

Journaling a
Preacher's Pilgrimage
to Israel

About the Author

Pastor Ed Rice is a retired USAF Systems Engineer surrendered to be a Baptist Preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Saved in 1960 at the age 8 he grew up tutored in the Scriptures through Tuscorora Baptist Church in Addison NY. Drafted into the military off of the dairy farm in 1972, Ed and Bev Rice raised 3 boys while serving as a Missile Technician in the USAF. After completing a USAF AECP bootstrap program he graduated from Ohio State University with a degree in electrical engineering and was commissioned in the USAF where he served until 1995 as a weapons integration, and systems engineer at Wright Patterson Air Force Base and Rome Laboratories. He finished his Masters degree in Electrical Engineering through The Air Force Institute of Technology in 1990. Pastor Rice, after serving as a youth pastor at each air base where he was stationed for the past 20 years, surrendered to be a Preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in June 1992. He has been pursuing his MDiv, DDiv degrees since that time and since 1998 has been Pastoring Good Samaritan Baptist Church in Dresden New York. His staunch belief in the preserved accuracy of the inspired Scriptures and his rich background in the history of Bible believing Baptists makes his insights throughout this 10 day tour of Israel pointed but Biblical. If you have never visited Israel do not miss this opportunity to journal through these 10 days. If you have visited this journal will take you back, and bring you up on the many changes since your visit. If you plan on visiting Israel, do not go without first taking this 10 day journaling experience.

About the Subject Matter

Exod 19:1 ¶ In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be **a peculiar treasure** unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.** These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Journaling a Preacher's Pilgrimage



to Israel

**How a visit to Israel will forever
change the way you read your Bible**

Pastor Edward Rice

“If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land,
and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.” (Num 14:8)

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Dedication

I wanted to go to Israel ever since 1960 when I was saved and attended Marian Clark's Sunday School class at Gang Mills Baptist Chapel. I listened to him talk about the places where Jesus walked as if he had been there. I do not know that he had, but the pictures that he painted in my mind's eye week after week, and God's promises that he taught in that Jr. boys class assured me that I would one day stand with my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, on the Mount of Olives and see Jerusalem with him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. I still will, but to visit there in the flesh was a dream I inherited from my Sunday School training and my father, Levi Rice. Since his salvation in the same Church in 1958, Dad always wanted to go to Israel, to actually see Jerusalem, and he had tickets in hand after his second bypass surgery. His heart was weak, but I had told him that to go and even to die in the land would be better than to forgo such a dream. I was disappointed that his doctor and others, concerned for his heart, talked him out of his 10 day trip to the Holy Land. He canceled his opportunity and died without visiting Israel. When the opportunity came for Bev and I to go on this 10 day Pastor Familiarization Tour it was financially impossible because we had just purchased tickets for our 10 day trip to Cajamarca, Peru, where our son Shane was ministering as a missionary. Impossible or no, the journal of this trip to the Holy Land is dedicated to Misty, Kassandra, Rachael, Rebekah, Moriah, Micah, Alexis, Charity, Lucas, Parker and Christina Rice, our 11 grand children, with the expectation that they too, one day, will get to walk where Jesus walked, and that they too, will one day stand on the Mount of Olives with their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

God's Dedication for Israel

Deuteronomy 30:6-8

And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.

ITINERARY

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(877) 465-3442 <http://christian-journeys.com>

27 Jan – 05 Feb, 2009

Day 1. Tue 27 Jan: Toronto Canada to Tel Aviv Israel #LY104 Depart 23:55 Arrive Ben Gurion Airport 18:05 El Al Airlines

Day 2. Wed 28 Jan: Israel, Tel Aviv, Boarding our touring coach for Netanya, through Tel Aviv – off of Joppa, “*Welcome to Israel Dinner*” Blue Bay Hotel

Day 3. Thu 29 Jan: Caesarea, Caesarea Aquifer, Mt. Carmel, Druze Lunch in , Megiddo, Valley of Jezreel, Nazareth, Dinner and overnight stay at Kibbutz HaGoshrim in the upper Galilee.

Day 4. Fri 30 Jan: Tel-Dan National Park, Headwaters of the Jordan River, Ancient City of Dan, Excavation of Laish, Caesarea Philippi, Golan Heights, Olive Farm, Golan Heights, Kibbutz HaGoshrim in Upper Galilee

Day 5. Sat 31 Jan: The Mount of Beatitudes, Sea of Galilee Boat Ride, The Jesus Boat Museum, Tabgha, Peter's Fish, Peter's House, Capernaum, Jordan River Dinner at Kibbutz Ginossar

Day 6. Sun 01 Feb: Gideon Springs, Bet Alpha Synagogue, Bet She'an, Qumran, Ein Gedi, Dead Sea, Moriah Classic Hotel,

Day 7. Mon 02 Feb: Masada, Jerusalem, Via Dolorosa, Dinner at Moriah Classic Hotel, Western Wall at night

Day 8. Tue 03 Feb Overlook Jerusalem: Mount of Olives, Garden of Gethsemane, Mount Zion, City of David, David's Palace, David's Tomb, Active Synagogue, Eccumenical Shop, Israel Museum, Archaeological Park, Southern Steps, Temple Wall, Western Wall Tunnels, Dinner at Hotel

Day 9. Wed 04 Feb: Overlook Bethlehem, Holocaust Museum, The Garden Tomb, Holy Sepulcher Church, Garden Tomb, “*Farewell Dinner*” in Joppa

Day 10, Thu 05 Feb: Israel to Toronto non-stop overnight. #LY103 Depart 00:55 Arrive 06:30

God's Itinerary for Israel

Isa 35:1-10 ¶ The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 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. 3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

5 ¶ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. 8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. 9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: 10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

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Preface

During my 48 years as a born again Christian I have visited Israel countless times through the slides and stories of others, now Bev and I would visit it in person. I would be remiss if I did not capture every piece of information, every sight, every thought and emotion in a journal. My slightly honed writing skills and copious note taking experience would be challenged beyond capability as information, sights, thoughts and emotions poured out of every day, every hour, yeah every minute of these 10 days in Israel. The months prior to departure had passed with such a hectic pace of pastoring a very small struggling Baptist Church that no preparations for this trip were complete. Every site that we were to visit should have been researched with every Bible passage revisited prior to boarding the plane. None were. If this journal had been placed in my hands days or even hours before our departure it would have been a marvelous marvelous tool of preparation for what we were to experience. I wish it were complete and more detailed in capturing every piece of information, Scripture reference, sight, thought and emotion of this trip. Alas, it is but a taste of an adventure that will whet appetites for growth into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Bible.

The journal itself is made up of thirty, two page Half Shekel Journals which were sent out for review over the weeks since our February 2009 trip. Through these Half Shekel Journals each event of our adventure was captured and recorded. Much more research into every site and fact is wanted to be done and easily accomplished with the vast capabilities of the internet search engines. This journal is but a step towards the research which is to consume a Christian's life; growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a first step that can change forever how you read your Bible, set your desire on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and get busy in growth and witnessing. It is a step that will cause you to long for your trip to Israel, whether it be a first, once in a lifetime visit, a revisit, or the visit where we will stand together with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Mount of Olives. Every Christian will eventually visit Israel.

Why the Half Shekel? ... The shekel is the base unit of Israeli money like the dollar is ours. With their economy as it is it exchanges for one of our quarters, although it is the size of a nickel. The half shekel is twice as large as a shekel but half its worth, about 12 1/2 cents or 1 US once-upon-a-time 'bit'. We called these Half-Shekel Journals because it is twice as large but half the worth of the real thing, OR it represents my little 'bit' of info, OR it cost me a half shekel to get it printed, OR, since a cup of Aroma Coffee over there cost 16 shekels, the half shekel is almost as worthless as our 2 cents, and the journal is my 2 cents.

If you have never asked and received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal saviour and lord of your soul, my prayer is that your reading this journal and exploring further the truths of His precious Word, the Holy Bible will lead you to a place where you will. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:17,18,36)



The Half Shekel Journal Vol I by Ed Rice

Vol I Day 1-2. Tue 27 Jan: Toronto Canada to Tel Aviv Israel

#LY104 Depart 23:55 Arrive Ben Gurion Airport 18:05 El Al Airlines

January the 27th arrived after 6 months of anticipation and \$(*undisclosed*) in hard earned, carefully saved cash. The morning dawned on Waneta Lake with Jeff and Denise Carpenter and Tony Spradlin looking for coffee and our promised steak and egg breakfast. Jeff and Denise would travel on our maiden voyage to Israel with us and Tony would sit and keep our wood fires going and our dogs



*Ed & Bev Rice, Jeff & Denise Carpenter,
Jim & Ruth Bianchi (left to right)*

content for this 10 day adventure. Packing was well nigh complete which allowed a relaxed morning of fellowship and anticipation. Bev's brother and sister were watching for her mom, Betty Cook, and Gary would attend to her fires relieving my beagle and I of our morning chores. Our goal to head to Toronto Canada at 11 AM, and our sunrise dawning optimized an exciting and relaxed morning. "And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long." (Psalm 35:28)

The 500 mile journey to Toronto entailed some bad directions through Buffalo, (fool computers), an easy boarder crossing at Rainbow Bridge, and a Tim Hortons in Hamlin. After phoned up directions to his down town apartment we all arrived for supper at 4:30 PM at Jim and Ruth Bianchis, our missionaries to Toronto. The six of us discussed all the ills and cures of the world at the pizza place, Lebrettos, one block from their apartment. An interesting argument ensued about who should pick up the tab but Jim won by insisting that he get it. After cake and pictures at their apartment they dropped us off at terminal #3 and took my car for 10 days. Praise the Lord.

"Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD." (Psalm 27:6b) Lee and Donna Pickett, our missionaries to Manitoba, who had connected us to this Christian Journeys Canadian tour, had flown into Toronto the day before and eagerly awaited our arrival at the airport. A joyous reunion surrounded our hurried check in, and our meeting of Marilyn Clarke and Brian Watt, our tour organizers from Christian Journeys and the 20 other 'Baptist'? preachers on our tour. I was excited to meet Matt Dowdy, the youth pastor from Parker Memorial where Shane and Kathy had just brought our 11th grand daughter, Christina Hope, into our lives. Matt had seen more of them than Bev and I. The Carlsons from Portage Prairie, friends of the Picketts, a couple from Saskatchewan, a Joshua Jones from W. Virginia, that had preached at Parker Memorial for Dr. Green, and knew Shane, and two or three other couples that I could not yet recall rounded out the colleague list and made me wish I had not left the list of their names on the kitchen table. We would be touring Israel with this group and the excitement and anticipation was intense.

While waiting for our 11 hour flight, I introduced myself to 'Shua' whose dialect and missing name tag disclosed my oversight in thinking he was a Baptist preacher. 'Joshua', as he explained his full name in English, was a business traveler that recruited high school girls to finish their last year of school and get 1 year of college by being an exchange student to Israel. The hour and a half conversation that ensued covered every topic conceivable and drew in several of my colleagues who wanted to preach a little when it was better to absorb from this x-tour guide and very knowledgeable traveler. Shua, just the same, was very impressed with our love for Israel and our savvy and disdain for the liberal Western media. He read through portions of my Isaiah 53 in Hebrew offering but would not keep it. The trust in God and looking for Messiah that he showed was encouraging, but his obvious rejection of Jesus as Christ not so much. What an insightful couple of hours. One more security check, surrounded by police with 9mm Uzzies¹ and we were on board the Luxurious 767 El Al aircraft which lifted off 15 minutes early.



Several 'orthodox' Jews boarded with us and with the dawn over Paris were found with a box strapped to their forehead, what I expect contained Scriptures. As they bobbed back and forth ritualistically they recited softly in Hebrew their prayers or readings. The young fellow beside me accepted a copy of Isaiah 53 in Hebrew which I had brought with me, and thanked me politely. The great interest in the people we will live among for 10 days heightened. Hours into the new day I was very impressed with Clint Eastwood's ability to speak Hebrew so well, although his lips never seemed to align with his words.

Day 2. Wed 28 Jan: Israel, Tel Aviv, Boarding our touring coach for Netanya, through Tel Aviv – off of Joppa, “Welcome to Israel Dinner” Blue Bay Hotel (011) 972-0 960-3603



A round of applause went up when the airplane touched down early at Ben Gurion Airport just outside of Tel Aviv. As Bev and I gathered our bags and climbed aboard our tour bus at our 18:05 scheduled landing time it was very surreal. We were in Israel, ... Just outside of Joppa, where Jonah began his flight from God, ... Where Dorcas was raised to life, “and many in Joppa believed in the Lord,” and where Peter stayed with Simon a tanner and saw a vision from God bringing him to Caesarea. We were here in the Holy Land. Bev and I asked the other if it was real. If we were really here. The tour bus headed off into the darkness to a place called Netanya. It was real.

1 The Uzi (Hebrew: זרזיר, officially cased as UZI) is a related family of submachine guns. Smaller variants are considered machine pistols. The first Uzi submachine gun was designed by Uziel Gal in the late 1940s. The prototype was finished in 1950, and initial service issue began in 1954. Over its service lifetime, the Uzi was manufactured by Israel Military Industries, FN Herstal, and other manufacturers.



The Half Shekel Journal Vol II by Ed Rice

Vol II Day 3 Thu 29 Jan: Caesarea,

Caesarea Aquifer, Mt. Carmel, Druze Luncheon, Megiddo, Valley of Jezreel, Nazareth, Dinner and overnight stay at Kibbutz HaGoshrim in the upper Galilee.

The eleven hour flight, the seven hour time change, and the strange excitement from the late night dangling of our feet in the Mediterranean Sea united with the realization that I was in Israel when I awoke at 3 AM. Beverly and I, Lee and Donna, and Jeff and Denise walked along the crashing starlit waves after supper last night and that came to my mind even before I figured out where I was sleeping. My mind raced madly to capture that I was in the Blue Bay Hotel in a Jewish Settlement called Netanya, nestled between the Biblical Plain of Sharon and the Mediterranean

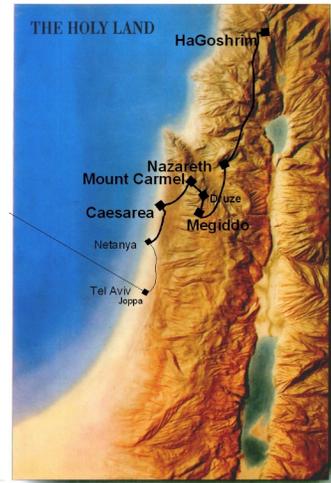
Sea. I was in Israel. "Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of Holiness." (Psalm 29:1-2) I often read, pray and praise when I awake at 3 AM.



Although I studied quietly, madly looking up Scriptures and mappings of Joppa, the Plain of Sharon, Caesarea, Mount Carmel and Megiddo, Beverly woke by 5 and we impatiently waited for the sun that would find us combing the beach line of the Mediterranean Sea before our 7 AM breakfast call. There with our feet in the mighty crashing waves we should discover the rest of today's Psalm "The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters. The voice of the LORD is full of majesty." (Psalm 29:3-4)

As the bus executed its scheduled 8 AM departure from Netanya, which we learned was named after Nathan Straus, (1848-1931) the wealthy founder of Macy's Dept. Store, who died on the Titanic, and left an inheritance to build the Jewish settlement in Israel; none of my studies prepared me for the information I was to receive as we made our first stop at the Caesarea National Park.

The port city of Caesarea was built by Herod the Great and named after his Caesar in Rome, an ancient form of kissing up. Herod was not a great personality but he was a great builder and was often called on this trip "the king we all love to hate." To butter up the non Jewish subjects, for he was Jewish, and to kiss up to the Roman Caesar he built, dedicated, and named the most Roman City in the whole promised land of Israel. Its Roman theater, hippodrome and architecture made Caesarea the avenue by which Roman culture was first funneled directly into the middle east. Its largest port in the world was intended to provide Roman ships a place to winter safely on the trade line to Egypt. But the jump start it gave his economy every spring made Caesarea take over as the leading trade center of the world.



Nathan Strause (January 31, 1848–January 11, 1931) was an American merchant and philanthropist who was to own two of New York City's biggest department stores -- R.H. Macy & Company and Abraham & Straus before giving away most of his fortune to the Zionist cause.

We wandered through the ruins of this portage city where our imagination was captured by what life was like 2000 years ago when the theater was in full production with its secret tunnel out of center stage and its circular design that allowed a stage whisper to be heard anywhere in the 2000 seat auditorium, still used for concerts today. We walked through Herod's Palace, and I heard the governor Pilot announce to his Roman soldiers in the Praetorium that they had to go to Jerusalem for that Jewish holy time of passover; their presence there was to quell any spirit of uprising among the Jews. From the ruins of Caesarea I heard Peter say to Cornelius:

“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly.” (Acts 10:34-40)



We each could imagine the cistern, not even fully excavated yet, likely housing the Apostle Paul who was held prisoner for Felix the Governor and first held in Herod's judgment hall then kept in Caesarea for 2 years until shipping to Rome. (Acts 23) We heard the crashing of hooves and chariots at the Hippodrome as animal contests and races were held on the Roman 'circus.' The 'tel' of construction built upon precious rubble which layer by layer exposed to the archaeologist a craggy history of Muslims, Mongols, Crusaders, Byzantine walls, Roman bath houses and entertainment centers. The massive harbor sunken into the sea and the fresh archaeological digs of Caesarea whet my ready appetite to see more, to comprehend it all, to come to this place again. But we had to press on to stand on Mount Carmel this very same morning. The tour bus only

paused momentarily on our exit so we could view the aquifer which carried fresh water at 250 gallons per family per day into Caesarea. Americans average only 100 gal/day/family and this gradually sloping suspended river of water, a world wonder of 2000 year old construction, was recently exposed in a hurricane, then unveiled by the archaeologist shovel, and now occupied only a few moments of our time between Caesarea and Mount Carmel. This day is fast becoming overwhelming.





The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice Vol III Day 3 Thu 29 Jan: Carmel, Megiddo

The whole land of Israel dwarfed to reality when Bev and I stood on Mount Carmel and looked across the Jezreel valley to see the town of Nazareth nestled in the foothills of Galilee, then looked back to see Caesarea on the coast and down the side of the Jezreel Valley to pick out the location of Megiddo. This condensing of the Holy land into a walkable, conceivable image seen from atop this height had as much an impact as reading Elijah's 63 word prayer which he uttered from this mountain, or hearing King Ahab and the people on their faces saying, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God." (1Kings 18:39) My mind's eye saw and heard these things on the third day of our visit to Israel. I saw the blood of those 400 prophets of Baal slain 2,906 years ago, and the sound of the abundance of rain that Elijah announced will never be driven from my ears. I was in God's Holy land, and I stood on Mount Carmel long viewed as only a dot at B-3 on map plate 9 of my Schofield reference Bible. The day presses us on and we need to be in Megiddo right after our lunch in the Druze village.

Our host served up our pita bread dipping dinner, with no individual plates or utensils but several dishes on one platter per table of five, wherewith we, the Cicanskys, and Marilyn while sharing one platter tried to dip from separate sides of the favorites because double dipping was the norm here. Our host was a secular Druid. He was still a Druid, but not living according to their very strict lifestyle. A Druid believes in reincarnation and the instant one dies, he is reincarnated in the birth of another Druid somewhere in the world. Therefore their numbers never change and the only way you can become Druze is by birth to a Druid father and mother. Their founder is supposed Jethro, the father in law of Moses, and it is taught that he will someday be reincarnated and born of a male, without female involvement. The male britches, of practicing Druids, must have a large pocket in the buttocks in case he should ever drop in, or 'out' as the case may be, unexpectedly. The Druze commune together with no entertainments and a strict set of rules taught by a father in their secret reading of their hand copied secret book. This reading is only done in the privacy of their own home and even secular Druids are very careful to maintain this secrecy. By choice or by ignorance, our host feigned the latter during the cross examination of 13 preachers. The Druze assimilate into many cultures and although they indulge in no entertainment they sure did put out an exceptional lunch for the 24 of us. They live peacefully in Israel, and even serve in the Israeli military. They are very sincere in their beliefs but 12 Baptist Preachers of the Gospel were all silently repeating John 14 in their minds: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. ⁴ ¶ And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. ⁵ Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? ⁶ Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**" The tunnel at Megiddo closes at dark and we hurry to the bus.



The Bible says that Solomon built the walls of Megiddo (2Kings 9:15) but the archaeologist shovel tells us that Ahab, 70 years later², was the king that did the major

2 Our guide, being very cognizant in the latest tools of archeology, was quite insistent that a new carbon-14 dating method which uses atomic particle analysis can date dead plant life to within 2 years of it's dying. Therein the date of the oldest wheat grains, lodged back in the rock crevices of the excavated

constructions within Megiddo. (2Kings 9:27 tells us he died there 112 years after Solomon.) A 'tel,' Arabic for 'a hill or mound,' hides layer upon layer of conquests and victors which 'tells' a history and these 27 layers of conquests was indeed at the crossroads of empires. An ideal defense overlooking an ideal farming valley strategically placed at the intersection of three continents makes Megiddo an ideal site for archaeological discovery of our 4000 years of history back to Noah. It was almost embarrassing to focus all my interest on only a few kings of Israel when peeling back before our eyes was world history from Napoleon's failed 1799 middle east campaign all the way to the Canaanite peoples that stepped off the ark in Noah's son Ham. (Gen 10:6) But such is the necessity of a 3 hour tour. Discovering city gates and concluding which were built by kings of Israel, uncovering grain 'silos' and older Bronze Age temples, horse stables and homes, palaces and water systems, are all an archaeologist's dream and a Bible student's paradise. There was no time nor allowance to descend to the bottom of the grain 'silo' while picking and dating 2,958 year old grains of wheat still lodged behind rocks. No time to sit in the gate or measure to estimate the stable capacity nor estimate army sizes and population estimates. The water system tunnel that would exit us from Megiddo would close at 4 and there was little time to conceive the rock chiseling and bolder lifting, necessitated by our 182 step descent (35m) down the 'well' and then up the grade through the tunnel to exit at the once concealed and buried spring. The Megiddo visit enlivened a flavor for all history, and for Bible accuracy. This war laden tel at the cross roads of continents should occupy more of my time because it will once again be a battle field of epic proportion:

“Zeph 3:8 ¶ Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination *is* to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, *even* all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. Zech 12:9 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 14:3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. 5 And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with thee. Re 14:19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs. Re 16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” (see also Isa 10:27-34, 24:21-23, 26:20-21, 34:1-8, 63:1-6, 66:15-16, Jer 25:29-33, Ezek 39:1-16, Joel 2:1-11, 3:9-16, Obd 1:15, Zeph 3:8, Zech 12:1-9, 14:1-5, Matt 24:27-28, Rev 14:14-20, 16:14-16, 19:17)

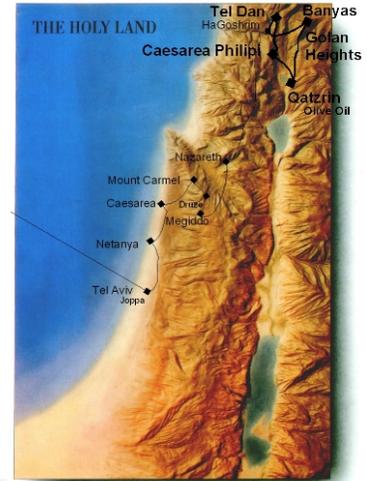
The cross section meticulously excavated into the tel exhilarated the mind for what remains yet to be discovered, but ancient history was but a passing fancy for this 10 days. I want to walk where my God, who was made flesh and dwelt among us, walked on this earth and we boarded the bus and headed toward Nazareth.

grain silo at Megiddo, came to be 900 BC in Ahab's reign, and not 990 BC in Solomon's reign. Carbon-14 dating must still rely on the assumption that the C-14 levels 3,000 years ago were roughly equivalent to those found today. Today C-14 is formed when cosmic radiation strikes nitrogen, is about 1 part per trillion, and decays back into nitrogen through beta decay, with a half life of 5,730 +/- 40 years. At the death of a plant or animal the ingestion of carbon ceases and the levels of C-14 begins this measurable decay.



**The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol IV Day 3 30 Jan: Nazareth - Tel-Dan**

As we got off the bus in Nazareth the tension in this land crackled and creaked. Three Muslim women sat beneath a huge banner which announced something about Allah, Mohammad and a desired Mosque at the entry way of this Catholic church. The one with the infant jested toward our group and said something in Arabic to the others and all three laughed and giggled and babbled on. As 24 Christians, 12 Baptist Preachers, of the Gospel walked by in silence, their chiding laughter was replaced by booing as we walked by to another 'man made' religious establishment, the Roman Catholic "Church of the Annunciation." Both establishments, Catholicism and Islam, have a history of hatred towards God's chosen. The paganism of Catholicism both amazed and appalled me. Here in the Holy Land the spokesman of Christianity is perceived to be this pagan Harlot, the Roman Catholic Church and her back up speaker the Greek Orthodox Church is competing for property rights on what they perceive to be holy dirt. As we enter the magnificent dome structure their paganism again caused me to marvel. "And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns." (Rev 17:7)



The real marvel of Nazareth was found in the archaeological dig underneath accessed from the outer courtyard of the church. There, 20 feet below the surface of the beautiful poinsettia garden was a small portion of the village of Nazareth. With an estimated population in the hundreds, it should not have been surprising that it was then said of this little place, "can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) This tiny excavation under the Church showed Nazareth to be a small poor village of masons and stone workers. The modernists want to immediately change the Bible; in their opinion, since no Black and Decker circular saw was found in the excavation Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 were errant in referencing a carpenter's son and should have mocked him as the mason's son instead. One of the preachers with us (not a Baptist), because he had a year of seminary Greek, even tried to justify their hasty changing of the Holy Scripture. Modernists do not believe in God's preservation of His inerrant, infallible, verbally inspired Scripture, and consider it their duty in life to try to change and 'fix' His book in hopes of restoring some fictitious original manuscripts that God lost 1,500 years ago. The more sincerity they have in doing God this 'favor' the more their ignorance³ aggravates this Baptist preacher. The excavation of the tiny town of Nazareth is a work in progress, the Word of God is not! We make our way north to the Golan Heights as our guide, Ron Winters, exhibits an awesome expectation of the days that lie ahead. It was getting dark as we checked in to Kibbutz HaGoshrim and we were too tired to take the short exploratory walk that we desired. The facilities and supper were superb. With interest we read their place mat at supper, Bev took hers since mine was spotted with spilled soup. The Mediterranean Kosher meals were an exceptional change to our normal high venison diet; a change little envied but delightfully enjoyed. I still like steak and egg for breakfast and interpreting Exodus 23:19, or 34:26 against it is just wrong.

³ Not their ignorance of linguistics as much as their brazen ignorance of God's almighty power to preserve his inspired words through the last 2000 years of dauntless attack.

Day 4 Friday 30 Jan of our trip started in a national park at the headwaters of the Jordan River. The invigorating hike along the small stream through a beautiful forest of trees revealed springs adding to the flow of the Jordan which supplied 12% of Israel's drinking water. We recalled King David's boast that his kingdom went from Dan to Beersheba⁴ and we read his 42 Psalm "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God,



for the living God:"
The name of this park had not properly prepared me for the breadth of what I would take in in the last portion of this walk through an Israeli watershed. Tel- Dan was indeed the telling of Dan, if one could get double meaning from the Arabic word 'tel'. Of course the Bible had already told on the Danites, in Judges 18 they left the territory allotted to them by Joshua as also stated in Josh 19:40-48. They proceeded north through the land promised to Ephraim, then through that assigned to Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun and Asher. They had found a city on Laish in the northern post of the land; a city which dwelt carelessly and isolated. When they left the two cities they had subdued, Zorah and Eshtaol, they stole and kidnapped "an ephod⁵ and teraphim⁶ and a graven image, and a molten image" (Jud 18:14) and the Levitical priest which dwelt with an Ephraimite named Micah. They easily conquered and burned the city of Laish. The tribe that abandoned their assigned inheritance, took up with a graven image and settled in the most northern tip of the promised land is not even listed among God's chosen tribes in Revelation 7:4-8. Instead his portion is doled out to Manasseh and Ephraim (son of Joseph) whom he had crossed to get to the city of Laish. It seems he also crossed God in abandoning his inheritance.

"The HaGoshrim Kibbutz and Resort Hotel lies in the heart of the Hula Valley. Founded more than fifty years ago, it was first known as HaGoshrim Guest House. During most of the period before the War of Independence this area was held by a Syrian leader, the Emir Fa'ur of the El Fadil tribe. He controlled the region from the beginning of the 20th century. In 1940 he sold his lands to the Keren Kayemet and left his palace, and it was to this site that Hagoshrim Hotel came to be built 13 years later.

"In 1943, a Hapoel HaMizrachi (religious Zionist) group arrived in the area but failed to settle in successfully, looked for a new direction and moved to the center of the country where they can be found today in "Moshav Nechalim" village and Yeshivat Nechalim, one of the largest yeshivas (colleges for religious studies) in the country.

"In the years 1944 and 1945 – three core-groups of youth movement graduates arrived from Turkey for agricultural training in the Land of Israel and named themselves "HaGoshrim", signifying "a bridge between Israel and the Diaspora". In September 1948, Kibbutz HaGoshrim was founded and the members settled in the earlier "Nechalim" group's site, interlaced with streams. This was approximately 2 kilometers south of the present location of the Kibbutz. The settlers suffered in the inundated area and requested the Jewish Agency's permission to move slightly north to higher ground where they would also gain better access to the main transport route.

"The ruins of the Emir Fa'ur's palace stood at this new site and were then being utilized by the Kibbutz members as a storehouse, laundry and various offices. The rear part of the building, behind the stone wall now in the hotel lobby, served as part of the wall of the sheep-pen used by the young farmers.

"In 1952 the idea crystallized of running a Guest House and it was a Kibbutz member, Ora Reiss, who was responsible for the idea. It was through her initiative that the Guest House gates were opened.

"The HaGoshrim Guest House opened in 1953, under Ora Reiss' management, in Emir Fa'ur's abandoned palace. The highlight for the guests was the chance to sit on wooden seats by the banks of the stream and dip their feet in the cool waters – a veritable Paradise!" History of HaGoshrim, from guest house place matt.

4 Am 8:14, Jud 20:1, 1Sa 3:20, 2Sa 3:10 17:11 24:2,15, 1Ki 4:25, 1Ch 21:2, 2Ch 30:5, Am 8:14

5 Something girt, a sacred vestment worn originally by the high priest #Ex 28:4 afterwards by the ordinary priest #1Sa 22:18 and characteristic of his office.

6 Givers of prosperity, idols in human shape, large or small, analogous to the images of ancestors.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol V Day 4 Fri 30 Jan: Tel-Dan Cont.

The archeology at Tel-Dan, again 'tel' is Arabic for mound, and descriptive of a conquered and reconquered heap of buried cities, revealed a tremendous Biblical history which indicated the exact truth of God's holy record keeping. Our first exposure to the dig at Caesarea and the tel at Megiddo breathed fresh air on our growing enthusiasm as we now stood at the gates of the city at Tel-Dan. The dig in the highest part of the city revealed the temple worship to the false gods which the Danites had stolen from Micah of Ephraim. But it also went on to reveal the presence of the larger worship area for the false god that Jeroboam had set up in Dan.



Influences of the pagan practices of the Cannanites caused temple worship to be done at the high points of an area and the Danites, with idols first, then with the calf that Jeroboam⁷ set up in Dan for worship, continued in such practice. As we descended into the city area of Dan, there were amazing discoveries of houses and palaces in partial exposure from digs, the work of students who dig for 8 weeks per season here at Dan. The recent discovery of the palace was commendable because as our guide, an archaeological enthusiast, told us, "Archeology is 10% finding fact and artifacts



and 90% imagination." Discovery of baths, houses, city gates and even the throne in this city caused them to estimate the population of the 3,000 year old city of Dan to reach about 2,000. We examined an area where a missing stone was carried off to a museum in 1999. It announced the fall of the city to a conqueror and declared that he had killed "the family of David," thus it was a very first archaeological find that indicates there was indeed a king David of Israel. The excitement of this find caused exuberance in all of Israel. Such finds could not cause me to believe my Bible more or less, but the joy it brought these Israeli archaeologists and the grief it caused their nay-sayers could even cause a Baptist to shout Alleluia!

As we rounded the hill departing from the city of Dan the sheepish grin on our guides face should have told us there was more to this site than we had seen. The city of Laish mentioned in Judges 18 (of the land called Leshem in Josh 19) lay partially exposed in an awesome archaeological dig pavilioned just around the bend of the hill. We cannot imagine what caused anyone to start digging in this location but there before us was the awesome fortified city that was built shortly after Cush and Canaan left their Grandfather Noah's Ark, and settled into this lush beautiful land. Then in Genesis 14:14 Abraham had chased his nephew Lot's captors all the way to this most northern city. Standing here in the city of Laish changed the pages of my Bible to a familiarity I had never known. We left Tel-Dan headed for the city of Caesarea Philippi.

7 1 Kings 12:32-33, 2 Kings 10:29 Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan. Cf Jeroboam's sin 1Ki 13:34 14:16 15:30,34 16:2,19,26,31 21:22 22:52, 2Ki 3:3 10:29,31 13:2,6,11 14:24 15:9,18,24,28 17:21,22 23:15

When an Israeli puts his hand to the land that God promised to him the land buds into blessing and prosperity. When Europe refused to accept oranges imported from Israel in order to shore up their own Euro and market, Israel cut down their orchards and grafted mango branches into their stumps. They completely took over a new market in Europe and prospered more than any orange orchard could. God blesses Israel. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” (Psalm 122:6)

The city Caesarea Philippi was first named Paneous after the pagan god Pan. At Herod's death the kingdom was divided amongst his sons and Philip built this city and named it after his Caesar and himself. “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) The word 'coasts' would not imply seacoast but the outer edge of the city. At this outer edge of the Caesarea Philippi there is a mammoth rock cliff with a large cave from which the city water supply was expelled. Well we could imagine Jesus overlooking this awesome scene as he declared to his disciples “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (*little stone*), and upon this rock (*large stone*) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt 16:17-18) (Italic Parenthesis added) Here Jesus was declaring that his Church, “the pillar and ground of truth” via 1Tim 3, would be built on the truth that 'Jesus was the Christ', not built, as the Catholics twist this verse, on Peter, the little stone; and certainly not built on the gargantuan rock standing before him at the 'coasts of Caesarea Philippi' as modernists would hope to sway it. Jesus would build his Church upon the truth of who he was, the Messiah, the Christ.

Now a massive rock and cave spewing water did attract a large amount of pagan worship and sure enough the front of the cliff wall was littered with temple ruins of every sort. As Beverly and I explored these temple sites three things mightily moved us. First, that we stood before such a massive rock and cave that stood here 2000 years ago. Second that mankind was so very pagan in its worship of false gods, considering that before all these false temples one day stood “the truth” and their eyes were blind to His presence. And lastly, but most profoundly, we were moved by the teachings of Jesus that He was indeed “the Christ, the son of the living God.” and that He would build His Church on that truth expounded here on the coasts of Caesarea Philippi. Bev and I got away from the bustle in a quiet moment to read the Scriptures and pray and rejoice. We were in Israel. We were sitting on real estate that God, manifest in the flesh, used as a platform to teach his disciples his purpose, to build an 'ecclesia' and 1,978 years later this pastor of a little part of it sat in awe of what He had done, despite the disobedient paganism of man's heart. Why? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

On the bus preachers of that gospel talked and jested about the trite. I wanted to sing. I wanted to shout. I wanted to read aloud the Scriptures. I wanted to weep. One after another added trite and not a word was spoken about my Lord, who on this location possibly at this very spot where we boarded a bus, had to tell Peter “thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” (Matt 16:23) Three silent tears assured me that there were a few on this tour who savored.





It proved wise to stay in easy earshot of our guide. Wise but difficult. In one sitting something about numbers came up and Ronny's accented answer intrigued me. In the Genesis account of creation the third day accounting, is captured by my Jr. Boys class poem of last year "On day three God created the land and the sea, the grass and the tree but not yet you and me." What we had not noticed in our studies was that for this 3rd day of creation God said, "that it was good" on two separate times. In Judaism this was not overlooked and all weddings are on Tuesday, the 3rd day of the week. In John 2, Jesus attended a wedding in Canaan of Galilee on what day? ... "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee;" For a Jew the soul stays with the deceased for 3 days. Therefore Jesus delayed and came to raise up Lazarus on what day? ... on the 4th day. Over and over you will find that Judaism has captured every significance about every number mentioned in the Bible and it would behoove each of you preachers, Ron reports, to have David Saluda's book "The Jewish Shades of Christianity"⁸. Put it next to your B.A.R. subscription⁹. Here at Caesarea Philippi we know that the cultic pagan practice of offering the first born son when he was 40 days old was carried out and thousands of infants were slaughtered on this massive rock that spewed out water and was considered sacred. Jesus said ... not on that rock ... but on 'this' rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt 16:18b) This cave, laden with infants blood, may have initiated the 'gates of hell' consideration.



We should note here that the giving of all the first born to the Lord on the 40th day was initiated by God as a memorial of the redeeming of Israel from Egypt and the passover of



Israel's first born in that redemption. Exodus 13:2 "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine." but the first born sons were not to be sacrificed, they were to be redeemed. "That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males *shall be* the LORD'S. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem." (Exodus 13:12-13) On the 41st day of life (cf Lev 12:3-4) "she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest:" (Lev 12:6b) Now Jesus, who fulfilled every aspect of every Jewish law, was so offered on this 41st day as recorded in Luke 2:21-24. (This was likely after the wise men left off their lucrative offering and fully payed for a redeeming lamb for "the Lamb of God which taketh way the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

8 No such book author or title were found on amazon.com and in context John 2 is obviously referencing the third day after Jesus' baptism, not the 3rd day of the week,... but hey.

9 Biblical Archeology Review <http://www.bib-arch.org/>



And while your Bible is open to Luke 2:22, look at the extreme importance of getting your pronouns correct and not using a modernist bible. Every modern bible translation¹⁰ followed the gnostic ideas of Origen's hexapla (185-254 AD) work broadcast from Alexandria Egypt, which changed the clear pronoun “her purification” to the errant pronoun “their purification” in order to imply that Jesus needed to be purified as well as Mary. Gnostics of the 1st and 2nd century did not believe in the deity of Christ and gathered their writings in Alexandria Egypt. Deists of the 20th

century did not believe in the deity of Christ and Bible Societies, both the American and United Bible Societies, gathered their writings from Alexandrian manuscripts into the NIV, ASB, NEV, NASB, etc. etc. Every modernist Bible has this brazen error. You should always check your Bible to know the modernists incursions, and make sure you use the one which follows the true text of the Textus Receptus. In English, always use the proven King James Authorized version.

On our way to the Golan Olive Oil¹¹ press for a free lunch we stopped at one of the army strongholds atop one of the Golan Heights. We were given enough information to know that the signs, warning of Syrian land mines, were serious and to carefully survey the bombed out shelters under the eucalyptus trees. Some one, who shall remain nameless, suggested that the signs which read in English and Hebrew “Danger Land Mines” may in Arabic say “Welcome Picnic Area.”



The wind and cold at this height made this stop breathtaking but a welcomed rush. The bus took us back down into the valley where an olive farmer had struck onto some genius and prosperity and was offering us a tour of his press.

Genius and prosperity yes, but his marketing skills, especially the film, had room for improvement. I learned that the pit of an olive contains a toxin which prevents plants from growing. That is fine when 500 pits fall under an olive tree and keep other plants from moving in on its territory, but it is another thing when 500 million pits need discarded from an olive processing plant. Mr. Olivepressor's genius solution was to use every part of the olive and discard nothing. It turns out the toxins in the olive pit make a powerful scrubbing soap for men, and a host of awesome skin care products, with almost anti bacterial properties, for women. God blesses these Jews with their ingenuity. They are reaching the place where God said “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make *you* afraid:” (Lev 26:3-6a) How unfortunate they are yet in disregard of His last command: “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John 6:39)

¹⁰ Except the New King James that had a couple born again translators who promised not to use the Alexandrian dribble in their work

¹¹ “The encounter between ancient tradition and quazi futuristic technology gave birth to the amazing Golan Olive-oil Mill in Qatzrin, capital of the Golan. www.golanoliveoil.com



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice

Vol VII Day 4 Fri 30 Jan: Olive Press and Golan Heights

So we learned about olives and olive oils. Remarkably the difference between a green olive and a black olive is about two weeks on an olive tree. The first pressing of the olive squeezes out what they call virgin olive oil. This is the oil that was used in the OT tabernacle and temple worship, very pure, very carefully pressed and handled so as not to crush any pit. It was interesting that I left the Finger Lakes wine capital of NYS to learn that grapes cannot thus be crushed with stone lest they break a grape seed and embitter the wine. The best way to crush grapes is with the naked foot, as seen in the “I Love Lucy” show which officially, and even internationally documents that process. Also it was later noted that in reality there is no such thing, in life or in olive oil, as an “extra” virgin, it is either virgin or not. They tried to make up some line about their pH testing level making their oil “extra” virgin, and labeled their product as such.

The second pressing produces olive oil, a few pits may have been cracked in this press and the oil may be the more bittered with toxins by them. The third pressing breaks more pits and produces an oil suitable for burning in lamps. The fourth pressing crushes all the pits and is used for making soap and cleansing creams. The art of crushing olives is indeed an art of several stages. An art which I knew more about now than I would ever need, but it is another stone in the rich mosaic of life and learning.

As the bus wound up the hills and around the switch backs that would expose us to the Golan Heights I could not anticipate the heroic blood we would find on the top. Our guide had previously unveiled the story of Elie Cohn (“Our Man in Damascus, Elie Cohn” by Ben-Hagan) a Jew planted into a Syrian settlement in South America, who became an advisor to the Syrians army, yet remained loyal to Israel. Elie gave the subtle advise of covering each strategic Syrian stronghold with a non-native desert tree called Eucalyptus. Such a tree provided comforting shade to the watch guard of Syrian soldiers but unwittingly provided a giant Israeli 'bulls eye' over every Syrian strong hold. Perched high above the “Yarden and the Kimeret,” these heights were taken on the 4th day of the 6 day war in June of 1967. With the Syrian shelling ceased, Israeli settlements began industriously building beautiful villages and involving themselves in the agriculture and dairy farming industries that we could see spread out before us from this magnificent vista. Syrians make war not farms.



With spunk and vigor our guide explained some of the Yom Kippur War of August 1973, that found him serving in the Israeli army. The Syrians had recaptured most of the Golan Heights and although he would not use the word miraculous, the Syrians mysteriously fled the area leaving only the local Druze with their farms in four villages. (Ein Kinya, Majel Shams, Butata and Mas'ada) As we learned earlier of the Druz, they desire to live their agricultural lives peacefully in the nations they occupy, here raising sheep, goats, cows

“Our Man in Damascus: Elie Cohn”
by Eli Ben-Hanan (Paperback)
The thrilling, shocking, true story of Israel's most daring spy: The story of our priceless most brave spy in Damascus. This book is based on facts and events which took place on the dates and in the places indicated. The dialogs and some of the names have been changed in order to complete the picture, and so as not to prejudice persons still living among us. This book reveals about the personality and deeds of Elie Cohn, Our man in Damascus, is merely a drop in the ocean of his outstanding achievements; the rest we will learn only years from now, if at all. Paperback, 143 pages Price \$13.95

and apples. They also flourished here when Israel stepped in.

Although the Golan Heights is outside of the Biblical borders of Israel's promised land and is considered "Ever Ha'Yarden" (the other side of the

KEY EVENTS
From <http://news.bbc.co.uk>
June 1967: Israel captures Golan Heights during Six-Day War
1973: Middle East War: Syria's military attempt to regain Golan Heights fails
1974: Israel, Syria sign armistice
1981: Israel annexes Golan Heights
1999: Peace talks; Israeli premier and Syrian foreign minister meet
January 2000: Peace talks break down
January 2008: Indirect talks resume through Turkish intermediaries

Jordan) it was good for us to visit this area now. The political savvy we gained as Israel struggles with giving the Golan Heights over to Syria as the "land for peace consideration" provides a deep insight into the heart of the Israeli people. On this mountain height covered with prickly pair cactus, Ronnie likened the Israeli people to "Saberous," the fruit of this cactus, which was prickly on the outside but soft and sweet on the inside. You could see forever.



In 1999 Benjamin Netanyahu talked with then Syrian president Hafey Assad about withdrawal from the Golan Heights for peace. Ehud Barak continued the talks with Assad's son Hashar. Days before the Israeli elections Syria's

attitudes towards peace may indeed be turning. All have opinions that way too much responsibility now rests on an inexperienced token US president named after Mohammad's horse, Barrack. I am reminded of an old Chinese curse I once heard "May you live in interesting times." 'B-B' as Netanyahu is called here, would be a right wing hawk in next weeks Israeli election, but whether he or the 'centrist' party leader gets in, they will be at odds with our very left wing selection and his very left wing congress.

Coming down from the mountain tops we passed a fortress high atop a mount and visible from 'everywhere.'



Nimrod was always thought to have been built by the Crusaders fending off the Muslims. Recent archaeological digs there revealed it was probably built by the Muslims to fend off the

Crusaders. We did not explore there, but the whole history of the crusaders and their impact on Israel as Catholics slaughtered Jews from Europe to Jerusalem would make another tour emphasizing that period enlightening. However, I already have a plate full of reading I want to do on Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David and Ahab, on the 6 day war, the Yom Kippur war and Sulaman the Magnificent¹² (1522-1566) The wealth of things I did not know loomed before me as we headed back to HaGoshrim for supper and rest. Doubtless I would taste every kind of olive that was there offered.

Benjamin Netanyahu was born in 1949 in Tel Aviv and grew up in Jerusalem. He spent his high school years in the US, where his father, historian Benzion Netanyahu, was doing research. Returning to Israel in 1967, Mr. Netanyahu enlisted in the IDF and served in an elite commando unit, Sayeret Matkal. ... Discharged from the IDF in 1972, Mr. Netanyahu participated in the Yom Kippur War and reached the rank of captain. In 1993 Mr. Netanyahu was elected Likud party chairman and served as head of opposition until his election to Prime Minister of Israel in 1996. During his term as Prime Minister, Mr. Netanyahu implemented policy that combined fighting terror with advancement of the peace process. Its cornerstone was the conclusion of well-measured agreements with the Palestinians that insisted on reciprocity. During his three year term the number of terror attacks drastically decreased. <http://www.netanyahu.org/biography.html> accessed 9 Mar 09

12 Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent, as he is known in the West, is known by the more noteworthy title of al-Kanuni, the Lawgiver, to his Muslim nation. He was responsible for bringing the Ottoman Empire (al-Dawlat al-'Uthmaniyyah) to its zenith of territorial possessions as well as cultural, religious and political prestige. His rule lasted from 1520 to 1566 and he was a contemporary of the Hapsburg Empire's Charles V, England's King Henry VIII and France's King Francis I. From <http://www.thenagain.info/webchron/MiddleEast/Sulayman.html> accessed 9 Mar 09



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol VIII Day 5 Sat 31 Jan: The Sabbath Day



I awoke well before dawn on 'shevet' (sometimes 'shabbat') the Jewish weekly day of rest that we call 'sabbath'. The Hebrew letter 'Bet', ב or בּ, found in your Bible at Psalm 119:9, is the first of the BeGaD KePhaT letters carrying two pronunciations. It is pronounced 'v' as in 'vine' unless there is a dot, called a Daghesh Lene¹³, in its center, which clues us to pronounce it 'b' as in 'boy'. Hebrew Bible manuscripts did not have vowel marks or Daghesh Lene dots until added by the Massoretes¹⁴ in the 8th century¹⁵. Thus there are numerous English pronunciations and we often differ from the modern Hebrew tongue. The various pronunciations aside the Massoretic text did capture every word of the Old Testament Scriptures¹⁶. Even the famous ben Asher ('son of Asher' group of Massorettes) manuscripts and the ben Naphtali ('son of Naphtali' group of Massorettes) manuscripts only differ on a few vowel marking methods with no consonant differences. Modernist textual critics play up these differences in an attempt to change the Bible to 'correct' manuscript errors that they themselves manufacture. Thus,

At Mount of Beatitudes



for our short Hebrew Lesson here, the Hebrew letters בּ ג ד כּ פ ת would be pronounced B-G-D-K-P-T, while Hebrew letters ב ג ד כ פ ת, would be pronounced V – Gh – Dh – Ch - Ph - Th. But that is in old Hebrew, not modern. Being in Israel was a tremendous encouragement to my Hebrew studies. I hope yours will be set aflame; anyone who is 'someone' was multilingual and pursued linguistic studies, a Christian should at least strive to become cognizant of the languages his Christ communicated in.

Christians with a rudimentary Bible knowledge also know that Sunday is not the sabbath, nor the 'Christian Sabbath' that has been errantly marketed by the Roman Catholic Church who “think to change times and laws” and to “wear out the saints of the most High” (Dan 7:25) A slight Bible knowledge here will also defeat the false teachings

13 Practico, Gary D., and VanPelt, Miles V., “Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammer”, Zondervan
 14 The Massoretic text is named for a group of Hebrew scholars called the Massorettes. They had schools in Babylon and Tiberius by the Sea of Galilee. They flourished from 500 to 1,000 A.D. The word "Massoretic" comes from the Hebrew word "massorah" which means "tradition". The idea is that of both preserving something and passing it down to the next generation. The Masorettes both preserved the Hebrew text and made accurate copies to hand down to succeeding generations. <http://www.lightforisrael.org/history/histTnach.htm> accessed 03/17/09
 15 The Massorettes main concern was safeguarding the Hebrew consonantal text. Originally the Hebrew text was written only in consonants as there were no vowels. The Masorettes added vowel markings underneath the consonants called ‘matres lectiones' meaning "mothers of reading". The vowel markings allowed those not familiar with the text the chance to read it. They also provided explanations of ambiguous words, and counted the verses, words and letters of the Old Testament. The standardization of the Hebrew text was completed between 600 - 700 A.D. Ibid
 16 Daniel Bomberg first printed the Hebrew text in 1516-17. This was called the First Rabbinic Bible, Daniel Bomberg edition. Bomberg published the Second Great Rabbinic Bible in 1524-25. It was edited by Abraham Ben Chayyim and is also called the Ben Chayyim Massoretic text. This became the standard Massoretic text for the next 400 years. This is the Hebrew text that the King James English Old Testament was translated from in 1611. [Biblical Criticism Historical, Literal, Textual by Harrison, Walkie, and Guthrie, 1978, p. 47-82.]

of the Ellen Whitists, called Seven Day Adventists, who will not recognize that we worship the Christ on the day that he rose from the tomb. On the first day of the week Christians have been so worshiping in the morning and evening for 1,978 years now; ever since the apostles found the tomb open in the AM, and found the Saviour amongst them in the PM. Don't be fooled about the importance of the first day of the week, it has nothing to do with the last day of the week, except that Christians are in a perpetual rest from their labors (Hebrews 4) and need not observe the Old Testament Law concerning the sabbath.

Anyway, we were told to watch out for 'shevet' elevators the night before. Since Orthodox Jews and all other Jews courteous of the strange Orthodox rendering, were not allowed to press an electrical button on 'shevet', for it would constitute causing work to be done, 'Shevet' elevators automatically stopped at every floor, on the way up, and on the way down. Of course there was even more work being done in this, but no Jew initiated the work after sundown on Friday. They were also not allowed to cook after sundown which made the aspect of our breakfast this morning intriguing I have not yet mentioned it, but indeed every morning we had a very interesting Kosher breakfast.



Each Mediterranean Kosher breakfast consisted of vegetables a plenty, olives, peppers, salad, everything you could make from crushed chick-pea or crushed sesame seeds, fish, eggs fried, scrambled or boiled, pancakes without syrup, olives, bread a plenty, lots of fruits, cereal, yogurt, cheeses sliced, cottaged and scrambled, and did I mention olives Never, never, never did they mix dairy and meat together, not even egg with meat. The 'shevet' breakfast had all that less what needed cooked fresh, no egg, fish or pancakes. They could serve meats on 'shevet' but not cook them. The trip must have been designed to get more exciting each day. It was so for Bev and I, and today we were headed for the sea of Galilee.

We got our bags around a half hour early and secured front seats on the bus so as not to miss a word that Ronnie, our guide, would say. The back of the buss was littered with incessant side conversations, jesting and a garbled speaker system. In this ten days I was far more interested in what we were experiencing in Israel, than in a pastors programs, problems, persuasions, learning or wit. This was not, however, a majority opinion amongst these 12 Baptist preachers. Elbowing their way to the front seats was first the Carlsons and Carpenters, then us and the Picketts. Our pending first glimpse of the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of Beatitudes and Capernaum had us almost giddy as we waited for the others to board the bus.

Cameras were clicking madly as we rounded the hill that offered us a view of the Sea of Galilee nestled in the valley below. Living in lake country and fishing on lake Erie and Ontario of the Great Lakes heightened my expectation for seeing this 'sea', it seemed larger at C-3 of Plate 9 in my Scofield reference Bible than it was in person. It was awesome to see it just the same and our first stop was at the Mount of Beatitudes Monastery.





The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol IX Day 5 Sat 31 Jan: The Sea of Galilee
Tourism zealots have outlined thousands of places



where George Washington slept. When you cross a tourism zealot with a religious zealot and give them 10 times the time to enhance their version of events it has quite an amazing result. Somewhere here on the Sea of Galilee Jesus “Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them.” (Matt 5:1-2a) We read the Sermon on the Mount Scriptures while overlooking the sea and before going to the Catholic Church where nuns were shushing everyone that entered. Beverly and I by passed the octagonally shaped ornately domed Church to see the cone shaped hollow funneling down to the sea side. It was likely just such a place where Jesus delivered the 9 Blessed 'R's that are recorded in Matthew 5. As we paced down the path that circled the vineyard which now occupied this hollow the dome of the Church suddenly erupted into 3 part male harmony as three Baptist Preachers sang several songs of the faith. The sea resounded echo blended with the amplification of the dome to cause the birds to hush. We stood in awed silence with shivers of excitement in my spine as I considered that ours, indeed is the Kingdom of heaven, not because of our meekness or our mercy, but because of the Nazarene who walked on this sea of Galilee. I wish now I had overlooked the Catholicness of the Church entry and cast my rough voice into the mix with the three singers. Indeed if a few more Baptist inhibitions had been broken the whole lot of us could have made the mountainside echo with the joyous Gospel message in song, it would have been enough to make the shushing nuns blush.

Hindsight always brings to view the things one could have done or should have done. Bringing each thought or action into conscious consideration in the present tense and making them subject to the review they will receive in hindsight is a life skill that few attain, but a journal is a most helpful tool for attaining that skill.

I scanned through Matthew 5, 6 and 7. We were at the mount of Beatitudes where Jesus taught not just the 9 Blessed 'R's but 3 chapters of practical lessons on living for God; on salt and light; on alms and prayers; on riches and trust; on judgment and A.S.K., (Asking, Seeking, Knocking); on straight gates and false prophets' on false professions of faith; and on being both a hearer and a doer. As I considered the depth of his teaching in the brevity of our stay here the shallowness of man was in constant reminder in the shrines all around me. I knew I would be here today but had not prepared in the least; even by rereading these three chapters in the quiet of my morning devotions. In hindsight, I should have. It started to rain as the bus ambled down the slope to where we were to board the boat and launch out into the deep... with no nets, (cf Luke 5:4) there was, however, an expected drought of precious memories.

The water levels on the Sea of Galilee were down about 15 feet below normal, and about 50 feet from levels when the son's of Zebedee fished here. Slippery docks lead us down across dried beach front to the Worship Tours Ltd. fisherman's replica boat moored at the end. The rain drizzled and the engine chugged to life amid claims that this was only the second fisherman's boat owned and operated here by believers; the first was owned by those couple of son's of Zebedee. As the boat drifted to a halt centered in the norther tip of the Sea of Galilee, and as Aneil, the boat owner, sang several contemporary Christians songs and spoke of his Lord and Saviour Jesus the Messiah, I was again struck by the smallness of the sea and the greatness of our God. As Baptist

voices blended with the Messianic Jews¹⁷ in praises to the Son of God, who had walked on and calmed this troubled sea so many years ago, the reality that God became flesh and dwelt among us gripped hearts in a way that I had not experienced in any old fashioned souther camp meetings nor stoic awestruck worship service of Yankees (or even Canadians as I suppose.) My military ventures across the face of the USA had brought me into rich contact with both Southern and Northern and also exposed the ever present hypocrisy of each. It is noted here but not developed that the sincerity of each of these two 'poles' loves the other, while the hypocrisy of these two backgrounds despises and speaks ill of the other. This tour had a strange unbalanced combination of each pole but, praise the Lord, no perceived hypocrisy. As Matthew took the microphone and Sue the keyboard and great songs of the faith rang out from this 'mixed multitude' nestled on a replica fisherman's boat adrift in the Sea of Galilee, this preacher of the Gospel of Christ flooded with an excitement and reverent awe that reached deep into my stoic Baptist upbringing which quelled any shout or run that my flesh wanted to do as my eye moistened with more than the misty rain that fell on this worship service.

As songs echoed from either shore I refreshed the Scriptures of Jesus calling Simon and Andrew to follow him and become fishers of men, of calling James the son of Zebedee and John his brother from their net mending; of his sleep and calming of the sea from Matt 8, Mark 4, and Luke 8; of his walk on this stormy Sea of Galilee in Matt 14, Mark 6 and John 6; and of Peters stepping out of the boat and walk on the water with him in Matt 14; and of the



drought of fishes in broken nets that marked the beginning of his earthly ministry as well as the drought of an hundred and fifty and three great fishes in unbroken nets that marked the end of his earthly ministry and provided the epilogue of John's precious gospel. I had waited 46 years of my Christian life to sit here on a replica fisherman's boat and read these Scriptures and sing these songs and the power and effect of this hour can be captured in life but not fully expressed in a photo or journal. As I grasped Beverly's hand on the slippery dock and we made our way to the boat museum, our eyes connected and I knew of two who knew the presence and power of worshipping a Saviour Redeemer on the very sea that he created and then walked upon.

Before heading to lunch we visited the boat museum where the 2000 year old boat was on display. The video of its recovery and transport to the museum displayed the zeal and excitement of the Israeli Archaeological Society and the students that participated in the laborious project. After years of oil treatments and care the 2000 year old water soaked wood, which would vaporize into dust if allowed to dry, was finally able to support several coats of varnish and be on display.

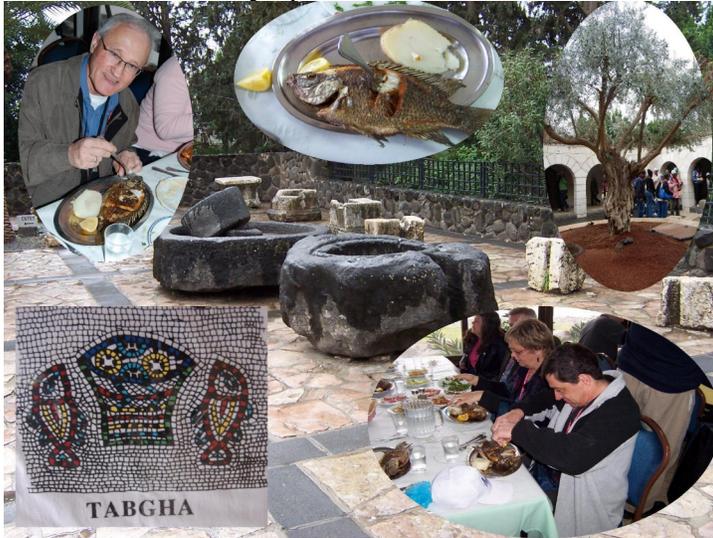
17 The Greek word for 'Messiah' is 'Christ'. Since he was expressed and expected in Hebrew language before the Greek expression, Hebrew believers call themselves Messianic, not Christian. In the Hebrew NT Acts 11:26b will say "And the disciples were called *Messianic* first in Antioch." Some of my peers erred when they refused to consider believing 'messianics' as true believers because they refused the name 'christian.' This was a self induced, artificially contrived language barrier built on stubbornness.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol X Day 5 Sat 31 Jan: Peter n Capernaum



The restaurant where our lunch was to be served was large eloquent and empty . The olive press in the reception area caught our attention because of our rigorous tour of Golan Olive Oil Inc. The title of our lunch “Peters Fish” caught our attention as well because our guide laughed at the thought of us eating it. And the decor of this restaurant intrigued us because it was just out of Capernaum where Peter caught fish before he walked on water. The arrival of our entries seemed to meet every expectation of our guide. Peter's Fish was all cooked and all there, staring at us through the whole meal and very delicious. Beverly opted for the “Peter's Chicken”. All had a marvelous time.



Peter's 1st century house was excavated out from under another building supported on 20th century beams. It was located at the outskirts of Capernaum, and positively identified as where Peter once lived. Here the loudest of Jesus' apostles taught some of the earliest converts of Christianity, which would “continue steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers.” Walking into the excavated city of Capernaum gave one the very

Roman sense of being there in 30 AD when Jesus had his abode amongst the streets we now stood upon. We examined in detail the Synagogue and as our guide clarified and explained the means of telling a 1st century Synagogue from a 2nd century Synagogue to one of our number who was disposed to doubt, my mind went off to Jesus' reading and teaching in the Synagogue “and they were astonished at his doctrine for his words were with power.” (Luke 4:31) The size of the Synagogue in a town can be used to determine a rough estimate of a towns population. We entered the side court of the Synagogue and the guide pointed out the markings etched in the stone floor. Children did their studies in the Synagogue and this courtyard served as a playground where they played 'hopscotch' and 'tic-tack-toe' type games. Capernaum was quite a distance from the sea. I had heard talk of the lagoon which had dried up and obviously the sea's level had dropped significantly in the past 2,000 years even as it had in the last 20 years¹⁸.

I looked out over the ruins of Capernaum, the city where Jesus came to dwell (Matt 4:13), here the centurion of great authority and great faith came to Jesus for his sick of the palsy servant. (Matt 8:5) He came to Peter's house where we had stopped earlier and He had found Peter's wife's mother sick of a fever. (Matt 8:14, Mark 1:29, Luke 4:38.) Here, in the ruins of an unoccupied, dried up, sea forsaken, man forsaken, once bustling city I recalled the words of the Christ:

¹⁸ I had often missed the fact that this Sea of Galilee size difference even showed in the plate maps of my Scofield Bible. The maps from the OT period always showed a huge sea, while the NT ones showed a much smaller one.



“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:23-30)

On the bus we traveled south toward the Jordan river outlet, the terrain grew rugged and the hills steep and jagged. As we passed by Genessar you could imagine the old sea level up to the edge of these steep hills and easily picture a herd of swine plunging down the side of any one of these slopes (Matt 8, Mar 5, Luke 5) and drowning in the sea. In the oldest of these accounts Matt 8 mentions a pair of devil possessed men while Mark and Luke's account gives all the emphasis to just one of the two. Also Matthews account gives a various spelling for the country of Gergesenes (Matt 8), of Gadarenes (Mark 5), of Gadarenes (Luke 8). It was not uncommon for a country to have several various labels and it was not uncommon that those with a Hebrew tongue would spell and pronounce names at odds with those with a Greek tongue, ... and it is all too common that

modernists Bible translators think nothing of changing God's words in order to synchronize these variations. It is all too common that Christians today are hood winked into accepting and using these modernist deviations from the actual preserved Greek text. Use an accurate, albeit old translation of God's holy Scripture; use a King James Authorized Bible. It translates God's Words, not mans corrections to them.



Some of the Nigerian tourists were gathered to leave the Jordan River bank as our bus pulled in. Their white robed bare foot 'chieftons' had drawn curious questions from our group as we had encountered them several times at our previous stops. The Nigerian government had sponsored so many free pilgrimages to Mecca for its Muslim population, that somehow they were persuaded to freely sponsor all Christian or Jewish pilgrimages to Israel. They were here by the bus loads. Several bought jugs of Jordan river water and rushed off to their bus with with their 'magic holy water,' ... I expected that made them more Catholic/Protestant than Bible believing Baptists but I had not yet found one that spoke English.

and should never be trivialized, especially by Baptists on the banks of the Jordan River. When Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox finally made their protest against Catholicism and affirmed that salvation is by faith without works or indulgence, they got the grace of God into the proper perspective, ... the perspective that Baptists, by various names previous, had then been preaching for 1,400 years! But these 'protesters' never got the doctrine of baptism even close to the Biblical doctrine. The whole glorification of baptism in the Jordan River was herein a missed opportunity to preach the message "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh, precious is the flow that washes white as snow. No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus." In hindsight, again, all the Baptist preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should have united their voices and sang it from the baptismal steps at the Jordan River. Twelve Baptist preachers, only spectators, some clicking cameras, some jesting where baby sprinkling Protestants now baptize by immersion without understanding. There was ample meaninglessness unchecked and unmentioned. What a shame. What a silence.

Driving through the little towns on our way back up to Kibbutz Ginossar was delightfully relaxing as our long day drew to its close. Even in Israel we detected our coffee and donut stop by the two police cars in the lot. Starbucks Coffee had attempted a go in Israel but Jews were accustomed to a richer roasted coffee than they offered. 'Aroma' coffee shops had taken over the market. Their prices didn't rival Starbucks. The stop, the coffee, the donut, and the Christian fellowship topped off a very busy, but superb day in Israel.



In our new room at the Kibbutz of Ginossar, Bev and I discussed what we had seen. I revisited my own baptism in Ford's pond by Faith Baptist

Church in Gang Mills NY, 47 years ago, Bev's 35 years ago. It would be folly and error to be re-baptized in the Jordan River. I had opportunity to clarify Baptist baptism today but I denied him thrice. It is only his blood that can wash away sin. No water from a Jordan River could. After an exceptional supper and exhausting day our talk with our Lord and reading of His word together closed day 5 of our tour with a peace that passes all understanding. Tomorrow was the the Lord's day, the first day of the week, the day God raised his son from the grave, and we would get to worship him here in Israel. Expectation remained peaked as we crossed the half way point of our time here.

Day 6 Sun 1 Feb: Kibbutz Ginossar on the shore of Galilee was just too nice a place to spend only one night. Supper was an especially fancy buffet meal in a packed dining room. Ron and Brian had intended that we all sit together for a formal dinner but some of us arrived early and the overwhelming crowds for dinner had foiled the plan. The meal was exceptional just the same. We awoke at the edge of dawn intent on walking on the sea shore before breakfast. Armed with these intentions a New Testament and a harmonica we started on our quest for the path that would get us to the sea. We met Greg and Janise Johnson on the same quest and eventually the four of us met with success. The sun rose to find us worshipping on the Lord's day, on the Sea of Galilee.





The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XII Day 6 Sun: Gideon Springs, Bet Alpha

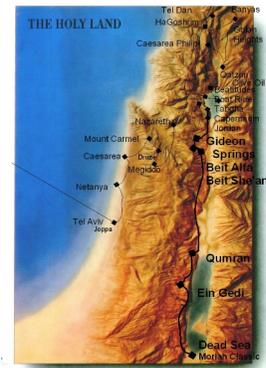
We boarded the bus, filled from breakfast, and I was

anticipating a surprise stop at Gideon Springs. Brian, the Christian Journeys coordinator, had asked me to be ready to preach at our Sunday service today and had mentioned an anticipated visit to the spring where the mighty man of valor, Gideon, had his 32,000 man army narrowed down to 300, so that God's mighty hand would be visible against the oppressive Mideonites. I had started the year preaching a sermon about possessing God's promised land and its application of a Christians possessing God's promised life. I have enjoyed the few times I have gotten to preach to preachers and found one does not need to fully develop the points of a message, just make them and move on. As the bus pulled into Gideon Springs, I was pondering the possibility of preaching from Joshua to Gideon since both Joshua and Judges started with approximately the same verse.

The rain increased as we went down the scenic trail to the spring where Gideon's men would have either bent to the knee or gone down to the belly to get a refreshing drink of water. I visualized the armies of Midionites thicker than grasshoppers and riding their camels just over the hill. God wants to fight our battles for us. He wants to hand us victories on a platter and watch the enemies of our soul flee in total defeat. To often we would rather war against them in our own might, or worse, compromise with them and let the oppressive destructive habits of life hold us in bondage.

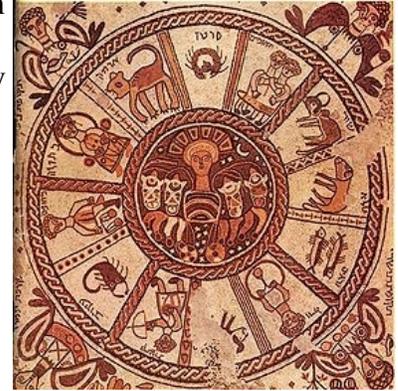
The sprinkle turned to rain as Ronnie gave us some ancillary details about the area and about Gideon. But for the rain it would have been an excellent location for an outdoor Sunday morning worship service. Bev and I had quietly worshiped already, but believers had been uniting with other believers on the day that Christ arose for 1,978 years now and we did not intend to make this one an exception. This Lord's day, however, was more in the hands of the agenda carefully, tactfully driven by our guide. Although I thought the early morningness of worship on the Lord's day more important than creature comfort and considered 1st thing in the morning more fitting than the 'convenience' of moving to a more convenient time, the leading of the wet masses outweighed a single preference and we headed for the bus. Bev and I wore an even coating of rain afforded by no umbrella. We each turned down several offers to share one, and I saw several dry left arms contrasting right arm soaked to the bone. Sharing umbrellas is not often practical and wet thanksgiving should accompany rain in a droughted land. We were driven to Beit Alpha to see another mosaic.

Two thousand years ago Israel was a tourist wonder of the world for three reasons. The Synagogue at Beit Alpha was an apparent encroachment of compromise into one of those wonders. I had no idea how so, even as we viewed the ancient ruins at Beit Alpha. We were ushered into an enclosure which housed the mosaic floor of a sixth century Synagogue. We spread out on the platform which encircled the mosaic and our guide asked us to observe, analyze, and think about the Synagogue floor before us. We contemplated. I mused. I had just recently considered how little people think for themselves these days because we let every one else do our thinking for us. (Usually horrid liberals like Katie Couric or Ted Koppel) It was refreshing to ponder the floor before us. Beverly pointed out the child sacrifice in the lower right corner, I picked out the 12 signs of the Zodiac and neither of us could follow the apparent story line in the mosaic before us. The drawings looked 3rd gradish and I couldn't comprehend the



importance of this examination.

Our guide finally stated the obvious for us. After 70 years of Babylonian captivity the Jews had so learned the first and second commandment that there was no graven image or likeness of man or beast found anywhere in the land, and especially not in the temple or any Synagogue. Yet here, in mosaic, in the floor of this 6th century Synagogue lay the image and likeness of several, ... to include even the signs of the Zodiac. The story line was less sinister than Bev and I had imagined. The child sacrifice was actually supposed to depict Abraham's offering up Issac. The likeness of a ram caught in a thicket was pointed out. The angel who prevented Abraham's knife from its sacrifice was supposedly there. The servants left with the donkey were also depicted. Menorahs and a building with other creatures were poorly depicted on the other side but central was the pagan Zodiac rotated so Cancer rather than Aries was at the top. This rotation, and the counterclockwise depiction of the signs indicated either ignorance or purpose. It looked to me like the former.



The presence of the Zodiac in a Synagogue was especially amazing. The Zodiac was developed by Babylonian astronomers to denote the annual cycle stations along the apparent path of the Sun across the heavens through the constellations that divide the ecliptic into twelve equal zones of celestial longitude. Although the term Zodiac means 'circle of animals' the constellation assignments²⁰ were not all animals. Astrologers construed that movement of the naked eye planets²¹ through the zodiac, called wandering stars, was a means of exploring and predicting what their gods were doing on Earth, even, eventually, imagining that the stars positions at ones birth determined their personalities and destinies. Such pagan polytheistic tomfoolery was now on display on a Synagogue floor... it also made its way into our society and is portrayed in every newspaper in our nation! Woe be to any Christian that falls for such anti-God paganism.



The tremendous compromise of this mosaic and the blundered Zodiac and poor quality of the art work was imaginatively portrayed as possible in a short interactive video. When I understood the enormity of the compromise that was made here I

feared that there was not enough made of the inclusion of images and paganism and too much made of the child like art that showed up on a Synagogue floor.

Beit Alpha was in interesting stop on our Lord's day in Israel. It illustrated how worldly compromise infiltrates our faith. Modernists welcome the compromise, expecting that Judaism had finally begun an 'evolution' which had incorporated Grecian-Roman culture into its faith and practices. Lester Roloff, the great Texas, Independent Baptist preacher and founder of the Rebekah Home for Girls (1968) said "This world wants mixers, but God wants separators." He still does.

20 Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn (us), Aquarius, Pisces

21 Wondering Star Planets visible with the naked eye are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn



The Half Shekel Journal By Ed Rice Vol XIII Day 6 Sun 1 Feb: Bet She'an

The first book of Samuel closes with the death of Israel's first king. I cannot read that last chapter without sacred pause and a quake in my voice. There the valiant men of Jabeshgilead periled life and crossed the valley to the then Philistine stronghold in Bet She'an. On Sunday we stepped into the ancient ruins of that city nestled on the western edge of the Jordan valley below mount Gilboa. Just off the Jezreel valley, Bet She'an in ancient time was called the gateway to the Garden of Eden.

Although not specifically mentioned in the life of Christ, it was the capital of Decapolis, which stretches up the eastern edge of the Jordan valley and is mentioned in Matthew 4:25 and Mark 5:20. When I saw the immense spread of Roman ruins scattered out beneath the massive tel of the trade controlling fortress, I found it hard to imagine that Christ did not walk these streets and harder still to imagine that had he, the Bible would remain silent about it. Though he did not visit this stronghold of Roman culture, the word of God's presence in the flesh, and the miracles that he did, surely did enter Bet She'an.

The ruins of a once populous city lay naked before us. It was mentioned that archaeologists love natural disasters that promote the destruction and abandonment of major civilizations. Not in present but in past, and not for the destruction, but for the fresh ripe historical evidences. The 749 A.D. earth quake which rolled the streets and leveled Beth Shean was a fitting example of such disaster.

But before examination of these remains, our guide, who was blessed with a very readable expressive personality, was excited to demonstrate for us a theater which still had a sounding wall in the back of the stage. We stood at the top right hand corner of the huge semicircular theater. We were reminded of the mere 2,000 seat theater which we visited on day 3 at Caesera, that an amphitheater has two half circles of seats connected, and that this particular theater would allow a whisper on stage to be heard throughout. Ronnie turned off his talking mic and gave us these reminders as he talked in a normal voice and descended down the stairs to the stage below. From our perch in the top row of this 10,000 seat theater we could plainly hear his footsteps and his whisper as he crossed the stage below. What an awesome, ingeniously designed theater for worldliness.

My children's generation were taught from kindergarten that these were cave men just steps ahead of the primeval creatures that crawled from a primeval sea. In reality the construction of Beth Shean revealed the truth that mankind is 'DE'volving not 'E'volving. Knowledge is increasing, as God said it would in the last days (Daniel 12), but the capabilities of man, and certainly his wisdom is not increasing. Yeah, I fear, especially as a high school math teacher who promoted Euclidean Geometry²² as necessary, that capabilities and wisdom are decreasing in our day and age. I think it was Mark Twain who said "Common sense is not as common as it used to be."

As I stood on Beth Shean's "42nd St. and 5th Avenue" intersection, I listened to our

22 "Civilization owes a great debt to Euclid, the Greek mathematician who organized three centuries of Greek mathematics into a deductive system. His completed work, the *Elements* consists of thirteen books and for more than two thousand years has been the basic text used for teaching geometry to high-school students. The *Elements* progresses methodically from the simple to the complex: it begins with precise definitions and unquestionable axioms which lead to profound consequences. ... Abraham Lincoln, at the age of forty, studied the first six books of the *Elements* as a training for his mind. ... Blaise Pascal, the French philosopher and mathematician who founded the modern theory of probabilities in the seventeenth century, said, "I think geometry the finest training the human mind can have. The whole art of reasoning is contained in its precepts." ref. "*Plane Geometry, a Traditional Approach*" ABeka Book, Pensacola Christian College, Pensacola FL 32523-9160 pp 52-53.



guide describe the 1st century's hustle and bustle of the market place, the elaborate goods from Asia, Europe, and Egypt that would be offered as wares, the open gambling and lottery sales, the liquor and drug market, and open prostitution that was rampant in the Roman culture and on the streets of Beth Shean. We marveled how similar America is. Man is not evolving! By His own words the world, at Christ's second coming, will be as it was in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was not moral at his first coming.

The tell tale waves of shock that still stood in the wrinkled streets and the dominoed toppling of the pillars of Ron's "5th Avenue" were evidence of the earthquake that broke this cities back 1,259 years ago. Almost wholly excavated in the past 12 years, the ruins of the city spread out over what looked like a 30 acre field I once plowed. As some of the more exuberant in our group headed off to climb the immense tel that over looked the city, Ron mentioned that the very wall where King Saul was hung may have been uncovered at the far end of the city. That thought loomed in my mind so that I did not hear or note all he said about the Roman baths used for Church baptisteries or the several third and fourth century Churches found in the city, or how Christians had prompted the abandonment of the massive theater and the rampant immorality. Instead I recalled the valiant men of Jabeshgilead and their noble quest to rescue the dead body of their cherished king.

In the close of 1st Samuel the stage is all set for Saul's final battle with the Philistines. David, in exile, was united with the wrong side! and the providence of God, who had already removed His spirit from Saul, caused the Philistines to send David back to his southland city of Ziglaga. There he becomes occupied with his own dilemma. The Philistines incursion deep into the north of Israel and their permanent occupation of Beth Shean caused our guide to mention speculation that they may have been directed by Egypt as a guard to the trade route of the Mesopotamian valley. If that be the case, these Philistines would be the earliest foreign legion. Beth Shean was previously controlled and built up by Egypt. The Bible, however, has always been a most accurate final authority for speculation, and it gives clear indication that God's chosen people, Israel, had readily done "evil in the sight of the Lord and made and served Baalim, Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him." (Jud 10:6) This acceptance of pluralism caused "the anger of the LORD to be kindled against them" because they were elect and commissioned by God to teach the whole world that "The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut 6:4) Indeed in Judges all their captors brought their gods into Israel's heartland and set up their temples there. The Philistines had done just that here.

To speculate that the Philistines occupied Beit She'an under Israel's first king because of an unrecorded influence from Egypt is likely unwarranted. But such speculation keeps archaeologists shovels busy and those shovels have always substantiated the truth of God's Record keeping. So 1st Samuel closes with Saul's lost battle at Mt. Gilboa and his death. The Philistines take his beheaded body and hang it on the trophy wall of their god, and the valiant men of Jabeshgilead risk their lives to rescue and bury the dead body of their king. Why did they do this? And why these men in particular? Before you read chapter 11's answer, let me point out two things about the Lord Jesus Christ, our living king. First, He said it is better to have your **right eye gouged out** than to enter into hell fire where your worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched! (Matt 5:29, Mark 9:43-49) And, second, He said "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and **slay them before me.**" (Luke 19:27) Now go too, read 1 Samuel 11, learn of valiant men, and consider your own right eye, and the soon coming King of kings; find the reason for these valiant men of Jabeshgilead, and find purpose to be every bit as valiant for a living king, who has redeemed your soul from hell.

A major portion of our day was consumed at Bet She'an. It could have consumed much more with no loss of interest. I should have also hiked to the top of that tel.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice Vol XIV Day 6 Sun 1 Feb: Qumran Scrolls

As our bus leaves Beth She'an we could click pictures of the amphitheater with a blood absorbing 'arena' (Latin for sand floor) at the outskirts of the city. Built for the Roman gladiator battles against man and beast these theaters, four found in Israel²³, were used in the 1st and 2nd centuries for cruel persecutions of Christians. The studies of that period afforded no more resource than several pictures clicked through a bus window and a sobering reality added to our Lord's day excursion. Ten days affords but a brief taste of voluptuous pages of precious history. Now off to Qumran.



Although I was very excited to see Qumran there was more to imagine there than there was to see, and the Dead Sea scrolls unearthed there around the year of my birth, have stirred and directed more than imagination in their 56 years of new life. We stood on the rock precipice where the Qumran community was found and Ron, our guide, pointed to a distant peak containing what was called 'Cave 4.' There in 1947 a Bedouin shepherd boy cast a rock down into a cave and went to explore the breaking porcelain he heard below. As Ronnie's peculiar accent and intriguing skill unveiled the long untouched jars that the Bedouin's removed, the seven scrolls found inside, and the authentication process riddled with excitement and adventure, we each realized why for 10 years Bedouins were the less shepherds and the more spelunkers as they became full time scroll hunters. Without

question the Israeli government paid the Bedouins \$10,000 per scroll and as the realization of what they had in hand bloomed, that was a small price.

On this craggy eastern slope overlooking the Dead Sea, 15 miles from the temple of Jerusalem, God had provided a below sea level, deep basin desert environment that could preserve Hebrew scrolls for 2,000 years! Untouched by human hand and sealed in ceramic jars the Bedouin desert wanderers discovered thousands of scrolls and fragments from 11 caves around Qumran.

These scrolls and fragments were archaeological gold and were bought and sold, smuggled and stolen for the 10 years of their discovery from 1947 on. But when the Israel Antiquities Authority inventoried the collection they found intact every book of the Hebrew Bible, (except Esther) all the Apocryphal (pseudigraphical) books, (books that provide inter-testament history which Jesus, Jews and Baptists never called Holy Scripture, but Catholics, and ergo many Protestants, errantly did.) Disagreements among scholars about the 'who, where, why and hows' of such a collection will continue to ebb and tide, but two things are firmly settled with this find. History, linguistics evidence, paleographic and carbon 14 dating establish the date of the actual scrolls from 200 BC to 68 AD, just 100 years after the prophet Malachi wrote, and just two years prior

23 "Very few amphitheaters have been found in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, and most of these are in Israel. Besides Beit She'an, amphitheaters have been discovered in Caesarea, Beit Govrin, and Nablus." Ref "Natural Parks of Israel, Beit She'an, Capital of the Decapolis" ERETZ Ito-Tzvi Inc. © 1996

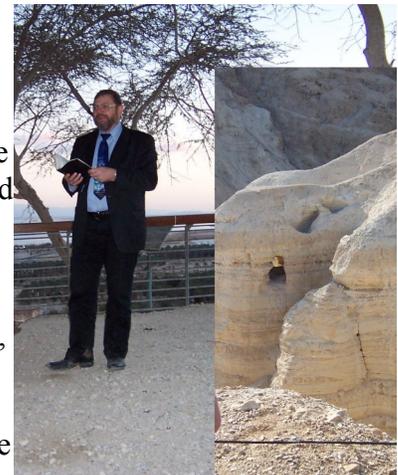
to the Roman ransacking and destruction of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem. But more marvelously than man's dating is God's preservation! Not the preservation of rolled up animal skins in a dry desert, high evaporation environment but the preservation of His words so that not one jot or one tittle would pass away! (Matt 5:18) For there was no letter difference found between the whole of the discovered Hebrew Bible and that found in the Massoretic copies put to print in 1524 (and put in English in 1611).



God had, for over a millennium of hand copying, exactly preserved His words just as He said He would. God's words are 'Preserved': "The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." (Psalm 12:6-7) They are 'Perfect' words: "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making

wise the simple." (Psalm 9:7) They are 'Pure' words: "The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes." (Psalm 9:8) They are 'Powerful' words: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb 4:12) They are 'Pleasant' words: "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words." (Prov 15:26)

The little I knew about the 1,000 scrolls found around the Qumran ruins stimulated to a new life as our guide so aptly pointed out caves and aspects of the discoveries that only a visit to the Qumran ruins could illustrate. He explained how the Essene community, once thought to occupy Qumran, were found much further south; that Essenes, being passivist, would never have built a fortress and did not use a refectory,²⁴ both found in the Qumran ruins. Levitical Jews would not likely use a refectory either. Evidence leans to some "priests of the house of Sodack," or some sect of Jewish zealots, or, perhaps, the Qumran ruins had nothing to do with the guard and defense of the treasury of hidden Hebrew scrolls secured against Roman invasion. Surely visiting Qumran offered little to see but much to learn.



Clearly, the Jewish Bible had been extremely well preserved but not well followed. "We Jews do not live according to the Jewish law, but according to the 'interpretation' of the book of law, the Mishna, or '2nd book,' is the 1st book of interpretation, first made in Tiberieous, with corrections published late in the Talmud, or '3rd book' and 2nd interpretation, which was then later called Shulhond Alhugb, or 3rd interpretation. ... So Judaism, today, is just as man made as Catholicism." The bus loaded and headed down the east coast of the Dead Sea. One more stop before dark. We need to worship at Ein Gedi.

²⁴ re-fec-to-ry n., A room where meals are served, especially in a college or other institution.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice Vol XV Day 6 Sun 1 Feb: Ein Gedi

The shoreline of the Dead Sea was a surprisingly lush and productive strip of agriculture. When an Israeli puts his hand to the plow their promised land yields its bounty, even near the Dead Sea. The rows of fig trees and truck farms opened periodically to make room for some tourist attractions. Where the Jordan valley connected to the sea was especially rich in each. There was even one attraction that allowed visitors to tour a swampy reserve full of alligators. Our guide, who was as much enthralled with linguistics as with archeology, relayed the time they hastily hung out an English translation of their sign which read “Come feed yourself to the alligators.” Turns out word order is important for some languages and they meant “Come to feed the alligators yourself.” Thirty years as a multi lingual tour guide provided Ronnie with enough wit and wisdom to relate such linguistic snafus one after another, and his accent so duplicated the Pink Panther's inspector Cluso, that Jeff Carpenter and I could likely have kept him going for hours. The account of getting a 'vrroom' in France had us in stitches, and some intimate phone conversations with 'ken' and the question about being kutchy-kutchy should not even be mentioned in this journal. Inspector Cluso, if you don't know, is the heroic source of wisdom for all modern spiritual giants and Israeli guides, credited for authoring the lines “It is just another dark stone in the rich tapestry of life” and “It is just another piece of fabric in the rich mosaic of life.” and ... enough. The bus turns off the valley road and heads up into the hills toward Engedi.



While First Samuel is a book about the rise and fall of king Saul, and 2nd Samuel about the rise and perpetuity of David, Ein Gedi, and Saul's hunt for David, is the overlap between the two. We stared at the rugged terrain around us. The trickling stream before us did not seem to be a significant water source for David and his 600 men, (1Sam 23:13) as they camped and hid in these surrounding hills. From our leveled hill of the Israeli National Park we overlooked the stream, several ibex, and fleeting conies on the opposite bank. The excitement of seeing the sure footed mountain creature overtook the fact that we were at Ein Gedi, where David was justified and Saul vilified. In a cave near our position David and some of his men were hidden when Saul came in to take a nap. Scholars like to discover hidden meanings in the Bible and then show off a superior intellect by teaching these, often invented, 'hidden meanings' to their followers. Many are taught in our seminaries that Saul “covering his feet” in a cave is one of those profoundly discovered secret meanings whereby Saul went into the cave to defecate. Such a hairbrain interpretation of Scripture is popular around Bible colleges and seminaries but just a little practical understanding of camping and cave dwelling portrays these show-off scholars as the prideful fools engrossed with bathroom talk that they are. Saul was in the coolness of the cave to take a nap and man had covered his feet for such a task for 2,942 years previous and for 3,070 years since. Don't let 'scholars,' so called, twist you up when it comes to logic, clarity, and literalness of the Holy Bible.

David could have slain Saul in the cave. David's 600 against Saul's 3,000 could have prevailed at Ein Gedi. Instead his speech turned Saul back to sane and responsible behavior for two years. If God does not turn the heart, the best arguments of man can only turn it temporarily. Saul would soon be seeking to destroy God's anointed again. The natural heart of man is desperately wicked and pitted against a Holy God. The supernatural Jehovah God that the secular educators are vehemently denying before our

children, is the only one that can change the heart of man.

In the park area at Ein Gedi, after suitable pictures of the ibex and connee, our group gathered to worship on this Lord's day. After our Sea of Galilee service, Matt Dowdy was the majorities choice for a song director and he lead in several old hymns of the faith. When a group of leaders, who are peers, meet without an assignment of leadership, the dynamics of the group is always an interesting study in personalities, humilities, and presumptions. I had been asked by the Christian Journeys coordinator, Brian Watts, to preach to this group of preachers on this Lord's day. There were a dozen more qualified and all were stimulated by our presence in God's



promised land. In my mind I backed together three outlines I had preached this year about conquering and dwelling in God's promised land for Christians. It will take being strong and of good courage, a continual presence in God's Word, and an absence of compromise and perpetual presence of faith as depicted in Joshua 1-10. God expects that we will conquer vices and put them out of our life as much as he expected Joshua to put out the Hittite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizzite, Hivite, and Jebusite. Preaching to preachers allows skipping many ancillary explanations and illustrations because most have already preached my text. Although it was a rushed worship time it was precious to gather with other believers and praise God for His Son, our Lord, our Saviour, and our Deliverer. The bus headed down the slopes and pointed to the Moriah Classic Motel at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. It was also super bowl Sunday back in the states, and

some in our number were expecting to see the game tonight.



The Dead Sea was deader than usual. Not because of its 36% salt content (the Great Salt Lake of Utah has only 6%) but because it had receded over 100 feet in depths from the 1920s. Israelis were now using most of the water from the Jordan River in agricultural ventures and cyclic climate changes, that the world fears and labels 'global warming' as their scare tactic, and blame tactic, has decreased

rainfall in the area. The result was, large spans of sink-hole-riddled, high-salt-laden soil which was being made productive with Israeli ingenuity. It was interesting that they had to dredge a channel to the southern end of the sea to keep a 'healthy' content 'salt' water at the foot of the Moriah Classic Motel. There they offered a variety of spa, mud, and beauty treatments at very reasonable prices. Had we not had very reasonable exhaustion after the longest day our journey, I might have noted some of those prices. We enjoyed an excellent buffet meal at an excellent 5 star motel. Bev and I would likely sleep well tonight. It sure was nice to find our comfortable bed. I can't believe I'm in Israel. I can't believe we planned an early dawn swim in the Dead Sea.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XVI Day 7 Mon 2 Feb: The Dead Sea

Day 7, Monday, 02 Feb 2009, Every day built with

anticipation for us. On this day we would finally enter Jerusalem. But between us and it lay the history books and works of Josephus' accounts of the tremendous hallmark of Jewish patriotism, Masada. The second reason that Israel was a 1st century wonder of the world was now up to my knee caps. We were up at dawn and found our way to the salty beach of the Dead Sea before breakfast. Pastor Carpenter demonstrated the improper way of entering in as he ran from the shore and jumped head first into the sea. The mineral content of the Dead Sea is so high and the water so dense that even Baptist Preachers float, but getting it into your eyes and mouth made for an ordeal not to be repeated. Bobbing on top of the water, being very careful not to get any in our eyes or mouth was an awesome, indescribable experience.



We swam/walked out to where the water was over our head and could continue 'walking' because our heads and shoulders were still not under the water while our feet touched no bottom. Those of us who had the courage to relax and lay back found we could bob on only about 3 inches of water. The even braver rolled over and floated on their belly with their head and face still completely out of the water. The second wonder which made Israel a 1st century wonder of the world was this sea, where 'everything floats'. Back at our room we showered, rinsed and reshowered my sweats and Bev's swim suit in a futile attempt to remove all the salt. We hung the wet clothes and sneakers in the desert sun on our balcony and went down to our Mediterranean Kosher breakfast.

Ronnie, had recommended we remove all jewelry and not shave before jumping into



the Dead Sea. The later was not a problem, in that I had not shaved since my 1995 retirement from the military. There I was required to be clean shaved and in a tie for my 13 years as an officer, the shave was gone, but I kept the tie for my service in the Lord's army. It took me half an hour of grease laden string stretching pulling to get my wedding ring off. My

beard had been on for only 11 years, but that ring had been on my finger for 34 of my 37 years of married life. I had lost my original while working under my car in Tuxedo Trailer Park, as an E-3 in the USAF at Rome NY. We scrounged around enough to buy a new one the year my second son, Shane was born and I had not removed it since. Now it was clamped into my 3 ring notebook until I could get it resized to fit it over my arthritic swollen knuckle, which still throbbed from trauma. The white ring left encircling my tanned finger looked like a wedding ring still, as Bev and I renewed our vows over the gold band, now in my note book. The dream of a life time unfolding in these 10 days and the 1st removal of the band, made an appropriate atmosphere for repeating again "until death do us part." I love being in love, and the 'empty nest' has been more blessed than Bev and I had ever planed or imagined, although we had thoroughly done both.

The ascent up the sheer 1000 foot edge of Masada would take 45 min of dedicated hiking and still not get us above sea level. Our dawdling at the Moriah Classic of the Dead Sea necessitated our taking the 62 second ride in the cable car instead, that plus I think Ronnie and Brian were concerned that we had no cardiologist on standby. The usual excitement in our guide was subdued into a serious graveness as we approached Masada and he told of the military recruits pre-dawn ascent to the top of Masada and the chant "Masada will never fall again." This sites tour was marked by solemnity and awe. The 'snake walk' that took us from the cable car through the wall on top was narrow. It was my mistake to lean over the rail and look straight down at the tiny people moving below. Fear gripped my chest as I stepped back with the thought of a 1,000 foot free fall. One pastor, who shall be unnamed in this accounting, stayed behind at the museum for fear of these kind of heights. The fear now moving to my belly gave him a more courteous regard. I don't have a fear of heights until I look down once and remember



Massada will never fall again!

previous cataclysmic encounters with them. We each eagerly stepped off the gangway onto solid rock and left the precipice behind.

This large plateau had impressive height and surely housed an impregnable fortress. Herod the Great, the king we love to hate, had built the double walled Roman fortress at this great altitude below sea level, and was so pleased with the location that he built an extravagant three tiered palace at its northern extremity. Ronnie recalled for us how

Herod's palace at Caesarea was immaculately isolated with the whole Mediterranean sea as his back yard. Here, after the 1000 foot shear drop, Herod's back yard was Engedi and wilderness, ... like stepping off into eternity. We toured the palace ruins, the hot and cold baths, the steam rooms, saunas and intricately plastered and painted (1st century fresco still displayed throughout) spacious living quarters of a king gone mad. We kept in awe and knowledge that this was but secondary to our purpose here. We circled the north west edge of the tremendous height as Ronnie pointed out the intricate waterways that brought plenteous waters from the cavernous cisterns miraculously filled annually by precious rains in this arid environment. It was inconceivable that Masada had such rich resources of water at the height above the Dead Sea. Remember this room, Ronnie noted, it is called the lottery room. Periodically our guide pointed out the Roman encampments that surrounded this impenetrable structure and baited our minds for the tremendous Roman siege which took place here just after the horrific fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.





The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice Vol XVII Day 7 Mon 2 Feb: Masada

We had a long pause overlooking the western face of Masada. You could clearly pick out the Roman engineered, Jewish slave built ramp to carry up the powerful Roman battering rams. Ron pointed out the location where the two stone walls built by Herod were breached and the wooden walls, barricaded with tons of sand, were set aflame. He told of a thousand Jews who withstood and mocked the Roman conquerors until 73 AD, and their wavering confidence in their impregnable stronghold. There were some with us who had never read Josephus' ²⁵ detailed description²⁶ of the siege here, and they moved with us to the site of the fallen Synagogue where Ron in a hushed, solemn, unrelenting description told, in intimate detail, the events of the last day of the siege on this sacred ground. Thirty years as a professional guide kept his emotion in check as he revealed the unimaginable in torrid detail. On two occasions prior to this penning I have attempted to reveal the same heart wrenching detailed accounting and could not bear through, and I shall here leave the description of the fate of the 976 souls in this 73 AD siege of Masada to the historian or the professional guide who will take you there. Being on that mount and hearing that description from Ronnie, who, in an early dawn swore his military allegiance in these footprints, was moving beyond description. Here it should only be affirmed that “Masada will never fall again.” We came down to head toward the city of Jerusalem on schedule.



For 40 years my mind's eye had overlooked the city of Jerusalem. I recalled asking Vern and Loise Tubbs, youth pastor at Tuscorora Baptist Church in the 1960s, why we sing “We are marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion, we're marching upward to Zion the beautiful city of God” and they showed me two things. II Samuel 5:7 and a large tattered picture overlooking the city of Jerusalem which hung on our Sunday School wall. We were on the bus which had its nose pointed to the city on a hill, the city where God's King would rule the world from the Throne of David. “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” (Psalm 2:6) We were headed to the place where Jehovah God dwelt. “Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.” (Psalm 9:11)

Our guide reported we were leaving Masada, 1,300 feet below sea level and headed to Jerusalem 2,300 feet above sea level, ascending to the city of God. Today we left the lowest place on God's earth literally and would ascend to the highest place on God's earth figuratively. Awesome. From the lowest parts of the earth to the city of God. Evangelist Dale and Opel Lingbaugh were ministering at Gang Mills, Faith Baptist Church when Opel clipped Little Pilgrim's sin burden off of his flannel graphed back and it fell to the

25 Josephus (AD 37 – c. 100), also known as Yosef Ben Matityahu (Joseph, son of Matthias) and, after he became a Roman citizen, as Titus Flavius Josephus, was a first-century Jewish historian and apologist of priestly and royal ancestry who survived and recorded the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. His works give an important insight into first-century Judaism. (From Wikipedia accessed 5/29/2009)

26 See “THE WARS OF THE JEWS; or the History of The Destruction of Jerusalem” by Flavius Josephus, Book VII *Containing the interval of about three years. From the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, to the sedition of the Jews at Cyrene.*, Chapter VIII *Concerning Masada and those Sicarii who kept it; and how Silva betook himself to form the Siege of that Citadel. Eleazar's speeches to the besieged*, Chapter IX. *How the people that were in the fortress were prevailed on by the words of eleazar, two women and five children only excepted, and all submitted to be killed by one another*, and Chapter X *Concerning Jonathan, one of the Sicarii, that stirred up a sedition in Cyrene, and was a false accuser[of the innocent.]* pp204-212 as Translated by William Whiston, A. M., London.

floor of that basement Sunday School room. I looked to the old rugged cross depicted on that flannel covered board, I told God that's what I wanted from Him, and He saved me from my sin burden before Pilgrim's paper burden settled on the floor. God saved me from the penalty of sin that night, the power of sin that week and will save me from the presence of sin someday soon, when I arrive in "Zion, the beautiful city of God." My harmonica was in my book bag beside me. If I had not so slaughtered the tune earlier I would have played it on the bus ride, "We are marching to Zion." In 1960 God took my soul from the lowest parts of the earth and stood it on a rock in his presence, the highest place a soul could ever be.

We passed Jericho with little notice. So little notice that it seemed disrespectful of the blind man that Jesus healed and Zacheaus that "wee little man, a wee little man was he, He climbed up into a sycamore tree, for the Lord he wanted to see." Jesus saved him just outside Jericho, and the next week Jesus paid all his sin debt on a hill called Calvary. The city that Joshua marched 7 times around passed with far too little notice but we needed to be in Jerusalem by dark.

Bedouins still use camels. Not because of their stamina in the desert, nor their ability to maneuver in hot sand, a Yamaha is better on all counts. They use them to attract tourists who pay handsomely to ride the ugly creatures while cameras go clicking in rapid succession. We passed several camps of them, and those sporting Camels would have persuaded our stopping except for Brian and Ronny's relentless drive to keep us on a schedule. The Bedouin's camps had shabby huts and tents, dumpy looking places with satellite dish antennas always near by. I wondered where they got their electricity and if big screen TV's ran off of 12 volt systems. More so I wondered when we would leave this dry barren desert and see Jerusalem. Both happened almost simultaneously. Brown Bedouin camps turned into green suburbs and as fast again we were filing off the bus. Ronny's choice location afforded not a glimpse of the city until we walked together up a knob which peeked over at a splendid panoramic view of the city. The effect was all that he was looking for in a dozen preachers. He let us enjoy the moment and then led in a Hebrew prayer of blessing commonly recited (in Hebrew) at the first sighting of Jerusalem. Bev and I stood hand in hand at the board fence and overlooked the city. I am glad we clicked a few pictures but they are for others. What we saw from that vantage is burned into our memory for the rest of our half over lives here. Then we will visit Jerusalem daily for 1000 years, and then live in the New Jerusalem for ever. For a Christian, the Bible is clear about those things. I hope you are as clear on it as well.

Upon entry into the city of Jerusalem we embarked on the traditional Via Dolorosa visiting the traditional fourteen stations of the cross as is the tradition for all Holy land tours. Baptists are traditionally very skeptical of the traditions of man and are forever leaning on every 'jot and tittle' of the inerrant infallible words of God in "All Scripture" instead.

Traditions are very errant, very fallible and always used by the master deceiver to lead people away from the cross of Jesus Christ. Such is never more literally true than when the traditional Via Dolorosa leads people deep into the old city to a cross within the city wall, while the Scripture says "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Heb 13:12-14) If that were the only error that Catholic tradition had sucked into Mel Gibson's production of the death of Jesus, it is sufficient error. After all, rat poison is 99.9% good edible food.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XVIII Day 7 Mon 2 Feb: Via Dolorosa

Armed with a good understanding of the error of it all, the traditional Via Dolorosa caused an excitement and urgency of the moment because we were walking in the old city of Jerusalem on streets where Jesus walked; not with a cross, but with a compassion, not in his suffering but in his serving. We were walking the busy streets of the old city of Jerusalem and it inspired our awe.

A very necessary stop before wandering the narrow streets was closed for maintenance. We had to walk about two blocks into what I perceived to be the Muslim quarter to find a hole in the floor of a dirty little room which was an adequate mens room, but less than adequate to the ladies. We waited with idle conversation and impatience for a very long restroom stop. The ladies finally returned with sheepish grins and some embarrassed whispers to husbands. I did not hear any details until later, but the lady's accommodation was every bit as nice as ours.

The Cobble stoned very narrow streets of the old city took one back to the first century times of Jesus and his disciples squeezing through following their master. Marketers still imposed this presence and their wares as we made our way through the maze. The only authentic 'stations' of the Via Dolorosa were visited first, they being the areas near the Roman Praetorium where Jesus was condemned to death and where he would have received his cross. I briefly recalled the praetorium ruins we visited in Caesarea and our guide's vivid description of how Pilot would gather up his whole headquarters, or Praetorium (a Roman commanders administration center) and remove to Jerusalem for the three annual and unsettling gatherings of restless Jews in the city of Jerusalem. This Passover gathering was a familiar trek for Pilot but would be like none other in the history of the world.

It had not registered in my mind that we were standing outside that 1st century praetorium when our guide referenced station 1 and 2 of the 'stations of the cross.' The narrow streets of the old city, the Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Armenian quarters of the city, the marketers selling rosaries and the crucifix, the contrast of the 1st century constructions, crusaders construction and modern shops blended into a confused awe that overwhelmed my reeling mind I tried to categorize and separate in my mind these three most pertinent experiences in our first walk in the city of Jerusalem.

First, and larger than life, loomed the history that we were standing on. Here in 1913 BC Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek, King of Salem and the priest of the most high God. (Gen 17) A thousand years later David brought in the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of a trumpet (2Sam) and a thousand years later again the Jews here brought in the "Word of the Lord", the "Light of the World," the "Son of God" with shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." These streets of the old city were the streets that Jesus walked on with his disciples. Here, in 70 AD Romans slaughtered Jews and tumbled walls; Islamic forces destroyed and rebuilt²⁷, Muslims destroyed and rebuilt²⁸, Crusaders



27 The Islamic conquest of [Israel's Promised Land], which began in 633, was the beginning of a 1,300-year span during which more than ten different empires, governments, and dynasties were to rule in the Holy Land prior to the British occupation after World War I. From www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org accessed 6/5/2009

28 In 638, the Jews in [Israel's Promised Land] assisted the Muslim forces in defeating the Persians who had reneged on an agreement to protect them and allow them to resettle in Jerusalem. As a reward for their assistance, the Muslims permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to guard the Temple Mount. Ibid

destroyed and rebuilt²⁹, Saladin destroyed and rebuilt³⁰, the Ottoman Turks destroyed and rebuilt³¹, and WWI destroyed and rebuilt³² this troublesome city.³³ While at seminary in Lancaster Pa, I went to tour old Philadelphia and stood on streets over 200 years old. How could I now stand in a city of God of such depth and not be overwhelmed.

We walked the marked up rugged streets and saw the marketers and residents intermixed. Districts were marked out as Muslim or Jewish, Christian or Armenian. The politic of what this city had become, the direction it was moving and its destiny at the return of Christ stirred an exciting curiosity in the experience of being here. “Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. ... To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;” (Psalm 102:13-17,21)



Keeping track of what quarter of the city we were walking through and the layout of the city in tension and schism while marketers tried to lure us to their wares by yelling out “Jesus is coming again,” and stepping around very narrow garbage haulers busy about their business, kept one third of my attention wondering about this present world we were experiencing for the very first time.

But the austere paganism of 'stations of the cross' and the artificial way of suffering via the Catholic Via Dolorosa made the Catholic representation of Christianity repulsive. With malice, Jerome had repeatedly translated 'repentance' to the Catholic Latin Vulgate's 'penance' and translated 'presbyter' to the Latin's 'priest' at the inception of this false Roman religion. In Catholic doctrine, both Roman and Eastern, the death of Christ was not sufficient to atone for ones sin, and they must do their own penance and suffering to make up for Christ's lack. Therein the stations of the cross on a Via Dolorosa are errantly meant to exalt Christs suffering to an object of worship and to a sample of his suffering that we should exemplify to attain our own righteousness. The stark contrast should be clear. Bible believing, born again Christians are not to worship or 'venerate' the sufferings of Christ nor any other object; or pray to Mary, the mother of Jesus or any other 'saint' of Catholicism. No, a Bible believing, born again Christian will only worship, venerate and pray to our God who was made flesh and dwelt among us, the Lord Jesus, the Christ, (which is in Hebrew 'the Messiah'.) Such prayer, veneration and idol kissing marked with pagentry, robes, priest craft, and “blind leaders of the blind” are exactly what Christ condemned in religion. Now it pretended to be Christianity.

29 The Muslims fended off their rivals until the end of the 11th century. In 1095, Pope Urban II called for Crusades to regain [Israel's Promised Land] from the infidels. They succeeded in 1099 and celebrated by herding all the Jews into a Synagogue and burning them alive. Non-[Catholics] were subsequently barred from the city. Ibid

30 Saladin succeeded in expelling the Crusaders and recaptured Jerusalem for the Muslims in 1187. Two years later, the Christians mounted the Third Crusade to retake Jerusalem, but Saladin's forces repelled them. Ibid

31 The next important phase in the history of Jerusalem was the conquest of the Ottoman Turks at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Turkish sultan then became responsible for Jerusalem. The Holy Land was important to the Turks only as a source of revenue; consequently, like many of their predecessors, they allowed [Israel's Promised Land] to languish. They also began to impose oppressive taxes on the Jews. Ibid

32 The Ottoman Empire held its own against rivals from Europe and Asia for roughly 400 years. They chose, however, to engage in a battle they could not win -- World War I -- and lost their empire. [Israel's Promised Land] was captured by the British, who subsequently were awarded a mandate from the League of Nations to rule the country. Ibid

33 In the course of its history, Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, and captured and recaptured 44 times.



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The overwhelming experiencing of history, resent tensions, and paganness emanated from our walk on the Via Dolorosa, and captured the afternoon. I wished there were time to explore each avenue with greater insight but we were shortly headed to the bus. I could not keep my bearing walking in this city. When the bus headed to the Moriah Classic, which was supposed to be a short walk from the Western Wall, which we were to visit after supper, all hope of getting any bearing was lost. Danny navigated the large bus down narrow streets and around tight circles as though he had done this for 30 years. He had.



We met with excitement in the lobby of the motel, eager to venture out onto the streets of Jerusalem at night. Supper had been exceptional and gratefully received in all its kosher bounty. Our after supper 'business meeting' with Brian and Marilyn as the representative of Christian Journeys was less kosher but just as gratefully received. Christian Journeys had called in all its favors and cut back all its profits to extend to us this Pastor's Familiarization tour at almost half fare, and wanted us to feel an obligation to come back on a full fare tour leading 20 people along with us. That sounds less tactful than what they were as the meeting was very informative in detailing the cooperative professionalism of Christian Journeys, and their associated guides, bus drivers, airlines, and accommodations. It took a miracle that this gruff retired military officer could pastor a dozen precious people for a dozen years. The likelihood of getting 20 that he could lead to Israel loomed as even less likely, but nobody enjoyed such a prospect as I.

The evening was cool as we filed out into the street. A few, who wanted to illustrate how very cold it was back in Canada, came with tee shirts and no coats for their object lesson. Bev and I were grateful for our coats and sweaters, striving for comfort over object lesson. Brian bubbled with excitement as he led this exhausted but exhilarated group across the boulevard and down the streets to view, for our very first time, the 57 meters of exposed ancient wall on the western edge of the Temple mount. These bottom 7 layers of Herod's retaining wall, which extended the plateau of the first and second temple area to a huge leveled platform to hold his massive temple renovation project, began to be called the wailing wall in the 19th century. Christians seeing the incessant reverent weeping of Jews at this last standing portion of their holy temple coined the phrase. The Jews call it only the Western Wall, and did so with such reverence that I also dropped the wailing wall nomenclature.

For all the fuss made about our safety in visiting Israel during the Gaza strip's rocket attacks against her, we found these back streets of Jerusalem safer than any city street I had frequented in America at night. Although told they would not let my weapon through airport security, it was assuring to know that one in three citizens here had one on ready. Progressive liberals in control of my government do not understand the robbery and rape deterrence of a well armed citizenry. Our evening walk to the wall

down the narrow streets of Jerusalem was in the least always pleasant and often overwhelming with joy and wonder.

At the wall there were separate entrances for the women to use and a separate portion of wall where they were confined. I was told, not that men should have their head



covered, but that we should put on a paper Kippah available at the entry. Again my military training had well instilled the necessity for a head covering while outside and its removal inside, with result that I almost always wore a hat outside, I had one on here but did not understand that it was suitable coverage of my head in order to respect the Jewish tradition. I removed it and donned their paper Kippah (Hebrew) or Yarmulke (Yiddish).

On my first visit to the Western Wall I was equally laden with ignorance and excitement. The Bible tells me to pray

with my head cover off, Jewish tradition here said I must keep the Kippah on. We were told earlier to NEVER turn your back on the wall but to respectfully back away while facing it. I had supposed that if one did turn their back to the wall and face some of the many well armed soldiers ever present at the wall, that they would just shoot you on the spot. If that be so what would they do to a Christian who removed his head covering to pray? No matter the danger of violating tradition I stood at the Western Wall of the temple with 2 hats in my hand and one hand on the wall and completed my promise to me, to pray for each member of our Church by name, each missionary we support and each family member I know. It was good to have ample time at our first visit here. I donned my paper hat and respectfully backed away from the wall, not sure exactly when I could turn to watch the black gowned orthodox Jews bobbing back and forth all around me. It was as natural a thought as could occur, and not meant with any disregard, but those with the grandest 'bob' obviously thought themselves the most pious prayers. One young fellow with side burn curls repeatedly pounding his kippah then forehead was obviously filled with hypocritical sincerity in his prayer time. There was apparent much sincere praying and weeping at this wall but the showy bobbing was a perpetual distraction from it. As I walked down the wall and into the culvert area under the city above I did notice that sincerity often increases and bobbing decreased with age. Some of our group was waiting for our walk back to the motel as I turned in my paper kippah, donned my hat and walked with the few last stragglers who would have stayed longer at this awesome site.

It seems foolish when written but when reunited with Bev I asked her if she prayed. I wanted that we could pray together at the wall but the motel room would now suffice. The stroll back to the motel was submerged in conversation about being at the wall. The stop for cappuccinos was like icing on dessert. We tried to recall Ronny's accounting of turning down 3 Bedouin's offers for coffee then drinking 3 one third cups. One third for a blessing to ones soul, one third for a blessing to ones health, and one third for a blessing to ones family. We drank our coffee by thirds but did not exactly recall what it had to do with befriending a Muslim Bedouin. We absorbed so much information on this trip that my pencil was dull and mind overflowing.



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Vol XX Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: Mount of Olives

My ankkelousing spondilitus knots up my spine if I sleep more than 5 hours. I arose at 4:30 AM eager to see this day unfold. I was at our desk in our room reading my Bible and jotting notes as the sun arose to lighten the room. All of our accommodations were superb. Here we had turned down a room for its cigarette smell and had ended up in a different wing than our companions. Today the halls were quiet when I woke Beverly at 6 AM so that we could get an early jump on our kosher breakfast. We talked at breakfast about how fast 10 days can go by, and the excitement of being in Jerusalem today. The bus took us to the top of the Mount of Olives and as we overlook the city, the peddlers swarmed in to sell us postcards, trinkets and full panoramic pictures of the city. They got to me on only 2 counts. I have no need of trinkets. Ron arranged for one of them to take a group picture with the city in the background and deliver copies to us at our bus rendezvous later. There is no way I would make a tourist trapped camel lift my obese carcass up from his kneeling position. I didn't doubt he could and we were glad that several couples gave us opportunity for pictures of the ugly creature.

The slope down the Mount of Olives was less olives and more tombs. The peddlers drove off a lad they called a pick-pocket and mocked a beggar that was regarded as academy award material. One of our group clicked a picture of a man's donkey and as we passed them they were still haggling about how much he owed him for the picture. The sloping Mount of Olives that overlooked the Kidron valley and the Eastern Gate of the temple gave a splendid panoramic view of the city as well as a view of mankind.

An excursion off the main trail took us to an ancient tomb. The reverence for this slope of real estate which faced the Eastern gate of the Temple was authentic and ancient. The thinking in Judaism is that those buried overlooking the temple will be the first



resurrected when their Messiah appears. They are entombed in a cenotaph with their feet towards the Eastern Gate so when they arose from the dead they would be facing the Eastern Gate. It is also customary to leave a stone on the cenotaph when you visit a grave. We leave flowers which signify the temporal brevity of life. The little stones on the graves provided a temporal record of a loved ones visit. This craggy slope that watched the sunset on the city of Jerusalem seemed more fitting for stones than for flowers.

As we moved north some the decline lessened and opened into a flat garden area, The Garden of Gethsemane. "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook 'Cedron', where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. ... for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples." (John 18:1-2) Our



guide carefully explained the Jewish law and tradition about travel distances' after partaking of the passover supper. The Garden of Gethsemane was within this limitation while Bethany, where Jesus had been staying previous nights, was not. I pondered other traditions that came into play that fateful night wherein God paid my sin debt in full.

I understand from two sources that Palestinian Jews observed the passover meal a day before the 14th day of Abib, in order to accommodate the crowds in Jerusalem for the Passover time. Such was clearly the case in Scriptures where Jesus was separated from others on Palm Sunday, the 10th of Abib, and slain on the 14th day of that month. (Exod 12:3,6) Slain at the same time that all Passover lambs were slain. Here in the Garden of Gethsemane on the edge of the Mount of Olives Jesus spent his last hours as is so intimately recorded in the Gospels.

Olive trees that stood here then stood here today. As it was told an olive tree lives and grows for eighty years, dies, remains dead for 20 years, then 'resurrects' from death and repeats this remarkable cycle. They get larger and larger, not with annual rings, but with centennial spurts of life. Carbon 14 dating of some of the dead wood in the trees in this garden go back 2,000 years. My skepticism would like to reference that in two more sources but I was certain this garden was here, in some form, with some more olive trees, when Christ spent that last evening in the form of man, born into the world to bear man's sin.



We moved on through the garden to visit a church built to commemorate some aspect of Christ in the garden. A peddler tried to sell us an olive leaf, some 'holy' beads and a crucifix. I wished to sit in a garden at Gethsemane with dew still on the olive trees and read the Gospel's accounts of Jesus' presence here, but when our group moved on towards



the bus at the bottom of the hill I was plenty ready to leave this catholicized commercial zone. At the bus we collected and reviewed our group photo. Awesome and fast.

There was an anticipation in our guide as the bus worked its way through Jerusalem towards the City of David. My guess was for another brand new archaeological dig. Ronnie was always the most excited about such, and the discovery of the Palace of David on the upper end of the City of David was challenging

his routine practice of introducing a site only when we were assembled at its entry. He was successful and his enthusiasm, in his own guarded manner, began to bubble out as we stood on a grated walkway and peered into an open archaeological dig.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XXI Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: King David's Tomb

He carefully unfold the intriguing story of an archaeologist who read in her Bible one day that David came down from his palace into the City of David. Ergo David's Palace was in the highest part of the City of David, ergo she found it. Convinced of her discovery the Israeli Archaeological Society bought four houses from four Arab families and proceeded to dig out David's Palace. When the discoveries necessitated the excavation of the whole city block the Muslim's immediately opposed those who would sell their properties, even killing family members of those who had. Not to be outwitted or out maneuvered by the savage Muslim tactics the Israeli government offered each family 2 million for their homes with a complete new identity in the country of their choice. The Muslims who regard the Holy Bible as fabricated fiction and King David, in particular, to be absolutely non existent in history have unpardonably blundered when ever King David's inscriptions or signets are found. Here they surely had.

The Archaeological adventures around the City of David make for much intrigue on their own account. In 2004, after 39 years of searching, studying and digging, the Fortress of Zion was discovered in the City of David. The next year, because of Eilat Mazar's 1997 publicized speculation that she knew where David's Palace could be found, they sunk their shovels into a huge building which proved to be David's Palace indeed. Earlier it was said that archeology is 90% imagination and 10% findings, but in the City of David the findings began to surpass all imaginations. In November of 2008 they uncovered layers of jars and bones and expect on their next dig to enter David's pantry and wine cellars as it were. Students come and dig here only 8 months per year and their focus has been on David's Palace as well as the wealth of 10th century finds that are an archaeologists treasure house.

Also first century discoveries in the City of David have caused the remodeling of old traditions. The actual 50 yard by 50 yard Pool of Shalome was found last year by following the water ways from the traditional location, known now to be in the wrong spot. This will cause the perceived wall location to move. The discovery of many pools and springs in this area caused Ron, our guide, to be certain that "Aenon near to Salim" of John 3:23 will soon be certified to be the 'Springs (aenon) near to Jerusalem' in the City of David. To date no such Aenon has been discovered and it has always been speculated to be somewhere near the Jordan River where John the Baptist started baptizing. That speculation always confounded the Apostle John's clarity because John said, 1) it was in Judaea, and Jordan is not; 2) near where Jesus was, making it near Jerusalem, where Jesus was for passover; 3) because there was much water there, one would not likely say such about the Jordan river area; 4) it was shortly before John the Baptist was taken in Judaea and cast into prison, i.e. Herod did not go to Jordan to capture him; and 5) John's disciples and the Jews were arguing about purifying and these pools, in the City of David were the very place of the Jew's purifying before their entry into the temple. When they finally uncover the placard which states this area to be "Aenon of Salim" there will be many a Bible student, who trusts the accounting and accuracy of God's Holy Word, who will say "I told you so."

They have discovered the one way path that leads from 'Micvah' (purifying bath) to the temple. Since you were not allowed to touch anything on your way to the temple it was a one way path, a separated path, which led to the temple. Excavating around the City of David and its abundance of water pools and good living conditions carries one through much Bible history. The Bible is His story, and tells you not just what happened but what happens. Archaeologists have even gone through the 2500 year old septic systems to carbon 14 date human feces and confirm the 586 BC siege of Jerusalem by analyzing the layers of human diet through that period of time. There was so much archeology to explore and standing here in the newly excavated Palace of King David unleashed an

avalanche of information and possibility.

David's Palace connected right to the wall of the city. Excavating turned out to be slowed and more tedious because of the wealth of discoveries. Artifacts from the Crusades back through the times of Christ, all the way through the kings of Judah back to David's time, thrilled and excited the Israeli Archaeological Society. What we could see was rocks and rooms of a palace, but Ronny's excitement would suffice. This was an archaeological gold mine and we wandered above room after room imagining the very presence of David, Solomon, Amnon, Tamar, Absalom, Jonathan's son Mephibasheth and the whole unfolding of Samuels second book. We were here carried back to a thousand years before Christ and met anew "the man after God's own heart."

The Bible says of some kings of Judah that they were buried in the sepulchers of their fathers in the City of David, but not in the sepulchers of the kings. (examp. 2Chron 21:20) The Bible lists 21 kings that ruled in Judah after David, (one was actually an evil queen) and the difficulty of perusing through three thousand years of rocky history and locating the sepulcher of King David is daunting, but done to the satisfaction of many. Our visit to the tomb of David was exciting in the Bible memories it evoked and the reverence we observed. The Jews coming out of the 70 year Babylonian Captivity had learned very well God's first two commandments of Exodus 20. They did not venerate, bow to nor pray to stone, gold, objects or men. That was the practice of Rome, and became the practice of all Romanism. There was much praying going on at the sepulcher of King David, as well as a silent reverence but there was no idolatry. It was refreshing to visit the hallowed ground.

The upper room where Jesus observed the last supper with his disciples could not have survived the calamities that befell Jerusalem, but if it had it would likely be very near and very much like the room that was commemorated as such near the tomb of David. Our observation of the room was, as it were a Bible memory of that last supper. The symbol of the pelican was pointed out. It adorned the 3rd century churches and the explanation given included the notion that a parent pelican will tear out its own flesh to ensure that its young get proper nourishment. I had never heard such an account of the pelican, but supposed the symbol quite lacking in that Jesus had not given just some of his flesh and some of his blood for our nourishment. He had to give all his life's blood to atone for our sin, i.e. to conquer mans disposition of sin, viz. my claim to my right to myself³⁴. Christ had to suffer death completely, to die in our stead, and "he, who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God through him." In the upper room he gave us the symbols that represent his sacrifice, atoning, and propitiation, and we should better use Christ's method of remembering than carve images in stone.

I noticed here the much construction work and repairs being done in Jerusalem. The upper room was being remodeled from its previous use as a Mosque. When visiting in February there is much work being done in preparation for the Easter rush time. I had not noticed or minded it so much at the Church of the Resurrection, because we had little interest in venerating, bowing to, nor praying to the gold and stone that elicited so much of Romanism. But here in the tomb of David and in the upper room, it interfered with seeing things that really caught our interest.



34 Oswald Chambers, "My Utmost for His Highest", Oct 5th



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Vol XXII Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: Archeology In Jerusalem

With a good dose of anticipation and awe we headed down the street through a maze of marketers and beggars. As Bev counted out change to buy nuts for a Shekel and a half the eager merchant grabbed all of her money to help her count change correctly. Used to the merchants and thieves in Peru, I barged in and took back the money. He knew our unfamiliarity with their currency and I still think we paid 3 Shekels for the nuts but I was not sure. Our counting was interrupted by an older orthodox Jew railing on a younger money hunting harpist dressed in Davidic garb in the street. “Go get a job, you should be working and not begging from these nice folks!” was the part that was in English. It quickly heated into an exchange that switched to Hebrew and got more animated. Of course Hebrew seems to do that on its own, but the exchange continued as we and they each went in separate directions. Jerusalem was definitely an interesting place to study diversification.

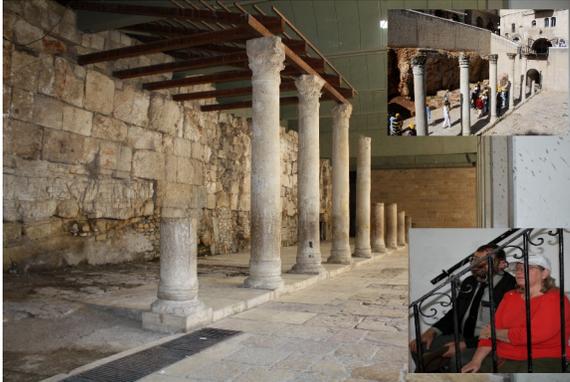


As near as I could tell we were crossing to the Arminian quarter near the dung gate when we viewed the walls riddled with 50 caliber bullet holes. From 1968 through 1970 this gate separated the Jordanians from the Israelis and the Jordanians had leveled much of the Jewish quarter with TNT. Rather than reconstruction, Israel began monumental archaeological discoveries. When you go down 20 feet here you go back 2000 years in history. When they dug in the blown up Jewish quarter of Jerusalem they found the 5th avenue and 42nd St. (as Ronnie called it) of Jerusalem as it lay in 33 A.D., when Christ was on trial here. After seeing such a street in Bet She'an we could not wait to see what Ron described as the arches and shops which were dug out of twenty feet of 'shmuck.' We walked gingerly as we headed into the city.

As you can tell by the name, this gate is where the garbage is taken out of the city. There was a covered area one might presume was a portion of the garbage processing area but it was actually an Israeli Archaeological Society garbage sifting center manned by university students. It seems that the Muslim workers digging under the temple mount area were throwing ancient artifacts in the garbage. Such was not an accident. The Muslims had denied that there ever was a Jewish temple and they were purposefully disposing of the evidence that proved their denials so ludicrous. Many tremendous temple artifacts had been recovered through this garbage sorting operation before the workers at the dome of the rock figured out what was going on in the tents outside of the dung gate.

Near Saint Stevens Greek Orthodox Church we paused near the path that led from the baths and to the temple. When Jesus was here for Passover 300 thousand people swelled the city and walked on these holy paths called 'shaqam' (Hbrw שקם) meaning to restore oneself. In fact the sycamore tree, named from the Greek derivation of this word, like the olive tree, dies, stays dead for years, then regenerates itself, comes to life and sprouts into new life. As we moved down the exposed 1st century stones we came across an underground Synagogue. The children playing in their outdoor court below street level were most captivating and most unusual. Synagogues are always built on the highest part of the city. Here they were well below street level. This departure from tradition was

necessitated by Muslim control, and rationalized in that they were located on a 1st century holy site at this level. The “Four Shepardi Synagogue” with joyful children in recess captured our attention for some time as we headed through the ancient streets to what Ron called Jerusalem's 5th Ave. and 42nd St. There we envisioned the shops and markets covered in canvas held up by the rows of pillars covered in intricate engravings, many were repositioned on their bases which lined the market place.



In the museum we watched a video that envisioned what it must have been like for a lad to bring a sacrifice to the temple area, bath and walk respectfully down the sacred path with his offering. Many of the images of the temple and Jerusalem area were modeled after the imagination of Raphael and other medieval artists who had painted pictures of this area. Coins and antique images of the actual temple had given correction to many of the guesses but all is

not yet known and these ongoing archaeological digs are still revealing much new detail.

From viewing the artifacts in the museum we came to some unique maps of Jerusalem. The first was a mosaic on the wall which showed some of the street layouts and great hordes of people in the city. The second was a depiction of how God and Israel depict the world map. It showed three pointed leaf shapes united in the center. The North West leaf was labeled Evropa, the North East, Asia, and the Southern, Africa. Jerusalem was depicted at the center of the world and anyone who has ever read the 66 chapters of Isaiah with the 66 books of the Bible (there is, by the way, some correlation of alignment and parallels in these two groups of 66) know this to be God's world view as well. This is why Joseph Smith who imagined that America represented the lost tribes of Israel, and invented Later Day Saints, had to come up with a whole new book which they call the 'Book of Mormon' and which develops that Jesus would come back and step down, not on the Mount of Olives, as the Bible states, but in North Carolina! It is diabolical that many could actually believe such balderdash. Many of the worlds dealings with Israel have a 'diabolical' dimension and one should get out a dictionary and make sure they understand what that word means.

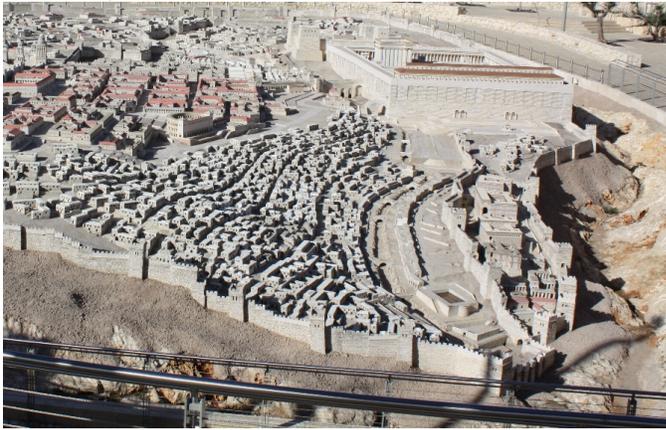
In the Bible Ezra is 'the ready scribe'; which chronicles the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple after the 70 year Babylonian captivity of Israel. In archeology and on the placards now before us this reconstructed temple is called the first temple period and Herod's temple the second temple period. I guess Solomon's Temple would then be designated the Original Temple Period, and the Tabernacle before that as the Tabernacle Period. We were now peering down into a causeway at a placard of that period at ground level for Ezra's day. The Bible books of Ezra and Nehemiah and Ezra's re-chronicling of Israel's history in 1&2 Chronicles, designates this period as starting in 536 B.C. What an awesome thing to peer back in history to Ezra's day and more.





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Vol XXIII Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: Jerusalem's Model

A very unique Bible bookstore was only a block out of our way. 'Shorashim the Biblical Shop', owned by Moshe and Dav Kempinski boasted a unique collection of "New, Views and Torah." (www.shorashim.com) Ronnie showed us into the shop with his anticipatory smile and the instruction to "Just listen to what they have to say." I recalled that same smile and instruction when we entered the Druz village for our free luncheon on our second day here. I suspected that Ron enjoyed these 10 days immensely. Although he did not get paid for doing a pastor familiarization tour he got some gratuities and the satisfaction of watching 12 pastors see things for the first time. He especially seemed to enjoy taking us to places where the evangelical talents of 12 preachers of the gospel would be the most thwarted. I could have only imagined this as so, but it was true for the Druz, and now for the Kimpenski brothers.



Shorashim had a play book from the World Council of Churches (WCC) Faith and Order Commission which repeated Samir Selmanovic's inter faith vision which will "seek to bring progressive Jews, Christians, Muslims and spiritual seekers of no faith to become an interfaith community for the good of the world. We have one world and one god." (they normally capitalize that last word but i refuse.) Their tact in presenting such a concept to a dozen Baptist Preachers who

knew better was as subtle and innovative as it was ineffective. Their most developed talking point was the deceitful approach that Christianity is just a marketing twist off of Judaism that was developed and expertly marketed by Paul who called himself an apostle of Jesus. Thus, in their misleading approach we were not followers of Christ but marketers of Judaism trained by Paul and "We have one world and one god, and for the good of the world we should all be part of the world interfaith community." At the close of the Kimpenski lecture I had two thoughts and multiple bite marks on my tongue. First, I wondered what kind of speech the Kimpenskis made to the Muslims when they herded them in and closed the doors for a private intimate talk like this; that had to be a doozer. Second, I wondered if I could return some of the novel things I had found in their unique shop because I have avowed that not a dime of my money would ever go to the WCC and here I was standing in one of their endorsed marketing camps. I felt dirtier than an American Baptist who just found out their counsel wholly supports the WCC. (They really should do us all a favor and drop 'Baptist' from their Church signs while they support such a diabolical venture.) We left the unique shop a little stunned that any one with even a couple brain cells close together could believe the tripe we just heard. But the wide gate and broad path that lead in and out of this shop ensured us that a majority do.

I longed for a map of the city with a little 'x' that said your are here. We made our way, somehow, to the glass enclosed menorah that overlooked the Western Wall and from there to the bus. I am not sure if we were purposefully sheltered from what we would see next or if I was floundering in so much overwhelming detail that I missed the introduction of our guide, but when we stepped into the Davidson Museum and saw the

stupendous model of the whole city of Jerusalem taking up a city block of real estate, and intricately depicting the layout of the city and temple in the time of the Lord Jesus Christ, I was the more overwhelmed

Concrete models of the buildings crammed into the City of David where we had just previously stood, opened to both a water way draining from the temple mount and the 'shagam' from the 'miqveh' that led up to the Southern Steps. The retaining wall that Herod had built and filled showed the south east pinnacle of the temple referenced in the Bible accountings of the temptation of Christ. (Matt 4, Mark 1, Luke 4) The gates around the Temple Wall detailed constructions that we had to imagine when looking at the excavations earlier today. The Eastern Gate and the position of the Temple's Holy of Holies captured our awe as we saw physically that the Muslim Dome of the Rock was actually situate over the court of the Gentiles. Cameras were clicking and every angle and elevation was available for exploration. The detail of each street in this model was intimidating as I expected any door to open and people to be seen walking about near their homes. But it was the depiction of the temple mount and its immediate surrounding that transfixed us to this model. The pretorium where Christ was tried was captivating. I imagined the ability of rolling a miniature camera down those replica streets and capturing Pilot surrounded by Roman soldiers all headed into the administration building on any given passover week when his attendance was required in Jerusalem. I saw the gates on the Western Wall exposed to view and not buried under 2000 years of reconstruction and rubble. The Eastern Gate, so revered in Judaism because of their misrepresentation of Ezekiel 40-42, and 43-44³⁵.



Our second lap around the 1st century Jerusalem model whet our appetite for what could be gleaned here if there was time afforded to revisit several archaeological digs and Jerusalem streets before circling it a 3rd and 4th time. Oh if I had two weeks to walk from a site back to this model, then up to the Southern Steps and back to the model, then down through the tunnels and back ... include here the City of David, the Pool of Siloam, the Pool of Bethesda, the Antonia Tower, the city gates, the temple gates, Gabbatha, etc. But, alas, in the hour we had here I absorbed all I could hold knowing we were next going to the Jerusalem Archeology Park also endowed by William Davidson, the famous Jewish writer who 'wrote' large numbers of checks..

Our drive past the multiple tombs on the Mount of Olives was now almost familiar on our first full day in Jerusalem. I could not erase the maze of caskets and see the garden park that Christ saw there. When we passed the Eastern Gate of the temple mount, however, the bus leaned to the right as the dozen preachers and wives moved to the windows to compare it to the model we just saw. So many times I had gazed at plate 9 of my Scofield Reference Bible and tried to envision the Tyropoeon valley spreading to the south from the temple mount and the seven gates into the temple. They were now modeled in 3 dimensions in the back recesses of my mind and camera.

35 Careful study of eschatology shows that a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ from the throne of David in Jerusalem will entail a new temple so large that it will not fit on Mt Zion as it is. The Eastern gate of this new temple is what is revered in Ezekiel 43, and not that of Herod's 'tiny' temple we now envision.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XXIV Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: The Southern Steps

Armed with the visions of the model we disappeared into the streets of the City of David where I lost all perspective of location until we came into view of the black dome of the Mosque on the southern wall of the temple mount. We looked up the immense wall to Robinson's Arch. We were already able to distinguish between the huge Herodian foundation stones and the smaller ones used in later reconstructions. Ronny's accent silenced the group as we all leaned a little closer to hear. "At my bar mitzvah in 1967, in the middle of a war, I stood up there on Robinson's Arch and everything we see here was covered by smultchk." His multilingual accent had captured a picturesque word for the rubble and dirt, debris and garbage that filled ancient sites. There is no English equivalent.

We listened intently as he described some of the war and the now visible foundation stones placed by Herod prior to the birth of Christ. He described the hated symbol of the 10th Roman Legion which came in 70 A.D. to topple the temple and its walls and leave the insignia of their wild boar. Nothing could be more disdained in the temple than that image in particular and there had previously been no images at all on



this temple mount. He described the demolitions and reconstructions of Muslims and Crusaders of Turks and Europeans. "Up there on the original South West corner of the wall a trumpeter would sound the shofar for the official ending of the sabbath day." His instrument would ceremoniously rest in a little notch with a Hebrew inscription on it. And that corner stone, with notch and inscription was found here in this rubble of the fallen wall. Such a find authenticated what the Jews and the Bible had been testifying. The findings and weepings done on this site, over these rocks and artifacts is beyond our Gentile imaginations.

Here beneath the smultchk they found 17 miqvehs for the purifying baths required once per week. (Lev 15:27) The large families of Jews is brought to mind by these miqvehs. Women must not be touched while in menstrual bleeding; then not for a week; then after her purifications in a miqveh she must come to her husband; not by coincidence, just at the time of normal ovulation. Along with the many baths buried in this rubble was Herod's arch, an abundance of water pools, and the cheese production facilities. That Jordanian destruction of the whole Jewish quarter of Jerusalem had indeed opened a floodgate of archaeological discovery.

We left the South Western corner of the temple mount through a maze of streets of the first century, 'climbed the decline' up to the 7th century and entered the Umayyad Palace area. The spacious courtyard which reused many of the stones of the 2nd temple period tied together large public buildings for people gathering in the temple area. Situated in the southern edge of the Temple Wall, there may have even been a bridge that led to the temple mount. The Americas do not even have a 7th century history, but I was eager to leave this 'modern era' Umayyad Palace and get back to the temple of the 1st century, and we headed for the Southern Steps of the temple.

At the base of the entry of the temple outside the Gentile court, Ronnie rehearsed the visit made here by Neil Armstrong with Ron as his guide. He expressed a desire to stand in the very place where Jesus once stood and they came here to the uncovered Southern Steps knowing that the Bible and the archaeologist shovel combined to place Jesus on this very spot. Here, Neil Armstrong said that “Standing here on the very place that his Lord had stood, was more important to him than standing on the moon.” With that revelation these steps became a sanctuary of worship. Bev and I ascended and sat on an undisturbed 1st century stone to read Scripture and pray together. We read about the 1st purifying of the temple in John 2, and the 2nd in Matt 21. We read how he taught in the temple from early dawn till evening on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of the old Hebrew month Abib, after his triumphal entry as “the lamb that taketh away the sin of the world,” the passover lamb that was separated from the rest of the flock on the 10th of that month and offered as a sacrifice on the 14th. Here on these very steps our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ, had fulfilled these Scriptures. It was an awesome worship service of two. Several others had broken off as couples to worship. When we regathered back together we were pretty much without words.

Ronny's accent and softened demeanor captured all our attention as he stood next to the huge glass enclosed Menorah which overlooked the Western Wall. “In 1492, a date which is easy for Americans to remember, Spain decreed that every Jew in their country must convert to Catholicism or die.” As usual Ronny spoke carefully and accurately. No one can be brought to Christianity by a sword, despite Saint Augustine's



doctrine of the two swords and millions of martyrs by the Catholics who grasped it. And no one can be kept from Christianity by a sword, despite the millions of martyrs still dying by Muslim and Communist swords. I always hate when people use 'Catholic' synonymously with 'Christian', they are not synonym. I never heard our guide run the two together. We each listen carefully, many with recorders going now, I with my now stuffed note book open. He described the mass exodus of Jews that caused the whole economy of Spain to collapse within 3 years. I thought of our own collapsed economy and the economics report Beverly just did at CCC on Fanny May and Freddie Mack. I am sure in Spain they likewise denied that the collapse had anything to do with their treatment of the Jews. But the Bible says to his people “fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.” (Isa 51:7b-8) The self fulfilling recession exaggerated onto our society by those wishing for a regime change is blooming into a full collapse of its own. If there is one thing we learn from history it is that we never learn from history.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XXV Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: The Western Wall

The Muslim Turks occupying Israel's once promised land perceived the economic advantage of immigrating the Spanish displaced Jews into Israel and opened their doors to them. In 1492 they gave them "eternal access" to the Western Wall of their temple area and a flood of Jews immigrated back to their homeland.

Ronnie's explanation continued. "This then is not the Jewish Western Wall, it is 'the' Western Wall." All faiths have access to this area as a place of prayer. The Jews reverence this wall as the portion of wall that remains of their temple mount, the very closest thing to their temple's holiest place. In respect of that reverence we should respect their custom of wearing a head covering in their holy areas and not disrespectfully turning our back on their holiest area. But access to this wall is freely given to all who would pray here, and the following of these Jewish customs is likened to following the Christian custom of removing head coverings when we enter a Church. You do not have to conform, but someone may speak to you about it when you don't.

Since we visited the wall last night and were now armed with much more information we were less timid on this approach I had my Stetson and no need of the paper kippah. As the ladies headed toward their entry point Pastor Carpenter, Pickett and I headed for the men's entry of the Western Wall. One of us should have said something profound as we walked into the large open area filled with orthodox Jews of many sects, children and visitors. I was at loss for words. My limited knowledge of the wall coupled with my anxious aged longing to see it drove words far from me. Every thing going on around me caught my interest. Children were being gathered for lessons, Jews were bobbing back and forth in a public prayer show, chairs were being moved to accommodate a group praying at the wall, elders were engaging conversation with juniors of their sect, tourists were milling around in the mix and cameras were clicking. The three of us swiftly dispersed as we followed camera lenses in different directions.

I made my way through the mallei of activity and found an open area at one of the gargantuan two thousand and nine year old foundation stones. A Christian can pray anytime and anyplace. We have an advocate with the Father, His only Begotten Son, dwelling within us and thus we can "pray without ceasing." I do have places of prayer as I have places of study. Being in those places prompt me there to pray or to study. This place, dedicated and reserved for a prayer place, did nothing towards prompting a prayer from me. I was instead struck with an awe. The stone before me was positioned here as part of a retaining wall to top Mount Moriah with a great 45 acre plateau for Herod's temple construction project. To my right hand and to my left were Jews praying a Hebrew prayer from the Jewish prayer book:

"Because of our sins we were exiled from our country and banished from our land. We cannot go up as pilgrims to worship Thee, to perform our duties in Thy chosen house, the great and Holy Temple which was called by Thy name, on account of the hand that was let loose on Thy sanctuary. May it be Thy will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, merciful King, in Thy abundant love again to have mercy on us and on Thy sanctuary; rebuild it speedily and magnify its glory."

Since this was being prayed all around me I thought it appropriate to start my prayer praying for the peace of Jerusalem. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." (Psalm 122:6) "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD." (Zec 8:22) I also prayed for the reconstruction of the temple here. When Baptists read their Bible correctly and literally³⁶, there is a 7 year tribulation period coming upon this earth at hand right after the catching away, or 'rapture', of the Church to meet the Lord in the clouds. (1Thes 4) In the midst of that 7 year period of world tribulation the anti-Christ, "the abomination of desolation, spoke of by Daniel the prophet" (Matt 24:15) "Shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." (Dan 9:27) The "sacrifice and the oblation" cannot

36 Only a minority of Christianity consistently read their Bible literally, most take their eschatology from 'clergy', only figuratively and thereby mucked up. Baptists, more consistently than any, hold to inerrant, infallible, literal interpretation for their eschatology. Baptist History Vol 1, John T. Christian

cease until it is restarted, and it cannot reconvene until there is a temple to house it. The temple will be reconstructed and it is exciting to learn of the preparation already made for that reconstruction and reconvening of the sacrifice and oblation. It was also exciting to be here at the Temple Wall and ask God to do what He said He would, rebuild this temple.

It was custom to write your prayer requests on a paper and tuck it into a crack in the stones. And it was reported that these slips of paper were periodically removed and kept forever in a vault within the Western Wall. I had previously written the names of all twenty three members of Good Samaritan Baptist Church on a small slip of paper on the opposite side the names of all twelve missionaries that our church supports, their wives names and their callings. I promised my self that I would pray for each name at the wall. It also included our three sons, their wives and our 11 grandchildren. As I prayed, I tucked the slip of paper into one of our Ford Porter "God's Simple Plan of Salvation" gospel tracts and rolled it up into a tight cylinder that tucked neatly into one of the few open areas above the rock before me. This was not steeped in superstition that such a written message would get to God better than my prayer, but was a token of my never ceasing to pray for those names. I should not say here that I prayed hastily but all the activity around me was intriguing.

I moved along the wall to the north of the open area, careful not to turn my back to the wall as I did. Jews of all sects were praying all along the path. At the edge of this open wall area there was an opening that allowed entry underneath some buildings above. Here another 100 feet or so of wall was exposed to several groups and many prayers. Two Catholic confessionals were up against the wall just inside the alcove. I checked them carefully because they were not here last night when we were here. Sure enough, they had wheels, and were rolled into a back closet for the evenings. I found it strange that Catholics would want to confess their sins next to a Jewish Temple Wall, but I find many things strange about Catholicism. My mom, Doris Romiano Rice, was converted to Christ when I was 6, and what I knew most about Catholicism was her joy for being free of its bondage and its confessionals. We have an advocate with the Father who was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

There was a group of younger Jews in a rich discussion further in, and a whole class of children being taught by an animated elder teacher near the end. I watched the children enjoying their lesson from the Torah and tried to figure out some of the gist of the lesson by the antics of the teacher. I did not feel out of place watching the children's lesson because there were about 20 adults standing around the back enjoying the lesson. Their advantage was that they understood the Hebrew tongue which went with the antics.

As I came back out of the alcove a young Jewish man came to me and asked my name. He then asked where I was from, about my family and after I thoughtlessly rapid fired answers to his rapid fire questions he took my arm, led me to the wall, and began praying out loud. He prayed for me, by name, my wife, by name, for my three boys and my home and theirs. He prayed for our peace and happiness and health. This was happening faster than I could catch my thoughts or squeeze in a word, and I am from New York! When he finished I looked up to see a jubilant smile, a clothe purse of coins in his left hand, his right hand extended and open. Just before I comprehended that he was looking for a shekel or two tip for his prayer, I grasped his open extended hand and placed my left hand on his shoulder and began to pray that this young man and many others here would receive the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. His reaction was quick, his withdrawal immediate and when I finished my audible prayer and looked up I saw him nowhere in the crowd. There was a crowd. I continued my prayer less audibly but more earnestly. I knew followers of the 1879 Mrs. Mary Baker Glover Eddy would sell their prayer time, but this is the first Jew I'd seen try it. I could have spent another hour observing all the activity. If I spoke Hebrew there were several lively discussions ongoing that I am certain I could have joined.

Although Christians had often called this the wailing wall it was interesting to see jovial Jews laughing and dancing with joy here. I made my way back to the entry point to join several of our group already gathering and taking group photos. I could hardly believe it, I was standing at the Western Wall I had heard about since I was eight. How many times I had seen slides of this, now I was armed with a camera and viewing it through its lens.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XXVI Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: The Western Tunnels

With no rush, schedule, or appointment our group of 24 gathered back together after exploring the Western Wall. We circled around Ronnie, our guide, as he explained some background of the Western Wall Tunnels we were about to enter.

Where there are two Jews you will have three opinions, and this is the case for the location of the Jewish Temple on the temple mount. The “traditional location” is held to be where the outcropping of Mount Moriah's bedrock reaches the temple mount elevations. This outcropping of the bedrock is presently covered by the Muslim shrine known as the Dome of the Rock. Historical accounts say that this anodized aluminum dome, recently coated with gold leaf, was built to overlay the location of the original Jewish temple and most rabbis in Israel agree. But when the Romans, Titus Vespasian in particular, overthrew Jerusalem and leveled the temple mount on the 9th day of the month Av in 70 A.D., as Christ said to his disciples in Matthew 24, they built a temple to Jupiter on this site. (132 A.D.) Then in the 7th century Umayyad Muslims built on those ruins

attempting to desecrate the Jewish temple's Holy of Holies location. Innuendos and myths then sprang from an unintelligible verse of the Koran which spoke of a “farthest place of prostration”, to where today most Muslims think maybe in a dream Mohamed

Western Wall Tunnels
 "Our feet stood poised at your gates, o Jerusalem"
 (Psalm 102:2)

From the time of the temples destruction we have been unable to ascend the temple mount to stand in the presence of the shechina. Foreign domination and the constraints of halacha? which prevented access to the temple mount shifted the focus and longings of the Jewish people for their heritage to the Western Wall. For hundreds of years the indignity of destruction concealed the major part of the Western Wall. The few stones visible told a tale of devastation. In 5727 (1967) soon after the liberation of the old city of Jerusalem, the Ministry of Religious Affairs undertook the task of clearing the Western Wall plaza area. The Ministry also initiated a project with a goal beyond mere scientific and archaeological curiosity. The workers pick-axe stripped away the centuries to make this ancient heritage visible and tangible to the Jewish people. Many tons of dirt and refuse were laboriously removed by hand to expose the magnificent underground structures. A continuous historical chain wrought in stone stretching from the Hasmonean era until our time was discovered.



went to Jerusalem and ascended from this outcropping of Mount Moriah's bedrock. The Al Aqsa Mosque (ie. farthest mosque) is so named to forge this outlandish connection back to that uninterpretable Koran verse and substantiate such wild suppositions. The gist of this information is that nobody knows an accurate location for the original Jewish temple on the temple mount. We expect that Solomon's temple, the post exile temple, and Herod's remodeled reconstructed temple all stood on the same location, but that location sill not be verified until scientific and

archaeological excavations can be done in the multiple natural and man made caverns and passage ways beneath the temple mount. This investigation will not occur until the Waqf, the Supreme Moslem Council, relinquishes its absolute control of the whole

temple mount area, which they consider a huge outdoor sacred mosque. These Muslims want not only the annihilation of Israel but the annihilation of any evidence that Israel ever existed. This diabolical hatred has resulted in a destruction of much archaeological evidence on the temple mount and active opposition to all activities of the Israeli Archaeological Society.

These excavations revealed the entire length of the Western Wall in all its glory. Almost 449 meters long with one stone reaching a weight of almost 400 tons. About 2000 square meters of rooms and public halls were discovered, as well as a section of a second temple road, a Hasmonean water tunnel, a pool, and many other finds. These finds will one day provide the setting for a learning center dedicated to fostering an awareness of Jewish history and an appreciation of the ideals nurtured in Jerusalem and the temple. Here is a realm rich in roots - it was on this mountain that Abraham was warned not to "lift your hand against the youth", Isaac. Here one can imagine the songs and music of the Levites. The stones evoke memories of King David and Solomon, of Ezra and Nehemiah of the Maccabees and the sages. King and prophets walked along these paths. Here at the foot of the Western Wall, more than any other place on Earth, the memories of Jewish past mingle with the hope of Jewish future.

We were now entering the Western Wall Tunnels which exposed the entire length of the Western Wall. Since 1967 tons of schmutztz was removed from these tunnels to expose indeterminable insight to the second temple period and a fervor of new interest in knowing even more. The entry way into the tunnels was strange. Where previous the turn-styles had been separate for men and women, these were marked for those who read signs, Jews vs Messianic Jews and Gentiles. Since the group of ladies before us went through one turn-style, I led a group of preachers through the other and the counters tallied us up as Jews, entering the tunnels. The distinction was likely made here because there were places in the tunnels deemed so close to the Holy of Holies that Jews were warned not to assemble there.

Workers were building supports in several deep openings we could peer into through the cracks in the plywood. As an engineer I wondered at the remarkable lattice of support holding up the city above while archaeologists dug through the city beneath. We had been warned about the claustrophobic nightmares of some of the narrower passages and our group hummed with anticipation as we made our way through the 'secret passage' and passed the 1st century stair way access partly exposed here. There were cisterns open to our view as we made our way through the rock lined corridors of the 1st century passages. At the 'large hall' we all assembled at another model of the temple. Before Ron began his discussion we examined the model's Western Wall and the many gates exposed to our view. From Robinson's Arch to the south, we worked our way north to Barclay's gate then to Wilson's Arch and to our present location just outside Warrens Gate, so named after Charles Warren, who discovered it in 1867. If the Holy of Holies was situated at the traditional site it would be just inside and north of Warren's Gate, that we were now approaching. If physicist Dr. Asher Kaufman were right in his estimation, it would be 330 feet further north, situated just inside the Eastern Gate. If Tel Aviv architecture Tuvia Sagiv were right, with his studies of the topography of the mount area the Holy of Holies would be about 20 meters in elevation down the souther slope from the traditional location.





The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XXVII Day 8 Tue 3 Feb: The Warren Gate

The model before us depicted the traditional location and our awe at being here could not be diminished no matter which location proves correct. The girders and beams holding up the city above and spanning the area of the large vault area captivated me as we followed Ronnie down the stairs to view a section of Herod's retaining wall. One stone at eye



Vault in the Great Bridge

One of the vaults supporting the bridge. The foundations of the bridge were laid on the ruins of structures from the second temple period. These remains dictated the irregular plan of the windows foundations.

level above the foundation was 35 feet long, 6 feet high and 8 foot deep. Its weight was estimated at 400 tons and imagining how Herod had it moved from the stone quarry to this location continues to capture imaginations. With Ryan King standing at one end and Joshua Jones at the other the photo's of this rock could not capture its immensity. Although we viewed the video portraying a possible solution of Herod's rock positioning adventures, this one still boggled all imaginations of modern man.

Standing at the entrance gate to the temple mount was even more moving. Hearing the explanations of those who explored the caves and passages under the temple mount area, and imagining the finds and furnishings that they reported created a new regard for the Muslims who were pouring these finds full of concrete from their perch above. As much as being this close to the original temple location induced awe,



Entrance Gate To The Temple Mount Warren's Gate is one of the four Western Wall entrance gates to the temple mount from the second temple period. During the early Muslim period 4495-4859 (735-1099AD) the internal space of the gate passage served as the main Synagogue of the Jews in Jerusalem. The Synagogue was located here because of its proximity to the holy of holies. It was named "the cave" because of its location under the temple mount. Today the whole passage functions as a large cistern serving the visitors to the temple mount. The gate is named after Charles Warren who discovered it in 5627/1867AD.

the diabolical hatred from those opposed to Jehovah God produced a wonder. As Christians we know the last chapter of this great conflict. The Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, which man had rejected, pierced and crucified will return in power and great glory to be King of kings and Lord of lords. (1Thes5:1-5)

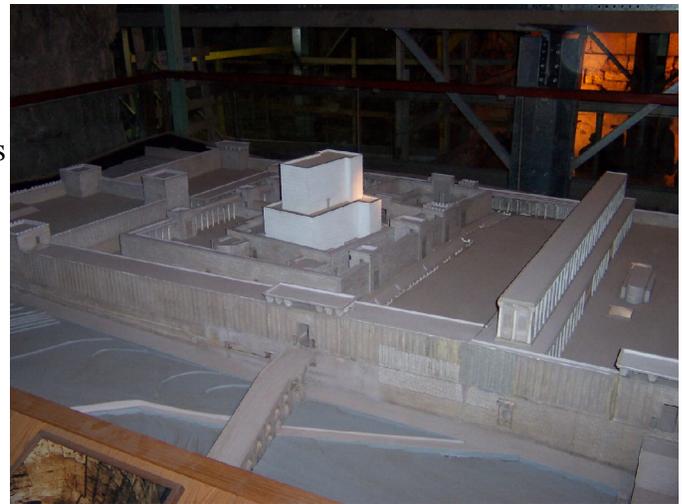
We passed the area just outside the Holy of Holies with reverence. A multitude of worshipers were seated near the wall here, silently praying or reading. Some had

headsets on and were listening to sermons or Torah readings, some were in small rooms off of the main corridor, all were reverent, expecting that they were here as close as they might ever be to the Holy of Holies, or Kodesh Hakodeshim, and the very 'shekina' cloud presence of Jehovah God. Christians know that one day the veil outside of that Holy of Holies was rent in twain from the top to the bottom and access was given to 'whosoever will' to enter into that holiest of all places, the very presence and throne room of Jehovah God. As Evangelist Loran Dawson used to say "In the OT God built a temple for His people, in the NT He builds a people for His temple. "

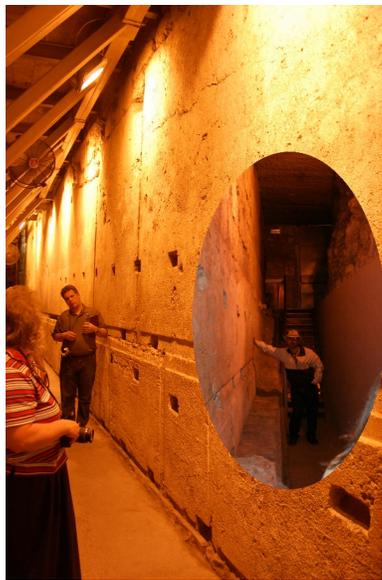
We passed the very narrow passages that exposed the whole northern section of the Western Wall. We walked over glass coverings that exposed great depths of openings below and

Western Wall Tunnel

A tunnel exposing the entire length of the Western Wall this excavation passes through the medieval structures built adjoining the wall. These structures were built in order to support the row of Moslem buildings which form the western facade of the temple mount enclosure above us.



we peered upward at the stacks of Herod's rocks above. All 24 of us stood in one huge cistern. There were gasps and grunts as we squeezed through tight passages and then made our way up the stairs past a Herodian street to the exposed streets above. The sun was bright. The late afternoon day was beautiful. The soldiers we passed in the streets were smiling, the children laughing, and we headed for what I think



was the Damascus gate where we found Danny waiting with the bus. This day, which began with our first stand on the Mount of Olives, a tour of the City of David and all parts of the temple mount that could be accessed, and ended in the tunnels of the Western Wall, was overpowering.

We were exhausted while partaking of the stupendous supper back at the Moriah Classic. We mixed our Kosher meal with timid conversations with our longtime friends, the Picketts and the Carpenters. The things we had seen and experienced this day were beyond absorption. Attempts

to describe thoughts to friends was swallowed by silent contemplation. In our room Bev and I read some Scriptures and surrounded our day in prayer before we fell into exhausted slumber. Our last day in Israel was looming before us and we both awoke at dawn to greet it.





The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XXVIII Day 9 Wed 4 Feb: The Holocaust

The dim lamp was not sufficient to read about Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus at the garden tomb and the sun was still an hour off. At its arrival would dawn the morning of our last day in Israel. Normal pre-dawn reading of Scripture was done on my Tungsten Palm Pilot with research done on my Compaq lap top. The latter was left in New York, the former had its recharging transformer burned up in Kubbuts Ginossar when a power surge surged through the borrowed converter. When I returned the converter to the Picketts, who borrowed it from the Carpenters, it still smelled a little burnt but we were unable to discern if it carried its own scent or that of my smoked recharger. My Palm seemed unharmed as it drifted off into silent hibernation. I missed it now. It would scroll through chapters of the Bible which could be read in a dark room where a light would awake my sleeping sweetheart. The sun came soon enough and we were off for our last Kosher breakfast in Israel. There were four events on our calendar for this last day, the 9th day of our tour. I recalled with humor how the marketing ploy had made our first 'day' only 1 hour inclusive and so too, our 10th day. Day 9, so called, was to include the sensationalized visit to the Garden Tomb, meant to be a highlight of the trip. For me this highlight waned. There were so many other highlights previous and I had seen so many slides and reactions to the empty tomb that it was familiar and I concerned myself of reproducing one of those canned and processed responses.

Highlights of Caesarea, Tel-Dan, Caesarea Philippi, Galilee, Capernaum, Bet She'an, Qumran, the Dead Sea, and Masada swirled through my mind as we boarded the bus and opened our Bibles for the last morning devotion led by an over exuberant but spirit filled Baptist Preacher. Every event of the day was sprinkled with a sweet effervescence of 'I want this to never end' mixed with the bitter herb 'this is the last time we will do this!' We greeted Danny for the last day and applauded his talent and knowledge as he drove us through the majestic country side where we would overlook Bethlehem. I did not fully understand that Bethlehem was under the control of the Jordanians and we, as tourists, were free to visit there but Danny and Ronnie, as Israeli citizens, were barred from entering³⁷. There is much I remain ignorant of in this hostile environment but one thing constant and increasing is hatred and hostility towards God's chosen people, Israel. The Bible says this hostility will spread to all nations and we have already seen it surging in the Americas.



The city of Bethlehem lay nestled in a valley surrounded by scenic foothills. Wayne and Earldine had previous taken a cab to visit Bethlehem on their own, but Bev and I had little interest in visiting yet another Catholic or Orthodox Church here. Just the same, a

³⁷ This explanation comes from goisrael.com "Are tourists allowed to enter areas outside of Israeli responsibility (Palestinian areas)? ... Passage to the two major tourist cities of Bethlehem and Jericho in the Palestinian Authority is direct without prior clearance or required authorization. In regard to the rest of the Palestinian areas, it is recommended to forward requests to the IDF Public Relations Office. (Fax: +972.2.5305724). All requests should include the following: name, passport nationality and number, destination, and place of departure into Palestinian Area Crossing if known; If crossing is by car: name and details of driver as well as car registration number should be included. Fax replies will only be sent to Israeli telephone./fax numbers."

'drive by shooting' (cameras) that vaguely identified the city seemed somewhat lacking.

In September of 2008, at Bev's mom's bidding, we attended a briefing at the Corning Museum of Glass. There an xArmy radio man, named Stephen something, as I recall, briefed his experience of being one of the very first US soldiers to enter the first German consecration camps discovered. That two hour presentation, with slides, sharpened my focus on the Holocaust and little did I know then that day 9 of our trip to Israel would widen the vista of such unimaginable vision and present a panorama of horror that would occupy two hours as if it were minutes. Bev and I began the tour of the Holocaust Museum in an alerted numbness.

The million and a half candle memorial for the million and a half children whose names were read aloud perpetually brought us to such somberness that our entry into the museum aisles was hushed and serene. The focus of the progression through this ugly history was an answer to the question "How could such a horror of history come to pass?" The light shed on that answer began in the early life of Adolf Hitler and shown as a flashlight on a path of depravity which widened into a trail, then a road, then a highway that engulfed a nation and embroiled into a world war. Aisle by aisle the diabolical darkness of mankind was exposed to the light of history with newspaper clippings, headlines, and Nazi film footage and photographs that knotted your stomach with graphics of hatred and unimaginable atrocity. Alas our two hour tour was expiring and we had covered less than half the museum. It was not right to haste through any specific era of this presentation of ugly history.



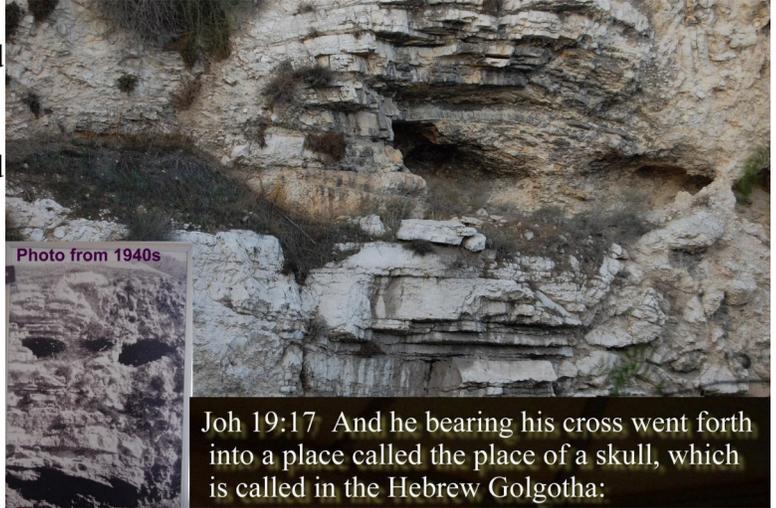
It repeatedly came to my mind that the very theories of evolution and survival of the fittest, which moved Hitler to annihilate an 'inferior species of humanity'; is being taught to my grandchildren in our government school system. It has been said the religion of a nation is that which is taught to its children. The Creator denying secular atheism overwhelming our educational system aligns very closely with the portrayal before me in this Holocaust Museum.

This was declared a hall of remembrance dedicated to ensuring this could never happen again. But one thing we learn from history is that we never learn from history. I recalled several conversations with a Syrian I meet regularly on the streets of Geneva NY, in his mind and mannerism every evil in this world ties back to Israel's existence in the world. It seems too incredible for words that such animosity even exists, let alone that it is being prompted and promoted by America's mainstream media. Could such a history in all its horror be repeated in this world? In America a path has widened to a trail. Our media repeatedly refers to Israel as the occupier of 'Palestine' and Adolf himself said if you repeat a lie loud enough and often enough it will be accepted as truth by the masses.

The Son was bright as we emerged from the museum and headed down through rows of trees. It was "The Path of Remembrance and Reflection" We were told that each tree here was planted in honor of a Gentile who helped the Jews during this unbelievable horror of history. Particular interest was paid to Corry Ten Boom's tree, and Oskar & Emilie Schindler's tree. It was reported that on the day that Corry died her tree died. Such is often perceived as superstition, but for a Christian who knows the God, by whom all things consist, there are no coincidences in this world. This was, after all, called the "Garden of the Righteous." The walkway closes with a large arch with the verse from Ezekiel 37:14, "I will put my breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil ... "



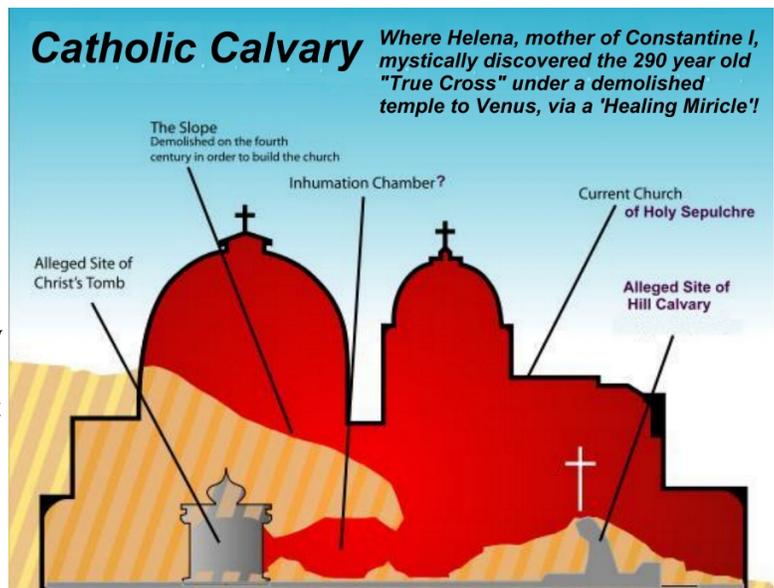
All of my 49 years as a born again Christian I had heard that there was an empty tomb in a garden near Golgotha and a Catholic Church built on an emptied tomb in Jerusalem; that there was a Calvary on Golgotha's hill and a Catholic Calvary in downtown Jerusalem. (My mom was converted from Roman Catholicism to 'Ye must be Born Again' Baptist's Christianity in 1958) The excitement now built exponentially as we entered the Garden Tomb next to the hill called Golgotha.



Mr 15:22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

Constantine was the undisputed Roman Emperor from 324-337 AD, but when he supposedly converted to the Christianity of his mother, Helena, in 313, he reversed Christian persecutions with an Edict of Milan, and began to make an 'ecumenical christianity' mandatory and controlled by the Empire. In 316 AD Constantine acted as the judge against the Baptists, then called Donatists, who broke fellowship with and spoke out against the Churches in Rome which had new leanings toward baptismal regeneration. These Donatists not only

broke fellowship with these errant churches but they proposed that only believers who have made a profession of faith should be baptized, because salvation was by grace through faith and not of works, nor baptism. For this schism, 'intra-christian' persecution was born wherein Constantine, as judge, authorized his 'ecumenical church' in Rome, later called his 'universal church' which in Latin is the 'Catholic Church' to use their swords against these hated Donatists who opposed the sloppy Roman baptismal practices, and broke fellowship with these errant Churches. Constantine actually led an army of his Roman 'christians' against the Donatist Christians, and in 325 he



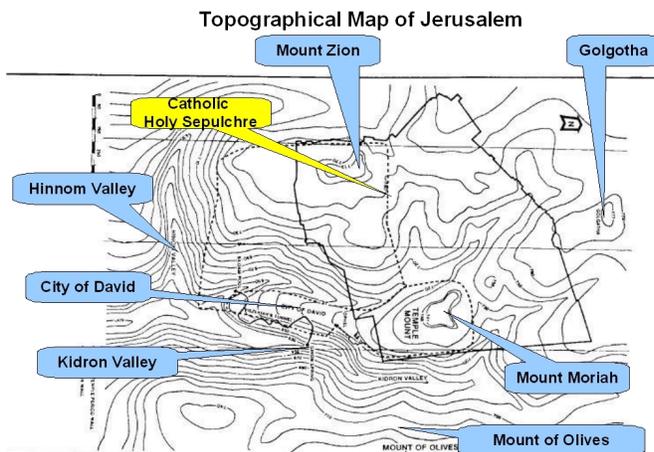
summoned the first ecumenical council, the Council of Nicaea. Churches which were true to the Bible, i.e. Baptist Churches, who refused to align with Constantine's new Roman Church were persecuted; their bishops were exiled, banished and killed. Constantine marked the birth of his oppressive, controlling, persecuting 'Catholic' Church, just 280 years after the crucifixion of Christ.

This over bearing emperor took control of the Roman Church and gave his mother, Helena, unlimited access to the imperial treasury in order to locate the relics of Christianity. Traditionally she is credited with finding the relics of the 'True Cross'. The legend goes that Helena entered a temple of Venus, built by Emperor Harrian on a hill in urban Jerusalem, ordered it torn down and thereupon found three crosses underneath. A woman from Jerusalem who was at the point of death, recovered suddenly when she touched, not the first, nor the second, but the third of the three crosses and Helena declared this the "True Cross." Whereupon her son, Emperor Constantine, built the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, also called the Church of the Resurrection, upon this hill that they assumed to be the Hill of Calvary. All this myth, superstition, and legend 290 years (325 AD)



after the crucifixion and resurrection however, had nothing to do with what the Bible says about "Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull." (Matt 15:22)

In 1842 Otto Thesnius, searching for the Greek 'Golgotha', rather than the Catholic's Latin 'Calvary', discovered that the revered hill north of the city wall and still bearing the appearance of a skull on its outcropping was much more likely the place of the crucifixion than the urban area where Helena spent her son's treasury. We passed



through the beautiful garden area to first examine this outcropping that resembled a skull. The Mount Golgotha is equal in height to Mount Moriah where the temple mount is located and to Mount Zion, where Herod's palace stood and the tower of David marks the western city wall. Golgotha stands outside the city wall at the crossroads of the only accessible entrance to Jerusalem. This crossroad area, beside a hill that looks like a skull, outside the city gate of Jerusalem, where crucifixions were regularly carried out fits all the Biblical

description of where Jesus was crucified. The only denomination that ever defied the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox authority and tradition to say this out loud was the Anglican Church. After a short period they too withdrew their affirmation of the Garden Tomb and hill of Golgotha, reconformed to the majority, and bowed to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Baptists are not a denomination but have never bowed to the Roman Sword nor the Roman churches, which it expelled from fellowship in the 2nd century when they went awry about baptismal regeneration. From our view of the skull-like face in the outcropping of Golgotha we proceeded to the Garden Tomb.



The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XXX Day 9 Wed 4 Feb: The Empty Tomb

When Otto opposed Catholic tradition and in 1842 declared the place of the skull to be Calvary, excavations in the garden beside Golgotha quickly followed.

In 1867 an empty sepulcher, hewn from stone, was discovered, and empty sepulchers were rare in this prime real estate for burial sites. (Recall that sepulchers were used for generations over here, and when overcrowded, a decayed ancestor's remains were put into a smaller box and retained in the same sepulcher.) This was likely the place, the very sepulcher, dug by Joseph of Arimathaea, where Jesus' body was laid to rest for 3 short days and nights. It was a borrowed tomb, but Joseph, the lender, would have likely retained it as empty as they found it on that Sunday morning 19 centuries ago. Also a tombstone of deacon Nonus, found in the Church of St. Stephen, made mention of this nearby Holy Sepulcher. Surely this is the most likely scene of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ if not the very tomb!



The presentation of all these facts, the careful language used so as not to offend Catholic or Orthodox listeners, the tip toeing done in the garden and the shekels it cost to get in here robbed us of the time and atmosphere needed to fully contemplate what happened here. Here it was that Mary Magdalene saw “the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.” (John 20:1-8) Here in this garden somewhere,

Mary met her Lord and her God as the Bible says on this wise, “Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” (11-17)



None of this could be comprehended and contemplated in the moment of being here, but they are forever the more precious because we were. When we would have yelled Hallelujah out loud and burst into song for “Christ the Lord is Risen Today,” we were shushed and told that there was a place



for that and this, here beside the empty tomb, was not 'the place.' The Nigerian groups that went both before us and



after us fained to not understand English, Hebrew or Arabic, and never ceased singing and praising God out loud all through the Garden Tour. When finally they ushered the all white preachers into the enclosed outdoor chapel where it was acceptable to sing and say Hallelujah out loud, the room filled with a submissive silence where some whispered 'Praise the Lord' and all wondered who was in charge of selection of a song list, leading the singing and then who was scheduled to preach today. The silence that broke out as we waited for those who would rather get to the gift shop before it closed than come to this worship service was graphic. Our worship lacks so much spontaneity and Spirit that I told Beverly “we should have broken off and gone through with one of the Nigerian groups who could not stop singing out loud.” Yeah even all the Garden Tour officials could not find their 'off button' nor

hush their praises to the crucified and resurrected Lord.

Stragglers finally came in clutching bags, song list were handed out and the 'on button' clicked so we could all sing together some songs of the faith. Strangely, with Nigerians out singing us, I remembered the worship services in Peru, and extended worship services in Corfu Haiti, and pondered what it was in our culture that required this scheduled and subdued worship service, even at the site of the empty tomb. It seemed that Christians in 3rd world countries that indeed pray in sincerity “Give us this day our daily bread,” are far more capable of spontaneous, unscheduled and extended worship of the God who saved them.

I do not know if it was on the schedule or spontaneous, but the southern youth of the group, Joshua Jones, rose to preach and shook some more of our cultural hangups. Yankees despise all the 'hacking' that southern preachers dramatize in their preaching. Although I doubled my “Amen” and “Preach it brother” outbursts during his preaching, the many fixed and empty stares at the floor set the mood for this service.

It is profoundly intriguing that here in a garden next to Golgotha, where tradition has long waged war with truth, culture waged war with Spirit. The culture that stifles our spontaneous worship needs to be contended with. Bev and I were forever changed by our visit to the Garden Tomb beside a hill called Golgotha. All we learned and all that happened here, both then and now, will change all our remaining Sundays when we openly worship remembering His empty tomb.





The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol XXXI Day 9 Wed 4 Feb: The Farewell

Mount Zion, in the center of urban Jerusalem, Mount Moriah, with its mysterious and revered temple mount, and now Golgotha, with its features of a skull and its resurrection ground, were now disappearing in the rear view mirror as the tour bus headed toward Joppa on the fringe of darkness for our ninth day in Israel. The farewell dinner was pleasantly divided between marketing, education, and farewells. The several guides used by Christian Journeys were eating with us, the meal was an awesome kosher presentation of delicacies filled with Jewish custom and served in downtown Joppa, and this was our last supper in Israel, and last supper as a group on our pastors familiarization tour. Small talk with the guides scattered around the large banqueting table was occasionally interrupted with more formal presentations, thank-



you, and farewells.



We Gentiles had become somewhat accustomed to eating with our fingers and dipping bread into community serving bowls which made fellowship around a meal fellowship around a meal. But Bev and I, well seasoned with exploring divergent custom and culture because of my 23 years in the military, easily picked out some of the 'culture shock' still visible in a meal with this group of Baptist preachers from up north. There is nothing that could have summed up what we had been through together in the last 9 days. There was

no climactic conclusion that could capture it. This farewell dinner, where we had fellowship around an intimate meal together, is the best possible in achieving a 'capping off' of this tremendous time together. Although we did not want it to end, we dismissed, took our final walk together down an ancient street in Israel and boarded the bus that delivered us to the Tel Aviv airport.

It was difficult to sleep on the 11 hour flight which brought us into Tel Aviv 9 days ago; there was too much anticipation and excitement in the air. It was impossible to sleep on the 11 hour flight which brought us into Toronto on our 9th day. I read and reorganized my notes, and wished I had written more. Beverly smiled and recalled something insightful about every note I mentioned to her. The few years we have left before we see our Saviour face to face will not be sufficient to fully revel in the things we saw and heard in these last few days. If they were all recorded in a journal, I know it would be beyond my recall or ability to write it. Just the same, a short journal could document enough to bless my children and my children's children.

My dozing pen bounced on my notebook as the Israeli airplane touched the ground in Toronto. I knew that a written page typed into a half. As I gathered things to deplane I was thinking I could type these 7 pages in just a couple of hours.

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