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## The Holy Land: A Premodern Photo Tour

The following photographic essay presents a series of rare vistas from Jerusalem and Palestine photographed about a century ago. More changes have occurred in the Holy Land in the last one hundred years than in the previous two thousand. Pictures such as these take the viewer back into the premodern era of the land of Israel. Their unpaved streets and simple landscapes are the same that greeted President George A. Smith and his party on their visit to the Holy Land in 1873 (see *Journal of Discourses*, 16:93–102) or that surrounded Orson Hyde as he prayed on the Mount of Olives in 1841 (*History of the Church*, 4:455–59). These scenes are probably close to the general surroundings experienced daily by Jesus and his early disciples.

Most of these photographs come from a book printed in Berlin in 1926 by Karl Gröber entitled *Palestine and Syria: The Country, the People, and the Landscape*, donated in 1998 to the BYU Harold B. Lee Library by Dr. James K. Lyon. At the conclusion of his mission in the Netherlands in late 1925, Professor Lyon's father, T. Edgar Lyon, and two other recently released missionaries traveled to the Middle East before returning to the United States. On their way, they encountered little besides Nomadic shepherds living in black wool tents, girls herding sheep, simple methods of agriculture, and a simple diet. Modern conveniences were few. Thus began the lifelong friendship of T. Edgar Lyon with the Holy Land. In 1927, on his twenty-fourth birthday, his father, David R. Lyon, gave him this book as a gift. It is now part of the BYU collection and held in the library at the BYU Jerusalem Center.

Gröber's photographs portray life in the Holy Land before it fell prey to the forces of modernization. Professor Lyon comments, "It seems to me that these photos may present a fairly accurate reflection of external living conditions that probably had not



changed significantly since the time of the Savior. My hope is that they convey strong impressions to viewers and that from them modern eyes may gain a sense of some of the physical circumstances in which the greatest spiritual teachings of all times arose.”

Added to Gröber’s photographs are three others. The picture of Golgotha was taken in 1993 by John W. Welch. The views of the village meeting and the terraced hillsides outside Jerusalem belong to the Madam Lydia Mary Olive von Finkelstein Mamreov Mountford collection, donated to the BYU Photo Archives in 1977. When Lydia Mountford,<sup>1</sup> an early-twentieth-century star of the stage, visited Jerusalem with her entourage in 1903, she took with her a Utah photographer, Charles Ellis Johnson, a son-in-law of Brigham Young. Even though many of his two thousand photographs, discovered in San Jose in the 1970s by Nelson Wadsworth, are spontaneous tourist shots, some of them capture significant scenes and historical social settings.

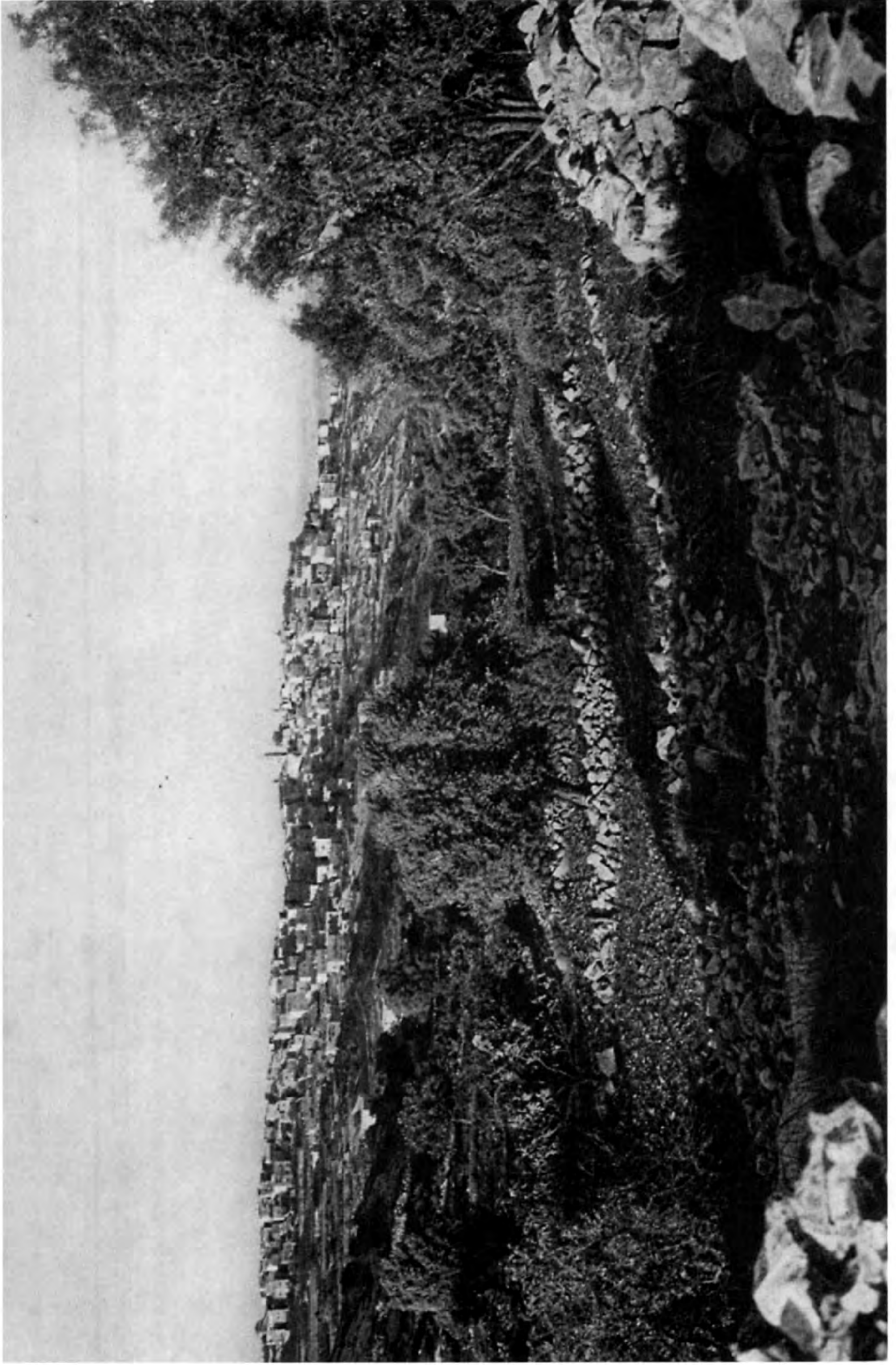
Altogether, these pictures take us where no traveler can go today. We may stand on the same spot and look out in the same direction, but the world of the New Testament is now obscured forever behind the billboards, pavements, and other facades of modernism. If we have clear, historical bearings and a knack for imagination, however, these pictures take us a long way back into the lands of the Bible. They have been selected and arranged below as a journey through the life of the Savior Jesus Christ.

#### NOTE

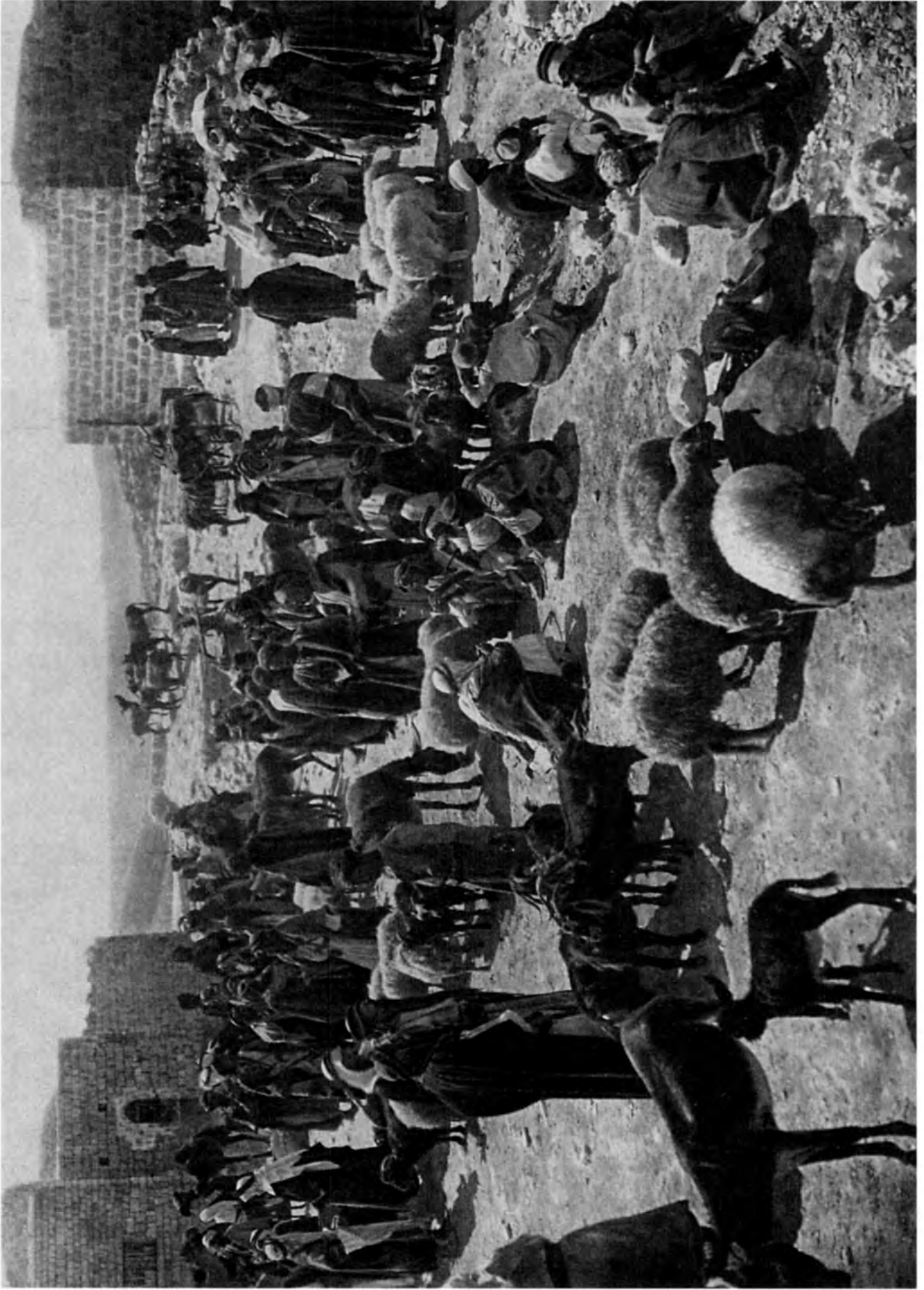
<sup>1</sup>For more information on Lydia Mountford, see Thomas Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 324–29.



Bethlehem, birthplace of Jesus. Olive trees dot the terraces around this "city on a hill."



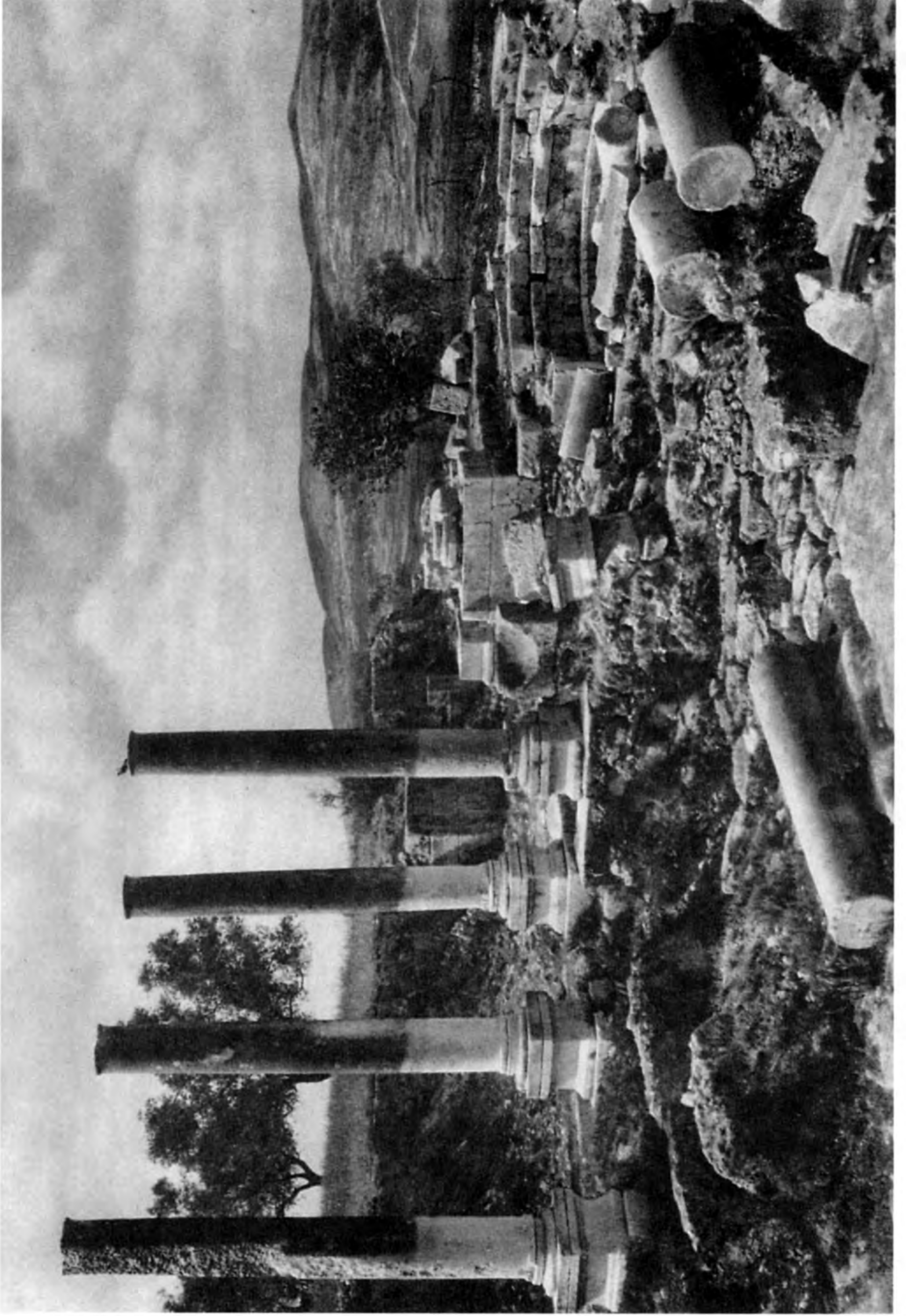




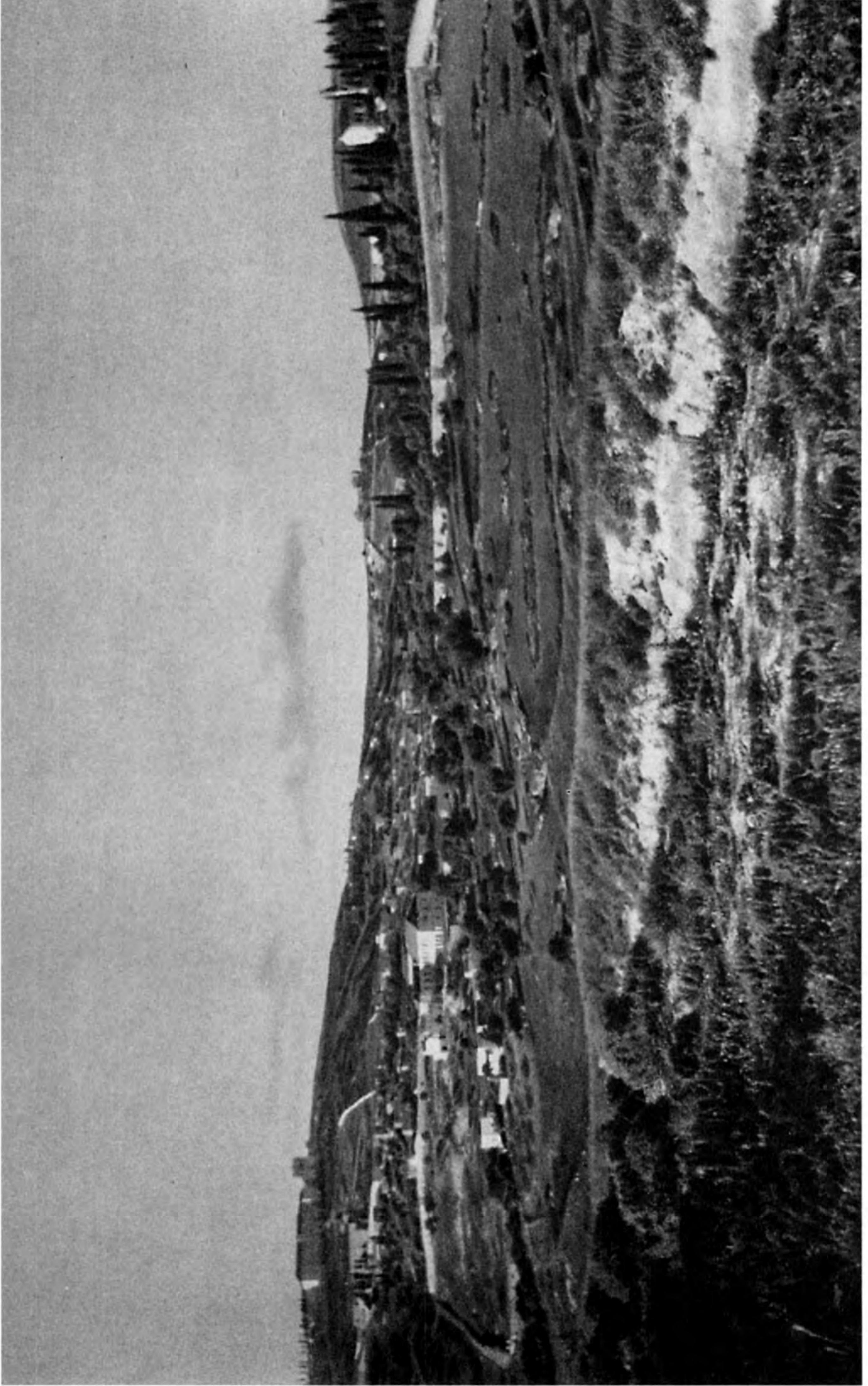
Shepherds in Bethlehem. Sheep and goats have been tended in much the same manner for centuries.



The Forum of Sebaste. Ruins mark the site of the magnificent basilica of Herod the Great, king of the Jews.



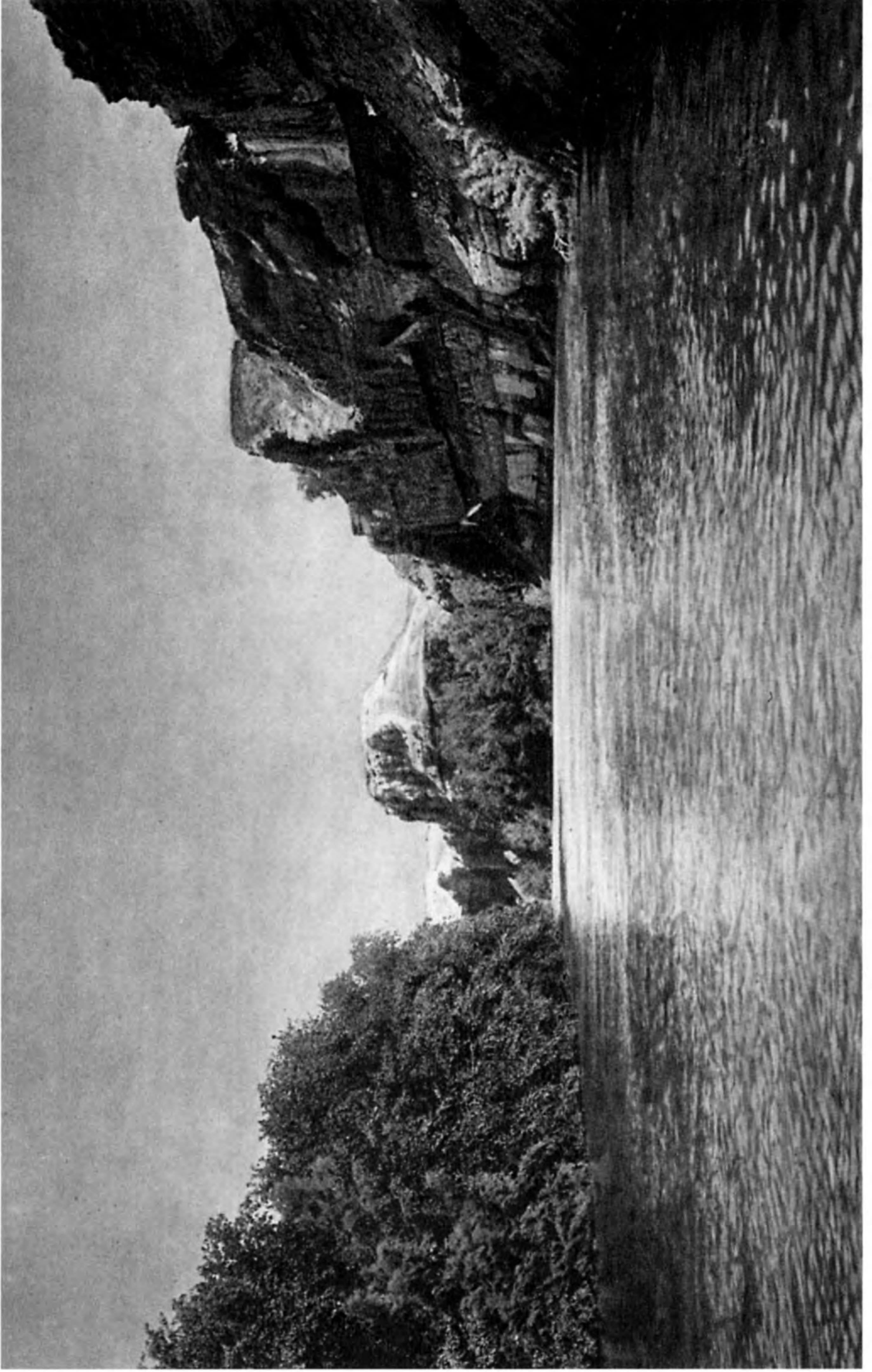




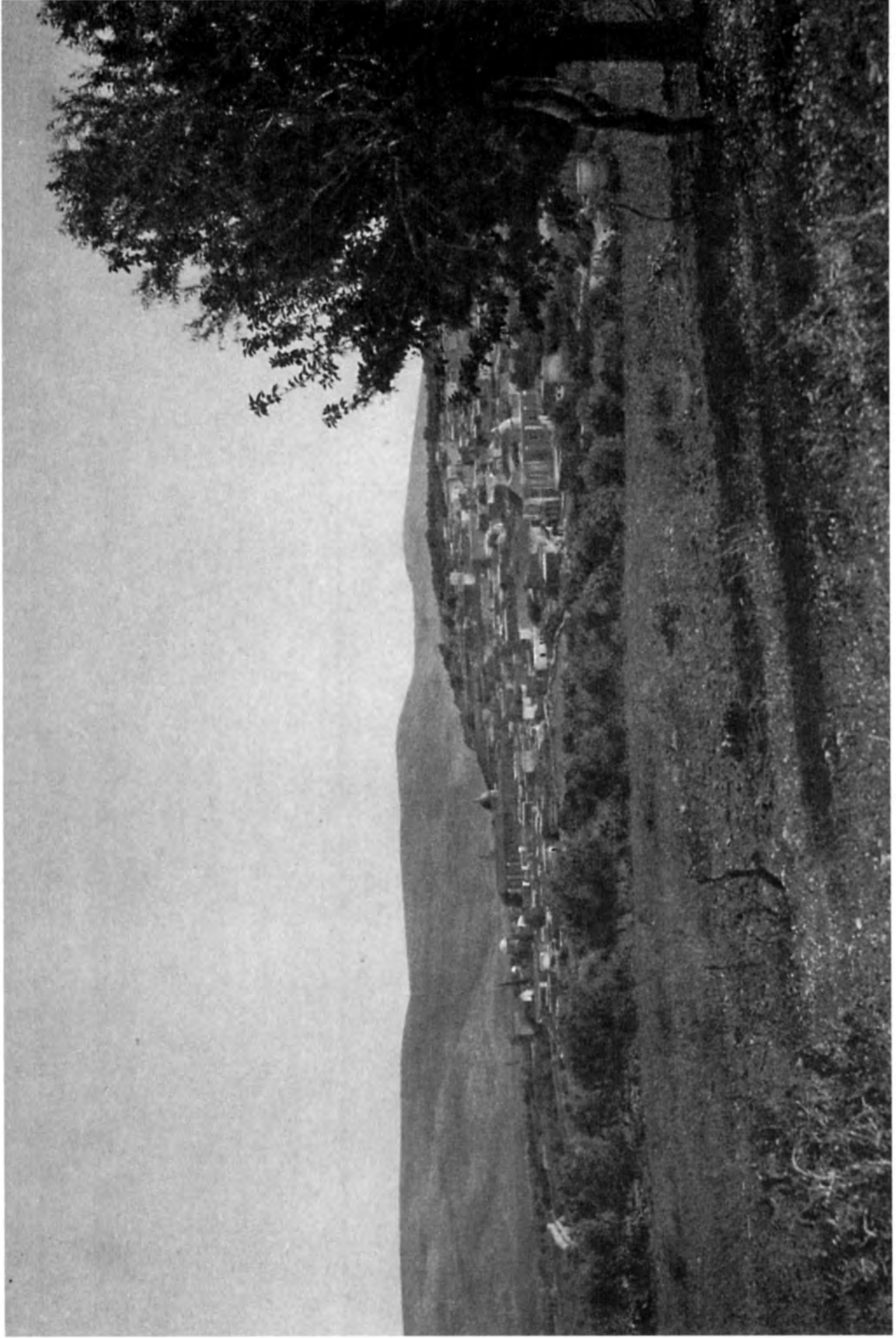
Nazareth. A small town a century ago, the city was even smaller during Jesus' childhood—perhaps only a few dozen homes.



The Jordan River. When John baptized Jesus, the Jordan flowed more swiftly than it does today.



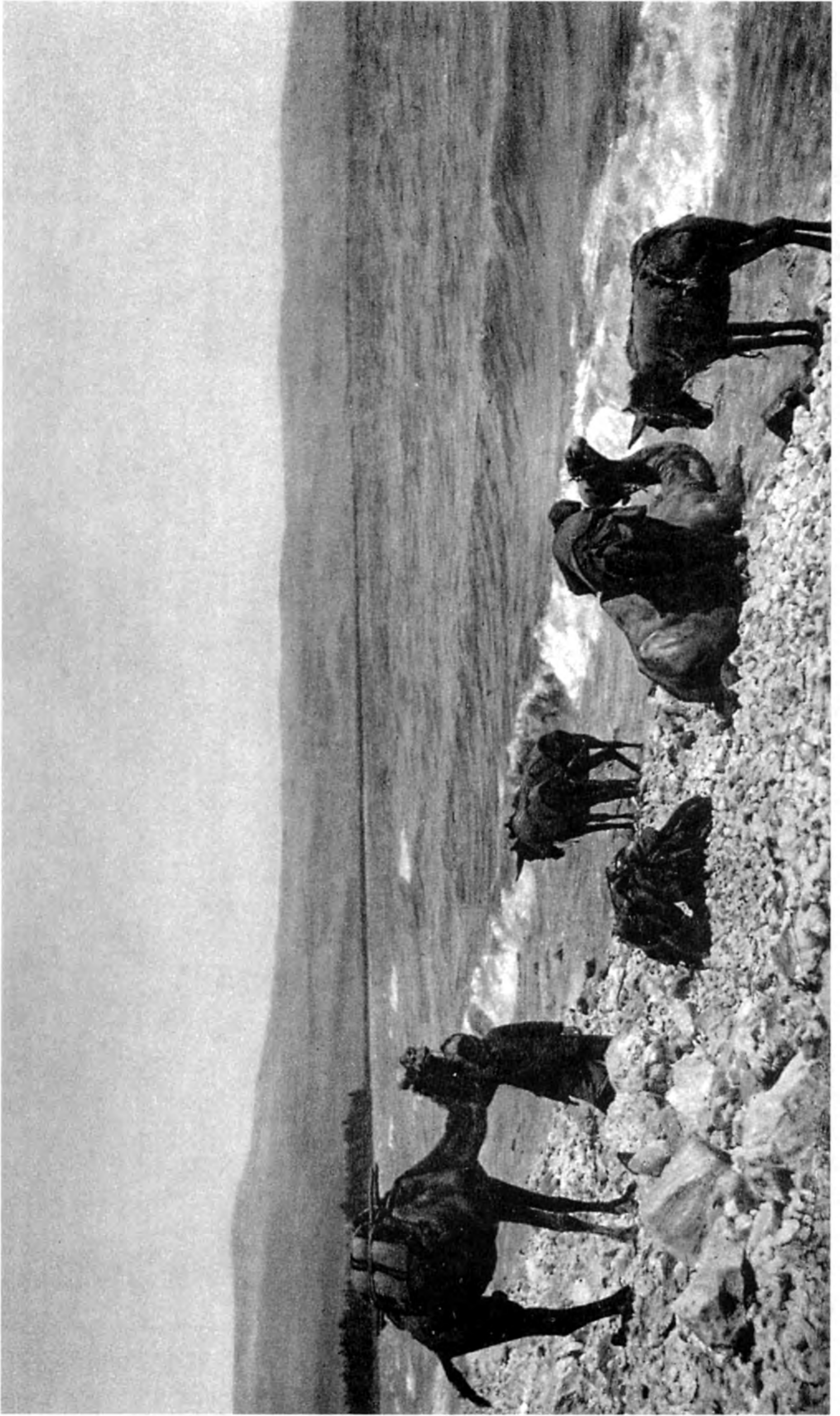




Cana. At this village, located near a Hellenistic center at Sepphoris, Jesus changed water into wine.



The Sea of Galilee. Though usually calm, this lake becomes turbulent when winds swirl through its low valley.







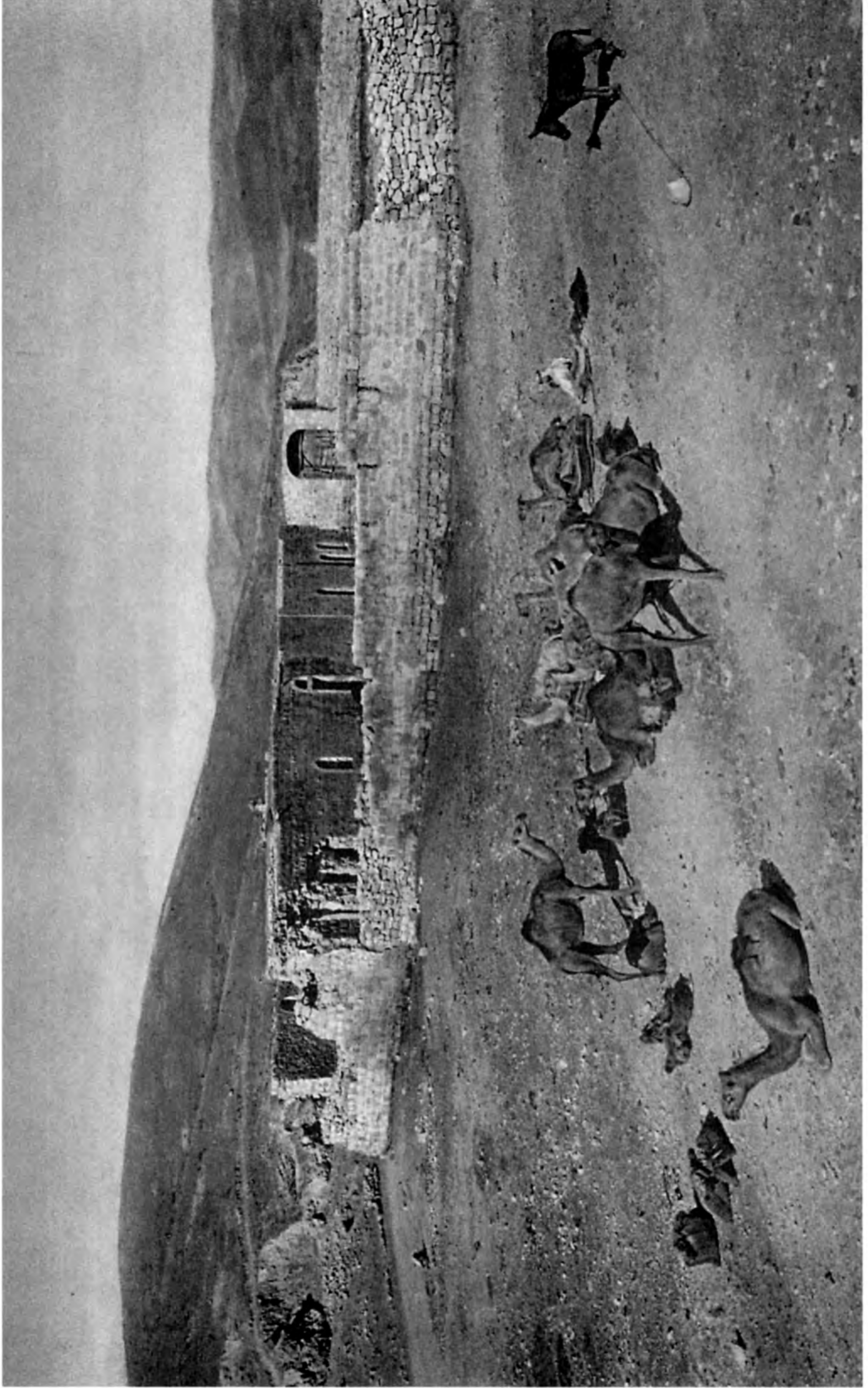
**Married woman.** Palestinian women showed their married status by wearing their dowry of jewelry and a head covering.





Mary's Well. This well in Nazareth evokes Jacob's well across the valley in Samaria, where Jesus taught the woman about living water.

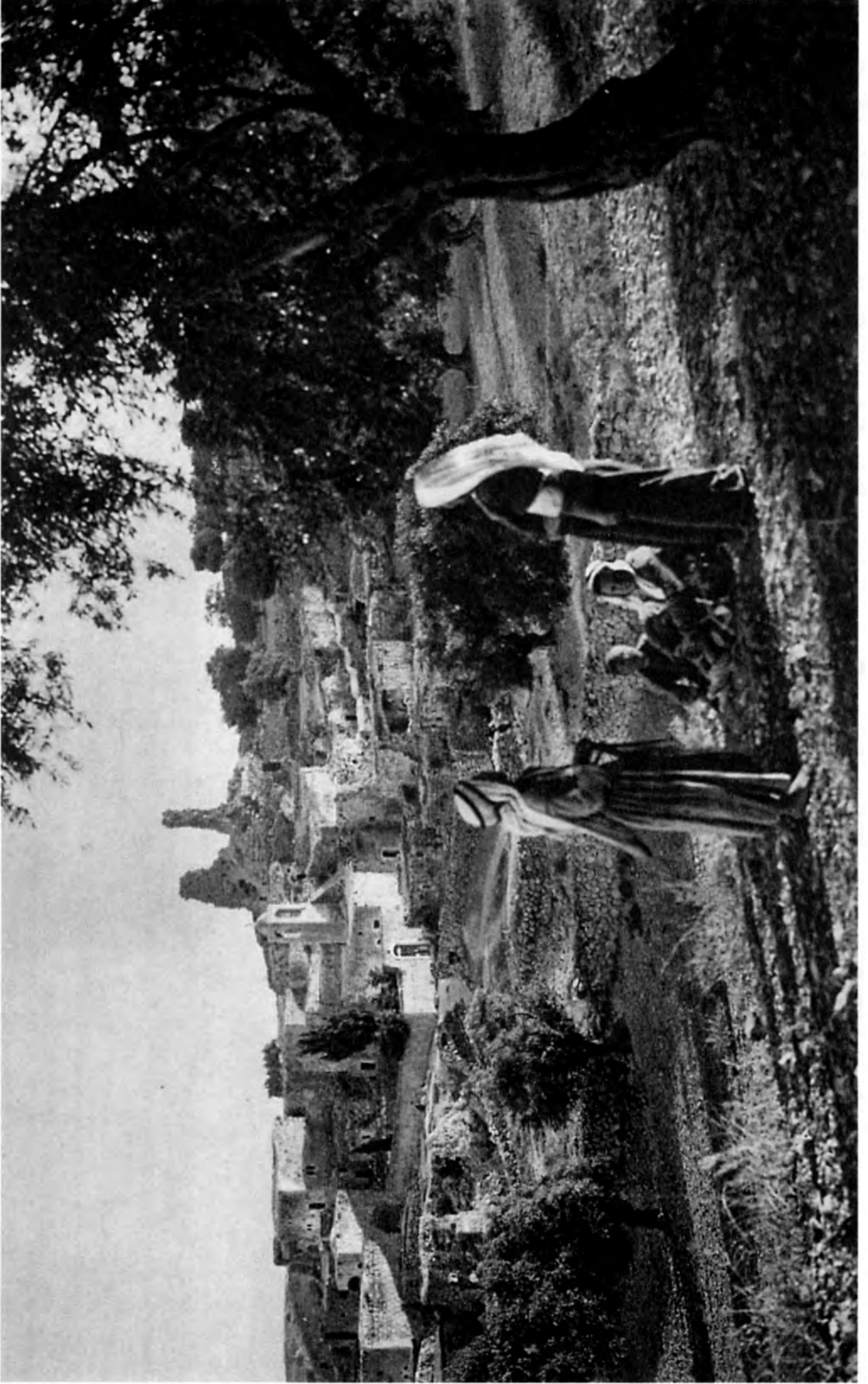




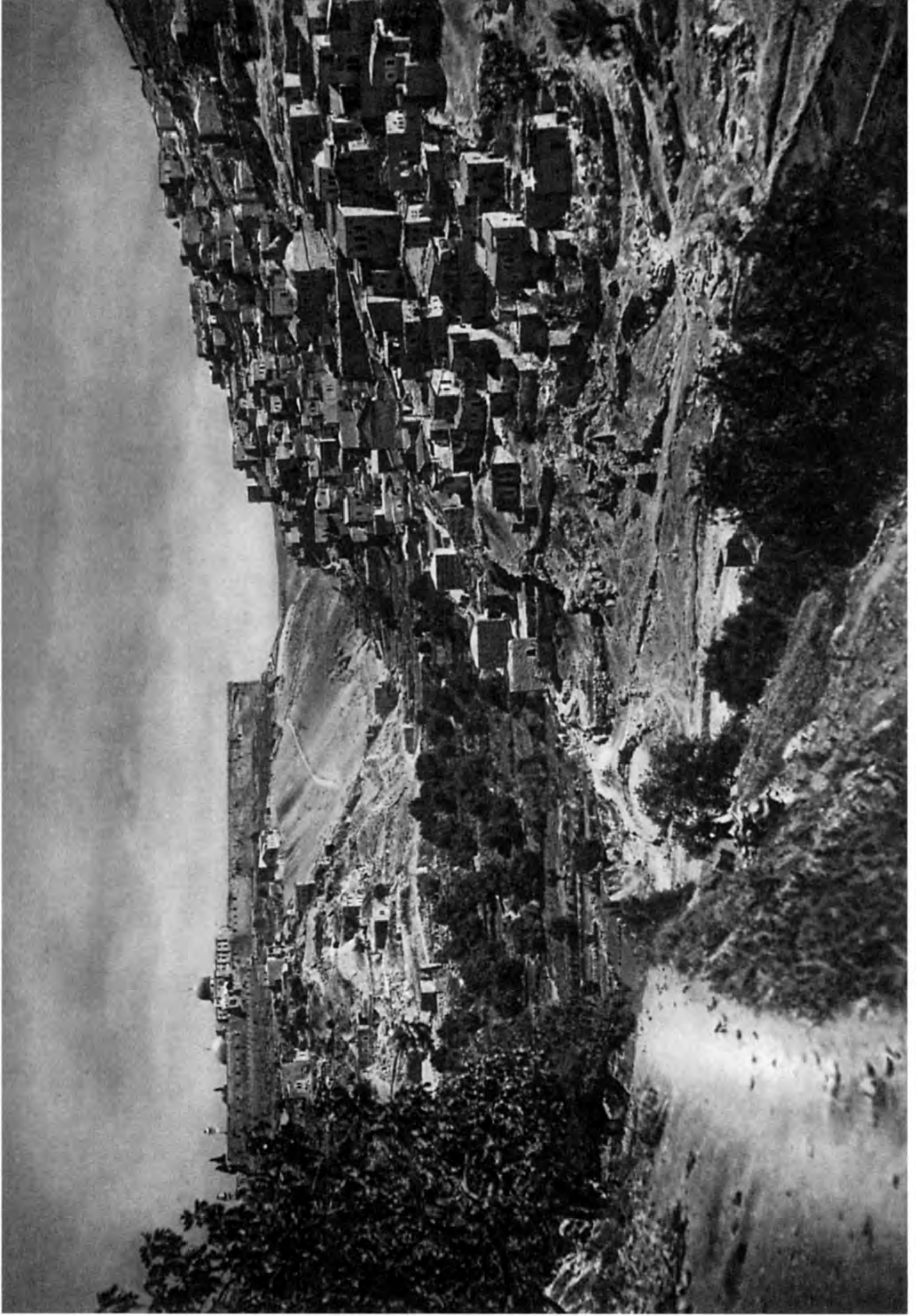
Ruins of a medieval inn. Jesus would have passed near this site several times on the old road from Jericho up to Jerusalem.



Bethany. Here Lazarus was raised and Jesus was anointed before he entered Jerusalem.



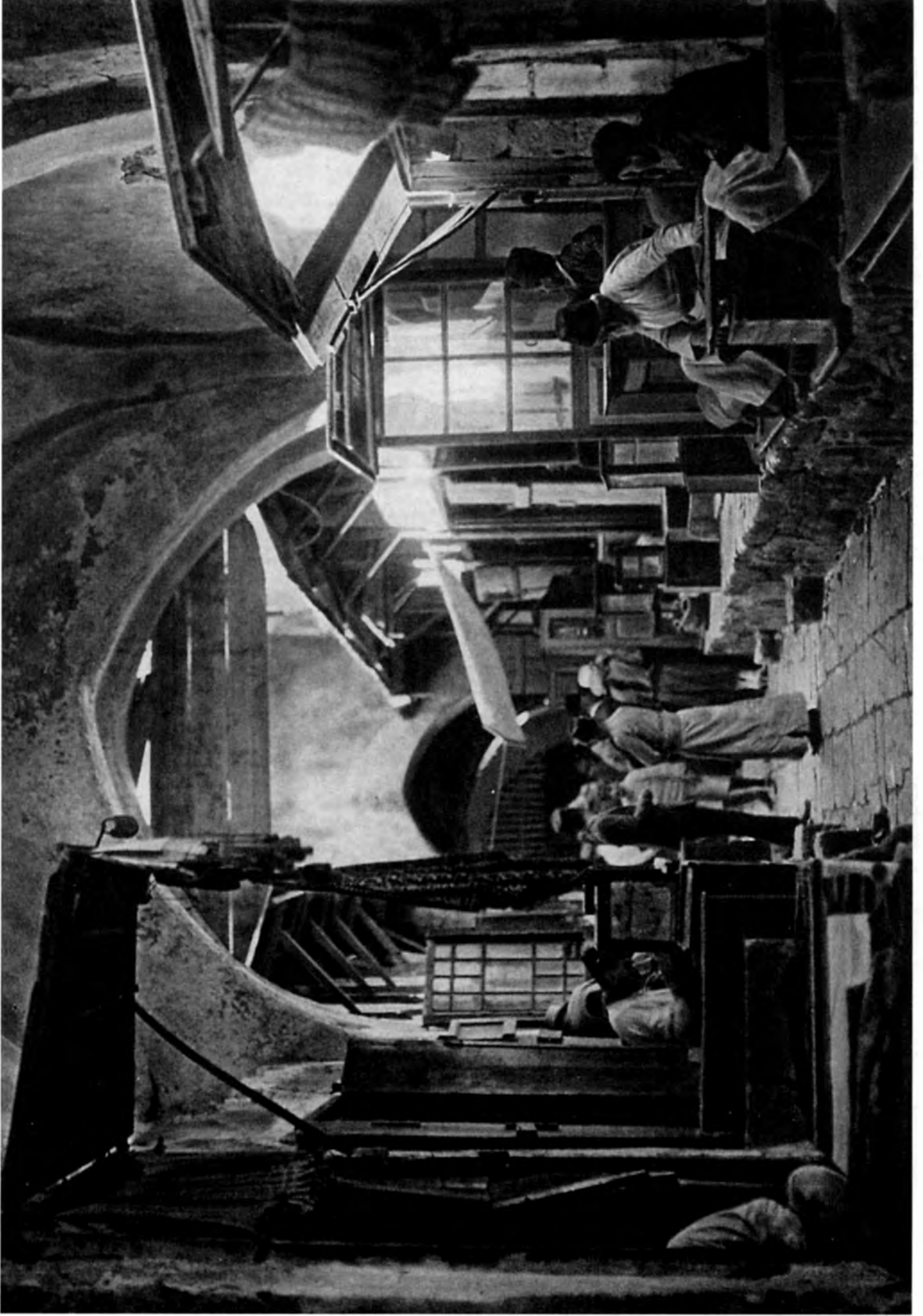




View of the Temple Mount, from the south. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" (Ps. 24:3).



Bazaar in Jerusalem. This turn-of-the-century marketplace is much quieter than the busy tourist centers of today.

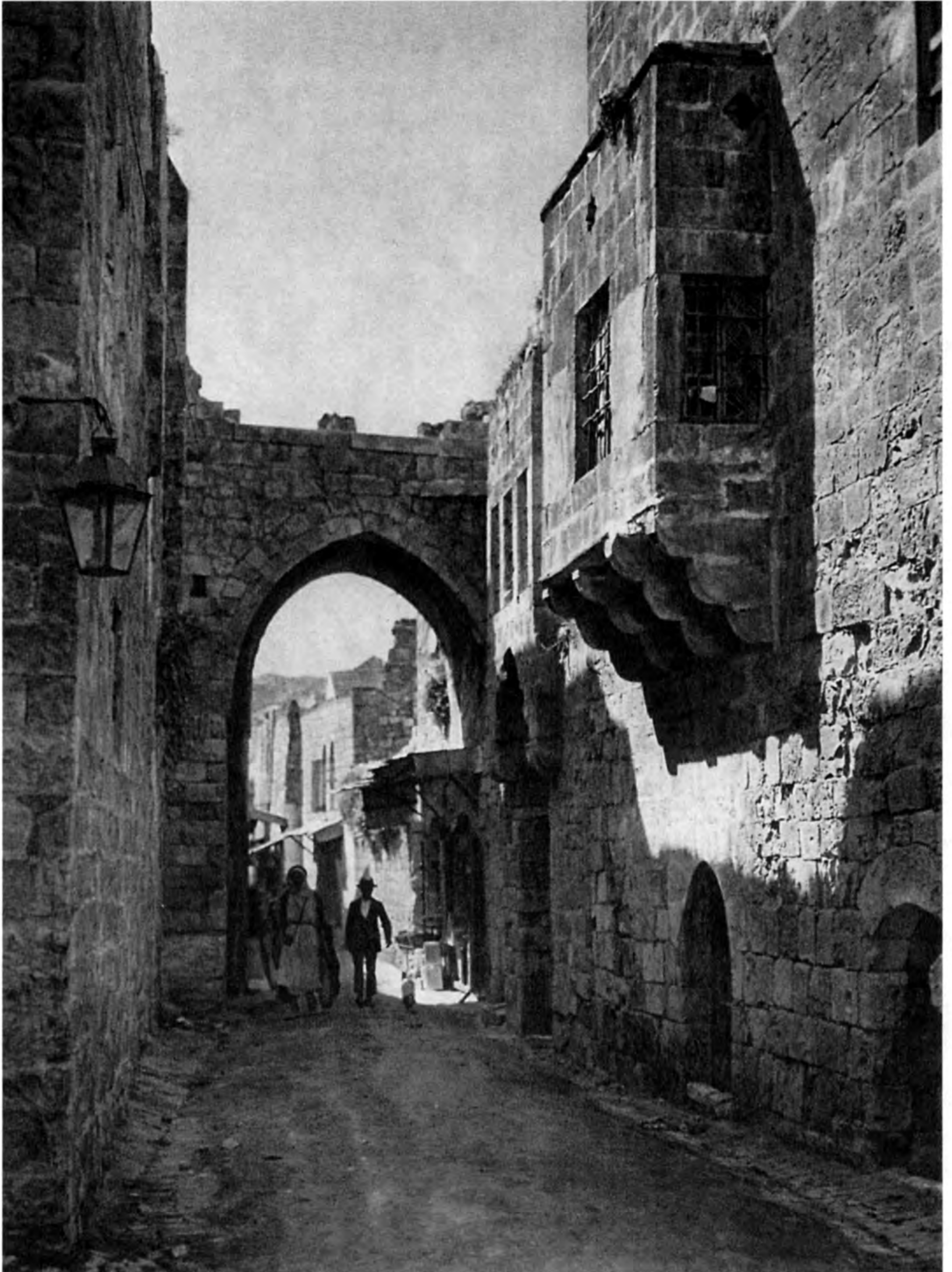






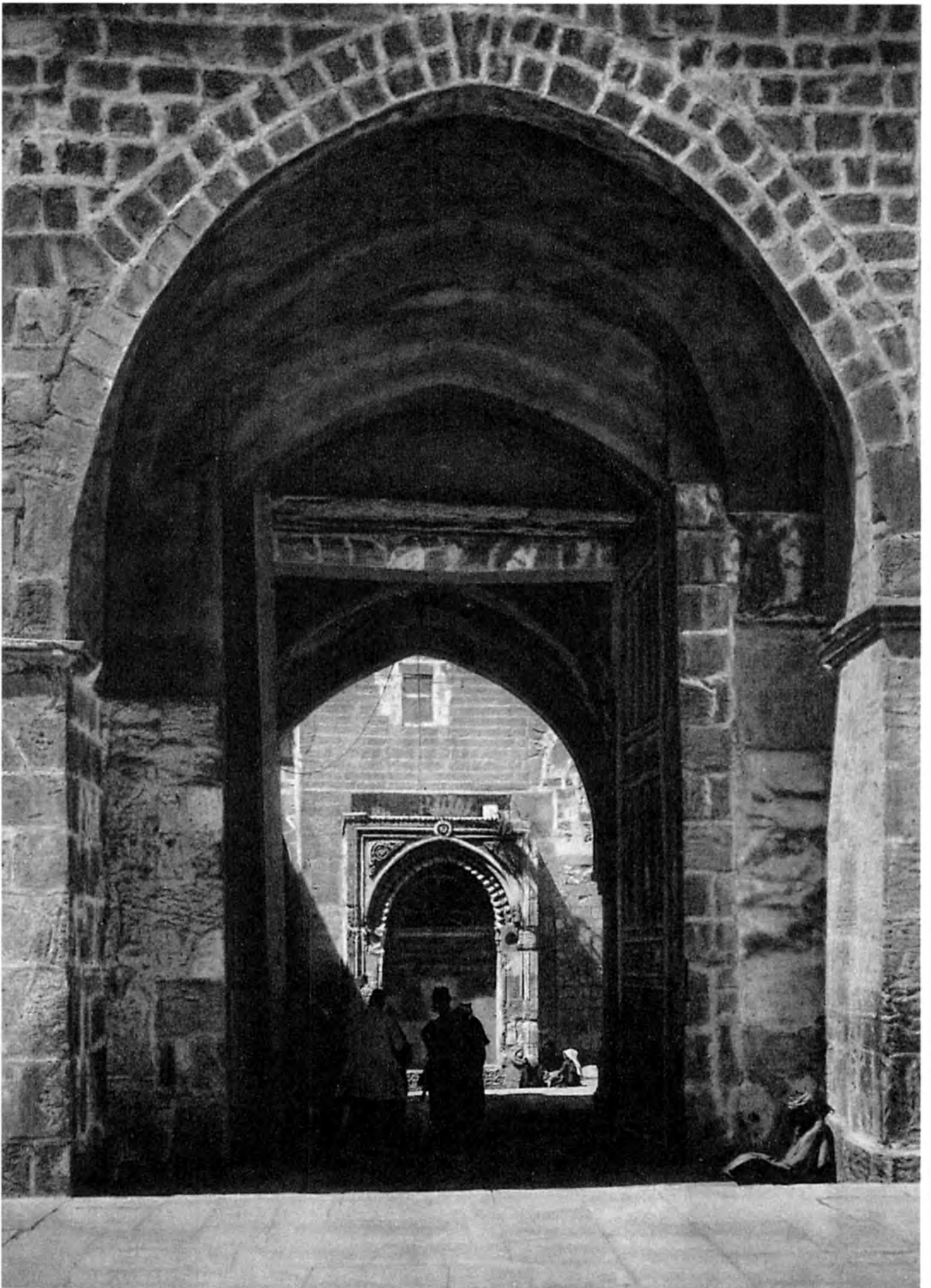
The Western Wall. Jews come to pray, to read, and to discuss the Law at this Herodian retaining wall around the Temple Mount.





Jerusalem street. Although the buildings are more recent, this narrow dirt street is perhaps not unlike the paths Jesus walked.





The Temple Mount. Islamic arches mark an entrance to the temple precinct where Jesus frequently taught.





Muslim-period arcades on the Temple Mount. Anciently, money changers would have operated in the arcades lining the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.





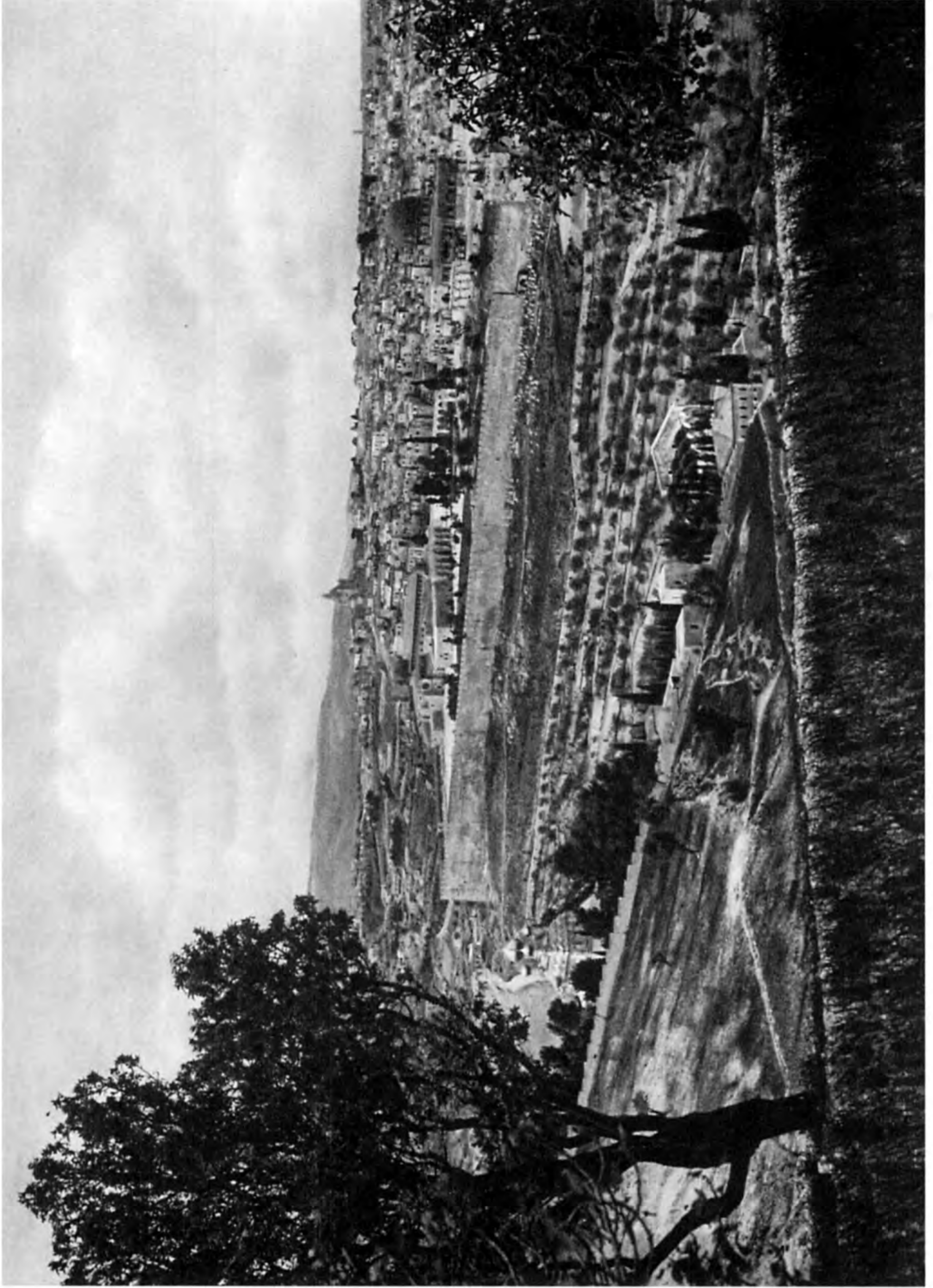
The Gate of Herod. Named in the sixteenth or seventeenth century after Herod Antipas, the gate became the site of a market.





**Village meeting.** Jesus may have encountered similar scenes as “he went round about the villages, teaching” (Mark 6:6).

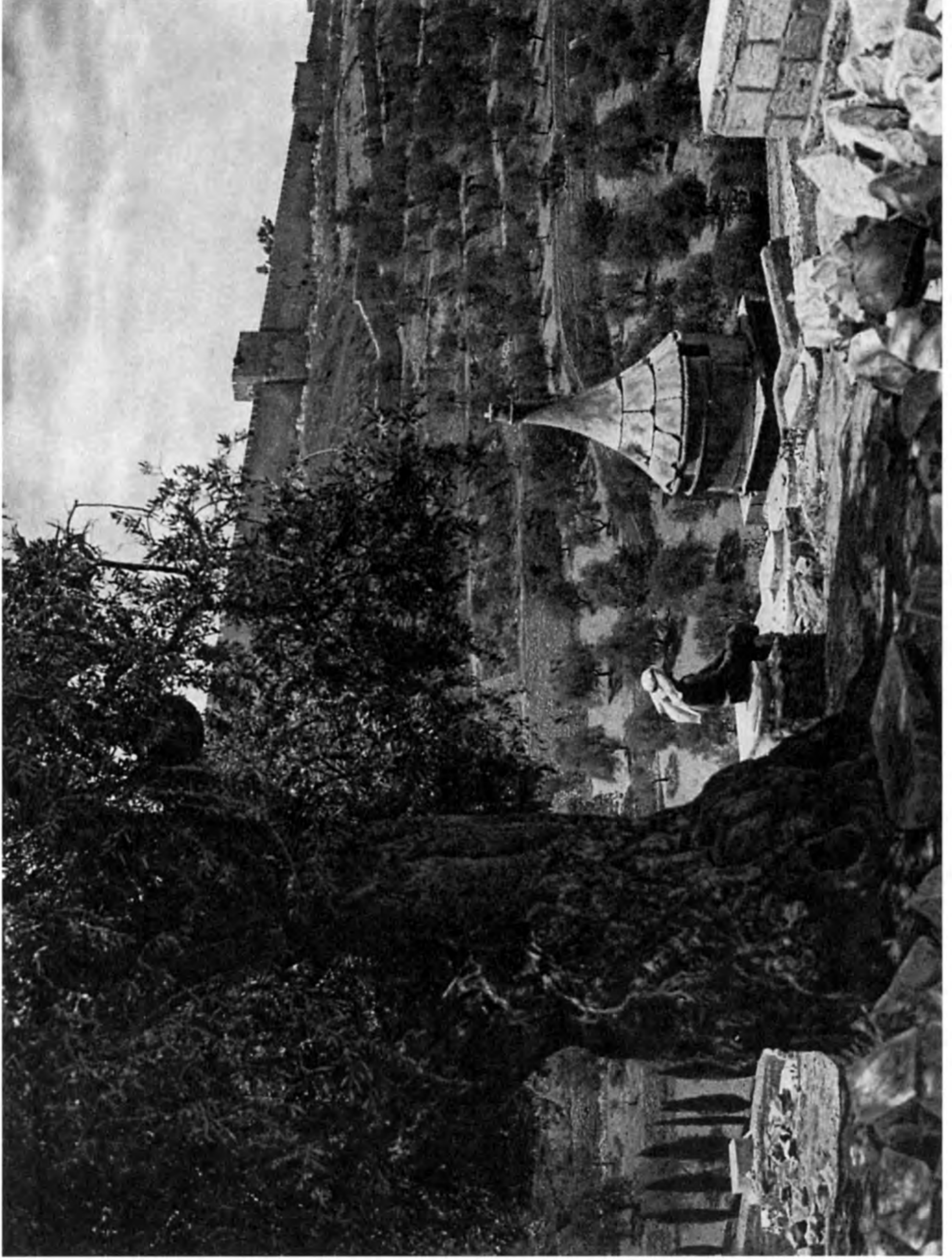




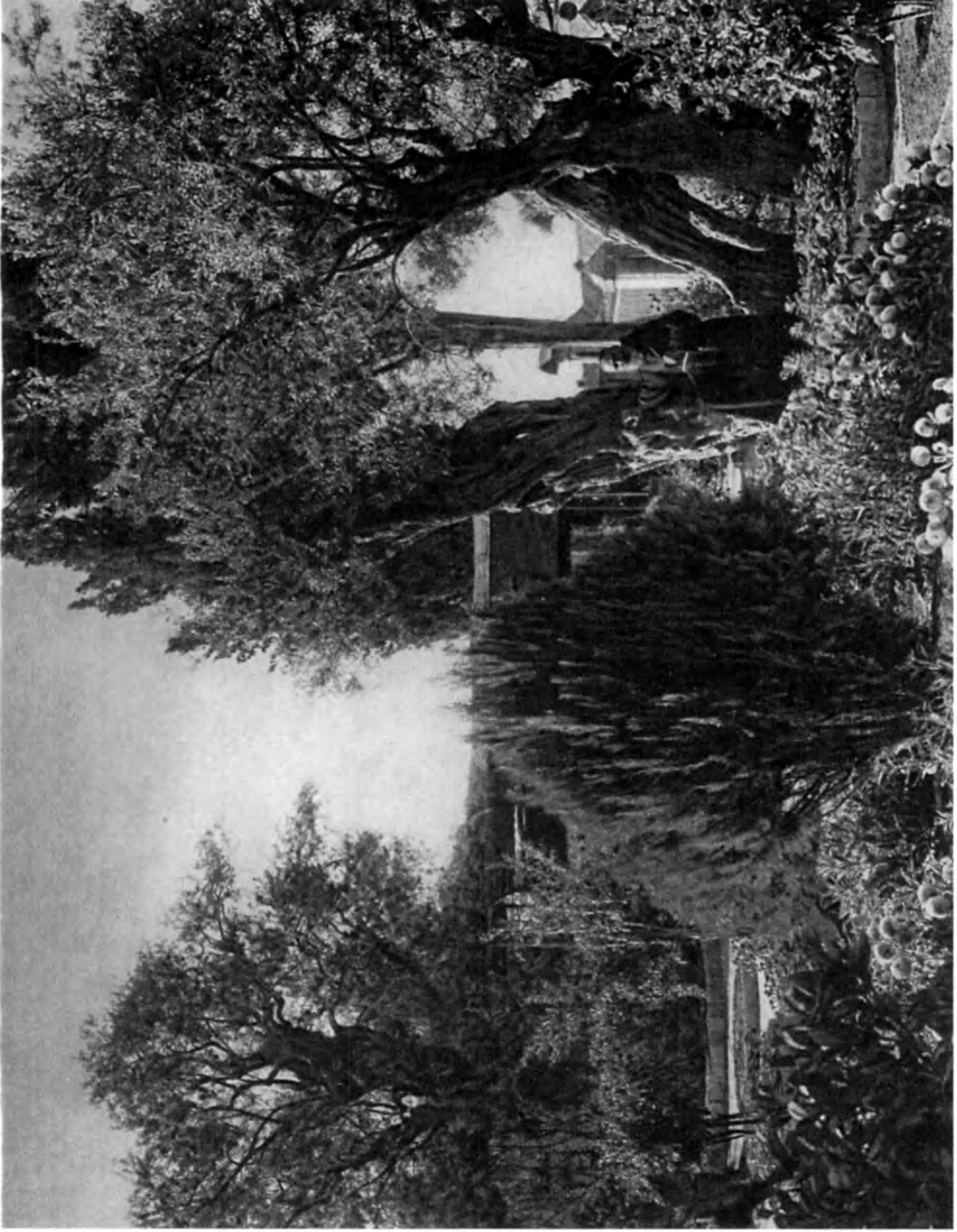
Jerusalem, from the Mount of Olives. From here, Jesus could see the temple as he wept over its impending destruction.



A view of Jerusalem from Absalom's Pillar. Jesus passed this way going to the Garden of Gethsemane.

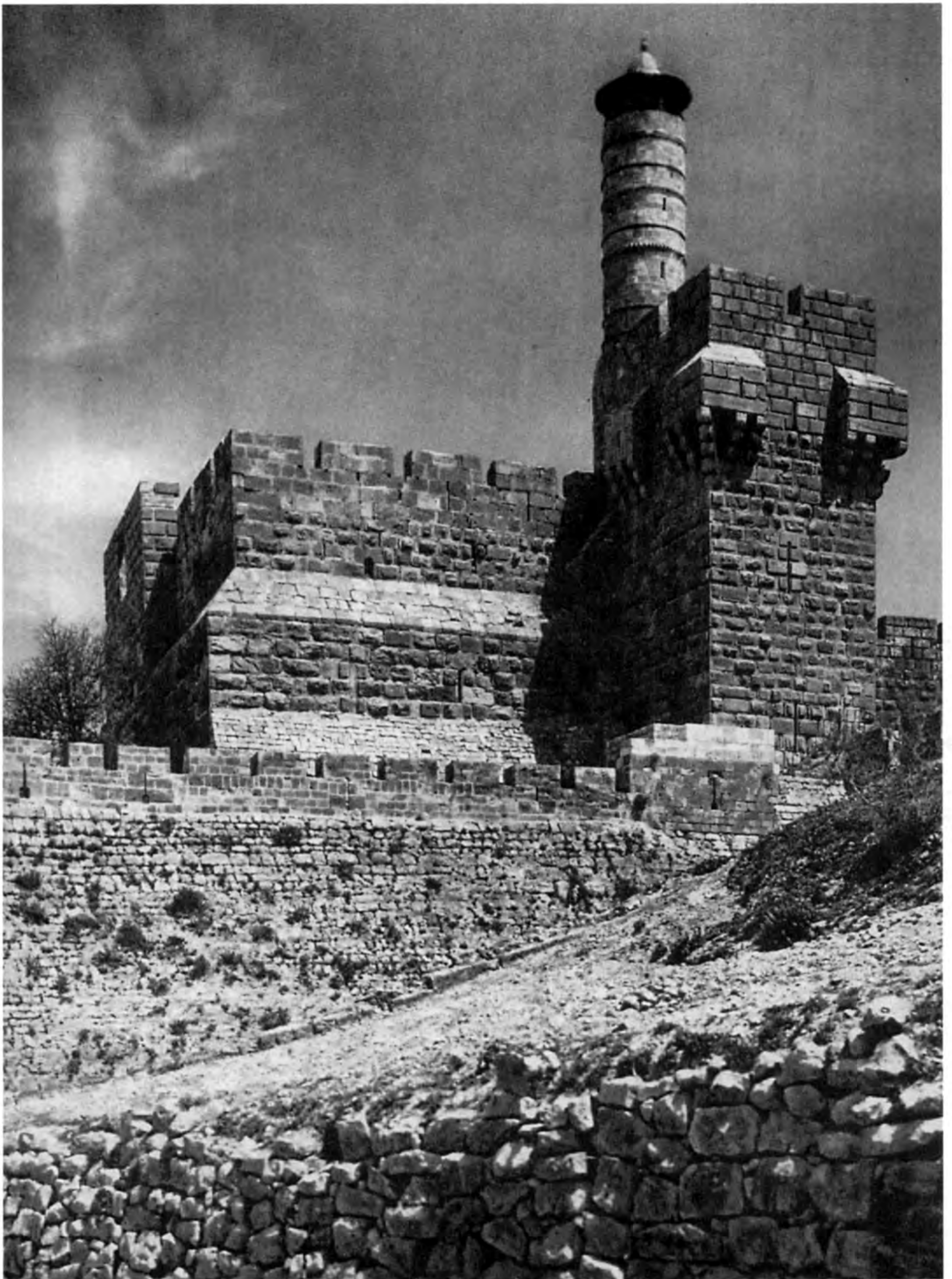






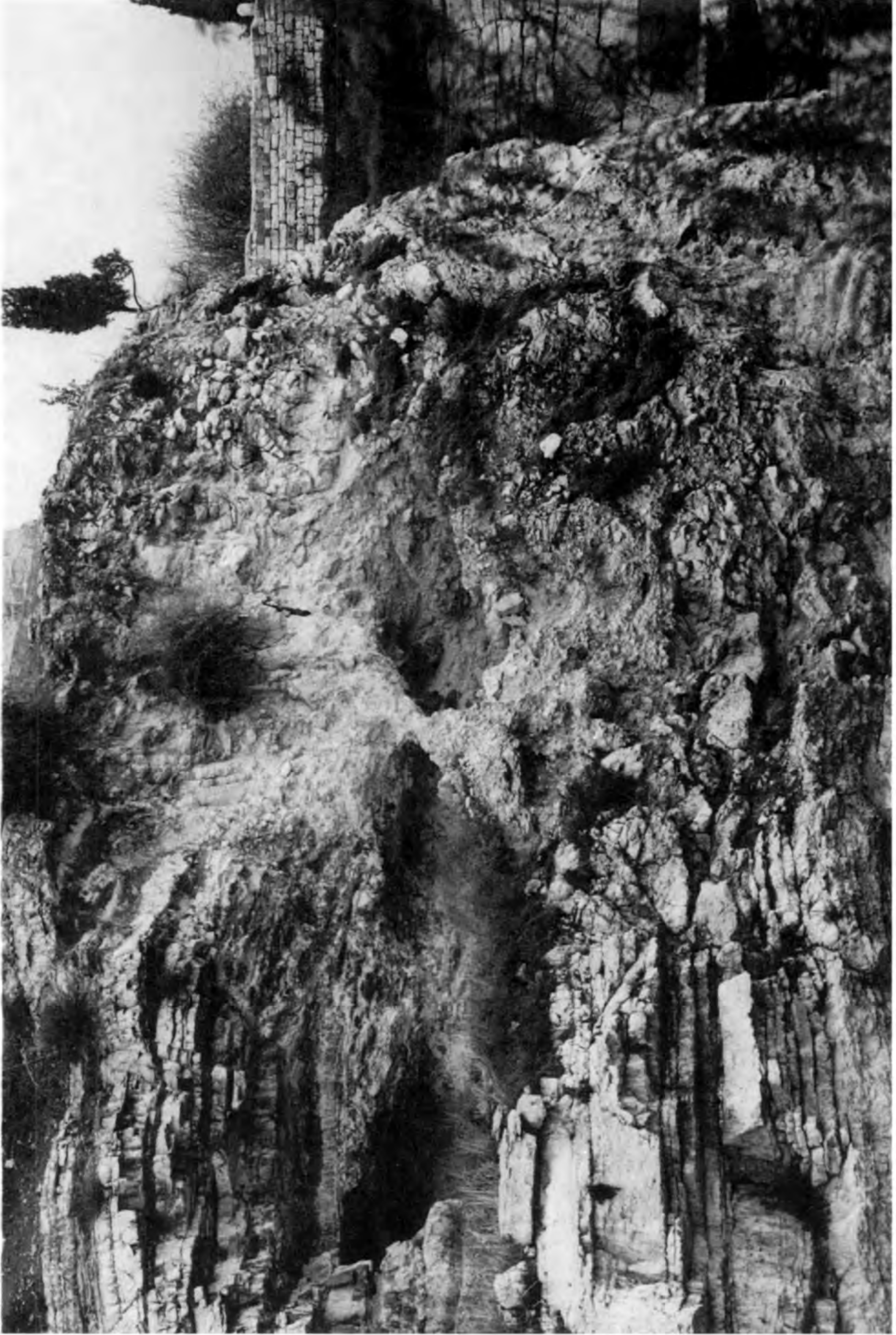
Traditional site of the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus probably retreated for his great agony to this garden, whose name means “the garden of the olive press.”





Citadel of Jerusalem. This tower stands on the Herodian foundations of the palace where Jesus was likely presented to Pilate and flogged.

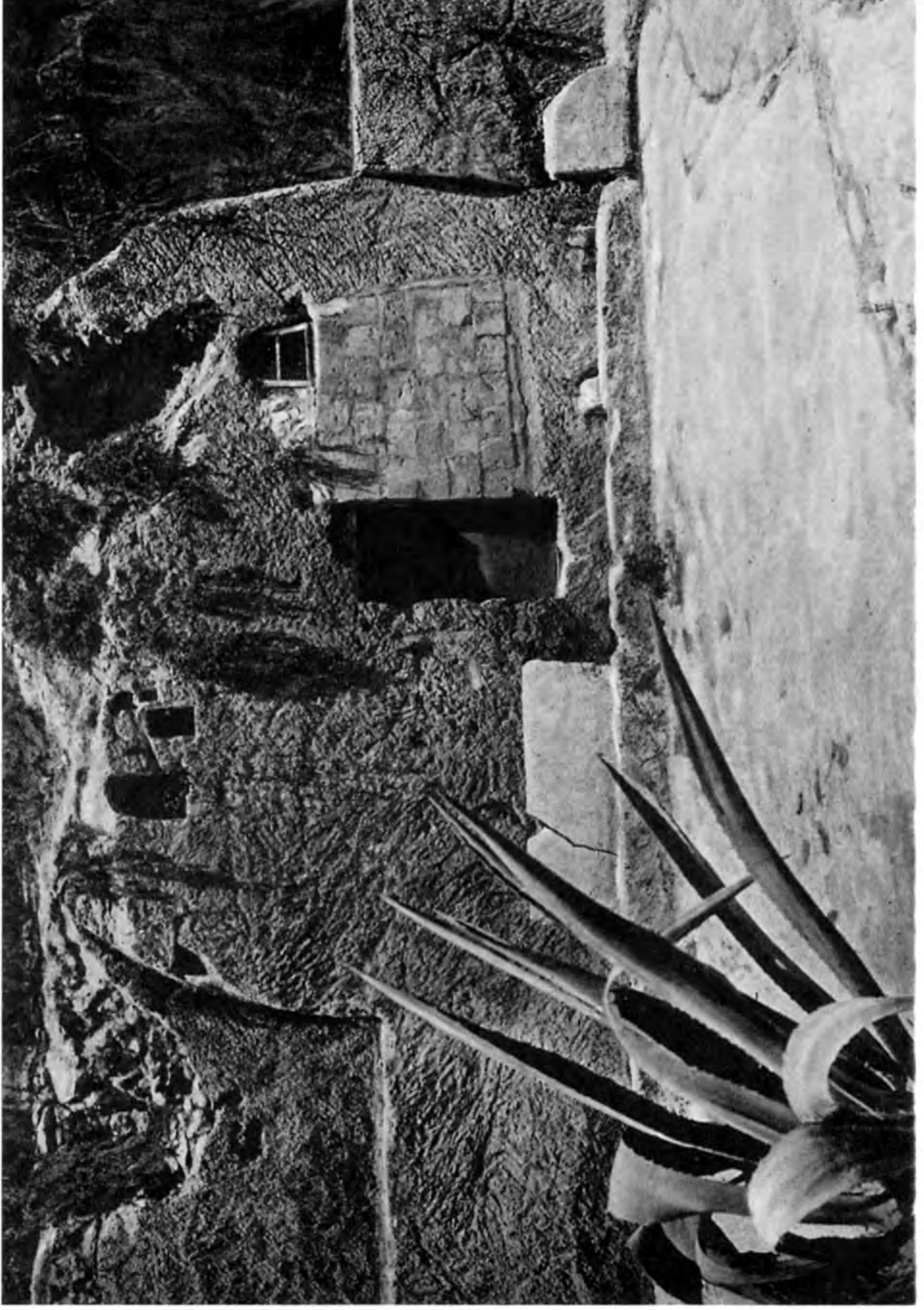




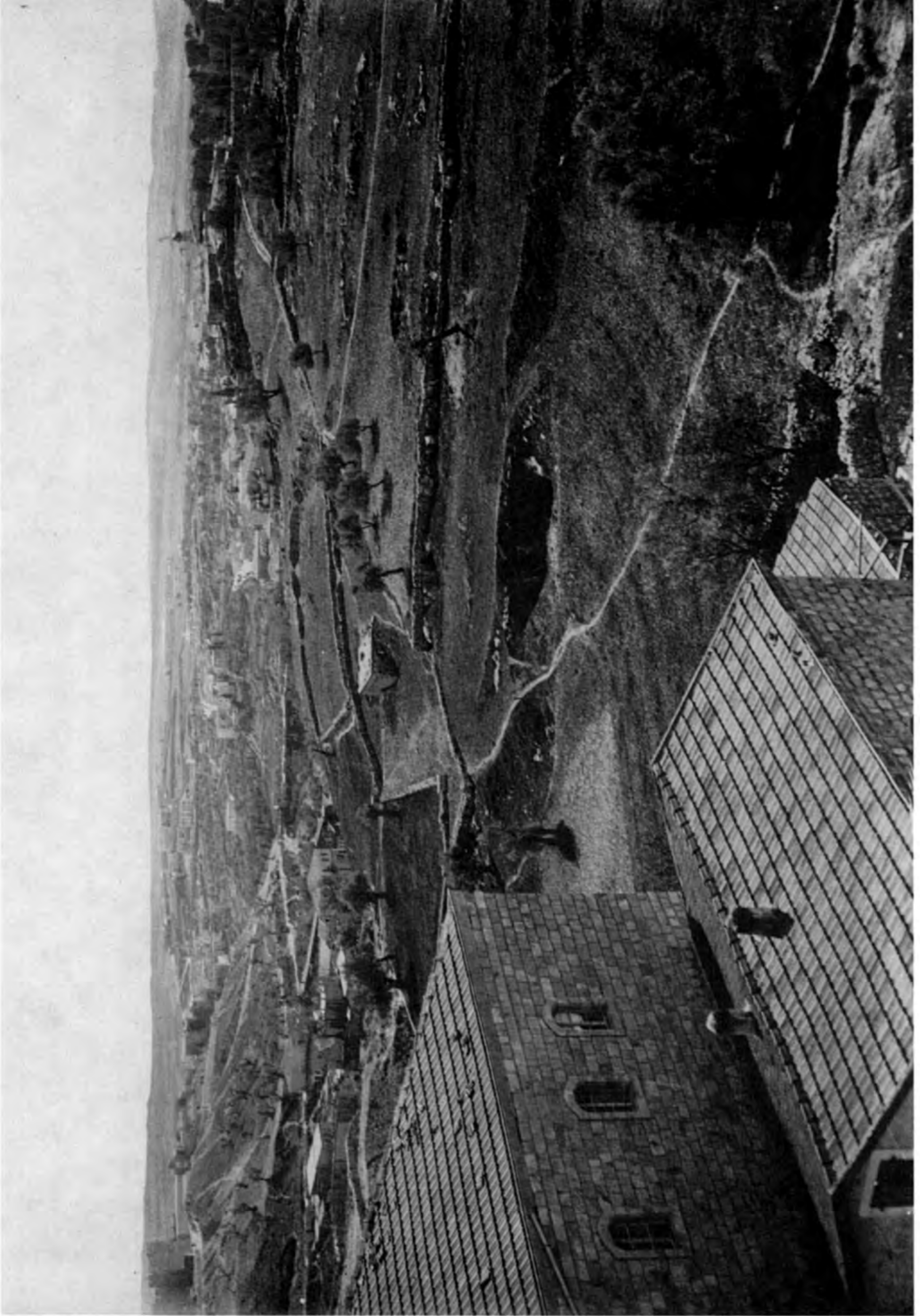
Golgotha (a skull). "And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull"  
(John 19:17), so called because it bears the image of a face on its limestone hillside.



Gordon's grave of Christ. "In the garden there was a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus" (John 19:17). Discovered in 1883 by British officer Charles Gordon, the tomb is now more commonly known as the Garden Tomb.







Terraced hillsides outside Jerusalem. This scene is similar to the countryside around Emmaus (Luke 24:13).