

## Absalom's Tomb

### Names (also known as)

“Absalom's Pillar”, “Tomb of Zachariah” and “Tomb of Simeon”.

### Etymology

Absalom - in Hebrew Av-Shalom, where Av is father, and Shalom is peace. Thus the name means "Father of peace".

### Location/Description

Upper Kidron Valley, on the foothills of the Mount of Olives, facing the temple mount.



Absalom's Tomb Monument is sixty feet tall.

### Scriptural references

2 Samuel 18:18 - "Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place".

### Famous characters

Absalom – 3rd son of King David

Zachariah – father of John Baptist

Simeon – “just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25)

### Brief history

Josephus mentions Absalom's Monument in Antiquities 7,10,3. However, this impressive tomb in the Kidron Valley known as

Absalom's Tomb actually has nothing to do with David's rebellious son Absalom. It acquired this moniker before scholars could actually date it, based upon the reference to



Absalom's Pillar or Place in 2 Samuel 18.

Over the years there developed a custom in Jerusalem for fathers to bring their rebellious sons to Absalom's Tomb to throw stones at the monument to the boy who lifted his hand against his father.

The structure actually dates to the Herodian period approximately 1,000 years after Absalom's death. These Herodian Tombs are referred to as “Second Temple Tombs”.

To the left of Absalom's Tomb is an eight chambered catacomb that appears to have been cut at the same time as Absalom's Tomb. Because of this, another theory is that the so-called Absalom's Pillar acted as a monument for the catacomb that was named the Cave of Jehoshaphat. Based upon the style, these tombs have been ascribed to the early part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., when Jesus may well have witnessed their construction.

In the Byzantine period monks commemorated Bible stories by writing inscriptions on the old tombs in the Kidron Valley. There is a 4<sup>th</sup> century inscription which reads “This is the tomb of Zachariah, the martyr, the holy priest, the father of John.” Another inscription was found on the Monument stating it was the Tomb of Simeon the “just and devout” - Scriptural character of Luke 2.

### Sources:

Jerusalem, An Archaeological Biography – H. Shanks; Pilgrimage Panorama with Gila – Your Holy Land Guide; Jerusalem In The Year 30 A.D. – L & K Ritmeyer

Wikipedia – Tomb of Absalom

BibleWalks.com – Tomb of Avshalom

(Compilers – Tom and Leslie Colby)