



**The Half Shekel Journals of 2023** by Pastor Ed Rice  
**#23028 Tue 28 Mar Eilat's Underwater Observatory**

*“Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Josh.13:1).*

I purposed that in my first conscious thoughts of a morning, I would praise the Lord GOD my Creator for consciousness. Of late, being old and stricken in years, it comes right after I praise him for the ankylosing spondylitis<sup>1</sup> that brings me to consciousness after only 5 hours of immobility. This morning, well before daylight, my praise list was long. We were to embark on day 13 of our 14 day Holy Land Tour, and we had already laid some ground-plans for our “free-day” in Eilat, Israel.

Pastor Pickett's Bible Berean Israel Tour 2023 booklet says:



Day 13 March 28th 2023 Today we have a free day in Eilat. There are several things you can do. You can stay at the hotel and sleep. You can go into town with a cab and look around and shop. You can go ice skating in the mall. There are two sites that are of great interest as well. The Underwater Observatory is within walking distance, and the Coral Reef Park is very close by, there you can go snorkeling on one of the world's largest and healthiest Coral Reefs in the world. It is amazing!!

I know being in a foreign country can make you a little uncomfortable to be on your own, so my thoughts are to take those who would like snorkeling for an hour or two, and then go to the observatory. We can work it all out. Remember, I am here to serve you. 1Timothy 6:17,

***“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;”***



1 Ankylosing spondylitis - an inflammatory arthritis affecting the spine and large joints. The condition is more common among men and usually begins in early adulthood. Symptoms include reduced flexibility in the spine. This reduced flexibility eventually results in a hunched-forward posture. Pain in the back and joints is also common. My treatment includes 2 to 6 aspirin (325mg) daily (it is a natural anti-inflammatory), and a teaspoon of Knox unflavored gelatin (jello) daily-religiously.



Bey, who is still in training for being a morning person, woke at 7:00 a.m., when I threw open the curtains a half hour after sunrise. “Free days do not necessitate sleeping in, not when you are in Israel!” I’m not sure I convinced her, but as we enjoyed breakfast alone at 8:00 a.m., she convinced me that she was holding the majority opinion on the subject.



Yesterday, after arriving at our hotel and catching a short nap, we took a late afternoon walk down to the Coral Beach Nature Preserve. We found it had closed at 1400 due to some labor disputes, and would open in the morning, charging us 35 shekels (\$10) each for a walk on their beach. The Underwater Observatory Park was \$125 shekels (\$34) per person to get in! So this morning there was a group headed to there



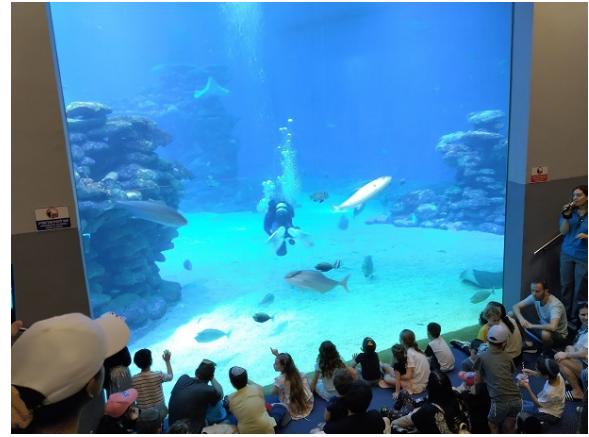
and we propose to go with them. Their plan - part 2 however, was to take a cab to Eilat and shop-till-you-drop; that didn’t capture our interest that much.

Dave and Lynne Johnson were all excited about a snorkeling adventure and were already off to access the coral reef from an underwater perspective. Their “Meet the Eilat Coral Beach Nature Reserve, History, Heritage and Nature” brochure said:





The most beautiful marine reserve in the world – colorful gardens beneath the sea. The reefs of the Gulf of Eilat are the only coral reefs in our country, and among them a wonderful and colorful world of corals, fish and a huge variety of unique creatures can be seen. The Coral Beach Nature Reserve in Eilat allows visitors easy access to the reef, as well as essential beach services, including a shop, showers, toilets, sunshades, deck chairs and sun loungers. Main Points of Interest include: **Bridges over the reef** – bridges built over the reef, from which the coral reef and the colorful fish swimming around it can



be seen. The bridges also offer safe access for divers and snorkelers to the eastern side of the reef that faces out to sea, without damaging the reef and its inhabitants. **Lookouts over the reef** and the wildlife that populates it – visitors to the nature reserve can enjoy the beauty of the colorful creatures living in the reef even without being professional divers. With a diving mask and snorkel (which can be hired at the beach) it is possible to peek into the rich and amazing world and the protrusions of coral around the fringing reef. Scuba divers can dive along the façade and slope of the reef to see the wonders of the reef at the greater depths. See [en.parks.org.il](http://en.parks.org.il)

Turns out, if you want to hear their underwater adventure and their run in with

the reef authorities, you need to ask Dave about it. I told them I was pretty sure Lee would have put up their bail to get them home if it had went any further. LOL

I think it was a group-think thing that got us to pay the little bit extra to include the 3D Aquadome Adventure. Bev and I are old, and had long outgrown any 3D dome experience excitement. Group-think, being what it is, thought the Aquadome 3D experience, costing extra, must be the best part of the Observatory experience, so the group hurried us past exhibitions that I wanted to see, and made it to the Aquadome's 3D 10:00 a.m. viewing. It was titled “Meet the Giants of the Ocean. Journey into the majestic kingdom of



humpback whales. Breathtaking visual experience! The Aquadome!”

After about 30 seconds of the dome's 3D video, Bev slipped off her 3D glasses and leaned back in her seat with her eyes closed. Sensitive to motion sickness, I perceived that she would not enjoy an ounce of the humpback whale experience. In fact I could see shades of blue flushing across her cheeks ... that may have been the dome lighting, but by the end of the show we were both noticeably moved. Not about the plight of the humpback whales, but about 3D dome induced motion sickness.



We were the first two to turn in our 3D glasses and exit the dome, which was not aqua at all. There was a nice park bench, bathed in sunshine and overlooking the beach just off from the exit. For an hour Bev and I sat there, sipped on Coca-cola, which naturally calms nausea, and which I secured from a nearby soda machine. We considered



what we had heard, and not seen, in the show. It had nothing to do with the Red Sea, nothing to do with a Coral Beach, nothing to do with anything else in the observatory, and, most certainly, nothing to do with God who created humpback whales, ... without millions of years, and without evolution.

*Ge 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over **the fish of the sea**, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon*



*the earth.*

*Psalm.8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? ... 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: ... 8 The fowl of the air, and **the fish of the sea**, and whatsoever passeth through the **paths of the seas**. 9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*



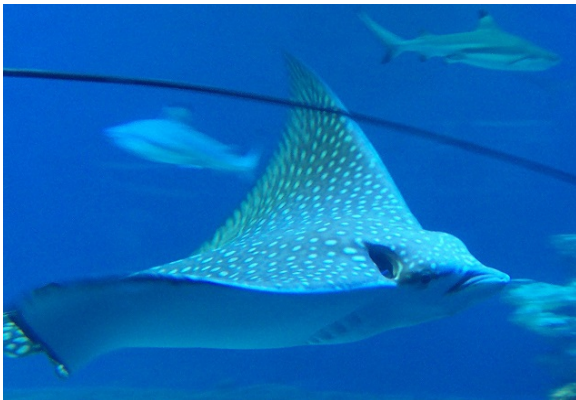
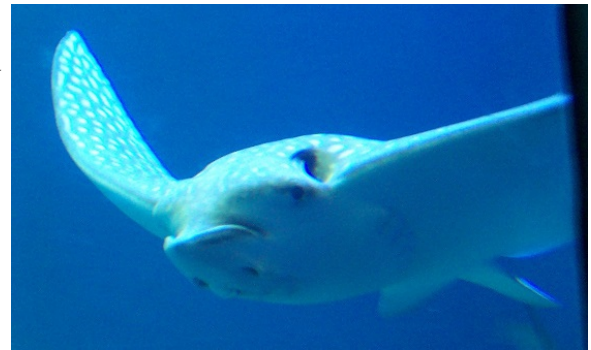




*Ex 20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, **the sea, and all that in them is**, and rested the seventh day:*  
We had excused ourselves from the group, saying we would be going through the observatory at a much slower pace than they. It was a beautiful day and we did just that. We sequentially, and casually, went through each and every exhibit. It was just as exciting to watch the children as it was to see the

exotic sea creatures. I was amazed that children could speak Hebrew so fluently, and I so poorly; I mean both of us had been working on it for 5 years.

I don't do well at photography of fish through glass, but caught pretty much what I wanted in pictures of Bev and I. To see excellent photos of the fish and reef, one could watch them stream by perpetually at [coralworld.co.il](http://coralworld.co.il)



We casually spent the whole delightful day at the observatory. Lunch was reasonable, gift shops not so much. Park benches were plentiful. The Underwater Observatory Tower was spectacular, and consumed a couple hours of our day. If I were not so eager to transcribe my notes about Day 14 I would here delve into some of the remarkable creations we explored in the Red Sea. Like the incredible parrotfish, whose coral-crunching bite can be heard on

tropical reefs worldwide. They are close relatives of the wrasse, with more than 30 types living on the reef, often forming large mixed schools with other species. Parrotfish are colorful, tropical creatures that spend about 90% of their day eating algae off coral reefs. This almost-constant eating performs the essential task of cleaning the reefs which helps the corals stay healthy and thriving.



But wait there is more, the parrotfishes' digestive system, which includes more teeth inside their throats, breaks down coral bits into the white sands that make beaches famous. Known as bioerosion, this process helps control algae populations and create new surfaces for baby corals to attach to and

grow. But just how much sand can a parrotfish produce? Surely it can't be enough to really make whole beaches? Think again. Scientists estimate that a single Chlorurus gibbus parrotfish can poop out more than 2,000 pounds of sand each year!

We could go on and on about creatures we saw at the Coral Reef Observatory, but suffice it to say:

*Job 38:8 Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?*

*Job 38:16 Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?*

*Ps 33:7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.*

*Ps 46:2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea:*



*Ps 65:5 By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:*

*Ps 66:6 He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.*

*Ps 74:13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.*

*Ps 77:19 Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.*

*Ps 89:9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.*

*Ps 93:4 The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.*

*Ps 95:5 The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.*



We casually strolled back to Isrotel Yam Suf in time to get my traditional one hour nap, and a delightful supper. Our whole group was a stir with stories. Turns out we had the most casual, uneventful day of all. Dave and Lynne couldn't stop talking about their coral reef snorkeling experience. Even the shop-till-you-drop crowd was exuberant about the sites in Eilat, and the malls, and the ice skating rink, and the time they had.

That was a notable and relaxing “day-off” spent in Eilat, Israel. It will be remembered, I trust, well into my '80s, and then I'll have a great grand child read me this entry.



*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 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. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ... 36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. ... 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*



*Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ... 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ... 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ*

*died for us. ... 12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ... 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. ... 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*10:9 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.*





## Msg #2313 Visiting Israel HS#03 Journal Excerpt

What The Bible Says Good Sam's Penny Pulpit by Pastor Ed Rice

While Pastor Rice and Bev are touring Israel with Pastor Lee Pickett from March 16<sup>th</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup>, here is an entry from their journal of last years trip: (view the whole journal by visiting our website and clicking “Journaling a Preacher's Pilgrimage to Israel”)

From Half Shekel Journal Entry #03: As we gathered at the north end of the Temple Mount our guide Joe, and then our guide, Pastor Charlie, addressed what was once standing in the empty lot before us. To address Jerusalem's vulnerability from the north a citadel was placed on a rocky plateau just outside the north west corner of the Temple Area. “The fortress served as a headquarters for the Roman army in Jerusalem... The close proximity of its high towers to the temple complex enabled Roman guards to keep watch on any disturbances that developed. Herod had built underground passage ways that allowed Roman detachments to enter the compound if deemed necessary.”<sup>2</sup>

This fortress was used for the Roman's judgment hall and Mark 15:16 says of Christ on trial, “*And the soldiers lead him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band.*” An old Arabic proverb says, “He that speaks well turns ears into eyes.” As Pastor Charlie spoke we could see the Roman Praetorium<sup>3</sup> standing in the open lot before us. We could see Jesus in the hands of the mocking soldiers; we could hear Pontius Pilot say to the crowd, “*What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ (Messiah)? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified*” (Mat.27:22).

It only took a moment really; mere minutes of our time standing at the north end of the Temple Mount. The Muslims had made sure that we had no Bibles to open. Our guide Joe, with just a few worded brushstrokes had painted the towers of a Roman citadel, filled with soldiers, and housing a judgment hall called Praetorium. Our guide Pastor Charlie had made that hall echo with God's word, Pontius Pilot's words, and soldiers with a purple robe and crown of thorns. Our guide, the Holy Spirit of God now flooded my mind with holy words: “*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*” (2Cor.5:20). (Ref also Isa.53:6, Jhn.3:17-18, 36,5:24). It is a horrible thing that man did in that judgment hall, that Praetorium that once stood only a few feet from where we now listened to Pastor Charlie.

The law was given in 1492 BC and for 1,500 years man was tried and tested for his ability to keep that law. He was supposed, by keeping the law, to come through the dark veil and stand in the presence of a holy God. He failed, man was, and is incapable of keeping God's law, incapable of standing in God's presence through law. In this judgment hall, the verdict for man is forever in; here man condemned the only begotten Son of God to death on a cruel cross. That guilty verdict for man cries out, “*the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...*” (Jer.17:9). ... “*As it is written there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ... For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom.3:10-11, 23). ...

The trial whereby man must keep the law of God is past. That dispensation, or test of stewardship, is ended, that case cannot be reopened by any religion. A new dispensation is now opened and springs on the world as a new dawn. “*For by grace are ye saved through faith*” (Eph.2:8-9, 7)... We somberly walked by the Praetorium which stood in our minds eye, and began our departure from the Temple Mount. It is a marvelous thing to be saved by grace.

*Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul. Thank you, Lord, for making me whole.*

*Thank you, Lord, for giving to me, Thy Great Salvation, So Rich and Free.*

An Essay for week #13 - Mar 26, 2023

A Holy Land Tour Journalled at [www.GSBaptistChurch.com/israel22](http://www.GSBaptistChurch.com/israel22)

2 see [www.christianevidences.org](http://www.christianevidences.org) accessed 11/22/2022

3 Pictures of the Roman Praetorium by the author at the Israel Museum.