The organizers of the exhibition are to be congratulated on the beautiful display of the models of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle Court, Solomon’s Temple, Herod’s Temple and the Herodian Temple Mount, which were commissioned by the late Ben Adelman, chairman of the American Friends of the Israel Exploration Society. These models were designed by the author and beautifully crafted by the York Modelmaking and Display Company.

My involvement with model making began with an invitation by the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem to make a model of the gateway of Gezer. Avraham Biran asked William Dever to give me some photographs and plans and that is how I started designing models. Soon after that the Israel Museum ordered a model of the Middle Bronze Age gateway in Tel Dan. On completion of the reconstruction of the Herodian villas in the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem under my supervision, Nahman Avigad also asked me to design a model of the Palatial Mansion. Making models forced me to look into problems which are usually ignored in archaeology: How high was the building? What kind of roof did it have? Where were the windows located and how large were they, etc. Avigad wrote about the model of the Palatial Mansion: “The model attempts to give an answer to some questions which the visitor may not have thought of, such as, for instance, the appearance of the building’s exterior and the nature of its architectural composition. By incorporating answers to these questions in the model, its designer, Leen Ritmeyer, took upon himself a grave risk, but without a constructive imagination no solutions can be offered to problems for which no tangible data are available”. Because of his very cautious nature, Avigad truly thought this a “grave risk”, but realized that one had to make informed guesses.
Any responsible reconstruction should take the following criteria into consideration:

- the making of accurate plans, elevations and sections of the site
- the survey of all the fallen or destroyed remains
- the study of any prior excavation or research
- the study of any available ancient sources
- the study of comparative architectural styles.

There is, however, a vast difference between making reconstruction drawings and designing models. The difference is that with a reconstruction drawing one can choose the angle from which to show a building and hide those parts of the building one is unfamiliar with because they have not been excavated or insufficiently researched. Reconstruction proposals are often expressed in ‘dotted lines’ on plans and other drawings, but, obviously, this modus operandi does not work for model making.

An example of ‘hiding’ information is my well-known reconstruction drawing of the Temple Mount (Fig. 1), which I made at the conclusion of Benjamin Mazar’s excavations to the west and south of the Temple Mount. The drawing shows the southwest corner in the foreground. This angle was deliberately chosen, as it shows the result of the excavations, which were carried out on either side of this corner. Neither the exterior of the Northern nor of the Eastern Walls can be seen. This was convenient, as these were the most problematic to reconstruct. The commissioning of the model of Herod’s Temple Mount by the late Benjamin Adelman got us out of this restricted focus. The “awkward” areas had to be brought out of the shadows and studied rigorously. To give an example of the academic and creative process that was involved in the making of the model of Herod’s Temple Mount (Fig. 2), we will examine the Eastern Wall, which I subsequently researched in depth.

The Masonry of the Eastern Wall

The Eastern Wall is 1530 ft. long and has three different types of masonry: Herodian, Hasmonean and Iron Age. The Herodian masonry has margins and flat, finely executed bosses, but there is also unfinished Herodian masonry with rough, unfinished bosses.