

Day 5
Tuesday March 7 2023

[Beit Sh'an](#)
[Genesis Land](#)
[Qasr El Yehud](#)
[Ein-Gedi](#)
[Dead Sea / Floating in the Dead Sea Float](#) (Things to Know)

Beit Sh'an

Beit She'an, also Beth-shean, formerly known as Scythopolis and Beisan, is a city in the Northern District of Israel, which has played an important role in history due to its geographical location at the junction of the Jordan River Valley and the Jezreel Valley.

In the Biblical account of the battle of the Israelites against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, the bodies of King Saul and three of his sons were hung on the walls of Beit She'an (1 Samuel 31:10-12). In Roman times, Scythopolis was the leading city of the Decapolis, a league of pagan cities.

The population of the town was completely changed from 1948 to 1950; the town's inhabitants had been entirely Muslim and Christian until the battle over the city during Operation Gideon caused many to flee, and the remainder were expelled. The new Israeli state replaced the population with Jewish immigrants in the subsequent months. In modern times, Beit She'an serves as a regional centre for the towns in the Beit She'an Valley. The ancient city ruins are now protected within the Beit She'an National Park.

Genesis Land - Eretz Breishit:

Biblical reenactments are good fun, but Genesis Land takes the experience to a new level. Meet a caravan of camels led by Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, on the way to the patriarch's tent. Make the acquaintance of Joseph and his brothers' mere minutes before the sibling rivals throw Joseph into the pit. Witness the matchmaking of Isaac and Rebecca by Eliezer, along with other beautiful and familiar stories. Experience the distinguished hospitality of Abraham, and stay overnight in his tent. In the morning, travel as our Biblical ancestors did, and ride on a camel!

Genesis Land (*Eretz Breishit* in Hebrew) is located in the Judean Desert, not far from Jerusalem. Against the backdrop of the breathtaking desert landscape, Genesis Land recreates the patriarchs' way of life. Make your own pita and bake it on the fire. Write a letter in ancient Hebrew on parchment scrolls. Create original pottery and mosaics. Ride camels along the ridge overlooking the spectacular riverbed of Wadi Qelt. Explore the Jericho Valley and Judean Desert on a jeep. Join a drumming circle at sunset, and watch the moon rise to the rhythm of the music. Actors dressed as Biblical figures add unique flavor to this activity. "Abraham" welcomes you to his tent and offers you food and drink. The desert is the stage for Biblical stories which are enacted for you. Guests can don Bedouin-style robes to get into character themselves.

Qasr El Yehud

Qasr al-Yahud (Arabic: قصر اليهود, lit. "The tower of the Jews" is the western section of the traditional site of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist on the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13-17). It has also been traditionally identified with two episodes from the Hebrew Bible, as one of the possible points through which the Israelites have crossed the Jordan river as they reached the Promised Land (Joshua 3), and as the site where prophet Elijah ascended to heaven (2 Kings 2:1-14). Qasr al-Yahud is actually an Arabic name given to the nearby Monastery of St John the Baptist, but is also being used for the West Bank section of the baptism site itself.

En Gedi

Ein Gedi (Kid spring) is located on the western shore of the Dead Sea, and is the largest desert oasis in Israel (1,000 dunams - 250 acres). It is watered by four springs. Its fresh waters made the settlement possible since ancient times, and was referred several times in the Bible as a fertile place.

Ein Gedi was prosperous in the Hellenistic and Roman period, its wealth based on its famous dates, vegetation, and the precious balsam (persimmon, Hebrew: afarsemmon) which was used to manufacture perfume (Hebrew: bosem).

The site was known in the Biblical times as fertile, blessed by the spring it is named after. This area is where David hid from the pursuing King Saul (1 Samuel 23 29: "And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at **Engedi**").

Ancient Ein Gedi is located on Tell Goren, a low hill (size of 2 dunam - 1/4 acre) on the north bank of Nahal Arugot. It was established as a small village in the 7th C BC, during the Judean Kingdom. A seal was found bearing the name "Uriyahu son of Azaryahu", perhaps belonging to an official Judean clerk around the 6-7th C BC.

The village thrived during the next 14 centuries, expanding into a small city which was located around and near the ancient site. A small harbor was located in Ein Gedi, and wood and stones anchors were found here on the eastern side of the synagogue. At some times the water level reached and flooded the houses of Ein Gedi.

Persian/Hellenistic/Hasmonean period = The Assyrians destroyed the village (still located on Tell Goren) in the 6th C, but it was repopulated after the exiles return during the Persian period. The village continued until the 4th C, then was deserted. The Hasmonian Kings, starting from Hyrcanus I (134-104BC) and especially Alexander Jannaeus (103-76), rebuilt the oasis, marking the rise of the new Ein Gedi. They added aqueducts and pools, initiated the balsam (persimmon) industry, planted trees on the hillsides, and relocated the new village to the north of Tell Goren.

Roman period = The village of Ein Gedi reached its peak during the Roman/Byzantine period, and was a wealthy town, famous for its dates and rare perfume, which could only be grown in few sites on the Dead Sea shore. The new Ein Gedi relocated north-east from Tell Goren, to a ridge between Arugot and David streams, and expanded to 40 dunams (10 acres) - one of the largest villages. The

village was densely built, with houses connected to each other. A 2nd C AD Roman bathhouse complex (40 x 5M) was excavated on the sea shore, north-east of the city. Ein Gedi was damaged during the first and second revolts against the Romans (70, 132 AD), but survived after a short time. During the first revolt, the village was sacked by their fellow zealot Jews from Masada, who filled up their storerooms with the booty from the village.

The Dead Sea

The Dead sea is a large salt lake east of the Judean desert. This is the deepest place in the world, situated on the Great Rift Valley (Syrian-African depression). Many points of interest are located around the lake, with nature reserves and ancient sites such as Masada, Ein Gedi and Qumran. It is one of the saltiest water bodies in the world - 34% - which gave it the Hebrew name "salt sea" (*Joshua 15:5*): "And the east border was the salt sea, even unto the end of Jordan". The salt levels make life inside the water impossible, hence the name "dead" sea. The Dead Sea is located to the east of the Judean desert, between Israel and Jordan. Its level is 420m under the sea level. The southern part of the lake is mostly dry or broken into evaporation pools. The shore along its western section is narrow, and may extend to 2-3 KM at the outlets of the brooks that flow from the Judean desert.

Biblical history = The Dead Sea is first referred in the war of the four kings against the five kings of the Dead Sea area (*Genesis 14 3*): "All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea". The five kings lost the battle, falling into slime (mud) pits (*Genesis 14 10*): "And the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain". The Bible tells about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities located on the south-east side of the Dead Sea (*Genesis 19 28*): "And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace". Lot, his wife and two daughters escaped just before the wicked city was destroyed, and fled to the outskirts of the nearby city of Zoar. Zoar is also mentioned in the Bible in connection to the departing of Abraham and Lot (*Genesis 13, 10*): "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto **Zoar**".

Floating in the Dead Sea

The Dead Sea borders Jordan, Israel and the West Bank and the shore is 1,388 feet below sea level, making it the Earth's lowest elevation on land. Everything about this lake is unique, especially the high concentration of salt! This means with the natural buoyancy, it's very easy to float.

CUTS AND RASH, OUCH! = Unless you like being in pain, make sure you do not have any cuts or rashes before getting into the water, after all it's like rubbing alcohol or as a matter of fact, salt on your wounds. But on the other hand, it is believed to be very, very healing.

DON'T SHAVE! = Do not shave a few days before getting into the water. The minor cuts and skin irritation after a shave might make it hard for you to fully enjoy the waters, especially when you feel your legs or your face burning.

LAY BACK AND RELAX = You will immediately find that by laying back, without any effort and no matter your weight, you will float!

DON'T DIP YOUR FACE IN THE WATER! = If you see a shiny coin or feel like grabbing a chunk of sea salt, don't do it! You definitely do not want to taste the water. And, if you open your eyes under the water, you will most likely have to run out of the sea to rinse your eyes at the shower and expect to have red eyes for the rest of the day.

FLOAT LIKE A BOAT = While floating, use your hand to navigate through the water, row slowly as if you were steering a boat, just make sure not to splash water into anyone's face!

DON'T STAY IN FOR TOO LONG = Your body will tell you when to leave the water, you'll start feeling a mild burning sensation, which means it's time to walk back to the hotel and enjoy a nice shower.