

# The Riddle of the Dome of the Rock: Was it Built as a Jewish Place of Prayer?



One of the most fascinating questions about the Temple Mount after the Islamic occupation in 638 CE is connected with the Dome of the Rock. Important scientific research conducted by Ya'akov Ofir holds that the Dome of the Rock was built in 691 CE for the Jews as their “last house” of prayer by their ally Abd el-Malik, the Umayyad ruler of Damascus, who also controlled the land of Israel in those days. The Jews who built the house believed that their redemption had already come. Ofir's conclusion is that the Dome of the Rock is a Jewish building.



*The four Pillars on which the dome rests interspersed with 12 pillars around the rock. The 4 pillars represent the 4 camps of the Israelites in the wilderness while the 12 pillars represent the 12 tribes of Israel*

Abd el-Malik was at war with the Abbasid Arab kingdom which controlled Arabia and Iraq. According to Ofir and others, Abd el-Malik was actually a follower of the Jewish faith. He ordered his citizens to pray with their faces towards Jerusalem and ordered them to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem instead of Mecca. One reason for this was that his citizens returned from their pilgrimages to Mecca with pro-Abbasid leanings. The Abbasids called Abd el-Malik an unbeliever and conducted wars against him.

What is so unique is that the Dome of the Rock was never built as a mosque and was never used for this purpose. The character of the building is not that of a typical mosque. No similar building can be found anywhere else in the Islamic world. It was not built facing Mecca but as an octagonal form corresponding to the points of the compass. The main entrance is from the south, not the south-east (the direction of Mecca) as in other mosques. The builders did not build a Michrab (showing the direction of Mecca) in the southern part of the building. Even today, when the Arabs pray on the Temple Mount they do not do it in this building. Only in 1947 did the Mufti Hajamim el Husseini, who made a covenant with Hitler agreeing to kill all the Jews in the land of Israel, decide to build a Michrab. He explained that the Jews were going to rebuild the Temple on the same location of the Dome of the Rock, the site of the First and Second Temples; in this way he believed he would be able to prevent it. However, this act never made the Dome into a mosque and the Moslems continued to pray in the El Aqsa mosque on the southern part of the Temple Mount.



*Coin (above) minted by Bar Kochva in the second century CE. The southern entrance to the Dome (below) is similar.*

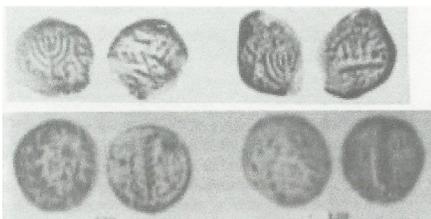
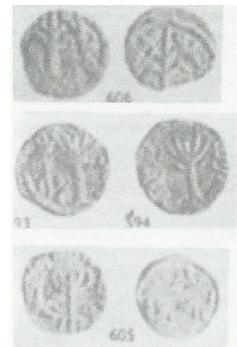


In mentioning the El Aqsa mosque we must point out that the pro-Jewish ruler, Abd el-Malik, never built a mosque on the Temple Mount. Rather, he ordered his subjects to pray in the beautiful underground entrance to the Temple Mount behind the Hulda Gates. The El Aqsa mosque actually began as a church built by Crusaders who occupied Jerusalem in the 11th Century. When the Moslems, under Salah Adin, re-occupied Jerusalem in 1187 they converted it to a mosque. The worshipers faced Mecca with their backs to the Holy of Holies. Such conversion was a common practice of Moslems all over the world.

After the Abbasid kingdom defeated the Umayyad kingdom the memory of the “last house” was completely erased. The historical writings were ignored and the records of Abd el-Malik — who, according to his faith, gave his hand to the building of the Dome of the Rock as a Jewish house of prayer — were destroyed. Even the special writing in the Dome of the Rock which told the story of the building of the house was crudely falsified. They removed the name of Caliph Abd el-Malik and replaced it with the name of Abdullah Hamam Al Mamum, the Abbasid ruler. This falsification is proven by the date of the building which belongs in the time of Abd el-Malik, not the time of Al'Mamum who lived many years after this period.

Abd el-Malik was called ‘The Righteous’ by the Jews of the time but an unbeliever (Kaffir) by the Islamic historians. Why? Why did the Moslems replace his name in the writings in the Dome? Ofir offers: The Dome of the Rock is a Jewish building. He explains this with historical evidence but also by the character of the building which he says is of completely Jewish design.

*Coins minted by Abd el-Malik at the end of the 7th Century CE (right) are very similar in design to those minted by the Hasmoneans in the 2nd Century BCE (below)*



According to his explanation, the dome represents a navel in keeping with the Jewish idea that the rock is the navel of the world. The dome is built on four pillars between which stand twelve pillars representing the tribes of Israel. He states that the birds carved on the windows represent the cherubim. The capitals of the pillars are reminiscent of the top of a palm tree, another Jewish motif. On the walls inside the Dome and also at the southern entrance there are palm, grape and fig designs. These are three of the seven species mentioned in the Torah as being native to the Holy Land. Ofir also speaks of other items that point to its Jewish origins. Details can be found in his book, The Riddle of the Dome of the

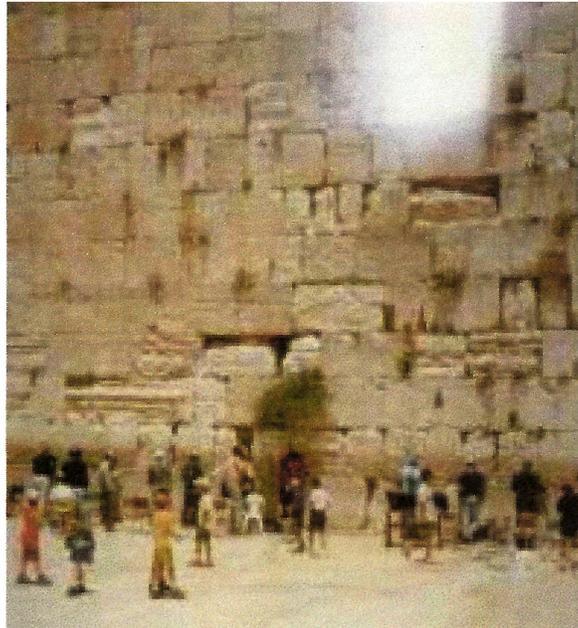
Rock (in Hebrew). The late Ariel Kotzer, a member of the Temple Mount Faithful Movement, wrote the forward to Ofir's book.

Abd el-Malik gave the Jews the right to manage the Temple Mount. He allowed them to light the candles in the Dome of the Rock and in the place where his subjects prayed in the hall of the Hulda Gates. He returned the Temple Mount to the Jews. Interestingly, even the coins which he minted were similar to the Jewish coins of the time of the Hasmoneans. This fact lends strength to Ya'akov Ofir arguments. When the Abbasids defeated the Umayyads they took away those rights from the Jews and prohibited them from entering the Temple Mount.

Another fact which strengthens Ofir's theory is the testimony of Jews who visited the Temple Mount which tells of the existence of a Jewish house of prayer on the Temple Mount in the early times of the Arab occupation of Jerusalem. This is mentioned in A House of Prayer and Midrash for the Jews on the Temple Mount in the Days of the Arabs by ben Tzion Dinur. From the very early testimonies which Dr. Dinur records in his article, we learn that the Jewish house of prayer was built during the early Arab occupation of the Temple Mount and that the Jews were evicted at a later time in Arab history. Rabbi Avraham bar Chia Hanassi states that “the Ishmaelite kings had the good habit of allowing Israel to come to the Temple Mount and to build there a house of prayer and Midrash.” Another testimony by the famous Karaite, ben Yerucham, was that “after the Ishmaelites occupied Jerusalem they gave permission to Israel to enter the Temple Mount to live there. They gave them the courtyards of the house of G-d and they prayed there for many years ... Later they were evicted.” Another testimony comes from the Armenian, Sibias, who said that “after the Jews had for some time enjoyed help from the Arabs, they decided to rebuild Solomon's Temple. They discovered the site of the Holy of Holies and they built a house of prayer for themselves on the foundation of the Temple using the remains of the Temple.” This testimony is very important because it shows very clearly that for the first time after the destruction of the Second Temple, all the Temple Mount was in the hands of the Jews and they used the remains of the Temple to build a house of prayer. This is confirmed today by the fact that remains of the Temple can be seen included in the Dome of the Rock itself. The Rambam (Maimonides) writes that in 1165 he visited Jerusalem and went up on to the Temple Mount and prayed in the great, holy house on the place of the Holy of Holies. All of this evidence is very important as further proof of Ofir's theory.

Whether or not Ofir's theory is correct, there is no doubt that this building does not resemble an Islamic building. The Abbasid kingdom converted the building into an Islamic building and falsified the historical evidence. In 1947, the Nazi Mufti, Haj Amim Al Hussein, declared it to be a mosque. This building which is located on the exact site of the First and Second Temples can never be a replacement for the Third Temple. This, like the El Aqsa mosque, is a foreign building on the Temple Mount. According to the Tanach (which even the Moslems believe) the Temple Mount should only be the site of one house, the house of the G-d of Israel. As with other foreign buildings which were built on the Temple Mount after the destruction of the Second Temple they are an abomination. G-d will remove them from His holy hill and He will again make it the holy site of His real “last house” — the Third Temple.

## Endowed with a Pure Spirit by the Temple Mount



*The Shekinah of G-d which never left the Temple Mount shines from the Temple Mount on the Western Wall through a 'window' in the Wall. It does not physically exist and comes from the gate of Heaven which is on the Temple Mount.*

The holiness of the Temple Mount is an eternal holiness. Even when the Temple did not exist on the mountain, the holiness of the place was not removed. The Sages said that all the abundant good which exists in the world comes via the Temple Mount. They also say that because of the holiness, to stand on the Mount or even to look at it endows one with the property of perfection, the holy spirit and holiness. This is the reason that G-d commanded Abraham to lift his eyes and look to Mt. Moriah. Then He told him to stand on the Temple Mount together with his son, Isaac. In this way he and his son would be endowed with very high spiritual values.

It is so sad that the Temple Mount, the most holy place in the world, has been desecrated by the nations. The Arabs built mosques on the holy hill of G-d and continue to do so with their shrines. The Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement is fighting to ensure the Temple Mount will no longer be desecrated and that the Israeli Government will remove the shrines and rebuild the Temple in our lifetime. We know that this will soon come about.

The Voice of the Temple Mount Faithful: Summer 5761/2001

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