

In Jerusalem B

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine in Jerusalem has been built over the foundations of an older church. The first mention of the monastery is made in the decree given by Sultan Suleiman to the Patriarch Germanos. According to Souchanof (1653), lay people used to live there, and in 1795 the church was refurbished by Patriarch Anthemos. Moreover, at the time of Patriarch Dositheos, the church is mentioned as one of the nunneries that belonged to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In 1836 the church was refurbished according to Neophytos the Cyprian, while the Holy Monastery gradually became inhabited by lay people and only the church remained to the clergy men. It is an orthogonal-shaped stone-built church with tiled roof, with dimensions 16.2×9.5. Its morphology is related to that of the Holy Church of Saint George in the Hebrew site. Most interesting is the well-preserved Russian style wooden temple.

The Holy Monastery of Saint George – Jewish Quarter

The historical church is located in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem Old City and is dated back on the 18th century. It has probably been built over a possible old people's home, which has been abandoned due to the increasing humidity released from the ground. In old writings it is referenced with the name "Aqabet al-Khader", while during the Crusades in 1150 it is named "Infunda S. Georgii". It is an orthogonal-shaped stone-built church, covering an area of 180 m². The Russian style Temple is of great artistic and architectural interest. In general, the interior decoration is modest, with some neo-classical elements, it is adorned however with some interior gold coating. The floor is covered with marble slabs, whereas geometrical shapes and solar motives are incorporated in its general pattern which is representative of the church

buildings of that period in Palestine.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Symeon at Katamonas

The hill Katamonas is found in New Jerusalem, and the name is derived from the Greek "state of being alone" because it was located far away from the town centre. The place has been associated with the burial site of the Righteous Symeon the God-receiver. Symeon the God-receiver was a righteous and pious man, one of the seventy translators of the Holy Bible, who was sent to Alexandria together with other men after the Philadelphian Ptolemy's request. While he was translating the Holy Bible from Hebrew to Greek, he noticed the verse by prophet Isaiah: "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). This verse greatly disturbed pious Symeon's mind as he was filled with disbelief. For this reason, he dropped his ring in the river, saying to himself that if he ever found the ring again, he would believe what was written by the prophet. According to the tradition, when he stayed at a small town overnight and he bought a fish to eat with his companions, he found the ring inside the belly of the fish. Then his mind was cleared from any doubts and he went back to Jerusalem and lived there. According to the Old Testament, knowing about the coming of the Messiah, Righteous Symeon beseeched God to be found worthy to see Him before he dies. His request was heard and it was he the one who received Theotokos with the Holy Infant at the Temple saying the phrase: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace..." (Luke 2:25-32). Having seen the salvation of God, "which thou hast prepared before the face of all people", and blessed the parents of the child, righteous Symeon slept in the Lord at the age of 270. As far as his Holy relics are concerned, they were transferred after their translation to the Holy Church that the Emperor Justinian had founded in Constantinople, in honour of Saint James the brother of God.

According to the tradition, Saint Symeon's house was on the hill where the Holy Monastery is. The tombs of his family

members were in the garden, according to the custom amongst the Jews and the ancient Egyptians, Palestinians and Syrians. Georgian monks founded the first monastery in the hill Katamonas and built the church in honour of Saint Symeon the God-receiver in the 12th century. Later on the monastery was destroyed and remained in ruins for centuries until the area was bought by monk Abramios. The monk toiled for twenty years to reconstruct the monastery and the church. He also built a cookhouse, storage areas and cultivated the garden. In 1879 Abramios was inspired to examine carefully the courtyard of the old tower looking for the tomb of the Saint. Indeed, his excavations revealed the carved tombs inside the rock. As they were full of debris, he cleared them and made a big entrance opening. The tombs were initially outside the tower but the walls were reconstructed to encompass them in the premises, and a new church was built over them dedicated to Saint Symeon. Pilgrims nowadays can see the carved on the natural rock tomb of the Saint inside the church. Carved stones of the old building are preserved to this day, as well as underground cisterns and parts of mosaic floors, the artefacts of impressive constructions of the Christian era. There are three icons in the temple, one of which portrays Saint Symeon interpreting the prophesy "behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son", the second icon portrays the Saint dropping his ring in the river and in the third one, the Saint finds his ring in the belly of the fish. The Church floor is covered with red and white marble, while the chapel's floor is stone-paved and adjoins the rock with the tombs.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Onoufrios

The Holy Monastery of Saint Onoufrios is located south of Siloam's pool near the Holy City, built on the potter's field or the "field of blood" which was bought for the foreigner's burial with the thirty silver coins the denounced Judas returned to the Pharisees. The current monastery was built over the ruins of the old monastery by monk Cyril at the end

of last century. It stands on the place where the Apostles found refuge after Christ's arrest. What can be seen at the monastery;

1. The place where Prophet Elijah was jagged and his tomb.
2. The cave-hermitage of Saint Onoufrios. According to the tradition the Saint visited the Holy Land to venerate the Holy Shrines and receive the blessing to retreat in the desert.
3. Saint Iouvenalios' tomb; he was the forty forth Patriarch of Jerusalem (442-458).
4. Catacombs with holy relics of martyrs who died by Persian raids and Crusaders.

At present, the monastery is being served by nuns.

The Monastery of Holy Zion

The hill of Holy Zion hosts the tomb of King-Prophet David and the Cenacle (also known as the "Upper Room") the place where the Lord had the Last Supper and where at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down to the Apostles like tongues of fire. Here was Saint John the Evangelist's house in which Theotokos slept in the Lord, and from this place the Apostles moved her body to Gethsemane for her burial. The Holy Trinity Church is at the top of the hill; the church celebrates on the Monday of the Holy Spirit and it was built by Archimandrite Gerasimos between the years 1905-1911. The memorable Archimandrite built at the same time the building that now hosts the Patriarchal School of Zion where male students are educated in order to join the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

The Holy Monastery of Megali Panagia (Great Theotokos)

The monastery is also known as the monastery of "Exceptional monks" and it was built by Patriarch Elijah during the years 494-516. It is located at the place where Theotokos and the other women were standing to watch Her Son's Crucifixion at Golgotha. The name "great" was given – according to the

tradition – because the most pure Mother of our Saviour cried out her lamentation, devastated by the sword of anguish that penetrated her heart at the sight of her Crucified Son.

The monks of that monastery were called Exceptional and their duties were the unceasing prayer of the heart and the care of the Church of the Resurrection with the chapels dedicated to the Lord's Passion, namely Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre. Starting with Patriarch Elijah, who founded the monastery and sustained the first community of monks there, the Order of this Brotherhood has been under the protection and supervision of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem ever since.

The assignment of the Monastery of Megali Panagia to Saint Melani

Once the Exceptional Monks were moved to live in the new monastery of Saints Constantine and Helen, Patriarch Elijah assigned the monastery of Megali Panagia to wise Saint Melani and her companions who numbered almost ninety nuns. Saint Melani arrived in Jerusalem in 417. According to Gerontios, her biographer, "every evening after the gates of the Church of the Resurrection had been closed, she remained by the Cross praying until the choir would come and then she would return to her cell to have some rest". Saint Melani's cell is near the Church of the Resurrection, in the monastery of Megali Panagia where her tomb is also found in the chapel dedicated to the Saint.

The Church of Theotokos was built in the 5th century by Patriarch Elijah. Placed on a special throne in the Catholicon, the holy icon of Panagia Odigitria (the one that guides) is believed to have been painted by Saint Luke the Evangelist. Near the throne of Odigitria there are two reliquaries with the holy relics of the Saints: James the brother of Christ, John the Baptist, Charalambos, Eleftherios, Ignatius Theophorus, Euthymios, Anthimos the hieromartyr, Nikon, Auxentios, Hypatios and Nektarios of Pentapolis the

wonderworker. There are also the relics of Saint Ioulita's hand, and those of the fool for Christ martyr Emir (1549), who was a Turkish prince. Finally, Saint Melani's handwritten holy gospel is kept in the monastery.

The Holy Monastery of Theotokos Seitanaya

Despite the fact that this nunnery is honouring the name of Theotokos, it is also known as the monastery of Theotokos' grandmother from the Arab name Der-elsaida, Grandmother's Monastery. The miraculous icon which according to the tradition arrived by itself from Damascus of Syria is in this monastery. There are two chapels in the monastery, dedicated to Saint Anna and All Saints respectively.