

Yesterday morning, some of us drove down to Jericho again. This time, however, we did not take the normal, broad, excellent highway, leading past Damascus Gate and Herod Gate and then paralleling the east wall of the Old City for a while. We drove north towards Ramallah, and then just about where the Shefá'at suburb begins, turned east along a narrow macadamized, little known road, that leads to Anata (Biblical Anathoth), Ain Far'ah, a fine spring from which some of the water for Jerusalem used to be drawn, and then twists around through the hills, till finally it leads down to the main Jericho Road. It is a thrilling ride through beautiful, intensively cultivated country, that peters out in the uncultivable parts of the Wilderness of Judah. The road had been macadamized, I am told, by the Jordan Government as a military road, to make it possible to bring military hardware to the Jerusalem area through a back road. Indeed, that is what happened during the Six Day War. Much of the road is marked by burned-out tanks and trucks that could not escape the devastating bombing of the Israeli Air Force. After the first few hours, it had won and maintained a crushing air superiority.

Reaching the Jericho Road, we looked for and found the side road leading to the old track along the Wadi Qelt. There were no signposts, because of some repairs being made where the two roads meet. It is a very steeply descending road, but by putting the car in first gear, there was no necessity of stepping on the brakes all the time. The Wadi Qelt is the continuation of the Wadi Far'ah near which we had driven when we left Anata. The entire character of the narrow steep canyon, cut through the grayish-brown rock of the Wilderness of Judah, suddenly changes, when out of its north side there bursts forth a powerful spring. The waters of Ain Qelt are soon led by a bridge-aqueduct to the south side of the canyon and then down to the Plains of Jericho, where, joining with the waters of Elisha's fountain near Tell es-Sultan (ancient Jericho), they irrigate the lush oasis of Jericho. The sight and sound of water pouring out of the rock in the desert are always entrancing. I have never tired of looking and listening and marveling. And then, too, there are the immensely picturesque stone buildings of the monastery of St. John of Choziba, practically plastered against the north side of the cliff.