

What were some lasting impacts of the Roman threats and destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E.?



Fig 2: The Arch of Titus (2019)
<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/Arch-Titus-Rome>

Dalia Marx – *The Missing Temple: The Status of the Temple in Jewish Culture Following Its Destruction*

Through exploring the significance of the Temple in the lives of all Jews, as well as looking at Jewish art, the search for a “new” Jerusalem and Temple, and thoughts on having a third temple in the modern era. Marx argues that Jews that are living in the sovereign Jewish state, with Jerusalem as its capital represents a novel situation. She argues that Jewish people have not yet internalised the implications of their return to their ancestral homeland. Many Jews are firm in their beliefs that a new temple would not and should not be built. This is due to the belief that an institution like a new Temple does not conform to present day reality and religious sentiments and also, a Moslem edifice is placed on the site where the Temple once stood. Additionally, Marx explores Jews that are willing for another Temple to be built. For many, a new Temple would be a sign of recovery and would re-ignite the true beating heart and identity of the Jewish religion. Furthermore, Jews wishing for a new Temple continuously strive for the restoration of the sacrificial objects such as the priestly garments and vessels. An example of a group promoting Temple worship is “The Temple Mount Faithful” which is led by Gershon Salomon. Whereby their members study the laws connected with the Temple rite and they have continuously published articles calling for preparations for actual sacrificial offerings in a newly built Temple on the Mount. In her conclusion, Marx compares Jewish people and the Temple, to placing a mirror between a missing limb and a healthy limb, strengthening the limb. This can compare to the ways Jewish people coped with, and recovered from the loss of the Temple through history. Thus, Marx argues that after the Second Temple’s destruction, the reflections of its teachings and tragedy are still in the hearts of all Jews today, a concrete place not being necessary.

Further Impacts from the Second Temple’s destruction

When the Second Temple was destroyed, the statuesque for the followers of Judaism changed forever. Not only, did Jews feel that they lost their Temple, but many also felt that they lost their identity, or part of themselves. Thus, many Jews that went into diaspora to locations like Spain and Iraq, after the Second temple’s destruction, felt both psychologically scared and lost. Scared, at the fact that their whole religion was on the brink of extinction, and scared that the ever expanding Roman Empire was still out to annihilate any remaining Jews that did not leave Judea. Furthermore, the disruption and loss of the Jewish priesthood, priestly classes and Temple law sent the remaining Jews into disarray and created a somewhat “Power Vacuum”. This was later resolved with founding positions of Rabbi’s and Torah scholars, despite sacrificial worship coming to an end. Rabbis gained more control and relegated former priests into inactive positions. Despite the persecution Jews would face all over the world in the years to come, it was a somewhat blessing that the Jewish religion managed to survive despite the little they had after the Temple’s destruction, in which this need to survive and be strong is still remembered through modern festivals in Judaism today.



Fig 3: Dalia Marx, Rabbi, Ph.D.
<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/Dalia-Marx>

Leadup to the Jewish and Roman Conflicts (66 C.E. – 74 C.E.)

The tensions between Jews and the Romans rose in 64C.E. - 66C.E. due to factions of “anti-elite” Jews deeply opposing the more elite Jews/Sadducees that were favoured by the Romans and creating class divisions within the Jewish religion. (Which was also influenced under Seleucid rule). What also caused the up rise in Jewish anger and revolt were the Roman procurators occupying Jerusalem in the 1st century C.E. This was believed by the historian, Josephus Flavius, to be due to the indifference and malice from Judean governors reflecting the malice and distaste of Emperors in Rome. Examples of these governors being Pontius Pilate and the deemed “incompetent” governor, Gessius Florus up towards the era of the Jewish and Roman conflicts. It was through these class divides, corruption of local and senate governments of the area and the constant distaste and mistreatment of the Jewish people that brought about riots and attacks on Roman citizens, and Roman-backed elite Greeks. These conflicts only became more tense through the rage of Gessius Florus when he plundered the Temple and stole money to fund the erecting of statues of Emperor Nero and himself, which in result, enraged the Jewish people. Thus, this was the beginning of a series of battles between the Jewish rebellions and the Roman Empire. Which, after a series of battles and the Romans taking most of Judea, eventually led to the siege of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E

After four unsuccessful years of failing to suppress the Jewish revolt in Judea, in the spring of 70 C.E, Emperor Vespasian’s son, Titus, led his legions with their advanced weapons to Jerusalem. Titus’ army of 65,000 men surrounded Jerusalem from three different directions, and eventually breached through into Jerusalem after destroying the outer third wall defence with a battering ram known as “Nikon” (The Victor). After, some unsuccessful Roman attempts at destroying the Antonia defences towards the Temple, the army made a 7km “choke ring” surrounding the city to starve the people of Jerusalem. Titus eventually breached further into the city on the “17th of Tammuz”, which today, is a day of mourning in the Jewish calendar. The walls of the Western Mount were eventually breached, and on the night of the 9th of Av, Titus’ army set fire to the gates that surrounded the Temple Mount. Then, on the 10th of Av, the Temple was completely set on fire and destroyed. Jews

that survived were imprisoned and led through the streets of Rome, becoming slaves, and witnessing objects of the temple carried through the city. Leading to the creation of the “Arch of Titus” in 81CE

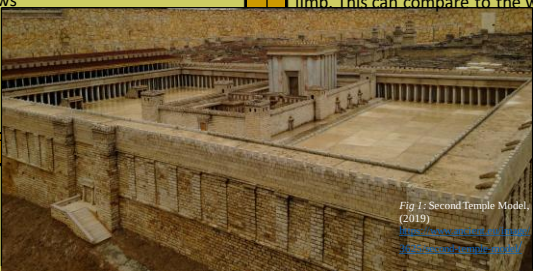


Fig 1: Second Temple Model, (2019)
<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/Second-Temple-Model>

Pilgrimage and the Wailing Wall

Every year, tens of

thousands of Jews from all over the world travel to Israel to visit the remains of the Second Temple after its destruction by Titus’ army in 70 C.E. These remains only consist of the limestone “Western Wall” which got bestowed the name: “Wailing Wall” due to the Jews that survived the Roman siege of Jerusalem wailing and weeping at what was left of their most holiest sanctuary. Today, many Jews, especially Orthodox Jews continue this tradition by wailing at the wall. This is to mourn and upkeep the memory of the Second Temple’s destruction but also in waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Additionally, Jews that go on pilgrimages to the wailing wall tend to kiss the stones as well as having a custom of writing personal prayers and leaving them within the cracks between the wall’s stones. The wailing wall is a physical reminder today of the what is left of the Second Temple, and is also seen by Jews all over the world as a beacon of hope for the future of Judaism; and a mark on the memories of those Zealots and Jewish populace that bravely fought and suffered, not just in the Jewish revolt, but throughout history.



Fig 6: Menorah (2019)
<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/Menorah>

My Insight on the impacts of the Temple’s destruction

Personally, the destruction of the Second Temple seemed to be more of an evolutionary step forward rather than a tragic setback or complete extinction for the surviving Jewish people. From all that has been explored, it seems that Judaism has not only survived, but has completely flourished within our modern era. The Temple seems to hold special places in the hearts of all Jewish followers, and through remembering and mourning over its destruction, it only makes Judaism as a religion even stronger. As, the Temple is in the hearts of all Jews, it’s not just a concrete building that was destroyed nearly 2,000 years ago.



The event of Tisha B’Av

The event of Tisha B’Av is the 9th day of the month of Av which usually occurs in the summer every year on the Jewish calendar (July/August). This day is known by modern Jews as the saddest day of the year, in which they tend to fast, deprive themselves from others and pray. To remember, respect and mourn tragic events throughout the history of the Jewish religion. Such as the Holocaust (1939 – 1945), the Bar Kochba revolt (133 C.E) and the destruction of the second Temple (70 C.E.) to name some examples. On this day, Jewish people follow sets of rules when fasting, they do not wear leather footwear, eat or drink, engage in marital relations, study positive texts in the Torah, engage in pleasurable outings, and other codes. To mourn and respect the Jewish nations throughout history that have suffered and/or defeated by adversaries. Morning prayers in Synagogues are held without the wear of the tallit and tefillin, as these are seen as adornments; and readings are done from the Kinot, to mark and remember the various tragedies that befell Jewish societies throughout history. Additionally, it is also customary to give extra charity on Tisha B’Av. Thus, this event gives great lasting impacts for many modern Jews today, as the Temple’s destruction is still remembered, but can also be seen as a positive, for the coming of happiness and goodness. From the suffering that has been endured throughout history.

Biblical Christian perspectives on the destruction of the Second Temple

There are many biblical perspectives on the Second Temple’s destruction within the religion of Christianity. One example of the Temple’s destruction being foretold is by Christianity’s Messiah, Jesus Christ, which can be seen in the gospel of Matthew, prior to denouncing others that claim to the Messiah, such as Simon b Giora, one of the frontmen and leaders of the Jewish revolt in 66 C.E., in Matthew’s gospel, it states:

‘As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.” (Matthew 24: 1-2)



Fig 4: The Bartheles, (2019)
<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/Bartheles>

A similar biblical example can be seen in the book of Daniel, which details the tragedy that is to come for the Judean Jewish nation where it states:

‘After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.’ (Daniel 9: 26)



Fig 7: The sufferings of Jesus Christ on the Cross, (2018)
<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/The-sufferings-of-Jesus-Christ-on-the-Cross>

These examples seem to convey messages of failure towards the religion of Judaism and its Temple. This is because many Jews then, throughout history and even today are still in waiting for the Messianic period. Due to the fact that many were and still are reluctant that Jesus is the true Messiah, as many individuals during 1st century C.E. all claimed to be the anointed one. Hence, this lack of faith was the blame for the result of the Second Temple’s destruction. Many Jews joined Jesus movements some years after his death and many fully-converted to its cause. Thus, the Temple was destroyed due to this lack of faith in Jesus as the true Messiah.