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MEMORANDUM FOR: Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.  
Director, Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs  
Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs  
Department of State

FROM: [redacted]  
Chief, Geography Division, OGI

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SUBJECT: Jerusalem's Temple Mount [redacted]

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1. The attached memorandum describes the history and significance of the Temple Mount and summarizes the policies of various concerned parties regarding its status. The memorandum includes a chronology of recent incidents on the mount, and an unclassified map of the Haram al-Sharif with an accompanying key. [redacted]

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2. The research and analysis for the text were done by [redacted] the Near East Branch, Geography Division, Office of Global Issues. [redacted]

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3. If you have any questions concerning this memorandum, please call me on [redacted]

[redacted]

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Attachment:

The Temple Mount: History, Significance, and Policy  
GI M 86 20039 [redacted]

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[redacted]

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SUBJECT: Jerusalem's Temple Mount

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The Temple Mount: History, Significance, and Policy

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Summary

The recent incidents involving Jews and Muslims on Jerusalem's Temple Mount are only two of many such incidents that have taken place there since the Six Day War in June of 1967. Muslims have controlled the Temple Mount continuously since retaking it from the Crusaders. Many Jews claim the site should be theirs, based on the earlier presence of two temples. Some Fundamental Christians and extremist Jews claim that a new temple must be built on this site as a precursor for the coming of the Messiah. Such conflicting beliefs and claims have often culminated in violent and near-violent incidents between groups. In a situation such as this, facts mean little, and beliefs--whether of ancient traditions or current rumors--mean everything.

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Physical Setting

The Haram al-Sharif (Noble Enclosure), which now occupies the Temple Mount (Mount Moriah), is an irregular, four-sided enclosure of about 144,000 square meters situated in the eastern and southeastern sections of Jerusalem's Old City (Figure 1). With its southern and eastern walls incorporated into the walls of the Old City itself, the Haram al-Sharif occupies about one sixth of the Old City. The western and northern walls of the compound abut homes and schools in the Muslim Quarter; the southern portion of the western wall--the "Wailing Wall" (Hakotel)--is exposed. When Solomon's temple occupied this site, it looked down upon the city from its relatively high elevation (740 meters above sea level.) Since then, the main residential area has shifted northward, so that now most of the Old City is higher than the Temple Mount.

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The Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Sakhra) today dominates the Haram al-Sharif. Built in 687-691, this mosque is situated over a rock believed to be the one on which Abraham attempted to sacrifice his son. Many scholars believe that the mosque also occupies the site of the two razed Jewish temples. The Dome of the Rock sits upon a 3 meter high, 23,000 square meter platform near the center of the Haram al-Sharif, and is reached by ascending one of eight staircases--each with a columned arcade at its top. The structure itself is a regular octagon, adorned with ornamental Turkish tiles. Although refurbished many times, most recently by King Hussein, the integrity of the original structure has been maintained.

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The al-Aqsa Mosque (Masjid al-Aqsa) stands adjacent to the southern wall of the compound, where once probably stood the palace of the ancient Kings of Judah, and later, at least one Byzantine Church. Unlike the Dome of the Rock, the original al-Aqsa did not survive crippling earthquakes in 746 and 1034; the present structure was completed in 1036. Al-Aqsa is adjoined to the west by the Mosque al-Maghariba, which is now a museum.

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Just northwest of al-Aqsa is the "Wailing Wall", an exposed portion of the Temple Mount platform retaining wall. Dating back to the period of the Second Temple, this is the closest that a devout Jew may get to the Temple Mount. From the seventh century, when Jews resettled in Jerusalem, to 1948, the alley in front of the wall served as a place for Jewish prayer. Between 1948 and 1967, Jordan did not permit Jews to pray there. Following the Six Day War, however, Israel razed the 700 year old Muslim neighborhood fronting the wall, thereby clearing a large plaza for prayer.

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#### Access and Security

Only three of the 11 functioning gates to the Haram al-Sharif are opened regularly. The Mograbi Gate is opened daily for entrances and exits; most tourists come in this way. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) position guards (usually reserves) at the access ways to the Western Wall plaza, from which the ramp to the Mograbi Gate is reached. These IDF guards check personal effects such as handbags, purses, and cameras. Armed Arab members of the Israeli national police stand guard on the ramp: one policeman is usually halfway up; at least two others at the gate itself again check hand-carried parcels.

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The other two functioning gates--Bab al-Qattanin and Bal al-Silsila--are opened for exiting the mount only, although some tourists may talk their way inside. These gates are usually guarded by Arabs, although in times of trouble, IDF guards are also present nearby.

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Access may be gained to the Temple Mount through less orthodox methods as well. Following the Goodman incident in 1982, many journalists entered the compound by climbing over the wall from roofs of adjoining Jewish Quarter houses; houses and schools in the Muslim Quarter offer similar accessibility. In addition, some extremist groups have attempted to penetrate the Temple Mount through the underlying maze of cisterns and tunnels--many of which are not fully explored.

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Security on the mount itself is maintained by at least two members of the IDF Border Police (first assigned here following the 1984 Lifta Gang incident), and by many waqf-appointed (unarmed) Arab guards. IDF guards also watch the compound from surrounding high places.

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Significance to Jews

The significance of the Temple Mount to the Jews dates back some 3000 years to the latter days of David. After seeing a vision of an angel beside a threshing floor owned by Ornan the Jebusite, David bought the threshing floor and erected an altar upon it. (I Chron. 21:15-25) Later, this piece of land became associated with the land of Moriah, where Abraham had attempted to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22:2)--an event that took place some 600 years before David's time and which is linked to God's covenant with the Jewish people. After David's death, his son, Solomon, built a temple on the site, into which he moved the Ark of the Covenant. Solomon's temple was razed by Nebuchadnezzar, modestly rebuilt following the Babylonian exile, later improved upon by Herod, and finally destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.  25X1

Although most Jews today accept the status of the Temple Mount, interpretation of certain biblical passages (particularly in Ezekiel and Daniel), has convinced several groups of Jews that a new Jewish temple must be built in order to hasten the coming of the Messiah, Redemption, and Armageddon. A new temple would not, however, necessitate the destruction of the Dome of the Rock--some existing plans propose incorporation of the mosque within the temple, or the construction of a pylon supported temple above the Dome of the Rock. Others, however, call for the complete removal of the Islamic shrines. One of the more popular posters sold in the Jewish quarter today is that of an aerial photograph of the Old City with the Dome of the Rock air brushed out and a photo of a temple model superimposed on the mount.  25X1

Jewish groups advocating a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount include:

1. Faithful of the Temple Mount - An organization of religious nationalists led by Gershon Solomon, which holds prayer demonstrations at the Mograbi Gate every major holiday. The group hopes to rebuild the temple, but for the time being, is dedicated to enabling Jews to pray on the mount, possibly in a synagogue adjacent to the Dome of the Rock. Members of this group were involved in this January's incidents on the mount.
2. El Har Hasem - A minor group seeking to restore Jewish rites on the Temple Mount.
3. Ateret Cohanim - A yeshiva. This religious school, located in the Muslim Quarter, is dedicated to studying the rituals of the temple, preparing to assume the role of temple priests when the temple is rebuilt.

4. Lifta Gang - A religious group from the Mei Neftoah area of Jerusalem arrested in March 1984 for their sabotage attempt on the Dome of the Rock.
5. Jewish settler underground - A group of some 25 religious Jews, many from West Bank and Golan Heights settlements, and many of them Gush Emunim members, arrested in April 1984. Most of the group were charged with, among other things, plotting to blow up the Dome of the Rock.

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### Christian Significance

For most Christians, the Temple Mount's importance is incidental to the life of Christ. The New Testament tells of Jesus' presentation here as an infant, his conversation with the temple elders at age 12, his driving out of the money changers, and his teachings in the temple during his last week. Christ does foretell the temple's destruction (Math. 24:1-3, et al), but many religious scholars interpret these passages figuratively. Most Christians visiting Jerusalem do not regard the Temple Mount as an objective of pilgrimage, but as a major historical curiosity.

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Many Fundamental Christians, however, believe that a new, literal, temple must be built upon the Temple Mount, in order for Christ to return (Some Fundamentalists believe that biblical prophecy dictates that the temple must be rebuilt only to be torn down again). This belief is based on interpretation of both Old and New Testament verses. Several groups of Fundamental Christians have been formed to encourage the return of the temple, and in this, they have found ready allies with Jewish groups dedicated to the same cause. These Christian groups include:

1. Jerusalem Temple Foundation - A Jerusalem-based organization that has reportedly helped Jewish groups purchase homes in the Muslim Quarter near the Temple Mount. The foundation's board consists of Stanley Goldfoot, (an ex-Faithful of the Temple Mount member, ex-Stern Gang Member, and ex-South African), and five U.S. evangelical Christians.
2. Temple Mount Foundation - A Los Angeles-based organization that, according to US press, helped fund the defense of the Lifta Gang.

3. International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem - An internationally-based group whose prime goal is to encourage Christian support for Israel. Although a peaceful organization, its official spokesman said in 1984 that the Muslims are usurpers on the Temple Mount, and that it should be returned to the Jews, even if it means Armageddon.

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### Muslim Significance

Muslims, too, accept the tradition that Abraham attempted to sacrifice his son here. However, according to the Koran (Sura XXXVII:99-113), the sacrifice was to be of Abraham's first-born, Ishmael, father of the Arab people. When the Arabs conquered Jerusalem in 639, Caliph Umar punished the Byzantine patriarch for neglecting such a holy site. According to some schools, Caliph Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan began construction on the Dome of the Rock in order to make Jerusalem a more important place of devotion than Mecca, then the seat of a rival caliph. The tradition arose at this time that the site had been further blessed, when after his death in Arabia, the Prophet Muhammad miraculously appeared on the Temple Mount before ascending into Heaven on his horse. (Muhammad's footprints and pieces of hair may be seen in the Dome of the Rock.) The Dome of the Rock is today the third holiest shrine in Islam, after the Ka'aba in Mecca and the Prophet's tomb in Medina.

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### Policies on the Temple Mount

The Haram al-Sharif is today administered by the waqf--the Islamic religious foundation. Although the waqf does not permit Jews or Christians to pray on the Temple Mount, no general restrictions are imposed on entrance to the mount and its shrines, except during prayer hours, on Fridays, and during Muslim holidays.

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Although the waqf permits Jews on the Temple Mount (and indeed, many Jewish tourists take advantage of this almost daily), Israel's Chief Rabbinate does not. Shortly after the Six Day War, the Chief Rabbis decided that no Jew should set foot on the mount for fear of inadvertently transgressing on the site of the Holy of Holies--the area in which the Ark of the Covenant was stored. Jews hold the key to the Mograbi Gate--the main gate used by tourists. There a guard and sign warn Jews not to enter the compound. Other rabbis have disagreed with this decision, however, claiming that visitation of parts of the Temple Mount requires ritual immersion and purity, while other parts were never sanctified.

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Israeli Government policy is to maintain the status quo on the mount. To allow Jews to pray on the mount is to invite possible acts of violence from the Muslim World. Similarly, to allow new Muslim construction on the mount would bring increased criticism by Israeli Jews, with probable increased protest action by extremist groups. [redacted]

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Most violent and near-violent incidents that have occurred on the Temple Mount since 1967 have been perpetrated by extremist Jewish groups or individuals. Often, these incidents lead to general strikes and riots by Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories. At least in one case, a general strike was extended to 15 Arab nations. The incidents in January this year were not the first to precipitate major discussion in the United Nations. Each such incident has the potential of disrupting the quest for Middle East peace, and as long as the various religious groups hold on to their beliefs and longings for this piece of land, similar, if not more volatile incidents are likely to occur. [redacted]

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Chronology of Major Incidents on the Temple Mount Since June 1967

- 18 August 1969 Jewish youths penetrate Haram al-Sharif compound and chant Torah verses.
- 21 August 1969 Michael Rohan, a deranged, born-again Christian from Australia, sets fire to the al-Aqsa Mosque. General protest strike by Arabs follows. After discussion of incident, UN Security Council calls upon Israel to obey Security Council resolutions forbidding any change in the status of Jerusalem.
- 2 March 1982 13 Jewish religious students force their way onto the Temple Mount. Clashes with Arabs praying in al-Aqsa result in two injuries.
- 11 March 1982 Alan Harry Goodman, an American-Israeli Kahane follower, shoots his way onto the Dome of the Rock platform, killing two guards and wounding 30 bystanders. Arabs commence throwing rocks, wounding tourists on the mount. Riots and a one-week general strike ensue in the West Bank and Gaza; 15 Arab nations join in one-day strike. Israeli courts sentence Goodman to life in prison on 7 April 1983.
- 4 March 1983 Explosives found at Bab al-Nadhir.
- 10 March 1983 Israeli police prevent some 45 Kakh members from the West Bank settlement of Qiryat Arba from establishing a "settlement" on the Temple Mount. Led by Rabbi Yisra'el Ari'el (formerly of Yamit), the group hoped to reach the mount via a blocked tunnel near Solomon's Stables.
- 27 January 1984 Palestinian guards frighten off men attempting to scale the Temple Mount wall near the Golden Gate. Israeli police discover explosives left by the fleeing men. Demonstrations in the West Bank follow the next day. In March, the Lifta Gang is arrested

for attempting to blow up Dome of the Rock. Israeli Government decided to place two members of the Border Police on the mount to guard against similar attempts. This action in itself precipitates Arab strikes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

17 June 1984

Israeli police arrest an insane rabbinical student who attempted to storm the Temple Mount in a car via a goat trail.

8 January 1986

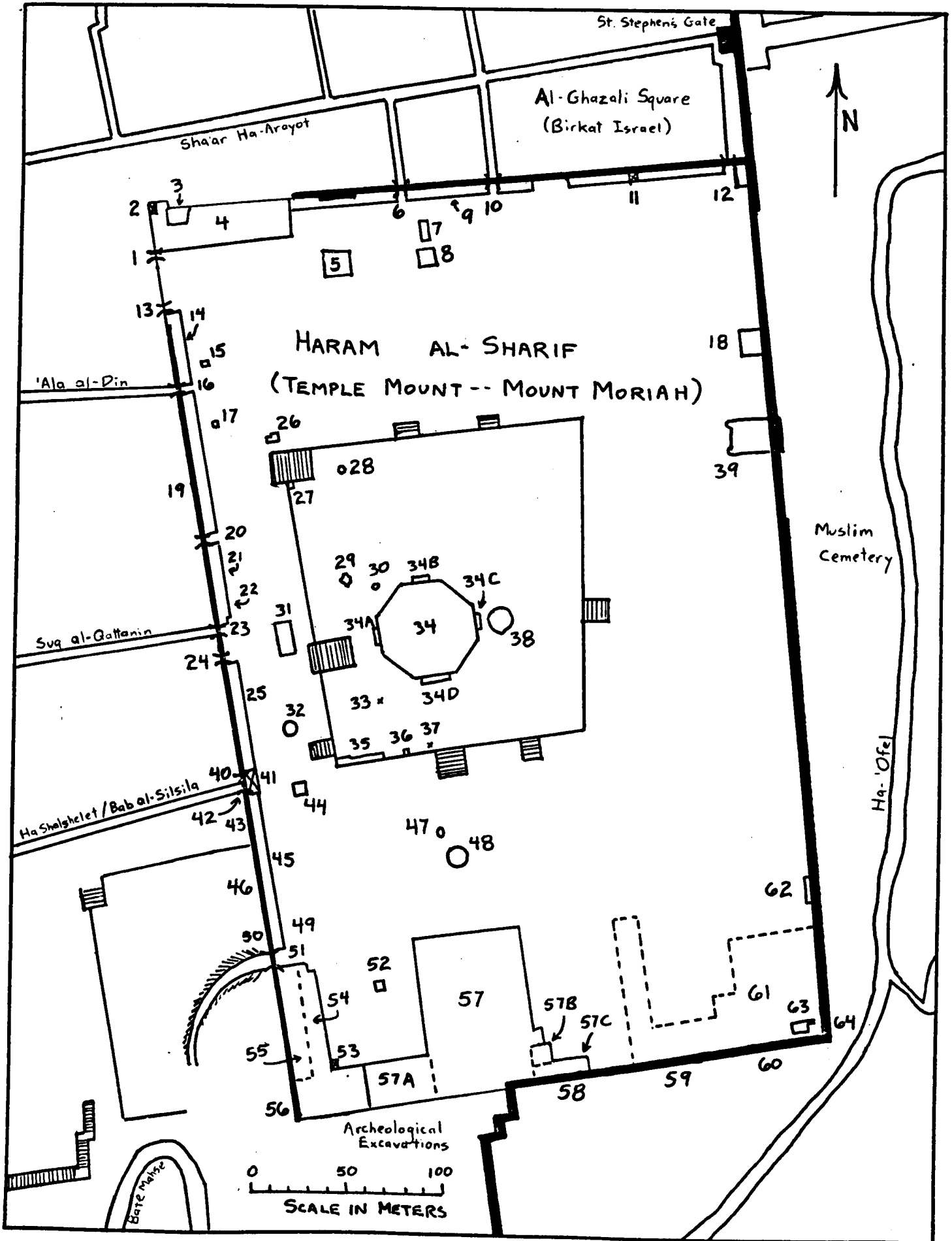
Waqf-approved visit to the Temple Mount by Knesset members leads to riots on the mount as Tehiya members try to force their way into Solomon's Stables and take pictures. Israeli Border Police quells riot with tear gas.

14 January 1986

Knesset members and other Jews again visit the Temple Mount. Certain members of the delegation begin to pray from the Torah, and again try to enter Solomon's Stables. Riots again erupt, resulting in more tear gas by Israeli Police. Mufti claims he will no longer grant Knesset groups permission to visit area. Incident is brought before the UN.

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The Temple Mount -- Key to Map

1. Bab al-Ghawanima - Gate, named for Ghanim family. Closed.
2. Minaret al-Ghawanima.
3. Al-Madrasa\* al-Jawiliyya.
4. Antonio Fortress remains - Formerly the Baris Fortress.
5. Dome of Solomon.
6. Bab al-'Atim - Gate of Gloom or the Dark Gate, also called Bab Feisal. Closed.
7. Fountain of Sultan Suleiman.
8. Dome of Suleiman Pasha.
9. Al-Madrasa al-Dawidariyya.
10. Bab Hitta - Low Gate, also called Hutta Gate and Gate of Forgiveness. Closed.
11. Minaret of Israel.
12. Bab al-Asbat - Gate of the Tribes. Closed.
13. Bab al-Serai - Palace Gate. Closed.
14. Al-Madrasa al-Manjikiyya.
15. Fountain of 'Ala 'al-Din al-Basair.
16. Bab al-Nadhir - Prison Gate, also called Gate of the Inspector and Bab al-Majlis. Closed.
17. Fountain of Sheikh Budayr.
18. Kursi Suleiman - Solomon's Throne. Small mosque. Muslim legend says that Solomon sat here as he observed his jinn constructing the great buildings at Jerusalem, Baalbek, and Palmyra.
19. Hakotel Haqatan - Small Western Wall.
20. Bab al-Hadid - Iron Gate. Closed.

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 \* Islamic religious college.

21. Al-Madrassa al-Arghuniyya.
22. Al-Madrassa al-Khatuniyya.
23. Bab al-Qattanin - Cotton Merchant's Gate. Open for exiting only.
24. Bab el Mat-hara - Gate of Latrines. Closed.
25. Al-Madrassa al-Uthmaniyya.
26. Fountain of Sha'lan.
27. Qubbat al-Khadr - Dome of St. George (or Elijah).
28. Dome of the Spirits.
29. Qubbat al-Mir'aj - Dome of Ascension. Restored in 1200. Commemorates Muhammad's ascent into Heaven. Copy of Byzantine dome on the Mt. of Olives marking Christ's ascension.
30. Dome of the Prophet.
31. Sabil Qait Bai - Fountain built by Mamluk Sultan Qait Bai in 1487.
32. Fountain of Qasim Pasha.
33. Sundial - Dates from Turkish times.
34. Qubbat al-Sakhra - Dome of the Rock. See text. Access originally gained by four gates at four cardinal points:
  - 34 A. Bab al-Gharbi - West Gate. Only gate now open.
  - 34 B. Bab al-Janne - Gate of Paradise.
  - 34 C. Bab Mahkmet David - Gate of David's Judgment.
  - 34 D. Bab al-Qible - South Gate.
35. Al-Nahawiyya Dome.
36. Dome of Joseph.
37. Burhan al-Din - Summer Pulpit. Also called Minbar Omar. Minbar erected in 1456.
38. Qubbat al-Silsila - Dome of the Chain. Miniature prototype of Dome of the Rock. Built in the 8th century. Arabs used this as a treasury, Crusaders as a chapel to St. James.

39. Golden Gate - Sha'ar Ha Rahamim. Also called Porta Aurea. Muslims call this Bab al-Dahiriyyeh - Gate of Eternity. Seventh Century Byzantine gate built upon earlier gate believed to be that through which Christ entered the city. Arabs walled the gate up in 810. Opened twice a year by Crusaders. Permanently blocked by Turks in 1530, incorporated into city walls in 1540. Some Fundamental Christians believe Christ will reenter the city through this gate.
40. Bab al-Silsila - Chain Gate; Sha'ar Ha shalsholet, also called Bab al-Wad. This is a double gate, one portal of which is called Bab al-Salaam--the Peace Gate. Open part-time.
41. Minaret of the Gate of the Chain.
42. Wilson's Arch - part of the ancient bridge linking the Temple Mount with the Upper City. Named for archeologist Wilson. Located under Bab al-Silsila.
43. Synagogue Hakotel Hama'aravi.
44. Dome of Moses.
45. Al-Madrassa al-Tankiziyya. Also called Mahkameh - The Tribunal. Built in 1330. Served as law court during Turkish period. Possibly stands on site of Jewish Council of Sanhedrion.
46. Hakotel Hama'aravi - Western Wall, or "Wailing Wall". See text.
47. Olive Tree of the Prophet.
48. Al-Kas - The Cup. Fountain built in 709. Used by Muslims for ritual washing before prayer. Connected to numerous underground cisterns.
49. Masjid al-Burak - Small underground mosque connected with Mohammed's ascent into Heaven on his horse.
50. Barclay's Gate (filled).
51. Bab al-Maghariba - Gate of the Moors. Also called Mograbi Gate. Only gate used regularly as entrance to Haram al-Sharif.
52. Dome of Yusuf Agha.
53. Minaret al-Fakhriyya.
54. Masjid al-Maghariba - Mosque of the Moors. Now a museum. Contains library and Islamic antiquities.

55. Al-Madrassa al-Fakhriyya.
56. Robinson's Arch - One part of ascending ramp leading into the Outer Court of Herod's Temple.
57. Masjid al-Aqsa - Al-Aqsa Mosque. See text. Compound also includes:
  - 57 A. Jami'an Nisa - Women's Mosque, also called White Mosque. Believed to be the Templar's fencing school.
  - 57 B. Jami al-Arba'in - Mosque of the Forty Martyrs. Was a Crusader Chapel to St. Zacharias.
  - 57 C. Jami Umar - Mosque of Omar. A Turkish addition.
58. Double Gate - Old gate from the Temple period. Filled.
59. Triple Gate - Also called Hulda's Gate. Old gate from the Temple period. Filled.
60. Single Gate - Old gate from the temple period. Filled.
61. Solomon's Stables - Huge vaultings built by Herod as supporting substructure. Used as stables by Crusaders.
62. Seat of Muhammad.
63. Cradle of Jesus-Small Byzantine crypt.
64. The Pinnacle - Tradition says that this is the pinnacle from which the Jews threw St. James, first bishop of Jerusalem.