

# GOING DEEPER

ACTS Israel Tour 2018

## THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

### The Hills of Jerusalem

The Old City of Jerusalem sits on top of a limestone plateau consisting of four hills and three valleys with larger hills on either side. The Mount of Olives—separated from the city by the steep Valley of Jehoshaphat—stands above the city to the west. The Hinnom Valley divides the city from the Judean hills on the east, and the city itself is bisected by the Tyropoeon Valley in the centre.

Now that you have seen this, it will not surprise you to discover that going almost anywhere in the Old City requires climbing either up or down.

*The hills of Jerusalem*

### The Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron Valley)

In Hebrew Jehoshaphat means “Jehovah has judged.” Thus the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the valley of God’s judgment. You can find this in Joel’s prophecy of what is to happen in the end of time.

*‘Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your  
young men will see visions.*

*In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike. And I  
will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth— blood and fire and columns of  
smoke. The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great  
and terrible day of the LORD arrives. But everyone who calls on the name of the  
LORD will be saved, for some on Mount Zion in Jerusalem will escape, just as the*

*LORD has said. These will be among the survivors whom the LORD has called.*

*‘At the time of those events,’ says the LORD, ‘when I restore the prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem, **I will gather the armies of the world into the valley of Jehoshaphat.** There I will judge them for harming my people, my special possession, for scattering my people among the nations, and for dividing up my land. (Joel 2:28 – 3:2)*

## **The Hinnom Valley (Gehenna)**

The Hinnom Valley became the site of Jerusalem’s garbage dump. It takes no imagination to understand that it looked ugly, smelled worse, and in ancient days, under the hot Middle Eastern sun, it was an indescribably horrible place. It is not surprising, then, that the Hinnom Valley became associated with death and evil. The idolatrous Kings of Judah, in the waning days of that kingdom, even committed human sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom.

*They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin. (Jeremiah 32:35).*

The Valley of Hinnom in the New Testament was called Gehenna, a place of death, decay, and burning. Because of this the Hinnom Valley became a reference to Hell.

*‘Dear friends, don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you after that. But I’ll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill you and then throw you into hell. Yes, he’s the one to fear.*

Today, the gate through the Walls of Jerusalem that leads most directly to the Hinnom Valley is called “The Dung Gate.” No further explanation of the purpose of that gate is needed.

It has always seemed significant to me that as you stand on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Old City, the Valley of Jehoshaphat runs across the scene and on into the Valley of Hinnom. God’s judgment flows into Hell itself.

## **The Tyropoeon Valley (The Western Wall)**

The Tyropoeon Valley, in modern times, has been substantially filled, and so it is not as easily seen. However, when we visit the Western Wall of the Temple we will be standing in the Tyropoeon Valley, right in the middle of the Old City. It no longer seems much like a Valley, but you will notice that at the rear of the Western Wall Plaza, opposite the wall, there are steep steps that take people up onto a hill. That hill is Mount Zion.

## **Mount Zion and the City of David**

References to Mount Zion can be confusing because during the time of the prophetic books Zion was increasingly used to refer either to Jerusalem as a whole or to the Temple Mount.

Before that, however, Mount Zion referred to the southeastern hill of Jerusalem. It was this area called Mount Zion that David conquered with his successful attack against the Jebusite city of Jerus.

*And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, ‘You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off’—thinking, ‘David cannot come in here.’ Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David. (2 Samuel 5:6-7).*

*Aerial view with valleys of Jehoshaphat (Kidron) and Hinnom marked*

In modern times the ancient City of David is being rediscovered and excavated. We will visit the City of David archeological park.

*Entrance to the City of David*

## **King Herod the Great’s Dream City**

David was a builder but the greatest builder of Jerusalem ever was King Herod the Great. He expanded and developed Jerusalem into the most prestigious city in that region of the world.

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## **Mount Moriah and the Foundation Stone**

The religious significance of Mount Moriah in the various traditions can hardly be overstated.



*The Dome of the Rock*

The “rock” under the golden Dome of the Rock you see today, is the peak of Mount Moriah and in Jewish tradition is referred to as the “Foundation Stone.”

Jewish tradition holds that the Foundation Stone is the first rock from which the rest of the earth was created, and it was on the Foundation Stone that God gathered the earth from which He created Adam. Mount Moriah is the place where God tested Abram's faith.

*Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. 'Abraham!' God called. 'Yes,' he replied. 'Here I am.' 'Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.'*

The stone later became the foundation stone for the Temple. Most Jewish tradition places the location of the Holy of Holies directly over the Foundation Stone. It is said that at the Foundation Stone the divine presence is most fully connected to earth.

#### *Inside the Dome of the Rock*

In Muslim tradition, the Foundation Stone is the place where Muhammad prayed with Abraham, Moses and other Prophets before he was taken by the angel Gabriel on a night-time journey to meet Allah. This makes the site the second holiest site in Islam. Today only Muslims are allowed to enter the Dome of the Rock.

From a Christian perspective Mount Moriah is the site of the Temple where Jesus taught. It is where sacrifices for sin were made.

With all this information you can understand why Jerusalem has been the focus of so many religious conflicts, and no location in Jerusalem has been more fought over than the peak of Mount Moriah.

It is quite fitting, then, that even today whenever you look out over Jerusalem, the feature that grabs all out attention is the gold dome of the rock. Although the dome itself is a Muslim construction, the site has great significance for all of the Abrahamic faiths.

Dome of the Rock from the Mount of Olives. [Click to View Larger](#)

## **The Old City and Modern Jerusalem**

Jerusalem has grown, been destroyed, rebuilt, and expanded again countless times over the centuries. Today, modern Jerusalem is a sprawling city with business districts, suburbs, parks, malls, and freeways. The Old City, however, remains its most prominent and recognizable feature. The old hills and valleys continue to define its features.

*Some locations in Jerusalem*

## **The Old City Walls**

The Old City is surrounded by 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) of walls dating from 1537, constructed on order of Sultan Suleiman of the Ottoman Empire. On average the walls are about 12 meters (39.37 feet) high and 2.5 meters (8.2 feet) thick.

*The walls of Jerusalem*

## **The Old City Gates and Map**

The walls contain 34 watchtowers and seven main gates open for traffic, with two minor gates reopened by archaeologists.

# JERUSALEM OLD CITY

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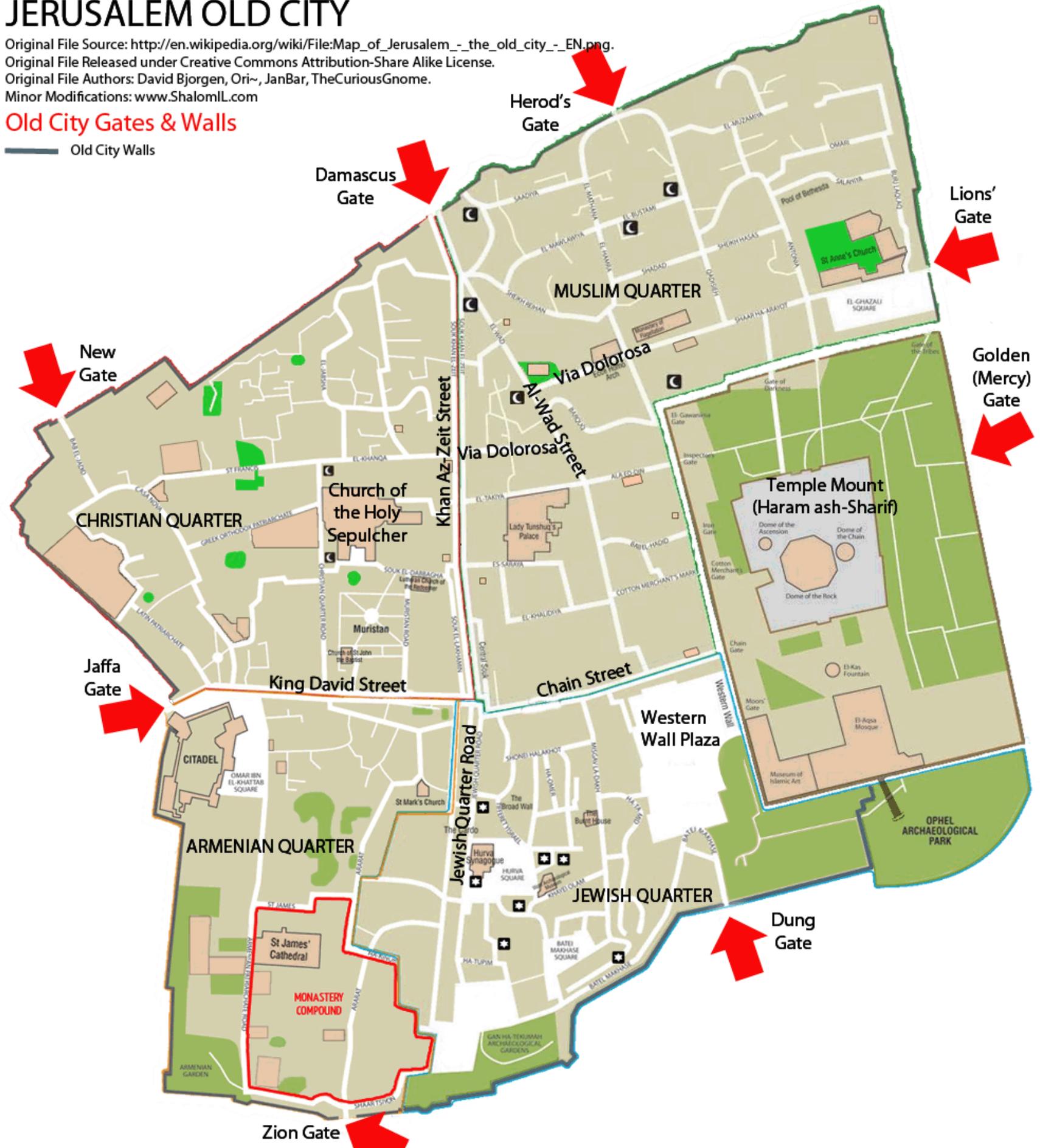
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## Old City Gates & Walls

— Old City Walls



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The Old City is divided into “quarters,” each associated with different religious grouping: Christian Quarter, Muslim Quarter, Jewish Quarter, and Armenian Quarter.

In the centre of the Christian Quarter is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the most

likely site of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. In the Jewish Quarter is the Western Wall Plaza, the location of the storied “Wailing Wall,” more often referred to today at the Kotel (Hebrew: Wall). On the right of the diagram is the massive area called by Jews the “Temple Mount” and by Muslims the “Noble Sanctuary” (Haram ash-Sharif).

## **Bethany, the Mount of Olives and the Temple**

The gospel story of Jesus in Jerusalem has several geographic anchor points. On the west of the Mount of Olives is Bethany, the village outside of Jerusalem where Jesus often stayed and rested, a place of safety for Him and where he raised Lazarus from the dead.

When he would walk from Bethany to Jerusalem, the path takes you over the Mount of Olives, down through the area called the Garden of Gethsemane (“Garden of the Olive Press”), across the Kidron Valley, and up into Jerusalem and the Temple courts.

As a side note, once you see what this walk involves, you’ll be convinced that to make the trip on a regular basis Jesus would have been quite fit.

As Jesus reached the top of the Mount of Olives, he would have seen the city of Jerusalem stretched out before his eyes, just as we will today.

*Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives*

On one famous occasion as He walked down the Mount of Olives, looking over the city, Jesus thought of the destruction that was soon to come and was overcome with grief.

*And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.’”*

## **The Temple Mount and the Temple**

Visit [this page](#) for more detail on the Temple and the Temple Mount.

## **Timeline for Israel**

The land of Israel has transformed through many kingdoms over thousands of years. Here is a brief timeline of some of those kingdoms.

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