



Israel Wilderness Experience

## The Exodus and the Gospels (12 Days)

This tour focuses considerable attention on themes from the Exodus narrative, as well as possible routes the Israelites may have followed through the Great Wilderness (portions of which include the modern Negev Wilderness). Attention will be given to life-styles of desert peoples from ancient times to the present. One of our themes will entail comparisons between the task of Moses and the role of Messiah as seen from various Jewish perspectives. Other subjects will include the conquest of the land of Canaan, and the development of Judaism through the Temple periods to the days of Jesus.

**Day 1** – Arrival and transfer to modern Be'er Sheva

**Day 2** – *ANCIENT WELL DIGGERS and THE GREAT WILDERNESS*

NORTHERN NEGEV: After an Israeli styled breakfast we will begin our Wilderness experience with a glimpse at shepherding in the southern Judean hill country with a visit to ancient Arad (Num. 21) and Be'er Sheva (Gen 21-26) to discuss many aspects of life during Abraham's day. This afternoon we will ponder some of the facets of biblical rock and water imagery as we hike through the beautiful Zin Canyon (Num 20). Other sites will include Avdat, the principal farming center of the ancient Nabateans. Overnight at Mitpe Ramon on the edge of the great Ramon Crater

**Day 3** – *SPYING OUT THE LAND and THE SPICE ROUTE*

CENTRAL and SOUTHERN NEGEV: This morning we will set out on foot to explore sections of the Nabatean 'Spice Route' where it meanders through some of the most magnificent landscapes of the central Negev region. Later we will consider the Wilderness of Paran where the spies first launched out to discover the land of Promise. We will finish the day relaxing on the shores of the Dead Sea. (morning hike approximately 2.5 hours)

**Day 4** – *MASADA, EN GEDI, QUMRAN and the CENTRAL BENJAMIN PLATEAU* (themes from Joshua 10)

THE JUDEAN WILDERNESS: We will begin our day at Masada, the imposing fortress palace built by Herod the Great. Here in the southern Judean wilderness we will consider one of the disasters of the Zealot Revolt against Rome during the final moments of their struggle. We will also visit the area of En Gedi, the region where David hid from Saul (I Sam.24). At Qumran we will discuss the site where the famous Dead Sea Scrolls were first discovered in 1947. From here we will begin our ascent to the Judean heights following several biblical themes including Joshua 10 starting at the plains near Jericho up to the Central Benjamin Plateau, from these heights we will gain important perspectives on the key approaches to Jerusalem and the Judean hill country. We will continue our journey towards the coastal plains to our seaside hotel. (1 overnight on the Mediterranean shoreline)

**Day 5** - *CROSSROADS AND CONFLICTS*

COASTAL PLAINS: After an Israeli-styled breakfast, we will follow one of the main land passages along the Eastern Mediterranean, which connected the super powers of the ancient world. Our study themes will include trade and commerce from the days of Herod the Great and his seaport project at Caesarea. Here we will discuss some of the conflicts between Gentiles and Jews during the first centuries B.C. and A.D. We will reflect on the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10) and the subsequent emergence of Christianity into the non-Jewish communities. Later we will travel to Mt. Carmel to consider Elijah and the dramatic Baal confrontation (I Kings 18) and through the Jezreel Valley and to Nazareth, the boyhood home of Jesus. Our day will end with a scenic overview of the Sea of Galilee. First of three nights on the Sea of Galilee

**Day 6** – *TO THE SOURCES OF THE JORDAN RIVER*

UPPER GALILEE AND GOLAN: This morning we will journey to Israel's border with Lebanon at the base of Mt. Hermon to enjoy the nature along the bountiful springs that form the upper Jordan River. We will consider the extent of Jesus' ministry in this northern part of the country. Sites will include: Tel Hazor, Tel Dan Nature Reserve, Banyas Falls and Banyas (Caesarea Philippi, *Matt. 16*), overviews of Lebanon and Syria (to contemplate Paul's 'Road to Damascus' experience) and more. Evening lecture: *The Rabbis and Torah Entertainment*.

### **Day 7 – *STRINGING PEARLS WITH JESUS***

AROUND THE SEA OF GALILEE: Today we will explore the deeper teachings of Jesus as he ministered in the Sea of Galilee region. In this beautiful setting we will give attention to various texts and traditions from his day, including the curious rabbinical technique of ‘pearl stringing.’ Sites will include: Capernaum, Chorazim, the traditional area of the Mt. of Beatitudes, Tabgha (John 21), an ancient boat museum and a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and more.

### **Day 8 – *OBSTACLES FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN***

JORDAN VALLEY TO JERUSALEM: This morning we will leave the Galilee and journey down the Jordan Valley to Jerusalem. Along the way we will view the principle city of the Decapolis, Scythopolis (or Beit Shean) where we will experience the capital of the Decapolis region. Here we will give some thought to some of the major impediments that interrupt the Gospel message from penetrating the Gentile world. Time and weather permitting we will relax in the picturesque waters of Sachne (a freshwater spring) at the base of Mt. Gilboa. We will finish our day with an overview of Jerusalem from the Mt. of Olives.

### **Day 9 – *THE ENVIRONS OF JERUSALEM***

Today we will journey along some of the scenic heights of the Judean hill country to gain perspectives of important approaches to Jerusalem during biblical times. We will view the Central Benjamin Plateau to the north and the area of Bethlehem to the south. In the Shphelah region (lower Judean foothills) we will see important battle sites such as between David and Goliath in the Elah Valley (I Sam. 17) and the region of Samson (Beit Shemesh). We will also visit a Model of Jerusalem from the Second Temple period (New Testament times). Other possible sites: Yad ve Shem (Holocaust Memorial).

### **Day 10 – *JERUSALEM THE HOLY***

Today we will consider some of the most important historic and religious sites to Jews, Muslims and Christians. We will begin our day at the famous Western Wall, which is an open-air synagogue for the modern Jewish community. Afterwards we will ascend the nearby Temple Mount of Herod the Great, now also a sacred site for Muslims. From here we will walk along the traditional Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the prize of orthodox Christianity. Sites along this way will include the Pools of Beit Zaita (John 5). We will also walk down of the Mt. of Olives to Gethsemane. Our afternoon will conclude with a time of reflection in the beautiful Garden Tomb.

### **Day 11 – *JERUSALEM THAT JESUS KNEW***

During our journey today inside the walled Old City and its enchanting quarters we will inspect several important archaeological sites from Jesus’ day. One of these will be a wealthy high priest’s home (possible house of Caiaphas). We will conclude our day at the exciting Southern Wall Excavations (or Ophel Gardens), where some key New Testament passages are easily reconstructed. Time permitting we will also cool ourselves in Hezekiah’s Tunnel underneath the original City of David (bring water shoes and a flashlight).

### **Day 12 – *FREE DAY FOR REST AND SHOPPING***

#### **Return Flight**

The material content and order of sites in this itinerary are subject to change and not all sites in the scheduled program are listed. The price is subject to change according the flux of the U.S. Dollar.

Price includes round trip airfare to Tel Aviv, airport assistance upon arrival, 2 airport bus transfers, 3 and 4 star hotel accommodations (with 2 meals daily), luxury coach throughout, driver, JCF guide and study materials, all entrance fees (except where mentioned otherwise), all tips and hotel portorage.

Price does not include lunches, extra drinks at meals or travel insurance (trip cancellation and travel health recommended).

#### **Optional day - *JERUSALEM THE CAPITAL CITY***

We will begin our morning at Yad ve Shem (Is. 56) the Holocaust memorial to remember the human tragedy and pain which preceded the birth of the modern nation of Israel. We will also view the Knesset and the famous Menorah. From here we will take time for the Israel Museum and the Shrine of the Book, where many Dead Sea Scrolls are on display. Here we will also view a model of Jerusalem from the Second Temple period. This afternoon we will take an overview of the City of David, and consider some of the archaeological remains from period of the Davidic monarchy (time and

weather permitting we will cool ourselves in the 'gentle flowing waters of the Shiloah' (Is 8) also known as Hezekiah's Tunnel (bring water shoes and a flashlight).