



The Half Shekel Journals of 2023 by Pastor Ed Rice
#2307 Mon 20 Mar Hazor, Tel-Dan, Canaanite Gate

On Monday, 20 March, I woke before the sun came out of his

chamber as a bride groom, before it rejoice to run its race. This was to be our third sunrise in Israel, and I sat in the dark to contemplate and recall all that went on in our Sunday race with the sun.

Pastor Pickett had conspired with Eli, our guide, to arrange that Costea, our bus driver, would be the very first one to guide a tour bus into the parking lot of the Hazor Archaeological Site; wheels up was scheduled for 0700 (technically buses don't have "wheels up"; that is an Air Force cliché, but many people get it).

As the sun engaged it's race, Bev and I wander down to breakfast, at the beautiful Lake House Hotel on the Sea of Galilee. We engaged with an amazing kosher buffet breakfast with Abe and Anna, and Sue, newfound Canadian friends, sharing the excitement of waking up in God's promised land of Israel. We anticipated the day together.



Pastor Pickett had assembled a little booklet called "Bible Berean Israel Tour, 2023". It gave a map of each day, a place to jot notes, and a description of the day's events. It called March 20th Day 5, which only worked out if Day 1 was entirely spent in the Newark, New Jersey airport. The map showed Hazor, Tel-Dan, Caesary Philippi, Mount Bendel (valley of tears), and Kursi. There was then two pages of description which said:

We begin our day with breakfast and fellowship and then on the bus for another day of our tour. Today we are headed for the Northern end of Israel to visit five major sites that you see on your map.





1. Our first stop is at one of Solomon's horse chariot cities. There are three of these in Israel; Hazor in the north, Meggido in the center, and Gezzer in the south. 1Kings.9:10-15.

2. Second stop is a nice short hike to Tel-Dan and the Golden Calf Temple built by Jeroboam, in his attempt to replace God's worship in Jerusalem. We will also visit the oldest mud brick gate in the world. 1Kings.22:25-23. (Read also Judges.18 - How Apostasy Begins). What do we take away today?

3. Our third stop is at a place of true hope for us all. Only 3 miles from Dan, is Caesarea Philippi. Here Peter made his great confession. Here Jesus announced the church that was to come.

Matthew.16:13-19. What do we take away today?

4. Our next stop is at Mount Bental to view into Syria, and also the modern history of this great nation Israel. Here at the Valley of Tears, God wrought a miracle in October 1973, as just 12 Israeli tanks stopped hundreds and saved the life of the nation. Jeremiah.31:6-12, Isaiah.43:4-7. What do we take away today?

5. Our last stop of the day is at Kursi. Here Jesus Christ saved the demon possessed man. Luke.8:26-39.

As we end the day, let us all be thankful for the great love, that *Jeshua Hamashiac*, Jesus Christ, has for all people, both Jew and Gentile alike.

We end our day with our hearts filled with thoughts and now sit down for a peaceful meal together in fellowship. Let us all be sure to mingle with those who you have just met. The fellowship of a small group is part of this wonderful



experience.¹

With umbrellas in hand, we greeted Eli and Costia right on time for our scheduled “wheels up”, and as the bus pulled out of the hotel parking lot, Pastor Henry Penner opened his Bible and we began our day's adventure with a Bible devotion and prayer. An excellent start to any day.

As we rambled up around the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee (actually tour buses don't ramble, every move, they make is with purpose and direction) Eli, our passionate guide, announced, ... On the right hand side you can see Magdala, the city of Mary Magdalene. Magdala has a brand new archaeological site opened, because six months ago, while doing road construction, they discovered a second synagogue that was in Magdala. A town with two synagogues is a very rare thing. (a town with two Baptist Churches is a very common thing; it's been said, “Baptist fight like alley cats, but then, too, they reproduce like alley cats as well.”) The excavators are working there today, and on your next trip to Israel you may want to visit Magdala.

Eli continued, ... we are heading into the Golan, which is a 690 square mile piece of property where southern borders of Syria and Lebanon meet the northern border of Israel. The Golan Heights is the Rocky plateau that was captured by Israel in the 1967 six day war. (angry Arabs still consider it to be Syrian territory held by Israel under military occupation; the majority of the UN agree, so does the worlds news media, and in 2009, even a president of the USA, Barack Hussein Obama, addressing an Arab-spring in Egypt, called Israel “the occupiers of Palestinian land.” No president before or since has had the audacity to do that.) This northern border area of Gods promised land has been war torn since the tribe of Manasseh settled the area in the 15th century BC. In fact “Golan” in Hebrew <01474> means both “their captivity” and “their rejoicing”² With that as our backdrop we are stopping now at one of Solomon's four fortress cities the northern one called Hazor.³



1 “Bible Berean Israel Tour 2023” by Pastor Lee Pickett & Mrs Donna Pickett, March 16-30 2023, Day 5

2 Strong Exhaustive Concordance reference “Golan <01474> of Bashan” Deut.4:43, Josh.20:8, 21:27, 1Chron.6:71

3 Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, & Gezer, were Solomon's four fortress cities 1Kings.9:15 *And this is the*

Just before we get to Hazor, in our attempt to visit every שירותים (*sherutim* (literally “services”) (what you all call a bathroom or restroom) in Israel we will stop at the beautiful Hula Nature Reserve. The Hula Nature Reserve was the first nature reserve to be created in Israel and was designed to preserve the flora and fauna (plants and animals) of the Hula Lake. Hula is a marsh area where birds stop-over on their migrations from Europe to Africa and then again on their return flights, the valley, as a whole, offers bird spotting, endless hikes and walks, bike trails, and beautiful nature to be observed. “Our purposeful stop here will only be for a few minutes, so don't wander off.”

It was raining pretty steady when we entered Tel-Hazor. The archaeological site was large, encompassing 200 acres, and containing artifacts back to Canaanite occupation. Our interest was the six chambered gate, identical in size and design to Solomon's gates at Megiddo and Gazer. The Hazor site included an impressive 130 foot shaft, reaching deep into the tel, accessing the water table below, tripartite pillard buildings (*tripartite* = involving three elements) to store food and house the royal cavalry, and four room pillared houses with a central court, and three side rooms.

We found a covered alcove, as well as a short, heaven sent, respite from the latter rains (the March - April spring rains that mature the crops of Israel), and opened our Bible to 1 Kings, and 2 Corinthians.

Solomon built some impressive, stronghold cities to protect his homeland of Israel. We have seen the construct of tremendous gates that control who gets in. Solomon was cognizant and wise about the physical security of God's promised land, but Solomon, the wisest man on earth, (God said so) was foolish about tearing down Satan's strongholds and building his spiritual stronghold cities. The Bible says 1 Kings. 11:1-6:

But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; 2 Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto

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..



the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father (1Kings.11:1–6).

Praise the Lord, God knows us, and our genuine weakness for the same tendencies to build, physical strongholds, and neglect the spiritual dangers all around us. So he addresses this several times in our New Testament. *“Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God: how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past, finding out“ (Romans.11:33).*

Of course, the best detailed reference to a spiritual stronghold may be the whole armor of God rehearsed in Ephesians chapter 6, but my personal favorite deals with tearing down Satan's strong holds, as found in 2Cor.10:3–6.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2Cor.10:3–6).

Some things to note in this text are found in a “Taking Back A

Stronghold” workbook I have used in my ministry for years. It deals with addictions that get a foothold in a Christian's life, it would have been helpful to Solomon and contains



these Five Elements of a Victorious Walk, with verses we should memorize and meditate on:

1. **Genuine Repentance** (Psalm 51). Do you see sin as an affront to a holy God or just have remorse over the consequences? *“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.”*

2. **Taking back ground** (Eph 4:27). Ground is given by sinful acts. This gives Satan legal jurisdiction in our lives. *“Neither give place to the devil.”*

3. **Tearing down strongholds** (2Cor 10:3-5). These are false belief systems that provide the enemy an area to bring destructive attacks. (See

verses above). An important part of tearing down strongholds is found in verse 6, *“And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.”* How does one revenge disobedience? *“For every hour I spend in this disobedience, I will spend two in Bible reading and prayer obedience.”* or *“For every act of this disobedience I will talk to ten people, give them a gospel tract, and tell them what God did for me.”* When you start seriously revenging all disobedience, Satan will give you a much wider berth.

4. **Build towers of truth** (John.8:32). These towers are a belief system based on the truth of God's Word. *“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”*

5. **Taking every thought captive** (Phil 4:8). This is God's standard for right thinking. If you do not take your thoughts captive, they will captivate you. *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”*

Right now each of us could identify, name and claim a “My besetting Sin!” (In the workbook there is a place to write it down!) Depending on our sin there are



a myriad of Bible Verses that touch it, they should be memorized, and regularly rehearsed until the stronghold is broken. An applicable verse for most of our addictions is:

My Stronghold Verse: 1Cor.6:19-20 *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”*

Solomon, with all his physical stronghold constructions, was not careful about tearing out Satan's spiritual strongholds and building up God's Spiritual strongholds. Be wiser than Solomon in that arena.

The lite rain was getting, ... less-lite as we headed toward the bus. Our stop at Tel-Dan was just up the road a half hour.

Tel⁴-Dan is an important site for Biblical archaeology. It is situated at the base of Mount Hermon on the headwaters of the Jordan River, at the northernmost tip of Israel. Being right close to the borders of both Lebanon and Syria, at the headwaters of the Jordan River, Pastor Lee Pickett and Eli, our guide, were noticeably excited to be here and they kept our spirits high despite the need of umbrella and rain coat.

Our stroll through the Tel-Dan Nature Reserve would have combined exploration of remarkable archaeological sites, the exquisite natural habitat areas, and bubbling streams of the Jordan headwaters. The luxurious foliage along the streams would not hide the several aqueducts that carried water off to flour mills and fields of a millennia ago. Although the incessant rain prevented most of our Tel-Dan experience, Pastor Pickett made sure we got a good Bible look at the place. Here is some of my “take-away.”

The first mention of Dan is found in Genesis 14:14, *“And when Abram heard that his brother (his Nephew Lot) was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three-hundred and eighteen, and pursued them into Dan.”* Some have speculated wildly why this northern point in the Promised Land was called Dan five-hundred years before the tribe of Dan ever headed up there⁵. (1913 BC of Genesis 14, to 1406 BC of Judges 18 = 507 years). I have a good answer for that, “Just because!” Any number of etymology



4 Remember that “tel” is Arabic for a mound and represents a mound of civilizations, one built on top of another. If you own a Bible, there are no “prehistoric” civilizations.

5 Modernist, ecumenical “scholars”, apostates and infidels contend that God did not write Genesis, they suppose man wrote it and it is not trustworthy.

reasons could be explored in Hebrew, Canaanite, and Syrian. Rachel called her “first born” Dan (actually born from her handmaid Bilhah). In Hebrew Dan means “a judge”. In folklore it was "judged" that three rivers should unite and make the headwaters for the Jor-Dan river. Jordan can be shown to mean, waters that come from Dan, come from a judge, or come from judgment. Any of a number of explanations could suffice for Abram referencing this place as Dan, and I like my answer of “Just because”, or better still, “Just because the Bible says so.”

Our real interest in the beautiful Tel-Dan Nature Preserve begins when the Tribe of Dan invaded the Canaanite occupied area in 1406 BC. Pastor Pickett gave a review of the background of this invasion. It occurred at the close of the book of Judges when civil and religious confusion was gaining the upper hand. The record of Joshua, who divided the land out by lots has this “post it note” attached in Joshua 19:47, “*And the coasts of the children of Dan went out to 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.*” The Bible then adds more detail to this rogue departure of Dan and adds Judges 1:34, “*And the Amorite forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley.*” Then Judges 18 has all the detail of Dan's departure from their inheritance, and their sojourn across the map to a land in the northern end of the promised land.

As they went through Ephraim they stole some idolatry, a crooked priest, his ephod, teraphim (*teraphim* <08655> AV image, or idol), and graven image, and off they went to capture Laish from the Zidonians (i.e. Sidonians of Sidon). It seems Dan experienced civil confusion, religious confusion, and inheritance confusion. Curiously, Dan is the only tribe left out when God seals 12,000 from each tribe in Revelation 7:4 - 8. (Ephraim, the other scalawag that hosted Jeroboam's golden calf, is not listed in Rev.7 either, but is therein called the tribe of Joseph).

The tribe of Dan, who abandoned their inheritance, and their God, is now steeped in idolatry, and when Jeroboam is possessed to set up false gods to drive his ten northern tribes from following the LORD and make them sin a great sin⁶ (cf 2Kings 17:20-23), Dan fits his bill. Jeroboam didn't want Israel going south to worship in Jerusalem.

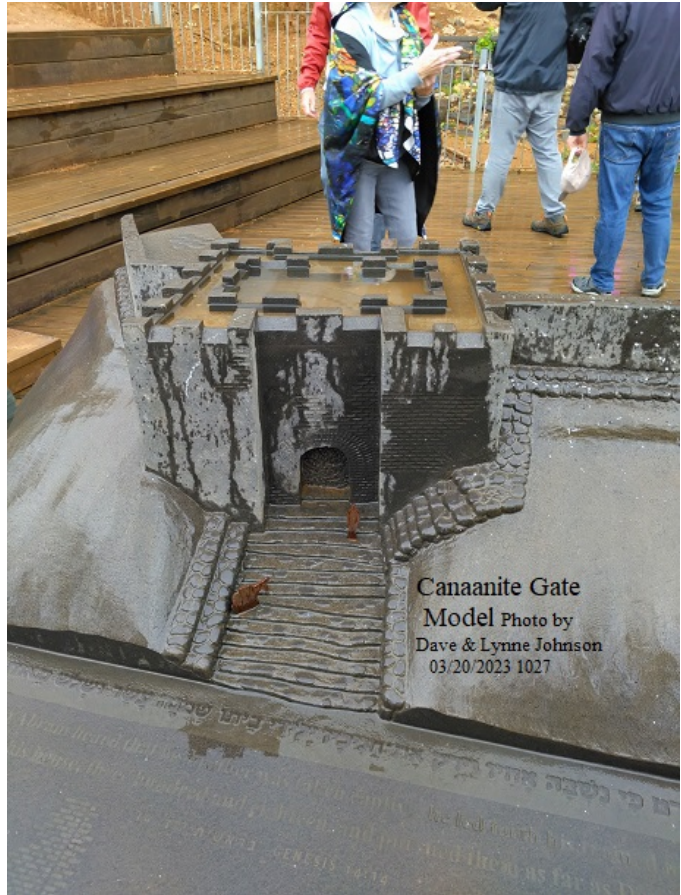
*20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.
21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. 22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; 23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day (2Kings 17:20-23) .*

Due to the present rain, the mud, and the slippery trails we were unable to visit the actual site of the altar were we might stand on the very plot of ground where such vile, national, idolatry took place, but Pastor Pickett taught well the evils of idolatry that took

6 No less than twenty times the Bible calls out this sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin!
OnlineBible.net User List: # 1Ki 13:34 14:16 15:30,34 16:2,19,26,31 21:22 22:52, # 2Ki 3:3
10:29,31 13:2,6,11 14:24 15:9,18,24,28 17:21,22 23:15. I have each highlighted via brown colored pencil in my Scofield Bible in order to emphasize the long chain of sinfulness created by one scalawag!

place here, and how it can easily take place in our lives, in our homes, and in our nation. Rather than hike through the beautiful, albeit very wet Tel-Dan Nature Preserve, Costia with the King-Long tour bus shuttled us to the oldest mud-brick gate in the world.

The Canaanite Gate, found on the backside of the Tel-Dan nature preserve is over 3,492 years old (Remember Moses was at Mount Sinai in 1492 BC, a memorable date, and we are over 2,000 years into *Anno Domini*, Year of our Lord). It has three arches made of mud-brick and is thus the oldest gate ever found. The archaeological work done on the Canaanite city of Laish afforded a glimpse into the culture of the heathens that God wanted utterly destroyed from his land; Deut.7:1 lists them, *“When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; ... ”* (It is possible that these in Laish were Sidonians instead of Canaanites). There are good but copyright Bible maps that indicate where these seven nations previously dwelt in God's Promised Land, and where Dan's original inheritance fell out by lot.



When the Lord God was giving his law, commandments, testimonies, and statutes to Israel he often cited *“for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you”* (Leviticus 18:24, cf 28, Deut.9:4-5, 12:30*, 1King.14:24)⁷. It was amazing that they discovered and excavated so much of Laish, the city that the Tribe of Dan destroyed. It was disturbing that the Tribe of Dan was so quickly moved into such vile idolatry. I have heard it said by the ignorant and agnostic, *“If I could see God, then I would believe!”* Israel did see God, they were there when *mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly”* (Exod.19:18). And yet the Bible

⁷ *Le 18:24, 28 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: ... 28 That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. De 9:4 ... but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. 5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 12:30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. 1Kngs.14:24 And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.*

records repeatedly how swiftly they fell into unbelief, and dove head first into idolatry. Since the fall of man, man is just bent toward sin, that natural bend is called our “iniquity”.

The Bible records that the verdict is already in about your keeping the law, “*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (Rom.3:10-12). There is no law or works one can do to get out of the condemnation of sin. Which is exactly why every human needs to be personally and individually *saved!* Saved from the condemnation attached to sin. “*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*” (John.3:17-18).

Christ took my condemnation, he took my place, ... “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom.5:8). If you are reading this and are not saved from that condemnation, you can be right now; the Bible says, “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ... 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” (Rom.10:9-10,13). Call on him today, call on us tomorrow; www.GSBaptistChurch.com.

The bus was loading up, our next stop was to be Caesarea Philippi and we were eager to get there and explore the very place where Jesus said, “Upon this rock, I will build my church.”

