



**The Half Shekel Journals of 2022** by Pastor Ed Rice  
**#15 Sat 5 Nov Jericho, Beit She'an, Gideon Springs**

Breakfast was complicated by the necessity of packing. A nice routine had established itself in our Tuesday through Friday, rise at dawn, mosey to an elaborate breakfast buffet, RADC<sup>1</sup> with family and friends, then stroll to the comfortable bus waiting with its loins girl for an early run.

Today, actually day five of our pilgrimage, all our worldly possessions needed to be packed into a bulging suitcase, (which only rarely is actually a case-for-suits anymore). The suitcases were hauled to the bus, and this morning her loins were scattered all over the adjoining sidewalk. We went for a deluxe breakfast and relaxing cup of coffee anyway.



Today was a Sabbath. Yesterday afternoon our guide Joe had excused himself and introduced an upcoming, non-Hebrew, tour guide named George, who took us to Bethlehem, and would today guide us on our quest to the Sea of Galilee on this Sabbath day. The Jewish Sabbath begins at sunset, and Joe had gone home to observe Sabbath. The observance of Sabbath in Israel is an interesting experience for Gentiles. Joe could not go



with us to Tiberias because on a Sabbath day a Hebrew was to *“abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day”* (Exod.16:29). The maximum Sabbath day's journey referenced in Acts 1:12, where the Mount of Olives was a *“sabbath day's journey”* from Jerusalem, was accepted as about ½ mile. Further, Hebrews were to do no servile work on a Sabbath day, nor were their servants. Joe would travel to Galilee after sunset Saturday which ended the Sabbath day.

We entertained ourselves at the elevators for a little bit. Many did not understand why their elevator car stopped on every floor, opened the doors to nobody, closed them, and went to the next floor. There it did the same, and proceeded on down to the lobby. It was labeled a Shabbot Elevator, and it was programmed to do that; with no one pushing any elevator button, it would stop and check for passengers on every floor, all the way to the top floor, then return, doing the same, all the way to the bottom floor.



1 RADC, in a previous USAF life, stood for Rome Air Development Center, where I worked from 1989 through 1995. There, not surprisingly, it took on the nomenclature, Relax And Drink Coffee. I so incorporated that into my daily life, that we kept the acronym.



In Israel, on each Sabbath Day, at least one elevator would be programmed as a Sabbath Elevator so that an orthodox Hebrew, striving to keep the letter of the law of the Pentateuch, could get around without even requesting a hired servant, i.e. an elevator, to do any servile work. God told them the sabbath rest for these Sabbath Days was to be “for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee.” To an engineer, like myself, this programming practice seemed to be kind of a hollow work-around to what God was requiring of them. But hey, if I recall, Jesus rebuked hypocritical law keepers so well, and so



thoroughly, that it is just fine for us to just smirk a little at a Shabbot Elevator.

While I'm a little off topic, let me say that God arranged the name of our morning meal to rhyme with break—a—fast on purpose, to teach a principle. He knew our digestive track needed a half day off, a twelve hour break, every day. God arranged that amount of time in darkness, so we would not eat from 6 pm till 6 am.



Thomas Edison invented the light bulb and the principle was hindered quite a little, but then man, who's every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually, invented a tele-vision to share those imaginations with millions. Now Americans sit up all night (at least to the 2<sup>nd</sup> watch of the night) eating potato chips and drinking soda, or worse, a chemical concoction purported to be “diet-soda”! These are our amusement (A-Muse, implies a = not, muse = thinking). American obesity is now epidemic, and breakfast breaks no fast, worse yet it can have a Twinkie washed down with a chemically decaffeinated coffee. All that aside, for the past five days, breakfast was just that for Bev and I, and this Saturday morning continued this health kick. The only thing missing for a deluxe breakfast was bacon fried under my sunny side eggs.

We were checked out of the Dan Jerusalem Hotel, and we stopped to explained to several why the elevators were “acting up” as they were. All our worldly possessions were packed under the bus, the doors latched, and from comfortable seats we watch Jerusalem disappear in our rear view mirror,... Well, perhaps, in bus driver, Ian's rear view mirror. George, our stand in guide for Joe, who was off for Sabbath, did not have all the exuberance of Joe as he barked off sites which passed by our windows, but he pointed out Bethany, approaching and passing by the right side of the bus.

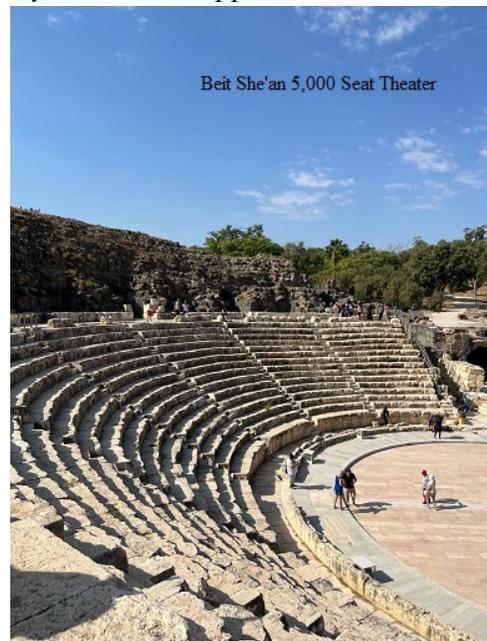


When Jesus came from Galilee, through Samaria, through Jericho, and then up the Jericho Road, he came to Bethany. “*Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him supper; and Martha*

*served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him*” (John 12:1-2, cf Bethany in 11 KJB verses; Matt.21:17, 26:6, Mrk.11:1, 11, 12, 14:3, Luke.19:29, 24:50, Jhn.11:1, 18, 12:1)

Bethany, home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, was such an interesting place in the Bible. There they fixed a large meal, it smelled of ointment from Mary’s alabaster box, and it was where Jesus sent disciples to secure a colt, the foul of an ass. Yeah now, it was only a glance out of the bus window as we turned toward Jericho and headed out of Jerusalem.

The canyon between Jerusalem and Jericho, the one that contained the Jericho Road that we visited three days ago, was circumvented when we circled south around the edge of the mountainous



wilderness and took the four-lane highway through the low lands. Jericho was a quiet little resort town today. Many residents wintered here to avoid the bustle in Jerusalem; it wintered well. Jericho is the sight of two major miracles in the Bible. We drove past the tel of the first, and more talked about one, and pulled into a park that holds the memorial token of the second. We had a photo shoot around an aged sycamore tree. Under the tel there was buried, a stronghold city of a defiant, amoral people that defied the Lord God for 400 years. Under the sycamore tree stood a short, defiant, amoral man, who defied the Lord God for 40 years. The one was completely destroyed, the other completely redeemed. Praise the Lord.

We left the wee little man, Zacchaeus redeemed, reformed, and rejoicing, in Jericho and Eiad headed the 46 foot tour bus up Route 90 to drive 1,000 years back in time from Zacchaeus to the Old Testament Bible city called Beit She'an.

Beit She'an (32°30'03.8"N 35°30'01.87"E), with some of the best preserved ruins of the Middle East, and as the most extensive archaeological site in Israel, might unusually detract



one from the main purpose of the holy pilgrimage to the Bible lands of Israel. The Bible student must put up a guard and make careful distinction of what the tour guides dangle before us at Beit She'an. There is only one important, and ugly place where the Bible touches it.



the Roman cardo, a three tiered theater that seated 7,000 people, an amphitheater to hold 6000 spectators for gladiator contests and for Christian martyrdom, and a huge bath and gym complex with heated swimming pools and public toilets.



The tourist attraction of Beit She'an does not touch the Bible. It begins in the fourth century and ends in the eighth century when the very pagan Roman city was destroyed by an earthquake in 749 AD. In that city, called Scythopolis, there was a well preserved pillared market street called



Unfortunately, our young guide George, who was standing in for Joe, got a little over enthralled at giving all the naked details of the bathhouse debauchery.

It was not kept in good focus that this was an extra Biblical, eighth century study of a pagan Roman time. Even when the pagan city Scythopolis was purported to be a "flourishing Christian Center with a bishop and several

churches”, it was pretended that such a 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantine church, which itself persecuted and murdered true believers, was a redeeming quality. It wasn't.

To define the Biblical significance (and a Biblical name) of Beit She'an one must go back 1,000 years before Christ, not forward 1,000 years after Christ. The Biblical city Beit She'an is really only important because of a few closing verses of the Bible's book of 1 Samuel.



1Sam.31:8-10 *“And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off*

*his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. 10 And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.”*

This tragic close of King Saul's life requires us to face up to a couple things about Beit She'an. First what are Philistines



doing so far north in Israel's promised land? Their kingdom centered down near Ashdod, 100 miles south of here, around what is now called the troublesome Gaza strip. And here they are in



Beit She'an, near Mount Gilboa, only 8 miles south of the Sea of Galilee. A principle here is that sin, like an unrestrained Philistine, moves into our lives, fast, far, and furiously.





The second thought at Beit She'an, is found in those closing verses of 1 Samuel as stated. This marks the closing scene of a little studied three act play that unfolds in Jabeshgilead. The opening act finds the tribe of Benjamin tangled in vile lewdness and folly, and the other tribes of Israel slaughter all but 600 of the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19–20). To get wives for those 600, Israel slew all the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead, saved 400 young virgins, and the tribe of Benjamin repopulated the town.

Act two of the Jabeshgilead, three act play

opens 300 years after the Benjamite survivors came to town. Nahash, the Ammonite, camped against Jabeshgilead, and the town had a seven day respite before Nahash was going to gouge out all their right eyes (1Sam.11:1–3). I hate it, when Ammonites act like that. Now God had chosen a Benjamite named Saul, and ordained him to be king of all of Israel. So far he had done nothing, but the spirit of God



came upon Saul when he heard about the plight of these men of Jabeshgilead, and his anger with kindled greatly ( 11:6).

King Saul, in his first valiant step saves the men of Jabeshgilead. First Samuel chapter 11 is an awesome chapter in



your Bible.

Act three of the Jabeshgilead, three act play opens 39 years later. God's chosen king, out of the tribe of Benjamin, failed miserably, and he was slain on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines, the enemy of God, came and cut off his head, stripped off his armor, and sent to publish their victory in the house of their idols, and among the people. Again, 1 Samuel 31:10 says, *“And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroath: and*



*they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.”*

With that little backdrop, look at the three closing verses of 1 Samuel.

1Sam.31:11–13 *“And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; 12 All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. 13 And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.”*



It makes me ask, if the valiant men of Jabeshgilead would do that for their dead king, what would I do for my living king?

It was told once that archaeologists at Beit She'an had uncovered a great wall that could have been where the valiant men of Jabeshgilead recovered the decapitated body of king Saul. Don't hold your breath. The valiant men of Jabeshgilead were only at Beit She'an, and the Philistines were only at Beit She'an, because the Bible says they were. I loved being at Beit She'an for three reasons. The theater

acoustics were amazing; you cannot stand on such a 1300 year old Roman Cardo anywhere in America; and I have studied out why the valiant men of Jabeshgilead went to a Philistine strong hold in the city of Beit She'an.

Several of us, older folks nodded off on the bus; it was less than an hour from Beit She'an to Gideon Springs, but that is what old folks do after gallivanting all over Jerusalem for four days. Pastor Charlie had his Bible open to Judges 6 as we gathered around a pool

bubbling out of a cave mouth called the well of Harod. He captured from the Bible that the Midianites were gathered thick as grasshoppers just north of this location. He developed that anyone could be a *“mighty man of valor”* when *“the Lord is with thee”*, and that for the saints of our day he has said, *“I will never leave thee!”*



That is pretty empowering. God then gives Gideon his modus operandi, *“the people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, my own hand hath saved me”* (Judg.7:2). When 22,000 soldiers left, and 10,000 remained, God said, *“the people are yet too many!”*. Pastor Charlie shared God’s criteria for selecting 300 men, and then



God's plan for defeating the Midianites! Our God is an amazing God he reigns from heaven above.

The pastors gathered for a photo op, at Gideon Springs, and several soldier wannabes demonstrated the proper way of drinking from the spring. Praise the Lord.

It was a most refreshing break and a soul stirring Bible message. We boarded the bus, once again reconnected with Route 90 N, and set our sights on the Sea of Galilee.

Cameras clicked madly as the Sea of

Galilee first came into view. In reality cameras don't click anymore, but it sounds so much better than “phones swung around wildly.” A Christian's first expression when seeing the Sea is usually, “Is that it?” Joe had warned us that in Israel creeks are called rivers, and lakes are called seas. Just the same it grabbed a Bible believer's mind with a such a flurry of Bible scenes that the body of water we saw was indeed a sea; **The Sea of Chinneroth** on map plate 3 “The Promised Land Showing the Settlement of The Twelve Tribes”, map plate 4 “The Hebrew Kingdom under David & Solomon” and map plate 5 “Kingdoms of Judah & Israel”, **The Sea of Gennesaret** on map plate 8 “Palestine Under the Maccabees”, **The Sea of Galilee** on map plate 9 “Palestine in the Time of Christ”, and all three on map plate 12 “Galilee”. I love my old Scofield Bible, and its maps.



It was approaching the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the day when we got into Tiberias and settled into our rooms at the Gai Beach Hotel, Eliezer Kaplan Blvd, Tiberias, 1410201, Israel. Some of the elders among us got an hour nap before the 1600 meeting with Pastor Charlie on the shores of Galilee. We watched the sun set in that worship service. The name of Christ was exalted, the Word of God was expounded, the Psalms of David were rehearsed, Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs were sung, and prayer was made as we overlooked the Sea of Galilee, and saw dusk ushered into Tiberias, Israel.

By the way: It should be required, for every born-again Christian who has access to an internet connection, that they go to <https://awakeamerica.org/capitol-connection/cc23/#sermons> and listen to the Wednesday, March 8, 2023 Capital Connection message "Pray, The Answer is On Its Way" by Pastor Chad Watson, Gloryland Baptist Church, Hartsville SC. This nation is well past the crossroad, and Christians, who are prayer warriors, dare not be ignorant of how we fit into Biblical Prophecy. Pastor Ed Rice.

