

Touching the Roots of our FAITH

Walking in the
Footsteps of JESUS
Israel



Pilgrim's Guide Book

TOUR



of the Holy Land

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Introduction: Upon arrival in the Land of the Bible, there will be much to absorb, from biblical and historical accounts to modern archeological discoveries. This free guide book was created to help you get the most out of your encounter to the Holy Land.

This encounter will give you a fresh perspective bringing the Old and New Testaments alive as you've actually been to these places. What were once black words on white paper now jump off the page in living, high-definition color. You will now know what the Sea of Galilee, Megiddo, Mount Carmel, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem the city of God look like. You will experience the Mount of Olives, to which David fled from Absalom and where Jesus delivered the preeminent Olivet discourse. You will gaze upon the Jordan River where the Israelites walked across safely on dry ground by God's miraculous power, and you will touch the cool waters in which Jesus was baptized. You will have a better understanding of world history, but more important, you will have a better understanding of how the very roots of our Christian faith are intertwined with the Lord's promises to the Jewish people.

Every step of this journey will awaken your senses. You will learn and experience more than you could ever imagine. And as you walk throughout Israel, a place so rich in biblical history, it is amazing to know that there is always another world just below your feet. As you stand on the Cardo, an unearthed Roman main street in Jerusalem, one can see, in the banks of the excavation, soils from 6,000 years of history. There is a sign in a nearby archaeological project that reads, **"You have descended three meters below the level of the present Jewish Quarter. You have gone back two thousand years in time."**

But before we dive into our first travel day, I'd like to share some helpful hints to maximize your time in Israel. These are the best and most important lessons I've learned from my many visits to this marvelous country:

1 Stand close to your guide – Wandering away from your group to take photos on your own can be very tempting when you're surrounded by such beautiful and intriguing sights. But the closer you stick to your guide, the more you'll learn about each location. Whenever I'm in the Holy Land, I can always be found standing close to the travel guide because I don't want to miss out on the details he or she has to share. Remember, you will hear from some of the most knowledgeable tour guides in the entire world, so take advantage of this opportunity.

2 There's water on the bus – Drinking water daily is critical as you travel throughout the land of the bible. Everyone is given 2 free bottles of water daily, and there additional water in an ice chest at the front of the bus that is stocked with cold bottled water for about \$1 each.

3 Don't lag behind – Trying to keep a large group of people together on a tour, while moving from point to point within a particular site, can be likened to "herding cats" because everyone is inclined to go in his or her own direction. When the tour guide moves to the next site, he or she has to wait until everyone catches up before beginning his or her discourse. I've been on trips where people lag 100 yards behind. So, out of consideration of others, please try to keep up. Remember that the group needs to move together to glean the most from the Holy Land experience.

4 "Not everyone is holy in the Holy Land." – This is a phrase that my tour guide, who was an officer in the Israeli army, would say and the whole group would erupt in laughter. I've never forgotten that line and have used it many times myself. It's just a good reminder when you're traveling in Israel, or anywhere in the world, to use common sense, to be aware of your surroundings, and to be safe.

5 Take good notes daily – When you return home from Israel and peruse all the photos you took, you'll want to look over your notes and be reminded of what happened where. It will also help you to stick close to your guide to hear all the interesting facts and insights.

6 Look at your itinerary every day – Most tour groups in Israel use different itineraries, so try to review your group's itinerary every evening to see where you will be going the next morning. Additionally, if you

read the corresponding section of this book before you get to your destination each day, you will be better prepared for what God wants to show and teach you in the various sites and along the way.

7 Pray every day – Before you leave your hotel room each morning, pray that God will teach you something new— something that’s life changing— during that particular day’s tour. At the end of each travel day, thank God for giving you the resources and the privilege of seeing His Word come to life through the sights, smells, and sounds of these sacred places.

Our prayer is that the above-mentioned tips and the rest of this book will prepare your heart, mind, and soul for the journey in which you will literally walk where Jesus walked. May you grow in your faith and be encouraged to live as Jesus lived— honoring God in all you do and say.

Enjoy— or, as they say in Israel, “Yehaneh!” (“Yee-Ha-NAY”)

We thank our Lord for the common thread of a love for him that binds us together. May new friendships be developed and old ones strengthened.

This Year in Jerusalem!!!

Shalom,
Pastor Eli Hendricks

Making your LIFE an ALIYAH



DID YOU KNOW: Aliyah means the going up, the ascent. When you read in the Scriptures of Jesus going to Jerusalem, you’ll find the word **UP** used over and over again.

“Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him” (Mark 10:32)

And why is that? Jerusalem is a city set on a mountain. So, to get there, you have to go up. So, the journey to Jerusalem is called in Hebrew, **Aliyah**. . . the ascending.

And it was not only because of the physical terrain but because Jerusalem is the Holy City.

So to go to Jerusalem is to *make Aliyah*. In the modern age, when the Jewish people began to return to the land of Israel, the return was called Aliyah. Going to the Promised Land was known as ‘making Aliyah,’ ‘the upward journey.’

As followers of Jesus Christ, your spiritual journey you are embarking on is a part of your Aliyah. So, what’s the journey? Your life. Your entire life is the Aliyah. Your life is a journey, but in God it is to be an upward journey . . . an ever-higher ascending.

How do you do that? Every day you will be given choices. Every choice will give you the chance to go lower, to stay the same, or to go higher. Choose the higher path, even if it’s harder, take the higher step . . . let each of your steps be higher than the step before it, each of your days be higher than the day before it. And you will end up walking on mountain. . . and your life will be an Aliyah.

The CHOICE: Today, choose the higher step, the higher act, the higher ground, the higher path in every decision. Start making your life an Aliyah.

Standing on the Promises of God

The LORD had said to Abram,

Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12:1-3)

The history of Israel begins with God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from whom the 12 tribes of Israel descended. God revealed to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 that a nation would arise from Abraham’s descendants and

that all people on earth would be blessed through him. While this is an outstanding promise, the Lord also made it clear that the Israelites were going to face some difficulties.

Despite this warning, Abraham and his offspring are assured in **Genesis 12:1-3** that— no matter what happened—the Promised Land was a part of God’s unwavering covenant to them. By acknowledging this very special covenant, we begin to understand God’s love for this country and its people. It gives Israel an identity as the people of Yahweh even to this day.

Israel’s Ancient History

Now, let’s look at a quick overview of Israel’s ancient history as well as a rough timeline, which will take us from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to modern-day Israel. As we review the history, remember that the BC calendar runs backward, like a countdown clock.

Sometime between 2000 and 1500 BC, God changed Abram’s name to Abraham and made a covenant with him:

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’” (**Genesis 17:1-2**)

God’s plan to increase Abraham’s numbers started slowly. He and his wife Sarah had one son of the covenant, named Isaac (**Genesis 17:19; 21:1-3**). (Abraham’s son, Ishmael, whom he had with Sarah’s maidservant, Hagar, and the six sons of Keturah were not included.) Isaac had two sons with Rebekah— Jacob and Esau, which made them Abraham’s grandsons (**Genesis 25: 25-27**). Jacob, the younger brother, conned his older brother, Esau, out of his birthright and their dying father’s blessing (**Genesis 25: 29-34**).



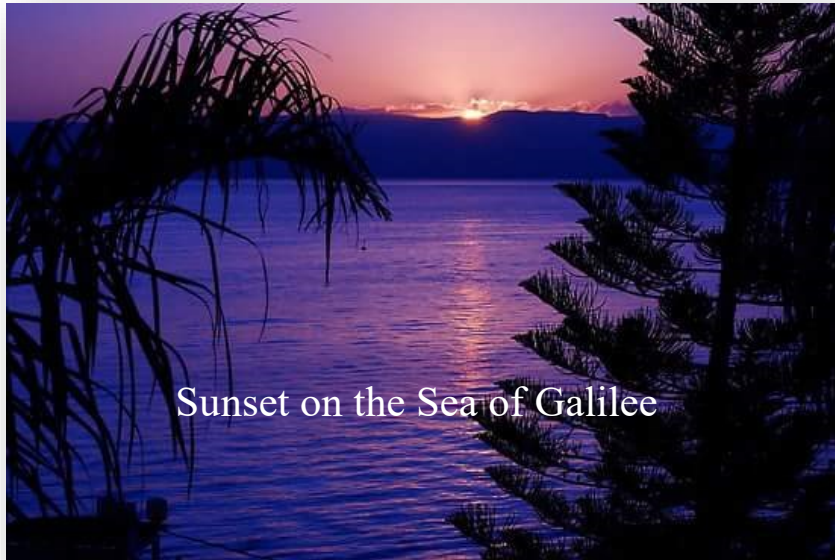
Years later, Jacob returned and made peace with Esau and at this point God confirmed Jacob’s covenant relationship. God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel. And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.” (**Genesis 35:10-12**)

Jacob had 12 sons, who would later become the 12 tribes of Israel. (Now that’s what I call “increasing in numbers!”) Let’s pick up the story with one of Jacob’s sons, Joseph, who was the great-grandson of Abraham. Take a look at **Genesis 37:3**: “Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his sons...”

Every parent reading this passage knows what kind of drama would be caused if you loved one of your children more than the others. In fact, many of you would probably say that to love one child more than another is impossible. This was not impossible for Jacob; and unfortunately, he didn’t even try to hide his favoritism —giving a valuable, multi-colored robe to Joseph, which rightfully should have been given to the firstborn son. Jacob’s obvious preferential treatment of Joseph caused his brothers to hate and become extremely envious of Joseph.

To make matters worse, Joseph began to have prophetic dreams that clearly showed he would rule over his brothers. In the first dream, his sheaf of wheat stood upright while theirs bowed to his. In the second dream, the sun (Jacob), the moon (Rachel), and eleven stars (his ten brothers plus Benjamin who was yet to be born) were all bowing down to him.

The colorful coat was bad enough; but Joseph’s dreams infuriated his brothers. Driven by jealousy, they tore off Joseph’s cloak, sold him into slavery, soaked his cloak in animal blood, and then told their father that his favorite son was dead. All this happened around 1897 BC. Next, Joseph had to endure hard work as a slave in Egypt in the house of Potiphar (an officer of Pharaoh), a false accusation from Potiphar’s wife, and some undeserved time in a dungeon. Nevertheless, Joseph was soon exalted by Pharaoh to rule over the entire land, because Joseph so aptly interpreted the strange dreams the Egyptian king was having. Near the end of his story, listen to what Joseph had to say to his brothers: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (**Genesis 50: 20**)



Sunset on the Sea of Galilee

Joseph realized that God had used him to save not only Israel but also Egypt from a seven-year famine, which you can read about in Genesis chapter 41. Amazingly, somewhere between 250 and 350 years later, the Egyptians enslaved Joseph's descendants; and around 1445 BC, God sent Moses to lead the Jews out of this captivity. The Israelites spent the next 40 years wandering in the desert because of unbelief and disobedience. But finally, after an entire generation of people died off (around 1405 BC), Joshua led Israel to take possession of the land God had promised them back in Genesis 12. We serve a God who always keeps His promises! Read Joshua chapters 3 through 6 to review this

fascinating story of how Israel crossed the Jordan, took possession of the Promised Land, and defeated the city of Jericho with its fortified walls.

Over the next 400 years, Israel was ruled by a series of judges such as Deborah (**Judges 4: 4**) and Samson (Judges 15:20), to name a few. The judges lasted until Israel began to pester God for a king. I can imagine that their pleas must have sounded something like this: "But God, all the other countries have one!" You've heard the phrase, "Be careful what you wish for," right? Well, we see very soon the disastrous result of the Lord giving His people precisely what they asked for.

Around 1050 BC Saul became the first king of Israel, followed by David who reigned from about 1010 BC to 970 BC, then Solomon who reigned from about 970 BC to 931 BC. It was during Solomon's reign that the First Temple was built in Jerusalem. A description of the Temple can be found in 1 Kings Chapters 5 and 6.

Next follows one of the most misunderstood subjects of Bible study: understanding David's / Solomon's kingdom.

Israel split into "Israel" and "Judah" after Solomon's death around 931 BC during the reign of King Rehoboam. All 12 tribes of Israelites were a united kingdom through the reigns of both David and Solomon. But after Solomon's death, they split into two completely separate and independent kingdoms—the southern kingdom of "Judah," consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with their capital at Jerusalem, and the northern kingdom of "Israel," consisting of the other 10 tribes: Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph was divided into Ephraim and Manasseh), with their capital in Samaria. The tribe of Levi had cities in both Israel and Judah.

Israel and Judah were never united again. Surprisingly, they even fought wars against each other from time to time. From the 9th to the 6th century BC, Israel continued to move further and further away from God. During this 300-year span, God began sending prophets to warn them of the destruction that was to come if they did not repent from their sins, starting with Elijah, followed by Elisha, Obadiah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, and finally Jeremiah. However, the people did not heed these warnings, and God permitted both kingdoms eventually to be defeated by their enemies.

The northern kingdom of Israel fell first, conquered by the Assyrians. By 721 BC nearly all of the Israelites had been taken into exile (2 Kings 17:1-23). Most of them never returned; even today they are referred to as the "Lost Ten Tribes of Israel." About 150 years later, the southern kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians and the people of Judah were taken into captivity. The First Temple of God in Jerusalem was destroyed at this time, which was around 586 BC (**2 Chronicles 36:17-20**).

Nearly 50 years later, 539 BC, King Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonians and issued a decree stating that the people of Judah could return to Israel. Not long after their return, which was around 520-515 BC, the Israelites built the Second Temple (**Ezra 1:1-3; 6:14-18**).

Despite the victory represented by this major achievement, Israel would be occupied by a long list of foreign rulers, and it would be approximately 2,500 years before the Israelites would officially take possession of their land again.

Here's a brief rundown of what happened during that two-and-a-half millennia:

Persian control lasted for about 200 years, from 538-333 BC, followed by the Greeks who ruled for the next 270 years, from 333-63 BC. During this period, the Second Temple was defiled, leading to a revolt by a Jewish rebel army called the Maccabees. You see, after Antiochus IV Epiphanes, ruler of the Seleucid Empire, issued a decree forbidding Jewish religious practice, a Jewish priest named Mattathias refused to worship the Greek gods. Mattathias killed a Hellenistic Jew who stepped forward to offer a sacrifice to an idol in Mattathias' place— then he and his five sons fled to the wilderness. After Mattathias' death about a year later, his son Judah Maccabee led an army to victory over the Seleucid dynasty.

Next came Roman rule, from 63 BC-333 AD. Jesus was born and lived during this era, and the Second Temple in Jerusalem was the one He walked amidst. When Jesus says in Matthew 24:2 "... not one stone will be left upon another," it's the Second Temple He's talking about. During Roman rule, the Second Temple was destroyed (c. 70 AD) just as Christ predicted, and most of the Jewish population was sold into slavery throughout the vast Roman Empire. Parts of the Second Temple still remain, which you will visit and learn more about when you visit the Western Wall. Even after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem and the beginning of the exile, some Jewish life in the land of Israel continued.

From the 3rd to the 6th century AD, the Byzantines governed, but they were pushed out by Arab invaders around 636 AD. Muslims controlled Israel for the next 450 years, and during their reign the Dome of the Rock was built on the site of the destroyed Second Temple. Because this is such a holy site to the Jews, you can imagine how devastating this was to them. On the plus side, large Jewish communities were reestablished in Jerusalem and Tiberias by the 9th century.

For the next 300 years, waves of Crusaders— both Christian and Muslim— came to Israel in order to recapture the Holy Land. In the 12th century, many Jews were massacred by Christian Crusaders; and many more were sent into exile. This ended when Egypt's Mamluk dynasty gained control of the area. During 200 years of Mamluk rule, the Jewish community rebounded as large numbers of rabbis and Jewish pilgrims immigrated to Jerusalem and Galilee. Prominent rabbis established communities in Safed, Jerusalem, and elsewhere during the next 300 years. After ruling for two centuries, the Egyptian Mamluks were defeated by the Ottoman Turks who would control Israel from 1516 AD until after World War I (1918 AD).

Four thousand years of history is a lot to keep track of. So, below is a list of some historical events that are important to the study of the Bible and prophecy. Scholars vary in the dates that they assign to ancient events. The dates shown below are approximations.

2100 BC (about 4100 years ago) God promises Abraham many descendants

Abraham around 2100 BC, living in what is now Iraq, God tells him to move to Canaan, which later became Israel. Unlike many people, Abraham believes in the one true God. God rewarded Abraham's faith, making him the father of a great nation (Israel), and an ancestor to the Messiah (Jesus Christ).

2000 BC (about 4000 years ago) Jacob (Israel) is born

Jacob, the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham, is born in Canaan. Jacob's name is changed to Israel. (Canaan is later renamed Israel, after Jacob.) He has 12 sons, for whom the 12 Tribes of Israel are named.



1900 BC (about 3900 years ago)

Joseph sold into slavery

Joseph, one of the 12 sons of Jacob (Israel), is sold into slavery by his brothers, who are jealous of him. Joseph ends up in Egypt, where he rises to power as a trusted assistant of a pharaoh. His father and his brothers later leave Canaan because of a famine, and move to Egypt. They are later saved from harm by Joseph.

1446 BC (about 3400 years ago)

Exodus begins

The Hebrews, or Israelites (descendants of Jacob), are enslaved for 400 years in Egypt until Moses leads them out of Egypt. They wander the desert for 40 years. Moses then brings them to the border of Canaan, the land that God had previously promised to their forefather Abraham.

1406 BC (about 3400 years ago)

Israel begins establishing itself as a country

After Moses dies, Joshua leads the Israelites into Canaan and begins conquering the land, establishing a sovereign country of Israel for the first time in history.

1400 BC (about 3400 years ago)

Israel is ruled by judges, not kings

From about 1400 BC to about 1050 BC, Israel is not ruled by kings. The people think of God as their King. Instead of an earthly king, Israel is led by judges who settled disputes.

1050 BC (about 3000 years ago)

Saul becomes Israel's first king

After about 350 years of being ruled by judges, the people of Israel demand to have a king, like the neighboring countries. By demanding a king, the people turned away from their faith in God as their king. Saul becomes king and reigns about 40 years.



1010 BC (about 3000 years ago)

David becomes King of Israel

David becomes king of Israel in about 1010 BC and reigns for 40 years. David, unlike Saul, follows the commands of God. He makes mistakes, but he repents for them. He seeks to please God. He expands the size of Israel and rules over surrounding territories.

970 BC (about 3000 years ago)

Solomon becomes king, builds Temple

Solomon, son of David, becomes king in about 970 BC. He too reigns for about 40 years. Solomon builds the Temple in honor of God. The work is completed in about 960 BC. But, Solomon eventually turns away from God and worships false gods.

926 BC (about 2900 years ago)

Israel becomes a divided kingdom

Shortly after the reign of Solomon, Israel becomes a divided kingdom. The southern kingdom, called Judah, includes the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. The northern kingdom continued to be called Israel. The two often war with each other.

721 BC (about 2700 years ago)

Assyrians conquer northern kingdom of Israel

The Assyrian Empire conquers the northern kingdom of Israel in about 721 BC. The Assyrians torture and decapitate many. They force many Israelites (10 of the 12 Tribes of Israel) out of Israel and bring in foreigners.

612 BC (about 2600 years ago)

Babylon conquers Nineveh (Assyrian Empire)

The Assyrian Empire's capital city - Nineveh - is attacked by coalition of Babylonians and others. As explained by the prophet Nahum in the Bible, Nineveh was to be destroyed because of the Assyrian Empire's treatment of Israelites and other people.

605 BC (about 2600 years ago)

Babylon exerts influence over Judah

The neo-Babylonian Empire, under the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar, begins forcing Judah into submission. Nebuchadnezzar takes many Jews as captives to Babylon to ensure Judah's obedience.

597 BC (about 2600 years ago)

Babylon attacks Judah

Babylonian army attacks Judah and takes more Jews as captives to Babylon. Ezekiel, one of the captives, becomes a prophet of God. Ezekiel explains that God is allowing Babylon to punish Judah because the people have been unfaithful to God.



586 BC (about 2600 years ago)

Babylon destroys Jerusalem and the Temple

Babylon attacks Judah again. This time, the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple that Solomon had built. More Jews are taken as captives to Babylon.

586 BC to 573 BC (about 2600 years ago)

King Nebuchadnezzar attacks Tyre mainland

Babylon begins a 13-year siege of the mainland of the Phoenician city of Tyre.

539 BC (about 2500 years ago)

Cyrus the Great conquers Babylon

After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the neo-Babylonian Empire begins to lose power. Cyrus the Great conquers Babylon in 539 BC, establishing the Medo-Persian Empire.

538 BC (about 2500 years ago)

Cyrus releases Jews from Babylonian Captivity

After conquering Babylon, Cyrus offers the Jews their freedom to leave Babylon and to return to Judah. Cyrus' kingdom extends over Judah and many other parts of the Middle East, but Cyrus allows people more cultural and religious freedom than did the neo-Babylonian Empire.

536 BC (about 2500 years ago)

Work begins to rebuild Temple

Some of the Jews in Babylon return to Judah and begin work in about 536 BC to rebuild the Temple, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

516 BC (about 2500 years ago)

Second Temple is dedicated

The Temple is consecrated for worship, 70 years after the Babylonians had destroyed it in 586 BC.

333 BC (about 2300 years ago)

Greeks begin rule over land of Israel

The Greeks, under the leadership of Alexander the Great, defeat Persian armies in Macedonia in 333 BC. This marks the fall of the Medo-Persian Empire and the rise of the Grecian Empire.

332 BC (about 2300 years ago)

Alexander conquers Tyre (Phoenician Empire)

Alexander wars against the island fortress of the Phoenician city of Tyre. He takes rubble from the mainland of Tyre and builds a walkway to the island. Alexander's forces then conquer the island fortress, bringing an end to the Phoenician Empire.

250 BC (about 2300 years ago)

The Old Testament is translated into Greek

A Greek ruler asks the Jews to translate all or part of the Old Testament into the Greek language. The translation is called the Septuagint.

175 BC (about 2200 years ago)

Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes torments the Jews

Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes rules Syria from about 175 BC to about 164 BC. He reigns over Judah and tries to destroy the Jewish religion. He also defiles the Temple.

164 BC to 63 BC (about 2200 years ago)

Jews have independence

The Maccabees, a group that fought for Jewish independence, stage a revolt against the Greeks and establish the Hasmonean royal dynasty, as well as sovereignty over all or part of the land of Israel for about 100 years, from about 164 BC to 63 BC.

63 BC (about 2100 years ago)

The Romans take over land of Israel

After the death of Alexander the Great, the empire of the Greeks is divided up and becomes weaker. During this time, the Roman Empire becomes increasingly powerful. The Roman general named Pompey seizes control over the land of Israel.

About 5 BC (about 2000 years ago)

Jesus is born in Bethlehem

Jesus is born in the town of Bethlehem. The Apostle Matthew later points out that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfilled a prophecy delivered by the prophet Micah, about 700 years beforehand. (See Micah 5:2).

About 25 AD (about 2000 years ago)

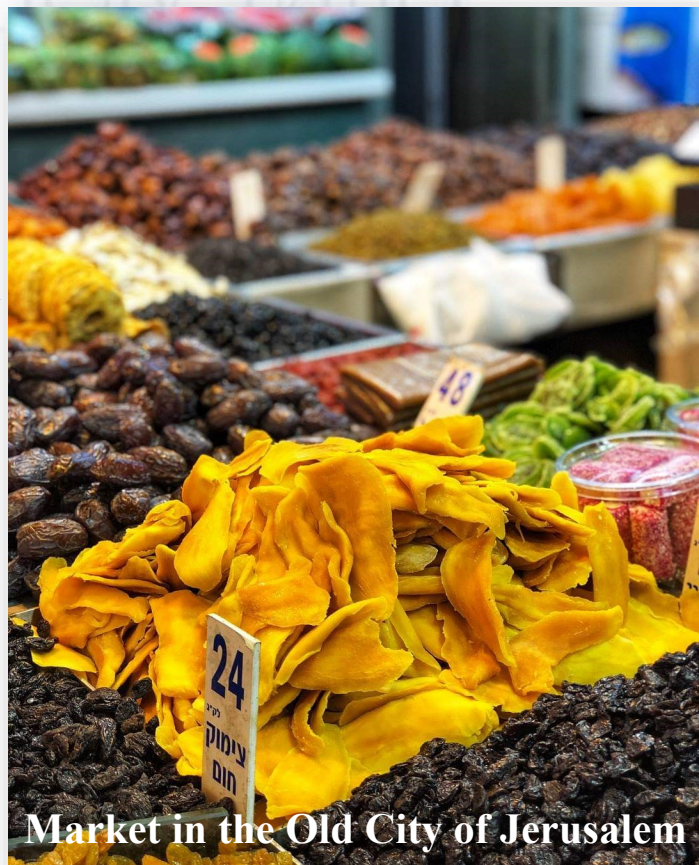
Jesus begins His ministry

Jesus is about 30 years old when he begins his ministry. He preaches salvation, delivers prophecies and performs miracles. He announces that he is the Messiah (the Christ) who was promised by the prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus promises salvation and eternal life to those who believe in him (See John 3:16).

About 28 AD (about 2000 years ago)

Jesus is crucified and resurrected

Jesus is falsely accused and is sent to Pontius Pilate, the Roman ruler of the land of the Jews, to be crucified. Jesus is later resurrected, meaning he



Market in the Old City of Jerusalem



is brought back to life, and his followers begin evangelizing him to others, allowing Christianity to spread very quickly throughout the Roman world and to eventually become the first religion to spread throughout the world.

70 AD (about 1900 years ago)

Romans destroy Jerusalem and Temple

In 70 AD, the Roman Army, under Titus, destroys Jerusalem and the Temple, to suppress an uprising of the Jews. According to the historian Josephus, about 1.1 million Jews were killed. Others were taken as slaves.

Different Herod's in the Bible

It is easy to get confused about who "Herod" is in the Bible. This isn't surprising since there are actually six different (!) "Herod's" in the New Testament; and they are all somehow related to each other. Here are thumbnail sketches to help you keep track of who's who:

1. **Herod the Great (ruled 37-4 B.C.)** He was the guy in the Christmas story, a super powerful client king answerable to Rome. He tried to trick the wise men and killed the babies in Bethlehem (not to mention some of his own sons and wives).
2. **Herod Archelaus (ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 6)** He was one of Herod the Great's three sons mentioned in the Bible. He received one-half of his father's territory, the area surrounding and near Jerusalem (Judea and Samaria). Joseph was unwilling to move Mary and toddler Jesus to Bethlehem after fleeing to Egypt because Bethlehem was in this Herod's territory and, like his father "the Great," Herod Archelaus wasn't known to be very cuddly either. He got replaced by a Roman procurator less than ten years into his reign; that's why Pontius Pilate is the man in charge at Jesus' crucifixion rather than one of the "Herod's."
3. **Herod Antipas (ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 39)** Jesus called him "the Fox" (Luke 13:32). Received a quarter of his father's territory (Galilee and Perea). Divorced his first wife and married Herodias, the wife of his brother (who was yet a different "Herod"). Killed John the Baptist. Pontius Pilate sent Jesus to see this Herod as part of Jesus' trial since this Herod was visiting Jerusalem at the time Jesus was sentenced to death. Did you know that Pilate and Herod Antipas became friends that day (Luke 23:12)?

4. **Herod Philip the Tetrarch (ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 34)** Got the remaining quarter of his father's territory (north and east of Galilee—mostly ruled over Syrians and Greeks). Married his niece, Salome, the daughter of Herodias (Herod Antipas's wife-of-sin).

5. **Herod Agrippa I (ruled A.D. 37-44 [41-44 in Judea])** Grandson of Herod the Great and nephew of Herodias, Herod Antipas's wife. Eventually ended up ruling over even more territory than did his grandfather, Herod the Great. In the book of Acts he is known as the one who put Peter in prison (Acts 12:1-5) ...although he couldn't *keep* him there (12:6-19)! Also...“He did not give God the glory” when referred to as a god by the people of Tyre and Sidon and was thus struck by an angel and “eaten by worms” (Acts 12:20-23). Yes...I know...TMI...but it's an easy way to remember which “Herod” he is.



6. **Herod Agrippa II (ruled A.D. 50s until long after the end of the Jewish war; died around A.D. 93)** Like his father Herod Agrippa I and great-grandfather Herod the Great he ruled over a large territory. He's the one who interviewed Paul along with the Roman procurator Porcius Festus when Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (in Palestine) after Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 25-26). Agrippa exclaimed to Paul (literal translation): “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian” (Acts 26:28). Or was his statement ironic? Either way, Paul ended up appealing directly to Caesar and so had no more contact after this with the final powerful “Herod.”

After this last Herod, we don't hear anything more of the dynasty of Herods. Here is an even briefer summary:

Herod the Great: Christmas story

Herod Archelaus: Joseph to Nazareth instead of Bethlehem because of him

Herod Antipas: Killed John the Baptist

Herod Philip: Ruled area north and east of Galilee

Herod Agrippa I: Eaten by worms

Herod Agrippa II: Trial of Paul in Caesarea

Israel History & Scripture Reference

Israel was the new name given to Jacob, which means “**ruling with God.**” The twelve tribes of Israel were made up by the descendants of Israel's twelve sons. These tribes became known as the nation of Israel. The Northern Kingdom later became known as Israel. Israel was a term used to refer to God's true and obedient people in the New Testament.

“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” (Gen 32:28)

On the next page are some **Simple Hebrew Phrases** to help you be a blessing to this country while visiting. The people of Israel welcome our presence and appreciate us most when we try to understand their culture. Even making a small attempt at speaking the language goes a long way to making new friends. That being said, here are some simple Hebrew phrases that may be useful to you during your travels. Remember, as a general rule you stress the last or next-last syllable.

Hello:	Shalom (“shah-LOME”)
Good morning:	Boker tov (“boh-ker-TOHV”)
Goodbye:	Lehitra’ot (“le-HIT-rah-ott”)
Please:	Bevakasha (“be-va-ka-SHA”)
Thank you:	Toda (“to-DAH”)
Yes:	Ken (“kin”)
No:	Lo (“low”)
Excuse me/ Sorry:	Slikha (“slee-CHAH”)
How much is it?:	Ma Hasha’a (“Mah ha-sha-AH”)
Help!:	Hatsilu! (“hat-SEE-lu”)
Toilets?:	Sherutim? (“sher-u-tim”)

Tel Aviv

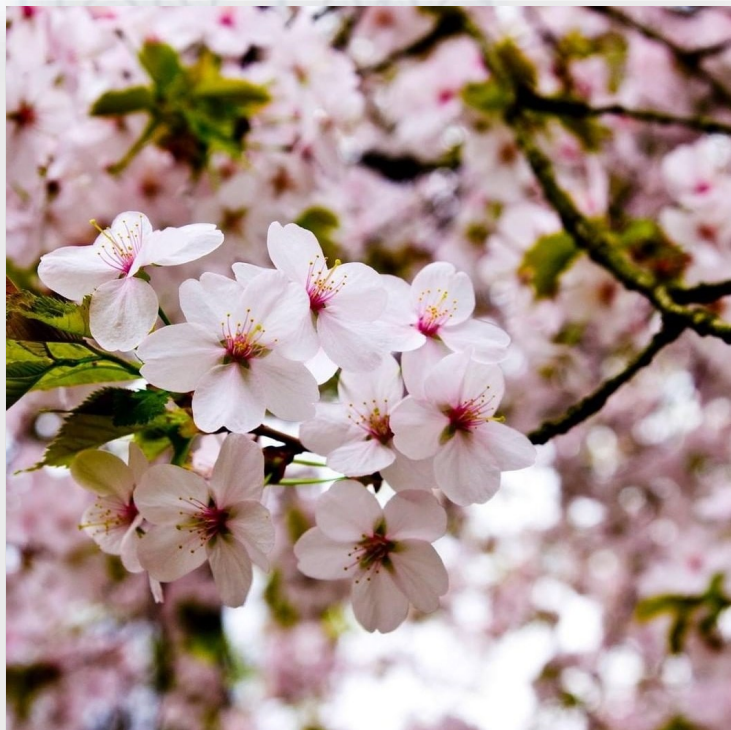
We will be landing at Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion Airport, the country’s only international airport, which is one of the most contemporary and well secured in the world. Situated on the Israeli-Mediterranean coastline, Tel Aviv is home to over 400 thousand residents. About 90 percent of Israel’s population (8.5 million) lives within a 90-minute drive of Tel Aviv.

Tel Aviv was founded in 1909 on the ancient port city of Jaffa. Today, it’s a modern, “global city,” meaning that it has been deemed as an important intersection in the global economic system. Tel Aviv is the financial capital and business center of Israel, home to the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, corporate offices, and research and development centers.

Besides being a major economic hub, Tel Aviv is also known for its abundance of entertainment, museums, art galleries, restaurants, and beaches that attract about 1.7 million foreign tourists each year. It has been called “The City that Never Sleeps” with its 24-hour culture, much like New York City. Tel Aviv possesses tall and numerous buildings, hustle and bustle, energy, speed, style, culture, and a metropolitan feel.

Interesting Facts:

- Israel has two official languages: Hebrew and Arabic
- Israel is only 1/6 of 1% of the landmass of the Middle East (Israel is roughly half the size of Lake Michigan).
- Israel has more museums per capita than any other country in the world.
- Ever wondered if the glue on Israel’s stamps is kosher? It is.
- There are over 40 kosher McDonald’s in Israel.
- With more than 3,000 high-tech companies and start-ups, Israel has the highest concentration of hi-tech companies in the

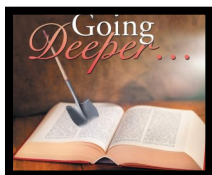


Israel's almond trees are the first to bloom each year.



world (apart from the Silicon Valley).

- Most of the Windows NT operating system was developed by Microsoft-Israel
- The Pentium MMX Chip technology was designed in Israel at Intel.
- The first cell phone and voice mail technology was developed in Israel.
- Four young Israelis developed the technology for AOL Instant Messenger.
- Over 1000 letters arrive in Jerusalem every year addressed to God.
- You may know the Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth, but did you know that the next lowest place on earth is over 800 feet higher? The Dead Sea is THAT low! The next lowest is in Djibouti on the African continent.
- The largest ancient dog cemetery is located in Ashkelon, Israel and dates back to the 5th and 4th century BC. There are potentially thousands of dogs buried in this spot and most of them are puppies. There is no clear reason for why they died or why they were buried the way they were together in individual graves. They all appear to have died from natural causes. Most dogs in that day only lived less than a year.
- There are 137 beaches in Israel. Surfing even has gained popularity.
- Israel has over 300 wineries. Many of these are in the north.
- There are cats all over Israel. In fact there are MILLIONS of feral cats in Israel. They were brought in by the British to combat a rat problem but reproduced quickly. Today the cats now pose a problem themselves, with many now seeing the cats as rodents.
- The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is controlled by six different churches; Roman Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syriac Orthodox churches. They don't always get along. They run under "status quo" meaning as long as nothing changes, everyone gets along. This has led to one of the most interesting facts: The immovable Ladder. In the courtyard of the church there is a small wooden ladder that most passing would assume shows active work being done to the building. However, the ladder has been there since the early 1800s and possibly even earlier. No one dares move it.
- The Mount of Olives is the oldest continuously used cemetery in the world. It's been in use for 3,000 years and has 150,000 graves. There are graves from the time of King David there.
- Bamba, a peanut flavored puff snack, is the number one snack in Israel. It is one of the first foods an Israeli child will eat due to how easily it dissolves. Researchers noticed another benefit as well; Israeli children don't have allergies to peanuts. This led to major strides in the understanding of how food allergies are developed.
- Israel is home to the largest underground hospital, with 2000 beds. The most interesting part of this hospital is that it is actually the parking garage. In an emergency, cars are moved, and it can be changed to a full functioning fortified hospital within 72 hours.



DID YOU KNOW: what the word Jew means or where it comes from? In Hebrew, the word for the Jewish people is the Yehudim. It comes from the Hebrew word for Praise, Thanksgiving, and

Worship. A Jew is one whose identity is based on praising God, giving thanks, and worshipping the Almighty God. A Jew is one whose very existence is a praise and witness to the existence of God.

It's strange, that a name linked to praise should become a word of vilification, that a word linked to worship should be used as a profanity, and that a word linked to thanksgiving could be used for cursing.

It's a strange world, where those born to praise and give thanks should be so hated, cursed, and warred against. When Jesus was crucified, do you know what was written over His head? A sign which read, King of the Jews, or King of the Yehudim.

His life was the epitome of the word Jew. His life itself was a praise to God. Everything He did was to bless, to worship, to glorify God. And the world crucified Him whose life was a praise to God.

It was the forces of darkness that crucified Him. And yet even in His crucifixion, He didn't stop being the King of the Jews, or the epitome of the Yehudim. Even the act of dying was an act of praise, a glorifying of God. He never succumbed to the evil but overcame the evil with good. He blessed those who cursed Him and even gave His life to save His enemies.

And as Christians who follow Him, those who are His, must do likewise.

We must never be overcome by the darkness or let it stop us from being good and giving praise. You must give thanks in all things and give praise at all times. You must bless in the face of cursing. You must make your life a praise regardless of the response. For if He who is King of the Yehudim is our King, then we too must, allow our very existence to be a praise unto God.

TODAY: praise God, give thanks, and bless others, for in doing so you will be a true Christian (a little Christ), allowing our lives to bring glory to God.



JAFFA/JOPPA

Jaffa / Joppa / Yafo, its name means **Lovely** or **beautiful**, and is located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Jaffa is said to be the oldest port in the world and was established by **Japheth**, the son of **Noah**. The oldest remains date back to the 16th century B.C. Archaeological excavations from 1955 uncovered remains from the Canaanites, a statue thought to be Aphrodite, as well as ruins from the time of the Hasmoneans and Romans.

In about 1,468 BC, Joppa was first conquered by Egyptian Pharaoh *Thutmose III*. An ancient story tells that in order to capture it, Egyptian soldiers were smuggled into the city in 200 baskets. There was still an Egyptian garrison here in the 14th and 13th centuries BC, when the city was mentioned in the *El Amarna letters*. This walled city once stood over 100' above the Mediterranean on a rocky ledge.

During the Roman period, Pompey conquered Israel in 66 B.C. and Jaffa became a free city state separated from the State of Israel. It was Herod, who conquered Jaffa in 38 B.C. as he was pushing toward Jerusalem to establish his reign. As you can see, most of the conquering armies, landed at Joppa, and then pushed their way to Jerusalem.

During what is considered the Arab period, Jaffa was conquered by the Muslims. It was a difficult time, but the port continued to be a place of entry for Christians and Jews. These travelers were mostly pilgrims to the Holy Land.

It should come as no surprise that Jaffa was conquered by the Crusaders in 1099. Since Jaffa was the main port to Jerusalem, the Crusaders kept coming. It is during this time that almost all Jews of Jaffa left for Europe.

This brings us to the Mamluks. Who were the Mamluks? They were mostly Egyptian, but some were from southern Russia and Turkey. The Mamluks destroyed the port of Jaffa to prevent the ships of Christian warriors from invading.



It was during the Ottoman period that Jaffa began to manufacture and export soap. It was also during this time that oranges were introduced to the world of trade. Don't miss the opportunity to enjoy a Jaffa orange during your visit to Israel.

Napoleon conquered the town in 1799, and there is a statue of him in the town center. It's another photo opportunity!

In 1909, a group of Jews from Jaffa decided to leave the crowded streets of the town and bought a section of sandy land north of Jaffa which is Tel Aviv today. In 1949, the Israeli government decided to merge Jaffa with Tel Aviv, and the name today is Tel Aviv – Jaffa.

Today, Jaffa's narrow streets are filled with galleries, cafes, and shops. A casual walk through the winding narrow

streets emphasizes the resiliency of a people. You would never consider that Jaffa had such a catastrophic past. There are other points of interest in Jaffa, such as, the Clock Tower built in 1901, St Peter's Church in the town center, Ramses Gate built in the 18th Century, and Gate of Faith built in the 20th Century.

In the Old Testament, after the Israelites entered the Promised Land under Joshua, the tribe of Dan received Joppa, but it was later lost to the Philistines. King David re-took Joppa in his time; and when Solomon succeeded his father as king, he developed it into Israel's major seaport. It was to Joppa that Hiram, King of Tyre sent cedar logs from Lebanon to use in building the original Temple of God in Jerusalem (**2 Chronicles 2:11,16**).

Through out Bible history, the city was in turn taken by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. It was included in the territory of Herod The Great during the time of Jesus.

In the New Testament, Joppa was the home of **Tabitha**, also known as Dorcas, a Christian lady known for her goodness and generosity. When she became ill and died, Peter, by the power of God, restored her to life.

(Acts 9:36-41) "At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. ³⁷ But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸ And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. ³⁹ Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive."

It was also at Joppa, while in the home of Simon the tanner, that **Peter had the vision** that showed him that the Gospel was to go out to Gentiles as well as Jews.

(Acts 10:9-16) "The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. ¹⁰ Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ¹¹ and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. ¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of

the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³ And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

¹⁴ But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

¹⁵ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

¹⁶ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again."

Also, Joppa apparently served as an area where Peter ministered (**Acts 9 and 10**).

Fact Finder: What was the name of an Old Testament prophet that sailed from Joppa as he was running from God?

(Jonah 1:3) "But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD."

After the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., a large Jewish community, including famous scholars, lived in Joppa. It also served as an important commercial center. Tombstones of these scholars and merchants have been uncovered.



(Statue of FAITH) Several biblical scenes are carved on the sculpture, including the **Binding of Isaac**, the **Conquest of Jericho** and **Jacob's Ladder**.

Appointing Your Days



DID YOU KNOW: in **Psalm 90:12** it states; "So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom."

What is it to number our days?

In the Hebrew text it says, "Teach us to **manah** our days." The word manah means to PREPARE and to APPOINT. This word appears again in the Book of Jonah where it is written that GOD appoints "MANAHS" a **FISH** (1:17), a **WORM** (4:7), and a **WIND** (4:8) to help the prophet accomplish His will.

So we number our days by consecrating them for the purposes of God. And then you use your days to accomplish

those purposes. Don't let your days determine your life. Let your life determine your days. And don't just let your days go by. Prepare them, that they might become vessels of blessing and life. Appoint your days."

TODAY: Prepare the days ahead. Set them apart. Commit them into God's hands and appoint them for the fulfilling of His purposes.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1. **II Chron. 2:16** Solomon, in building the temple in Jerusalem, floats timber from the Lebanon Hills to Joppa.
2. **Jonah 1:3** Jonah, fleeing to Tarsus, finds a ship at Joppa.

Interesting Facts: Waves in the Mediterranean Sea can reach heights of 15'-20' during storms.

3. **Acts 9:36-43** At Joppa, Tabitha (translated *Dorcas*), a good woman full of good works, gets sick and dies, with her body washed and placed in an upstairs room. Peter, coming from the nearby town of Lydia, raises her. As a result, many are saved here at Joppa.

4. **Acts 10:5-23** Cornelius sends for Peter at Joppa to come to Caesarea. As Cornelius' men come to Joppa, they find Peter praying on the roof top. He has a vision, and then goes himself to Caesarea.

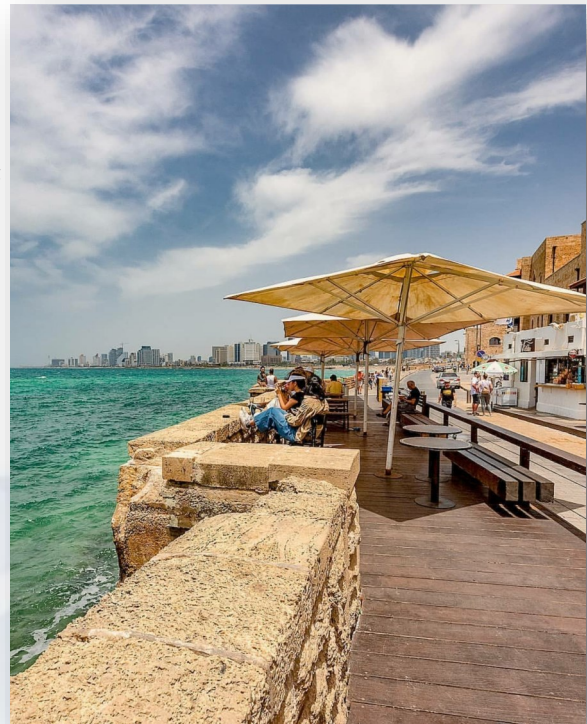
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS OF INTEREST

Excavations in ancient Joppa, which is situated east of the Turkish port, have revealed remains of fortifications and habitations of all periods from the Bronze Age to Byzantine and Arab periods.

1. **LATE BRONZE:** The remains of a **gate** of the Egyptian town of Joppa has been found. On the gate jamb a hieroglyphic inscription was also found.
2. **IRON AGE I & II:** With excavations spread out over a large area in this region, archaeological surveys have revealed evidence of potsherds and other remains that date to the Old Testament, namely, to the time of Jonah.
3. **HELLENISTIC/ROMAN I:** Most recently, archaeological structures dating between the 3rd century BC and the 2nd century A.D. have been unearthed. As these excavations continue to take place, expectations remain high that what will be revealed will be an impressive coastal city that played a significant role in providing safe harbor to Roman vessels and ships.

Personal Reflections:

There are times in our life when we become so fearful of circumstances that we avoid situations that challenge us. On the other hand, there are other times in life that cause great excitement and joy, and we feel that we just can't wait for them to happen. In both scenarios, God longs to be part of the picture. When we become fearful and want to run away from our difficulties, God wants us to trust in Him. Equally, God desires us to approach our "JOYS"



with a thankful and humble heart.

God desires for us to entrust our lives to the “Big Picture” that only He can see and realize that He longs to bless us in all circumstances. He also desires to share His blessing with others around us through the unfolding of His plan and purpose. It’s like the anticipation of seeing a long-lost family member or friend at the airport. We find ourselves hastening our steps until we are literally running to warmly greet them. The life experiences of Jonah and Peter are best described as “Running Away” and “Running Toward.”

Treasure Thought and Personal Application: God’s ways are often not our ways. What God-allowed situations of life are you running away from? Don’t allow circumstances to frighten you from doing what He wants you to do. Don’t run away from His perfect plan for your life, or from how He wants to use you for His redemptive purpose. Which God-orchestrated opportunities are you running toward? Allow God’s unique vision to propel you toward what He has planned for you. He just may use you like He used Jonah or Peter!!!

Mediterranean Sea

Our first clue to the importance of the Mediterranean is its name, which literally means “**in the center of the earth.**” This body of water has always been an important route for merchants and travellers. Even in ancient times, it created opportunities for trade and cultural exchange among different people groups of the region—the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Phoenician, Carthaginian, Greek, Levantine, Roman, and Moorish. The history of the Mediterranean region is central to understanding the origins and development of many of today’s modern societies.

All of these societies were shaped by their close ties to this sea, which provided a way of life, business trade, cultural exchange, colonization, and sometimes war. Access to this common sea also led to many historical and cultural connections between the ancient and modern societies around the Mediterranean.

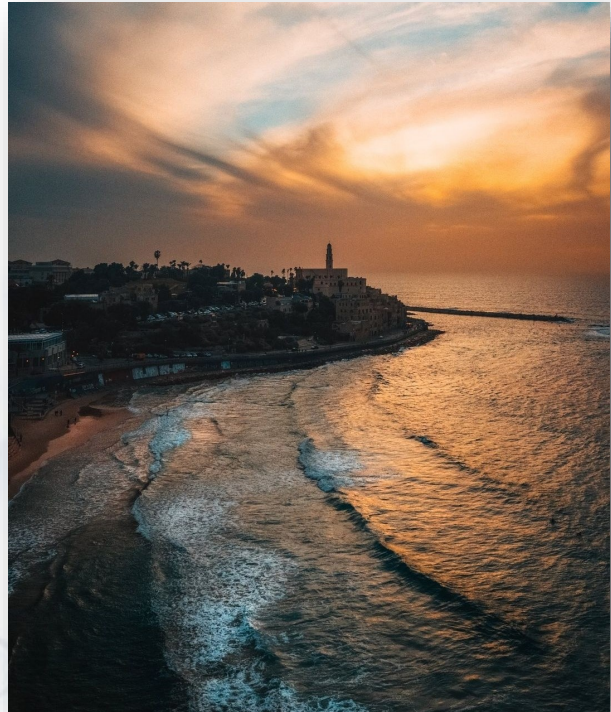
Because so many people groups— each with their own language—border this sea, it has many names. In Modern Hebrew, it has been called Hayam “the middle sea,” a literal adaptation of the German equivalent Mittelmeer. In Turkish, it is known as Akdeniz, “the white sea.” In modern Arabic, it is known as al-Baḏr al-Abyad al-Mutawassit, the “Middle White Sea.” And, lastly, in Islamic and older Arabic literature, it was referenced as Bahr al-Room, or “the Roman Sea.”

The Israelites were generally not a seafaring people during the time of Bible History. They were, however, well familiar with the Mediterranean Sea that formed the western border of the land of Israel. It was called variously “the sea” (**Joshua 16:8**), the “Western Sea” (**Deuteronomy 11:24**), or the “Sea of the Philistines” (**Exodus 23:31**).



King Solomon had cedars of Lebanon floated in rafts down the Mediterranean coast to use in construction of the First Temple (**1 Kings 5: 8-9**). The apostle Paul travelled extensively on the Mediterranean Sea during his missionary journeys in which he established himself as a leader in the new Christian Church.

The Mediterranean Sea extends from Gibraltar in the west to Israel in the east. It touches upon Europe, Africa and Asia, which were the Crossroads of the World during ancient times. It is approximately 2,300 miles long, and from 100 to 600 miles



wide. Its greatest depth is approximately 14,400 feet off Cape Matapan. It connects with the Atlantic Ocean through the Strait of Gibraltar, the Black Sea by the Dardanelles, and the Red Sea by the Suez Canal. Many ancient civilizations were connected with the Mediterranean, including Phoenicia, Egypt, Rome, Greece, and Philistia.

Caesarea

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Caesarea Maritima means; “**Caesarea by the Sea**” which is a name given to it during modern days to separate it from Caesarea Philippi which is in the Golan Heights to the north. During the lifetime of Jesus Christ, and well into the New Testament stage of Bible History, Caesarea was a major Roman political centre in occupied Israel. It was located on the shore of The Mediterranean Sea, on the road from Egypt to Tyre, “**Via Maris**” and is located about 75 miles northwest of Jerusalem and 30 miles north of Jaffa. Herod the Great built the city of Caesarea between 22 and 10 BC and named it in honor of Caesar Augustus. Mark Antony presented the city to Cleopatra; however when Octavian (later known as Caesar Augustus) defeated Antony at Actium, it was put under the control of Herod who built it up and renamed it after the Caesar. It then became the capital of the Roman province of Judea, the headquarters for the procurators (governors) and the Roman troops.



The **Roman Legion** was a term that came to represent the vast military system that enabled the Roman Empire to conquer and govern the ancient world of Europe (including Britain), south-central Asia and the Middle East, and North Africa. Centered in Rome, it was unquestionably the sole military superpower of its day, all connected by an elaborate system of Roman Roads.

A legion was the largest unit in the ancient Roman army, composed of infantry and cavalry. At full strength, such a division could consist of up to 6,000 soldiers. Each legion was divided into cohorts of 600 men, and each cohort was further divided into centuries of 100 men. A century was commanded by a centurion.



Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine, is an 8,000 acre site which is located 23 miles south of Mount Carmel on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Caesarea became the administrative capital of the Province of Judea, where the Roman procurators, or governors, resided. Three Roman governors of Palestine lived there: Felix (**Acts 24**), Festus (**Acts 25**), and Pontius Pilate (**John 19**). Archeologists found Pilate's name carved in stone in the theater at Caesarea. In New Testament times, Caesarea served as the major seaport of Judea. Herod built a harbor that could shelter ships from Mediterranean storms.

Herod wanted the city to be Hellenistic, accommodating mainly non-Jewish populations; however, there were still a significant amount of Jews who resided in the city. Somewhere around 25 BC, Herod the Great began an



extensive building program. He was determined to create a thoroughly Roman outpost here, since the city was ideally situated for trade. Like any modern Roman city, it would have had markets, wide roads, temples, a drainage system for sanitation, aqueducts for fresh water and luxurious public buildings. Every five years the city would host major sports competitions, gladiator games and theatrical productions, so a Roman amphitheater was a must.

There was one big problem with this new and improved city; its harbor had dangerous currents and tended to fill with silt. Never one to think small, Herod decided to build a 40-acre artificial harbor complete with a lighthouse (whose fire burned 24 hours a day), large breakwaters, six enormous bronze statues (used to mark dangerous sandbars), and anchorage for up to 300 ships. The harbor was built using materials that would allow the concrete to harden underwater. Some of the stones used to build the harbor's breakwater were 18 feet wide, 9 feet high and 50 feet long. Take a look at these other fascinating details:

Its construction was an unprecedented challenge; never before had such a large artificial harbor been built. There was a total absence of islands or bays as natural protection; furthermore, work was hindered by bad weather. During preliminary underwater digs in 1978, archaeologists were stunned to discover concrete blocks near the breakwater offshore, an indication of the highly sophisticated use of hydraulic concrete, which hardens underwater. Though historians knew that the Romans had developed such techniques, before the discoveries at Caesarea, hydraulic concrete was never known to have been used on such a massive scale. The main ingredient in the concrete, volcanic ash, was probably imported from Mt. Vesuvius in Italy; it is likely that the wooden forms were, too.

The new harbor brought status and wealth to Herod's kingdom. He used the harbor to import materials for more building projects. Most importantly, it made Palestine easily accessible to Rome, only a 10-day voyage away. An earthquake devastated this port in 130 AD.

By the time Herod was done, the city of Caesarea covered 165 acres. It boasted a 4,500-seat amphitheater, multiple temples, palaces, storerooms, residential areas, sewer system, public baths, paved streets, an elaborate villa that probably belonged to Herod himself, and a hippodrome that could seat 38,000 people. Caesarea became not only the capital of the province, a role it played for the next 500 years, but also the headquarters for the Roman legions stationed in Judea. As you walk around, try to imagine what it was like while reading this account:

It is almost impossible to imagine the splendor of the city and harbor, where the less noble building material was white limestone. Mosaic sidewalks, with long rows of columns, led from the city to the theater. Thousands of columns standing in parallel rows along the main streets formed majestic promenades throughout the city. More than 1,300 column fragments were found on the bottom of the harbor alone. They were made of marble imported from Italy and Egypt; columns of pink granite came from Aswan. Large slabs covered streets and sidewalks. Maritime trade was extensive: large warehouses facing the harbor contained... wine, olive oil, fruit syrups, and nails. The presence of Chinese porcelain attests to the geographical reach of Herod's commercial activities.

Caesarea continued under Roman or Byzantine rule until 640 AD when Muslim Arabs captured the city and ruled until the 12th century. With their arrival, the harbor fell into disrepair and began to silt up. From the 12th to the 14th

century, Caesarea bounced from Muslim to Christian Crusaders and back again. It was in the 13th century that the impressive Crusader fortress we see today was built by the French king, Louis IX. Despite its fearsome appearance, it offered ineffective resistance to the assault of the Mamluks who destroyed the city in 1265. (You will see these fortified walls and actually walk through the waterless moat as you enter Caesarea through the main Crusader gate.)

For hundreds of years after this final destruction, residents of other coastal towns used ships and boats to strip the



city of its beautiful stonework and ruined structures. The aqueduct system, which had supplied Caesarea with water for more than 1,000 years and required constant maintenance and inspection in order to run smoothly, was neglected and soon became obstructed. The springs of water, no longer able to flow through them, turned the region north of Caesarea into a swamp, while the rest of the region was gradually covered by sand dunes. By the 16th century Caesarea was just a small, ruined village. Little that Herod had built remained. The site remained abandoned until the Ottoman Turks resettled Muslim refugees from Bosnia there in 1878. The refugees fled the area during the 1948 conflict. The only surviving remnant of their village is the mosque, which can be seen near the sea. These days, Caesarea is a thriving city with modern industry and 21st century conveniences.

Since 1971, excavations have added much information about Caesarea. A very productive **aqueduct** was built by King Herod, which brought freshwater from the Carmel mountains 4-5 miles away. The water travelled underground entering the city and, due to pressure, created a fountain inside of Caesarea. A smaller aqueduct was also used for irrigation. Large sewers have been found running under the city as well. A 38,000 seat **hippodrome** (racetrack— pictured on page 30) was also built on the east side of the city. However, it was destroyed during the Muslim invasion around 640 due to lack of use, earthquakes, and sea erosion. Two quotations of the Greek text of Romans 13:3 were found inscribed on mosaic floors in the archives building during excavation. The Roman governor **Pontius Pilate**, who condemned Jesus to be executed, lived at Caesarea where a **plaque was discovered in 1961, bearing his name** and recording a dedication he made. It is the only written evidence of Pilate outside the gospels. Visible today is the large **amphitheatre** (picture above) northwest of the hippodrome. Herod the Great constructed this theatre with a seating capacity of 4,500. According to Josephus, this is where the death of Herod Agrippa occurred, as recounted in Acts 12. The theatre was covered with a skin covering (vellum), and visitors probably brought cushions with them to soften the stone seats. In 1976, excavations produced the first evidence of Strato's Tower, the Hellenistic site near which Herod built Caesarea, according to Josephus. Also, a **small synagogue** was excavated north of a large fort built at the **Herodian harbor** during the Crusades. The harbor was built using materials that would allow the concrete to harden underwater. The forty-acre harbor would accommodate 300 ships, much larger than the modern harbor existing today. This harbor area contained many stone storerooms; many of which have still not been excavated. The only one ever found in Palestine was reused by the Roman legions as a Mithraeum (a cultic center dedicated to the Persian god Mithras). The city of Caesarea was never rebuilt after its destruction by Muslims in the thirteenth century.

Caesarea in the Bible



After baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip was “transported” to Azotus (Ashkelon) and from there, continued to Caesarea, evangelizing as he traveled (**Acts 8: 40**).

Under a death threat by Hellenistic Jews, new convert Paul was taken from Jerusalem to the port of Caesarea and shipped back to Tarsus (**Acts 9: 28-29**).

After Peter’s vision about the clean and unclean, he traveled to Caesarea to share the Good News with Cornelius, the centurion in what was known as the "Italian Regiment" (**Acts 10**).

Paul’s second and third missionary journeys sailed to and from the port of Caesarea (**Acts 18: 22; 21: 8**).

Herod Agrippa I died in Caesarea after “being eaten by worms” as God’s judgment on him for receiving praise due only to the Lord (**Acts 12: 19, 21-23**).

After his third journey, Paul stayed in the city with Philip and his four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. Paul then proceeded to Jerusalem with several disciples from Caesarea (**Acts 21: 9-16**).

Paul was sent to stand trial before Felix and was put under house arrest in Caesarea for two years. While imprisoned, he witnessed to Festus and King Agrippa and was eventually sent on to Rome (**Acts 23-26**).

There are **Four Significant Ties to the New Testament in Caesarea**— the impact of which is too great to measure:

1. In Jesus’ day, Pontius Pilate lived in Caesarea and would have journeyed from here to Jerusalem for the Passover and the trial of Jesus. Up until 1962, we had no archaeological validation that Pilate had actually lived here until the famous Pontius Pilate stone was discovered. Today visitors can view a stone bearing his name, unearthed in a recent excavation.





The fragmented Latin inscription on a mounted plaque reads:

To the Divine Augusti [this] Tiberieum

... Pontius Pilate

... prefect of Judea

... has dedicated [this]

2. Acts 10:1-48 is one of the most critical passages in the entire Bible. It is the story in which Peter receives a vision to go to Caesarea and witness to a centurion named Cornelius, who was a devout man but had never heard the Gospel. This was, of course, God revealing that the Gospel was not just for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. (If you are not Jewish, you would be classified as a Gentile.) The city of Caesarea should remind us of the importance that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for people of all ethnic backgrounds. It was here Peter and the early Church leaders had to confront their prejudices; and from that moment forward, they began focusing on reaching all people— both Jews and Gentiles.

As for Cornelius, consider his own boldness in receiving Peter into his house, as well as his receiving the message of Christ. Soon after, Cornelius was baptized, and even asked Peter to stay for a few days. It was a life-changing experience for this Roman, who was expected to suppress Jews like Peter, not befriend them and invite them to stay in your own home.

3. Part of our tour will include walking into the 4,500-seat Roman amphitheater, which is still in existence today and sits on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. Upon entering the amphitheater, imagine one of the most dramatic events that ever occurred on the stage below.

To give some background, the emperor Tiberius wanted his friend Caligula to rule the region instead of Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great. Because of this fact, Tiberius threw Herod Agrippa in prison. Sometime later, a fellow prisoner showed Agrippa a fierce-looking owl in the tree upon which Agrippa was leaning. Such an owl, called an “uhu” or “bubo,” was rare to see in the daylight. The other prisoner told Agrippa that he would soon be delivered from imprisonment, promoted to the highest position of power, and envied by all who have pitied his misfortune. Continuing his prophetic discourse, the prisoner said that Agrippa would be happy until the day he died, that he would have children and they, too, would be happy. However, there was some bad news as well, according to the prisoner; the next time Agrippa saw the owl, he would die shortly thereafter.

Agrippa remained in prison during the short reign of Tiberius. Upon Tiberius' death and the accession of Caligula, Agrippa was not only set free, but (being favored by the emperors Caligula and Claudius) he acquired the provinces that had belonged to his uncle Philip and more territories were added to his kingdom so that he ruled over the entire region of Palestine, including Judea. When Agrippa had reigned three years over Judea, he came to Caesarea where he organized shows in honor of Caesar.

One day, Agrippa was informed about a certain festival in which vows were made for his safety, and there a great multitude of dignified persons gathered together. On the second day of this festival, Agrippa put on an extraordinary garment made entirely of silver, and came into the theater early in the morning. The sun illuminated the garment in such a surprising and resplendent manner that a look of horror spread over the faces of the multitude who cried out that he surely was a god. Upon this, the king did not rebuke the people or reject their impious flattery, but afterward, he looked up and saw an owl sitting on a rope over his head, and he immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tiding and became deeply sorrowful.

Josephus, a Roman historian, records what happens next:

A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now spoke to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner." When he said this, his pain became violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign.

Acts 12: 21-23 records this event as follows: On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted. "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

You are standing in the very theater where this strange, historical and biblical event took place!

4. Wherever you are in Caesarea, you'll notice that you're literally on the water's edge. Look west, across the Mediterranean Sea, and imagine setting sail in New Testament time. You would be just a 10-hour boat ride away from Rome, the most powerful city in the world. Imagine being a resident of Caesarea during the time after Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension to Heaven; the city is filled with both Jews and Gentiles, and the Gospel is being preached with great fervor and passion by some of the early disciples. It is from this magnificent port that the Gospel would one day travel across deep and capricious waters to Rome. Christianity advanced westward from where you're standing—the actual port of Caesarea Maritima—to Rome, then to all of Europe, and eventually to the New World.

If you could trace your **spiritual roots** far enough backward, they would originate from Caesarea Maritima, or "Caesarea by the Sea." Take a moment and be mindful of how God used this city-port— built by Rome for its own selfish purposes— to spread the Gospel to the known world. It is a very moving and powerful thought.

Personal Reflections: Acts 10 records the story involving Cornelius, a resident of Caesarea, and Peter. Even though the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his entire household in a dramatic conversion experience, Peter would be criticized for entering Cornelius' house (Acts 11:2), an action scorned by Jews, because entering the house of a Gentile made one ceremonially unclean.



As for Cornelius, consider his own boldness in receiving Peter into his house, as well as his receiving the message of Christ. Soon after, Cornelius was baptized, and even asked Peter to stay for a few days. It was a life-changing



experience for this Roman, who was expected to suppress Jews like Peter, not to befriend them and invite them to stay in your own house.

The Apostle Paul became familiar with Caesarea as he used this harbor city to leave on his first and second missionary journeys (Acts 13-14, 16-18). However, following this third and final mission trip, Paul found himself on trial in Jerusalem. Eventually, Paul would be brought to Caesarea at night by 200 Roman soldiers (Acts 23:23-25). Ananias, the High Priest brought charges of misconduct against Paul before Festus, the governor (Acts 24:1) who believed that he was innocent and kept him in prison for more than two years (Acts 24:26-27). Paul's bold faith would become evidence of the strength and fortitude he possessed in proclaiming the message of Christ. Being courageous for Christ is a result of being confident in the life-changing characteristics of the Gospel.

Boldness for Christ is displayed in our life when we decide to be used by God as a beacon of hope and life to a lost world. It is God's spirit who embeds courage within us as we trust that God will use us to extend the message of the kingdom to the lost.

JEZREEL VALLEY

There are not too many places in Israel, where you can stand and consider the vast number of historical events that occurred over the span of thousands of years.

Relatively spacious in size, this prominent valley lies in the heart of Israel, and has played a significant role in history over the millennia. Welcome to an area given to the Tribe of Joseph. Welcome to Israel's breadbasket and home to its most fertile farmland. Welcome to the flat, rich plain of the Jezreel Valley!



DID YOU KNOW: Seeds have the potential for miracles. Each one is filled with the potential for life, growth, and fruitfulness. It is all there in the seed, everything it will become, the plant, the flower, the tree. It is all there inside the shell. Nothing happens until the seed is planted and all its potential stays unrealized. But when we take the seed and plant it in the soil, everything changes. The seed becomes one with the earth. The shell opens and the life inside the seed joins itself to the soil around it. It puts out roots and draws in life from the earth. The plan is activated, the promise is unlocked, and the potential becomes a reality.

The Bible refers to the Word of God as a seed. And every seed, every word has a potential miracle. And as is a seed, so is the Word of God. Each Word has the potential to produce life, growth, fruitfulness, and a miracle. It is all there inside the seed, inside the Word. But if the Word stays on the pages and is never sown into the soil of our hearts, then its life stays unlocked, unrealized. You need to sow the Word into every situation of your life and let it become one with that soil... the soil of your heart, your thoughts, your emotions, your life. For when the Word becomes one with your life, then its shell will break open, its plan will be activated, its promise unlocked, its life released, and its miracle begins.

TODAY: Take a seed from the Word of God and plant it into your heart so its promise, its potential will be

unlocked and bear its fruit in your life.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The *Plain of Jezreel*, or simply the *Jezreel Valley*, took its name from one of the most important cities which flourished there during the Biblical period. Its name means “**God sows**” in Hebrew. The valley was known for its agricultural opportunities. The narrative concerning Naboth’s vineyard in the town of “Jezreel” (located on the southern edge of the valley) describes Ahab’s jealousy over Naboth’s abundance (**1 Kings 21:1-16**). The Bible also refers to the valley’s wheat harvest in the account of Shunamite’s son being overcome by heat stroke and Elisha raising him from the dead (**2 Kings 4:18-37**).



The valley extends across the breadth of the country, between Mt. Carmel, Mount Gilboa and the Hills of Lower Galilee. The River Kishon flows through its whole length to the Mediterranean Sea. From early times the valley was of the utmost importance to communications between the coast and the countries to the north and east. Fortified cities of Megiddo, Tannach, Ibleam, and BethShean were built in order to guard the mountain passes leading into and from the valley.

Some of the greatest battles in Biblical history took place here, including the battle between Deborah and Sisera (**Judges 4-5**); the battle between Gideon and the Midianites (**Judges 7**), the battle between Saul and the Philistines (**1 Sam. 29 and 31**), and the battle between Josiah and Pharaoh Necho (**II Kgs. 23:29-30**).

In the Persian Period, the Jezreel Valley was part of the satrapy of Samaria. In the Hellenistic Period, the Ptolemies had large estates on the fertile plain. The Valley was conquered by the Maccabees and later formed part of Herod’s kingdom.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES (to the Valley and other surrounding sites)

1. Jezreel Valley

Jezreel means “**God sows**.” Thus, it should be no surprise that this valley is home to some of the most fertile farmland in Israel. Laurence Oliphant— British author, international traveler, and diplomat— eloquently described the valley in 1887 as “a huge green lake of waving wheat with its village-crowned mounds rising from it like islands.” Rich in natural springs, this “breadbasket” supplies local needs and produces enough for export. This is Israel’s heartland. It’s no wonder that Ahab and Jezebel wanted Naboth’s land located in this valley.

In ancient times, this valley was also known as the Plain of Esdraelon. The central part is usually referred to as the Jezreel Valley and the southwest portion is known as the Valley of Megiddo (Armageddon).



DID YOU KNOW: that Ezekiel prophesied God would take what seemed IMPOSSIBLE and make it POSSIBLE?

When the Jews started returning to the land of Israel in the 1890s, they did not find a land “flowing with milk and honey” as recorded in the bible, but a desolate barren land.

The Jezreel valley was a swamp and a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which spread the disease of malaria, and made it uninhabitable for centuries.

The people began draining the swamp by planting eucalyptus trees imported from Australia around the perimeter. These trees were selected because of their reputation for absorbing large amounts of water. Canals were dug to assist in draining the water to the Mediterranean Sea.

Pioneers began replanting the forests that were decimated for thousands of years by conquering nations. The Jewish National Fund (JNF) was organized to help reclaim the land. As of today, they have planted over 250 million trees and built 180 dams and reservoirs and established more than 1,000 parks throughout Israel.

Today the Jezreel Valley is the greenest area in all of Israel with crops producing per acres some of the highest yields of any land in the world. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy Ezekiel spoke some 2,600 years ago:

“The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. They will

say, “This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.” (**Ezekiel 36:34-35**)

TODAY: Don't allow your eyes to govern your sight. Your vision must be fueled by faith as God takes what many believe is IMPOSSIBLE only to make it POSSIBLE!

Jezreel Valley in the Bible: This valley has seen many battles.

- Here, Joshua defeated the Canaanites and allotted the land to Issachar.
- Here, the Midianites, Amalakites, and other eastern people were allowed to harass and oppress God's people for seven long years.
- Here, under a tree in the city of Ophrah, Gideon heard the angel of the Lord say, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior” (**Judges 6: 11-12**).
- Here at the spring of Harod, Gideon's warriors took their pass-or-fail drinking test, which reduced their number from 10,000 to 300 (**Judges 7**). But God gave the 300 a decisive advantage, for it was in this valley that those 300 men, armed with trumpets, empty jars, and torches, saw the Almighty One, the One true God, win the impossible victory for them.
- Also here in the Jezreel Valley, Saul and his army camped in preparation for their battle with the Philistines who had stationed themselves across the Harod Valley near Shunem (**1 Samuel 28: 4**).



- And on Mount Gilboa, Saul and his three sons died (**1 Samuel 28-31**).

- Many battles have been fought on this plain, but it is still best known for the battle that is yet to come... the Battle of Armageddon.

a. **Joshua 17:16** And the children of Joseph said, “*The hill is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Bethshean and its towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel.*”

b. **Judges 6:33** Gideon and his men camp in the valley of Jezreel.

2. Kishon River

Kishon, from the Hebrew word pronounced *kee-shone*, meaning *winding*, is the name given to a stream in northern Israel that originates around Mount Tabor and Mount Gilboa and flows westward through the plains of Esdraelon and the Jezreel Valley to the Mediterranean Sea, where it enters the sea near Mount Carmel. While relatively modest in size during much of the year, during the seasonal winter rains the stream can become a swollen river, just as it did in ancient times e.g. "the torrent Kishon swept them away, the onrushing torrent, the torrent Kishon" (**Judges 5:21**).

The Kishon in Bible History

The Kishon is mentioned in the Old Testament involving victories of Israel under Deborah against the Canaanites, and of Elijah over the prophets of Baal. It isn't mentioned specifically by name in the New Testament, however Jesus Christ would have been very well familiar with it, while He lived in Nazareth which is just north of the Kishon, and during His journeys south to Jerusalem.

Deborah's defeat of Sisera:

- a. "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment."

"She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his 900 chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" (**Judges 4:4-7 RSV**)

"Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the men who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the river Kishon. And Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which The Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not The Lord go out before you?" "So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. And The Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak at the edge of the sword; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot." (**Judges 4:13-15 RSV**)

Deborah's song: "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river of Kishon."

- b. Elijah and the prophets of Baal, which must have occurred during the drier season, since the Kishon is referred to as a "brook," unlike other references for other times of year when it is referred to as a "river" or "torrent":

"And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O Lord, art God, and that Thou hast turned their hearts back."

"Then the fire of The Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God; The Lord, he is God."

"And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and killed them there." (**1 Kings 18:36-40 RSV**)

3. Mt. Moreh

Located between the Mt. Tabor and Mt. Gilboa; it is the first place that the Bible names when Abram (later: Abraham) comes from his native country with his wife and family. God appears to him in the plains of Moreh, and he is told to build an altar to commemorate the event of arriving in the Promised Land on a mountain near Shechem (**Genesis 12 5-8**)

- a. **Gen. 12:6** Abraham passes through to the *plain of Moreh*.



b. **Judges 7:1f** The Midianites battle Gideon and his 300 men. The Midianites are to the north of Gideon by the hill of Moreh.

4. Mt. Tabor

Mount Tabor sits on the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley. It is 11 miles from the west shore of the Sea of Galilee. It rises 1,850 feet above sea level and is located about six miles E of Nazareth. Shaped like an inverted bowl, this symmetrical mound of limestone is on the northeastern part of the plain of Esdraelon. The Via Maris passed by Mount Tabor through the Jezreel Valley going north into Damascus. The landscape is covered with oaks and lush vegetation, making it ideal for the cattle to graze.

The tribes of Israel gathered here for battle against the Canaanites during the period of the Judges. Barak, at the command of Deborah, gathered his forces on Tabor and descended thence with "ten thousand men" into the plain, conquering Sisera on the banks of the Kishon river (Judges 4:6-15). Here also the brothers of Gideon were slain by Zebah and Zalmunna (Judges 8:18-19).

Some believe this to be the place of the transfiguration of Jesus. Churches have been built on this location commemorating the event since the times of the early Church. The gospels place the story of Peter's confession some forty-five miles northwest of Mount Tabor, in the region of Caesarea Philippi (Mathew 16). The city of Caesarea Philippi sat at the base of lofty Mount Hermon, the highest peak in Israel. Mount Tabor stands some fifty miles away, back in the territory of Herod Antipas. The geography of the story suggests the heights of Mount Hermon as the most likely candidate for the location. This does not imply that the Master brought His disciples to the peaks of Mount Hermon. To climb to the top of Hermon would be a serious Alpine ascent, occupying an entire



day, scrambling up the slopes like mountain climbers. More likely, Jesus took His disciples onto one of the surrounding ridges or partially up one of the slopes of Hermon.

Mount Hermon already has strong association with the blessing of God. Psalm 133 connected the “dew of Hermon” with unity, blessing and the anointing. The mountain’s remote location afforded the Master a private location to bring His disciples; its magnificent grandeur and awe-inspiring heights provided the appropriate, heavenly-Sinai environment. Ultimately, it does not matter where the transfiguration occurred. The important thing is that it testified to the coming kingdom and the splendor of our King.

Today there are two Christian monasteries on Mt. Tabor; one is Greek Orthodox and the other is Roman Catholic.

Mount Tabor in the Bible

This mountain is first mentioned in Joshua 19:22 as part of the boundary of Issachar’s land and the border of three tribes: Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali. Mt. Tabor is next mentioned in the book of Judges where Deborah the prophetess summoned Barak of the tribe of Naphtali and gave him God’s command:

“Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor.” (**Judges 4:6**)

As promised by God, through Deborah the Canaanites were destroyed. Gideon named Mt. Tabor as the site of his brothers’ death at the hands of the Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna (**Judges 8: 18**). And, if Origen and the bishop of Jerusalem figured correctly, Mt. Tabor may actually be the “high mountain” where Christ was transfigured. As believers we talk about having “mountaintop” experiences in our spiritual journey with the Lord , but this was literally a mountaintop experience. Notice Peter’s reaction in the passage; he wanted to pitch some tents and stay there forever, but that was not God’s plan for Peter and it probably will not be His plan for us.

In the Bible:

- Judges 19:12,22,34
- Mount Tabor is on the boundary of Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali; 1 Chr. 6:77.
- Mount Tabor is a city for the Levites; Judges 4:6,12-16.
- Deborah and Barak organized their army on Mount Tabor to face Jabin, king of Hazor led by General Sisera; Judges 8:18-21.
- Gideon killed the leaders of the Midianites because they had killed Gideon’s brothers on Mount Tabor; Psalm 89:12.
- Mount Tabor used to express God’s great creation; Jeremiah compares Nebuchadnezzar’s greatness to the great height of Mount Tabor Jer. 46:18.

The Transfiguration—“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ² and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” ⁶ And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” ⁸ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹ Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.” (**Matthew 17:1-9**)



DID YOU KNOW: Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles is a tremendous time of Celebration? During the festival the people of Israel would go up to Jerusalem to give thanks to God for His blessings, for the fruit of their harvests, the produce of their fields, for His provisions, His faithfulness, and for the gift of His protection.



And so the Feast of Tabernacles is filled with celebration, praises, thanksgiving, dancing, and joy. In fact, the very command that ordained the feast states (**Leviticus 23**); "You shall be altogether joyful." So great was this celebration that it was simply known as the festival. Tabernacles is the feast of joy.

It comes in the autumn, the end of the year, with Tabernacles being the last feast of the year. It's the greatest celebration and it comes at the end.

What does that reveal?

In the world, the greatest things come at the beginning. Everything starts out young, and then gets older and older. In the world, the celebration comes at the beginning. Then it fades away, ultimately ending in death. But the Feast of Tabernacles reveals that in the Kingdom of God, it's the opposite. The greatest celebration comes at the end. So, if you live in God's power, you don't move from life to death, but from death to life.

The Feast of Tabernacles also reveal that the greatest joy comes at the end? The joys of the world come at the beginning. They're fleeting. They grow old and pass away. The joys of sin lead to sorrow. The laughter of youth leads to tears of mourning. But in God, the greatest joy comes at the end. In other words, the ways of God all lead in the end to joy. Even that which seems hard for the moment, the way of sacrifice, self-control, and righteousness, in the long run it all lead to joy. God's calendar ends with the Feast of Tabernacles, and those who walk in His ways end up altogether joyful. For the ways of God all lead to joy.

TODAY: allow your faith to grow strong in the joy of the Lord. And remember, the Lord has saved the best for last!!!

INTERESTING NOTE: During the Feast of Tabernacles, Jews would build a temporary hut (Booth) out of small trees and branches and spend time outdoors as a reminder that their forefathers dwelt in tents in the wilderness. The Greek word for tabernacles is *skene*, which refers to a tent or hut. **Why would Peter suggest building three tabernacles?** It is very possible that the transfiguration occurred during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot, which in the context makes sense.



5. Jezreel

Jezreel, from the Hebrew word pronounced *yiz-reh-ale*, meaning *God will sow*, was a northern city of Israel within the allotted territory of the tribe of Issachar. The Valley of Jezreel, named after the city, marked the boundary between Samaria to the south and Galilee to the north. Megiddo and the Plain of Megiddo, also known as the Plain of Esdraelon, are just to the west of Jezreel. Some of the kings resided in Jezreel, most notably Ahab.

- a. **I Sam. 29:1** The Israelites are camped near Jezreel before the Philistines move north.
- b. **I Kings. 18:45** After Elijah kills the prophets of Baal, Ahab rides to Jezreel.
- c. **I Kings. 21:1** Naboth, the Jezreelite, has a vineyard close to the palace of Ahab. Jezebel tricks Naboth and he is killed. As a consequence, a prophetic word is said, "*The dogs will eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.*"
- d. **II Kings. 10:1** Jehu orders the servants in Samaria to kill the 70 sons of Ahab. After they do, they bring their heads to the gate of Jezreel and lay them in two heaps.

6. Shunem

Shunem, a town in the territory of Issachar named with Jezreel (**Josh 19:18**), was 5 miles south of Mt. Tabor. Before the battle of Gilboa the Philistines pitched their camp here. They and the army of Saul, stationed on Gilboa, were in full view of each other (**1 Sam 28:4**). It was the scene of the touching story recorded in **2 Ki 4:8-37**, in which the prophet Elisha raises to life the son of the Shunammite woman.

7. Nain

Nain, meaning *pleasant*, or *green pastures*, was a town in Galilee southeast of Nazareth and Mount Tabor, and southwest of the Sea of Galilee. Nain is mentioned specifically only once in the Bible, however it involved a major event. Nain is located only a short distance from Shunem, where a surprisingly similar event is documented. Perhaps that is why the mourners at Nain responded to the miracle performed by Jesus by crying "A great prophet has risen up among us!" (**Luke 7:16**), associating Jesus with the biblical prophet Elisha.

The Miracle at Nain

After healing a centurion's slave at Capernaum, Jesus travelled south, followed by a growing multitude, and arrived at Nain where He raised a widow's son from the dead: "After He had ended all His sayings in the hearing of the people He entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a slave who was dear to him, who was sick and at the point of death. When he heard of Jesus, he sent to Him elders of the Jews, asking Him to come and heal his slave. And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he built us our Synagogue." And Jesus went with them."

"When He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have You come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to You. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."

"When Jesus heard this He marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well."

"Soon afterward He went to a city called Nain, and His disciples and a great crowd went with Him. As He drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."

"And He came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother."

"Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited His people!" And this report concerning Him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country" (**Luke 7:1-17**).



DID YOU KNOW: What is the key to being fruitful in God? What causes some to become strong in the kingdom while others struggle?"

The answer can be found in the part of a plant we do not see. The hidden part, yet it is the most important part. When we look at a tree, we never see the whole tree. We just see what

grows above the earth. The most important part is unseen, growing downward into the earth. From the roots it receives from the soil water, minerals, and its nourishment. Without the roots, the tree ceases to exist. And if its roots are shallow or planted in weak soil, the tree and its fruits will eventually wither away. A tree's **FRUITFULNESS** can never exceed its **ROOTFULNESS**.

So, to apply this to our lives, in God, our life is like a tree. There are two parts to our existence, the part that is visible to everyone and the hidden part that no one can see. Jesus teaches in **Matthew 13** about the parable of the sower and that soil and roots determine our fruits. So, what exactly are the roots in our lives? They are our inner life with God, our faith, our devotion, our love, our communion, our time with Him in prayer expressing what is in our heart. No one can see it, but it is the most critical part, the part by which we receive spiritual life and nourishment from the soil our lives are planted in. It causes the rest of our life to grow and bear fruit. If our roots are shallow and not planted in good soil, the fruits of our lives in God will wither away. Our fruitfulness in God will always be directly proportionate to your rootfulness in God.



This roman mile marker is from the city of Capernaum in Galilee inscribed with the words "VIA MARIS" or "way of the sea," a main travel and trade route through ancient Israel.

Sheresh in the Hebrew language is the word for root, and it is linked to deepness or depth. So, if we want to become great in God, we must become deep in God, by strengthening our roots. Make it your life's goal to grow deeper in the hidden and secret places of your life with God to bear much fruit. As it is written in (**Proverbs 12:12**), "The root of the righteous will bear fruit."

TODAY: Focus on strengthening your roots, going deeper in God's presence, deeper in receiving the nutrients of His word in your life. And from those roots **Psalm 1:3** declares, you will FLOURISH!!!

Via Maris – ("the way of the sea")

Aside from its agricultural significance, the Jezreel Valley was an important thoroughfare even in ancient times as it presented an easy route from the ocean in the west to the mountains east. This route connects three major north-south trade routes through Israel, connecting Egypt in the south with Turkey, Syria, and Mesopotamia to the north.

The **King's Highway** ran east of the Jordan River. The **Ridge Route** ran on top of a range of low mountains through the middle of Israel between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea.

The Coastal Highway or the **Via Maris** (as it was known under the Roman Empire) ran along the Mediterranean coast.

The Via Maris ran from Egypt in the south along the coast up to Megiddo in Israel where it split into two branches. The western coastal branch continued along the coast, while the eastern inland branch went through Galilee to Magdala on the Sea of Galilee and then on to Damascus where it crossed the King's Highway. The inland branch was also known as the Great Trunk Road and was the busier of the two branches of the Via Maris.

The Via Maris trade route probably goes back at least to the time of Abraham 4,000 years ago. Abraham and Isaac probably used it when they traveled back and forth to Egypt. The Midianite traders on their way to Egypt (who bought Joseph from his brothers) were probably on the Via Maris. The Via Maris runs near Dothan where Joseph found his brothers and was sold to the Midianites by them. (Genesis 37:15-28)

One of Isaiah's Messianic prophecies (around 700 BC) describes the location of Zebulun and Naphtali as "*by the Way of the Sea*" or the Via Maris (Isaiah 9:1). The inland branch of the Via Maris ran right through Zebulun and Naphtali.

Matthew 4:12-16 reports that Jesus' move from Nazareth to Capernaum fulfilled this prophecy. Capernaum was in Naphtali near the Via Maris.

Joseph and Mary probably escaped to Egypt along either the Via Maris or the King's Highway. Joseph surely used the Via Maris when he returned and settled in Nazareth (Matthew 2:13-14, 19-23).

When Saul journeyed from Jerusalem to persecute Christians, he probably took the Ridge Route from Jerusalem to the inland Via Maris and then on to Damascus by the Via Maris where he met Jesus as he neared Damascus (Acts 9:1-9).

The Kings Highway

This north-south trading route ran south along the plateau of the mountains east of the Jordan/arava rift valley, from Damascus into the Saudi Arabian peninsula, the Hejaz, via Rabbath-ammon, modern-day Amman. Traders coming up with their exotic spices who wanted to take their goods to the Mediterranean coast for export would travel on a major east-west trade route via the Beit Shean Valley into the Valley of Megiddo.

Mount Gilboa



Mount Gilboa is on the southeastern side of the Jezreel Valley. It marks the north edge of Manasseh's territory and the southern edge of Issachar. It was a favored spot for militaries to view the Jezreel Valley and watch for other invading armies. King Saul felt forced to commit suicide on these slopes when facing certain defeat by the Philistines. In light of Saul and Jonathan's deaths, David cursed the mountain: "O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings" (2 Sam 1:21).

a. **I Sam. 28:4** With the Philistines at Shunem and Saul and Israelites at Gilboa, Saul consults a witch at Endor.

b. **I Sam. 31:1-5** The Philistines conquer the Israelites, Saul is wounded, and dies on Mt. Gilboa. His body is taken and hung on the walls of



Beth Shean.



c. **Judges 7** Gideon chooses his 300 men at the base of Mount Gilboa at the Springs of Harod.

Gideon's Spring

From biblical times to more recent history this one spot has been a place where armies gathered prior to battle, where great battles were fought, and where an army in the making trained.

The Spring of Harod flows from Gideon's Cave. This is the place where Gideon gathered his men before fighting the Midianites. Judges 7:1 describes the scene, "Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people

that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley." It was here that Gideon administered the 'water test' as a way of choosing the warriors for the coming battle (**Judges 7:4-7**).

Today it is a nature reserve with the second largest pool in Israel, sprawling lawns, a picnic area, and great looming eucalyptus trees.

(**Judges 7:1**) With the Midianites dwelling in the Jezreel Valley, Gideon is camping at the Spring of Harod. He reduces his army here to 300 men.

Mt. Carmel

Carmel is a mountainous ridge extending about twenty miles along the Mediterranean Sea and turning southeastward into the Jezreel Valley. Its greatest width at the southeast is thirteen miles; its highest point 1,742 feet. The ridge is made of the same Cenomanian limestone as makes up the central mountain range of Palestine. Haifa, located on Carmel's northwestern corner, contains harbors for ships passing in the ocean; several Jewish



settlements are also nestled in Mount Carmel's slopes, and two large Druze villages. (See the glossary of terms for more about the Druze religion) The plain of Sharon extends to the south.



Mt. Carmel's name comes from the Hebrew word, Karem El, which means "God's vineyard." Even today it's pretty easy to see why.

In a mostly barren and arid land, this mountain appears positively lush and overgrown. Archaeologists have discovered ancient wine and olive oil presses here, which show the agricultural roots of this place. There would have been olive groves and vineyards dotting all across the mountainside. It was one of the most beautiful and fertile areas in Israel, which explains why it is used in Scripture as a symbol of beauty (**Isaiah 33:9; 35:2**).

In ancient and modern times, Mt. Carmel had another role. It acted as a border and a barricade. In Joshua 19: 26, this four -to-five-mile wide range was used as the western boundary of the land allotted to Asher. But this 1,500-foot high limestone mountain range also helped to keep out unwanted intruders. Battles between Egyptians and Canaanites, and British and Ottoman Turks occurred here and in the Jezreel Valley below.

In ancient times oak trees, olive groves, and vineyards grew around Mt. Carmel, which explains why it is known for its beauty and fertility (**Isaiah 33:9; 35:2**). Robbers and outcasts used this area as a hiding place because of the many dense wild plants and gorges and caves (**Amos 9:3**). Today, Carmel is still forested, and large parts of it have been made a nature reserve. Solomon described his beloved by saying, "*Your head is as majestic as Mount Carmel*" (**Song of Solomon 7:5**), possibly comparing her hair to the thick, luxuriant foliage of Carmel.

The crowning event of Elijah's ministry took place on Mount Carmel. Elijah the prophet challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (**1 Kings 18:21**). Elijah was not the first to build a Hebrew altar on the mountain; the Bible describes him as repairing a ruined "altar of the LORD" before offering his sacrifice (1 Kings 18:30). According to tradition, that contest took place at Qeren ha-Carmel, located at 1,581 feet, overlooking the Jezreel Valley. The brook Kishon flows through that valley and around to the north of Carmel before emptying into the Bay of Acre (**1 Kings 18:40**).

Due to the caves, water and food sources, Elijah, Elisha, and Amos were all thought to have used Mt. Carmel as a refuge. In the 12th century, Carmelites founded a monastery on this mountain at the presumed site of Elijah's grotto. But without a doubt, Mt. Carmel is best known for one past event and one future event.



DID YOU KNOW: Some cities are very windy and to walk against the wind can be a real struggle. In the Hebrew language, the word for wind is **RUACH** which also means the "**SPIRIT**". In Hebrew, the Holy Spirit is the Holy Wind. So, what happens if you walk against the wind? It creates drag. It makes it harder to walk and eventually we get tired. In the same way, when we walk against the Spirit, it creates a drag on our lives. Everything we do becomes harder. It takes more energy to do less. So, when we go against the leading of the Holy Spirit, we're fighting against the Wind. We can't walk against the direction of the Spirit without getting weary and worn out.

When we live our lives surrendered to God, life becomes easier because the Holy Spirit help us to move ahead. So, when we walk against the Spirit, those decisions create drag. But if we turn around, then the wind doesn't work

against us but gives us power. If we turn, we change our course. If we yield to the Holy Spirit promptings, then the drag disappears. Then the Spirit empowers us and moves us forward to bless everything we do, and life becomes easier. So, if we walk in partnership with the Holy Spirit, life will go from being a drag to a breeze with the Wind at your back.

TODAY: is there a part of your life that you know is going against the direction of the Spirit? Today, turn around and start walking with God and allow His Spirit to empower you for the days ahead.

Mt. Carmel in the Bible

It was right here on Mt. Carmel that Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal. In 1 Kings 18: 24 we see him make his stand: “Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire— he is God!” Never much of a diplomat, Elijah turns it up a notch in verse 27 taunting the prophets of Baal about their false god: “Shout louder! Perhaps he’s deep in thought, or busy, or traveling.”

You remember the rest of the story; their god (with a little “g”) is a no-show, but Elijah’s God (with a big “G”) sends fire so fierce it licks up the sacrifice, the gallons of water, the stones and the soil. The people finally believe and follow Elijah’s orders to kill all 450 of Baal’s prophets. Elijah then climbs to the top of Mt. Carmel and prays for the Lord to send rain and end the drought. As you stand on this high place, try to picture the last verse in 1 Kings 18 with the rain pouring down, “ The power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.”

On the northern slope of Mt. Carmel is Haifa, Israel’s third largest city, but it is the southern slope that overlooks the Jezreel Valley. From this mountaintop you can see a battlefield more famous than Gettysburg and this battle hasn’t even been fought yet! To the right is the Valley of Armageddon.

Just like in Elijah’s time, many false gods have staked their claim of the high places like Mt. Carmel. The Baha’i (a religion founded in Persia in the 19th century) and Druze (an offshoot of Islam) have temples here, and the largest mosque in Israel, Mahmood Mosque, is also located on Mt. Carmel. It is sobering to stand on this mountain and know that the God who destroyed the false gods in Elijah’s time will someday return and destroy every false god once and for all.



Elijah lived 900 years before Christ. His role was to bring the Word of God to Israel. He was associated with many miracles and the power of God, and he spent his entire life serving Yahweh, the one and only Almighty God. When he left the earth, he didn’t die like many of the other prophets who were martyred. Instead, we learn that Elijah was walking down a road when suddenly a chariot of fire descended from the sky and took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind... and he was seen no more (**2 Kings 2: 1-11**).

Because of this event, an expectation grew that Elijah would return one day to usher in the final stages of the world. In fact during Passover, Jews prepare a cup and leave an empty chair for Elijah in case he returned! This helps us to understand why people thought Jesus Christ was Elijah, as seen in **Luke 9: 18-20**.

When you walk into the memorial area of Mount Carmel, you will see a statue of Elijah with his sword in the air and his foot upon one of the 450 prophets of Baal, which symbolizes the cleansing of wickedness from the land. When you gaze at this statue, please remember that even though it honors Elijah for slaughtering the 450 false prophets, the reality is that God is the one, true God and He alone was responsible for this great victory.

Additionally, perhaps the most important part of this story is that after Baal’s prophets were defeated, the Lord God Almighty brought a “heavy rain” to the land after a terrible, three and a half-year drought and famine (**1 Kings 18: 45**). This is a picture of God sending blessing, life, renewal, and restoration once men turn from their false idols and honor Him with their lives. It is an encouragement that one day, there will be a great and final battle, and the Lord will rid the world of every evil once and for all.

*“So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel” (**1 Kings 18:21**).*

*“And Elijah said unto all the people, ‘Come near unto me’. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down” (**1 Kings 18:30**).*



“And Elijah said unto them, ‘Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape’. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there” (1 Kings 18:40).

“Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries” (Song of Sol 7:5).

“The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits” (Isaiah 33:9).

“It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God” (Isaiah 35:2).

“And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence...” (Amos 9:3).



DID YOU KNOW: Saul of Tarsus hunted, arrested, and even killed many of the first followers of Jesus, but with a flash of light, on the road to Damascus, everything for him changed with just one touch from God. His experience left him blinded and the Lord then spoke to a Christian named Ananias to go to Saul. So, Ananias approached the blind persecutor, and with the touch of his hand, Saul regained his sight. Do you know what was the first thing that Saul ever saw as a follower of Jesus Christ?

In God there are no accidents or coincidences. He chose the man Ananias as the first thing Saul’s eyes would see in his new life with his new beginning. What does the name Ananias mean? It’s a translation of his real name, his Hebrew name, Khananyah. And what does that mean? "Yah" is the Name of God, and "khanan" means grace. Khananyah means the Grace of God.

So, the first thing Saul or later God would change his name to Paul, saw was the GRACE of God. And it was Khananyah who touched him and caused his blindness to be removed and allowed him to see. So, it was the grace of God, that touched his life and the grace of God that allowed him to see.

It is the grace of God that touches our lives, that removes our blindness, and allows us to truly see. Only by the grace of God can we see clearly. And the first thing we see in salvation is khananyah, the Grace of God.

And it was khananyah, that gave Saul the ability to rise and walk without condemnation, guilt or shame. He lived as a disciple, to help others, and to fulfill his true purpose in life.

And so, it is only the grace of God that gives us the ability to walk away from the old and embrace the new. Only His grace enables us to live forgiven, to live with purpose, to help others, and to fulfill our calling. And that's why Khananyah was the first thing Saul, in his new life, was able to see, because true life is found when we see ourselves and others through the grace of God. It is God's Grace that saves those who have no reason or right to be saved. Everything begins by seeing khananyah. We must never move away from that grace, or from seeing it, for without khananyah, we become blind. Every good thing we do comes from God's grace. Everything begins, and is fulfilled, in khananyah, the GRACE of God.



TODAY: look to see khananyah, the grace of God. Follow it, dwell in it, act in it, and let everything flow out of it.

Megiddo

“Kings came, they fought; the kings of Canaan fought at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo, but they carried off no silver.” (**Judges 5:19**)

Tel Megiddo means the “**hill or mound of Megiddo.**” This hill was formed over a period of about 5,000 years (1,000 years before Abraham). From around 6000 BC until 500 BC, Megiddo was destroyed and rebuilt over and over again. In fact, archaeologists believe that there have been 22 cities built on this site, each one piled right on top of the rubble left by the others. With each rebuilding, the city got a little higher.

Located west of Jordan at the edge of the fertile Jezreel Valley, this important city guarded the main pass of the International Coastal Highway leading into the valley. This strategic position made Megiddo one of the most important commercial and military centers of Palestine from 2000 to early 1000 B.C. Megiddo was the scene of many Old Testament battles. Great military men, such as King Thutmose III of Egypt (15th century B.C.), defeated a coalition of Canaanite kings at Megiddo. It is also the place where king Ahaziah (**2 Kings 9:27**) and Josiah (**2 Kings 23:29-30**) died.



Although he did not take the city, Joshua defeated the king of Megiddo at the time of the Israelite conquest of Canaan (**Joshua 12:21**). The land was later divided among the tribes of Israel and Megiddo was assigned to Manasseh. However, they could not conquer it from the Canaanites (**Joshua 17:11-12; Judges 1:27**). Deborah and Barak defeated the forces of Hazor under the command of Sisera near Megiddo, but they did not take the city either (**Judges 4:15; Judges 5:19**). King David might have conquered the land as part of his program for establishing the kingdom. By the time of King Solomon, Megiddo served as the headquarters of one of his twelve administrative regions (**1 Kings 4:12**). Later, Solomon rebuilt the city in order to serve as a location of one of his chariot and garrison cities (**1 Kings 9:15-19**).

Megiddo has always been a strategic place. It was one of three cities that provided guarded access to the Plain of Megiddo. Several major trade routes passed through Megiddo including the main route between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Whoever controlled Megiddo also controlled the traffic and trade. This brought great wealth and military power, but it also brought war— and lots of it. This broad plain has seen more than 100 battles, from Egyptians to Assyrians to Israelites to Napoleon.

Four of the more famous battles are:

The Battle of Megiddo in the 15th century BC was fought between the armies of the Egyptian pharaoh Thutmose III and a large Canaanite coalition led by the rulers of Megiddo and Kadesh. This is the first documented battle in recorded history. Think of all the wars that have ever been waged—the Battle of Megiddo was the earliest ever written about.

Megiddo was destroyed in the military campaign of Pharaoh Shishak in 926 BC, and rebuilt during the reign of Ahab, king of Israel (c. 874-852 BC) who made it a royal “chariot city.”

- Archeologists estimate that the stables could accommodate 450 horses and dozens of battle chariots.
- Solomon’s gate into the city hung from fortress walls that were 11 feet thick with room for barracks and storage within.



The Battle of Megiddo in 609 BC was fought between Egypt and the Kingdom of Judah, in which King Josiah fell. (**2 Kings 23: 29-30**)

The Battle of Megiddo in 1918 was fought during World War I between Allied troops, led by General Edmund Allenby, and the defending Ottoman army.

On top of Megiddo, you will see a most impressive engineering feat, which was designed to protect the city’s water source during a siege. Started by Solomon as a reservoir, Ahab made it more complex by having a **subterranean tunnel cut** (pictured right), 80 feet deep and then 230 feet long, connecting the city to springs outside the city wall. The tunnel was cut from both ends simultaneously, and the engineering was so precise that when they met in the middle, they were only off by 12 inches. Finally, a thick wall covered by earth was built to hide the original entrance to the cave from which the spring came.



You will be given the opportunity to walk down the stairs that lead to the tunnel, and it’s good to note beforehand that there are many steps.

Thankfully, most are descending, but make sure you’re in good shape for the short trek. After you exit the tunnel, the tour bus will be there to pick you up!

Right: A limestone **manger** sets next to stone hitching posts where Ahab’s (Solomon’s) stables remain.



Megiddo in the Bible

The city was originally Canaanite; in fact, the remains of a Canaanite worship center and its 5,000-year-old altar are still visible in the eastern part of the city. The Egyptian pharaoh Thutmose III took Megiddo from the Canaanites in 1470 BC and said, “The capturing of Megiddo is the capturing of a thousand cities.” This conquest further established Egyptian presence and control of the land before the conquest under Joshua.

After the conquest and settling of the land, Megiddo became one of the major cities in the area that the tribe of Manasseh was unable to completely conquer. Eventually, God used Deborah from the hill country of Samaria and Barak from Kedesh to overcome the Canaanites of the region (**Judges 4:13-15; 5:19-25**).

Solomon fortified Megiddo, making it his stronghold to ensure his control of the territory (**1 Kings 9: 15-16**). After Solomon’s death, however, Shishak of Egypt destroyed Megiddo and erected a stone pillar on the site to mark his victory (**1 Kings 14:25-28**). Later, in 874-853 BC, Ahab rebuilt the city in grand style. It was at Megiddo that Pharaoh Neco killed King Josiah in battle (**2 Kings 23:29-30**).

Megiddo served as the seat of the royal governor during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel (**2 Kings 14: 23**). In the early 1900s a seal was found bearing the inscription “to Shema, servant of Jeroboam.” During the rebellion of Jehu, King Ahaziah of Judah fled to Megiddo and died there of his wounds (**2 Kings 9: 27**).

Megiddo was finally conquered and destroyed in 732 BC during the campaign of Tiglath Pileser III, king of Assyria, against the Kingdom of Israel (**2 Kings 15: 29**). This is Megiddo’s past, but Armageddon is Megiddo’s future.

The word “**Armageddon**” is a derivative of the Hebrew word Megiddo, and many people believe that the final battle on earth will happen right here. It will be a culmination of the tension and struggle we have experienced since sin was ushered into the world— marked by intense, spiritual warfare like we have never seen before. Just look at how John describes the forces that oppose God as they prepare for this terrible time to come: “They are spirits of demons performing



miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty ...Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.” (Revelation 16:12-16)

However, other Scriptures suggest that this plain is not the site of the final conflict, but is instead a staging ground where the enemies of God will gather before they attack. For instance, Zechariah predicts that just before the Messiah’s return, Gentile nations will come against Jerusalem to destroy it (Zechariah 12: 1-9). Joel also predicts this attack on Jerusalem, referring to “multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision” (Joel 3: 1-17). The climax of this attack will be Christ’s return, when He will deliver the repentant remnant of Israel (Revelation 14).

There have been many prophecies and interpretations about the events that will unfold during the Battle of Armageddon , as described in the book of Revelation. However, because Revelation was written in Apocrypha (or “coded”) language, no one knows for certain the details of that day except for Almighty God. When engulfed in curiosity or simply desiring to discover truth, it’s always best to read the Scriptures and to ask God to give you an understanding of His Word.

As you read through these passages there are several intriguing details:

First, Revelation 9:16 tells us that this final confrontation between good and evil, light and dark, God and those who oppose Him, will involve an army of 200 million soldiers. Some scholars argue that an army of that size today could only come from China.



**Gate built by
King Solomon**

Second, Revelation 14:20 reveals that the blood will flow as high as a horse’s bridle, for a distance of 200 miles. The Valley of Armageddon is only 14 miles wide and 20 miles long.

Opinions are varied and numerous, but one must note that the Scriptures have one thing in common; there is coming a day of ultimate judgment when Jesus Christ returns. So, instead of becoming consumed with trying to discover and decode the details of the battle, it is better to ask yourself if you are ready for Jesus’ return. According to Acts 1:7-8, our Lord commands us not to be concerned about the dates

and details of His return, but to be ready ...and to share the Gospel with as many people as possible before He returns. Therefore, our concern should not be about the battle in this valley at the base of Megiddo, but our minds should be focused on the battle in our heart and in the hearts of others, and whether or not we’re prepared spiritually for the coming Day of Judgment.

“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” “But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5: 1-9)

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and



godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” (2 Peter 3:9-14)

“The king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one” (Josh 12:21)

“And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher Bethshean and her towns...and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even three countries” (Josh 17:11-12).

“Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and her towns...nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land” (Judges 1:27).

“And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet” (Judges 4:15).

“The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money” (Judges 5:19).

“Baana the son of Ahilud; to him pertained Taanach and Megiddo, and all Bethshean...” (1 Kings 4:12).

“And this is the reason of the levy which King Solomon raised; for to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer” (1 Kings 9:15).

“But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house....And he fled to Megiddo, and died there” (2 Kings 9:27).

“In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and King Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him” (2 Kings 23:29).

“In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon” (Zech 12:11).

“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (Rev 16:16).

Personal Reflections: Standing at the northern edge of the city gives you a view of the entire Jezreel Valley, the location of many battles during biblical days. Looking directly across the valley, you can see Nazareth, Cana, Mt. Gilboa and Mt. Tabor, the location where Deborah and Barak defeated the armies of Sisera (Judges 3-4). You can also see the Hill of Moreh, the very place where Gideon defeated the armies of the Midianites (Judges 6-7). To the west the Mediterranean Sea and Mt. Carmel can be seen, a mountain range on which Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18). Virtually in every direction you look the battles of the past come alive.

It is in this very spot that the final battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16) will take place and the victory will be given through the very hand of God. This victory will be marked by Jesus, being hailed as King of kings and Lord

of lords. Upon his return, Jesus will be the one to fulfill the predictions of the Hebrew Scriptures, as the whole world recognizes Him as King. Shouts of praise and glory will be lifted high. As much as the gate structures of Megiddo's ancient past may impress us, how much more will the Lord's coming victory impress all who testify to His greatness! Indeed, we will all shout aloud:

"Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle." (Psalm 24:7-8)

Megiddo and its surrounding valley have seen more than their share of fighting and bloodshed. God has intervened on behalf of His people many times throughout biblical history. That is what God does! In the last days, God will once again step into history and bring victory. Only God knows when that will happen. In the meantime, those who follow Christ have the confidence to know that whatever battles they may personally fight, our God (Emmanuel) is with us and will move on our behalf.

Cana

Cana was a village in Galilee, located four miles northwest of Nazareth and was located on a main trade route between Sepporis and Tiberias.



Right: Greek Orthodox Church of the Marriage Feast, inside are large **stone jars** (pictured right) which are believed to be the original water pots used during the miracle at Cana.

Jesus performed His first miracles in Cana. He changed the water into wine (**John 2:1, 11**) and healed an official's son who lived in Capernaum (**John 4:46-50**). Nathanael, one of Jesus' disciples, and possibly Simon came from Cana (**John 21:2**).

Cana was made headquarters for defending Galilee against the Romans during the first Jewish revolt, which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. After this destruction, the town became the seat of the priestly family of Eliashib. John's Gospel refers to it as "Cana of Galilee," in order to distinguish it from Kanah, located near Tyre (**Joshua 19:28**). Since Byzantine and medieval times, the traditional site of Cana has been Kefar Kana, about four miles east of Nazareth on the main road from Nazareth to Tiberias. However, contemporary scholars have almost unanimously settled on Khirbet Kana as the site of New Testament Cana. This site is located eight miles north of Nazareth on the northern edge of the Battuf Plain. To this day it is called Cana of Galilee by the Arabs of the region. Pottery from the Hebrew monarchy period, as well as from Hellenistic, Roman, Arabic, and Crusader times, has been found by archeologists.



DID YOU KNOW: What is it mean to be doubly blessed? In Jewish tradition, there's a belief about Tuesdays that goes all the way back to the beginning.

When God created the world, He said "it is good" on every single day of the week, except Tuesday, the third day of the



week (Genesis 1:9-13).

On Tuesday, God said “it is good” ...twice! That’s why many Jews believe Tuesday is doubly blessed by God.

Today many important events like weddings, contracts and even peace accords in Israel are often celebrated on Tuesdays because it was God that said that day was doubly blessed.

Cana in the Bible

Just as it is nowadays, the ancient world had major, influential cities where people from miles around came to do business: Rome, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Athens. Cana was not one of them; however, as stated before, its greatest claim to fame is that shortly after being baptized in the Jordan River, **Jesus performed His very first miracle here:**

“On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied, “My time has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.” This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in Him.” (**John 2:1-11**)

It appears that Cana had no natural spring in the vicinity, so the water used in the town had to be brought from nearby cisterns, or even from Nazareth. These large stone jars would have been used to store water.

Cana’s second, important biblical mention is as follows:



Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to see him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. (**John 4:46-47**)

And finally, Cana is known as the hometown of one of the disciples, Nathanael, also known as Bartholomew. Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. (**John 21:1-3**)

A Day of Firsts!

With six large stone water jars nearby, each holding 20-30 gallons, Jesus gave his First command, “Fill the jars with water” (John 2:7). Not only do they do so, but they also draw some of the water out and take it to the master of the banquet.

The second “First” takes place when the master tastes the water, now turned into wine. His first impression was to conclude that this was the best of wines, not the diluted kind typically served after the guests had too much to drink.

The third “First” comes when Jesus reveals His glory, leading the disciples to put their faith in Him (John 2:11). It was as if this miracle was meant to provide the disciples some tangible evidence of who Jesus was. This included Nathanael, who was from this small town. Their faith needed to begin building upon an awareness of Christ’s divine status.

Nazareth

Jesus grew up in Nazareth; a small village in Galilee located seventy miles north of Jerusalem. It is first mentioned in the New Testament as the home of Mary and Joseph (**Luke 1:26-27**). Nazareth is located about 15 miles west of the Sea of Galilee and 20 miles east of the Mediterranean. Jerusalem lies about 70 miles south. It was located in the rocky limestone hills, overlooking the Jezreel Valley. It is situated on three sides of a hill. This location forms a sheltered valley with a moderate climate favorable to fruits and wildflowers. Archeologists found that the ancient town was higher on the western hill than the present village.

Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha (ancient writings not included in the Bible), Jewish writings, or the histories of Josephus. Nathanael remarked, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see” (**John 1:46**). Jesus’ public ministry began in Nazareth. He later left the village to be baptized by John in the Jordan River (**Mark 1:9**). When John was arrested, Jesus moved to Capernaum (**Matthew 4:13**). Though Jesus was often identified by his boyhood city as “Jesus of Nazareth” (**John 18:5, 7**), the New Testament records only one subsequent visit by Jesus to Nazareth. During this visit, Jesus preached in the local synagogue and claimed that Isaiah’s prophecies were coming true to the oppressed people. He was then rejected by the townspeople (**Luke 4:16-30**). Jesus’ followers were also known as “Nazarenes” (**Acts 24:5**). The angel Gabriel announced in Nazareth that Mary would bear a Son whose name would be called Jesus (**Luke 1:26**).





Special Note: This picture is a replica of a 1st century synagogue.

So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.” (**Matthew 2:21-23**)

Very little is known about Nazareth from ancient sources. It was just a small agricultural village that fell to Zebulun’s lot when boundaries were being established. Then around 700 BC, the Assyrians conquered the area and the Jews were taken off into captivity. Gentiles settled so heavily in the region that Isaiah described it as “the Galilee of the Gentiles”:

...In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles... (**Isaiah 9:1**)

It’s the rest of the prophecy, found in verses 2-9, that most of us know from Christmas services or Handel’s Messiah, “For unto us a child is born...” that explains how the region would be honored one day. Can you imagine anything less likely than this insignificant little town becoming the birthplace for the coming Messiah?

God began to set the stage around 100 BC when John Hyrcanus, as part of the Hasmonean conquest, opened up the way for Jews to begin to return from Persia and Babylon. It is likely that the whole line of David from the exiled land of Judah settled around Nazareth. Hyrcanus gave the Gentile occupiers two simple choices: convert to Judaism or leave. He was so successful that, by Jesus’ day, most in Galilee were Jewish.

Archaeological research suggests that, at the time of Jesus, the population of Nazareth was no larger than 100, which meant a lot of gossip and very little privacy. Most likely everyone knew Mary and Joseph’s story, though I doubt any of them believed it. Would you believe a young girl who came to you and said she had been impregnated by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18-20)? Nonetheless, the story is true and, just as Isaiah had prophesied; this would be Christ’s hometown. He grew up here, learned carpentry skills here, and around the age of 30, began His ministry here.



Sometime between 300 and 500 AD, a Byzantine church was built over the place where it is believed that the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary. In 1966, the Roman Catholic Church began constructing the Basilica of the Annunciation over these remains, and today it is the largest basilica in the Middle East. The Greek Orthodox Church nearby is built over the town’s water source.



DID YOU KNOW: There’s no prophet that declared that Jesus the Messiah would be a Nazarene from the city of Nazareth. But what do the prophets say of Messiah? They speak of Messiah as the branch found in **Isaiah 11:1-2**; “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord”

Why the Branch you may ask? For one, He would appear on earth in littleness, in weakness, growing up as a shoot or a sprout. He would be born among us on the genealogy, the tree of humanity. His presence on earth would then grow, becoming greater and greater and bear its fruit to the world.

In Hebrew, one of the words for branch is netzer. It's the word used by Isaiah in his prophecy of Messiah as the branch that would come forth from the line of David. The word netzer or netzeret is the Hebrew name for the place you know as Nazareth. Nazareth would mean the place of the branch or the place of the branching forth. It is the perfect name, for the place where Jesus would grow up and from where He would branch out.

Nazareth was considered a nothing place, the most obscure and unlikely of places. Then why did God choose it?



For that very reason. God loves to choose the unlikely and because it's not about Nazareth, it's about that which comes through Nazareth. In the same way, it's not about who we are. Nor does it matter how likely or unlikely, how imperfect, or sinful our life has been. For whoever receives Him, through that life, the life of God will come. And from that life He will branch out to the world. For we are each called to be His Nazareth.

TODAY: Let Jesus the Messiah's life come through your life. Let His love come through your love and your life become His branching.

Nazareth in the Bible

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and later to Joseph in Nazareth. Mary was pregnant here in this town—she may have given birth in Bethlehem, but all the scandal of her pregnancy would have been whispered about here. After a side trip to Bethlehem and then Egypt, Joseph and Mary returned and raised their family in this tightly-knit, remote, little village.

Near the beginning of His ministry, Jesus preached in His hometown synagogue and this small group of people who should have known Him best became so angry that they tried to throw Him off a cliff. Later in His ministry, Jesus returned to Nazareth, this time with His disciples (Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6). Mark says the people were astonished by His wisdom and knew about the miracles that He had performed, but sadly, instead of receiving Him they “took offense.”

“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene” (Matt. 2:23).

“And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim” (Matt 4:13).

“And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan” (Mark 1:9).

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth” (Luke 1:26).

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read” (Luke 4:16).



“And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong” (Luke 4:29).

“And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see” (John 1:46).

“They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them...” (John 18:5-7).

“For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5).

Personal Reflections: Have you ever wondered why God chooses the modest, humble things of life to accomplish His purposes here on earth? It is His prescribed way of reminding us that anything left in His hands has the potential of producing glory to God. This is one reason why God instructs His people to walk humbly with Him (**Micah 6:8**). He demonstrated this by the way He sent His son, Jesus, one born in modesty and humility in a town called Bethlehem. Who would have ever thought the Messiah would be born in a stable meant for field animals? Who would have ever imagined it would be unclean shepherds who would be the first to greet the Christ Child? Indeed, God’s ways are often not our ways.

It was a small town on the edge of the Jezreel Valley in Lower Galilee where Jesus was raised (**Matthew 2:23**). This area would be called “home” for the Savior of the world for His first 30 years. Welcome to Nazareth, a modest village not even mentioned in the listing of towns in the Talmud, but the hometown of Jesus.

Are you a person with small beginnings? If you are, don’t be disappointed or discouraged. Rather, just know that God can take your humble beginnings and offer you great possibilities to accomplish much for His Kingdom!

Although Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth was nothing special, the Savior who was raised here most certainly was. Jesus returned to his hometown only to be rejected as Messiah, Yet, Jesus came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). Offer to God your humble beginnings and begin to see the great things He can do through you!



DID YOU KNOW: the word yasha in Hebrew, means to rescue, to help, to defend, to preserve, to make free, to attain victory, to bring to safety, to heal, and to save. This word is the answer to everything. I’m sure you’re thinking, “How is it the answer to everything?” Yasha is what we spend our lives seeking for, whether we realize it or not. We all need help, we all need freedom, we all need victory, and we all, in one way or another, seek for salvation.

In Hebrew, salvation comes from yasha. From the word yasha comes the Hebrew word yeshua. Yeshua means salvation. So, in **Psalms 118:14** it is written, “He has become my salvation.” Who has become salvation? God has become our salvation. In other words, God would not only be the Creator of the universe, but He would also become our salvation. In other words, God would become our help, our defense, our preserving, our freedom, our victory, our salvation. God would become the answer to our greatest and deepest needs.

In Hebrew, God would become yeshua. But if the word yeshua means salvation, what’s the difference between saying; “God would become salvation” or “God would become yeshua?” When the name Yeshua was translated into Greek, it became Iesous. And when Iesous was translated into English, it became Jesus. Jesus is Yeshua or Yeshua is Jesus. Yeshua is the real name of the one the world knows as Jesus. So, then God will become Yeshua. God will become Jesus. And that’s exactly what the name Yeshua reveals. It means, God is my salvation.

The ancient hope was that one-day God would become our Yeshua. And so, He has. And what does Yeshua mean? It means God has become our rescue, our help, our freedom, our healing, our victory, and our salvation. God became Yeshua to become the answer to every need. So, the key is to take every need in your life and join it to that name, to Yeshua, one word and the answer to everything.

TODAY: realize Yeshua is the answer to ALL your deepest needs. Let Jesus inside your heart so your TRUE purpose for life can be experienced.

SEPPHORIS

“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.” (**Mark 6:3**)

Sepphoris, also known as Zipporis, is the traditional birthplace of Mary and is located in the center of Galilee. The area is surrounded by olive groves, pomegranate trees, grape vines, and fig trees—items often mentioned on the pages of the Bible. Though Jesus’ hometown, Nazareth, is located just four miles to the south, Sepphoris is not mentioned in the New Testament.



This site was known as “the jewel of the Galilee.” As one of the capital cities of Galilee, it was a wealthy trading center. Historian Josephus called Sepphoris “the ornament of all Galilee,” describing it as an exceptionally strong fortress. Herod Antipas chose this site in 4 BC as the capital of his government. The people of Sepphoris were so influenced by Rome that during the Jewish Revolt they supported Vespasian, the Roman emperor whose son would later destroy the Second Temple. They surrendered to the Romans to save their city from destruction and even minted coins in honor of Vespasian calling him the “peacemaker.”



Sepphoris has been rightly called “The Forgotten City.” Although commentaries and geography texts give attention to nearby Nazareth and Cana, Sepphoris is usually ignored. Though not mentioned in Scripture, it was very influential in the region where Jesus lived and ministered.

Some scholars characterize ancient Sepphoris as essentially non-Jewish, but after more than 15 years of excavating, we believe the archeological evidence indicates that the city was largely Jewish, as was Galilee in general. Large water pools identified as mikva’ot (pools used for Jewish ritual

baths) have been discovered and, coupled with the lack of pig bones during archeological digs, this reinforces this position.

The city was “perched like a bird” on a 400-foot hill overlooking the Bet Netofa Valley. Its Hebrew name, Zippori, or “bird,” refers to its lofty location and panoramic views of Lower Galilee, including Cana and Nazareth.

Sepphoris was located about midway between the Mediterranean coast and the Sea of Galilee, and was situated on the well-traveled highway that connected the Mediterranean port of Ptolemais to the Sea of Galilee.

The highlight of the city is a 4,500-seat amphitheater, built into the eastern side of the hill probably while Jesus was a teenager. Its stage was 156 feet wide and 27 feet from front to back. The people who attended this theater were sophisticated, admiring Greek and Roman plays. Traditional, conservative Jews such as Jesus and his family frowned on this sort of activity, and preferred their own Jewish culture.

In one large building there are many mosaic floors, including the Nile mosaic in the largest room. This mosaic shows the Pharos lighthouse of Alexandria, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



At the summit near the theater is a large dining room floor, which dates from around 300 AD. The building included a central triclinium, or formal dining room, with a mosaic made up of 1.5 million stones of 28 colors. The beautiful woman in the mosaic is nicknamed the “Mona Lisa of the Galilee.”

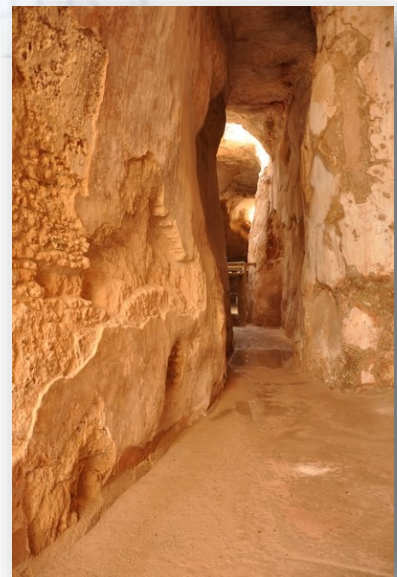
Again, although Sepphoris is not mentioned in the Bible, the importance of this city for believers is the fact that it was just four miles from Nazareth. During Jesus’ early years, Herod Antipas was restoring, developing, and fortifying Sepphoris. It served as his principle residence and the administrative center of Galilee until he built Tiberias in 18-20 AD.

Also, according to tradition, Mary’s parents, Joachim and Anna, lived in Sepphoris. If true, this busy trading center was Mary’s hometown. Who knows, maybe Joseph, a young craftsman from Nazareth, met Mary while working in the city. Later, as Jesus was growing up, his grandparents would live just one hour away. It’s safe to conclude that Jesus would have been familiar with this town.

Being only a good stretch of the leg from Nazareth, and Jesus certainly knew the town. In fact, it is quite probable that Joseph and his young son Jesus worked there - they were builders, and Sepphoris was one of King Herod's great building projects when Jesus was a boy. Since Nazareth was only a small village and work would have been limited if not downright scarce, Joseph may have helped build the beautiful theater there.

Rising 400 feet above the rolling terrain of central Galilee, the acropolis at Sepphoris is crowned by a late box-shaped citadel (far right) that overlooks excavations in the city’s first-century C.E. residential area. Located a mere 4 miles north of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, Sepphoris was a thriving urban center during his lifetime and in the centuries that followed, and many scholars have wondered if Jesus was influenced by the cultural and intellectual trends that prevailed in the nearby city.

The Hebrew name for Sepphoris is Zippori. The earliest major rabbinic text, the Mishnah, which dates to about 200 C.E., tells us that Zippori was one of the cities fortified by Joshua when the tribes of Israel first settled in the Promised Land. Despite many seasons of excavation, it is still not clear whether this tradition is accurate and, if so, whether the text refers to Sepphoris or another site, Tel ‘Ein Zippori, a few miles north of Sepphoris in the Nazareth basin. Two of the earliest artifacts found at Sepphoris date, not from the time of Joshua, but from the fifth to fourth century B.C.E., after the Jews were permitted by the Persian ruler Cyrus the Great to return from the Babylonian Exile. The first item is a black-ware drinking goblet, or *rhyton*, the lower portion, or *protome*, of which resembles the face of a lion, the body of a horse and the outspread wings of a bird. The second artifact is a fragment from a marble or calcite vase originally inscribed in four languages. The text included the name Artaxerxes in the cuneiform signs of the Persian, Elamite and Old Babylonian languages; there was also a version of the text in Egyptian hieroglyphics.



Since the Persians are known to have established garrisons at various points along the road system in Syria-Palestine, these fine objects suggest the presence of one such garrison near Sepphoris. They also underscore the city’s strategic location along the major trans-Galilee highway, which linked the area of Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee with the Mediterranean coast at Akko. (Pictured: an underground water reservoir: with nearly 2 million gallons capacity.)

Personal Reflections: Have you ever lived next to or near an important or well-known person? Perhaps he had a prestigious job, was an athletic star, or was on television. Perhaps he was simply financially successful, as defined by our culture today. You could not help but notice the size of their house, and the lifestyle they lived. Whether you envied them or not, the fact remained that some live by different standards than others. Let’s face it: in all parts of the world there are some who are rich and some who are not so well off.

Perched on a 400-foot hill overlooking the Jezreel Valley in Lower Galilee, Sepphoris was a prominent and influential city in many ways. It was where the “rich” lived. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the First Century AD, called this city the “the ornament of Galilee.” It was located on a well-travelled route that connected the



Mediterranean Sea with the Sea of Galilee, making this city known to all. It had great cultural influence, yet interestingly not mentioned in Scripture. Area nearby towns, such as Nazareth and Cana could only gaze upon it and marvel.

Sea of Galilee

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. (**Mark 1:16-18**)

Flavius Josephus, a Roman historian, sketched out the ancient boundaries of Galilee as follows: Akko (Acre) and Mount Carmel to the west, Samaria to the south, the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee to the east, and to the north roughly the same border that exists today between Israel and Lebanon. The total region of Galilee is about 50 miles long, north to south, and 30 miles wide, east to west.



The largest body of water in Galilee is hard to miss. At 13 miles long, 7.5 miles wide, and only 150 feet at its deepest point, the Sea of Galilee—more properly designated as a lake—is one of the largest bodies of fresh water in the Middle East. The lake is surrounded on all sides by higher land because the surface of the lake is 690 feet below sea level. It lies in the lower section of the Jordan Valley. It is fed by the Jordan River, rainfall, and springs on the northern side.

The Sea of Galilee is one of the five divisions found in the Jordan Rift, which drains 70 percent of the land of Palestine. In its 65-mile course from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, the Jordan River drops 590 feet, an average of about nine feet per mile. This lake provided fishing industries and agriculture products to many local towns and villages. After being rejected by His home village, Jesus moved his ministry to the Sea of Galilee, where He performed many miracles and teachings. Jesus calmed the storm on the lake for His disciples and also appeared walking on the water of Galilee (Matt. 8:23-27, Mark 6:47-52).

The Jordan River flows the entire length of Israel and connects the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. Rabbis have said of the Sea of Galilee,

“Although God has created seven seas, yet He has chosen this one as His special delight.”

Sea of Galilee in the Bible

The Sea of Galilee is mentioned in the Bible by three other names:

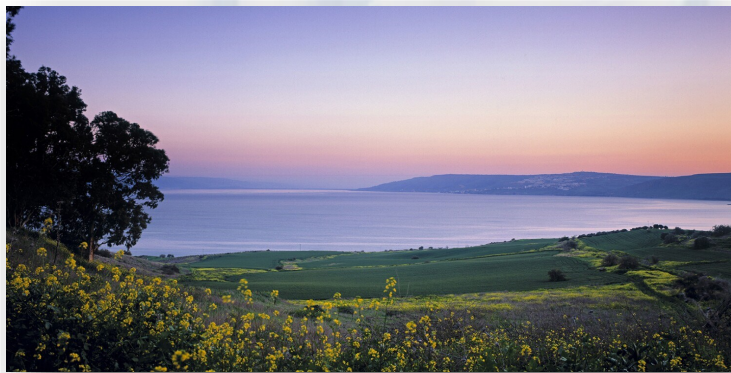
1. The Sea of Kinneret (or Chinnereth), from its harp-like shape
2. The Sea of Tiberias
3. The Lake of Gennesaret

Nazareth, Mt. Tabor, Capernaum, Cana, and the Sea of Galilee are all in this one region. Much of Jesus' life was spent here. Thus, much of His ministry occurred here as well. As we go from site to site, try to remember that in Galilee you are walking where Jesus walked more than any other place in Israel—the thought alone is enough to knock your sandals off!

In the New Testament period, there was settlements and villages encircling the lake and plenty of trade and ferrying by boat. The Gospels of Mark 1:14-20, Matthew 4:18-22, and Luke 5:1-11 describe how Jesus recruited Simon, Andrew, James, and John from the shores of Galilee. Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount from a hill overlooking this lake, and many of His miracles were performed here including walking on water, calming a storm, and feeding 5,000 people in Tabgha.



Many famous sites are located around the lake, including Capernaum, home to at least five of the 12 disciples. The Church of the Beatitudes is said to mark where the Sermon on the Mount was preached and the Church of the



Multiplication is said to mark the site where Jesus fed 5,000 followers from five loaves of bread and two fish. The nearby lakeside town of Magdala is the hometown of Mary Magdalene.

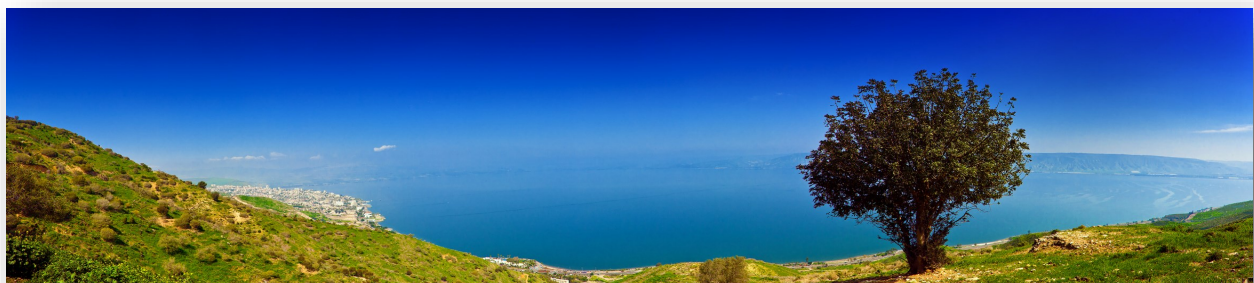
Of all the places in Israel, many people come away saying that the Sea of Galilee is their favorite part of the tour. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, this is where Jesus spent most of His time in ministry; almost all His teachings and miracles were conducted somewhere near this body of water. Second, it is the least commercialized of the towns in

Israel and remains basically the same as it was in Jesus' day. As you take a boat ride across the Sea of Galilee, you truly get a sense for what our Lord felt and experienced.

Imagine Jesus walking on the water, bidding Peter to come or possibly instructing Peter and his men to cast their nets over the side of the boat, bringing up so many fish that their nets began to break and the boat began to sink. If you spend much time on the Sea of Galilee, you will notice that the weather can change quite rapidly and how quickly a storm can brew, and you will be able to fathom why Jesus suddenly had to rebuke the wind and the waves saying, "Quiet, be still!" (**Mark 4:39**)

It was in this region, and for three-and-a-half years, that Jesus disciplined the Twelve and instilled within them the lessons and lifestyle of the Kingdom of God. Wouldn't it have been wonderful to have spent several years around this lake with Christ mentoring you and embedding in you the great urgency to take the Gospel into the whole world? (**Matthew 28:18-20**)

The warm climate and fertile soil of the plains around the Sea of Galilee nourished a variety of extended-season crops, including tropical varieties such as dates and bananas. Josephus' description of the plain of Gennesaret



included walnuts, fig trees, olives, and grapes. Domestic and foreign trade were also important to the economy of the lake region. Merchant caravans from all directions passed along the shores of the lake, including some loaded with grain from the Golan region. Thus market day brought villagers from round about to sell their produce in the cities by the lake, all of which contributed to the busy life and economy of the Sea of Galilee. This was the world in which Jesus labored, where "a great crowd followed him and thronged about him" (**Mark 5:24**).

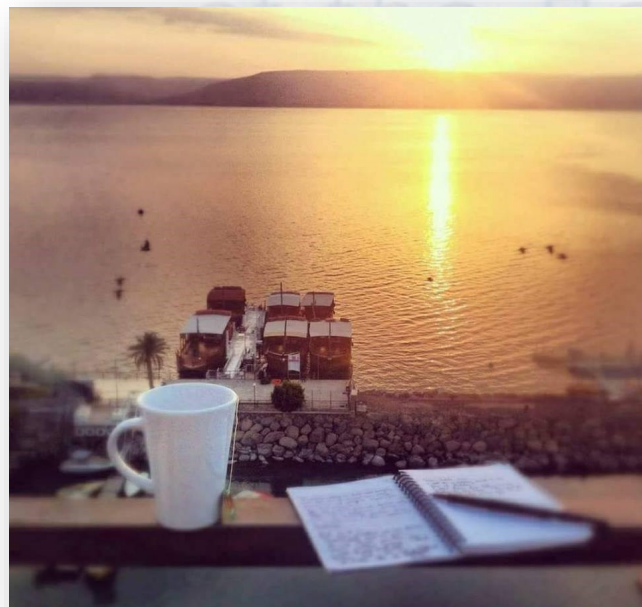


In his sermons, Jesus used illustrations from the lake, the land around it, the roads, and the people who lived and worked in the area. He used images that

the people could relate to, so that the people could more easily understand his message. In this setting Jesus told many of the parables, including the parables of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the grain of mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure hid in the field, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea (Matt. 13).

"And the coast shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall descend, and shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward:" (**Numbers 34:11**).

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers" (**Matt 4:18**).



"And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" (**Matt. 8:26**).

"Now as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers" (**Mark 1:16**).

"And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out..." (**Mark 6:48-49**).

"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret" (**Luke 5:1**).

"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias" (**John 6:1**).

"(Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)" (**John 6:23**).

"After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself" (**John 21:1**).



DID YOU KNOW: The Holy Land has two inland seas, one is called the Kinneret, or the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee receives its water on its northern end from the inflow of the Jordan



River. On its other end is its outflow.

There it becomes again the Jordan River flowing southward. The other sea is called the Sea of Salt, or the Sea of Death. It's called the Dead Sea because virtually nothing can live there. There's no fish and no vegetation. Its salt and minerals prevent life from growing.

The Dead Sea gets its water from the Jordan River and so does the Sea of Galilee.

So why is the Dead Sea dead?

The difference is that the Dead Sea only has one opening to the north where it receives water from Jordan.

But it has no outlet.

So, the water only pours in and becomes dead. But the water of the Galilee is alive, freshwater filled with fish. And yet the very same water flows between the two.

So how can the same water produce life in one place and death in the other?

Because of the outlets, the Sea of Galilee is always giving what it receives. It's always flowing.

But the Dead Sea only receives and never gives out.

So, the life that gives of what it receives, is the life that is always a blessing to others, that life is the Sea of Galilee.

Its waters are always fresh. It's always filled with life, and a constant source of blessing.

But the life that only takes and doesn't give back, that life becomes dead and barren even though it has the same potential.

You see, it's not what you have in this life, how much or how little, that, in the end, will matter.

It's what you do with what you have.

If you only take, the waters become dead, and your life becomes like the Dead Sea.

But if you give, then the waters become alive and your life becomes the Sea of Galilee, a blessing to all.

TODAY: Live after the pattern of the Sea of Galilee, always receiving and always giving. Receive God's LOVE and freely give it to all your life touches.

Tiberias

What appears to be a quaint little lake village has actually been in existence for more than 2,000 years. Since Roman times, Tiberias has been a vacation spot due to its 17 natural mineral hot springs. Just south of the city was the Old Testament town of Hammath. Mentioned in **Joshua 19:35**, Hammath was known for its hot springs centuries before Herod arrived on the scene. Herod Antipas (one of Herod the Great's three sons) built the city in 18 A.D. and named it in honor of the Roman emperor Tiberius. In Herod Antipas' time, the Jews refused to settle here; the presence of a cemetery made the site ritually unclean so Antipas settled Gentiles in Tiberias. He built a palace and made the city his new capital. Tiberias became so great that the Sea of Galilee soon came to be called the Sea of Tiberias. A lakeside palace was built by Herod, with the security of a naturally fortified acropolis lay behind him. This palace would let in a panoramic view of Galilee.



After a burial ground was discovered during the building of the town, Jews abandoned the site. The town was settled by a group of Gentiles, some under the orders of Herod. Herod accomplished a good population by offering nice houses and plenty of land to all who lived there. According to the Gospels, Jesus never went to Tiberias, probably because of the pollution caused by corpses. The town of Tiberias is only mentioned once in the New Testament, after the feeding of the five thousand. The Sea of Tiberias, or Lake Galilee, is referred to in John 6:1 and John 21:1.

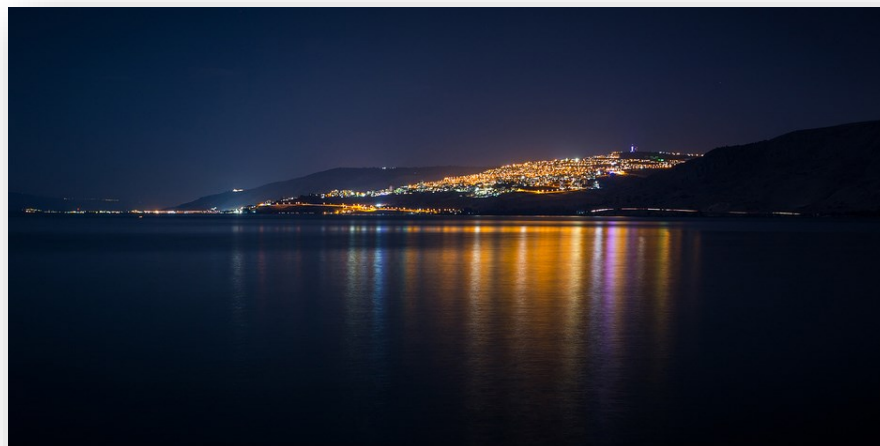
Tiberias in the Bible

The Jewish locals in biblical times may have refused to live in this "unclean" city, but they would have been very aware of Herod's power and influence over their lives, especially since Tiberias was visible from Capernaum. One of Jesus' early followers was Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward (**Luke 8:3**). Chuza managed Herod's finances and royal estates, so it's reasonable to assume that Joanna and Chuza lived in Tiberias. It's almost certain that Herod had heard of Jesus' ministry; but they did not meet until Pilate, trying to pass the buck, sent Jesus to Herod's court. (**Matthew 14:1-2; Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7-9; 23:6-12**)

The day after Jesus fed the 5,000 at Bethsaida on the northeastern side of the lake, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks... (**John 6:23**). It's likely that these were people from Tiberias who followed Jesus, saw His miracles firsthand, and believed.

Then, after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples:

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. (**John 21:1-4**)



"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias" (John 6:1).

"The day after Jesus walked on the sea a crowd from Tiberias pursued Him across the sea to Capernaum..." (John 6:22-25).

“Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks” (John 6:23).

“After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself” (John 21:1).

Special Note: The shores of the Sea of Galilee with Tiberias and Mount Arbel in the distance.



Arbel Cliffs

The Arbel Cliffs hang over the sea of Galilee at an elevation of 594 feet above sea level and 1283 feet above the Sea of Galilee. The cliff of Arbel overlooks the Sea of Galilee and provides an excellent panorama of the Sea and the plain of Gennesaret. Arbel’s numerous natural caves served as hiding places for Jewish rebels in the conflicts against Herod (40 bc), and later the Romans (66 ad). The Syrian General Baccies attacked Jews hiding in these caves in 161 BC during the Maccabean revolt. Herod the Great burned out criminals from these caves around 38 BC when he was first given jurisdiction over Galilee as a young man serving under his father.

Arbel is a place where one can gain a “Big Picture” perspective of the life and ministry of Christ. Arbel offers us an opportunity to step back and discover the landscape where Jesus served.

From the vantage point of Arbel, you can see some of the modern day cities and towns that surround the Sea of Galilee. Josephus mentions that during the time of Christ, there were 200 towns and villages in the Galilee region.



BIBLICAL REFERENCES— Arbel has only one possible mention in scripture found in the book of Hosea.

(Hosea 10:14) “Therefore tumult shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be plundered as Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle; a mother dashed in pieces upon her children.”

Some believe that Matthews account of Jesus going up on a mountain to pray was possibly on Arbel.

(Matthew 14:22-33) “Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.²³ After he had dismissed them,

he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone,²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a

ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”²⁸ “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”²⁹ “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” (Matthew 14:22-33)



DID YOU KNOW: Which comes first, the day or the night? Most people in the world would say... Day leads into night. But that is not how God sees it.”

If the day leads to night, then everything goes from light to darkness.

- Everything gets darker.
- Everything is in the process of darkening.

And it would appear to be the way of the world. We go from day to night, from youth to aging, from strength to weakness, and ultimately from life to death. Day to night.

It’s the way of the world, but it’s not the way of God. When God created the universe, it was not day and night. It is written, “There was evening, and then there was morning.”

- The day began with night.
- There was night and then there was day. It is the night that comes first.
- That’s why **Jewish holidays** always **begin at sunset**.

Not only Jewish holidays, but every biblical day. Each day begins at sunset. There is evening and then morning.

The world moves from day to night - but in God, it is the opposite. It goes from night to day . . . from darkness to light. The children of this world live from day to night. But the children of God live from night to DAY. They are born again in the darkness and move to the day.

And if you belong to God, then that is the order of your life. You are to go from darkness to light, from weakness to strength, from despair to hope, from guilt to innocence, from tears to joy, and from death to life. And every night in your life will lead to the dawn.

So, live according to God’s sacred order of time . . . that your entire life be always moving away from the darkness and to the light. As he said those words, the first light of daybreak appeared and the night began yielding to the day.



TODAY: What darkness is in your life, the darkness of fear, of sin, of problems, of gloom? Today, turn away from it and to the light of day.

Capernaum

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of

the Gentiles – the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matthew 4:12-17)



Capernaum was a settlement on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was near a main highway that connected Galilee to Damascus. The site is a ruin today but was inhabited from 150 BC to about 750 AD.

Capernaum is mentioned throughout the four Gospels. Luke cites it as the home of Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew, the tax collector. Matthew 4:13 says that Jesus Himself lived there for a time and Mark 1:21 says He taught in the synagogue.

In Capernaum today you can find the beautiful remains of an ancient synagogue. The synagogue measures 79 feet long, 60 feet wide, with an area

of 4,740 sq. feet, making it the largest synagogue of its day! The synagogue at Capernaum is not the one where Jesus preached, but it was probably built upon the footing and foundation of the 1st century synagogue. The recent discovery of coins in the mortar dates this reconstructed synagogue somewhere between the 4th and 5th century AD. Also in Capernaum you will find a house that some claim originally belonged to Simon Peter.

This city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee became Jesus’ home base for His ministry. This name means “village of Nahum,” although there is no knowledge as to who Nahum was. Capernaum was located in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali (Matthew 4:13). The west shore of the lake was settled by the tribe of Naphtali. Its location was described as being near the border of the Jordan and the political frontier. Such a frontier town is told about in the story of the centurion (Luke 7:2).

During the excavations, a private house was uncovered beneath a fourth-century Jewish-Christian place of meeting. In the first half of the second century, this house served as an assembly hall for the early Christians. It was very likely the home of Peter as well, through findings of inscriptions and reports from early Christian travelers.

Dwelling rooms arranged around a courtyard. Sometimes the dwelling rooms were separated from the courtyard by a wall pierced by a continuous row of windows. This common device in ancient houses in northern Palestine, called a window wall, allowed air and light to enter the interiors of rooms. Family life centered on the courtyard, where there were ovens and stoves for cooking, a staircase providing access to the roof (or sometimes a second story), and an exit to the street. The flat roofs of the houses were used for sleeping (in warm weather), drying fruits, and other activities. Typical of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, the village houses focused on the courtyard, with only one door opening to the street and few (if any) windows in the outer walls.

Matthew refers to Capernaum as “Jesus’ own city” (Matt. 9:1). Jesus cured Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever, healed two paralytics, and raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Matt. 8:5-17; Mark 2:1-22; Luke 8:40-56). Jesus called His first disciples from the villagers and fishermen nearby. He called Matthew to be His disciple from a station selling goods located in the vicinity of Capernaum. Although He taught much in the local synagogue and performed many miracles, few people from the city were among his followers. This caused Jesus to grieve over the city for its lack of faith (Matt. 11:20-24). Because of the city’s refusal to believe and repent, there was a heavy curse imposed on Capernaum (Matthew 11:23).

(Pictured Right) A millstone—”But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Matthew 18:6



Capernaum was the epicenter of Jesus' ministry and miracles. It's hard to comprehend how many of His miracles happened here without looking at the biblical text. The following is only a partial list:



Jesus Begins to Preach

“When he came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all. He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” (Mark 9:33-37)

The Calling of the First Disciples

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers,

Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-22)

Jesus Heals the Sick

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him. (Matthew 4:23-25)

Jesus Calms the Storm

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!” (Matthew 8:23-27)

Jesus Walks on the Water

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him



Inscription on pillar at front right of synagogue

ΗΡΩΔΗΣ ΜΟΝΙΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΙΟΥΣΤΟΥΣ ΥΙΟΣ ΑΜΑ ΤΟΙΣ ΤΕΚΝΟΙΣ ΕΚΤΙΖΑΝ ΤΟΝ ΚΙΟΝΑ

“Herod, the son of Monimos, and Justus, his son, together with their children erected this column.”

walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed. **(Matthew 14:22-36)**

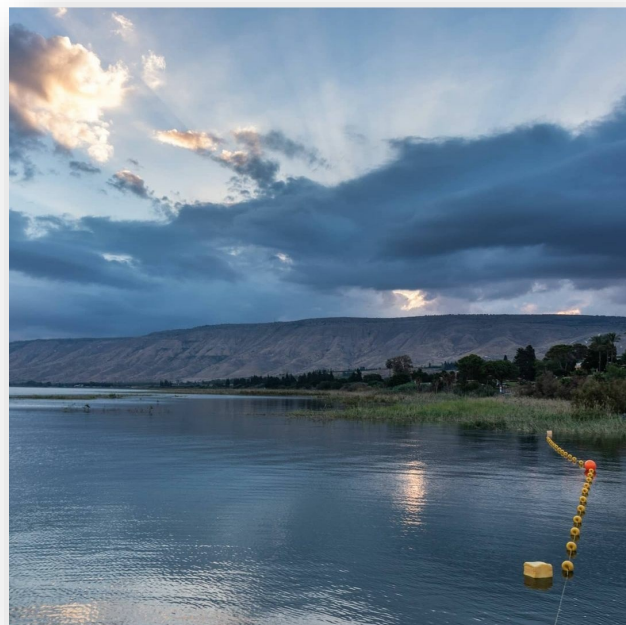
(Pictured Right) The black basalt rock foundation of the synagogue is from the time of Jesus.

Jesus Heals Many

When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.” **(Matthew 8:14-17)**

The Faith of the Centurion

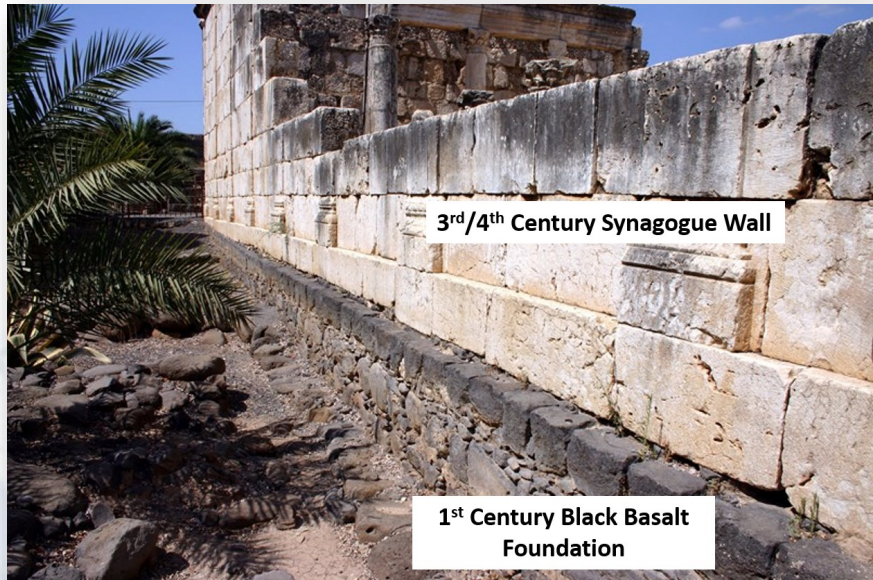
When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.” Jesus said to him, “I will go and heal him.” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many



will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very hour. **(Matthew 8:5-13)**

The people of Capernaum didn’t just hear about the miracles of Jesus, they saw them firsthand. They heard His voice speak wisdom, truth, and mercy in their synagogue. They were there when He fed the 5000. They saw their friends and neighbors healed. Sadly, they ultimately made the same choice that the people of Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown, made—refusing to repent and believe. Jesus describes these hardhearted eyewitnesses as being worse than Sodom! Listen to His words:

“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that



3rd/4th Century Synagogue Wall

1st Century Black Basalt Foundation



were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the Day of Judgment than for you.” (Matthew 11:23-24)

During your visit, make sure you spend a little time looking at the 4th century synagogue in Capernaum. If you look on the outside of the wall facing the west, you will see the foundation blocks of the 1st century synagogue. Look for a little sign that tells you this 4th century synagogue was built upon the foundation of the 1st century synagogue, and you can see that the original synagogue foundation was a much darker color of stone. It would have been inside this 1st century synagogue that Jesus gave the discourse in John 10 about the good shepherd and predicted that one day He would lay down His life for His sheep. Go inside the synagogue and read the following passage of Scripture:

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” (John 10:9-18)



DID YOU KNOW: During the life of Jesus, Capernaum was a small fishing village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It also served as the central location of his ministry. It was to Capernaum that people came from all over the Galilee, **the sick, the crippled, the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, the fallen, the unholy, the condemned, and the outcast.** And it was at Capernaum that JESUS received and healed them and showed them mercy and forgiveness. It was there that He showed them compassion and restored their lives and faith in God.

Capernaum was located on a major trade route (**Via Maris** – linking **EGYPT** to **Mesopotamia**) where travelers would come and rest as they made long journeys. These travelers would hear about the **MIRACLES** and **TEACHINGS** of Jesus and spread the good news in other cities and towns on their journey.

Capernaum was a translation of its **REAL NAME**. The first part, Caper, stands for the Hebrew word **kaphar** and can be translated as village. The second part, **naum**, stands for the Hebrew name Nachum, the same name as the prophet Nahum. So, Capernaum could be called “the village of Nahum.”

Why would JESUS choose ‘the village of Nahum’ as the center of His ministry? There’s no record of any connection between Capernaum and the prophet Nahum. And if there was another Nahum, we have no record of his existence. But there are no accidents or coincidences in the Kingdom of God.

If we go deeper, we find something beautiful. Nachum is not just a name; it’s a Hebrew word filled with meaning. It means to **comfort**, to **console**, and to **repent**. So, Capernaum could be translated as...

“the village of **COMFORT**”

“the village of **REPENTANCE**”

“the village of **CONSOLATION**”

So, the center of JESUS’s ministry was “the village of comfort.” **That’s where the sick was healed, where the sinful were forgiven, where the broken were made whole, and where the outcasts were received.** And it’s where they turned to God.

A **PROPHETIC INSIGHT** is that Capernaum reflected the plan of God for His Son. When Jesus read in the synagogue at **Nazareth**, He didn't arbitrarily pick the scroll or passage from the book of Isaiah. It was the **PARASH-A...** a pre-chosen passage from ages past that was being read in synagogues all over the world. They handed Him the scroll from **Isaiah 61:1-2** and He read a prophetic portion concerning the messiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the **brokenhearted**,
To proclaim liberty to the **captives**,
And the opening of the **prison to those who are bound**;
2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,"

When he finished, he closed the book and declared "this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Capernaum is the village of mercy, repentance, comfort, healing, restoration, and tender love. It reflects the **heartbeat of God for all humanity** and that's why Jesus chose it as the center of His ministry. Receive God's heart for you today, as it is the **KEY** to unlock the abundant life.

TODAY: Receive God's heart for your life as it unlocks the untold blessings.





Mount of Beatitudes

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (**Matthew 5:1-3**)

The Sermon on the Mount is recorded in Matthew 5-7 and again in Luke 6, and it is regarded as one of the greatest pieces of literature ever spoken or written. In this powerful discourse, Jesus Christ delivers important and practical steps for godly living—touching on such topics as our evangelistic duty as believers, the true fulfillment of the law, murder and anger, adultery and divorce, swearing oaths, forgiveness and love, charity, prayer that is pleasing to God, true wealth, worry, and judging others. Surely, Christ’s Sermon on the Mount cut to the heart of Jesus’ followers as they listened, and it should do the same for us today.

Scripture gives no indication of the exact location of this event, but the Byzantines built a church to commemorate it on the northern slopes overlooking the Sea of Galilee that is octagonal, the eight sides representing the eight Beatitudes. Once you’ve taken a look around, find a quiet spot somewhere on the hillside and read the Beatitudes below. If you have time, open your Bible and read the entirety of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 through 7. Try to imagine what it must have been like to hear these words for the very first time. Which words would have pricked



you, confused you, or comforted you as you sat in the hot sun surrounded by multitudes of people? Let the truth of these words sink in as if Jesus had just spoken them for the first time:

The Beatitudes

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:3-12)

Tabgha

And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about 5000 men, besides women and children. (Matthew 14:19-21)

Two miles west of Capernaum is what Josephus referred to as the “well of Capernaum.” No doubt, this was a popular fishing spot of the locals because of its famous “seven springs.” Heptapegon (the name was eventually adopted to Tabgha) is the traditional location for several events in Jesus’ ministry. The seven springs that emerged at Tabgha (today only six have been discovered) produced water warmer than that of the Sea of Galilee. This set off a sort of biological domino effect, because the warm water brought algae, the algae brought fish, and the fish brought fishermen.

By 350 AD, pilgrims were coming to this site in the belief that this is where Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Eventually, a chapel was built. A pilgrim by the name of Egeria visited Tabgha around 380 AD and described what she saw.

By the sea is a grassy field with plenty of hay and many palm trees. By them are seven springs (heptapegon), each flowing strongly. And this is the field where the Lord fed the people with the five loaves and two fishes. In fact the stone on which the Lord placed the bread has now been made into an altar. People who go there take away small pieces of the stone to bring them prosperity, and they are very effective.

The original chapel was enlarged around 480 AD and this is when the mosaic floors were added. The church was destroyed around 685 AD probably during Arab conquests. Over time silt and stone covered what was left of the church, and for about 1200 years these floors were forgotten. Then, in 1932, they were rediscovered. A protective cover was built over the site and in 1982 the modern church that exists today was built. The builders faithfully reconstructed the church according to its original design and the mosaic floors were restored. Take time to notice the basket of bread flanked by two fish.

Tabgha in the Bible

Tabgha is the traditional location for the calling of the disciples. It is believed that here Jesus walked along the shore and called out to Simon Peter and Andrew who were casting their nets into the lake. Walking along, Jesus saw two other brothers, James and John who were preparing their nets with their father Zebedee. Jesus called these men to



follow Him, promising that He would make them “fishers of men.” Without hesitation, they left their nets and followed Him (**Mark 1:16-20**).

(Pictured to the right). Tabgha’s well-known mosaics commemorate Jesus’ miraculous feeding of 5,000 from five loaves of bread and two fish .

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the



crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.” Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. “Bring them here to me,” he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. (**Matthew 14:13-21**)



DID YOU KNOW: The priests or the cohanim wore a white linen tunic which was a sash of blue, purple, and scarlet. The cohanim were the priests of Israel, the sons of Aaron. It was the cohanim who ministered in the Temple and who were given charge by God over the offerings and sacrifices by which the people of Israel were reconciled to God.

Jesus came at a time when the Temple was still standing, when the priesthood of Israel was still in effect. The sons of Aaron had charge over the sacrifices and confirmed that each sacrifice was spotless and without blemish. Shouldn’t there have been some connection, some recognition given by the priests, of Jesus being the final and ultimate sacrifice?

There was, born to the cohanim, to the house of Aaron, a child who was not only a priest, but one descended from Aaron on both his father’s and mother’s line, a pure-blooded priest. The child was given the name Yochanan. You know him as John the Baptist. So, it was John who presented the Lamb, Jesus the Messiah, the final sacrifice, to Israel. It was the cohanim who identified the sacrifice and certified that it was acceptable to be sacrificed. So, it was Yochanan, John, who first identified Jesus as the acceptable sacrifice. He was the first to identify Him as the sacrificial Lamb. It was John who said, “**Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**”



Primacy of Peter

The **Church of the Primacy of Peter** is a modest Franciscan chapel that incorporates part of a 4th-century church. It is located at Tabgha on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee and commemorates Jesus’ reinstatement of Peter after a fish breakfast on the shore.

In John 21, Jesus appears to his disciples for the third time after his resurrection on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The night before, Peter and several other disciples had sailed out on the lake to fish but caught nothing. In the morning, a man appeared on the shore and called out to them to throw their net on the right side of the boat. Doing so, they caught 153 large fish they couldn’t drag the net back into the boat.



At this point Peter recognizes Jesus, and promptly jumps out of the boat to wade to shore to meet him. The other disciples follow in the boat, dragging the net behind them. When they land, Jesus has prepared a charcoal fire for the fish and provided bread, and they have breakfast together (John 21:9). This is believed to have taken place on the *mensa Christi*, a large rock incorporated in the chapel.

After breakfast, Jesus reinstated Peter (after his three-time denial of Jesus at the crucifixion) with the words "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-19). This is the event for which is

interpreted by the Catholic Church to give the Pope (as the successor of Peter) authority over the worldwide Church.

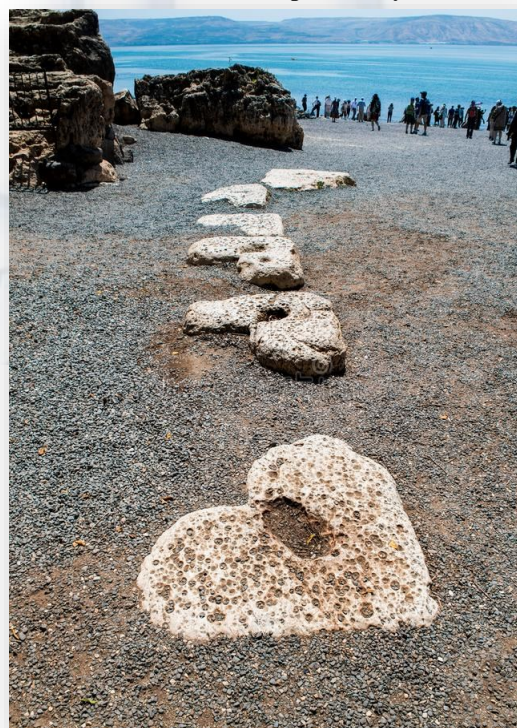
The Franciscan chapel is small and made of grey stone, with a modest tower in one corner. It is **pleasantly located** right on the northwest shoreline of the Sea of Galilee.

At the base of the chapel's walls on the west end, the walls of the late 4th-century church are clearly visible on three sides. Like the early church, the modern chapel incorporates a large portion of the stone "table of Christ" (Latin: *Mensa Christi*) at the altar. This is where Jesus is believed to have served his disciples a fish breakfast after they landed on shore (John 21:9).

On the lake side of the church are the **rock-cut steps** mentioned by Egeria as the place "where the Lord stood." It is not known when they were carved, but it may have been in the 2nd or 3rd century when this area was quarried for limestone.

Below the steps are six heart-shaped double-column blocks known as the **Twelve Thrones**, which can be under water when the lake level is high. Originally designed for the foundation of a column, they were probably taken from other buildings and placed here to commemorate the Twelve Apostles. The association likely derived from Luke 22:30: "You will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel."

A little further inland from the Church of the Primacy of Peter is the Church of the Loaves and Fish, which is well worth a visit.



"Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple

whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead." (**John 21:1-14**)

The Jesus Boat

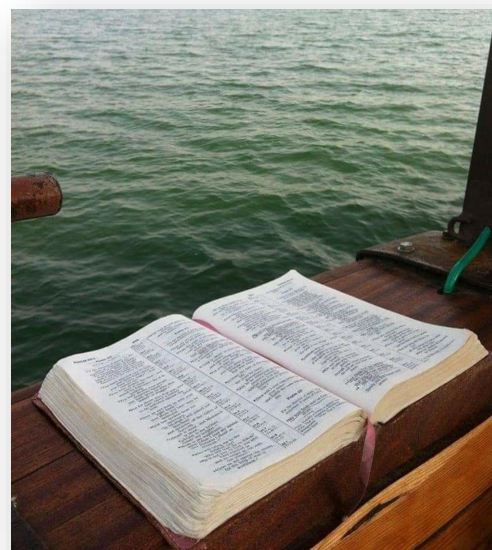
Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (**Matthew 4:21-22**)

The Sea of Galilee Boat, or the Jesus Boat, does not get its name from any personal association with Jesus, but from the fact that it is an ancient fishing boat from the time of Jesus (1st century AD). The boat, found in 1986, is 27 feet long and 7.5 feet wide. Moshe and Yuval Lufan, fishermen and amateur archaeologists from Kibbutz Ginosar, discovered the boat when a prolonged drought caused the shoreline to recede. The two brothers stumbled upon the remains of the boat, which was partially buried in the newly exposed shore.



The brothers called the authorities who sent out a team of archaeologists to investigate. Realizing that the remains of the boat were of tremendous historical importance to Jews and Christians alike, a secret archaeological dig was undertaken by members of the Kibbutz Ginosar, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and numerous volunteers.

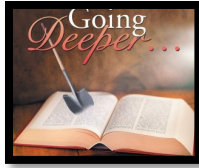
Like the proverbial rock and a hard place, the team was caught between two conflicting needs: caution and speed. One heavy rainfall could have ended all attempts to raise this boat, but if they had moved too quickly, this 2000-year-old artifact could have fallen apart. To make matters worse, a rumor spread that the boat was full of gold, so the site of the dig had to be guarded day and night.



Despite the obstacles, the team had the boat out in just 12 days. It was then submerged in a chemical bath for seven years before it could be displayed in the Yigal Allon Museum in Kibbutz Ginosar.

The boat has been dated to 40 BC (plus or minus 80 years) based on radiocarbon dating, and 50 BC to 50 AD based on the pottery (including a cooking pot and lamp) and nails found in the boat, as well as hull construction techniques. The evidence of repeated repairs done to the boat indicates that it was in use for several decades.

The Sea of Galilee Boat is historically important to Jews as an example of the type of boat used by their ancestors in the 1st century for both fishing and transportation across the lake. The boat is also important to Christians because this was the sort of boat used by Jesus and his disciples, several of whom were fishermen. Boats such as this played a large role in Jesus' life and ministry and are mentioned 50 times in the Gospels.



DID YOU KNOW: A Jewish prayer shawl is called a tallit. The most important part of the tallit is its corners and the fringes of its corners. God commanded that the children of Israel were to wear fringes on the corners of their garments (**Numbers 15:38-40**). The corner itself is called the kanaf. And the fringes on the corners are called the tzitzit. In the New Testament there are no physical descriptions of Jesus to tell us what He looked like. But we do know what He wore. He wore on His garments the kanaf and the tzitzit.

A very famous passage in the New Testament describes a woman that touches the hem of Jesus' garment and is instantly healed of her infirmity. We read in the book of Matthew (**9:20-22**) "Then a woman, who was ill with a flow of blood for twelve years, came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment. For she said within herself, 'If I may just touch His garment, I shall be healed.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her, He said, 'Daughter, be of good comfort. Your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well instantly." This was not a onetime miracle. In fact, it is recorded that everyone who touched the hem of His garment was healed (**Matthew 14:35-36**).

But they did not just touch the hem of His garment. The word in Greek for what they touched is Kraspedon. Kraspedon is a translation of the Hebrew words kanaf and tzitzit. So, they were not just touching the hem of His garment; they were touching the sacred corner and fringe of His garments as ordained in the Law. At the very end of the Old Testament is an amazing verse. It is written, "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings (**Malachi 4:2**)." But in Hebrew, it does not say wings. It says, "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His kanaf"—the very word that also means the corner and fringe of His garment. So, they touched the kanaf, the corner, the fringe, of the sun of righteousness, Jesus and they found "healing in His wings."

TAL-ITH contains two Hebrew words; **TAL** meaning **tent** and **ITH** meaning **little**. Thus, you have **LITTLE TENT**. Each man had his own little tent. Millions of Jews could not fit into the tent of meeting that was set up in the Old Testament. Therefore, what was given to them was their own private sanctuary where they could meet with God. Each man had one! His Prayer Shawl or Tallis. They would pull it up over their head, forming a tent, where they would begin to pray and sing songs, and call upon God. It was intimate, private, and set apart from anyone else, enabling them to totally focus upon God. This becomes their **PRAYER CLOSET** whenever and wherever they prayed!



Migdal / Magdala / Magadan

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. (**John 20:18**)

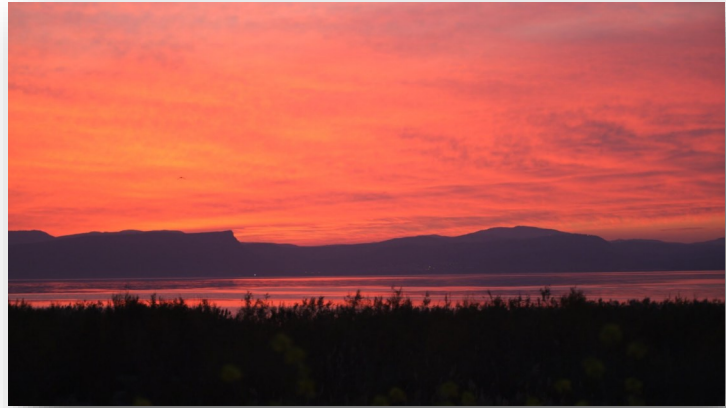
Migdal was founded in 1910, but what makes this town so interesting is its connection to Magdala (sometimes called Magadan in Greek translations of the New Testament). Modern-day Migdal is thought to stand on the site where ancient Magdala once stood. Magdala, just 3 miles north of Tiberias, was a city that would have been well known to Jesus and His disciples. It's likely that the fishermen/disciples often sailed to Magdala with their catch of fish. Here their fish were sold, salted, and shipped. The fishing industry was such a large part of the city that its two other names were Tericheae (derived from the Greek word for "salted fish") and Magdala Nunayya or "Magdala of the fishes."

Before Herod built Tiberias, Magdala was the most important city on the lake. It had a hippodrome, a large population, and a reputation for immorality. Today, most know of Magdala because of one particular citizen who is mentioned in all four Gospels:

Mary Magdalene. It's assumed that Mary Magdalene meant "Mary of Magdala" just as someone from Nazareth was

called a Nazarene. It was here that Jairus' daughter was healed (**Mark 5:21-6:1**) and the woman who was healed from hemorrhaging by touching the corner of his garment (**Mark 5:21-43**).

Discoveries from a new archaeological dig are creating excitement in the area where Jesus began his ministry. The most important discovery in Magdala has been a synagogue (pictured above) dating back to the time of Jesus. According to archaeologists, it's the first one discovered in the Galilee other than the one in Capernaum.



An expression that appears many times in several places of the Gospel, (**Matthew 4:23**) "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. This location is the closest synagogue to Capernaum where He lived. So it was likely He was here many times."

In the synagogue, the team discovered a 2,000-year-old treasure. They call it the **Magdala Stone (pictured on left)**, and some archaeologists say it's the most important discovery in decades. The Menorah (seven-lamp candelabrum) on the stone is one of a kind, the first one discovered before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. The Legionnaires of Christ own the land and are building an entire center at Magdala with an archaeological park, hotel and spiritual center.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS OF INTEREST

1st Century Synagogue Found at Magdala



A synagogue from the Second Temple period (50 BCE-100 CE) was exposed in archaeological excavations the Israel Antiquities Authority is conducting at a site slated for the construction of a hotel on Migdal beach. In the middle of the synagogue is a stone that is engraved with a seven-branched menorah (candelabrum), the likes of which have never been seen.

The main hall of synagogue is 1,291 square foot in area. Its stone benches, which served as seats for the worshippers, were built up against the walls of the hall. Its floor was made of mosaic tiles and its walls were treated with colored plaster (frescos).

This location was near the center of Jesus' ministry (Capernaum, Chorazin, Gennesaret, etc.), makes it quite likely that Jesus visited

Magdala. Matthew records that "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues," (Matt 9:35). Thus it is likely, that Jesus visited this synagogue.

This is not the first synagogue excavated that Jesus visited. He almost certainly was in (an earlier version) of the Capernaum synagogue, may have been in the Chorazin synagogue.

Mary Magdalene in the Bible

Mary of Magdala, like many of us, was in pretty sad shape before meeting Jesus. Possessed by seven demons, she must have felt completely helpless and hopeless until the day the Lord set her free (Luke 8:2). She never forgot who had saved her and she stayed close—joining with others, including the 12 disciples, who accompanied Jesus during



His ministry (Luke 8:1-2). She stood with Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the foot of the cross (John 19:25), and she was the first human witness to His resurrection:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. (John 20:1-18)



DID YOU KNOW: Jesus was teaching the multitudes from a boat on the Sea of Galilee. He turned to His disciple Simon Peter in Luke 5 and said, "Launch out into the deep, and let your nets out for a catch." So, they did. They caught so many fish that their nets began to break due to the abundance.

I have found that the blessings of God are very rarely ever found in the shallow waters, the shallow waters of faith. They do not swim there. There are many who dwell only in the shallows of Christianity. They stay near the shore. They stay near that which is familiar and comfortable. They never fully leave the old ways, the old life. So, they only know the shallow things of God. They never enter the deep. They believe, but with a shallow faith. They read the Scriptures, but only get into the shallow of the Word, the surface, the letter. They pray but only in the shallow of prayer. They never allow themselves to enter the depth of prayer. They never allow themselves the time. And they know of God's love, but they never get into the deep of His love. As a result, they never know the deep blessings that God has for them.

If you want the blessings of God, you must leave the shallow and launch out away from the shore, away from its distractions, away from the old and the familiar, and into the deep, into the deep waters of faith, the deep waters of His presence, the deep of His Word, the deep of worship, the deep of His joy, the deep of His voice, the deep of His Spirit, and the deep of His heart. That is where your blessings are waiting and will be found.

TODAY: Launch out into the deep waters of God. And there let down your net that you can experience His abundant blessings.

Bethsaida

Two sites, about one and one half miles apart near where the Jordan River enters the Sea of Galilee, have been proposed for Bethsaida. Josephus records that Philip the Tetrarch, (who ruled Gaulanitis from 4 B.C. to A.D. 34), developed the village of Bethsaida, near the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. He states that in A.D. 30, Philip raised it to the status of a "city", strengthening its fortifications, increasing its population, and naming it "Julias" in honor of the Emperor Augustus' daughter.

Biblical Significance

Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum formed what has been called the "Evangelical Triangle," because most of Jesus' miracles in Galilee were performed in these cities. In light of Jesus' condemnation of them for their unbelief, the word "evangelical" would more accurately refer to the preaching of the gospel there, rather than the character of their inhabitants! (Matt 11:20-30)

Bethsaida was the home of three of Jesus' disciples, Peter and his brother Andrew, and Philip (John 1:44). Apparently Peter later moved to Capernaum, where his mother-in-law (and wife) resided (Matt 8:14,15; Mark 1:30,31; Luke 4:38,39). Since fishing was the main industry in each of these towns, Peter's move of some three miles would be unremarkable, except that Capernaum was to become the base of Jesus' Galilean ministry.



The small plain that surrounds Bethsaida may have been the location of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," if this account recorded another occasion on which Jesus gave this. (**Luke 6:17-49**)

At the conclusion of the "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus illustrated the importance of basing one's life on God's truth, rather than on human teaching, by contrasting the foundations on which two builders constructed their homes. (**Luke 6:47-49**)

His reference may have been to the plain at el-'Araj, where builders would need to dig through some five feet of alluvial soil to find bedrock. "Foolish builders" would build on the sandy overlay, to their sorrow when the spring floods came down from the hills; "wise builders" would have no problem since they had built their houses

on the rock stratum below. The three disciples who came from Bethsaida (Andrew, Peter and Philip) would have especially appreciated this illustration.

Jesus performed a unique healing at Bethsaida, restoring a man's sight in stages (**Mark 8:22-26**). Apparently He used this method to demonstrate to His disciples their imperfect understanding of His deity at that time. In this miracle, He sought to prepare their hearts for the next revelation of His person. From Bethsaida they proceeded up the Jordan Valley to Caesarea Philippi, where He would ask them, "Who do you say that I am?" (**Matt 16:15; Mark 8:27; Luke 9:20**)

Korazim / Korazin / Chorazin

Korazim, also known as Korazin or Chorazin, was a small village two and-a-half miles from Capernaum, situated on a large hill above the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, which was settled at the beginning of the 1st century AD. People who lived in Chorazin could see the other cities of the "evangelical triangle," Capernaum to the south and Bethsaida to the east. It is approximately 985 feet above the level of the lake.



We know a little about Korazim from Jewish writings and from history. The city and its surroundings are mentioned in Jewish Talmud. It is renowned for its very early harvest of grain, most likely due to an abundance of dark volcanic soil in the area. We learn from history that the city was destroyed, probably by an earthquake, in 363 AD and was rebuilt in the 5th century. In the 16th century, Jewish fishermen used to reside here.

Today, Korazim is an excavated ruin and the site of a National Archaeological Park. Extensive excavations and a survey were carried out here from 1962-1964 and were resumed from 1980-1987. The ruins of

Korazim are spread over an area of 25 acres, subdivided into five separate sections, with a large and impressive synagogue in the center.

The synagogue, like most of the other structures here, was built with black basalt stones (a volcanic rock found locally) and is the same type of synagogue found in Capernaum. Decorated with Jewish motifs, the ancient building also features a pair of stone lions—similar to a pair found in the synagogue at Kfar Bar'am in Northern Israel—floral decorations and other carvings such as images of wine making, a well-preserved Medusa, an armed soldier, and human and animal figures. Prominently displayed in the synagogue is the “Seat of Moses,” (pictured below) to which Jesus may have been referring in Matthew 23:2. Sadly, these elements suggest the melding of Judaism with pagan beliefs and rituals of the time.

Near the ancient synagogue is a mikvah, or ritual bath, surrounded by public and residential buildings. Several olive millstones (used to extract olive oil) have been found in Korazim and suggest a dependence on the olive for economic purposes, like a number of other villages in northern, ancient Galilee.

Korazim in the Bible

This town's chief claim to fame is that Jesus cursed it (along with Bethsaida and Capernaum) because of its lack of repentance and belief— despite the miracles He performed there:

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.” (Matthew 11:20-24)

“Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” (Luke 10:13-16)





DID YOU KNOW: In the spring of the year, you can find wildflowers of every color in Israel. Jesus spoke of flowers in Luke 12:27-28 when He said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." He was speaking of the care and provision God gives to His children, comparing King Solomon in all his riches and glory to a wildflower. And King Solomon in all his glory could not equal the beauty of a single lily of the field. What does this reveal to us about God?

If God cares for a wild lily, how much more does He care for His children? But there's more. Solomon's clothing was the work of man. The lily of the field is the work of God. And between the two, there's no comparison. It is the lily that is the more beautiful, the more perfect, and the more majestic. You see, our striving to be good is never perfect. But the handiwork of God is always perfect. So, perfection is not based on our striving to produce good works but is found in the way of the lilies. Learn their secret. Lilies neither toil nor spin. They don't strive to produce, they yield to God and become His masterpiece. A life spent trying to produce works of righteousness and holiness will not produce them, as they are focused on the source, which is themselves. But a life focused on God will be focused on the source of their works, which is God. So, the secret is to not focus on our work



for God, but to become the work of God. Stop striving to do the work and start letting your life become the work. Let your doing become the doing of God. Stop struggling to produce good works for God and let God produce His good work in you. Let His goodness cause your life to become His good work. Let everything you do begin with Him. Let your righteousness be the outflowing of His righteousness. Your love, the outflowing of His love, and your life, the outflowing of His life. And your life will become as beautiful as a lily of the field.



TODAY, don't focus on you, but instead learn the secret of the lily and yield to God so your true beauty will emerge.

Golan Heights

The Golan Heights, more simply — the Golan, is Israel's most northeastern region. Geographically, the Heights are bordered on the west by a rock cliff that drops 1,700 feet to the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River; on the south by the Yarmouk River; on the north by the international border with Lebanon; and on the east by a largely flat plain that stretches into Syria. The Golan Heights themselves are between 400 and 1,700 feet high.

Geologically, the Golan Heights are a plateau and part of a volcanic field that extends northeast almost to Damascus. The entire area is scattered with inactive volcanic cones. **Mount Hermon** is in the most northern point of Golan Heights but is geologically separate from the volcanic field.

History

The bible refers to the Golan Heights as "Bashan;" the word "Golan" derived from the biblical city of "Golan in Bashan" (**Deuteronomy 4:43, Joshua 21:27**). The area was assigned to the tribe of Manasseh, although the tribe of Dan is also associated with the Golan.

The Golan Heights, along with the rest of the region, came under the control of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE and his successors, the Greeks. In the mid-2nd century, Judah Maccabee and his brothers came to the aid of the local Jewish communities when these areas came under attack by their non-Jewish neighbors. Judah's grandnephew, the Hasmonean King





Alexander Jannai, later added the Heights to his kingdom. In those days, the Golan's chief city was Gamla. The Jews of Gamla joined their brothers in the Great Revolt against Rome in the 1st century CE, but the revolt failed and the city fell into Roman hands in 67 CE.

The Jewish presence on the Golan Heights was renewed in 1886-1887, when Jews from Tzfat purchased lands in the Golan, and in 1891, when Baron Rothschild purchased approximately 18,000 acres of land there. New Jewish immigrants to Israel established five small communities on these lands, but in 1898 the Turks forced them to leave. Almost 50 years later, in 1947, the lands were seized by the Syrian army.

Although most of the Golan Heights were included within Mandatory Palestine when the Mandate was formally granted in 1922, Britain relinquished the area to France in the Franco-British Agreement in 1923. The Heights became part of Syria upon the termination of the French Mandate in 1944.

After the 1948-1949 War of Independence, the Syrians built extensive fortifications on the Heights, from where they shelled civilian targets in Israel and launched terrorist attacks. Over 140 Israelis were killed and many more were injured in these attacks between 1949 and 1967; heavy

property damage was also inflicted.

During the 1967 Six Day War, in response to Syrian attacks, the IDF (Israel Defense Force) captured the Golan Heights in just over 24 hours of intense fighting. Nearly all of the Golan's Arab inhabitants fled as a result of the war. Four villages remain, three on the slopes of Mt. Hermon and one in the northern Golan.

Almost immediately after the war, Israel renewed the Jewish presence on the Golan. Kibbutz Merom Golan was founded in July 1967, at the initiative of kibbutzim in the nearby Upper Galilee and Hula Valley. By 1970, there were 12 Jewish communities on the Golan.

The Golan Heights Today

Approximately 18,000 Jews live on the Golan today. They reside in kibbutzim and other agricultural settlements and in the town of Katzrin.

Around 17,000 Druze also live in the Golan. The Druze community in Israel is officially recognized as a separate religious entity with its own courts, which have jurisdiction in matters of personal status, and spiritual leadership. Their culture is Arab and their language Arabic, but they opted against mainstream Arab nationalism in 1948 and have since served in the Israeli Defense Force and the Border Police. The community has a special standing among the country's minority groups, and members of the community have attained high-level positions in political, public, and military spheres.

Economy

The economy of the Golan Heights is based on both agriculture and industry, including tourism. In the Golan there are 5,000 acres of cultivated agricultural land, of which 4,000 acres are used for fruit orchards. Other crops growing on the Golan include subtropical plantations, wine grapes, various vegetables, and berry fruits. A further 100,000 acres of land are designated for natural pasture for 20,000 heads of cattle and sheep, for both meat and dairy production. The Golan's dairy cattle produce approximately 60 million liters of milk per year.

There are approximately 30 industrial enterprises on the Golan, mostly based in the Katzrin Industrial Zone. Some of the better-known industries are the Golan Heights Winery, and Mei Eden, one of Israel's biggest mineral water distribution companies.



Dan

This city lay at the southern base of Mount Hermon and was the northernmost point of the ancient Israelite kingdom. It was also used as a topographical marker in the phrase “from Dan to Beersheba” (2 Samuel 3:10). Dan was a Phoenician city, originally named Leshem (Joshua 19:47) or Laish (Judges 18:7), which was conquered by Dan’s tribe when it migrated northward.

When Lot had been taken captive, Abraham and 318 of his servants pursued him as far as the city of Dan (Gen. 14:14). The Canaanite city of Laish had existed on this site more than 5,000 years ago. Joshua had led his troops through this area and sometime after Israel captured this city the name was changed to Dan, and it became the northernmost city in nation of Israel.

Dan was also a very important commercial center, because it guarded a major trading route running between Damascus and Tyre. The Huleh Valley, was very lush and fertile because of the great water sources from the Jordan River. There was an abundant amount of grain and vegetables produced in this territory, as well as plenty of supplies to feed the flocks and herds of animals.

When Jeroboam I became king of the northern kingdom of Israel, Dan housed one of two shrines where golden calves were worshiped. Even Jehu’s drastic purge did not defeat the worship of Baal at Dan. The city fell under Syrian control (2 Kings 10:28-32) during Ben-hadad’s reign. Dan was later re-conquered by the northern kingdom when the Syrians were attempting to ward off Assyrian attacks during the time of Jeroboam III (793-753 BC). Its inhabitants were deported to Assyria (2 Kings 17:6) by Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC). The site did continue to be inhabited (Jeremiah 4:15; 8:16), and its acropolis was used for worship. During Greek and Roman times, the area was enlarged and in the New Testament times, it was eclipsed by Caesarea, which was located very close to Dan.



(Pictured right) A reconstructed four horned alter used for idol worship.

Archaeologists have uncovered one of the largest and best preserved city gates in all of the world at this site, along with a 9th century paved plaza that was probably the town center. A small altar from the ninth or tenth century B.C. was also found here.

(Pictured on the next page) The city gates were a part of a city’s protection against invaders and were also a place of central activity in biblical times. It was at the city gates that important business transactions were made, court was convened, and public announcements were heralded. Accordingly, it is natural that the Bible frequently speaks of “sitting in the gate” or referenced the activities that took place at the gate. The raised platform may have been the sitting place of the King or Judge (2 kings 23:8): “Then the king arose, and sat in the gate...”

“And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father” (Josh 19:47).

“Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure...” (Judges 18:7).

“To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba” (2 Sam 3:10).

“Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel...” (2 Kings 10:28-32).

“In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings 17:6).



“For a voice declares from Dan, and published affliction from mount Ephraim” (Jeremiah 4:15).

“The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones...” (Jeremiah 8:16).



Abraham’s Gate

The reopening of Abraham's gate is truly one of Israel's most coveted and significant historical treasures. This unique arched gate is one of the two oldest arched mud brick gates in the world that dates to immediately after the tower of Babel in 2200 BC. Another mud brick gate just as old can be seen at Ashkelon. This gate is the same gate that Abraham passed through while he was on his way to save Lot from the Israelites. The people of Israel find this to be a significant historical treasure because of its historical significance. It describes the event that happened in the biblical times throughout the Bible.

Abraham's gate was uncovered in 1979 at Tel Dan in the north. This structure was from the Canaanite period of the Bronze Age. It was built around 1750 B.C. The authorities named this archaeological site after Abraham, which is the first patriarch of the Jewish people, because it dates from the period of Abraham. The structure is made of three

arches and made from sun-dried mud bricks on top of a foundation of large basalt stones. It stood seven meters tall (twenty-two feet) and has two towers and a horizontal structure linking them below. These arches are the oldest that were ever found in Israel. The gate is almost four thousand years old. "Ze'ev Margalit, who is responsible for archaeological preservation at the parks authority, indicated that 'The Bible recounts that the people of Dan took Abraham's nephew Lot prisoner, and Abraham came to Dan to rescue him.'"

In **Genesis 14:8-12** it says:

"Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and drew up their battle lines in the Valley of Siddim against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills. The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom."

The kings went to Sodom and Gomorrah and took all of their food, Lot (Abraham's nephew), and everything that he owned. They imprisoned him, and kept him to die.

In **Genesis 14:13-16** it says:

"One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people."

Abraham got all of his people, and they became an army. He split them up and went to Dan to save Lot. Abraham entered through the gate that is now called "Abraham's Gate" and rescued Lot, his possessions, and all of the women, men, and children.



Caesarea Philippi

Located on the southern slopes of Mount Hermon near the ancient city of Dan, this city is found at the northern extremity of Palestine. The ancient Roman city of Caesarea Philippi is mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Acts. Today, it is an uninhabited archaeological site. Located 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee at the base of Mount Hermon, it is the home of one of the largest of the four springs that feed the Jordan River. The abundant water supply made the area very fertile and attractive for religious worship, and numerous temples were built here.

This city has had a long history of pagan worship—first, the Phoenician god Baal, then the Greek god Pan. Pan was the Greco-Roman god of

nature, livestock, hunting, etc. – all things related to wild times, party music, and, of course, fertility. Pan was a



crazy looking guy with the hindquarters, legs and horns of a goat. It was believed that if Pan wasn't worshipped he would come at night and terrorize people, thus giving way to our English word "PANIC." The centerpiece of this ancient worship site is a huge cliff and grotto, which contains the remains of numerous altars, caves, temples, and courtyards. The entire area teemed with

Roman mythology and idolatry. A cave near Caesarea Philippi was said to be the birthplace of Pan and where he lived. A grotto shrine dedicated to him gave this site the name Paneas in early Roman times.

The Gates of Hell

To the pagan mind, the cave at Caesarea Philippi created a gate to the underworld, where fertility gods lived during the winter. They committed detestable acts to worship these false gods.

Caesarea Philippi's location was especially unique because it stood at the base of a cliff where spring water flowed. At one time, the water ran directly from the mouth of a cave set in the bottom of the cliff.

The pagans of Jesus' day commonly believed that their fertility gods lived in the underworld during the winter and returned to earth each spring. They saw water as a symbol of the underworld and thought that their gods traveled to and from that world through caves.

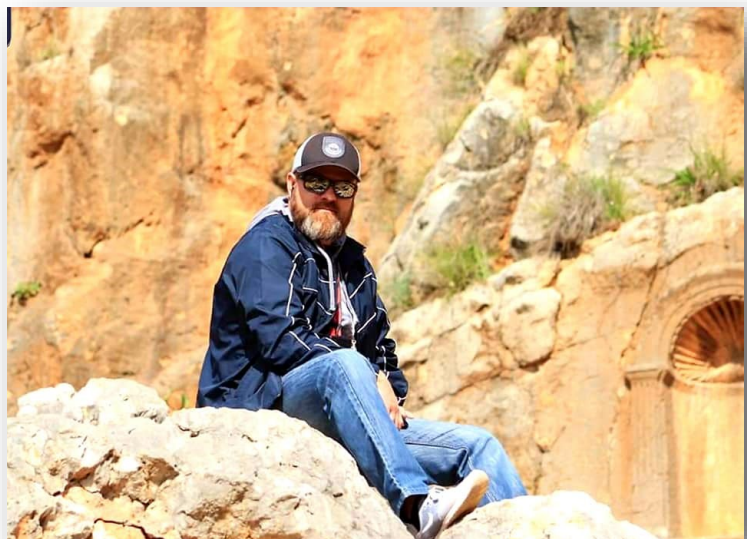
To the pagan mind, then, the cave and spring water at Caesarea Philippi created a gate to the underworld. They believed that their city was literally at the gates of the underworld, the gates of hell. In order to entice the return of their god, Pan, each year, the people of Caesarea Philippi engaged in horrible deeds, including prostitution and sexual interaction between humans and goats.

When Jesus brought his disciples to the area, they must have been shocked. Caesarea Philippi was like a red-light district in their world and devout Jews would have avoided any contact with the despicable acts committed there.

It was a city of people eagerly knocking on the doors of hell.

Caesarea Philippi, which translates "**Philip's city of Caesar,**" was built by Herod's son Philip on a large plateau at the foot of Mount Hermon near the headwaters of the Jordan River. Herod built a temple dedicated to the Roman emperor Augustus here, but it was Philip who took the fresh water pools, fertile soil, and hilltop views and turned this place into one of the best resorts in Palestine. In a fit of modesty, he renamed it Caesarea Philippi after himself.

Later, Herod Agrippa II (the grandson of Herod the Great) renamed the city Neronias to honor Emperor Nero, but after Nero committed suicide the name was changed back to Paneas. The area's modern name is Banias, an Arabic corruption of Panias.



Caesarea Philippi in the Bible



Caesarea Philippi rests on the southwestern slope of **Mount Hermon**, which happens to be the tallest mountain in all of Israel at 9,232 feet above sea level and 11,000 feet above the level of the Jordan Valley.

It was right here where Jesus, nearing the end of his ministry, asked his disciples one profound question... "Who do you say that I am?"

"They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:13-18)

This dramatic scene in the Gospels is referred to as Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi. The disciples had walked with Jesus for about three years, listening to his teachings and witnessing his miracles. They came to know Jesus as a man. However, Simon had come to understand that Jesus was the long-awaited Jewish Messiah.

Jesus responded by blessing Simon. He changed Simon's name to Peter – the "rock" – and declared that he would build a church on this rock – a church so solid that not even Hades itself would overcome it.

A majority of Christians believe that the "rock" that Jesus was referring to was not Peter himself, but Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus had never explicitly taught Peter and the other disciples the fullness of his identity, and Jesus stated that God had opened Peter's eyes and revealed to him who Jesus really was. So, under this interpretation, Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah was informed and inspired by God – which brought forward the heartfelt declaration of Peter's personal faith in Jesus. Many Christians believe that it is this "personal faith" in Jesus that is the hallmark of a true Christian, and that those who place their faith in Jesus, as Peter did, are the true "church."

Special Note: In Jesus' time a temple stood in front of this cave. In the cave or the grotto was a very deep pool that they never could measure (according to Josephus) and a powerful stream of water flowed. The cave was believed to be the gates to Hades.

THE GROTTA OF THE GOD PAN: This cave is the nucleus beside which the sacred sanctuary was built. In this 'abode of the shepherd god,' pagan cult began as early as the 3rd century BCE. The ritual sacrifices were cast into a natural abyss reaching the underground waters at the back of the cave. If the victims disappeared in the water this was a sign that the god had accepted the offering. If, however, signs of blood appeared in the nearby springs the sacrifice had been rejected.



If, however, signs of blood appeared in the nearby springs the sacrifice had been rejected.

This water flows to feed the Jordan River and ultimately the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

Jordan River

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)



The Jordan River Valley is mentioned frequently in the Bible. In fact, it is mentioned about 175 times in the Old Testament and about 15 times in the New Testament. The name Jordan literally translates “the descender,” which makes sense once you know a little about the valley.

The headwaters of the Jordan are at the base of Mt. Hermon, and, as mentioned in the previous section, four main streams feed the Jordan here: the Nahr Baniyas, the Nahr el Leddan, the Nahr Hasbani, and the Nahr Bareight.

The Jordan River descends in a series of steps. The first is from Mt. Hermon to Lake Huleh—and it is a doozy, with a drop of more than 8,000 feet generating fast moving rapids that are enjoyed by rafters. Lake Huleh’s altitude is about 1,000 feet above sea level. The river flows through Lake Huleh and continues on to the Sea of Galilee, which is 685 feet below sea level. From there it descends another 600 feet, emptying into the Dead Sea, which is 1,275 feet below sea level.

The river itself follows a winding, nearly 200-mile long course. In modern and in ancient times, it has been used as a natural boundary line. Up north it is used as a western boundary for the Golan Heights, and down south it divides Jordan and Israel.

The Jordan River played a very important role in Biblical times. It is the river that the Israelites crossed to enter the Promised Land of Canaan (**Joshua 3:14-17**). The fords of the Jordan were the sites of conflict in the war of Jephthah and the Gileadites against the Ephraimites (Judges 12:1-6). The prophet Elijah sought refuge from Ahab king of Israel by the brook of Kerith east of the Jordan (1 Kings 17:1-5). Elisha followed Elijah to the Jordan River, where he watched Elijah ascend into heaven by a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:6-12). Naaman, the Syrian general, bathed in the Jordan at the command of Elisha and his leprosy was healed (2 Kings 5:8-14). Elisha made the ax float at the Jordan River (2 Kings 6:1-7). The Jordan River also marked the division between the tetrarchy of Philip and that of Herod Antipas. It is also the river in which John baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17). Peter confessed that Jesus was the “Christ, the Son of the living God” at Caesarea Philippi, located on one of the sources of the Jordan, Baniyas (Matthew 16:13-20). Jesus healed two blind men at Jericho, which is near the Jordan (Matthew 20:29-34) and visited with Zacchaeus in that same city (Luke 19:1-10).



“And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people...” (Josh 3:14-17).

“And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto



Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thine house upon thee with fire...” (Judges 12:1-6).

“... So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan” (1 Kings 17:1-5).

“And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan...” (2 Kings 2:6-12).

“And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, “Wherefore hast thou rent thy

clothes?...” (2 Kings 5:8-14).

“And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us...” (2 Kings 6:1-7).

“Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong...” (Jeremiah 49:19).

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him...” (Matt 3:13-17).

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am...?” (Matt 16:13-20).

“And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him” (Matt 20:29-34).

“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich...” (Luke 19:1-10).

“And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode” (John 10:40).



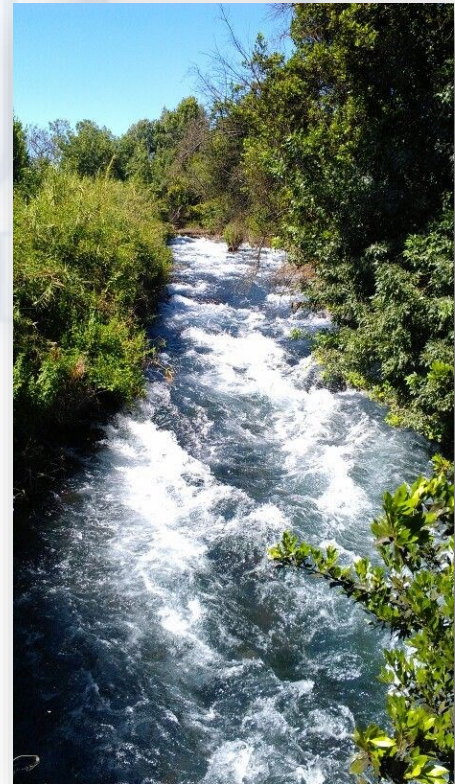
DID YOU KNOW: The Jordan river begins in the north of Israel and flows down to the Sea of Galilee, then through the Jordan Valley to the wilderness of Judea, and finally into the Dead Sea where it comes to its end. In Hebrew, the Jordan name is the Yarden.

The name comes from the Hebrew word yarad. Yarad means to go down, to descend. So, the Jordan means the descender. All rivers descend, but no river descends as much as does the Jordan. It descends so far that it ends its journey in the lowest place on earth, the Dead Sea.

As the Jordan descends it gives life to the Promised Land. It is through a descent, that life is given.

- God is the Ultimate Descender.
- God is the Yarden.
- It is the Most High who is the Descender.

Only He can fully descend. And so, Jesus the Descender humbled Himself, descending from the heights to come into the world, and taking the form of man.



And as the Jordan descends to the Sea of Galilee, so the Descender came to the land of Galilee, and there gave life to those in need. And in the same way that the Jordan descends from Galilee to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth, so from Galilee the Descender went down to the lowest of depths, to death and judgment.

For God is love. And the nature of love is to descend that it might give of itself, and that we, in its descent, might find life. And those who have received the life of this Yarden must likewise descend to give of that life to others. Embrace His love today!

Bethany beyond the Jordan

The Jordan River site is along the major east-west trade route. The site is midway between Amman, Jordan and Jerusalem, directly east of and in view of Jericho. It was also along the north-south



route for those traveling between the Galilee region and Jerusalem.



Baptism of Jesus - Matthew 3:13-17 and corresponding passages in the other three Gospels. Jordan claims this place as the baptism site of Jesus by John the Baptist, but actually it can be claimed by Israel as well. John the Baptist was baptizing in this well-traveled area, calling for repentance and “prepare ye the way of the Lord” for the coming Messiah.

The Baptism Site on the Jordan side of the Jordan River is one of the most important recent discoveries in biblical archaeology. Excavations only began here in 1996, following Jordan's peace treaty with Israel in 1994, but have already uncovered more than 20 churches, caves

and baptismal pools dating from the Roman and Byzantine periods.

Although the identification is not absolutely certain, archaeology has shown that the area known as Wadi Kharrar has long been believed to be the biblical Bethany-beyond-the-Jordan, where John the Baptist lived and Jesus was baptized.

This area is also associated with the ascension of the Prophet Elijah into heaven, which is commemorated at a hill called Tell Mar Elias.

Note: This Bethany should not be confused with Bethany close to Jerusalem, where Mary and Martha lived and Lazarus was raised from the dead.

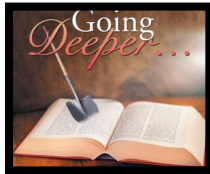
Other Biblical Events in this Area:

Crossing the Jordan to the Promised Land – Joshua 3:1-4:24 This is the location of the Israel encampment and the crossing of the Jordan River led by Joshua and the Ark of the Covenant into the “Promised Land.”



Elijah ascends to Heaven - 2 Kings 2:5-14 The hill on the east of the Jordan River is the site where Elijah passed the mantle on to Elisha and and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

*“Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” ... Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped **at the Jordan**. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them **crossed over** on dry ground. ... As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more.” (2 Kings 2:6-12)*



DID YOU KNOW: In **Genesis 1:3** God said, “Let there be light!” And there was light. Notice what God did. In the world, we speak of that which is. But God speaks of that which is not. He spoke the light when it was not, and then it was. This is the way of God not only with light, but also with His people.

There was an old man whose wife was past the age of bearing children. But God gave him the name Avraham or Abraham, which in Hebrew means father of the multitudes. He gave him a name of that which was not and then it was. Abraham became the father of all nations. His name prophetically spoke the very purpose of his existence. Then there was the man who was rejected by his family, falsely accused, and thrown into prison. But God had caused him at birth to be given the name Yosef or Joseph. Yosef means he shall increase. His prophetic destiny would carry him to Egypt where he increased in power and became second in charge of the largest empire in the world at that time. And then there was the man who lived in fear of his enemies. But God had caused his name to be Gideon. The name means he who strikes down. He would end up a national hero who against overwhelming odds, struck down the enemies of Israel. And then there was a man of great passion but little stability. But God had given him the Aramaic name Kayfah which means the rock. You know him as Peter and by the end of his life, that is exactly what he would become, a rock of strength for the early church.

The world tells us to see ourselves as we are. But God sees us not as we are, but as He called us to be. He gives us a prophetic identity not based on our past but based on what we are to become. The secret is to receive that identity and believe it before we see it. Live it as if it is.

So, your name is no longer rejected, but **ACCEPTED**; no longer weak, but **MIGHTY**; no longer defeated, but **VICTORIOUS**; no longer condemned but completely **FORGIVEN**.

TODAY: Fulfill your prophetic calling and walk in your God ordained identity.



Beth - Shan

“The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.” (1 Samuel 31:8-10)

As we drive south from the Sea of Galilee and cross the Jordan River, we enter the Beth She'an Valley. Located 17 miles south of the Sea of

Galilee, Beth She'an is situated at the strategic junction of the Harod and Jordan valleys. It is a small town with many names: Beth She'an (the actual Hebrew word is pronounced “bayth-she-awn”), Bet She'an, Beit She'an, Beth Shan (the abbreviated form), Beisan—and just to keep things interesting, Scythopolis. Besides having a long list of names, it has a long history that dates back to biblical times. According to the Talmud, “If the garden of Eden is in Israel, then its gate is in Bet She'an.” Set between two valleys, it has fertile land and plenty of water. This explains why so many invaders have conquered and then settled here.

Today Beth She'an is best known for its spectacular archaeological excavations. The Bet She'an tel is about 262 feet tall, and 18 previous cities have been built on this site—one on top of the next. In the 15th century BC, Beth She'an was listed among Thutmose III's conquests. The city was used as an Egyptian administrative center, and ruins from this time have been found. Egyptian stela from the time of Seti I and Ramses II were also uncovered here and later moved to the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem.

The Egyptians were eventually conquered by the Canaanites, who controlled Beth She'an until the Philistines conquered them around the 11th century BC. It was during Philistine rule that Saul's body was hung from the wall of Beth She'an as mentioned in the above Scripture reference. Later, the city came under Jewish control with the conquests of King David. Ruins from this era have also been uncovered.

The city seemed to drop from the historical radar until around the 3rd century BC when Greco-Romans rebuilt and renamed the city "Scythopolis." Ruins from an 8,000-seat theater, a stone colonnade, basalt streets, and a one-and-a-half acre Roman thermae (bath house) can still be seen today. From the 4th to the 7th centuries AD, Byzantines ruled Beth She'an. Under their rule the city prospered and grew to its largest size—a population of 40,000. Many beautiful mosaics survived this period.

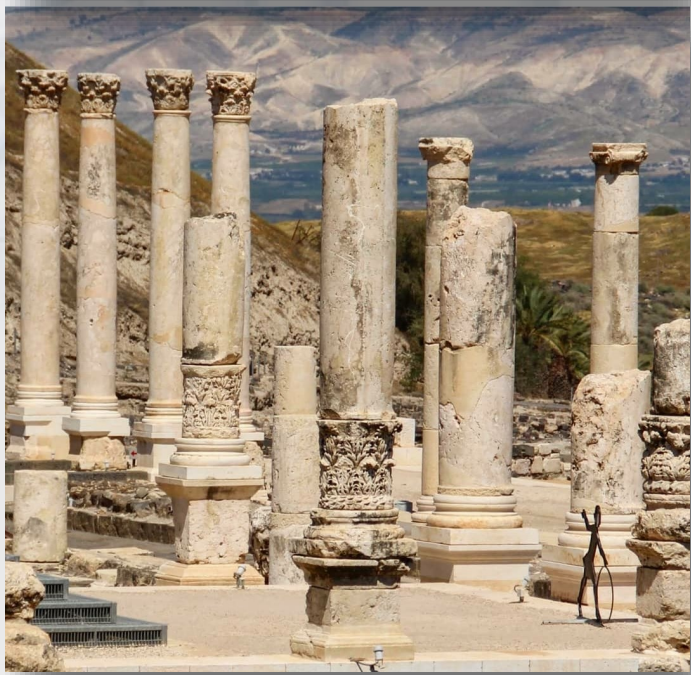
In 634 AD, Muslims captured and renamed the city once again, this time, "Besian." The city fell into decline and much of the marble was carted off and crushed to make lime. Like taking a wrecking ball to a condemned building, an earthquake in 749 AD destroyed what was left of the city. It remained mostly abandoned for the next thousand years. The Swiss-German traveler, Johann Ludwig Burkhart, described Beth She'an in 1812 as "a village with 70 to 80 houses, whose residents are in a miserable state."

Beth She'an was put back on the map in 1921 when the University of Pennsylvania began excavating. Then, nine seasons of excavations were conducted from 1989 to 1996 by the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

This is always one of the most impressive archaeological sites that one will visit while touring throughout all of Israel.

Beth She'an in the Bible

Beth She'an was one of the ancient cities of the Decapolis mentioned in Mark 5:20 and Mark 7:31. Beth She'an and the surrounding towns were assigned to the tribe of Manasseh, but fearing the iron chariots of the Canaanite inhabitants, the Israelites failed to



drive the Canaanites out of Beth She'an (**Joshua 17:16-17**). Israel finally conquered Beth She'an during the reign of King Solomon, some four hundred years after Joshua's conquest of the area (**1 Kings 4:12**).

But perhaps the most well-known biblical story involving the town is when Saul and his three sons died on Mount Gilboa; the Philistine victors carried their decapitated bodies to Beth She'an and hung them on the city wall to humiliate the Israelites. When the Israelites heard of this travesty, the men of Jabesh Gilead marched through the night (a distance of 12 miles) to recover the bodies of the king and his sons. They carried them back to Jabesh Gilead where they burned them and buried the ashes.

There are traces of an ancient settlement here in the well watered and fertile northern part of the Jordan Valley. This Palestinian town is located fifteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee and four miles west of the Jordan River. It stood at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, guarding an important Jordan River crossing. It was one of the key cities that developed at points where natural routes connected the highlands to the east and west.

When the Philistines defeated Israel under King Saul at the battle on Mount Gilboa, Beth-Shan was a Philistine city. The slain bodies of Saul and his sons were hung on the city wall. Saul's head was displayed in the temple of Dagon, a Philistine deity (**1 Samuel 31:10-13**; **2 Samuel 21:12-14**; **1 Chronicles 10:8-10**). Later, the city became a part of David's kingdom.

The area that included Beth-Shan was given to Issachar's tribe at the time of Israel's conquest of Canaan. Eventually, Manasseh's tribe took it over (Joshua 17:11). It was then added into the district of Baanah under King Solomon (1 Kings 4:12). The city is thought to have been destroyed by Shishak (Sheshonk I), pharaoh of Egypt in the tenth century B.C. During the remainder of the Old Testament period, Beth-Shan was insignificant.

Beth-Shan received the name of Scythopolis during the Hellenistic period because it was settled by a colony of Scythian mercenaries serving the Egyptian king Ptolemy II. This strategic site also held an Egyptian military base, which were also located in other surrounding areas. Greek deities Dionysus and Zeus had temples built in honor of them. Eventually, Beth-Shan became an important administrative center under the rule of the Hasmonean kings. It prospered as a member of the league of Greco-Roman commercial cities called Decapolis (Matthew 4:25; Mark 7:31) and was the only league member west of the Jordan.

(Pictured Right)

The largest Roman bath house ever excavated in all Israel. The sub-floor shown to the right would have been flooded with boiling water causing the room to be filled with steam for relaxation and the easing of sore muscles.



“And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher Beth-shean and her towns...” (Josh 17:11).

“And they put his armor in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-Shan...” (1 Samuel 31:10-12).

“And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa...” (2 Sam 21:12-14).

“Baana the son of Ahilud; to him pertained Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean...” (1 Kings 4:12).

“And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa...” (1 Chr 10:8-10).

“And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan” (Matt 4:25).

“And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel” (Mark 5:20).

“And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis” (Mark 7:31).

Ein-Karim –

The city of Ein Karim is located southwest of Jerusalem. It is the birth place of John the Baptist, who was the son of Zachary, a priest of the Temple in Jerusalem from the division of Abijah. The Angel Gabriel told Zachary that his wife, Elizabeth would bear a child even though she was an old woman.

Luke 1: 13-22 *“Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. ¹⁶And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

¹⁸*And Zacharias said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.”*

¹⁹*And the angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. ²⁰But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.”*

²¹*And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. ²²But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.”*

Mary’s cousin Elizabeth’s came to visit her when she was 6 months pregnant in Luke 1:39-42 *“Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”*



DID YOU KNOW: In Israel when it rains, they consider that day blessed by God. In the desert region they only experience just a few inches of annual rainfall so when it rains, overnight the valleys are green, the hills are green, and there are plants everywhere. God gave the prophet Isaiah this word in chapter 35: "The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the



desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice . . . For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert . . . There shall be grass with reeds and rushes . . . "

You may be thinking, how does the desert blossom so quickly? The answer is because it was all there waiting to blossom, the seeds, the dry riverbeds, the potential was there waiting.

It is a picture of redemption. The barren wilderness represents our lives without God. And the rain is His Spirit, and the outpouring of His love and grace upon our lives. And the blossoming of this wilderness tells us this: it does not matter how barren our lives have become or how hopeless any situation in our lives may appear. It does not matter how dry and lifeless things may seem. All it takes are the rains of heaven. And that which is dormant and that which seems dead and hopeless will blossom again. And the seeds that He planted will spring up, and our valleys will again be covered with green, and our riverbeds will again flow with rivers of living waters.

The most barren of deserts is but a miracle waiting to happen, under the outpouring of the desert rains. Our entire life is like the desert seeking the rains of heavens which causes dry barren areas to blossom, to flow, and to produce miracles.

Wadi Qelt

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" - Psalm 23:4

After John 3:16, the 23rd Psalm is probably one of the most well-known Scriptures in the Bible. It brings comfort to those who are going through trials of life.

A Wadi Qelt (or Kelt) is a narrow gorge cutting through the Judean Wilderness. For thousands of years, travelers descended 17 miles on their journey from Jerusalem down to Jericho. On this ancient path, travelers would face danger from falling rocks, wild animals, and thieves hiding in its many caves. The Romans had built a road through this area which became the setting for the only parable Jesus gave concerning the Good Samaritan found in **Luke 10:25-37**:



“And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”²⁷ So he answered and said, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your



mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’ ”²⁸ And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”²⁹ But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”³⁰ Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.³¹ Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.³² Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.³⁴ So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.³⁵ On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’³⁶ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”³⁷ And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to

him, "Go and do likewise."

Shepherds can still be seen above Wadi Qelt, leading their sheep and goats along paths worn into the hillside by shepherds' centuries earlier. The shepherds still guide their flocks along these paths with their rods and still lead them to the calm, spring-fed waters of the wilderness. When sitting above Wadi Qelt, it is impossible not to imagine that the writer of 23rd Psalm was sitting in the same spot when he wrote about his Lord, the shepherd, protecting and comforting him as he walked through this dangerous "valley of the shadow of death."

David wrote about walking through the valley of the shadow of death and he knew it was not his final destination. Like David, we also enter valley experiences as we journey through life, but we don't remain there. It's on this journey, however, that Jesus is beside us, walking us through those difficult days. When we come out on the other side, we'll be stronger, or we'll find ourselves celebrating in heaven.

The key word in "through." We don't walk "in" the valley, we walk "through" the valley. We don't remain there. Without valleys, there would be no mountaintops.

Whether we're still journeying through life or headed to our final home, the Good Shepherd is always with us. He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

That is one of many promises we can cling to as we journey through life. We're never alone. He is with us always. Whether it's in the deepest valley or on the highest mountain, He is always with us.

The monastery of St. George is visible and hangs on the wall of Wadi Qelt above the road to Jericho. It was first built in the late fifth century and restored to its current condition in 1901 by a Greek monk who settled there. It is inhabited today by Orthodox monks who gladly open their doors to visitors.



DID YOU KNOW: Elijah wore a large garment, a robe of sorts, made of a rough light brown material called a mantle? When Elijah was being taken up to heaven, he cast it upon the shoulders of Elisha, signifying that Elisha would follow in his footsteps as a prophet of the Lord. Can you imagine being Elisha and feeling Elijah's mantle coming over you?

It must have been overwhelming. He must have felt totally inadequate.

Undoubtedly, but so did all the others who received their mantles. From Moses, to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, to Peter, they all felt unworthy of the mantle given them, and with good reason, the mantle was too big. It didn't fit. But that's the nature of the mantle. In Hebrew the mantle is called the *aderet*. *Aderet* means large, big, great, wide, powerful, excellent, noble, mighty, and glorious. You see, the mantle is bigger and greater than the one it's given to. And so too it is with us.

With all God's children. Each one of us is given a mantle, a calling. But remember, your mantle is your *aderet*, and the *aderet* always speaks of greatness. So, your calling will be too big for you. It won't fit. It won't match who you are. And there will be times when you'll struggle with that, with its magnitude in comparison to who you are. It will always be greater, more powerful, more noble, more excellent, and more glorious than the one who wears it and to whom it was given.

You may be thinking, why does God give us mantles that are too big and don't fit?

Your mantle is not meant to fit who you are. It's meant to fit who you are becoming. So, when you were a little child, your parents bought you clothes that didn't fit, that were too big. It wasn't to fit who you were; it was to fit who you were to become. So too your mantle is beyond you, that you can grow into it, to accomplish something for God greater than yourself. Never be intimidated at the difference in size. It must be that way, that you might become greater, more excellent, more noble, more powerful, and more glorious than you are now.

TODAY: embrace the aderet, your mantle, the call of God on your life. Accept its greatness and that it's over and above you. Believe it, and by surrendering to God's leading... you will grow into it.

Jericho

Jericho is the lowest city on earth at 846 feet below sea level and the oldest whose occupation began in 10,000 BC. It is built around a powerful spring of water producing 1,000 gallons per minute. This spring has always caused an oasis to grow in this desert and the water still flows today and is being used to irrigate Jericho.

Jericho became a private estate of the reigning ruler in Alexander's day (336 BC). With no real city growth, the Syrians built it up as a defensive fort in 100's BC. Herod leased it from Cleopatra who received it from Mark Antony. Octavian (Caesar Augustus) gave it to Herod the Great who built a palace, hippodrome and a theatre. Herod Archelaus built a village for his date plantation workers. Vespasian moved siege equipment up roads that Rome built to attack Jerusalem from Jericho. Byzantines settled Jericho. Muslims of the Umayyad dynasty built a luxury hunting palace there in 700 w/ mosaics still visible. Crusaders took Jericho but when they were defeated by Saladin in 1187 AD Jericho was abandoned and overrun by Bedouin raiders which left it a miserable village overrun by the desert. After WWI order was restored.

(Pictured on the Right: a sycamore-fig tree)



Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. **Luke 19:1-6**

The city of Jericho is located on the west side of the Jordan River in the West Bank of the Palestinian territories. At 825 feet below sea level, it is the lowest oasis and town in the world. Jericho is also believed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities on earth, occupied since approximately 3000 BC.

After Jerusalem, Jericho is the most excavated place in Israel. The name Jericho may be connected to the ancient name of the Canaanite moon god. The Hebrew words for moon, month, new moon, and Jericho are very similar. It is also associated with the words for spirit or smell. The pleasant fragrances of the fruits and spices in the land may have helped to name the place. In the Old Testament, it is referred to as "the city of palm trees" (**Deuteronomy 34:3; 2 Chronicles 28:15**). Jericho was located about five miles from the southern-most fords and about ten miles northwest of the Dead Sea. It lies about 3,500 feet below Jerusalem, which was only 17 miles away. As Jesus said in the parable of the good Samaritan, "down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (**Luke 10:30**).





(Pictured Right): The retaining wall (revetment wall) that supported a taller mud brick wall that collapsed when Joshua arrived. These walls are where homes (such as Rahab's) were built leaning against this city wall.

Before the Bible first mentions Jericho in connection with the exodus from Egypt, it was a large and thriving city for centuries. Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is dated back to the Neolithic Age ten thousand years ago. There are three main reasons primitive people would have chosen this site as a settlement and

as a key city. **1)** It has a plentiful spring, now called Elisha's Fountain (**2 Kings 2:18-22**). **2)** It has a warm climate in the winter, although "hot" describes it in the summer. **3)** It is strategically placed at a Jordan ford and at the base of several routes leading westward to the foothills. Many different populations have come and gone in Jericho, however, the civilizations grew more complex over the years. The food-gathering population gave way to a relatively complex urban society, which included kings, soldiers, and guest houses. Jericho was developed this way when Joshua arrived there. The first certain identification of its inhabitants occurs in **Numbers 13:29**: "The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."

In the Old Testament, Jericho is best known because of Joshua's conquest of the city by encircling it and blowing the trumpets in obedience to God's command. Israel had spent some time on the east bank of the Jordan in the plains of Moab (**Numbers 22:1; Numbers 26:3, 63**).

Jericho was targeted as the first military objective in the conquest. Before crossing the Jordan and establishing camp at Gilgal, Joshua sent spies ahead to Jericho. Rahab the harlot took them in and later helped them escape. For her cooperation, she and her family were spared when Israel destroyed the city (**Joshua 2:1; Joshua 6:1**). Because Jericho was such a strategic oasis, if it could be taken, the way into the mountains of Canaan would lay open. The fall of the city itself occurred after the Israelites had marched around it in silence, except for the continual blowing of trumpets, once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. As the priests blew the trumpets, the people shouted and the walls collapsed. Joshua laid a curse on anyone who might rebuild Jericho (**Joshua 6:26**). Five hundred years later, Hiel rebuilt the city at the cost of two of his sons (**1 Kings 16:34**). Joshua's victory has led to major excavations at Tel es Sultan, the mound of ancient Jericho.

Jericho appears throughout the rest of the Old Testament. In **2 Samuel 10:5** David had his humiliated ambassadors wait there until their beards grew back (see also **1 Chronicles 19:5**). It was also where many of the prophets lived, as well as a headquarters for Elisha (**2 Kings 2:5; 1 Samuel 10:5**). A return of prisoners also took place there at the time of Ahaz (**2 Chronicles 28:15**). Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. and King Zedekiah fled to land near Jericho, but was caught by Babylonians. The Babylonians took out his eyes at a place called Riblah in Syria (**2 Kings 25:5; Jeremiah 39:5; Jeremiah 52:8**). Jericho is mentioned in the census lists of Ezra and Nehemiah (**Ezra 2:34; Nehemiah 7:36**). Men from Jericho also helped rebuild the Jerusalem wall (**Nehemiah 3:2**).

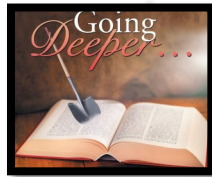
King Herod built the Jericho of the New Testament more than a mile to the south of the Old Testament site. In the New Testament Jericho is the home of Zacchaeus, the wealthy chief tax collector of the new Roman Jericho. As Jesus passed through Jericho (**Luke 19:1**) he met and ate with Zacchaeus. Jesus also healed blind men while passing from the site of ancient Jericho (**Matthew 20:29**) to the Herodian Jericho (**Luke 18:35**). The parable of the good Samaritan also took place in Jericho (**Luke 10:30-37**).

In 1868, Charles Warren first excavated Jericho. It was then excavated by a German team of Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger in 1907-11, and then by John Garstang in 1930-36. They found piles of mud bricks at the base of the

found the city was built on. In the 1950's Kathleen Kenyon re-excavated the site and determined that the bricks were from the city wall which had collapsed when the city was destroyed.

The Bible records that when the walls collapsed, Joshua and his men stormed the city and set it on fire. Archaeologists found evidence for a massive destruction by fire just as the Bible described.

Although Jericho was of small consequence after its destruction under Joshua, the Jericho of Herod was a city of beauty and importance. Eventually this Jericho decayed with the decline of Roman influence in the Middle East. There have been writings of pilgrims to the Holy Land that have taught us what we now know of the modern city of Jericho. They usually report seeing certain things of Biblical significance, such as the tree that Zacchaeus climbed. They also report that Jericho was a filthy, wretched Muslim village. It remained that way until recently, when it grew in size and importance as a major West Bank City.



DID YOU KNOW: Moses prophesied in **Deuteronomy 29:22-23** that one day there will come a stranger, one who will journey from a faraway land. And when he enters the land of Israel, he will bear witness of its barrenness, its devastation, and its desolation.

This prophecy came true when the land's devastation was at its most extreme, in the nineteenth century. The stranger would come from America, from San Francisco, from the ends of the earth. And since the prophecy required someone to bring forth words of testimony, so he would be a man of words, a writer. He is considered by many to be the Father of American literature; the stranger was Mark Twain.

His journey had begun in June 1867, and he would reach the Holy Land in mid-September. He would enter the gates of Jerusalem on September 23. On September 27, after an excursion in the desert, he would return to the Holy City for the culmination of his pilgrimage.

September 28 would constitute his last full day and night in Jerusalem. The following day he would leave the city and head back to the shore to board his ship and begin the journey home to America where his writings would appear in articles across America and beyond. September 28 fell on a Saturday. Saturday is the Sabbath.

Every Sabbath day, from ancient times, the Jewish people gather in their synagogues, open the scrolls, and read the ancient Scriptures. Thus, on every Sabbath day there is a specific portion of Scripture appointed to be read called the **PARASHA**. The appointed Scripture for September 28, 1867, was this:



. . . the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD has laid on it: 'The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there . . .'" (Deut. 29:22-23)

The prophecy of the stranger! It was on that day that the stranger had accomplished what the prophecy had foretold, on the day the prophecy was read throughout the earth.

The prophecy was appointed to be read in every synagogue in the world. So, across the earth, in every synagogue from San Francisco to Siberia, they were reciting and chanting the prophecy of the stranger, who would come from far away to the land of Israel to bear witness of the desolation. And so, the prophecy of the stranger was being proclaimed throughout the earth at the very moment the stranger was in the land fulfilling its words.

Since ancient times the scattered children of Israel would pray to God to have mercy on Jerusalem and bring them back to their homeland. They prayed that prayer, seeking God's mercy, virtually every day of their exile for two thousand years. And for two thousand years it seemed to them as if God wasn't hearing their prayers. But the stranger would be the sign that their exile was about to end, and that God had heard their prayers.

The stranger's real name was NOT Mark Twain. At his birth he was given the name Samuel. Samuel is a Hebrew name. So, he was given a name that came from the land of Israel, the land he would one day visit. And in Hebrew Samuel means "God has heard".

Yes, for God had heard the prayers of His people. He would fulfill His purposes for Jerusalem and the Promised Land. And what were the prayers that His ancient people prayed, that He heard and would soon answer? They were that He would restore the land and that He would bring them back, that He would have mercy, that He would be merciful to them. The stranger's real last name was not Twain; it was Clemens. And in Hebrew Clemens means "Merciful" . . . the quality of showing mercy.

The stranger was a sign from God.

Samuel—God had heard their prayers.

Clemens—and was about to show them mercy.

"And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho" (Numbers 22:1).

"And Moses and Eleazar the priest spake with them in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying," (Numbers 26:3).

"These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho" (Numbers 26:63).

"And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar" (Deut 34:3).

"And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho..." (Josh 2:1).

"Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in" (Josh 6:1).

"And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and builds this city Jericho..." (Josh 6:26).



“When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return” (2 Sam 10:5).

“In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho...” (1 Kings 16:34).

“And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knows thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye peace” (2 Kings 2:5).

“And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees: but the water is naught, and the ground barren...” (2 Kings 2:19-22).

“And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him” (2 Kings 25:5).

“Then there went certain, and told David how the men were served. And he sent to meet them: for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return” (1 Chr 19:5).

“And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives... and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria” (2 Chr 28:15).

“And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him” (Matt 20:29).

“Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness” (Luke 3:2).

“And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves...” (Luke 10:30-37).

“And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging...” (Luke 18:35-43).

“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho...” (Luke 19:1-10).

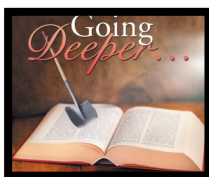
“The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five” (Ezra 2:34 & Nehemiah 7:36).

“But the Chaldeans’ army pursued after them, and over-took Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho...” (Jer 39:5).

“But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him” (Jer.52:8).



Blooming in the Desert



DID YOU KNOW: Isaiah not only saw Israel returning to the land, he prophesied that their agricultural blessings would also be a blessing to the world:

“He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” (Isaiah 27:6)



Israel is an exporter of all types of food, and the nation produces ninety-five percent of its countries own food requirements. There are over 725 agricultural communities that have been developed in swamp and desert regions.

Years ago a satellite picture identified a large underground water source in the rift that runs south from the Sea of Galilee and ends at the northern part of the Dead Sea. Israelis began drilling and discovered a huge lake of underground water! Using this water source, the agriculturists began to install water pumps and irrigation pipes throughout the desert. Today there seems to be tens of thousands of acres of farms stretching from the Sea of Galilee to the northern part of the Dead Sea. South of the Dead Sea, there are now over 54 farms spread throughout the desert, and they produce tomatoes, peppers, melons, and many other foods.



The crops yield over 10 times the production output in America. Even the cows in the region give more milk, up to 4,000 gallons a year compared to the average American cow that gives 2,500 gallons a year. This is an area, that for 5,800 years, was barren wasteland, and the land which the prophet saw blooming. This miracle is considered a sign of both God's favor and His faithfulness on the land.



DID YOU KNOW: When the Israelites were dying in the wilderness from being bit from venomous snakes, God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and suspend it on a pole (**Numbers 21:4-9**). And when the dying Israelites looked at that brass serpent, they were healed.

This seems very strange how the

Israelites were healed of the serpent's venom by an image of a serpent.

This principle of a negative of a negative nullifies the negative and produces its opposite, a positive. So, the power of the serpent is nullified by the power of the serpent, a double negative. The serpent in the Bible is a symbol of evil, the enemy, darkness, Satan, and sin.

This reveals the power of sin and evil will be nullified, by a double negative called redemption. So, Jesus the Messiah said this to Nicodemus in **John 3:14-15**: "As Moses

lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."



What does that mean? The double negative is called the Nekhushtan in ancient Hebrew, and in the New Testament it is fulfilled through the cross. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says; "He made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us." The cross is the double negative of judgment and creates the positive which is our salvation. Those separated from God are reconciled through Jesus Christ death on the cross, so those condemned are loved, and those dying from sin, inherit eternal life.

TODAY: Live your life thanking God for your spiritual life that comes through Jesus's being lifted up, so you could have eternal life through your belief and surrender to Him.



Dead Sea

The Dead Sea is both the lowest point in Eurasia at 1,371 ft. below sea level and falling, and the deepest hypersaline lake in the world at 2,300 ft. below sea level. It is also one of the saltiest bodies of water on Earth with a salinity of about 30%. It is twice as salty as the Great Salt Lake in Utah and 8.6 times as salty as the ocean. The sea is completely landlocked and the deeper you go the saltier it gets. Why is it so salty? Well, the Dead Sea is so low that it can't drain, and 7 million tons of water evaporates from it every day, leaving behind the minerals that flowed in with the water, including salt. This is about 8.6 times greater than the average ocean salinity. It measures 42 miles long, up to 11 miles wide, and is located on the border between the West Bank, Israel, and Jordan, and lies in the Jordan Rift Valley. The main tributary is the Jordan River.

There is strong geological evidence that there are subterranean fires under the Dead Sea. The waters of the Dead Sea contain about twenty-one minerals, twelve that are found in no other sea or ocean in the world. Another odd feature is that in the past, the sea occasionally spit up black-looking asphalt, a tarlike substance, into small pebbles from deep crevices under the water. After earthquakes, chunks of asphalt as large as a house have appeared on the lake, giving it a nickname of Lake Asphaltites!

In the year 312 there were Greek mercenaries making money from the jellylike crude oil that surfaced from the waters in the center of the Dead Sea. Arabic tribesmen with reed rafts would be on shore waiting as these bulls of jellylike crude oil were collected. The Greeks carried them off like the plunder of war, and fights would break out over who obtained the substances. Once this black substance collected on shore, three men would chop it with axes and cover the sticky substance with sand, then placing in bags. Camels then carried the valuable crude oil to Alexandria, Egypt, where it was sold and used as a fuel for lighting fires.

The Dead Sea has attracted interest and visitors from around the Mediterranean basin for thousands of years. It was a place of refuge for King David, it was one of the world's first health resorts for Herod the Great, and it has been the supplier of products as diverse as balms for Egyptian mummification to potash for fertilizers.



Visitors can float effortlessly on the waters of the Dead Sea because of the extremely high concentration of dissolved mineral salts in the water. Increased density means our bodies are more buoyant in the Dead Sea—so you bob like a cork. In fact, people are so buoyant in this water it makes it tough to actually swim. Most people like to just kick back in the water and read. The dry air, year-round warm temperatures, and therapeutic value of this place makes it quite a tourist destination.

Except for simple organisms, no plant or animal life is found in the Dead Sea. Fish that accidentally swim into the waters from one of the several freshwater streams that feed the sea are killed instantly, their bodies quickly coated with a preserving layer of salt crystals and then tossed onto shore by the wind and

waves. And this is no ordinary table salt, either. The salts found in the Dead Sea are mineral salts, just like you find in the oceans.

The Jordan River is the only major stream flowing into Dead Sea. Its area was constantly shrinking, and the water level was dropping by more than a meter (3 feet) a year.

Because it has no exit, water is lost only through evaporation, which leaves behind the minerals. A low promontory of land called el-Lisan (“the tongue”) projects across the sea from the east, dividing the southern third from the northern section. The southern part is now a series of evaporation pools for mineral extraction.

Most of the water that once flowed from the Jordan River into the Dead Sea is being diverted for drinking water and agricultural purposes, so there is not enough to offset the high evaporation rate.

Since the late 1980s the landscape around the sea has been reshaped by thousands of sinkholes — caused by fresh water from the mountains dissolving underground levels of salt. This phenomenon has caused some tourist beaches in Israel to close due to being unsafe.

Rescue proposals to prevent the sea drying up have included canals to bring water from the Mediterranean Sea or the Red Sea.

If the Dead Sea becomes rejuvenated with fresh water, this could fulfil a prophecy in Ezekiel 47:8-10, that it will “become fresh . . . and there will be very many fish”.

In December 2013, representatives of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority agreed on a long-term desalination project in which brine would be piped about 180 kilometers (112 miles) from Aqaba, Jordan, to replenish the Dead Sea.



DID YOU KNOW: One of Ezekiel’s famous prophecies – widely thought to be allegorical rather than literal – is now being fulfilled just as he said it would 2,600 years ago! Ezekiel prophesied that the Dead Sea would one day be teeming with life.

“Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not

become fresh; they will be left for salt. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” (Ezekiel 47:6-12)

In recent years, the Dead Sea is showing signs of coming alive! Fresh water is now flowing into this Rift Valley expanse that has been unable to support life since the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah thousands of years ago. There are recent reports of fish swimming in sinkholes of fresh water which have formed on the shores of the Dead Sea. These large freshwater sinkholes were discovered in 2011, are a result of dropping water levels. The Sinkholes are caused by fresh water running under the ground from nearby mountains are meeting the sediment layers and melting them. As a result, the sinkholes are teeming with fish and algae.



The water has a salinity level less than 1.5% and is water you could drink. This is the beginning of the fulfilment of Ezekiel’s prophecy.

Dead Sea in the Bible

The lake was not known as the Dead Sea until the 2nd century AD. The Old Testament refers to it as the Salt Sea (Genesis 14:3; Joshua 3:16), the Sea of Arabah (Deuteronomy 3:17), the Eastern Sea (Ezekiel 47:18; Joel 2:20), and the Sea (Ezekiel 47:1-11).

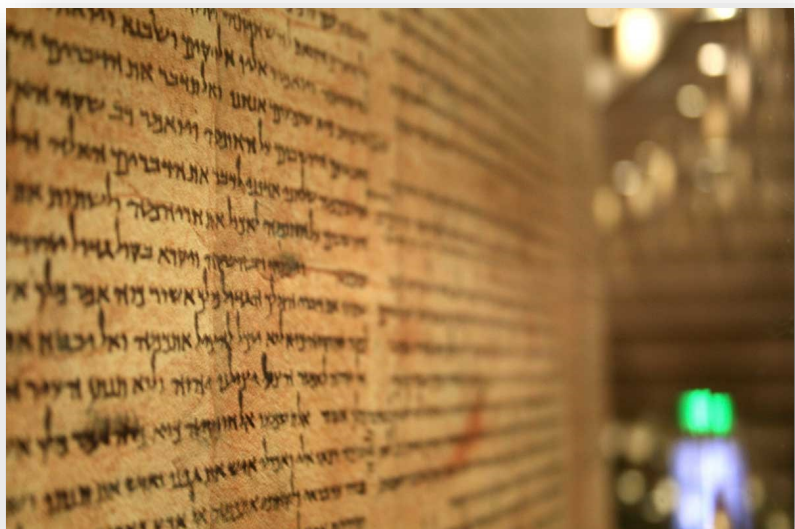
In ancient times, the Dead Sea was a great natural barrier blocking traffic to Judah from the east. An advancing army of Ammonites and Moabites apparently crossed a shallow part of the Dead Sea on their way to attack King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20). Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20-33) and the three other “Cities of the Plain” (Deuteronomy 29:23) were somewhere on these shores. Before their destruction, the Dead Sea was a green valley, which was called the Vale of Siddim. King David was said to have hidden from Saul at Ein Gedi nearby.



DID YOU KNOW: The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the year 1947 and sold to a merchant in Bethlehem for leather scraps. The merchant, Shahin Kando recognized the ancient writing on the leather parchment and gave them to Hebrew University’s head archaeologist Eliezer Sukenik to examine them in the privacy of his home.

Upon arriving home, Sukenik began unrolling the parchments, his fingers trembling at the prospect that what he was about to see was unprecedented. The words on the parchments were in Hebrew. The writing was ancient, going back thousands of years. It would represent the beginning of what has been called the greatest archaeological discovery of modern times, the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Dead Sea Scrolls contained the Hebrew Scriptures that not only were hidden but miraculously preserved for 2000 years. Up to their discovery, the oldest surviving copy of the Hebrew Scriptures, or most of the Bible, came from the Middle Ages. Any biblical manuscript from before that time had either been lost, destroyed, or unable to survive the passage of time. But with the uncovering of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the



world was now in possession of a Bible penned a thousand years earlier, from ancient times, from the time of Jesus. The discovery was momentous. The scrolls not only confirmed, in ink and parchment, the ancient origins of the Bible but also its accuracy. The text of the ancient parchments amazingly matched the modern text of the Bible. In two thousand years the word of God remained unchanged. Contained in the scrolls themselves was the ancient prophecy of **Isaiah 40:8...**

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God endures forever.”

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the year 1947. The same year of the United Nations resolution that would bring forth the rebirth of Israel. In the same year of restoration of the nation comes the restoration of the word. So, the people of Israel came back to the land, and God restored the word to them.

And the scrolls themselves would speak of the nation’s restoration. The most celebrated of the Dead Sea Scrolls was the scroll of Isaiah. It was there in that very first cave and was preserved in its entirety. Israel would build an entire sanctuary to house it, the Shrine of the Book. It was that scroll that contained some of the most powerful words of comfort ever given to Israel and some of the most beautiful prophecies of its future restoration. Several of these would come true in the twentieth century with the gathering of the Jewish people back to the land: “He will . . . assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (**Isaiah 11:12**)

But the mystery joining together the nation and the word would go even deeper. On the first night when Sukenik sat in his study deciphering the Dead Sea Scrolls, when after two thousand years their ancient secrets would for the first time be revealed, something else was happening. In the next room Sukenik’s youngest son, Mati, was listening to the radio. Mati would rush back and forth to tell his father what he was hearing.

The day that Sukenik brought the Dead Sea Scrolls back to his home, the day he unrolled them, and the day their words first came to light was November 29, 1947. This was also the day that the United Nations assembled in New York to vote on the resolution that would bring Israel back into existence.

The WORD of GOD and the NATION were being restored on the same day! When Sukenik’s son rushed into his office that night to give him the last report, his father was deeply absorbed in the ancient words coming to life before his eyes. His son shouted the news: “The United Nations resolution had passed. Israel would again become a nation.”



The word that was lost for two thousand years, was now restored, and the nation that was lost for two thousand years was now restored . . . at the same time.

Yes, in the **very same year**, on the **very same day**, on the **very same night**—at the very same moment, **God restored the Nation of Israel and WORD** together after 2000 years.

The Dead Sea was called at various times:

The Salt Sea

“All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.” Genesis 14:3

“And the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about.” Numbers 34:12

The Sea of the Plains

“The plain also, and Jordan, and the coast thereof, from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, under Ashdoth-pisgah eastward.” Deuteronomy 3:17

“And all the plain on the east side of the Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah.” Deuteronomy 4:49

The East Sea

“But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into the land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder parts toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savor shall come up, because he hath done great things.” Joel 2:20

The Former Sea

“And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out of Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter it shall be.” Zech. 14:8



DID YOU KNOW: In the Southern part of Israel lies the Judean desert, a wilderness where you will find mountains, which extended out into the distance. In the Hebrew language, the wilderness is called the **MIDBAR**. The word midbar comes from the root word dabar which means... **“TO SPEAK”**.

What is the wilderness?

It is the place of God's speaking, the place of His voice. It is where God especially talks to us. Why did He bring His people into the wilderness, into the midbar? So, He could speak to them. He brought Moses into the midbar to speak to him in a still, small voice.

The wilderness also represents hard times - times of loss, crisis, tragedy, loneliness, conflict, hardship, problems, separation, tears – which speaks of going through the wilderness. And yet the wilderness is a holy place. It is a place where God gave His Law, His Word, and where He revealed His presence. Sometimes in life, God brings us into the wilderness that He might speak.

In our everyday life we have many distractions. But in the wilderness the distractions are gone. So, God brings us to the wilderness that we might hear His voice. Therefore, do not fear or despise the wilderness of your life, and



do not despise His removing of the distractions. Rather embrace it. Draw closer to Him. And listen to what He is saying. Seek to hear His voice, and you will hear Him. For the wilderness in your life is not just a wilderness. It is holy ground ...the midbar ...the place of His voice.

Make a choice to put away the distractions, those things that keep you from hearing. And go into the wilderness, the midbar, and seek the Voice of God.

Masada

Masada means “fortress” and it’s not hard to understand how it got its name. The site stands like an island of stone hundreds of feet above the plain



surrounding it. With sheer cliff sides that range between 300 and 1300 feet high but has no water, shade, food or fuel but it's natural resource, rock which makes it a perfect place to build a palace.

According to Josephus, Herod the Great wanted a safe place to retreat in case of revolt, so he fortified Masada between 37 and 31 BC. During the first Jewish-Roman war (66 AD) it fell into the hands of the Jewish zealots, and after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 AD), the Jewish rebels and their families fled to this mountain-top fortress, using it as a base for raiding Roman settlements.



The natural fortifications, the narrow, winding path to the protected gate, the rainwater cisterns, the storehouses, barracks, and armory (built by Herod), made this place seem indestructible. Its walls were made of rough stone that was almost a mile in length. The walls design were called a “casemate” with two primary functions. First, they were large enough to house troops or supplies. Secondly they were able to strengthen the wall at certain areas by filling the case with stone in areas of possible vulnerability.

The zealots knew they couldn't beat Rome; they hoped to wait them out. They were so few—maybe Rome wouldn't consider them worth the cost of a long, drawn-out siege. That hope died in 72 AD when Rome marched against Masada with 8000 troops.

At first, the Romans tried to breach the wall. When that failed they came up with a new plan; they would build an earthen ramp on the shortest side. The Romans used Jewish slaves to build the ramp so that the Jews on Masada would not roll rocks down the hill to kill them. By spring of 73 AD, the ramp was complete.



Meanwhile, the Jews on Masada realized that they were going to be conquered and they knew what defeat at the hands of the Romans would cost—slavery for the wives and children and execution for the men. Their leader, Eleazar ben Yair, proposed a drastic solution. Each man would kill his own family and then the men would kill each other. 11 potsherds were found, each inscribed with a different name, that may have been the lots cast to determine who would kill the remaining comrades (**pictured to the left**). Two women and five children hid in cisterns to avoid being killed. From these survivors and from Josephus who recorded their story, we have Eleazar's final speech to his people:

“Since we have long ago resolved never to be servants to the Romans, nor to any other than to God Himself, Who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind...it is still in our power to die bravely and in a state of freedom. Let our wives die before they are abused and our children before they have tasted of slavery and after we have slain them, let us bestow that glorious benefit upon each other.”



Eleazar also ordered that all Jewish possessions be burned except for the food. Why? He wanted the Romans to know that the zealots hadn't fallen due to weakness. They had chosen their own destiny: death before slavery. By the time the Romans entered the fort the 960 defenders were already dead.

Masada in the Bible

Although Masada is not mentioned in the Bible by name, it is possible that this was David's place of refuge during his flight from Saul and where he wrote some of his Psalms. If so, David was probably referring to Masada as the "stronghold" (1 Samuel 22:4-5; 23:14; 24:22), using it to depict Masada is always one of the highlights of a trip to the Holy Land. More of a historical drama than a biblical drama, it captivates the imagination to hear the story of the Jews resisting the Romans and fleeing to this mountain, then taking their own lives rather than being captured alive. This is another one of those places in which you'll want to stick close to your guide, avoid wandering off, and absorb all the details of one incredible story. And with a stunning view of the Dead Sea, the adventure will take you back in time.

There are two ways to get to the top of Masada: one is by cable car and the other is by walking up the Snake Path.



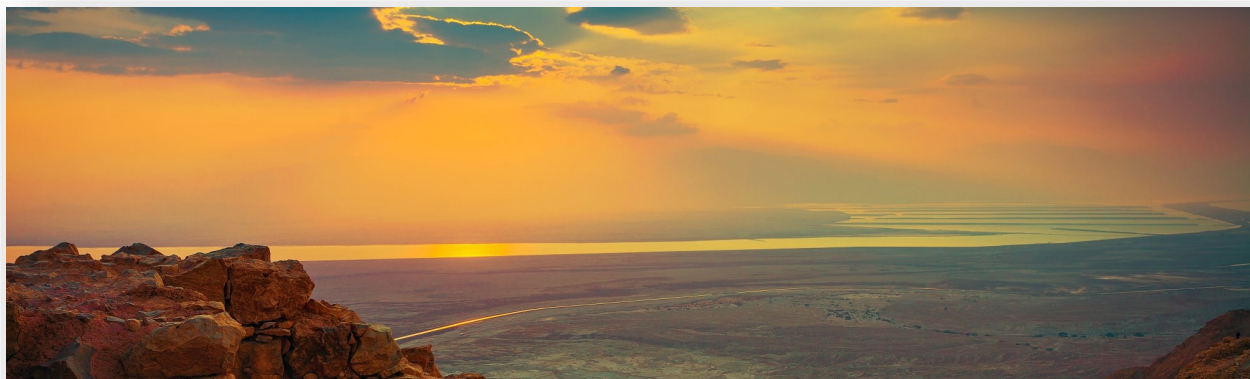
DID YOU KNOW: The Romans, led by General Titus, slaughter the Jewish people in Jerusalem in AD 70. They ransacked, burned, and tore down the Holy Temple and ran the Jewish people out of Jerusalem. Four years later, in AD 74, the 10th Legion of the Roman empire, conquered the desert fortress of Masada. So, the Jewish people lost Jerusalem in AD 70, and four years later, in AD 74, they lost Masada.

But let's now go deeper into what is called the **Masada algorithm**.

According to the ancient account, the Temple was set on fire on the 10th day of the Hebrew month of Av. It would have been a Sunday. The Hebrew date places it 49 days before the Feast of Trumpets. The Feast of Trumpets takes place on the new moon that begins the Hebrew month of Tishri. In the year AD 70 the new moon of Tishri took place on September 24 on our Western calendar. Forty-nine days back takes us to August 6.

And when exactly did Masada fall? According to the ancient accounts, the defenders of Masada died by their own hand on Passover, the fifteenth day of Nisan. And when did it take place on the Western calendar? **In AD 74 it fell on March 31. Between the loss of Jerusalem and the fall of Masada, is a time span of 1,333 days.**

God is in the **RESTORATION** business.
 Anything LOST shall be found.
 Anything BROKEN shall be restored.





On the morning of October 13, 1963, **Yigael Yadin**, and **Israeli archaeologist**, started the excavation of the desert fortress of Masada.

In **1967** the Arab world fought against Israel in what is known as the **Six-Day War**. This war was started by the Soviet Union sending a false report to Egypt that Israel was going to attack them. Egypt, Syria and Jordan prepared to attack Israel. At that time Jordan occupied Jerusalem and used its position to attack Israel. **God gave the Israeli's a supernatural advantage and they emerged victorious against these 3 nations in only 6 days** and they regained control over **JERUSALEM**.

So, back to Masada. There was 1333 days between the fall of Jerusalem and the fall of Masada. On October 13, 1963, the excavation of Masada began. When you add the 1,333 days to the beginning of the excavation it brings us to **June 7, 1967**. This is the exact date of Israel's victory in the war and regaining control over Jerusalem.

So, it was 1,333 days from the loss of Jerusalem to the loss of Masada... and 1,333 days from the return to Masada to the return of Jerusalem. **Down to the exact day!**

Nobody human could have planned this! The Israeli soldiers enter the Lion's Gate to regain control of Jerusalem which fulfilled God's plan of restoration.

The days of **DESTRUCTION** were the exact number of the days of **RESTORATION**. Everything was divinely orchestrated by the hand of God as prophesied by the prophet **Zechariah 8:4-5**:

“Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem... The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.”

Ein Gedi

“And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.” (**1 Samuel 23:29**)

The 6,250-acre Ein Gedi (or “En Gedi”) is a nature reserve and national park in Israel, located west of the Dead Sea, close to Masada and the caves of Qumran. The oldest ruins found in Ein Gedi are from the Chalcolithic period (4000 BC). The remains of this temple are not far from Ein Gedi Spring.

Josephus, the 1st century Roman-Jewish historian, praised Ein Gedi for its palm trees and balsam. The site is known for its caves, springs, and rich diversity of flora and fauna. Thanks to its location, hot climate, and abundant water, Ein Gedi is truly an oasis. Most of the springs around the Dead Sea are salty, but not here. Ein Gedi's fresh water and farmland made it an ideal place to settle.

These days, hikers and nature lovers come to see the wildlife. On any given day, you might see ibex (**pictured right**), hyrax, or, very rarely, a leopard.

Ein Gedi in the Bible

On the western shore of the Dead Sea about 35 miles southeast of Jerusalem, the extreme conditions of the area made habitation prohibitive except near the freshwater springs. En-gedi contained a hot water spring coming from



the side of a limestone cliff, producing semitropical vegetation. This vital oasis was allotted to Judah's tribe for an inheritance (**Jos. 15:62**). The area became known for its palms, vineyards, and balsam. This ancient site was southeast of the oasis at Tell el-Jarn near modern 'Ain Jidi. In **2 Chronicles 20:2**, En-gedi was called Hazazon-tamar and was involved in several Old Testament events. Kedorlaomer conquered the Amorites here (Gn 14:7); and in Ezekiel's vision of Israel's restoration, fishermen would catch fish from the Dead Sea from En-gedi to En-eglaim (**Ez 47:10**).



Around 1000 BC, Ein Gedi served as one of the main places of refuge for David as he fled from Saul and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi (**1 Samuel 23:29**).

Ein Gedi means literally **“the spring of the kid (goat),”** and there is evidence that young ibex have always lived near the springs of Ein Gedi. Once, when David was fleeing from King Saul, the pursuers searched the “Craggs of the Ibex” in the vicinity of Ein Gedi. It was in a cave near here that David cut off the corner of Saul's robe (**1 Samuel 24:4**).



“And they returned, and came to En-mish-pat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar” (Gen 14:7).

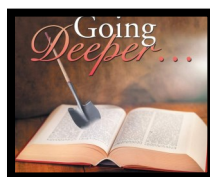
“And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-ge-di” (1 Sam 23:29).

“And the Ziphites came unto Saul and Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon...” (1 Samuel 26).

“Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and” (2 Chr 20:2).

“And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-ge-di even unto En-eg-la-im...” (Ezekiel 47:10).

“Just like a deer that craves streams of water, my whole being craves you, God.” (Psalms 42:1)



DID YOU KNOW... The Name of God is made up of four Hebrew letters, the YUD, the HEH, the VAV, and the HEH: **YHVH**. It's the most sacred of names, so sacred some refuse to say it. And yet you say the sacred Name of God all the time. When you speak of yourself, you say the Name. Allow me to explain. When you feel happy, you say, "I am happy." And when you're not, you say "I am sad." When you tell others who you are, you say, "I am" followed by your name.

YHVH means "I Am." It's the Name of the Eternal, the Name of God. His Name is I Am. It is woven into the fabric of existence that when you speak of yourself, you must say His Name. Why is that? It's because your existence comes from His existence. He is the I Am of all existence . . . the I AM of all I AM's. Your I am only exists because of His I AM. And as you exist from Him, so it is only from Him that you can find the reason

and purpose of your existence.

Therefore, when you say your name, you must always speak His Name. And you must always speak His Name first because His existence is first, and your existence flows forth from His. That's the flow of existence. Therefore, you must put Him first and then let everything flow from that. Let everything begin with Him and flow forth from Him. That's the secret of life. To not only live for Him, but to live your life from Him, to live from His living, to move from His moving, to act from His actions, to feel from His heart, to be from His being, and to become who you are from who He is . . . I am.

TODAY: Learn the secret of living each moment from His life, doing from His doing, loving from His love, and being from His being.

Qumran Caves

Qumran, just 150 feet west of the Dead Sea, is 1,200 feet below sea level. Difficult-to-reach caves dot the steep cliffs to the west of the settlement.

Qumran was home to the Essenes, an extreme sect of the Pharisees. Disapproving of religious practices in Jerusalem, they withdrew to Qumran in the wilderness. They lived a communal life and shared their possessions. They practiced frequent baptism and believed the end of the world was near. Essenes never married, because they wanted to be ritually pure when the Lord returned. Men lived outside in the caves away from the women. The Essenes stored their library of scrolls in these caves for safety. The site of this city has been identified as Khirbet Qumran, or the biblical "City of Salt" (**Joshua 15:62**).



These caves located on the western shore of the Dead Sea are where many ancient manuscripts have been found including the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Psalm Scroll, the Temple Scroll, and fragments of over 400 other writings including pieces from almost every book in the Old Testament. They were found in a dozen caves from 1947 onward. Some manuscripts are intact and others are fragmentary. Esther is the only book from the Old Testament that remains unrepresented.

On the north side of the Wadi Qumran, about one mile south of Cave I, lay the ruins of a Jewish monastery known as Khirbet Qumran. Khirbet Qumran was first investigated in 1949 by archaeologists Harding and de Vaux. The Jordanian Archaeological Museum and the Ecole Biblique conducted more investigation in 1951. They uncovered the main building and concluded that it was the center of a well-organized community. Most of the 200 to 400 people who lived in Qumran, lived in tents or in nearby caves. A large cemetery was located to the east toward the



Dead Sea. It was announced by De Vaux that Khirbet Qumran was the headquarters of a Jewish sect called the Essenes.

Dated back to the eighth and seventh centuries BC, investigations at this site have shown that it was lived in several times. Some have suggested that the buildings may have been built during the reign of King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:10). There is more evidence of people living on the site during the Greco-Roman period. A major settlement began

shortly before 100 BC, in the time of Hyrcanus I, and ended with an earthquake in 31 BC. There was probably settlement in the area again in about the time of death of Herod the Great (4 BC). The area was then captured by the Romans in AD 68. A Roman garrison remained there until about AD 90. Jewish rebels then used the site as a base during the second revolt against the Romans under Bar-Kochba in AD 132-135.



The largest building was the main assembly hall. Much pottery was found, some of which was used for housing the scrolls, which were copied in the writing room. There were no manuscripts found in the ruins of Khirbet Qumran, however, the pottery was very similar to that in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Cave I. This clearly shows that there is a link between the ruins and the manuscripts. Small plaster tables or benches, together with inkwells dating from Roman times, were also found during excavation in the writing room, or scriptorium.



The elaborate water system in the area had many round and rectangular cisterns (called Mikveh's—pictured on the previous page) that collected water from the mountains to the west, probably used for ritual purifications and baptism by the Qumran group. Hundreds of coins from the Greco-Roman period have also helped in telling us when the area was occupied. 'Ain Feshka, an oasis and spring about two miles to the south, was probably used as an agricultural outpost of Khirbet Qumran.

“And the Ziphites came unto Saul and Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon...” (1 Samuel 26).

“Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry” (2 Chr 26:10).



DID YOU KNOW: The Book of Esther is the only book in the Bible that contains absolutely no mention of God. That seems very strange. It would seem to be a godless book. In fact, it's filled with godlessness . . . evil people and evil plans to exterminate the people of God. And it's not just the Name of God that's missing but also, it seems, His presence. Darkness reigns, and God is nowhere to be found.

So is the Book of Esther less inspired than the other books in the Bible? “NO,”... Not at all. It's as holy as all the other books that mention God's Name. That's the point. Even though the Name of God isn't mentioned, the hand of God lies behind every event. He is there, unseen, unmentioned, yet working all things together and turning every event around to fulfill His purposes. Esther is the Book of the Unmentioned God. And the Book of the Unmentioned God is a most holy book. It's the book that speaks of all the times you don't FEEL the presence of God, when you don't HEAR His voice, when you don't SEE His hand, when there's no sign of His LOVE or PURPOSE, and when He seems FAR away or not there at all.

So when all you see is darkness, that is the time of the Book of the Unmentioned God. And it's telling you this: Even though you don't feel His presence, He is there still. Even though you don't see His hand, it is still moving.

Even when you don't hear His voice, He is still speaking, even in the silence. Even when you feel abandoned and alone, still His love is there. And even when He seems hopelessly far away from you, He is still right there beside you, working every detail in your life for His purposes and your redemption. And in the end, the light will break the darkness, the good will prevail, and you will know that you were never alone. He was with you all along. And it was holy. It was the time of your Book of the Unmentioned God. Whenever you can't see or feel the presence of God in your life, know that He's fully there. It's just your chapter in the Book of the Unmentioned God.



Judean Desert

A small desert, approximately 580 square miles, filled with treasures from nature and ancient Biblical history with mountain cliffs, rolling hills set beside plateaus, riverbeds set in deep canyons and braided by several rivers. Some of the rivers supply water year-round which creates oases. The edge of the wilderness is marked by 300-foot cliffs towering along the western shore of the Dead Sea and since its location is close to Jerusalem settlements can be found along its perimeters. Springtime in the wilderness is a time for blossoms, only for a short season; for when the sun comes out in full force, it dries up again to become a dry wilderness. The Judean Desert wilderness is intertwined within scripture with some of the most significant events in Jesus' life taken place in and around the Judean desert wilderness. It is located the southern province Judea in Israel; bordered by the Judean Mountains to the West and the Dead Sea to the East. Judea includes the territories of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Dan, Simeon, and part of Ephraim and contains the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Bethany, Bethpage, Emmaus, and others. Since Jerusalem is located on a hill anytime someone is traveling to Jerusalem they are "going up" and anytime they are going away from Jerusalem they are "going down".

The desert is known for its rugged landscape, which has provided a refuge and hiding place for those seeking solitude and isolation throughout its history. Magnificent monasteries were built in the cliffs and rock crevasses with some of these monasteries still active and others only ancient ruins such as Mar Saba Monastery. The wilderness also holds fortresses from the days of the Maccabees such as Massada and Horkenya. Recently, just decades ago the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in a cave in Qumran from the Byzantine period.



David found refuge here when he hid from King Saul in the wilderness of Ziph Moab and Ein Gedi all of which are part of the Judean wilderness. "And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness and remained in the mountains in the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand." (1 Samuel 23:14) "So he brought them before the king of Moab, and they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the stronghold." (1 Samuel 22:4). "Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi." (1 Samuel 23:19).

"The Judean Desert wilderness is nestled up against the Jordan river on its most north-eastern edge near where it enters the northern end of the Dead Sea. John the Baptist lived in this desert wilderness until the day of his manifestation to

Israel: regarding in the days of Jesus when John the Baptist appeared preaching in the wilderness desert of Judea. Jerusalem and all Judea and all the country about the Jordan went out to hear him and were baptized in the Jordan by him, confessing their sins.” (Matthew 3:5-6).

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (40 days). Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.” (Matthew 4:1,11). Scripture from the Bible reveals in this desert wilderness one of the most important victories in the life of Jesus is when He overcame temptation after his baptism by John the Baptist. Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.” (Mark 1:12-13).

Jesus and disciples preached and baptized in this area traveling throughout as scripture testifies, “After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon (roughly 8 miles south near Jordan) near Salim (the home of Melchizedek), because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison.” (John 3:22-23-24).

Jesus left the Judean Desert Wilderness after John the Baptist was put in prison by Herod making John’s imprisonment a key to God’s timeline. “Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.” (Matthew 4:12).

“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14-15). “After John, the Baptist had been thrown into prison, Jesus and his disciples departed Judea. Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.” (John 4:1-3).

The “Promise Land”: The “Promised Son”. (Isaiah 9:1).



DID YOU KNOW: Rain brings life, without it, life would cease to exist. This is particularly true in the land of Israel, which is especially dependent on the outpourings of heaven. But there was another kind of outpouring in our lives. The Scriptures speak of an outpouring, not of water, but of the Spirit, the rain of the Spirit (Isaiah 44:3-4).

What’s the connection between the two, the Spirit and the rain?

The rain pours down from the sky and gives life to the land. The Spirit pours down from heaven and gives life to those who receive it. The outpouring of rain causes barren land to revive and become fruitful. The outpouring of the Spirit causes barren lives to revive and become fruitful. And this outpouring . . . happened . . . On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Spirit of God was poured out in Jerusalem, on the disciples. It is the outpouring that causes barren lives to bear fruit. It is this outpouring that produced the Book of Acts and changed the history of the world.

Has there ever been another outpouring like it? Not quite like it, but there’s a hidden mystery.

You see, there wasn’t just one rain in Israel. There were two distinct rains, each with its own name. One was called the **YOREH**, the former rain, and the other was called the **MALKOSH**, the latter rain. One came in autumn, and the other in spring . . . two rains . . . two outpourings. So if there are two outpourings of rain in the land of Israel . . . then would it not also follow that there would be two such outpourings of the Holy Spirit?

In the Book of **Joel (2:23-29)**, God promises to send both the former rains and the latter rains, and to pour out His Spirit in the last days. So then there must again be another outpouring. And as the former rains came upon the people of Israel and the world, so too will the latter rains. That which was barren will bear its fruit, and that which was dead will come alive again.

TODAY: Seek the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to touch dry areas and make them fruitful. Prepare and receive for your latter rains are the way!!!

BEERSHEBA

Beersheba was the capital town of the *Biblical Negev* and is most prominently known within the history of the *Patriarchal Period*. (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; 2,100-1,900 B.C.). The name of the city, *Beersheba*, is so named because of its meaning and significance in Biblical history. Beersheba means “*the well of the oath*,” (Genesis 21:22-32) and signifies the *covenant agreement* that was made between Abraham and the servants of Abimelech.. According to Biblical history, Abraham dug a well there, planted a *tamarisk* (grove) there, called on



the name of the Lord, and lived there (**Genesis 22:19**). Isaac went to live at Beersheba, concluded a covenant with Abimelech, and re-digs the well previously dug by his father there which was named *Sheba* (**Genesis 26:22-33**). Later, Jacob offered sacrifices there (**Genesis 46:1-4**).

After the cities conquest by Joshua , Beersheba was in the territory of Simeon within the territory of Judah (**Joshua 19:2**). In the time of the Judges (1,400-1,100 B.C.), Beersheba apparently became the center of

the district (**I Samuel 8:2**). From the common phrase that was used to mark both the southern and northern reaches of Israel, "...from Dan to Beersheba...", Beersheba became known as the southern frontier of Israel as well as a religious and administrative center for Israelites.

In addition, Beersheba is also mentioned, together with Dan, Bethel, and Gilgal, as a religious center in the later days of the Kingdom of Israel, when all four towns were reproached because of their rivalry with Jerusalem (**Amos 5:5, 8:14**). During Josiah's reforms, this Judean King defiled all the high places "*from Geba to Beersheba*. (**II Kings 23:8**)."

Following the Babylonian Exile, the town of Beersheba was resettled after Nehemiah's restoration of the kingdom (**Neh. 11:27**).

Although Beersheba must have been an important place in the *Roman* and *Byzantine* periods, it does not appear very frequently in the sources.

Today Biblical Beersheba is identified with *Tel es-Seba*, 3 miles to the east of modern day Beersheba.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Genesis 21:14 After Isaac is born, Hagar, wanders around the wilderness of Beersheba with Isaac. Water is scarce. Therefore, she lays Isaac under a shrub, for he was dying of thirst.

Genesis 21:31 Abraham and Abimelech make a *covenant*. Abraham digs a well and calls the place "*the well of promise/oath*."

Genesis 22:19 After Abraham and Isaac return from Mt. Moriah, they live Beersheba.

Genesis 46:1-5 Jacob travels to Beersheba and offers sacrifices to God.

Judges 20:1, I Samuel 3:20, II Samuel 3:10, 17:11, I Kings 4:25, I Chron. 21:2, II Chron. 30:5 - The phrase, "...from Dan to Beersheba..."

I Kings 19:3 Elijah flees for his life from Ahab and Jezebel to Beersheba. He eventually goes to Mt. Horeb (Sinai).



II Kings 23:8 All the priests came out and defiled the high places “*from Geba to Beersheba...*” This brought on Josiah’s reforms in the end of the 7th C.B.C.

II Chron. 30:5 Hezekiah makes a decree from Beersheba that the people should come to Jerusalem for Passover, for they had not done this in a long time.

Nehemiah 11:27 Beersheba served as a boundary for Nehemiah.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS OF INTEREST

1. **MIDDLE BRONZE:** Probably during the time of Abraham, people lived modestly in dwelling pits. Later, houses built from mud brick may have been used. However, except for a few **potsherds** found, no remains exist today.

2. **IRON AGE:** According to the late Yohanan Aharoni (of Tel Aviv University, who excavated here during 8 seasons between 1969-1976) the **house dwellings** of Strata IX and VIII from the 13th to 11th centuries B.C. represent the first significant archaeological structures of any kind here at Beersheba. In the early part of the *Iron Age*, Beersheba was built up and fortified in a circular fashion. **Circular streets** can be seen, running parallel to the circular **casemate wall** that encompassed the city.

Of the more impressive findings, a **gate structure** (dating to Solomon), large **storehouses**, and an imposing **governor’s residence** was uncovered. Beersheba was also a cultic center for the region. A **horned altar** that was built from un-hewn/cut stone (according to Joshua 8:30-31) was dated to the 8th C.B.C. Also, a **brick factory** was found, the location where the dried bricks were made for the city’s structures and houses.



Typical to the *Israelite* period are **4 room houses**. These bordered the **casemate wall** that could have been filled in if needed in order to make the wall stronger against enemy attack. These houses contained 4 rooms, and a second floor supported by **pillars** that have been reconstructed today. **Stairs** would have led to a flat roof overlooking a **courtyard** where animals were kept. A typical house measured about 44 feet by 25 feet.

Of the outer wall structure that bordered the houses themselves, evidence of the damage done by the Assyrians and King Sennacherib’s invasion of the area in 732 B.C. can be seen.

Within the city, **cooking jars** have also been uncovered as well as **juglets**, and **iron blade sickles**.

An impressive **watering well** can be seen that most date to the 10th C.B.C. The well was once cut on the eastern slope of the city just outside the ring of houses that fortified the city. The well, cut on a hill, had to be 4 times deeper than a well dug at the base of the hill. The base of the well on the hill was hewn from solid rock, and the upper part was strengthened by a stone lining. The well reaches some 100 feet down and was no doubt the original area of the well where Abraham and Abimelech made their *covenant* centuries before.



DID YOU KNOW: Beersheba is the first place in the Promised Land to which Abraham laid claim and it has direct connection to the year of Jubilee in 1917.

The Year of the Jubilee involves a year of release from indebtedness (**Leviticus 25:23-38**) and

all types of bondage (vv. 39-55). All prisoners and captives were set free, all slaves were released, all debts were forgiven, and all property was returned to its original owners. In addition, all labor was to cease for one year, and those bound by labor contracts were released from them. One of the benefits of the Jubilee was that both the land and the people were able to rest.

As a boy, General Edmund Allenby was born into a devout Christian home. From childhood he was immersed in the stories of the Bible and the accounts of the Hebrew Scriptures that his father used to read to him each morning. He learned of the promised land, of its heroes, Joshua, David, and Elijah. He would remain an avid student of the Bible his entire life. Though he never desired it, because of closed doors and less-than-ideal circumstances he ended up in the army.

In the summer of 1917 Allenby replaced General Archibald Murray as commander of the British-led forces in Egypt. He spent the remainder of that summer preparing his troops and strategizing for the upcoming campaign. While Murray had focused on Gaza, Allenby placed his focus on a different city: Beersheba. So, in the fall of that year, British forces against the odds, had taken control of Beersheba.

Just as Beersheba was essential to Israel's beginning, so it would again be essential to the beginning of Israel's restoration. As it was the first place in the land to be claimed for Abraham and his children, the first to be taken away by others, and the first to be restored . . . so after two thousand years of exile Beersheba would also be the first place to be reclaimed and returned to Abraham's children. And it all took place in the year of Jubilee, when what is lost must be restored to the original owner.

Beersheba was regained on October 31, 1917. This was the same day that the British War Cabinet approved the Balfour Declaration where a letter written by British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lionel Walter Rothschild, in which he expressed the British government's support for a Jewish homeland.

So, after two thousand years the promise of the land and the beginning of its transference took place on the EXACTLY the same day. That week the prescribed reading from the Torah (called the PARSHA) in synagogues all over the world was from **Genesis 21:31**:

“Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there.”

The scripture that marked the very first account of Abraham's recovery of Beersheba, was the very scripture read throughout the world at the same time the recovery was taking place. And only by the hand of God did this just happened to be the appointed reading for that week. These readings were appointed long before anyone involved with this event was even born. Only by the PROPHETIC HAND of GOD could this have happened. And so, the little boy who had read of the heroes of faith in the Bible has now become one of them. And the Bible student who never wanted a career as a soldier was now the vessel through which the ancient prophecies would be brought to their fulfillment.

Jerusalem Area

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.”



For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.” For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.” (Psalm 122:6-9)

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is located in the Judean Mountains about 2,500 feet above sea level. It had access to the Ridge Road, which ran alongside major cities. It is 16 miles due west of the northern end of the Dead Sea and 38 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea. It was formerly called Salem, the city in which Abraham paid tithes to



Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul identifies Melchizedek as the "king of Salem, that is, king of peace" (Heb. 7:2). Although Jerusalem is sometimes called the "City of Peace," more wars probably have been fought at its gates than at those of any other city in the world.

Jerusalem in the Bible

The fact that the name "Jerusalem" appears 801 times in the New International Version of the Bible makes it quite evident that this city is very important to and cherished by God and His people. An entire book could be written on Jerusalem and its biblical and historical significance, but we will simply

highlight a few of the most notable places that Jerusalem is mentioned in the Word of God.

First, it was King David's choice for the capital city, "set on a commanding height of land that sprawls across a spine of limestone hills... Jerusalem is powerfully located for defense, for trade, and for beauty. The ancients referred to Jerusalem as the 'navel of the world,'"⁸ because of the belief that it's where humanity actually began.

Second, many of the most familiar Psalms were actually written for Jewish pilgrims who were journeying to the Holy City. They would have come up to Jerusalem from lower ground singing, as was the accepted custom. Of special mention is **Psalms 87**. Note that the word "Zion" often refers to Jerusalem:

"He has founded his city on the holy mountain. The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwellings of Jacob."

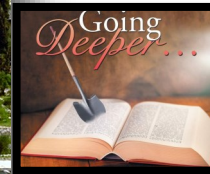
Jerusalem was captured by David from the Jebusites in about 993 B.C. and made capital (2 Sam.5:1-10). It became Israel's national sanctuary as well. David made many building establishments in Jerusalem. He built the royal court along with Solomon, a palace with the aid of Hiram, transported the Ark of the Covenant, and built a tent shrine to house the sacred chest (2 Sam. 6). Solomon's crown achievement in building activities was the construction of a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant (known as the Temple Mount). Jerusalem became the spiritual and political heart of Israel and the Zion of Yahweh.

Jerusalem was later captured by Babylon in 598 BC and destroyed in 587 BC. About 50 years later rebuilding was started and by Jesus' day it was the center of Jewish worship and under Roman rule. Jesus often traveled to Jerusalem to attend Jewish festivals. John recorded three Passover feasts, one Feast of Tabernacles, an unnamed feast, and a festival of Dedication (Hanukkah) that Jesus attended. Jesus performed many miracles while in Jerusalem. He healed a paralytic man at the "Sheep's Pool," known as Bethesda (John 5:2-9). Jesus also healed a blind man in the Pool of Siloam. He also spent a lot of time teaching His disciples and others in the temple. Jesus spent his last days in Jerusalem, cleansing the temple, disciplining, and being judged by high priests and leaders. He was then crucified just outside city walls in a place called Golgotha, "the place of the skull." The Gospels describe





several post-resurrection appearances that took place in Jerusalem (**Matt. 28:9-10; Mark 16:14-18; John 20:19-29**).



DID YOU KNOW: In the year AD 70, the armies of Rome, under the command of the general

Titus, destroyed the land of Israel and the ancient nation of Judea. To commemorate the end of Israel along with other Roman victories, a monument was built in Rome and called the Arch of Titus. Inside the arch was carved an image of Israel's destruction, the carrying away of the

sacred vessels from the Temple of Jerusalem. Two thousand years later, the Roman Empire lay in ruins. But the nation of Israel was miraculously raised from the dead. The new nation needed a symbol. And do you know where they found it, Israel's national seal? On the Arch of Titus. By building a monument to seal in stone the destruction of Israel, the Romans ended up doing the very opposite. They preserved in stone the image of Israel's sacred golden seven-branch menorah for two thousand years. And that very image from that arch became the symbol of Israel's resurrection, the national seal of the newborn nation, the menorah, the symbol of God's light overcoming the darkness. What does the Arch of Titus reveal?



That in the end, you can't stop the purpose of God.

God not only causes His purposes to come to pass, but He will even use that which is against His purposes to cause those purposes to come to pass. He not only overcomes evil but causes evil to be used for good. And so, He will turn death into life, destruction into rebirth, darkness into light, the curses set against His people into blessings, and the tears of His children into rejoicing. And He will turn everything in your life that was meant for evil around for good and that which was meant to harm you to save and bless you instead. It's all there in the menorah of God's light kept safe for the ages on the Arch of Titus.

TODAY: Identify the "Arches of Titus" in your life, all the bad that God redeemed for your good.



Mount Moriah

This name is used only twice in the Old Testament. Abraham was sent to sacrifice his son Isaac in "the land of Moriah" (**Gen 22:2**). It has been suggested that the form of the name "Moriah" may be connected with the ram that was "provided" in the place of Isaac when God "appeared" to Abraham. (The Hebrew verb ra'ah can have the meanings "see," "provide," and "appear," and the ending -iah is the shortened form of the name of the Lord that is found in many Hebrew names.)

The northern part of the ridge of Mount Moriah is actually 250 feet higher than the southeastern hill because the eastern ridge slopes towards the south. It is on this higher elevation that Solomon built the Temple Mount.



Solomon's commencement of his grand design for Jerusalem enclosed the higher ridge of Mount Moriah, which provided space for the temple and palace complex. David expanded Jerusalem northward upon the northern part of the eastern ridge (2 Chr. 3:1). The threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (2 Sam 24; 1 Chr 21) has been identified with Solomon's temple. Some see in the description of the Lord's appearing to David a reminder of his appearing to Abraham there. The Jewish historian Josephus (Antiquities 1.13.2; 7.13.4), as well as the second-century BC book of Jubilees, connects the place of the temple with the place where Isaac was offered up (Jubilees 18:13). Moriah has been linked with Mt. Gerizim by Samaritan tradition. Muslim tradition links the Dome of the Rock with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac on the great rock under the dome of the mosque.

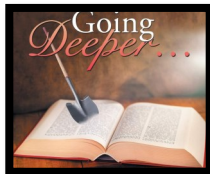
"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen 22:2).

"And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite" (2 Sam 24:18).

"And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father" (1 Kings 11:27).

"And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel..." (1 Chr 21).

"Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah..." (2 Chr 3:1).



DID YOU KNOW: Exodus 12:3 says, "On the tenth day of this month, each one shall take for himself a lamb . . . a lamb for a house." This command was a holy day, the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Nisan.

The Passover takes place on the fifteenth day of Nisan and the Tenth of Nisan was the day that the lamb was chosen and taken to live in the house that would, on Passover, offer up as a sacrifice. The Tenth of Nisan is the Day of the Lamb, the day of being identified with the house that would sacrifice it. You know it as Palm Sunday? It's the day Jesus rode a donkey into the streets of Jerusalem and was greeted by the people with celebration and palm branches.

As the people of Jerusalem were taking the Passover lambs to their homes, Jesus the Messiah was being led from the Mount of Olives into the city gates. The bringing in of Messiah to the city with palms and hosannas was the fulfillment of what had been commanded from ancient times, the bringing in of the lamb.

So, on the day when the Passover lamb was to be brought to the house, God brought the Lamb of God to His house, to Jerusalem, and to the Temple. And just as the lambs of the Tenth of Nisan had to be sacrificed on Passover to cover the families' sins, so too the Lamb of God would be sacrificed on Passover to cover the sins of the world for all eternity. The Lamb of God had to come to the House of God that the blessings of salvation could come to the world.

So, it is only when you bring the Lamb home, when you bring Him into the place where you live your life, when you bring Him into every room, every closet, and crevice, only then can the fullness of the blessings of salvation be received.

TODAY: Bring home the Lamb of God and let Him have access into every room, closet, dark space, and crevice in your life.

Mount of Olives

The Mount of Olives is a limestone ridge located just a few hundred yards east of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It offers a breathtakingly beautiful view of the Old City, rising more than 2,000 feet above the Kidron Valley, which separates Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. Some tour guides elect to spend some time atop this ridge and give a brief synopsis of Jerusalem's history. It is truly a priceless experience to get this fascinating history lesson while looking across the valley, seeing so many old and new buildings and the golden Dome of the Rock, and imagining what life would have been like in Jesus' day.

The Mount of Olives, named for its ancient olive groves, is home to an estimated 150,000 graves, including tombs from biblical times traditionally associated with Zechariah and Absalom. Important rabbis from the 15th to the 20th centuries are buried here, as well as former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. The site is a **mountainside of stones**. You see, Jews traditionally do not bring flowers to a grave; instead they leave a small stone on the grave, symbolically raising a monument for the loved one. These are known as Stones of Remembrance.

You may notice that the cemetery is in pretty bad condition, and you may wonder why such a holy site is in such bad shape. Well, during the 19-year Jordanian occupation, 40,000 to 50,000 tombs were desecrated and much of the cemetery was vandalized. The Jordanians even cut a road right through the heart of the cemetery, which destroyed thousands of graves—some dating back to the time of the First Temple.

But despite so much death and destruction both past and present, there is hope. Jewish tradition says that the Messiah will come from the east, pass the Mount of Olives and continue through the Kidron Valley before arriving at the Temple Mount. They believe the dead will rise on that day and escort Him into the city. Jews from around the world often ask to be buried near Jerusalem, for they believe they will be among the first to greet the Messiah. Many pay over 1 million dollars to be buried in this area.

Interesting Facts: The Mount of Olives in Jerusalem is the oldest, continuously used cemetery in the world with an estimated 150,000 tombs. The first recorded burials are from the First Temple period 3,000 years ago and burials continue there until today.

There are also many **churches** atop the Mount of Olives, such as:

- The Church of All Nations (Basilica of the Agony inside the Garden of Gethsemane).
- The Church of Mary Magdalene (recognized by the golden onion domes).
- Dominus Flevit (The Lord Wept—shaped like a teardrop).
- The Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary.
- Little Family of the Resurrection.
- Pater Noster (Church of the Lord's Prayer).
- Augusta Victoria Lutheran Hospital, Church & Tower.
- The Russian Orthodox Convent of the Ascension & Bell Tower.

Also found on the Mount of Olives is the Chapel of the Ascension. This chapel was built in 392 AD to mark the site where Jesus ascended into heaven. The original chapel was destroyed by the Persians and rebuilt by the Crusaders. The current chapel was built on the ruins of that 7th century church. After the Crusaders were driven out by Saladin, the chapel was converted to a mosque.



DID YOU KNOW: the Hebrew letter SHIN is the 21st letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is not just any letter, but shaped like a "W" in the English alphabet.

In Hebrew, this letter stands for one of the names of God... El Shadai, the Almighty. It

also stands for Shalom, the common Jewish greeting which means "perfect peace." It is also the first letter in the Shekinah which was the Spirit of God that descended upon the earthly tabernacle of the Israelites, the Ruach Ha Kodesh, the consuming fire, and amazingly enough the letter also looks like a fire.

2 Chronicles 6:6 "But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there;"

2 Kings 21:4 "And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name."

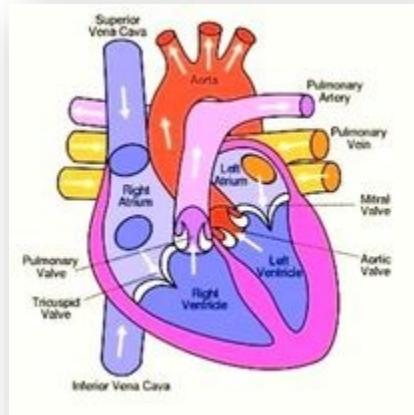
In Jerusalem, you have Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, and the Mount of Olives. In between you have the Valley of



Hinnom, the Trypoeon Valley, and the Kidron Valley. Guess what an aerial view of Jerusalem looks like? It looks like the letter Shin, the symbol of The Almighty!

But there is another place where you will find the letter "SHIN".

God's Name is not only written in the land of Israel, but physically on our hearts! Ironically, it also has the shape of the letter SHIN on a human heart. The lower, larger left ventricle (which supplies the full body) and the smaller right ventricle (which supplies the lungs) are positioned like the lines of the letter Shin.



Humanity has the undeniable mark of being God's creation. Each of us have to choose whether to give our hearts totally to Him or not. But, when we do, and the enemy comes against us, God can in effect say, "You can't have them, because My Name is written there!"

TODAY: let this remind us that we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart as you are marked by El Shadaai, God Almighty.

Mount of Olives in the Bible

This hill was first referred to in the Bible in 2 Samuel 15:30, when King David fled the city to escape from Absalom's rebellion. Next, King Solomon erected altars dedicated to false, foreign gods here on the mount (1 Kings 11:7). They were later destroyed by King Josiah who "filled it with bones" to prevent future worship, and by this it had become known as the Hill of Corruption (2 Kings 23:13-14).



When Ezekiel had the vision of the cherubim and the wheels, the glory of the Lord went up from the city and hovered above this mountain (**Ezekiel 11:22-23**). Additionally, the people gathered olive branches here for the first Feast of Tabernacles after their return from the Babylonian exile (**Nehemiah 8:15**).

It's hard to grasp how central this place was in the life of Jesus. Let's just review some of the big events that happened here. Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives and prophesied Jerusalem's destruction:

"The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." (**Luke 19:43-44**)

In 70 AD, the Roman commander Titus stood on this very hill and oversaw Jerusalem's destruction, unknowingly fulfilling Jesus' words. The Mount of Olives played a strategic role as Titus positioned his headquarters on the

northern extension of the ridge during the siege of Jerusalem. He named the place Mount Scopus, or “Lookout Hill,” because of the view it offered over the city walls. The whole hill must have provided a platform for the Roman catapults that hurled heavy objects over the Jewish fortifications of the city. **Take a moment to pray for the peace of Israel.**

Jesus taught here. He often traveled over the mount on His way to Bethany to visit His friend Lazarus. His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey took place over and down the Mount of Olives (**Luke 19:28-44**). He prayed with His disciples here just before His arrest (**Luke 22:39-54**). Here, the Lord was betrayed by Judas’ kiss and then performed one of His last miracles by restoring the soldier’s ear that Peter had sliced off. Jesus appeared to the disciples on the Mount of Olives after His resurrection, and He ascended into heaven from here (Acts 1:1-12). Here are some other biblical passages concerning this amazing site:



Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and

all the holy ones with Him. (**Zechariah 14:3-5**)

“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” (**Matthew 24:30-31**)

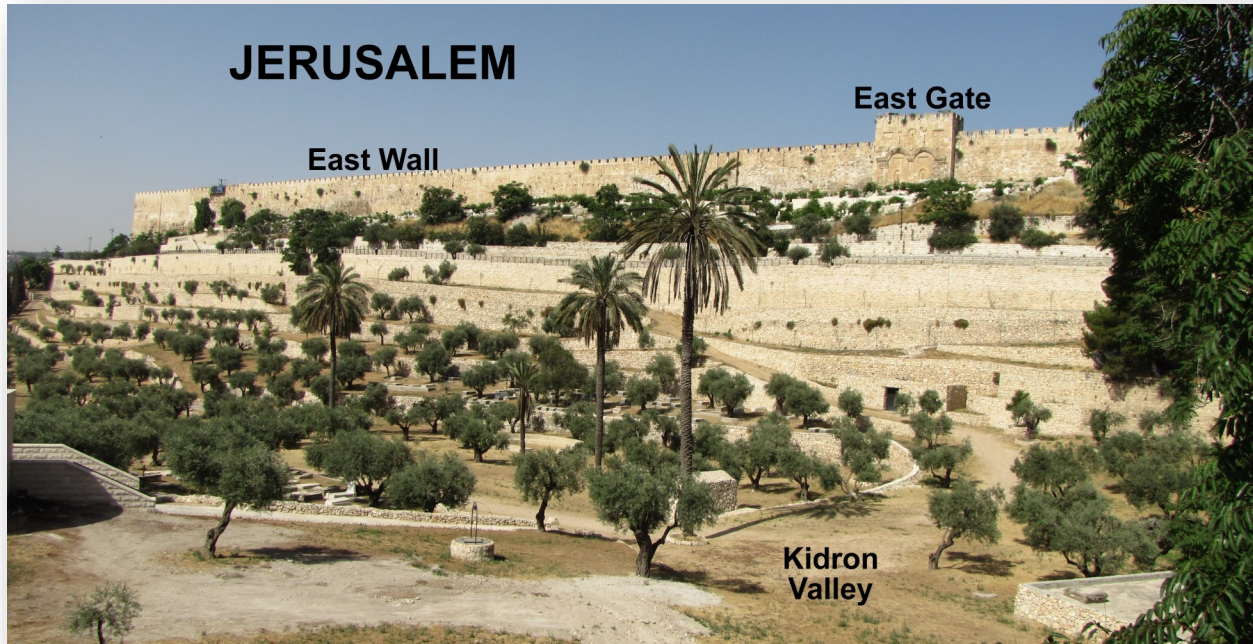
After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “*why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.*” (**Acts 1:9-11**)

From atop the Mount of Olives, Jesus looked across the valley towards Jerusalem from the same vantage point you have today, except for one difference: Jesus wept. As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “*If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.*” (**Luke 19:41-42**)

“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from hence forth and forever.” (**Psalms 125:2**)

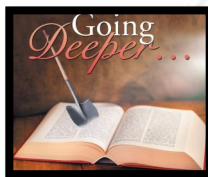
On Sunday of the last week of His life, Jesus descended from the Mount of Olives to cries of “Hosanna”. On Tuesday of the same week, after answering questions from the religious authorities He taught his disciples about the “end times” while seated on the Mount of Olives.

“And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world” (**Matt 24:3**).



“And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately” (Mark 13:3)

“Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:12)



DID YOU KNOW: In Mark 14:26, it is recorded that at the end of the Passover Seder, the Last Supper, Jesus, and His disciples sang a song. What song would they have sung? The word used to describe the song is the Greek humnos. Humnos was used to speak of the Psalms of Israel. And from ancient times it was ordained that the Passover Seder would always end with the singing of songs, specifically, the Psalms, and a specific set of Psalms called the Hallel's.

The Passover would end with the singing of the last of these, Psalm 118. And is Psalm 118 significant? Extremely so, it is Psalm 118:22-23 that contains the words, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." The Hebrew word for rejected means as well despised and abhorred. Who is the rejected stone? Jesus the Messiah, He was despised and rejected of men (Isaiah 53:3).

2000 years ago, that song was sung all over Jerusalem, the song of the rejected stone. And it would be fulfilled on that very Passover. It was right after Jesus and His disciples finished singing the song that they went to the Mount of Olives where He would be arrested, despised, and abhorred, and finally cast away at the crucifixion, the epitome of rejection.

But what also does it say? "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." So, the despised and rejected man on the cross would end up becoming the cornerstone of faith, of civilization, of history, and of the world.

Think about it . . . kings and queens, generals, and emperors, bow down to the man nailed to a cross. The



most pivotal, world-changing life on this planet is that of a crucified Jewish Rabbi . . . the stone of rejection. And that crucified Rabbi becomes the cornerstone of history. In God, the object of man's hatred becomes the center of His love, and the object of man's despising becomes the vessel of His glory. How amazing is that? And it was all there, that night, at the Last Supper . . . in the song of the stone.

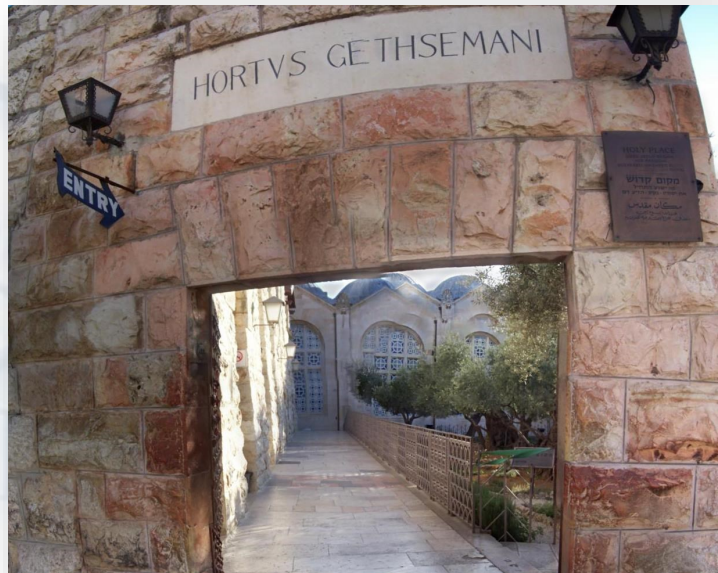
TODAY: Make Jesus who is the Cornerstone, the cornerstone of all you do. May everything be built from that foundation of faith.

Garden of Gethsemane

Gethsemane was located opposite the temple, across the Kidron Valley on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. After the Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus engaged in fervent prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He underwent a great inner struggle, knowing that the hour of his betrayal was coming soon. It was here that Judas betrayed Jesus to temple authorities who placed Jesus under arrest (**Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32-50; Luke 22:39-53; John 18:2-12**).

The age of these olive trees in the garden easily date back to the days of the Crusades. A few of the trees (between 3 to 8 trees) are possibly 2,000 years old. This olive grove was stripped of trees during the war in 68-70 AD by the Romans for use as fire wood and siege equipment against the city of Jerusalem. This means it is unlikely that any of these exact trees were here at the time of Christ in 30 AD, but scholars do estimate the age of these trees to be anywhere between one and two thousand years.

Interesting Facts: Olives symbolize peace— After the Flood, Noah sent a dove forth from the Ark to circle the earth and find out whether there was yet dry land. When the bird brought back a branch of an olive tree, Noah realized that plants were growing once again. Ever since, olives have symbolized the hope for a peaceful future.



The name Gethsemane is used only in Matthew 26:36 and Mark 1:32. It means “oil press,” also suggesting the presence of an olive grove. More than anything else Jesus realized that He must say “yes” to the Father and bare the weight of the sins of all mankind. He prayed three times and was pressed to the extent that He sweated great drops of blood. For devotional application, it is interesting to note that olives are pressed three times. The use of the word “place” in the Gospel accounts indicates that Gethsemane was an enclosed piece of ground. It may be that the grove was privately owned and that Jesus and his disciples had special permission to enter.

The Gospels of Luke and John do not mention the word Gethsemane. However, they both record Jesus' agony



before his betrayal. Luke says the location was on the “Mount of Olives” (**Luke 22:39**). John describes the area as “across the Kidron Valley” (**John 18:1**); the Gospel of John is the only Gospel to call the spot a garden. It is also evident that Jesus and his disciples gathered in Gethsemane for fellowship and prayer (**Luke 22:39; John 18:2**). The Gospel narratives indicate that the garden was large enough for the group to separate into different part of it.

Garden of Gethsemane in the Bible

After eating the Last Supper with His disciples, and before His betrayal and arrest, Jesus spent the night in the Garden of Gethsemane. Take a moment to think about what Jesus went through that night, asking if this cup could be passed from Him, but ultimately yielding His will to God the Father's. The name of this garden, Gethsemane, means "olive press." Just as the olives here were pressed, crushing the oil out of them, He too would soon be pressed "pouring Himself out even unto death" (Isaiah 53:12).

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."



Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."



"I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder..." (Matt 26:36-45).

"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him..." (Luke 22:47-53).



DID YOU KNOW: On the night before Jesus was crucified, He went to the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-44). There He surrendered His will in the face of His approaching sufferings and death. It was there, in Gethsemane, that the Temple guards came to arrest Him. So, Gethsemane is the place where His sufferings begin.

The name Gethsemane means "oil press" and represents the three presses that olives go through in the extracting of the oil. The olives would be placed on the top of a stone trough and a large wheel-like stone would roll over them, crushing them. The crushing of the olives would release their oil.

Why is it the place where Jesus's sufferings began linked to olive oil? In the Scriptures, oil is linked to healing and joy, and, in its most sacred application, to anointing. Oil would be poured out to anoint kings and prophets. So, oil in

its highest symbolism, signifies the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So, if the crushing of olives in the olive press releases oil, so then the crushing of Jesus in Gethsemane, the oil press, would be linked to healing, joy, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It all begins in the oil press of Gethsemane.

TODAY: Let every desire and ambition that is not of God be surrendered and crushed. And in their crushing, be filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit that healing and joy will flow into every area of your life.

Flora and Fauna: Flora is plant life; Fauna refers to animals.

The Olive tree—the olive tree was the most valuable and useful tree grown in Israel; groves of them grew in hills and plains alike. The trees, which can reach a height of 20 feet, will grow for centuries if left undisturbed. If an olive tree is cut down, shoots will grow from the root, producing new trees. Though some of the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane are ancient, none date to the time of Christ. When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, General Titus ordered all the trees of Jerusalem cut down.

Olive trees grow fruit in abundance. They produce enough olives for food; olives and bread were staples in ancient Israelite diet. In biblical times, there were even enough olives left over in Israel for sale to foreign markets. In Zechariah 4:3, the two olive trees in the prophetic vision were symbolic of the abundance with which God had provided for the people, far beyond their needs.

The olive tree has a small white blossom which is easily blown off by the wind. When the olives are ready to be picked in November, tarps or blankets are spread below the trees. The branches are then shaken or beaten with poles. According to the Law, the olives remaining on the tree or those which had fallen on the ground were left for the poor:



When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. (Deuteronomy 24:20)

After they are gathered from the tarps into baskets, the olives are brought to the place of pressing. The baskets are piled one on top of the other and crushed beneath the weight of a heavy stone. As the oil seeps out, it is strained through the numerous baskets and is collected into the shallow stone basin below. In biblical times, the initial crushing was sometimes done by the feet of harvesters in depressions in the rock. The oil is then poured into large storage jars.

broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root ... (Romans 11:17)

If some of the branches have been

Not all olives are created equal, however. Cultivated olives are the best, while those from wild olive trees are relatively small and worthless. But like many other types of fruit trees, the olive tree can be grafted. When good shoots are grafted onto a wild tree, the resulting tree becomes fruitful with large olives. However, when the

Apostle Paul used the olive tree as an analogy of the Gentile-Jewish relationship, the procedure was reversed: the wild branch is grafted onto the cultivated tree. Paul was not ignorant of olive grafting; instead, he appears to have

purposefully reversed the image to demonstrate God's ability to change even a "worthless" branch into a fully fruitful branch. In the same way, the gentile Church is to rejoice in God's mercy for including them in the covenant of God's people.



DID YOU KNOW: on the day of His death, Jesus was arrested, beaten, bound, scourged, abused, mocked, humiliated, degraded, stripped naked, nailed to a cross, put-on display as a blasphemer and a criminal, cursed, judged guilty, and condemned to death. It all happened on Friday, the sixth day. It was also on the sixth day of creation that God made man in His own image.

On the sixth day of the crucifixion, it all happened in reverse. On the sixth day of creation God made man in His image. But on the sixth day of crucifixion, man made God in his image.

On the sixth day, the day of man's creation, God caused man to bear the image of God, an image of glory and perfection.

So, on the sixth day, the day of man's redemption, man caused God to bear the image of fallen man, as one who had fallen, as one found guilty, and as one cast out. All that was the image of man's fall. So, God was judged as a blasphemer because blasphemy was the sin of man. Man passed judgment on God, because man himself was under judgment. As God had made man in the image of God's glory, man now made God in the image of man's guilt and shame. As God had made Adam in His image, it was now Adam making God in the image of Adam, as one who had transgressed, under judgment and condemned to death, cursed, and separated from God. When you look at the cross, you are beholding God in the image of man.

Why did God allow Himself to be so abused and degraded?

God allowed Himself to bear the image of man, that man might again be allowed to bear the image of God. God allowed Himself to bear the image of fallen man, that man might bear the image of the risen God. So make it your aim that your life would become a reflection of His life, your nature a reflection of His nature, your works a reflection of His works, and your heart a reflection of His heart. Allow Him to make you and form you into His image. For God bore your image in His death, that you, in your life, could bear the image of God.

TODAY: Jesus the Messiah, in His death, took upon Himself your image. Now take upon yourself His image. Live today in the image and nature of God.

The East Gate (Golden Gate)

The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east." (Ezekiel 43:4)

From the Mount of Olives, look toward the west at the wall around Old City Jerusalem and you will see a large, double gate that looks permanently locked. The East Gate (or Golden Gate) is the oldest of the current gates in Jerusalem's Old City Walls. According to Jewish tradition, the Shekhinah (Divine Presence) used to appear through this gate, and will appear again when the Messiah comes (Ezekiel 44:1-3) and a new gate will replace the present one.

In ancient times, Jews used to pray for mercy at the old East Gate— hence the name Sha'ar Harachamim (the Gate of Mercy). It was also known as the Beautiful Gate. In Christian apocryphal texts, the gate was the scene of a meeting between the parents of Mary. In Arabic, it is known as the Gate of Eternal Life. The Muslims call this gate



The Mercy Gate (Bab el Rahmeh) and according to the Koran, the just will pass through this gate on the Day of Judgment.

Remains of a much older gate dating to the times of the Second Jewish Temple have been found here. The present gate was probably built around 520 AD as part of Justinian I's building program in Jerusalem. During the time of the First Temple, the East Gate was the main entrance into the Temple area.

If you stand on the Mount of Olives, you can look over the East Gate into the huge area north of the Dome of the Rock and see the East Gate, the Outer Court Gate, the Inner Court Gate, and the Temple entrance all in a perfect line. The Talmud makes this observation:

“All the walls which were there were high, except the wall in the east, so that the priest who burned the heifer, standing on the top of the Mount of Olives, and directing himself to look, saw through the gateway of the sanctuary, at the time when he sprinkled the blood” (Mishnah, Middot 2:4). The Shekhinah, which used to appear through this gate, will appear again; but until then, the gate must be left untouched.



DID YOU KNOW: In Genesis 2:16-17, it is written that inside the Garden of Eden grew the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was the one tree; the fruit of which man was not to partake.

But man did partake, and through that partaking came sin and death came into the world. Through that one tree came the fall of man.

Now Jesus died to bring salvation... To end Sin, Death and the Grave... To undo the fall in the garden.

And on what did He die? A cross... And of what was it made? Wood... And what is wood? A tree . . . The cross is a tree.

The cross is the second tree. Through the first tree, the penalty of sin begins. Through the second tree, the penalty of sin ends.

Through the first tree man fell. And through the second tree, man rises. Through a living tree came death. And through a dead tree, comes life.

In the partaking of the first tree, we die, and in the partaking of the second tree, we come alive. And as God placed the first tree in the center of the garden, so He has placed the second tree in the center of history, the center of this world, so that all can partake of it and find life. And the more you partake of this tree . . . the more alive you will become.

TODAY: The second tree must be the center. Make it the center of your life and center everything else around it. Partake and live of its fruit.

The East Gate in the Bible

Four of Jerusalem's 11 gates are sealed, and the East Gate is one of them. Knowing that the Jews expected the Messiah to come through this gate, the Arabs decided to try to prevent any possibility of His return. Therefore, the East Gate was walled up by Muslim conquerors (the Ottoman Turks) with great stones in 1530 AD. A cemetery was planted in front of it because they thought that the Jewish Messiah could not set foot in a cemetery and therefore would not be able to come. Ironically, in sealing up the gate, they were actually fulfilling a prophecy made by Ezekiel (see below) about 600



years before Christ, which said that the gate would be shut. Think about that—God used even His enemies to fulfill His prophecy!

Then the man brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, the one facing east, and it was shut. The LORD said to me, “This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way.” (Ezekiel 44:1-3)

As Jesus entered Jerusalem through the East Gate, the people laid down palms and cried “Hosanna!” (John 12:13). This happened around 30 AD, long before the gate was blocked by the Ottomans. Our Lord rode on a donkey through the original East Gate, which was later destroyed along with the rest of the city by the Romans in 70 AD. Ezekiel says concerning this closed gate that the “Prince” (a word used in the Old Testament to refer to the coming Messiah and in the New Testament to refer to Jesus) shall enter it again. Jesus, having entered the city, said He would not be seen again until Jerusalem acknowledges Him (Matthew 23:37-39).

Today the Temple Mount is under Muslim control, and the East (Golden) Gate is guarded around-the-clock, sealed up, and blocked off. The faulty thinking would be funny if it weren’t so tragic. Arabs try to shut Jesus out with a wall just as the Romans tried to shut Him in with a stone. They put a cemetery at the gate not grasping the fact that this Messiah has no trouble walking through cemeteries—after all, He walked out of His own tomb. One day, the Messiah will arrive at the Mount of Olives with all His saints and He will once again depart from another cemetery and walk through another stone, the East Gate. Then the Lord will enter the Temple area.

The picture God is giving us here—in big blocks of stone—is this: Israel had access to God as His presence resided in the Holy this: Israel had access to God as His presence resided in the Holy 34; Leviticus 16; 1 Kings 6:16 and more), but their hearts were so closed to Him that they did not recognize His Son. This gate stands as a monument to their closed hearts. For now the gate is shut, but that seal is as temporary as the one that was placed on His tomb. Jesus prophesied to Israel about the desolation of their Temple, and that desolation continues to this very day. But on the day of the His choosing, He will return, open the gate, rebuild the Temple, and all Israel will know that the Lord is God.

Kidron Valley

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) John 18:1-5

In the 1st century, the Kidron Valley



was 50 feet lower than the valley floor you see today. That's about the height (or in this case, the depth) of a five-story building. Why the change in altitude? Rubble from the destroyed Temple and other rubbish was tossed down here.

Jerusalem was protected by the Kidron Valley to the east and the Hinnom Valley to the west. These valleys merge south of the city from where the Wadi Kidron continues eastward to the Dead Sea. Viewed from the south, these two valleys look kind of like an off-center wishbone, with the Kidron Valley on the right and the Hinnom Valley curving around in an "L" shape from the west. At one time a spring ran through the valley, but it was diverted by Hezekiah's tunnel to supply water to Jerusalem.

The Pool of Gihon is located in the Kidron Valley. The Kidron Brook runs through the valley during the wet season, but it remains dry most of the year.

Kidron Valley in the Bible

King David crossed the Kidron Valley to escape from his rebellious son Absalom (**2 Samuel 15:23**). King Asa burned his grandmother's pagan Asherah pole in the Kidron Valley (**1 Kings 15:13**), and the evil Athaliah was executed there (**2 Kings 11:16**). It became for some time a dumping site for destroyed pagan items (**2 Chronicles 29:16, 30:14**). By the time of King Josiah, the Kidron Valley had become the city cemetery (**2 Kings 23:6; Jeremiah 26:23**). For this reason, the valley has been of much interest to archaeologists.

Jesus would have traveled through the Kidron Valley many times as He traveled to and from Jerusalem.

Absalom's Tomb

(Pictured Right) The traditional site of the tomb of David's rebellious son, Absalom, is located on the eastern slope of the Kidron Valley, on the east side of Jerusalem. Josephus wrote about this tomb, which existed in the 1st century AD. It stands 20 feet high and 24 feet wide. Some attribute this tomb to a man named Zechariah (there are about 30 people in the Bible are called Zechariah).

In Judaism, rebellious children were taught to throw stones at "Yad Avshalom," the shrine of Absalom, to learn what rebellion leads to. "If anyone in Jerusalem has a disobedient child, he shall take him out to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, to Absalom's Monument, and force him, by words or stripes, to hurl stones at it, and to curse Absalom; meanwhile telling him the life and fate of that rebellious son."



This seems a little harsh, right? But before we begin to feel too sorry for Absalom, let's review his life's highlight reel from **2 Samuel: 13-15**:

Absalom's sister Tamar is raped, rejected, and shamed by her half-brother Amnon.

Tamar receives no justice from King David.

Two years later, Absalom conspires and kills Amnon.

Now a murderer, Absalom flees and remains banished.

David, mourning Amnon and Absalom, calls for Absalom's return after three years.

David, still divided in heart, remains distant for two more years without seeing Absalom.

Absalom burns down General Joab's field to gain the King's attention.

Absalom's tantrum gets David's attention and they are reconciled, somewhat.

Absalom conspires to overthrow David.

Absalom exploits the hurts of Israel's citizens.

Absalom steals the allegiance of the people.

Without a doubt, Absalom's response to injustice is what separated this father and son. Remember, David knew all about injustice. Murderous Saul hunted David and chased him into the wilderness. David was forced to live like a fugitive for years, but when the Lord put Saul's very life into David's hands, he refused to take vengeance. Compare that to Absalom's response to injustice. He plotted and carried out his vengeance, refusing to leave it in the hands of the Lord.

Read 2 Samuel chapter 15-18 to see how this family drama played out. Ultimately, Absalom died a less-than-honorable death, alone on the back of his mule with his neck caught in the branches of an oak tree (**2 Samuel 18:9**). When King David heard the news, instead of rejoicing over the death of this disobedient and disrespectful son, he mourned his loss.

The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you – O Absalom, my son, my son!" (**2 Samuel 18:33**)

Mount Morah

Mount Moriah is the mount on which Abraham offered Isaac in Genesis 22. In 1 Chronicles 21 it is identified as the location of Arunah (or, Ornan) the Jebusite threshing floor that David bought for 600 shekels of gold. This purchase is an important fact since it demonstrates that the Jews received this area through a legal transaction. They have never sold the rights to Mount Moriah.

King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David paid Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site. And David built there an altar to the Lord and presented burnt offerings. (1 Chronicles 21:24,-25)

Mount Moriah is where Solomon built the Temple.

Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (2 Chronicles 3:1)

Mount Moriah is a ridge of rock that rises from the junction point of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys. It rises through the City of David and reaches its highest elevation just northeast of the Damascus Gate in the Old City. The Temple Mount today covers about 45 acres and is built around the outcropping of the bedrock under the Dome of the Rock. It is about 118 feet lower than the highest point of Mount Moriah.

The top bedrock of Mount Moriah just outside the Dome of the Rock. This is part of the same bedrock where the Ark of the Covenant sat in Solomon's Temple on Mount Moriah. The bedrock in this photo above is covered by the Muslim's Dome of the Spirits (pictured above) about 285 feet north of the location where the Ark of the Covenant sat in the Most Holy Place.

House of Caiaphas - St. Peter Gallicantu

On the southeastern slope of the hill is one of the traditional locations for the house of Caiaphas. Gallicantu means "**cock crowing**" and it reminds us of the three denials of Peter. Built atop the ruins of a Byzantine church and monastery, Catholic pilgrims believe that the prison in which Christ was held is located inside the church. Others believe that a more likely location for Caiaphas' house is in the Armenian property outside Zion Gate.





Whether it is the actual site or not does not take away from the devotional application here. In the lower level one may view rooms from Christ's time including the place where He was possibly beaten, scourged and held as prisoner for the evening. Outside the house is part of the Roman Road that He walked to be led to the Judgment Hall. The rooster pen provides the timely sound affects as a reminder of Peter's weakness and our own need for strength from the Spirit of God.

Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew. Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they

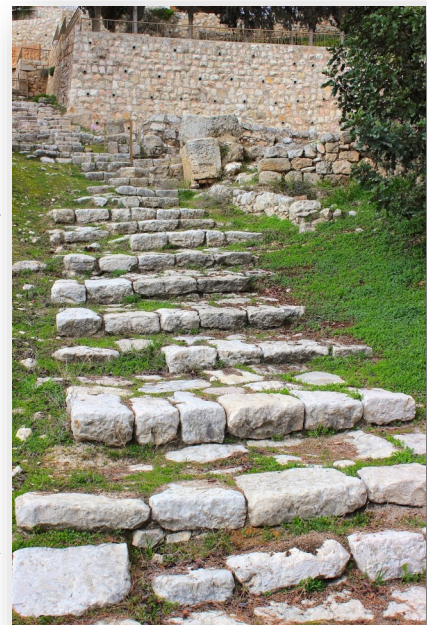
themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover. (John 18:14-28)

(Pictured Right) Windows to a holding cell located in the basement of Caiaphas house.

“And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee? Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.” **(Matt. 26:57-75)**



(Pictured Right) An ancient path that possible Jesus took after his arrest and being brought to the house of Caiaphas,





DID YOU KNOW: Did you ever wonder why Jesus the Messiah wore a crown of thorns? Think about it, a crown, is a symbol of royalty, of power, of kingship, of wealth, and glory. The crown Jesus wore and made not of gold or jewels, but His was made of thorns. Why? In the book of Genesis, everywhere Adam and Eve walked, everything they touched was blessed by God. When they rebelled against Him, the consequence brought the curse and declared the ground would now bear thorns and thistles. The thorns were thus the sign of the curse, the sign of a fallen world, a creation that can no longer bear the blessed fruit it was called to bear, but now brings forth thorns, pain, piercing, blood, tears, and destruction.

When a crown is placed on a man's head, he becomes the king. At that moment, the weight of his kingdom rested upon him. So, what is the significance of the crown of thorns that was placed on the head of Jesus in **Matthew 27:29**? When the crown was placed on His head, He became, "The King of Thorns, the King of the Curse." Thorns speak of pain and tears. So, the crown of thorns means He would now bear the pain and tears of mankind. Thorns speak of piercing, and **Isaiah 53** prophesied that he will be pierced. And the thorns are linked to the curse and the curse is linked to death. So, the crown of thorns ordains that Jesus the Messiah would die. He will bear the weight of the curse upon His head (**Galatians 3:13**).

A crown also signifies authority, of the one who reigns. By bearing the weight of the curse, Jesus becomes king over it, and the King over those who are Cursed. King of the Broken, King of the Pierced and Wounded, King of the Rejected, King of the Disappointed, the King over all Humanity. So, Jesus is King over all who have fallen so they can come to Him and find restoration. For the One who wears the crown has ALL authority to turn Sorrow into Joy, Death into Life, and thorns into something Beautiful. He who wears the crown is Lord of the Fallen, the King of Thorns and the Restorer of that which was lost.

TODAY: Bring the thorns, the wounds, the shame, the sorrows, the disappointments of life to the King of Thorns, so the pain of the past no longer is a curse but allow the King of all kings to restore the Blessing.

Upper Room

The second-story room of Hebrew or Greek homes; often like a tower, built on the flat roof of a Hebrew home for privacy, for comfort during the hot season, or for the entertainment of guests. It could sometimes accommodate large gatherings of people. Jesus met with his disciples shortly before his arrest in an upper room and ate the Passover supper (Lord's Supper) with them as well (**Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12**). This is where He prepared them for His death, the Holy Spirit's coming and their future ministry. The size of some of these rooms is evident from the fact that, after Jesus had left and ascended to heaven, the disciples went to the upper room where they all had been staying before. In one instance the room was on the third story (**Acts 20:8**). Eutychus, sitting in the window, went to sleep and fell three stories to the street below (**Acts 20:9-10**). Ahaziah also fell through the latticework of his upper room (**2 Kings 1:2**).

The dead son of the widow of Zarephath was taken by Elijah to an upper room where he had been staying and raised him from the dead (**1 Kings 17:19-23**). David went to an upper room for privacy to mourn the death of Absalom (**2 Samuel 18:33**). The kings of Judah built strange altars near the upper room of Ahaz, which Josiah pulled down as part of his reform program (**2 Kings 23:12**). Dorcas was laid in an upper room after she had died; later, Peter was taken up to the same room to pray for her restoration to life (**Acts 9:36-41**).

"And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:33).

"And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him..." (1 Kings 17:19-23).

"And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of baalzeub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease" (2 Kings 1:2).

"And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron" (2 Kings 23:12).





“Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover...” (Matt 26:17-29).

“And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.” (Mark 14:15).

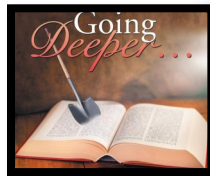
“And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entered in...” (Luke 22:10-38).

“And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and

Andrew...” (Acts 1:13).

“And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together...” (Acts 20:8-10).

“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did...” (Acts 9:36-41).



DID YOU KNOW: Most of us think of the Last Supper in terms that are familiar to us. In our imagination Jesus and His disciples sit around a rectangle shape table on chairs. Jesus is at the center and His disciples are around him. This was not the traditional style of table. The table was most likely horseshoe in shape and was known as a Triclinium.

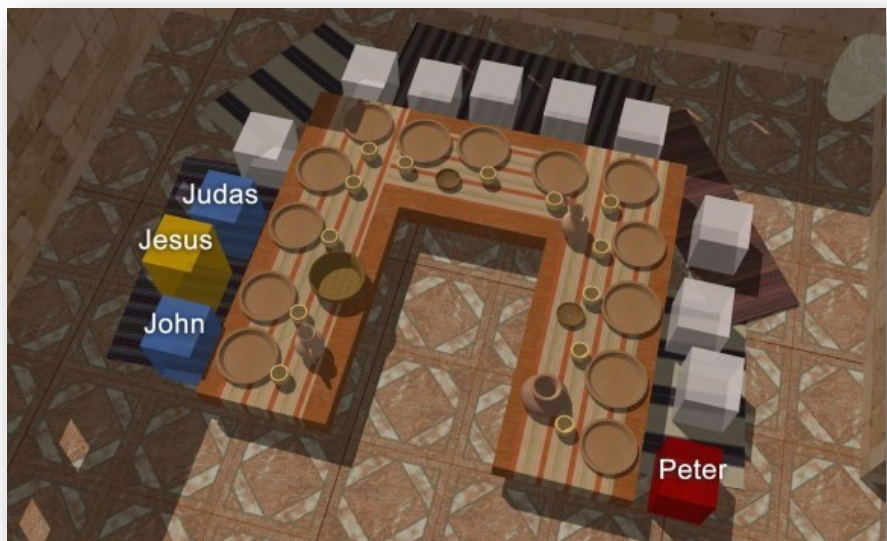
The person who reclined in front of another was referred to as reclining or leaning on the bosom or chest; or more commonly spoken of as the lap of that individual. This was the meaning in

John 13:25; “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.” Based on Jewish law and tradition, Passover (and most meals) was partaken of while people reclined around a low table. Each person would be lying on their left side and leaning on their left arm, with their feet behind them and their heads facing the table. This means those seated on the left side would have their bodies somewhat facing the end of the table. This position, during a meal like the last supper, frees up the right arm for eating.

Judas is sitting to the left of Jesus, in the place designated for the most honored guest. Although the host would normally select who sat next to him, (Luke 14:7 – 11), no record exists of Jesus asking Judas to sit next to Him. Judas likely felt he deserved to be the honored guest at the supper and quickly claimed the choice position as his right.

Apparently at a Jewish meal, the top place was at the head end of the table or the middle of the middle couch, however the guests, were not free to sit where they desired. The host could seat and reseal guests as needs arose. Jesus gives an example of the host asking a presumptuous guest to give up his place of honor to another guest.

Jesus was the host (leader) of this seder meal. Although the Bible does not directly state the seating for this last meeting, we can summarize where Judas, Jesus, Peter, and John would have had to sit. It should also be noted that



Peter, in the seating diagram below, is located across from John at the end of the table. This was, (especially during this most solemn seder,) the lowest and most humble place at the table.

In the gospels it tells us that Peter had to get John's attention for him to ask Jesus who was going to betray Him. (John 13:21, 24). This would have been unnecessary if Peter was seated next to John. Peter, however, had to be close enough to John so that his request wouldn't be heard by the others. John then leans backwards against Jesus' chest to ask Him. (John 13:23-25).

Given how people sat to eat a meal, John had to be immediately to Jesus' right while at the table. This position enabled him to slightly lean back and be against the Lord's chest. Additionally, the interaction that involved Peter, John, Jesus, and Judas, was quiet and close enough so that the other disciples didn't know what was said (see John 13:28). This meant they didn't know that, during the meal, the betrayer would be the one given a piece of bread, the sop.

The host of a formal meal or supper would give, the honored guest, at the table the first sop. The sop was a piece of bread or other small amount of choice food that is dipped in a sauce. The host, once he had the sop, would place it into the mouth of the honored guest. This guest always sat to the left of the host, in John 13:21, 25-26, the Bible clearly states was Judas Iscariot.

After receiving the sop, Judas asked if he was the betrayer, which Messiah confirmed that he was in Matthew 26:23-25. Satan then immediately enters Judas, and he leaves the room.

The Room of the Last Supper

The Cenacle, the traditional location of the upper room that Jesus borrowed in order to have Passover with his disciples, is in the area of the so called "Tomb of David."

(More correctly, the tomb was probably the royal burial place of the later kings of Judah, rather than of David himself; David would have been buried in the ancient City of David.) In any event, the room of the Last Supper is also probably the same one in which Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, and where the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost.

There is a possibility that this is indeed the correct location for the upper room. According to Epiphanius, a fourth century bishop who lived in Palestine for at least 20 years, several first century buildings had survived into the time of Hadrian (A.D. 135). Among these was the small Christian church. If the original Christian community continued to meet in the upper room, then it is likely that Epiphanius' small church was at that location.

When this church was rebuilt on a larger scale in the late fourth century, it was called the Upper Church of the Apostles; a century later it was known as the Mother of Zion Church. A small apse in the "Tomb of David" is all that remains of this church, since it was burned during the Persian invasion in A.D. 614. Finally, a mosaic floor in in Madaba, Jordan (about A.D. 600) includes a depiction of the church in just this area of Jerusalem.



DID YOU KNOW: on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a unique ceremony took place. The high priest would stand before the people with two goats at his side. Each goat had to be identical in appearance to the other. The high priest would then reach into an urn and pull out two lots, one in each hand. Each lot had a different Hebrew word inscribed on it. He then placed one lot on the head of the goat to his right, and another on the head of the goat to his left. One stone identified the goat that would die as the sacrifice for the sins of the people. The other identified the goat or scapegoat that would go free (**Leviticus 16:7-10**).

So, before there could be a sacrifice, there had to be the presentation of the two goats before the people and the determination of the two destinies.

Does this ceremony apply to Jesus and His crucifixion that took place? He was presented before the people, for the choosing, for the determination of destinies. And there was two presented, and only one could become the sacrifice. And according to the ordinance of Yom Kippur, the other life had to be let go. So, what happened to the other life that was presented that day? He was let go. And what was his name... Barabbas (**Matthew 27:15-24**)?

According to the requirements of the ancient ceremony, the two had to be identical. Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of the Father. Do you know what the name Barabbas means? Barabbas comes from two Hebrew words, bar, which means son, and abba, which means father. Barabbas means the Son of the Father. The two lives each bears the name the Son of the Father.

So, Jesus came to earth and lived like us, He was flesh and blood, in the likeness of man (**Philippians 2:7**). He

became our identical, He was our willing sacrifice, slain so we could be set FREE.

TODAY: Live as one sentenced to judgment but was released and given FREEDOM because of the LOVE and SACRIFICE of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Antonia Fortress

Herod erected the Antonia Fortress to the north of the Temple precinct to guard the Temple Mount area. Perhaps built on the foundation of an older garrison site, Herod named this fortress in honor of Mark Antony. This fortress has traditionally been identified as the place where Jesus appeared before Pontius Pilate.

The fortress was roughly rectangular in form. The E-W length has been estimated at approximately 490 ft. and the N-S figure is 260 ft. Prominent high towers projected at each of the corners. They were said to be 75 ft. high, except for the SE one which overlooked the Temple which was 100 ft. high.



Josephus is the authority for the castle's interior, said it served both as a palace and a barracks. Several stairs led down from the castle to the porticoes of the Temple at its north end. There was said to have been a subterranean passageway from the castle to the Court of Israel, but it was for emergency use only. Titus made his grand assault upon the Temple area from the Castle Antonia.

In the old city of Jerusalem today the street that begins at St. Stephen's Gate passes directly above the remains of the Castle Antonia. The Convent of the Flagellation and the Church of the Sisters of Zion are built above much of the north half of Antonia. Under the latter building can be seen a large area of the original central courtyard of the castle, which seems to have been 165 ft. square. The massive original paving stones, one ft. thick, are still in place. The channels cut in the stone pavement were used to carry rain water into the cisterns, which are still in use today. One can also see where the soldiers scratched their game patterns into the pavement (below), where they would cast lots for the personal items of those being crucified.

(John 19:23-24) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. 24 They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Psalms 22:18) which says: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."

Bible history

There are two theories concerning the place where Christ was tried before Pilate. Some scholars favor Herod's palace which was at the NW corner of the city near the modern Jaffa Gate, but more scholars favor the Castle Antonia. Pilate and Christ could have stood on one of the balconies, with the mob in the courtyard described above. John 19:13 speaks of "The Pavement" as the site of the trial. The Via Dolorosa assumes that the Castle Antonia is the site of the trial of Christ before Pilate.

Paul was arrested in the Temple courtyard after the mob had tried to lynch him. He asked for, and was granted, permission to speak to the crowd from the steps leading up from the Court of the Gentiles into the barracks (Acts 21:31-22:29).



When Paul appeared before the Council the next day, he again had to be rescued and was rushed up the stairs into the barracks (Acts 22:30-23:10). He was taken by night from the Castle Antonia under a military convoy to Caesarea (Acts 23:23-35).

The Palace of Herod the Great

Herod's palace was located in the area that is now called the Armenian Quarter of the Old City. The palace complex extended from David's Citadel to the area of Christ Church, the Jaffa Gate police station, and the Armenian Garden. Traces of the palace foundations, columns, and cisterns have been found in those areas. The foundations of the large tower inside Jaffa Gate are probably those of the tower of Phasael, which was built in memory of Herod's brother. Just like the Temple, Herod's Palace was constructed on a platform, about 1000 feet (from north-south), and 180 feet (from east-west). The Palace



consisted of 2 main buildings, each with its banquet halls, baths, and accommodation for hundreds of guests. It was surrounded with groves of trees, canals, and ponds studded with bronze fountains.

King Herod built the three heavily fortified towers of the citadel upon a location that was already a very fortified position since the days of Solomon. Jerusalem's citadel was the highest point of the city about 2500 feet above sea level. Herod built the citadel and towers to protect the western side of the city of Jerusalem and his marvelous palace. These were fantastic towers, the largest was the Phasael Tower but the most beautiful was his Mariamne Tower.

The Phasael Tower - (the largest, named after his brother stood 145 feet high).

The Hippicus Tower - (named after a friend, and was 132 feet high)

The Mariamme Tower - (named after his beloved Hasmonean wife whom he had murdered).

Josephus said "the king considering it appropriate that the tower named after a woman should surpass in decoration those called after men." It stood 74 feet high).

When Titus destroyed most of Jerusalem in 70 AD., he spared Herod's fortress.

Nothing remains of Herod's three towers today and a Citadel named "David's Tower" stands on the spot of a Phasael's Tower.

In 1999, archaeologists found a building (pictured left) while working on the Tower of David Museum. It turned out to be a possible site of King Herod's Palace. Records on its walls go back to the First Temple period, even before the time of Jesus and the Roman governor Pontius Pilate who sentenced him to the cross.

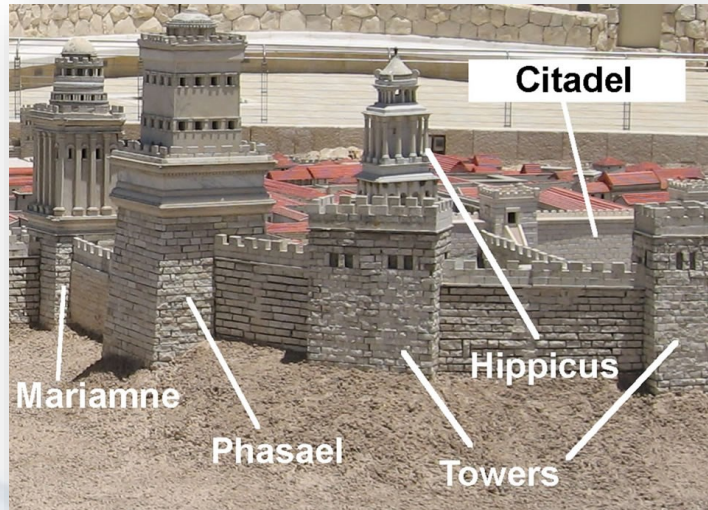
For years, experts suggested that Pilate had handed down his death sentence from the Antonia Fortress in the northeastern part of the Old City, where the Roman Praetorian Guard was housed. But this recent discovery puts the possibility of King Herod's Palace at the Tower of David to possibly be where Pilate could have pronounced judgment on Jesus.

David's Citadel

Jerusalem's Citadel, known as the "Tower of David", is a historical and archaeological asset of international significance. The Citadel is a medieval fortress with architectural additions dating back almost 3,000 years to strategically strengthen the city's defense. It is located near the Jaffa Gate, the historical entrance to the city and

the point where the East meets the West. It bears cultural and architectural values and has been the symbol of the city of Jerusalem for generations.

The Origin of the Name: Despite being called the Tower of David; the citadel has no connection to King David. The roots of this mistake date back to the Byzantine period, when early Church fathers misinterpreted Josephus Flavius' writings and attributed a tower from the time of Herod (the Tower of Phasael) to King David. The Muslims also associated the Herodian tower with King David and called it mihrab Nabi Daud (the prayer niche of the prophet David). In the 19th century, when Westerners arrived in the city looking for physical evidence of the scriptures, the Turkish minaret added to the Mamluk mosque was mistakenly identified as the Tower of David. It was then that the misnomer for the Herodian Phasael Tower was transferred to the Turkish minaret and it received the name the Tower of David.



Judgment Hall of Pilate

Found in the New Testament, the word “Judgment Hall” was also translated as “Praetorium” (Mark 15:16) and “common hall” (Matt 27:27). The word was first used to refer to the place where the Roman general’s tent stood in an army camp and hence was a reference to the headquarters of the camp. Later, it came to mean the military council that met in the general’s tent. It was then used in reference to the palace in which the Roman governor or procurator resided while ruling a province. In Jerusalem, it was the palace that Herod the Great had built for himself. When the Roman governor came from his normal residence in Caesarea to Jerusalem, he occupied Herod’s palace and conducted his official business there. On Friday, before Jesus’ death, the high council brought Jesus before Pilate to gain assent to their verdict, charging Jesus with treason. The site of the interrogation before Pilate is debated. It could have been in Herod’s palace in the western part of the city. Another possibility is that Pilate lodged in the Antonia Fortress while residing in Jerusalem. Pilate then sent Jesus to be judged by Herod Antipas, after realizing that Jesus was a Galilean. Jesus was then turned back into the hands of Pilate, who allowed Jesus to be executed by torture and crucifixion.

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers” (Matt 27:27).



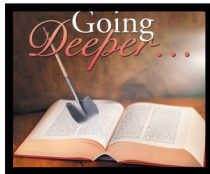
“...And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it...” (Mark 15:1-5).

“And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band” (Mark 15:16).

“And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate...” (Luke 23:1-5).

Adjacent to the arch is the Ecce Homo Convent near the corner of the Via Dolorosa is the Second Station of the cross where the Roman soldiers’ game in **Lithostrotos** pavement under Zion Sisters convent which were once

claimed to be the Stone Pavement where Pilate had his judgement seat (**John 19:13**). (Pictured on previous page) Markings in the paving stones, indicating a dice game known as the King's Game, suggested a possible site where Jesus was mocked by the soldiers (**John 19:2-3**).



DID YOU KNOW: That Psalm 103:11-12 declares; “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he

removed our transgressions from us.”

The east is from the west is known as the east-west continuum. You may be thinking, “How is this different from the north-south continuum?” Because, the earth is a sphere, and it turns on its axis on an east-west continuum. Therefore, the earth has a north pole and a south pole, but no east or west pole.

How far is the north from the south? Since there are two poles, the distance is limited. All north comes to an end at the North Pole. And all south ends at the South Pole. If the psalmist said your transgressions were removed as far as the north to the south, then sin would have been removed only a few thousand miles from the sinner.

But how far is the east from the west? East and west have no poles. Therefore, they never end. East and west are infinite. They go on forever. In fact, the Hebrew word for the east, *kedem*, also means **everlasting**.

So, in Jesus the Messiah, how far does God remove your sins from you? An infinity away, an eternity away. And if you had all eternity, you could never find them again. As it is written, “So far has He removed our sins away from us . . . as far as the east is from the west.”

TODAY: take time to ponder and take in the love of God that removed your sins as far as the east is from the west and live accordingly.



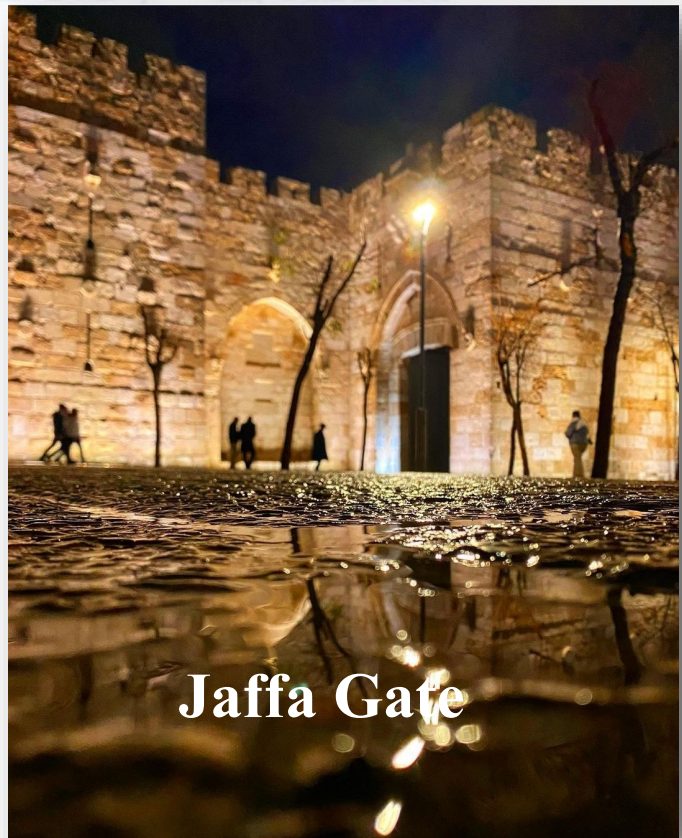
Jerusalem Area

Gates of the Old City

Ancient cities were actually massive stone fortresses. However, like a chain, a fortress is only as strong as its weakest point. In times of war, enemy forces often concentrated their attacks on the gates, typically the weakest part of the city wall. Because of this, the gates usually included or were flanked by defensive guard towers.

As we mentioned earlier, the **Jaffa Gate** on the western side of the city walls is named for the road that leads from the gate to the port city of Jaffa (Joppa). Built in 1538, the Jaffa Gate is one of the main entrances into the city. Busy with pedestrians and cars, a road allows visitors to enter the Old City through a wide gap in the wall between Jaffa Gate and the Citadel. It's also the best place to catch a cab back to the hotel if you're spending your free day exploring the Old City and are too tired to walk back.

The **New Gate** on the west wall is so named because it is the newest. It was built with permission of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1889. The gate is located near the northwestern corner of the city and leads into the Christian Quarter.



Jaffa Gate

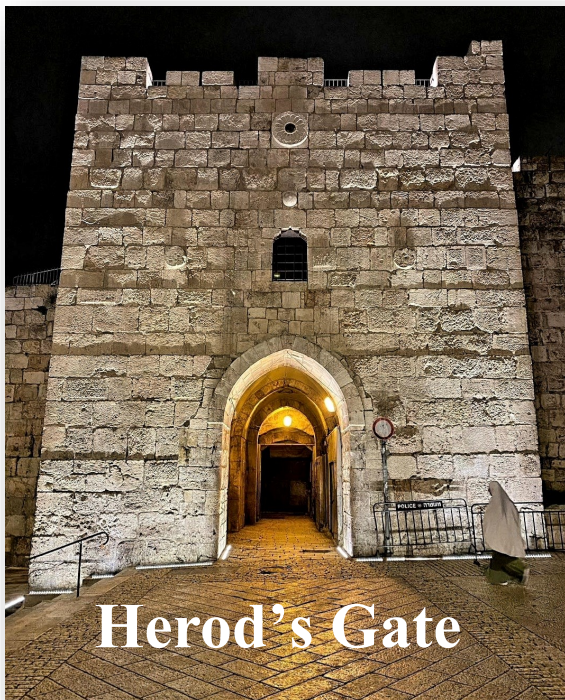
The **Damascus Gate** to the north has two nicknames. It is called the **Shechem Gate** by Jews, for a city by the same name that used to be outside this gate. The Arabs call it the “Gate of the Column,” because of a tall pillar that once stood in this gate’s plaza during the Roman and Byzantine periods. This is the busiest and most magnificent of all Jerusalem’s gates. There is one large center gate originally intended for use by persons of high station, and two smaller side entrances for the rest of us.

Herod’s Gate (also called Flowers Gate) is just east of the Damascus Gate and is the entrance into the Muslim Quarter through the northern wall. It is named after Herod the Great, and its nickname comes from the floral carvings above the gate entrance.

The **Lions’ Gate**, also known as Stephen’s Gate or the Sheep Gate (Nehemiah 3:1, 32; 12:39), is located on the east wall, north of the Temple Mount and today leads to the Via Dolorosa. Near the gate’s crest are four figures of lions, two on the left and two on the right. It is referred to as **Stephen’s Gate** because tradition says that the first Christian martyr was stoned outside this gate. Israeli paratroopers from the 55th Paratroop Brigade came through this gate during the Six-Day War and unfurled the Israeli flag above the Temple Mount.



As discussed earlier, the **East Gate** (also known as the **Golden Gate** or **Mercy Gate**) faces the Mount of Olives on the eastern side of the Old City.



Herod’s Gate

Dung Gate is found in the south wall and is the gate closest to the Temple Mount. This is one of the 12 or so gates that existed at the time of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3:14). It led out to the Valley Of Hinnom. Since the 2nd century, trash has been hauled out of the city through this gate.

Zion Gate is on the south wall, overlooking Mount Zion and leading to the Jewish and Armenian Quarters. This gate was used by the Israel defense forces in 1967 to enter and capture the Old City. Make sure to notice the bullet holes that can still be seen on the stones surrounding the gate.²

The gates of Jerusalem have seen some changes since the days of the Old Testament. In biblical times nearly every city was a “gated” city. Strong gates were vital to the city’s welfare. Gates were where business was transacted and where important announcements were made. Traders brought their goods into the city through gates. Gates were frequently the focus of enemy attacks. The weakest points of a city’s walls were its gates because they were made of wood and could be set on fire. To “possess the gates” meant that you had conquered the city. (**Genesis 22:17**).

Perhaps the most famous gates in the Bible are the ten gates that were built in the wall surrounding Jerusalem. Nehemiah gave detailed attention to them (Nehemiah 3). He was distressed because the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and its gates were burned with fire (Nehemiah 1:3-4). He saw the need for a great restoration. Because of his vision and strong leadership, the job was completed in only 52 days (**Nehemiah 6:15**). The ten gates can symbolize the gospel story. Chapter 3 of Nehemiah starts with the:

Sheep Gate, located in the NE part of the city wall. As you might expect, this gate was where the sheep were brought into Jerusalem to be sacrificed. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (**Isaiah 53:6**). But Jesus, the Lamb of God, “was led as a lamb to the slaughter” (**John 1:29, Isaiah 53:7**). By His blood our sins are forgiven (**Romans 3:25**).

Next came the **Fish Gate**. All you had to do was “follow your nose” to find this gate! Fishermen brought their catch from the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River through this gate. Jesus told the disciples, “I will make you fishers of men” (**Mark 1:17**). We are saved from our sins in order to help save others from their sins.

The **Old Gate** is mentioned next. It was the oldest of all the gates. It stands for the timeless principles of God’s truth. Jeremiah said, “Ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you find rest for your souls” (**Jeremiah 6:16**). We need to stay on course in the Christian life (**Matt 7:14**) and not veer off to some “New Gate.”

The **Valley Gate** was next in line. David spoke of “the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4). Just because we are Christians does not mean that we will not have valleys in our life. But the presence of the Shepherd will be with us; therefore, we will “fear no evil.” And we will be fruitful for the best fruit is grown in the valley.

The **Refuse Gate** was another gate you could find by following your nose. Garbage and rubbish were carted through this gate to the valley of Hinnom. Sometimes it is called the **Dung Gate**. There are many things we should refuse for our spiritual health’s sake (2 Corinthians 7:1).

The **Fountain Gate** must have been a refreshing place to visit. The Pool of Siloam graced the King’s Garden. Jesus declared that from the lives of believers living water would flow. “By this He meant the Spirit” (John 7:38,39). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives will be a source of refreshment to others.

The only gate that needed no repairs was the **Water Gate**. Each gate had suffered damage because of fire, but no repairs were necessary here. Ezra set up a pulpit and taught from the Book of the Law in front of the Water Gate (**Nehemiah 8:3**). The Word of God cannot be destroyed and needs no revision. Today the church is cleansed “with the baptismal water by the word” (**Ephesians 5:26**). See also Acts 2:41, Titus 3:5.

The **Horse Gate** was vital because horses were necessary to successful warfare. John saw a Rider on a white horse whose name was the Word of God (**Revelation 19:11-21**). War was made upon the Rider on the horse – and His army. The church is the army of Christ, engaged in spiritual warfare (**Ephesians 6:10-18**). Let us “possess the gates” – even the vaunted Gates of Hades (**Matthew 16:18**).

The **East Gate** faced the rising sun. It was the first gate to be opened in the morning. It has been sealed up for many years but it reminds us that Jesus is coming again (**Matthew 24:44**). Don’t be shut out when the Bridegroom comes (**Matthew 25:1-13**).

The **Miphkad Gate**, near the present Golden Gate, was where King David reviewed his troops and



foreigners were required to register. The Hebrew word means “appointment” or “census.” At the “Appointment Gate” or “Inspection Gate” we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:10**).

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14)

The Four Quarters of the Old City

The Four Quarters of the Old City are formed along a roughly rectangular grid, but the quarters are not equal in size. To get an idea of the borders, draw a line running north to south from the Damascus Gate to the Zion Gate. Cross it with an east to west line running from the Jaffa Gate to the Lions’ Gate (also called Stephen’s Gate).

The **Muslim Quarter**, located in the northeastern corner, is the largest and most densely populated of the four quarters with 22,000 citizens as of 2005. Like the other three quarters of the Old City, the Muslim quarter had a mixed population of Jews as well as Muslims and Christians until the riots of 1929. Today, only 60 Jewish families live in the Muslim Quarter.

The **Christian Quarter** is in the northwestern corner of the Old City. Few people live in this quarter. Instead, this quarter is full of religious sites (40 holy places in all), small museums, and educational buildings. You can also find many souvenir shops, coffee shops, hotels, and restaurants. This quarter also contains the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

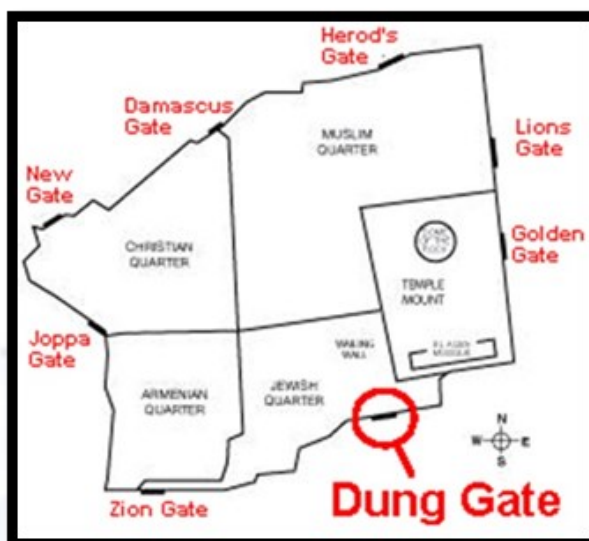
The **Armenian Quarter** is the smallest of the four quarters of the Old City. Although the Armenian people are Christians, the Armenian Quarter is distinct from the Christian Quarter. Despite the small size and population of this quarter, the Armenians remain independent. Unlike most Christians in the region, they are not Arab and have chosen to stay ethnically separate. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the four quarters of the city came under Jordanian control. Jordanian law required Armenians and other Christians to “give equal time to the Bible and Qur’an” in private Christian schools. Today more than 3,000 Armenians live in Jerusalem—500 of them in the Armenian Quarter.

The **Jewish Quarter** lies in the southeastern sector of the walled city. Jews have had a continuous presence here since the 8th century BC. The oldest synagogues—the Elijah the Prophet and Yohanan Ben Zakkai—are both roughly 400 years old. These synagogues are below street level, because, when they were built, Jews and Christians were not allowed to build anything higher than the Muslim structures.

The Jewish Quarter of today is built on the remains of Herod’s upper city (37 BC-70 AD). In 1948, Jordan forced the entire Jewish population (about 2,000 people) to leave the quarter. Ancient synagogues were destroyed and homes were sacked. The quarter remained under Jordanian control until its capture by Israeli paratroops in the Six-Day War of 1967. The quarter has since been rebuilt and settled, and has an estimated population of 2,500. Before being rebuilt, the quarter was carefully excavated under the supervision of Hebrew University archaeologist Nahman Avigad. The archaeological remains are on display in a series of museums and outdoor parks two or three stories below street level. Just off the plaza is the *Cardo* (right), a sort of ancient Byzantine super highway that ran through the heart of the city. Today, a small area is preserved with some of the original Roman columns. Just beyond the columns is an underground mall with a number of Jewish stores and art galleries. This is a good place to purchase souvenirs and, as mentioned earlier, haggling is expected.

Western Wall

Built in the 1st century by Herod the Great as part of the Temple Mount complex, the Western Wall commonly refers to a 187-foot section of ancient wall on the western side of the Temple Mount. Here are some quick facts about its dimensions and composition:





The above-ground portion of this limestone retaining wall actually spans 1,600 feet, but it is mostly hidden behind buildings that run along its length.

At the Western Wall Plaza, the total height of the Wall from its foundation is estimated at 105 feet, with its exposed section standing approximately 62 feet high. The plaza was designated as an area for prayer when Israel captured the Old City in 1967.

The Wall consists of 45 stone layers, 28 of them above ground and 17 underground. The bottom layer is 50 feet wide. The first seven layers, which you can count from the ground up, date back to Herod.

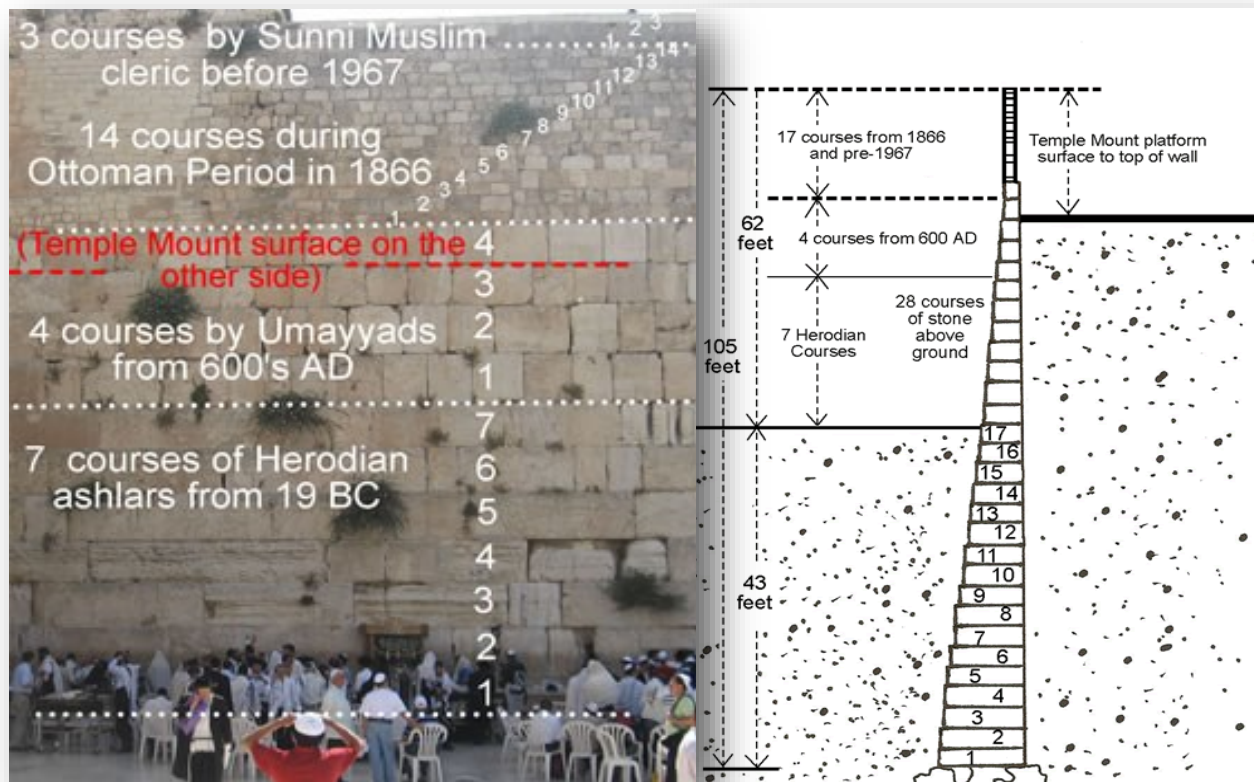
Most of the stones weigh between two and eight tons each. One giant stone (called the Master Course) located in the northern section of Wilson's Arch measures 44.6 feet long and almost 11 feet wide. It weighs approximately 570 tons (1,140,000 lbs.).

When Rome destroyed the Second Temple in 70 AD, only one outer wall remained standing. The Romans probably would have destroyed this wall along with the others, but it probably didn't seem worth the effort since it was not considered part of the Temple itself; it was just an outer wall surrounding the Temple Mount. For the Jews, however, this remnant of what was their most sacred building quickly became the holiest place in Jewish life.

Throughout the centuries, Jews from all over the world have made the difficult pilgrimage to Palestine, heading immediately for the Western Wall to thank God, offer prayers, and mourn the destruction of their temple. The prayers spoken at the Wall were so intense that Gentiles began calling the site the "Wailing Wall." However, this term is considered derogatory to most Jewish people, as it refers to their audible lamentations about the temple's destruction and other hardships.⁵ Let's show them honor and respect by calling the site the "Western Wall."

The Western Wall is also the holiest place still accessible to Jewish people today, because Muslims control the Temple Mount. Here, Jews are as close as they can get to the Foundation Stone, which is the rock referred to in the Dome of the Rock. Jews believe the Holy of Holies sat on this rock and that the Ark of the Covenant once rested here (**Exodus 26:33**). Because of the profound reverence they possess, most Jews will not set foot on the Temple Mount.

At times tens of thousands of people gather here for prayer. Most people know that you are supposed to write a prayer on a piece of paper and tuck it into a crevice in the Wall. What most people don't know is why. How did this tradition get started? In the 1700s, a desperately poor man could no longer feed his family and came to see Rabbi Chaim Ibn Attar. The rabbi wrote on some parchment and told the man to put it between the holy stones of the Western Wall. That must have worked, because 300 years later all kinds of people—from Popes to politicians to pop stars—are still putting their paper prayers in the Wall!



Today the Western Wall has gone high tech. The Israeli Telephone Company established a fax service where petitioners can send notes to be placed in the Western Wall. A number of charitable websites now offer the same service, and since July 2009, you can even “Tweet” a prayer to the Western Wall.

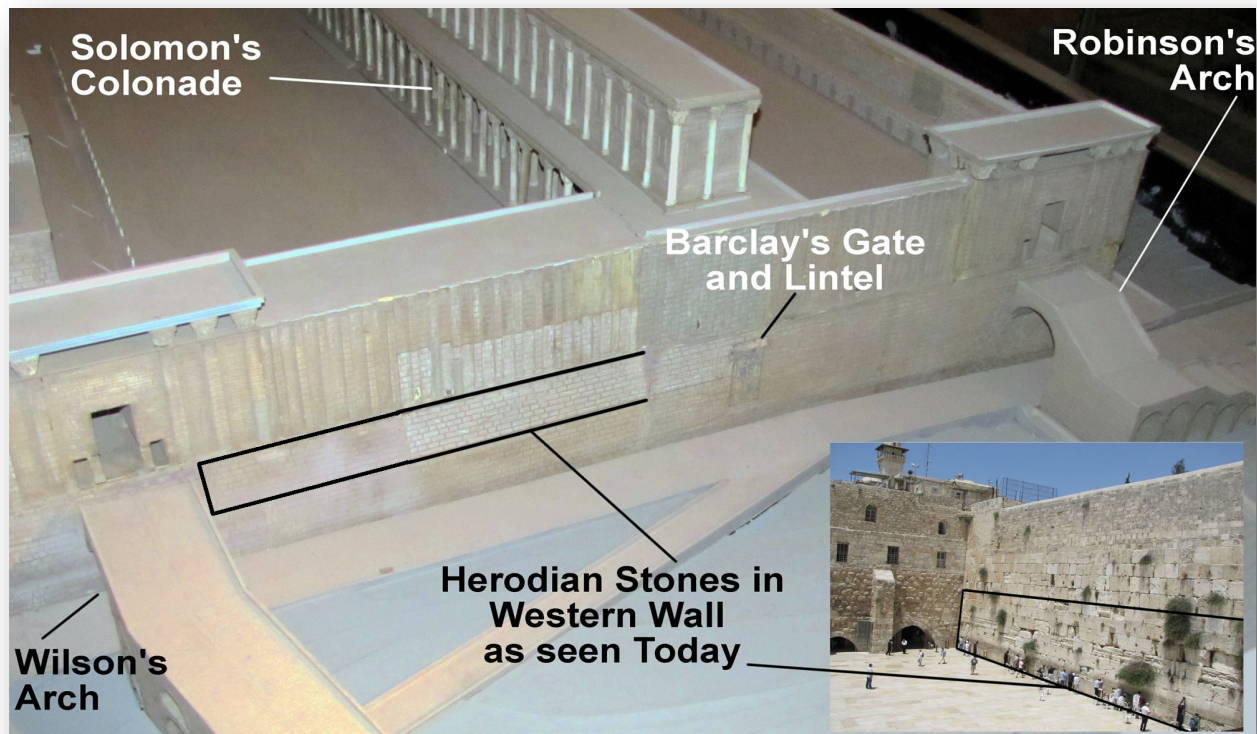
Not everyone is thrilled with the increased activity at the Western Wall. Some ultra-orthodox Jews believe that the custom of placing paper prayers in the crevices violates the holiness of the Wall. They believe our unholy hands should not touch any part of the Wall and that leaning against it or using it for shade diminishes its sanctity. Even using its cavities for resting prayer books or candles is frowned upon. At one point in the Wall’s history, pilgrims would place nails in the cracks and paint their Hebrew names on the Wall. These practices stopped after rabbinic consensus determined that they were a desecration of holiness. Years ago, it was not uncommon for tourists to remove a chip from the Wall or some of the sand from between its cracks as a good luck charm or memento. Some rabbis claimed this practice was “an evil custom which is totally forbidden.” However, it is permissible to take twigs from the vegetation that grows in the Wall, as they contain no holiness.

Even cleaning the stones creates a problem. If placing your finger in a crevice is a no-no, according to their reading of Jewish law, scrubbing it down would be out of the question. As a result, offensive graffiti once sprayed by a tourist was left for months until it began to naturally peel away.

In the past, ultra-orthodox Jews violently broke up any prayer service organized by women. Today, there is a sectioned-off area for women only. As a sign of respect, men and married women are expected to cover their heads when approaching the Wall and to dress modestly. On Saturdays, it is forbidden to enter the area with electronic devices, including cameras, which infringe on the sanctity of the Sabbath.

Remember when leaving, the custom is to walk backwards away from the Wall. While here, make your way up the stairs behind the entrance of the Wall to one of the rooftop lookouts above. This offers the best view. From here you can see the entire Wall and the Dome of the Rock peeking from behind it.

The Western Wall is open 24 hours a day. If you can, try to see it at night when it’s the most peaceful. Walk up to the Wall and feel the rough texture of thousands of battles; hear the echoes of millennia of prayers; see the honey yellow glow of past civilizations. Then step back and take in the history and majesty of this simple wall of stone. To stand and pray here is a humbling and awesome experience. For those who have never been, the Western Wall



can be viewed online through a live video feed with frequently updated photos daily. Check out www.aish.com/wallcam or www.thewall.org.

After Jordan captured the Western Wall and the Old City during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Article VIII of the 1949 Armistice Agreement allowed Israeli/Jewish access to the Western Wall. However, Jordan refused to keep its word, and Jews were effectively barred. For the next 20 years, a vantage point on Mount Zion that overlooked the Wall became the place where Jews gathered to pray.

The Western Wall came under Israeli control after Israel's Six-Day War victory in 1967. Yitzhak Rabin, fifth Prime Minister of Israel, described the moment Israeli soldiers reached the Wall:

“There was one moment in the Six-Day War which symbolized the great victory: that was the moment in which the first paratroopers—under Gur’s command—reached the stones of the Western Wall, feeling the emotion of the place; there never was, and never will be, another moment like it. Nobody staged that moment. Nobody planned it in advance. Nobody prepared it and nobody was prepared for it; it was as if Providence had directed the whole thing: the paratroopers weeping—loudly and in pain—over their comrades who had fallen along the way, the words of the Kaddish prayer heard by Western Wall’s stones after 19 years of silence, tears of mourning, shouts of joy, and the singing of ‘Hatikvah.’”

Forty-eight hours after capturing the Wall, the military demolished the entire Moroccan Quarter, which stood just 12 feet from the Wall. Chaim Herzog, who later became Israel’s sixth president, took much of the credit for the destruction of the neighborhood:

“When we visited the Wailing Wall we found a toilet attached to it...we decided to remove it and from this we came to the conclusion that we could evacuate the entire area in front of the Wailing Wall...a historical opportunity that will never return...We knew that the following Saturday, June 14, would be the Jewish festival of Shavouot and that many will want to come to pray...it all had to be completed by then.”

Before demolition, the 1300-square foot area could accommodate a maximum of 12,000 people per day; after demolition it became an enormous plaza covering more than 200,000 square feet, which can now hold more than 400,000. Jews believe that the Western Wall is close to the Holy of Holies and so they come here to pray. Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger writes, “...since the gate of heaven is near the Western Wall, it is understandable that all Israel’s prayers ascend on high there...”



DID YOU KNOW: Prayers from hearts all over the world, are carefully placed between the

ancient stones of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. These prayers are viewed as so sacred that a rabbi watches over them as they are carefully removed from the wall's crevices twice a year and buried ceremoniously on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Temple area.

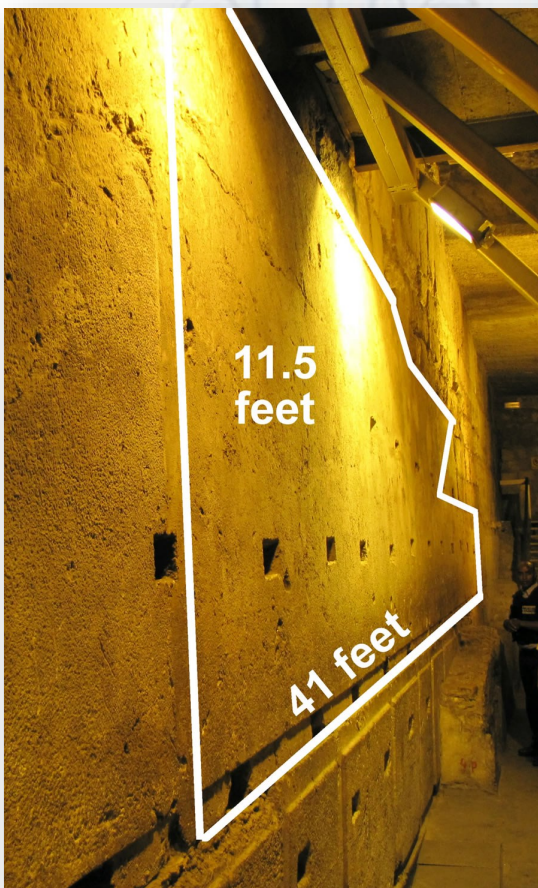
Western Wall Tunnel (Rabbi's Tunnel)

While the above-ground portion of the Western Wall is close to 200 feet long, most of its original 1600-foot length is hidden beneath the Prayer Plaza and the rest of the Old City. Rabbi's Tunnel gives special access to this subterranean section of the Wall. The tunnel is underground and adjacent to the Western Wall, allowing access to the rest of the structure.



British researchers began excavating the Western Wall in the mid 1800s; however, the Six-Day War in 1967 provided an opportunity to expand the dig. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of Israel aimed to expose the continuation of the Western Wall. Lasting almost 20 years, the excavation revealed many previously unknown facts about the history and geography of the Temple Mount. A difficult endeavor, since the tunnels ran beneath residential neighborhoods constructed on top of ancient structures from the Second Temple Period, the dig was conducted with the supervision of scientific and rabbinic experts—hence the name, “Rabbi’s Tunnel.” Then in 1988, the Western Wall Heritage Foundation was formed and took over the excavation, maintenance, and renovations of the Western Wall and Western Wall Plaza.

“Warren’s Gate” lies about 150 feet into the tunnel. This sealed-off entrance has been turned into a small synagogue called “The Cave,” and has become a most-sacred spot to the Jewish people. Why put a synagogue here? As mentioned earlier, assuming it was located at the traditional site under the Dome of the Rock, this is the closest Jews can get to the Holy of Holies.



The biggest stone in the Western Wall, often called the Western Stone (left), can be seen within the tunnel. At 41 feet long, 11.5 feet tall, and weighing 1,140,000 pounds, it ranks as one of the heaviest objects ever lifted by human beings without powered machinery.

Originally, tourists walking through the tunnel had to retrace their steps back to the entrance. But in 1996, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu ordered a new exit to be cut into the Struthion Pool area to the Via Dolorosa nearby. Since then, large numbers of tourists are able to enter the tunnel’s southern entrance near the Western Wall, walk the tunnel’s length with a tour guide, and exit from the northern end. At the end of the tour the route back to the Jewish Quarter passes through the Muslim Quarter. As a precaution, sometimes Israeli soldiers accompany tourists back to the Jewish Quarter.

Towards the northern end of the tunnel, you’ll come across a section to the left with a pool, and to the right you’ll see the Roman road that ran along the outside of the temple. Oftentimes one wonders if Jesus actually traveled down this particular section. It is my belief that He most definitely would have walked by this pool with His disciples and perhaps leaned against the rail and spent time with His followers, teaching them.

This is one of the places in Israel that give me the chills when I consider that I’m actually walking where Jesus walked. But remember, in Christ’s day, it wasn’t a tunnel. Enjoy!

Temple Mount

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as He taught them, He said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a ‘den of robbers.’” (Mark 11:15-17)



Jewish Midrash (a large collection of rabbinical sermons that help explain the teachings of the Torah and Talmud) holds that it was from the Temple Mount that the world expanded into its present form, and that this was where God gathered the dust He used to create the first man, Adam. The Torah records that it was here that God chose to rest his Divine Presence, and consequently, two Jewish Temples were built at the site. According to Jewish tradition, one day the Third Temple will be built here, and it will be the final one. Because no one today can pinpoint the exact location of the Holy of Holies, many Jews will not set foot on the Mount.

In Islam, this site is called Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) and is revered as the destination of Muhammad’s journey to Jerusalem and the location of his ascent to heaven, although there is no record of him being there. The Temple Mount is also associated with biblical prophets who are esteemed in Islam, and it’s the location of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, the oldest Islamic structure in the world.

Often visitors wonder why the Temple Mount isn’t the highest point in the city when the Bible seems to describe it as such. The answer is that the city today (including the Old City) has grown and shifted from its original location. The earliest city of Jerusalem is the “City of David,” a smaller hill south of, and lower than, the Temple Mount.



DID YOU KNOW... During the time of JESUS, Two Lambs were sacrificed everyday? One lamb was offered in the morning, and the other lamb was offered at twilight. This, was the **Law of the Tamid (Exodus 29:38–39)**. Tamid was the name given to the sacrifices that were to be offered every day in the Temple. So each day, the offerings would begin with the sacrifice of the morning lamb and finish with the sacrifice of the evening lamb. All the other sacrifices would come in between the two. There is a specific ritual to the offering of the Tamid. The morning lamb would be offered up at the third hour of the day. With its death, the Temple trumpets would sound and the Temple gates would be opened. Then at about the ninth hour, the evening sacrifice would be slain and offered on the altar, at which time all the sacrifices would be finished. So the morning lamb was offered up at the third hour.

What time is that? Nine o’clock. And when was JESUS crucified? The same hour, nine in the morning. So as the morning lamb was slain on the altar, the Lamb of God was lifted on the altar of the cross, and the trumpets sounded to announce the sacrifice, and the Temple gates were opened. And the evening lamb, at the ninth hour, what time was that? Three in the afternoon. The exact time when Jesus the Messiah died on the cross?

So the crucifixion of Jesus began with the offering up of the morning lamb and ended with the offering of the evening lamb. And it all took place during the six hours of the Temple sacrifices, in between the two lambs, from the first sacrifice to the last. The Lamb of God, is all in all, covering every moment, every need, every sin, every problem, and every answer. He is the Tamid.

What does tamid mean? It means continual, daily, perpetual, always, and forever. And so He will be there for you always . . . and will be your answer continuously, every day, always, and forever . . . For Jesus is the Lamb, and not only the Lamb . . . but YOUR Tamid.

TODAY... REJOICE in the fact that Jesus is your Tamid—the atonement for every moment of your life—always, and forever.

Temple Mount Highlights in the Bible

Abraham journeys three days from Beersheva or Garet to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice in obedience to God's command. God provides a substitute (**Genesis 22; Hebrews 11:8-19**). Mt. Moriah is the site of the Temple Mount.

David returns the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and places it in the Tabernacle of Moses erected there (**2 Samuel 6:1-18; 1 Chronicles 15-16**). David plans the First Temple, but is not permitted by God to build it (**2 Samuel 7:1-17**).



David purchases the threshing floor of Araunah, which later becomes the site of the First Temple, and erects an altar of sacrifice on Mt. Moriah (**2 Samuel 24:1-25; 1 Chronicles 21:1-22:5**).

Solomon, with the help of Hiram of Tyre and 183,600 workers, builds the First Temple and the Royal Palace using local limestone, cedar from Lebanon, and large amounts of gold and silver. The Temple is built in seven years (**1 Kings 5-9; 2 Chronicles 2-3**).

In 924 BC, Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt plunders the Temple and carries off much of the gold and silver (**1 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chronicles 12:1-11**).

Joash, king of Judah, repairs the Temple, establishes a maintenance fund, and brings a period of revival and reforms to the southern kingdom (**2 Kings 12:4-5**).

Ahaz, king of Judah, dismantles Solomon's bronze vessels and places a private Syrian altar in the Temple (**2 Kings 16:1-20; 2 Chronicles 28**).



The stairway in front of the El-Aqsa leads to the closed Double Gate in the Southern Wall.

Hezekiah, with the help of God and the prophet Isaiah, resists the Assyrian attempt to capture Jerusalem (**2 Chronicles 32**). He restores the Temple and brings another period of national reform and revival (**2 Chronicles 29-31**). Later, he strips gold from the Temple to pay tribute to Sennacherib (**2 Kings 18-16**).

Josiah repairs the Temple and brings about national religious reforms (**2 Chronicles 34-35**).

In 586 BC, the First Temple is destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, and the sacred vessels are carried off to Babylon. Sometime between 553-540 BC, Belshazzar of Babylon later desecrates these vessels (**Daniel 5**).

Ezekiel receives a vision from God describing in detail the great Temple to be built during the reign of the Messiah in an age yet to come (**Ezekiel 40-48**).

In 516 BC, Jews under Nehemiah's leadership return from Babylon in small numbers to rebuild the city and its walls (**Daniel 9; Haggai 2:18-19; Nehemiah**).

The construction of the Second Temple begins around 538 BC. Despite fierce opposition and delays, it is completed under Darius of Persia in 516 BC with the erection of an altar of sacrifice on Mt. Moriah.

In 332 BC, priests from Jerusalem meet the invading army of Alexander the Great and persuade him to not destroy Jerusalem by showing him Scriptures that predict his rise to power. After the death of Alexander in 323 BC, a series of wars between Syria and Egypt subject the Holy Land to multiple distresses (**Daniel 9:24-27; 11:1-35; Zechariah 9:1-10**; writings of Josephus).

Between 140-37 BC, the Hasmonean dynasty expands the Temple Mount. The Hasmoneans are an independent Jewish state. Evidence of a Hasmonean expansion of the Temple Mount has been recovered by archaeologist Leen Ritmeyer.

Around 19 BC, the Temple Mount is enlarged and leveled by Herod the Great. It takes 10,000 workers, 100 priests, 1,000 wagons, and 46 years to get the job done. Herod has the area leveled by cutting away rock on the northwest side and raising the sloping ground to the south, filling in the sections with earth and rubble. Antonia Fortress and a rainwater reservoir are also built during this period of expansion. By the time Herod is done, the Temple Mount has doubled in size—covering 35 acres.

Temple Mount Events:

- Jesus is presented at the Temple and dedicated to God by His parents (**Luke 2:21-24**).
- Jesus, at age 12, talks to priests and teachers in the Second Temple while His parents are in Jerusalem for Passover (**Luke 2:41-50**).
- Jesus is tempted by the devil on the pinnacle of the Temple (**Luke 4:9**).
- Jesus casts out moneychangers from the Temple early in His ministry (**John 2:13-16**), and again three years later.
- During His final week of life before the resurrection, the Lord teaches in the Temple courts and confronts the crowds and Pharisees there. Jesus predicts destruction of the Second Temple (**Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19:41-48; John 12:12-50**).
- Followers of Jesus, who are gathered in the Temple Courts 10 days later on Pentecost Sunday, experience the coming of the Spirit of God to give birth to the Church of Jesus Christ. Peter preaches to the crowds and many are saved (**Acts 2**).
- Stephen is martyred on the Temple Mount; Saul of Tarsus is present (**Acts 6-7**).
- James, brother of Jesus and leader of the Church in Jerusalem, is martyred by being thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple Mount.
- Titus, son of Roman Emperor Vespasian, destroys the Temple Mount and pretty much all of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
- Constantine's mother, Helena, built a small church on the Mount in the 4th century AD. The church was later destroyed and the Dome of the Rock was built on its ruins between 689 and 691 AD. (More on the Dome of the Rock in the next section.)

When sitting on the Southern Steps, look at the size of the Temple Mount wall, and imagine Jesus walking down these steps with His disciples as the following scene unfolds:

As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?" Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the Gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Mark 13:1-13)

Ark of the Covenant

In the 10th century BC, after King David captured the city of Jerusalem and made it the capital of the Israelites, he chose this high place as the site of a great temple to house the Ark of the Covenant (**2 Samuel 24:18-25**). Prior to this, the Ark had moved among several sanctuaries, especially those of Shechem and Shiloh. The construction project was undertaken by David's son, King Solomon, and completed in 957 BC.

The Temple's two main purposes were to house the Ark of the Covenant and provide a place for people to worship, so the Temple was a fairly small building with a large courtyard. The courtyard included a huge bronze basin for priestly ablutions and was surrounded by storehouses. The Temple itself was a rectangular building oriented east and made up of three parts: a porch; a main room for services (Holy Place); and the Holy of Holies.

The Holy of Holies housed the Ark of the Covenant, which was accompanied by two cherubim carved of olive wood. It was also considered the dwelling place of the Divine Presence of God (*Shekhinah*). So sacred was this innermost sanctuary that it could be entered only by the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

The Ark of the Covenant is first mentioned in the Bible in **Exodus 25**. Following Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, God instructs Moses to build a Tabernacle (or tent) in which the Israelites will worship God. Placed in a special area known as "the Holy of Holies," the Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred object in the Tabernacle. Detailed instructions were given by God to construct the Ark. It was to be made with acacia wood and overlaid with gold. Dimensionally, the Ark was to be 2.5 cubits (1 cubit is approximately 18 in.) long and 1.5 cubits wide and high. Atop the Ark were two gold cherubs that stood with their wings covering an area of the Ark known as the "Mercy Seat."

The Ark of the Covenant contained three items of extreme significance to the Israelites. The first was two stone tablets bearing the divine inscription of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments formed the foundation of God's covenant with Israel, commonly referred to as "The Law" (**Exodus 31**). The second item in the Ark was the rod of Aaron. God miraculously caused Aaron's rod to bud with blossoms to show the rest of the tribes of Israel that it was God's will for Aaron to be in charge of the Priesthood (**Numbers 17**). The last item was a golden pot of manna. Manna was the starchy food God miraculously provided for the Israelites during their 40 years of desert wanderings (**Exodus 16**).

However in **1 Kings 8:9**, when Solomon brought the Ark into the Temple which he had built, it only contained the stone tablets. The other contents, the rod and the jar of manna, must have been removed at some point before the Ark was brought into the temple. And that is



all the Bible says about the contents of the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark of the Covenant was where God manifested His presence on earth. The Ark went ahead of the Israelites wherever they traveled. Not only was it the center of worship when it resided in the tabernacle, but the Ark also protected the Israelites in battle, supernaturally defeating any adversaries that came before them (**Joshua 6:3-4**). The Israelites also went to the Ark to seek God's guidance and wisdom for the nation (**Numbers 7:89, Exodus 25:22**).

Where is the Ark of the Covenant today?

The last historical mention of the Ark in Scripture is in **2 Chronicles chapter 35**, where King Josiah (who reigned in Judah 640-609 BC) asked the Levites to return the Ark to the Temple where Solomon had originally housed it after completing and dedicating the Temple sometime in the 10th century BC (**2 Chronicles, chapter 5**). There is no mention as to why the Levites had removed the Ark in the first place, nor is there any indication as to whether or not the Levites acquiesced to King Josiah's request.

The Temple of Jerusalem was an important center of religious and national identity from the beginning, but it became even more important when Josiah (640-609 BC) abolished all other sanctuaries and established Solomon's Temple as the only acceptable place for sacrifice in the Kingdom of Judah.

The First Temple was looted of its treasures - including the Ark of the Covenant - between 604 BC and 597 BC and totally destroyed in 587-86 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon. The Jews were deported to Babylonia between 586 and 582 in what is known as the Babylonian Exile.

In 538 BC, the Persian king Cyrus II (who had conquered Babylonia) allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. This was completed around 515 BC as a modest version of the original, without the Ark or any other ritual objects. But the Temple resumed its role as the religious center of Judaism, with elaborate rituals conducted by priests and Levites.

The next few centuries saw Jerusalem by a number of foreign rulers. The Temple was respected by these (Persian and Hellenistic) rulers until Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who plundered it in 169 BC and desecrated it in 167 BC, by commanding that sacrifices be made to Zeus inside. This sparked the Hasmonean revolt, after which Judas Maccabaeus rededicated the Temple. This event is still celebrated in the annual festival of Hanukkah.

During the Roman era, Pompey entered (and thereby desecrated) the Holy of Holies in 63 BC, but left the Temple intact. In 54 BC, Crassus looted the Temple treasury. The Temple's fortunes rose again, however, with King Herod the Great of Judea, who began to rebuild it in 20 BC. The project was completed in 26 AD, after the birth of Jesus.

Herod doubled the size of Temple Mount, surrounding it with retaining walls and gates. The Temple itself was enlarged and faced with large white stones. A series of "courts" allowed access to successively smaller groups of people: Jews and Gentiles; Jews only; Jewish men only; and priests only. Although it still lacked the Ark, the Temple now housed the Scriptures and other Jewish writings. It also became the headquarters of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court of law during the Roman period.

According to the New Testament, the Temple of Jerusalem played a significant role in the life of Jesus. After his birth (around 4 BC), Jesus was dedicated at the Temple in accordance with the Law of Moses (**Luke 2:22-28**). When he was a boy, he impressed the Jewish teachers with his knowledge (**Luke 2:41-52**). Jesus was later tempted by Satan to jump off the Temple to prove his status (**Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-13**) and he angrily overturned tables of moneychangers during the "Cleansing of the Temple" (**Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15-**



19, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:14).

In 66 AD, a Jewish rebellion against Rome began and culminated in destruction of the Temple (and the entire city) by Titus on August 10, 70 AD. When the roman soldiers burned the temple, all the gold (estimated at 3000 pounds) pooled in cracks between the stones. The soldiers toppled every stone to dig out the gold and this event fulfilled the prophecy of Jesus (**Matthew 24:1-8**) where he said not one stone would be left on another.



DID YOU KNOW: There were in the Temple of Jerusalem two major barriers separating God from man, the holy from the unholy. One was formed by two massive doors of gold, the doors of the hekhal, the holy place. These separated the holy place from the Temple courts. The other, deeper inside, was called the parochet, the colossal veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies and through which only the high priest could enter on the Day of Atonement. They were the representations of the barrier separating each of us from God, the chasm between the sinful and the most holy.

It is recorded in the New Testament that at the time of Jesus's death, the parochet, the veil of the holy of holies, was torn in two from TOP to Bottom. What would that have signified, that the barrier between GOD and MAN was removed?

But there was still a second barrier, the golden doors of the hekhal that gave entrance into the holy place. Should not these doors have been opened as well? Could there have been a second sign, a second witness? There was, and of the most powerful kind, an opposing witness.

This is in Tractate Yoma 39, from the writings of the rabbis, the Talmud. It contains a most amazing thing. The rabbis record that before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, a strange thing began to take place in the Temple. The second barrier, the golden doors of the hekhal, began to open by themselves. The rabbis record that it began to happen about forty years before AD 70. Then it comes to about the year AD 30! It happens to be the same time that something else took place in Jerusalem, the Rabbi Yeshua, Jesus, was crucified on the cross, as the final atonement, to remove the barrier from God to man.

The fact remains that rabbis themselves bear witness concerning the removal of the second barrier, and, thus, that at the time of Jesus's death, that which was separating God from man, God from us, was removed, and the way to His presence for mankind was opened.

Dome of the Rock

Standing where the First and Second Temples once stood, the incandescent golden Dome of the Rock is impossible to miss as it dominates the Jerusalem skyline. This octagon-shaped monument was built by the Muslim ruler Abd al Malik in 688-691 AD. The reason the Dome of the Rock was built on the location where it sits today is because some say it was from this rock that

Muhammed ascended to heaven on a horse with the angel Gabriel. But, this is a 12th century tradition developed from a dream that involved Muhammed's night journey in the Koran in Sura 17:1: *"Most glorified is the One who summoned His servant (Muhammad) during the night, from the Sacred Masjid (of Mecca) to the farthest place of prostration, whose surroundings we have blessed, in order to show him some of our signs. He is the Hearer, the Seer."* But, Jerusalem is not mentioned here, nor is Jerusalem ever



mentioned anywhere in the Koran. The Dome of the Rock was built 200 years before this tradition began to be told. Today, most scholars believe that the Dome of the Rock sits upon the location of the Holy of Holies, as well as the Foundation Stone—the name of the rock upon which the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the First Temple. During the Second Temple period when the Ark of the Covenant had been hidden, the stone was used by the High Priest who offered up incense and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices on it during the Yom Kippur service. The Dome of the Rock, 30 feet by 24 feet, currently “occupies the center of the shrine and is surrounded by lavish décor, stained glass windows, pillars of marble, [and] glass partitions [to] keep souvenir hunters from temptation!” Muslims, who today control the Temple Mount by Israel’s permission, will not allow archeologists to work the site. Until the site can be excavated, the exact location of the Foundation Stone can’t be known.

The Dome of the Rock was badly rattled during an earthquake on July 11, 1927. In 1955 Jordan, with funds from Arab governments and Turkey, began a massive renovation on the monument. As part of this facelift, the dome was covered with a durable aluminum and bronze alloy. The restoration was completed in August 1964, but in 1998 King Hussein of Jordan decided to give the dome a serious upgrade, covering it in 176 pounds of 24-karat gold leaf that cost \$8.2 million dollars.

Under Jordanian rule, Jews were forbidden from entering the Old City, but after the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel regained control of Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock. Within hours Rabbi Shlomo Goren entered the Dome of the Rock with a Torah book and a shofar.

Sadly, just a few hours after the Israeli flag was hoisted over the Dome of the Rock General Moshe Dayan, in attempt to keep the peace, ordered that it be lowered. A few days after the war was over, 200,000 Jews flocked to the Temple Mount and Western Wall in the first mass Jewish pilgrimage since the destruction of Temple in 70 AD. What a homecoming that must have been!

Surrounded by angry Muslim/Arab neighbors, the Israeli government decided to let the Islamic Waqf (or trust) control the site, although it remains under Israeli sovereignty. Today, Jews are generally banned from praying on the Mount or doing anything that might disturb Muslims. However, recently the police have been allowing religious Jews to let their tzitzit (tassels) hang freely outside their clothing. At times, the police have even allowed for very limited Jewish prayer; for example, during the 2008-09 Gaza War, a small number of Jews were allowed to pray atop the Mount for the welfare of the Israeli Defense Forces.

In 2006, the compound was finally reopened to non-Muslims visitors free of charge. Non-Muslims may never enter on Fridays, Saturdays, or Muslim holidays. Entry is through a covered wooden walkway next to the security entrance to the Western Wall known as the Mugrabi or Maimonides Gate. Non-Muslims are not allowed to enter the mosques, and visitors must undergo a strict security screening. Items such as Hebrew prayer books or musical instruments are not allowed.

You may wonder why Jews continue to allow these restrictions to be placed on them by the Muslim Council. First, as one Jewish tour guide once explained to us, keeping the peace is of the utmost importance to Israelis. The second reason goes clear back to the Old Testament. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and the penalty for breaking this law was death. Since the exact location of the Holy of Holies is unknown most Orthodox Jews consider stepping on the Mount to be forbidden.

For Muslims, the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque make Jerusalem the third-holiest city, after Mecca and Medina. Muslims teach that this is where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son Ishmael and where Muhammad ascended to heaven, which is a major biblical rewrite. Scripture teaches that this is where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son Isaac (Genesis 22:2) and where the future Messiah will return (Ezekiel 43:7).

Muslims, however, deny the Sonship and deity of Jesus and teach that He is just a prophet. These beliefs are clearly on display inside the mosque. Five times the Qur’anic verse that reads “God has no companion” is repeated along with this remarkable prayer, “In the name of the One God (Allah) Pray for your Prophet and Servant Jesus son of Mary.” Building the mosque on this particular site was no accident, for the Lie stands as close to the Truth as it can, making it easy to confuse the two: Ishmael and his descendants become the sons of the promise instead of the sons of the law; Jesus becomes a prophet instead of the very Son of God; and Muhammad ascends to heaven from here instead of the resurrected Savior.

Despite deception and confusion, we have this blessed assurance of our Heavenly Father’s ultimate plan, found in Philippians 2:9-11: Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Al-Aqsa Mosque

More important to the Muslims than the Dome of the Rock is al-Aqsa Mosque. The mosque is the third most holy place in the Muslim world, after the shrines in Mecca and Medina (both of which are in Saudi Arabia). The original mosque was built between 705 and 715 AD, but it has been destroyed and rebuilt many times.



The al-Aqsa Mosque is on the Temple Mount where Solomon built the first permanent Jewish temple. According to Jewish tradition, Solomon's Temple housed the Ark of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments. The Temple also became the only legal place to make sacrifices.

Al-Aqsa was originally a small prayer house and was later expanded. It was completely destroyed by earthquakes in 746 and 1033 AD. The mosque standing today was built in 1035 AD. In 1099, the Crusaders captured Jerusalem and for a short time they used the mosque as a church and a palace. In 1187 AD, under Islamic Crusader Saladin, al-Aqsa became a mosque once more.

The site is like a lightning rod for disasters. There is a history of earthquakes dating back to 31 BC. In fact, the Dead Sea Rift runs directly under the Temple Mount and Zechariah prophesies that the Mount of Olives will one day be split in half by an earthquake (Zechariah 14:4). There were major earthquakes here in 1927 and 1937, which seriously damaged the mosque. In 1969, King Abdullah of Jordan was assassinated here, and a fire gutted the southeastern wing of the mosque in the same year. At first, Palestinians and Israelis blamed each other for the fire, both turned out to be wrong. The fire was actually started by Michael Dennis Rohan, an Australian tourist who was a member of the Worldwide Church of God sect. He hoped that by burning down al-Aqsa Mosque he would hasten the Second Coming of Jesus, making way for the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount. Rohan was put in a mental institution, found to be insane, and was later deported from Israel.

Dome of the Spirit

The small dome in the northwest corner of the temple mount near the Dome of the Rock can be seen on a direct east/west line from the peak of the Mt. of Olives through the Eastern Gate.

According to the Mishnah, the High Priest stood on the Mt. of Olives, and while looking towards the Holy of



Holies, he would sacrifice the Red Heifer and sprinkle the blood in its direction seven times.

One controversial question today exists... *Where* on the large platform was the exact location of the ancient Temple? Until recently, that question would have been answered in but one way. Most scholars agreed that the Dome of the Rock is the site of either the Holy of Holies or the altar of sacrifice in the Temple. Primarily through the labors of a physics professor at the Hebrew University, however, this view is being seriously

questioned.

Asher Kaufman is an orthodox Jewish immigrant from Scotland who has long been interested in the topography of the Temple Mount. Through his own personal study of the Bible, the writings of Josephus, the rabbinic literature, and the Temple Mount itself, he has arrived at a startling conclusion: The ancient Temple was about a hundred yards *north* of the Dome of the Rock.

The only gate that entered the Temple area from the east is aptly called the Eastern Gate. It has been sealed since the late Middle Ages. Most scholars believe that it is built over the original Eastern Gate that led directly into the Temple courtyard. A reference in the Mishna reveals that, during the ceremony of the slaying of the red heifer (Num. 19), the high priest could look from the top of the Mount of Olives directly over the Eastern Gate into the Temple sanctuary. This implies that the Temple building was directly behind the gate. If the Temple were located on the site of the Dome of the Rock, when you entered the sealed Eastern Gate today, he would have to make a left turn (south) to reach the Dome of the Rock.

If you marked a perpendicular line from the center of the Eastern Gate through the Temple Mount area, that line would go directly through a small domed structure that covers a round, flat slab of Mount Moriah itself. That domed cupola is called, in Arabic, by either of two names: the Dome of the Spirits or the Dome of the Tablets.

While not all archaeologists have accepted Kaufman's view, his arguments are based on more than just a few *hunches*. He is convinced that, if excavations could be allowed on this Moslem holy site (not very likely), the very foundations of the ancient Temple would be brought to light.

Saint Anne's Crusader Church

To honor one's parents is near the top of the list of God's commands (Exodus 20:12), and the Church of Saint Anne does not fall short in this regard. The beautiful 12th century Crusader church was built to commemorate Mary's parents, Joachim and Anne (Hannah), who are said to have been living in Jerusalem during the time of Mary's birth. It was erected between 1131 and 1138 AD to replace a previous Byzantine church. You may want to stop here before embarking on the Via Dolorosa, since the church is near the beginning of the First Station.

Unlike other Crusader churches, St. Anne's escaped destruction under Muslim rule in the 12th century because it was converted to an Islamic seminary. If you read Arabic you can still see Saladin's name inscribed above the doorway. Eventually abandoned, the church fell into ruin until the Ottomans donated it to France in 1856. Though the church has been restored; most of what remains today is original.

The church is right next to the Bethesda Pool, which is believed to be the site where Jesus healed a paralytic (John 5:1-15). You can also see ruins of a Roman temple to the god of medicine, as well as the remains of a Byzantine church that was built over the temple.



With a garden surrounding the church in full bloom in spring and summer, songbirds, and candles burning softly, St. Anne's Church has an undeniably gentle and welcoming atmosphere. The simplicity both inside and outside of the church sets it apart from all others. You may notice that the building leans slightly to the side. Some tour guides claim the tilt is symbolic of Jesus on the cross. I suspect the builder just needed a level.

St. Anne's acoustics are so perfect that pilgrim groups come to sing in the church



throughout the day. You, too, are welcome to sing but remember only religious songs are permitted. So, just to review, “Awesome God” and “Amazing Grace” would be excellent choices; “My Girl” and “Heartbreak Hotel,” not so much. Please be respectful to the other groups trying to enter and exit. You may feel compelled to linger and enjoy the sweet sound of voices lifted up to the Lord, but try to limit your time inside the chapel out of consideration of others.

Pool of Bethesda

Bethesda is a series of ancient pools in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem. Its name can be translated “**house of mercy**” in Aramaic; and since the 4th century, it has also been called the Sheep Pool, which came from a misunderstanding. The Gospel of John describes the pool’s location using the Greek word *probatike*, which means, “pertaining to sheep.” Eusebius, an early 4th century Christian, interpreted this as “the sheep-pool” and it stuck. Today scholars think the word, *probatike*, actually referred to Bethesda’s location near the Sheep Gate.

Surrounded by five pillars or columns, the pools are fed by a nearby spring. John 5:4 asserts that an angel moved the waters at certain times and healed the sick. It was here at the Pool of Bethesda that Jesus healed the man who had been lame for 38 years. Though there was some doubt regarding the actual existence of this pool, an archaeological discovery in the 19th century confirmed the historical accuracy of the biblical account. Then in 1964, further archaeological excavation

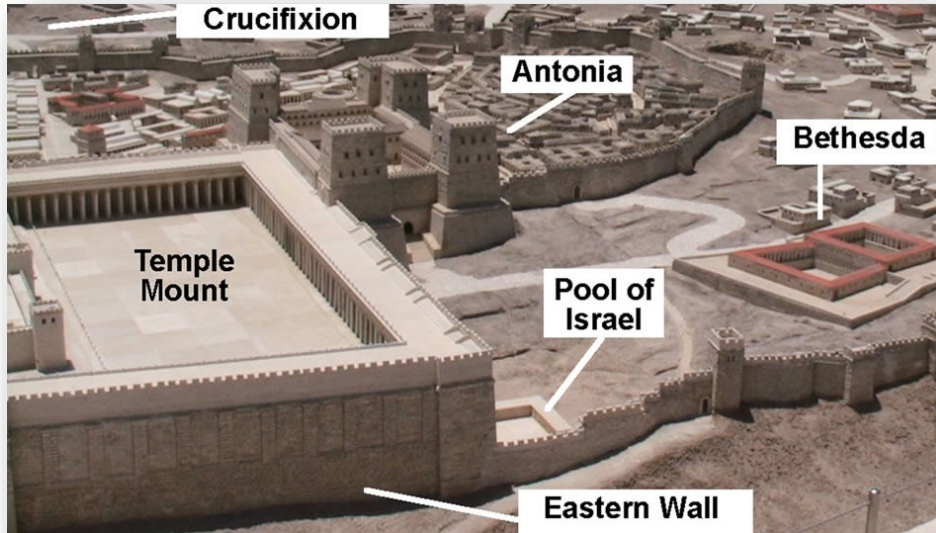


revealed the remains of the Byzantine and Crusader churches, Hadrian’s Temple of Asclepius and Serapis, the small healing pools of the Asclepieion, the other of the two large pools, and the dam between them. These reservoirs supplied water to the Temple Mount during the time of the First Temple, and is referenced in the Old Testament as the “Upper Pool.”

The Pool of Bethesda in the Bible

Seen here as the “Upper Pool,” the Pool of Bethesda is referenced within these three Scriptures in the Old Testament:

The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief officer and his field commander with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They



came up to Jerusalem and stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. (**2 Kings 18:17**)

Then the king of Assyria sent his field commander with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. When the commander stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field...(**Isaiah 36:2**)

Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out, you and

your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field." (**Isaiah 7:3**)

And here is John's well-known account of Christ healing the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda:

Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath...**John 5:1-9**

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus performed many miracles. Oftentimes, the purpose of these miracles was to bring validation that He was indeed the Son of God, the Christ, the Chosen One. Other times, He performed miracles out of His compassion, love, and concern for others—as in the feeding of 5,000 or raising His friend Lazarus from the dead.

The problem is that many folks began following Jesus just because of the wonder and awe of the miracles, instead of desiring to put their trust and faith in Him because He was the Savior of the world. Even today, there are many who seek a miracle of healing or deliverance, which Jesus is able to perform when it's in accordance with His will. However, my prayer is that your faith in Jesus Christ is not contingent upon whether or not He performs a miracle in your life. I pray you will study His life and His teachings, and read the testimony of those who followed Him, earnestly seeking out if He is, in fact, God's one and only Son. The greatest miracle of all is not a matter of health or finances; the greatest miracle of all is the miracle of salvation that is promised to all who believe:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (**John 3:16-17**)

Church of the Holy Sepulchre





The area where the Church sits today was a large limestone quarry in 600-700 BC. The city of Jerusalem was to the SE and expanded first to the west before it came north toward the quarry. In an area east of St. Helena's Chapel in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher the quarry was over 40 feet deep.

Today's Church of the Holy Sepulcher sets over two sites: Calvary and the tomb of Jesus. Both these sites were in the same garden outside the walls of Jerusalem in 30 AD, and now they are under one roof. John wrote that they were close to each other:

“At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.” **(John 19:41-42)**

In 30 AD, this was the perfect place to cut new graves because of the bedrock left exposed around the quarry, because it had only recently become available so still had lots of available space, and because it was close to the city yet still outside the walls. Jerusalem was, and still is, surrounded by graves that had used for a thousand years leading up to 30 AD. This new garden was indeed a great opportunity for Joseph to be able to cut a grave so close to the city:

“Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.” **(Luke 23:50-53)**

After Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, he took an interest in the holy places associated with his newfound faith and commissioned many churches to be constructed throughout the Holy Land. One of these churches was the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which Constantine began building in about 326 AD by leveling a pagan temple to the goddess Aphrodite. Today, the site is revered by Christians as the hill of Calvary (Golgotha) where Jesus was crucified and buried.



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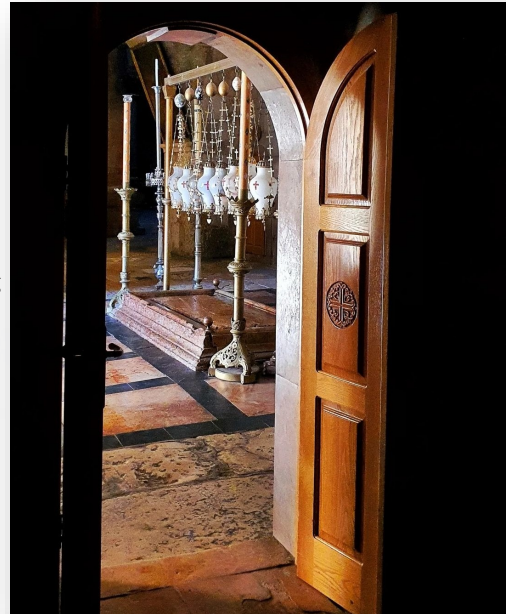
In 614 AD, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (“tomb”) was severely damaged by fire when the Persians invaded Jerusalem and captured the cross. But in 630, Roman (Byzantine) Emperor Heraclius marched triumphantly into Jerusalem, restored the cross, and rebuilt the church.

Christians were forced to surrender Jerusalem to Muslim control under caliph Omar in 638. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre continued to function as a Christian church under the benevolent protection of Omar and early Muslim rulers, but this changed on October 18, 1009, when the “mad” Fatimid caliph Hakim had wrecking crews systematically destroy the church. Ironically, if Omar had turned the church into a mosque, Hakim probably would have left it alone.

Though Jerusalem’s Christian community could not afford the repairs, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was finally rebuilt in 1048 when Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos and Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople financed the reconstruction. The funds, however, were not adequate to completely restore the original church; the atrium and the basilica were completely lost and only the courtyard and the rotunda remained.

In 1112, the Crusaders began to slowly renovate the church, building a monastery where the Constantinian basilica used to be and replacing the shrine of Christ’s tomb in 1119. The Constantinian courtyard was covered with a Romanesque church (dedicated in 1149), which was connected to the rotunda by a great arched opening. A bell tower was added in 1170.

Subsequent centuries were not very kind to the church, which suffered damage, desecration, and neglect. The Franciscans conducted a significant renovation in 1555, but attempts at repair often did more damage than good. A fire in 1808 and an earthquake in 1927 also did extensive damage.



Then, in 1959, the Latin, Greek, and Armenian communities agreed on a major renovation plan. They vowed to replace only the elements that were incapable of fulfilling their structural function. Local masons were trained to trim stone in the style of the 11th century for the rotunda and in the 12th century style for the church. With all the additions, Constantine’s church was much larger than the one that stands today, though it had a simpler layout.

There are three primary custodians of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, first appointed when the Crusaders held Jerusalem: the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Apostolic, and the Roman Catholic churches. In the 1800s, the Coptic Orthodox, the Ethiopian Orthodox, and the Syrian Orthodox acquired lesser responsibilities. An agreement regulates times and places of worship for each church.

Not all historians and archaeologists agree, but for centuries many have held the belief that this church was built over the actual tomb of Christ. Here is some of the supporting evidence:

- The site was outside of the city walls at the time of Jesus’ death.
- Tombs from the 1st century are preserved inside the church.
- Christians held services at this site until 66 AD.
- Even after the area was brought inside the city walls in 41-43 AD, the locals did not build here.

In 135 AD, Roman Emperor Hadrian built the Temple of Venus (Aphrodite) on the site. If Christians believed the site was holy, he might have done this to prove that Roman gods were more powerful than the God of Christianity.

In the early 300s, Constantine built his church here, which was an inconvenient and impractical site. Why go to the trouble of tearing down the massive Temple of Venus—when there was an open space nearby—unless tradition clearly stated this was where Jesus died and was buried?

Historian Eusebius claimed that under the torn-down Temple of Venus, the original memorial was found.

Based on the above factors, the Oxford Archaeological Guide to the Holy Land has concluded that this is “very probably” the place where Jesus Christ died and was buried. Israeli scholar Dan Bahat, former City Archaeologist

of Jerusalem, said this: “We may not be absolutely certain that the site of the Holy Sepulchre Church is the site of Jesus’ burial, but we have no other site that can lay a claim nearly as weighty, and we really have no reason to reject the authenticity of the site.”

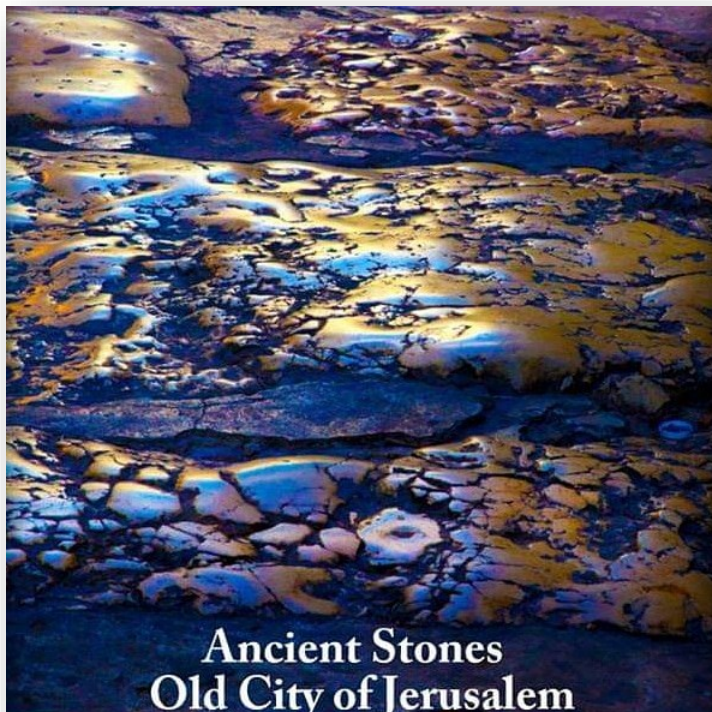
Via Dolorosa

As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Luke 23:26-31)

The Via Dolorosa, which means the **Way of Suffering**, is a street within the Old City of Jerusalem. Since the 18th century, it has been held to be the path that Jesus walked, carrying His cross, on the way to His crucifixion. Along the Via Dolorosa are the nine Stations of the Cross; the remaining five stations are inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



During the Byzantine era, a Holy Thursday procession started from the top of the Mount of Olives, stopped in Gethsemane, entered the Old City at the Lions’ Gate, and followed approximately the same route to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that the Via Dolorosa follows today. The route has always been debated. Some claim the eastern hill route, while others argue for the western hill route. In the 18th century, they finally settled on the eastern route, but it turns out they may have been wrong.

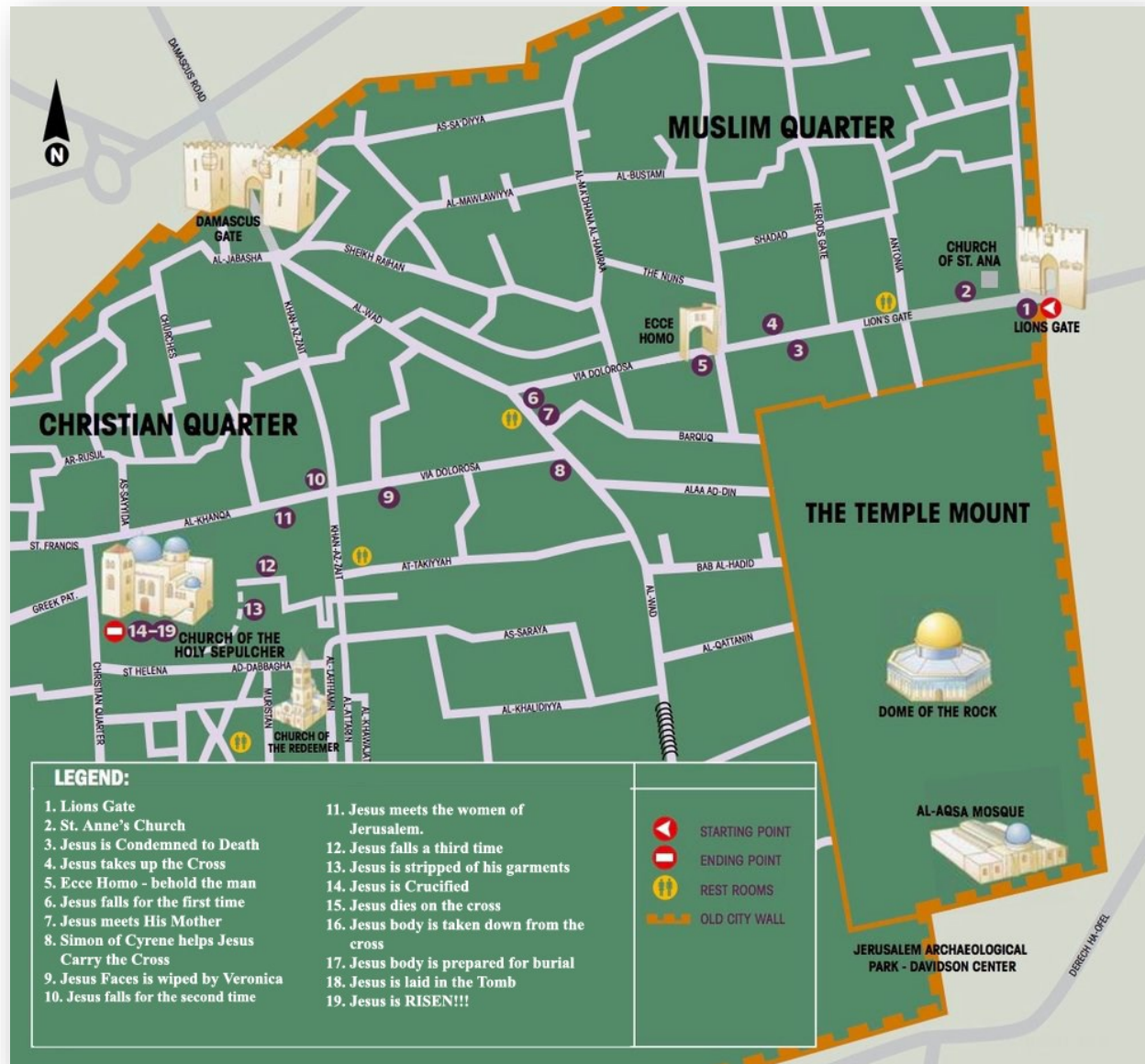


**Ancient Stones
Old City of Jerusalem**

The belief that the Via Dolorosa was the biblical route was based on the assumption that the Praetorium—the place where Jesus was condemned by Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:27 and Mark 15:16)—was next to the Antonia Fortress. Josephus records that the Roman governors stayed in Herod’s palace when they were in Jerusalem, carried out their judgments on the pavement immediately outside it, and had those found guilty flogged there. Josephus’ writings place Herod’s palace on the western hill. In 2001, under a corner of the Jaffa Gate citadel, which is on the western hill, part of Herod’s palace was uncovered.

Ultimately, which road Jesus took doesn’t really matter. What matters is that He took that road for us. Today, the traditional route starts just inside the Lions’ Gate, near the location of the former Antonia Fortress, and makes its way westward through the Old City to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The stations are as follows:

Stations of the Cross



Ecce Homo -- (Latin: "Behold, the man!") A station of the cross on the Via Dolorosa commemorated by an arch. The phrase "Ecce Homo" refers to Pilate's words when he brought Jesus out to the crowd for judgment. (John 19:5)

Whether following the Via Dolorosa through all its 14 stations or merely visiting the five posts inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, walking in the path of Jesus Christ will be an unforgettable, times of meditation.

The First Station: Jesus is condemned to die.

Jesus stands in the most human of places. He has already experienced profound solidarity with so many on this earth, by being beaten and tortured. Now he is wrongfully condemned to punishment by death. His commitment to entering our lives completely begins its final steps. He has said "yes" to God and placed his life in God's hands. We follow him in this final surrender, and contemplate with reverence each place along the way, as he is broken and given for us.

The Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross.

Jesus is made to carry the cross on which he will die. It represents the weight of all our crosses. What he must have felt as he first took it upon his shoulders! With each step he enters more deeply into our human experience. He walks in the path of human misery and suffering, and experiences its crushing weight.

The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time.

The weight is unbearable. Jesus falls under it. How could he enter our lives completely without surrendering to the crushing weight of the life of so many on this earth! He lays on the ground and knows the experience of weakness beneath unfair burdens. He feels the powerlessness of wondering if he will ever be able to continue. He is pulled up and made to continue.

The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother.

Jesus' path takes him to a powerful source of his strength to continue. All his life, his mother had taught him the meaning of the words, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." Now they look into each other's eyes. How pierced-through her heart must be! How pained he must be to see her tears! Now, her grace-filled smile blesses his mission and stirs his heart to its depth. Love and trust in God bind them together.



The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross.

Jesus even experiences our struggle to receive help. He is made to experience the poverty of not being able to carry his burden alone. He enters into the experience of all who must depend upon others to survive. He is deprived of the satisfaction of carrying this burden on his own.

The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

Jesus' journey is at times brutal. He has entered into the terrible experiences of rejection and injustice. He has been whipped and beaten. His face shows the signs of his solidarity with all who have ever suffered injustice and vile, abusive treatment. He encounters a compassionate, loving disciple who wipes the vulgar spit and mocking blood from his face. On her veil, she discovers the image of his face - his gift to her.

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time.

Even with help, Jesus stumbles and falls to the ground. In deep exhaustion he stares at the earth beneath him. "Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return." He has seen death before. Now he can feel the profound weakness of disability and disease and aging itself, there on his knees, under the weight of his cross.

The Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.

The women of Jerusalem, and their children, come out to comfort and thank him. They had seen his compassion and welcomed his words of healing and freedom. He had broken all kinds of social and religious conventions to connect with them. Now they are here to support him. He feels their grief. He suffers, knowing he can't remain to help them more in this life. He knows the mystery of facing the separation of death.

The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time.

This last fall is devastating. Jesus can barely proceed to the end. Summoning all this remaining strength supported by his inner trust in God, Jesus collapses under the weight of the cross. His executioners look at him as a broken man, pathetic yet paying a price he deserves. They help him up so he can make it up the hill of crucifixion.

The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped.

Part of the indignity is to be crucified naked. Jesus is completely stripped of any pride. The wounds on his back are torn open again. He experiences the ultimate vulnerability of the defenseless. No shield or security protects him. As they stare at him, his eyes turn to heaven.

The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.

Huge nails are hammered through his hands and feet to fix him on the cross. He is bleeding much more seriously now. As the cross is lifted up, the weight of his life hangs on those nails. Every time he struggles to pull himself up to breathe, his ability to cling to life slips away.

The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross.

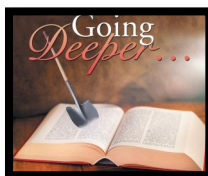
Between two criminals, a mocking title above his head, with only Mary and John and Mary Magdalene to support him, Jesus surrenders his last breath: "Into your hands I commend my spirit."

The Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross.

What tender mourning! Jesus' lifeless body lays in his mother's arms. He has truly died.

The Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid In The Tomb.

They take the body of Jesus to its resting place. The huge stone over the tomb is the final sign of the permanence of death. In this final act of surrender, who would have imagined this tomb would soon be empty or that Jesus would show himself alive to his disciples, or that they would recognize him in the breaking of bread? Oh, that our hearts might burn within us, as we realize how he had to suffer and die so as to enter into his glory, for us.



DID YOU KNOW: Tombs are where life ENDS, but gardens are where life BEGINS.

So a garden tomb is the place of DEATH and LIFE, the end and the beginning.

A place of life after death, a place of resurrection. Life begins in a garden as it rises up from the earth.

That which has descended to the earth. The seed. And Jesus liken His death to a seed falling into the earth and dying.

And what happened to the seed of Jesus's life as it was buried in the Garden Tomb? It bore life. It rose.

Whatever is planted in the Garden Tomb will bear MIRACLE life, NEW life.

Whatever you plant here, your PAST, your broken DREAMS, your old LIFE, your FAILURES, your LOSSES, your TEARS, whatever you let go of here, will come alive again and blossom and bring forth life, a miracle more beautiful than what you planted.

For this tomb is the Garden of God and this garden has a ground full of MIRACLES.

Take all in your life that FAILED, that was TAKEN or LOST, that was broken, all of your sorrows and trust it to God, allowing LIFE, and New Beginnings to spring forth in GOD'S Garden of Miracles.

Garden Tomb

The Garden Tomb was first pointed out in 1849; a rock formation there resembles a skull (Golgotha), and the site accords with the biblical data of the area where Jesus was buried. It is presently a beautiful garden park, where many Christian groups take communion.

But is the Garden Tomb really the tomb of Jesus? The main reason some people think so is that early accounts of the burial (**Hebrews 13:12**) describe it as occurring **outside the city walls**. And today, the Garden Tomb is outside the walls while the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is within them.

However, the city walls were expanded by Herod Agrippa in 41-44 AD and only then enclosed the site of the Holy Sepulchre, so both sites were outside the walls at the time of Jesus.



However, scholars are generally agreed that the Garden Tomb is **not** the actual site of Jesus' burial. According to Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "there is no possibility that it is in fact the place where Christ was buried." Holy Land specialist Dr. Carl Rasmussen comments, "it is my opinion that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher preserves a more accurate tradition."

One problem with the Garden Tomb is that, based on its configuration, it dates from the late Old Testament era (9th-7th century BC). Thus it was not a "**new tomb**" (Matt 27:60; John 19:41) at the time of the crucifixion.

In addition, the burial benches were cut down in the Byzantine period (4th-6th century AD) to create rock sarcophagi, radically disfiguring the tomb. This clearly indicates that early Christians did not believe this was the burial place of Christ.

The wardens of the property (the UK-based Garden Tomb Association) stress that it is the resurrection of Jesus, not the issue of finding the exact spot of his burial, that is important. Regardless of its authenticity, the Garden Tomb is a fine place for contemplating the death burial of Christ.



DID YOU KNOW: In **Isaiah 53:7-11**, is the prophecy of the dying Messiah, "Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and to afflict Him, if He would make His life an offering for sin . . ."

In ancient times, one of the sacrifices offered in the Temple was called the Asham. The Asham was the guilt offering for the guilty. Asham also means "the guilt". The guilt offering and the guilt? It seems contradictory, but it goes together. The guilt offering could only take away the guilt of the one offering it by first becoming the guilt.

Isaiah's prophecy describes Jesus the Messiah as wounded, pierced, and crushed for OUR sins. But in Hebrew text, it goes further. It says that His life would become an Asham. It's an amazing thing because Asham is the same word used in the Book of Leviticus for the animal sacrifices offered up by the priests to redeem the guilty. But here it's used to speak not of a sacrificial animal but of a human sacrifice... the death of the Messiah. Jesus is the Asham. And that means that He not only died to take away our guilt, but He becomes the guilt itself.

So, when you see Him on the cross, you're seeing the Asham, the sacrifice, but also the guilt itself. The guilt being nailed to the cross. And if Jesus the Messiah is the Asham and the Asham is "the guilt", then if the Asham dies, all your guilt, all your shame, and all your regrets dies with Him. They've all died and are gone, completely and forever . . . It is **FINISHED**.

TODAY: Take all your regrets, the shame, and the guilt you've ever carried and give it to Jesus who is your Asham. Forgive yourself and receive His forgiveness and let it go FOREVER.

Golgotha – There are several mountains surrounding the city of Jerusalem with the Mount of Olives being the most famous mountain in the Old Testament, but Golgotha is the most famous in the New Testament. The Gospel writers name the hill where Christ was led away to be crucified. At that time in Jerusalem, three languages were spoken: Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. For this reason, Pilate placed an inscription on the cross, “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews,” in all three languages. The site of the execution was on a hill called Calvary (in Latin) or Golgotha (in Hebrew). The Gospel writers reveal the name of the hill and also one strange fact: it was the hill of a skull.



“And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.” (John 19:17–18)



To understand the probable meaning of Golgotha, one must go back to the time of Noah when a strange race of giants once roamed the earth. When Moses reported the days of Noah, he indicated that there were giants on the earth in those days. Moses further revealed that these giants were the offspring of the sons of God coming in unto the daughters of men, who bore these mighty men of renown. According to numerous Jewish and early church sources, the giants were born when angels were sent down from God in the form of humans to teach men righteousness and reveal the mysteries of God. Some, however, became enamored with the virgin daughters of men, fell into lust, and had physical relations that birthed an oversized person, often nine to fifteen feet in height.

According to Scriptures, there was once a race of beings called giants who roamed and even ruled parts of the earth. They existed prior to the Flood and were present in the time of David.

This race of giants perverted the earth before the Flood. They caused fear in the Hebrews who desired to enter the Promised Land, and they controlled mountains in Hebron when Joshua and Caleb led Israel into their inheritance (Josh. 15). By the time of David, the last five giants in biblical record were living in Israel. They are listed in **1 Samuel 17:4**; **2 Samuel 21:16–22**; and **1 Chronicles 20:5**. Their names are:

1. Goliath
2. Saph
3. Lahmi
4. Ishbi-Benob
5. The giant from Gath

As a teenager, David slew Goliath and used the giant’s own sword to cut off his head:



“Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.” (1 Samuel 17:51)

After that verse are the most interesting and overlooked portions of Scripture in the story of David and Goliath. When happened to the head of the giant? The Bible reveals what David did after he defeated the high Philistine champion: “And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent.” (1 Samuel 17:54)

Goliath and Golgotha

The meaning of Golgotha being the hill of a skull could be linked to Adam, but more likely it is linked to Goliath. Many believe that after David took the head of the giant to Jerusalem to make a statement to the Jebusites who currently occupied the city, that he buried it and the place of burial has been recognized as skull hill. Centuries of history caused the original meaning and intent of this hill to be lost, but the clues are still hidden in the word Golgotha.

We read in the Bible that Goliath was from Gath. He would have been identified as Goliath of Gath, just as Jesus was known as Jesus of Nazareth and Saul as Saul of Tarsus. A person was often identified with the area where he was from.



Goliath from Gath could be abbreviated to read Gol-Gath-ha! Thus the word Golgotha alluded to a skull—a very famous skull that was buried at the base of a hill later named in Hebrew the hill of Golgotha! If this theory is correct, it adds another dynamic dimension to the purpose of Christ being crucified at the hill of a skull!

Here is the picture... As Christ is hanging from the cross on the top of the hill of a skull, His blood is falling on the ground, perhaps in the very area when the skull of the ancient enemy of Israel is buried. Christ's feet were over the head of the enemy. Just as God predicted, the seed of the woman will bruise his (the enemy's) head (**Gen. 3:15**). The Hebrew word for bruise means “to overwhelm, to break, and to cover.” As Christ the Lamb of God was slain during Passover, it appeared that Satan had won. However, Christ broke the power of sin and death and sickness, and put His enemies under His feet!

After Satan's defeat by Christ, we can now proclaim as Paul did to the believers in Rome: “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” (**Romans 16:20**)

The City of David in the Old Testament

After defeating the kings that had invaded Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham received food and a blessing from Melchizedek, King of Salem and priest of God Most High (**Genesis 14:18-20**). Salem is most likely to be identified with Jerusalem, and it is the first mention of the city in the Bible.



The next mention of Jerusalem is during the campaigns of Joshua. He fought Adoni-Zedek, King of Jerusalem, along with four other kings who opposed the Israelites' entry into the land (Joshua 10:1-27). While Adoni-Zedek and the others were defeated, Jerusalem remained unconquered until the time of David.

David's capture of city is described in **2 Samuel 5:6-7**

"The king and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the jebusites, who lived there. The jebusites said to David, 'You will not get in here, even the blind and the lame can ward you off' They thought, 'David cannot get in here.' Nevertheless, David captured the fortress

of Zion, the City of David."

The site possessed the natural defenses of the **Hinnom Valley** to the south, the **Kidron Valley** to the east, and the **Tyropoeon** or **Central Valley** to the west.

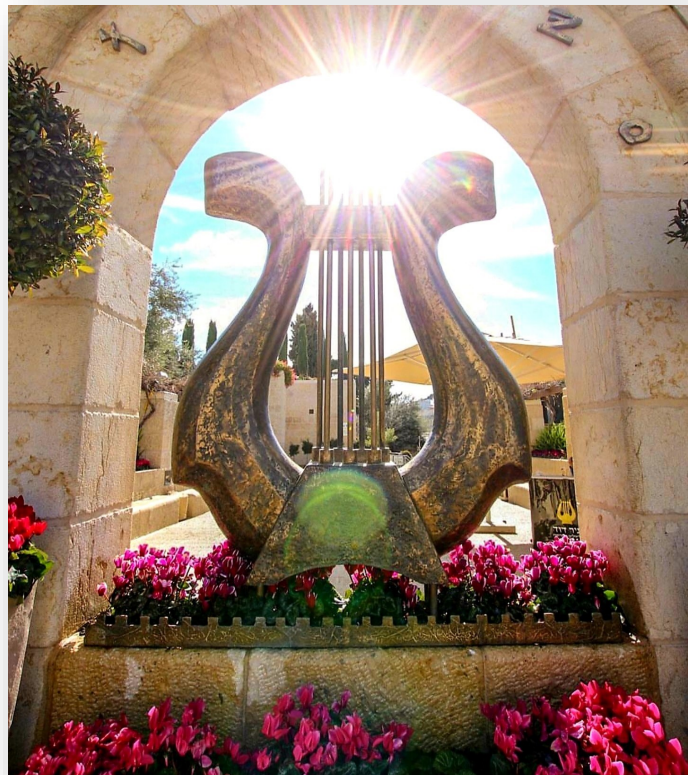
It was from the roof of David's palace that David spied Bathsheba bathing. In his palace Nathan the prophet rebuked David for his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah the Hittite. The court intrigue of David's family, with David's sons vying for power, all took place within the confines of the small fortified City of David. It was within the city that David was buried, as was most of the royal family thereafter.

During the reign of Hezekiah, the Assyrian king Sennacherib advanced down the coast of Israel and threatened Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Hezekiah responded to the threat by digging a tunnel to bring the water supply within the walls of the city and by building larger walls and extra reservoirs for water. He prayed to God for the city to be spared:

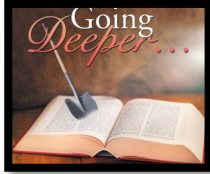
"O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God. It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men's hands. Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God." (2 Kings 19:15b-19)

In response to Hezekiah's prayer, God struck dead most of the Assyrian army overnight, and the city was spared.

Jerusalem would not be so fortunate in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians invaded. They utterly destroyed the city, including the Temple, deporting the people to Babylon. Under the leadership of



Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, many Jews gradually returned to Jerusalem with the permission of the Persian rulers. Nehemiah's ride around Jerusalem to assess the damage to the walls, related in Nehemiah 2:12-16, is perhaps the best ancient source in identifying the ancient walls and gates of the city. Under his leadership the walls were rebuilt, and people once again built their houses in the area of the city of David.



DID YOU KNOW: During Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, a unique ritual took place called the water drawing ceremony. During the ceremony a procession led by a priest would go down to the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem, draw water into a golden pitcher, and then ascend to the Temple Mount where he would pour out the water at the altar while a verse from Isaiah 12:1-3 would be read: “And in joy, you shall draw water from the wells of salvation.”

The water drawing ceremony was a central part of the feast, as water, or the lack of it, was a matter of life or death in the Middle East. So, on every day of the Feast of Tabernacles the ceremony was performed. One of the most famous statements Jesus made began with the words, “If anyone is thirsty . . .” (John 7:37-39). Most believers know this verse, but few understand its context.

The Feast of Tabernacles, has a central focus on water, with its drawing water with the words from Isaiah being proclaimed: “And in joy you shall draw water from the wells of SALVATION.” But in Hebrew, it’s not the wells of salvation. It reads the wells of YESHUA. So, it’s like saying “you will draw water from the wells of Yeshua” which is the Hebrew name for Jesus. And the gospel of John records that Jesus stood up during the feast and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” Rivers are powerful and shape the landscape for generations to come.

The wells of Yeshua and the living water speaks directly of the Holy Spirit's power shaping the landscape of our lives. As water is essential every day for us to stay alive physically, so our dependency to look to and lean on the Holy Spirit is essential for our spiritual life. Therefore, we must choose to draw the living water from the wells of Yeshua.

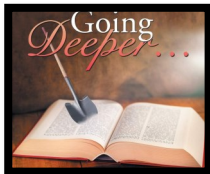
TODAY: come to the wells of Yeshua, and in joy, draw forth and partake of the rivers of the living water only found in the Spirit of God.

The City of David in the New Testament

One of the few mentions of the area of the city of David in the New Testament is the healing of the blind man in John 9:1-12. Jesus anointed the man's eyes with mud and told him to go wash in the **Pool of Siloam** at the southern end of the City of David. David's Tomb, also located in the area of the City of David, was mentioned by Peter (Acts 2:29) as a landmark existing in his day, although certainly the Babylonian destruction would have destroyed any monument and robbed anything in the tomb.

The Archaeology of the City of David

The fertile ground around the **Spring of Gihon** attracted settlers as early as the 4th millennium B.C. The main water source of the original City of David was the Gihon Springs located at the base of the eastern slope of the city in the Kidron Valley. The Gihon Springs provided water year-round by gushing forth several times a day. This water then naturally flowed into the Kidron Valley. In the earliest days of Jerusalem's occupation, reservoirs were built to collect the water from the Gihon Springs.

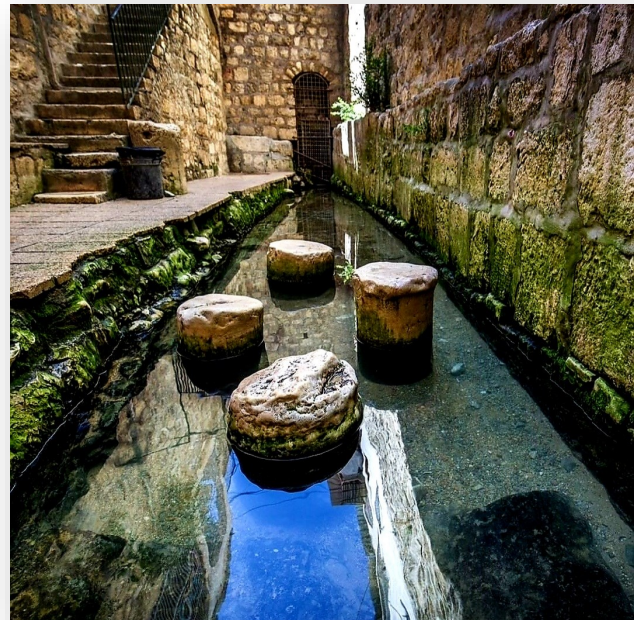


DID YOU KNOW: Solomon was Anointed King at the Gihon Spring

“Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said,

“Long live King Solomon!”” (1 Kings 1:39)

At the end of his life, David may have been frail, but he



certainly did not suffer from senility. Once Nathan and Bathsheba made him aware of Adonijah's intent to take the throne and to kill Solomon and his supporters, so David responded (**1 Kings 1:1-27**). His action was intended to make a clear statement that Solomon was to be the next king over God's people. Adonijah conspired in secret, holding a feast with select individuals to garner their support (**1 Kings 1:9-10**). David told "Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada" to make Solomon's appointment as king as public as possible. They were to anoint him at Gihon, a well-known spring just outside of Jerusalem where a large crowd could gather to see the anointing. They were to set Solomon on David's mule and parade him through Jerusalem on the way to the spring, for riding on one of the royal steeds would signify that Solomon would be the next king. David's instructions were followed, and Solomon was anointed king publicly and to great acclaim. In fact, the joy was so great that "the earth was split by their noise" (**1 Kings 1:40**).



Once Solomon was anointed, the supporters of Adonijah recognized that they would be guilty of treason if they remained with him. They left him, and Adonijah fled to the altar for safety. Solomon promised to preserve his life if he behaved himself (**1 Kings 1:41-53**).

There were three systems designed to utilize the Gihon Spring water:

1. Warren's Shaft
2. Siloam Channel (Tunnel)
3. Hezekiah's Tunnel

These three water systems continued to bring water to the city of Jerusalem until the days of the Hasmoneans and Herod. During the last century BC and the first century AD, aqueducts were built to transfer water into Jerusalem from the southern hill country of Judea from around Hebron and Bethlehem.

The city was walled about 1800 B.C. to include the ridge of the City of David. Archaeologists have excavated 25 occupational levels of the city, representing periods from the earliest settlement to the medieval era.

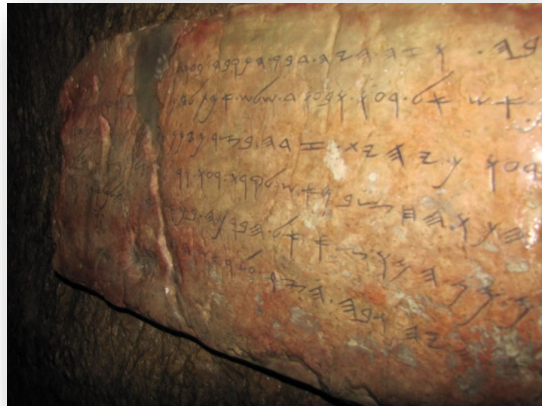


Among the most interesting remains are the water systems which include **Warren's Shaft** (named after the discoverer), the Siloam Channel, and **Hezekiah's Tunnel**.

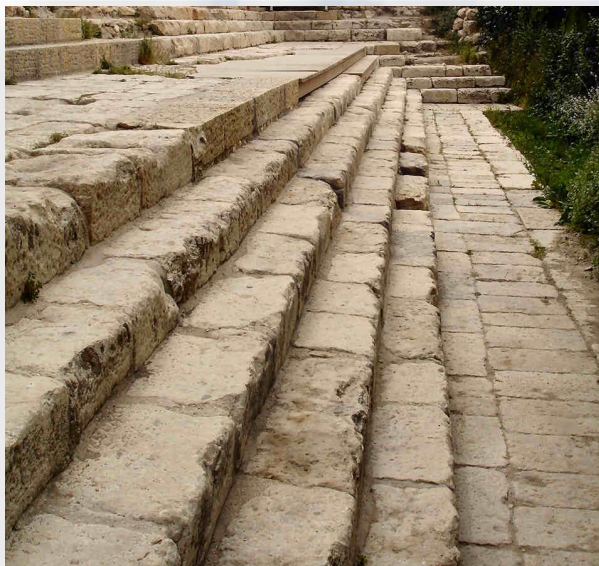
The earliest system, Warren's Shaft, was a stepped tunnel leading to a place where jugs could be lowered down about 45 feet to a small pool. A horizontal channel brought the water from the spring to the pool. If the vertical shaft was the "conduit" through which David's men climbed to get into the city, it was a remarkable feat. The vertical shaft, about six feet wide, would have made

the ascent extremely difficult. During the excavation, it took professional mountain climbers hours to get up the shaft.

As King Hezekiah prepared the city to withstand the imminent Assyrian siege, he decided to bring the water supply into the city in a way that could not be cut off by the enemy outside the walls. To do this he sealed up the outward flow of the Gihon spring and dug a tunnel 1732 feet long, bringing the water into a pool called the pool of Siloam. An inscription (right), discovered in 1880 in the tunnel, describes the process of the tunneling.



What you see today as the **Pool of Siloam** is only one of two pools in the area (the other is the pool of Bethesda). The upper Pool of Siloam dates to about 701 B.C. By the time of Jesus, there was a covered porch at the entrance supported by six columns, and the pool itself was about four times the size of what you see today. The account of the healing of the man who had been blind since birth (**John 9:1-41**) is one of the longest Gospel narratives of any of the miracles of Jesus. The disciples asked whose sin had caused the man's blindness, his own or his parents? Neither, said Jesus; he was born blind "so that God's works might be revealed in him". Then Jesus spat on the ground, made mud with his saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes. "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam," he said. The man did as he was told, and he was able to see.



The Herodian street that ran from the north of the city along the Western Wall, under Robinson's arch, and down the eastern hill through the City of David until it reached the Pool of Siloam. The Pool of Siloam is circled in the picture on the next page.

Recent excavation of this area has uncovered a stepped stone street that ascends from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple Mount on the **Siloam Road**. The style of the stairs is similar to the large staircases in front of the Double and Triple Gates, in that the steps alternate between narrow and wide runs. In this photo the first step is a narrow run while the second step is wider. This created a slow, steady procession as people ascended from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple Mount. In this photo the excavation turns toward the left and then follows a section of this wide street up through the City of David.

This gutter system would collect runoff rain water from the city and drain it toward the Kidron Valley during Roman times. It has been completely excavated, and both sides reveal a wall made of blocks that support the stone

paved street above.

Now cleaned out, this tunnel enables visitors to walk 700 yards uphill, along the edge of the Tyropoeon Valley and under the Old City wall, to an exit near the Western Wall.



Among the items discovered in this tunnel were a rare gold bell (pictured left), perhaps once sewn to a high priest's garment, and an ancient silver shekel, customarily used to pay the half-shekel head tax to the Temple. A more somber find was a Roman sword, with its leather sheath partly intact. As the Romans overtook Jerusalem in AD 70 during the First Jewish-Roman War, with the Temple in flames, the last of the Jewish rebels hid in the sewers. "Those in the sewers were ferreted out, the ground was torn up, and all who were trapped were killed," reported the historian Flavius Josephus.

Herodian Street was used by Jewish pilgrims today.

From the Pool of Siloam, visitors can walk on a section of the Herodian street — now also below ground level — that hundreds of thousands of Jews used three times a year (festivals: Passover, Pentecost, tabernacles) to ascend to the Temple during pilgrim feasts. Jesus almost certainly walked this way.

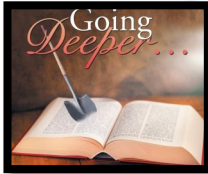
Some artifacts, probably from the City of David, have turned up in private collections. These include a ring containing a seal belonging to Hanan, the son of Hilkiah (2 Kings 22:8 and 2 Chronicles 34:14). There are also numerous clay bullae (small lumps of clay used to seal important documents) with seal impressions mentioning the name of Baruch, the son of Neriah, and Jerahmeel, the son of King Jehoiakim. These artifacts provide important connections to the life of the prophet Jeremiah. Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah, undoubtedly lived in



Jerusalem, where he twice wrote down Jeremiah's prophecies beginning in about 605 B.C. It is likely that all these discoveries come from the City of David. Unfortunately, the precise locations of their discovery are unknown.

(pictured right) A drain in the Herodian pavement on the Siloam Road.

Jesus Attended the FEASTS.



DID YOU KNOW: According to John's gospel, Jesus participated in the festivals during His lifetime. John records an important narrative occurring on the last day of the **Feast of Tabernacles**. This day was known as the "Day of the Great Hosanna." The priest returned from the pool of Siloam for the last time as the Hallel Psalms (**Ps. 113-118**) were sung and three blasts of the silver trumpets were heard.



During the Libation offering, the **High Priest** – would fill a vessel with Living Water (flowing water from the Pool of Siloam) to pour on the Four Horns of the Alter. The priests would cut willow branches in 25ft lengths and as the High Priest made his way back up to the temple on the Siloam road, the priests standing 30ft apart would moved their feet in unison as they swished the branches back and forth making a sound like a Mighty Rushing Wind. This Illustrated the Holy Spirit's Breath that would blow in the temple.

During this unique ceremony, a Flute Player - also named as the Pierced One - played and called for both the wind and water to enter the Temple.

FLUTE-

The flute is symbolic of the MESSIAH

The flute is pierced, just as the Messiah was pierced during the crucifixion.

The flute player (pierced one) lead the procession and calls for the wind and the water to enter the Temple as the priests are swishing the willow branches and circles the alter seven times.

Near the brass alter were two containers- one silver that held wine, and one gold that held the living water. At a precise moment in the ceremony, the High Priest mixed the wine and water into one vessel.

The other priests circled the altar seven times with the willow branches, forming a willow canopy above the brass alter.

Somewhere, in this same location, is where the Holy Spirit would blow like a mighty rushing wind and the Spirit would fill the first believers with His power (**Acts 1:8; 2:1-4**). It is here that John records that Jesus suddenly in a loud voice cries out saying:

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37-39)

Hezekiah’s Tunnel

During the reign of Hezekiah, the king of Judah between 715 and 686 BC, another extraordinary tunnel was dug underneath the City of David in Jerusalem. It was used to bring water from the Gihon Spring on one side of the city to the other during times of war, which proved to be of immense value during the siege by the Assyrians in the 8th century BC.

In 1830, a hexagonal clay prism, known as the “Taylor Prism,” was discovered among the ruins of Nineveh. It tells us that Sennacherib, the king of Assyria in the Eighth Century BC, had Hezekiah trapped in Jerusalem like a “bird in a cage.” Hezekiah and his engineers refortified the city walls and carved a 1,720 foot tunnel out of solid bedrock to bring the ever-flowing waters of the Gihon spring into the inner sections of the city (1 Kings 1:38, 45; 2 Kings 20; 2 Chronicles 29-32). The carving of the tunnel was a remarkable feat!



With a flashlight in hand, you can walk through this tunnel today and see the very chisel marks cut into the bedrock. An inscription found near the end of the tunnel, kept in storage at the Istanbul Museum, tells the remarkable story of how two teams chiseled toward each other until they could literally hear the sound of the other picking before breaking through.

Hezekiah’s Tunnel was discovered by American explorer Edward Robinson in 1838. In the 1860s, another explorer named Charles Warren is credited for having discovered a 52 foot vertical shaft that descends to the level of the 1,750 foot long water tunnel. We can only express thanks to 19th Century explorers and archaeologists like these for dedicating their lives to this cause here in the City of David. Whether studying the story of David’s capture of the city (2 Samuel 5) or how Hezekiah and his fellow citizens of Jerusalem withstood the massive Assyrian army in 701 BC, archaeology continues to shed light on how these events were achieved.

Like a royal inscription found on a piece of pottery here, God is more concerned about what is written on our heart. Often, like pottery that needs to be cleared of dirt and debris, God finds dirt and debris upon our hearts as well. It is God’s Spirit who renews our spiritual walk (Titus 3:5).

Likewise, just as archaeology sheds light on the ancient past of the Bible, it is God's Spirit who reveals to the follower of Christ the pathways to God. Unlike walking through Hezekiah's Tunnel without a flashlight, God delights when we walk in the light way. God is pleased when we entrust our ways to His wisdom (Proverbs 3:5-6; Proverbs 4:6).

Thanks be to God for the light He sheds on our pathway. Like a flashlight radiating beams into the darkened tunnel of Hezekiah, God provides His Spirit for our enlightenment. God has provided the gift of illumination of His Spirit that enables us to walk through the dark tunnels of life with confidence. This requires us to put aside the "pitch darkness" of our own wisdom. Allow God's Spirit to shed light on your life.

"Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah—all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city—are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?" (2 Kings 20:20)

"When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him. They gathered a large group of people who blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land. 'Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?' they said." (2 Chronicles 32:2-4)

David took the city by telling his army that the only way to enter the fortified city was through the water shaft the Jebusites had cut.

The Jebusites had made an underground passage way for the public to descend in. This public tunnel led to a shaft that served as a well to lower buckets in to draw water up from the Gihon Springs.

1 Chronicles 11:6 says that Joab led David's men into the Gihon Springs, shimmied up the shaft to reach the underground public tunnel. From there they stormed the city.

"And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, 'You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,' thinking, 'David cannot come in here.'" ⁷ Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David).

⁸ Now David said on that day, "Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul), he shall be chief and captain." (2 Samuel 5:6-8)

Joab, David's general answers the call and surprised the Jebusites by sneaking in through a hidden passage found in the Gihon Spring. A vertical shaft was discovered in the underground tunnel that flows from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam.

Someone standing on a rock platform at the top of the shaft could drop a bucket on a rope and draw up the cool water from the gently sloping tunnel that was safely inside the wall of the city. During a time of war having a water source inside the city was crucial to their survival.

Joab and his men scaled the shaft which lead to another tunnel that opened into the city. They went undetected by the Jebusites and opened the city gates, allowing David's army in so they could overtake the city of Jerusalem.



Davidson Archeological Park

The Jerusalem Archaeological Park and adjacent **Davidson Center** offer a window into **Jerusalem** on the eve of its destruction by the Romans in 70 C.E. The site contains direct artifacts from the city's destruction in 70 C.E., as well as significant archaeological remains from the Byzantine and early Arab periods. The site encompasses the south section of the Western Wall together with Southern Wall of the Temple Mount and the areas adjacent to them. It can be seen from without looking to the right (east) while walking from the Dung Gate to the **Western Wall Plaza**.

Western Wall Street - A Herodian street from the days of Jesus and the New Testament runs along the west side of the Western Wall. A portion of this street has been found at the northwest edge of the Western Wall inside the tunnels (as seen in a photo earlier in the book). This same street ran from the northwest corner all along the Western Wall of the Temple Mount to the southwest corner (see photo below). It then continued all the way down through the City of David to the Pool of Siloam, where a large portion of it has been excavated. The street was originally built by Herod the Great and later repaved by Herod Agrippa I around 40-44 AD.

Under the street is a gutter that is large enough to walk in, which collected rain water and ran it south, out of the city. The pavement is supported by three rows of vaults which created vaulted rooms built on the bedrock. During the Roman destruction of the Temple and Temple Mount huge chunks of rock and ashlar stones were pushed over the edge onto this pavement, where the force of the falling objects crushed portions of the pavement down into the gutter beneath the streets. During the excavation process much of this rubble was removed, but some was left to help communicate the magnitude of the devastation caused by the Roman Legions. The stones that were left in place can still be seen lying on the street in the piles where they landed almost 2,000 years ago.

A 246 foot portion of the street was excavated below Robinson's Arch. The street there is 28 feet wide and is bordered with raised curbstones.

Two interesting pieces of the Temple complex are seen here.

- 1. Trumpeting Stone** - In the front right is a stone that fell from the Temple Mount above. It is a piece of the railing from the course of stones at the top of the southwest corner. The priestly trumpeter would have stood on this stone to sound the trumpet signaling the beginning and end of Sabbath days and festivals. The sharp corner that has been cut out of this block is where the priest would have stood, and the beveled edge served as a guard railing. In the top left portion of the guard rail is a Hebrew inscription. It is read right to left, and says: "**For the place of trumpeting to . . .**" It appears the rest of the inscription was broken off when Charles Warren dug a tunnel through the rubble in the 1800's, and went right through this stone. The rest of the inscription may have said "For the place of trumpeting 'to the temple,' or, 'to herald the Sabbath.'



Josephus describes this place on the Temple Mount wall when he writes: Above the roof of the priests' chambers, . . . it was the custom for one of the priests to stand and to give notice, by sound of trumpet, in the afternoon of the approach, and on the following evening of the close, of every seventh day, announcing to the people the respective hours for ceasing work and for resuming their labors. - Josephus IV:9:12

It is likely that James, the pastor of the Jerusalem church who wrote the book of James, was forced to stand on this stone in 63 AD to proclaim that Jesus was not the Messiah. Instead, James confessed Jesus by announcing to the crowd that Jesus was the Christ, that he sits at God's right hand, and that he will return in the clouds from heaven. The scribes and Pharisees responded by pushing James, the brother of the Lord, over this railing to his death.

- 2. Temple Shops** - Behind the Trumpeting Stone on the pavement is a nicely carved block that was a decorative piece from the Temple complex. Also, notice the four shops on the curb of the pavement on



the left side, at the back of the photo. The lintels (top stone over the doorways) of these shops provided support for Robinson's Arch, which in turn supported the staircase that led to the southwestern gate of the Temple Mount.

This may be the very place in the gospels that Jesus dealt with those taking advantage of those who came to worship God. They were charging an unfair exchange rate and overcharging for the animals to be sacrificed.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

“So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.” (John 2:13-1)

“Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned

the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’” (Matthew 21:12-13)



Southern Wall Excavations -- is a street 22-foot wide also ran along the southern wall of the Temple. About 37 feet of this street can still be seen at the southwest corner, where it begins to ascend rapidly through a series of stairs until it reaches the Double Gate that lead into the temple court. Although we know the route, the street is not visible after the initial 37-foot section until it reaches the Double Gate. At the Double Gate it is again visible down to the Triple Gate.

Stairs run up to this street from the south, coming up the Ophel from the south. The remains of these stairs are also still visible. In fact, they are still useful to visitors. As the street continues along the southern wall

toward the east a series of vaults, similar to the vaults under the street along the Western Wall, were built to support it. These vaults, or arches, supported the street along the southern wall and were also used as shops.

Inscription reads in Latin:

"To Titus Aelius Hadrianus
Antoninus Augustus Pius
The father of the fatherland, pontifex, augur
Decreed by the Decurions"



The Triple Gate led visitors under the Temple Mount through a decorated tunnel beneath the Royal Stoa on the south end of Solomon’s Colonnade, then to a stairway which took worshippers up to the outer courtyard of the Temple Mount. The Triple Gate is 230 feet east of the Double Gate and is 51 feet wide. Each of the three gates is 13 feet wide with two 6 foot walls separating them. This Triple Gate is likely the “Beautiful Gate” of Acts 3:2:

“One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer – at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money . . . Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful . . . While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade.” (Acts 3:1-11)

The **Single Gate** was cut by the Knights Templar and is not original to the Temple Mount. The Crusaders used this gate to access the caverns below the Temple Mount, where they kept their horses. The caverns are called “Solomon’s Stables.” The gate was

blocked shut by Saladin in 1187 when the Muslims returned.

The **Ophel** is part of the Eastern Hill that sits between the City of David and the Temple Mount. The word “ophel” means “swell or rise” and refers to a higher part of the landscape. The Jebusites built their citadel there, as did David, who also added a lot more fortification to this northern part of his city.

The Ophel is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 27 and 33:

“Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple of the Lord and did extensive work on the wall at the hill of Ophel.” (2 Chronicles 27:3)

Afterward he (Manasseh) rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher. (2 Chronicles 33:14)

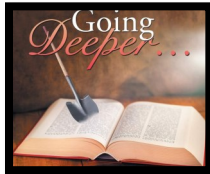
This part of the city was always heavily fortified, as seen in Nehemiah 3:26, Isaiah 32:14 and Micah 4:8. Extensive building took place in this area from the days of David right up to the modern excavation of the Ophel just south of the Temple Mount.

This southern side of The Temple was the main entrance for the common folk, whereas the Priests and Levites had their own entrance from the higher, eastern



side. Parts of the giant stairs, which led to the Temple Mount from the courtyard, have been unearthed. It is in this courtyard that Jesus likely drove out the vendors and money exchangers who were exploiting the people. (Matt 21:12-17; Mk 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46) In the Mishna, we are told that Rabbi Gamliel taught at the Temple steps; thus this is likely the place where the Apostle Paul (Saul) learned at Gamliel's feet. (**Acts 22:3**) It is also the only known area where 3,000 could have heard the preaching of Peter and be baptized on the Day of Pentecost.

From the steps of the double gate, as you look east-southeast down the steps over the Kidron Valley toward the southern summit of the Mount of Olives. At the foot of these stairs are numerous mikvah (ritual baths) used by the Jews for purification. These mikvah were likely used by the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 for baptizing the 3,000 new Jewish believers in the name of Jesus. On that day, these steps would have been crowded - first, because it was the Jewish feast of Pentecost, and second, because of the events recorded in Acts chapter 2.



DID YOU KNOW: There are many powers in the world, the power of the sun, the power of the wind, the power of rivers, the power of fire, the power of armies, and the power of man. Each of these powers have conditions and limitations. But there is a power beyond all these powers, a power with no limitations, the power to do anything.

Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem, to receive this power, the power of the Holy Spirit (**Luke 24:49**). The word used in the Scriptures for "POWER" is the Greek word *dunamis*. It comes from the root word *dunamahee*, which means "to be able". This is the power to become able to do that which you could never do before, the power to do that which is above your ability to do.

Dunamahee means to make that which was impossible.... POSSIBLE. And one more thing, *Dunamahee* also means can, as in I can. The power of the Holy Spirit gives us the power to do all things, and the power to do whatever you need to do to fulfill the will and calling of God.

It's the power of powers, the power to do whatever it is that you need to do. It's the power to nullify and overcome every "I can't" in your life.

TODAY: Embrace the Holy Spirit and allow the power of "I Can Do All Things through Christ" to govern your life (**Philippians 4:13**)!

Day of Pentecost - According to the Book of Acts, the experience of the Pentecost was shared by all in the large crowd, causing confusion, and inspiring fear.

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" Acts 2:6-12

Then (the Apostle) Peter standing with the eleven other apostles spoke to the crowd. He explained that these strange events had been predicted by the prophet Joel, and that Jesus's coming had been prophesied by David. Peter explained that these events confirmed David's prophesied exaltation of Jesus. Peter then exhorted his listeners to turn to Christ. About three thousand responded to Peter's sermon.

Three physical signs occurred showing the coming of the Holy Spirit

A. Sound of a mighty Blowing Wind. Wind is a powerful force in nature. If you've ever seen or experienced a hurricane, tornado or cyclone, you know this all too well. Jesus instructed the disciples to wait for an empowerment promised by the Father (Acts 1:4-5, 8). This power would come in connection with the Holy Spirit. The word "Spirit" is translated from the Greek term *pneuma* which literally means breath, a current of air, or breeze. Therefore it's appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit is inaugurated by the coming of a mighty rushing wind from heaven.



B. Visible of tongues of Fire rested on each of them. The tongues of Fire which descended on the disciples represents a theophany (a visible manifestation of God). This is important to Christianity in that it represents the dynastic succession of power from Jesus to the Holy Spirit who guides the believers.

C. They heard the apostles speaking in the native tongue of the listener, i.e., the miracle was in the hearing. This was important in that it was key for the spread of the gospel. The Holy Spirit acted as a translator so that as the preaching occurred everyone there comprehended the message in their own native language. (This event has also been interpreted as the opposite of the events at the Tower of Babel, which, according to the tradition, introduced the language barriers in the first place.)

"Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Acts 2:26-33
Simon Peter also reminded the multitude (in Acts 2:17-21) that this experience had been predicted by the prophet Joel:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:" (Joel 2:28)

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Acts 2:38-41



DID YOU KNOW: The sacrificial lambs that were offered up in the Temple, were raised in close proximity to Jerusalem, in a little town called Bethlehem. The very same place where Jesus, the Lamb of God was born.

The bible records that... "While shepherds watched their flocks by night . . ." Not just any shepherd's or any flocks, but the lambs destined to be sacrificed in the Temple of Jerusalem as an offering to God for the sins of the people.

That is why the first ones to see Jesus in this world were the shepherds, because when a sacrificial lamb is born, the shepherds attend its birth. Not just any shepherd's, but by the shepherds of Bethlehem, the shepherds who attended the birth of the sacrificial lambs. So, the Lamb of God was born among the sacrificial lambs for the same reason, to be sacrificed in Jerusalem.

The plan of God was there from the beginning, from His birth. The entire purpose of Jesus's life was to give Himself, to give His life as a gift of sacrificial love for all mankind. His entire life . . . even from the moment of His birth . . . was orchestrated to reflect His love. The entire life of Jesus was a living sacrifice, every moment a gift given, the incarnation of true love.

TODAY: As you celebrate the birth of the Son of God in Bethlehem, may you also celebrate and receive the GREAT LOVE that He has for YOU!

Bethlehem

Bethlehem is a town six miles southwest of Jerusalem and 2,500 ft. above sea level. The name means "house of bread." It bordered the Judean Wilderness to the east which provided pasture for sheep and goats. It was surrounded by vineyards and almond trees. It is sometimes called Bethlehem-Judah or Ephrath (Gen 35:19; Micah 5:2) to keep it from being confused with another city, Bethlehem of Zebulun. Located in Judah, Bethlehem was one of the towns that played a key role in history. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which was a fulfillment of prophecy



(Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-7). Bethlehem was also the place of death and burial for Rachel. It is also known as the City of David, as David was both born and anointed there (1 Sam. 16:4, 13; Luke 2:4, 11). The name Bethlehem actually means “house of bread.”



Bethlehem was first settled by the Canaanites and was associated with the earliest fathers (or “patriarchs”) of Israel, because Rachel died and was buried near it (Gen 35:16, 19; Gen 48:7). The earliest mention of Bethlehem is in some ancient battle reports, written fourteen hundred years before Christ’s birth, which refer to a city named bitil u-lahama south of Jerusalem. This name may have meant “house of (the goddess) Lahama.” A branch of Caleb’s family settled there, and Caleb’s son Salma was known as “the father of Bethlehem” (1 Chr 2:51). It was also the home of a Levite boy who served as priest to Micah (Judges 17:7-8), and of Boaz, Ruth, Obed, and Jesse, the Bethlehemite, David’s father (Ruth 4:11-17; 1 Samuel 16:18).

was also the birthplace of King David and the home of one of David’s mighty men, Elhanan (2 Sam 23:24; 1 Chr 11:26). A daring deed was performed in Bethlehem by three of David’s warriors. They broke through a chain of Philistine warriors who had taken over the city to bring David water from a well near the city gate of his hometown (2 Sam 23:14-17). Bethlehem is also mentioned as being next to the village of Geruth-kimham, where Jews running from the Babylonians stayed while they were on their way to Egypt (Jer 41:17). People from Babylon were part of the group of Jews who returned Israel after living in exile in Babylon (Ezra 2:21; Nehemiah 7:26; 1 Esdras 5:17).

Boaz owned fields here and married Ruth who gave him Obed, King David’s grandfather. It

Bethlehem was only a small village when Jesus was born (Matt 2:1-16; Luke 2:4-6, 15; John 7:42). Joseph had to go to Bethlehem because he was part of the family of David (Luke 2:4), under orders of Caesar Augustus. It is said that the birth of Jesus might have taken place in a cave in the rocks outside town, as agreed upon by Christian writers Justin Martyr and Origen. Another early Christian writer, Jerome, described the cave where the Roman Emperor Constantine had built a church. Some evidence was found near Bethlehem that suggested a second period of building in the time of a later emperor, Justinian (AD 527-565), in 1934-35. Constantine’s church was then extended past its original boundaries. There were steps that led down to the cave, which were artificially shaped into a square, probably by Constantine’s builders. There is, however, no description of the cave from before the construction of Constantine’s church.

“...And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem...” (Gen 35:16-27).

“And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was



but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem” (Gen 48:7).

“And there was a young man out of Bethlehem-judah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there...” (Judges 17:7-8).

“And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephrath, and be famous in Bethlehem...” (Ruth 4:11-17).

“And Samuel did that which the Lord spoke, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Come thou peaceably?” (1 Sam 16:4).

“Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah” (1 Sam 16:13).

“Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him” (1 Sam 16:18).

“Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose names was Jesse...” (1 Sam 17).

“And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem...” (2 Sam 23:14-17).

“Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem” (2 Sam 23:24).

“Salma the father of Bethlehem, Hareph the father of Bethgader” (1 Chr 2:51).

“Also the valiant men of the armies were, Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem” (1 Chr 11:26).

“The children of Bethlehem, an hundred twenty and three” (Ezra 2:21).

“The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight” (Nehemiah 7:26).

“And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt” (41:17).

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephrath, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem...” (Matt 2:1-16).





“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under...” (Matt 2:16-23).

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed...” (Luke 2:1-15).

“Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” (John 7:42).

Bethlehem/Shepherd's Field --

Originally a small village on the road from Jerusalem where sheep were raised to be used in the temple for sacrifice. Here also took place the story of Ruth and Boaz, and is the birthplace of both David, and David's greatest son, Jesus. Here also can be found the tomb of Rachel. Many believe the site of The Shepherd's Field to be the place where angels of the Lord visited the

shepherds to announce the birth of Israel's King and Savior. (Gen 35:16-20 48:7 Ruth 1 Sam 16:1-12; 17:12 Micah 5:2 Luke 2:1-7, 8-20 Matt 2:1-18)

Bethlehem Inn - We know the Christmas story so well. Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem and were turned away from the village inn by the innkeeper. They took refuge in a barn, where baby Jesus was born and laid in a manger. A very early church tradition says the site of the nativity was a cave near Bethlehem.

The text of Luke 2 notes there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the “inn.” Unfortunately, the Greek term translated inn (*kataluma*) had multiple meanings, among them inn or a large courtyard house. Used only one other time in the New Testament (Luke 22:11 and the parallel passage, Mark 14:14), it was the place where Jesus



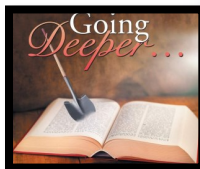
observed the Last Supper with His disciples. Here, Luke gave additional information about the *kataluma*. He said it was a furnished large upper story room within a private Jerusalem house. The *kataluma* of the last night of Jesus' earthly ministry was the "upper room."

Excavations in Bethlehem have uncovered numerous installations within domestic structures which probably represent ancient inns with mangers. Some are carved, but most are stone built (pictured left). Wooden mangers, of course, have not survived in the archaeological record.

A small number of flock animals were housed, not in attached exterior sheds, but inside the house in one of the ground floor rooms. Here, animals, tools and agricultural produce were stored. Here, too, food was prepared and possibly consumed. Family sleeping quarters were on the second floor (an upper room). By being inside, the animals were protected from the elements and theft. In addition, their presence provided body heat for cool nights, access to milk for the daily meal and dung as a critical fuel source.

Consequently, Mary and Joseph did not find space in the living quarters of the Inn (roadside courtyard home). Instead, they stayed downstairs in the domestic stable, still within the home, where a manger or two was located. Here they were visited by the shepherds, and maybe the wise men some time later.

Jerome translated the Bible into Latin—From a cave beneath the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem came the most enduring version of the Bible ever translated. In this underground study around AD 386, pleasantly cool in summer but chilly in winter, St Jerome spent 30 years translating the Scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. The text he produced was the first official version of the Bible designed for the common man. It is known as the Vulgate, and it remained the authoritative version for Catholics until the 20th century.



DID YOU KNOW: It's written in Psalm 147 that God gives to every creature "food". The Hebrew word for food is lechem. Lechem means food, but it also means

bread. There's a town in Israel called the House of Bread. The Hebrew word for house is bait. So, the house of bread would be Bait Lechem. We know it as Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem was a feeding trough where animals or creatures came to receive their lechem. And so, it was there that The Bread of Life came down from heaven and there was laid in a feeding trough for lechem. Jesus said, "I am The Bread of Life which comes down from heaven. He who eats of this bread will never hunger." Jesus the Messiah truly is The Lechem of Life. He is the One for whom this world and our soul's hunger for. Without Him, we're all empty. So don't try to fill up your life or your soul with that which is not bread.

TODAY: Turn again to Him who is The True Bread for your life, and your life will truly be filled. For God is He who gives to every creature...lechem.



Shiloh—

"The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The country was brought under their control" (Joshua 18:1).

"Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek. The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand of them on the battlefield. When the soldiers returned

to camp, the elders of Israel asked, “Why did the Lord bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the Lord’s covenant from Shiloh, so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies” (1 Samuel 4:1-3).

Since the days when Moses was instructed to build a Tabernacle in the Wilderness of Sinai, the people of God turned to this transportable structure as a place of sacrifice and worship. It was a place where the Shekinah glory of God was encountered. It was in the Holy of Holies, once a year, where sins were atoned for as the High Priest approached the Ark of the Covenant.

Following the Conquest (roughly in the late 1400’s BC), the Tabernacle was given a more permanent, yet not final, place where it functioned in similar ways for the 12 tribes of Israel.

Welcome to Shiloh, the capital of ancient Israel. A highly fortified with massive walled city located about 25 miles north of Jerusalem, half way between Shechem and Bethel. It is the place where the Ark of the Covenant was housed for 369 years; centuries before the days of David, Solomon, and Jerusalem. Welcome to the place where the priest, Eli, raised a young boy named Samuel. Welcome to Shiloh!

It was here that Joshua divided the tribes’ allotment of land (Joshua 18). Also, a godly woman, Hannah, prayed to conceive a son, and her son Samuel, a prophet who would minister before the Lord (1 Samuel 1:1-28; 3:21). From the time Israel entered the land until the time of Samuel, the Ark of the Covenant remained in the Tabernacle at Shiloh.

Imagine the Israelites’ joy when they set up the Tabernacle here following the rounds of victories during the Conquest (Joshua 18:1). Compare this with the upsetting defeat they incurred when the Philistines attacked the city. As the Philistines learned that the Ark of the Covenant was being brought into the Israelite camp, they cried, “We’re in trouble! Nothing like this has happened before” (1 Samuel 4:7). Emboldened against Israel’s “secret weapon,” the Philistines won the battle, leaving the defeated Israelites to witness the Ark of the Covenant being carried off by these Gentile invaders! While the Tabernacle was removed and taken to nearby Gibeon, where it stayed until the days of Solomon, the Ark remained captured.



This same Ark, made according to the plans of God in the Sinai Desert (Exodus 25:10-22), that would eventually be carried by the Levites under Joshua’s command across the dry river bed of the Jordan (Joshua 3:1-16), was now taken by the Philistines. According to Jewish Talmudic sources, the Ark that rested here at Shiloh for 369 years was now gone. What a tragedy! What a catastrophe!

The Israelites were terrified at the loss of the Ark. A Benjamite reported the catastrophe to the 98 year-old priest, Eli, who served for 40 years at Shiloh. The biblical text says in dramatic fashion:

“When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had led Israel forty years” (1 Samuel 4:18).

The Philistines eventually returned the Ark after 7 months. The Lord struck the Philistines with plagues

of tumors and rats (**1 Samuel 5**). While they were in possession of the Ark, they stored it next to a statue of their god Dagon. The statue fell twice on its face before the Ark. The second time, the head and the palms of the hands broken off. In a rather mundane fashion, they placed the Ark on a wooden cart and sent a trespass offering of 5 golden tumors and 5 golden rats to represent the number of the lords of the Philistines. One for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron. Pulled by 2 milk cows, the Ark traveled eastward up the Sorek Valley to Beth Shemesh, a city in the Shephelah (“Lowlands” of Judah, see **1 Samuel 6:1-18**). This holy vessel of God would be housed in nearby Kirjath Jearim for 20 long years in the house of Abinadab (**1 Samuel 7:1-2**). The name Kiriath Jearim means “Town of the Forests” and it served as a boundary marker between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin.



Eventually, King David decides to bring the ark from the "house of Abinadab" to the city of Jerusalem (**2 Samuel 6:1-2**). The ark is placed on an ox-cart driven by Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons (**2 Samuel 6:3-5**). At one point, the Ark rocks as the oxen pull it, and Uzzah sticks out his hand to steady the Ark, and so God strikes Uzzah dead (**2 Samuel 6:7**).

David temporarily abandons his plan to move the ark to Jerusalem (**2 Samuel 6:10-11**).

“So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his house.”

When David hears that the LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom, he successfully moves the Ark to Jerusalem in the manner prescribed by God, not on a cart, but on the shoulders of the Levites.

When the prophet Jeremiah spoke of Shiloh about 500 years later, he referred to Shiloh as a place “where God’s name dwelt” (**Jeremiah 7:12**). However, Shiloh was also a place of wickedness. Could this wickedness have been a reference to the Israelites’ lack of total trust in God?

Devotional Thought for Shiloh

Read Jeremiah 7:1-15; 26:6; Mark 11:15-17.

“Go to Shiloh and see,” God said. In traveling to Shiloh, we see what happened when a previous generation did not follow God.

The people of Jeremiah’s day, as well as those during the time of Jesus, felt that the presence of God’s temple gave them security.

- Both Jeremiah and Jesus pointed to Shiloh to show that security comes not from the Tabernacle at Shiloh or the Temple in Jerusalem.
- Security comes from God’s presence. For over three hundred years, only the high priest could stand in the place of the Holy of Holies. But today, anyone can wander where the Tabernacle at Shiloh stood, because “the glory has departed” (**1 Samuel 4:22**).

Although today God’s temple is His church (**1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19**)—and although He will never remove His Spirit from us (**2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30**)—we do face the possibility that we can choose not to allow God to use us any longer (**Revelation 2:5**).

Let us remain faithful to the Lord so that His glory can shine to a dark and hurting world.



DID YOU KNOW: Do you ever wonder about God's love, if His love for you will endure, if it will outlast your sins, or if your sins will exhaust it? Have you ever wondered about His faithfulness to you, if it will always be there . . . if it will always keep you no matter what?

It is written in the **Psalms 103:17**: "The lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who reverence Him."

The word translated as lovingkindness is the Hebrew word *khesed*. *Khesed* speaks not only of God's merciful, tender love, but of His faithful love, the love of God that doesn't let go. But what it goes on to say about that love is amazing: The faithful love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who reverence Him. Do you realize what it's saying? His tender and faithful love for you is from everlasting. In other words, He doesn't only love you now. He loved you before you were.

How may you ask? He's God. He knew you before you existed. Not just a year or ten years before, He has always known you. For ages before you existed, He has known you. And if He loves you now, it could not have been any different then. God has loved you, tenderly, mercifully, and faithfully . . . from everlasting. How long has He loved you? For an eternity! He's loved you from forever. His love for you has already lasted an eternity! It has already traveled an eternity to reach you.

Will God's love for you ever cease or give up? The answer is no. God's love for you has already spanned the length of eternity. It has already lasted forever. For the love of God is, to you who reverence Him, from everlasting to everlasting, from forever to forever.

TODAY: Ponder the love that God has for you that has already endured for an eternity and will not cease or ever fail you.

Elah Valley—

This is the valley where David killed Goliath (**1 Samuel 17**). It stretches from the land of Judah to the land of the Philistines. The Elah Valley is one of five major valleys running through the foothills that are found between the Coastal Plain and the hill country of Judah. The valley begins east of Gath and ends at a ridge that rises into Bethlehem.

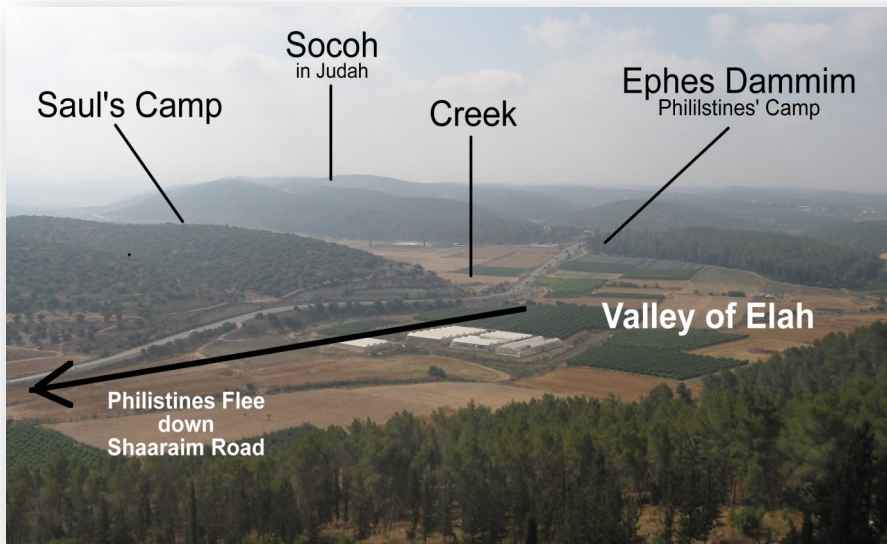
The Valley of Elah, "the Valley of the Terebinth". It is called after the large and

shady terebinth trees which are indigenous to its parts, and best known as the place described in the Bible where the Israelites were encamped when David fought Goliath (1 Sam. 17:2, 19). The Philistines were encamped on the south side of the valley and King Saul's forces occupied the hill on the northern side. It was near Azekah and Socho (17:1). On the west side of the valley, near Socho, there is a very large and ancient tree of this kind, 55 feet in height, its trunk is 17 feet in circumference. It marks the upper end of the valley, and forms a noted object, being one of the largest terebinths in the area. Rising up from the valley on its extreme south-east end lies the hilltop ruin, Adullam.

Elah Tree—The valley gets its name from the Elah tree, a type of oak or terebinth tree. A large 55 feet tall and 17 foot in circumference) tree still remains in the valley.

Brook Elah—The Brook Elah is famous for the five stones it contributed to David as he prepared to battle against the Philistine champion, Goliath. Some surmise that David chose five stones instead of the one needed in case he





needed to face Goliath's four brothers.

Adullam—Located on the east end of the valley is the site of Adullam. This place proved to be the perfect place for David to hide in his initial flight from Saul. This site was in "no-man's land" where he could stay safely out of the reach of King Saul or the hand of the Philistines.

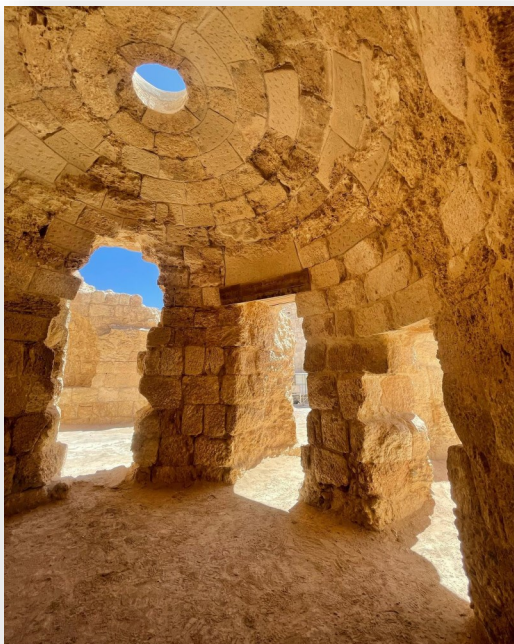
Cave of Adullam—1 Samuel 22 says David hid in the "cave of Adullam." Today there are many caves at the site and it's

not clear which one or ones David used. He hid with his 400 men who were in debt, distress, or discontent.

Kiriath-Jearim - a Gibeonite town (Joshua 9:17) on the border of Benjamin, to which tribe it was assigned (Joshua 18:15 Joshua 18:28). This city is mentioned 18 times in the Bible. The Ark of the Covenant was brought to this place (1 Samuel 7:1 1 Samuel 7:2) from Beth-Shemesh and Abinadab, a Levite was put in charge of it. There it remained until it was removed by King David and taken to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Samuel 6:3; 2 Samuel 6:12; 1 Chronicles 15:1-29).

Herodion— **Herodium** (Latin), **Herodeion** (Ancient Greek), best known in Israel as **Herodion** is 3 miles southeast of Bethlehem and 8 miles south of Jerusalem. Its summit is 2,460 feet above sea level. It is the only palace that is named after Herod the Great.

Herod built or re-built eleven fortresses. This one he constructed on the location of his victory over Antigonus in 40 BC.



Herod's Herodium

Constructed over a small pre-existing hill, the Herodium was a fortress for Herod to quickly flee to from Jerusalem and a luxurious palace for his enjoyment. He chose to be buried here and the mountain is the shape of an ancient burial mound (tumulus). Herod's tomb was discovered by archaeologist Ehud Netzer in 2007.

The Palace

King Herod built the mountain by first erecting a double-walled



cylinder with an outer diameter of 200 feet. There were seven stories in the cylinder including two or three at the top which no longer exist. Afterwards a massive fill of earth and gravel was placed against the cylinder. The four towers are located at the points of the compass.

The Bathhouse

Another symbol of Herod's extravagance in building, this full-size Roman bathhouse had the typical design of four rooms - apodyterium (changing room), tepidarium (stretching room), caldarium (steam room) and frigidarium (cold bath).

The floor was paved with white and black mosaics and the walls were decorated with frescoes of many colors and geometric designs.



The Synagogue

Probably a triclinium (dining room arranged with three tables) in Herod's day, this room was transformed into a synagogue by the Jewish rebels who took over the Herodium in AD 70.

First century AD parallels to this synagogue exist at Masada and Gamla, two sites also captured and held by Jewish fighters in the war against Rome.



DID YOU KNOW: In **Exodus 25**, God gives plans or blueprints for the building of the Tabernacle. Notice the details as everything had to be made exactly according to the pattern, to the exact measurements and specifications. And it all came about through a man named Bezalel. God had filled him with His Spirit. And through Bezalel, the Spirit of God built the Tabernacle. What does that reveal?

The Holy Spirit fulfills the plans of God. And the building of the Tabernacle was part of the Law of Moses. And the day that marks the giving of the Law is the Feast of Shavuot. And on that same day, the Feast of Shavuot, also known as Pentecost, the Spirit of God was given to the first followers of Jesus the Messiah. The same Spirit that translated all these plans and blueprints and measurements into reality. That same Spirit was given to His people and is given to you.

Why? To do the same work, to translate the purposes of God into reality. As it is written, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes." Behind the word statutes is a Hebrew word that speaks of appointed times and measures. You see, God's purposes, God's will and plans for your life, are just as detailed, specific, and precise as the plans and measurements of the Tabernacle. His plans are perfect and not only for your life but for every day of your life, for every moment. That's why He gives you the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives you the power to fulfill God's plan, to move in His perfect will, and to walk in the exact footsteps, down to the exact measurements and specifications of His appointed purposes for your life. Make it your goal to find and fulfill the perfect and precise plan God has for your life. Live by the Spirit, move in His leading, and you will walk into your appointed footsteps, in the blueprints of the Spirit.

TODAY: Seek to live according to the heavenly pattern. Walk, Speak, Submit, and move by the leading of the Holy Spirit into the divine blueprint God has for your life.



DID YOU KNOW: A yud is the smallest of all Hebrew letters, barely more than a dot, so small you could miss it. From the yud came the Roman letters I and J.



And from the yud came the Greek letter iota... As in "not one iota" or as in "not one jot." It all comes from the same tiny letter.

It is the smallest of letters, but the most significant. It is the yud that begins the greatest and most sacred of Hebrew words: The sacred Name of God, YHVH, begins with a yud. The land of God, Israel, begins with a yud. The City of God, Jerusalem, begins with the yud. And the name Jesus, in Hebrew, begins, as well, with a yud.

And what does it all mean?

The greatest of words begin with the smallest of letters. In the same way, the greatest works of God begin with the smallest of strokes. Life itself begins on a scale so small, it can't even be seen. It's the secret of the yud.

And how does one apply it?

We are called to the new and to change. But by nature, we avoid both newness and change. So how do you change? How do you go from a life of failure to a life of victory? It's an overwhelming prospect. How do you do it? With the yud. You start by taking the yud of steps, the smallest of steps but toward the greatest of change. You don't start out with a great victory, but you take the yud, one small action, one little

step toward the great victory. You take that one step, the yud of courage, that iota of change, the smallest stroke of new beginnings, the yud of life you're called to live. You begin the greatest of things with the smallest of strokes. You begin by applying the secret of the yud.

TODAY: take the smallest of actions, but in a new direction, the first step toward the life of victory you're called to live... the yud of a new journey in Christ.

Glossary of Terms

Agadah: A Hebrew term meaning "storytelling." Agadic teaching, especially the teachings of the rabbis, contained stories, legends, parables, and folklore. (also spelled Haggadah)



Aliyah: Specifically, it is to ascend, or rise. Traditionally used to refer to the return of the Jews to the land of Israel. Also, in the synagogue, it is used to describe the one who is given the great honor of reading the Torah.

Druze—The Druze community, more correctly known as the Muwahideen, number close to 120,000 in Israel. They live primarily in the Galilee and the Golan Heights, and are classified as a separate religious group, with their own courts and their own jurisdiction in matters such as marriage, divorce, and adoption.

The Druze religion has its roots in Islam, but although some members consider themselves "Muslim," they have been recognized as a separate religion. During the reign of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, in the 10th and 11th centuries, the Druze religion was formed, combining tenets of Islam with the philosophy of the Greeks and Hindus. The Druze do NOT accept converts. They believe that anyone who wanted to join the religion had a chance to do so in the first generation after it was started, and that everyone who is alive today is reincarnated from a previous generation. Therefore, they concluded that people today already had their chance to join, centuries ago, and the religion has been closed to converts since 1050. Proselytizing is not allowed under Druze law.

The religion is heavily monotheistic, and has ties to the world's three main religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Their prophets include Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus, and Mohammed. Their most revered religious figure is Jethro, father-in-law of Moses. A tomb built over his believed burial site, at the Horns of Hittin near the Kinneret, is a gathering place for members of the Druze faith, and every April, the Druze meet there to discuss matters pertaining to the community.

Despite a few holy sites which have become official gathering places for the Druze, the Druze generally spurn the concepts of ceremonies and rituals. There is no official liturgy or prayer book, no holy days or fast days, and no pilgrimages. They accept "The Seven Precepts," which they believe are the essential components of the Pillars of Islam. The precepts, which form the core of Druze faith, include truthfulness in speech, belief in one God, protection of others, and the belief that every hour of every day is a time to reckon oneself before God. Druze believe that the various rituals and practices adopted by the three major faiths have turned those believers away from the "true faith."

The Druze are divided into two groups: al-Juhhal ("the ignorant") and al-Uqqal ("the knowledgeable"). Al-Juhhal represents the majority of Druze members, approximately 80% of the community, and is the "unlearned" group. They do not have access to the holy writings of the faith, do not attend the religious meetings, and in general are not expected to follow the ascetic rulings of the al-Uqqal. The al-Uqqal, in contrast, which includes both men and women, are the learned minority. Men and women adopt a more stringent dress code, and the spiritual leaders of the community arise from the most influential 5% of the al-Uqqal. The Druze forbid polygamy, along with the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and pork. Equality between men and women, in marriage and in religious life, is an important part of the Druze tradition. Women are encouraged to participate in daily prayer, can take part in religious ceremonies, and are able to initiate divorce.



The first Druze began settling in modern-day Lebanon and northern Israel centuries ago, and the largest Druze community in the Galilee is called Daliyat el-Carmel, situated in the Carmel Mountains. During the British Mandate, the Druze purposely kept out of the Arab-Israeli conflict; when Israel's War of Independence broke out in 1948, the Druze fought on the Israeli side. A minority of Druze who live in the Golan Heights protested when the Israelis annexed the land from Syria, following the Six-Day War. Few of them have accepted full Israeli citizenship, and remain Syrian citizens.

The rest of the Druze, however, are full members of Israeli society. The Druze have mainly found employment in the fields of social work, security services, and prison personnel. A new program has been started to help the Druze gain entry into Israel's lucrative high-tech sector. They have also become prominent members of the IDF and of the *Knesset*, where they hold a disproportionate number of seats relative to the size of their community. In addition to holding prominent military and political positions, the Druze are active in the realms of sports, media, the arts, and literature.

El Shaddai: One of the Judaic names of God, commonly translated as "God Almighty" or "the God of more than enough."



Essenses: This represents a Jewish sect that separated from mainstream Judaism. They are best known as inhabiting the community of Qumran in the Wilderness of Judah.

Gemara: A Hebrew and Aramaic term meaning "to learn from memorization." It also means "completion." It serves as the *commentary* on the collection of Oral Tradition or the *Mishnah* contained in the *Talmud*. It supplements as well as uses the *Mishnah* in launching various discussions on the practice and application of the Torah.

Gentile: Any non-Jewish person. Also can refer to a stranger or foreigner.
Jehovah Jireh: In Hebrew, “the Lord will provide.” Designation for God, but also refers to the place where Abraham offered to sacrifice his son, Isaac, before God provided a ram to be sacrificed in his place.



Haram esh-Sharif: Meaning “Noble Sanctuary,” this platform is also called Temple Mount. Tradition holds that this was where Abraham offered his son as a sacrifice to God. On top sits the Dome of the Rock, and other Islamic structures, including sabils. Previously, it was the site of the Jewish Temple and the Holy of Holies. Non-Muslims can only enter through the Moors’ Gate, but can exit through any of the nine functioning gates

Israel Museum/Shrine of the Book: Israel's finest and most comprehensive museum, containing artifacts and documents from pre-historical to Biblical to Byzantine, Turkish and Modern times. Also, the some of the Dead Sea Scrolls (including the famous Isaiah text) and many artifacts relating to the Qumran community can be found in the separate Shrine of the Book building, whose famous roof is shaped like the ceramic jar covers in which the scrolls were first found.

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Kibbutz: (Hebrew: “gathering” or “collective”) Israeli collective settlement, usually agricultural and often also industrial, in which all wealth is held in common. Profits are reinvested in the settlement after members have been provided with food, clothing, and shelter and with social and medical services. Adults have private quarters, but children are generally housed and cared for as a group. Cooking and dining are in common.

Knesset: home of the Israeli Parliament.

Logos: Greek word for “the written word.” Also part of the root word by which we derive the English word logic.

Mezuzah: This is a Hebrew term that refers to the doorpost box container. According to Deuteronomy 6:9, the hanging of a mezuzah fulfills the commandment, “*You must write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.*” They typically contain the words of Deut. 6:4 (the “Shema”).

Mikveh: Water used for baptism in Judaism that brings a spiritual cleansing of the mind and spirit.

Mishnah: A Hebrew terms which means “*that which is repeated.*” This was a collection of Oral Laws compiled around 200 A.D. by Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi at Sepporis (near Nazareth). It is arranged into 6 divisions or orders (e.g. Seeds, Appointed Times, Women, Damages, Holy Things, and Purities) and 63 tractates. It developed into what was to be known as the Talmud. The Mishnaic Period spans approximately 240 years (20 B.C to 220 A.D.)



Mitzvah: Hebrew for “commandment.” Refers to the commandments given to us by God. Not just the Ten Commandments, however, but all 613 mitzvahs found in Scripture.

Modeh Ani: Hebrew for “I acknowledge” or “I give thanks.” A Jewish prayer said daily upon waking while still in bed.

Oral Law: The Oral Law includes all that Moses learned from God by heart which he did not write down, but transmitted orally to his successors. This tradition is passed on from generation to generation.

Passover: In Hebrew, Pesach, a yearly Jewish feast, or holy day, recalling Israel’s exodus from Egypt and deliverance from slavery. Literally refers to the plague God sent Pharaoh that killed all the firstborn male offspring of Egypt. The application of lamb’s blood on the doorposts of Israelite homes caused the curse to “pass over” all within the households.

Pharisees: A Hebrew term which means “to be set apart.” They were a pious group of sages from the 2nd Temple Period. The rabbis were the successors to the Pharisees. They believed in Oral Law as well in the resurrection.

Rabbi: A Hebrew term that means “teacher, “great” or “revered”. They were viewed sages, as ones who had great learning. In Jesus’ day, it was a title of honor not yet achieving a formal title for those ordained to service or ministry. After 70 A.D., a sage (“chakham”) often carried the title of “Rabbi,” a more official term indicating an ordination status.

Rhema: Greek term for the Word of God made alive by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Rosh Hashanah: Hebrew for “head of the year.” First day of the Jewish calendar and a ten-day period of reflection and repentance leading to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Sabbath: Shabbat in Hebrew, a day of rest on the seventh day beginning at sundown every Friday. Seder: Hebrew word for “order” or “arrangement,” but also referring to the meal and ceremony on the first and second nights of Passover.

Sadducees: They were an influential group that rejected the Oral Law and the authority of the sages. Almost all of the priests were Sadducees. They did not believe in the resurrection. In the Gospels, they were the primary opponents of Jesus and the early Christians because of their political ties to the Roman government. They were also the group in charge of the Jerusalem Temple.

Sanhedrin: Also known in the 2nd Temple period as “The Great Sanhedrin,” this was a religious body of 71 Jewish men who were devoted to the interpretation of both the biblical and traditional law. They served as the



tribunal of religious law and justice. The 3 top leaders of the Sanhedrin were the *Nasi* (presiding leader), the *Av Bet Din* (chief magistrate), and the *Chakham* (the sage). When the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., the seat of the Sanhedrin moved from Jerusalem to Yavneh, to Bet Shearim, to Sepporis, and finally to Tiberias.

Shabbat: The Sabbath (or Shabbat, as it is called in Hebrew) is one of the best known and least understood of all Jewish observances. People who do not observe Shabbat think of it as a day filled with stifling restrictions or as a day of prayer like the Christian Sabbath. But to those who observe Shabbat, it is a precious gift from God, a day of great joy eagerly awaited throughout the week; a time when we can set aside all of our weekday concerns and devote ourselves to higher pursuits.

Shavuot: Hebrew for “weeks.” Denotes the Feast of Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks. It is celebrated 50 days after Passover and commemorates when God gave Moses the first five books of the Old Testament on Mount Sinai. The word Shavuot means weeks, and the festival of Shavuot marks the completion of the seven-week counting period between Passover and Shavuot.

Shema: Hebrew word meaning “to hear or obey”. First word of the daily Jewish prayer that says, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One” found in Deuteronomy 6: 4.

Solomon's Quarry: A quarry located north of the Temple Mount near the present-day Damascus Gate, now called Solomon's Quarry or Zedekiah's Cave. This quarry was used through the Roman period (63 B.C.-A.D. 324), and possibly also by Hezekiah for his building projects.

Sukkot: Hebrew word, plural for “booth” or “hut.” Signifies the Feast of Tabernacles, celebrated for seven days after Yom Kippur. A reminder of when Israel lived in the wilderness in makeshift tents, and later worshipped in a portable tabernacle, a forerunner to a permanent temple.

Synagogue: A term meaning “gathering together”. During the time of Jesus, it was a place to study Torah, not a place of worship.

Tallit: A prayer shawl traditionally worn as an outer garment by Jewish men. Edge of the tallit has tassels made with blue thread at the four corners, or wings.

Talmud: A Hebrew term that means “study.” The term comes from a root word that means “disciple.” The Mishnah, together with its written commentary, Gemara, form the Talmud. A version of the Talmud was written in Israel (about 350 A.D., known as the Jerusalem Talmud. It provides commentary on 39 of the Mishnah’s tractates) as well as in Babylon (about 500A.D. known as the Babylonian Talmud. It provides commentary on 37 of the Mishnah’s tractates).

Tanach: the name for the Hebrew Bible.

Tefillin: A Hebrew word referred to in Deut. 6:8, “*And you will bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as a reminder on your foreheads.*” The Greek term is **Phylacteries**. Tefillin include small boxes that contain Scriptures connected with God’s redemptive power. Jesus warned his disciples against making an ostentatious display of their faith by enlarging these tefillin or by lengthening the *tzitzit*.



Teshuvah: A Jewish concept that involves returning to God through repentance. Also refers to the forty days leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Torah: Hebrew word for “instruction,” or “law.” It is derived from a Hebrew word meaning “to reveal.” God’s Word or law as a pathway to relationship with our Father. Also refers to the first five books of the Old Testament.

Tzedakah: Hebrew word commonly translated as “charity,” but also part of the root word of “justice.” Used to refer to acts of kindness.

Tzitzit: This is a term that refers to the fringe or tassel on the “Tallit” or Prayer Shawl. It is mentioned in Numbers 15:38-39 and serve as a reminder of the many Jewish do’s and don’ts found in the Torah.

Yad V'Shem -- ("Hand and Name" from Isaiah 56:5) This museum commemorates the Holocaust of European Jewry perpetrated by the Nazis before and during WW II.

Yom Kippur : Hebrew for the Day of Atonement. The most solemn of Jewish holidays. During temple worship, it was the day the high priest went into the Holy of Holies to offer a sacrifice that would atone for the sins of the nation for another year.

Psalms of Ascent

Psalm 120 A Song of Ascents.

- ¹ In my distress I cried to the Lord, And He heard me.
- ² Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips And from a deceitful tongue.
- ³ What shall be given to you, Or what shall be done to you, You false tongue?
- ⁴ Sharp arrows of the warrior, With coals of the broom tree!
- ⁵ Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
- ⁶ My soul has dwelt too long With one who hates peace.
- ⁷ I am for peace; But when I speak, they are for war.

Psalm 121 A Song of Ascents.

- ¹ I will lift up my eyes to the hills— From whence comes my help?
- ² My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.
- ⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade at your right hand.
- ⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.
- ⁸ The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.

Psalm 122 A Song of Ascents. Of David.

- ¹ I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the Lord.”
- ² Our feet have been standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem!
- ³ Jerusalem is built As a city that is compact together,
- ⁴ Where the tribes go up, The tribes of the Lord, To the Testimony of Israel, To give thanks to the name of the Lord.
- ⁵ For thrones are set there for judgment, The thrones of the house of David.
- ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you.
- ⁷ Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces.”

⁸ For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, "Peace *be* within you."
⁹ Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good.

Psalm 123 A Song of Ascents.

¹ Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens.
² Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes *look* to the Lord our God, Until He has mercy on us.
³ Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us! For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
⁴ Our soul is exceedingly filled With the scorn of those who are at ease, With the contempt of the proud.

Psalm 124 A Song of Ascents. Of David.

¹ "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side," Let Israel now say—
² "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, When men rose up against us,
³ Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their wrath was kindled against us;
⁴ Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, The stream would have gone over our soul;
⁵ Then the swollen waters Would have gone over our soul."
⁶ Blessed *be* the Lord, Who has not given us *as* prey to their teeth.
⁷ Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the ~~f~~fowlers; The snare is broken, and we have escaped.
⁸ Our help *is* in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 125 A Song of Ascents.

¹ Those who trust in the Lord *Are* like Mount Zion, *Which* cannot be moved, *but* abides forever.
² As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people From this time forth and forever.
³ For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest On the land allotted to the righteous, Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.
⁴ Do good, O Lord, to *those who are* good, And to *those who are* upright in their hearts.
⁵ As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, The Lord shall lead them away With the workers of iniquity. Peace *be* upon Israel!

Psalm 126 A Song of Ascents.

¹ When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream.
² Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."
³ The Lord has done great things for us, *And* we are glad.
⁴ Bring back our captivity, O Lord, As the streams in the South.
⁵ Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy.
⁶ He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves *with him*.

Psalm 127 A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.

¹ Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.
² *It is* vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; *For* so He gives His beloved sleep.
³ Behold, children *are* a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.
⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So *are* the children of one's youth.
⁵ Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128 A Song of Ascents.

¹ Blessed *is* every one who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways.
² When you eat the labor of your hands, You *shall be* happy, and *it shall be* well with you.
³ Your wife *shall be* like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table.
⁴ Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord.
⁵ The Lord bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life.
⁶ Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace *be* upon Israel!

Psalm 129 A Song of Ascents.

¹ "Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth," Let Israel now say—
² "Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth; Yet they have not prevailed against me.
³ The plowers plowed on my back; They made their furrows long."
⁴ The Lord *is* righteous; He has cut in pieces the cords of the wicked.
⁵ Let all those who hate Zion Be put to shame and turned back.
⁶ Let them be as the grass *on* the housetops, Which withers before it grows up,
⁷ With which the reaper does not fill his hand, Nor he who binds sheaves, his arms.
⁸ Neither let those who pass by them say, "The blessing of the Lord *be* upon you; We bless you in the name of the Lord!"

Psalm 130 A Song of Ascents.

¹ Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord;
² Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications.
³ If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
⁴ But *there is* forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.
⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope.
⁶ My soul *waits* for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning— *Yes, more than* those who watch for the morning.
⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord *there is* mercy, And with Him *is* abundant redemption.
⁸ And He shall redeem Israel From all his iniquities.

Psalm 131 A Song of Ascents. Of David.

¹ Lord, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me.
² Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; Like a weaned child *is* my soul within me.
³ O Israel, hope in the Lord From this time forth and forever.

Psalm 132 A Song of Ascents.

¹ Lord, remember David *And* all his afflictions;
² How he swore to the Lord, *And* vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:
³ "Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, Or go up to the comfort of my bed;
⁴ I will not give sleep to my eyes *Or* slumber to my eyelids,
⁵ Until I find a place for the Lord, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."
⁶ Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah; We found it in the fields of ^fthe woods.
⁷ Let us go into His tabernacle; Let us worship at His footstool.
⁸ Arise, O Lord, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength.
⁹ Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, And let Your saints shout for joy.
¹⁰ For Your servant David's sake, Do not turn away the face of Your Anointed.
¹¹ The Lord has sworn *in* truth to David; He will not turn from it: "I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.

¹² If your sons will keep My covenant And My testimony which I shall teach them, Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore.”

¹³ For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired *it* for His dwelling place:

¹⁴ “This *is* My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.

¹⁵ I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread.

¹⁶ I will also clothe her priests with salvation, And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

¹⁷ There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.

¹⁸ His enemies I will clothe with shame, But upon Himself His crown shall flourish.”

Psalm 133 A Song of Ascents. Of David.

¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity!

² *It is* like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.

³ *It is* like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing— Life forevermore.

Psalm 134 A Song of Ascents.

¹ Behold, bless the Lord, All *you* servants of the Lord, Who by night stand in the house of the Lord!

² Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary, And bless the Lord.

³ The Lord who made heaven and earth Bless you from Zion!

TOUR
of the Holy Land