

## Montefiore Windmill

### Names (also known as)

Mishkanot Sha'ananim

### Etymology

The name given to cottages built by Montefiore means “Dwellings of Delight”.

### Location/Description

The Montefiore Windmill is located in the Yemin Moshe quarter in Jerusalem.



### Famous characters

Sir Moses Montefiore (lived contemporary with Dr. John Thomas: Author of “Elipis Israel”).

### Brief history

For anyone who has been to Israel, the name Moses Montefiore inevitably evokes the response, “Oh! the windmill man!” The Montefiore Windmill in the Yemin Moshe quarter in Jerusalem may be the most distinctive memorial to this amazing Jewish man. The Jewish world is scattered with institutions all named after Sir Moses Montefiore. Even Richmond Virginia has a Moses Montefiore Cemetery, as do New York; Philadelphia; Las Vegas, Massachusetts and North Dakota. Massachusetts; Wisconsin, Illinois and Ramsgate, England all have synagogues named after him. The first synagogue in the

New Mexico Territory in 1886 was named after Sir Moses.

Moses Montefiore was born on Oct. 24, 1784 in Livorno Italy, but was brought up in London. He began his career working for grocery and tea merchants. Later Moses went to London and became an International Financier along with his brother, Abraham. In appearance, Moses Montefiore was an imposing man at 6'3”. As a Financier, he represented the Rothschilds and in 1812 he married Judith Cohen, sister-in-law to the Rothschild family. Montefiore was innovative and very successful in the Gas Light business. From 1837-1838 he was appointed Sheriff of London and Queen Victoria knighted him in 1838 in recognition of his efforts on behalf of the Jews. He was given the rank of Baron in 1846. Moses and Judith Montefiore never had children together.

Moses was not a particularly religious man until his first trip to Jerusalem in 1827. It was a trip that changed his life and he decided to combine philanthropy with being an Orthodox Jew. He wanted to help Jews everywhere and concentrated on the Holy Land. In 1843, he set up a Jewish Clinic in the city of Jerusalem. He built a shrine over the tomb of Rachel and an agricultural farm near Jaffa. In 1856, at the end of the Crimean War, Montefiore bought the Balaclava Railway intending to create a line between Jaffa and Jerusalem. This venture never came to fruition.

Montefiore regularly donated money to poor Jews in Jerusalem. His intention was to provide for them until they could become self-sufficient. When he attempted to curtail this financial support, the recipients rioted to the extent Montefiore was in physical danger in their midst. His various efforts occasionally put him in significant personal danger. Montefiore believed that if the indigent Jews living in the slums in Jerusalem were given jobs and better housing that they could begin to change their plight. To that end, he looked for land to buy in Jerusalem.

A wealthy American Jew, Judah Touro, at his death, willed \$60,000 to help Jews in the Holy Land and named Moses Montefiore to manage these funds. Montefiore used this money towards the acquisition and development of land he purchased outside the city walls in 1855. He paid L1,000 for 38,250 square meters of land west of the Pool of the Sultan. From 1857 to 1859, a windmill and two houses were built and 3 years later 20 more houses were added, with cisterns and gardens. They became known as the Montefiore Cottages. In Hebrew, they were called Mishkanot Sha'ananim, meaning “Dwellings of Delight”.



The windmill was designed by Kent, England Millwrights. The stone was quarried in Israel and parts and machinery from Kent were shipped to Israel, some of which was transported by camel. The windmill was intended to grind flour to make bread. The windmill's success was limited due to a lack of wind and proper maintenance and eventually broke down. As far as the living quarters: at first no one wanted to live there because of the threat of robbers. They would stay there during the day and go back inside the city walls to the slums at night. In 1865 when a Cholera epidemic hit the city, those at Mishkanot Sha'ananim were not

affected, which led to more Jews staying there. Montefiore also introduced a printing press and a textile factory in his attempts to help.

In 1875, at age 91 Montefiore made his final voyage to Israel, and when viewing a prospering Jerusalem said “surely we’re approaching the time to witness the realization of God’s hallowed promises to Zion”. Using his international influence, Montefiore successfully intervened several times to help Jews in alleged cases of blood libel in Israel and elsewhere. He died at the age of 101 on July 28, 1885.

In 1948, during a blockade of Jerusalem, Jewish fighters put an observation post at the top of the Montefiore Windmill. The British blew the Observation Post off the Windmill. Legend has it, the British soldiers intended to destroy the entire windmill, but when they saw evidence it was designed in Kent, England, they limited their destruction to only the observation post. In 2012, the Dutch rebuilt the Montefiore Windmill under the banner “Christians for Israel”. Flour was ground again in May 2013. Between 1948 and 1967, the Mishkanot Sha'ananim was considered a dangerous area and only the very poor lived there. Mishkanot Sha'ananim has been restored and for a time housed visiting academics, musicians and artists.

### Scriptural importance

The life and work of Sir Moses Montefiore provides evidence of the outworking of God’s purpose in restoring the land of Israel to the Jewish people.

### Sources:

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