

THE “CAMP OF THE ASSYRIANS” AND THE THIRD WALL OF JERUSALEM

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Abstract: On two occasions in his description of the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, Josephus mentions the “Camp of the Assyrians” as the area in which Titus’ quarters were located. The historian’s account suggests that the location of this site meant that it played an important role in the battles at the city walls. Scholars do not agree on where it was situated, despite the significance of this fact for accurate reconstruction of the progression of the siege of Jerusalem as well as determining the course of the so-called Third Wall. Analysis of the literary and archaeological evidence leads to the conclusion that the name “Camp of the Assyrians” refers to an area lying north-west of the present-day walls of Jerusalem, whose southern borders are demarcated by the remains of an ancient wall unearthed during archaeological excavations and identified by archaeologists as the Third Wall.

The historical works of Josephus, though not the only source of our knowledge of the topography of Jerusalem until its destruction in 70 CE, are certainly the most valuable. The importance of the information provided by the historian is all the greater as he had an excellent knowledge of Jerusalem from personal experience, having spent much of his life in the city. Despite the frequency with which we refer to his works in reconstructing a picture of the city, it is not always possible to place many of the toponyms, characteristic places and buildings which he mentions with any accuracy. These difficulties are the cause of incessant disagreements between scholars which often highlight various weaknesses in Josephus’ account. These include excessive vagueness, occasional lack of credibility of the statistical data and dimensions of the sites he describes, or lack of the requisite care in providing significant topographical details associated with the places in which the events he describes were played out. The liberties Josephus takes in describing the city were natural for somebody who knew Jerusalem’s topography very well and was addressing his work to contemporaries with a similarly good knowledge of how it had looked before the destruction. For later generations of readers, on the other hand, much effort is required to reconstruct this picture.

Since the beginning of the first systematic archaeological excavations in Jerusalem in the 19th century, along with studies on the city’s historical topography, it has been possible to clear up a number of ambiguities and inaccuracies in Josephus’ works. Still, though, the identification and location of many places and buildings that he refers to continue to be unknown or controversial. The toponyms still to be located on the map include the “Camp of the Assyrians,” which Josephus mentions in the context of the

siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE on two occasions in the *Jewish War* (BJ 5.303; 504). The context in which this name appears suggests that owing to its convenient location, the area identified as the “Camp of the Assyrians” gave the Roman command full control over the course of the battles waged on the line of the Second Wall, stoutly defended by the Jewish rebels, and at the walls of the Antonia fortress.

Despite the strategic importance of the “Camp of the Assyrians” during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, scholars debating various details of the course of the fighting have never made a serious effort to locate this site. In general, they place it as they see fit.¹ I would argue that its location is important both for correcting certain aspects of the picture of the battles at the walls of Jerusalem, and for solving important problems concerning the history and topography of the area to the north of today’s line of the walls of Jerusalem’s Old City, especially the question of the course of the Third Wall, the erection of which is attributed to King Agrippa I.²

The toponym “Camp of the Assyrians” used by Josephus does not appear in any other source. This seems to suggest that it was known only to the residents of Jerusalem, referring to an event that had taken place in the distant past. The name itself sounds as if it referred to an extensive area. The only event that can be linked to this name was the siege of Jerusalem during the rule of Sennacherib, mentioned in the Books of Kings (2 Kings 18: 17 - 19: 36), Chronicles (2 Chr 32: 1-21), and Isaiah (36: 2 - 37: 38). These sources, unfortunately, contain no indication of the place where the camp was located.³ With the shape of the terrain around Jerusalem in mind, as well as examples of other sieges in later eras, we can only assume that it was probably situated to the northern side of the city, where the comparatively flat land offered good conditions for setting up camp not too far from the walls of Jerusalem. If we acknowledge that “Camp of the Assyrians” was a toponym known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem contemporary to Josephus, the aim of its use in the description of events was probably to maintain the narrative’s clarity, as well as avoiding the need to introduce any further topographical explanations. In order to determine whether this is hypothesis is correct, we need to look more closely at those passages of *Bellum Judaicum* in which Josephus refers to the “Camp of the Assyrians.” I shall quote these here in order to make the subsequent discussion clearer. The first mention appears in connection with Titus’ decision to move his quarters to the area of the “Camp of the Assyrians” after the Romans had taken the Third Wall.

¹ According to M. Avi-Yonah (1968, p. 113), M. Kenyon located “the Camp of the Assyrians” “within the present day Old City.” Avi-Yonah himself (1968, p. 113, note 89) suggested that it “would be about where the Russian Compound is at present.” Other proposals are: Ussishkin 1979, p. 139 (the Northwest Hill); Price 1992, pp. 132-133 (the northwest corner of the city); Ussishkin 1995, p. 292; 2014 (the Northeast Hill); Kokkinos 2015, p. 99* (“This [i.e. Camp of the Assyrians] occupied the area from the Third Wall to the Kedron [tower] (...) or, in other words, beginning from above the Royal Caverns (...) and extending a part of northern Bethesda some way towards the eastern line of the Third Wall by the Kedron Valley (...)”).

² Cf. Jos. BJ 2.218-219; 5.152-155; AJ 19.326-327. Scholars frequently differ in their opinions as to what part of this wall was built during his rule and what part after his death, as well as whether it was Agrippa I who built it, or somebody else should be credited. Josephus himself is to blame for these discrepancies, as in each case when he mentions the construction of the wall by this king in his works he gives a different version of the circumstances and a different time.

³ See Ussishkin 1979, pp. 139-142; 1995, pp. 290-292; 2014, pp. 95-96.

The Romans having thus on the fifteenth day (of the siege), being the seventh of the month Artemisius, become masters of the first wall, razed a large part of it along with the northern quarter of the city, previously destroyed by Cestius. Titus now shifted his camp within the first wall to the so-called Camp of the Assyrians, occupying all the ground between it and the Kedron, but keeping far enough back to be out of bowshot from the second wall, which he forthwith proceeded to attack (BJ 5.302-303; tr. H. St. J. Thackeray).⁴

The second appears in the description of the course of the circumvallation, or earthen rampart built by the Romans to encircling Jerusalem. According to Josephus, this fortification started and finished in the “Camp of the Assyrians”:

Beginning at the camp of the Assyrians – the site of his own encampment – he directed the wall towards the lower region of the New Town and thence across the Kedron to the Mount of Olives (...) (BJ 5.504; tr. H. St. J. Thackeray).⁵

Titus’ attack, which led to breaking of the first insurgent line of defense of Jerusalem, probably took place close to the Psephinus Tower, from the western side. It also allowed the city gate to be opened from the northern side, and as a result enabled the remainder of the onrushing units to quickly pass through and immediately begin cleansing the area (BJ 5.301-302). The first wall that Josephus mentions, seen from the side of the attacking Romans, is identified as the Third Wall seen from the city side. This means that the new Roman camp found itself in the area between the Third and the Second Wall, i.e. in the part of the city which we otherwise know to have been called the New City or Bezetha (cf. BJ 5.149-152), and which in 66 CE was the target of the intervening attack on the governor of Syria, G. Cestius Gallus (BJ 2.527-530), in Jerusalem at the time. This account makes it clear that the term “Camp of the Assyrians” did not refer to the whole area. The name might therefore have been used only to refer to the western part of the area between the walls, which undoubtedly also confirms the contents of the second reference. Yet stating that the area known as the “Camp of the Assyrians” should be placed to the north-west of the Second Wall by no means brings us any closer to its actual location. It would be possible to determine this only if we were to definitively solve the problem of the course of the Third Wall. This problem presented itself in 1838, when Edward Robinson discovered a section of the reinforcements lying north of the western line of the present-day walls of Jerusalem’s Old City (and probably constituting an extension of them) and called them a remnant of the Third Wall.⁶ The debate on the path of this wall grew in intensity many years later, following the archaeological excavations of E.L. Sukienik and L.A. Mayer in 1925-1927⁷ and 1940.⁸ These led to the discovery of further sections of the same defensive wall of length of around 500 meters, extending over a space of 750 meters and located practically parallel, approximately 400-450 meters away, to the

⁴ Ῥωμαῖοι μὲν οὕτω τοῦ πρώτου τείχους πεντεκαϊδεκάτῃ κρατήσαντες ἡμέρα, ἑβδόμη δὲ ἦν Ἀρτεμισίου μηνός, αὐτοῦ τε πολὺ κατασκάπτουσι καὶ τὰ προσάρκτια τῆς πόλεως ἃ καὶ πρότερον Κέστιος. Μεταστραποπεδεύεται δὲ Τίτος εἰσω κατὰ τὴν Ἀσσυρίων παρεμβολὴν καλουμένην, ἐπισχὼν πᾶν τὸ μεταξὺ μέχρι τοῦ Κεδρώνος, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ δευτέρου τείχους ὅσον ἐξωτέρω βέλους εἶναι. προσβολὰς δ’ εὐθέως ἐποιεῖτο.

⁵ ἀρξάμενος δ’ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσσυρίων παρεμβολῆς, καθ’ ἣν αὐτὸς ἐστρατοπεδεύσατο, ἐπὶ τὴν κατωτέρω Καινὴν πόλιν ἦγε τὸ τεχοῖς, ἔνθεν διὰ τοῦ Κεδρώνος ἐπὶ τὸ Ἐλαιῶν ὄρος.

⁶ Hamrick 1981, p. 262; cf. Paton 1905, pp. 196-211; Ariel, Baruch, Zilberbod 2014, p. 156.

⁷ Sukienik, Mayer 1930.

⁸ Sukienik, Mayer 1944, pp. 145-151.

present Turkish northern walls of the Old City. Its discoverers dated the wall to the end of the 60s CE, stressing that its foundations were from much earlier.⁹ Later archaeological works along the line of this wall not only corroborated their findings as to the time when it was built, but also made it possible to discover new sections and unknown elements of its construction.¹⁰ Essentially, the debate comes down to either accepting the argument that the remains are part of the Third Wall, or insisting that the course of this wall basically coincided with the line of the present northern wall of Jerusalem, which dates back to Ottoman times. Since the early 1990s, the vast majority of scholars expressing an opinion on this question are in no doubt that the remains of fortifications discovered by Robinson as well as Sukienik and Mayer are part of the Third Wall.¹¹ Yet there is still no shortage of scholars questioning this opinion.¹²

For the proponents of both these views, the main point of reference is Josephus' description of the Third Wall. To obtain a better understanding of the arguments made by both sides it is necessary to refer to the passages from this description containing significant topographical information:

The third [wall] began at the tower Hippicus, whence it stretched northwards to the tower Psephinus, and then descending opposite the monuments of Helena (queen of Adiabene and daughter of king Izates), and proceeding past the royal caverns it bent round a corner tower over against the so-called Fuller's tomb joining the ancient rampart terminated at the valley called Kedron. This wall was built by Agrippa to enclose the latter additions to the city, which were quite unprotected (...) (BJ 5.147-148; tr. H. St. J. Thackeray).¹³

Although this passage does not contain any mention of a gate in the wall, Josephus confirms the existence of one elsewhere. It was situated next to the "Women's Towers," with the main road from Jerusalem northward leading through it (cf. BJ 5.54-55).¹⁴ The gate was well fortified by the insurgents¹⁵ and played an important role in the defense of the city (BJ 5.55-66.109-119). Titus almost died in its vicinity when the unit he was leading, carrying out a reconnaissance of the Third Wall's fortifications, was lured into a trap by the rebels (BJ 5.55-66).

Key factors in this debate are the distance of the discovered fortifications from the Old City and the location of the Psephinus Tower and the "royal caverns." One argument frequently cited against recognizing these fortifications as the Third Wall is the large

⁹ Sukienik, Mayer 1930, p. 56.

¹⁰ Kenyon 1966, pp. 87-88; Hamrick 1966, pp. 19-26; Ben-Arieh, Netzer 1974, pp. 97-107; Ben-Arieh 1976, pp. 60-62; Hamrick 1985, pp. 217-222; Tzaferis, Feig, Onn, Shukron 2000, pp. 287-288. For a detailed description of all discovered sections of the fortification see: Sukienik, Mayer 1930, pp. 13-35; Ben-Arieh, Netzer 1974, pp. 98-102; Hamrick 1966, pp. 21-24; 1985, pp. 217-219; cf. also Kloner 2001, pp. 105*-107*; Kuchler 2007, pp. 978-985.

¹¹ Ben-Arieh, Netzer 1974, pp. 106-107.

¹² Cf. Kokkinos 2015, pp. 95*-96*.

¹³ τῷ τρίτῳ δ' ἀρχὴ ἦν ὁ Ἱππικὸς πύργος, ὅθεν μέχρι τοῦ βορείου κλίματος κατατεῖνον ἐπὶ τὸν Ψήφινον πύργον, ἔπειτα καθῆκον ἀντικρὺ τῶν Ἑλλήνων μνημείων, Ἀδιαβηνῆ βασιλὶς ἦν αὐτῇ Ἰζάτου βασιλεύως θυγάτηρ, καὶ διὰ σπηλαίων βασιλικῶν μηχανόμενον ἐκάμπτετο μὲν γωνιαίῳ πύργῳ κατὰ τὸ Γναφέως προσαγορευόμενον μνημα, τῷ δ' ἀρχαίῳ περιβόλῳ συνάπτον εἰς τὴν Κεδρῶνα καλουμένην φάραγγα κατέληγεν. Τοῦτο τῇ προσκτισθείσῃ πόλει περιέθηκεν Ἀγρίππας, ἥπερ ἦν πᾶσα γυνή.

¹⁴ N. Kokkinos (2015, p. 97*) identifies this gate as the present Damascus Gate.

¹⁵ This is confirmed by archaeological excavations carried out by this gate, which provide archaeologists with evidence of the work the rebels did to fortify the city: Sukienik, Mayer 1944, pp. 148-151.

distance between them and the present-day walls of the Old City. If, as Josephus suggests and archaeological data confirms,¹⁶ the area of the New City was not densely populated, according to critics of this identification it would not have made much strategic sense for Agrippa I to build defensive walls at such a distance from the city. They therefore argue that the line of the Third Wall more or less coincided with the course of the present northern walls of Jerusalem, and that the "royal caverns" mentioned by Josephus were quarries found beneath the Old City.¹⁷ Taking these elements of the current topography of the city as a reference point, these scholars sought to identify the fortifications variously with the remnants of the circumvallation built by Roman soldiers during the siege of Jerusalem, the so-called fourth wall, intended as a barrier built by the insurgents to protect Jerusalem from the north, part of the fortifications of the camp of legion *X Fretensis*, and earthworks built at the time of the Bar-Kokhba revolt.¹⁸ It has also been argued that there is no historical context permitting an understanding of the function of the find.¹⁹

The description of the battles at the wall furthest removed to the north of Jerusalem, which Josephus calls the first one, mentions something that has not been used in the discussion on its identification with the Third Wall or with today's northern wall of the Old City. Josephus notes the considerable distance of the wall from the city and the fact that the long battle had sapped the energy of its defenders and discouraged them from continuing their resistance, which they saw as useless as there were another two walls behind them (BJ 5.299-300). If we accept the hypothesis that the line of the Third Wall constituted the line of the northern walls of the Old City, that would not justify the defeatist approach of some of its defenders, if behind them, in full view, was the Second Wall. The existence of the Third Wall on the course of today's northern walls of Jerusalem is

¹⁶ Cf. Tzaferis, Feig, Onn, Shukron 2000, p. 287; Geva 1993c, pp. 745-746; 2011, pp. 301-309.

¹⁷ The problem of the identification of these "royal caverns" is connected to the unspecified character of the name used by Josephus, as well as the suggestion of their identification with King Solomon's quarries, also known as the Cave of Zedekiah (cf. Kokkinos 2015, pp. 96*-97*). This opinion is not shared by all scholars; cf. Ross 1942, pp. 77-78. According to A. Kloner (1986, pp. 126-129), who is in favor of identifying the fortifications as the remains of the Third Wall, the "royal caverns" should be identified as graves hewn in a rock found by Nablus Road in land belonging to the École Biblique, although again this may be doubted owing to the distance between these graves and the fortification lines. The results of archaeological works conducted in the last two decades in the immediate and further vicinity of the wall and the remains of quarries that they unearthed in many places, from which the material for building it was taken, together with numerous graves and caves hewn nearby, justify another hypothesis still: the name "the royal caverns" used by Josephus refers neither to any of the topographical points previously known to us, with which attempts were made to link them, nor to specific royal graves, but perhaps instead to expansive quarries discovered by archaeologists with numerous burial graves hewn in rocks from Herodian times (cf. Ben-Arieh, Netzer 1974, pp. 97-98; Kloner 2001, pp. 82*-87*, no. 241-261). Their name may be connected not to royal burial grounds, but rather to King Agrippa I, as it was during his rule that they began to be utilized intensively as a result of work on the fortifications. Data obtained during the excavations tells us that they also functioned for a long time afterwards.

¹⁸ On the history of research on this wall, the proposed interpretations of its function and scholars' opinions on the time of its erection, see Paton 1905, pp. 196-211; Sukienik, Mayer 1930, pp. 7-12; Ross 1942, pp. 75-81; Kenyon 1966, pp. 87-88; Avi-Yonah 1968, pp. 98-122; Hamrick 1968, pp. 23-25; 1977, pp. 21-22; Ben-Arieh, Netzer 1979, pp. 140-141; McNulty 1979, pp. 141-144; Schmitt 1981, pp. 153-170; Hamrick 1981, pp. 262-266; Hamrick 1985, pp. 215-216, 223-232; Margalit 1990, pp. 31-32; Price 1992, pp. 290-292; Geva 1993b, pp. 744-745; Wightman 1993, pp. 159-181; Bieberstein, Bloedhorn 1994, I: pp. 115-116, 125-127; Magness 2000, pp. 328-329; Küchler 2007, pp. 978-985; Galor, Bloedhorn 2013, pp. 71-74.

¹⁹ This isolated position is represented by Kokkinos 2015, p. 96*: "The notorious 'Mayer and Sukienik wall,' as often called, is a wall with a historical context totally unknown to us."

also not confirmed by the archaeological excavations near Herod's Gate and Damascus Gate.²⁰ Archaeologists have been unable to identify any traces of the foundations of this wall there. Neither has any evidence of the existence of the Psephinus Tower been found nearby Tancred's Tower, which was located in the place where the Collège des Frères can currently be found. The remains discovered there date from much later historical eras.²¹

Describing Titus' preparations for the attack on Jerusalem, Josephus mentions that after carrying out a reconnaissance of the area and preparing the terrain, he transferred the joint camp of legions *XII Fulminata* and *XV Apollinaris* and the auxiliary units active with them to the vicinity of the Psephinus Tower, locating it at a distance of two stadia from the tower. From the western side, at the level of the Hippicus Tower and at a similar distance from the walls of Jerusalem, was the camp of legion *V Macedonica* (BJ 5.133-134). One can assume that this distance was justified by the range of some of the Roman siege engines of the time, held by the rebels.²² Irrespective of whether the insurgents had the means to make use of their technical possibilities, this distance ensured the safety of the soldiers billeted in these camps. It also created a wide strip of land between the warring sides, allowing any unexpected sorties on Roman positions from the rebel units to be quelled.

After securing the external wall, Titus again moved the camp of his units, this time to the area of the "Camp of the Assyrians" (BJ 5.303). This decision must have been dictated by particular strategic concerns, as any change in the position of the camp was a major logistical operation whose successful completion required time and a huge amount of work connected with transferring a large number of people and a mass of military equipment as well as building the entire camp infrastructure from scratch, from fortifications to quarters for several thousand soldiers. Such a move could be justified only by a significant change in the situation on the battlefield, i.e. a shift in the frontline making it hard for Titus to command effectively and to efficiently lead the siege of the city from the previous position. This happened only when the Third Wall was conquered, and so it must indeed have been far removed from the line of the Second Wall. If we take into account the distance of 400-450 meters that divides the line of the fortifications discovered by archaeologists from the current northern walls of Jerusalem, and add to this the two stadia, that is 370-390 meters, that divided the Psephinus tower from the then Roman camp, we get a total distance of over 800 meters. This would make Titus' decision to move the camp nearer to the city fully understandable.

If we accept that the Psephinus tower was indeed located in the north-western corner of the Old Town, then its conquest together with the line of the Third Wall must rightly have led to doubts as to the wisdom of the Roman leader's decision. In this case, his units would be separated from the line of the Second Wall by a strip of land measuring

²⁰ This conclusion is supported by archaeological and numismatic material allowing us to date the building of the wall running along the line of the present northern wall of the Old Town to at the earliest the late 3rd/early 4th centuries CE: Hamilton 1940, pp. 19-20, 35, 52-53; Magness 2000, pp. 330, 335-336. Another important piece of evidence showing that at the time there were no defense walls in the place of the present northern walls of the Old City is the lack of archaeological evidence of their presence in the segments either to the east or to the west of the Damascus Gate: Hamilton 1940, pp. 35, 52-53; Kloner 1986, pp. 124-126; Baruch, Avni, Parnos 2008, pp. 1819-1820; Bahat 2008, pp. 1821-1822.

²¹ Cf. Ross 1942, p. 71; Avi-Yonah 1968, pp. 103-105. N. Kokkinos (2015, p. 96*) disagrees, regarding them as relicts from this tower.

²² Cf. BJ 5, 269-270.

between 250 and 400 meters in width.²³ It is doubtful that a new camp could have been made in this space in a way that would offer Titus and his men the necessary security. At the same time, it is unlikely that Titus would have abandoned the caution employed previously in setting up a new camp. The intensive nature and changing situation on the front line of the battle for the Second Wall, with unexpected rebel sorties, showed that safeguarding his army's positions was a priority for the Roman commander, making Josephus' rhetorical assertion (BJ 5.303) that he chose to make a camp in the immediate vicinity of the Second Wall rather improbable.²⁴ Assuming that the Third Wall could indeed be found in the place of the present northern walls of the Old City, we can state unequivocally that owing to the topographical realities there is no way that Titus' new camp could have been located in the area between the Second and the Third Wall.

In considering where the “Camp of the Assyrians” was located, it is also important to think about the size of the camp that Titus had to set up there. Josephus makes several mentions of Roman camps around Jerusalem. These references are in particular to the camps of legions scattered around the city. When speaking of Titus' camp, however, he means the camp housing his billets, at least two legions and auxiliary units working with them. Finding quarters for such large forces required a suitably extensive area. Since archaeologists have examined dozens of Roman camps of various sorts – of legions as well as auxiliary units – providing us with reliable data on their size, construction and the layout of the internal construction, we are able to determine the dimensions of Titus' camp.

The question of the size of the camp where Titus' quarters were housed should be considered against the background of similar Roman military installations known to us elsewhere in the Roman Empire. It does not matter much whether these were permanent camps – fortresses – or temporary camps built on a short-term basis for the duration of a campaign. Regardless of whether a soldier was staying in a camp or fighting outside of it at a given moment, he had a guaranteed place there. Even if the infrastructure of temporary camps might sometimes not meet the same standards as those of fortresses, it was certainly always put in place, as it was difficult to foresee how long the camp would be in operation. Excellent examples of the remnants of temporary camps are provided by the Roman military installations at Masada²⁵ and Machaerus.²⁶ These are of inestimable importance, as we can base on them our ideas of how the fortifications that the Romans built around Jerusalem might have looked.

An analysis of the dimensions of the legionary camps that we know of suggests that their average size was 18.5-20 ha.²⁷ With Titus' camp in Jerusalem, however, we are

²³ This width is purely hypothetical, as we do not know what the course of the Second Wall was. It may in fact have been smaller, depending on which hypothesis regarding the course of the Second Wall we view as being the most probable.

²⁴ Cf. Kokkinos 2015, p. 99*.

²⁵ Davies 2011, pp. 65-82.

²⁶ Strobel 1974, pp. 128-184.

²⁷ By way of an example, let us cite the dimensions and area of several legionary camps from various parts of the Roman Empire from the 1st and early 2nd centuries CE: the camp of legion *XIII Gemina* at Apulum, 470 x 470 m; approx. 22 ha; the first camp of legion *II Adiutrix* at Aquincum, 460 x 430 m, approx. 19.80 ha; the camp of legions *XV Apollinaris* and *X Gemina* at Carnuntum, 490 x 334/391 m, approx. 16.5/ approx. 18.2; the camp of legion *XI Claudia* at Durostorum, 410 x 520 m, 21.3 ha; the camp of legion *IV Flavia* at Sarmizegetusa, 546 x 600 m, 32.8 ha; the camp of legion *IV Flavia* at Singidunum, 560 x 330 m, approx. 18.5 ha; the camp of legion *VII Claudia* at Viminacium, 443 x 386 m, approx. 17.1 ha (Wilkes 2000,

looking at a site where two legions were quartered, along with an unknown number of soldiers sent by vassal rulers and Roman auxiliary units. We can rule out a situation in which the allied units and *auxilia* were all placed in one common camp, as such a concentration would make little tactical sense. When the decision to build the circumvallation was made, most auxiliary units were quartered around the city, in positions between the legions' camps (cf. BJ 5.510). Only units supplied by rulers allied with Rome could, for various reasons, stay in the main camp of the Roman commander. Bearing in mind the medium size of the Roman legionary camp, we are justified in assuming that to quarter both legions and the accompanying allied units Titus would have needed an area of at least around 50 ha. If we then take into account the aforementioned issue of security, requiring that a certain distance be maintained between the camp and the line of the Second Wall, and the size of the area between the Second and Third Walls (assuming that the latter corresponds to the course of the Turkish walls) available to Titus, we can see that it would have been simply impossible to billet his army there, even if it had been spread across all the way from the north-western corner of the Old City to the Kidron Valley.

There is one more reason why it is hard to accept the hypothesis of the dislocation of the Roman units in this area. Josephus' description of the course of the Second Wall is so general that any efforts to reconstruct it are only suppositions, of varying degrees of probability, which it is extremely difficult to verify.²⁸ Not only do they lack any significant topographical elements, but they also fail to mention whether it had any gate apart from the towers.²⁹ This information is of huge importance as the lack of a gate in the Second Wall would have made communication between the old quarters of Jerusalem and the New City as well as access to the road heading north from Jerusalem towards Damascus impossible. Since there is no doubt that such a gate must have existed, it remains to be considered where it may have been located – which is indirectly also significant for the location of Titus' camp in the area of the "Camp of the Assyrians."

Despite the lack of any written mentions of the location of the gate in the Second Wall, archaeological data is available that is worth some attention. The excavations carried out at the Damascus Gate by R.W. Hamilton in 1937-38 and under the direction of C.M. Bennett in 1964-66 provided evidence that allows us to date its origin at least to the reign of Hadrian.³⁰ The next phase of these excavations, conducted in 1979-84 by Menahem Magen, demonstrated that the Roman gate was raised on the foundations of an earlier one, from Herodian times, that is from the period from the rule of Herod to the death of Agrippa I.³¹ This discovery is extremely important as most scholars cite the

pp. 114-116); the camp of legion *III Cyrenaica* at Bostra, 440 x 350 m, approx. 16.5 ha (Lenoir 2002, p. 176; cf. Parker 2000, p. 124: 463 x 363 m, 16.8 ha); the camp of legion *XVI Flavia Firma* at Satala, approx. 470 x 350 m, 16.5 ha (Parker 2000, p. 123).

²⁸ Cf. Ross 1942, pp. 72-75; Avi-Yonah 1968, pp. 123-15; 1971, p. 169; Margalit 1990, pp. 30-31; Price 1992, p. 292; Wightman 1993, pp. 181-184; Geva 1993a, p. 736; Kokkinos 2015, pp. 88*-90* and 81*, fig. 2.

²⁹ The context in which Josephus (5.336: ἄλλοι δ' ἔξω τοῦ τείχους κατὰ τὰς ἀνω προσηδῆσαντες πύλας) mentions the upper gates in the Second Wall suggests that he is not referring to a large gate, as G.J. Wightman (1993, p. 182) and N. Kokkinos (2015, p. 89*) believe, but rather an element of the construction of this embankment.

³⁰ Hamilton 1940, pp. 19, 21-23; Hamrick 1968, p. 22; Hennesy 1970, p. 24; Wightman 1993, pp. 167-173; Magen 2000, p. 286; cf. Kloner 1986, pp. 125-126.

³¹ Most elements of the earlier gate construction were preserved in the lower part of the towers that flanked it; cf. Magen 2000, pp. 283-284, 286. According to J. Magness (2000, pp. 333-335), the Romans

results of the earlier excavations and argue that the Roman gate was the first such construction built from materials used in Herodian buildings.³² Only some believe that the unearthed Herodian remains belong to the gate of the Second Wall and take its position into account in their proposed reconstructions of its course.³³ I would suggest that the location of this gate in the place of the present Damascus Gate is supported by the fact that it is close to the Women's Towers in the Third Wall, since both these gates would be joined by the same road heading northwards from Jerusalem, whose course continues to coincide partially with today's Nablus Road. In selecting a place for the gate, the builders of the Third Wall must have borne in mind the course of this road, which had long been in use, and made the section of it between the two walls a communications axis linking the fortifications of the Old and New Cities. By recognizing the Damascus Gate as a constituent part of the Second Wall, we can state that the southern edge of Titus' camp was north of the line of the current walls.

A common feature of the sieges of Masada, Machaerus and Jerusalem was the circumvallation built by the Roman soldiers around each of these points of resistance. This was designed to prevent the defenders from escaping, and at the same time prevent support arriving from outside. This feature of the Roman fortifications is worthy of attention, as in the case of Jerusalem we know of it only from the rather imprecise description given by Josephus (BJ 5.503-508). Owing to the lack of agreement among scholars as to where some of the topographical points mentioned in this account may have been, there are many disparities in the proposed reconstructions of the course of the circumvallation outside Jerusalem. One factor that must be considered when establishing its likely course is the location of the Roman camps. With the sieges of Masada and Machaerus, the camps of participating units were located either on the line of the circumvallation itself, with one of their sides being an integral part of it, or at a certain distance behind this line. The ramparts themselves were built at a considerable distance from the places under siege.³⁴ In the case of Jerusalem, it is certain that the part of the fortifications of the camp located in the "Camp of the Assyrians" was made part of the structure of the circumvallation,³⁵ which is one more piece of evidence showing that Titus' camp must have been located at some distance from the line of the present northern walls of Jerusalem.³⁶

erected not a gate, but a free-standing triumphal arch in honor of Hadrian, founder of Aelia Capitolina, which was transformed into a gate only in the late 3rd/early 4th centuries CE, when the fortification system was built on the line of the current northern wall of the Old City. Nevertheless, this conclusion is not supported by the content of the fragmentarily preserved Roman inscription on the Damascus Gate. This shows that the building was erected on the basis of a decree of the authorities of the Aelia Capitolina colony. Moreover, it is highly likely that the block on which the inscription is carved was placed inside the already existing construction of the gate (arch) later: *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palestinae*, vol. 1: *Jerusalem*, Berlin – Boston 2012, pp. 30-31, no. 728 (*comm. ad loc.* by W. Eck).

³² Cf. Hamilton 1940, p. 19; Avi-Yonah 1968, pp. 122-123; Hamrick 1966, pp. 22-23; 1977, p. 20; Kloner 1986, pp. 125-126; Wightman 1993, pp. 169-173; Geva 1993d, p. 761.

³³ Cf. Ross 1942, p. 74; Avi-Yonah 1968, pp. 124-125.

³⁴ The width of the strip of land between the circumvallation and the besieged fortresses was in the case of Masada and Machaerus determined by terrain conditions, which prevented Roman units from getting too close to the positions occupied by the insurgents.

³⁵ We can assume that although Josephus does not refer to this explicitly, a section of these ramparts must also have run in the proximity of the camp of *legio V Macedonica*.

³⁶ According to Josephus, it took just three days to build the embankment (CJ 5.509). But his assertion that the sole cause of this speed was the soldiers' fervor seems rather dubious (BJ 5.502-503). Without

Since the size of Titus' camp excludes the possibility of it having been located within the present Old City walls, it must have been situated in an appropriately large terrain. Here we should mention Josephus' mention of demolitions carried out by Roman soldiers in the area of the New City immediately after controlling it (BJ 5.302). One of the objectives of these actions was without doubt to destroy all the existing buildings that might have offered cover or shelter for launching unexpected attacks on the Roman units. But more important in these systematic demolitions and the levelling of the terrain that came with them was the preparation of the land for a new camp.³⁷ The same process was followed each time the Roman camps were moved at the walls of Jerusalem. The area of the New City to the north of the Second Wall is the only area in which there was sufficient space to set up a camp. In order to safeguard the soldiers stationed there, at least some sections of the Third Wall might have been used, especially those that surrounded the New City from the east and north.³⁸ Bearing in mind the shape of the terrain of the New City east of the Nablus Road line, where rocky elevations are now situated,³⁹ it is more probably that Titus had his quarters and the legions' camp located rather on the western side of this road, in the area of the valley contained approximately within today's streets Shivtei Yisra'el and Derekh Shkhem (the Nablus Road).⁴⁰ This valley is sufficiently vast, and the gentle slopes of the surrounding hills would have been perfectly suited to setting up a large camp there. In addition, it was very close to the front of the battles at the walls of Jerusalem – so close that the besieged rebels could observe the Roman soldiers' camp life from the heights of the First Wall and Temple Mount (BJ 5.348-352). Owing to the proximity of Titus' camp to the city, we can assume that it was this valley that Jerusalem's inhabitants called the "Camp of the Assyrians."

The conclusions that this discussion allows us to make confirm that scholars who on the basis of interpretation of the archaeological data identify the Third Wall, which we know from the work of Josephus, with the line of the discovered fortifications, are correct to do so. An analysis of the description of Titus' activities at Jerusalem not only provides further arguments to corroborate this interpretation, but also means that we can

underestimating the significance of this factor, we must assume that the decision to build an embankment must have been preceded by collection of the necessary amount of the appropriate building materials, especially as adequate quantities of some of them, e.g. wood, could not be found near Jerusalem. For the circumvallation around Masada and Machaerus, stone was used, large amounts of which were readily available. However, in both cases much work, and no doubt also time, was needed to collect sufficient quantities of it. The preparations for building the circumvallation around Jerusalem may have begun as soon as the idea of building it was first considered among Titus' men; cf. BJ 5.491-501.

³⁷ These operations were so painstaking that they resulted in the removal of almost all traces of previous human activity. It is very likely that this is why archeologists have been unable to find very many relics dating from the period before the siege of Jerusalem in the New City (Hamrick 1981, p. 265 offers a different interpretation of this fact).

³⁸ Cf. Ariel, Baruch, Zilberbod 2014, pp. 152-156, 159.

³⁹ However, the terrain was not an obstacle in setting up a camp of one of the auxiliary units here when the circumvallation was built; cf. BJ 5.510. Its presence was justified by the strategic position of this area opposite Antonia. The Romans may also have used part of the eastern section of the Third Wall as an element of the camp's reinforcements.

⁴⁰ The area needed for the camp on the east-west axis probably went beyond the western line of the Third Wall. Presumably, a large section of it on this side might have been destroyed during the fighting, and the process of its further demolition might have been accelerated when Titus decided to move the camp to the area of the New City.

look at them from another point of view than that which has previously been widely accepted. We can therefore have more confidence in pinpointing the location of the quarters of the Roman commander outside of Jerusalem in the decisive phase of its siege and identifying one of the important points of the city’s topography.

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