



The Half Shekel Journals of 2023 by Pastor Ed Rice
#23019 Fri 24 Mar Knesset, Neot Kedumim

“They” say, after running a marathon it is best to engage in some low intensity workouts for a couple days of recovery (rather than, I suppose the preferred, NO intensity workouts). I'm not sure who “they” are, and I've never run an actual marathon, but Day 9 was opportunity for a lower intensity, if not a genuine low intensity workout. Make no mistake a mental-emotional-spiritual marathon was engaged when we walked where Jesus walked from the Upper Room to Gethsemane, to Caiaphas' Palace, to the Praetorium, to the Damascus Gate, and to Golgotha. There is no more intense walk in history on this planet, and we followed that with a visit to Yad Vashem.

Before dawn on Friday, March 24th while staring at a ceiling in the Prima Kings Hotel, in Jerusalem, I mentally rehearsed events of the last 48 hours and audibly



rehearsed this prayer “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.” Last night Bev and I had reviewed today's five stops in Pastor Lee's booklet and talked about the mental exhaustion that sets in on a Holy Land Pilgrimage. Most tours run 10 days, Pastor Lee purposefully designed and laid out these 14 days with cunning. Day 9 was to be less intense and tomorrow, Day 10 was to be an “Enjoy the rest, and have a Free Day in Jerusalem.” I smiled at the “less intense” day ahead of us and as a marathon runner might gingerly lower aching legs to the morning floor, I closed my eyes in the warm morning shower as my mind's eye embraced the day. Pastor Lee's booklet described Day 9:

We begin our day with breakfast and get on the bus for another day of adventure in Israel. Today we venture into the region called the shephalah or

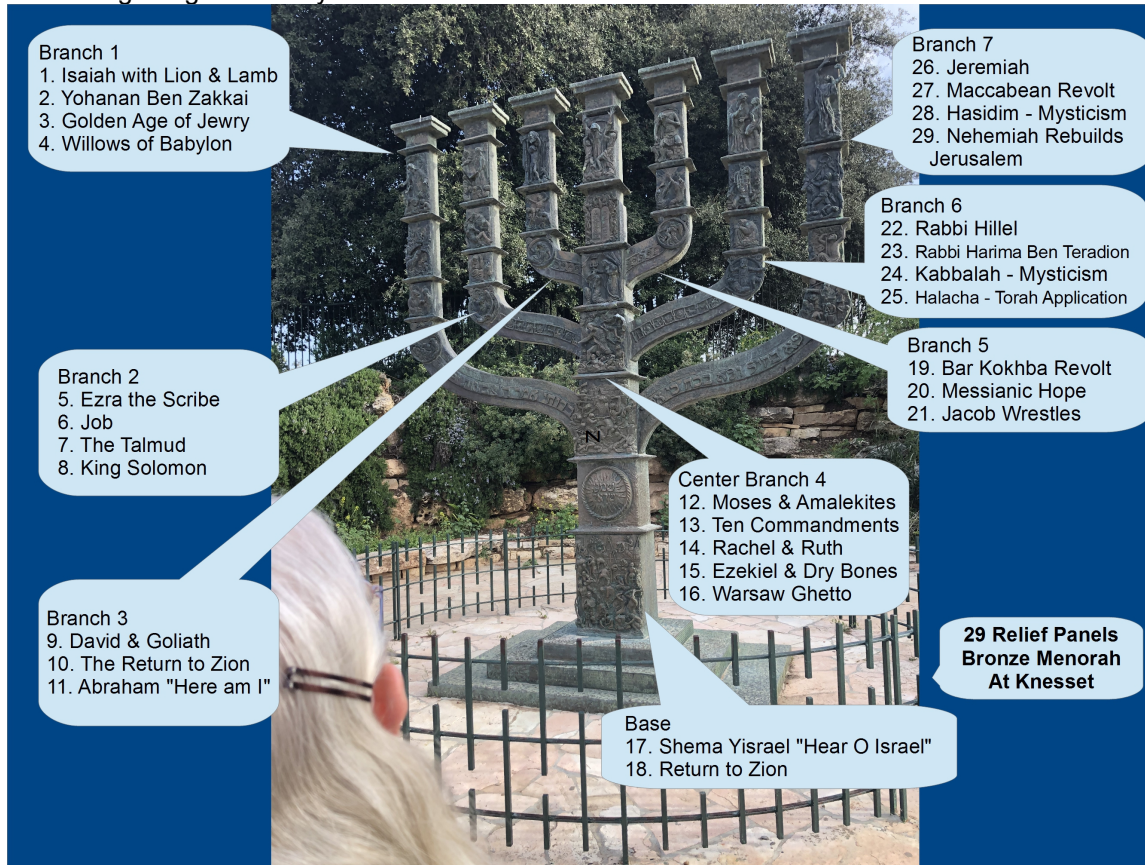


Hill country.

1 Our first stop is in the valley of Elah where David slew Goliath. If Israel lost that region they lost the bread basket of Israel at that time this made the victory so very important. 1 Samuel 17.

2 Our next stop is at Beth Shemesh The Ark is returned to Israel. 1 Samuel 6.

3 We now visit the valley of Aijalon where the sun stood still and the and God brought a great victory. Joshua 10: 1 - 15.



4 Our next stop is at Neot Kedumim. This is a Biblical Landscape reserve where we will be introduced to the agricultural life of ancient Israel.

5 Our last stop of the day is Mod'in. This is where the Maccabees began to resist the Selucid Empire from 167 BC to around 134 BC. They were a people set on proper worship of God. It is from these folks that the Jewish people celebrate Hannukah.

We finish our day back at our hotel and look forward to a restful night.

I let my Bev sleep a couple more hours and we got around to morning devotion at 6 am. Our chronological Bible read schedule had us reading Joshua 15-17 on Friday, March 24th 2023. I have liked schedule and structure in our lives, it had served us well through 23 years of military life that entailed raising three boys, and served us even better since my 1995 retirement from the USAF. Family outloud Bible reading time had been more than a structured routine, it had daily flooded our lives with Godly blessing. So after reading three chapters of Joshua dividing up the promised land into possessions of the twelve tribes we culminated with Josh.17:13, *"Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out."* Makes you think, doesn't it.



Psalm 84, read aloud, was our Psalm of the day¹, and it led us to conclude, “*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! ... For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee*” (Ps.84:1,11-12). Family altar is one of the most valuable principles to be steeped into a believers daily life, seconded by daily personal Bible devotions. Bible, Bible and Bible, “*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*” (Joh.13:7).

A kosher breakfast in Jerusalem, among new acquaintances, now bonded, and now friends-A, was equally stimulating for our 9th day in Israel. We climbed on the King-Long, made in China, 12M 49 passenger tour bus with baited anticipation. It was an hour after the 6:38 am sunrise in Israel, and I was more baited with anticipation than others, I was to give, our morning 'short' bus devotion to start our day.

Matthew 5-7 is Jesus' longest recorded sermon. The book of Matthew is introductory to the New Testament, and thus introductory to the New Testament's kingdom of heaven. This long sermon is introductory to the book of Matthew, the nine blessed-Rs are introductory to the long sermon, and the first three blessed-Rs are



key to getting one into the kingdom of heaven.

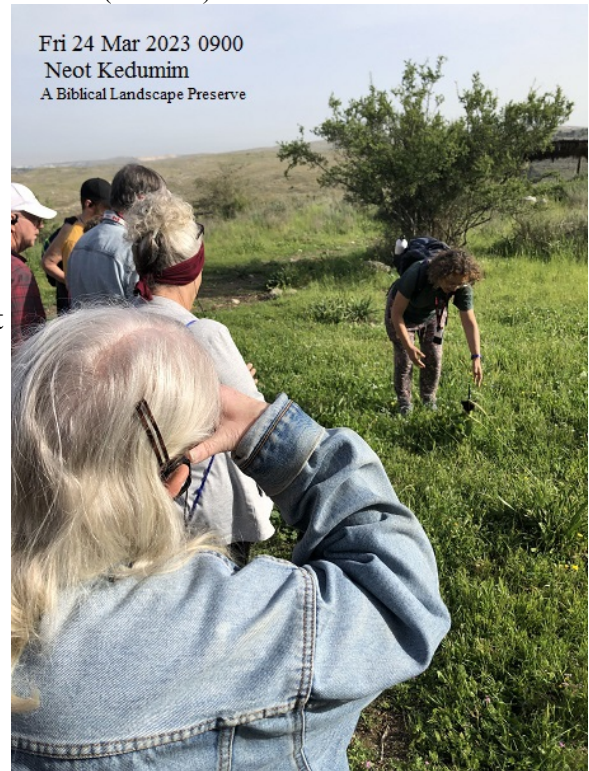
Blessed R the poor in spirit, ... “*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit*” (Ps.34:18): for their's IS the kingdom of heaven. Blessed R they that mourn, ... “*Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*” (Job.42:6): for they shall be comforted, ...

“*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another*

Comforter, that

he may abide with you for ever” (Joh.14:16)!

Blessed R the meek, “*The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever*” (Ps.22:26): for they shall inherit the earth, “*He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and*



¹ An approximate Julian date was 30 days of Jan + 30 of Feb + 24 of Mar. = 84th day of the year, making the Psalm of the day, Psalm 84, remember structure is good.

I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Rev.21:7)!! These three Blessed-Rs are key to being born-again, saved, bought with the blood, redeemed, and converted to Christ. And *“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, ... ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt.18:3).

It was short, but it was a dense pack of truth, and one of my favorite salvation outlines.

The bus leapt into Jerusalem's morning traffic and our guide Eli, took up the microphone. Good Morning, *Boker Tov* (בוקר טוב) (Our response was *Boker or* (בוקר אור) or right back at you, ... I think.)

We missed a couple things in our busy schedule in Jerusalem and this morning we will make up one by swinging by the Knesset on our way out of town.



The Knesset is Israel's house of representatives (the parliament). It has four main functions: 1) To pass laws – the Knesset has the sole authority to pass laws, 2) to supervise government work, 3) to choose the President of Israel and the state comptroller, and 4) to deliberate over state issues through the Knesset committees and the work of the Assembly. We will stop at Wohl Rose Park

(Hebrew: גן הוורדים, Gan HaVradim) a public garden located opposite the Knesset and government precinct, at the foot of the Israeli Supreme Court. It is a 19 acre park and there are over 400 varieties of roses grown there, many of them gifts from countries around the world. Our main point of interest is the Bronze Menorah built by Benno Elkan; a British-Jewish sculptor who worked on it for 6 years. The Parliament of the United Kingdom gave it to Israel in 1956.

Eli was a walking encyclopedia, and regularly amazed us. I wrote so fast in my journal, in a bouncing, swerving, regularly braking hard tour bus, that most of my notes were only bits and



pieces of Eli's profound recitation. I reconstruct what I can, but when we saw the 14 foot high 4 ton bronze menorah in person, Eli was again off and reciting.

The original menorah, a seven branched candelabra, stood in the Temple and has been a symbol of the Jewish people since the 2nd century BC. It became a national symbol of the State of Israel in 1948. Eli walked us through a description of each picture in the relief panels on the Menorah. In a chronological sequence, the three branches on either



side of the center branch depict the story of the Jewish people since the destruction of the First Temple and the subsequent exile of the Jewish people. In the center branch, you see the images that symbolize the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and the establishment of the modern State of Israel. I wrote madly but had to reconstruct some of the list from outside research. I think it was worth the effort.

The 29 Relief Panels of the Bronze Menorah at Knesset are: Branch 1, 1. Isaiah with Lion & Lamb, 2. Yohanan Ben Zakkai , 3. Golden Age of

Jewry, 4. Willows of Babylon, Branch 2, 5. Ezra the Scribe, 6. Job, 7. The Talmud, 8. King Solomon, Branch 3, 9. David & Goliath, 10. The Return to Zion, 11. Abraham "Here am I", Center Branch 4, 12. Moses & Amalekites, 13. Ten Commandments, 14. Rachel & Ruth, 15. Ezekiel & Dry Bones, 16. Warsaw Ghetto, Base, 17. Shema Yisrael "Hear O Israel", 18. Return to Zion, Branch 5, 19. Bar Kokhba Revolt, 20. Messianic Hope, 21. Jacob Wrestles, Branch 6, 22. Rabbi Hillel , 23. Rabbi Harima Ben Teradion, 24. Kabbalah – Mysticism, 25. Halacha - Torah Application, Branch 7, 26. Jeremiah, 27. Maccabean Revolt, 28. Hasidim – Mysticism, 29. Nehemiah Rebuilds Jerusalem.

Some notes with the Relief Panel, #2 Yohanan Ben Zakkai (the youngest and most distinguished disciple of Rabbi Hillel. Zakkai has been called the "father of wisdom and the father of generations (of scholars)" because he ensured the continuation of Jewish scholarship after Jerusalem fell to Rome in 70 AD); #22 Rabbi Hillel (Born in Babylon 110 BC died in Jerusalem ?? AD); #23 Rabbi Harima Ben Teradion (Haninah ben Teradion, Rabbi: (2nd century AD) Mishnaic sage, father of Rabbi Meir's wife Beruriah.)

Prayer is the foundation of Jewish life. Eli explained that the daily prayer recorded on the base of the bronze Menorah, was the prayer recited by Jews at the extermination camps. I was unable to decipher it in my notes but Chabad.org said the the prayer on



the base of the Menorah was: “Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light. Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.” Back on the bus the city of Jerusalem slowly disappeared into beautiful but rugged countryside. As the bus passed a security checkpoint with an obvious high tech security fence, Eli picked up the microphone. The fences you see have very effectively eliminated suicide bombers from the PLA.

Remember that in 1973, Jericho and all the West Bank of the Jordan River was given to the PLO, which the Oslo Accord officially labeled a “Palestinian Liberation Authority (PLA).” In a five-year transition, areas A, B, and C, were created; area A with 18% of the

West Bank under “PLA” control; area B with 22% of the West Bank under “Shared” control; and area C with 60% of the West Bank area remaining under Israeli Civil, and Israeli Security control.

This arrangement was completely untenable until the Israeli Security Control constructed a very effective wall to stop the PLO suicide bombers. Today the West Bank Area C is separated by barricades and security fences, that the PLA and the liberal press call “The Apartheid Wall!” Eli bit his lip. He wanted to say more, ... In 2005 Israel had a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and in 2006 Palestinians, by election, put the terrorist group Hamas in charge of the area. Hamas initiated violent conflicts in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Eli was obviously pessimistic about where things were now headed.²

Going on 9 am, right on time, Costia pulled the bus into the parking area of “Neot Kedumim”, the Biblical Landscape Reserve founded in 1964 in Israel.

This unique recreation of the physical setting of the Bible in all its depth and detail allows visitors to see life as it was lived by our ancestors 3,000 years ago. “More than a garden” showing various plants, Neot Kedumim embodies the panorama and power of the landscapes which shaped the values of the Bible and provided the rich vocabulary for expressing those values.

“On 625 acres of hills and valleys, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, lies a world apart. Neot Kedumim – the Biblical Landscape Reserve in Israel. a unique endeavor to re-create the physical setting of the Bible in all its depth and detail. it embodies the panorama and power of the landscapes that both helped shape the values of the Bible and provided a rich vocabulary for expressing them on a variety of disciplines – such as Bible scholarship, botany, zoology, geography, history, and archaeology – to bring the Bible and its commentaries to life.”³

For the next hour and a half our guide, Johanna, of Neot Kedumim had us imagine a lot of things about existing in this wilderness area and living solely off the land. She described for us this environment as described in the Bible, the plants native in Bible language, the agricultural practices used in Bible times, and people with stamina,



2 Curiously this journal was being typed on Day 70 of the Israeli Hamas war, started by Hamas atrocities of October 7th 2023. Today a British journalist exposed and forsook internal antisemitic bias in order to stand behind Israeli efforts to completely destroy Hamas. That is better than the US of A's Liberal Lefts President Joe O-Biden, who is urging Israel to protect all Palestinian civilians, consider a cease fire, and seek a two state solution for Gaza. College students, trained by leftist Marxist college professors are chanting “gas the Jews” and give “From the River (Jordan) to the Sea (Mediterranean) to Hamas! ... give it to the raping, pillaging, beheading, hostage taking terrorist of the 7 October massacre! It's diabolical! I could say much more about our leftist government plotting the Marxist overthrow of our nation, but perhaps this in enough said in this venue.

3 From <https://www.neot-kedumim.org.il/> accessed 12/13/2023.

determination and genuine dependence on God and his former and latter rains. We peered down into wells and pondered cisterns. We ate almonds, tasted the mustard plant, and pondered the Big-7 food groups listed in the Bible.

For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of 1) wheat, and 2) barley, and 3) vines, and 4) fig trees, and 5) pomegranates; a land of 6) oil olive, and 7) honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee (Deut.8:7-10).

Johanna continued, in Hebrew the word for “Spring time” is *Abib* <024> אֲבִיב , as in, “for in the month *Abib* <024> thou camest out from Egypt” (Exod.34:18). It means month of ear-forming or growing



green. Green things are called *yereq* <03418>

ירק for green vegetables, NOT potatoes or root vegetables. All Hebrew holy days (holidays), are agricultural related; Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Trumpets, spring, summer, and fall.



We are in a land where three continents meet, and three climates come to bear on the land that God loves. Some plants loose their leaves here in the winter, some plants loose their leaves in the summer, mountain tops differ significantly from valleys, and water is always precious. Therein God says:

But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: 12 A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. 13 And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command

you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, 14 That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. 15 And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full (Deut.11:11-15).

Consider the the box myrtle, ancient forests, the Mediterranean shrub, legumes, wild sage, thistle, flax, clover, wild barley, wild wheat, hyssop⁴, ... all with no chickpeas! All managed with highly developed but ancient agricultural practices honed by the Hebrew agricultural holy-days. Imagine eight months annually with no rain, and then capture more fully John 7:37-38, *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”*

This large acreage park, dedicated to bringing back the environment that was here when the twelve tribes settled in, held the higher goal that verses of Scripture would come to better light, and come alive. Even the rebukes of Scriptures can be more clear: *“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer.2:13).*

The efforts of “Neot Kedumim”, the Biblical Landscape Reserve founded in 1964 are also intended to make upcoming prophecies in Scripture hold greater weight.

“Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. 24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. 26 And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. 27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God” (Joel.2:23-27).

“By reuniting text and context, it opens up before the visitor Israel’s nature as the idiom of the Bible. The symbols, prayers, and holidays of the Jewish and Christian heritage, observed and preserved for thousands of years, blossom in a new and colorful dimension at the world’s only Biblical landscape reserve. A non-profit organization in Israel, Neot Kedumim has received international recognition as a model of restoration ecology – the reclamation of ravaged landscapes.” <https://www.neot-kedumim.org.il/>

This was only an hour and a half spent in touring a Biblical landscape reserve, but it would effect things I read in my Bible from now till Jesus comes. We wandered toward the tour bus, it seemed that every stop and every site we visited ended to soon. I’m sure that would be true for our next stop as well; I was already anticipating finding five smooth stones to hang in a wall plaque with my ancient Hebrew sling.

4 Encyclopedia Britannica s.v. Hyssop - hys·sop /'hisəp/ noun noun: hyssop; plural noun: hyssops 1. a small bushy aromatic plant of the mint family, the bitter minty leaves of which are used in cooking and herbal medicine. 2. (in biblical use) a wild shrub of uncertain identity whose twigs were used for sprinkling in ancient Jewish rites of purification.