priests.  
**D**, altar of burnt-offering. **E F G**, porch, holy place, and holy of holies.  
**H**, 1-9, Gates of the Sanctuary (*M.M.* i. 4, 5), viz.: 1, gate of the House Moked; 2, Korban gate; 3, gate Nitsus; 5, the gate of Nicanor, or the Beautiful Gate; 7, the water gate; 8, gate of the firstborn; 9, the fuel gate; 10, the 'upper gate,' wrongly called the gate of Nicanor.  
**K**, the guardhouse Moked (=hearth). **L**, the 'northern edifice

that was between the two gates' (see *J. W.* vi. ii. 7, § 150). Here, it is suggested, the sacrificial victims were examined by the priests, having been brought in either by the underground passage shown on the plan, or by the ramp also shown. The upper storey may have contained the important 'chamber of the councillors' (*parhedrin*) (*Yoma*, i. 1).  
**M**, the chamber Gazith, in which the priests on duty assembled for prayer (*Tamid*, iv. end). There are not sufficient data for fixing the location of the other chambers mentioned in the Mishna. Their distribution on the plan is purely conjectural.

Jewish stonecutters either did not aim at, or did not succeed in reaching, a rigid uniformity in the height of their stones. Excluding a few abnormal varieties at either end of the scale, we find 138 courses ranging in height from 3 feet 2 inches to 4 feet. I think we may assume that stones of this size would not be cut to a smaller unit than the handbreadth, and that a margin of error of an inch in twelve handbreadths and over may be allowed the Jewish craftsmen. Now 53 of the courses show a height of 44-45 inches, the higher figure, however, occurring chiefly at one point in the wall. The next most frequent size is 41-42 inches, found in 23 courses. The standard measurements may therefore be confidently set down as follows:

38-39 in. (10 courses) = 13 hands, or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cbs. of 17.6 to 18 in.  
 41-42 ,, (23 ,, ) = 14 ,,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  ,, ,, ,,  
 44-45 ,, (53 ,, ) = 15 ,,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  ,, ,, ,,

The next step must be to endeavour to get rid of the margin of uncertainty still left as between a 17.6 and an 18 inch cubit. For this purpose it is natural to take the measurement of the stones at points in the wall where special attention to uniformity might reasonably be expected. Such is the foundation at the south-east angle, where the stones were found to be as perfectly preserved 'as if they had been recently cut.' Here the foundation course is 3 feet 8 inches in height, or *exactly*  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cubits of 17.6 inches. Another point where a fresh beginning was made is found at the Triple Gate, from which the great 'master course' runs east and west. Now the height of three stones of this course, at and on either side of the gate, averages 70.2 inches, which is clearly 4 of the cubits of which the foundation course is  $2\frac{1}{2}$ . Comparing these results with 'the most beautifully-set work . . . superior to any ever found in Jerusalem' in the oldest part of the south wall of the city excavated by Bliss and Dickie (*Excavations at Jerusalem*, 30), we find 'remains of three courses each  $23\frac{1}{2}$  inches high,' which is exactly 8 handbreadths of a 17.6 inch cubit. The sill of the ancient Valley Gate, it may be added, measured 8 feet 10 inches, otherwise 6 cubits (*op. cit.* 19). These two monuments of the Jewish monarchy, possibly even of Solomon's time, therefore, equally with the Herodian wall of the Haram, were built according to a cubit which measured 17.6 inches (447-448 millimetres).

(b) Anticipating for a moment the subsequent

discussion as to the identification of the gates of the temple area, let us test the results now obtained by the positions of the present representatives of the older gateways as these are laid down on the Ordnance Survey map.<sup>1</sup> Now the distance of the Double Gate in the south wall from the south-west angle of the Haram, as measured by the English surveyors, is 330 feet, which yields 225 of the 17.6 cubit, *again without a fraction*. The original jambs of the Triple Gate were 400 of the same cubit from the south-west angle, and 200 (293 feet) from the south-east angle. On the west side of the Haram, we have first Barclay's Gate, 271 feet or 185 cubits from the south-west angle, while at 586 feet or 400 cubits we reach Wilson's Arch and the historical gateway to the pre-Herodian and Herodian temples. It was these remarkable data that unexpectedly placed in the writer's hand the key to the precise location of the temple and its courts, as will appear in the sequel.

(c) If further confirmation be needed of this discovery of the cubit of the Jewish builders, it may be found in the dimensions of such structures as can reasonably be assigned to a date before or shortly after the beginning of the Christian era. Every visitor to the Holy City is familiar with the remains of Robinson's Arch; although, as will be shown below, it cannot have formed one of the approaches to Herod's temple, it can scarcely be younger than the second century. Now its pier—probably much older than the arch (see below)—is 51 feet 6 inches in length, which is 35 cubits, and its span 'may have been 43 or 44 feet' (*S.W.P. Jer.* 176); 44 feet are exactly 30 cubits. The better preserved Wilson's Arch, 'with a span of 42 feet and a width of 43 feet,' was evidently intended to have the same dimensions (30 cubits). The oldest buildings now to be found in 'underground Jerusalem' are in the immediate vicinity. One of these, 'the ancient hall' of the surveyors, was originally 20 feet 4 inches or 14 cubits in length, and most of the measurements of the various vaults, viaducts, and passages will be found to fit easily into our scale (see Sir Charles Wilson's measured drawings, *P.E.F.St.* 1880, 22 ff.; *S.W.P. Jer.* 200 ff.)

The same remark holds good, as might be expected from what we have learned of their position, of the width of the ancient gateways to

<sup>1</sup> See the accompanying ground-plan of the temple courts.

the temple. That of the Double Gate, for example, is 41 feet or 28 cubits, while the original width of the interior passages was twice 12 cubits. The same exact equation is seen in the single passage at Barclay's Gate, which is 19 feet or 13 cubits in width. The gate which led to the Valley of Hinnom we have seen to be exactly 6 cubits in width. It is surely unnecessary to multiply instances in proof of the contention that

*the builder's cubit of six handbreadths, from the later monarchy to the second century A.D., measured 17.6 inches, neither less nor more.* That this was the cubit of the third temple, and, by inference, of its predecessors, will be evident as our inquiry advances. The first of the problems with which we set out to deal has thus been solved.

(To be continued.)

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF DEUTERONOMY.

#### DEUTERONOMY XXIX. 29.

'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.'

#### EXPOSITION.

'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.'—The immediate connexion of these words with the context is not clear. Rashi connects the 'secret things' with the 'imagination of the evil heart of the secret idolater' of v. 18. His note runs thus: 'It is not that I shall punish you for those secrets; they belong to the Lord our God, and He will exact them from the individual sinner; but the things that are *disclosed* belong to us and to our children, to 'put away the evil from the midst of us.' And if judgment is not executed among them, the many will be punished. But it is impossible not to feel that there is more behind the words of this passage than this. May not this be one of the occasions concerning which the apostle says of the prophets, that they 'searched *what or what manner of time* the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify'? All those curses were to come upon Israel; and yet, after that, there was still a covenant with them, embracing every generation to the world's end. Must not Moses have longed to know what would befall his people in the latter days? and if we ourselves, 'upon whom the ends of the world are come,' do not yet see the future of Israel distinctly, are not the words appropriate still? To the very end, what better way is there than this? 'Lord, I have hoped for Thy salvation, and done Thy commandments.'—WALLER.

'But the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.'—Probably this verse is a general reflexion added by Moses by way of admonition to his previous discourse. The scribes may have had this in their mind when they distinguished the words, *unto us and to our children*, by placing over them extraordinary points, in order to emphasize them, though by many this is regarded as a mere critical notation, indicating a various reading.—ALEXANDER.

'That we may do all the words of this law.'—The hidden future is Yahweh's; the known past, with its lesson of obedience to the law, is ours. Revelation is here regarded as historical rather than canonical.—ROBINSON.

#### THE SERMON.

##### 'On Duty' in the Dark.

By the Rev. T. A. Jefferies, Huddersfield.

The soldier's position when on duty at night is not an enviable one. He cannot see the movements of the enemy, and sometimes his comrades are equally out of sight. Perhaps he is sentry, and through the darkness must pace a certain track and guard that way. Even in broad daylight his position is often little better; he knows nothing of the general's plans, and must frequently be tempted to think he is rushing to death for no purpose. Yet he has no alternative. Orders must be obeyed. The secret things belong unto the general, but to the soldiers belong the words of command that they may accomplish the leader's design. And so it is in life. We are often burdened with the sense of the darkness and mystery around us, but to every man is given the commandment of God. The explanation is with Him, and with us the call to obey. We are in the dark, but something is required of us. Let us not forget that we are on duty.

I. There is the mystery of existence, the riddle of the universe. Why were we made so ignorant of nature and ourselves? Look, for instance, at this age-long quarrel over miracles. It would never have been but for our ignorance of nature. Did we know nature, did we know but Tennyson's 'flower in the crannied wall,' that controversy