



**The Half Shekel Journals of 2022** by Pastor Ed Rice  
**#05 Tue 1 Nov PM City View, Ascension Hill, Gethsemane.**

Beverly and I settled into the comfortable seats of the Irizar i6S luxury tour bus, finally reunited with our Bibles, notebooks, and my walking stick. We

had, in half a day, walked twice as far as any New York day, and now my arthritic back and Bev's swollen ankle were already making us pay.



Every bus ride in and around Jerusalem was a thrill and we remained glued to our window trying to pick out the sites that Joe barked out on the speaker. There was one announced for every two blocks that Eiad navigated; the 40 foot Irizar squeezed through some impossible situations with

amazing speed and agility. I tried to keep half an eye on the windshield, and half on the landmarks zooming by.

Between barks, Joe was maintaining an ongoing narrative of what we would be doing with the rest of our first day in Jerusalem. Gethsemane before dark, stuck in my mind.

We got off the bus at City View Park, or maybe it was



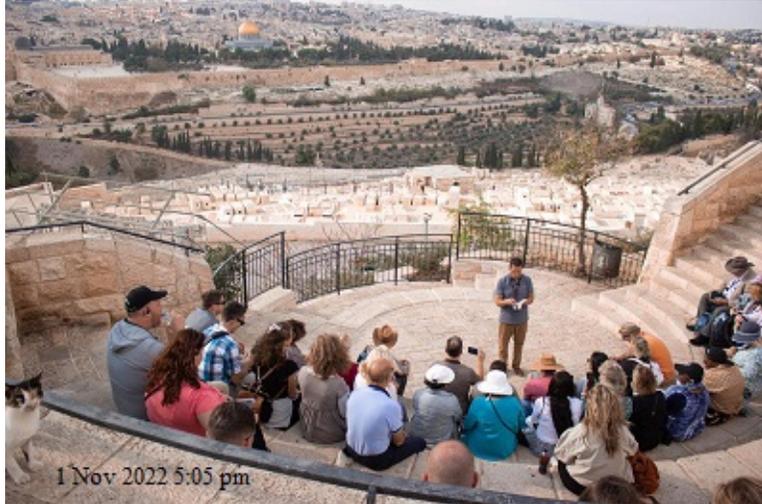
Ascension Hill, I'll have to check my sons iPhoto for the exact location<sup>1</sup>, but the place was loaded with ticks, leeches and other bloodsucking parasites. One of

them couldn't get a package of 20 postcards to stick to my hand so he slid them into my coat pocket and said "only 10 shekels"... And some thing about his hungry little children at home. I learned you cannot be polite to leeches. A "No thank you", must be replaced with a "No and get your hands off of me, ...", and, "If you try and put another prayer shawl on my wife, I'll break your

<sup>1</sup> img\_5303ss Shane n Kathy Olivet 1Nov22 1:53pm 31°46'33.67"N 35°14'34.29"E, img\_5306ss Pastor Chalie at 7Arches 1Nov22 2:15pm 31°46'32.62"N 35°14'34.37"E, img\_5312 Gethsemane prayer time1 1Nov22 3:08pm, 31°46'47.67"N 35°14'24.29"E, img\_4090 Gethsemane prayer time7 1Nov22 3:28pm, 31°46'47.71"N 35°14'23.03"E ... what amazing things phone cameras can do now days.

arm ..." I did however, remain civil. I pulled the now "free" postcards out of my pocket again and dropped them on the roadway, ... again. I wanted to pitch them over the barricade behind us and down the hillside, but I thought that might be "unchristian." There were more subtle leeches lurking here but I didn't remember any of them.

Our group assembled in a tiny arena overlooking the city and posed for a group photo with Jerusalem in the backdrop. I personally knew only a half dozen of the fifty. We were bonded together in Spirit, and I knew that over the next ten days there would also be a bond of experience between us. Remembering one's name is a very personal thing that starts a personal bonding. We all know sharp minds that will never forget a



name or a face; the rest of us struggle along in the background. I'm a little further back than most, but I had determined that I was going to love this ten days with forty "strangers" no matter what. The Clarks knew all this and provided us with a brochure with names and pictures of each one on the tour; bless their heart.



We were just coming up on our 24th hour in Israel, the view of the city from the Mount of olives was already familiar. There is the Eastern Gate; the large Temple Mount; the Southern Steps; the City of David; the expanse of the Kidron Valley; ... all these were now familiar, and cherished.

It was good to see Pastor Chalie with his Bible opened. Man was not meant to read an iBible from an iPhone, and certainly not to preach from one. I think that is in the Bible somewhere, seems like I saw it in Hezekiah 3:16, ... there is a lot of stuff found in that one verse. I can keep a wind from turning my Bible page when preaching on the street, but when my fat thumb barely brushes John 3:16 on a touchscreen, it jumps off to a picture of the grandkids or something, and the train of thought is derailed. Not only that, open a Bible in public and you look like a Christian, open your phone and you look like a bored nobody. Further, the Muslims controlling the Temple Mount taught us something about the power of that book when it is opened in a public space.

"Open your Bibles to Acts chapter 1." The circle of believers, all settled into the little stone arena overlooking the city of Jerusalem, opened their Bibles. The hush was holy. Earlier I mentioned the proverb about ears turned to eyes; the task was easy from this

vantage point.<sup>2</sup> We listened, spellbound, doubtless we were mere feet from the very spot where the resurrected Christ Jesus ascended up into heaven, and two men in white apparel addressed the spellbound disciples. Pastor carefully read some of the text again:



*“And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:7-9).*

Think of it, “you shall receive power” and “ye shall be witnesses.” How am I doing with that charge? We are doubtless right here very near to where Jesus gave his disciples that encouragement; verse 12 says they were on the Mount called Olivet.

When he ascended up into the cloud, he left us a promise:

*“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye*



*gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).*

When he comes from heaven in the clouds in like manner as they saw him go, ... Our stewardship assignment for being witnesses will be over; this dispensation of grace will be ended. I want to hear him say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant” (Matt.25:21, 23).

After some pretty weighty teachings to his disciples Jesus once told them, “*Let these sayings sink down into your ears*” (Luke 9:44a). We had opportunity to do just that as we contemplated the remarkable views from our perch on Olivet.

2 Dictation Sent from my iPhone8, Note: Half Shekel 5 continued on pp10b... yes I did get my iPhone repaired as soon as we returned from Israel, thanks for asking.

That verse continues, “for the Son of man shall be delivered in the hands of men”(verse 44b). We left this high point, considering his ascension, to go to a most precious place where that part of the verse played out, in Gethsemane.



We had a brief time to get some more photographs and contemplate the holy ground we were standing on before the group loosely gathered and moved down the hill into the place called Gethsemane. Most of the holy sites in and around Jerusalem are remarkably Catholic, Gethsemane was remarkably garden. We walk through and around the tranquil garden and although it was laden with tour groups it was everywhere quiet and worshipful.

The seamless transitions between these sites was a huge credit to our tour guide Joe. Generally hidden from our view were all the scheduling issues that were involved in getting fifty awestruck, camera crazed, pondering believers from a seating area at Ascension Hill, to one in the garden of Gethsemane. Joe accomplished it remarkably, and as we sat comfortably in our own alcove of worship in the center of Gethsemane, the only credit alluded to for Joe was when he said, “We are not in a hurry here, We have plenty of time to pause, and worship, and pray.”



Joe also quieted the hour with a brief introduction to the park and why we were paused here. As he switched his Whisper connection to Pastor Charlie he did what the most professional tour guides do well, he kind of disappeared into the background, present and available, but quiet and respectful.

Pastor had his Bible open, but was silent for a significant moment. We all knew the Scriptures that were to be read. We knew where we were. We knew why we were here. We knew the events that transpired here almost 2000 years ago. As Pastor gained enough composure to begin reading, his somber, consecrated worship settled in on each of us, and tear laden eyes stared into open Bibles that recorded the hallowed events.

*“Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. ... Then*



*cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee,*

*and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me”*  
(Matt.26:31, 36-38)

It would only be a few hours and *“Lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people”* (verse 47).

Christians gather together weekly for Bible study, worship and prayer; it is commanded so. Families gather around the table to read scripture aloud and pray together; it is expected, it is called family altar. But individual believers, personally and privately falling on their face before a



holy God, to seek him with the whole heart, ... that is too often overlooked and under

emphasized in our busy lives. Pastor made an impassioned plea that it not be overlooked here in the place called Gethsemane. We dispersed, for prayer was want to be made. No coincidence, it was the ninth hour, being the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1).



Darkness settled onto our first day in Jerusalem. We gathered for an exquisite supper back at the Dan Hotel. We were burdened with exhaustion, moved with emotion, aroused with worship, energized by prayer, and delirious with joy. Tomorrow would dawn another day of walking where Jesus walked. Sent from my iPhone



**The Half Shekel Journals of 2022** by Pastor Ed Rice  
**#06 Wed 2 Nov am Judean Wilderness; Jericho Road, En Gedi.**



**The Half Shekel Journals of 2022** by Pastor Ed Rice  
**#07 Wed 2 Nov pm Masada, and the Dead Sea.**