



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XX Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: Mount of Olives

My anklelousing spondilitus knots up my spine if

I sleep more than 5 hours. I arose at 4:30 AM eager to see this day unfold. I was at our desk in our room reading my Bible and jotting notes as the sun arose to lighten the room. All of our accommodations were superb. Here we had turned down a room for its cigarette smell and had ended up in a different wing than our companions. Today the halls were quiet when I woke Beverly at 6 AM so that we could get an early jump on our Kosher breakfast. We talked at breakfast about how fast 10 days can go by, and the excitement of being in Jerusalem today. The bus took us to the top of the Mount of Olives and as we overlook the city, the peddlers swarmed in to sell us postcards, trinkets and full panoramic pictures of the city. They got to me on only 2 counts. I have no need of trinkets. Ron arranged for one of them to take a group picture with the city in the background and deliver copies to us at our bus rendezvous later. There is no way I would make a tourist trapped camel lift my obese carcass up from his kneeling position. I didn't doubt he could and we were glad that several couples gave us opportunity for pictures of the ugly creature.

The slope down the Mount of Olives was less olives and more tombs. The peddlers drove off a lad they called a pick-pocket and mocked a beggar that was regarded as academy award material. One of our group clicked a picture of a man's donkey and as we passed them they were still haggling about how much he owed him for the picture. The sloping Mount of Olives that overlooked the Kidron valley and the Eastern Gate of the temple gave a splendid panoramic view of the city as well as a view of mankind.

An excursion off the main trail took us to an ancient tomb. The reverence for this slope of real estate which faced the Eastern gate of the Temple was authentic and ancient. The thinking in Judaism is that those buried overlooking the temple will be the first



resurrected when their Messiah appears. They are entombed in a cenotaph with their feet towards the Eastern Gate so when they arose from the dead they would be facing the Eastern Gate. It is also customary to leave a stone on the cenotaph when you visit a grave. We leave flowers which signify the temporal brevity of life. The little stones on the graves provided a temporal record of a loved ones visit. This craggy slope that watched the sunset on the city of Jerusalem seemed more fitting for stones than for flowers.

As we moved north some the decline lessened and opened into a flat garden area, The Garden of Gethsemane. "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook 'Cedron', where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. ... for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples." John 18:1-2 Our guide carefully explained the Jewish



law and tradition about travel distances' after partaking of the passover supper. The Garden of Gethsemane was within this limitation while Bethany, where Jesus had been staying previous nights, was not. I pondered other traditions that came into play that fateful night wherein God paid my sin debt in full. I understand from two sources that Palestinian Jews observed the passover meal a day before the 14th day of Abib, in order to accommodate the crowds in Jerusalem for the Passover time. Such was clearly the case in Scriptures where Jesus was separated from others on the 10th of Abib and slain on the 14th day of that month. (Exod 12:3,6) Slain at the same time that all Passover lambs were slain. Here in the Garden of Gethsemane on the edge of the Mount of Olives Jesus spent his last hours as is so intimately recorded in the Gospels.

Olive trees that stood here then stood here today. As it was told there an olive tree lives and grows for eighty years, dies, remains dead for 20 years, then 'resurrects' from death and repeats this remarkable cycle. They get larger and larger, not with annual rings, but with centennial spurts of life. Carbon 14 dating of some of the trees in this garden go back 2,000 years. My skepticism would like to reference that in two more sources but I was certain this garden was here, in some form, likely with some olive trees, when Christ spent that last evening in the form of man, born into the world to bear man's sin.



We moved on through the garden to visit a church built to commemorate some aspect of Christ in the garden. A peddler tried to sell us an olive leaf, some 'holy' beads and a crucifix. I wished to sit in a garden at Gethsemane with dew still on the olive trees and read the Gospel's accounts of Jesus' presence here, but when our group moved on towards the bus at the bottom of the hill I was plenty ready to leave this catholicized commercial one. At the bus we collected and reviewed our group photo.



Awesome and fast.

There was an anticipation in our guide as the bus worked its way through Jerusalem towards the City of David. My guess was for another brand new archaeological dig. Ronnie was always the most excited about such, and the discovery of the Palace of David on the upper end of the City of David was challenging his routine practice of introducing a site only when we were assembled at its entry. He was successful and his enthusiasm, in his own guarded manner, began to bubble out as we stood on a grated walkway and peered into an open archaeological dig.