

.....MORE PLACES TO VISIT

TOMB OF PROPHET SAMUEL AS: Prophet Samuel [also called *an-Nabi Samu'il* or *Nebi Samwil*] was one of the more striking personalities of the Bible, guiding the Jewish people as a messenger of the God and serving as the kingmaker of both King Saul and Saul's successor, **King [Nabi] David AS**. As per biblical notes, Samuel's mother, Hannah, was without children for many years, and gave birth to her only son after she pledged to enlist him in the service of God at the Tabernacle in Shiloh.

The tomb of the Prophet Samuel lies on the heights, atop a steep hill at an elevation of 908 meters above sea level. It is situated in the Palestinian village of **Nabi Samwil** in the West Bank, 1.3 km **north** of the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Ramot. It is visible from miles around. As such, over the centuries, Nabi Samuel's tomb has seen armies clash at its feet, conquerors come and go, and pilgrims of many faiths assembled in worship. The site offers breathtaking views of Jerusalem, especially from the roof of the structure. The site contains an **18th century mosque**, built on the remains of Crusader-era fortress; the tomb and a small synagogue are located in an underground chamber underneath the mosque.

Public Transportation: From the Central Bus Station, take the 31, 32 or 67 bus to Ramot Junction and switch to the 36 Aleph line. The trip takes about 30 minutes, depending on traffic. Admission is free but modest clothing required. Today, the tomb of Nabi Samuel and the nearby archaeological area form a National Park and the city of Jerusalem stretches at its feet.

The **Bible's Book Samuel** states that the prophet was buried in his hometown of Ramah – to the east of the hill. It is also said that in 1173 AD, the Crusaders had found the bones of Nabi Samuel in a Jewish cemetery in Ramla and reburied here, overlooking the Holy City.

The strategic location of Nabi Samuel's tomb made it the site of battles during the British

conquest of Ottoman Palestine in 1917, and the village was badly damaged from artillery fire and abandoned. It was resettled in 1921, but various difficulties lead it to again disband after a number of years. The mosque was also damaged in the battle between the British soldiers and the Ottomans; but was restored soon thereafter.

The location was again significant in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and the 1967 Six-Day War, and was used by artillery of the Jordanians. Though the area lies in the Palestine territory but due to expanding archaeological excavations in the region, it is now part of Israel's national park scheme. The original village located on the hilltop is still inhabited by about 20 Palestinian families or more.

On the site is a building containing a mosque built in 1730s that was formerly a church. The tomb itself is located in an underground chamber where a small synagogue is located. **Both Jewish and Muslim prayers are held at the site** – Jewish prayers regularly but Muslim prayers occasionally, with more religious Jews visiting on the anniversary of Nabi Samuel's death, the 28th of Iyar in the springtime.

TOMB of NABI ZECHARIAH:

It is an ancient stone monument amongst others in **Kidron Valley** - completely carved out of the solid rock and does not contain a burial cavity. The base of the monument is made of three steps; above it there is a decoration of two ionic columns and the upper part is like a pyramid. Interestingly the fine masonry and decoration is visible on the facade only; while the other sides of the tomb are extremely rough and unfinished.

The tourists see a huge dark cave adjacent to Nabi Zechariah's tomb but sealed and closed. As Jewish traditions also adopted by Christians, this cave is believed to be the burial place of **Haggai, Nabi Zechariah AS and Malachi**, the last three Hebrew Bible prophets who are believed to have lived during the 1st century BC.

The site has been venerated by the Jews since medieval times, and they often visit the site and worship at the cave. In 1882, the Christian leadership acquired the location for the Russian Orthodox Church, planned to build it which aroused strong protests. The Ottoman courts ruled in 1890 that the transaction was binding but the Russians agreed to keep the site open for people of all faiths.

Nabi Zechariah AS is mentioned in holy Qur'an as prophet and father of John the Baptist; he was a righteous priest in the 2nd Temple in Jerusalem AND used to manage the services there. As he reached his old age, Nabi Zechariah AS got worried over who would continue the legacy of preaching the message of God after his death; then he prayed to God for a son. As a gift from God, Nabi Zechariah was given a son named **Yahyā** [John the Baptist], a name specially chosen for this child alone; Nabi Zechariah was 92 years old then; **Al-Qur'an** 19:4-10.

Nabi Zechariah AS was [also made] the guardian of Jesus's mother [holy] Mary because she had already dedicated herself for Special Service to the God Almighty. Holy Mary grew up with excellence while in the care of Nabi Zachariah AS – which showed his status as a pious man. He was frequently praised in the Qur'an: *"....And Zachariah and John, and Jesus and Elias: all were [in the ranks] of the righteous."* — **Al-Qur'an** 6:85. In the Bible's book **2 Chronicles [24:20-21]**, Nabi Zechariah AS has also been mentioned in a very respectable way.

Coming back; **Nabi Zechariah's** rest place, and principles of the construction are similar to that of the **Tomb of Benei Hezir** - which is the oldest of four monumental rock-cut tombs standing together and dates to the period of 1st century BC. The tomb's inscription reveals that the cave was used by several generations of wealthy Benei Hezir family. In the Hebrew Bible there are two mentions of men with the name of Hezir. One was the founder of the 17th priestly division [**1 Chron.** 24:15]; the other one was among the leaders who set their

seal to the covenant with Nehemiah [**Neh.** 10:20].

It is a complex of 38 burial caves. The tombs were originally accessed from a single rock-cut stairwell which descends from the north. At a later period an additional entrance was created by quarrying a tunnel from the courtyard of the Tomb of Zechariah. The stairs lead into a large circular central vault measuring 24 ft in diameter. From it, two parallel tunnels, 5 ft wide & 10 ft high, go 20 yards deep into the rock. A third tunnel runs in another direction - all connected by cross galleries and runs for about 40 yards.

Outside, the first stone pillar is the **burial chamber of Absalom**, Nabi David's third son, by Maacah, was born in Hebron. He moved at an early age along with the transfer of the capital to Jerusalem, where he spent most of his life. He was a great favourite of his father, and of the people. His charming manners and personal beauty were exemplary. He lived in great style and used to drive in a magnificent chariot. Absalom eventually rebelled against his father and was killed during the Battle of Ephraim's Wood; **2 Samuel 18:1-17** is referred.

The fact remains that the tombs do not contain bodies as these are solid objects carved from the rock. Fact remains that in ancient times there was custom that the body used to be buried in the backyard family-cave and the rock in front was carved to make it a pointed mark that here that body or coffin was laid down. Here also, the caves are there on the back side of the rock-mark with two openings; now seen closed with iron doors and bars. Nothing can be seen inside while the whole history is buried there.

The fact also remains that no-where else **Nabi Zechariah's** burial place is approved by historians. The history of holy Mary's birth, staying around in the temple at Jerusalem and Jesus's birth 9km away and childhood nearby do point out that it is the right burial place of Nabi AS.

TOMBS OF SANHEDRIN:

Also called **Tombs of the Judges**, is an underground complex of **63 to 71 rock-cut tombs** located in a public park in northern Jerusalem called **Sanhedria**. They are part of a giant **necropolis** situated to the north-east of the Old City and dating to the **Second Temple period**; there are about 1,000 burial caves within 4.8 km of the Old City constructed during 1st century AD; the tombs are noted for their elaborate design and symmetry. The tombs were made open to the public in 1930s.

The **Sanhedrin** [in *Greek*: sitting together] was an assembly of rabbis appointed to sit as a tribunal - classed as **rabbinical courts** then; lesser Sanhedrin used to be of 23 judges and only ONE Great Sanhedrin of 71 judges, which among other roles acted as the Supreme Court. In Jerusalem, the Great Sanhedrin used to sit in the **Second Temple** and used to convene every working day. After destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, the Great Sanhedrin moved to Galilee, nearby Roman province. The last universally binding decision of the Great Sanhedrin appeared in 358 AD, when the Hebrew Calendar was abandoned by the Christian rulers.

The Tombs of the Sanhedrin are known by different names in history. In 1235 AD, Jews called them the **Tombs of the Righteous**; the Christian literature of year 1611 AD said as **Tombs of the Prophets**; some called it by their original name - **Tombs of the Judges** because the tombs contain 71 burial niches as the number of members of the Sanhedrin. However, the **Tombs of the Sanhedrin** have been a site for Jewish pilgrimage and prayer since 13th century. The facade of the tomb used to appear differently - as '**caves within caves**'.

Inside are four burial chambers on two levels. The largest chamber, just inside the entrance,

contains 13 arched burial niches arranged on two tiers, one atop the other, with some dividing the niches into pairs. Each niche measures 50 x 60cms. Other chambers contain further 10 to 12 more niches - but each chamber is designed with symmetry. Stone coffins were also found in rock-cut vaults within the complex. There are 63 burial niches in the tomb, along with several cubicles for bone collection.

Opinions differ as to how the dead bodies were placed in so small niches but it might not be the situation. Most historians understand that only bones of the dead body were kept in stone coffins - not the whole body. In 1867, a French archeologist of the tombs discovered a sarcophagus [stone coffin] inscribed with the name *Yitzhak* [Isaac] in Hebrew. Over protests of the local Jewish residents, the archeologist stopped further exploration but took that coffin with him to France, where it was displayed in the **Louvre Museum in Paris**.

Mahane Yehuda Market

[*Shuk Mahane Yehuda*], often referred as '**The Shuk**', is a marketplace in Jerusalem, originally open-air but now partially covered. Popular with locals and tourists alike, the market's more than 250 vendors sell fresh fruits and vegetables; baked goods; fish, meat and cheeses; nuts, seeds, and spices; wines and liquors; clothing and shoes; and house-wares, textiles, and what not.

In and around the market are stands, juice bars, cafes, and restaurants. The colour and bustle of the marketplace is accentuated by vendors who call out their prices to passers-by through shouting & hand waving.

It's definitely a must visit, and again it's up there in every tourist's **favourite** things to do in Jerusalem. **The Shuk**, as it's usually called, is Jerusalem's biggest market; a busy place, with delicious food everywhere you look – rows of glistening *baklava*, *halva* topped with roasted nuts, fruit and vegetables, street food... Visitors

always feel bewildered in these kind of place - where to go and what to eat first. Every tourist spends some time there in the **Mahane Yehuda** - quite busy with *falafel*, *shawarma*, *Kobbedah*, *sesame seeds Halva* and juice stands lining the alleys and everything else you'd expect from a market.

Here is where **Bitemojo** comes in. Bitemojo is a phone-app specially designed for European and American visitors which claims: *"Forget about everything you've heard about Jerusalem and join us for a food tour to explore all the places and people who are responsible for the creative revolution in the city. Professor Richard Florida came up with the term CREATIVE CLASS to describe the new generation which has been turning the big cities into....."*; it costs around 25\$ per person only.

The concept is quite simple – a **self guided food tour**. The Shuk is so busy, that following a guide is very hard. On a Bitemojo tour you simply follow a map that takes you to various places of interest – most of them food related, but not exclusively. Once you get to a food stop, you simply show your phone to the seller who will hand you a 'bite' – most tourists try *khacha-puri* [Georgian bread topped with cheese], *kubeba* [fried croquettes stuffed with meat] and a cookie with ice cream to end with sweet note.

....and at night! Most markets are kind of dead during the night – not the Shuk, which seems to be living a parallel life after sunset. Gone are the fruit & veg stalls, it's time for the bars to open their doors. With cool music, outdoor seating and lots of delicious food and drinks, the Shuk becomes definitely one of the coolest Jerusalem hangouts after dark – with an atmosphere that is light years away from the sacred Old City and goes similar to what you'll find in Tel Aviv, Israel's capital.

There's also another reason to visit the Shuk at night – checking out Solomon Souza [a British born painter & street artist's art, 150 portraits of historical and contemporary figures painted on

the shutters of the stalls, making the atmosphere of **Mahane Yehuda** at night fantastic and unforgettable.

URBAN ART: the tourists don't see much street art around Jerusalem besides the Shuk, but there are a couple of places where one can see some **urban art projects** – like the rooftop of **Clal Center**, an indoor shopping mall built in the Seventies which is worth a visit for its cool architecture alone. Another piece of urban art are **giant poppies** that inflate when you walk by, found in **Valiero Square**, near the ultra-orthodox district near the Mahane Yehuda market. Some visitors have special craze for young artists, both local and from around the world, they can head to **Beitar Jerusalem** at 155 Jaffa Road - a contemporary art centre. There are also many cool contemporary art galleries in Jerusalem but most tourists give more attention to visit the millennia old real art-remains of the Old City.

Ein Karem

Another place away from Old Jerusalem, **Ein Karem** used to be a separate village that now forms part of the city. **Ein Karem is worth a visit** – because the **Church of St John the Baptist** exists here. It is a Catholic church built in the location where St John [Prophet Yahya AS] the Baptist was born. It's a completely different experience compared to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre [*always flooded with devotees*] but here around the atmosphere is meditative, calm and quiet.

The Church of St. John carries its mention in the written history since at least 1113 AD. In 1480 AD, one writer Felix Fabri, a Swiss Dominican theologian (1441-1502 AD), reported it as tall and vaulted building but turned into a stable for animals. During Ottoman era, in the 1670s, the village Ein Karem was given to the Franciscans. In 1697, it was rebuilt from the ground as a large square building, uniform, beautiful and neat all over. In early 1800s, the convent appeared to be superior in comfort and equal to

that of Nazareth. In 1883, the Palestine Exploration Fund noted that the Church of the Baptist was of Crusading origin but later the dome was raised from four heavy piers; the grotto was reached by seven marble steps and the monks were chiefly Spaniards.

The Israel Museum

The Israel Museum is the ***largest in Middle East***, showcasing a number of collections that include archaeological artefacts, paintings, sculptures and even a huge model of ancient Jerusalem on the rooftop. The highlight of the museum is definitely the **Shrine of the Book**, where you can see the Dead Sea Scrolls, believed to be the most ancient manuscripts in the world. The latest addition to the shrine is – **Nano, the smallest Bible in the world**, a chip the size of a grain of rice where the whole Bible is inscribed.

The visitors like to see the **Holyland Model of Jerusalem** of the city of Jerusalem in the late 2nd Temple Period. The model was moved from its original location at the Holyland Hotel in Bayit VeGan to a new site at the southern edge of Billy Rose Sculpture Garden at the said Museum in June 2006.

The model, as of 2,000 sq m [22,000 sq ft] was commissioned in 1966 by Hans Kroch, the owner of the Holyland Hotel, in memory of his son, Yaakov, an IDF soldier who was killed in the Israeli War of 1948. The model was designed by Israeli historian Michael Avi-Yonah based on the writings of Flavius Josephus. The model includes a replica of the Herodian Temple. For the move, the model was sawn into 1,000 pieces and later reassembled - the Holyland Hotel then spent \$3.5 million on the move.

The Holocaust Memorial

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum, is not only a memorial for the 6 million Jews who lost their lives in the holocaust; it also works as a research and education centre. It is dedicated to

preserving the memory of the dead; honouring Jews who fought against the Nazi army and Gentiles who selflessly aided Jews in need. One room after another, it gives us goose-bumps that stay till we step out of the museum. Artefacts, books, clothes, footwear and other belongings bring waves of sorrow for the visitors.

Established in 1953, **Yad Vashem** is on the western slope of Mount Herzl, also known as the Mount of Remembrance, at a height of, 804 meters [2,638 ft] above sea level and adjacent to the Jerusalem Forest. The memorial consists of a 44.5 acre complex containing the Holocaust History Museum, memorial sites such as the Children's Memorial and the Hall of Remembrance, the Museum of Holocaust Art, sculptures, outdoor commemorative sites such as the Valley of the Communities, a synagogue, a research institute with archives, a library, a publishing house, and an educational centre.

A core goal of Yad Vashem's founders was to recognize non-Jews who, at personal risk and without a financial or evangelistic motive, chose to save Jews from the ongoing genocide during the Holocaust. Yad Vashem is the second-most-visited Israeli tourist site, after the Western Wall, with approximately one million visitors each year – no admission fee is applicable.

About 1.5 million children were also killed; the photos of young boys and girls are projected on the glass and in the background one can hear their names, age and country of origin. Millions of reflections of twinkling lights, which actually originate from just 5 candles kept at various angles using mirrors, intensify the grief. There is also a memorial named Righteous, for all those non-Jews who risked their lives and helped Jews at their time of plight. The last room, the Hall of Names, has heaps of files containing the names of the people who had lost their lives.

