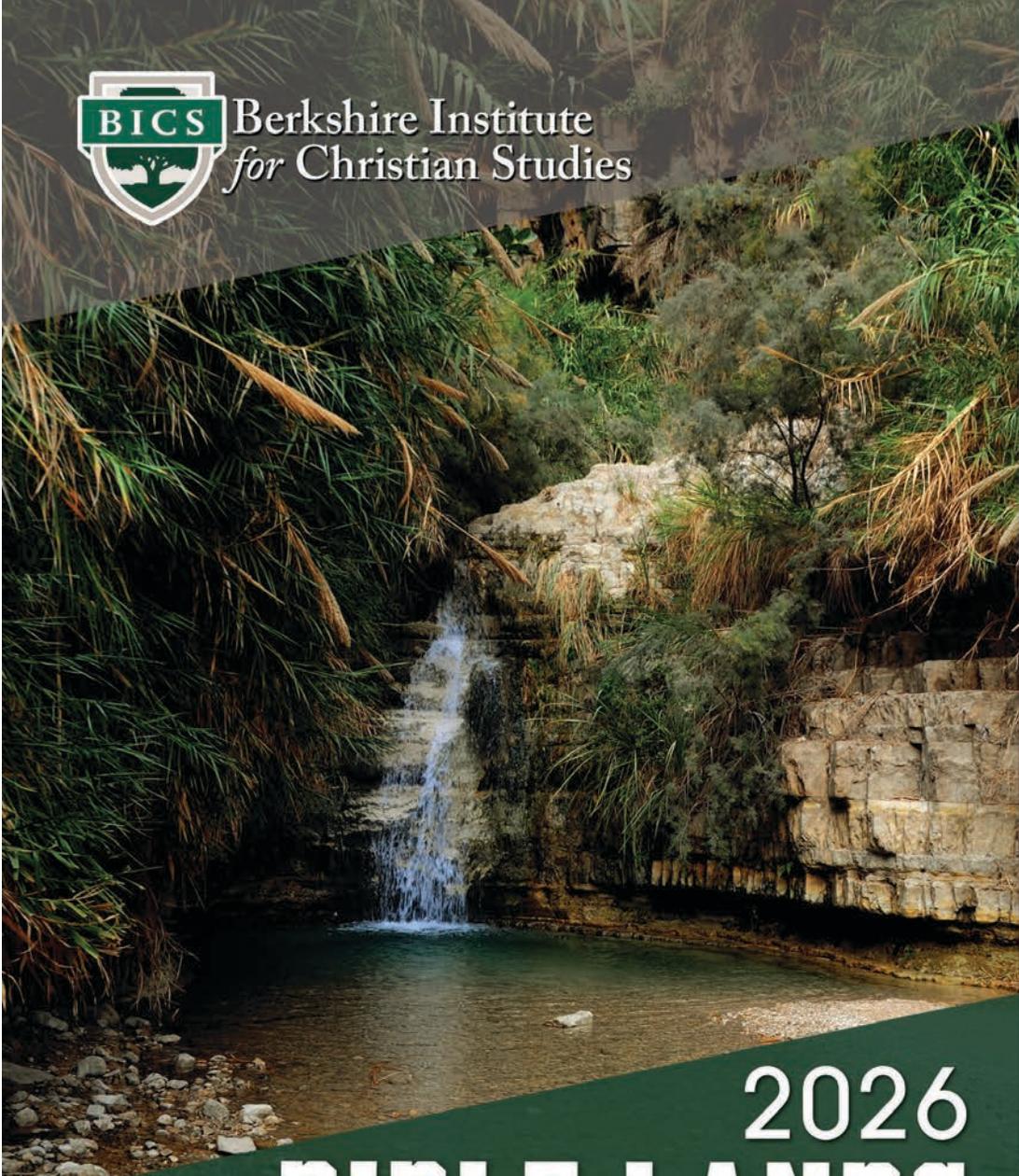




Berkshire Institute  
*for Christian Studies*



# 2026 BIBLE LANDS *Travel Guide*



take heart

PSALM 27:14

*"Wait for the LORD; be strong,  
and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the LORD!"*

– Psalm 27:14

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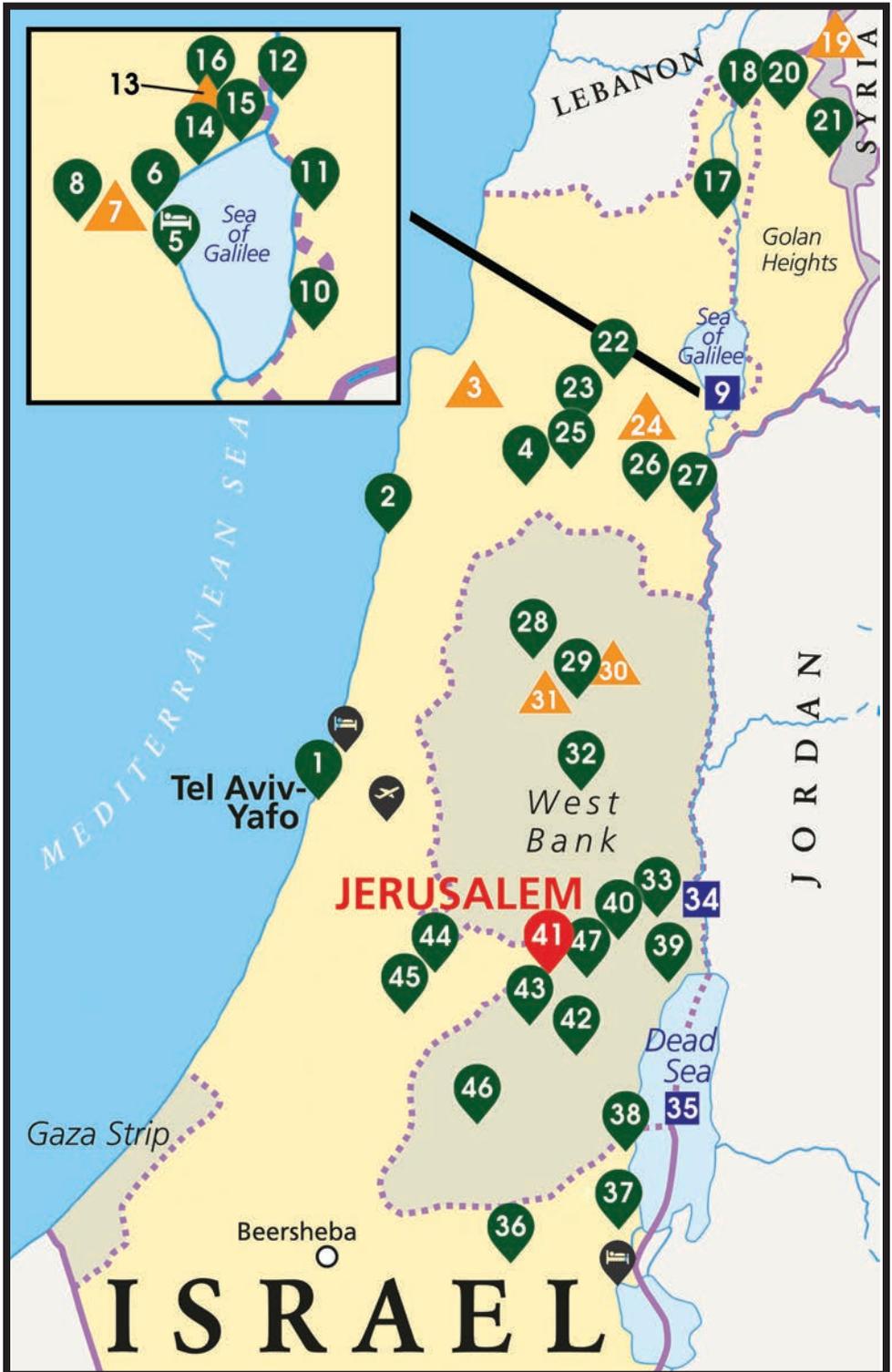
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## Daily Reminders

- Be on time
- Protect your passport
- Check-in your room key at the front desk (or carry it securely)
- Drink plenty of water
- Sanitize your hands often
- Respect the Tour Guide by not talking while he/she is talking

## ***Welcome to the Bible Lands!***

On behalf of the Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies, we welcome you to the Land of Promise.

This is more than a vacation—it is a journey to the places where biblical history unfolded. Here, you will walk where Jesus walked, stand where prophets prophesied, and experience landscapes that have remained remarkably unchanged since ancient times.

The land of Israel has been called the "Fifth Gospel" because it serves as a living testimony to God's Word. Where Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the story of Jesus through words, the land itself tells that story through stones, soil, and sacred sites. Every hill and valley, every ancient path and weathered stone speaks of God's faithfulness to His people across the ages.

As you travel the ancient roadways and walk where the great men and women of faith have trod, you will experience what the prophet Jeremiah described: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). This guide will help orient you to the land, its people, and its distinctive features so that your journey becomes not merely sightseeing, but a deeper encounter with the Word of God made visible in the very landscape before you.

While you are traveling to the Land of Promise, you are ultimately journeying to know better the God of Promise. The same God who promised Abraham a land and descendants, who promised David an eternal kingdom, who promised through the prophets a coming Messiah, is the God who keeps His promises to you today. As the Scriptures come alive in the very places where they were written and fulfilled, may you also come alive to the faithfulness of God and learn to trust more fully in His promises.

May God richly bless your journey, deepen your faith, and draw you closer to the promise-keeping God who chose this special land to reveal Himself to the world.

Welcome to Israel—the Land of the Bible!



# *Introduction to the Land of Israel*

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## **BIBLE LANDS** *Travel Guide*

"Ask for the ancient paths; ask where the good way is,  
and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah 6:16

## THE NAME "ISRAEL"

The name Israel comes from Genesis 32:28, where God changed Jacob's name after he wrestled with the angel at Peniel: *"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."* The name combines the Hebrew roots meaning "to strive/contend" (sarah) and "God" (El). It became the covenant name of both God's land and His people, based on His promise to Abraham (Genesis 17:1-8).

Throughout history, the land has been known by several names:

- **Canaan:** In the Bronze Age and early biblical period
- **Israel/Judah:** The divided kingdoms after Solomon's reign (930 BC)
- **Judea, Samaria, Galilee:** Regional names used during the Second Temple period
- **Palestine/Syria Palestina:** Imposed by Roman Emperor Hadrian after the Bar Kokhba revolt (AD 135) to punish the Jewish population and erase the name "Judea." The name derives from "Philistia," the coastal territory of Israel's ancient enemies, the Philistines.

The modern State of Israel revived the ancient biblical name when it declared independence in 1948, seeing the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the ancestral land as the fulfillment of prophecy and the culmination of centuries of longing expressed in the phrase "Next year in Jerusalem."

## GEOGRAPHY

Israel is a small country—approximately 10,762 square miles, roughly the size of Massachusetts or the state of New Jersey. Serving as a land bridge connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa, Israel has been a crossroads of civilizations for millennia. Its diverse geography ranges from Mediterranean coastline to desert wilderness, from fertile valleys to rugged mountains, each region playing a vital role in the biblical narrative.

Israel's compact size belies its remarkable geographic diversity. Understanding these distinct regions will help you appreciate the biblical events that took place within them.

### The Coastal Plain

Stretching along the Mediterranean Sea, the Coastal Plain is a narrow strip of flat, fertile land running from Lebanon in the north to Gaza in the south. This region includes major modern cities like Tel Aviv, Haifa,

and ancient Caesarea Maritima. In biblical times, this area was home to the Philistines (hence the name "Palestine") and included cities like Joppa (modern Jaffa), where Jonah fled from God's call. The plain widens considerably in the south, creating excellent agricultural land.

### **The Shephelah**

The Shephelah (meaning "lowland" in Hebrew) consists of rolling foothills between the Coastal Plain and the Central Mountain Range. This buffer zone was strategically important in ancient times as a battleground between the Israelites in the highlands and the Philistines on the coast. The Valley of Elah, where David fought Goliath, is located in the Shephelah, as are the fortified cities of Lachish and Azekah.

### **The Galilee Region**

Divided into Upper and Lower Galilee, this northern region features green, rolling hills and fertile valleys. Lower Galilee, with gentler terrain and better agriculture, was the primary setting for Jesus' ministry. Here you find Nazareth (Jesus' hometown), Cana (site of His first miracle), Capernaum (the center of His Galilean ministry), and the Sea of Galilee. Upper Galilee is more mountainous and rugged, with peaks rising over 3,900 feet. The region receives more rainfall than most of Israel, making it notably greener and more lush.

### **The Central Highlands**

Running like a spine through the center of the country, this mountainous ridge includes the hills of Samaria and the Judean Mountains. Jerusalem sits at approximately 2,500 feet elevation in these mountains. This region was the heartland of ancient Israel and Judah. The terrain is rocky and challenging, with terraced hillsides that have been cultivated for thousands of years. Cities like Shechem, Shiloh, Bethel, Hebron, and Bethlehem are all located in this central highland region.

### **The Jordan River Valley**

Part of the Great Rift Valley, this deep depression runs from the Sea of Galilee in the north (690 feet below sea level) to the Dead Sea in the south (the lowest point on earth at 1,410 feet below sea level). The Jordan River connects these two bodies of water, flowing through a valley that provided an important north-south route in ancient times. Jericho, one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, sits in this valley. The climate here is significantly warmer than the surrounding highlands.

## **The Negev Desert**

Covering roughly 60% of modern Israel's land area, the Negev is a triangular desert region in the south. Though arid, it was traversed by important trade routes in biblical times and was home to patriarchs like Abraham and Isaac. The Negev includes dramatic landscapes like the Makhtesh Ramon crater and sites like Beersheba and Arad.

## **The Dead Sea Region**

The Dead Sea, earth's lowest point, is a unique body of water so salty (nearly 10 times saltier than the ocean) that virtually nothing can live in it. Fed by the Jordan River but having no outlet, its high salinity results from intense evaporation. The western shore features important biblical and archaeological sites including Qumran (where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered), Ein Gedi (where David hid from Saul), and Masada.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS AND RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION**

Modern Israel is a diverse, multicultural nation with a population of approximately 9.9 million people (as of 2024). Understanding this diversity will help you navigate and appreciate the complex society you'll encounter.

### **Population Breakdown**

- **Jews:** Approximately 73-74% of the population. This includes a wide spectrum from secular to ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jews, as well as diverse ethnic backgrounds including Ashkenazi Jews (of European descent), Sephardic Jews (from Spain, Portugal, and North Africa), and Mizrahi Jews (from Middle Eastern countries).
- **Arabs:** Approximately 21% of the population. Most Israeli Arabs are Muslim, though a significant minority are Christian (roughly 7-9% of the Arab population) or Druze. Israeli Arabs are citizens of Israel with full rights, though they often maintain a distinct Palestinian Arab identity.
- **Others:** About 5% of the population includes non-Arab Christians, members of other faiths, and those who do not identify religiously.

### **Religious Landscape**

Israel is home to three major monotheistic faiths, making it one of the world's most religiously significant places:

- **Judaism:** As a Jewish state, Israel follows the Hebrew calendar for national holidays, and Jewish religious law (Halakha) influences certain aspects of public life. You'll encounter everything from secular Israelis to strictly observant Orthodox and Hasidic communities, particularly in Jerusalem. The Sabbath (Friday evening through Saturday evening) is observed as a day of rest, with many businesses closed.
- **Islam:** Muslims constitute about 18% of Israel's total population. Most are Sunni Muslims, with Muslim holy sites including the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem's Old City. You may hear the call to prayer five times daily from mosques throughout the country. Friday is the Muslim day of communal prayer.
- **Christianity:** Christians make up approximately 2% of Israel's population, including various denominations: Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Protestant communities. Jerusalem contains some of Christianity's holiest sites, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb. Bethlehem, Nazareth, and other biblical sites have significant Christian populations and communities that have maintained a presence for centuries.

## **Language**

Hebrew and Arabic are the official languages of Israel. English is widely spoken, especially in tourist areas, hotels, and major cities. Many signs are trilingual (Hebrew, Arabic, and English), making navigation relatively easy for English-speaking visitors. (See page 175 for some essential Hebrew and Arabic greetings and phrases.)

## **POLITICAL LANDSCAPE**

Understanding Israel's complex political situation will help you navigate certain aspects of your journey and appreciate the challenges facing the region.

### **The State of Israel**

The modern State of Israel was established on May 14, 1948, following the United Nations partition plan for British-controlled Palestine. Israel is a parliamentary democracy with a Prime Minister as head of government and a President as head of state (a largely ceremonial role). The Knesset (parliament) has 120 members and governs from Jerusalem.

## **Jerusalem: A Divided City**

Jerusalem holds profound significance for all three primary faiths and remains at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel claims Jerusalem as its undivided capital, though this is not universally recognized internationally. The city is divided into West Jerusalem (predominantly Jewish, developed after 1948) and East Jerusalem (predominantly Arab, including the Old City, annexed by Israel in 1967). The Old City contains the Western Wall, Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and other sacred sites.

## **The West Bank**

The West Bank refers to the territory west of the Jordan River, captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War. According to the Oslo Accords (1993-1995), this region is divided into three administrative areas:

- **Area A:** Under full Palestinian Authority civil and security control (approximately 18% of the West Bank), including major Palestinian cities like Ramallah, Bethlehem, Nablus, and Jericho.
- **Area B:** Palestinian civil control with joint Israeli-Palestinian security control (approximately 22% of the West Bank), mostly rural areas
- **Area C:** Full Israeli civil and security control (approximately 60% of the West Bank), including Israeli settlements, military zones, and most archaeological sites.

Many biblical sites are located in Area C or Area A, requiring coordination and sometimes security escorts for tour groups.

## **Gaza Strip**

The Gaza Strip, along the Mediterranean coast near Egypt, has been under Israeli military operations since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel. The territory is not accessible to tourists or part of any tour itineraries. It is mentioned here only for geographic context.

## **NATURAL LIFE: FLORA & FAUNA**

Israel's position at the junction of three continents, combined with its diverse geography and climate zones, creates remarkable biodiversity despite the country's small size.

## **Biblical Significance**

The land is described throughout Scripture as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8), emphasizing its fertility and God's provision.

Deuteronomy 8:7-9 describes it as "a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey."

These "**Seven Species**" that ancient Israel was famous for remain central to the land's agricultural identity: Wheat, Barley, Grapes, Figs, Pomegranates, Olives, and (Date) Honey.

## **Flora**

Israel contains over 2,800 plant species, an remarkable number for such a small country. The landscape shifts dramatically depending on rainfall and elevation.

### **Trees:**

- **Olive Trees:** Gnarled, ancient specimens throughout the country, particularly moving to see in the Garden of Gethsemane
- **Fig Trees:** Common throughout Israel, providing shade and fruit; famous in Jesus' teaching (Matthew 21:18-22)
- **Date Palms:** Tall, elegant palms, symbol of Judea on ancient coins
- **Almond Trees:** First tree to bloom in late winter (January-February) with beautiful white/pink blossoms; mentioned in Jeremiah 1:11-12
- **Sycamore-Fig:** The tree Zacchaeus climbed (Luke 19:4)
- **Acacia:** Desert tree, possibly the "shittim wood" used in the Tabernacle
- **Cypress and Pine:** Common in forested areas

### **Plants & Shrubs:**

- **Mustard:** Seen abundantly throughout the countryside, growing surprisingly large from tiny seeds (Matthew 13:31-32)
- **Christ Thorn (spina-christi):** Shrub with sharp thorns, traditionally believed to be the plant used for Jesus' crown of thorns; common in dry areas
- **Oleander:** Pink or white flowering shrub along streams and wadis
- **Broom Tree:** Desert shrub under which Elijah rested (1 Kings 19:4-5)

In addition, in the spring (February-April), hillsides bloom with poppies, anemones, cyclamen, and crown anemones—likely including the "lilies of the field" Jesus referenced (Matthew 6:28-29). Even the desert briefly blooms after winter rains.

## **Fauna**

### **Animals:**

- **Ibex (Wild Goats):** Rocky mountain goats with dramatic curved horns, often spotted at Ein Gedi and Masada
- **Hyrax (Rock Badger):** Small, guinea pig-like creatures mentioned in Proverbs 30:26, common at archaeological sites
- **Gazelles:** Graceful antelope occasionally seen in open areas
- **Jackals and Foxes:** Mostly nocturnal; foxes mentioned in Jesus' saying about having "nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58)
- **Wild Boar:** In forested and agricultural areas
- **Camels:** Domesticated, often seen carrying tourists or in Bedouin camps

### **Birds:**

Israel sits on a major migration route between Europe/Asia and Africa. Over 500 species recorded, including:

- **Hoopoe:** Israel's national bird, crested and distinctive
- **Storks:** Massive flocks pass through during migration seasons
- **Eagles and Hawks:** Soaring over valleys and deserts
- **Pelicans and Cormorants:** At the Sea of Galilee
- **Doves:** Common throughout, symbol of the Holy Spirit

### **Marine Life:**

The Sea of Galilee still supports a fishing industry continuing a biblical tradition. Ten species of fish live in the lake, including St. Peter's fish (tilapia), often served at restaurants along the shore.

## **Climate Zones**

Despite its small size, Israel contains remarkable climatic diversity. The coastal areas and much of the north experience a Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters. Moving inland and southward, the landscape transitions through semi-arid zones into the arid desert of the southern Negev and Arabah Valley. The southernmost tip at Eilat enjoys tropical conditions along the Red Sea. Rainfall decreases dramatically from north to south (from 30-40 inches annually in Upper Galilee to less than 1 inch in parts of the Negev) and from west to east. The rainy season runs from November through March, with almost no rain the rest of the year—precisely as described in Scripture's references to "former and latter rains" (Deuteronomy 11:14).



# ***Glossary & Historical Background***

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## **BIBLE LANDS** *Travel Guide*

"Ask for the ancient paths; ask where the good way is,  
and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah 6:16

## **GLOSSARY**

- Agora** Central marketplace or assembly space for civic, commercial, and social activities.
- Aliyah** Hebrew for "ascent" or "going up," referring to Jewish immigration to Israel. Historically significant waves include pre-state immigration and mass immigration after 1948. The term reflects the spiritual significance of returning to the Land of Israel.
- Annunciation** The Christian belief in the announcement by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive and bear Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 1:26-38). This occurred in Nazareth, traditionally where the Church of the Annunciation now stands.
- Apse** A semicircular projection often with a dome found at the end of a building particularly in Christian basilicas. The apse is commonly located at the eastern end of a church, symbolizing the direction of the rising sun and the anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ.
- Aqueduct** Structures for transporting water, featuring arches or elevated channels. One of the most impressive examples in Israel is at Caesarea Maritima.
- Ashlar** Precisely cut rectangular stone blocks with smooth, flat surfaces and square edges. Herodian construction at the Temple Mount used massive ashlar stones, some weighing hundreds of tons, often featuring a raised central boss with recessed margins. This technique produced some of the most impressive stonework in the ancient world.
- Basalt** Dark volcanic rock commonly found in the Galilee and Golan Heights. Used extensively in ancient construction for building foundations, grinding stones, and paving. The black stone weathers to gray.

- Basilica** Public building used for administrative, legal, and commercial purposes, characterized by a rectangular plan with double rows of columns and a semicircular apse. Later, this also refers to a specific style of building used by a Christian church in the 4th century.
- Bedouin** Arab nomadic peoples traditionally living in desert regions, including Israel's Negev Desert. Bedouin culture is characterized by tent dwelling, herding (sheep, goats, camels), strong tribal identity, and hospitality traditions.
- Bema** A raised platform for public speaking or official proceedings in the ancient world. In synagogues, the platform from which Torah is read; in ancient Galilean synagogues, typically a stone platform near the Jerusalem-facing wall.
- British Mandate** The League of Nations mandate that placed Palestine under British administration from 1920-1948, following the collapse of Ottoman rule. This period saw significant infrastructure development and increasing tensions between Jewish and Arab populations, ending with Israel's independence in 1948.
- Bulla**  
(pl. *Bullae*) Small clay seal impression used to secure documents or containers. Created by pressing a signet ring into soft clay. Many discovered in Jerusalem bear names of biblical figures, providing historical verification.
- Byzantine Empire** The eastern Roman Empire (AD 395-1453), centered in Constantinople. After Christianity became the state religion, the Byzantines built numerous churches and monasteries throughout the Holy Land, many decorated with elaborate mosaics. This period ended with the Arab conquest in the 7th century.
- Caliph / Caliphate** A caliph is a religious and political leader in Islam, considered a successor to Muhammad. A caliphate is the state governed by a caliph. The Umayyad Caliphate built the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

- Capital** The topmost part of a column, serving as a transition between the shaft and the load-bearing elements above. Capitals come in various designs, each corresponding to a specific architectural order, such as Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian.
- Cardo and Decumanus** Typical in Roman cities, these were the two main streets: the **Cardo Maximus** serving as the primary north-south street and the **Decumanus Maximus** as the main east-west thoroughfare. These streets often intersected at key junctions, organizing the urban layout and providing important passages for commerce and movement.
- Casemate Wall** Double-wall fortification with two parallel walls connected by perpendicular walls, creating chambers between them to be used for storage or filled with rubble for strength. Common in Iron Age Israelite fortifications.
- Cenacle** From Latin cenaculum (dining room), the traditional site of the Upper Room where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper (Mark 14:12-26) and where the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Located on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.
- Cistern** An underground chamber carved into bedrock for collecting and storing rainwater, vital for survival in Israel's arid climate where natural springs were scarce.
- Colonnade** A row of columns supporting an entablature or roof structure. Colonnades are often used to define and enclose outdoor spaces, provide structural support, and create architectural rhythm and visual interest.
- Crusades** European Christian military campaigns (1095-1291) to capture and control the Holy Land. Crusaders built impressive fortresses, churches, and cities throughout Israel, with major remains at Acre, Caesarea, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

<b>Dead Sea Scrolls</b>	Ancient Jewish manuscripts discovered between 1947-1956 in caves near Qumran by the Dead Sea. Dating from roughly 250 BC to AD 70, they include the oldest known copies of biblical texts, along with sectarian documents likely from the Essene community. Now housed in the Israel Museum's Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem.
<b>Druze</b>	A distinct Arab ethnic and religious community in Israel, numbering approximately 140,000, found primarily in the Galilee region and on Mount Carmel. The Druze practice a monotheistic faith that emerged in the 11th century with roots in Islam but is considered a separate religion.
<b>Edicule</b>	Small shrine or chapel structure housing a sacred site or relic. The most famous is the ornate structure within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that encloses the traditional tomb of Jesus.
<b>Entablature</b>	The horizontal structure resting on top of a row of columns in classical architecture, consisting of the <b>architrave</b> (bottom), <b>frieze</b> (middle), and <b>cornice</b> (top).
<b>Essenes</b>	A Jewish sect during the Second Temple period known for strict observance of purity laws, communal living, and ascetic practices. The Essenes inhabited Qumran near the Dead Sea and were responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls.
<b>Façade</b>	The decorative front exterior of a building. Ancient synagogues in Galilee (like Capernaum and Chorazin) featured elaborate stone façades with columns, pediments, and carved ornamentation facing toward Jerusalem.
<b>First Temple Period</b>	The era from the construction of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem (c. 960 BC) until its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BC. This period represents the united monarchy under Saul, David, and Solomon, followed by the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

- Fresco** A painting technique where water-based pigments are applied to wet plaster, creating a durable mural on walls or ceilings.
- Grotto** A small cave or cavern, often with religious significance.
- Gymnasium** Ancient Hellenistic facility for physical exercise, athletic training, and education.
- Hades** Greek term for the underworld or realm of the dead; in the NT, hades typically translates the Hebrew *sheol*. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus declared that "the gates of Hades" would not prevail against his church (Matt. 16:18), likely referencing the deep cave which ancients believed was an entrance to the underworld.
- Hellenistic** A term referring to the period following Alexander the Great's conquest of the region (332 BC) through the Roman conquest (63 BC), during which Greek culture, language, and architecture profoundly influenced Jewish society. This era saw the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty, the Maccabean Revolt against forced Hellenization, and tensions between traditional Judaism and Greek cultural practices. Hellenistic influence is evident in Israel's archaeological sites through Greek-style theaters, gymnasiums, and architectural elements that were adopted and adapted by Jewish communities.
- Herodian** Referring to the architectural style and building projects of Herod the Great (ruled 37-4 BC) and his dynasty. Herodian masonry is characterized by precisely cut rectangular stones with distinctive marginal drafting (smooth borders with a slightly raised or recessed center). Major Herodian sites include Caesarea Maritima, Masada, Herodium, and the expansion of the Second Temple.
- Hippodrome** A large stadium for chariot races, athletic competitions, and public events, featuring an oval track surrounded by tiers of seating. Served as a center for communal gatherings and civic celebrations in ancient cities.

<b>Icon</b>	A sacred image or painting, typically depicting Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints, or biblical scenes. Icons are central to worship in Greek Orthodox and other Eastern Christian traditions, and are prominently displayed in churches throughout Israel.
<b>Intifada</b>	Arabic for "uprising" or "shaking off." Refers to Palestinian uprisings against Israeli occupation, primarily the First Intifada (1987-1993) and Second Intifada (2000-2005). The term may come up in historical discussions or contemporary contexts during travel.
<b>Kibbutz</b>	A collective agricultural community unique to Israel, where members traditionally share property, work, and resources communally. First established in the early 20th century by Zionist pioneers, kibbutzim (plural) played a crucial role in developing Israel's agricultural sector and settling the land, though many have since privatized.
<b>King's Highway</b>	An ancient north-south trade route running along the Transjordan plateau, east of the Jordan River and Dead Sea, connecting the Gulf of Aqaba to Damascus. Mentioned in the Bible (Numbers 20:17), it passed through Edom, Moab, and Ammon, and was used for transporting incense, spices, and other luxury goods.
<b>Kotel</b>	Hebrew for "wall," referring to the Western Wall of the Temple Mount. The holiest site in Judaism where Jews are permitted to pray, it's a retaining wall from Herod's Second Temple (19 BC) that survived the Temple's destruction in AD 70.
<b>Latin Vulgate</b>	The Latin translation of the Bible completed primarily by St. Jerome in the late 4th century AD (c. 382-405), commissioned by Pope Damasus I. Jerome worked in Bethlehem, translating from Hebrew and Greek texts. The Vulgate became the Catholic Church's standard Latin Bible for over 1,000 years and profoundly influenced Western Christianity and biblical interpretation.

- Lintel** A horizontal beam or architectural element spanning the top of an opening, such as a door or window, to support the weight of the structure above and distribute it to the surrounding walls.
- Mamluk** A medieval Islamic dynasty (1250-1517) that ruled Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. Mamluks built distinctive architecture throughout Israel, including fortifications, mosques, and public buildings, particularly visible in Jerusalem's Old City and Acre.
- Mediterranean Sea** A vast body of water bordered by Europe to the north, Asia to the east, and Africa to the south. Spanning approximately 965,000 square miles, it is one of the world's largest seas. Its coastline extends for about 28,600 miles, and its average depth is around 4,900'. The Mediterranean is known for its warm climate, rich marine biodiversity, and the cradle of ancient civilizations such as the Greeks, Romans, and Phoenicians.
- Menorah** A seven-branched candelabrum that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem and has become one of Judaism's most recognizable symbols, appearing frequently in ancient synagogue mosaics and stone carvings.
- Mikveh** A pool or bath of natural water used in Jewish tradition for ritual purification. Mikva'ot (plural) are found throughout Israel's archaeological sites, particularly from the Second Temple period, and were essential for maintaining religious purity before entering the Temple or participating in religious ceremonies.
- Mishnah** The first written collection of Jewish oral traditions and laws, compiled around AD 200 by Rabbi Judah the Prince. The Mishnah forms the foundation of the Talmud and organizes Jewish religious law into six major orders covering agriculture, festivals, family law, damages, sacrifices, and ritual purity.

- Mosaic** Artistic technique using small pieces of colored glass, stone, or other materials (called tesserae) to create intricate patterns or images on surfaces such as floors, walls, or ceilings. Spectacular examples can be seen at sites like Beit She'an, Caesarea Maritima, and numerous ancient synagogues throughout the Galilee region.
- Necropolis** A large burial ground or cemetery, often located outside the city walls.
- Niche** Recessed space in a wall used to display statues, hold lamps, or mark sacred spaces. In ancient synagogues, niches often housed Torah scrolls. In churches, they frequently contain icons or statues.
- Olive Press** A facility for extracting olive oil, consisting of crushing stones (often large circular stones rolled over olives to create a paste) and pressing mechanisms (weighted beams or screw presses) to extract the oil.
- Ophel** Hebrew for "hill," referring to the fortified area south of the Temple Mount connecting the City of David with the Temple Mount. Contained administrative buildings and fortifications during the First and Second Temple periods.
- Ossuary** A small stone box or container used to hold the bones of the deceased after the body had decomposed. Common in Jewish burial practices during the Second Temple period (1st century BC through 1st century AD), ossuaries were typically placed in family tombs and often inscribed with the names of the deceased.
- Ostrakon**  
(pl. **Ostraca**) Pottery shard used as a writing surface in the ancient world. Because papyrus was expensive, broken pottery was used for letters, receipts, and records. Important examples discovered at Arad and Lachish.

- Ottoman Empire** A vast Islamic empire that controlled Palestine (including modern-day Israel) from 1517 to 1917. During this 400-year period, the Ottomans administered the region as part of the province of Greater Syria, bringing relative stability but also neglect to many ancient sites. Ottoman rule ended with British conquest in World War I, leading to the British Mandate period (1917-1948).
- Pan** Greek god of shepherds and wilderness, depicted as half-man, half-goat. Worshiped at Caesarea Philippi in a cave sanctuary near where Jesus declared his messianic identity (Matthew 16:13-20), making Christ's proclamation particularly significant against this pagan backdrop.
- Portico** A covered walkway with columns attached to a building facade. In Jerusalem, Solomon's Portico was a colonnaded walkway on the eastern side of the Temple Mount built by Herod.
- Roman Bath** A complex of public bathing facilities consisting of several interconnected rooms, including the *palaestra* (exercise area), *caldarium* (hot bath), *tepidarium* (warm bath), and *frigidarium* (cold bath), designed to facilitate a sequence of bathing rituals and social interactions.
- Roman Roads** Extensive paved highways constructed across the Roman Empire from Britain to the Middle East. These roads were meticulously engineered using multiple layers: a foundation of compacted soil or rubble (*statumen*), gravel bedding (*rudus*), cemented sand and gravel (*nucleus*), and a surface of fitted paving stones (*pavimentum*).
- Sarcophagus** A stone coffin, typically adorned with sculpted or engraved decorations, used for containing and burying the remains of deceased individuals in ancient civilizations. The term "sarcophagus" originates from the Greek words "sarx" (flesh) and "phagein" (to eat), reflecting its function as a container for the flesh of the deceased.

<b>Second Temple Period</b>	The era from 516 BC (when the Temple was rebuilt after the Babylonian exile) until AD 70 (when the Romans destroyed the Temple). This period includes Persian, Hellenistic, Hasmonean, and Roman rule, and encompasses the time of Jesus and early Christianity.
<b>Sepulchre</b>	A tomb, burial chamber, or cave used for interment of the dead. The term is famously associated with Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built over Jesus' traditional burial site.
<b>Siege Ramp</b>	Earthen or stone ramp constructed by attacking armies to breach city walls, allowing siege engines and troops to reach the top of defensive walls. The Roman siege ramp at Masada (73 AD) is the best-preserved example.
<b>Standing Stones (Matzevot)</b>	Upright stone pillars erected for religious, memorial, or commemorative purposes. In biblical times, they marked sacred sites or represented divine presence. Jacob set up a standing stone at Bethel (Genesis 28:18-22).
<b>Stele</b>	A vertical stone slab or pillar, typically inscribed with text, reliefs, or decorative motifs, used as a commemorative or funerary monument in ancient cultures.
<b>Stoa</b>	A stoa is a covered walkway or portico with a roof supported by columns, often facing a public space. Stoas served as markets, meeting places, and promenades for social and intellectual activities.
<b>Strata (sg: Stratum)</b>	Distinct layers of archaeological deposits representing different periods of occupation at a site. By excavating strata in sequence, archaeologists reconstruct site history and establish chronological relationships between findings.
<b>Stepped Street</b>	Ancient paved street featuring stone steps for steep terrain in hilly cities. Jerusalem's Stepped Street in the City of David was the main thoroughfare from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple Mount during the Second Temple period.

- Synagogue** A Jewish house of worship for prayer, study, and assembly. Ancient synagogues from the Roman and Byzantine periods are found throughout Israel, particularly in Galilee.
- Syncretism** The blending of different religious beliefs or practices. In biblical history, this often meant mixing Israelite worship with Canaanite practices, which the prophets condemned.
- Talmud** The central text of Rabbinic Judaism, consisting of the Mishnah (oral law) and the Gemara (commentary and discussion on the Mishnah). The Talmud exists in two versions: the Jerusalem Talmud (compiled c. AD 400) and the Babylonian Talmud (compiled c. AD 500), serving as the basis for Jewish law and tradition.
- Tell (or Tel)** An artificial mound formed by the accumulation of layers of human settlement debris, such as mudbrick, pottery, and other materials, built up over time in ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean regions.
- Theater** An outdoor structure used for public performances, including plays, religious ceremonies, and civic events. The theater featured tiered seating in a steeply sloping semicircle around a central performance area called the **orchestra** and generally had 3 sections: the **ima cavea** (closest to the stage, most prestigious), the **media cavea** (middle, for the respectable citizens, or sometimes for men), and the **summa cavea** (highest, typically occupied by common citizens). The stage, known as the **skene**, served as a backdrop for actors. The entrances or passageways through which actors entered and exited were called **parados**, while the spectators exited via the **vomitoria**.

- Torah Scrolls** Handwritten parchment scrolls containing the five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy), considered the most sacred text in Judaism. Torah scrolls are meticulously copied by trained scribes and kept in the Torah ark (a cabinet or niche oriented toward Jerusalem), then read publicly from the bema.
- Via Maris** Latin for "Way of the Sea," this was one of the ancient world's most important trade routes, running from Egypt along the Mediterranean coast through Israel (via the Coastal Plain, Jezreel Valley, and Galilee) to Damascus and Mesopotamia.
- Wadi** A dry riverbed or valley in desert regions that remains dry most of the year but can experience sudden flash floods during rainy seasons; often used as natural routes for travel in ancient times.
- Wet Sifting** Archaeological technique using water to sift excavated soil, allowing recovery of small artifacts that might be missed in dry sifting.
- Wine Press** An installation used for crushing grapes to extract juice for wine production. Ancient wine presses in Israel typically consisted of a treading floor where grapes were crushed by foot, and a lower collecting vat connected by a channel.
- Zealots** Jewish resistance movement during Roman occupation (1st century AD) that sought to overthrow Roman rule through armed revolt. They played a major role in the Jewish Revolt (66-73 AD) and made their famous last stand at Masada in 73 AD.

## HISTORICAL PERIODS IN ISRAEL

<b>Early Bronze Age</b>	<b>2400-2200 BC</b>
<i>Era of Abraham's birth (2166 BC) and early patriarchal period.</i>	
<b>Middle Bronze Age</b>	<b>2200-1550 BC</b>
<i>Abraham arrives in Canaan (2091 BC). Jacob's family migrates to Egypt (1876 BC). Hyksos rule Egypt and Canaan (1674-1550 BC), introducing horses and chariots. Northern coastal settlements and desert nomad.</i>	
<b>Late Bronze Age</b>	<b>1550-1200 BC</b>
<i>Egypt expels Hyksos and controls Canaan (1550 BC). Exodus from Egypt (1446-1406 BC). Joshua's Conquest of Canaan (1406 BC). Period of the Judges begins (1370 BC).</i>	
<b>Iron Age I</b>	<b>1200-1050 BC</b>
<i>Continuation of Judges period. Philistines ("Sea Peoples") invade and settle the southern coastal plain (1200 BC).</i>	
<b>Iron Age II-A: United Kingdom</b>	<b>1050-931 BC</b>
<i>Saul (1050-1010 BC), David (1010-970 BC), Solomon (970-931 BC). Solomon builds the First Temple in Jerusalem.</i>	
<b>Iron Age II-B: Divided Kingdom</b>	<b>931-586 BC</b>
<i>Kingdom splits into Israel (north) and Judah (south). Assyrians conquer Northern Kingdom (722 BC). Babylonian Empire arises and Nineveh falls to Babylon (612 BC). Babylon subjects Jerusalem; Daniel taken hostage (605 BC). Babylon attacks Jerusalem; Ezekiel deported (597 BC). Babylon destroys Southern Kingdom, Jerusalem, and the Temple (586 BC).</i>	
<b>Persian Period</b>	<b>538-332 BC</b>
<i>Return from Babylonian exile (536/5 BC). Second Temple constructed (520-516 BC). Ezra's mission and reforms (458 BC). Nehemiah rebuilds Jerusalem's walls (445/4 BC). Judea becomes a Persian province with relative autonomy.</i>	

<b>Hellenistic Period</b>	<b>332-63 BC</b>
<p><i>Alexander the Great conquers Judea (332 BC). Greek culture and language profoundly influence the region. After Alexander's death, Judea falls under Seleucid (Syrian-Greek) control. Maccabean Revolt against Seleucid oppression and forced Hellenization (167-142 BC) led by Judas Maccabeus, Jonathan, and Simon. Hasmonean Dynasty established by Simon Maccabeus (142-63 BC).</i></p>	
<b>Roman Period</b>	<b>63 BC-AD 326</b>
<p><i>Pompey conquers Palestine for Rome (63 BC). Herod the Great reigns (37-4 BC). Birth of Jesus (4 BC). John the Baptist and Jesus' ministry begins (AD 26). Crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus (AD 30). Jewish-Roman War and destruction of Jerusalem and Temple (AD 66-70). Masada falls (AD 73). Bar Kokhba Revolt; Hadrian renames Jerusalem "Aelia Capitolina" (AD 132-135). Persecutions under Emperors Decius (AD 250) and Diocletian (AD 303).</i></p>	
<b>Byzantine Period</b>	<b>AD 326-638</b>
<p><i>Constantine builds great churches over holy sites (AD 326). Christianity becomes the dominant religion. Emperor Justinian reigns (AD 527). Major pilgrimage destination with extensive church construction and monastic communities.</i></p>	
<b>Early Arab Period</b>	<b>AD 638-1098</b>
<p><i>Mohammed's hijra and founding of Islam (AD 622). Muslim conquest of Jerusalem (AD 638). Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque built on Temple Mount. Umayyad Caliphate rules from Damascus (AD 661-750). Jerusalem becomes Islam's third holiest city.</i></p>	
<b>Crusader Period</b>	<b>1096-1291</b>
<p><i>First Crusade establishes Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099). Saladin defeats Crusaders at the Battle of Hattin (1187), ending Crusader control of Jerusalem and establishing the Ayyubid dynasty. Crusader kingdom based at Acre/Acco (1192). Mamelukes drive Crusaders from the land (1291). Period of massive fortification and church construction.</i></p>	

<b>Mamluk Period</b>	<b>1291-1517</b>
<i>Egyptian-based Mamluk sultans control the region. Period of economic decline and reduced importance for Jerusalem, though Islamic architecture continues to be added.</i>	
<b>Turkish/Ottoman Period</b>	<b>1517-1918</b>
<i>Ottoman Turks conquer Palestine (1517). Sultan Suleiman rebuilds Jerusalem's walls (1543). Petty governors exploit the land (1566-on). Napoleon campaigns from Egypt to Acre; Rosetta Stone discovered (1799). First Aliyah—Jews begin emigrating from Eastern Europe (1882). Theodore Herzl convenes First Zionist Congress (1897).</i>	
<b>British Mandate Period</b>	<b>1917-1948</b>
<i>Balfour Declaration supports Jewish homeland (1917). British drive out Turks (1917-1918). British Mandate over Palestine (1920-1948). Increased Jewish immigration and growing Arab-Jewish tensions lead to UN partition plan.</i>	
<b>Modern State of Israel</b>	<b>1948-Present</b>
<i>State of Israel established (1948). Arab-Israeli War (1948-49). Six-Day War; Israel gains control of East Jerusalem, West Bank, Golan Heights, Sinai (1967). Peace treaties with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994). Ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace efforts.</i>	

\* The dates given for the various time periods are approximations. This timeline is based on the BICS Bible Lands Chronology, originally developed by Dr. Oral Collins and later refined and updated by President Steve Brown. BICS holds to a conservative evangelical interpretation of biblical chronology, including an early date for the Exodus (1446 BC) and Joshua's conquest of Canaan (1406 BC), which differs from some scholarly reconstructions that propose later dates.

## KEY RULERS & FIGURES IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

HELLENISTIC GREEK PERIOD	
<b>Alexander the Great</b>	<b>356-323 BC</b>
<i>Macedonian king who conquered the Persian Empire, including Judea, in 332 BC. His conquests spread Greek culture, language, and architecture throughout the region, profoundly influencing Jewish society and setting the stage for the Hellenistic period.</i>	
<b>Antiochus IV Epiphanes</b>	<b>c. 215-164 BC</b>
<i>Seleucid king who ruled Syria and Judea (175-164 BC). He attempted to forcibly Hellenize the Jews, desecrating the Temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar and outlawing Jewish practices, which sparked the Maccabean Revolt in 167 BC.</i>	
<b>Judas Maccabeus</b>	<b>died 160 BC</b>
<i>Jewish priest and military leader who led the successful revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He recaptured and purified the Temple in 164 BC (commemorated by Hanukkah), restoring Jewish worship and establishing the foundation for the Hasmonean dynasty.</i>	
ROMAN PERIOD	
<b>Pompey</b>	<b>106-48 BC</b>
<i>Roman general who conquered Jerusalem in 63 BC, ending Hasmonean independence and bringing Judea under Roman control. He entered the Temple's Holy of Holies, shocking the Jewish population, though he did not plunder it.</i>	
<b>Caesar Augustus/Octavian</b>	<b>63 BC-AD 14</b>
<i>First Roman Emperor (27 BC-AD 14) who consolidated Herod the Great's rule over Judea. His census decree brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1), where Jesus was born during Augustus's reign.</i>	

<b>Antipater</b>	<b>died 43 BC</b>
<i>Idumean (Edomite) advisor to the Hasmonean rulers who maneuvered his family into power. Father of Herod the Great, he secured Roman favor and paved the way for the Herodian dynasty through political cunning and loyalty to Rome.</i>	
<b>Herod the Great</b>	<b>c. 73-4 BC</b>
<i>King of Judea (37-4 BC) appointed by Rome. Master builder who constructed Caesarea Maritima, expanded the Second Temple into one of the ancient world's architectural marvels, and built Masada, Herodium, and other fortresses. Ruthlessly maintained power through violence, including the massacre of Bethlehem's infants (Matthew 2:16). His legacy includes magnificent architecture alongside brutal tyranny. Jesus was born during his reign.</i>	
<b>Herod Archelaus</b>	<b>23 BC-c. AD 18</b>
<i>Son of Herod the Great who ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (4 BC-AD 6) as "ethnarch". His brutal reign prompted Joseph and Mary to avoid Judea and settle in Nazareth (Matthew 2:22). Rome deposed him for incompetence, replacing him with direct Roman governors.</i>	
<b>Herod Antipas</b>	<b>c. 20 BC-c. AD 39</b>
<i>Son of Herod the Great, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 BC-AD 39). He built Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. Married his brother's wife Herodias, prompting John the Baptist's execution. Jesus called him "that fox" (Luke 13:32) and appeared before him during his trial (Luke 23:7-12).</i>	
<b>Herod Philip</b>	<b>c. 20 BC-AD 34</b>
<i>Son of Herod the Great, tetrarch of the northeastern territories including Iturea and Trachonitis (4 BC-AD 34). Generally considered the most moderate and competent of Herod's sons, he ruled peacefully and rebuilt Caesarea Philippi (Baniyas).</i>	
<b>Caiaphas (High Priest)</b>	<b>c. 18 BC-c. AD 36</b>
<i>Jewish high priest (AD 18-36) appointed by Rome who presided over the Sanhedrin trial of Jesus and advocated for his death (John 11:49-50, Matthew 26:57-68). He also participated in the persecution of early Christians (Acts 4:6).</i>	

<b>Pontius Pilate</b>	<b>died c. AD 39</b>
<p><i>Roman prefect of Judea (AD 26-36) who condemned Jesus to crucifixion despite finding no fault in him (Matthew 27, Luke 23, John 18-19). Known for insensitivity toward Jewish customs and brutal suppression of unrest. An inscription bearing his name was discovered at Caesarea Maritima.</i></p>	
<b>Herod Agrippa I</b>	<b>11 BC-AD 44</b>
<p><i>Grandson of Herod the Great who ruled over an expanded kingdom (AD 37-44). He persecuted early Christians, executing James the apostle and imprisoning Peter (Acts 12:1-19). He died suddenly at Caesarea after accepting worship as a god (Acts 12:21-23).</i></p>	
<b>Herod Agrippa II</b>	<b>AD 27-c. 100</b>
<p><i>Son of Agrippa I, last of the Herodian dynasty, ruling small territories in northern Israel (AD 50-100). Paul presented a defense before him at Caesarea (Acts 25-26). He sided with Rome during First Jewish Revolt (66-70).</i></p>	
<b>Nero</b>	<b>AD 37-68</b>
<p><i>Roman Emperor (AD 54-68) who persecuted Christians after blaming them for Rome's great fire (AD 64). Both Peter and Paul were likely martyred during his reign. His mismanagement contributed to the First Jewish Revolt (AD 66-70), though he died before Jerusalem's destruction.</i></p>	
<b>Vespasian</b>	<b>AD 9-79</b>
<p><i>Roman general who led the campaign to suppress the First Jewish Revolt beginning in AD 67. He became emperor in AD 69, leaving his son Titus to complete the siege of Jerusalem. He established the Flavian dynasty.</i></p>	
<b>Titus</b>	<b>AD 39-81</b>
<p><i>Roman general and later emperor (AD 79-81) who besieged and destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, burning the Second Temple and ending the First Jewish Revolt. The Arch of Titus in Rome depicts the Temple treasures, including the menorah, being carried away as spoils.</i></p>	

**Hadrian**

**AD 76-138**

*Roman Emperor (AD 117-138) who brutally suppressed the Bar Kokhba Revolt (AD 132-135). He banned Jews from Jerusalem, renamed the city Aelia Capitolina, and renamed Judea "Syria Palaestina" to erase Jewish connection to the land. He built a pagan temple on the Temple Mount site.*

**Bar Kokhba**

**died AD 135**

*Leader of the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome (AD 132-135). Some believed him to be the Messiah. His rebellion initially succeeded but was crushed by Hadrian, resulting in catastrophic Jewish losses, the razing of Jerusalem, and the Jewish diaspora.*

**Josephus**

**AD 37-c. 100**

*Jewish priest, general, and historian who fought against Rome in the First Jewish Revolt (AD 66-70) but surrendered and became a Roman citizen. Born Joseph ben Matityahu, he took the Roman name Flavius Josephus. His writings (The Jewish War, Antiquities of the Jews, and others) provide invaluable historical accounts of first-century Judea, the Jerusalem Temple, the Herodian dynasty, and early Jewish-Roman conflicts. He is the primary non-biblical source for this period and provides the only contemporary account of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. His works also contain references to Jesus, John the Baptist, and others, making them crucial for New Testament historical studies.*

**BYZANTINE PERIOD**

**Constantine the Great**

**c. AD 272-337**

*Roman Emperor (AD 306-337) who legalized Christianity through the Edict of Milan (AD 313) and made it the favored religion of the empire. He initiated the construction of churches over holy sites in the Holy Land, transforming the region into a Christian pilgrimage destination.*

**Helena**

**c. AD 246-330**

*Mother of Constantine who traveled to the Holy Land around AD 326-328 to identify and venerate Christian holy sites. Tradition credits her with discovering the True Cross. She commissioned the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.*

**Eusebius of Caesarea**

**c. AD 260-339**

*Bishop of Caesarea and church historian known as the "Father of Church History." His writings, particularly Ecclesiastical History and Onomasticon (a gazetteer of biblical place names), provide crucial information about early Christian sites, martyrs, and the identification of biblical locations throughout the Holy Land.*

**Jerome**

**c. AD 347-420**

*Christian priest and scholar who lived in Bethlehem from AD 386 until his death. He translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, producing the Vulgate, which became the Catholic Church's official Latin Bible. His monastery and cave dwelling in Bethlehem are venerated sites.*

**Justinian I**

**AD 482-565**

*Byzantine Emperor (AD 527-565) who built extensively throughout the Holy Land, including the Nea Church in Jerusalem (now destroyed, though archaeological remains can be seen in the Jewish Quarter) and St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai. He extensively renovated and expanded the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, adding mosaics that partially survive today. His reign represented the height of Byzantine power and Christian influence in the region.*

**ISLAMIC & CRUSADER PERIODS**

**Caliph Umar**

**c. AD 584-644**

*Second caliph of Islam who conquered Jerusalem in AD 638, ending Byzantine rule. He established Muslim control over the Holy Land and, according to tradition, was shown Christian holy sites by Patriarch Sophronius. Muslim tradition holds he prayed on the Temple Mount, foreshadowing later Islamic construction there.*

**Saladin**

**AD 1137-1193**

*Kurdish Muslim military leader who recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187 after decisively defeating them at the Battle of Hattin. Known for his chivalry and respect for Christian holy sites, he allowed Christian pilgrims to visit Jerusalem. His Ayyubid dynasty controlled the region until the Mamluks.*

**Richard the Lionheart**

**1157-1199**

*English king who led the Third Crusade (1189-1192) attempting to recapture Jerusalem from Saladin. Though militarily successful in retaking coastal cities, he never recaptured Jerusalem. He negotiated a treaty with Saladin allowing Christian pilgrims access to the holy sites.*

**OTTOMAN PERIOD**

**Suleiman the Magnificent**

**1494-1566**

*Ottoman Sultan (1520-1566) whose reign marked the empire's golden age. He rebuilt Jerusalem's city walls (1537-1541), which still stand today, and beautified the city with fountains and other structures. The Damascus Gate and much of Jerusalem's Old City architecture date to his reign.*

**BRITISH & MODERN PERIODS**

**Eliezer Ben-Yehuda**

**1858-1922**

*Lithuanian-born linguist who revived Hebrew as a modern spoken language after centuries of liturgical-only use. He compiled the first modern Hebrew dictionary, coined thousands of new words for contemporary life, and raised the first native Hebrew-speaking child in modern times.*

**General Edmund Allenby**

**1861-1936**

*British field marshal who conquered Jerusalem and Palestine from the Ottoman Turks in December 1917 during World War I. He famously entered Jerusalem on foot out of respect for the holy city, ending 400 years of Ottoman rule and beginning the British Mandate period.*

**Theodore Herzl**

**1860-1904**

*Austro-Hungarian journalist and founder of modern political Zionism. His book *The Jewish State* (1896) advocated for a Jewish homeland. He organized the First Zionist Congress in Basel (1897), launching the movement that led to Israel's establishment. Buried on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.*

**Chaim Weizmann**

**1874-1952**

*Russian-born chemist and Zionist leader who played a crucial role in securing the Balfour Declaration (1917), which supported a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He served as president of the World Zionist Organization and became Israel's first president (1949-1952).*

**David Ben-Gurion**

**1886-1973**

*Polish-born Zionist leader and Israel's primary founder who served as the first Prime Minister (1948-1954, 1955-1963). He declared Israel's independence on May 14, 1948, and led the nation through its War of Independence and formative years, establishing its governmental institutions and military strength.*

## ANCIENT CITY GATES: The Heart of Urban Life in Biblical Israel

In ancient Israel, city gates were far more than defensive structures—they were the civic forum, the beating heart of urban life. Understanding these gates helps unlock the social, legal, and economic world of biblical times.

### Function and Significance

City gates were vital hubs of community life, as shown by their many uses described throughout the Bible:

- **Legal proceedings:** Elders sat at the gate to settle disputes and render judgments (Ruth 4:1-11; Amos 5:15)
- **Commercial activity:** Merchants conducted business and farmers sold produce in gate plazas
- **Political assembly:** Kings addressed their subjects and officials made proclamations (2 Samuel 18:4, 24)
- **Social gathering:** Community members met, exchanged news, and conducted marriages (Genesis 23:10-18)
- **Defensive stronghold:** Multiple chambers created a formidable barrier against attackers

The gate complex typically included an outer plaza, the gatehouse with its chambers, and benches lining the walls where elders sat. These benches, still visible at sites like Tel Dan and Lachish, are where biblical figures like Boaz conducted legal transactions (Ruth 4:11).

## Identifying Gate Types: Chambers and Chronology

Archaeological excavations have revealed distinct gate styles that help date and identify ancient cities by counting the number of chambers:

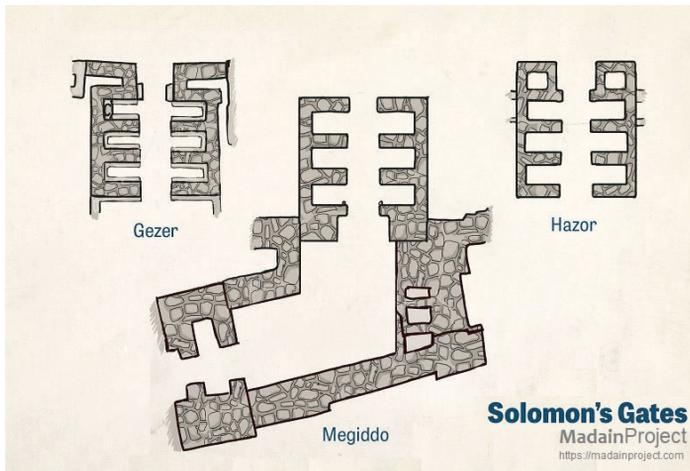
### Canaanite Gates (Late Bronze Age, c. 1550-1200 BC)

- Two or four chambers
- Simpler design with two towers flanking the entrance
- Example: The Late Bronze Age gate at Megiddo

### Israelite Gates (Iron Age, 10th-9th centuries BC)

- Four chambers; found at sites like Khirbet Qeiyafa and Tel Dan
- Six chambers; found at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer
- Built with expertly dressed stones
- Integrated with casemate walls (double walls with partitions creating storage rooms)

The six-chambered gates at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer share remarkably similar designs and measurements, suggesting centralized planning. These are often called "Solomon's Gates" based on 1 Kings 9:15, though some scholars debate whether they date to Solomon's reign (10th century BC) or later (9th century BC). All agree, however, that these gates represent organized state-level construction.



## Gates You'll Encounter

**At Megiddo** - You'll see both the earlier two-chambered Canaanite gate and the later six-chambered Israelite gate side-by-side, dramatically illustrating the transition from Canaanite to Israelite control.

**At Hazor** - The massive six-chambered gate showcases Iron Age monumental architecture, with chambers and benches still clearly visible where town elders once sat in judgment.

**At Tel Dan** - Two remarkable gates tell different chapters of the city's story. The famous "Abraham's Gate," a mud-brick gate from the Middle Bronze Age (c. 2000-1750 BC), features three complete arches built on massive basalt foundations—the oldest complete arches in the world, predating Roman construction by over 1,500 years! Named for Abraham's pursuit of his nephew Lot's captors to Dan (Genesis 14), this gate was preserved when it was intentionally filled in and buried. Later, the Israelites built an impressive four-chambered gate complex to the west, one of the finest examples of Iron Age gate architecture.

**At Shiloh** - In a recent and profoundly significant discovery, archaeologists led by Dr. Scott Stripling with Associates for Biblical Research have uncovered what they believe to be the city gate on Shiloh's northern perimeter. This gate, identified through piers, socket stones, and a gap in the defensive glacis (earthen embankment), likely served as the main entrance nearest to Shiloh's spring. Most remarkably, this may be the very gate where the high priest Eli sat when he received the devastating news that the Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines, causing him to fall backward and die (1 Samuel 4:18). The discovery connects directly to one of the Old Testament's most dramatic moments and provides physical evidence for Shiloh's role as Israel's religious capital for nearly 400 years.

**In Jerusalem** - The Old City today has eight gates, most built by Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1537-1541), though some incorporate earlier foundations. The sealed Golden Gate on the eastern wall holds special significance—it may preserve the location of the ancient Shushan Gate, with some stonework possibly dating to the First Temple period. Jewish and Christian tradition anticipates this gate will reopen when the Messiah comes.

When you stand in these ancient gateways, remember: you're standing where Abraham pursued Lot's captors, where Eli received tragic news about the Ark, where Ruth's kinsman-redeemer made his decision, where prophets called Israel to justice, and where Jesus entered Jerusalem. These weren't merely entrances—they were the town square, courthouse, marketplace, and defensive fortress all in one—the very heart of biblical life.

## KEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

### CAESAREA MARITIMA

#### **Pontius Pilate Inscription (Pilate Stone)**

Limestone block discovered at Caesarea Maritima in 1961. Latin inscription reads "Pontius Pilatus, Prefect of Judea." Dated to 26-36 AD. First archaeological evidence confirming Pilate's existence and his correct title as prefect, not procurator as previously assumed.

### MEGIDDO

#### **Megiddo Mosaic**

Third-century AD mosaic floor discovered 2005 in building identified as early Christian prayer hall. Contains Greek inscription mentioning "God Jesus Christ" and dedicator Akeptous. Represents one of earliest physical Christian artifacts in Holy Land. Predates Constantine's legalization of Christianity. Features geometric patterns and fish symbols.

### SEA OF GALILEE

#### **Jesus Boat**

First-century fishing boat discovered in 1986 in Sea of Galilee mud during drought. Measures 27 feet long, 7.5 feet wide. Carbon-14 dated to 100 BC-70 AD. Built from twelve wood types using mortise-and-tenon joints. Preserved and displayed at Yigal Allon Museum in Ginosar.

### MAGDALA

#### **Magdala Stone**

Carved stone block discovered in 2009 in first-century synagogue at Magdala. Features earliest known depiction of Second Temple menorah carved by someone who saw it. Also shows Temple facade and other ritual objects. Dated to before 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem Temple.

### TEL DAN

#### **House of David Inscription (Tel Dan Stele)**

Fragmentary Aramaic victory stele discovered at Tel Dan in 1993-1994. Dated to 9th century BC. Contains phrase "House of David", providing first extrabiblical reference to King David's dynasty. Erected by Aramean king, possibly Hazael, commemorating victory over Israel and Judah.

## **SHILOH**

### **Ceramic Pomegranate**

Small ceramic pomegranate discovered by ABR in 2018 near large East-West wall from Iron Age I period. Features suspension hole and four calyx petals. Pomegranates adorned high priest's robe (Exodus 28:33) and Solomon's temple pillars, symbolizing God's provision and fertility. Possibly related to tabernacle cultic activity at Shiloh.

### **Storage Jars and Cult Vessels**

Numerous pottery vessels excavated from Iron Age I levels (12th-11th centuries BC). Large storage jars and cult vessels discovered in areas identified as possible tabernacle precinct. Include collared-rim jars typical of early Israelite settlements. Evidence of cultic activity during period of Judges.

## **MT. EBAL**

### **Mt. Ebal Curse Tablet**

Lead tablet discovered at Mt. Ebal altar site by Scott Stripling, announced 2022. Contains proto-alphabetic script with word "cursed" repeated. Dated to Late Bronze Age, approximately 1400-1200 BC. Represents oldest Hebrew text and connects to Joshua 8:30-35 covenant ceremony where Joshua built altar and inscribed copy of Law of Moses.

## **ARAD**

### **Arad Standing Stones (Matzevot)**

Two standing stones found in Holy of Holies of Israelite temple at Tel Arad. Dated to 10th-8th centuries BC. Located beside incense altars. Represent either Yahweh and Asherah or symbolic divine presence. Temple dismantled during Hezekiah's or Josiah's reforms, consistent with centralization of worship in Jerusalem.

## **QUMRAN**

### **Dead Sea Scrolls**

Approximately 900 manuscripts discovered 1947-1956 in eleven caves near Qumran, dating from 3rd century BC to 1st century AD, including oldest known biblical manuscripts, sectarian documents, and apocryphal texts. These texts, belonging to the Jewish sect known as the Essenes, revolutionized the understanding of Second Temple Judaism.

## **HERODION**

### **Herod's Sarcophagus Fragments**

Red limestone sarcophagus fragments discovered at Herodion in 2007 by Ehud Netzer. Elaborately decorated with rosettes. Dated to early 1st century AD. Confirms Herodion as Herod the Great's burial site, as described by Josephus. Sarcophagus intentionally smashed in antiquity, possibly during First Jewish Revolt.

### **Pilate Ring**

Bronze ring discovered at Herodion in 1968-69, identified 2018. Bears inscription "Pilatus" in Greek letters. Dated to 1st century AD. Likely belonged to Pontius Pilate or someone in his administration. Simple copper alloy ring suggests official seal ring rather than personal jewelry.

## **JERUSALEM - CITY OF DAVID**

### **Siloam Inscription**

Hebrew inscription carved into wall of Hezekiah's Tunnel in City of David. Discovered 1880. Commemorates meeting of two teams of tunnelers digging from opposite ends. Dated to 701 BC during Hezekiah's preparations for Assyrian siege (2 Kings 20:20). Six lines of ancient Hebrew script. Now in Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

### **Bullae (Clay Seal Impressions)**

Multiple clay seal impressions discovered in City of David from late 7th-early 6th centuries BC which mention biblical figures: possibly Baruch ben Neriah (Jeremiah's scribe) and others from Jeremiah's time. Separately, a 2019 discovery bears inscription "Belonging to Nathan-Melech, Servant of the King" (2 Kings 23:11, during Josiah's reign), found in burned destruction layers from 586 BC Babylonian conquest.

### **High Priest's Bell**

Small golden bell discovered 2011 in drainage channel beneath Street of Steps in City of David. Dated to Second Temple period, likely before 70 AD. Possibly from high priest's garment hem (Exodus 28:33-34). Found with pottery and ritual items in layer from Roman destruction.

## **JERUSALEM - TEMPLE MOUNT**

### **Temple Mount Warning Inscription**

Greek inscription warning Gentiles not to enter Temple inner courts beyond the Court of Gentiles. Discovered 1871 near Temple Mount, first century AD. Text warns: "No foreigner is to enter within the balustrade and forecourt around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his subsequent death." Confirms Josephus's account.

### **Trumpeting Place Inscription**

Hebrew inscription reading "To the Trumpeting Place". Discovered 1968 at base of Temple Mount's southwestern corner. Stone fell from pinnacle during 70 AD destruction. Indicates location where priest blew shofar to announce Sabbath and festivals. Dates to Herodian period. Now in Israel Museum.

## **JERUSALEM**

### **Caiaphas Ossuary**

Limestone bone box discovered 1990 in family tomb in Jerusalem's Peace Forest. Bears Aramaic inscription "Joseph son of Caiaphas." Dated to first century AD. Possibly belonged to high priest Caiaphas who presided at Jesus' trial (Matthew 26:57). Contained bones of six individuals including 60-year-old male. Now in Israel Museum.

## **JORDAN**

### **Madaba Map**

Sixth-century Byzantine mosaic map discovered 1884 in Madaba, Jordan. The oldest cartographic depiction of the Holy Land, showing cities and biblical sites from Lebanon to Egypt. Most detailed section depicts Jerusalem, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Cardo. Provides invaluable evidence for biblical geography during the Byzantine period. Replicas viewable at various sites throughout Israel.

## A KEY ARCHITECT OF THE HOLY LAND

**Antonio Barluzzi (1884-1960)** was an Italian architect known as the "Architect of the Holy Land" for his extensive work designing churches throughout Israel. Commissioned primarily by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, Barluzzi created some of the most iconic pilgrimage churches in the region. His designs are characterized by their symbolic and evocative qualities—each church specifically designed to reflect the biblical event it commemorates. For example, the Church of All Nations at Gethsemane uses violet-blue alabaster windows to evoke the nighttime agony of Christ, while *Dominus Flevit* is shaped like a teardrop to symbolize Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. On this trip, you'll visit five of Barluzzi's works: the *Church of All Nations* at Gethsemane (1924), the *Church of the Beatitudes* (1937-38), the *Church of the Flagellation* on the Via Dolorosa (1927-29), *Dominus Flevit* on the Mount of Olives (1954-55), and his restoration of the *Chapel of the Crucifixion* within the *Church of the Holy Sepulchre* (1933-37).

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## KEY BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS

- Edward Robinson** (1794-1863) American biblical scholar who pioneered scientific biblical geography in Palestine (1838, 1852). He correctly identified hundreds of ancient sites by comparing biblical names with modern Arabic place names, establishing the foundation for biblical archaeology.
- Charles Warren** (1840-1927) British military engineer who excavated Jerusalem (1867-1870), particularly around the Temple Mount. Warren's Shaft in the City of David and numerous underground explorations revealed ancient Jerusalem's water systems and foundations, including massive stones of the Temple Mount's walls.
- William Albright** (1891-1971) American scholar who dominated 20th-century biblical archaeology. He developed pottery chronologies and advocated for the reliability of biblical accounts, particularly regarding the patriarchs and conquest period.

- John Garstang**  
(1876-1956) British archaeologist who excavated Jericho (1930-1936), claiming to find evidence of walls falling during Joshua's conquest around 1400 BC. His early-date conclusions were later challenged by Kathleen Kenyon.
- Kathleen Kenyon**  
(1906-1978) British archaeologist who re-excavated Jericho (1952-1958) and Jerusalem (1961-1967), particularly the City of David. She refined stratigraphic excavation methods but concluded Jericho was unoccupied during the traditional conquest period, supporting a late-date Exodus theory.
- Yigael Yadin**  
(1917-1984) Israeli archaeologist and military leader who excavated Hazor, Masada, and Megiddo. His dramatic Masada excavations (1963-1965) uncovered Herod's palaces and evidence of the Jewish Zealots' last stand, becoming a symbol of Israeli national identity and resistance.
- Benjamin Mazar**  
(1906-1995) Israeli archaeologist who excavated extensively around Jerusalem's Temple Mount (1968-1978), uncovering Herodian-period structures, streets, and artifacts.
- Ehud Netzer**  
(1934-2010) Israeli archaeologist and architect who became the leading expert on Herodian architecture. He excavated and reconstructed Herodium (discovering Herod's tomb in 2007), Masada, Jericho's palaces, and Caesarea.
- \*Bryant Wood**  
(b. 1936) American archaeologist who challenges Kathleen Kenyon's Jericho chronology. His re-analysis of Jericho pottery argues for a destruction date around 1400 BC, supporting the biblical conquest narrative and early-date Exodus position.
- Gabriel Barkay**  
(1944-2026) Israeli archaeologist who discovered the Silver Scrolls at Ketef Hinnom (1979), containing the oldest known biblical text (Priestly Blessing from Numbers 6). He also directed the Temple Mount Sifting Project.
- Ronny Reich**  
(b. 1947) Israeli archaeologist who co-excavated the City of David with Eli Shukron, making groundbreaking discoveries including the Pool of Siloam (2004) and the Pilgrimage Road connecting the pool to the Temple Mount.

- Israel Finkelstein** (b. 1949) Israeli archaeologist who developed the "Low Chronology" theory, challenging traditional dating of Israelite monarchy sites. Director of excavations at Megiddo, his minimalist approach questions the historicity of united monarchy under David and Solomon, sparking significant scholarly debate.
- Eli Shukron** (b. 1955) Israeli archaeologist who has excavated extensively in Jerusalem's City of David for over two decades. He discovered ancient drainage channels, the Pool of Siloam, and structures from the First Temple period, revealing Jerusalem's ancient water systems and infrastructure.
- Eilat Mazar** (1956-2021) A Israeli archaeologist who excavated the City of David, claiming to discover King David's palace and identifying structures from Solomon's time. Her work, often supporting biblical accounts, sparked controversy but provided significant finds including bullae (seal impressions) mentioning biblical figures.
- \*Orna Cohen** Israeli conservationist who gained recognition in 1986 for preserving the first-century "Jesus Boat" from the Sea of Galilee. She has worked as conservator on dozens of excavations including the palace at Tel Hazor, and ABR's Shiloh excavations.
- \*Scott Stripling** (b. 1970) American archaeologist and director of excavations at Shiloh (2017-present) with ABR. He co-directed excavations at Khirbet el-Maqatir (proposed biblical Ai) and discovered the "curse tablet" at Mount Ebal (2022), containing early Hebrew script that could predate previously known examples.

\* Indicates affiliation with Associates for Biblical Research (ABR), a Christian apologetics ministry demonstrating the Bible's historical reliability through archaeology. BICS maintains a longstanding relationship with ABR.



Berkshire Institute  
for Christian Studies

# ***Guide to Biblical Sites & Personal Notes***

**BIBLE LANDS**  
*Travel Guide*

"Ask for the ancient paths; ask where the good way is,  
and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah 6:16





## 1 Joppa/Jaffa (“Beautiful”)

Originally built on a rocky ledge overlooking the Mediterranean, Joppa served as an important seaport in ancient times. It was allotted to the Tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:46) and was significant in that it was the only natural harbor between Egypt and Acco. It was the site of substantial shipping in both Old and New Testament times. Cedar logs from Lebanon were floated from Tyre and Sidon to Joppa and then transported over land to Jerusalem for use in Solomon’s Temple (2 Chron. 2:16). In the Old Testament, Joppa was where Jonah sailed from while fleeing God’s command to go to Nineveh (Jonah 1:3). In the New Testament, Joppa was the location where Peter raised Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead (Acts 9:36-42), and where he received the vision of the clean and unclean animals at the home of Simon the Tanner (Acts 10:9-16).

## 2 Caesarea Maritima (*Caesarea by the Sea*)

**Site Report:** *Elizabeth Ortale*

Located on the coast, the port city of Caesarea was founded by Herod the Great in 22 BC (named after Caesar Augustus) and was the seat of the Roman government in Israel until the Byzantine era. It was the home of the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate, whose name was discovered on an inscription there, validating the truthfulness of Scripture through extra-biblical evidence. In the New Testament, Caesarea was significant in that it was the place where Philip and his

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four daughters preached/prophesied and later settled (Acts 8:40; 21:8-9), where the first Gentile convert, Cornelius, and his household received the Gospel and where the “Gentile Pentecost” took place (Acts 10), where God struck down Herod Agrippa I (AD 43) in the Theater for accepting the worship of men (Acts 12:19-24), where Paul visited on three occasions on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 9:30; 18:22; 21:8-16), and where he spent two years in prison, making his defense in the “Place of Hearing” before Felix, Festus, and King Herod Agrippa II before appealing to Caesar in Rome (Acts 23:23-27:2). Caesarea is the most frequented of the National Park sites in Israel, with over 800,000 visitors per year.

**3** **Mt. Carmel (“Vineyard of God”)** **Site Report: Devin Gasque**

Part of a mountain range 13 miles long extending to the Mediterranean Sea, Mount Carmel enjoys a lush climate year-round. From antiquity, its heights were home to altars of foreign gods, most famously for the worship of Baal. Mount Carmel was often a point of comparison in the Old Testament, as in Song of Songs 7:5 (the majesty of a bride’s head) and Isaiah 35:2 (a symbol of beauty, fruitfulness, and majesty). In Isaiah 33:9, Amos 1:2, and Nahum 1:4, it is prophesied to wither as an indication of God’s judgment on the land. However, Mount Carmel is best known for the great contest between Elijah and the Prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:19-26. Here, Yahweh revealed Himself as the true God, consuming the sacrifice by fire from Heaven (1 Kings 18:38-39). The Catholic Monastery on Mt.

Carmel (*Muhraqa*) can be traced back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and is said to be built over Elijah's Grotto.

#### 4 Megiddo (*"Place of Troops"*)

Situated on the southern end of the Jezreel Valley, Megiddo guarded a strategic pass to Mt. Carmel and today boasts some twenty-five levels of occupation throughout its history. Here Joshua defeated the king of Megiddo in his conquest of Canaan (Joshua 12:7, 21). It was later given to the tribe of Manasseh, who failed at driving the Canaanites out (Judges 1:27). During the time of Solomon, Megiddo was fortified as an essential defense post, as evidenced in the six-chambered "Solomonic Gate" (1 Kings 9:15; 10:26) and was later the site where Josiah, the last good king of Judah, was killed in 609 BC by Pharaoh Neco as he attempted to prevent the Egyptian army from marching through the land (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chronicles 35:20-24). In addition to a remarkable grain silo, so-called "Solomon's Stables" (mangers) were discovered here and attributed to the reign of Jeroboam. It is believed that nearly 500 horses were housed in these stables, recalling the sin of trusting in military might rather than in God (Psalm 20:7). Megiddo boasts an impressive water tunnel from the time of Ahab and is understood as the location of the last great gathering of the armies of evil before the return of Christ at Armageddon (Revelation 16:13-16), which in Hebrew means *Hill of Megiddo* (*Har-Megiddon*).



## Magdala (“Tower”)

Site Report: *Maddy Johnston*

Situated on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, Magdala became famous as the home of Mary Magdalene (Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2; John 20:1,18). Scripture records that Jesus and His disciples came here after feeding the 4,000 (Matthew 15:39). Beyond a fishing and boat-building village, Magdala is also believed to have been a place where fish was salted (from its alternate Greek name *Tarichaea* meaning salted fish). Likely, the boy’s fish given to Jesus for feeding the 5,000 were preserved here at Magdala (John 6:1-14). By the mid-first century, Magdala had a thriving population of approximately 30,000. Excavations in 2008 by the Franciscans uncovered several small pools (possibly used to salt fish), an ancient harbor, a first-century synagogue where Jesus most certainly taught (Matthew 4:23, Luke 4:44), and the “Magdala Stone,” which is perhaps the earliest known artistic rendering of the Second Temple. At the time of the Jewish Revolt (AD 66-70), Magdala served as the base for the Zealots who opposed Roman rule. In 1986, not far from Magdala, a fishing vessel from the time of Christ was discovered in the silt and named, “*The Jesus Boat*.”



## Mt. Arbel (“House of God’s Ambush”)

Mt. Arbel is situated near the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and rises 1,300 feet above the surrounding area. According to the historian Josephus, Mt. Arbel was where the Romans squelched the

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last of the Hasmonean rebels who sought refuge in its cliffs (“*Little Masada*”). Josephus records the following:

“Now these caves were in the precipice of craggy mountains, and could not be come at from any side, since they had only some winding pathways, very narrow, by which they got up to them; but the rock that lay on their front had beneath it valleys of a vast depth, and of almost a perpendicular declivity; insomuch that the King (Herod the Great) was doubtful for a long time what to do, by reason of a kind of impossibility there was of attacking the place. Yet did he at length make use of a contrivance that was subject to the utmost hazard; for he let down the most hardy of his men in chests, and set them at the mouths of the dens. Now these men slew the robbers and their families, and when they made resistance, they sent in fire upon them and burned them, and as Herod was desirous of saving some of them, he had proclamation made, that they should come and deliver themselves up to him; but not one of them came willingly to him; and of those who were compelled to come, many preferred death to captivity. And here a certain old man, the father of seven children, whose children, together with their mother, desired him to give them leave to go out, upon the assurance and right hand that was offered them, slew them after the following manner – He ordered every one of them to go out, while he stood himself at the cave’s mouth, and slew that son of his who perpetually went out. Herod was near enough to see this sight, and his bowels of compassion were moved at it, and he stretched out his right hand to the old man, and besought him to spare his children; yet he did not relent at all upon what he said, but over and above reproached Herod on the lowness of his descent, and slew his wife as well as his children, and when he had thrown their dead bodies down the precipice, he at last threw himself down after them. By this means Herod subdued these caves and the robbers that were in them. He then left there a part of his army, as many as he thought sufficient to prevent any sedition...and returned to Samaria.” (Josephus, *War of the Jews*, 446)

The only biblical reference to Mt. Arbel is Hosea 10:14, which references the battle between the Israelites and Assyrians in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC.



### **Valley of the Doves** (Alternately, *Valley of the Winds*)

The Valley of the Doves is a 22-mile road from Nazareth to the Sea of Galilee. No doubt Jesus and His disciples walked this ancient path-way on many occasions (Matt. 4:13; Luke 4:31; John 2:12).



### **Tiberias**

Located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, Tiberias was named after Tiberius Caesar by Herod Antipas in AD 17-20 and was made the capital of his tetrarchy. Known for its therapeutic hot springs, Tiberias became a popular resort for the Romans. Although the Gospels do not record Jesus ever visiting Tiberias, it may be assumed that many of its inhabitants journeyed across the Sea of Galilee to seek healing and to witness the miracles of Jesus (John 6:1; 21:1). In the year AD 200, the *Mishnah* (the compilation of the oral law) and later the *Talmud* (the Rabbinic interpretation of the law) were completed here in Tiberias.



### **Sea of Galilee** (“Province”)

Referred to in the Bible as the Sea of Kinnereth (Numbers 34:11, Deuteronomy 3:17, Joshua 13:27), the Lake of Gennesaret (Greek

– *Harp*; Luke 5:1), and the Sea of Tiberius (John 21:1), the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:18) is a fresh water lake that is approximately 13 miles long, 7 miles wide, and boasts a maximum depth of 160 feet. At 700 feet below sea level, the Sea of Galilee is the world’s lowest freshwater lake. Home to over 18 species of aquatic life, the Sea of Galilee was the source of income for many in the region as fish were caught, salted, and sold here. While the Sea of Galilee boasted some 16 bustling ports and harbors in ancient times, today, it is home to only four. This body of water played a significant role in at least two miracles of Jesus; when He calmed the storm in the boat (Matthew 8:23-27) and when He walked on water (Matthew 14:22-33). In addition, Jesus warned His listeners that it is better to have a millstone tied around one’s neck and thrown into the sea than to cause a child to sin (Matthew 18:1-6). Given its proximity to Capernaum, it is likely that the Sea of Galilee was the body of water (sea) that Jesus was referencing.

**10** **Kfar Haruv** (“*Village of the Carob*”)

Located on cliffs over 1,000 feet above the Sea of Galilee, Kfar Haruv is a kibbutz established on the Golan Heights in 1973 with a population of roughly 400 people. BICS enjoys an easterly overview of the Sea of Galilee from this beautiful vantage point.

**11** **Kursi** (“*Chair*”)

**Site Report:** *Will Middleton*

Kursi is located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee in the

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Gentile land of the Gadarenes/Gerasenes. With its steep hills that descend into the lake nearby, Kursi is traditionally identified as the place where Jesus cast the demons into a herd of pigs, thus freeing the man from his satanic bondage (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 8:26-37).



## **Bethsaida et Tell** (“*House of Fishing*”)

**Site Report:** *Paige Mosher*

Located east of the upper Jordan River and north of the Sea of Galilee, Bethsaida was rebuilt during the reign of Philip the Tetrarch and renamed *Julius* after the daughter of Augustus Caesar. Bethsaida was the hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (John 1:44) and was near the location where Jesus healed a blind man (Mark 8:22-26) and fed the five thousand (Luke 9:10-17). Bethsaida was included in the cursing of three cities by Jesus (with Chorazin and Capernaum) because it refused to repent despite the miracles He performed there (Matthew 11:20-22). In the Old Testament, Bethsaida is said to have been an important city in the kingdom of Geshur, and the home of David’s wife, Ma’acah (Michal the mother of Absalom—cf. 1 Chronicles 3:3). Remnants of this ancient city can be seen in a wall system and a stele depicting a god with a bull’s head (believed to be the moon god Sin) found near the massive gate complex. Bethsaida was destroyed by the Assyrians in 732 BC and later rebuilt and occupied through the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Later finds, such as the *Fisherman’s House* and

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the *Winemaker's House*, were uncovered from the time of Jesus. An alternate site (*el Araj*) closer to the Sea of Galilee has recently been discovered from the 1<sup>st</sup> century and is currently undergoing excavations.

### **13** Mt. of Beatitudes (*"Mountain of Happiness/Blessedness"*)

Near the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of Beatitudes is believed to be where Jesus delivered the famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-13). Because of its natural amphitheater, which slopes gently toward Galilee's shore, Jesus would have been able to speak comfortably to thousands without artificial amplification.

### **14** Tabgha (*"The Seven Springs"*)

Tabgha is located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee at the foot of the Mt. of Beatitudes. Because of its seven hot springs, which flowed into the lake here, the shores of Tabgha became one of the essential fishing sites on the Sea of Galilee. It is said to be where Jesus called His disciples to follow Him and become "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:18-24; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11). Most famously, however, it is known as the place where Jesus appeared to His disciples after the Resurrection and where He reinstated Peter after his denial (John 21:1-24), commemorated at the Church of the Primacy of Peter. Inside this small chapel is said to be the rock where Jesus and His disciples enjoyed breakfast. Outside are ancient steps believed

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to be in use at the time of Jesus. The Roman Catholic Church of the Multiplication is also situated nearby as a possible location of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21).



**15 Capernaum** (“*Village of Nahum*”) **Site Report: Caleb Krotz**

Perhaps the most important town during the time of Christ, Capernaum was located on the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee, where its prosperous fishing industry caused it to flourish. At the time of Jesus, it boasted a 2,500-foot paved promenade supported by an 8-foot seawall. Here vessels could unload cargo from piers that extended approximately 100 feet onto the lake. In addition, the Via Maris (International Highway from Mesopotamia to Egypt) passed by Capernaum, allowing control of this vital trade route. That Capernaum was a prominent town is evidenced in the presence of a Roman centurion and detachment of soldiers (Matthew 8:5-9), a customs station/toll booth (Matthew 9:9), and a high official of the king (John 4:46). Jesus made Capernaum His hometown after His rejection at Nazareth (Matthew 4:13-16). It was here that He performed many miracles, such as the healing of the man with unclean spirits in the synagogue (Mark 1:21-26), the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:30-31), the healing of the Centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13), the healing of the paralytic man (Mark 2:1-13), the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead and the healing of the bleeding woman (Mark 5:22-43), the healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54), the healing of two blind men and a demoniac (Luke 11:14-

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26) as well as countless others (Matthew 8:16-17; 9:35-36). Christ performed more miracles in Capernaum than in any other city, yet its inhabitants refused to believe (Matthew 11:23-24). Capernaum is near where the fishermen Peter, Andrew, James, and John were called to follow Christ (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-21) and where Matthew Levi was called from his tax collector office to be a disciple of Christ. In the synagogue, Jesus famously declared Himself to be the “Bread of Life” (John 6:24-71). Of interest is the discovery by Italian archaeologists in 1968 of a modest dwelling dating to the first century revealing fishhooks and graffiti references to “Peter.” This structure, believed to be the home of St. Peter (*sacra insula*), was found buried within the remains of an octagonal Byzantine church containing ancient writings in the plaster walls mentioning Jesus as “Lord” and “Christ” in Aramaic, Greek, Syriac, and Latin.

### **16 Chorazin** (“*Secret/Mystery*”)

Located approximately 2 miles north of Capernaum, Chorazin was excavated by British archaeologist Jacob Ory in 1926. Made popular by its cursing of Jesus (Mt. 11:21), Chorazin was considered part of the “Gospel Triangle,” where Jesus performed most of His miracles. Of note here is a synagogue from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century which showcases a “Seat of Moses” unearthed by archaeologists in 1926 (Mt. 23:1-3).

### **17 Hazor** (“*Enclosure*”)

**Site Report: Owen Brown**

Located on a strategic hill along the International Highway, Hazor

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served as Israel's first line of defense from enemies attacking from the north. During the Period of the Conquest, Joshua captured the city from King Jabin and destroyed it by fire (Joshua 11:1-13). Later, during the period of the Judges, Israel defeated the king of Hazor (also with the title-name *Jabin*) under the leadership of Deborah and Barak (Judges 4-5). Solomon rebuilt Hazor during the United Kingdom, and it served once again as a northern defense post for the kingdom. Many years later, the inhabitants of Hazor were taken into captivity by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, due to God's judgment (2 Kings 15:29).



### Tel Dan (“Judge”)

**Site Report:** *Addie Blackstone*

The northernmost boundary-city of Israel in the Old Testament (“from Dan to Beersheba”), Dan boasts a rich history starting with Abraham (“*Abrahamic Gate*”) as he traveled through here from Hebron to rescue his nephew, Lot, who had been captured at Sodom (Genesis 14:13-16). Known initially as *Laish*, this strategic city was first settled by the Sidonians but was later captured by the Israelites. The Book of Judges notes that the tribe of Dan was not satisfied with its allotment near Judah and relocated here (Judges 18). Tragically, Israel succumbed to idol worship as Jeroboam I, the first king of the northern kingdom, set up a golden calf both in Dan and in Bethel to prevent the people from going to Jerusalem to worship (1 Kings 12:26-33). In 1993–1994, archaeologists discovered a stele in the

city gate inscribed with the words, “House of David” – which marks the first time David is mentioned outside the biblical text. It is possible that the area surrounding Dan, with its rich wildlife and flowing streams, inspired the writing of Psalm 42.

- **The City Gate**

Tel Dan is a wonderful example of an ancient city gate structure. In antiquity, city gates were often centers for debate and commerce and were sometimes named for the items traded or sold there (i.e., Fish Gate, Sheep Gate). Because the elders often carried out important business there, to “sit at the gate” was to attain a certain social status. Elders would administer justice there (Deut. 21:19; Josh. 20:4; Ruth 4:1), and its king would meet with his subjects at the city gate (2 Sam. 19:8; 1 Kings 22:10). Further, priests and prophets would deliver discourses and prophecies at the gate of the city in the hope of persuading the people to obey God (Neh. 8:1; Jer. 17:19-20; 36:10). In the New Testament, Jesus healed a paralytic near the Sheep Gate of Jerusalem (John 5:2-9), and prayer (Acts 16:13) and burial (Luke 7:12; Heb. 13:12) are typically seen as occurring outside the city gate. In Bible times, city gates often consisted of wooden double doors attached to posts that turned in large stone sockets (Judges 16:3). These gates would be closed at night and barred with heavy beams or iron rods (1 Kings 4:13). Because the gate complex was vulnerable to attack, they would often have either steps or a sharp right-angle turn to make it easier to defend. Typically, the gate complex consisted of double towers with two, four, or six rooms on either side

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of its passage into the city that, among other things, contained soldiers standing watch (i.e. Megiddo). Throughout Scripture, the city gate was a symbol of power (Matt.16:18) and safety (Is. 28:6), and to “possess the gate” was to seize the whole city (Gen. 24:60). God promised Abraham that his descendants would one day possess the gates of his enemies (Genesis 22:17).

- **Almond Tree**

Counted among the most beautiful of Israel, the almond tree is the first to blossom and the last to bear fruit. Its nectar produces a dangerous poison (*amygdalin*) which bees are mysteriously drawn to but are not harmed by. The Hebrew word for almond is *shaked*, which means “to watch.” The almond bud is used symbolically in the Bible to represent God’s watchfulness over His people and an emblem of His faithfulness (Exodus 25, Numbers 17:8; Jeremiah 1:11-12; 31:28).

### **19 Mount Hermon** (“*Mountain of the Chief*”)

With snow-covered peaks year-round, Mount Hermon rises to an impressive height of over 9,000 feet above sea level. In addition to its snowmelt, three principal sources converge at Mt. Hermon (the waters of *Hasbani*, *Banias*, and *Dan*) to supply the Jordan River with an abundance of valuable fresh water. In Biblical times this mountain was referred to as *Ba’al Hermon*, *Senir*, *Sirion*, *Sion*, and later by Josephus as *Mt. Lebanon*. In addition, its majestic features and beauty were referenced by both Solomon (Song of Songs 4:8) and by

the Psalmist (Psalm 133:3). Given the proximity of its location to the narrative, Mount Hermon is the likely candidate for the place where Jesus was transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1–9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28–36).

20

**Caesarea Philippi** (*Banias*)      **Site Report:** *Jason Merchant*

Originally called *Panion* or *Panias* after the Greek nature god Pan, the pagan city of Caesarea was renamed by Herod the Great's son, Philip, to honor the Emperor of Rome and made the capital of his tetrarchy. In the New Testament, Caesarea Philippi marked the northernmost boundary of Jesus' ministry and the region where Peter famously professed Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21). In addition to remnants of the Temple of Pan ("*Gates of Hades*") and various shrines, palatial ruins were discovered here attributed to Agrippa II, the king who admitted to Paul in Caesarea Maritima, "*You almost persuaded me to become a Christian*" (Acts 26:28).

21

**Quneitra Overlook** ("*Arched Bridge*")

From high atop the Golan Heights, BICS travelers will view the abandoned Syrian village of Quneitra. As a buffer zone between Israel and Syria since 1974, the city is under the control of the United Nations.

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22

### **Cana** (“Place of Reeds”)

At the time of Jesus, Cana was the home of Nathaniel (John 21:2) and, most famously, the place where Jesus performed His first miracle of turning water to wine at the wedding feast (John 2:1-11). Jesus healed the Nobleman’s dying son from Cana in Capernaum because of his great faith (John 4:46-54).

23

### **Nazareth** (Hebrew: *netzer* - “Branch/Shoot”)

Located on a ridge overlooking the Jezreel Valley, Nazareth was a small village at the time of Christ and is not mentioned in the Old Testament. Most famously, it is known for the place the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would be the mother of Jesus. After the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus returned to Nazareth, where Jesus’ boyhood and young manhood were spent growing “in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). When told that Philip had found the One spoken of by Moses and the prophets - Jesus of Nazareth - Nathaniel surprisingly asked, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (John 1:46).

- **Nazareth Village**

Established in the year 2000, this open-air museum recreates the first-century village of Nazareth. Replete with olive trees, terraces, an ancient wine press, replicas of first-century houses, a synagogue, mikveh, an olive press, and a carpenter’s shop, the Naza-

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reth Village reenacts daily life at the time of Jesus. Here, the BICS travelers will enjoy a special “biblical lunch.”

- **St. Gabriel’s Church**

Built during the Crusades, St. Gabriel’s Church is a Greek Orthodox church commemorating the site where the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would become the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-33). The church sits atop the spring, feeding *Mary’s Well* 150 yards away.

- **The Church of the Annunciation**

Also known as the *Basilica of the Annunciation*, the Church of the Annunciation is said to be built over the childhood home of Mary, where she received word that she would become the mother of Jesus. The *Grotto of the Annunciation*, venerated by the Roman Catholic Church, is believed to be the cave where Mary and her parents lived. It was originally built by Constantine’s mother, Helena, along with the *Church of the Nativity* and the *Church of the Holy Sepulchre* in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, to commemorate important events in Jesus’ life.

- **Tomb of the Just One**

Located under the Sisters of Nazareth convent, this little-known site was first discovered in 1884 and is thought to be where the Holy Family settled and lived. This first-century house is located nearby a tomb that the Crusaders identified as the “Just One of Nazareth,” presumably the burial place of Joseph (cf. Matthew 1:18).

- **Nazareth Synagogue**

Built by the Crusaders in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this synagogue is said to stand over the site of the 1st-century building where Jesus learned as a boy. Later, Jesus preached His first recorded sermon here, but the people grew angry and attempted to throw Him from a cliff (Luke 4:16-30). The Synagogue is currently under the management of the Melkite Greek Catholics.

- **Mt. Precipice**

Also known as the *Mount of Precipitation*, the *Mount of the Leap of the Lord*, and *Mount Kedumim*, Mount Precipice is located along the edge of the Jezreel Valley. It is believed to be where the angry mob tried to kill Jesus after He declared Himself to be the Messiah in the synagogue (Luke 4:29-30). From this vantage point, a view of Mt. Tabor (Deborah and Barak – Judges 4) is possible, as well as the areas of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7-25) and Shunem (2 Kings 4:8-37).

 **Mt. Tabor** (“Height”)

Located conspicuously at the center of the Jezreel Valley, Mount Tabor rises in isolation to a height of 1,850 feet near where the International Highway takes its northern turn toward the Sea of Galilee. Mount Tabor held biblical significance in that it was allotted as a unique city for the Levites (1 Chronicles 6:77) and was where Deborah and Barak gathered the Israelites to fight against the army of Jabin (Judges 4:6, 12-16). Unfortunately, a misinterpretation of

Matthew 17:1 has caused Mt. Tabor to be incorrectly identified as the place where Jesus was transfigured. Because some have translated, “*Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves*” as, “*Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up on a high mountain which was apart*” (KJV), Mt. Tabor has been selected because it is a mountain that stands conspicuously “alone” in the Jezreel Valley. While there is a reason for debate (Matt. 17:1, 14), some scholars believe that the Mt. of Transfiguration should more accurately be associated with Mt. Hermon in the north.

### **Jezreel Valley** (“*God Sows*”)

A crossroads between the two major routes east/west and north/south (from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River Valley and from the Galilee to Judean Hill Country), the Jezreel Valley was the location of many battles. It is believed that the armies of Satan will gather here to wage war against the Lord in the last days. After viewing the area, both Napoleon Bonaparte of France (1800) and Lord Kitchener of Great Britain (1874) agreed that the Jezreel Valley was among the world's greatest and most strategic battlefields.

### **Harod Spring** (“*Terror*”)

Located at the foot of Mount Gilboa, the *Spring of Harod* (“*Ein Harod*”) is believed to be the place where Gideon selected his 300 men

to fight against the Midianites based upon how they drank water from the stream (Judges 7:1-25).

27

**Beth Shean** (“*House of Security*”) **Site Report: Samuel Brittin**

Also known as Scythopolis, Beth Shean is located at the junction of the Jezreel Valley and the Jordan River Valley. Due to its lush climate, Beth Shean has been occupied for thousands of years and boasts at least 18 different occupation levels. Joshua attempted to capture Beth Shean from the Philistines. Still, their iron chariots proved too much to overcome (Joshua 17:16). After King Saul lost his life in the battle on Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31:1-6), the Philistines “put his armor in the temple of Ashtoreth and hung his body on the wall of Beth-shan” (1 Samuel 31:10). Under Solomon, the Israelites eventually gained control of Beth Shean and established it as a garrison city (1 Kings 4:12). Once the leading city of the Decapolis, archaeologists have discovered evidence of an Egyptian Governor’s house (14<sup>th</sup> century BC), a Philistine Temple of Dagon (1 Chronicles), a temple dedicated to Ashtoreth (1 Samuel), in addition to a spectacular Greco-Roman city replete with a theater, bathhouse, and temple dedicated to Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. A massive earthquake in AD 749 destroyed the city.

28

**Samaria/Sebaste** (“*Lookout*”/ “*Augustus*”)

Built in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC by King Omri, Samaria was the last capital

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of the northern Kingdom of Israel. Located on a hill, Samaria became an ideal location to defend itself from attack (hence the name “*look-out*”). It was the place where King Ahab built a temple for his Phoenician bride Jezebel to worship Baal (1 Kings 16:32), and also his ivory palace (1 Kings 22:39). It is where God delivered Samaria from an attack by the King of Aram (1 Kings 20:1-21), and the place where the dogs licked up King Ahab’s blood after he was killed, fulfilling what was prophesied about him in 1 Kings 22:1-40. It is also the location where King Ahaziah of Israel fell through the lattice of his palace’s upper chamber and eventually died (2 Kings 1:2-17), where Elisha led the blinded Aramean army to receive their sight (2 Kings 6:8-23), and where he predicted relief of the famine (2 Kings 6:24-7:20). God warned of Samaria’s destruction through His prophets (Hosea 7:1; 8:5-6; 10:5-7; Amos 3:12; 4:1; 6:1; Micah 1:1, 5-7), which was ultimately fulfilled when the Assyrians destroyed it in 721 BC (2 Kings 17:3-16). Later, Herod the Great executed two sons (Alexander and Aristobulus) by strangulation here for insubordination. Tradition also maintains that John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod Antipas and buried here after being held at Machaerus in Jordan (Matthew 14:10). Of note are the remains of a Hellenistic Tower, the ruins of the Temple of Augustus, a Roman Theater, and a Roman street once lined with 600 columns.

29

### **Shechem/Nablus/Tel Balata (“Shoulder”)**

Shechem was built on the slopes of Mount Ebal, a long-time strate-

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gic city and the first capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. God appeared to Abraham here and announced to him that this was the land He would give to his descendants (Genesis 12:6). In response, Abraham built the first altar to the Lord at Shechem (Genesis 12:7). Jacob also built an altar to the Lord here upon his return from Mesopotamia (Genesis 33:18-20), and where, according to tradition, he dug a deep well (John 4:12). Here vengeance is taken by Simeon and Levi on the men of Shechem for the rape of their sister Dinah (Genesis 34). Joseph visited Shechem before his brothers sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:12-36), and it is also believed to be the location where he was laid to rest after his death in Egypt (Joshua 24:32). At the end of his life, Joshua gathered the Twelve Tribes of Israel at Shechem and left them with the famous charge: *“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15). Later, during the time of the Divided Kingdom, Rehoboam went to Shechem to be crowned king over all Israel (1 Kings 12:1) but ruled only Judah. Jesus famously spoke with a Samaritan woman at the well here in Sychar and offered to quench her thirst with water from a well *“that will spring up to eternal life”* (John 4:14).

- **Tel Balata** (*“Mound of the Acorn”*)

Tel Balata is situated in a mountain pass between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal and boasts a rich archaeological history, including a Middle Bronze wall and gate from the time of Abraham, remains of the temple of Baal Berith (Judges 9), and the *“Joshua Stone”*

(Joshua 24:25-28). Here BICS remembers the covenant of the Blessings and Curses instituted by Joshua with Israel.

- **30 Mt. Ebal** (“Bare”) and **31 Mt. Gerizim** (“Separate / Cut Off”) Located north of Shechem, Mount Ebal was where Moses instructed the Israelites to observe a religious ceremony once they crossed into the Promised Land (Deut. 27:4-5). Later, under the leadership of Joshua, that ceremony was enacted which included building an altar (Joshua 8:30), sacrificing offerings to the Lord (v. 31), writing the law of Moses on stones (v. 32), and reading the law to the assembly (vv. 33-35). When Joshua read the blessings of the law, the six tribes of Israel on Mount Gerizim (Deut. 27:12) responded with “Amen”; when he read the curses of the law, the six tribes of Israel on Mount Ebal (Deut. 27:13) responded with “Amen.” Thus, Mount Ebal became known as the *Mount of Cursing*. During the time of Alexander the Great, the Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim which was later destroyed. However, the Samaritans continued to worship on that mountain until the time of Christ, as evidenced in Jesus’ interaction with the woman at the well (John 4:20-21).

### **32 Shiloh** (“Peace/Tranquility”)

Located between Bethel and Shechem, Shiloh was where Joshua divided the tribal allotments to the fledgling Hebrew nation (Joshua 14). Later, Shiloh served as the religious center before the United Kingdom. It was the site of the first permanent location of the Tab-

ernacle (Joshua 18:1) and thus the central place of worship for the Israelites during the period of the Judges (Judges 18:31). It was at Shiloh that Hannah prayed for a son (1 Samuel 1:3, 11) and where Samuel eventually performed his duties as priest and prophet (1 Samuel 1:9; 2:18-21; 3:1-21). During a battle with the Philistines, the Ark of the Covenant was captured but never returned there (2 Samuel 6:2-17), a sign that God had forsaken Shiloh as the center of His worship (Psalm 78:60).



**Jericho** (“Fragrant,” alt. “Moon,” Hebrew: “City of Palms”)

**Site Report: Jeremiah Smith**

Said to be among the oldest inhabited cities in the world, Jericho is located at the northern end of the Dead Sea and is an oasis amid a dry and hot region. Old Testament Jericho is identified as *Tel es-Sultan* and is where Rahab hid the spies (Joshua 2) and where the Israelites eventually marched around the city before capturing it (Joshua 6). During the Period of the Judges, Jericho was the location of the palace of Eglon, the king of Moab who oppressed Israel but who was later killed by Ehud (Judges 3:12-30). During the days of Elijah and Elisha, Jericho was a community of prophets (2 Kings 2:5). There, with God’s help, Elisha purified the bad water of the spring so the people could drink (2 Kings 2:19-22). New Testament Jericho was the location of Herod the Great’s winter palace and later the place where he died. In addition, it is said to be near the area where

Jesus was tempted (Matthew 4:1-11) and where blind Bartimaeus was healed (Mark 10:46-52). NT Jericho was the site of Zacchaeus' conversion (Luke 19:1-10) and where pilgrims traveled their last day's journey to Jerusalem (Songs of Ascent - Psalm 121). The road between Jericho and Jerusalem is likely the setting of Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), as some believe Jericho to have been a residence-city for priests serving in the Temple.

- **Judean Date Palm** (*Phoenix Dactylifera*)

Jericho, the City of Palms, was well-known in ancient times for its sweet and succulent dates. Historically, the date palm is recognized as a symbol of Judean fertility but thrived as far north as the Sea of Galilee and the Hula Valley region. Its fruit has long been considered a staple food and its branches were treasured as a source of shade and shelter from the hot Judean climate. In addition, the Hebrew people used it for medicinal purposes as they believed it to cure disease and promote longevity. The date palm appeared on the Hebrew shekel and is referenced several times in the Old Testament (Psalm 92; Song of Solomon 5:11; 7:7-8). King David named his daughter Tamar after the date palm to testify to her beauty and significance (2 Samuel 13). In 2005, a seed (affectionately called "*Methuselah*") was found among a cache in Herod's Palace at Masada (dating between 155 BC and 64 AD) and was planted at *Kibbutz Ketura* in southern Israel. Currently, "*Methuselah*" is the oldest verified human-assisted germinated seed and stands over four feet tall.

### **34** Jordan River/Baptismal Site

Spanning a meandering distance of 223 miles (but only 124 miles “as the crow flies”), the headwaters of the Jordan River begin at the base of Mount Hermon in northern Israel and flow into the Sea of Galilee. Meaning *descending from Dan*, the Jordan River gradually drops in elevation until it reaches its lowest point at the Dead Sea, 1,300 feet below sea level. The banks of the Jordan River provide the functional border between the West Bank of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Jordan River of today is merely a shadow of her former self in Biblical times with Israel regulating its flow from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee. It is perhaps most famous among Christians as the site where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:13-17). Identified by Josephus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century as the Bethany Beyond the Jordan of the Bible (John 1:28), subsequent excavations have verified the integrity of the site in Jordan as a result of the Byzantine and Crusader Church ruins found there. Israel constructed their own site on the western bank of the river to commemorate this important event. It remains as the third holiest site in Christendom after the Church of the Nativity and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In addition to being the place where Jesus was baptized, it is said to be the location where the Israelites crossed into the Promised Land (Joshua 3), where the prophet Elijah was translated to Heaven by a whirlwind and a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:9-14), and where Elisha made the axe head float (2 Kings 6:1-7).

## 35 Dead Sea

Roughly 45 miles long and 11 miles wide, the Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth at an elevation of 1,350 feet below sea level. At the northern end, its depths reach a staggering 1,200 additional feet below the surface, the height of the Empire State building. With over 33% of its makeup consisting of salt and minerals (compared to 3-4% for most oceans), the Dead Sea was a valuable resource for potash, bromine, magnesium chloride, and other minerals, but was worthless as a source of drinking water. Besides its lack of aquatic life, it was said to be dead because of the absence of any natural outlets. The Dead Sea was known in the Bible as the *Salt Sea* (Numbers 34:3,12), the *Eastern Sea* (Joel 2:20), and simply, *The Sea* (Ezekiel 47:8). The first-century historian Josephus refers to the Dead Sea as Lake Asphaltitus. During the period of the Exodus, the Dead Sea was established by God as the eastern border of Israel's land (Numbers 34:3,12). David likely crossed the Dead Sea when he took his family to Moab to flee from King Saul (1 Samuel 22:3-5). The combined armies of Ammon, Moab, and Edom crossed the Dead Sea and attempted a surprise attack on King Jehoshaphat at Jerusalem, but God thwarted their efforts (2 Chronicles 20). The Dead Sea has been compared to those who trust in human partnerships rather than on reliance on God and to a bush abiding near "*the parched places in the desert - in a salt land where no one lives*" (Jeremiah 17:6).



## Arad (“Fugitive”)

**Site Report:** *Audia Feagler*

Significant for its location, which controlled the southern road from Judah to Edom, Arad was inhabited by the Canaanites and Israelites throughout its long history. During the period of the Exodus, the King of Arad attacked the Israelites near the end of their wilderness wanderings (Numbers 21:1-3) but was defeated by Moses and the Hebrews. During the Period of the Conquest, the descendants of Jethro (the Kenites) relocated from Jericho to Arad (Judges 1:16). Arad was also an essential link for trade to the south and supplied the Egyptians with tar and other vital minerals for embalming and waterproofing taken from the Dead Sea region. Most significantly, Arad is known for its intact temple, replicating the much larger temple in Jerusalem. Equipped with a sacrificial altar and a Holy of Holies, it is believed that this unsanctioned temple was covered over sometime during the reforms of kings Asa (1 Kings 15; 2 Chronicles 14-16), Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:41-50; 2 Chronicles 17-20), Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32), or Josiah (2 Kings 22–23:30; 2 Chronicles 34–35). Sadly, Arad stands today as an example of religious syncretism (the combined worship of Yahweh with a pagan deity) - a practice that plagued God’s people throughout their history.

- **Acacia Tree**

The Acacia tree is typically found in the desert and sports an umbrella-like canopy that provides crucial shade from the oppressive heat of the wilderness. In addition, its deep roots access sub-

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terranean water sources that other plants cannot reach. Besides its usefulness to weary travelers, the Acacia Tree is said to have medicinal value in the resin that drips from its branches (*Arabic Gum*). Known alternately as *Shittim Wood*, this tree is mentioned twelve times in the Bible, most famously as the wood used to build the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 16:15; 25:10, 13; 27:1; 37:25).

- **Bedouin Tents**

Important to Middle Eastern hospitality, the traditional Bedouin tent is woven from goat hair which contracts and forms a tight seal during rainfall. In the summer's heat, the Bedouin tent's inside remains cool, while in the cold winter, it is quickly warmed by a small fire. Food staples of the Bedouin include *fetir*, made with flour, water, and salt and is cooked on a flat pan over an open fire, and *moraras* (much like a pancake), made from flour, water, samna fat, sugar, or honey, which are enjoyed along with rice and various fruits and vegetables. The Bedouin lifestyle today is much like it would have been for Abraham and the other Patriarchs.

- **Broom Tree (*Retama raetam*)**

Indigenous to the desert, the white broom tree is a shrub with a broad canopy. In Bible times, the broom tree was used for cooking as it is known to retain its heat long after it has become dead ash. The prophet Elijah sought relief under a broom tree after fleeing from wicked Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19).



## **Masada** (“Stronghold/Fortress”)

**Site Report:** *Zoe Hutchins*

Located near the Dead Sea's western shore, Masada's cliffs rise to a formidable height of approximately 1,300 feet, making it a natural fortress against the enemy's attack. It is possible that David visited this stronghold both when he returned from Moab with his 400 men (1 Samuel 22:3-5; 1 Chronicles 12:1-16) and when he fled from Saul after confronting him at En Gedi (1 Samuel 24:22). It is also likely that David had Masada in mind when he penned Psalm 18:2 and Psalm 31:3, referring to God as his “fortress.” During the Intertestamental period, the paranoid King Herod further fortified Masada by constructing an 18-foot wall around its top and building a fortress and winter palace that he believed to be impregnable. Later, when the Romans took Jerusalem in AD 70, Jewish Zealots, under the direction of Eliezar Ben Yair, fled to Masada, where they attempted to resist submission to the pagan empire. After a lengthy siege, the Romans finally penetrated the fortress in AD 73 but, according to Josephus, discovered to their dismay, that 960 men, women, and children chose suicide rather than bow their knees to the idolatrous oppression of Rome. Masada is a national symbol of Israel's strength and resilience today. Archaeological evidence reveals that a 2.5-mile circumvallation wall ringed the area around the desert fortress. The wall, composed of rough stone blocks with a rubble core, measured more than 5 feet wide and 10 feet high. Fifteen towers lined the eastern and northern stretches of the circumvallation wall, while

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eight camps laid down around the wall served as bases and garrison points for the Roman troops. A cache of seeds from the 1<sup>st</sup> century was also found here and have been used to produce a date palm tree called Methuselah” (see "Judean Date Palm" on page 72).

### **38** En Gedi (“Spring of the Wild Goat”)

En Gedi is an oasis along the Dead Sea's barren western shore. Fed by natural hot springs, En Gedi yielded an abundance of much-needed fresh water and vegetation amid this arid region. Proof that this area was historically rich in agriculture, Solomon was compared to a cluster of henna blossoms growing in the gardens of En Gedi (Song of Songs 1:14). En Gedi was allotted to the tribe of Judah during the Period of the Conquest (Joshua 15:61) and was the location where David hid from King Saul in a cave (1 Samuel 23-24). David penned Psalms 57 and 142 in reflection on this event. In addition, much wildlife from biblical times remains in this beautiful area, such as the Ibex (*wild goat* - Psalm 18:33) and the Coney (*rock badger/hyrax* – Deut. 14:7).

### **39** Qumran (“Moon”)

**Site Report: Xander Tompkins**

Located on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, Qumran is thought to have been inhabited by the Essenes, a small Jewish sect during the first century. Qumran rose to notoriety when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered here by a shepherd in 1947. Contained

in large clay jars, ancient scrolls (most notably the scroll of Isaiah) were found when a young boy allegedly threw a stone into one of its caves looking for his goat. It is believed that as the Romans approached to capture Qumran from the Essenes in AD 68, these holy scrolls were hidden in caves with the intent of retrieving them later. Upon their discovery, they were sold to a local antiquities dealer and now find their residence in the *Shrine of the Book* at the Israeli Museum.



### **Wadi Qelt** (“*Valley of Gushing Water*”)

Running east to west, Wadi Qelt is the central passageway from Jericho to Jerusalem. Pilgrims often traveled this road to Jerusalem, singing Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134) as they approached the Holy City. However, in ancient times, this was a dangerous road to travel as thieves would lie in ambush along its flanks, as seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Because of its perilous reputation, some believe Wadi Qelt to be the “*valley of the shadow of death*” spoken of by David in Psalm 23:4. Today, it is the location of the uniquely positioned *St. George’s Monastery* as well as one of the oldest Jewish synagogues in the world.

### **Mt. Scopus** (“*Lookout*”)

Overlooking Jerusalem from the northeast and a part of the Mount of Olives, Mount Scopus was the location of the Roman siege camp by Titus and the 10<sup>th</sup> Roman Legion, which led to the destruction of

the Holy City in AD 70 (cf. Luke 21:20). As the first glimpse of Jerusalem, the BICS Bible Lands Seminar commemorates the story of Melchizedek and Abraham on Mount Scopus with a “Genesis Welcome” (Genesis 14:18-20).

## **Mt. of Olives**

The Mount of Olives is a north-south ridge east of Jerusalem that rises to 2,676 feet as it overlooks the Holy City. Separated from Jerusalem by the Kidron Valley, the Mount of Olives – as its name indicates – was a rich olive grove in ancient times. Sadly, King Solomon built high places for pagan deities here (1 Kings 11:5-7), and consequently, it was given the nickname “Mount of Corruption.” Nevertheless, the prophet Zechariah predicts that the Messiah will return to this mountain to vindicate His people in the end times (Zech. 14:4). The Mount of Olives was frequented by Jesus and His disciples when they visited Jerusalem but is perhaps best known for the events of Passion Week.

- **Dome of the Ascension**

The Dome of the Ascension marks the site venerated by early Christians as the place where Jesus ascended to Heaven (Acts 1:6-11). Now part of a Muslim mosque complex, the Dome of the Ascension is said to house the footprint of Jesus before He left the earth.

- **Tombs**

Used as a cemetery for over 3,000 years, the Mount of Olives

contains some 150,000 Jewish graves. Based on the promise that the Messiah will return to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), many Jews believe that they will be among the first to be resurrected by being buried here. Because of the harsh climate and rocky terrain, visitors to these tombs leave rocks rather than flowers to honor their dead. In rebuking the Pharisees, Jesus compared them to “*whitewashed tombs*,” noting that they were more concerned about their outer appearance than their rotting insides (Matthew 23:27-28). Tombs in ancient times were often whitewashed to prevent anyone from accidentally bumping into them in the dark, thus making the person unclean. Menachem Begin (former Prime Minister of Israel) and Eliezer Ben-Yahuda (said to have revived the dead Hebrew language in 1922) are buried here.

- **Palm Sunday Road**

From Jericho to Bethphage and across the Mt. of Olives, Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 (Matthew 21:1-11).

- **Dominus Flevit Church (“The Lord Wept”)**

Fashioned in the shape of a teardrop, this Roman Catholic Church was constructed in the 1950’s to commemorate Jesus’ weeping over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44).

- **Church of Mary Magdalene**

Built by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1886 by Tsar Alexander III to honor his mother, Empress Maria Alexandrovna, this church was erected to commemorate her patron saint, Mary Magda-

lene. Known for its seven distinct gilded onion-shaped domes, the Church of Mary Magdalene stands noticeably on the Mt. of Olives. The enormous canvas hanging above the iconostasis illustrates the legend in which Mary Magdalene traveled to Rome to tell Emperor Tiberius of Jesus' unfair trial and unjust sentence. It is said that Mary held an egg in her hand, representing life. It turned red when she handed it to the Emperor, thus becoming a living symbol of Jesus' blood and the Resurrection. Some have traced the Christian custom of dying eggs on Easter to Mary's presentation of this red egg as a tribute to the Emperor.

### **Garden of Gethsemane** (*"Garden of the Olive Press"*)

Located at the foot of the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane was a favorite spot for Jesus and His disciples to pray and rest. Today, ancient olive trees dot the mountainside, but it is unlikely that they date to the time of Christ as it is said that the Romans cut down all the trees in this area in their siege of Jerusalem in AD 70.

- **The Church of All Nations**

Commemorates the site where Jesus agonized in prayer the night before His crucifixion, was betrayed by Judas and was later arrested by the Temple guards (Matthew 26:36-56, Luke 22:39-54).

- **Grotto of Gethsemane**

Identified since the 4th century as the location of Judas' betrayal (Luke 22:48), the Grotto of Gethsemane has been maintained by

the Franciscans since 1361. It is also said to be where Jesus and His disciples stayed when they frequented Jerusalem. After His Resurrection, the Mount of Olives is where Jesus ascended to heaven as witnessed by the disciples, with the promise that He would return in like manner one day (Acts 1:9-11).



## **Jerusalem** (*“Place/Abode of Peace”*)

Identified as one of the oldest cities in the world, Jerusalem has been of longstanding importance to the Jewish people. The Bible records that Abraham encountered Melchizedek, King of Salem, in this area as he returned from rescuing Lot from the five kings of the north (Genesis 14). Later, David captured the city from the Jebusites and eventually made it his kingdom's capital (1 Chronicles 11:4-9). During its long history, Jerusalem is said to have been destroyed at least twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, and captured/recaptured some 44 times. While the ancient city was fortified by the Jews beginning with David (c. 1000 BC), the existing walls were constructed by Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire in 1538. Within those walls today, Jerusalem is divided into four quarters: the Armenian, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Quarters.

### **Temple Mount**

One of the holiest sites for Jews, the Temple Mount is rich in biblical history. Most notably, it is the location of both Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:1-37) and later the Temple built by Herod the Great (John

2:19-20). The Second Temple, rising to a height of 150 feet, was visible for miles as the sun shone on its brilliant white stone. Previously known as Mount Moriah, it was where Abraham was called to sacrifice Isaac, but where God miraculously intervened with a ram (Genesis 22:1-19). Later, it is where David purchased the threshing floor of Araunah to build an altar (2 Samuel 24:18-25). It is the site of many events, such as the cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-46; John 2:13-17), the healing of the blind man (John 9:1-41) and the lame beggar (Acts 3:1-10). Finally, it is the location where Jesus was dedicated by His parents and met by Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:21-38), where Mary and Joseph found Jesus learning as a young boy (Luke 2:41-50), and where later Jesus commended the widow for giving everything she had as opposed to the rich who merely gave from their abundance (Luke 21:4). Paul was seized here after being accused of bringing a Gentile into the Temple courts but was later released because he was a Roman citizen (Acts 21-22).

- **Golden Gate/Beautiful Gate**

Located on the eastern wall of the Temple Mount, the Golden Gate/Eastern Gate (1 Chronicles 26:14; 2 Chronicles 31:14) was built over the location of the original Solomonic eastern gate (“*Kadim*”) of Jerusalem. It is believed by the Jews to be the gate through which the Messiah will enter (Ezekiel 44:103; Psalm 24). The Golden Gate was sealed in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD by the Muslims, and it is believed that graves were placed around it to prevent the

Messiah from entering. However, Christians know that the Messiah has already passed through this gate during His triumphal entry into the city around AD 30 (Matthew 21:1-11) and eagerly await His second advent.

- **Solomon's Portico/Royal Portico**

Named for King Solomon and rebuilt by King Herod, Solomon's Portico (Colonnade) was a large, roofed structure supported by multiple columns. It was located along both the eastern (Solomon's Portico) as well as the southern (Royal Portico) walls of the Temple Mount and served as the backdrop for many events in Scripture, such as Jesus' sermon about His sheep knowing His voice (John 10:1-21), the cleansing of the Temple (John 2:13-17), Peter's great sermon (Acts 3:11-26), and the gathering of the disciples amidst persecution (Acts 5:12-24). In addition, it was here on the southeastern side of the Temple Mount (the pinnacle of the Temple) that Satan tempted Jesus to jump some 450 feet down into the Kidron Valley (Luke 4:9-12), saying that God would protect Him from harm (Psalm 91:11-12). As the highest place on the Temple Mount, Priests would stand here each morning, watching for the first signs of dawn to signal the start of the morning sacrifices. Today, the Muslim *Al-Aqsa Mosque* stands where Solomon's Portico once resided.

- **Temple Steps**

Known as the *Teaching Steps* or *Rabbi Steps*, these stairs are located on the southern end of the Temple Mount and led to the

Temple via the Huldah Gates. Over 200 feet wide, this walkway was comprised of a staircase of thirty alternating long and short steps. Some suggest that the fifteen long steps may have been one of the locations where pilgrims sang the fifteen Psalms of Ascent (120-134) as they went up to worship. It is believed that Jesus spent much of His time teaching here while in Jerusalem (Matthew 22-23).

- **Dome of the Rock**

Initially completed in AD 691, the Dome of the Rock is a Muslim shrine that houses the rock from which the Prophet Mohammed ascended “from the far city” to heaven accompanied by the angel Gabriel. Judaism recognizes the site as the place where Abraham offered Isaac up as a sacrifice to God (Genesis 22), the site near the threshing floor of Araunah purchased by David (2 Samuel 24:18), and the location of the Temple, which became the center of Jewish worship.

- **Dome of the Spirit**

In 1975, Dr. Asher Kaufman identified the Dome of the Spirit, located northwest of the Dome of the Rock, as the location of the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple. Also known as the *Dome of the Tablets*, this Islamic structure is said to memorialize the tablets of the Covenant inside the Ark in the Holy of Holies and the Spirit of God that dwelt there.

## Via Dolorosa

The road, which in Latin means, “*Way of Suffering*,” “*Way of Grief*,”

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“*Way of Sorrows*,” or “*Painful Way*,” is believed to be the path that Jesus walked on His way to the crucifixion. Beginning at the Antonia Fortress, it spans 2,000 feet and terminates at the *Church of the Holy Sepulchre*. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Franciscans have maintained the route, venerating the following events:

Station 1	Jesus is condemned to death
Station 2	Jesus carries His cross (Ecce Homo)
Station 3	Jesus falls the first time
Station 4	Jesus meets His mother, Mary
Station 5	Simon of Cyrene carries Jesus’ cross
Station 6	Jesus wipes His face on Veronica’s cloth
Station 7	Jesus falls the second time
Station 8	Jesus speaks to the pious women
Station 9	Jesus falls the third time
Station 10	Jesus is stripped of His garments (Holy Sepulchre)
Station 11	Jesus is nailed to the cross (Holy Sepulchre)
Station 12	Jesus dies on the cross (Holy Sepulchre)
Station 13	Jesus is taken down from the cross (Holy Sepulchre)
Station 14	Jesus is laid in the tomb (Holy Sepulchre)

## **Hidden Gate**

Originally excavated in the 1970s by archaeologist Magen Broshi, the Hidden Gate has been proposed as an alternative site for the trial of

Jesus. The excavations uncovered a monumental gateway leading to King Herod's palace complex. Nearby, archaeologists also discovered a stone pavement (known as Gabbatha), which is believed to have supported the judgment seat (bema) where Pontius Pilate sentenced Jesus to death, as described in John 19:13.

### **Church of the Holy Sepulchre** (*Church of the Holy Tomb*)

Completed by Constantine's mother Helena in AD 330, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is believed to be the site where Jesus was both crucified and buried (Matthew 27:32-28:15). Controlled by the Greek Orthodox Church, Calvary (*Golgotha*) has been identified here as a rocky outcrop just outside the Old City wall but near one of its gates, making it an attractive site for Roman crucifixions. The tomb of Jesus is also located inside this massive church complex and is believed to be authentic due to the various first-century burial shafts (*kokhim*) identified here. The tomb structure (*edicule*) houses two rooms. The first, the *Chapel of the Angel*, is superintended by the Greek Orthodox Church and is said to contain a piece of the stone that the angel rolled away from the entrance. The second, the *Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre*, commemorates the location where Jesus was buried and rose again on the third day (Mark 15:42-16:20; Luke 23:50-24:12; John 19:1-20:9).

### **Garden Tomb/Gordon's Calvary**

Seen by some as an alternate site for the burial place of Jesus, the

Garden Tomb is visited by thousands of pilgrims each year. Identified by General Charles Gordon in 1882 as Golgotha (Aramaic – *Golgotha*, Latin – *Calvary*) because of its geological features resembling a skull, it was later purchased by British Christians and venerated as the place where Jesus was crucified. Located nearby is a tomb cut from the rock as well as evidence of an ancient olive press and cistern, giving credence to the argument that this was at one time a garden (John 19:41a). However, despite its tranquil setting, it is unlikely that Gordon’s Calvary is authentic due the fact that the tomb is said to date to the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Furthermore, Scripture is clear that Jesus was placed in a “*new tomb in which no one had yet been laid*” (John 19:41b), thus disqualifying the Garden Tomb as the genuine site of the Resurrection.

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### **Herodion** (Latin: *Herodium*)

Located near Bethlehem, the Herodion is the site of one of Herod the Great’s fortresses which later became his burial place. To mark his victory over the Parthians in 40 BC, Herod built and named the Herodion after himself. This fortress/palace appears to be yet another mountain among the many of Judea, even though it stands conspicuously alone on a small plain. However, approximately half of the Herodion was artificially constructed to conceal the small but lavish city inside, which contained, among other things, towers, ornate rooms, cisterns, baths, and a theater. In 2007, archaeologist Dr. Ehud Netzer discovered Herod’s beautifully decorated red granite

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sarcophagus, which was smashed into pieces in a mausoleum on the side of the Herodion. Josephus attributes this to the Jewish revolt against the Romans sometime between AD 66 and AD 73. In addition to Herod's rosette-decorated sarcophagi, Netzer also discovered the remains of two white limestone sarcophagi, which he believes likely belonged to Herod's fourth wife, Malthe. and his son Archelaus' wife, Glaphyra. Sadly, Dr. Netzer's life ended here in 2010 when a railing he was leaning on broke, plummeting him to death.

- **King Herod's Death**

According to Josephus (*War of the Jews*, pp. 468-469), Herod the Great died at 70 from chronic kidney disease complicated by Fournier's gangrene. Suffering from depression and distemper, fevers, intolerable itching, colon pain, tumors on his feet, an inflamed abdomen, rotting genitalia, convulsions, and loss of eyesight, King Herod often sought relief from the hot baths of Jordan and even resorted to soaking in hot oil. Knowing that the end was near, Herod assembled the country's most prominent men and had them held as prisoners. He instructed his sister Salome, "I know well enough that the Jews will keep a festival upon my death; however, it is in my power to be mourned for on other accounts and to have a splendid funeral if you will be but subservient to my commands. Do you but take care to send soldiers to encompass these men who are now in custody, and slay them immediately upon my death, and then all Judea, and every family of them, will weep whether they will it or not." Salome dismissed

the prisoners at his death, conducted a grand funeral, and buried him at the Herodion.

### **43** **Bethlehem** (“*House of Bread*”)

Located approximately 5 miles south of Jerusalem, this little town held major significance in God’s metanarrative of salvation. During the period of the Patriarchs, Rachel died near Bethlehem after giving birth to Benjamin (Genesis 35:16-20) and was buried here. The story of Ruth and Boaz took place in the wheat and barley fields of Bethlehem (book of Ruth), and later David was born, tended his sheep, and was anointed King of Israel here (1 Samuel 16:1-13; 17:12). In Micah 5:2, the prophet foretold the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, which found its fulfillment in Jesus (Luke 2:1-7).

- **The Shepherd’s Field**

Believed to be where the angels appeared to the shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:8-20), the Shepherd’s Field (Khirbat Siyar al-Ghanim) is superintended by the Franciscans. Here, caves overlooking lush fields are revered as the place where shepherds rested and sought refuge from storms while tending their sheep and near where the angelic announcement took place.

- **Church of the Nativity**

Noted as one of the best-authenticated sites in the Holy Land, the Church of the Nativity was initially constructed by Helena around the year AD 330 and later rebuilt by Emperor Justinian in the 6<sup>th</sup>

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century AD. Its earliest traditions suggest that the *Grotto* (cave) which lies underneath the basilica, is the location of the birth of Jesus. In the cave, there is both a manger (feeding trough) and a fourteen-pointed star which symbolizes the number of generations from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian Exile, and from the Exile to the birth of the Messiah (Matthew 1:1-17). In addition to its messianic significance, the Church of the Nativity is said to be the place (*St. Jerome's Cave*) where Jerome translated the Vulgate from Hebrew and Greek to Latin, beginning in AD 386. Later, the church survived an invasion of the Muslim armies due to the fresco outside of the church depicting the three wise men dressed similarly to them. Currently, the Church of the Nativity is under the shared control of the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian ecclesiastical authorities.

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### **Beth Shemesh** (*"House of the Sun"*)

Situated on the eastern end of the Sorek Valley, Beth Shemesh was the historical border between Judah and Philistia. During the Period of the Conquest, Beth Shemesh was allotted to the Levites as one of their cities of inheritance (Joshua 21:16). Most famously, Beth Shemesh is remembered as the place near where Samson lived (Judges 13-16), and where the ark of the covenant was returned to the Israelites after its capture by the Philistines (1 Samuel 6:1-21). It is here that the Kohathites, descendants of Aaron, lived (Joshua 21:4). While the Kohathite priests were allowed to carry the ark,

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they were prohibited from looking inside it (Numbers 4:20). It was because of this sin that the men of Beth Shemesh were struck down (1 Samuel 6:19); a reminder that the Lord's instructions bound even the priests. Recent excavations at Beth Shemesh have revealed that it was a thriving city from the Middle Bronze through the Iron Age. Of note, Beth Shemesh boasts the largest Iron Age reservoir found in Israel, with a holding capacity of over 56,000 gallons, enough to sustain its inhabitants comfortably for three months in the event of a siege. This remains an ongoing archaeological site with discoveries as recent as 2019.

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### **Valley of Elah** (“*Valley of the Oak*”)

Located approximately 16 miles northwest of Hebron, the Valley of Elah was where David fought the giant Goliath between Socoh and Azekah (1 Samuel 17). Elah derives its name from the terebinth tree prolific in this area from ancient times until today.

### **Socoh** (“*Branches*”), **Azekah** (“*Strength of Walls*”)

Located on a hill on the western side of the Elah Valley, **Socoh** was garrisoned by King Rehoboam for the defense of Judah (2 Chronicles 11:7) but was later captured by the Philistines during Ahaz’s reign (2 Chronicles 28:18). It is the location where the Philistine army gathered to taunt Israel through the giant Goliath (1 Samuel 17). **Azekah** was a strategic city also fortified by Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11:9) and was one of the last Israelite cities to fall and be captured by the

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Babylonians in 586 BC (Jeremiah 34:7). From Azekah, Saul and the Israelites positioned themselves to fight Goliath and the Philistines.

### **Khirbet Qeiyafa** (“Fortress of Elah”)

Discovered in 2007, Khirbet Qeiyafa is said to be a Judean fortress identified with King David. This southern stronghold was likely erected to protect the kingdom against the advances of the Philistine city of Gath, located only 8 miles to the west. Boasting stones as large as 8 tons, this southern outpost was also home to two large buildings dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC. Archaeologists believe these buildings to be a palatial structure and a storeroom containing stamped storage vessels dating to the time of King David. Further, its two gates (one on the west and one on the south), consisting of four chambers each, are the earliest example of a double-gated city from the First Temple Period. It appears that the city came to sudden ruin as hundreds of pottery vessels, stone utensils, and metal objects were discovered, having been hastily left on the floors of its dwellings. In 2008, the oldest known Hebrew text was discovered here (1,000 years older than the Dead Sea Scrolls) on an *ostrakon* (a piece of pottery) on the floor of one of the rooms bearing this inscription:

*“Do not oppress, and serve God... despoiled him/her  
The judge and the widow wept; he had the power  
Over the resident alien and the child, he eliminated them together  
The men and chiefs/officers have established a king  
He marked 60 [?] servants among the communities/habitations/generation.”*

Some believe this to be the description of the coronation of Saul as Israel transitioned from the Period of the Judges to a united monarchy. Additionally, two important discoveries were made in 2012. The first, a large clay vessel, was unearthed bearing the name *Ishba'al, son of Beda*. The name *Ishba'al* also appears in 2 Samuel 2 (alt. *Ishboshet*) and 1 Chronicles 8 as one of King Saul's sons who would rival David for the throne. Interestingly, this name was not used after the First Temple period. The second was an elaborate doorframe to an inner sanctum, shedding light on the meaning of the mysterious *mezuzot* of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:31). Khirbet Qeiyafa has been identified with biblical *Shaaraim* (Joshua 15:36; 1 Samuel 17:52; 1 Chronicles 4:31), which in Hebrew means, "two gates." In addition, 1 Samuel 17:52 notes that after David's defeat of Goliath, the slain Philistine bodies lay from Shaaraim to Gath and Ekron.

#### 46 **Hebron** ("Alliance")

Located 19 miles southwest of Jerusalem on the road to Beersheba, Hebron played a significant role in the history of God's people. Here Abraham settled at the "*great trees of Mamre*" (Genesis 13:18) and purchased the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 23:1-20) where he and his wife Sarah (Genesis 25:7-10), his son Isaac and his wife Rebekah (Genesis 35:27-31), and his grandson Jacob and his wife Leah (Genesis 49:29-33; 50:12-14) were buried. It is here at Hebron that Abraham and Sarah were visited by the angels who promised the birth of a son (Genesis 18:1-15), and where Abraham viewed the destruction

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of Sodom (Genesis 19:27-29). During the Period of the Conquest, the fields surrounding Hebron were given to Caleb as a tribal inheritance (Joshua 14:6-15; 15:13-14), while Hebron proper was allotted to the Levites (Joshua 21:11-12). During the Period of the United Kingdom, David was anointed king over Judah at Hebron and ruled here for the first seven years of his reign (2 Samuel 2:1-4, 11). The current building which houses the memorial tombs, is said to have been built by Herod the Great and is venerated by both Jews and Muslims.

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### **Bethany** (*"House of the Poor/Humble/Afflicted"*)

A small village two miles east of Jerusalem and located on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, Bethany was the site of several important events in the life of Jesus. Here Jesus often spent the night at the home of His friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus on His way to Jerusalem (Luke 10:38-42), and it is here that Jesus most famously raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44). Here also Jesus was anointed by Mary with expensive perfume at the home of Simon the Leper (John 12:1-9) and He later cursed a fruitless fig tree that withered (Matthew 21:18-22).

- **The Fig Tree**

First mentioned in the Garden of Eden account (Genesis 3:7) and cited over fifty times throughout Scripture, the fig tree has always been a valuable commodity in Israel (Deut. 8:8). Prized for its shade, the fig tree grows to nearly 20 feet tall and produces leaves the size of a man's hand. Figs have historically been

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pressed into “cakes” and eaten (1 Sam. 30:12) and used as well for medicinal purposes (2 Kings 20:7). The ancients saw fig trees as a sign of peace and prosperity (1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4; Zech. 3:10), and the spies sent out to view the Promised Land brought back figs along with clusters of grapes and pomegranates as examples of the agricultural richness of the area (Numbers 13:23). The fig tree of Israel produces up to three crops per year; the “early fig” of June (Isaiah 28:4; Nahum 3:12), the “summer fig” of August, and sometimes the “winter fig” which ripens in the spring (Rev. 6:13). Unique to the fig tree is the fact that its fruit appears before its leaves, possibly explaining the Lord’s cursing of it in Mark 11:13. Jesus likens His Second Coming to the imminent arrival of summer when the twigs of the fig tree become tender, and its leaves appear (Matt. 24:32-33).

### **Kidron Valley** (“*Valley of Gloom*”)

Forming the eastern border of Jerusalem, the Kidron Valley (or Jehoshaphat Valley) runs north-south and is home to a seasonal brook by the same name. Dry for most of the year, this wadi was crossed by Jesus and His disciples on their way from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, and most certainly on the night He was arrested and brought before Annas and Caiaphas (John 18:1-13). In Joel 3, the Kidron Valley is represented as the place where God will judge the nations.

## **Hinnom Valley** (“*Valley of Freedom*”)

Located south of Jerusalem, the Hinnom Valley is a deep ravine that forms Jerusalem’s southern border. Infamous in biblical history, it was the location where children were sacrificed to the god Molech (2 Kings 23:10), a sin which kings Ahaz and Manasseh were also guilty (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6). After the reforms of Josiah, the Hinnom Valley became the garbage dump for the city of Jerusalem. Here, fires continually burned night and day, thus becoming a symbol of the place of judgment called Hell (Greek – *Gehenna*; cf. Matt. 5:22; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6). Near the Hinnom Valley is located the Potter’s Field (*Hakeldama*), the traditional site where Judas killed himself and was buried (Matt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:1-20).

## **Tyropoeon Valley** (“*Cheesemakers Valley*”)

Forming the natural separation between Mt. Moriah and Mt. Zion, the Tyropoeon Valley was coined the *Cheese-makers Valley* by the historian Josephus in the first century, perhaps as a mistranslation of the Hebrew name for Outer Valley as described in the Copper Scroll. At its base, the Western Wall of the Temple rose to a height of over 130 feet and is said to be a display of unparalleled masonry in the ancient world. The Tyropoeon Valley intersects with the Kidron Valley and terminates in the Valley of Hinnom.

## **Hezekiah’s Tunnel**

Built by King Hezekiah shortly before 700 BC, this 1,500-foot-long

tunnel was cut 60' from the surface through the bedrock to bring water from the Gihon Spring safely into the city of Jerusalem during the attack of King Sennacherib of Assyria (2 Kings 18:13-19:36; 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:2-4). In 1867, Charles Warren discovered an inscription (also known as the *Silwan* inscription) describing its construction, stating that workers began at opposite ends and channeled toward each other guided only by the sounds of their pickaxes, eventually meeting in the middle. Currently, this valuable inscription is housed in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, Turkey. The passage reads:

*...the tunnel...and this is the story of the tunnel while...the axes were against each other and while three cubits were left to cut?...the voice of a man...called to his counterpart, (for) there was ZADA (weak spot/crack) in the rock, on the right...and on the day of the tunnel (being finished) the stone-cutters struck each man towards his counterpart, ax against ax and flowed water from the source to the pool for 1200 cubits. And 100? Cubits was the height over the head of the stonecutters...*

### **Pool of Siloam (“Sent”)**

King Hezekiah created a reservoir inside the walls of Jerusalem, the Pool of Siloam, to protect the city’s water supply from the invading Assyrians in 700 BC. Isaiah referred to the Pool of Siloam as the *waters of Shiloah*, and the *Lower Pool* (Isaiah 8:1-6; 22:9), and the prophet Nehemiah referred to it as *Shelah* (Nehemiah 3:15). In the New Testament, the Pool of Siloam is mentioned by Luke as the site where 18 men died when a tower fell on them (Luke 13:4). It was

also the location to which Jesus “sent” the blind man to be healed after He put mud on his eyes near the Temple (John 9).

### **Pilgrim’s Road**

Discovered accidentally in 2004 due to a burst water pipe under the City of David, the Pilgrim’s Road is a twenty-six-foot-wide staircase that spanned some two-thousand feet from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple. Believed to have been constructed by Pontius Pilate (between AD 20-30), this passageway was traveled by thousands of pilgrims who would purify themselves in the *waters of Shiloah* before entering the Temple Mount. Of interest, archaeologists found a tiny gold bell in a drainage channel under the road, which they believed came loose from the tunic of the High Priest on his way to the Temple, a raised podium built on the side of the road, a child’s carving depicting the menorah from the Temple, and thousands of coins dating from the time of the Jewish Revolt (AD 66-70). The road was officially opened to tourists in 2025.

### **Western Wall & Tunnel**

Built by King Herod in 19 BC, the Western Wall of the Temple complex extends some 1,800 feet along the Tyropoeon Valley. Sometimes referred to as the *Wailing Wall (Kotel)*, it is venerated as one of the holiest sites in Judaism. This open-air section is over 200 feet long and separates its worshippers by gender (men on the left, women on the right). Some say that many Orthodox Jews who worship

here are modern examples of the Pharisees that Jesus rebuked in His day, proudly displaying their broad phylacteries and long tassels (Matthew 12:1-7). The Western Wall Tunnel reveals an additional 1,600 feet of the wall and contains a stone believed to be one of the largest objects ever lifted without powered machinery. Sometimes called the Western Stone, its dimensions are approximately 34' long X 10' high X 15' wide, and it is estimated to weigh a staggering 570 tons (more than two fully-loaded 747 airliners). It may have been this stone among others that a disciple marveled at as they were leaving the Temple with Jesus, "*Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!*" (Mark 13:1-2). A location within the Western Wall Tunnel is believed to be the closest spot to the Holy of Holies, and many female Jews go there to worship and pray.

### **St. Anne's Church**

Built by the Crusaders sometime between AD 1131 and AD 1138, St. Anne's Church commemorates the birthplace of Mary and is named after her mother, Anna. Some believe a small crypt below the church to be the *grotto* (cave) where Anna birthed Mary. Currently maintained by the Roman Catholic order of the White Fathers (after the colors of their robes), it is owned by the French after it was given to Napoleon by the Ottomans for his support during the Crimean War of 1856.

**Pool of Bethesda** (“House of Mercy”)      **Site Report: Ella Clark**

Located near the Sheep Gate in northern Jerusalem, the Pool of Bethesda is referred to in the Old Testament as the *Upper Pool* in the book of 2 Kings (18:17) as well as by the prophet Isaiah (7:3; 36:2). The Pool of Bethesda is most famously the site where Jesus healed the man who had been lame for thirty-eight years (John 5:1-15). Archaeologists have discovered two pools in the vicinity, with one corresponding to the five porticos (porches) described in John 5:2. Some believe the miracle that Jesus performed here to be a polemic against the healing powers of the Greek god Asclepius and his worship as savior.

**Mt. Zion** (“Mountain of Fortification”)

Originally a Jebusite city captured by David (2 Samuel 5:6-7), Mount Zion’s boundaries grew by the first century to include the hill southwest of Jerusalem. Throughout the years, it was used to reference Jerusalem, the land of Judah, and the people of Israel as a whole (Isaiah 40:9; 60:14; Jeremiah 31:12; Zechariah 9:13). In the New Testament, Zion is used to represent God’s spiritual kingdom, His Church, and the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 14:1). Today, the tombs of Horatio Spafford (“It is Well with My Soul”) and Oskar Schindler (“Schindler’s List”) are located in a cemetery on Mt. Zion.

- **Upper Room** (Latin: *Cenacle*, meaning dinner)  
Located on Mount Zion is the Upper Room, believed to be the traditional site of the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-30; Luke 22:7-23), where Jesus washed the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17), and where He gave the new command to love one another (John 13:34-35). It is the place where Jesus comforted (John 14:1-4; 16:33) and prayed for His disciples and all believers (John 17:6-26), and promised the Holy Spirit (John 16:5-16). Interestingly, it marks the only spot in Scripture where Jesus is said to have sung (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26) - quite possibly Psalm 116:3-4, 8-9, 12-13, 16-17; and 118:6-7, 14, 17-29 of the Hallel (Praise) Psalms. In Acts, it is here that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in power, and where Peter preached the famous sermon at Pentecost wherein some 3,000 came to believe (Acts 2).
- **The Tomb of David**  
Located beneath the Upper Room, the Tomb of David was venerated as the location of King David's resting place by the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Although wrongly associated with David's burial place "*in the city of David*" (1 Kings 2:10), it is the traditional location where Jews and pilgrims come to honor the life of Israel's great king.
- **St. Peter in Gallicantu** ("*The Rooster Crows*")  
Located on the eastern slopes of Mount Zion, the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu commemorates the place where the rooster crowed at Peter's third denial of Jesus (Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62). Built over the remains of the house of the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, it is believed to contain the *Sacred Pit* in which Jesus spent His last night awaiting trial before Pilate (John 18:12-40). Additionally, archaeologists have uncovered ancient steps from the Mount of Olives – across the Kidron Valley – to Mount Zion. There is little doubt that these were the steps that Jesus ascended the night He was arrested.

## Hezekiah's Broad Wall

Unearthed during the 1970s, Hezekiah's Broad Wall dates to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. This massive structure (some 21 feet thick and 200 feet long) effectively fortified the city of Jerusalem. King Hezekiah constructed this wall in anticipation of the invasion of Sennacherib, King of Assyria. Nehemiah later rebuilt the wall (Neh. 3:8; Isaiah 22:9-10).

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Berkshire Institute  
*for Christian Studies*

# *Song Lyrics*

## **BIBLE LANDS** *Travel Guide*

"Ask for the ancient paths; ask where the good way is,  
and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah 6:16

## Amazing Grace

John Newton | Traditional American Melody

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch; like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

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## Angels We Have Heard on High

Traditional French Carol

Angels we have heard on high  
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply  
Echoing their joyous strains.

### Refrain:

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
Which inspire your heav'nly song?

Come to Bethlehem and see  
Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee,  
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

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As the Deer

Martin Nystrom

As the deer panteth for the water,  
So my soul longeth after You.  
You alone are my heart's desire,  
And I long to worship You.

Refrain:

You alone are my strength, my shield;  
To You alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire,  
And I long to worship You.

You're my friend and You are my brother,  
Even though You are a King.  
I love You more than any other,  
So much more than anything.

Refrain

I want You more than gold or silver,  
Only You can satisfy.  
You alone are the real joy giver,  
And the apple of my eye.

Refrain

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## At the Cross

Words: Isaac Watts | Music: Ralph E. Hudson

Alas! and did my Savior bleed  
And did my Sov'reign die?  
Would He devote that sacred head  
For such a worm as I?

### Refrain:

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,  
And the burden of my heart rolled away,  
It was there by faith I received my sight,  
And now I am happy all the day!

Was it for crimes that I had done  
He groaned upon the tree?  
Amazing pity! grace unknown!  
And love beyond degree!

### Refrain

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**Because He Lives**

William & Gloria Gaither

God sent His son, they called Him, Jesus;  
He came to love, heal and forgive;  
He lived and died to buy my pardon,  
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!

**Chorus:**

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,  
Because He lives, all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the living,  
Just because He lives!

How sweet to hold a newborn baby,  
And feel the pride and joy he gives;  
But greater still the calm assurance:  
This child can face uncertain days because He Lives!

**Chorus**

And then one day, I'll cross the river,  
I'll fight life's final war with pain;  
And then, as death gives way to vict'ry,  
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives!

**Chorus**

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**Be It Unto Me**

Claire Cloninger & Don Moen

Be it unto me  
According to your Word  
According to your promises, I can stand secure  
Carve upon my heart the truth that sets me free  
According to your Word O Lord  
Be it unto me

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**Beloved, Let Us Love One Another**

1 John 4:7 & 8  
Music by Dennis Ryder

Beloved, let us love one another  
For love is of God and everyone that loveth  
Is born of God and knoweth God  
He that loveth not,  
Knoweth not God, for God is love  
Beloved, let us love one another  
First John 4: 7 and 8

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**Blessed Assurance**

Fanny J. Crosby

Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine  
O what a foretaste of glory divine  
Heir of salvation, purchased of God  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His Blood

**Refrain:**

This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long  
This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long

Perfect submission, perfect delight  
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight  
Angels descending, bring from above  
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love

**Refrain**

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## Blessed Be Your Name

Matt & Beth Redman

Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow; blessed be Your name.  
And blessed be Your name When I'm found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness; blessed be Your name.

Every blessing You pour out, I'll turn back to praise  
And when the darkness closes in, Lord, still I will say....

### Chorus:

Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name when the sun's shining down on me  
When the world's "all as it should be"; blessed be Your name.  
And blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering  
Though there's pain in the offering; blessed be Your name

Every blessing You pour out, I'll turn back to praise  
And when the darkness closes in, Lord, still I will say....

Repeat Chorus Twice

### Bridge:

You give and take away  
You give and take away  
My heart will choose to say,  
"Lord, blessed be Your name."

Repeat Chorus Twice

Bless The Lord Oh My Soul

Bless the Lord, Oh my soul and all that is within me  
Bless His Holy name  
(repeat)

He has done great things, He has done great things  
He has done great things, bless His Holy name  
(repeat)

Bless the Lord, Oh my soul and all that is within me  
Bless His Holy name  
(repeat)

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Blest Be the Tie that Binds

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above

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**The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power**

Andraé Crouch

The blood that Jesus shed for me  
Way back on Calvary  
The blood that gives me strength  
From day to day  
It will never lose its power  
It reaches to the highest mountain  
It flows to the lowest valley  
The blood that gives me strength  
From day to day  
It will never lose its power

It soothes my doubts and calms my fears  
And it dries all my tears  
The blood that gives me strength  
From day to day  
It will never lose its power

It reaches to the highest mountain  
It flows to the lowest valley  
The blood that gives me strength  
From day to day  
It will never lose its power

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Christ Arose!

Robert Lowry

Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior,  
Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain:

Up from the grave He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes,  
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,  
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Savior;  
Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain

Death cannot keep its Prey, Jesus my Savior;  
He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain

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Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him, all creatures here below  
Praise Him above ye Heavenly host  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost  
Amen

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**Family of God**

Bill & Gloria Gaither

I'm so glad I'm a part  
Of the Family of God!  
I've been washed in the fountain  
Cleansed by His blood  
Joint heirs with Jesus  
As we travel this sod  
For I'm a part of the Family  
The Family of God

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**Fill My Cup, Lord**

Richard Blanchard

**Chorus:**

Fill my cup, Lord;  
I lift it up Lord;  
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.  
Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more.  
Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole.

Like the woman at the well, I was seeking  
For things that could not satisfy.  
And then I heard my Savior speaking—  
“Draw from My well that never shall run dry.”

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Fishers of Men

Harry D. Clarke

I will make you fishers of men,  
Fishers of men, fishers of men.  
I will make you fishers of men,  
If you follow Me  
If you follow Me if you follow Me.  
I will make you fishers of men  
If you follow Me

Hear Christ calling come unto Me,  
Come unto Me, come unto Me.  
Hear Christ calling come unto Me,  
I will give you rest.  
I will give you rest, I will give you rest.  
Hear Christ calling, come unto Me  
I will give you rest.

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For The Joy

For the joy set before Him  
For the joy He endured the pain  
For the joy He suffered the shame  
And He would do it all again  
He'd do it all again  
He'd do it all again  
For the joy

God Be With You 'Til We Meet Again

Jeremiah E. Rankin

God be with you 'til we meet again  
By His counsel guide, uphold you  
With His sheep securely fold you  
God be with you 'til we meet again

God be with you 'til we meet again  
'Neath His wings protecting, hide you  
Daily manna still provide you  
God be with you 'til we meet again

God be with you 'til we meet again  
If life's perils should confound you  
God will put His arms around you  
God be with you 'til we meet again

Refrain:

'Til we meet, 'til we meet  
'Til we meet at Jesus' feet  
'Til we meet, 'til we meet  
God be with us, 'Til we meet again

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God Is So Good

God is so good  
God is so good  
God is so good  
He's so good to me

God answers prayer...

I love Him so...

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## Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Words: Thomas O. Chisholm | Music: William M. Runyan

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be

### Refrain:

Great is Thy faithfulness  
Great is Thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning new mercies I see  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside

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## Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Thank you Jesus...

Lord we love You...

Lord we praise You...

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**Hallelujah! What A Savior!**

Philip B. Bliss

“Man of Sorrows!” what a name  
For the Son of God who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim, Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude  
In my place condemned He stood,  
Sealed my pardon with His blood, Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we  
Spotless Lamb of God was He  
“Full atonement!” can it be? Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Lifted up was He to die. “It is finished!” was His cry  
Now in Heav’n exalted high, Hallelujah! What a Savior!

When He comes, our glorious King  
All His ransomed home to bring  
Then anew His song we’ll sing: Hallelujah! What a Savior!

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**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

Words: Charles Wesley | Music: Felix Mendelssohn, arr. by William H. Cummings

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”  
Joyful, all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th’angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”  
Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Hail the heav’nly Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings, Ris’n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by, Born that man no more may die;  
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

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He Is Lord

He is Lord, He is Lord  
He is risen from the dead and he is Lord  
Ev'ry knee shall bow, ev'ry tongue confess  
That Jesus Christ is Lord

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He Knows My Name

Tommy Walker

I have a Maker, He formed my heart  
Before even time began, My life was in His hand

Chorus:

He knows my name,  
He knows my every thought  
He sees each tear that falls  
And hears me when I call

I have a Father, He calls me His own  
He'll never leave me, No matter where I go

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## He Lives!

Words & Music by A. H. Ackley

I serve a risen Saviour; He's in the world today.  
I know that He is living, whatever men may say.  
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,  
And just the time I need Him He's always near.

### Chorus:

He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.  
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

In all the world around me I see His loving care,  
And though my heart grows weary I never will despair.  
I know that He is leading, thro' all the stormy blast;  
The day of His appearing will come at last.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian! Lift up your voice and sing  
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ, the King!  
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find,  
None other is so loving, so good and kind.

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## He Who Began A Good Work

Jon Mohr

He who began a good work in you  
He who began a good work in you  
Will be faithful to complete it  
He'll be faithful to complete it  
He who started the work  
Will be faithful to complete it in you

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He Will Hold Me Fast

Ada Ruth Habershon | Matthew Merker

When I fear my faith will fail  
Christ will hold me fast  
When the tempter would prevail  
He will hold me fast  
I could never keep my hold  
Through life's fearful path  
For my love is often cold  
He must hold me fast

Chorus:

He will hold me fast  
He will hold me fast  
For my Savior loves me so  
He will hold me fast

Those He saves are His delight  
Christ will hold me fast  
Precious in His holy sight  
He will hold me fast  
He'll not let my soul be lost  
His Promises shall last  
Bought by Him at such a cost  
He will hold me fast

Chorus

For my life He bled and died  
Christ will hold me fast  
Justice has been satisfied  
He will hold me fast  
Raised with Him to endless life  
He will hold me fast  
Till our faith is turned to sight  
When He comes at last

Chorus

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His Mercy is More

Matt Boswell | Matt Papa

What love could remember no wrongs we have done  
Omniscient all knowing He counts not their sum  
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

What patience would wait as we constantly roam  
What Father so tender is calling us home  
He welcomes the weakest the vilest the poor  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

Chorus:

Praise the Lord His mercy is more  
Stronger than darkness new every morn  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

What riches of kindness He lavished on us  
His blood was the payment His life was the cost  
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford  
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

Chorus

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## The Holy City

Words: Frederick Edward Weatherly | Music: Stephen Adams

One night while I was sleeping I had a dream so fair  
I stood in old Jerusalem Beside the temple there  
I heard the children singing And ever as they sang  
I thought the voice of Angels From Heaven in answer rang

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem!  
Hark how the angels sing,  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Hosanna to your King!”

And then I thought my dream was chang’d  
The streets no longer rang  
As with the glad Hosannas The little children sang  
The sun grew dark with mystery  
And the morn was cold and chilled  
As the shadow of a cross arose Upon a lonely hill

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem!  
Lift up your gates and sing,  
Hosanna in the highest,  
Hosanna to your King!”

And once again my dream was changed  
New earth there seemed to be  
I saw the Holy City Beside the crystal sea  
The light of God was on its streets  
And the gates were open wide  
That all who would might enter  
And no one was denied  
No need of moon or the stars by night  
Or the sun to shine by day  
For it was the new Jerusalem  
That would not pass away

“Jerusalem! Jerusalem  
Sing for the night is o’er  
Hosanna in the highest  
Hosanna for evermore!”

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Holy, Holy, Holy

Reginald Heber

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns upon the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Which wert and art and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name,  
In earth and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

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Hosanna!

Wesley A. Ross

Hosanna!  
Blessed is the One  
Who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna!  
Blessed is the One  
Who comes in the name of the Lord!

The people spread out their coats on the way,  
They cut down the branches from the trees nearby,  
They shouted for joy to their God,  
“The Son of David is coming today!”

(repeat)

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## How Deep the Father's Love for Us

Stuart Townend

How deep the Father's love for us  
How vast beyond all measure  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure  
How great the pain of searing loss  
The Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory

Behold the Man upon a cross  
My sin upon His shoulders  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
Call out among the scoffers  
It was my sin that held Him there  
Until it was accomplished  
His dying breath has brought me life  
I know that it is finished

I will not boast in anything  
No gifts, no pow'r, no wisdom  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ  
His death and resurrection  
Why should I gain from His reward  
I cannot give an answer  
But this I know with all my heart  
His wounds have paid my ransom

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## How Great is the Greatness of God

Bryan Fowler | Matt Boswell | Matt Papa

### Chorus:

How faithful the Father above  
How wondrous the work of the Son  
How sweet is the Spirit given to us  
How great is the greatness of God

Morning by morning with every dawn  
My soul with a new song awaits  
Still in the evening my praise goes on  
Forever my God is the same

When my heart gazes on Calvary  
At all of your mercies arrayed  
Oh that my Savior would die for me  
I sing out with infinite thanks

Oh what a comfort in every trial  
His presence is all that I need  
Power that brought resurrection life  
That power is living in me  
That power is living in me

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## How Great Thou Art

Stuart K. Hine

O Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

### Chorus:

Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee  
How great Thou art, How great Thou art  
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee  
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in  
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart  
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration  
And then proclaim: "My God, how great Thou art!"

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I Bless You in the Name of Jesus

I bless you in the name of Jesus brother  
I bless you in the name of Jesus sister  
I bless you in the name of Jesus  
In the name that heals and frees us  
Bless you in His precious, holy name

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I Have Decided To Follow Jesus

I have decided to follow Jesus  
I have decided to follow Jesus  
I have decided to follow Jesus  
No turning back no turning back

The world behind me the cross before me...

Though none go with me I still will follow...

Will you decide now to follow Jesus...

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I Love You, Lord

Laurie Klein

I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice  
To worship you, O my soul rejoice  
Take joy, my King, in what you hear  
May it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear

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I Love You With The Love Of The Lord

Jim Gilbert

I love you with the love of the Lord  
Yes I love you with the love of the Lord  
I can see in you the glory of my King  
And I love you with the love of the Lord

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I'll Say Yes, Lord, Yes

Lynn Edward Keesecker

I'll say yes Lord, yes  
To Your will and to Your way  
I'll say yes Lord, yes  
I will trust You and obey  
When the Spirit speaks to me  
With my whole heart I'll agree  
And my answer will be, Yes Lord, yes

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I've Got Peace Like a River

Darrell Rodman | Fred Bock

I've got peace like a river  
I've got peace like a river  
I've got peace like a river in my soul  
I've got peace like a river  
I've got peace like a river  
I've got peace like a river in a my soul  
  
I've got joy like a fountain...  
  
I've got love like an ocean...

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**In Christ Alone**

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

In Christ alone my hope is found  
He is my light, my strength, my song  
This Cornerstone, this solid ground  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm  
What heights of love, what depths of peace  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease  
My Comforter, my All in All  
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh  
Fullness of God in helpless babe  
This gift of love and righteousness  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
'til on that cross as Jesus died  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay  
Light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious Day  
Up from the grave He rose again  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am His and He is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

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It Is Well With My Soul

Words: Horatio G. Spafford | Music: Philip P. Bliss

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Refrain:

It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet,  
Though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

Refrain

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

Refrain

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,  
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;  
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!  
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

Refrain

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.

Refrain

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**It Took A Miracle**

John W. Peterson

It took a miracle to put the stars in place;  
It took a miracle to hang the world in space.  
But when he saved my soul,  
Cleansed and made me whole,  
It took a miracle of love and grace.

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**Jesus Paid It All**

Words: Elvina M. Hall | Music: John T. Grape

I hear the Savior say, "Thy strength indeed is small;  
Child of weakness, watch and pray, Find in Me thine all in all."

**Refrain:**

Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

Public Domain

Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho

Colin Buchanan

Refrain:

Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho  
Joshua fought the battle of Jericho  
And the walls came a-tumbling down  
Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho Jericho  
Joshua fought the battle of Jericho  
And the walls came a-tumbling down  
And the walls came a-tumbling down

You may talk about your men of Gideon  
You may talk about your men of Saul  
But there's none like good old Joshua  
At the battle of Jericho

Refrain

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Just A Closer Walk With Thee

Patsy Cline, 1965

I am weak but thou art strong  
Jesus keep me from all wrong  
I'll be satisfied as long  
As I walk, let me walk close to thee

Just a closer walk with thee  
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea  
Daily walking close to thee  
Let it be, dear lord, let it be

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Lead Me to Calvary

Words: Jennie E. Hussey | Music: William J. Kirkpatrick

King of my life, I crown Thee now,  
Thine shall the glory be;  
Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow,  
Lead me to Calvary.

Refrain:

Lest I forget Gethsemane,  
Lest I forget Thine agony;  
Lest I forget Thy love for me,  
Lead me to Calvary.

Show me the tomb where Thou wast laid,  
Tenderly mourned and wept;  
Angels in robes of light arrayed  
Guarded Thee whilst Thou slept.

Public Domain

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Marching to Zion

Words: Isaac Watts | Music: Robert Lowry

Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known;  
Join in a song with sweet accord,  
Join in a song with sweet accord,  
And thus surround the throne  
And thus surround the throne

Refrain:

We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;  
We're marching upward to Zion,  
The beautiful city of God

Let those refuse to sing, who never knew our God;  
But children of the heav'nly King  
But children of the heav'nly King  
May speak their joys abroad  
May speak their joys abroad

Public Domain

Near the Cross

Fanny J. Crosby

Jesus, keep me near the cross,  
There a precious fountain  
Free to all, a healing stream  
Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.

Refrain:

In the cross, in the cross  
Be my glory ever;  
Till my raptured soul shall find  
Rest beyond the river.

Near the cross I'll watch and wait;  
Hoping, trusting ever,  
Till I reach the golden strand,  
Just beyond the river.

Public Domain

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Nothing But the Blood

Robert Lowry

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus  
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus

Refrain:

Oh! precious is the flow, That makes me white as snow  
No other fount I know, Nothing but the blood of Jesus

Nothing can for sin atone, Nothing but the blood of Jesus  
Naught of good that I have done, Nothing but the blood of Jesus

This is all my hope and peace, Nothing but the blood of Jesus  
This is all my righteousness, Nothing but the blood of Jesus

Public Domain

O Come Let Us Adore Him

O come let us adore Him  
O come let us adore Him  
O come let us adore Him  
Christ the Lord

For He alone is worthy  
For He alone is worthy  
For He alone is worthy  
Christ the Lord

O come let us adore Him  
O come let us adore Him  
O come let us adore Him  
Christ the Lord

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Of the Father's Love Begotten

Marcus Aureliou C. Prudentius, 4<sup>th</sup> century  
tr. John M. Neale, 1854 & Henry W. Baker, 1859

Of the Father's love begotten  
Ere the worlds began to be,  
He is Alpha and Omega,  
He the source, the ending He,  
Of the things that are, that have been,  
And that future years shall see,  
Evermore and evermore.

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## The Old Rugged Cross

George Bennard

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,  
The emblem of suffering and shame;  
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

### Refrain:

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,  
Till my trophies at last I lay down;  
I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
And exchange it some day for a crown.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true;  
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;  
Then He'll call me some day to my home far away,  
Where His glory forever I'll share.

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## Praise the Name of Jesus

Praise the name of Jesus  
Praise the name of Jesus  
He's my Rock, He's my Fortress  
He's my Deliverer  
In Him shall I trust  
Praise the name of Jesus

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Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV)

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Rejoice In The Lord Always

Evelyn Turner

Rejoice in the Lord always  
Again I say rejoice  
Rejoice in the Lord always  
Again I say rejoice

Rejoice rejoice, Again I say rejoice  
Rejoice rejoice, Again I say rejoice

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Silent Night, Holy Night

Words: Joseph Mohr | Music: Franz Gruber

Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and Child.  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, Shepherds quake at the sight;  
Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light;  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

Public Domain

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The Solid Rock

Edward Mote | William Batchelder Bradbury

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name

Chorus:

On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand

When darkness veils His lovely face  
I rest on His unchanging grace  
In ev'ry high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil

His oath His covenant His blood, Support me in the whelming flood  
When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay

When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
O may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne

Public Domain

**Soon and Very Soon**

Andraé Crouch

Soon and very soon  
We are going to see the King  
Soon and very soon  
We are going to see the King  
Soon and very soon  
We are going to see the King

**Refrain:**

Hallelujah hallelujah  
We're going to see the King

No more crying there...

No more dying there...

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**Spirit of the Living God**

Daniel Iverson

Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me  
Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me  
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me  
Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me

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Springs Of Living Water

John W. Peterson

I thirsted in the barren land  
Of sin and shame  
And nothing satisfying there I found  
But to the blessed cross of Christ  
One day I came  
Where springs of living water did abound

Chorus:

Drinking at the springs of living water  
Happy now am I my soul they satisfy  
Drinking at the springs of living water  
O wonderful and bountiful supply

How sweet the living water  
From the hills of God  
It makes me glad and happy all the way  
Now glory grace and blessing  
Mark the path I've trod  
I'm shouting hallelujah every day

Chorus

O sinner won't you come today to Calvary  
A fountain there is flowing deep and wide  
The Savior now invites you to the water free  
Where thirsting spirits can be satisfied

Chorus

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Standing on the Promises

Russell K. Carter

Standing on the promises of Christ my King,  
Through eternal ages let His praises ring,  
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,  
Standing on the promises of God.

Refrain:

Standing, standing,  
Standing on the promises of God my Savior;  
Standing, standing,  
I'm standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God.

Refrain

Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,  
Bound to Him eternally by love's strong cord,  
Overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword,  
Standing on the promises of God.

Refrain

Standing on the promises I cannot fall,  
List'ning every moment to the Spirit's call,  
Resting in my Savior as my all in all,  
Standing on the promises of God.

Refrain

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Sweet Sweet Spirit

Doris Akers

There's a sweet sweet Spirit in this place  
And I know that it's the Spirit of the Lord  
There are sweet expressions on each face  
And I know they feel the presence of the Lord

Chorus:

Sweet Holy Spirit Sweet heavenly Dove  
Stay right here with us filling us with Your love  
And for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise  
Without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived  
When we shall leave this place

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Thank You Lord

Bessie Sykes | Seth Sykes

Thank You Lord for saving my soul  
Thank You Lord for making me whole  
Thank You Lord for giving to me  
Thy great salvation so rich and free

(repeat)

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There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains: Lose all their guilty stains,  
Lose all their guilty stains;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its pow'r,  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Are safe, to sin no more: Are safe, to sin no more,  
Are safe, to sin no more;  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Are safe, to sin no more.

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There's Something About that Name

Gloria Gaither & William J. Gaither

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus  
There's just something about that name  
Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain  
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, let all Heaven and earth proclaim  
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away,  
But there's something about that name

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Thy Word

Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith

When I feel afraid  
And I think I've lost my way  
Still You're there right beside me  
Nothing will I fear  
As long as You are near  
Please be near me to the end

Chorus:

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
And a light unto my path  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet  
And a light unto my path

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'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

Words: Louisa MR Stead

Music: William J. Kirkpatrick

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to take Him at His Word;  
Just to rest upon His promise,  
And to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"

Refrain:

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er;  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
Oh, for grace to trust Him more!

I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee,  
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;  
And I know that Thou art with me,  
Wilt be with me to the end.

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Were You There?

African American Spiritual

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,

Tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,

Tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,

Tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when He rose up from the grave?

Were you there when He rose up from the grave?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble,

Tremble, tremble.

Were you there when He rose up from the grave?

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We Will Feast in the House of Zion

Sandra McCracken

Chorus:

We will feast in the house of Zion  
We will sing with our hearts restored  
He has done great things we will say together  
We will feast and weep no more

We will not be burned by the fire  
He is the Lord our God  
We are not consumed by the flood  
Upheld protected gathered up

Chorus

In the dark of night before the dawn  
My soul be not afraid  
For the promised morning oh how long  
Oh God of Jacob be my strength

Chorus

Every vow we've broken and betrayed  
You are the faithful one  
And from the garden to the grave  
Bind us together bring shalom

Chorus

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What A Friend We Have in Jesus

Joseph Scriven

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
all because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged;  
take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness;  
take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden,  
cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge--  
take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Do your friends despise, forsake you?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In his arms he'll take and shield you;  
you will find a solace there.

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## What A Gathering

John H. Kurzenknabe

At the sounding of the trumpet,  
When the saints are gathered home,  
We will greet each other by the crystal sea,  
With the friends and all the loved ones  
There awaiting us to come,

### Refrain:

What a gath'ring of the faithful that will be!  
What a gath'ring, gath'ring,  
At the sounding of the glorious jubilee!  
What a gath'ring, gath'ring,  
What a gath'ring of the faithful that will be!

When the angel of the Lord proclaims  
That time shall be no more,  
We shall gather, and the saved and ransomed see;  
Then to meet again together,  
On the bright celestial shore,

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Wonderful Peace

Words: W.E. Cornell | Music: W.G. Cooper

Far away in the depths of my spirit tonight  
Rolls a melody sweeter than psalm;  
In celestial-like strains it unceasingly falls  
O'er my soul like an infinite calm.

Refrain:

Peace, peace, wonderful peace,  
Coming down from the Father above!  
Sweep over my spirit forever, I pray  
In fathomless billows of love!

I am resting tonight in this wonderful peace,  
Resting sweetly in Jesus' control;  
For I'm kept from all danger by night and by day,  
And His glory is flooding my soul!

Refrain

And I think when I rise to that city of peace,  
Where the Author of peace I shall see,  
That one strain of the song which the ransomed will sing  
In that heavenly kingdom will be.

Refrain

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Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me

Jonny Robinson | Michael Farren | Rich Thompson

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer  
There is no more for heaven now to give  
He is my joy my righteousness and freedom  
My steadfast love my deep and boundless peace

To this I hold my hope is only Jesus  
For my life is wholly bound to his  
Oh how strange and divine I can sing all is mine  
Yet not I but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken  
For by my side the Saviour he will stay  
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing  
For in my need his power is displayed

To this I hold my Shepherd will defend me  
Through the deepest valley he will lead  
Oh the night has been won and I shall overcome  
Yet not I but through Christ in me

No fate I dread I know I am forgiven  
The future sure the price it has been paid  
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon  
And he was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold my sin has been defeated  
Jesus now and ever is my plea  
Oh the chains are released I can sing I am free  
Yet not I but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus  
For he has said that he will bring me home  
And day by day I know he will renew me  
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold my hope is only Jesus  
All the glory evermore to him  
When the race is complete still my lips shall repeat  
Yet not I but through Christ in me



Berkshire Institute  
for Christian Studies

# 2026 *Itinerary*

*Daily Hebrew Words,  
Hebrew/Arabic Phrases,  
& Personal Journal*

**BIBLE LANDS**

*Travel Guide*

"Ask for the ancient paths; ask where the good way is,  
and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah 6:16

## 2026 ITINERARY

### **DAY 1 (MAR 11): Depart USA**

### **DAY 2 (MAR 12): Arrive in Tel Aviv**

Arrive in Tel Aviv where you will be met at the airport for transfer to your hotel. Dinner and overnight in Tel Aviv.

### **DAY 3 (MAR 13): To the Sea of Galilee**

Begin by exploring the remnants of the ancient port of Old Jaffa (Joppa) where Jonah boarded a ship to Tarshish after God commanded him to preach to Nineveh. Depart for nearby Caesarea Maritima. In Acts 10 read about Peter's encounter with the god-fearer Cornelius. Paul also stood here before Festus and Felix. View the Pontius Pilate Stone. Continue to Herod's summer home, the stadium, the harbor, and the Roman aqueduct. Depart for Muhraqa (Mt. Carmel) to consider Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal. Lunch is included at a nearby Druze village. Descend Mt. Carmel for the Jezreel Valley and the sites of Megiddo. This is the site of the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). Walk to the overview of the Canaanite circular bama (altar). Explore the ruins and descend into the water tunnel. Cross the Jezreel Valley and proceed to your lodging for the next five nights at Tiberias.

### **DAY 4 (MAR 14): Sea Circle Trip**

Circle the sea visiting sites of Jesus' ministry. Depart Koursi ("demons into the swine") and Bethsaida (home of Peter, Philip, Andrew). Visit the Mt. of Beatitudes, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). Optional is a foot-descent to the seaside of Tabgha. Visit Capernaum, the center for Jesus' Galilean ministry. Board the Jesus Boat, a double-scale replica of a Roman fishing boat, to sail the sea and enjoy some of the inspirational Bible geography references. Lunch included at local restaurant.

### **DAY 5 (MAR 15): Upper Jordan**

Depart on the ancient Via Maris road to Chorazin (one of 3 cities cursed by Jesus), dwellings carved by volcanic basalt. Continue to Hazor (ancient crossroads, largest Canaanite city) for a brief stop. Proceed to Tell Dan. Walk into the Nature Preserve beside the

roaring Dan River (Ps. 42) to Tell Dan (biblical Laish). View the High Place of Jeroboam. After a self-host lunch, proceed to Banias (Caesarea Philippi) to consider Peter's confession of Jesus as Christ. Lunch is provided. Time permitting, visit the palace of Agrippa II. Return via Quneitra to view the Syrian border and continue to Tiberias. On the return trip to Tiberias, travel the Aphek Plateau for an unobstructed view of the Sea of Galilee from Kfar Haruv.

**DAY 6 (MAR 16): Nazareth, Mt. Precipice**

Return to the Jezreel Valley to visit the hometown of Jesus, Nazareth. Visit the Nazareth Village to explore the lifestyles of Jesus' lifetime. Following orientation to the village, a complimentary lunch will be served. Ascend to Nazareth for a Mt. Precipice ridge view of Mt. Tabor and the Jezreel Valley. Visit Mary's Well and the Church of St. Gabriel, as well as the Nazareth Synagogue. Walk to the Basilica of the Annunciation to view an archeological museum and excavations. Depart Nazareth by way of Cana to consider the first recorded miracle of Jesus (John 2). Return to Tiberias.

**DAY 7 (MAR 17): Mt. Arbel, Tel Beth-Shean**

Depart for Mt. Arbel for a dramatic overview of Jesus' public ministry on the north shores of the Sea of Galilee. Motor to the Valley of the Winds below the Arbel. Here one may see the untouched hills and valley as a reminder of what it was like in the days of Jesus. Continue to the seaside ruins of Magdala for the archaeology of a 1st century synagogue. After lunch visit Ma'ayun Harod (Gideon) and descend into the Jordan Valley to Tel Beth Shean. Approach a Roman bridge to ascend the Tel for the presentation of the death of Saul, Israel's first king. Descend to the reconstruction of Scythopolis, the leading city of the Greco-Roman Decapolis. Return to Tiberias. Lunch is included.

**DAY 8 (MAR 18): Samaria, Dead Sea**

Depart for Dothan and Samaria (royal city of the Northern Kingdom) and Sebaste (King Herod). Lunch is included. Continue to Nablus for Tel Balata and nearby Jacob's Well. Continue to the site of Shiloh to consider the tabernacle of Joshua 18:1. Continue to Bethabara (Bethany beyond Jordan) for the excellent Israeli site of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. Return to Jericho to consider

the findings of Dr. Bryant Wood at Jericho's wall. Depart for an oasis-like hotel at the Dead Sea for lodging.

**DAY 9 (MAR 19): Bedouin Tent & Lunch**

Visit Tel Arad and the ancient temple sites on the edge of the Syro-African rift. The north-south stretch of land from the tip of the Dead Sea to the Red Sea is almost 100 miles. Although not a desirable route for ancient caravans, the nomadic Bedouins found subsistence. Ride camels into the Arabah sands. The journey into Makhtesh Ramon is a window of explanations about the Bedouin ways, desert, and the famous spice route. The complimentary lunch will be in a traditional Bedouin tent, and includes traditional Bedouin service and stories. Some Bible scholars note that until one visits the wilderness the land of the Bible has not been visited, since 70% of Bible narratives involve the wilderness. Return to the Dead Sea.

**DAY 10 (MAR 20): Masada, to Jerusalem**

Depart for the Masada fortress and ascend via the tram. Explore the legendary last stand of the Jewish Zealots against the forces of Rome. Explore the dig which includes the Jewish synagogue and the Roman assault ramp. Descend to the Dead Sea and Ein Gedi (David and Saul) and walk the path to the waterfall. Visit Qumran to view the caves. En route to Jerusalem, detour on a Roman Road to the Wadi Qelt (reference to the Parable of the Good Samaritan). From the road, survey the cliffside St. George's Monastery. Return to the highway to visit Lazarus' Tomb in Bethany. Proceed to Jerusalem's Mt. Scopus for a first view of the Old City and an ancient Genesis welcome. Lodging is in Jerusalem.

**DAY 11 (MAR 21): Jerusalem, Bethlehem**

Visit the Mt. of Olives for orientation to Jerusalem's Old City (Ps. 122). Walk on the traditional Palm Sunday route past the Dominus Flevit Church and continue to the Garden of Gethsemane. Proceed to the Dung Gate and ascend the Temple Mount to walk past the Al-Aksa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Continue to the St. Stephen's Gate to visit St. Anne's Crusader Church and the Pool of Bethesda. Walk on the Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Depart for the Judaeen wilderness, the Herodion (Herod's

grave) and to view Shepherds' Fields. Continue to Bethlehem's Manger Square and the Church of the Nativity. Visit an olive wood shop before departure for Jerusalem.

**DAY 12 (MAR 22): Judean Shephelah, Arabah**

Descend Jerusalem on the Beth-horon Road into the Aijalon Valley (the sun stood still). Pass Nahal Sorek (Delilah) and arrive Bethshemesh (Samson, Ark of the Covenant). Continue to the Valley of Elah. Visit Khirbet Qeiyafa (time permitting) to consider an early planned fortified city from the time of David. Ascend Azekah and reference the battle geography of David and Goliath. Depart for Hebron (conditions permitting) to view the extraordinary Herodian building, a classic structure illustrating the stone dressing of Herod the Great, the ancient master builder. Return to Jerusalem.

**DAY 13 (MAR 23): Jerusalem Sightseeing**

Proceed to the Dung Gate to see the joyful ancient tradition of Bar Mitzvahs this morning at the Western Wall. Proceed to the Ophel Ridge to walk on the Herodian pavement, view and touch the Temple foundation, and sit on the Temple steps from Jesus' time, the one place where we know Jesus walked and taught (Lk. 19-21). Proceed to the nearby Hezekiah's Tunnel, (bring old shoes for the knee-deep water) and walk to the Pool of Siloam (Jn. 9). Visit the lower Pool of Siloam. Explore the newly opened Pilgrim's Road. Walking through the Western Wall Tunnel is subject to time confirmation.

**DAY 14 (MAR 24): Jerusalem**

Visit the Jerusalem Garden Tomb. There will be time for personal reflection. Proceed to the Damascus Gate and walk through the shuq (old city) to the Western Wall. Continue to the eastern slope of Mt. Zion for the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu. Ascend the Mt. Zion entry into the Old City to visit the Upper Room. Walk to the Cardo and Hezekiah's Broad Wall. Enter the Wohl Museum to view the upper Jerusalem of Jesus' time. Motor to the Israel Museum to view the biblical archaeology and the 1/50 model of Jerusalem in the Herodian period. Nearby is the Shrine of the Book.

**DAY 15 (MAR 25): Departure**

Today we will transfer to the airport for our return trip home

## DAILY HEBREW WORDS

Day 3	ERETZ	<i>land</i>	Genesis 12:1-3
Day 4	TALMID	<i>disciple</i>	Matthew 28:19-20
Day 5	PESEL	<i>idol</i>	1 Kings 12:26-29
Day 6	BESORAH	<i>good news</i>	Isaiah 52:7
Day 7	KAVANAH	<i>direction, attention</i>	Psalms 24:3-4
Day 8	MAYIM HAYIM	<i>living water</i>	John 4:10
Day 9	EMUNAH	<i>faith, faithfulness</i>	Genesis 15:6
Day 10	BERAKH	<i> bless</i>	Deuteronomy 8:10
Day 11	ANI	<i>humble, gentle, poor</i>	Zechariah 9:9
Day 12	BEN ADAM	<i>Son of Man</i>	Luke 21:27
Day 13	VE'AHAVTA	<i>you shall love</i>	Matthew 22:37-40
Day 14	SHALOM	<i>peace</i>	John 14:27

## ESSENTIAL GREETINGS & PHRASES

Israel is multilingual—Hebrew and Arabic coexist alongside English. Learning a few words shows respect and builds connection.

### Hebrew Phrases

Hello/Peace/Goodbye – **Shalom** [*shah-LOHM*]

The most versatile word. Use anytime, anywhere.

Peace be upon you – **Shalom aleichem** [*shah-LOHM ah-LAY-khem*]

Response: "**Aleichem shalom**" [*ah-LAY-khem shah-LOHM*]

Good morning – **Boker tov** [*BOH-ker tohv*]

Good evening – **Erev tov** [*EH-rev tohv*]

Good night – **Laila tov** [*LIE-lah tohv*]

Sabbath peace – **Shabbat shalom** [*shah-BAHT shah-LOHM*]

Use Friday afternoon through Saturday evening. Appropriate when visiting Jewish areas or shops closing early on Friday.

Thank you – **Todah** [*toh-DAH*]

Thank you very much – **Todah rabah** [*toh-DAH rah-BAH*]

### Arabic Phrases

Peace/Hello (casual) – **Salam** [*sah-LAHM*]

Peace be upon you – **As-salaam alaikum** [*ahs-sah-LAHM ah-LAY-koom*]

Response: "**Wa alaikum as-salaam**" [*wah ah-LAY-koom ahs-sah-LAHM*]

Hello (informal) – **Marhaba** [*mar-HAH-bah*]

Good morning – **Sabah al-khayr** [*sah-BAH ah-KHAYR*]

Response: "**Sabah an-noor**" [*sah-BAH ahn-NOOR*], meaning "morning of light."

Thank you – **Shukran** [*SHOOK-rah*]

You're welcome – **Afwan** [*AHF-wahn*]

Let's go/Come on – **Yalla** [*YAH-lah*]

You'll hear this everywhere—a friendly way to say "let's get moving!"

God willing – **Inshallah** [*in-SHAH-lah*]

Expresses hope while acknowledging God's sovereignty. Heard constantly in everyday conversation.

























































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"Ask for the ancient paths; ask where the good way is,  
and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls."

- Jeremiah 6:16