



The Half Shekel Journals of 2023 by Pastor Ed Rice
#2303 Sat 18 Mar Mt Carmel, Druze, Megiddo, & Mt Arbel



Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel (1Kngs.18:19-20).

We boarded the bus and headed for Mount Carmel. Eli took the time in the short bus ride to finish his sentence about water desalination. There are currently five desalination plants operating in Israel. It is a miracle that one of the driest countries on earth now makes more freshwater than it needs.¹ The Sorek reverse osmosis desalination facility is one of the largest in the world, pumping in seawater from a mile out in the Mediterranean sea. The

five operational desalination plants, turning seawater, or brackish water, to distilled water, provides just under 600,000,000 m³ of potable water every year.

The four year drought of 1998 to 2002 that ravished other Middle East countries, drove Israel to innovate. These plants, plus their innovative drip irrigation techniques, are making Israel thrive. (California and Las Vegas still cannot desalinate seawater because their environmental impact studies are not complete).



The bus pulling into Mount Carmel National Park, interrupted Guide Eli's enthusiastic discourse on desalination of seawater, irrigation methods, and the Negev changing to a garden... *“For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert”* (Isa.35:6 cf.33:21).



Carmel means “the Garden land” and that only begins to capture the beauty that dwells on Mount Carmel, and that can be seen from its heights. This is where the prophet Elijah staged the contest with the 450 prophets of Baal (and with Jezebels 400 prophets of the groves, who wouldn't come up the mountain).

1 “Israel Proves the Desalination Era Is Here - One of the driest countries on earth now makes more freshwater than it needs” By Rowan Jacobsen, *Ensia* on July 29, 2016
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/israel-proves-the-desalination-era-is-here/> “We are standing above the new Sorek desalination plant, the largest reverse-osmosis desal facility in the world, and we are staring at Israel’s salvation. Just a few years ago, in the depths of its worst drought in at least 900 years, Israel was running out of water. Now it has a surplus. That remarkable turnaround was accomplished through national campaigns to conserve and reuse Israel’s meager water resources, but the biggest impact came from a new wave of desalination plants.”



Pastor Lee Pickett, standing on Mount Carmel, gives the details. First Kings 18 begins, “*And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth*”, but the rubber meets the road at verse 21, “*And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*”

In the climax of the account, Elijah prays a 63 word prayer and the fire comes down from heaven.

LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O

LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again (1Kng.18:36–37).

A Christian is strengthened and encouraged by reading this chapter. In the day in which we live it would behoove a believer to memorize Elijah's prayer, and then pray it. The next chapter in Elijah's life finds him 112 miles south of Mount Carmel, fleeing from old Jezebel. He is in the wilderness of South Judah, right near Beersheba. Being on the mountaintop is often a picture of great victory in a Christian's life, being in a desert wilderness, not so much. Elijah heard from God in both places, and we can learn some valuable lessons from both chapters. Both circumstances teach some things about communicating



with God.

The view from Mount Carmel was spectacular. Before us was the Air Base of the Israeli Defense Force, beyond that you could pick out where Nazareth (32.704528 N. 35.288805 E.) is, about 15 miles away. Past that, about 5 miles, you could just make out Mount Tabor (32.688041 N. 35.383052 E). But most impressive was how the Jezreel valley spread out everywhere. Eli pointed out that Jezreel, Hebrew <03157> יזרעאל. *yiz-reh-ale*, means “God sows” referencing the “fertile soil of God”. The



valley was all of that.

Following the western edge of the Jezreel Valley southward you could just barely make out where Megiddo is located. We would stop at Megiddo right after our lunch



with the Druze.

The Druze people are a very curious lot. We were to have lunch in a Druze “restaurant” and Guide Eli identified some strangely dressed people leaving Mount Carmel with us, as Druze. On the bus, he then explained a little bit about the people who would be serving us lunch.



The Druze are a very secretive, religious sect that are thought and treated as a

branch out of Islam. But Druze do not identify as Muslims, and Muslims do not accept their religion. Druze strongly believe in reincarnation, to the point where their numbers do not change. You only become a Druze by reincarnation. Their religion is closed to all outsiders. Consequently, they do not proselytize, nor teach

any of their beliefs to outsiders.

Eli did not mention a second, very strange, tenant of the Druze religion, they believe in the coming of a male-birthed



Messiah.

Whereas the Hebrew and

Christian Messiah was to be born of the “seed of woman” the Druze Messiah, a direct descendant of the Biblical Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, would come from the “seed of man”, with a male birthing, with no female involvement. Consequently, the Druze's male wardrobe includes a strange pouch under their butt, just in case their Messiah should happen to “drop in” through them. I am not kidding, and you can't make this stuff up.

It is understandable why guides no longer mention this tenant of the Druze secretive religion. The Druze were undoubtedly tired of tourists gawking at their very strange male attire, and openly laughing or mocking at the very apparent pouchy pants.

It dare not be skipped here that while leaving Mount Carmel, and maneuvering backstreets in search of the Druze restaurant, Costea, our skilled bus driver, went down a long, winding, narrow street that met with a dead-end caldesac. After two failed attempts of turning the 40 foot King-Long tour bus around in driveways, Costea was given a standing ovation for backing the bus all the way up the 1/4 mile of an incorrigibly narrow winding street. And so we had a very pleasant lunch with the Druze that day.



The dynamics of a group growing together is worthy of some observation, if not a whole study. This group, half Canadian, with some Mennonite background, half not, coming from all walks of life, but all born again believers, was starting to gel. The trying plane ride, an immersion into a strange new world, Caesarea, Mount Carmel, and the bus ride adventures, had all met over lunch in a strange Druze environment, and the group started to change from a mixture with properties in fine suspension, to a more solid form, . . . It began to gel. I could say more, but I don't know exactly how.

It was very powerful, and moving, to stand on the “*tel*” of Megiddo. Megiddo, from the Hebrew <04023> מִגִּדּוֹ *Mēgiddow meg-id-do*, meaning “place of crowds” comes from a Hebrew root, <01413> גָּדַד *gadam*, meaning “to attack or invade”. That’s an apt description of this ancient city



of Canaan, on the southern rim of the plane of Jezreel, 6 miles from Mount Carmel, 11 miles from Nazareth, and 80 miles from Jerusalem.

Our guide Eli explained that a “*tel*” is a mound that accumulates over thousands of years where conquered cities are destroyed and rebuilt, one on top of another, until, in time, and in very strategic locations, a mound of debris forms in layer upon layer of destroyed and burned ruinous heaps. The 20 layers of ruinous heaps in this “*tel*” of Megiddo² gives testimony of its strategic location, so does the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which names it as the place for the final conquest of Satan and mankind shaking their fist at God's authority, and his ownership of the planet.

And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon (Rev.16:16).

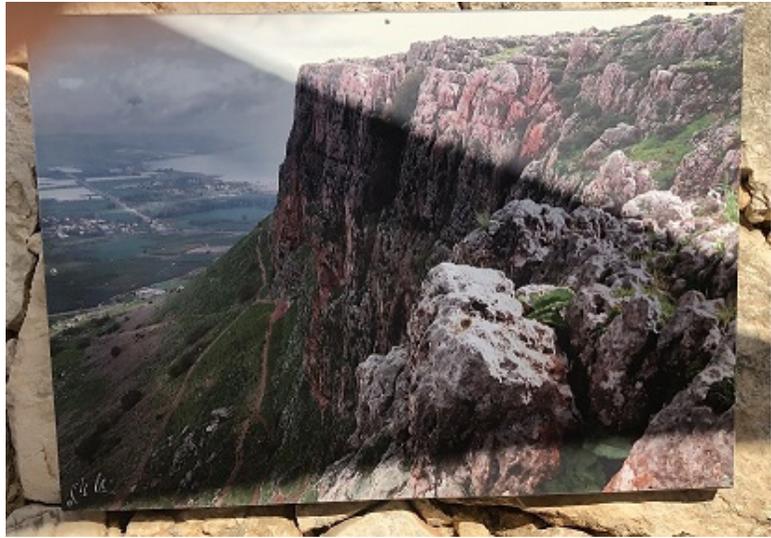
In short, all the nations of the world gather to wipe God's chosen people, the nation of Israel, off the face of the earth; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who has opened the seven sealed book, which is the title deed of the earth, comes on a white horse and with a sharp sword, smites all these nations, and then rules them with a rod of iron for 1,000 years. The Bible says, to those who believe the Bible, that his foot touches down on the

2 Eli named and described the heavy-handed tactics of the “archaeologists” who unearthed the 20 layers of this “*tel*” by driving a bulldozer right through the middle of it!

Mount of Olives and mountains move aside,... and “tels” as well, to make a valley reaching all the way to Megiddo! Spilled blood in this valley reaches all the way to the horses bridle!³

The apostate catholic churches, have taught their “Christians” to deny these facts, calling them, allegorical and figurative. But the genuine believer, armed with a factual, non-ecumenical, and non-copyright, authorized Bible, holds these truths to be literal and self-evident.

It is hard to make a thorough application of all this in a 10 minute devotion, or in a 300 word essay, but this author attempted it, while standing beside his hat on the “tel” of Megiddo. The essay is repeated below.



Msg #2316 Defeating Satan's Strongholds

What The Bible Says
Good Samaritan's Penny Pulpit by
Pastor Ed Rice

The “hill of Megiddo”, Armageddon in the Hebrew tongue (Rev.16:16), is a stronghold city overlooking the crossroad that connects empires, in the center of a country, Israel, that connects three continents. Biblical prophecy tells us that God has his eye on that stronghold, and will make it the place of the final showdown when all

nations gather to wipe Israel off the face of God's earth. The Revelation of Jesus Christ details how that works out for the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, ... and his cronies (Rev.16,19-20). King Solomon rebuilt Megiddo into an impressive stronghold city for Israel (1Kings.9:15), and we can today view his signature three gate design, horse stalls and chariot parking lot in its “tel”(mound of destructions). Although Solomon conquered and rebuilt physical stronghold cities he neglected to take down Satan's spiritual strongholds in his life.

The Apostle Paul details how that can be done in 2Cor.10. *“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled”* (2Cor.10:5-6).

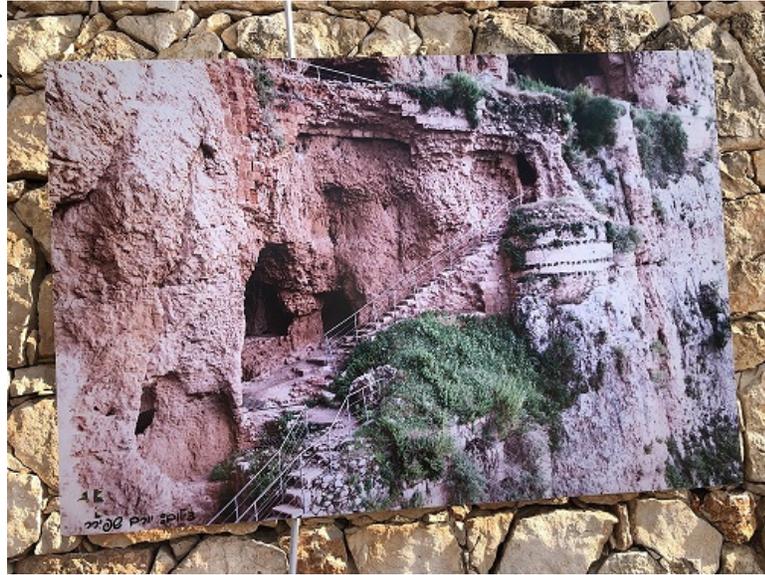
3 Rev.14:20, cf “Eschatology, Volume 11 by this author, www.GSBaptistChurch.com/theology .

Two major ingredients here, first captivating every thought and bringing it into obedience. This is called “renewing of your mind” in Romans 12, and “think on these things” in Phil.4:8. Second, “revenge all disobedience.” Disobedience comes in two flavors, sins of commission, like smoking, drinking, and cussing, and sins of omission, like not praying, not Bible studying, and not witnessing. Take revenge on these sins. Every cuss word, gets an hour of Bible study and prayer. When I miss an hour of Thursday soul-winning, I'll go two hours on Friday n Saturday. That's what revenging disobedience looks like. Satan hates that.

An Essay for week #16 - Apr 16, 2023

In light of all this, I think I said, it was very powerful and moving to stand on the “*tel*” of Megiddo.

The bus pulled up to Mount Arbel National Park at 2:30 PM, Costea, our bus driver, was right on time, and right in place, helping the ladies down off the last step of the bus. Mount Arbel is not mentioned in the Bible, which is curious, given that our Lord Jesus Christ centered his ministry in lower Galilee, and centered in lower Galilee, are these high



cliffs, a visible landmark from most anywhere on the sea of Galilee. It stands sharply and prominently over the sea, and its graceful stature provides a magical view of the sea, the Golan Heights, and Mount Hermon.⁴ (Mount Hermon is mentioned in scriptures in Deut.3:8–9, 4:48, Ps.89:12, 133:3).

Our guide Eli pointed out that in 161 BC “Arbela” was the site of a battle between the Jews, united with the Maccabees, and the evil Seleucid General Bacchides, who defeated and brutally killed his opponents. Josephus mentions in his “Antiquities” that the Greek general captured the many people who had taken refuge in the caves at Arabella. Recall that this Maccabean revolt would eventually overthrow the vile Seleucid Antiochus IV, Epiphanes⁵ who desecrated the temple, and controlled all Judea.

4 See touristisrael.com/mount-arbel

5 “*Epiphanies*” means “god manifest” but people changed his name to “*Epimanes*”, meaning “the mad”.

The beautiful well cared for Arbel National Park was perfectly enticing, the gusting wind not so much. We made our way to the summit of Mount Arbel, but Bev and I drew the line at stepping out on the rocky crag that gave the grandest view. Yes, there were guide rails, but wind gust had already made us stagger some as we approach the summit. The view was spectacular. Our Whispers device could not pick up all that Eli was describing to those who went around the last rocky bend, but we could well imagine. I am not afraid of heights, I am afraid of falling from them. So Bev and I perched on a rock atop the peaks of Mount Arbel, and took in the panoramic view. Just before the rest of our group emerged from the narrow walkway, we saw a



white hat labeled “Bible Berean Israel Tour” emerge riding on a gust of wind. It flickered around in the updraft then disappeared over the precipice, and was last seen drifting off towards the sea of Galilee.

Dinner at the Lake House Hotel in Tiberius, on the Sea of Galilee, brought with it the stimulating conversation that described every adventure of the day. No one claimed ownership of the white hat that made the advance trip to the Sea. Perhaps we would find it during our Sunday worship service on the Sea of Galilee.

