

## THROUGH WHICH GATE DID JESUS MAKE HIS TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM?

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THIS question seems to be unnecessary, as literature shows that in nearly every age the eastern gate of the Temple, or the present "Golden Gate," is the one. But as recently a southern gate, generally called the "Double Gate," has been indicated as such under the name "Huldah Gate,"<sup>1</sup> it seems to me expedient to look a little more closely into the matter.

### 1. *The East Gate, now called "Golden Gate."*

Jesus came from Bethany, situated east of Jerusalem, and 15 furlongs distant from it (John xi, 18). Between is the Kidron Valley and the Mount of Olives, which one coming from there had to cross. There are two principal roads, the direct one going over the top of the Mount, the other, more to the south, somewhat longer, and crossing the ridge where it is much lower. Looking closely to the history, one becomes convinced that Jesus used the direct road over the top of the mountain, for he passed Bethphage, situated on that road or near to it (compare *Quarterly Statement*, 1897, p. 117), and in Luke xix, 37, the "descent" is mentioned, where the city could be seen, which points to the direct way, and so it was taken in all centuries. Coming this way the "Golden Gate," or the former "east gate" of the Temple, is just opposite. Its lintel is 100 feet higher than the point where the various roads are uniting at the present Garden of Gethsemane. And as here, or rather a little more south, the valley coming down from the neighbourhood of Jeremiah's grotto hill through Bezetha falls into the Kidron Valley, bridges crossed both and the line of the road made a curve, the first bridge crossing the Kidron westwards (as at present) to the low rocky shoulder between these two valleys, and the second crossing the other valley in a southwestern direction, whence the road ascended the hill in a slope of one in three and a half, or an angle of 16 degrees, up which a donkey could easily go. As the Golden Gate is situated further south than the bridges mentioned, it may be, and most probably was, that a flight of steps went down *direct* into the valley and up again on the other side for people walking and using the southern road over the ridge of Olivet. It has to be remarked that about 50 feet east of the Temple wall the city wall runs at a somewhat lower level than the sill of the Golden Gate, which wall had certainly also a door or gate, but of an inferior kind, with only a single entrance, whereas all the Temple gates had double entrances,

<sup>1</sup> It seems that recently "Huldah Gate" was explained to the German Emperor to be the gate through which Jesus entered six days before Easter, when the people were excited and cried, "Hosanna in the highest." Several members of the Emperor's suite asked me afterwards about it.

as the Golden Gate has to this day. The latter was called in Jewish time "Miphkad" (Neh. iii, 31), and according to the Talmud "Shushan"; whereas the gate in the outer wall was called "Sur" (2 Kings xi, 6). Between this city wall and the Temple wall were houses, forming a kind of suburb. Here riders had to dismount, as it was not lawful to pass the Temple gates riding. At the gates there was always a large free space or square, so when Jesus dismounted from the ass it caused some halting, and the people, who were crying "Hosanna!" pressed more together, so that even the city became aroused (Matt. xxi, 10). Having entered the Temple gate and passed its long vestibule, Jesus went up the flight of steps into the outer court, where, instead of pious, devotional people, he found market business going on, which he cast out (Matt. xxi, 12). There is nothing, either in the locality or in history, against the idea that this gate was the one by which Jesus entered on that solemn occasion.

This is mentioned by the earliest Christian writer, the Bordeaux Pilgrim, A.D. 330, as the "Eastern Gate." And Antoninus, about A.D. 560 to 570, says:—"From Gethsemane we ascended by many steps to the gate of Jerusalem. This is the gate of the city, which adjoins what was once the beautiful gate of the Temple, the threshold and posts of which still stand." Here we have the steps which I have mentioned above, also the city gate in the outer wall, and near it the "Gate of the Temple," or the present Golden Gate, of which at that time stood the lower parts, which, even now, after the restoration, are still recognisable. The restoration of this old Temple gate is generally ascribed to Justinian, but as that emperor died in A.D. 562, and even later, according to Antoninus, as quoted, the gate was still in ruins, it must have been built by one of his followers, between A.D. 560 and 629,<sup>2</sup> at which time it may have stood when Heraclius entered the city with the Holy Cross, on coming back from Persia, though I think the city wall gate probably then still existed and the Golden Gate lay in ruins, and that Heraclius took up the idea to build it again, and in a more monumental manner, as a memorial, first, of Christ's entry on Palm Sunday, and secondly, of his own triumphal entrance when bringing back the Cross of Christ. It then became a proper eastern gate, and the old city gate, with much of the remaining wall, was removed, so as no more to project above the surface of the ground, even as it is to-day, for underground Sir Charles Warren still found the ancient wall ("Recovery of Jerusalem," pp. 156, 157). This work, however, was not finished when eight years afterwards, A.D. 637, Omar took the city, and all building operations were arrested.<sup>3</sup> The openings of this double gate were walled up

<sup>1</sup> Hayter Lewis, "The Holy Places of Jerusalem," London, 1888, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> "Bœdeker" (German edition), 1891, p. 56. It dates most probably from the seventh century after Christ.

<sup>3</sup> This explains the unfinished condition of the building as at present seen.

by Omar, and remained so for some centuries, as neither of the pilgrims speak of it until the Crusaders got possession of the place, A.D. 1102. Saewulf mentions it, and says:—"There is the gate of the city at the eastern part of the *Temple*" (no more in the city wall), "which is called the Golden Gate. . . . By the same gate the Lord Jesus, coming from Bethany on Palm Sunday, entered the city sitting on an ass, the children singing 'Hosanna to the son of David!' By that same gate the Emperor-Heraclius returned triumphant from Persia, with the Cross of our Lord." Every year twice, on Palm Sunday and on the Feast of the Cross, in memory that Heraclius brought the Cross back through this gate, the procession came from the Mount of Olives and through this gate, the Patriarch riding on an ass. Hence it was *open* again, and provided with wooden doors, so that on other days it could be locked.<sup>1</sup> But when the Moslems, in A.D. 1187, again got possession of the Holy City it was walled up again, as it is to-day, and Christians could no more perform their ceremonies there, but had then to enter the city through the Zion Gate.<sup>2</sup> This ceremony was observed until the year 1738, when it was abandoned.

So we see that in all ages this eastern (or Golden) gate was considered to be the gate through which Jesus entered on Palm Sunday; the Huldah Gate is never mentioned.

## 2. *The Huldah Gate, i.e., the present "Double Gate."*

This gate is situated in the south wall of the Haram es Sherif, or the old Temple wall. It is mentioned by Josephus ("Antiq.," 15, 11, 5) and the Talmud (Middoth, 1, 3), where it is called the "two gates of Huldah." Huldah is the name of the weasel,<sup>3</sup> so some think these gates were called so, because they are like tunnels—people going in at one end and disappearing and coming out at the other, just as these animals do; but others, and the greater part, think the name is derived from the Prophetess Huldah (2 Kings xxii, 14; 2 Chron. xxxiv, 22), that her tomb was in the neighbourhood of the gate, and so the gate was called after her. For the Talmud says that besides the tombs of the kings, also the tomb of Huldah was inside the city, but no other—in what part of the city we do not know. According to the Scripture texts her house was in the "College," as the English Bible gives it, but others translate, in the "second quarter" of the city. The text makes the remark, "in Jerusalem." When this word is used for a certain part of the Holy City in respect to another part, it means the town on the western hill, whereas the part on the eastern hill was the Temple, with its surroundings, and Ophel. So I

<sup>1</sup> Theodorich, A.D. 1172, says that near the Garden of Gethsemane, where the crowds met our Lord with palm branches, there was a high place built up of stones where the Patriarch blessed the palm branches.

<sup>2</sup> See Quaresmius and others. (Tobler, "Golgotha," St. Gallen, 1851, p. 448, f.)

<sup>3</sup> Levit. xi, 29.

conclude the lodging of the prophetess was on the western and not on the eastern hill, and as most likely she was buried at the place where she had lived, her tomb could be in the neighbourhood of the Temple. This is also clear from the fact that the King had to send a deputation to her to ask her advice. If she had lived at, or very close to, the Temple or king's house, things would have been much simpler. Her house must have been at some considerable distance from the King's house, which latter was close to the Temple; and the double gate (or Huldah Gate) was situated at that time in the King's house itself. Besides all this, the Jews celebrated for a long time the tomb of Huldah on the Mount of Olives, now called Pelagia. All this proves that the tomb of Huldah was after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans, and so in the time of the second Temple, no longer known, although the gate in question may have been called Huldah Gate for some reason. But all this has no bearing on the question through what gate did Jesus enter on this solemn occasion? There was no special reason why He should have used this Huldah Gate. Besides this, there are other objections: coming from Bethany, and intending to go into the Temple, the Golden Gate was the very one and not any other. To use the Huldah Gate Jesus had not only to make a very much longer way, but to go down the Valley Kidron as far as the spot where the slope of the Ophel hill was such that a donkey could easily go up. This is in the neighbourhood of the Pool of Siloam, about 100 feet deeper than the ground near the Garden of Gethsemane, and so Jesus would have had to descend 100 feet deeper, and instead of only rising about 100 feet at the Garden of Gethsemane, where the ascent is even easier than at any place on the eastern side of Ophel or the Temple mount, had to rise 200 feet. Besides all this, the idea that Jesus might have used the Huldah Gate is not old but modern. Professor Dr. Sepp is the originator of it, asserting in "Jerusalem und das Pilage Land," Schaffhausen, 1873, vol. i, p. 393, the double or Huldah Gate to be the one the Lord Jesus passed through under the hosanna shouting of Palm Sunday. "For at the Golden Gate the ascent would have been too rugged and bold,<sup>1</sup> whereas at Ophel it was smooth and passing the whole street of the town, where the people became aroused" (Matt. xxi, 10). So he asserts, for the first time, in direct opposition to the tradition that the Huldah Gate was the real one and not the Golden Gate.

The Huldah Gate idea is therefore only 25 years old, whereas the tradition lasted for 1800 years, and will, as is shown above, overcome or outlive the other.

<sup>1</sup> If the Emperor Heraclius could perform the task of entering by the Golden Gate, and afterwards, in the Crusading time, the Patriarch do the same, also riding on an ass, certainly also Jesus could do it, and in a time when Palestine was thoroughly cultivated more than it was in later times after so many disturbances and destructions.