

Solomon, Lamentations, and parts of many other books. However, other kinds of biblical poetry (narrative, proclamations of judgment, and so on), may or may not call for a poetic translation, depending upon the needs of the particular language and culture.

There are other rhetorical devices in Hebrew poetry which we have not mentioned here, but the above are perhaps the principal ones that the translator needs to keep in mind. Other refinements are discussed in the literature on the subject, and translators are urged to make use of such in whatever way possible.

### Reference

An excellent discussion of this subject to which translators are likely to find access appears in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (RSV), pages 1523-29 (Oxford University Press, new edition, 1977), in an article entitled "Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry". Also in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3 (K-Q), pages 829-38 (Abingdon Press, 1962), there is a very useful article entitled "Poetry, Hebrew". And in the *Supplementary Volume* of the same publication, pages 669-72 (Abingdon Press, 1976), there is an article with the same title.

EUAN FRY

## THE TEMPLE IN THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

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There are almost 100 references in the gospels and Acts to the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was the centre of Jewish religious life during the period of time covered by these books; and many of the important events which they relate took place there.

When we read such statements as the following, what do we understand by them?

Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the Temple. (Lk 2.27)

Once there were two men who went up to the Temple to pray... (Lk 18.10)

One day when Jesus was in the Temple teaching the people... (Lk 20.1)

Although there are references such as Jn 8.20 and Jn 10.23 which name particular locations within the temple area as a whole, for many people the word "temple" gives a picture of the modern-day church building in which people come together to worship. So they get quite the wrong meaning from these statements, thinking that the people mentioned were actually inside the main temple building. There are even some Bible Society illustrations for the parable in Lk 18.9-14 which seem to show a man praying inside a building! (This same misunderstanding is even more common in French-speaking areas, since the word *temple* is used in

French to refer to a Protestant church building.)

In this article I will try to give a description of the whole sacred site which the New Testament writers call "the Temple", referring in detail to each of its main parts. Then I will discuss the various references to the Temple in the gospels and Acts, to identify which part of the whole area may be in view, and I will make some suggestions regarding translation.

### **Construction of the Temple**

The temple which stood in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus had been built by King Herod the Great. It stood on the same site as the earlier temples which were built by Solomon and Zerubbabel.

Strictly speaking this temple should not be called the third temple, since it was a reconstruction of the temple which was built by Zerubbabel after the captivity. Herod himself said that it was only intended to be regarded as an enlarging and further beautifying of that earlier temple.

After the necessary preparation the work of building was begun around the year 20 B.C. The temple building itself, on which priests and Levites worked, was finished in a year and a half, and the courts in a further eight years. But other work continued for many years afterwards.

Herod's temple was built on the same plan as Solomon's temple, but it was far larger and grander. Its most impressive feature was the great platform on which it was built, which is still in existence today. The supporting walls of this platform extended beyond the top of the natural hill site to enclose an area of some 14 hectares (35 acres). At its southern end the platform stood more than 30 metres (100 feet) above ground level.

The main temple building was on a terrace high above the platform, so that it could easily be seen from any part of the city of Jerusalem or the nearby countryside. It was covered with so much gold that it was a dazzling sight in the bright sun. As some comments in the gospels suggest, it was a truly magnificent building.

For our knowledge of the details of Herod's temple we depend almost entirely on the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus. The measurements given in this article, and the details of the diagrams, are based on information given by Josephus.

### **The building and the courts**

When the books of the New Testament mention the Temple in Jerusalem, they most often refer to the whole area of the great platform and everything that was on it. This included a number of different structures as well as the main temple building; and the whole site was divided into four separate well-defined areas, which are usually called "courts" in English.

The outer court extended to the edge of the platform on all sides. It was surrounded by a high wall, and could be entered from outside by any of a number of gates and passageways. This court was open to all people, even those Jews who were ritually unclean and gentiles (non-

Jews). It is referred to as the **Court of the Gentiles**.

Within the Court of the Gentiles was a raised terrace, reached by climbing fourteen steps, and surrounded by a stone wall. This wall was the boundary of the inner temple area, and on it were notices warning gentiles that they were not allowed to enter. Some distance back from the stone wall was the high wall surrounding the sanctuary building and the three inner courts.

The first of the inner courts to be entered was the **Women's Court**. This was a square about 60 metres across, and it was on a level higher again than the terrace from which it was entered. The main gate into this court was the "Beautiful Gate"; and there were two other gates also through which women could enter. Women were not permitted to go nearer to the main temple building than this court.

The inner court, entered from the Women's Court by a flight of steps and a single gate, was the same width as the Women's Court, about 60 metres, and about 85 metres in length. The sanctuary (main temple building) stood at the western end of this court, high above it on its own terrace. A low stone wall 5 metres in from the eastern end divided this court into two parts: the smaller **Court of Israel** into which Jewish men could enter, and the larger part surrounding the sanctuary building, called the **Priests' Court**. There were other gates at the sides of this area by which the priests could go straight into their court from the Court of the Gentiles.

Diagram 1 is a plan of the whole of Herod's Temple, roughly to scale, showing the various courts and gates. It also shows the location of other structures which I will refer to below.

It is important to note something else about the arrangement of the courts. The different levels of the various courts, and the high walls separating them, meant that the whole temple site was divided into three quite separate areas, the Court of the Gentiles, the Women's Court, and the inner court surrounding the main temple building. It would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to see what was happening inside one of these areas from either of the other areas.

Diagram 2 shows the division of the temple site into separate areas, from a different perspective. It is a section through the whole site along a line joining the two points marked A on either side of diagram 1. It shows well the five different levels progressing upwards from the base platform to the terrace on which the main temple building stood.

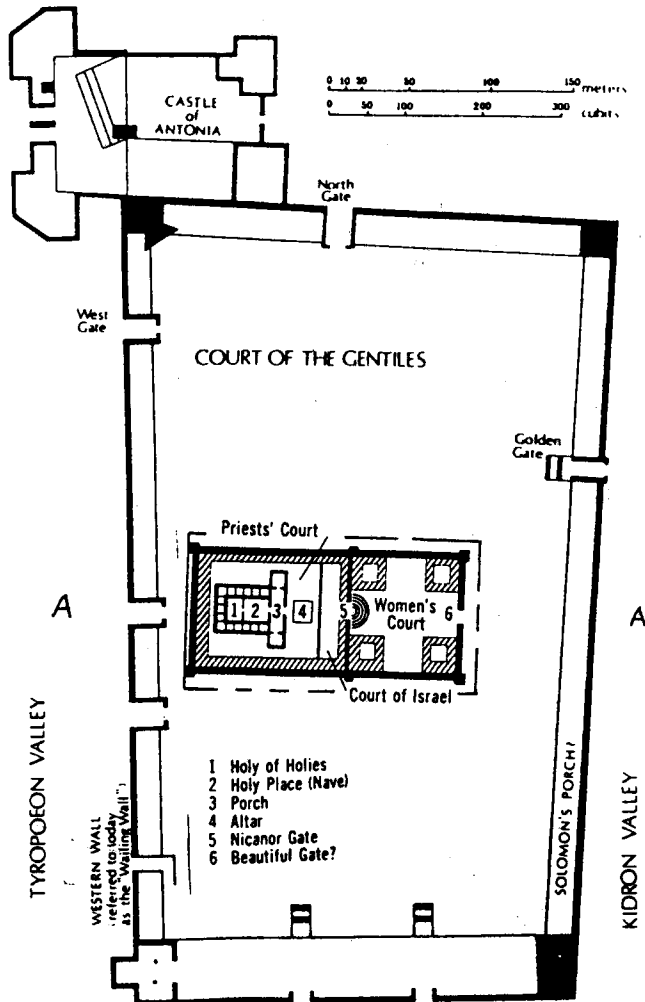
### **Religious activities at the Temple**

The main temple building was so large and high that it was the focus of attention for the whole temple area. But people who went to "the Temple" hardly ever went inside the main building: in fact it was only the priests on duty who were allowed to go in. The whole range of religious activity for which people came took place in the various courts. And because of the restrictions on the entry of women and gentiles into the inner court surrounding the sanctuary, a great deal of the activity

took place in the Women's Court and the Court of the Gentiles.

The main activity in the Priests' Court which surrounded the temple building was the offering of sacrifices. The large altar of burnt offering stood in front of the building, 13½ metres (45 feet) wide and about 7 metres (22½ feet) high. The priests had to climb a flight of steps to reach the top of it; and it would have been high up above the

DIAGRAM 1 PLAN OF HEROD'S TEMPLE



worshippers (men only) gathered in the Court of Israel. Along the sides of the Priests' Court were rooms which were used for storing all the utensils required for the sacrifices and for attending to the lamps and the incense altar within the temple building.

The temple building itself stood so much higher than the Priests' Court that it was entered by a flight of 12 steps. It was 45 metres (150 feet) long and 45 metres high. The front of the building was also 45 metres wide. A large open gateway led into the porch, which was 4½ metres (15 feet) deep, and the interior of the building was entered through large doors. Inside the building were the "Holy Place", 18 metres long, 9 metres wide, and 27 metres high, and the Holy of Holies, 9 metres long and wide, and 27 metres high. They were separated by a wooden partition with a curtain hanging over the entrance to the Holy of Holies. (Some rabbinic writers speak of two curtains.) Within the Holy Place were the golden candlestick, the table on which the showbread was placed, and the altar for burning incense; and the Holy of Holies was completely empty. There were side rooms three storeys high on the sides of the building, entered only from the outside.

Apart from the sacrifices, most of the other religious ceremonies prescribed for the people of Israel in general would have taken place in the Women's Court. These included the ceremonies associated with purification and the ceremonies associated with dedication and vows. Round the walls of this court were porches, constructed in the form of a roof supported by high pillars. In each corner of the court was a room, four rooms altogether. One room was for storing oil and wine for the sacrifices, one for storing wood, one for people affected with leprosy to wash themselves, and one used in connection with the Nazirite vow. According to Josephus it was in some of the pillars that the offering boxes were placed.

The large outer court, the Court of the Gentiles, had porches all around it, including the porch called Solomon's Porch on the eastern side. These porches were covered with roofs of cedar supported on marble pillars about 11 metres (37 feet) high. Within the large space of this court, as well as in the Women's Court, religious discussion and debate took place, and the rabbis and teachers instructed those who wanted to learn about the Law and the religious life. Also within this court were the traders who supplied the animals and birds for sacrifices and who exchanged Roman money for the special currency which had to be used to pay the temple dues.

### **The different meanings of "temple"**

I now want to examine all of the occurrences of the word "temple" in the gospels and Acts, and to indicate, as far as possible, which part or parts of the temple site they refer to. In most cases the context will give us the clues that we need to make this judgment.

There are relatively few occurrences which definitely refer to the main temple building. Zechariah went into the building to burn incense,

and saw a vision there (Lk 1.9,21,22). And the curtain in the temple building was torn in two when Jesus died (Mt 27.51; Mk 15.38; Lk 23.45). In Mt 23.35 there is a reference to the murder of Zechariah between the temple building and the altar; but of course the building referred to in this case is actually the temple built by Solomon.

Another group of occurrences may refer to the main temple building, but they could also refer to the whole temple site. The "beauty" of the temple (Lk 21.5) or comments about the gold in the temple (Mt 23.16,17,21) may point to the main building rather than the whole site. But references to "tearing down" (Mt 26.61; 27.40; Mk 14.58; 15.29; Jn 2.19,20; Acts 6.14), "abandoning" (Mt 23.38; Lk 13.35), "talking against" (Acts 6.13; 25.8), and "destroying" (Jn 11.48) are not so clear. The Festival of the Dedication of the Temple (Jn 10.22) celebrated the purification of the altar and the restoration of the worship of the Lord which took place at the time of Judas Maccabeus, well before the reconstruction of the temple by Herod the Great. (Mt 12.6 also belongs in this group of occurrences.)

The "highest point of the Temple" (Mt 4.5; Lk 4.9) may be at the top of the temple building. But it is just as likely that it refers to a high point at the edge of the temple platform which was high above the valley below.

In the story of the cleansing of the Temple Jesus quoted the words of Is 56.7, "My Temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations." In order for this to include the outer court which gentiles were allowed to enter, this must refer to the whole temple site rather than just the main temple building (Mt 21.13; Mk 11.17; Lk 19.46). References to Jesus going to the Temple or away from the Temple (Mt 21.23; 24.1; Mk 13.1; Jn 8.2,59) also relate more naturally to the whole temple site than to any particular part of it.

The temple tax which is the topic of the conversation reported in Mt 17.24-27 was a payment made by all male Jews for the upkeep of the Temple. It was presumably applied to the maintenance of all parts of the Temple, and not only to the main building.

There are many references to the gathering of people in the Temple or to activities involving a variety of people which took place in the Temple. These general gatherings and activities would most likely have been in the outer courts, the Court of the Gentiles and the Women's Court. General references to individuals going into the Temple or being in the Temple are also likely to relate to these areas. The following occurrences of "temple" seem to me to fall into this category:

Mt 21.14,15; 26.55; 27.5

Mk 11.11,16,27; 12.35; 14.49

Lk 2.27,36,46; 18.10; 19.47; 20.1; 21.37,38; 22.53; 24.53

Jn 5.14; 7.14,28; 11.56; 18.20

Acts 2.46; 3.1,2,8; 5.20,21,25,42; 21.26,27,30; 22.17; 24.12,18; 26.21

The text of the Good News Bible calls for comment regarding two of these references. At Mk 11.16 GNB translates "he would not let anyone

carry anything through the temple courtyards". This makes it very clear that the activity referred to is not in the main temple building but in the courts. However the translation at Acts 21.30, "At once the Temple doors were closed", wrongly suggests that the reference is to the main building. No matter what type of construction was involved, the RSV translation "gates" is really required to give the right meaning of the gates which opened into the city.

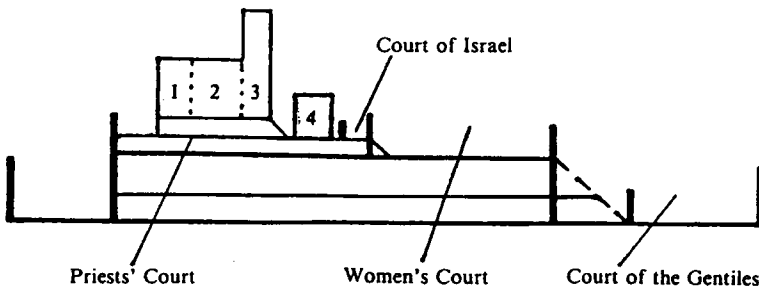
There are a few occurrences of "temple" where we can be fairly sure of the particular court which is referred to. When Jesus drove the traders out of the Temple (Mt 21.12; Mk 11.15; Lk 19.45; Jn 2.14,15) he drove them from the Court of the Gentiles right out of the temple site altogether. And we know that "Solomon's Porch" (Jn 10.23) was part of the structure at the outer edge of the Court of the Gentiles.

References to the "temple treasury" (Mt 27.6; Mk 12.41; Lk 21.1) indicate a location in the Women's Court where the offering boxes were placed. Likewise the ceremony of purification for which Mary and Joseph went to the Temple would also have taken place in the Women's Court.

The passage in Acts 21.27-29 calls for very careful interpretation regarding the areas of the Temple. Gentiles were allowed to go into the outer court, the Court of the Gentiles, but no further. So the accusation against Paul was that he had taken the Greek Trophimus from the outer court into the Women's Court, or even the Court of Israel (verses 28 and 29, also Acts 24.6).

Finally there is another group of occurrences of "temple" where the reference is to the service of priests. This service included the important function of offering sacrifices, and took place mainly in the Priests' Court (Mt 12.5; Lk 1.8,23). (Jn 2.21 itself indicates that it is using "temple" in a different sense from the Temple in Jerusalem, in giving the real meaning of Jesus' words in verse 19.)

DIAGRAM 2 SECTION OF HEROD'S TEMPLE



### Translation of “temple”

The first concern of translators in dealing with “temple” is generally to find an equivalent term or expression which covers the components of meaning of *hieron*, “temple”, in the NT texts. The main components may be set out as follows:

#### Temple

- a place or building
- belonging to the Jews
- large and important
- there was only one
- it was holy
- for the worship of God...  
which included sacrifice  
and also a range of other ceremonies

The task of finding an equivalent for “temple” is made more difficult by the need to have a different equivalent for the word “synagogue”, which is also a building belonging to the Jews for the worship of God.

Many older translations have simply used transliterations of “temple” and “synagogue” rather than trying to find equivalent terms or meaningful expressions in their own languages. This approach does keep the two terms separate; but it makes the readers depend on explanations given by pastors or teachers for their understanding of the text.

Translators who have tried to find meaningful equivalents for the two terms “temple” and “synagogue” have usually made a distinction between them in one of two ways (which focus on the contrasting components of meaning). One way takes the size and importance of the Temple to make a contrast, so that expressions such as “sacred meeting/worship house of the Jews” and “big sacred meeting/worship house of the Jews” are used. The other way focuses on the different nature of the religious activity at each of the places, so that expressions such as “meeting/worship house of the Jews” and “sacrifice/ceremony place of the Jews” are used.

It is not my purpose in this article to discuss how to arrive at the most precise equivalent to cover all the components of meaning of “temple”. That is something that each translator really has to work through for himself in the light of the present usage and possibilities in his own language. My chief concern here is that the basic term or terms chosen for “temple” should give the reader of a translation a clear and correct picture of the location referred to in each passage. And I am afraid that in many cases where an equivalent like “house of God” or “worship house” has been chosen, the readers have quite the wrong picture of what going to the Temple or being in the Temple means. (This may be the case for the word “temple” in English too, for many readers.)

What can be done to avoid giving readers the wrong picture? In the light of what I have found out about the Temple as it was in the period of the gospels and Acts I would like to make four suggestions for the



translation of "temple" in these books.

1. If it is possible, translators should use as the general term or expression an equivalent which suggests a place or site rather than a building. Some extra component could then be added, or a different term be used, for those few passages where the reference is actually to the temple building. (This suggestion would also provide another element of clear distinction between "temple" and "synagogue".)
2. If, because of established usage, it is necessary to continue using a basic term or expression which refers primarily to a building, this term or expression should be modified so that it covers the temple site as a whole, for all those passages where the focus is clearly not on the temple building alone.
3. It is possibly not necessary, in most passages, to name or describe the particular part of the temple site which is in focus. This should only be done where it is required to make the meaning of a passage clear, for instance Acts 21.26-30. (It is good for the translator, however, to have a clear picture of the particular part of the temple site which is being referred to, since this will help him to present the right perspective in his translation of the passage as a whole.)
4. Translators should seriously consider providing a plan of the temple site as a help for readers, with translations of the gospels and Acts. Also, if notes or footnotes are being included, these could refer to the plan as required; and they could also give more information than the text about the particular part of the temple site which is in focus in a given passage, where this would be helpful.

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(Information about the Temple, such as I have given in this article, can be found in most Bible dictionaries and Bible handbooks.)

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## WHERE IS THE OTHER SIDE?

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The Greek adverb of place meaning "the shore or land on the other side" is found twenty-three times in the New Testament. It always refers to the other side of a body of water such as a lake, a river or a stream. In all but one of the cases, the body of water is either the Jordan River (eight times) or Lake Galilee (fourteen times). The only other occurrence of this adverb is used of the gully to the east of Jerusalem where the stream called Kidron flowed during the rainy season.

The related verb *diaperao* meaning "to cross over to other side" is also used in Mt 9.1 and 14.34, Mk 5.21 and 6.53 as well as Luke 16.26. In English and many other languages it is necessary to translate this by a