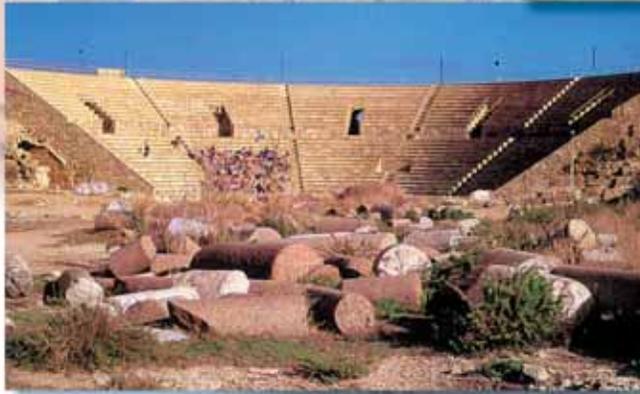




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# Israel Tour

## Israel History & Scripture Reference

### Israel

Israel was the new name given to Jacob, which means "ruling with God" (Genesis 32:28). The twelve tribes of Israel were created by the descendants of Israel's twelve sons. These tribes became known as the nation of Israel. The Northern Kingdom later became known as Israel. Israel was a term used to refer to God's true and obedient people in the New Testament.

*"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Genesis 32:28).*

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### Caesarea

Herod the Great built the city of Caesarea between 22 & 10 B.C. and named it in honor of Caesar Augustus. Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine, is an 8,000 acre site which is located 23 miles south of Mount Carmel on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Caesarea became the administrative capital of the Province of Judea, where the Roman procurators, or governors, resided. Three Roman governors of Palestine lived there: Felix (Acts 24), Festus (Acts 25), and Pontius Pilate (John 19). Archeologists found Pilate's name carved in stone in the theater at Caesarea. In New Testament times, Caesarea served as the major seaport of Judea. Herod built a harbor that could shelter ships from Mediterranean storms.

Herod wanted the city to be Hellenistic, accommodating mainly non-Jewish populations; however, there were still a significant number of Jews who resided in the city. Cornelius, a Roman officer, was converted to Christianity in Caesarea (Acts 10:1, 24). Peter's mission to Caesarea helped to expand the Christian population among the Gentiles (Acts 10). The apostle Peter visited Philip, who was a prominent Christian leader who lived there (Acts 21:8). Caesarea was also the place of Paul's imprisonment for two years, before his journey to Rome. In AD 70 Roman general Titus returned to Caesarea after conquering Jerusalem, as did Flavius Silva in AD 73 after defeating the fortress cities of Masada and Herodium. During the Byzantine period,

Caesarea became a center of Christian learning.

Since 1971, excavations have added much information about Caesarea. A very productive aqueduct was built by King Herod, which brought freshwater from Mount Carmel to Caesarea. This water traveled underground, originating from springs to the northeast. A smaller aqueduct was also used for irrigation. Large sewers have been found running under the city as well. A 30,000 seat hippodrome (racetrack) was also built on the east side of the city. However it was destroyed during the Muslim invasion of 640, along with a large archives building on the coast. Two quotations of the Greek text of Romans 13:3 were found inscribed on mosaic floors in the archives building during excavation. Still visible today is the large amphitheater northwest of the hippodrome. In 1976, excavations produced the first evidence of Strato's Tower, the Hellenistic site near which Herod built Caesarea, according to Josephus. Also, a small synagogue was excavated north of a large fort built at the Herodian harbor during the Crusades. This harbor area contained many stone storerooms; many of which have still not been excavated. The only one ever found in Palestine was reused by the Roman legions as a Mithraeum (a cultic center dedicated to the Persian god Mithras). The city of Caesarea was never rebuilt after its destruction by Muslims in the thirteenth century.

*"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him..." (John 19:1-42).*

*"Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus" (Acts 9:30).*

*"And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends"(Acts 10:24).*

*"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him"(Acts 21:8).*

*"We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness..."(Acts 24:3-27).*

*"Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem..."(Acts 25:1-27).*

## **Mt. Carmel**

Carmel is a mountainous ridge extending about twenty miles along the Mediterranean Sea and jutting southeastward into the Jezreel Valley. Its greatest width at the southeast is thirteen miles; its highest point 1,742 feet. The ridge is made of the same Cenomanian limestone as makes up the central mountain range of Palestine. Haifa, located on Carmel's northwestern corner, contains harbors for ships passing in the ocean; several Jewish settlements are also nestled in Mount Carmel's slopes, and two large Druze villages. (Druzes are members of a particular Muslim sect.) The plain of Sharon extends to the south.

In ancient times oak trees, olive groves, and vineyards grew around Mt. Carmel, which explains why it is known for its beauty and fertility (Isaiah 33:9; 35:2). "Carmel" is a contraction of a Hebrew word meaning "vineyard" or "garden of God." Robbers and outcasts used this area as a hiding place, because of the many dense wild plants and gorges and caves (Amos 9:3). Today, Carmel is still forested, and large parts of it have been made a nature reserve. Solomon described his beloved by saying, "Your head is as majestic as Mount Carmel" (Song of Solomon 7:5), possibly comparing her hair to the thick, luxuriant foliage of Carmel.

Conquerors and traders often avoided Mount Carmel's military base and moved through the Jezreel Valley to the east or the Zebulun Valley to the northeast. There were important passes that cut through the mountain, which linked the plains of Sharon and Esdraelon. Early in the fifteenth century BC, that route was taken by Pharaoh Thutmose III and also by British Lord Allenby when he conquered Palestine in 1918. The tribal territories of Asher, Zebulun, Issachar, and Manasseh met at Mount Carmel, although possession of the mountain's heights was never fully settled.

The crowning event of Elijah's ministry took place on Mount Carmel. Elijah the prophet challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Elijah was not the first to build a Hebrew altar on the mountain; the Bible describes him as repairing a ruined "altar of the LORD" before offering his sacrifice (1 Kings 18:30). According to tradition, that contest took place at Qeren ha-Carmel, located at 1,581 feet, overlooking the Jezreel Valley. The brook Kishon flows through that valley and around to the north of Carmel before emptying into the Bay of Acre (1 Kings 18:40).

*"So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel" (1 Kings 18:20).*

*"It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God" (Isaiah 35:2).*

*"And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence..." (Amos 9:3).*

## **Megiddo**

Located west of Jordan at the edge of the fertile Jezreel Valley, this important city guarded the main pass of the International Coastal Highway leading into the valley. This strategic position made Megiddo one of the most important commercial and military centers of Palestine from 2000 to early 1000 B.C. Megiddo was the scene of many Old Testament battles. Great military men, such as Thutmose III of Egypt (15th century B.C.), Napoleon in 1799, and General Allenby during World War I, have fought for mastery there. King Thutmose III (1504-1450 B.C.) defeated a coalition of Canaanite kings at Megiddo. It is also the place where king Ahaziah (2

Kings 9:27) and Josiah (2 Kings 23:29-30) died.

Although he did not take the city, Joshua defeated the king of Megiddo at the time of the Israelite conquest of Canaan (Joshua 12:21). The land was later divided among the tribes of Israel and Megiddo was assigned to Manasseh. However, they could not conquer it from the Canaanites (Joshua 17:11-12; Judges 1:27). Deborah and Barak defeated the forces of Hazor under the command of Sisera near Megiddo, but they did not take the city either (Judges 4:15; Judges 5:19). King David might have conquered the land as part of his program for establishing the kingdom. By the time of King Solomon, Megiddo served as the headquarters of one of his twelve administrative regions (1 Kings 4:12). Later, Solomon rebuilt the city in order to serve as one of his chariot and garrison cities (1 Kings 9:15-19). The plain of Megiddo (valley of Megiddon, KJV) is referred to in Zechariah's prophecies that Israel and Jerusalem would be restored (Zechariah 12:11). Revelation 16:16 mentions the numerous conflicts fought over control of this valley, also known as Armageddon (Har Megiddon, the "mount of Megiddo").

*"Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and her towns...nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land" (Judges 1:27).*

*"And this is the reason of the levy which King Solomon raised; for to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer" (1 Kings 9:15).*

*"In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon" (Zechariah 12:11).*

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

## **Cana**

Cana was a village in Galilee, located four miles northwest of Nazareth. Jesus performed His first miracles in Cana. He changed the water into wine (John 2:1, 11) and healed an official's son who lived in Capernaum (John 4:46-50). Nathaneal, one of Jesus' disciples, and possibly Simon came from Cana (John 21:2).

Cana was made headquarters for defending Galilee against the Romans during the first Jewish revolt, which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. After this destruction, the town became the seat of the priestly family of Eliashib. John's Gospel refers to it as "Cana of Galilee," in order to distinguish it from Kanah, located near Tyre (Joshua 19:28). Since Byzantine and medieval times, the traditional site of Cana has been Kefar Kana, about four miles east of Nazareth on the main road from Nazareth to Tiberias. However, contemporary scholars have almost unanimously settled on Khirbet Kana as the site of New Testament Cana. This site is located eight miles north of Nazareth on the northern edge of the Battuf Plain. To this day it is called Cana of Galilee by the Arabs of the region. Pottery from the Hebrew monarchy period, as

well as from Hellenistic, Roman, Arabic, and Crusader times, has been found by archeologists.

*"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him" (John 2:11).*

*"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum..." (John 4:46-50).*

## **Nazareth**

Jesus grew up in Nazareth; a small village in Galilee located seventy miles north of Jerusalem. It is first mentioned in the New Testament as the home of Mary and Joseph (Luke 1:26-27). Nazareth is located about 15 miles west of the Sea of Galilee and 20 miles east of the Mediterranean. Jerusalem lies about 70 miles south. It was located in the rocky limestone hills, overlooking the Jezreel Valley. It is situated on three sides of a hill. This location forms a sheltered valley with a moderate climate favorable to fruits and wildflowers. Archeologists found that the ancient town was higher on the western hill than the present village (compare Luke 4:29). Although trade routes and roads passed near Nazareth, the village itself was not on any main road.

Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha (ancient writings not included in the Bible), Jewish writings, or the histories of Josephus. Nathanael remarked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see" (John 1:46). Jesus' public ministry began in Nazareth. He later left the village to be baptized by John in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9). When John was arrested, Jesus moved to Capernaum (Matthew 4:13). Though Jesus was often identified by his boyhood city as "Jesus of Nazareth" (John 18:5, 7), the New Testament records only one subsequent visit by Jesus to Nazareth. During this visit, Jesus preached in the local synagogue and claimed that Isaiah's prophecies were coming true to the oppressed people. He was then rejected by the townspeople (Luke 4:16-30). Jesus' followers were also known as "Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). The angel Gabriel announced in Nazareth that Mary would bear a Son whose name would be called Jesus (Luke 1:26).

Nazareth remained a Jewish city until the time of the emperor Constantine (AD 327), when it became a sacred place for Christian pilgrims. In about AD 600, a large basilica was built in Nazareth. The village was alternately controlled by Arabs and Crusaders until 1517, when it fell to the Turks, who forced all Christians to leave. In 1620, Christians returned and the town became an important Christian center.

*"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matthew 2:23).*

*"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16).*

*"For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5).*

## **Tiberias**

Founded by Herod Antipas about A.D. 18, Tiberias was one of the two cities that dominated Lower Galilee later that century. It is located midway along the western shores of Lake Galilee. Herod named the city in honor of the emperor Tiberius. Today the name is preserved in the town Tabariyeh. The site became Herod's new capital after abandoning Sepphoris, which he built in 4 B.C. Tiberias had several advantages because of its location. It lay just below a rocky projection above the lake, a natural acropolis that offered good protection. It was a center where roads from north, south, and west met, allowing Herod to move readily to various parts of his domain. To the south lay famous warm springs, which were known to the Roman writer Pliny the Elder. He spoke of their health-giving qualities. A lakeside palace was built by Herod, with the security of a naturally fortified acropolis lying behind him. This palace would let in a panoramic view of Galilee.

After a burial ground was discovered during the building of the town, Jews abandoned the site. The town was settled by a group of Gentiles, some under the orders of Herod. Herod fostered population growth by offering nice houses and plenty of land to all who lived there. According to the Gospels, Jesus never went to Tiberias, probably because of the pollution caused by corpses. The town of Tiberias is only mentioned once in the New Testament, after the feeding of the five thousand. The Sea of Tiberias, or Lake Galilee, is referred to in John 6:1 and John 21:1.

*"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias" (John 6:1).*

*"The day after Jesus walked on the sea a crowd from Tiberias pursued Him across the sea to Capernaum..." (John 6:22-25).*

*"Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks" (John 6:23).*

## **Sea of Galilee**

The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake thirteen miles long and seventeen miles wide. The lake is surrounded on all sides by higher land because the surface of the lake is 690 feet below sea level. It lies in the lower section of the Jordan Valley. It is located about 60 miles north of Jerusalem in a range of mountains. The mountains of Upper Galilee are northwest of the lake and rise to a height of 4,000 feet above sea level, while the mountains on the east and west ascend about 2,000 feet. The Decapolis is found on the west, south, and east. The mountain wall flattens into the plain of Gennesaret at the northwest corner of the lake. At about 2,000 feet above sea level, it gives way to El Batila in the northeast. Where the Jordan River enters the sea. During the New Testament, the sea was surrounded by the towns of Capernaum, Bethsaida,

Korazin, Magdala, Tiberias, and others.

This lake has many names, beginning with Sea of Chinnereth (Numbers 34:11), which is found in the Old Testament. The name was later changed to Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1). Because the town of Tiberias is on the shore, it was also called the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1, 23, and 21:1). King Herod built the town near the warm springs of Hamath by the sea around AD 26 and named it for the emperor. People began to call it the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:18) because it is close to the province of Galilee. In the New Testament, "the sea" identifies it as the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee is one of the five divisions found in the Jordan Rift, which drains 70 percent of the land of Palestine. In its 65-mile course from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, the Jordan River drops 590 feet, an average of about nine feet per mile. This lake provided fishing industries and agriculture products to many local towns and villages. After being rejected by His home village, Jesus moved his ministry to the Sea of Galilee, where He performed many miracles and teachings. Jesus calmed the storm on the lake for His disciples and also appeared walking on the water of Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 6:47-52).

*"And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" (Matthew 8:26).*

*"Now as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers" (Mark 1:16).*

*"And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out..." (Mark 6:48-49).*

## **Capernaum**

This city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee became Jesus' home base for His ministry. This name means "village of Nahum," although there is no knowledge as to who Nahum was. Capernaum was located in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali (Matthew 4:13). The west shore of the lake was settled by the tribe of Naphtali. Its location was described as being near the border of the Jordan and the political frontier. Such a frontier town is told about in the story of the centurion (8:5; Luke 7:2).

Through excavation and Jewish evidence, Tell Hum has been revealed as the site for ancient Capernaum. During the excavations, a private house was uncovered beneath a fourth-century Jewish-Christian place of meeting. In the first half of the second century, this house served as an assembly hall for the early Christians. It was very likely the home of Peter as well, through findings of inscriptions and reports from early Christian travelers.

Matthew refers to Capernaum as "Jesus' own city" (Matthew 9:1). Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever, healed two paralytics, and raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Matthew

8:5-17; Mark 2:1-22; Luke 8:40-56). Jesus called His first disciples from the villagers and fishermen nearby. He called Matthew to be His disciple from a station selling goods located in the vicinity of Capernaum. Although He taught much in the local synagogue and performed many miracles, few people from the city were among his followers. This caused Jesus to grieve over the city for its lack of faith (Matthew 11:20-24). Because of the city's refusal to believe and repent, there was a heavy curse imposed on Capernaum (Matthew 11:23).

*"And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim" (Matthew 4:13).*

*"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him..." (Matthew 8:5-17).*

*"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret..." (Luke 5:1-11).*

## **Mount of Beatitudes**

This is the mountain where Jesus was followed by great multitudes to listen to his sermon of Beatitudes. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven..." (Matthew 5:3-12). These statements tell who's blessed and the reason that they are blessed.

*"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him..." (Matthew 5:1).*

*"When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him" (Matthew 8:1).*

## **Dan**

This city lay at the southern base of Mount Hermon and was the northernmost point of the ancient Israelite kingdom. It was also used as a topographical marker in the phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" (2 Samuel 3:10). Dan was a Phoenician city, originally named Leshem (Joshua 19:47) or Laish (Judges 18:7), which was conquered by Dan's tribe when they migrated northward.

Dan was also a very important commercial center, because it guarded a major trading route running between Damascus and Tyre. The Huleh Valley, below Dan, was very lush and fertile because of the great water sources from the Jordan River. There was an abundant amount of grain and vegetables produced in this territory, as well as plenty of supplies to feed the flocks and herds of animals.

Eventually Israel separated into two kingdoms. When Jeroboam I became king of the northern kingdom of Israel, Dan housed one of two shrines where golden calves were worshiped. Even

Jehu's drastic purge did not defeat the worship of Baal at Dan. The city fell under Syrian control (2 Kings 10:28-32) during Ben-hadad's reign. Dan was later re-conquered by the northern kingdom when the Syrians were attempting to ward off Assyrian attacks during the time of Jeroboam III (793-753 BC). Its inhabitants were deported to Assyria (2 Kings 17:6) by Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC). The site did continue to be inhabited (Jeremiah 4:15; 8:16), and its acropolis was used for worship. During Greek and Roman times, the area was enlarged and in the New Testament times, it was eclipsed by Caesarea, which was located very close to Dan.

*"And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father" (Joshua 19:47).*

*"To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba" (2 Samuel 3:10).*

*"For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim" (Jeremiah 4:15).*

## **Caesarea Philippi**

Located on the southern slopes of Mount Hermon near the ancient city of Dan, this city is found at the northern extremity of Palestine. It lies in the Wadi Banias, a beautiful area near the Jordan River. It was called Panion in the second century BC, because the Greek god Pan was worshiped in a cave nearby. It was also the place where the King Antiochus III, of Syria, defeated the Ptolemies of Egypt in a crucial battle in 200 BC. "Panium" was governed by Zenodorus, according to Jewish historian Josephus (Antiquities 15.10.3). Josephus writes its cultic site was "a very fine cave in a mountain, under which there is a great cavity in the earth, and the cavern is abrupt, and prodigiously deep, and full of a still water; over it hangs a vast mountain, and under the caverns arise the springs of the river Jordan."

Augustus Caesar gave the city to Herod the Great after the death of Zenodorus. King Herod then gave the territory to his third son, Philip, when he died in 4 BC. Philip built his capital and named it Caesarea Philippi, after the Roman emperor Tiberius Caesar and himself. This distinguished it from the larger Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast. This territory was also known as Panias, an area sacred to the Graeco-Roman nature god. Herod and Philip also built a temple in this capital dedicated to Caesar.

Caesarea Philippi is where Jesus asked His disciples "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" and Peter made his confession that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-16). The transfiguration of Jesus probably took place here as well. King Agrippa II enlarged Caesarea Philippi in about AD 50 and named it Neronias in honor of the emperor Nero. The modern name, Banias, derives from the Arabic difficulty in pronouncing

Panias.

*"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16).*

## **Jordan River**

The Jordan River originates above the Sea of Galilee and meanders south through the Jordan Valley two hundred miles to end in the Dead Sea. This river lies in the bottom of a great canyon called the Jordan Rift, an elongated depression stretching from lower southwest Asia Minor (Syria) to the Gulf of Aqaba. The rift was once filled by the Lisan Lake, but geological activity caused it to recede, and the result was the formation of three separate bodies: the Huleh Lake, the Sea of Galilee, and the Dead Sea. Each of these bodies of water is fed by the Jordan River even to this day. In Hebrew, Jordan River means "the descender." The Jordan is comprised of four separate streams: Bereighith, Hasani, el-Liddani, and Baniyas. In the northwest corner of the Huleh Valley, the Bereighith emerges within the area of Merj Ayoun, flowing from a spring located on a modest knoll west of Mount Hermon. To the east is the Hasbani, a stream that descends from a spring 1,700 feet above sea level and follows a course of about 24 miles. These two smaller streams merge less than a mile above where they merge with the el-Liddani and the Baniyas. The el-Liddani is located near Tel el-Qadi (the biblical city of Dan). The most powerful stream of the four, it is fed by 'Ain Leddan, a spring that is nestled among thick underbrush and is fed by the melting snows off Mount Hermon. The el-Liddani meets the Baniyas, the last of the four streams. The Baniyas originates from a cave approximately 1,100 feet above sea level in the northeast corner of the Huleh Valley (Caesarea Philippi) and follows a steep descent before it joins with others. These four streams, making up the Jordan River, flow together along a southerly course of 10 miles before entering Huleh Lake.

The Jordan River played a very important role in Biblical times. It is the river that the Israelites crossed to enter the Promised Land of Canaan (Joshua 3:14-17). The fords of the Jordan were the sites of conflict in the war of Jephthah and the Gileadites against the Ephraimites (Judges 12:1-6). The prophet Elijah sought refuge from Ahab king of Israel by the brook of Kerith east of the Jordan (1 Kings 17:1-5). Elisha followed Elijah to the Jordan River, where he watched Elijah ascend into heaven by a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:6-12). Naaman, the Syrian general, bathed in the Jordan at the command of Elisha and his leprosy was healed (2 Kings 5:8-14). Elisha made the ax float at the Jordan River (2 Kings 6:1-7). The Jordan River also marked the division between the tetrarchy of Philip and that of Herod Antipas. It is also the river in which John baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17). Peter confessed that Jesus was the "Christ, the Son of the living God" at Caesarea Philippi, located on one of the sources of the Jordan, Baniyas (Matthew 16:13-20). Jesus healed two blind men at Jericho, which is near the Jordan (Matthew 20:29-34) and visited with Zacchaeus in that same city (Luke 19:1-10).

*"And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people..." (Joshua 3:14-17).*

*"And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan..." (2*

*Kings 2:6-12).*

*"Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong..." (Jeremiah 49:19).*

*"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him..." (Matthew 3:13-17).*

## **Bethany beyond the Jordan**

The Jordan River site is along the major east-west trade route. The site is midway between Amman, Jordan and Jerusalem, directly east of and in view of Jericho. It was also along the north-south route for those traveling between the Galilee region and Jerusalem.

**Baptismal of Jesus** - Matthew 3:13-17 & corresponding passages in the other three Gospels. Jordan claims this place as the baptism site of Jesus by John the Baptist, but actually it can be claimed by Israel as well. John the Baptist was baptizing in this well traveled area, calling for repentance and "prepare ye the way of the Lord" for the coming Messiah.

**Crossing the Jordan to the Promised Land** – Joshua 3:1-4:24 This is the location of the Israel encampment and the crossing of the Jordan River led by Joshua and the Arc of the Covenant into the "Promised Land."

**Elijah ascends to heaven** - 2 Kings 2:5-14 The hill on the east of the Jordan River is the site where Elijah passed the mantle on to Elisha and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

## **Beth- Shan**

There are traces of an ancient settlement here in the well watered and fertile northern part of the Jordan Valley. This Palestinian town is located fifteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee and four miles west of the Jordan River. It stood at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, guarding an important Jordan River crossing. It was one of the key cities that developed at points where natural routes connected the highlands to the east and west.

When the Philistines defeated Israel under King Saul at the battle on Mount Gilboa, Beth-Shan was a Philistine city. The slain bodies of Saul and his sons were hung on the city wall. Saul's head was displayed in the temple of Dagon, a Philistine deity (1 Samuel 31:10-13; 2 Samuel 21:12-14; 1 Chronicles 10:8-10). Later, the city became a part of David's kingdom.

Beth-Shan contains the ancient tell from the Old Testament, which towers above the city of Scythopolis. Two Egyptian texts found at Tell-el Husn, a mound, indicate that this is the same area as Beth-Shan. The tell, or mound, is 213 feet high and about one-half mile in circumference at its base. An inscribed stone, called a stele, was found at Beth-Shan that tells the story of Seti

I's victory over Habiru.

The area that included Beth-Shan was given to Issachar's tribe at the time of Israel's conquest of Canaan. Eventually, Manasseh's tribe took it over (Joshua 17:11). It was then added into the district of Baanah under King Solomon (1 Kings 4:12). The city is thought to have been destroyed by Shishak (Sheshonk I), pharaoh of Egypt in the tenth century B.C. During the remainder of the Old Testament period, Beth-Shan was insignificant.

Beth-Shan received the name of Scythopolis during the Hellenistic period because it was settled by a colony of Scythian mercenaries serving the Egyptian king Ptolemy II. This strategic site also held an Egyptian military base, which were also located in other surrounding areas. Greek deities Dionysus and Zeus had temples built in honor of them. Eventually, Beth-Shan became an important administrative center under the rule of the Hasmonean kings. It prospered as a member of the league of Greco-Roman commercial cities called Decapolis (Matthew 4:25; Mark 7:31) and was the only league member west of the Jordan.

*"And they put his armor in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-Shan..." (1 Samuel 31:10-12).*

*"And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa..." (2 Samuel 21:12-14).*

*"And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa..." (1 Chronicles 10:8-10).*

*"And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan" (Matthew 4:25).*

## **Jericho**

Jericho was an ancient city on the west side of the Jordan River. The name Jericho may be connected to the ancient name of the Canaanite moon god. The Hebrew words for moon, month, new moon, and Jericho are very similar. It is also associated with the words for spirit or smell. The pleasant fragrances of the fruits and spices in the land may have helped to name the place. In the Old Testament, it is referred to as "the city of palm trees" (Deuteronomy 34:3; 2 Chronicles 28:15). Jericho was located about five miles from the southern-most fords and about ten miles northwest of the Dead Sea. It lies nearly 1,000 feet below sea level and about 3,500 feet below Jerusalem, which was only 17 miles away. As Jesus said in the parable of the good Samaritan, "down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (Luke 10:30).

Before the Bible first mentions Jericho in connection with the exodus from Egypt, it was a large and thriving city for centuries. Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is dated back to the Neolithic Age ten thousand years ago. There are three main reasons primitive people would have chosen this site as a settlement and as a key city. 1) It has a plentiful spring, now called Elisha's Fountain (2 Kings 2:18-22). 2) It has a warm climate in the winter, although "hot"

describes it in the summer. 3) It is strategically placed at a Jordan ford and at the base of several routes leading westward to the foothills. Many different populations have come and gone in Jericho, however, the civilizations grew more complex over the years. The food-gathering population gave way to a relatively complex urban society, which included kings, soldiers, and guest houses. Jericho was developed this way when Joshua arrived there. The first certain identification of its inhabitants occurs in Numbers 13:29: "The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."

In the Old Testament, Jericho is best known because of Joshua's conquest of the city by encircling it and blowing the trumpets in obedience to God's command. Israel had spent some time on the east bank of the Jordan in the plains of Moab (Numbers 22:1; Numbers 26:3, 63). Jericho was targeted as the first military objective in the conquest. Before crossing the Jordan and establishing camp at Gilgal, Joshua sent spies ahead to Jericho. Rahab the harlot took them in and later helped them escape. For her cooperation, she and her family were spared when Israel destroyed the city (Joshua 2:1; Joshua 6:1). Because Jericho was such a strategic oasis, if it could be taken, the way into the mountains of Canaan would lay open. The fall of the city itself occurred after the Israelites had marched around it in silence, except for the continual blowing of trumpets, once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. As the priests blew the trumpets, the people shouted and the walls collapsed. Joshua laid a curse on anyone who might rebuild Jericho (Joshua 6:26). Five hundred years later, Hiel rebuilt the city at the cost of two of his sons (1 Kings 16:34). Joshua's victory has led to major excavations at Tel es Sultan, the mound of ancient Jericho.

Jericho appears throughout the rest of the Old Testament. In 2 Samuel 10:5 David had his humiliated ambassadors wait there until their beards grew back (see also 1 Chronicles 19:5). It was also where many of the prophets lived, as well as a headquarters for Elisha (2 Kings 2:5; 1 Samuel 10:5). A return of prisoners also took place there at the time of Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:15). Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. and King Zedekiah fled to land near Jericho, but was caught by Babylonians. The Babylonians took out his eyes at a place called Riblah in Syria (2 Kings 25:5; Jeremiah 39:5; Jeremiah 52:8). Jericho is mentioned in the census lists of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2:34; Nehemiah 7:36). Men from Jericho also helped rebuild the Jerusalem wall (Nehemiah 3:2).

King Herod built the Jericho of the New Testament more than a mile to the south of the Old Testament site. In the New Testament Jericho is the home of Zacchaeus, the wealthy chief tax collector of the new Roman Jericho. As Jesus passed through Jericho (Luke 19:1) he met and ate with Zacchaeus. Jesus also healed blind men while passing from the site of ancient Jericho (Matthew 20:29) to the Herodian Jericho (Luke 18:35). The parable of the good Samaritan also took place in Jericho (Luke 10:30-37).

In 1868, Charles Warren first excavated Jericho. It was then excavated by Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger in 1907-11, and then by John Garstang in 1930-36. Although Garstang thought he had found the wall that fell before the Israelites, the investigations by Kathleen Kenyon in 1952-56 showed that the topmost level of ruins was already too early to tell anything of the city of Joshua's day. Kathleen Kenyon uncovered and interpreted many layers of civilizations that date back to 8000 B.C. at Jericho. The Neolithic tower has also been uncovered through

excavations.

Although Jericho was of small consequence after its destruction under Joshua, the Jericho of Herod was a city of beauty and importance. Eventually this Jericho decayed with the decline of Roman influence in the Middle East. There have been writings of pilgrims to the Holy Land that have taught us what we now know of the modern city of Jericho. They usually report seeing certain things of Biblical significance, such as the tree that Zacchaeus climbed. They also report that Jericho was a filthy, wretched Muslim village. It remained that way until recently, when it grew in size and importance as a major West Bank City.

*"And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho..." (Joshua 2:1).*

*"Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in" (Joshua 6:1).*

*"And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho..." (Joshua 6:26).*

*"And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives... and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria" (2 Chronicles 28:15).*

*"But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him" (Jeremiah 52:8).*

*"And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him" (Matthew 20:29).*

*"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves..." (Luke 10:30-37).*

*"And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging..." (Luke 18:35-43).*

## **Dead Sea**

The Dead Sea is both the lowest point in Eurasia at 418 meters (1,371 ft) below sea level and falling, and the deepest hypersaline lake in the world at 330 m (1,083 ft) deep and 799 m (2,621 ft) below sea level. It is also one of the saltiest bodies of water on Earth with a salinity of about 30%. This is about 8.6 times greater than the average ocean salinity. It measures 67 kilometers (42 mi) long, up to 18 kilometers (11 mi) wide, and is located on the border between the West Bank, Israel, and Jordan, and lies in the Jordan Rift Valley. The main tributary is the Jordan River.

The Dead Sea has attracted interest and visitors from around the Mediterranean basin for thousands of years. It was a place of refuge for King David, it was one of the world's first health resorts for Herod the Great, and it has been the supplier of products as diverse as balms for Egyptian mummification to potash for fertilizers.

In Arabic the Dead Sea is called Al Bahr al Mayyit meaning "the Dead Sea", or less commonly Bahr Lūt meaning "the Sea of Lot". Historically, another Arabic name was the "Sea of Zoar", after a nearby town. In Hebrew the Dead Sea is called the Yam ha-Melakh - meaning "sea of salt", or Yam ha-Mavet - meaning "sea of death". In past times it was the "Eastern Sea" or the "Sea of Arava". To the Greeks, the Dead Sea was "Lake Asphaltites"

The Jordan River is the only major stream flowing into Dead Sea. There are no outlet streams. The water level is receding to alarming levels due mostly to irrigation of the Jordan River, both in Israel & Jordan. Plans are being discussed to dig a channel from the Red Sea, Gulf of Aqaba in order to bring it back to past levels.

It is important to read Ezekiel's prophecy regarding this body of water in Ezekiel 47:7-10, 18

#### **Called at various times:**

##### The Salt Sea

*"All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea." Geneses 14:3*  
*"And the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about." Numbers 34:12*

##### The Sea of the Plains

*"The plain also, and Jordan, and the coast thereof, from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, under Ashdoth-pisgah eastward." Deuteronomy 3:17*  
*"And all the plain on the east side of the Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah." Deuteronomy 4:49*

##### The East Sea

*"But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into the land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder parts toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savor shall come up, because he hath done great things."*  
Joel 2:20

##### The Former Sea

*"And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out of Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter it shall be."*  
Zechariah 14:8

## **Masada**

Masada is the name for a site of ancient palaces and fortifications in the South District of Israel on top of an isolated rock plateau on the eastern edge of the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea. Masada became famous for its significance in the First Jewish-Roman War (Great Jewish Revolt), when a siege of the fortress by troops of the Roman Empire led to a mass suicide of the site's Jewish defenders when defeat became imminent.

### **Geography**

The cliffs on the east edge of Masada are about 451 m high, dropping off to the Dead Sea, and the cliffs on the west are about 100 m high; the natural approaches to the cliff top are very difficult. The top of the plateau is flat and rhomboid-shaped, about 600 by 300 m. The center of the plateau is at 31°18'55"N, 35°21'13"E. There was a casemate wall around the top of the plateau totaling 1400 m long and 4 m thick with many towers, and the fortress included storehouses, barracks, an armory, the palace, and cisterns that were refilled by rainwater. Three narrow, winding paths led from below to fortified gates.

### **History**

According to Flavius Josephus, a first century Jewish Roman historian, Herod the Great fortified Masada between 37 and 31 BCE as a refuge for himself in the event of a revolt. In 66 CE, at the beginning of the First Jewish-Roman War (also called the Great Jewish Revolt) against the Roman Empire, a group of Jewish rebels called the Zealots took Masada from the Roman garrison stationed there. In 70 CE, they were joined by additional Zealots and their families who were expelled from Jerusalem by the other Jews living there shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem (and the Second Temple). For the next two years they used Masada as their base for raiding and harassing Roman and Jewish settlements alike.

In 72 CE, the Roman governor of Iudaea, Lucius Flavius Silva, marched against Masada with the Roman legion X Fretensis and laid siege to the fortress. After failed attempts to breach the wall, they built a circumvallation wall and then a rampart against the western face of the plateau, using thousands of tons of stones and beaten earth. Josephus does not record any major attempts by the Zealots to counterattack the besiegers during this process. This is significantly different from his accounts of other sieges against Jewish fortresses, suggesting that perhaps the Zealots lacked the equipment or skills to fight the Roman legion. Some historians also believe that Romans may have used Jewish slaves to build the rampart. The Zealots were reluctant to kill the slaves because of their beliefs.

The rampart was complete in the spring of 73 CE, after approximately two to three months of siege. This allowed the Romans to finally breach the wall of the fortress with a battering ram on April 16. When they entered the fortress, however, the Romans discovered that its approximately 1000 defenders had set all the buildings but the food storerooms ablaze and committed mass suicide rather than face certain capture or defeat by their enemies. Capture would probably have led to slavery or execution. Because Judaism strongly discourages suicide the defenders were reported to have drawn lots and slain each other in turn, down to the last man, who would be the only one to actually take his own life. The storerooms were apparently left standing to show that the defenders retained the ability to live and chose the time of their death over slavery. This

account of the siege of Masada was relayed to Josephus by two women who survived the suicide by hiding inside a cistern along with five children. They repeated Elazar ben Yair's final exhortation to his followers, prior to the mass suicide, verbatim to the Romans.

### **The site today**

The site of Masada was identified in 1842 and extensively excavated from 1963 to 1965 by an expedition led by Israeli archeologist Yigael Yadin. A pair of cable cars now carries those visitors who do not wish to climb the ancient Snake Path (now restored on the eastern side of the mountain with access via the Dead Sea road). The area remained largely untouched by humans or nature in the past two millennia, due to the location's remoteness from human habitation and its arid environment. The Roman ramp still stands on the western side and can be climbed on foot. Many of the ancient buildings were restored from their remnants, as well as the wall-paintings of Herod's two main palaces, and the Roman-style bathhouses that he built. The synagogue, storehouses, and houses of the Jewish rebels were also found and restored. The meter-high circumvallation wall that the Romans built around Masada can be seen just outside this wall along with eleven barracks for the Roman soldiers. Water cisterns two-thirds of the way up the cliff drain the nearby wadis by an elaborate water system, which explains how the rebels managed to have enough water for such a long time.

### **Ein Gedi**

On the western shore of the Dead Sea about 35 miles southeast of Jerusalem, the extreme conditions of the area made habitation difficult except near the freshwater springs. En-gedi contained a hot water spring coming from the side of a limestone cliff that produced semi-tropical vegetation. This vital oasis was allotted to Judah's tribe as an inheritance (Joshua 15:62). The area became known for its palms, vineyards, and balsam (Sg 1:14; Josephus's Antiquities 20.1.2). This ancient site was southeast of the oasis at Tell el-Jarn near modern 'Ain Jidi. In 2 Chronicles 20:2, En-gedi was called Hazazon-tamar and was involved in several Old Testament events. Kedorlaomer conquered the Amorites here (Genesis 14:7). When David fled from Saul he found refuge in the many caves of the region (1 Samuel 23:29). In Ezekiel's vision of Israel's restoration, fishermen would catch fish from the Dead Sea from En-gedi to En-eglaim (Ezekial 47:10).

*"And they returned, and came to En-mish-pat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar" (Genesis 14:7).*

*"And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-ge-di" (1 Samuel 23:29).*

*"And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-ge-di even unto En-eg-laim..." (Ezekiel 47:10).*

## **Qumran Caves**

These caves, located on the western shore of the Dead Sea, are where many ancient manuscripts have been found. Such manuscripts include the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Psalm Scroll, the Temple Scroll, and fragments of over 400 other writings including pieces from almost every book in the Old Testament. They were found in a dozen caves from 1947 onward. Some manuscripts are intact and others are fragmentary. Esther is the only book from the Old Testament that remains unrepresented.

On the north side of the Wadi Qumran, about one mile south of Cave I, lay the ruins of a Jewish monastery known as Khirbet Qumran. Khirbet Qumran was first investigated in 1949 by archaeologists Harding and de Vaux. The Jordanian Archaeological Museum and the Ecole Biblique conducted more investigation in 1951. They uncovered the main building and concluded that it was the center of a well-organized community. Most of the 200 to 400 people, who lived in Qumran, lived in tents or in nearby caves. A large cemetery was located to the east toward the Dead Sea. It was announced by De Vaux that Khirbet Qumran was the headquarters of a Jewish sect called the Essenes.

Dated back to the eighth and seventh centuries BC, investigations at this site have shown that it was lived in several times. Some have suggested that the buildings may have been built during the reign of King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:10). There is more evidence of people living on the site during the Greco-Roman period. A major settlement began shortly before 100 BC, in the time of Hyrcanus I, and ended with an earthquake in 31 BC. There was probably settlement in the area again at about the time of death of Herod the Great (4 BC). The area was then captured by the Romans in AD 68. A Roman garrison remained there until about AD 90. Jewish rebels then used the site as a base during the second revolt against the Romans under Bar-Kochba in AD 132-135.

The largest building was the main assembly hall. Much pottery was found, some of which was used for housing the scrolls, which were copied in the writing room. There were no manuscripts found in the ruins of Khirbet Qumran, however, the pottery was very similar to that in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Cave I. This clearly shows that there is a link between the ruins and the manuscripts. Small plaster tables or benches together with inkwells dating from Roman times were also found during excavation in the writing room, or scriptorium.

The elaborate water system in the area had many round and rectangular cisterns that collected water from the mountains to the west, probably used for ritual purifications and baptism by the Qumran group. Hundreds of coins from the Greco-Roman period have also helped in telling us when the area was occupied. 'Ain Feshka, an oasis and spring about two miles to the south, was probably used as an agricultural outpost of Khirbet Qumran.

*"And the Ziphites came unto Saul and Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon..." (1 Samuel 26).*

*"Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the*

*low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry" (2 Chronicles 26:10).*

## **Mount Moriah**

This name is used only twice in the Old Testament. Abraham was sent to sacrifice his son Isaac in "the land of Moriah" (Genesis 22:2). It has been suggested that the form of the name "Moriah" may be connected with the ram that was "provided" in the place of Isaac when God "appeared" to Abraham. The Hebrew verb ra'ah can have the meanings "see," "provide," and "appear," and the ending -iah is the shortened form of the name of the Lord that is found in many Hebrew names.

The northern part of the ridge of Mount Moriah is actually 250 feet higher than the southeastern hill because the eastern ridge slopes towards the south. It is on this higher elevation that Solomon built the Temple Mount. Solomon's commencement of his grand design for Jerusalem enclosed the higher ridge of Mount Moriah, which provided space for the temple and palace complex. David expanded Jerusalem northward upon the northern part of the eastern ridge (2 Chronicles 3:1). The threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21) has been identified with Solomon's temple. Some see in the description of the Lord's appearing to David a reminder of his appearing to Abraham there. The Jewish historian Josephus (Antiquities 1.13.2; 7.13.4), as well as the second-century BC book of Jubilees, connects the place of the temple with the place where Isaac was offered up (Jubilees 18:13). Moriah has been linked with Mt. Gerizim by Samaritan tradition. Muslim tradition links the Dome of the Rock with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac on the great rock under the dome of the mosque.

*"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2).*

*"And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite" (2 Samuel 24:18).*

*"Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah..." (2 Chronicles 3:1).*

## **Mount of Olives**

From this overview, we sit while your guide discusses the Biblical significance and history of the city gates, valleys, and important structures. Thoughts of time past, present day and future events brings to mind the realization that this is the city of our Great King and our future home.

*"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from hence forth and forever." (Psalms 125:2)*

On Sunday of the last week of His life, Jesus descended from the Mount of Olives to cries of "Hosanna". On Tuesday of the same week, after answering questions from the religious authorities He taught his disciples about the "end times" while seated on the Mount of Olives.

*"And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world" (Matthew 24:3).*

*"And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately" (Mark 13:3).*

*"Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey" (Acts 1:12).*

## **Garden of Gethsemene**

Gethsemene was located opposite the temple, across the Kidron Valley on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. After the Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus engaged in fervent prayer in the Garden of Gethsemene. He underwent a great inner struggle, knowing that the hour of his betrayal was coming soon. It was here that Judas betrayed Jesus to temple authorities who placed Jesus under arrest (Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32-50; Luke 22:39-53; John 18:2-12).

The name Gethsemene is used only in Matthew 26:36 and Mark 14:32. It means "oil press," also suggesting the presence of an olive grove. More than anything else Jesus realized that He must say "yes" to the Father and bare the weight of the sins of all mankind. He prayed three times and was pressed to the extent that He sweated great drops of blood. For devotional application, it is interesting to note that olives are pressed three times. The use of the word "place" in the Gospel accounts indicates that Gethsemene was an enclosed piece of ground. It may be that the grove was privately owned and that Jesus and his disciples had special permission to enter.

The Gospels of Luke and John do not mention the word Gethsemene. However, they both record Jesus' agony before his betrayal. Luke says the location was on the "Mount of Olives" (Luke 22:39). John describes the area as "across the Kidron Valley" (John 18:1); the Gospel of John is the only Gospel to call the spot a garden. It is also evident that Jesus and his disciples gathered in Gethsemene for fellowship and prayer (Luke 22:39; John 18:2). The Gospel narratives indicate that the garden was large enough for the group to separate into different parts of it.

*"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemene: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray..." (Mark 14:32-42).*

*"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him..." (Luke 22:47-53).*

## **House of Caiaphas - St. Peter in Gallicantu**

On the southeastern slope of the hill is one of the traditional locations for the house of Caiaphas. Gallicantu means "cock crowing" and it reminds us of the three denials of Peter. Built atop the ruins of a Byzantine church and monastery, Catholic pilgrims believe that the prison in which Christ was held is located inside the church. Others believe that a more likely location for Caiaphas' house is in the Armenian property outside Zion Gate.

Whether it is the actual site or not does not take away from the devotional application here. In the lower level one may view rooms from Christ's time including the place where He was possibly beaten, scourged and held as prisoner for the evening. Outside of the house is part of the Roman Road that He walked to be led to the Judgment Hall. The rooster pen provides the timely sound effects as a reminder of Peter's weakness and our own need for strength from the Spirit of God.

*Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew. Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover. (John 18:14-28)*

*And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee? Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he*

*denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:57-75)*

## **Upper Room**

The upper room is a second-story room of Hebrew or Greek homes; often like a tower, built on the flat roof of a Hebrew home for privacy, comfort during the hot season, or the entertainment of guests. It could sometimes accommodate large gatherings of people. Jesus met with his disciples shortly before his arrest in an upper room and ate the Passover supper (Lord's Supper) with them as well (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12). This is where He prepared them for His death, the Holy Spirit's coming and their future ministry. The size of some of these rooms is evident from the fact that, after Jesus had left and ascended to heaven; the disciples went to the upper room where they all had been staying before. In one instance the room was on the third story (Acts 20:8). Eutychus, sitting in the window, went to sleep and fell three stories to the street below (20:9-10). Ahaziah also fell through the latticework of his upper room (2 Kings 1:2).

The dead son of the widow of Zarephath was taken by Elijah to an upper room where he had been staying and raised him from the dead (1 Kings 17:19-23). David went to an upper room for privacy to mourn the death of Absalom (2 Samuel 18:33). The kings of Judah built strange altars near the upper room of Ahaz, which Josiah pulled down as part of his reform program (2 Kings 23:12). Dorcas was laid in an upper room after she had died; later, Peter was taken up to the same room to pray for her restoration to life (Acts 9:36-41).

*"And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of baalzeub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease"(2 Kings 1:2).*

*"And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron" (2 Kings 23:12).*

*"Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover..." (Matthew 26:17-29).*

*"And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us."*

*(Mark 14:15).*

*"And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew..." (Acts 1:13, 2).*

## **Jerusalem**

This city was located in the hills of Judah and had access to the Ridge Road, which ran alongside major cities. Jerusalem was captured by David from the Jebusites in about 993 B.C. and made capital (2 Sam.5:1-10). It became Israel's national sanctuary as well. David made many building establishments in Jerusalem. He built the royal court along with Solomon, a palace with the aid of Hiram, transported the Ark of the Covenant, and built a tent shrine to house the sacred chest (2 Sam. 6). Solomon's crown achievement in building activities was the construction of a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant (known as the Temple Mount). Jerusalem became the spiritual and political heart of Israel and the Zion of Yahweh.

Jerusalem was later captured by Babylon in 598 BC and destroyed in 587 BC. About 50 years later rebuilding was started and by Jesus' day it was the center of Jewish worship and under Roman rule. Jesus often traveled to Jerusalem to attend Jewish festivals. John recorded three Passover feasts, one Feast of Tabernacles, an unnamed feast, and a festival of Dedication (Hanukkah) that Jesus attended. Jesus performed many miracles while in Jerusalem. He healed a paralytic man at the "Sheep's Pool," known as Bethesda (John 5:2-9). Jesus also healed a blind man in the Pool of Siloam. He also spent a lot of time teaching His disciples and others in the temple. Jesus spent his last days in Jerusalem, cleansing the temple, discipleing, and being judged by high priests and leaders. He was then crucified just outside city walls in a place called Golgotha, "the place of the skull." The Gospels describe several post-resurrection appearances that took place in Jerusalem (Matt. 28:9-10; Mark 16:14-18; John 20:19-29).

The name "Jerusalem" has many meanings: 1) Egyptian Meaning: The earliest mention of Jerusalem is found in the texts known as the Egyptian Execration Texts from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries before Christ, in the form Urusalimum. 2) Semitic Meaning: In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the name appears as Urusalim. Later it is found as Ursalimmu. The two Hebrew root-words, uru (city) and salim (a divine name), produced the compound word "the city of the god salim." Salim, or Shalem (Akkadian, Shulmanu; perhaps Solomon), was a god worshiped by the Amorites (Ezekiel 16:3). 3) Hebrew/Aramaic Meaning: In the Hebrew Old Testament, Jerusalem is written yerushalayim, and in the portions of the Old Testament written in the Aramaic language, the name is written yerushalem. It contains the root words yarah ("to found") and shalem (a divine name), which gives us "the foundation of [the god] Shalem." 4) Greek Meaning: In the New Testament, the word "Jerusalem" is a translation of Ierusalem and Hierosoloma. The first of these is simply the way that Greek authors wrote the Old Testament Aramaic word; the second reflects the Greek word hieros (holy).

*"Behold, I build a house to the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to him..." (2 Chr. 2-4:8).*

*"So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward" (2 Sam 5:9).*

*"Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand..." (2 Sam 6).*

*"And say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy*

*father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite" (Ezekiel 16:3).*

*"And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him..." (Matt 28:9-10).*

*"Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief..." (Mark 16:14-18).*

*"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches" (John 5:2-9).*

*"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you..." (John 20:19-29).*

## **Jerusalem Area**

**Ecce Homo** -- (Latin: "Behold, the man!") A station of the cross on the Via Dolorosa commemorated by an arch. The phrase "Ecce Homo" refers to Pilate's words when he brought Jesus out to the crowd for judgment. (John 19:5)

**Garden Tomb** -- The Garden Tomb was first pointed out in 1849; a rock formation there resembles a skull (Golgotha), and the site accords with the biblical data of the area where Jesus was buried. It is presently a beautiful garden park, where many Christian groups take communion.

**Jewish Quarter** -- Where you may find the "broad wall" that is mentioned in Isaiah 22 and Nehemiah 3; a "window" into the period of the First Temple.

**Mount Zion** -- Often identified with the "City of David", it was after Solomon that the city grew farther to the north and to the west on the hill today identified as Mount Zion, a hill that is protected on the south and west by the Valley of Hinnom. This identification of Mount Zion, which in 2 Sam. 5:7 is applied to David's city, derives from the Jewish historian Josephus, who identified all of the Jerusalem of his day (the first century A.D.) with the city of David. You can visit the "Upper Room" (Mark 14:12-26) and the House of the High Priest Caiaphas (Mt.26:57).

**Palm Sunday Road** -- Follow the trail of Jesus and his disciples from the Mt. of Olives to Jerusalem, when he was hailed as king in the so-called, "Triumphal Entry." (Matt 21:1-11 Mark 11:1-10 Luke 19:28-40 John 12:12-16)

**Pool of Bethesda** -- A name found in later NT manuscripts for the original "Bethzatha" in John 5:2. It is the Hebrew name of the pool near the 'Sheep Gate' in Jerusalem. Here, according to tradition, many of the sick in Jerusalem waited for healing by means of a periodic angelic visitation. Jesus performed a great miracle here on a man who had been lame for 38 years. As it was done on the Sabbath, this led to controversy with certain Jewish leaders of the time. (John 5:1-16)

**Rabbi's Tunnel/Western Wall Tunnel** -- Underneath the present surface of the Western Wall compound lies the magnificent Western retaining wall of the Herodian Temple. Controlled by the Rabbis, the Western Wall Tunnel is an underground tunnel exposing the Western Wall in its full length. The tunnel is adjacent to the Western Wall and is located under buildings of the Old City in Jerusalem, Israel.

### **Tunnel History:**

After the Six Day War, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Israel began the excavations aimed at exposing the continuation of the wall. The excavations lasted almost twenty years and revealed many previously unknown facts about the history and geography of the Temple Mount.

The tunnel exposes a total length of 500m of the walls, revealing the methods of construction and the various activities in the vicinity of the Temple Mount. The excavations included many archaeological finds along the way, including discoveries from the Herodian period (streets, monumental masonry), sections of a reconstruction of the Western Wall dating to the Umayyad period and various structures dating to the Ayyubid, Mamluke and Hasmonean periods constructed to support buildings in the vicinity of the Temple Mount.

"Warren's Gate", lies about 150 feet into the tunnel. This sealed off entrance has been turned into a small synagogue called "The Cave" by Rabbi Yehuda Getz since it is the closest point a Jew can get to the Holy of Holies assuming it was located at the traditional site, under the Dome of the Rock.

At the northern portion of the Western Wall remains of a water channel, which originally supplied water to the Temple Mount, were found. The exact source of the channel is unknown, though it passes through an underground pool known as the "Strouthion Pool". The water channel was dated to the Hasmonean period and was hence dubbed the "Hasmonean Channel".

The biggest stone used to build the Western Wall is also revealed within the tunnel. The stone has a length of 13.6 meters, a width estimated between 3.5 to 4.5 meters; estimates place the weight at 570 tons.

Included with our tour of the Tunnel is audiovisual show showing the different Temple Periods. While walking through the Tunnel you will find Jews fervently praying as this is the closest they feel that they can get to the place where the Temple was prior to its destruction.

**Devotional Application:** Before exiting the Tunnel, we view the massive cornerstone rejected by the builders and the stones on the street where Jesus walked as he was taken to the Judgment Hall. This is definitely a time for prayer and reflection.

### **Herodian Mansion**

Located in Jerusalem, this was the palace of King Herod the Great of Judea. During Roman times, wealthy Jerusalemites, like King Herod, built their palatial villas or palaces in the Upper City. Herod was responsible for the building of many great structures, including an impressive port of Caesarea on the coast, giving to Palestine a much needed major harbor. He also built two fortresses, Masada and Macherus, along the shores of the Dead Sea. In an attempt to locate and kill Jesus, Herod killed many baby boys in the land when Jesus was born (Matt 2).

*"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem..." (Matt 2:1-22).*

**Southern Wall Excavations** -- This southern side of The Temple was the main entrance for the common folk, whereas the Priests and Levites had their own entrance from the higher, eastern side. Parts of the giant stairs, which led to the Temple Mount from the courtyard, have been unearthed. It is in this courtyard that Jesus likely drove out the vendors and money exchangers who were exploiting the people. (Matt 21:12-17; Mk 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46) In the Mishna, we are told that Rabbi Gamliel taught at the Temple steps; thus this is likely the place where the Apostle Paul (Saul) learned at Gamliel's feet. (Acts 22:3) It is also the only known area where 3,000 could have heard the preaching of Peter and be baptized on the Day of Pentecost.

**Day of Pentecost** - According to the Book of Acts, the experience of the Pentecost was shared by all in the large crowd, causing confusion, and inspiring fear.

*"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" Acts 2:6-12*

Then (the Apostle) Peter standing with the eleven other apostles spoke to the crowd. He explained that these strange events had been predicted by the prophet Joel, and that Jesus's coming had been prophesied by David. Peter explained that these events confirmed David's prophesied exaltation of Jesus. Peter then exhorted his listeners to turn to Christ. About three thousand responded to Peter's sermon.

Three physical signs occurred showing the coming of the Holy Spirit

A. Sound of Blowing Wind

B. Vision of tongues of Fire that rested on each of them. The tongues of Fire which descended on the disciples represents a theophany (a visible manifestation of God). This is important to Christianity in that it represents the dynastic succession of power from Jesus to the Holy Spirit who guides the believers.

C. They heard the apostles speaking in the native tongue of the listener, i.e., the miracle was in the hearing. This was important in that it was key for the spread of the gospel. The Holy Spirit acted as a translator so that as the preaching occurred everyone there comprehended the message in their own native language. (This event has also been interpreted as the opposite of the events at the Tower of Babel, which, according to the tradition, introduced the language barriers in the first place.)

*"Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Acts 2:26-33*

Simon Peter also reminded the multitude (in Acts 2:17-21) that this experience had been predicted by the prophet Joel:

*"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:" (Joel 2:28)*

*"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Acts 2:38-41*

**Temple Mount** -- The place where God chose to "put His name;" where Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice (Mt. Moriah, Gen 22); the site of both the First and Second Temples found in the Bible. Today it is occupied by the Dome of The Rock Mosque.

**Via Dolorosa** -- (Latin: 'way of pain'), the traditional pilgrimage route in Jerusalem commemorating Jesus' journey to the cross (Mark 15:20-23). The traditional route is not likely to have been historical, since Pilate probably condemned Jesus at the Herodian palace on the opposite side of the city (Matt. 27:19; Luke 23:4; John 18:28; Philo Delegation to Gaius 38; Josephus War 2.301). A route from there through the city to Golgotha would have led east on David street and then west on Triple Suk to Golgotha. The present route consists of two devotional stops near the Ecce Homo arch, seven outside leading to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and five inside the church itself. Though Byzantine pilgrims followed approximately the present route from Gethsemane to Calvary on Holy Thursday, they made no devotional stops. Numerous routes developed during the Middle Ages. The devotional practice of representing the gospel story in churches around fourteen stations led to the development of the present route. The route itself was fixed in the eighteenth century and all of the stations established in the nineteenth. (Matt.26)

**Wailing/Western Wall and Excavations** -- The holiest site in Judaism, that is the closest visible and accessible part of the Second Temple complex from Jesus' time.

**Israel Museum/Shrine of the Book** -- Israel's finest and most comprehensive museum, containing artifacts and documents from pre-historical to Biblical to Byzantine, Turkish and Modern times. Also, the some of the Dead Sea Scrolls (including the famous Isaiah text) and many artifacts relating to the Qumran community can be found in the separate Shrine of the Book building, whose famous roof is shaped like the ceramic jar covers in which the scrolls were first found.

**Jerusalem Model of 2nd Temple Jerusalem** -- Here the visitor can find a full scale model of the Jerusalem of Jesus' time. A great aid in visualizing the geography of NT Jerusalem.

**The Knesset** -- home of the Israeli Parliament.

**Solomon's Quarry** -- A quarry located north of the Temple Mount near the present-day Damascus Gate, now called Solomon's Quarry or Zedekiah's Cave. This quarry was used through the Roman period (63 B.C.-A.D. 324), and possibly also by Hezekiah for his building projects.

**Yad V'Shem** -- ("Hand and Name" from Isaiah 56:5) This museum commemorates the Holocaust of European Jewry perpetrated by the Nazis before and during WW II.

**Bethany** - John 10:19-40 - Jesus returned after threatened stoning and again to raise Lazarus from the dead.

**Stephen's Gate** - Stephen was the first martyr of the Christian faith. After his stoning, many Christians fled to Judea and Samaria from Jerusalem, while also planting the Gospel in Cyprus.  
*"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit..." (Acts 7:59-60).*

## **Judgment Hall of Pilate**

Found in the New Testament, the word "Judgment Hall" was also translated as "Praetorium" (Mark 15:16)

and "common hall" (Matt 27:27). The word was first used to refer to the place where the Roman general's tent stood in an army camp and hence was a reference to the headquarters of the camp. Later, it came to mean the military council that met in the general's tent. It was then used in reference to the palace in which the Roman governor or procurator resided while ruling a province. In Jerusalem, it was the palace that Herod the Great had built for himself. When the Roman governor came from his normal residence in Caesarea to Jerusalem, he occupied Herod's palace and conducted his official business there. On Friday, before Jesus' death, the high council brought Jesus before Pilate to gain assent to their verdict, charging Jesus with treason. The site of the interrogation before Pilate is debated. It could have been in Herod's palace in the western part of the city. Another possibility is that Pilate lodged in the Antonia Fortress while residing in Jerusalem. Pilate then sent Jesus to be judged by Herod Antipas, after realizing that Jesus was a Galilean. Jesus was then turned back into the hands of Pilate, who allowed Jesus to be executed by torture and crucifixion.

*"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers" (Matt 27:27).*

*"...And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it..." (Mark 15:1-5).*

*"And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band" (Mark 15:16).*

## **Church of the Holy Sepulcher**

Ancient tradition places Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection over this site. Queen Helena, mother of Constantine, ordered this church to be built over the site Christians showed her when she visited Jerusalem in about 335 A.D. Through archeology, it was found that this site was actually outside city walls at the time of Jesus' death and was used as a quarry with many tombs cut into the rock.

*"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites? For ye are like unto white sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matt 23:27).*

*"And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulcher" (Matt 27:61).*

*"Their throat is an open sepulcher..." (Rom 3:13).*

## **Bethlehem**

Bethlehem is a town six miles southwest of Jerusalem. It is sometimes called Bethlehem-judah or Ephrath (Gen 35:19; Micah 5:2) to keep it from being confused with another city, Bethlehem of Zebulun. Located in Judah, Bethlehem was one of the towns that played a key role in history. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which was a fulfillment of prophecy (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-7). Bethlehem was also the place of death and burial for Rachel. It is also known as the City of David, as David was both born and anointed there (1 Sam. 16:4, 13; Luke 2:4, 11). The name Bethlehem actually means "house of bread."

Bethlehem was first settled by the Canaanites and was associated with the earliest fathers (or "patriarchs") of Israel, because Rachel died and was buried near it (Gen 35:16, 19; Gen 48:7). The earliest mention of Bethlehem is in some ancient battle reports, written fourteen hundred years before

Christ's birth, which refer to a city named bitil u-lahama south of Jerusalem. This name may have meant "house of (the goddess) Lahama." A branch of Caleb's family settled there, and Caleb's son Salma was known as "the father of Bethlehem" (1 Chr 2:51). It was also the home of a Levite boy who served as priest to Micah (Judges 17:7-8), and of Boaz, Ruth, Obed, and Jesse, the Bethlehemite, David's father (Ruth 4:11-17; 1 Samuel 16:18).

Bethlehem was the birthplace of David and the home of one of David's mighty men, Elhanan (2 Sam 23:24; 1 Chr 11:26). A daring deed was performed in Bethlehem by three of David's warriors. They broke through a chain of Philistine warriors who had taken over the city to bring David water from a well near the city gate of his hometown (2 Sam 23:14-17). Bethlehem is also mentioned as being next to the village of Geruth-kimham, where Jews running from the Babylonians stayed while they were on their way to Egypt (Jer 41:17). People from Babylon were part of the group of Jews who returned Israel after living in exile in Babylon (Ezra 2:21; Nehemiah 7:26; 1 Esdras 5:17). Bethlehem was only a small village when Jesus was born (Matt 2:1-16; Luke 2:4-6, 15; John 7:42). Joseph had to go to Bethlehem because he was part of the family of David (Luke 2:4), under orders of Caesar Augustus. It is said that the birth of Jesus might have taken place in a cave in the rocks outside town, as agreed upon by Christian writers Justin Martyr and Origen. Another early Christian writer, Jerome, described the cave where the Roman Emperor Constantine had built a church. Some evidence was found near Bethlehem that suggested a second period of building in the time of a later emperor, Justinian (AD 527-565), in 1934-35. Constantine's church was then extended past its original boundaries. There were steps that led down to the cave, which were artificially shaped into a square, probably by Constantine's builders. There is, however, no description of the cave from before the construction of Constantine's church.

*"And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem" (Genesis 48:7).*

*"Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose names was Jesse..." (1 Samuel 17).*

*"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).*

*"Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" (John 7:42).*

**Bethlehem/Shepherd's Field** -- Originally a small village on the road from Jerusalem to Hebron. Here took place the story of Ruth and Boaz, and is the birthplace of both David, and David's greatest son, Jesus. Here also can be found the tomb of Rachel. Many believe the site of The Shepherd's Field to be the place where angels of the Lord visited the shepherds to announce the birth of Israel's King and Savior. (Gen 35:16-20 48:7 Ruth 1 Sam 16:1-12; 17:12 Micah 5:2 Luke 2:1-7, 8-20 Matt 2:1-18)