



Nebi Samuel Park

Mount Samuel, Mount of Joy

(National Park)

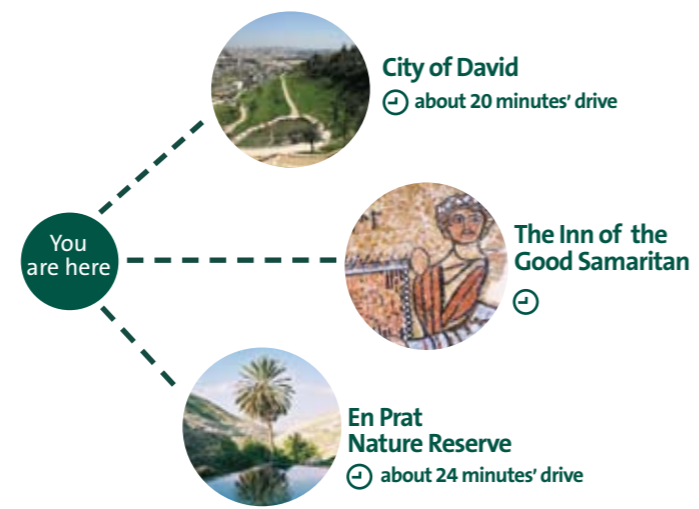
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Welcome to Nebi Samuel Park

Mount Samuel, Mount of Joy

I daresay there is nowhere in Palestine...or in the entire world, a sight like Nebi Samwil. Not because of its height... but because of its situation. And thus it seems like a center overlooking the best-known places on earth, like nowhere else... (from a description by the pilgrim Norman McCleod, 1884)

At 885 meters above sea level, Nebi Samuel Park controlled the ancient road (and controls the modern one as well) from Giv'at Ze'ev to Jerusalem.

“And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah” (1 Sam. 7:6).

The site is identified as the biblical Mizpah, in light of remains found from the time of the First Temple and the Second Temple, and is also the site mentioned in Nehemiah 3:15 ... **the ruler of the district of Mizpah**” and later, the Maccabees **“And they assembled together, and came to Mizpah over against Jerusalem: for in Mizpah was a place of prayer heretofore in Israel”** (Macc. I: 3, 46).

And Samuel died; and all Israel gathered themselves together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah (1 Sam. 25:1).

According to tradition, Nebi Samuel Park is also identified with **Rama**, Samuel's burial place. The anniversary of Samuel's death is marked on the 25th of the Hebrew month of Iyar. Samuel's tomb monument is located in a cave under the fortress that stands high on the hill here.

During the Byzantine period a monastery was built here in honor of Samuel the prophet. Later, in the Umayyad and Abbasid periods (the Early Muslim period), a pottery production center was built at Nebi Samuel Park. (Ovens and numerous pottery vessels from this period were uncovered in excavations of the site.) The most prominent remnant here is a mosque built over the remains of the Crusader fortress and church.

“And at Rama is the tomb of Samuel the Ramatite, and the tomb of Hannah in one fine house, and in front of the house is a mosque of the Ishmaelites. Near there is a spring and they say it is Hannah's ritual bath...and there is a synagogue there and more than a thousand Jews gather there...on the 25th of Iyar, the day of his death.”

(Description of a medieval Christian pilgrim)

Touring the site

The tour begins at the explanatory sign at the southeast entrance.

The remains seen here are of a residential quarter and main street under which ran a rainwater drainage channel. This is part of a large, densely inhabited settlement from Second Temple times whose dwellings, which had two stories and perhaps more, were built on terraces.

This settlement was established in the second century BCE (the Hellenistic, Second Temple period), apparently by the Seleucid king Antiochus III or Antiochus IV, and continued in existence until the time of the Hasmonean (Hellenistic) kingdom. The settlement was abandoned during the reign of King Alexander Jannaeus, perhaps because it was no longer needed to defend Jerusalem after Alexander expanded his realm.

Remains of a settlement from the Persian period were also found, apparently an administrative center for the province of Judah. Scholars have come to this conclusion based on jar handles stamped with the word *yahad*, found at the site.

In this area remnants were found of a settlement, from the First Temple period, beginning in the eighth century CE (the time of the kingdom of Judah).

This site is mentioned in the Bible in the context of the Babylonian exile, which began at this time:

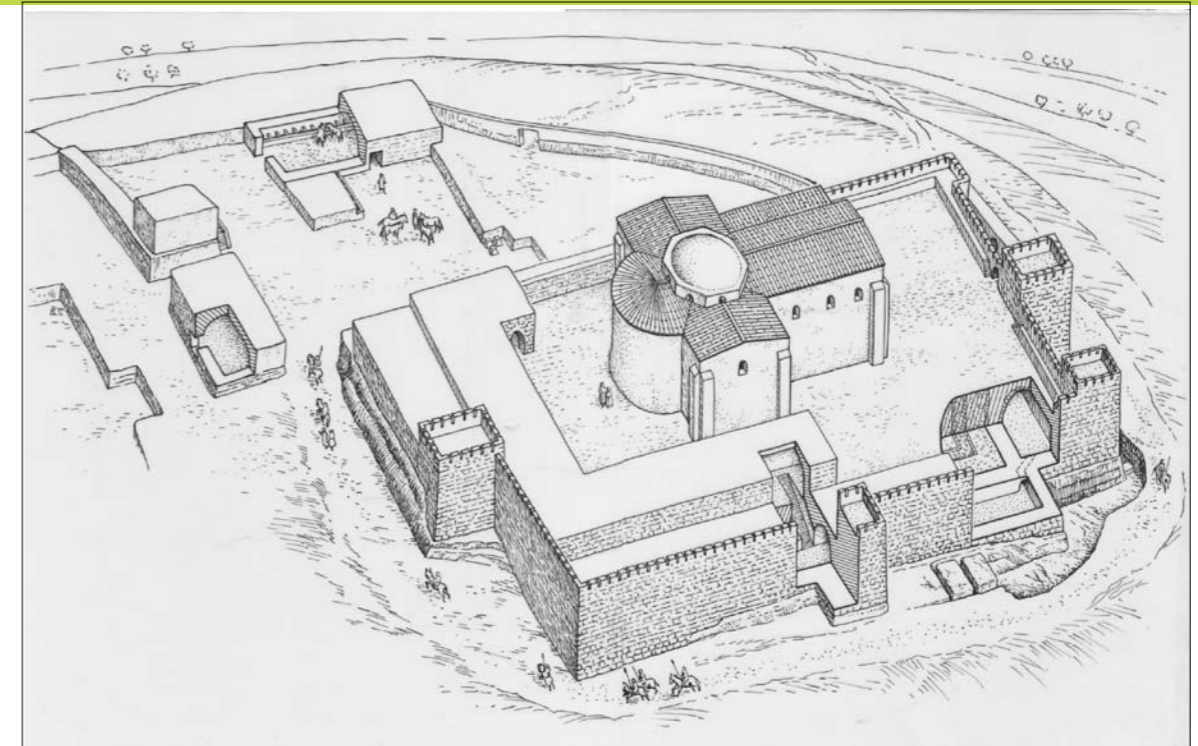
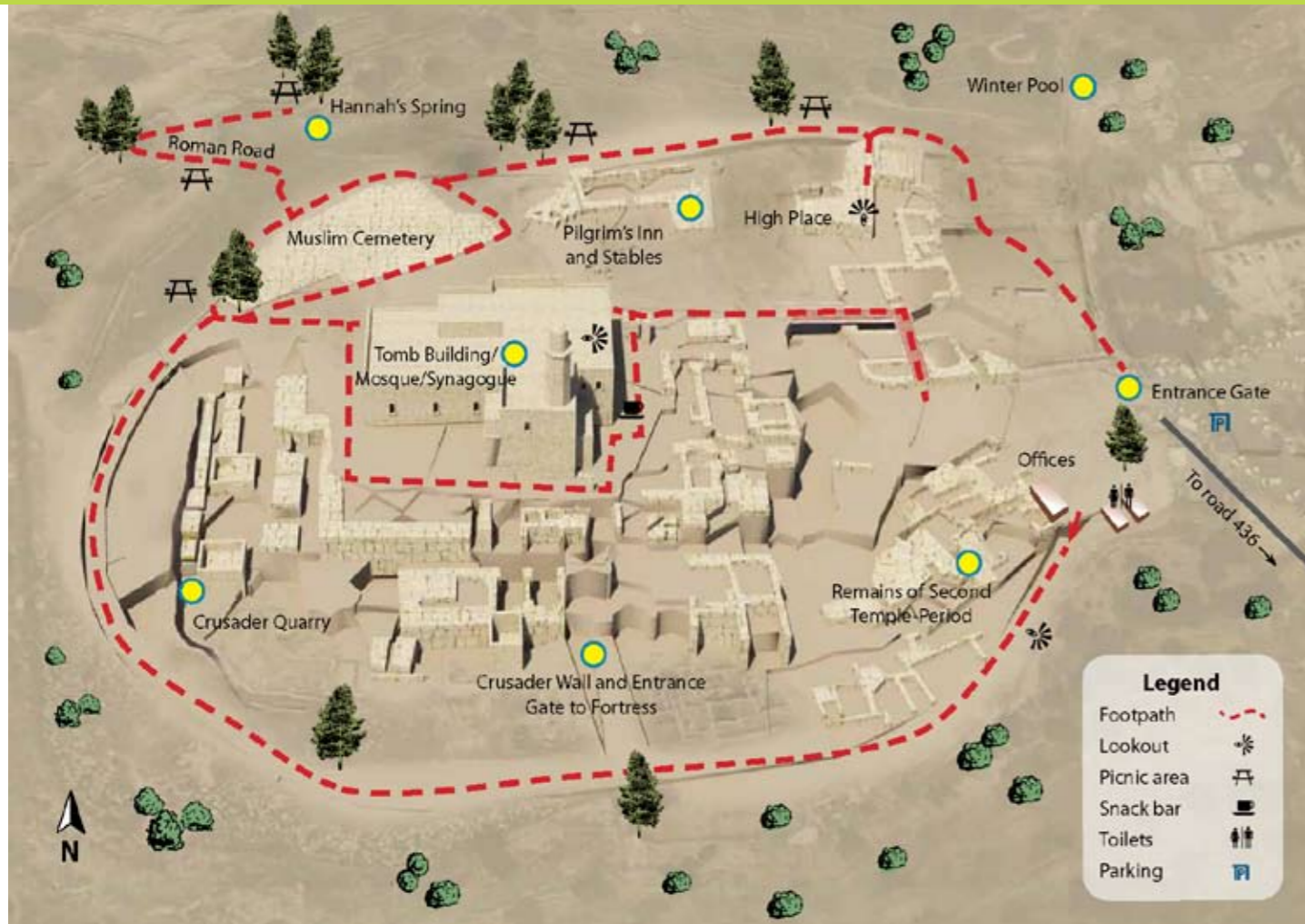
Now when all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poorest of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah... (Jer. 40:7–8).

This is also the place where Gedaliah son of Ahikam was murdered by Ishmael son of Nethaniah.

Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam... (Jer. 41:16)

The tour continues westward, where remains can be seen of the wall of the Crusader fortress. When the Crusaders approached Jerusalem in 1099, they saw the city from this place, one of the highest points in the Jerusalem mountains, and therefore they called it Mount of Joy. In the 12th century they built the fortress, which controls the road from the lowlands to Jerusalem.

Continuing along the route, you will see a quarry that also serves as a moat. The builders of the fortress and the church used the local stone, and the quarry was planned as part of the fortress' defenses. The quarrying was done along a long channel, which is 70 cm wide and 3 m deep.



Artist's rendering of the Crusader fortress

The opening you see further along the path is a side entrance to the fortress. The main entrance is below it on the west. The ancient road from the lowlands to Jerusalem came from the northwest and the main entrance to the fortress was indirect: People approached it up a ramp raised on large vaults, which can be seen here, and turned left to the entrance.

Below this point, on the descent toward the orchard, is Hannah's Spring, where according to tradition, Hannah immersed after giving birth to Samuel **And it came to pass, when the time was come about, the Hannah conceived, and bore a son; and she called his name Samuel: 'because I have asked him of the Lord'** (1 Sam. 1:20).

Next to the fortress an inn was built for pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. The quarry was turned into an encampment with stables, cisterns and shelters – mainly tents – on its eastern side.

The ground in the encampment area was leveled northward allowing rainwater to drain into channels cut at the western and eastern corners. The water in the eastern channel collected in a pool constructed outside the quarry and the water in the western channel flowed outside to agricultural terraces.

In 1187 (the Ayyubid/Crusader period) the fortress and the wall were destroyed by Saladin and his army to prevent a Crusader return to the site.

Remains can be seen in the encampment area of two pottery ovens from a later period – the Mamluk (Late Muslim) period.

At that time this was a manufacturing area for clay vessels; other firing ovens were uncovered throughout the site. The vaults, which once supported the ramp that ascended to the fortress, were divided into workrooms and living quarters.

During the Ottoman period, settlement here was renewed and its synagogue remained in use until 1730. In that year, the mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Mohammed al-Halili, expropriated the tomb of Samuel from the Jews, closed its entrance and built a mosque over it. A small Muslim settlement was established at the site.

During World War I, the British, on their way to conquer Jerusalem, fought the Turks here, and on November 21, 1917, the British took Nebi Samuel Park and the mosque was destroyed.

The communication trench that you can see along the path is a remnant of the War of Independence, when the Palmach launched a failed attack on the site in the hope of lifting the threat on Jerusalem. The trench was also used during the Six-Day War, when, on June 6, 1967, Israel captured the place.

Opening hours of the prayer site

Sunday–Wednesday: around the clock, except from 2 A.M. to 4 A.M.

Thursday–Friday: From Thursday 4 A.M. to Friday before the Sabbath begins.

On Rosh Hodesh (the first day of the Hebrew month), the site remains open from 4 A.M. to 2 A.M. the following morning.

Opening hours of the archaeological site:

The site is open year-round from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. (summer time 5 P.M.)

On Friday and holiday eves the site closes one hour earlier.

Last entrance to the site is one hour before closing.

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Production: Adi Greenbaum

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Iron 1200-586	Persian 586-332	Hellenistic 332-63	Roman 63 BCE - 324 CE	Byzantine 324-638	Early Arab 638-1099	Crusader 1099-1291	Late Arab 1291-1516	Ottoman 1516-1917	British Mandate 1917-1948	State of Israel 1948-...
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