



Where Is the Third Wall of Agrippa I?

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The recent publications of Benoit (1976) and Hamrick (1977) have contributed to narrowing the gap among various scholarly views concerning the nature and date of the wall unearthed in Jerusalem in the 1927-28 excavations of Sukenik and Mayer, 400 m northwest of the present wall of the Old City. Both Benoit and Hamrick are of the opinion that these are the remains of a wall which defended the city in the 1st century C.E., prior to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. The questions of the precise date of construction and the identity of the builder remain open to discussion.

Excavations carried out by the authors intermittently between 1972 and 1974 along the line of the Third Wall have thrown additional light on various aspects of the problem. The discovery of two additional towers enabled the excavators to observe a pattern of evenly spaced (42-43 m), northward-facing towers (see plan), thus proving that the wall faced north. Among other problems, the methods used in the construction of the wall were studied in detail.

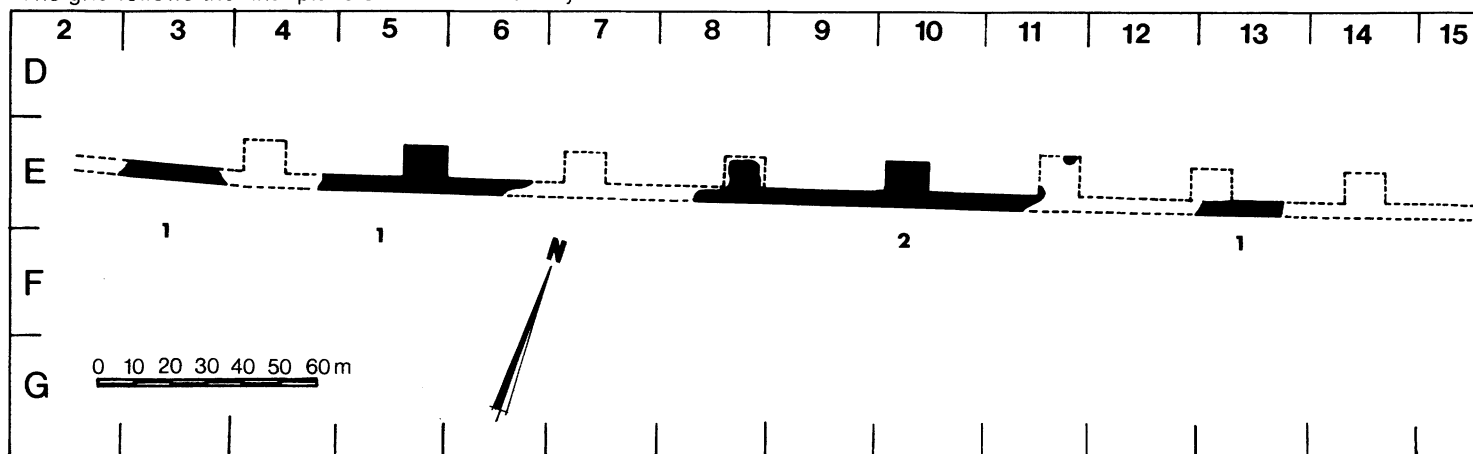
The remains of the 4.5-m-thick wall are part of an engineering enterprise which, in one section, follows a straight line for 750 m(!). The courses of masonry uncovered comprised the foundations of the wall which had been adapted to the natural surface of the bedrock. These foundations were constructed of small and medium-size field stones and of ashlar of varying sizes. Fine workmanship is evident, mainly in the well-fitted ashlar and in the high quality mortar binding the field stones.

The foundations match perfectly the measurements of the Third Wall as described by Josephus: 10 cubits for the width of the wall and 20 cubits for the width of the towers. He may have exaggerated somewhat in describing the size of the stones employed in the construction, although several huge stones (5 m long) were found incorporated in the foundation. Similarly, Josephus exaggerated in describing the size of the stones used in the construction of the three towers of Herod's western palace (Phasael, Hippicus, and Miriamne). He was accurate, however, in the overall measurements he gave for the towers, as evident in the so-called "Tower of David."

The remains of the excavated foundations are impressive enough to have been part of the ambitious plans of Agrippa I. They are not the desperate and hasty work of the Jewish insurgents. The scanty remains of their building activities at Masada and Herodium are of considerably inferior quality.

Recent archeological finds have enhanced Josephus' reliability as a source for the history of this period. This is a weighty obstacle to the acceptance of

The grid follows the final plans of Sukenik and Mayer.



Hamrick's suggestion that Josephus ignored the construction of such an imposing wall (the so-called Fourth Wall) in the northern confines of the city, if indeed the Third Wall was "simultaneously being completed some 400 m to the south" (Hamrick 1977: 22). It is thus also implausible that this was "constructed as a formidable barricade against the cavalry" with no southward continuation on either side.

Once more we should return to the evidence in Josephus. He asserts that Agrippa, who initiated the construction of the Third Wall, was ordered by the Romans to discontinue his enterprise. It subsequently was completed, hastily perhaps, at the time of the War against the Romans.

The attempt to employ tenuous topographical data mentioned by Josephus, such as the Royal Quarries or Psephinus' Tower, seems unnecessary in view of clear-cut archeological remains which confront us.

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Legend

- 1 Sections Exposed in 1927-28
- 2 Sections Exposed in 1927-28 and 1972-74
- 3 Sections Exposed in 1940
- 4 American School of Oriental Research—The Albright Institute

The North Wall Outside Jerusalem

In his article "The Third Wall of Agrippa I" Emmet W. Hamrick (*BA* 40.1 [1977]: 18-23) seeks to identify the builders of the 750-m wall that lies about 400 m north of Jerusalem's Old City. As Hamrick shows, distinguished scholars of the past and present are divided in their opinions about the origin of this wall. Those who do not think it is the Third Wall built by Agrippa I (as described in Josephus) suggest other possibilities. Hamrick himself agrees with Pierre Benoit of the Ecole Biblique that there is an alternative worthy of serious consideration: this north line may have been a defensive position planned and built entirely between A.D. 66 and 70 by the Jewish insurgents.

There is no documentation to support such a view. In order to be acceptable, it must at least be supported by circumstantial evidence. Thus, in considering Hamrick's view, we are forced to ask the question: What was the situation in Jerusalem during the interval A.D. 66-70?

Josephus (*JW* 5.1.4) records that at that time the Jewish insurgents were engaged in fighting a savage three-way civil war. Chief Priest Eleazar, leader of some 2400 Zealots, had entrenched himself in the great Temple's Inner Court, a fortress superior even to the Antonia and coveted by all factions. Maintained by the offerings, it appeared Eleazar could hold out there indefinitely.

When Vespasian and his armies swept through Galilee crushing the revolt there, John of Gischala with his army of 6000 fled to the safety of walled Jerusalem. He seized the cloistered Outer Court of the Temple. This amazing structure was a quarter mile long and about 900 ft wide. Established in this incomparable base of operations, he could both present a strong front to the Romans when they came and completely surround Eleazar in the Inner Court. When John's marauders unleashed a reign of terror over the people of Jerusalem, the city fathers sent for the legendary Simon ben Giora to save the city.

