

AROUND THE HOLY CITY

Between Jerusalem Bethlehem and Jericho

Amnon Ramon

The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies



כל הזכויות שמורות למכון ירושלים לחקר ישרא

Around the Holy City

Christian Tourist Routes
Between Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho

To my Parents Esther and Shmuel Ramon, Thanks to their guidance, I first discovered the paths of the Holy Land

Advisor: Israel Kimhi

Photographers: Nati Shohat (Flash 90)

Dubi Tal, Moni Haramati (Albatross)

Amnon Ramon

Graphic design: Devora Lifshitz

Maps: Vered Shatil Printed by: Ahva Press

Front cover: Aerial View of Mar Saba Monastery

Back cover: Aerial View of the Visitation Church, En Kerem

Photographers: Dubi Tal, Moni Haramati (Albatross)

This publication was assisted by the Charles H.Revson Foundation, N.Y. The statements made and the views expressed are the sole responsibility of the author.

ISBN 033-8681

® 2000, The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies

The Hay Elyachar House 20 Radak St, Jerusalem 92186 Email: machon@jiis.org.il

Tel: 02-5630175 Fax: 02-5639814

Around the Holy City

Christian Tourist Routes

Between

Jerusalem

Bethlehem

and

Jericho

Amnon Ramon

The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies Jerusalem 2000



Introduction

The purpose of this guide book is to suggest seven routes to lesser-known sites in the surroundings of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho. Most of them are located in almost biblical scenery away from the crowded city centers.

Buses or cars are necessary for most of the routes, but many of them also include sections that can be done on foot. The routes are planned for those who wish to visit lesser-known sites that still maintain the flavor of the country before the development boom of the last 100 years. Routes 2, 3, and 4 are intended for groups and require a guide who is well acquainted with the routes. It is not recommended to go on these tours by yourself. On the more adventurous tour to the Judean Desert monasteries (Route 3) it is absolutely necessary to make use of field vehicles with four-wheel drive which can travel on dirt roads.

Since the tours are intended for the Christian tourist and pilgrim we will concentrate mainly on the history of the different sites and their importance to Christianity. A special effort has been made to provide the traveler with the fruits of the latest research in archaeology and history regarding the various sites.

Each route is accompanied by a map which allows the traveler to orient himself easily and navigate the routes. We have made an effort not to burden the user with excessive directions in the body of the text, assuming that he can find his way easily with the help of the maps and the direction signs on the spot.

The numerous photographs included in the guide will also make it easier to follow the routes. It is our intention that this book will serve both as a useful guide as well as a souvenir of a tour of unknown areas in the Holy Land.

I would like to thank those who helped in the writing and production of this guide: Israel Kimhi, Coordinator of Research on Jerusalem at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies; Mr. Hani Abu Daia and Mr. Fahmi Nashashibi, our fellow members on the team for the development of Tourism in the Bethlehem—Jerusalem area; Dr. Uzi Dahari and Mr. Gideon Avni of the Israel Antiquities Authority; Gadi Wexler and Yohai Goell from Yad Ben-Zvi; the staff of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies and its Directors, Professor Abraham Friedman and Ora Ahimeir, who accompanied the project from the beginning; Hamutal Appel, Riki Fishel, and Sue Kerman, who translated the text from the Hebrew, Nati Shohat, the photographer and Devora Lifshitz, the graphic designer.

I gratefully acknowledge the works which I consulted, though all responsibility for any statements in this guide lies solely with the author. A list of the sources is appended after Route Seven.

Special thanks are due to the Israel Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Tourism, Minhelet 2000 and the Jerusalem Municipality for their great assistance in the production of the guide.

Contents

Introduction

9 Route 1

Along the main highway from Bethlehem to Jerusalem

27 Route 2

Indigenous Christianity between Bethlehem and Jerusalem

37 **Route 3**

From Bethlehem to the desert monasteries and the Jordan River

63 Route 4

In the footsteps of Jesus and the Judean Desert monks between Jericho and Jerusalem

95 **Route 5**

In the footsteps of King Herod on the fringe of the Desert

105 Route 6

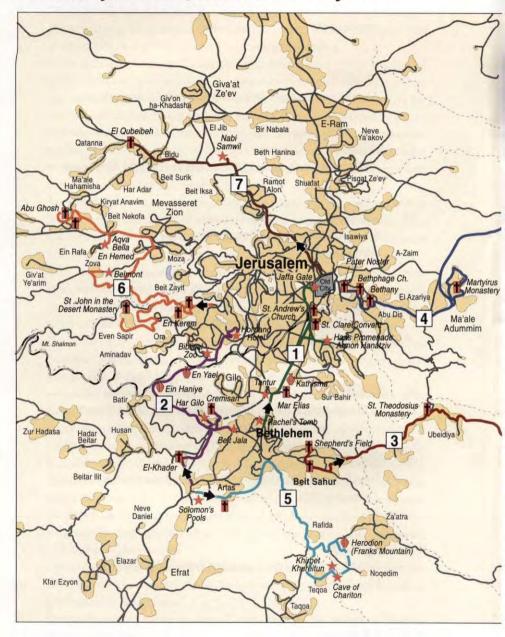
From En Kerem to Abu Ghosh – Christian sites in the Jerusalem Hills

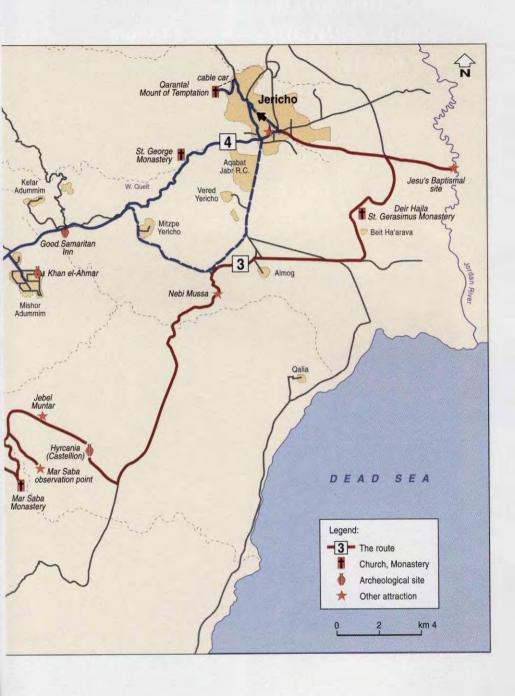
119 Route 7

In the footsteps of the Crusaders from Nabi Samwil to El-Qubeibeh

126 Bibliography

Christian Tourist Routes Between Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho







ALONG THE MAIN ROUTE HIGHWAY FROM BETHLEHEM TO **JERUSALEM**



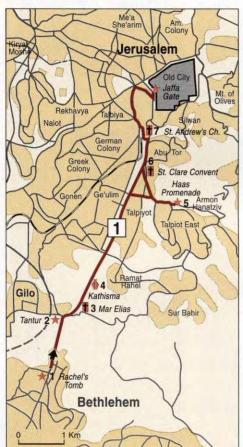
מכון ירושלים לחקר ישראז

Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, of course contains many important Christian sites, each of which is deserving of a visit of its own. Our tour, that will take us to sites along the highway from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, begins at Rachel's Tomb, at the northern entrance to Bethlehem.

Sites

- 1. Rachel's Tomb
- 2. Tantur
- 3. Mar Elias
- 4. the Kathisma Church
- 5. Armon Hanatziv (UN Headquarters) and the Promenade
- 6. the St. Clare Convent
- 7. St. Andrew's Scottish Church

End of the route: Jaffa Gate



Note

This route can also be followed in the opposite direction, from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

Length of route:

about 7 km

10

כל הזכויות שמורות למכון ירושלים לחקר ישראל

1. Rachel's Tomb

Visiting hours

Every day from 8:00 a.m. till sunset. On Friday from 8:00–13:00



"And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-Lehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day"

(Genesis: 35: 19-20).

Rachel's Tomb in the late Nineteenth Century

Rachel's Tomb is identified in Jewish, Christian and Muslim tradition with the burial site of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, who died giving birth to their son Benjamin (Genesis 35: 16, 19). Members of the three monotheistic faiths connect Rachel with the figure of the Great Mother, who in her death during childbirth took upon herself the sufferings of all women who bear children. In the New Testament Rachel's misfortune is alluded to as a kind of prophecy of the death of the helpless babes killed in Bethlehem by King Herod (Jeremiah 31: 14; Matthew 2: 16-18). This connection apparently was an important reason for the preservation of the site during the Byzantine period, and possibly explains why other traditions that locate Rachel's Tomb north of Jerusalem were rejected. The tomb is mentioned by Josephus Flavius, by the Church Fathers Eusebius, Jerome and Origen and also by pilgrims in the fourth and seventh centuries. However, only during the Crusader period (twelfth century) was a dome first built over the tomb, supported by four pointed arches. According to Jewish tradition the tombstone was built of twelve stones which represent eleven of the tribes of Israel (not including Benjamin) and their father Jacob. In the late Middle Ages, during the period of Islamic rule, the site was



praying at Rachel's Tomb (1998)

restored a number of times by the Muslim rulers.

In 1622, Muhammad Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem, changed the appearance of the building by filling in the Crusader arches and giving it the appearance of the tomb of a Muslim holy man. From this period on the tomb became a central, popular holy site for Jewish pilgrims. One reason for its growing importance to Jews was that, unlike the Tombs of the Patriarchs in Hebron or various sites in Jerusalem, Rachel's Tomb - also sacred to Christians and Muslims was accessible to Jews as well without almost any interference. In the nineteenth century Jews were even given permission to restore it. Moses Montefiore, the famous Jewish philanthropist who financed the restorations, also built a room for Muslim prayer on the site in an effort to assure good neighborly relations between Jewish and Arab worshippers. With his help the Jews also received a key to the building. From the nineteenth century until the present the site has been a place of pilgrimage for members of the three religions. Women are conspicuous among the visitors - through prayers and vows they beseech Rachel's help to alleviate their barrenness and for help with other problems.

In the past few years the tomb has been restored once again by the Israeli authorities and a high wall has been built which hides the historic tomb structure.

2. Tantur - The Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies



The gate to Tantur Compound Entrance from Rosmarin Street, just before the intersection with Hebron Road.

To arrange visits call the Institute at Tel. 02-6760-911

The earliest Christian activity at Tantur ("hilltop" in Arabic) began during the Crusader period. In 1110 the monk Gerald, head of the Knights of St. John of the Hospital in Jerusalem, established a hospital, a hostel for pilgrims, and a tower at the top of the hill which was identified by pilgrims as the place where Rachel gave birth to her son, Benjamin. They called the site "The Tower of Jacob at Efrata" (on the basis of Genesis 35: 16-20).

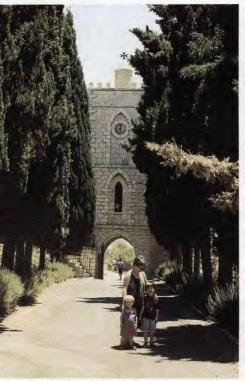
The conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187 brought about a lengthy lapse in medical activity on the site. However, about 700 years later, it was once more in Christian

hands. Count Bernard Caboga, the Austrian consul in Jerusalem and a member of the Order of the Knights of Malta (a later version of the Order of the Knights of St. John), bought the land in 1869 intending to restore it to its original glory and to build a Christian hospital for the Order. In 1876, thanks to a generous contribution by the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph, who visited the site on his way to Bethlehem during his visit to the Holy Land in 1869, the Hospice of the Knights of Malta was opened. It later became a clinic and hospital that served the local population of all faiths until the First World War.

In the years following the war the hospital ceased to function, being replaced by various monastic orders and Christian institutions that operated there on a limited scale. In 1949 the site was entrusted to the Salesian monks from the nearby Cremisan Monastery who established an international theological seminar at the site.

In the second half of the 1960s, at the initiative of Pope Paul VI, who

visited the Holy Land in 1964, and in the wake of a decision adopted at the Second Vatican Council, the idea gradually took shape to establish an ecumenical institution here which would attempt to heal the breach between the many different Christian churches, sects and groups. The land was bought by the Holy See from the Order of the Knights of



garden and the gate of Tantur

Malta in 1966 and four years later the old hospital building was demolished. The architect Frank Montana, who also restored the large building of Notre Dame de Jérusalem opposite the New Gate in Jerusalem, used the old stones of the hospital to build a new institute which blends in well with the hilly landscape. He left only the eastern side of the wall of the compound, including the stylized tower built by Count Caboga. In 1972 the Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies was inaugurated. Its objective was to study what united and divided the various Christian churches and the three monotheistic religions in the Holy Land, in the belief that the site where Christianity was born was the most suitable place to heal the breach within it.

Tantur hosts scholars and groups interested in deepening

their knowledge of the history of Christianity and its relations with Judaism and Islam. It includes classrooms and lecture halls, a large library with 55,000 books and 420 periodicals as well as 50 guest rooms made available to individuals and groups.

From this beautiful building and the garden surrounding it one is offered a wonderful view of the area of Jerusalem, Beit Jala and Bethlehem. On the first floor of the stylized tower at the entrance to the compound is a small chapel which contains the tomb of the vigorous Count Bernard Caboga, the founder of the nineteenth-century compound, who was privileged to be buried within its walls.

3. Mar Elias - The Monastery of Elijah

On Hebron Road, at the southern entrance to Jerusalem.
The monastery and the restaurant are open during the day. Tel. 02-6760-966



Elijah the Prophet ascends to heaven - A wall painting at Mar Elias

The monastery was established in the sixth century and served, among other purposes, as a rest stop on the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Destroyed during the Persian invasion in 614, it was restored but destroyed again during an earthquake that hit the area in the twelfth century. In 1160 the monastery was rebuilt with funds provided by Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus I. In the fourteenth century the bishop of Jerusalem, Elias, was buried here and his grave became a pilgrimage site for the residents of the area. Over the years a tradition developed that Elijah the Prophet had rested on this spot when he escaped from Jezebel on his way to Beersheba and Mount Horeb(1 Kings 19:1-8). Pilgrims were even shown the stone on which



The painted Dome at Mar Elias Church

he rested. The monastery is under the aegis of the Greek Orthodox Church. The monastery's large basilica-shaped church, which underwent renovation during the past few years, is decorated with drawings depicting scenes from the life of Jesus. Between the many stars painted on its ceiling are the figures of saints, in the form of angels. The skeleton of a monk from the Byzantine period, his body in chains (most likely the result of self-inflicted asceticism), is exhibited in the church's eastern section. The skeleton was discovered in archaeological excavations conducted opposite the monastery in 1993.

A small garden, which has been planted in front of the monastery, contains an environmental sculpture representing the meeting of the desert with settled land. On a raised platform in the garden is the bench of William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), a well-known English artist, one of the leaders of the pre-Raphaelite school of painting. Hunt lived in Jerusalem for a long period of time and executed several paintings on biblical themes and scenes from the life of Jesus. He believed that a realistic presentation of the landscape of the country and its people would help the Christian believer experience the suffering of Jesus. The bench was set up by his wife Edith on the spot where he used to

The bench of William Holman Hunt



sit and look at the views of Bethlehem and the Judean Desert, the source of inspiration for his work. Biblical verses in Hebrew, Greek, English and Arabic decorate the bench and tell the story of its placement at the spot.

4. The Kathisma Church

Note

An archeological site

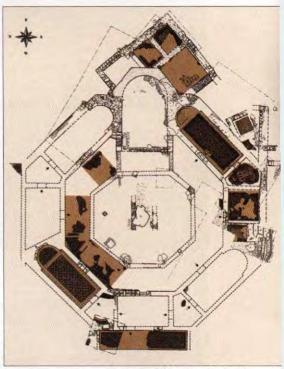
Hidden in the olive groves 350 meters north of Mar Elias is one of the most important archaeological finds for Christianity discovered in the

The Greek Orthodox Patriarch visits the archeological excavations in Kathisma



Jerusalem area in recent times. It is an octagonal church decorated with beautiful mosaics from the Byzantine period. The plan of the church is unusual: a square circumscribing three concentric octagons. The square was not continuous along the east side, but rather a polygonal apsis projected eastwards beyond the outer octagon.

According to several historical sources, the rock at the center of the church is the spot where Mary sat down to rest before entering Bethlehem to give birth to Jesus. This is the source



The plan of the Kathisma chu

The palm tree at the Kathisma Church

of the name Kathisma – "the sitting place" in Greek.

The tradition (which appeared in the Proto-Evangelium of James 17: 2-3), reminds us of Rachel's death at childbirth and calls attention to her nearby tomb.

The church was built in the mid-fifth century and is mentioned in descriptions by Christian pilgrims. It was converted into a mosque, probably in the first half of the eighth century. Apparently the Christian tradition connecting the rock in the center of the church to Mary's birth pains was also adopted by the Muslims. Support for this assumption can be found in the palm-tree pattern that appears on the mosaic floor which brings to mind the description in the Koran of Mary giving birth beside a palm



tree (Koran, Chapter 19, Mary: 22–26). A late Christian tradition (which appears in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 20), and resembles the Moslem tradition, tells us that on the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, they rested underneath a palm tree. At the request of Mary, the child Jesus commanded the palm tree to bend down and refresh

his mother with fruit and then commanded a spring of water to flow forth from its roots.

The site was later deserted and the location of the church forgotten, until it was rediscovered in archaeological digs conducted in 1992, 1997, and 1999. The discovery of the church with the holy rock at its center aroused great excitement among Christians and a festive prayer was held at the spot with the participation of the highest officials of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, which owns the land. Recently, development activities started on the site for turning it into a major tourist attraction on the road between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

There is also an old water pool on the site marked as "Bir Kadismo" on the maps, a corruption of the ancient name Kathisma. It is also called "the star hole", as it has been associated by pilgrims with the place where the star announcing the birth of Jesus was revealed to the Magi on their way to Bethlehem (Matthew 2: 9-10).

"And they drew near to the third milestone. And Joseph turned round and saw her sad and said within himself, 'Perhaps the child within her is paining her.' Another time Joseph turned round and saw her laughing and said to her, 'Mary, why is it that I see your face at one moment laughing and at another sad?' And Mary said to Joseph, 'I see with my eyes two peoples, one weeping and lamenting and one rejoicing and exulting.' And having come half-way, Mary said to him, 'Joseph, take me down from the she-ass, for the child within me presses me to come forth.' And he took her down from the she-ass and said to her, 'Where shall I take you and hide your shame? For the place is desert" (The Protevangelium of James 17: 2-3).

5. Armon Hanatziv (Government House) - at the eastern end of the Haas Promenade

Note

An observation point and Promenade (the Haas and Sherover Promenade)



The Haas Promenade

This building and its grounds formerly served as the official residence of the British High Commissioner for Palestine. The site today serves as the Middle East headquarters of the UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) and is closed to visitors. The promenade is open to the public.

This hill, from which there is an impressive view of ancient Jerusalem

This hill, from which there is an impressive view of ancient Jerusalem and its surroundings, is identified, according to one Christian tradition, with the Hill of Evil Counsel, the location of the summer home of the High Priest Caiaphas where the Sanhedrin met and decided to put Jesus to death (John 11: 50–51). A burial cave, one of whose ossuaries bears the name of Caiaphas, was found at the bottom of the hill. Another tradition associates the site with the spot where Abraham looked out onto the Land of Moriah before the sacrifice of Isaac and the place where he left his donkey and the two young men who

accompanied him (Genesis 22: 4–5). From the UN headquarters to the neighborhood of Abu Tor runs a carefully-tended promenade which provides a spectacular view of the Old City, the Mount of Olives and the fringes of the desert. A tunnel 395 meters long was cut in the rock under the ridge upon which Government House is located. It was part of the system supplying water to Jerusalem during the Roman period (see route five). Sections of the aqueduct that conveyed water to the Temple can also be seen along the Sherover Promenade.

"Then on the third day
Abraham lifted up his
eyes, and saw the place
afar off. And Abraham
said unto his young
men, Abide ye here
with the ass; and I and
the lad will go yonder
and worship, and come
again to you"

(Genesis 22:4-5).





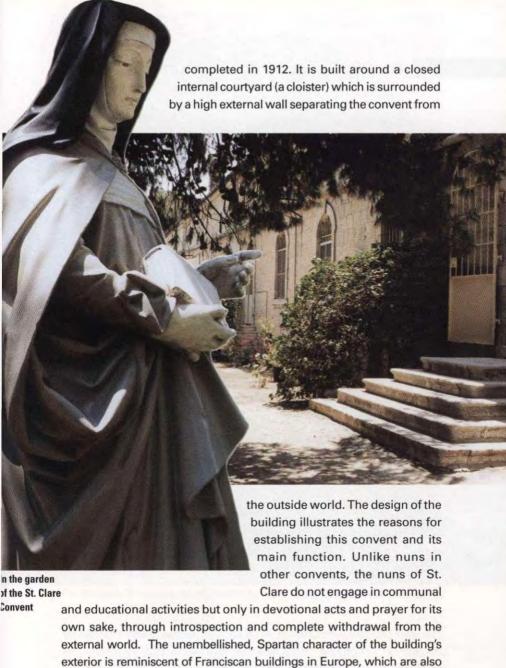
Government House

Monday-Friday, 15:00-17:00. Please ring the bell



The icon of St. Clare

This convent is the home of the Order of Franciscan Nuns which was founded in the thirteenth century by St. Clare of Assisi, a disciple of St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan Order. The convent in Jerusalem was established in 1888 and its construction was



and educational activities but only in devotional acts and prayer for its own sake, through introspection and complete withdrawal from the external world. The unembellished, Spartan character of the building's exterior is reminiscent of Franciscan buildings in Europe, which are also marked by an emphasis on simplicity and modesty. The peaceful atmosphere in the convent is meant to provide the nuns with ideal conditions for introspection and prayer. The nuns speak among themselves only at set times and only for their most essential needs. The division of labor and the daily tasks are reminiscent to a certain extent of life in a commune.

7. The St. Andrew's Scottish Church

Entrance from Remez Street, near the Khan Theater.

Visiting hours

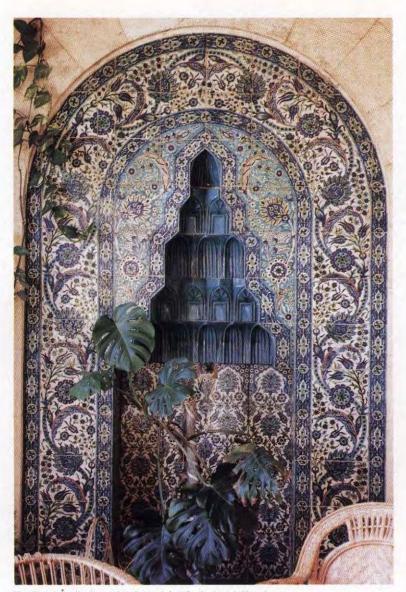
Every day between 9:00–18:00.

If the church is closed inquire at the office of the adjacent hostel, Tel. 02-6732-401



St. Andrew's Church in snow (1992)

The church is named after St Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland and one of Christ's first disciples. It was founded in 1927 in memory of the Scottish soldiers who fell in the battle for Jerusalem during the First World War. General Edmund Allenby, the British commander who captured the city, was among those who participated in the cornerstone laying ceremony. Inside the church is an inscription dedicated to King Robert the Bruce of Scotland. Before his death in 1329, after having been unable to fulfill his vow to take part in a Crusade to the Holy Land,



The Fireplace (in Armenian Ceramic) at St. Andrew's Hospice

he ordered that his heart be buried in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, his wish was never fulfilled since the messenger bearing the royal heart was killed in Spain before reaching the Holy City. The king's heart was returned to Scotland but an inscription in the apse of the church states that this was where it was to have been buried.

The church and the hostel connected to it, which were designed by the English architect Clifford Holliday, are considered a successful combination of the local Eastern style, expressed in the arches and



The inscription dedicated to Robert the Bruce of Scotland

domes, and the influence of the modern style, represented by the rectangular tower and the manner in which the mass of the building is broken by the use of a few graded cubes.

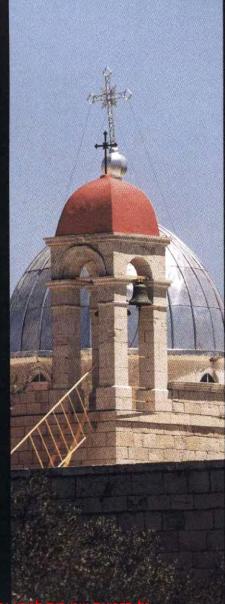
On the slope leading down from the church are burial caves dating from biblical times. Two small silver bands found in one of the caves contain the earliest biblical text ever discovered in an archeological excavation. It dates back to the seventh century BCE and includes the Priestly Benediction (Numbers 6: 24-26).

The remains of a very large church dating from the Byzantine period, and quite likely named after St. George, were uncovered on the northern section of the hill. In additional excavations recently conducted on the slopes of this hill, archeologists have discovered an ancient quarry dating from the Second Temple period and a pagan cemetery from the second and third centuries CE, possibly the graves of Roman soldiers.

After visiting the church we will continue along King David Street northwards towards Jaffa Gate, one of the main gates of the Old City.

ROUTE 2

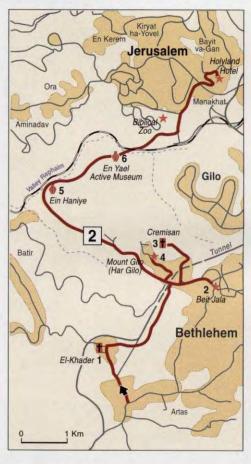
INDIGENOUS
CHRISTIANITY
BETWEEN
BETHLEHEM AND
JERUSALEM



Sites

- 1. The village of El-Khadr
- 2. The town of Beit Jala
- 3. Cremisan (Deir Kirmisan)
- 4. Mount Gilo (Ras Beit Jala) and the Everest Hotel
- 5. Ein Haniye
- 6. En Yael (Ein Yalu)

End of the route: the Tisch Biblical Zoo or the Model of Ancient Jerusalem next to the Holyland Hotel.



Note

It is possible to descend from Mount Gilo to Cremisan and to Ein Haniye on foot. Buses and regular cars can descend from Mount Gilo to Ein Haniye and Jerusalem on the road that bypasses Beit Jala.

Length of route: about 15 km.

1. The village of El-Khadr

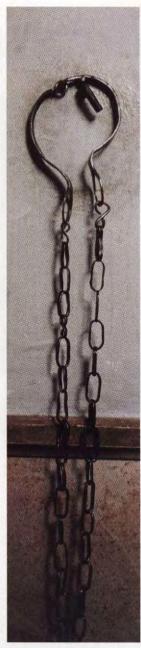
Visiting hours

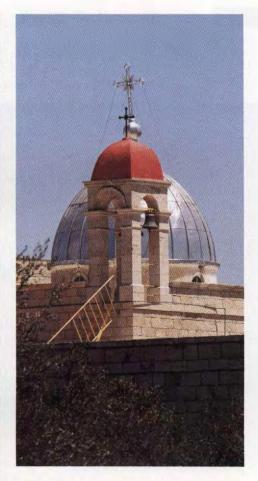
The Monastery of St. George is usually open during the day. Tel. 02-2743-233



St. George and the Dragon in the Church

About 3 km south of Bethlehem, on the main road to Hebron, is a stylized stone gate that leads to the Monastery of St. George in the heart of the village of El-Khadr. The church of the monastery was built in the eighteenth century on the ruins of a Byzantine church by a Greek Orthodox monk from the Mar Saba Monastery. In 1912 the church and the monastery were renovated to bring them to their present form. The monastery and the church are dedicated to St. George, or El-Khadr according to the Muslim tradition, who was identified with the Prophet Elijah. His emblem, which appears on the lintel of the gate and over the entrances to many houses in the Bethlehem area, is a knight on horseback slaying a dragon, which is also the emblem of St. George, the patron saint of England.





The chains and the Dome of the church at El-Khadr

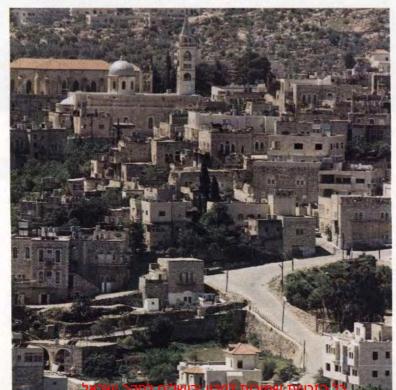
According to Christian tradition, El-Khadr is said to have possessed healing powers, as well as the ability to bring rain and perform other miraculous deeds. He is also considered the patron saint of farmers, wayfarers and the sick. Iron chains with which the mentally ill were bound in order to cure them are still displayed in the village church. The neighboring villages (both Christian and Muslim) conduct a colorful, well-attended procession to the monastery

and the church on the birthday of El-Khadr. This is today a Muslim village that developed from a group of tenant farmers who cultivated the lands of the Greek Orthodox monastery.

2. Beit Jala

The origins of this town are uncertain and no one knows when it was established. It may possibly have been an outgrowth of Christian Bethlehem. In any case, it was already mentioned in Muslim chronicles dating from 1283. Because of its proximity to Rachel's Tomb various nineteenth-century researchers tried to identify Beit Jala with Efrata or Rama which are mentioned in the Bible. There is an ancient well in the town known as Bir Ona, which local tradition identifies as the site where Mary rested on her way from Bethlehem to En Kerem. There are five churches in the town and several other Christian institutions. Most outstanding among them are the Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas, with its square tower and glittering silver dome; the Church of the Virgin Mary in the center of town and the large seminary for acolytes of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

About 5,000 of the residents of Beit Jala are Christians (of whom 75 percent are Greek Orthodox). A large number of native inhabitants of the town have immigrated since 1948 to North and South America where there are flourishing Christian Arab communities of former residents of Bethlehem and the surrounding area. In Santiago, Chile, alone there are 25,000 emigrants from Beit Jala.



General view of Beit Jala

3. Cremisan (Deir Kirmisan)

Visiting hours to the monastery and the winery

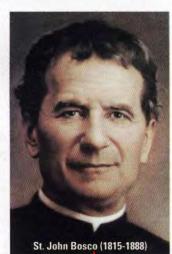
every day between 8:00 and 16:00 - except Sunday. It is advisable to make prior arrangements for a visit to the church at Tel. 02-2744-825



The Monastery and its agricultural grounds

The Salesian monastery of Deir Kirmisan (Cremisan) is located on the northern slope of Mount Gilo, about a kilometer west of the town of Beit Jala. It contains an impressive building, a large winery and a cheese factory. The monastery, established in 1908 with funds provided by the Vatican, contains an agricultural school and an important theological institute.

The Salesian Order - named after Francis da Sales, the Bishop of Geneva



ת למֹכוֹן ירושלים לחקר ישראל

and one of the leaders of the Counter-Reformation at the beginning of the seventeenth century – was established in 1859 near Turin, Italy by St. John Bosco. The members of the Order dedicate themselves to the Christian and professional education of lower class children and youth. One can buy bottles of excellent wine and olive oil, which are produced at the monastery, in its shop.



A watchman's hut in the vicinity of Mount Gilo

4. Mount Gilo (Har Gilo) and the Everest Hotel

An observation point, a cafe and a field school.

Open all day.

To arrange visits to the Har Gilo Field School: Tel. 02-9932-386

Mount Gilo, which rises to a height of 923 meters above sea level and is covered with olive trees, fruit orchards and picturesque stone terraces, offers a rare view of the entire area between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. From the observation tower and the two observation points (near the entrance gate and at the western side of the crest of the hill)

there is also a magnificent view that stretches from the Dead Sea in the east to the Mediterranean coast in the west, and from Ramallah in the north to the Hebron mountains in the south. From here one can also see Herodion (which we will visit on route five) and the fringes of the Judean Desert.

Construction of a Russian church was begun early in the twentieth century, but was brought to a halt by the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution. During the Second World War a British Army radio station was set up at the spot and after 1948 it became a Jordanian army base. After the Six-Day War in1967, an Israeli settlement was built here that included a field school of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and a hostel for travelers. The remains of a Roman mausoleum were found in the pine forest near the field school. There is an exhibit there of agricultural tools, including an oil press. The Everest Hotel, located near the top of the mountain, offers good meals along with an impressive view.

5. Ein Haniye

Note

A spring in the Valley of Refaim



The spring of Ein Haniye

From Mount Gilo we descend by vehicle (along the road that bypasses Beit Jala) to the spring of Ein Haniye, located in the Valley of Refaim. What is unique about this spring is that its water gushes forth into a pond through an ancient apse that is decorated with a shell. The beautiful apse is part of a Roman nympheon that was built above the spring and was in existence through the Byzantine period. It became a sacred site in the Byzantine period because of the tradition relating to the baptism by the evangelist Philip of an Ethiopian eunuch who was the treasurer of Queen Candace (Acts 8: 26-40). This was the event that later led to the transformation of Ethiopia into a Christian country. A sixth-century Byzantine church was discovered north of the spring, but its remains have been covered over.

"And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8: 38-39).

6. En Yael (Ein Yalu)

Note

A spring, a Roman farm and an open air museum where ancient crafts are demonstrated.

Visiting hours

all week between 8:00 and 16:00. Entrance fee.
To arrange a visit and activities in the museum call Tel. 02-6451-866



Olive crushing stone at En Yael

The spring Tunnel at En Yael

The central feature at this site is an agricultural farm from the Roman and Byzantine periods built around a spring and a Roman villa. A mosaic floor was discovered inside the villa decorated with animals - mostly birds and fish - and scenes from Greek mythology. In addition, an ancient water tunnel leading from the spring, pools and an irrigation system have been excavated and reconstructed. In addition to the archeological ruins there is also an active museum on the spot, that recreates different work techniques from ancient times for pottery making, weaving, the production of mosaics, building and agriculture. On Saturday there are open workshops in which visitors can try their hand at the different crafts practiced in the country in ancient times.

From En Yael we can cross the Refaim Valley and end the route at the Tisch

Biblical Zoo or at the unique model of Jerusalem as it was in the time of Jesus, located on the grounds of the Holyland Hotel.



Children at En Yael workshop

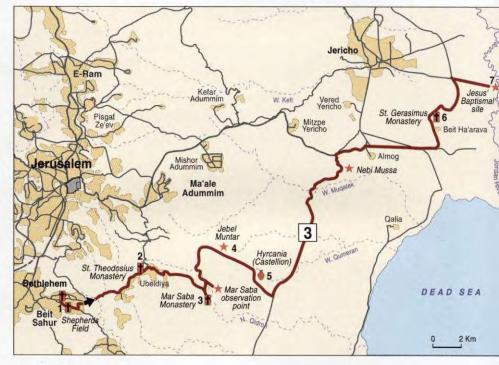
36

FROM BETHLEHEM
TO THE DESERT
MONASTERIES AND
THE JORDAN RIVER



Sites

- 1. Shepherds Field at Beit Sahur
- 2. The Monastery of Theodosius
- 3. The Monastery of Mar Saba
- 4. Jebel Muntar
- 5. Hyrcania (Castellion); Nebi Musa
- 6. The Monastery of St. Gerasimus (Deir Hajla)
- 7. Jesus' baptismal site (the Jordan River monasteries)



Note

The drive from the Mar Saba Monastery to Nebi Musa is possible only in a field vehicle with four-wheel drive, and can only be done on Fridays and Saturdays since it is a training area for the Israel Defense Forces.

Visits should be coordinated with the military authorities

at Tel. 02-5305-372 or 03-6976-876.

Visits to Jesus' baptismal site and the Jordan monasteries must also be coordinated with the army at Tel. **02-5303-372**.

Those who wish to do so can return to Jerusalem via the next route (route 4).

Length of route: about 40 km.

1. "Shepherds Field" at Beit Sahur (Deir el-Rayuat and Siar el-Ganem)

Visiting hours to Deir el-Rayuat - the Greek Orthodox site

every day 10:00-17:00 [ring the bell]. Tel. 02-2773-135

Visiting hours at Siar el-Ganem - the Franciscan site

8:00–12:00, 14:00–18:00 [in the winter till 17:30]. Tel. 02-2772-413

Both sites are in the eastern part of the village of Beit Sahur,

about 2 km east of Bethlehem



In the cave of Deir el-Rayuat

Christian tradition identifies Deir el-Rayuat (the Monastery of the Shepherds), at the eastern end of the town of Beit Sahur, as the place where the Angel of the Lord revealed to the shepherds the news of the impending birth of Christ (Luke 2: 8-11). It also considers this to be the location of the biblical Tower of Eder – the place near which Jacob camped after the death of Rachel (Genesis 35: 21) and also the site mentioned in the prophecies of the Prophet Micah in connection with



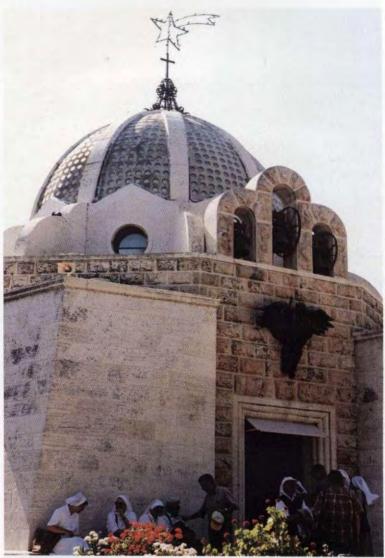
In the modern Church of Deir el-Rayuat

the End of Days expected to begin there (Micah 4: 8). Christians believe the revelation of the Angel to the shepherds to be the fulfillment of the words of the Prophet Micah. There is a cave at this spot which according to tradition was used by the shepherds, and the ruins of a church that existed there from the fourth to the eleventh centuries. The archeological excavations conducted here show that the site gained importance in the sixth century, during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, when a magnificent basilica was built above the cave. Christian sources from the seventh century report that the Christmas celebrations actually began on December 24 in the Shepherds' Church, from where the priests and believers would begin a festive procession to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. From the beginning of the seventh century an additional tradition developed, according to which the three Magi who brought the news of the birth of Jesus were buried in the Shepherds' Church. The visitor is shown their tomb in the western section of the church.

In the eleventh century the church and monastery were apparently destroyed and only the cave remained, which became a pilgrimage



"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:8-12).



The Franciscan church of Siar el-Ganem

site for both Muslims and Christians. The cave also served as a church for the Greek Orthodox community in Beit Sahur until the town's new church was built in 1955.

Today, the cave – which contains a Byzantine mosaic floor from the fourth century – and the magnificent new church built beside it are under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. However, the Franciscans, who were not allowed to worship in the cave in privacy, challenged the authenticity of the Greek Orthodox site. In 1950 they



The Dome of the Church at Siar el-Ganem

began to build a new church on the spot called Siar el-Ganem, about 500 meters north of the Greek Orthodox site. Archeological excavations conducted there revealed the remains of a large monastery, cisterns, wine presses and storage caves, as well as evidence of a settlement from the time of the Second Temple. A natural cave was also discovered on the spot which, according to the Franciscans, was used by the shepherds to whom the Angel revealed himself. In 1954 a handsome church was dedicated nearby, designed by the well-known architect Antonio Barluzzi. This unusual building, known as Gloria in Excelsis, symbolizes the tent of the nomadic shepherds. Its dome is made of glass windows which allow much light into the church – a symbol of the light that shone on the shepherds with the appearance of the Angel (Luke 2: 9). Construction of the building was made possible by a contribution from Canada.

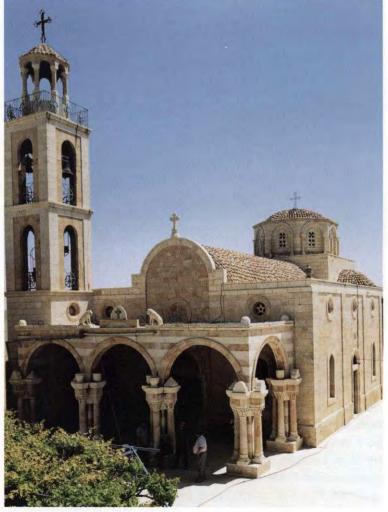
Near Beit Sahur, Christian pilgrims would point out the field in which Ruth, the Moabite woman, and Boaz met. The marriage that resulted from that meeting (Ruth 2: 3-17) has much importance in Christian tradition because of its important offspring: David, their great grandson, and Jesus, a descendant of David.

2. The Monastery of Theodosius

Visiting hours

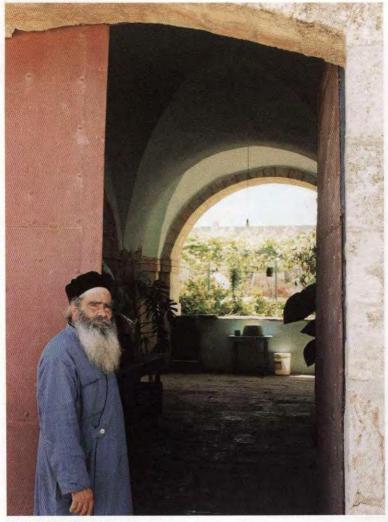
every day from 8:00-13:00: Tel. 050-282-447

This monastery was established by Theodosius who is considered to be the founder of the first communal monastery (coenobium) in the Holy Land. He was born in 423 CE in Cappadocia, which is today in Turkey. In 450 he came to Jerusalem and spent some time at the Iberian Monastery, probably located in the vicinity of the Tower of David. In 455 he entered the monastery that he founded in Bethlehem, but when



The church at St. Theodosius Monastery

efforts were made to appoint him abbot he fled, finally settling in a large cave on the southern bank of the Kidron Valley in the Judean Desert. This is the place where, according to tradition, the Magi rested on their way to pay homage to the infant Jesus in nearby Bethlehem (Matthew 2: 1–3). A small group of monks of different ethnic backgrounds gathered around it and dedicated themselves to caring for the sick, the aged and the mentally ill. When the community of monks grew, Theodosius established a communal monastery in 476 which soon became the largest monastery in the Judean Desert. Its unique aspect was the communal life led by the monks and their social



The gate to St. Theodosius Monastery



The Burial Casket of St. Theodosius

work. Four churches in the monastery served monks of different nationalities and the monastery's varied religious life reflected the tolerant atmosphere and international character of the monks in the Judean Desert. In 492 the Patriarch of Jerusalem appointed Theodosius head of all monks living in communal monasteries (coenobium in Greek). This is the source of the Greek title, cenobiarch. Theodosius died in 529 at the age of 105.

The monastery continued to develop even after Theodosius' death and at its zenith about 400 monks from various countries lived there. It contained churches, educational institutions, hostels, soup kitchens and orphanages. Among its residents were not only monks but men learned in various professions, and men of letters as well. Three of its abbots became patriarchs of Jerusalem during the Byzantine period. Despite the Persian conquest in 614 and that of the Muslims in 638, which had a harmful effect on the activity of the monastery, it nevertheless continued to function until the seventeenth century, when its residents found themselves under constant threat from desert nomads. In 1620 the monastery was deserted and used as a shelter for Bedouin and their sheep. In 1899 the Greek Orthodox bought the site from the Ottoman authorities and between 1914 and 1925 the monastery was reconstructed in its present form. Today there is a permanent presence of Greek Orthodox monks in the monastery.

The most interesting part of the monastery is the crypt where, according to tradition, the Magi rested and in which the abbots of the monastery were buried. Along the walls of the cave are the burial caskets of Theodosius, the founder of the monastery, his mother and sister, and many other holy men. From the monastery there is a fine view of the whole eastern section of the Jerusalem mountains and large parts of the northern Judean Desert.

3. The Monastery of Mar Saba (St. Sabas)

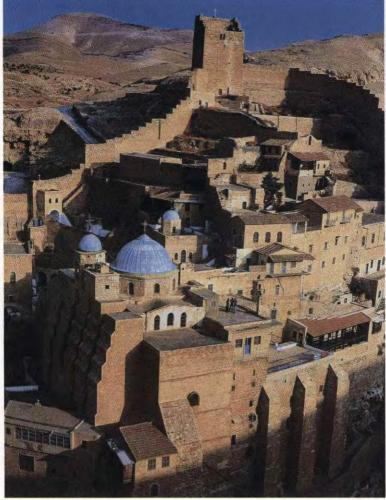
Visiting hours

every day from 9:00-16:00)

Note

Entrance is limited to males. It is recommended that mixed groups view the monastery from the observation point opposite, on the other side of the Kidron Valley. From there one has a magnificent view of the monastery. Vehicles with fourwheel drive are necessary to reach the observation point.

Mar Saba is the largest and most impressive monastery in the Judean Desert and is considered to be the most important monastic center in



General View of Mar Saba כל הזכויות שמורות למכון ירושלים לחקר ישראל





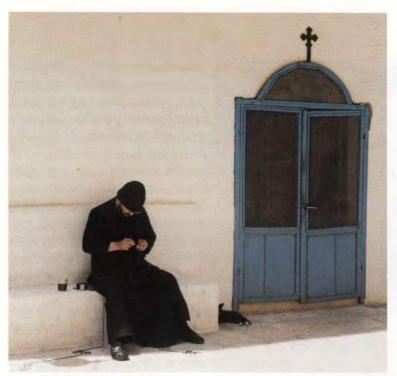


A well at Mar Saba

the Holy Land. This status stems, among other things, from its long history, which spans 1,500 consecutive years.

The founder of the monastery was St. Sabas who was born in Cappadocia in 439 CE. He came to the Holy Land at the age of eighteen, and like Theodosius spent some time in a monastery in Jerusalem. From there he reached Euthymius' monastery at Khan el-Akhmar. Euthymius entrusted him to St. Theoctistus, who for seventeen years initiated him into the monastic life in the monasteries of Euthymius and Theoctistus. For a number of years he lived as a hermit at different reclusive sites in the country. After acquiring a following of disciples, in 483 he founded the Great Laura on the southern cliff of the Kidron Valley, which attracted monks who lived a completely reclusive existence during the week, each in his own cell, but on Sunday would gather in the center of the laura for a communal meal, meditation and prayer led by the abbot of the monastery. The origin of the name for this kind of monks' community is the Greek word laura, which means "path," referring to the path connecting the monks' cells.

According to the local tradition Sabas lived for five years in a small cave opposite the monastery (marked today by a light-colored cross) with a lion that protected him from robbers. A small spring that ran below the monastery supplied the monks with drinking water. Legend



At the Monastery courtyard

has it that one day the spring dried up, but Sabas refused to leave the place. A miracle occurred and the water began to flow from the spring once again.

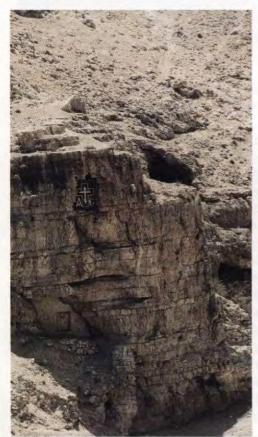
The laura continued to grow due to the personal example set by Sabas and the number of monks reached 150. In 492 Sabas was appointed by the Jerusalem Patriarch as head of all the lauras in the country. He established four new lauras, seven communal monasteries – among which were those of Hyrcania and Jebel Muntar (see below) – and also four hostels (two in Jerusalem and two in Jericho). Sabas was highly regarded not only in the Holy Land, but also in Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. At the ripe old age of 90 he made the journey to visit Emperor Justinian and induced him to rebuild the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem.

Sabas died in 532 at the age of 92 surrounded by hundreds of admirers. His way of life at Mar Saba was considered exemplary in the history of Christian monasticism. He was buried in the courtyard of the monastery in a structure with a hexagonal dome decorated with paintings. In time, a stay at this monastery became an essential stage of advancement in the Greek Orthodox clerical hierarchy.

After the death of Sabas permanent structures were built, as well as a few churches, whose construction was financed by donations from



Calling for prayer



The Cave of St. Sabas

Anatolia and even from the court of the Emperor Justinian. One of the early buildings that has survived in the monastery, cut in the rock, is the chapel of St. Nicholas, that was first built by St. Sabas.

As the monastery grew over the years, more living quarters, storerooms and a hostel were added, and a wall was built around it. At its zenith it was inhabited by 150 monks and served as a center for hundreds of others. Among its other attributes it had a very extensive spiritual life which yielded important literary works. The most famous theologian who withdrew to the monastery around 716 was John of Damascus (c.675-c.749), Doctor of the church, and heroic defender of the Images in the Iconoclastic Controversy.

The monastery was badly damaged during the Persian invasion in 614 and was rebuilt and destroyed a number of times. During the Crusader period the monastery and its outer wall were renovated and a watchtower was built near today's entrance. However, when the Crusaders left the Holy Land they took Sabas' remains with them to Venice. In 1965, as a result of the visit by Pope Paul VI to the Holy Land, Sabas' remains were returned to the monastery. Today they are wrapped in fine cloth and lie in a glass casket in the large church of the monastery. From the end of the Crusader period until the nineteenth century the monastery suffered several attacks by Bedouin but remained in Christian hands. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Serbian and Bulgarian monks settled there, but in 1625 it was returned to the Greek Orthodox Church. In 1840 the Russian government, which was the protector of the Greek Orthodox Church in Palestine, began renovations, restoration, and construction at the monastery, resulting in its present form. Its unique location at the top of a cliff in the Kidron Valley gives the visitor the feeling that the monastery is hanging in the air, making it one of the most fascinating sites to visit in the country. Male visitors enter the monastery through a small portal and descend on a narrow stepped path into a courtyard. In the middle is the small domed building, which housed the body of the founder of the monastery, Sabas, from 532 until the Crusades. One of the resident Greek monks acts as a guide to the labyrinthine monastery, including the richly-painted cruciform domed church and its icons, and will also show visitors the relatively well-preserved remains of St. Sabas, which were returned to the Monastery in 1965. This is the main church of the Monastery dedicated to St. Mary, the 'God-bearer' (Theotokos in Greek). Visitors are also taken into the chapel of St. Nicholas (in the cave), where the skulls are stored of the monks murdered by the Persians in 614. Finally, visitors can look down from a balcony to the Kidron Valley.

4. Jebel Muntar

Note

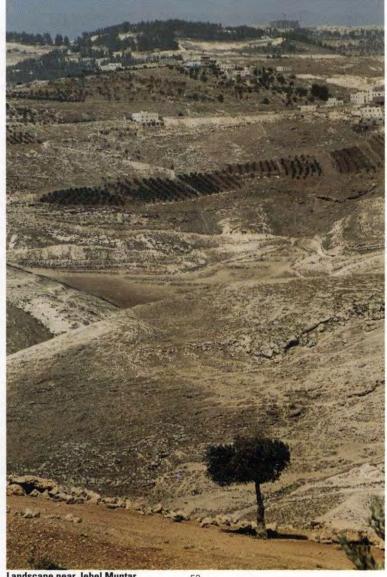
An observation point and the remains of a monastery. Access only by heavy-duty vehicles with four-wheel drive.

According to some researchers, this mountain top, which rises to a height of 524 meters above sea level, is the peak of Mount Azazel from which, when the Temple in Jerusalem was functioning, the "scapegoat" (a goat or a lamb) was thrown into the depths as atonement for the sins of Israel (Leviticus 16: 10, 22). Here a tower

was built in 450 as living quarters for the Byzantine Empress Eudocia who sought the spiritual guidance of the revered monk Euthymius. This is where the two met and Eudocia was convinced by Euthymius to choose the Orthodox faith and not that of the Monophysites, who seceded from the Orthodox Church at the Council of

"And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16: 22).

Chalcedon (451). As a result of this meeting a reconciliation was effected between the Patriarch of Jerusalem and the desert hermit monks, who had at first adopted Monophytism. In 509 St. Sabas established a communal monastery on the mountain and entrusted it to the care of his disciple, Scholarius, who had been a guard at the Emperor's palace. This is the source of its name - the Scholarius Monastery. It is also possibly the source of the Arabic name of the mountain - Jebel Muntar - which means the mountain of the guard.



Landscape near Jebel Muntar

52

5. Hyrcania – Castellion

Note

An observation point, the remains of a fortress and a Byzantine monastery.

Access to site by heavy-duty vehicles only.

From Jebel Muntar we continue in the direction of the Hyrcania Fortress, built in the Hasmonean period and expanded by King Herod, who executed some of his adversaries at this spot. The most outstanding find discovered here from the time of the Hasmoneans and Herod is a sophisticated water system which includes two aqueducts, along whose route one can still see bridges, crossings, dams, and more. The two aqueducts end in 21 wells and pools for storing water. Their total capacity is around 20,000 cubic meters.

After the fortress was destroyed, a Byzantine church and monastery were built there at the end of the fifth century. The founding of the monastery is attributed to St. Sabas who, like his teacher Euthymius,



Aerial view of Hyrcania and the water system 53 כל הזכויות שמורות למכון ירושלים לחקר ישראל



Aerial view of Nebi Musa

used to wander far into the desert during Lent. According to the description of his biographer, Cyril of Scythopolis, Sabas was attacked by evil spirits and retreated to the hill, but he overcame them and routed them through prayer and by sprinkling the oil of the Holy Cross. Construction of the monastery, known as Castellion (fortress), was completed in 492, and Sabas appointed his disciples Paulus and Theodoros as its heads. The monastery was built according to the coenobium model, for older monks who had excelled in monastic life. Among the ruins are the remains of a church founded by Sabas at the northeastern corner of the hilltop. The church floor is of white mosaics and the pillars that supported the arches which held up the ceiling are still visible in the walls.

The monastery continued to function until the seventh century, still making use of the water system from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In 1923 Greek Orthodox monks from Mar Saba Monastery returned to settle at the site. They lived amid the ruins of the early cells and in the ancient water cisterns. They cleared the ruins of the church and set up a chapel in the cave which contained ancient graves. They also restored the path that led to the top of the hill and built the structure that extends from the northern end of the hilltop. In 1939 the monks were forced to desert the spot due to deteriorating security conditions.

From Hyrcania we will descend to the road through the Hyrcania Valley and turn north in the direction of Nebi Musa, which Muslim tradition identifies as the burial place of Moses. The impressive building was apparently built by the Mamluk Sultan Baibars in 1265 at a site that was already considered holy as Moses' burial place. The construction of the fortified complex around the holy place resulted from the Mamluks' fear that the Crusaders might yet return. After visiting the site we will meet up with the main Jerusalem-Jericho highway and turn east toward the Dead Sea. We will then turn left on the road that bypasses Jericho and continue for 3 km where we will reach the Monastery of St. Gerasimus (Deir Hajla).

6. The Monastery of St. Gerasimus (Deir Hajla)

Note

Open during the daytime. Entrance fee

The Monastery, known in Arabic as Deir Hajla, seems to preserve the Hebrew name Bet Hoglah, which is mentioned in the biblical description of the lands of the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua18:19). Gerasimus, who arrived in the Holy Land from Lycia in Asia Minor in the second half of the fifth century, is considered to be the founder and leader of the monastic movement in the Jordan Valley. His great



Aerial view of the Monastery

55

כל הזכויות שמורות למכון ירושלים לחקר ישראל



St. Gerasimus and the Lion

experience in monastic life led him to found a new type of monastery – a sort of combination of a communal monastery (coenobium) and a laura. This type comprised a central structure – the coenobium – which included the cells of the head of the laura and the holders of other positions, in addition to a church and a dining room. Around the coenobium were the cells of those who adopted the ascetic way of life according to the strict rulings of Gerasimus. The function of the coenobium was to provide the needs of the recluses who lived around it and also to train acolytes for life in the laura.

A monastery of this type was established in 455, the remains of which were discovered 300 meters east of the present-day monastery. The remains of the coenobium include ancient building stones, pieces of marble, colorful mosaic stones and pottery from the Byzantine period. A few remains of ten monks' cells have been found in the area. A bit to the east, on the cliffs of the riverbed which is called Wadi el-Nukheil, another group of cells has been discovered, as well as a small chapel hewn out of chalk stone. From these cells, carved out like caves, one can understand why the hermits in Gerasimus' laura were known as "the cave dwellers". In its physical form and internal organization Gerasimus' laura served as a model for the Calamon Monastery in Ein Hajla and the St. George Monastery in Wadi Kelt.

Gerasimus is also known for the unique relationship he developed with a lion known by the name of Jordan. Tradition relates that Gersimus removed a large thorn from the paw of a lion that roamed the area near the Jordan River and became Gerasimus' faithful

Icon of Simon Stylites (c. 390–459) - a monk, who lived on top of a pillar until his death - A wall painting at St. Gerasimus

> companion from that time on. He followed him everywhere and became a house pet of the monastery. Once, when he was left in charge of the monastery donkey, the lion could not resist the temptation and devoured the donkey. The lion was punished for his act by being made to carry out all the tasks formerly executed by the donkey. So dedicated was he that he even directed the many pilgrims to the monastery. When Gerasimus died the lion lay on his master's grave until he, too, died of grief a few days later. As a result of this tradition, Gerasimus is portrayed on icons and wall paintings accompanied by a lion with a thorn in its paw.

> The Gerasimus Monastery, which was one of the most important monasteries in the Judean Desert in the sixth century, was not deserted during the Persian and



Muslim occupations (614 and 638, respectively) but remained active until the Crusader period. Only the deterioration of security conditions in the late Middle Ages resulted in its desertion and destruction at the end of the sixteenth century. In 1885 the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate managed to raise the funds necessary to rebuild the monastery and it began to flourish as the number of pilgrims to Jesus' baptismal site on the Jordan increased. In the last few years the monastery has been renovated once again, becoming one of the most popular tourist sites in the Jericho area. In its beautiful courtyard there is a kiosk where the visitor can refresh himself with a cold drink.

The monastery owns a few groves of fig and sycamore trees. Among the sycamores are some enormous ancient trees. Near the monastery are springs that in the past provided water for the caravans that crossed the Jordan. These springs are marked today by a cluster of palm trees. The largest of them is Ein Hajla, near which stood the Calamon Monastery in Byzantine times.

From Deir Hajla we will continue another two kilometers to the north, where we will turn east to Qasr el-Yehud – the Christian baptismal site on the Jordan River, and its monasteries.

7. Jesus' baptismal site (Qasr el-Yahud)

Note

The baptismal site of Jesus on the Jordan. An Israeli military zone.

To arrange visits call the Israel Defense Forces
coordination headquarters; Tel. 02-5303-372



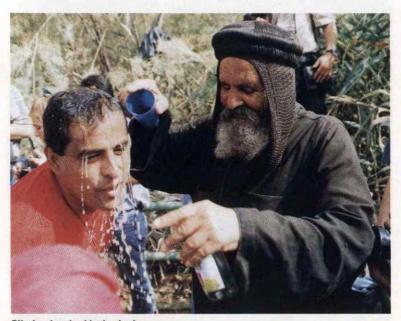
Pilgrimage at the baptismal site

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (Mark 1: 2-11; Matthew 3: 1-17) is considered to be one of the major events in the life of Jesus and of crucial importance in the history of Christianity. This act was sanctified by Christian believers shortly after Jesus' death and has become one of the two most important sacraments of the Christian Church.

The Jordan River had already acquired special significance because of the acts of the prophets Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17: 3; 2 Kings 5: 14). It later became the focal point of the activities of John the Baptist, who called upon the people to be cleansed of their sins in the same river in which the Prophet Elisha told Na'aman to bathe and cure himself of his ills. After John baptized Jesus, a voice was heard from Heaven proclaiming the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God – as

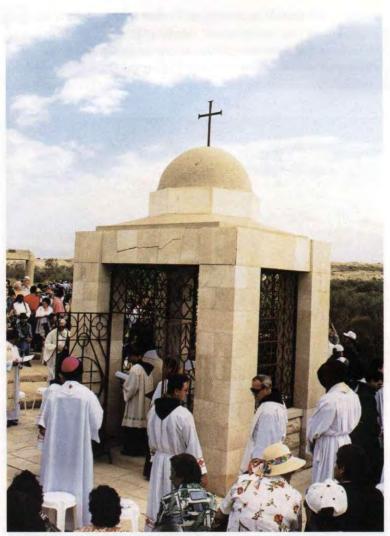
related in the Gospel according to St. Mark: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1: 11).

As early as the Byzantine period, churches and monasteries were established near the baptismal site. During the Crusader period the site flourished once more and many pilgrims rushed to be baptized in



Pilgrims baptized in the Jordan





The Franciscan chapel at the baptismal site

the Jordan River (In 1172, according to one account, 60,000 pilgrims visited the Jordan!). When security conditions deteriorated during the Mamluk period, the Jordan monasteries were gradually deserted. Conditions for pilgrimage became especially difficult and pilgrims used to return to Jerusalem, being afraid to stay overnight by the Jordan. Only during the British Mandate period were new churches and monasteries built. Until 1967 the site hosted thousands of pilgrims, members of various sects and communities, who came to be baptized in the Jordan and take home bottles of water from the river, water to



"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"

(Matthew 3: 16-17).

which they attributed all kinds of healing powers. Since the 1967 war it has been necessary to get special permission from the Israeli military authorities to visit the site. Since the beginning of the peace process several plans have been drawn up to redevelop the area, and the Israeli authorities intend to allow pilgrims to visit the area more freely during events marking the Millennium.

Today there are five monasteries that have been deserted since 1967, and two chapels that were built after 1930. The most important of them is the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. John the Baptist, which was

built on the ruins of a church and a monastery from the Byzantine period. The monastery, which was restored in 1955 and looks like a fortified compound, also commemorates the place where, according to Christian tradition, the Children of Israel crossed the Jordan (hence its Arabic name, Qasr el-Yahud – the castle of the Jews). South of the Greek Orthodox monastery are a small chapel built by the Franciscans, a Syrian monastery, a Coptic monastery, a Russian chapel, an Ethiopian monastery and a Romanian monastery. The large number of monasteries and chapels on the banks of the Jordan indicates the importance of the site and its centrality in Christian tradition.

This is the end of the route. Those who wish to do so can return to Jerusalem via the next route, which offers a visit to the Christian sites along the highway between Jericho and Jerusalem.

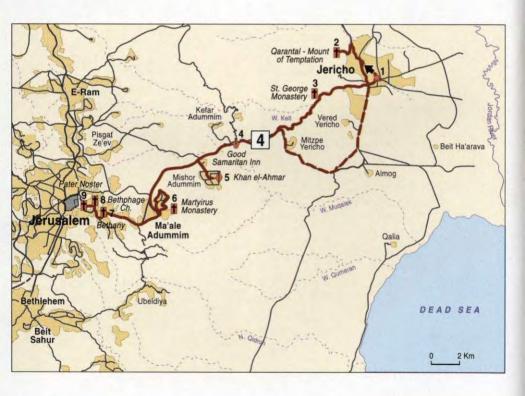
ROUTE 4

IN THE FOOTSTEPS
OF JESUS AND THE
JUDEAN DESERT
MONKS – BETWEEN
JERICHO AND
JERUSALEM



Sites

- 1. Jericho
- 2. Qarantal Monastery
- 3. Monastery of St. George in Wadi Kelt
- 4. Inn of the Good Samaritan
- 5. Khan el-Ahmar (the Monastery of Euthymius)
- 6. The Martyrius Monastery in Ma'ale Adummim
- 7. The church and tomb of Lazarus in Bethany (El-Azariya)
- 8. The Bethphage Church
- 9. The Mount of Olives Pater Noster Church.



Length of route: about 35 km.

1. Jericho



Landscape around Jericho

Jericho, the first city captured by the Israelites and among the first walled cities in the world, was one of the most important cities in the country in the time of Jesus and John the Baptist. Jesus passed through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem for the last time and John the Baptist baptized his believers in the nearby Jordan River. For these reasons many churches and monasteries have been built there, the remains of which are found at different sites around the city and in the surrounding area. Many pilgrims set out from Jericho to the baptism site on the Jordan.

"And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way" (Luke 19:3-4).



The rich agricultural yielding of Jericho

During the lifetime of Jesus Jericho was an important city, built according to the highest standards of Roman culture and construction. It was used as a resort by the wealthy of Jerusalem who wished to escape that city's harsh winter. Its magnificence was expressed – as archeological findings have revealed – in majestic homes, palaces, public buildings, bath houses, squares, extensive gardens, and more. Two important events occurred in Jericho according to the New Testament: the miracle of the healing of the blind man by Jesus (Luke 18: 35-43) and Jesus' meeting with the chief publican, Zacchaeus, who repented after Jesus came to his house (Luke19: 1-11). Zacchaeus, a man of small stature, climbed a sycamore tree in order to get a better view of Jesus, who was surrounded by a large crowd. Jesus called him down from the tree, visited his home, and as a result Zacchaeus repented. He gave half of his property to the poor and promised to compensate fourfold those whom he had exploited.

From earliest times, Christian pilgrims to Jericho have wished to visit the sites connected with the activities of Jesus. However, these sites have not been exactly identified. Today, the sycamore tree, not far from the center of town, on the road to Tel el-Sultan, is pointed out as the tree which Zacchaeus climbed. There are also a number of churches and Christian institutions in Jericho, such as the Franciscan monastery and church dedicated to Jesus the Good Shepherd, the Russian Hostel (which serves today as the offices of UNRWA – the United Nations Relief Work Agency), the Ethiopian Monastery, the Coptic Monastery, and others.

There are a few other important sites in and around Jericho which will be of interest to the Christian tourist. The most important of them are: Tel el-Sultan, the site of ancient Jericho; Elisha's Spring (Ein el-Sultan) whose waters were purified by the Prophet Elisha (2 Kings 2: 19-22); the synagogue of Jericho, which is believed to have been built in the seventh century; Hisham's Palace (Khirbat el-Mafgar), which is representative of the magnificent Moslem construction of the eighth century; the Hasmonean palace; the palace of King Herod located at the entrance to Wadi Kelt, and more.

2. The Qarantal Monastery (on the Mount of Temptation)

Note

A new cable car transports visitors from the center of Jericho (opposite Tel el-Sultan) to the foot of the monastery.

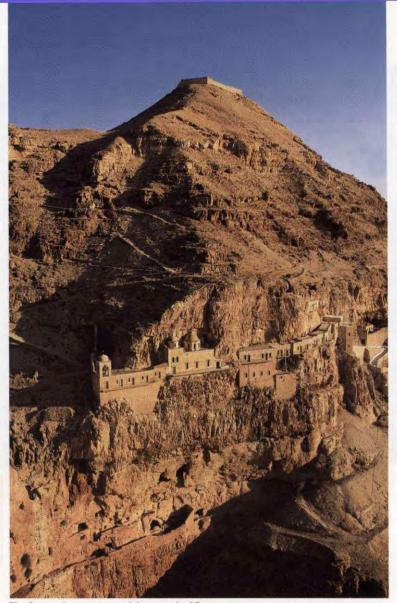
Operating hours of the cable car 8:00-20:00 Tel. 02-2321-590

Visiting hours at the monastery: 9:00-13:00, 14:00-17:00;

Saturday: 9:00-14:00; Sunday: 10:00-14:00. Tel.: 02-2322-827

At a distance of 1.5 km northwest of Jericho, above the Jericho basin, towers the steep ridge of the Qarantal on whose slopes is located one of the most beautiful monasteries in the Judean Desert. The approach to the monastery is via a narrow road that forks to the north at Tel Jericho. A left turn from the road brings one to the parking lot, from which it is a 400-meter climb up to the monastery.

The origins of the monastery are connected to the activities of the monk St. Chariton, one of the founders of the monastic movement in the Judean Desert. After establishing his first laura, the Pharan monastery, at Ein Fara in Wadi Kelt, Chariton sought a quiet, isolated spot to which he could retreat. He wandered around in the desert for a



The Qarantal monastery and the summit of Doq

whole day until he found a cave in the vicinity of Jericho where he decided to stay. In time, monks, admirers and many disciples joined him until, around 340, he decided to establish a new monastery at the top of the Mount of Temptation, called the Laura of Douka, a name derived from the Doq fortress built there during the Hasmonean period. The abbot of the monastery after Chariton was the monk Elpidius, during whose time it became one of the most important monastic centers in the country. A contemporary source reported that Elpidius headed the monastery for twenty-five years, and was like a queen bee

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered" (Luke 4: 1-2).

in a busy beehive. Those were peaceful days and the number of monks was so great that the monastery seemed like a city.

The Persian occupation in 614 apparently brought in its wake the destruction of the monastery, which ceased to serve as a focus of monastic activity. During the Crusader period an attempt was made to renew monastic settlement at the site. The Qarantal was given over to the Augustinian Canon monks of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and the residents of Jericho maintained the monks and pilgrims that stayed there. After the Crusader period the number of monks decreased to a great extent, until the monastery was finally completely deserted.

Today the site has been identified with the Mount of Temptation, where Satan tempted Jesus for forty days and nights by promising him "all

the kingdoms of the world" if he would bow down to Satan (Matthew 4: 1-4, Luke 4: 1-9). The Arab name, Quruntul, is a corruption of the French quarante, which means forty.

Reconstruction of the monastery, begun in 1874 by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, continued for about twenty years until 1895. The new monastery, from which there is a breathtaking view of Jericho and its surroundings, looks as if it is hanging from the middle of the cliff. It was built at a height of 170 meters above twenty-five caves that face east towards Jericho, in which monks follow a reclusive life. There is a passage among the caves leading to a kitchen, the monks' dining hall and the Church of the Annunciation, which was once a chapel inside a cave. The iconostasis of the church is decorated with an icon



ות למכון ⁶⁹רושלים לחקר ישראל ^{The}newysahlerrearts

depicting Satan trying to tempt Jesus, as well as images of John the Baptist, the Angel Gabriel and other saints. On the western wall there is a collection of over 100 icons, most of which are from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the southeastern end of the church is a staircase leading to the Chapel of the Temptation that contains the stone upon which Jesus sat when Satan tried to tempt him for the first time. The stone is part of the apse above which is the altar.

From the entrance to the monastery another winding path leads up to the top of the mountain. There are the remains of the Doq fortress from Hasmonean and Herodian times. One of the outstanding events that occurred on this site during the Hasmonean period was the murder of the High Priest Simon and his two sons by his son-in-law Talmi ben Habubu during a great feast that was held in the fortress. There are remains from the Byzantine period of the Douka Monastery, founded by the monk Chariton in the fourth century. In 1914 the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate began to build a large church on the spot, but its construction was suspended because of financial difficulties. The distinctive walls of this unfinished church, which was planned in a clover shape, are visible from afar. From the crest of the mountain there is a bird's-eye view of Jericho, the Jordan Valley and the mountains of Moab.

3. Monastery of St. George, Wadi Kelt

Note

The monastery, which is about 5 km west of Jericho, can be reached by a narrow road that runs from Jericho along the route of Wadi Kelt, or by driving along the Jericho-Jerusalem highway until the turnoff indicated by the road signs. Once we reach an observation point, we will continue on foot (about half an hour) until we reach the monastery's gates.

Visiting hours

9:00-12:00, 15:00-17:00, closed Saturday afternoon. Tel. 050-259-949

This impressive monastery, located on the northern side of the Wadi Kelt canyon, was founded at the beginning of the fifth century by monks who settled in caves found in the cliffside. The tombs of these five monks, who arrived there from Syria, are today under the auspices of the churches of St. John and St. George at the lower level of the modern monastery.

Around 480 the monk John (later known as St. John of Choziba) founded the first communal (coenobitic) monastery on the site, which

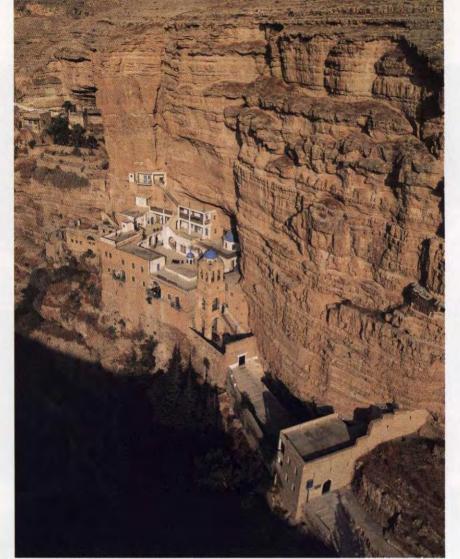


General view of St. George Monastery

was dedicated to the Holy Virgin. He reached the Judean Desert from Egypt, became a hermit (anchorite), and later the abbot of the monastery. In approximately 516 he was appointed bishop of Caesarea, the provincial capital of Judea in the Byzantine period, but after a while left this position and returned to his monastery in Wadi Kelt, where he died some time between the years 520 and 530.

From the beginning of the fifth century the number of hermit monks in the caves and recesses around the monastery increased. They would congregate only on Saturdays and Sundays to participate in the ceremonies and prayers conducted in the monastery.

"So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook" (1 Kings 17: 5-6).



Aerial view of St. George Monastery and Wadi Kelt

St. George of Choziba lived and was active there in the late sixth century. He had originally intended to join the neighboring monastery of Calamon at Ein Hajla on the Jericho plain, but was rejected because of his young age. He settled in the Wadi Kelt monastery at the end of the sixth century and became highly respected. During the Persian invasion of 614 many monks fled the monastery, but St. George and a handful of others remained behind. George was taken prisoner by the Persians, but was not harmed. He died at a ripe old age in about 620. After his death the monastery was named after him.

The monastery continued to function after the Muslim conquest in the

seventh century. In the Middle Ages, Christian tradition connected the monastery and the surrounding caves with St. Joachim. It was considered the place to which he retreated to lament the barrenness of his wife Anne, and where the Angel appeared and announced the birth of Jesus' mother, Mary. Another tradition identifies the site as the cave to which the Prophet Elijah retreated for three years, where he was fed by the ravens (1 Kings 17: 3-7).

Towards the end of the twelfth century, during the Crusader period, the monastery was rebuilt by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus. A contemporary source described the monastery as a magnificent site - many of its sections were carved out of the rock, and it was located in a most isolated spot. After the departure of the Crusaders the monastery was deserted and destroyed. Its reconstruction was initiated in 1878 by the Greek monk Callinicos, who settled there and began to rebuild it. By 1901 construction of most of the monastery had been completed. The bell tower was built in 1952 by Timothy I, the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The monastery has three levels: the upper one contains the church of the cave named after the Prophet Elijah, while on the middle level can be found the main buildings of the monastery named after John and George of Choziba, as well as the church of the Virgin Mary; on the lowest level are the arched storerooms, the tombs of the five Syrian monks mentioned above, and the ancient church.

The monastery also owns the orchards and agricultural areas in the bed of the wadi and on its slopes, as well as the flour mill that in the past was powered by water conveyed in an aqueduct from the spring in Wadi Kelt. The monastery – which is still active today – is built on a narrow, long rock shelf above the wadi with a profusion of water and greenery surrounding it. It is considered one of the most beautiful Christian sites in the Holy Land.

Wadi Kelt, often identified in Christian tradition with the Brook Cherith (1 Kings 17: 5), was used in ancient times as a central route between Jericho and Jerusalem. Along this route Jesus made his last journey to Jerusalem, and many pilgrims have travelled that ancient road in the opposite direction - from Jerusalem to the Jordan, During the Byzantine period the first monks lived near the springs of Ein Kelt and Ein Fara on the slopes of the wadi. The monastery near Ein Fara, which is called Pharan, is thought to be the first in the Judean Desert. It was founded by Chariton around 330, and served as the ideal model of a monastery for the monks of the Judean Desert.

4. The Inn of the Good Samaritan (Khan el-Hatruri)

Note

Today an abandoned structure along the Jerusalem-Jericho highway

On the main road between Jericho and Jerusalem is Khan el-Hatruri, which Christian tradition identifies with the Inn of the Good Samaritan, site of the parable of the Good Samaritan, later related by Jesus. The Samaritan cared for a man who had been cruelly attacked by robbers on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem, unlike the priest and the Levite who ignored the man's suffering and crossed over to the other



"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10: 33-34).

side of the road (Luke 10: 25-36). In the parable of the Good Samaritan the value of true friendship is demonstrated in the adage "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19: 18).

There may have been a monastery here during the Byzantine period

of which nothing has remained. The origins of the present building are apparently from the seventh century when it served as a way station between Jericho and Jerusalem (a milestone from this period can be seen near the building). During the Mamluk period the structure served as an inn mainly for Muslim pilgrims on their way to Nebi Musa. It was also used as a station for changing horses by the Mamluk courier service. Today the structure is abandoned, but there are plans to restore and develop it in the near future.

On the other side of the road one can distinguish the remains of a fortress at the top of the ascent, halfway between Jericho and Jerusalem. This site, of which mention was made even in ancient Egyptian documents, has served from antiquity as an observation point and guard post along the main road from the eastern side of the Jordan through Jericho to Jerusalem. During the Crusader period the Templar Knights built the fortress on the crest of the hill to protect Christian travelers on their way from Jerusalem to the baptismal site at the Jordan River and to the Dead Sea. The Crusader ruins still visible at the site are the moat and the foundations of the buildings. The arches above them date from the Mamluk and later periods.

The name of the place, Ma'ale Adummim, or the "red ascent" (Joshua 15: 7), apparently derives from the red color of the metamorphic rocks at the site. However, the reputation it acquired as a place where robbers attacked pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem led Hieronymus, the abbot of the monastery, to claim early in the fourth century that the place got its name from the great quantity of blood shed in the murderous attacks of brigands on innocent passersby.

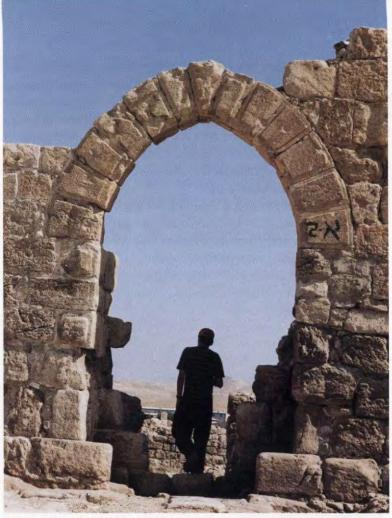
The Monastery of Euthymius (Khan el-Ahmar)

Nata

An archeological site in the industrial zone of Mishor Adummim.

About a kilometer and a half south of the Jerusalem-Jericho road, in the industrial zone of Mishor Adummim, are the ruins of one of the most important monasteries in the Judean Desert. It was founded by St. Euthymius, one of the major leaders of the monastic order in the Judean Desert during the fifth century.

Euthymius, a monk of Armenian origin from Cappadocia, decided at the age of twenty-nine to make a pilgrimage to the holy places in Jerusalem and to become a monk in the Judean Desert. In 405 he



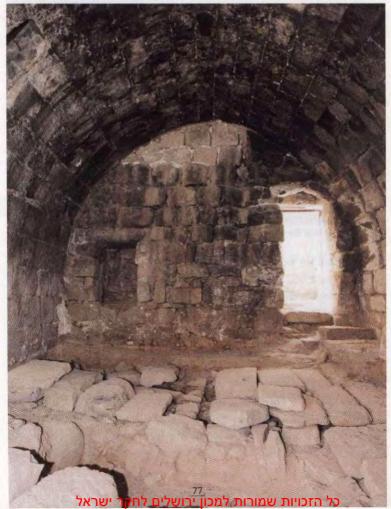
The main gate to St. Euthymius Monastery

settled in the Pharan Monastery in Wadi Kelt and from there began to establish additional monasteries and expand monasticism in the Judean Desert. The first monastery he established, together with the monk Theoctistus, was on the cliffs above Wadi Mukallik, south of the Jerusalem-Jericho highway, which is believed to be the first communal (coenobitic) monastery in the Judean Desert.

After establishing this monastery, which bears the name of Theoctistus, Euthymius continued his wanderings. He settled at Masada in the southern Judean Desert and for a period lived on its summit as a recluse. From there he went west to the edge of the desert of Ziph and set up yet another communal monastery. Later, Euthymius returned to this area and in 428 established his fourth monastery, the most important one, in Mishor Adummim, not far from the first one in Wadi Mukallik.

The monastery, which was organized on the model of a laura, had ties with the communal monastery of Theoctistus. Both were administered by the same officials and held property in common, including lands in the plain and a hostel in Jerusalem. This model of cooperation between the laura and the coenobitic monastery influenced the founders of other monasteries such as Gerasimus (who founded the monastery of Deir Hajla) and Sabas (the founder of the Mar Saba Monastery). Euthymius' laura soon attracted monks, many of whom were later appointed to high offices in the Church establishment in the Holy Land. Among his disciples were Sabas, Martyrius and Elias of Arabia, who in time founded their own monasteries. These appointments reflect the transformation of the monastic order from a spontaneous movement of those who sought to withdraw from society and live as

The Crypt at St. Euthymius Monastery



recluses in the desert into an organized movement that received support from, and had close ties with, the ecclesiastical and political establishments of the Byzantine Empire.

When he passed away in 473 at the age of ninety-five, Euthymius the Great enjoyed unprecedented admiration. On his deathbed he ordered that the laura at Mishor Adummim be converted into a communal monastery, a wish that was realized in 482, nine years after his death. The monks' cells were destroyed and a complex was built instead, surrounded by a wall and containing a church, a dining room, a tower and lodgings for the monks, built around the tomb of Euthymius.



The mosaic floor at the church of St. Euthymius

The monastery continued to function until it was damaged by an earthquake in 660. It was reconstructed during the early Arab period and once again when the Crusaders ruled in the middle of the twelfth century. Around the end of the twelfth century the monastery was abandoned, and a fortified Mamluk khan was built there in the thirteenth century to safeguard the caravan route from Jerusalem to Jericho and Nebi Musa.

We will enter the monastery through a gate that has survived intact. The monastery's walls and gates belong to the latest stage of its construction in the twelfth century. Our route will lead us through a complex of corridors and rooms to the crypt where St. Euthymius is buried. The location of his tomb, in the very center of the monastery,

is indicative of the important role it played in the life of the community. The tomb was also on the itinerary of the many pilgrims who visited the monastery during the Byzantine period.

The crypt includes two chambers: the central hall and a secondary one, just to the west of the first. Nine masonry burial troughs were discovered under the paving stones (most of which are missing) of the central, rectangular chamber, whose walls and ceiling are constructed of fine ashlars. According to the description of the monk Cyril of Scythopolis, the central of these burial troughs is that of Euthymius. Two large burial troughs were discovered in the secondary chamber, containing the skeletons of more than a hundred monks of high status, who probably asked to be buried near St. Euthymius. From the crypt we will continue to the monastery's church, on the upper level, built upon a substructure of three vaults. Excavations have revealed that the church and the arches were rebuilt in the latter half

upper level, built upon a substructure of three vaults. Excavations have revealed that the church and the arches were rebuilt in the latter half of the seventh century, and that extensive renovations of the church and its ornamental elements were undertaken by the Crusaders in the twelfth century. The Crusader church is divided into a nave and two flanking aisles. A colorful mosaic floor incorporating geometric designs and animal representations, which has been dated to the Umayyad period (the seventh and eighth centuries), was found in the southern aisle. The floor of the nave is ornamented with stone slabs of various sizes and colors, in the opus sectile style, and is dated to the twelfth century.

The Martyrius Monastery at Ma'ale Adummim

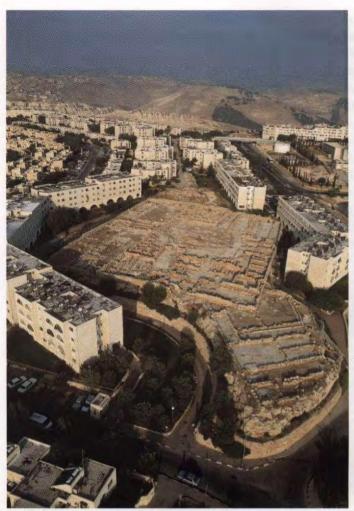
Note

An archeological site inside the city of Ma'ale Adummim.

Visiting hours

Sunday-Thursday 8:00-16:00, Friday 8:00-13:00, Saturday closed. Entrance fee. Tel. 02-5356-031

In Khirbet el-Murassas, on a hill east of the Jerusalem-Jericho road in the heart of the modern city of Ma'ale Adummim, a large, impressive Byzantine monastery was uncovered at the beginning of the 1980s during the construction of the city. The total area of the monastery is about 2.5 acres (about 70×80 meters). The monastery was founded by Martyrius, a monk from Cappadocia, who arrived in 457 together with the monk Elias of Arabia at Euthymius' laura in Khan el-Ahmar. They



Aerial view of St. Martyrius

left the laura because of its small, narrow cells and established two monasteries of their own: Elias founded a coenobium in the vicinity of Jericho, while Martyrius went to live in a cave a distance of 4 km from Euthymius' monastery. It was here that he established a monastery which apparently received generous financial support after Martyrius became Patriarch of Jerusalem in 478.

During the excavation of the site, a number of inscriptions were found that support the assumption that this was in fact the monastery of Martyrius. Among them is an inscription engraved on a tombstone at the entrance to





Panels of the mosaic floor at St. Martyrius Monastery



the central church of the monastery which states that this is the tomb of Paulus, "presbyter and archimandrite" (priest and abbot). This man is also mentioned in the writings of Cyril of Scythopolis, biographer of the founders of monasteries in the Judean Desert, as the abbot of the Martyrius Monastery. Additional inscriptions have been discovered at the site which mention the abbots of the monastery and people who held other positions, such as Genesius and Joannis.

The monastery went through three main stages of development. The first, its foundation by Martyrius, included the monastery, the early church and the cave in which the founder of the monastery lived. The area of the monastery was then very limited and not surrounded by a wall.

In the second stage, during the period of the Abbot Paulus (who succeeded Martyrius in 478), it was expanded and became one of the major monasteries in the Judean Desert. A wall was built around it which encompassed a central courtyard, stables and water cisterns.

In the third stage, under the leadership of the Archimandrite Genesius (553-568), the monastery reached its maximum size. An impressive dining hall and a twostory kitchen were built, with magnificent marble floors. The area of the stables was reduced and basic changes were made in the church: the original floor was replaced by a marvelous, colorful mosaic, and a chapel was added. At the southeastern end of the monastery a "three-arched chapel" was built whose floor was also a magnificent, colorful mosaic made from large stones. In the southwestern wing a new chapel was built by combining two monks' cells. It is believed that a bathhouse was built as well at this time, though it is unclear whether it was for the use of the monks or for pilgrims. Outside the monastery - so as not to disturb the routine of the monks - a large hostel was built for pilgrims, which also included a stable for their animals and a church of its own. The monastery was surrounded by extensive agricultural land whose produce supplied most of the monks' needs. It was irrigated by enormous water cisterns which were uncovered in the archeological digs.



The monastery was damaged but not completely destroyed during the Persian invasion in 614. After the Muslim conquest of Palestine in 638, it was deserted and an agricultural farm, which continued to function throughout the Umayyad period, occupied the center of the compound. After the earthquake of 749, the site was abandoned. In the archeological excavations conducted from 1981 to 1985, very impressive remains were discovered, which we shall now visit. We shall enter the complex through the northern gate in the eastern wall. which was defended by two wooden doors and a round rolling stone which was discovered in situ (1). The interior of the gate has a floor that was hewn out of the bedrock and watering troughs for pack animals on both sides. As we proceed we reach a large courtyard paved with stone slabs, with a large stone trough in its center. A paved lane leads from here to the monastery's central courtyard, flanked on the north and the east by large stables. At the entrance to the eastern stable, which had a stone floor, was a staircase that led to the second floor. Cut in the rock through the center of the stable ran a sewage channel that seems to indicate a high level of hygiene in the monastery. From the courtyard we will now turn to the central church complex (2).

Illustrated reconstruction of St. Martyrius Monastery



The ancient church, probably founded during the earliest period of the monastery's existence, under Martyrius, was discovered about fifty centimeters under the floor of the present church. It had not been destroyed but has been preserved under the present-day church. This church complex included a rectangular church, a chapel, auxiliary rooms, a narthex and a burial hall, with round and hexagonal medallions containing various animals and geometrical designs.

We leave the church and continue to the northern wing of the monastery with the Cave of Martyrius at its center (3). It is here, most probably, that he lived after leaving the laura of Euthymius. At some later date it was turned into a burial cave. A seven-line inscription, partially damaged, was discovered above the cave, mentioning by name three priests – Georgius, Iohannes and Elpidius – who were laid to rest here.

From here we shall continue to the most impressive remains of the refectory, measuring 31x25 meters (4). It contained a dining hall in the shape of a basilica, an entrance room and a kitchen, above which was a second story. Next to the refectory was an open courtyard with a large cellar at its side, probably for the storage of wines. The central hall contained a beautiful colored mosaic floor which has survived in its entirety. In all probability, this hall had a wooden ceiling with a tiled roof above it. Stone benches, 40 cm high, were discovered around the walls of the central hall; they were plastered over so that the clothes of the monks sitting on them would not be soiled. A dedicatory inscription, indicating that the dining hall was built during the days of Abbot Genesius, was found near its entrance.

A very important discovery was made in the kitchen, just to the south of the dining hall. Here were found huge storage vats, metal utensils, marble tables, plates, cooking pots and dozens of ceramic jugs for drinking wine. Some eggshells were even found in one of the cooking pots.

From the dining hall we shall proceed to the bath house (5), located near the two large cisterns. This is the first known instance of a bath house in a monastery of the Byzantine period. During the Umayyad period, after the monastery was deserted, a farm was established in this area which utilized the huge quantities of water stored in the monastery (6).

We now continue our tour to the southeastern section of the monastery and the "Chapel of the Three Priests" (7). This chapel, established during the final stage of the monastery's existence, was discovered in the western part of this section. It contains a magnificent mosaic floor

made of large stones. A dedicatory inscription, commemorating the same three priests named in the inscription above the burial cave – Elpidius, Iohannes and Georgius – was found here, opposite the apse. We shall conclude our visit in the pilgrims' hostel (8), which was erected in the northeastern corner of the monastery, outside its walls. It measured 43x43 meters and included living quarters, a church and stables for the pilgrims' pack animals. It was probably established during the final stage of the monastery's construction, at the same time as the dining hall, in the second half of the sixth century. Pilgrims did not pay for the hostel's services, but its upkeep depended on donations by generous guests. Its location outside the walls was intended to prevent the pilgrims from interfering with the monks' daily routine.

There are six huge water cisterns under the monastery which collected every drop of water available in the area. This was in effect a huge complex for collecting and storing water, well planned to its minutest details. It could store between 20,000 and 30,000 cubic meters of water for use during the dry season. The cisterns are today closed to visitors, but there is a plan to turn them into concert halls.

7. The Church and Tomb of Lazarus in Bethany (El-Azariya)

Visiting hours at the church

8:00-11:45, 14:00-18:00. In the winter until 17:00. There is an entrance fee to the Tomb of Lazarus, Tel. 02-2799-291

Bethany is located on the main road just outside Jerusalem, which even in the time of Jesus was a bustling metropolis. According to Christian tradition, this is the same village of Bethany mentioned in the New Testament as the place where Jesus stayed during his visits to Jerusalem. The poor residents of the village happily received Jesus and some of them became his admirers and followers.

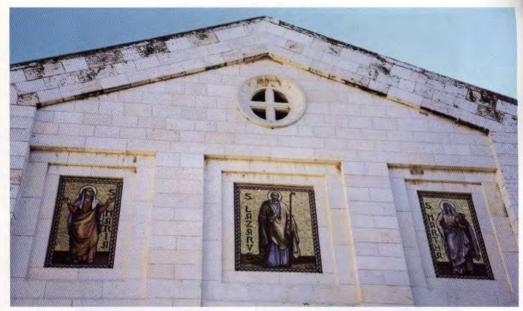
Three traditions are connected with Bethany in the New Testament. They are commemorated on the walls of the Franciscan Church of Lazarus located at the wide bend on the main road to Jerusalem. The first and most important tradition has to do with the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus after he had lain in his grave for four days (John 11: 1-47). This is the greatest miracle performed by Jesus. It aroused not only the wonder of the multitudes but also the anger of the Sanhedrin,



The church of St. Lazarus

and according to the Gospel of St. John led to the decision of the Sanhedrin to put an end to his life (John 11: 53).

The second tradition relates to the visit of Jesus to the house of Simon the Leper in Bethany, and the anointment of his head (or his feet, according to John) with precious oil by a woman later identified in Christian tradition as Mary Magdalene (Matthew 26: 6-23, John 12: 1-8). According



The front facade of St. Lazarus church

to the Scriptures, the disciples of Jesus were indignant that so much precious oil had been wasted; they felt that it could have been sold for a large sum of money which could then have been divided among the poor. However, Jesus praised the act of the woman who foresaw the future and anointed him in anticipation of his death on the cross.

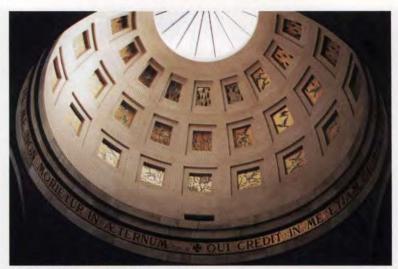
The third tradition relates to the visit by Jesus to the home of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. Martha, the older sister, labored to serve their guest, whereas her sister sat at his feet thirstily drinking in his words. Martha asked Jesus to command her younger sister to help her serve him. Instead, Jesus criticized Martha, who had been working hard to serve her guest, and praised Mary, who listened to his words, because "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10: 38-42).

These three traditions have made Bethany a holy town since the beginning of the Byzantine period. The Church Fathers mention it, especially in connection with the tradition regarding the grave of Lazarus. The church above the grave was built in the late fourth century and restored in the fifth and sixth centuries after having been destroyed in an earthquake. Important ceremonies also took place there, such as the gathering for the procession that re-enacted Jesus' entry into Jerusalem during the celebration of Palm Sunday.



"And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go" (John, 11: 43-44).

Bethany's importance decreased during the first period of Muslim rule in Palestine (638-1099). In the eleventh century the Caliph el-Hakim did not permit the procession from Bethany to Jerusalem to be held. However, during the Crusader period the ceremony was reinstated and two churches were built dedicated to the holy events that had occurred in the village. Responsibility for the Church of St. Lazarus was transferred in 1138 to the Benedictine nuns of the Church of St. Anne, in Jerusalem, which received generous support from the Crusader royal family. Queen Melisend, whose sister Yvette was a nun of that Order, took it upon herself to construct all the buildings of the church and the monastery. After the Crusaders departed, many of these churches were damaged. However, pilgrims' accounts from the early fourteenth century onward note that the Church of St. Lazarus was converted into a mosque. In the seventeenth century, the Christian presence in the village was restored by the Franciscans. They managed to get permission to hew a staircase leading down to Lazarus's grave. Only in 1952-1953, however,



The Dome of St. Lazarus church

did they succeed in building the present church and monastery.

The modern church, which was designed by the famous architect Antonio Barluzzi, is constructed in the form of a Greek cross. Its walls have no windows or other openings, so that the visitor has the feeling that he has entered a catacomb. The light that comes in through the top of the dome, of course, symbolizes the resurrection of Lazarus. The walls are decorated with beautiful mosaics, which commemorate the three important traditions connected to Bethany. Remains of churches and monasteries from the Byzantine and Crusader periods have been uncovered in the area adjoining the church.

On the slope just above the modern church is the site of Lazarus' tomb, which is under Muslim control. A narrow passageway with twenty-four steps leads the visitor to the tomb's entrance room. Entry into the burial room was blocked, as described in the New Testament, by a stone that Jesus asked to be removed so that he could resurrect Lazarus (John 11: 38–39). The spot where Jesus stood has been converted into a chapel. The altar is still used, especially by the Franciscans, who commemorate the resurrection of Lazarus on September 7. There are many niches in the walls of the room for inserting candles. Electric lighting was installed only prior to the visit of Pope Paul VI in 1964. A narrow, graded passageway leads to the small burial room. In this room there were apparently three graves; according to tradition the grave to the right is that of Lazarus. During the Crusader period the burial site was part of a Crusader church erected on the spot where the mosque now stands. The graded passageway was hewn only in the seventeenth

century after a very high sum was paid to the Muslims. It allows entry to the grave in a way that circumvents the mosque.

The mosque, dedicated to El-Azar – apparently a Muslim corruption of the name Lazarus – was built by the Muslims in the sixteenth century on the foundations of the Crusader church. The Muslims believed that Lazarus could resurrect their sons and so they used to make pilgrimages to this holy spot.

Further up the slope, above Lazarus' grave, is a Greek Orthodox church which was built in 1965 to commemorate the holy events at this site. The church is not open to visitors. Behind it one can see the remains of the Crusader tower built to protect the monastery and the nearby church. In 1152, during the rule of the Crusader King Baldwin III, the tower proved its worth when the monks hid inside it while being attacked by brigands. The area around the ruined tower is under the control of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

8. Bethphage Church

Visiting hours

8:00-11:30, 14:00-17:00, in the winter until 16:30. Tel. 02-6284-352

There are two important traditions connected to Bethphage, which at the time of Jesus was a small village on the eastern slope of the Mount



of Olives. This is the place where Jesus sent two of his disciples to fetch him a colt and an ass which he would use for his final entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21: 1-11, Mark 11: 1-10). It is also where Jesus met Martha, and later her sister Mary (John 11: 17-34) when he returned from his exile across the Jordan to resurrect Lazarus. Another tradition connects the place to the fruitless fig tree that was cursed by Jesus and withered away (Mark 11: 12-14, 20-25).

The church that commemorates these events was built by the Franciscan monks in 1883 on the ruins of a Crusader church. In order not to arouse

The front tower at Bethphage church

כל הזכויות שמורות למכון ירושלים לחקר ישראל



"Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me" (Matthew 21: 2).



Wall paintings at Bethphage church

the suspicions of the Muslim authorities it was built as an ordinary fortified structure. The apse of the church was added in 1897 and the tower only in 1954. The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, accompanied by his disciples and admirers, is commemorated on the wall. Near the apse of the church there is a square stone that was discovered in 1876 by the French scholar Charles Clermont-Ganneau. The stone is decorated with paintings from the Crusader period which were reinforced and restored in 1950. The decorations describe the holy events that took place in Bethphage and its surroundings – the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, his disciples carrying the palm fronds, Jesus' meeting with Martha and Mary, and the resurrection of Lazarus.

The Palm Sunday procession, which re-enacts Jesus' last entry into Jerusalem on the day before Easter, usually starts out from this church.

9. Pater Noster Church (the Eleona Basilica) on the Mount of Olives

Visiting hours

8:30 -11:45, 15:00 -16:45. Closed to visitors on Sundays. Tel. 02-6264-904

The origins of this church, the most important one on the Mount of Olives, lie in the Byzantine period. According to Christian tradition, it was founded





The gate to the monastery of the Carmelite Convent

in the fourth century by St. Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, near the spot where Jesus ascended to heaven and above the cave where he taught his disciples the secrets of redemption and the End of Days (Matthew 24: 3, Mark 13: 3, Luke 21: 37). This magnificent church, called Eleona (a corruption of the Greek word for olives), was built on three levels, taking the topography of the area into account. The entrance was from the west, with an open yard (atrium) in the center of the complex, and on the east the church, in the form of a large basilica. It is among these ruins that the visitor stands. The building is almost as

"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Luke 11: 2-4).



'Pater Noster' prayer in Icelandic

big as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, which was built at the same time.

The church was destroyed during the Persian invasion in 614 and restored by the Crusaders. They built a modest structure on the ruins of the Byzantine church which they dedicated to the famous Pater Noster prayer that Jesus recited near the Mount of Olives or on the mount itself (Luke 11: 1-4). In 1152 the modest Crusader church was replaced by a magnificent one, built with money donated by the Sveinsson brothers from Denmark, who were also buried in the church.

When Saladin took Jerusalem from the Crusaders late in the twelfth century, the church on this site was also destroyed. In 1866 the French duchess Princesse de la Tour d'Auvergne, the daughter of a well-known Italian author, arrived in the country and acquired the deserted site for the Carmelite nuns, who have remained at the site ever since. The church and the Carmelite convent were built in 1874 with money donated by the duchess. By her own wish, her remains were brought there for burial after she passed away and rest to this day in the stone sarcophagus which bears her statue. In an urn beside the sarcophagus is the heart of her father.

The part of the convent open to visitors includes the square yard surrounded by pillared corridors decorated with more than eighty ceramic plagues on which the Pater Noster ("Our Father Who Art in Heaven") prayer is inscribed in as many languages. These include languages that are no longer in use or spoken languages that have no written form, and hence appear in Latin transliteration. In the western part of the courtyard are the remains of an unfinished church - the Church of the Holy Heart – the construction of which was begun after the First World War in 1920. The church, which was supposed to symbolize the desire for universal peace at the very site where Jesus and his disciples had memorized the secret of Christian brotherhood. was never completed because of financial difficulties. Under the raised platform of the unfinished church is a crypt carved out of the stone. On its eastern side is an apse, and on the western side is a passageway to an earlier burial cave. A Christian tradition dating from the Byzantine period identifies the spot as the place where Jesus taught his disciples the secrets of redemption and of the Millennium. The burial room was apparently used in Byzantine times to inter the bishops of Jerusalem.

This is the end of the route. Those who wish to do so can continue from here to the Mosque of the Ascension or proceed down the western slope of the Mount of Olives, which offers a wonderful view of the Old City of Jerusalem, towards the Dominus Flevit Church and the churches in Gethsemane.

ROUTE

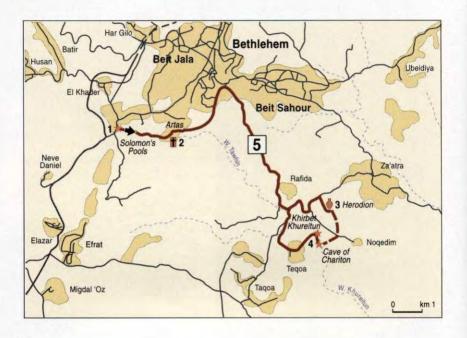
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF KING HEROD ON THE FRINGE OF THE DESERT



למכון ירושלים לחקר ישרא

Sites

- 1. King Solomon's Pools
- 2. Artas
- 3. Herodion (Herodium)
- 4. Khirbet Khureitun (the ruins of a monastery) and the cave of Chariton.



Note

The last part of the route – from Herodium to Khirbet Khareitun – can be done on foot along the path marked in blue.

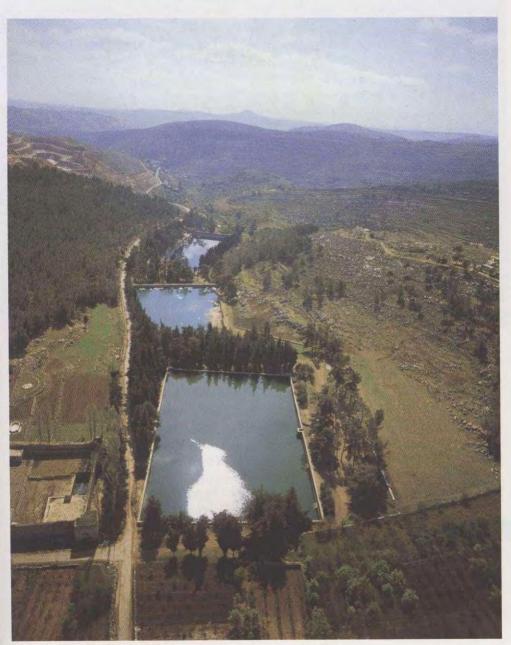
This route is intended for groups; it is not recommended for individuals.

Length of route: about 16 km.

1. King Solomon's Pools

Note

Large pools that supplied water to Jerusalem, situated on the main highway from Jerusalem to Hebron, about 4 km south of Bethlehem.



Aerial view of King Solomon's pools

The name King Solomon's Pools was given to these pools by Christian travelers who attributed their construction to King Solomon because of the verse in Ecclesiastes (attributed to Solomon): "I build for me pools of water, wherewith to water the wood of green trees" (Ecclesiastes 2: 6). However, in fact, the pools were built 800 years later during the Hellenistic and Roman period, as part of a project for supplying water to Jerusalem, which had by that time become a large city in need of enormous quantities of water.

These three gigantic pools are the heart of the ancient aqueduct system to Jerusalem. The two upper pools receive water from the springs in the hills of Hebron (in Wadi el-Arrub and Wadi el-Biyar). Through the upper aqueduct water flowed to the city itself, while from the lower pool another aqueduct carried water directly to the Temple Mount, which needed large quantities of water to perform various purification rituals. It is believed that the lower aqueduct was built during the rule of the Hasmoneans (the Hellenistic period, second century BCE). The upper aqueduct was probably built in Herod's time (the late first century BCE) and renovated by the Roman army after the conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

The pools and the aqueducts were in constant use from the Roman period until 1967. During the Ottoman period a ceramic pipe was installed along the lower aqueduct, and later a pump was added beside the pools. Only after the 1967 Six-Day War was the use of Solomon's Pools discontinued, being economically unfeasible. The capacity of the pools is 280,000 cubic meters. The three pools were built along the bed of the Artas Valley, one higher than the other in such a way that the overflow from the upper pool ran into the one below it.

Opposite the pools on the other side of the street are the remains of an Ottoman fortress, Qal'aat el-Burak, which was built in the seventeenth century to defend the pools. In recent years there has been much development activity at this site. A tourist center with restaurants, souvenir shops and a museum are now under construction.

Artas – the village and the convent

Visiting hours at the convent

Daily, except Sunday 8:00-12:00; 15:00-18:30. Tel. 02-2742-427

The source of the name Artas is a corruption of the Latin "hortus", which means gardens. The source of this name is the Christian tradition that



Aerial view of the Convent in Artas

locates here King Solomon's gardens (Ecclesiastes 2: 5 -6) as well as the nearby hunting grounds of King Herod, adjacent to Solomon's Pools.

A convent was built on the southern slope of Wadi Tawahin, opposite the picturesque village, in 1902. It is called Notre Dame de Hortus Conclusus, commemorating Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was known as "Our lady of the Enclosed Garden". This name is based upon a verse in the Song of Songs: "A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song of Songs 4: 12), which Christians interpret as a metaphor for the Virgin Mary. The impressive convent – surrounded by green gardens watered by the nearby stream – includes a church and a large orphanage. It was built with funds donated by Catholics and is maintained by an order of nuns based in Italy. In 1848 an unsuccessful attempt was made to establish a settlement in Artas of Protestant Christians from the United States and Jews who had converted to Christianity.

Herodion (Herodium; the Mountain of the Franks)

Note

An archeological site and national park.

Visiting hours

Sunday to Thursday, 8:00–17:00 (in the winter until 16:00); Friday, 9:00–15:00. Tel. 050-505-007. Entrance fee

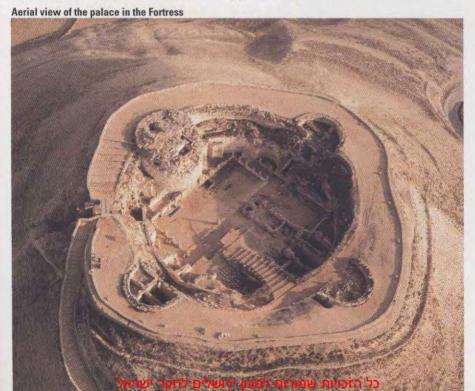
Herodion, which has the appearance of an extinct volcano, has aroused the curiosity of travelers and researchers since the fifteenth century. It is located on an artificial hill on the fringes of the Judean Desert, twelve km south of Jerusalem and six km southeast of Bethlehem. It includes the ruins of a number of impressive palaces built by King Herod between 25 and 15 BCE. This enormous building project was meant to commemorate not only Herod's name but his victory over the last Hasmonean king, Antigonus II (Mattathias), and his men in 40 BCE. According to the famous historian Josephus, Herod was buried in Herodion, but his grave has not yet been found by archeologists, despite intensive excavations.

Josephus' description of Herodion matches the archeological finds at the site:

"It was strong and fit for such a building. It is a sort of moderate hill raised to a farther height by the hand of man, till it was of the shape of a woman's breast. It is encompassed with circular towers, and hath a straight ascent up to it, which ascent is composed of steps of polished stones, in number two hundred. Within it are royal and very rich apartments, of a structure that provided both for security and beauty. About the bottom there are habitations of such a structure as are well worth seeing, both on other accounts, and also on account of the water which is brought thither from a great way off, and at vast expense; for the place itself is destitute of water. The plain that is about this citadel is full of edifices, not inferior to any city in largeness, and having the hill above it in the nature of a castle." (Antiquities of the Jews, Bk. 15, Chap. ix, 4).



General aerial view of the Fortress and the Lower City of Herodion



And in fact at the top of the hill there is a circular structure, unique and quite extraordinary not only in the Holy Land but in all of the ancient world. Around this structure, whose circumference is 63 meters, the builders threw down the debris which gave the hill its cone shape (like a breast), visible for miles. This complex served both as a mighty fortress and a magnificent palace. Herod assured a steady supply of water by means of a special aqueduct that began in the area of Solomon's Pools and Artas.

The palace was six or seven stories high, surrounded by three semicircular towers and one huge circular tower with a circumference of about 18 meters, of which only the foundations, which are for the most part sealed off, remain today. Inside the structure stood Herod's gorgeous private villa, which included a large reception room, halls and living quarters, as well as a magnificent bath house. At the base of the hill Herod built the lower city, which covered an area of 200 dunams and included a large palace, a big pool, an extensive monumental building and a path that was meant to be used for Herod's royal funeral. The Herodion fortress, which looks out onto the desert but is within view of Jerusalem, the capital, became Herod's most magnificent palace, serving as his monument and last resting place. It should be noted that this was one of the grandest palaces built at the time in the Roman Empire.

After Herod's death the site was used twice, during the Great Revolt (66–70 CE) and the revolt of Bar Kokhba (132–135 CE), by the Jewish extremist fighters who rebelled against the Romans. In the Christian Byzantine period it once more became an important center. The three churches that were built here were decorated with mosaic floors that have been uncovered in archeological excavations. The site was deserted about the time of the Muslim conquest in the seventh century and remained abandoned until it was rediscovered in the fifteenth century. The first traveler to mention the site was a Dominican friar, Felix Faber (1483), who connected the remains he saw here to a story that was widespread in those days among Christians. It told of a group of frank knights (known as the Crusaders), who fled to this spot after Jerusalem fell to Saladin in 1187. For this reason Herodion was also known as the Mountain of the Franks.

From the nineteenth century until the present, Herodion has become a focus of archeological excavations and intensive research. Recently, a surprise assault system from the Bar Kokhba period was found in Upper Herodion. It includes water cisterns, tunnels and hidden apertures for sneak attacks – all witness to the great ingenuity of its

builders. In 1998 these impressive tunnels were opened to visitors. Extensive development plans for the site have recently been drawn up. Should they be carried out, Herodion will become one of the most fascinating and interesting sites in the country.

From Herodion we can continue on foot (along the path at the bottom of the hill) to Khirbet Khureitun and the Chariton cave, or continue by car to the settlement of Tekoa, where one can descend to these sites on foot along the path marked in blue.

4. Khirbet Khureitun and the Cave of Chariton

Note

The ruins of a monastery and a large cave. The short path from Khirbet Khureitun to the Cave of Chariton is marked in black. Proper guidance and equipment (powerful flashlights, a guide rope and a map of the cave) are essential. Visitors to the cave should be accompanied by a qualified guide.

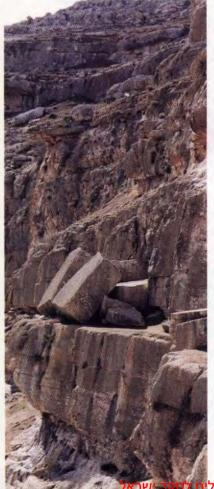
Chariton was the first monk in the Judean Desert and is considered one of the first leaders of the monastic movement in the Holy Land. He arrived in the country from Egypt, probably at the end of the third century. He was influenced by Hilarion, the first monk to establish a monastic settlement in the Holy Land, south of Gaza. Chariton settled in the Judean Desert and set up a few lauras for monks, some of which became monasteries. He first established the Pharan Monastery in Wadi Kelt in about 330, then the Douka Monastery atop the Mount of Temptation, above the present-day Qarantal Monastery, about a decade later (see route four), and finally, in about 345, the monastery known later as the Souka or the "Old Laura" on the cliffs of the southern bank of Wadi Khureitun. At first the monks lived in several caves on the surrounding cliffs. About forty laura cells were spread out over quite a large area of about 110 acres with an average distance of 35 meters between each cell. The remains of the "hanging cave" of Chariton were discovered at the



Remains of the Tower at Khirbet Khureitun



The Cave of Chariton



southern end of the laura. He used this cave in his latter days as a retreat, and after his death it became a holy site. At a later stage a wall was built around the laura and the monks left their cells, moving to the area that was surrounded by walls and towers. The monks made their living by raising sheep and growing field crops; they had connections with nearby Tekoa, which was settled at the time and was also the center of monastic activity. They drew their water from a large cistern which is still used today by Bedouin shepherds in the area.

The remains of the protruding walls seem to be those of the monastery built around the monks' caves during the second stage. The monastery was badly damaged in 614 when the Persians invaded the country. It was later renovated and continued to function during the eighth and ninth centuries until it was abandoned.

Below Khirbet Khureitun, and a bit to the east, along the path marked in black, on the descending slope of Wadi Khureitun, is the cave of Chariton. This is an enormous natural cave, which includes several halls with an area of 180 sq. meters, from which tunnels begin, and a long narrow passageway. It was in the archeological digs conducted in a rock shelter nearby during the British Mandate period that the earliest prehistoric remains ever found in the Judean Desert were uncovered. At the entrance to the cave is a large rock on which are laid diagonally two large stones which are known as the Ten Commandments. A visit to the cave including its tunnels, halls and lower depths is a circular tour which can take between two to five hours. There are low narrow tunnels in the cave and dry, white stalactite rooms.

ROUTE

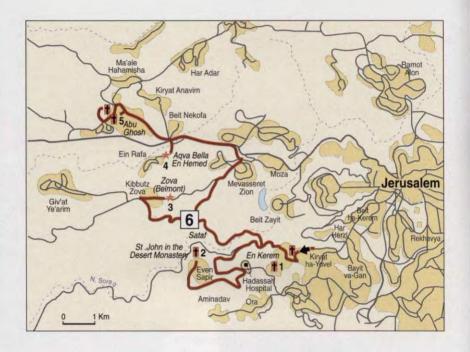
FROM EN KEREM TO ABU GHOSH -CHRISTIAN SITES IN THE JERUSALEM HILLS



כל הזכויות שמורות למכון ירושלים לחקר ישראל

Sites

- 1. En Kerem (the Church of John the Baptist and the Church of the Visitation)
- 2. the Monastery of St. John in the Desert
- 3. the Belmont (Zova) Fortress
- 4. Aqua Bella (En Hemed)
- 5. Abu Ghosh



Length of route: about 15 km.

1. En Kerem

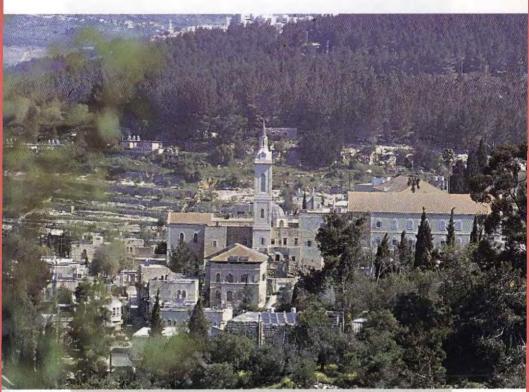
Note

A village that is today a neighborhood in southwestern Jerusalem. Easily accessible by car along the road that begins at Mount Herzl.

Visiting hours

The Church of St. John the Baptist: 8:00–12:00, 14:30–18:00 [in the winter until 17:00], closed on Saturdays. Tel. 02-6413-639

The Church of the Visitation: 8:00–11:45, 14:30–18:00 [in the winter until 17:00], closed on Saturdays. Tel. 02-6417-291



General view of En Kerem

"And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb..." (Luke 1: 39-41).



Aerial view of the Visitation Church

The importance of En Kerem in Christian tradition is related to its identity with "the city of Judah", where John the Baptist was born (Luke 1: 39). This has made En Kerem a site holy to Christianity, and since Byzantine times various churches and monasteries have been built there commemorating events connected with John the Baptist. There are two important churches in this village, which has in recent decades become a neighborhood of Jerusalem. Both of them are under the auspices of the Franciscan friars. The older one is the Church of John the Baptist, located in the central square of the village. It was built in the second half of the nineteenth century with the financial support of the Spanish court on the ruins of three churches, two Byzantine and one Crusader. Findings from the archeological excavations conducted at the spot, including a statue of Venus, are

displayed in a small building beside the steps of the church. The magnificent church is decorated with scenes from the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus. Above the central altar, which is dedicated to Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, is a painting of Mary's visit to En Kerem attributed to the renowned Spanish painter El Greco (1541–1614). The painting on the southern wall describes the slaying of John the Baptist and is attributed to Ribalta, another well-known Spanish painter of the seventeenth century.

To the left of the main altar is the cave of John the Baptist, which is believed to be where Elisabeth, while in hiding from Herod's soldiers, gave birth to John the Baptist. The beautiful marble altar in the cave was a present of Queen Isabella of Spain in 1851.

An amazing collection of gilded clerical robes, gold and silver vessels, icons and ancient books, and even an ancient music score from the Middle Ages is kept in the monks' dressing room to the right of the altars. The church courtyard is decorated with twenty-one ceramic plaques, each bearing, in a different language, the "Benedictus" prayer recited by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, after the birth of his son (Luke 1: 68–79). To the east of the church one can see the new hostel that was built in 1857, known as Casa Nova. To its right is the bell tower, a gift from the Spanish court, which was built in 1859. The four bells, that toll exactly at 12:00 noon, are dedicated to John the Baptist, Elisabeth, Zacharias and to the visitation of the Angel to Elisabeth.

The second important church is the Church of the Visitation at the southern end of the village, near the spring which is known as the Virgin's Fountain. Christian tradition identifies the church with the summer house of Zacharias and Elisabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. It was here that the meeting is said to have taken place between the two pregnant women: Mary, who was soon to give birth to Jesus, and Elisabeth, who was carrying John the Baptist. The two blessed each other and John even jumped for joy in Elisabeth's womb at hearing Mary's blessing (Luke 1: 39–56). In the courtyard of this church are forty-seven ceramic plaques on which appear, in the same number of languages, the "Magnificat" – Mary's prayer of thanks while she carried Jesus in her womb (Luke 1: 46–56).

The site was purchased by the Franciscan Order in 1679 with the intention of renovating it, but only in the 1860s was permission granted to restore the place. The modern church, which commemorates the Visitation, was built in 1955 by the well-known Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi, some of whose work we have encountered on other routes.

On the lower floor are the remains of an ancient cave, traditionally the site where John the Baptist hid when he fled from King Herod's soldiers at the time of the massacre of the babes in Bethlehem. The walls are decorated with scenes from the life of John the Baptist.

On the second floor one can see remains of a Crusader church which are integrated into the modern walls. This floor is decorated with impressive wall paintings portraying events and traditions in Christian history, including one of the architect Barluzzi himself (dressed in a suit beside the woman in yellow). In the central apse is a painting of Mary and Jesus in the desert, with a Franciscan monk dedicating the church to her. Looking on is St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan Order, and Alberto Gori, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem at the time of the church's dedication.

In addition to the two churches, En Kerem also includes a number of monasteries and other Christian institutions. These were built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the result of competition between the different Christian sects and the European powers for control of the Holy Places. The most outstanding of them are the Convent of the Sisters of Zion (also serving today as a hostel), the Russian Monastery (which spreads over a large area running down to the village) and the convents of the Sisters of the Rosary and Saint Vincent de Paul, which serve as institutions for orphans and the sick. The churches with their spires, the picturesque houses, the terraced hillsides around the village and its special location among the surrounding hills make En Kerem one of the more charming corners of Jerusalem.

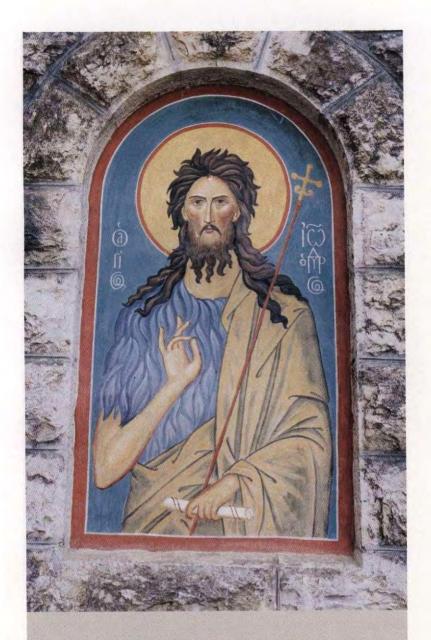
Monastery of St. John in the Desert

Visiting hours

every day from 9:00-12:00, 14:00-17:00. Entrance fee. Tel. **02-6431-937**

About five kilometers west of En Kerem, near the village of Even Sapir, is the monastery and chapel dedicated to St. John in the Desert. Christian tradition connects the site to the period when John the Baptist became a recluse as described in the verse: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (Luke1: 80).

From the plentiful vegetation and the spring flowing under the



"And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey" (Matthew 3: 4).



The pool in the Monastery Garden

monastery it is difficult to imagine the place as a "desert", but the Christian commentators explain that the word desert can also be interpreted as a place of seclusion. And, indeed, there is a cave in the hillside in which, according to Christian tradition, John used to seclude himself, like a monk. A modest monastery and church were built by Franciscan monks above the cave in 1923 on ruins from the twelfth century. In the last few years Greek Catholic monks have been living



Moses' icon at the entry to the church

here, supporting themselves by painting icons, making wine, and other activities. The peace and quiet of the monastery make it one of the most beautiful spots in the Judean Hills.



Monks' garments

3. The remains of the Crusader Belmont Fortress (Zova)

Entrance to the site is via Kibbutz Palmach-Zova.

Visits to the Crusader site and the nearby spring can be arranged with the kibbutz: Tel. 02-5347-952

Half a kilometer from Kibbutz Palmach-Zova there is an ancient mound rising to a height of 769 meters above sea level, on which are the ruins of a Crusader fortress. Remains from the First Temple and Byzantine periods have been found at the site, believed to be the birthplace of Yigal the son of Nathan of Zobah, one of King David's heroes (2 Samuel 23: 36). However, its fame lies primarily with the ruins from the Crusader period. Here the Crusaders built around 1170 a fortress they called



The Crusader gate in Belmont

Belmont (beautiful mountain). The site was erroneously identified by Christian pilgrims as ancient Modi'in, the home village of the Maccabeans. Today only a few wall sections and a moat hewn out of the rock remain. From the top of the fortress, which in spring is covered with flowering almond trees, one is offered a breathtaking view of the Jerusalem Hills. A spring and an impressive tunnel found in the apple orchards on the eastern slope of the mound allow one to get an idea of the ancient agricultural methods in the hill region.

From Kibbutz Palmach-Zova we return to the Sataf Junction, and turn northwards (left) towards Mevasseret Ziyyon. We will join the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway, quickly leaving it by taking the first right turnoff to reach Aqua Bella (En Hemed).

4. Aqua Bella (En Hemed)

A Crusader farm and a national park.

Visiting hours

daily from 8:00–19:00, in the winter until 16:00. On Friday from 8:00–15:00.

Entrance fee, Tel. 02-5342-741

This site, whose name means "beautiful water," was built during the reign of the Crusader King Fulk d'Anjou and belonged to the Hospitaler Order. It was apparently used as a castle to protect the spring and the agricultural lands in this small valley. It might have been the home of



Remains of Aqua Bella

115

the master of the flourishing farm that existed there during the Crusader period. A few of the original rooms, halls, embrasures, pillars and various adornments remain of this two-story Crusader building, which is surrounded by broad lawns, streams and large trees. Stonecutters' markings can still be found on some of the stones from the Crusader period.

5. Abu Ghosh

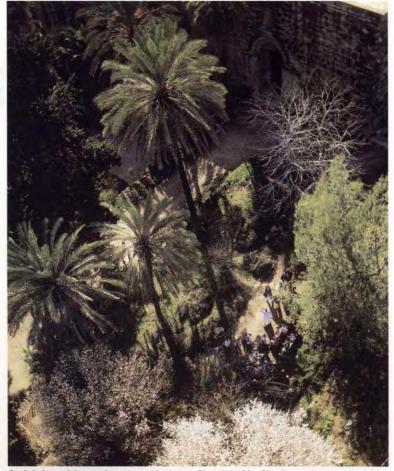
Visiting hours

The Church of the Resurrection [in the lower part of the village]:

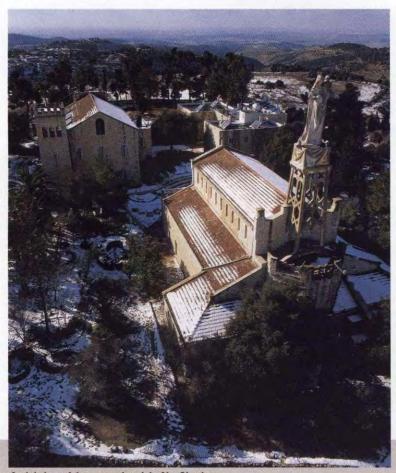
8:30–11:00, 14:30–17:30; closed on Sunday and Thursday. Tel. 02-5342-798

Notre Dame de l'Arche de l'Alliance [the church atop the hill]:

daily from 8:30–11:30, 14:30–18:00, in the winter until 17:00. Tel. 02-5342-818



Aerial view of the garden next to the lower Church in Abu Ghosh

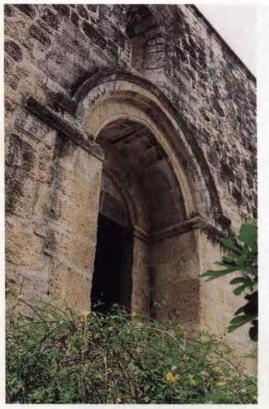


Aerial view of the upper church in Abu Ghosh

"And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord" (1. Samuel 7: 1).

This village is considered to be the biblical Kiryath Yearim, which became an important center of religious worship during the struggle between the Philistines and the Israelites for control of the Judean Hills. The Ark of the Covenant, which was recovered from the Philistines, was placed here in the house of Abinadab and watched over by his son Eleazar (1 Samuel 7: 1) until it was transferred to the Temple in Jerusalem. The village knew another period of prosperity – in the time of Solomon – but since then it began to decline.

The entry to the Crusader Church



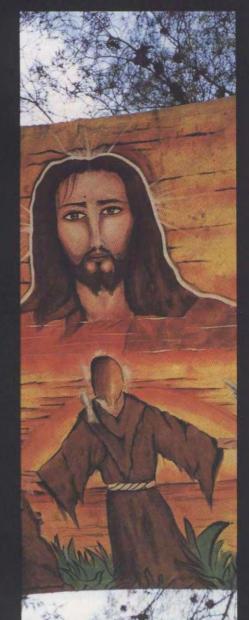
The Byzantine period was one of renewal for the area due to the biblical narrative concerning the Ark of the Covenant in Kirvath Yearim, A church was built at the top of the hill overlooking the village. It was destroyed during the Persian invasion in 614 but on its ruins a church and a monastery were built in 1924 called Notre Dame de l'Arche de Alliance (Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant), dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The church, which can be seen for miles around because of the large statue of Mary on its roof, is served by nuns of the French order of St. Joseph de l'Apparition. During the Crusades the Christians also identified this village with Anathoth, the birthplace of the prophet Jeremiah, and with Emmaus, where Jesus revealed himself to his disciples after his

Resurrection (Luke 24: 13–17). A beautiful Crusader church and monastery were built above the spring in the lower part of the village. They were partially destroyed a few times during the Mamluk period and the residents were massacred by Muslim army battalions serving in the area. In 1875 the French Consul in Jerusalem managed to purchase the site, and the Crusader church was rebuilt by Emperor Napoleon III. On the walls of the church, in which Benedictine monks serve today, one can still discern remains of a Crusader fresco. There is a small spring in the crypt under the church, which is considered one of the most beautiful Crusader churches in the Holy Land.

We can end our tour with a tasty meal at one of the excellent Oriental restaurants in the village.

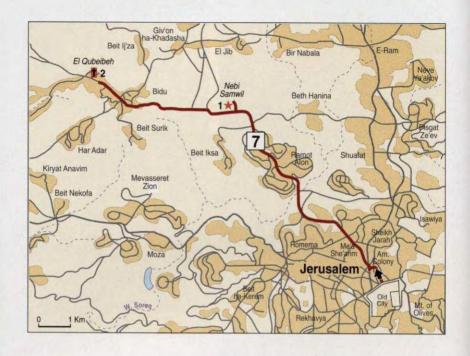
ROUTE

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE CRUSADERS FROM NEBI SAMWIL TO EL-QUBEIBEH



Sites

- 1. Nebi Samwil
- 2. El-Qubeibeh



Length of route: about 15 km.

1. Nebi Samwil

Note

The tomb of the Prophet Samuel, an archeological site and a holy place

The site can be reached by road from the Ramot neighborhood in northwest Jerusalem.

Open every day from 8:00 till sunset

One tradition identifies this site with Ramah, the burial place of the Prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 25: 1). The first to connect it with Samuel was the Byzantine historian Procopius, the scribe of the Emperor Justinian (sixth century), who wrote that by order of the Emperor a well was dug and a wall was built around the monastery of St. Samuel. However no ruins dating from the Byzantine period have been discovered in the archeological excavations conducted here.



Aerial view of Nebi Samwil

Very impressive remains, however, were uncovered from the time of the Crusaders, who from here had their first glimpse of the buildings and fortifications of Jerusalem in the summer of 1099. Perhaps the joy and excitement that overwhelmed the knights when they saw Jerusalem for the first time after a journey of approximately three years were what inspired the name they gave to this site – the Mountain of Joy (Mons Gaudii in Latin, Montjoie in medieval French).

The ruins of a gigantic Crusader fortress, 100 meters long and 50 meters wide, have been discovered at the spot. At its center is an impressive, beautifully constructed church called St. Samuel of Shiloh. North of the fortress, in an area used as a quarry, an enormous stable was built – 24 meters long and 7.6 meters wide. Large wells were dug and extensive areas leveled, apparently as a resting spot for companies of knights and caravans of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. The Crusaders arranged for an organized supply of water and food for the thousands of people who stopped here. They also built towers, a magnificent public building, and two oil presses outside the grounds of the fortress. Construction of the church and the large fortress were completed in 1157.

Thirty years later, in 1187, the fortress was taken by Saladin. During the Third Crusade (1192), it was controlled by the Muslims. Richard the Lionheart, the English King who led the Crusade, was only allowed a view of Jerusalem from this spot. The King's biographer wrote that as tears fell from his eyes and he covered his face with his shield he said that he did not deserve to see the city which he had been unable to liberate.

After the Crusader period the fortress was converted into a mosque, and later, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it also served as a synagogue. After a struggle between Jews and Muslims that continued for hundreds of years it became a mosque again in 1730. During the First World War, and again in the wars of 1948 and 1967, there were bitter battles at this site, which holds a strategic command over Jerusalem from the west. In the last few years it has been used as a common place of worship for all Jews, Muslims and Christians who believe that this is the burial site of the prophet Samuel.

From Nebi Samwil we will continue westwards through the village of Bidu until we reach El-Qubeibeh.

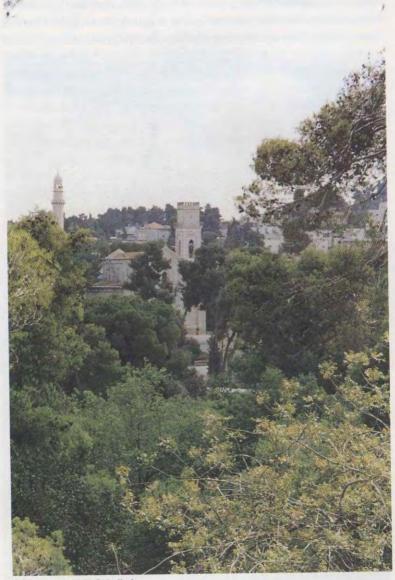
2. El-Qubeibeh

Note

An archeological site and a church.

Visiting hours

daily from 8:00-11:30, 14:00-17:00. Tel. 050-200-417



General view of El-Qubeibeh

The village is identified with the Crusader settlement of Parva Mohomaria, which means "little dome", because of the hilltop above the village. It began as an agricultural settlement established by the Crusaders around 1120, and was part of the large estate of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Its great importance was due to its location on the main Crusader road from the plains to Jerusalem, which connects the Ayalon Valley with Nebi Samwil.

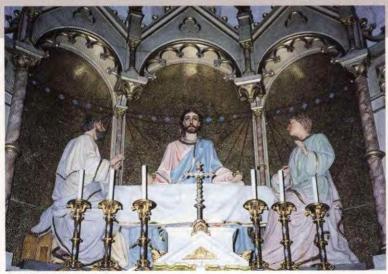
After the expulsion of the Crusaders from Jerusalem and the Judean Hills in 1244 Christian pilgrims could only reach Jerusalem by this road. The tradition identifying el-Qubeibeh with Emmaus – on the road



to which Jesus revealed himself to his two disciples after his resurrection and afterwards stayed in the home of one of them, Cleopas (Luke 24: 13-35) - instead of neighboring Abu Ghosh, was established at this time.

When the Ottoman Turks captured Jerusalem in 1517, stones were taken from the church in el-Qubeibeh to build the walls of the city, and the Crusader site was destroyed. In 1861 the site was acquired by the Marguise Pauline de Nicolay, who having built some rooms there, then ceded it to the Franciscans. They carried out archeological excavations on the spot and built a new church based on a Crusader model in 1901. Remains of the ancient Crusader village, built in medieval European style, have been uncovered on the grounds of the church and in the surrounding area. Two German-Catholic institutions were built in the village at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Sisters of St. Charles of Borromeo operate a rest home for elderly nuns to the east of the Franciscan church, while the Salvatorian Sisters run an old-age home for women to its west. The surrounding pine wood (called "the comb of el-Qubeibeh"), which is owned by the Franciscans, stands out on the crest of the hill. From there one has a panoramic view of the Judean Hills to the west and the coastal plain. From El-Qubeibeh we can now return to Jerusalem.

"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight" (Luke 24: 30-31).



Jesus in the House of Cleopas

Bibliograpy

Guides and General Books

- Baldi, D. Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 1982.
- Bartlett, W.H. Walks about the City and Environs of Jerusalem, London 1844.
- Ben Yosef, S. (ed.), Israel Guide, Vol. 5: The Judean Desert and the Jordan Valley, Keter Publishing House and Ministry of Defense, Jerusalem 1979 (Hebrew).
- Ben Yosef, S. (ed.), Israel Guide: Vol. 9: Judea, Keter Publishing House and Ministry of Defense. Jerusalem 1980 (Hebrew).
- Colbi, S.P. A History of the Christian Presence in the Holy Land, University Press of America, Lanham, New York and London 1988.
- Elliott, J.K. The Apocryphal New Testament, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1993.
- Guérin, V. Description de la Palestine, Judée, Vols. 1-3, Paris 1869.
- Hoade, E. Guide to the Holy Land, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 1984.
- Meisterman, B. Guide to the Holy Land, Oates and Washbourn, London 1923.
- Meron, E. (ed.), *Pathways in Jerusalem: A Walking Tour Guide with Yad Ben-Zvi*, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem 1996 (Hebrew).
- Pax, W.E. In the Footsteps of Jesus, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Jerusalem 1970.
- Schiller, E. Guide to Christian Historical Sites and Holy Places in Israel (Ariel, 85-87), Ariel Publishing House, Jerusalem 1992 (Hebrew).
- Schlink, M.B. The Holy Land Today, The Faith Press, London 1964.
- Stern, E. (ed.), New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land, Jerusalem and New York 1993.
- Wilkinson, J. Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades, Aris and Phillips, Warminster, England 1977.

Selected Topics and Sites

- Amit, D. "Sites and Places on the Way from Jerusalem to Hebron", in: G. Barkai and E. Schiller (eds.), *Bethlehem, Efrata* (*Ariel*, 128-129), Ariel Publishing House, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 155-171 (Hebrew).
- Avner, R. "Mar Elias The Kathisma Church", Hadashot Archeologiot (Archaeological News), 108, Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 139-142 (Hebrew).
- Avner, R. "Birth pangs on the Bethlehem Road", in: Y. Eshel (ed.), *Judea and Samaria Research Studies, Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting 1998*, Kedumim-Ariel 1999, pp. 155-160 (Hebrew).
- Benvenisti, M. *The Crusaders in the Holy Land*, Israel Universities Press, Jerusalem 1970.
- Chitty, D.J. The Desert A City, Oxford 1966.
- De Sendoli, S. Emmaus el-Qubeibeh The Sanctuary and Nearby Biblical Sites, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 1980.
- Ellenblum, R. Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998.
- Hirschfeld, Y. "The Hanging Cave of St. Chariton", Excavation and Surveys in Israel, 12 (1987), pp. 149-158.
- Hirschfeld, Y. The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1992.

- Hirschfeld, Y. "Monasteries and Churches in the Judean Desert in the Byzantine Period", in: Y. Tsafrir (ed.), Ancient Churches Revealed, Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 149-154.
- Hirschfeld, Y. "Monastery of St. Euthymius, Survey and Excavation", Excavations and Surveys in Israel, 3 (1984), pp. 80-82.
- Magen, Y. "The Monastery of St. Martyrius at Maale Adumim", in: Y. Tsafrir (ed.), Ancient Churches Revealed, Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 170–196.
- Magen, Y. and Dadon, M. *Nebi Samwil* (Brochure about the latest excavations, no date; in Hebrew).
- Netzer, E. Greater Herodium (*Qedem: Monographs of the Institute of Archaeology*, 13) The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 1981.
- Patrich, J. "Chapels and Hermitages of St. Sabas' Monastery", in: Y. Tsafrir (ed.), Ancient Churches Revealed, Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 233–243.
- Patrich, J. Sabas, *Leader of Palestinian Monasticism*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C. 1995.
- Patrich, J., Arubas B. and Agur, B. "Monastic Cells in the Desert of Gerasimus near the Jordan", in: F. Manns and E. Alliata (eds.), Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 277–296.
- Petrozzi, M.T. Ain Karim, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 1971.
- Petrozzi, M.T. Bethlehem, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 1971.
- Schiller, E. (ed.), *Jericho and its Surroundings* (*Kardom*, 28-30), Ariel Publishing House, Jerusalem 1983 (Hebrew).
- Schiller, E. Rachel's Tomb, Ariel Publishing House, Jerusalem 1977 (Hebrew).
- Storme, A. Bethany, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 1992.
- Stransky, T.F. "The Austrian Hospital at Tantur (1869-1918)", in: M. Wrba (ed.), Austrian Presence in the Holy Land, Austrian Embassy, Tel Aviv 1996, pp. 98–121.

Illustration Credits

Nati Shohat (Flash 90): 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 52, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 65, 66, 69, 71, 74, 76, 77, 78, 81, 105, 111, 112, 113, 128

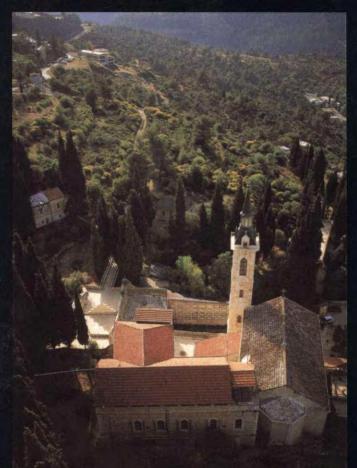
Dubi Tal, Moni Haramati (Albatross): 47, 53, 54, 55, 68, 72, 80, 95, 97, 99, 101, 108, 116, 117, 121, front and back cover

Amnon Ramon: 14, 56, 57, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 103, 104, 107, 114, 115, 118, 119, 123, 124, 125

Yizhak Magen (Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, Archeology Officer): 82

Israel Antiquities Authority: 18 (a,b), 19





Many words were written about Jerusalem - the Holy City, but not so much about less-known sites in the surroundings. This book offers seven different routes to discover Christian sites between Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho. Most of them are located in almost biblical scenery, and are far away from the crowded centers. Each route is accompanied by a map and numerous photographs, which allow the traveler to orient himself easily.

This book can serve both as a useful guide, as well as a souvenir for people who wish to discover Terra Incognita around the Holy City.

The author, Amnon Ramon, is a research-fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, a Tour Guide in Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and is an expert on holy religious sites in Jerusalem and its surrounding.