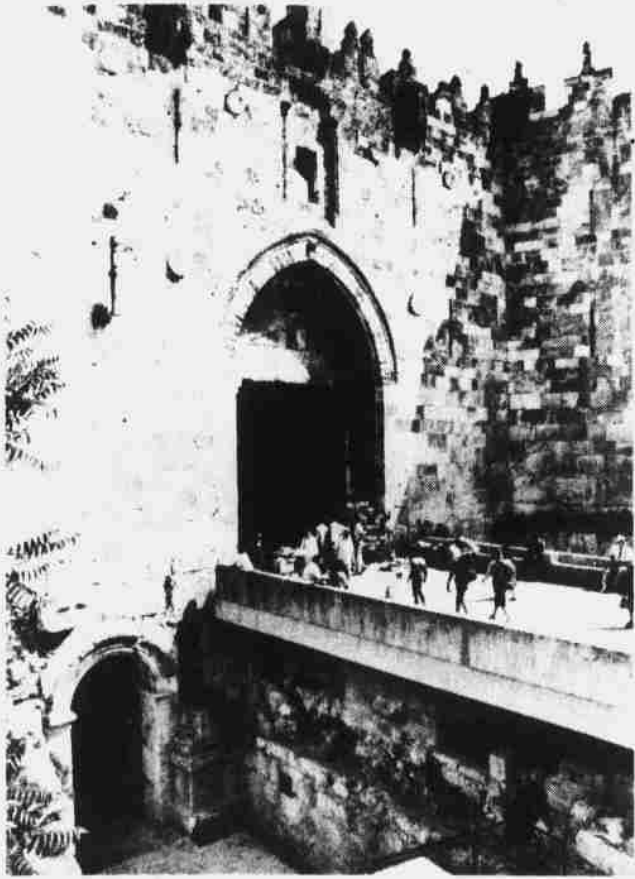


# THE GATEWAY TO ROMAN JERUSALEM



Countless millions of pedestrians have strolled or strayed through Jerusalem's Damascus Gate without stopping to glance down at the arch just peeking above ground level off to one side. Today, some 1,850 years after its construction, that arch stands once more revealed in all its glory, rid of the debris that had gradually swallowed it up.

The story of the arch starts in 135 A.D., the year the Bar Kochba revolt of Jews against Roman rule was quelled. The Roman Emperor Hadrian ordered the obliteration of any "Jewishness" in Jerusalem by razing the city and building in its stead a Roman military colony, access to which was forbidden to anyone circumcised.

Even the name Jerusalem was banned and the new town was called Aelia Capitolina (Aelia; the middle of Hadrian, and Capitolina; the divine Roman trinity of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva). The excavated arch carries an inscription mentioning Colonia Aelia Capitolina, conveniently ruling out any guess-

ing about its origin. The arch was part of a triple, triumphal entryway that stood at the head of the north-south axis of the town, the *Cardo Maximus*. Every Roman town was laid out in grids, and the second axis, running from west to east, was called the *Decumanus Maximus*. Both streets were bordered by colonnades, and at their intersection stood the *Tetraphylon* or "four-pillars."

The Byzantines converted the guard rooms into two storeys. The staircase was blocked off and its lower part converted into a water cistern. The room now had a vaulted ceiling and was used for olive oil production. Remains of the olive press have now been uncovered and restored.

Even though the olive press went out of use centuries ago, its existence is inferred by the Arab name of the adjacent

modern street, *Khan el Zeit* (the Inn of the Olive). The Crusaders completely blocked the room off in the 13th century, probably to prevent invaders from reaching the top of the city wall they had rebuilt.

One of Jerusalem's greatest charms is the continuing process of discovering the past. Here at the Damascus Gate and the uncovered Hadrian's arch, the visitor can feel a part of the rediscovery process.

JERUSALEM; ISRAEL; - THE RECENTLY UN-EARTHED SECOND-CENTURY ROMAN GATEWAY INTO JERUSALEM (LOWER LEFT) VIES FOR ATTENTION WITH THE GRAND DAMASCUS GATE, A MAJOR ATTRACTION OF JERUSALEM'S OLD CITY SINCE THE RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY BY SULEIMAN THE MAGNIFICENT. THE ROMAN ENTRYWAY WAS ONE OF THREE ARCHES WHICH COMPRISED A TRIUMPHAL ENTRANCE TO THE CITY BUILT BY HADRIAN.

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