

PILGRIMAGE IN THE HOLY LAND: ISRAEL
CHAPTER 10 – Temple Mount – Church of St. Anne – Pool of Bethesda

City of Jerusalem, Temple Mount

Temple Mount as the place where God chose the Divine Presence to rest (Isa 8:18) – “LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion”
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_Mount

Marian: [explaining the itinerary of the day] “First we’ll visit the Temple Mount. Then we’ll go to a sing-a-long church. It’s a place where you will see – it’s just an amazing feeling – it’s in the area where they discovered the Pool of Bethesda. And that’s what we’re doing in the Old City. Then we begin the new city – I’ll do a little bit of driving through the new city to give you an idea of downtown Jerusalem, what’s going on in the city, where shopping is actually done (chuckle from the women). And then we’re going to go to the Israel Museum, and lastly, the Holocaust Museum.

“Now, these are museums, so if anybody feels that they’d rather go shopping, one option could be like this: when we get to the Israel Museum, where we’ll see the Dead Sea scrolls and the model of Jerusalem, I would advise those are worth seeing. You know, you don’t get to see the Dead Sea scrolls every single day. They’ve had such an impact. And the model of Jerusalem will help you bring things together, to see the city of Jerusalem as it was in the time of YOSHUA. What we’re trying to do is understand the country in the time of YOSHUA – I do my best to bring that across – what the countryside was like, what the city was like, what the ruling Roman party was like, and what his other Jewish fellows were like.

“I also am very fascinated by a thought, which I want to share with you: what was the Bible – or the scrolls, or the Scriptures – that YOSHUA was reading? Could it possibly be that they were different from our Scripture today? It’s a question that absorbs me, and I share a little of that when we get to the Dead Sea scrolls.

“Then we’re going to the memorial for the six million. Now, for some of you people that’s very important, and for the others – they’ve been to the Washington one, and so they are not so interested. I respect everybody’s opinion, because everybody knows what’s good for him. So, at that point, when we leave the Israel Museum for Yad VaShem, some people can – if they want – take a taxi to the Old City. And then, I would really hope you’ll be with us for communion at four o’clock in the Garden Tomb, because the Garden Tomb is a very special experience.

“The other possibility is for our driver Moses to take people back to the Old City – if he’s able to do that. I’ll ask him that question if there are more than half of you that are wanting to skip the Holocaust Museum.

“Now, the Garden Tomb was discovered in the 1880s by General Gordon, and he said emphatically: ‘We’re not building a church – we’re Protestants, of course – we’re not building a church. We’re leaving it as a garden. And it is a garden. No matter how many people are there, you never get the feeling that you’re overcrowded. It’s a wonderful experience. I have the communion cups. And we’ve been together for so long in the Holy Land, and I think that’s going to be one of the places where – if we don’t sing ‘On Holy Ground,’ which I have been waiting for, for the last eight days . . .”

Paul: (starts singing, ‘we are standing on holy ground’) “All right, you got it!”

Marian: “I think that will be a wonderful place to sing ‘On Holy Ground.’ You can practice now.”

Paul (to Stan): “You know that one?”

Stan: “I think so.”

**Paul (singing): “We are standing on holy ground
For I know that there are angels all around
Let us praise Jesus now
For we are standing in His presence on holy ground.”**

[We arrive at the Dung Gate, which we enter, and then we form a long queue to go through the security check-point in order to go to the Temple Mount.]



Marian: “. . . The second temple, also on top of a hill with sloping sides. Along comes King Herod, and he says, ‘I’m going to build you a beautiful new temple.’ And the people tell him, ‘If you touch the temple, we kill you!’ And why would that be because...”

Kim: “God said so.”

Marian: “Because you cannot change the size of the temple. Those dimensions are sacred: it’s 20 cubits like this (demonstrating with her hands), 30 cubits high, and 60 cubits long. So that’s God-given. So now Herod has a problem. He says, ‘OK, I cannot possibly change the size of the temple. I cannot possibly leave it the way it is. What do I do?’ Well, nothing can stop him from enlarging the area around the temple. So, the temple is up here. He builds a wall to the south, a wall to the east, a wall to the north, and a wall to the west. In other words, he encases the hill with a box. Get that? That was easy, right? (response, ‘yep’) Then, on that box he builds a platform. Can you imagine now, putting an enormous esplanade around the temple. How does he do it? First of all, he has to take into account that there is at least 50 meters between the top of the hill and the valley below. So his wall has to be 50 meters high. 50 meter high walls with an enormous platform on top. So, if I have a mathematician, you can give me the size: if we have 500 meters east, 500 meters, 450 meters south, 450 meters north – in between is the esplanade. [The trapezium shaped platform measures 488 m along the west, 470 m along the east, 315 m along the north and 280 m along the south, giving a total area of approximately 150,000 m² (37 acres).] Can you imagine? [roughly, perimeter = 1,900 meters for the entire wall (box), and . . .

“So, only when we come up to Temple Mount do we get some idea of the size that Herod was dealing with when he built this enormous structure around. So, the structure he built was a box around the hill. He also built inside the box by having arches, which supported platforms, which supported arches, which supported platforms. So slowly they built up the level inside. That would actually mean – and you may have noticed it when they were showing you the model in the rabbinical tunnels – you have one very large platform – you remember that one? When they used that model, did you notice that the temple came with a small platform? That platform was the highest part of the hill. And what Herod built is just one or two meters below that, which was his platform for the multitude of people.

“Remember in the film it says, up to a certain staircase everybody can go, and only that staircase was for the Jewish people? Well, I’m going to be able today to show you where that staircase was. Also, what I’m going to show you today – which is well worth waiting for – is where actual esplanade of the temple always

had been, and what was added on by Herod. Now, why am I making a big point of this? Because, what's so confusing for all of you is: Why is everybody praying at the Western Wall when you have Temple Mount? You could be just going up to Temple Mount. Yeh? (response, 'right') So, could we go up to Temple Mount? (response, 'no, it's Muslim') No, not because it's Muslim – but I understand what you're saying.

“Remember all our purity rituals – and everything? So, number one problem is purity. You could not go to the temple if you were not purified. And if you had come into contact – as a priest – with a dead body, you had to sacrifice a red bull, and then put the ashes over you; but you can't sacrifice the bull if you don't have the temple. So a lot of people are ritually unclean. So that would be number one for a lot of religious people. Number two: We don't know – this is the really, really important one – we don't know where the Holy of Holies was. The whole temple was completely destroyed. Now, you know that the Holy of Holies was so sacred, that only the high priest could go in, and only once a year. It was so sacred, that he wore a sash – an enormous belt – and that actually went outside the Holy of Holies. So, if he didn't come out, he could be pulled out. But nobody could go in to get him out – that's how sacred the Holy of Holies is.

“The Holy of Holies is where the Spirit of God rests. However, because we don't know where the Holy of Holies was, people who do not want to desecrate it don't go up to Temple Mount. And you can understand that, I'm sure. So the next best thing for them is praying at the Western Wall. That's as close as possible to the Holy of Holies. This is the most important – more important than anything else – we don't want to desecrate the Holy of Holies. Can you imagine what that means for a religious person? Maybe by mistake, he is treading on the Holy of Holies. He doesn't want to do that. So for him, it's preferable not to go up there at all.

“That means – that in 1967, when all of this was conquered, and just above us is the Jewish Quarter, which has been rebuilt as you can see it from here – there was a decision made not to go to Temple Mount. And the keys of Temple Mount were given back to the Muslims. A few years ago, we realized that's a mistake. But then the rabbis began to say, 'Of course, the temple was the highest part.' We don't know where. But then we have the low platform. Right? So at least we can go up to the low platform and make our presence felt there. And that is where the problem stands today.

“Today, religious people want to go up on the mountain and pray. That's very worrying for the Muslims. Christians, of course, want to go to the eastern gate, which is where I'm going to be taking you. And if you pray at the eastern gate, that's very worrying for the Muslims. And so we have a very delicate

situation, which is why you can't bring Bibles. And that's why I wanted you to come with as little as possible, so that there is nothing suspicious in your bag. Because if there is anything in the bag, like a Bible, it gets taken away.

“Now I just want to finish up – I promised you I was going to speak here and not waste our time – why Mohammed would go up to heaven from here. The guy is born in Mecca, he dies in Medina – what on earth is he doing going up to heaven from here? And the horse with the head of a woman – we'll accept that – but now let's try and find out what was really going on. The Muslim religion is a continuation of Jewish and Christian religions. There is nobody in the Old or New Testament that isn't mentioned in the Koran, the Bible of the Muslims. Most of their laws are similar to the Jewish and Christian religions. When you go in a mosque, what do you do? You take off your shoes. Where does that come from? (response, 'Moses') Moses and the burning bush on Mount Sinai – 'take off your shoes, the land upon which you are standing is holy.' (Exodus 3:5) It goes straight over to the Muslim religion. To have no kind of statue – straight from the Jewish religion. Purification rites before you go in the mosque; you have to wash any part of the body that you are going to touch during prayer, which actually means behind the ears as well. They touch the ears during prayer, which is where that expression came from – never mind, don't write that down. (laughter) So, most of the laws that we see the Muslims performing is easy to see coming from Jewish and Christian religions. Moses is sacred, Jesus is sacred.

“The Muslim religion knows that this is where the Spirit of God rests. When we talk about the temple, I've said it several times – and I say it again to stress it – it makes no difference whether the temple is there or not. God said, 'This is where I want to put my name,' and therefore, we understand and believe that this is where the Spirit of God rests. (2 Chronicles 33:7 – “...In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever.” [See also 2 Kings 23:27]

For the Lord has chosen Zion;

He has desired it for His dwelling place.

This is My resting place forever;

Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. Psalm 132:13-14

“The Muslims know it. And so they make this the site where Mohammed goes up to heaven. So you have Mohammed speaking to God from the exact site where God rests. See, he can't go up from Mecca, because God is not resting there. He can't go up from Medina – God is not resting there.

Someone points out that a guard is standing behind Marian, listening to what she's saying.

“Yes, there’s guards who come around and listen to what the guides are saying.” Marian politely smiles at the guard and acknowledges his presence.

“And what we wanted to make really clear was that this would be a sacred site if the Muslim religion is a continuation of the Jewish and Christian religions – it has to have the same sites that are sacred. In the Jewish religion, of course, this is sacred. And you may remember that the room of the Last Supper is a mosque. And the Tomb of David had originally been a mosque. And just, by the way, if you go into India or any of these countries that have been overtaken by Muslim rule, you find that even Hindu temples have become mosques. And in many places in the world, they simply take the place that was a church – if you go to Damascus, you’ll see a church that has become a mosque – and this is all over the world.”



A view of the Western wall – with the separate sections for men (left) and women (right) from the ramp leading to the Temple Mount.

[We finally walk through the security check-point and up the temporary covered walkway (Mugrabi bridge). This is where I almost lose Stan – he walks ahead of me, without watching; I had stopped to take a picture of the Western Wall from the elevated walkway. I called out and saw that Stan was up ahead. Luckily, I spotted him and was able to catch up with him, preventing him from following another group. Then we enter the Moors’ (or Mugrabi) Gate and see the Temple Mount.]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mugrabi_Gate

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mughrabi-Bridge> [The Mughrabi Bridge is a wooden

bridge connecting the Western Wall plaza with the Mughrabi Gate of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The "temporary" bridge was still standing at the end of 2011, when the city engineer of Jerusalem issued an order to close the structure because it was not safe. As of February 2012, work to make the bridge safe again is in progress.]



Marian: “The platform was added on by Herod. Below us is empty – there’s nothing. The mountain is over there (points to the mosque area, where Mount Moriah is). This is the platform supported by the walls, and below us is arch on arch so that you could have a platform here. OK? Is it getting clearer?” (response, ‘yes’)

Ken: “There’s all kinds of tunnels under there?”

Marian: “Exactly.”

Ken: “Who is allowed to go under there?”

Marian: “I have been a guide a long time, so I’ve been down there. We would go down here – it used to be called the stables of Solomon. The Crusaders used that as stables in the enormous archways built by Herod. Remember the triple gate? When you came in the triple gate you came up here, and the temple stood opposite you. We can appreciate it, because you see today, as you come here – you suddenly have this.

“Now think – in the time of Herod, you went through a 70 meter long dark tunnel, and suddenly you came out opposite the temple. By that time, you were so happy to see daylight, that you didn’t care what side the temple was. Which is why – remember – we had a very small discussion about where the porticos were. The porticos were where the moneychangers were, because – in the Mishnah Middot, which is a Jewish book that gives the sizes [http://orion.it.luc.edu/~avande1/jerusalem/sources/middot.htm], they say the porticos are there, and you would go out and then go through the porticos. But Josephus tells us the porticos are here (where we entered the Temple Mount, to the left or west of the El Aqsa mosque). And it’s there that people would still be changing money – it’s not that changing money was a problem. It’s not. You had to change money to come up on the temple, because money that was being used by the Roman world had the face of Caesar on it. And the Jewish coins didn’t have faces, so you couldn’t come on Temple Mount with a coin that had a face on it. So you had to have moneychangers.

“It was everything about what was going on. It was the fact that priests were living in houses 1,000 square meters, when ordinary people were living in homes 36 square meters. And when priests were living in 1,000 square meters, it was buildings three stories high, like we saw in the house of Caiaphas, with storerooms and places for servants and the upper living quarters. If your priests are living – and I don’t make any connotation of something today – but if your priests are living in houses of 1,000 square meters, and the rest of the people are poor, something is very wrong with the priesthood. That is why Yohanan is kicking over the moneychangers’ tables, and that is why the priestly families want to get rid of him. But they will not be able to, if the Romans don’t want to. That’s the only point that I wanted to make with all this.

“Now, this building (El-Aqsa) was built by the Crusaders, who thought that that mosque was the temple of Solomon. The Templars, they’re the ones who look after the temple. They took off the moon – remember we said that if it’s a full moon, it’s very sacred – they took off the moon and put up a cross. And this became the temple of Solomon. The Templars had their horses below in stables, which were actually these arches built by King Herod. And they called them the stables of Solomon. Today, in that building that I was lucky enough to get into, is another mosque. Below this mosque is another mosque – you can find it on the internet – it’s called El-Aqsa al-Masjid, ‘the farthest mosque.’ So whatever evidence we had of a temple here, it’s gone by now.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Aqsa_Mosque [Jerusalem was captured by the Crusaders in 1099, during the First Crusade. Instead of destroying the mosque—which they called "Solomon's Temple"—the Crusaders used it as a royal palace

and as a stable for horses. In 1119, it was transformed into the headquarters for the Templar Knights. During this period, the mosque underwent some structural changes, including the expansion of its northern porch, and the addition of an apse and a dividing wall. A new cloister and church were also built at the site, along with various other structures.[16] The Templars constructed vaulted western and eastern annexes to the building; the western currently serves as the women's mosque and the eastern as the Islamic Museum]

“That’s the reason – when they’ve thrown away all the dirt – we have an archaeological excavation that sifts all the dirt that they’ve moved out when they built this mosque here. And we’re still sifting it. That’s all we can do. We cannot excavate here.

“So, you see, there are some problems. But my very good friend over there is Muslim, and when I came up you saw that we both prayed for peace – he and I – it’s much better for everyone.



View of the Dome of the Rock on the former Jewish Temple Mount.

“I think it was Ellen that came to me and said, ‘What’s all these study groups?’ Guys, ten years ago, there was not one single study group up here. But ten years ago, Jewish people decided they needed to come up and start praying at the Temple Mount – remember what I was telling you down there. In 1967, Moshe Dayan thought that that would be a good way to make peace – to give back the keys of the mosque to the Waqf, the people in charge of it. So he did that

immediately after 1967. And then they made this law that Jewish people can't come up here so as not to desecrate the temple. The temple was up there (pointing to the Dome of the Rock). You could come here (near the El-Aqsa mosque).

“This – the study groups – is all financed by one of the big countries that has oil. I'm not mentioning any names. But one of the big countries that has oil is financing these study groups. If you don't have a job, you can come here, sit at one of those places, and you're going to get financial aid.”

Ellen: “Do they have to stand in those long lines to get up here every day?”

Marian: “No, they don't. They have another twelve doors to come in. We're going to go out of one of the. They don't have any security check to come in. They're not worried, because the people who worry them is us. We may come in and preach up here – I don't preach, do I? (laughter) They may come up with a bomb.”



Kim: “Are there toilets up here?”

Marian: “You'll have to wait about fifteen minutes until we go down from here and get to the Church of St. Anne. OK? We mentioned the idea of ritual purity, to wash different parts of the body, but it's exciting to know that below us were enormous reservoirs of water. It's used today for the washing of the feet or any part of the body that you will touch before you go to prayer. But, in ancient times were enormous areas of water. Everything below us is empty. We know from

the enormous aqueduct that we went through – the Hasmonean area – that they were bringing enormous amounts of water to the temple. But we don't know that the Hasmoneans had more than just that part. What we know is what Herod built. We don't know what Herod destroyed from the Hasmoneans, cause Herod literally defaced them. They don't exist for Herod. So Herod covers the aqueduct – it's gone.

“We're going up to the area where the temple stood.”



Temple Mount -- The place where God chose to "put His name;" where Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice (Mt. Moriah, Gen 22); the site of both the First and Second Temples found in the Bible. Today it is occupied by the Dome of The Rock Mosque. [walk up stairs, take pictures of the 'qanatir,' the free-standing arcade, which looks like an archway with four pillars or columns]



Wilfred: “How old is the stairway?” (flight of steps)

Marian: “Very old.”

[Salesman comes up to sell pictures of the Dome of the Rock mosque]

Marian: “If you want postcards of the mosque inside, this is two dollars. You have a few more than usual of the mosque inside.

“I would like to just point you in the direction over there (points out into the Old City, the Christian Quarter). You can see a large gray dome. And a little to the left you can both gray domes of the Holy Sepulcher, and you see a large cross on top.

“Here you have the mosque (Dome of the Rock), and in a moment I will show you the spire of the Ascension (chapel).”

Hawker: “Anybody want postcards?”

Marian: “Into the mosque can go only Muslims. So, notice – Church of the Holy Sepulcher - OK, what I want to show you is this.”

Kim: “Marian, you have to talk fast. I have to use the toilet.” (laughter)

Marian: “What’s the most important thing in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher? The resurrection – Jesus ascending into heaven. Notice now – a straight line between the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the mosque – it’s in a direct line. This means religious competition. Both of them are in a direct line with the Church of Ascension on the Mount of Olives. It’s one straight line. If you look at an aerial photograph of Jerusalem, you can’t miss it. It’s amazing.”

Steven: “Is it done on purpose?”

Marian: “Obviously, it’s done on purpose. [Walk closer to the mosque] Not by chance, gold and blue – the sun and the sky. You get an amazing view of the Mount of Olives from here. There’s an amazing view of the white dome of the synagogue in the Jewish Quarter. [Marian does not spend much time talking about the mosque, nor about the small Dome of the Chain building to the east of the large Dome of the Rock mosque.]



The Temple Mount is a vast rectangular esplanade in the southeastern part of the Old City. The platform was enlarged by Herod the Great. To the right of the platform is a Qanatir – a freestanding arcade. Each of the eight flights of steps up to the platform of the Dome of the Rock is topped by a qanatir. Some of the column capitals were recycled from Roman-era buildings.

“Our main goal right now is to go to see the eastern gate. From the eastern gate we will get to the church, where they have toilets. Hang on in there. (response, ‘yeh’)

Kevin: “Weak souls, here.”

Paul: “The spirit is willing, but the body can’t handle it.”

Kevin: “Yes, we know. The flesh is weak.”

Paul: “Worse than weak. It’s incontinent.”

Kevin: “Incontinent – that’s a good one.” (laughter)



One of the first and greatest achievements of Islamic architecture, the Dome of the Rock was built in AD 688-91 by the Omayyad caliph Abd el-Malik. Intended to proclaim the superiority of Islam and provide an Islamic focal point in the Holy City, the majestic structure now dominates Jerusalem and has become a symbol of the city. More a shrine than a mosque, the mathematically harmonious building echoes elements of Classical and Byzantine architecture, including the rotunda of the Holy Sepulcher.



The Dome of the Rock is located at the visual center of a platform known as the Temple Mount. It was constructed on the site of the Second Jewish Temple, which was destroyed during the Roman Siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE. In 637 CE, Jerusalem surrendered to the Rashidun Caliphate army during the Muslim conquest of Syria. The place became an Islamic shrine in AD 691 with the building of the Dome of the Rock. The Temple Mount in Arabic is known as “Haram esh-Sharif (“the Noble Sanctuary”)

A.C. Cresswell in his book Origin of the plan of the Dome of the Rock notes that those who built the shrine used the measurements of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The diameter of the dome of the shrine is 20.20m and its height 20.48m, while the diameter of the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is 20.90m and its height 21.05m. The structure is basically octagonal. It comprises a wooden dome, approximately 20 m in diameter, which is mounted on an elevated drum consisting of a circle of 16 piers and columns. Surrounding this circle is an octagonal arcade of 24 piers and columns. The outer side walls are made of porcelain and mirror the octagonal design. They each measure approximately 60 feet (18 m) wide and 36 feet (11 m) high. Both the dome and the exterior walls

contain many windows.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dome_of_the_Rock

Eastern Gate at Temple Mount

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Gate_\(Jerusalem\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Gate_(Jerusalem))

Marian: “So that gate (pointing to the eastern gate, sealed up) is in exactly the same place that it was 2,500 years ago. Above that, Herod built his gate; and above that, the Crusaders built their gate in the Crusader period. They would come in and go out – no problem. Then when the Muslims build it – they’re building on the Crusader gate, but they block the entrance. So that’s where we saw the blocked gate from the other side.

“When we go down – you see the stairs that go down to it – there is actually a girl’s school in there. A Muslim girl’s school.

Mabel: “So when was it blocked, what year?”

Marian: “Four hundred years ago, as they’re building the wall, they build that (school building), and they blocked the gate. They’re using a lot of the Crusader wall. So they’re building – they already got a gate there – they’re just blocking it. The Crusader gate was there, they’re using it, then blocking it.”

Dennis: “And the reason is . . .”

Marian: “Because they don’t want the Messiah to come – not for Jewish, and not for Christian. When the Messiah comes, that temple goes (pointing to mosque), because the temple of heaven will come down. And then – whoosh! – it’s finished. It’s over for them.”

Mabel: “If they believe that, why aren’t they afraid they might be doing something wrong?”

Marian: “They believe that because they say, ‘God gave half of his truth to the Jewish people, then God gave half of his truth to the Christian people. And finally, God gave his whole truth to the Muslim people.’ (response, ‘hmmm’) That is – Mohammed is using Jewish and Christian religions. That’s what I have been saying, what is sacred for Jewish and Christian is also sacred for Muslim. It’s not by chance he goes up to heaven from here – even though it’s a midnight journey, and Jerusalem is not mentioned; it would be understood, this is the temple and this is where he’s got to go up to heaven.”

Mabel: “Then they should have nothing to fear.”

Marian: “They should have nothing to fear.”

Mabel: “But they do.”

Marian: “Of course.”

Larry: “What is the so-called revelation that he had?”

Marian: “The revelation of Mohammed is totally amazing. The revelation cannot be explained. He’s a man living in the 7th century, and his words are poetic beyond belief, and nobody can quite understand who wrote what, and where. For them, it’s the Word of God, just like for us Scripture is the Word of God. These are questions that we’ll be also able to talk about later. Keep all the questions in mind, and in a few minutes we will find somewhere else – I actually wanted to give a minute, if it’s possible, if I’m allowed to, for a silent prayer here at the eastern gate. Is that going to be a problem for anyone? (response, ‘no’) One minute silent prayer – is that OK with everybody?”



At the Dome of the Chain. This small dome stands at the approximate center of the Hara mesh Sharif (Temple Mount), which, according to one theory, equated to the center of the world. The 13th-century tiling on the interior surpasses even that of the Dome of the Rock. The simple structure is supported on 17 columns. Some mystery exists over the purpose of the small dome beside the huge Dome of

the Rock. Its name derives from the legend that a chain once hung from the roof, and whoever told a lie while holding it would be struck dead by lightning. [Some say it was from this rock that Muhammed ascended to heaven on a horse with the angel Gabriel. But, this is a 12th century tradition developed from a dream that involved Muhammed’s night journey in the Koran in Sura 17:1:“Most glorified is the One who summoned His servant (Muhammad) during the night, from the Sacred Masjid (of Mecca) to the farthest place of prostration, whose surroundings we have blessed, in order to show him some of our signs. He is the Hearer, the Seer.” But, Jerusalem is not mentioned here, nor is Jerusalem ever mentioned anywhere in the Koran. The Dome of the Rock was built 200 years before this tradition began to be told.]

<http://www.generationword.com/jerusalem101/67-temple-mount-muslim.html>

[We spend a meditative moment or minute – something now called ‘silent prayer’ in the Christian world. But in actuality, it is a moment to reflect on the sacred place we are in, to meditate on its significance, and to hope in our hearts for peace]



A pilgrim: “Amen.” (we finish with a silent ‘amen’ in our hearts and minds)

Muslim man: “Hey, no praying.”

[Marian motions for us to be silent – there’s a Muslim guard above us, watching]

Paul (to Stan): “We can’t pray here.”

Stan: “I thought we were praying.”

Paul: “We weren’t praying. We were just meditating.”

Kevin: “They’re scared of their own shadows.”

Paul: “Yeh, that’s about it.”

Steven: “No tolerance, no acceptance.”

Paul: “Yeh, the tolerance thing is a difficult thing for them. Even the Mongols had more tolerance when they invaded Russia and Europe. ”

Wilfred: “When you studied or read the Koran, what are some of the main conclusions that you came to?”

[At the moment, we have to stand aside as a Muslim man in a tractor comes bearing down the road towards us. We step aside quickly.]

Stan: “Watch it.”

Paul: “Well, some of the main conclusions that I came to is – it’s copied. It’s like – let’s say – I’m doing a term paper, and I copy from someone, but I change the words around, and make it sound like it’s my own. That’s very easy to do. I can copy anybody’s stuff and make it sound like my own – I’d just say a few things differently, and changing maybe who’s the hero, and who’s not. In other words, it’s a man’s work, and it’s something that took some thought on how he’s going to do it to present the Arab people with their story. And my conclusion was: it was very chopped up. It’s like when I read the Book of Mormon, I thought it was very chopped up. And they tried to tell their story of the Israelites – the lost tribes – somehow coming to America. Very chopped up stories. And the Mormons trying to make their book look like the Old Testament. And Mohammed trying to . . .”

Wilfred: “Yeh, I know.”

Marian: “Now you understand (after the incident with the Muslim man and the tractor) – and he was sitting there, and I knew he was there, he’s always there. I should have actually shown you him sitting there as we were walking along so that you would know. Which is why I said, silent prayer. And then, silent prayer – what can they do? We’re not saying anything.”

Mabel: “Right.”

Tom: “Is silent prayer even a prayer to them?”

Marian: “It wasn’t until we said, Amen. Now, he’s trying to run us over, that’s for sure.”

Paul: “OK, let’s get out of here, quick.” (laughter)

[We start walking towards the exit, following Marian.]



View of the Mount of Olives from the Temple Mount.

Both Jewish and Muslim tradition says Mount Moriah is Eden. The book of Jubilees was written in the 100’s BC and was considered authoritative scripture by the Dead Sea community says, “The Garden of Eden was the Holy of Holies and the dwelling of the Lord.” (Jubilees 8:19)

<http://www.generationword.com/jerusalem101/67-temple-mount-muslim.html>



View of the Asbat Minaret on the northern side of the Temple Mount. A minaret (Turkish: minare from Arabic manârah, lighthouse) is a distinctive architectural feature of Islamic mosques, generally a tall spire with an onion-shaped or conical crown, usually either free standing or taller than any associated support structure. The basic form of a minaret includes a base, shaft, and gallery. Minarets provide a visual focal point and are used for the call to prayer.



The Gate of the Tribes, (Arabic: Bab al-Asbat), is located at the north-eastern corner of the Temple Mount.

**The Bab al-Asbat is located at the exact opposite corner from the Magrabi gate and is a natural exit after you have toured the Temple Mount because it leads to the area close to St. Anne's Church, The Pool of Bethesda and the Via Dolorosa. All of these sites are in the Muslim Quarter of the old city.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gates_of_the_Temple_Mount**

**Marian: "...and miraculously, the Crusaders found the house of Anne, the mother of Mary, here. That was a miracle.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Anne
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Anne's_Church,_Jerusalem [The church possesses amazing acoustics perfect for Gregorian chant, with sounds moving across the open space and up from the grotto. This makes the church a pilgrimage site for soloists and choirs]**

"We're really going in for a sing-a-long." [enter St. Anne's Church]



Leslie Burns, the Pastor Tom's wife, leads us in devotional singing in St. Anne's Church. The interior of the church had fantastic acoustics. She led us in the song "We are Standing on Holy Ground." Then I led the group in the singing of "Amazing Grace." The Crusader Church of St. Anne was built in 1140, on the remains of a Byzantine Church, to commemorate the traditional site of Mary's birthplace at the home of her parents Anne and Joachim.

Leslie: "We are going to sing, 'On Holy Ground,' we are standing in his presence on holy ground – if you'd like to sing, maybe some of us could stand up

here . . . [several people join Leslie in the acoustical center, under the dome]
“We are standing on holy ground (pause, wait for echo to resound all around)
And I know that there are angels all around (pause, echo travels)
Let us praise Jesus now (pause)
We are standing in his presence (pause)
On holy ground. (wait for echo to die down)
Leslie: “Let us sing that again.”
“We are standing on holy ground (pause, wait for echo to resound all around)
And I know that there are angels all around (pause, echo travels)
Let us praise Jesus now (pause)
We are standing in his presence (pause)
We are standing in his presence (pause)
We are standing in his presence (pause)
On holy ground.” (wait for echo to die down).

Paul: “Wow, that is amazing.”

Marian: “Would anyone else like to do a song here? We can listen to your fantastic voices.”

Paul: “How about if we try ‘Amazing Grace’ in here?”

Marian: “I was just going to say that. This is the best place for singing it. If you want to come up here, we’ll be singing with you. If you can lead us from this point – where the best echo is . . .”

Paul: “How about a group of us, five or six?”

Stan: “We got the words?”

Paul: “Amazing Grace, you know it.”

Stan: “I think I’ll probably remember it.”

[We go to the echo point with several others. I lead like a choir director, waving my hands when to sing, and when to pause.]

“Amazing grace (pause)
How sweet the sound (pause)
That saved a wretch like me (pause)
I once was lost (pause)
But now I’m found (pause)

Was blind, but now I see.” (prolong last word, echo continues as we listen in silence).

Leslie (continues singing and we all sing-a-long with her, pausing less frequently):

**“T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.
When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.”**

Paul: “Wow.”



Interior of the Basilica of St. Anne

[We walk out of the church with music ringing in our hearts, minds, and ears. It's an experience we won't soon forget – an experience of the sacred environment responding to the vibrations of our voices with an echo that brought joy and validation of the experience.]

Pool of Bethesda [The name of the pool is said to be derived from the Hebrew language and/or Aramaic language. beth hesda meaning either house of mercy or house of grace.]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pool_of_Bethesda

Marian: "...the enormous pool that was here 2,000 years ago. We're going to have a reading in a moment.

"We're at an area known as the Sheep's Gate. We're on the eastern side of the city. And the thing about the eastern side of the city is that over there is the desert (pointing to the east), where the Bedouin have their sheep and goats. So, when you would bring your sheep and goats to market, you would bring them to the eastern gate. This is Jerusalem in the time of Yohanna and the Pool of Bethesda was here (shows on diagram of the city) – it was outside, just outside the gate. If this is the city, and this is the eastern gate – this is just outside. OK? We'll have the reading now."

Pastor Tom: "It's easy for us, when we see these miracles, to be amazed – that's good. But Jesus tells us later, right at the end of John – actually, John tells us why Jesus did these miracles: this is John 20:30-31 –

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

"There are seven or eight miracles, like walking on the water, that are written in John. John says that Jesus did the miracles to show that he was truly the Messiah."

Wilfred does the second reading: "This is from John 5:1-9 – (International Standard Version)

1 "Later on, there was another festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem is a pool called Bethesda in Hebrew. It has five colonnades, 3 and under these a large number of sick people were lying—blind, lame, or paralyzed—waiting for the movement of the water. 4 At certain times an angel of the Lord would go down into the pool and stir up the water, and whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. 5 One particular man was there who had been ill for 38 years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" 7 The sick man answered

him, “Sir, I don't have anyone to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up. While I'm trying to get there, someone else steps down ahead of me.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!” 9 The man immediately became well, and he picked up his mat and started walking.”

Pastor Tom: “It is interesting, Jesus says to this guy who had been a cripple for thirty-eight years, ‘Do you want to be well.’ Duh!?! (laughter) It was obvious. I want to read on to show an appreciation of the miracle and why Jesus was here. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.”11 But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” 18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

“I want to close with this one thing – Apostle Paul was talking about the death of Christ, and he asked himself, ‘Why did Christ do these miracles? Why did Christ die? He wanted people to believe in him. And he talked about salvation, how he freed us from our sins. And in 2 Corinthians 5:14 he says: “For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” So it was not just to free us from our sins, he died for all so that we would live for him. Everything is leading up to the cross. This was so we, the people, would live as we were designed to live. And that’s the freedom we have in Christ.”

Marian: “So before I take you to see the excavations, which don’t look very exciting from here. And I have to get people excited over a pile of stones. (chuckle) What I try to do is explain my case. We hear a story of a man who needs to get into the pool when the waters are stirred. Now, the Bethesda pool – and we’re going to see it in a model – is actually two pools. Water was coming from the north – remember, the water is coming from the north and rushing down to the lower parts of the city. And here they’re capturing the water. Between the two pools is a kind of outlet which brought water to another area here. And every time the water left the two big pools and came into the small pool, as it flowed it stirred the water.

Now, people couldn't see that the pipe was bringing the water in, and the waters were getting stirred from that, and they said, 'It was an angel.' And they want to get in there when the waters are stirred, when they think the angel has appeared.

“So what's going on here is very much similar to people touching a rock and kissing this thing, and then bowing – you know – and lighting a candle. All these things that detract from what you're really supposed to be believing in, which is the grace of God. So, the reason I try to stress the name of this place – now, I will tell you what the name of this place means.

“In Hebrew, when you write the word for house, you write b-e-t-h (pronounced 'beit'). 'Beth' is house. But the name of this place is 'Hesda' – Beth-Hesda. Now, because the word combined has two h's – one next to the other in the English language – so one h falls. But people are used to reading 'beth' and then they miss that the other word is 'Hesda' – so they mispronounce the word, 'Bethesda.' Sorry, Wilfred.

“Hesda is a major word that is telling us what is happening here. If you don't get that word, you don't get what's happening here. You know that the beatitudes say, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall have mercy.' And you think – now, how do I work with that one? If you would realize that in Hebrew there are two different words for mercy, you would understand more what it was trying to say. Most probably, Yoshua would be using the two separate words as a play on the understanding of merciful. One merciful that we have in Hebrew is 'Rachamim' from 'Rechem' – the womb of a woman. And one form of merciful in Hebrew is like the motherly mercy for her children. The other form of mercy is 'Hesed' – if anyone knows a song 'Hesed v' Rachamim' we sing them together. We consider those two different kinds of mercy: 'Hesed' is the grace of God; 'hesed' means grace, mercy of God. This is the most important thing in the story.

“If this place is called 'House of the Grace of God,' then what Yoshua is teaching here is that the stirred up waters by the angel is not what's going to cure you. What's going to cure you is the grace of God. 'Beth-Hesda' – House of the Grace of God. So Yoshua says, 'Take up your bed and walk for you have been touched by the grace of God.' That's the only reason I bothered you about the name, 'hesed' grace. And that explains why this man – after 38 years – was suddenly blessed with this possibility of getting up and going. And the laws of what you can do on the Sabbath, or what you can't do on the Sabbath, is showing us once again that people were getting it wrong. They were just going on the wrong line, and Yoshua was trying to show them: 'Go with the grace of God.'

“If you are merciful, like a mother is merciful to her children, you will have the grace of God. That’s how you get it. You can get the grace of God when you’re merciful. Every one of the miracles that we see, we always see how Yeshua is saying, ‘You don’t need the ritual.’ And take – once again – the story in John chapter 2, of changing water into wine – and it’s so specific, that story. When you ask, how many saw that miracle? The miracle of the water and the wine – how many people actually witnessed water turned into wine? (response, ‘none’) No one. Except the servant. It’s not a miracle for the people to go, ‘wow.’ That’s a miracle written to remind us that all the washing of the hands – because the water used is for the sacred washing of the hands – all the washing of the hands is not going to save you. What’s going to save you is when the grace of God comes down on you. Washing the hands before the meal is not going to get you there. Getting into the pool when it is being stirred is not going to get you there. That is the message that I wanted to share with you.”

<http://blog.travelpod.com/travel-photo/abarnes/1/1226322000/pools-of-bethesda.jpg/tpod.html>



Sign: Bethesda. In the courtyard of the church of St. Anne is the Pool of Bethesda. Uncovered in 1871, the pool appears as a deep pit broken by a series of stone foundations and archways. Used as a rain catchment pool during Herod’s reign, it was part of a grandiose plan to augment Jerusalem’s meager water supply. It was here that Jesus miraculously cured the infirm man on the Sabbath.

At ruins of the Pool of Bethesda

John asks a question about the water.

Marian: “My guess is that the water was siphoned off into a pool over there. More or less where Asclepius had his pool. And people would go and dip in there. When the waters would rise here, you know, it’s coming from higher parts – and when it’s let out, that water flowing, suddenly there would be agitation. What you can see over there are the five porticos (translated as porches by older English bible translations).

[Asclepius is the god of medicine and healing in ancient Greek religion.]

“You can see that we have one pool below us. And actually, only four walls are left for us: this one here; this one in the middle, where the Byzantine church was built; and on the Byzantine church a Crusader church. That Crusader church was destroyed; this Crusader church (St. Anne’s) was left, and it was used as a madrasah, a school of teaching for the Muslims. They didn’t destroy that church. And I’m so grateful, because of the acoustics.



“So, it will become clearer – this is the enormous pools of Beth-Hesda, the enormous reserves of water. This would also be taken partly to the temple, partly for people. And we’re outside the city, and this would have been near the Sheep’s gate. The place is right, the pools are right; so we’re absolutely in the area. Where exactly their pool was, I guess it’s somewhere over there (points across the way). You see where the roof is over there, where it has the red color? (response, ‘yeh’) That’s what they had as a health resort, if you like. You know that the Greek world had a spa - literally. Do you want to run over and take a look at it?”

A lady: “We can see it from here.”

Marian: “OK. We’re going back to the bus, then.”



Under Herod the Great, the cisterns that lay outside the city walls were turned into curative baths. Ruins of a Roman temple, thought to have been to the god of medicine, can be seen here, as can those of a later Byzantine church built over the temple. Later it became the Pool of Bethesda.

[walk past the Lion’s gate, down the hill to the bus. The Lion’s gate was undergoing some work; scaffolding all around]



Presently the façade of the gate is undergoing repair. Notice the scaffolding. Suleyman the Magnificent built this gate in 1538. Its Arabic name, Bab Sitti Maryam (Gate of the Virgin Mary) refers to the Tomb of the Virgin in the nearby Valley of Jehoshaphat. The Hebrew name, Shaar ha-Arayot, or Lions' Gate, refers to the two emblematic lions on either side of the gateway.

“This is the Lion’s gate, also known as St. Stephen’s gate. According to tradition, this is where Stephen was stoned – the first martyr. So, it has two different names. It’s being repaired right now. This gate leads to the Via Dolorosa that we followed yesterday”.



Walking down the road from the Lion’s Gate. The Mount of Olives is in front of us.

[I have a discussion with Marian about the Maya calendar – and 2012 predictions of the end of the world – as we walk down to the bus. We both agree that the cyclical calendar was ending one round and starting another.]