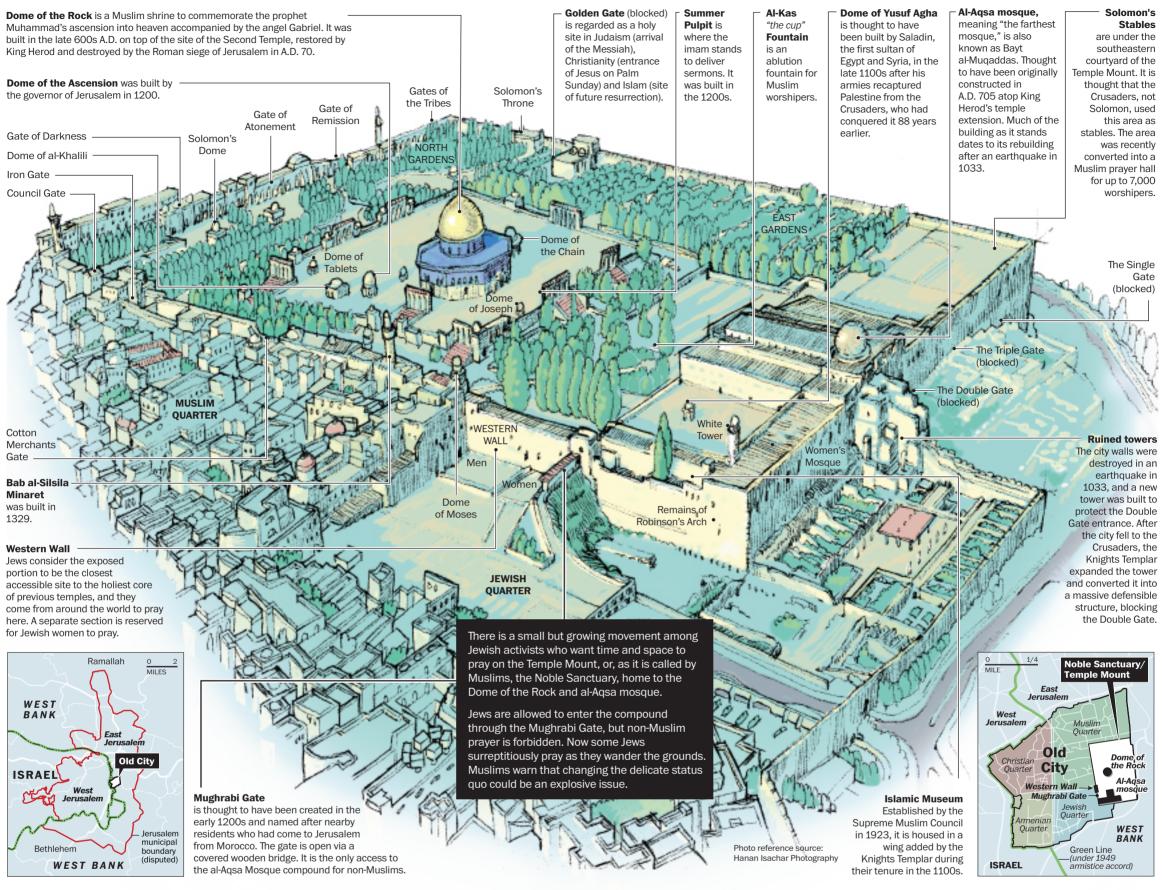
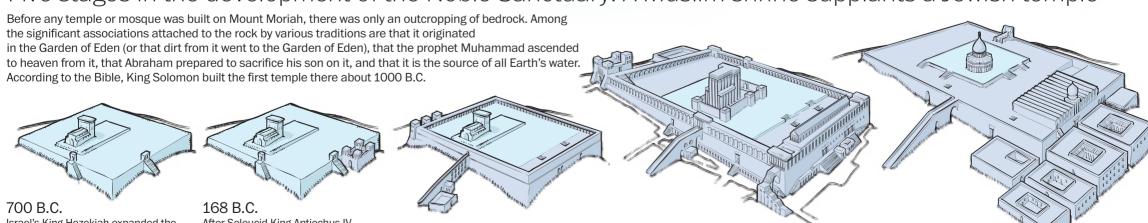
The most contested real estate on Earth?

Muslims call it the Noble Sanctuary. Jews and Christians call it the Temple Mount. Built atop Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, this 36-acre site is the place where seminal events in Islam, Judaism and Christianity are said to have taken place, and it has been a flash point of conflict for millenniums. Many aspects of its meaning and history are still disputed by religious and political leaders, scholars, and even archaeologists. Several cycles of building and destruction have shaped what is on this hilltop today.



Five stages in the development of the Noble Sanctuary: A Muslim shrine supplants a Jewish temple



Israel's King Hezekiah expanded the Temple Mount after his predecessor, Ahaz, plundered the temple. He built the walls and platform that form the courtyard. The first temple stood until Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it in 586 B.C., and Jews built a second

After Seleucid King Antiochus IV
Epiphanes ransacked the city, he built
a fortress called Akra adjacent to the
grounds and erected an altar to Zeus
in the temple. Oppressive anti-Judaism
laws sparked the Maccabean revolt
that Hanukkah commemorates, and
the fortress was demolished.

142 to 63 B.C.

Under the Hasmonean Dynasty, founded by the Maccabees, the temple was "purified" and restored and its platform extended to the south.

20 B.C.

King Herod ordered a major renovation and expansion of the Second Temple and greatly enlarged the square. All four New Testament gospels tell the story of Jesus chasing money changers out of this temple. It was destroyed during a Roman invasion under Emperor Titus in A.D. 70.

A.D. 691

During the Umayyad period, the Dome of the Rock was built over what was thought to be the innermost portion of the original temple, including the Holy of Holies, which only the high priest could enter. Al-Aqsa mosque was erected over part of Herod's addition, and several public buildings were later added.