



Amir Tsarfati

Israel Unveiled: The Southern Steps

<https://youtu.be/GNkmHN0ROGI>

Shalom from the Temple Mount area in Jerusalem. Right behind me is a triple gate, sealed



off, going all the way back to the Ottoman Empire time of 480 years ago. This is the southern retaining wall that originally was built by Herod the Great. The Temple Mount during the time of Herod had four major retaining walls. This was the way for Herod the Great to build a huge platform upon which the temple of the Jews would be standing alongside a grand beautiful marketplace because after all, there is no business like God's business. The southern wall faced the southern part, obviously, of the city of Jerusalem because that was the most heavily populated area of the city at the time. And it faces that which was the historical beginning of Jerusalem, the city of the Jebusites that David took and turned it into the City of David. This is down there where David had his palace built. That's where the entire story of David and Bathsheba took place. This is where Solomon became the king of Israel, and so, it was

only inevitable and natural for the southern wall to become the main entrance into the Temple Mount for the lay-Jewish pilgrims.



There were two main sets of entrance and exits into and out of the Temple Mount for the lay-Jewish pilgrims. Behind me, the Triple Gate was the main entrance. This was the place where a Jewish pilgrim, after having been baptized in the ritual bath that contained the water of the Gihon Spring, together with some hyssop and the ashes of the red heifer, that he would then have a white robe dressed on him, and he would be very careful not to touch any impure object as he made his way up to the temple, holding in his hands the sacrificial animal. Coming upstairs, he would pay the temple tax to the priest that was standing right at the entrance, and he would enter through those gates and make his way up to the courts of God.

The gates that are behind me are known in the Jewish tradition as the gates of Huldah. Huldah was a prophetess mentioned briefly in 2 Kings 22 and in 2 Chronicles 34. We know that in the time of King Josiah, once the Book of the Law was found, the Bible says that after that discovery, Hilkiah, together with Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah approached her to get the Lord's opinion. In the entrance was a place that one will approach with reverence, simply because he wanted to stay clean, pure, and wanted to bring the sacrificial animal to the priests in the temple and to complete his duty. The exit was a completely different story. They say that nobody was allowed to enter through the exit unless he was someone who mourned over a dead person in his family, and the very act of him entering through the exit caused everyone to comfort and offer their condolences for the deceased person. We know that upon exit, there was that large portion of

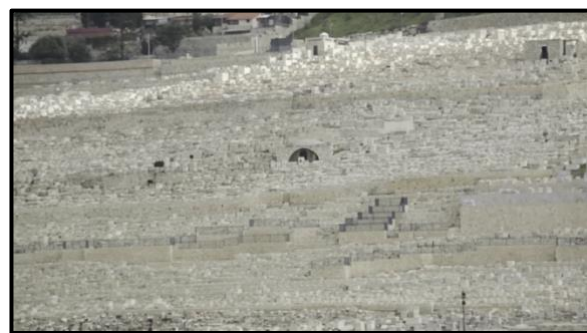


these steps, known as the southern steps. These steps, as you can see, were carved out of Mount Moriah's own bedrock. The steps were not even. It was a short and a long, a short and a long, to stop anyone from running up or down and to create an atmosphere of reverence.



These steps right below the exit were known in the Jewish Talmud as the “Stairs of the Teachings” or the “Stairs of the Teachers” and in Hebrew: *Ma'alot HaMidrashah*. Very, very

important rabbis used to teach down there. We know that they used to sit on the stairs as all the students will stand all around them with such admiration. In those days, rabbis—and mainly the presidents, or the great rabbis of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious council—would be greatly honored by everybody all around them. People imitated the way they looked, the way they walked, the way they talked, and the way they taught. We know that Rabbi Gamaliel, one of the great leaders of the Jewish Sanhedrin, was teaching here. One of his disciples or students was no one else but Saul from Tarsus, who was known to all of us as Paul the Apostle. Paul absorbed much of his knowledge and understandings of the Jewish tradition and knowledge of the Scriptures from



the teachings of Rabbi Gamaliel right here on these steps.

We know that Jesus Himself taught here. Not only that He taught here, but He even referred to the cemetery that is right by this area on the

lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Jesus, pointing at the lower part of that cemetery, was quoted saying, **Matthew 23:27: “²⁷ ‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.’”**

But the story that I want to touch this morning, right here, is the story of the Feast of Pentecost, that festival where Jewish people are gathering on the 50th day after Passover had been celebrated. Not too many people understand the reason for gathering during that day. But we know that on that day, Jews were supposed to come to Jerusalem from all four corners of the world to celebrate the main three major holidays: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Those Jews, who are well-versed in many different languages as they came from different countries, were all gathering right here in this area, as this is the only place for the gathering of thousands of people for the option of going through a ritual bath, through the water baptism, during those days. I'm reading from **Acts 2:1–18**, the portion that talks about that amazing Pentecost. **“¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. ⁷ Then as they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those who dwell in Mesopotamia, Judea**

and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.’ ¹² So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ ¹³ Others mocking said, ‘They are all full of new wine.’ ¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.’” Which means it’s about 9 a.m., “¹⁶ ‘But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days;...”” Peter gave a bold speech during those days. A speech that basically reveals the messiahship and the lordship of Jesus throughout the Old Testament to the people who were here. Peter was bold. Peter was energetic. Peter was completely in contrast to what we know in John chapter 21.

Isn’t that amazing, that the Bible gives us a great contrast between the events of Pentecost during that time, and the events of the first Pentecost celebrated just below Mount Sinai as the Jewish people received the Law on Mount Sinai. The Bible says that in Exodus 32:28 that while Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai and the people of Israel were worshiping the golden calf, God struck them with such punishment that 3,000 people perished that day. It's kind of amazing and a great contrast to the fact that when the Holy Spirit descended on that day of Pentecost right here, and as [He] came in the shape of tongues of fire just as when the law was given on Mount Sinai, 3000 men got saved right here during that day. What a beautiful not only

contrast, but maybe even fulfillment of that which was the shadow below Mount Sinai and that which is the substance right here. We know that in **Romans 5:20** it says, “²⁰ **Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,...**” God's grace is more than enough for any problems or need. In **2 Corinthians 12:9**, it says, “... ⁹ **‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’**” What a great transformation we have of Peter right here from John 21 to Acts 2. It's not anymore the *grieving-Peter* about the death of Christ; it is now *bold-Peter*, filled with the power of the resurrection. Acts chapter 2 is all about the resurrection. It's all about the power of the resurrection. It's all about the work of the Holy Spirit.

What about you? Do you know the power of His resurrection? Who is Jesus in your life? Is He still baby Jesus that you have to turn to Mother Mary in order to ask something from Him? Or is He Jesus who remains on the cross, and you kind of feel that He's helpless and may not be able to help you? Or do you really know the power of His resurrection? The power of His resurrection is what makes it all different. Mohammed died. Buddha died. All these people died! All those religions are based on dead figureheads. Jesus was resurrected. Jesus is alive and that's what makes the events of the first Pentecost right here something completely different. Jesus resurrected from the dead. Death has been defeated. Death lost its sting. That sting lost its power. Do you know the power of His resurrection?

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** Scripture is taken from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.*

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