



**The Half Shekel Journals of 2023** by Pastor Ed Rice  
**#23014 Wed 22 Mar Zion Gate, David's Tomb, Upper Room**

We made our way from the pool of Bethesda following Eli through the narrow streets of Jerusalem. He guided us past a sign saying, “Via Dolorosa” and we turned into a small alley called “Nun's Ascent”. We entered a doorway labeled, “Lithostrotos”, and came into an underground area said to be discovered in 1857.

Eli explained “lithostrotos” is a paved section of Roman forum,



known to us in Hebrew as “Gabatha” from John 19:13. We are under what would have been the Fortress of Antonia. It was built by King Herod in 35 BC to protect the Temple mount, ... and also to observe the Temple mount. Always trying to extend his persona, Herod named the fortress after his friend Mark Anthony. It stood 115 ft high and was guarded on the North by a 165 ft wide ravine. It was headquarters for the Roman soldiers, and housed over 600

of them. It had a secret passage from the fortress to the temple, a passage which, for Hebrews, for Israeli, for Pharisee, Scribe, and Lawyer, represented the tyrannical control of Rome over their nation of Israel. The holy ceremonial robes of the high priest were confiscated and held in a tower of this Antonio Fortress. The Roman tower overlooked the most holy place, and the whole Jewish temple. On Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Fall Feasts of Ingathering, the high priest's holy ceremonial



Photo of "pavement" (Greek "lithostrotos")  
Discovered in 1857 under rubble of the  
Antonia Fortress, Jerusalem.  
See <https://dannythedigger.com/lithostrotos/>  
accessed 11/07/2023 Pastor Edward Rice

robes passed from Roman control into the holy Temple. As mere Gentiles, we can barely conceive or comprehend the tyranny of such controls.

We stood here on lithostrotos in what would have been Pilot's Judgment Hall in the center of the Antonio Fortress. I, for one, still little conceived nor fully comprehended what we were standing on.

*When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement<sup>1</sup> (<3038> λιθόστρωτος lithostrotos) but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha (Joh.19:13).*

By Pastor Pickett's design, and Israeli guide Eli's arrangement, we huddled in this covert of lithostrotos beside busy noisy streets of Jerusalem and Pastor David Elias opened our Bibles to Matthew 27.

*When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: 2 And when they had bound him, they*



*led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. ... 11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. 12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. 13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? 14 And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly (Matt.27:1-2,11-14).*

The preacher's kid, that got saved as a 13-year-old boy on January 3rd 1995, took us back 1,993 years by reading several verses of the chapter from the Holy Bible, the living Word of God. It is

1 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, 3038 λιθόστρωτος lithostrotos lith-os'-tro-tos AV-Pavement 1 of 1, Def: spread or paved with stones, a mosaic or tessellated pavement.



indeed “*quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb.4:12 ).

These pavement stones might well have been laid sometime after Jesus stood before Pilot, but they represented well the very place where Pilot said, “*Whom will you that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?*” (Mt.27:17).

We filed out of the sacred room labeled “Lithostroto”, and into the alley called “Nun's Assent”. As we watched for Costia to bring the bus we were given a few minutes of free time and some of us wandered through an open cemetery area along the eastern wall of the city. We stood just outside the Eastern Gate and clicked several pictures. The photo-op was not wasted on the irreverent. In Ezekiel 10 and 11 the glory of the God of Israel rises and departs from Jerusalem departing from “The door of the east gate of the Lord's House (10:19,11: 1). In chapter 43 it is prophesied that the Shekinah<sup>2</sup> Glory

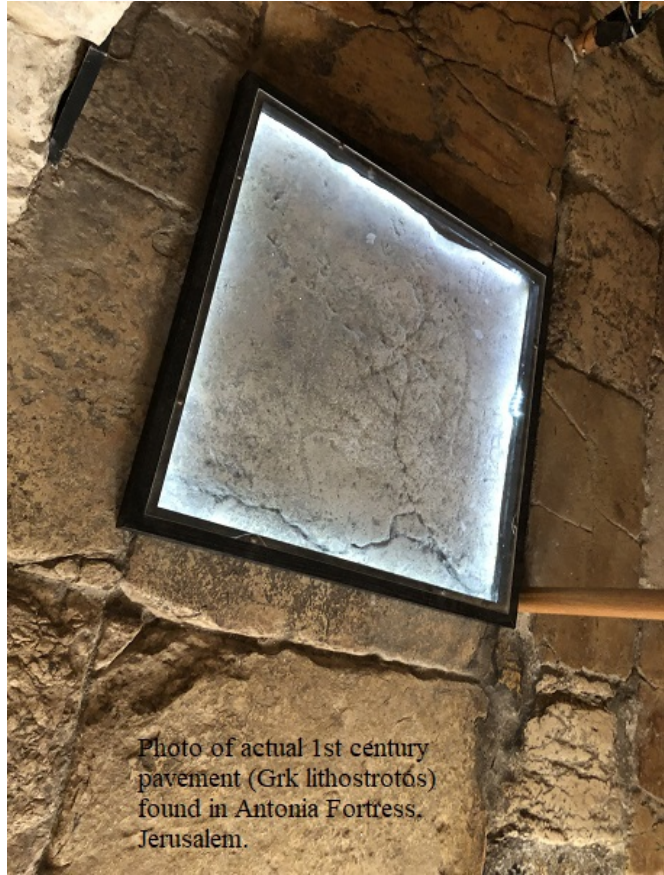


Photo of actual 1st century pavement (Grk lithostrotós) found in Antonia Fortress. Jerusalem.

of God will return through the Eastern gate.



*Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: 2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. 3 And it was according to*

2 WordWeb 8, s.v. “Shekinah”, The visible majesty of the Divine Presence, especially when resting or dwelling between the cherubim on the mercy seat, in the Tabernacle, or in the Temple of Solomon; - a term used in the Targums and by the later Jews, and adopted by Christians



*the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face.*



*4 And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. 5 So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. 6 And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. 7 And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name,*

*shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places*

*(Ezek.43:1-7).*

It was very moving to stand just outside this Eastern Gate; since my childhood at Tuscarora Baptist Church I have heard tell what God said, and will do here.

When we regathered at our appointed place Eli was “Whispering” to the group, so Bev and I turned on our whisper earpiece ... So when a friend or loved one visits the cemetery here they leave a little stone on the headstone. Your custom is to leave a flower, which testifies to the beauty and the brevity





of life. Ours is to place a stone. The little pebble is to remind them, and show to others, that someone that cares has visited, has mourned for, has respected, supported and honored, this memorial. The Hebrew word for “pebble” is also a word that means “bond.” That little pebble on a headstone is to bond the deceased with the visitor.

Eli went on, ... Another custom often asked about is our breaking of a glass at a wedding. This commemorates, as a reminder, how covenants can be broken, at Mount Sinai the two tables of stone were broken, in history our Temple was twice destroyed, the city of Jerusalem twice broken. So a glass, usually wrapped in a cloth is placed on the floor in front of the groom, the Rabbi sings a song “If I forget you Jerusalem”, commemorating the falling of Jerusalem and the destruction of two temples. When Jewish people experience immense joy, they should also remember the less than joyous times in their history. They break the glass in order to actively remember. It is our custom that, “With every celebration comes commemoration.”

In the bus we sounded off with our numbered roll call. It reminded us to pray for Larry and Golda who were missing out on this day, being on sick leave. The bus pulled from the curb and



Costia navigated us towards Zion Gate. I pulled out my harmonica and led off with “We're Marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion.” I could not tire of the streets of this city. The Psalmist, who never got to ride in a King-Long tour bus through these bustling streets, said it for us 3,000 years ago, “*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her*”

*cunning*” (Psalm 137:5).

Zion gate, with its thousand .50 caliber (.50 inch, 12.7 mm caliber) chips in her stones, stood larger than life as we passed under her majesty. I put my thumb in a bullet hole, yea, .50 caliber! In a previous life I worked on the B-52 Stratofortress which had had four menacing .50 caliber, 1000 rounds per minute, machine guns protruding from its tail. General Dynamics then built a .50 caliber Gatling gun with so much firepower that just its recoil could stop the forward progress of an A-10 Warthog! I loved my time in the USAF (23 years, 72-95). Consequently a chip in the rock of Zion Gate could hold my attention quite a while.



We were a couple blocks from David's Tomb. The Biblical site of the Tomb of David would be in the City of David (1King.2:10), but Crusaders (1095-1291 AD) built a replica upper room in the upper part of Jerusalem's Western Hill and thought David's Tomb was near the Biblical upper room, because they misread Acts 2:29.

Subsequently, a Jewish Rabbi saw a vision, and an empty casket was placed in a synagogue built on this same location in order to honor King David. Baptists traditionally discard tradition and hold tight to the Holy Bible, which is the sole authority for our faith and practice, but today, a little upper room tradition, and a lot of Tomb of David tradition, was on our tourist docket.

Before we entered, Eli led an excursion to the roof of the building. As a young lad there was a place here that his father had often brought Eli and his brother. From this spot, The 50-year-old image that still defines the Six-Day War



David Rubinger's iconic photo showing Israeli paratroopers (from left: Zion Karasenti, Yitzhak Yifat and Haim Oshri) standing in front of the Western Wall in Jerusalem during the Six-Day War, June 7, 1967. (Photo credit: David Rubinger/GPO)

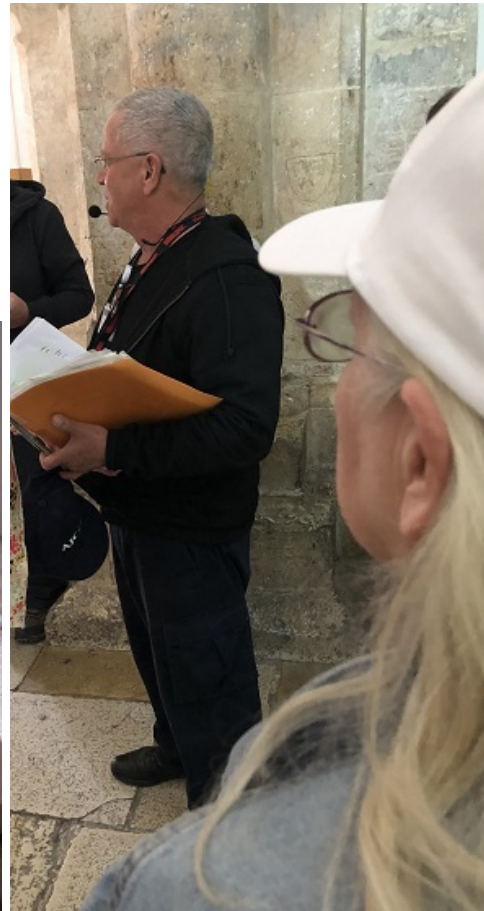
on the Western Hill of Jerusalem, one could see the Western Wall, and now it's Prayer Plaza. Eli talked fondly of his memories here, of the passing of his father, and how he would have cherished the 1967 New York Times iconic photo of the three weeping warriors standing at that conquered wall (see photo below). In that moment all of us were enamored by the Western Wall, the 6-Day War, and Eli's childhood and military service. *"Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee"* (Psalm.122:6).

A "Cenacle" is a dining room on an upper floor (cena = Latin for supper). That is what the Bible's upper room was commonly called here. The replica of the "cenacle", the Bible's upper room, was the

best that the Catholic Crusaders<sup>3</sup> could have imagined. Catholics don't believe too much of the Bible, and they know even less, believing it allegorical and best left to their priest-craft.

3 Please never call these "Christian" Crusades, they were Roman Catholic Crusades.

*And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? 13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. 14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the*



*goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 15 And he will shew you **a large upper room**<sup>4</sup> furnished and prepared: there make ready for us (Mark.14:12-15).*

This restoration of a 12th century Crusader Chapel would have been very much like the room where Jesus had his last supper with his disciples. Here, in such an upper-room, Jesus washed his disciples feet, John 13; Jesus appeared to his disciples twice, John 21; Thomas was rebuked, and in a similar upper-room, 120 believers prayed on the day of Pentecost, Acts 1-2.

The replica room, it's furnishings, and paintings, stirred our imagination. I longed for time to sit, meditate, read, and journal in such a location. Such an upper room also housed the disciples when the Holy Ghost came upon them.

4 It is curious that for “pavement” they like the Greek “lithostrotos”, but for “upper-room” they like the Latin derived English “centacle” instead of the Greek <508> ἀνώγειον anogion an-ogue’-eh-on, AV-upper room 2; 2, def. a room in the upper part of a house. Go figure.





Tomb of David site below Upper-Room site

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into **an upper room**, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. ... 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts.1:12-14,2:1-4).



There was not time to take in all the Bible that unfolded in such an upper room. We moved to the stairs and shortly entered one of the holiest sites for Jews, the commemorating Tomb of King David. Before the 1967 conquering of the Temple's Western wall, this room was the predominant place of prayer for pilgrimming Jews. It was reverently attended to while we visited. In the foyer many of the Jewish worshipers were eager to talk with us, and answered any questions we might have about this prayer practice. I gave out several Isaiah 53 Hebrew Bible portions and was again amazed at how reverently they handled the Scripture track. A Hebrew was not to destroy or disrespect a Hebrew Scripture copy. Again I thought

it would have been worthwhile to spend more time here but such a luxury could not be afforded us. We were yet to go to Caiaphas's Palace today.