



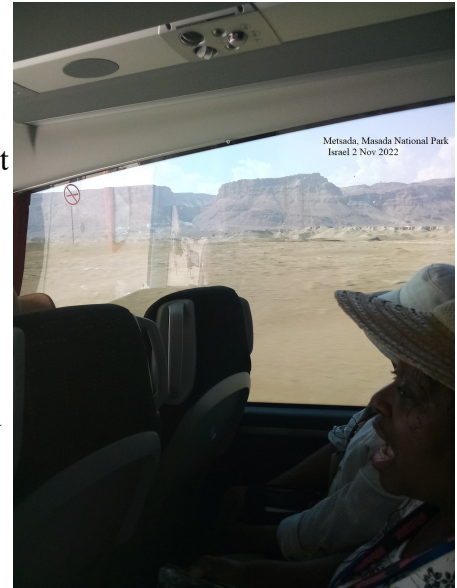
## The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice #08 Wed 2 Nov Masada

Masada, in Hebrew and on modern maps called Met-Sada, but long known as Masada, in English tradition, stands as a grand monument on the shores of the Dead Sea. The mesa like rock plateau stands atop 1300 feet cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea. It is an awesome conformation and a monument to 1) man's unnatural hatred of God's chosen people Israel, 2) to a man's elaborate, extravagant, and psychotic life, and 3) to a fortress of archaeological explorations and findings. This was to be a remarkable afternoon in our exploration of God's holy land.

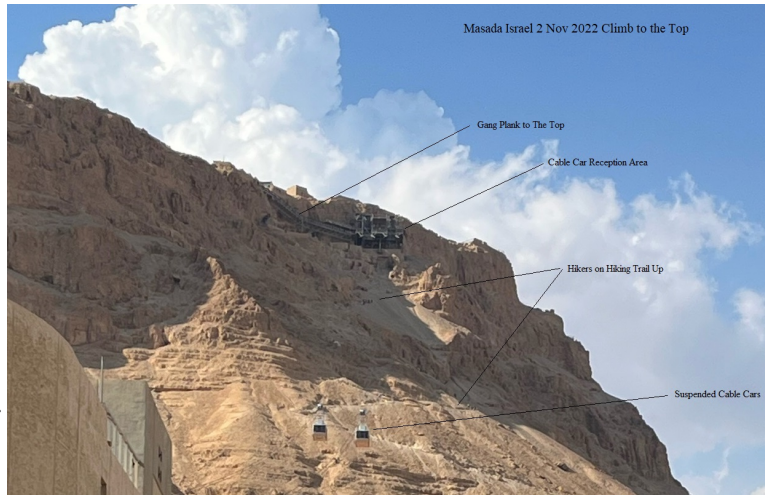


The flat top mountain loomed before us as our group organized for the adventure. Several physically fit and stout hearted souls were intent on hiking the winding, climbing, 3 km trail that made its way up the eastern face of the mount. The "moderate" hike moved into the "difficult" range when the sun beat down on the trail, bottom to top, as it did this warm November day. There were a few ennobled attempts to talk some out of such a challenging adventure, but those of us choosing to ride the cushy cable cars up the mountain face wished them well and Godspeed as they set off for their mountain climb.

Our bus pulled out of the Ein Gedi Reserve parking lot and turned south for 13 mile drive on Highway 90. Sandwiched between the Dead Sea and the mountainous wilderness to the west, the drive itself was intriguing. Gorges and canyons opened into the low land desert where their rivers turned to dusty trickles and dumped into the sea. Off in the distance we can see the flat top mountain called Masada rise out of the desert floor. It was the most impressive topography.



Some of us were just getting to know others in the group and the nervous tension of waiting in line for a suspended driverless cable car, that would dangle us 1,000 feet above the desert floor, was an effective icebreaker for starting conversations. I'm not sure how many people were supposed to jump into one of these contraptions, but about ten more than should have



crowded in when the doors opened. The automatic doors attempted to close but were blocked by the last passengers cramming in. Attendants pushed on the overflow until the glass doors slid past them. We watch through the glass as passengers repositioned to get "comfortable" for the ascent. I was quite certain the fellow with his face all contorted and smashed tight

against the closed glass door was only doing that for a comedy effect. We stared at him as the car lurched into motion and left the station. Nobody laughed, and tension increased as we waited for the next car.

When it comes to phobias our cable car had a good majority covered. We were a large group of people, crammed into a tight area, confined there, with no control over our situation, dangling hundreds of feet in the air, and when two or three smart alicks shifted from side to side so did the whole cable car.

Those who had reasonable control over their phobias could look out and wave to our hiking team as they got tinier and tinier on the hiking trail far below us. The view we had was breathtaking. So were the phobias.



When the doors finally opened at the top of our gentle glide with the spectacular view the adventure of ascent was not quite complete. We stepped out on a narrow metal mesh gangplank that was suspended above nothing, ... and that nothing went on for three score and ten cubits straight down. I am not afraid of heights, but I am afraid of falling large distances. White knuckles gripped the gang plank hand rail, and I did not venture to look down until my feet were on solid rock on the short path to the top of Masada. Wow!



I called Masada a threefold monument, let me address the least to the greatest. The archaeological digs all over this mountain fortress are impressive. Archaeology is 10% find, 90% imagination. Wall foundations, artifacts, mosaics, and plaster fascia, bath houses, interconnected cisterns and every archaeological dig found on this mountain top have kept

“imagination” here very active. What was built here? How, why, and when was it built? What was built underneath? What did these walls see and here? Humans armed with inquiring minds are always on a quest to find out more, to uncover the past, to dig a little deeper. This first week of November, college students were back in school, but several archaeological sites were still open and being explored here in the fortress atop Masada.

Who discovered what-when still intrigues some of us, and the line demarcating what was original and what was reconstructed still put good running shoes on active imaginations.

Herod the Great, who reigned from 37 BC to 4 AD was psychotic. He was probably undeserving of the “Great” title, except that he was greatly psychotic, and



quite a great builder<sup>1</sup>. Here on Masada he built an elaborate Roman bathhouse to support his more elaborate, even exotic, palaces. Herod's northern palace was chiseled into the rock of the northern cliff edge and hung out with nothing but that three score and ten cubits of drop as his backyard. A paranoid recluse might have considered the rocky reef of the Mediterranean Sea a remarkable backdrop of privacy and protection but this, on Masada, had that beat hands-down.

The palaces, the Roman bathhouse, the swimming pool, the elaborate water resources found on Masada, and then all the archaeological wonder that exposed them, were amazing monuments found on this mighty fortress. But they pale in comparison to the depravity of man that was put on full display on this mountain plateau.



Mankind has an unnatural hatred for God's chosen people Israel. A genuine believer understands that antisemitism is a manifestation of Satan's opposition to God. Masada is an important post-AD<sup>2</sup> cog in Satan's attempt to totally annihilate God's chosen people Israel by genocide. It is not unprecedented.

From Genesis 3:15 to Jeremiah 22:30<sup>3</sup> Satan does all he can to destroy the seed line of Messiah. Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Ruben, Jacob's rejected first born (cf 1Chor.5:1-2), Joseph, all the drama of Genesis, and all the lineage of kings, these record Satan's attempts to foul and destroy God's chosen seed line of Messiah. One can easily see that the seed line is a dynamic ongoing battle which ends up including harlots and a Moabite! Its outcome is cast before the foundation of the Earth, but its participants are not! God works with man, and

1 Herod built the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple and lavish palace-fortresses at Caesarea, Masada, Jericho, and Herodium.  
2 AD is a Latin abbreviation of *Anno Domini* meaning "In the year of our Lord." "Post -AD" refers to the period after the birth of our Lord.

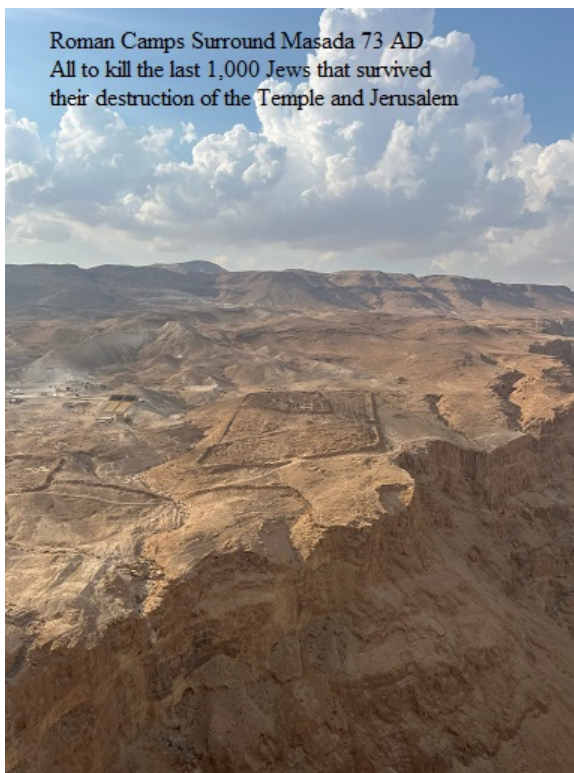
3 Genesis 3:15 "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" Jeremiah 22:30 "*Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.*" Jehoiakim was the last of the kings of Judah, God calls him Coniah, meaning "Jehovah will establish", and apparently God ends the kingly seed line of Judah in this verse, but according to Matthew 1:11-12, God does a righteous "bait and switch" wherein man, and more so Satan, loses track of the seed line of David which is the seed line of Messiah.

man's free will, to accomplish his purposes. He still does; John Calvin's predestination, election, and fatalism ideologies be gone! God is dynamically working with man in real time. He did then, and does now. So when God stops the clear revelation of this seed line, declaring king Jehoiakim childless, Satan has to take another tact. He chooses genocide, striving to wipe out every living Jew.

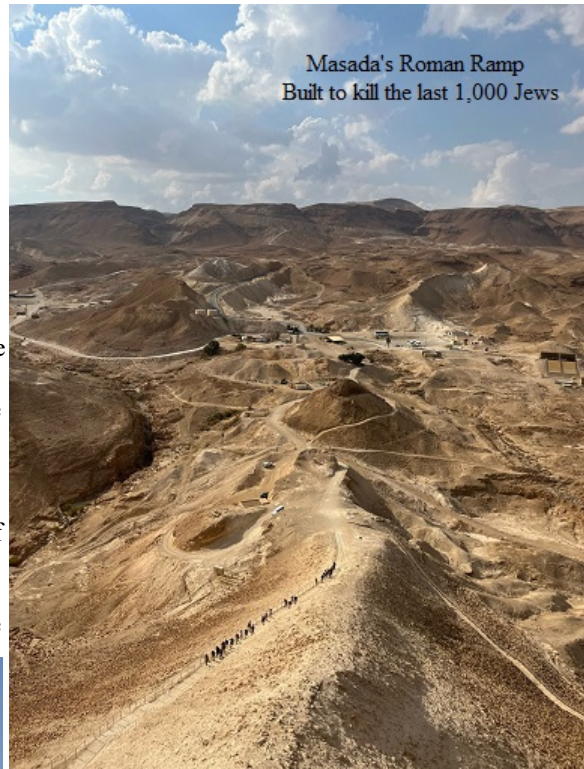
If you have read the book of Esther you know about Haman the son of the Agagite, and you see Satan's new hand; his first attempt using genocide. If you read some inter-testament man-made history books, you'll learn about the villainous Antiochus of Syria. Les Crawford, director of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry in Australia, tells us:

Antiochus Epimanes, meaning "Antiochus the Mad" or "Maniac" ... unleashed his fury on Jerusalem when he returned from Egypt. First, he killed Jason, the last of the Zadokite high priests. He also ordered the massacre of about 40,000 Jews and sold a similar number into slavery. But this was merely the beginning. His persecution of the Jewish people knew no limits.

Antiochus installed a Seleucid garrison to control Jerusalem and proceeded to stamp out the



Roman Camps Surround Masada 73 AD  
All to kill the last 1,000 Jews that survived  
their destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem



Masada's Roman Ramp  
Built to kill the last 1,000 Jews

Jewish faith using murder and torture. Toward the end of 167 BC, he issued a series of devastating decrees that included forbidding Temple offerings and installing pagan altars and images for people to offer sacrifices of pigs and other unclean animals in the Jewish sanctuary. He also outlawed circumcision and Sabbath observance, and he burned Torah scrolls and forced dietary violations. Disobedience was punishable by death—usually a gruesome one.

The climax of the attack on Judaism came when Antiochus offered a pig on the pagan altar to Zeus that had been erected in the Jerusalem Temple. The desecration foreshadows the future, prophetic "abomination of desolation" associated with the Antichrist (Dan. 11:31; 12:11).

The action provoked courageous resistance from the Jewish people, but Antiochus's garrison initially crushed it. Under the leadership of Mattathias and his son Judah, the

Jewish forces grew strong enough to defeat Antiochus's army. This victory enabled the rededication and restoration of the Temple, a remarkable moment in Jewish history celebrated annually in the festival of Hanukkah.<sup>4</sup>

4 <https://israelmyglory.org/article/villainous-antiochus/> Israel My Glory January/February 2023, Article

Ergo Satan was not able to corrupt the seed line of Christ, nor annihilate the Jew's who brought us the Messiah. Christ bruised Satan's head. Now, Satan must do all he can to keep God's immutable plans from coming to pass. Satan must prevent the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Israel.<sup>5</sup> What happened at Masada in 74 AD is the tail end of Satan's first post-AD attempt at annihilating all Jews. It is dramatic. It is tragic. Many try to erase it from history, to refute Josephus' record of it, and even to call the Jews who died here on Masada repulsive Zealots who deserved to die.



Masada was only Satan's precursor. Josephus reports that over a million Jews were slaughtered or carried into captivity in the AD 63-74 Jewish revolt against Rome. Jerusalem was destroyed and burned by future emperor Titus until not one Jew remained



in Israel. The Roman governor of Judaea, Lucius Flavius Silva, headed a Roman legion and laid siege to Masada to kill the thousand who remained. Such demonic hatred and persecution would pursue Jews to this day.

Bruce Scott writes in his article "Away With Them":

In the centuries that followed, Jewish people were expelled from cities and

kingdoms throughout medieval "Christian Europe," including Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Papal States, and Italy. One such ill-famed expulsion resulted from the edict of English King Edward I (of William Wallace [Braveheart] fame) in 1290. Thousands were evicted from their homes and forbidden to return to England for almost 400 years. In 1394, King Charles VI expelled all Jews from France.

However, the most infamous expulsion occurred in Spain. On March 31, 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella signed the Alhambra Decree (Edict of Expulsion), which was not made public until May 1, shortly after they commissioned Christopher Columbus to embark on his historic voyage to the New World.

The Alhambra Decree threw the Jews out of Spain lock, stock, and barrel, adding that any who remained would "incur the penalty of death and the confiscation of all their possessions." They had until August 1 (9th of the Hebrew month Av) to comply. This expulsion dismembered the largest

"Villainous-Antiochus" by Les Crawford, pg 19.

5 <https://israelmyglory.org/article/the-never-ending-hatred/> Israel My Glory January/February 2023, Article "The Never-Ending Hatred - Why does antisemitism refuse to die? What evil fuels this illogical, never-ending hatred?" by Ty Perry, pg 14-17

Jewish community in the world at the time.<sup>6</sup>

The article continues to describe the “ethnic cleansing” undertaken by the Catholic Churches who perpetuated wholesale slaughter of Jews with the cruelest means. The hatred and slaughter of God's chosen people continued into Protestant ranks. Scott continues in his article:



The Masada Mountain Climbers Catchup a little sunburnt and thirsty by smiling



It wasn't only Catholics who advocated expelling the Jews. In 1543, Martin Luther, leader of the Protestant Reformation, wrote a 13-part booklet titled “On the Jews and Their Lies”.

It spewed such vitriolic hatred of the Jewish people that it influenced the German perception of Jews for centuries to come and helped Adolf Hitler and the Nazis justify their “final solution to the Jewish question,” a euphemism for the

annihilation of European Jewry.

Toward the beginning of his ministry, Luther was more congenial toward the Jewish community, thinking Jews might believe the gospel after he restored the doctrine of justification by faith. But when they failed to accept the gospel, he began to despise them.

He wrote “On the Jews and Their Lies” three years before he died. It is a polemic against a Jewish publication in which the author debates an imaginary Christian. Luther not only challenged the Jewish author's interpretation of

Scripture but also vented his animosity toward all Jews. He held nothing back. “Next to the devil,” Luther wrote, “a Christian has no more bitter and galling foe than a Jew.”<sup>7</sup>



6 <https://israelmyglory.org/article/away-with-them/> Israel My Glory January/February 2023, Article “Away With Them” by Bruce Scott, pg 20-23.

7 Ibid. pg 22

He called Jewish people “venomous, bitter, vindictive, tricky serpents, assassins, and children of the devil who sting and work harm stealthily wherever they cannot do it openly.” He also gave credence to the commonly accepted libels of the day that Jewish people kidnapped and mutilated Christian children and deliberately poisoned wells. (This very libel led to the massacre of thousands of European Jews during the Black Death plague in the mid-14th century.)



The tail end of the Roman Empire's hatred for, and destruction of a million Jews, happened on the highland desert plateau called Masada. It is presently one of the most popular tourist attractions in Israel receiving 750,000 visitors per year. We were fifty of them. The Roman Empire, spiraling into obliteration because of the judgment of God, reached out with its evil fingers and

attempted to wipe all of God's chosen people Israel off the face of the earth. They burnt and destroyed the temple and all of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and then with one final

villainous campaign they reached to the top of a fortress in a barren wilderness to kill off the thousand Jews that still defied their evil. If we learn nothing else from this tour of Masada, learn this, antisemitism is diabolical, it is a manifestation of Satan himself; Satan “*opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped*”; he will do whatever it takes to prevent the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Israel. Masada is thus a vile taste of the great lengths that Satan would take, through the hands of evil men, to destroy the Jew.



North End of Masada  
Herod's Palace Remains



In 1948 Israel was given back what God said was rightfully theirs and a slogan was born to commemorate their homecoming; the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) units are still sworn in on Masada's southern point with that powerful affirmation for the Jewish state, "Masada, shall never fall again." In that swearing in ceremony Eleazar's words are read atop that mesa:

"Since we long ago, my generous friends, resolved never to be servants to the Romans, nor to any other than to God himself, who alone is the true and just lord of mankind; the time is now come that obliges us to make that resolution true in practice...I cannot but esteem it as a favor that God hath granted us, that 'tis still in our



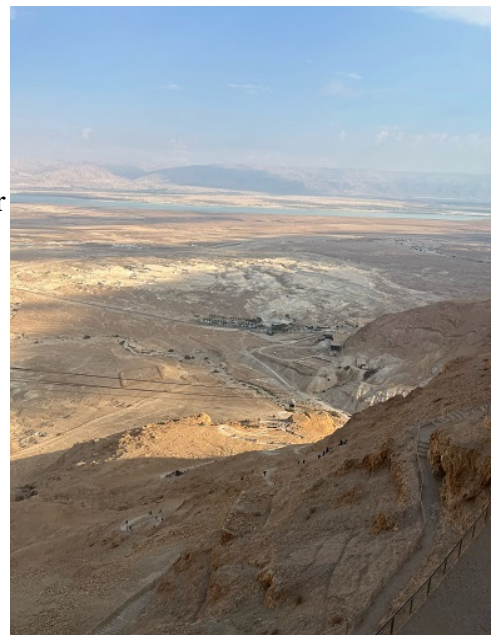
power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom. Which hath not been the case of others, who were conquered unexpectedly. 'Tis very plain that we shall be taken within a days time: but 'tis still an eligible thing to die, after a glorious manner, together with our dearest friends."<sup>8</sup>

A Christian with their Bible open to the Revelation of Jesus Christ might be found in full agreement with their slogan, "Masada, shall never fall again." Our bus lumbered out of the parking lot of Masada National Park. Some of us were somber, but all of us were knowing who holds the future, and carried a better perspective which would better

enable us to fulfill Psalm 122:

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good (Ps.122:6-9).*

There was one more stop for the day, the bus turned north and we headed for a salty beach on the north end of the Dead Sea.



8 <https://www.ifcj.org/news/fellowship-blog/masada-shall-never-fall-again> International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, Fellowship-blog article, 21 May 2018. (Accessed 01/02/2023)