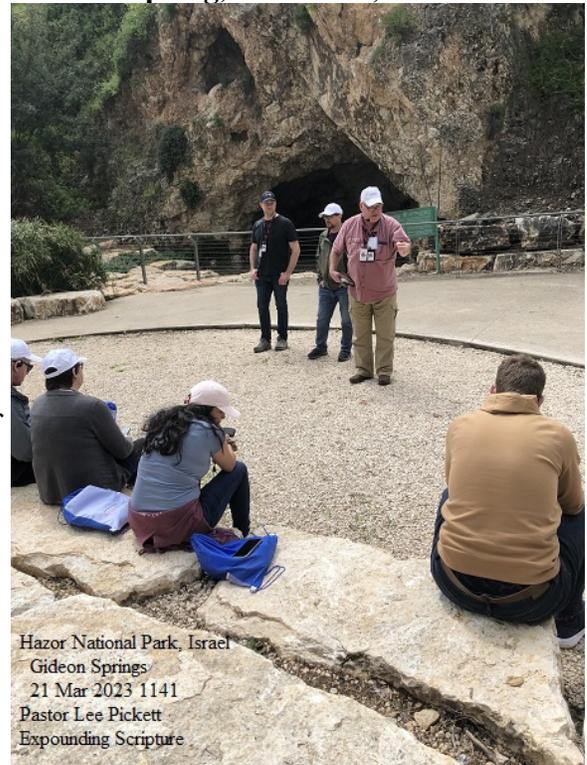




The Half Shekel Journals of 2023 by Pastor Ed Rice
#23011 Tue 21 Mar at Harod Spring, Bet Shean, Jerusalem

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

For me, standing on a plot of ground in Israel where my Lord and my God unfolded an account of his great love, great strength, and unmitigated involvement in the affairs of man, unfolded in me an unparalleled love for the scope and detail recorded in my authorized King James Bible. Jesus called out the accuracy of one *jot* or one *tittle* of the law in Hebrew, in the same vein, in English, I have come to love even the KJB punctuation! (cf Matt.5:18). This unfolding was true for me on every road, every street, every plot of ground, yeah “every place that



Hazor National Park, Israel
Gideon Springs
21 Mar 2023 1141
Pastor Lee Pickett
Expounding Scripture



the sole of your foot shall tread upon” in the land of Israel. Now we were, “pitched beside the well of Herod” in Israel's Herod National Park.

And there came an angel of the LORD,

and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour (Jud.6:11-12).

This “mighty man of valor”, who was threshing wheat and hiding from the Midianites, was peeking out of the wine press terrified of being caught. It shows us that God sees us for what we could be, and not for what we are. Gideon had God standing at his side, you and I, as Bible believing, born-again Christians, have him standing right inside of our being, and could expect, no should expect, “greater



works than these” (John.14:12). Look for such miracles in your life.

Judges chapter 6 and 7 give the first ingredients of a pending miracle: 1) a troubling circumstance, 2) a humble servant, 3) supplicating prayer, 4) an obedient heart, and 5) get up and go action. (Preached by Dr. Cisler in August just five months after Bev and I, Pastor Lee and Donna Pickett, and Pastor Jeff and Denise Carpenter stood at this place in 2009. Again Scripture comes more alive when one has stood on the very place that it took place, even when someone else is giving the five points and the



poem.) Our guide Eli gave a good background for where we stood in Herod National Park. In his words we visualize “the Midianites and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east ... in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude” (Judges.6:5).

He gave an inside scoop on Gideon and his calling, and his 10 men who threw down the altar of Baal, and cut down the grove that was by it. Eli unleashed his Whisper mic and gave it to Pastor Lee who opened our Bibles to Judges chapter 7 and

unleashed the account of Gideon's 300 men. He spoke of God's reducing the odds of victory, his ensuring that he would get all the glory, and his means of selecting who would go. He talked of the tactics that God used in the battle, of Gideon's fear and qualm being calmed when he snuck down and heard of the dream God sent into the Midian camp, and a battle fought against unprecedented odds. And he rejoiced in God's glorious victory.

There were opportunities for several of us to reenact using our hand to dip water from the spring. It was ennobling. It brought us back to a day and time when Israel faced both great physical battles and grand spiritual battles. It symbolized a desire and a resolve to be recruited into the physical and spiritual battles ongoing in our lives in 2023. We will be in battles where the odds will be overwhelmingly against us. “*We wrestle not*



against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”(Eph.6:12).

The story of Gideon and his battle against the Midianites is recorded here so that one will never forget that the Lord will fight their battles for them. We should keep Gideon and his 300 men close to our heart, as we live in perilous times. The pre-tribulation rapture of the church will be post perilous times and there will be some battles to be won. They will only be won supernaturally, with a genuine surrender to our Lord.



On our way home from the July Northeast division summit I scratched out a 300 word essay that I found encouraging. It was aimed at preachers, but I think any believer might find it a blessing.

Msg #2332 Logistics, Locations, and Lights

What The Bible Says

Good Samaritan's Penny Pulpit by Pastor Ed Rice

The hand of God left Gideon camped beside the well of Harod with three hundred men and a host of logistic problems (Judg.7:1-6). While sending *all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retaining those three hundred men* (vr.8), I would have used Amazon to order up three-hundred empty pitchers and cute little oil lamps; “Lets try for overnight delivery.” Truth is, the three hundred came with their own food and trumpets and Gideon scrounged up empty pitchers and lamps. Joe Shmo said, “Why did I get this grubby ugly water hauling pitcher, and Dr. Capable over there has that ornate, gold trimmed, up for show pitcher?” Gideon responds, “Never mind the type of empty pitcher you have, it is just an empty pitcher, and it is to be broken anyway!” Joe goes on with his lament, “Well, why do I have to stand up on the edge of this obscure steep hillside while I. M. Somebody gets to guard that roadway towards the main mountain pass?” Gideon responds, “Those grasshoppers need to be completely surrounded by light, never mind the empty pitcher type, never mind the obscure location you are at, just break your pitcher, hold up the Light, and sound off with your trumpet!”

Break your vessel where God puts you, hold up the Light where you are at, sound out on that trumpet that you have, blast it as long and as hard as you can, and let God do his perfect work. Obedience is the very best way, to show that you believe. I have often left a conference, come to our two story, 100 max occupancy brick school house, and felt a twinge of discouragement. Pastor Shirley's parting NE Vision Summit message on Gideon, completely alleviated that tendency on 27 July.

An Essay for week #32 - Aug 6, 2023

As the tour bus lumbered out of the Harod Spring parking lot and Costia guided it onto Route 71 headed toward Beit She'an, Eli took the mic and passionately addressed the hushed crowd. “On your right you can see the HaGilboa Reserve containing mount Gilboa, where they found Saul and his three sons fallen.”



1Sa 28:4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

1Sa 31:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

1Sa 31:8 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.

Eli then went on, with now spellbound listeners, to describe how in grade school they memorized, in Hebrew, David's Lamentation Over Saul and Over Jonathan His Son. As he recited portions of the Hebrew lyrics the whole bus filled with the passion of the moment.

Holy Bible 2Samuel 1:17-27 English

- 17 *And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:*
- 18 *(Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)*
- 19 *The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!*
- 20 *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*
- 21 *Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.*
- 22 *From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.*
- 23 *Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their*

Holy Bible 2Sam.1:17-27 Hebrew

www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15861

יְזוּקְנֵן דָּוִד אֶת־הַקִּינָה הַזֹּאת
עַל־שָׂאוֹל וְעַל־יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנֵי
יְחִיאֵל אִמֶּר לְלַמֵּד בְּנֵי־יְהוּדָה קֶשֶׁת
הַגֵּה כְּתוּבָה עַל־סֵפֶר הַיָּשָׁר
יִטְהַצְבִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־בְּמוֹתֶיךָ
חֲלָל אֵיךְ נִפְּלוּ גִבּוֹרִים
כֹּאֲל־תִּגִּידוּ בְּגַת אֶל־תִּבְשְׂרוּ
בְּחוּצַת אֲשַׁקְלוֹן פֶּן־תִּשְׂמַחְנָה
בָּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים פֶּן־תִּעְלֶזְנָה
בָּנוֹת הָעַרְלִים
כֹּאֲהָרִי בִּגְלֹבַע אֶל־טַל וְאֶל־
מָטָר עֲלִיכֶם וּשְׂדֵי תְרוּמַת כִּי
שָׁם נִגְעַל מִגֵּן גִּבּוֹרִים מִגֵּן
שָׂאוֹל בְּלִי מְשִׁיחַ בְּשִׁמֶן
כַּבְּמִדָּם חֲלָלִים מִחֶלֶב גִּבּוֹרִים
קֶשֶׁת יְהוֹנָתָן לֹא נִשְׁוֶג אַחֲוֹר
וְחֶרֶב שָׂאוֹל לֹא תִשׁוּב רִיקָם
כַּשָּׂאוֹל וְיְהוֹנָתָן הַנְּאֻהָבִים

lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

We may not be able to hear Eli recite this lamentation in a recording, but there is a superb audio Hebrew Bible provided by Mechon Mamre (The Mamre Institute). One can hear 2Sam.1:1-27 read aloud in Hebrew at:

<https://torahclass.com/audio-bible-in-hebrew/> (Select the chapter reference 2Sam.1 and press <PLAY>. Verse 17 begins at the 3:12 time-stamp.) Once you have learned the Hebrew alphabet

וְהַנְּעִימָם בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא
נִפְרְדוּ מִנְּשָׁרִים קָלוּ מֵאַרְזוֹת
גִּבְרוּ:

כַּדְּבָנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־שָׂאוֹל
בְּכִינָה הַמְּלֻבָּשְׁכֶם שְׁנֵי עִם־
עַדְנִים הַמִּעֲלָה עֲדֵי זָהָב עַל
לְבוּשְׁכֶן:

כַּהַאִיר נָפְלוּ גִבְרִים בְּתוֹךְ
הַמִּלְחָמָה יְהוֹנָתָן עַל־בְּמוֹתָיִךְ
חָלַל:

כּוֹצֵר־לִי עֲלֶיךָ אַחִי יְהוֹנָתָן
נְעִמַת לִי מְאֹד נִפְלְאַתָּה
אֶהְבֶּתְךָ לִי מֵאֲהַבַת נָשִׁים:

כּוֹצֵיךְ נָפְלוּ גִבּוֹרִים וַיִּאֲבְדוּ כְלֵי
מִלְחָמָה:



(given in Half Shekel #2309 on page 69 of this journal) it is surprising how well you can follow in the Hebrew text as the narrator reads each verse with a slight pause between verses. Hebrew reads right-to-left. It is also pretty easy to follow the

reading in English as one can recognize key words. Expand your horizons a little and try it. We will all be speaking man's original language, Noah's language, Hebrew, when we step into Glory. PTL This site has complete and accurate Hebrew voice recordings of every Old Testament book. They are not chanted with a melody (as in a formal synagogue service) but instead are clearly pronounced in Sephardic-style modern Hebrew so that by hearing, you may learn how to properly vocalize the words.

It was a 25 minute drive down route 71, past the hills of Gilboa, that got us to Beit She'an, Israel (32°30'03.8"N 35°30'01.87"E). Sadly, after the death of Saul and his three sons, this was the city that closes the book of 1Samuel:

8 ¶ *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 (1Sam.31:7-10).*

Curiously, God did not let the book end with such a bitter defeat. In the next sentence we find, "*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*" (31:11-12).

The valiant men of Jabeshgilead is what holds the Bible-wonder for visiting such a pagan city as Beit She'an. I had read the last chapter of Judges and knew the origins of these men of Jabesh. I had read 1Samuel chapter 11 and understood why these men now acted valiantly. As a young man I had penned the question in the margin of my Bible, "If



the valiant men of Jabeshgilead would risk their lives in devotion to their dead king, what would I risk for my living King?” King Saul came from their blood and saved their right eye, my King gave his blood, and saved my whole soul.

The book of 1Samuel has one last verse:“¹³ *And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.*” How many Christians today, do you suppose, have fasted seven days about anything? It makes one think.

Beit She'an is a major tourist attraction in Israel, not because it ghoulishly touches the Bible in Saul's death, but because it has the most extensive and best preserved archaeological ruins in the Middle East. We did not visit the actual city of Beit She'an, it was atop of the tel, overlooking Mount Gilboa at the meeting place of the Jordan and Harod Valleys. The 80 meters of tell, which we did not climb, contain 18 levels of occupation going back to the Canaanites. The excavations in Beit She'an proper would have showed us a great circular Byzantine era church replacing both the Canaanite and



the Philistine temples. Instead we toured excavations in Scythopolis, built at the base of Beit She'an. This Roman city flourished from the 4th century until the mid 8th century when an earthquake leveled it and prompted its complete abandonment. The ruins depict a Decapolis city in the 8th century with nothing whatsoever to do with the 1st century.

Excavations in Scythopolis have uncovered: A three-tiered theatre for dramatic performances, seating 7000 people; An amphitheatre holding 6000, where gladiatorial contests entertained soldiers of the Sixth Legion which was based there; A huge bath and gym complex with swimming pools and halls heated by hot air from furnaces. Its public toilets had channels underneath with running water; A Roman basilica that served as a courthouse and administrative center; A nymphaeum, an elaborate monumental building with a decorative fountain; and A mosaic of Tyche, the Roman goddess of good fortune, wearing the walled city of Scythopolis as a crown and holding the horn of plenty in her hand. (A list from seetheholyland.net/beit-shean/)

Consequently the walk through “Beit She'an” gave a better view of the depravity of man on display during the demise of the Roman Empire, than any glimpse into the 1st century of Christ, or the 11th century BC of its Philistine control at the death of King Saul.

Before you knew it we were back on the bus, and waking from a short nap. Eli had the mic and was, with all his passion, saying, “Out to your left you can just make out Mount Nebo where God said to Moses, *“Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people”* (Deu.32:49-50a).

Our next stop was Jerusalem.

