

# The Golgotha Unveiled from the Writings of Maria Valtorta Is Not the Traditional One

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## Abstract

Maria Valtorta (MV) (1897-1961)—an Italian mystic who claimed to have visions of Jesus’s life—describes Jesus’ crucifixion with many details from which significant data can be retrieved. My investigation based on these data and the topography of northwest Jerusalem in the I century AD, shows that Jesus’ crucifixion place, Golgotha (the “skull”), is neither at the Holy Sepulchre nor in the Garden Tomb area. The paved road to Golgotha she accurately describes arrives at its top with the minimum mean route gradient; its half way defines two distinct tracts with same height and same walking time but different mean route gradient; at half way Jesus is allowed to walk to the top in a spiral country road less steep than the second tract. The paved road leads to a place where a few years after Jesus’ crucifixion the Psephinus Tower, described by Flavius Josephus, was erected, in the area known today as the Russian Compound. In conclusion, the Golgotha unveiled from MV’s writings was at the same location of the Psephinus Tower.

## Keywords

Garden Tomb, Golgotha, Gordon’s Calvary, Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, Maria Valtorta, Psephinus Tower, Roman Crucifixion, Russian Compound

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## 1. Two Places for Golgotha, or More?

Since the early IV century Christians venerated the evangelical places of the Holy Land, and millions of them have visited the place that, according to Tradition, saw the crucifixion, burial and resurrection (Golgotha, or Calvary) of Jesus of Nazareth, namely the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Bahat, 1986; Biddle, 1999; Conant, 1958; Corbo, 1981; Dawson, 2021; Kelley, 2019; Gibson & Taylor, 1994; Piccirillo, 2011; Tucci, 2019). Since the XIX century, some protestant denominations have considered Golgotha the place known as Gordon’s Calvary, in

the Garden Tomb area (Barkay, 1986).

Now, the reader of *l'Evangelo come mi è stato rivelato* (*The Gospel as revealed to me*) written by Maria Valtorta (MV) (1897-1961)—an Italian mystic who claimed to have visions of Jesus' life, whose assessment is, of course, beyond science and, therefore, my judgment—is surprised, as was MV herself, because the Golgotha Hill she “sees” does not at all resemble the two places just mentioned (Valtorta, 2009).

The aim of this paper is to determine the location of Golgotha according to what she writes on the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, which she narrates with many details. From them, by studying the topography of Jerusalem in the I-century AD (Anno Domini), I have determined a particular place—which is neither the Holy Sepulchre nor the Garden Tomb—which unexpectedly fits all the details MV reports, either explicitly or implicitly.

A few years later after the crucifixion, in this place, or very near it, the Psephinus Tower was built as part of the Third Wall (Tsafrir, 1999; Ritmeyer & Ritmeyer, 2017), in the area known today as the Russian Compound. The area today is, of course, changed because it was largely modified by centuries of building, destroying and rebuilding.

In conclusion, the paper examines the correlation between a twentieth-century “vision” of first-century Jerusalem and the layout of first-century Jerusalem, and reaches conclusions regarding different sites in first-century Jerusalem based on information contained in the “alleged” vision. However, it must be noted that I have studied her writings. In other words, MV is an Italian literary author who proposes a different location of Golgotha. This methodology is controversial, of course, in a historical paper, but strictly speaking, this is not a paper on history, but a paper on interpreting a text and checking whether this interpretation may lead to a plausible location for Golgotha. Only excavations of archeologists will finally decide on it.

After this introduction, Section 2 sketches MV's biography and literary works; Section 3 presents the two traditional sites of Golgotha, the Holy Sepulchre and Gordon's Calvary; Section 4 makes the reader acquainted with Jerusalem in the I century AD; Section 5 reports the topical passages in which MV describes the Golgotha Hill and Jesus' crucifixion, from which the “data” necessary to find the path to Golgotha and its location are retrieved in Section 6; Section 7 presents some likely paths leading to Golgotha; Section 8 determine *the* path to Golgotha; Section 9 discusses conjecturally why the site of the Holy Sepulchre was likely chosen as the Golgotha in the early IV century; Section 10 shows that the path leading to Golgotha coincides with the road going to the place where later the Psephinus Tower was built, therefore indicating that Golgotha was located in the same place; finally, Section 11 draws a conclusion.

## **2. Maria Valtorta and Her Inexplicable Multi-Disciplinary Knowledge**

Maria Valtorta was an Italian writer active in the years of World War II and just

after. Her literary and voluminous work (Matricciani, 2022a)—based, as she claims, on mystic visions, whose assessment is, of course, beyond science—contains a detailed life of Jesus of Nazareth, especially the three years of His “public life”. A rigorous and scientific analysis of her writings on Jesus’ life—narrated in her main work *Il Vangelo come mi è stato rivelato* (*The Gospel as revealed to me*, in the following EMV) (Valtorta, 2009), translated in many languages—shows that it contains many data concerning facts and events allegedly occurred 2000 years ago in the Holy Land, well beyond her knowledge, culture and skills (Matricciani & De Caro, 2017; Matricciani & De Caro, 2020; De Caro et al., 2020).

She reports, in real time during the alleged visions, what she sees, hears and even smells—as she claims—in a period lasting several years (Matricciani, 2022a). She mentions towns, villages, buildings, palaces, Roman roads, streets, mountain tracks, river Jordan, ports of the Roman Mediterranean, lakes (Tiberias, ancient Meron), torrents, mountains and hills, trees and flowers, fragrances and perfumes, dresses, food, weather, sceneries and monuments of the Holy Land in the time of Jesus, a geographical area she never visited.

Paralyzed below the waist and bedridden since 1934 (Valtorta, 1997; Centoni, 1987), she writes on a small stand, sitting on the bed with shoulders supported by pillows in her house in Viareggio (Tuscany, Italy), during World War II and the few following years.

In Valtorta’s house, there was a library with miscellaneous texts. However, in this library, there were no books on Palestine that, just in case, Maria Valtorta could consult (Valtorta, 2021). She had only a Bible and an Italian Dictionary (Valtorta, 2021).

In spite of a complete lack of any data possibly available in those days, every time some of the data she reports have been checked, they turn out to be unexpectedly correct, sometimes even anticipating what scholars would find years later she wrote about them (La Greca, 2019; De Caro et al., 2021b). For example, this is the case of the four towers of the Biblical town Jezreel (De Caro et al., 2020) or the case of mentioning a certain “Galen”, a doctor and philosopher she considers living in the I century AD (EMV chapter 129.1), only recently established to be a real person, different of the more famous Galen of Pergamon (La Greca et al., 2024).

She wrote in Italian 13,193 pages of 122 school notebooks of her time (Pisani, 2010; Matricciani, 2022a), without making any correction, with a set of fountain pens always filled with ink because she did not know when the alleged visions would come. In these notebooks, there are not only the events now published in the EMV, but also many other writings, as she intercalated the pages describing the events on Jesus’ life with pages on various topics (Matricciani, 2022a). The characters of the EMV speak differently from one another, they show different style, they “speak” as different real persons (Matricciani, 2022b).

All these texts are now scattered partly in the EMV and partly in other books (Matricciani, 2022a), all published by Centro Editoriale Valtortiano, and translated in many languages. In the little book *I Quadernetti* (Valtorta, 2006) there is

a miscellany of several topics, including the very interesting text on the alleged three St. Peter's burial sites, which has led to the likely discovery of his first burial site (De Caro et al., 2020) and has inspired the search of the third one (De Caro et al., 2021a).

The distribution of all this literary corpus in different books is due to Emilio Pisani (1935-2023)—his family printery published MV' writings since the years 1950's—who collated the text with the original manuscript, titled and numbered the chapters and divided them into numbered passages.

Marta Diciotti (1910-2001), caretaker and housekeeper of the Valtorta family since 1935 (Valtorta, 1997) and eyewitness of the writing activity—even at nights because she slept in the same bedroom—tells (Centoni, 1987) that Maria Valtorta could write from 2 to 6 hours without pauses, with steady speed, and that this activity could be repeated in the same day, up to 6 hours.

In the following, referring to her writings, I drop the adjective “alleged”, although I always mean it throughout the paper because it is not my task to declare, or establish, whether her “visions” were real, because this is beyond science. However, I present and discuss the data retrieved from her writings as if they were real, and show that, inexplicably, they do seem so.

Before investigating her writings, in the next two sections I first summarize the main characteristics of the Holy Sepulchre and Gordon's Calvary (Section 3), and then the topography of Jerusalem in the I century AD (Section 4). These notes are useful for getting acquainted with the background of my investigation.

### 3. Golgotha Today

In this section, I briefly summarize the main information available on the two places currently indicated as Golgotha, namely the Holy Sepulchre and Gordon's Calvary (Garden Tomb). Notice that the literature on them, especially the Holy Sepulchre, is immense, therefore I indicate only a few books and papers which may be the starting point for deepening the topic.

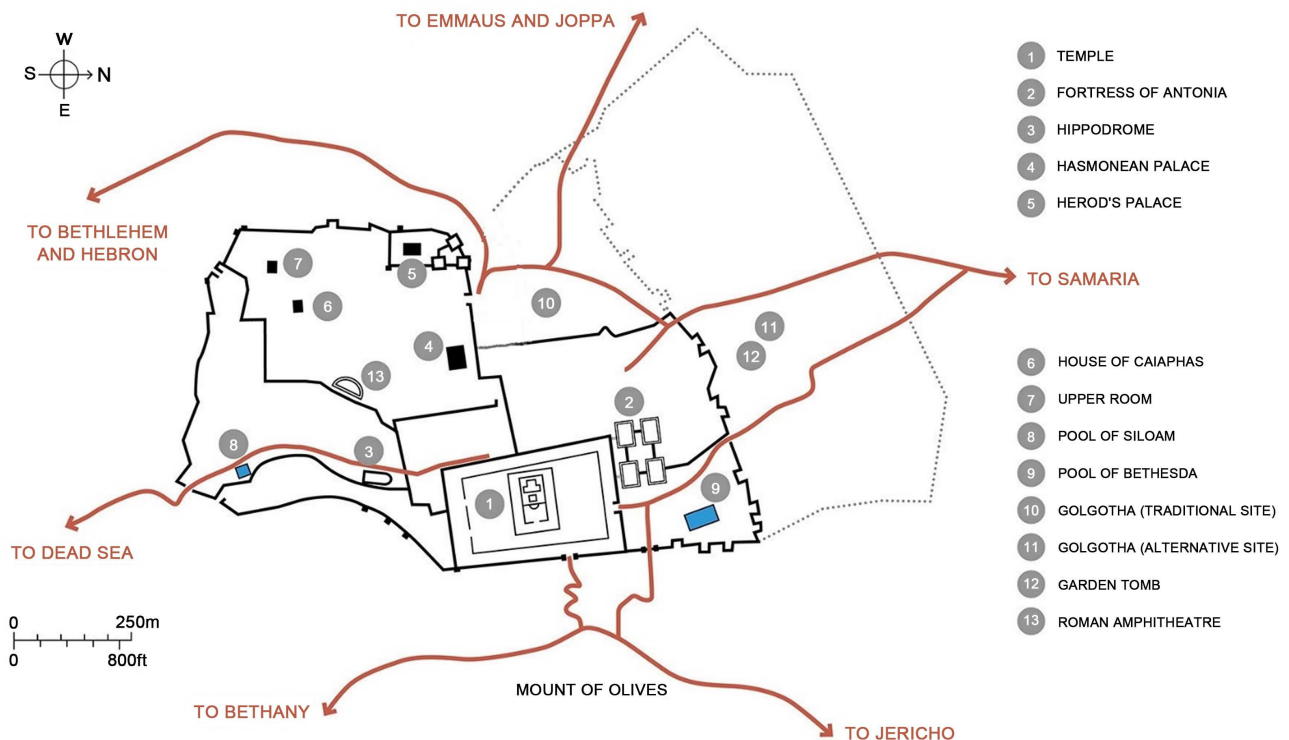
**Figure 1** shows the location of these sites and other main buildings, roads and localities in the I-century Jerusalem. The northern dotted line (north is in the right side of the figure) is the Third Wall, built after Jesus' death.

#### 3.1. The Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre

The Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre was first built in the IV-century, and later rebuilt, in the current Christian Quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem. The Basilica contains both the alleged site where Jesus of Nazareth was crucified (Golgotha) and the location of Jesus' empty tomb (Joseph of Arimathea's “new tomb”) (Avi-Yonah, 1950).

Archaeological excavations in the second half of the XX century showed that north of the city walls (First Wall) of the early I-Century AD there was a vast quarry, used since the VIII century BC (Before Christ) for extracting meleke limestone. The quarry was abandoned in the I-Century BC, largely filled and used for

vegetable gardens. In the carved rocky walls, along the hillside, a number of family tombs were hewn (Shtober-Zisu & Zissu, 2018; Avni, 2005; Galor, 2017; Ritmeyer & Ritmeyer, 2017; Wilkinson, 1972).



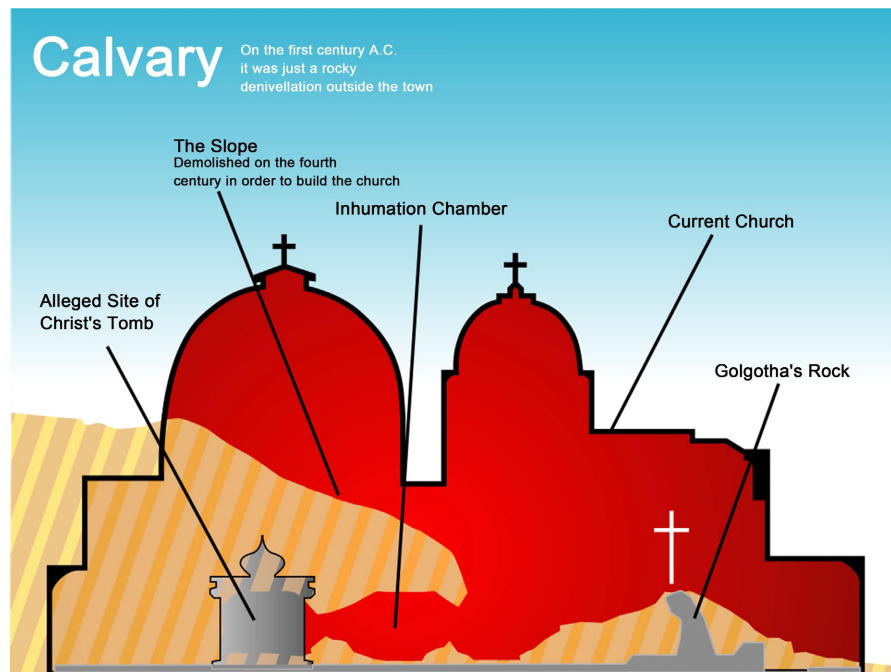
**Figure 1.** Map of Jerusalem in the I century AD. Notice that north is to the right. The northern dotted line is the Third Wall, built after Jesus' death. Contributed by FreeBibleimages, <https://www.freebibleimages.org/>, last access, 3 September 2024.

Golgotha, the “mount” on which the crosses were raised, would have had the appearance of a rocky knoll above and separated from the hill. When in 41-42 AD Herod Agrippa enlarged the city walls towards the northwest and started to build the Third Wall, the alleged Golgotha became part of the city. The bones in the tombs of the area were transferred outside the new walls, because both Romans and Jews allowed cemeteries only outside city walls. This is why no bones were found in the tomb of the Holy Sepulchre.

After the second Jewish revolt in 132-136 AD and the prohibition to all Jews to live in the city, Jerusalem was transformed into a Greek-Roman city, Aelia Capitolina (Tsafirir, 1999; Gibson, 2009). In the area of the alleged Golgotha a pagan temple was erected on an embankment, thus sealing off the ancient remains, as Eusebius—Bishop of Caesarea in the early IV century—writes (*De Vita Constantini*, III, 28).

In 324-325, Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem, at the request of Emperor Constantine the Great, destroyed the pagan structures built on this alleged Golgotha to look for the empty tomb of Jesus. In a surprised tone, and contrary to all expectations, Eusebius recounts the discovery of the “most holy of caves” (*De Vita*

*Constantini*, III, 28), the one which had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus. Following the discovery of the empty tomb and the rock knoll, Constantine's architects designed the first Holy Sepulchre complex, containing both Golgotha and the Tomb. Since then, these sites are *the* Golgotha and *the* Tomb (Dawson, 2021) for a vast majority of Christians (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Cross-section of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This figure positions Golgotha as it is currently located within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Dawson, 2021). See also: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/larrywkoester/37262985992/in/album-72157689253203885/>, last access, 3 September 2024.

### 3.2. Gordon's Calvary and Garden Tomb

In 1842, Otto Thenius, a German theologian and biblical scholar—relying on the research of Edward Robinson—was the first to publish a proposal that the rocky knoll north of the current Damascus Gate was Golgotha. In 1882-83, Charles George Gordon endorsed this view, therefore the site is known today as Gordon's Calvary. The location is beneath a cliff that contains two large sunken holes, which resemble the eyes of a skull. The skull-like appearance caused the place to be assumed as the Golgotha (Barkay, 1986). Nearby is an ancient rock-cut tomb known today as the Garden Tomb, which Gordon proposed as the tomb of Jesus. The Garden Tomb, however, dates to the VII century BC.

Now, to fit MV's observations on the Jerusalem of the I century AD and find the most probable path to Golgotha and its location, in the next section I summarize the main data on the topography of Jerusalem.

## 4. Jerusalem in the I Century AD

The maps of Jerusalem give the impression that the city is flat but Jerusalem is a

city built on hills and surrounded by hills. Because of this mountainous terrain, many streets in the Old City have steps built into them going up and down from one hill to another. To understand the city as it was in the time of Jesus it is important to become familiar with the hills on which the city was built (Avi-Yonah, 1968; Galor, 2017; Ritmeyer & Ritmeyer, 2017; Harrison, 2022).

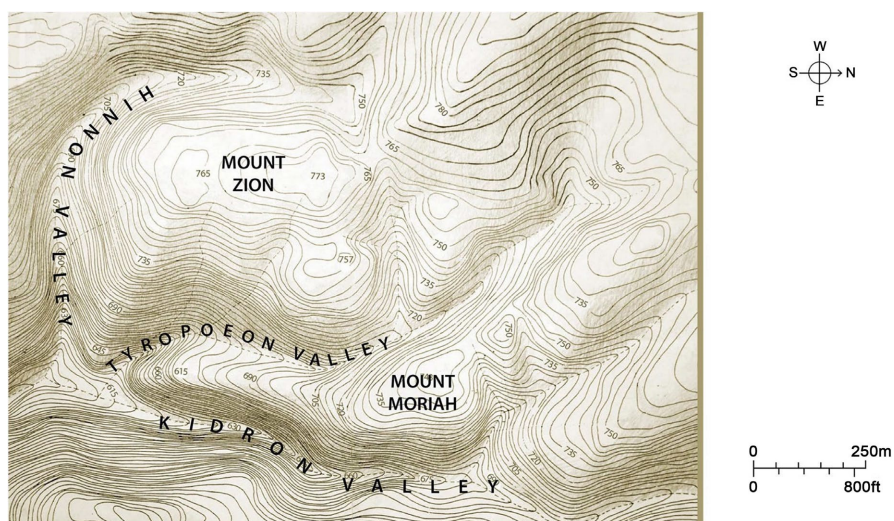
Jerusalem has four major hills separated by three valleys. **Figure 3** shows the topography of Jerusalem, with isolines (contour lines) traced every 3 metres in altitude (Vincent & Steve, 1954). The hill to the east of the Kydron Valley is the Mount of Olives, a ridge of hills that extends all the way north and south along the east side of the city.

Next, moving westward is the first valley, the Kidron (or Kedron) Valley. This too, goes all the way up and down, north and south.

The next valley is the Tyropoean Valley. This valley is harder to see because it cuts right down through the middle of the city from north to south. This brings it right up along the western side of the Temple Mount and from there down through the area once known as the Lower City, just to the west of the City of David. Here it continues to the southeast corner of the city, where the Pool of Siloam is located.

The next hill is the Western Hill. This area was known as the Upper City (or Mount Zion) in Jesus' days. In this part of the city there were the houses of the richest people, including Herod the Great's Palace.

Next is the Hinnon (or Hinnom) Valley, which starts out going eastward where it is not very deep, but then turns south as it increases in depth. By the time it gets south of the city, it turns eastward again. Here is a fairly deep canyon, with high rocky cliffs on the south side. It joins up with the Kydron Valley as it heads out to the dead sea.



**Figure 3.** Topography of Jerusalem mountainous area in the time of Jesus of Nazareth (after Vincent & Steve, 1954). Isolines of same altitude (contour lines) are traced every 3 metres. Copyright of Balage Balogh/www.Archaeologyillustrated.com, used with permission. <https://www.freebibleimages.org/>, last access, 3 September 2024.

The fourth hill, to the west of the city walls, is the Central Ridge, which is the peak of the Judean hill country, a ridge that runs right through the center of the country, north to south.

On this mountainous terrain the ancient Jerusalem was built, with its Temple, the Antonia Fortress, Herod the Great's Palace and other important buildings, squares and streets, as **Figure 4** shows (Ritmeyer & Ritmeyer, 2017).

Finally, notice that the city itself did not extend east of the Kidron Valley or west or south of the Hinnom Valley in pre-modern times.

In **Figure 4** Jerusalem is seen from southeast. The main road leading to the Gate in the north (this is MV's Judicial Gate) is the Tyropoen street. To its right we see the Antonia Fortress. From the Judicial Gate two roads exit. The road on the right goes northward to Samaria (see also **Figure 1**), the road on the left goes northwest to the place where Flavius Josephus sets the Psephinus Tower. This latter road turns out to be of great importance for my investigation, as shown in the following sections.

We are now familiar with the topography of Jerusalem, therefore we can read what MV writes about the crucifixion events.



**Figure 4.** Jerusalem in the time of Jesus of Nazareth seen from southeast (Ritmeyer & Ritmeyer, 2017). Copyright of Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, Ritmeyer Archaeological Design, used with permission.

## 5. The Golgotha Hill According to Maria Valtorta

In this section I report the main passages—extracted from the EMV (Valtorta, 2009) with chapter number and chapter subdivision indicated in parentheses, and the date of writing/vision—from which the information (the “data”) on Golgotha will be retrieved in Section 6. The translation from Italian to English and the emphasis are mine.

Before reading these passages, however, it is useful to further visualize the main area of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus involved in MV’s texts, very carefully drawn in **Figure 5** (see also **Figure 4**).

**Figure 5** shows the northwestern part of the city looking from southeast. The main road leading to the Gate (this is MV’s Judicial Gate) is the Tyropoeon street. To its right we see the Antonia Fortress and the Temple Mount; to its left we see part of the Upper City.



**Figure 5.** Northwestern part of Jerusalem looking from southeast. The main road leading to the Gate (this is MV’s Judicial Gate) is the Tyropoeon street. To its right we see the Antonia Fortress and the Temple Mount; to its left we see part of the Upper City. Copyright of Balage Balogh/<https://archaeologyillustrated.com/>, used with permission.

From the Judicial Gate we see the two roads (see also **Figure 4**), one going to Samaria, the other one going to the place where Flavius Josephus sets the Psephinus Tower.

Now we are ready to read MV’s writings carefully.

(608.1) (26 March 1945) “But before Jesus is taken outside [from the Antonia Fortress], into the street, to receive the cross and set out...” [Longinus] pours a light blond rosy liquid out of a real military canteen. «It will do You good. You must be thirsty. And the sun is shining outside. And *the way is a long one.*»

(608.2) “In the *little square* [just outside the Antonia Fortress] there are already some mounted soldiers...”

(608.3) “Longinus spurs his horse and the procession begins to move slowly. ... Longinus try to take the way towards the walls. «You must not do that! You must not! It is not legal! The Law prescribes that condemned men are to be seen in the town where they sinned!» ... Jesus comes down the three steps that from the lobby take one into the square.”

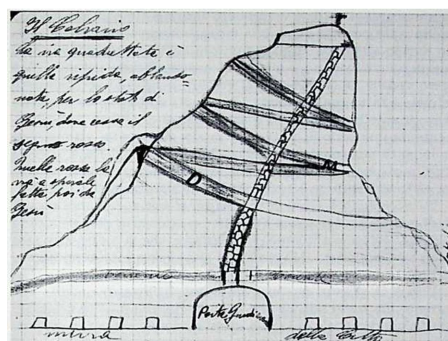
(608.4) “But upon arriving at a certain spot, the soldiers make a perfect manoeuvre and... the procession deviates abruptly along a *street that goes directly towards the walls, downhill*, a good short cut to the place of the execution.”

(608.4) “Many people have already assembled at the Judicial Gate [this seems to be the Fish Gate] ... Beyond the Gate there is a stream and a little bridge.”

(608.5) “The ascent to Calvary [Golgotha] begins. A barren road, without the least shade, paved with *uneven stones*, that goes straight up the hill. Here again, when I used to read, I read that Calvary was a few metres high. It may be so. It is certainly not a mountain. But it is a hill, *not certainly lower than the mount of the Crosses is, with respect to the Lungarni, where the Basilica of Saint Miniato is in Florence.*”

(608.7) “So Longinus gives the order to take the longer road that winds up the mountain and is therefore not so steep. This road seems a path that by dint of being used by many people has changed into a rather comfortable road. This crossroad is situated *about half-way up the mountain*. But I see that farther up, the straight road is crossed four times by this one, which climbs with a slighter slope and to compensate for this is much longer...”

“And many people are going up this road... They are mostly women, weeping and veiled, and some small groups of men... who are much ahead of the women and are about to pass from sight, when going on their way, *the road turns round the mountain*. Calvary here looks somehow pointed in its odd structure, which is snout-shaped on one side, whilst on the other side it drops sheer. I will try to give you an idea of its aspect seen in profile.” [She draws **Figure 6**].



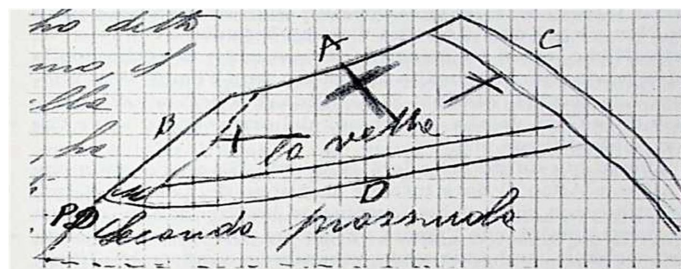
**Figure 6.** In this sketch drawn by MV we read, at the base, *Porta Giudiziaria* (Judicial Gate) at the center of the city walls (*mura della città*). A little further up, in parallel, she writes *Torrente* (torrent) twice, and at the far right *ortaglie* (vegetables garden). On the left she writes: *Il Calvario* (The Calvary). The squared road (*via quadrettata*) is the steep paved road abandoned at the first crossroad for the state of Jesus. The spiral path is the road followed by Jesus after the first crossroad. The letter D indicates the point where the pious women following Jesus are when He arrives at the first crossroad; the letter M indicates the point where Mary is leaning against the rock face (*the North*).

(608.11) “The road continues. It goes *round the mountain, it comes back almost to the front, towards the steep road*. Here, at the place I indicate with M, there is Mary with John. I should say that John has taken Her to that shady place, behind the slope of the mountain, to give Her some relief. It is the steepest part of the mountain. There is no other road going round it. Above and under it the slope rises or descends steeply... It is shady there, because I should say that *it is the North*, and Mary, leaning as She is on the mountain side, is protected from the sun.”

(608.12) “...And in doing so he [Longinus] sees *a cart standing still, which has certainly come up from the vegetables garden at the foot of the mountain* and is waiting for the crowds to pass, so that it may go down towards the town with its load of greens. I think that curiosity has made the man from Cyrene and his sons go up there, because it was not necessary for him to do so. ...”

(608.15) “...Calvary, at its top, has the shape of an *irregular trapezoid*, slightly higher on side A [she draws **Figure 7**], after which the mountain drops steeply for more than *half its height*. *Three deep holes are already ready on this pitch*, covered with bricks or blackboards, *built on purpose*, in short. Near them there are stones and earth ready to fill in the crosses. Other holes however were left full of stones. *It is clear that they empty them from time to time for the number needed*.

Under the trapezoidal top, on the side that the mountain does not slope down, there is a kind of gently sloping platform, which forms a *second pitch*. Two wide paths start from this and run along the top, so that it is isolated and raised by at least *two metres on all sides*.”



**Figure 7.** Top of the Calvary (la vetta), slightly higher on side A (North), where the mountain drops steeply for more than half its height. M indicates where Mary is. PD indicates the point where the pious women (pie donne) are at the second pitch (Seconda piazzuola). On the first pitch (la vetta) are three deep holes covered with bricks or blackboards.

(609.26) (27 March 1945) “Joseph and Nicodemus appear from behind the rock. They had certainly taken shelter there, behind the protection of the mountain [North side], to save themselves from the thunderbolts. They go to Longinus. «We want the Corpse.» «Only the Proconsul can grant it. Go quick, because I heard that the Judaeans want to go to the Praetorium [Antonia Fortress] to obtain permission to fracture His legs. I would not like them to disfigure His body.»”

(609.31) “Nicodemus and Joseph arrive back running and they say that they have Pilate’s permission. But Longinus, who is not too trustful, *sends a horse-*

*soldier* to the Proconsul to learn what he has to do also with regard to the two robbers. *The soldier goes and come back at a gallop* with the order to hand over Jesus and break the legs of the other two, by will of the Jews.”

(610.1) (19 February 1944) “The little procession, after descending Calvary, *at the foot of it finds the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, hewn out of the limestone of the mountain...* I see the sepulchre made as follows. It is a room dug in the stone, at the end of a vegetable garden all in blossom. It looks like a grotto, but it is evident that it has been dug by man. There is the burial room proper with its loculi (they are *different from those of the catacombs*). These are like *round cavities*, that penetrate into the stone, like the cells of a beehive, to give an idea. At present they are all empty. The empty opening of each loculus looks like a black spot on the grey stone. Before this room there is a kind of anteroom, in the middle of which there is a slab of stone for anointing. Jesus is placed on it, enveloped in His sheet.”

(611.7) (28 March 1945) “The road [coming from the vegetables garden at the foot of the mountain] dusty ... runs *round Calvary* and arrives at the *main road, which is parallel to the walls...* The little stream, that flows along the road, babbles softly in the deep silence which has fallen everywhere. The town seems to be deserted, as nothing but silence comes from it. They are now at the little bridge that leads to the steep Calvary road. And, in front of it, there is the Judicial Gate.”

(631.1) (14 April 1947) “Jerusalem is already burning hot in the midday sun.... But when they [the Apostels] have to leave the town, they no longer have the relief of the archivolts. The *road* [this is not the road to Calvary, but the main road mentioned in (611.17)] *that runs along the walls and disappears towards the north and the south* like a dazzling ribbon of incandescent dust, gives the impression of a furnace ground. ...”

(631.2) “They begin to climb Golgotha. The scorched Golgotha, where the blazing sun has dried the sparse grass that looked like thin down on the *yellowish mountain fifteen days previously...*”

“[John speaking] The sun is the same everywhere. But to go uphill, let us take that road [the less steep]. It is longer, but not so toilsome. Longinus also took it to make it possible for the Lord to climb it. ...They [the other apostles] follow him as far as the intersection of the *paved road with the spiral path*, and they go along the latter. Yes. It is not so steep.”

(631.5) “They are now at the top. On the *first esplanade*: a slab of fire. The reflection of the heat is such that the earth seems to be trembling, because of that phenomenon caused by the sun on the burning sands of deserts.”

Earlier, MV writes, (372.2) (30 January 1946): “Lazarus’ palace is on one of the many ground elevations that make the streets in Jerusalem, particularly the less beautiful ones, a continuous up and down. It is almost in the centre of the city, slightly south-west. It is situated in a beautiful street leading to the Sixtus, forming a T with it, and it dominates the lower part of the city and faces towards Bezetha, Moriah and Ophel and the Mount of Olives, which is behind them. Behind it [the

palace] there is Mount Sion, the area to which it belongs, while on both sides one's eyes rove over the southern hills, whereas Bezetha to the north hides most of the view. But *beyond the Gihon* [Hinnon] *valley, the bald head* [the 'skull'] *of Golgotha emerges yellowish in the pink light of dawn...*"

## 6. Data Retrieval

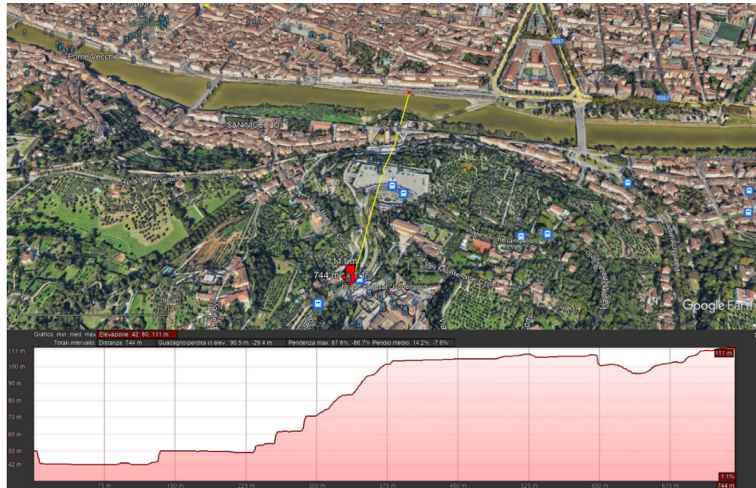
From (608.1) to (608.4) we get the following information. The place of the trial was the Antonia Fortress. The Roman execution place by crucifixion was outside the Judicial Gate (this gate should be Fish Gate) because the *street goes directly towards the walls, downhill*, see the Tyropoen Street in **Figure 4**, **Figure 5**. The execution place is not near, because *the way is a long one* (in Section 8, I estimate 900 m from the Antonia Fortress).

From (608.5) we get the height of the Golgotha Hill, seen from the Judicial Gate. The hill "is *not certainly lower than the mount of the Crosses is, with respect to the Lungarni, where the Basilica of Saint Miniato is in Florence*". Therefore, see **Figure 8**, the height should be approximately 50 metres. Moreover, we learn that the road is *paved with uneven stones*, therefore it was built, was not a country path. However, it was not well-maintained, because of the *uneven stones*, therefore it was not one of the main roads sketched in **Figure 1**.

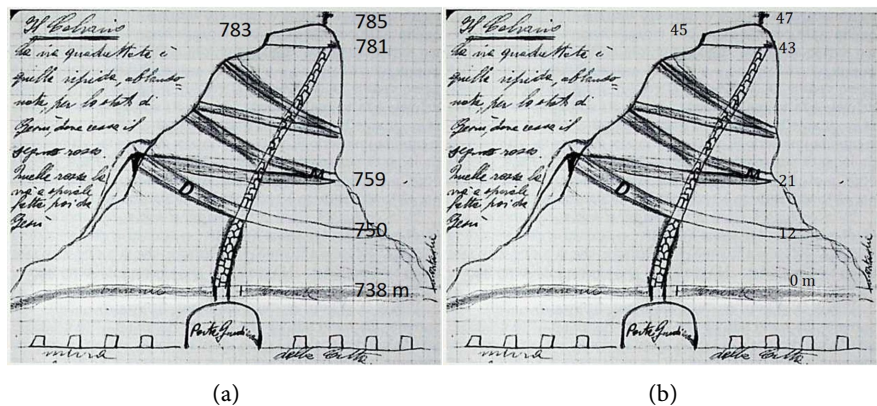
MV had "seen" Roman roads, so she knew the difference between major and minor roads. In (564.3), 7 February 1947, she writes: «A road running down from the north toward the south intersects the lane. It must be a fairly important road, because at the crossing point it has one of the milestones used by the Romans, with the inscription on the northern face: "Neapolis", and below this name—carved quite large in the lapidary characters of the Latins, as strong as themselves—much smaller, and barely scratched in the granite: "Sichem"; on the western face: "Silo-Jerusalem"; and on that side to the south: "Jericho." On the eastern side there is no name at all.»

And in (632.32), 16-17 April 1947, she writes: «A coastal road. Perhaps the one that connects Caesarea to Joppa, or another. I don't know. I know that I see countryside inland and sea outside, bright blue after the yellowish line of the shore. The road is certainly a Roman artery. Its paving bears witness to this.»

From (608.7), first we learn that at *about half-way up the mountain* the steep paved road can be avoided by taking the longer road (the spiral country path) that winds up the mountain and is therefore not so steep. We can figure out that either before it was not possible to go around the hill, or the road of this first tract was not so steep relative to the second tract. Moreover, from (608.15) we learn that the second pitch (the top of Golgotha) is raised by at least *two metres on all sides*. This gives the vertical scale of **Figure 6**, where the side of the small squares represents vertically 2 metres. Surprisingly, the figure she draws is in scale, as **Figure 9** shows, in agreement with the height of the plateau of **Figure 8**. The estimated height of Golgotha is 47 m relative to the torrent, which was very likely at about the same altitude of the Judicial Gate.



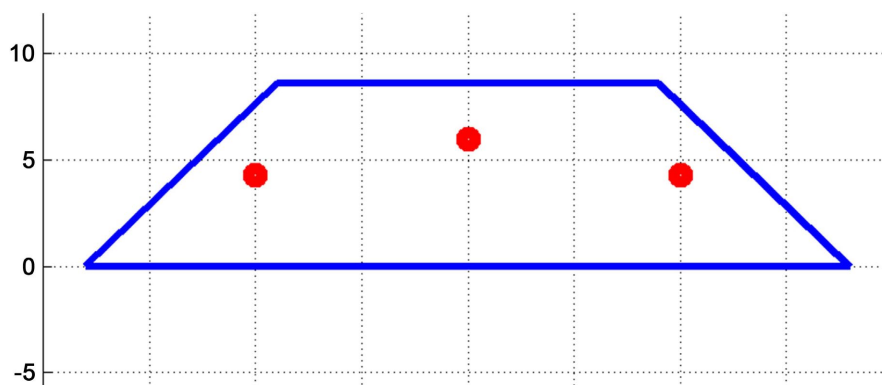
**Figure 8.** Screen shot of the terrain profile from Arno River (left) to Piazzale Michelangelo and Church of Saint Miniato (right), in Florence. The altitude of the plateau is about 50 m above the Lungarni mentioned by MV, the street running parallel to the Arno river.



**Figure 9.** (a) Altitude (m above seal level) of significant points of Golgotha. (b) Height (m) of significant points of Golgotha relative to the torrent and Judicial Gate.

The horizontal dimensions of **Figure 6** do not seem in scale because the route gradient (i.e. the slope of the road; this topic is discussed in Section 7) calculated for the spiral country road is very large (from about 25% to 50%), therefore neither practical nor useful for avoiding the paved road, whose gradient route is quite smaller (Section 7).

I think, however, that the dimensions of the top sketched in **Figure 7** is in scale, because MV dedicates a great care in observing and describing the position of the three crosses and other holes present on it. From **Figure 7**, I calculate the area to be  $58 \times 4 = 232 \text{ m}^2$ , where 58 is the number of squares in the trapezoid, and its front side as 36 m. Now, the back side of the trapezoid seems to be half of the front side, therefore its height—formula of an isosceles trapezoid—is given by  $(2 \times 232) / (36 + 18) = 8.6 \text{ m}$ . Therefore, the top should approximately look as in **Figure 10**, with the position of the three crosses.



**Figure 10.** Sketch of the trapezoid top of Golgotha with indicated the approximate positions of the three crosses. The cross in the middle is Jesus' cross. The scale (metres) is reported in the vertical axis.

In conclusion, she drew the height of Golgotha and the trapezoid of the top in scale. The presence of four intersections of the spiral country road with the paved road signals a change in the paved road, very likely its steepness, as I will show in Section 7.

From (608.11) we learn a fundamental information: the direction of the paved road. This road, starting at the Judicial Gate, must go from southeast to northwest, or from northeast to southwest, because where Mary stands *it is the North* and we see her on the *right* side. Moreover, from (631.11) we learn that the *main road*—this is not the paved road to Golgotha, but the main Roman road mentioned in (611.17)—*runs along the walls and disappears towards the north and the south*. MV sees the road parallel to the wall, the road running westeast.

This must be the road to Samaria and to Damascus and Caesarea Maritima (Avi-Yonah, 1950), see **Figure 1**, which is visible for a long trait from north to south, and is parallel (north-south, as roughly sketched in **Figure 1**) to the Second Wall of Jerusalem near the Judicial Gate. In other words, the crucifixion place was near, and clearly visible from a main road, where the Romans used to set public execution places to alert potential criminals on their likely final destiny.

The archeologist Shimon Gibson (Gibson, 2009) writes: «We may assume [following the historian Josephus Flavius (*Jewish War* V.4.1-V.4.4)] that a road or path ran parallel to the northern stretch of the First Wall, from the outside, ascending along the edge of the Transversal valley [it is the valley that runs north from the Tyropoeon Valley, almost completely filled already at Jesus' time] westward where, after passing Herods palace... it joined up with the main highway leading westward». This seems just the main road mentioned by MV.

Moreover, from (608.15) we learn the site is very likely an official place of Roman execution by crucifixion because *three deep holes are already ready on this pitch*, covered with bricks or blackboards, *built on purpose*. Near them there are other empty holes. In other words, the paved road was very likely built only to arrive at this place, it was a dead-end road.

The evangelists wrote in Greek mostly for non-Jewish readers because they

always mention how the Jews *called* the place of crucifixion: «They came to a place called Golgotha» (Matthew 27, 32); «They brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means “The Place of the Skull”» (Mark, 15, 21); «When they came to the place called “The Skull”, they nailed Jesus to the cross there» (Luke, 23, 32); «He went out, carrying his own cross, and came to “The place of the Skull”, as it is called.» (John, 19, 17). In writing so, I guess their aim was to underline the reality of their narration about the death of Jesus, therefore they referred to a specific place—outside a city gate (Hebrews, 13, 12)—with a toponym evidently well known to the Jews, who did not need further details. Any reader could understand that Golgotha was an official place of crucifixion of the Romans. The skeptical contemporary non-Jewish readers could always check its existence by asking the Jews of the diaspora.

From (608.12) we learn the man from Cyrene, with his cart, was near the place where the pious women were standing (not far from where Mary was), therefore at about the beginning of the spiral country path. Very likely he did not climb further because the paved road was very steep and the spiral road was occupied by the procession of Roman soldiers, Jesus, the other two convicts, the curious people. The spiral country path continued down-hill to the right, not visible in **Figure 6**, to the vegetables garden from which he had climbed for curiosity. From (611.7) we learn that the vegetables garden is also the place of *the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea*.

From (609.26) and (609.31) we read about the events that occurred to get the body of Jesus. Because of the distance, Joseph and Nicodemus run because the Judicial Gate is not near and from there they had to go to Antonia and come back before sunset, as at the sunset Saturday and Passover started. To underline that there was a certain distance between Golgotha and Antonia, and time was important, MV writes that Longinus sends a horse-soldier to hear directly from Pilatus about giving the body to Joseph. *The soldier goes and comes back at a gallop.*

From (610.1) we learn that *the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea is hewn out of the limestone of the mountain*—the sepulchre of rich people—and is located at the foot of Golgotha, deep in the vegetables garden (611.7), not far from the torrent from which the vegetables were very likely watered, and near the main road to Samaria and the Judicial Gate.

Moreover, MV sees tombs quite different from those seen in Italy, with which she was acquainted: they are *different from those of the catacombs* because they are like *round cavities*, that penetrate into the stone, like the cells of a beehive. The tomb is new, because at present its “cells” are all empty. MV is just describing the tombs of rich people of Jerusalem, known as rock-out tombs (Avni, 2005).

From (631.2), written in different times as often MV does (Matricciani, 2022a), we learn the scorched Golgotha appears yellowish. The apostles, after the first intersection with the country spiral path, follow this latter because less steep. It is too hot and they are not in a hurry. According to the chronology established by (Matricciani & De Caro, 2017; De Caro et al., 2021c; De Caro et al., 2023), the

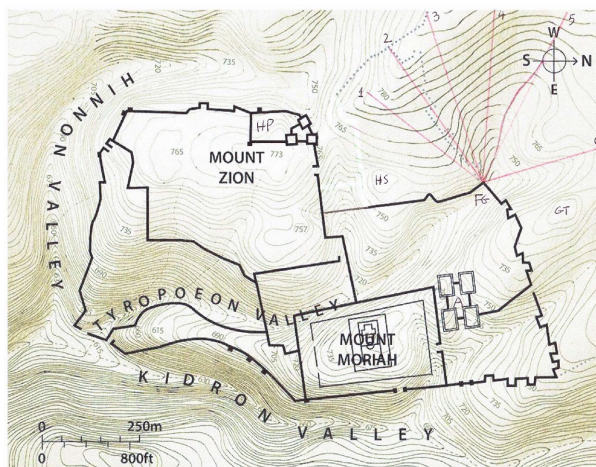
crucifixion date was Friday 23 April 34, therefore the apostles are climbing Golgotha on Friday, 7 May 34.

Moreover, before the facts just recalled, in (371.2) MV clearly describes where Lazarus' palace is—in the Upper City, the part of Jerusalem where rich people had palaces—and what can be seen from there. We learn that Golgotha is *beyond the Gihon [Hinnon] valley* with its *bald head* (the “skull”) *emerging yellowish* at dawn. This information is very important because it means that Golgotha is north of the Hinnon Valley to be visible so distinctly from the Upper City. Golgotha, therefore, cannot be located just outside the Gardens Gate (Holy Sepulchre) or at the Gordon's Calvary, because these sites *are not* beyond the Hinnon Valley.

Now, from these data in the next two sections I first study some possible paths of the “paved road” (Section 7) and then establish which one is *the* road to Golgotha (Section 8).

## 7. Likely Paths to Golgotha

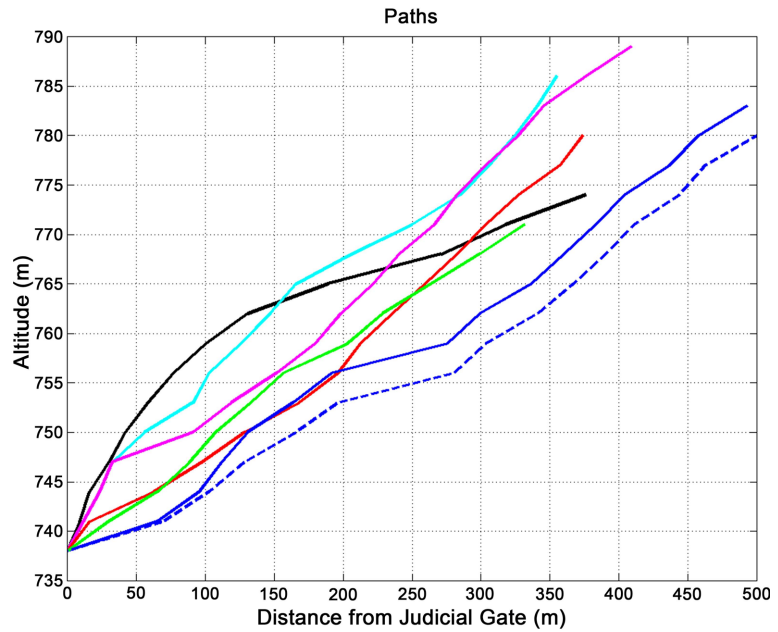
According to Section 6, the paved road to Golgotha runs from southeast to northwest, or from northeast to southwest, therefore it must be in the upper right part of **Figure 3**, as shown in **Figure 11**, where some possible straight paths are drawn. Let us study them.



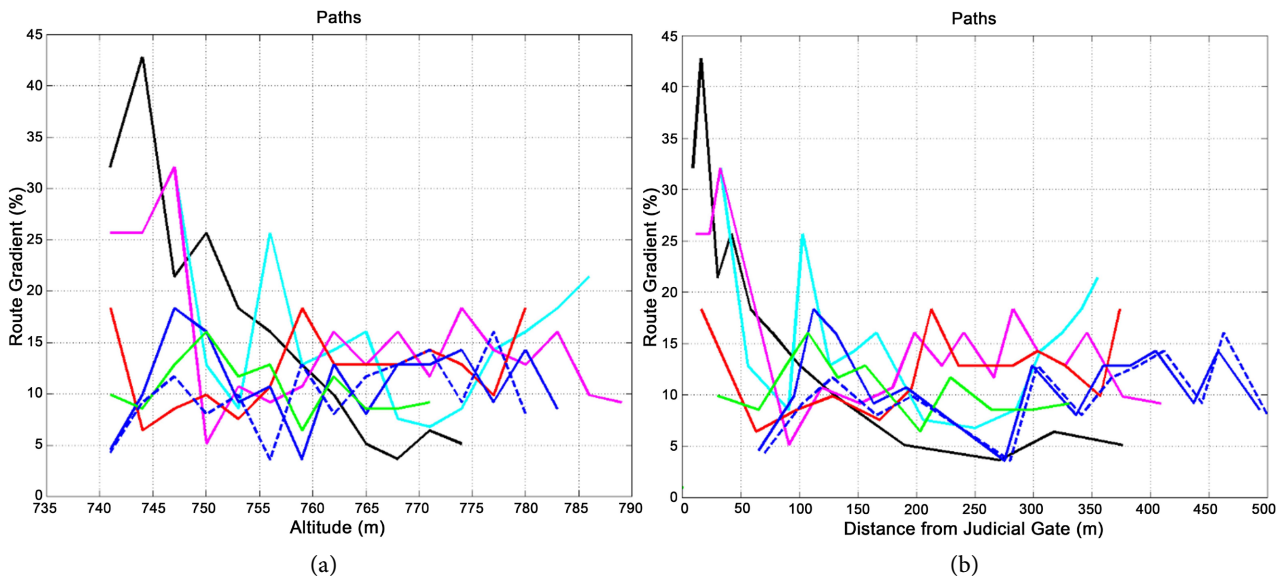
**Figure 11.** Hypothetical paths of the paved road (red lines) seen by Maria Valtorta starting at the Judicial (Fish) Gate, FG. HP, Herod the Great's Palace; HS, Holy Sepulchre; GT, Garden Tomb and Gordon's Calvary area; A, Antonia Fortes (after Vincent & Steve, 1954).

**Figure 12** shows the altitude versus distance from the Judicial Gate (or Fish Gate) for each path. **Appendix A** shows how the height versus distance is computed. The distance is measured on the map of **Figure 11**, but practically it coincides with the slant distance because the mean route gradient is small.

**Figure 13** shows the route gradient versus altitude and distance. The route gradient is the slope encountered walking along a road (Kay, 2012).



**Figure 12.** Altitude above mean sea level (m) versus distance (m) from the Judicial Gate of paths drawn in **Figure 11**. Path 1: black; path 2: cyan; path 3: magenta; path 4: red; path 5 straight: blue continuous line; path 5 curved: dashed blue line; path 6: green.



**Figure 13.** (a) Route gradient (%) versus altitude above mean sea level (m). (b) Route gradient (%) versus distance (m) from Judicial gate. Path 1: black; path 2: cyan; path 3: magenta; path 4: red; path 5 straight: blue continuous line; path 5 curved: dashed blue line; path 6: green.

Let us discuss the six paths depicted. Path 5 with the curved tract (dashed blue line) is partially coincident with the straight path 5 (blue continuous line) and it mimics closer MV's paved road, which is not straight.

**Table 1** reports some fundamental characteristics of these paths: the direction, the mean route gradient and its possible decrease at about half way, namely at 755

- 760 m altitude. The latter datum is important to match one of the six paths to the paved road seen by MV, who notices that the spiral country road starts at half way, where I have anticipated (Section 6) a significant change in one or more characteristics of the paved road.

**Table 1.** Fundamental characteristics of paths: direction, mean route gradient (%), decrease of route gradient at about half way, namely at 755 - 760 m altitude.

Path	Direction	Mean route gradient (%)	Mid-altitude (755 - 760 m) slope decrease?
1 (black)	North-East to South-West	16.6	No
2 (cyan)	North-East to South-West	16.7	No
3 (magenta)	North-East to South-West	15.1	No
4 (red)	South-East to North-West	12.4	No
5 (blue)	South-East to North-West	11.1	Yes, drops to 3.8%
5 (dashed blue)	South-East to North-West	10.0	Yes, drops to 3.8%
6 (green, road to Samaria)	South-East to North-West	10.6	Yes, drops to 7%

Now, from **Table 1** and **Figure 12** and **Figure 13**, path 1 (black line), path 2 (cyan line), path 3 (magenta line) and path 4 must be excluded from being the road to Golgotha because very steep, with very large starting slope. Path 6 must also be excluded because it practically coincides with the Roman road to Samaria (and also to Damascus, Caesarea Maritima), it is not a dead-end road. Therefore, the two paths 5 (straight and curved) are the best candidates to fit MV's paved road to Golgotha. I study these paths in detail in the next section to decide which one fits best MV's writings.

Notice that the particular "peak" of Golgotha of **Figure 6** is not found in **Figure 11** where it would be indicated by a closed contour line. There might be several causes for its alleged disappearing. I conjecture that the rocky peak "seen" by MV disappeared because levelled by terrain filling due to centuries of destructions, building, and rebuilding, including earthquakes (*Ambraseys, 2006*). In this case, the terrain surrounding the peak would have maintained the ancient altitude, still seen in **Figure 11**. For example, archeologists (*Reich & Shukron, 2011*) dug the stepped-road that from the pool of Siloam goes to the Temple Mount: it is 10 metres below the actual surface because of the rubble due to the Roman destruction in 70 AD. This topic is further discussed in Section 10 where I propose a particular solution to this issue.

## 8. The Path to Golgotha

Let us discuss the two paths 5. They are similar, but with some significant differences which allow a plausible final choice between the two.

The starting route gradient is larger in the straight path than in the curved path (18% against 11.5%), which therefore favors the latter as the path best fit to a real road.

The two paths show a decrease in route gradient in a short tract just at half altitude/distance—where MV sets the starting point of the spiral country road—and both reach approximately the height of the Basilica of Saint Miniato seen from Lungarni. As already noticed, MV seems to have maintained the vertical scale of the Golgotha Hill.

Let us, therefore, study these two paths with more detail. Persons condemned to crucifixion, soldiers, horse-soldiers would have used the dead-end paved road. Jesus's case, as we know, was different, as Longinus ordered to take the spiral country road, at half way, just before encountering the man from Cyrene ascending from the vegetables garden.

Spectators would have used either the paved road or the spiral country road, as MV writes. Now let us assume a healthy man or a horse-soldier galloping up- or down-hill in the paved road and calculate how long it takes to arrive at the top. These calculations are done in detail in **Appendix B. Table 2, Table 3** report the final results. Each path has been divided in the two tracts indicated by the changing slope in **Figure 12, Figure 13**.

The time to go from Antonia to the Judicial Gate (or vice versa) must be added to the time reported in these tables. This walking distance is estimated to ~400 m with about 3% slope, therefore the distance from Antonia to the Golgotha top is approximately 900 metres.

Now, the horse-soldier galloping back and forth to Antonia would have needed (**Table 3**, for example) at least  $2 \times 1.59 = 3.18$  minutes just for the travelling, plus the time to talk with Pilatus and get his order. I guess that he was likely back 15 minutes later. If he walked, the total walking time only would have been approximately  $2 \times (8.05 + 5.48) \approx 27$  minutes (5.48 min is the time to walk to Antonia from the Judicial Gate) plus the time to talk with Pilatus. Too much time for people in a hurry, therefore Longinus's choice to send a horse-soldier.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of path 5, straight. In column 7, 0.60 minutes is the estimated time to gallop to Antonia Fortress from the Judicial Gate.

	Altitude $h$ (m)	Distance $\ell$ (m)	Height $\Delta h$ (m)	Mean route gradient (%)	Time paved road (min)	Time horse-soldier galloping (min)
First paved road tract	$738 \leq h < 765$	$\ell < 336$	27	10.6	4.78	0.61
Second paved road tract	$765 \leq h < 783$	$336 \leq \ell < 493$	18	11.4	3.39	0.44
Total	783	493	45	11.0	8.17	$1.05 + 0.60 = 1.65$

**Table 3.** Characteristics of path 5, curved. In column 7, 0.60 minutes is the estimated time to gallop to Antonia Fortress from the Judicial Gate.

	Altitude $h$ (m)	Distance $\ell$ (m)	Height $\Delta h$ (m)	Mean route gradient (%)	Time paved road (min)	Time horse-soldier galloping paved road (min)
First paved road tract	$738 \leq h < 759$	$\ell < 304$	21	7.8	4.20	0.49
Second paved road tract	$759 \leq h < 780$	$304 \leq \ell < 500$	21	11.6	3.85	0.50
Total	780	500	42	10.0	8.05	$0.99 + 0.60 = 1.59$

Now, from **Table 2**, **Table 3** and previous remarks, I think that the curved path 5 fits better the path to Golgotha “seen” by MV, because it shows:

- 1) The minimum mean route gradient (10%).
- 2) Two distinct tracts of the paved road at half way, with different mean route gradients (7.8% and 11.6%), which, very likely, was the practical cause for starting the spiral country road.
- 3) Perhaps just by chance but very intriguingly, the two tracts of the paved road have the same height (21 m) and require about the same walking time (3.85 - 4.20 min).

In conclusion, the curved path 5 is the most probable path to Golgotha, according to MV’s writings and my investigation. This path and MV’s description of Golgotha satisfy all the remarks done by the archeologist Shimon Gibson.

He writes (Gibson, 2009), emphasis is mine: «Today, the rock of Calvary is pointed out to pilgrims immediately on the right when entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This rocky outcrop rises to a height of 9 to 13 metres above the surrounding quarry floor and its top is narrow and confining (only  $3.5 \times 1.7$  metres).» ...«The summit was too narrow to permit three crosses to be placed there and its sides were too steep to allow easy access [see the right lower part of **Figure 2**]. While the rock may have been a monument marking the general place of Golgotha—*almost a signpost*—it was definitely *not the actual place of crucifixion*.

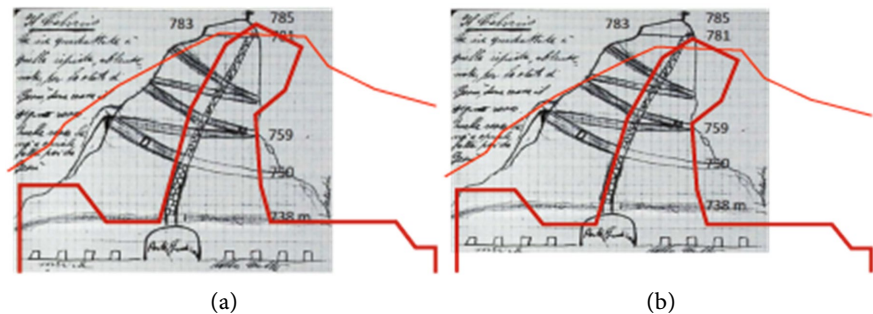
The execution site of Golgotha must have been an *easily identifiable topographical landmark* close to Jerusalem, a *low promontory* perhaps, known to the city inhabitants... it was a place *people had easy access* to and it could be *seen from afar*, which suggests a *conspicuous location rather than a small rocky outcrop*. More important, it was situated *adjacent to a path or road leading to the city*...»

In the next section I conjecture why in the IV century the Holy Sepulchre site was likely indicated as the Golgotha.

## 9. A Conjecture on Fuzzy Memories Leading to a Wrong Place

When I first saw **Figure 2**, I was impressed by the resemblance of the profile of the rock of crucifixion, the “skull”, shown in the right lower corner, with the Golgotha profile drawn by MV (**Figure 6**). This resemblance appears quite tight, as

**Figure 14** below shows, where the rock of crucifixion is rotated and scaled to the Golgotha seen by MV. This resemblance may be due just to chance, but I think that the probability of this coincidence must be very low. More striking is the coincidence of the paved road curved line with the left profile, for which I have no explanation, besides mere chance. On the contrary, I have a plausible explanation for the profile coincidence.



**Figure 14.** Rock of crucifixion (red line) scaled to Golgotha profile seen by MV. (a) By imposing the same height; (b) by imposing the same knee at about 759 m altitude.

Now, **Figure 2** is the final result presentable to lay people of many studies by archeologists, historians and other scholars many years after MV died, therefore she could not know anything about the archaeology of the site. She could read the most recent Italian academic essay of the time *Vita di Gesù Cristo (Life of Jesus Christ)*, written by Giuseppe Ricciotti (Ricciotti, 1941), who, however, did not report any archaeological detail either on the Holy Sepulchre or Golgotha. MV could not read scholar publications of her time, such as (Clermont-Ganneau, 1899) or (Harvey, 1935), because she knew only French (her mother was a French teacher) not English. In her home library, however, there were no scholar publications in any language (Valtorta, 2021). It is just impossible she knew something technical about the Holy Sepulchre and the Tomb.

In any case, as for the other topics mentioned in Section 2, MV seems to know facts and possess knowledge that only scholars knew, and often future scholars, not her contemporaries.

Now, from the resemblance shown in **Figure 14**, I conjecture how the Golgotha of MV—assuming it was the real hill, with that particular profile—was erroneously located where the Holy Sepulchre is.

After the complete destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD—including its walls—only few Jews stayed in the area and even fewer Christians. The second destruction of Jerusalem in 132-136 AD, its transformation in Aelia Capitolina very likely cancelled further any memory of Herod the Great's Jerusalem. Local Christian passed on very few memories about Jesus' crucifixion place. From the New Testament we only know that Jesus was crucified outside an unknown city gate, in a place that resembled a "skull", and buried in a new rock-cut tomb near it.

I conjecture that the curious and uncommon shape/profile of the hill was

strongly passed on, not its exact location (very likely, just a generic “out of a gate”), because the Romans destroyed the Third Wall and the towers along it (see Section 10). I think that the memory, passing from person to person, became so fuzzy that the rock that emerged in the filled quarry just 150 metres north of the Gardens Gate—namely, the actual Holy Sepulchre site—which resembled a “skull”, became the monument marking the general place of Golgotha.

In conclusion, in the IV century Christians were convinced that Golgotha was north of the Gardens Gate just because of the rocky “skull”. Therefore, when Flavia Julia Helena (Emperor Constantine the Great’s mother) asked the bishop of Jerusalem where Golgotha was, it was natural to indicate her the actual place because the rocky “skull” was still visible. The excavations below the pagan temple of Aelia Capitolina, built there in the II century (Tsafrir, 1999), unveiled rock-cut empty tombs, a fact that reinforced the belief they had found the Golgotha.

For Christians, the search of Golgotha ended forever at that time indicating, however, a wrong place, according to MV’s writings and serious doubts by modern scholars (Gibson, 2009).

In the next section I discuss which important building was built few years after Jesus’ crucifixion at the end of paths 5 or very near it, and where Golgotha should be located today in Jerusalem.

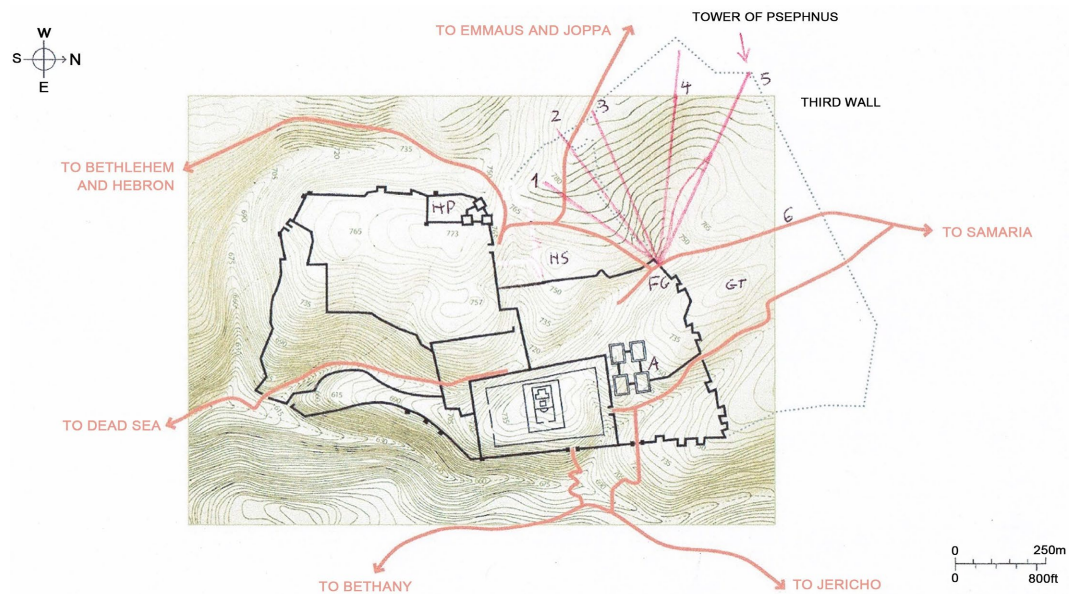
## 10. Where Was Golgotha?

**Figure 15** shows the main roads and the alleged paths to Golgotha studied in Sections 7 and 8. The dotted northern line reports Flavius Josephus’s Third Wall, built by Herod the Great’s grandson Agrippa I—king of Judea from 41 to 44—to protect the northern new suburb Beit Zeita of the city. Agrippa never completed the Third Wall. This was left to the Jewish insurgents about 20 years later, after an early Roman attack succeeded in burning the northern suburb, incompletely enclosed by the Third Wall.

At the northwest corner of the Third Wall we know, after Flavius Josephus (*Jewish War* V.4.1 - V.4.4), that a high octagonal tower, the Psephinus Tower, was built few years after the crucifixion of Jesus. The tower was 70 cubits high and from its top the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the mountains of Transjordan to the east could be seen in clear days. The Roman and Hebrew cubit was 44.44 cm long, therefore the tower was  $70 \times 0.4444 \approx 31.1$  m high. Other conversion factors give slightly different heights.

Now, In **Figure 15** we notice that the two paths 5 end just where this tower was built. In other words, I conjecture that the Psephinus Tower was built at the top of Golgotha, in a place very easy to defend from assaults coming from north (the most indefensible side of Jerusalem), just where the hill drops steeply for more than half its height.

According to the model built by the Madain Project ([https://madainproject.com/psephenus\\_tower](https://madainproject.com/psephenus_tower), last access 29 November 2024)—located at the outdoor Israel Museum in Jerusalem—the octagonal tower could be



**Figure 15.** Hypothetical paths of the paved road seen by Maria Valtorta starting at the Judicial (Fish) Gate, FG. HP, Herod the Great's Palace; HS, Holy Sepulchre; GT, Garden Tomb and Gordon's Calvary area; A, Antonia Fortress. Paths 5 end at the location of Psephinus Tower, Third Wall (after Vincent & Steve, 1954).

circumscribed by a circle of about 16.2 metres in diameter and occupy ~186 square metres, which is compatible with the top of Golgotha and its area (232 square metres), once the trapezoid area is lowered by about 2 metres down to the first pitch, or the first pitch is filled up to the top.

The place was easily accessible thanks to the paved road. Construction materials could be brought to the top with no difficulty. The place of execution was transformed in a watching place for defence, with a high tower inserted in the Third Wall. Therefore, the road that in Figure 4 goes to the Psephinus Tower is just the paved road seen by MV.

Today, it is generally accepted that the Psephinus Tower was located in the area known as the Russian Compound Plateau, which is a strategic high point (792 m altitude) of the ridge that runs northwestward from the Jaffa Gate area.

Now, according to MV, the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, hewn out of the limestone of the mountain, was located at the foot of Golgotha, deep in the vegetables garden, not far from the main Roman road and the Judicial Gate. This location is not far from the Garden Tomb and we know that tombs of the I century AD have been found not far from this site—as in many other sites around Jerusalem (Avni, 2005)—besides the tomb of the VII century BC. Therefore, I think that one of these tombs might be the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

In conclusion, according to MV's writings and my investigation, Golgotha was located where the Psephinus Tower was erected few years after Jesus' crucifixion, in the area known today as the Russian Compound.

## 11. Conclusion

According to the writings of Maria Valtorta—an Italian mystic who claimed to

have many visions of Jesus's life—and my investigation conducted on the topography of Jerusalem and the most probable road allowed by her observations and details on Jesus' crucifixion, Golgotha (the "skull" hill) was in the area known today as the Russian Compound, very likely where the Psephinus Tower, described by Flavius Josephus, was later erected, incorporated in the Third Wall.

In the early IV century local Christians were convinced that Golgotha was just 150 m north of the Gardens Gate, where a rocky "skull" was visible from the terrain filling the ancient quarry. Therefore, the bishop of Jerusalem indicated this place to Flavia Julia Helena (Emperor Constantine the Great's mother) asking him where Golgotha was. The consequence of this ancient choice is that the Tradition assumes this location as the Golgotha, therefore, according to MV's writings and remarks by archeologists (Gibson, 2009), today pilgrims visit a wrong place.

In conclusion, both MV's writings and my investigation exclude that the Holy Sepulchre or the Garden Tomb area could be identified as Golgotha. As for Jesus' tomb, the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea was near the Garden Tomb area.

Very few excavations have been done in the Russian Compound area, where remains of the foundations of the Psephinus Tower should still be dug. More difficult could be to find remains of the crucifixion site, especially the "skull"—which would confirm the identification of Golgotha with the Psephinus Tower location—because the area has gone through many changes due to centuries of destructions, building, and rebuilding, including earthquakes.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Appendix A: Distance and Route Gradient Calculations

Let  $\delta_k$  be the distance (e.g. in cm) measured on the map between two consecutive contour lines (3 metres altitude difference) of the path; let  $\delta_{250}$  the length (cm) mapping 250 m (as in **Figure 11**), then the partial distance  $\ell_k$  (m) between two consecutive contour lines is given by:

$$\ell_k = 250 \times \frac{\delta_k}{\delta_{250}} \quad (\text{A1})$$

Therefore, the path length  $\ell$  (m), made of  $n$  partial tracts, measured on the map, is given by:

$$\ell = \sum_{k=1}^{k=n} \ell_k \quad (\text{A2})$$

The route gradient (Kay, 2012)  $s_k$  of a partial tract is given by (for its value in % multiply by 100):

$$s_k = \frac{3}{\ell_k} \quad (\text{A3})$$

Therefore, the path mean route gradient is given by:

$$S = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^{k=n} s_k \quad (\text{A4})$$

The height  $\Delta h_k$  (m) at each step relative to a reference point (i.e., the Judicial Gate) is given by:

$$\Delta h_k = 3k \quad (\text{A5})$$

Therefore, at the end of the path the height (m) relative to the Judicial Gate (altitude approximately 738 m above mean sea level) is given by:

$$\Delta h = 3n \quad (\text{A6})$$

The altitude  $h$  (m) is given by:

$$h = 738 + \Delta h \quad (\text{A7})$$

## Appendix B: Speed of Man Walking and Horse Galloping

The walking speed  $v_{k,w}$  (km per hour) in a partial tract  $k$  is a function of route gradient  $s_k$  and can be estimated from (Self et al., 2012):

$$v_{k,w} = 6 \times \exp(-3.5 \times (s_k + 0.05)) \quad (\text{B1})$$

The time  $\tau_k$  (minutes), after Equation (A1), is then given by:

$$\tau_k = 60 \times \frac{\ell_k / 1000}{v_{k,w}} \quad (\text{B2})$$

Therefore, the total time  $T$  (minutes) of walking is given by:

$$T = \sum_{k=1}^n \tau_k \quad (\text{B3})$$

The speed  $v_{k,g}$  (km per hour) of a horse galloping is given by (Self et al.,

2012):

$$v_{k,g} = (-48.8 \times s_k + 12.9) \times \frac{3600}{1000} \quad (\text{B4})$$

From Equation (B4), the total time of galloping can be calculated as done for the walking time.