

# Mount Moriah

הר המוריה

אבנר רמו



At elevation of 12,072 ft (3,680 m) this 5<sup>th</sup> highest mountain in Nevada obtained its name from the Bible: Mount Moriah

In the Book of Genesis we read:

ויאמר קח-נא את-בנך את-יחידך אשר-אהבת, את-יצחק ולך-לך אל-ארץ המוריה; והעלהו שם לעלה על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך.

“And He said: Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of” (Gen 22:2).

The Greek translator wrote here: “high land”, apparently assuming that: מוריה (*Moriah*) is an order-type error of: הרים (*harim*) - “mountenous (land)” (e.g. Deu 11:11).

Alternatively, ארץ המוריה (*erets hamoriah*) could be a א (a) - ה (h) vowel letter substitution and order-type error of: ארץ האמרי (*erets haemori*) - “The land of the Amorites” (e.g. Num 21:31; Jos 24:8; Jud 10:8; 11:21; Am 2:10).

It seems that one of the early scribes of the Hebrew Book of Genesis inserted a gloss in regard to this name:

ויקרא אברהם שם-המקום ההוא, יהוה יראה, אשר יאמר היום, בהר יהוה יראה.

“And Abraham called the name of that place YHWH-jireh; as it is said to this day: In the mount where *YHWH* is seen” (Gen 22:14).

Unlike the English transliteration, the Greeks translated here יראה to: “saw.” The ancient gloss here suggests that it was believed that the name מוריה (*Moriah*) resulted from the fusion of two

words **מורה** (*moreh*) - “teaches” (e.g. Is 9:14; 2 Ch 15:3) and **יה** (*yah*) - “YHWH” (e.g. Ex 15:2). The reading of: **ויאמר אברהם, אלהים יראה-לו השה לעלה** - “**And Abraham said: God will show him the lamb for a burnt-offering**” (Gen 22:8), suggests that the word **מורה** (*moreh*) is related to the root **ראה** (*rah*) - “see” and therefore **מריה** (*Moriah*) could mean: “YHWH shows.”

According to the Chronicler (but no one else), King Solomon built YHWH's house on **הר המוריה** - “**mount Moriah**” (2 Ch 3:1). This is an unusual statement as we frequently read in the Bible that God's house is on Mount Zion, and nowhere in the Bible is it indicated that “Zion” and “Moriah” are two names of the same place. Furthermore, we have to wonder, why the exceedingly hallowed name: “Moriah”, appears in the Bible only twice (in Genesis 22:2, and 2 Ch 3:1).

The Chronicler also tells us that in **הר המוריה** - “**mount Moriah**”: “[YHWH] **appeared to David**” and that there: “**provision (for the house of God) had been made in the place of David, in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite**” (2 Ch 3:1). Yet the description in the Book of Samuel about the affair that took place in Ornan's threshing floor does not mention these details (2 Sam 24:18-24). We should also notice that the Book of Samuel tells us that in this place:

**ויבן שם דוד מזבח ליהוה, ויעל עלות ושלמים; ויעתר יהוה לארץ, ותעצר המגפה מעל ישראל.**  
“**And David built there an altar to YHWH, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. So YHWH was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel**” (2 Sam 24:25; see also: 1 Ch 21:18-28).

Later, after building the house of God, King Solomon uttered in his prayer:

**רעב כי-יהיה בארץ, דבר כי-יהיה שדפון וירקון ארבה וחסיל כי יהיה, כי יצר-לו איביו, בארץ שעריו: כל-נגע וכל-מחלה.**  
**כל-תפלה כל-תחנה אשר יהיה לכל-האדם, ולכל עמך ישראל-אשר ידעו איש נגעו ומכאבו, ופרש כפיו אל-הבית הזה**  
**ואתה תשמע מן-השמים מכון שבתך, וסלחת.**

“**If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting or mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague or whatsoever sickness there be;**

**What prayer and supplication so ever be made by any man, or by all Your people Israel, who shall know every man his own plague and his own pain, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house;**

**Then hear You from heaven Your dwelling-place, and forgive**” (2 Ch 6:28-30; see also: 1 Ki 8:37-39).

Although some of the functions of Solomon's house of God were similar to those of David's altar built in Ornan's threshing floor, it does not necessarily indicate that they were located in the same place.

In the Book of Samuel we also hear God telling David about his son:

**הוא יבנה-בית לשמי; וכננתי את-כסא ממלכתו עד-עולם.**  
“**He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever**” (2 Sam 7:13; see also: 1 Ch 28:5-7).

Yet in the Book of Samuel we do not hear God instructing David where God's house should be built, or hear David himself declaring that God's house will be built in Ornan's threshing floor (or anywhere else). The writer of the Book of Kings tells us that Solomon was aware of God's words to David about the building of God's house by David's son (1 Ki 5:19). Yet Solomon did not ever say that he himself was directly instructed by God to build Him a house, or where it should be built.

It appears somewhat peculiar that even in his final words to his son Solomon, David does not remind him about his duty (or privilege) to build God's house (1 Ki 2:1-9), let alone where it should be built. In fact, except for the Book of Chronicles, we never hear David instructing his son Solomon to build God's house.

Unlike the Books of Samuel and Kings, the Chronicler said that David told Solomon:

**ראה עתה כי-יהוה בחר בך לבנות-בית למקדש-חזק ועשה.  
ויתן דויד לשלמה בנו את-תבנית האולם ואת-בתיו וגנזכיו ועליתיו, וחזריו הפנימים-ובית הכפרת.**

**ותבנית כל אשר היה ברוח עמו, לחצרות בית-יהוה ולכל-הלשכות סביב-לאצרות בית האלהים, ולאצרות הקדשים.**

**ולמחלקות הכהנים והלויים, ולכל-מלאכת עבודת בית-יהוה; ולכל-כלי עבודת בית-יהוה.**

**“Take heed now; for YHWH had chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it.**

**Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch [of the temple], and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper rooms thereof, and of the inner chambers thereof, and of the place of the ark-cover;**

**And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, for the courts of the house of YHWH, and for all the chambers round about, for the treasuries of the house of God, and for the treasuries of the hallowed things;**

**Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of YHWH, and for all the vessels of service in the house of YHWH. (1 Ch 28:10-13).**

Yet we should notice that even here there is no mention where the intended location of God's house is.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Book of Chronicles we read:

**ויחל שלמה לבנות את-בית-יהוה בירושלם בהר המוריה**

**“Then Solomon began to build the house of YHWH at Jerusalem in mount Moriah” (2 Ch 3:1).**

The Greek translator wrote here: Αμορια - “Amoria” which is a transliteration. However, we do not know if in his Hebrew Vorlage this name started with ה (h) or א (a) (see also: LXX version of verse Jud 7:1).

In contrast to the information given in the Book of Chronicles about the location of Solomon's house of God, the Book of Kings does not reveal where Solomon built it (1 KI 6:1). The name **הר המוריה** - “mount Moriah” is not included here, and even Jerusalem is not mentioned.

It is possible, that when the Book of Kings was written, the location of Solomon's house of God was trivial information and there was no need to mention it. On the other hand the Book of Chronicles was written several hundred years later, when this information apparently was no longer a common knowledge. It should also be noted that while there are in the Bible multiple verses indicating that God resides in mount Zion, none of them appear in the Book of Chronicles.