



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, housing the Apostle Paul who was held prisoner for the arrival of Felix the Governor. Paul was 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.'¹ 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 into Caesarea at 250 gallons per family per day. 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.



¹ The word 'circus' is derived from the Roman roofless, oval enclosure surrounded by tiers of seats used for public spectacles involving animals.