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The Marwani Musalla in Jerusalem: New Findings¹

Beatrice St. Laurent
and Isam Awwad

Figure 1: Air view of the Haram al-Sharif from the north showing the eastern area of the Haram al-Sharif. Source: Matson Collection, Library of Congress.

Shortly after Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab’s (579-644, caliph 634-644) arrival in Jerusalem in 638, he is said to have constructed a rudimentary mosque or prayer space south of the historical Rock now contained within the Dome of the Rock (completed 691) on the former Temple Mount or *Bayt al-Maqdis* known popularly since Mamluk and Ottoman times as the Haram al-Sharif.² (Fig.1) Though later textual evidence indicates that ‘Umar prayed somewhere south of the “rock” and later scholars suggest that he constructed a rudimentary prayer space on the site, there is no surviving physical evidence of that initial structure. After his appointment as Governor of Syria (*bilad al-sham*) by ‘Umar in 639/40, Mu‘awiya ibn Abi Sufyan (602-680, caliph 660-680)³ either expanded upon the Mosque of ‘Umar or constructed an entirely new mosque in Jerusalem between 640 and 660.

This mosque was completed in time for his investiture in that mosque in 660 as the first Umayyad caliph.⁴

This article proposes that the seventh-century mosque of Jerusalem constructed between 640-660 has survived to today and that the official entrance to that mosque and the *Bayt al-Maqdis* precinct was the centrally placed eastern gate. Further, it will be demonstrated that there were four entrances to this mosque, one ceremonial and public from the east, leading to a northern entrance to the prayer space, a second public entrance and a third private entrance, both from south of the city. The physical evidence from the site itself, the newly established presence of Islamic rule in Jerusalem, and the persistence of religious memory of the earlier significance of the site contributed to the location of this mosque in the southeastern quadrant of the sanctuary.⁵ The building is variously known historically as *masjid qadim*, *aqsa*, Solomon's Stables and is today the Marwani Musalla (prayer space).

History

Up to now, there are no inscriptions or other archaeological evidence dating the mosque of Mu'awiya or proclaiming it for Islam. However, citing Jeremy Johns the "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence,"⁶ thus we are reliant on near contemporary literary evidence, the plan and remains of the building itself.

In his 2003 article "Archaeology and the history of Early Islam," Johns presents the documentary and textual evidence for Mu'awiya's establishment of a monarchy with its administrative capital in Damascus and its spiritual capital in Jerusalem. Mu'awiya was the first Muslim ruler who introduced his name and the title of *amir al-mu'minin* on coins, official documents and in monumental architectural inscriptions.⁷ Robert Hoyland citing the near contemporary mid-seventh-century *Maronite Chronicles* written by Syrian Christian Maronites indicates that Mu'awiya minted gold and silver, that he placed his throne in Damascus and refused to go "to the seat of Muhammad,"⁸ all suggesting that his goal was the creation of a monarchy in his name, attesting to his and the Sufyanid contentious relationship with Mecca.

Mu'awiya figures prominently in several non-Muslim sources of the period. Several scholars cite this textual evidence for the existence of the seventh-century mosque. Bernard Flusin in his 1992 article in *Bayt al-Maqdis*, cites a text by one Theodore who indicates that there was a mosque on the site before the death of the Patriarch Sophronius, who received Caliph 'Umar in Jerusalem (circa 639).⁹ Anastasius of Sinai, at the time of the construction of the Dome of the Rock (691) "witnessed the clearing of the Roman 'Capitol' for the Muslims '30 years ago,'" so in 658.¹⁰ Creswell cites further Christian sources: Theophanes (751-818), Elias of Nisibis (d. 1046), and Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) who specifically note the construction of a building in 643, and Michael the Syrian (1166-1199) who indicates that the mosque was built in 640.¹¹

The only contemporary visitor and commentator to describe the seventh-century mosque is the Gallic Bishop Arculf or Arculfus who visited Jerusalem sometime between 679 and 682 during the reign of Mu‘awiya.¹² He states:

... in inferiore vero parte urbis ubi Templum in vicinia muri ab oriente locatum ipsique urbi transitu pervio ponte mediante fuerat coniunctum nunc ibi Saraceni quadratam domum subrectis tabulis et magnis trabibus super quasdam ruinarum reliquas construentes oratione frequentant quae tria milia hominum capere videtur.

[... in that renowned place where once the Temple had been magnificently constructed, placed near the wall in the east, the Saracens now frequent a quadrangular place of prayer, which they have built rudely constructing it by setting great beams on slabs on some remains of ruins; this house, it is said to hold three thousand men at once.]

This description pinpoints the location of the mosque next to the eastern wall of the precinct not the southern wall as many later scholars suggest. His visit to Jerusalem provides a date by which the mosque was completed but he does not attribute the construction to a specific ruler. Holding three thousand men, this was a large structure that was sturdily built and thus not easily dismantled.¹³

The earliest Muslim sources to mention the mosque are from the tenth and eleventh centuries. The tenth century Muslim author al-Maqdisi reports (c. 966) that Mu‘awiya restored the “Temple” indicating that it was there that Muslims swore allegiance to him.¹⁴ Other tenth-century historians make no mention of the mosque. Ibn al-Murajja in the first half of the eleventh century cites a tradition (the chain ending in 721) that Mu‘awiya is reported to have stated from the *minbar* of the mosque “what is between the two walls of his mosque (*masjid*) is dearer to God than the rest of the earth.”¹⁵ The Persian traveler Nasir-i Khusraw who visited Jerusalem on March 5, 1147, indicated, “the eastern wall is attached to the congregational mosque” and that “one wall of the mosque is on the Valley of Gehenna [Kidron Valley today].” The mosque in this context has been interpreted by most scholars to mean that the entire complex of the Haram al-Sharif is considered as the mosque.¹⁶ In 1173, Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Harawi (‘Ali of Heart) is the first Muslim traveler to mention the structure in the southeastern corner of the Haram as Solomon’s Stables.¹⁷

Description

The Mosque is a multi-aisled vaulted quadrangular building of monumental proportions – large enough “to contain three thousand men.” (Fig. 2) It is built into the southeast corner of the precinct now known as the Haram al-Sharif. The total area of the space is 3,390 square meters. There are nine barrel-vaulted aisles of equal length

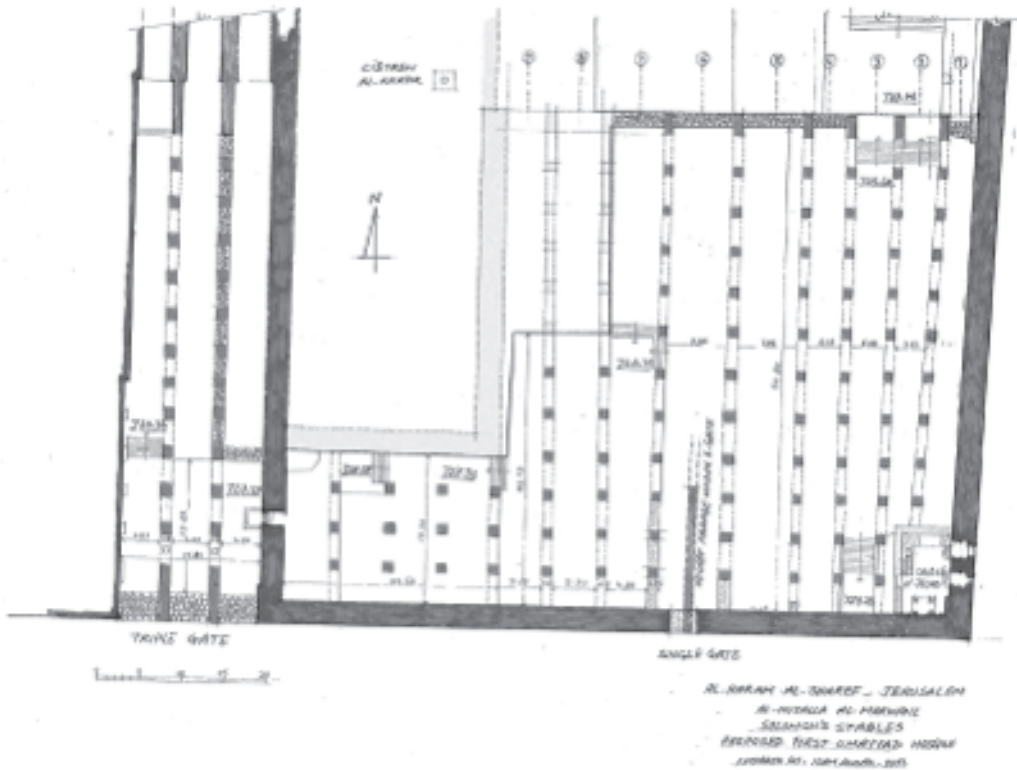


Figure 2: Plan of the Mosque of Mu'awiya. Source: Awwad, June 2013.

comprising the main area, running perpendicular to the south *qibla* wall or wall facing Mecca. The four aisles to the east are narrower than the western aisles. The fifth aisle is wider than the rest and thus is the central nave and the focus of the structure. The four shorter aisles to the west ending in bedrock should be considered as part of the entrance area where it connects with the Triple Gate and its vaulted passageway.

The aisle arcades are supported by eighty-eight large piers with six additional engaged piers for a total of ninety-four. (Fig. 3) The piers consist of huge stones in secondary use measuring 110 x 280 cm – perhaps the “large slabs” mentioned by Arculf. Semi-circular arches springing from ashlar stones hewn to trapezoidal shape top the piers. The barrel vaults springing from the arcades currently roof the building, but their differing stone construction suggests later construction. At regular intervals just above the arcade arches in some but not all of the aisles are square holes that possibly held wooden scaffolding during vault construction or re-construction.¹⁸ We propose that the original vaulting of the mosque was closely similar to the vaulting of the passages in the Triple Gate, which did not suffer damage in the earthquakes subsequent to the seventh century construction of the building and its southern entrances. (Fig.4)

What is truly notable is the near-complete absence of decoration in the interior of the building. There are two exceptions. The first is the *Mahd Isa* or Cradle of Jesus



Figure 3: Interior of the Mosque of Mu'awiya showing aisle 4 and the piers of re-used Herodian stones.
Source: St. Laurent, 2007.



Figure 4: Vaulting of the western most vaulted passage of the Triple Gate. *Source: Awwad, 2013*

in the southeast corner, which includes decorated stones from previous periods, and which will not be examined in this paper. The only other decoration is in the center of the fifth aisle or the central nave of the building on the south-facing or *qibla* wall. (Figs. 5a and 5b) There is a decorated fragment of Byzantine marble centrally placed at floor level almost as the springing to the left of an arch where a *mihrab* would be located. Additionally, there is a large piece of marble to the right corresponding to the location of the right arch springing. A series of other marble pieces located above this almost form an arch. Finbarr Flood in his article “Light in Stone. The Commemoration of the Prophet in Umayyad Architecture,”¹⁹ summarizes the material, textual and scholarly evidence for the use of markers mainly of stone or marble to commemorate the prayer places of the Prophet in the early Umayyad period. Flood supports the idea that “the installation of a series of stone memorials at sites where the Prophet was believed to have prayed represent different aspects of a formal aniconic programme of commemoration focused on the Prophet.” The textual evidence indicates that slabs of white and other colored marbles and black stones streaked with white in the Kaaba and early mosques of Arabia and Palestine.²⁰ While Flood focuses on the time of the early Rashidi Caliphate and on the period of ‘Abd al-Malik, we would like to suggest Mu‘awiya was conscious of the stone markers as commemorating the prayer places of the Prophet and that the stones placed in the central aisle on the *qibla* wall could be



Figure 5a: Mihrab in the south or qiblah wall of the fifth central nave. *Source: Awwad.*



Figure 5b: Mihrab detail of Byzantine spolia. *Source: St. Laurent, 2007.*

such a marker or a rudimentary *mihrab* indicating the direction of prayer. In a recent paper Alan Walmsley and Hugh Barnes discussed the *mihrab* of the early eighth-century mosque of Jerash as constructed of Byzantine spolia – earlier building material in re-use.²¹ Perhaps the use of spolia in the mosque in Jerash demonstrates continuity with the earlier usage in Jerusalem.

The plan of the mosque conforms to a later mosque at the south end of the Haram – the first Aqsa documented by Robert Hamilton in his 1949 *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*.²² It was a substantial building of stone and dressed with marble measuring 50 meters north to south and 45 meters east to west, similar in scale to the Mosque of Mu‘awiya (Marwani Musalla) and located directly under the current Aqsa mosque. Apparently, Julian Raby has suggested that Hamilton’s “First Aqsa” was the Mosque of Mu‘awiya.²³ In 1999, Jeremy Johns published the plan, which evidences close similarities in both plan and scale to the Marwani plan – a multi-aisled structure – with aisles running north to south to the *qibla* wall – and a larger central nave. This Jerusalem plan seems to be the prototype for later Umayyad mosques.²⁴ We propose that the first usage was in the mosque of Mu‘awiya located in the southeast corner of the precinct.

Raby’s argument is interesting but one needs to consider that the first structure to be built by Abd al-Malik was the Dome of the Rock completed in 691. The Aqsa was not built until the early eighth century after the completion of the Dome. If the Mosque of Mu‘awiya was on the site of the present Aqsa, where did



Figure 6: Southern wall of the Haram al-Sharif showing the Triple Gate and Single Gate. *Source: St. Laurent, 2012.*



Figure 7: Triple Gate showing arch construction. *Source: St. Laurent, 2012.*

the Muslim community pray during the construction of the early eighth-century Aqsa?

We propose that the first Aqsa of Hamilton was based on the plan of Mu‘awiya’s mosque directly to the east. In fact, Hamilton’s excavation of the eastern aisle demonstrates the east-west near-alignment of both buildings, that is, minus the later porch of the present mosque. A 1970s probe by Isam Awwad of the northwest side of the Aqsa supports this thesis. In addition, the eighth-century Aqsa was far wider than the current mosque and the east wall of that structure would have been adjacent to and above the vaulted aisles of the Triple Gate. In fact, there were twelve simple undecorated entrances on the east façade of the early-eighth-century Aqsa, suggesting consistent usage of the structure from the east with the formal entrance on the north aligned with the Dome of the Rock – part and parcel of ‘Abd al-Malik’s “grand narrative.” Thus, the Muslims of Jerusalem would have continued to pray in the Mosque of Mu‘awiya while the new mosque was under construction.

Much has been written about the date of the structure known currently as the Marwani Musalla and now discussed as the Mosque of Mu‘awiya.²⁵ Most are in agreement that the structure was one built with materials in secondary re-usage and many date it to the early Umayyad period.²⁶

Access

There were three entrances to the mosque’s enclosed prayer space – the Triple Gate and the Single Gate both from the exterior of the precinct, within the city walls at the time and located on the southern wall of the sanctuary; and the main northern entrance from the interior of the precinct. There was another major entrance to the entire precinct to the north in the eastern wall. (Fig.6)

The Triple Gate afforded public access from the area to the south via an entrance on the east wall of its vaulted chamber. (Fig.7) It also led to the interior of the entire precinct to the north through a vaulted aisled passageway and, up until 1996, this was the main entrance to the building.²⁷ This is a simple undecorated gateway indicating that it was not the most important entrance to the building. Similar to the interior arcades semi-circular arches spring from ashlar stones hewn to near-trapezoidal shape. Since the Triple Gate is contemporary with the rebuilding of the southern wall and the complex of Solomon’s Stables now referred to as Mu‘awiya’s mosque, it should be dated to the Umayyad period and as a possible rebuilding of an earlier gateway. The interior consists of three barrel-vaulted passageways leading northward exiting to the precinct platform (see Fig. 4). The vaults of this passageway are integral to the Umayyad period of construction. In the southeast wall of the easternmost vaulted aisle of the passageway, there is a small, undecorated doorway that affords entry into the mosque. (Fig. 8)

The Single Gate is in the south wall of the Haram leading to the sixth aisle of the mosque. (Fig. 9) It is a simple single-arched entrance with no decoration. The arch construction up to the springing is closely similar to the Triple Gate and the interior



Figure 8: Entrance to the Mosque in the southeast wall of the easternmost vaulted passageway of the Triple Gate. *Source: Awwad, 2013.*



Figure 9: Single Gate in the southern wall of the Haram al-Sharif located east of the Triple gate. *Source: St. Laurent, 2012.*

arcade arches of the mosque. It differs from the Triple Gate and interior arches in that the arch is pointed. Most scholars attribute this entrance to the Crusader period but archaeologist Dan Bahat dates it to the Fatimid reconstruction after the 1003 earthquake.²⁸ Based on the similar construction of the lower part of the Single Gate to that of the Triple Gate, we propose the gate was part of the “original” Umayyad construction, that it was partially destroyed by successive earthquakes in the eighth through the eleventh centuries and reconstructed at the same time as the interior vaulting.

Further, a “tunnel” or a passageway discovered by Wilson in the third quarter of the nineteenth century under the Single Gate runs north until blocked by debris. There are two exits from the tunnel one directly above the other. They were both originally underground but the upper one was exposed during Mazar and Ben-Dov’s excavations. Evidence from a visit with Meir Ben-Dov in the 1970s indicates that it led directly upward from under the Single Gate to the interior of the building.²⁹ The construction of the tunnel is of Herodian-period stone in reuse paralleling the interior construction of the piers suggesting a contemporary date for the tunnel and thus the Single Gate. On the interior, there are partial protective walls that appear to the left and right of the Gate.³⁰

To explain the function of these two entrances it is necessary to examine the

southeast area beyond the Gates. Evidence from British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon's excavations in the early 1960s³¹ and later those of Benjamin Mazar and Meir Ben-Dov support the existence of an active community resident in the area just outside the south wall of the precinct during both the Byzantine and early Islamic periods.³² There was a Byzantine residential area south of the Haram and the population was mixed Christian, Jewish and Muslim by the early Umayyad period.³³ So perhaps it was already the residential area for Muslims during the period of Mu'awiya.

Procopius, the historian of Late Antiquity who, in his sixth-century *De Edificiis Justiniani* documented the architecture of the Byzantine emperor Justinian, mentions two hospitals for the sick and poor near the Basilica of St. Mary (Nea Church), one located in the southern area of the precinct and documented by Ben-Dov.³⁴ Nasir-i-Khusraw also mentions that there was a hospital on the eastern side of the city.³⁵ That structure was thus used consistently from the Byzantine period through the eleventh century and was no doubt in active use during the period of Mu'awiya.

The main Umayyad structures south of the Haram excavated by Benjamin Mazar and Ben-Dov date from the later Umayyad period in the eighth century when the Aqsa Mosque was first constructed during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik. However, Ben-Dov shows a smaller Islamic-period structure in the area just outside the Single Gate at the eastern end of the southern wall. This might possibly be one of the Byzantine hospitals mentioned by Procopius and Nasir-i Khusraw. We propose that this building could have been Mu'awiya's residence. If that were the case then the Single Gate would have been his private secure entrance during a much-conflicted insecure early Umayyad period when caliphs were subject to assassinations and assassination attempts. Further, the above-mentioned tunnel under the Single Gate could have been his means of escape during times of difficulty.

Ben-Dov dates the Single Gate to the Crusader era based on the fact that it was an escape exit from Jerusalem when the city walls were bounded by the Haram's southern wall. If the Gate dates from the Umayyad era when the eastern city wall extended further to the south, then the passageway led directly from the mosque to the residential and palace area directly south of the gate. In that case, one of the two "escape" exits could have led outside to the neighborhood and the other directly underground to the interior of the palace, providing the caliph quick means of egress during times of political unease.

The main entrance is the north portal situated on the north wall opening into the precinct within the walls of *Bayt al-Maqdis*. (Fig.10) This portal consists of nine arched openings to the mosque interior, with only seven and the beginning of an eighth visible today, more apparent in the line drawing and photographic detail of the beginning of the eighth arch. (Fig.11) The plain stone construction parallels that of the Triple Gate, the lower part of the Single Gate and interior arcades suggesting the same period of construction in the Umayyad period. There is also evidence of doors suggesting that it was a secure enclosed structure. (Fig. 12) That the four aisles from the east to the main eastern fifth aisle are considerably narrower than those to the west suggests that the builders confronted a space intended to be monumental in scale with

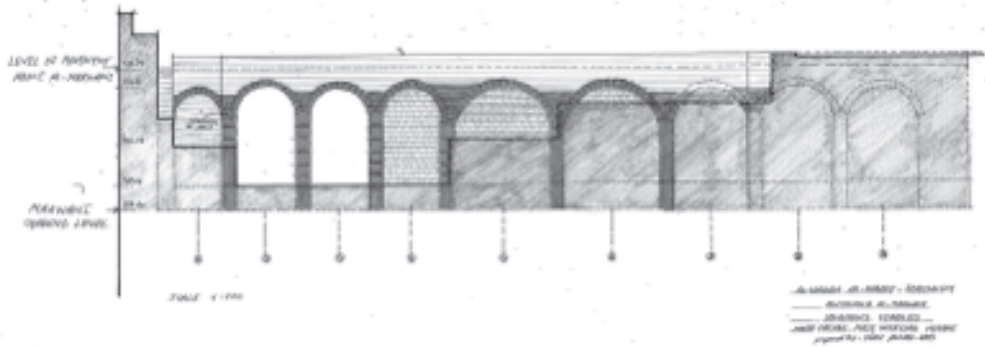


Figure 10: North Portal elevation from the north. *Source: Awwad, 2013.*



Figure 11: Detail of the portal from the north showing beginning of the 8th arch. *Source: Awwad, 2012.*

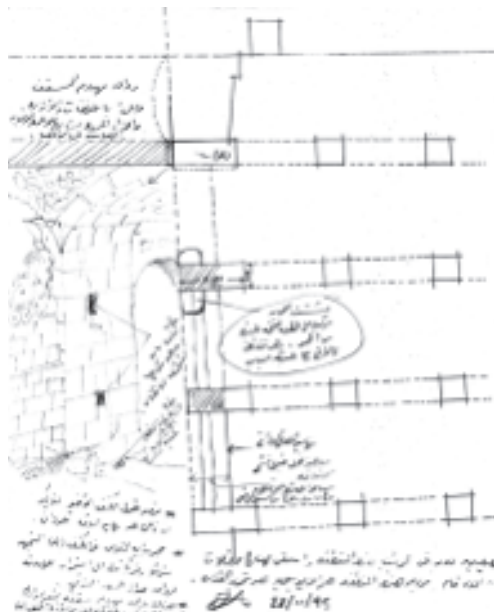


Figure 12: Sketch showing placement of doors in the easternmost wall of the north portal. *Source: Awwad, 1999.*

a centrally placed large central aisle. However, the bedrock restricted the scale of the entryway. The result was a nine-aisled structure with an emphasis on a central nave with the aisles to the east necessarily narrower to keep the main nave in a central position.

Further, the exterior façade of this portal reveals that the spandrel area and the top of the arches had at some point collapsed and were reconstructed at a later date. (Fig. 13) The exterior southern wall of the precinct above both the Triple and Single Gates exhibits reconstruction at exactly the same level suggesting a collapse, no doubt caused by an earthquake, supporting the later reconstruction of the interior vaults, assigned by Bahat to the Fatimid era.³⁶

This portal was not known and was revealed during the opening by the Awqaf of a second safety entrance for the Marwani Musalla in 1999. Up until that time, the structure was considered an underground structure causing a rethinking of the function of this building. After the building no longer functioned as a mosque, the arches were filled in with stones and an additional supporting wall was built in the interior



Figure 13: North portal façade from the north. *Source: St. Laurent, 2012.*



Figure 14: Golden Gate from the west from the top of the Dome of the Rock. *Source: St. Laurent, 2012.*



Figure 15: South entrance of the Golden Gate from the south. Detail shows the springing of an arch to the upper left of the entrance. *Source: St. Laurent, 1993.*

of the building so there was no evidence of openings in the wall. Clearly, this major portal's existence indicates that the structure was buried after the building was no longer in use. Thus the southeastern area of the precinct in proximity of the mosque was much lower when it was initially built.

There is yet another gate to consider – the Golden Gate.³⁷ (Fig. 14) Proceeding north from the portal in the north façade of the mosque, one comes to the Golden Gate situated midway in the eastern wall. It is a monumental ornately decorated entrance to the eastern side of the precinct clearly exhibiting multiple periods of construction. There are two entrances from the east leading to a multi-columned hall and, continuing west, directly into the precinct. There is also a south entrance, which is much simpler than the double entrance on the west façade. (Fig. 15)

Archaeologist Dan Bahat and London-based historian Yuri Stoyanov – and others before them – present convincing arguments for the Byzantine construction or reconstruction of the Golden Gate and its use by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (emperor 610-641). Bahat considers the Golden Gate a Christian structure constructed in the Byzantine period during the reign of Heraclius.³⁸ In fact, Yuri Stoyanov suggests that Heraclius returned the relic of the True Cross to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in March 30, 630.³⁹ The fact that the Golden Gate is in direct alignment with the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre strengthens Bahat's and Stoyanov's arguments. Others have assigned it to the Umayyad period.⁴⁰ In fact, the Golden Gate exhibits ample evidence of multiple periods of construction and may evidence



Figure 16: Detail of plan of the Haram al-Sharif. Source: Pierotti, 1864.

construction in both periods. This suggests that the gate was officially utilized to access the precinct during the first half of the seventh century under both Christian and Muslim rule.

Charles Wilson in the 1865 *Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem* states:

In the northeast corner and between the Birket Israel and Golden Gate, there has been an immense amount of filling in to bring this portion up to the general level of the area, and it appears to have been done at a period long after the erection of the Golden Gate, the north side of which is hidden by an accumulation of rubbish rising twenty-six feet above the sill of the western doorway. Immediately in front (west) of the golden Gate there is a deep hollow, the descent to the entrance being over a sloping heap of rubbish, which, on excavation, would probably be found to cover a flight of steps leading up to the higher level; the southern side is not so completely covered as the northern, but even here the rubbish is nine feet above the western door sill, and soon rises to the general ground level. A little to the southwest of the Golden Gate the rock is again found on the surface, having a dip of 10 degrees [in symbol form] due east, and here only one layer of 'missae' covers the 'malaki,' in which the cisterns are excavated ...⁴¹

The plans of the Haram of DeVogue and Ermete Pierotti,⁴² the latter the Chief Engineer for the Ottomans on the Haram al-Sharif from 1854-1861 (Fig. 16) show that depression, and in fact, also demonstrate that the level of the Golden Gate is closely similar to the level of the main entrance to the mosque to the south. The level indicated by Wilson in the *Ordnance Survey* plans of 1865 is as follows: for the Golden Gate, inside at the level of the entrance 2,388.8 meters and outside the wall 2,393.2 meters; for the area of the mosque 2,384 meters outside the east wall in the area of the mosque and 2,371.2 meters; a roughly four-meter difference.⁴³ These measurements indicate a gentle downward sloping from the Golden Gate to the mosque. This equivalency and sloping is also clearly reflected in DeVogue's 1864 plan of the topographical delineation of the landscape in the Haram's southeastern area. This suggests that the entire eastern area of the precinct was originally much lower than at present and that the area south of the Golden Gate was also, over the centuries, filled with trash.

That this area is filled with debris is amply demonstrated by Zachi Dvira and Gabi Barkay's Temple Mount Sifting Project, "sifting" the material removed to open the "new" entrance to the Marwani Musalla. Much of the material found in that fill falls notably in the category of detritus. Evidence from Beatrice St. Laurent's research with the project demonstrates that the material from the 1943 demolition of the Crusader structure once attached to the east side of the Aqsa Mosque was deposited in the area directly in front of the north portal of the mosque.⁴⁴ There is reason to assume that the east area continued to serve as a depository for trash from the time of the abandonment of the mosque.

To the left of the entrance in the south wall of the Golden Gate is the springing



Figure 17: Reconstructed arch just north of the north portal of the mosque. *Source: St. Laurent, 2012.*

of an arch indicating that there was an arcade in that area (see fig. 15). Supporting that premise is the existence of multiple arch springings (with one arch reconstructed in the 1990s) appearing on the southeast wall by the main entrance to the Marwani Musalla. (Fig. 17) From this, one can safely propose that there was an arcade that ran the length of the east wall from the Golden Gate to the entrance of the mosque with piers measuring 90 x 90 cm with a span of 340 cm between each pier. From this evidence, we posit that the Golden Gate was the public formal entrance to both the precinct and the mosque. The area west and south of the Golden Gate was the courtyard or *sahn* of the mosque bounded by the arcade or *riwaq* on the east and on the west by cisterns embedded in bedrock. (Fig. 18)

The Golden Gate was on Heraclius' path to return the relic of the True Cross to the Holy Sepulchre, an event that marked the return of the region to Byzantine control after the Persian wars. This lends credence to the Gate's religio-political importance for the Christian residents of the city in the first half of the seventh century. It is also significant that this event occurred only a few years prior to the beginning of the early Muslim period in 637/638 CE.

Mu'awiya's period of rule in Jerusalem was one marked by equanimity among the various religious groups in the city. Non-Muslim contemporary authors contrast the reigns of Mu'awiya and the first Marwanid caliph 'Abd al-Malik – strongly protesting the harsh administrative and fiscal reform of the latter. The reign of Mu'awiya was seen as a “golden age ... when the Arabs exacted only tribute and allowed the

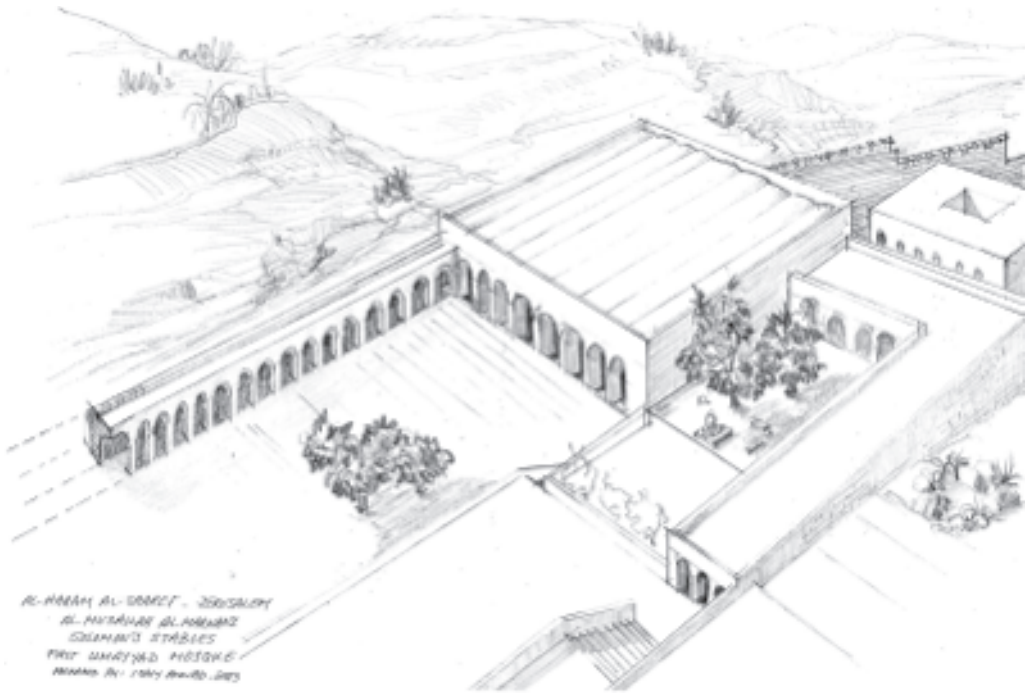


Figure 18: Perspective drawing of the Mosque of Mu'awiya. Source: Awwad, 2013.

conquered population ... to remain in whatever faith they wished ... justice flourished ... and there was great peace in the regions under his control; he allowed everyone to live as they wanted.”⁴⁵

Mu'awiya was said to have propagated the use of the term “land of the Gathering and Resurrection” (*ard al-mahshar wa 'l-manshar*). When he met with Iraqi emissaries to his court he indicated that they had arrived at “the seat of the best caliphs” and “at the holy land, the land of the Gathering and Resurrection.”⁴⁶ Necipoğlu suggests that the court meeting was at Damascus and that he was extending Jerusalem’s holiness to all of Syria (*bilad al-sham*) but the source is not cited.⁴⁷ We would suggest that he was equating the religious and administrative functions of rule.

There is also evidence to suggest that Mu'awiya’s intentions were to establish Jerusalem as a religio-political capital of the nascent Umayyad Empire. Miriam Rosen-Ayalon citing S.D. Goitein indicates “the extent of their architectural development there [Jerusalem] was such that it has been suggested that their aim was to turn it into a major focal point and eventually their capital.”⁴⁸ Amikam Elad adds that it seems evident:

... that the Umayyads intended to develop Jerusalem into a political and religious centre, which if it were not intended to surpass Mecca, would at least be its equal. This effort began with Mua'waya ibn Abi Sufyan and ended during the reign of Sulayman ibn 'Abd al-Malik (715-717) when he began to build Ramleh.⁴⁹

Abdul Aziz Duri indicates that Jerusalem “was not one of the administrative centers; since those centres were to be bases for the Arab *muqatila* (troops) to meet their needs in pastures and climate. Bait al-Maqdis with its Haram was hardly suitable.”⁵⁰ In fact, Mu‘awiya did not first build a mosque of monumental scale in Damascus but in Jerusalem. The intention was for his investiture as caliph in that mosque, a decidedly religio-political motive. This strongly supports his intention of establishing Jerusalem as both a center of royal authority without administrative capability and a spiritual capital of his new empire.

By adding an Umayyad façade to the Golden Gate and making it the formal ceremonial entrance to his mosque Mu‘awiya sent a strongly symbolic message concerning the passage of power from one political entity to another. That he added an Islamic layer to the Byzantine structure rather than re-building it implies a respect for the previous empire while imposing a new Islamic ethos and gloss to *Bayt al-Maqdis*.⁵¹ This suggests that the intention of the new Islamic regime was to live in a spirit of cooperation with the resident population of the city.

It was left to ‘Abd al-Malik to shift the emphasis from the southeastern quadrant of the precinct to a more central and monumentally focused plan fully expressed in the Dome of the Rock (688-691) and the slightly later al-Aqsa Mosque. In fact, Eutychius (877-940) reports that ‘Abd al-Malik “extended the territory of the mosque, included the Sakhra...”⁵² and we posit that the mosque cited here is the Mosque of Mu‘awiya, which extended from the Golden Gate to the prayer space built into the southeastern corner of *Bayt al-Maqdis*.

Conclusion

It is hard to believe that the mosque described by Arculf in the seventh century as holding three thousand men and constructed of “great slabs” had totally disappeared as most scholars suggest. There has also never been a reasonable explanation for the function of the building known as Solomon’s Stables other than that it was built to bring the level of the platform up to the same level as the area of the present Aqsa Mosque. This claim is now disproved by the nine-arched entrance to the structure and indicates that the monumental building’s main entrance was from the north.

The investiture of ‘Abd al-Malik as the first Marwanid (another branch of the Umayyad lineage) caliph marked the end of the Sufyanid branch of the Umayyad dynasty and the beginning of the Marwanid period (685-813). At the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century ‘Abd al-Malik shifted the emphasis on the site from the east to the central area occupied by the Dome of the Rock, al-Aqsa Mosque and the palace complex to the south of the Aqsa. He further imposed the “grand Umayyad narrative” of the Marwanids on this monumental architectural scheme, which altered the use and significance of the entire area. There was also a shift to develop the west and north entrances to the precinct. The Abbasids laid claim to the site after 750. Mazar and Ben Dov’s excavations demonstrate that the Abbasids

set on a path of nullification of Umayyad achievements in Jerusalem using the palace area as a quarry for their own architectural purposes.⁵³ This is supported by the finds in Barkay's "Temple Mount Sifting Project."

It is then reasonable to assume that the mosque built by Mu'awiya functioned at least until the Aqsa was completed. Afterward, the Golden Gate was closed and it was abandoned for major public usage and the area came to be used as a depository for materials of construction and trash.

The proposed date for the initiation of construction of the Mosque of Mu'awiya is 640 – shortly after the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem and only ten years after Heraclius's heroic re-entry through the Golden Gate. What more appropriately symbolic gesture than for the formal entry to the Mosque of Mu'awiya to be through exactly the same gate, symbolizing the prevalence over Byzantium by Islam and physically establishing the religio-political primacy of Islam in the construction of his mosque in the southeastern part of the precinct in Jerusalem. In his reference to the "land of the Gathering and Resurrection" he establishes the holiness and political dominion of *Bayt al-Maqdis*, and initiates a "narrative" focused on eschatology and the legitimization of caliphal authority in both Damascus and Jerusalem.

The survival of the Mosque of Mu'awiya raises an additional important issue. Up until now, the Dome of the Rock was the oldest extant Islamic monument in the world. The survival of the rather plain Mosque of Mu'awiya displaces by fifty-one years the physically imposing Dome of the Rock as the oldest surviving monument. This adds an entirely new gloss of simplicity, benevolence and quiet diplomacy to the early Islamic period in seventh century Jerusalem.

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Endnotes

- 1 The premise of this article was presented as a preliminary paper at ICHAJ12 (International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan), May 5-11, 2013 at Humboldt University in Berlin and will be published in the conference journal.
- 2 Robert Schick, "Archaeology and the Qur'an," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden and Boston: 2001-2006); see also Donald P. Little "Jerusalem under the Ayyubids and Mamluks," in *Jerusalem in History*, ed. Kamil Asali (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1990), 187-188.
- 3 Mu'awiya was the first of three Sufyanid caliphs ruling from 660-680 in *bilad al-sham*. His investiture was in the same year as the death of the 'Ali, the last of the Rashidi caliphs.
- 4 For excellent general overviews of available scholarship on this topic see: Jeremy Johns "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam: The First Seventy Years," in *JESHO Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 46 (2003): 411-36; Gülrü Necipoğlu, "The Dome of the Rock as Palimpsest: 'Abd al-Malik's Grand Narrative and Sultan Süleyman's Glosses," in *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*, 25 (2008): 19, 81-82 fn. 9-12.
- 5 The initiation of a "narrative scheme," the symbolic and eschatological associations relative to the mosque and the Golden Gate will be explored in an expanded version of this article. For more general information on the Haram al-Sharif see Oleg Grabar et al., *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 6 Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam," 416.
- 7 Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam," 418-19, fn.10 and 11.
- 8 Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Darwin Press, 1997), 136-39; Andrew Palmer, Sebastian P. Brock and Robert Hoyland, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 31-32.
- 9 Bernard Flusin, "L'Esplanade du Temple à l'arrivée Arabes d'après deux récits byzantins," in *Bayt al-Maqdis: 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, Part 1, ed. Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns [Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 19-22.
- 10 Flusin, "L'Esplanade du Temple, 25-26. See also Gülrü Necipoğlu, in *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*, 20 (2003): f. 14, 82.
- 11 K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 1, part 1 (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1969), 32-33. Creswell suggests that the mosque of 'Umar exists in legend only. See also Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 31-35.
- 12 Andreas Kaplony, *The Haram of Jerusalem 324-1099: Temple, Friday Mosque, Area of Spiritual Power* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 210-211, provides the best summary of translations of Arculf.
- 13 It is not clear if Arculf actually visited the site, which suggests that his description might contain some inaccuracies.
- 14 Mutahhar ibn Tahir al-Maqdisi, *Kitab al-bad' wa'l-ta'rikh*, ed. and trans. Clément Huart, 6 vols (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1960), 4: 87, trans. 82.
- 15 Necipoğlu, *Muqarnas* 20, 19, 82 fn.16.
- 16 *Nasir-I Khusraw's Book of Travels*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002), 28-29. Nasir-I Khusraw clearly states that the mosque was attached to the eastern wall. Scholars seeking to place the mosque in the south central part of the Haram have interpreted mosque to mean the entire sanctuary. Further support of a more literal interpretation will be provided in the discussion of the Golden Gate as eastern entrance of *Bayt al-Maqdis*.
- 17 Guy Le Strange, *Palestine Under the Moslems* (London: Alexander P. Watt for the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1890), 87.
- 18 There was some consideration that these holes once held beams but physical evidence at the site does not support this theory.
- 19 Finbarr B. Flood, "Light in Stone. The Commemoration of the Prophet in Umayyad Architecture," in *Bayt al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam, Part 2* [Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 311-359.
- 20 Flood, respectively 353 and 317.
- 21 Alan Walmsley and Hugh Barnes, "How Deep those Foundations – How Tall those Walls – How Strong that Roof: Building Practices and the Early Islamic Mosque at Jarash," presented at ICHAJ12 (International Conference on the

- History and Archaeology of Jordan), Berlin May 5-11, 2013. We look forward to this paper's publication.
- 22 Robert W. Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque: A Record of Archaeological Gleanings from the Repairs of 1938-1942* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949).
 - 23 This was to be published in a forthcoming article since 1992 but has not yet appeared.
 - 24 Jeremy Johns, "The 'House of the Prophet' and the Concept of the Mosque" in *Bayt al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam, Part 2* [Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64.
 - 25 Among the scholars referencing the building as an Umayyad rebuilding of an earlier structure are: T. A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem von Salomo bis Herodes* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 961, fn. 127; and accepted by Meir Ben-Dov, "Solomon's Stables," in *The Mosque of el-Aqsa, the Double Gate and Solomon's Stables*, ed. E. Schiller, (Jerusalem, 1978) [Hebrew], Dan Bahat, "The Physical Layout," in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Islamic Period, 638-1099*, ed. J. Prawer (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 58 and "Re-examining the History of 'Solomon's Stables'" in *Qadmoniot* 34:2 (2001): 122, 125-130 [in Hebrew]; S. Gibson and D. Jacobson, *Below the Temple Mount in Jerusalem: A Sourcebook on the Cisterns, Subterranean Chambers and Conduits of the Haram al-Sharif* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1996), 279, and much of this referenced in Jon Seligman "Solomon's Stables. The Temple Mount, Jerusalem: The Events Concerning the Destruction of Antiquities 1999-2001" in *'Atiqot*, 56 (2007): 39.
 - 26 Melchior DeVogue, *Le Temple de Jérusalem: Monographie du Haram-ech-Chérif* (Paris: Noblet & Baudry, 1864) indicates that it is "Arab" post seventh century; C.W. Wilson and C. Warren, "Southern Wall, Important Discovery North of the Platform of the Dome of the Rock" in *The Recovery of Jerusalem* (London: R. Bentley, 1871), 14-15 agreed with this dating.
 - 27 Historically, there is another entrance from the east through the *Mahd 'Isa*.
 - 28 Bahat, "Re-examining the History," 129.
 - 29 As Chief Architect for the Haram, Isam Awwad convinced Ben-Dov to close the topmost passage.
 - 30 Charles Wilson, "The Masonry of the Haram Wall," in *Palestine Explorations Fund Quarterly Statement* 13 (1880): 55-57. Benjamin Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), 127-128, and Meir Ben-Dov, tr. Ina Friedman, *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1985), 346-347, indicate that it was blocked by debris. For a more complete analysis and description see Shimon Gibson and David Jacobson, *Below the Temple Mount in Jerusalem: A Sourcebook on the Cisterns, Subterranean Chambers and Conduits of the Haram al-Sharif* (BAR Int. S. 637) (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996), 204-208.
 - 31 Kay Pragg, *Excavations by K. M. Kenyon in Jerusalem 1961-1967: Volume V. Discoveries in Hellenistic to Ottoman Jerusalem* (London: Center for British Research in the Levant, 2008).
 - 32 Meir Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 207-272 documents the discoveries from the Byzantine period and 273-322 is evidence of the Umayyad era.
 - 33 For the Jewish presence see Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, and Julian Raby "In Vitro Veritas: Glass pilgrim vessels from 7th-century Jerusalem," in *Bayt al-Maqdis* (2), 113-190. Raby demonstrates that there was a mixed population residing in the area south of the Haram in the seventh century including Jewish glass-artisans.
 - 34 Procopius *De Edificiis Justiniani (Buildings)* Volume 6 (London: W. Heinemann, 1954); Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple*.
 - 35 Thackston, *Khusraw's Book of Travels*, 29.
 - 36 Bahat, "Re-examining the History," 128-129.
 - 37 Ahmad Yousef Ahmad Taha, *The Golden Gate in Jerusalem - Architectural and Historical Study in the Islamic Period* (Cairo: Dar al-Farooq Publications, 1999) [in Arabic]. While teaching at the Institute for Archaeology in Shaykh Jarrah, Beatrice St. Laurent worked with Ahmad on his thesis on the Golden Gate.
 - 38 Dan Bahat, "The Golden Gate and the Date of the Madaba Map," in *The Madaba Map Centenary, 1897-1997: Travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad Period: Proceedings of the International Conference held in Amman, 7-9 April 1997*, Collectio Maior, 40, eds. Michele Piccirillo and Eugenio Alliata (Jerusalem Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1999), 254-256.
 - 39 Yuri Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of*

- the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 AD and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 68 ff.
- 40 Among others, Miriam Rosen-Ayalon, "Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharif," *Qedem* 28 (1989): 38-39
- 41 Charles W. Wilson, *Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem* (Southampton: Ordnance Survey Office, 1865), 31.
- 42 Ermete Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored: being a Description of the Ancient and Modern City* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1864), Plate XI.
- 43 Wilson *Ordnance Survey*, plan of the Haram al-Sharif, and DeVogue *Le Temple*, plan of the Haram al-Sharif.
- 44 The results of my work and research with the Temple Mount Sifting Project will be published in the project's publication. See also G. Barkay and Y.S. Dvira, "The Temple Mount Sifting Project, Preliminary Report 3," in E. Meiron, *City of David Studies of Ancient Jerusalem no. 7* (Jerusalem: Megalim, 2012), 47-96. [Hebrew].
- 45 Johns, "Archaeology and the History of Early Islam," 422-23.
- 46 Necipoğlu, *Muqarnas* 20, 19, 82 fn. 17 and 18.
- 47 Necipoğlu, *Muqarnas* 20, 19.
- 48 Rosen-Ayalon, "Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharif," 1, citing S. D. Goitein in *EI2* s. v. "al-Quds." She further proceeds to discount this as a possibility.
- 49 Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 49.
- 50 Abdul Aziz al-Duri, "Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period 7th-11th Centuries AD," in *Jerusalem in History*, ed. Kamil J. al-Asali (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1990), 110. See also the same article for Mu'awiya's achievements, 105-11.
- 51 The date of the Golden Gate will be more fully examined in a future article cited above.
- 52 Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 44, cites the historian Eutychius.
- 53 Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 273-342.