



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#24 Wed 9 Nov, The Boat Museum, Caesarea by the Sea, Elah.

On Wednesday, November 9th before dawn I was studying with my penlight so as not to awaken Beverly. Our bags were pretty well packed so our last morning in the Gia Beach Hotel, indeed our last morning in Israel, would go smoothly. As dawn broke we went down to the patio overlooking the Sea of Galilee and, as our morning custom was; we read Scripture aloud together. Nov 9th on our schedule was 1 Peter and Psalm 129. We mused about how fast the 10 days went, and watched birds dance over the Sea of Galilee until the breakfast hour.



Again a wonderful Mediterranean breakfast buffet was served at the Gia Beach Hotel (sometime when I have more time to write I will explain why break-fast is called that, and how God designed us, and our hours of daily darkness, called night, to give our digestive track half a day off, ... every day). We dined with Shane, Kathy and Micah, and I talked no one into trying the cold fish with me. We had time to loiter some this morning, the bus wouldn't load up

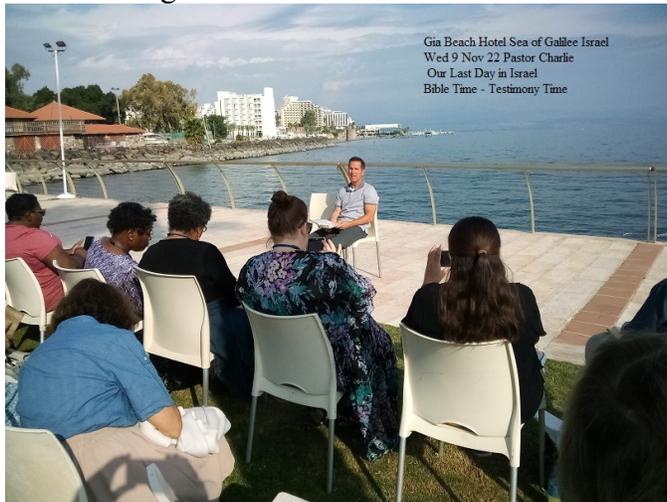
till 10, and a worship service overlooking the Sea of Galilee was to assemble at 0830. We all knew it, but were reluctant to say it out loud, this was our last day in Israel, and we would be on a plane home tonight.

We sang some hymns together before Brother Andy Reese, Pastor of Fellowship Bible Baptist Church, started out a testimony time talking of the Education we got being in Israel, the Exhortation that came from Scriptures that were read here, and Evaluations that we could make on our lives, on our priorities, and especially on our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, after all, we just walked where Jesus walked.

Pastor Charlie broached Peter's "I go a fishing" statement, made after his three year walk with our Lord, and his three dimensional denial. Pastor drove home Jesus' three-dimensional question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" His point was poignant, and he followed up with a charge that we let this experience change us forever. As Pastor asked for others to share something about the effect this trip had on them, several stood, one after another and gave testimony of changes wrought in their outlook, in their attitude, and in their life. Seems when a testimony struck a chord of a familiar song, we joined Pastor Charlie as singing with grace in our hearts rang out in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.



After an hour our Israeli Tour Guide Joe echoed Jacob's words, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not ...", and announced that we were not finished yet; the bus would be loading at 10 and we were to head out to see the "Jesus Boat", then to head down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea for a lunch before our amazing stop at Caesarea on the Sea. We would then have supper in Tel Aviv and then head to the airport to catch our flight home. Guide Joe Freedman solicited our questions, gave us his email address, and then reminded us that an Israel trip is made of puzzles, roller-coasters, and a smorgasbord.



Pastor Charlie relayed that the Jordan River, with head-waters in Dan, swirls through the Sea of Galilee, flows through the Jordan valley, and then stagnates in the Dead Sea; don't let the waters you have drank-in here stagnate. The Psalmist said,

When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. 2 Then was our mouth filled with

laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. 3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. 4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. 5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him (Psalm.126:1-6).

And the Lord said, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John.20:21).

We were dismissed with joy in our hearts to wander one last time through the small park overlooking the Sea of Galilee. As we did, prayer of thanksgiving, joy, and surrender was want to be made. Schedule did not hurry our pace, but bags were being loaded on the bus at 10. Moods were mixed as Eiad guided the 46' Irazar 16S tour bus up Route 90 toward the



Galilee Boat Museum, Ginosar, Israel; mixed, yes, but joy prevailed.

The Boat Museum (32°50'40.1"N 35°31'29.8"E) houses a most marvelous, imaginative story. In 1986 after a severe drought, some lads, exploring some dried up lake bed, stumbled onto a piece of obviously very old wood. Upon further careful excavation it was found to be the hull of a very, very old fishing boat. Upon even further, very tedious, even miraculous excavations, that challenged the genius of the ablest archaeologist in Israel for 11 years, the whole 27 foot long, 7 1/2 foot wide, 4 1/3



foot high hull was removed from the mud and put in a museum. In 2000 the 15 passenger, 2,000 year old¹ fishing boat, designated “The Ancient Galilee Boat”, went on display in Yigal Allon Museum at Kibbutz Ginosar near where it was discovered. We saw it there; ... but didn’t touch it. We watched the miracle movie detailing how it went from mud to awesome display. This paragraph is only a readers – digest condensed version.

I wish I had more time² to describe the fisherman brothers, Moshe, and Yuval Lufan, who stumbled onto it, the mortise-and-tenon joints of its planks, the cedar

planking and oak frames plus five other woods used, the evidence of repeated repairs showing the boat was in use for nearly a century, the likely stripping and scuttling that landed the hull sunk into the muck 2000 years ago, and all the media hype about the



1 Radiocarbon dating, called carbon-14 dating, is one of the most reliable and accurate methods of dating organic materials. It is the Creationist's friend because it is extremely accurate for organic materials that existed in God's 6,000 year old Universe. It is the Evolutionist's worst nightmare because there is no way it can give them numbers greater than the ten of thousands that their reprobate science requires. The basis of Carbon-14 dating is that living plants, animals, and humans ingest carbon dioxide containing some ¹⁴C, a radioactive isotope of carbon, that, upon their death, when they quit exchanging carbon dioxide, begins a natural radioactive decay. After 5,730 years only half of the original ¹⁴C remains and, with today's very accurate bean-counters, very accurate results come from organic materials which died from 100 to 6,000 years ago.

2 On journaling in general it was well said by Mark Twain, “If you wish to inflict a heartless and malignant punishment upon a young person, pledge him to keep a journal a year.” In fact I so enjoyed Twain's journaling in his book “*The Innocents Abroad*”, that was referenced earlier in this journal, and I so feared that my readers would miss Twain's true expertise, I include here a link that gets you his book for free, Mark Twain's “THE INNOCENTS ABROAD” is available in full at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3176/3176-h/3176-h.htm> or in multiple formats at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3176> [From an 1869—1st Edition] Accessed 4/4/2023 egr

excavation (like the Ministry of Tourism's knockdown drag out fight with the ultra-Orthodox Jews of Tiberius, who thought there were already way too many “Christian” tourists showing up in Galilee!). Each of these could support a couple more paragraphs and that wouldn't touch the huge dike that had to be built, or salvaging the ships planking that had the consistency of wet cardboard! To study more, start at seetheholyland.net/jesus-boat. Once again we boarded the bus and Eiad headed it toward the Mediterranean Sea.



On the way, while going through the pass around the now familiar Mount Arbel, it was announced that due to a storm in Florida the American Airlines flight that was to take half of our group home through Miami, was definitely canceled and other arrangements were being made. For most, a Thursday 10 Nov flight was being arranged, and a hotel reservation for the evening was also being arranged. This was cause for prayer, and prayer was made for safe and providentially blessed travels of all, but especially for those booked through American Airlines.

As we approached Caesarea we stopped at a large indoor shopping mall called “Akiva”

in order to shop and get some lunch. For days now Guide Joe and Pastor Charlie had been very careful to recommend good shopping places and warn about the rip-off artists ever present on a tour through Israel. The mall garnered a hand wavering “be smart, be careful” categorization, and off we went for an hour. Bev and I wandered through several shops, and I settled on buying a beautiful but affordable mezuzah.



In accord with Deuteronomy 6:9 *“And thou shalt write them (these words, which I command thee this day (vr.6)) upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates”*, a “mezuzah” is a small case affixed to the doorpost of each room in Jewish homes and workplaces which contains a tiny scroll of parchment inscribed with a prayer. It is customary for religious Jews to touch the mezuzah every time they pass through a door and kiss the fingers that touched it. It is attached on the door of a Hebrew residence, and it must be attached on the upper third of the right-hand side of the doorway as one enters, no less than one hand-breadth from the top. A blessing precedes the hanging.

A mezuzah is hung at an angle because of a traditional story about two rabbis who couldn't agree whether to hang the mezuzah horizontally or vertically. Eventually they reached a compromise and agreed to hang it at a slight angle, with the top facing towards the home. The rules regarding the mezuzah seemed to overwhelm its function; only men could write mezuzah scrolls, only men could hang the mezuzah, and when the scribe writes the scroll, he must be careful to shape every letter in a specific manner with adequate spacing between the words. One letter may not touch another, even slightly. The parchment should be rolled and not folded to avoid cracking letters, which would



render the mezuzah *posul* (invalid). Despite the phariseism of it all, I wanted one on my study's doorpost.

As we came to Caesarea Pastor Charlie opened our Bibles to Acts 10. An angel of God said to a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, *“Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to*

do” (Acts.10:4b-6).

Pastor was passionate as he walked us through the Bible account of the Gentiles receiving the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, passionate as he walked us through the book of Acts and Paul and Barnabas' exploits to carry the gospel to every creature, passionate about Paul at Corinth, Paul at Ephesus, Paul traveling to Rome a living sacrifice ready to be offered, and Paul before King Agrippa, but tearfully passionate when he talked of his close friend Missionary Stephen Troell, 45, who was shot on the street where he lived in Baghdad, Iraq on Monday, 8 November. Stephen was preaching that same gospel to the people of Baghdad where God had called him and placed him. People had said, “Is he trying to get himself killed?” No, he was doing what we all must do, he was being an Acts 1:8 Christian. *“Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in*



Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).



Caesarea was the city where Gentiles first received the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which made it intriguing, but it also taught much about the madman of Jesus' day, Herod the Great. Herod is called “The Great” for two reasons, as near as I can figure. First, he was greatly psychotic, as can be seen in any brief study of his life. Second, he was a great contractor, who built great things, even impossible things. Caesarea is a leading example of his latter greatness, but it also depicted some of his former psychotic greatness.

As we passed awestruck through the entryway of the massive amphitheater in Caesarea National Park, our guide Joe, the walking encyclopedia of history, told of the Battle of Actium in 31 BC where Augustus Caesar (Octavian) had a decisive victory over Mark Antony and became the undisputed master of the Roman world. So Herod, who wanted

to be very Roman at the time, builds Caesarea to show his loyalty to Octavian. Joe then rehearsed the history of Caesarea's temple that Herod built to the Roman goddess Venus which stood for 300 years before it was replaced by an Orthodox Catholic Church. Muslims tore down the church and built a mosque, crusaders tore down the mosque and built a church, Turks tore down the church and built a ... well you get the picture. Yet here somewhat standing still today are the entertainment centers built by Herod himself, this magnificent amphitheater, and the hippodrome on the other side of his palace that we will see shortly. Joe, our history baron, then began a history lesson about Herod the Great.



Herod, the Roman Jewish client king of Judea, born 72 BC, and reigning from 37 BC till his death in 4 BC, who called himself “The Great”, thought himself Jewish when he wanted to and thought it might be helpful, and thought himself Roman, when he thought that might be helpful. He was neither, he fooled no one, he did neither well, and failed in both rolls. He played the role of the persecuted persecutor, but, ... he was a great builder.

Here, at Caesarea by the sea, he built two artificial breakwaters that held 200 ships with his massive palace that overlooked the sea. When Herod the Great, built the city Caesarea, he wanted to be thoroughly Roman, and

he built with Roman philosophy of bread plus entertainment, comfort plus entertainment, amusement plus entertainment.

We sat in the massive, acoustically fine-tuned, amphitheater, a 4,000 seat theater which is a center of entertainment to this day. Joe explained the amazing acoustics of the design, pointed out the sounding wall which had once existed in the front, the stage with its hidden entry ways, and the Roman plays that were unveiled in this venue, before he directed us down through the amphitheater seats, across the stage and out through some more ruins near the sea shore.



As we went, Bev and I took a moment to pull aside and thank the Lord who brought us back to Israel, back here where we could sit and savor precious moments like these, where we could rejoice, and see what it does to the first time visiting believer,... No, I guess, what it does to every believer that steps onto this holy ground.

We gathered out on Herod's artificial breakwater, at least on the parts that remained above water after 2,023 years. God raised up a psychotic narcissist, and gave him a propensity to build unbelievable

and impossible things. God is not above using people like that, and Satan is not below using people like that. As an engineer, I have supposed that God didn't want his only begotten Son to come and manifest himself in a paltry, half asped³ rebuilt temple that had been desecrated by Satan and a villainous psychotic narcissist named Anticus of Syria (241 BC – 187 BC). And so God raised up his own psychotic narcissist named Herod. And Herod, calling himself "The Great", made the Jerusalem temple one of the wonders of the world. That's what I suppose. Here at Caesarea, Herod was in training for building great and impossible things⁴, and so he did.



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- 3 There is actually a wood handled wood working plane called an A.S.P. And when a wood worker did not use this tool well, or he only did one side of a board, it was called "half-asped". The phrase quickly got misspelled universally. See picture of wood handled A.S.P below.
- 4 An approximate timeline for Herod The Great's construction projects is: Herod, born 77 BC, reigned as the Roman Jewish client king of Judea 37–4 BC, and built 15 palaces; he built a Masada Palace, 37 through 10 BC; the Jericho Wadi Qelt Palace, 35 through 4 BC; Caesarea, 22 through 10 BC; and the Rebuilt Temple, with the extended Temple Mount we see today, 20 through 10 BC, just in time for Christ, the King of Glory.

And so it was that Joe pointed out to us the ancient harbor ruins with two amazing artificial sea walls that Herod built, plus the foundations of his stupendous palace that stood in the harbor, and the unbelievable freshwater 8' deep swimming pool, built in the sea. Mentioning also that it was filled via 10 miles of aqueduct, an engineering marvel to this day, bringing in water from the springs north east of the city.



But wait, there's more. Found at the entry of Herod's Palace was a damaged block of carved limestone now called the Pilate Stone. It's inscription says that Pontius Pilate had built a "Tiberium". Evidently it was some structure honoring the Roman emperor Tiberius, who ruled from AD 14 to AD 37. Such an archaeological mention of Pontius Pilate was quite momentous to the half-infidels, trying to keep the full infidels at bay. A Bible believer might-ought-to get a little more excited about it than we do, but it is the Holy Spirit of God that confirms the authenticity and superb accuracy of God's Holy Word, not so much the archaeologist's shovel.

But wait, there's more. As we came back to shore, as it were, out of Herod's Palace foundations, We saw a recently excavated room that was very likely a prison cell. Since "that" was very likely, then Acts 23:35 very likely put the Apostle Paul in this very spot, ... yeah, in this very room!





Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. ³⁴ And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; ³⁵ I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall⁵ (Act.23:33-35).

As we left Herod's Palace, and headed towards Herod's hippodrome, we stopped for a photo op at the



Roman Head⁶. Who could resist the opportunity to sit on such a royal throne and get a picture when it was 2,022 years old? Evidently not very many.

En vogue with Roman philosophy, bread plus entertainment, plus entertainment, plus entertainment, Herod built a hippodrome; the gambling and Sin City equivalent of the horse track of our day. This hippodrome, at Caesarea, is the best preserved of its kind, could seat up to 20,000 spectators, and was predominantly used for chariot racing. Our society, today,

does not differ greatly from this Roman city's sin filled, entertainment centered, situation. The wickedness of man is still great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually (cf Gen.6:5). People need the Lord and we need to be witnesses (Matt.28:19-10, Mrk.16:15, Luk.24:46-48, Jn.20:21, Acts.1:8, Great Commission referenced 5 times), and we need to be soul winners (Ps.126:6, Prv.11:30, Dan.12:3). We dare not forget, people need the Lord.



5 See the extended Strong's Concordance study, "A note about the Greek word Pratorium" found in "Journaling a Preacher's 2023 Pilgrimage to Israel", "Half Shekel #2302 Sat 18 Mar Caesarea by the Sea", pg 15, at www.GSBaptistChurch.com/israel23.

6 "The Head" is a 15th century nautical term referring to the bow or fore part of a ship. The ship's toilet was typically placed at the head of the ship near the base of the bowsprit, where splashing water served to naturally clean the toilet area. It thus became a common practice to call the toilet, the head. There is a portable toilet outlet in Upstate NY called "Ed's Head". You cannot imagine how much I hate their name

We gathered onto the bus to go 10 minutes up the Mediterranean Sea coast to where Herod's amazing aqueduct ran along the sea coast (32°30'44.98"N 34°53'48.76"E)⁷. The pictures here attest to the fact that we spent a very relaxing hour and a half on the beach of the Mediterranean Sea, exploring this marvelous site. This aqueduct Herod “the Great” constructed, carried fresh water at 250 gallons per family per day into Caesarea. Americans average only 100 gallons per family per day of water usage. This gradually sloping suspended river of water, a world wonder of 2000 year old construction, was recently exposed in a hurricane, then unveiled by the archaeologist shovel. It now occupied a full hour and a half of our time, on our last day in Israel, on our way to the airport at Tel Aviv. A marvelous, marvelous hour and a half.

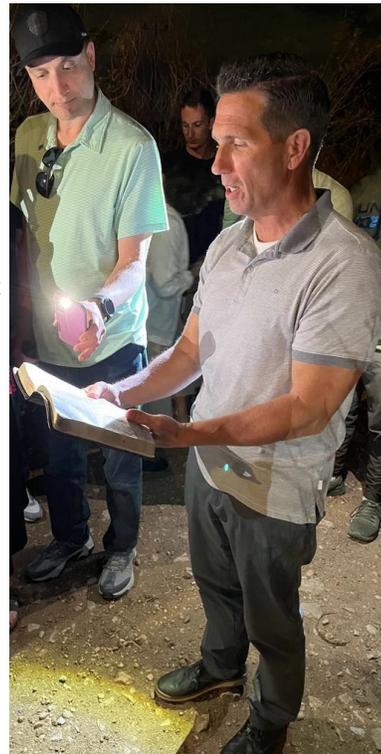


The sun would set on the Valley of Elah, Israel at 1645 today. Our El Al Airlines Flight #LY25, TLV to EWR, was to board at midnight. No one scrambled from the beach, or hurried to the bus, but Eiad guided it out of the Caesarea Beach parking lot at 1600.

The Valley of Elah, where Goliath stood against the armies of

Israel and defied their living Jehovah (LORD) God, was a two hour drive south, thirty miles inland from the Mediterranean, and an hour south of Tel Aviv Airport. But a promise is a promise, and so Eiad drove a tour bus full of excited, smiling, talking, born-again believers, marinated in nine full days of touring Israel, right past a sunset resting on the Mediterranean Sea, and then another hour south to the Valley of Elah.

For six-thousand years now, people have been lifting five smooth stones out of Elah Valley, dropping them in their pocket, and keeping them for life. In the last fifty years the best anyone has done is to find five gnarly hunks of gravel imported from the last road construction job, and pocketing them, with expectation of telling someone where they came from. I think Bev and I did just fine, it being dark as midnight at the time, and our actual location



⁷ If one would punch this lat, long coordinate into an internet Google search it would take them to the very beach, in the land of Israel, ... well virtually take them there anyway.

being uncertain to everyone except the Israeli Tour Guide, Joe, and our Israel seasoned Pastor Charlie.

To this day I have my five stones mounted on a little wooden placard announcing where I got them at 31°42'08.44"N 34°56'33.25"E. (31°42'08.44"N 34°56'33.25"E where the pictures were taken was found to be the corner of Route 383 and Route 38, 2.2 km from the center of the Valley of Elah, but most certainly within the valley.)

Despite the hour and the darkness Pastor Charlie could not not read the



account of David and Goliath, and so he did. While helpers held their phonelights on him and his Bible, he read all 58 verses of 1 Samuel 17. 'Amen's, 'Hallelujah's, and 'Praise the Lord's rang out in the darkness along Route 383 as



he read familiar portions, and all three were echoed through the valley while the stone was slinging through the air. The reading was kinda long, so no one could blame those of us who were still shuffling through the roadside gravel looking for the smoothest stones. And those who scooted across the road in the headlights of that oncoming truck were not really in great peril, the drivers saw us in time to brake and swerve, completely missing us.

It was going on 7 pm when we climbed back on the bus and headed toward the airport at Tel Aviv.

