

ARCHEOLOGIST: ANCIENT CISTERN PROVES LOCATION OF SECOND TEMPLE

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An Israeli archeologist said Wednesday that he has pinpointed the exact location of the Second Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount.

The site identified by Hebrew University archeologist Prof. Joseph Patrich, based on the study of a large underground cistern on the Temple Mount and passages from the Mishna, places the Temple and its corresponding courtyards, chambers and gates in a more southeasterly and diagonal frame of reference compared to previous studies.

Patrich based his research, which is about to be published, on a study of a large underground cistern on the Temple Mount that was mapped by British engineer Sir Charles Wilson in 1866 on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund, along with passages from the Mishna.

The giant cistern, 4.5 meters wide and 54 meters long, lay near the southeastern corner of the upper platform of the Temple Mount. Examining the location and configuration of the cistern together with descriptions of the daily rite in the Temple and its surroundings found in the Mishna, Patrich said that this cistern is the only one found on the Temple Mount that can tie in with the ancient rabbinic text describing elements involved in the daily purification and sacrificial duties carried out by the priests on the altar in the Temple courtyard.

On this basis, he says, one can reconstruct the placement of a large basin that was used by the priests for their ritual washing, with the water being drawn by a waterwheel mechanism from the cistern.

After this purification, the priests ascended the nearby ramp to the sacrificial altar.

By thus locating the laver, the water wheel, the ramp and the altar, one can then finally map, again in coordination with the Mishna, the alignment of the Temple itself and its gates and chambers, he said.

These considerations led Patrich to place the Second Temple further to the east and south than earlier thought, and at a southeasterly angle relative to the eastern wall of the Temple Mount, and not perpendicular to it, as earlier assumed.

Patrich said that his research indicates that the rock over which the Dome of the Rock was built in the 7th century CE is actually outside the confines of the Temple.

The rock is believed to be the place at which the binding of Isaac took place, while Muslims consider it to be the spot from which Muhammad ascended to heaven.

The Temple Mount is Judaism's holiest site as the ancient compound where the two Jewish Temples stood, and is Islam's third holiest site after Mecca and Medina.