

Mount of Olives



Description

Mount of Olives is the hill facing the old city of Jerusalem, on the eastern side of Kidron valley. Its name came from the olive trees that once grew on its hillside from ancient times. According to Jewish tradition, the Messiah will appear here and bring the dead back to life. Therefore, the hillside became the most holiest cemetery, and the hillside is covered by thousands of grave stones.

Jesus had many encounters on Mount of olives, and the area has many Churches that glorify his acts in this part of Jerusalem (for example, see: Basilica of Agony). There are additional Christian sites on Mount of Olives (such as the Tomb of Mary).

History

Old Testament

The hill is first referred in the Bible when King David flees the city (2 Samuel 15: 30, see references). King Solomon erected altars on the hill dedicated to false alien gods. They were later destroyed by King Josiah who "filled it with bones" to prevent future worships. Prophet Zechariah talks about the day of Judgment, with Mount of Olives its epicenter of God's fiery fight against the enemies of Jerusalem.

New Testament

Mount of Olives is associated with acts in the life of Jesus. Several churches mark these places: Pater Noster church, the place where according to tradition Jesus taught his disciples the Lords prayer; the tear-shaped church of Dominus Flevit ("the Lord wept") where Jesus wept over the future destruction of the city; Gethsemane (Gat Shemanim) where Jesus was betrayed and arrested.

Middle Ages

Until the 12th C AD the Jews used to come and pray from the top of mount of olives, since it has a great view of the temple Mount. During Sukkoth (Tabernacles - a Jewish religious festival) they conducted parades on the hillside.

Scripture

Bible References in Context

- ▶ King David flees the city (II Samuel 15:30)
- ▶ Solomon Erected Altars here to false idols
- ▶ Zechariah talks about the Day of Judgement on this Mount
- ▶ This is the place that Jesus wept over future destruction

II Samuel 15:30

“And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up”.

Zechariah 14:1-11

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine presses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited”.

1 Kings 11:5-7

In this text King Solomon (968-928 BC) builds altars for alien worship, and although it does not explicitly name the hill, the place is probably Mount of Olives.

“For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of

the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon”.

2 Kings 23: 12-14

This made God furious, and was the reason that God split the Kingdom to two (928 BC) following Solomon's death. King Josiah, many years later (630 BC), destroyed these altars. The Mount of Olives is called “the mount of corruption” which sounds similar in Hebrew (Mischah, Maschit). Note that this text explains the cemetery on mount of Olives as the result of the Josiah attempt to fill it with bones, so the place will not be Holy and suitable for worship.

And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. And he brake in pieces the images and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.”

John 8:1

Jesus Arrives in Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth), and passed through Mount of Olives.

“Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them”.

Matthew 26: 36; Mark 14:32

At the foot of the Mt Olives lies the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed on the night of his betrayal. This scene is illustrated in many old paintings, such as Gustav Dore's drawing on the right.

“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder”.

“And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray”.