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Evidence of the Roman Attack on the Third Wall of Jerusalem at the End of the Second Temple Period

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Remains of a first-century CE wall segment and a tower base uncovered in the Russian Compound, Jerusalem, shed light on the course of the Third Wall in the west of the city and the fierce battle that took place there in the First Jewish Revolt. A concentration of ballista stones and other weapons at the site support the evidence furnished by Josephus in *Jewish War*, describing the battle at the Third Wall and the siege imposed by Titus on Jerusalem in 70 CE. The archaeological evidence and the historical sources enable a reconstruction of the battle between the Roman army and the Jewish defenders, which resulted in the breaching of the Third Wall and ended with the destruction of the Second Temple.

Keywords: Second Temple, Third Wall, Second Wall, Roman Legion, battlefield, weapons, ballista, stone projectiles, battering ram, rampart

Introduction

One of the most impressive fortifications in Jerusalem is the Third Wall that surrounded the city at the end of the Second Temple period until its breaching by the Tenth Roman Legion. Various sections of this wall have been discovered in archaeological excavations throughout the city. In 2015, a salvage excavation conducted in the Russian Compound exposed another section of the Third Wall, and next to it, evidence of battlefield remains. In light of the uniqueness of these findings, it can be concluded that this section of the Third Wall was attacked by the Roman soldiers, who, in turn, were fired back at by the Jewish defenders.

The Western Section of the Third Wall

According to Flavius Josephus (*Jewish War* 5, 148–152), King Agrippa I initiated the building of the Third Wall in his last years, in the reign of Emperor Claudius. The wall was to provide protection for the new city that extended over the hill beyond and to the north of

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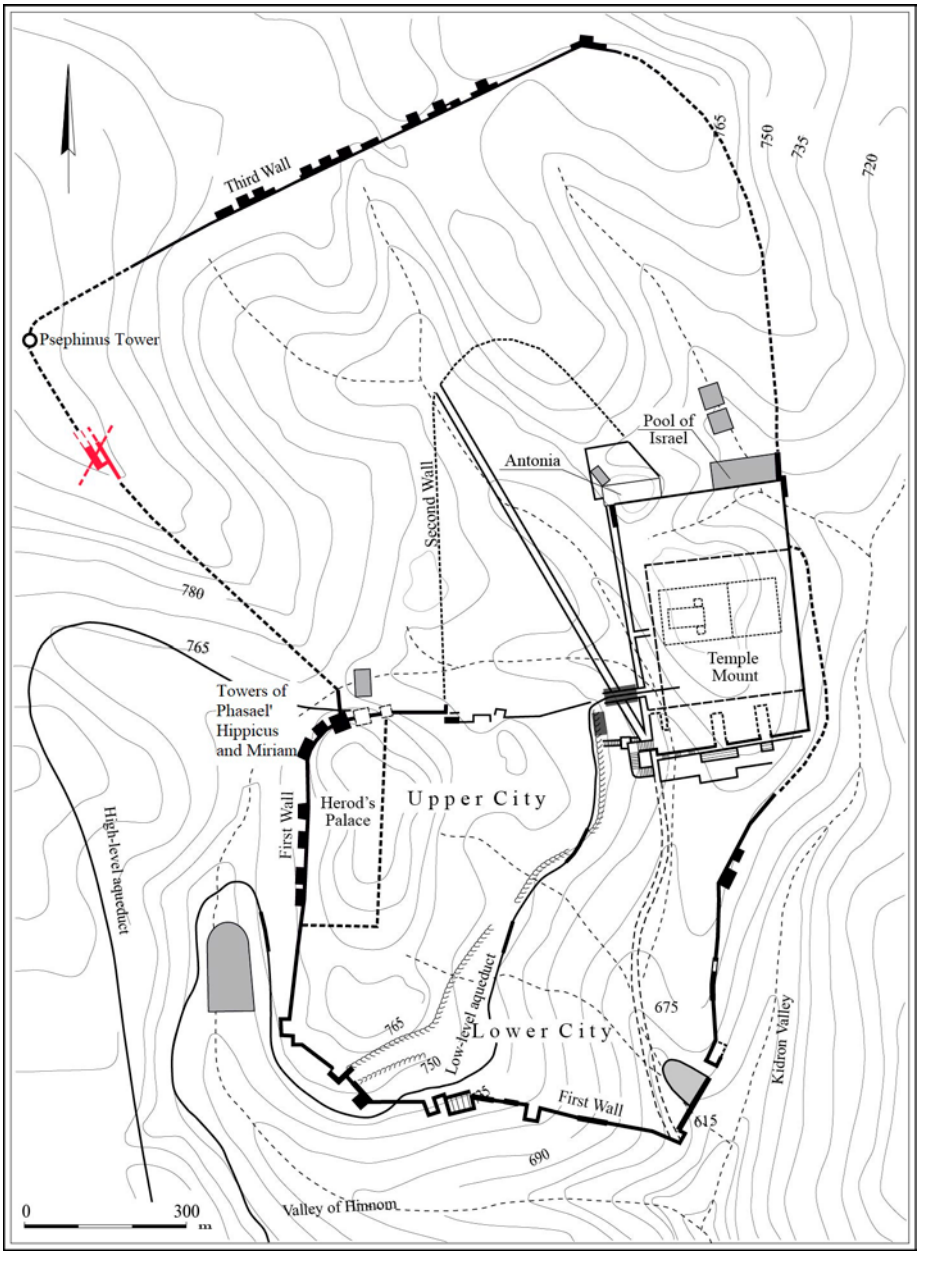

Fig. 1. General plan of Jerusalem on the eve of the destruction in 70 CE; the excavation site is marked in red (after *NEAEHL* 2:718; drafting: Michal Birkenfeld).

the earlier Second Wall (Fig. 1). The construction of the Third Wall was halted in the days of Agrippa, an event for which two explanations may be offered: (1) Agrippa feared that Claudius would suspect that the wall was constructed as part of a rebellion against him; (2) Claudius halted the construction of the wall for fear of rebellion (Josephus, *Antiquities* 19, 327–326). Another possibility is that Agrippa indeed completed the construction of the wall, for he was granted the right to fortify the city (Tacitus, *History* 12). According to Josephus,

it is clear that Agrippa was at least responsible for laying the foundations of the wall, which was built of large, perfectly matching ashlar stones, making it difficult to breach it with war machines (*Jewish War* 5, 153–155). Along the wall were 90 towers, all with square and solid foundations (*Jewish War* 5, 158).

From the onset of archaeological research in Jerusalem, various sections of the Third Wall were surveyed and excavated, allowing for a reconstruction of its course. The uncovered sections are not uniform in their construction methods and style, exhibiting different levels of finishing; also, the line of the wall is sometimes curved (see, for example, Pococke 1743; Robinson and Smith 1841; Sukenik and Mayer 1944; Paton 1905; Ben-Arieh and Netzer 1974; Tzaferis, Feig, Onn and Shukron 2000; Kenyon 1966). Regarding the course of the Third Wall in the west, Josephus wrote (*Jewish War* 5, 147):

> The beginning of the third wall was at the Tower Hippicus, whence it reached as far as the north quarter of the city, and the Tower Psephinus, and then was so far extended till it came over against the monuments of Helena… and joined to the old wall at the valley called the Valley of Kidron.

The remains of Tower Hippicus are generally identified with the foundations and lower courses of the Tower of David in the Citadel (Geva 1992:721; see also Kloner 2020). According to Josephus, the Tower of Psephinus was in the northwestern corner of the Third Wall, at a high place overlooking Transjordan in the east and the sea of Yafo (Jaffa) in the west (*Jewish War* 5, 160):

> Now the third wall was all of it wonderful; yet was the tower Psephinus elevated above it at the north-west corner, and there Titus pitched his own tent; for being seventy cubits high it both afforded a prospect of Arabia at sun-rising, as well as it did of the utmost limits of the Hebrew possessions at the sea westward.

From this we learn that Titus' siege camp was located opposite the northwestern corner tower of the Third Wall, identified by Avi-Yonah on Ha-Nevi'im Street, near Munbaz Street (Avi-Yonah 1968:103, 107). Today, the location of the tower remains uncertain.

The Breaching of the Third Wall

Flavius Josephus describes the location of the Roman army camps around the city on the eve of the invasion (*Jewish War* 5, 133–135):

> But as for Titus himself, he was but about two furlongs distant from the wall, at that part of it where was the corner and over against that tower which was called Psephinus, at which tower the compass of the wall belonging to the north bended, and extended itself over against the west; but the other part of the army fortified itself at the tower called Hippicus, and was distant, in like manner, but two furlongs from the city. However, the tenth legion continued in its own place, upon the Mount of Olives.

The reason for locating Titus' camp opposite the Tower of Psephinus, and another camp opposite the Tower of Hippicus, was to breach the city from the west, through the Third Wall (*Jewish War* 5, 259–260):

> Titus went round the city on the outside with some chosen horsemen, and looked about for a proper place where he might make an impression upon the walls; but as he was in doubt where he could possibly make an attack on any side (for the place was no way accessible where the valleys were, and on the other side the first wall appeared too strong to be shaken by the engines). He thereupon thought it best to make his assault upon the monument of John the High Priest; for there it was that the first fortification was lower, and the second was not joined to it, the builders neglecting to build strong where the new city was not much inhabited. Here also was an easy passage to the third wall, through which he thought to take the upper city, and, through the tower of Antonia, the temple itself.

According to this description, Titus planned to attack the Third Wall with soldiers camped near the Towers of Psephinus and Hippicus. From there, Titus intended to advance with his forces toward the Antonia near the Temple Mount. In these areas, Titus ordered to build ramparts, but the Jewish defenders made it difficult for him by attacking the rampart's builders with stones and arrows. As a result, he divided his army into groups of rampart builders, archers and catapult fighters (*Jewish War* 5, 262–263).

After the completion of the rampart, siege towers were brought in, together with battering rams, which breached the city wall in three places simultaneously, probably at locations near the army camps. According to Josephus, the battering rams did not succeed in breaching the city wall and did not break in. Battles between the Romans and the Jewish defenders took place at points where the Romans tried to breach the walls, striking fire that engulfed the siege machines. Eventually, the besiegers managed to breach the wall and break into the city (*Jewish War* 5, 296–300). Following this act, the Romans took over the Third Wall and destroyed it, as well as the northern part of the city.

THE EXCAVATION IN THE RUSSIAN COMPOUND

In 2015, remains of the western face of a tower and a wall segment were uncovered in an excavation in the Russian Compound. Based on their deliniation and construction style, the remains seem to be part of the Third Wall (Avner and Arbiv 2016). The tower base (W350; Fig. 2) was built of large, roughly dressed stones (width 6.7 m), bonded with an orange-yellow material. The western face of the tower was built of medium-sized stones. From the tower's foundation, a row of stones extending along about 13 m was identified as the remains of the Third Wall.

The tower base was dated to the first century CE by pottery recovered in the bonding material between its stones, including a Herodian oil lamp with a knife-pared spout, which was common in Jerusalem in the first century CE, first appearing at the end of the first century BCE. The presence of this oil lamp at the base of the bonding material indicates that the tower was built at the earliest, at the end of the first century BCE (Geva 2010:128–129; Tchenkhanovets 2013:124).

Fig. 2. General plan of the excavation area; the findspot of the ballista stones is marked in red (drafting: M. Kahn).

Adjacent to the course of the presumed Third Wall, a pile of collapsed stones was found, apparently originating from the upper courses of the wall that collapsed during or after fighting. In the entire excavated area—on bedrock and near the line of stones—was a layer of ash. As previously suggested (Avner and Arbiv 2016), it is possible to reconstruct here a wall from which a tower or an offset protruded, 7.6 m west of the wall. The foundations of the wall are solid, also built of large stones held together with an orange-yellow bonding material (Fig. 3).

The Weapons

The assemblage of weapons unearthed in this excavation is unusual. Below are presented the finds, followed by a discussion of their significance and contribution to the understanding of the history of the breaching of the Third Wall during the First Jewish Revolt.

Fig. 3. General view of the excavation area, looking north (photography: A. Peretz).

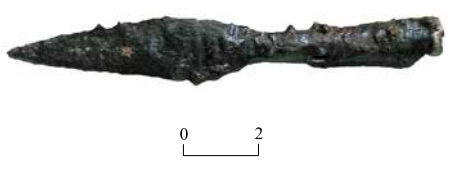

Fig. 4. The spearhead (photography: C. Amit).

Spearhead. In the stone collapse next to the wall, a spearhead was found (Fig. 4). It is not possible to determine its precise function, as opposed to stone projectiles which were fired to a distance, spears were thrust by hand or even thrown for a short distance. Spearheads were probably not blindly thrown over a wall. The spearhead is of cast iron, exhibiting meticulous and precise blacksmithing. A ring made of copper alloy is soldered to the socket. The leaf-shaped blade is very thin; its shoulders are low and asymmetrical. The mount is wide and large. It seems that the spearhead was produced in a workshop of the Roman army, or of its allies, who had extensive and professional knowledge of the production and design of iron and metal tools (Curle 1911; Stiebel 2007:273–271; Knox et al. 1983:97–107). The possibility that the rebels produced high-quality metal equipment is unlikely. This type of spearhead was common in the first century CE throughout the Roman Empire; local adaptations, such as the addition of decorations, were sometimes made in auxiliary camps. A similar type of spearhead was discovered in the excavations in the Burnt House in the Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem, where only the blade was preserved (Nenner-Soriano 2010:258,

Fig. 5. The level wherein the ballista stones were found west of the wall (photography: A. Peretz).

Fig. 6. Ballista throwing stones of different weights (from left to right: 0.33, 2, 5, 8, 11 and 24 kg).

Pl. 8.1:M2), Gamla (Stiebel 2014: No. 106, Fig. 4.25) and in a Roman fort in Wales, Britain (Chapman 2005:219, Pl. D:Da34).

Catapult Bolts. Ten catapult bolts of different sizes were found. Most of them were found at the same level as the ballista stones, while some of them were scattered west of the wall, i.e., outside the city, and others, under the stone collapse of the wall.

Ballista Stones. To the west of the wall, outside the city, a concentration of 79 ballista stones was found *in situ* in a rather small area (L232, L236, L253; 15.0 × 5.2 m; Figs. 5, 6). Three additional ballista stones were discovered near the southern face of the tower base, which protruded from the wall; one was found in the ash layer along the wall, within the city.

The ballista stones are evidence of the fighting that took place here. In the study of ancient artillery, the weight of the stones is an important factor in identifying them as ballista stones. Stones that weigh less than 500 g are not suitable for use as ballista stones and it is likely that they were hand-thrown or shot with a sling.

In this study, stones were weighed and other characteristics were analyzed, such as stone size, rock type, shape, degree of chipping and level of finish, which can indicate whether a stone was roughly processed or not processed at all but used in its natural form (Tables 1, 2). This data can help attribute the stones to different types of projectiles, testifying to the extent of investment in their production and whether they were prepared in advance for use as artillery, or were assembled hastily, ad hoc, in the battlefield.

Most of the stones weigh up to 5 kg, some weigh up to 11 kg, and one stone weighs 24 kg. The level of chipping and processing of some of the stones is meticulous and uniform, attesting to the effort invested in their production. The shape of some of the stones is

Table 1. Attributes of the Stones, by Locus

Locus	Whole	Broken	Flat side(s)	Mizi Ahmar	Dolomite	Natural/Unworked
215		1		1		
221		1			1	
232	3	1	1	2	2	3
236	10		2	6	3	4
242	1			1		
243	2		1	2	1	1
245	1		1		1	
248		3		3		
250	1			1		
252	1			1		
253	31	5	6	25	11	6
254	1	1			2	1
255						
256	1				1	
262		1		1		
269	1				1	
318	1			1		
330		1		1		
332		1		1		
351	1			1		
352	3				1	
363	2	1	1	3		1
n/a	2	1	1	3		1
Total	*62*	*17*	*13*	*53*	*24*	*16*

Table 2. Whole Ballista Stone Assemblage, by Weight

Weight (kg)	N
0.3–0.5	4
0.5–1.0	4
1–2	13
2–3	5
3–4	5
4	2
5	12
6	9
7	1
8	2
9	1
10	1
11	2
24	1
Total	*62*

asymmetrical, either due to the shape of the original stone or to the technical skills of the stone mason (Shatzman 1991:101). Some stones exhibit rough chiseling, probably the result of fast dressing during battle.

Hand-Thrown Projectiles. Stones with one or two flat sides were retrieved. Some of them are cube-shaped, allowing their stacking and an easier grip before throwing (Holley 2014:49). The hand-thrown projectiles weigh 2–3 kg, and it is possible that they were thrown by the Jewish defenders at the Roman soldiers engaged in building the rampart. Holley notes that in Masada, projectiles weighing 600 g were found, which were fired from ballistae (Holley 1994:355). It may be suggested that stones of relatively light weight were also used as ballista stones, the flat side allowing them to be loaded safely in the war machines so they would not roll during their fast loading in battle, especially when shooting at an angle higher than usual (Holley 2014:50).

Roman Artillery in the Destruction of the Walls of Jerusalem

According to Josephus, Titus led four legions on a military campaign to Jerusalem: Legion V Macedonica, Legion X Fretensis, Legion XII Fulminata and Legion XV Apollinaris; these were further assisted by auxiliary troops (*Jewish War* 5, 41–45). Similar to the Roman warfare doctrine applied by Vespasian in the battle of Yodefat, also in the battle of Jerusalem, Titus assigned each legion with 55–65 war machines (Shatzman 1989:471). Hence, a total of about 240 war machines of different types and sizes were used.

The Tenth Roman legion was stationed on the Mount of Olives, while the other three legions were positioned along the wall from the north and northwest, until the meeting point between the Third Wall and the Second Wall near Tower Hippicus (*Jewish War* 5, 134). During the siege of Jerusalem and the battle over the city, the Romans and the Jewish defenders used war machines, such as catapults (*Jewish War* 5, 269–270), and various weapons, such as spears, arrows and projectiles.

The use of torsion artillery, especially in siege warfare, was commonplace in the Roman army (James 2004:209). Vitruvius and Philo grouped the ballista stones by weight according to Hellenistic and Roman measurements: light (2.5–4.5 kg), medium (5.0–7.5 kg), heavy (9–14 kg) and very heavy (16.0–40.5 kg). As no war machines could suit every caliber, and given that the weight of the stones was not accurate or uniform, it was possible to fire a stone of low caliber with a machine intended for a higher caliber, but the effectiveness of such a shot would be less (Shatzman 1991:97). In his description of the siege of Jerusalem, Josephus writes (*Jewish War* 5, 269–270):

> The engines that all the legions had ready prepared for them, were admirably contrived; but still more extraordinary ones belonged to the tenth legion: those that threw darts and those that threw stones were more forcible and larger than the rest, by which they not only repelled the excursions of the Jews, but drove those away that were upon the walls also. Now the stones that were cast were of the weight of a talent, and were carried two furlongs and further.

Until the excavation in the Russian Compound, the only evidence supporting Josephus' description of the use of artillery during the siege of Jerusalem was a 23.3 kg ballista stone retrieved from the excavations of the Third Wall north of Damascus Gate (Sukenik and Mayer 1930) and 25 ballista stones discovered in Broshi's excavations along the western face of the Third Wall near the Tower of David (Shatzman 1989:473, esp. n. 23). In the description of the attack against the Third Wall, Josephus does not specify the size of the stones used by the Jewish defenders, but only emphasizes the Roman weapons, as he also did in his description of the Battle of Yodefat, where he testifies to the existence of "the machine," which probably used especially large stones that caused enormous damage (*Jewish War* 3, 243–246). A stone weighing 24 kg retrieved from the excavation in the Russian Compound was probably fired from a massive one-talent machine capable of shooting a stone weighing one talent, evidence of the use of heavy war machines by the Romans in the siege of the Third Wall. This stone is the largest and heaviest found to date in archaeological excavations in Jerusalem from a context dating to the First Jewish Revolt.

Natural undressed stones were found in the same layer as the ballista stones, adjacent to the Third Wall from the west. According to Josephus, the Jewish defenders threw such stones at the Roman army (*Jewish War* 5, 268) and thus, the many stones found outside the Third Wall were probably flung by the Jewish defenders. Also, the Jewish defenders may have reused ballista stones that were fired in their direction and landed within the city limits, similar to what is known from other battlefields, including Gamla (Magness 2014:27, Fig.

2.17; Coulston 2001:25). If this description is correct, two other stone items discovered in the excavation may have been used by the defenders: a carved stone cylinder and a soft white limestone weight (see Stiebel 2003:219; Syon 2014:16).

Most of the ballista stones found in the Russian Compound excavation are of small and medium caliber (up to 11 kg), apparently used against soft targets, such as people, or to cover for the attacking forces and prevent the defenders from attacking (*Jewish War* 5, 269). The average weight of the stones (0.3–11 kg, i.e., 2–16 librae) is similar to that of the ballista stones from Gamla and Yodefat (Aviam 2005:144; Holley 2014:47, respectively; Table 3). The ballista stones were fired from small- and medium-sized machines that were placed along the siege rampart and within the siege towers (Holley 2014:51). Due to their size, they could be moved quickly; they were operated by two soldiers and their firing rate was high.

"Caliber" is a general term used to denote groups of weights of stones: small, medium, large etc. Each particular firing machine (ballista, in this case) had an optimal caliber. While a firing machine designed to shoot stones weighing 25 kg could technically also shoot stones weighing 20 kg, their firing would have been less effective. Philo of Byzantium in the third century BCE mentions war machines designed for weights of 10, 15, 20, 30 and 50 mina, and of one talent (one mina = c. 431 g; one talent = 26 kg). Vitruvius too notes weights of stones fired from war machines, using the Roman weight system: 2, 4, 6, 10, 20, 40, 60, 80, 120, 160, 180 and 200 librae (one libra = c. 325 g). At various battle sites, the ballista stones were classified into groups according to caliber, i.e., the machine from which they were fired. In Pergamum, for example, hundreds of ballista stones were assigned to 14 caliber groups, meaning that the stones were fired by at least 14 war machines, each intended for a different weight range (Shatzman 1995:56, and see references therein).

Similarly, the ballista stones found in the Russian Compound were grouped together according to possible calibers and compared to those proposed by the researchers at Gamla, Masada and Yodefat (Table 3). Most of the ballista stones from the Russian Compound belong to a small or medium caliber (up to 16 libra), probably used against the defenders of the wall. Stones of a similar weight range were documented in Gamla, Masada and Yodefat. The stone of the largest caliber from the Russian Compound has no parallels in the assemblages from Gamla and Masada; a larger one, however, was found at Yodefat (Aviam 2005:144).

Table 3. Balista Stones from the Excavation and Other Contemporary Sites

Weight	Jerusalem, the Russian Compund	Yodefat (Aviam 2002:129)	Masada (Holley 1994:357)
Libra	5, 6, 10, 18, 73	2, 6, 80	2, 3, 5, 7, 9
Mina	3.5, 4.5, 5, 7, 10.5, 16, 56	1.5, 5, 80	2, 4, 6, 10

DISCUSSION

Clear evidence of a fierce battle was found in the area opposite the western face of the Third Wall and near the tower base or offset that protruded from it to the west. The rich assemblage of hand-thrown projectiles is to date the largest found outside the city walls of the late Second Temple period, testifying to artillery fired by the Roman soldiers and also to the counter-reaction by the Jewish defenders. The Roman shooting was twofold: against the Jewish defenders, and to provide cover for the army forces engaged in the building of the rampart or activating the battering ram. This confirms Josephus' description, which details the Jewish defenders' attempts to prevent the Romans from building the rampart and the siege towers. The archaeological evidence indicates the bombarding, and possibly the breaching of the Third Wall of Jerusalem in this area.

Based on the ceramic evidence, the construction of the Third Wall and the tower should be dated to the first century CE, and therefore, the battle cannot date earlier than this period. Historical considerations and knowledge of ancient Roman combat tactics, as well as the findspot of the hand-thrown projectiles along the course of the Third Wall, bear witness to the Roman attack against the Third Wall during the days of the First Jewish Revolt, on the eve of the destruction of the Temple.

Josephus described Titus' search for a weak spot in the wall, in terms of construction or topography. The area of the Russian Compound is situated at an altitude of about 800 m above sea level, effectively controlling the valley extending to the north of Damascus Gate and the eastern slopes of the Russian Compound up until the Upper City. Therefore, it can be surmised that the area of the Russian Compound had the potential to provide the optimal point for attacking the Third Wall, and that the breaching of the wall and the break into the city took place here.

The Battle Over the Third Wall of Jerusalem

The findings from the excavation—the location of the wall segment and the tower base protruding from it to the west, and the findspots of the hand-thrown projectiles and the ballista stones along the western face of the tower—clearly indicate that the Roman army attacked the city from the west (without ruling out other, as yet undiscovered attacks in other areas). Josephus described how Titus camped with his soldiers opposite the Tower of Psephinus, on the western side of the Third Wall. Although this information is not sufficient, based on strategic considerations it is likely that Titus' camp was located at a high place, from which the commander could maintain eye contact with his other army camps and with the besieged city.

Josephus' writings concerning the use of weapons and ammunition by the Jewish defenders of the city during the siege of the Third Wall is laconic, whereas his descriptions of the Roman army are detailed and informative, including the use of artillery and ballista stones, their types and sizes. Josephus renders the placement of war machines on the wall by Shim'on Bar Giyora, and the shooting of arrows and throwing stones at the builders of

the rampart, while emphasizing the defenders' lack of knowledge in operating the machines (*Jewish War* 5, 267–268):

> But though they had these engines in their possession, they had so little skill in using them, that they were in great measure useless to them; but a few there were who had been taught by deserters how to use them.

This description contrasts Josephus' statement that the men of Yoḥanan of Gush Ḥalav, who came to help defend the wall, gained experience in operating war machines before the First Jewish Revolt, apparently after they defeated Cestius Gallus in 66 CE and looted the war machines he had left behind during his retreat (Shatzman 1989:472). As mentioned above, it is not possible to determine who used each of the stones that were fired based on archaeological considerations; however, it is possible that they reflect not only on Roman warfare, but also on the Jewish response to the attack.

According to Josephus, the distance between Titus' camps and the towers was the same as the firing distance of the ballistae, i.e., equaling two furlongs (c. 400 m; *Jewish War* 5, 133; 269–270). Based on the writings of Josephus, from the general Roman army tactics and from a specific local tactical point of view, the war machines were not located in the Roman army camp, but in other places, so that the Jewish defenders would be forced to divide their forces in their fight against the Romans. A similar strategy was employed by the Romans in Gamla and Masada, taking into account two main variables: topography and range. According to these variables, and based on research by Marsden (1969:91), who estimated the range of the war machines at 350–450 m, Holley concluded that both in Gamla and Masada the Romans placed their war machines at a reasonable distance from their target, maintaining their safety on one hand, and remaining effective on the other. At Gamla, the war machines were placed at commanding strategic points, at a distance of about 300 m from the city walls (Holley 48:2014), and in Masada, the Romans placed their catapults on the large earthen rampart and at the top of the siege tower (Holley 1994:361).

Based on the firing range of the war machines and the strategies adopted at the other sites, it can be suggested that the Roman war machines were placed at a maximum distance of 400 m west of the Russian Compound, along the line of the Third Wall; this is further supported by the finding of the large 24 kg ballista stone, whose firing range was 2 furlongs. This understanding corre;ates with Josephus' description of the location of Titus' camp at a distance of about 400 m from the Tower of Psephinus. It may be possible to locate the firing of the large ballista stone about the same distance from the city walls as Titus' camp though probably not at the same point.

The size of the ballista stones, and the description of the war machines of the Tenth Roman Legion, attest that on the western front, little use was made of the heavy, large-caliber machines of 1 talent (23–26 kg). According to Shatzman (1995), a talent equals 26 kg, but only one of the 79 ballista stones weighs close to this, about 24 kg, while most of them weigh less than 11 kg and their diameter does not exceed 20 cm. It is interesting that on the northern front, near the Antonia, only one stone weighing 23 kg was found in Sukenik and Mayer's excavations. It can be assumed that it was fired from the heavy war machines of the Tenth Legion, which were stationed on nearby Mount of Olives.

The firing of ballista stones was aimed at the top of the wall where the Jewish defenders stood (*Jewish War* 5, 263). The ballista stones retrieved from the Russian Compound excavation indicate the use of small and medium caliber on the one hand, and of heavy and massive firing at the western face of the Third Wall, on the other. According to Josephus, many war machines, such as catapults (*Jewish War* 263), were placed opposite the wall at distances that allowed extensive firing that would enable the Roman army to conduct siege works and to complete the breaching of the wall. It is possible that at this stage, the small-caliber war machines were widely used to cause precise damage to the defenders of the city, who were standing on the wall, as Holley suggested for Masada, and to allow cover for the Roman army and the rampart builders at the foot of the fortification (Holley 1994:363). Josephus described this well (*Jewish War* 5, 276–277):

> Then did Titus set his engines at proper distances, so much nearer to the wall, that the Jews might not be able to repel them, and gave orders they should go to work; and when thereupon a prodigious noise echoed round about from three places, and that on the sudden there was a great noise made by the citizens that were within the city.

The "great noise" in three locations within the city indicates that Titus conducted his attack simultaneously on three fronts: (1) opposite the Tower of Hippicus, in the area where the Third Wall connected to the Second Wall and considered a weak spot; (2) probably near the Russian Compound, not far and south of the supposed location of the Tower of Psephinus—the firing was intended against the defenders of the wall, who tried to damage and delay the breaching of the wall by the battling ram, an attempt that failed; and (3) opposite the northern section of the wall. Josephus reports the retreat of the defenders from the Third Wall to the inner defensive line along the Second Wall (*Jewish War* 5, 300–302):

> It was on other accounts also thought by them to be superfluous to guard the wall, there being besides that two other fortifications still remaining, and they being slothful, and their counsels having been ill concerted on all occasions; so a great many grew lazy and retired… And thus did the Romans get possession of this first wall, on the fifteenth day of the siege, which was the seventh day of the month Artemisios, [Jyar,] when they demolished a great part of it, as well as they did of the northern parts of the city, which had been demolished also by Cestius formerly.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The remains of the first-century CE wall segment and tower base uncovered in the Russian Compound shed light on the course of the Third Wall in the west, which was heretofore only hypothesized. The concentration of ballista stones and other weapons is tangible evidence of a battlefield at the time of the First Jewish Revolt, of an intensity not previously discovered in Jerusalem. The exceptional correspondence between the archaeological evidence and Josephus' descriptions of the battle over the Third Wall and the siege imposed by Titus on Jerusalem in 70 CE, shed light on the events that occurred in Jerusalem before the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt and during the First Jewish Revolt, ending in the tragic destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 CE.

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