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Bethany

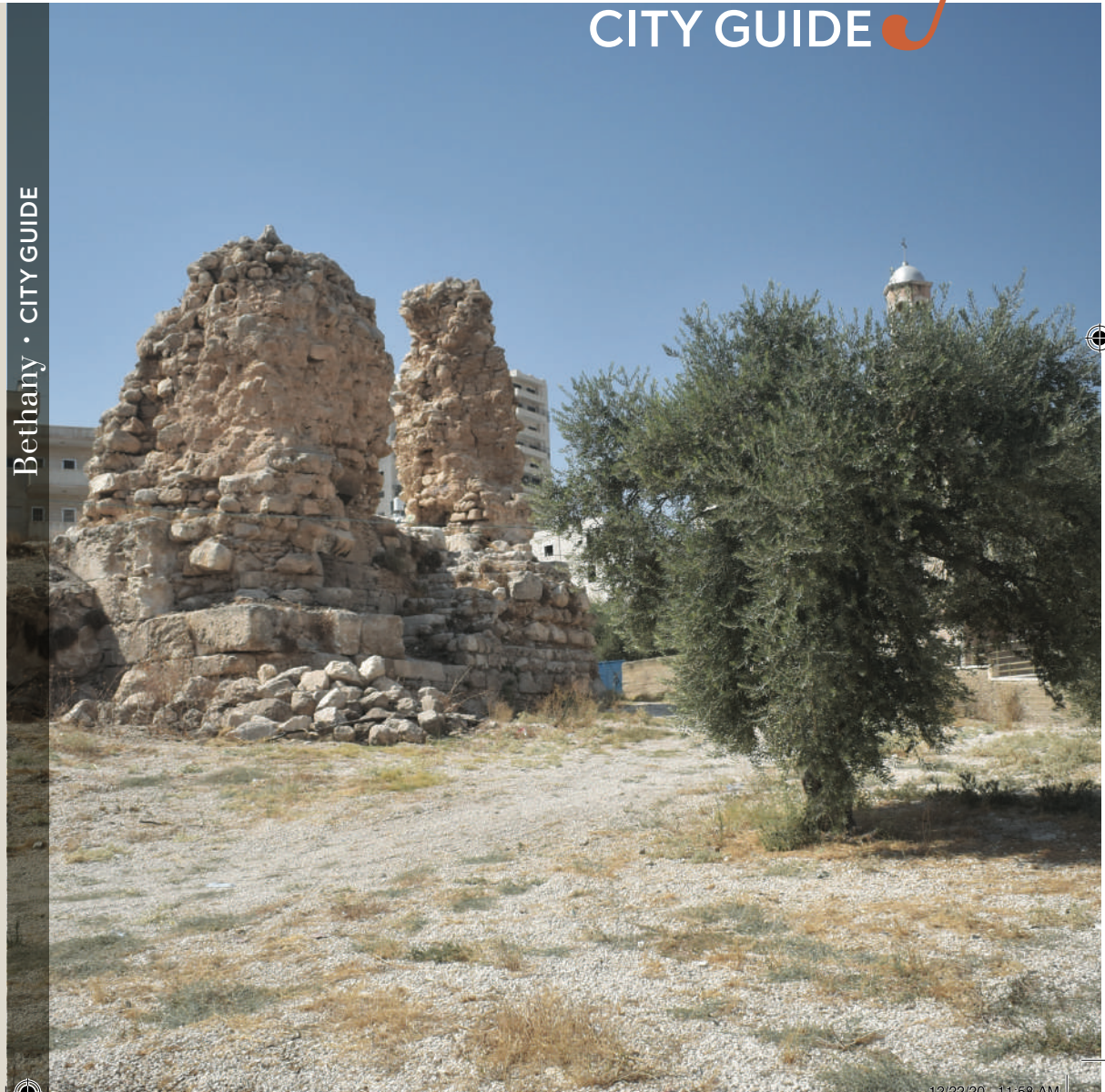
CITY GUIDE

Two churches and a mosque lie today along the road that leads to the tomb of Lazarus, the place where the miracle of the Raising of Lazarus has been commemorated since the 4th century.

This guide will lead visitors through the ruins of ancient monasteries and churches—now almost obscured by modern buildings, and reveal the beauty and value of this little known town.

 History  Visit  Info

Bethany • CITY GUIDE





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BETHANY *Tourist Guide*

Pro Terra Sancta

2020

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Bethany

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Location

The village of Bethany (al-Azariya in Arabic) lies on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, along the ancient road to Jericho. One of the villages of the Province of Jerusalem,

Bethany is just 5 km from the Old City, at map coordinates 35°15'52" E/31°46'12" N, and is 671 meters above sea level.



Getting to Bethany/al Azariya

FROM JERUSALEM

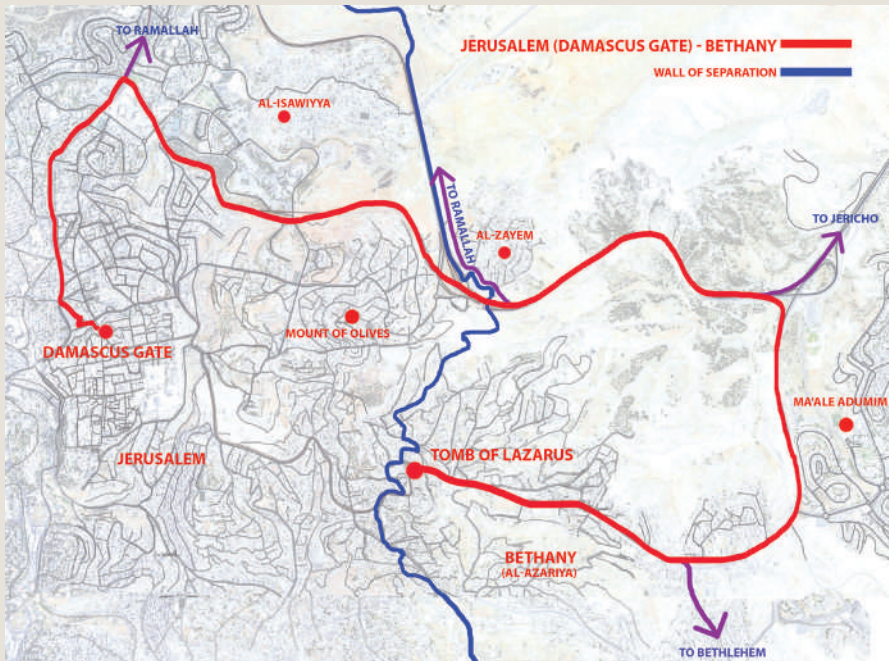
By Car



Bethany is just 30 minutes by car from Jerusalem, but traffic can get backed up as you near the entrance to the village. It's best to avoid going on Thursday afternoons and Saturdays, when Palestinian workers and tradesmen commute. From the Old City, take Route 60 north for 2 km. At the French Hill intersection, turn right onto Road 417, following the signs for the Dead Sea. This road will take you through the tunnel under the Mount of Olives. Continue down the hill onto Road 1, then later bear right towards Ma'ale

Adumim. At the Adumim interchange, get into the right lane, so you can exit onto Road 417; the other lanes lead you into the Ma'ale Adumim settlement. After 3.5 km you will reach the bus parking lot near the Bethany Town Hall, where one can also park cars.

Route by car or bus from Jerusalem to Bethany.



FROM JERUSALEM

By bus



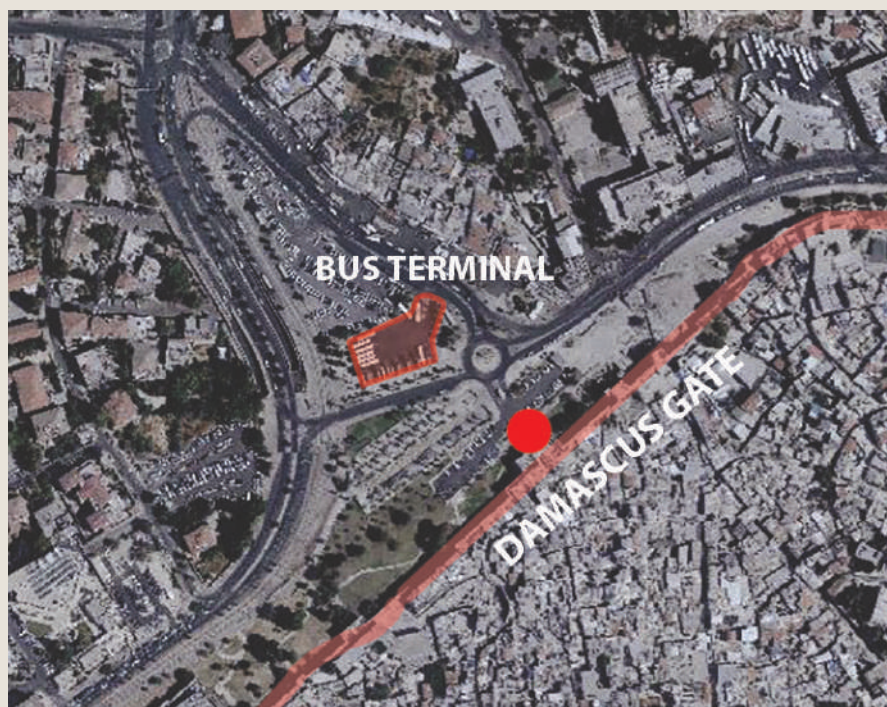
Catch bus #263 to Bethany, at the bus stop outside the Damascus Gate, on the right. Service is frequent during the day, and the trip to Bethany only takes about 35 minutes and costs 2 euros. Tell the driver you want the St. Lazarus Monastery or the Bethany Town Hall stop.

On Foot



From the Church of the Pater Noster on the Mount of Olives, walk down E-Sheikh Street for about 300 meters to the Church of Bethphage. At the Church, turn left onto Bethphage Street. At the intersection with Hardub Street, turn right. After about 800 meters, at the bottom of the hill, you will need to pass through the Zaitun/Ras Abu Sbitan pedestrian checkpoint. Then walk south along the Wall of Separation for about 1.4 km, until you reach a long staircase that goes down to the Tomb of Lazarus.

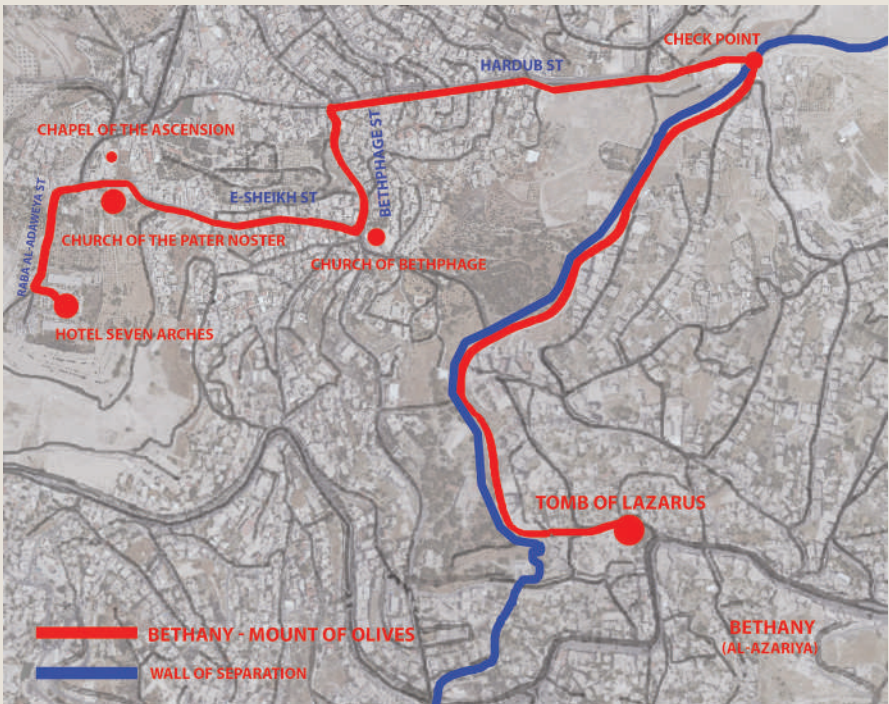
The bus stop outside the Damascus Gate, where one catches the #263 bus.





Above: The footpath from the Mount of Olives (in the background) down to the checkpoint (left). You can also see one of the Jerusalem area buses.

Below: Map of the walking route from Jerusalem to the Tomb of Lazarus.



FROM BETHLEHEM

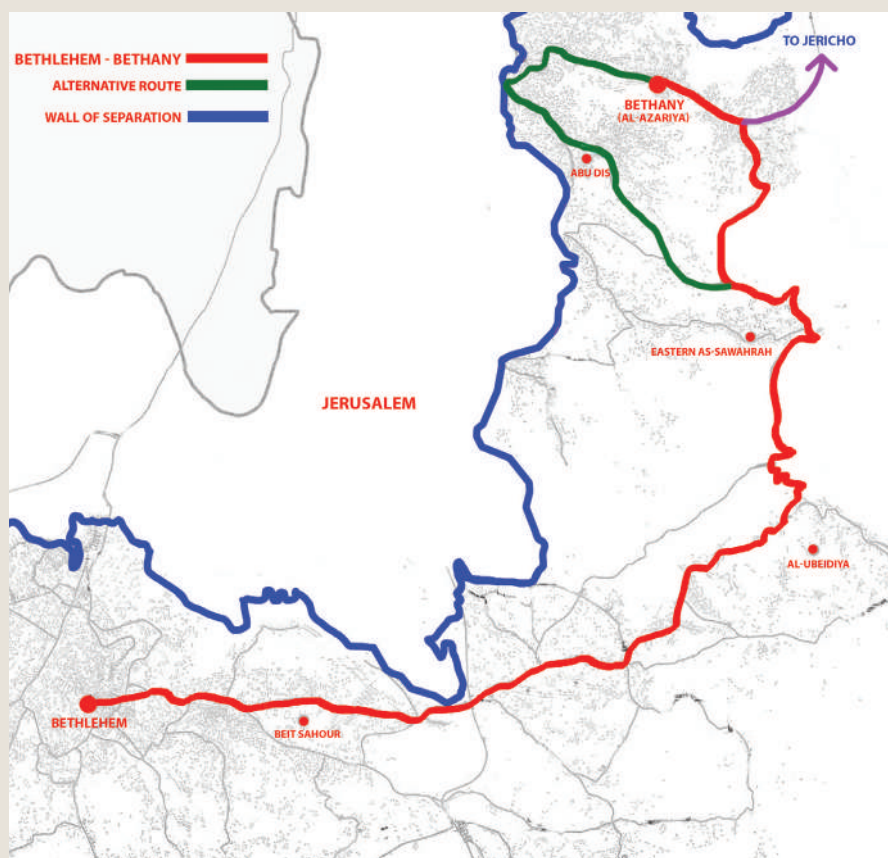
By car



It is also a 30-minute drive from Bethlehem to Bethany. From the Church of the Nativity, head east on Manger Street towards Beit Sahur. Continue on this road, past the Theodosius Monastery and Al Ubediya. The road then winds down through several hairpin turns to the bottom of the Wadi Nar (Arabic for Valley of Hell). Continue on to the Container check point, then

make an immediate right, following this road to the main roundabout of Bethany/al Azariya, and exit left onto Road 417. Continue on Road 417 for about 3 km until you reach the bus parking lot near the Bethany Town Hall, which also has parking spaces for cars.

Map of the route by car or shuttle from Bethlehem to Bethany.



FROM BETHLEHEM

By shuttle



You need to take two shuttles to get from Bethlehem to Bethany. Catch the yellow Abu Dis shuttle at the Manger St. tour bus parking lot. These 9-seater shuttles leave as soon as they fill up, and have frequent departures. After about 35 minutes, get off at the Al Quds University entrance in the village of Abu Dis. From there, catch a white shuttle bus to Bethany/al

Azariya, which is a quick 10 minute ride along Road 417. Get off in front of the Bethany Town Hall.

Upper photo: White shuttle operating between Abu Dis and Bethany.

Lower photo: Yellow shuttles connecting Bethlehem and Abu Dis.



FROM JERICO

By car



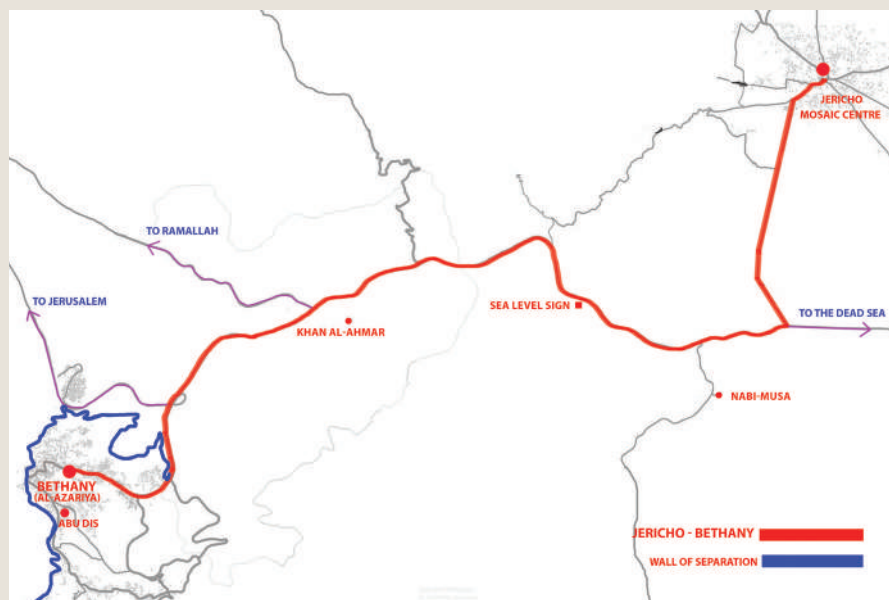
It's a 30 minute drive, depending on traffic. Take Al Quds Street out of Jericho towards Jerusalem. After about 6 km, you will reach Road 1; take it to the right. After about 16 km, when Road 1 veers right to Jerusalem, stay straight on Road 417 to Ma'ale Adumim. Then get into the right lane—the other lanes lead you into the Ma'ale Adumim settlement—and continue on Road 417, for approximately 3.5 km until you reach the bus parking lot near the Bethany Town Hall. Park in the parking spaces reserved for cars.

By shuttle



You can catch a shuttle to Bethany at Jericho's main mosque. These yellow 9-seater shuttles leave as soon as they fill up, and have frequent departures. After about 30 minutes, get off at the Bethany/al Azariya roundabout, and catch a white shuttle, for a quick 10 minute ride down Road 417 to the stop in front of Bethany's Town Hall.

Route by car or shuttle from Jericho to Bethany.



FROM JERICO

On Foot



It is a demanding but amazing walk from Jericho to Bethany. The route is mostly uphill, and is usually done in two stages.

Day 1 From Jericho to Khan al Ahmar is about 16.2 km, and the altitude climbs from 200 meters below sea level to 200 meters above sea level. We recommend starting from the Mosaic Centre laboratory—you can also hire a guide there. Go left on Al Quds road and then take the first right. Along the right side of this road lie the ruins of Herod's villa. Descend toward the ruins, crossing the Wadi Qelt and continue along the dirt path on the right bank of the wadi. The path is well-marked; keep walking along it until

you reach the spectacular monastery of St. George in Choziba. Cross the stone bridge under the monastery, and take the path upward, following the green signs. After a steep climb, an unforgettable vista of the wadi and monastery will be spread out before you. The path continues along the aqueduct, which once carried the water from Ain Qelt to Jericho. Follow it until you meet the red path that comes up from the floor of the valley. A small Bedouin camp stretches out in the lower part of the valley. Keep walking, past another camp, and finally to the beautiful Ain Qelt springs.

The Wadi Qelt, on the walking route from Jericho to Bethany.



FROM JERICO

Take care not to deviate from the path along the aqueduct channel—which is full of water in this area—and follow the red signs. Cross the small bridge over the wadi, and then follow the black signs. After passing a Bedouin camp, the path will climb steeply to a vista on the south bank of the valley. Continue along the dirt track (an ancient Roman road) until you reach the intersection leading to the *Khan* (caravanserai or inn) of the Good

Samaritan. Follow the path east until you meet the Alon settlement road, and a roundabout. Take the A1 road to the Khan al Ahmar Bedouin camp, where you can get a bed for the night.

Day 2 The second stretch of 17 km takes you to Bethany, climbing from 200 to 671 meters above sea level. Exit the Khan al Ahmar camp through the A1 underpass. Continue southeast to the Abu Falah camp



at the entrance to the wadi. Walk south, directly through the camp, until you cross the paved road encircling the Mishor Adumim settlement. Walk along the left side of the settlement, avoiding the garbage dump, until you can look out over the wadi below. Make your way down in a southwesterly direction, and cross over the next valley. At the next fork, bear right; the road will continue south then west. Follow the various bends in the road

until you see the houses of Wadi Abu Hindi; after about 900 meters you'll see the bamboo school. Continue for 1 1/2 km; you will then see the Kedar settlement road on your right. Follow it to the Bethany/al Azariya roundabout, and then walk along Road 417 until you reach the Bethany Town Hall.

THE WAY OF THE DISCIPLES

THE PATH FROM JERICO TO BETHANY IS ONE LEG OF THE “WAY OF THE DISCIPLES”, A WALK THAT TRACES THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES. STARTING IN NAZARETH AND ENDING IN JERUSALEM, THE “WAY OF THE DISCIPLES” IS AN 11 STAGE WALK ACROSS THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, AND IS DEDICATED TO ALL THOSE WHO LOVE WALKING—BE IT FOR SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT, CULTURAL ENRICHMENT, OR SIMPLY FOR PLEASURE. DESIGNED BY SILVANO MEZZENZANA, HEAD OF DUOMO TRAVEL & TOURISM, THE ITINERARY PASSES THROUGH SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PLACES OF CHRISTIANITY, INCLUDING LAKE TIBERIAS (SEA OF GALILEE), MOUNT TABOR, BURQUIN (HEALING OF THE LEPERS), SEBASTE (SAMARIA), TAYBEH, JERICO; AND FINALLY CLIMBING THROUGH THE DESERT TO BETHANY AND JERUSALEM.

A COMPANION GUIDE, PUBLISHED BY HOLY LAND EDITIONS, AS WELL AS THE “WAY OF THE DISCIPLES” APP, (AVAILABLE ON THE APP STORE AND GOOGLE PLAY), CAN ALSO HELP YOU ORIENT YOURSELF, AS YOU WALK THROUGH THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE DISCIPLES.



Above: Cover, Way of the Disciples companion guide (Italian version).

Opposite page: Walking route from Jericho to Bethany.

Geo-Political Situation

Bethany, traditionally known as the eastern gateway to Jerusalem, is still the second largest inhabited area in the Province of Jerusalem, with an area of 4.3 square miles. Prior to the 1967 Israeli occupation, the village of Bethany measured almost 11 square miles. After 1967, more than half of this land was confiscated by Israel to build the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and other smaller satellite settlements. The 1993/95 Oslo Accords returned some control to the Palestinian Authority, dividing the West Bank into three areas: Area A, total Palestinian control, Area C, total Israeli control, and Area B, under mixed control, where Israel is responsible for security and the Palestinian Authority for civil administration. Bethany is in Area B

(mixed control), which unfortunately means hardship and conflict for its people, and not much assurance of safety. Of Bethany's pre-1967 11 square miles, 83% is under Israeli control now, while the other 17% (where most of Bethany's inhabitants live), is under mixed control. Water was confiscated as well. To supply their own settlements, the Israelis dug a well in the eastern part of Bethany, unfortunately depriving Bethany's inhabitants of that water.

Entrance to Bethany, with the Ma'ale Adumim settlement looming on the left.



The conflict between Israel and Palestine forced the people of Bethany to live in very unsettled conditions. Circumstances deteriorated even further with the construction of the "Wall of Separation" in 2002, part of which passes within just a few meters of the Tomb of Lazarus.

The Wall prevents Bethany's population from going to Jerusalem, and makes getting to Bethany from Jerusalem much more difficult, which further isolates and denigrates the village. Even tourists must take a more roundabout route to Bethany, also hampering its economy. The isolation caused by the Wall is also felt on a social and cultural level, particularly by the village's most vulnerable groups,

which are women and young people, who struggle to plan for or even to envisage a dignified future for themselves.

Bethany's unemployment rate is a whopping 60%. Of those who manage to find a job: 30% work for the Palestinian Authority, 30% are allowed to go to work in Israel, 15% are traders, 10% work in industrial jobs and 10% in the service industry. Only 5% remain employed in the traditional agricultural sector, after it was decimated by Israel's confiscation of land and the unchecked waves of new constructions.

Bethany's main street. In the background is St. Lazarus Church, and the Wall of Separation behind it.





THE WALL OF SEPARATION

IN JUNE 2002, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT MADE THE DECISION TO BUILD THE "SECURITY BARRIER"—REFERRED TO AS THE "APARTHEID WALL" OR SIMPLY "THE WALL" BY PALESTINIANS—A COMBINATION OF DITCHES, TRENCHES, ROADS, WIRE FENCES, ELECTRONIC BARRIERS AND CONCRETE WALLS, SOME AS MUCH AS 9 METERS HIGH. THE WALL IS STILL BEING CONSTRUCTED TODAY. ITS COMPLETED LENGTH WILL BE 712 KM—ALMOST DOUBLE THE LENGTH OF THE 1949 ARMISTICE GREEN LINE—85% OF WHICH WILL LIE WITHIN THE WEST BANK. THE WALL ALREADY SEPARATES JERUSALEM FROM THE REST OF THE PALESTINIAN-INHABITED TERRITORY OF THE WEST BANK, WHICH HAS BEEN FRAGMENTED INTO A SERIES OF ENCLAVES BY ISRAELI ROADS, SETTLEMENTS AND MILITARY CHECKPOINTS.

THE WALL VIOLATES THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE. PALESTINIAN FARMERS LIVING NEXT TO THE WALL HAVE SEVERE DIFFICULTIES IN REACHING THEIR FIELDS AND MARKETING THEIR PRODUCE. AS A RESULT, THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR—LONG A MAINSTAY OF THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY—HAS SUFFERED DRASTICALLY. TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS CAUSED BY THE WALL HAVE ALSO MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR PALESTINIANS TO REACH THE HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL CENTERS GENERALLY LOCATED IN CITIES. THE INHABITANTS OF BETHANY CAN NO LONGER ACCESS THE HOSPITALS IN JERUSALEM. THE EDUCATION SECTOR HAS ALSO BEEN HARD HIT, AS SO MANY VILLAGE SCHOOLS DEPEND ON TEACHING STAFF FROM OTHER AREAS. THE RESTRICTIONS HAVE ALSO SEVERELY LIMITED FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS.

THE WALL ALSO DAMAGES THE HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE OF PALESTINE, WHICH HAD EMERGED FROM MILLENNIA OF ENCOUNTERS WITH DIFFERENT TRIBES, CITY-STATES, EMPIRES, NATIONS, CULTURES. DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE WALL IS NOT ONLY IMMEDIATE, BUT ALSO HAS MID- AND LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES, AS WELL. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL AND SUBSEQUENT CONFISCATION OF LARGE AREAS OF PALESTINIAN TERRITORY WILL NOT ONLY CONTINUE TO DEGRADE PALESTINE'S HISTORIC LANDSCAPE, BUT ALSO

The Wall separating the regions of Abu Dis and Bethany from Jerusalem.



PREVENT PALESTINIANS FROM MANAGING THEIR OWN CULTURAL HERITAGE.

IN THE LONGER TERM, THE INCREASING POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT BROUGHT ON BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL WILL FORCE AN ALREADY DESPERATE PEOPLE TO ALTERNATIVE, EVEN UNSUITABLE MEANS OF GAINING INCOME, SUCH AS ILLEGAL EXCAVATIONS. THESE EXCAVATIONS, COUPLED WITH INCREASING POPULATION GROWTH IN THE SAME CONSCRIBED AREA, WILL ONLY AGGRAVATE THE ALREADY DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN THE REGION.

The Wall of Separation above the Tomb of Lazarus.

Climate

The winter season in Bethany lasts three months, but the climate is pleasant and moderate the rest of the year. July and August are the hottest months, but even then the evenings are usually cool. Summer temperatures can reach 35° C; in winter it rarely drops below freezing. The rainy season is from November to February.

From April until mid-June, a hot, dry, sandy wind called the *khamsin* lashes through Palestine from the Arabian desert.

Lightweight clothing and hats are best in the summer, with a sweater for the night and evening. In winter it is advisable to have warm clothes and a jacket.

When visiting holy places like the Tomb of Lazarus, both women and men should keep their legs and shoulders covered—shorts are discouraged, even in the summer. It's always good to have a shawl or other covering handy.

Population

Bethany has about 24,000 inhabitants, most of whom are Muslim. Arabic is the official language, and

English is widely understood, especially in the places frequented by tourists.



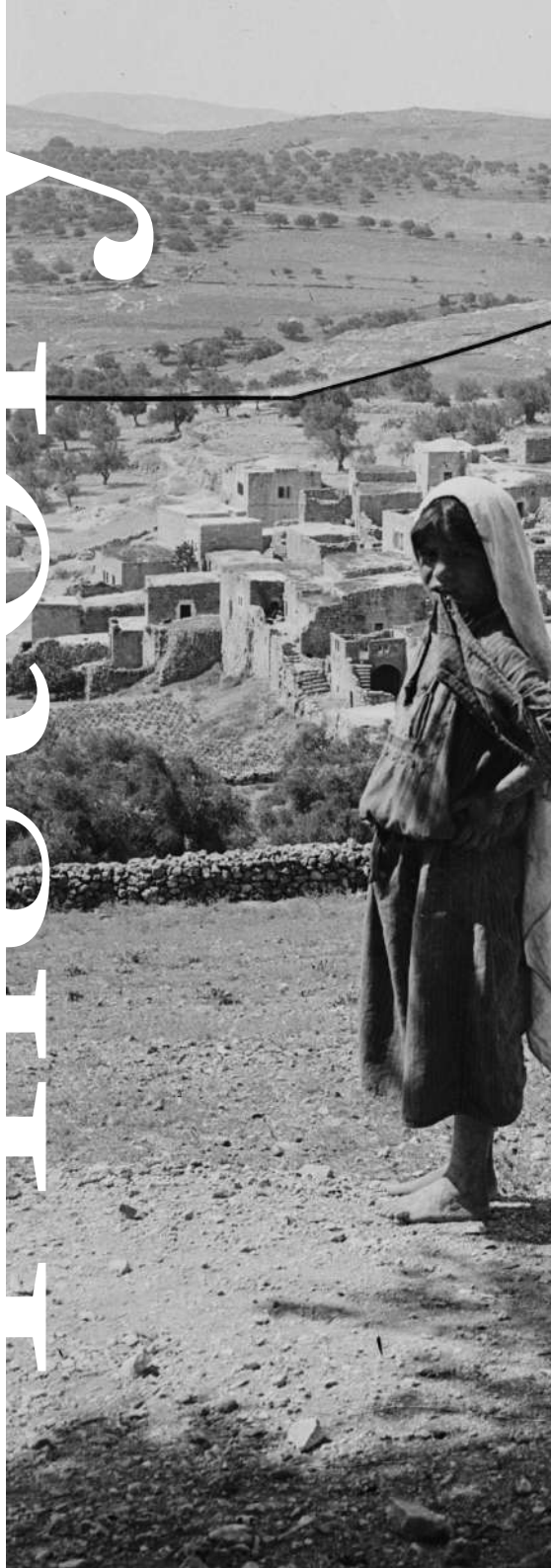
Left: Students visiting the Tomb of Lazarus.

Below: Walking from Jericho to Bethany.



History

*Bethany, circa
1900-20.*





ANCIENT BETHANY

The name Bethany can be traced back to the days of the Old Testament. Other place names in the village are linked to the later New Testament miracle "The Raising of Lazarus", whence came Bethany's Arabic name, "al Azariya", or "Place of Lazarus". The origins of the village remain uncertain. There are many ancient (Bronze Age) tombs near the Tomb of Lazarus, but no evidence of a town, because burial grounds in those days would have been located far from where people lived. Towards the top of the Mount of Olives, however (much higher than the Tomb of Lazarus), excavations carried out by Franciscan Friar Sylvester Saller in 1951-1953 uncovered the ruins of houses, as well as silos, cisterns, caves, and even an oven—dating from the



Above: Amphora-shaped sealing vase that produces a horse stamp. Persian Period, (6th c. BC). Terra Sancta Museum, Jerusalem.



Left: Hellenistic oil lamp, with the characteristic bowl-like shape. Terra Sancta Museum, Jerusalem.

500s BC to the 1300s AD. Oil lamps, jugs and coins were unearthed at this site, along with some extraordinary fragments of terracotta sealing vases from the Persian period (500s BC). Are these the ruins of an earlier Bethany? The excavations cannot be conclusive, as they could only be carried out in conscribed areas. The excavation site is under two buildings now owned by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, but it lies just where the road to Jerusalem is blocked by the Wall of Separation.

BETHANY IN THE TIME OF JESUS

Two roads connected Bethany to Jerusalem: one crossed over the Mount of Olives, the other—the longer but less strenuous caravan route—went around the mountain to the southwest.

According to tradition, Jesus took the road from Jericho through Bethany on his travels to Jerusalem. Some scholars believe this road was built by Romans in the 2nd century AD; but others date it from the Umayyad period (661-750 AD). Pieces of four Umayyad milestones from this road were found during the Ottoman period (1516-1917), and are currently on display in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. Some historical sources also confirm that Umayyad Caliph Abd al Malik ibn Marwan had built a road connecting Bethany with Jericho.

From the Gospels we know that Lazarus lived in Bethany with his

Aerial photograph of the Bethany region in 1931. The ancient road from Jericho can be seen in the foreground.



H

sisters Martha and Mary. They were a comfortable family financially, and Jesus often stayed with them when he was in the Jerusalem area. When Jesus heard about Lazarus's illness, he went to him, but arrived too late—Lazarus had already been dead for four days. Urged by Martha and then Mary, Jesus went to his friend's rock-carved tomb, and had the stone blocking the entrance removed. He called to Lazarus to come out. And Lazarus came out—alive, and still in his burial wrappings.

While the Gospels mention other visits by Jesus to Bethany—to the home of Simon the Leper or to Martha and Mary—Lazarus is not named again. According to Eastern tradition, after he was raised from the dead, Lazarus became Bishop of Cyprus, and he died and was

buried there. His Tomb is in Larnaca, in the crypt of a church dedicated to him. According to Western tradition, Lazarus took his sisters to France, where he preached, and became Bishop of Marseilles.

There are many representations of the "Raising of Lazarus" in art. In the early years of Christianity, this story of Jesus defeating death was depicted mainly in burial places, like in catacomb frescoes or carvings on sarcophagi. Lazarus is usually shown still bandaged, standing at the entrance of his tomb.

Lower left: The Raising of Lazarus, Caravaggio, 1609. Messina Regional Museum.

Lower right: The Anointing of Jesus, from La Cité de Dieu de Sant'Augustin, c 1475-80. Royal Library of the Netherlands.





MARTHA AND MARY IN ART

MARY AND MARTHA OF BETHANY ARE THE SISTERS OF LAZARUS, WHOSE HOUSE JESUS OFTEN VISITED. IN THE GOSPELS, AS WELL AS FROM THE FIRST CHRISTIAN ARTISTIC DEPICTIONS, MARTHA IS THE SOLICITOUS WOMAN OF THE HOUSE, BUSILY WELCOMING AND SERVING JESUS, WHILE HER SISTER MARY SITS QUIETLY AT HIS FEET, LISTENING TO HIS WORDS. SOMETIMES MARTHA IS ALSO DEPICTED GREETING JESUS AT THE ENTRANCE TO BETHANY, TO BREAK TO HIM THE NEWS OF LAZARUS'S DEATH.

OVER TIME, LAZARUS'S SISTER MARY HAS COME TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH MARY MAGDALEN, BECAUSE OF JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S ACCOUNT OF JESUS BEING ANOINTED IN "THE HOUSE OF BETHANY". MARY IS USUALLY SHOWN EITHER PUTTING NARD—A VERY RARE OINTMENT—ON JESUS'S HEAD OR FEET, AND DRYING THEM WITH HER HAIR, OR ALONE, IN MEDITATION, WITH THE OINTMENT BOTTLE NEXT TO HER.

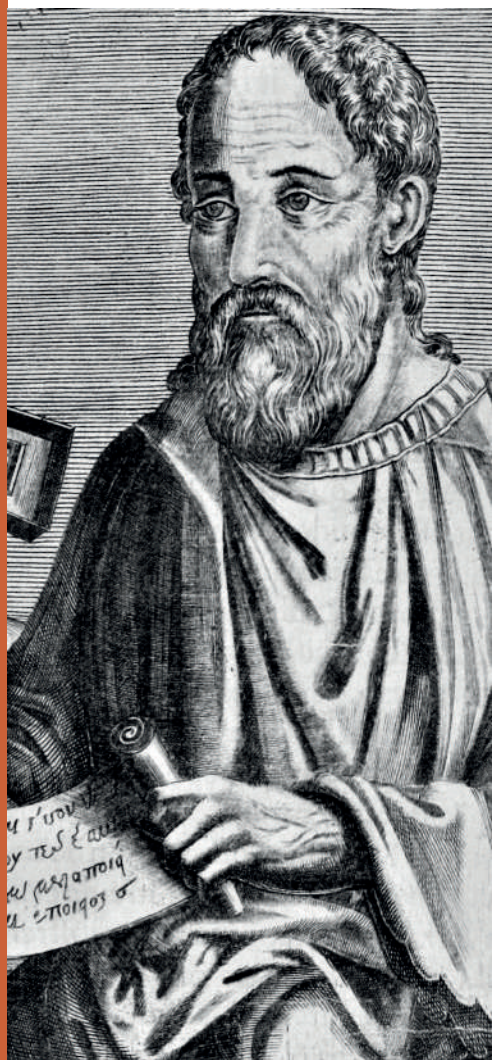
Christ in the House of Martha and Mary, Jan Vermeer, c 1656. Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh.

THE BYZANTINE ERA (324-638 AD)

The early followers of Jesus were forced to worship in secret, to avoid persecution under Roman law. Only after the advent of Emperor Constantine, and the Edict of Milan (in 313 AD), did Christianity finally become a lawful religion in the Roman Empire, and the first churches on holy sites could begin

to be built. It is said that St. Helena, Constantine's mother, started this tradition of marking a holy place with a church. The building of churches began to flourish after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

The first evidence of worship at the Tomb of Lazarus comes from Eusebius of Caesarea, who (in about 330AD) wrote, in Bethany one can admire "...the place of



EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA (c 265-340) WAS BORN IN CAESAREA MARITIMA IN PALESTINE. HE STUDIED IN THE FAMOUS LIBRARY THERE, WHICH WAS A PRIMARY CENTER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, SAID TO HAVE CONTAINED MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND VOLUMES. EUSEBIUS BECAME BISHOP OF CAESAREA MARITIMA IN 314, AND WROTE SEVERAL BOOKS FUNDAMENTAL TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY, INCLUDING "ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY". HE WAS AN ADVISOR TO EMPEROR CONSTANTINE, TO WHOM HE DEDICATED ANOTHER FAMOUS WORK "LIFE OF CONSTANTINE". MORE THAN JUST A FAITHFUL BIOGRAPHY, IT IS A EULOGY FOR THE EMPEROR, AND DESCRIBES, AMONG MANY OTHER THINGS, HIS CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

Portrait (generally accepted to be that) of Eusebius of Caesarea.

Lazarus." A few years later, an anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux noted that in Bethany is the crypt where Lazarus was buried. The first actual church at the Tomb—a small one in the style of a basilica—must have been built after these accounts. The pilgrim Egeria, writing in the years 381-384, mentions a church, but one located on the outskirts of Bethany, where she noted that "Lazarus's sister Mary", had met Jesus. Egeria then describes the "Lazarium"—the area comprising the Tomb, church, and an outdoor plaza—as well as the liturgies and processions that took place there, which were attended by multitudes of people. In 390, Saint Jerome, then living in Bethlehem, added to his Latin translation of Eusebius's Greek text, that "...now a church has been built there." These words conclusively date the

construction of the first church at the Tomb of Lazarus to the end of the fourth century. It was a particularly prolific church-building time in the Holy Land, largely due to the support of the Eastern Roman emperors.

The miracle of the Raising of Lazarus greatly influenced Christianity, which in turn greatly affected the architectural landscape of Bethany. The Tomb of Lazarus was enhanced, and a church was added on its east side. The villagers began to build near the Tomb and church, and Bethany grew to encompass the area from the top of the hill down the slope to the Tomb.

Reconstruction of the first church at the Tomb of Lazarus.



Excavations carried out in the first church show that it was destroyed by an earthquake. Since the mosaics in the church were in excellent condition, with no signs of restoration, Fr. Saller decided that it might have been the earthquake of 447, but was probably the much more devastating earthquake of July 551, which wiped out hundreds of villages in the Middle East.

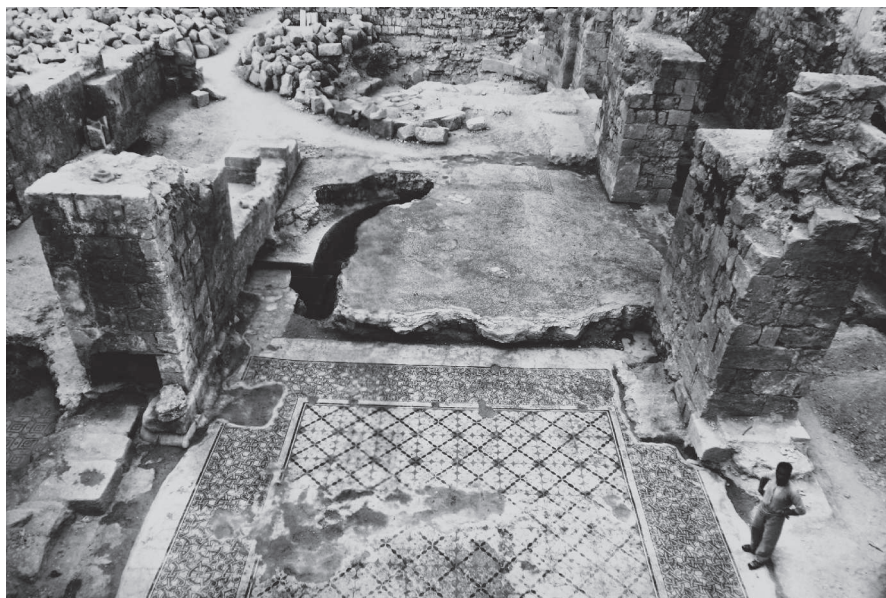
A second, larger church was built just east of the ruins of the first church, most likely in the late 6th century, after the earthquake of 551. A great many religious buildings were constructed in the Holy Land during this period. This second church somehow remained standing until the twelfth century, and the arrival of the Crusaders, who made many improvements to it. Archaeological evidence—particularly that

of the numerous and obvious restorations made to the mosaic floors, testifies to the great age of this second church.

THE TRANSITION TO ISLAM (638-1099)

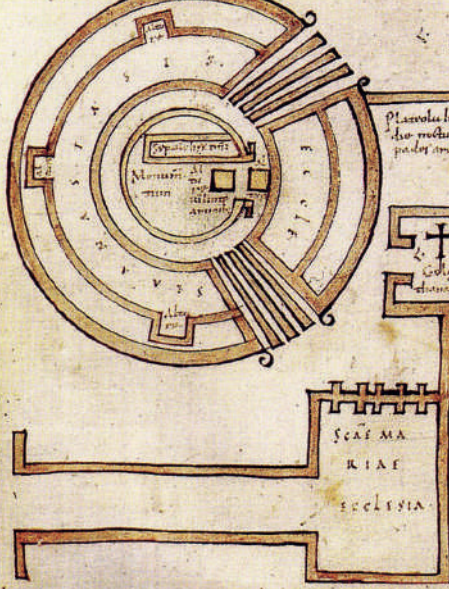
Not much information exists about Bethany after Islam came to Palestine in 638. Excavations in the west of the village show that life seemed to continue as usual in the early Islamic period, even up until the arrival of the Crusaders in the late 11th century, and village demographics remained pretty much unchanged. While the population was only slightly diminished

Excavations by Fr. Sylvester Saller near the Tomb of Lazarus, (1949-53). The center aisle of the first church is visible.



De illo lapide quod hostium monasterij aduoluitur & quod archiepiscopus
 Insuper eorum & in dicitur dicitur pfectus possit. Cuius minor pars fir-
 rametis de loco quidam ab ipso lapide in dicitur. Arce hostium
 monasterij augeat. Id est monasterij dominice sancti confiteatur. Conuincit.
 Moser uocatur lapidifragi quod in eum dolentia oponeat. In dicitur
 mausolei saluatoris loco quod in gubitu alio ab ipso hostium in dicitur
 bilis ex fuit.

¶ In hoc loco duos ecclesias illo factos habuit. Et locus
 In quo abraham ab ipso compositus fuit illud imponit lignorum
 feruere. sicut isaac in molariis. ubi nunc mensa habetur
 lignea. non paruasque qui paupe et elemosina et populo offeruntur.



De golygonis ecclesie. Intra quos magnus arce gentis. In quo loco pfectus
 humani generis filius. In fixa fuit.

Placuit Inqui-
 do rectus. In
 pades indente

menta ligna
 In loco

Constituta in
 bantia. hoc est
 maburum.

Exedra calce-
 dui

In quo loco crucis dicitur cum
 hinc laterum crucibus
 tubera repetit est.

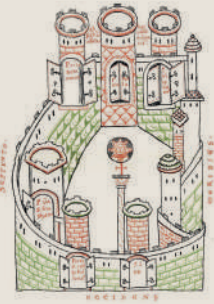
SCAS MA
 RIAE
 ECCLESIA

Intra illa quoque ecclesia vel golygonis in sinistra. quod an
 exedra In quo est calce dui. quem esse benedictum proprium in tra
 Intra in parte qui paretur. ipse amicus. apostolis tradidit
 conuincit. qui argenteus calce paretur. galles mensuram
 habens. duas. unguis Intra exedra. parte altera Intra conuincit
 compositis. In quo unguis calce. ille Intra spongia quem accere
 plonium. Intra circum ponitur Intra crucis. quem opertur
 unguis. que paretur Intra dicitur. saluus feruere ubi condit
 habetur. opertur foramen postquam manu tangit propria stultus.

¶ Intra in dicitur ecclesie. que in dicitur hoc est resurrectio uocatur.
 quod in loco dicitur resurrectio fabrica est. Ad dicitur in dicitur
 paretur. Intra in dicitur. Intra in dicitur.

DE LOCIS SANCTIS

"De Locis Sanctis" ("On the Holy Places") was written by the Irish monk Adamnano (c 625-704). The work consists of three volumes, and is largely the account of the bishop Arculf, and his nine month sojourn in the Holy Land in about 680AD. He meticulously describes Jerusalem, other Palestinian holy places, and even other Middle Eastern cities; his description of the Tomb of Lazarus in Bethany is cited in this guide. Most importantly, Arculf described the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to Adamnano, and included a hand-drawn map illustrating the state of the church after the Islamic conquest. "De Locis Sanctis" was widely read and referenced in the later descriptions reported by Western pilgrims.



Above: Arculf's map of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, De Locis Sanctis.

Above: Arculf's map of Jerusalem, De Locis Sanctis.

by the time the Crusaders arrived, it became drastically reduced after their departure in the late 12th century. Travelers that visited Bethany during this period didn't remark on the houses near the Tomb or church, but instead on the agricultural estates of the "Franks", (what the Crusaders were called at that time.) The reduced demographic activity in Bethany after the Crusades was largely due to their departure.

Forty years after the arrival of Islam, in about 680, during the reign of Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, the Frankish bishop Arculf visited Bethany and gave a detailed description of the second church. He is the also first to document the existence of a large monastery near it. Two centuries later, in 870, during the reign of caliph Harun al-Rashid, the Benedictine monk "Bernard the Pilgrim" visited the village, church and a monastery. He also spoke of a pool, north of the Tomb of Lazarus, in which he says Lazarus would have washed himself after being raised. Bernard also cites the presence of a religious community, which means that Bethany's church was still functioning and serving the Christian inhabitants of the village. He spoke of one of the most important Christian ceremonies—the Palm Sunday procession—which went from Bethany to Jerusalem. The Melkite Christian historian and physician Yaḥyā of Antioch also wrote of it. (This procession was prohibited for

two years in 1008 by the Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah.)

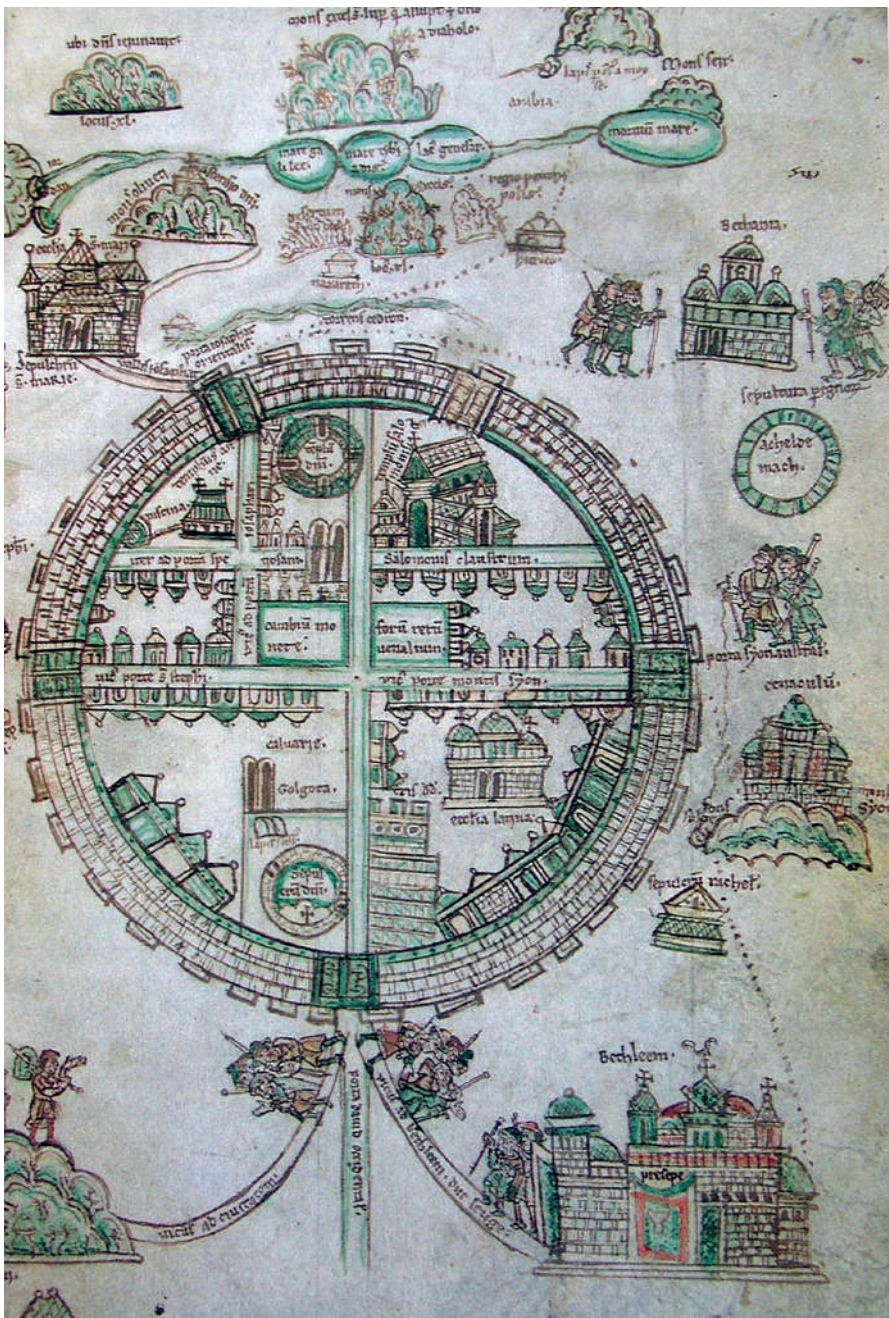
Arab historians, such as Ya'qubi the geographer, who wrote in 897, (during the Abbasid caliphate), said that he had visited Palestine, and mentioned "Jesus's miracle in Bethany" in his account.

THE GREAT BUILDINGS OF THE CRUSADES (1099-1187)

After the conquest of Palestine, by the Crusaders, and during their control of Jerusalem (1099-1187), Bethany, like the rest of the region, experienced a period of great architectural expansion.

In 1138, Queen Melisende of Jerusalem acquired the Tomb of Lazarus from the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, the Catholic authority charged with safeguarding the church after the Crusader conquest of 1099. In exchange, the Queen gave them Tecua, a village southeast of Bethlehem. The church near the Tomb of Lazarus was restored again ("third church").

A fourth church was built around the same time—the first directly over the Tomb of Lazarus. The construction of this church, dedicated to Saint Lazarus, caused the previous (third) church to be re-dedicated, to Martha and Mary. The pilgrim Theodoric, visited Bethany in 1172, and describes a double church, one in memory of Blessed Lazarus, and the other dedicated to the two sisters Martha and Mary.



Crusader map of Jerusalem, 12th c.,
 Royal Library of Belgium.

Between 1191-1244 an anonymous pilgrim speaks of the two holy places, a church built in memory of the house of Martha, where Jesus had been a guest, and a marble chapel, where Lazarus had been raised up by Jesus.

South of the fourth church was the Convent of Saint Lazarus, one of the most prestigious Crusader convents in the Holy Land. It was built by Queen Melisende for her sister Yvette, a Benedictine nun of the Convent of Saint Anne in Jerusalem. The Convent of St. Lazarus was even fortified, so it could also help protect the surrounding community as well.

William, the Bishop of Tire, in his *History of the Outremer*, describes the convent:

"Since it was on the edge of the desert, and therefore exposed to the enemy's aggression, the queen had a well-fortified tower built, of squared and polished stone..."

The appendix (in old French) after the text by William of Tire adds that Melisende...

"...built a beautiful church and cloister, with a chapter room, a dormitory and all the other structures necessary for a religious place."

Digital reconstruction of the two churches and the Convent of St. Lazarus.



QUEEN MELISENDE: DAUGHTER, WIFE, AND MOTHER OF KINGS

MELISENDE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF KING BALDWIN II OF JERUSALEM AND HIS BELOVED WIFE, THE ARMENIAN PRINCESS MORFIA. THEY HAD NO SONS, AND MELISENDE, AS THE ELDEST CHILD, WAS RAISED AS THEIR HEIR. SHE MARRIED FULCO, COUNT OF ANJOU, ACCORDING TO THE WISHES OF HER FATHER AND KING LOUIS VI OF FRANCE. FROM 1131, SHE RULED WITH HER HUSBAND AS QUEEN OF JERUSALEM, AND THEN CONTINUED AS REGENT UPON THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND IN 1143, IN THE NAME OF HER SON, BALDWIN III. EVEN AFTER HER SON REACHED MATURITY IN 1145, SHE WAS RELUCTANT TO RELINQUISH THE THRONE. PATRONESS OF THE ARTS AND DEVOTED SUPPORTER OF THE CHURCH, IN 1138 SHE ACQUIRED BETHANY AND BUILT THE CONVENT OF SAINT LAZARUS, OF WHICH HER YOUNGER SISTER YVETTE BECAME ABBESS IN 1144. IT IS IN THIS CONVENT THAT SIBYLLA, COUNTESS OF ASCALON AND QUEEN MOTHER OF JERUSALEM WOULD GROW UP. IT HAS BEEN CALLED THE "CONVENT OF QUEENS", AND WAS DEDICATED TO MARTHA AND MARY, FRIENDS OF JESUS AND SISTERS OF LAZARUS.



Detail from a 13th c. manuscript, depicting the coronation of Queen Melisende.

The convent was built between 1138 and 1144. Taxes and tithes from the oasis of Jericho helped to support the nuns and maintain the convent. According to pilgrim Felix Fabri, who visited the Holy Land in 1480 and again in 1483-84, the nuns dressed in white tunics and black cloaks, and wore green crosses.

Bethany was always very dear to Melisende, during and especially after her reign as Queen of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. After her son ascended to the throne, the queen became ever more devoted to the Church, and to Bethany. William, of Tire wrote that her actual intention in

building the Convent of St. Lazarus was to arrange a more suitable position for her sister Yvette, who in fact became mother superior of the convent upon the death of the elderly Abbess Mathilde, her predecessor. On the occasion of her sister's elevation to abbess, Queen Melisende endowed the convent with liturgical riches, including chalices, gold and silver crosses, furnishings and vestments.

THE AYYUBID DYNASTY (1187- 1260)

In 1187, the region of Jerusalem, which included Bethany, as well as other parts of Palestine returned to Muslim control with the defeat of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem by Saladin in the battle of Hattin. Saladin himself ordered the Convent of St. Lazarus and its two defense towers destroyed, leaving only the two churches standing.

A new era was ushered in—both demographic and architectural—for the village of Bethany and the Tomb of Lazarus. Saladin moved Arab tribes into in the area, to help fill the population vacuum created after the Crusader evacuation.

Wilbrand von Oldenburg, the Canon of Hildensheim, wrote in his 1211-12 account of his trip to the Holy Land, that in Bethany he saw a small castle, with two churches, looked after by Muslims. According to him, one was the house of Simon the Leper, where Mary Magdalen, in a

Detail of a map of Jerusalem showing Bethany, Historia Hierosolymitana, Robertus Monachus, 12th c., Uppsala University Library. The two churches are clearly defined, one behind the other, connected by the open space of the atrium.



display of penance, had embraced Jesus' feet and obtained forgiveness. Wilbrand claimed the other church was the garden of Martha and Mary. However, we know today that nothing existed in that area during Jesus's time, except for a burial ground.

It is likely that the reuse of the ruins of the convent for residential purposes was already happening in the Ayyubid period. Archaeological excavations show that the villagers had modified the large spaces of the convent, putting in dividing walls and ceilings, in order to adapt them to family life.

The situation in the region remained dangerous for some years after the expulsion of the Crusaders from the city of Jerusalem and much of Palestine, because they still controlled other parts of the region. Thus, Saladin, and the Ayyubid and Mamluk governors who followed him, tried in various ways to instill a sense of belonging in the newly arrived tribes. One such way was through a construction boom in *maqams* (Islamic shrines), especially where a Christian presence still existed. This is what probably happened in Bethany. Although there are no specific historical references, it's presumed that the *maqam* in the crypt leading to the Tomb of Lazarus dates to this period.

THE EVOLUTION OF ISLAM DURING THE MAMLUK SULTANATE (1260-1516)

During the Mamluk Sultanate, hostilities ceased and security was re-established after the definitive exit of the Crusaders from Palestine. The population of Bethany increased as well, and the Tomb of Lazarus became an important place of Islamic prayer. At the end of the 15th century, the Islamic *qadi* (judge) had a door installed at the end of the passage leading to the Tomb of Lazarus, and had two keys made for it, one of which was given to the Franciscan Friars of Jerusalem. Although there is no account of it in Western sources, it is likely that a minaret was added to the *maqam* during this period as well, in the same location, and in a similar shape to the later Ottoman period minaret.

Western pilgrims and travelers describe the early Mamluk period as being one of religious tolerance between Muslims and Christians, particularly in the management of the Tomb of Lazarus. Dominican friar Burcardo del Monte Zion, in recounting his Holy Land sojourn (1274-85), told that in Bethany one could see the house of Simon the Leper, where Jesus had eaten; the house of Martha, where Jesus was often a guest and which had been transformed into a church; and not far from this church, the Tomb of Lazarus. He describes it as a beautiful marble chapel within

a marble-covered monument, into which one descends to visit the Tomb. He remarked that the Tomb was held in the highest regard by the Saracens, in remembrance of this miracle performed by Jesus.

By the first half of the 14th century we know that the third church was in ruins (Fra Giovanni di Fedenzola, c 1330), but that the crypt and the Tomb under the fourth church still stood. Franciscan Friar Nicolò di Poggibonsi gives a detailed description in 1347:

"One encounters a large square after entering the fortress—to the right is a broken door leading to the church. Over the church is a vaulted tomb [dome?] above each building; in the east there is a tomb [apse?], without an altar; after exiting this church is a square; at the front of which is the chapel which covers the Tomb from which Jesus raised Lazarus. One must pay to enter it. Upon entering the chapel, on the right side is an altar and the Tomb of Saint Lazarus, which is covered with a large stone. This stone has a opening, into which people reach their arm, as an act of devotion. On the west side are three steps, leading to a dark chapel with a bench, from which Christ called to Lazarus."

According to Fra Giovanni, control of the Tomb had changed hands, and the muslim authorities now charged a fee to access it. The traveler Frescobaldi, in 1384, reports that the crypt had been transformed

into a mosque. The Islamic presence at the Tomb had by this time become quite absolute, with regular Islamic prayers and services. However, agreements with the Islamic authorities permitted Christians to still continue to celebrate some of the important yearly rituals at the Tomb of Lazarus.

A Russian archimandrite named Grethenios visited Bethany around 1400, and wrote that it was in ruins. The great church which had stood above the Tomb of Lazarus—only a third of it remained. He could still see the Tomb, decorated with marble, and also, on the north side, a small opening—the area where Jesus called Lazarus out of the Tomb. This seems to indicate that the burial site was under the floor of the crypt, and one had to enter it on their hands and knees.

John Poloner, a German(?) traveler, wrote in 1421-2 that the only things left of the church on the Tomb of Lazarus were the pillars. He described the Tomb as a dark vault; and ten steps away he saw the altar/bench where Jesus called to Lazarus. Farther on, was the house of Simon the Leper, which he noted had two cisterns. Even farther down the hill, he mentions the house of Mary Magdalen, and its destroyed church, which had been transformed into a stable.

Thirty years later, around 1485, the Franciscan Friar Francesco Suriano wrote that the crypt holding the Tomb of Lazarus was intact and venerated by Christians and Muslims alike; also that the Franciscan Friars

had the keys and could come and go as they wished. There is in fact documentation of a 1499 agreement between Fra Bartolomeo da Pienza of the Franciscan Friars Custody of the Holy Land and the guardian of the Tomb of Lazarus at that time, Schiamali bin Muhammed, bin Ali Katamani. He had not only given the Franciscans a key to the Tomb, he had also granted permission for them to visit the Tomb and perform their traditional liturgies there. Even the pilgrim Felix Fabri, visiting at the end of the 15th century,

described how the desecrated church was used as a barn, its altars destroyed and full of sheaves of wheat. There was only one wall remaining of the other church, but he says that it must have been beautiful—he could still see remnants of the colored marble floors. The crypt of Lazarus was now a mosque, but he could still enter it, after paying a small fee to the people of Bethany. He saw the raised marble Tomb and the walled crypt. He also saw the Palm Sunday procession.

FROM LAZARUS TO ÛZAYR

THE MAQAM IN BETHANY ONLY BECAME LINKED WITH "ÛZAYR" SOME CENTURIES AFTER THE FALL OF THE CRUSADER KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM. AS AL YACUBI (897) AND AL IDRISI (1165) TESTIFY, THE TOMB OF LAZARUS WAS KNOWN BY THE MUSLIMS OF THE EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD AS "THE TOMB IN BETHANY OF THE PERSON RAISED UP BY JESUS, OF THE NAME LAZARUS (AL AZAR)".

THE RE-IDENTIFICATION WITH ÛZAYR BEGINS IN THE 14TH-15TH CENTURY. MUJIR AL-DIN AL-HANBALI (1456-1522) RECALLED LAZARUS (AL AZAR) AS BEING A FAMOUS PROPHET IN THE JERUSALEM AREA, BUT THAT HE MIGHT ALSO HAVE BEEN ÛZAYR BIN HARON (EZRA SON OF AARON); AND THAT HIS TOMB WAS VISITED. AL-HANBALI ALSO REMEMBERED ÛZAYR FROM THE VILLAGE OF HAWARTA, NEAR NABLUS. BY THE OTTOMAN PERIOD, HOWEVER, THIS "MERGING OF IDENTITIES" HAD FIRMLY TAKEN HOLD. THE BETHANY MAQAM HAD NOW BECOME FAMOUS UNDER THE NAME ÛZAYR, AND ARAB SCHOLARS SUCH AS ABD AL-GHANI AL-NABULSI (1641-1731) AND MUSTAFA AL HUQAIMI (D. 1764) DESCRIBE HOW THEY HAD VISITED THE MAQAM OF THE PROPHET ÛZAYR IN BETHANY. THE BETHANY MAQAM IS ALSO REGISTERED IN SEVERAL OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS UNDER THE NAME ÛZAYR INSTEAD OF UNDER THE NAME LAZARUS.

ÛZAYR IN ISLAM

THE PROPHET ÛZAYR IS SPOKEN OF AS "RAISED FROM THE DEAD" IN THE QU'RAN; SURA BAKARA, VERSE 259:

HOW THE ONE WHO PASSED BY A TOTALLY DESTROYED VILLAGE AND SAID, "HOW WILL ALLAH RESTORE LIFE TO THIS NOW THAT IT IS DEAD?" ALLAH THEN MADE HIM DIE FOR A HUNDRED YEARS, THEN RAISED HIM AND SAID, "HOW LONG HAVE YOU STAYED [DEAD]?" HE REPLIED, "PERHAPS...FOR A DAY OR PART OF A DAY." SAID [THEN ALLAH]: "NO, YOU STAYED [DEAD] A HUNDRED YEARS. SO LOOK AT YOUR FOOD AND DRINK: THEY HAVE NOT CHANGED. LOOK AT YOUR DONKEY [HIS BONES ARE ROTTEN]! AND [WE DID THIS] TO MAKE YOU A SIGN FOR MEN. SEE HOW WE GATHER THE BONES [OF YOUR DONKEY] AND THEN CLOTHE THEM WITH FLESH". WELL, WHEN [THIS] WAS REVEALED TO HIM HE SAID, "I KNOW THAT ALLAH CAN DO ANYTHING".

INTERPRETERS OF THIS VERSE PLACE THE EVENT IN THE JERUSALEM AREA, WHICH IS PROBABLY HOW THE "RISEN ONE" BECAME LINKED WITH BETHANY. ÛZAYR IS MENTIONED AGAIN IN THE QU'RAN, AS A PROPHET OF THE *BENI ISRAIL* OR "CHILDREN OF ISRAEL". SURA AT-TAWBA, VERSE 30 READS:

THE JEWS SAY: "EZRA (ÛZAYR) IS THE SON OF ALLAH"; AND THE NAZARENES SAY: "THE MESSIAH IS THE SON OF ALLAH". THIS IS WHAT COMES OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS. THEY REPEAT THE WORDS OF THOSE WHO WERE ALREADY DISBELIEVERS BEFORE THEM. ALLAH DESTROY THEM. HOW MISLED THEY ARE!

THUS, OVER THE CENTURIES, THE FIGURES OF LAZARUS, FRIEND OF JESUS AND EZRA/ÛZAYR, PROPHET OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL—BOTH RAISED FROM THE DEAD—MERGED IN THE VENERATION AT THE TOMB OF BETHANY.

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ادْكُرِي نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِكَ إِذْ
 أَنْتَلْتِ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ تُكَلِّمِ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَإِذْ
 عَلَّمْنَاكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالذِّكْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ
 مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي
 وَتُرِيئُ الْأَكْثَمَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِي
 وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَنْكَ إِذْ جِئْتَهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ
 فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسْحَرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

Verse 110, Sura al Ma'ida,
 Qu'ran

LAZARUS (AL AZAR) IN ISLAM

LAZARUS HIMSELF IS NOT MENTIONED IN THE QU'RAN. HE IS NEITHER A HOLY FIGURE NOR RELEVANT TO THE ISLAMIC FAITH. HOWEVER, THE MIRACLE OF THE RAISING OF LAZARUS IS MENTIONED, IN SURA AL 'IMRAN, VERSE 49:

AND WILL SEND HIM [JESUS] AS A MESSENGER TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL [SAYING]:
 VERILY, I BRING YOU A SIGN FROM YOUR LORD. I MAKE FOR YOU THE FORM OF A
 BIRD IN CLAY AND THEN I BREATHE INTO IT AND, WITH THE PERMISSION OF ALLAH, IT
 BECOMES A LIVING THING. AND BY THE WILL OF ALLAH, I HEAL THE MAN BORN BLIND
 AND THE LEPER, AND RAISE THE DEAD. I WILL INFORM YOU OF WHAT YOU EAT AND
 WHAT YOU MUST STORE IN YOUR HOUSE. CERTAINLY THERE IS A SIGN IN THIS FOR YOU,
 IF YOU ARE BELIEVERS!

AND AGAIN, IN SURA AL MA'IDA VERSE 110:

AND WHEN ALLAH SAYS: "O JESUS, SON OF MARY, REMEMBER MY GRACE UPON YOU
 AND YOUR MOTHER AND WHEN I STRENGTHENED YOU WITH THE PURE SPIRIT! SO MUCH SO
 THAT YOU SPOKE TO MEN FROM THE CRADLE AND IN MATURE AGE. AND WHEN I TAUGHT YOU
 THE BOOK AND THE WISDOM AND THE TORAH AND THE GOSPEL, WHEN YOU FORGED THE
 FIGURE OF A BIRD OUT OF CLAY, THEN YOU BLEW ON IT AND WITH MY PERMISSION IT BECAME
 A BIRD. HEALED, WITH MY PERMISSION, THE MAN BORN BLIND AND THE LEPER. AND WITH
 MY PERMISSION YOU RAISED THE DEAD. AND WHEN YOU DEFENDED YOURSELF FROM THE
 CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WHEN YOU CAME WITH THE TRIALS. THOSE OF THEM WHO DIDN'T
 BELIEVE SAID, "THIS IS OBVIOUS MAGIC."

MUSLIMS WORSHIP JESUS AND THE VIRGIN MARY. THEY BELIEVE IN THE MIRACLES OF JESUS, AND FROM THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY ONWARDS, TOOK AN INTEREST THE TOMB OF LAZARUS, BECAUSE JESUS PERFORMED A MIRACLE THERE. JESUS IS CONSIDERED A PROPHET OF ALLAH IN ISLAM, AND AS SUCH IS VENERATED WITH THE OTHER PROPHETS.

AS FOR THE MIRACLE OF RAISING THE DEAD, THE INTERPRETERS OF THE QU'RAN EXPLAIN THAT ALLAH ENTRUSTED HIS PROPHETS WITH THE ABILITY TO PERFORM MIRACLES WHEN THEY SAW FIT TO DO SO. THEY STRESS, HOWEVER, THAT THESE MIRACLES ARE ONLY ACCOMPLISHED WITH THE PERMISSION, AND THROUGH THE POWER AND WILL, OF ALLAH. MUSLIM SCHOLARS TAKE THE TEXTS OF THE GOSPELS LITERALLY, WHEN RECOUNTING JESUS'S MIRACLES; INCLUDING THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

BETHANY UNDER OTTOMAN RULE (1516-1917)

The Ottoman Empire controlled Palestine for four centuries, from 1516 to 1917, during which time Bethany changed very little. Perhaps this was due to the constant insecurity of continuing skirmishes between the Ottomans and the local Bedouin tribes.

In the Ottoman census of 1588, Bethany had 340 inhabitants, in 68 houses. A late 19th century census recorded only 35 houses and 226 inhabitants. Accounts of travelers to Bethany in the late 1800s confirm these figures, many citing between 20 to 40 houses, some which were more like shacks. The population of the village remained quite

low for most of the Ottoman period, and Bethany was reduced to a small, rather poor village. The situation wasn't much better in the surrounding Palestinian villages either. Most housing was concentrated around the local mosque, while in Bethany, the villagers' homes were around the Tomb of Lazarus, especially in the south-west and the east; a few houses also stood to the north, beyond the road that passes in front of the Tomb.

As they had done in the past, the Christian communities still continued to celebrate Palm Sunday in Bethany. The German theologian

Bethany c 1900-20; the mosque is in the center, the convent tower ruins (al Qanater) in the background. The small road by the mosque leads to the Tomb of Lazarus.



Constantin von Tischendorf (1815-1874) visited Bethany and reported that the Tomb was surrounded by solemn devotion, especially at Easter, when monks and pilgrims lined the road from Jerusalem to Bethany, carrying torches and lighting up the dark night with an atmosphere of excitement.

The *Ûzayr maqam* also underwent significant architectural changes with the arrival of the Ottomans. Christian pilgrims had been permitted to get to the Tomb of Lazarus through the *maqam* since its construction in the late 1400s. However, from 1553, access through the *maqam* to the Tomb was revoked. Fortunately, the Franciscans Friars were granted the right to open an independent entrance to the Tomb of Lazarus—from the north—and

to keep the keys. They carved out the rock ladder that still today allows one to access the Tomb from the main road. The agreement to open this new entrance was signed by the Islamic *qadi* and the Franciscan Friars on July 25, 1574. The original entrance to the Tomb, from the south through the *maqam*, was walled up.

Giovanni Zuallardo, Knight of the Holy Sepulchre, visited Bethany in around 1586. He describes the ruins over the Tomb as a large construction, more like a castle than a church. He also wrote that the Muslims built a shrine there be-

Reconstruction of the Maqam of Ûzayr.



RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS LINKED TO BETHANY

Below left and right: Franciscan celebrations at the Tomb of Lazarus, first half of the 20th century.

EGERIA'S ACCOUNT OF HER LATE 4TH CENTURY VISIT TO BETHANY IS OF INESTIMABLE VALUE IN RECONSTRUCTING THE ANCIENT RELIGIOUS LITURGIES THAT TOOK PLACE THERE. SHE MENTIONS "THE LAZARIUM" THREE TIMES DURING THE LITURGICAL YEAR—ON THE FIFTH DAY AFTER EPIPHANY, ON THE PALM SUNDAY VIGIL, WHEN THE RAISING OF LAZARUS WAS COMMEMORATED, AND IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING EASTER.

WE KNOW THAT THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN BETHANY COMMEMORATED MARTHA, MARY AND LAZARUS SINCE THE BYZANTINE ERA. IN THE 17TH CENTURY, NEARLY A MILLENNIUM AFTER EGERIA'S ACCOUNTS, THERE WERE STILL THREE MAIN CELEBRATIONS, IN ADDITION TO PALM SUNDAY: THE FEAST OF SAINT LAZARUS ON OCTOBER 17, THE FEAST OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN ON JULY 22 AND THE FEAST OF SAINT MARTHA THE FOLLOWING WEEK. THE DATES HAD CHANGED ONLY SLIGHTLY THROUGH THE CENTURIES—THE BYZANTINE ERA CELEBRATIONS LINKED TO MARTHA AND MARY HAD BEEN HELD ON JUNE 4TH.

THE POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING CELEBRATIONS AT ALL DEPENDED ON THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SITUATION. IN GENERAL, THE ISLAMIC STATE PROVIDED PROTECTION FOR CHRISTIAN PILGRIMS IN THE COUNTRY, CHARGING A TARIFF FOR THIS SERVICE, WHICH WAS COLLECTED BY THE LOCAL RULERS. THE RIGHTS OF





CHRISTIANS WERE SUBJECT TO THE *FIRMAN*, OR MANDATE OF THE SULTANS AND LOCAL RULERS.

FROM EARLIEST CHRISTIAN TIMES, THE PROCESSION OF THE PALMS STARTED FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. BUT IN THE 9TH AND 10TH CENTURIES, THE STARTING POINT WAS CHANGED TO BETHANY. FROM THERE, AN OLIVE BRANCH WAS BROUGHT TO THE BASILICA OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE, WITH THE *WALI* OF JERUSALEM (REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CALIPH OR THE SULTAN) LEADING THE PROCESSION. THE FATIMID CALIPH AL-'AZİZ BILLAH, IN THE 10TH CENTURY, ACTUALLY LED THE PROCESSION HIMSELF. THIS TRADITIONAL PARTICIPATION BY THE *WALI* CONTINUES TO THIS DAY, AND PALESTINIAN OFFICIALS STILL GIVE THEIR PATRONAGE TO MAJOR CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS. THE PROCESSION OF PALMS HOWEVER, ONCE AGAIN BEGINS AT THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS CELEBRATE THE LITURGY OF HOLY MONDAY IN BETHANY, COMMEMORATING THE WASHING OF THE FEET OF JESUS BY MARY, SISTER OF LAZARUS. THEY ALSO CELEBRATE THE FEAST OF STS. MARTHA, MARY AND LAZARUS ON 29 JULY. THE ORTHODOX CHURCH CELEBRATES LAZARUS SATURDAY, ON THE DAY BEFORE PALM SUNDAY.

The Greek Orthodox celebration of Lazarus Saturday in Bethany, 2018.

cause they also venerate the miracle of the "Raising". He said that the Guardian of the Monastery of Mount Zion (part of the Custody of the Holy Land) had re-discovered an ancient staircase inside the Crusader church, also leading to the Tomb. He wrote as well that to visit the Tomb he had to pay the local farmers.

Tomb. Also that Christians could no longer access the original entrance of the Tomb via the *maqam*, as was previously possible. However, he added that the Franciscan Friars had devised and paid for a separate, direct entrance to the Tomb—a staircase of 22 steps,

Traveler Jan van Cootwijk visited Bethany in 1598, and confirmed that one had to pay to enter the

Map of Bethany, The Most Devoted Journey to Jerusalem, Giovanni Zuallardo, 1586. The Tomb of Lazarus is marked with the letter G.



- A *Ecclesia Montis Oliveti.*
- B *Beiphage viculus.*
- C *Fons Apestolorum.*
- D *Domus Martha.*
- E *Petra sessionis Domini.*
- F *Domus Mariæ Magdalena.*

- G *Sepulchrum Lazari.*
- H *Domus Lazari.*
- I *Ædes Simonis leprosi.*
- K *Ficus maledicta à Domino.*
- L *Via Hierusalem versus.*

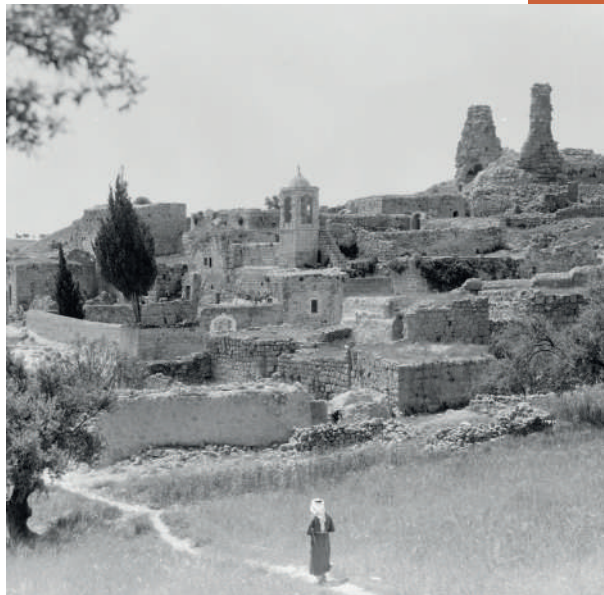
carved into the rock, from the west side of the church.

The scholar Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi visited Bethany twice, in 1690 and in 1693. On the first visit, he wrote that he entered the *maqam*, which he describes as the Tomb belonging to the prophet Ûzayr. On the second visit, he wrote that he had prayed in the mosque. In this account, for the first time, the Tomb is described as that of the prophet Ûzayr; all other Muslim accounts up to this point (Ya'qubi, in 897, al-Idrisi in 1165, Yaqut al Hamawi (1178-1229), among others) had identified the place as the Tomb of Lazarus. Note also that during his first visit al-Nabulsi talks about a *maqam*, (shrine) but during the second al-Nabulsi says mosque, or place of prayer.

The Bethany *maqam* had a foundation of three courses of stone, topped by a sloping wooden sarcophagus-like structure. It was oriented north-south and surrounded by a simple wooden fence. An official mandate, or *firman*, dated August 5, 1777 requested permission to open and examine the interior of the "Tomb of Ûzayr", but the results of the investigation, even if one had ever been carried out, are unknown. The *maqam* has had some seventeenth century restoration work, but the most important change took place in 1899, when its minaret was restored and a stone staircase added, descending from

Left: Bethany family at the entrance to the Tomb of Lazarus c 1898-1914.

Right: The village of Bethany at the turn of the 20th century.



north to south. The *maqam's* external walls were also restored, and a facade facing east was created in the crypt by bricking up the space between the pillars that supported the vaults. Two rectangular doors in this facade accessed the mosque; at the main door a marble slab bears an 1899 Turkish inscription which proclaims that the mosque and the *maqam* were restored by order of the son of Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

The Ottomans enacted many constitutional reforms in the 19th century, several which impacted charitable institutions. The archives of the Islamic court in Jerusalem are full of various permits and decisions relating to the rights of other communities, as regards their properties and their holy places. The *Gülhane firman*, issued by Abdülmecid I in 1839, was an attempt to implement administrative reform across the Empire. While it covered many issues, it also addressed equal rights (and duties) for all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation. A second document, the *Humayun firman*, issued in 1856 by the Sultan himself, tried to regulate the construction of all non-Islamic places of prayer in the Empire. This was transformational for the village of Bethany, as it gave Christians the opportunity to buy back land and houses. Among them was Pauline de Nicolay, the French marquise and Franciscan tertiary, who bought a plot of land south of the Tomb of

Lazarus in 1863, and also obtained papal approval to build a place of prayer and a home for the elderly there. The Marquise later donated the property to the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. In 1889, the Franciscan Custody itself purchased most of the old houses that had made up the ancient nucleus of Bethany, and those that were in the vicinity of the *maqam* and the Tomb of Lazarus. These houses—34 in total—had been built on the ruins of the ancient churches and the Crusader convent.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, during the same period, bought land west of the Tomb, as well as in the area where the ruins of the largest tower of the Crusader convent still stand. The Patriarchate also bought the land around "The Stone of the Encounter", traditionally identified as the place where Jesus met Martha on the outskirts of Bethany, and received the news of Lazarus's death. There, in 1883, they built the Church of Burj el-Hammar and a monastery dedicated to St. Lazarus.

Along Bethany's main road, also in the east of the village, the Russian Orthodox church built a place to house pilgrims.

MODERN DAY BETHANY

The twentieth century brought renewed interest in the history of the Tomb of Lazarus, as well as advances in archaeological research and restoration techniques. The architectural landscape of the village of Bethany continued to change, as well as to expand, in order to accommodate the increasing number of visitors to the area.

The core of the old city, set against the hill, as seen in old photos of Bethany, has changed profoundly. The rows of vaulted houses to the south and east of the *maqam* of Ûzayr, and to the left of the road that passed in front of the Tomb of Lazarus, no longer exist.

In the 1940s, The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land decided to



Above: The left aisle of the first church, in the process of being excavated, (1949-53).

Bottom left: Fr. Sylvester Saller OFM (1895–1976).

Bottom right: Fr. Saller's excavations in progress.



explore the land it owned east of the *maqam*, and to build a new church on the site. Archaeological excavations were carried out between 1949 and 1953, led by Fr. Sylvester J. Saller. The excavations uncovered the succession of religious buildings erected near the Tomb throughout the centuries—in particular the ruins of the Byzantine-era churches, as well as the Crusader churches and convent, with its defense towers. Excavations were also conducted southwest of the Tomb of Lazarus, unearthing traces of earlier versions of the village. In 1957, Fr. Saller published, (through Studium Biblicum Franciscanum), the results of these excavations, in a work entitled, *Excavations at Bethany (1949-1953)*. The text has become one of the definitive resources for historical research on Bethany.

After the excavations were concluded, designs for a new church were drawn up. It was erected in 1954, on the ruins of the first and second (Byzantine period) churches and the third (Crusader) church.

The *maqam* of Ûzayr also underwent major changes. In 1954, the old square and domed minaret with the external staircase (as seen in archival photographs) was demolished and replaced with the current minaret. The building itself also received routine maintenance and restorations in the intervening years. From 2002-06, mosque authorities carried out a great deal of major work on the site, in order to add more square footage for prayer. The importance

Restoration work being carried out on the oil press, 2018.



of preserving the history of the site was not always a priority, and the result is the mosque we see today. By contrast, the recent maintenance and conservation works carried out from 2019-2020, in the old part of the mosque, were executed with great caution by the *Associazione Pro Terra Sancta* and The Mosaic Centre.

In 1965, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate built a new church on land it owned to the west of the Tomb of Lazarus. This two-story building has a church on each floor, and was built on the foundations of the fourth (Crusader-era) church's north wall—parts of which are still visible from the Orthodox "first floor" church.

In recent years, the Municipality of Bethany has become increasingly

interested in enhancing the ancient core of the village, through various collaborations with the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as well as other non-governmental institutions. A tourist itinerary through the old part of the village was created. In 2018, a small museum was opened, south-west of the Tomb, by the Ministry. A Tourist Information Center was also opened right next door.

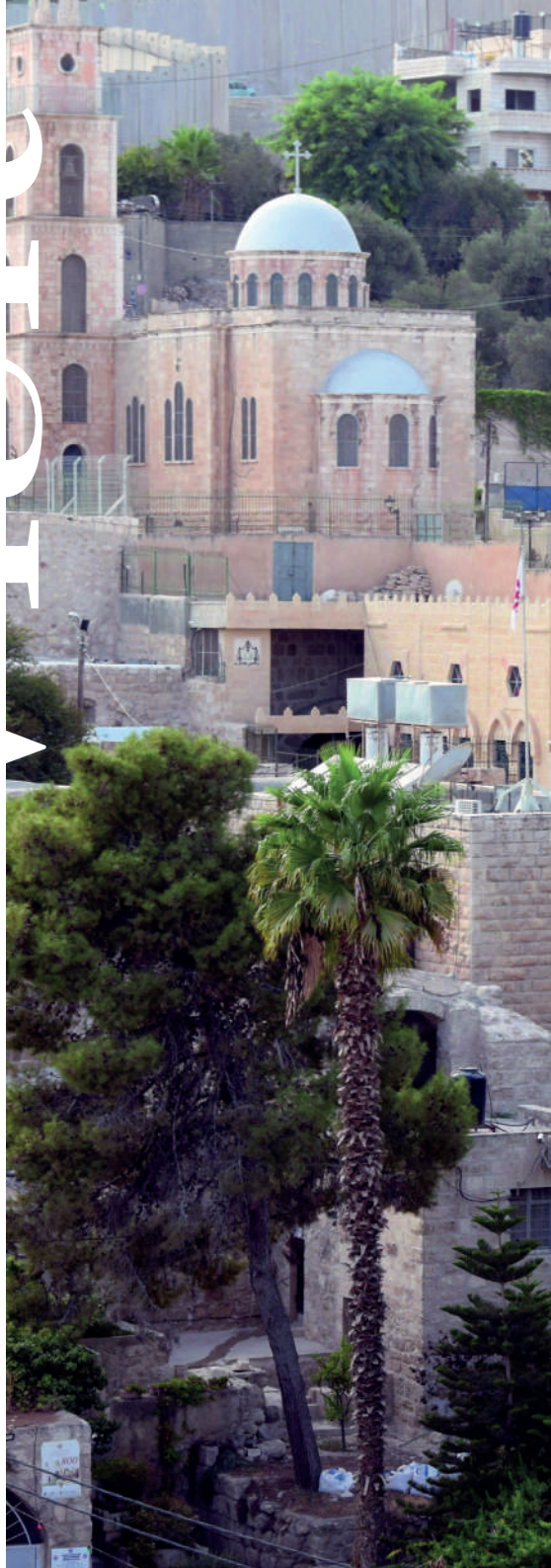
Since 2016, *Associazione Pro Terra Sancta* and The Mosaic Centre, in collaboration with Al Quds University and the Municipality of Bethany, have been working to discover, conserve, and share Bethany's extraordinary history and heritage.

Conservation work being carried out in 2018, on the medieval frescoes on the pillars of the third church.



Visit

The historic center of Bethany, and the principal holy sites around the Tomb of Lazarus: the Catholic St. Lazarus Church (foreground), the mosque of al Ûzayr, and the Greek Orthodox church (above).





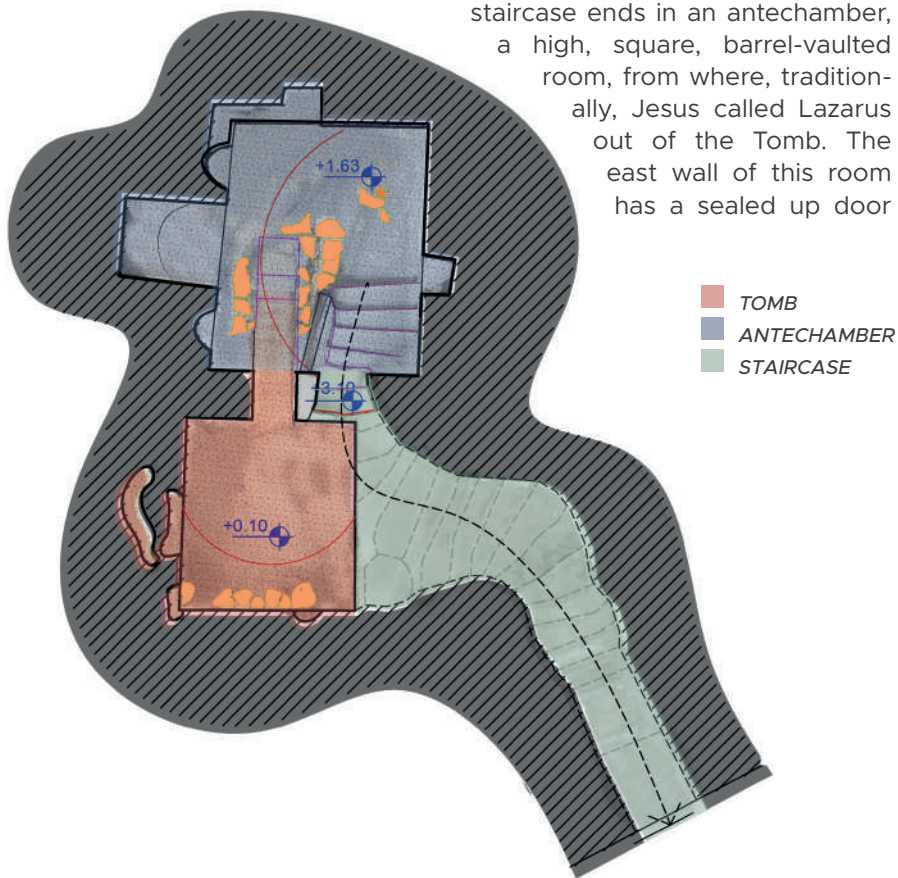
V

From the bus parking lot, walk along the small road on the right, climbing until you reach the entrance to the Tomb, which will be on the left. Admission costs about 1.5 euros per person. Since 1890, management of the Tomb has been entrusted to the Bethany families of Abu Rish and Hamdan; currently it is managed only by the Hamdan family.

Diagram of the Tomb of Lazarus: The rock-hewn staircase to the Tomb is in green; the antechamber is in blue; and the burial chamber in brown. Left of the antechamber is the original (now sealed off) entrance.

THE TOMB OF LAZARUS

The original Tomb of Lazarus was carved out of solid rock, and consisted of an antechamber and burial chamber. It was enlarged in the 4th century and again modified in the medieval period as well. Today, access to the Tomb is from the north, on the road outside the churches and mosque, via a steep, late 16th century 24-step staircase that was carved out of the rock by the Franciscan Friars, with the permission of the *qadi*. Care must be taken at the entrance and exit, as the doorways are quite low. The staircase ends in an antechamber, a high, square, barrel-vaulted room, from where, traditionally, Jesus called Lazarus out of the Tomb. The east wall of this room has a sealed up door



with niches on either side. This was the original entrance to the Tomb—via an open atrium in front of the Byzantine church. It was walled up in the 16th century.

Three steps lead to the opening of the burial chamber, which is also square but has a lower ceiling—a height of only about 2.5 meters. Two irregular niches, one on each side of the entrance, are now partially closed by stone cladding. Lazarus's Tomb is believed to have been on the right of the entrance, and originally covered by a horizontal stone. Recent restoration work confirmed that the burial chamber was built around the same time as the antechamber—probably in the Crusader period—while the lower walls are most likely earlier. Archaeological excavations have uncovered two ossuaries—containers



Above: Eastern wall of the antechamber of the Tomb of Lazarus, with the sealed up original entrance and niches.

Below: Entrance to the Tomb of Lazarus today.



V bearing bones—on the original floor of the Tomb. The ossuaries were later covered over with earth and rubble, raising the floor of the burial chamber and making it easier to enter. Study of these ossuaries is ongoing.

Reaching the Tomb might be physically challenging for seniors or those with mobility issues. While it is not possible—for conservation reasons—to alter the existing architecture of the Tomb, a joint Italian-Palestinian project provides an inclusive and accessible alternative: a 90-second virtual visit to the Tomb using 3D technology. Inquire at the shop across from the Tomb; Ahmad Awad, Hussein Mahmoud or Wasid Ibrahim can help with both admission to the Tomb, and the equipment for the virtual visit.

ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RUINS OF THE FOURTH CHURCH

After exiting the Tomb, to the left and just up the road is the Greek Orthodox church. Built in 1965, it has two churches, one on each floor. The church on the lower floor incorporates part of the north wall of the medieval (fourth) church that was built over the Tomb of Lazarus; stones from this church are still visible. The Orthodox church commemorates the miracle of the Raising of Lazarus, which is depicted in the two wooden iconostases, (altar screens), made

Virtual view, antechamber of the Tomb of Lazarus. In the middle are the three steps leading down to the burial chamber.



by Greek artists. Unfortunately it is not open for tourists, except for the celebrations on Holy Saturday, before the Orthodox Palm Sunday.

INFORMATION CENTER AND MUSEUM

Take the steps that run between the Tomb and the Orthodox church to the small local museum, which is housed inside an old building that has been purposely renovated. It displays interesting artifacts from the various periods of Bethany's history, and is managed by the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. A welcoming and knowledgeable employee is happy to give visitors a tour of the museum.

The ground floor Information Center is managed by the Municipality of Bethany in collaboration with the



Above: Exterior view, Greek Orthodox church.

Below left and right: Virtual visit to the Tomb, and the frescoed dome of the Greek Orthodox Church.



V Ministry of Tourism. All the latest information about the area is available here, including printed materials. One can take a break at the tables provided in front of the Center, while also contemplating a floor mosaic of simple white tiles, the decorated remnants of the south wall of the fourth church, and the cloister of the Benedictine convent.

RUINS OF THE CONVENT TOWERS

Continue south. A few meters from the museum, on the right, are the remains of an imposing tower, part of the ancient Benedictine Convent of St. Lazarus. It was built by the Crusader queen Melisende in 1143 next to the Tomb of Lazarus and the two churches, (one dedicated to Martha and Mary and the other to Lazarus).



Three towers—unusual for a convent—were built for extra fortification. This one was the highest and most important of the three. It's commonly known as "al Ganater" (the Arch); and also by the names "Burj Abu Saiad" (Abu Saiad Tower) or "Burj al Qanat" (Canal Tower).

Above: Students visiting the museum.

Below: The space in front of the Information Center, with remnants from the wall of the fourth church on the right.





Ownership of the tower and surrounding land was acquired by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate at the end of the 19th century. The tower had a square floor plan with a cistern underneath. There was a second tower in the southeast corner of the convent, and a third in the eastern area of the convent. There was no tower in the north, because that area was occupied by the two churches. The Convent of St. Lazarus was destroyed by Saladin, after his



1187 reconquest of Jerusalem. Do not approach the tower, as its structure could be unstable. It is advised that one views the tower only from the safety of the path.

Above left: Remnants of the cloister of the Benedictine convent.

Above right: al Qanater c 1934-38.

Below: al Qanater today.



V THE BENEDICTINE CONVENT

Follow the path south, down the steps to the left, and continue on the paved road until you come to a paved stone path on the left. These are the ruins of the second tower of the Crusader convent.

This tower was built on solid rock, which is visible from the southwest side. Abutting the tower are the ruins of some humbler buildings, dating to the Ottoman period.

In 2019, through a joint Italian-Palestinian effort, the tower structure was consolidated, to prevent it from collapsing onto the nearby, much-used road. This tower also had a square floor plan and was originally much higher. The north wall retains some medieval features. Following its abandonment, the tower had been

divided into two levels, creating two separate rooms. An original opening to the north was used as a door to the upper room and an east door to the lower room.

In the area north of this tower, remnants of other constructions from the Crusader period are visible, but it is not possible to understand their original characteristics in any detail. There is evidence of a rectangular room, at ground level; the north part built with stone and the south part carved into the rock. A water channel crossed this room, covered by large stone slabs. The channel ran from west to east and probably is

Below left: Roman water channel.

Below right: The second tower of the crusader convent (as viewed from the southwest), prior to restoration.



of Roman origin. It was discovered in 2018, during excavations by Al Quds University.

Continue north on the path. Just before the mosque, there is a door on the left that leads to areas under the guardianship of the Custody of the Holy Land, including remnants of the Benedictine convent that were unearthed through excavations carried out in the 1900s, and expanded upon by research carried out over the last four years. The convent can also be accessed from the modern St. Lazarus's Church square.

Another area, accessed via an iron walkway, most likely dates to the Roman or Byzantine periods, and was a necropolis carved into the rock. The floor of the first room is simply unlevelled natural rock, as is

what remains of the lowish ceiling, which is visible to the south. In the Crusader period this cave-like area was transformed, and incorporated—with the space next to it—into one of the vaulted ground floor rooms of the convent. The wall that currently divides this space was added in the Ottoman period. Low on the east wall is the architrave of a door, decorated with a cross, accessed via a few stairs.

Farther along the walkway is another cave-like room. Here, too, the floor is unlevelled natural rock. The west wall and the foundations of the north wall date to the Crusader period, while the rest of the walls and the cross vault are from

The Roman/Byzantine necropolis within the Custody property, unearthed during recent archaeological excavations.





is solid rock, while the eastern wall has three openings, indicating that this space opened to the outside prior to the construction of the eastern rooms.

The northern end of the chapel, which is about 1.2 meters lower than the other end, has remnants of the foundations of a wall of a Byzantine-era room, including portions of a beautifully colored mosaic floor. This mosaic was part of the first Byzantine church, dating back to the 4th century; but it also bears evidence of later Byzantine and medieval restorations.

Ottoman period. You can exit this area down to the olive press or to the crusader room/chapel.

Because of the steep east-west incline of the rocky hill, this rectangular chapel is the highest room in this area. Behind the stone cladding of the west and south walls

Above: Detail of the cross carved atop the door between the necropolis and chapel.

Below: A passage through the ruins of the crusader convent, discovered during recent archaeological excavations.



Looking west, there is an opening into a small rocky space behind the wall. Turning back towards the chapel, one can see the layer of rock on which the floor rests.

The eastern door leads to the oil mill; in the west corner, on the upper level, a staircase leads to an upper floor of the convent still being excavated and restored, and is therefore not yet open to the public.

This convent, during the Crusader period, was one of the richest in the Holy Land. It was built by Queen Melisende of Jerusalem, between 1138 and 1144, for her sister Yvette, a Benedictine nun. It was known as the convent that trained the girls of the Crusader aristocracy, like the future queen Sibyl. Saladin had this convent/fortress destroyed in 1187.

All the buildings of the convent were located south of the two medieval churches, and, taking advantage of the topography of the area, were built on the rocky plateaus rising to the west. The convent was surrounded by an outer wall—a 26 meter portion of the east side of it still survives. This portion of the convent wall follows the ruins of the wall of the second Byzantine-era church, on which the present day church was also built. The line of the wall continued to a tower in the southeast corner of the convent, the ruins of which today lie at the entrance to the Franciscan garden.

The 1949-53 excavations by Fr. Sylvester Saller in the area of the convent, coupled with recent

The Crusader room has been transformed into a chapel.





excavations, have uncovered parts of the cloister as well as an entrance to the upper floor of the convent. The convent was 62.5 meters wide (east to west) and 50 meters long (north to south). Building on the slope involved terracing the hill, so the rooms on the ground floor became the foundations of the rooms on the upper floors. The ground floor rooms are the only ones that survive. The cloister was on the highest terrace, on the west, and was surrounded by a 4.5 meter wide portico. Still visible today are three entrances from the cloister to the convent: one led to the (now

At left: One of the openings that led directly from the Crusader room to the outside, before the eastern rooms were built.

Below: Fragment of the 4th c. mosaic, with remnants of the Byzantine wall around it.



completely destroyed) upper floor; another led to a lower level, where portions of a long, vaulted, north-south oriented room have survived. The stones here are typical of the craftsmanship of the Crusader period, and have numerous masons' marks. There most likely was a third entrance, that led directly into the nearby fourth church.

During the excavations, many architectural elements were found, including carved marble capitals from double columns. Of extraordinary interest is the recent discovery of the north-east corner of the cloister, and a portion of a staircase that



Right: The ruins of the long vaulted hall of the convent, (oriented north-south).

Below: What remains of the entrance to the upper floors of the convent, as seen from the cloister portico.



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led from this area to the Tomb of Lazarus, giving the nuns direct access from the convent. In the rubble along this staircase, fragments of what must have been two very beautifully carved marble capitals were found, each bearing a story from Jesus's childhood, inspired by the Gospels. Despite the damage, one can easily recognize "The Massacre of the Innocents by King Herod" on one, and on the other "The Flight into Egypt".



Below: The staircase leading directly from the cloister of the Benedictine convent to the Tomb of Lazarus.





Opposite page: Crusader-era carved decoration..

This page: Carved marble capital and architectural element; one with a snake, the other with decorative motifs.



Below: Part of the northeast corner of the cloister.



THE OLIVE OIL MILL

In one of the vaulted rooms on the ground floor of the convent is an olive oil press. The hall was built in the medieval period, but the space has seen many historical periods. The even, hewn stone slabs to the right of the entrance were laid directly onto the solid rock, and probably date from the Crusader era. The foundations of the south wall, running west-east, are also from this period.

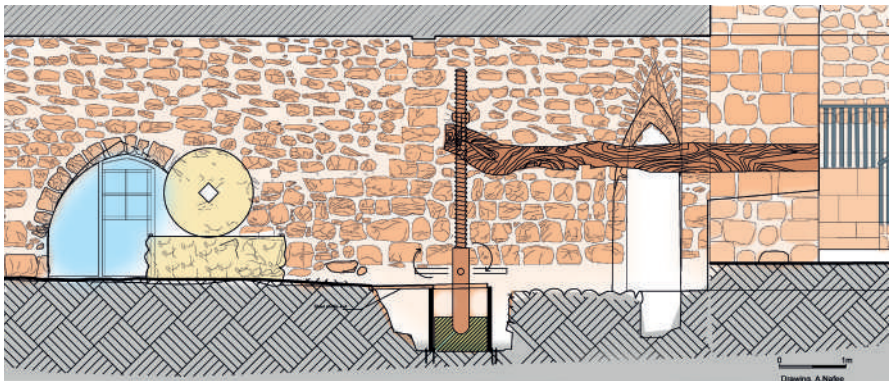
Interestingly, the builders positioned the north wall of this hall about half a meter north of the foundations of a Byzantine-era wall, which runs parallel. This is why part of the Byzantine structure's mosaic floor is still visible on the left of the hall's entrance. This mosaic also has evidence of later restorations, and continues up under the Crusader wall. Part of it is visible through a specially-made modern opening in the wall, near the electrical panel. This wall was probably installed in the Mamluk period to support the current

half-height barrel vault, which divided the room into two spaces, one on top of the other. It is also possible that an original Crusader vault was lost in the destruction of the convent by Saladin.

The room could have been transformed into an oil mill in the 17th century. The inhabitants of Bethany call it the "Abu Dawas oil mill" (perhaps the name of the family that operated it). Near the entrance to the room, in the ceiling, is an opening through which the sacks of olives were probably passed for processing in the mill. In fact, the upper room had an easily accessible entrance directly onto the road.

In 1954, with the construction of the new St. Lazarus Monastery, the east wall of the hall was built, with a door in the center, to connect old spaces with new. The foundations of the Byzantine wall are visible here also.

The room has all the characteristic elements of an oil mill. There





Left: Illustration of the components of the oil press.

Above: The threaded screw of the olive press, post-restoration.

HOW AN OIL MILL WORKS

The oil press's grindstone.

AFTER HARVESTING THE OLIVES AND REMOVING ANY REMAINING LEAVES AND TWIGS, THE OLIVES WERE PLACED ON THE HORIZONTAL STONE OF THE PRESS. A LARGE, VERTICALLY-ORIENTED WHEEL-LIKE STONE SERVED AS THE GRINDSTONE. AN AXLE PASSING THROUGH A HOLE IN THE CENTER OF THE GRINDSTONE ALLOWED IT TO ROLL OVER THE HORIZONTAL STONE IN A CIRCULAR MOTION. AN ANIMAL WAS HARNESSSED TO THE MECHANISM, AND CIRCLED THE PRESS TO OPERATE IT; SOMETIMES IT WAS RUN BY A MAN. IN SOME MILLS, TWO CIRCULAR WHEELS WERE PLACED ON THE AXLE. THIS WAS THE FIRST PHASE OF OLIVE PROCESSING—THE CRUSHING. IN THE SECOND PHASE, THE CRUSHED OLIVES WERE PLACED IN CYLINDRICAL FILTERING VESSELS (*FISCOLI*), WHICH WERE USUALLY MADE OF STRAW OR JUTE. THE *FISCOLI* WERE THEN POSITIONED ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER BENEATH THE PRESS, WHICH CONSISTED OF A LONG THREADED POLE HINGED INTO THE WALL THROUGH A HORIZONTAL WOODEN TRUNK, WHICH ACTED AS A LEVER AND ALLOWED THE PRESS TO MOVE UPWARDS OR DOWNWARDS. AT THE BASE OF THE WOODEN





POLE IS A HOLE WITH A WOODEN SHAFT THROUGH IT, TO HELP ROTATE THE SCREW AND LOWER THE LARGE POLE DOWNWARDS. THIS WAS USUALLY DONE BY ONE OR TWO MEN. THE POLE WAS LOWERED, APPLYING AND MAINTAINING PRESSURE ON THE *FISCOLI* UNTIL ALL THE LIQUID WAS EXTRACTED FROM THE OLIVES. THESE LIQUIDS COLLECTED IN THE SETTLING TANK, IN THE WEST OF THE ROOM. THEY WERE THEN PLACED IN LARGE VATS, WHERE THEY REMAINED MATURING, UNTIL THE LESS-DENSE OIL SEPARATED COMPLETELY FROM THE WATER, AND ROSE TO THE SURFACE TO BE REMOVED.

COMPARED TO MODERN PROCESSING METHODS, EXPELLING THE OIL WITH HEAVY STONE PRESSES WAS VERY SLOW. IT IS ALSO DONE COLD, INSTEAD OF BEING SWEATED OUT WITH BOILING WATER, WHICH INCREASES THE CHANCE OF OXIDATION AND SPOILS THE TASTE OF THE OIL. TO PROCESS A TON OF OLIVES WITH GRINDSTONES AND A WOODEN PRESS, LIKE THE ONE PICTURED HERE, TOOK SIX HOURS; NEARLY THREE TIMES LONGER THAN MODERN METHODS. HOWEVER, THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM, THOUGH TIME-CONSUMING, IS MORE RESPECTFUL OF THE OLIVE FRUIT.

The oil mill; the Crusader period stone floor is visible in the foreground.

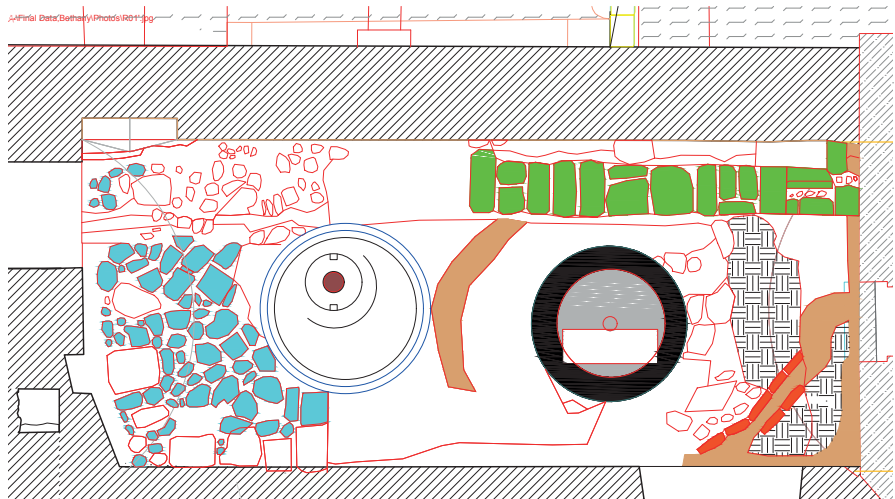
V are several different types of mills in Palestine—all quite similar—but the type of press in this mill is quite rare in Palestine. It is distinguished by having a "worm screw" to assist in applying the pressure. The earliest examples date back to Roman times, and this type of press remained in use until the early twentieth century.

On the floor you can see the colored grout used in the recent restoration to delineate the historical phases and highlight the ancient ruins below, such as the remnants of the Byzantine wall. The grout also highlights evidence of how the rooms were used, such as the trail in the rock worn by the animals that walked continually around the press. The floor was kept separate from the wall to allow moisture to escape more easily from the

walls and the ground below, filling the separation channel with white grout. The most complex conservation work was carried out on the wooden structure of the press, which, although severely damaged, was able to be cleaned and reinforced.

An added feature of the mill room is the digital video projected under the vaulting of the east wall, describing the stages of olive oil production, beginning with the harvest, and with an engaging explanation of how the various elements of the mill room function.

Diagram of the excavation of the hall. You can see the elements of the oil mill and the ancient remains of the Byzantine masonry in green, of the Crusader pavement in blue and channels in red-brown.



CRUSADER ROOM MODERN DAY CHAPEL

At the end of the oil mill room is an arched doorway leading to a small barrel-vaulted room. This little hall has been transformed many times in its history—the northwest vault was completely collapsed; but many Crusader period architectural elements remain. To support the surviving part of the vault, a large, modern pillar was inserted near the room's entrance, but in a rather crude way—allowing the east section of the room to be used, but totally abandoning the destroyed west section. Excavations in 2018 exposed all the surfaces of the room, including the west wall, where rock can still be seen at the top, and a very small door was discovered below, leading west.

The restoration allowed the room to be used as a chapel, after properly consolidating the portion of the collapsed vault. At certain times of the year there are so many pilgrims arriving and requesting to perform religious functions, that this chapel also is often pressed into use, along with the Church and main chapel.

THE "SOUTH PASSAGEWAY"

Exit the mill room through the left door. This leads to the "south passageway". In Byzantine times it was a rectangular room—perhaps a chapel—parallel to the first 4th c. church and its atrium. This space was probably accessed through the portico

The small crusader hall, recovered through archaeological excavations and restoration.





of the atrium. Part of this room extends under the current south wall. Remnants of the mosaic floor can be seen along the south wall and in the western part of the north wall. The mosaic is finely executed, with small tiles; subsequent restorations are characterized by the use of larger tiles. As part of the “Hospitalable Bethany” project, this mosaic was reconstructed according to the original design, but with a neutral-colored mortar; thus the ancient portions are highlighted, making it easier to understand how the space might have looked in Byzantine times. This space was also used in the second version of the church, in

Left: The “south passageway” mosaic before restoration.

Below: The mosaic after reconstruction and restoration.



the 6th century. In the Crusader period, the south wall was rebuilt and reduced. The north wall separated the corridor from the atrium, transforming the area into a passageway between the convent and the church. The arches and the lower parts of the walls that supported the roof are still visible.

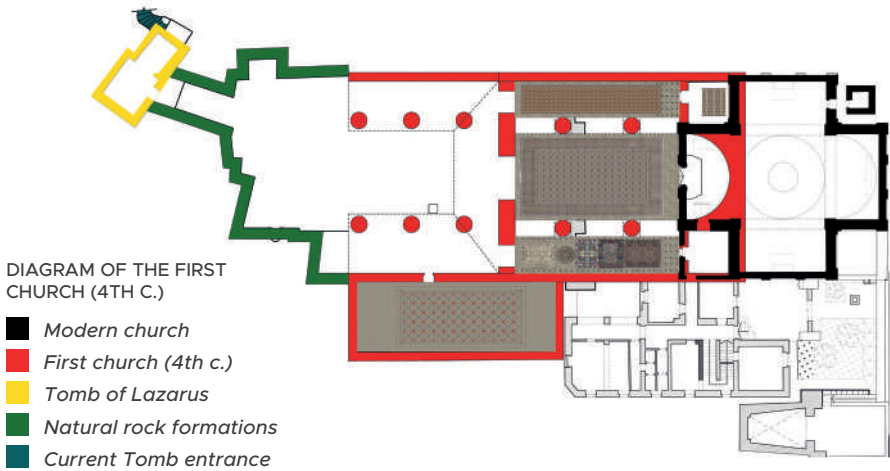
REMNANTS OF THE ANCIENT CHURCHES

Exit the "south passageway" into the square of the modern Franciscan church of St. Lazarus. It can also be accessed from the tourist bus lot, via the garden. There are

Right: Column and base from the first Byzantine church (4th c.).

Below: Reconstruction of the first Byzantine church, from the Tomb of Lazarus.





various excavated remnants identifying the location of the 4th century church that flanked the Tomb of Lazarus on the east, and which had been rebuilt a second and third time by the 12th century.

The first church was built near the Tomb of Lazarus, sometime be-

tween 333 and 390AD, most likely around 380AD. It was relatively small in comparison to the later churches. It had a basilica plan with two rows of stone columns, which divided the nave into three aisles, the central

Ruined north wall of the first three churches.





being the widest. The capitals were decorated in the Corinthian style and supported stone arches. The roof structure was made of wood. The facade of the first church faced west, and stood beyond the walls of the second and third churches (ruins of which still remain); so the first church was about 5 meters closer to the Tomb than the later versions. A 16-meter-long atrium connected the first church to the Tomb. This area was probably used for outdoor ceremonies. As in other ancient Christian buildings, the shrine was therefore external to the church.

Left: A broken column under the pillar of a subsequent church testifies to the previous church's collapse due to an earthquake.

Below: Modern church square surrounded by the ruins of the walls and pillars of the ancient churches. The portals in the pavement reveal 4th c. mosaics.



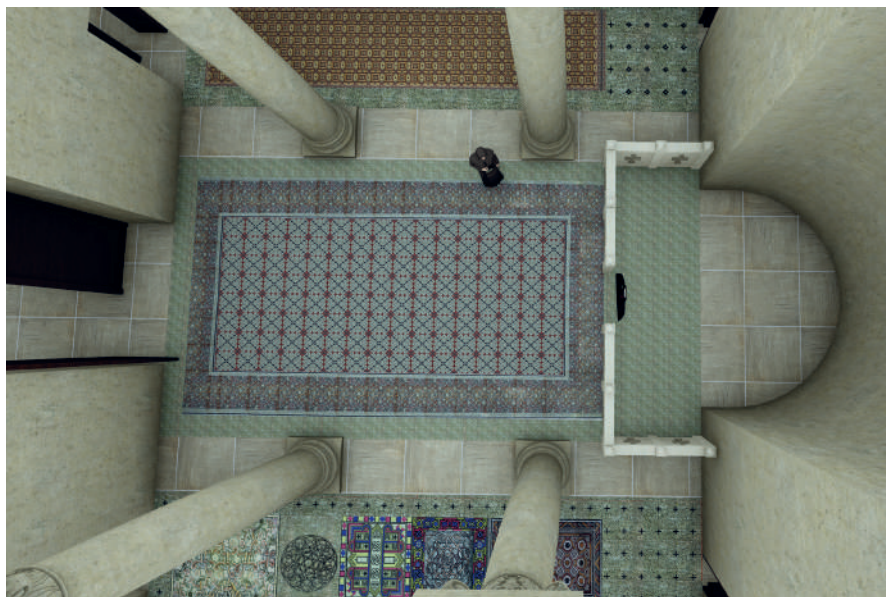
The modern church square is flanked by the foundations of the north wall and, near the two steps, the south wall. The second and third churches were built on these same foundations; the walls establishing the width of the churches, which has remained constant.

The pillars that are located in the center of the square belong to the second church, presumably built between 551-565, after the first church was destroyed by one of the many earthquakes that hit Palestine in the 5th and 6th centuries. This destruction of the first church is evidenced by pieces of columns and stones embedded under the pillars of the second church.

Portals placed into in the pavement of the square show parts of the splendid mosaic floors of the first

church. These 4th c. floors were oriented west to east, and entirely decorated with mosaics. Large portions of these original mosaics survive, preserved under a modern floor, giving us an idea of what the entire decorative program must have been like; the portals show small examples. The decoration was entirely geometric, with different motifs in the nave and side aisles. A wide variety of colored tesserae, or small tiles, were used, most often white, red, black, yellow and blue. The north aisle (on the left when facing the modern church's facade) was decorated with a continuous framed panel with a simple white mosaic pattern. The nave aisle had a large geometric panel

Digital reconstruction of the interior of the 4th c. church, with the mosaic flooring.





THE MOSAICS

OF PARTICULAR INTEREST ARE THE MOSAICS OF THE FIRST CHURCH (BYZANTINE-ERA); PORTIONS OF WHICH ARE VISIBLE IN THE SQUARE OF THE MODERN CHURCH. REMNANTS OF THE SECOND CHURCH MOSAICS (ALSO BYZANTINE-ERA), AS WELL AS A FEW FRAGMENTS OF THE MEDIEVAL ONES, ALLOW US TO FOLLOW THE DEVELOPMENT OF THESE SACRED BUILDINGS THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES.

THE DECORATED FLOOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH (4TH C.), WHICH INCLINES SLIGHTLY FROM WEST TO EAST, HAS BEEN PRESERVED FOR CENTURIES UNDER THE FLOORS OF THE LATER CHURCHES, EXCEPT FOR PARTS OF THE SANCTUARY AND BETWEEN THE COLUMNS, WHICH WERE INSTEAD DESTROYED BY THE SUBSEQUENT CONSTRUCTIONS. THE FLOOR'S MOSAIC DECORATION IS ENTIRELY GEOMETRIC, WITH DIFFERING MOTIFS IN THE CENTRAL AND SIDE AISLES.

THE CENTRAL AISLE IS DECORATED IN A SINGLE MOSAIC PANEL, COMPOSED OF SQUARES CONTAINING A SERIES OF RADIATING WHITE SCALES IN THE SHAPE OF A FLOWER, ON A RED BACKGROUND. AT THE CENTER OF EACH WHITE ROUNDED

Detail of the mosaic in the central nave. On the left you can see the wide border that surrounded a field of squares filled with scales.

In this photo of the 1949-53 excavations, one can see that the mosaic floor of the first Byzantine church's center aisle had survived almost completely intact.

SCALE OR "PETAL" IS A SMALL, FIVE TILE CROSS, OR FOUR TILE FLOWER, ALTERNATING BETWEEN RED AND BLACK. THE SQUARES OF FLOWERS ARE CONTIGUOUS AND CROSSED BY A DOUBLE GRID; ROWS OF CONCAVE SQUARES ON A RED GROUND ARE OVERLAID BY ROWS OF CROSSED BLACK SPINDLES, WHICH FORM THE DIAGONAL GRID. THE BORDER, WHICH IS QUITE WIDE (115 CM), IS COMPOSED OF CURVED AND INTERLACED CORDONS WITH EYELET KNOTS, ENCIRCLED AT THE PRIMARY POINTS OF INTERSECTION.

THE FLOOR MOSAICS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ALTAR ARE SIMILAR, BUT ON A WHITE BACKGROUND (IT LOOKS GREEN ON THE RECONSTRUCTION). ON THE RIGHT ARE SEVEN ROWS OF BLACK CROSSES, AND ON THE LEFT, A ROW OF SMALL RED SQUARES AND THE BLACK CROSSES. THIS BLACK CROSS STYLE ALSO FORMS THE BORDERS OF REST OF THE NAVE. THE LEFT, OR NORTH AISLE IS ALSO DECORATED WITH A SINGLE CONTINUOUS PANEL, WHICH WAS COMMON IN BYZANTINE-ERA PALESTINE. THIS PANEL IS COMPOSED OF OCTAGONS SET AT RIGHT ANGLES, FORMING A HERRINGBONE PATTERN OF OBLONG BLOCKS AND HEXAGONS (PHOTO, P 83). THIS PANEL OF WHITE, BLACK AND RED TESSERAEE WAS DAMAGED AND LATER REPAIRED USING ONLY WHITE TILES. THE DECORATION OF THE SOUTH AISLE DIFFERED FROM THE OTHERS BOTH IN VARIETY OF DESIGNS AND COLOR AND SIZE



Mosaic floor of the south aisle, during the 1949-53 excavations. In the foreground is damaged third panel.

OF TESSERAE—HERE THEY ARE MUCH SMALLER. AT THE TIME OF THE EXCAVATIONS, FIVE PANELS OF VARYING SIZES WERE UNCOVERED.

THE FIRST PANEL (NEAREST THE ALTAR) WAS RECTANGULAR, WITH A DOUBLE-STRAND TWISTED RIBBON OR *GUILLOCHE* FORMING THE BORDER. THE FIELD WAS MULTI-COLORED, WITH OVALS OF CONTRASTING COLORS ON A DARK BACKGROUND IN AN ORTHOGONAL (SET AT RIGHT ANGLES) COMPOSITION OF CONCAVE OCTAGONS, INTERLACED WITH CORDS.

THE SECOND PANEL IS SQUARE. IT IS A MIXED COMPOSITION AROUND A CENTRAL KNOT; A STAR OF TWO SQUARES AND A ROSETTE OF EIGHT CIRCLES IS INSCRIBED IN A LARGER CIRCLE. THE BORDER IS FILLED WITH A CHAIN OF STRAIGHT AND DIAGONAL KNOTTED CIRCLES AND SQUARES.

THE THIRD PANEL WAS RUINED WHEN A CISTERN WAS DUG



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Below left: Detail, first panel, south aisle.

Below right: Detail, second panel, south aisle.

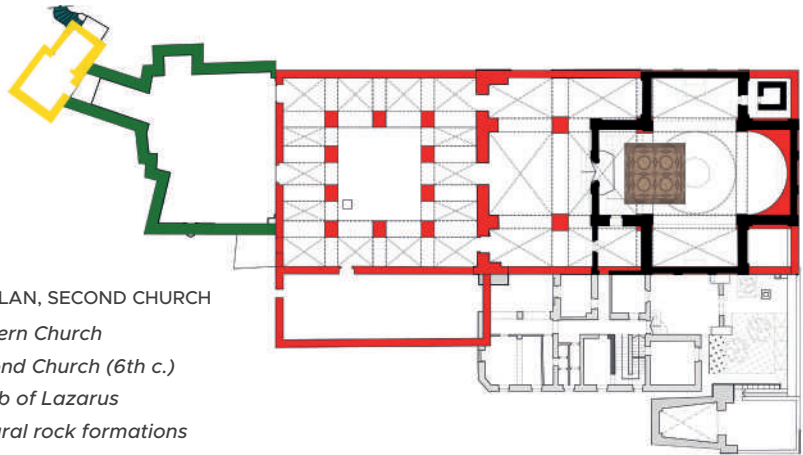
THROUGH IT. HOWEVER, WE CAN SEE THAT IT IS SIMILAR TO A FLOOR PANEL IN THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY IN BETHLEHEM: SQUARE, WITH HEART-SHAPED CORNER KNOTS AND NOTCHES, SUBTENDED BY AN IRREGULAR EIGHT-POINTED STAR, INSCRIBED IN A SQUARE. IT IS BORDERED BY SQUARES ALTERNATING WITH LOZENGE-INSCRIBED RECTANGLES. THE FOURTH AND FIFTH PANELS ALSO ONLY SURVIVE IN FRAGMENTS. COVERED BY THE NARTHEX OF THE SUBSEQUENT CHURCHES, PARTS OF THESE MOSAICS ARE NOW VISIBLE THROUGH PROTECTIVE GLASS PORTALS IN THE FLOOR. REMNANTS OF THE FOURTH PANEL TELL US THAT IT WAS A CROWN COMPOSITION, PROBABLY ROUND, COMPOSED OF CIRCLES AND SQUARES ON THE DIAGONAL—ALSO SIMILAR TO A MOSAIC IN THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY. THE FIFTH PANEL RESEMBLED THE INTERLACING CORDS IN THE BORDER OF THE CENTRAL AISLE PANEL, WHOSE WESTERN EDGE IS ALSO VISIBLE THROUGH THE PROTECTIVE GLASS OF THE NARTHEX FLOOR. OF THE TWO ROOMS THAT FLANKED THE APSE, ONLY THE FLOOR OF THE NORTHERN ROOM HAS SURVIVED. IT IS AN ORTHOGONAL COMPOSITION OF STARS OF EIGHT TANGENT LOZENGES FOR TWO TOPS, FORMING LARGE STRAIGHT SQUARES AND SMALL SQUARES ON THE DIAGONALS. SOUTH OF THE ATRIUM (WHICH WAS AT THE FRONT OF THE CHURCHES) WAS ANOTHER ROOM, PERHAPS A SIDE CHAPEL, WITH A MOSAIC FLOOR. ONLY THREE FRAGMENTS OF THIS MOSAIC SURVIVE; IN THE NORTHWEST CORNER, IN THE ENTRANCE TO THE CRUSADER ROOM/CHAPEL, AND ALONG ITS WALLS. THESE FRAGMENTS TELL US THAT THE MOSAICS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH ARE VERY SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE



Mosaics in the north aisle, first church.

CENTRAL NAVE, BUT WITH A NARROWER BORDER OF FOUR-STRAND POLYCHROME *GUILLOCHE* ON A DARK BACKGROUND. THE OUTER BORDER IS WHITE AND, AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE CRUSADER HALL ON THE RIGHT, WE CAN SEE THAT IT WAS DECORATED WITH A ROW OF ALTERNATING COLORED SQUARES CONNECTED BY A LINE OF BLACK TILES ON THE DIAGONAL. FRAGMENTS OF THE SECOND CHURCH'S MOSAIC FLOOR ARE STILL VISIBLE NEAR THE PILLARS, AS WELL AS INSIDE THE CURRENT CHURCH. THEY ARE CRUDER THAN THE EARLIER MOSAICS, MOSTLY WHITE, AND MADE UP OF LARGE AND IRREGULAR TESSERAE. ONLY THE CENTRAL AISLE MOSAIC HAD ADDED GEOMETRIC MOTIFS, PARTIALLY VISIBLE TODAY THROUGH A GRATE IN THE FLOOR OF THE CURRENT CHURCH. IT IS A SIMPLE GEOMETRIC COMPOSITION OF LARGE CIRCLES THAT ENCLOSE A SMALLER CIRCLE AND LOZENGES ON A WHITE BACKGROUND, WITH FRUIT AND LEAVES IN THE OUTER SPACES. THE CORD FORMS A SQUARE OF EYELET KNOTS AT THE TWO SURVIVING CORNERS. THE PANEL IS ENCLOSED BY A TWO-STRAND POLYCHROME *GUILLOCHE* ON A LIGHT BACKGROUND. THIS BUILDING MUST HAVE BEEN IN USE FOR QUITE SOME TIME, AS THERE ARE MANY REPAIRS IN THIS FLOOR, USING NON-MATCHING TESSERAE AND EVEN PIECES OF MARBLE OR STONE. ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE UNCOVERED A FEW REMNANTS OF ANOTHER COMPLETELY WHITE FLOOR MOSAIC, AT A LEVEL HIGHER THAN THE MOSAICS OF THE SECOND CHURCH. IT IS ALSO QUITE ROUGH, AND IS THOUGHT TO DATE TO THE MEDIEVAL BUILDING PHASE, OR WHAT WE CALL THE "THIRD CHURCH".





FLOOR PLAN, SECOND CHURCH

- Modern Church*
- Second Church (6th c.)*
- Tomb of Lazarus*
- Natural rock formations*
- Current entrance to the Tomb*

surrounded by a wide border. The floor of the south aisle was divided into five different-sized geometric panels, only portions of which survive. Of the two rooms flanking the apse, only the floor of the northern room has survived.

The second church was built in line with the first church's side (northern and southern) walls, but its body was extended to the east by 13 meters, onto newly laid foundations. Its apse reached the same height

Digital reconstruction of the second church.



as the eastern end of the current church, (as one can see when inside the church.) This second church had a total length of 27 meters, and its west wall foundations are under the wall that one sees in the square when looking towards the mosque. Thus the area between the church and the Tomb was becoming bigger, perhaps to accommodate the increasingly large crowds participating in the liturgies of Holy Week. According to accounts from that era, the faithful filled the fields around the monastery near the church also.

The floor plan was always basilica-shaped, with three nave aisles paved with mosaics—glimpses of which can be seen near the pillars and in the corners of the walls of the modern square. These less refined mosaics are mostly white, made from larger and more irregular



Above: In the corners of the square, above the more refined mosaics of the first church, are remnants of the second church's rougher mosaics.

Below: Remnants of the walls and pillars of the second church, in the square of the modern church.



tesserae, and laid at a height higher than the floor of the current church. The floor of the second church, and consequently that of the third, was in fact as much as 40 cm higher than that of the first church. A major change came with the replacement of the columns with stone pillars, to support the sloping wooden and tiled roof, while four larger pillars supported a dome.

The second church remained in use until the 12th century, when the region came under the control of the Crusaders.

After the arrival of the Crusaders, the church was restored, consolidated and reinforced with buttresses, the ruins of which can still be seen in the north wall. These architectural elements gave a new look to the church.



Above: Inside the narthex.

Below: What remains of the facades of the second and third churches.



The architecture of the Crusader period revolved around the use of stone, especially for the domes and ceiling vaults. Since the second church had a lighter, wooden roof, the Crusaders built new pillars against the existing ones in order to support the new stone roof. The "reinforced" pillars in the north wall measured 1.8 meters in diameter; the previous ones were only half a meter. The inside pillars were also reinforced, from 1.4 to 1.7 meters; the earlier square pillars were thus made rectangular. Some of the stones from these pillars, visible today in the modern square, still have traces of white plaster and frescoes.

Let's look at the narthex in detail. Even though less than half of it survives, it is still possible to envision how it might have looked in medieval

times. It had three arches opening west into the arcade surrounding the atrium. Only the southernmost of these arches remains; it led into the south part of the arcade. The middle arch, aligned with the central door of the church, opened into the center of the arcade, and the northern arch was the counterpart of the southern one. The narthex today is back to its original height, although it had once been divided into two levels sometime during the Ottoman period. That's why there's a fireplace high up in the south wall. The atrium arch is now walled up. On the ground, two carved stone floor slabs look like they might have covered tombs in the floor, but they were commemorative only—there

The Ottoman period fireplace, high up in the formerly divided narthex.



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were never any tombs underneath. They most likely were dedicated to local priests or nuns of that time. The glass portions of the floor allow us to admire the mosaics of the south aisle of the first church. In the north of the narthex, fragments of the central aisle of the first church tell us that it was closer to the Tomb than subsequent churches.

At that time, access to the rock-cut Tomb of Lazarus was still through the open atrium beyond these three arches. The arcade around the atrium of the first church was topped with a tiled, wooden, roof-like structure. The atrium had a well to collect water—quite common in ancient churches. This atrium was enlarged in the second church, and its arcades built with stone pillars instead of columns, but it was still topped



Above: Memorial stone slab, formerly set into the floor of the crusader-era church.

Below: Fragment of the first church nave mosaic, under the narthex of later churches.



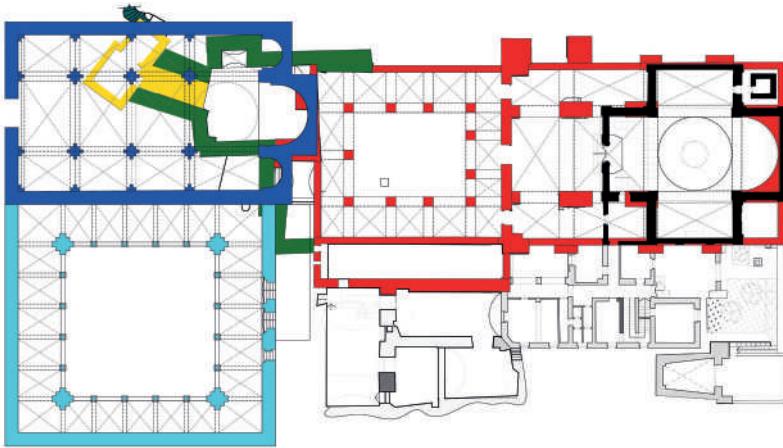


DIAGRAM OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH CHURCHES AND CLOISTER OF THE BENEDICTINE CONVENT

- Modern Church*
- Third Church (12th c.)*
- Fourth Church (12th c.)*
- Cloister (12th c.)*
- Tomb of Lazarus*
- Natural rock formations*
- Current Tomb entrance*

with a tiled wooden structure. It still had a functioning well.

In the Crusader period, the atrium arcades were still constructed with stone pillars, but now the roof was

Traces of a medieval fresco on a pillar from the third church.





made of vaulted stone, instead of wood. Another major change was to the space between the atrium and the access to the Tomb of Lazarus: three barrel vaults with large arches were built, and still exist today, though inside the al Ûzayr mosque. The central arch was on the same level as the atrium, thus over the entrance to the Tomb, while the north and south arches were built at a higher level, above the rock. Each arch supported an apse of the fourth church, which—for the first time—was built directly over the Tomb. The al Ûzayr mosque can be visited

Left: In the mosque of al-Ûzayr one can still see the arches and vault of the medieval crypt in front of the tomb of St. Lazarus.

Below: Interior of the al-Ûzayr mosque. In the background is the Ottoman facade of the first mosque.



outside of prayer hours, by asking permission from those in charge of the mosque. These people are kind and welcoming, so please dress appropriately and remember to remove your shoes before entering. Women are asked to keep their heads covered inside the mosque.

A fourth church was then built, during the Crusader period, and directly over the Tomb of Lazarus. It had a nave with three aisles and a central dome. Very little remains of its walls; the foundations of its central and south apses can be seen above the roof of the mosque. These two apses were discovered in 1954 when the new minaret of the mosque was built. This fourth church was also likely used by the Benedictine nuns of the adjacent Convent of St. Lazarus, to directly access the Tomb from the convent.



Above: Arched substructure that supported the south aisle of the fourth church.

Below: Digital reconstruction of the fourth church—convent tower in the background.



ST. LAZARUS CHURCH

Back in the square of the modern church, look up and admire the mosaic panels positioned high in the facade, representing Lazarus, Martha and Mary. Then look down again—the bronze church portal is divided into six equal panels, and decorated with braids and circles in high relief; symbols of life and immortality. At the bottom right is the date of construction: 1953.

Once inside, go to the northwest corner, to see the remnants of the first church's apse wall, under an iron grate. Nearby, to the south, is another grate protecting a mosaic fragment from the central aisle of the second church. It is sparsely decorated, mostly with geometric elements and a few leafy motifs, using large tiles and few colors.



Above: Facade of the modern day St. Lazarus church.

Below: Mosaics from the second church.



While not much remains of this mosaic, we can still see that it has had numerous restorations, indicating that the second church had been in use for quite some time.

The current Catholic Church of St. Lazarus was built for the Custody of the Holy Land by the architect Antonio Barluzzi, on the site of the first three churches, after the archaeological excavations were completed. This new St. Lazarus Church was consecrated on April 2, 1954. The architect recalled the sadness of the death and the joy of the Raising of Lazarus by designing a building without windows, as if it were a funerary monument—but with a single beam of light coming from the opening in the dome. The church has a Greek cross plan, is of the same width as the ancient churches, and is surmounted by a



Above: The portal of the modern church.

Below: First church's apse being excavated. Mosaics from the second church can be seen at right.





coffered dome with a large oculus. Foundations of the apse of the second church are visible in the sanctuary. The frontal of the main altar, by Friulian sculptor Aurelio Mistruzzi, depicts two angels supporting the edges of a cloth, near the empty Tomb of Lazarus. Two marble medallions, one with the image of Mary and one with Martha's, adorn the side altars; they are the work of Venetian sculptor Antonio Minghetti.

Left: Side altar sculpted medallions.

Below: Interior of the modern St. Lazarus Church.





ESUS. EGO SUM RESURRECTIO ET VITA. JOH.

THE MODERN MOSAICS

Above: "Jesus Enters Bethany" the mosaic above the main altar of the modern church.

Below: Detail from the mosaic "The Raising of Lazarus", above the right side altar.



THE MOSAICS INSIDE ST. LAZARUS CHURCH DEPICT THE FOUR GOSPEL EVENTS THAT TAKE PLACE IN BETHANY: ABOVE THE ALTAR, "JESUS ENTERS BETHANY", RIGHT, "THE RAISING OF LAZARUS", LEFT, "JESUS AT THE HOUSE OF MARTHA AND MARY", AND ABOVE THE ENTRANCE "JESUS AT THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE LEPER", WHERE MARY ANOINTS HIM WITH NARD OIL. THE MOSAICS WERE DESIGNED BY ROMAN ARTIST CESARE VAGARINI, AND PRODUCED IN ITALY BY THE MONTICELLI MOSAIC WORKSHOP. THE DOME'S COFFERS ALSO CONTAIN MOSAICS OF DOVES, FLOWERS AND FLAMES ON GOLD BACKGROUNDS; THE DOME ITSELF IS RINGED WITH THIS LATIN INSCRIPTION, FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME, EVEN IF HE DIES, WILL LIVE, AND WHOEVER LIVES AND BELIEVES IN ME, HE WILL NOT DIE FOREVER". ON THE REAR FACADE IS THE NAME OF THE CHURCH FLANKED BY TWO ANGELS, WHO WITH TRUMPETS ANNOUNCE THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

THE MOSQUE OF AL-ÛZAYR

The *maqam* or shrine of al-Ûzayr was constructed over several centuries, from the Mamluk period until today. It incorporates the ruins of the medieval fourth church—built over the Tomb of Lazarus—as well as the atrium that led from the third church to the Tomb and the crusader crypt.

We can see from archival photographs that the old minaret of the mosque was not too tall, square-shaped, domed and had an external staircase; it was replaced with the current minaret in 1954. Throughout the twentieth century, the *maqam* had been the subject of much maintenance and restoration, but of the greatest impact was the major construction work carried out at the beginning

of the twenty-first century, which gave us the mosque (muslim place of prayer) we see today. These new constructions covered over open areas inside the older parts of the *maqam*, in particular what remained of the atrium of the ancient churches, in order to gain more space for prayer and other services. Consolidation works were also carried out on the old walls. The ancient atrium was covered by a new upper floor, above which is an octagonal dome with eight rectangular windows topped with pointed arches.

Below: Exterior and entrance of the al-Ûzayr mosque.

Opposite page: Interior of the al-Ûzayr mosque.





WHAT TO SEE NEAR BETHANY

After the ancient village, there are other nearby sites one can visit. The "Stone of the Encounter", traditionally the spot where Martha met Jesus to tell him of Lazarus's death, can be reached on foot. However, the Fountain of the Apostles (*Ain al Hod*) and Pope's Hill can only be reached by car/taxi. Drive back along the road to Jerusalem; at the first roundabout take the second exit to the Fountain of the Apostles. For Pope's Hill, stay on the main road another 300 meters; at the orphan's school, make a left onto "the Pope's road". There are no signs after that, but people on the street can give further directions.

THE STONE OF THE ENCOUNTER

Jesus was a friend of Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary. When Lazarus fell ill, the sisters sent for Jesus—but Jesus chose not to come immediately, and Lazarus died. When Jesus arrived a few days later, Martha went to meet him at the entrance to the village to inform him of Lazarus's death. Here, according to the Christian tradition, is a stone called "The Stone of Encounter", where Jesus had sat when he met Martha. In the 4th century, Egeria wrote of a church marking the spot where Jesus had met Mary, about 500 steps west of the Tomb, towards Jerusalem. In the Crusader period,

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this meeting was commemorated by a stone positioned east of the village.

Currently this stone is protected on land owned by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, near the modern-day road to Jericho and the al-Iskhan roundabout. On the other side of the road, the Greek Orthodox church commemorates The Encounter with the church of Burj el-Hammar, which was built in 1882-83, on foundations that seem to belong to an earlier medieval structure. Burj el-Hammar has a single nave—wider than it is long—covered by a dome, with a large clover-shaped choir and a portico. The main apse protrudes through an external corniced wall, and two other apses through the side walls.

The Russian Orthodox Church also commemorates "The Stone of the



Above: Small chapel enclosing the "Stone of the Encounter" in the Russian mosqobia.

Below: The Greek Orthodox church of Burj el-Hammar .



Encounter", on the grounds of its large *mosqobia* (school for girls), which lies along the same main road to Jericho. A stone discovered here in 1934 bears an inscription in ancient Greek.

THE FOUNTAIN OF THE APOSTLES (AIN AL HOD) AND THE CARAVANSERAİ

The inhabitants of Bethany depended on water from wells dug near their homes and from springs near the village. In the east is a spring called *Bir al Aed*; near it is a round structure in the shape of a well, about 8 meters deep. Also nearby are the ruins of an ancient mosque. The villagers used this spring in times of drought, and *Bir al Aed* means "the font of water that never dries up" in Arabic.

The "Fountain of the Apostles" (*Ain al Hod*) is also located east of the village, in the valley below. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho first passed through the village of Bethany, then descended into this valley, and by this fountain, bringing to mind the spring Jesus and his disciples encountered on their journey from the River Jordan. The fountain has a well dating back to Roman times, which was also used in the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. Above it is an arched niche. Niccolò di Poggibonsi in the mid-14th century wrote:

"...one mile down in the valley, is a Frankish [Arabic] hotel; on the side of which there is a beautiful fountain..."

The Fountain of the Apostles.



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French physician Bremond wrote in 1679:

"We began the journey to Bethany, going to the Fountain of the Apostles, five miles east of Jerusalem, in a valley below Bethany; it is so named, because the Holy Apostles stopped there before entering Jerusalem. It has a beautiful stream of water, which passes under an arched wall, and falls into a vessel, which serves as refreshment for passengers, and as a watering hole for the beasts; and there is a small half-ruined khan, in which one shelters when it rains."

Right: The Bir al Aed spring.

Below: The Fountain of the Apostles, with the spring and the caravanserai, at the bottom of the valley.



Today at the bottom of the valley you can still see the ruins of the caravanserai or *khan* described by travelers. It was built near the spring in the Ottoman period, incorporating older ruins, perhaps from the Mamluk period. The *khan* was a place of hospitality for traveling merchants and their animals.

POPE HILL

The name dates back to 1964, when Pope Paul VI visited the Holy Land and King Hussein of Jordan offered him the hill as a gift. There are also ancient ruins on the hill, some dating back to the Roman and Byzantine periods.

Pope Hill.



Info

*The oil mill in the
Franciscan convent
of Bethany.*





I Where to eat in Bethany/al Azaria

Comfic Restaurant and Cafè

Manager: Hamid al-Natsheh

Open daily from noon to midnight.

Restaurant, grill, sandwiches, hookahs, hot and cold drinks, fruit cocktails and natural juices. Make a reservation and request typical Palestinian dishes like stuffed chicken, stuffed lamb, and stuffed neck of lamb; they also have ribs and all types of cuisine for special occasions. The dining area is quiet and the service is excellent. Located in the Samer Khalaf building, opposite the taxi at the Bulbul.

Information and Reservations:

Tel: 0522816666 & 0562777075

al Shaab Restaurant ("family style")

Manager: Mohamed Ibrahim (Abu Yousef)

It's easy to choose from the many popular Palestinian dishes on display in this restaurant. Several plates of typical local salads accompany the main course. Definitely order their *taboon* (warm traditional flatbreads). Popular, simple, no reservation required. Located in the Kabsa area near the Separation Wall.

Information:

Tel: 0568111270 & 0522605060

al Tarwa Restaurant

Manager: Nader Khalaf

Serves traditional Palestinian dishes, also hummus, falafel, *ful* (broad beans) and omelets. No reservation needed. Located next to Taxi al-Bulbul.

Information:

Tel: 0529480321 & 022793020



Al-Ezz House

Manager: Ayman Al-Mukhal

European-style restaurant, offering hot and cold drinks, exquisite cakes, several flavors of *shisha* (hookah), a full menu with excellent entrees. A quiet place that can accommodate large groups. Located behind the Bethany Municipal Building.

Information and reservations:

Tel: 0599753926 & 0598933814 & 0528339146

<https://www.facebook.com/betelezzcaffe/>



Restaurant Kaisar (Caesar)

Manager: Faisal Murar

This restaurant offers a wide selection of seafood and a variety of middle-eastern style grilled meats. Located at the Iskhan roundabout.

Information and reservations:

Tel: 0529500002002 & 0502161115

<https://www.facebook.com/CaesarRest/>



Lava Cafe & Chokolava

Manager: Moamen Abu Arafa

Specializing in Italian dishes and French desserts. Located at the Iskhan roundabout.

Information and reservations:

Tel: 0597345463

<https://www.facebook.com/lavacafe.bethany/>



The Shorouq Society for Women

Manager: Fatima Faraon

A Palestinian all-female cooperative interested in healthy eating. Try a typical home-cooked Palestinian meal. Women prepare traditional Palestinian dishes such as *makloba*, *msakhan*, *shishbarak*, *manakish* stuffed with *za'atar* or spinach, and various types of salad. Located along the main road opposite the Orthodox church and near the National Bank.

For information and reservations:

Tel: 022791551 & 0524860534 & 0598172312

Shopping



Martha and Mary Souvenir

Manager: Hashem Abu Ziyad

Middle-eastern handicrafts in olive wood; ceramics, accessories, icons and more. Located at the entrance of St. Lazarus Church, to the left of the tourist bus parking area.

Tel: 0525252036 & 0597607174



Al-Eizariya Souvenir

Manager: Ruslan Faraon

Middle-eastern objects and other souvenirs. Located on the road leading to the Tomb of Lazarus, near the al-Ùzayr mosque.

Tel: 0568111270 & 0522605060



Tomb of St. Lazarus Herbs and Spices

Manager: Kifah di Al-Mukhal

Essential oils, various types of spices, herbs, drinks and natural juices. Located on the road leading to the Tomb of Lazarus, after the al-Ùzayr mosque.

Tel: 0569971213



Michau Souvenir

Manager: Muhammad Alyan

Middle-eastern souvenirs. Located across from the Tomb of Lazarus.

Tel: 0529044402



Tomb of Lazarus Souvenir

Managed by Hussein Hamed

Middle-eastern souvenirs. Located across from the Tomb of Lazarus.

Tel: 0522524032



Notre Dame Souvenir

Manager: Adel Basa

Middle-eastern souvenirs. Located across from the Tomb of Lazarus.

Tel: 0524088985



The Shorouq Society for Women

Manager: Fatima Faraon

Palestinian non-profit committed to helping women build a better future. The women of this society produce and sell products inspired by the history of the village of Bethany:

- natural soaps made using rosemary, lavender, coffee, honey, turmeric, bay leaf, coconut oil; also mud from the Dead Sea
- essential oil of rosemary and lavender
- creams of various types: moisturizing, anti-wrinkle, relaxing, moisturizers for hands, sunburn relief, eczema treatments, avocado ointment
- Traditional Palestinian embroidery work

Located along the main road opposite the Orthodox church and near the National Bank.

Information and appointments:

Tel: 022791551 & 0524860534 & 0598172312



Association Al Hana

Manager: Ola Abu Damous

A women's non-profit that produces candles of different shapes and colors, as well as other traditional products.

Located near the al-Iskahn roundabout.

Tel: 0598617346 & 0598935810



Peace Center for Palestinian Handicrafts

Manager: Sawsan Khatib

Traditional Palestinian embroidery, traditional accessories and wood embroidery. Located across from St. Lazarus Church.

Tel: 0522821778 & 0595523504

