Cross that Border!

This Yom Yerushalayim we will visit Yemin Moshe's hidden streets and parks. Last year's tour on these pages traced the Old City wall; now descend into the valley below Jaffa Gate, cross at the traffic light. Enter the park where a globe beckons you to enter. Artistically representing a medieval drawing of Jerusalem at the world's center, enjoy the echo inside. Continue forward to David's Village gate, and see the Tannous Bros. stone sign and historical explanation. I still remember the original building; evoking life under Jordanian guns, Jerusalem's front line, 1948-1967.

Turn left onto a gravel path, up to the asphalt road, and follow it down left until the right turn indicated by blue street signs (Hatikvah). Once on the path, take the right-hand stairs, then cross to the left-hand stairs, traverse the small, open park with benches towards the left, and up again. A left onto a tree-lined broken asphalt road, sharp right up through a parking lot, and left onto the first row of houses (shhh!).

Follow Hatikvah Street until it dead-ends into HaMetzuda, and look up at the building facing you, from where an Arab sniper shot brave young fighter Avraham Michael Kirschenbaum on Shevat 30 5708 – he was fighter 36 of the tragic “Lamed-He/35” massacre; due to a mishap that night, he was sent here instead. After being transferred, a British sniper killed wounded Kirschenbaum; the synagogue memorial plaque hints at who was responsible. All three Jewish militias mourned him. Kirschenbaum’s grandmother was one of the original tenants of Mishkenot Sha’ananim. She was the person who brought milk to the area.

Go down HaMetzuda and turn right onto Pele Yoetz Street, to the 1899 Beit Yisrael Synagogue. Prayers continued here under fire during the tough war decades. Broad windows enable a view inside, enjoy the porch view and signs; descend the steps on the left into the former cistern, now a study hall. Rabbi Chanoch Yeres invites your calls for assistance (+972 525666230). Below the synagogue is a kindergarten, once another synagogue. The synagogue upstairs was for the Prushim (Litvaks). The synagogue downstairs was for the Chasidim.

Continue to HaMigdal Street, down and right onto HaMevaser Street with art, flowers and the stone square in the middle which marks the entrance to the community water cistern. Continue another block to the small, almost vertical alleyway called R. Yitzchak Badahab Street, and turn left to enjoy the 1897 Turkish Sephardic Synagogue, Malki Street No. 2. Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion celebrated his election by being chazzan here on Shabbat. Community members who lived for decades across from Jordanian soldiers and snipers on the Old City walls were forced to sell and move out, and some walk in from all over the city. Yemin Moshe Street straddling the hill leads either down to the park and to restaurants and educational facilities, or up to the windmill! (+972 25661441). See Sir Moses’ recreated carriage (he traveled with a personal shochet) and artistic depictions of his manifold deeds. The famed porch here faces the Old City and distant Jordan; catch a marriage proposal almost any night.

Up to the parking lot, right to signs enumerating Jerusalem’s growth since 1860; grassy knoll to your left. At its end, walk forward and a touch left to an arbor covering benches and overlooking a lovely fountain, with benches all around. A series of paths and parks leads through the Zionist Confederation House gate, and onward with steps and paths until you see a canopy on your right. Weddings are often held here. Look at the Old City, with Teddy Park and the artists area below. Now reach the road – left takes you to the hotels and down; right returns you to our starting point below Jaffa Gate.

You have freely walked through borders and can now appreciate the blessing bestowed upon us by the sacrifices made in the Six-Day War, and all the decades and centuries leading up to it.

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