



**The Half Shekel Journal** by Ed Rice  
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Armed with the visions of the model we disappeared into the streets of the City of David where I lost all perspective of location until we came into view of the black dome of the Mosque on the southern wall of the temple mount. We looked up the immense wall to Robinson's Arch. We were already able to distinguish between the huge Herodian foundation stones and the smaller ones used in later reconstructions. Ronny's accent silenced the group as we all leaned a little closer to hear. "At my bar mitzvah in 1967, in the middle of a war, I stood up there on Robinson's Arch and everything we see here was covered by smultchk." Hi multilingual accent had captured a picturesque word for the rubble and dirt, debris and garbage that filled ancient sites. There is no English equivalent.

We listened intently as he described some of the war and the now visible foundation stones placed by Herod prior to the birth of Christ. He described the hated symbol of the 10<sup>th</sup> Roman Legion which came in 70 A.D. to topple the temple and its walls and leave the insignia of their wild boar. Nothing could be more disdained in the temple than that image in particular and there had previously been no images at all on

this temple mount. He described the demolitions and reconstructions of Muslims and Crusaders of Turks and Europeans. "Up there on the original South West corner of the wall a trumpeter would sound the shofar for the official ending of the sabbath day." His instrument would ceremoniously rest in a little notch with a Hebrew inscription on it. And that corner stone, with notch and inscription was found here in this rubble of the fallen wall. Such a find authenticated what the Jews and the Bible had been testifying. The findings and weepings done on this site, over these rocks and artifacts is beyond our gentile imaginations.

Here beneath the smultchk they found 17 miqvehs for the purifying baths required once per week. (Lev 15:27) The large families of Jews is brought to mind by these miqvehs. Women must not be touched while in menstrual bleeding; then not for a week; then after her purifications in a miqveh she must come to her husband; not by coincidence, just at the time of normal ovulation. Along with the many baths buried in this rubble was Herod's arch, an abundance of water pools, and the cheese production facilities. That Jordanian destruction of the whole Jewish quarter of Jerusalem had indeed opened a floodgate of archaeological discovery.

We left the South Western corner of the temple mount through a maze of streets of the first century, 'climbed the decline' up to the 7<sup>th</sup> century and entered the Umayyad Palace area. The spacious courtyard which reused many of the stones of the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple period tied together large public buildings for people gathering in the temple area. Situated in the southern edge of the temple wall, there may have even been a bridge that led to the temple mount. The Americas do not even have a 7<sup>th</sup> century history, but I was eager to leave this 'modern era' Umayyad Palace and get back to the temple of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and we headed for the southern steps of the temple.



At the base of the entry of the temple outside the Gentile court, Ronnie rehearsed the visit made here by Neil Armstrong with Ron as his guide. He expressed a desire to stand in the very place where Jesus once stood and they came here to the uncovered southern steps knowing that the Bible and the archaeologist shovel combined to place Jesus on this very spot. Here, Neil Armstrong said that “Standing here on the very place that his Lord had stood, was more important to him than standing on the moon.” With that revelation these steps became a sanctuary of worship. Bev and I ascended and sat on an undisturbed 1<sup>st</sup> century stone to read Scripture and pray together. We read about the 1<sup>st</sup> purifying of the temple in John 2, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> in Matt 21. We read how he taught in the temple from early dawn till evening on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> of the old Hebrew month Abib, after his triumphal entry as “the lamb that taketh away the sin of the world,” the passover lamb that was separated from the rest of the flock on the 10<sup>th</sup> of that month and offered as a sacrifice on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Here on these very steps our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ, had fulfilled these Scriptures. It was an awesome worship service of two. Several others had broken off as couples to worship. When we regathered back together we were pretty much without words.

Ronny's accent and softened demeanor captured all our attention as he stood next to the huge glass enclosed Menorah which overlooked the Western Wall. “In 1492, a date which is easy for Americans to remember, Spain decreed that every Jew in their country must convert to Catholicism or die.” As usual Ronny spoke carefully and accurately. No one can be brought to Christianity by a sword, despite Saint Augustine's doctrine of the two swords and millions



of martyrs by the Catholics who grasped it. And no one can be kept from Christianity by a sword, despite the millions of martyrs still dying by Muslim and Communist swords. I always hate when people use 'Catholic' synonymously with 'Christian', they are not synonym. I never heard our guide run the two together. We each listen carefully, many



with recorders going now, I with my not stuffed book open. He described the mass exodus of Jews that caused the whole economy of Spain to collapse within 3 years. I thought of our own collapsed economy and the economics report Beverly just did at CCC on Fanny May and Freddie Mack. I am sure in Spain they likewise denied that the collapse had anything to do with their treatment of the Jews. But the Bible says to his people “fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.” (Isa 51:7b-8) The self fulfilling recession exaggerated onto our society by those wishing for a regime change is blooming into a full collapse of its own. If there is one thing we learn from history it is that we never learn from history.