

Solomon's Quarries

The entrance to Solomon's Quarries built by Suleiman in 1535 is under the north wall of the Old City, and sits on the rock escarpment of Mount Moriah. Solomon's Quarries are also known as Zedekiah's Cave or Zedekiah's Grotto. The stones for Solomon's temple may have been hewn and taken from this quarry around 970 BC (1 Kings 6:1). It seems certain that King Herod returned here in 19 BC for some of



the stone used to build his temple. Some of the stones in the Western Wall, for example, could easily have originated in this quarry. The quarry entrance is under the north wall of the Old City about 500 feet to the east of the Damascus Gate. It was concealed during the Ottoman Empire by Suleiman in 1540 for security reasons and was not rediscovered until 1854 when James Barclay found it and snuck in one night. Josephus mentions the "Royal The entrance to Solomon's Quarries Caverns" (War 5:147) in his discussion of the north wall and gate built by Herod Agrippa I in 41BC on the same location as today's wall and Damascus Gate. This quarry became known as Zedekiah's Cave because 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52 tell how Zedekiah led the city of Jerusalem in 586 even though the Babylonian army had encircled the city for 24 months and had even entered to city to pillage and burn. How did Zedekiah escape entrapment in the city of Jerusalem at that time? The Bible indicates that he and his troops used a gate at night, but legend and the system of caves under the city provide additional information. There is reported a tunnel from the royal palace of David that was connected to the cave system under the Temple Mount on Mount Moriah, which would have been connected to this quarry. In fact, many ancient accounts and even modern reports claim that this cave system extends all the way to Jericho 13 miles away.



The entrance to Solomon's Quarries (or, Zedekiah's Cave) in the north wall just east of the Damascus Gate.



The stone ashlars were taken from this quarry. The straight cuts and grooves of the square blocks that were removed can still be seen.