



The Half Shekel Journal Vol VII by Ed Rice
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” official, and I learned, international documentation of 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. 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 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 desert tree called Eucalyptus (non native.) 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.



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 captured most of the Golan Heights back and although he would not use the word miraculous, the Syrians mysteriously fled the area leaving only the Druze of 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 and apples.

“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

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 Jordan) it was good for us to

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

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” give deep insight into the heart of the Israeli people. On this mountain height covered with prickly pear 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. 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 are opinioned 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 Magnificent¹ (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. He took part in a number of military operations, including the rescue of hostages in a high-jacked Sabena airplane in 1972. In the same year, he was cited for outstanding operational leadership by the late Major General Motta Gur. 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

1 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