



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
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With a good dose of anticipation and awe we headed down the street through a maze of marketers and beggars. As Bev counted out change to buy nuts for a Shekel and a half the eager merchant grabbed all of her money to help her count change correctly. Used to the merchants and thieves in Peru, I barged in and took back the money. He knew our unfamiliarity with their currency and I still think we paid 3 Shekels for the nuts but I was not sure. Our counting was interrupted by an older orthodox Jew railing on a money hunting harpist dressed in Davidic garb in the street. "Go get a job, you should be working and not begging from these nice folks!" was the part that was in English. It quickly heated into an exchange that switched to Hebrew and got more animated. Of course Hebrew seems to do that on its own, but the exchange continued as we and they each went in separate directions. Jerusalem was definitely an interesting place to study diversification.

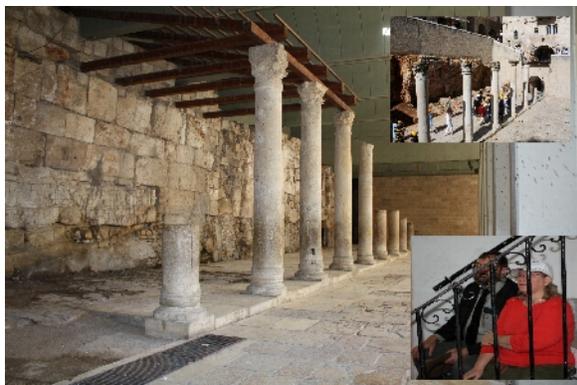


As near as I could tell we were crossing to the Arminian quarter near the dung gate when we viewed the walls riddled with 50 caliber bullet holes. From 1968 through 1970 this gate separated the Jordanians from the Israelis and the Jordanians had leveled much of the Jewish quarter with TNT. Rather than reconstruction Israel began monumental archaeological discoveries. When you go down 20 feet here you go back 2000 years in history. When they dug in the blown up Jewish quarter of Jerusalem they found the 5th avenue and 42nd St. (as Ronnie called it) of Jerusalem as it lay in 33 A.D., when Christ was on trial here. After seeing such a street in Bet Shaine we could not wait to see what Ron described as the arches and shops which were dug out of twenty feet of 'shmuck.' We walked gingerly as we headed into the city.

As you can tell by the name, this gate is where the garbage is taken out of the city. There was a covered area one might presume was a portion of the garbage processing area but it was actually an Israeli Archaeological Society garbage sifting center manned by university students. It seems that the Muslim workers digging under the temple mount area were throwing ancient artifacts in the garbage. Such was not an accident. The Muslims had denied that there ever was a Jewish temple and they were purposefully disposing of the evidence that proved their denials so ludicrous. Many tremendous temple artifacts had been recovered through this garbage sorting operation before the workers at the dome of the rock figured out what was going on in the tents outside of the dung gate.

Near Saint Stevens Greek Orthodox Church we paused near the path that led from the baths and to the temple. When Jesus was here for Passover 300 thousand people swelled the city and walked on these holy paths called 'shaqam' (Hbrw שקם) meaning to restore oneself. In fact the sycamore tree, named from the Greek derivation of this word, like the olive tree, dies, stays dead for years, then regenerates itself, comes to life and sprouts into new life. As we moved down the exposed 1st century stones we came across an underground Synagogue. The children playing in their outdoor court below street level was most captivating and most unusual. Synagogues are always built on the highest part of the city. Here they were well below street level. This departure from tradition was

necessitated by Muslim control, and rationalized in that they were located on a 1st century holy site at this level. The “Four Shepardi Synagogue” with joyful children in recess captured our attention for some time as we headed through the ancient streets to what Ron called Jerusalem's 5th Ave. and 42nd St. There we envisioned the shops and markets covered in canvas and the rows of pillars covered in intricate engravings, many were repositioned on their bases which lined the market place.



In the museum we watched a video that envisioned what it must have been like for a lad to bring a sacrifice to the temple area, bath and walk respectfully down the sacred path with his offering. Many of the images of the temple and Jerusalem area were modeled after the imagination of Raphael and other medieval artists who had painted pictures of this area. Coins and antique images of the actual temple had given correction to many of the guesses but all is not yet known and these ongoing archaeological digs are still revealing much new detail.

From viewing the artifacts in the museum we came to some unique maps of Jerusalem. The first was a mosaic on the wall which showed some of the street layouts and great hordes of people in the city. The second was a depiction of how God and Israel depict the world map. It showed three pointed leaf shapes united in the center. The North West leaf was labeled Evropa, the North East, Asia, and the Southern, Africa. Jerusalem was depicted at the center of the world and anyone who has ever read the 66 chapters of Isaiah with the 66 books of the Bible (there is, by the way, some correlation of alignment and parallels in these two groups of 66) know this to be God's world view as well. This is why Joseph Smith who imagined that America represented the lost tribes of Israel, and invented Later Day Saints, had to come up with a whole new book which they call the 'Book of Mormon' and which develops that Jesus would come back and step down, not on the mount of Olives, as the Bible states, but in North Carolina! It is diabolical how many could actually believe such balderdash. Many of the worlds dealings with Israel have a 'diabolical' dimension and one should get out a dictionary and make sure they understand what that word means.

In the Bible Ezra is 'the ready scribe'; which chronicles the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple after the 70 year Babylonian captivity of Israel. In archeology and on the placards now before us this reconstructed temple is called the first temple period and Herod's temple the second temple period. I guess Solomon's Temple would then be designated the Original Temple Period, and the Tabernacle before that as the Tabernacle



Period. We were now peering down into a causeway at a placard of that period at ground level for Ezra's day. The Bible books of Ezra and Nehemiah and Ezra's re-chronicling of Israel's history in 1&2 Chronicles, designates this period as starting in 536 B.C. What an awesome thing to peer back in history to Ezra's day and more.