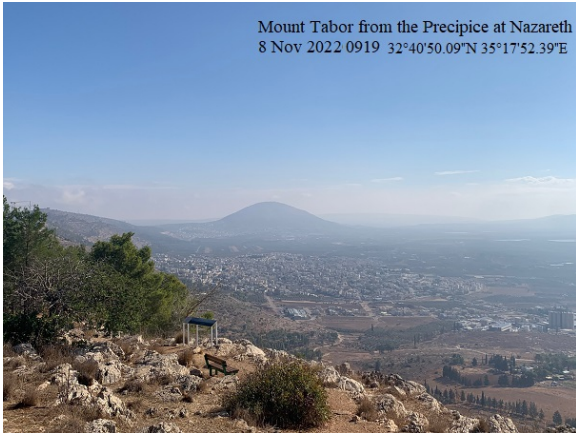




The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#22 Tue 8 Nov Nazareth Precipice, Zippori, Mt Carmel

I'll begin this journal by adding some findings that should have been in my last journal. Turns out my notes were about as organized as a novice journalist might keep. From the Precipice overlooking Nazareth our guide Joe had pointed out many places of interest, to include Cana of Galilee, 5 1/2 miles north east, where Jesus did his first miracle. As we drove past Cana (Kafar Kanna on the map) Joe talked of the Kibbutz at the site in 1909, reminding us that a Kibbutz was originally a communist/Marxist community of people who shared everything, didn't even own their own clothes, and only functioned for a



Mount Tabor from the Precipice at Nazareth
8 Nov 2022 0919 32°40'50.09"N 35°17'52.39"E

short time before it collapsed in failure. It would behoove us to keep those failures in mind as the World, America, and Israel presses toward Socialism.

As we passed Cana of Galilee, Pastor Charlie read the account of Jesus's first miracle from John chapter 2. He pointed out that this was Jesus's first miracle, that *“both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage”*, and that the Apostle John gave much attention to chronological details (in 2009 our tour guide Ronnie Weaver told us that all Hebrew weddings are on Tuesdays, the third day of the week, because in the Genesis account, God recorded *“and God saw that it was good”* two times on Tuesday, the third day of the week, Gen 1:10,12). It was also clarified that Jesus' changing the water into wine gives no credence to the modernist idea that drinking booze is okay with God. Jesus still said *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”*, in Prov.20:1, also in Prov.23:31-32, *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder”*, and again in Prov.31:4-5, *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”*



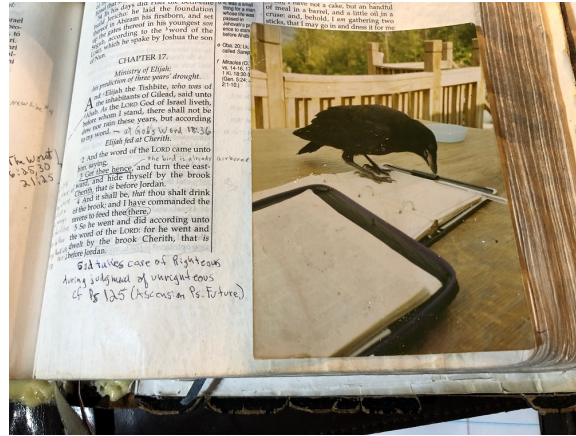
Israel Tour Guide Joe on Precipice
8 Nov 2022 0908

From the Precipice, Joe also pointed out Mount Tabor, 5 miles to the east (which might, possibly, could have been, where Jesus was transfigured in front of Peter, James, and John). Then, on down towards the southeast he pointed out the city of Nain, about 5 miles out, which was where Jesus raised the widows son from the dead (Luke.7:11). You could also see Endor, where Saul met with the witch, a little further south. Eight miles away, you could even see Gideon Springs, and all the way around to your right was Mount Carmel. These several views across the Jezreel Valley brought much of the Bible into perspective as we saw how close together these familiar places were located. Pastor Charlie pointed out that Mary and Joseph traveled about 100 miles in four days of hard journey to get to Bethlehem, a considerable effort for a very pregnant young lady. As I

said previously, the United Monarchy map, Plate 4 in my Scofield reference Bible, with each 1 inch of paper being 20 miles of real estate, is more precious and understood today than it ever has been.

My son, Shane's notes reminded me that when Pastor Charlie preached on the Precipice from Luke 4:16–30, he clarified that Jesus was not crude or rude, causing the people of Nazareth to be angry, but he was calm, and his words were gracious, but they reacted with anger. His words were 1) Spirit filled, 2) Gracious, 3) Unwavering, and 4) Truthful words. People, even today, sometimes get very angry when hearing the Words of God.

In our short stop at Zippori, our guide Joe had pointed out that Jews of Zippori (rebuilt into Sepphoris) did not participate in the AD 66 revolt against Rome. If one is strong in their faith, they do not participate in revolt, nor do they assimilate into the society around them (I was thinking that part one of such guidance might not have been quite so applicable during our American revolution).



Pastor Charlie wisely interjected here, that Jesus, who grew up in Nazareth, only 4 miles from Zippori, “grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. ... And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke.2:40, 52). Even though Herod was building Sepphoris into the “ornament of all Galilee”, even though the powers of Hell convinced him to make the little town right next to Nazareth his administrative capital of Galilee, and despite the fact that forces afoot want to compromise Jesus' upbringing with seditions not in evidence, Pastor Charlie made it clear that the Bible is true and accurate; Jesus was sinless, and as a youth, he was found “in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke.2:46–47). In the Holy Bible Jesus was not in Zippori, or Tzippori, or Soppboris, but he went down with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject unto them (2:51), “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (2:52). Further, the first miracle he did was in Cana of Galilee, the Bible says so. Don’t let the world, the flesh, or the devil besmirch the youth of our Lord Jesus Christ with stories about what was going on near Nazareth (or with Roman catholic stories about show off miracles done as a

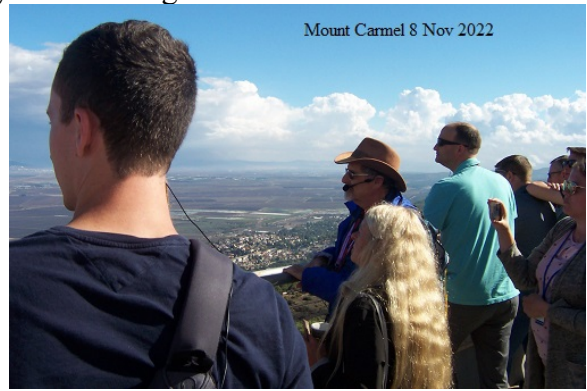


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teenager!). Thank you Pastor Charlie for being clear, Biblical, and blunt about this rumor mill astir in Zippori, changed to Sepphoris, by the evil king Herod.

The bus was loading, it was exciting to visit the Precipice overlooking Nazareth and see the whole region around it, it was an adventure to visit Zippori, and learn a little history of the region, but my anticipation was set on Mount Carmel. Someday we will sit and talk with Elijah the prophet.

The story of Elijah, yea, the contest in Israel between God and their idolatry, did not begin nor end on Mount Carmel. Three and 1/2 years earlier Elijah the Tishbite, who



was of the inhabitants of Gilead, walks on to the page of our Bible and starts the contest with Ahab, the most vile king of Israel (God called him such in 1Kings.16:25, 30, 21:25). We know almost nothing about Elijah, but can surmise some things, ... he grew up in rugged farming country and his parents named him “the LORD (Jehovah) he is God”; that tells us something. After his earthshaking, life threatening announcement to King Ahab, Elijah disappears, and anyone who has read the Bible knows “The Raven at

the Brook Cherith Account.”

In 1995, on the day we moved into our new home after my USAF retirement, and installation as a Pastor in Yates County, a raven crashed into our back door, and when I slid it open, he hopped into our lives. We raised him for two years, and never have stopped, marveling at Elijah's encounter with such a genius bird. Okay, ours was just a crow, but we knew him to be a distant cousin of Elijah's friend, and a providentially sent encouragement in our ministry.¹

After God sent Elijah the raven, the Bible reader knows about the widow with a barrel of meal and a little cruise of oil in Zarephath. Most people don't know that to get to Zarephath, Elijah had to walk 100 miles kitty-corner across a drought stricken nation, which had a royal bounty on his head. Nor do they realize that Zarephath was headquarters for Jezebel's father, who dictated all of Tyre and Sidon's outlandish and brutal, Baal worship! It is kind of Elijah's 'out of the pot and into the fire' experience that demonstrated God's sense of



¹ Ravens differ from crows in larger size, larger bill, tail shape, and flight patterns; they travel in pairs, while crows travel in larger groups. Amazingly, they also copulate in mid air, crows don't. (ref audubon.org) I lived with the ravens on Shemya, an island of the Aleutian chain, from May of 1983 until May of 1984.

humor, and careful protection of his Prophet. Anyway, now, here we stood on Mount Carmel. I, for one, was awestruck.

It certainly would have been better served if someone had built an altar of 12 stones here, rather than a Roman Catholic “Carmelite Monastery of Elijah”. In Arabic and Hebrew “*Muhraqa*” as this spot is called, means “*it burns*”, and the spot is authentic. John Butler writes in his book “*Elijah the Prophet of Confrontation*”:

Regarding Mount Carmel ... “no spot in Palestine is more beautiful, more bracing, or healthful than Carmel ... Up to the northwest, it juts as a promontory into the Mediterranean, rising to a height of 500 ft. Thence it stretches about twelve miles to the S.S.E., rising into two other peaks. The first of these, about four miles from the promontory, is not less than 1740 feet high. Still further to the southeast is a third peak 1687 feet high, which, to this day bears the name of El-Maharakah, or 'place of burning' (sacrifice). This, there can scarcely be a doubt, was the place of Elijah's sacrifice.”



royal invitation (1Kings.18:20), the stress of the times which would greatly increase the interest in the meeting, and that Christ had crowds of 5,000 “besides women and children” (Matt.14:21) in the same land, we think the crowd was easily in the five digit category.

The outstanding feature of the crowd, which Elijah deals with at the very outset, is that they were wavering. “The assemblage on Carmel was, for the most part, wavering between the claims of Jehovah and Baal (D. Merson). The contest on Mount Carmel was to stop this wavering and to lead the people to follow Jehovah.”²

2 John G Butler, “*Elijah the prophet of confrontation - Biblical Bible series number 3*”, LBC publications, 1994, page 115.

Our guide Joe was excited to lead us to where the prophet Elijah staged the contest with the 450 prophets of Baal (and with Jezebel's 400 prophets of the groves, who wouldn't come up the mountain). Joe gave a cursory introduction of Mount Carmel to the awestruck. Carmel means "the Garden land" and that only begins to capture the beauty that dwells on Mount Carmel, and all that can be seen from its heights (that is not to be confused with NJ "The Garden State"). It was no matter to us that the Carmelite³



Monastery, dedicated to the Roman Catholic queen and mistress of Carmel, crowded into the site. In staunch contrast, the first Carmelite ever heard of was a precious Bible character named Abigail the Carmelites (2Sam.27:3). Sent from my iPhone 8/3/23 12pm

Pastor Charlie opened our Bibles to 1Kings chapter 17 and 18 and flat out preached. Elijah had said,

Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount

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

We were standing at the place known as the *Muhraqa*, literally meaning 'it burns'. This is surely the very site where "*Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD*" (1Kngs.18:31-32).

Standing on the site, Pastor Charlie gives details. First Kings 18 begins, "*And it came*

- 3 The Carmelite Order is one of the few monastic orders, if not the only one, not to refer to a charismatic founder, but to a prophet of the Old Testament: Elijah and his disciple Elisha are considered by the Carmelites as the spiritual fathers of the order. Tradition indicates the presence on Mount Carmel of a series of Jewish and then Christian hermits who lived, prayed and taught in the caves used by Elijah and Elisha. This is how the first Christian hermits (at the origin of the founding of the order), settled in the caves of Mount Carmel to pray to God. The first chapel built within the hermitages and bringing together this community is dedicated to the Roman Catholic's version of the virgin Mary. Very quickly, the spirituality of the whole order turned to Roman Catholic Mary who became the Roman Catholic queen and mistress of Carmel. (The Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, known as the Carmelites are a Roman Catholic mendicant religious order (Mendicant orders are, primarily certain Roman Catholic religious orders that have adopted for their male members a lifestyle of poverty, traveling, and living in urban areas for purposes of preaching, evangelization, and ministry, especially to the poor.)). A Carmelite prays for the Roman Church and in union with the Roman Church. The day is divided into times of chanting the Liturgy of the Hours - a monastic tradition of marking the different parts of the day with prayer.

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

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

LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again (1Kng.18:36–37).



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



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

In the panoramic view from Mount Carmel, following the western edge of the Jezreel Valley southward you could just barely make out where Megiddo is located. That was to be our next stop.