



BETTER

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SAFEKEEPING

In January, this column began with the sound of hammer and chisel, the cries of stonemasons and carpenters, and the toiling of two groups of people—the Parisii and the Gola—who labored tirelessly and gave sacrificially to build structures that would stand as monuments to their faith and history for centuries. There was another sound—the sound of weeping.

The Gola were rebuilding the *Beit haMikdash*—the temple that was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army some 70 years earlier.¹ The ones who remembered the original *Beit haMikdash* wept as the new foundation was laid because the new building seemed insignificant by comparison to the original.² They were faced with a choice: dwell on what was lost or get to work rebuilding. That was the admonition of the prophet Haggai: “Take courage, all you people of the land . . . and get to work. . . The glory of this new house will surpass that of the old.”³ And so, the exiles—the Gola—got to work.

It took over twenty years to complete what became known as Zerubbabel’s Temple or the Second Temple.⁴ Sheshbazzar started the project. Cyrus, King of Persia, entrusted Sheshbazzar with transporting the surviving artifacts from the *Beit haMikdash* and leading the first group of the Gola as they returned to the land of Israel.⁵ Sheshbazzar is credited with laying the foundation of the Second Temple, but then building stopped due to interference from the people who had moved into the ruins of Jerusalem during the diaspora.⁶ Also, it was more than a little difficult to convince people to work on a building project when they were trying to rebuild their own lives.

Zerubbabel took over.⁷ He saw the unfinished building and understood what its completion would mean to the rebuilding nation, and he got to work.⁸ But, unlike Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel had help—the religious leader Joshua ben Jehozadak, Ezra and Nehemiah, who took up construction as a second career and led the rebuild of the Second Temple and reconstruction of the walls surrounding the city of Jerusalem, and Haggai and Zechariah, whose strong voices motivated professionals and laypeople alike to join the building efforts.⁹ Within 5 years, the Second Temple—the *Beit haMikdash hasSeni* (“Second House of the Sanctum”)—was completed.¹⁰ It stood in place for the next 420 years and was essential to preserving the nation’s cultural uniqueness and history.¹¹

The completion of the *Beit haMikdash hasSeni* was not the end. It never is. Anything worth building is also worth preserving. That is the next chapter.

About 340 years after the Second Temple was completed, it found itself under attack. By then, the Persian Empire had been conquered by the Greeks, and Antiochus IV Epiphanes was in charge of a very large, and very powerful, army.¹² Antiochus IV Epiphanes was a person with an unrelenting commitment to instilling Hellenistic culture and beliefs wherever the Greek empire expanded, including Palestine.¹³ To Antiochus IV Epiphanes, that meant forbidding the Jewish people from practicing their religion and then publicly desecrating the Second Temple that had been the center of Jewish faith and culture for centuries.¹⁴ It meant extinguishing the fire that had been burning on the Menorah standing inside the temple for centuries.¹⁵

It was not long before the people resisted—led by Mattathias and his five sons.¹⁶ When Mattathias died a year later, his son, Judah Maccabee (“the Hammer”) took charge, and after two years, Judah and his followers managed to take back Jerusalem and restore the Second Temple.¹⁷ Most are familiar with this story as it is part of the origin of the celebration of Hanukkah.

It is a celebration of a miracle—a miracle in which the Menorah was re-lit and then remained lit for 8 days, even though there was only enough oil for 1 day. It is also a celebration of the preservation of the building that was rebuilt by the Gola centuries ago and the history and culture that continues to be built even to this day—even under the most

dire of circumstances.

By the time of Jesus almost 2 centuries later, it was called the Feast of Dedication, and it was celebrated, despite Roman occupation at the time.¹⁸ During the Holocaust, some fashioned Menorahs out of scraps of wood and bullet cartridges which they found in the concentration camps.¹⁹ At the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, some made candles out of the scraps of what little food they had and wicks from their threadbare clothes.²⁰ They whispered the Hanukkah blessings and gave thanks even in the darkest circumstances.²¹ Some things are worth preserving and passing on.

This year, my Firm turned 90 years old. Our origin story is not quite as dramatic as that of the *Beit haMikdash hasSeni* or the celebration of Hanukkah, but it too is a story of rebuilding and preservation. Our Firm was founded by two lawyers, Mr. M.W. Egerton, Sr. and Mr. Joseph A. McAfee, during very dark times—the early years of the Great Depression.

At the time, Mr. Egerton and Mr. McAfee had one focus: reorganizing the East Tennessee National Bank, one of the thousands of banks that failed after the stock market crash of 1929. Whether you are rebuilding a city or rebuilding a bank, you cannot do it from afar. Presence matters. Mr. Egerton and Mr. McAfee understood this and set up the Firm an office in the bank’s building. Then, they got to work. Soon, the bank’s charter was reinstated, and Park National Bank emerged as the largest bank in Knoxville. That foundation was laid 90 years ago, and dozens of attorneys have built upon that foundation and preserved this legacy for the next generation of lawyers. That is our Firm’s story.

But, that very well could be the story of any lawyer because our profession builds upon the foundations laid by other lawyers. 2022 is almost over, but it is not too late to do something to make the legal profession just a little bit better.

¹ AICE, The Jewish Temples: The Babylonian Exile (597-538 BCE), <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-babylonian-exile>; see also AICE, The Jewish Temples: The First Temple – Solomon’s Temple, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-first-temple-solomon-s-temple>.

² Ezra 3:12-13 (CJB).

³ Haggai 2:4, 9 (CJB).

⁴ Lawrence H. Schiffman, Ancient Israel: Building the Second Temple, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/second-temple/>, last visited Nov. 9, 2022.

⁵ *Id.*; see also Emil G. Hirsch, Schulim Ochser, Sheshbazzar Jewish Encyclopedia, <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13567-sheshbazzar>, last visited Nov. 9, 2022.

⁶ Chabad.org, Tisha B’Av and the 3 Weeks, The Second Temple is Built, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/144773/jewish/The-Second-Temple-is-Built.htm, last visited Nov. 9, 2022.

⁷ Lawrence H. Schiffman, Palestine under Persian Rule II, My Jewish Learning, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/palestine-under-persian-rule-ii/>, last visited Nov. 9, 2022.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*; see also Chabad.org, *supra* n.6.

¹⁰ Schiffman, *supra* n. 4.

¹¹ Chabad.org, *supra* n.6.

¹² Hans Volkman, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Encyclopedia Britannica, available at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Antiochus-IV-Epiphanes>.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ History.com, Hanukkah, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Antiochus-IV-Epiphanes>, last visited Nov. 9, 2022.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ See John 10:22-23.

¹⁹ Natasha Frost, Amid the Holocaust’s Horrors, Many Jews Found Ways to Mark Hanukkah, History.com (Dec. 20, 2019), <https://www.history.com/news/holocaust-hanukkah-concentration-camps-jews>, last visited Nov. 9, 2022.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*