

Archaeological Temple, Biblical Sacrifices, and Religious Reforms

Lecture: 02-27 Lecture: Archaeological Temple, Biblical Sacrifices, and Religious Reforms | Israel 2026

SITE OVERVIEW

Location: Beer-Sheva (Beersheba) — ancient cultic temple site (exact modern site name not specified in recording)

Date of Visit: Not explicitly stated in recording

Biblical References:

- Genesis 15 (Abrahamic Covenant / covenant ceremony)
- Genesis 15:17 (smoking fire pit and blazing torch passing between the pieces)
- 1 Corinthians 6 (body as temple of the Holy Spirit)
- Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion (time of death — third hour / ninth hour)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Cultic Temple at Beersheba: A secondary Israelite temple was established at Beersheba, containing an altar of sacrifice, incense altars, and a Holy of Holies. Dr. Schilling situates this within the period of Solomon, making it approximately 10th century BCE.

Strategic Military Context: Beersheba functioned as the outer boundary (“outside limits”) of Israelite territory. The temple is interpreted as a security-motivated cultic site, allowing stationed soldiers and priests to perform religious obligations — including Passover sacrifices — without abandoning their posts to travel to Jerusalem.

Hezekiah’s Reform: Dr. Schilling states that King Hezekiah dismantled “high holy places” (not referring to geographic elevation, but sacred cultic sites). This temple likely ceased operation during Hezekiah’s reign, if not during the subsequent reform of King Josiah.

Abrahamic Covenant: Dr. Schilling traces the origin of animal sacrifice to Abraham’s encounter with Yahweh, rooted in a Near Eastern cultural practice of covenant-making through the cutting and dividing of animals — formalized in Genesis 15.

The Tamid Sacrifice: Daily temple sacrifices (called the Tamid) were offered at the Jerusalem Temple: one at 9:00 AM and one at 3:00 PM. Dr. Schilling connects the Passover lamb slaughter — beginning after the morning Tamid (9:00 AM) and concluding by the afternoon Tamid (3:00 PM) — to the Gospel timeline of the Crucifixion.

70 AD: Dr. Schilling briefly references the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as the event terminating the sacrificial system for Jewish practice.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Temple Complex Discovered: Excavations at the site uncovered a complete temple structure including:

- An altar of sacrifice with a bloodstone (a channel to direct blood flow into a basin)
- A Holy of Holies
- Two stone tablets (Mesbahot — standing stones or offering stones)
- Incense altars (plural, though Dr. Schilling notes there should canonically be only one; archaeologists identified additional ones — speculative interpretation noted)

Reproductions vs. Originals: The original stone tablets are housed in a museum; reproductions with the real stones incorporated are present at the site.

Blood Basin/Channel: The altar featured a channel directing sacrificial blood into a basin; on Yom Kippur, blood would be cast at the base of the Holy of Holies within this temple.

Orientation of Temple: An audience member raised the point that this temple does not face Jerusalem — Dr. Schilling acknowledged this observation but did not elaborate on its interpretive significance within the recording.

Scholarly Debate: The existence of this site challenges the exclusive Jerusalem-sacrifice mandate under Mosaic Law. Scholarly suggestion offered: the site was a pragmatic, militarily justified cultic deviation, not a theologically endorsed one. (Flagged as interpretive/speculative.)

DR. SCHILLING'S KEY POINTS

Why Sacrifices Exist at All: Dr. Schilling grounds the origin of sacrifice in Genesis 15, explaining that God accommodated Abraham's request for assurance by using a culturally recognized Near Eastern covenant ceremony — walking through divided animal carcasses to ratify an oath. God himself (as a smoking fire pit and blazing torch) passed through the blood, making an unconditional covenant with Abraham.

Three-Part Abrahamic Covenant: (1) A great nation, (2) land, (3) blessing — both personal and for descendants.

Tamid–Crucifixion Parallel: Dr. Schilling draws an explicit theological connection: Jesus was placed on the cross at 9:00 AM (the morning Tamid) and died at 3:00 PM (the afternoon Tamid), precisely bracketing the Passover slaughter window — framing Jesus as the ultimate Passover sacrifice.

Correction of “High Places” Misconception: The term “high places” (bamot) does not refer to geographic elevation, but to elevated or unauthorized sacred sites. Hezekiah’s reform targeted these cultic deviations.

Cultic vs. Sect Distinction:

- A cult deviates from scriptural truth, typically by elevating a secondary authoritative text alongside Scripture (e.g., Mormon, Jehovah’s Witnesses).
- A sect is a group that elevates a particular distinctive above other elements of faith without necessarily teaching falsehood (e.g., the Amish elevating simple communal life).

New Testament from a Jewish Perspective: Dr. Schilling acknowledges that Judaism can legitimately view Christianity as a cultic deviation — it departs from traditional Jewish teaching. From a Christian perspective, the New Testament is understood as a continuation and fulfillment of the Old Testament through Yeshua as Messiah.

Messianic Judaism: Dr. Schilling describes Messianic Jews as those who accept Yeshua as Messiah while continuing to observe Jewish practice (Shabbat, feasts), yet are not accepted as Jewish by the broader Jewish community.

1 Corinthians 6 Application: Following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD, Paul’s teaching reframes the believer’s body itself as the temple of the Holy Spirit, making physical sacrificial structures theologically obsolete for Christians.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Beersheba as Boundary Marker: The phrase “outside limits” positions Beersheba as the southernmost boundary of Israelite-controlled territory — consistent with the biblical idiom “from Dan to Beersheba” denoting the full extent of the land.

Strategic Vulnerability: Dr. Schilling uses the 1973 Yom Kippur War as a modern analogy: Egypt and Syria attacked Israel on its holiest day when defenses were reduced. The ancient Beersheba garrison faced an analogous threat if soldiers departed for Jerusalem during Passover, leaving a critical military corridor undefended.

Gateway to Jerusalem: Dr. Schilling emphasizes that if Beersheba fell to an enemy advance, it would initiate a chain of successive city losses leading toward Jerusalem — underscoring its critical defensive position.

Ur of the Chaldees / Mesopotamia: Referenced as Abraham’s place of origin, relevant to understanding his polytheistic cultural background prior to his encounter with Yahweh.

QUOTABLE MOMENTS

“You can only do sacrifices in Jerusalem, but they’re doing sacrifices here.” — Highlighting the theological tension at the Beersheba cultic site.

“God gives him an oath and then passes through the blood himself.” — On Genesis 15:17 and the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

“When does Jesus die? There’s some kind of relationship going on there.” — Connecting the Tamid sacrifice schedule to the Crucifixion timeline.

“Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.” — 1 Corinthians 6, cited as the theological resolution to the end of the sacrificial system for Christians.

“I never became a Christian. I’m Jewish. I accepted Yeshua as my Messiah.” — Paraphrasing a Messianic Jewish acquaintance, illustrating the identity tension within Messianic Judaism.

“Religion controls everything” — Observation on the pervasive role of religious identity in Israeli-Palestinian political and communal life.

PERSONAL NOTES

Follow-up question: Why does the Beersheba temple not face Jerusalem?
Dr. Schilling acknowledged the question but did not answer it — warrants further research into temple orientation in Israelite practice.

Josephus’s figure of 300,000 Passover lambs is historically debated and likely hyperbolic — worth cross-referencing with secondary scholarship on Josephus’s numerical reliability.

The identification of this site’s period as “Solomonic” should be verified against current archaeological consensus — some scholars may date it differently.

The Tamid–Crucifixion parallel (9 AM / 3 PM) is a well-known homiletical point but should be noted as theological interpretation, not strictly a claim of historical synchronicity.

Modern geopolitical commentary (anti-Semitism in universities, U.S. campus protests) was briefly introduced but not developed — tangential to the site’s historical content.