



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#20 Mon 7 Nov Tel Dan, Caesarea Philippi, Golan

Tel¹-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, Joe, our guide, began an excited description of where we were at, even as stragglers gimped in from the bus parking lot. The short bus ride, after a pleasant lunch,



had lulled some of us into REM sleep, and brain activity, and leg movements, were dawdling a little.

Our stroll through the Tel-Dan Nature Reserve combined exploration of remarkable archaeological sites, the exquisite natural habitat areas, and bubbling streams of the Jordan headwaters. The luxurious foliage along the streams did not hide the several aqueducts that carried water off to flour mills and fields of a millennia ago.

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 there². (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 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 Dan, and

- 1 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.
- 2 Modernist, ecumenical "scholars", apostates and infidels contend that God did not write Genesis, they suppose man wrote it and it is not trustworthy.

I like my answer of “Just because”, or better, “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 Charlie gave an excellent 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 (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 scallawag 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 sin³ (cf 2Kings 17:20-23), Dan fits his bill. Jeroboam



3 No less than twenty times the Bible calls out this sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin! 1Kings. 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

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)



As Pastor Charlie leaned against the replica altar set up in Dan, yea while we stood on the very plot of ground where such vile,

national, idolatry took place, he taught of the evils of idolatry in our lives, in our homes, and in our nation.

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 Gergashites, 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)⁴. It was amazing that they discovered and excavated so much of Laish.

The bus was loading up, our next stop was to be Caesarea Philippi and we were eager to get there and also to make the Golan Heights by dark.

pencil in order to emphasize the long chain of sinfulness created by one scalawag!

Mat.16:13 *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

Mrk.8:27 *And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?*



Caesarea

Philippi is called by several names today: Baniyas and Pnias are the most common, and it turns out that Baniyas is just an Arab's pronunciation of Pnias, Arabs have no “P” sound in their alphabet. Joe was fluent in giving a wealth of background about what we saw as we came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi. We were at the base of Mount Hermon and looking into a cave mouth that was the

largest spring feeding the Jordan River. The cold waters of this spring, flowing out of the cave, has been a hot-bed for pagan worship of false gods. The spring, just inside the cave, was considered bottomless. In the Old Testament of the Bible it was called Baalherman (Judges 3:3, 1Chron.5:23) and Baalgad (Joshua 11:17, 12:7, 13:5), but it was later named Pnias after the Greek god Pan. That's Pan with a “P”.



An open air sanctuary was built for Pan next to the cave. “Sacred niches” are still visible in the rocky cliff of the mountain. Statues of various “deities” were placed in the niches. One niche contained a sculpture of Echo, the mountain nymph⁵, and Pan's consort. Another housed the statue of Pan's father, Hermes, son of nymph Maia.

Augustus Caesar later gave the city to Herod the Great, who built a marble temple to Augustus.

When Herod the Great died, in 4 BC, the city passed to his son Philip the Tetrarch, who

4 *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.*

5 Webster 1828, “nymph” a beautiful mythological goddess inhabiting rivers, woods or other locations.

rebuilt the city and changed the name to Caesarea Philippi. Philip made it his capital, and ruled the area until 33 AD. He depicted the Shrine of Pan on his coins, some of which have survived to this day.

Pastor Charlie opened his Bible to Matthew 16, and began to teach the Biblical significance of why we were here today. Jesus came to the “coast of Caesarea Philippi”, he did not enter the city, ... probably stood right here where we are meeting today. With the backdrop of this massive rock, pouring out its water, and all the pagan



idolatry and false god worship present in the background, Jesus asked his disciples, “*Whom do men say that I the son of man am?*” Then he asked “*But whom say ye that I am?*” It was Simon Peter that answered and said, “*Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.*”

As non-Roman Bible believers, as non-catholic Bible believers, it is important to rightly divide the word of Truth in Jesus' paramount statement in verse

18. “*And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter (4074 Petros, stone) and upon this rock (4073 petra, rock, cliff or ledge) I will build my church ...*” A good paraphrase is “Peter, you're just a little stone, but on this rock, i.e. the truth that I am the Christ, the son of the living God, ... I will build my *ecclesia*, i.e. a called-out gathered together body of believers.”

But wait there's more: I can well picture the



most pragmatic teacher to ever walk on earth as he gave a full 3 second pause, then swung his arm across all the pagan worship going on behind him and said slowly and emphatically, “*and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*”⁶



Standing in this spot, viewing that huge rock and hearing these Bible truths expounded has an impact on the mind that will not soon go away. It was good to be here in the coast of Caesarea Philippi. The bus was loading, we wanted to be on the Golan Heights

6 Some have speculated that this water springing cave was called “The Door of Hades”, or “The Gates of Hell”, previous to Jesus's arrival here, but there is no such evidence. It would seem much more likely, to this Baptist preacher, that God labeled it such in his son's declaration, and that the label stuck around after that.

by dark, and thanks to Eiad's expertise we were.

Jos 21:27 *And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the other half tribe of Manasseh they gave **Golan** in Bashan with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; ...*

Golan of Bashan was a bordertown and subjected to “captivity,” as the name means in Hebrew. Ben Haddad of Damascus was defeated by King Ahab here, and it has been a war-torn area ever since. Joe was passionate as he



described for us how from 1948 - 1967 Syria controlled the Golan Heights, and used it as a military stronghold to randomly snipe at Israeli civilians in the Hula Valley below,

forcing children to sleep in bomb shelters. In late 1966 a youth was killed by a landmine while playing football near the Lebanon border. Syria allowed Yasser Arafat's Fatah to carry out such attacks.

During the 1967 Six Day War, on June 9th Israel



moved against Syrian forces on the Golan. By late afternoon on June 10th, Israel was in complete control of the Golan plateau.



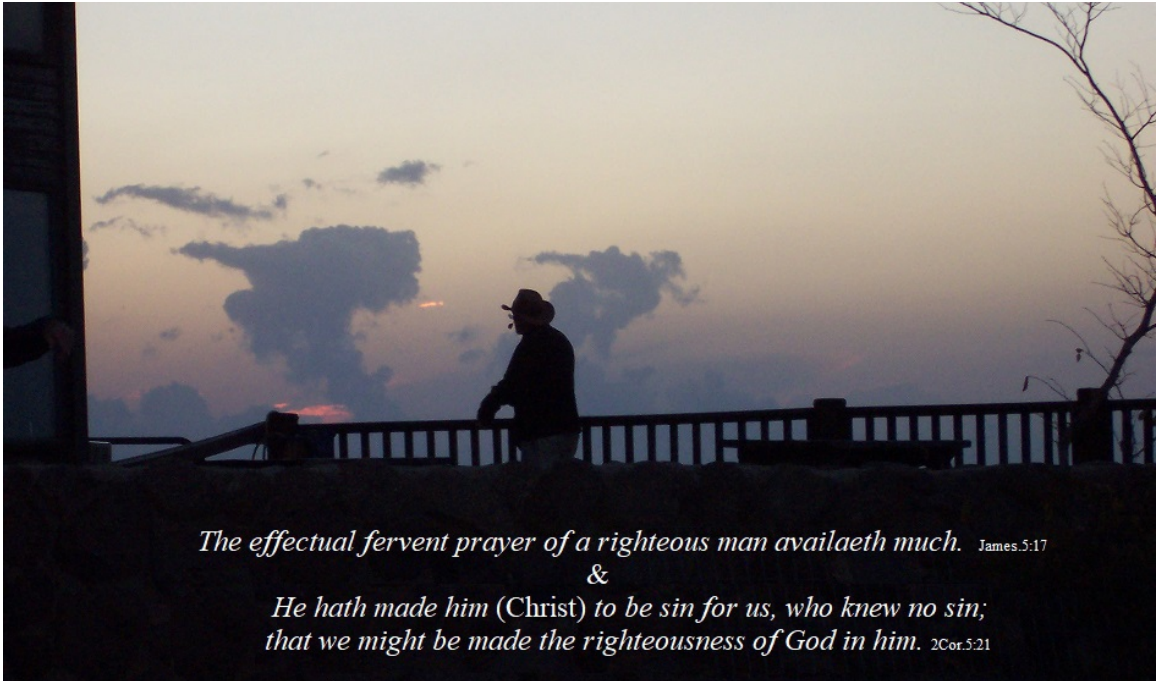
Six years later, in a surprise attack on Yom Kippur, the Syrians over ran the Golan Heights, before being driven back by the Israelis. Syria signed an agreement that left the Golan in Israel's hands. Peace processes faltered, and Syria renewed threats and made troop movements, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated on April 17th, 2016, that Israel will never give up the Golan

Heights. “It's time that the international community finally recognized that the Golan will remain forever under Israel's sovereignty.”

Today Israel has built thriving communities for Arabs, Drew's, Alawites⁷, and Jews in the Golan, but Syria has never signed a peace agreement with Israel.

7 Oxford Dictionary, s.v. “alawites” a member of a Shiite Muslim group living mainly in Syria.

The bus is loading, we must start back, darkness is falling, and supper is ready at the hotel.



Pastor Everett & Debra Napuunoa of First Baptist Church in Parishville, NY went to Israel in January of 2023. We have been swapping adventure stories and they just posted excellent videos of their Israel Pilgrimage on youtube. There are not that many Napuunoas, so if you do a youtube.com Search for “Debra Napuunoa Israel” you will easily find several videos with excellent photography (I think “*napuunoa*” is Hawaiian for “I am related to Noah”, but don't quote me on that). Thank you Pastor Everett & Deb. Enjoy.