



## **Mount Moriah - the Temple Mount**

Mount Moriah, also referred to as the Temple Mount. This is the site that G-d selected for the establishment of the Holy Temple. According to tradition, the creation of the world

began in this spot. Adam - the first man - was also created here and later brought his offering in this same location. It was here on Mount Moriah that our forefather Abraham

was commanded by G-d to bind his son Isaac. A generation later, Jacob perceived the Holy Temple in a dream. From the very moment that Abraham called this place Hashem Yireh (lit., "G-d will See"), this spot was designated as a place for serving G-d.

Hundreds of years later, King David revealed this location and built an altar to G-d here. His son, King Solomon built the first Holy Temple which stood four hundred and ten years. The Second Temple was built about seventy years after the destruction of the First Temple, by the Jews who returned from the Babylonian Exile.

## **The Temple Mount: Dimensions**

At the beginning of the Second Temple period, the area of the Temple Mount was five hundred cubits square (approx. two hundred and fifty square meters). During the time of Herod, the area was greatly expanded and reached its present day dimensions. The Holy Temple and its courtyards were situated on the Temple Mount.

The wall surrounding the Temple Mount rose to a height of forty cubits. However on the eastern side the wall was lower, so that the priest that burned the red heifer could see over the wall and into the entrance to the Heichal, while he stood on the Mount of Olives.

The Levites kept watch in watchtowers that were situated on the side of the wall. The stoa, a covered area that stood on pillars, ran all along the wall, surrounding the mountain plaza.

## **The Temple Mount: Sanctity**

The Temple Mount was defined as the "Levite Camp." Those forbidden to enter were:

Men and women experiencing irregular emissions.

Menstruating women; Women who had recently given birth.

Lepers. (Lepers were also forbidden to enter the walled city of Jerusalem.)

Those who had been rendered impure through exposure to the dead were not allowed to proceed beyond the Soreg fence.

Gentiles were permitted to enter the Temple Mount up until the Soreg fence.

## Temple Mount: Use & Duties

The Temple Mount served as a gathering place for the pilgrims arriving on the three festivals.

The stoa area also served as a storage place for various items such as the four species, which were placed there during the Sukkot festival, when it occurred on the Sabbath.

## The Chulda Gates

The Chulda Gates are **the southern gates** of the Temple Mount. These gates served as the main entrance to the Temple Mount, since the majority of the population lived in the City of David area, which was south of the Temple Mount. The Chulda gates served as both entrance and exit and therefore were double. Two reasons for the gate's name:

A. The prophetess Chulda was in the practice of sitting there...

B. The underground tunnels that led from the gates up to the Temple Mount complex somewhat resembled tunnels made by a mole in the ground. (Chulda is Hebrew for "mole.")

The Chulda gates were double gates. The western gate was apparently used as an entrance and the eastern gate as an exit. From the western Chulda gate, tunnels lead up to the elevated Temple Mount level.

Through these gates one entered the area of the Temple Mount, whose sanctity paralleled that of the "Levites Camp." However, since the gates themselves were beneath the level of the Temple Mount, and there is a principle that the underground tunnels were not sanctified, those who were forbidden to enter the Temple Mount plaza were permitted to enter the gate compound.

## The Kiponos Gate

**The western gate**, one of the five Temple Mount gates. There are many opinions as to the origin of the name. For example, Kiponos is possibly the Greek name of the man that constructed the gate, or alternatively, the name of a rose garden that was adjacent to the gate. (Kiponos is Greek for "rose;" Source: Tractate Midot 1:3).

All the gates of the Holy Temple were twenty cubits high and ten cubits wide. The Kiponos Gate had a square lintel as did the other gates of the Mikdash, (with the exception of the Tadi Gate), and its doors were overlaid in gold.

The interior area of the gate had the level of sanctity as the Temple Mount.

The Kiponos Gate served as an entry and exit for the Temple Mount. All those entering would enter on the right side, walk around the Temple Mount and exit on the left side.

### **The Tadi Gate**

**The northern gate**, one of the five gates of the Temple Mount. This gate did not serve as an entrance or exit for the pilgrims. It was used exclusively by priests who had become impure and therefore it was situated in the north, next to the Place of the Hearth and the Priests' Immersion Chamber. From there the priests would exit through a special tunnel directly to this gate, (alternate view). There are those who claim that the name is not Tadi but tari, which indicates the gate's special lintel built from two stones, one leaning on the other, together forming a triangle - "tri" in Greek. (Source : Tractate Midot 2:3).

All the gates of the Holy Temple were twenty cubits high and ten cubits wide. This gate had a special lintel built from two stones that leaned against each other. (Source: Tractate Midot 2:3).

The interior side of the gate had the same level of sanctity as the Temple Mount.

### **The Shushan Gate**

**The eastern gate**, one of the five gates of the Temple Mount. The source of the name Shushan: The Jews that returned from the Babylonian/Persian exile etched the image of the city of Shushan (the Persian capitol) on the gate - to signify their appreciation to the Persian kingdom that was instrumental in building the Second Temple.

The doors were overlaid in gold. The Shushan Gate's lintel was lower than the Temple Mount wall. This enabled the priest who stood on the Mount of Olives and officiated in burning the red heifer to look above the gate, and gaze directly through the eastern gate of the Women's Courtyard. In this manner the priest was able to see into the entrance of the Sanctuary, thus fulfilling the requirement that he must "face the Tabernacle" while preparing the red heifer.

The interior of the gate had the same level of sanctity as the Temple Mount.