The House of Simon the Tanner in Jaffa



The House of Simon the Tanner in Jaffa: Where St. Peter Saw His Rooftop Vision

The **House of Simon the Tanner** is an old house in the old city of **Jaffa**, on a rise overlooking the sea, which Christian tradition identifies as the home of **Simon the Tanner**, with whom **St. Peter** stayed "many days" in Jaffa, according to the Acts of the Apostles. On the roof of this house, the story goes, Peter saw his famous vision that opened Christianity to non-Jews, after he had raised the young woman **Tabitha** from the dead in Jaffa. For centuries the house has belonged to an Armenian family that hands down its tradition, while the Catholic Church places the event at the nearby Church of St. Peter. Today it is one of Jaffa's best-known Christian sites. This guide covers the house's story, significance and history.

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Quick facts

The House of Simon the Tanner at a glance

Arabic name	بيت سمعان الدباغ – يافا
Location	Old city of Jaffa, on a rise overlooking the sea
Tradition	Home of Simon the Tanner, with whom St. Peter stayed
Text	Acts 9:43 and 10:9–23
Event	Peter's vision on the roof of the house
Related event	The raising of Tabitha in Jaffa
Ownership	An Armenian family for centuries
Status	Private property, never archaeologically excavated
Rival site	The nearby Catholic Church of St. Peter
Visiting	From outside, at the entrance

Who was Simon the Tanner?

Simon the Tanner was a man of Jaffa in the 1st century CE who worked in

tanning hides, a trade usually practised near the sea because of its need for water. The Acts of the Apostles mentions him as the host of St. Peter, one of Jesus's disciples, who stayed at his house during his time in Jaffa. He should not be confused with Simon Peter himself; they are two different men who share the same name.

Location

The house stands in the old city of Jaffa, in one of its narrow lanes overlooking the sea, near Jaffa's old lighthouse and the port, and close to the Church of St. Peter, the Sea Mosque and the Jaffa hill.

The story in Acts

The Acts of the Apostles tells of a woman of Jaffa named **Tabitha**, meaning "gazelle", who was "full of good works and acts of charity"; she fell ill and died. The disciples of Jaffa sent for Peter, who was in nearby Lydda; he came, prayed and raised her from the dead, and the news spread throughout Jaffa and "many believed". Then "he stayed many days in Joppa with one Simon, a tanner" (Acts 9:36–43).

Peter's rooftop vision

Acts goes on to tell how Peter went up to the roof of Simon's house around noon to pray, and saw heaven opened and something like a great sheet descending, filled with all kinds of animals, and heard a voice saying: "What God has made clean, do not call common." While he was puzzling over its meaning, messengers arrived from **Cornelius**, a Roman centurion in Caesarea, asking for him; he went with them, and Cornelius and his household were baptised, the first non-Jews to enter Christianity (Acts 10:9–48). Christians therefore regard this vision in Jaffa as a turning point that opened the Church to all nations.

The house through the ages

For centuries the house has belonged to an **Armenian family** that hands down the tradition that it is the house of Simon the Tanner; it is private property and has never been archaeologically excavated. The Catholic Church, by contrast, places the event at the nearby **Church of St. Peter**, which also stands on a rise overlooking the sea, on the site of a fortress built by King Louis IX of France around 1251; the Franciscan friars ran a guesthouse there from 1650 for pilgrims arriving through Jaffa's port, before the present church was built between 1888 and 1894, with a painting of Peter's vision above its altar. Both remain religious traditions that archaeological evidence cannot settle.

Jaffa's Christians and the Nakba

Before the Nakba, Jaffa was an Arab city of Muslims and Christians of many denominations, Greek Orthodox, Latin, Armenian, Greek Catholic and others, where churches and mosques stood side by side. In May 1948 the city fell to Zionist militias and most of its people were expelled, leaving only a few thousand gathered in the Ajami neighbourhood. Its Christian sites, including the House of Simon the Tanner, remain witnesses to the Christian and Muslim Jaffa that existed before the Nakba.

The house today (2026)

The House of Simon the Tanner remains private property closed to the public; visitors and pilgrims simply stand at its entrance in its narrow lane, while the nearby Church of St. Peter welcomes visitors daily. The house remains one of Jaffa's best-known Christian sites and part of the fabric of its old city, whose Arab residents face the pressures of Judaisation and the conversion of historic houses into tourist and art projects.

Frequently asked questions

Where is the House of Simon the Tanner?

In the old city of Jaffa, on a rise overlooking the sea near the old lighthouse and the Church of St. Peter.

Who was Simon the Tanner?

A man of Jaffa in the 1st century CE who worked as a tanner, with whom St. Peter stayed according to the Acts of the Apostles.

What happened at the House of Simon the Tanner?

According to Acts, St. Peter saw a vision on its roof that opened Christianity to non-Jews.

Who raised Tabitha from the dead in Jaffa?

St. Peter, who afterwards stayed many days at the house of Simon the Tanner.

Can the house be visited inside?

No. It is private property belonging to an Armenian family, and visitors simply stand at its entrance.

Conclusion

In a narrow lane of old Jaffa, the House of Simon the Tanner overlooks the sea that Peter saw from its roof two thousand years ago. Between the Armenian family's tradition and that of the nearby church, the house remains a witness to Jaffa's place in Christian history, and to a Palestinian city where Christians and Muslims lived side by side.

Sources

- Palestine 48 – Jaffa
- Palestine 48 – House of Simon the Tanner
- The Bible – Acts of the Apostles, chapters 9 and 10
- Custody of the Holy Land – Jaffa sanctuaries: St. Peter
- Al Jazeera – The city of Jaffa (May 2011)

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