

Crossroads of Conflict Israel—2008

Shalom

From Mt. Carmel looking at part of the Jezreel Valley and realizing the importance of that Valley to the security of western Israel—the Valley was the route for armies and caravans from the coastal plain to the Jordan Valley over the years.

Nazareth is the childhood home of supreme peacemaker—Jesus. The population today is a mixture of Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

Golan Heights—east and north of the Galilee Sea—was captured by Israel in 1967. The location reveals its importance for strategic peace in the region.

Views from Mt. Arbel looking north and the plain of Gennesaret with Mt. Arbel in the distance—west side of the Galilee Sea.

Church of the Beatitudes on the northwest shore of the Galilee Sea—location of the Sermon on the Mount.

The bunkers and fortifications on Dan Tel looking north to Lebanon. The importance to having control of these plains that lead to Lebanon are very evident for peace in the area.

Banias is the location of one of the three springs that are the sources of the Jordan River—the edge of the West Bank—in northeast Israel.

The roads to Damascus and Amman!

Beit Shean reveals recent digs that have unearthed eighteen layers of cities dating from the late Middle Ages! The Tel in the distance, wide streets, preserved columns and large Roman theater appear in these photos.

Qumram is where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in local caves in 1947—confirming almost all of the Old Testament—and are over 1000 years older than any previously known version of the Old Testament! The parchment of Isaiah was on display at the Israel Museum—Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem.

Masada is an example of the extraordinary building of palaces by King Herod during his reign (on “steps” or terraces in the photos) as well as a fortress overlooking the Dead Sea. It is also where the zealots/rebels made their last stand against Roman rule. The Jewish stronghold held out for several years after the fall of Jerusalem but in 73 AD, as the Romans were planning the final assault using a siege ramp to the west, committed mass suicide rather than be captured and imprisoned again by the Romans—a very important historical site/lesson for Israeli citizens of all ages for conflict, surrender, and fighting.

Jericho lies within Israel and is Northwest of the Dead Sea with security gates at entrances/exits to this West Bank city—administration by the residents with security by Israel. Jericho was conquered by Joshua and is believed to be one of the oldest cities in the world—over 10,000 years old!

Old Jerusalem looking at the Temple Mount and Dome of the Rock on top of Mount Moriah. The building at the time was visited by Jesus, was the center of struggles against Roman rule, “rebuilt” several times, and Mohammed (founder of Islam) dreamed that the Temple Mount was the site of his ascent to heaven. One of Islam’s holiest sites. Note the numerous burial sites (Christian and Muslim) on both sides of the Kidron Valley (in between Old Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives). Muslim authority controls access within the Dome of the Rock.

From outside the South Wall of Old Jerusalem looking east toward the Mount of Olives with Kidron Valley in between.

St. Stephen’s Gate entrance from the east into Old Jerusalem—northeast corner of the Temple Mount—site of the martyrdom of Stephen.

The Western (or wailing) Wall to the Temple Mount and Dome of the Rock. Solomon’s Temple had rested on the top of Mount Moriah. The retaining wall towers the Old City and are nearest to the Holy of Holies of the Temple and has drawn Jews for prayer for years—“to weep and bemoan their bitter fate.” In 1967 the wall after thousands of years passed into Jewish hands.

Travel between enclaves or sectors of the West Bank are met by walls, security, etc.—this one at the entrance/exit to Bethlehem. Certain Israeli citizens cannot enter Bethlehem! Another example where there is administration of an area by Arabs but security by Israel—all within Israel.

The Garden Tomb, north of the Damascus Gate of Old Jerusalem, has the famous skull-shaped rock—“Calvary”—and tomb believed to be possible site of crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

At Nebi Samwil there is an impressive mosque and minaret constructed in the 16th century atop the remains of an earlier Crusader church. Significant remains from the Crusader period have been found in digs. The pictures reflect views on how near Israel, Jordan, and Syria are to one another as well the different means of isolation/containment within Israel as to the walls, etc. separating individual communities or housing developments within Israel.

Tel Lachish is located southwest of Jerusalem and guarded the land route from the sea/west. The city was surrounded by two walls including a lower retaining wall. The approach ramp (reflected in the picture) led to the outer gatehouse. The only siege ramp (smaller in scale but same concept as that at Masada) is located to the east (right of the picture). The horror and suffering at Lachish was terrible when Assyria destroyed it. Rebuilt, but the judgment of God on Lachish was the destruction of

everyone there, god-fearers and non-believers, and was deemed a judgment on an entire culture—God destroyed good and bad thus “instructing everyone not to ignore bad in their culture!” Finally, this Tel Lachish National Park was opened as a result of litigation in connection with the digs in the area and concluded with the opening to the public as a park.

Finally the 21st Century enactment of the David-Goliath battle in the Valley of Elah—southwest of Jerusalem. When the Philistines camped on the edge of the Valley, “Saul and the Israelite army moved into a defensive position on the northern ridge overlooking the Valley of Elah opposite the Philistine camp. David was a young man at the time, perhaps in his teens, whose primary responsibility in life was to tend his father’s sheep. Sent on a mission from his father to bring provisions to his three older brothers, who served with Saul’s army, David made the fifteen-mile trek from his hometown of Bethlehem down to the Israelite camp in the Valley of Elah. When he arrived, he heard the challenge of Goliath, the giant from the city of Gath, for Israel to provide an opponent for him. The winner would decide the outcome of the confrontation between the Israelites and the Philistines.... Obtaining permission from the reluctant, cowardly King Saul, David entered the valley, gathered five smooth stones from the bed of the seasonal stream, and approached Goliath. Their meeting took place in full view of both armies. Each man watched with bated breath from the slopes of their respective hills. David placed one of the stones into his sling, rotated it several times to produce momentum, and launched the stone at Goliath. It struck the giant in the forehead, dropping him to the ground. Seeing the giant lying dead, the Israelite forces swarmed down the hillside into the valley, chasing the Philistines westward through the Valley.”

Shalom, Shalom.