

The Mystery of the Mt. of Olives

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Introduction: As we draw near to the Celebration of Passover I desire that we understand that the real struggle that Yahshua faced, began and was won not when he was nailed to the Tree as the perfect sacrificial Lamb of YHWH but was in the Garden called Gethsemane. This garden was situated on what is called the Mount of Olives so today as a preparation for Passover I wish to explore why this mount was and is so significant and what it represents.

The Place of the Master's greatest Test:

Yahshua often spoke to his Talmidim (Disciples) of the purpose he was sent into the World but since he had come in the form of human flesh he still faced a great struggle in the Garden that is known as Gethsemane or in Hebrew Gat Sh'manim meaning "Oil Press" on the Mount of Olives. We read in Luke 22:39 that Yahshua often went to this garden with his disciples to pray. This night however was unique and painful as we read:

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Mark 14: 33 And Yahshua took Kepha (Peter), Ya'acov (James) and Yochanan (John) with him and he began to be troubled and deeply distressed.³⁴ Then he said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even to death.

The anguish of Yahshua had nothing to do with fear of men or the physical torments of the execution tree because we read at the last Supper the desire he had to fulfil his purpose for coming in accord with the will of his Father so when they are at table for the last Supper he declares his intent as we read in:

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Luke 22:14 When the hour had come he sat down and the twelve emissaries with him. 15 And he said to them, with fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

The great anguish that he came to experience in the Garden was that within hours the full cup of Divine fury against sin would be his to drink and his anguish reflected the extreme bitterness of the cup of wrath he was given. Nothing exemplifies this better than the words he cries out from the tree:

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MattithYahu (Matthew) 27: 46 And about the ninth hour Yahshua cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Ĕli, Ĕli, lemah shebaqtani?" that is, "My Ĕl, My Ĕl, why have You forsaken Me?"

(In Hebrew- Eli Eli asav rachoq yeshuah (why are you far from rescuing me)

It is however in Gethsemane that the struggle with his human will takes place. This is the real test as we read. In his prayer to the Father that came from a desperate soul we see his progressive defeat of his will and his total submission to the Father's will:

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MattithYahu (Matthew) 26:39 And he went a little further and fell on his face and petitioned saying, "O my Av (Father) if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will but as you will."

The second time he goes to pray we see a greater resolve in accepting that it is the Father's will:

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MattithYahu (Matthew) 26: 42 And he went away again the second time and petitioned, saying "O my Av (Father) if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done."

Finally after the third time we see the Master with absolute resolve ready to do the will of the Father:

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MattithYahu (Matthew) 26:45- 46 Then he came to his disciples and said to them, "are you still sleeping and resting, behold the hour is at hand and look the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of transgressors. 46 Rise let us be going:

At the arrest however we see Kepha (Peter) so passionate to prevent the capture of his master who then tries to lop off the head of the servant of the Kohen Ha Gadol (the High Priest) but only succeeding in cutting off his ear and as Yahshua heals this man he says something that reveals what he knows of the Father for he says:

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MattithYahu (Matthew) 26: 53 Think not that I cannot petition to my Father and he shall immediately give me more than twelve legions of Malakhim (Angels).54 But how then shall the Scrolls be fulfilled that say thus it must be.

Yahshua knew the great love of the Father that would never make him take this cup of suffering even at the expense of his own word but that great love also rested in Yahshua and therefore compelled him to go through this suffering that what was written would be fulfilled and would bring salvation to the world.

This whole episode was a prelude to his suffering but was so essential to give him the strength to go through it all for us.

What I would now like to also investigate is whether this place, the Garden and the Mount of Olives was more than just a customary place for prayer or whether it had much greater significance.

Subtle pointing's to the Mount of Olives

We have a reference to this mount in Bereshith (Genesis) when Abraham built an Altar:

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Bereshith (Genesis) 12:8 And he moved from there to the Mountain east of Bethel and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an Altar to YHWH and called on the name of YHWH.

It is evident that Abraham returned to this altar on the Mount of Olives at the time Yahweh made a covenant with him in Bereshith (Genesis) 15. "This covenant (promise) was sealed by the blood sacrifice of animals and was symbolic of the greater covenant to come -- the covenant sealed by the blood sacrifice of [YahShua] the Messiah that is available to all who put their trust in him. In making His covenant with Abraham, [Yahweh] revealed significant details of His redemptive plan for humankind, including the PLACE where the ultimate sacrifice would take place."

The Camp of Israel's limits had been set by the Bet Din as being an imaginary circle around the Sanctuary with a radius of 2000 cubits (Roshanah 2:5; Sanhedrin 1:5 and Shebuoth 2:2). The summit of the Mt of Olives equates to being outside this radius.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 24:14 "Take OUTSIDE THE CAMP him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him

The first time we see the Mount of Olives mentioned by name in the Scriptures is when David had to flee Yerushalayim for his life because of his son Absalom.

The High Priest Zadok moved the Ark over the Kidron because David had taken the Rod of Aaron up to the Mount of Olives to pray for deliverance. David reassured Zadok that he would keep the Rod within the 2000 cubit radius considered inside the camp (Torah Anthology Joshua pgs. 75-76).

David wept as he crossed over the Mount of Olives & While David is walking up the Summit he has an Epiphany which we read in the following:

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Tehillim (Psalms) 22 "My Elohim, My Elohim, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My Elohim, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent... I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; they

shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, "He trusted in Yahweh, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"... They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots...

David was given a vision of these events and then directed by Yahweh to plant the rod, knowing it would become the instrument of redemption for all humankind. He begins to transcend time and feel the agony that will take place 1,000 years later. Then he understands as he thrusts the Rod into the ground on the Mount of Olives just a stone's throw away from what would be the Third Altar.

After crossing the Kidron Bridge, David followed this pathway which ascended the Mount of Olives "to ha Rosh where Yahweh was worshiped. (II Samuel 15:32)" The Hebrew words "ha Rosh" translate in most Scripture translations as "the summit." However, these words can also be translated as "the head" or "the skull." That Adam's skull was buried at Gulgolet on the Mount of Olives was common knowledge. Origen speaks of it as a well-known fact in his time; and St. Augustine wrote:

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"The ancients hold that because Adam was the first man, and was buried there [at Golgotha], therefore it holds the HEAD of the human race"

Gulgolet is named from Adam's skull, the summit of the Mount of Olives, the site of the Red Heifer altar, "the place where Yahweh was worshiped"!

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Hebrews 13:11-13

11 For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the Kohen Ha Gadol (the High Priest) for transgression are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore Yahshua also that he might set-apart the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Let us go forth therefore to him outside the camp bearing his reproach.

The Tabernacle and Temple was made up of three main sections, the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the Court. It also had three altars, the Altar of Incense, the Brazen Alter of Burnt Offerings, and a third altar outside the camp.

The third Altar was located directly outside the Golden Eastern Gate over a ravine called the Wadi Kidron. Another reference pointing towards the place of Yahshua's sacrifice comes from the Prophet who is given a word from YHWH:

YermeYahu (Jeremiah) 1:11-12...the word of Yahweh came to YermeYahu [Jeremiah], saying, "YermeYahu, what do you see?" And I said, "I see a branch of an almond tree." Then Yahweh said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.

In the Time of Rebbe YahShua, there was an arched bridge called the “Bridge of the Parah Adamah (Red Heifer) that lead from the Golden Eastern Gate across the Wadi Kidron up to the third Altar on the summit of the Mount of Olives. This causeway was called “the descent of the Mount of the Olives (Luke 19:37).”

There is no doubt that YahShua was led, like the Red Heifer, from the Temple through the Eastern gate, across the Kidron Bridge and up the ascent of the Mount of Olives to the summit.

Hebrews 13:10 “We have an altar from which those who minister at the Tabernacle have no right to eat.”

In the Presence of YAHWEH

Now since, in the Torah, a person accused of the sin of blasphemy had to be tried, convicted, and killed in the presence of Yahweh, the only appropriate execution place was the summit of the Mount of Olives. Since Yahweh’s presence (Shekinah) resided in the Holy of Holies of the Temple, the condemned man had a clear, unobstructed view of the ONLY entrance to the Temple on its EASTERN side. Therefore, the Messiah died on the Mount of Olives facing the Temple and “in the presence of Yahweh.”

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The Significance of the Mt. of Olives

Rebbe YahShua was proclaimed king [HIS CRIME] on the Mount of Olives and arrested at the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives was the place of his arrest. Golgotha (the place of the head) was on the Mount of Olives near the place where the bodies of sacrificed Temple animals were burned. This steep slope on the Mount of Olives east of the Temple was outside the east gate of the city of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) and fits all Scriptural evidence for the location of the crucifixion. It must be noted that all the Temple walls were high except 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 heifer is sprinkled. (Talmud Middot 2:4)”

It was here at the summit of the Mount of Olives that stood a miraculously budding branch of an almond tree, called A’aron's rod, planted on the Mount of Olives by David and grew into the crucifixion tree. It was here that our Messiah was nailed on a cross beam in the midst of two Zealots. King Messiah YahShua became the fruit of the Tree of Life.

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We also know that according to Scripture that the Mount of Olives plays a major role in the Return of Yahshua as the coming Moshiach (Messiah since we read in:

Ma'esah Ha Sh'lichyim (Acts of the Apostles) 1:10 And while they (the Disciples) looked steadfastly towards the Shamayim (heavens) as he he went up, behold two men stood by them in white clothing; 11 They said, you men of Galil, why do you stand gazing up into the Shamayim (Heavens)? This same Yahshua who is taken up from you into the Shamayim shall return in the same manner as you have seen him go into the Shamayim.

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A further quote revealing the significance of the Mount of Olives is given through the Prophet ZekarYah (Zechariah) showing just how central to the theme of Scripture is this Mount:

ZekarYah (Zechariah) 14:4 And in that day His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives which faces Yerushalayim on the east and the Mount of Olives shall split in two from east to west, a very great valley and half of the mountain shall move towards the north and half of it towards the south.

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Summary Points

When looking into the Mystery of the Mount of Olives we find its significance through much of Scripture so we need to consider how it played and will play a great role until Yahshua's return as the ruling King so we need to draw some point of significance:

1. Gethsemane which means "the Oil Press" on the Mount of Olives was the place where the Master was greatly pressed but chose to submit to the Father's will.
2. The great anguish that Yahshua felt that caused his sweat to be like drops of blood were not the result of the fear of men but over the Cup of Divine Wrath that he endured for our sins and that of all mankind.
3. In Yahshua's petitions we see him progressively overcoming his human will and strengthening his confidence to submit totally to the Father's will & purpose.
4. We also have discovered that the Mount of Olives was revealed as a place of sacrifices from early times. Abraham built an Altar there and called on the Name of YHWH.
5. Sources reveal that King David planted A'aron's staff on the Mount of Olives that would later be the tree upon which the Saviour would be impaled on a crossbeam.
6. Finally Scripture reveals that Yahshua will return to the Mount of Olives which will split in two so he can enter Yerushalayim through the Eastern gate as the Messiah and Ruling King.

Conclusion:

As we consider & celebrate Passover I pray we consider the extreme Cup that the Saviour took for us and all those who would come to receive his promise and that we would begin to see how undeserving we really are. When we humble ourselves in considering his suffering it is an opportunity for us to consider if our life was worthy of the great suffering that he received for us.

Ibrim (Hebrews) 12:3-4 For consider him who endured such opposition from transgressors against himself lest you be wearied and lose heart. 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.