



**The Half Shekel Journals of 2023** by Pastor Ed Rice  
**#23029 Wed 29 Mar Ramon Crater, Ashalim, Sde Boker**

The bus was not to leave Isrotel Yam Suf, Eilat, Israel until 0830, making for a relaxing morning for early risers. Pastor Lee had described our day as:

Day 14 March 29th 2023 We Begin our last day as we share breakfast together and check out of the hotel. Be sure to have all your belongings. Today we begin the trip back to where we began in Tel Aviv. It has been such a blessing to serve each one of you. If the Lord does not return this year we will be doing this again in 2024.

1. Our first stop is at Ramon Crater. The Grand canyon of Israel.

2. Our next stop is at kibbutz Sde Boker, this is where the first prime minister of Israel and his wife lived in the last part of their lives. We will visit their graves to pay our respects to this tremendous man and his wife. Ezekiel 37 1-22, What do we take away today?

3. Our last stop is at Tell Beersheva. It is here the old and ancient and the new come together. It is here Abraham was given the gospel. It is here that we see Israel's rebirth truly begin with a modern miracle on October 31st 1917. Genesis 22:1-18, What do we take away today?



A couple hours before sunrise on the last day of our Israel pilgrimage my mind flashed with Beersheba Scriptures I wanted to check, Psalms that should be read, and prayer that was want to be made. I love morning quiet time, at home I own the whole house, here a

quiet corner of our hotel room. I let Bev sleep until sunrise. We read three chapters from Judges and Psalms 89 (it was the 89th day of the year), packed up all our worldly possessions, and headed down to a 7:30 breakfast, our last one in Israel.

Being right here on the Red Sea, 200 km from the Dead Sea, and headed to the Med Sea, I somehow felt obligated to again eat some of their cold fish offerings for breakfast. Beverly said, "That makes one of us!" and moved off towards their generous pastry offerings. Ensuring that all our bags were slid into the belly of the King-Long tour bus was, by now, pretty routine. Costia was beaming his greeting smile as we climb the stairs and headed to the familiar fifth row left hand side. Routines are good. Broken routines are good too. This being our last day in Israel a lot of things go through the mind.

Pastor Bill Thiessen gave a Scripture centered, thought provoking, opening to our day and Eli was noticeably excited about our excursion from the Red Sea to the Med Sea,



and all that would be seen on the way.



We had just comfortably left Eilat and started into the now familiar Negev landscapes when we passed a battery of Israel's Iron Dome. Israel's missile defense system consists of batteries of three or four launchers that can fire 20 interceptor missiles. They are located all across Israel and when an incoming hostile missile is expected to strike a population area, it launches an intercept missile that explodes near the incoming rocket and destroys it. A very sophisticated and genius device which has negated the incessant Islamist-Palestinian rocket attacks on the Israeli homeland. Palestinians, whose name roots back to the Philistine and Palesta Providences present when the Roman empire tried to wipe every Jew off the face of the earth in 70 AD, have avowed, again, and still, to wipe every Jew off the face of the earth. They were given control of the Gaza

strip in an absolutely foolhardy land-for-peace Israeli compromise. Palestinians don't want peace, they want annihilation of Israel. In 2005 Israel had a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and in 2006 Palestinians, via an election, put the terrorist group Hamas in charge of the area. Hamas initiated violent conflicts in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Their rockets have not ceased; the Iron Dome has foiled their hostile aggression so far.

A little past the Iron Dome battery we passed a large kibbutz. Eli folded it right into his dialogue as a farming kibbutz for very Zionist settlers. The kibbutz in Israel started as a socialist agricultural entity. Anything built on socialism cannot survive, proving always to be unsustainable. It must migrate back into capitalism, or devolve into complete communism. It is unfortunate that America has not realized and learned this, even with repeated observations. While



teaching freshman college Algebra, I once averaged all the quiz scores and gave everyone the same grade, an 82%. The only complaints came from several who had aced the quiz. The next week when everyone got a 72% more complained that it wasn't fair. The next week when they all got a 62% grade, there was a caustic rebellion. I left the socialist grading system and went back to people getting what they earned. High performers, under socialism, abandon high performance. They always have, and always

will.

Anyway, in the Negev this curious kibbutz had an agricultural work day from dawn till 9:00 a.m., when the temperature reached 45° C! That impressed the Canadians right off; the Americans had to wait through Eli's full 30 second pause before he clarified "That's like 113° Fahrenheit!" Eli pointed out the little shrub like acacia "trees" galore around the kibbutz, and smiled at me wryly. I took it that he enjoyed my argument with the tabernacle guide two days ago.



The Negev terrain grew more hostile and rocky as we approached our stop at the Ramon Crater. NASA had eloquently said, "Ramon Crater resembles a landscape from the fictional Star wars planet of Tatooine. It includes sporadic red and yellow clay hills and is surrounded by mountains. The north section of the crater contains a black hill, which was once an active volcano that is now covered with the basalt. ... Ramon Crater also contains a memorial dedicated to Ilan Ramon, the Israeli astronaut who died along with six others crew members in the Space Shuttle Columbia accident in February 2003.

The memorial is located at Mount Ramon, the highest peak in the area.” The NASA site also had several remarkable satellite photos of the crater, but it contained much balderdash about the millions of years of evolution it took to form an erosion crater.



Eli explained, the Ramon Crater or Makhtesh Ramon, is one of the five craters in the Negev desert. It is the largest erosion crater in the world, and its rim, overlooking the vast depression, is one of the most spectacular sites in Israel. When God creates a 1600 foot deep, 9 mile by 26 mile crater in your backyard, it is a wonder to behold. An erosion crater is a grand canyon with no outlet, it is entirely encircled by mountains.

Ramon Crater is an erosion crater that was previously a body of water about four times the size of the Sea of Galilee. Israel's Negev has five such erosion craters. Sandstone was compressed under the lake bed with stratification of seashells and a wide variety of marine animal fossils around the rim. The stratification layers with

volcanic activity make a geological wonder and a geological window. The obvious conclusion, there was a world flood at just the time the Bible says there was a world flood. Evolutionist must bury and conceal a flood of crater lake evidence to hold to their NO FLOOD demand. Ramon Crater is the largest National Reserve in Israel with inhabitants of the Nubian mountain goat, leopard, jackal, striped hyena, sand fox, wolf



Bedouins in Negev Israel, near Ramon Crater  
29 March 2023 11am

and gopher. Humans can stay here, too, but the motel charges \$1,000 per night.

After overlooking the crater we gathered on the bus and Eli began unfolding his encyclopedic mind as Costia guided the tour bus from the craters edge, back to the main route north. Currently excavations at three sites in Israel's Negev Desert have uncovered way-stations in an ancient desert highway which connects Gaza to Petra in what is called the “Spice

Road.” On your right hand you can see the great solar tower of Ashalim. It is a massive

feat of engineering that uses 50,000 reflective mirrors to focus the sun onto the beaming tip of an 800 foot tower. The towers blinding light prompts comparisons to the Tower of Babel, and/or Moses' Burning Bush. The giant water boiler inside the tower's turret runs steam turbines to generate electricity. Solar thermal generation of electricity was thought promising before photovoltaic panels were refined and took over the solar scene.



On your left there is an extensive six-story underground prison housing Hamas prisoners with life sentences. It is six stories high, but completely underground. You will often hear of prisoner exchanges for IDF soldiers, it happens here. You can be sure they are not watching color TV in air conditioned cells over there.

On your right hand you can see a Bedouin camp. These Bedouins are not Israeli and not loyal to any government. Israel built cities for Bedouins, but behind every house was a tent. They are

often involved in smuggling weapons. Their youth have ignored all leadership, and become criminal drug and weapons smugglers. Bedouins often claim they are the owners of the Negev, but that is not so.

Coming up on the right is the burial site of David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister. Kibbutz Sde Boker has his famous home that is now a museum. A number of pioneering families founded this community in 1952, and it was later joined by Ben Gurion. Their vision of creating industry and life in the desert so impressed the Prime Minister that the elderly spokesman applied to join the community. He was accepted with one vote margin, and made Sde Boker



his home. Ben Gurion lived here for the rest of his life, hosting world leaders and many other dignitaries in his home. "His passion for developing Israel's desert and his membership in the Sde Boker have undoubtedly been of paramount importance in securing investments in infrastructure and creation of the thriving communities and

industries in the Negev which continue to flourish” (touristisrael.com).

Ben Gurion said, “We will do the difficult first, the impossible will take a little longer.”

From the NY Times Digital Archives December 2, 1973:

TEL AVIV, Dec. 1 — David Ben-Gurion, a founding father of modern Israel and its first Premier, died today at the age of 87. He succumbed at 11:06 A.M. local time (4:06 A.M. New York time) to a brain hemorrhage that had struck him two weeks ago.

Because of the Sabbath the Government withheld an official announcement until sundown tonight. However, the news was reported unofficially earlier by the state radio.

Premier Golda Meir convened the Cabinet for a memorial meeting in Jerusalem tonight. Minister of Interior Yosef Burg ordered flags on all public buildings lowered to half-staff from tomorrow morning until Monday night.

Mr. Ben-Gurion will lay in state at the Knesset, or Parliament, building in Jerusalem from 10 A.M. tomorrow through the night until 7 A.M. Monday. The public will be able to pay respects. Places of entertainment throughout the country will be closed tomorrow.

Okay, get out your Bibles, our next, and final, stop will be at Beersheba.

*And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? 30 And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. 31 Wherefore he called that place **Beersheba**; because there they sware both of them. 32 Thus they made a covenant at **Beersheba**; then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. 33 And Abraham planted a grove in **Beersheba**, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God (Gen.21:28-33).*

**Beersheba**: <0884> בְּרֵאֵר שֶׁבַע AV- 34 times, Beer-sheba= "well of the sevenfold oath."