

Holy Places

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson looks at holy places. It covers mostly the monotheistic religions and some of the holy places that are associated with them. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Benares
2. Temple Mount
3. Golgotha
4. Mecca

1. Benares

Every religion has a region where it originated. Hinduism emerged in the area that is now called India. For Hindus, a city of great importance in India is called Benares, the city of Shiva. Shiva is one of the great Hindu gods. Many people travel to Benares on **pilgrimage** as an act of devotion to show their love for Shiva and other gods.

The city of Benares has more than 2,000 temples, and people often travel from one pilgrimage site to another for weeks or months, visiting different holy places, cities, buildings, and natural structures.



TERM TO KNOW

Pilgrimage

A sacred journey that may be completed physically, seeking out a particular place such as a shrine or important geographical location, or it could be a metaphorical journey.

2. Temple Mount

Jerusalem could be considered the Most Holy Place in the world. All three monotheistic religions have historical claims to the city and countless numbers enter Jerusalem on pilgrimage every year. **Temple Mount**, also called

Mount Moriah, is usually considered the most holy site for Jews, and it is equally significant for Christians. For many Muslims, it also holds special power in the tradition of Islam.



Temple Mount in Jerusalem

For followers of Judaism, it is believed to be the site where God gathered the dust to create Adam, the first man. It is the place where Abraham was instructed to sacrifice his first son, Isaac. It was also the location of the first and the second Jewish temples. Many Christians understand Temple Mount to be the place where Jesus spent much of his ministry.



TERM TO KNOW

Temple Mount

A significant place in Jerusalem for Jews.

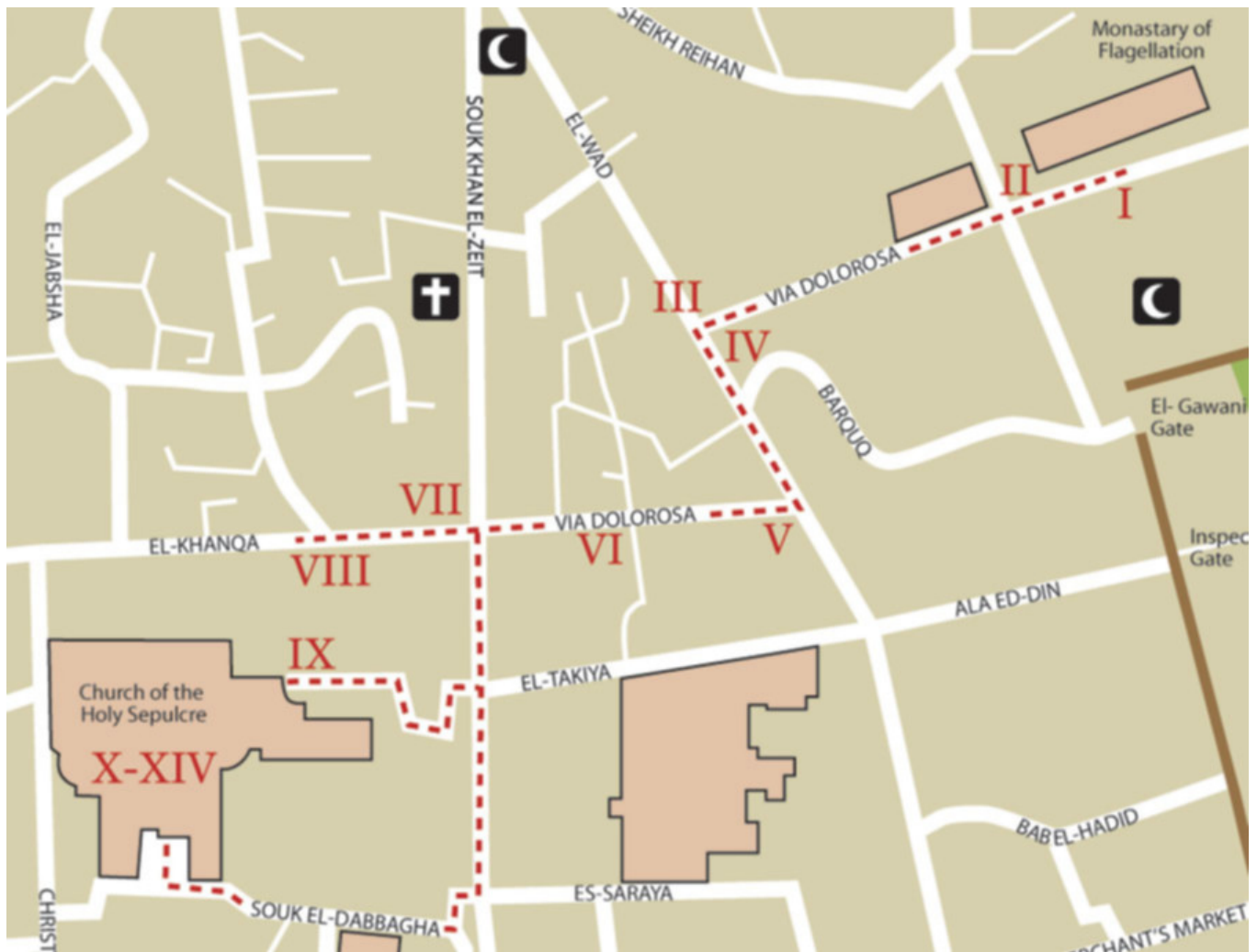
3. Golgotha

Many pilgrims travel to another holy site nearby called Calvary or Golgotha. Followers believe that this was the location of Jesus' condemnation, crucifixion, and burial.



Jesus being Led to Golgotha, Theosophanes the Cretan, 16th Century CE

Many pilgrims come to travel this “way of sorrows,” as it’s called. The pilgrim undergoes a symbolic identification and comes to terms with the suffering of Christ. These are also commonly called the stations of the cross.



A map of the route of the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem's Old City by David Bjorgen

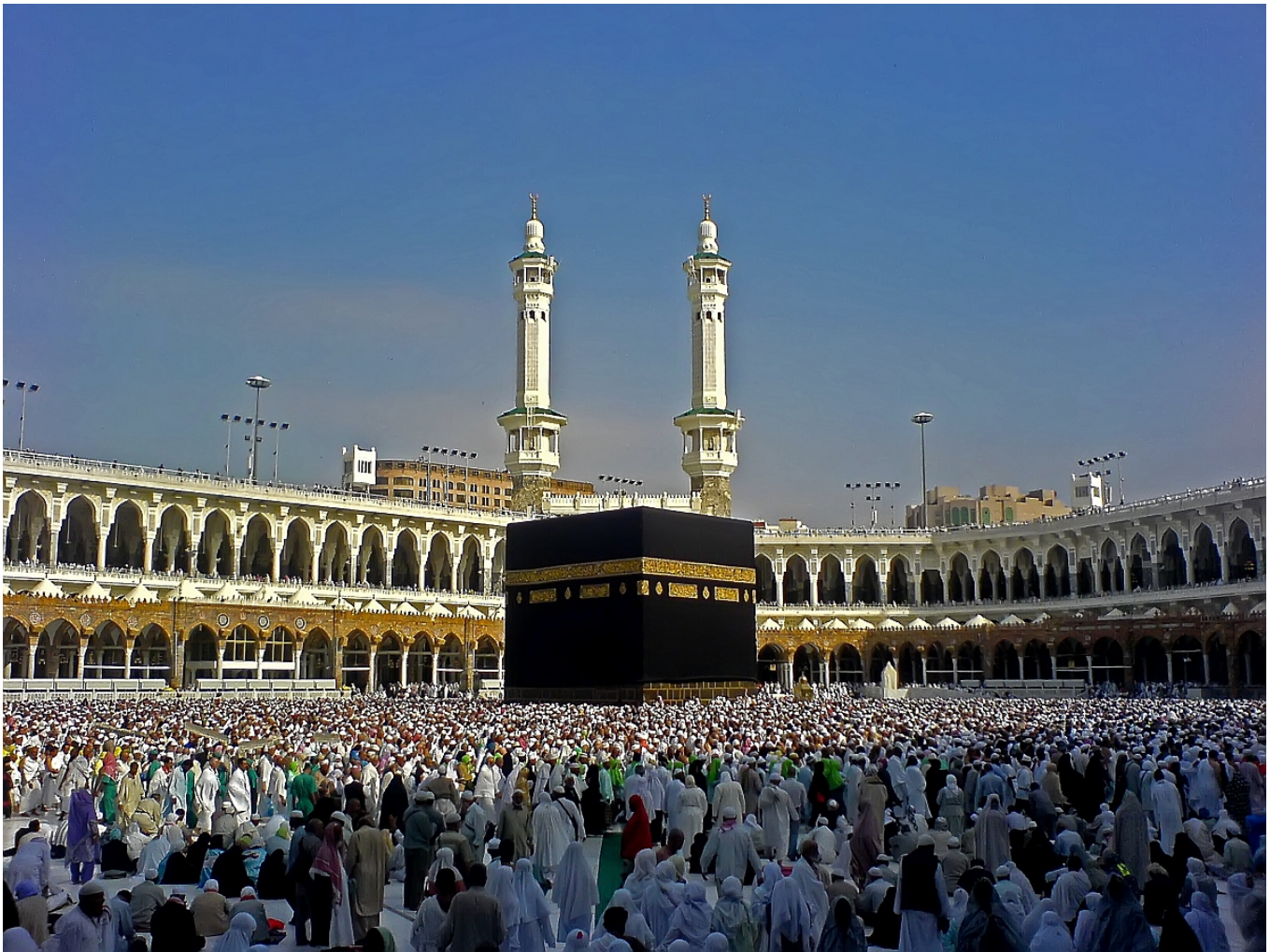
The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built in the first centuries after Christ's death and has gone through many transformations. What hasn't changed is the belief that this was, indeed, the site of Jesus' last hours, his burial, and Resurrection. The Church has always remained on the ground of these holy events.



Church of the Holy Sepulcher

4. Mecca

Jerusalem has significance for Muslims as well because their prophet Muhammad is believed to have traveled there before returning to Mecca, his birthplace and the site of his revelation, in what is now Saudi Arabia. For Muslims, Mecca is the most holy city. It is here where the Kaaba is located, which Muslims believe to have first been constructed by Abraham, patriarch of the three monotheistic faiths, and his second son, Ishmael. The Kaaba was a site of pilgrimage in Mecca before Islam, and it said that Muhammad restored the worship at this location to the one God.



Islamic pilgrims visiting Mecca in what is now Saudi Arabia

During the **Hajj**, six million pilgrims come to **Mecca** to circumambulate the Kaaba. The circling of the Kaaba represents the unity of believers and their collective faith in one god. Turning seven times counterclockwise in worship represents this commitment.

Performing the pilgrimage of the Hajj is one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith. If one can afford it and is physically able, one must perform the Hajj at least once before dying.



TERMS TO KNOW

Kaaba

In Islam, the most sacred house of worship, or mosque, located in Mecca.

Mecca

A holy city for Muslims; the birthplace of prophet Muhammad and the site where the Qur'an was revealed. Muslims make pilgrimage, or Hajj, to this city, which is located in Saudi Arabia.



SUMMARY

For Hindus, the city of Shiva, **Benares**, is a place where people travel on pilgrimage to show their love and devotion to the Hindu god, Shiva. Jerusalem has great significance for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. For Jews, the **Temple Mount** represents the spot where God gathered the dust to create the first man, Adam. It also is the site of the first and second temples. For Christians, it represents the place where Jesus spent much of his youth and ministry. It is also where he, nearby in **Golgotha**, was condemned to death, crucified, and resurrected. The city of **Mecca** is a holy place for Muslims because it is the birthplace of Muhammad and houses the Kaaba.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Hajj

A pilgrimage, or journey, to the holy city of Mecca taken by Muslims to visit the Kaaba, a sacred shrine.

Kaaba

In Islam, the most sacred house of worship, or mosque, located in Mecca.

Mecca

A holy city for Muslims; the birthplace of prophet Muhammad and the site where the Qur'an was revealed. Muslims make pilgrimage, or Hajj, to this city, which is located in Saudi Arabia.

Pilgrimage

A sacred journey that may be completed physically, seeking out a particular place, such as a shrine or important geographical location, or it could be a metaphorical journey.

Temple Mount

A significant place in Jerusalem for Jews.