

JERUSALEM SCENES

A street in the Jewish Quarter



Looking at the above picture in order to formulate a few comments about it, I could not help contrast the scene with the tree-lined suburban streets of the area in which I live, the kind of environment in which most readers of this magazine will live. In contrast, when we read the Bible, we are reading a book centred in the land of Israel long ago, where most people lived in surroundings much more like those depicted in our picture. The towns and cities of ancient Israel were not spread out like the cities of today; people for the most part lived in houses closely joined to each other, reached by narrow alleyways, and without the gardens which characterise many homes today.

Our picture is of the Old City of Jerusalem. Yet the buildings are not old. Prior to the independence of Israel in 1948, this area, the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, would, like the other quarters, have been a maze of old streets and buildings. When Jordan took over East Jerusalem in 1948, the Jews were driven out, and the area was left largely unoccupied and badly damaged. After the Six-Day War of June 1967, it was first partly excavated, with many significant remains being discovered, and then rebuilt, using the limestone that underlies Jerusalem. Today it is a maze of narrow streets and alleyways which are fascinating to explore, with here and there a plaque drawing attention to some aspect of Jewish history. Our picture shows one of the wider streets; most are too narrow to take a vehicle. The name over the shop doorway reminds us that this building is built over the line of the ancient *Cardo*, which we will look at in our next issue.—*Tony Benson*