Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif

Old City of Jerusalem
The first thing to know about Temple Mount is that it’s not a mountain. It’s an elevated plateau in Jerusalem, covering approximately 35 acres.
Temple Mount contains three sacred sites: Dome of the Rock (green arrow), Al-Aqsa Mosque (purple arrow), and the Western Wall (blue arrow). It also contains a sacred rock, which you’ll hear more about in the Dome of the Rock presentation.
Sacred to 3 world religions

- Jews
- Christians
- Muslims

For Jews, Temple Mount occupies the sites of first and second temples (see next two slides).
Temple Mount in the First Century

This is a model of the Second Temple. It was completed in 515 BCE, but was renovated and expanded by Herod the Great in approximately 20 BCE. You can see Herod’s retaining walls clearly in this image.
The holiest spot in the temple compound was the Holy of Holies...
The Holy of Holies was so sacred holy that only the high priest of the temple could enter, and even he entered only one day a year (on Yom Kippur, the holiest of Jewish holidays). According to Jewish and Christian tradition, the Holy of Holies was originally built to house the Ark of the Covenant, the chest that held Moses’ stone tablets, on which God had inscribed the Ten Commandments.
Sacred to 3 world religions

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- Who can summarize why Temple Mount is sacred to Jews?
- For Christians, Temple Mount is sacred because it’s a place where Jesus would have visited. For example, the famous scene in which Jesus overturns the tables of the money lenders took place at this temple.
- For Muslims, the site is sacred because it’s where Muhammad departed for his trip to heaven. We’ll learn more about that when we learn about the origins of Islam.
A place with two names

- Temple Mount
- Haram al-Sharif/Noble Sanctuary
- Under Muslim control from 1187-1967

There isn’t an in-between, politically correct name for this place. Jews and Christians call it Temple Mount; Muslims call it Haram al-Sharif, which means Noble Sanctuary. No matter what you call it, you’re taking a side.
1967: Jews retake Old City; Noble Sanctuary remains under Arab (Muslim) control

• Anyone can visit Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, but sacred Jewish prayer items cannot be visible. Only Muslims are allowed to visibly pray. (Obviously, no one can stop non-Muslims from inner prayer.)
• Dome of the Rock is open to Muslims only.