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Source: *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (May, 1970), pp. 47-60

Published by: [The American Schools of Oriental Research](#)

The Excavations South and West of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem: The Herodian Period

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Since the days of Wilson and Warren — a hundred years ago — the topographical and archaeological study of Jerusalem has developed extensively and is reflected in a considerable bibliography. Many problems, however, remain concerning the history and topography of the Holy City, including basic questions of its character, development and extent in various times, which are still vague and hotly contested. Not only are the objective difficulties in the study of Jerusalem enormous — especially because of the many destructions and, in certain cases, razing to the very bedrock — but also because only very limited areas are free of medieval and modern buildings and thus available for excavation. Moreover, it has been only during the present century that archaeological techniques have become more and more refined, enabling a far more accurate chronological determination of the remains of buildings and fortifications, and thus clearing up several of the basic problems through modern methods of stratigraphical diggings in the various parts of the city as well as putting to the acid test the plentiful material which has been gathered and analyzed over so many years of research.

Proceeding to discuss the recent discoveries from the glorious period in the history of Jerusalem — from the reign of Herod the Great down to the destruction of the city and the second temple in A.D. 70 — a period well known to us from ancient literary sources, especially the writings of Josephus Flavius and the Mishnaic — Talmudic literature, as well as the New Testament, we must note that it is especially in our own times that important results have been obtained. The uncovering of remains of the third wall, the limited excavations in the citadel, at the Damascus gate, within the old city proper and on the "Ophel", the study of the ancient water supply, and the extensive work on the various ancient burial-grounds surrounding the city, have all greatly advanced research and have placed it on a firm basis. In spite of the basic differences in opinion concerning the city walls and the various topographical riddles in Jerusalem, today we are gaining a far more realistic picture of Jerusalem in Herodian times than that imagined by the scholars in previous generations.

Without going into the numerous general problems which directly or indirectly concern ancient Jerusalem, and of the attempts to solve them, we

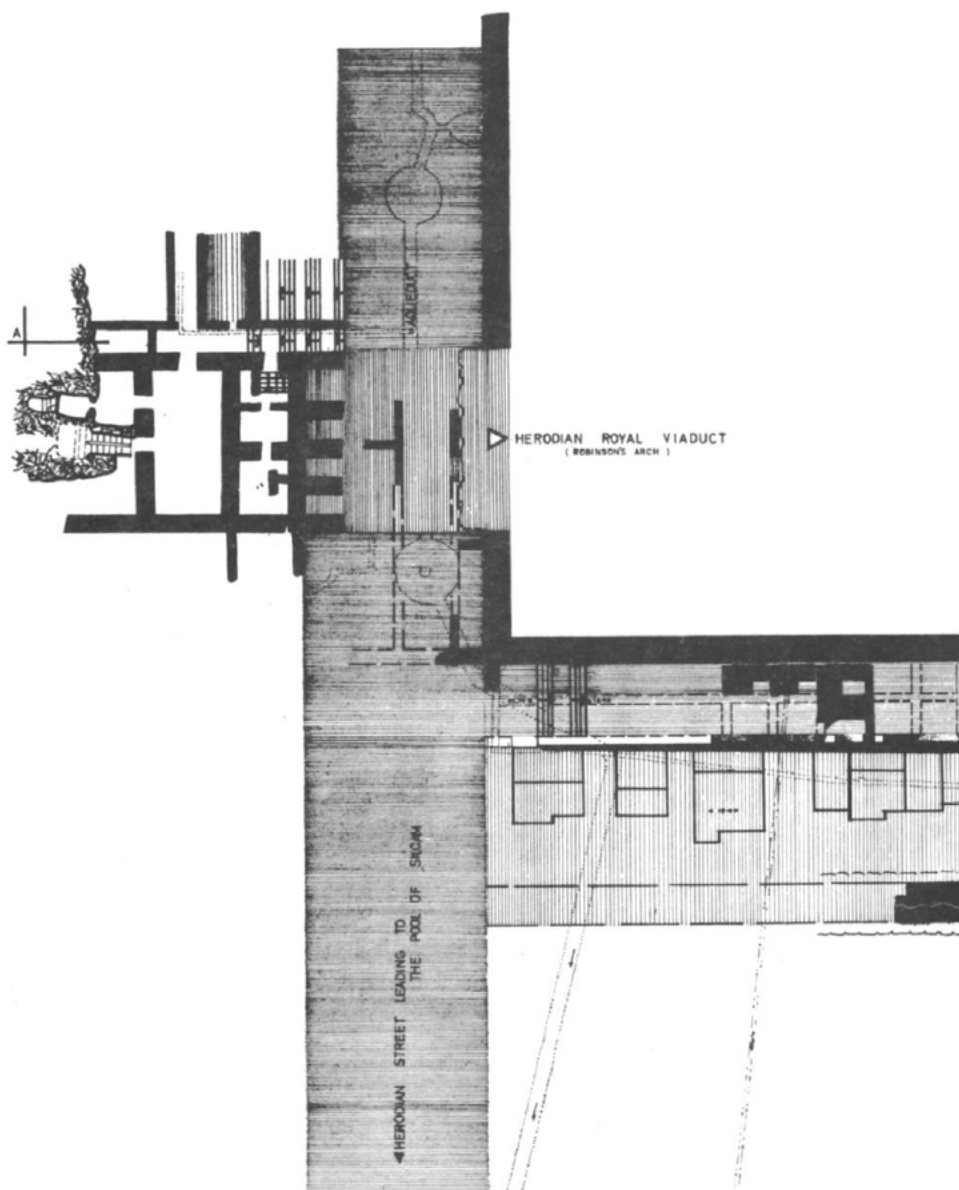
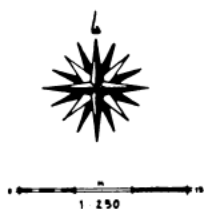
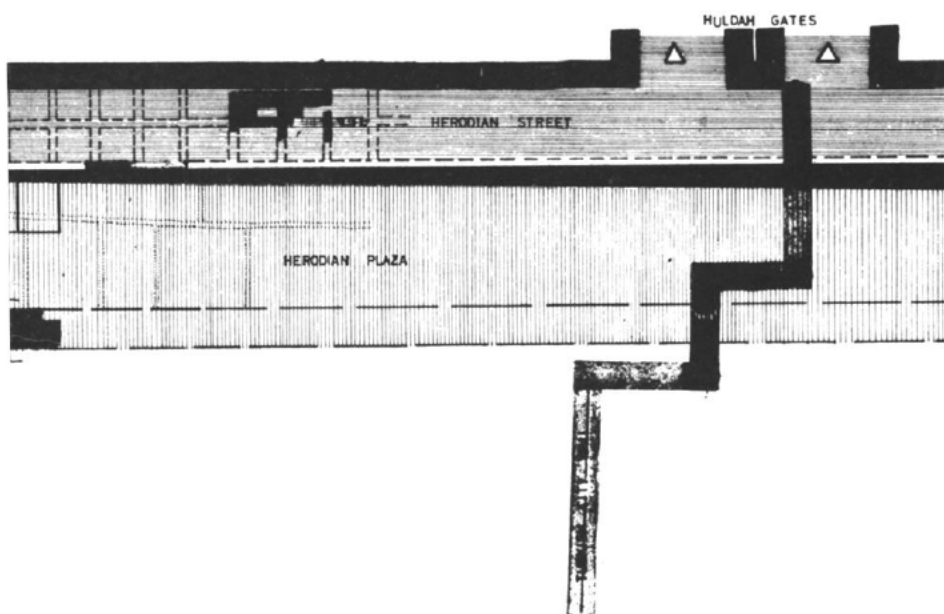


Fig. 9. Plan of the structures found at the south-west corner of the temple area, especially as they date to the time of Herod.



THE TEMPLE COURTYARD



shall limit ourselves to several conclusions stemming from the excavations of the last twenty months, south and west of the walls of the temple platform. This excavation, under my direction, with the assistance of Mr. Meir Ben-Dov and a rather small archaeological and technical staff, including the late architect I. Dunayevsky, eng. A. Urweider, Miss E. LeFrak and graduates and students of the Hebrew University, is being carried out under the auspices of the Hebrew University and the Israel Exploration Society. Work has been concentrated mainly in the open area delimited on the north by the southern wall of the temple platform and on the east and south by the Turkish walls, as well as in an area adjacent to the southern part of the western wall, in the region of Robinson's arch.

These areas are of special interest in regard to the ancient topography of the city. Here, where bedrock descends eastward from the western hill, down to the Tyropoean Valley and then rises up again to the "Ophel" hill, drastic changes occurred as a result of Herod's tremendous undertaking in doubling the extent of the *temenos* by filling up the Tyropoean valley as well as the western slope of the Kidron valley. The leveling-off of this enormous area was achieved by means of huge walls founded on bedrock, containing vast amounts of fill. In the outer temple courtyard, along its southern edge, Herod built his "royal stoa", reaching high above it. This construction is described by Josephus as one of the greatest architectural feats of mankind (*Antiquities* XV, 412). It was possible to reach this stoa directly from the upper city to the west by means of the viaduct spanning the eastern slope of the western hill. Robinson's arch, jutting out slightly from the western wall some 12 meters north of the southwestern corner of the temple platform, is a fragment of the eastern arch which supported this viaduct.

In planning our excavations, we leaned mainly on the results of Charles Warren's explorations of a hundred years ago, whose work consisted of digging narrow shafts and galleries around the walls of the temple platform. He published the results of his investigations, including important and accurate data on the lie of the bedrock, on the courses of the huge walls, on the pavements, water channels, etc.

In the first stages of our excavation, we paid special attention to the stratigraphy of the strip of land running along the southern wall, from the southwestern corner up to the buildings adjoining the "Double Gate", one of the two gates in the southern wall called in the Mishna the "Hulda Gates" (*Middoth* 1.3), which led up to the outer temple courtyard, under the "royal stoa". Our excavations enabled us to establish the stratigraphical sequence dividing the levels into four periods: the Early Arab (8 phases), the Byzantine (4 phases), the Roman (2 phases) and the Herodian (from

Herod the Great down to A.D. 70). During this entire period till the "Double Gate" was closed, a street ran along the southern wall, leading from the southwestern corner up to the gate. In the Omayyad period this street was paved with cobblestones. A gate on the southern side of the street led to a magnificent building located on that flank. Without going into the problems presented by this building, we can state that it is similar in plan to the well known palaces of the Omayyad period. For the construction of this building ashlars, columns and other architectural remains



Fig. 10. A portion of the northern part of the Omayyad building (to the south of the southern wall), looking east.

from earlier periods were used. In the subsequent periods, in Abassid and Fatimid times, there were various attempts to restore the huge building partially, both by clearing debris away and through further construction. From the end of the Fatimid period on, the area of our excavations, south of the southern wall, remained uninhabited.

As for the Roman and Byzantine periods, we can note in passing that structures, some of them well preserved, have only been found adjacent to the southwestern corner, and to the east, next to the Turkish wall. The central area here apparently was reserved for gardens. The many finds of the Roman period include a stone slab on which is engraved a Latin monumental inscription from the time of Septimius Severus, many bricks and tiles bearing stamps of the Legio X Fretensis as well as of Colonia Aelia

Capitolina, an abundance of coins, fragments of marble sculptures, bronze figurines and large quantities of pottery and glass. Not less plentiful and interesting are the finds from the Byzantine levels.



Fig. 11. A Byzantine building with a mosaic floor (beneath the Omayyad level) in the south-eastern section of the excavation.

Let us return to the Herodian period. Our excavations along the southern wall have revealed an impressive sight — the well preserved courses of the Herodian wall comprising huge ashlar, some of which are 10-11 meters long. The ashlar of the upper courses have careful margins surrounding flat bosses, whereas the lower ones have much cruder, bulging bosses.

The latter should be regarded as the foundations of the wall, for they were not intended to be exposed to view. The further we uncovered the wall, the clearer became the outstanding planning and workmanship involved in the construction. In a section next to the southwestern corner, we found a part of the Herodian street, paved with large, squared flagstones, with two flights of three steps each leading up to the east. This section of the street was entirely engulfed in debris from the destruction of the Temple wall in A.D. 70, including ashlar with flat bosses from the highest courses of the wall itself, and architectural fragments from the top of the wall and possibly also from the "royal stoa", including fragments of a Corinthian capital, columns, decorated stones and two sun dials, as well as many coins



Fig. 12. Courses of the Herodian southern wall of the temple platform near the southwestern corner and the paved street with an accumulation of stones from the destruction of the second temple. In the background a section of the various levels (Omayyad, Byzantine, Roman, Herodian).

(the latest of which are from the fourth year of the First Revolt) and fragments of pottery and stone vessels typical of the Herodian period. Of special interest are the top cornerstone from the southwestern corner, as well as other fragments, which enabled the expedition's architect, the late Immanuel Dunayevsky, to make a reconstruction of the top of the southwestern corner of the wall. Later, we found in the debris ashlar with pilasters which were jutting out from the wall; these, together with remains of a small section of the western wall found many years ago beneath Bâb es-Saray, enable a comparison of the upper structure of the walls of the temple platform with those of the Herodian walls surrounding the cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

The study of the Herodian street was not without difficulties, for further to the east the flagstones of the pavement had been removed, apparently in the Roman period, at least in the few excavated areas. Surprisingly we discovered below the estimated level of the pavement two rows of masonry chambers built in the fill. In the easternmost section we even found a blocked opening between the two rows, with another opening slightly higher leading to the next chamber to the east, towards the "Double Gate". Here, we came to two conclusions: that these chambers were built in the fill in a continuous series the entire length of this part of the southern wall, and that two building phases are to be distinguished in the Herodian period. The latter point is evident in other areas, as well. These facts fit in well with what we know from Josephus, i.e., that construction work in the temple area went on until the time of the Procurator Albinus (*Antiquities* XX, 219-220; B. J. 5.36-38).

The Herodian street was bordered on its southern side by a wall, beyond which there was a plaza, c. 12 m. wide, sections of which we have uncovered recently. The plaza, which probably served as a gathering place for the crowds of pilgrims coming to Jerusalem on the festivals, is built over the fill and is paved with large flagstones, properly squared and trimmed, above a foundation of stones. On the south, the plaza was supported by a massive wall 3 m. wide, resembling Herodian masonry in Samaria and Jericho. All in all, we have clarified to a certain degree the character of this area south of the Temple Platform in the Herodian period. Even so, we still hope that in the future we shall be able to solve some additional problems for a better understanding of this area.

As for the finds so far examined, including those from the Herodian street and the small chambers, on the plaza, as well as in the area adjacent to Robinson's arch, and which are clearly to be ascribed to the Herodian period, firstly we must mention the abundance of coins, from Alexander Jannaeus down to the fourth year of the First Revolt — mostly coins from Jerusalem, but some few also foreign, such as two silver Tyrian shekels and a gold coin of Tiberius. Of the pottery, of special interest are the variety of

the so-called Herodian lamps, and the small painted "pseudo-Nabataean" platters. A thorough study of the rich corpus of pottery should yield valuable results concerning our understanding of daily life in this area, close by entrances to the temple area. This is true also of the various types of stoneware, mostly fragmentary, including pieces which bear short Hebrew inscriptions. The stoneware includes vessels of various sizes and types often decorated in the Herodian style, as well as a large number of stone weights, some of which are inscribed. One stone vessel fragment is of special interest, for it bears the inscription *Qorbân* — 'sacrifice', alongside and upside-down from the carved depiction of two bird figures. This inscription brings to mind

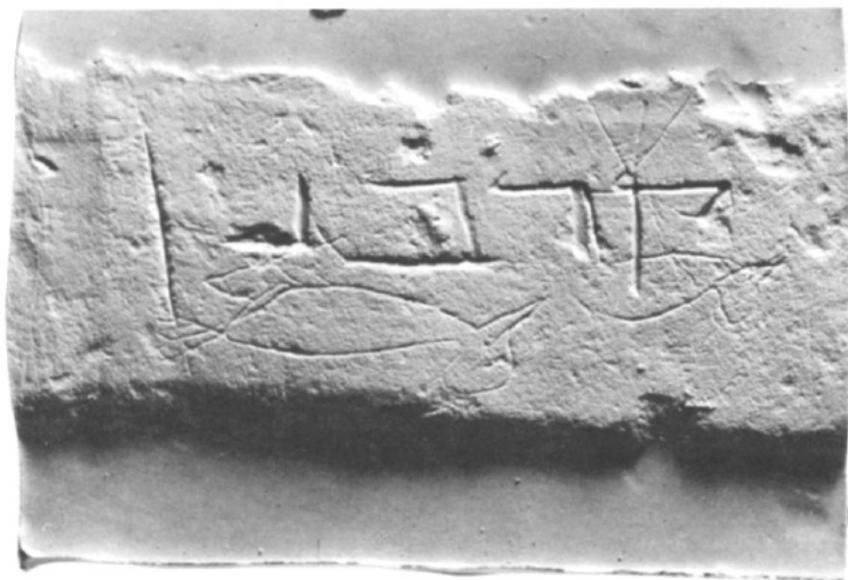


Fig. 13. The inscription *qorban* on a fragment of a stone vessel. Herodian period.

what is stated in the Mishna: "If a man found a vessel and on it was written *qorbân* . . ." (*Maaßer Shenî* IV. 10). The depiction of the two birds may be connected with the offering of the woman in confinement (Leviticus 12:8). Of no less interest are two stone objects which may be of ritual origin: one is flat and square on top, with a sunken area in the middle, and a drain-like hole in one corner. The other seems to be similar to some Nabataean incense altars. Apropos, very few Nabataean coins and sherds were discovered in the excavations. It is worthwhile to mention, that in the fill there was a considerable quantity of sherds from the end of the pre-exilic period, including handles bearing the *lmlk* stamp, together with sherds of the Herodian period, and very few of the Persian (including a handle bearing a *yhd* stamp) and the Hellenistic periods.

In trying to sum up the excavations to the west of the western wall, from the southwestern corner of the temple platform almost up to "Barclay's Gate", the first feature is "Robinson's Arch" which, according to common opinion, is a fragment of the viaduct spanning the space between the Upper City and the entrance to the "royal stoa" on the southern part of the court of the Temple. We had the opportunity in this area of solving several important stratigraphical problems and of somewhat clarifying the overall picture concerning the building phases in the Byzantine, Early Arabic and Crusader periods, as well as of discovering a building from the period of Aelia Capitolina in a reasonable state of preservation. A unique find was a



Fig. 14. A Hebrew inscription (a citation from Isaiah 66:14) engraved in one of the Herodian stones of the western wall beneath "Robinson's Arch". The inscription is probably from the Byzantine period.

Hebrew inscription carved into one of the stones of the western wall beneath "Robinson's Arch". Undoubtedly from the Byzantine period, and possibly from the days of Julian the Apostate, it quotes a passage in Isaiah 66:14 — "And you shall see, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones (shall flourish) like herbs".

As for the Herodian period: foremost is the fine preservation of the western wall up to a considerable height in this area. At a distance of 12.40 meters to the west of Robinson's arch, we came across the well preserved lower part of the finely constructed pier which supported the arch. It is 15.25 meters long — the length of Robinson's arch. We have found that the pier has four small rooms built into it, with their openings on the east,

facing the Herodian paved avenue which passed beneath the arch. These rooms may well have served as shops, for the finds within them included stoneware, weights and coins, mainly of Agrippa I. Beneath the avenue, paved with large slabs, which was found to run north-south along the western wall down the Tyropoeon valley, there is the grand Herodian aqueduct, already discovered by Warren. It is hewn into the bedrock and is vaulted over with stone voussoirs. So far, we have traced it for a length of some 200 meters, and it will become one of the major objectives in our future



Fig. 15. "Robinson's Arch" and the first pier of the viaduct (in the front). Herodian period. work, along with the channels leading to it — one of which, in the plaza area south of the southern wall, has already been cleared for a considerable length.

Complicated problems are raised concerning the viaduct. It is clear that it did not rest on further piers, which common hypothesis is based on Charles Warren's assumption, in contrast to a suggestion of Conrad Schick. It now appears that to the west of the discovered pier there was a monumental structure, of which only traces remain, and that the viaduct ran over its roof, towards the Upper City. We are presently in an advanced stage of the study of the building remains in this region, including two flights of steps to the north of the above building, ascending from east to west to a

platform from which access was gained to the upper stories of the huge building. To the north, there is a Herodian structure with a vaulted roof over which a monumental broad staircase led from the paved avenue in the east to the Upper City in the west; it still remains to be examined thoroughly (cf. *Antiquities* XV, 410). Suggested restorations of this entire building complex to the west of the western wall are problematic.

We are also pushing forward the exploration of the cisterns, reservoirs and other water installations hewn into the bedrock in the area to the west



Fig. 16. "Robinson's Arch" near the southwestern corner, the pier in front and to the left the flight of steps ascending to a platform (in the process of excavation).

of the pier. It is now apparent that in some instances what were at first considered cisterns are actually older, subterranean tombs, of the Iron age II. Moreover, it is quite certain that these tombs were hewn into the bedrock according to a well thought-out plan, on terraces of the eastern slope of the western hill, quite close to the original valley bed. In other words, they lie opposite the southern part of the temple mount, where it is supposed that the royal citadel of the Davidic dynasty stood. The tombs are of the Phoenician type found in the southern necropolis at Achzib, excavated by Dr. M. Prausnitz; according to the finds, these latter were ascribed to the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. They are also quite similar to some Iron II tombs in the village of Silwân. Their chief feature is a shaft which leads



Fig. 17. The Herodian aqueduct beneath the paved avenue, near the western wall.

through a doorway to the plastered burial chamber, over which is hewn a *nefesh*, resembling a chimney covered with slabs or a gabled roof. Only in the finest of these tombs was there found a dromos leading to the shaft. Till now we have examined only a few of the tombs, which examination suggests that they were cleared already in ancient times and remained unused until re-exposed in the Hasmonean (one of them contained an abundance of Hellenistic pottery and Hasmonean coins) and in the Herodian periods. Some were incorporated into the Herodian aqueduct.

Of course, these discoveries raise important problems concerning the expansion of Jerusalem in the period of the Judaean Kingdom. It seems that this burial ground is the ninth-seventh centuries B.C. It probably remained in use from the time of Joram until the days of Manasseh, i.e., the middle of the seventh century, B.C., when — according to the recent archaeological evidence — the expansion of Jerusalem towards the west began, and the new quarters — the Mishneh and Maktesh — were established (cf. 2 Chronicles 33:14; Zephaniah 1:10-11). A new door has obviously been opened for restudy of the problems involving the royal tombs and the common burial grounds in pre-exilic Jerusalem (cf. Ezekiel 43: 5-9; Jeremiah 31: 37-39). And indeed, this is a subject to which I hope to return in the near future.

Paul W. Lapp: In Memoriam

Paul W. Lapp, well-known to BA readers for several articles written during the past seven years, is tragically dead at the age of 39. He had already reached a position of prestige and respect in Palestinian archaeology unequaled among those of his own generation and rarely surpassed by his elders. From the beginning of his association with the American School in Jerusalem in 1957, virtually every aspect of its program had felt the impact of his strong personality and the guidance of his high standards.

Professor Lapp and two colleagues were swimming at a beach near Kyrenia, on the north coast of Cyprus on Sunday, April 26; they had been busy preparing for the opening of new excavation at Idalion. Heavy undertow must have developed without the swimmers' realization. One swam to shore and another was rescued by boat in the water. A helicopter recovered Dr. Lapp's body, nearly an hour later, when it was too late to revive him.

Paul Lapp began his field archaeological work at Balata (Shechem) in the summer of 1957. He and his capable wife Nancy were among a group of graduate students from Johns Hopkins University, including Robert Boling (editor of ASOR newsletters) and the writer of these words. We learned field technique from Lawrence Toombs together, how to draw sherd profiles