

Day 6  
Wednesday March 8 2023

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## Masada

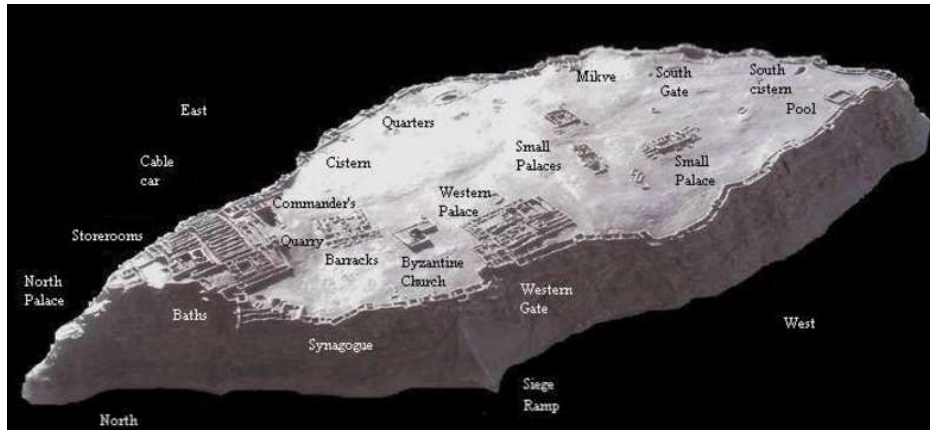
Suggested Reading: The Dove Keepers by Alice Hoffman // Josephus, War of the Jews (book 7)

Masada is located on a steep and isolated hill on the edge of the Judean desert mountains, on the shores of the Dead Sea. It was the last and most important fortress of the great Jewish rebellion against Rome (66-73 AD), and one of the most impressive archaeological sites in Israel.

The last stand of the Jewish freedom fighters ended in tragic events in its last days, which were thoroughly detailed in the accords of the Roman historian of that period, Josephus Flavius. Masada became one of the Jewish people's greatest icons, and a symbol of humanity's struggle for freedom from oppression. Israeli soldiers take an oath here: "*Masada shall not fall again.*"

Masada is located on a diamond-shaped flat plateau (600M x 200M, 80 Dunam or 8 Hectares). The hill is surrounded by deep gorges, at a height of roughly 440M above the Dead sea level. During the Roman siege it was surrounded with a 4KM long siege wall (Dyke), with 8 army camps (A thru G) around the hill.





Calendar	Event
1000BC	David hides in the desert fortresses (Masada?)
2nd C BC	Hasmonean King (Alexander Jannaeus?) fortifies the hill
31 BC	Major earthquake damages the Hasmonian fortifications
24BC	Herod the great builds the winter palace and fort
4BC	Herod dies; Romans station a garrison at Masada
66AD	Head of Sicarii zealots, Judah Galilee, is murdered Eleazar Ben-Yair flees to Masada, establishes and commands a community of
zealots	
67AD	Sicarii sack Ein Gedi on Passover eve, filling up their storerooms with the booty
66-73AD	Great Revolt of the Jews against the Romans
70AD	Jerusalem is destroyed by Romans; last zealots assemble in Masada (total
1,000),	commanded by Eleazar Ben-Yair
73AD	Roman 10th Legion under Flavius Silvia, lay a siege; build 8 camps, siege wall &
ramp	
73AD	After several months the Romans penetrate the walls with tower and battering
ram.	
	Masada falls; the defenders commit suicide. Josephus Flavius writes (in Rome) the story of the siege and fall

**Roman period =** The village of Ein Gedi reached its peak during the Roman/Byzantine period, and was a wealthy town, famous for its dates and rare perfume, which could only be grown in few sites on the Dead Sea shore. The new Ein Gedi relocated north-east from Tell Goren, to a ridge between Arugot and David streams, and expanded to 40 dunams (10 acres) - one of the largest villages. The village was densely built, with houses connected to each other. A 2nd C AD Roman bathhouse complex (40 x 5M) was excavated on the sea shore, north-east of the city. Ein Gedi was damaged during the first and second revolts against the Romans (70, 132 AD), but survived after a short time. During the first revolt, the village was sacked by their fellow zealot Jews from Masada, who filled up their storerooms with the booty from the village.

## En Gedi

Ein Gedi (Kid spring) is located on the western shore of the Dead Sea, and is the largest desert oasis in Israel (1,000 dunams - 250 acres). It is watered by four springs. Its fresh waters made the settlement possible since ancient times, and was referred several times in the Bible as a fertile place.

Ein Gedi was prosperous in the Hellenistic and Roman period, its wealth based on its famous dates, vegetation, and the precious balsam (persimmon, Hebrew: afarsemmon) which was used to manufacture perfume (Hebrew: bosem).

The site was known in the Biblical times as fertile, blessed by the spring it is named after. This area is where David hid from the pursuing King Saul (1 Samuel 23 29: "And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at **Engedi**").

Ancient Ein Gedi is located on Tell Goren, a low hill (size of 2 dunam - 1/4 acre) on the north bank of Nahal Arugot. It was established as a small village in the 7th C BC, during the Judean Kingdom. A seal was found bearing the name "Uriyahu son of Azaryahu", perhaps belonging to an official Judean clerk around the 6-7th C BC.

The village thrived during the next 14 centuries, expanding into a small city which was located around and near the ancient site. A small harbor was located in Ein Gedi, and wood and stones anchors were found here on the eastern side of the synagogue. At some times the water level reached and flooded the houses of Ein Gedi.

**Persian/Hellenistic/Hasmonean period** = The Assyrians destroyed the village (still located on Tell Goren) in the 6th C, but it was repopulated after the exiles return during the Persian period. The village continued until the 4th C, then was deserted. The Hasmonean Kings, starting from Hyrcanus I (134-104BC) and especially Alexander Jannaeus (103-76), rebuilt the oasis, marking the rise of the new Ein Gedi. They added aqueducts and pools, initiated the balsam (persimmon) industry, planted trees on the hillsides, and relocated the new village to the north of Tell Goren.

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## The Mount of Olives

**Mount Olivet** is a mountain ridge east of and adjacent to Jerusalem's Old City.- It is named for the olive groves that once covered its slopes. The southern part of the Mount was the Silwan necropolis, attributed to the ancient Judean kingdom.- The Mount has been used as a Jewish cemetery for over 3,000 years and holds approximately 150,000 graves, making it central in the tradition of Jewish cemeteries.- Several key events in the life of Jesus, as related in the Gospels, took place on the Mount of Olives, and in the Acts of the Apostles it is described as the place from which Jesus ascended to heaven. Because of its association with both Jesus and Mary, the Mount has been a site of Christian worship since ancient times and is today a major site of pilgrimage for Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants. Much of the top of the hill is occupied by At-Tur, a former village and now a neighborhood of East Jerusalem with a majority-Muslim population.

The ridge is formed of oceanic sedimentary rock from the Late Cretaceous, and contains a soft chalk and a hard flint. While the chalk is easily quarried, it is not a suitable strength for construction, which is why the Mount was never built up and instead features many man-made burial caves.

The Mount of Olives is first mentioned in connection with David's flight from Absalom (II Samuel 15:30): "And David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up." The ascent was probably east of the City of David, near the village of Silwan.- The sacred character of the mount is alluded to in the Ezekiel (11:23): "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city."

The biblical designation Mount of Corruption derives from the idol worship there, begun by King Solomon building altars to the gods of his Moabite and Ammonite wives on the southern peak, "on the mountain which is before (east of) Jerusalem" (1 Kings 11:7), just outside the limits of the holy city. This site was known for idol worship throughout the First Temple period, until king of Judah, Josiah, finally destroyed "the high places that were before Jerusalem, to the right of Har HaMashchit..."(II Kings 23:13)

An apocalyptic prophecy in the Book of Zechariah states that Messiah will stand on the Mount of Olives and the mountain will split in two, with one half shifting north and one half shifting south (Zechariah 14:4). Many Jews have wanted to be buried on the Mount of Olives since antiquity, based on the Jewish tradition (from the Biblical verse Zechariah 14:4) that when the Messiah comes, the resurrection of the dead will begin there. There are an estimated 150,000 graves on the Mount, including tombs traditionally associated with Zechariah and Absalom. On the upper slope, the traditional Tomb of the Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi is situated. Notable rabbis buried on the mount from the 15th-century to present.

**New Testament references.** The Mount of Olives is frequently mentioned in the Matthew 21:1; 26:30, etc.) as part of the route from Jerusalem to Bethany and the place where Jesus stood when he wept over Jerusalem. Jesus is said to have spent time on the mount, teaching and prophesying to his disciples (Matthew 24–25), including the Olivet discourse, returning after each day to rest (Luke 21:37, and John

8:1 in the additional section of John's Gospel known as the *Pericope Adulterae*), and also coming there on the night of his betrayal (Matthew 26:39). At the foot of the Mount of Olives lies the Garden of Gethsemane. The New Testament tells how Jesus and his disciples sang together – "When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" Gospel of Matthew 26:30. Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives according to Acts 1:9–12.

### **Mount of Olives for Palm Sunday Walk**

The Mount of Olives is a central place to the Holy Week traditions of Palm Sunday, the Agony in the Garden, the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, and his ascension into heaven. It also provides a stunning view of Jerusalem. This is the site of a Jewish cemetery where the faithful have been buried for centuries awaiting the Messiah's return. Christians believe the Messiah arrived in the form of Jesus.

Tour buses will let walking tours off near the top of the Mount of Olives for the walk down the mountain. The walk is about a half mile and descends 400 feet. Those walking down the Mount of Olives should wear sturdy shoes as the path is steep and there are some areas of gravel. Dress for respect of the holy sites of many faiths. Men should wear long pants rather than shorts. Women should wear pants or skirts that are below the knee and should have a garment to put on that covers their arms to past their elbows.

From the viewpoint near the top of the Mount of Olives, the old city of Jerusalem spreads out on Temple Mount. Immediately below the viewpoint are Jewish cemeteries, where the faithful await resurrection and the entry into Jerusalem with the Messiah via the Golden Gate. The golden Dome of the Rock is one of the three most holy sites of the Moslem faith. It is the site where Abraham bound his son Isaac to offer him as a sacrifice, but his hand was stayed by a messenger of God. The first and second Jewish Temples were built and destroyed on Temple Mount on the site of the Dome of the Rock.

### **Tomb of the Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi**

The Tomb of the Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi is an ancient burial site located on the upper western slope of the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem. According to a medieval Jewish tradition also adopted by Christians, the catacomb is believed to be the burial place of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the last three Hebrew Bible prophets who are believed to have lived during the 6th-5th centuries BC. Archaeologists have dated the three earliest burial chambers to the 1st century BC, thus contradicting the tradition.

The burial chamber forms two concentric passages containing 38 burial niches. The entrance to the large rock-cut burial cave is on the western side, where a staircase descends, flanked on both sides by a stone balustrade. It leads into a large circular central vault measuring 24 ft in diameter. From it, two parallel tunnels, 5 ft wide and 10 ft high, stretch some 20 yards through the rock. A third tunnel runs in another direction. They are all connected by cross galleries, the outer one of which measures 40 yards in length.

Research shows that the complex actually dates from the 1st-century BCE, when this style of tomb came into use for Jewish burial. Some Greek inscriptions discovered at the site suggest the cave was re-used to bury foreign Christians during the 4th and 5th centuries CE. On one of the side walls of the vault, a Greek inscription translates: "Put thy faith in God, Dometila: No human creature is immortal!"

### **Gethsemane**

**Gethsemane** (is an urban garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, most famous as the place where Jesus prayed and his disciples slept the night before his crucifixion; i.e. the site recorded as where the agony in the garden took place. According to Luke 22:43–44, Jesus' anguish on the Mount of Olives (Luke does not mention Gethsemane; Luke 22:39-40) was so deep that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." According to the Eastern Orthodox Church tradition, Gethsemane is the garden where the Virgin Mary was buried and was assumed into heaven after her dormition on Mount Zion. The Garden of Gethsemane became a focal site for early Christian pilgrims. Eight ancient olive trees growing in the Latin site of the garden may be 900 years old. A study conducted by the National Research Council of Italy in 2012 found that several olive trees in the garden are amongst the oldest known to science.