



Who Built the First Wall of Jerusalem?

Author(s): Benjamin Mazar and Hanan Eshel

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BENJAMIN MAZAR

HANAN ESHTEL

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

SINCE the nineteenth century, various expeditions have unearthed large segments of the First Wall of Jerusalem. N. Avigad discovered its northern section in the Upper City; its western section was uncovered in the courtyard of the Citadel by C.N. Johns and others, and along the western Ottoman wall by M. Broshi. F.J. Bliss and A.C. Dickie revealed its southern sections along the slopes of Mount Zion; and its eastern section was uncovered by R.A.S. Macalister and J.G. Duncan in the City of David.¹ It is worthwhile to ascertain who was responsible for the monumental project of constructing this wall.

A cluster of Hellenistic weapons was discovered close to the First Wall in the excavation of the Citadel by R. Sivan and G. Solar. The remains included 299 sling stones, two lead sling bullets, and a few dozen Hellenistic arrowheads, some inscribed with an emblem which probably denoted the army unit that participated in the siege of Jerusalem. There is no doubt that these stones date from the second century B.C.E.² Similar sling bullets were found in Dor, some with inscriptions dating them to the siege of Antiochus VII Sidetes against Tryphon shortly before the attack on Jerusalem.³ Thus, we may conclude that the First Wall already existed at the time of Antiochus VII's siege of Jerusalem during the reign of John

* This note is based on ideas presented in 1993 by the late Prof. B. Mazar to H. Eshel, then his teaching assistant. It is one of four short papers that Mazar had intended to write, but which he did not complete due to his poor health. In the second paper he had intended to show that during the fifth century B.C.E. land owners who lived in Jerusalem were holding royal estates in the Jericho region in a place named Senaah. In the third paper, he had intended to prove the historicity of the description found in 2 Chron. 26:11-15. In the fourth article, he had planned to discuss once again the relationship between the divine attributions and names in Canaanite and Aramaic inscriptions and the attributions of the Israelite god during the period of the Monarchy. I (H.E.) would like to thank Prof. A. Mazar, for encouraging me to take this task upon myself, and the Ingeborg Rennert Centre for Jerusalem Studies, Department of Land of Israel Studies, Bar-Ilan University, for its assistance.

1 See discussion and bibliography in G.J. Wightman: *The Walls of Jerusalem*, Sydney, 1993, pp. 88-90 and 111-157; and in H. Geva: *Jerusalem, the Second Temple Period*, *NEAEHL* 2, pp. 717-752.

2 R. Sivan and G. Solar: Excavations in the Jerusalem Citadel, 1980-1988, in H. Geva (ed.): *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, Jerusalem, 1994, pp. 173-174.

3 D. Schlesinger: A Lead Slingshot from Dor, *Qadmoniot* 15 (1982), p. 116 (Hebrew); D. Gera: Tryphon's Sling Bullet from Dor, *IEJ* 35 (1985), pp. 153-163.

Hyrchanus I (134 B.C.E.). The description of this battle in Josephus, *Ant.* 13:236–241, confirms that the wall was built before Hyrchanus's first year, when Antiochus attacked Jerusalem:⁴

But Antiochus, being resentful of the injuries he had received from Simon, invaded Judaea in the fourth year of his reign and the first of Hyrchanus' rule, ... And after ravaging the country, he shut Hyrchanus up in the city itself, which he surrounded with seven camps, but at first he accomplished nothing whatever because of the strength of the walls ... When, however, Hyrchanus observed that his great numbers were a disadvantage because of the rapid consumption of provisions by them, ... he separated from the rest those who were useless, and drove them out, and retained only those who were in the prime of life and able to fight. But Antiochus, on his side, prevented those who had been rejected from going out, and so, wandering about the walls between the lines, they were the first to be exhausted by their cruel sufferings and were on the point of perishing miserably. Just then, however, the festival of Tabernacles came round, and those within the city took pity on them and admitted them again.

Avigad suggested that Jonathan, son of Mattathias, who was the High Priest from 152 to 142 B.C.E., and his brother Simon, who was the Ethnarch of Judah from 142 to 134 B.C.E., built the wall — which Avigad named 'The Hasmonaean Wall'.⁵ This supposition is based on three verses from 1 Maccabees, which state that 'Jonathan thereupon took up residence in Jerusalem and began to build and restore the city. He ordered the men who were doing the work to build up the walls and to encircle Mount Zion with four-foot stones to defence, and this they did' (1 Macc. 10:10–11), and that Simon 'hastened to complete the walls of Jerusalem and surrounded it with fortifications' (1 Macc. 13:10). Avigad's assumption that the two sons of Mattathias had built the First Wall is further supported by 1 Maccabees 10:45, which mentions that Demetrius I, king of Syria, proposed a treaty with Jonathan, which contained a clause to the effect that Demetrius would build the wall of Jerusalem. Jonathan rejected the proposal; hence, it is evident that Demetrius did not build the First Wall. However, Avigad concluded, on the basis of this verse, that the building of the city wall was an important issue in the days of Jonathan.

It should be mentioned that of the time of Judas Maccabeus it was said: 'At that time they built high walls and strong towers around Mount Zion' (1 Macc. 4:60). It hardly seems likely that this refers to the reinforcing of Nehemiah's wall which

4 Translated by R. Marcus, Loeb Classical Library, pp. 347–349. For the problems generated by this description, see B. Bar-Kochva: *Antiochus the Pious and Hyrchanus the Tyrant: A Chapter in the Historiography of the Hasmonaean State*, *Zion* 61 (1996), pp. 7–44 (Hebrew).

5 N. Avigad: *Discovering Jerusalem*, Jerusalem, 1980, pp. 65–73.

surrounded the Eastern Hill or to the strengthening of the Temple Mount. Both books of Maccabees state that when Antiochus IV Epiphanes became king in 175 B.C.E., Jason received permission to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem and referred to the Jerusalemites as 'Antiochene'. This implies that Jerusalem had become a Greek 'polis' in 175 B.C.E. (see 2 Macc. 4:9-11; 1 Macc. 1:14).⁶ It is unlikely that a city only 15 acres in size, confined to the Eastern Hill, would be granted the status of a polis.

Several architectural remains discovered by Avigad indicate that luxurious structures were built in the Upper City of Jerusalem during the Hellenistic period. The base of a large column (1.8 m. in diameter) was discovered in Area C, under a floor dating from the time of Herod the Great. Potsherds found in the rubble there date from the second and first centuries B.C.E. Also found there was a large, meticulously carved Ionic capital. A complete Ionic capital, as well as another column base (1.56 m. in diameter) and segments of other columns were uncovered close to the Nahmanides Synagogue. A third Ionic capital, similar to the above-mentioned complete one, was found shattered in Area Q. Avigad pointed out that the Ionic capitals found in the Upper City, and particularly the one found intact, were ornamented in typical Hellenistic style, with lily scrolls, spirals and a row of niches around the top of the columns. These features are rare, and until now have only been found in two Hellenistic temples in Asia Minor. Avigad considered whether these findings might attest to the fact that Antiochus IV had built a temple to Zeus in the Upper City of Jerusalem. However, he reached the conclusion that these capitals may have come from one of the stoas built by Herod on the Temple Mount.⁷ This was based on the fact that the figure IX was inscribed on one of the capitals in Roman numerals, which could only have been introduced to Jerusalem not earlier than the time of Herod, and on the fact that Josephus Flavius mentioned that the Royal Basilica was adorned with Corinthian capitals.

It seems to us, however, that the capitals and bases found in the Upper City should be dated to the Hellenistic period, rather than to Herodian times, on the basis of stylistic considerations. In light of this, we would like to suggest that Jerusalem extended to the western hill as early as the Seleucid conquest, during the days of Antiochus III. Josephus mentions (*Ant.* 12:125-146) that after the fifth Syrian War, when Palestine came under Seleucid rule, Antiochus III published two

6 M. Stern: Antioch in Jerusalem: The Gymnasium, the Polis and the Rise of Menelaus, *Zion* 57 (1992), pp. 233-246 (Hebrew).

7 Avigad (above, n. 5), pp. 150-165. Distinction must be made between the inscription of the figure IX and the debate relating to the dating of the capitals, as it is possible that the figure was inscribed at a later date, during secondary use, maybe in the Royal Basilica. On this building, see B. Mazar: The Royal Stoa in the Southern Part of the Temple Mount, in H. Shanks and B. Mazar (eds.): *Recent Archaeology in the Land of Israel*, Washington, D.C., 1981, pp. 141-147.

decrees granting the Jews special privileges in appreciation of their support during his battles, when the citizens of Jerusalem supplied his army with provisions and helped him expel the Ptolemaic forces from the city. The first decree stated that in reward for the Jews' support, the king decided to rebuild their city, which had apparently suffered extensive damage in the course of battle, to return to Jerusalem citizens who had fled during the war, and to rebuild the temple, the stoas and any other building in Jerusalem in need of repair. The second decree was intended to preserve the holiness of the Jerusalem Temple by forbidding Gentiles from entering it and from bringing ritually impure meat into the city. In light of this, we assume that the First Wall was built by Antiochus III or by the Jews, during his reign, soon after the Seleucids took control of Palestine. This assumption is supported by the fact that in the days of Antiochus III, a large fortified city was built on the summit of Mount Gerizim.⁸ It appears that Antiochus aided the Samaritans in building their city, since they too had assisted him during the fifth Syrian War. His assistance to the people of Jerusalem by building the First Wall may be compared to his help to the Samaritans in building their fortified city on the summit of the hill.

Even after the building of the First Wall and the restoration of Jerusalem to its former size, as it was at the end of the First Temple period, it seems that there remained large empty spaces in the Upper City, which were used by the sons of Antiochus III — Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV — to build the public institutions necessary for turning Jerusalem into a polis.⁹ It appears quite probable, therefore, that the gymnasium which operated in the city as of 175 B.C.E. was built in these areas. It is likely that the monumental architectural elements discovered by Avigad were originally parts of the structures built in the first half of the second century B.C.E., when Jerusalem became a Hellenistic city.¹⁰

8 Y. Magen: Mount Garizim and the Samaritans, in F. Manns and A. Alliata (eds.): *Early Christianity in Context. Monuments and Documents (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. Collectio Maior 38)*, Jerusalem, 1993, pp. 91-148.

9 One should consider the possibility that the inscription published by S. Appelbaum, which originated from the Gymnasium of Jerusalem, was found in this area of the Upper City; see S. Appelbaum: A Fragment of a New Hellenistic Inscription from the Old City of Jerusalem, in A. Oppenheimer *et al.* (eds.): *Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period. Abraham Shalit Memorial Volume*, Jerusalem, 1980, pp. 47-60 (Hebrew, English summary on p. III).

10 It was Avi-Yonah who suggested that the huge architectural remains discovered in the Upper City originally belonged to a temple dedicated to Zeus, which Antiochus Epiphanes had built or had intended to build in Jerusalem when he granted it the status of a Greek polis. See M. Avi-Yonah: The Newly-Found Wall of Jerusalem and its Topographical Significance, *IEJ* 21 (1971), pp. 168-169.