

ARAD

REGION: The Negev

SITE SUMMARY

Arad is a city located in the north-eastern area of the region called the biblical Negev. Because of its location, the city controlled ancient routes dating back to the Early Bronze (Canaanite) Period. The city was well fortified by walls and towers. The Arad House represented the standard size of a house during this early period. The city was conquered by Joshua (Josh 12). Nearly 1,500 years later, the Israelites developed the upper portion (the Citadel) in the 11th century BC. Archaeologically, in 1962 an impressive temple was discovered in the upper part of the city. Although smaller in size, it preserved the same dimensions as Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. With Jerusalem being 75 miles north, these Judeans built this temple as an alternative temple. Through the reforms of both King Hezekiah and King Josiah, temple worship came to an end. Additionally, many ostraca (inscriptions) were found here from the Citadel area.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Numbers 21:1, 33:40
- Joshua 12:14

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- King of Arad
- Joshua

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The Early Bronze city (the lower city) consists of fortification walls, towers, the broad or Arad House, and a deep well.
- The Israelite city (the upper city) is where the temple can be seen. Although reconstructed, you will see the court of the temple, the altar (made of uncut stone), and the Holy of Holies. Replicas of the two standing stones (Jachin & Boaz, see 1 Kings 7:21) and the incense altar are displayed (the real ones are in the Israel Museum).

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God is delighted when He sees within you a purified heart. It is only when your heart is right with Him that you can truly worship and live your life as a living sacrifice unto Him (Rm. 12:1). Allow God to tear down any wall built within the temple of your heart. Strive for purity!



ARBEL, MT.

REGION: Lower Galilee

SITE SUMMARY

Mt. Arbel is located on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. The mountain towers over 1,000 feet above the Plain of Gennesaret below, providing the very best panoramic view of the region. Historically, Arbel's numerous caves located among the steep cliff served as hiding places for Jewish rebels in the conflicts against Herod (40 BC), and later the Romans (66 AD). The Jewish historian Josephus describes the crushing of these Jewish efforts. While Arbel is not specifically mentioned in the Gospels, it is easy to conjecture that Jesus used Arbel as a place to escape the crowds from time to time and to pray (Mt. 14:23). Archaeologically, a synagogue dating to the Talmudic Period was excavated.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 14:23

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- The Disciples

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The view from the top is spectacular. There are two ways to access the top (now a national park). First, you can drive through Tiberias and ascend by bus or car on the back side of Arbel. After parking, there is a 300 yard easy walk to the top. Second, there is a trail that begins in the Valley of the Doves below. The hike takes a little over an hour. It is a steep ascent, with handholds in the rocks once you begin ascending the cliff.
- The Talmudic Period synagogue is located about 200 yards from the entrance to the park on your right. It is covered with weeds.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God sent His only Son into the world to make a redemptive difference. The big "panoramic" picture is this: God sent Jesus because He loved the world (John 3:16). While the specific stories of the Gospels unfold in the regions of the Galilee below, step back in order to see God's big picture and purpose.

AZEKAH

REGION: The Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Azekah was a strategically placed city located along the Elah Valley in a region called the Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah. This city was built on a 350 foot hill overlooking the Gath (tel es-Safi) and Philistine Plain to the west and the Elah Valley (named for a type of terebinth tree) and specifically the ancient city of Socoh to the east. Archaeologically, Azekah was excavated at the turn of the 20th century. Recent excavations in 2014 have now started again.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Joshua 10:10-11, 15:35
- Nehemiah 11:30
- 1 Samuel 17

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

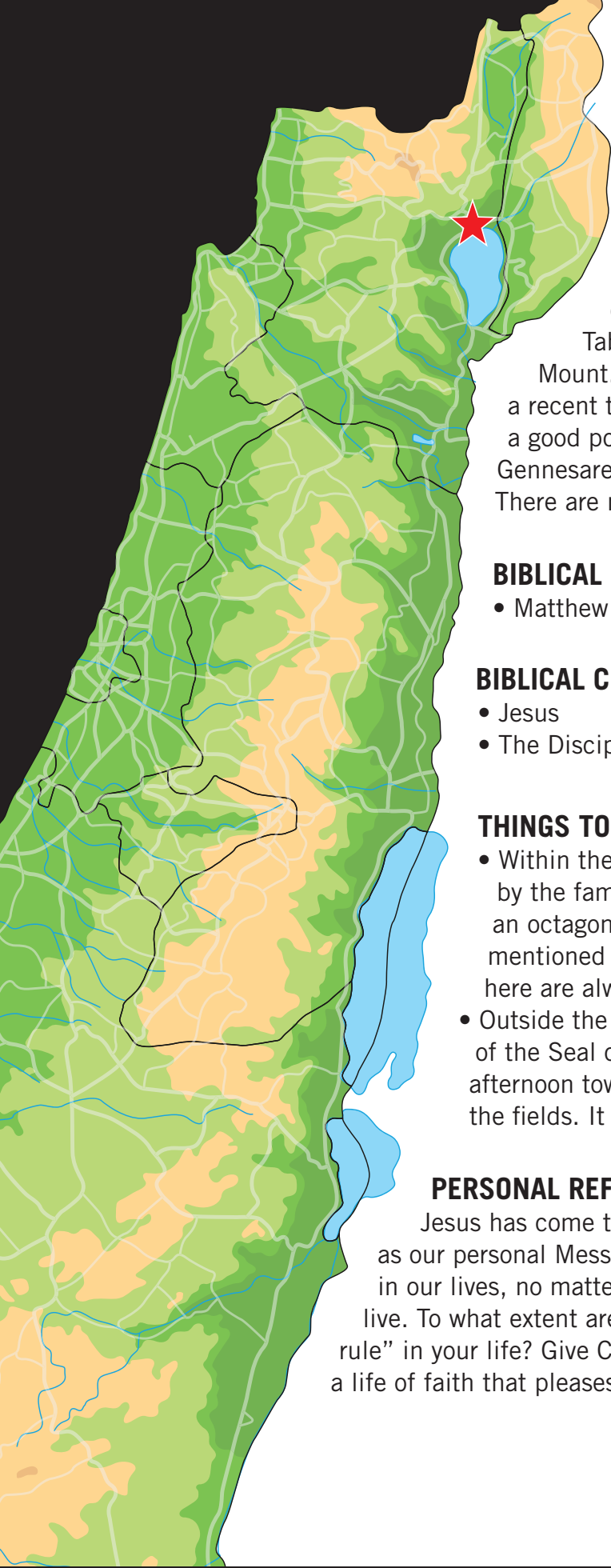
- David & Goliath battled in Elah Valley

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- On the western edge of the top of the site you will see some of the recent excavations. They are not that impressive. But the view to Tel es-Safi from here is good. This was where Goliath was from.
- Sitting under the terebinth tree, you can see the Elah Valley and the “battle field” of David v. Goliath to the east. On a clear day you can see the hills of Judah and the areas of Bethlehem & Hebron.
- Sitting under the tree is a perfect place to read the 1 Samuel 17 story in its entirety. As the Philistines are defeated, Israel chases them to the west, no doubt back towards and eventually around Azekah to the Philistine Plain.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God can be trusted, even in the midst of our battles of life. Believing in Him leads to victories in our spiritual walk. Like David, are you fully trusting in God, or only partially in your own strength. Make a list of your struggles and offer each “campaign” to God through prayer. Pray that God bolsters your confidence while facing your battles of life.



BEATITUDES, MT.

REGION: Lower Galilee

SITE SUMMARY

The Mt. of Beatitudes is located on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum and Tabgha. This is where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. While today's location for this event is only based on a recent tradition, the natural amphitheater topography makes it a good possibility. On the top of this hill overlooking the Plain of Gennesaret, the Franciscans built a beautiful basilica in 1938. There are no archaeological ruins.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 5-7
- Luke 6:17-49

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

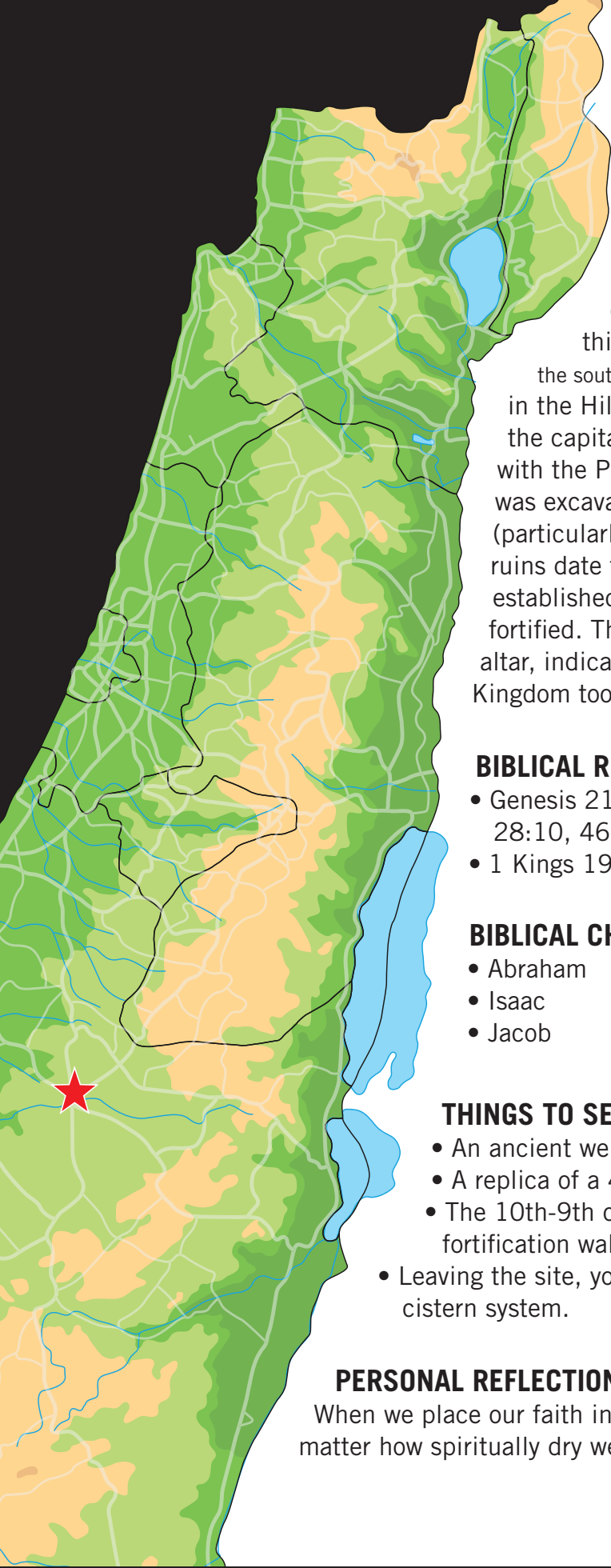
- Jesus
- The Disciples
- The Crowds

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Within the Catholic site, a beautiful basilica was built. Designed by the famous Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi, this chapel is an octagonal building, representing the eight Beatitudes mentioned in the nine verses of Matthew 5:3-11. The gardens here are always well kept.
- Outside the Catholic site is the hillside. Sitting on rocks, the view of the Sea of Galilee below is stunning, especially in the late afternoon toward sunset. A path can be taken to the bottom through the fields. It is about a 30-minute walk.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus has come to establish His kingdom on earth. When we accept His as our personal Messiah, he invites us to live out these kingdom principles in our lives, no matter how contrary they may be to the culture in which we live. To what extent are you allowing these kingdom principles to “reign and rule” in your life? Give Christ total control in your life. Ask God to help you live a life of faith that pleases the King!



BEERSHEBA

REGION: The Negev

SITE SUMMARY

Beersheba is a city located in the heart of the region called the biblical Negev. Rainfall is scarce here in this area (6-8 inches/year in this area of the Negev, much less in the southern Negev). Located about 25 miles south of Hebron in the Hill Country of Judah, the modern city of Beersheba is the capital of the Negev. The ancient site is most associated with the Patriarchs of Israel. Archaeologically, this small site was excavated in the 1960s and 70s as well as in recent years (particularly the impressive cistern system). Most of the city's ruins date to the 10th century BC when a new settlement was established here, to the Ninth Century BC when the city became fortified. The most significant item found here was a 4-horned altar, indicating that worship during the days of the Judean Kingdom took place here in one form or another.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Genesis 21:27-34, 26:22-33, 28:10, 46:1
- 1 Kings 19:3
- 2 Samuel 17:11
- Psalm 126:4
- Amos 5:5, 8:14

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Abraham
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Solomon
- Samuel's 2 sons

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- An ancient well (it does not date, however, to the time of Abraham and Isaac)
- A replica of a 4-horned altar (the real one is in the Israel Museum)
- The 10th-9th century BC city: A Solomonic gate, a casemate fortification wall, 4-room Israelite houses
- Leaving the site, you descend 60 feet down through very impressive cistern system.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When we place our faith in God's covenant promises, our souls are quenched no matter how spiritually dry we become. Drink up of the Shepherd's goodness!



BETHLEHEM

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Bethlehem (“house of bread”) is located in the Hill Country of Judah about 5 miles south of Jerusalem.

Bethlehem is first mentioned as the place where Rachel died. It was also the hometown of David and where he both shepherded and was anointed (1 Sam. 16). The main attraction in Bethlehem are the Shepherds’ Fields (actually in Beit Sahor nearby) and the Church of the Nativity. The church was built over a series of caves in the 4th century AD. The current basilica was rebuilt by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century AD. Archaeologically, there has been little activity. Today, Bethlehem is an Arab city, predominantly Muslim.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Genesis 48:7
- 1 Samuel 16:1-13, 17:12-15
- Ruth 1-4
- Micah 5:3
- Matthew 2:1-12
- Luke 2:1-20

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesse
- David
- Samuel
- Joseph/Mary
- Jesus
- Shepherds
- Wise Men
- Herod

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The Shepherds’ Fields in Beit Sahor (east of Bethlehem) include caves and a chapel. Reading Luke 2 and singing Christmas carols in either a cave or the chapel is special.
- The Church of Nativity at Manger Square in the heart of Bethlehem is shared by Armenians, Greek Orthodox, and Catholics. People stand in long lines to see the nave and grotto area. This serves as the traditional place of Christ’s birth.
- Olive wood shops within Bethlehem.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God sent His Son into the world “just at the right time (Gal. 4:4).” Our souls are flooded with joy when we consider who was born here. Jesus came to be our “Living Bread.” Magnify Jesus with celebration and joy!



BETH SHEMESH

REGION: The Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Beth Shemesh was a strategically placed city located along the Sorek Valley in a region called the Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah. This Levitical city (which means “house of the sun”) controlled the eastwest route through the Sorek Valley as well as the north-south “diagonal route” from Eshtaol to Lachish. Archaeologically, Beth Shemesh was excavated about 100 years ago, and most recently about 10 years ago. Although the ruins are not overly impressive today, in the days of the Bible the city was known for its many cisterns. However, the city is best known for the Ark of the Covenant being returned here by the Philistines.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Joshua 15:10, 21:16
- Judges 1:33
- 1 Samuel 6:1-21
- 2 Kings 14:11-13

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Judeans
- Philistines
- Jehoash (Israel's king)
- Amaziah (Judah's king)

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- You will first see Late Roman (4th-6th century AD) structures to your left as you walk to the top of this rather small site. Towards the Sorek Valley you will see ruins from the Iron Age (Israelite) period.
- On the top of the site is a round cement platform. It's best to read the 1 Samuel 6 story from here as it unfolds before your eyes! You can picture the Ark of the Covenant coming up the Sorek Valley!
- There is a big “pottery cemetery” (discarded pottery from recent digs) just beyond the top of the site. Feel free to take a few pieces!
- On the slope towards the Sorek Valley, you can descend into one of Beth Shemesh's water cisterns. Take a flashlight with you.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God's ways are not our ways. He intervenes in our lives in ways that sometimes surprise us and blow us away! Be sure to prepare yourself for God's surprises. Just perhaps if you are not being “surprised” by God, you are not walking with Him!



CAESAREA MARITIMA

REGION: Coastal Plain

SITE SUMMARY

Caesarea is located along the Mediterranean Sea in the Coastal Plain. The full name of this impressive city developed by King Herod the Great from 22-10 BC was Caesarea Maritima. The city is located 30 miles north of Joppa (Jaffa) and 20 miles south of Haifa. The city's harbor was most impressive, serving the ancient world for centuries. Josephus describes it in great detail. Archaeologically, the ruins date from Herod's time through the Crusader Period (12-13th centuries AD). Excavations began in the 1950s and 60s. In 1961, a four-line inscription was found in secondary use in the theater. The name "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea" is preserved in Latin text. In the 1980s, underwater excavations (exploring the ancient harbor) took place. Restoration work continues to this present day. Both Peter and Paul knew this city well, both proclaiming with boldness their faith.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Acts 10:1-33, 12:20-23, 21:8-9, 26:1-27

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

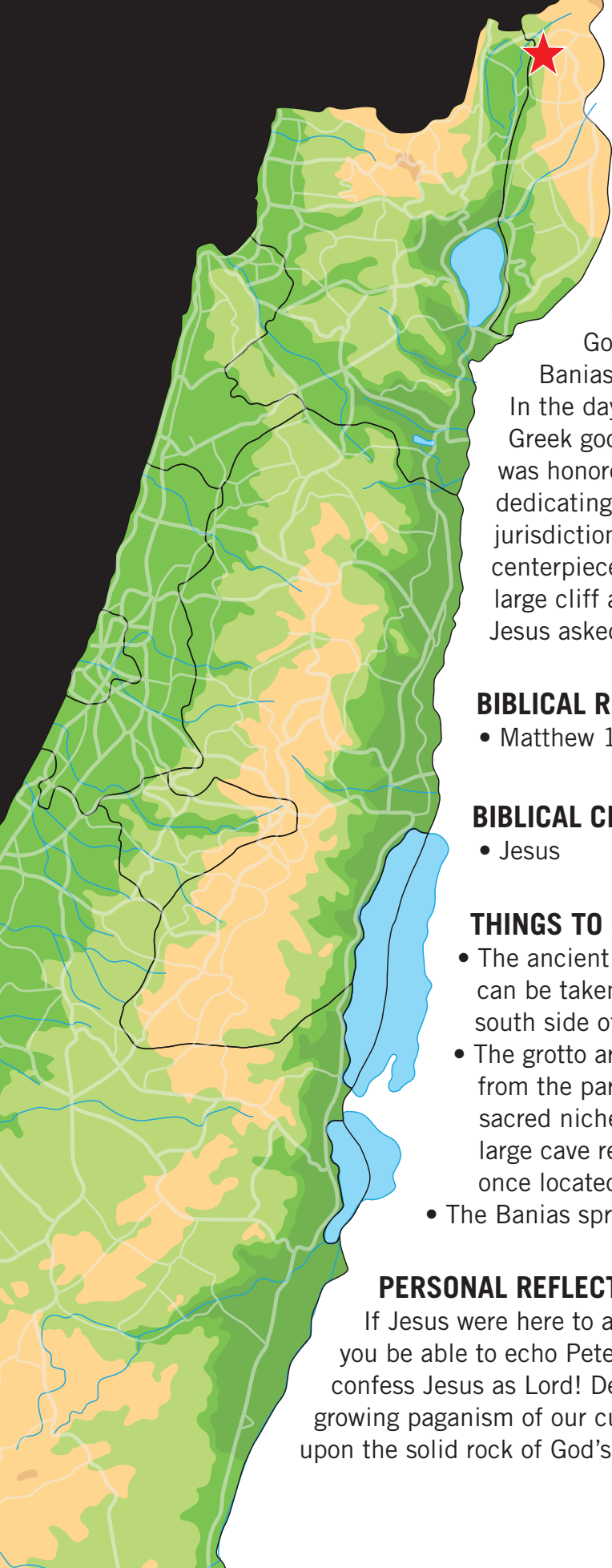
- Cornelius
- Paul
- Peter

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The Roman theater. While this has been restored, it is impressive. Singing here is fun. The view of the Med. Sea is wonderful.
- Herod's palace, a replica of Pilate Inscription, the hippodrome, and many mosaics can be seen in the Roman side of the city.
- Parts of Herod's harbor can be seen within the Crusader city of Caesarea, along with the foundation of a Temple of Augustus and a newly-restored nymphaeum ("fountain").

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Being courageous for Christ is a result of being confident in the life-changing characteristics of the Gospel. Boldness for Christ is displayed in our life when we decide to be used by God as a beacon of hope and life to a lost world. Both Peter and Paul displayed boldness here. Pray that God brings boldness to your faith.



CAESAREA PHILIPPI

REGION: Golan Heights

SITE SUMMARY

Caesarea Philippi is located 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee on the slopes of Mt. Hermon on the Golan Heights. The city was founded alongside the Banias springs, one of three tributaries of the Jordan River. In the days of Jesus, it was a center of pagan worship. Pan, the Greek god depicted as a half-man, half-goat playing the flute, was honored here. Herod the Great built a temple here, dedicating it to Caesar Augustus. Later, the city came under the jurisdiction of Herod's son, Philip. Archaeologically, the centerpiece of the excavation that began in 1967 has been the large cliff and grotto area. It was in the region of this city where Jesus asked the question, "Who do you say I am?" (Mt. 16).

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 16:1-20

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- The Disciples

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The ancient city extends on both sides of the road. A hiking path can be taken to see the primarily the Late Roman ruins on the south side of the road.
- The grotto area of the site is the high cliff region that can be seen from the parking lot. Walking up to this area you can see the sacred niches, where statues of various deities were placed. A large cave represents where the temple of Augustus was once located.
- The Banias spring water flows year round.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

If Jesus were here to ask you the question, "Who do you say I am?" would you be able to echo Peter's response? There is nothing more sacred than to confess Jesus as Lord! Despite being surrounded by the "sacred grotto" of the growing paganism of our culture, Christ enables His followers to build their faith upon the solid rock of God's salvation message.



CAPERNAUM

REGION: Lower Galilee

SITE SUMMARY

Capernaum is located on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. This was the city where Jesus established His ministry base. During His time, this was a fishing village of somewhere between 1,000-1,500 people. The city served as a customs station where taxes were collected (Matthew, the tax collector, Mt. 9:9). A small garrison of Roman soldiers were also positioned here. By the time of the Crusader Period (12-13th centuries AD), the city was abandoned. Recently, The Franciscans bought the land in the late 19th century. Archaeologically, excavations of the site began in 1905, with most of the restorations being completed by the Franciscans.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 9:1
- Mark 1:21-34, 2:1-12, 2:13-17, 9:33-37
- Luke 7:1-10
- John 6:53-59

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- The Disciples
- Peter's mother-in-law
- Centurion

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- 5th century AD synagogue and many capitals and reliefs. The foundations of the original 1st century synagogue can be seen below.
- Walls of the octagonal Late Roman church (5th century AD) built over the "traditional" house of Peter. A Catholic church is built over these ruins. Through the glass floor of the sanctuary you can look down and see this ancient 1st century house and Byzantine church.
- The lake shoreline can be accessed through the gate. It is solemn to think that Jesus called some of His disciples here.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus came into this world with heavenly authority (s'mekah). He came with compassion and concern for those in need. What specific needs do you have that Jesus can touch? Invite Him to touch you!



CARMEL, MT.

REGION: Mt. Carmel Range

SITE SUMMARY

Mt. Carmel is located between the coastal Sharon Plain and the Jezreel Valley. The entire Carmel Range (which means vineyard of God) ascends to a height of 1,500 feet and is nearly 13 miles long. Three “passes” into the Jezreel Valley cut through this mountain range, one of which (the Jokneam Pass) is visible from the top of Carmel. In the Bible, the Carmel Range is primarily connected to the Elijah vs. Baal showdown narrative (1 Kings 18). Today, the Muhraqa Monastery sits on top of the highest peak. It was established by the order of Carmelites in the 17th century AD. Archaeologically, other than the sites located at the bottom of the Carmel Range (i.e. Jokneam, Megiddo), there has not been any significant archaeological activity on Carmel.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- 1 Kings 18:1-46
- 2 Kings 4:1-37
- Song of Songs 7:5

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Elijah
- Elisha
- Woman from Shunem

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Driving to the top of Carmel to the Muhraqa Monastery offers a spectacular view. To the west, the towers of Caesarea located on the shoreline of the Med Sea can easily be seen.
- Looking northeast, the Jezreel Valley comes into view. On a clear day, even the hills of Gilead (in Jordan) can be seen.
- The chapel of this monastery is a nice place to read the 1 Kings 18 story. It is also a great place to sing given the good acoustics.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God is one who defies odds. When teamed with an all-powerful God, the believer in Christ is never the underdog, no matter the odds. Like Elijah learned, no circumstance is beyond God’s capable and sovereign hand of intervention. What “against the odds” situation in life do you need to place into God’s hands?

CHORAZIM

REGION: Lower Galilee

SITE SUMMARY

Chorazim is located on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. While the city is mentioned only twice in the Gospels, the city was one of three condemned by Jesus for their unbelief. The ancient village was built primarily with grey basaltic stone. As mentioned in the Talmud, Chorazim became known for being located in an area that provided optimal conditions for the region's early grain harvest. Archaeologically, excavations of the site began as early as the 19th century, with the last dig in 1980-84. While these ruins date to the 3rd century AD, potsherds found nearby conclude that this was the 1st Century town Jesus knew. The most unique discovery was the "Seat of Moses" found in the 1920s.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 11:21, 23:1-36
- Luke 10:13

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

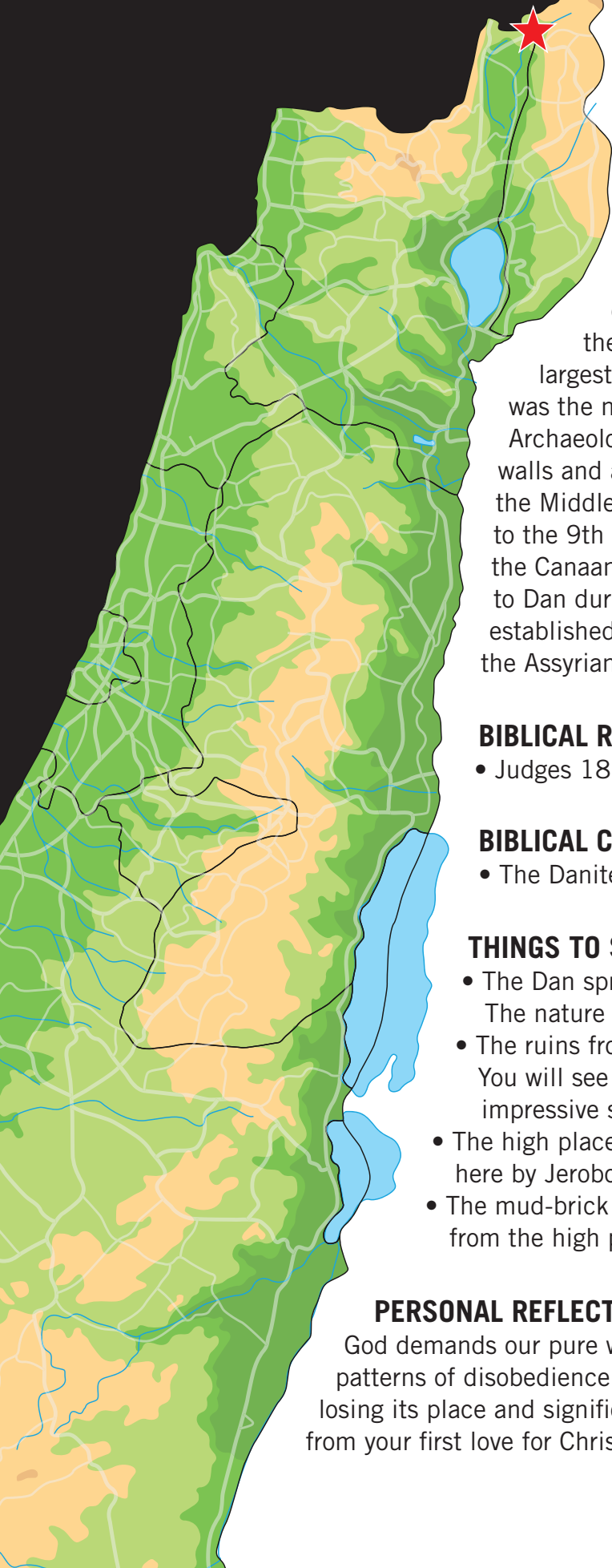
- Jesus
- The Disciples

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Upon entering the site, a miqve (ritual bath) can be seen on your right. It is covered with a stone roof.
- The courtyard and other partially reconstructed stone houses.
- The 3rd Century AD synagogue. A replica of the Seat of Moses (Mt.23:2) is displayed right inside the synagogue. The original one is in the Israel Museum.
- Many coney (rock badger, Psalm 104:18) can be seen sunning themselves on the basaltic rocks.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God desires His followers to live a life of consistent obedience. Hypocrisy is the result when a humble and contrite heart is absent. For spiritual leaders, having a position of prominence, like Moses' seat, requires a heart that desires to follow the ways of God. Ask God for a humble and committed heart.



DAN

REGION: Golan Heights

SITE SUMMARY

Dan is located 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee on the border with Lebanon off the western slope of the Golan Heights. Located on the Dan springs, the largest of the three sources of the Jordan River, Dan was the northern border of the biblical kingdom of Israel. Archaeologically, major findings include sections of imposing walls and an even more impressive mud-brick gate built during the Middle Bronze Period (2,000-1,550 BC). An inscription dating to the 9th century BC reveals the phrase, “house of David. During the Canaanite period, the city was called Laish, but later changed to Dan during the time of the Judges. Jeroboam, King of Israel, established a high place and false altar here. Dan would fall to the Assyrians in 722 BC.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Judges 18:1-29
- 1 Kings 12:28-33

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- The Danites
- King Jeroboam

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The Dan springs. It produces the largest amount of water in Israel. The nature path winds along the river.
- The ruins from the Israelite Period (Iron Age) are most impressive. You will see fortification walls, a double-chambered gate and impressive stone city streets.
- The high place and altar area represent the false worship established here by Jeroboam.
- The mud-brick gate (Middle Bronze) is located off the path that leads from the high place.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God demands our pure worship. He invites us to put away our idols and patterns of disobedience. Are there circumstances in your life where faith is losing its place and significance? Strive to put away any patterns that distract you from your first love for Christ.

EN GEDI

REGION: The Wilderness of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Engedi (“spring of the wild goats”) is a city located 12 miles north of Masada along the western coastline of the Dead Sea in the region of the Wilderness of Judah. Due to the unique geological features of this region, En Gedi is a place of refreshing springs throughout the year even in this dry region. The continual supply of water attracts the ibex (wild goats & coney, see Psalm 104:18). Archaeologically, there is a Jewish synagogue here dating to the 3rd century AD as well as a temple from the Chalcolithic Period.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- 1 Samuel 24:1-22
- 2 Chronicles 20:1-30
- Song of Solomon 1:14

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- David
- Jehoshaphat
- Solomon

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- As you enter this National Park, be on the lookout for both the ibex and the coney.
- While the Chalcolithic temple is not accessible for tourists, the 3rd century AD synagogue is. The mosaics are really impressive.
- You can hike up the canyon/wadi on the cement path to the first water falls. From here, be sure to continue up the hiking trail to get a glimpse of the other waterfalls. The highest falls is at the end of the canyon. To hike here and back will take about 40 minutes.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God is our refuge, strength, protection, and encouragement. For David hiding in a cave, God guided his every step. Claim Psalm 46:1 as your “cave verse” – “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Know that you can entrust your life’s cares to a God who is deeply interested in you!



GEZER

REGION: The Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Gezer was a strategically placed city located along the Aijalon Valley in a region called the Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah. The city was initially conquered by Joshua (although not completely). It was mentioned several times by Pharaoh Thutmose III (15th century BC) and later in the El Amarna Letters (14th century BC, “Gezer has been captured...”). It was later destroyed by the Egyptians, and given as a gift to Pharaoh’s daughter, Solomon’s wife. Solomon refortified the city, along with other strategically located cities (e.g. Megiddo, Hazor). Archaeologically, Gezer was excavated about 100 years ago, and again in the 1960-1970s. Current digs are taking place.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Joshua 10:33, 12:12, 16:10, 22:12
- 1 Kings 9:16-17
- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (seasons of life)

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Joshua
- Solomon
- Shoshenq I/Shishak (Egyptian pharaoh)

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- You will see archaeological ruins from the Middle Bronze (Canaanite) through the Iron Age (Israelite) Periods. This includes a huge Canaanite fortification tower & chambered-gate structure, and the Canaanite water system.
- A six-chambered gate attributed to Solomon was also excavated. We see these types of Iron Age I gates elsewhere (e.g. Megiddo, Hazor).
- A replica of the Gezer Calendar. The original one was discovered in the early 1900s. It dates to the 10th century BC.
- Leaving the site you will see Gezer’s famous messebot (“standing stones”) used most likely as part of cultic practice.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God has designed our lives to be seasonal. He is the One in control of our personal “seasons of life.” The key to victorious living with God is to trust Him through every “season” of life.

HERODIUM

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Herodium was a palace-fortress built by Herod the Great. It is located in the Hill Country of Judah on the western the edge of the Judean Wilderness about 8 miles southeast of Jerusalem and only a 3 miles east of Bethlehem. The building project began about 24 BC. Although build on a small hill, it stood 90 feet high with four massive towers projected from the walls. Herod was buried here after dying in Jericho in 4 BC (Mt. 2:19-20). The Romans destroyed Herodium in 71 AD. Archaeologically, excavations began in the 1970s. Uncovered here were mosaics, frescos, a swimming pool (located below), a bathhouse, and cisterns (used later in the Bar Kokhba revolt of the 2nd century AD). Following 35 years of digging, Ehud Netzer finally found Herod's tomb (in May 2007). Excavations continue today of the royal archway.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 2:19-20

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Herod the Great

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Hiking to the top offers a spectacular view of Jerusalem and the Mt. of Olives to the north, Bethlehem to the west, and the Judean Desert to the east. On a clear day, you can see the Dead Sea and the hills of Moab (Jordan). The biblical town of Tekoa is located to the south (home of Amos, the prophet).
- Archaeologically, you can see the four towers around this cylinderlike fortress, the bathhouse and the synagogue.
- You also can walk down through the cistern system. This leads to the theater built into the side of the site as well as the burial area.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Herod was a great builder. Yet he was an evil man. In nearby Bethlehem, God's plan of salvation unfolded within the shadows of this impressive palace-fortress. The birth of the "King of kings" would serve as the world's answer to evil.



HERMAN, MT.

REGION: Golan Heights

SITE SUMMARY

Mt. Hermon is located 30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee on the Golan Heights on the northern border of Israel. It is the highest mountain in Israel, about 7,300 feet above sea level. The mountain is shared by both Syria and Lebanon. It is a snow-capped mountain about six months a year. Israel even has developed a ski resort on their side of the mountain. Mt. Hermon is also a primary source of the Jordan River. The melting snow helps replenish the water levels of the Sea of Galilee. Some suggest that it was somewhere on the slopes of Mt. Hermon where the Mt. of Transfiguration event took place.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Deuteronomy 3:8
- Joshua 22:7
- Song of Songs 4:7-8
- Psalm 42:4-5, 89:11-12, 133:1-3
- Matthew 17:1-13

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- Three Disciples

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Mt. Hermon can be seen as far as 50 miles away from the south on a clear day. The peak of the mountain rises majestically, especially when covered with snow.
- During the summer months, taking the ski-lift chair to the top offers a spectacular view of the region below. One can hike down the marked trail back to the ski resort.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God is delighted when people live in unity (Psalm 133), especially believers in Christ. The “dew” of unity is to flow like a river upon brothers and sisters in Christ. Are you displaying the precious “dew” of God’s love and grace toward others? Let us all strive to live in unity together.



JAFFA

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Jaffa (also Joppa) is located at the southern end of Tel Aviv along the Mediterranean Sea. The city sits 20 miles north of Ashdod and 30 miles south of Caesarea.

Jaffa (which means beautiful in Hebrew) was a Canaanite city founded around the 18th Century BC. Later, Joppa is mentioned in the allotment of cities given to the Tribe of Dan. Later in the 12th Century BC, the Sea Peoples (e.g. Philistines) took control of the city, only to be ousted by David 200 years later. Joppa was a port used by Solomon, bringing in cedar logs from Tyre. It was also from this port that Jonah sailed (Jonah 1). In the days of the New Testament, Peter received a heavenly vision here (Acts 10). In 1799, Napoleon I of France captured the town. Today, both Jews and Arabs share the city.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Joshua 19:46
- 2 Chronicles 2:16
- Jonah 1:1-3
- Acts 9:36-42, 10:9-16

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Joshua
- Solomon
- Jonah
- Peter
- Tabitha (Dorcas)
- Cornelius

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- A large whale/fish is displayed while entering the city from the south, preserving the story of Johah.
- The quaint streets of modern Jaffa. As you walk these streets, you will pass the traditional house of Simon the tanner.
- St. Peter's Church. This is a Catholic Church.
- A view of the Tel Aviv coastline is spectacular from here.
- A clock tower dating back to the Ottoman Empire (1900) stands in the main square of Jaffa.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God's ways are often not our ways. What God-allowed situations of life are you running away from today (like Jonah)? What God-orchestrated opportunities are you running toward? Trust God's perfect plan for your life.



JERICO

REGION: The Jordan Valley

SITE SUMMARY

Jericho is located just north of the Dead Sea in the southern end of the Jordan Valley. It is the oldest city in Israel. Jericho was the first city take by Joshua (Joshua 6), and it as destroyed completely. Today, Jericho is a Palestinian city of about 20,000. Archaeologically, the site of is called Tel es-Sultan is only about 6 acres in size with an approximate 1,200 people living this ancient city. The site was excavated at the turn of the 20th century as well as in the 1930s and 1950s. A 23 foot stone tower in the middle of the site is the oldest visible structure to be seen. The city of New Testament Jericho (and the location of King Herod's palace) is located about 1.5 miles south.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Joshua 1:1-20
- 2 Kings 2:13-22
- Luke 10:30-37, 19:1-10
- Mark 10:46-52

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Joshua
- Elisha
- Jesus
- Zachaeus
- Bartimaeus

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The 23 foot high stone tower. It is located in the middle of the site within the “archaeological trench.”
- The double stone walls at the southern end of the site. Traditional dating places these in the Middle Bronze Period. However, the evidence suggests that these date to the Late Bronze Period. On top of these walls (no longer visible) was a mud-brick wall. It was the mud-brick wall that came “tumbli’n’ down.”
- The New Testament site is more difficult to get to, but there you can see remnants of the palace, bathhouse and mosaics.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Despite the challenge, Joshua encircled this city seven times and the walls fell. What situation are you facing in your life that feels like a “Jericho wall?” Place your faith in God to bring down the “walls” in your life!



JERUSALEM: BETHESDA POOL

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Pool of Bethesda (“house of mercy”) is located in the Old City of Jerusalem just inside St. Stephen’s (also called Lion’s and Jericho) Gate. In the days of the New Testament the pool was just north of the Temple. The history of the pool can be traced back to the 2nd Century BC. Archaeologically, the site was initially excavated in the 1800s, although later discoveries in early 1900s (and later 1960s) revealed a double pool surrounded by four porticoes (porches), with a fifth portico between the two pools. A Byzantine church was also built here. Also on the premises there are the remains of a Crusader church. Using these structures, in 1856 French Catholics built a church here called St. Anne’s Church.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- John 5:1-15

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- The Disciples
- The Lame Man

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Looking below to the lowest ruins, you can see the foundations of the “porches” (John 5:2). You also can see a pillar made from porphyry (purple) granite.
- Higher up, the structures of the Byzantine Church can be seen.
- To the east of the pool, what’s left of what is suggested to be a temple dedicated to Asclepius (Greek god of healing) is visible. This was built in the days of Hadrian (2nd Century AD).
- St. Anne’s Church is a great place sing. It’s high Crusader ceiling makes for an 8-9 second echo.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God is a God who heals. He longs to bring joy and transformation to our lives. Here Jesus healed a man lame for 38 years. Recall a time when Christ brought you spiritual healing? Sing a song of joy to God as you recall Jesus’ healing touch! Like the man at Bethesda, be sure to tell others about it!



JERUSALEM: CITY OF DAVID & HEZEKIAH'S TUNNEL

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The City of David & Hezekiah's Tunnel ("house of mercy") is located south of the Old City walls of Jerusalem. In biblical days, the city was defined by the Kidron Valley to the east and the Tyropoeon Valley to the west. When David conquered the city from the Jebusites, it was only 9 acres in size (300 yards long x 100 yards wide). Solomon expanded the city northward when he built the First Temple. The City of David expanded to the western hill (called Mt. Zion today) during the days of Hezekiah. Archaeologically, excavations began in the 1800s. City walls, royal buildings, seal inscriptions, towers, four-room Israelite houses, and even David's palace have been uncovered. Most amazingly, Hezekiah's Tunnel was discovered, a 170 foot water tunnel that is mentioned in the Bible.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- 2 Samuel 5:6-11
- 2 Kings 20:20-21
- 2 Chronicles 32:1-21
- Isaiah 36-37

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- David
- Solomon
- Jebusites
- All Judean Kings

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- A 15-minute 3-D movie about the history of this Old Testament city.
- "Area G" (as it is called), This is the excavation on the eastern slope of the City of David. The palace of David was located on top of the slope. In Area G, you can see Ahiel's house (and his stone toilet).
- Warren's Shaft
- The Gihon Spring and the newly-discovered tower complex.
- Hezekiah's Tunnel & the Siloam Pool

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Thanks be to God for the light He sheds on our pathway. Like a flashlight radiating beams inside Hezekiah's Tunnel, God provides His Spirit for our enlightenment. He helps us to walk through our dark tunnels with confidence.

JERUSALEM: GARDEN TOMB

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Garden Tomb is located north of the Damascus Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem. This place provides an attractive alternative to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as the place of Christ's death and burial. The property is owned and operated by Anglican believers. The Garden Tomb tradition began in 1883 when British Major-General Charles Gordon stood atop of the present Turkish Old City rampart. From this vantage point he noticed a rocky escarpment that mysteriously resembled the face of a skull. Archaeologically, many Iron Age (or Israelite) tombs have been discovered in this area north of the Old City. The tomb displayed at the Garden Tomb is most likely one of these classic Old Testament tombs. Yet it is a wonderful place to consider the miracle of the resurrection!

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 28:1-15
- Mark 16:1-8
- Luke 24:1-8
- John 20:1-18

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- Mary Magdalene
- Mary
- Salome
- Peter
- John
- The Angels

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- A tour is given by one of the Garden Tomb guides of the premises. This includes a view of the suggested place of crucifixion (on "Golgotha" or "skull hill"), a walk through the garden, and the tomb itself.
- Areas for groups are set aside for worship & communion services.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! We come to the Garden Tomb not to worship the "place" but rather the "Person" who rose again for us. Whether this is the tomb or not does not matter. What matters is that it is empty. Accept Christ in faith as your risen Savior, believing that God raised Him from the tomb. Come and celebrate eternal life in and through Him!

JERUSALEM: GATES

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

There are 8 gates of the Old City of Jerusalem today. From the days of the Old Testament, there have been named gates in Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 14:13, 2 Chronicles 26:9, Jeremiah 37:13, and Nehemiah 2:13-15). While only sections of walls dating to the Bible have been discovered, the Old City walls and their gates can be seen today. These walls and gates were built by Turkish Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and date to 1537 AD. Archaeologically, with the exception of a few gates added over the last few centuries, the gates date to this time period (16th Century AD).

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Psalm 24:7, 87:2, 118:9
- Matthew 7:12-14

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Jaffa Gate – It leads into the Christian & Armenian Quarters
- New Gate – It was added in the 19th century AD
- Damascus Gate – It is the most ornate gate. It leads into the heart of the Muslim Quarter - About 12 feet below this gate, there is an older gate built by Hadrian (2nd Century AD).
- Herod's Gate – It is also called the Flowers Gate.
- St. Stephen's Gate – It is also called the Lion's and Jericho Gate.
- Eastern Gate – It is also called the Mercy Gate. It is a closed gate. It is through this gate that the Messiah will return (Ezekiel 44:1-3).
- Dung Gate – It leads into the Jewish Quarter / Western Wall (Kotel).
- Zion's Gate – It was made famous in the 1948 War of Independence. You can still see the bullet holes on the façade of the gate.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

To stand in one of Jerusalem's gates is to affirm God's preservation of this ancient city from days of old. We enter into a relationship with God through Christ, who serves as a gate that leads to eternal life. Take joy in Christ who is the only "way, truth, and the life."



JERUSALEM: HOLY SEPULCHER CHURCH

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Holy Sepulcher Church is located in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. Along with the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, it is the oldest church in Israel. The church represents the traditionally located for the location of Christ's crucifixion and burial. According to the writings of Eusebius (260-340 AD) the Christian community in Jerusalem venerated this area as the site of Christ's death until 66 AD. In the 2nd Century AD, Hadrian built a Temple of Venus over the site. In 325 AD, Constantine ordered the destruction of this temple and charged his mother, Helena, with the task of building a basilica here. In 614 AD, the church was damaged by the Muslims. It would suffer destruction over the next 400 years until the Crusaders rebuilt it. Today the space of the church is shared by the Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Roman Catholic, Coptic, Ethiopians, and Assyrian Orthodox. Archaeologically, the presence of many tombs dating to the 2nd Temple Period (time of Jesus) confirms it was a burial site outside the city walls.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- John 20:1-8
- Hebrews 12:1-2

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- When you enter the church, the rock of preparation is the first things you see. By tradition, this is where Jesus' body was wrapped and prepared for the grave.
- Up the stairs to the right is the crucifixion location. Part of the rocky escarpment can be seen.
- On the left is the traditional tomb of Christ. Its tomb today is surrounded by a wooden chamber.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God invites us to keep our eyes firmly placed on Jesus. Within the church we see a lot of "religiosity." However, we are to worship the Person, not the "place."



JERUSALEM: ISRAEL MUSEUM & SHRINE OF THE BOOK

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Israel Museum and the Shrine of the Book is located in West Jerusalem across from Israel's Knesset / Parliament building. Opening in 1965, the Museum is dedicated to archaeology, Judaic Studies, and Modern Art.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- 1 Chronicles 29:10-14

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- A 1:50 scale model of Jerusalem as it would have looked in 70 AD. Be sure to view from all directions. This was the project of the renowned professor and archaeologist Michael Avi-Yonah.
- The Shrine of the Book is a small museum dedicated to displaying the Dead Sea Scrolls. You will see vessels from daily life in Qumran used by the Essenes and authentic fragments of scrolls. The large "Isaiah scroll" in the middle, however, is a copy.
- The Israel Museum has various "wings" to explore. The archaeological wing is full of artifacts taken from ancient sites in Israel. Some of the highlights include: Hazor mensebot (standing stones), the Dan Inscription, items from Arad's "holy of holies" temple, the Ben Hinnom tomb silver amulet, various ostraca (paleo-Hebrew inscriptions on potsherds), the "place of trumpeting" stone from Herod's Temple, the Moses' Seat (from Chorazim), the Caiaphas ossuary, the Pilate Inscription (from Caesarea), and Herod's sarcophagus (from Herodium), to name just a few.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Praise be to God for the amazing work of archaeologists who help reveal and reconstruct the ancient world for us. Step back and be amazed how God preserves so many artifacts from the past. It helps us celebrate the historicity of the Bible and see the Bible come to life before our very eyes!



JERUSALEM: MOUNT OF OLIVES

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Mount of Olives (Har Hazeitim, or “Mount of Oil” in the Talmud) is located east of the Old City of Jerusalem and the Kidron Valley. Extending south to north about 2 miles, this mountain separates the Hill Country of Judah to the west with the Judean Desert to the east. Today, the view from the top (2,900 feet) provides the best panoramic perspective of the Old City. Landmarks on the top of the Mount of Olives include the Augusta Victoria Hospital with the Lutheran Church of Ascension, the Church of the Holy Ascension (a Russian Orthodox Church), and the tower of the Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus, on the northern part. Both Bethany and Bethpage are located on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- 2 Samuel 15:30
- Zechariah 9:9, 14:1-16
- Mark 11:1-10
- Luke 19:41-44, 22:39-53
- John 8:1
- Acts 1:6-12

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- David
- Ezekiel
- Zachariah
- Jesus
- Disciples
- Caiaphas

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The view from the top is fantastic!
- Walking along the massive Jewish cemetery on the “Palm Sunday road” takes you past Dominus Flavet and the Church of Mary Magdalene (Russian Orthodox) down to the Church of All Nations & the Garden of Gethsemane.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus was proclaimed “King” here. It was ultimately where He would be betrayed. He ascended to heaven from here. He will once again return here. When He does, The mountain will split into two and the world will acknowledge God’s redemption found only in His Son, Jesus! Until He comes, allow Him to reign and rule in your life!



JERUSALEM: SILOAM POOL

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Siloam Pool (the Hebrew word is Shiloah, meaning “to send”) is located in Jerusalem at the southern end of the City of David. In the Bible, the pool is best associated with the healing of a man who as born blind (John 9). Until recently, the Pool of Siloam was thought to be the stone pool located at the end of Hezekiah’s Tunnel. In the 1900s a 5th Century AD church was built over this retaining pool (Is. 22:9). However archaeologically, in 2004 bulldozers doing municipal work uncovered a set of ancient steps that wee part of another pool a mere 50 yards south of Hezekiah’s retaining pool. In addition to the steps, the excavation also revealed the southern extension of a Herodian street extending from the Temple Mount area. It would have been this Roman street that was used for the Festival of Water Libation during Tabernacles/Sukkot (John 7). Only half of the Siloam Pool itself has been excavated.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- John 7:2-44
- John 9:1-38

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- High Priest
- Blind Man

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Walking through Hezekiah’s Tunnel leads you to both the traditional Pool of Siloam as well as the authentic one. Walking through the Canaanite tunnel also leads you here.
- You can sit on the steps and read the remarkable story of transformation from John 9.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus came to be a healer. Jesus took the time to ministry to this blind man. He did what others would not do. He approached him with God’s best interests in mind, and his life was touched physically and spiritually. Consider the ways Jesus has touched your life. What has been your testimony? Are you willing to share it with the same excitement?



JERUSALEM: SOUTHERN WALL EXCAVATIONS

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Southern Wall Excavations is located within the Old City of Jerusalem in the Jewish Quarter. It is an area known for its extensive archaeological discoveries, revealing the 1st century AD ruins at the southwest corner of the Temple Mount as well as the area directly south of the Temple. The SW corner of the Temple Mount was probably where Jesus was tempted (Mt. 4:5-7). Today what was uncovered at this corner was a 1st Century street (more than 200 feet of a 30 foot wide walkway) and dozens of Temple stones toppled by the Romans in 70 AD. Archaeologically, Benjamin Mazar excavated this area in 1986. Digging continues to this present day primarily by Elat Mazar, his granddaughter.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 4:5-7, 21:12-17, 23-27, 22:1-2
- Mark 13:1-2
- John 2:19, 7:14-52, 10:23
- Luke 2:22-52, 18:10-14, 21:5
- Acts 3:11, 5:12

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- The Disciples
- Simeon
- Anna
- Pharisees
- Temple Leaders

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- At the SW corner of the Temple, you can see a 200 foot section of a Roman 1st Century street, dozens of massive stones lying on this street (these were toppled by the Romans in 70 AD at the destruction of the Temple), what is left of Robinson's Arch located high on the western wall, miqvat (ritual baths), and ancient shops.
- On the southern side of the Temple, you can see 1st century steps that would have led into the Temple, many more miqvat, an portions of the Ophel (OT ruins from Nehemiah's day).

PERSONAL REFLECTION

For sure, Herod's Temple was a magnificent building! Even the disciples were impressed of its beauty. Jesus taught often in the Temple that once stood tall. When is the last time you gazed at the beauty of Christ and His amazing grace?

JERUSALEM: THE OLD CITY

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Old City of Jerusalem is almost 3 miles in circumference and is deemed the crown jewel of tourism in Jerusalem. The walls of the Old City were built by Suleiman the Magnificent beginning in 1537 AD and reach a height between 20-50 feet. The wall contains some 43 towers and 8 gates (depending on how you count them). The Old City is divided into four quarters: Muslim Quarter (about 25,000 residents), Christian Quarter (about 5,300 residents), Armenian Quarter (about 2,500 residents), and Jewish Quarter (about 2,400 residents). Each quarter has unique characteristics, smells, and feel. Archaeologically, ancient ruins of some kind or another can be seen in all quarters.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Psalm 48:13, 91:4
- Isaiah 26:1

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- In the Muslim Quarter: The Damascus Gate leads into the heart of this quarter. Notice the 2nd Century AD gate below the present one. The Via Dolorosa begins in this quarter.
- In the Christian Quarter: The Holy Sepulcher Church is the highlight. It is a church that was built in 325 AD
- In the Jewish Quarter: This is where the Western Wall is. This served as a retaining wall for Herod's Temple. In the heart of the Jewish Quarter is the Hurva Synagogue. Also here is the Broad Wall 8th-7th century BC, the Burnt House (1st century AD), and the Cardo (2nd Century AD street).
- In the Armenian Quarter: David's Citadel. This is the location of Herod's Jerusalem palace.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Seeing the Old City for the first time makes an impression upon us. So does encountering God's love and grace. Be sure to thank God for the impressions of love He has made upon your heart.



JERUSALEM: UPPER ROOM ON MT. ZION

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Upper Room (cenacle in Latin) is located today outside the Old City of Jerusalem on the western hill call Mt. Zion today. Although the actually “house” is only traditional and does not date to Jesus’ day, it’s location was in what was called the Upper City of Jerusalem. It was where Jesus shared the Last Supper (Passover meal) with His disciples. It was also where Jesus appeared to the disciples following His resurrection. While some contend that Peter’s Pentecost gathering and message following Jesus’ ascension took place here (Acts 2), it most likely took place somewhere near the Temple. Archaeologically, while there are only partial remains of Late Byzantine Period floors (5-6th Century AD), with foundations dating back a few centuries before, the existing house itself dates to only the Crusader Period (12th Century AD). The building was also used as a Muslim mosque.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Luke 22:7-38, 24:36-49
- John 13-17, 20:19-29

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- The Disciples
- Water-carrying Man

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The house called the Upper Room today is primarily a Crusader building. You will see the Crusader gothic-style ceiling arches.
- You will also see a Corinthian-like capitals in the middle of the cenacle.
- A Muslim mihrab (a semicircular niche) facing the direction of Mecca, along with an Arabic inscription, can be seen in the right corner.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

The Upper Room experience represents a life-changing encounter with Jesus. For the disciples, it as a private time with the One who have His life for us. Don’t worry if today’s location for the Upper Room may or may not be the place. Instead, be sure to spend time with the Savior.



JERUSALEM: VIA DOLOROSA STATIONS OF THE CROSS

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Via Dolorosa (“way of the cross”) is located in the Old City of Jerusalem. It begins in the Muslim Quarter and finishes in the Christian Quarter. The Via Dolorosa preserves the Catholic traditional route Jesus carried His cross to Golgotha. There are 14 stations of the cross, with the final five inside the Holy Sepulcher Church. Archaeologically, the evidence suggests that Jesus was sentenced to be crucified not at the Antonio Fortress but at Herod’s palace inside Jaffa Gate today. The lithostrotos (“stone pavement” – Jn. 19) at the Antonio Fortress (specifically visible at the lower levels of the Sisters of Zion convent) dates to the 2nd Century AD, while the stone pavement at Herod’s palace is 1st Century AD.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- John 19:6-18

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- Caiaphas
- The Disciples
- Priestly Officials

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

• **Station 1:** Judgment in the Praetorium (courtyard of the Umariyah School); **Station 2:** Flagellation & Receiving the Cross (Church of the Flagellation); **Station 3:** The First Fall (tradition of the Polish Catholic Church); **Station 4:** Jesus Meets His Mother (Armenian Catholic Church); **Station 5:** Simon of Cyrene Takes the Cross; **Station 6:** Veronica Wipes His Face; **Station 7:** The Second Fall; **Station 8:** Weeping over the Daughters of Jerusalem (Chapel of Saint Haralampos); **Station 9:** The Third Fall (Ethiopian Coptic Church); **Station 10-14:** Garments Stripped, Crucified, Setting of the Cross in Place, the Body Removed, Jesus Laid in the Tomb (all inside the Holy Sepulcher).

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus’ willingness to endure the cross surpasses all comprehension. He walked the “way of the cross” with a submissive heart to the will of His Father (Phil. 2:8). Take time to reflect with a grateful heart on the passion of Christ.



JERUSALEM: WESTERN WALL

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

The Western Wall (also called the "Wailing Wall") is located within the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. This wall served as one of the retaining walls for Herod the Great when he expanded the Temple Mount. It was a building project that he began in 20 BC. Between 1948 and 1967, the Jordanians controlled the Western Wall and the entire Old City. On June 7, 1967 the Old City & the Wall was liberated in the Six-Day War. The Western Wall is 1,600 feet in length. Archaeologically, the Western Wall has been exposed through a project called the Western Wall Tunnel.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Mark 13:1-2
- Luke 18:10-14, 21:5

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- Temple Priests
- The Disciples
- Levites

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The Western Wall Plaza is referred to as The Kotel. Entering through security, you immediately see the Wall in front of you. You will see 5-7 levels of classic Herodian Stone. However, the level of Herodian stones descend anywhere between 8 and 16 levels further down to the bedrock. Both men and women can approach the Wall, inserting prayer requests if you like. You will see religious Jews pray here 24/7, with the use of tefillin (phylacteries) & tallits (prayer shawls).
- At the southern end of the Western Wall you is the remains of Robinson's Arch. It as discovered by Edward Robinson in 1838. The arch served as a bridge for priests coming into the Temple.
- Walking through the Western Wall Tunnel allows you to walk north parallel to the Wall itself. On the way you will see the Master Course, a stone 40 feet long, 10 feet high, and 14 feet deep. It weighs an estimated 500 tons.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God is a holy God who demands our reverence. God meets us where we are. He invites us to approach Him in prayer. Come and spend time alone with God.



JERUSALEM: YAD VASHEM HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

REGION: Hill Country of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial is located in West Jerusalem near Mt. Herzl. The name Yad Vashem literally means “a place/memorial and a name.” It is taken from Isaiah 56:5. Established first in 1953, Yad Vashem is a place where emotions surface in considering the 6 million Jews who lost their lives in the Holocaust.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

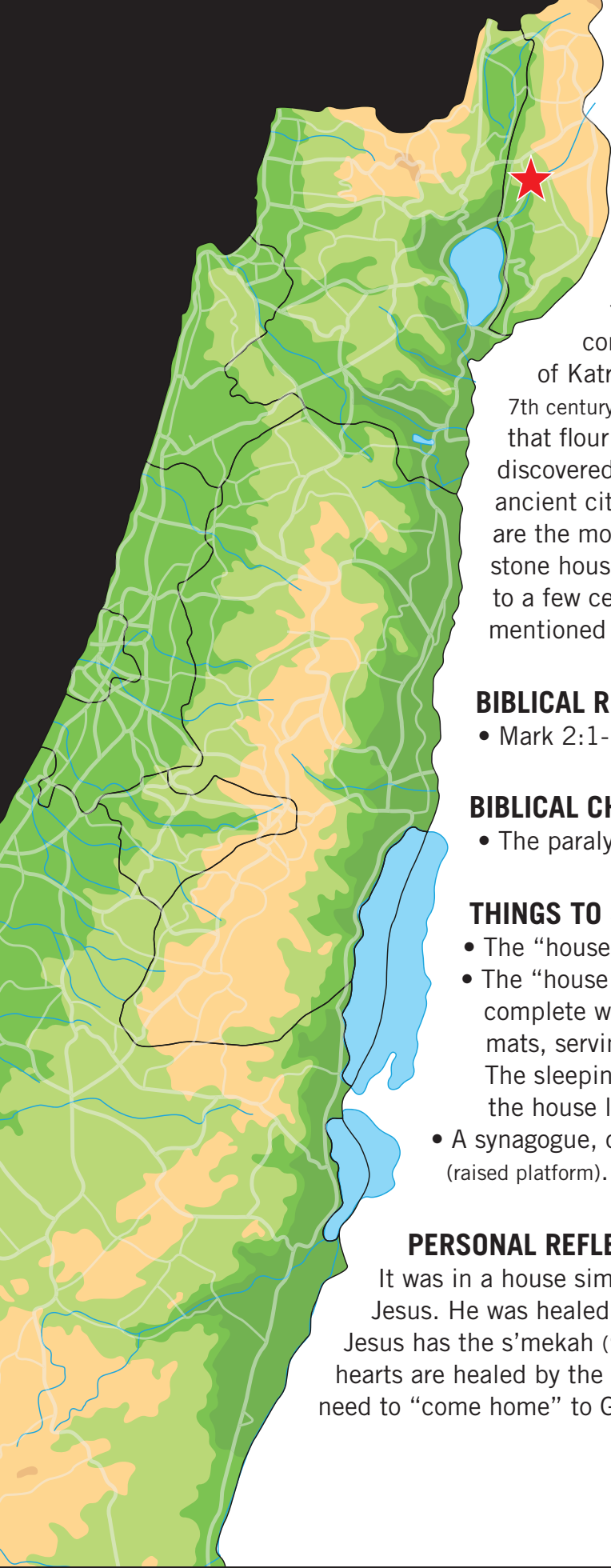
- Isaiah 56:5
- Psalm 73:23-28

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Included through this 45 acre complex is the Garden/Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations. Trees are planted in honor of some 22,000 Gentiles who risked their lives in helping Jews. You will find such names as Oscar Schindler and Corrie ten Boom.
- The Children’s Memorial is a small building illuminated by only the mirrored reflection of a few candles. 1.5 Jewish children lost their lives. Their names are mentioned as you walk through.
- The Museum is arranged in chronological order. You will walk through 10 separate exhibit halls. You will hear and read the stories, and see many personal items.
- The Valley of the Communities consists of 2.5 acres of limestone monuments with the engraving of the names of 5,000 Jewish communities that were destroyed or barely survived.
- Railroad boxcar that was used to transport Jews to the gaschambers.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Neither the presence of evil in the world nor the historicity of the Holocaust can be denied. The de-valuing and loss of human life saddens our hearts. Yet in the midst of loss, God is to be found. Pray for someone you know who lost a loved one in the Holocaust.



KATZRIN

REGION: Golan Heights

SITE SUMMARY

Katzrin is located on the Golan about 10 miles from the northeastern corner of the Sea of Galilee. It is considered the capital of this region. The ancient site of Katzin was apparently a thriving Talmudic village (3rd-7th century AD). It was one of over two dozen Jewish villages that flourished in this region. Archaeologically, the ruins were discovered after the 1967 war. While only 10% of the ancient city has been excavated, the two reconstructed houses are the most unique and special structures at the site. One stone house is completely re-modeled, and even though it dates to a few centuries after Jesus' day, it looks a typical house as mentioned in the Gospels.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Mark 2:1-12
- Colossians 1:13-14

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- The paralyzed man lowered through the roof

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The "house of Uzi" – a partially-reconstructed house.
- The "house of Rabbi Abun" – a fully-reconstructed house complete with living utensils, cooking pots, storage jars, floor mats, serving bowls, rolling pins (used on the flat roof), and oil lamps. The sleeping loft above is accessed by a wooden ladder. Exiting the house leads to the courtyard.
- A synagogue, complete with two rows of four columns and a bema (raised platform). It dates to the 6th century AD.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

It was in a house similar to this that a paralyzed man was lowered down to Jesus. He was healed both physically and spiritually. His sin were forgiven. Jesus has the s'mekah ("authority") to forgive all our sins. As He forgives us, our hearts are healed by the amazing grace of God. In your journey of faith, do you need to "come home" to God? Spiritual healing awaits!

KHIRBET QEYAFABA

REGION: The Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Khirbet Qeiyafa is a relatively new excavation (since 2007) of a small fortified city around the time of David. It is located along the heart of Elah Valley in a region called the Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah. This city was built specifically between the ancient city of Socoh to the east and Azekah to the west. Some believe this city was called Shaaraim (1 Samuel 17:52). Others believe it was Ephes Dammim (1 Samuel 17:1). It is a word that means “double gates.” Archaeologically, this small site was fortified with a wall and two gates. The leading theory is that the city was built by David, serving as a “buffer/protection” city between the Judean Hill Country to the east and the Philistine Plain to the west. This was a one occupation-level city.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- 1 Samuel 17:52
- 1 Chronicles 4:31

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- David & Goliath battled in the Elah Valley

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- While this is a site not visited by the average tourist group, the new gravel road allows a bus or car to climb most of this tel. Ascending to the top along the northern fortification wall, the first thing to see is the impressive Iron Age I (Israelite) 6-chamber gate.
- From this gate structure, you can look across the Elah Valley and see the ancient city of Socoh. The text of 1 Samuel 17:3 tells us that the battle took place in the narrow part of the valley (“gai”) probably just east of Socoh.
- Interestingly, the site also had messebot or “standing stones.” One can be seen within the house/dwelling structures.
- Leaving the site, the second 6-chamber gate can be seen.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

It was in the Elah Valley below where David battled Goliath. God invites us to completely trust in Him. It is God who “fortifies” us with confidence to get through each and every “battle” of life.



LACHISH

REGION: The Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Jaffa (also Joppa) is located at the southern end of Tel Aviv along the Mediterranean Sea. The city sits 20 miles north of Ashdod and 30 miles south of Caesarea.

Jaffa (which means beautiful in Hebrew) was a Canaanite city founded around the 18th Century BC. Later, Joppa is mentioned in the allotment of cities given to the Tribe of Dan. Later in the 12th Century BC, the Sea Peoples (e.g. Philistines) took control of the city, only to be ousted by David 200 years later. Joppa was a port used by Solomon, bringing in cedar logs from Tyre. It was also from this port that Jonah sailed (Jonah 1). In the days of the New Testament, Peter received a heavenly vision here (Acts 10). In 1799, Napoleon I of France captured the town. Today, both Jews and Arabs share the city.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Joshua 10:3,5,31-32; 12:11; 15:44
- 2 Kings 18:14,17
- 2 Chronicles 10:9, 32:9
- Isaiah 36:2, 37:8
- Jeremiah 34:1-7

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Joshua
- Rehoboam
- Sennacherib

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The two fortification walls that surrounded the city. You can best see these walls by using the modern ramp that ascends the site.
- The two gates structures.
- The Assyrian siege ramp.
- The palace (most likely built by Rehoboam).

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God desires His people to obey Him. As the double walls of Lachish protected the city, what protects you again disobedience? Heed the warnings, and turn over every part of your life to God's control.



MARESHA/BEIT GUVRIN

REGION: The Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Maresha is a city located along the Beit Guvrin Valley in a region called the Shephelah (lowlands) of Judah.

This Old Testament city is best known to be the home of the prophet Micah. The city later became the capital of the Idumeans during the Hellenistic Period. At this time, the location of the city actually moved a mile and a half away, off the natural hill. The name of the city was changed to Beit Guvrin. Archaeologically, Maresha was first excavated in 1900 AD. One Iron Age II (Israelite) stratum and two Hellenistic strata were identified. 17 royal seal impressions (“la-melech” seals) were found here. Also, 100s of caves chiseled from the soft limestone were also found. Of the Roman ruins located near the main road, an impressive amphitheater can be seen. It is only one of two found in Israel.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Joshua 15:44
- 2 Chronicles 11:5-8, 14:9-10
- Micah 1:14-16

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Joshua
- Asa
- Micah

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The underground caves are interesting to see. The columbarium cave exhibits about 2,000 small niches most likely for raising pigeons.
- The “Bell Cave” is a huge cave, with a ceiling about 50 feet high. Be sure to sing a few songs in here. There are 100s of these caves in this area.
- Not much is seen on the tel of Maresha. It is not worth visiting.
- The amphitheater in the Roman city (off the main road) is well preserved.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God used Micah to declare warning to His people. Maresha represents the disobedience of God’s people. Yet God is gracious in sending us a Deliverer (Micah 5:2-5).



MASADA

REGION: The Wilderness of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Masada is a city located in the region of the Wilderness of Judah. This unique site, not directly mentioned in the Bible, literally is an isolated rock plateau about a 1,000 feet high overlooking the Dead Sea to the east. In the days of the Old Testament, perhaps David found refuge from Saul's pursuit here (the "stronghold"). Masada was developed by King Herod the Great and served as one of his many "palace-fortresses." After the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 AD), Masada served as a place of refuge against the Roman forces for 967 Jewish inhabitants. The fall of Masada came in 73 AD. Archaeologically, while initial discoveries of the ruins on top took place in the 1800s, the first full-scale dig took place in the 1960s by the famous Yigal Yadin.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Psalm 18:1-2
- 1 Samuel 24:22

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- David
- King Herod

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- Ascending in a cable car from the east or hiking the Roman ramp from the west, the top of the site is one large excavation. You can descend into one of the 12 cisterns on the southern end of the site.
- The 3-level northern palace can be accessed by a metal staircase. You will see original frescos from the 1st century.
- The Roman ramp can be seen on the west side, along with a number of the Roman camps (including Sylva's camp).
- Also on the west edge of the site is a Jewish synagogue.
- You can hike down (or up if time allows) the Snake Path on the eastern side. It will take about 40 minutes.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God serves as our personal "metzada" (Masada) for those who place their faith in Christ. Place your faith in God who is "rocksolid" in extending His faithful care to you. God is our "mighty fortress."



MEGIDDO

REGION: Jezreel Valley

SITE SUMMARY

Megiddo was a strategically placed city located on the edge of a region called the Jezreel Valley. The city's location guarded the primary western pass into this valley. It was so important that 15th Century BC Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III once said that "capturing Megiddo was more important than capturing 1,000 cities..." Eventually the city was taken by Joshua (Joshua 12), but not totally controlled until the time of Solomon. Archaeologically, the first primary excavation began in 1925. To date, there are over two dozen levels of occupation revealed, spanning about 3,000 years. In the last days, Megiddo is mentioned as the location of the last battle.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Joshua 12:21
- Judges 1:27
- 1 Kings 9:15
- 2 Kings 23:29
- 2 Chronicles 35:22-24
- Revelation 16:16

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Solomon
- Jeroboam II
- Josiah
- Pharaoh Necho

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- A large wall map and a 3-D model of the tel of Megiddo.
- Walking to the top of the tel you will pass three gates, from the Late Bronze to Iron Age (Solomonic) Periods. Also visible are stables(Solomon's?), the Early Bronze rounded altar, and a grain silo.
- From the top of the tel, one can see Mt. Carmel, the Nazareth Ridge, Mt. Tabor, the Hill of Moreh, and Mt. Gilboa.
- One leaves the site by walking down through the water system.


PERSONAL REFLECTION

God has intervened on behalf of His people and will continue to do so. In the last days, God will once again step into history and bring victory according to His sovereign time and plan. Entrust your present and the future into God's capable hands.

NAZARETH

REGION: Lower Galilee

SITE SUMMARY



Nazareth is located on a mountain ridge between Cana and the Jezreel Valley in the Lower Galilee. The city during the days of the New Testament was only a small Galilean town of perhaps only a few dozen families. It was so small that it is not even mentioned as a Galilean town in the Talmud. The town was located only four miles from Sepphoris, the region's most prominent city. Yet it would be here where Jesus would be raised by Joseph and Mary. Archaeologically, excavations took place in 2009-10, taking place the Church of Annunciation, a Catholic church traditionally honoring where Mary was confronted by the angel (Luke 1). A few house structures from the 1st century have been uncovered. In the modern city of Nazareth today (with a combined Arab & Jewish population of about 100,000), there are other churches, including a Greek Orthodox Church of the Well.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Matthew 2:3
- Luke 1:26-38, 4:14-30
- John 1:46

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Jesus
- Mary
- Joseph
- The Disciples

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- The two primary churches within Nazareth today are the Church of Annunciation (Catholic) & the Church of the Well (Greek Orthodox).
- Some groups go and see the Nazareth Village. This includes a reenactment of a 1st century town. It is quite touristy.
- Driving up to the Precipice offers not only a great view of the city of Nazareth but a spectacular view of the Jezreel Valley to the south.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Although Jesus' hometown of Nazareth as nothing special, the Savior who was raised here most certainly was. The "good" that came out of this small town was God's salvation! Even though rejected, Christ came to serve (Mark 10:45).



QUMRAN

REGION: The Wilderness of Judah

SITE SUMMARY

Qumran is a site on the northern edge of the Dead Sea in the Wilderness of Judah. It is 8 miles south of Jericho. The site represents the most important discoveries throughout all of Israel, namely because of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered here in 1947. These scrolls date from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, offering us the earliest Hebrew texts of the Bible ever found. A total of more than 700 fragments of scrolls have been discovered in a total of 11 caves. The Essenes were the most likely scribes of these scrolls. The most famous scrolls include the Isaiah scroll, the Copper scroll, and the Temple scroll. They even found extra Psalm scrolls, one preserving a humble psalm written by David. Archaeologically, the site of Khirbet Qumran offers insights how these Essenes lived.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Psalm 19:7-10
- Matthew 19:11-12
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- The Essenes
- John the Baptist

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- At the entrance to the site of Qumran, you can watch a 10-minute video about the Essene community.
- At the archaeological site, you can see several ritual baths (miqvot), cisterns, and a scriptorium.
- Walking only 40 yards south of the site, you can get a good view of Cave 4. The majority of the scrolls were found here.
- You also can drive about half a mile north of the visitor center and walk to Cave 11. Other caves are also accessible (e.g. Cave 1).

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Every book of the Hebrew Scriptures (OT) has been found except Esther. We rejoice in the miraculous preservation of God's Word. As you read and meditate on God's Word, allow God to speak to you. Approach His Word with holy reverence.



WILDERNESS OF ZIN

REGION: The Southern Negev

SITE SUMMARY

The Wilderness of Zin is a city located just to the south of the modern Israeli community of Sde Boker (the burial place of David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister) in the region of the southern Negev. The Zin is mostly associated with Moses and the 12 spies and their 40 day journey. Sent from Kadesh Barnea (located just south and west), these spies came up through this desert region en route to the Hill County of Judah. The Zin is characterized by remote canyons, intense sun, and dotted with a few acacia trees. In biblical times, Miriam dies here in the Zin. Also, it is somewhere in the Zin where Moses strikes the rock. In more modern times, T. E. Lawrence (known as Lawrence of Arabia) and C. Leonard Wooley first surveyed this region about 100 years ago. They performed archaeological surveys for the Palestinian Exploration Fund in 1914.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Numbers 13:17-25, 20:1-13, 34:1-4

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Moses
- 12 spies
- Miriam

THINGS TO SEE & EXPERIENCE

- It is best to see an overview of the Zin from Ben Gurion's tomb at Sde Boker. The panoramic view of the canyon below is wonderful!
- Walking through the canyon is a unique experience. Hiking through the canyon to the waterfalls will allow you to see unique geological formations as well as a few griffon vultures (if you are lucky).
- Hiking to the far rim of the canyon is only for the seasoned hiker. There are ladders to scale in order to reach the top.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

In your exploration of life, be sure to follow God's lead and guidance. Don't ever doubt Him. Ask God to renew your patience and your level of trust as He leads you through the desert times of the journey of life.