

## IN SEARCH OF THE LOST TEMPLE MENORAH

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In 70 A.D. Titus, the son of the new Roman Emperor Vespasian besieged and conquered Jerusalem. In the process, Titus not only burned the city, but also the beautiful Second Temple which had been totally renovated by Herod the Great. However, before the Temple itself was destroyed, Titus rescued the Golden Temple Menorah and many other sacred Temple items. It is the intent of this paper to trace the history of the Golden Temple Menorah and of these other sacred Temple items from their capture in 70 AD by Titus to their disappearance in the 7th century AD.

The destruction of the Temple began in the summer of 70 AD when Titus first attacked the Antonia fortress located at the northwest corner of the Temple Mount. 1 It was in the Antonia that Jesus had earlier been tried by Pontius Pilate and where Paul was kept under guard after his arrest in Jerusalem. Titus took the Antonia by undermining a section of the northern wall of the Temple area. A part of the northern wall also functioned as the exterior wall of the Antonia fortress. According to Josephus the northern wall was 60 feet high, but it was still not able to withstand the Roman attack. 2 The Antonia itself was eventually razed to the ground by Titus in order to prepare an easy way for moving his troops and equipment onto the Temple Mount to attack the remaining Jewish forces there. 3

When this northern wall and the Antonia fell, a breach was made through which Roman troops poured into the Temple area. While Titus' troops were fighting their way through the rubble of the northern wall and onto its top, the defending Jewish soldiers set fire to the wooden roof of the covered colonnade [Greek: "stoa"] which was a part of this wall.

The ancient colonnades of the Temple consisted of a series of stone columns set just inside the outer walls of the Temple mount. On top of these columns --and attached to the outer walls-- was a roof made of thick wooden planks. In all there were four colonnades around the four sides of the Temple wall.

The main function of these covered colonnades was to provide protection from sun and rain for worshipers. However, the roofs of these four colonnades were all connected, and their flat tops had also been designed for use as a platform from which soldiers could shoot arrows down on either side of the Temple wall. It was to prevent the Romans from using the standing portions of the northern colonnade in this way that the Jews set it on fire. It was thus the Jews who set the first fire that burned in the Temple area. However, this was not the fire that destroyed the Temple.

In spite of the fact that the northern wall of the Temple area was now breached by the Roman army, the Jews fought on. They established another line of defense along a second interior wall located north of the Temple itself. According to Josephus, the Jews were still confident of success in defending the Temple because they believed that God would not allow His Temple to be destroyed by the pagan Romans. 4

As the Romans pressed their attack against the Temple, Josephus reports that a Jewish military leader named John of Gishcala, who was in charge of defending the Temple, took some golden Temple items and melted them down. 5 Josephus, who was a mortal enemy of John of Gishcala, says that John did this out of greed. However, John probably did this in an attempt to buy some very expensive food in the besieged city of Jerusalem for his starving troops.

At first glance it might appear that John of Gishcala had committed sacrilege. However, John only melted down selected Temple items. From a list provided by Josephus himself, it can be seen that John melted down only golden items used outside of the Temple building itself.

It also appears, from this same list, that John melted down golden items given to the Temple by pagans. For

example, Josephus states that John melted down golden containers which Caesar Augustus and his wife Livia had given to the Temple. 6 Therefore, while John of Gishcala did destroy certain Temple items, he did not destroy the sacred items-- including the Golden Temple Menorah--which were used in the interior of the Temple.

Temporarily stymied in their attempt to take the Temple from the north, the Romans shifted their attack to the western wall. Realizing that they would have difficulty in stopping an attack against the western wall, the Jews set a trap for the Romans. When the Romans finally reached the top of the western wall and began to fight their way along the wooden planks covering the top of its colonnade, the Jews pretended to flee in terror.

Roman troops then poured on to the top of the western colonnade, only to find that the Jews had set a trap for them by piling up under the colonnade massive amounts of wood covered with tar. When the Jews set this wood on fire, many Roman troops were burned to death or were forced to jump to their deaths, but this minor Jewish victory was only a small setback for the Romans. 7

For the second time the Jews had used fire as a weapon against the Romans in the Temple area. This fact must be stressed since it may explain in part why Roman troops, who were generally careful not to destroy the sacred places of their enemies, were willing to burn down the Jewish Temple.

With the northern and western walls destroyed, Titus began to attack Jewish defenders on the eastern and southern walls of the Temple Mount. These walls fell rather quickly to the Romans since Titus could attack them from both the inside and the outside.

The Jews were then forced to establish a new line of defense inside a small second set of walls immediately surrounding the Temple itself. This area also fell quickly to the Romans who took it by setting fire to all of the wooden gates leading inside this second set of walls. Once these gates were burned, the Romans rushed in to attack the Jewish defenders inside. 8

During the fighting inside of this second set of walls, a storage room connected to the Temple building itself was set on fire by some unknown Roman soldier. This fire

quickly spread to other storage rooms and then began to burn the Temple building. According to Josephus, when Titus heard what had happened, he ran to the Temple and ordered his troops to put out the fire. Titus' troops would not or could not obey him. Titus himself then entered into the Temple. Josephus writes:

....and as the fire spread and grew in force, he [Titus] went with his high military officers into the Holy Place of the Temple and saw the things that were in it. The things that he saw in the Temple even surpassed their fame among non-Jewish peoples, and were not inferior to what [those of us who are its Jewish adherents had claimed that they were like. 9

Titus' efforts to save the Temple were futile. While the storage rooms attached to the Temple burned, Titus almost certainly looted the sacred items from the interior of the Temple. At that time the sacred items inside would have included the Golden Menorah, the Table of Shewbread, the Altar of Incense, and various golden platters, bowls and other implements used in worship.

However, it must be noted that there is no available historical or textual evidence which states exactly when Titus first got his hands on the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items from the interior of the Temple. Yet it is absolutely certain that Titus did at some point obtain these sacred Temple items since they are pictured on his triumphal arch in Rome and since they are also mentioned by Josephus as having been a part of Titus' booty.<sup>10</sup> As will be seen, Titus will obtain two other Temple Menorahs, but neither came from the sacred interior of the Temple itself.

Incidentally, the Ark of the Covenant was not in the Second Temple, as ancient Jewish sources, including Josephus and the Talmud, clearly state.<sup>11</sup> The Ark of the Covenant disappeared at the time of the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC.

It is certain that it was Titus who took the sacred items from the interior of the Temple building. But

if Titus did take these sacred items from the Temple, why does Josephus --an eye witness-- not specifically state that Titus did this? The answer to this question probably is connected to Josephus himself. It was Titus and his father Vespasian who earlier had not only saved Josephus' life but who had also become his patron after the Jewish War was over. Josephus owed both men a heavy debt of gratitude.

Josephus also probably did not mention that Titus had stolen the Temple Menorah, Table of Showbread, the Altar of Incense, and other sacred items from the interior of the Temple because he did not want to picture Titus as a temple robber, which even in Roman eyes was looked on as shameful. And in addition, Josephus, whom many Jews then --and now-- considered a traitor, probably did not want to link his own name to that of the man who had robbed the Temple of its sacred treasures. A meticulous reading of Josephus will show that he was very careful to blame everyone but Titus for the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Temple.

Josephus, however, seems to have had no compunction about telling how other sacred Temple items --which were not from the Temple's interior-- fell into Titus' hands. Josephus tells the following tale about how Titus got his hands on some non-interior sacred Temple items, including two Temple Menorahs. Josephus writes of events immediately after Titus had captured the Temple:

Now it was at this time that one of the priests by the name of Jesus Ben Thebuthus --after obtaining from Titus a sacred oath guaranteeing his safety in exchange for promising to surrender certain Temple items-- came out of the Temple and gave to Titus some valuable Temple items which had been hidden in the wall of the Temple. And this priest gave to Titus two menorahs like those used in the Holy Temple, along with golden tables, platters, and bowls, all made of gold. He also surrendered the veils, the high priests' garments, including [the ephod with] the precious stones, and many other articles used in public worship. 12

Here Josephus tells how Titus got his hands on sacred Temple

items when the cowardly Jewish priest Jesus Ben Thebutus traded them to Titus for his life, but nothing is said about how Titus obtained the sacred Temple items from the interior of the Temple. It should be noted that Titus at this point obtained two Temple Menorahs, but neither came from the holy interior of the Temple.

If Titus found another Menorah earlier when he entered the Temple, as he almost certainly did, this would make a total of three Temple Menorahs. It is almost certain that there were three Menorahs, and one was almost certainly the original Golden Temple Menorah made by Moses. But what use did these other two Menorahs serve? It is possible that they were used either to light other areas of the Temple or were used as spares when the original Menorah was being cleaned or filled with oil.

It is also possible that these two other Menorahs were made by King Solomon. The Old Testament states that in the days of Solomon there was more than just one Temple Menorah. II Chronicles 4:7 mentions not just two or three, but ten Temple Menorahs that King Solomon had ordered made and that were always kept burning "in the Temple." However, the context of II Chronicles 4:7 suggests that "in the Temple" meant that these ten golden Menorahs were used to light the area around the ten lavers in the outer court of the Temple near the Brazen Altar. Therefore the Old Testament suggests that these ten Menorahs were used outside the Temple building itself and not in its interior.

It is unknown what became of Solomon's ten exterior Menorahs, but it is possible that the two Menorahs, which were given to Titus by the priest Jesus Ben Thebutus, were two of the ten exterior Menorahs made by Solomon. It is also possible that these two other Menorahs were made by Herod the Great. It is almost certainly one of these two other Menorahs that is pictured on the Arch of Titus. They appear to have been much more elaborate than the more plain Golden Menorah made by Moses.

Moses' Menorah had feet to support it while the Menorah pictured on the Arch of Titus has a wider, more elaborate base. Moses' Golden Menorah was almost certainly captured by Titus and taken to Rome along with the other sacred items which he took from the interior of the Temple.

Undoubtedly Titus' friend, Josephus, --who was himself a Jewish priest and related to the Hasmonean priestly family-- knew which Temple Menorah was special, in other words which Menorah had been made by Moses for use in the interior of the Temple. 3 It should also be noted that when he writes about the sacred Temple items taken to Rome by Titus, Josephus does describe one special Temple Menorah in detail.<sup>14</sup> It is nearly certain that this is Moses' Menorah. Moses' Golden Menorah was almost certainly carried in Titus' Triumph, but is not pictured on his Arch of Triumph.

In his triumphal march through Rome, Titus' troops carried and displayed the massive loot which they had seized from the Jews in Jerusalem. Among the items displayed on the Arch of Titus is a single Temple Menorah, the Table of Showbread, and some other sacred items taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. Josephus also states that an official Temple copy of the Torah was carried and displayed by Titus' troops.<sup>15</sup> However, this copy of the Torah is not pictured on the Arch of Titus.

Josephus also indicates that Vespasian, after his son Titus' triumphal march through Rome, placed Moses' Menorah, the other two Menorahs, the Table of Showbread, and the other sacred Jewish Temple items in the "Temple of Peace" in Rome. <sup>16</sup> Vespasian built this temple in Rome as a place to store and display his and his son's war trophies. It appears that one section of the Temple of Peace was specifically designed to hold the sacred Jewish Temple items. Josephus writes:

.....he [the Emperor Vespasian] also had placed there [in the Temple of Peace] as trophies of his glory those golden vessels and instruments that were taken out of the Jewish Temple. But he gave orders that they should be kept stored there [in the Temple of Peace] according to their [Jewish] law, but the purple veils from the

[Temple's] Holy Place he put in his own royal palace 17

It should be recalled that Titus had close connections to both Josephus and the Herodian Princess Bernice, and they could have told Titus how to handle these sacred Temple items. These sacred Temple items apparently had their own separate area or room in the Temple of Peace. It also appears that there were not any idols or other pagan objects there that would affront Jewish religious sensibilities.

These sacred Temple items appear to have been stored in this Roman temple for the next 380 years. I have not found one single ancient writer who mentions these sacred items for the next four and a half centuries. From this point on, only Moses' Golden Temple Menorah will be the focus of this paper. However, it is likely that the other two Temple Menorahs were stored with and also traveled with Moses' Golden Temple Menorah.

The next ancient writer, after Josephus, to mention these sacred Temple items is Procopius of Caesarea. Procopius of Caesarea, who lived in the 6th Century AD, provides the only existing information on what happened to the Golden Temple Menorah and to the other sacred Jewish items after they were placed in the Temple of Peace in Rome by Titus in 70 AD.

Procopius in his work "History of the Wars," however, does not mention the Temple of Peace; or probably more correctly, he does not mention this temple by that name. Procopius states that in the early fifth century the sacred Temple items of the Jews, including the Golden Temple Menorah, were stored in the "Palation" in Rome. Palation translates as the "Palace." The Palation was the official residence in Rome for the emperor of the Western Roman Empire. The Palation included, however, more than just the sleeping quarters of the Emperor and his family. The "Palation" was a term used much like the term "White House" is used today. The Palation also included imperial offices, palace officials, and later even chapels and churches for use by the royal family.

The relationship of the Palation to the earlier Temple of Peace in Rome is unknown, however it seems likely that the Palation in some way came to include the site and/or



building in which the older Temple of Peace was once located. Perhaps the Temple of Peace was converted into some sort of a Christian chapel in the royal palace complex when Rome became Christian in the 4th century AD.

By any means, it does appear likely that the older Temple of Peace became a part of the royal buildings which made up the Christian Roman Emperor's palace in Rome. Whether or not the Temple of Peace and the Palation in Rome were in some way connected, --and it is almost certain that they were-- it is clear from Procopius that the sacred items taken by Titus from the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD were by the 5th century AD stored in the Palation at Rome.

However, Procopius in his work "History of the Wars" mentions two treasures, "the Treasures of the Jews" and the "Treasures of Solomon," as having once been stored in the royal "Palation" in Rome. As will be seen below, a distinction must be made between "the Treasures of the Jews" and the "Treasures of Solomon," but more on that later. In both cases Procopius explicitly states that both of these treasures had been taken earlier from Jerusalem to Rome by Titus.

Procopius' first mentions these two "Treasures" in conjunction with traumatic events which took place in 410 AD. In 410 AD. Alaric the Visigoth took the city of Rome and sacked it. Among the items taken by Alaric from Rome were "the Treasures of Solomon," which Procopius says had earlier been captured by Titus in his conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD. According to Procopius, Alaric carried off the "Treasures of Solomon" to Gaul [modern France] in 410 AD. However, as will be seen below, the "Treasures of Solomon" did not include the sacred Temple Menorah or other sacred items taken from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem by Titus.

Alaric stored all of his loot, including the Treasures of Solomon, in the city of Carcasiana in Gaul, today the modern city of Carcassone in France. Included in Alaric's treasure trove at Carcasiana were the "Treasures of Solomon." The "Treasures of Solomon" were to remain in the city of Carcasiana until 507 AD.

In 507 AD the Franks attempted to conquer the city of Carcasiana and to capture the "Treasure of Alaric" which was

stored there. Procopius writes of this struggle between the Goths and the Franks:

And, the Germans [i.e. Franks], gaining the upper hand in this engagement, killed most of the Visigoths and their leader Alaric [the younger]. Then they [the Franks] took possession of the greater part of Gaul and held it; and they laid siege to Carcasiana with great enthusiasm, because they had learned that the royal treasure was there which Alaric the elder in earlier times had taken as booty when he captured Rome. Among these were also the Treasures of Solomon, the king of the Hebrews, a most noteworthy sight. For most of them were adorned with emeralds; and they had been taken from Jerusalem by the Romans in ancient times. 18

It should be noted here that there is no suggestion in this quotation from Procopius that the "Treasures of Solomon" included any sacred Temple items. The Franks were unsuccessful in their attempt to take the city of Carcasiana and were eventually forced to lift their siege when the Gothic King Theodoric the Great arrived with his army from Italy. However, Theodoric's hold over the area of Gaul was weak, and therefore he decided to move Alaric's Treasure to the more protected city of Ravenna in Italy. Procopius states that Theodoric moved "all the valuable goods which were stored in the city of Carcasiana" to Ravenna. 19 While Procopius does not specifically state that the "Treasures of Solomon" were moved to Ravenna, it can be safely assumed that they were included in the "valuable goods" which Theodoric moved to that city.

It is unknown what happened to the "Treasures of Solomon" once they reached the city of Ravenna. The city of Ravenna was later conquered by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I in the 6th century. Justinian made the city of Ravenna into the Byzantine capital of Italy because Ravenna was much easier to defend than was Rome. But not one single historical source states that Justinian captured the "Treasures of Solomon."

However, Procopius' description of the "Treasures of Solomon" as a "noteworthy sight"... "adorned with emeralds"

suggests that he had personally seen them and that they had fallen into Justinian's hands when he conquered Ravenna in the middle of the 6th century AD. Procopius was a Byzantine historian who personally knew Justinian. As was noted above, Procopius' description of the "Treasures of Solomon" strongly suggests that he had seen them in person which suggests that Justinian had captured them when he took Ravenna.

As will be seen below, the trail of "the Treasures of the Jews," including the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Jewish artifacts taken by Titus, will eventually lead, not to Gaul and Ravenna, but to North Africa and Carthage.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the so-called "Treasures of Solomon" --but not the "Treasures of the Jews," i.e. the sacred Temple items-- disappear from historical records at the time of the Gothic King Theodoric the Great in 507 AD. As will be seen below, there is positive proof that the golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were not included in the "Treasures of Solomon" which were carried off first by Alaric to Carcasiana in 410 AD. and then to Ravenna by Theodoric the Goth in 507 AD.

It is impossible to say with any degree of certainty what valuable items may have been included in the so-called "Treasures of Solomon." As was noted above, Procopius states that the "Treasures of Solomon" were "adorned with emeralds," but he does not describe them in detail. However, it must be noted that there is no evidence that any sacred Temple items were ever adorned with emeralds. In other words, it is nearly certain that the Treasures of Solomon did not include any sacred Temple items.

It is also highly unlikely that any of the so-called "Treasures of Solomon" actually date from the time of Solomon. However, it is almost certainly true that the "Treasures of Solomon" were taken from Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD, and it is also very likely that Titus found "the Treasures of Solomon" in the Temple area. It is even possible that some of these "Treasures" were royal jewels stored in the Temple for safekeeping by members of the Herodian family.

It was a common practice in the ancient world among almost all ancient peoples to use temples and temple areas as places of deposit for valuable goods. Even valuable

clothes and other garments were stored in temples. Temple areas were generally surrounded by walls, were well-guarded, and were generally run by honest priests. And besides this, almost all ancient peoples thought that it was a great sacrilege to steal anything from a temple. For this reason private individuals very commonly stored their most valuable items in a temple or temple area.

As is known from a variety of ancient sources, the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was also used by Jews as one such place of deposit. In other words, the ancient Jews used the Temple in Jerusalem something like a huge "safety-deposit box." And, as Josephus clearly indicates, Titus seized a huge amount of such valuable, privately-deposited goods from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem when he captured it in 70 AD.

It was these non-sacred items, the so-called "Treasures of Solomon," which were carried off by the Visigothic King Alaric in 410 AD. when he sacked the city of Rome. But, the question now arises: Why did Alaric only take the non-sacred items, when the sacred Temple items were also stored in Rome and probably at the same site as the "Treasures of Solomon?" To answer this, it is necessary to do a brief study of Alaric and of his sack of Rome in 410 AD.

When Alaric took the city of Rome in 410 AD, it was a great shock to the Romans. The city of Rome had not been taken by a foreign invader for over 800 years. The shock and humiliation of having their city sacked by King Alaric the Goth tended to make the Romans exaggerate what had happened to them. However, as is well-known from a variety of ancient Roman sources, Alaric in his "sack" of Rome did very little damage to the city. He merely looted the city of much of its wealth. And as is also well-known from the writings of historians such as Orosius, Jordanes, and Zosimus; Alaric spared all the Catholic churches in the city of Rome and did not loot them of their sacred treasures, even though Alaric himself was an Arian Christian.

Among the valuable sacred items spared by Alaric were the Golden Temple Menorah and other sacred Temple items. As will be seen below, these sacred Temple items --the Treasures of

the Jews"-- clearly remained in the "Palation" in Rome until 455 AD. It appears that Alaric felt free to take any non-sacred items stored in Rome, and therefore he carried off the non-sacred loot taken by Titus from the Temple in 70 AD. However, out of religious respect, Alaric left the sacred items from the interior of the Jewish Temple --including the Temple Menorah-- in Rome in the Palation. In other words, Alaric took the "Treasures of Solomon" but left the "Treasures of the Jews."

In 455 AD the Vandal King Gizeric/Gaiseric, sailing from his newly acquired territories in North Africa, also conquered and sacked the city of Rome. While the brutality of Gizeric's sacking of Rome is probably exaggerated in ancient Roman sources, it is unquestionably true that he was far more cruel in his treatment of Rome and of the people of Rome than Alaric had been in 410 AD.

While Alaric in 410 had not looted Catholic churches and had not taken sacred items, Gizeric and his Vandals in 455 AD did loot churches and did steal valuable sacred items. Gizeric was an Arian Christian, but unlike Alaric, he had no scruples against stealing from Catholic churches. Gizeric even stripped the gold from the roof of a church in Rome which had, in pagan times, once been the great temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.

Among the valuable items taken from Rome by Gizeric and the Vandals were the "Treasures of the Jews," in other words the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred items taken by Titus from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. 20 As was stated above, according to Procopius, these sacred Temple items were stored, at the time of Gizeric's conquest, in the "Palation" in Rome.

Gizeric took these sacred Temple items back with him to North Africa. Gizeric then stored these sacred Temple items in his capital city of Carthage. There is no historical evidence suggesting where these sacred items were stored in Carthage. However, they would remain in Carthage for less than 80 years.

In 534 AD the Vandals of North Africa were defeated by the armies of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. Justinian's army was led by his brilliant general Belisarius. Belisarius recaptured all of North Africa for the Eastern Roman Empire. The Eastern Roman Empire is today

called the Byzantine Empire. Among the items seized by Belisarius from the defeated Vandals were the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items --"the Treasures of the Jews"-- taken from Jerusalem nearly 500 years earlier by Titus.

Belisarius took the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items back with him to Constantinople to be carried in his triumphal parade celebrating his victory over the Vandals. Procopius, who was an eyewitness of this parade, writes of Belisarius' triumph:

And, there was booty, --first of all, whatever articles are wont to be set apart for the royal service --thrones of gold and carriages in which it is customary for a king's consort to ride, and much jewelry made of precious stones, and drinking cups, and all the other things which are useful for the royal table. And, there was also silver weighing many thousands of talents and all the royal treasure amounting to an exceedingly great sum (for Gizeric had despoiled the Palation in Rome, as has been said in the preceding narrative), and among these were the Treasures of the Jews, which Titus, the son of Vespasian, together with certain others, had brought to Rome after the capture of Jerusalem. 21

While Procopius does not specifically state in this text that these "Treasures of the Jews" were sacred items

from the ancient Jewish Temple, what transpires next at Belisarius' triumphal parade proves that they were. While Belisarius' triumph was in process, the Jews who lived in the city of Constantinople saw their sacred Temple items being carried in his parade. Procopius writes:

And, one of the Jews, seeing these items, approached one of those known to the emperor and said: "These treasures I think it inexpedient to carry into the palace in Byzantium. Indeed, it is not possible for them to be elsewhere other than in the place where Solomon, the King of the Jews, formerly placed them. For it is because of these that Gizeric captured the palace of the Romans, and that now the Roman [i.e. the Byzantine] army has captured the Vandals." 22

The Jewish man in the above text is clearly stating that these "Treasures of the Jews" were sacred Temple items and that he believed that they were connected to the First Temple built by King Solomon. It should be noted that this Jewish man knew that these objects had come from the "palace of the Romans." Clearly the "palace of the Romans" referred to here is the Palation in Rome where the Treasures of the Jews had once been stored.

This Jewish man was also issuing a warning that if proper religious respect was not paid to these sacred items, then divine judgment would result. It should be remembered, as Justinian and this Jewish man almost certainly did, that in the Bible in Daniel chapter 5, King Belshazzar of Babylon lost his kingdom to the Medes and the Persians because of divine judgment for using Temple items—the candlestick in Daniel ch. 5 was almost certainly the Temple Menorah-- at a pagan feast in his palace.

When Justinian heard this warning by this Jewish man, he was terrified. Procopius writes:

When this had been brought to the ears of the Emperor, he became afraid and quickly sent everything to the sanctuaries of the Christians in Jerusalem. 23

Therefore after almost 500 years the sacred Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items taken by Titus in 70 A.D.

were sent back to Jerusalem by Justinian. It should be noted that it was about this same time that a plague struck Constantinople in which about one fourth of the population died.

Four questions now arise about these sacred Temple items:

- 1.) Did these sacred items actually reach Jerusalem?
- 2.) If they did, in which Christian churches were they stored?
- 3.) Did Justinian or some other emperor later bring these sacred items back from Jerusalem to Constantinople and then place them in some church such as Hagia Sophia?
- 4.) Were these sacred items ever captured by any other nation such as the Persians, the Arabs, or the Turks?

As will be seen, there are good, reliable historical answers to each of these questions.

The answer to the first of these questions is yes.

Justinian did send the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items back to the city of Jerusalem. As will be seen below, there is good historical evidence proving that the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were returned to Jerusalem by Justinian and stored in Christian churches there.

As was seen above, Procopius states that the "Treasures of the Jews" were placed in the "sanctuaries" [plural] of the Christians in Jerusalem, 24 and not just in one single Christian Church. It is likely that the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were at first stored in two or three of the most famous Christian churches that existed in Jerusalem at that time.

The second question to be answered is: In which Christian "sanctuaries" or churches were the Temple Menorah and the other sacred temple items stored in Jerusalem?

Before attempting to answer this question it must be stated that no branch of Christianity ever built a church on the site of the Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. 25 Byzantine Christians never considered the Temple site itself as a sacred Christian area, and for this reason they never built a church there. The only Christian church ever built on the Temple Mount was the Church of the Pinnacle of the



Temple, which was located at the site on the Temple Mount where Christ had contended with Satan. The Church of the Pinnacle of the Temple was located at the southeast corner of the Temple Mount and was apparently one of the smaller churches in Jerusalem. 26

Nevertheless, as was stated above, no Christian church was ever built on the actual site of the Temple. Christ's statement in John 2:19: "destroy this Temple and I will rebuild in three days" was generally understood by Christians as saying that His body had replaced the Jewish Temple. And in addition, in Matthew ch. 24 Christ had even predicted the total destruction of Herod's Temple in 70 AD. Christians, therefore, tended to look on the ancient site of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem as being under a divine curse.

As was noted above, Procopius of Caesarea clearly states that when Justinian returned the Temple Menorah and the other Temple items to Jerusalem that he placed them "in the sanctuaries of the Christians in Jerusalem." It should be noted that Procopius says that the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were placed in the "sanctuaries" [plural] of the Christians in Jerusalem, and not just in one single Christian Church.

The most likely candidates are the Church of the Holy Sepulcher [also called "the Church of the Resurrection"], the Basilica of Mt. Zion, and the Church of the Pinnacle of the Temple. But it must be noted that there were about 6 other major churches, not counting monasteries, in which these sacred Temple items might have been stored by Justinian.

While Justinian may have at first stored the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items in these "sanctuaries of the Christians," it is very likely that Justinian later moved all these sacred items into a another church named the "Nea" or New Church which he built in 543 AD. 27 It is nearly certain that Justinian built this "New Church" specifically as a place to house these sacred Temple items.

The site where Justinian built his "New Church" was not a recognized, sacred, Christian site, but it was located very near to the Temple Mount. As was stated above, I believe that Justinian built

the Nea Church specifically as a storage site for the sacred Temple items which he had sent to Jerusalem in 534 AD. I also believe that these sacred Temple items were still in the Nea/ New Church when Jerusalem was conquered by the Persians in 614 AD.

The third question now arises: did Justinian or some other Byzantine Emperor ever remove the Golden Temple Menorah and other sacred Temple items from Jerusalem? As far as Justinian is concerned this question may at first glance seem strange. Did not Justinian himself send these items to Jerusalem? Why then would he have brought them back to Constantinople only a few years later?

But, Justinian had a special building project in process which might have caused him to change his mind later about the Golden Menorah and the other sacred Temple items. Because of this special building project, it is possible that Justinian brought these Temple items back to Constantinople.

At the time [534 AD] when the Golden Menorah and other sacred items were brought to Constantinople by Belisarius for his triumphal parade, Justinian was building his fabulous Church of Hagia Sophia [St. Sophia]. Until the building of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome a thousand years later, Hagia Sophia was the most fabulous Christian church in all the world.

Unfortunately, the great Church of Hagia Sophia is not well-known in the United States, possibly because it was made into a Muslim mosque in 1453 when the city of Constantinople was conquered by the Muslim Turks. Today Hagia Sophia is a museum, and the Turkish government is currently funding its restoration.

Today after 1450 years, two conquests, and several earthquakes, Hagia Sophia is still considered one of the greatest architectural wonders in the world. Even by today's standards it is huge, its central dome rising more than 175 feet. Its interior was once covered with beautiful mosaics and marbles, its jewel-covered altar and altar items were once either made of solid gold or covered with gold, and the interior of the Church itself was also once lighted by hundreds of lamps made of solid silver. 28

After its construction, Procopius reports that

Justinian boastfully compared Hagia Sophia with the First Jewish Temple built by King Solomon. At the dedication of Hagia Sophia, Procopius writes that Justinian said: "I have surpassed thee O'Solomon!" Justinian may have later thought that his Hagia Sophia should not only surpass Solomon's Temple in its size and wealth but also that Hagia Sophia should be further enriched and honored by sacred items from Solomon's own Temple.

Therefore, to restate our third question: Did Justinian or any other later Byzantine Emperor ever return the golden Temple Menorah or any of the other sacred Temple items to Constantinople? The historical evidence suggests that Justinian never returned, even temporarily, any of these sacred Temple items to Constantinople. If Justinian did not, then did the later Emperor Heraclius take them to Constantinople for safe-keeping during the turbulent 7th Century AD when Jerusalem was first conquered by the Zoroastrian Persians, given to the Jews by the Persians, temporarily re-conquered by the Byzantines, and then later permanently conquered by the Muslim Arabs?

There is a point in history that provides us with an opportunity to see if the Golden Temple Menorah or any of the other sacred Temple items were ever returned to the city of Constantinople by Justinian, Heraclius, or any other later Byzantine emperor. This point in time is the Fourth Crusade.

In 1204 the infamous Fourth Crusade --which had earlier been excommunicated by Pope Innocent III for destroying the Catholic Christian city of Zara-- captured the Greek Orthodox city of Constantinople. After conquering Constantinople, the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade went on a horrible rampage of looting, murder, rape, and burning. 29 In other words they behaved more like beasts than Christians.

Among the massive amount of booty seized by the Crusaders were nearly all of the Christian relics which the Byzantines had collected over centuries and had placed in their many Greek Orthodox churches in Constantinople. The only Byzantine relics which the Crusaders did not seize were those of Greek Orthodox saints whom the Roman Catholic

Crusaders did not know.

The Catholic crusaders carried these stolen relics back to Western Europe and placed them in their own churches. These Crusaders were so proud of the relics that they had looted from Greek Orthodox churches that they made lists of those relics which they had stolen.

For example the Crusader Robert de Clari, who was a participant in the conquest and looting of Constantinople, writes in his book "The Conquest of Constantinople" that he knew of the following relics which were carried back to Western Europe by members of the Fourth Crusade and given to Catholic churches.

- 2 pieces of the true cross
- 2 nails used to crucify Christ
- A crystal vial of the blood of Christ
- The tunic worn by Christ at the time of Crucifixion
- The crown of thorns worn by Christ
- Part of the robe of the Virgin Mary
- The head of John the Baptist
- 1 roofing tile with the image of Christ on it
- An image of St. Demetrius that oozed sacred oil
- Relics of the Apostle Andrew
- Relics of Timothy
- Relics of Luke
- And other "rich relics" 30

Another participant and eye-witness to the sacking of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 was Geoffroi de Villehardouin who writes of his experiences in his "Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade." 31 He too mentions a number of relics taken by the Crusaders back to Western Europe. While Robert of Clari and Geoffroi de Villehardouin provide the two best lists of stolen relics, there are a number of other lists which survive from the medieval world. Most of the more sacred stolen relics --e.g. the true cross and the crown of thorns-- are mentioned on all of these lists, but some relics only appear on one or two.

The best complete study of all the relics taken by soldiers of the Fourth Crusade is the *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae* by Paul Edouard Didier le Comte de

Riant which was published in 1877-8. Count Didier, who lived in the 19th century, collected all the medieval sources listing relics taken by the Fourth Crusade from Constantinople. Didier's list is long and includes all of the items mentioned by both Robert of Clari and Villehardouin. In addition to the items given above from Robert of Clari's list, Count Didier reports the Crusader theft of such additional relics as:

- The column on which Christ was scourged
- The arm of the Apostle James
- A piece of stone from the sepulcher of the Lord
- The rolling stone from the tomb of the Lord
- A piece of stone from the place of the Crucifixion
- A piece of stone from the place of the Ascension
- The stone on which John stood when baptizing Christ
- A piece of stone from the tomb of Abraham
- Two of Timothy's teeth
- Hair from the head of Mary
- The piece of wood on which John the Bap. was beheaded
- Hair from the head of Christ
- One of the Lord's sandals
- Some of Jesus' baby clothes
- A belt ["cingulo"] that the Lord once wore
- Relics of St. Stephen
- Relics of the Apostle St. Thomas
- The head of the Apostle St. James the Younger
- The sponge from which Christ drank vinegar
- The stone that Jacob used for a pillow
- The iron lance that pierced Christ's side
- The Head of St. Barnabus
- A crystal vial with Mary's milk in it. 32

Even this is only a partial list of the relics reported by Count Didier as taken by the Crusaders from Constantinople in 1204. The complete list includes more than a hundred other relics of lesser-known Christian saints. Incidentally, some of these additional relics seem to have surfaced years after the Fourth Crusade, and, as far as their origin in the Fourth Crusade is concerned, their

authenticity is highly questionable.

The lists of relics given above are not intended to be complete, but only to illustrate how extensive our information is about the relics taken by the Crusaders in 1204 from Constantinople. It should be noted --as can be seen from the examples given above-- that Old Testament relics are relatively rare on these Crusader lists of relics taken from Constantinople. Less than two percent of all the relics mentioned are from the Old Testament period. The Byzantines strongly preferred New Testament and post-New Testament relics to Old Testament relics.

The Temple Menorah is never mentioned in any of the sources dealing with relics from the Fourth Crusade. There is also not one single reference on any of these lists to any of the other sacred items taken from the Temple by Titus in 70 AD. It can safely be concluded that the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade did not find the Temple Menorah or any other sacred Temple items in Constantinople when they captured this city in 1204 AD.

However, someone may speculate that the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were hidden from the Crusaders by the Byzantines just before the city fell to the Crusader army. At first I too thought that this was a possibility, but later I changed my mind. That the Byzantines hid the sacred, golden, Temple Menorah at some secret site in Constantinople is highly unlikely for several reasons.

First, the Byzantines' most highly-prized relic was the "True Cross" on which Christ was thought to have been crucified. And yet, the Byzantines did not bother to hide the True Cross from the Crusaders. The Crusaders captured the True Cross, split it up into pieces, and scattered its pieces in Catholic churches through out Europe. If the Byzantines did not bother to hide the "True Cross," why would they have bothered to hide the Golden Temple Menorah? Incidentally, pieces of the True Cross were worth far more than their weight in gold. Even other relics which were very highly valued by the Byzantines --such as the nails from the crucifixion, the spear that pierced the side of Jesus, His crucifixion clothes, His blood, Mary's milk,

etc.-- were also all captured by the Crusaders. All of these items would have been seen by both the Byzantines and the Crusaders as being at least as important --and probably even more important-- than golden relics from the Second Temple, and yet these sacred Christian items were not hidden from the Crusaders by the Byzantines.

The second reason why it is unlikely that the Byzantines hid the sacred Temple items is that the Byzantines, as well as the Crusaders, preferred New Testament relics to Old Testament relics. Since both the Byzantines and the Crusaders placed a much greater stress on New Testament relics as opposed to Old Testament relics, why would the Byzantines have singled out the Golden Temple Menorah and other sacred Temple items for special protection by hiding only them?

And finally, as was stated above, it is likely that Byzantine Christians were a little uncomfortable with using sacred items from the cursed Jewish Temple as Christian relics. For this reason alone, it seems very unlikely that the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were given special protective treatment as relics by the Byzantines.

But, a new question now arises: Were the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items hidden by the Byzantines simply because of the gold that they contained? The answer to this question is a very strong NO! The Byzantines literally had tons of gold in their city. Robert of Clari even comments in his book about the huge amount of gold and silver taken by the Crusaders in 1204. Robert of Clari says that "3/4th of all the wealth in the entire world" was stored in Constantinople. 33

Tons of gold were also taken from Byzantine churches by the Crusaders; so much gold was taken from Hagia Sophia Church that donkeys had to be brought in to carry it out. Besides this, many of the relics that were taken by the Crusaders had already been enclosed by the Byzantines in very expensive, bejeweled gold and crystal boxes called reliquaries. And, most of these relics and the reliquaries in which they were stored were themselves worth far more than their weight in gold.

The fact that the Temple Menorah was made of gold is not an argument to support an assumption that the Byzantines went to great trouble to hide it in Constantinople from the Crusaders. Besides this, there were other less-valuable sacred Temple items in the "Treasures of the Jews," and not a single one of these shows up on any of the Crusader relic lists. It is highly unlikely that these sacred Jewish items would have been hidden when such prized Christian relics as the True Cross, the crucifixion nails, the crown of thorns, the lance that pierced Christ's side, etc. were not.

Indeed, it appears that the Greek Orthodox Byzantine people naively expected the Catholic Crusaders to respect Orthodox churches and not to plunder them. How were the Byzantines to know that the "Christian" members of the Fourth Crusade would act like beasts by murdering, pillaging, raping, burning buildings, and looting churches?

In light of all of this evidence, in answering the third question, it can safely be concluded that the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were never returned from Jerusalem to Constantinople by Justinian, Heraclius, or any other Byzantine emperor.

The fourth question that was posed earlier was: Were the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items ever captured by the Persians, Arabs, or Turks who at one time or another captured Jerusalem after Justinian returned these sacred items to the Holy City?

The Arabs and the Turks can be quickly eliminated. There is not one bit of historical information which suggests that the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were ever captured by the Arabs or the Turks. But, as will be seen below, the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items were unquestionably captured by the Persians when they conquered the city of Jerusalem in 614 AD.

The Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items clearly remained in Jerusalem from 534 AD. until 614 AD. 34 In June of 614 AD the city of Jerusalem was conquered by a Persian army coming from the area that is today the nation of Iran. The ancient Byzantine chronicle named the "Chronicon Paschale" writes of the capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 AD:



In this year about the month of June, we [i.e. Byzantine Christians] suffered a calamity which deserves unceasing laments. For, together with many cities of the east, Jerusalem too was captured by the Persians, and in it were slain many thousands of clerics, monks, and virgin nuns. The Lord's tomb was burnt [i.e. the Church of the Holy Sepulcher] and the far-famed temples [i.e. churches] of God, and in short, all the precious things were destroyed. The venerated wood of the Cross, together with the holy vessels that were beyond enumeration, was taken by the Persians, and the [Greek Orthodox] Patriarch [of Jerusalem] Zacharias also became a prisoner. And this has not taken a long time to come to pass, not even a whole month, but a few days. 35

The Persians were ancient enemies of the Byzantine Empire. 36 The Persians and the Byzantines had fought each other on and off for centuries. Finally in the early 7th Century AD, the Byzantines and the Persians fought each other to a state of mutual exhaustion. The Byzantine Emperor Heraclius finally managed to defeat the Persians in the second and third decades of the 7th Century, but both sides were devastated and weakened by the fighting. The resulting weaknesses of both the Persian and Byzantine Empires paved the way for the subsequent conquest of the entire Middle East by the Arab Muslims in the period from 630-650 AD.

The hatred between the Byzantines and the Persians was caused by two things: First, the Byzantines and the Persians both wanted to control the very valuable trade routes which passed through the Middle East. Before a sea-route around Africa was discovered by the Portuguese in the late 15th Century AD, almost all trade between the East and the West flowed overland along trade routes through the Middle East.

And second, the Byzantines and the Persians were enemies for religious reasons. The Byzantines were Greek Orthodox Christians, and the Persians were at that time Zoroastrians. The Zoroastrian religion was the state

religion of the Persians for over 1200 years before the Arab Muslim conquest of Persia/Iran in the middle of the 7th Century A.D. The Zoroastrian religion was almost completely extinguished—only a few still exist today-- in Persia in 640 AD when the Arabs conquered Iran and forced the Persians to convert to the Islamic faith.

As was stated above, one of the major reasons --if not the major reason-- for the success of the Muslim Arabs in conquering the entire Middle East including Persia in the middle of the 7th Century AD was the debilitating war which the Persians had just finished fighting against the Byzantine Empire. It was during this great war between the Byzantines and the Persians that the city of Jerusalem was captured by the Persians in 614 AD and held by them and their Jewish allies until 629 / 630 AD.

The passage from the "Chronicon Paschale" quoted above states that the Persians looted and destroyed Christian places of worship in Jerusalem when they took the city in 614 AD. However, other Byzantine historical sources state that, while it was the Persians who looted Christian churches, it was volunteer Jewish troops from the Byzantine Empire--allied to the Persians-- who destroyed the Christian churches in Jerusalem.

While the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items are not specifically mentioned in Byzantine texts which describe the conquest of the Jerusalem and the looting of Christian churches by the Persians in 614 AD, there are several Byzantine texts from this period which do strongly suggest that the Persians seized these sacred items from a looted Christian church—almost certainly the Nea Church-- in Jerusalem. As will be seen, the Persians unquestionably got their hands on the Temple Menorah and other sacred Temple items in 614 AD. However before studying what happened to the Golden Temple Menorah and to the other sacred Temple items, it is first necessary to make a brief study of the relationship of the Jews to the Christians in the Byzantine Empire.

The list of Jewish grievances against the Byzantine Empire was long. There were instances of forced conversions of Jews to Christianity. Jews also had to pay special taxes, and the building or renovating of a Jewish synagogue was allowed only by special imperial permission. Sometimes

Jews were even attacked and killed, and only rarely were “Christian” perpetrators arrested and punished.

But, the two acts of discrimination, which seem to have galled the Jews the most were the Byzantine restrictions forbidding them from rebuilding their Temple and prohibiting them from even living in Jerusalem, their holy city. However, both of these restrictions actually predated Byzantine Christianity.

Jews were first forbidden to live in Jerusalem in the second century AD by a law issued by the pagan Roman Emperor Hadrian, after his defeat of the Jews in the Bar Kochba Revolt of 132-135 AD. Of course banning the Jews from living in Jerusalem also meant that they were banned from rebuilding their Temple.

When the Emperor Constantine the Great converted to Christianity in the 4th Century AD., he continued Hadrian's ban on Jews living in Jerusalem. The net result of this ban was that Jerusalem in the early Byzantine period became almost exclusively a Christian city, although it must be noted that Byzantine Christian sources indicate that Samaritans were also apparently allowed to live there. Byzantine Jews deeply resented Christian domination of their holy city.

By the 7th Century AD large groups of Jews were living in nearly every part of Palestine, but not in Jerusalem. It appears that the return of the Temple Menorah and of the other sacred Temple items to Jerusalem by Justinian in 534 AD had special significance for all Jews, but especially for those living in Palestine. It also seems very likely --and there is historical evidence suggesting this-- that these Palestinian Jews interpreted the return of their sacred Temple items to Jerusalem as a sign from God.

The modern, Byzantine historian Mark Whittow in his "The Making of Byzantium" writes the following about Byzantine Jews at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem in 614 AD by the Persians:

A phase of messianic anti-Roman [i.e. anti-Byzantine] fervour is well-documented among the Jewish population of the Near East in the early seventh century, and they were certainly a group excluded from the empire's Christian-Roman identity, with every wish to see the old order fall. 37

It is highly likely that the return of the Temple Menorah and of the other sacred Temple items to Jerusalem played a major role in causing the "messianic anti-Roman fervour" which Mark Whittow says existed among Jews in the early seventh century. Incidentally, there is no historical evidence suggesting that any Jew at that time claimed to be the Messiah, although Wittlow's statement might appear to suggest this.

Byzantine Jews did look on the invading Persians as divinely-sent delivers from Byzantine persecution. It appears that many Byzantine Jews believed that God was using the Persians a second time to restore Palestine and Jerusalem to Jewish control. It should be remembered that earlier under the Persians in the 6th century BC the Jews had regained Jerusalem and rebuilt their Temple after the Babylonian Captivity. The Jews seem to have thought that history was repeating itself in the 7th century AD.

It is likely that it was this "messianic" thinking which led to one of the darkest events in all of Jewish history. When the Persian army first attacked Palestine and later began to besiege Jerusalem in 614 AD, large numbers of Byzantine Jews from Palestine and other parts of the Middle East joined the Persian army. And, when the city of Jerusalem fell to the Persians, the Jews participated in --and may have initiated-- a mass slaughter of tens of thousands of Christians who lived in the city of Jerusalem. Two Byzantine sources --Dionysius of Tel-Mahre 38 and Theophanes the Chronicler-- both report that 90,000 Christians were slaughtered in Jerusalem by the Persians and the Jews. 39 However, their estimate probably over-states reality by about 25,000.

The monk Strategius of St. Sabas reports that only 66,509 Jerusalem Christians were slaughtered by the Persians and the Jews. 40 Strategius claims that his number was based upon an actual body count made by a Christian cleric named Thomas, who helped in burying those Christians slain by the Jews and the Persians. Thomas took an actual site-by-site body-count of the slaughtered people that he helped to bury. Strategius quotes Thomas' entire report. The sites and the number of dead buried at each site, as given by Thomas, seem to be

very accurate. Thomas' report almost certainly gives a total number of the dead that is very close to the actual number of Christians killed.

There is also one section in Strategius which states that Samaritans, who were apparently either living or doing business in Jerusalem, were also killed by the Jews.<sup>41</sup> No number is given by Strategius for the Samaritan dead in Jerusalem. It is possible that the total number of "Christian" dead given by the cleric Thomas included at least some Samaritans. However, the exact number of Samaritans killed is not given in any ancient source.

Another ancient Byzantine author, Bishop Sebeos, states that 57,000 Christian people were killed by the Persians and Jews in 614 A.D.<sup>42</sup> The number of slain Christians given by Bishop Sebeos is nearly 10,000 less than the number given by Strategius. However, it seems likely that Strategius' number is the more accurate. Possibly the discrepancy between Strategius and Sebeos can be attributed, in part, to the unknown number of slaughtered Samaritans.

Bishop Sebeos, after writing that 57,000 Christians were killed by the Persians and the Jews in 614 A.D., goes on to state that an additional 35,000 Christians, including Jerusalem's Archbishop Zacharias, were taken as prisoners by the Persians.<sup>43</sup> According to Strategius, the Jews purchased "many" of these Christian captives from the Persians and put them to death.<sup>44</sup> Strategius' narrative goes on to state that the Jews wanted to kill the entire Christian "flock" in Jerusalem.<sup>45</sup> However, it seems highly unlikely that the Jews bought a large number of Christian

captives from the Persians just for the purpose of killing them.

But the historical evidence does suggest that the Jews wanted Jerusalem to again become an exclusively Jewish city, and for them it did not matter whether Jerusalemite Christians --and Samaritans-- were killed, sold into slavery, or converted to Judaism, as long as Jerusalem became Jewish again.

It is unquestionably true that Jews actively participated in the killing of tens of thousands of Byzantine Christians during the fighting in Jerusalem in 614 AD. It is also true that more Christian churches were burned in Jerusalem than in any other Byzantine city conquered by the Persians. 46 As will be seen below, it was not the Persians but the Jews who burned most of the Christian churches in Jerusalem.

Strategius writes that "some" of the Christian churches of Jerusalem "were destroyed" during the conquest of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 AD, but he goes on to state that the majority survived the siege and were later burned by the Jews after the Christians surrendered the city. 47 Ancient Byzantine sources clearly state that the Christian churches in Jerusalem were first looted by the Persians, before they were burned by the Jews. That it was the Jews who burned the Christian churches in Jerusalem can be seen in Strategius' work "The Conquest of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614." Strategius writes:

And, as the captive [Christian] people were being led away into Persia, the Jews who remained behind in Jerusalem began with their own hands to destroy and to burn the holy churches which had not yet been destroyed. 48

For all practical purposes, Christian Jerusalem ended in 614 AD. The Byzantine Emperor Heraclius would eventually retake Jerusalem in 629/630 AD, and a few Christians returned to Jerusalem and apparently made an attempt to rebuild a few of their churches, but there is no archaeological or historical evidence suggesting that they succeeded in rebuilding a single church at that point in time. The number of

Christians in Jerusalem after 630 AD was a small fraction of the number that once used to dwell there before 614 AD. As will be seen below, a few years later in 638 AD Jerusalem was conquered again, this time by the Arabs, and it became a Muslim city.

But, what happened to the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items during the turmoil in Jerusalem in 614 AD? A passage from Strategius proves that the "Treasures of the Jews," i.e. the Golden Temple Menorah and other sacred Temple items, survived the destruction of the Christian churches in Jerusalem.

Writing of the period immediately after the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians and the Jews, Strategius states that most Christian captives were first taken by the Persians to a dried-out water reservoir, which served as a makeshift prison camp. It was at this reservoir that the following events recorded by Strategius took place. Strategius, whose words drip with anti-Semitism, writes:

Then the malignant Jews, who are the enemies of the truth and who hate Christ, because they saw that the Christians had been delivered into the hands of their enemies and because they hated Christians, rejoiced greatly. They [the Jews], following their own maliciousness, had contrived an evil plan against the [Christian] people, and their [the Jews'] standing was great before the Persians, since they [the Jews] had served as the betrayers of the Christians. Then, they [the Jews] stood along the bank of that reservoir and called out to the children of God [i.e. the Christians]. And, since they [the Christians] had been detained, they [the Jews] said to them: "If you wish to avoid death, be made Jews and renounce Christ, and you may ascend out of this place and come with us; for we have ransomed our treasures from the Persians, and good will be done to you by us." 49

According to Strategius, the Christians rejected this Jewish offer with disdain. It was immediately after this episode that Strategius reports that Jews began to buy captive Christians from the Persians and to kill them.

The most interesting part of the above quotation taken from Strategius is the Jewish statement that: "we have ransomed our treasures from the Persians." When Jerusalem fell to the Persians in 614 AD, there were no Jews living there, and the Jews had no property of any sort in Jerusalem. What possible Jewish treasures could there have been in Jerusalem, except for the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items? And, in addition, since the Jews were the allies of the Persians in the conquest of Jerusalem; why would the Jews have had to buy back their own personal property from the Persians?

The Jews in the above passage are clearly not saying that they ransomed their own personal property from the Persians. These "treasures" of the Jews were clearly something other than the personal belongings of the Jews. In addition, the Jewish use of the term "our treasures" also strongly suggests that they were speaking about what the Byzantines called "the Treasures of the Jews."

It is almost certain that the "treasures" which the Jews redeemed from the Persians were the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items which had been returned to Jerusalem by the Emperor Justinian in 534 AD. In other words, the historical evidence strongly suggests that the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items first fell into the hands of the Persians when they looted the Christian churches in Jerusalem in 614 AD. Then these same sacred items were purchased from the Persians by their allies the Jews.

Another reason for believing that the Jewish "treasures" mentioned by Strategius were something unique is the very fact that the Jews even bothered to mention these treasures to the Christians. Why would the Jews have bothered to refer to "our treasures" when talking to the captive Christians at this time? There is nothing in the context of this situation which would explain why the Jews were talking to Christians about the recovery of Jewish "treasures," unless, of course, the Jews thought that these "treasures" had some special religious significance which might apply to Christians who converted to Judaism.

It appears that the Jews believed that their



acquisition of their "treasures" heralded the coming of a new age, in which Jerusalem would again be a Jewish city. And, as will also be seen below, the Jews at this time clearly intended to begin building a Third Temple on the Temple Mount. Their reacquisition of the Golden Temple Menorah and of the other sacred Temple items was almost certainly seen by the Jews as a divine sign that they should begin to rebuild their Temple.

While Strategius attributes Jewish joy over the Persian conquest of Jerusalem to the Jews' hatred of Christians and of Christ, it is far more likely that the Jews were simply overjoyed at their reacquisition of their sacred Temple items, of their Temple Mount, and of their Holy City, Jerusalem.

Strategius also clearly states that the Persians left Jerusalem in Jewish hands in 614 A.D. when the Persian army moved on to attack Egypt. It should be noted that Strategius has the Jews burning Christian churches while the Persians and their Christian captives were leaving Jerusalem. Therefore, for the first time in hundreds of years, the Jews again held the city of Jerusalem, but their hold over their Holy City was to be very short-lived. The Byzantine Emperor Heraclius briefly regained control of Jerusalem in 629/630 AD after defeating the Persians, but in 638 AD the city fell under Muslim Arab control.

Good historical evidence indicates that Heraclius withdrew his military forces from Jerusalem sometime before 636 AD, probably because he needed them in his war with the Muslim Arabs. Neither Jewish nor Byzantine historical sources indicate that Heraclius conducted any sort of massive slaughter of the Jews when he retook Jerusalem. Incidentally, I suspect that Byzantine control of Jerusalem lasted at best for just a few years and not for the entire period from 630 to 636 AD. One thing is for certain, Heraclius did not destroy the "place of prayer" built by the Jews on the Temple Mount. This "place of prayer" will be discussed more fully below.

That the Jews uncharacteristically participated in the slaughter of Christians in Jerusalem in 614 AD may even, in part, be explained by a religious zeal stimulated in the Jews by: 1) their recent re-acquisition of their sacred items, 2) their control over the city of Jerusalem, and 3) their anticipated rebuilding of the Temple on the Temple Mount. However, the rosy future anticipated by the Jews in

614 AD soon disappeared into thin air in the next two decades of the Seventh Century.

As was suggested above, the Persians and the Jews seem to have been very friendly allies. However, for some unknown reason, one ancient writer reports that the Persians turned against the Jews. The "Chronicle" of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre states that later in the year 614 the Persian General Shahrvaraz, who conquered Jerusalem for the Persian King Chosroes, banned all Jews from Jerusalem.<sup>50</sup> No explanation is given for the Persians' betrayal of their former allies the Jews. And, indeed, it seems very likely that Dionysius is not to be believed on this point.

It is clear from other sources, that the Jews in the Byzantine Empire continued to support the Persians for years after 614 AD. Therefore, as was stated above, it seems very likely that Dionysius is incorrect. It is clear from the Byzantine sources that Jerusalem was a Jewish city for more than a decade after 614 AD.

After leaving Jerusalem in the hands of their friends the Jews, the Persians went south to conquer Egypt from the Byzantines in 615 AD. The situation did not look good for the Byzantine Empire. Lands which had belonged to the Roman/ Byzantine Empire for hundreds of years were being lost to the Persians.

The Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, however, was a good military man. Heraclius became the Byzantine Emperor in the later part of 610 AD, and, after some serious set backs in 614 and 615 AD, he began to win the war against the Persians. Heraclius' army finally dealt the Persians a devastating defeat at the Battle of Nineveh in 627 AD.<sup>51</sup> As a result, Jerusalem returned briefly to Byzantine control in 629/630 AD.

Out of a desire for revenge for Jewish behavior in 614 AD, the Emperor Heraclius is said to have ordered a massacre of Jews living in Jerusalem and in the Galilee.<sup>52</sup> However, as will be seen, this order was almost certainly not fully carried out-- if at all. It is clear from historical sources that Palestinian Jews in Jerusalem and the Galilee were not all slaughtered by Heraclius. There unquestionably was a large Jewish community still living in Jerusalem when the Arab Muslims took the city in 638 AD. As will be seen below, Arab Muslims appear to have provided some protection for the Jews from Byzantine forces.

After their defeat by the Byzantine army at the Battle of Nineveh in 627 AD, the Persians returned the True Cross and other sacred Christian items to the Emperor Heraclius, who at first returned them to Jerusalem. However, when the Muslim Arabs began to threaten Jerusalem a few years later, the True Cross and all other sacred Christian items stored in Jerusalem were taken to Constantinople (ca. 633 AD) for safekeeping. I suspect that it was at this time that Heraclius also removed all Byzantine troops from Jerusalem.

These sacred Christian items remained in Constantinople until the coming of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 AD. But, as was seen above, the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items are not mentioned as being among the sacred items that were either returned to the Byzantines by the Persians or sent to Constantinople by the Emperor Heraclius. It is clear that Heraclius, if he got his hands on the sacred Temple items, --and he almost certainly did not-- then he did not return them to Constantinople.

As a matter of fact, there is not one single reference to the "Treasures of the Jews," to be found in any Byzantine source after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Persians and their Jewish allies in 614 AD. But, as was argued above and as the above quotation from Strategius strongly suggests, the Jews almost certainly did acquire these sacred Temple items --"our treasures"-- in 614 AD from the Persians. But, what happened to these sacred items after 614? It is almost certain that these items remained in Jewish hands in Jerusalem at least until the coming of the Muslim Arabs in 638 AD.

In 636 AD Muslim Arab armies decisively defeated the Byzantine army at the great Battle of Jabiya-Yarmuk in what is today the modern nation of Jordan.<sup>53</sup> As a result of this battle, the entire Middle East quickly fell under Muslim Arab control. In 638 AD the Jews in Jerusalem quietly surrendered the city to the Muslim Caliph Omar.

According to Bishop Sebeos, when the Muslim Arabs gained control of Jerusalem, the Jews living in the city went to the "leaders" of the Muslim Arabs and requested that they [the Jews] be allowed to rebuild their Temple on the Temple Mount. The Jews seem to have expected special treatment since they had sided with the Arab Muslims against

the Byzantine Christians. In making their request, the Jews told the Arab leaders that they had recently "discovered" the ancient "site of the Holy of Holies" in Solomon's Temple. 54 However, the Jews were to be bitterly disappointed. Bishop of Sebeos writes:

I will relate a little more about the intentions of the rebellious Jews, who having earlier received help from the leaders of the children of Hagar [i.e. Arabs], conceived a plan to rebuild the Temple of Solomon. Having discovered the place which is called the Holy of Holies, they [the Jews] had built on its foundations, a place of prayer for themselves. However, the Ishmaelites [Arabs], jealous of them, drove them from this place and called it their house of prayer. 55

Bishop Sebeos here clearly states that the Jews had built some type of temporary "place of prayer" over the site where the "Holy of Holies" was once located in Solomon's Temple. This temporary place of prayer was unquestionably built by the Jews sometime during the period from 614-630 A.D. when Jerusalem was under their control.

While there is no positive proof, it appears likely that the "Treasures of the Jews" --i.e. the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items-- were stored in this Jewish "place of prayer" on the Temple Mount during the period of time from 614-630 AD when Jerusalem was under Jewish control. Indeed, it also seems likely that this "place of prayer" was built specifically as a place to store the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items which the Jews had recovered in 614. The phrase "place of prayer" probably indicates that average Jews did not enter its interior to pray, but rather prayed in front of it.

It should be noted, as Bishop Sebeos states, that it was the intention of these Jews to rebuild the "Temple of Solomon. This Jewish "place of prayer" was clearly intended to be only a temporary structure, and this suggests that it was originally built to house temporarily the sacred Temple items which the Jews had recently purchased from the Persians. It should be recalled what Justinian had earlier been told by the Jew in Constantinople. He had warned the Emperor Justinian about the "Treasures of the Jews":

"... it is not possible for them to be elsewhere other than in the place where Solomon, the King of the Jews, formerly placed them. 56

If the Jews themselves believed this—as they almost certainly did-- then the only place where they could store their sacred Temple items was in Jerusalem either on or near the Temple Mount, the site of the ancient Temple of Solomon.

The fact that these 7th century Jews had discovered the site of the Holy of Holies in the Temple and had built a temporary place of prayer over it, may also explain the rectangular cutting now found on the huge rock --"es Sakhra"-- which is located inside of the present Dome of the Rock Mosque. It is this rectangular cutting which Leen Ritmeyer has argued in an article in *Biblical Archaeology Review* that it was the site where the Ark of the Covenant once stood. 57 Ritmeyer believes that this rectangular cutting was made by King Solomon in order to provide a level place for the Ark of the Covenant to sit.

However, I believe that it is likely that this rectangular cutting, which indeed is the size of the Ark of the Covenant, was made by the same 7th century Jews who claimed to have discovered the site of the Holy of Holies and who also had built a Jewish “place of prayer” over it. If this rectangular cutting was made by these 7th century Jews, then it was probably intended as the orientation site around which their proposed Third Temple was going to be built. This rectangular cutting may also have served as an orientation site for the placement of the Temple Menorah and other sacred Temple items which were almost certainly placed in this temporary Jewish “place of prayer.”

Dionysius of Tel-Mahre --giving only a slightly different version of the same story told by Bishop Sebeos-- states that the Jews came to the Caliph Omar and asked for permission to rebuild their Temple. 58 Caliph Omar denied the Jewish request. And to make matters worse for the Jews, according to Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, one of the first things that Omar did when he took control over Jerusalem was to convert the Jewish "place of prayer" on the Temple Mount into a Muslim house of prayer or mosque.

It should be recalled that this Jewish "place of prayer" had been built on the site where the ancient Holy of Holies

in the Temple of Solomon was once located. The original "Mosque of Omar" was therefore located on the exact site that 7th century Jews believed was the ancient site of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple.

No ancient source tells what happened to the Jewish “place of prayer” that originally stood on the site of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple, although Bishop Sebeos seems to suggest that it was at first simply taken over and used by Omar as a Muslim house of prayer. Omar later seems to have torn it down and to have built his own, new, Muslim prayer house.<sup>59</sup> Omar's new Muslim house of prayer in time came to be called the Mosque of Omar. Only slightly later in ca. 690 AD, the Muslim Caliph `Abd al-Malik destroyed the original Mosque of Omar and built the Dome of the Rock Mosque.<sup>60</sup> It is Caliph `Abd al-Malik’s Dome of the Rock Mosque that still stands today on the Temple Mount.

It is therefore very clear from the writings of both Bishop Sebeos and of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre that the Dome of the Rock Mosque sits directly over the site which the Jews had identified in the seventh century as the location of the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Solomon.

While Omar did take this Jewish “place of prayer” on the Temple Mount away from the Jews, there is no indication in any ancient source that he ever got his hands on the Golden Temple Menorah or on any other sacred item taken from the Jewish Temple by Titus in 70 AD.

The question now arises: what happened to the Temple Menorah and to the other sacred Temple items? The answer to that question can only be an educated guess. But, the answer is probably to be found in the events which took place in the early 7th century.

It is clear from the Byzantine sources that the Jews wanted to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem, and it is very likely that the Jewish desire for a Third Temple was, in part, driven by their desire to have a place in which to put their recently-recovered sacred Temple items.

It is also logical to assume that the Jews hid these sacred Temple items in times of trouble during the turbulent years from 614-638 AD, years in which Jerusalem changed hands four times. First, the Jews were given control of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 AD. Second the Byzantines regained Jerusalem in 629/ 630. Third, the Jews

appear to have regained Jerusalem in ca. 633 AD. And fourth, the Muslim Arabs took Jerusalem in 638 AD. It can safely be assumed that the Jews hid their sacred Temple items first from the Emperor Heraclius when he marched into Jerusalem in 630 A.D. and also from Omar and his Arab armies in 638 A.D. But, the question again arises: Where did the Jews hide the Lost Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items?

The Jews almost certainly would not have taken these Temple items out of Jerusalem. It again should be remembered that a Jewish man had earlier convinced the Emperor Justinian that he would be under a divine curse if he did not return these same sacred items to Jerusalem. Moreover, even earlier during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Jews never considered moving these same sacred Temple items out of Jerusalem to protect them from the Romans, even though it appears that they could have done so if they so wished. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that the Jews of the 7th century AD removed their sacred Temple items from Jerusalem.

But, another question now arises: Where in Jerusalem were the Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items hidden by the Jews from the Muslim Arabs? A good possible answer to this question may be suggested by the Jews' statement to Omar. They tell Omar that they had found the very site where the ancient Holy of Holies was once located in the Temple of Solomon. It is apparent from what the Jews say to Omar that they had extensively explored the Temple Mount area.

The most logical place for the Jews to have hidden the Golden Temple Menorah is inside the Temple Mount. But, where in the Temple Mount might the Jews have hidden the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items?

The answer to this question is again only an educated guess. It seems most likely that the Jews hid these sacred items somewhere close to --if not directly under-- the very site that they had recently identified as the site of their ancient Holy of Holies in the Temple. By "under the rock in the Dome of the Rock Mosque," I do not mean Bir el Arwah, the small empty cave that tourists now visit under the rock "es Sakhra."

Nevertheless, it does seem likely that the Jews hid their sacred items somewhere close to the site on which they had earlier built their temporary "place of prayer," a "place of prayer" in which these same sacred Temple items had very likely once been stored. Hiding these sacred Temple items in some chamber, cave, or cistern under this place of prayer on the Temple Mount would not only have been convenient but would also have served to protect Jewish religious sensibilities.

Therefore in conclusion, my best guess is that the Golden Temple Menorah and the other Sacred Temple items which Titus took from Jerusalem in 70 AD were hidden by the Jews in the 7th century in a deep underground chamber, cave, or cistern located somewhere inside the Temple Mount. And, as was stated above, the most likely place in the Temple Mount for the Jews to have hidden the Golden Temple Menorah and the other sacred Temple items taken by Titus is somewhere under where the ancient Holy of Holies was once located; a site that is now under the Dome of the Rock Mosque.

Before ending this discussion on the Lost Temple Menorah, let me engage in one bit of pure speculation. The rectangular cutting on the rock in the Dome of the Rock Mosque may --and this is a big may-- be some type of clue as to where the Lost Temple Menorah and the other lost Temple items lie hidden under the Dome of the Rock Mosque.

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. Flavius Josephus, "Josephus," Greek text with an English translation by H. St.J. Thackeray, "Wars of the Jews," (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), Bk. VI, ch. 1, Vol. III, p. 385.
2. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. V, ch. 5, Vol. III, p. 275.
3. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VI, ch. 2, Vol. III, p. 408.
4. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. V, ch. 11, Vol. III,



p. 343..

5. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. V, ch. 13, Vol. III, p. 375.

6. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. V, ch. 13, Vol. III, p. 375.

7. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VI, ch. 3, Vol. III, pp. 427-429.

8. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VI, ch. 4, Vol. III, pp. 441-443 and Bk. VI, ch. 4, pp. 451-453.

9. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VI, ch. 4, Vol. III, pp. 450-452. My translation of Greek text.

10. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VII, ch, 5, Vol. III, p. 549.

11. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk V, ch, 5, Vol. III, p. 267. Josephus writes of the empty Holy of Holies:

"The innermost recess measured twenty cubits and was screened in like manner from the outer portion by a veil. In this stood nothing whatever: unapproachable, inviolable, invisible to all, it was called the Holy of Holies." p. 267.

12. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VI, ch. 8., Vol. III, pp. 486-488. My translation of Greek.

13. For a description of the golden Temple Menorah made by Moses, see Exodus 25:11-39. The Temple Menorah was made out of about 75-100 pounds of gold.

14. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VII, ch, 5, Vol. III, p. 549.

15. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VII, ch, 5, Vol. III, p. 549.

16 Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VII, ch. 5, Vol. III, p. 551. The "Templum Pacis" was apparently completed in ca. 75 A.D.

17. Josephus, "Wars of the Jews," Bk. VII, ch. 5, Vol. III, p. 552. There is no historical source which states or even suggests what happened to the sacred Temple veils placed by Vespasian in his palace in Rome. It should be noted that while the Bible speaks of the veil as being singular, Josephus speaks of it in the plural. Josephus' description fits well with Matthew 27:51.

18. Procopius of Caesarea, "History of the Wars," trans. by H.B. Dewing (London: Heinemann, 1916, Bk. V. xii. 40-42.

19. Procopius, "Wars," Bk. III. v. 1-5. My translation of the Greek text which is provided by Dewing in his bilingual edition.

20. See Procopius, "Wars," Bk. III. v. 1-5 and Bk. IV. IX. 5-6. Incidentally, one of Gizeric's treasure ships, while sailing from Rome to Carthage with his loot, sank in the Mediterranean Sea in a storm with a cargo of Roman statues on board. Somewhere at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea between Rome and the modern day city of Tunis in North Africa there still lies a very valuable cargo of Roman statues, statues which are undoubtedly worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

21. Procopius, "Wars," Bk. IV. ix. 4-5

22. Procopius, "Wars," Bk. IV. ix. 5-7.

23. Procopius, "Wars," Bk. IV. ix. 5-7.

24. Procopius, "Wars," Bk. IV. ix. 5-7.

25. While Christians never built a church on the site of the Jewish Temple, in the First Crusade the Dome of the Rock

Mosque was seized by Crusaders, made into a Christian church, and renamed the "Templum Domini."

26. For the location of the Church of the Pinnacle of the Temple, see David Livingston's drawing of the Madaba Map in his article "Locating Biblical Bethel" in "The Bible and the Spade," Fall, 1998, p. 79.

27. The Nea Church appears on the Madaba map which was made in 595-596. The "New" Church once stood directly to the west of the southwest corner of the Temple Mount. It is difficult to judge distances based on the Madaba map, but the Nea Church appears to have been located only about 200 meters from the Temple Mount. On the location of the Nea Church, see David Livingston's drawing of the Madaba Map in his article "Locating Biblical Bethel" in "The Bible and the Spade," Fall, 1998, p. 79. See also the map of Jerusalem in the Byzantine period provided by Charles Gulston in his "Jerusalem: The Tragedy and the Triumph," (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1978), p. 180. On the dating of the Madaba map, see Mark Whittow, "The Making of Jerusalem: 600-1025," (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 63.

28. On Hagia Sophia see Alexander Van Milligen, "Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture" (London, 1912). On these silver lamps see Robert de Clari, "The Conquest of Constantinople," (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 105.

29. For an eye-witness account of the looting of Constantinople by one of the knights of the Fourth Crusade see Robert de Clari, "The Conquest of Constantinople."

30. Didier, Comte Paul, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, 3 vols. (Genevae, 1877-8.

31. Geoffroi de Villehardouin, "Chronicle of the 4th Crusade and the Conquest of Constantinople," in "Memoirs of the Crusades by Villehardouin and de Joinville," trans. by Grank

T. Marzials (New York: Dutton, 1958).

32. Robert of Clari, "The Conquest of Constantinople," pp. 101-108.

33. See Robert de Clari, "The Conquest of Constantinople," pp. 108-110.

34. Procopius of Caesarea, "History of the Wars," Bk. IV, ix.

35. Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby, eds. and trans., "Chronicon Pascale," (Liverpool: Liverpool Un. Press, 1989), "Heraclius" 614 A.D., p. 156.

36. The so-called "Byzantine" Empire was in reality the eastern half of the old Roman Empire. When the Western Roman Empire fell to various Germanic tribes in the 5th and 6th Centuries A.D., the Eastern Roman Empire lived on until 1453 A.D., when the great city of Constantinople, the capital of Byzantine Empire, was finally captured by the Ottoman Turks. The Byzantine Empire is more properly called the "Eastern Roman Empire." The people of the Eastern Roman Empire always called themselves "Romans" not "Byzantines." It is also as "Romans" that the Byzantines are referred to in medieval Arab and Turkish sources.

37. Mark Whittow, "The Making of Byzantium," p. 88.

38. The Syrian author Dionysius of Tel-Mahre in his "Chronicle" states that 90,000 Christians were slaughtered by the Persians when they took Jerusalem in 614 A.D. For Dionysius' "Chronicle" see "The Seventh Century in West-Syrian Chronicles," translated and edited by Andrew Palmer (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993, p. 128.

39. Theophanes, "The Chronicle of Theophanes," trans. by Harry Turtledove (Philadelphia: University of Penn, Press, 1982), p. 11.

40. Strategius of St. Sabas, "Le Prise De Jerusalem par Les Perses en 614," Latin translation from Georgian with French notes by Gerard Garitte (Louvain: Universitatis Catholicae Lovaniensis, 1960), XXIII, 44, p. 53.

41. Strategius, XXIII, 50, p. 53. Strategius merely states that: "Many [Samaritans] being unblemished and steadfast perished, experiencing a bitter death," p. 53. It appears that Samaritans who agreed to become Jews were allowed to live, and those who remained "steadfast and unblemished" were executed. The Samaritans had earlier revolted against Byzantine Christian rule in the years 484 and 529 A.D. and many were killed. In the revolt in 529 A.D. many Samaritans were forcibly converted to Christianity. See the "Chronicon Pascale" for the years 484 and 529, pp. 95-96 and p. 111. The Samaritans, who had earlier been a large minority group in the Byzantine Empire, never recovered from their defeats in 484 and 529 at the hands of the Byzantine armies.

42. L'Eveque Sebeos, "Histoire D'Heraclius," translated into French from Armenian by Frederic Macler (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1906, Ch. XXIV, p. 69.

43. Sebeos, "Histoire D'Heraclius," Ch. XXIV, p. 69

44. Strategius, "Le Prise De Jerusalem," X, 4, p. 18 and XI, 5, p. 19. While Christians in Jerusalem especially suffered the wrath of the Jews, there are also Byzantine sources which tell of the slaughter of Christians by Jews at Tyre and Acre. See Kaegi, "Byzantium and the Arab Conquests," p. 117.

45. Strategius, "Le Prise De Jerusalem," VIII, 17, p. 14, and XI, 7, p. 19.

46. See Walter E. Kaegi's "Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 46 where he writes:

The Persians did not destroy everything; they granted pacts to many towns and areas in Syria other than

Jerusalem, the devastation of which was exceptional.  
p. 45.

I believe that the reason that Jerusalem was an exception was because the Jews intended to cleanse Jerusalem of all things that were non-Jewish.

47. Strategius, "Le Prise De Jerusalem," X, 4, p. 18.

48. Strategius, "Le Prise De Jerusalem," X, 9, p. 18.

49. Strategius, "Le Prise De Jerusalem," IX, 10, p. 17.

50. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, "Chronicle," #24 in Palmer's "The Seventh Century in West Syrian Chronicles," p. 128. It is possible that Dionysius, writing long after the event, incorrectly attributed the later Muslim ban on Jews living in Jerusalem to the Persians.

51. Whittow, "The Making of Byzantium," p. 80.

52. Kaegi, "Byzantium and the Early Arab Conquests," p. 117.

53. Kaegi, "Byzantium and the Early Arab Conquests," p. 147.

54. Dionysius, "Chronicle," #74, p. 161. See also Sebeos, "Histoire D'Heraclius," Ch. XXXI, p. 102.

55. Bishop Sebeos, "Histoire of Heraclius," XXXI, p. 102.

56. Procopius, "Wars," Bk. IV. ix. 5-7.

57. Leen Ritmeyer, "The Ark of the Covenant: Where it stood in Solomon's Temple," in "Biblical Archaeology Review," Jan.-Feb. 1996, pp. 70-72. Ritmeyer argues that this rectangular cutting was made by Solomon's workmen as a level place on which the Ark of the Covenant could sit. However, Josephus makes no reference to this rectangular cutting when he discusses the Holy of Holies, and even Ritmeyer writes

that: "Josephus was apparently unaware of the existence of this most interesting feature," p. 71. I think that the reason why Josephus did not know about this rectangular cutting was because it did not exist during his lifetime.

58. Dionysius, "Chronicle," #74, p. 162.

59. Historical sources for the period when the Muslim take control of Jerusalem are generally very poor. The Byzantines write very little about this event, and the Muslims did not keep good records or write good history at this time. Muslim sources which tell of the conquest of Jerusalem were written two or three centuries after the Muslim conquest and are generally thought to be of low reliability. See Mark Whittow's comments in his "The Making of Byzantium, where he writes of the poor quality of Muslim historical sources on their conquest of Jerusalem in 638.

60. Whittow, "The Making of Byzantium," p. 141.