

MARINA MAGRILOV ▪ PINCHAS POLONSKY ▪ MICHAEL MAGRILOV

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# JUDEA AND SAMARIA ▪

THE HISTORICAL HEARTLAND  
OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE



Museum "Migdal Ha'Roe", Shilo

**A guidebook to Israel**

**JUDEA AND SAMARIA,  
the historical heartland  
of the Jewish people**

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מרינה מגרילוב  
פינחס פולונסקי  
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יהודה ושומרון – מולדת היסטורית  
של העם היהודי

מדריך ישראל

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To see the originals of these maps in the Internet you can use  
similar QR codes placed on the maps of each Route.

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OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE**

**A GUIDEBOOK TO ISRAEL**



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**Dedicated to the great-grandmother  
Lidia Marcuze  
From the great-grandson David Marcus  
and his family:  
Sharon, Liad, Idan, Hila-Hen and Itay**



**מוקדש האהבה והערכה רבה לסבתא רבא**

**לידיה מרקוס**

**מהנין דוד מרכוס ומשפחתו: שרון, ליעד, עידן, הילה-חן ואיתי**

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of this book

# **Judea and Samaria, the historical heartland of the Jewish people**

## **Introduction to the English Edition**

The same Creator, who endowed all people with inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, endowed the Jewish people with an inalienable land, among which are Judea and Samaria. In fact, Judea and Samaria have been and continue to be at the center of the Jewish history, and we have the whole Tanakh to prove it.

Current tour guides call these areas “the West Bank” or “Palestinian Territories.” They will tell you about the final resting place of the arch-terrorist Yasser Arafat in Ramallah, but will not tell you that merely three miles from there, in Beit El, is where the Patriarch Jacob had his dream with the ladder.

This is why this book was written. It is the first tour guide exclusively devoted to Judea and Samaria. This guide was originally written in Russian by a group of talented tour guides from the company Guide21; it is now in its third Russian edition.

In 1967, Israelis did not purposefully set out to liberate Judea and Samaria; these territories had fallen in their hands as if by miracle. The country’s establishment did not want these lands then and many don’t want them now. They were to be used as a bargaining chip with the Arabs and at best for security reasons. Possession or surrender of these territories defines the character of Israel in the most fundamental way. Will it face its Jewish destiny or will it reduce itself into oblivion?

Thankfully, many Israelis choose the former. Today the Jewish population in Judea and Samaria is around 350,000 and in “East Jerusalem” around 250,000. The combined number of 600,000 has a special meaning in Jewish history. This was the number of fighting men among those who left Egypt with Moses, and the number of fighting men among those who entered the Promised Land with Joshua. This was the number of Jews in the British mandate Palestine when the State of Israel was declared. The Vilna Gaon said that redemption will begin when 600,000 Jews live in the Land of Israel. Today, about as many Jews live beyond the “Green Line,” and hopefully the status of these lands will change soon.

How is this guide different from all other guides? All other guides tell you how you can go somewhere; this guide tells why you should go there. This is because it is saturated with Biblical quotations tied to the tours. When a passage is read on the exact site of the event, it brings to life both the text and the place. It compresses the centuries and fills a Jewish traveler with ownership of both his history and his land.

Ilya Ravkin. March 2015

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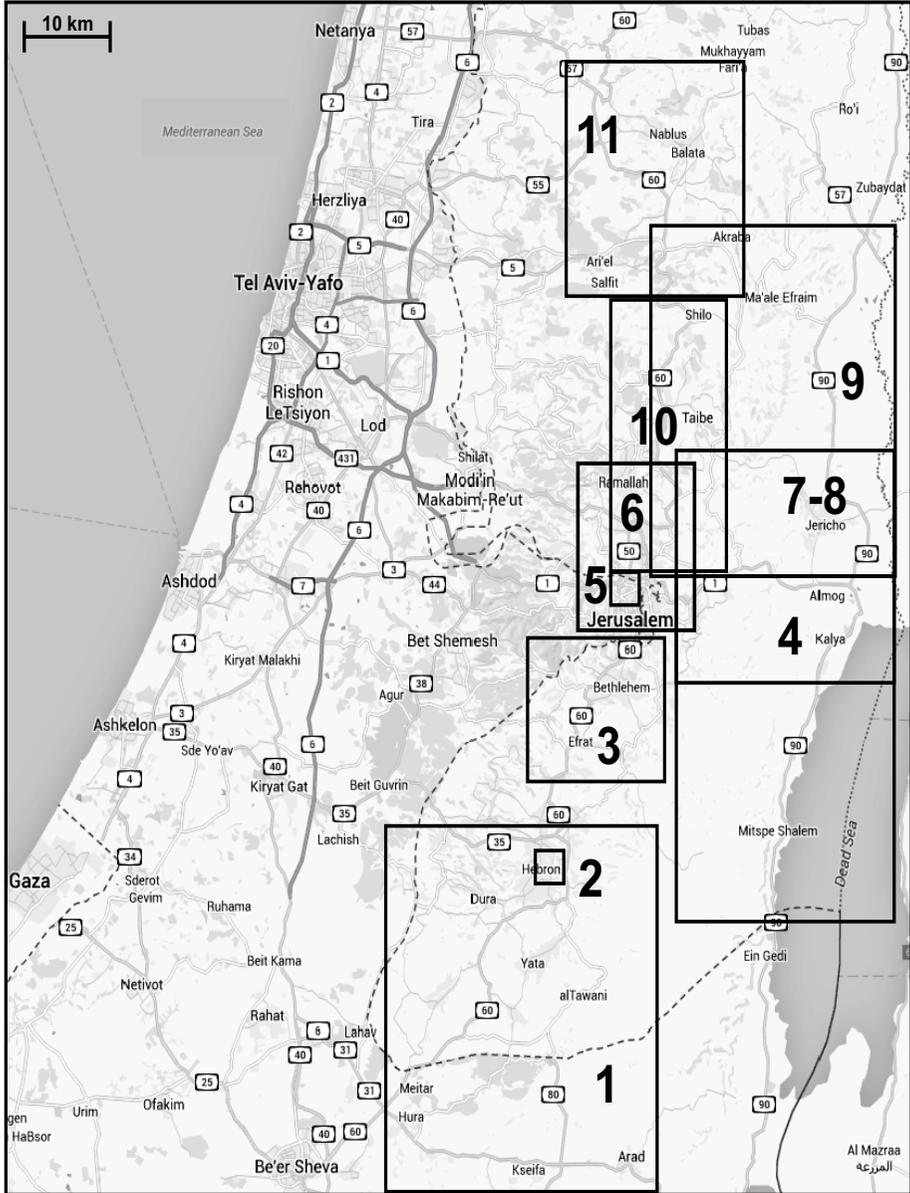
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# MAP OF THE ROUTES



# LIST OF PICTOGRAMS

At the beginning of each route you can find pictograms related to the whole route. The pictograms related to the points of the route are placed in the margins near their description



Bring drinking water



Protect yourself from the sun – bring sunglasses and cover your head



On the route there are cafes and restaurants (you can always buy food and use toilets in any gas station, in addition to the places marked by pictograms)



Bring comfortable footwear



You can stay for a night in a hotel or zimmer



Museum or National park; Entry fee;  
opening hours:10:00-16:00 (winter),  
9:00-17:00 (summer)



Closed on Shabbat (Friday afternoon – Saturday)



There is an opportunity to swim during the trip



While visiting sacred places dress accordingly, cover your  
shoulders and knees.



A key is required to visit the archaeological object. Ask the  
security guard at the entrance to the settlement for the key.



# INTRODUCTION

## **WHAT IS “JUDEA AND SAMARIA”?**

Judea (the inheritance of the tribe of Judah) and Samaria (the inheritance of the sons of Joseph) is a historical region of the Land of Israel, which was the center of the Jewish State in ancient times. This is the place where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived and where the main historic events of the period of Judges transpired. This was the center of Kings Saul’s, King David’s and King Solomon’s kingdoms. Here the country was split into two kingdoms after the death of King Solomon, the Southern in Judea and the Northern in Samaria.

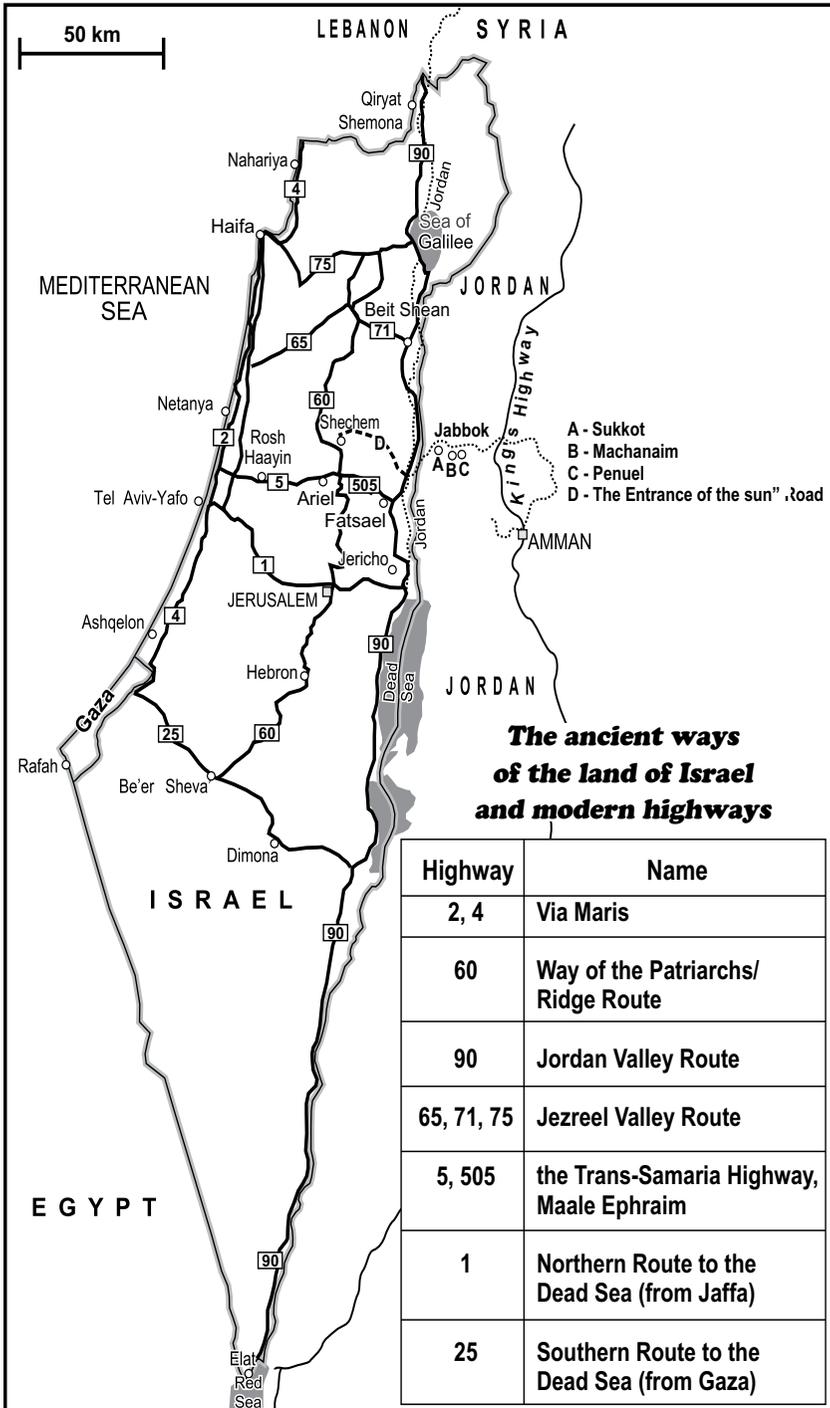
It is within the territory of Judea and Samaria that all the major biblical events took place. If you look at a list of all the geographical sites mentioned in the Tanakh, you will see that 90% of them are concentrated in Judea and Samaria. Thus, it is specifically Judea and Samaria, and not just “Israel,” that is the historical homeland of the Jewish people.

It was in this place that Jewish monotheism and biblical texts, which became the foundation of western civilization, were formed. As a result, Judea and Samaria have a unique historical and spiritual status.

## **THE UNIQUE POLITICAL STATUS OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA**

This land is unique not only in a spiritual-historical sense, but also politically. Every territory on Earth belongs to some particular country and is under that country’s sovereignty. Sometimes more than one

# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

country claims sovereignty over a territory. There are only two exceptions to this rule: Antarctica, which according to the international convention does not belong to any one country, and Judea and Samaria. There are no other exceptions.

Today the territory of Judea and Samaria does not legally belong to any one country. The Ottoman Empire that ruled this land between 1517 until 1917 does not exist anymore. The British Mandate over the territory (which lasted from 1919 until 1948) ceased. In 1948, during the War of Independence, Jordan annexed Judea and Samaria; its control over the territory lasted nineteen years. Because of this nineteen-year rule, left-wing politicians and journalists still call Judea and Samaria, returned under Israeli control in 1967, “occupied territories,” meaning “occupied by Israel.”

In 1967, in the course of the Six-Day War, the Israel Defense Forces freed this part of the country. However, Israel was not yet ready to reclaim Judea and Samaria because it would have meant that Israel was transitioning from the concept of “State-as-refuge,” which dominated Zionism during its early stages (and is still popular today), to the concept of “revival of the Biblical State” – a radical shift of the national idea. As a result, Judea and Samaria were not annexed by Israel and they remained “controlled territories.”

Eventually, Jordan withdrew its claims on this territory. The Palestinian Authority is not a state and does not have any right of sovereignty. Israel controls Judea and Samaria, but does not declare it as part of the country. That is why this land, so spiritually and historically vital to the development of civilization, does not legally belong to anyone.

This means that the Jewish future of Judea and Samaria (and in general, of the State of Israel) depends on how well we will be able to master these lands. This is one of the critical points in our influence on the future: if we actively populate the land, settle in it, travel there and study it, it will become legally ours. It will become an integral part of Israel.

# INTRODUCTION

That is why your tour of Judea and Samaria is not only the fulfillment of the biblical commandment given to Abraham, “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it” (Genesis 13:17), but an active step towards the embracing of the land by the Jewish people.

## **ANCIENT ROADS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL**

Topographically, the State of Israel is clearly divided into four parts, arranged longitudinally from the North to the South.

I. Along the Mediterranean Sea lies a coastal plain.

II. Further east are mountains (although they might be called hills, they are quite difficult to pass in some areas, and not all of them have roads). This range of mountains stretches from north to south, starting from Lebanon, continuing through the Upper (Northern) and then the Lower (Southern) Galilee. Further south, this range turns into the Samaritan mountains, the Judean mountains, and then the Negev mountains, which eventually turn into the Sinai mountains.

III. Still further east, a deep valley stretches from the north to the south comprising the following: the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon, Upper (Northern) Jordan River, which flows through the Hula Valley; Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee); Lower (Southern) Jordan River from Lake Kinneret to the Dead Sea; the Dead Sea, followed by the Arabah Valley (which turns into the Eilat Gulf and still further down becomes the Red Sea). The main part of this area, including the whole of the Jordan River and the Kinneret, is located below sea level, and the Dead Sea is the lowest spot on earth.

IV. Further east begins the ascent to the mountains, to the plateau and the Transjordan mountain range, which also stretches from north to south: Mount Hermon, the Golan

# INTRODUCTION

Heights, and the Gilad and Moab mountains (which now belong to Jordan).

This entire geological system is called the Syrian-African fault line (because it stretches from Syria to the African coast). The mountain range to the west of the valley is called Lebanon, while the one to the east of the valley is called Anti-Lebanon. These mountains are intersected from west to east by rivers and smaller valleys.

Because of this topography, it is not always possible to pave roads in all locations. From ancient times, a general network of perpendicular roads has developed; this network functions even today.

Foremost of these are the vertical roads that run from north to south (in today's Israel these are the highways with even numbers). Four of these roads have existed since ancient times:

1. The first road is called Via Maris (literally, the Way of the Sea in Latin, and Derech HaYam in Hebrew) because it runs along the Mediterranean coast. It is a convenient and an extremely significant road today, as it was in ancient times, when it connected Egypt and Mesopotamia and was considered to be one the most central roads of antiquity. Today it is Route 2 and 4.

2. Another road called the Way of the Patriarchs (Derech HaAvot), known also as the Ridge Route (Derech HaHar), follows the watershed ridge line from north to south (today it is Route 60). This road is not very suitable for caravans and even less for armies; it is not always easily passable. It follows the mountain ridge that marks the center of the country. According to the biblical account, the forefathers of the Jewish people settled alongside this road, and many of the main religious-historical sites are situated there: Shechem, Shilo, Beit El, Jerusalem, Beit Lechem (Bethlehem), Hebron, Be'er Sheva. It is this road that runs through Judea and Samaria, and it is beside this road that

# INTRODUCTION

the main historical events described in the biblical Books of Joshua, Judges, and Kings took place.

3. Further east is a highway that follows the Jordan valley, the Dead Sea and the Arabah, and ends in the city of Etzion Gever (the ancient name of Eilat). Today it is route 90.

4. Finally, the fourth road is called the King's Highway (Derech HaMelech). It stretches along the Transjordan plateau (today this territory belongs to Jordan).

The horizontal roads (in today's Israel, these are the roads with odd numbers) were formed in those areas where the mountains could be crossed by way of a valley or a mountain pass.

1. In the North of the country it is the road through the Jezreel Valley, which separates the Mountains of Galilee from the Mountains of Samaria. At the west end of this road, where it connects with Via Maris south of Mount Carmel, the ancient sea ports Atlit, Dor and Caesarea were located. On the same road, north of Mount Carmel, you can reach the port in the Haifa Bay (today these are routes 71, 65, 75). The ancient city of Beit She'an (Skitopolis) is at the intersection of this road with the road along the Jordan River. The road crossed the Jordan River to the south of the Kinneret and continued further east to Transjordan.

2. To the South of the road mentioned above lay another route that stretched through the Southern foothills of Samaria. This road began from the sea, from today's city of Herzliya, continued to the source of the Yarkon River (the region of today's city of Rosh HaAyin), then further east, intersected with the Way of the Patriarchs to the south of Shechem, and then across Ma'ale Efrayim (meaning "Ascent to the Tribe of Ephraim") and descended to the Jordan River at the Adam Bridge. Today it is the Trans-Samaria Highway, Highway 5 and Road 505.

3. Even further South, the main horizontal road runs through the mountain pass between the Judean and the

# INTRODUCTION

Samarian Mountains. This road began at the ancient port of Jaffa, passed through the mountain to Jericho, located near the northern end of the Dead Sea (today it is route 1 and route 444), and continued further east to Transjordan. At the intersection of this road and the Way of the Patriarchs, in the center of the country, is Jerusalem.

4. Finally, there was another pass at the foothills of the Judean Mountains from the South: the road stretched from Gaza, passed through Be'er Sheva to the south end of the Dead Sea, where the ancient city of Sodom stood, and further south into Transjordan (today route 25).

## **THE WAY OF THE PATRIARCHS**

Out of all of the above mentioned routes of Judea and Samaria, the most intriguing is the central one, the Way of the Patriarchs, or the Ridge Route, which stretches from north to south, following the Judea and Samaria Mountain Range (today it is route 60). This road was the main path along which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob traveled and lived. This route is also closely connected with the history of their descendants, Kings of Israel, prophets and Maccabees.

The main centers of civilization in the 2nd millennium BCE. were Egypt and Mesopotamia. The classical ancient road, connecting these civilizations, went through the Land of Israel: it ran along the coast from south to north (Derech HaYam), bypassed Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod until the modern-day Caesarea, then turned east, alongside Wadi Ara (Wadi means riverbed) to Megiddo, or along Wadi Milek until Yokneam, continued through the Jezreel Valley to Beit She'an, or alongside the western coast of the Kinneret until its northern end, further on towards the Golan and Transjordan along the King's Highway (Derech HaMelech). Everybody who had to travel followed this road: traders and conquerors that used the Holy Land as a bridge connecting continents and ancient empires.

# INTRODUCTION

In contrast, the forefathers of the Jewish people were masters of the Land and came here to settle permanently. They preferred to use the inner, central Ridge Route, from where all the other roads, including Derech HaYam and Derech HaMelech, could easily be observed.

The Way of the Forefathers is pivotal for Judea and Samaria: It is the main part of all the routes described below.

## **HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY: DIVISIONS OF PALESTINE IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

*Why has the most important part of the country become so controversial in our days?*

In ancient times, the borders of the Land of Israel, or the province of Judea (In 135 C.E., after the suppression of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, the Romans renamed it “Palestine”), were different in different historical periods. In general, two parts were distinguished: the Western part of Israel (Western Palestine) situated between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, and the Eastern part of Israel (Eastern Palestine) which covered highlands and hills to the east of the Jordan River.

Subsequently, when the Jews were expelled from their homeland by the Romans, this territory was not considered to be an independent unit, it did not have its own name, and the Arabs that lived there never considered themselves to be a separate nation. Eventually, the Arab Caliphate occupied the land, and later, the territory became part of the Ottoman Empire.

In ancient times, Judea and Samaria were the center of the Jewish state because Jews came from the east. They crossed the Jordan River, conquered the lands west of the Jordan River and settled there. The Philistines lived along the coast at that time. That is why the absolute majority of all the historically significant Jewish places are located in the central and eastern, mountainous part of the country.

# INTRODUCTION

In the 19th and 20th centuries, a migration from the opposite direction occurred: Jews came from the west, which is why the coastal area became the most densely populated region in modern Israel. As a result, that part of Eretz Israel which is historically the most significant, happened to be less populated in the first half of the 20th century. It was later captured by the Arab armies, annexed in 1950 by Jordan, and then came under Israel's control only in 1967.

As a result, the most historically significant part of the country became the most controversial in world opinion. This circumstance emphasizes again that the contemporary Middle East conflict is not only territorial, but primarily a conflict of values which touches upon the very essence of the State of Israel. When we say that "Israel is the national historic homeland of the Jewish people," we have to acknowledge that the real historic homeland is first and foremost located in Judea and Samaria.

## ***British mandated territory of Palestine***

In 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration which promised to facilitate the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in its historic homeland "in Palestine."

At the end of the First World War, the Balfour Declaration was used as the basis of the resolutions of the Paris Peace Conference (1919) and the San Remo Conference (1920). In these resolutions, the League of Nations approved the transfer of the territory of Palestine under direct British control, in accordance with the Balfour Declaration. From that point on, the Declaration had acquired the status of a binding document recognized by the international community.

After the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations, the 12th chapter of the Charter of the United Nations ("International Trusteeship System" section) says

# INTRODUCTION

that the resolution made by the League of Nations regarding the partitioning of territories of the former Ottoman Empire remains in force. In other words, the resolution of the right of the Jewish people to its historical homeland was also legally confirmed by the world community after the Second World War, and from a legal standpoint, the resolutions are still in force today.

## ***The First Division of Palestine, 1921***

In 1921 the British authorities decided to partition the mandated Palestine and create an “Emirate of Transjordan,” for which they allocated three quarters of Palestinian territory. In 1946, the Emirate became an independent country, known today as Jordan.

The creation of Jordan resulted from a conflict in Arabia. Before the First World War, the Arabian Peninsula was ruled by the Turkish Empire. The English promised the Arab Sheiks an independent country in Arabia after the defeat of the Turks. The English bargained on the most distinguished Arab tribe, the Hashemite Dynasty, who had their origins from Mohamed and ruled in Mecca. However, when the Turks were defeated, the Hashemites could not resist the force of the other tribe, the Saudis. The Saudis had their own small state in Nejd (central Arabian Peninsula) and supported Wahhabism as a state ideology. In the war that started in 1920, the stronger Saudis expelled the Hashemites, conquered the entire Arabian Peninsula and called it Saudi Arabia.

England had to “find employment” for their allies, the Hashemites, and placed one of the dynasty representatives on the throne in Iraq, and to another “made a present” of the “Eastern Palestine” (i.e. Transjordan), by appropriating it from the mandate land. Thus, the Arab state was formed in Palestine almost a hundred years ago, much earlier than the Jewish state was formed, showing the falsehood of the

# INTRODUCTION

claim that Palestinian Arabs supposedly do not have their own state.

## ***The Second Division of Palestine, 1947***

The second division of the territory remaining after the detachment of Jordan took place on paper only. In 1947, after the British terminated their mandate, the United Nations accepted the recommended map, this time dividing only the Western Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

To divide the territory, a checkerboard method was utilized: In the North, the Arabs received Western Galilee; the Jews received Eastern Galilee. In the center of the country, the order was reversed: the Jews received a coastal strip of land in the west, while the Arabs received the hilly region in the east (i.e., Judea and Samaria). In the south, the division was reversed once more: the Arabs received the western part of the Negev (Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza), while the Jews received the eastern part of the Negev (south of Be'er Sheva).

The Jewish populace welcomed the plan because they saw it as the first step in the international recognition of Israel, though many considered this plan unfair and dangerous for the security of the future state. Therefore, the Jewish Agency (which represented the country's Jewish population at that time) announced their readiness to accept the division plan; the Arab representatives rejected the plan. In November of 1947, the plan was accepted by the United Nations as a "recommendation," but was never implemented.

By refusing to accept in 1947 the "United Nations' resolution regarding the partition," the Arab population living in the Land of Israel lost their legal right to claim this decision as the basis of their "right to their own state."

## ***The Third Division of Palestine, 1948***

As soon as the British Mandate terminated, on May 14 of 1948, Israel declared its independence. The next day, armies

# INTRODUCTION

of several Arab countries invaded Israel and, together with the Arab population of Israel, tried to destroy the Jewish State. However, they did not succeed. As a result of the War of Independence, the Jews strengthened their control of the coastal region, the Negev (except Gaza), and the Galilee, but Judea, Samaria, and the old city of Jerusalem were conquered by the Arab armies and annexed by Jordan.

After the war, no Arab state was formed on the territory of Palestine, as the Arabs living there did not consider themselves a separate nation and did not need such a state. The border was not established, and it was emphasized that the “cease fire line” was only temporary.

The way the Israeli authorities treated the Arabs under their control differed from the way the leaders of the Arab countries treated the Jewish population that fell under their control. All Arabs in the Israeli territories received Israeli citizenship and equal rights. The few Jews who found themselves in the territory controlled by Arab countries were either exiled or killed.

A considerable number of Arabs that lived in Palestine before the war left areas that became “Jewish” and joined the Arab armies that promised the volunteers easy battles and rich plunder. Later on, Israel refused to give citizenship or the right of return to those Arabs who left the country, especially those that served in the enemy armies. However, these Arabs did not receive citizenship in the neighboring Arab states either. They were settled in refugee camps and were under the supervision of a special United Nations agency. As a result, there were two refugee agencies in the United Nations: one dealt with all the refugees in the world, while the other dealt only with Arab refugees of Palestine, who after 25 years were named “the Palestinian People.” The first of these agencies was “universal”: it aimed to help refugees rebuild their lives in a new place. The other agency had the opposite mission: to prepare the refugees for their

# INTRODUCTION

return to Israel and, therefore, prevent their absorption in the Arab countries.

It is important to mention that during that period, approximately the same number of Jews escaped from Arab countries into Israel. Thus, what really happened was NOT the “expulsion of Arabs from Israel,” but an “exchange of population.”

## ***The 1967 War***

In early 1960s, Arab countries began talking about a new war, in which united Arab forces would “liberate Palestine from the Jewish presence.” In May of 1967, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria and Iraq announced total mobilization. Egypt expelled United Nations observers from Sinai and blockaded the Straits of Tiran, which was a violation of previous agreements and, in essence, a declaration of war.

On June 5, 1967 Israel, without waiting for the Arabs to open fire, made a preemptive strike, which was so devastating that only six days were needed to completely defeat the Arab armies. As a result of the war, Judea, Samaria, and the Golan were liberated and Israel gained control over Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula.

However, neither the establishment nor the majority of Israelis were ready at that time to claim sovereignty and settle Judea and Samaria. Their status remained “controlled” and not “annexed.”

Although the majority of Israelis hoped to come to terms with the Arabs by giving back territories conquered in the war (though the Arabs did not agree to this), there were those who spoke out about the significance of Judea and Samaria for the development of the Jewish State: almost immediately after the war, Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook published a plea calling for settlement of the lands now under Israel’s control. Following this, a group of religious Zionists under the leadership of Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook created the settlement movement called “Gush Emunim.”

# INTRODUCTION

At that time, this movement did not receive government support. The government only agreed to return Jewish residents to Gush Etzion, from where they had been expelled by the Arabs during the War of Independence. All the other building projects in Judea and Samaria were carried out by Gush Emunim participants on their own.

In 1974, a group of activists from Gush Emunim came to Sebastia, a completely destroyed ancient capital of the kingdom of Israel, and declared that they were going to resettle it. The Israeli army arrested and removed them, but they returned several weeks later. This repeated six times, until the government agreed to create a new settlement in Samaria, for which they offered an abandoned army base several kilometers away from Sebastia. This was the beginning of the real settlement movement.

In 1977, after Likud's victory in the elections, Menachem Begin planned to start massive construction in Judea and Samaria. He subsequently retreated from this plan under external pressure. Letting the settlers take initiative, the Likud government would only legalize a new settlement after the first houses and streets were under construction.

At the beginning of the 1990's, Jewish settlements were scattered all over the hills of Judea and Samaria. The population of those settlements quickly reached 120,000. Since then, the Gush Emunim movement has been rapidly growing, gaining more and more new members each year.

## ***The Oslo Agreement and the current status***

In 1992, after the leftist parties came to power, they held secret negotiations with the PLO and in 1993 signed the Oslo Accords.

According to this agreement, Judea, Samaria and Gaza were divided into three areas: Area A (Arab towns) under full control of the Palestinian Authority; Area B (Arab villages) under the administrative control of the PA and the military control of Israel; Area C (Jewish settlements,

# INTRODUCTION

roads between the settlements, army bases and vacant land) under Israeli control. Borders between the areas were temporary: according to the agreement, areas A and B were supposed to gradually spread until they covered all of Judea and Samaria. This expansion continued until 2000, when, following massive unrest, any change in the borders of areas A, B and C was halted.

Today, area C is the encompassing territory that covers more than half of Judea and Samaria and areas A and B are islands inside of it. Today, all negotiations have reached a dead end and society no longer believes in the possibility of making peace with the Arabs. That is why today, more than ever before, the fate of all these lands depends first and foremost on us.

# ROUTE 1

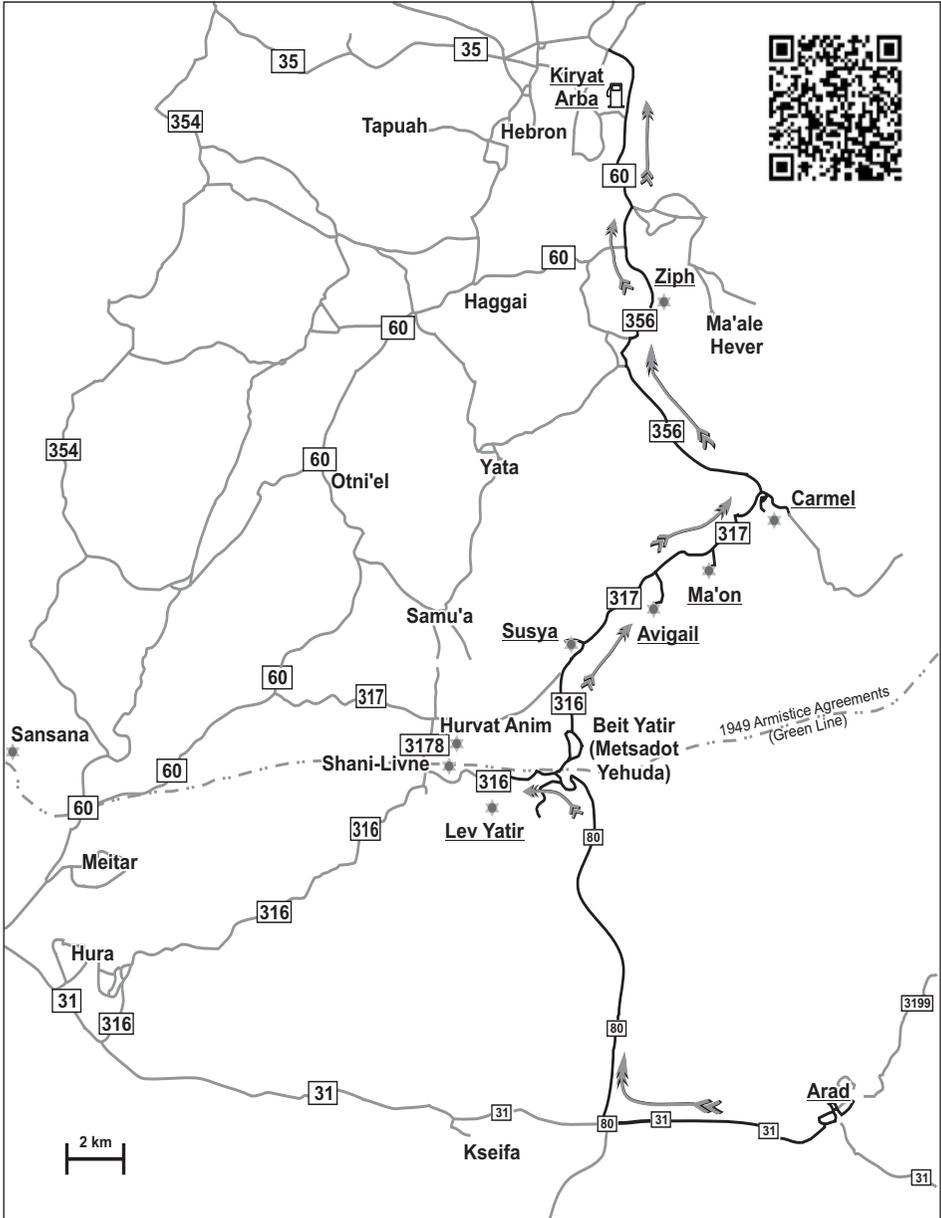
## SOUTHERN JUDEA – HEBRON HILLS

- Tel Zif
- Tel Ma'on
- Mitzpe Abigail
- Carmel
- Susya
- Yatir Forest



*A marble menorah from Ma'on (on display at the Israel Museum)*

# ROUTE 1



# ROUTE 1

## Video

In the heart of the land of Tanakh

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwLhkavfOUs&feature=plcp>



From Arad to Be'er Sheva through the Israel's biggest forest

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OxyjYSIOgg>



*Yatir Forest is one of the largest forests restored by Israel.  
Scenic view to the South.*

# ROUTE 1

**List of coordinates of the points of interest  
mentioned in the route**  
(see the explanation on page 188)

1

## Route 1. Southern Judea – Hebron hills

|   | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Highway 60, the turn to Kiryat Arba   | 31.541629<br>N 31°32.497' | 35.132989<br>E 35°7.979'  |
| Highway 60 turns to the west,<br>its continuation to the south is highway 356 | 31.504754<br>N 31°30.285' | 35.132919<br>E 35°7.975'  |
| Highway 356, start of ascent to Tel Zif                                       | 31.478008<br>N 31°28.68'  | 35.134539<br>E 35°8.072'  |
| The settlement of Carmel  | 31.431615<br>N 31°25.896' | 35.182277<br>E 35°10.936' |
| The settlement of Ma'on (not Tel Ma'on!)                                      | 31.413378<br>N 31°24.802' | 35.163909<br>E 35°9.834'  |
| Start of the road to Mitzpe Abigail<br>From highway 317                       | 31.412380<br>N 31°24.742' | 35.144340<br>E 35°8.66'   |
| The Mitzpe Abigail settlement (Waze does find it,<br>iGo doesn't)             | 31.403486<br>N 31°24.209' | 35.140805<br>E 35°8.448'  |
| The Mitzpe Ya'ir settlement   | 31.382230<br>N 31°22.933' | 35.134690<br>E 35°8.081'  |
| Ancient Susya   | 31.404187<br>N 31°24.251' | 35.10437<br>E 35°6.262'   |
| Lev Yatir   | 31.348579<br>N 31°20.914' | 35.059923<br>E 35°3.595'  |
| Crossroads of highways 31 and 80  | 31.253992<br>N 31°15.239' | 35.124296<br>E 35°7.457'  |

# ROUTE 1

## **ROUTE 1**

Southern Judea – Hebron Hills (Tel Zif, Tel Ma'on, Mitzpe Abigail, Carmel, Susya, Yatir Forest)

### **HISTORY**

Hebron Hills were Judah's tribal inheritance and constituted the main part of Biblical Judea. A Jewish state existed here until the Judean wars with Rome, and the contemporary Jewish people trace their origin primarily to its inhabitants. The southern part of Hebron Hills contains quite a number of ruins of ancient Judean cities that were destroyed by the Romans, as well as remnants of later buildings and villages that have survived for several centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple and the Bar Kokhba revolt in 1st-2nd century CE. Jews were forbidden to reside in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, but Jewish settlements continued to exist in Southern Judea until the 9th century CE.

### **HOW TO GET THERE**

The route can start either from the North or from the South.

From the South (this is exactly where the arrows point on the route plan):

Begin from the intersection of route 31 and route 80 (the Arad Region), go north towards the Yatir Forest, then to the archaeological site Susya (on routes 80, 316, 317), then continue towards Mitzpe Abigail and Ma'on and then further towards Carmel and Tel Zif on route 356. Then continue towards Hebron on route 60.

From the North:

From Jerusalem, take route 60 (or from Kiryat Gat take route 35, then go south on route 60). Pass turnout to Kiryat Arba (near a gas station on route 60) and continue south on route 60 towards Be'er Sheva until the intersection with route 356. Route 60 goes to the villages Haggai and Otniel but our

# ROUTE 1

itinerary takes us to the left on route 356 (which turns into route 317 after the Carmel settlement).

The first stop on our route is Tel Zif, three kilometers down on route 356. Small settlements Ma'on and Mitzpe Abigail will be further down.

The city of Susya, a fabulously interesting archaeological site, will be the last stop on this route. You can complete this trip by taking a short walk in the Yatir Forest .

1

## **ALONG THE ROUTE**

Going south after passing Kiryat Arba, the road takes you to biblical sites untouched by time. Toponymy too is reminiscent of ancient history: Ain-Kosba, Bar-Kohba's birth place; Bani Haim, probably the biblical Anim; Zif, a city close to the southern border with Edom, mentioned in the Book of Joshua and in the book of Samuel as the city where David hid when King Saul persecuted him. The Book of Joshua also mentions a few other small towns which are on the map even today: Jewish Ashtamoa, Ma'on, Carmel, as well as Yatta, Halhul and other Arab villages which kept ancient Jewish names.

The largest Jewish settlement of the Hebron hills is Susya. Today it has population of 900, while the population of Ma'on is 470. Mitzpe Abigail currently has fewer than 100, approximately the same as Ashtamoa. Despite the small Jewish presence in this region today, these towns play an important role. In 2005, during the period of Disengagement conducted by Ariel Sharon's government, these few Jewish families, spread over several settlements, prevented the south of Hebron Hills from being transferred to the Palestinian Authority. (In Northern Samaria, where Jewish presence was even smaller, Sharon managed to destroy two Jewish settlements, Bayt Sahur and Homesh. As a result, almost all of the Northern Samaria is now under Arab control and is now inaccessible either to Israelis or to tourists.)

# ROUTE 1

## TEL ZIF



Watch the video “Hebron Hills”. See the link on p. 34.

If you are driving from north to south, your first stop is Tel Zif. A tel is a mound over the ruins of an ancient city, in this case the city of Zif. You will see it on the left side of the road (the road sign “Tel Zif” will be on your right) soon after the intersection of route 60 and route 356. (An additional reference point is the nearby military base.)

The road to the hilltop has been recently paved and is accessible by car. In the middle of the ascent, you can stop and examine an ancient well. On top of the hill you will see ruins, impressive remains of an ancient city. Peek into the first Book of Samuel, chapters 23 and 24:

*And David abode in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill-country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life; and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in the wood. And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him: 'Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.' And they two made a covenant before HaShem; and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house. Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying: 'Doth not David hide himself with us in the strongholds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O king, come down, according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him up into the king's hand.' And Saul said: 'Blessed be ye of HaShem; for ye have had compassion on me. Go, I pray you, make yet more sure, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there; for it is told me that he dealeth very subtly.*

# ROUTE 1

*See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking-places where he hideth himself, and come ye back to me with the certainty, and I will go with you; and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.’ And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul; but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah on the south of Jeshimon. And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying: ‘Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.’ Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. And the men of David said unto him: ‘Behold the day in which HaShem hath said unto thee: Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thy hand, and thou shalt do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.’ Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe privily. And it came to pass afterward, that David’s heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul’s skirt. And he said unto his men: ‘The HaShem forbid it me, that I should do this thing unto my lord, Hashem’s anointed, to put forth my hand against him, seeing he is HaShem’s anointed.’ So David checked his men with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. And Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying: ‘My lord the king.’ And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth, and prostrated himself. And David said to Saul: ‘Wherefore hearkenest thou to men’s words, saying: Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that HaShem had delivered thee to-day into my hand in the cave; and some bade me kill thee; but mine eye spared thee; and I said: I will not put forth my hand against my lord; for he is HaShem’s anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand; for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that*

# ROUTE 1

*there is neither evil nor transgression in my hand, and I have not sinned against thee, though thou layest wait for my soul to take it. HaShem judge between me and thee, and HaShem avenge me of thee; but my hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients: Out of the wicked cometh forth wickedness; but my hand shall not be upon thee. After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. HaShem therefore be judge, and give sentence between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thy hand.' And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said: 'Is this thy voice, my son David?' And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. And he said to David: 'Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rendered unto me good, whereas I have rendered unto thee evil. And thou hast declared this day how that thou hast dealt well with me; forasmuch as when HaShem had delivered me up into thy hand, thou didst not kill me. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore HaShem reward thee good for that which thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thy hand.*

(I Samuel 23:14-24:21)

Events described in these chapters took place in the Tel Zif area. These chapters relate how the people living in the city of Zif betrayed David twice, how Saul almost caught him, and how the Philistines interfered.

## **TEL MA'ON**

Following along our route you will see a big mound over the ancient Jewish city of Ma'on. A one and a half meter high marble menorah, decorated with lions, was found here during the excavations of a synagogue. It was made in the Byzantine era, a bit more than three hundred years after the destruction of the second Temple. The menorah is now housed in the Israel museum in Jerusalem.

# ROUTE 1

1

Thanks to this and other archaeological finds we now know that here, in Judea, Jewish presence lasted for at least several centuries after the destruction of the second Temple. Though the center of the Jewish life moved to Galilee, traditional Jewish settlements remained in Judea until the 9th century CE. During the Byzantine period and the period of early Islam, Nabateans who lived in the south of the country converted to the faith of the conquerors, as evidenced by the churches and mosques built in their cities (Avdat, Mamshit, Shivta, Nitzana). But Ma'on remained Jewish. During the excavation of the city, not a single church or mosque was found, only a synagogue, and no pork bones were found among organic remains; in other words, the inhabitants observed kashrut.

## **MITZPE ABIGAIL**

The next site on the route is Mitzpe Abigail (do not miss the road sign pointing to it). The settlement is named after Abigail, King David's wife. Her story is told in the first Book of Samuel, chapter 25. Only 20 families live there now, but this place is strategically very important because it links all of the settlements in the region. The settlement was established in 2001, and is one of the very few settlements created after the Oslo Accords. You can enter the settlement by car.

Like in every Jewish settlement, there is a synagogue, water, shade from the sun, and a restroom. You may be invited for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat with the locals. In Mitzpe Abigail you can buy honey and olive oil, produced from olives grown in the settlement itself.

## **SUSYA**



**Watch the video "Hebron Hills". See the link on p. 34.**

Susya is the most interesting and important place in southern Hebron Hills. It is an ancient Jewish settlement that blossomed in the period of the Mishna and Talmud, and its name is often mentioned in relation to multiple archaeological finds.

Excavations revealed well-preserved walls of houses and streets, numerous underground facilities, cisterns and pools

# ROUTE 1

for bathing, industrial and household caves, as well as a rescue tunnel. Devices for the production of olive oil were found, tools for making pottery and much more. The ancient well is restored. The synagogue with columns and a mosaic floor was well preserved. Each excavated house has a mikvah and the doorposts have indentations for the mezuzahs. Jewelry, Jewish inscriptions, mosaics with text and symbolic images were uncovered in the excavations conducted in Susya.

Ancient Susya was a large and well developed Jewish city, with a population of about 3,000. It had a wide main street, shops, workshops, public buildings and community life. The city was expanded in the 2nd-3rd centuries as a result of



Susya. Ancient synagogue

the Roman (and later Byzantine) policy forbidding Jews to live in Jerusalem and its surrounding areas. Susya existed approximately until the 9th century CE.

Although Susya occupied a large territory of 6 acres, and was populated by industrious people, it was not mentioned in a single ancient text. Archaeological excavations have not yet produced any material evidence of Jewish presence in this area in Biblical times. Some believe that Susya is the biblical city of Carmel (Joshua 15:55), although this is still just an assumption.

# ROUTE 1

There is a modern settlement with the same name situated close by. Susya was reborn thanks to the efforts of Gush Emunim in 1983. There are more than 900 people living there today. Upon buying a ticket to the Susya Archaeological Park, you will receive a booklet with a map; you can also rent an audio guide. The tour of the Park includes a 12 minute audio-video presentation about the history of Susya. You will be able to go down into the caves, draw water from the ancient well and see wonderful mosaics in the ancient synagogue.

1

## **YATIR FOREST**



**Watch the video “From Arad to Be’er Sheva through the Israel’s biggest forest”. See the link on p. 34.**

If you decide to go further south after visiting Susya, you may want to stop and take a walk in Yatir Forest (the map shows a vacant tour camp, named Lev Yatir, meaning Heart of Yatir). Yatir Forest is one of the largest forests restored by Israel in place of the ancient groves that were destroyed by the conquerors while the Jewish people were away from its land. More than four million trees struck root in this area, which had been turned into a barren desert during hundreds of years of desolation. Forests are continued to be planted to this very day. Entering Yatir Forest you have crossed a patrol road – here the “territories” end and the areas that belonged to Israel before the Six-Day War begin. The northern border of the forest goes through the 1949 cease-fire line. One look at the map is enough to understand why this border is often called the “green line”: barren land on one side and a green forest on the other side.

# ROUTE 2

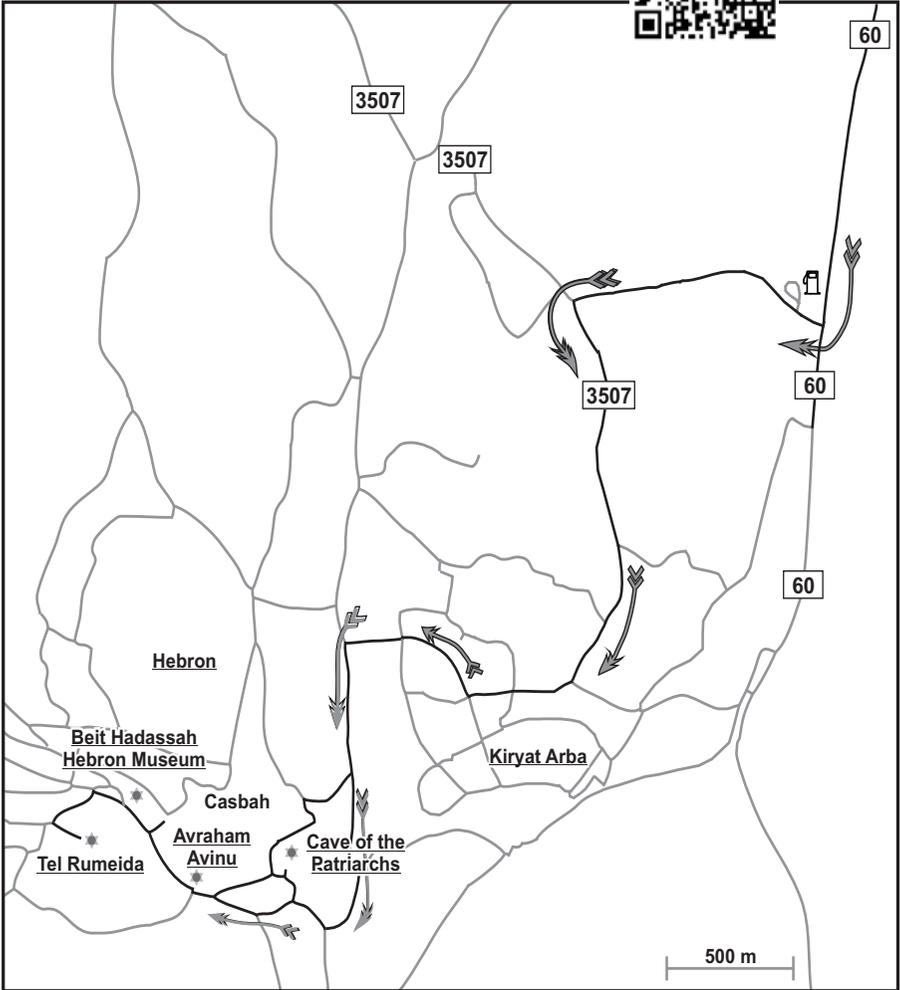
## HEBRON

- Hebron – Machpelah
- Kiryat Arba
- Casbah
- the Jewish Quarter
- the Synagogue of Avraham Avinu
- Tel Rumeida



*Herodian Mausoleum above the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron*

# ROUTE 2



# ROUTE 2

## *Video*

Walking through Judea and Samaria. The main road of Israel.

Chapter 2.

Hebron.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFmbOcO\\_Jm4&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFmbOcO_Jm4&feature=plcp)



Walking through Judea and Samaria. The main road of Israel.

Chapter 3.

The Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaknNeAq-oY&feature=plcp>



# ROUTE 2

**List of coordinates of the points of interest  
mentioned in the route**  
(see the explanation on page 188)

## **Route 2. Hebron**

2

**(Attention! In Hebron it's better to rely on road signs and instructions of the army rather than on GPS)**

|                                     | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Highway 60, the turn to Kiryat Arba | 31.541629<br>N 31°32.497' | 35.132989<br>E 35°7.979' |
| Ma'arat HaMachpelah                 | 31.524131<br>N 31°31.447' | 35.110604<br>E 35°6.636' |
| Avraham Avinu                       | 31.523706<br>N 31°31.422' | 35.106928<br>E 35°6.415' |
| Hadassah Complex and Museum         | 31.525921<br>N 31°31.555' | 35.104201<br>E 35°6.252' |
| Tel Rumeida                         | 31.524991<br>N 31°31.499' | 35.102127<br>E 35°6.127' |

# ROUTE 2

## **HISTORY:**

According to the Jewish tradition, Hebron is the second most important city after Jerusalem. It is one of the most ancient cities in the world, and in ancient times it was the capital of Judah's tribal portion. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in Hebron, and Hebron is the site of the Ma'arat HaMachpelah, also known as the Cave of the Patriarchs, the burial place of the forefathers and foremothers of the Jewish people. Hebron was also the first capital of King David's kingdom. Jews lived in Hebron continuously for approximately 3,500 years.

After a massacre in 1929 organized by the Arab residents, the Jews were forced to leave the city. In 1948, when the Jordanians took control of the area, they destroyed whatever was left of the Jewish Quarter. In 1967, after the Six-Day War, thanks to the efforts of the settler movement, the Jewish quarter has been partially restored, and is being actively developed.

## **HOW TO GET THERE**

By car:

From Jerusalem go south by highway 60 (or from Kiryat Gat take highway 35 and then turn right onto highway 60) until Kiryat Arba (make a right turn after the gas station). Then go through Kiryat Arba and follow the signs to the Cave of the Patriarchs (Ma'arat HaMachpelah) until you reach the opposite exit from Kiryat Arba, which is the Jewish entrance to Hebron.

By bus:

You can get here from Jerusalem by commuter bus #160, which goes to Kiryat Arba, enters Jewish Hebron, and then stops at the Cave of the Patriarchs. (Not all #160 buses enter Hebron; check beforehand).



In front of the entrance to the Machpelah, there is a small tourist center named after Rabbi Joseph Gutnik. In this center there is a coffee shop, a restroom, and a small gift shop. If you want to spend Shabbat in Hebron, which is a wonderful

# ROUTE 2



opportunity to get a taste of both ancient and contemporary Jewish settlement life, there is a small hotel in the Jewish Quarter of Hebron. This hotel can be reached by phone 052-869-3872. There is also a hotel in Kiryat Arba at the Nir Yeshiva which you can contact at 054-751-5227.

A tour of Hebron can be ordered through Shmuel Mushnik (tel. 02-996-3993), a Hebron tour guide and resident of the town, or through the tour agency Guide 21.

2

## **KIRYAT-ARBA**

Kiryat Arba is mentioned in the Bible as another name for Hebron (Genesis 23:2, 35:27). Kiryat Arba is one of the earliest Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria. It was founded in 1968 by the group Gush-Emunim, headed by Rabbi Moshe Levinger. The official status was received in 1970. The population of Kiryat Arba is about 8,000. The territory of the town is about 500 acres (part of this territory is occupied by illegal Arab construction).

Kiryat Arba is of great significance to the settlement movement. Many central figures from the right camp reside here, among them former Knesset members Geula Cohen, Rabbi Eliezer Waldman and Elyakim Haetzni. The chief rabbi of Hebron, Rabbi Dov Lior, heads the “Council of Rabbis of Judea and Samaria.” Kiryat Arba is divided into two large regions, the Kirya and Givat Harsina (the distance between them is 1.2 miles). The Kirya is made up of four- and five-story buildings, while Givat Harsina (Ramat Mamre) is an area occupied by single-family houses and cottages. There are several settlement outposts and farms around the city and the Hebron Heights Winery is nestled here.

## **LIVING AND ACTING ANTIQUITY**

The texts and monuments of Judaism are not the oldest in the world. There are older buildings and texts, such as the Pyramids of Egypt, the Code of Hammurabi, and others. But between us and them is the most important difference – they are a museum piece, and we are a live and active culture and civilization.

# ROUTE 2

The Torah is not the oldest text in the history of mankind, but it is the most ancient text of those that continue to live. It is actually used and remains a sacred book for many millions of Jews and billions of Christians. So it is with architecture: the building of the cave of Machpelah in Hebron is not the oldest structure in the world, but it is the oldest building used as intended, and not just preserved as a museum.

Other ancient cultures, who were our contemporaries millennia ago, are long dead; they are interesting for experts, historians and archaeologists. At best, they are tourist attractions. The most ancient living system is Judaism. It is this vibrant and functioning antiquity that we see in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron that makes it unique for the mankind.

## **HEBRON: THE CITY OF OUR FOREFATHERS**



Watch the video “Walking through Judea and Samaria. Chapter 2”. See the link on p. 46.

In Judaism, Hebron is considered the second holiest city after Jerusalem. This is one of the few cities in the world where the Jewish presence was maintained throughout the whole history of the Jewish people. The nearly four-thousand year Jewish history in Hebron begins in the days of the patriarchs. Hebron was the city where Abraham settled (Genesis 13:18), where he made a covenant with God (Genesis 14), and where he received the prophecy about the future birth of Isaac. Here he met the angels sent to punish Sodom and Gomorrah, and here he argued with God to save the cities (Genesis 18). From here he went to Abimelech, and here he returned to bury his wife Sarah (Genesis 23), never to leave, even after his own death – here his remains lie even today.

The first legal purchase of a parcel of land in the Holy Land took place here, in Hebron. This purchase was the Cave of Machpelah, which Abraham bought to bury his wife Sarah. Wisely rejecting the offer of the burial place as a gift,

# ROUTE 2

Abraham legally bought the land, as documented in the Bible (Genesis 23):

*And the life of Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kiriath Harba – the same is Hebron – in the land of Canaan; and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spoke unto the children of Heth, saying: ‘I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.’ And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him: ‘Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.’ And Abraham rose up, and bowed down to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. And he spoke with them, saying: ‘If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in the midst of you for a possession of a burying-place.’ Now Ephron was sitting in the midst of the children of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying: ‘Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee; bury thy dead.’ And Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. And he spoke unto Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying: ‘But if thou wilt, I pray thee, hear me: I will give the price of the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.’ And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him: ‘My lord, hearken unto me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.’ And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the hearing of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. So the field of Ephron, which was in*

# ROUTE 2

*Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the border thereof round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre – the same is Hebron – in the land of Canaan. And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the children of Heth.*

Years later, Isaac and Rebecca as well as Jacob and Leah lived in Hebron and were buried in Ma'arat HaMachpelah. After the Jews conquered Canaan, Hebron became the inheritance of the tribe of Judah and was handed over to Caleb Ben Yefune. It later became the center of Judea and the first capital of King David's kingdom. After its capture by the Edomites in the sixth century BCE, Hebron was returned to Jewish control by Alexander Jannaeus (Yannai) and became a part of the Hasmonean kingdom. It remained a part of Judea under King Herod and during the Roman occupation. After the downfall of the kingdom, Jewish life continued to exist in Hebron under the foreign rule.

In Byzantine times, Ma'arat HaMachpelah was temporarily turned into a church. In 614, the city was captured by the Persian army of Khosrau II and the church that was built on top of the tomb was destroyed. Subsequently, Hebron was recaptured by Byzantium (the church was restored), then conquered by the Muslims (the church was destroyed and turned into a mosque), and then by the Crusaders. It was then recaptured by the Muslims and remained under the Mamluks until 1517. From then and until the World War I, Hebron was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. In 1917, after the defeat of Turkey, the city passed on to the British rule. In 1948, Hebron, along with the whole of Judea and Samaria, was annexed by Jordan and remained under Jordanian control until 1967, when it passed on to Israeli control.

# ROUTE 2

According to the Oslo Accords, the new Arab part of Hebron belongs to the Palestinian Authority while the ancient sections of the city (including all of the Jewish sites) are under the control of the Israeli army.

## **MA'ARAT HAMACHPELAH - CAVE OF THE PATRIARCHS**



Watch the video “Walking through Judea and Samaria. Part 3”. See the link on p. 46.



The road from Kiryat Arba to the Jewish quarter of Hebron passes through blocks of partially destroyed houses dating back to the early Middle Ages, offering a remarkable view into the depths of time. This road takes us to the most famous historical place in Hebron: the mausoleum above the Ma'arat HaMachpelah. For centuries, under Christian and Muslim rule, Jews were denied access to it, but in 1968 the building was cleared of rubbish, partially rebuilt, and Jewish religious services were restored there.

Unlike in many other places where tourists can see only ancient ruins, in Hebron they can enter the very well-preserved two-thousand-year-old structure built over the grave of our forefathers. Built under the orders of King Herod, the mausoleum over the Ma'arat HaMachpelah is the only fully preserved building of his time. Today it is probably the most ancient building on earth that continues to accept visitors and functions for its original intended purpose.

Herod, disliked and distrusted by people because of his cruelty and his Edomite origin, tried to emphasize that he “belonged to the people” by initiating grandiose building projects of national significance. For example, he renovated and expanded the Temple in Jerusalem. In particular, he ordered a huge mausoleum built over the highly revered graves of the forefathers. The building's shape resembles the Tabernacle (Mishkan) that the Jews built in the desert after the Sinai revelation, while the stonework (marked with evenly recessed edges of the “Herodian Signature”) is reminiscent of the Temple Mount walls (including stone of the still-visible Western Wall).

# ROUTE 2

Some of the questions regarding the mausoleum built by Herod remain unanswered, as full-scale archaeological excavation is impossible due to the region's political situation. The only presumed entrance, located under the structure, to the cave that contains the remains of the patriarchs (discovered by chance), resembles a descent to the tombs in ancient pyramids. In 2010, the Israeli government included Ma'arat HaMachpelah in the registry of the most important sites of the Jewish national heritage. The United Nations and UNESCO, who do not accept the Jewish character of Ma'arat HaMachpelah and who consider it to be "a site of Muslim heritage", attempted to pressure the Israeli government, but were rejected.

## **THE JEWISH QUARTER AND THE SYNAGOGUE OF AVRAHAM AVINU**



During the Jordanian occupation, the Jewish late-medieval quarter of Hebron was destroyed and turned into a dump. The 16th century building of the Avraham Avinu Synagogue was savagely demolished and a corral was built in its place. After the liberation of Hebron, the renovation of the Jewish Quarter began. A physics professor and repatriate from Russia, Ben Zion Tavger was the leading force behind the restoration work. Thanks to his effort, the Avraham Avinu Synagogue and an ancient Jewish cemetery were restored. Today, the Jewish quarter and the Avraham Avinu Synagogue are the centers of Jewish Hebron.

## **CASBAH**

Casbah is a market place situated next to the Cave of the Patriarchs and dates back to the late medieval ages. In the early days, it was populated mostly by Jews. Many houses still have indentations from mezuzot, menorahs and other Jewish symbols. After the slaughter of 1929 and the eviction of Jews from Hebron, Casbah was completely occupied by Arabs. Today, it is possible to visit Casbah only accompanied by a special army patrol, and such visits are only at times set for tourists (mainly on Saturdays).

## **HADASSAH COMPLEX AND MUSEUM**



The Jewish hospital Hadassah was built in 1893. In the city where the Arab population was hostile to all strangers, the Jewish hospital accepted everybody in need without making any religious or ethnic distinctions, even treating patients who could not pay. In those years, Hadassah was functioning thanks to donations of the diaspora Jews, collected by Zionist organizations for Israel.



The hospital ceased to operate after the Arab mob demolished it during the 1929 Hebron Massacre, killing its doctors and patients. After the return of the Jews in 1967, the building was restored and today it and the neighboring buildings constitute one of Hebron's Jewish residential quarters.

On the ground floor of Beit Hadassah is a small museum of the history of Hebron. One of the expositions is dedicated to the memory of those killed here in 1929.

## **TEL RUMEIDA AND THE ANCIENT CEMETERY**

Tel Rumeida is an ancient settlement in Hebron dating back to biblical times. There is a road that leads to fortress walls which are over four thousand years old. Abraham himself walked this road! You can climb up the ancient tel from the Cave of Machpelah or from the Hadassah building.

Ruth, the biblical Moabite woman who joined the Jewish people and later became King David's great grandmother, is buried on the top of the hill. The grave of Jesse, King David's father, is located there as well. Near Tel Rumeida is one of the most ancient Jewish cemeteries in the world.



*Hebron. Cave of the Patriarchs*

# ROUTE 3

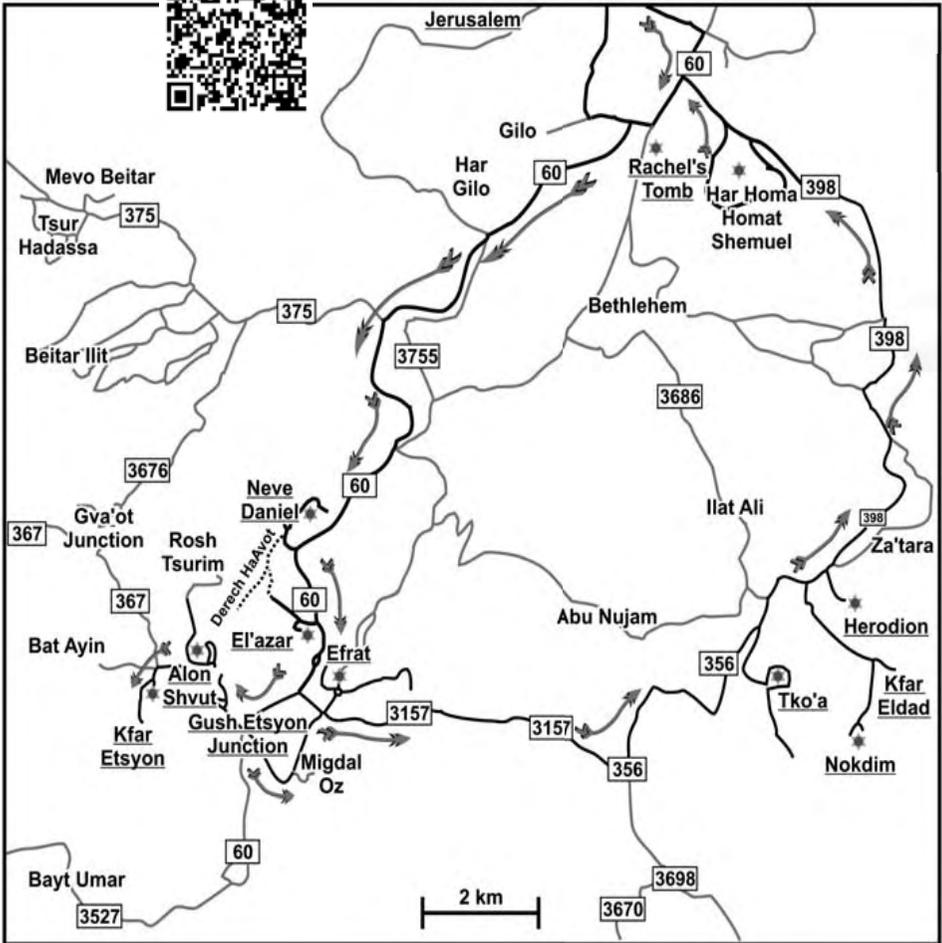
## NORTHERN JUDEA

- Gush Etzion
- Herodion
- Rachel's Tomb



*Gush Etzion Wineries*

# ROUTE 3



# ROUTE 3

## *Videos*

Walking through Judea and Samaria. Chapter 1

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QERB\\_EbaZUU&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QERB_EbaZUU&feature=plcp)



Herod the Great

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8cw7mqFbzs&feature=plcp>



Where is the Rachel's Tomb?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1DQcBlkn-w&feature=plcp>



# ROUTE 3

## *List of coordinates of the points of interest mentioned in the route*

*(see the explanation on page 188)*

### **Route 3. Northern Judea**

|   | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Exit from the Gilo district to the "Highway of Tunnels " (Kvish HaMinharot) | 31.731553<br>N 31°43.893' | 35.202404<br>E 35°12.144' |
| Entrance to the Neve Daniel settlement<br>And to the Way of the Patriarchs  | 31.673827<br>N 31°40.429' | 35.139511<br>E 35°8.37'   |
| The El'azar settlement  | 31.660687<br>N 31°39.641' | 35.141097<br>E 35°8.465'  |
| Kfar Etzion   | 31.651153<br>N 31°39.069' | 35.11543<br>E 35°6.925'   |
| Alon Shvut  | 31.653454<br>N 31°39.207' | 35.126935<br>E 35°7.616'  |
| The Gush Etzion junction  | 31.646276<br>N 31°38.776' | 35.132149<br>E 35°7.928'  |
| Crossroads of highways 60 and 3157  | 31.651345<br>N 31°39.08'  | 35.142603<br>E 35°8.556'  |
| Efrat   | 31.652468<br>N 31°39.148' | 35.150235<br>E 35°9.014'  |
| Crossroads of highways 3157 and 356<br>(after Efrat)                        | 31.640174<br>N 31°38.41'  | 35.202277<br>E 35°12.136' |
| The turn to Tekoa   | 31.661674<br>N 31°39.7'   | 35.226066<br>E 35°13.563' |
| Tekoa   | 31.652322<br>N 31°39.139' | 35.227053<br>E 35°13.623' |
| Nokdim  | 31.645965<br>N 31°38.757' | 35.243533<br>E 35°14.611' |
| Herodion  | 31.664925<br>N 31°39.895' | 35.241258<br>E 35°14.475' |
| Return to Jerusalem<br>(entrance to the Hebron road)                        | 31.738332<br>N 31°44.299' | 35.212208<br>E 35°12.732' |
| Rachel's Tomb   | 31.719694<br>N 31°43.181' | 35.203086<br>E 35°12.185' |

# ROUTE 3

## **HISTORY**

Gush Etzion, located on the northern slope of Hebron Hills between Bethlehem and Hebron, is of interest due to both its ancient and contemporary history. Four settlements were founded here at the beginning of the 20th century, during the early Zionist movement. In 1948, the Arabs captured and demolished all four settlements and slaughtered all their residents. After the War of Independence, this territory was under Jordanian control. The settlements were restored after the liberation of Judea and Samaria in 1967. Today, more than 25,000 Israelis live in Gush Etzion. It is divided into Western Gush Etzion around the Gush Etzion Junction (Tzomet HaGush) and Eastern Gush Etzion around Herodion. Adjoining Gush Etzion from the northwest, is the ultra-orthodox (charedi) settlement of Beitar Illit, with a population of 42,000.

## **HOW TO GET THERE**

Take highway 60 from Jerusalem either through Derech Hevron Street, or through the Gilo district. This road, also called the Highway of Tunnels (Kvish HaMinharot) enters Western Gush Etzion. Arab Bethlehem will be on your left. Proceed towards the Gush Etzion Junction, and make a right turn into highway 365 towards Alon Shvut and Kfar Etzion. At the Gush Etzion Junction are a gas station, a large supermarket “Rami Levi”, a restaurant, and the Gush Etzion Winery (Yekev Gush Etzion).

The old highway going through Bethlehem has been closed for Israelis since Bethlehem was turned over to the Palestinian Authority. Therefore, it is now impossible to get to Hebron from Jerusalem by the Way of the Patriarchs.

Unfortunately, today it would be irresponsible to recommend that you travel independently in the beautiful region of “Nahal HaMaayanot” (a collection of springs near the Arab village Husan) and along Wadi Fukin, which leads to the springs of Fukin and the ruins of the Beitar Fortress, destroyed by the Romans in 135 CE. This route runs along the border of Arab villages situated in zone “A”; therefore, you can walk there only with a tour guide who knows which places are safe and

# ROUTE 3

which are not. You can arrange a guide through the tour agency Guide21 (cell: 052-6252096, website: Guide21.net) who will show you the terrace agriculture in the Husan Village, where local farmers work the land in the same manner as in the time of Abraham. You will be able to walk along ancient aqueducts dug out by our forefathers in the mountains, and visit the remains of Beitar.

After visiting settlements of Western Gush Etzion (see below), move on to Eastern Gush Etzion. For that, return to the Gush Etzion Junction, drive for about a kilometer towards Jerusalem (on highway 60), and then in the South Efrat intersection turn right on highway 3157 towards the Tekoa settlement and the Herodion fortress. Continue straight and turn left on highway 356.

The Herodion Fortress is visible from a distance. It is easily recognizable by the unique shape of the mountain. It is a manmade round pyramid with cut apex built by Herod. Several years ago, King Herod's grave was found in the fortress.

Take highway 398 to return to Jerusalem. This highway connects Eastern Gush Etzion with the southeast region of Jerusalem, Har Homa. This neighborhood, located in the Jerusalem municipality, was constructed in the early 2000's, despite opposition from the Arabs and the United Nations. The United Nations General Assembly even condemned the construction of Har Homa with a special resolution.

Enter Derech Hevron Street through Har Homa. This street leads to Rachel's Tomb, or Kever Rachel. To get there, drive south down Derech Hevron Street until the end, i.e. until the "security fence" that separates Jerusalem from Bethlehem. Israeli soldiers will open the auto barrier at the check point to let you drive to Rachel's Tomb. Concrete walls are erected on both sides of the road to protect from Arab attacks. Rachel's Tomb itself is also protected by concrete walls.

## **BETHLEHEM**

The exact translation of Bethlehem, or Beit Lechem, is "house of bread". In ancient times it was an important grain-producing center. (A description of the harvest is found in the second

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chapter of the Book of Ruth.) Unfortunately, the town itself is no longer a part of the sightseeing tour, which takes a road around it.

The historical and religious significance of Bethlehem for Christianity is common knowledge, and it is a notable place in Jewish history as well. The events described in the Book of Ruth, as well as the birth and anointment of King David, all occurred in Bethlehem.

*And HaShem said unto Samuel: 'How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? fill thy horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided Me a king among his sons.' And Samuel said: 'How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me.' And HaShem said: 'Take a heifer with thee, and say: I am come to sacrifice to HaShem. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will tell thee what thou shalt do; and thou shalt anoint unto Me him whom I name unto thee.' And Samuel did that which HaShem spoke, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said: 'Comest thou peaceably?' And he said: 'Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto HaShem; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. And it came to pass, when they were come, that he beheld Eliab, and said: 'Surely HaShem'S anointed is before Him.' But HaShem said unto Samuel: 'Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him; for it is not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but HaShem looketh on the heart.' Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said: 'Neither hath HaShem chosen this.' Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said: 'Neither hath HaShem chosen this.' And Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse: 'The HaShem hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse: 'Are here all thy children?' And he said: 'There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep.' And Samuel said unto Jesse: 'Send and fetch him; for we will not*

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*sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of beautiful eyes, and goodly to look upon. And HaShem said: 'Arise, anoint him; for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of HaShem came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah (I Samuel 16:1-13).*

Bethlehem is home to one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. Until only twenty years ago, before the Oslo Accords, Christians constituted the majority of population in Bethlehem. Since the town was placed under the control of the Palestinian Authority, Christians started escaping from the new government on a massive scale. Its population dropped to fifteen percent of the pre-Oslo number and continues to shrink. Though Bethlehem has more mosques than churches today, important Christian sites still remain there: Church of the Nativity, two Greek Orthodox monasteries (one of which dates back to the sixth century), a Catholic Franciscan monastery with the church of Saint Katherine, an Armenian monastery, as well as the cave where Saint Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, lived and was buried.

3

## **WESTERN AND EASTERN GUSH ETZION**

Gush Etzion is divided into two parts: Western, around the Gush Etzion Junction, and Eastern, around Herodion. Two different highways go there from Jerusalem, routes 60 and 398, curving around the Arab Bethlehem from west and east.

Western Gush Etzion includes the following settlements: Neve Daniel (population 2,220), El'azar (population 2,130), Efrat (population 9,100), Alon Shvut (population 3,500), Kfar Etzion (population 650), Bat Ayin (population 1,200), Migdal Oz (population 500), Rosh Tzurim (population 850), and Har Gilo (population 700).

Eastern Gush Etzion includes the following settlements: Tekoa (population 2,500), Nokdim (population 1,300), Ma'ale Amos

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(population 500), Kfar Eldad and Ma'ale Rehavam (population 200), and Metzad and Pnei Kedem (population 450).

## **NEVE DANIEL**



Watch the video “Walking through Judea and Samaria. Chapter 1”. See the link on p. 58.

Neve Daniel is the first settlement after the exit from the tunnel on route 60. Before Bethlehem was transferred to the Palestinian Authority, highway 60 went through it, but after the transfer, the highway was moved west and two tunnels were dug that directly connect Gush Etzion with Jerusalem.

Neve Daniel is located on one of the highest mountains of Judea (close to 1,000 meters above sea level). In winter there is snowfall and strong winds. In clear weather, both the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the Mediterranean Sea are visible from the settlement. Neve Daniel was founded in 1982 on the land known as the “Cohen Farm”, named after Isaac Cohen,



*The ancient mikvah on the Way of the Patriarchs*

who bought this land in 1935 from the local Arabs. Later, this land was bought by the Keren Kayemet Foundation.

Today Neve Daniel is a religious communal settlement. Near Neve Daniel is a very interesting segment of the ancient Way of the Patriarchs, with ancient milestones and mikvahs still

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standing today. To get there, exit highway 60 to Neve Daniel following the road sign to the “Way of the Patriarchs.” Without entering Neve Daniel, turn left on the dirt road. This road is suitable for passenger cars.

## **EL’AZAR**

The next settlement along the way is El’azar, named after one of the Maccabee brothers who died in a battle with the Seleucid army in this region. To suppress the Maccabee uprising, Lysias bought 300 elephants (“tanks of the ancient world”) in India, which, according to his plan, would terrify the enemy. Attempting to stop the attack, Eleazar killed one of the elephants, but was crushed by it. As a result of Eleazar’s heroism, elephants lost the halo of invincibility; nevertheless, the Greeks overpowered the Jews in that battle and temporarily took control over Jerusalem.

3

## **KFAR ETZION**



The history of the settlement enclave Gush Etzion began in 1927, when a group of religious Zionists founded the first settlement. Soon, during the Arab riots of 1929, the settlement was looted and burned. Seven families who lived there could not stand up against the Arab mob and were forced to leave when the besiegers attempted to surround the settlement and cut off roads and paths. However, the following year the settlement was not only rebuilt, but greatly expanded. In place of the desert where only thorns and occasional wild olives grew, a cultivated agricultural area of 1976 acres emerged. At this time, the group of settlements in the area was named Gush Etzion, and the settlement itself was named Kfar Etzion. However, its population was still small. In 1936, during the next Arab attack, the settlement was once again completely destroyed; orchards and crops were demolished and the revived land was abandoned again.

In 1943, a group of refugees from Europe who managed to reach Palestine recreated the settlement and organized a successful agricultural enterprise. In the next few years, three

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other agricultural communities appeared next to Kfar Etzion: Ein Tzurim, Masu'ot Yitzhak and Revadim. In the beginning of the War of Independence, the population of this area exceeded 450 people.

In January of 1948, Kfar Etzion was blockaded. The siege was broken, though at great cost. The children of Kfar Etzion were evacuated to Jerusalem. In May of 1948, the siege was reinforced by the approaching forces of the Arab Legion, and on May 13, 1948, right before the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, Kfar Etzion fell. In the fierce battle, most of its defenders were killed, and the rest were captured and almost immediately publicly shot by the triumphant Arabs. The region fell under the Jordanian control.

Kfar Etzion was liberated in 1967. Previous residents who lived there in the 1940's returned, joined by many new people.

In Kfar Etzion there is a Gush Etzion museum, a regional natural history center, and a memorial dedicated to the heroic events of the 1930's and 1940's. There is a small 45-room hotel in Kfar Etzion where you can stay overnight. There is a zoo-farm, with animals not typical for the Israeli agriculture: lamas, gazelles, peacocks, ostriches. There is also a small amusement park.

## **ALON SHVUT**



**Watch the video “Walking through Judea and Samaria. Chapter 1”. See the link on p. 58.**

At the center of Western Gush Etzion is a settlement called Alon Shvut, literally “Oak of Return.” And indeed, on top of the mountain grows an ancient oak tree that can be seen from afar, even from some of the hills of Jerusalem. After the War of Independence, former residents of Gush Etzion developed a tradition of getting together right before the Independence Day, on the day they lost Gush Etzion, in one of the few places from where they could see the oak tree, in order to emphasize their determination to return. This became a reality in 1967. Today there is an audio guide in English and Hebrew near the oak tree.

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The settlement Alon Shvut was founded in 1970 as a religious community and a center of Torah study. Its yeshiva, which is interesting not only because of the people who study there, but also because of its architecture, is one of the most important Zionist yeshivas in modern Israel.

## **EFRAT**

Not far from Alon Shvut is the settlement of Efrat, which has grown nearly to the size of a city. It was founded in 1983. Most of its population consists of immigrants from the USA. Today it is the biggest settlement in Gush-Etzion, spread over several kilometers along highway 60. The settlement has a hotel called Neve Efrat, as well as pedestrian routes that lead to springs and to an ancient aqueduct built by King Herod. You can take an easy and pleasant walk along Nahal Hapirim (Creek of Wells). To get to the Eastern Gush-Etzion, take highway 3157 towards Herodion (exit from highway 60 at the South Efrat Junction). Highway 3157 ends at the T-junction. Turn left on highway 356 to Tekoa (after which the highway continues to Herodion and Jerusalem).

## **TEKOA**

Tekoa is one of the most ancient cities in Judea, mentioned many times in the Bible. The prophet Amos was born in Tekoa. This settlement is also mentioned on the stele of the Egyptian Pharaoh Sheshonk, in the proud listings of his victories and conquests. Very little information remains about the life of the ancient city. However, it is known that four hundred years after the defeat in the war with Sheshonk, after the return from Babylonian captivity, the citizens of Tekoa took part in the rebuilding of the Second Temple, and subsequently in the Hasmonean battles for independence and in the wars against Rome. They were famous for their willful character and unwillingness to submit to authority, not only that of their conquerors, but even of their own officers as well.

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Contemporary Tekoa was reconstructed at the end of the 1970's as a communal settlement. Both religious and non-religious residents live there peacefully together. Many of the residents are repatriates; English is heard often, and Russian is almost more prevalent than Hebrew.

## **WADI HARITON**

Between Tekoa and Nokdim lies a very beautiful canyon Wadi Hariton, named after the Christian monk Hariton, who built a monastery there during the fourth century. To explore the scenic surroundings, drive to the beginning of the descent into the canyon. There are remnants of ancient times all along the pedestrian descent into the canyon: monastic cells in the cliffs, ruins of the monastery, and the majestic Herodion.

A walk from Tekoa to Herodion can take a couple of hours. Follow the blue markings on the western slope of the canyon. Make sure to wear a hat and have plenty of water.

On the opposite side of the canyon (the Nokdim side), many caves are visible in the steep slope. One of them is the famous Hariton Cave (unrelated to the monk). There are two large stones at the entrance to the cave. The size and shape of the stones remind observers of the two tablets that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. This is one of the largest limestone caves in Israel. Its long and branched-out passages and tunnels stretch for several kilometers. Enter these caves only with a local guide.

## **NOKDIM AND KFAR ELDAD**

The settlement Nokdim was founded in 1982. Like in Tekoa, both religious and non-religious Jews reside here side by side. Kfar Eldad is a separate neighborhood of Nokdim, founded as a caravan settlement in 1994. After striving for seventeen long years, Kfar Eldad residents finally gained permission to build permanent houses in 2011, and the settlement began to actively develop.

## HERODION



One of the most famous fortresses in Israel is located in the immediate vicinity of Nokdim. This fortress was built by King Herod in 23-20 BCE on top of an artificial mountain. The fortress consisted of two sections, the upper and lower Herodion. The king's palace was in the upper section, while the lower section was for the court and guards. There, Herod found his last resting place, which however, did not bring peace to his memory: his adversaries destroyed the grave of the tyrant and leveled his tombstone. Several years ago, archaeologist Ehud Netzer discovered Herod's grave.

The reason that the fortress was built in this particular place was that Herod almost died here while fighting Antigonus. He lost faith in his victory and was ready to commit suicide in order to avoid being captured alive by the enemy. Herod fled, and after several years returned to Judea to become king, with Rome's consent and leading the Roman army. Herod built fortresses to commemorate the events of his youth. Thus, Herodion was erected. It is the only fortress built by King Herod that he named after himself.

During the Bar Kokhba revolt (132-135 CE), Jewish rebels hid from the Romans deep in these mountains. They have built multiple secret passages, which are accessible even today.

It takes about twelve to fifteen minutes to get back to Jerusalem on highway 356 past the Har Homa quarter. Built only several years ago, this road gave a new impulse to further develop Eastern Gush Etzion.

## RACHEL'S TOMB



**Watch the video "Where is the Rachel's Tomb?"**

**See the link on p. 58.**



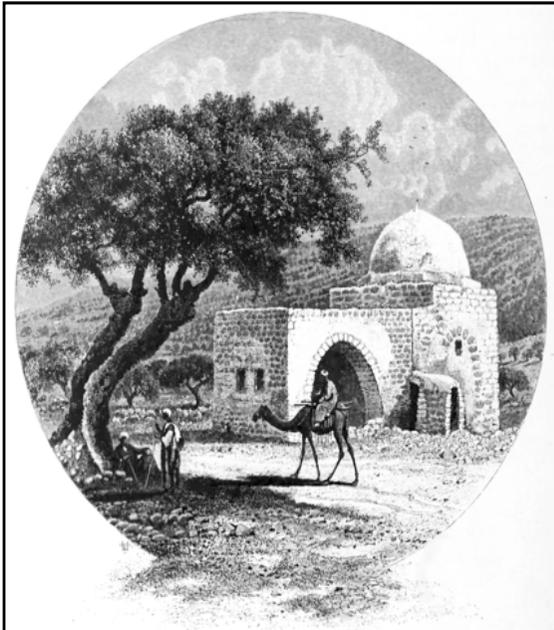
The final destination on this route is the grave of our foremother, Rachel. Before the Oslo Accords, there was a pastoral landscape around the grave. The revered grave was not especially guarded. Now it is surrounded by concrete walls and towers protecting the grave and its visitors from Arab attacks.

# ROUTE 3

Unfortunately, we are not absolutely certain (unlike in the case of the Cave of Machpelah), that the structure located at the entrance to Bethlehem is situated exactly over the grave of our foremother. Nonetheless, the popular tradition considers this place to be Rachel's grave. We know from the Torah that Jacob buried his favorite wife near the Way of the Patriarchs, on the way to Bethlehem:

*And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was still some way to come to Ephrath; and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the mid-wife said unto her: 'Fear not; for this also is a son for thee.' And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing – for she died – that she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath – the same is Beth-lehem. And Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave; the same is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day (Genesis 35:16-20).*

However, there are differing opinions regarding the exact place of Rachel's burial.



*Popular imagery of the tomb depicting it as it appeared during the late 19th century*

# ROUTE 4

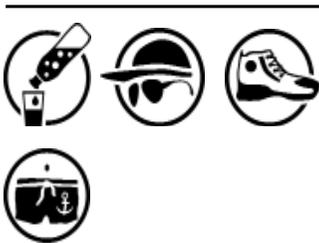
## JUDEAN DESERT

A variety of tours are possible in the Judean desert. We offer three tours:

**ROUTE 4A.** A walking group tour with a guide (possibly at night when the weather is cooler; it is especially convenient to walk during the full moon). The tour starts at Kfar Eldad. You can get there using bus 166 from the central bus station in Jerusalem. (If going by car, drive to the settlement Ma'ale Rekhav'am.) From there, walk to Metsukey Dragot.

**ROUTE 4B.** A walking or bike tour. The tour starts at Ma'ale Adumin, a suburb of Jerusalem, continues to Keidar – Mount Muntar – Hyrcania – Al Nabi Musa – Kibbutz Almog – Jerusalem.

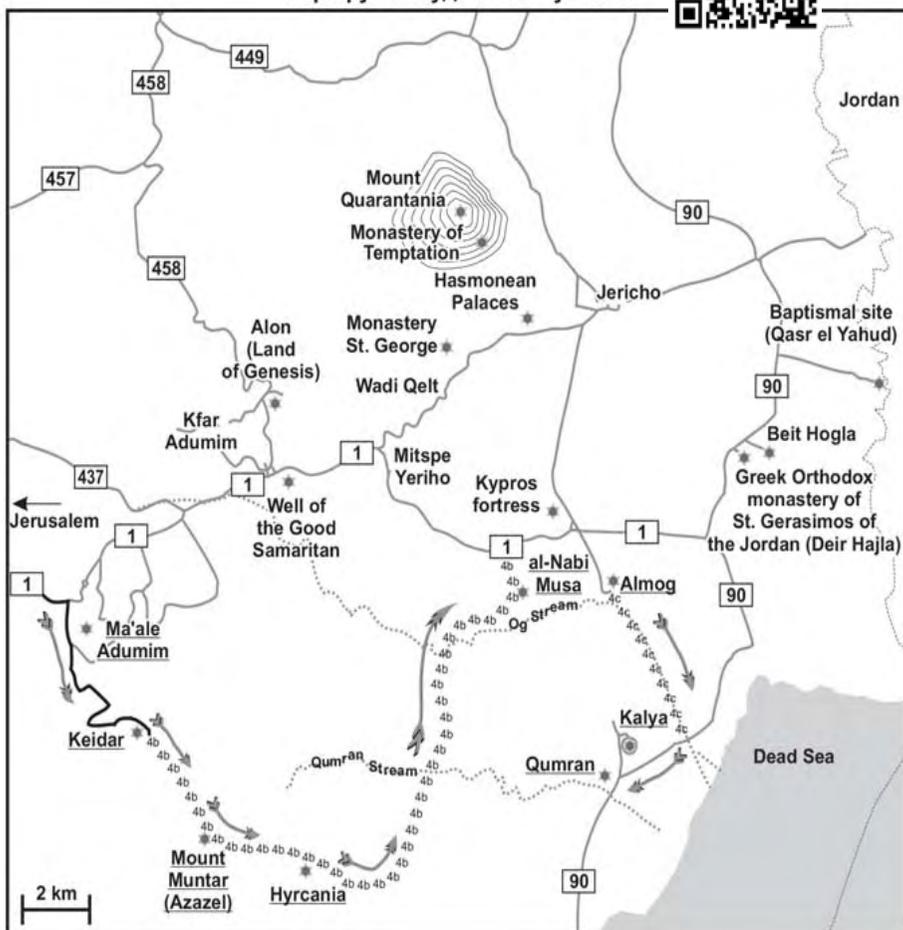
**ROUTE 4C.** A walking tour from Kibbutz Almog along the Nahal Og stream to Qumran.



*The Kohen (priest) leads the scapegoat to the Azazel Mountain*

# ROUTE 4

## Маршрут 4. Иудейская пустыня



# ROUTE 4

## Videos

Judean desert. Cyprus. Hyrcania. Mt. Azazel

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGTF7oEC9nw&feature=plcp>



Herod the Great

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8cw7mqFbz&feature=plcp>



Royal palaces in Jericho

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqfDOVbZwVE&feature=plcp>



# ROUTE 4

## ***List of coordinates of the points of interest mentioned in the route***

*(see the explanation on page 188)*

### **Route 4. Judean Desert**

**(GPS navigators may not be able to find some points in the desert)**

|   | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Entrance to Ma'ale Adumim                                     | 31.767781<br>N 31°46.066' | 35.292546<br>E 35°17.552' |
| Fork in the road to Kedar and Kedar Darom                     | 31.754481<br>N 31°45.268' | 35.30376<br>E 35°18.225'  |
| Kedar Darom (South Kedar), start of the route to Jabel Muntar | 31.74721<br>N 31°44.832'  | 35.301282<br>E 35°18.076' |
| Kfar Eldad  | 31.653585<br>N 31°39.215' | 35.252055<br>E 35°15.123' |
| Ma'ale Rehav'am   | 31.647573<br>N 31°38.854' | 35.259351<br>E 35°15.561' |
| Jabel Muntar  | 31.73532<br>N 31°44.119'  | 35.34511<br>E 35°20.706'  |
| Kibbutz Almog   | 31.789287<br>N 31°47.357' | 35.461546<br>E 35°27.692' |
| Qumran National Park  | 31.741581<br>N 31°44.494' | 35.45998<br>E 35°27.598'  |
| Kibbutz Kalia   | 31.751197<br>N 31°45.071' | 35.466138<br>E 35°27.968' |
| Nabi Musa   | 31.786406<br>N 31°47.184' | 35.43157<br>E 35°25.894'  |
| The turn to the dirt road to Hyrcania                         | 31.706802<br>N 31°42.408' | 35.379693<br>E 35°22.781' |
| Hyrcania  | 31.71906<br>N 31°43.143'  | 35.365738<br>E 35°21.944' |

# ROUTE 4

Only healthy and physically fit people should participate in the long walking and biking tours. It is extremely important that all tourists are accompanied by Israelis familiar with the terrain. Only routes 4B and 4C are shown on the map.

## **JUDEAN DESERT**

The Judean desert is a unique nature reserve that stretches from the eastern side of the Hebron Highland to the western shore of the Dead Sea. For many centuries, these harsh cliffs and ravines attracted hermits and rebels, hiding in inaccessible remote caves. Because of this and the almost total lack of precipitation, unique historical relics survived in caves bordering the Dead Sea. In the 20th century, eleven caves along the dry Qumran stream were discovered to contain hundreds of ancient manuscripts and hand-written fragments, known today as the “Dead Sea Scrolls” (more on this in the description of route 4C).

4

## **ROUTES**

The Judean desert is exhaustingly hot in the summer. In the winter, heavy rains, accompanied by violent water flows, can begin unexpectedly and can be very dangerous. Although waiting for the right weather conditions to travel in the Judean desert is not too burdensome in the summer time, it is always possible to take a walk at night. When choosing the right time for your walk, have in mind that nights with a full moon are preferable: there is enough light from the moon to see the desert in all its glory. Such a walk will leave an unforgettable impression, but it is suitable only for those who are prepared for many hours of difficult walking. You must be accompanied by a tour guide. It is difficult to get oriented at night in the desert even for those who have experience in night walks in other countries. A guide experienced in this area of Israel is critical to descend to the Dead Sea in the right place.

# ROUTE 4

## **ROUTE 4 A. KFAR ELDAD - METSUKEY DRAGOT**

When the weather permits, that is, during the cool months and when it does not rain, you can travel in the Judean desert during the day. A footworn path leads from Kfar Eldad, located in the eastern part of Gush-Etzion, to Mitzpe/Metsuke Dragot. Connecting the coast of the Dead Sea with the hills of the Hebron Highlands, this road has been known for several thousand years. It is quite possible that Herod and his people took this road to flee, miraculously escaping death in a battle with Antigonus. The prophet Amos, who lived in Teko'a, probably walked this road many times. There are still remnants of ancient enclosures for sheep and goats, where they were driven at night to protect them from wild animals. On your way you will probably meet Bedouins with their herds of sheep or camels, mountain goats, and damans, small herbivorous animals that look like rabbits without ears (in truth, they are close relatives of elephants and have nothing to do with rabbits). Panthers, foxes, wolves and snakes also habitate this area, though it is unlikely you will run into them. If you choose to travel at night, your most unforgettable experience will be the sunrise over the Moab Mountains on the other side of the Dead Sea. This sight does not leave anyone indifferent.

You may encounter enormous water-gathering pits. Gathering rain water for future use is mandatory for surviving here. These pits were built in the pre-Jewish period of the history of Canaan (remember the biblical story of Joseph, in which his brothers threw him into a dry water-gathering pit and then sold him into slavery in Egypt). Much later, water-gathering pits were described in connection with King Uzziah, King of Judea, "And he built towers in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns, for he had much cattle; in the Lowland also, and in the table-land; and he had husbandmen and vinedressers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry" (Book of Chronicles II, 26:10). These pits are still used by Bedouin herders who live in the desert today.

# ROUTE 4

## **ROUTE 4 B. MA'ALE ADUMIM - KIBBUTZ ALMOG**

Weather permitting, you can take a day trip from Ma'ale Adumim (on foot, on a bike, or in a jeep) south-east, passing the settlement Kedar, to Kibbutz Almog.

### **KEDAR**

Kedar is a small settlement in Eastern Gush Etzion. The word Kedar is mentioned in the first chapter of the Song of Songs: "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon" (Song of Songs 1:5). As a contemporary settlement, it was founded in 1984. Its population is both religious and secular; there are around 150 families living there today. One kilometer from Kedar is a settlement called Kedar Darom. You can leave your car there when you start your trip.

### **JABEL MUNTAR (or Mt. AZAZEL)**



**Watch the video "Judean desert. Cyprus. Hyrcania. Mt. Azazel". See the link on p. 73.**

The road from Kedar to Mount Muntar is almost completely unpaved, and does not contain any major ascents or descents. The only difficult part is climbing up the mountain itself. According to legend, this is the place from where the scapegoat was thrown on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

The word Azazel is mentioned in the Bible. It is understood as "Az azel", a lost goat or a scapegoat. In modern Hebrew, the expression "lech le-Azazel" means "go to hell!" Regarding the specific location of Mount Azazel, the ever-doubting Jews would say that it is unknown, but there are several reasons to identify it with Mount Muntar:

1. Mount Muntar is at the "right" distance from Jerusalem (12 miles to the east).
2. Mount Muntar's profile fits Mt. Azazel's description: it is steeper on the eastern side than on the western.
3. The ancient well at the foot of the mount is called "bir el tsuk", literally, "the well at the cliff", which means that

# ROUTE 4

the mountain looks like a cliff, which also corresponds to the description.

4. On the top of the mountain there are remnants of a Byzantine monastery. This means that the place was marked as holy as far back as the Byzantine period.

5. Mt. Muntar is infamous in Bedouin tradition: it is told that evil spirits reside there.

The panorama from Mount Muntar makes up for all the strenuous climbing. Hyrcania, and Herodion, Sartaba (Alexandrión), Jerusalem and the Dead Sea are all visible from here. The descent from Mt. Muntar in the direction of Hyrcania is a narrow path on a slope, quite steep in some places (be careful of the slippery stones that fall under your feet).

From a geological point of view, local mountains have the following formation: from the Jerusalem Mountains until the Hyrcania valley is predominantly hard rock, while mountains closer to the Dead Sea have a soft karst formation. Flashes of water created numerous caves in the mountains, which were favored by hermits in ancient times. In these caves, the hermits found solitude and hid from the corruption and injustice of the city. In the Christian period, in place of hermit cells, lavras and monasteries were built, while hermits moved further east and deeper into the desert. The relics and ruins of antiquity are seen in the desert to this day.

## HYRCANIA



**Watch the video “Judean desert. Cyprus. Hyrcania. Mt. Azazel”. See the link on p. 73.**

Our next stop is at the Hyrcania fortress.

1. From Route 1, make a right turn at the “Nabi Mussa – Hyrcania” exit. Pass Nabi Mussa, which will be on your left.
2. Continue on this paved road and cross two wadis (riverbeds) – Qumran River and Schacha River.
3. Turn onto an unpaved road towards the Hyrcania Mountain, which is clearly visible as it stands in front of other mountains. Its shape resembles Masada. The distance from Route 1 here is approximately 12 km.

# ROUTE 4

4. If you have not noticed Hyrcania and reached the end of the paved road (where you see descent towards the Kidron River), go back and look for Hyrcania on your left.
5. Leave your car at the foot of the mountain. You can go up the mountain only on foot; it is not too difficult.

Hyrcania is not a well known site, but it is impressive nonetheless. A fortress on top of the mountain was built in the times of Hasmoneans, around 100 BCE. According to legend, Queen Salome (Shlomtzion), King Alexander Yannai's widow, who was remembered as a kind, wise and active ruler, kept her treasures in the Hyrcania fortress, though she herself lived in Jerusalem.

In 31 BCE King Herod turned Hyrcania into a prison. His older son Antipater was executed and buried there and the sister of Antigonus, the last king from the Hasmonean dynasty, was imprisoned there.

Hyrcania is one in a chain of fortresses that stand along the Jordan River and the Dead Sea: Sartaba, Dagon (Quarantal), Cyprus, Hyrcania, Herodion, and Masada (Hebrew for fortress). The Hyrcania fortress was totally destroyed by the Romans during the Judean war and then rebuilt during the Byzantine rule, but subsequently became desolate. At present the fortress lies in ruins. As of today, no archaeological excavations have taken place there.

## **NABI MUSA (ARABIC FOR PROPHET MOSES)**

Nabi Musa is a picturesque walled complex visible when you exit from Highway 1 Jerusalem – Jericho. The complex consists of a mosque, “a shelter” and two wells. According to the Middle Ages Muslim legend, the Prophet Moses was buried in the tomb located at Nabi Musa (Muslims also revere Moses-Musa as a prophet). The Jewish tradition does not consider this place either holy or Moses' burial place, because it is written in the Torah, two thousand years before the rise of Islam, that the

# ROUTE 4

burial place of Moses is located to the east of the Jordan River and that the exact place is unknown: "So Moses the servant of HaShem died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of HaShem. And he was buried in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-Peor; and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deuteronomy 34:5-6).

Today Nabi Musa is a desolate and deserted place, but it was not always so. At one time, the Muslim conqueror Saladin (1138 – 1193), revered by Muslims as a great hero, established a new Muslim holiday and ordered that it be celebrated at the "graves of all prophets." This edict created a necessity for a "grave of Moses." Only in the last century did the pilgrimage to Nabi Musa die away.

## **KIBBUTZ ALMOG**



Kibbutz Almog is a green oasis, located on the northern shore of the Dead Sea, 22 kilometers east of Jerusalem. It was founded in 1977. Kibbutz Almog has a museum of an ancient religious sect of Essenes, a conference hall and a hotel with all of the modern facilities and accommodations. (Visitors to Jerusalem often stay here). At the entrance to the hotel, one can get maps of the region, as well as information about various tours (by foot, bike, or car). All tours start at the entrance to the kibbutz. The nearest and the most accessible tour is along Nahal Og (the Og stream).

## **ROUTE 4C. KIBBUTZ ALMOG - THE OG STREAM - QUMRAN CREEK - QUMRAN NATIONAL PARK.**

### **THE OG STREAM**

This stream is formed by merging of several torrents originating in the Jerusalem Mountains. The best place to start a trip to the Og Stream is from the dirt parking lot at the outskirts of Kibbutz Almog; from there, a winding and steep slope will take you to the stream.

# ROUTE 4

You can drive along the Og stream until the Qumran creek in a jeep or on a mountain bike. Keep in mind that each year winter currents change the terrain and you may have to cross the stream in different places. You can also walk along this route (7-8 kilometers down to highway 90, and 3 more kilometers along it until Qumran).

If you want to walk along the stream and stay close to the Kibbutz, make a right turn from the parking lot instead of making a left turn towards Qumran. There are many scenic cliffs that you can climb, holding on to step irons hammered into the stone. Make sure to take plenty of water with you and to take all precautionary measures. Do not make these trips in the summer heat or during the winter torrents, which are dangerous for both people and cars.



*On the walking route at Nahal Og*

## **DESCENT TO THE DEAD SEA**

The mountain ridge where Jerusalem is situated is a watershed. Many streams originate here; they are flowing in the rainy season and almost dry in the hot summer months. Some of them flow to the Mediterranean Sea, while others to the Dead Sea.

The Qumran creek is the only watercourse which collects rain water from the streams in the Jerusalem Mountains and then flows into the Dead Sea. The elevation difference is 1200 meters.

# ROUTE 4

## **QUMRAN NATIONAL PARK**

The famous Qumran National Park, located at the egress of the Qumran Caves, is one and a half kilometers from the Dead Sea (if you come by car, take the exit from route 90).

The Qumran caves gained world renown after ancient scrolls of three extremely important centuries of the Jewish history, the 2nd century BCE through 1st century CE, were discovered there.

These caves were located close to a hill fort, which was later unearthed by archaeologists. Several cultural layers were excavated. The earliest layer dates to the 9th - 8th centuries BCE and is related to the construction of fortified towers in the desert at the time of King Uzziah (Book of Chronicles II 26:10).



The upper layers are from the period between 2nd century BCE and the 1st century CE and are connected to the hermit community that inhabited the Dead Sea region (some identify them with the Essenes; others contest this claim).



The ancient manuscripts of Tanakh as well as holy books of the community were found in the Qumran caves. The first seven scrolls were found by chance in 1947 by a Bedouin boy. After some time, they fell into the hands of an Arab antiquarian from Bethlehem, who started looking for a buyer for this unusual item. One of the potential buyers was a professor from the Jerusalem University, Eleazar Sukenik. He was secretly sent a fragment of one of the scrolls. In order to purchase a scroll, he had to travel from Jerusalem to the Arab Bethlehem, risking his life because these events took place at the heat of the war preceding the Israeli declaration of independence. Sukenik did not immediately dare to travel to Bethlehem, suspecting provocation. During this time, the United Nations several times delayed the session dealing with the British Mandate for Palestine.

Finally, Eleazar Sukenik decided to travel to Bethlehem dressed as an Arab and bought three scrolls. On November 29, 1947, the day when the three scrolls were finally returned to the

# ROUTE 4

Jewish hands, the United Nations passed a resolution creating an independent Jewish state on a part of the Mandate territory.

The other four scrolls were purchased by a Jerusalem metropolitan bishop of the Syriac Catholic Church, who asked Sukenik for his expertise. In the end, these scrolls were secretly transferred by this bishop from Jordan to the USA, and subsequently purchased by the Jerusalem University.

After a cease fire agreement between Israel and the Arab countries was signed, Qumran fell under Jordanian rule. Jews did not have access to the Judean Mountains; this was the beginning of the 19-year-long Jordanian occupation. Archaeological excavations and the search for the scrolls were now transferred into the hands of the French Catholic mission.

Some of the scrolls found their way to the historical museum of Amman. One of these scrolls was the famous “copper scroll”, which describes, in encrypted form, the location of the hidden Temple treasures, including a vessel with ashes from the last “red heifer” necessary for ritual purification. In the same museum, there are also tens of thousands of pieces of burnt parchment, all that is left of the “Qumran library” that was found and burned by the Romans.

However, most of the preserved Qumran scrolls today belong to Israel. You can see them in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, in a separate wing called “Shrine of the Book”, which was opened in 1965. Israelis who visit the shrine can read the two thousand year old text with relative ease. Today, fragments of all books of the Tanakh were found (except for the Book of Esther), in various degrees of preservation.

What is amazing in the story of the Qumran scrolls is that the timing of their discovery precisely corresponds to the dramatic history of the creation of the modern Jewish State. Professor Sukenik’s son, Yigael Yadin, one of the founders of Hagana, wrote: “I have the feeling that the discovery of these scrolls at the time of the declaration of Israel’s independence has some higher meaning. It seems that the scrolls that were buried in caves for two thousand years after the Jewish people lost their

# ROUTE 4

independence, were waiting for the moment when the Jewish people would return home and once again regain national freedom.”

Nathan Alterman, one of the most renowned Israeli poets of the 20th century, compared the caves in the northern part of the Dead Sea with mail – at the right time in the right hands! But a major part of the findings, including the ashes from the “red heifer”, have not yet been found. This means that many discoveries still await us in the future.



*The cave #1*

# ROUTE 5

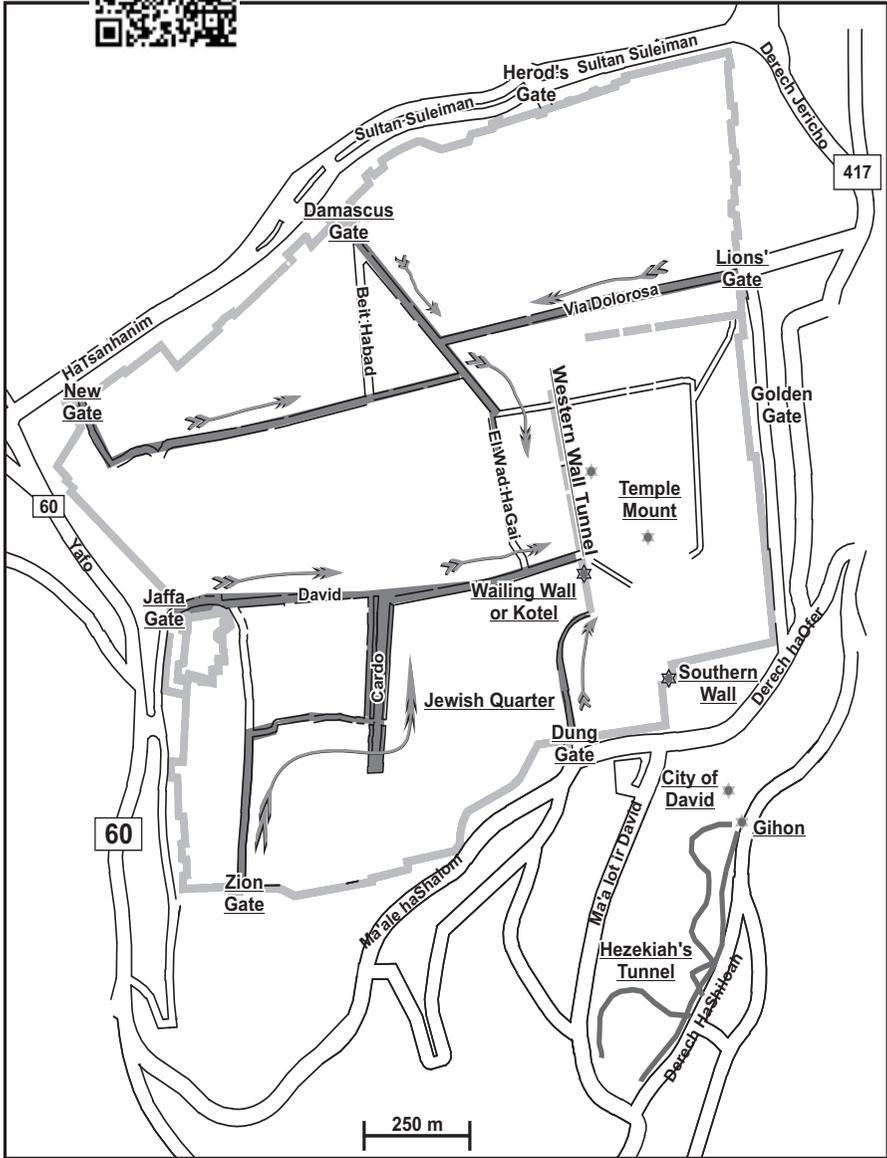
## ANCIENT JERUSALEM

- Hasmonean Tunnel
- The Western Wall
- The Temple Mount
- Southern wall of the Temple Mount
- City of David



*The Tower of David at the Jaffa Gate*

# ROUTE 5



# ROUTE 5

## Videos

Jerusalem – the capital of the Israel.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyPWv-m\\_tq8&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyPWv-m_tq8&feature=plcp)



Israel – Biblical reality: Sukkot and the world.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyPWv-m\\_tq8&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyPWv-m_tq8&feature=plcp)



# ROUTE 5

## *List of coordinates of the points of interest mentioned in the route*

*(see the explanation on page 188)*

### **Route 5. Ancient Jerusalem**

|   | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| The Mamila pedestrian street Parking  | 31.777149<br>N 31°46.628' | 35.225064<br>E 35°13.503' |
| The Jaffa Gate  | 31.776693<br>N 31°46.601' | 35.227585<br>E 35°13.655' |
| The New Gate  | 31.779201<br>N 31°46.752' | 35.225745<br>E 35°13.544' |
| Shechem (Damascus) Gate   | 31.781754<br>N 31°46.905' | 35.230031<br>E 35°13.801' |
| Herod's Gate (Gate of the flowers)  | 31.783045<br>N 31°46.982' | 35.233218<br>E 35°13.993' |
| The Lions' Gate   | 31.780856<br>N 31°46.851' | 35.236544<br>E 35°14.192' |
| The Dung Gate   | 31.774659<br>N 31°46.479' | 35.233797<br>E 35°14.027' |
| The Zion Gate   | 31.772949<br>N 31°46.376' | 35.229691<br>E 35°13.781' |
| The Western Wall  | 31.776747<br>N 31°46.604' | 35.233904<br>E 35°14.034' |
| The Southern wall of the Temple Mount,<br>the Davidson Center archaeological park | 31.775562<br>N 31°46.533' | 35.235128<br>E 35°14.107' |
| The City of David   | 31.773938<br>N 31°46.436' | 35.235632<br>E 35°14.137' |
| The Cardo   | 31.775516<br>N 31°46.53'  | 35.231071<br>E 35°13.864' |

## HISTORY

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the holiest place in the world for the Jewish people. According to the Jewish tradition, this was the place where the creation of the world began, where Abraham showed his willingness to sacrifice Isaac in the “Akeidat Yitzhak” story. The First and the Second Temples stood on the Temple Mount, and according to Isaiah’s prophecy, the Third Temple will be erected here, with all of humanity uniting around it:

*The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the end of days, that the mountain of HaShem's house shall be established as the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say: 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of HaShem, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of HaShem from Jerusalem. And He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of HaShem...Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon Mine altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. (Isaiah 2:1-5, 56:7).*

5

## HASMONEAN TUNNEL



It is appropriate to start getting acquainted with historical sites of Jerusalem with a tour of the Western Wall of the foundation of the Jerusalem Temple, along which stretches the Hasmonean tunnel.



The entrance to the Hasmonean tunnel is located at the far end of the open area in front of the Western Wall, in the building

# ROUTE 5

that stands perpendicular to the Western Wall. There is a fee to enter the tunnel. You can buy tickets at the entrance, but it is better to order them in advance (tel. 02-627-1333).



The tour of the Hasmonean tunnel consists of three parts: a walk under the Muslim quarter along the Western Wall of the Temple Mount (during King Herod's time, this was just an open street); the passage in the Hasmonean tunnel itself, and the exit through a modern corridor hewn in the rock.

In essence, the Hasmonean tunnel is an ancient aqueduct, which supplied water to the Temple Mount during the entire Hasmonean Period. Herod rebuilt the water system, and the ancient aqueduct ceased to be used. In those days, it was possible to exit the Hasmonean tunnel by walking the steps, which are still visible today.

After passing through the tunnel, exit into Via Dolorosa and return to the Western Wall. If you happen to tour the Hasmonean tunnel in the evening or at night, the exit to the Muslim quarter (i.e. to Via Dolorosa) will be closed, and you will have to retrace your steps to the entrance.

## **THE WESTERN WALL**



Up until 1967, there was only a narrow passage to the Western Wall of the Temple Mount, while the rest of the area was built-up with houses. During the Jordanian occupation (1948-1967), the Jews' access the Old City and the Western Wall was forbidden. During the Six-Day War, the area in front of the wall was cleared and after the war, free access was given to all who wished to visit the Western Wall.

The entrance to the area in front of the Western Wall from the Muslim quarter lies under the ancient arch built during King Herod's time. The arch is completely preserved. Pay attention to the illuminated pits on both sides of the passage: They are archaeological digs. If you look down into these pits, you will see stones belonging to the Herodian period.

# ROUTE 5

That part of the wall that is visible today is not part of the original Temple structure, but rather part of the western retaining wall of the Temple complex. The foundation of the Temple and all the supporting walls survived until today.

The “Wailing Wall” is not a Jewish name; it was given by the Christians who believed, at least in those times, that the Jews were destined to eternally mourn the loss of their country, their capital and their Temple. However, this name is not used in Hebrew.

Pay attention to the stones of which the Wall is assembled. All of them have edging along the perimeter – this was how King Herod marked his structures. This edging helps us today to recognize Herod’s stones, which conquerors and destroyers of the great city used for their own purposes.

5

## **THE TEMPLE MOUNT**



The Temple Mount occupies a special place in the history of the Jewish people. Here stood the Temple built by King Solomon, but the oral Jewish tradition teaches that this place was marked by God much earlier, from the beginning of creation, that here lies the Foundation Stone from which creation began. Jewish tradition identifies the Temple Mount with Mount Moria, where Abraham showed readiness to sacrifice his son, Isaac (Gen. 22).

During the Passover meal, the Jews for centuries have been wishing: “Next year in Jerusalem”, meaning not simply the city of Jerusalem, but the Third Temple; without the Temple, Jerusalem is not complete, and without the complete Jerusalem, the Jewish people are not complete. Today, this expression sounds slightly differently: “Next year in the rebuilt Jerusalem”, meaning in Jerusalem with the rebuilt Temple.

The Temple Mount is located to the north of Jerusalem’s historical center, the Fortress of Zion. Approximately, in the year 1000 BCE, King David conquered this fortress from the Jebusites, rebuilt it and made it his capital. David then triumphantly brought the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of

# ROUTE 5

God's presence, into the city. The city subsequently became known as Ir David (The City of David).

Jerusalem is situated on the territory between the plots of the tribe of Judah (to which King David belonged) and the tribe of Benjamin (to which King Saul, the first king of Israel, belonged). These tribes were always rivals. By transferring the capital to Jerusalem and bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the city, he emphasized the unity of his kingdom and turned his capital into a religious center for all twelve tribes.

David, however, did not build the Temple but left it to his son Solomon, who fulfilled the task. A thousand years later, King Herod, redeveloping the Temple Mount, expanded it to the north and to the south, but left the western and eastern walls untouched. It is possible that they remained from the time of King Solomon. The distance from the Western Wall to the Eastern wall of the Temple Mount was 250 meters at all times.

Herodian stones used in the construction of retaining walls were not bound with mortar. The walls were nevertheless stable due to the weight and size of the stones, the smallest of which weighs four and a half tons.

## **ASCENT TO THE TEMPLE MOUNT**

Muslims can ascend the Temple Mount through any gate; Christians and Jews are allowed only through the Maghreb (Mughrabi) Gate. Bags are checked and all religious items are removed, including prayer books. Make sure to have an ID with you.

There are several Jewish laws that pertain to ascending the Temple Mount:



- It is forbidden to ascend the Temple Mount without taking a ritual bath (mikvah)



- It is forbidden to walk on the Temple Mount in leather shoes

- It is forbidden to step on specific holy areas on the Temple Mount.

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Since not everybody is aware of all of these nuances, we recommend joining a religious Jewish group that ascends the Temple Mount. For further information see:

[http://www.templeinstitute.org/guide\\_to\\_ascending\\_the\\_mount.htm](http://www.templeinstitute.org/guide_to_ascending_the_mount.htm)

Opening hours of the Temple Mount for individual tourists and tourist groups:

In the winter, from 7:00AM until 10:00AM and from 12:30PM until 1:30PM.

In the summer, from 7:00AM until 11:00AM and from 1:30PM until 2:30PM every day except for Fridays and Saturdays.

## **THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK - THE SOUTHERN WALL OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT (THE DAVIDSON CENTER)**

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There is an archaeological park at the southern wall of the Temple Mount. To get there, cross the area in front of the Western Wall, exit through the checkpoint, and before exiting through the Dung Gate, go down to the renovated lower Cardo, an ancient Roman street. There is an admission fee to enter the Archaeological Park.

Before visiting the archaeological park, it is worth visiting a small museum of antiquities where you will see a movie that will take you 2000 years back in time and show how the city looked at the time. After you finish watching the movie, come down to the main street of Jerusalem of King Herod's time. The mound of stones left by archaeologists on the excavated main street attests to the scale of Roman destruction. The Romans threw these stones down from the Temple Mount in 70 CE. They dismantled the walls of the Temple complex to the level of the Temple Mount. Huge stones thrown down from the walls concealed the main street of the city for almost 2000 years.

Walk among the ruins of former splendor, take a peek into ancient shops, into the mikvah (a pool for ritual bath); try to decipher the inscription written on the fragment of the wall and imagine how a town bellman stood on this spot and announced to the Upper and Lower city that the Sabbath had

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commenced. To help your imagination, the Archaeological Park has pictures and tablets with short stories about the place.



At the Archaeological Park, you can get to the most southern wall of the Temple complex. During early Islam, in the 7th-8th centuries, the conquerors of Jerusalem from the Umayyad dynasty built for themselves “eternal” palaces near the Temple Mount. For their construction, they used Herodian stones, as evidenced by the edging on the stones along the perimeter.

Spiral stairs will take you to the renovated Byzantine house (which became a foundation for the Islamic palace). The palace’s sewage system will lead you from one room to another in the Byzantine house, and the next spiral stairs will take you further down to the Jewish period of the city’s history. Underground storage rooms cleaved into the rock are all that is left of the houses. It is cool here in any heat even today. A communal cellar served as an underground storage for several houses. After this short excursion to the ancient Jewish dwellings, you will go up the stone stairs of one of these houses, thereby transporting yourself from the past to the present.

Circumnavigating the fortress of medieval Knights Templar, which divides the Southern wall of the Temple Mount into two parts, you will see the now blocked triple gates called “Huldah Gates.” In ancient times, it was the main entrance to the Temple. Leading to the gate is a staircase that 2000 years ago served as an entrance to the Temple Mount. The steps of this staircase have different widths, ranging from 30 cm to 70 cm. This unusual construction was deliberate: it is impossible to climb these stairs automatically, thinking about unrelated things. The varied width of the stairs forced visitors to concentrate on the Temple.

The stairs are partially renovated and the old steps are visibly different from the new ones. Try standing on these steps and imagining yourself entering the Temple. In the last row of the Herodian stones (the stones above them are much smaller), you can see an indentation in the corner stone where once lay a mezuzah.

## THE CITY OF DAVID

The exit from the archaeological park does not go underground, but goes along a new alley on the level of the present-day streets. After leaving the Old City through the “Dung Gate”, turn left, walk 200 meters, and on your right, you will see an entrance to the archaeological complex “The City of David.”

Ask in the box office what route best suits you. The brochures include a description of the available routes, as well as the amount of time each of them takes.



Before you begin touring the entire complex, look under your feet. You are treading on a grate through which you can see ruins of King David’s palace! King David’s palace was excavated quite recently, thanks to the efforts of archaeologist Eilat Mazar, whose grandfather Benjamin Mazar was also an archaeologist, and who worked at the excavations near the Southern wall of the Temple Mount.



Careful excavations of the City of David have been going on for dozens of years and continue today. Sometimes archaeologists receive “hellos” from the ancient citizens of Jerusalem when they dig out seals with the names mentioned in the Book of Kings and the Book of Chronicles. For example, the following seal inscription was discovered: “Belongs to Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, son of Shovi,” who was a well-known figure in King Zedekiah’s court and was mentioned twice in the Book of Jeremiah (37:3, 38:1).

Another stamp was found with the name “Gemariah son of Shaphan the scribe”. This name is known as an official figure and scribe during the rule of Jehoiakim in 608-597 BCE (Jeremiah 36:11). Not far from the king’s palace, is a prison where, presumably, Prophet Jeremiah was held captive.

You can walk through the aqueduct carved in the rock and learn how the city was supplied with water in ancient times. Finally, you can make a “wet tour” by following the 530-meter-long aqueduct constructed in the 8th century BCE. (The water will reach your knees.) This aqueduct is a tunnel carved in the rock, having an average human height. There is no light there,

# ROUTE 5

so make sure to take a flashlight with you (or purchase one at the souvenir store near the cashier). Some tourists take candles with them, but keep in mind that if you drop your candle into the water, you will have to walk in complete darkness. The tunnel looks very dramatic – it is reminiscent of an underground passage or a catacomb. It will take you at least half an hour to walk through it. Do not be afraid to get lost there, because it does not branch off.

After leaving the aqueduct, you will find yourself in the ancient Pool of Siloam (Breikhat Hashiloah). In the Bible, it is called the “Lower Pool” and is the location where Jewish kings were anointed. According to the Gospel, the Pool of Siloam is the location where Jesus cured “a man blind from birth.” Usually, you can go up from the Lower Pool to the entrance to the City of David by taking a share taxi (monit sherut) for a reasonable price. You can also walk underground: first follow the 2000-year-old city staircase, and then walk under this staircase through the dugout sewage tunnel from the time of King Herod.

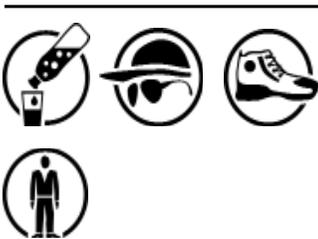


*The southern wall of the Temple Mount. Hulda Gates*

# ROUTE 6

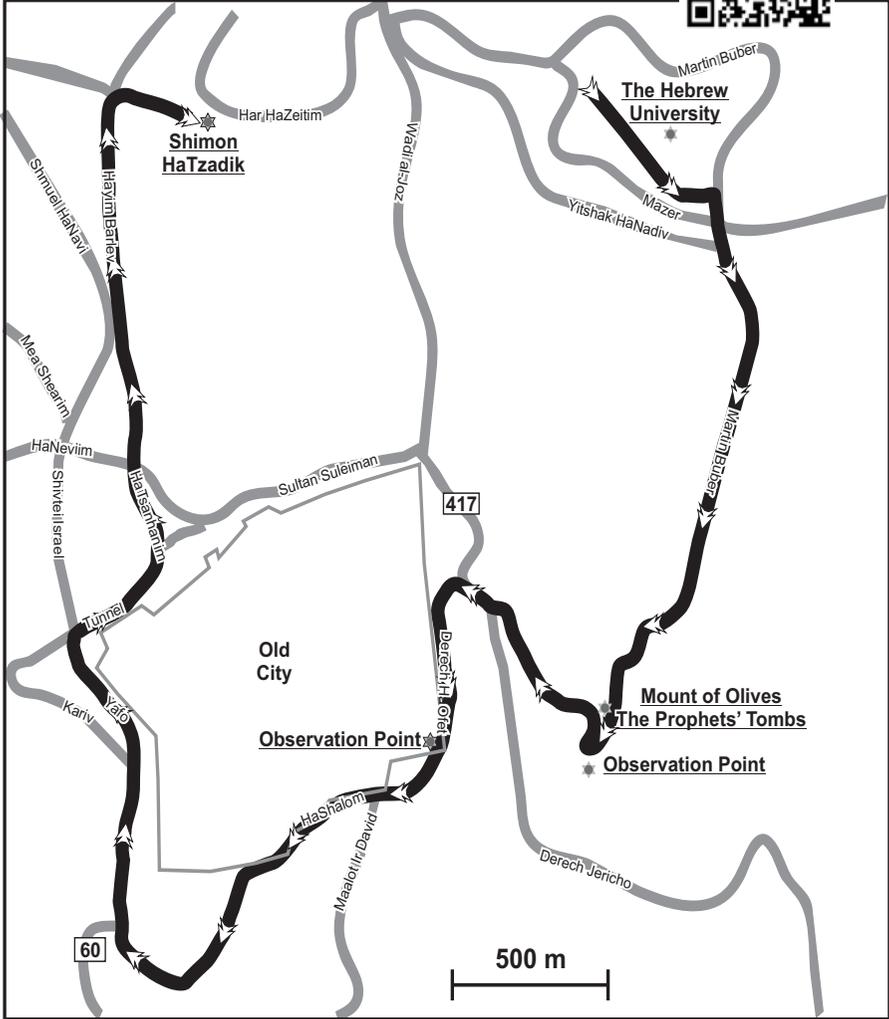
## JEWISH ANTIQUITIES OF EAST JERUSALEM AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS

- Mount of Olives, Shimon HaTzadik Neighborhood
- Nabi Samuel (Mizpah)
- Tell El Ful (Gibeah of Benjamin)
- Qubur Bani Yisra'il
- Ma'avar Michmas



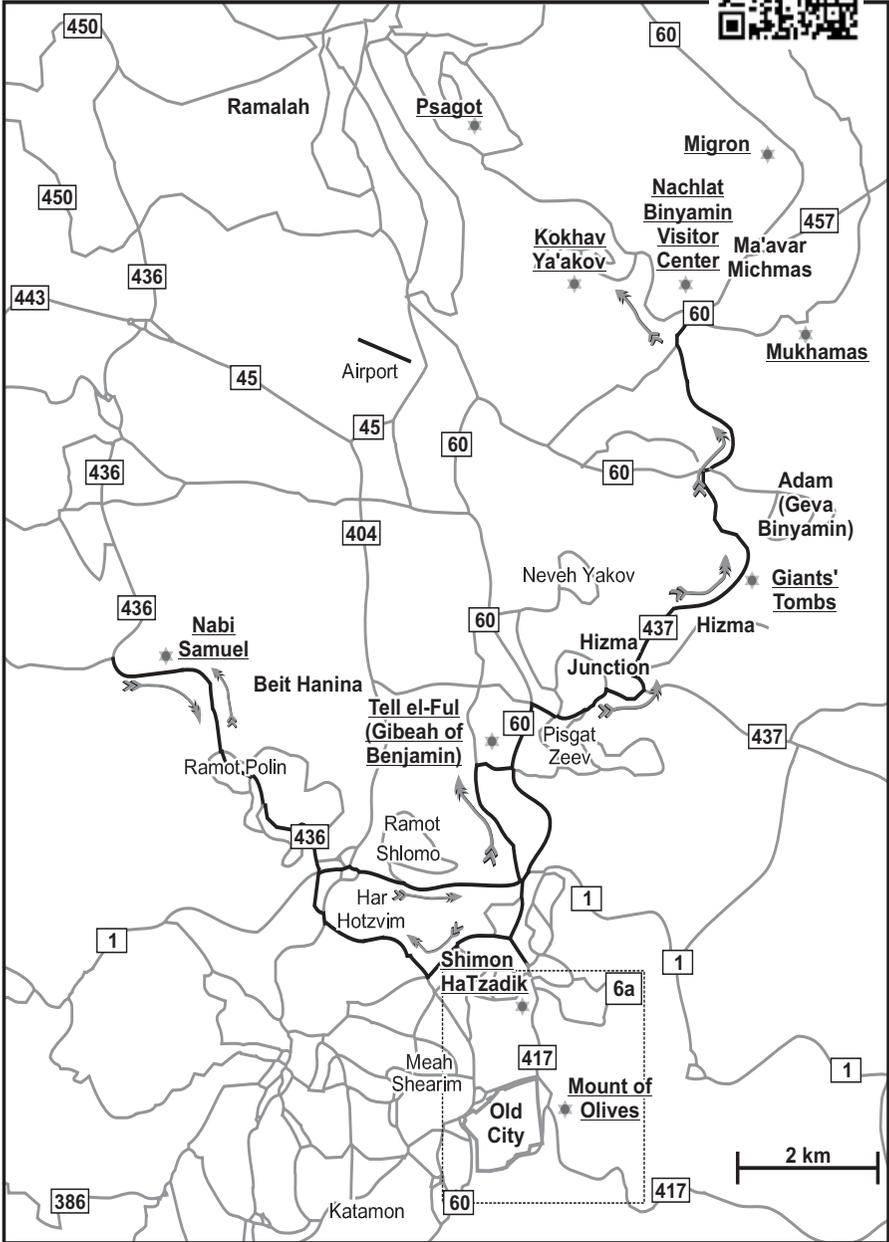
*Tower and the excavation of Nabi Samuel*

# ROUTE 6



MAP 6A

# ROUTE 6



MAP 6B

# ROUTE 6

## *Videos*

Shimon HaTzadik or Sheikh Jarrah?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0btXv0-TbA&feature=plcp>



Forgotten Holy Sites – Gibeah and Mizpah

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTnjuzXTLmQ&feature=plcp>



Where is the Rachel's Tomb?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1DQcBlkn-w&feature=plcp>



# ROUTE 6

**List of coordinates of the points of interest  
mentioned in the route**  
(see the explanation on page 188)

## **Route 6. Jewish antiquities of East Jerusalem and the surrounding areas**

|  | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mizpah (“Nabi Samuel”)   | 31.832941<br>N 31°49.976’ | 35.18159<br>E 35°10.895’  |
| Tell el Ful (Gibeah of Benjamin)   | 31.821574<br>N 31°49.294’ | 35.231088<br>E 35°13.865’ |
| “Qubur Bani Yisra’il” (Attention! The roadside was rebuilt, it’s impossible to stop) | 31.842315<br>N 31°50.538’ | 35.268569<br>E 35°16.114’ |
| View of “Qubur Bani Yisra’il” from the Adam settlement (Geva Binyamin)               | 31.846485<br>N 31°50.789’ | 35.270651<br>E 35°16.239’ |
| Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus  | 31.797458<br>N 31°47.847’ | 35.240511<br>E 35°14.43’  |
| The Hebrew University (Scopus)   | 31.792552<br>N 31°47.553’ | 35.243021<br>E 35°14.581’ |
| Augusta Victoria Hospital  | 31.786205<br>N 31°47.172’ | 35.248493<br>E 35°14.909’ |
| The Prophets’ Tombs  | 31.776720<br>N 31°46.603’ | 35.243343<br>E 35°14.6’   |
| Kidron Valley, Tomb of Absalom   | 31.777267<br>N 31°46.636’ | 35.238837<br>E 35°14.33’  |
| Shimon Hatzadik Neighborhood, Tomb of Simeon the Just                                | 31.79206<br>N 31°47.523’  | 35.230342<br>E 35°13.82’  |

# ROUTE 6

## **“EAST JERUSALEM” – WHAT IS IT?**

“East Jerusalem” is a relative term. In Israel, it is commonly used in reference to Arab quarters of the city. In the world media, this term often refers to the part of Jerusalem, occupied by Jordan from 1948 until 1967, liberated by Israel in the Six-Day War and later annexed. Any visitor to the city can see that there is no real division between the “eastern” and “western” parts of Jerusalem according to the 1948-1967 borders. The “international terminology” considers the southern and northern Jewish quarters of Jerusalem (such as Gilo, Ramot and others) to be part of “East Jerusalem.” It also assigns to “East Jerusalem” the quarters that emerged in place of ancient Judean settlements around Jerusalem. Several of these cities (Mizpah, Giva) were independent centers that left their mark in Jewish history.

## **THE ROUTE**

This route begins at the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. It then continues to the Mount of Olives, stops at the graves of the Minor Prophets, descends down to the Garden of Gethsemane following the “Messiah road”, then visits Kidron (the valley of God’s judgment), circles around the walls of the Old City to the Shimon HaTzadik neighborhood. This part of the route is shown on map 6A.



From the Shimon HaTzadik neighborhood, the route goes through religious quarters, which are closed to traffic on Saturdays, passes by Har Hotzvim and Ramot, and then takes highway 436 to the ancient city of Mizpah. Exit the highway at the road sign “Nabi Samuel.” After exploring the archaeological excavations and possibly visiting the spring, take the same highway 436 back towards Jerusalem. Pass the Ramot neighborhood and make a left turn at the big junction with the sign “Pisgat Ze’ev.” Follow the road signs to Pisgat Ze’ev: pass Ramat Shlomo, after the intersection Giva Tzarfatit, get on the bridge to your left, take the first exit from the bridge and make an immediate left, go up the hill and pass a water cistern. Leave

# ROUTE 6

your car at the foot of the ancient hill and walk uphill to the unfinished palace of the Jordanian King Hussein. More than three thousand years ago, at the time of King Saul, this was the capital of the Kingdom of Israel, Givat Binyamin or Givat Shaul.

After viewing the panorama, drive about two kilometers north-west, through the Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood, to the Hizma checkpoint. At the roundabout immediately after the checkpoint, make a left to the north onto route 437, in the direction of Psagot and Beth El.



After several curves, the road will go downhill. At the lowest point where the road turns left, you can see a large structure (20m x 3m x 2 m) called the “Giants’ Tombs” on the right side of the road. For a better view the “Giants’ Tombs”, keep driving on highway 437 to the settlement Adam and stop at the panoramic viewpoint. From there, go down on foot. More on this in a video clip “Where is Rachel’s Tomb” at Guide21Israel channel on YouTube.



After getting acquainted with ancient burials, keep on highway 60 North until the exit to Psagot. Drive up to the Visitor Center of the Benjamin Region. The same building is the wine tasting center of the Psagot Winery where you can finish the tour.

This tour is intensive. If you are touring independently, without a tour guide, you may want to split the trip into two days.

## **MOUNT OF OLIVES**

Mount of Olives is a long hill that goes north to south, in the east of Jerusalem, opposite the Old City. The hill has two peaks. The northern peak is called Har haTzofim (mount of observers), better known by its Latin name as Mount Scopus. The Hebrew University and The Hadassah Medical Center are situated there. Before the Six-Day war, this hill was a tiny isolated Israeli enclave, located deep inside Jordanian territory.

Between the two peaks stands a Lutheran hospital named after the German empress Augusta Victoria. The hospital occupies several historical buildings; its construction was financed by the German Empire in 1910 as a refuge for pilgrims. At that time,

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the hospital buildings were the most modern in Jerusalem: they were the first in the entire city to have electricity. The Augusta Victoria Hospital functions since 1948, originally as a hospital in the Jordanian part of Jerusalem, and to this day it continues to treat exclusively the Arab population of Jerusalem (of course, the Arabs are treated and work in all other hospitals too).

At the southern peak of Mount of Olives, there are an Arab village At-Tur and numerous churches and monasteries of different Christian denominations.

## **OLD CITY WALLS AND THE SEALED “GOLDEN GATES”**

The wall that goes around the Old City today is not an ancient Jewish construction. The ancient Jerusalem city wall was destroyed by the Romans in the Jewish-Roman wars; the remnants of the wall were subsequently used as foundations for buildings during the Byzantine period. After victory over the Crusaders, the Mamluks destroyed whatever was left of the city wall, so that Jerusalem could not defend itself. The city did not have walls and was open to any invader until the 16th century when the Ottoman Turks conquered Jerusalem. The city wall of today was erected by Suleiman the Magnificent.

In time of Muslim rule there was a wide-spread opinion that the Prophet Ezekiel's vision about the gates referred to the Jerusalem's Golden Gate: "And HaShem said unto me: 'This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it, for HaShem, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut.'" (Ezekiel 44:2)

This gate is located right across from the Mount of Olives, and (as the Zion Gate) is much older than the walls built by Suleiman the Magnificent. In 1541, when the Sultan ordered the renovation of the city walls, he sealed the Golden Gate so that the Jewish Messiah could not come through it. In addition, Muslims established a cemetery in front of the Golden Gate knowing that the Jewish tradition considers cemeteries impure. The Sultan also foresaw the possibility that the cunning Messiah would resurrect the dead and thus avoid ritual defilement. For

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this purpose, he ordered to bury in this cemetery his most courageous and fierce soldiers fully armed, so that when they would be raised from the dead, they could immediately kill the “infidel” Messiah.

## **KIDRON VALLEY**

Located between the Mount of Olives and the Temple Mount, Kidron Valley is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Jerusalem. During the ages, this cemetery expanded until it reached the top of the Mount of Olives. At the very top of the mountain, at the descent, lies the tomb of the Minor Prophets – Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi. There are 36 burial niches cut in the rock, where, according to tradition, the disciples of the prophets are buried.

There are other ancient tombs in Kidron Valley. Some think that one of the tombs belongs to King David’s son Absalom. It is next to the Tomb of Benei Hezir, a burial place of a priestly family mentioned in the Talmud. It is still possible to distinguish a Hebrew inscription on its façade. Among the magnificent tombs of the necropolis, there is a grave of one of Solomon’s wives, a daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh.



Numerous holes in the nearby cliff are also burial places from the period of the First Temple. The headstones are covered with inscriptions mostly from the medieval period when the Jews were allowed to enter Jerusalem, but some of the inscriptions date back to the period of the Second, and even the First Temple.

Between 1948 and 1967, when the entire Old City and the Mount of Olives were under Jordanian occupation, Jewish graves were covered with trash and most of the headstones were damaged. After the liberation of Jerusalem, the necropolis was restored; alleys for visitors and a road from the Mount of Olives to the Temple Mount were built. The area in front of the entrance to the underground aqueduct of King Hezekiah was renovated.

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## **SHIMON HATZADIK NEIGHBORHOOD**

Within a short drive up north from the Old City, in the vicinity of Shimon Hatzadik Street (Simon the Righteous) a neighborhood with the same name is being revived. The neighborhood was founded in 1867 during the Turkish rule, near the grave of Shimon HaTzadik, the high priest and the head of Sanhedrin at the time of the Second Temple. During the British mandate, in 1937, the British authorities forcefully deported the entire Jewish population from this area. The deportation, which was called “evacuation”, was justified by explaining that otherwise the Jews would be slaughtered by the Arabs. It is quite likely that the British were led by a genuine desire to avoid bloodshed. Immediately after the deportation, Arabs from the neighboring villages moved into the quarter and renamed it “Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood.”

On April 13, 1948, one of the most horrific terrorist acts in the history of the Jewish state took place in the Shimon HaTzadik Quarter. A militarized Arab formation attacked a medical convoy that was heading towards the Hadassah hospital, and assassinated 80 doctors and medical personnel. In 1967, after the Six-Day War, many of the Arabs left, afraid of retribution, but many remained.

After the liberation of Jerusalem, Shimon HaTzadik’s grave was cleared from dirt and sewage (from 1937 until 1967 residents of the neighborhood used the grave as enclosure for goats) and became a pilgrimage site. The synagogue of the Shimon Hatzadik Quarter was restored and the empty buildings were returned to their surviving owners. However, many of the houses today are still occupied by the descendants of the Arabs who captured them.



At the end of the 1990s, the Arabs tried to force out the Jews who returned to their homes. They used violence as well as legal measures, aided by European activists and with financial support from the European Union. They filed lawsuits against the returning Jews, claiming that Arabs who occupied these

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houses in 1937 became legal owners because of the Statute of Limitations. All of these claims were rejected by the court.

## MIZPAH (“NABI SAMUEL”)



**Watch the video “Forgotten Holy Sites – Gibeah and Mizpah”. See the link on p. 100.**

Several minutes north-west from the Jerusalem quarter of Ramot, on top of a hill on the right side of the road, you can see a mosque. This place, known today by its Arabic name “Nabi Samuel”, is traditionally considered to be the burial place of the Prophet Samuel. According to the majority of researchers, this is the site of the ancient city of Mizpah, the place of many remarkable events of Jewish history.



The word “mizpah” means “observation post” or “view.” It is part of the names of several biblical cities and of several settlements in contemporary Israel. This is Mizpah of Benjamin, mentioned in the Book of Joshua (18:26) as part of the northern border of Benjamin’s inheritance. In Mizpah, eleven tribes of Israel joined together to fight the tribe of Benjamin (Book of Judges 20:1-3). Mizpah was also an important city during the time of the Prophet Samuel (I Samuel 7:5-12) and one of the centers of his activities (I Samuel 7:15-17). In Mizpah Samuel “judged Israel” and King Saul was anointed as king:

*And Samuel said: ‘Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray for you unto HaShem. And they gathered together to Mizpah, and drew water, and poured it out before HaShem, and fasted on that day, and said there: ‘We have sinned against HaShem.’ And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said to Samuel: ‘Cease not to cry unto HaShem our God for us, that He save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a whole burnt-offering unto HaShem; and Samuel cried unto HaShem for Israel; and*

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*HaShem answered him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but HaShem thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten down before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-Car.*

*Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-Ezer, saying: 'Hitherto hath HaShem helped us. So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Israel; and the hand of HaShem was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the border thereof did Israel deliver out of the hand of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-El, and Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all those places (I Samuel 7:5-16).*

After King Solomon's kingdom was divided in 9th century BCE, Mizpah became a border town in the north of the Judean kingdom. King Asa, who ruled Judea during the war with the Israeli king Basha, fortified the city (I Kings 15:22).

After the Jews lost the war with Babylon and Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar (586 year BCE), Mizpah became the residence of Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the governor of now-Babylonian province of Judea. He was killed there together with his friends and servants (II Kings, 25:25). As a result, the Jews lost the last remnants of sovereignty in their land. To commemorate Gedaliah's assassination, an annual fast called the Fast of Gedaliah was instituted in Judaism.

After the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, Mizpah served as an administrative center of the region (Nechemiah 3:19). It is possible that Judah the Maccabee gathered his forces in Mizpah prior to his battle with Gorgias (I Book of the Maccabees 3:46). Mizpah was not only an administrative center

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but also a religious one. The Book of Maccabees relates that the Jews convened in Mizpah to celebrate and pray “because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah” (I Book of the Maccabees 3:46-54).

Today, only ruins remain of the ancient settlement: a segment of a wall built in 11th century BCE, two towers and remains of several one- and two-story houses. The population of Mizpah was around 1000 people at that time, which was considered a fairly large city.

In 1099, the crusaders who came to the Holy Land called this hill the “Mount of Joy” because from here they first saw Jerusalem. Going from the parking lot to the central fortress, you walk over the bridge across the moat built by the crusaders who settled here.

In 1730, the Turks converted the Crusader fortress into a mosque. After the Jews returned to Mizpah in 1967, they built a synagogue to pray at the cenotaph (symbolic tomb) of Samuel the Prophet. The same door leads from the street to both the mosque and the synagogue. More and more Jews come here on the 28th day of the Jewish month of Iyar, the day of Prophet Samuel’s death, which coincides (perhaps, not by chance) with the day of liberation of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War.

6

## **TELL EL FUL (GIBEAH OF BENJAMIN)**



**Watch the video “Forgotten Holy Sites – Gibeah and Mizpah”. See the link on p. 100.**



In the north of Jerusalem, at the entry to the neighborhood of Pisgat Ze’ev is a hill called in Arabic Tell el-Ful (literally, “Hill of Beans”). It is the highest point in this region. On top of the hill there is a structure that is clearly visible from all directions. This unfinished building of several concrete columns, walls and floors was meant to be King Hussein’s palace that he began erecting in 1965. He chose this place for a palace not only because of magnificent views, but also because during the last hundred years the archaeological diggings on this hill revealed walls of King Saul’s palace, whereas the official Arab

# ROUTE 6

historiography claims that there are no Jewish antiquities in this place. After the liberation of Jerusalem, Israel did not tear down the framework of the building erected by Hussein, and so it still stands on the edge of the hill, slowly crumbling.

In the Book of Judges, this hill is called Gibeah of Benjamin. In 12th century BCE, the city was completely destroyed during the Jewish civil war described in The Book of Judges (chapters 19-20). However, in the second half of the 11th century BCE, Gibeah was not only completely rebuilt, but became the capital of a united kingdom ruled by King Saul. Since then, it has been called not Gibeah of Benjamin, but Gibeah of Saul. (The modern-day Givat Shaul neighborhood is located in a completely different place.)

During the construction of the Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood, which adjoins Givat Shaul, there were many archaeological discoveries. They confirm that in ancient times a route from Jerusalem to Shechem passed here and that this area had highly developed production of wine and olive oil, including for the needs of the Jerusalem Temple. The numerous water reservoirs that were found here supplied Jerusalem with water. Remains of some of these reservoirs allow us to imagine their original shape and considerable size.

## **QUBUR BANI YISRA'IL**



*Qubur Bani Yisra'il. The ancient "Tomb of the giants"*

# ROUTE 6

Leave Jerusalem bypassing Pisgat Ze'ev through the Hizma checkpoint. At the roundabout, turn left towards Beth El. Not far from here, at the end of the descent, at the lowest point of the road, on the right side, you will see enormous stone tombs. These graves date back to the time of the First Temple, and one of them to the time of the patriarchs. There is an opinion that the central, most ancient, tomb belongs to our matriarch Rachel. Whether true or not, there is no doubt that this is one of the oldest preserved Jewish tombstones in the world. Even the Arabic name for these graves supports this idea: "Qubur Bani Yisra'il" translates as "Tombs of the Children of Israel".

## **VISITOR CENTER OF THE BENJAMIN REGION**



To get to the visitors center of the Benjamin Region, continue north on highway 437 and near the Settlement Adam (also called Geva Binyamin), turn right (don't enter the settlement at the roundabout) and get onto highway 60 north. Before the Oslo Accords, route 60 passed through Ramallah, but after the agreement, it was closed for Israeli transport and moved east to by-pass Ramallah. A new detour road 437 was built.

After several minutes of driving on route 60, turn left towards Psagot and Kokhav Ya'akov, make a right turn at the roundabout near the gas station, and drive up the steep road to the visitor center of the Benjamin Region by the caravans of Migron (see later). The center is open Sunday through Thursday, from 9am until 5pm and on Friday from 9am until 11:30 am. You can make an appointment ahead of time by calling 02-9979333, but it also possible to visit the center without an appointment.



The center is located on top of the hill and provides great views in every direction: in the South – Jerusalem, in the west – Psagot, the administrative center of the Benjamin Region, immediately followed by adjacent to it Ramallah. Halfway to Psagot is a small and actively developing settlement Kokhav Ya'akov. In the east, close to us, is Ma'avar Michmas (discussed below). Farther east are the Transjordan Mountains. In good weather one can see contours of tall buildings in Amman, the

# ROUTE 6

capital of Jordan. In the north is a small settlement of Migron, and farther north lie the Samaritan Mountains. When the air is exceptionally clear, for example, after a winter rain, it is possible to see Hermon, the northern-most point in Israel.

## **MA'AVAR MICHMAS**

To the east of the visitor center is the Arab village of Mukhmas. North of it, where highway 457 branches off of highway 60, is a gorge and the settlement Ma'avar Michmas, which means "pass through the Michmas gorge." This is the place of a battle between King Saul and the Philistines. King Saul's son Jonathan was almost executed there because he unknowingly broke the oath given by his father (Book of Samuel I, 14:27-45).

In his novel "The Romance of the Last Crusade", Major Vivian Gilbert relates an interesting anecdote that occurred during the First World War:

All orders were given out and the troops were getting what rest was possible before zero hour. In his bivouac, by the light of a candle, the brigade major was reading his Bible. When the raid was first discussed, the name Mickmash had seemed vaguely familiar, although he could not quite place it. Just as he was about to turn in for the night, however, he recollected and thought he would look it up. He found what he was searching for in Samuel I, Chapters 13 and 14:

And Saul and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Mickmash. ...

Now it came to pass upon a day that Jonathan, the son of Saul, said unto the young man that bore his armour, "Come and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side," but he told not his father. . . . And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over into the Philistine garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. The forefront of the one was situated

# ROUTE 6

northward over against Mickmash, and the other southward against Gibeah. And Jonathan said to the young man that bore his armour, "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison.

"It may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

And the major read on how Jonathan went through the pass, or passage, of Mickmash, between Bozez and Seneh, and climbed the hill dragging his armour-bearer with him until they came to a place high up, about "a half an acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow"; and the Philistines who were sleeping awoke, thought they were surrounded by the armies of Saul, and fled in disorder, and "the multitude melted away." Saul then attacked with his whole army. It was a great victory for him; his first against the Philistines, and "so the Lord saved Israel that day, and the battle passed over unto Beth Aven." The brigade major thought to himself: "This pass, these two rocky headlands and flat piece of ground are probably still here; very little has changed in Palestine throughout the centuries," and he woke the brigadier. Together they read the story over again. Then the general sent out scouts, who came back and reported finding the pass, thinly held by Turks, with rocky crags on either side, obviously Bozez and Seneh; whilst in the distance, high up in Mickmash the moonlight was shining on a flat piece of ground just about big enough for a team to plough. The general decided then and there to change the plan of attack, and instead of the whole brigade, one infantry company alone advanced at dead of night along the pass of Mickmash. A few Turks met were silently dealt with. We passed between Bozez and Seneh, climbed the hillside, and just before dawn, found ourselves on the flat piece of ground. The Turks who were sleeping awoke, thought they were surrounded by the armies of Allenby and fled in disorder. We killed or captured every Turk that night in Mickmash; so that, after thousands of years, the tactics of Saul and Jonathan were repeated with success by a British force.

# ROUTE 6

## **MIGRON**

To the north of the visitor center, on a hill above route 60, used to be a small settlement (around 60 families) of Migron. It was founded in 1999; its citizens were sure that this settlement was legal because it was approved by the government. In 2002, during the second intifada, Ariel Sharon gave an order to reinforce Migron. In 2008 the leftwing movement “Shalom Achshav” (Peace Now) presented Bagatz (the Israeli Supreme Court) with documents that they received from the Arabs, where they claimed that Migron was allegedly built on private Arab land and demanded its demolition.

Residents of Migron and the regional council were convinced that these documents were a forgery. Nevertheless, because the left-wing government of the Kadima party declared them authentic, the court did not attempt to examine the situation and ruled that Migron must be demolished. Thus, Migron was transformed from a legal to an “illegal settlement.” The government (by that time, right-wing parties came to power) had no desire to dismantle Migron. In response to Shalom Achshav’s complaint that the court’s ruling was not carried out, Bagatz decided that they would not revise their prior verdict and that Migron has to be demolished by the summer of 2012. The army and the government declared that they will do everything to resolve the conflict and offered to move the settlement two kilometers away from its original location, to a territory that undoubtedly belonged to the state. The resettlement was carried out in the summer of 2012.

## **WINEMAKING OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA**

At the visitor center you can see a video about the ancient history of the inherited land of the tribe of Benjamin and about wine making in the land of Israel. You will also be able to taste and purchase the fine wines made in the Psagot Winery. The settlement of Psagot was founded on the place of an ancient town, in whose caves the Bar-Kohba rebels hid from Roman persecution. One of these caves happened to be right next

# ROUTE 6

to the house of Yaakov Berg, the founder and director of the winery. Yaakov used the coolness of the cave for ageing and storing of his first barrels of wine. His desire to carry on with wine making became even stronger after an archaeological discovery. During excavations of the caves and the surrounding ancient Jewish town, a coin was found with an inscription “Shivat Zion” (return to Zion) on one side and a picture of an amphora, a wine vessel, on the other. Yaakov Berg decided that it was a sign for him to continue the tradition of Jews who lived here more than 2000 years ago. He then used the found coin as the logo of the winery.

In the beginning, winemaking in Psagot was just a small local business. Everybody who wanted was invited to visit the winery; a family from Miami visited it at one point. They were so impressed by the history and the potential of the place, that they invested a considerable sum in the development of the business. Today 400,000 bottles of wine are produced here annually.

In the past few years, winemaking in Judea and Samaria has been experiencing a real boom. Winemaking boutiques that produce high quality wine have been opened in more than a dozen settlements.



*Mount Blessing Winery. Har Bracha settlement.*

# ROUTE 7

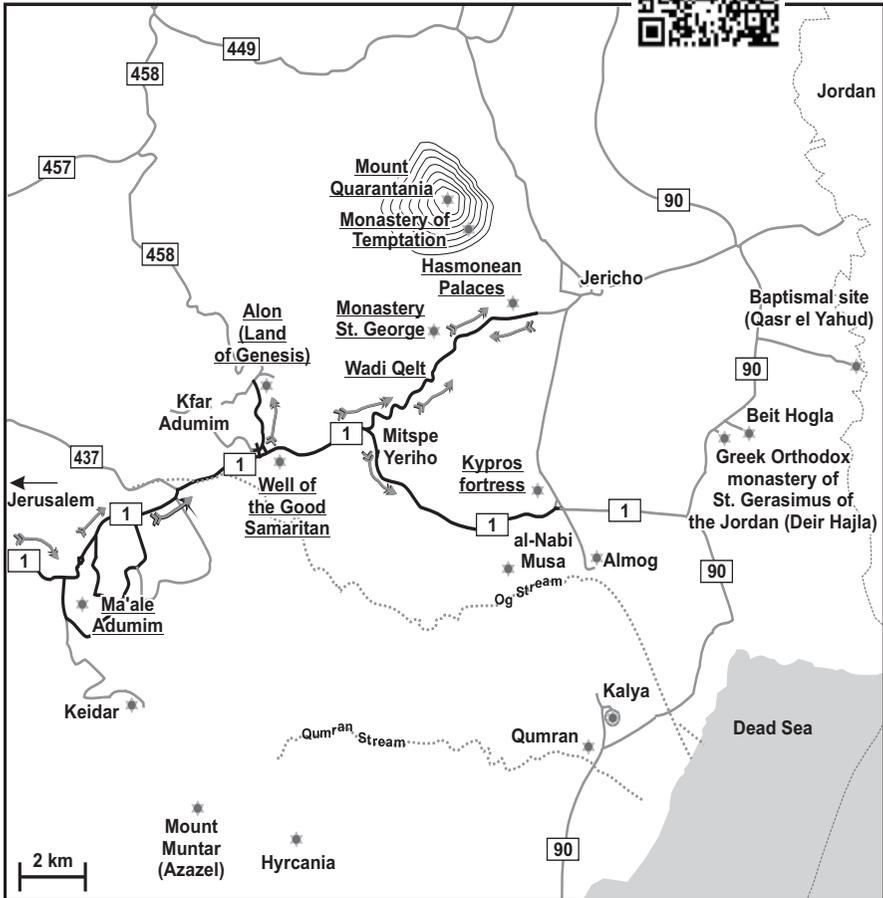
## ROAD TO JERICHO

- Ma'ale Adumim
- Allon Road
- "Eretz Bereshit" (Land of Genesis)
- Well of the Good Samaritan
- Mitzpe Jericho
- Wadi Qelt
- Herodian Palaces in Jericho
- Kypros Fortress
- Dagon Fortress and Monastery of Temptation



"Eretz Bereshit"

# ROUTE 7



# ROUTE 7

## *Videos*

Royal palaces in Jericho

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqfDOVbZwVE&feature=plcp>



Herod the Great

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8cw7mqFbzs&feature=plcp>



Judean desert. Cyprus. Hyrcania. Mt. Azazel

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGTF7oEC9nw&feature=plcp>



# ROUTE 7

## *List of coordinates of the points of interest mentioned in the route*

*(see the explanation on page 188)*

### **Route 7. A road to Jericho**

**(a GPS navigator may not be able to find some points in the desert)**

|  | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Entrance to Ma'ale Adumim                    | 31.767781<br>N 31°46.066' | 35.292546<br>E 35°17.552' |
| Kedar  | 31.754007<br>N 31°45.24'  | 35.311847<br>E 35°18.71'  |
| The Well of the Good Samaritan               | 31.816058<br>N 31°48.963' | 35.359601<br>E 35°21.576' |
| Mitzpe Jericho                               | 31.818538<br>N 31°49.112' | 35.389838<br>E 35°23.39'  |
| “Eretz Bereshit” – exit from road 458        | 31.829609<br>N 31°49.776' | 35.351801<br>E 35°21.108' |
| The Alon settlement                          | 31.833944<br>N 31°50.036' | 35.353121<br>E 35°21.187' |
| Road to the panorama of St. George Monastery | 31.843149<br>N 31°50.588' | 35.414937<br>E 35°24.896' |
| Ruins of the Hasmonean Palaces               | 31.849848<br>N 31°50.99'  | 35.436239<br>E 35°26.174' |

# ROUTE 7

## HISTORY

The ancient road of Ma'ale Adumim, which means “Red Ascent”, has throughout history connected two famous cities, Jerusalem and Jericho. Today this is highway 1. There is no other pass, neither to the south nor to the north, that connects the Jordan Valley, Jericho and the Dead Sea, lying 400 meters below the sea level, with the mountain ridge rising 800-900 meters above the sea level around Jerusalem. For this reason, Ma'ale Adumim was one of the most important ancient roads connecting Jericho and the Dead Sea with Jerusalem and with Jaffa and the Mediterranean. It has not lost its significance even today.

Recently, a new city called Ma'ale Adumim grew south of the road; it is an eastern suburb of Jerusalem and the largest Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria. Approximately halfway on the ascent from Jericho to Jerusalem, the Well of the Good Samaritan is located, a site traditionally associated with a well-known parable in the New Testament. Today, there is a mosaic museum on this site that displays ancient mosaics from all over the country.

North of highway 1 and parallel to it is Nahal Prat, a picturesque canyon, also known as Wadi Qelt. In ancient times, it marked the border between the tribal lands of Benjamin in the north and Judah in the south. The canyon begins near the Jerusalem neighborhood of Pisgat Ze'ev, continues near the settlement of Anatot, where the Prophet Jeremiah lived, and ends in the Jericho Valley, where the kings who ruled in Jerusalem had their winter residences.

The fertile, evergreen Jericho Valley, fed with water from rivers and springs, had rich agricultural land that even grew spices highly valued in Rome. In the wintertime, it was warmer and dryer than Jerusalem.

In order to control the road and protect the palaces, fortresses were built on the mountain tops on both sides of the Nahal Prat Canyon. During the reign of King Herod, in the 1st century BCE, the entire fortress and palace complex was rebuilt.

# ROUTE 7

Since 1994, according to the Oslo Accords, control over Jericho was transferred to the Palestinian Authority. Royal palaces and fortresses fell on the borderline with zone A (full control of Palestinian Authority). Travel to the palaces and fortresses became possible only on foot, along the ancient aqueduct of Nahal Prat. The Kypros Fortress was luckier than the Dagon Fortress; it was always open thanks to its proximity to highway 1. In the spring of 2012, the Israeli Army opened traffic on the ancient road along Nahal Prat, which made access to archaeological sites and palaces much easier. Today the Israeli Army uses modern equipment to watch over and control the security of the area from the top of Mt. Quarantania.

## ROUTE



**Watch the video “Royal palaces in Jericho”.**

**See the link on p. 118.**



Take highway 1 from Jerusalem towards the Dead Sea. After passing a few intersections, exit onto highway 458 at the road sign “Allon.” Your first stop is at the “Land of Genesis”, near the Bedouin tents. After viewing the theme park, go back to highway 1 east and then immediately make a right. Follow the signs to “The Good Samaritan.” Take a tour of the mosaics museum. (There is an entrance fee to visit the museum.)

Return to highway 1 east and exit to Mitzpe Jericho. The road sign will indicate “Wadi Qelt” and “St. George.” The road turns left and makes a fork: to the right is Mitzpe Jericho and to the left is St. George’s Monastery. First, visit Mitzpe Jericho for the panoramic view of Jericho. Then drive to the left side of the fork, to tour the St. George’s Monastery. The road will wind over the canyon and take you to a parking lot, marked by large gates with a cross. This is the starting point of the pedestrian descent towards the monastery. The sixth-century, carved in the cliff monastery, with its chapel and gardens, is active and open to the visitors. From here you can descend a little further into the canyon for a better view of Wadi Qelt.

To tour the Herodian Palaces, continue on the same road. Keep in mind that this road was closed for many years, and its condition

# ROUTE 7

is quite poor. Be careful on sharp and steep turns, especially since your attention will be distracted by the incredible beauty of the Prat canyon. At the foot of the mountain enter an Arab village. Drive past a mosque with a minaret on the right side of the road, and in another few hundred feet you will reach a cone-shaped hill on your left. Just after the hill, will be an area with a sign put up by the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Tourism: "Tulul Abu el-Alaiq/Herod's Palace." When touring the Palace, it is best to keep your car in direct line of sight.

Begin your exploration of the palaces with the cone-shaped hill, which looks like a miniature Herodion; it is a part of the third palace complex. From the top of this artificial mountain, inside of which was the Herod's palace, you can truly appreciate the magnificence and magnitude of these ancient structures. Directly in front of you, to the north, on the other side of Nahal Prat, are the remains of the third palace. To the west, closer to the mountains, are the remains of the second palace. Ruins of the first palace are hidden from view under a banana plantation. Ahead of you, to the north, is a mountain with antennas – it is Mount Dagon or Mount Qarantania, also known as Mount of Temptation. Behind you, after the mosque, at the foot of the mountains, you can see the smooth, symmetrical, top of Mount Kypros.

Although during the tour you will not be crossing the Palestinian Authority border, the Hasmonean and Herodian palaces lie in zone B, right on the border with zone A. It is therefore advisable to coordinate your trip with the Central Region Headquarters (02-5300551).

## **ANCIENT ASCENT TO JERUSALEM**

The ascent from Jericho up to Jerusalem is called Ma'ale Adumim, literally "The Red Ascent" because the mountains in this region have a red hue. This place is mentioned in the book of Joshua describing the borders of the tribe of Benjamin:

And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families ...And it was drawn on the north,

# ROUTE 7

and went out at En-Shemesh, and went out to Geliloth, which is over against the ascent of Adummim (Joshua 18:11,17).

The Christian tradition connects Nahal Prat with Nahal Cherit, mentioned in connection with Prophet Elijah:

*And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said unto Ahab: As HaShem, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of HaShem came unto him, saying: Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan (I Kings 17:1-3).*

In the context of a disputation between the Pharisees and the Essenes during the Second Temple period, about the beginning of a new month, a testimony of an eyewitness was brought up, who claimed that he saw the sickle of the new moon rising over Ma'ale Adumim. Eusebius of Caesarea mentions Ma'ale Adumim as a destroyed village on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho where a military garrison was stationed.

7

## **MA'ALE ADUMIM**

The city of Ma'ale Adumim was founded in 1975 to the south of highway 1, 10 km from Jerusalem. It grew quickly and soon became the eastern suburb of Israel's capital.

Several antiquities are preserved in the city, among them ruins of a Byzantine church. Archaeological diggings, which always precede new construction in ancient cities, revealed massive ruins of a Byzantine Monastery of St. Martyrius with a multicolored mosaic floor. Not far from the ruins of the monastery, archaeologists found an oil press with well-preserved vessels and stone chutes for olive oil.

The Jewish population either fled this area or was destroyed after the defeat in the Judean war. The Crusaders built here their fortress Castel Rouge; later, Saladin partially destroyed and partially rebuilt it; gradually, Saladin's fortress became dilapidated. During the Turkish occupation, a police station was located at the site of the fortress; it was blown up by the English

# ROUTE 7

during World War I. Prior to the Six-Day War, the Jordanians had a small garrison here.

The Population of Ma'ale Adummim is around 40,000. Most of the residents of the city work either in Jerusalem or in the neighboring suburb Mishor Adumim.

## **ALLON ROAD AND PARK “ERETZ BERESHIT”**

Named after Yigal Allon, one of the leading Israeli politicians of the 1960s, Allon Road (highway 458), stretches from Mishor Adumim in the south, to Mehola in the north. The road goes between the mountainous part of Samaria, which has Arab population, and the Jordan Valley, which has only Jewish population. Allon's peace plan proposed to incorporate the Jordan Valley into Israel and to give the mountainous part to Jordan, with the road serving as the border. However, the Arabs refused to discuss such a proposition.



If you turn from the Jerusalem-Jericho road to Allon Road, you will soon see a road sign to “Eretz Bereshit” (“Land of Genesis”). It is a tourist park named after the first book of the Torah. It tries to re-create the atmosphere at the time of our Forefathers. You will see “ancient” tents, and people dressed in clothes of the time of Abraham baking flatbread and brewing tea made with local herbs, and offering to take a camel ride.

## **WELL OF THE “GOOD SAMARITAN”**



**Watch the video “Royal palaces in Jericho”. See the link on p. 118.**

The name is borrowed from the evangelical parable related by Jesus (Luke 10:30-37). In ancient times, there was an inn here. Today it is the site of a mosaics museum, with original mosaics from all over the country. Many of these mosaics are amazing in their elegance of design and laconic beauty of colors. Besides the museum itself which is located in a Turkish period building, there are remains of cave dwellings of the Second Temple period and stone wells from various time periods, with troughs



# ROUTE 7

to collect rainwater. There is a restored church with a mosaic floor from the Byzantine period.

## WADI QELT



Canyon “Wadi Qelt”, also known as “Nahal Prat”, begins at Pisgat Ze’ev, the northern neighborhood of Jerusalem. In the book of Joshua this canyon is mentioned beside Ma’ale Adumim:

And the border went up to Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward, looking toward Gilgal, that is over against the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the brook; and the border passed along to the waters of En-shemesh, and the goings out thereof were at En-Rogel (Joshua 15:7).

The stream is not mentioned by name, but it says “the” brook, referring to the only perennial brook near Jerusalem. The brook is not wide, in many places it can be stepped over, but it bore witness to more historical events that shaped the Western Civilization than most of great rivers.

It takes one day to pass along the entire Wadi Qelt from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is a relatively easy and a very picturesque route. It does not start from Pisgat Ze’ev, though, but from a national park at the Ein Fara Spring, to which you can descend from the Anatot settlement. Modern Anatot is built not far from the ancient Anatot, famous as Prophet Jeremiah’s residence. Another entrance to the park is from the Allon Road at the “Ein Mabua” exit.

Walking towards Jericho for about 3 hours, you will reach another descent to Wadi Qelt near Mitzpe Jericho. Close to it is the picturesque Monastery of St. George of Koziba. Further down, Wadi Qelt leads to Jericho and the Hasmonean palaces. However, the riverbed near the palaces is dry because the water is diverted for irrigation.

## MITZPE JERICHO

Mitzpe Jericho (literally, “Jericho Lookout”) was founded in 1977. Today, more than 1,700 people live there. The promenade of the settlement reveals a breathtaking view of

# ROUTE 7

Jericho in the east. Mitzpe Jericho is also famous because in 2009 the first altar in the last 2000 years was built there and a special blessing was uttered. It was built with stones from the Judean Desert, taken from a place where no human has ever stepped. According to the Jewish Law, the stones were processed without the use of iron. The altar, 4 meters high and 6 meters in width and length, was constructed by the staff of the Temple Institute. Its construction was timed to coincide with the ninth of Av, the day of the destruction of the First and Second Temples.

## **HASMONEAN PALACES**



**Watch the video “Royal palaces in Jericho”.**

**See the link on p. 118.**

The Hasmonean and Herodian palaces are located in the immediate vicinity of zone A.

Israelis are forbidden to enter zone A, and for this reason it is necessary to coordinate your visit here with the Central Military Headquarters of the region at 02-5300551.

Jericho was the first city transferred to the Palestinian Authority in 1994. From then on, even the road leading to the Monastery of St. George of Koziba in Wadi Qelt was closed for several years. Tours of the Herodian palaces could be made only on foot, along the ancient aqueduct of the Prat Spring. Later, the road to the monastery was opened, although the part leading down from the monastery to the Jericho Valley was still inaccessible. (The ancient road that connected Jerusalem to Jericho went through the Jericho Valley.) Today this part of the road is once again open to visitors.

In the 1980's, Professor Ehud Netzer created a superb archaeological site here. Unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority covered the excavated rooms of Herod's first palace with sand, stones and dirt and planted a banana plantation on top. The first palace stood south of the road on which you drove. You will see the excavations of the second and third palaces.

# ROUTE 7

The construction of the Hasmonean Palaces began in the 2nd century BCE. Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II of the Hasmonean dynasty, sons of King Alexander Jannaeus (Yannai) and Queen Salome Alexandra (Shlomtzion), received as a gift from their parents two identical palaces (named “Twin Palaces” by Professor Netzer who uncovered them). After the death of their parents, the brothers went to war against each other, and their rivalry lasted for almost thirty years. Because of this civil war, Judea lost its independence and fell under Roman rule. In 63 BCE, Pompey destroyed the fortress that controlled the entrance to the gorge of the Prat River and placed Hyrcanus II as king in Jerusalem.

Herod’s farther Antipater I the Idumaeen was the closest confidant of King Hyrcanus II. Antipater sent his sons, Herod and Phasael, to study in Rome, and after their return, Antipater solicited profitable positions for them from Hyrcanus II. Herod was assigned as governor of Galilee, where he installed order according to his Roman upbringing by cruelly executing the rebels. Executions without trial were condemned by Sanhedrin, and Herod was called to Jerusalem to stand trial before the elders. However, Herod refused to disarm before entering the courtroom of the elders on the Temple Mount. Perhaps this was why he was not arrested immediately; however, after this incident Herod was not only dismissed from his job, but was also forced to go into hiding.

Due to a conspiracy of aristocrats, Herod’s father Antipater was murdered. Hyrcanus II, having lost the support and advice of Antipater, sought to be closer to his son and even offered Herod his granddaughter Miriam to marry, a potential heir of the Hasmonean dynasty. Further struggle for power between Antigonus II Mattathias, the son of King Aristobulus II and his uncle Hyrcanus II, almost cost Herod his life. Later, Herod built the Herodium fortress at the place of the battle to commemorate his miraculous salvation. He returned to Judea with Roman legions, laid siege to Jerusalem and conquered it.

# ROUTE 7

He then executed Antigonus II and became king in his stead, as an appointee of Rome, in year 36 BCE.

Herod built his first palace in the Jericho Valley before he became king. He built it on the opposite (southern) side of the Prat Spring, from where he looked with jealousy at the magnificent Hasmonean palaces. In 31 BCE, after an earthquake, he ordered to build a mound on top of the damaged Hasmonean palaces. He used the twin palaces as a foundation for building his own palace, thereby proclaiming to all that he was the real ruler of the country. Professor Netzer named this construction Herod's Second Palace. Thanks to Herod's ambition to cover the Hasmonean palaces, they were well preserved, luckily for the archaeologists.

It is likely that Aristobulus, the last high priest from the Hasmonean dynasty and a brother of Herod's wife Miriam, was drowned on the king's order in a well-preserved swimming pool in Herod's palace.

In 15 BCE Herod hosted an important guest, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, a son-in-law of Emperor Augustus himself. He is famous in the history of architecture for commissioning the building of the Pantheon in Rome. Josephus Flavius describes how Herod entertained his important guest in Ceasarea, Samaria, Hyrkania, Alexandria, Herodion and Jericho. According to Josephus, "Herod was Augustus' best friend after Agrippa and Herod was Agrippa's best friend after Augustus."

Herod used the latest technology, probably brought to him by the important guest from Rome, to build the third palace on both sides of the Prat Spring. All over the palace you can see walls made out of diamond-shaped bricks. The palace itself was located on the northern side of the river, with grand throne-rooms, colonnade, bathhouses, glamorous stucco ceilings and splendid floor mosaics. Especially impressive is the round pool, which was part of the bath structure.

On the southern side of Nahal Prat, he built a "sunken garden" and an artificial pond for boat competitions. A staircase leads to the top of the man-made cone-shaped hill. This staircase was

# ROUTE 7

a continuation of the huge bridge built over the river. A bath and living quarters were constructed inside the cone-shaped hill. Round and rectangular niches were built in the walls of the “sunken garden”, although no statues were found inside. This probably means that Herod respected the Jewish tradition. The mentally ill king calmed himself by looking down from the bridge at the roaring winter stream formed by the merging of two rivers, Prat and Na’aran.

## **MOUNT KYPROS**



**Watch the video “Judean desert. Cyprus. Hyrcania. Mt. Azazel”. See the link on p. 118.**

To protect his palaces, Herod built a fortress and a palace on the nearest hill. A breath-taking view of the surroundings opens from the top of the hill. However, not much is left from Herod’s fortress-palace, especially in comparison to the palaces in the valley. In his “Judean War”, Josephus Flavius describes Kypros as “a new, fortified and beautiful fortress, towering over Jericho.” The fortress probably existed from the time of the Hasmonean dynasty (2nd-1st centuries BCE) and was destroyed in 63 BCE by Pompey. Herod re-built the fortress: he used retaining walls to expand the upper part of the fortress and built on the lower ground as well. From then on, the mountain and the fortress have been named after his mother Kypros.

7

## **DAGON FORTRESS**

To the north of the palaces, you can see a mountain with tall antennas. The Dagon Fortress was located on top of this mountain in the Hasmonean period. Here, Simon, the last of the five famous Maccabean brothers, was murdered by his own son-in-law Ptolemeus. Today, on top of this mountain, is an Israeli army base, whose antennas can be seen from everywhere. Among other responsibilities, the Israeli army monitors the security of tourists and Israelis visiting the Hasmonean palaces. Route #9 below has more information about the Dagon Fortress.

# ROUTE 7

## QUARANTANIA MONASTERY



The name of the monastery derives from a Latin word “Quarentena”, meaning “forty”. Christian tradition connects Mt. Dagon with the place where Jesus was tempted in the desert for 40 days. An ancient monastery belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church is located on the slope of the mountain. A cable car line goes from Jericho to the Monastery. This monastery stands in the place where the very first hermit monks gathered, long before Christianity became the formal religion of Rome. Here the tradition of Christian monasticism was born. Monks settled near water wells and natural caves, which protected them from the sun in the hot midsummer days. Gradually, monastic communities began emerging where the Monastery of Temptation stands today.



*The Monastery of Temptation*

# ROUTE 8

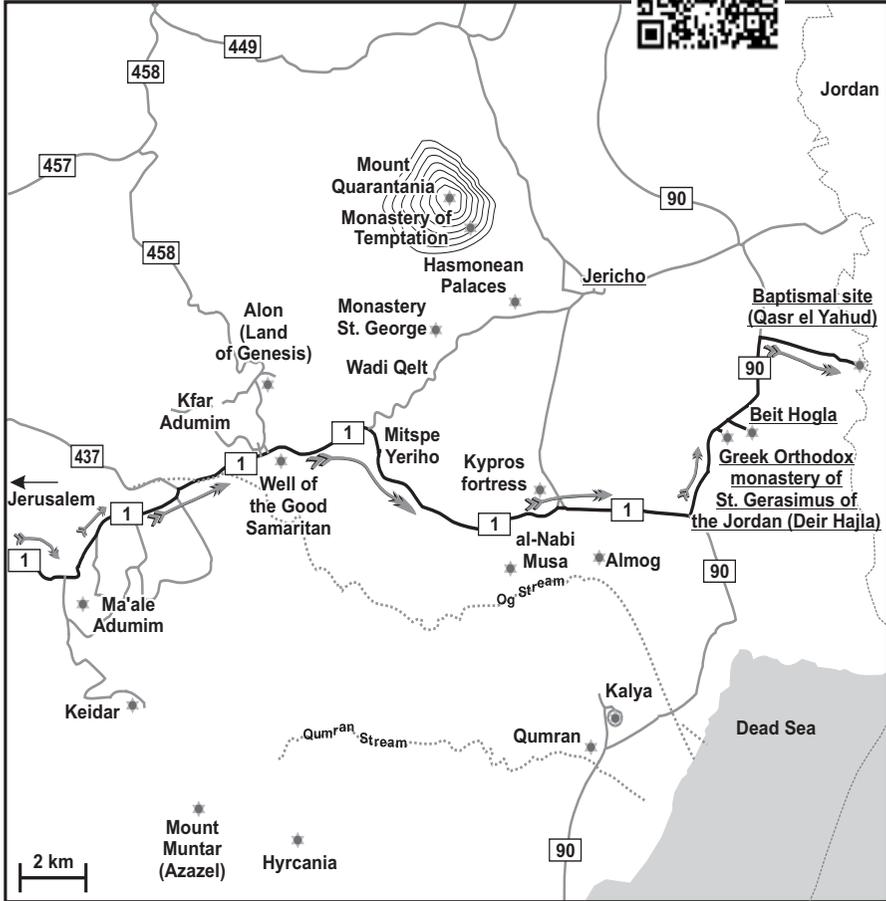
## JERICHO AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- ANCIENT JERICHO
- PLAINS OF JERICHO
- GILGAL
- BEIT HOGLA
- QASR EL YAHUD



*Trumpets of Jericho*

# ROUTE 8



# ROUTE 8

## Videos

Hill of Circumcision at the Jordan Valley

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwVo5aXQOKg&feature=plcp>



*Ancient mosaic from synagogue of Jericho*

# ROUTE 8

## *List of coordinates of the points of interest mentioned in the route*

*(see the explanation on page 188)*

### **Route 8. Jericho and its surroundings**

**(a GPS navigator may not be able to find some points in the desert)**

|                                | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| The Hisma checkpoint           | 31.828438<br>N 31°49.706' | 35.252656<br>E 35°15.159' |
| Beit Hogla                     | 31.821437<br>N 31°49.286' | 35.506459<br>E 35°30.387' |
| Qasr el Yahud                  | 31.837261<br>N 31°50.235' | 35.545995<br>E 35°32.759' |
| Mevo'ot Jericho                | 31.908092<br>N 31°54.485' | 35.41759<br>E 35°25.055'  |
| The Monastery of St. Gerasimos | 31.821118<br>N 31°49.267' | 35.499571<br>E 35°29.974' |

# ROUTE 8

## **ROUTE**

Take highway 1 from Jerusalem towards Jericho and the Dead Sea. After Jericho was handed over to the Palestinian Authority, entrance into the town was closed for Israelis. Today it is impossible for tourists to explore Jericho by themselves. Once a week an organized tour from Mevo'ot Jericho travels to the city in armored buses and accompanied by Israeli army and Palestinian police to visit the ancient Synagogue Shalom Al Yisrael. You can find more details about this trip in chapter 9.

We recommend visiting the Jewish outpost Beit Hogla. To get there, make a left from highway 1 to highway 90, pass by the road sign to the St. Gerasimos Monastery (Deir Hajla), and then, after less than one kilometer, turn right towards the army base "Nebo" and the Beit Hogla settlement, which is to the right of the base. You can walk from Beit Hogla to Gilgal, the place where the Jews performed mass circumcision after returning to the Land of Israel, and then to the Ein Hogla spring (a half hour walk from Beit Hogla). From this spring you can see Qasr El Yahud, the place where the Jews crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. You can also return to highway 90 and drive north; in a couple of kilometers you will get to the road sign "Qasr El Yahud" (Baptism site). Just a few meters away, on the opposite bank of the river, are tourists like you, but in the Jordanian territory. Today, Christians perform ritual ablutions in this part of the Jordan River. By the way, the Jordan River in its "natural state" is not so narrow; it is narrow because the Jordanians use most of its water to irrigate their fields, under the terms of the peace treaty with Israel.

8

## **ANCIENT JERICHO**

Jericho is situated at the intersection of two ancient roads: one goes from north to south, along the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, the other goes from east to west, around the Dead Sea and through Ma'ale Adumim and the Jerusalem passage. In ancient times, this made Jericho a very important trading center.

# ROUTE 8

In ancient times Jericho was called the City of Palms, but the Jewish tradition calls it the City of Palms and Miracles. It is located in the middle of a flat plain, once fertile, but turned into a lifeless desert by numerous conquerors in the last 2000 years. The Jordan River divides this plain into two parts, plains of Moab (in the east) and plains of Jericho (in the west). Both stretch north from the northern tip of the Dead Sea, where Wadi Qelt meets the Jordan River. The Wadi Qelt creek is only one of the numerous sources of water in this oasis, and if the water is utilized wisely, there is enough of it.

Jericho and its surroundings are unique both geographically, as the lowest spot on Earth, with almost no precipitation, and historically. It is the most ancient city in the Holy Land known to historians. Jericho is not only mentioned frequently in historical documents, but also in legends about miracles that took place here: the waters of the Jordan River standing still when the Children of Israel crossed it to get to the Promised Land, the walls of the besieged Jericho tumbling down. Jericho is also the site of Prophet Elijah's ascent to heaven and the appearance of an angel to Joshua Bin Nun.

But most importantly, Jericho was the first city the Jews conquered after crossing the Jordan River. The Book of Joshua, chapter 6, describes how after a week of siege and marching around the walls, on the seventh day, kohanim (priests) circled the city seven times while blowing their shofars. After that, the soldiers gave a loud shout and the walls of the city collapsed to the foundation; the victorious army marched into Jericho.

## **PLAINS OF JERICHO, GILGAL**



**Watch the video “Hill of Circumcision in the Jordan Valley”.  
See the link on p. 133.**

Before the walls of Jericho fell down, an important event took place in the life of the Jewish people – mass circumcision. The commandment of circumcision was given before the Exodus, but it was temporarily delayed during wanderings in the desert. However, it was forbidden to enter the Promised Land

# ROUTE 8

uncircumcised. For five weeks straight, the Jewish people stood in Moab and listened to Moses' last instructions (recorded as the book of Deuteronomy). Moses died; the Jewish people crossed the Jordan River and began preparing to enter the Promised Land.

Gilgal is a place of circumcision: the site of final deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. The word Gilgal originates from the root that means "remove" or "liberate" because here the shame of slavery was removed from the Jewish people. "And HaShem said unto Joshua: 'This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.' Wherefore the name of that place was called Gilgal, unto this day" (Joshua 5:9).

Three days after the circumcision, the Jewish people celebrated Passover and proceeded to conquer Jericho. They set their camp away from the city because the camp inhabitants were mostly women, children, and newly circumcised men, who were still weak, while the enemy could attack at night.

## BEIT HOGLA



Watch the video "Hill of Circumcision in the Jordan Valley". See the link on p. 133.

The camp was set east of Jericho, near the Ein Hogla spring. The ancient name Beit Hogla has remained until our days. The Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. Gerasimos ("Deir



*Scenic View of Mountain Moab*

Hajla" in Arabic) is presumably located where the Mishkan (Tabernacle) once stood, at the center of the Jewish camp.

On the far side of the plains of Moab, about sixteen kilometers beyond the Jordan River, is Mount Nebo, where Moses died

# ROUTE 8

and was buried. Before dying, Moses gazed from there at the Land of Israel, the land he was not allowed to enter. Today, at the top of the mountain, you can discern the white dome of a church, and to the right of it – a deep ravine, Nahal Heshbon, which separates the mountains of Moab to the south from the Mountains of Gilead to the north.

In ancient times, a Jewish town of the same name stood in place of today's Beit Hogla. Here lay the border between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin. This town is mentioned numerous times in the Bible. It was located between the Ein Hogla spring and another spring, which today is located on the territory of the monastery.



Excavations of the town are visible from highway 90 between the palm grove at Ein Hogla and St. Gerasimos monastery. It is worth leaving your car at the shoulder and walking around the ancient town. Archaeologists unearthed remnants of streets, foundations of houses, and water drains of the time of the First and Second Temples. Only a small part of the town has been excavated, a town that existed for more than 2000 years, from the time of Joshua Bin Nun (14th century BCE) until the end of the Byzantine period (6th century CE). The town ceased its existence for almost fifteen hundred years after it fell under Islamic rule. Today, only a small village with the same name exists due to the efforts of one brave woman, Erna Kobus, next to the ruins of ancient Beit Hogla. Only one family resides here so far, the first in 1400 years, but its residence is permanent: the family has already planted olive and pomegranate groves, as well as a lot of greenery.

Nine kilometers southeast of Mount Nebo, in today's Jordan, there is a city called Madaba that was founded by the Moabites. Madaba has remains of the Byzantine St. George's Greek Orthodox Church and its famous floor mosaic, known as the "Madaba Mosaic Map" because it depicts a map of the 6th century CE Holy Land. On the spot of St. Gerasimos Monastery there is a building with twelve windows labeled "Gilgal." The

# ROUTE 8

twelve windows symbolize the twelve stones on which the kohanim (priests) stood when the Jews crossed the Jordan River by dry land. Next to Gilgal, the mosaic map has a sign “Beit Hogla.”

You can get to Beit Hogla from Jerusalem by bus 961 (Jerusalem – Tiberias), bus 966 (Jerusalem – Katzrin) or bus 968 (Jerusalem – Beka’ot). The name of the stop is “Nebo.” The bus driver will tell you where to get out.

## **MONASTERY OF ST. GERASIMOS**

Gerasimos was a native of Turkey. He led a monastic life in Palestine from approximately 450 CE. Gerasimos managed to get together some hermit monks who were wandering in the desert. Five days a week the monks lived in their cells according to the rules established by Gerasimos, but Saturday and Sunday, they spent together over collective prayers and meals. However, today Gerasimos’ name is known to Christians not because of his successful monastic organization, but because of a legend of his encounter with a lion. It is true that lions inhabited Palestine until the 18th century, but what happened to Gerasimos is exceptional.

According to the legend, he not only managed to remove a splinter from the animal’s paw, but also tamed him, so much so, that the lion began to guard the donkey that carried water from the Jordan River to the monastery. Later on, the donkey was stolen and the lion was accused of eating it. After the donkey was found, Gerasimos repented for falsely accusing the faithful lion. The legend ends with the death of the lion on Gerasimos’ grave. In most unexpected places in the monastery, one can see a depiction of the lion, the hero of the legend of Gerasimos of the Jordan.



To the left of the main entrance to the monastery, there is an old chapel in a cave, where, according to legend, Jesus and his family stayed on their way to Egypt, when they were escaping from King Herod.

# ROUTE 8

## **QASR EL YAHUD**



Watch the video “Hill of Circumcision in the Jordan Valley”.

See the link on p. 133.

The holy sites of the Jordan Valley – the twelve stones of Gilgal, the place of mass circumcision, the place where the Jews crossed the Jordan River, the place where tabernacle stood – were always pilgrimage sites. The holiness of this place is stated in the Bible:

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him: ‘Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?’ And he said: ‘Nay, but I am captain of the host of HaShem; I am now come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said unto him: ‘What saith my lord unto his servant?’ And the captain of HaShem’S host said unto Joshua: ‘Put off thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.’ And Joshua did so” (Joshua 5:13-15).

This legendary place is holy for Christian pilgrims as well. It is believed that here John the Baptist met Jesus on his way to the Jordan River. In other words, this is exactly the place where Jesus was baptized. Eventually, numerous churches were built on both sides of the river to commemorate this event. In advance of the second millennial celebration of Christianity, the Ministry of Tourism of Israel began a restoration project upgrading and expanding this historical place in order to make it easier for pilgrims to perform ritual bathing in the waters of the Jordan River. However, frequent Palestinian terror attacks stalled the development of this project. Only a few years ago, the project was resumed and the place became accessible for the public. Today, the accommodations at this site are being completed. It is open to pilgrims every day until 4:00 pm. There are restrooms, changing cabins, a small gift shop, and steps descending to the water. In a few feet from you across the river, you could see tourists just like you, on the Jordanian territory.

# ROUTE 8



*The inscriptions “Gilgal; the twelve stones”, “Beit Hogla” and “Jericho” are highlighted on the mosaic map of Madaba*

# ROUTE 9

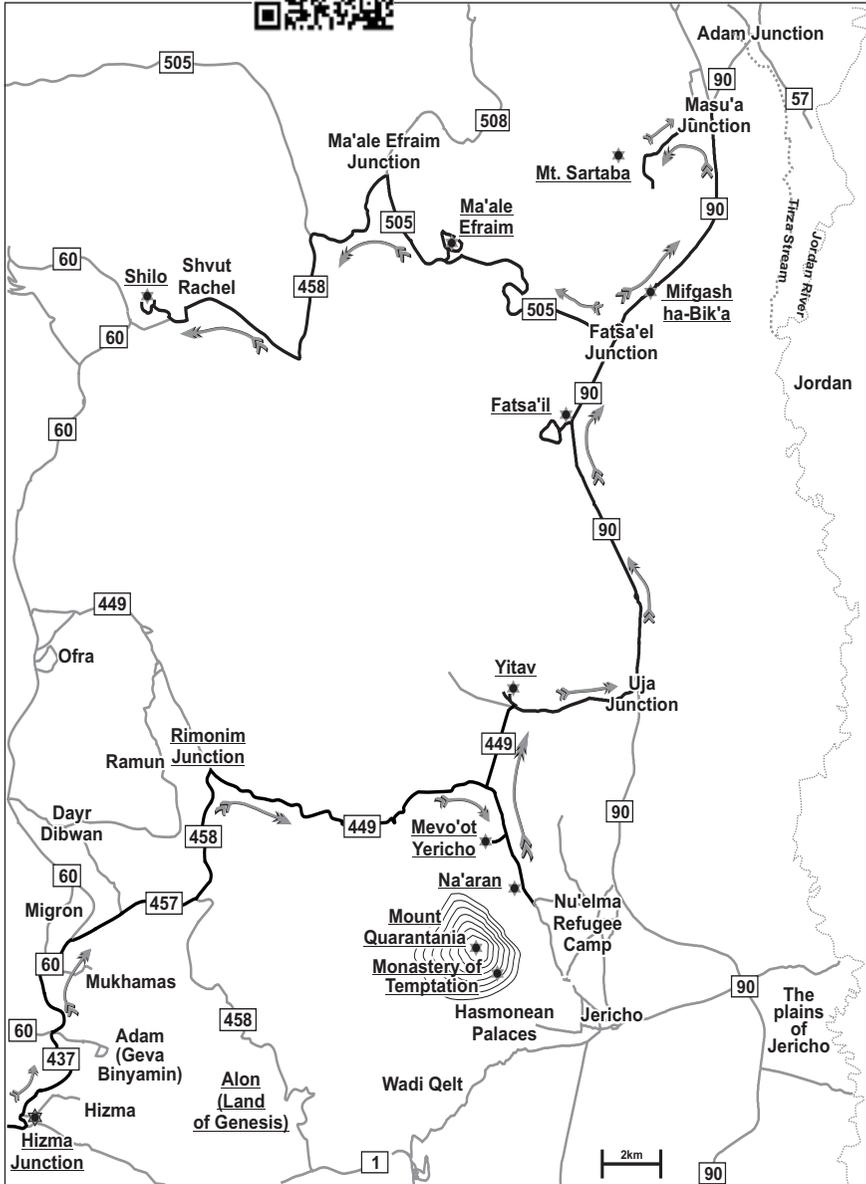
## THE JORDAN VALLEY

- Mevo'ot Yericho
- Na'aran, Yitav
- Pazael (Fazael)
- Mifgash ha-Bik'a
- Mt. Sartaba
- Ma'ale Ephraim
- View of Kikar Adam and Transjordan



*Mountain Sartaba*

# ROUTE 9



# ROUTE 9

## *Videos*

Jordan Valley: Sartaba Fortress, Jericho Valley, Signal Fires

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsylvU09zc0&feature=plcp>



Road of the rising Sun

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqleN0iAmhM&feature=plcp>



# ROUTE 9

## **List of coordinates of the points of interest mentioned in the route**

*(see the explanation on page 188)*

### **Route 9. The Jordan Valley**

|   | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| The Hisma checkpoint  | 31.828438<br>N 31°49.706' | 35.252656<br>E 35°15.159' |
| The Rimonim junction  | 31.92605<br>N 31°55.563'  | 35.317905<br>E 35°19.074' |
| Mevo'ot Jericho   | 31.908092<br>N 31°54.485' | 35.41759<br>E 35°25.055'  |
| Yitav   | 31.94721<br>N 31°56.832'  | 35.423856<br>E 35°25.431' |
| Pazael (Fazael)   | 32.025033<br>N 32°1.501'  | 35.444076<br>E 35°26.644' |
| Mifgash ha-Bik'a  | 32.054936<br>N 32°3.296'  | 35.46931<br>E 35°28.158'  |
| Road to Mount Sartaba from highway 90<br>(Attention! There is a solid center line on the<br>road. To turn, you must travel south) | 32.102408<br>N 32°6.144'  | 35.495912<br>E 35°29.754' |
| Start of the foot path to the Sartaba peak  | 32.089892<br>N 32°5.393'  | 35.472428<br>E 35°28.345' |
| Ma'ale Ephraim  | 32.069538<br>N 32°4.172'  | 35.402473<br>E 35°24.148' |
| Shilo (the settlement)  | 32.052226<br>N 32°3.133'  | 35.297652<br>E 35°17.859' |
| Shilo (the excavations)   | 32.05479<br>N 32°3.287'   | 35.289702<br>E 35°17.382' |

# ROUTE 9

## THE ROUTE

The whole route goes along highway 90, the most eastern of all major Israeli roads, stretching from Metula to Eilat. In this route we will be traveling along the Jordan Valley. It is possible to get on highway 90 from the north, through Beit She'an, from the south, through the Arad region, or from Jerusalem. There are two options for getting to the Jordan Valley from Jerusalem. The first is quick and easy: take highway 1 east from Jerusalem and turn left after Jericho on highway 90.

The second is more interesting. From the Jerusalem neighborhood Pisgat Ze'ev, through the Hisma checkpoint, get onto highway 437 north (left on the checkpoint roundabout). After about four kilometers, highway 437 merges with highway 60 at a roundabout in the settlement Adam. Turn onto highway 60 north. On the left side of the road is Zone A, which belongs to the Palestinian Authority. After another four kilometers, exit highway 60 to highway 457 towards Ma'ale Michmash.

Drive 4.5 km on highway 457 until it merges with highway 458. Turn left (north) onto 458 and drive until it merges with highway 449 at the Rimonim junction in about 4.5 km. Make a right turn onto 449, to the east, towards the Jordan Valley. You will be driving along the most beautiful descent. After about 10 km, highway 449 makes a 90 degree turn to the left (north) and an unmarked road splits from it and goes to the south. Turn right onto this road and in about 1.8 km you will reach Mevo'ot Yericho.

Those who like to hike, can climb Mt. Quarantania (Dagon) from Mevo'ot Yericho. You can also visit the synagogue in Na'aran, which is 1.6 km south of Mevo'ot Yericho. Return to highway 449 and drive north to the Yitav settlement. Turn right to the east onto an unmarked road and in 4.5 km reach highway 90 in the Arab village Uja e-Tahta. Highway 90 north will take you up the Jordan Valley to Pzael and Mifgash ha-Bik'a. From there you can climb Mt. Sartaba.

Highway 505, which goes north-west from Mifgash ha-Bik'a, will take you to the panoramic platform in Ma'ale Ephraim in about

# ROUTE 9

9 km. In good weather, Biblical places in Transjordan are visible from there: Sukkot, Machanaim and Penuel – approximately in the spot of confluence of Jabbok (Zarqa) River from the east and Tirza River from the west with the Jordan River. From there, you can also see the Adam Bridge across the Jordan River.

Leaving the panoramic site, continue on 505 for about 8 km and turn left (south) on highway 458 (Derech Alon). Drive for about 3.5 km south on 458 and turn right (west) onto an unmarked road, towards the mountains of southern Samaria. The road goes for 7.5 km by the outposts Alei Ayin, Esh Kodesh, Kida, Achiya, and Shvut Rachel until it merges with highway 60. Turn right (north) to Shilo. You can find a description of Shilo in route 10. Highway 60 will take you back to Jerusalem.



If traveling from Tel Aviv, highways 5 and 505 will take you to the panoramic platform in Ma'ale Ephraim. When traveling in the Jordan Valley, your mobile telephone may automatically switch to the Jordanian telephone network, about which you will be informed by a text message. You will then need to manually switch back to the Israeli telephone network, which is much cheaper if you have an Israeli SIM card.

When driving by the outposts on the way to Shilo, notice the auto barriers on the roads leading to the settlements. During the week, these auto barriers are either open, or the guards will open them for you after checking your documents. On Saturdays the auto barriers are closed.

## **HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY**

Jordan Valley is a strategically important valley, separating contemporary Israel from Jordan and all the Islamic territory up to the Indian Ocean. The Jordan River is the eastern border of contemporary Israel, but it is not a geographic border of the Holy Land.

The concepts of the “Land of Canaan” and the “Land of Israel” are not identical. Canaan extends from the Mediterranean Sea to Jordan, but the land of Israel incorporates land on both sides of the Jordan River. This means that the Jordan River flows

# ROUTE 9

along the border of the Land of Canaan, but in the middle of the land of Israel. In addition, the Jewish tradition considers the western part between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River holier than Transjordan.

The western (Israeli) side of the Jordan Valley, unlike its eastern (Jordanian) side, practically does not have precipitation; it is a rather dry and desolate place. The twenty settlements established here after the Six-Day War constitute the entire Jewish population. Here are some of the statistics about the population size of the Jordan Valley settlements for 2012:

Na'ama – 136 people; Yitav – 269; Na'aran – 70; Netiv HaGdud – 190; Gilgal – 162; Tomer – 306; Pazael – 270; Gitit – 324; Yafit – 176; Mesua – 170; Argaman (Crimson) – 167; Beka'ot – 205; Roi – 158; Hemdat – 155; Maskiot – 73; Rotem – 86. The only settlement with a population of more than 1000 is Ma'ale Efraim, its residents numbering 1,600.

The Mountains of Samaria in this area are not well inhabited. Outside the settlements, it is hard to encounter any signs of human presence, perhaps just the roads and the rare signs to underground springs or archaeological sites. The roads are few here; the main road, highway 505, goes from the Jordan River through Ma'ale Efraim.

## **THE JORDAN VALLEY IN BIBLICAL TIMES**

In ancient times, one of the major roads of the Land of Israel passed through the Jordan Valley. The road went along the Jordan River, somewhat removed from the river's western bank, almost exactly tracing the current highway 90. On the eastern side of the Jordan River, in what today is called Transjordan, the tribes of Reuven, Gad and part of the tribe of Menashe settled. The other nine and a half tribes settled on the western side of the Jordan River. Not far from the Adam Junction (described below), on the eastern side of the Jordan River, is Penuel (literally, "the face of God"). This is the place where Jacob received the name Israel. Nearby is Succot, the place where Jacob settled: "And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him a

# ROUTE 9

house, and made booths for his cattle. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth (Genesis 33:17).

## **MEVO'OT YERICHO**

Mevo'ot Yericho is a young agricultural settlement not far from the ancient Na'aran. It is not yet marked on official maps of Israel. From the point of view of the authorities, this outpost does not legally exist yet (as of January 2015). Its surrounding area is very picturesque. For security reasons, walking around the area is allowed only if accompanied either by a local who is well-familiar with the region, or by the army. With such escort, you can visit the Hasmonean aqueducts and ancient burial places in the mountains. Trips to mount Quarantania and to Na'aran originate from Mevo'ot Yericho. Once a week, usually on Sundays, organized tours in armored buses visit the ancient "Shalom al Yisrael" synagogue in the center of Jericho.



Jewish Jericho in modern times has a fascinating history. Until 1990, the only permanent Jewish citizen of Jericho was one woman, Rose Bilbul. Her scientific studies of the local papaya started before the Jordanian occupation in 1948-1967. After the liberation of Jericho in the Six-Day War, Rose could restore her plantation and return to her home. However, Israeli authorities forbade Jews to settle in Jericho. As an alternative, several new Jewish settlements were created around the city. The "Shalom al Israel" synagogue had a religious study center, which made the Jewish presence in the city noticeable.

The Oslo Accords of 1993 transferred the control of Jericho to the Palestinian Authority, and from then on, the Jews were not allowed into Jericho. Rose Bilbul was not allowed to visit her own house, and she continued to manage the production of creams made from papaya over the telephone from her apartment in Jerusalem. During the transfer of Jericho to the Palestinian Authority, it was agreed that Jews would be allowed to visit "Shalom al Israel" synagogue to

# ROUTE 9

pray and study. However, this agreement was violated by the Arabs, who in 2000 broke into the synagogue, destroyed and burnt everything inside it. Yeshiva students were forced to flee. The only thing that survived was a Torah scroll that was stored in a safe. Today, this scroll is in the synagogue of Mevo'ot Yericho. When residents of the settlement receive permission to pray at the "Shalom al Israel" synagogue, they bring the Torah scroll with them. A group of Jewish enthusiasts decided not to leave Jericho even after it became part of the Palestinian Authority. They gained permission to have Shabbat services at the "Shalom al Israel" synagogue, and began setting up a campground near Na'aran, remnants of an ancient Jewish city north-west of Jericho, once every two weeks. Eventually, the Mevo'ot Yericho outpost sprung from this campground. Today, twenty-five families live there, and permanent housing instead of temporary caravans is being built. Nevertheless, the legal status of Mevo'ot Yericho is still that of an illegal settlement as of January 2015. To legalize the outpost, the defense minister has to put his signature on a document, which he, so far, refuses to do.

## **MOUNT QUARANTANIA**

The Book of Maccabees mentions the murder of Shimon, the last of the five famous Maccabee brothers, together with his wife and children in the fortress of Dok above Jericho. This is the oldest mention of the fortress on the mountain Dok.

Another name of this mountain is Quarantania (see a description of this mountain in route 7). The dominant position of the mountain over the whole region was the reason fortifications were built on it. The fortress had its own water supply system, which, from an engineering point of view, was very similar to the well-known systems of gathering and storing water used in the region. (Several aqueducts gathered seasonal waters on the western slopes of Mount Quarantania and directed it to several water gathering pits). It is likely that the first fortification on the mountain was constructed when

# ROUTE 9

the Jews returned from Babylon, and the Hasmonean dynasty just inherited the fortress.

## NA'ARAN

A road from Mevo'ot Yericho leads to ancient Na'aran through the Achor valley. The Achor valley is known from the biblical story about the punishment of Achan from the tribe of Judah (Joshua 7:1-26). Achan was stoned because he took from what was commanded by God to be "devoted to destruction"; he was tempted by a cloak and gold from the spoils captured in Jericho. The entire people of Israel suffered as a result of Achan's sin – the Israelites' attack on the city of Ai was disastrous, and thirty-six men died. A large heap of stones, which is considered to be Achan's grave, still stands there today, but visiting the site is tricky because it is located in Zone A.

Ancient Na'aran stands at crossroads, at a point of descent from the mountains of Samaria to the Jordan Valley. Na'aran is mentioned (as Na'arah) in the Book of Joshua (16:7), and in the Book of Chronicles (7:28) as a border city between the lands of Ephraim to the north, Benjamin to the south and Menashe to the east. It is mentioned in later sources as well, e.g., by Josephus Flavius.



A synagogue mosaic floor dating to the sixth century CE is preserved until today. The Jewish community of Na'aran apparently existed until the 10th century CE.

Na'aran was discovered by chance during World War I, when a Turkish shell explosion exposed an incredibly beautiful mosaic floor. Fragments of the mosaics depicting the Ark of the Covenant, the Menorah and inscriptions in Aramaic, were placed in the museum of the Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem and in the Rockefeller Museum. Later on, the excavated objects were again covered with soil, but in the 1970s Na'aran was re-discovered by Israeli soldiers during their training exercises.

# ROUTE 9

The synagogue was built around the fourth century CE. Water was fed into the city through an aqueduct from a spring, which is still called Dok, from the name of the Maccabean fortress.

## **YITAV**

To get to Moshav Yitav, go back from Na'aran past Mevo'ot Yericho. The moshav is mainly populated by the descendants of Subbotniks from the former Soviet Union. "Yitav" is an abbreviation for "Yad Yitzhak Tabenkin", i.e., the moshav is named after Yitzhak Tabenkin, the founder of the kibbutz movement. Yitav was founded as a kibbutz, but later its status was changed to a collective moshav (moshav shitufi).

One of the founders of the kibbutz, Uri Carmiel, is delighted to welcome guests of the settlement. Uri is a descendant of the Subbotniks from the Voronezh region, who in the 1960's organized a kibbutz in Russia based on the Israeli model. Following the Six-Day war and a break up of diplomatic relations with Israel, Soviet authorities noticed that they have overlooked a Zionist hotbed right under their noses. Some of the members of the kibbutz were imprisoned; others, like Uri, were put into psychiatric asylums. As a result, the family moved to Israel only at the end of the 1970s. Uri and his likeminded friends started to build Kibbutz Yitav.

The name of the Achor valley, which is mentioned in the book of Joshua, is translated as "grim" or "hopeless." However, prophet Hosea prophesized that the Achor valley will one day become "a door of Hope" (in Hebrew, Petach Tikva): "And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope" (Hosea 2:17). In 1872, Yoel Moshe Salomon, a resident of Jerusalem and a founder of the first agricultural settlements, decided that the time for the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies has come. He bought a piece of land on this very spot and founded there a Jewish settlement.

However, the settlers could not bear the blazing heat and lack of water and returned to Jerusalem. Petah Tikva was founded later at its present location in the coastal plain. However, the

# ROUTE 9

descendants of Voronezh Subbotniks proved to be much more stubborn, and they succeeded in building a settlement. The fact is that the Jordan valley does have springs, but they are difficult to reach. There is plenty of ground water at the foot of mountains, and today the Mekorot Organization drills artesian wells there. The presence of aqueducts from the Hasmonean times, which conveyed water from the Uja source to Na'aran, proves that water existed in this area.

## **PAZAEI (FAZAEI)**

From Yitav, drive 4.5 km east to highway 90. Turn left (north) on 90 and drive 12 km up the Jordan Valley. Your next stop is at the Pazael Junction; from there, we will later take highway 505 west to the Samaritan Mountains. The settlement Pazael was founded in 1975 as a moshav, and was named after the ancient city of Phasaelis from the first century BCE, which in turn was named after king Herod's brother Phasael. Pazael has a crocodile farm, and for a small fee, you can visit these sharp-toothed reptiles.

## **MIFGASH HA-BIK'A**

Slightly north of the intersection of highways 90 and 505 is a small tourist place called Mifgash ha-Bik'a ("Meeting in the Valley"). There is a gas station, stores and several small cafés there. A beautiful panoramic view opens up from the observation platform. Tour guides like to scare tourists by telling them that the crocodiles sometimes escape from the nearby Pazael farm and then go hunting the passersby and visitors of the café.

At the station itself, there is a miniature model of the Syrian-African Fault, of which the Jordan valley is a part. This place is very picturesque. If you wander around long enough, you might run into Bedouins riding camels.

You can also climb up the Sartaba Mountain from here. Your efforts will be rewarded by a panoramic view and by the opportunity to explore the ruins of the Alexandrion fortress.

# ROUTE 9

## **MOUNT SARTABA**



**Watch the video “Jordan Valley: Sartaba Fortress, Jericho Valley, Signal Fires”. See the link on p. 144.**

Visiting Mount Sartaba will take a few hours. Only the saddle between two mountain peaks can be reached by car. One peak is the site of a military base, whose antennas are visible from afar; another peak has ruins of the Alexandrion fortress. This mountain road is narrow and only partially paved, but passable. Getting on this road is possible only when traveling south. If traveling north, make a U-turn. The exit, which is a little north of Mifgash ha-Bik’a, is barely noticeable, so use the exact coordinates that are in the table at the end of the book.

From the saddle, the road continues to the military base and a foot path leads to the Sartaba peak. There is one more road going down, but it is closed to traffic and marked with a sign “danger, mines.” Leave your car on the shoulder and continue on foot following green markings. The ascent is steep in some places.

Mt. Sartaba is cone-shaped and is the tallest of the surrounding mountains. At the time of the Second Temple, Mt. Sartaba was the second station from which a signal fire was lit to announce the beginning of a New Moon. Most of the Jews lived then in Babylon. The beginning of new months and holidays was set according to the observation of a New Moon, confirmed by Sanhedrin in the Temple in Jerusalem. To notify the Diaspora of a new month, a fire was lit on the Mount of Olives. The top of the Mount of Olives is in direct view from the top of Mount Sartaba, located 30 kilometers away. As soon as the fire on the Mount of Olives was noticed, a second fire was lit on Mount Sartaba, starting a chain of fires on the subsequent mountaintops of Transjordan. As a result, the information reached Babylon in a couple of hours, faster than pigeon post.

Observation posts were strictly guarded so that the fires would not be lit before their time. However, the system was eventually “broken” by the Sadducees, who started a false fire on one of the intermediate mountains, which sent a false signal to

# ROUTE 9

Babylon. It was decided to substitute signal fires by messengers, who took a long time to travel, and the Babylonian Jews did not receive the message about the New Moon until the holiday had already begun. For this reason, it was decided to duplicate the holiday days in the Diaspora (due to the uncertainty of which day was actually the New Moon).

King Alexander Jannaeus (“Yannai” in Hebrew) built a fortress on top of the Sartaba Mountain, later named “Alexandriion” after him. During King Herod’s reign, the fortress was rebuilt and used as a prison. It was here that King Herod’s two sons by his second wife, Mariamne the Hasmonean, were murdered, on the order of their father.

If you decide to make the effort and climb the Sartaba Mountain, the magnificent view and remnants of the palaces and fortresses at its summit will not disappoint you.

## **VIEW ON KIKAR ADAM AND TRANSJORDAN**



**Watch the video “Jordan Valley: Sartaba Fortress, Jericho Valley, Signal Fires”. See the link on p. 144.**

Go back (south) on highway 90 to the junction with highway 505. Turn right (west) on highway 505, also called the Ma’ale Efraim road, towards the Mountains of Samaria. Make a stop at a wide observation deck on the left side of the road. A magnificent view of the entire Jordan Valley opens up from there. Several kilometers to the north, two shallow but famous creeks fall into the Jordan River: Nahal Tirzah from the west and Nahal Yabbok from the east (“nahal” means “creek” in Hebrew). Their estuaries are located not far from each other; in ancient times, the space between them was occupied by the city of Adam, and the entire surrounding area was called Kikar (literally, “plaza” or “plain”) Adam.

To commemorate this, a contemporary bridge across the Jordan River is called “Gesher Adam” (Adam’s Bridge). The bridge is clearly visible from the Samarian Mountains, as is the entire eastern side of the Jordan River, which is now densely populated. Unlike the western (Israeli) riverbank which hardly ever receives

# ROUTE 9

rainfall, the eastern (Jordanian) bank often enjoys heavy rains. (Clouds coming from the Mediterranean Sea give rain to the areas with rising altitudes, i.e. the western mountain slopes.)

From the observation deck, in good weather, the famous biblical sites of Transjordan can be seen at the place of confluence of Yabbok and Jordan Rivers – Sukkot, Machanaim and Penuel. On the Israeli side, along the Tirzah Spring (not far from where it falls into the Jordan River) there was a road, which the Torah called “The Way of the Rising Sun.” In his farewell speech, Moses directs the people of Israel to follow this road (Deuteronomy 11:30). Today it is highway 57. When the people crossed the Jordan River, the waters of the river stood still in the area of Adam and exposed the bottom of the river. This allowed the Israelites to cross the river on dry land. They were then supposed to follow the “way of the rising sun” to Shechem to renew their covenant with God, this time in the land of Israel.

After seeing Kikar Adam and Transjordan, you have several travel options. One way is to follow highway 505 west; it is known as “Kvish Hotse Shomron”, meaning the “Trans-Samaria Highway”. At the Tapuah junction take highway 5 west, past Ariel, to get to the coast. Alternatively, at the junction of highways 505 and 458, take highway 458 (“Allon Road”) south. In about



3.5 km, make a right turn and drive past the picturesque mountains of southern Samaria into Shilo (described below in chapter 10). You will be passing by outposts Alei Ayin, Esh Kodesh, Kida, Achiya and Shvut Rachel. Then take highway 60 to return to Jerusalem.

*View of Ma'aleh Ephraim and the Jordan Valley*

# ROUTE 10

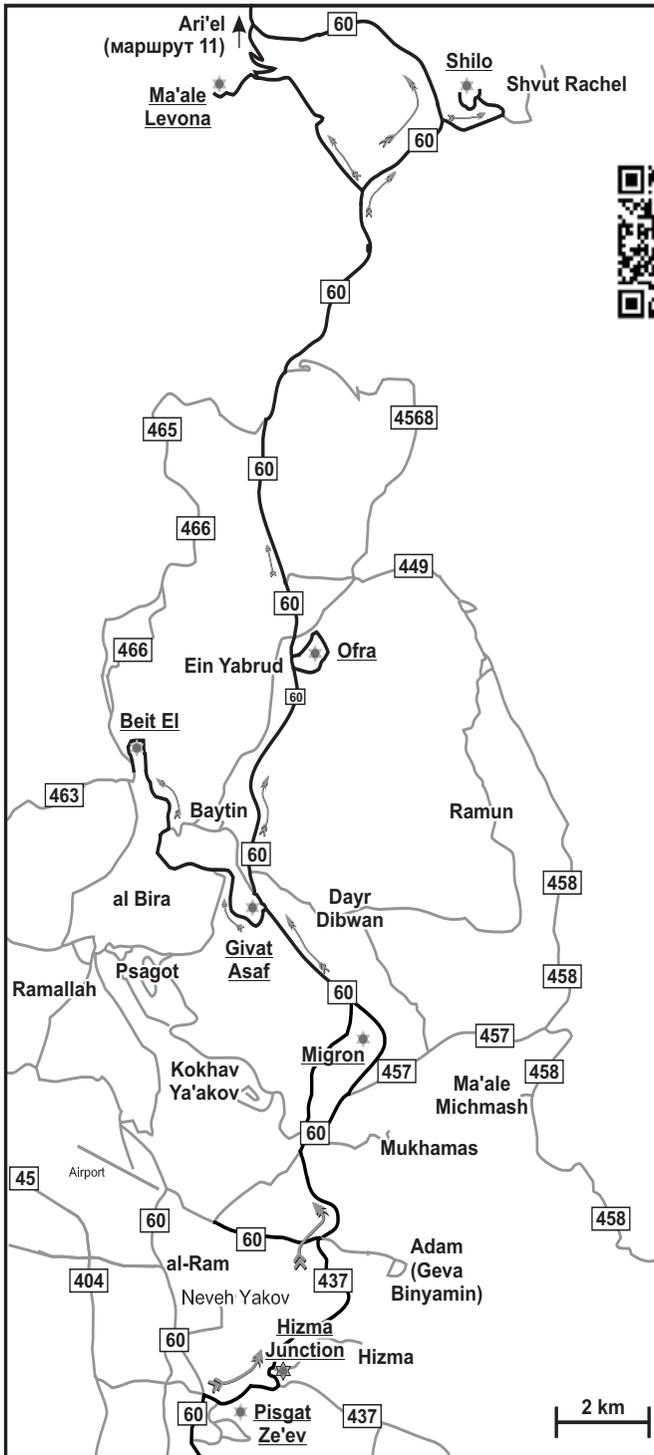
## SOUTHERN SAMARIA AND THE REGION OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

- Beit-El
- Ofra
- Ma'ale Levona
- Shilo
- Rechelim
- Ariel



*Jacob's Ladder in Beit-El*

# ROUTE 10



# ROUTE 10

## *Видеоматериалы*

Beit El – the site of Jacob’s dream.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ljh\\_RJCIJUU&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ljh_RJCIJUU&feature=plcp)



Shilo – place where Ark of the Covenant stood

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DilPVfVtLos&feature=plcp>



# ROUTE 10

## *List of coordinates of the points of interest mentioned in the route*

*(see the explanation on page 188)*

### Route 10. Southern Samaria and the Tribe of Benjamin Region

|                         | Latitude (N)              | Longitude (E)             |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| The Hisma checkpoint    | 31.828438<br>N 31°49.706' | 35.252656<br>E 35°15.159' |
| Beit-El                 | 31.939526<br>N 31°56.371' | 35.221303<br>E 35°13.278' |
| Ofra                    | 31.955676<br>N 31°57.34'  | 35.257634<br>E 35°15.458' |
| Shilo (the settlement)  | 32.052226<br>N 32°3.133'  | 35.297652<br>E 35°17.859' |
| Shilo (the excavations) | 32.05479<br>N 32°3.287'   | 35.289702<br>E 35°17.382' |
| Ma'ale Levona           | 32.053844<br>N 32°3.23'   | 35.238554<br>E 35°14.313' |

# ROUTE 10

## **ROUTE**

This route partially follows the “Way of the Patriarchs”, i.e. highway 60, in the ancestral lands of the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim. The southern entrance to this area is from Jerusalem and the northern (from Tel Aviv) is through Ariel via highway 5. From Jerusalem, start your journey in Pisgat Ze’ev and drive towards the Hizma checkpoint. After the checkpoint, on the roundabout, turn left on highway 437 north and drive towards the Adam settlement. Do not enter the settlement at the Adam roundabout, but take highway 60 towards Beit El. After about 8.5 km, take the left turnout to Beit El near caravan settlement Givat Asaf.

Further on, the road leads to the entrance to Beit El. (On the left is a checkpoint at the northern entrance to Ramallah.) After visiting Beit El, the place of Jacob’s dream, and the remnants of Jeroboam’s temple, get back on highway 60 north, passing by Ofra and Ma’ale Levona. Next stop is Shilo and then Ariel. Afterwards, return to Jerusalem or Tel Aviv.

## **HISTORY**

Benjamin’s inheritance is located in the south of Samaria. Although the inheritance is small in comparison to the land of other tribes, some of the most significant holy sites are located there. In the south, the land of Benjamin contains the Temple Mount (the rest of Jerusalem is located in the land of Judah.) Also, for some time, the tabernacle (Mishkan) was located in Nov and Givon, in Benjamin’s territory.

The book of Joshua describes miracles that occurred during the conquest of the land of Israel: parting of the Jordan River, crumbling of the Jericho walls, and celestial stones in Beit Horon. All these places are located in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Upon bestowing blessings on each tribe, Moses said about Benjamin, “The beloved of Hashem shall dwell in safety by Him; He covereth him all the day, and He dwelleth between his shoulders” (Deuteronomy 33:12). These words

# ROUTE 10

can mean that the Shechina (God's presence) dwells in the land of Benjamin, and that the Temple has to be built in Benjamin's territory. Today, after almost 2000 years of exile, we re-discover for ourselves places where famous biblical events took place. Jewish people carried with them the revelation of Jacob's dream for 3700 years of their history. It gave Jewish people strength and faith at the times of persecution, because this revelation, besides the promise of the land, was also saying: "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee back into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Genesis 28:15).

Southern Samaria is closely tied with both the life of our Forefathers and the life of the following generations. During the time of the Judges, Shilo in the land of Ephraim was the spiritual center of the Jewish state. After Jeroboam split Solomon's kingdom and pronounced himself the king of its northern part, he built an "alternative temple" in Beit El, a place considered holy from the times of Abraham and Jacob.

## **BEIT-EL**



**Watch the video "Beit El – the site of Jacob's dream".**

**See the link on p. 159.**

Beit El, one of the most remarkable places in southern Samaria, is situated on the Way of the Patriarchs. (After the Palestinian Authority took control of Ramallah, the route that passed through Ramallah was closed and highway 60 was moved east. Therefore, Beit El is currently afield from the main highway.) In ancient times, roads connecting Jerusalem and Shechem, and the Jordan valley and Modi'in passed through Beit El. Before the period of the Forefathers, this town was known as Luz. It had a very important geographical location, as it was the natural center of the region.

Beit El is mentioned in the Torah numerous times, starting with Abraham who built an altar there: "And he went on his journeys from the South even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent

# ROUTE 10

had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Ai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first; and Abram called there on the name of Hashem” (Gen.13:3-4).

Here, in Beit El, Jacob receives the promise of Eretz Israel: *“And Jacob went out from Beer-Sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon the place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and*

*put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold,*



*Beit-El. Point of Jacob's dream*

*HaShem stood beside him, and said: ‘I am Hashem, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And he called the name of that place Beth-el, but the name of the city was Luz at the first” (Genesis 28:10-19).*

Contemporary Beit El was built in 1974, close to the biblical Beth-el (the site of today’s Arab village Beitin). The population of Beit El is more than 6000. In 1930, biblical archaeologist William Albright concluded that the spot of Jacob’s dream is in the Beitin village itself. However, Israeli archaeologist Ze’ev Vilnai does not agree with him. He thinks that the place of Jacob’s dream is on Mount Artis, next to contemporary Beit El.

Vilnai substantiates his point of view with the following: Arab elders consider Mount Artis a “makam muqaddas”, a holy

# ROUTE 10

place. Mount Artis contains ruins of two structures: a mosque from the period of early Islam, and a Christian chapel from the time of the crusaders. Hundreds of Jewish burial places of the time of the second Temple are found in the area. In other words, there is substantial evidence that the place is holy to all three monotheistic religions. Today this place is designated as a national park due to numerous old trees found on the mountain. This is an additional proof that this place is holy, because trees were never cut down in holy places.

Jeroboam, the first king of the Israeli kingdom, built a temple in Beit El as an alternative to the Temple in Jerusalem. This place was chosen deliberately: the place of Jacob's dream was no less holy to the Jews than Jerusalem. Next to the "Makam muqaddas" on Mount Artis, there are ruins of a large public building. The building has very wide walls and its masonry is typical of the First Temple period. The size of the building is similar to the size of the Mishkan. There is a stone there with a huge flat surface; the large area around it served as a place of public gatherings during the holidays. The altar was usually located outside of the sanctuary, on a podium. A low heap of stones exists there even today. Bones of kosher animals were found on Mount Artis, supporting the theory that the ruins functioned as an altar. Incidentally, Jeroboam's temple faces not Jerusalem, but "makam muqaddas", the place of Jacob's dream. The area where sacrificial animals could be eaten was separated from the rest of the temple by a small fence. Remnants of this fence can be seen today.

Multiple wine presses and an ancient oil press are evidence of active Jewish life here in the First and Second Temple periods. When visibility is good and the air is clear, usually in the winter after rainfall, climb up to the observation platform on top of the water tower. From there you will see the entire coast from Ashkelon or Ashdod to Netanya in the west, Mount Hermon in the north, Transjordan in the east, and Jerusalem and the Judean Mountains in the south. Topography did not change in the last 4,000 years, and the view today is roughly the same

# ROUTE 10

view that Jacob saw when he heard: “The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed” (Genesis 28:13).

## **GIVAT ASAF**

Givat Assaf is an outpost at the turnout from highway 60 to Beit El. Prior to the Oslo Accords, highway 60 followed the Way of the Patriarchs through Ramallah and Beit El. After the treaty, the highway was moved east, to circumvent the territory given to the Palestinian Authority. As a result, Beit El is four kilometers off the main highway. The turnout to Beit El from highway 60 became strategically important because it is the only road connecting Beit El with Jerusalem. In May of 2001, Arabs killed Assaf HersHKovitz from the Ofra settlement at this junction. Three months earlier, his father Ari was killed by Arabs at exactly the same spot. In memory of Asaf, activists of the settlement movement built an outpost on the nearest hill, from which the junction could be under control. The new settlement was named Givat Asaf. Today more than 20 families live there. A legal struggle is underway to give this settlement the status of a full-fledged town.

## **OFRA**

Returning to highway 60 north, you will soon reach a settlement named Ofra. The ancient city of Ofra was located on the northern border of the land of the tribe of Benjamin, not far from Beit El.

A road that runs to the land of Shual through Ofra is mentioned in the book of Samuel:

“And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual” (Samuel I 13:17). It appears, the same city, with alternative spellings, is mentioned in different sources: in II Chronicles 13:19, the city is called Ephraim or Ephron; in the Book of the Maccabees (11:34), the city is called Aferema in Greek; in the New Testament (John 11:54) it is called Ephraim; in Eusebius’ Onomasticon (On the

# ROUTE 10

Place-Names in the Holy Scripture) and on the Madaba Map it is called Ephron.

According to most archaeologists, ruins of the ancient Ofra are located on the territory of the Arab village Taibe, northeast of the contemporary Ofra. Ofra is one of the first settlements founded by the Gush Emunim movement. The settlement has an interesting history. In the spring of 1975, members of Gush Emunim heard that the army was hiring freelance workers to build fortified enclosures around the army base in the immediate vicinity of the ancient Ofra. Several activists of Gush Emunim were hired for work, and within a couple of days of searching, they found a convenient place not far from the base to start building temporary housing. They requested permission from the army to stay there overnight instead of going to and from Jerusalem every day, and received it. On April 20, 1975, they settled in the place. Every year residents of Ofra celebrate this day as a day when Ofra was founded. Today Ofra counts 3000 residents.

## **MA'ALE LEVONA**

About 10 km north of Ofra on highway 60 is Ma'ale Levona, a settlement located on top of a hill on the left side of the road. Levona (Frankincense) is one of components of the incense used in the Temple. It was probably cultivated here in ancient times. The name of the town Levona is mentioned in the Book of Judges (21:19).

The contemporary settlement has 600 residents. There are traces of ancient buildings in the vicinity, although not enough to conclude that the present Ma'ale Levona settlement is at the site of the ancient town.

## **SHILO**



**Watch the video “Shilo – place where the Ark of the Covenant stood”. See the link on p. 159.**

Retrace your route from Ma'ale Levona to highway 60, and in about 2.7 km arrive at the contemporary settlement of Shilo,

# ROUTE 10



built next to the ruins of the ancient Shilo. The city was the religious capital of the Jewish people during the time of Judges from the 13th century until the 11th century BCE.



Remnants of the ancient Shilo are found on top of the hill located above the picturesque valley. There is a small visitor's center next to the archaeological site, which has exhibitions, miniature models, and films about archaeological diggings and ancient events. There is a fee to enter the archaeological park at the excavation site.

The Book of Judges tells about the tradition that existed in Shilo:

*And they said: 'Behold, there is the feast of Hashem from year to year in Shilo, which is on the north of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. 'And they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying: 'Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; and see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shilo come out to dance in the dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shilo, and go to the land of Benjamin" (Judges 21:19-21).*

On Tu B'Av, on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Av (usually celebrated in August), at the season of ripening of fruit, young unmarried girls went into the vineyards. They sang and danced among the grape vines so that young men who wanted to get married could meet them and find brides for themselves. This tradition disappeared in the Diaspora. Today it is gradually reappearing as the Israeli Holiday of Love or Jewish Valentine's Day.

During the period of Judges, the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle and an altar were located in Shilo, for 300 years. Here Hannah begged God for a son, who became the Prophet Samuel. Here, the period of Judges ended and the period of Kings began.

# ROUTE 10

Many years later, Jerusalem's Temple was modeled after the temple in Shilo that was destroyed by the Philistines. In the eastern side there was a big court called Ezrat Hanashim used for communal prayer (as well as by women on certain occasions). Advancing towards the inside, there were 15 steps where the Levites sang psalms and that led to the gates to the inner court where the altar was located. Only those who brought sacrifices were allowed into the inner court, called "Ezrat Yisrael." An experienced guide can point out these elements of the Temple architecture. Ancient biblical stories come alive, especially during holidays when present-day residents of Shilo perform plays on biblical subjects.

The Book of Jeremiah (6:12) tells about the destruction of Shilo and the capture of the Ark by the Philistines. He addressed the citizens of Jerusalem, who did not believe that the Temple and the city chosen by God could be destroyed. Jeremiah reminds them of the fate of Shilo and calls them to go and look at its ruins. Maybe the prophet brought guided tours here to show the Jews what was left of the Temple in Shilo and where the Tabernacle and the altar once stood. In the Book of Psalms and in the Book of Jeremiah, the destruction of Shilo symbolized punishment for moral wrongdoings. However, the Book of Jeremiah also gives another prophecy. The prophet comes back to Shilo after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. He sees the mountains of Samaria, where instead of vineyards and olive gardens, and instead of blossoming Jewish settlements, only ruins and ashes remained. Here Jeremiah the Prophet promises that, despite the ruins and ashes, there will be a time when Jewish settlements will be rebuilt in the mountains of Samaria, and vine groves will be planted on the slopes of the mountains.

## **RECHELIM**

Continue from Shilo north on highway 60 for 10.5 km. On the right side will be settlement Eli (3000 residents), named after the High Priest Eli, who raised Samuel the Prophet. At the

# ROUTE 10

intersection where a road to Ariel turns left, make a right turn (under highway 60) towards the settlement of Rechelim. This settlement was founded in 1992, at the place where Rachel Drouk and Itzhak Rofeh were murdered by terrorists. They were on their way to Tel Aviv to join the demonstration of the settlement movement when their bus was attacked.

In the beginning, an army base was established here, which eventually grew into a settlement with a religious center named after Itzhak Rofeh. The first residents of Rechelim lived in tents. Several years later, caravans appeared, and only later, were permanent stone houses built. Today approximately 20 families live in Rechelim.

## **ARIEL**

In 1978, a settler group decided to find a place in the mountains of Samaria for a new settlement. There were three options approved by the Israeli army: the first location became the Barkan settlement, the second became the Kfar Tapuah settlement, and the third became the city of Ariel, the largest Jewish settlement in Samaria today. The place selected for building the city was called “Jabel Mawat” (hill of death) by the Arabs because of the inhospitable terrain. An Arab village, Kifl Haris (biblical Timnath-heres), is located close by, only one kilometer north from the city. It is believed that Joshua Bin Nun and Caleb ben Yefuneh are buried there. Among all the people who left Egypt, they were the only two who were allowed to enter the Land of Israel: these two leaders of the Jewish people spoke from the very beginning about the necessity to conquer the Promised Land immediately, while the other ten spies sent with them came back scared of the “giants” that filled the land. The Jewish people were punished for this doubting, by having to wander in the desert for forty years, until those who were born as slaves in Egypt died, and the new generation of people free from the slave mentality grew up. Joshua and Caleb outlived their contemporaries and led the people to conquer Canaan.



# ROUTE 10

Today it is difficult to visit the graves of Joshua and Caleb. Authorities of the Arab village Kifl Haris allow tourists to visit the graves only three times a year, and only at night and under the protection of the army. However, it is thanks to the proximity to Kifl Haris, that the town of Ariel was founded.

Ariel is considered the capital of Israeli settlements in Samaria. The population is around 19,000. Highway 5 connects Ariel with Tel Aviv (about a half hour drive). The town of Ariel is located at 570-730 meters above the sea level. It is famous for its pleasant cool climate, greenery and clean air. The majority of the city's population is immigrants from the former USSR. Recently, the College of Ariel received the status of university, although Arabs and various leftist organizations tried to boycott it. Despite international and domestic pressure, Netanyahu's cabinet confirmed the status of Ariel's university. Ariel also has a Holocaust and Heroism Museum situated in the private house of Holocaust survivors Irene and Yaakov Vodislavski. The address of the museum is 44 HaNachshonim Street; you can reach it by calling 03-9060105. The hosts are always happy to receive guests and to show them around the museum.



Ariel has one hotel, Hotel Eshel haShomron, conveniently located at the Ariel intersection (Tzomet Ariel) at the western town entrance, near a gas station, where highway 5 turns into highway 505. On the hotel grounds is a museum "Park of Tanakh", and a reduced replica of the Temple Mount is under construction. There is a fee to visit the museum. Reservations can be made by calling 03-9366841.

*Entrance to the museum "Park of Tanakh"*

# ROUTE 11

## CENTRAL SAMARIA – LAND OF JOSEPH’S DESCENDANTS

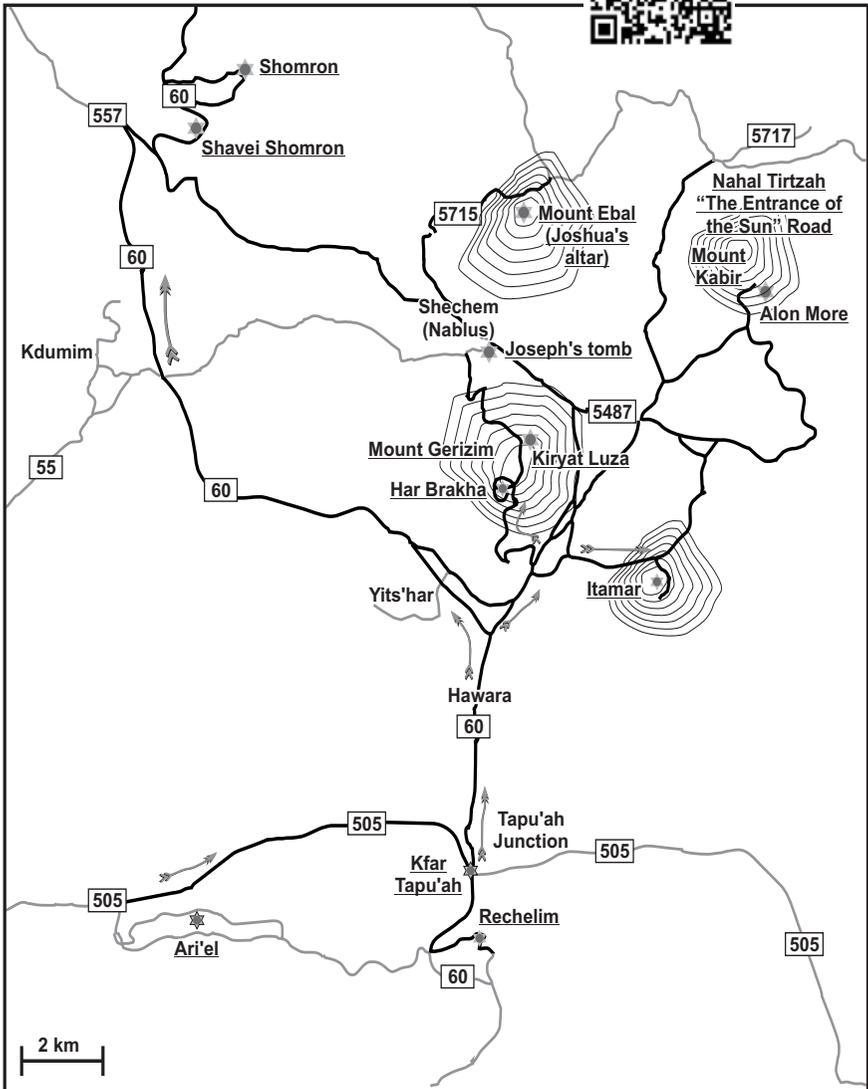
To tour central Samaria, we suggest two routes:

- 11A – Ancient Shomron (Sebastia), Mt. Ebal, Tel-Shechem, and Joseph’s Tomb.
- 11B – Itamar, Elon Moreh, Har Bracha, Mt. Gerizim and the Samaritans.



*Coin found in Psagot – the ancient symbol for winery*

# ROUTE 11



# ROUTE 11

## Videos

An Altar in Givon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41AYPXvnhaA>



By the roads of Prophet Jeremiah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cTDMrhAGYo>



Land of Israel Conquest by the Jewish people

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TlgVEL7M1gl>



Where the first ancient capital was. Around Shilo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgHuyinCgjA>



***List of coordinates of the points of interest  
mentioned in the route***

*(see the explanation on page 188)*

**Route 11. Central Samaria – the Land of Joseph’s Descendants**

|  | <b>Latitude (N)</b>       | <b>Longitude (E)</b>      |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| The Tapuah junction                    | 32.115149<br>N 32°6.908’  | 35.257001<br>E 35°15.42’  |
| Ariel, Hotel Eshel haShomron           | 32.107806<br>N 32°6.468’  | 35.162766<br>E 35°9.765’  |
| Rechelim                               | 32.101299<br>N 32°6.077’  | 35.255034<br>E 35°15.302’ |
| Shavei Shomron                         | 32.264455<br>N 32°15.867’ | 35.184395<br>E 35°11.063’ |
| Har Bracha                             | 32.192375<br>N 32°11.542’ | 35.264908<br>E 35°15.894’ |
| Kiryat Luza (the Samaritan settlement) | 32.203108<br>N 32°12.186’ | 35.270726<br>E 35°16.243’ |
| Itamar                                 | 32.174159<br>N 32°10.449’ | 35.308485<br>E 35°18.509’ |
| Elon Moreh                             | 32.232878<br>N 32°13.972’ | 35.33035<br>E 35°19.821’  |

# ROUTE 11

All the sites on route #11A are located in Zone A. You can get there only in tourist buses and in coordination with the army. To check what days Mt. Ebal and Sebastia (the capital of Shomron) are open for tourists, visit the website <http://www.midshomron.org.il/103171/English>, or call 09-8841359 or 09-8841623. After the Oslo Accords, Shechem (Nablus) became completely closed to Israelis. Joseph's Tomb can be visited only with special permission from the army, under guard and on specific days. In contrast to route 11A, all the sites on route 11B are located in Areas C and B and are open to visitors at any time.

## **HISTORY**

The ancient road from the Jordan Valley to Shechem goes along the Tirzah River. In the Torah, it is called the "Way of the Rising Sun." Today it is highway 57.

The first time Abraham saw the land promised to him was from Mt. Ebal, situated to the west of Shechem. After returning from the Egyptian slavery, the covenant between the Jewish people and God was renewed on Mountains Ebal and Gerizim. Joshua's altar (13 century BCE) used for this event was found on Mt. Ebal.

Central Samaria is located on the lands of Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Shomron, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Israel, was located northwest of Shechem. During the Second Temple period, Mount Gerizim served as the religious center of Samaritans. Although Central Samaria is rarely considered a tourist heaven, it is one of the most beautiful, lush and peaceful regions in Israel. It is especially felt in summer, coming up to this cool mountain area from the heat and humidity of the coast. Although it takes only half an hour from the coast to the mountains of Samaria (37 km from Ariel to Tel Aviv and 45 km from Har Bracha to Tel Aviv), the feeling is like being in a different country. Cool air, pastoral landscape,

# ROUTE 11

no rush or traffic on the roads. Despite the absence of summer rains, all the valleys are green thanks to the morning dew.

The significance of the Jewish settlements of this area (namely, Elon Moreh, Itamar, Har Bracha, and Yitzhar) is not only historic and touristic, but strategic as well: they are built on top of the mountains. This chain of Jewish settlements controls the only valley in Samaria, which splits the central mountain ridge of the country and connects the Jordan Valley with the coastal plain.

## **ROUTE**

The route begins at Samaria's main crossroads, the Tapuah Junction. To get there from Jerusalem, take highway 60. From Tel Aviv, take the Trans-Samaria Highway (highway 5), pass through Ariel and then get onto highway 60. From the Jordan Valley, take highway 505.

Route 11 A: From Tapuach, take highway 60 North and follow signs to Yitzhar, Kedumim, and Shavei Shomron. Alternatively, you can get here from the coastal plain via highway 55. Shavei Shomron is the starting point of all organized tours in armored buses to Mount Ebal and ancient Shomron (Sebastia).

Route 11 B: Drive approximately 5.5 km on highway 60 North from Tzomet Tapuach to Tzomet Gilad where highway 60 turns to the left and route 555 branches off to the right. Take route 555 for 1.7 km until you reach a roundabout. The first exit from it is route 555. It goes to the east, to Itamar, Elon Moreh and Mount Kabir. The second exit from the roundabout is the checkpoint at the entrance to Shechem; the road is closed to Israelis.

The third exit from the roundabout is a road without a number, which goes north-west to Mount Gerizim through Har Bracha and Kiryat Luza. A Samaritan community resides in Kiryat Luza; their museum is open to visitors.

From a panoramic viewpoint on Mount Gerizim, you can see Joseph's Tomb in Shechem and Joshua's altar. On the way back, follow the same road until you get to the checkpoint, and then to the Tapuah Junction.

# ROUTE 11

## **SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT GUSH EMUNIM**

It is not a coincidence that the first contemporary settlement in Samaria was named Elon Moreh, after the first stop Abraham made upon reaching the Holy Land. This settlement marks the founding in 1973 after the Yom Kippur War of the religious Zionist movement, Gush Emunim. At that time, the government was run by the left party Avoda, headed by Yitzhak Rabin. The Yom Kippur War showed the futility of hopes for peace with the Arabs, and the lack of confidence in the Israeli establishment. Therefore, the settlement movement decided to act on its own. After several failed attempts and changes in location, Elon Moreh settled in its current location. Its original location is the present settlement of Kedumim. Then-opposition leader Menahem Begin supported the Gush Emunim movement and declared that “the government does not have any right to prevent Jews from settling anywhere in the land of Israel.”

Kedumim was established only after the seventh attempt. On Hanukah, November 30, 1975, thousands of supporters of the settlement movement occupied an empty railroad station in Sebastia and managed to stay there for eight days, which forced the government to agree to a new settlement. (At the beginning of the twentieth century, this was a station of the Hejaz Railway.) Prior to these events, the movement managed to get permission for the new settlement of Ofra at the foot of Mount Baal Hazor, north of Ramallah (see route 10).

In 1977, Likud came to power in Israel for the first time. The next day after the elections, Begin came to Kedumim and declared that many settlements like Elon Moreh will grow in the future and that his government, unlike the previous one, will support and not hinder the creation of new settlements in Judea and Samaria. The building of new settlements began, but the peace treaty with Egypt put a freeze on all building plans. And again, struggle with the government commenced, this time with its own Likud party. Despite Arab terror and Israeli government resistance, the Gush Emunim movement built 160 settlements

# ROUTE 11

and 100 outposts in Judea and Samaria, thus fundamentally changing the political map and the entire history of Israel.

## **ROUTE 11A - City of Shomron (Sebastia), Mt. Ebal (Joshua's altar), Tel Shechem, and Joseph's Tomb.**

At the northern border of the Arab village Hawara, highway 60 turns west towards the Yitzhar settlement. This section of highway 60 is called Tzir Gilad, in memory of the murdered here in 2001 Gilad Zar, son of Moshe Zar, one of the founders of the settlement movement. The Jewish settlement Yitzhar is located on top of the mountain. Its population is 1000. To the right is the Givat Ronen outpost. About 9 km north of Yitzhar, and 1.5 km before the Kedumim Junction (the intersection of routes 55 and 60), is the settlement Havat Gilad. Its residents refuse to put up a wall as a matter of principle. The Kedumim settlement is 2 km west from the junction, on route 55. It was founded in 1977. Its population today is 4000.

To continue to Shavei Shomron, at the Kedumim Junction take highway 60 north. After Ariel Sharon's destruction of the Jewish settlements of Homesh and Sanur in 2005, passage to northern Samaria was closed for Israelis. There is a hotel for overnight stay in Shavei Shamron. The road to the archaeological park begins right behind the walls of the settlement.

## **SHOMRON (SEBASTIA)**

In tenth century BCE, Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern (Israeli) kingdom, placed two golden calves on the northern and southern borders of his territory, namely, in Dan and Beit El, so that the Jews of the ten northern tribes would not go to Jerusalem. The capital of the northern kingdom at that time was Tirzah. Jeroboam's dynasty did not last long. The Book of Kings relates the story of the war between two generals, Zimri and Omri. The victorious Omri ruled the country for 13 years from Tirzah, after which he moved the capital to a new city, Shomron. He built the new capital on a mountain, bought from a man by the name of Shemer from the tribe of Ephraim. The

# ROUTE 11

name Shemer was immortalized in the name of the capital, and today in the name of the entire region of Shomron (Samaria), as well as in the people who came to live there, the Samaritans (Shomronim in Hebrew).

In those days, the city was considered huge: it occupied a total of 32 hectares. Later, during Herod's rule, it expanded to 85 hectares. In comparison, the city of David was 6 hectares, and during the First Temple, Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, was 14 hectares.

On top of the hill, the palaces of Omri and his son Ahab were located. Today, tour buses drop off tourists at a large trade square, decorated with columns; the tour of the Sebastia ruins begins and ends there. The entire territory is a national park of Israel. The right side of the square is called Bula, a place where city meetings were held during the Herodian period.

Herod rebuilt the ancient Shomron and renamed the city Sebastia, in honor of the first emperor of Rome Octavian Augustus, disregarding the taste of the Jewish population ("sebastos" is the Greek equivalent of the Latin "augustus", meaning "divine".) Then again, there were almost no Jews in the city during Herod's reign; it was mainly populated by Greek-speaking residents.

At the foot of the mountain, among the cypress trees, there is an entire row of columns – these are the remains of Herod's hippodrome. At Herod's time, the city wall was there too. On top of the mountain are the impressive ruins of royal palaces: the palace of Omri, the founder of the city, palaces of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, as well as the palace of Jeroboam the Second. Numerous fragments of ivory jewelry, for which the royal residence was famous, were found here.

Elijah the prophet, a prophet of the northern kingdom during the reign of Ahab, was in conflict with the authorities and did not live in Shomron. But his disciple, the prophet Elisha was a resident of the city. Prophet Amos came to Shomron from Tekoa. When the authorities heard his angry, accusatory speeches, they expelled Amos from the city and sent him to

# ROUTE 11

his hometown of Tekoa. Amos described Shomron, its social injustice, the king's bed and chambers made of ivory, and prophesied to the city's affluent citizens that they would be exiled.

The winding path around the mountaintop leads to the ruins of the Byzantine church. It is believed that the head of John the Baptist is buried in the crypt of the church. Columns from the Herodian period were used in the construction of the church.

## **MT. EBAL (JOSHUA'S ALTAR), TEL SHECHEM, JOSEPH'S TOMB.**

Mount Ebal (945 m above sea level) is the tallest of all four mountains surrounding the Shechem valley. A big hill of stones still stands on mount Ebal. Archaeologist Adam Zartal examined the hill and concluded that it is an old sacrificial altar from the period of Joshua bin Nun, probably the one described in the Book of Joshua (8:30-32):

*“Then Joshua built an altar unto HaShem, the God of Israel, in mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of HaShem commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of unhewn stones, upon which no man had lifted up any iron; and they offered thereon burnt-offerings unto HaShem, and sacrificed peace-offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote before the children of Israel.”*

It is interesting that inside Joshua's square altar, there is another, more ancient round altar, possibly belonging to Abraham himself. Note that Joshua's altar is not located on top of the mountain. Building altars on mountain peaks was a pagan custom. Jews built their altars on low mountains or on slopes, emphasizing the greatness of God and the humility of man. This custom can be seen in other places as well, primarily in Shilo. In another example, the Temple in Jerusalem was not built on the highest mountain.

The low stone fence around the altar is well preserved, outlining the territory where the eating of sacrificial food was allowed.

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Animal bones found on this spot confirm that it was a Jewish altar: not only were all the animals kosher, but they were all one-year-old males, used for Jewish sacrifice.

During the period of the Judges, cities were small and only the rulers resided there. The main population lived in the surrounding areas, finding shelter in temporary housing, caves and tents. One such small city was Shechem. Tel Shechem, an excavated mound on the site of ancient Shechem, can be easily seen from Mount Gerizim. The town was situated in the valley between Mounts Gerizim and Ebal.

The Book of Joshua (8:30-34) describes a ceremony in which the Jewish people renewed their covenant with God. The kohanim (Jewish priests) with the Ark of the Covenant stood in the Shechem valley between Mounts Gerizim and Ebal. The Israelites stood on the slopes of mountains, each tribe taking its assigned spot: Six tribes stood on Mount Ebal: Reuven, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naftali. The other six tribes stood on Mount Gerizim: Shimon, Levi, Judah, Yissachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. In ancient times, instead of sound amplifiers and microphones, natural topography was used to amplify sound. There are four mountains surrounding the Shechem Valley, creating a closed acoustic system. Three million people stood on the slopes of mounts Gerizim and Ebal, and everybody heard the words of the priests bless those who were true to the covenant with God and curse those who were not:

*Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if ye shall hearken unto the commandments of HaShem your God, which I command you this day; and the curse, if ye shall not hearken unto the commandments of HaShem your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. And it shall come to pass, when HaShem thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt set the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 11:26-29).*

# ROUTE 11

The Tribes who stood on Mount Gerizim repeated the words of the blessing and the tribes who stood on Mount Ebal repeated the words of the curses. That is why the mountain of Gerizim is often referred to as “the mountain of blessings” and Ebal as the “mountain of curses”. It does not mean that Mount Ebal itself is cursed; it is just as holy and important for the Jews as Mount Gerizim. For this reason, Joshua placed his altar on Mount Ebal.

To commemorate the covenant between God and the Jewish people, Joshua put an enormous stone in Shechem, which is still there today. The second way in which the covenant was commemorated, was that the Joseph’s remains taken out of Egypt were buried in Shechem:

*And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of the children of Joseph (Joshua 24:32).* Joseph’s tomb in Shechem symbolizes the renewal of the covenant.

## **ROUTE 11 B – Itamar, Elon Moreh, Har Bracha, Mount Gerizim, the Samaritans**

North of Hawara village, highway 60 turns north-west (as does our Route 11A). Road 555 splits off to the north-east. Take it until a roundabout in 1.7 km. Straight ahead is Shechem and a checkpoint, but the road to Shechem is closed. You can either turn right continuing on route 555 to Itamar, then to Elon Moreh and Mount Kabir, or turn left towards Mount Gerizim, the Jewish settlement Har Bracha and the Samaritan settlement Kiryat Luza. From Mount Gerizim, you can see Joseph’s Tomb and Joshua’s stone erected to commemorate the covenant in the Shechem valley.

The Itamar settlement was founded in 1984. Today, more than 1000 residents live there. Itamar consists of the central section, and of several quarters and agricultural farms located on the nearby hills, spreading for more than 10 kilometers from west to east along the mountain ridge, over the strategically

# ROUTE 11

important Beit Dagan valley. Itamar contains vast pastures, olive groves, and vineyards. It also includes poultry farms, livestock, and other kinds of agriculture. Itamar is an example of a very successful agricultural settlement in Samaria, which is probably not to the liking of some of its neighbors. On March 11, 2011, the entire country was stricken by tragedy when Arabs from the nearby village of Awarta entered a house in Itamar in the middle of the night and killed five members of the Fogel family, including small children.

The water sources near Itamar supply the settlement with water. The residents of Itamar grow ecologically clean vegetables and breed ecologically clean animals (chickens, goats). In addition to not using chemicals, the settlement practices the Zionist principle of “Avoda Ivrit” (Jewish labor). All labor is performed by the residents themselves, with no Arab or Thai workers. We recommend visiting several private agricultural farms in Itamar:

1. Nekuda Kafrit Farm (Village Point Farm). Go straight after entering the settlement. The owner’s name is David Itzhak. He decided to start his own farm when his friend and resident of Itamar Joseph Tvit was murdered in a terror attack. Talking about himself, David says that he was always fidgety. In school, he felt like he was in prison, and sitting still through an entire class was real torture for him. He created in Itamar an agricultural school for difficult teenagers. He teaches them the way children were taught in ancient times, with lessons taking place outside, between working the fields. All guests of the farm are offered tea, coffee, dates and nuts. Animals of the farms are also always happy to greet the guests: you can ride a horse, and feed the goats, sheep and a camel.

2. Givat Olam Farm (Top of the World Farm). This farm was founded in 1996 by Avri Ran. He started from scratch, like most of the local businesses. Fifteen years later, an agricultural farm that yields ecologically clean produce blooms in the center of Samaria with free range chickens and goats that give amazing country cheese. Avri’s originality can be seen in the barn: there is a piano there! Apparently, goats like music too. As a

# ROUTE 11

matter of fact, in many Israeli dairy farms, cows are milked while listening to music. It is considered to be a small secret of good milk products...

## **ELON MOREH**

The settlement was founded in 1975. In 1980, after five years of frequently moving from one place to another in search of a permanent place, after a life in tents, it finally found its permanent home on Mount Kabir. More than 1500 people live there today.

The name of the settlement, “Elon Moreh”, literally means “pointing oak”, a sign on the road. The first place where Abraham stopped after entering the holy land was Elon Moreh, and there God promised him: “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Genesis 12:7). We do not know exactly where this promise was made, and the “pointing oak” of that period of course did not survive until modern times. There are several mountains in the vicinity of Shechem: Kabir, Itamar, Gerizim, and Ebal. The tallest is Mount Ebal. The entire land is visible only from this mountain, which means that the ancient Elon Moreh was somewhere on it.

## **MOUNT KABIR**

A new road leads from Elon Moreh to the top of Mount Kabir. An easy walk around the top of the mountain takes about an hour. From Mount Kabir, one can see Joshua’s Altar on Mount Ebal through binoculars; the valley along the Tirzah River, where the first capital of the northern kingdom once was; and flowing with springs, “the Way of the Rising Sun.” Unfortunately, all of these sites are located in Zone A, so for now we have to settle for the view from above.

# ROUTE 11

## **HAR BRACHA SETTLEMENT ON MOUNT GERIZIM**

On the left side of the road on top of Mount Gerizim is an entrance to the settlement Har Bracha, literally “the Mountain of Blessing.” You feel real serenity there. The settlement was founded in 1983. Today, its population is 1800 people. Under the guidance of Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, the local yeshiva students combine learning Torah with working in their respective professions.

The settlement has caravans with modern accommodations for overnight stay (Kfar HaNofesh Shomron can be reached at 02-656-6694.) Wine from local vineyards, permeated with the energy of the Mount of Blessings, is wonderfully delicious. At the exit from the settlement (if you continue on the same road you came), on the right side, there is a wooden house with a gazebo – the local restaurant, whose modest architecture and interior is compensated by wonderful wine and a striking view. The restaurant is open only with advance reservation (052-5775156, Nir).

Continue driving for two more kilometers until you reach the modern settlement of Kiryat Luza, built by the Israeli government for the Samaritans, who previously lived in Shechem. On Mount Ebal there is a military base for strategic reconnaissance, which controls the airspace over Samaria and Transjordan.

## **MOUNT GERIZIM, THE SAMARITANS**

Mount Gerizim is one of the four mountains surrounding the Shechem valley, and at 881 m above sea level is the second tallest after Mount Ebal. The history of the Samaritans is closely connected to Mount Gerizim. In 722 BCE, Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and exiled most of the population into Assyrian captivity. Instead of the ten Israeli tribes, Assyrians brought other captive nations to live in the Northern Kingdom. The Jews called them “Cuthim” (Cuthah is a town near Babylon). Second Kings (17:24-28) tells that these people practiced a mixture of Judaism and paganism.

# ROUTE 11

Mixing with the remains of the Jewish people and adopting their customs, the newcomers became a new people called the Samaritans. Until today, they consider themselves to be the true Israel, the keepers of the old tradition. This feeling was further enforced by the Babylonian conquest of Judea in the sixth century BCE.

During the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile and started building the Temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritans suggested that they join the Jewish people in this construction and eventually become one people. However, the Jews who had just returned from Babylon saw as one of their main missions fighting paganism, and refused. This began a feud between the Jews and the Samaritans.

Samaritans declared Mount Gerizim to be holier than Jerusalem. They substituted the word “mountain” with “Gerizim” in some places in the Torah. At the end of the fourth century BCE, the Samaritans built their own Temple on Mount Gerizim. It stood for two centuries, until Antiochus IV Epiphanes converted it into Temple of Zeus around 167 BCE. The Temple of the Samaritans was completely destroyed by the Hasmonean King John Hyrcanus.

After numerous uprisings of the Samaritans against Byzantium, a church was built on the ruins of the ancient Temple; eventually, it was rebuilt into a Crusader’s fortress. All the ruins on top of the mountain today are a national park and open to visitors. Today there are a total of 720 Samaritans. In 1980, the Samaritans, with the help of the Israeli government, founded their own settlement, called Kiryat Luza. The Samaritan community of Shechem (around 500 people) gradually moved to Kiryat Luza because of their difficult living conditions in Shechem, and to escape assaults from the local Muslim majority.

In the Samaritan museum of Kiryat Luza, the visitors are told that Samaritans descend from three Israeli tribes – Ephraim, Menashe (Joseph’s sons) and Levi, while contemporary Jews descend from the three tribes who lived in the southern

# ROUTE 11

kingdom: Judah, Benjamin and Levi (Levites did not have their own land and lived on the territory of other tribes).

Samaritans revere the Five Books of Moses, but do not include Prophets and Writings, except for the Book of Joshua, into their holy books. The Samaritans begin their history with the Israelites' crossing of the Jordan River. They believe that the Ark of the Covenant was on Mount Gerizim; they keep many biblical commandments, such as offering the Passover sacrifice. During the Samaritan Passover, crowds of Israelis gather on Mount Gerizim to watch the ceremony.

During Succoth, Samaritans do not build temporary dwellings, as the Jews do, but rather make trellises of fresh fruit, which they attach to the ceilings of their homes. Mezuzahs of the Samaritans are hung over the entrance to the house. They are not small parchment scrolls (like the Jewish mezuzah), but stone tablets with verses from the Torah. Samaritan mezuzahs, as all Samaritan texts, are written in the ancient script, "ktav kadum"; it is the alphabet that all Jews used prior to the Babylonian exile.

## **Using geographical coordinates in GPS Navigation Programs**

In our Travel Guide we provide the geographic coordinates (latitude, longitude) for the main points of all routes. If you are traveling independently with a GPS navigator, this will enable you to get exact directions to the destination, instead of searching for an address or object.

Of course, after entering the coordinates into the navigation program, you must make sure that it “understood” you correctly, and that it found the right spot!

In some cases, the coordinates do not accurately indicate the object; sometimes navigators are configured not to the object itself but to the nearest accessible point.

Our guide is designed primarily for tours led by tour guides. If you are traveling without a guide, you should be especially cautious and responsible, especially in the vicinity of “Arab” areas and in the deserts.

Below you will find a short description of how to set geographic coordinates in the popular navigation programs, iGo and Waze. This is not as simple and intuitive as we would like it to be; the screens might differ in the various program versions which are constantly updated. Navigation with these coordinates is also possible using other navigation programs (example: Garmin Navigator).

### **iGo**

Because a significant part of our routes are situated in the “territories”, check the “permit needed” configuration under the “Configuration of Route” field so that you will be able to drive through the roads that “require special permission”.

1. Open the Menu of the Navigator and choose Find
2. In the search menu, choose More.
3. In the new window, choose Coordinate.
4. A screen will appear, ready for you to enter the latitude. By clicking on the north or south hemisphere, you choose north

or south latitude (northern is the default, which is of course the correct choice for all of Israel). Indicate the exact latitude you are looking for (in iGo it is impossible to copy-paste a coordinate).

5. Choose the longitude search. By default, choose Eastern longitude, which, again, is the correct choice for Israel. Indicate the longitude of the destination and then press “Done”.

6. If everything has been entered correctly, a map should appear with the indicated destination at the center. Press “Next” and get directions to your chosen destination.

## **Waze**

Because a significant part of our routes are situated in the “territories”, it is important to turn off the “Keep within areas under Israeli authority” configuration in the Navigation rubric.

1. In the Waze Menu, choose Navigate.

2. In the search window enter the coordinates, separated by a comma. Warning! In the older versions of the program, one needed to enter longitude and then latitude. In the newer versions, you need to enter the coordinates in their “natural” order — latitude first. Press “Search”.

3. If everything has been entered correctly, a map should appear with the indicated destination at the center. In the latest version of Waze, an intermediate screen appears with the search results. With any particular pair of coordinates, there is only one possible point (it may lack a name). Choose this point and then press Go.

Don’t forget to use a map to double check that you have chosen the correct destination and the route the navigator will show you!

At the beginning of every route you will see a list of coordinates of its main destinations. The order of the coordinates is: latitude, longitude. To work with different navigators, we offer coordinates of destinations in two formats: in tenths of a degree and in the “N/E degree ° minute ‘ “ format.



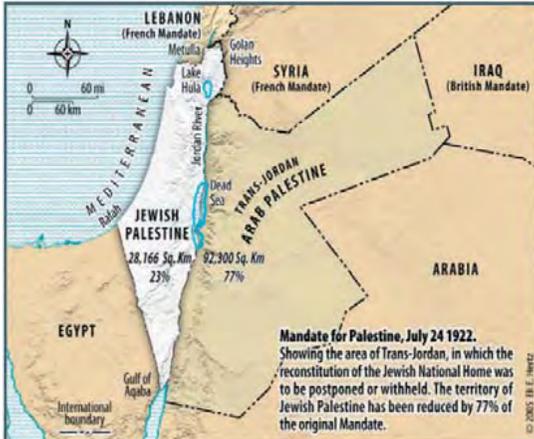
# INTRODUCTION

## HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY: “PARTITIONS OF PALESTINE” IN XX CENTURY



### Palestine as the League of Nations Mandate territory.

The decisions of 1920 London and San-Remo conferences followed by 1922 League of Nations Mandate incorporated the Balfour Declaration of 1917 – “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”.



**Exclusion of Transjordan from the British Mandate for Palestine (1922).** 77% of the Mandate territory was excluded from the provisions regarding Jewish settlement. Technically Palestine and Transjordan remained one mandate, but most official documents referred to them as if they were two separate mandates.

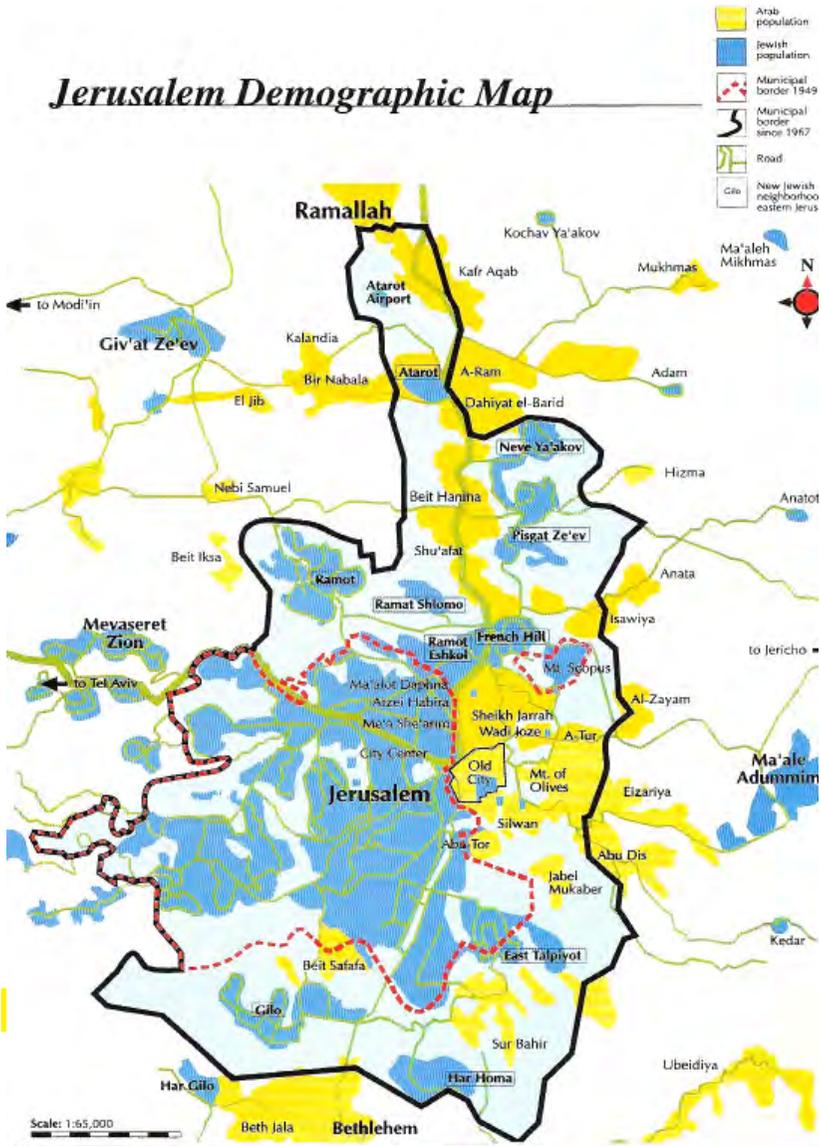


The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was a proposal developed by the United Nations. On 29 November 1947, the U.N. General Assembly adopted the Plan as Resolution 181. The plan was accepted by the Jewish public, and by the Jewish Agency despite the fact that the territory of the Jewish State according to the plan was only about 10% of the 1920 Mandate. Arab leaders and governments rejected the plan and the civil war broke out. Immediately after the new Jewish state was declared in May 1948, armies of 5 Arab states invaded Israel. The partition plan was never implemented.

**After the War of Independence** In 1949, Israel signed armistice agreements with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Israel occupied territories of about one-third more than was allocated to the Jewish State under the UN partition plan but Judea, Samaria and the Old City of Jerusalem were occupied by Jordan.

# INTRODUCTION

## *Jerusalem Demographic Map*



# **ROUTE 1**

## **Southern Judea – Hebron hills**



**Ascent to Tel Zif**



**Festival in ancient Susya**



**Ancient synagogue in Susya**



**All roads lead to the synagogue**



**Yatir Forest on sunset**



**Mitzpe Abigail**

# ROUTE 2

## HEBRON



**Ma'arat HaMachpelah – Cave of the Patriarchs**



**View of the Arab part of Hebron from Yeshiva in Kiryat Arba**



**These stones have seen Abraham**



**A former Jewish house in the Arab Casbah**



**Two-story "caravan" houses in Tel Rumeida**



**Memorial on the site of death of little Shalhevet Paz**

# ROUTE 3

## NORTHERN JUDEA



Ancient Roman milestone



Ancient mikveh on the way to Jerusalem



Nahal Maayanot,  
Gush Etzion



A prayer at Rachel's Tomb



Near the ruins of Beitar



The Way of the Patriarchs (near Alon Shvut)

# ROUTE 4

## JUDEAN DESERT



On the walking route  
at Nahal Og



Qumran National Park



Hyrcania



Oasis in the Judean desert (near Beit Hogla)



Nabi Musa

# **ROUTE 5**

## **Ancient Jerusalem**



**Archaeological Park of the Southern wall of the Temple Mount**



**The entrance to the Hasmonean Tunnel**



**The Golden Gate – the gate of the Messiah**



**The Western Wall**



**Excavations of the main street of ancient Jerusalem**



**The entrance to the City of David**

# ROUTE 6

## Jewish antiquities of East Jerusalem



Excavations at Nabi Samuel



Jews in Shimon HaTzadik Neighborhood



Tell El Ful (Gibeah of Benjamin). The unfinished palace of King Hussein



Psagot Winery



The ancient «Tomb of the giants»

# ROUTE 7

## A road to Jericho



Wadi Qelt (Nahal Prat)



View to Jerusalem from Ma'ale Adumim



Herodian Palaces in Jericho



Excavations of Herod's palaces in Jericho



Mosaic in the museum of «The Good Samaritan»

# **ROUTE 8**

## **Jericho and its Surroundings**



**Qasr El Yahud**



**In the settlement of Beit Hogla  
with Erna Kobus**



**Excavations of the ancient city  
of Beit Hogla**



**Plains of Jericho and Mount Nebo**

# ROUTE 9

## Jordan Valley



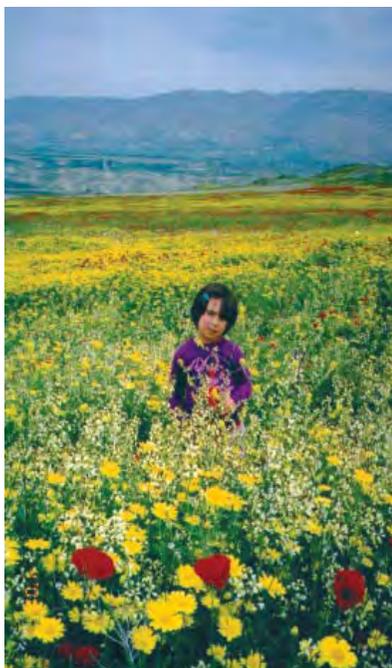
View of the Ma'ale Ephraim settlement



Turn to the settlement Mevo'ot Yericho



Kikar Adam - an junction of the ancient roads



Blooming Jordan Valley



The road to the ancient synagogue in Na'aran

# ROUTE 10

## South Samaria and the Tribe of Benjamin region



Beit El



Beit El – the site of Jacob's dream



The ancient Shilo



Blooming almond trees in Samaria



Synagogue in Shilo



Mandrakes in Shilo

# ROUTE 11

## Central Samaria – Land of Joseph's Descendants



The museum of Samaritans on Mount Gerizim



Tel-Shechem. Night visit to the Joseph's Tomb



Mosaic in the ruins of an ancient synagogue



Ancient altar on Mount Ebal