

Chapter 1

THE GEOGRAPHICAL KEY TO JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

There is no longer any doubt. Jesus was crucified near the summit of the Mount of Olives about half a mile east of the Temple Mount. This fact is confirmed in the New Testament in a variety of ways. One such confirmation comes from the Book of Hebrews. It states that the crucifixion occurred “without the gate” and “without the camp” of Israel that was associated with the city of Jerusalem in the early first century (Hebrews 13:11-13). These geographical factors in the Book of Hebrews are of utmost importance in locating the place of the crucifixion of Jesus. In fact, these two phrases in the Book of Hebrews of themselves are sufficient to pinpoint the region where the crucifixion of Jesus took place.

With the geographical references in the Book of Hebrews that Jesus was crucified “without the gate” and “without the camp,” these are adequate indications to allow any school child in the first century who lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem the ability to identify the area of the crucifixion. These geographical factors may mean little to us who live in the modern western world, but to early Jewish people in the Jerusalem area, they can mean only one thing:

They show that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives. This determination would have been as easy to make by early Jews as an American geography student today being able to identify the Statue of Liberty as being in New York harbor in the eastern part of the United States.

The Book of Hebrews Provides the Key

Let us look at these geographical indications in the Book of Hebrews. The phrases “without the gate” and “without the camp” referred to a specific place in the area of Jerusalem, and not simply to a general region surrounding the capital city. Indeed, to the author of the Book of Hebrews, it was a specific “gate” of Jerusalem that he emphasized. Only one area in the vicinity of Jerusalem was being referred to by the two geographical expressions mentioned above, and that was in the *eastern* region outside the city limits of Jerusalem. And though the sacred writers tell us that Jesus was crucified at a place called “Golgotha” (without feeling the need to identify its location), the geographical parameters mentioned in the Book of Hebrews are of themselves sufficient proof to show that Golgotha was located at the southern summit of the Mount of Olives. In actual fact, the author of Hebrews provides a ritualistic context which involves prescribed and well-known Temple ceremonies that demand specific geographical factors that locate the place referred to by the phrase “without the camp.” The geographical indications associated with the two phrases (“without the gate” and “without the camp”) are adequate to pinpoint the site of Golgotha to first century Jews. To do so, however, requires that a person understand the geographical features associated with the ritualistic factors celebrated at the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus.

Geographical Factors of the Temple Are Mostly Unknown Today

The problem in modern times is the fact that most people (even

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scholars and Christian ministers) do not apply, or they do not understand, the geographical features associated with the Temple and its ritualistic ceremonies. Because of this deficiency, which is widespread, I feel it is necessary at the start of this book to rehearse for modern readers a brief geographical overview of the Jerusalem area and the Temple that all people of the first century who lived in Jerusalem not only understood but took for granted. Just as anyone in New York City today or in the whole of the United States knows that the Statue of Liberty is located in New York harbor, so the use of the geographical factors associated with the Temple rituals in the time of Jesus can without doubt locate "Golgotha" as being near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives. It is very easy to do once the geography is understood. These matters were well recognized by people who once lived in Jerusalem or in Judaea, and this was especially in evidence while the Temple was still standing. The geography can identify the site of the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Temple and Geography

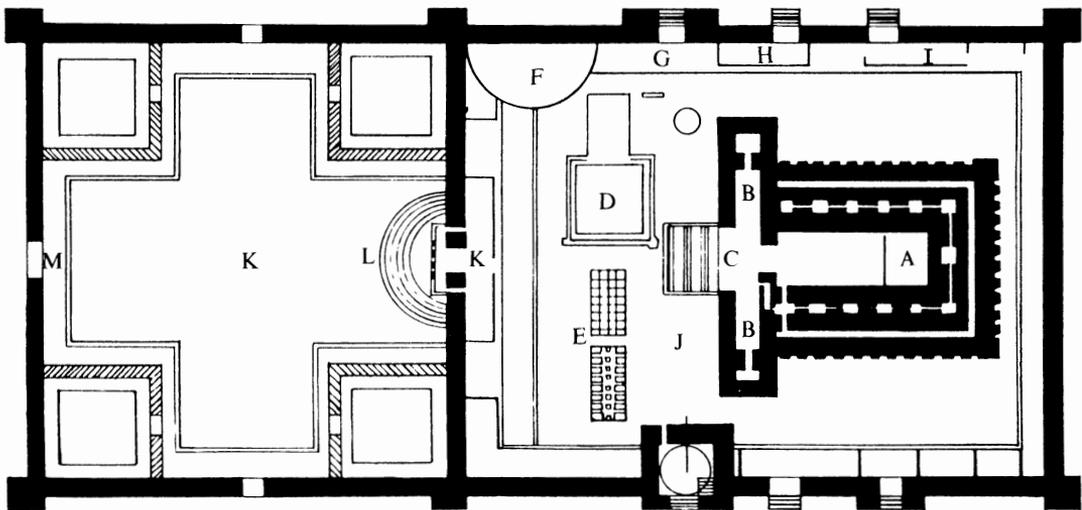
First of all, the Temple at Jerusalem was patterned after the Tabernacle that Moses constructed in the wilderness, which in turn was patterned after the geographical features of the Garden in Eden and the Land of Eden itself. That does not end the symbolic agreements. The Temple and its environs were further patterned after God's heavenly palace and its celestial surroundings (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). These are important factors to recognize. As for the Tabernacle, it was simply a portable Temple. Though the Temple in the time of Jesus was built out of stone, wood and precious metals, for nostalgic and ritualistic purposes it was common for Jews in the first century to call the Temple by its former designation "the Tent." This was a way of perpetuating the connection of the Temple with the Tabernacle that existed in the time of Moses. The author of the Book of Hebrews consistently called the Temple which Herod refurbished by the name "the Tent," and he was followed by the Jewish authorities who wrote the Mishnah, the first part of the two

Talmuds a little over a century later.

The Temple (or “Tent”) was made up of three main sections and it had three altars. That’s right. It had *three* altars. Most people today are only aware of *two* altars associated with the Temple. But there were actually *three* altars, and the *Third Altar* is the most important for us to recognize if we hope to discover the place where Jesus was crucified.

Look first at the three compartments of the Temple. The innermost section was located in the western part of the structure and it was called the Holy of Holies. This is where God was typically resident and He faced *eastward* to view the other two sections of the Temple where the priests and the ordinary Israelites assembled for God’s commanded ceremonial services. The second section of the Temple was just to the *east* of the Holy of Holies and it was called the Holy Place — a place where only priests could enter or supervise. Within this compartment there was the first altar placed in front of the inner veil called the Altar of Golden Incense. Just *east* of this compartment called the Holy Place, but still in the priest’s section, was the second altar called the Altar of Burnt Offering. Further *east* from this Second Altar was the third section of the Temple called the Court of the Israelites which was divided into two parts, the western reserved for the men and the eastern for the women. Besides this, outside this third section of the Temple (and surrounding the Temple itself) there was a vast enclosure which Herod built that he called the Court of the Gentiles. This was not a part of the Holy Temple in a strict sense but it provided an area where Gentile folk could assemble if they felt inclined to worship the God of Israel.

The Court of the Gentiles located outside the three main sections of the Temple had an eastern wall *with one gate* that separated the Temple Mount from a deep ravine that was situated along the entire side of this eastern wall. This ravine was called the Kidron and is mentioned several times in the Bible (I Kings 15:13; II Chronicles



The Temple at the time of Christ. A) Holy of Holies, B) Outer Holy Place, C) Outer Curtain, D) Altar of Burnt Offering, E) Slaughter Areas, F) Chamber of Hewn Stone (Sanhedrin Hall), G) Counsellor's Chamber, H) House of Abtinias, I) Chamber of Wood, J) Court of Priests, K) Court of Israel, L) Steps to Nicanor Gate, M) Eastern Gate. Diagram by Norman Tenedora.

30:14; Jeremiah 31:40; John 18:1). In the time of Jesus, there was a double tiered arched bridge supporting a roadway which led from this eastern gate of the Temple to the top of the Mount of Olives. That double tiered arched bridge was built by the priests to span the Kidron Ravine. This bridge was constructed by the priests for sacerdotal purposes and it was known as the Bridge of the Red Heifer (*Shekalim* 4:2). It connected *the single gate* in the eastern wall of the Court of the Gentiles with a sanctified road that led up to a Third Altar of the Temple located near the summit of the Mount of Olives. It is this altar referred to by the Book of Hebrews that was associated with the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Third Altar of the Temple

Where was that Third Altar that the Book of Hebrews has reference to? If that altar can be found, then the general site of the crucifixion can also be ascertained. As the author of the Book of Hebrews points out, this is the important altar associated with the crucifixion of Jesus.

“We have AN ALTAR, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned *without the camp*. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, *suffered without the gate*. Let us go forth unto him *without the camp*, bearing his reproach” (Hebrews 13:10-13 capitals and italics mine).

The first thing that must be recognized is that a *literal* altar is being discussed by the author of Hebrews. It has been shown by Helmut Koester (“Outside the Camp,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 1962 (55), pp.299-315) that the “altar” cannot be a symbol for the Lord’s Supper nor is it a figure of speech for the “cross” of Jesus. After all, the statement in the Book of Hebrews about the “bodies of those beasts” was certainly referring to literal beasts, and the “blood brought into the sanctuary” was clearly a literal event, and the “high priest” performing the ceremony was certainly a lit-

eral person, and the sin offerings that were “burned outside the camp” were also literal animals, and the fact that the priests “had no right to eat” of those well-know sin offerings was also a literal fact because these particular sin offerings were prohibited from being eaten, so why shouldn't “the altar” itself be a literal altar? This is especially true because there was in fact a literal altar (the Third Altar) of the Temple associated with these sin offerings. There can really be no doubt in this matter. The altar being discussed in the Book of Hebrews was the Third Altar of the Temple that the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus were well acquainted with. This altar was not shaped like the other two altars in the Temple. We will see shortly that it was built for different purposes and those purposes required that it have no ramp like we normally think is associated with an altar. Still, the author of the Book of Hebrews called it an altar. It was the specific altar located outside the Camp of Israel that surrounded the city of Jerusalem where certain sin offerings were burnt to ashes.

This important Third Altar was located near the summit of the Mount of Olives where the Red Heifer was killed and burnt to ashes and where special sin offerings were burnt according to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 4:12). This outer altar the prophet Ezekiel called the *Miphkad* (Numbering Place), which the King James translators rendered as “the appointed place” (Ezekiel 43:21). In the words of Ezekiel, it was located “without the sanctuary” and was positioned outside the Temple. It was called an “Outward Sanctuary” (Ezekiel 44:1), and the Targum for Ezekiel 43:21 says the spot was “the Temple outside the Sanctuary.” This outer “Temple” was patterned after the altar on which the sin offering for Cain was to be placed outside the area of Eden as shown in the early account in Genesis.

The Importance of the Third Altar

Most readers of the Bible today (even Christian scholars and ministers of religion) are completely unaware of this important Third Altar positioned on the Mount of Olives that was associated

with essential ceremonies of the Temple. Most Christians today are completely oblivious to the existence to this altar. Indeed, I have read major books written by eminent professors over the past two hundred years about the ritualistic and ceremonial services conducted in the Temple at Jerusalem with the authors *not once* mentioning this important and significant Third Altar located near the summit of the Mount of Olives. This is the altar that Christians have forgot! But recognizing the existence and the importance of this Third Altar plays an essential role in identifying the place of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Why this particular altar? Because the sacrifices on this Third Altar of the Temple were the prime ones mentioned by the Book of Hebrews which dealt with the sins of Israel. They prefigured precisely what Jesus would be doing for mankind at his crucifixion.

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered *without the gate*. Let us go forth therefore unto him *without the camp*, bearing his reproach” (Hebrews 13:12,13).

Early Christians were well aware of this outside altar. The location for burning these sin offerings was to be “in a clean place” outside the Camp (Leviticus 4:12). Note that Moses commanded “a clean place” (singular), not “clean places” (plural). There was only one place outside the Camp of Israel in the wilderness, and only one place outside Jerusalem in the time of Jesus, where these offerings were burnt to ashes. The Jewish authorities have maintained records which show the location of this specific “clean place” within which the Third Altar was situated mentioned by the Book of Hebrews. It was *east* of the sanctuary.

In the time of Moses the holiest region within the encampment of Israel was in front of the entrance to the sanctuary (on its *east* side). This was the area of the Camp within which Moses, Aaron, and his sons pitched their tents (Numbers 3:38). The eastern region was also the side of the sanctuary governed by the tribe of Judah,

out of whom came King David who was to give rise to the Messiah of Israel (Numbers 2:3). As a matter of fact, the author of the Book of Hebrews consistently used the theme of the Tabernacle in the wilderness as his standard and model in showing how Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic rituals. This is significant in our present discussion because there was only one entrance for people to enter the Tabernacle and that was on its *east* side. Indeed, the entrances to all three compartments of the Tabernacle were on their *east* sides. There was no way of entering (or exiting) any area of the Tabernacle on the south, the west or on its north sides. Since the author of Hebrews exclusively used the Tabernacle in the wilderness as his standard for illustration, it follows that the bodies of the animals taken outside “the gate” (note the text says “THE gate,” a single gate) has to refer to the *eastern* gate of the Temple (or the *eastern* gate of the Camp) through which the priests took the sin offerings to be burnt. Dr. Hutchinson in the last century believed that this indication alone gave weight to Jesus’ crucifixion being *east* of the Temple (*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly*, 1873, p.115). And though Dr. Hutchinson made this suggestion so long ago, no scholars took him up on his belief in an *eastern* crucifixion of Jesus and his idea got nowhere at the time. Had the scholars paid attention to Dr. Hutchinson, the place of the crucifixion would have been discovered a century ago. But back to the matter at hand.

The Holiest Area of Jerusalem Was East of the Temple

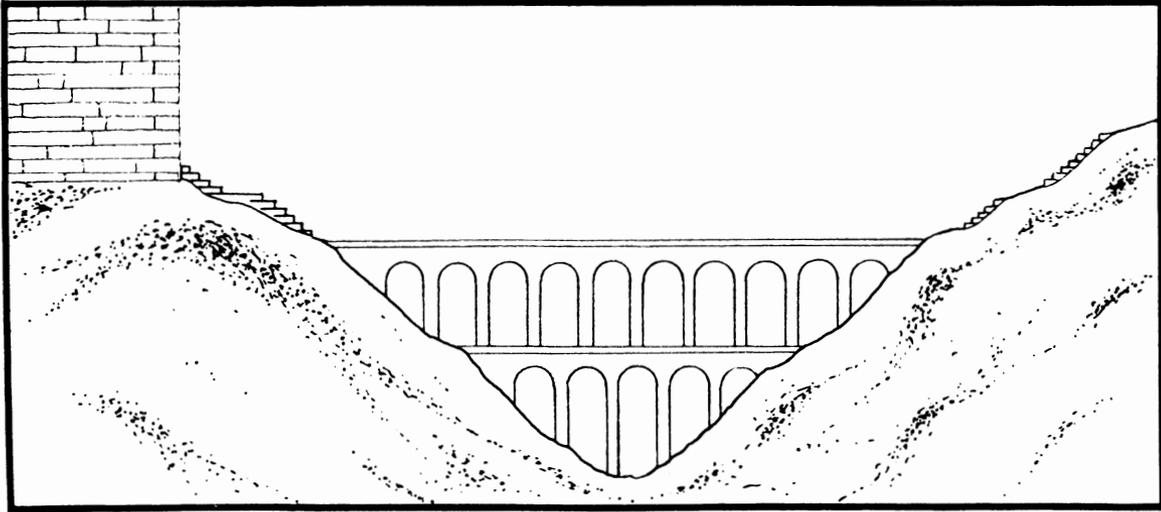
Indeed, it was the region *east* of the Temple and up the slopes of the Mount of Olives that was reckoned the holiest part of the Jerusalem area surrounding the Temple (*Berakoth* 9:5). One of the main reasons for this was because the sin offering known as the Red Heifer was killed and burnt to ashes in this area “outside the camp” (Numbers 19:1-22, see especially verse 9 where the Red Heifer is called a sin offering). I will show evidence in a moment that proves the place where the Red Heifer was sacrificed was exactly the same “clean place” where the bodies of the offerings

referred to by the author of Hebrews were also burned “outside the camp.”

The Red Heifer sacrifice was considered one of the holiest of Israel’s offerings. Its ashes were saved for long periods of time. Periodically, part of the ashes was mixed with pure water in a large container. The sprinkling of this water purified Israelites for a number of important ceremonial functions associated with the Temple and the Camp of Israel (Numbers 19). It was also the means for purifying the Levites so that they could perform their activities in the Temple (Numbers 8:7). In order to sacrifice the Red Heifer, the selected animal was taken from the Temple through the *eastern* gate (“without the gate”) and then led further *east* (“without the camp”) to the special “clean place” where it was killed and burnt to ashes. The early rabbis noted that the Red Heifer was taken through the *eastern* gate of the outer walls surrounding the Temple.

“There were five gates to the Temple mount: the two Huldah Gates on the south, that served for coming in and going out; the Kiponus Gate on the west, that served for coming in and going out; the Tadi Gate on the north that was not used at all; *the Eastern Gate* on which was portrayed the Palace of Shushan. *Through THIS [Gate]* the High Priest that burned the [Red] Heifer, and the heifer, and all that aided him went forth to the Mount of Olives” (*Middoth* 1:3 capitals and italics mine).

This reference shows that in the time of Jesus the place for burning the Red Heifer was located *east* of the Temple on the Mount of Olives. This is also attested in another part of the early Jewish records (*Parah* 3:6,7). This latter section of the Mishnah also gives us further details about the roadway that led from the Temple up to the summit of the Mount of Olives. It shows that from the *east* gate of the sanctuary the priests constructed a causeway for pedestrians that went *eastward* from the Temple mount to a bridge which crossed the Kidron Valley onto the western slopes of the Mount of Olives. This was an arched bridge. It had pillars on the bedrock of the valley floor which went upwards to form several arches for the



This drawing is a reasonable facsimile of the bridge across the Kidron Valley. It was two tiered with the upper pillars located over the lower crowns of the arches in order to prevent any

physical contact with a bone, grave, or tomb in the valley below. The bridge connected the temple mount with the "Broadway" known as the Descent of the Mount of Olives.

first tier. On top of the crowns of those arches another tier of pillars went upwards to form a second group of arches. The causeway was then built on top. The bridge was constructed in this fashion because of ritual interpretation. According to the rabbis this type of bridge prevented anyone coming in contact with bones or other contamination that might have been in the valley below and it would allow people to enter the Temple in a purified way.

The two tiered arched bridge must have been an imposing sight for it allowed pedestrians to walk *eastwards* apparently from the level of the Temple mount straight across the Kidron Valley (which was quite precipitous in this area) to intersect with the western slopes of the Mount of Olives. The arched bridge made it unnecessary for worshippers to descend into the depths of the valley and then climb up a portion of the mountain on the east to reach the summit of Olivet. Conversely, people walking westward from the Mount of Olives into the Temple enclosure were afforded the same convenience. This roadway on the slopes of Olivet which led *westward* into the Temple had a special name and it is mentioned in the New Testament. It was called “The Descent of the Mount of Olives” (Luke 19:37).

This was the holiest roadway into the Temple. Indeed, the whole area of the Mount of Olives in front of the *eastern* part of the Temple was considered the most sacred region outside the walls of Jerusalem because it faced the Holy of Holies (*Berakoth* 9:5). The holiness was further enhanced because at the top of the Mount of Olives was the “clean place” where the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes and (as we will see later) where the bodies of the sin offerings mentioned by the author of the Book of Hebrews were burnt to ashes. From this summit area of the Mount of Olives one could look westward over the eastern wall of the Temple directly into the sanctuary itself. The eastern wall of the Temple enclosure was made lower than the other walls surrounding the Temple in order to allow a full view of the sanctuary interior including the curtain that

was hanging in front of the Holy Place.

“All the [Temple] walls were high, save only the *eastern wall*, because the [High] Priest that burns the [Red] Heifer and stands *on the top of the Mount of Olives* should be able to look directly into the entrance of the Sanctuary when the blood [of the Red Heifer] is sprinkled” (*Middoth 2:4*).

This area from the “clean place” on top of the Mount of Olives westward into the Temple itself was reckoned to be of special religious significance. And while the southern and western entrances to the Temple allowed worshippers access into the unrestricted regions of the Temple enclosure, the purifying waters from the ashes of the Red Heifer could only be obtained in Jerusalem at the *eastern* entrance to the Temple and at the “clean place” on top of the Mount of Olives (*Parah 3:11 cf. 3:3*). Since the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes at this location on Olivet, it follows that it represented the site of origin for the main purification rituals for the people of Israel. This was understood by all Jews of the time. This is why it was essential that Jesus was crucified (to purify not only the earth but even heaven itself) near the spot where the purifications for Israel were ordained to take place which was on top of the Mount of Olives.

With this in mind, it can be better understood why *this* region on Olivet has great symbolic significance in relation to Jesus' crucifixion. Not only was it the area of origin for the purification rituals of Israel and where the sin offerings were burnt “outside the camp,” but it was in this general region, according to Christians, where the greatest of all sin offerings (Jesus) was sacrificed to God. As a matter of contrast, the present *western* site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the place of Jesus' crucifixion, built by Helena the mother of Constantine from A.D.326 to 337, and the Garden Tomb area *north* of the Damascus Gate, *have nothing to do with any* Old Covenant ritual. However, this *eastern* site of purification on the Mount of Olives is very much associated with the rituals and ceremonies of the Temple at Jerusalem. This is why the author of the

Book of Hebrews was so interested in associating the altar outside the Temple (the Third Altar) with the crucifixion of Jesus. Both the altar for burning the sin offerings and the location of Jesus' crucifixion were near each other on the Mount of Olives.

The Third Altar and the Sin Offerings

It is important to recognize that the site of the altar for burning the sin offerings situated "outside the camp" was at the same place at which the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes. That the two rituals were performed at the same place can be shown from a discussion that took place among the rabbis just after the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70. The inquiry was in relation to this very matter. In analyzing scriptural verses that discussed the subject, Rabbi Eliezer (who had seen the Temple before its destruction) was adamant that the place located "outside the camp" in Leviticus 4:12 (speaking about the burning of the sin offerings) was identical to the place "outside the camp" mentioned in Numbers 19:3 (speaking about the burning of the Red Heifer).

"It is said here [in Leviticus 4:12]: *Without the Camp*, and it is said there [in Numbers 19:3]: *Without the Camp*. Just as here [in Leviticus] it means outside the three Camps [of the priests, of the Levites, and of the Israelites], so does it mean there [in Numbers] outside the three Camps; *and just as there* [Numbers 19:3] *it means TO THE EAST OF JERUSALEM*, so does it here [Leviticus 4:12] *TO THE EAST OF JERUSALEM*" (Yoma 68a, see also Zebahim 105b, capitals, brackets and italics mine).

This is rabbinic proof (from an eyewitness to the Temple and its rituals) that the place "outside the camp" for burning the Red Heifer was identical with that for burning the sin offerings mentioned by the author of the Book of Hebrews. And what is highly significant is the fact that Rabbi Eliezer (just like the author of the Book of Hebrews) applied rituals pertaining to the Tabernacle of Moses with those which governed the Temple in Jesus' time.

This means that the Old Testament legislation concerning the

Tabernacle was applicable to the later Temple. It was thus necessary for the priest performing the sacrifice of the Red Heifer to be *east* of the Temple so that he could face *directly west* in order “to sprinkle the blood seven times towards the Holy of Holies” (*Parah* 3:9). The priest had to be able to see the full curtain that was hanging in front of the *east* entrance to the Holy Place. This is one of the main reasons that the *eastern* wall of the Temple was lower in height than the other walls. Recall again what *Middoth* 2:4 says about this matter.

“All the [Temple] walls were high, save only the *eastern wall*, because the priest that burns the [Red] Heifer and *stands on the top of the Mount of Olives* should be able to look directly into the entrance to the Sanctuary when the blood is sprinkled” (italics mine).

There is a further reference in the Mishnah about what the High Priest did on the Day of Atonement at this same place “outside the camp.” It shows that the altar for burning the sin offerings was far enough away from the Temple that the High Priest standing near the entrance to the Holy Place could not distinctly make out the features of the priests who were getting ready to set the torch to the sin offering at the summit of the Mount of Olives. What must be understood in this account is the fact that it was *distance* between the High Priest in the Temple and those on the Mount of Olives which made both parties obscure to one another. I will explain why this matter is important in a moment. Note the account.

“He that can see the High Priest when he reads [in the Temple] cannot see the bullock and the he-goat that are being burnt; and he that can see the bullock and the he-goat that are being burnt cannot see the High Priest when he reads: not that it was not permitted, but because the *distance apart* was great and both acts were performed at the same time” (*Yoma* 7:2).

This reference tells us very much. It shows that the High Priest could not be seen distinctly because of the *distance* between the simultaneous ceremonies. The summit of the Mount of Olives is a

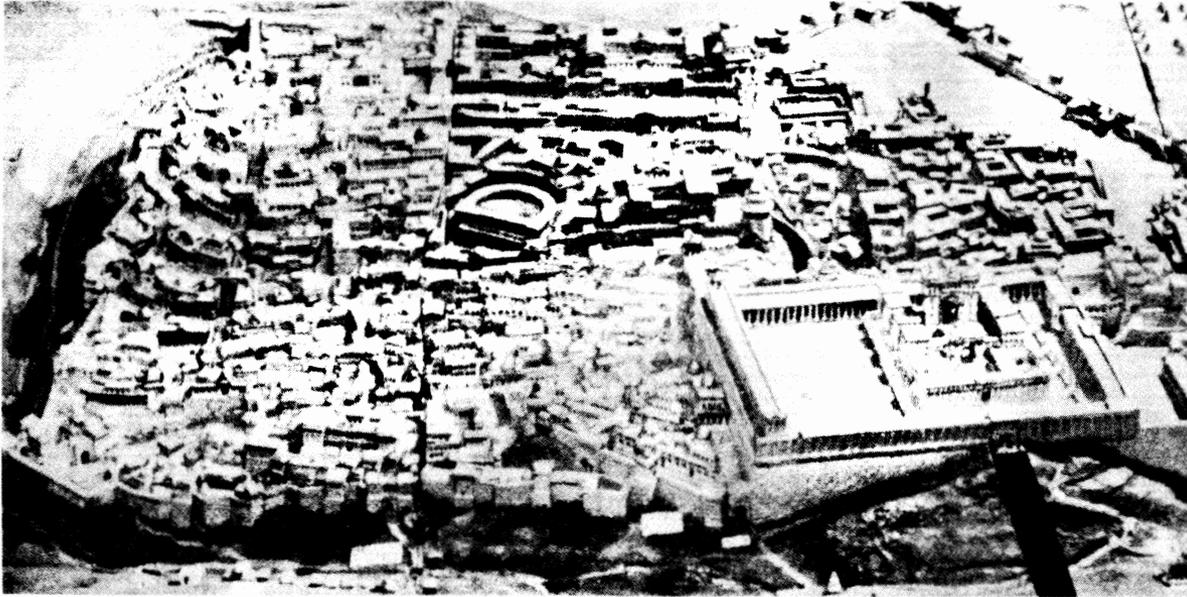
little over half a mile from the place where the High Priest was standing. From the Mount of Olives I have tried to distinguish friends of mine among a crowd of people standing around the Dome of the Rock on the Temple mount, and though my friends could be seen, it was not possible to identify them individually. And so it was with the priests on top of the Mount of Olives. The High Priest was just a little too far away to distinguish him clearly.

The Importance of the Third Altar

There can actually be no doubt that the “clean place” for burning the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement as well as performing the Red Heifer sacrifice was located *directly east* of the Temple. It was a permanent site called the Beth ha-Deshen (the House of the Ashes) where also the “ashes are poured out” from the animals consumed on the Altar of Burnt Offering in the Temple (Leviticus 4:12). It was located on a slope of a hill (*Yoma* 68b). Being on a slope allowed the ashes not to pile high into a heap. There was a drainage system associated with the “clean place” that permitted the ashes to be washed with rain water down the side of the hill into the Kidron Valley where the ashes would fertilize areas maintained by the priests. Indeed, since the ashes were not allowed to gather into a heap at the Beth ha-Deshen, the altar area was designed in such a way that it resembled more of a pit to contain the ashes rather than an altar with a ramp like we normally understand an altar to be shaped. For this reason the “clean place” was called “the Ash Pit” (*Zebahim* 47b). Since Rabbi Eliezer said that in Temple times this area was *east* of the Temple and located on a sloped area, it was located on an upper western slope of the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple to the west.

Now why is it important to recognize that the early Jewish records show the altar for burning the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement was *directly east* of the Temple? The reason is because of an opinion among some Jews in the fifth century of our era that a “clean place” for burning the sin offerings was located *north* of

JERUSALEM LOOKING WEST JUST AFTER THE TIME OF CHRIST



The Temple Mount is seen with its entrances on the east. The black stripe indicates the position of a double tiered arched bridge (described on page 34) which connected the main Temple (the “Inward Sanctuary”) with the Miphkad Altar which was the Altar of Red Heifer (the “Outward Sanctuary”) on the Mount of Olives.

the Temple (see *Yoma* 68b and *Tosefta Kippurim* 3:17). There were reasons in the fifth century why they said this (and I will explain it in a later chapter), but this opinion could in no way be correct for the first century since it contradicts the eyewitness account of Rabbi Eliezer that in Temple times the specific “clean place” was east of Jerusalem (*Yoma* 68a; *Zebahim* 105b).

In regard to this northern supposition, some modern Jewish scholars have pointed out that there was about fifty years ago an extensive ash heap located south and west of the old Mandelbaum Gate that had been there for generations. The existence of this ash heap has been traced back, apparently, to the twelfth century and some have wondered if this might also be a northern “clean place” to satisfy the phrase “where the ashes are poured out”? In no way, however, could this particular ash heap be considered such a “clean place.” Analysis of the remains from this heap show that there were, besides ashes, the remnants of bones, teeth and even flesh still left on bones (Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible*, Leviticus 1-16, p.240). These are not from the Temple. There were no flesh or parts of bones or teeth left from the offerings performed in the Temple. All animals to be burnt on the Altar of Burnt Offering were consumed totally to ashes. Though a portion of the ashes was placed beside the altar on its east side each day, the large remainder of them were piled in the center of the Altar to re-cycle in the burnings until all parts of the animals had become ashes, and this included teeth and bones. It was not thought for a moment that any flesh would still be on the bones for deposit at the official “clean place” designed as a receptacle for the ashes which was located “outside the camp.” After all, the “clean place” was for ashes, not bones, teeth or flesh. It was only when the animals had totally become ashes was it allowed for them to be taken to the “clean place” and poured out.

The “Clean Place” Was an Ash Pit, Not an Ash Heap

There are differences. The particular ash heap near the old

Mandelbaum Gate is northwest of the Temple and it was located on level ground while the official site of “where the ashes are poured out” had to be *east* of the Temple and situated on the slope of a hill. As a matter of fact, the official “clean place” was not even an ash heap. It was, as I have shown, an Ash Pit (*Zebahim* 47b). This Pit was located within the enclosure called the Beth ha-Deshen and it was only for ashes and contained no fragments of bones, teeth or pieces of flesh still left on the bones. This Ash Pit was attached to a conduit that allowed the ashes to descend into the valley below (rain water or other waters were used to cause the ashes to descend into the valley). A similar conduit existed on the Temple mount to allow the blood from the sacrifices to descend into the same area of the Kidron Valley.

None of these important factors was associated with the ash heap near the Mandelbaum Gate. Indeed, there is another reason why any ash heap located north of Jerusalem could not be considered as being the official place for the sacrifice of the sin offerings “outside the sanctuary” as Ezekiel described it. This is because the Mishnah also shows that the priests “outside the camp” who performed the Red Heifer sacrifice were able to look *directly west* and see the High Priest in the interior of the Temple (*Yoma* 7:2). This would have been impossible if the priests were situated north of the Temple (and certainly from the northwest where the ash heap was). The outer northern wall of the Temple was higher than the eastern wall and this would have prevented anyone north (or northwest) of the Temple from observing the activities even in the outer part of the Temple. This fact is fatal to any theory that the sin offerings were burnt north of the Temple. The truth is, the ash heap northwest of old Jerusalem was probably the remains of a tanning factory that once was in the area. It certainly has nothing to do with the official site for pouring out the ashes from the Temple sacrifices that the author of the Book of Hebrews had in mind. The reason some rabbis of the fifth century began to speak about a “clean place” in the north of Jerusalem (erroneously so) will be explained in chapter

nineteen. The true “Ash Pit” was located on Olivet.

What About the Garden Tomb Area North of Damascus Gate?

There is another northern region that has been suggested as possibly being the site of “Golgotha.” This is an area about 200 yards north (and a little east) of the Damascus Gate that has become known as the Garden Tomb. In the middle of the last century a small hewn tomb was found in a garden that had on its east side a hill on which was a Muslim cemetery that had two caves in its limestone escarpment that gave an appearance of the eye sockets of a skull. This cave area had been given the name “Jeremiah’s Grotto,” probably in the Crusader period, though scholars are aware that the name had nothing to do with the historical prophet by the name Jeremiah. Yet the limestone escarpment, now located just north of the present bus station, did have a remarkable resemblance to the eye sockets of a skull. Since most New Testament translations render the word “Golgotha” (which was the place where Jesus was crucified) as “Place of the Skull,” it was surmised by some scholars at the time that this may indeed be the site of the crucifixion. While it was recognized that there were no Temple rituals of any kind (the type that pre-figured Jesus and his substitutionary role as the sin-bearer for mankind) that were associated with this northern area, the skull-like appearance of those caves gave those who did not accept the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the western part of Jerusalem as being the proper site a great deal of optimism and even confidence that the real tomb of Jesus had now been found.

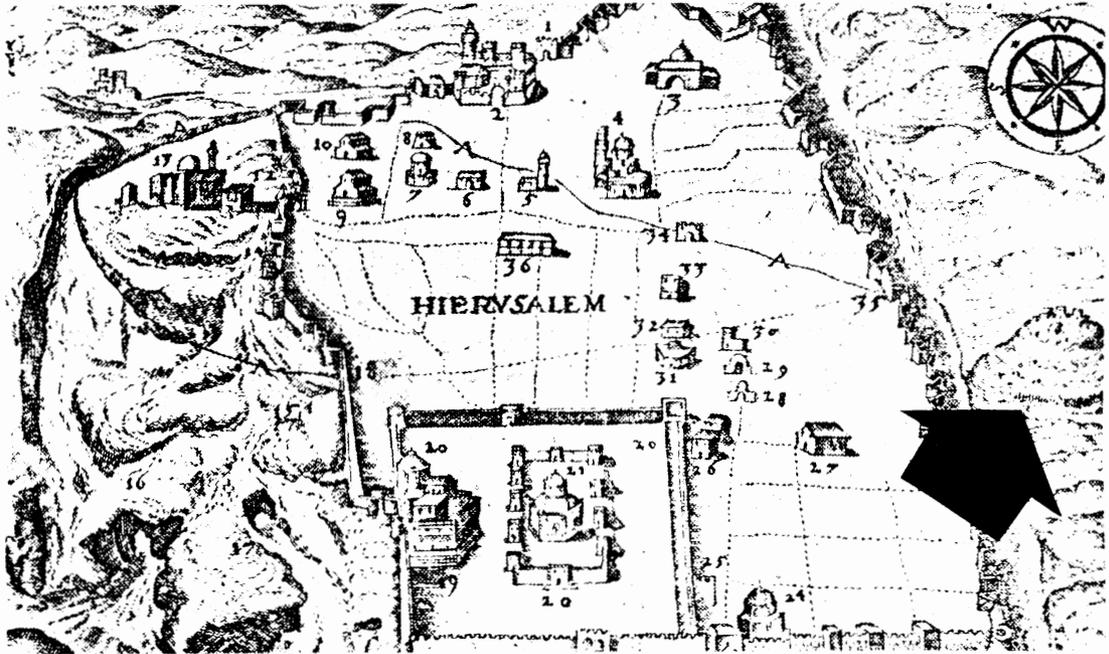
Could the Garden Tomb Area Be Golgotha?

When the skull-like rock formation was photographed and sent throughout Europe and the United States, an enthusiasm began to emerge in some Protestant circles that the Garden Tomb area had better credentials for being the real crucifixion site of Jesus than the region of the traditional Church of the Holy Sepulchre built in the

days of Constantine. But the enthusiasm did not impress the majority of scholars in the world. As for the Garden Tomb area itself, it had many demerits associated with it. If the skull-like appearance of the hill above the present bus station had the supposed eye socket features in ancient times, there is no mention of it in early literature.

The fact is, there is evidence that the “eye sockets” which were rather impressive a hundred years ago were not even there in the time of Jesus (or at any other period between Jesus’ time and A.D.1700). A European traveler by the name of Sandy went to Jerusalem in A.D.1610. He took time to draw a picture of some of the prominent geographical features located within and around the city. Though his drawing displays only the structures and hills which he thought significant (either *over* or *under* exaggerating their dimensions and showing a number of non-existent hills as a background fill-up), Sandy nevertheless emphasized (for some reason) the hill which presently represents the site of “Jeremiah’s Grotto.” Interestingly, he showed no caves as having then existed in the escarpment. Had this location contained the two “eye socket” caves that were a rather prominent feature in the hill a hundred years ago, it is strange that Sandy (whose drawings were noted for their exaggerations) showed nothing of them in A.D.1610. It seems evident that the erosive process that created the unique “eye sockets” only happened between 150 and 250 years ago. As a matter of fact, anyone who has visited Jerusalem over the past thirty years (as I have a score of times) is well aware that the so-called skull appearance of “Jeremiah’s Grotto” has so deteriorated in that short period that one can hardly recognize today any skull features at all. The truth is, “skull hill” is a modern creation that has nothing to do with the geography that existed in the time of Jesus.

These difficulties have prompted some scholars to attempt new research in their quest to pinpoint the region of Jesus’ crucifixion. Professor W. S. McBirnie went to Jerusalem and to various acade-



This is the A.D.1610 drawing of Jerusalem by Sandy. The arrow points to the large hill outside the north wall of Jerusalem and not far from the Damascus Gate (numbered 35 by Sandy). As one can observe there is no indication of any skull-like eye sockets (caves) associated with the hill. They were not there in A.D.1610.

mic centers in Europe with what he referred to as a "Task Force" of educated Christians to locate the tomb of Jesus. The result of their research was published in the 1975 book titled "The Search for the Authentic Tomb of Jesus." In the prologue to their book they mentioned that the team of researchers spent thousands of man hours pondering over the geological, topographical, demographical, archaeological and historical data that have been written about the subject since the beginning of the Christian era. After surveying this evidence, Professor McBirnie and his "Task Force" concluded that the site of the Garden Tomb had the best credentials for being the actual tomb of Jesus (though he wisely admitted that "the final proof of any location is still absent" p.14).

Though my own opinion concerning the crucifixion site has varied over the past 40 years, I came to feel (with the publication of Professor McBirnie's book) that he made a good case for NOT accepting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the true location, though his suggestion that the Garden Tomb was probably authentic remained a shaky conclusion. This is especially true at the present because archaeologists over the past 20 years have identified all the tombs around the Garden Tomb area (including the Garden Tomb itself) as being Iron Age creations. This means that these tombs were actually carved out of the rock about seven to eight hundred years before Jesus (Barkay and Kloner, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1986, pp.22-57). These new discoveries are fatal to the theory that the Garden Tomb could have been that of Jesus because the New Testament clearly indicates that Jesus was buried in a tomb just *recently* hewn from the rock.

Only a Site Connected With the Temple Rituals Is Proper

In summary, we find that any person who lived in Jerusalem in the early first century would have known the precise geographical parameters involved in the teaching of the author of the Book of Hebrews when he said that Jesus was crucified "without the gate" as well as "without the camp." These geographical indications

focus on well-known matters that deal with the Temple rituals and ceremonies. The only sacrifices which met the requirements that the author was speaking about concerning the death of Jesus were those associated with the Third Altar located *east* of the Temple near the summit of the Mount of Olives. From this information alone, any of the ordinary citizens of Jerusalem would have directed their attention to the *eastern* part of Jerusalem and to the top of the Mount of Olives for the fulfillment of any such analogy. And, indeed, we will see in a later chapter that no animals of any kind (no matter what they were) were ever offered outside the Temple in the *northern* parts of Jerusalem, neither in the *southern* parts of Jerusalem, nor in the *western* parts of Jerusalem. Only in the *eastern* part of the Temple were the animals sacrificed, except those which were sacrificed at the important Third Altar located even further *east* of the Temple near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives.

In the next chapter we will look at the dimensions of the Camp of Israel that surrounded the Temple and Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. This information will also show conclusively that Jesus was indeed crucified on the Mount of Olives very near the Third Altar where the ashes were poured out and where the main offerings for sin (including the Red Heifer) were sacrificed by Israel to God.