

Holy Land Trip of 2011

Israel & Jordan

By Rev. John Hoole

Introduction

The term Holy Land encompasses the places in the Middle East that are mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. It includes:

- **Israel** (which hold most of the sites sacred to Jews and Christians)
- **Western Jordan** (where Moses glimpsed the Promised Land and Christ was baptized).
- The **Sinai Peninsula** in Egypt (where Moses and the Israelites wandered for 40 years)
- **Southern Syria** (where Elijah took refuge and the apostle Paul was converted)

Central to the Holy Land is Israel. The nation of Israel is on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. It is a parliamentary democracy and the world's only **Jewish state**, and it occupies just a tiny proportion of the globe. It is the size of New Jersey and is the land described by God in Exodus 3:8 as "flowing with **milk and honey**"

If you were to look down on Israel from space, you come to realize just how small it is. Israel stretches only 263 miles from north to south, and its width ranges from 71 miles at its widest point to only 9 miles at its narrowest point. To the northeast, Israel faces a 47-mile border with Syria. To the north and northwest, a 49-mile border with Lebanon. To the east, Israel has a 247-mile border with Jordan. And to the southwest, Israel has a 130 miles border with Egypt.



The name "Israel" is rooted in the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, where Jacob is renamed Israel after a wrestling match with an angel of the Lord. *"Israel" means "He who wrestled (or struggled) with God."*

Israel is divided into three main regions lengthwise: the coastal plain, the mountain region, and the Jordan Valley Rift.

Coastal plain

The country's western strip, stretching from Rosh Ha-Nikra in the north to the Sinai Peninsula in the south. The plain is 3-4 miles wide in the north, expanding as it moves southward to about 33 miles.

The soil in the coastal plain is fertile; there are several water sources, and the region includes the country's major transportation arteries. The coastal plain is densely populated with most of Israel's major cities, including Tel Aviv and Haifa.

The plain is divided from north to south into the Galilee Plain, the Acre Plain, the Carmel Plain, the Sharon Plain, the Mediterranean Coastal Plain, and the Southern Coastal Plain. East of the coastal plain are the lowlands (called the Shephelah) – moderate hills that create a transitional region between the coast and the mountains.

Mountain region

The mountainous region stretches from Lebanon in the north to Eilat Bay in the south, between the coastal plain and the Jordan Valley Rift.

Most of the less densely populated mountainous region is stone or rocky ground. The climate in the northern mountainous regions is Mediterranean and rainy, while the southern sections are a desert. The key stretches of the mountainous region are the Galilee in the north, the Carmel, the hills of Samaria, the Judean hills, and the Negev highlands.

The contiguity of the mountainous region is interrupted at two points by major valleys – the Yizre'el (Jezre'el) Valley separating the Galilee mountains from the hills of Samaria, and the Be'er Sheva-Arad Rift separating the Judean hills from the Negev highlands. The eastern slopes of the Samaritan hills and Judean hills are the Samaritan and Judean deserts.

Jordan Valley Rift

The rift extends the entire length of Israel from the northern town of Metula to the Red Sea in the south.

The rift was caused by seismic activity, and is part of the Afro-Syrian rift which extends from the Syrian-Turkish border to the Zambezi River in Africa. Israel's largest river, the Jordan, flows through the Jordan Valley and includes Israel's two lakes: the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), the largest body of fresh water in Israel, and the salt water Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth. The Jordan Valley is divided from north to south into the Hula Valley, the Kinneret Valley, the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea Valley and the Arava.

Golan Heights

The hilly Golan region is east of the Jordan River. The Israeli Golan Heights are the end of a large basalt plain, mostly located in Syria. North of the Golan Heights is Mt. Hermon, Israel's highest peak at 2,224 meters above sea level.

Facts And Figures

- **Population:** 7,233,700
- **Area:** 8,522 sq. mi., about the size of New Jersey
- **Capital:** Jerusalem
- **Official Languages:** Hebrew, Arabic
- **Prime Minister:** Benjamin Netanyahu
- **People:** Jews (76.4%), Muslims (16.1%), Christians (3.4%) Druze (2.0%)
- **Currency:** New Israeli Shekel (NIS)
- **Type of economy:** Free market capitalist, Western-style economy
- **Health of economy:** has remained relatively healthy despite the global slowdown, but the long-term outlook is heavily dependent on developments in the conflict with the Palestinians and other Arab neighbors.
- **Main exports:** cut diamonds, chemicals, agricultural products
- **People (Religion):** Jews (76.4%), Muslims (16.1%), Christians (3.4%) Druze (2.0%) Undeclared (2,1%)
- **Type of government:** parliamentary democracy

Jerusalem (Yerushalayim in Hebrew and al-Quds in Arabic) has nearly 700,000 inhabitants (2010 est.). Tel Aviv has a population of 380,000 and is the business and cultural center of Israel. Haifa (Hefa) is the largest city in the north with some 265,000 inhabitants. Of the total population, 91 percent are defined as urban, that is resident in localities with more than 2,000 inhabitants. Of the Jewish population, 40 percent were born abroad, mostly European, Russian or



American-born (1.2 million citizens), and 60 percent (2.8 million citizens) were Israeli-born Jews. The 24 percent of non-Jewish Israeli citizens are mostly of Arab origin.

There are 2 main Jewish communities, the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. The former are the Jews from Eastern, Central, and Northern Europe, while the latter originate from the Balkan countries, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Hebrew is the official language and Arabic is officially used for the Arab minority. English is the most commonly used foreign language. Ultra-orthodox Jews, who refuse to converse in the holy language of Hebrew, and elder Eastern European immigrants speak Yiddish. Due to the diversity of the immigrant population, most Israelis are multilingual.

After the Diaspora (the dispersion of Jews from their homeland, beginning AD 70) for nearly 2000 years, *aliyas* or waves of **immigration** started bringing Jews to what had once been Israel in the last decades of the 19th century, driven by the idea of establishing a Jewish national homestead in their biblical land. From the early 1920s, the Jewish population in Palestine increased more than sevenfold, from only 80,000 to 600,000 in 1948, when the State of Israel was declared. In the first 20 years of the state's existence, between 1948 and 1972, the country's population quadrupled.

Interesting Facts about Israel

Let me share with you some facts about Israel today. From dozens of interesting things about Israel, I have chosen 15 to share with you.

1. Israel's \$100 Billion economy is larger than all of its immediate neighbors combined.
2. Israel has the highest ratio of university degrees to the population in the world.
3. According to industry officials, Israel designed the airline industry's most impenetrable flight security. U.S. officials now look to Israel for advice on how to handle **airborne** security threats.
4. More than 85% of Israel's solid waste is treated in an environmentally sound manner.
5. With more than 3,000 high-tech companies and start-ups, Israel has the highest concentration of high-tech companies in the world – apart from Silicon Valley in California.
6. Israel leads the world in the number of scientists and engineers per capita than any other country – with 145 per 10,000, compared to 85 in the U.S, over 70 in Japan and less than 60 in Germany.
7. The cell phone was developed in Israel by Motorola, which has its largest development center in Israel.
8. Voice mail technology was developed in Israel.
9. Both Microsoft and Cisco built their only Research and Development center outside the US in Israel.
10. A team of Israeli and US researchers has designed a watermelon picking robot endowed with artificial vision to do the job of harvesting.
11. Israel's Given Imaging developed the first ingestible video camera, so small it fits inside a pill. Over 65,000 patients have swallowed the M2A capsule, which allows doctors to take pictures and diagnose the inside of the colon for cancer and other digestive disorders.

12. Israel was the first nation in the world to adopt the Kimberly process, an international standard that certifies diamonds as “conflict free.”
13. The first PC antivirus software was developed in Israel in 1979.
14. Israeli scientists are developing a nose drop that will provide a five-year flu vaccine.
15. Israel has the highest percentage in the world of home computers per capita.

Day 3 - Sunday, March 20

Mount of Olives



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'39"N, 35°14'37"E

The Mount of Olives rises to the east of Jerusalem, across the Kidron Valley from the Temple Mount. Its name came from the olive trees that once grew on its hillside from ancient times. According to Jewish tradition, the Messiah will appear here and bring the dead back to life. Therefore, the hillside became the most holiest cemetery, and the hillside is covered by thousands of grave stones. From the Mount, you will get a stunning view of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Kidron Valley, and the Temple Mount.

The Mount of Olives is actually a short mountain range, about two miles long from north to south. There are four peaks, with Mount Scopus as the most northerly and the Hill of Corruptions (2 Kings 23:13-14) at the south end.



King David fled over the Mount of Olives to escape from Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15:30). After King Solomon became corrupt, he built pagan "high places" there (1 Kings 11:7). Later, King Josiah destroyed Solomon's idolatrous altars. Ezekiel had his vision of The Lord and the flying cherubim above it (Ezekiel 11:22-23). The people gathered olive branches there for the first Feast of Tabernacles after their return from The Babylonian Exile (Nehemiah 8:15).

Jesus regularly went up onto the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39). He often traveled over it on His way to Bethany to visit His friend Lazarus. His famous Olivet prophecy is named after it (Matthew 24:1-51). The Triumphal Entry of Jesus riding on a Donkey and her colt into Jerusalem took place over and down the Mount of Olives (Luke 19:28-44). Jesus prayed with His disciples there just before His arrest That Fateful Night (Luke 22:39-46). Jesus was arrested there, during which Peter struck the servant of the high priest with a sword and cut off his ear (Luke 22:49-51). Jesus appeared to the disciples on the Mount of Olives after His Resurrection, and He ascended into heaven from there (Acts 1:1-12).

According to Acts 1, Jesus left the earth, returning to His Father, from the Mount of Olives. When He returns to earth, we are told that He will return to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-4), resulting in an earthquake with half the mountain moving north and half to the south.

Dominus Flevit (Day 3)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'40.09"N, 35°14'29.48"E

The name of this place means, "***The Lord Wept.***"

On the descent from the Mount of Olives towards Jerusalem stands a Franciscan church of unique architectural form; its dome is shaped like a tear.

As Jesus made his way from Bethany to Jerusalem in what some today call the "Triumphal Entrance" of Jesus, we are told that as He descended from the Mount of Olives, He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).



While the Dominus Flevit church was being built, workers unearthed the remains of a church, built in Byzantine style, from the seventh century A.D. And next to the church a large ancient cemetery was uncovered. Some of the tombs were from the Second Temple period. Impressive carved sarcophagi (stone coffins), ossuaries (stone boxes used to store human bones) and pottery were found. The front of the building faces directly the Temple Mount across the Kidron Valley.

Garden of Gethsemane (Day 3)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'46.00"N, 35°14'23.48"E

Gethsemane comes from the Hebrew "**Gat Shemanim.**" In Aramaic, it is "**Gath-Smané.**" It literally means, "Oil Press" and always has Olive oil in mind. Although we call it a garden, it really was an olive orchard, as it is to this day. Some of the olive trees you will see here are so old, they may have been mere saplings when Christ was here. If not, some will date back to within a few hundred years of Christ.



Previous tour - a time of prayer at Gethsemane

A few days after the above Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, following their observance of the Last Supper, Christ and His 11 disciples walk to the Gethsemane, located at the base of the Mount of Olives. Jesus wants to pray.

It was in this garden that the greatest battle by a single person was ever fought. We are told that before He begins to pray, He was "*deeply distressed*" (Matthew 26:37). Mark records that He was "*troubled and deeply distressed*" (Mark 14:33). Luke records that He was in agony and his sweat became like drops of blood (Lk. 22:44). The writer of Hebrews refers to his "*loud cries and tears.*" But, in the end He accepted the Father's will. "*Not as I will, but as You will.*" (Matthew 26:39).

Caiaphas' House (Day 3)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'14.59"N, 35°13'55.66"E

After Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss at the Garden of Gethsemane, the Scriptures tell us He is taken to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest (Matthew 26:57). At this house you will see stone steps leading up the slope of Mount Zion which date to the first century. You will actually walk on steps that most likely Jesus walked up as He was taken from the Garden of Gethsemane to the house of Caiaphas. Beneath the house that



Steps dated to the 1st century
Caiaphas' House

currently sits on this place you will descend steps into a dungeon where Jesus quite possibly spent the night before His crucifixion. But back then, there were no steps, only a hole in the top of the stone dungeon large enough for one person to be lowered.

Next to the house is a church called the Gallicantu, which means "the crowing of the cock." During the interrogation of Christ inside the house of Caiaphas, in the courtyard is where Peter denied Christ three times.

Upper Room (Day 3)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'17.60"N, 35°13'45.00"E

It is a short walk from the house of Caiaphas to the place of the Upper Room - also on Mt. Zion. It is here that Christ and His disciples observed the Last Supper. It is from here that Judas goes to make a deal with the religious leaders to betray Christ. It is here that Jesus institutes one of the ordinances of the Church.

We are told in Mark 14:26 that Jesus and the disciples sing a song before leaving this room to go to the Garden of Gethsemane.

In Latin, the place is called, the **Coenaculum**. That word begins with "**Coena**," which means "Dinner." In 1st century Jerusalem, in the upper Jerusalem homes – homes of the wealthy, the dining rooms were generally on the upper floor.

It is quite probable that this Upper Room is the same as that mentioned in Acts 1 & 2 on the Day of Pentecost, which takes place less than 8 weeks following the Last Supper.

Yad Vashem (Day 3)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'27"N, 35°10'32"E

Yad Vashem honors the victims and heroes of the Holocaust. It is also a research center and houses the central archives for research into the Holocaust. Its memorial section contains a special Hall of remembrance called in Hebrew, "Phel Yizkor," a memorial to the destroyed communities, the Children's Memorial, a permanent exhibit presenting the events of the Holocaust, and authentic objects from the ghettos and concentration camps.

The name, Yad Vashem, is taken from Isaiah 56:5, which reads: *"Unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name [Yad = place, vaShem = a name] better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."*

Bethlehem (Day 3)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°42'20.00"N, 35°12'21.84"E

The name, Bethlehem, means, **"House of Bread."**

To finish Day 3, we will travel about 5 miles south of Jerusalem to Bethlehem, conditions permitting. Bethlehem is the place of our Lord's birth. In its vicinity are situated the shepherds' fields where an angel appeared and announced the birth of our Savior.

It is also the hometown of David, where, as a young lad, he tended the sheep of his father. At the request of his father, David walks from here, 15 miles directly west, to the Valley of Elah, where he fights and kills the Philistine giant, Goliath (1 Samuel 17).



Bethlehem - Shepherd's Field

It was in Bethlehem that Samuel anointed David to be King of Israel (1 Sam. 16:1-13). According to the prophet Micah, one day God would raise up a ruler to lead the people of Israel from Bethlehem.

The tomb of Rachel, wife of Jacob, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, and one of the four matriarchs of Israel, is located just outside Bethlehem. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin (Genesis 35:16-20).

The story of Ruth the Moabite and the great-grandmother of King David, unfold in the fields around the town.



Bethlehem - Church of the Nativity

Bethlehem is located on the mountain road which, from ancient times, linked the main hilltop cities of Samaria, Shechem, Bethel, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron on a north-south route.

The **Church of the Nativity** was built above the **Grotto of the Nativity** to commemorate the place of Jesus' birth. In the eastern side of the grotto is a circular recess, containing a large silver star which

designates the spot, as tradition has it, Jesus was born. The star has fourteen points and is inscribed with a Latin inscription which translates: **Here Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary.**

During the seventh century, when the Persians invaded the Holy Land, they destroyed all Christian churches they found except for the Church of the Nativity. According to one legend, when the Persians saw the mosaics depicting the wise men from the east coming to pay homage to Jesus (Matthew 2:9-11), they were astonished by the sight of the Persian sages. Out of respect for them, they left the church intact.

Day 4 - Monday, March 21

Western Wall (Day 4)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'36.23"N, 35°14'01.64"E

The Western Wall is one of the most significant holy places for the Orthodox Jews. It symbolizes the return of the people of Israel to the Land of Promise. It is also the wall that was the closest to the Holy of Holies within the Temple.

Once called the "Wailing Wall," the Western Wall of the Temple Mount is referred to in Hebrew as the "KOTEL", a Hebrew word that simply means, "Wall." Since 1967, the plaza



Western Wall Plaza

at the Western Wall has been open to all people, as a place of prayer and study. The Western Wall is one of the four retaining walls surrounding the Temple Mount. When the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, much of the Western Wall remained standing.

For the next 1,900 years, even during the most dangerous of times, some Jews would risk their lives and property to make their way to the Wall. Throughout the millennia, the Wall remained a place where Jews would come to pour their hearts out to God.

Its full length is 488 meters – 1601 feet. The Wall can be divided into 4 sections:

1. Southern Wall area – approximately 80 meters – 262 feet.
2. The Kotel Plaza – approximately 70 meters – 230 feet. That's where people come to pray. The Google Earth coordinates above are for the Kotel plaza.
3. The Western Wall Tunnel – 320 meters – 1,050 feet. Originally explored by two British archaeologists:
 - Charles Wilson in 1864
 - Charles Warren in 1867-1870
4. An aqueduct. This aqueduct was found near the northern part of the Wall, and was used during the time of the Maccabbees – about 150 BC.

Western Wall Tunnels (Day 4)

Off the side of the Kotel Plaza is the entrance to the tunnels along the Western Wall. The current ground level of the Plaza is not at the level it was in the first century. The original ground level is about 30 to 40 feet below. This is obvious if you are standing in the plaza and take a look at Wilson's Arch at the northeast corner of the plaza. Only the top 8 or 10 feet of the original passageway is visible.

The tunnels of the Western Wall will take us down to the original street level at many places in our tour. Most all of the tunnels are beneath the Arab Quarter of the old city.



Western all Tunnel

As mentioned above, the Western Wall is that which was closest to the Holy of Holies within the Temple. While touring the Western Wall tunnels, you will most likely see a group of Jewish ladies praying and reading the Torah. That is place along the Western Wall that the Jews believe is actually the closest to where the Holy of Holies was located.

Tunnels have been excavated all along most of the length of the wall, with care taken to ensure structural support for the buildings above. They have allowed archaeologists to see what actually existed in the first century. They have also discovered some of the changes that have occurred over the 2000 years since. One thing they have uncovered is the Herodian street that ran the full length of the Western Wall and on down beside the City of David

When you go into the tunnel, you will see a number of large rooms and vaults. Some require navigating a number of steps or stair cases as you proceed through the maze of tunnels. Sometimes we found ourselves in long hallways. Other times found us in vaulted ceiling rooms. At one place our guide mentioned we are standing beside one of the entrances into the Temple Mount. Quite likely at some point in His life, Christ probably walked on those stones. And while that place is part of the tunnels, in the first century, it would have been above ground. This reminded me of the words of the Psalmist: ***"Our feet stood poised at your gates O Jerusalem!" (Psalms 122:2)***

Southern Wall (Day 4)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'34"N, 35°14'11"E

The excavations of the Southern side of the Temple Mount was begun by Benjamin Mazar in 1968 and were the largest earth-moving archaeological projects in Israel. Work continued until 1978 but has since resumed in the 1990s under the direction of Ronny Reich. These excavations are the most important for understanding the Temple Mount because of the impossibility of excavating on the mount itself. Some of the steps are authentic, leading from the City of David into the Temple Mount.



Southwest corner of the Temple Mount - Gray dome is Al Aqsa Mosque

The southern steps are more than 200 feet wide, with alternating short and long steps. Some suggest that this may have been the place where pilgrims sang the fifteen Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120-134) as they went up. This may have been where the city's rabbis and elders met and made decisions.

The entrance and exit, now blocked, are called the Huldah Gates. Inside the gates, there were a flight of stairs leading to the Temple court. There are two sets of gates, one a double arch (western) and a triple arch (eastern). The double gate is directly beneath where the Al Aqsa Mosque is located above on the Mount. In the first century, behind the triple Huldah Gate, was the King Solomon stables.

Here is a side note. In the 1970's Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon, was visiting the steps near the southern wall. When he realized that Jesus had walked here, he said he was more excited to stand here than on the moon

Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Day 4)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'42.49"N, 35°13'47.03"E

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, also called the Church of the Resurrection by Eastern Orthodox Christians, is within the current walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. However, it was outside the walls of the city during the first century. The importance of that is the Jews never buried a person within the city. It was, however, close to one of the city gates.

The church stands on the site that is believed to encompass both Golgotha and Calvary, where Jesus was crucified and where his tomb (sepulcher) was located. A



Church of the Holy Sepulcher

chapel marks the spot where pilgrims recall that Jesus was disrobed (John 19:23); a nearby altar gives pilgrims a place to remember the horror of where He was nailed to the cross. An ornate shrine stands above the rock on which many believe Jesus was crucified [Matt. 27:50-51]. The site was selected based on memories of the site as a place of

execution, and on the existence of a garden, tombs and fragments of wood planks.

After Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity, he published the "Edict of Toleration" allowing the practice of the Christian faith in the Roman Empire. He and his mother, Helena, erected the first church on this site in the fourth century. It was destroyed by the Muslims in the eleventh century, but was rebuilt in the same century.

In the center of the complex rests the Holy Sepulcher with a large rotunda above it. The building is share by many Christian denominations, including Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Syrians and Copts. And the Abyssinians occupy a portion of the roof.

Roman Cardo (Day 4)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'34.20"N, 35°13'50.96"E

As you know, the Temple was completely destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The prophecy of Jesus, in [Matthew 24:2](#), stating that, "*not one stone shall be left upon another*," was so completely fulfilled that they do not know exactly where the Temple stood. The Roman armies, under the direction of Titus, so completely destroyed all remains of anything on the Temple Mount in the 1st century.

Then again, there was the Bar Kokhba rebellion that occurred A.D. 132 – 135, when over 500,000 Jews lost their lives to the Romans. After this the Romans wanted to so decimate any remnant of Jews in Israel, they issued a decree that no Jews were allowed at all in the city of Jerusalem. In fact, the Romans renamed the city to Aelia Capitolina, and began to rebuild the city as a Roman city over the ruins of old Jerusalem in the second century.



Ancient Roman Cardo

When the Romans built cities, many – maybe most – had two main streets through them. The north-south street was called **Cardo Maximus**. The main street going from west to east was called **Decumanus Maximus**. In Jerusalem, this street would have started at the Damascus Gate in the northern wall of the city.

The word "Cardo" means *heart*. This street was considered to make its way through the heart of the city. We will visit the excavations of the Roman Cardo in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem. The ancient Cardo would have been lined by many shops. Today you will see many more modern shops, and maybe make some purchases.

After the Six-day War in 1967, they began looking for the Cardo in the Jewish section, and they found it some 19 feet (6 meters) below current street levels. A

portion of it was excavated in the early 1970's. They have uncovered about 200 yards of the old Cardo, but they know there is much more buried under the buildings of the current city.

Pool of Bethesda (Day 4)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'54.43"N, 35°14'12.04"E

The word, **Bethesda**, comes from the Aramaic, **Beth hesda**, and means "*house of mercy*" or "*house of grace*." In Hebrew, it is **Beth Chesda**. In John 5, we read of the occasion where Jesus healed a man who had an infirmity for 38 years. In verse 2, we are told that the pool is near the Sheep Gate, just north of the Temple Mount, and has five porches.

Until the 19th century, there was no evidence outside the Gospel of John for the existence of the Pool of Bethesda. Skeptical scholars said that the Gospel of John must have been written later, probably by someone who did not have first-hand knowledge of the city of Jerusalem, and that the pool had a metaphorical or symbolic, rather than actual, significance. Then in the nineteenth century, archaeologists discovered the remains of a pool exactly matching the description in John's Gospel. Yet again, archaeology confirms that the Bible talks about real people and real places. Archaeologists have indeed uncovered the five porches, one of them separating the two compartments of the pool, so there is no question that this is the ancient Pool of Bethesda.

These pools supplied water to the temple during the times of the first and second temple (until Herod). There are references in the Old Testament to the "upper pool", which may have been the name of the northern pool.



Pool of Bethesda

Nearby is the Church of St. Anne, which is built to commemorate Anne, the mother of the virgin Mary, who is believed to have been born near here.

City of David (Day 4)



Google-Earth coordinates:

31°46'29"N to 31°46'12"N (north to south)

35°14'05"E to 35°14'10"E (west to east)

The city of Jerusalem is mentioned in the Bible much earlier than David's era. It is recorded in connection with Melchizedek, King of Salem (a previous name of the city), who blessed Abraham, assuring him of victory over his adversaries (Genesis 14:18-20).

At the time of David, the city was called Jebus, after the Jebusites. King David left Hebron to conquer this small hilltop city and he defeated the Jebusites (2 Samuel 5:5-9; 1 Chronicles 11:4-8). David brought to Jerusalem the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6) and he established Jerusalem as the capital and worship center of the God of Israel. Later he built an altar on what became the Temple Mount, where his son Solomon built the First Temple.

The City of David lies just south of the Temple Mount, and was a hill at the junction of the Tyropoeon and Kidron Valleys, down to the Valley of Hinnom to the south. The City of David is quite narrow, only about 100 meters in width, and lies above the steep embankment down to the Kidron Valley.

In this area archaeologists have uncovered interesting artifacts from the time of the City of David and the Kings of Judah, as well as later periods. Thick walls and outer battlements encircled the city and the residential areas they contained. Some of the fortifications of the walled city have been uncovered.

Day 5 - Tuesday, March 22

Model City (Day 5)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'23.00"N, 35°12'12.71"E

Artisans have constructed a 1:50 scale model representing Jerusalem during the Second Temple period. It includes all the walls and fortifications, the public buildings, palaces, markets & homes. The "jewel in the crown" is the



Jerusalem - Model of the city at the time of Jesus (2nd Temple Period)

model of the Second Temple, rebuilt by Herod the Great and destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70. The model was constructed as much as possible from the original materials used at the time: marble, stone, wood, copper and iron. The topography is an exact copy of Jerusalem during the time of Christ.

The model, measuring 2,000 square meters (21,520 square feet) was commissioned in 1966 by Hans Kroch, the owner of the Holyland Hotel, in memory of his son, Yaakov, an IDF soldier who was killed in the Israeli War of Independence in 1948. The model was designed by Israeli historian and geographer Michael Avi Yonah based on the writings of Flavius Josephus and other historical sources.

The setting of the model allows visitors to walk around the city and in some places look down on the city from a higher platform.

Garden Tomb (Day 5)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°47'02.00"N, 35°13'48.39"E

The Garden Tomb is located outside the Old City walls, north of the Damascus Gate.



Garden Tomb

With the hustle and bustle of the city all around, inside the Gardens is tranquil and peaceful. Next to the Garden is a barren knoll which, according to some, fits the description of Golgotha. In 1885, British General Charles Gordon was visiting this place and saw what looked to him like a knoll in the shape of a skull. It was outside the Old City, but still close to the city, which was a requirement according to John 19:20. It also fits John's description: *"Now there was a garden in the place..."* (John 19:41). It is

close to Mount Moriah where Abraham offered Isaac. And nearby, in the garden was a tomb carved out of solid rock, and a round stone can be used to block the tomb's entrance.

Even if this is not the actual site where Jesus died and rose again, it is an inspiring facsimile of the one described in the Bible.

In 1893 the Garden Tomb Association was founded and a year later the Tomb and Garden were purchased from their German owners. It is a beautiful place and we will have a time of worship and observing the Lord Supper.

Herodium (Day 5)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°39'56.43"N, 35°14'26.65"E

The Herodium is located south of Jerusalem and 3 to 4 miles southeast of Bethlehem. It is a conical hill constructed over a preexisting hill. It was built by King Herod the Great in 24 B.C. as both a fortress and a personal palace. Its construction was layer upon layer until it had sufficient height (400 feet) to dominate the surrounding landscape.



Herodium - Burial Place of Herod the Great

The 2009-2010 excavations uncovered near the tomb base a small 450-seat capacity theater with an elaborately decorated royal theater box. Hebrew University Professor Ehud Netzer reported on May 8, 2007 that he had discovered the tomb of Herod, above tunnels and water pools at a flattened site halfway up the hill to Herodium. Professor Netzer died on October 27, 2010, from a fall at Herodium, where he had been digging for 38 years. The findings include coffins of Herod's family, a theater with a VIP room, and two coffins containing the remains of most likely Herod's wife and the wife of Archelaus, Herod's son.

Professor Ehud Netzer recently wrote a lengthy article which was just published posthumously in the January/February 2011 edition of the Biblical Archaeology Review, where he goes through the details of this palatial edifice, including not only the palace/fortress at the top, but also the monumental stairway, the lower palace, terrace, bathhouse, pool complex and the lower Herodium.

Day 6 - Wednesday, March 23

Caesarea Maritima (Day 6)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°29'54.58"N, 34°53'26.46"E

Today we head to the Mediterranean Sea. The trip will take us near Tel Aviv, then north along the Plains of Sharon.

Sometimes it is referred to as Caesarea Maritima to distinguish it from Caesarea Philippi, and means Caesarea by the Sea. Caesarea Maritima was one of the more



Caesarea Maritima

important cities during the time of Christ, in a political sense. Although the Phoenicians had a small port settlement there, called Stratos Tower, it was King Herod the Great that put it on the map. Herod the Great ruled the Land of Israel from 37 to 4 B.C.. During that time, approximately 10 B.C., he constructed a large port city to honor Roman Caesar Augustus. Once built, this city became the center of Roman rule in the Judean area. It had a harbor as large as that at Athens. You can only see part of it today.

Caesarea boasted a theater that could hold 4,000 people. Caesarea had a hippodrome seating 38,000. When I first visited Caesarea, most of the hippodrome was under sand. They have done a great deal of archaeological digging in these ruins, and, among other ruins, the hippodrome is greatly uncovered, and it measures 1,500 feet in length and 250 feet wide.



Aqueduct from Carmel region

Despite its beauty as a Roman City, it lacked one essential element

needed by all settlements. There were neither springs nor rivers situated close to the Caesarea. To provide fresh water, a 9-mile aqueduct was constructed, bringing water from the region of Mount Carmel. Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, lived in the governor's palace here. The first physical evidence relating to Pilate was discovered in 1961, when a block of black limestone was found in the Roman theatre at Caesarea Maritima,

The book of Acts refers often to this city. In Acts 10, we read of a man named Cornelius, who was the Roman centurion in this city. He is referred to in Acts 10:2 as being a "God-fearing man." That is a term often used of Gentiles who had become proselyte of the Jewish faith. In Act 10:3, we are told Cornelius is visited by an angel.

Later in the book of Acts, Philip the evangelist is still residing here with his four daughters (Acts 21:8). This is where Paul landed when returning from his 2nd & 3rd missionary journeys (Acts 18:22). Herod Agrippa I died in Caesarea after "being eaten by worms" as God's judgment on him for taking praise due only to the Lord (Acts 12:19-23).

Paul was held as a prisoner here for two years while awaiting trial (Acts 23:23-30). Paul defends himself 3 times in Caesarea. First before Felix, then Ananias, the High Priest, and last before Festus – the governor who succeeded Felix. Paul eventually used his Roman citizenship to appeal to Caesar (Acts 23 – 26). Paul spoke before King Agrippa II in Caesarea, who responds: "*You almost persuade me to become a Christian.*" (Acts 26:26)

Carmel (Day 6)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°49'02.23"N, 34°58'41.91"E

Mount Carmel juts out into the Mediterranean Sea, making it a stronghold against armies coming along the coastline. This mountain is 1742 feet high, and overlooks the modern city of Haifa today. Mt. Carmel is more than just a single peak, but is a 15-mile range from the coast towards Megiddo, and is the southern border for the Valley of Jezreel (also called Valley of Megiddo or Valley of Esdraelon).

The Scriptures depict Mount Carmel as a place of gardens. Solomon, speaks to his beloved, saying her head was like Mount Carmel (Song of Solomon 7:5). Mount Carmel is a long-time fruitful area (Isaiah 33:9, 35:2, Jeremiah 1:19; and Micah 7:14).

Mount Carmel is best known as the site of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal. This site was well chosen for God to display of His superiority over the pagan god. Jezebel was from Sidon, and Ahab was from Samaria, and this site is about half-way between the two. 1 Kings 18 tells of how Elijah prayed and fire came from heaven consuming the sacrifice and lapping up all the water which had been poured.

From Mount Carmel, you can look westward and see the blue Mediterranean Sea. When clouds form, they almost always come from that direction. This site is also near where Elijah sends his servant out 7 times to see if rain was approaching. He returns the last time to tell Elijah he sees a cloud the “size of a man's hand” (1 Kings 18:44).

Megiddo (Day 6)



Google-Earth coordinates: 33°35'07.00"N, 35°11'03.70"E

From Carmel, we travel east along the hills south of the Valley of Jezreel. Today, as it was then, this is a very fertile part of Israel. We arrive at the site of the ruins of the ancient city of Megiddo, now called Tel Megiddo..



Tel Megiddo

This is one of the most important archaeological mounds in Israel. The city of Megiddo sat strategically on the ancient trade route – the Via Maris, from Egypt to Syria and Mesopotamia. There were also major trade routes going east and west through the Jezreel Valley. From this position, the citizens of Megiddo control traffic, both trade and military. This advantage brought it much wealth and prestige.

The city of Megiddo stood at the south-western edge of the Valley of Jezreel. Megiddo is mentioned in an Egyptian document over 3,500 years old. It was one of the chariot cities of King Solomon and King Ahab. Megiddo is first mentioned in the Bible in Joshua, chapter 12. This entire chapter is a list of all 31 kings that Joshua defeated as Israel entered the promised land. In Joshua 12:21, one of those kings was the king of Megiddo.

When Joshua (Yehoshua) divided the land among the tribes, Megiddo was assigned to the tribe of Manasseh (Menasheh). But, even though the King of Megiddo was conquered, they did not take the city. Neither did the tribe of Manasseh drive the people of Megiddo out of the city. They were, however, able to make them pay taxes to Manasseh.

Megiddo was finally captured by the time of Shlomo HaMelech (Solomon the king). It was probably conquered during the time of King David. David was a warrior king,

while Solomon's reign was essentially a peaceful one. Solomon rebuilt the city and even had a palace there.

During the past 4,000 years, at least 34 bloody conflicts have been fought at Megiddo and the adjacent Valley of Jezreel. Egyptians, Canaanites, Midianites, Amalekites, Philistines, Hasmonaeans, Greeks, Romans, Muslims, Crusaders, Mamlukes, Mongols, French, Ottomans, British, Germans, Arabs and Israelis have all fought and died there.

Many of the leaders who fought here have recognizable names. Names like: Thutmose III, Jehu, Deborah, Barak, Sisera, Gideon, Saul and Jonathan, Joram, Jezebel, Antiochus, Ptolemy, Vespasian, Saladin, Napoleon and the British General Allenby.

This has been the site of many great battles, some of which are recorded in the Bible.

King Josiah. According to 2 Kings 23:29-30, it was on this field that Josiah, the last of the God-fearing kings of Judah, was slain when he went to war against Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt.

Ahaziah and Joram. It was there, too, according to 2 Kings 9, that Ahaziah, king of Judah, was slain as he, together with Joram, were fleeing from King Jehu.

Gideon. It was in this valley that Gideon and his little band alarmed and defeated the Midianites, who destroyed one another in the fight (Judges 7:18-23)

King Saul and Jonathan. Also, it was here that King Saul was defeated by the Philistines, where he and his 3 sons were slain.

Jezebel. It was in this valley that King Ahab and his wife Jezebel lived, in the city of Jezreel. And later, it was also the place of Jezebel's horrible death (2 Kings 9:30-37).

Deborah and Barak. It was on this great battlefield, according to Judges 5:19, that Deborah and Barak had their great victory over the Canaanites.

God is not done with the importance of the city of Megiddo and the valley it looks over. This city and the valley will yet serve to fulfill prophecy future. There is yet another battle – The Battle of **Armageddon** – that will include



Armageddon

this area. Even though the Bible has much to say about the Battle of Armageddon, the word “Armageddon” is found in the Bible only once. Revelation 16:16 (NIV) *Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.* This word – Armageddon – is made up of two other Hebrew words. Har... meaning “mountain.” Megiddo referring to a city we are discussing today. The city of Megiddo was built on a hill, so the hill was called the “hill of Megiddo”or Armageddon.

Arbell Cliffs (Day 6)

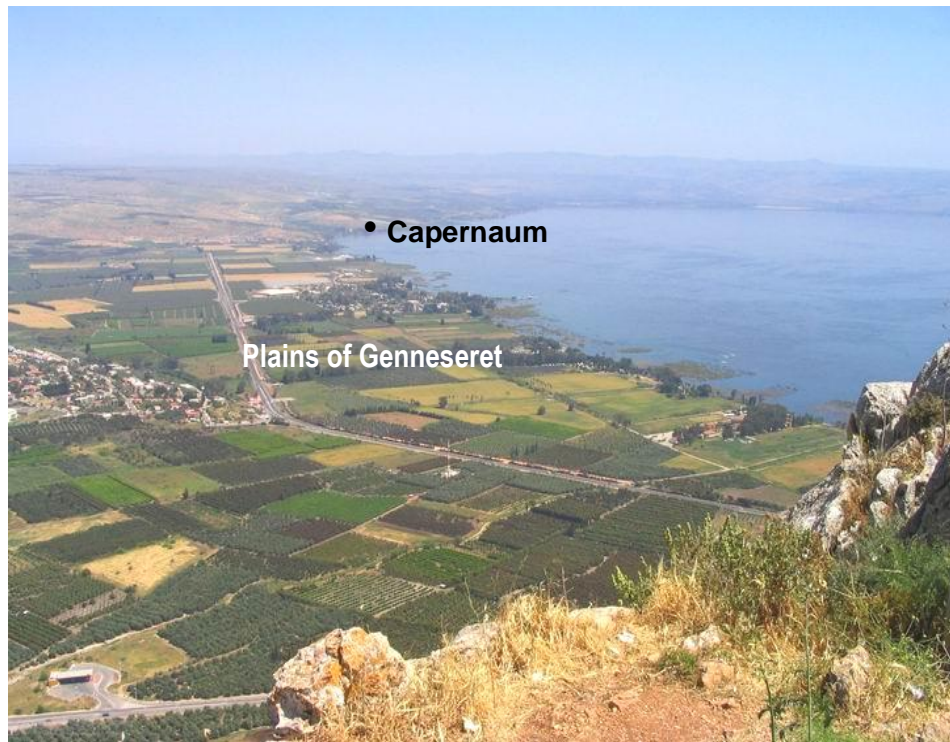


Google-Earth coordinates: 32°49'27.23"N, 35°29'59.38"E

The Arbel Cliffs are located on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and are situated on the southern side of the Plain of Ginnosar.

They rise to an elevation of 594 ft. [181 m.] above sea level and 1283 ft. [390 m.] above the level of the Sea of Galilee. The **Cliffs of Arbel** provide a panoramic view stretching from

the Golan Heights to the Jordan River valley. The snow-capped Mount Herman can be seen in the distance on clear days.



Taken from Arbel Cliffs. Our Galilee boat ride will be taken from Nof Ginosar.

The cliffs overlook the Sea of Galilee and are located 4 Kilometers north of Tiberias. They stand over Mary Magdalene's village, today a town called Migdal. A village, including a synagogue, were located to the west southwest of the cliffs.

During the Maccabean revolt the Syrian general Baccides attacked Jews who were hiding in the caves located on the north side of the cliffs (161 B.C.). The same thing happened when Herod attacked his opponents who were hiding in these caves (38 B.C.).

Also, from the cliffs you can see the place of our stay for the next three nights - Nof Ginosar.

Nof Ginosar (Day 6)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°50'40.23"N, 35°31'22.38"E

Nof Ginosar was founded in 1937. As is true of almost all kibbutzim, Nof Ginosar is named after an ancient name in the area. In Bible times, a small plain some 3 miles long and one mile wide was situated on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee. In Old Testament times, it went by the name Chinnereth. In New Testament times it went by the name Genneseret. The historian Josephus referred to this area as Gennesar, a shortened form of Genneseret. In the Hebrew Talmud, it is referred to as Ginesar.

You will remember the story of the disciples in the boat out on the Sea of Galilee when a storm broke out. Then they see Jesus walking on the water, thinking it was a spirit. Jesus speaks to them not to fear. And Peter says, *"If it is you, tell me to come to you on the water."* When they got back into the boat the storm ceased, and they made the rest of their voyage to Genneseret ([Matthew 14:34](#)).

Day 7 - Thursday, March 24

Boat Ride on Galilee (Day 7)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°49'38"N, 35°31'20"E

We will take a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, leaving the shore at Nof Ginosar. We will stop in the middle, have a time of reading the Bible, singing and a short faith lesson. Every time I have travel on the boat, each has been very special and uplifting. The ride will take about 45-50 minutes.

Jesus Boat (Day 7)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°50'38.23"N, 35°31'29.97"E

The summer and fall of 1985 was very harsh, and very little rain fell. It created a drought in Israel. Water was pumped from the sea of Galilee to irrigate the farmland surrounding the Sea of Galilee. The level of the sea took a nosedive creating vast expanses of mud flats.

Two brothers – members of Kibbutz Ginosar – were walking along the lake in late January, 1986. Moshe and Yuval Lufan were walking south towards Magdala, which is only 2 or 3 miles from Ginosar. As they walked, they discovered the faint oval outline of a boat in the muddy lake bed. They reported their find, and archaeologists quickly arrived on the scene.

Their biggest problem in preserving this water-logged boat, was how to get it out of the mud without destroying it. I won't go into all the details, but, once removed from the mud, the treatment of the boat consisted of impregnation with a special wax material for 9½ years in a pool. In 1995, the pool was drained and the boat revealed. The round building on the Ginosar property was constructed to house the museum for this boat.



Jesus Boat at Nof Ginosar

The boat is 26½ feet long, 7½ wide and 4 feet high. Carbon-14 dating process says this boat was used between 60BC and 70 AD. It is considered the largest class of vessels on this Sea during the time of Christ.

Studies have shown that if a vessel of this size was used for fishing, it would have four oarsmen and one helmsman. If the boat was used to transport people, Josephus says the larger boats on Galilee could hold 15 people. Why is that an important point. Several New Testament stories have Jesus and the 12 in a single boat, as was the case when Jesus came walking on the water.

Ever since the remains of this boat were found, people gave it the name, “The Jesus Boat.” Of course, there is no evidence that Jesus ever saw this boat, just as there is no evidence that he didn't. There is a fair chance, however, that it was operative during the time Jesus walked these shores.

In the museum building is a nice shop with a large array of souvenirs and other product.

Capernaum (Day 7)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°52'51.28"N, 35°34'29.58"E

Early in the ministry of Jesus, Matthew 4 and Luke 4 tell us that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert where He was tempted and tested by Satan for 40 days. This was immediately following his baptism by John at the Jordan River.

Both Matthew and Luke tell us that when Jesus returns from his testing, He goes to the Galilee region – specifically to Nazareth first. This is, after all, his hometown where Joseph and Mary lived. The Bible tells us Jesus went to the local synagogue, and was asked to read the scroll. Luke tells us that after reading from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus was rejected by his hometown.

Matthew 4:13 (NKJV) says

13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,

Luke 4:31 (NKJV) puts it this way:

31 Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths.

Capernaum became the home base or headquarters for the ministry of Jesus. Today there is little in Capernaum besides the ancient ruins of a town in which Jesus often ministered.

Two important buildings in Capernaum are mentioned by name in the Bible. The Synagogue and Peter's house. And, fortunately for us, these two places have had good documentation in historical writings down through the centuries. The location of these two places are known.

An octagonal church has been erected directly over the traditional sight of the home of the apostle Peter. The church is elevated, giving the ability to view the ruins below it. Also, inside the church is a transparent floor, allowing us to view the home from above.

Now let's look at the synagogue. It is probably the most ornate of the buildings to be found in this city. In fact, this is the most impressive synagogue in all of Galilee. The synagogue in Gamla is only 67% the size of this one in Capernaum. The synagogue at Masada is 47% the size of this one. The one at Herodian is 46%, and the one at Magdala is 13% of the size of this synagogue.

The synagogue in Capernaum has a main prayer hall, flanked by side aisles which are separated by two rows of columns. The interior was plastered and colored, and ornamented with reliefs.

On the south side, there is an independent porch of considerable size. Why is the porch and entrance on the south side of the synagogue? The entrance of a synagogue is pointed towards Jerusalem. And the worshipers face in that direction.

The benches on which the elders sat lined the inside walls. There were probably mats on the floor for people to sit on. Dating the synagogue you see in Capernaum today is debated. But it is definitely later than the first century. Most writings identify it to the 4th century.

Take a look at the exterior foundation when you arrive. You will notice black basaltic stones below. The evidence shows the visible synagogue was built directly on top of a



Ancient ruins of the Synagogue in Capernaum

previous one. Archaeologists refer to this as the black synagogue and the white synagogue. It was quite common to build a holy place directly over a previous one. The black synagogue has been dated to the first century before Christ.

That means, that this earlier synagogue is the one in which Jesus taught. It was in this synagogue that Jesus healed the demoniac man – Mark 1:21-27. It was here where He healed the servant of the centurion, the one who built this black synagogue – Matthew 8:5, Luke 7:3. It was here that Jesus preach his sermon on the “bread of life” – John 6:16-59. This was just after feeding the 5,000.

Mount of Beatitudes (Day 7)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°52'52.65"N, 35°33'18.75"E

The Mount of Beatitudes is a small hill, between Tabgha and Capernaum – probably closer to Tabgha. The Scripture doesn't clearly indicate where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. This is the traditional site, but others believe it may have been near the Horns of Hattin or Mount Arbel – both of which are southwest of this location.

This would be a natural site for Christ to preach his longest recorded sermon - the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 & 7). The hillside forms a natural bowl (amphitheater) shape arena, sloping down to the sea, where thousands could sit and still hear the Master speak. The winds coming off the sea would carry his voice.

It is often pointed out by scholars and Bible teachers how Jesus was like Moses. As a child he was pursued by an evil king just as Moses was. He gave the law like Moses, although it was more of an application and fulfillment of the old law. He delivered the people and fed them miraculously like Moses. He ascended a mountain and taught the people as Moses did. Indeed, Moses actually spoke of one like himself who would come in the future: *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him"* (Deut. 18:15).

There were some differences in their ministries. The old Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, remarks concerning one of these differences. He says that in Moses' day "... the people were ordered to keep their distance; now (in Jesus' day) they are invited to draw near: a blessed change!"

Tabgha (Day 7)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°52'52.65"N, 35°33'18.75"E

This small village is located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, about 2 miles southwest of Capernaum and 8 miles north of Tiberias. It is the traditional site of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (Mark 6:30-46). The earliest building at Tabgha was a small chapel built in the 4th century A.D. This was probably the shrine described by the pilgrim Egeria at the end of the 4th century: *"In the same place (not far from Capernaum) facing the Sea of Galilee is a well watered land in which lush grasses grow, with numerous trees and palms. Nearby are seven springs which provide abundant water. In this fruitful garden Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish."* It is believed that Tabgha is the place where Peter and others kept their fishing boats.

Tabgha is not mentioned in the Bible, and the word is believed to be an Arabic contraction of **HEPTAPEGON**. That word literally means "7 springs." This area was, and still is, a very fertile area because of the many springs.

Nazareth (Day 7)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°42'07.70"N, 35°17'51.44"E

The city of Nazareth lies 16 miles west of the Sea of Galilee. It is located on a ridge overlooking the valley of Jezreel to the south and sits at an altitude of about 1,300 feet **above** sea level. That is a significant difference from the Sea of Galilee, which is 670 feet **below** sea level.

Its elevation and location isolated it from the normal trade route, so it was never a large town during the time of Christ. The population at that time would have been 20 – 25 families, many of whom were probably related to each other. Maybe it had a population of 100 to 125. And the village proper was located in a bowl shaped landscape.



Nazareth - Conical building is the Church of the Annunciation

Little is known in historical writings about the history of Nazareth. Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament. Josephus mentions 45 towns in Galilee in his writings, but Nazareth is not among them. The Talmud mentions 63 towns in Galilee, but Nazareth is not one of them either. None of the apocryphal books mention Nazareth. Outside the New Testament, no book

written before the 4th century mentions Nazareth.

After the 4th century, we know that some priestly families lived in the village. Archaeological excavations have confirmed that the city was only a small agricultural village during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

This village was always unwallled and unprotected. Archaeological digs have found many small caves that had been enclosed to make homes. Its unimpressive nature is reflected in the statement of Nathanael, "*can anything good come out of Nazareth.*" ([John 1:46](#))

It is in Nazareth where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, and announced the coming of the birth of Christ. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth after their marriage. It was from Nazareth that Mary and Joseph went south to Bethlehem to register for the census that had been ordered by the Roman rulers. It was during that trip that Jesus was born.

Nazareth Precipice (Day 7)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°41'06.35"N, 35°17'58.95"E

Jesus began his ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth. The small size of the village of Nazareth when Jesus lived there probably becomes an important factor in our understanding their reaction to Jesus' ministry. Everyone present that day would have known Jesus well. They had seen him grow up, probably not a whole lot different than others of his age. He could very possibly have lived 25 years in this town.

Jesus would have grown up attending the synagogue in Nazareth. When He read from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, and then announced that what Isaiah wrote was, at that moment, fulfilled in himself, their reaction was not positive.

The rejection by His own clan, and their dragging Him out to the edge of the ridge to throw Him down to his death, must have been very traumatic for all involved. This would have been especially true for His mother and brothers and sisters as well as the towns people who knew Him so well.

Luke 4:29-30 (NIV) tells us:

29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.

30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

They took Christ to the cliffs upon which their little city had been built, in order to kill him by throwing him off. This is the only precipice near Nazareth, so it is most likely the place mentioned in Scripture.

Nazareth is an Arab city, but all through its history, it has been a place of much Christian influence. That is still true today. And 80% of the Christians are Arab.

Nazareth Village (Day 7)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°42'00.05"N, 35°17'31.63"E

Based on solid New Testament scholarship and the most up-to-date archaeology, Nazareth Village brings to life a farm and Galilean village, recreating Nazareth as it was 2,000 years ago. Come meet the people and experience first-century hospitality.

Nazareth Village has been created in Israel as an authentic "first century" village, a place of living history. It looks similar to the way Bethlehem and Nazareth looked during Biblical times, and interpreters re-enact what Mary and Joseph did and lived.



Nazareth Village

What they have uncovered here is believed to be an actual first century farm. It is located on the side of a hill, where terraced farming would have taken place. It is 12

acres in size, and includes: Houses, a carpenter's workshop, synagogue, stable, wine press, olive press, water cistern, stone quarries, weaving, farming, and family living. The working farm has: sheep, chickens, and donkeys that pull wooden plows through rocky soil.

Clothes, tools and even the food have been re-created as precise replicas of the daily materials used by Jews under the Roman occupation. More buildings are constructed each year.

Day 8 - Friday, March 25

Banias (Caesarea Philippi) (Day 8)

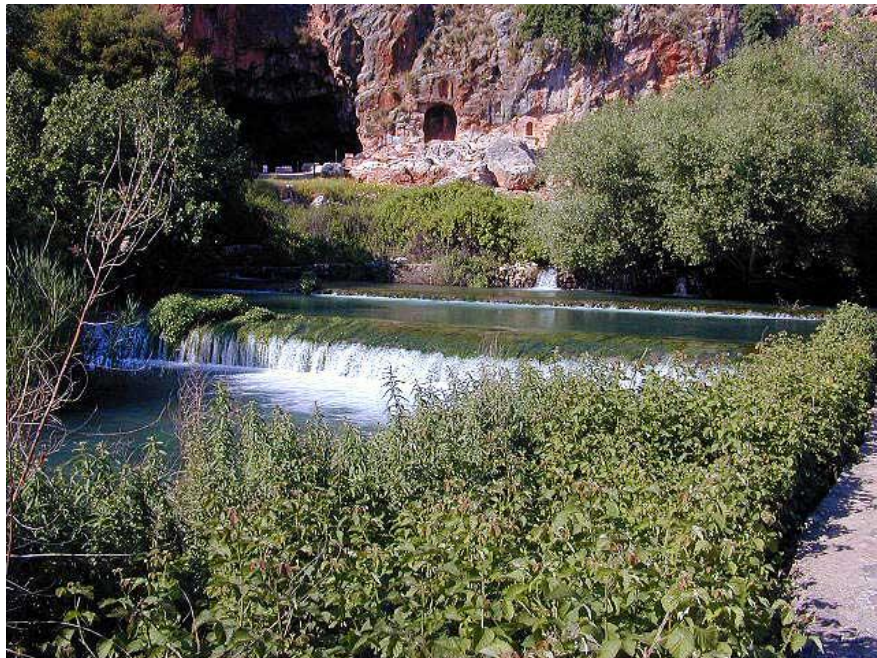


Google-Earth coordinates: 33°14'53.76"N, 35°41'38.73"E

Banias (in Arabic) or Paneas (Greek) is a city that goes back to Alexander the Great in the fourth century before Christ. Prior to this the site had several different names. In [Joshua 11:17](#), this site was called Baalgad, and, as stated in this passage, the location is "*in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon.*" (Also mentioned in [Joshua 12:7; 13:5](#)). [Judges 3:3](#) calls this place "*Baalhermon*", with Mount Hermon nearby (also [1 Chron. 5:23](#)). These ancient references indicate that the god Baal was worshiped here.

Alexander the Great brought into this area his culture, including the pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses. Alexander changed the name of this place to honor the Greek god *PAN*, thus Banias or Paneas. And along rock cliff are many man-made niches where idols to the god Pan were placed.

When Herod the Great died in 4 BC, his kingdom was divided among several of his relatives. Herod's son, Philip, became the tetrarch of the area north and east of the Sea of Galilee, extending



Caesarea Philippi (Banias/Paneas)

southward to include the Decapolis. Following his father's example, Philip rebuilt

Paneas to honor Tiberias Caesar and renamed it Caesarea Philippi. But, unlike his father, Philip included himself as part of the city's name.

At Caesarea Philippi, we find the ruins of what is believed to be the foundations of several temples. Also, in the side of the rock cliff is a large cave, with a spring of fresh water. It produces a great amount of water, and becomes one of the headwaters of the Jordan River. Until 170 years ago, the water flowed out over the ground in front of the cave. An earthquake in 1837 caused debris to fill the ground in front, and partially inside the cave, and since that time, the water has flowed underground.

At this location, we are 1,150 feet above sea level (Sea of Galilee is 670' below sea level) and are on the southern woodland slopes of the 9,200-foot Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in Israel.

In the Bible, Caesarea Philippi is the most northerly city Jesus and his disciples traveled to. I think this would be a natural place for Jesus to stop for refreshment with his disciples. This is especially true with regard to what he teaches his disciples here. First, Jesus asks the disciples, *"Who do people say I am?"* Jesus often taught his disciples using metaphors and parables that related to the physical context in which He was ministering. For instance, Christ said "I will make you fishers of men" while they were mending their nets. And He spoke about a "sower who went out to sow," at a location where they could visibly see sowing occurring. He spoke of a city on a hill that could not be hid at a place where they could actually see a city on the top of a hill. And then Christ turns the attention away from who people say He is, to asking his disciples, "with regard to what you see here and the gods worshiped in this place, who do YOU believe I am"?

Peter's declaration, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,"* challenged all the gods in the niches of the cliff, whether they be Baal, Pan, Zeus or the emperor himself. And, standing in front of this rock cliff, it would explain Christ's use of the metaphor of a "rock." *"Upon this rock I will build my church,....."* He is, of course, speaking about Himself, the "Solid Rock," and the fact that He is ***"the Christ, the Son of the Living God."*** He uses the word "Petros," a term that would be used to describe the very cliff that stood there.

Tel Dan (Day 8)



Google-Earth coordinates: 33°14'49.03"N, 35°39'03.90"E

This is the site of the city named after the 5th son of Jacob. His mother was Bilhah, but Bilhah did not name him. Bilhah was the handmaid of Rachel, and Rachel named him.

At Tel Dan, you will visit an ancient Canaanite gate that is dated to the time of Abraham. Of course it wasn't called Dan until later. The Book of Judges tells us the city was previously named Laish. Most likely, Abraham would have passed through

this city, and probably this gate, as he, Sarah and Lot migrated into the land of Canaan.

Tel Dan is located about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and 3 miles west of Caesarea Philippi, and is today part of an Israeli nature preserve. The nearby Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in Israel – 9,200 feet high, has water runoff that seeps into the ground and flows underground to lower levels, where it resurfaces in hundreds, possibly thousands, of springs, called karstic springs. These eventually run together to form the Dan River. The water is so clear and cool. This river becomes the largest of the three headwaters of the Jordan River. At Caesarea Philippi, as mentioned above, we will see the Banias River. These two rivers, plus the Hatsbani River, come together in the Huleh Valley to form the Jordan River. In fact, the Dan River is as large as the other two combined. The Dan River provides 7/8 of a million cubic yards of water every day. That would be 177 million gallons of water every day. And, the word “Jordan” means “down from Dan.”



Ancient Canaanite Gate - Dates to time of Abraham

From the very beginning of the tribe of Dan moving into this area, they had a severe problem, not with the armies of their neighbors, but with taking to themselves the gods of their pagan neighbors. They become very idolatrous. And they never recovered from the depths to which they fell. In the Bible there are absolutely no records of noble deeds

by the tribe of Dan.

[Judges 18:30](#) NKJV

30 Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the idols;...

After Solomon reigned as the King of Israel, the kingdom became divided. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was king over the Southern 2 tribes. And Jeroboam became the king over the Northern 10 tribes, and took the name "Israel." And the city of Dan essentially becomes the capital of this Northern Kingdom.

Excavation of this Tel began in 1966. The impressive finding include sections of imposing walls and gates, as well as a pagan ritual altar that dates to the time of the tribes of Israel and quite possibly constructed by Jeroboam. In the Bible, these pagan altars are often called "High Places."

Prior to 1967, when Israel did not have the Golan Heights, a military command post lookout was located here. This is close to where the borders of Lebanon, Syria and Israel met prior to 1967. This site is only 40 miles from Damascus, the capital of Syria.

Mount Bental (Day 8)



Google-Earth coordinates: 33°07'45"N, 35°47'09"E

In the Golan Heights, on top of Mount Bental (part of an extinct volcano) is a series of antiquated and abandoned Israeli bunkers giving a sobering taste for what out-post army life is like. From the highest lookout there is a sweeping and gorgeous view north to Mt. Hermon and everything south until the southern Golan, including all the Syrian approaches to the Heights. This site is more than 3,800 feet above sea level.

Mount Bental offers a commanding view across the demilitarized zone between Syria and Israel, established by the U.N. after the Yom Kippur War in 1973. One of the largest tank battles was fought at Mount Bental. Although the Syrians attacked with ten times the number of tanks Israel had, Israel knew that this position was too important to lose. The Syrians eventually retreated, although the area between Mount Hermon in the North and Mount Bental became known as the Valley of Tears.

Yardenit (Day 8)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°42'38.39"N, 35°34'13.80"E

Earlier in this handbook I mentioned that the name, Jordan, means "*Down from Dan.*" Jordan in Hebrew is Yarden. Yardenit means "little Jordan," and is a popular baptismal sight. Those on the trip who wish to be baptized can do that here.

Every year, over half a million tourists from all over the world visit the site. The baptismal site is located between magnificent eucalyptus trees and the natural river flora. It is an ideal spot for recollection in serenity and tranquility. Comfortable and adequate facilities are available for religious ceremonies on the banks of the Jordan River.

Day 9 - Saturday, March 26

Beit She'an (Day 9)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°30'09.00"N, 35°30'04.72"E

"Beit" or "Beth" are two ways of saying the same thing - They each mean "house." In this case Beit She'an means, "House of Peace" or "House of Rest." Sometimes the word "Beit" is a separate word, as in Beit She'an. Other times it is a prefix of a single word, as in BeitLe'em – Bethlehem (House of Bread).

The Jezreel Valley is the only significant valley in Israel that runs somewhat east to west. The Jordan Valley and most other valleys run north to south. Beit She'an is located at the place where the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys meet, some 17 miles south of the Sea of Galilee and 3½ miles west of the Jordan River.

The ruins of this city are numerous – more than found in most ancient places. Most of the uncovered ruins are below the Tel – the acropolis. When you look from the theater to the acropolis, you are looking north. The acropolis is about 260 feet high.



Excavated Ruins of Beit She'an - Photo taken from top of Tel

During the Roman period – that would include the time of Christ - this city went by another name – Scythopolis. Scythopolis is not mentioned by name in the Bible. It is part of what the Bible calls The Decapolis – a group of 10 cities.

The end of the reign of the first king of Israel - King Saul - ends in Beit She'an. When Joshua conquered the Promised Land, Beit She'an was given to the tribe of Manasseh. Like Megiddo, the Israelites did not drive the inhabitants out. In the 11th century, the Philistine conquered Beit She'an. And it was during that century when they nailed King Saul's body to the wall of Beit She'an. And it remained in the hands of the Canaanites until the reign of David. It remained under Jewish control for the next 300 years, until the 10 tribes making up the Northern Kingdom of Israel were conquered by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.

Nearby the city are the remains of a **SHUL**. **SHUL** is Yiddish for synagogue.

On January 18, 749 AD, Beth She'an was destroyed by an earthquake. All the fallen columns and pillars fell in the same direction.

Scripture records that there were at least two temples in Beit She'an during the time of David and Solomon. One was to the god Dagon – [1 Chronicles 10:10](#). The other was to the goddess Ashtoreth – [1 Sam 31:10](#). Dagon is a primary god of the Philistines. When Samson fell into the hands of the Philistine, [Judges 16:23](#) tells us that they “*offered a great sacrifice to Dagon their god.*” They have actually found 5 or 6 temple complexes, each having inscriptions mentioning several different deities.

Gideon Spring (Day 9)



Google-Earth coordinates: 32°32'59.05"N, 35°21'16.61"E

Gideon Spring is not far from Beit She'an. At the bottom of the south side of the Beit She'an tel, you will find a street running somewhat east and west. It is called Sylvanus Street. If you go east, and then curve to the north around the Tel, taking what is called the Valley Street, you will, after going a few hundred yards, come to a stone bridge, which crosses the Harod River. If you were to follow that river westward for about 9 miles, you would come to the what today is called the Gideon Spring.

This spring was never known or called Gideon Spring in the Bible. It was called the Spring of Harod – [Judges 7:1](#). And this is the only time it is referred to in the Bible. Earlier I mentioned that Beit She'an had been given to the tribe of Manasseh by Joshua. This is true also of the Valley and Spring of Harod.



At Gideon Spring - the Biblical Spring of Harod

This place has been made famous because of what happened here, and also by the man who was in charge of Israel at this time.

In **Judges 6:11**, we find the man Gideon hiding the little batch of crops he has grown. He has hid his harvest in a wine press, and is secretly threshing the wheat he had

grown. But in the next verse, an angel of the Lord appears unto Gideon, with a message that God is calling him to deliver his people from the Midianites. There can be no question as to the Divine origin of this call upon the life of Gideon.

Gideon does test the call to make sure that it is truly from God. Once convinced, Gideon prepares for a military encounter with the Midianites. At this spring – the **Spring of Harod** – God instructed Gideon on how to choose his soldiers. The story is recorded in **Judges 7**.

The spring was much bigger back in the time of Gideon.

After putting the men of the army through two tests prescribed by God, the army is reduced from 32,000 to 300 men. Because they only used 300 men to fight the Midianites, nobody was able to think that it was by their might and power they defeated the enemy. God often showed Israel how He could take something small, and do something great with it. I think He is still trying to show us the same today.

In the life of Gideon, we see that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. In the person of Gideon, we see there is strength in weakness. When you see how God used Gideon, you realize that God also can use you for His purposes.

Qumran (Day 9)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°44'33.25"N, 35°27'34.30"E

We leave the hills and the high valleys and head south to the western shores of the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is the lowest place on the face of the Earth. It is nearly 1,400 feet below sea level. That compares with:

- Lowest point in Asia is 490 feet below sea level.
- Lowest point in Africa is 435 feet below sea level.
- Lowest point in North America – Death Valley – at 282 feet below sea level.

It is 30% salt, thus making it 8.3 times as salty as the ocean. It is also the deepest salt lake in the world – 1,270 feet at its deepest.

The level of the Dead Sea has dropped more than 80 feet in the past 50 years. 25 years ago (1986), a health spa was located at En Gedi just a few steps from the Sea. Today, just 25 years later, the Sea is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the Spa. It is expected to drop another 60 feet in the next two decades.

We will first drive past the ancient city of Jericho, which is 15 miles from Jerusalem and more than 3,000 feet lower in elevation. Turning south from there, it is about 8 miles to the settlement at Qumran. The ruins of Qumran are about 1 mile from the Dead Sea. Qumran is about 150 feet above the level of the Dead Sea, but still 1,200 feet below sea level.

What makes this site important today is what was found there in 1947. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls ranks as one of the most prominent archaeological finds of the 20th century. Two Bedouin shepherds discovered the first 7 scrolls in 1947. They were trying to find some stray goats, and thinking they may have entered a cave, they tossed some rocks into one hoping to scare the goats out. What they heard was the breaking of pottery.



Qumran - Cave #4

The cave that you most often see in photos of Qumran is not the one in which the goat herders found the first 7 scrolls. That is cave number 4. More than 825 scrolls and more than 100,000 scroll fragments were found in 11 caves total.

Although the Qumran community existed during the time of the life of Christ, none of the Scrolls refer to Him, nor do they mention any of His follower's described in the New Testament.

There are a number of reasons why the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is so remarkable. Firstly, the scrolls demonstrated a very accurate transmission of the Old Testament text. The Jews today use, as their Scriptures, the Hebrew Masoretic text, which was compiled in AD 916. This is their Tanach. It was given this title because the men chosen for this task were called Masoretes, which is a word derived from **Masorah**, meaning "tradition."

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provides manuscripts that are at least 1,000 years older. These are now the oldest manuscripts that exist of the Old Testament.

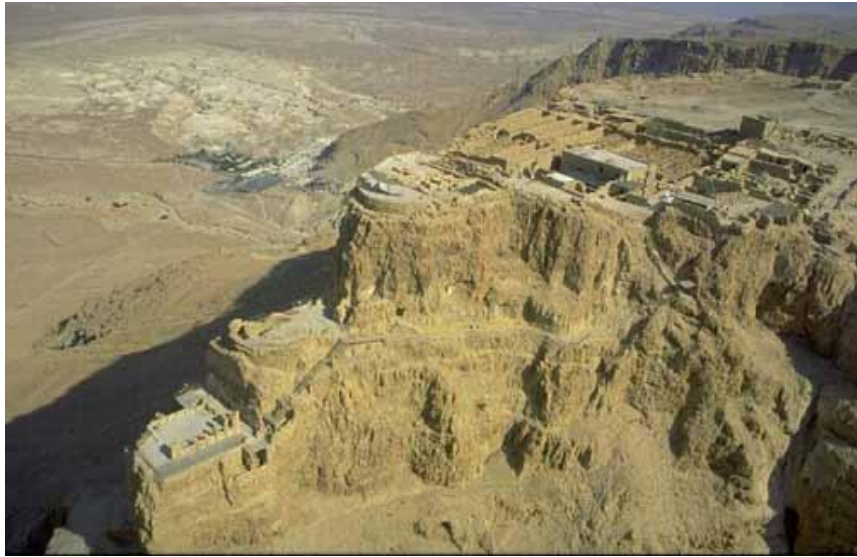
Day 10 - Sunday, March 25

Masada (Day 10)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°18'59.49"N, 35°21'14.28"E

Masada is located atop an isolated, diamond-shaped rock mesa, with sheer cliffs on all sides. On the eastern side – the side towards the Dead Sea – the elevation drop nearly 1,100 feet. The top of the mesa is about 1520 feet above the level of the Dead Sea. That makes the mesa above sea level – the Dead Sea being 1,400 feet below sea level. The western cliffs are not that high, but still close to 500 feet. I will say more about the western side later.



Masada - 3-Part Palace of Herod the Great

You can scale the mountain several ways. You can take the cable car, which takes about two minutes. There is also a snake path on the eastern side. This is believed to be the only path to the top back in David's day. On our last trip, Dr. Braddy and myself used the winding path to climb to the top.

There is a White Rock path on the western side that is less treacherous, but getting to it takes longer. Most of this path was built by the Roman in their siege of Masada, which ended in AD. 73.

The summit of Masada is virtually flat, with a very slight rolling terrain. Its size is 2,130 feet, north to south, and 984 feet, west to east. It is large enough to provide sufficient space to sustain a fairly large community.

The word "MASADA" is derived from the Hebrew word that means "fortress" or "stronghold."

King Herod the Great had a number of palaces. Two of them were located at Masada. One was located at the northern tip, sometimes called the "hanging palace," because it extended down the promontory of the mountain on three levels. The lowest level was 115 feet below the top of the mesa. Winding staircases provided access to each level. The other larger palace was located on the western side of the mountain. During Herod's occupation of the site, a casemate wall was erected around the top of the mesa - 4,250 feet in total length.

Masada is most known for what happened here between AD 70 and AD 73. It probably started earlier. When the Romans, in the late 60's A.D., set out to quell an uprising among the Jew, they destroyed Jerusalem and, in A.D. 70, burned the Temple. During this time, some Jewish zealots overcame the small Roman garrison at Masada, taking control of it.

The Romans begin a siege on Masada shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. At the time, there are nearly 1,000 Jews living atop this fortress. The Romans, under the leadership of General Flavius Silva, begin building an earthen ramp, that would extend from the valley on the west side to the top of the fortress. The ramp was built on the western side because the elevation there was much less. The ramp that was built can still be seen today.

The final and successful Roman assault on Masada occurred in A.D. 73. What the Romans found when they poured over the top of cliffs is not what they expected to find. What we know about what happened comes only from the 1st century Jewish historian, Josephus. When the Romans took the fortress, they found only two women and 5 children alive. Almost 960 people had committed suicide.

En Gedi (Day 10)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°27'09.56"N, 35°22'50.21"E

Traveling north about 12 miles, we come to the oasis of Engedi. Sometimes you see the name as one word – Engedi, while other times you will see it as two – Ein Gedi. In most of our Bibles, it is two words, **“En Gedi.”** If you use a New American Standard Version, it is one word.

Engedi, in Hebrew, means **“spring of the young wild goat.”** Sometimes it is just called, **“Spring of the kid.”** For thousands of years, Engedi has been a

major oasis with lush vegetation, high quality dates and medicinal plants. It is mentioned 6 times in our Bible, which I will discuss in a few minutes.

The mountains to the west are severely gorged, and act almost like an aqueduct to bring an abundance of water to Engedi. There are also four springs that feed the oasis. Their names are:



En Gedi - Oasis on the Dead Sea

- David Spring, which feeds the channel of Nahal David. The Hebrew word, “Nahal,” means: **stream**. David Spring becomes Nahal David.
- Shulamit Spring
- Engedi Spring: Both the Shulamit and Engedi Springs feed into Nahal David.
- Arugot Spring: This spring become Nahal Arugot, and is south of the others.

All four of these springs are approximately 650 feet above the level of the Dead Sea. These springs and the resultant streams provide water year-round to the oasis of Engedi. In fact, they provide approximately 3 million cubic meters of water per year. I calculated that to be 615 thousand gallons per day. Much of the water is used for agriculture, or is bottled for consumption.

The warm climate, the diverse vegetation, predominantly of date palms, and the supply of much water, attracts many animals: including ibex, hyrax, leopard, and a variety of birds, including vultures, eagles, and falcons.

En Gedi is the only source of water for miles around. And the Ibex coming to the springs here would be a close image to what David writes in Psalm 42:1. *“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you.”* The springs pour out of the limestone cliffs high up towards the top of the plateau, which rise almost 2,000 feet above the Dead Sea.

Now let’s look at what the Bible says about En Gedi. Many ancient places have, over the course of their history, had their names changed several times. That is also true of En Gedi.

Perhaps the oldest name for this location is Hazezon-Tamar. You find that name in the first book of the Bible – Genesis. This is the name Abraham and Lot knew of this place.

Genesis 14:7 NIV

⁷ Then they turned back and went to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they conquered the whole territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who were living in Hazazon Tamar.

Now back to En Gedi. There are several other biblical references to En Gedi. One of the most fascinating occurs during the time of David, prior to him becoming the King of Israel.

The hills around En Gedi are filled with hundreds of caves. You find the story in 1 Samuel 23 & 24. It is the story of how King Saul thought David was a threat to his kingship, and sought to have him killed. The events mentioned in this passage happened at En Gedi.

Solomon adds some flavor in his comment in Song of Solomon 1:14 *My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blooms In the vineyards of En Gedi.*

Amman Jordan (Day 10)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°57'14"N, 35°56'12"E

Next we head for our hotel in Amman, the capital city of Jordan. Amman is also one of the 10 cities of the Decapolis. You will notice that the name "Philadelphia" is shown on some maps. During the Roman era, from the 3rd century on, the city we now know as Amman, was called Philadelphia. This should not be confused with the Philadelphia in Asia Minor which is mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

The Ammonites are mentioned a number of times in the Bible. They descended from a son born to Lot and his youngest daughter following the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah ([Genesis 19:30-38](#)).



The Citadel in Amman, Jordan
Possible place of Uriah's death (husband of Bathsheba)

Because the Ammonites descended from Lot, Abraham's nephew, they were considered by God as a nation "related to" Israel.

Deuteronomy 2:19 NIV

19 When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I will not give you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites. I have given it as a possession to the descendants of Lot."

The Ammonites occupied the tableland east of the Jordan Valley, which stretched all the way to the Arabian desert. The territory of the Ammonites make up a part of what today we call Jordan. In Biblical times, the Ammonites, along with the Moabites and the Edomites occupied the territory that is known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan today.

Day 11 - Monday, March 26

Petra (Day 11)



Google-Earth coordinates: 30°19'23"N, 35°27'00"E

Early in the morning we will drive down the Kings Highway, which runs from the city of Damascus, through Amman, to the Red Sea at Aqaba. We won't go to Aqaba, but will stop at Petra. The ruins of this ancient city is Jordan's biggest attraction and a genuinely breathtaking world wonder – the "rose-red city."

The earliest inhabitants of this area were the Horites, or Hurrians. Later, Esau, the brother of Jacob, settled in the territory south of the Dead Sea, and his descendants, the Edomites, gradually replaced the Hurrians. The Edomites lived here at the time the Israelites came from Egypt during the Exodus. About 400 BC, the Edomites were driven out by the Arabian Nabataeans.

The city was carved from sandstone outcrops by the Nabatean people, and at its peak in the 1st century AD was a major trading route and home to 30,000 people. Caravans passing through this area had to pay taxes to the Nabateans.

The primary way to get to the ruins of Petra is the tall, narrow cleft in the rock, called the **Siq** (Cleft), which is a winding fissure in the eastern ridge. At the end of the Siq, the path opens up to a canyon. The first carving in the face of the canyon cliff is an edifice called the **Treasury (Khasneh)**. That is an odd name, since it was never used as a bank or for the transaction of business. In reality, it is probably a royal tomb.



The Treasury (Khasneh) from the Siq

The Treasury was featured in the Indiana Jones movie, *The Last Crusade*. Harrison Ford (Indiana Jones) is pictured here as finding the Holy Grail inside the Treasury.

Although the name Petra is not contained in the Bible, there are many that believe it is alluded to in several Passages. Many Bible resources identify the biblical Sela with Petra. ([Isaiah 42:11](#), for instance). Like Petra, the word "Sela" means "rock." Petra was the capital city of the Nabateans.

In biblical times, this region was known as Mount Seir (or Sela). Petra was its Greek name. The Biblical Mount Hor, which is part of Mt Seir, is near Petra. Aaron, the brother of Moses, died on Mt. Hor at the age of 123 ([Num. 33:38, 39; Deut. 10:6](#)).

Some Bible teachers believe the people of Israel will flee to Petra during the period of the tribulation immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ to earth to set up His kingdom.

What I did not know prior to coming to Petra the first time, was that there are so many cliff monuments. There are approximately 750 carved monuments at Petra. The gorge in which you find these ruins extends for about one mile. Almost all of the cliff carvings at Petra are primarily burial places.

Day 12 - Tuesday, March 27

Mount Nebo (Day 12)



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°46'04.74"N, 35°43'30.17"E

Mount Nebo, also identified with Pisgah, was located northeast of the Dead Sea overlooking the Jordan Valley opposite Jericho. A town with the same name was nearby. It is unclear whether the town was named for the mountain or the mountain for the town.

The king of Moab took Balaam the prophet to "the top of Pisgah" in an effort to get Balaam to curse Israel (Numbers 23:13-14).

The tribe of Reuben receive the city of Nebo as part of their tribal inheritance (Numbers 32:3, 28).

Isaiah predicted the inhabitants of Nebo and Medeba would weep at the time of their coming destruction (Isaiah 15:2).

When the children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, Moses was not allowed to go with them. Joshua would lead them into the land given to them by God. Where did Moses go so that he could see the Promised Land? He went to the top of Mount Nebo. This mountain is the highest of the Pisgah range of mountains – about 4,000 feet. From there Moses was allowed to view much of the Promised Land.

Before Moses leaves his people to climb Mount Nebo, He prophesies to them, and tells them to "choose life." Then He repeats the commandment, "*Love the Lord with all your heart and all your might.*"

[Numbers 36:13](#) (NIV) tells us the location. *"These are the commands and regulations the LORD gave through Moses to the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho."*

It must have been a very emotional moment for Moses, looking out from the top of Mount Nebo and seeing the promised land, while knowing that he would not enter. After all of his exploits during the Exodus, and after struggling 40 years in the wilderness leading the constantly complaining and disobedient Israelites, he was being allowed to go this far and no farther.



Sanctuary of Nebo

Moses ascends Mount Nebo, sees the promised land, and dies there. "Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." (Deuteronomy 34:7 RSV).

On very clear days, I am told, the unaided eye can pick out Bethlehem and not far from there the singular cone that was Herod's fortress of Herodium. You are able to see the towers and buildings on the Mount of Olives. Qumran is easily discerned by the side of the Dead Sea. And, of course, the oasis of Jericho

Joshua would take over leadership, and lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. And once again, God works a miracle, dividing the waters of the Jordan, so the Children of Israel could cross on dry ground ([Numbers 13:14-16](#)).

Bethany beyond Jordan **(Day 12)**



Google-Earth coordinates: 31°50'13.23"N, 35°32'49.80"E

The reason the Bible speak of the city of "**Bethany beyond the Jordan**," is to distinguish it from Bethany, the home city of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, which was near Jerusalem, not far from the Mount of Olives. This New Testament town in Jordan is located about 5 miles north of the Dead Sea.

Bethany beyond Jordan was the place where John the Baptist lived and where he baptized people. It is here that John baptized Jesus.

John 1:26-29 (NIV)

26 "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know.

27 He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

28 This all happened at **Bethany on the other side of the Jordan**, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!



Bethany Beyond Jordan - Location of baptisms by John the Baptist
Very close to Tel Mar Elias (Elijah's Hill).

Wadi Gharrar is a small tributary of the Jordan River that is fed by about five springs. Tradition holds that these springs provided the water that was used by John the Baptist for baptizing. Those who support this tradition note that 1) "Bethany beyond the Jordan" was not necessarily a location on the river itself, 2)

this site is closely connected with the river, and 3) it was unlikely that a swiftly flowing river like the Jordan would have been used for frequent baptisms.

He is often likened unto the prophet Elijah. I find it interesting that the area where John the Baptist ministers is also the area where the hometown of Elijah is located. We are told in the Bible that Elijah was a Tishbite. **1 Kings 17:1** also tells us that the city of **Tishbe** is located in Gilead. This area is known as lower Gilead. The ruins of Tishbe have been identified near the modern village of Listib. In Arabic, its name is **Tel Mar Elias**. Tell = Hill, Mar = Saint, Elias = Elijah. It is not a high hill – probably 300-400 feet in height.

Earlier, I mentioned what Elijah did at Mount Carmel, where he confronted the prophets of Baal....and fire came down from Heaven. Sometime after that, Elijah picked up a sidekick from the school of the prophets. His name was Elisha. **2 Kings 2** tells us that the two of them came to the Jordan River, where Elijah rolled up his cloak and struck the water, causing it to divide. They walked across on dry ground to the east bank of the River. That happened in this area of the Jordan and not long after, Elijah was taken in a chariot of fire and an whirlwind to heaven. Tradition says the spot of his rise to heaven was at what is today called Elijah's hill.