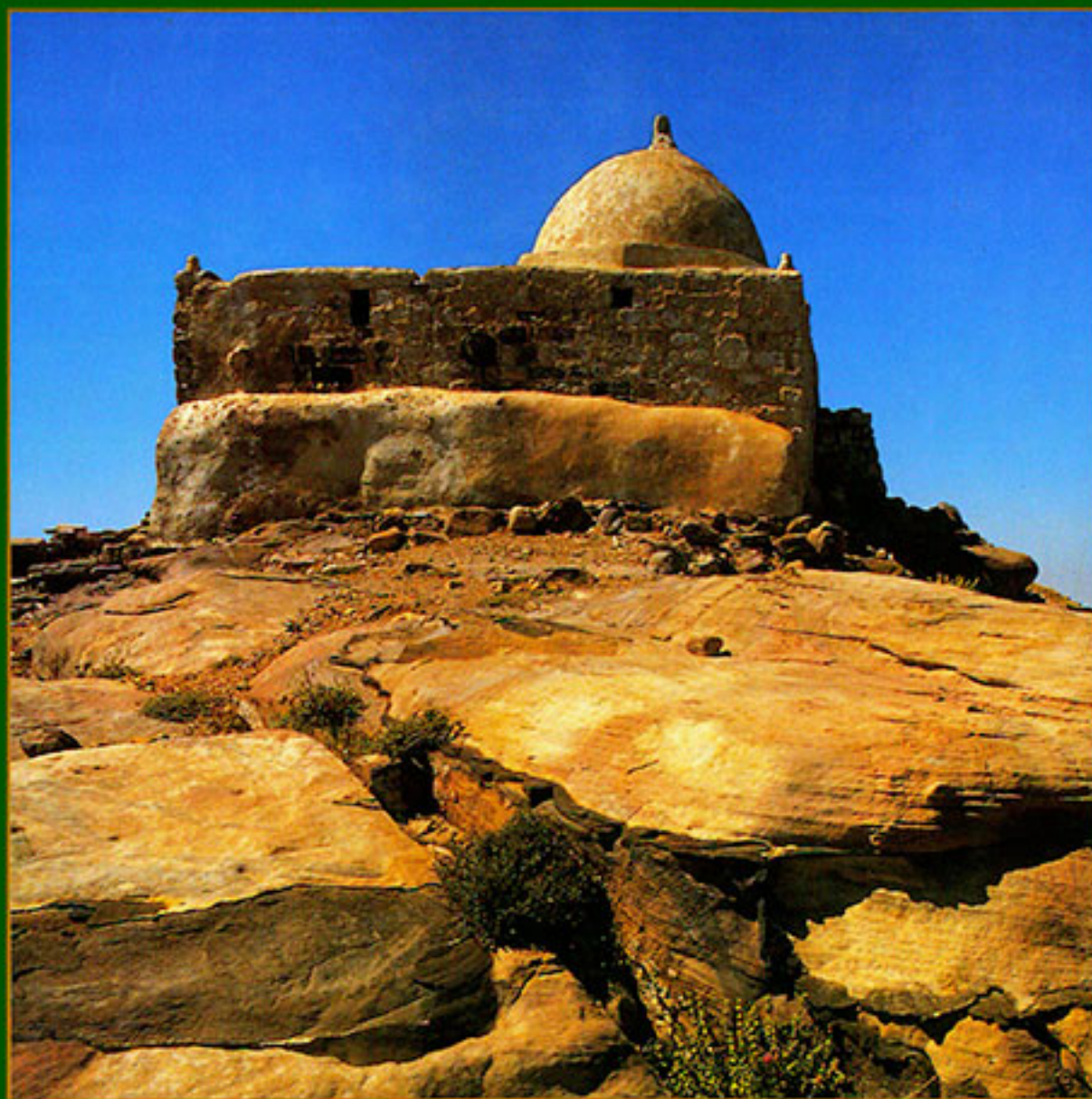


THE HOLY SITES OF JORDAN

مَقَامَاتُهَا الْأَشْرَفُ



THE
HOLY
SITES
OF
JORDAN

Published by TURAB (owned by The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought)

Photography [Islamic Sites]: Fakhry Malkawi

Photography [Christian Sites]: Father Michele Piccirillo and Dino Politis

Cover photograph: Ammar Khammash

Text [Islamic Sites]: Sheikh Hassan Saqaf

Fatwa on visiting Sacred Sites: Sheikh Hassan Saqaf (Trans. Ja'far Hassan)

Text [Christian Sites]: Father Michele Piccirillo

Design and layout: Andrea Atalla and Susan Wood

Senior Editor: Ghazi Bin Mohammed

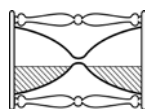
This edition is reproduced from the second edition with errata added 2013 © Copyright TURAB

Second edition 1999

First edition 1996

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

THE
HOLY
SITES
OF
JORDAN



TURAB

جَمْعِيَّةُ تَرَابِ الْأَرْضِ الْبَلَدِيَّةِ
(تَرَاب)

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION	11
PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION	13
INTRODUCTION	14
ARABIC INTRODUCTION	18
BOOK I	21
ISLAMIC SITES:	
<i>A Fatwa</i> Regarding Visiting Holy Sites	22
PART I:	25
The Messengers and the Prophets	
The Prophet Nuh / Noah ﷺ	27
The Prophet Hud ﷺ	29
The Prophet Lut / Lot ﷺ	31
The Prophet Khidr ﷺ	33
The Prophet Shu'ayb / Jethro ﷺ	35
The Prophet Harun / Aaron ﷺ	37
The Prophet Musa / Moses ﷺ	39
The Prophet Yosha' / Joshua ﷺ	41
The Prophet Dawud / David ﷺ	
The Prophet Sulayman / Solomon ﷺ	45
The Prophet Ayyub / Job ﷺ	47
The Prophet Yahya / John ﷺ	49
The Prophet 'Isa / Jesus ﷺ	51
The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ	53
PART II:	55
The Companions ﷺ	
Ja'far bin Abi Talib ﷺ	56
Zeid ibn Al-Harithah ﷺ	57
Abdallah bin Rawahah ﷺ	58
Abu 'Ubaydah 'Amir ibn Al-Jarrah ﷺ	59
Mu'ath bin Jabal ﷺ	60
Shurhabil bin Husnah ﷺ	60

CONTENTS

'Amir bin Abi Waqqas	61
Dirar bin Al-Azwar	61
Al-Harith bin 'Umayr Al-Azadi	62
Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari	63
Abu Al-Darda'a	65
Bilal bin Rabah	65
Maysarah bin Masruq Al-Abassi	66
'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl	66
Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari	67
Farwa bin 'Amro Al-Jadhami	67
Abd Al-Rahman bin 'Auf	68
Jabir bin Abdallah	69
Ka'ab bin Umayr Al-Ghifari	69
 PART III:	 71
Other Religious Sites	
The Cave of the Sleepers / <i>Kahf al-Raqim</i>	71
Zeid bin Ali bin Al-Hussein	72
Sheeth / Seth	72
Gadur / Gad	73
Hazir / Asher	74
'Uyun Musa / Moses' Springs	75
 PART IV:	 77
Historical Sites	
The Site of the Battle of Mu'tah	77
The Site of the Battle of Fahl	77
The Site of the Battle of Yarmouk	77
The Hill of Judication / <i>Jabal Al-Tahkim</i>	79
'Uthman's Mosque at Ayla	79
Humayma	79
 PART V:	 81
Appendices	
Appendix I: Jerusalem	81
Appendix II: The Letter of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to the Emperor Heraclius	82
Appendix III: The Royal Cemetery	84
 MAP OF ISLAMIC HOLY SITES	 86

CONTENTS

BOOK II	89
CHRISTIAN SITES:	
Introduction: A Pilgrim's Journey Through the Holy Land	91
PART I:	95
The Biblical History of the Land	
The Sanctuaries Along the Roman Road (Esbus-Livias)	96
PART II:	99
The Jordan River	
Epiphany	100
Bethabara	103
The Bethany - Saphsaphas	104
Wadi Kharrar and the Story of St. Mary the Egyptian	105
Elijah	106
PART III:	109
The Saints	
Saint Lot	109
John the Baptist	111
Moses	113
The Hot Springs	115
The Springs of Moses ('Uyun Musa)	115
Mount Nebo	116
The Memorial of Moses	118
The Origin of the Memorial to Moses on Mount Nebo	120
Egerias View from Mount Nebo	123
Today's View from Mount Nebo	124
The Mountain Where Moses Died	125
How the History of Pilgrims to Mount Nebo was Discovered	126
Jerash (Gerasa)	131
The Cross	132
The Virgin Mary	133
Soldier Saints	133
Madaba Map	134
Um Al-Rasas	137
Aaron's Tomb	139
MAP OF CHRISTIAN HOLY SITES	141

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks must first of all go to H.M. King Hussein for his untiring efforts and support for the preservation and refurbishment of all the Holy Sites in Jordan. It was His Majesty who first and repeatedly called for attention to be paid to this part of Jordan's heritage, and it was he who ordered the formation of a *Royal Committee for the Building and Preservation of the Mosques and Tombs of the Prophets and Companions in Jordan*, thereby in fact initiating the first comprehensive and systematic refurbishment of Jordan's Sacred Places since the time of the Ayyubids. Also, it must be mentioned that His Majesty has personally and generously taken the lead in financially supporting the building of mosques at Jordan's Holy Sites.

Next, thanks must go to H.R.H. Crown Prince El-Hassan for his equally untiring support for and interest in Jordan's Holy Sites. Then thanks must be made to H.R.H. Prince Ra'ad bin Zeid, Chief Chamberlain and the Head of the aforementioned Royal Committee; to H.E. Dr Abd Al-Salam Al-Abbadi, the Minister of Religious Affairs; to H.E. Chief Justice Sheikh Izz Al-Din Al-Tamimi; and to all the other members of the Royal Committee, and in particular to Mr. Mohammed Shomali (Secretary of the Royal Committee), for all their help with this book (in particular by way of advice and information provided) and for all their work on the Holy Sites themselves.

The actual piecing together of this book was an extremely complicated affair that was only made possible by a joint team effort on behalf of a number of people, because the book includes much original research that had to be conducted in both Arabic and English in tandem. Also, it necessarily involved the difficulties of co-ordinating the activities of a number of different parties: TURAB; U.S.A.I.D.; the Royal Committee; the writers; the photographers; the translators; the editors and layout specialists; and, finally, the Project Co-ordinator.

To U.S.A.I.D. grateful thanks go for the technical expertise responsible for the 'layout' of this book. In particular, to Mr. Alonzo Fulgham, who really was 'the man behind the book' and but for whom the project would never have been realized, as also to Mr. Sahim Yaghi; and to Mr. William T. Oliver, the Mission Director of the U.S.A.I.D. Office in Jordan (for his foresight and whose final decision it was to authorise the project). Then thanks and acknowledgements must go to Miss Susan Wood who was the U.S.A.I.D. expert responsible for nothing less than the layout, editing and typesetting of the book; to Miss Andrea Atalla, Susan's fellow-designer, as well as the all-important Project Co-ordinator; to Sheikh Hassan Saqqaf for the basic Arabic texts on the Islamic Sites and the *Fatwa* on visiting Holy Places; to Father Michele Piccirillo for the basic texts on the Christian Sites and the pictures of these sites; to Mr. Fakhry Milkawi for the pictures of the Islamic Holy Sites, which involved a great deal of travelling and field research; to Mr. Ja'far Hassan for translation and logistical work; to Mr. Hussein Al-Adwan, Turab's current Secretary, for logistics and organisation; and to Miss Khadija Mheisin's office for translation into Arabic. Last, but by no means least, grateful thanks must go to Mr. Hani M. Salam for his generous sponsoring of the printing of the book.

Ghazi bin Mohammed,
Senior Editor,
December 1995.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

‘TURAB’ literally means ‘earth’ or ‘soil’ in Arabic and is an acronym for Turath Al-Urdun Al-Baqi meaning ‘Jordan’s Everlasting Heritage’. TURAB is an officially registered, tax-exempt Jordanian cultural charity. It was founded in 1994. Its official purpose is to ‘protect, preserve and propagate traditional Jordanian, Arab and Islamic culture and heritage’.

This book is the first in a proposed extended series by TURAB that aims to do precisely that, with especial concentration on those areas of Jordan’s heritage that have up to now been neglected. Everyone knows the marvels of Petra, Jerash, the Dead Sea and the Desert Castles etc.; and, indeed, there exists a spate of books about these, but no one is aware of the incredible treasures Jordan has by way of Holy Sites. Indeed, this book is perhaps the first comprehensive one ever published on the subject, and is certainly the first one ever published in both English with Arabic captions, and the first one that includes both Islamic and Christian Sites. It is also designed to be an attractive but practical ‘field-guide’ to all these sites¹. It is our hope that it will encourage ‘religious tourism’ in Jordan, both by the Muslim pilgrims that converge yearly in their millions, 400 miles south of Jordan’s borders in Medina and Mecca for Hajj and Umra and the traditional visit to the Prophet’s ﷺ tomb, and by the Christian pilgrims who flock daily in their thousands to Jerusalem, 20 miles west of Jordan’s borders (and who are making preparations to converge there in their millions during the year 2000, the bi-millennial anniversary of the birth of Christ). Thus, on behalf of TURAB’s trustees and members, it is my pleasure to say that TURAB has the privilege to present to the world, comprehensively and for the first time ever, the Holy Sites of Jordan, in the hope that they will finally receive the international recognition and appreciation they deserve.

Ghazi bin Mohammed,
Chairman of the Board of Trustees of TURAB.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

The first edition of *The Holy Sites of Jordan*, was, by the grace of God, a phenomenal success. In two years over 5,000 hardback copies of the book were sold all over the world, making it the most successful bilingual, illustrated Jordanian hardback in history. Moreover, it was given as an official gift, by the Royal Hashemite Court, to many visiting world leaders including President Jacques Chirac, who kindly ordered the *Institut du Monde Arabe* to make a French translation of it. Television documentaries and academic studies have even been made based upon it, and it has significantly contributed to religious tourism in Jordan. Finally, it has brought Muslims and Christians in Jordan even closer together through a deeper understanding of their common religious heritage.

The book has thus been blessed by its subject matter. In this second edition a few minor mistakes have been corrected, and a few additions have been made. We hope it will be even more successful than the first edition.

Ghazi bin Mohammed,
Chairman of TURAB.
September 1998

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

INTRODUCTION

Jordan is a blessed land. Directly to the south of it lie Mecca, the oldest place of worship and holiest spot on Earth, and Medina, the city – and final resting place – of the last Prophet ﷺ. The Holy Qur'an says (3:96):

*Lo! The first Sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Becca²,
a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples.*

Immediately to Jordan's west – and in fact only twenty miles away from the border, as the crow flies – lies Jerusalem, the world's other great spiritual centre. Thus the land of Jordan, lying between Mecca and Jerusalem, is inherently blessed, as the Holy Qur'an explicitly states (17:1):

*Glorified be he who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place
of Worship³ to the far Distant Place of Worship⁴ the neighbourhood whereof
We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens. Lo! He, only
He, is the Hearer, the Seer.*

All the Traditional Commentators on the Qur'an agree that the land of Modern Jordan forms part of this 'neighbourhood'. Moreover, the Prophet ﷺ once beseeched God: O God, bless for us our Sham⁵ and our Yemen⁶. Abu Jahl, the night before the plot to assassinate the Prophet ﷺ in Mecca before the *Hijra*, said: 'Muhammad promises you gardens like the gardens of Al-Urdun'⁷; and the Prophet ﷺ himself mentioned Amman in the context of comparison to Heaven, when he said:

*My Pool [in Heaven] stretches for the distance [like that] which is
between Aden and Amman of Al-Balqa⁸.*

Furthermore, a host of prophets graced Jordan by living in or travelling through it. These definitely include Nuh (Noah), Lut (Lot), Khidr, Ibrahim (Abraham), Ilyas (Elijah)⁹, Shu'ayb (Jethro), Yosha' (Joshua), Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Ayyub (Job), Yahya (John), 'Isa (Jesus) and the Prophet Muhammad – peace and blessings be upon them all. Many of them are known to have died and been buried here, including Moses (on Nebo, near Madaba), Aaron (on Mount Hor, above Petra), Jethro (in Wadi Shu'ayb, near Salt), Job (in Salt), and John (in Mukawir, also near Madaba). Moreover, research included in this book shows that the place where the Meccan *Hanif* Zeid bin 'Amr heard the prediction that there would arise a Prophet in Mecca – also perhaps the site

of the famous childhood encounter of the Prophet Mohammed ﷺ with the monk Bahira, and the later encounter of the Prophet ﷺ and his companion Maysarah with the monk Nestor at the same site – is in Jordan at the site of *Mayfa'ah*, where Christian monks had a sanctuary, the ruins of which exist to this day.

Also, the Cave of the Seven Sleepers (about which there is a chapter in the Holy Qur'an) is in Jordan, and there is much evidence that the following verse of the Qur'an refers to Amman, which confers upon the city a great blessing (18:19):

Now send one of you with this your silver coin unto the city, and let him see what food is purest there and bring you a supply thereof. Let him be courteous....

Of the Prophet's Companions (may God be pleased with them all) a large number were martyred and buried in Jordan, for Jordan was the first territory outside of the Arabian Peninsula to which Islam spread (during the Prophet's own lifetime, in 629 A.D.), and in fact it was also the site of the first contact between Islam and the non-Arab world. The most important Companions buried in Jordan include: Zeid ibn Al-Harithah (the Prophet's adopted son, and the only Companion mentioned by name in the Qur'an — 33:37); Ja'far bin Abi Talib (the cousin of the Prophet, elder brother of Ali, and the person that most resembled the Prophet 'in looks and in character'¹⁰); Abu 'Ubaydah ibn Al-Jarrah (the *Amin*, the 'Trustworthy One' or 'Guardian' of the Nation of Islam, and one of the 'Blessed Ten' Companions promised Paradise); 'Amir bin Abi Waqqas (another of the Prophet's cousins); Mu'ath bin Jabal (the Prophet's governor in the Yemen); Shurhabil bin Husnah (the Scribe of the Qur'anic Revelation); the great general, Dirar bin Al-Azwar; Abu Dharr al-Ghifari; Abdallah bin Rawahah; Abu Al-Darda'a; and the general, 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl. However, many more than these — and indeed, than the nineteen odd whose known tombs are mentioned in this book — were martyred on the territory of Jordan, notably at the Battle of Mu'tah (629 A.D.); at the two Battles of Yarmouk (634 and 636 A.D.¹¹); at the Battle of Fahl (635 A.D.); and during the Great Plague of 639 A.D., when Abu 'Ubaydah's army was camped at the Ghor in the Jordan Valley. Thus Jordan probably has more Companions buried in it than any territory outside of the Arabian Peninsula.

In summary, from the point of view of Islam, and for a number of different reasons, Jordan's territory is the most blessed in the world after that of the Arabian Peninsula and Palestine¹², and as such has been sorely neglected by the Islamic World.

★ ★ ★

From the point of view of Christianity, I believe, the land of Jordan is no less precious, and after the territory of Palestine, I believe it is considered the most blessed territory in the world. For not only is the Bible strewn with over one hundred recognized references to the territory of Jordan — Edom, Moab, Gilead, Ammon, Arabah, Nebo, Gedara, Gerasa and so on — including the site with which Jesus ﷺ is directly associated. After all, it was from the Jordanian side of the River Jordan that Jesus ﷺ entered and was baptised by John ﷺ, and it is into Jordan that Jesus ﷺ retreated and spent forty days ‘in the wilderness’. As the Song of Solomon says (2:5), referring to the tents of Jordanian bedouin (the Kedar): *I am black, but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar.*

In other words, Jordan — in Christianity as in Islam — is an extension of the Holy Land, and as such has also been sorely neglected, as will hopefully be seen during the course of this book.

★ ★ ★

Finally, it should be explained that there are four types of Islamic Holy Sites mentioned in this book: (i) graves (*Darih*) where a ‘blessed personage’ — a Prophet or a Companion — is actually corporeally buried; (ii) shrines¹³ (*Maqam*) where a blessed personage is not necessarily corporeally buried, but has visited and graced during his/her lifetime, or even after their death from Heaven (in a vision, or ‘spiritually’), and has consecrated to God; (iii) ‘other religious sites’ (*Mawqi*), like the Cave of the Seven Sleepers just outside Amman (and about which there is a chapter in the Qur’an), and like the shrine of Zeid bin Ali bin Al-Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib, the great, great, grandson of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), and a saintly man in his own right, revered especially by Shiah and Zeidi Muslims; (iv) and ‘historical sites’ (*Mahal*) associated with important events in the course of the history of a religion, and of interest mainly from that point of view¹⁴. And whilst Islam strictly forbids any supplication to — or even prayer in front of — any grave or person, it nevertheless recognizes that God has blessed particular people and particular places, just as He has blessed particular months (Ramadan), days (Friday), trees (olives, for instance, amongst others) and so on. Thus it may be said that Jordan, with its blessed land, and with its wealth of Sacred Sites, is in itself a spiritual treasure with the potential to grace the lives of all those who visit it.

★ ★ ★

H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Mohammed.
December 1995.

¹ There are currently a number of projects underway, by *The Royal Committee for the Building and Preservation of the Mosques and Tombs of the Prophets and Companions in Jordan*, to renovate many of these sites, but the book will nevertheless maintain its usefulness, first because it is the only book to enumerate these sites comprehensively; then because the projects will aim to preserve as many features of the old edifices as possible; and finally because the book will nevertheless remain a clear guide to the general locations of these sites and to the actual tombs.

² ‘Becca’ is the ancient Arabic name for ‘Mecca’.

³ In Mecca.

⁴ In Jerusalem.

⁵ ‘Sham’, in Arabic, literally means ‘Syria’, but includes the territory of Modern Jordan.

⁶ *Musnad Ibn Hanbal*, 2: 90; 118.

⁷ ‘Al-Urdun’, in Arabic, means ‘Jordan’.

⁸ Quoted from Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali’s, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya Ulum Al-Din)*, Volume 40 (*The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife, Kitab Dhikr Al-Maut wa ma Ba’duhu*), Part II, Chapter on ‘The Pool’. *Al-Balqa* is the name of the province in which, to this day, Amman is situated.

⁹ Of all the Prophets mentioned in this list, only Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ilyas (Elijah) do not have tombs shrines in Jordan: the former because he is buried in Hebron, on the West Bank, and the latter because he did not die but was carried into Heaven (from the Jordanian side of the River, in fact). However, it must be said that at one time or another perhaps *all* the 25 Prophets mentioned in the Qur’an came to — or passed through — the territory of Jordan.

¹⁰ Ibn Sa’ad, *Kitab al-Tabaqat Al-Kubra*, IV, 1:24

¹¹ It will be of interest that there is still a hill in Yarmouk, in northern Jordan, named after the undefeated general, Khalid ibn Al-Walid, for the stance he took there during the Second Battle of the Yarmouk.

¹² This, of course, is not withstanding the land of Najaf and Karbala, which despite the greatness of the personages buried there (the Imam Ali — may God ennoble his face — and his son Al-Hussein — may God be pleased with him — and his family), is not a blessed land as such according to the Qur’an and the *Hadith* in the same way as Jordan is.

¹³ The word ‘shrine’ has two meanings in the Oxford English Dictionary: (1) ‘a place for special worship or devotion’ and (2) ‘a place hallowed by some memory or association’. It is obviously in the second sense that the word is used throughout this book (and in the context of Islam in general), and this also explains how, as in the case of Khidr (p.b.u.h.), there can be more than one shrine to the same person.

¹⁴ It should also be mentioned that although (in general) only Prophets and Companions only are mentioned in this book there are a number of other important and saintly Islamic figures buried in Jordan including Abu Sulayman Al-Darani (an early ascetic mentioned in Qushayri’s *Risalah*) in Ma’an; Damis Abu Al-Hawl (the Muslim Conqueror of the Citadel of Halab, amongst other places) between Salt and the Ghor; and the eponymous Musa Abu Nusayr (the Muslim Conqueror of Andalusia and a very pious man, who is said to have died in Jordan returning from pilgrimage) in the Belqa.

العربي. ومن أبرز هؤلاء الصحابة الذين تم دفنهم في الأردن زيد بن حارثة (الذي كان الابن المتبنى للرسول ﷺ قبل إلغاء الإسلام للتبني، والصحابي الوحيد المذكور بالاسم في القرآن الكريم - سورة الأحزاب : ٢٧) ؛ وجعفر بن أبي طالب (ابن عم الرسول والأخ الأكبر لعلي، وهو الشخص الأكثر شهرة للرسول في "الخلق والخلق")^(١) ؛ وأبو عبيدة عامر بن الجراح (أمين الأمة الإسلامية، وأحد الصحابة العشر "المبشرين" بالجنة) ؛ وعامر بن أبي وقاص ؛ ومعاذ بن جبل (والي الرسول على اليمن) ؛ وشرحبيل بن حسنة (كاتب الوحي) ؛ والقائد العظيم ضرار بن الأزور ؛ وأبو ذر الغفاري ؛ وعبد الله بن رواحة ؛ وأبو الدرداء ؛ والقائد العسكري عكرمة بن أبي جهل. هذا وقد استشهد على أرض الأردن عدد كبير عدا الثمانية عشر من أصحاب الأضرحة التي سلف ذكرها في هذا الكتاب، وبالأخص في معركة مؤتة (٨ للهجرة)، وفي معركة اليرموك (١٢ و ١٥ للهجرة)^(٢) ومعركة فحل (١٤ للهجرة) وبوباء الطاعون العظيم عام ١٩ للهجرة عندما عسكر جيش أبي عبيدة في غور الأردن. وهكذا، فإن أرض الأردن تحوي من أضرحة الصحابة عدداً أكبر من أي منطقة أخرى خارج الجزيرة العربية.

خلاصة القول، ومن وجهة نظر الإسلام، ولأسباب عدة، فإن منطقة الأردن تكون أكثر منطقة مباركة في العالم بعد الحجاز وفلسطين^(٣) إلا أن منزلتها الدينية غير معروفة في العالم الإسلامي إلى حد بعيد.

أما من وجهة نظر المسيحية، فإنني أعتقد بأن أرض الأردن لا تقل أهمية حيث أنها أعظم أرض مباركة في العالم بعد فلسطين. وتكرر في التوراة والإنجيل الإشارات إلى منطقة الأردن - إيدوم، مؤاب، جلعد، عربا، نبو، جدارة، عمون، وجرش- من حيث ارتباطها بالأنبياء الذين تم ذكرهم سابقاً. والأردن هو الموقع الذي يرتبط به السيد المسيح عليه السلام مباشرة. فقد دخل عليه السلام من الجانب الأردني لنهر الأردن حيث تعمد من قبل يحيى عليه السلام. وقد كانت الأردن المنطقة التي اختلى فيها السيد المسيح عليه السلام حيث قضى أربعين يوماً في البرية. وهناك إشارة إلى البدوي الأردني (القيدار) في سفر نشيد الأنشيد (١ : ٤) : "أنا سوداء، لكنني جميلة، يا بنات أورشليم، كأخبية قيذار". وبعبارة أخرى، فإن أرض الأردن - في المسيحية كما هي في الإسلام- ما هي إلا امتداد للأرض المقدسة. غير أنه تم إهمالها بشدة كما سنرى في سياق هذا الكتاب.

وفي النهاية، تجدر الإشارة إلى أن المواقع الإسلامية المباركة المذكورة في هذا الكتاب مقسمة إلى أربعة أجزاء : ١ الضريح - حيث دفنت فعلياً شخصية مباركة (إما نبي أو صحابي) ٢ المقام - حيث زارت شخصية مباركة هذا الموقع في حياتها أو بعد مماتها من الجنة (في رؤية) وتم بذلك تكريس هذا المكان لله سبحانه وتعالى ٣ المواقع، كالكهف ومقام زيد بن علي بن الحسين بن علي بن طالب، حفيد حفيد الرسول ﷺ، وهو أحد الصالحين وصاحب مكانة عند الشيعة الزيدية ٤ المحل، والمرتبطة بأحداث بارزة في سياق التاريخ الإسلامي ولها أهمية بسبب ذلك. ويمنع الإسلام أي دعاء أو صلاة أمام قبر أو شخص، ولكنه يرى على أن الله سبحانه وتعالى بارك في أشخاص معينين وأماكن معينة، تماماً كما بارك سبحانه وتعالى أشهراً (رمضان) وأياماً (الجمعة) وشجراً (الزيتون مثلاً ضمن أخرى) وما إلى ذلك. وبهذا، فإنه يمكننا القول بأن الأردن، بأرضه المباركة، وثروته من الأماكن المباركة، هو بعينه كنز روحاني يسمو بحياة من يزوره إذا تفاعل مع ما يرنو إليه ويشير ذلك في النفوس من معان عظيمة وإحياءات مباركة.

١. "بكة" هو الاسم العربي القديم لمكة.

٢. في مكة.

٣. في القدس.

٤. كلمة الشام هنا تضم أرض الأردن الحديث.

٥. مسند الإمام أحمد بن حنبل، ١٢ : ١١٨.

٦. هذا الحديث أخرجه الترمذي وابن ماجه، ويذكر كتاب زيد الدين العراقي "الغني عن حمل الاسفار في الاسفار في تخريج ما في الاحياء من الاخبار" ج ٤ ص ٦٥٧.

٧. ابن سعد، "كتاب الطبقات الكبرى"، الجزء الرابع، ١١ : ٢٤.

٨. ما يمكن أن يثير الأهمية هو أن هنالك حتى يومنا هذا جبل في اليرموك، في شمال الأردن، سمي نسبة للقائد البطل، الذي لم يخسر معركة قط، خالد بن الوليد، وذلك تقديرًا لموقفه في معركة اليرموك الثانية.

٩. هذا، بالطبع، عدا عن كربلاء والنجف، والتنان بالرغم من عظم الشخصيات المدفونة فيهما (الإمام علي كرم الله وجهه، وابنه الحسين رضي الله عنه وعائلته) ليست أرض مباركة طبقاً للقرآن الكريم والحديث كما هي الأردن.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مقدمة

أرض الأردن مباركة. فإلى الجنوب منها مباشرة تقع مكة المكرمة، أقدم مكان للعبادة وأقدس بقعة على وجه الأرض، والمدينة المنورة، مدينة سيدنا محمد ﷺ ومكان ضريحه الشريف.

﴿إن أول بيت وضع للناس للذي ببكة^(١) مباركا وهدى للعلمين﴾
القرآن الكريم (سورة آل عمران : ٩٦)

وإلى الغرب من الأردن مباشرة، وعلى بعد ٢٠ كيلومتراً من الحدود، تقع القدس، المركز الروحي العظيم الآخر في العالم. وبذلك، فإن أرض الأردن التي تقع ما بين مكة والقدس هي مباركة في صلبها، كما يوضح القرآن الكريم على نحو بَيِّن (سورة الإسراء : ١) :

﴿سبحن الذي أسرى بعبده ليلاً من المسجد الحرام^(٢) إلى المسجد الأقصى^(٣)﴾
الذي بركنا حوله لنريه من آيتنا إنه هو السميع البصير﴾

ويتفق مشاهير مفسري القرآن الكريم على أن الأردن الحديث جزءاً من هذه المنطقة المباركة. كذلك، فإن الرسول ﷺ كان قد دعا لله سبحانه وتعالى : "اللهم بارك لنا في شامنا^(٤) اللهم بارك لنا في يمننا^(٥)". وقال أبو جهل في الليلة التي سبقت محاولة قتل الرسول ﷺ في مكة قبل الهجرة : محمد يعدكم بجنات كجنات الأردن". وقد ذكر الرسول ﷺ عمان في سياق مقارنتها بالجنة عندما قال ﷺ :

"إن حوضي ما بين عدن إلى عمان البلقاء"^(٦)

إضافة إلى ذلك، فإن عدداً من الأنبياء كانوا قد باركوا أرض الأردن عندما أقاموا فيها أو اجتازوها في رحلاتهم. ومن هؤلاء نوح وإبراهيم ولوط وهارون وموسى والخضر وشعيب ويوشع وأيوب ويحيى والمسيح وسيدنا محمد صلوات الله عليهم جميعاً وسلامه. وقد عُرف أن عدداً منهم كان قد توفي أو دفن فيها، ومن ضمن هؤلاء موسى (في نَبُو بالقرب من مأدبا)، وهارون (على جبل هارون، فوق البتراء)، وشعيب (المدفون في وادي شعيب قرب السلط) وأيوب (في السلط) ويحيى (في مكاور، بالقرب من مأدبا). هذا، ويبين البحث الذي يتضمنه هذا الكتاب أن لقاء سيدنا محمد ﷺ في صغره، ولم يكن وقتها رسولاً بعد، مع الراهب بحيرى واللقاء الآخر فيما بعد للرسول والصحابي ميسرة مع الراهب نسطور في نفس الموقع قد تم على الأرجح على أرض الأردن.

كذلك يقع في الأردن "الكهف" خارج مدينة عمان في سحاب والذي وردت في القرآن الكريم سورة بإسمه مُتحدثة عن قصة أهله. وهناك بينات عدة على أن الآية التالية من القرآن الكريم تشير إلى عمان مما يمنح المدينة بركة عظيمة (سورة الكهف : ١٩) :

﴿فابعثوا أحدهم بورقكم هذه إلى المدينة فلينظر أيها أزكى طعاماً فليأتكم برزق منه وليتلطف ولا يشعروا﴾
بكم أحداً﴿

هذا وقد استشهد ودفن في الأردن عدد كبير من الصحابة رضي الله عنهم جميعاً، وكان الأردن أول منطقة انتشر فيها الإسلام خارج الجزيرة (في زمن الرسول ﷺ عام ٨ للهجرة)، كما كانت أيضاً أول مكان يشهد اتصالاً شاملاً بين الإسلام والعالم غير



BOOK I

Islamic Sites

A FATWA REGARDING VISITING OF HOLY PLACES


God says in the Qur'an (3: 97): *In it are signs manifest; the Station of Abraham; and whosoever entereth is safe.* And (2:125): *And take ye the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer.*

Holy Sites are pure and blessed locations. God created such places on earth so that the hearts of faithful could turn to them for prayer, blessings and mercy. The benefits of visiting Holy Sites include becoming aware of, and reflecting upon, matters of faith, and learning about the Prophets, the Companions, the great Scholars and the Righteous. Visiting Holy Places is *Sunna** and an act favoured by God. God says in the Qur'an, referring to when Mohammed ﷺ was taken from Mecca during the Night-Journey of *Al-Isra'* to Jerusalem (17:1): *Glorified be He who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens.* And (33:21): *Verily in the Messenger of God ye have a good example for him who hopeth in God and the Last Day, and who remembereth God much.* And (37: 137-138): *And lo, ye verily pass by (the ruins of them) in the morning and at night-time; have ye then no sense?* Moreover, the Prophets ﷺ aid that (*Sahih Muslim* 4/1845; no. 2375), he saw Moses standing in his grave and praying, when he was flown from Mecca to Jerusalem during the Night Journey.

The tombs and mosques of the Prophets and the Companions, the Righteous and the Scholars are sacred and blessed places where God answers prayers. It is unanimously agreed by Muslim scholars that visiting these places is favoured by God. According to Al-Hafith Al-Dahabi (in his book *Siyar A'lam Al-Anbia'* 10/107) regarding the life of the Lady Nafisah Al-Sharifa Al-Hasaniah: 'A prayer is answered by her grave and by the graves of all the righteous'. And according to Al-Imam Al-Hafith Al-Nawawi (*Al-Majmu'* 5/310) visiting graves is favoured for men, although it was initially forbidden by the Prophet during the early days of Islam and then permitted when the rules of the religion became better rooted and more solid.

According to scholars, it is favoured that the visitor approach the grave as closely as he would approach his friend if he was alive. According to Al-Nawawi, women are not prohibited from visiting the graves in Islam, but are prohibited from wailing and crying near them. According to Al-Bukhari and to Muslim, when the Prophet ﷺ saw a woman weeping by a grave he told her to fear God and be patient but did not prohibit her from visiting the grave. When 'Aisha (r.) once asked the Prophet what should be said at a grave, he told her to say: 'Greetings on you faithful and on the Muslims of this land. May God have mercy on those of us who preceded and those who will follow. And we shall, God willing, follow'. Scholars hold that it is preferred for the visitor to say his greetings when he enters a graveyard and pray for those whose graves he visits as well as the others buried there. A person may visit a grave either by standing, sitting





or passing by it, and according to some scholars it is preferred that he stands facing the deceased with his back to Mecca without touching, kissing or caressing the tomb (see Abu Musa Al-Asfahani, *Adab Ziarat Al-Qubour*). In my opinion, however, it is not *Haram* or *Makruh* to touch or kiss a tomb provided that it is done in a dignified and respectable way without raising one's voice, screaming or other such acts practised by the base and heretic. Also, sitting on a grave is *Makruh* in Islam. In *Sahih Muslim*, according to Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Sitting on an ember that would burn one's clothing and reach one's skin is better than sitting on a grave'. The same can be said of unduly stepping on or leaning over a grave.

Thus we have demonstrated that visiting Holy Sites and the tombs of Prophets and Companions is approved of behaviour in Islam. Nevertheless, some people have a problem with visiting the graves of the Righteous who are either buried in mosques, or over whose graves domes have been erected, particularly in respect of the *Hadith* stating that God damned the Jews and Christians who turned their Prophets' graves into places of worship. However, this *Hadith* contradicts the Qur'an and the *Sunna* and is not accepted by the majority of scholars for the following reasons: first, God praised the people who erected a mosque on the Cave of Sleepers and did not reproach them for it, as shown in the following verse of the Qur'an (18: 22): *Those who won their point said: We verily shall build a place of worship over them.* Those who won their point and wanted to build the place of worship were the believing Muslims who admired the Sleepers of the Cave (who themselves believed in God). Second, the Prophet ﷺ said: 'A garden of Heaven separates between my grave and my pulpit'. Thus, since the Prophet said that a garden of Heaven separates his grave from his pulpit, and since a pulpit is found only in a mosque, this signifies that prayer by a grave that is within a mosque is permitted. Third, Muslims, whether scholars or lay-people, have, since the time of the Companions, visited the tombs of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions Abu Bakr (r.) and 'Umar (r.) in the Holy Mosque in Al-Medina Al-Munawarah.

(For further reference regarding arguments against the prohibition of praying by tombs in mosques refer to Abdallah bin Al Siddiq Al-Ghomari, and Al-Sharif Ahmad bin Al-Siddiq,.)[Translation: Ja'far Hassan]

The above *Fatwa* was pronounced and written by Hasan bin Ali Al-Saqqaf on 11/1/1416 A.H.; 9/6/1995 A.D..

* Moreover, according to the Lady Aisha رضي الله عنها the Prophet ﷺ himself used to visit the cemetery of *Baqi' Al- Gharqad* late at night and pray for his dead Companions there.

PART I

The Messengers and the Prophets

*Say ye: we believe in God and
that which is revealed unto us
and that which was revealed
unto Ibrahim, and Ismail, and
Ishaq, and Ya'cub, and the Tribes,
and that which Musa and 'Isa
received, and that which the
Prophets received from their
Lord. We make no distinction
between any of them, and unto
Him we have submitted.
(The Qur'an 2:136)*

A Messenger is a human being unto whom God has Revealed a Sacred Law or Message, or a new Religion – or part of one already partially previously Revealed – and ordered to him to proclaim it. A Prophet is a human being inspired and ordered by God to proclaim the Law of one of the previous Messengers. All Messengers are Prophets (but not vice versa), and all Prophets have already attained the degree of perfect sanctity and impeccability (but again, not everyone who reaches this degree becomes a Prophet). The Prophet Adam ﷺ was the first Prophet, and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the last and seal of the Messengers and the Prophets. There are 25 Messengers and Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an. By name, they are (in chronological order): Adam; Idris (Enoch); Nuh (Noah); Hud; Salih; Ibrahim (Abraham); Lut (Lot); Ismail (Ishmael); Ishaq (Isaac); Yacub (Jacob); Yusuf (Joseph); Shu'ayb (Jethro); Harun (Aaron); Musa (Moses); Dawud (David); Sulayman (Soloman); Ilyas (Elijah); Al-Yasa' (Elisha); Ayyub (Job); Dhul Kifl (Ezekiel); Yunus (Jonah); Zakariyyah; Yahya (John the Baptist); 'Isa (Jesus); and Muhammad – Peace and Blessings upon them all. There are also stories of other figures mentioned in the Qur'an who are either Prophets but not named as such, or named, but without their status being clear. The former include Khidr, Samuel and Yosha' / Joshua, and the latter include 'Uzair / Ezra. There are also other figures who are 'Righteous Sages' or 'Saints' like Luqman, and perhaps Abel whom the scholars agree are not Prophets. Finally, it should be said that Islamic tradition relates that there have been thousands of Prophets in history and pre-history, and several hundred Messengers; and in fact every people has had their own Prophet sent to them at one point in time. The Qur'an says (16: 36): *And verily We have raised in every nation a messenger, (proclaiming): Serve Allah and shun false gods...*



Prophet Nuh / Noah

His Shrine in Kerak*

السلامة

النبي نوح
مقامه في الكرك

The Qur'an says (7: 59):

*We sent Nuh to his people,
and he said: 'O my people!
Serve God! Ye have no other
god save Him. Lo! I fear for
you the retribution of an
Awful Day...*

The Prophet Nuh عليه السلام is one of the most ancient Prophets. He is mentioned in the Qur'an many times, and there is even a *Sura* (Chapter 71) named after him. His story is that God sent him to his people to warn them to worship Him and to abandon their idols. However, they repeatedly rejected him – all except a few poor people of low-standing – and eventually God sent a flood which covered the earth and drowned everyone except the Prophet Nuh عليه السلام and his companions who had been forewarned to build a ship, and who thus were saved in it.



* It is already mentioned in Ibn Kathir's (14th Century) *Al-Bidaya wal-Nihaya* that some people held that Nuh's tomb was in Biqa', Nuh's Kerak, although he personally did not agree.



Prophet Hud

His Shrine near Jerash

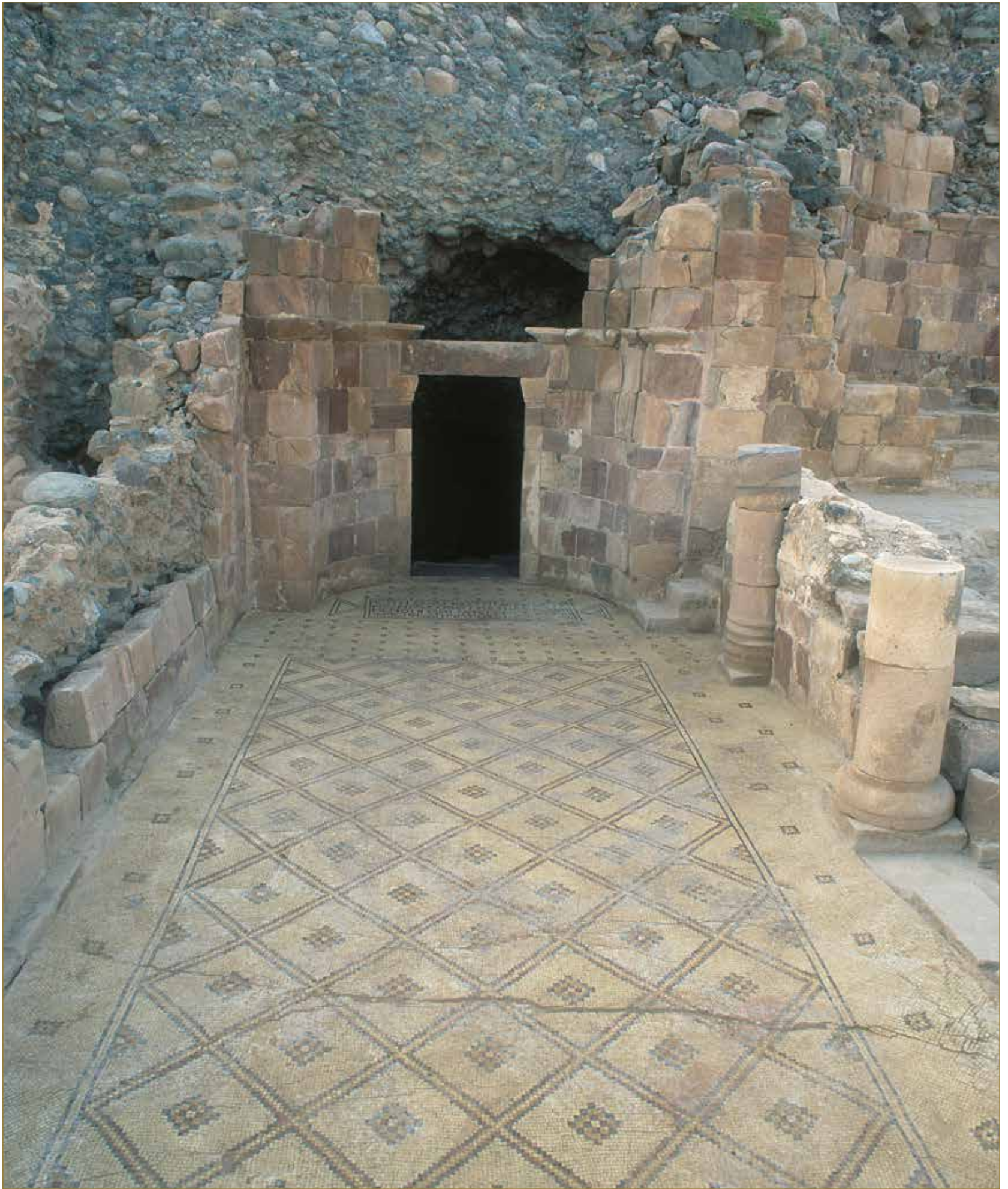
الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

النَّبِيُّ هُودُ
مَقَامُهُ قَرَبُ جَرَشٍ

The Prophet Hud عليه السلام was an ancient Arab Prophet, descended from the Prophet Nuh عليه السلام. God sent him to his tribe – the ‘Aad, who were known for their strength and size, and said to live in the Yemen – to warn them to worship the One God, but they ridiculed him and accused him of madness. Eventually, God sent them a terrible drought as a warning, and when they did not heed that, He sent a black cloud with a terrible wind that for eight days and seven nights chastised them and eventually destroyed them all, with the exception of Hud عليه السلام and the faithful with him who escaped. The eleventh *Sura* in the Qur’an is named after Hud عليه السلام, and says (11: 50):



*And unto ‘Aad [We sent]
their brother, Hud.
He said: O my people!
Serve God. Ye have no
other god save Him. Lo! ye
do but invent [the idols]!*



Prophet Lut/Lot

His Cave at Ghor Safi*

السلامة

النبي لوط
كهفه في غور الصافي



The Prophet Lut عليه السلام was the nephew of the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام and immigrated with him from Ur in Iraq, but whereas the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام went to live in Palestine (in Hebron), Lut عليه السلام went to live in the lands just south of the Dead Sea. Lut عليه السلام warned his people to desist from their homosexual practises, but they would not listen. God sent two Angels to him who warned him to flee, which he did during the early hours of the night with his daughters, to his cave in Ghor Safi, and the following morning the Angels destroyed his people to the last man. The Qur'an says (37: 133-136):

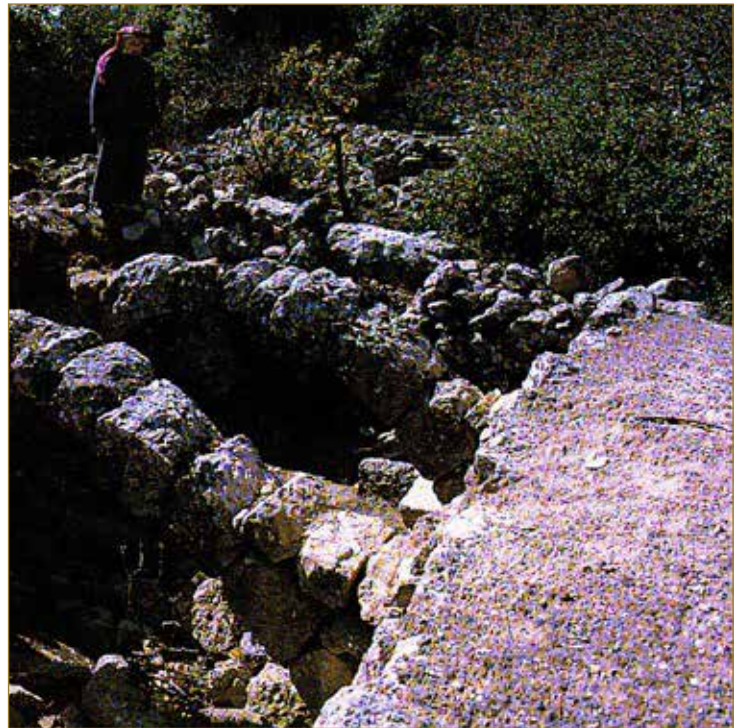
*And lo! Lut verily was
of those sent [to warn]; When We
saved him and his household, every
one; Save an old woman** among
those who stayed behind; Then We
destroyed the others.*

* In Ghor Al-Safi/Zoar there are 6th Century ruins and mosaics dedicated to the cave where the Prophet Lut عليه السلام spent the night, and its topography tallies exactly with the Islamic and Biblical accounts of the cave.

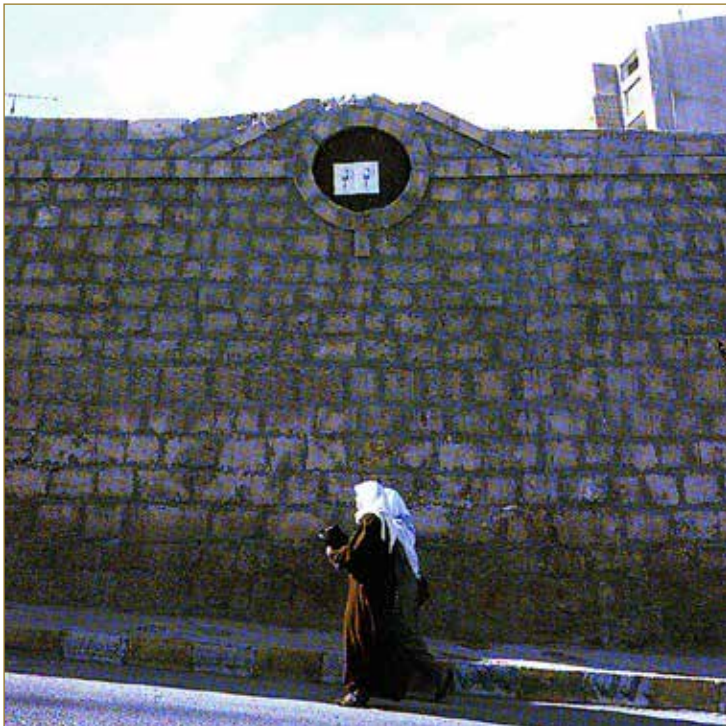
** That is, Lut's wife.



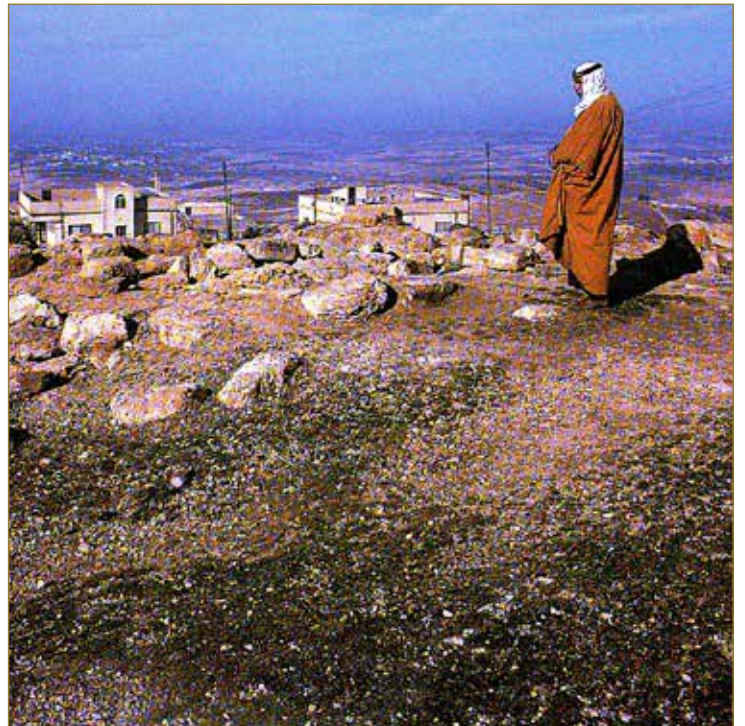
Mahis



Ajlun



Kerak



Bayt Ras

Prophet Khidr

His Shrines in Mahis;^{*}
Kerak; Ajlun; and
Bayt Ras, Irbid.

السَّالِمِينَ

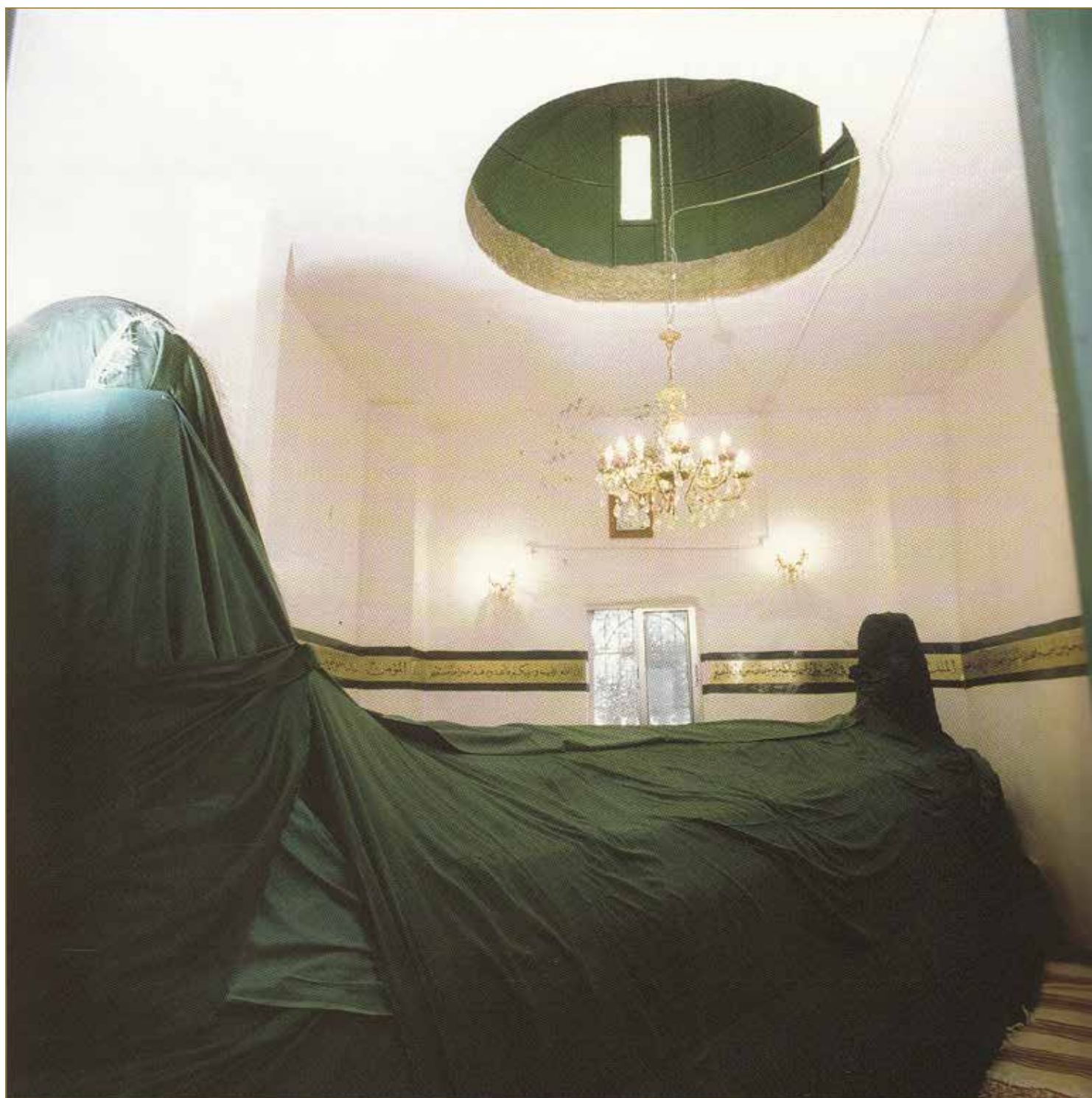
النَّبِيُّ الْخَضِرُ
لَهُ مَقَامَاتٌ فِي مَا حَضَرَ وَالْجَرَكَ
وَعَجَلُونَ وَبَيْتَ رَاسٍ

The Holy Qur'an relates (18: 65-67):

*Then found they [Musa and
Yosha'] one of Our slaves [Khidr],
unto whom We had given Mercy
from Us, and had taught him
knowledge from Our presence. Musa
said unto him: May I follow thee, so
that thou mayst teach me right
conduct of that which thou hast been
taught ? He said: Lo! thou canst
not endure with me....*

The Prophet Khidr عليه السلام is mentioned, albeit not by name, in the *Surat Al-Kahf* (Chapter 18) in the Qur'an. He is the mysterious, immortal figure whom Musa عليه السلام encounters at the place where the 'two Seas' meet (i.e. at the place where the mortal world meets the world of immortal life, as indicated by the incident of the fish coming back to life) and whom he subsequently implores to be allowed to accompany. However, Musa عليه السلام questions Khidr's عليه السلام actions three times, and eventually Khidr عليه السلام, after explaining his (righteous) motives, parts with Musa عليه السلام. Islamic tradition relates that Khidr عليه السلام is one of four or five blessed figures in history who never died as such – these being Idris / Enoch; Khidr; Ilyas / Elijah; 'Isa / Jesus and Maryam / Mary – but were taken to Heaven directly and in their bodies (much like the Prophet Muhammad, عليه السلام, during the *Isra*), and who thus can return to this world at will, and in fact Khidr عليه السلام and Ilyas / Elijah are said to meet during the *Hajj* at Mecca every year. (This also explains why Khidr عليه السلام has so many shrines in Jordan – places hallowed by him – but no tomb, Jordan being traditionally his 'land'.)

^{*} Prophet Khidr عليه السلام is identified in Christianity with the mythical St. George. Indeed, his shrine in Mahis serves also as a local Christian shrine to St. George.



Prophet Shu'ayb

His Tomb in
Wadi Shu'ayb, near Salt*

السَّيِّدُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

النَّبِيُّ شُعَيْبٌ
ضَرْبِيهِ فِي وَادِي شُعَيْبٍ ،
قَرِبَ السَّلَاطِ

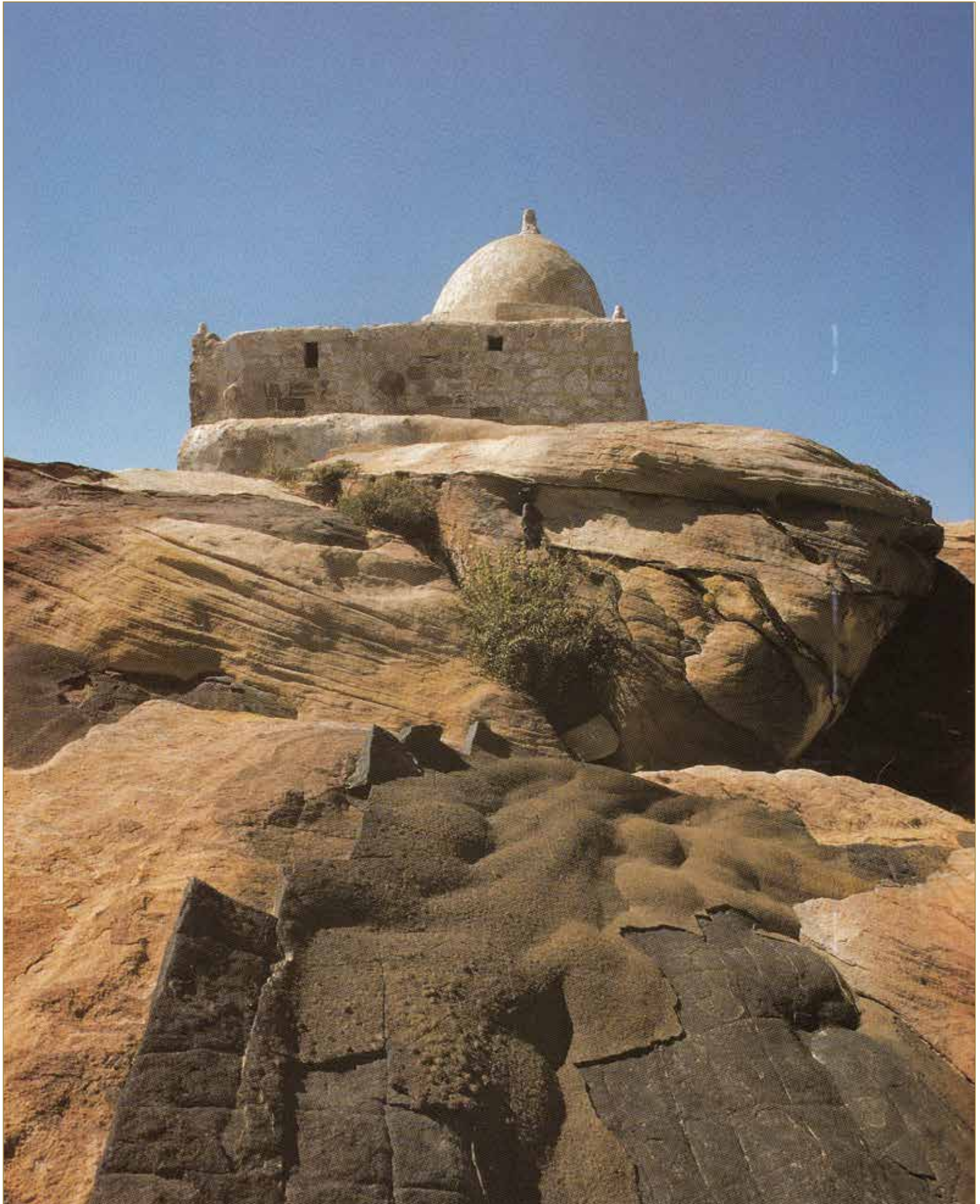
The Holy Qur'an relates his mission as follows (7: 85):

And unto Midian [We sent] their brother, Shu'ayb. He said: O my people! Serve God! Ye have no other god save Him. Lo! A clear proof hath come unto you from your Lord; so give full measure and full weight and wrong not mankind in their goods, and work not confusion in the land after the fair ordering thereof. That will be better for you, if ye are believers.

The Prophet Shu'ayb (called Jethro in the Bible, جَثْرُو) is a descendant of the Prophet Ibrahim. He is one of four Arab Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an (Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb and Muhammad, ﷺ; the Prophet Ismail / Ishmael also became Arabised and spoke Arabic later in his life, after settling in Mecca): he was from the tribe of Midian, who lived in the vicinity of Ma'an in Jordan. The people of Midian were heathen bandits that cheated and terrorised travellers. God sent Shu'ayb to warn them to desist, but they rejected him, and so God destroyed them. Shu'ayb was also Musa's and Harun's father-in-law, and the Qur'an relates the story of how Musa worked for him for ten years as payment for dowry. Shu'ayb was also said to be the only Prophet known to be blind.



* Midian, where Shu'ayb عليه السلام lived, is according to the Christian tradition, east of the Gulf of Aqaba, and according to Tabari in lands of southern Syria, and thus it makes sense that Shu'ayb's tomb should be near Salt.



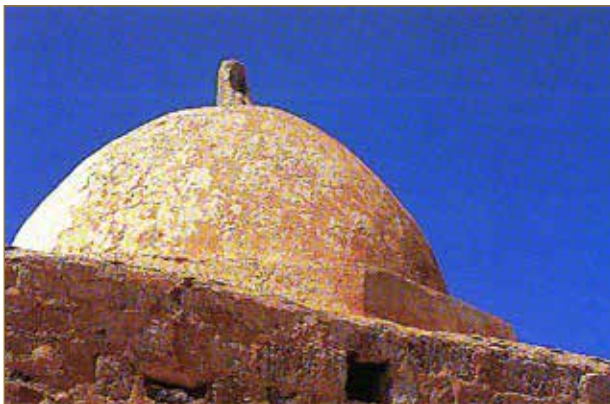
Prophet Harun / Aaron

His Tomb in Petra*

الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

النَّبِيُّ هَارُونُ

ضَرْيَحُهُ قَرَبَ الْبَتَاءِ

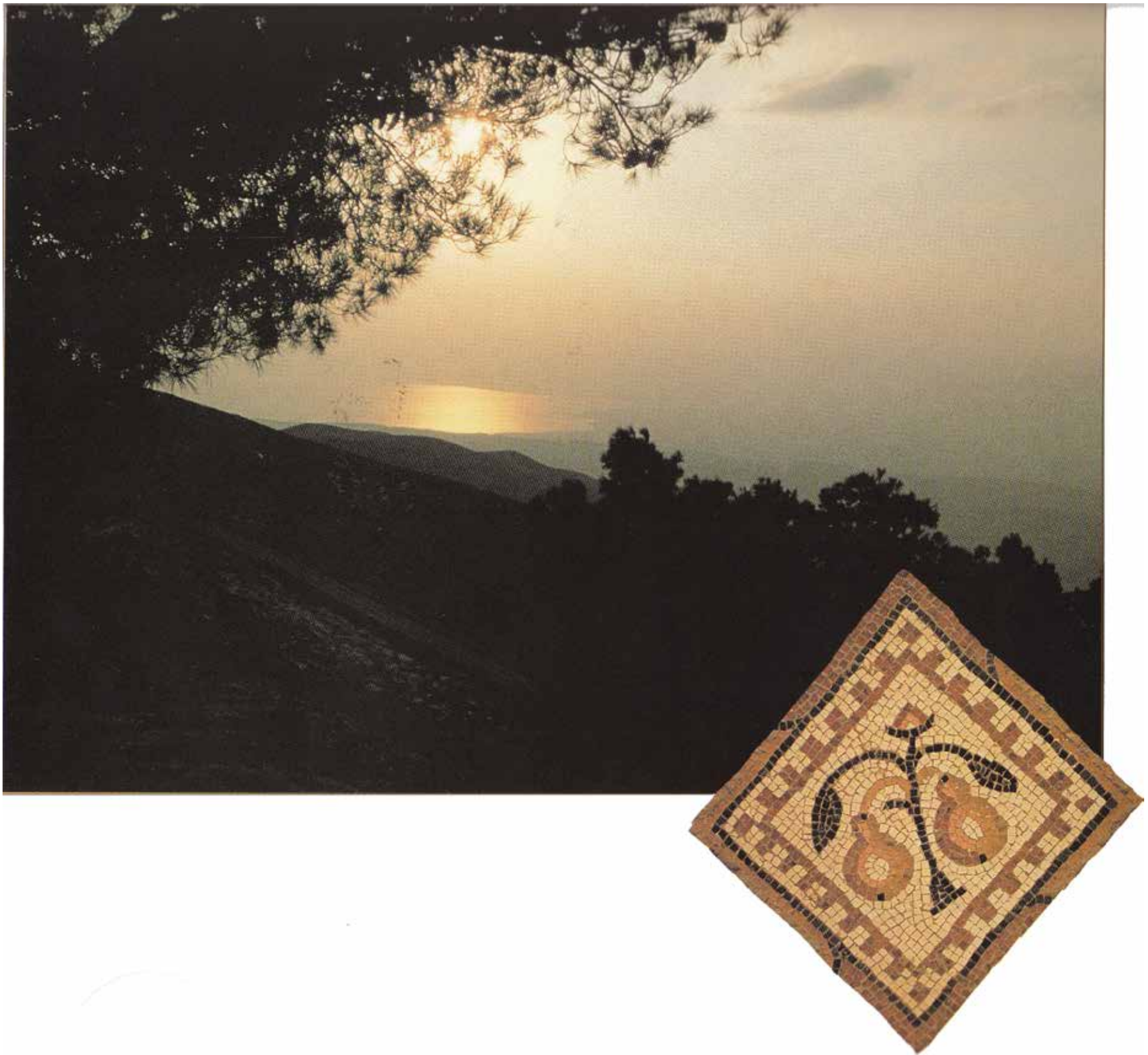


The Prophet Har'un bin 'Imran عليه السلام was the elder of the Prophet Musa عليه السلام, and the descendant of the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام through his grandson the Prophet Ya'qub / Jacob عليه السلام. However, whilst Musa عليه السلام was a Messenger and a Prophet, Harun عليه السلام was a Prophet only. He shared with Musa عليه السلام in his missions to Pharaoh and in leading the Tribes of Israel out of captivity in Egypt. He was buried by Musa عليه السلام and his people on Mount Hor, near Petra. The Qur'an relates Musa's عليه السلام prayer (20: 25-36):



[Musa] said: O my Lord! Expand for me my breast. Ease my task for me. And remove the impediment from my speech. So they may understand what I say. And appoint for me a minister from my family: Harun, my brother. Add to my strength through him. And let him share my task. Ever we glorified thee much, and much remembered thee. Lo! Thou didst see us. He said: thou art granted thy request, O Musa.

* The topography of the Prophet Harun's عليه السلام tomb in Petra corresponds exactly with the traditional Islamic and Biblical accounts of Harun's burial.

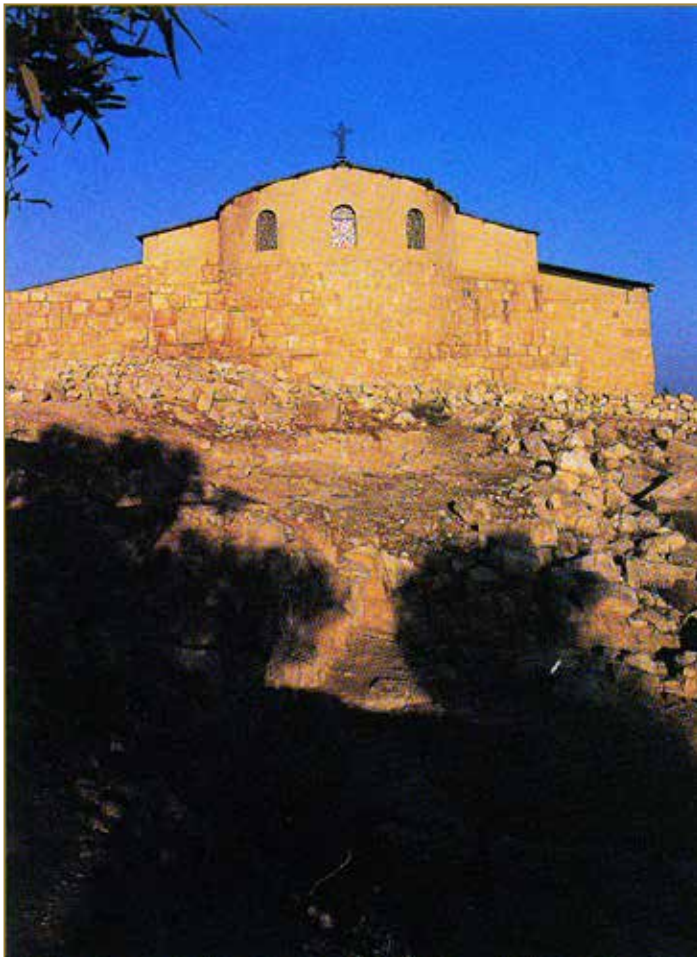


Prophet Musa/Moses

The Site of his Death on
Mount Nebo,
near Madaba

السَّالَامُ عَلَيْهِمْ

النَّبِيِّ مُوسَى
موقع وفاته على جبل نبو،
قرب مادبا



The Prophet Musa عليه السلام is the Prophet mentioned most often in the Holy Qur'an. Many of the episodes of his life and mission are related in detail. These include: his birth and the ruse through which he was brought up at Pharaoh's Court; his dispute with the Egyptian whom he killed with a blow; his escape to Midian, and his marriage to Jethro's daughter; his and Harun's mission to Pharaoh and the miracles they were granted; his escape with the Children of Israel from Egypt; his speaking to God; his striking the rock; his anger at his people's relapsing into worshipping the golden calf; and many of the episodes that happened to him and his people whilst they wandered in the desert before his death. Although, there is no actual tomb on Mount Nebo, it is nevertheless definitely the place where he died. The Holy Qur'an says (32: 23):

*We verily gave Musa the
Scripture; so be not ye in doubt
of his receiving it; and We
appointed it a Guidance for the
Children of Israel.*

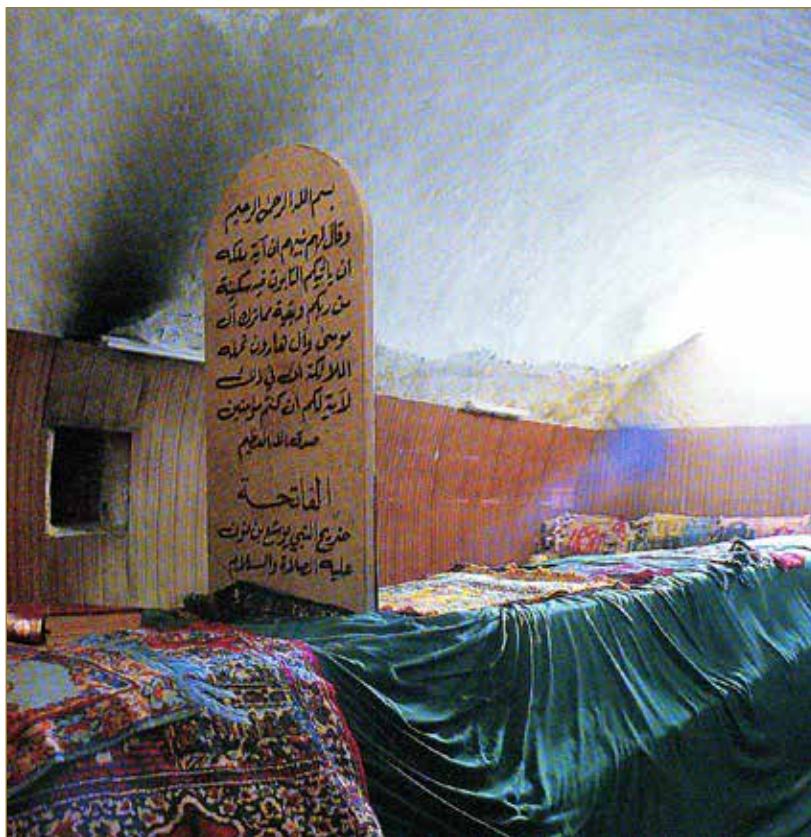


Prophet Yosha' / Joshua

His Tomb near Salt

السيّد عليهما السلام

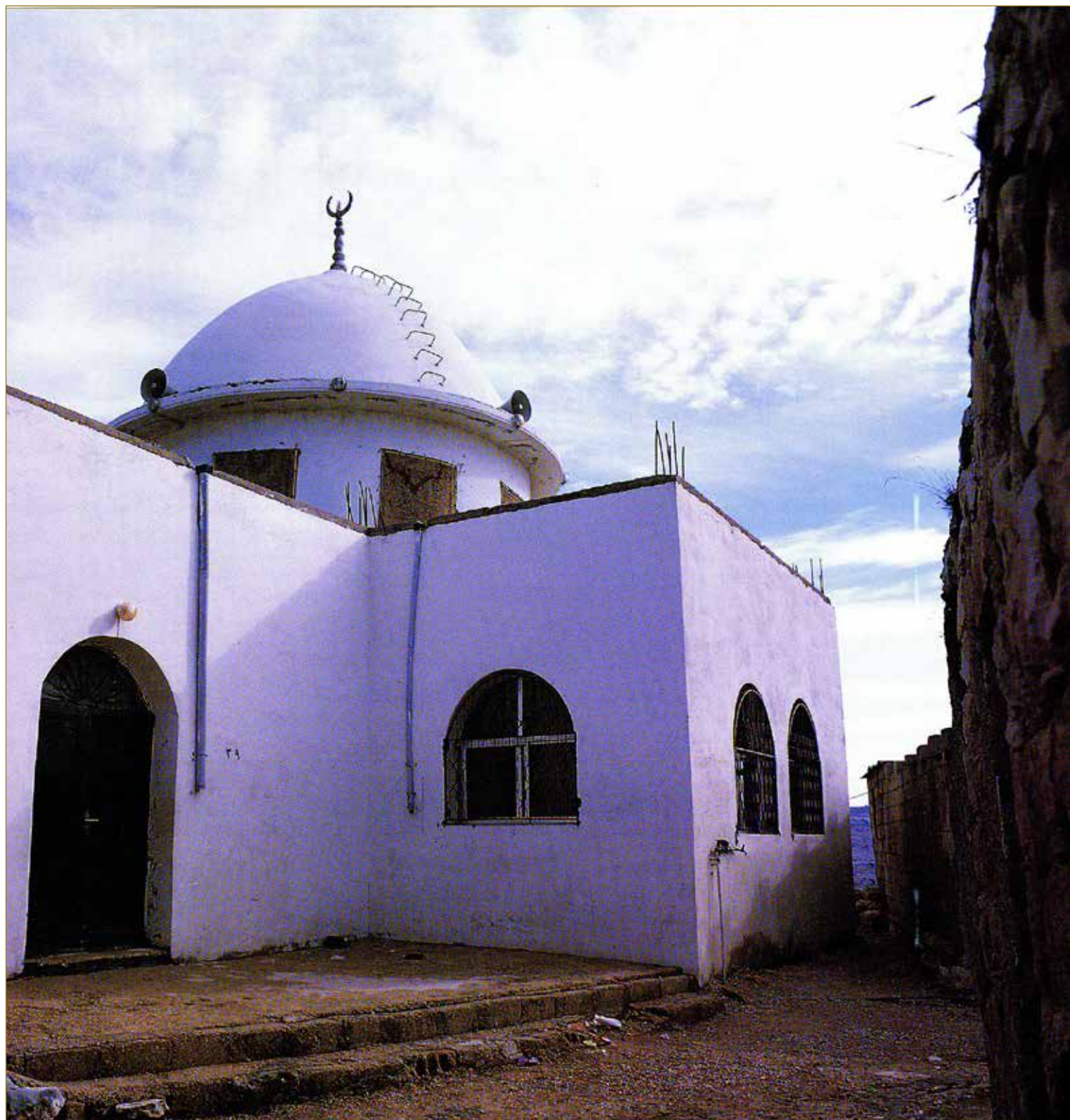
النبي يوشع
ضريحه قرب مدينة السّاط



The Prophet Yosha' عليه السلام, the son of Nun, was the maternal nephew of Musa عليه السلام, and a descendant of the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام. He is mentioned in the Qur'an as the apprentice of Musa عليه السلام in *Surat Al-Kahf* (Chapter 18). After the death of Musa عليه السلام he became the leader of the Army of the tribes of Israel, and led them in conquest over the land of Palestine, including Jericho and Jerusalem. The Prophet Muhammad عليه السلام said that: 'the sun was never halted for a human being except for Yosha' عليه السلام on the night he left for Jerusalem'. Although his name as such does not appear in the Qur'an, Islamic tradition clearly confirms his status as a Prophet.

The Holy Qur'an relates (18: 60):

*And when Musa said
unto his ward [Yosha']:
I will not give up until
I reach the point where the
two rivers meet, though
I march on for ages....*

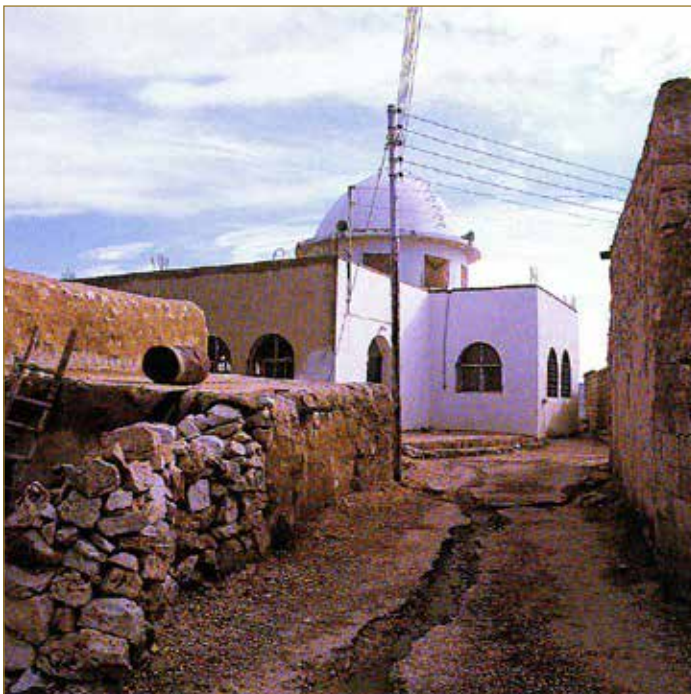


Prophet Dawud / David

His Shrine in Mazar Al-Shamali

النبي داود
مقامه في المزار الشمالي
عليه السلام

The Prophet Dawud عليه السلام was both a Prophet and a King of his people, the Children of Israel. He slew Jalut / Goliath and succeeded Talut / Saul as King. To him God revealed the Psalms, and with him the very hills and the birds sung God's praises. He campaigned for many years and defeated the enemies of his people. Unlike in Christianity and Judaism, the Prophet Dawud عليه السلام is regarded as impeccable in Islam, and to say otherwise is sacrilegious. He spent some time in Jordan, whilst he was at odds with Saul, and later whilst he was on campaign. The Holy Qur'an says (38: 17-18):



*Bear with what they say, and
remember Our bondman Dawud,
lord of might. Lo!*

*He was ever turning in
repentance [to his Lord]. Lo!
We subdued the hills to hymn
the praises [of their Lord] with
him at nightfall and at sunrise.*



Prophet Sulayman

His Shrine in Sarfah, near Kerak

النبي سليمان
مقامه في صرفا
عليه السلام

The Holy Qur'an relates (27: 15-16):

And We verily gave knowledge unto Dawud and Sulayman, and they said: Praise be to God, Who hath preferred us above many of His believing slaves! And Sulayman was Dawud's heir. And he said: O mankind! Lo! we have been taught the language of birds, and have been given [abundance] of all things. This surely is evident favour.

The Prophet Sulayman عليه السلام was the son of the Prophet Dawud عليه السلام and his successor as King of Israel. From his early childhood, he was known for his proverbial wisdom and for his piety. As a king he was given powers and domination over the earth that no man – before or after him – has or would ever be given, and these included control over the *Jinn*, control over the Winds and understanding the Language of the Birds. As with his father, the Prophet Dawud عليه السلام, he is regarded as impeccable in Islam, and to say otherwise is also sacrilegious. Amongst the stories related about him in the Holy Qur'an, is a story of his forcing the Queen of Sheba to come to him and to accept the One God.





Prophet Ayyub / Job

His Tomb in Salt*



السَّالَامُ عَلَيْهِمْ

النَّبِيِّ أَيُّوبَ
مَقَامُهُ فِي قَرْيَةِ بَطْنِا قَرَبَ السَّيْطِ

The Prophet Ayyub عليه السلام was a descendant of the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام. He is mentioned in the Qur'an as an example of patience and endurance. He was a wealthy man who underwent great trials in his wealth, his family and his health, but accepted them patiently.

The Holy Qur'an relates (38: 41-44):

And make mention of Our bondman Ayyub, when he cried unto his Lord [saying]: Lo! the devil doth afflict me with distress and torment. [And it was said unto him]: Strike the ground with thy foot. This [spring] is a cool bath and a refreshing drink. And We bestowed on him [again] his household and therewith the like thereof, a mercy from Us, and a memorial for men of understanding. And [it was said unto him]: Take in thine hand a branch and smite therewith, and break not thine oath. Lo! We found him steadfast, how excellent a slave! Lo! he was ever turning in repentance [to his Lord].

* Scholars and historians agree that Ayyub عليه السلام lived in Buthaina, in Houran, Transjordan, and this means that the Shrine in Salt could be a tomb.



Prophet Yahya / John

The Site of his Death
at Mukawir

السلام

النبي يحيى
موقع وفاته في
مكاور، مادبا

The Holy Qur'an says (19: 12-15):

*O Yahya! Take the Scripture with
Might! And We gave him wisdom
when a child. And compassion
from Our presence, and purity;
and he was devout. And dutiful
toward his parents. And he was
not arrogant, rebellious. Peace on
him the day he was born, and the
day he dieth, and the day he shall
be raised alive!*

The Prophet Yahya عليه السلام was the son of the Prophet Zakariyyah / Zachariah عليه السلام and thus also the cousin of the Blessed Virgin Maryam / Mary. His birth itself was miraculous because his parents were too old to have children at the time, but were granted one in response to his father's prayer to God to grant him a son that would carry on his work (of preaching). Yahya عليه السلام was a pious, ascetic son, and was inspired with the scripture and went about the land preaching the word of God, and foretelling the immanent advent of the Messiah. When consulted by King Herod Antipas as to the licitness of the latter's marriage, he refused to declare it legal, and was eventually murdered and beheaded for this, at the instigation of Salome, in Herod's Citadel at Mukawir / Machaerus, albeit that his head was taken and buried in what is now the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.*



* His body remained and was buried in Mukawir.



Prophet 'Isa/Jesus

The Site of his Baptism in
the River Jordan;
His Cave in Gedara

اليسع عليه السلام

النبي عيسى
موقع المغطس في
نهر الأردن "الغور الأوسط"
كهفه في أم قيس

The Holy Qur'an says (41:14):

*O ye who believe! Be God's
helpers, even as 'Isa the son
of Maryam said unto the
disciples: who are my helpers for
God? They said: We are God's
helpers. And a party
of Children of Israel believed,
while a party disbelieved. Then
We strengthened
those who believed against their
foes, and they
became the victors.*

In Islam, 'Isa / Jesus ﷺ is viewed as follows (4: 171): *The Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam, was but a Messenger of God and His Word which he conveyed unto Mary, and a Spirit from Him....*

The question of his super-eminence over the other Messengers is formulated as follows (2: 153): *We have preferred some of these Messengers over others. Some of them God spoke to, while others He raised in degree; and We gave 'Isa, son of Mary, clear proofs, and We supported him with the Holy Spirit... The Holy Qur'an also says (23:50): And we made the son of Maryam and his mother a Portent...*

'Isa / Jesus ﷺ was baptised by Yahya / John the Baptist عليه السلام in the River Jordan – it was then that the Holy Spirit descended on him in the shape of a dove – and emerged into the Jordanian side of the River and spent 'forty days in the wilderness'. The site of this is marked, to this day.

Um Qays – Gedara – is also the site of a famous miracle performed by 'Isa / Jesus ﷺ, (the Miracle of the Gadarean Swine) and to this day there is a Cave named after him, in which he is said to have spent some time.





Prophet Muhammad

النبي محمد

صلى الله
عليه
وسلم

The Site of his Early Encounter with the Monk Bahira, and later with the Monk Nestor

موقع لقائه مع الراهب بحيرة وفيما بعد مع
الراهب نستور، البقعاوية في الصفاوي
(شجرة عمرها ١٥٠٠ سنة استظل بها
النبي ﷺ اثناء رحلته إلى الشام)

According to Islamic tradition (specifically according to Ibn Hisham's recension of Ibn Ishaq's *Seerah*), the Meccan *Hanif* Zeid bin 'Amr bin Nufayl, around the time of the birth of the Prophet ﷺ or perhaps just before, 'determined to leave Mecca to travel about in search of the Hanifiyyah, the religion of Abraham'. He wandered about Syria and Iraq questioning monks and rabbis until he eventually came 'to a monk at Mayfa'ah, in the land of Al-Balqa' who told him that there would shortly arise a Prophet amongst his own people with the 'religion of Abraham'. Excavations at Um Rasas, 30 kilometers South-East of Madaba, in 1986, by the Franciscan Archeological Institute on Mount Nebo, discovered the ancient name of 'Kestron Mefa'a' three times on mosaic floors in the Church of St. Stephen, and the same name in Greek was discovered on two vignettes of the city dated to the 6th Century. This, combined with Roman Army records identifying the Mefa'a on the 'plateau of Moab' and with the ruins of churches and towers found there, clearly shows that the site where *Hanif* Zeid bin Amir had heard the prediction concerning the coming of the Prophet ﷺ was Um Rasas.

Ibn Hisham maintains that the famous childhood encounter of the Prophet ﷺ and his uncle Abu Talib with the Monk Bahira – and his (with his companion Maysarah's) later encounter with the Monk Nestor – was at a caravan stop of 'Bostra of Al-Sham'. To this day there is an ancient tree near Safawi which is said to be the tree underneath which the Prophet ﷺ took shelter, perhaps when he was spotted by the Monk Nestor.

However, Al-Halabi (17th Century) appealing to the authority of Ibn Askar (12th Century) says that these same incidents occurred in the village of Mayfa'ah in the district of Balqa, which would bring us back to Um Rasas, where Zeid bin 'Amr heard the prediction mentioned earlier. Whatever the case, both sites are in Jordan, and although Um Rasas is a recent discovery, the tree in Safawi has long been marked out by the local population.

PART II

The Companions

*When he said to his
Companion: ‘Grieve not.
Lo! God is with us’.*

(The Qur’an, 9:40)

A Companion is someone who met the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a Muslim. The Meccan Companions who immigrated to Medina with the Prophet ﷺ are known as the *Muhajirun*, and the Medinan Companions who received them and aided them are known as the *Ansar*. Of them, the Holy Qur’an says (9: 100):

*And the first to lead the way of
the Muhajirun and the Ansar,
and those who followed them in
goodness – God is well pleased
with them and they are well
pleased with Him, and He hath
made ready for them gardens
under which flow rivers, wherein
they will abide for ever. That is
the supreme triumph.*

Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ said (in both *Bukhari* and *Muslim*): ‘The best of my people are my generation, and then they that come after that, and then they that come after that’. Thus it will be apparent that the all Companions are personages who have been immeasurably blessed, albeit that on many occasions the Prophet ﷺ spoke of the particular merits – and hence the superiority – of his closest Companions amongst them.

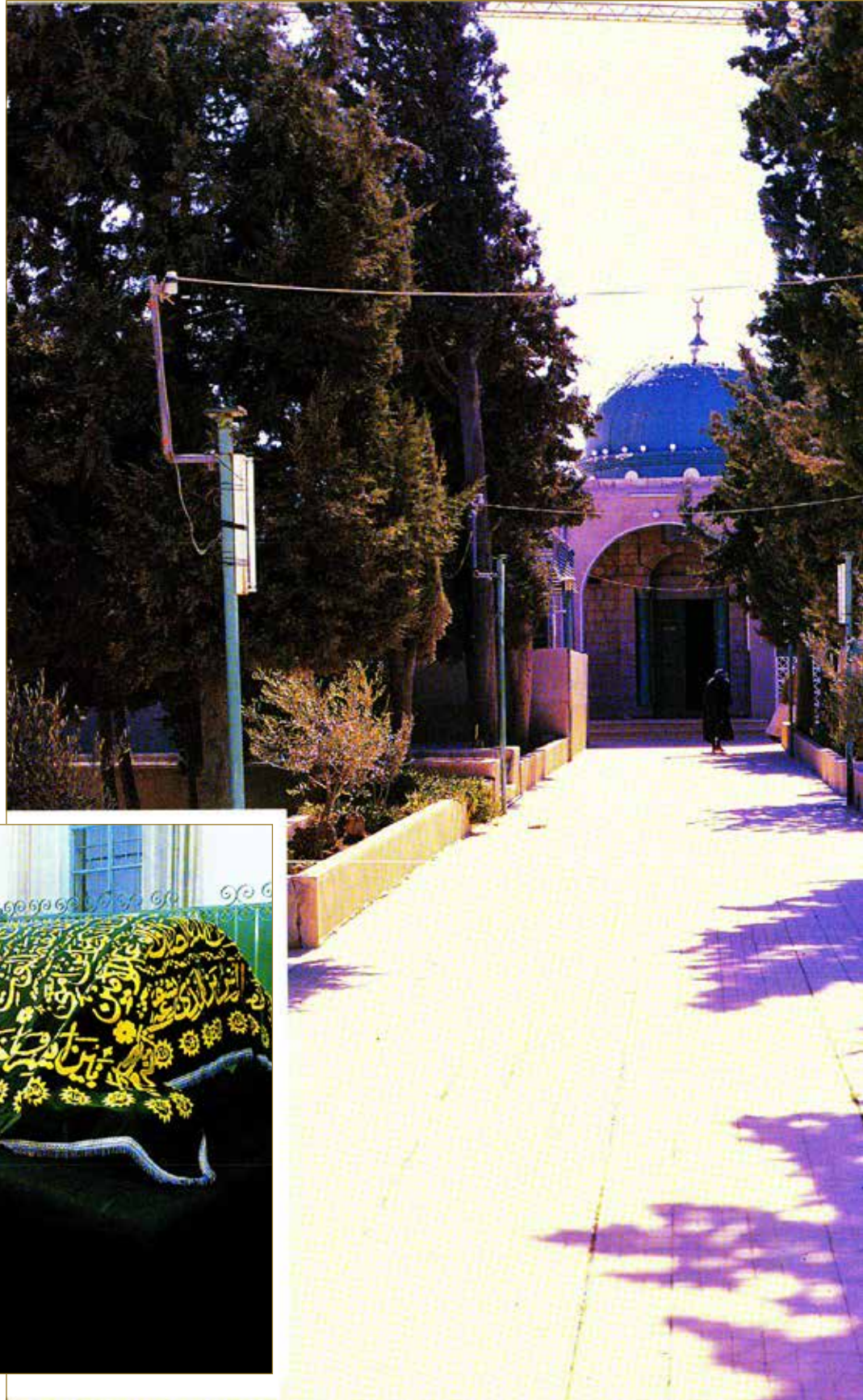
ﷺ

Ja'far bin Abi Talib

His Tomb at Mazar, near Kerak

جعفر بن أبي طالب
ضريحه في المزار، قرب مدينة الكرك

Ja'far bin Abi Talib bin Abd Al-Muttalib bin Hashim was the Prophet's ﷺ first cousin and one of the first Muslims. He was ten years senior to his younger brother, the Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib, and was himself one of the greatest Companions. Traditions relate that Ja'far was the person who most resembled the Prophet ﷺ 'in looks and in character', and that there was no man who was better, after the Prophet ﷺ, than he. He was one of the Companions who first immigrated from Mecca to Abyssinia. He came back to Medina at the time of the conquest of Khaybar. When the Prophet saw Ja'far upon his return from Khaybar he kissed him between the eyes and said: 'I do not know for which to be happier: Ja'far's return or the conquest of Khaybar'. He stayed in Medina for several months until the Prophet charged him with the deputy command of an army to raid Mu'tah in the region of Kerak. He was martyred there in the month of *Jamada Al-Uwla* in the eighth year after *Hijra*, at the age of forty one. Before being killed at Mu'tah, Ja'far's right and left arms – in which he in turn had held the standard of Islam – were severed in combat. Shortly afterwards, the Prophet ﷺ had a vision of Ja'far in the Highest Paradise, sitting with the other martyrs of the battle, but with wings instead of arms. Thus Ja'far became known to posterity as *Ja'far Al-Tayar* – Ja'far, the Winged One.





رضي عنه

Zeid ibn Al-Harithah

His Tomb at Mazar, near Kerak

زيد بن الحارثة
ضريحه في المزار، قرب مدينة الكرك

Abu Usama Zeid Ibn Al-Harithah was the first Companion to adopt Islam after Ali bin Abi Talib (k.). Whilst still a child Zeid was captured from his mother (of an Arab tribe, far from Mecca) and sold into slavery. The Prophet ﷺ bought him in Mecca and gave him his freedom. When Zeid's father and uncle came to look for him to take him back, Zeid refused, choosing to stay with the Prophet ﷺ. Thereupon the Prophet ﷺ adopted him, announcing: 'Zeid is my son. I inherit him and he inherits me', and this pleased his father and uncle, who left satisfied. For a while he was known amongst the Muslims as 'Zeid bin Mohammed'. Then came the Qur'anic verse (33:5): *Call them after their fathers. That is more equitable in the sight of God*, and Zeid became known as 'Ibn (the son of) Al-Harithah' again. Zeid is also the only Companion mentioned in the Qur'an by name (33:37): *So when Zeid had dissolved (his marriage) with her, We gave her unto thee in marriage*. Zeid was the Prophet's ﷺ chief military commander, and whenever he sent Zeid with an army he put him in charge, as he did with his young son Usama, after Zeid's death, in Zeid's honour. According to the Lady 'Aisha, had Zeid lived, he would probably have been the first Caliph. Zeid was the Commander-in-Chief of the Muslim forces at Battle of Mu'tah, and was martyred there in the eighth year after the Hijra at the age of fifty-five. The Prophet lamented his death to his Companions with tears in his eyes, but saw him in the Highest Paradise, in the same vision that he saw Ja'far.



رضي الله عنه

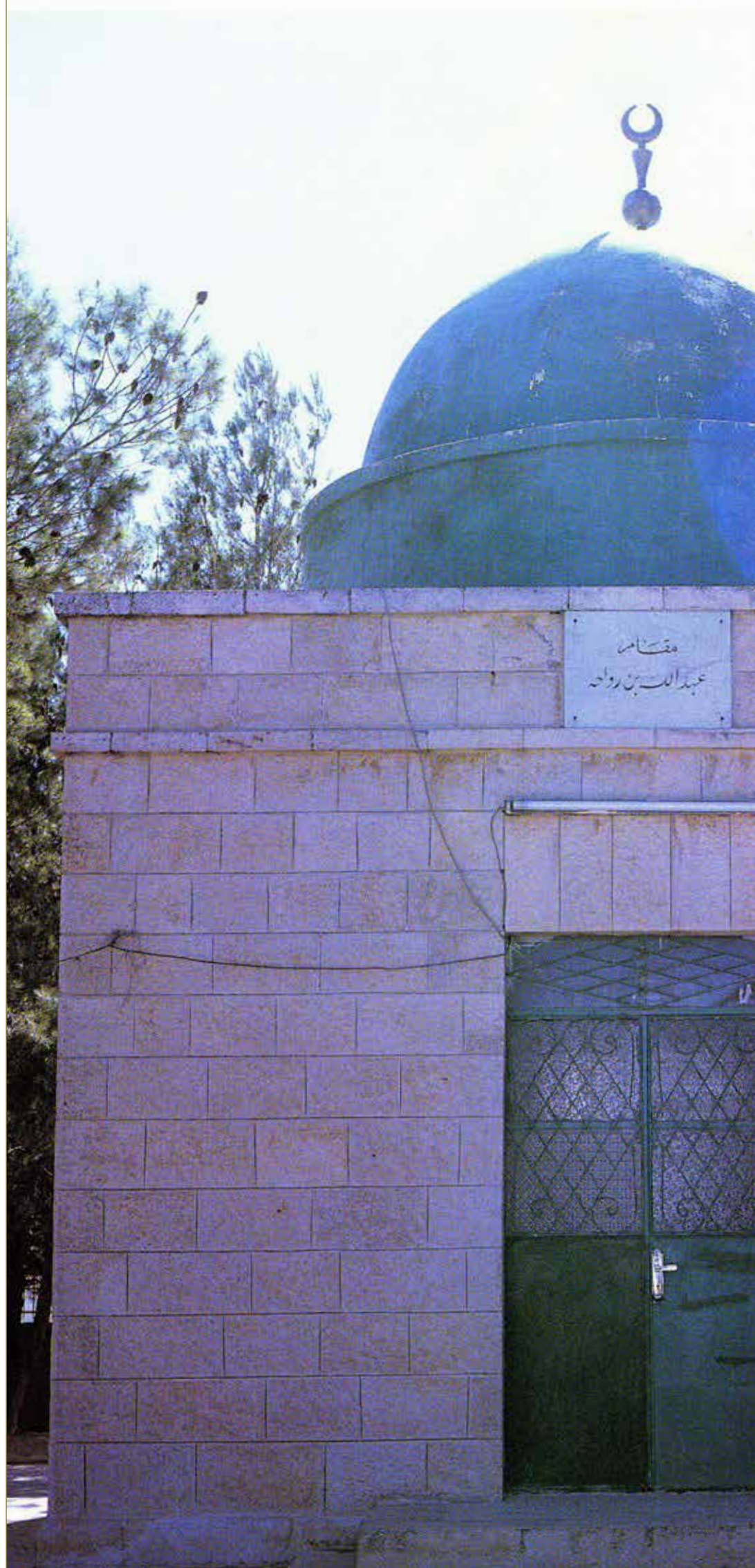
Abdallah bin Rawahah

His Tomb at Mazar, near Kerak

عبدالله بن رواحه
ضريحه في المزار، قريب مدينة الكرك

The great Companion Abdallah bin Rawahah bin Tha'labah, also known as Abu Amro' Al-Ansari Al-Khazraji Al-Badri, was originally a Christian scribe from Medina who participated in the Pact at Aqaba. During the Battle of Badr, he was left behind by the Prophet ﷺ in charge of Medina. Later he was sent out at the head of a detachment of 30 mounted men to attack Usayr bin Rozam in Khaybar, whom he killed. He was then appointed by the Prophet to collect alms from the fruits of trees (which were mostly date palms). Abdallah was known for his patience, his love of *Jihad*, his obedience and his piety. According to Abu Al-Darda'a: 'If we were travelling with the Prophet ﷺ on a hot day, no one in the group would be fasting but the Prophet and Abdallah bin Rawahah'. When the following verse was revealed (26: 224): *As for poets, the erring follow them*, Ibn Rawahah thought himself to be amongst these latter, but then God revealed the verse (26: 227): *Save those who believe, work righteousness, and remember God much, and vindicate themselves after they are wronged. And soon the unjust will know the vicissitudes of their [own] affairs*.

It is said that when the Muslim army moved on to Mu'tah by way of the region of Ma'an they were told that the Byzantines had prepared a huge army to fight them. Zeid then consulted his companions and they advised him to withdraw. But Ibn Rawahah remained silent, and when Zeid consulted him personally, he said: 'We did not march here to loot but to fight, and we do not fight them because of superior numbers or better equipment. My opinion is to go ahead and fight them'. He had been appointed by the Prophet ﷺ as the third-in-charge of the army, after Zeid and Ja'far, and was killed during the Battle of Mu'tah in the eighth year after *Hijra*. However, he was later seen, along with Zeid and Ja'far, in Paradise in the same vision of the Prophet ﷺ. He left no offspring.

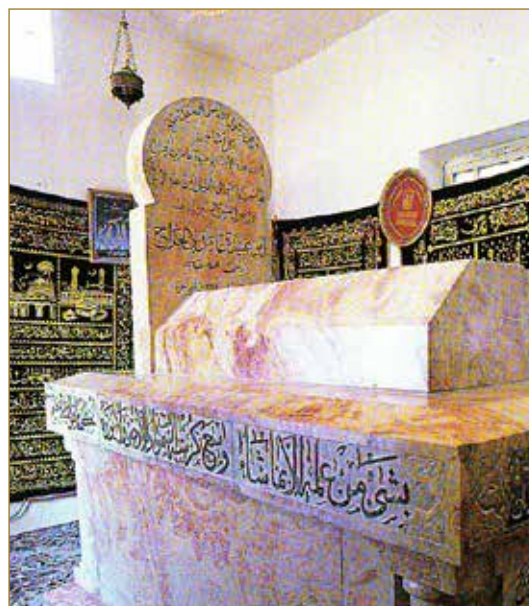


رضي الله عنه

Abu 'Ubaydah 'Amir ibn Al-Jarrah His Tomb in the Ghor, in the Jordan Valley

أبو عبيدة عامر بن الجراح
ضريحه في قرية عمّا منطقة الأغوار الوسطى
وادي الأردن

Abu Ubaydah 'Amir bin Abdallah bin Al-Jarrah Al-Qurayshi was a great Companion and amongst the first to enter Islam. The Caliph Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq رضي الله عنه nominated him for the Caliphate at the meeting of Al-Saqifah. He was related to the Prophet ﷺ through a common ancestor (Fihr), and was one of the immigrants to Abyssinia as well as one of the compilers of the Holy Qur'an. He was also one of the 'Blessed Ten' Companions whom Prophet ﷺ confirmed will go to Heaven (and who also included the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs), and was personally named by the Prophet ﷺ as the Guardian or 'Trusted One' (*Ameen*) of the Nation of Islam. He was said to be a tall, thin man with a lean face, and a slight beard, and a broken front tooth that was the envy of all the Muslims, because he had broken it during the Battle of Uhud pulling a link of chain mail out of the Prophet's cheek (the Prophet, ﷺ had received a blow to the face whose force embedded his armour into his cheek) and because, as it broke, his blood mixed with the Prophet's blood. After the Prophet died ﷺ he led the Northern Army of the Muslims during the Syrian Campaign, and was one of those who died from the Great Plague in the 18th year after the *Hijra*, near Fahl, at the age of 58.



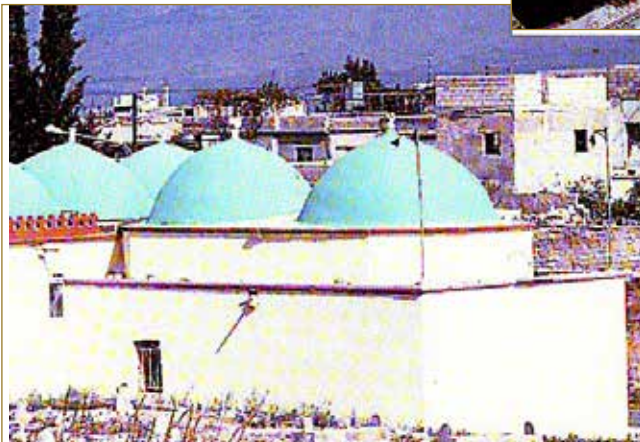
رضي الله عنه

Mu'ath bin Jabal

His Tomb in the Ghor, in the Jordan Valley

معاذ بن جبل
ضريحه في الشونة الشمالية "قرية الشيخ معاذ"
وادي الأردن

Abu Abd Al-Rahman Mu'ath bin Jabal Al-Ansari Al-Khazraji Al-Madani Al-Badri was present at the Pact at Aqaba at an early age and turned to Islam at the age of eighteen. He was one of the early Muslims who took part in the Battle of Badr. He was also one of the four Ansar who compiled the Qur'an during the time of the Prophet ﷺ, who subsequently said: 'Read the Qur'an from four, from Ibn Masoud; from Salim Abu Hdayfa; Ubayy bin Ka'ab; and Mu'ath bin Jabal'. The Prophet also said that 'the most knowledgeable amongst them on what is allowed and prohibited [in Islam] is Mu'ath bin Jabal' and that 'Mu'ath will be at the forefront of all the scholars on the Day of Judgment'. The Prophet ﷺ had sent him at the head of a group of Companions as Ruler of the people of Yemen and as a religious teacher. The Prophet ﷺ also put him in charge of Mecca during the Battle of Hunayn and ordered him to teach the people of Mecca the Qur'an and the Faith. Mu'ath died in Jordan during the 18th year after the *Hijra*, at the age of thirty eight.



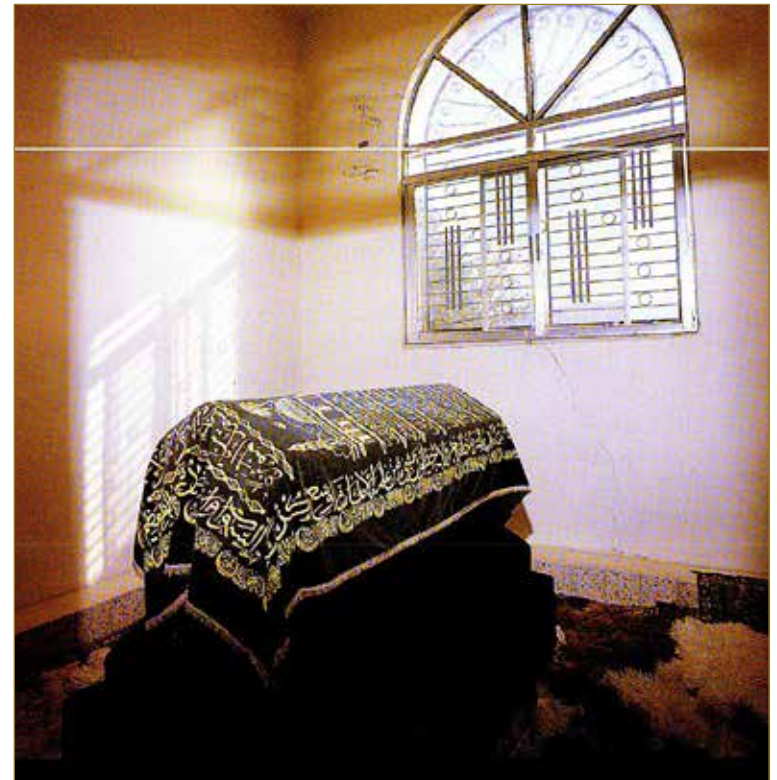
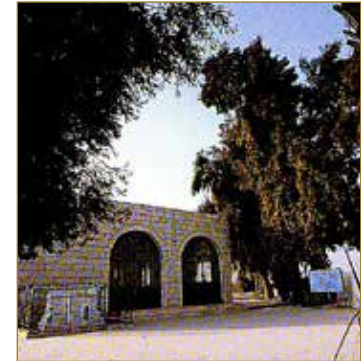
رضي الله عنه

Shurhabil bin Husnah

His Tomb in the Ghor, in the Jordan Valley

شُرْحَبِيل بن حُصَيْنَه
ضريحه في 'وادي اليابس'
وادي الأردن

Abu Abdallah Shurhabil bin Husnah (his mother) is the son of Abdallah bin Muta'. He converted to Islam in Mecca before the *Hijra* and left for Abyssinia with his family and then returned to Medina. He was sent by Abu Bakr on the conquests of Al-Sham and appointed by the Caliph 'Umar to govern three quarters of Bilad Al-Sham. It is said that he was infected by the Great Plague on the same day as Abu 'Ubaydah and died at the age of 67 in the 18th year after the *Hijra*.



رضي الله عنه

'Amir bin Abi Waqqas

His Tomb in the Ghor, in the Jordan Valley

عَامِرُ بْنُ أَبِي وَقَّاصٍ
ضريحه في وادي الأردن

'Amir bin Malik Al-Zahri also called 'Amir, the son of Abi Waqqas was the maternal cousin of the Prophet ﷺ and the brother of the famous general Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas. Their mother Himnah, the daughter of Sufyan bin Umayyah, swore to stay out in the sun until 'Amir – who had converted to Islam – renounce his new faith, but he persisted. According to some sources 'Amir was the eleventh man to convert

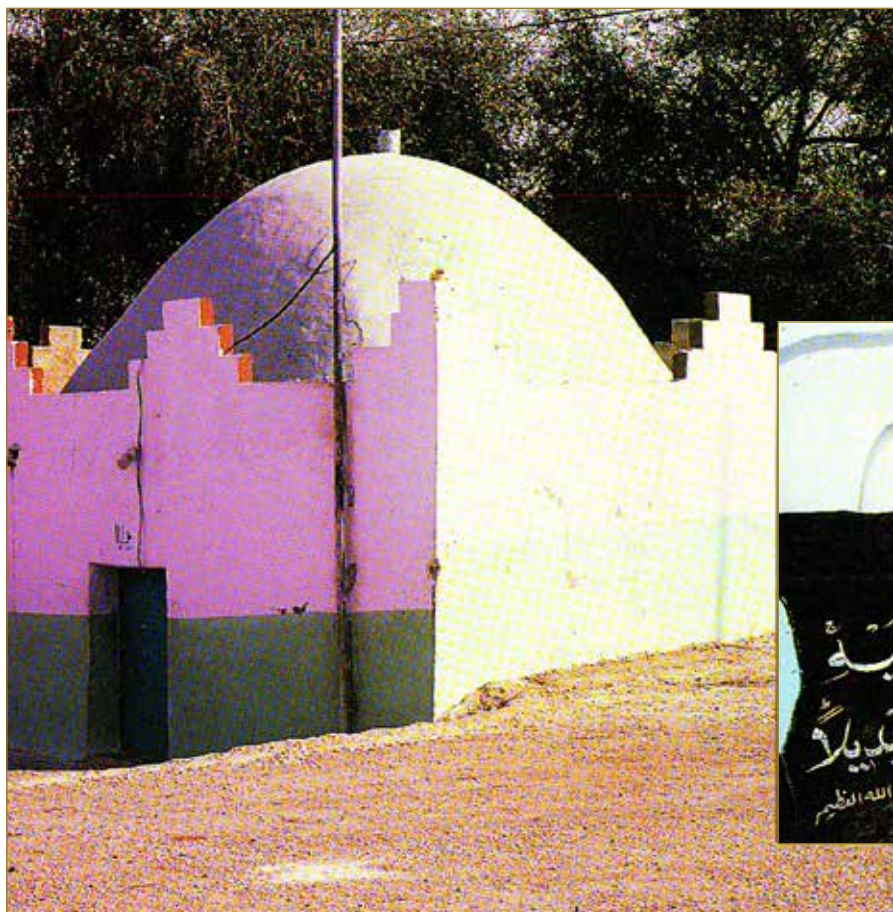
رضي الله عنه

Dirar bin Al-Azwar

His Tomb in the Ghor, in the Jordan Valley

ذِرَارُ بْنُ الْأَزْوَارِ
ضريحه في وادي الأردن 'الغور الأوسط'

Dirar bin Al-Azwar was one of the early Companions. It is recorded that he once gave the Prophet ﷺ a she-camel, and that he was sent by him to prevent the Bani Assad from raiding. He is best remembered as a wild and fierce warrior who used to love combat – and as a general under Khalid bin Walid during the Islamic Conquests – and whose very name was enough to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy. He too died during the Great Plague in the 18th year after the *Hijra*.



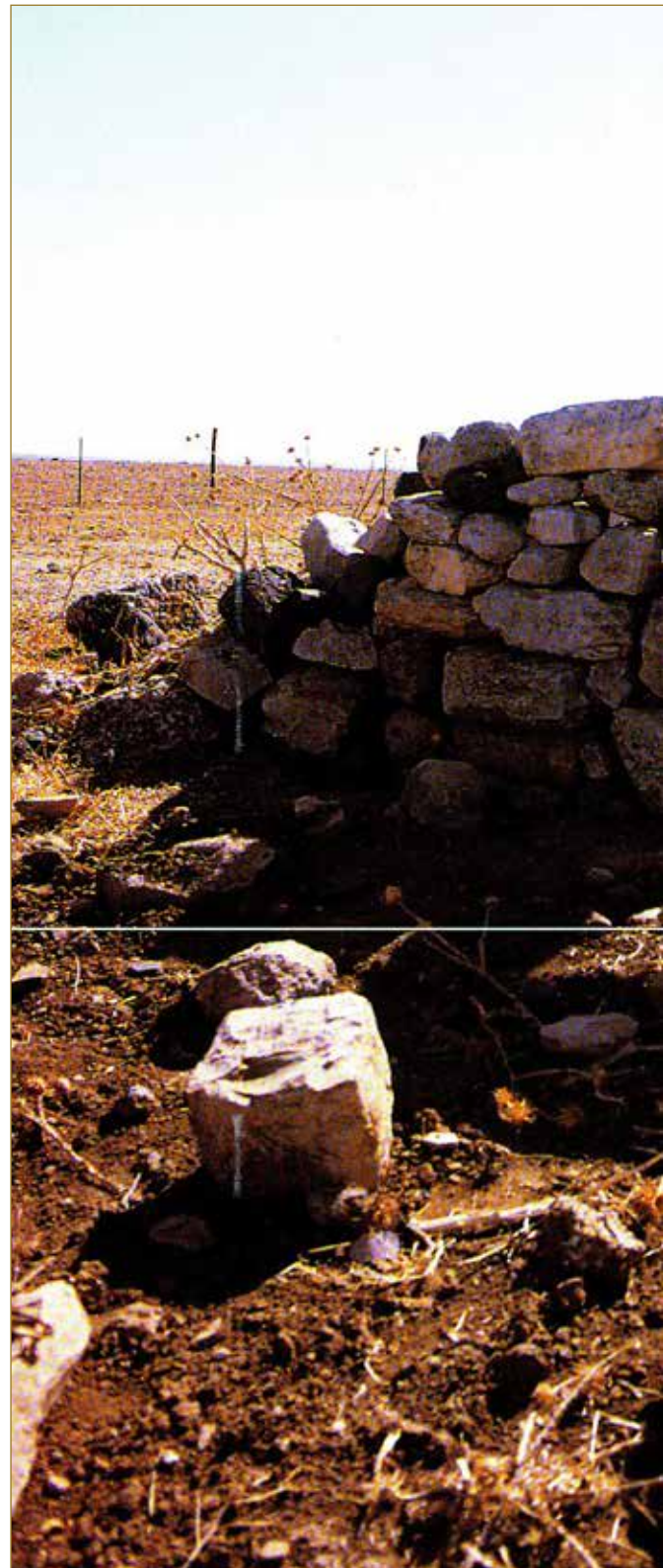
رضي عنه

Al-Harith bin 'Umayr Al-Azadi

His Tomb near Tafilah

الحارث بن عُمير الأزدي
ضريحه قُرب الطفيلة

Al-Harith bin 'Umayr Al-Azadi was one of the Prophet's Companions. The Prophet ﷺ sent the King of Basra a message with Al-Harith bin Umayr, but when the latter arrived in Tafilah, he was captured and killed by Shurhabil bin 'Amro Al-Ghassani (the Ruler of the district of Mu'tah), making him the only messenger of the Prophet ﷺ to be martyred during his mission.





ﷺ

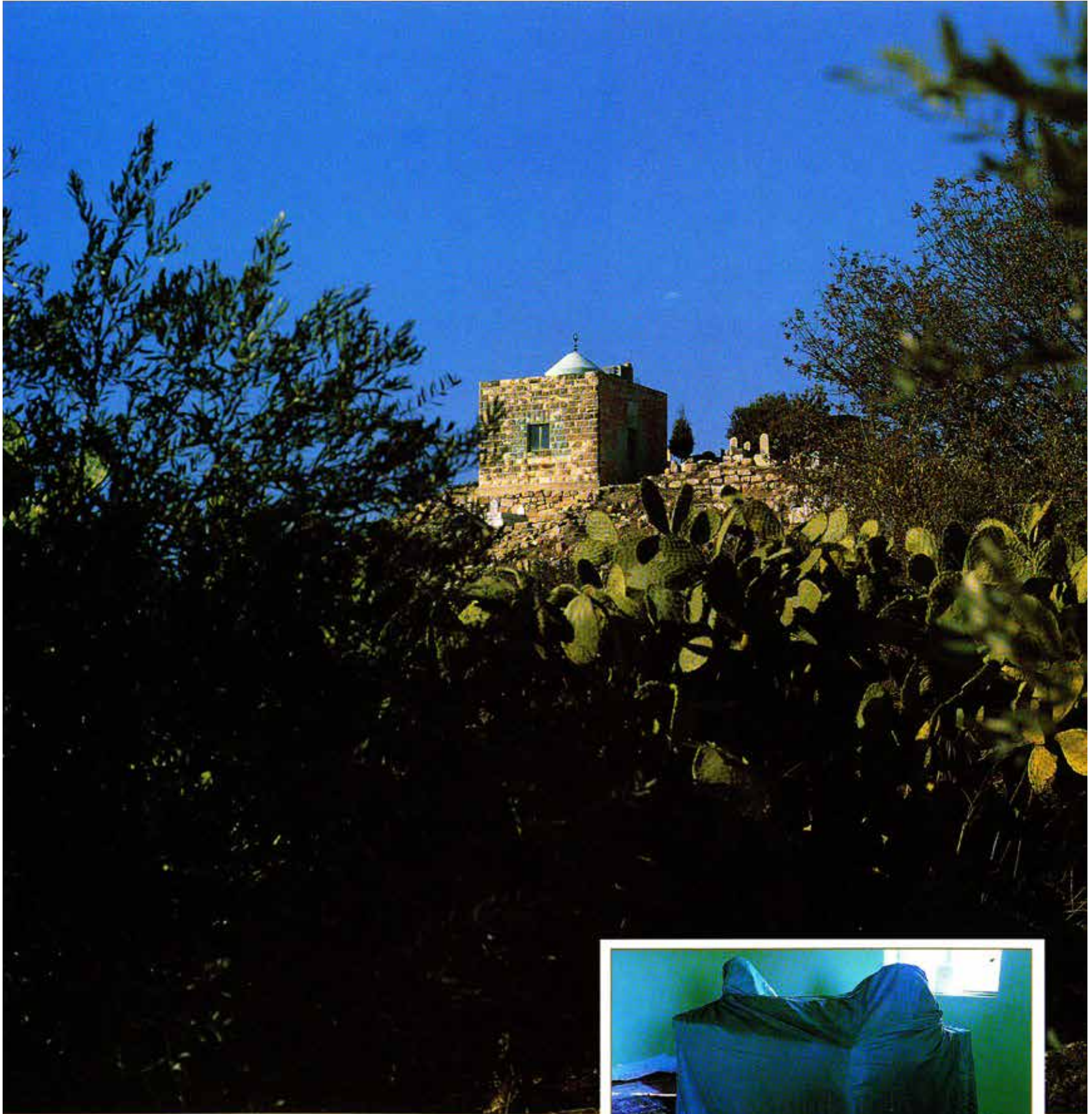
Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari

His Tomb near Madaba

أبو ذر الغفاري
ضريحه قربة مادبا

Abu Dharr Jundub bin Jinadah Al-Ghifari was among the first Companions to turn to Islam. When Abu Dharr first heard of the Prophet he told his brother to ride to Mecca and learn more about the man who was claiming to be a Prophet and to be receiving Revelations from the sky. When his brother returned and told Abu Dharr that he heard the Prophet instruct people on the highest virtues and that his words were not poetry, Abu Dharr immediately went to see the Prophet ﷺ and adopted Islam. The Prophet ﷺ told him to go back to his people and teach them about Islam and there await instructions. However, Abu Dharr wanted to announce his Islam loudly and publicly so he went to the Mosque and proclaimed the *Shahadah*, such that the people fell upon him and beat him until the Prophet's uncle Al-'Abbas intervened by reminding the people that the man was from Ghifar, on the trade route between Mecca and Syria. Abu Dharr returned the next day and repeated the whole thing until Al-'Abbas came to his rescue once more. Finally, he returned to his people and remained there until after the Battle of Uhud when he immigrated to Medina.

Abu Dharr was tall, thin and dark, and was known for his austerity. The Prophet said of him: 'Never did the earth hold or the sky shade someone more honest than Abu Dharr', and 'May God have mercy on Abu Dharr. He lives alone, dies alone and will be resurrected alone'. Ali bin Abi Taleb said of him: 'Abu Dharr is a vessel full of knowledge that may be relied upon'. He died in the 31st year after *Hijra*.



رضي الله عنه

Abu Al-Darda'a

His Tomb near Irbid

أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ

ضريحه في قرية سؤم الشناق، قرب إربد

The great Companion Abu Al-Darda'a 'Uwaymir bin Malik Al-Ansari Al-Khazraji entered Islam at the Battle of Badr and participated in the Battle of Uhud where he fought bravely and was praised highly by the Prophet ﷺ. He was a trader before Islam and at first continued trading as a Muslim, but then decided he could not combine both his profession and worship God as much as he wanted, and so abandoned trade and devoted all his time to worship. He was amongst the most pious and devoted of the Companions and is well known for his transmission of the *Ahadith* of the Prophet ﷺ. During 'Umar's Caliphate (r.), he was in charge of the region of Damascus. He died in the 32nd year after *Hijra*, during the Caliphate of 'Uthman (r.).



رضي الله عنه

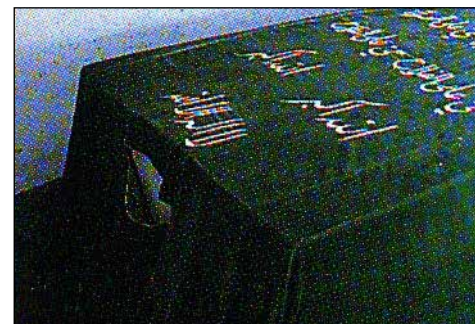
Bilal bin Rabah

His Shrine in Wadi Seer, Amman

بِلَالُ بْنُ رَبَاحٍ

مقامه في قرية بلال، وادي السير، قرب عمان

Bilal was of Abyssinian origin but was born in Hijaz. He became one of the first converts to Islam, whilst still a slave, and suffered terrible torture at the hands of his master, Umayyah bin Khalaf, but refused to recant his belief in the One God. Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq bought him, upon orders from the Prophet ﷺ, and emancipated him. He became the Prophet's own *Muathin*, known for his beautiful voice, and after the conquest of Mecca it was he who was asked to climb the Ka'aba and sound the call to prayer. The Prophet said: 'Four will be the first among their people to enter Paradise: myself among the Arabs, Salman among the Persians, Bilal among the Abyssinians and Suhayb among the Byzantines'. He also said ﷺ: 'Paradise longs for three: Ali, Ammar and Bilal'. After the death of the Prophet ﷺ he refused to sound the public call to prayer (*Adhan*), but made an exception at the conquest of Jerusalem, and history relates how all the old Muslim veterans – including the Caliph 'Umar and the General Khalid Ibn Al-Walid – immediately broke down into tears at hearing once again the voice so strongly associated with the Prophet ﷺ. He died joyfully saying that he would soon be reunited with the Prophet, in the 20th year after *Hijra*, whilst he was in his sixties.



رضي الله عنه

Maysarah bin Masruq Al-'Abassi

His Tomb in 'Arda, near Salt

ميسرة بن مسروق العبسي
ضريحه في العارضة قرب السلت

Maysara bin Masruq Al-Abassi was one of the nine members of the delegation of Bani 'Abs who met with the Prophet. He witnessed the Farewell Pilgrimage of Prophet ﷺ and told him: 'Praise be to God who saved me, through you, from Hell'. He and his tribe stood firm in support of Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq during the time of the Wars of Apostasy, and he took part in the Battle of Yamamah and the Conquest of Syria with Khalid bin Walid. In the 20th year after the *Hijra* he was charged with the command of an army of 4000 men which successfully attacked the Byzantines, and was the first Muslim army to enter Byzantine lands.



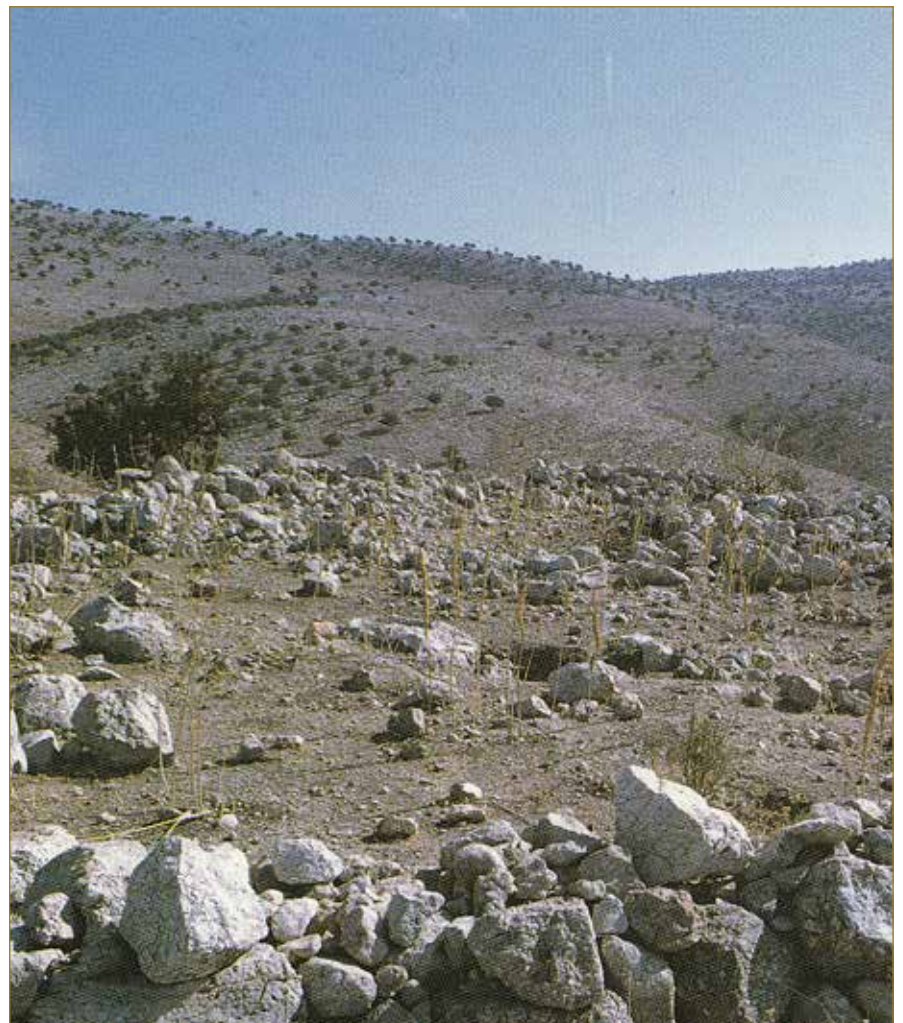
رضي الله عنه

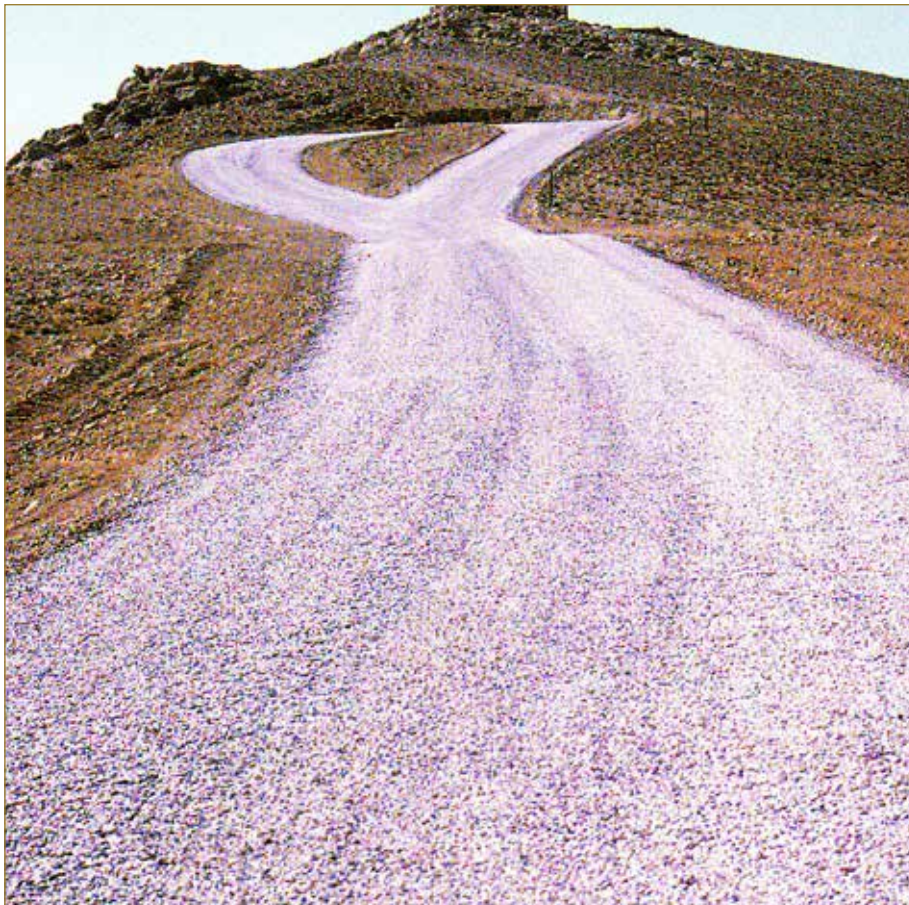
'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl

His Tomb near 'Ajlun

عكرمة بن أبي جهل
ضريحه قرب عجلون

Abu 'Uthman 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl Al-Qurayshi was one of the Companions who before turning to Islam had been one of the staunchest and bitterest enemies of the Prophet ﷺ, along with his father. He and Safwan bin Umayyah bin Khalaf escaped when the Prophet conquered Mecca, but returned and entered Islam after the Prophet guaranteed their safety. When he entered Islam he promised to struggle twice as hard for the religion as had against it, and was said to have finally made a good Muslim, before he was martyred during the Syrian Campaign.





رضي الله عنه

Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari His Shrine at Udruh, near Ma'an

أبو موسى الأشعري
مقامه في اذرح قرب معان

Abu Musa Abdallah bin Qays Al-Ash'ari entered Islam before the *Hijra* and immigrated to Abyssinia with Ja'far bin Abi Talib and returned to Medina with him at the time of the conquest at Khaybar. He was later sent as the Muslim Governor and religious teacher over a part of the Yemen. Abu Musa was a short, thin man with a beautiful voice, praised by the Prophet ﷺ. He was also a general during the Islamic conquests and was the arbitrator who represented the Caliph Ali (k.) in the Judication between him and Mu'awiyah at Udruh.

رضي الله عنه

Farwa bin 'Amro Al-Jadhami His Tomb near Tafilah

فروة بن عمرو الجذامي
ضريحه في حمامات عفرا، قرب الطفيلة



Farwa bin 'Amro Al-Jadhami Al-Nafathi was originally the Ruler of the Arab city of Ma'an and the surrounding area (in the South of Jordan today) under Byzantine suzerainty. After the fall of Mecca and the raid on Tabuk, Farwa sent the Prophet ﷺ a messenger to inform him of his Islam with a white mule as a gift. The Byzantines discovered this through their ally, Al-Harith bin Abi Shammar, the King of Ghassan, and crucified him by a spring called 'Afra near Tafilah. Although Farwa entered Islam during the Prophet's own lifetime, he never had the honour to meet him, and is therefore considered to be one of his greatest followers but not one of the Companions.

رضي الله عنه

Abd Al-Rahman bin 'Auf

His Shrine in Jbeha, near Amman

عبد الرحمن بن عوف
مقامه في قرية عوف

Abd Al-Rahman bin 'Auf was one of the first Muslims and one of the earliest Companions. He belonged to the Qurayshi clan of the Zuhrah – the clan of the Prophet's ﷺ mother Aminah – and thus was the Prophet's kinsman twice over. His father, 'Auf, was killed in the days before Islam by the Bani Jazima, an Arab tribe living not far from Mecca which used to waylay Meccan caravans, and he had avenged himself on them before becoming a Muslim. He was a merchant by profession, and had made the Hijra at roughly the same time as – albeit not together with – the Prophet ﷺ. He subsequently took part in all the major battles and campaigns of Islam during the Prophet's ﷺ life-time, including Badr; Uhud; the Trench; the Conquest of Mecca; Hunayn and the Farewell Pilgrimage, and personally led the Muslim expedition to Dumat Al-Jandal. The Prophet ﷺ made him a signatory, on behalf of the Muslim side, to the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, and after the death of the Prophet ﷺ he was one of the Muslim signatories at the Conquest of Jerusalem and the famous Covenant of 'Umar (with the city's Christian population). He was also one of the well-known 'Blessed Ten' Companions whom the Prophet ﷺ had assured would go to Paradise, and was a member of the Shura Council of the Caliphate that appointed 'Uthman ؓ to succeed 'Umar ؓ.

A number of more personal incidents involving the son of 'Auf are also well-known to history. After the Battle of Badr, he was collecting coats of mail as spoils of war, when one of the chiefs of the unbelievers, Umayyah — a former friend of his, in fact — appealed to him to take him and his son Ali as prisoners instead, for they could not get away. Abd Al-Rahman did this, but no sooner had he done so than they were spotted by Bilal — the Prophet's Muathin and a former slave of Umayyah's

severely tortured by him for his Islam — who immediately started screaming, wildly, and despite Abd Al-Rahman's efforts to calm him down: 'Umayyah, head of unbelief, may I not live if he lives!'. Thereupon, some of the other Muslims came and executed Umayyah and his son as War Criminals.

It is also related that on one occasion during the expedition to Tabuk, the Prophet ﷺ was, for some reason, late for prayers, the Muslims chose Abd Al-Rahman to lead the prayer. When the Prophet ﷺ arrived, Abd Al-Rahman naturally stepped back, but the Prophet ﷺ motioned Abd Al-Rahman to continue and prayed behind him. Afterwards the Prophet ﷺ said to him: 'Ye have done well, for verily a Prophet dieth not until he hath been led in prayer by a pious man of his people'. Moreover, as further testament to Abd Al-Rahman's spiritual greatness, the Prophet ﷺ on another occasion when 'Abd Al-Rahman and Khalid bin Walid (whom the Prophet, ﷺ, had named Sword of God for his valour) had an altercation, the Prophet ﷺ rebuked Khalid saying: 'Gently Khalid, let be my Companions; for if thou hadst Mount Uhud all in gold and didst spend it in the way of God thou wouldst not attain unto the merit of any man of my [closest] Companions.'





ﷺ

Jabir bin Abdallah

His Shrine in Tafilah

جَابِرُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ
مَقَامُهُ فِي الطَّفِيلَةِ

The *Ansari* Jabir bin Abdallah bin ‘Amr of the Bani Salimah clan of the Khazraj was one of the early Companions, and much beloved of the Prophet ﷺ. He was a poor man with seven sisters and no brothers whose father had a dream that he would be martyred the night before the Battle of Uhud (and in fact was, during the battle) and so had prevented him from attending the battle, in order that he might survive to look after his young sisters. He did, however, take part in the Battle of the Trench and was beside the Prophet ﷺ during the conquest of Mecca. He related (in *Waqidi*) several episodes and miracles he witnessed by the Prophet ﷺ. On one occasion whilst the Muslims were on campaign, the Prophet ﷺ noticed that Jabir was lagging behind because his camel was old, weak and slow. He made Jabir dismount and tapped the camel with his stick, which then got up and outstripped all the other camels. He also then made Jabir sell it to him at a generous price, and then topped-up the price, and finally made Jabir keep both the money and the camel; and this was perhaps a way to give of himself and his time, and to financially help a poor but sincere man, without injuring his pride.

ﷺ

Ka’ab bin Umayr Al-Ghifari

His Shrine in Salmani

كَعْبُ بْنُ عُمَيْرٍ الْغِفَارِيُّ
مَقَامُهُ فِي السَّلْمَانِيَةِ

Ka’ab bin Umayr Al-Ghifari was sent by the Prophet ﷺ at the head of a small detachment to southern Jordan to the tribe of Qu’da’ah in the year 629 AD/8 AH. He called upon them to enter Islam, but they murdered him and his companions.



PART III

Other Religious Sites

THE CAVE OF THE SLEEPERS /KAHF AL-RAQIM

Near Sahab, outside of Amman

In a chapter named ‘the Chapter of the Cave’ (*Surat Al-Kahf*) in the Holy Qur’an, a story is related of how a group of pious youths – equated with the Christian Legend of the ‘Sleepers of Ephesus’ – who were persecuted for believing in the One God, took to a Cave for refuge. There God preserved them for 300 solar years (which is exactly equal to 309 lunar years) and when they awoke they discovered this to their astonishment after sending someone covertly into the nearby town (which would have been Amman). The Cave in Sahab, which is said to be this cave, and on which there still stands Byzantine and Roman ruins, exactly fits the description in the Qu’ran of how (18:17):

*And thou mightest have
seen the sun when it rose
move away from their cave
to the right, and when it set
go past them on the left,
and they were in the cleft
thereof. That was one of
the portents of God....*



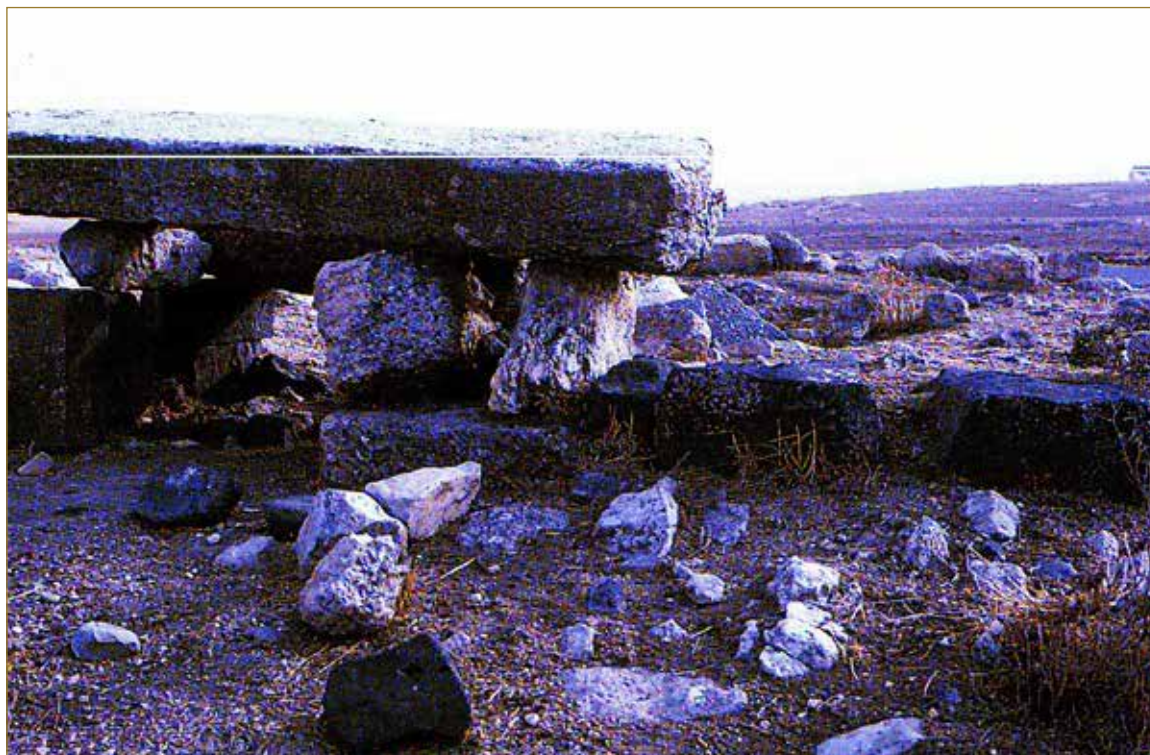
ZEID BIN ALI BIN AL-HUSSEIN *His Shrine in Kerak*

Al-Imam Abu Al-Hussein Zeid bin Ali Zein Al-Abiddin bin Al-Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib Al-Hashemi was the great, great grandson of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the brother of Al-Imam Al-Baqir. He was a majestic, righteous and knowledgeable religious leader who was martyred fighting against the unjust. Al-Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq said of him: 'Amongst us he was the best read in the Holy Qur'an, and the most knowledgeable about religion, and the most caring towards family and relatives'.

He was asked by some of the people of Kufah to be their ruler, but was killed soon after his arrival in Kufah at the age of 42 in the year 122 after *Hijra*. The Zeidi sect in the Yemen is named after him.

SHEETH/SETH *His Shrine near Tafilah*

Sheeth ﷺ is the son of Adam ﷺ, and was the Prophet and the Ruler of his brothers and relatives. Adam ﷺ was said to have met Eve for the first time after being expelled from the Garden of Eden (near 'Aden in the Yemen) on Mount Arafah in Mecca (hence the name in Arabic, which means 'know' or 'recognise'). Eve was said to have died in Jeddah (hence the name in Arabic, which means 'grandmother'), and Adam was said to have died on Mount Abu Qubays in Mecca (all this explains how the Ka'aba is the oldest place of worship on earth — see the Qur'an 3:96, and the Introduction). Now Sheeth ﷺ is said to have been buried not far from his father, so it is quite possible that his Shrine in Tafilah is his Tomb. Also, it should be mentioned that Sheeth is said to have been the inventor of the arts and crafts.





GADUR/GAD

His Tomb on Tel al-Gadur in Salt

Gad is the son of Ishaq / Isaac عليه السلام, the brother of Yusuf / Joseph and thus the father of one of the Tribes of Israel. The local people (and the local lore) call him the 'Prophet Gad' which is not impossible – despite the negative behaviour of Yusuf's brothers towards him – because the Qur'an says (4: 163-4):

*Lo! We inspire thee as
We inspired Nuh and the
Prophets after him, as We
inspired Ibrahim and Ismail
and Ishaq and Ya'cub and
the Tribes, and 'Isa and
Ayyub and Yunus and
Harun and Sulayman,
and as We imparted unto
Dawud the Psalms; And
Messengers We have
mentioned to thee before
and Messengers We have
not mentioned; and God
spoke directly to Musa.*

HAZIR / ASHER

His Tomb in Salt

Hazir / Asher is another one of the sons of Ishaq / Isaac عليه السلام, the brother of Yusuf / Joseph عليه السلام and thus the father of another of the Tribes of Israel. He is not, however, said to be a Prophet.



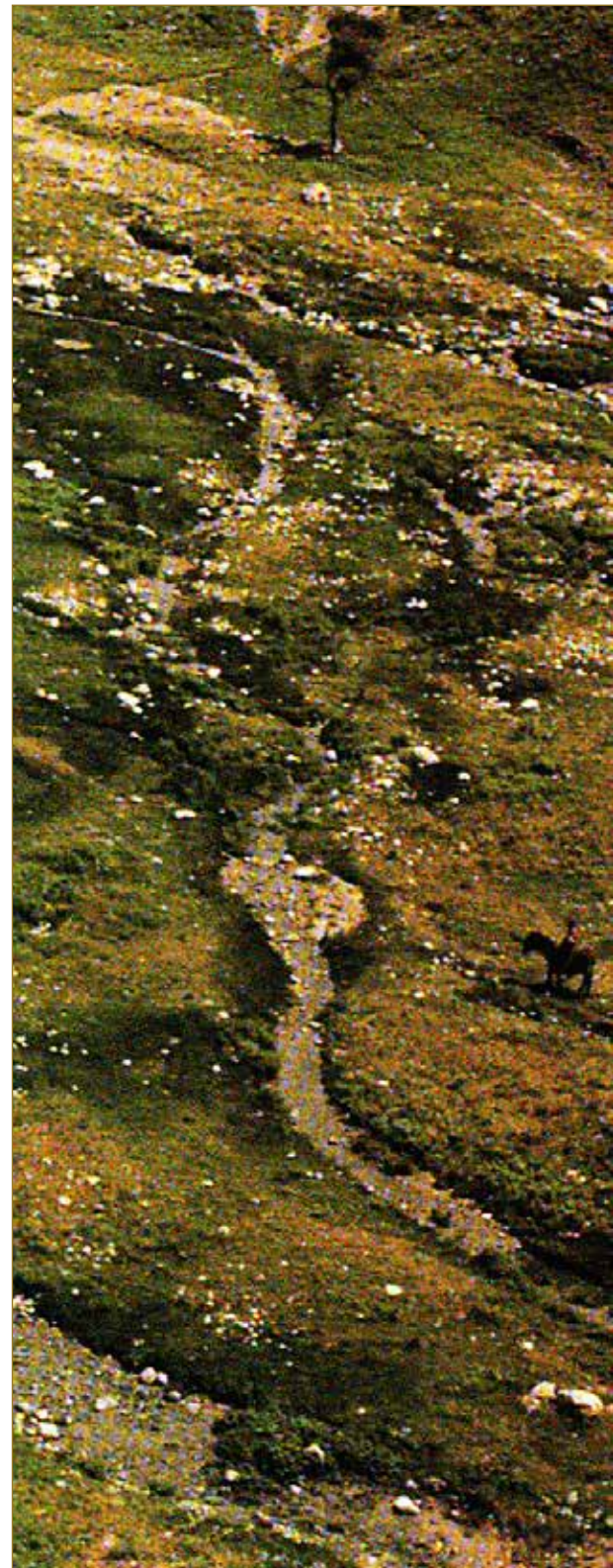


MOSES' SPRINGS
'UYUN MUSA
His Springs near Madaba

The Holy Qur'an relates the story of how Musa عليه السلام struck a rock with his staff and thereby provided his people with water (2: 60):

*And when Moses asked for
water for his people, We
said: Smite with thy staff
the rock. And there gushed
therefrom twelve springs
(such that) each tribe knew
their drinking place. Eat
and drink of that which
God hath provided, and do
not act corruptly, making
mischief in the earth.*

These springs are to be found at 'Uyun Musa, near Madaba. Until the 1930s there were still twelve of them, but then the local town council merged them into three springs to make more water for the local inhabitants.



PART IV

Historical Sites



Site of the
Battle of Fahl

THE SITE OF THE BATTLE OF MU'TAH

Near Kerak

Mu'tah is the site of a famous battle, during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ (– in the year 629 A.D.), between a Muslim army dispatched from Medina under Zeid ibn Al-Harithah ؓ and Ja'far bin Abi Talib ؓ, and a combined Byzantine / Ghassanid army.

THE SITE OF THE BATTLE OF FAHL

Pella, Northern Ghor

Fahl, or Pella, is the site of a famous battle (in the year 635 A.D.) between the Muslim army, under the Companions Khalid Ibn Al-Walid and Abu 'Ubaydah Ibn Al-Jarrah, and the Byzantines.

THE SITE OF THE BATTLE OF YARMOUK

Near Irbid

Yarmouk is the site of two large, famous and critical battles (in the years 634 and 636 A.D.) between the Muslim army, under the Companions Khalid Ibn Al-Walid and Abu 'Ubaydah Ibn Al-Jarrah, and the Byzantines, at the beginning of the Caliphate of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (كرم الله وجهه).



THE HILL OF JUDICATION JABAL AL-TAHKIM

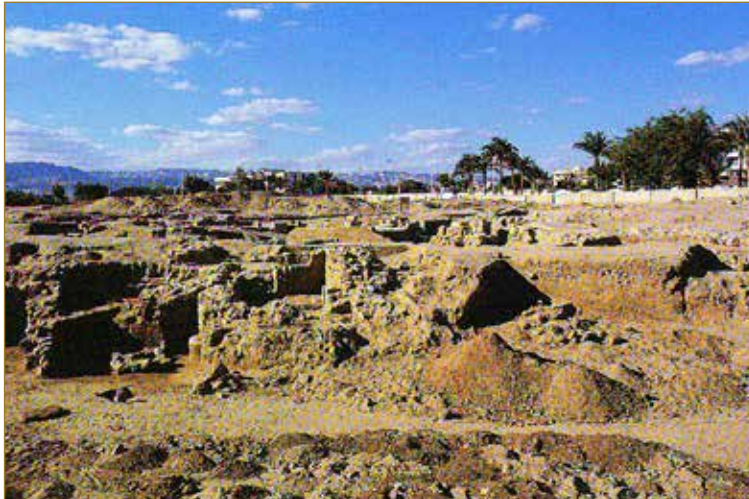
Udruh, near Ma'an

This hill in Udruh, near Ma'an, midway between the Hejaz and Syria, is the site of the Judication between the party of the Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib ﷺ, represented by Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari, and the party of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, represented by 'Amr Ibn Al-'As, after the Battle of Siffin.

'UTHMAN'S MOSQUE AT AYL

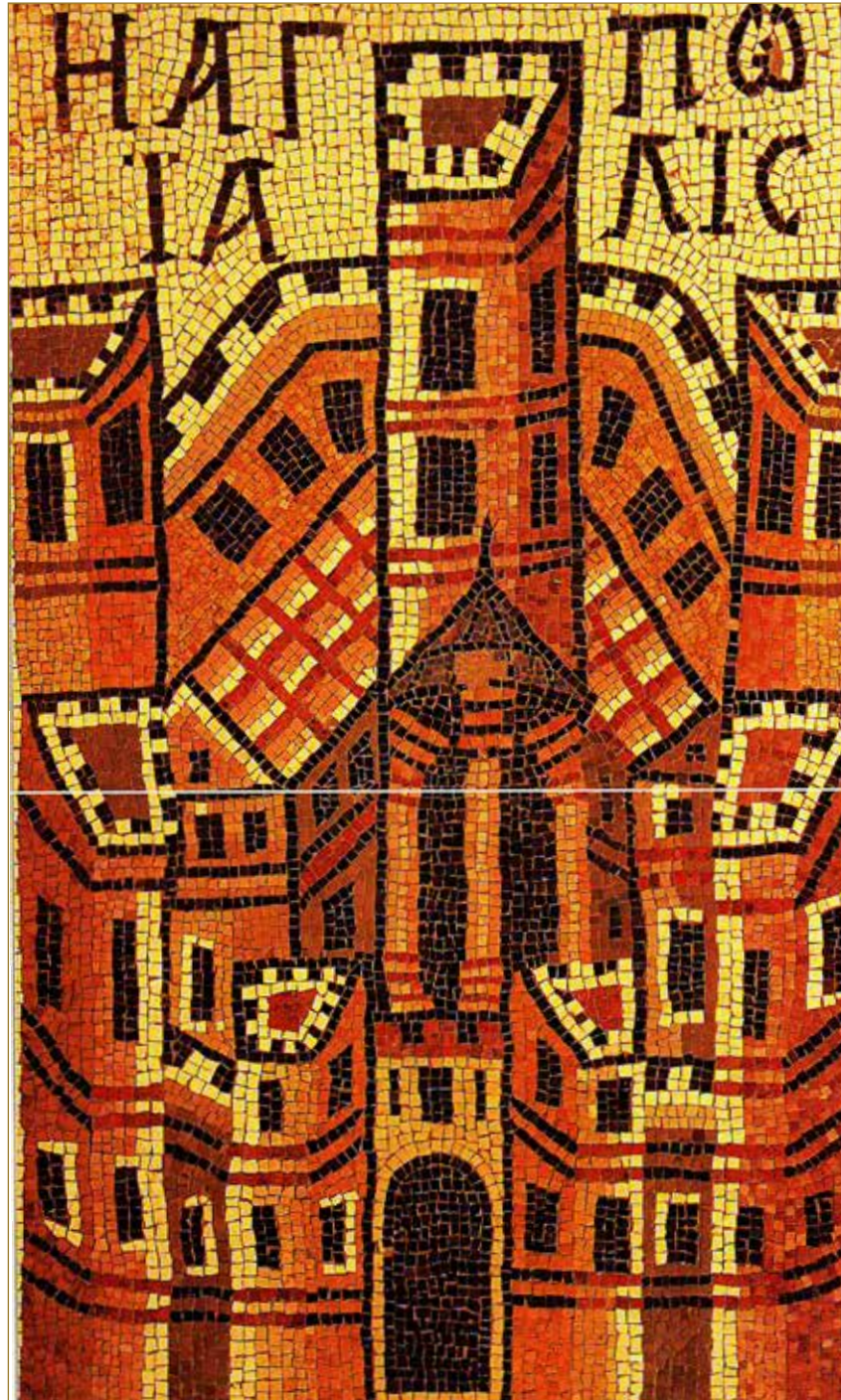
Aqaba

This mosque in Aqaba was established during the Caliphate of 'Uthman bin 'Affan ﷺ, perhaps by the Caliph himself.



HUMAYMA *Near Ras al-Naqab*

Humayma is the site of the base of the 'Abbasid family, and the site from which the 'Abbasids plotted – and put into effect – their usurpation of the Islamic Caliphate from the Umayyads.



A mosaic of Jerusalem from Um Al-Rasas in Jordan

PART V

Appendices

APPENDIX I: *Jerusalem*

Jerusalem, whose sacredness to both Islam and Christianity needs no explanation here, must be mentioned in the context of a book on the Holy Sites on Jordan, for a number of reasons, not least of which is that, being only 30 km from the Jordanian border as the crow flies, it holds Jordan within its 'spiritual ambit'. The Holy Qur'an says (17: 1):

Glorified be he who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of Worship
to the Far Distant Place of Worship** the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that
We might show him of Our tokens! Lo! He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer.*

Furthermore, Jerusalem – and indeed the whole West Bank – was physically part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from 1948-1967, and officially part of Jordan until 1988, when there occurred an official 'Severance of Ties' in order to recognize Palestinian sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza. Until this sovereignty is in effect *de facto*, however, the Hashemite Kingdom – and in particular the Monarchy – of Jordan has had, and continues to have, a special religious and moral responsibility for the Holy Sites in Jerusalem. First, as the direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who alighted there on his 'Night Journey' (*Isra*), and second, as members of a family whom throughout the century, have given their all, and indeed in some cases their very lives, for Jerusalem. King Hussein bin Ali of the Hijaz, the leader of the Great Arab Revolt, it is known, declined Western aid and political support, rather than give any political concessions to a foreign country over Jerusalem. He also, in the period of 1922-1927, was the first Hashemite Monarch this century to restore the Holy Places, at his personal expense, and, indeed, is buried there at their side today. His son, King Abdallah bin Al-Hussein, the Founder of Modern Jordan and the saviour of Jerusalem in 1948, was assassinated in the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque during the Friday Prayers on July 20th, 1951. H.M. King Hussein bin Talal, King Abdallah's grandson, has also restored the Holy Places twice, during the period of 1952-1964, and during the period 1992-1994 (the second time from his own personal finances), and completed the emergency renovation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, after a fire was set to it by a lone Zionist fanatic in 1969. Thus the Hashemites have had the honour to serve the Holy Places in Jerusalem throughout the century. As their ancestor, the Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (كرم الله وجهه), said: *Jerusalem is the centre of the Universe and the closest point on Earth to Heaven.*

* In Mecca.

** In Jerusalem.

APPENDIX II:

The Letter of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to the Emperor Heraclius

In the years of 628–629 A.D., the sixth and seventh year after the *Hijra*, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ sent out from his capital in Medina a number of letters inviting world leaders to embrace Islam. The Prophet ﷺ and the Muslim community were still politically and militarily very weak so it was a bold and dangerous move that might even have led to his being invaded by the ‘superpowers’ of the day, and at the very least endangered the lives of his envoys. To Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor, the Prophet ﷺ sent Dihya Al-Kalbi; to Chosroes, the Persian Monarch, he sent Abdallah bin Hudhafah Al-Shami; to the Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt, he sent Hatib Ibn Abu Balta’ah; to the Negus of Ethiopia, he sent Umar bin Umayyah Al-Sahmi; to the King of Yamamah he sent Salit bin Amr; to the King of Basra he sent Al-Harith bin ‘Umayr Al-Azadi; to the King of Bahrain he sent Al-Ala’ bin Al-Hadrami; to the King of Yemen he sent Ibn Umayyah Al-Makhzumi; and to Al-Harith, the Arab Ghassan Governor of the Byzantine Province of Syria, he sent Shuja’ bin Wahb Al-Assadi. All the envoys were men chosen for their bravery, their ability to deal with difficult situations and their capacity to represent Islam favourably. Dihya Al-Kalbi had such noble bearing that it is related that the Archangel Jibril / Gabriel ﷺ used to take a form similar to his, when appearing in human guise. For the risk of martyrdom the envoys were promised Paradise by the Prophet ﷺ, even if their missions were not successful, although some of them in fact were.

Of these letters only two are thought to survive, the one to the Muqawqis of Alexandria, and the one to Heraclius (delivered to him in fact whilst he was in Jerusalem by Dihya). The letter to Heraclius read:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

From Muhammad bin Abdallah to Heraclius, the Emperor of Byzantium. Peace be upon who follow the right guidance. Thereafter; I invite you to the Message of Islam. Convert, and you will be saved. God will double your reward. If you decline the responsibility for wrongs of the Arians falls upon you. *O People of the scripture! come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and we shall ascribe no partners unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords besides God. And if they turn away then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims**.

This letter is now one of the most important documents of Islam and forms part of Jordan’s religious heritage. It was apparently given to King Abdallah by the Government of Turkey, on the King’s visit there in 1947. This was a gesture recalling the sword and banner of the Prophet ﷺ given by Barakat II, the Emir and Sharif of Mecca (and King Abdallah’s direct paternal twelfth ancestor) to Selim I, founder of the Ottoman Dynasty, when the former recognised the Caliphate of the latter, and the latter confirmed the independence of the former. (The sword and banner of the Prophet ﷺ acquired, from the Hashemite Family, are still preserved in the Topkapi Museum, where they are Turkey’s most precious relics.) In the 1970s, the Letter was authenticated by the Keeper of the Oriental Manuscripts at the British Museum in London, and afterwards H.M. King Hussein placed it in the Central Bank of Jordan, in Amman, for safekeeping, and this is where it is kept to this day.

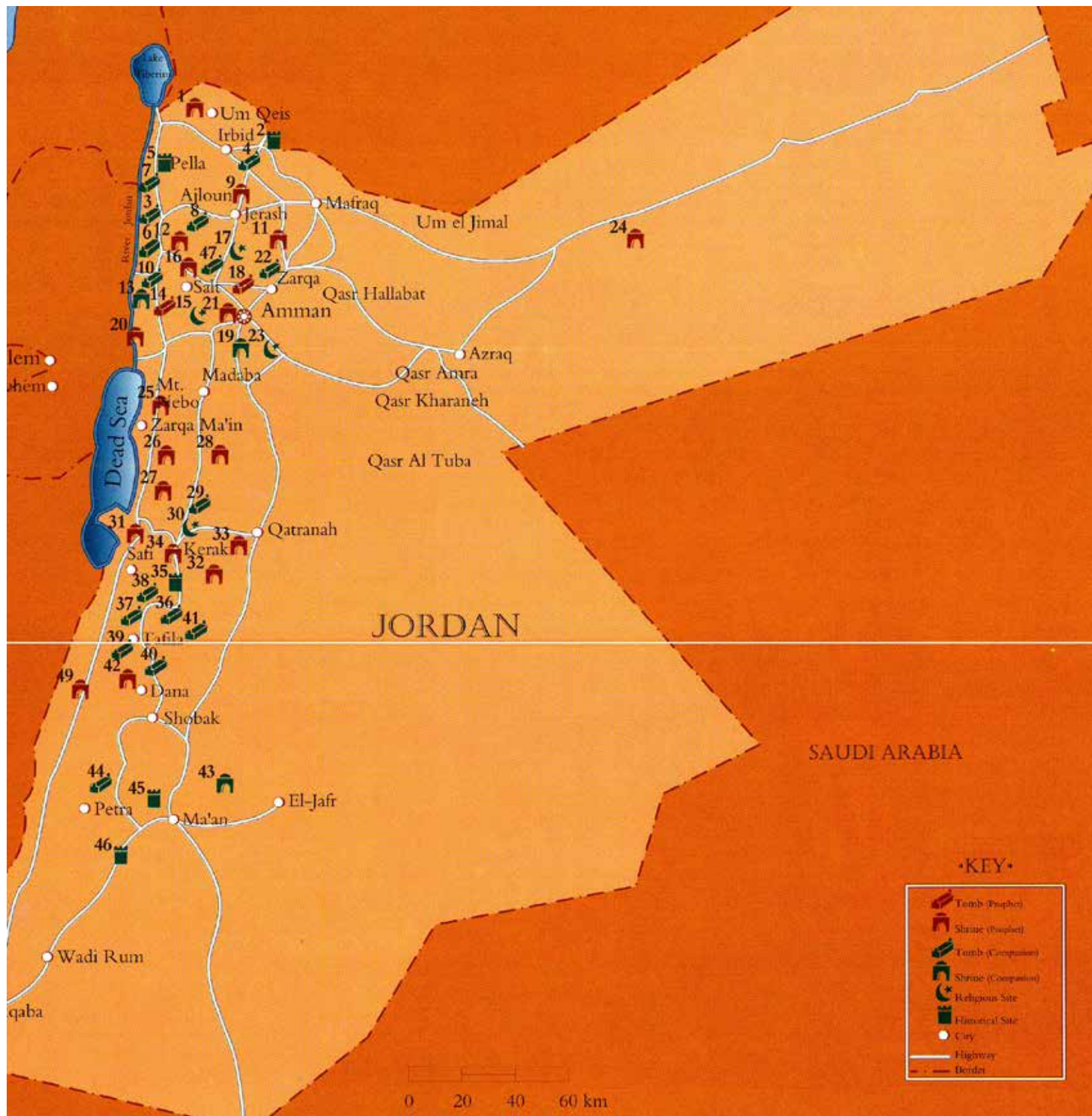
* Muslims meaning ‘those who have surrendered unto God’. These last lines are from the Holy Qur’an, 3:64.

APPENDIX III: *The Royal Cemetery*

On the top of *Hill of the Palaces* in the heart of Amman sits, silently, shrouded by majestic pines and firs, the Royal Hashemite Cemetery. In its centre stands the marble, domed tomb of the Martyr-King, Abdallah bin Al-Hussein, the founder of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (he was the first person to find rest in the Cemetery). H.M. King Abdallah was assassinated on July 20th, 1951, entering the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, for the Friday Prayers. He knew that there was a threat on his life that day, but was willing to risk martyrdom, as was his fifteen year-old grandson Hussein (Jordan's current king) who was at his side that day, in order to continue serving God and his country, and in order to pray at the beloved Holy Mosque which his armies had saved from Jewish occupation in 1948.

To the west of the Cemetery lies the beautifully-tiled tomb of King Abdallah's son, King Talal, Jordan's second king. All around them lie the graves and tombs of various Hashemite Queens, Princes, Princesses, Sharifs and Sharifas. Slightly behind these lie the graves and tombs of many of Jordan's greatest political leaders, statesmen, officers, sheikhs, judges, veteran Hashemite retainers from the Great Arab Revolt, and martyrs, who all gave their lives in the way of God and the country. The whole Royal Cemetery is ringed by a white stone wall and has a permanent 24 hour, 365 day Honour Guard from Al-Hussein bin Ali Brigade. Although the Royal Cemetery is obviously not a Holy Site as such, it bears mentioning in the context of this book because it contains tombs, and thus the *barakah*, of many of Twentieth Century Jordan's greatest martyrs.





MAP OF ISLAMIC HOLY SITES

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1- Prophet 'Isa | 26- Moses' Springs |
| 2- Battle of Yarmouk | 27- Prophet Yahya |
| 3- Mu'ath bin Jabal | 28- Prophet Muhammad |
| 4- Abu Al-Darda'a | 29- Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari |
| 5- Battle of Fahl | 30- Zeid bin Ali bin Al-Hussein |
| 6- 'Amir bin Abi Waqqas | 31- Prophet Lut |
| 7- Shurhabil bin Husnah | 32- Prophet Nuh |
| 8- 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl | 33- Prophet Khidr |
| 9- Prophet Khidr | 34- Prophet Sulayman |
| 10- Dirar bin Al-Azwar | 35- Battle of Mu'tah |
| 11- Prophet Hud | 36- Ja'far bin Abi Talib |
| 12- Prophet Dawud | 37- Zeid ibn Al-Harithah |
| 13- Abu 'Ubaydah 'Amir ibn Al-Jarrah | 38- Abdallah bin Rawahah |
| 14- Prophet Yosha' | 39- Jabir bin Abdallah |
| 15- Gadur | 40- Al-Harith bin 'Umayr Al-Azadi |
| 16- Prophet Ayyub | 41- Farwa bin 'Amro Al-Jadhami |
| 17- Hazir | 42- Sheeth |
| 18- Prophet Shu'ayb | 43- Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari |
| 19- Bilal bin Rabah | 44- Prophet Harun |
| 20- Prophet 'Isa | 45- Jabal Al-Tahkim |
| 21- Prophet Khidr | 46- Humayma |
| 22- Abd Al-Rahman bin 'Auf | 47- Maysarah bin Masruq Al-Abassi |
| 23- The Cave of the Sleepers | 48- 'Uthman's Mosque at Ayla |
| 24- Prophet Muhammad | 49- Ka'ab bin Umayr Al-Ghifari |
| 25- Prophet Musa | |



BOOK II

Christian Sites

If you cross the Holy Jordan you will find rest

INTRODUCTION

Jordan is an ideal place for Christians from all over the world to re-live, through pilgrimage and through prayer, the stories found in the Bible relating to Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Jethro, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. The religious history and importance of Jordan is well documented in both the Old and New Testaments. Starting from the Jordan River, where John baptized Jesus, to Mount Nebo, where Moses died, to Mukawir, where John the Baptist was be-headed, Christian pilgrims and tourists can find beautiful sanctuaries honoring the saints and sacred occurrences in the Bible.

This section of the book on the *Christian* sites of Jordan retraces some of the earliest Christian pilgrimages. Readers will notice that many of the Christian religious sites are also Islamic Holy sites. Lot's Cave, for example, is an important site for Muslim Pilgrims.

One of the first documented Christian pilgrims was a woman named Egeria. She travelled from the West to the Holy Land in the 4th Century. Egeria wrote to her sisters about her travels in exquisite detail. Her journals were uncovered in Italy in the 19th century. Much of this century's important archaeological work in the Holy Land is due to her impeccable notes. After Egeria, in the 5th century, a bishop named Peter (the Iberian) came to Jordan with his biographer. Peter was interested in tracing the Biblical stories through pilgrimage. The writings of his biographer recount Peter's efforts to get relief from some of his health problems. He specifically sought the curative powers of the Hot Springs of Moses. After Peter came another important pilgrim from Piacenza. We do not have a name for this pilgrim, but this late 6th Century pilgrim left a very detailed description of some of the sites and sanctuaries in the Jordan region. This late 6th Century pilgrim has become known as the "Anonymous Pilgrim of Piacenza".

From the writings of these pilgrims we can see they were primarily interested in a specific region: the Jordan River area and the Dead Sea. The area directly across the Jordan River, coming from Jericho and Jerusalem, was inhabited by cave-dwellers and hermits at the time of most of the early pilgrimages. The hermits, in many cases, were monks who retold Biblical stories and offered much needed food and shelter. There is a great deal written in the journals of the pilgrims about the hospitality of the monks in that region. Most of the early pilgrims also wrote in detail about their journeys to Mount Nebo. The journey to Mount Nebo was rather gruelling in the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries; with a steep climb up the hill and stops along the ancient Livias-Esbus sector of the Roman Road.

The modern Christian pilgrim can still re-live, in Jordanian territory, the same experience of faith. Today's pilgrim can visit the same places, retracing the itinerary of predecessors from centuries back. Christians can stop in prayer in the Moses Memorial Sanctuary on Mount Nebo, can climb Jebel Harun in Petra and can descend into the valley by the banks of the River Jordan, where John baptized Jesus Christ. Visitors can see many other beautiful historical sites such as the town of Madaba. Madaba is famous for its breathtaking mosaics with imagery inspired by Christianity.

Indeed, Madaba, in particular, is a lovely place to visit on a Friday afternoon, when most of the other sites of Jordan are closed for the Islamic holiday. The Mosaic museum and school are excellent examples of the work of the many archaeological groups in Jordan who are committed to preserving the religious holy sites in Jordan. Today you can find Muslims and Christians working side by side on archaeological digs at many of the important Christian sites, which shows that Jordan is truly a kingdom of peace and religious freedom.



PART I

The Biblical History of the Land



Opposite:
*Dramatic view of
the Holy Lands
of Jordan from the
top of Mt. Nebo,
where Moses died.*

Below:
Christian artifact.

There are many stories about the Biblical history of what is now the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and they frequently refer to trans-jordanian territory (the territory of Jordan before 1948). For example: the Dead Sea Valley, the Garden of the Lord, was generously bestowed by Abraham to Lot his nephew, and to his descendants, the Ammonites and the Moabites (Gen 13,10 ss). Also, from the height of Mount Nebo, having reached the end of his life's mission, Moses, looked with hope at the Land of Rest (Jerusalem) which his people would enter. (Deut 4,26; 34,1 ss). Later on, the territory that lies between Arnon-Moujib and Hermon was forcibly occupied by the tribes of Gad, Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh (Num 21,21ss). The occupation of the land became a cause of friction between Israel and the neighboring people because the latter felt that they had been defrauded of their rights (Judges 11).

David, at the height of Jerusalem's political power, managed to subdue all those who lived in Transjordan, making them pay tributes. He thus also controlled the caravan routes that crossed the land and which united the east with the markets in the west. (1 Ch 18-20). Having fled Jerusalem as a result of the rebellion investigated by his son Absalom, David was warmly welcomed not only by his subjects, but also by the Ammonite Governor (2 Sam 17,24 ss).

After Solomon's death the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah reverted to fighting with the Aramaic Kingdom of Damascus to the north, the Ammonites and Moabites in the centre, the Edomites in the south east together, and other Arab tribes to the south.

•THE SANCTUARIES ALONG THE ROMAN ROAD•

ESBUS-LIVIAS

The area in Jordan most visited by Christian pilgrims is the area opposite Jericho, from the east bank of the river to the sanctuary of Moses on Mount Nebo. Christians have been attracted to these places because of their religious connection to Jesus Christ and John the Baptist. Further inland from the Jordan River, in the territory of Madaba, are places which relate to the final episodes in the life of Moses.

Both areas were located along the Livias-Esbus sector of the Roman Road connecting Jerusalem to the Via Nova Traiana on the Jordanian high-plateau. The exploration of the Roman-Byzantine road from Esbus to Livias, began in the last century. Recently the Hesban Expedition has rediscovered the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th milestone, numbered with Esbus as the starting point, thus confirming that this was the road followed by the pilgrims coming from Jerusalem to Mount Nebo. Visitors today can still see 13 milestones at the 5th Mile, and 4 milestones are still visible at the 6th Mile near the Roman-Byzantine fortress of Al-Mahatta. This point is now the beginning of the detour that leads to 'Uyun Musa, the Springs of Moses.

Right [top]:
*Esbus mosaic from
Byzantine era.*

Right [center]:
*Scattered
milestones on
the ancient road.*

Below:
*Recently discovered
later milestone from
the ancient
Roman-Byzantine
road.*

Opposite:
*The distant view
of Livius, the
destination of
many early
Christian
pilgrims.*









Left:
*The historic
Jordan River*

PART II

The Jordan River

In the past most pilgrimages to the Holy Land would have started at the River Jordan, after a stop in Jericho. At the point where the road crossed the river, five miles from the Dead Sea, south of the modern Al-Hussein bridge, they commemorated several biblical episodes: the miraculous crossing of the Children of Israel narrated in the Book of Joshua (Joshua 3: 4:24), the crossing by the prophets Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2: 5-14), and the hill from where Elijah was taken up to Heaven.

Of course, the Jordan River is best known as the place where Jesus was baptized by John, son of Elizabeth and Zacharius, known to most Christians as John the Baptist. The Bible tells the story of how the Angel Gabriel came to Zacharius and told him his wife, Elizabeth, would give birth to a baby named John. Soon Elizabeth was expecting a baby. Mary came to see Elizabeth, and told her that she too had received a visit from the Angel Gabriel, who told her she would have a baby named Jesus. Thus Jesus and John were born. John lived a simple life and grew up to preach the Gospel of Jesus. The message John gave to his followers was one of forgiveness and atonement. John began to baptize people who confessed their sins and repented. Being baptized in the Jordan River water meant being cleansed of sin. This baptism is narrated in the Christian Gospel (Matthew 3: 1-17; Mark 1: 2-8) as follows:

"In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.' This is he who was spoken of through the Prophet Isaiah: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the lord, make straight paths for him.' John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with Fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness'."



Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment Heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from Heaven said, "This is my child, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

•EPIPHANY•

For Christians the "Epiphany" is considered to be the manifestation of the divinity of Christ. The event is traditionally celebrated on January 6th and is commemorated with three episodes: the baptism in the Jordan River, the coming of the Wise Men to Bethlehem, and the miracle of Canan. The famous 6th Century Christian Pilgrim from Piacenza had the opportunity, during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to celebrate the feast of the Epiphany at the River Jordan, together with the Christians of the region. In his writings he relates his experiences:

"I celebrated Epiphany at the Jordan. During that night special miracles take place at the spot where the Lord was baptized. There is an obelisk surrounded by a screen, and in the water, where the river turned back on its bed, stands a wooden cross. On both banks there are marble steps leading down to the water. The eve of the epiphany is a solemn vigil with an enormous congregation present. They begin matins at the fourth or fifth cock-crow, and at dawn, when matins are over, the ministers go outside, and, accompanied by deacons, the priest goes down to the river. The moment he starts blessing the water the Jordan turns back on itself with a roar and the water stays still till the baptism is over. All the ship-owners of Alexandria have men there that day with great jars of spices and balsam, and as soon as the river has been blessed, before the baptism starts, they pour them out the water, and draw out into the water. This water they use for sprinkling their ships when they are about to sail. After the baptism every one goes down into the river to earn a blessing. Some wear linen, and some other materials which will serve as their burial shrouds. After the baptizing ends the water returns".



Left:
The Madaba map, discovered in 1896 in the floor of a Byzantine church in the predominantly Christian town of Madaba, 30 km (19 miles) south of Amman.

Above:
One of the many beautiful religious artifacts uncovered in the Mt. Nebo area.





ΑΙΝΩΝΕΝΘΑ
ΝΥΝΟCΑΤΤΑ



ΦΑC

ΒΕΘΑΒΑΡΑ

ΤΟΤΧΑΓΙΧΩΑΝΝΟΥ

ΤΥΒΑ



ΠΤΙCΜΑ

ΤΟC

ΑΛΩΝΑΤΑΘΗΝΥΝ

ΒΗΘΑΓΓΑ

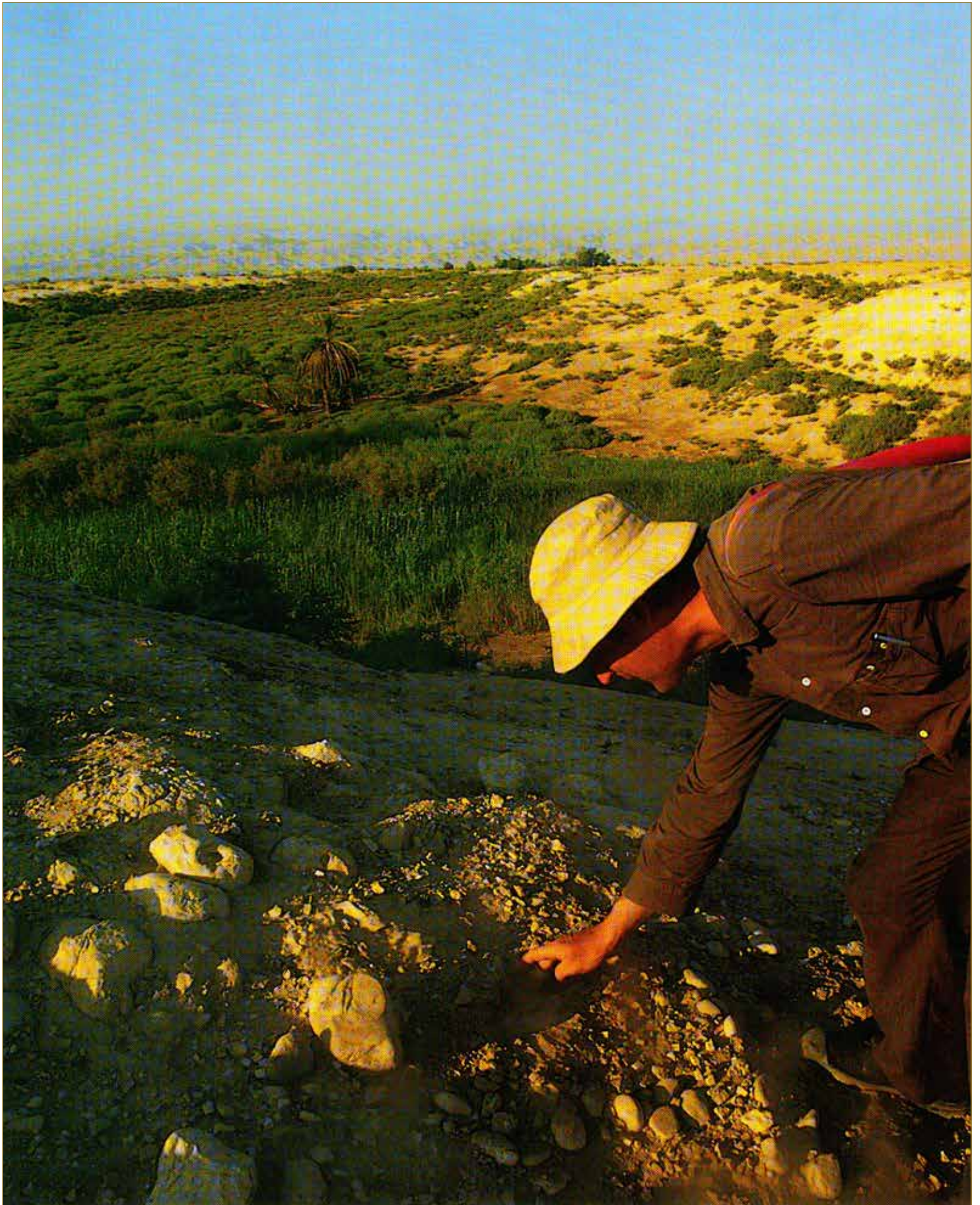
ΓΑΛΑΤΟΚΑΙ
ΔΩΔΕΚΑΛΙΘΟΝ

ΤΕΡΙΧΩ

ΟΤΧΑΓΙΧ
ΑΚΑΙΟΥ

ΑΚΑΙΟΥ





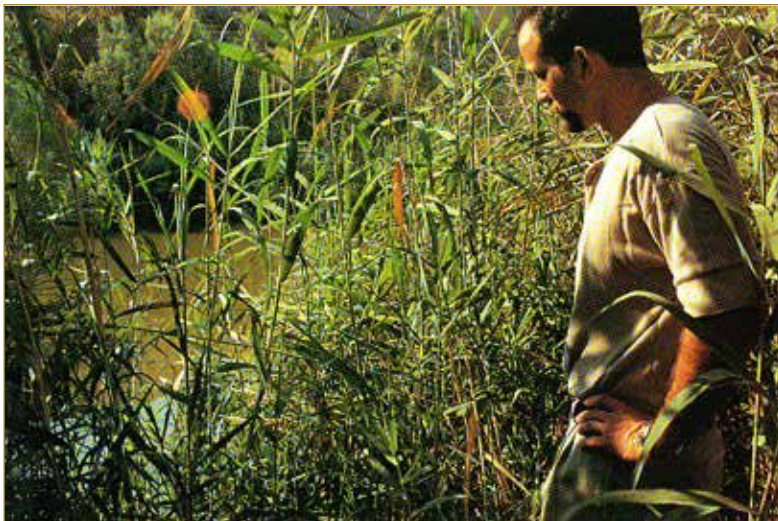


Opposite:
Taken from the
Jordanian side of the river, the
steps of Bethabara; a view
of the Byzantine monastery.

Left:
As detailed in the
ancient map of
Madaba; Bethabara
was called Ainin.



Below:
His Royal Highness Prince
Ghazi bin Mohammed
brought archaeologists to
the site of Bethabara;
closed off from the
general public for many
years for security
reasons. Plans are
being developed to
renovate this sacred site.



◦BETHABARA◦

At the Jordan River modern explorers spotted the ruins of a Byzantine monastery with a church built at the time of Emperor Anastasius. This is thought to be the ruins of “Bethabara” – a church commemorating John the Baptist.

As narrated in the Gospel (Mt, 3, 1-17):

“Then Jesus came from the Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.”

The pilgrim Theodosius was the first to mention the church, built by Emperor Anastasius, in honor of Saint John the Baptist: “At a place where my Lord was baptized is a marble column, and on top of it has been set an iron cross...It stands on great vaults which are high enough for when the Jordan is in flood.”

In 1995 the sites of John the Baptist were rediscovered by His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Mohammed and the Franciscan Archaeologist of Mt. Nebo. A new project for the protection and renovation of this holy site is envisaged.



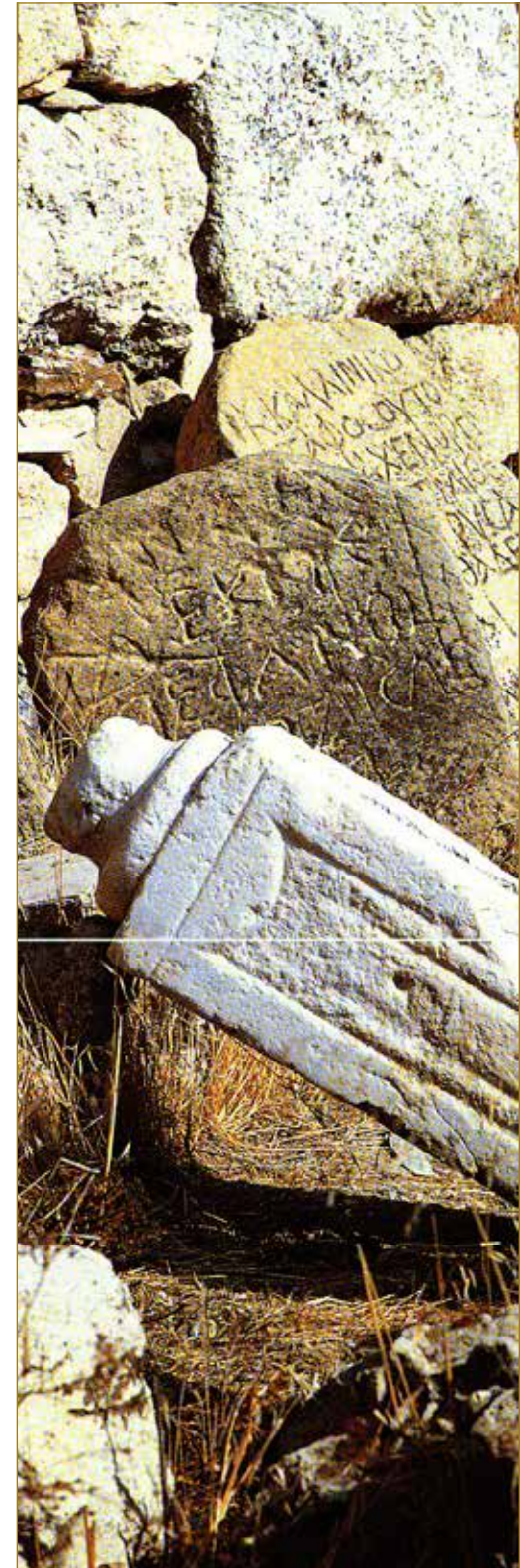
•THE BETHANY – SAPHSAPHAS•

The 7th Century writer John Moschus narrates the story of one personal experience in the monastic caves (laura) of the area: on his pilgrimage to Sinai by way of Alia, a monk from the monastery of Saint Eustorgius in Jerusalem took the road to Arabia. When he crossed the Jordan River he was stricken by a violent fever and forced to take refuge in a cave. Three days later, Saint John the Baptist appeared to him in a dream and tried to dissuade him from continuing his pilgrimage. John told the monk: *“This little cave is greater than Mount Sinai. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself has come in here to pay me a visit”*. Convinced, and recovered from his illness the monk transformed the cave into a church for the hermits living in the area. *“It is the place which is called the Laura of Saphsaphas near the Jordan”* concludes John Moschus.

Several other legends have developed regarding the caves and the hermits living in the area. One is told by the famous Pilgrim of Piacenza:

“On the bank of the Jordan river there is a cave with cells for seven virgins. They have people outside to look after them. The virgins are taken there when they are very young. When one of them dies, she is buried in her cell, and another cell is carved from the rock, so that another girl can be replaced to keep the number of virgins always seven. With great reverence, we entered the caves to pray there, but we did not see the face of a single one of them. It is said that the cloth which the Lord wore on his face, is kept in this place. On both banks of the Jordan below the mountains there are serpents from which people make antidotes against poisoning”.

Right:
Christian
funerary
stellae





•WADI KHARRAR AND THE STORY OF ST. MARY THE EGYPTIAN•

According to the Gospel, John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing “in Bethany beyond the Jordan”. This place was located by the Christians in the region of Wadi Kharrar.

The most famous legend regarding the area of Wadi Kharrar is about the life of Saint Mary the Egyptian. In her youth, Mary chose to live a disreputable life in Alexandria. One day, out of sheer curiosity, she joined some Christian pilgrims who were sailing to Jerusalem. During the voyage she seduced many of the pilgrims. She kept living this kind of destructive life even in Jerusalem. Until, on the day of honor for the Holy Cross, she went along with the pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher where the relic of the cross of Jesus Christ was displayed. She was made to go into the church with the other pilgrims but at the threshold she felt as though an invisible force kept her from entering. All of a sudden her heart was filled with sorrow. She cried to the Virgin Mary for help. The next day she felt she could go into the church and honor the Holy Cross. After the miraculous conversion at the door of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, she asked the Virgin Mother: “Now lead me to whichever place you please. Be my guide to salvation and teacher of the truth, accepting me on my way to contrition”. As she was uttering these words, she heard a voice, as if shouting from afar, saying: “If you cross the Holy Jordan, there you will find rest.”

She left the city immediately and crossed the Jordan River, taking with her just a piece of bread she purchased with a few coins which a Christian pilgrim had given her. The repentant sinner, Mary, related her life to the monk Zosima:

“I left the atrium of the church and hurried along the road, as I was leaving, a man saw me and gave me three coins, saying: ‘Take these mother.’ I took the money and bought three loaves and I accepted them as a sign of benediction for my journey. I asked the man who sold me the bread which was the way to the River Jordan. Having been informed as to which city gate lead to where I was heading, I set out on my journey, crying on the way.

When the sun had almost set, I caught sight of the Church of John the Baptist which is next to the Jordan. I went into the sanctuary in adoration. I immediately went down into the river and washed my face and hands with the blessed water. I partook of the most pure and life-giving sacraments of the Lord Christ in the same basilica of John the Forerunner and Baptizer. I ate half a loaf of bread, drank water from the Jordan and slept on the ground. As soon as the morning light shone, the next day, I crossed over to the other side

and again I asked my guide to take me wherever it pleased her. I eventually got to this desert and since then I have always stayed away from people, like a fugitive, awaiting my God who saves all those who convert to him, be them small or great.”

She lived for forty seven years in the desert, until she was found by chance by the monk Zosima. He heard her story and gave her Holy Communion. When he returned to visit her she had died. Zosima buried her. Legend has it that a lion helped Zosima to dig her grave.

This legend was narrated in Greek by Sofronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, in *The Life of St. Mary the Egyptian*.

◦ELIJAH◦

Near the monastic complex or “laura”, at the beginning of Wadi Kharrar, Christian pilgrims have traditionally been shown a hill where the Prophet Elijah ascended into Heaven (Jebel Mar Ilyas is what the place is called in Arabic). There was a sanctuary in Wadi Kharrar which was visited until the Crusade Period. In 1106 Abbot Daniel, a Russian pilgrim, was very impressed by the place. He wrote:

“Not far away from the river, at a distance of two arrow throws, is the place where the Prophet Elijah was taken into Heaven in a chariot of fire. There is also the grotto of Saint John the Baptist. A beautiful torrent full of water flows over the stones towards the Jordan; the water is very cold and has a very good taste; it is the water that John drank while he lived in the holy grotto”.

The place was later abandoned for security reasons. However, the memory of the place is not lost. Theodosius wrote:

“Where my Lord was baptized there is, on the far side of the Jordan, the ‘little hill’ called Hermon, where Saint Elijah was taken up”. Similarly the Pilgrim from Piacenza writes: “This is the place where the Children of Israel made their crossing, and also where the sons of the Prophets lost their axe-head, and where Elijah was taken up (to Heaven). In that place is the ‘little hill of Hermon’ mentioned in the Psalm. At the foot of the mountain at seven o’clock in the morning, a cloud forms over the river, arriving over Jerusalem at sunrise, above the basilica on Zion, the basilica at Christ’s Tomb and the basilica of Saint Mary and Saint Sophia (once the Praetorium where Christ’s case was heard). Above these places the dew comes down like showers, and sick people collect it. In the hospices all the dishes are cooked in it, and in the places where this dew falls many diseases are cured. For this is the dew of which the Psalmist sings, ‘It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion” (Ps 133,3).







PART III

The Saints

•SAINT LOT•

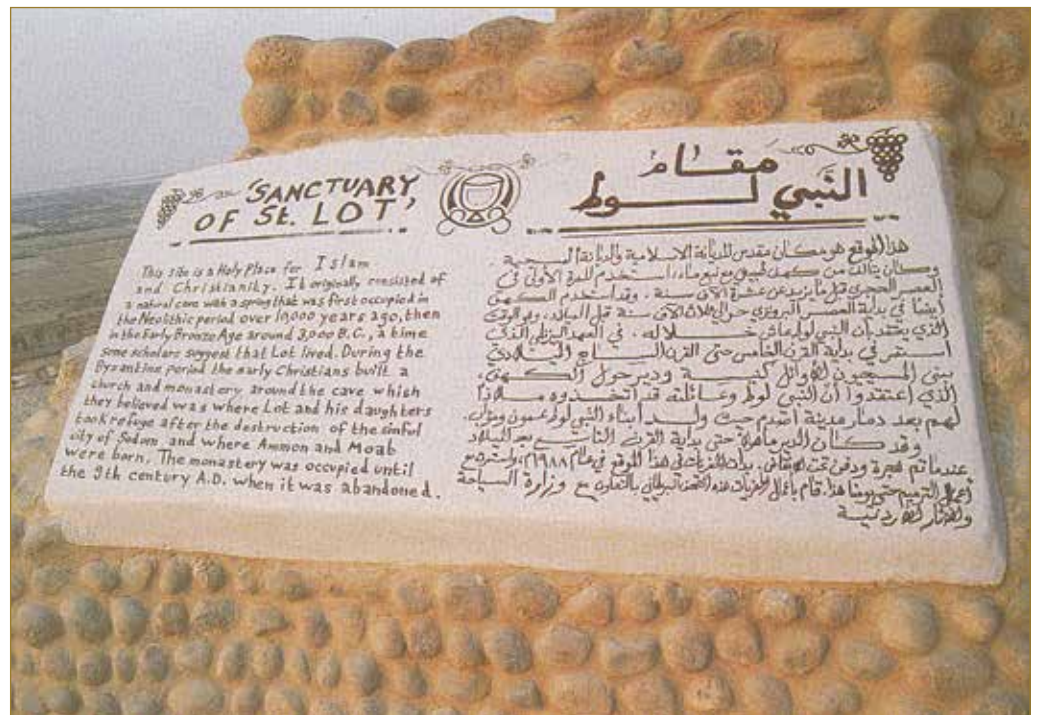
Recently, an archaeological expedition funded by the British Museum in London, and lead by Constantinos Dino Politis, uncovered the monastery and church of Saint Lot. This sanctuary, which clings to the steep slopes of the mountains at the Dead Sea near Zoar (Ghor Al-Safi) was built close to the venerated “Cave” of Lot. The cave, used as a burial place in the Second Millennium BC, was absorbed into the church because it was also the place chosen by Lot and his daughters. Lot and his daughters lived in the cave, having escaped the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible tells us how Lot and his family were told by God to run from Sodom and Gomorrah and never look back. Lot’s wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. However, Lot and his daughters kept running. They lived for years in the cave.

About the cave, the Bible tells us:

“Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave.” (Gn 19, 39)

Lot’s Cave;
Recently uncovered,
is a beautiful hike
up a steep slope at
the edge of
the Dead Sea.
There are some
beautiful mosaics
at the entrance to
the cave.

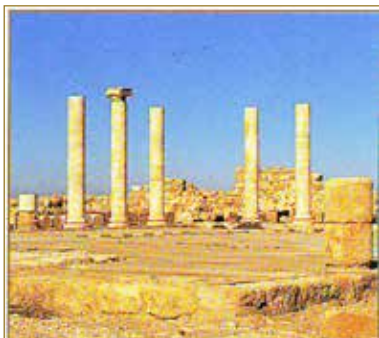
The mosaics are
covered most
of the time for
protection, but
a few parts are
open for viewing.







Below and
opposite:
Mukawir/Machaerus



•JOHN THE BAPTIST•

It is known that John the Baptist baptized followers in the Jordan River. He also preached against sin. Specifically, John told King Herod that he had sinned for marrying his brother's wife Herodias. Herodias was furious with John and wanted to have him killed. However, King Herod had him arrested and locked up in the fortress of Mukawir. Here John tragically died. This is how Mark the Evangelist relates the end of John the Baptist in a dramatic page of his Gospel:

King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying: "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others said: "He is Elijah." And still others claimed: "He is a Prophet, like one of the Prophets of long ago." But when Herod heard this, he said: "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod: "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife". So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled, yet he liked to listen to him. Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you". And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom". She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. At once the girl hurried in to the King with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. (Mk 6, 14-29).

Qal'at al-Mishnaqa close to the village of Mukawir, has kept the old name of the Herodian fortress built to guard the southern boundary of Peraea against the onslaught of the Nabataeans from Petra. Currently there are archaeological excavations at the site which have identified the palace-fortress built by Herod, situated on top of an isolated mountain standing in the middle of the wadi (valley), as well as the city built on the steep northern slopes of the mountain where John the Baptist was held prisoner prior to his tragic death.



•MOSES•

The pilgrimage of Egeria, is one of the best examples of a religious journey to Mount Nebo. She wrote in great detail about her journey to Mount Nebo:

“Some time went by. Then, impelled by God, I conceived the desire to go once more into Arabia, to Mount Nebo. It is the mountain which God told Moses to climb, in the words “Ascend this mountain Araboth, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab over opposite Jericho; and view the land of Canaan, which I give to the Children of Israel as their possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend”. And Jesus, who never fails those who hope in him, saw fit to grant my desire.

With us came some holy men from Jerusalem, a presbyter and deacons, and several brothers (monks), and we reached the place on the Jordan where holy Joshua, the son of Nun, and the Children of Israel passed over, as we are told in the Book of Joshua. We were also shown a slightly raised place on the Jericho stretch of the river, where the children of Reuben and Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh made an altar.”

Opposite:
Baptistry
at the
Memorial
of Moses



After crossing the Jordan river, the pilgrim Egeria stopped in Livias, the reference point for those who wished to visit the nearby sanctuaries connected with Moses, which the pilgrim Theodosius described in the following manner:

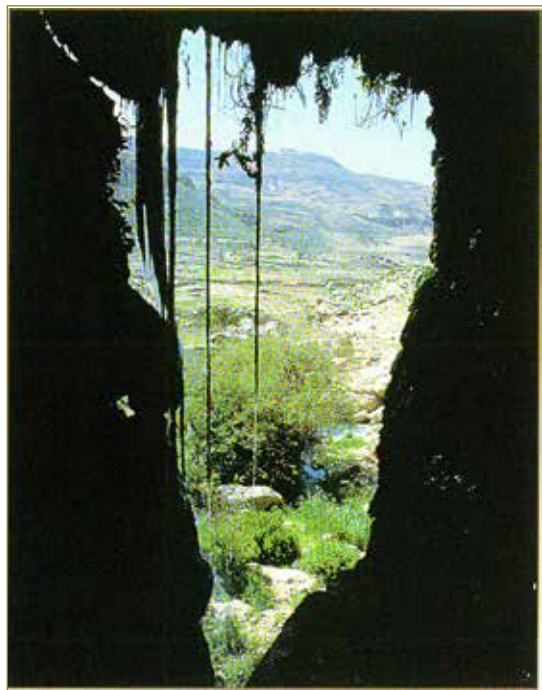
“After crossing the river we came to the city of Livias, in the plain where the children of Israel encamped in those days. The foundations of the camp and dwellings of the Israelites are still to be seen there today. It is a vast plain stretching from the foot of the Arabian mountains to the Jordan, where the Bible says that “the children of Israel wept for Moses in Araboth Moab at Jordan opposite Jericho for forty days”. It is where Joshua the son of Nun “was filled with the spirit of wisdom when Moses died, “for Moses had laid his hands upon him”, as it is written. It is where Moses wrote the Book of Deuteronomy, and where he “spoke the words of this song until they were finished, in the the assembly of Israel”, the song written in the Book of Deuteronomy. And it is where holy Moses, the man of God, blessed each of the children of Israel in order before his death. When we reached this plain, we went on to the very spot, and there we said a prayer, and from Deuteronomy we read not only the song, but also the blessings he pronounced over the children of Israel. At the end of the reading we said another prayer, and set off again, with thanksgiving to God. And it was always our practice when we managed to reach one of the places we wanted to see to first say a prayer, then a reading from the book, then to say an appropriate psalm and another prayer. By God’s grace we always followed this practice whenever we were able to reach a place we wanted to see”.

In her stop in the city at the foot of Mount Nebo, Egeria had enough time to commemorate, by reading the Bible and praying, all the biblical episodes related to this territory, referred to in the Bible as the Steppes of Moab. At the same time, she asked a priest of the city to act as her guide to the sanctuary of Moses on Mount Nebo.



Opposite:
The Springs of Moses
[‘Uyun Mousa]

Below:
Christo-Palestinian
Inscription
[‘Uyun Mousa]



•THE HOT SPRINGS•

The city of Livias was also famous for its thermal springs which abounded in its territory and which were known to the pilgrims as the Baths of Moses. The Pilgrim from Piacenza writes at length about Livias.

“Nearby is a city called Livias, where the two half-tribes of Israel stayed before crossing the Jordan, and in this place are natural hot springs which are called the Baths of Moses. In these springs lepers are also cleansed. One spring there has very sweet water which they drink as a cathartic, and it heals many diseases. This is not far from the Salt Sea, into which the Jordan flows, below Sodom and Gomorrah. Sulphur and pitch are collected on the shores. Lepers are in the sea all through the day in July, August, up to the middle of September. In the evening they wash in these Baths of Moses. From time to time, by the will of God one of them is cleansed, but for most of them it brings only some relief. No living creature is to be found in this sea. Not even straw and wood will float on it, and human beings cannot swim, but anything thrown into it sinks to the bottom. From the Jordan it is eight miles to the place where Moses departed from this life, and a little further on is Segor.”

Today visitors to Jordan can experience these same natural hot springs. Hammamat Ma’in is a popular tourist destination, with a spa and other modern amenities for weary travellers.

•THE SPRINGS OF MOSES• (‘UYUN MUSA)

As Egeria related in her journal and letters to her sisters, the second stop was near the springs where many hermits lived.

“We turned off the road at once, the presbyter led the way, and we followed him. It is a place with a tiny church under a mountain - not Nebo, but another one not very far from Nebo, but further in. A great many monks lived there, truly holy men of the kind known here as ascetics.”

The holy monks were good enough to receive us very hospitably, and welcomed us indoors. Going in with them we joined them in prayer, and they then very kindly gave us the “blessings” which is normal for them to give to those whom they entertain. Between the church and the cells was a plentiful spring which flowed from the rock, beautifully clear and with an excellent taste. We asked the holy monks who lived there about this water which tasted so remarkably good. “This,” they told us, “is the water which holy Moses gave the children of Israel in this desert.” As usual we had there a prayer, a reading from the Books of Moses, and one psalm.”

•MOUNT NEBO•

The pre-eminent sanctuary across the Jordan River has traditionally been Mount Nebo, the site of Moses' view of the Holy Land. Over the centuries the Christian pilgrims who subjected themselves to the fatigue of climbing the steep road of Livias to Esbus, were finally treated with the opportunity to contemplate the Promised Land from the natural Balcony chosen by God for his prophet. That natural balcony is Mt. Nebo.

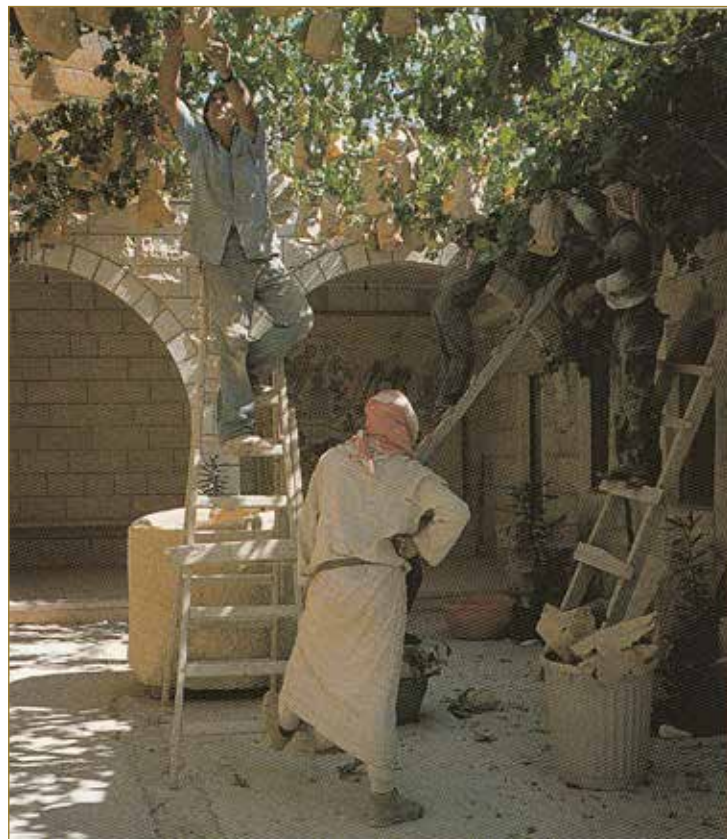
The Roman Road bordering the south bank of the Wadi Hesban reaches a high plateau along the crest of Al-Mushaqqar facing Mount Nebo. At the sixth milestone is a detour from the main road which leads to the Springs of Moses, from which it is possible to climb to the peak of Mount Nebo to visit the sanctuary of Moses.

In Roman times the trip was divided into three stops. The first stop was near the 6th milestone. Here four milestones are still visible near the Roman-Byzantine fortress of al-Mahatta, from which the detour starts that today leads to "Uyun Mousa" or the Springs of Moses. A small spring called by the Bedouins 'Ayn Saq'an has provided fresh water to soldiers and Christian pilgrims at the end of their climb from the valley. At the 6th mile, pilgrims could choose one of two routes: either



continue taking the Roman Road and reach the Via Nova Traiana, down to Madaba and from there move on to Mount Nebo or take the detour which descended directly to the Springs of Moses at the foot of the mountain. This latter short-cut was proposed to the pilgrim Egeria and all those who were accompanying her, by the priest from Livias. Egeria wrote in her memoirs of the trip:

"Now we had to hurry to carry out our intention of reaching Mount Nebo. As we travelled along, the local presbyter from Livias (I had asked him to leave his home and accompany us because he knew the area so well) asked us: 'would you like to see the water that flows from the rock, which Moses gave to the children of Israel when they were thirsty? You can if you have the energy to turn off the road at about the sixth milestone'. At this we were eager to go".



Opposite:
View of Mount Nebo

Left:
Courtyard of the Franciscan
Monastery at Mt. Nebo



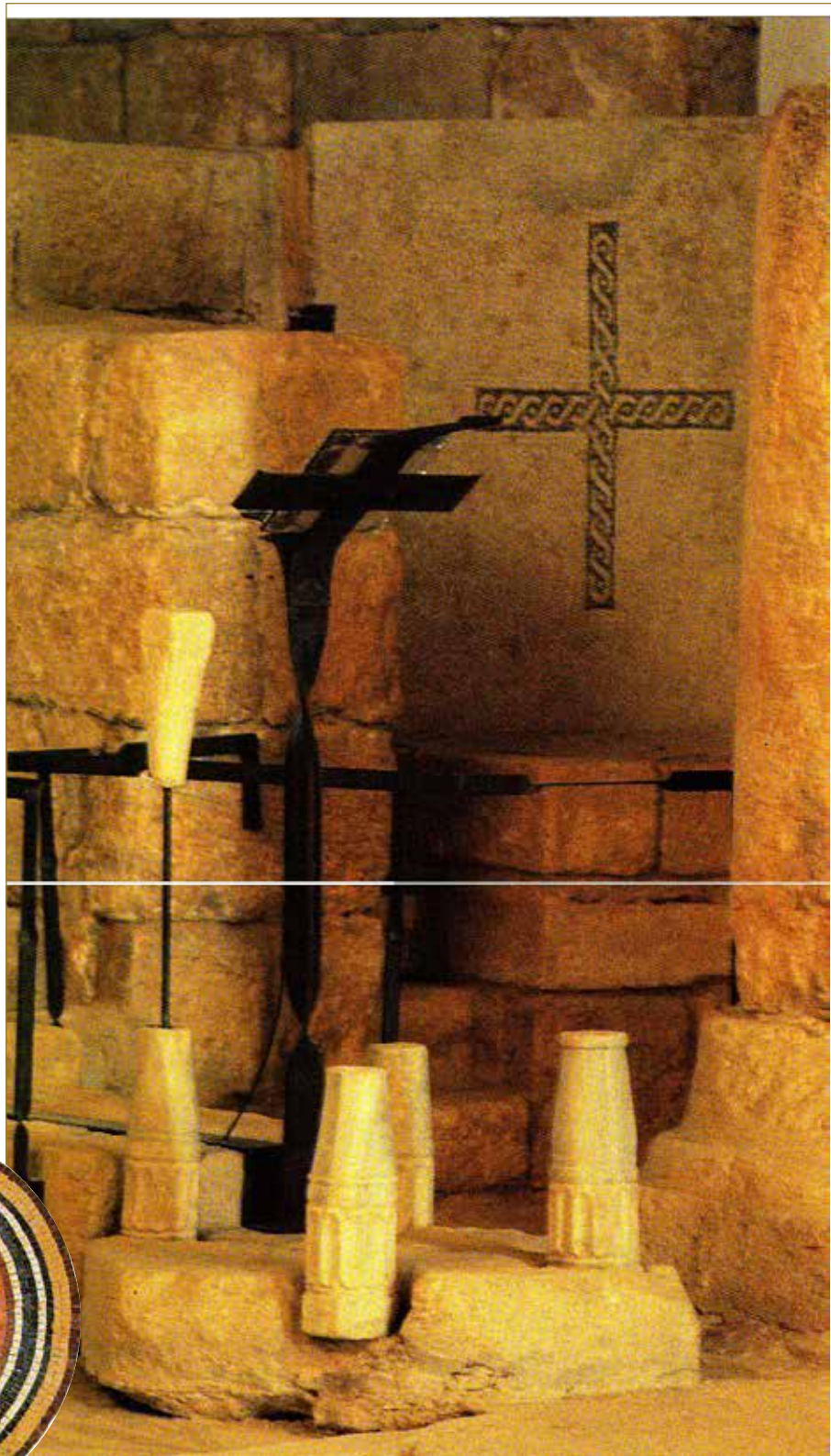
•THE MEMORIAL OF MOSES•

After resting and experiencing the generous hospitality the hermits near the Springs, Egeria took the last stage of her journey, which in her memories had been also the most difficult and painful. She wrote:

“Then we set off for the mountain, and with us came the holy clergy and monks who had accompanied us, and many of the holy monks who lived near the spring were kind enough to come too, or at least the ones who had the energy to ascend Mount Nebo. So we set out and came to the foot of Mount Nebo; it was very high, but mostly possible to ascend on the donkeys, though there were some steeper parts where we had to dismount, and it was hard going.

On reaching the mountain-top we came to a church, not a very big one, right on the summit of Mount Nebo, and inside, in the position of the pulpit, I saw a slightly raised place about the size of a normal tomb. I asked about it, and the holy men replied. “Holy Moses was buried here - by angels” since the Bible tells us “No human being knoweth his burial.” And there is no doubt that it was angels who buried him, since the actual tomb where he was buried can be seen today. Our predecessors here pointed out this place to us, and now we point it out to you. They told us that this tradition came from their predecessors.

Soon we said the prayer and the other things which were usual in a holy place, and the church”.



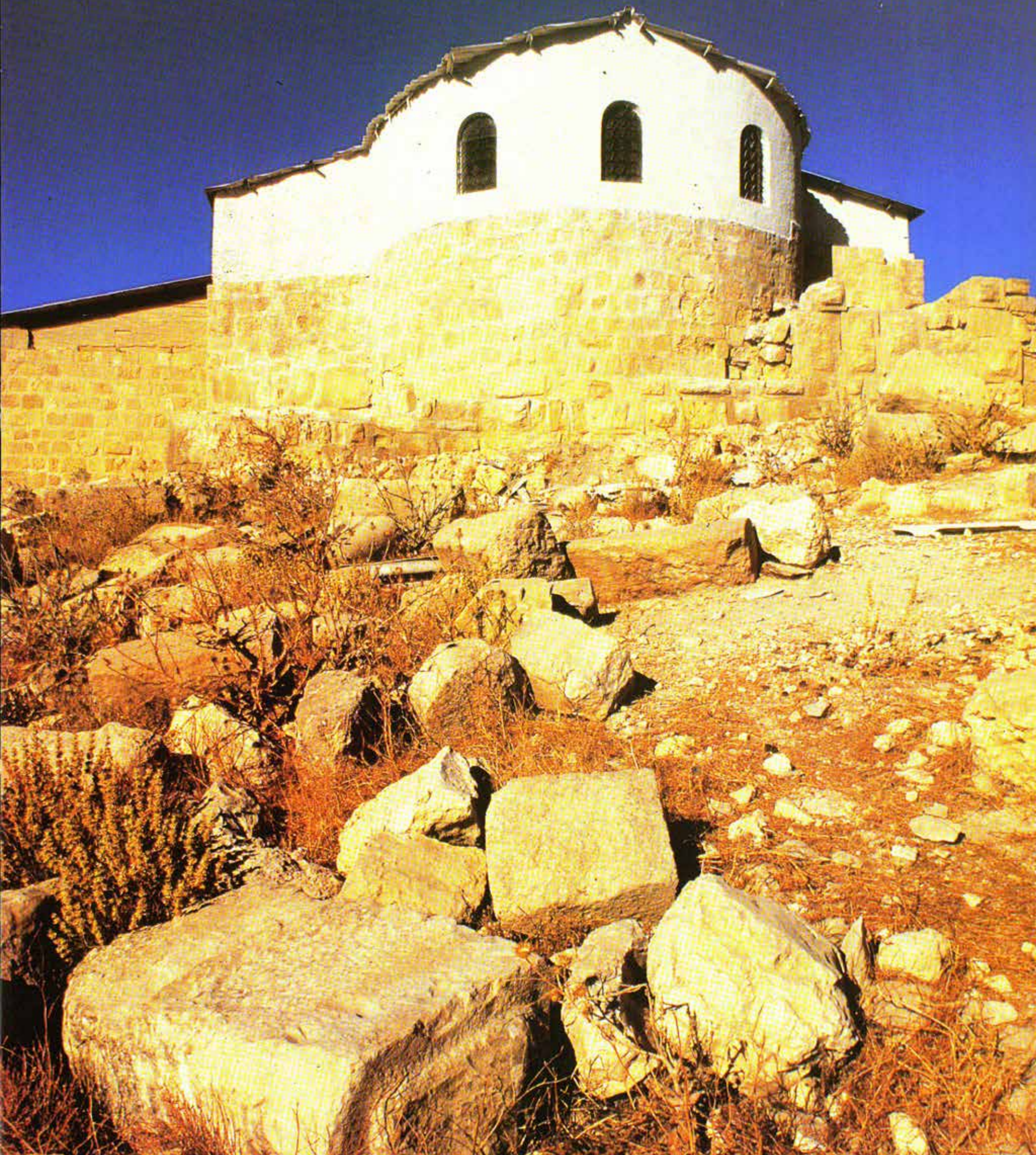
Opposite:

Memorial of Moses;

Church at Mt. Nebo.

Right:

Altar of Church at Mt. Nebo.



A Croatian monk, Jeronymus Mihaic, who was fascinated by biblical recollections upon which he had meditated at Jericho, opened a road to reach the ruins. He built a modest little house and guaranteed a water supply by putting the ancient cisterns he had found among the ruins back into service. On July 13th, 1933, the archaeological research started. Since 1933, the Franciscan Archaeological Institute has been hard at work at Mount Nebo – with the generous help and assistance of the Bedouins from the mountain. The excavations were interrupted by the Second World War but were taken up again during the sixties, when the restorations began. New discoveries were made on an artistic and historical level.

During the first three long seasons of digging, the Franciscan Archaeologist uncovered a big basilica, slightly atypical in shape and flanked with chapels, at the center of a wide monastery with its cells organized around cloisters.

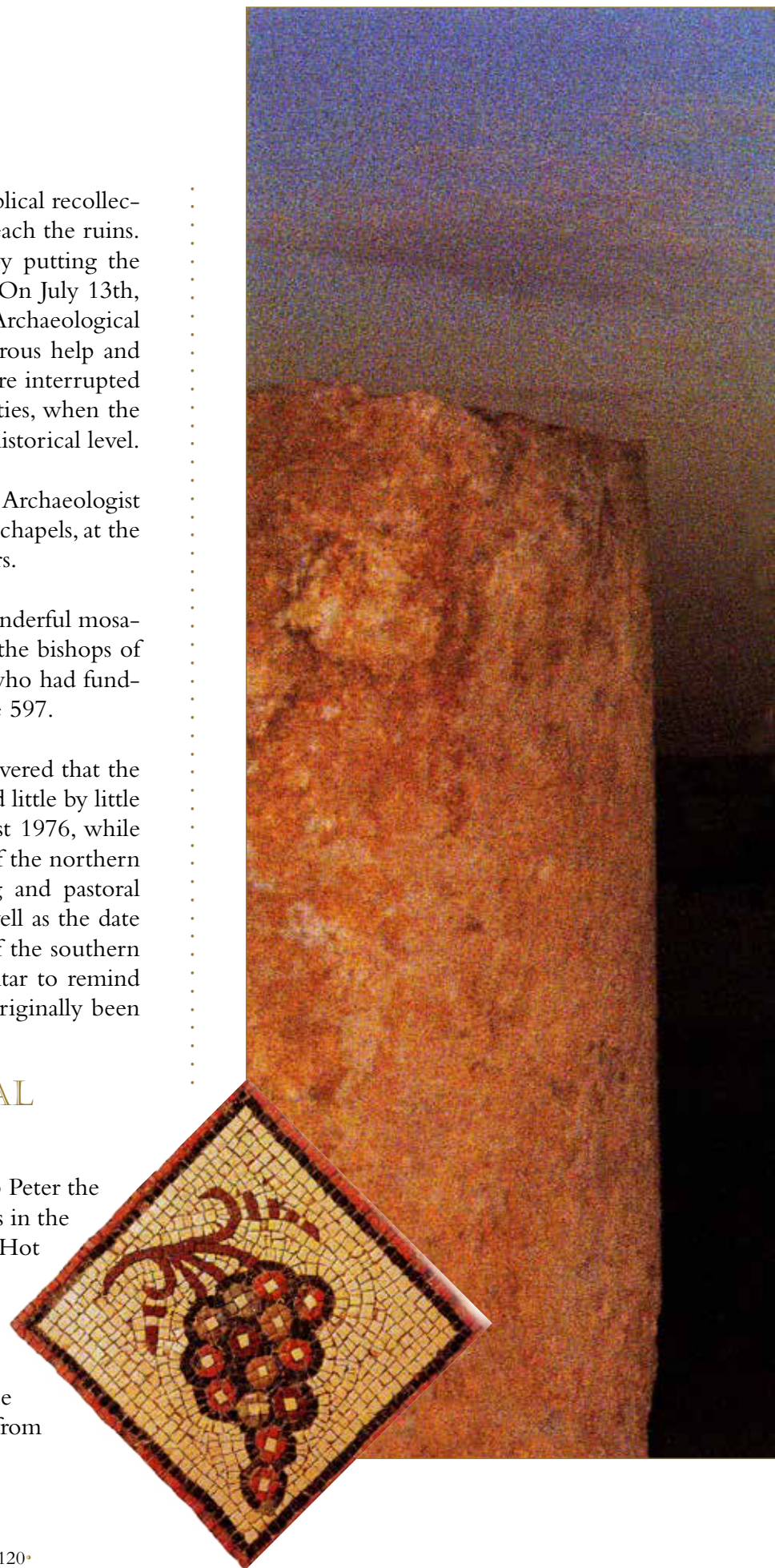
The floors of the sanctuary turned out to be decorated with wonderful mosaics rich in inscriptions, from which they could read the names of the bishops of Madaba. They could also see the names of the numerous patrons who had funded the work. The date of completion of the mosaic is shown to be 597.

Other artistic and historical discoveries were made. It was discovered that the sanctuary which Egeria visited in the IV century had been enlarged little by little till it reached its maximum extension in the VI century. In August 1976, while digging for other restorations, one meter below the mosaic floor of the northern chapel, a mosaic masterpiece was discovered. It depicts hunting and pastoral scenes. The names of the artists are inscribed into the mosaic as well as the date of completion – which was around AD 531. At the eastern end of the southern aisle of the basilica was built a kind of platform, the memorial altar to remind pilgrims of the Prophet Moses, in whose honor the church had originally been built.

•THE ORIGIN OF THE MEMORIAL TO MOSES ON MOUNT NEBO•

The same road taken by Egeria must have been taken by Bishop Peter the Iberian, by now old and infirm, in search of a cure for his afflictions in the Hot Baths of Moses at the foot of Mount Nebo, and later on at the Hot Baths of Baaru in the region of Madaba.

Peter's biographer, who went along with him on the journey, tells us that they went directly to the hot springs of Moses, much praised by the pilgrims, but Peter found very little benefit, because the springs were not very hot. Some of the faithful Christians from







Above:
Beautiful mosaic at
Mt. Nebo

Arabia suggested to Peter that he continue to the hot springs of Baaru where the waters were much hotter and more curative. So the next day, his party took the road to Madaba; the one which goes up from Livias to Esbus and then descends to Madaba, and from there to the hot springs of Baaru.

The detour which the priest of Livias told Egeria about offered a twofold advantage. First of all, it reduced the distance to Madaba considerably, and secondly, it offered a stop at the sanctuary of Moses, where he had been as a youth before his conversion. The biographer of Peter the Iberian wrote about this:

“On the following day we travelled to Madaba. Midway there we came to the holy hill of Moses, whose name is Abarim, i.e., Fasga (Pisga), where God said to him: “Go up and die.” On it there is a venerable and very large temple, named after the prophet, and many monasteries, which are built around it.

Full of joy on account of our arrival at this place, we, together with the aged man, offered up prayer and thanksgiving to God, who honored us with the blessing and veneration of such a prophet. On that occasion we learned from the inhabitants of that mountain, how the builders of that temple were convinced that the body of holy Moses was

lying there and how over it the temple was built and the table and altar stand, and under the altar the vessel of oil and of grace, although holy Scripture clearly and unmistakably states: “Moses, the servant of the Lord, died in the land of Moab”. Thus according to the word of the Lord, they buried him in the land near the house of Fogor, and no one up to the present day knows about his end. They told us: A shepherd from the village of Nebo, which is situated on the south side of the mountain, whilst leading his flock to pasture, brought it to this place. On the arriving here, he saw, as in a vision, a very large cave, filled with much light, pleasing odor and splendor. Filled with astonishment, for never before had anything of the kind been seen at that place, he, strengthened by divine power, ventured to descend into that cave, and saw a venerable old man whose face was brilliant and beaming with kindness, and who was on a luminous bed resplendent with glory and grace. And since he realized that this was holy Moses he immediately ran with great fear and joy to the village and hastened to inform those who lived there of the vision. Enlightened by God he collected small stones and made many stone heaps at that place, where he had the vision, since he bore in mind the possibility that after his departure, it might again become impossible to recognize the spot where this actually happened. For when the inhabitants of that village heard it, they all came

in great crowds to the (place of the) vision and looked for that cave. And that shepherd calling God to witness declared: "At this place where these heaps of stones are, I beheld that vision and I went down into that cave and saw the holy prophet. And for this very reason I made these heaps of stones, in order that, if the prophet at God's command should again conceal himself, nevertheless the heaps of stones would indicate the place". And so, since they and many more saints were convinced that the vision was a true one, and all the inhabitants of that region together hurriedly brought building material. This temple was built in the name of the great prophet and lawgiver, and he proclaims this publicly and to every man, so that no doubt is possible, his goodness and power by means of signs and wonders and cures, which since that time have occurred at this place without interruption. For it is a place of cure both for the souls and for the bodies, and a place of refuge for all those, who come here from all places and are afflicted in soul and affected with many kinds of sufferings of the body. After we had prayed there and as a viaticum had received the prayers of the great prophet, we reached the town mentioned above (Madaba)."

(From *The Life of Peter the Iberian*, translated by S. Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo*, 1. Jerusalem 1941, pp. 341-347).



• EGERIA'S VIEW FROM MOUNT NEBO •

Following the story of Moses. The IVth Century Christian Pilgrim Egeria, who, had come to the end of her pilgrimage took a look at the breathtaking view. She wrote:

"Then the presbyters and holy monks who were familiar with the place asked us: "Would you like to see the places which are described in the Books of Moses? If so, go out of the church door to the actual summit, the place which has the view, and spend a little time looking at it. We will tell you which places you can see." This delighted us, and we went straight out. From the church door itself we saw where the Jordan runs into the Dead Sea, and the place was down below where we were standing. Then, facing us, we saw Livias on our side of the Jordan (river) and Jericho on the far side, since the height in front of the church door, where we were standing, jutted out over the valley. In fact from there you can see most of Palestine, the Promised Land and everything in the area of Jordan as far as the eye can see.

To our left was the whole country of Sodomites, including Zoar, the only one of the five cities which remains today. There is still something left of it, but all that is left of the others is heaps of ruins, because they were burned to ashes. We were also shown the place where Lot's wife had her memorial, as you read in the Bible. But what we saw, reverend ladies, was not the actual pillar, but only the place where it had once been. The pillar itself, they say, has been submerged in the Dead Sea; at any rate we did not see it, and I cannot pretend we did. In fact it was the bishop there, the Bishop of Zoar, who told us that it was now a good many years since the pillar had been visible. It used to stand near the sixth milestone from Zoar, but was now completely submerged by water.

Then we went round outside to the right of the church, and they showed us two cities facing us. One was Heshbon, now called Exebon, the city of Sehon, King of the Ammonites, and the other the city of Og, King of Bashan, which is now called Safdra. Also from this point they pointed out facing us Peor, a city of the Kingdom of Edom. All these cities we saw were perched in the mountains, but just below us was a flatter tract of land; there, we were told, Moses and the Children of Israel had their camp when they were fighting the cities, and we could see traces of the camp. From what I call the left side of the mountain, the side of the Dead Sea, we were shown a very abrupt mountain which was once called the Viewpoint. This is the mountain where Balak the son of Beor put Balaam the Seer so that he should curse the Children of Israel, and God would not allow it, as we are told in the Bible. So when we had seen all we wanted, we returned in the name of God, by way of Jericho and the same road by which we had come, to Jerusalem". (From J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, 1981, pp. 103-108).

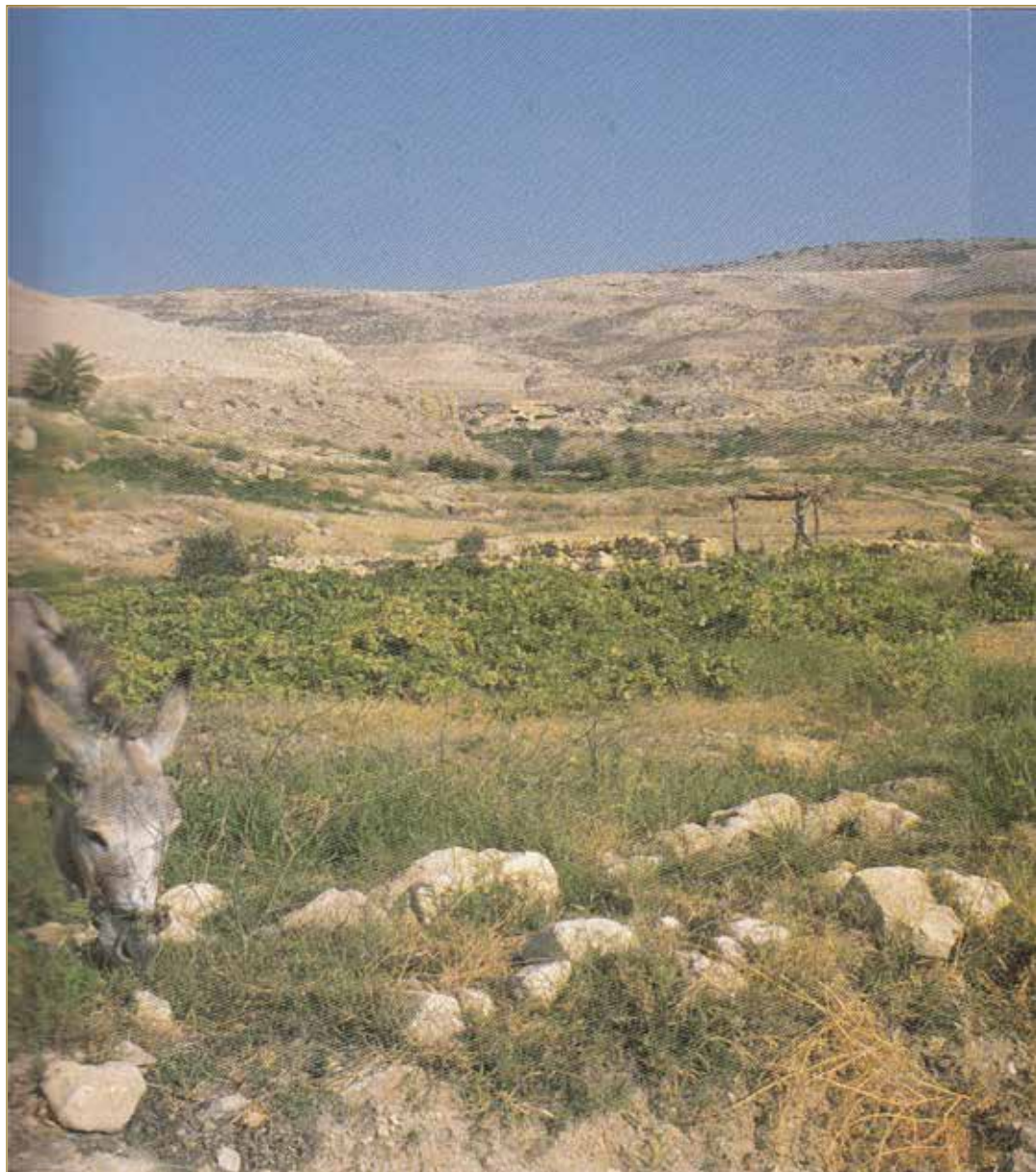
•TODAY'S VIEW FROM MOUNT NEBO•

The same spectacular view can be enjoyed by any visitor or Christian pilgrim who climbs Siyagha-Mount Nebo on a particularly clear day. As one looks from the view at Mount Nebo the Jordan River's course unwinds from the north and descends towards the Dead Sea.

From the houses of Rameh, a village at the foot of the mountain has developed upon the ruins of the Livias. From Mt. Nebo one can also see Jericho on the Western Bank of the Jordan. The view of the Dead Sea on a clear day is spectacular. That view reminds visitors and Christian pilgrims of the Biblical story of the cursed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed by fire as punish-



Left:
A detailed mosaic at Madaba
Right:
Mass in the Church at
Mt. Nebo.
Below:
View of Mt. Nebo from
'Uyun Musa





ment from God. With a bit of geographical updating the monks of Mount Nebo have also indicated, at the foot of the mountain, the city of Zoar-Segor. Zoar-Segor is the city in which Lot and his family lived, after being saved from destruction through Abraham's intercession. The famous mosaic map of Madaba, accurately adhering to historical documentation, indicates the city is on the South-Eastern Shore of the Dead Sea where stands modern day Ghor Al-Safi.

Today, as in the IVth Century times of Egeria, the most important biblical site we find as we move to north (and to the right) is the city of Esbos-Hesban, which Christians recall as the capital city of the Ammonite Kingdom of Sihon defeated by the Israelites. The monks of Mount Nebo have also located the city of Adra the capital city of the Kingdom of Bashan who was also defeated by the tribes of Israel on their way towards the conquest of the Promised Land.

Moving further north towards the 6th milestone on the road which the ancient pilgrims had used in their ascent to the sanctuary, the monks pointed out the locality of Peor or Fogor. Here stand the remains of a pagan shrine connected with the licentious cult of Baal. Baal was one of the fertility gods of Canaan. In Moses' warning to the Israelites against idolatry (Deut. 4:3) he points out the punishment God gave to Baal. Christian pilgrims always found this site a stumbling block in their journey. At the highest point of Siyagha, which is to the south of the sanctuary of Moses, one can enjoy a wider view over the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. This point was indicated by the monks as being the place from which the Seer Balaam blessed the Israelites who had set up their camp at the foot of the mountain.

•THE MOUNTAIN WHERE MOSES DIED•

As is related in the book of Deuteronomy (34:2-6), Moses is buried in the valley at a spot unknown to all but to God. The Bible tells us:

"Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan. All Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea. The South and the plan of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. Then the Lord said to him, this is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying: 'I will give it to your descendants. I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.' So Moses, the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day."

A memorable modern Pilgrimage was recorded in 1864. They came on horse back to the hill where Moses died. Led by the knowledgeable Bedouin of the region, coming up from the eastern banks of the Dead Sea. The men of the Duke of Luynes recorded their journey:

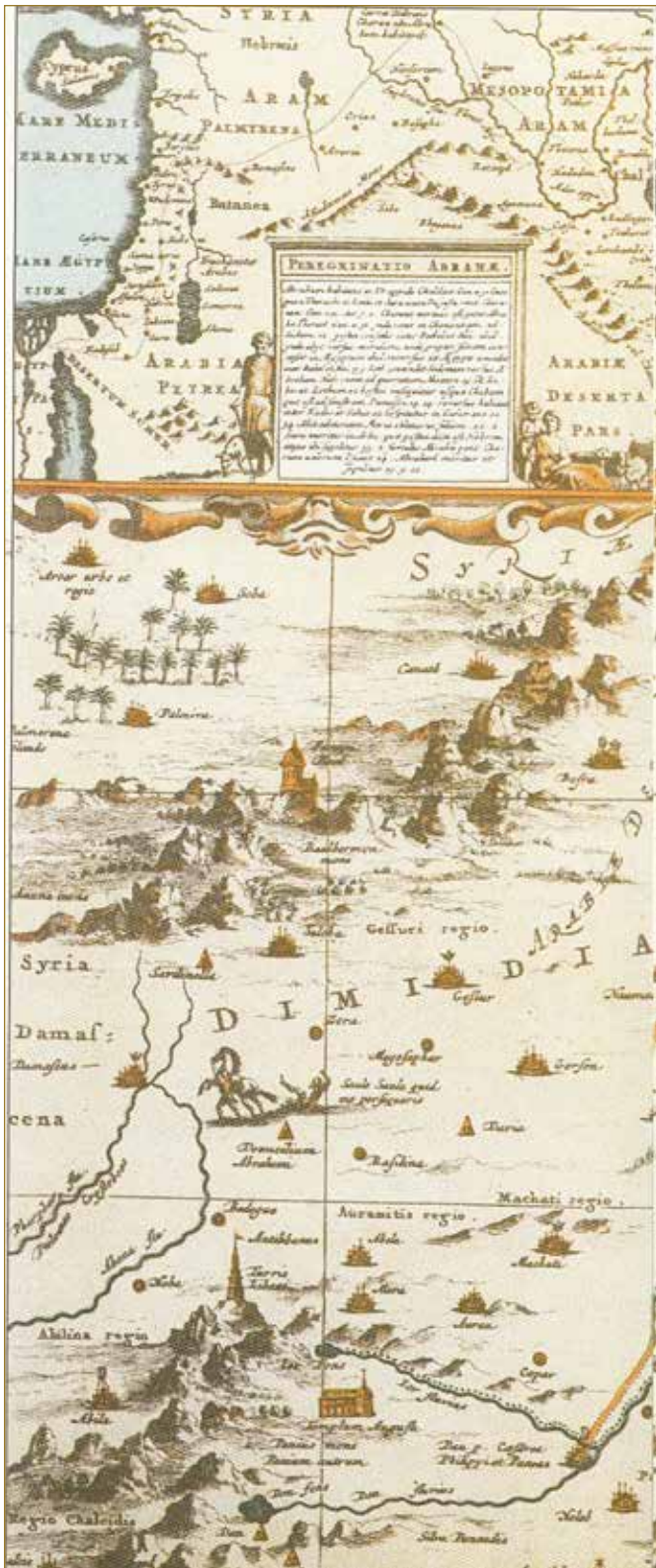
“It was a particularly clear and mild day, such that the men of the those who were involved in the exploration of the Dead Sea, 400 m. below the level of the Mediterranean Sea, could enjoy without too much effort, the climb towards the mountain peak. The hill was identified by the Bedouins as Jebel Musa, (the Mountain of Moses.) We found the top covered by a cascade of squared-up blocks from ruined buildings. In a slight depression, on the highest point, aligned columns and capitals lay half buried in the stony ground. The surrounding silence was broken by the clucking of partridges. The view over the Jordan Valley, where an irregular black line indicated the tortuous course of the Jordan River, encompassed the oasis of Jericho. West of the river to the foot of the mountains are Jerusalem and Bethlehem which precipitate into the heavy waters of the Dead Sea in which they are reflected. Between the rises in the valley floor and the sequence of steep valleys illuminated by the sun, rare green patches indicated the possible presence of springs.

Little by little the enchanted landscape was given a shape and a name as the Bedouin guide indicated and picked out their different characteristics. To the north, below the mountain, there was Uyun Musa the Valley where the Springs of Moses gushed from the rocks, to the east was Wadi Afrit the valley of the Devil; to the south was Wadi Kanisah, the valley of the Church; crowning over the imposing ruins on Siyagha peak, was the monastery, a natural balcony looking out onto the valley.”

•HOW THE HISTORY OF PILGRIMS
TO MOUNT NEBO WAS DISCOVERED•

The secrets of what was concealed in those squared blocks of ruins which the horse-backed pilgrims saw in 1864 were puzzling. The 19th Century pilgrims asked themselves why the Bedouins still called the mountain *Nebo*? Biblical references to the mountain left little doubt as to the accuracy of the information preserved by the Bedouins. But the question was what kind of surprises were hidden under those stones?

The answer came about twenty years after the horse-back riding pilgrims visited to the area. In 1884 a professor at the University of Rome, while rearranging some old latin manuscripts, realized that one of the codes he was working on contained about a hundred parchment sheets telling the story of a trip to the Holy Land.



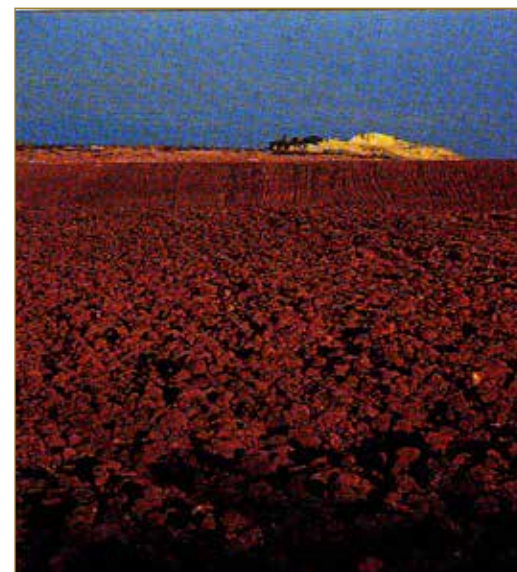


That story was over 1300 years old; written by a woman who was tracking the biblical significance of her journey to the near east. Clearly this woman was inspired by the stories of the Bible and clearly she was very courageous, as she appears to have taken this journey alone. Using a form of popular Latin, the woman had written to her far away sisters about her trip to Jerusalem. She wrote about what she had seen and the people she had met. The manuscript was partly ruined. However parts of the writing were clear and extremely descriptive. She wrote about her trip to Sinai on Moses' tracks, led by the monks from the region. Also recovered was the complete narration of a second trip which took her to Mount Nebo in Arabia from Jerusalem.

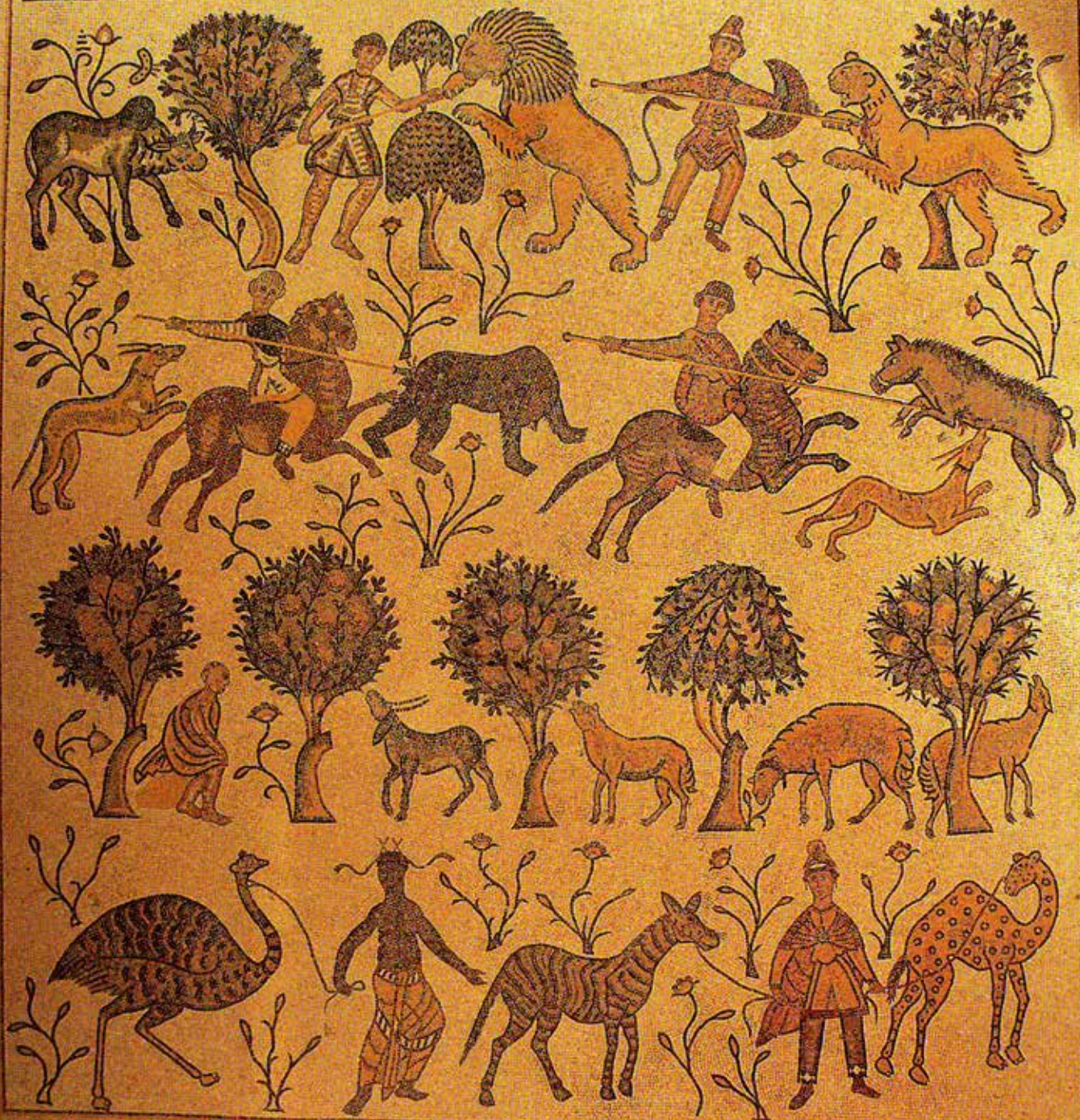
The written itinerary of the pilgrim we call Egeria or Etheria is precise and detailed. From Jerusalem, travelling with holy men; a priest, some deacons from Jerusalem, and some monks, Egeria headed towards Jericho. She crossed the River Jordan, and reached the town of Livias at the foot of Mount Nebo. There, she asked a *"priest of the town who better knew those places"* to accompany her. They took the Roman Road that links Livias in the valley to Esbos in the highlands.

On arriving at the 6th milestone the priest indicated the sanctuary that dominated the mountain on the other side of the valley and advised her to leave the main road and take a rocky footpath in the valley below:

"If you want to see the water that spurts from the rock, that which Moses gave to the sons of Israel when they were thirsty, you can see it, on condition that you consent to the fatigue of leaving the road at about the 6th mile'. And, immediately leaving the road, we followed the priest who guided us. In that place there is a little church at the foot of the mountain where a number of very hospitable monks live. Between the church and the hermitage where they live, abundant water gushes from the rock; clear water with a delicious taste. Leaving this place we arrived at the foot of the mountain Nebo which was very high. However, it is possible to climb most of it on a donkey, although a small part of it was too rocky and it was necessary to go up on foot. Now there is a small church on the top of Mount Nebo, and in that church, in the spot where the pulpit is, there is a memorial altar to Moses. The priests and monks who knew these places then said to us: 'If you want to see the places spoken about in Moses' books, come out of the church and from this summit look carefully and we will show you the individual places to be seen even though far off'".



ΧΑΡΙΤΕΙΔΕΠΙΤΟΥΤΑΤΑΝΤΑΘΕΟΦΙΛΕΣΤΡΙΑΤΡΟΣΗΜΩΗΚΠΟΙΜΕΝΟΣΗΛΙΟΥΕΤΙΣΑΝΩΚΟΔΟΜΗΘΗΛΗΚΕΚΟΣΗ
 ΘΗΤΟΙΕΡΟΝΤΟΥΘΥΔΙΑΚΟΗΚΟΝΜΕΤΑΤΗΣΕΝΑΥΤΩΑΓΙΑΣΚΟΛΥΜΒΕΘΡΑΣΤΗΣΠΑΛΙΝΓΕΝΕΙΑΣΤΟΥΧΑΡΙΕΣΤΑΤΟΥΚΗ
 ΒΩΡΙΟΥΣΠΟΥΔΗΛΙΟΥΗΓΟΥΜΕΝΟΥΚΤΡΕΝΥΠΑΤΙΑΦΧΧΛΑΜΠΑΔΙΟΥΚΟΡΕΣΤΟΥΤΩΝΛΑΜΠΡΤΗΑΓΟΥΣΤΩΣ
 ΧΡΟΝΩΝΘΙΝΔΣΤΟΥΕΤΟΥΣΥΚΕΤΗΣΕΠΑΡΧΙΑΣΥΠΕΡΣΩΤΗΡΙΑΣΜΟΥΣΗΛΙΟΥΣΧΚΣΕΡΓΟΥΣΓΑΜΕΤΗΣΥΠΕΡ
 ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑΣΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΟΥΣΧΚΓΟΘΥΣΧΚΠΑΝΤΩΝΤΩΝΑΥΤΟΙΣΔΙΦΕΡΟΝΤΩΝΑΜΕΝΚΕ







•JERASH (GERASA)•

At the church of Saint Theodore there is a special dedication to John the Forerunner, after whom many Christians of the region are named and to the Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul “to whom power was given”. An inscription at the Church of Saint Theodore reads:

“I am in the resplendent abode of the victor, Theodore, immortal martyr, holy man, whose glory has flown upon the earth and in the deep abyss of the oceans. His body has been returned to the earth but his soul, in the immense heavens, shares forever the life of the angelic choirs. He is an everlasting bastion, an invincible defense of the city and its present and future inhabitants.”

Also in Jerash we can read, in the mosaic found in the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damianus: “Pray now, while venerating the beautiful pair of victors. In truth, they are saints who own the art allaying sufferings. From now on those who make offerings will benefit through the elimination of misadventure in their lives.”

There is another beautiful inscription carved on the lintel of the outer door of the Church of Saint Theodore at Gerasa. This church is built right next to the temple of the city’s main deity Artemis. The Christian religion was opposed to the sacrifices that were offered to the pagan gods at the Temple of Artemis. The inscription about this at the Church of Saint Theodore reads:

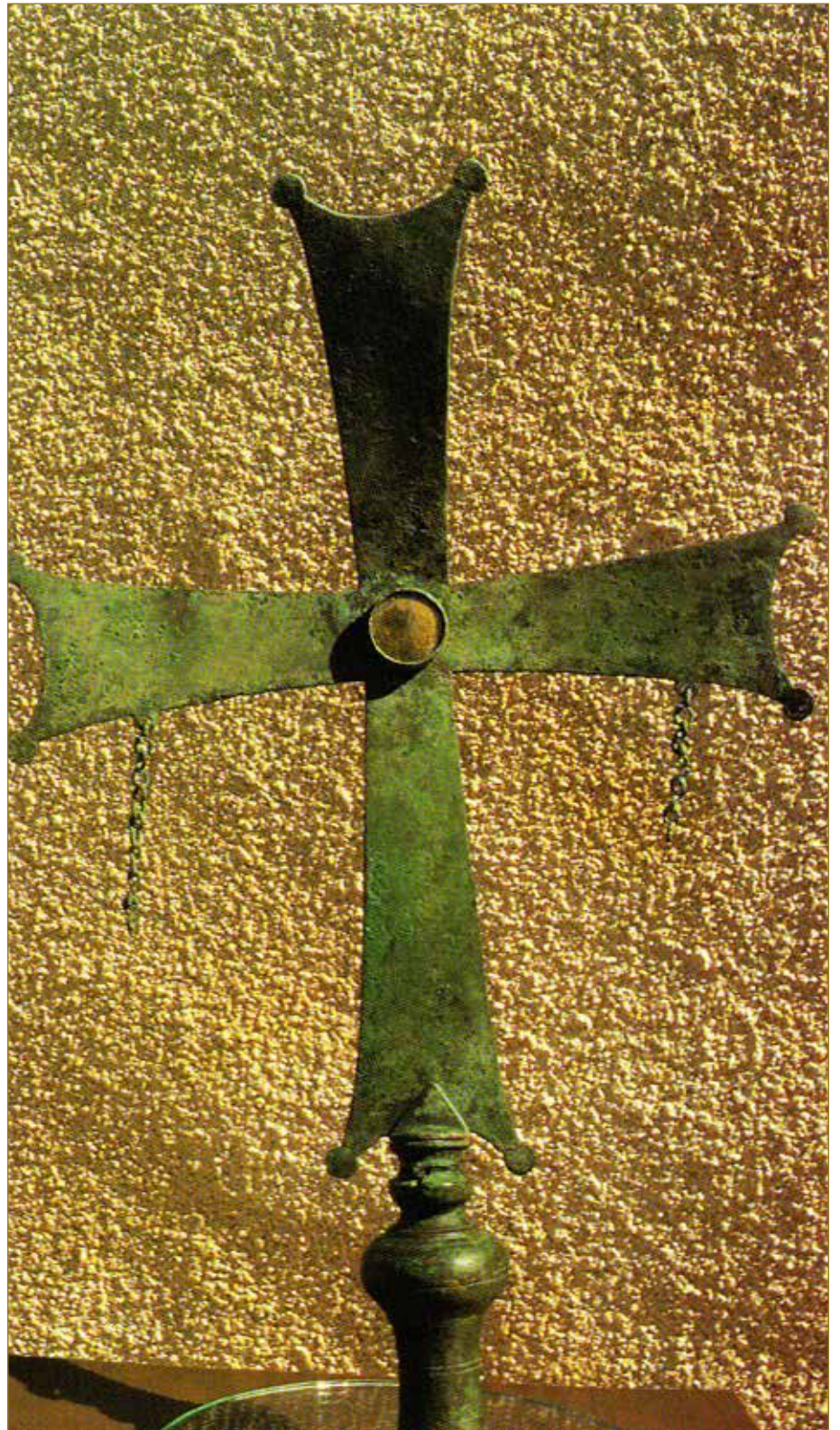
“I am the wonder and admiration of passers-by, because all traces of disorder have disappeared from here. In place of the dirt of the olden days, the grace of God has surrounded me on all sides. Once, animals tortured by sufferings were thrown here and gave out an unpleasant odor. Often the passer-by covered his nose, held his breath and escaped the nasty smell. Now, those who pass near this sweet-smelling place raise the right hand to their forehead and trace the sign of the cross.”



Opposite:
The Church of St. Theodore
Left [bottom]:
Inscription on the lintel at the
Church of St. Theodore
Left [center]:
The Church of St. Theodore
Left [top]:
Mosaic of St. Cosmos

•THE CROSS•

The sign of the cross which the Christians then and now, loved sculpting and painting everywhere, can be found in churches as well as homes. It is also found on common furnishings, on ornaments, on tombstones and on watch towers erected for the defense of the cities. The famous modern bronze cross memorial at the top of Mount Nebo was sculpted by Gian-Paolo Fantoni of Florence, Italy. It symbolized the serpent lifted up by Moses in the desert, as well as the Crucifixion of Jesus.



• THE VIRGIN MARY •

Christians nourish a great devotion toward the Blessed Virgin Mary. The churches at Madaba, on Mount Nebo, and elsewhere in Jordan pay homage to Mary, the mother of Jesus. At the church of the Virgin, the mother of Jesus is the Virgin Theotokos, Holy and Immaculate Queen through whom one seeks purification of the soul. The central medalion found in the Church reads: *“If you want to look at Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, and to Christ whom she generated, purify (your) mind, flesh and works! That you may purify with (your) prayer the people of God.”*

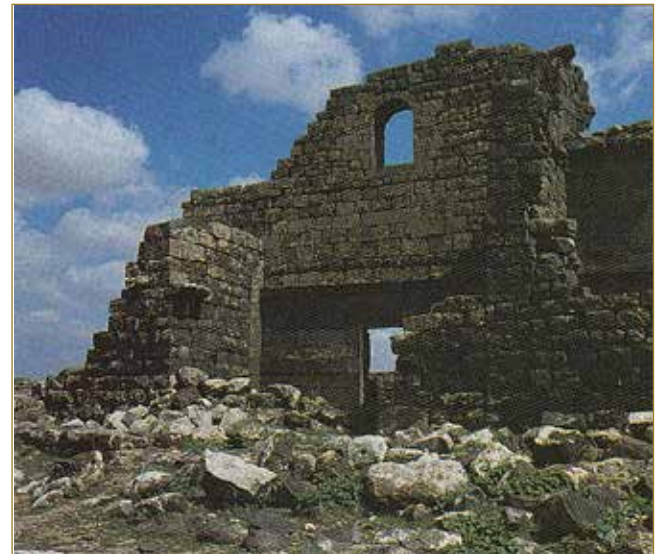
Right :
Religious icon.
Bottom:
*The central mosaic
inscription at the
Church of the Virgin
in Madaba*
Far right [top]:
Um Al-Jimal
Far right [bottom]:
A Seal of St. Michael



•SOLDIER SAINTS•

At the Ayla–Aqaba site in the south of Jordan we find the names of the soldier saints Theodore and Longinus sculpted on two column capitals as a symbol for the protection of the city.

At Um Al-Jimal there are also the names of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel inscribed on each side of the tower in barracks.



•MADABA MAP•

It was the Christian vision of continuity and completeness with the Old Testament that inspired the mosaic artists and craftsmen of the area to make the Map of Madaba. Christians of the region saw the Old Testament as a guideline for establishing geographic regions and borders. This famous mosaic map was designed in around 570 AD to decorate the floor of a Byzantine church in Madaba. It is more than a geographic text of that era. It is principally an updated rereading of the Story of Salvation, as narrated in the Bible in its geographic context. The Holy City of Jerusalem is placed at the centre of the redeemed ecumene. The principal building found is the Constantine complex of the Holy Sepulcher, constructed on the Rock of Calvary, thought of as being the center of the world.

Today this splendid map is housed in the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George, which was built in 1896 over the remains of the original Byzantine Church. Only part of the map has been preserved – it originally measured a staggering 25 x 5 meters and was made of more than two million stone tesserae.



Left:
*The gate of the Church
of St. George in Madaba*

Right:
*The ancient mosaic map
of the Holy Land.*









Opposite page:
The Tower at Um Al-Rasas.

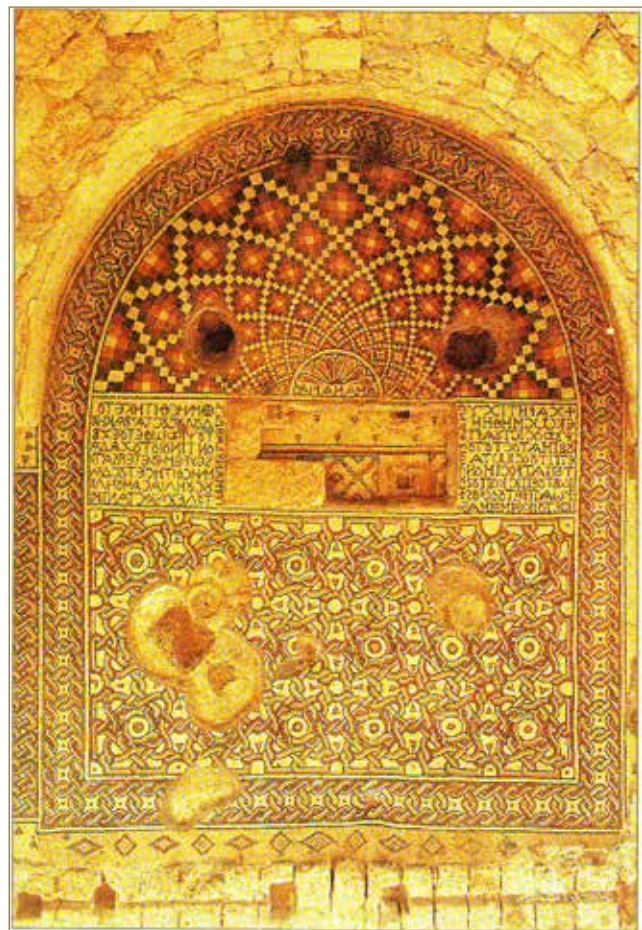
Below :
The mosaic floor of the Church of St. Stephen.

Below [right]:
The altar of the Church of St. Stephen.



◦UM AL-RASAS◦

The Byzantine tower of Um Al-Rasas, which is still standing, is approximately 14 meters high. It is built at the centre of a square courtyard with a water cistern at its base and a small church nearby. At its very top the tower had a domed room with no stairway leading to it. This means that it was not a watch tower to forewarn the approach of marauding bedouins. It was more probably the tower of a Stylite monk living the special ascetic way of life, well attested in Syria where it originated with St. Simon the Stylite. The fact that this way of life spread rapidly through the entire middle-east in the 5th Century and continued into the Medieval Period, is also very well documented.



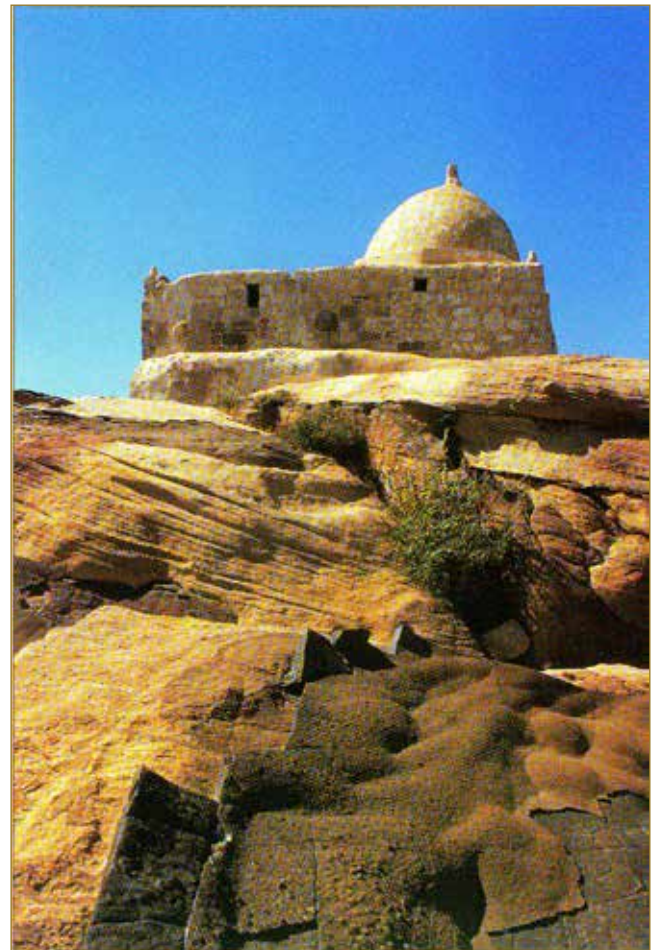


*Aaron's tomb, at the top
of Mount Hor, near Petra.*



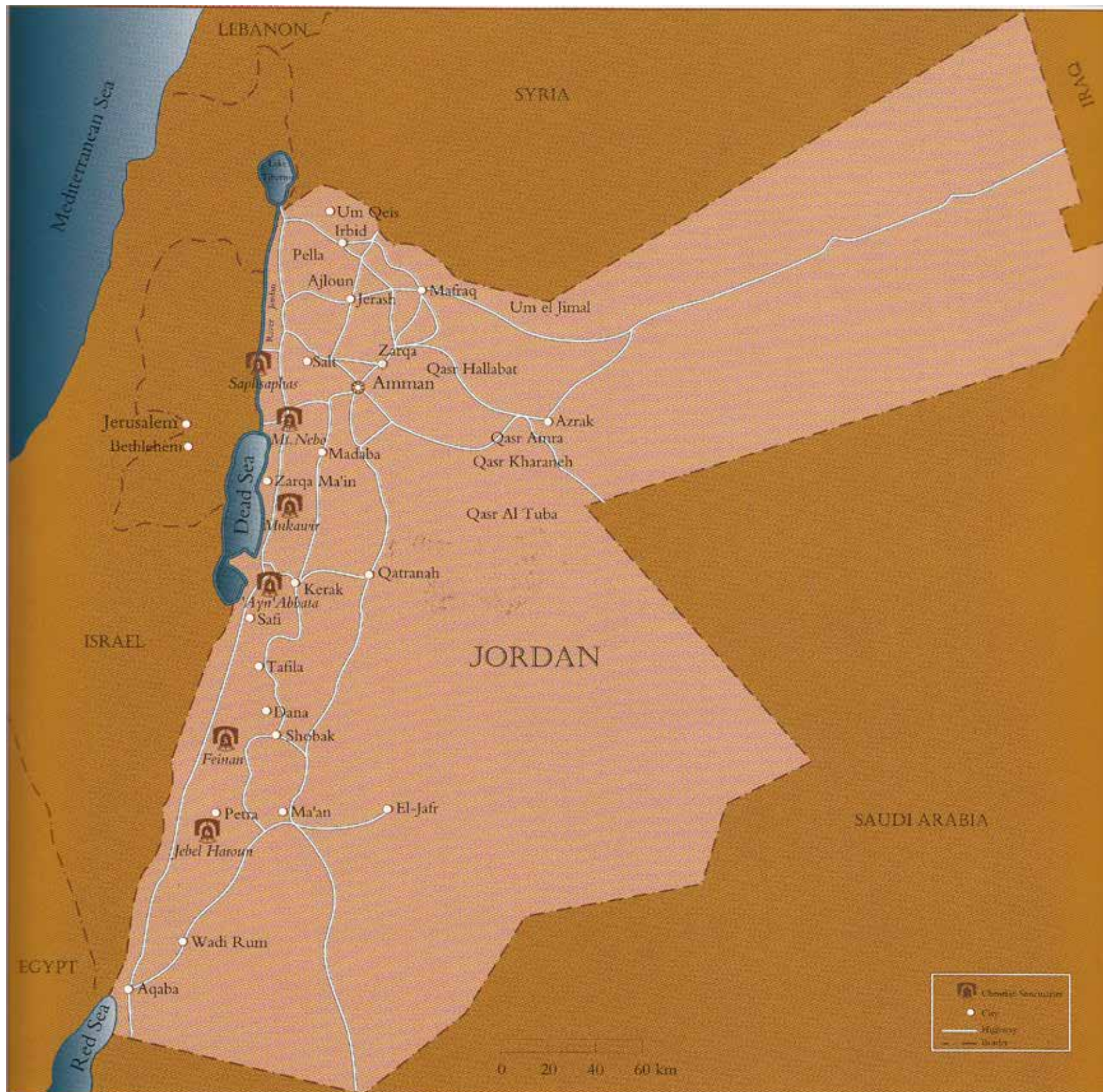
•AARON'S TOMB•

Aaron was the older brother of Moses. The Bible tells the story of how Aaron made atonement to the people of Israel in an attempt to stop the plague. When Aaron died, God told Moses to strip him of his garments. Moses gathered the people of Israel at Mount Hor and did as God commanded. He took the garments and gave them to his son Eleazar. Aaron died there at the top of Mount Hor, and the people of Israel mourned Aaron's death for 30 days.



MAP OF CHRISTIAN HOLY SITES

- 1- The sites of John the Baptist
- 2- The memorial of Moses
- 3- The prison of John the Baptist
- 4- The sanctuary of Lot
- 5- The copper mines of Feno
- 6- The monastery and tomb of Aaron



CLARIFICATION

by Rami Khoury

Archaeological surveys and excavations along the length of Wadi el-Kharrar since 1996 have generated significant new information about the area of Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John the Baptist preached and baptized during the early days of his ministry. The combined evidence of the biblical text, Byzantine and medieval writers' accounts, and the latest archaeological work all locates the tradition of John the Baptist's mission, including the baptism of Jesus, in the area adjacent to – and directly east of – the Jordan River, in the land of the modern Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

John 1:28 specifies: Bethany, beyond the Jordan as the place where John was baptizing; the expression beyond the Jordan refers to the east bank of the river. In a later reference to the same place on the east bank, John 10:40 says that Jesus traveled across the Jordan to the place where John at first baptized. Matthew 3:13 states that Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John, while Mark 1:9 says Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John.

These references to Jesus' movement from Galilee, to the Jordan, to John, conform to the normal route through Decapolis and Perea, bypassing Samaria, that Jesus would have taken between Galilee and Bethany beyond the Jordan in the lower reaches of the Jordan River.

John the Baptist and Jesus baptized people in different places, according to the biblical texts, including in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:5; Mark 1:5), at Aenon near Salem (John 3:22-23), and at other unspecified places. The biblical texts in Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23; 4:1, and John 1:28-34 use different expressions to refer to places and events associated with the baptism of Jesus. This multiplicity of terms and possible meanings is compounded by the different Biblical translations.

Matthew and Mark both say that after his baptism Jesus came up from the water or out of the water. Luke 4:1 says that after his baptism and temptation Jesus left the Jordan. There are references also in Matthew 3:5 to the whole Jordan district, or all the region about the Jordan, or the entire Jordan region. The expression the Jordan can refer both to the Jordan River and to the general region around the Jordan River, while the baptism of Jesus is mentioned in association with the water, the Jordan, and the Jordan River.

Excavations in Jordan since 1997 have uncovered a series of ancient sites associated with the tradition of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus, located along the length of the Wadi el-Kharrar east of the river (a 'Wadi' in Arabic means a perennial, seasonal, or dry riverbed). At the site of Tell el-Kharrar, identified as Bethany beyond the Jordan, the excavations have uncovered a Byzantine-era monastery. The site is located nearly two kilometers east of the Jordan River, at the start of the Wadi el-Kharrar. Several natural springs emerge from the ground here to form pools that start the flow of water through the Wadi el-Kharrar, eventually feeding into the Jordan River. An idyllic oasis dominates the start of Wadi el-Kharrar and the site of Tell el-Kharrar.

Pottery and coins from the 1st Century AD indicate that this site was used or inhabited at the time of Jesus and John the Baptist. Three or four centuries later, it was developed into a monastic complex commemorating the baptism of Jesus and the ministry of John. The monastery included plastered baptism pools; at least two churches; a deep well; several cisterns fed by ceramic pipes; a perimeter wall, and other structures. Immediately adjacent to the east bank of the Jordan River, archaeologists have excavated a large complex of two or possibly three Byzantine churches. These are probably the remains of the church built by the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius to commemorate the baptism of Jesus. The church was described by Byzantine and medieval era pilgrims as being carried on stone arches or vaults (recently identified) to withstand the seasonal flooding of the Jordan River. The location of this church complex, combined with John the Baptist's presence at Bethany beyond the Jordan at Tell el-Kharrar, indicates that Jesus must have entered and emerged from the baptism waters on the east bank of the river.

John 1:33-34 reports that after baptizing Jesus, John said: I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me: He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the child of God.

Later, when John was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, some of his disciples *came to John and said to him: Rabbi, he*

who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, here he is, baptizing, and all are going to him. (John 3:26). The double reference in the text of the Book of John to the fact that John bore witness to Jesus immediately after his baptism *beyond the Jordan* confirms the east bank of the Jordan as the place of Jesus' baptism.

Other new archaeological discoveries add to this identification. Much of the entire southern bank of Wadi el-Kharrar shows remains of ancient structures, such as monks' cells; isolated chapels; pilgrims' facilities; churches; domestic structures, and other facilities from the Byzantine and medieval periods. These are all thought to have related to the veneration of the east bank of the Jordan River as the site of the ministry and tradition of John the Baptist.

Halfway between Tell el-Kharrar and the Jordan River is a large, stone-built, plastered pool measuring over 20x10 metres, with inflow and outflow water channels linking it to Wadi el-Kharrar. This unique structure is located at the edge of the fertile Jordan Valley plain, at the point where the plain plunges down into the wide flood plain and narrower depression of the Jordan River. The pool is thought to have been used for group baptisms in the Byzantine period.

The seasonal flooding of *the Jordan* River in antiquity would have seen the river waters reach this point, occasionally making the Jordan over a kilometer wide (such-flooding is well documented from earlier this century; but it no longer occurs due to the modern construction of dams on the tributaries that flow into the river from its east and west banks).

The location of John the Baptist at *Bethany beyond the Jordan* is also affirmed the strong theological and deliberate geographic links between John and the Prophet Elijah. The small natural hill that forms the core of Tell el-Kharrar has been identified since the Byzantine period as the place from where Elijah ascended to heaven in a whirlwind and on a chariot and horses of fire (2 Kings 2:11-13). The Tell has long been known in Arabic as Tell Mar Elias ('the hill of Saint Elijah').

The nearby ford at the Jordan River is also identified as the place where Joshua miraculously crossed the river, and where both Elijah and Elisha stopped the waters of the river and walked across from one bank to the other. Thus this area captures a series of spiritually significant events in the lives of Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ, with the focal point of all the incidents recounted in the Bible being the area in Jordan today between the river and Tell el-Kharrar.

In sum, the new archaeological evidence indicates that: (1) *Bethany beyond the Jordan* may refer to a region as well as to a specific settlement, probably the one located at the later site of the Byzantine monastery at Tell el-Kharrar; (2) *the Jordan* refers to the Jordan River as well as to the area flanking its banks; and (3) the Jordan River itself occasionally expanded to a kilometer wide or more, due to seasonal flooding. Thus *the water* of the baptism could have referred to the river itself, the floodplain a kilometer to the east, or the flowing water of Wadi el-Kharrar at its start or where it entered the Jordan River.

Consequently, John the Baptist could have baptized Jesus and other people at any of several locations: (1) at the springfed natural pools at the start of Wadi el-Kharrar, called 'John the Baptist's Spring' by ancient writers; (2) at man-made baptism pools at the Tell el-Kharrar settlement (called *Bethany beyond the Jordan* in the Bible, also called Bethania, Bethabara, Saphsaphas, and Beit 'Any in the New Testament and in the Byzantine era); (3) anywhere in the waters of Wadi el-Kharrar along its nearly two kilometer-long route between Tell el-Kharrar and the Jordan River; (4) at baptism pools built along the route of the wadi; (5) at the eastern edge of the riverwater-filled floodplain of the Jordan River; (6) on the east bank of the Jordan River itself.-

Needless to say, all of these are now on the eastern side of the Jordan River, in the territory of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and in the newly-created National Park of the Baptism of Christ.

والحمد لله رب العلمين

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds

