

CHRIST FOR ALL NATIONS · ISRAEL · 4 TO 13 OCTOBER 2026

Walking into the Pages

The Bible becomes three dimensional · a journey of ten days

*"Now that you are here in the Holy Land,
it is as if you are opening the Bible and walking into its pages.
The Bible becomes three dimensional."*

How every journey with Tai begins

*"Go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

MATTHEW 28:19 · THE COMMISSION YOU CARRY

For Evangelist Daniel and Russel Benson
and the pilgrims of Christ for all Nations

*You are not tourists. You are pilgrims.
You carry the Great Commission in your hands,
and this week you walk the ground where it was first spoken,
and where the nations first heard it.*

Guided by Amitai (Tai) Elon & Simon Brodtkin · Sar-El Tours #102521

The Journey at a Glance

ten days, eight days of walking, one Book open the whole way

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each day opens with its own page: the road and the times, the verse for the day, one Hebrew word, one question to carry. Then come the site studies, one page for every place we stand. Each study begins with the full passage printed with verse numbers, so we read it aloud together on the very ground where it happened. Then why it happened here of all places, the people as living people, the thing your own eyes can verify, and a prayer before we walk on. Scripture is printed from the World English Bible. Read aloud from whichever Bible you carry.

THE ROAD

Sun 4 Oct	Arrival · Ben Gurion to the coast	David's Harp, Netanya
Mon 5 Oct	Caesarea · Carmel · Megiddo · Jezreel · Nazareth · Cana	Ramot, Sea of Galilee
Tue 6 Oct	The boat · Capernaum · Tabgha · Beatitudes · Magdala	Ramot, Sea of Galilee
Wed 7 Oct	Tel Dan · Banias · the Golan · Mount Bental · Yardenit	Ramot, Sea of Galilee
Thu 8 Oct	Beit She'an · Qasr al Yahud · up to Jerusalem · Mount Scopus · the Shuk	Vert, Jerusalem
Fri 9 Oct	Mount of Olives · Gethsemane · Gallicantu · Via Dolorosa · Upper Room	Vert, Jerusalem
Sat 10 Oct	Masada · Ein Gedi · Qumran · the Dead Sea	Vert, Jerusalem
Sun 11 Oct	Temple Mount · Bethesda · Western Wall · City of David · Yad Vashem	Vert, Jerusalem
Mon 12 Oct	Garden Tomb · Bethlehem · Shepherds' Fields · Herodion · the Model	Vert, Jerusalem
Tue 13 Oct	To Ben Gurion · Shalom and lehitraot	

THE SCRIPTURE MAP OF THE WEEK

Day 1	Acts 10 at Caesarea · 1 Kings 18 on Carmel · Revelation 16:16 at Megiddo · Luke 4 in Nazareth · John 2 at Cana
Day 2	Mark 4 on the water · Mark 2 in Capernaum · John 6 and John 21 at Tabgha · Matthew 5 on the Mount · Luke 8 in Magdala
Day 3	1 Kings 12 at Dan · Matthew 16 at Banias · Psalm 133 facing Hermon · Romans 6 at the Jordan
Day 4	1 Samuel 31 at Beit She'an · Joshua 4 and Matthew 3 at the Jordan · Isaiah 2 on the road up · Zechariah 8 in the city
Day 5	Acts 1 on the Mount of Olives · Luke 19 on the path · Matthew 26 in the garden · Luke 22 at Gallicantu · John 19 on the Via Dolorosa · Acts 2 in the Upper Room
Day 6	Psalm 18 at Masada · 1 Samuel 24 at Ein Gedi · Isaiah 40 at Qumran · Ezekiel 47 at the Dead Sea
Day 7	Genesis 22 on Moriah · John 5 at Bethesda · 1 Kings 8 at the Wall · 2 Samuel 5 in David's city · John 9 at Siloam · Acts 2 on the Steps · Isaiah 56 at Yad Vashem
Day 8	Matthew 28 at the Garden Tomb · Luke 2 in Bethlehem and the fields · Matthew 2 at Herodion

1

From the Sea to the Valley

Caesarea, Carmel, Megiddo, the Jezreel Valley, Nazareth and Cana

*"Truly I perceive that God doesn't show favoritism;
but in every nation he who fears him
and works righteousness is acceptable to him."*

ACTS 10:34, 35 · PETER, IN CAESAREA

THE ROAD TODAY

08:00 **Depart the hotel.** North along the coast, the old Via Maris.

Caesarea Maritima. The door the Gospel walked out of. The Spirit fell on the first Gentile household here, and from this harbor Paul sailed for Rome. [ACTS 10:44](#)

Mount Carmel. Elijah asks a nation to stop limping between two opinions, and fire answers. [1 KINGS 18:21](#)

Tel Megiddo. Har Megiddo, the hill that gave the world the word Armageddon. [REVELATION 16:16](#)

The Jezreel Valley. Gideon's three hundred, Naboth's vineyard, the breadbasket of Israel below us like an open book. [JUDGES 7](#)

15:30 **Nazareth Village.** The small town nobody expected anything from. [JOHN 1:46](#)

Cana. We drive by the village of the first sign. [JOHN 2:11](#)

To the Sea of Galilee. Dinner and our first night by the lake.

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TODAY

גוֹיִם · Goyim, nations. In Hebrew a goy is simply a nation, any nation. Israel herself is called goy kadosh, a holy nation. God promised Abraham that all the goyim of the earth would be blessed in him (Genesis 18:18). This morning in Caesarea you stand where that promise opened its door to the nations. Christ for all Nations begins its week where all nations began to hear.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY IN YOUR POCKET

Peter needed a vision from heaven to walk into Cornelius' house. Whose house is God sending you to that you would never have entered on your own?

THE PAGES WE OPEN TODAY

Caesarea Maritima · Mount Carmel · Megiddo · Nazareth · Cana

TONIGHT · **RAMOT HOTEL, SEA OF GALILEE**

Caesarea Maritima

Herod's harbor, where the door opened to the nations

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · FIRST PAGE · THE CENTURION

¹ Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ² a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, who gave gifts for the needy generously to the people, and always prayed to God. ³ At about the ninth hour of the day, he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God coming to him, and saying to him, "Cornelius!" ⁴ He, fastening his eyes on him, and being frightened, said, "What is it, Lord?" He said to him, "Your prayers and your gifts to the needy have gone up for a memorial before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa, and get Simon, who is also called Peter."

ACTS 10:1 to 5

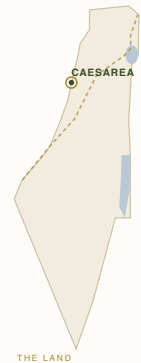
SECOND PAGE · THE SPIRIT FALLS

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ They of the circumcision who believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was also poured out on the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ "Can anyone forbid these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just like us." ⁴⁸ He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay some days.

ACTS 10:44 to 48 (V. 46 ABRIDGED)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Herod the Great built this harbor from nothing on a straight coast with no bay, sinking concrete underwater, and named it for Caesar. It became the gate between this land and the Mediterranean world. Look what God did with Herod's gate: here the first Gentile household received the Spirit, and from this port Paul sailed to Rome. The gospel left Israel for the nations through the front door the empire itself had built.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Cornelius. A Roman officer who prayed to the God of the people his empire occupied, and gave to their poor. Heaven kept the receipts: your prayers and your gifts have gone up for a memorial. **Peter.** He walked into a Gentile's house against every rule he was raised with, and while he was mid-sermon heaven interrupted him and settled the question itself. **Paul in chains.** Two years imprisoned here, then out through this harbor to Caesar.

THE 3D MOMENT

In the Roman theater here they found a stone bearing the name Pontius Pilatus, the only inscription of Pilate ever discovered, named in stone in the city he governed from. Along the beach the aqueduct still marches toward the ruins of Herod's harbor, which the sea took back. The judge's name survived on a spare stone. The harbor did not.

THE HEBREW WORD

שַׁעַר · **Sha'ar**, gate. Caesarea was the sea gate of the land, and God made it the gate of the gospel to the nations. When He wants a door, He will use the empire's own hinges.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Cornelius's quiet prayers and gifts were building a memorial before God he knew nothing about. What is your hidden faithfulness building right now?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You opened the door to the nations in the emperor's own city, and we who pray from the nations today walked in through it. Keep the door open. Remember the quiet prayers and hidden gifts, as You remembered the centurion's. And pour out Your Spirit again, mid-sermon. Amen.

Mount Carmel · Muhraka

the place of burning, where the fire fell

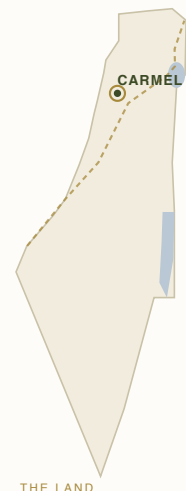
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

²¹ *Elijah came near to all the people, and said, "How long will you waver between the two sides? If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people didn't say a word.* ³⁶ *At the time of the evening offering, Elijah the prophet came near, and said, "Yahweh, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word."* ³⁷ *Hear me, Yahweh, hear me, that this people may know that you, Yahweh, are God, and that you have turned their heart back again."* ³⁸ *Then Yahweh's fire fell, and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.* ³⁹ *When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces. They said, "Yahweh, he is God! Yahweh, he is God!"*

1 KINGS 18:21, 36 to 39 (READ THE FULL CONTEST IN VV. 20 to 40)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Carmel is the rain gate of the land, the first ridge the sea clouds strike, green when everything else is brown. And Baal was sold to Israel as the rain god, the storm rider. So the drought was already a duel before Elijah ever proposed one: three rainless years on the rain god's own mountain. When Elijah called for the contest here, he was challenging Baal on Baal's home court, in front of the whole nation, at the end of a drought that had already proven who holds the sky. The Arabic name of this spot remembers the verdict: Muhraka, the place of burning.



THE LAND

THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Elijah. One man against four hundred fifty, and against something worse than prophets: a nation that answered him not a word. He rebuilt a broken altar with twelve stones, drowned it in water, and prayed a prayer you can read aloud in under thirty seconds. The shortest prayer won the longest silence. **The people.** They wavered between two sides until the fire chose for them, and then they fell on their faces with one sentence: Yahweh, He is God. In Hebrew, that sentence is a name: Eliyahu.

THE 3D MOMENT

Stand at the statue of Elijah and look at the view: the Kishon brook below, the Jezreel spread eastward, Tabor and Moreh and Gilboa in a line. Then hear the detail most visitors miss. Elijah's own name, Eliyahu, means My God is Yahweh. The answer to the contest was walking around inside the prophet's name the entire time. The people's final cry simply repeated what his mother named him.

THE HEBREW WORD

עֲנֵנִי · **Aneni**, answer me. The heart of Elijah's prayer, hear me, answer me, and to this day the cry of Israel's prayers on fast days. One word, prayed by one man, and the sky tore open. Heaven is not moved by length.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

How long will you waver between the two sides? The people answered not a word. Where in your life are you still standing silent between two altars?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, answer us as You answered on Carmel. Not with fire we can boast of, but with the turning of hearts. End the drought in us. And when we waver between two opinions, choose us back, until we say with one voice: You are God.
Amen.

Megiddo

twenty-six cities deep, the battlefield that named the last battle

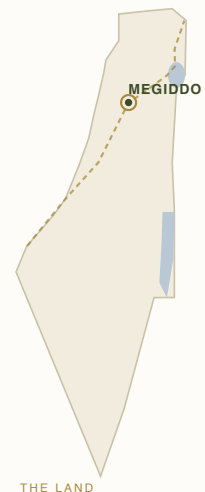
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹² The sixth poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates. Its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings that come from the sunrise. ¹³ I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, something like frogs; ¹⁴ for they are spirits of demons, performing signs; which go out to the kings of the whole inhabited earth, to gather them together for the war of that great day of God, the Almighty. ¹⁵ "Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his clothes, so that he doesn't walk naked, and they see his shame." ¹⁶ He gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew, Megiddo.

REVELATION 16:12 to 16 · ALSO: 1 KINGS 9:15 · 2 KINGS 23:29

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Megiddo guards the mouth of the Aruna pass, the narrow slot where the Via Maris squeezes through the Carmel ridge. Every army marching between Egypt and Mesopotamia had to thread this needle, so every empire fought for this hill: Pharaoh Thutmose fought here, Josiah king of Judah died here, and the armies kept coming for three thousand years, down to the British in 1918. Solomon fortified it with Hazor and Gezer. When John needed one word for the war at the end of the world, he chose this address: Har Megiddo, which the nations learned to say as Armageddon.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Josiah. The best king Judah ever had, the boy who found the lost Torah and turned a nation, and he fell here, riding out to a battle that was not his. Even the righteous can die at Megiddo. The valley does not check credentials. **John the seer.** Exiled on Patmos, he reaches for the one place name every reader of the Hebrew Bible would feel in their stomach. He is saying: the last war will be fought where all the wars were fought, and God wins it.

THE 3D MOMENT

The archaeologists' cut in the tel exposes the layers: twenty-six cities stacked one on top of another, each built on the ruins of the last, gate over gate, ash over ash. Run your eyes up that slice of the mound. That is what human power looks like in cross-section. Twenty-six kingdoms, one on top of the other, and the grass grows over all of them.

THE HEBREW WORD

הַר מְגִדּוֹ · **Har Megiddo**, the mountain of Megiddo. Say it quickly and you hear the word the whole world knows: Armageddon. One of the most famous words on earth is simply Hebrew geography, this hill, this valley, this view.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Twenty-six cities believed their walls would hold. Blessed is he who watches, says the verse read on this hill. What are you trusting in that is really just one more layer waiting to happen?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, the wars of three thousand years are stacked under our feet, and the last word over this valley is Yours. Keep us watching. Keep us dressed and ready. And until that great day, make us people of peace standing in the world's favorite battlefield. Amen.

Nazareth & Mount Precipice

the hometown, and the cliff at the edge of it

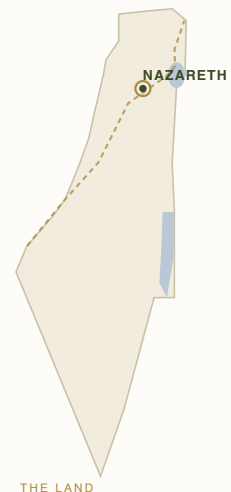
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹⁶ He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. He entered, as was his custom, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ The book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to deliver those who are crushed, ¹⁹ and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." ²⁰ He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began to tell them, "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² All testified about him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, and they said, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" ²⁴ He said, "Most certainly I tell you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown." ²⁸ They were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things. ²⁹ They rose up, threw him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill that their city was built on, that they might throw him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he, passing through the middle of them, went his way.

LUKE 4:16 to 30 (ABRIDGED: VV. 23, 25 to 27 OMITTED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Nazareth in His day was a village of a few hundred people, tucked in a bowl of hills off every major road, so small it appears nowhere in the Old Testament. That is the point Nathanael made: can anything good come from Nazareth? But climb to the Precipice at the village's edge and the secret opens. The whole Jezreel Valley lies at your feet: Tabor, Moreh, Gilboa, Carmel, Megiddo. The boy from the no-name village grew up looking out every day over the greatest battlefield map of the Old Testament. Hidden village, open Bible.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Jesus, the hometown boy. He read Isaiah in the synagogue where He had heard it read since childhood, closed the scroll, and told His neighbors the words were now alive in the room. **The neighbors.** They had watched Him grow up, bought from the carpenter's shop, sat beside Him on Shabbat. In one hour they went from wondering at His words to marching Him toward a cliff. Familiarity is not faith. Sometimes it is faith's hardest enemy.

THE 3D MOMENT

Stand on the Precipice, the traditional brow of the hill, and turn slowly. Nearly every battle of the Hebrew Bible's heartland is visible in one panorama: Deborah at Tabor, Gideon at Moreh, Saul at Gilboa, Josiah at Megiddo. He saw this view a thousand times before He ever preached a word. The geography of His childhood was a scroll laid open.

THE HEBREW WORD

נֶצֶר · **Netzer**, branch, shoot. Nazareth carries the word inside its name. Isaiah promised a netzer would grow from the stump of Jesse, a green shoot out of a cut-down tree. The village's own name whispered the prophecy the whole time.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

No prophet is acceptable in his hometown. Where has God been speaking to you through something so familiar that you stopped hearing it?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You stood up in Your own hometown and read freedom out loud. Read it over us. Good news to the poor, healing to the broken hearted, release to the captives. And keep us from the blindness of the familiar, so You never have to pass through our midst and go on Your way. Amen.

Cana

where the best wine came last

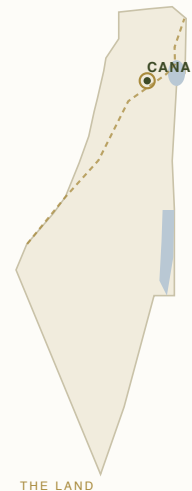
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ The third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. ² Jesus also was invited, with his disciples, to the marriage. ³ When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever he says to you, do it." ⁶ Now there were six water pots of stone set there after the Jews' way of purifying, containing two or three metretes apiece. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water." They filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the ruler of the feast." So they took it. ⁹ When the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and didn't know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast called the bridegroom, ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have drunk freely, then that which is worse. You have kept the good wine until now!" ¹¹ This beginning of his signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

JOHN 2:1 to 11 · ALSO: JOHN 21:2

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Cana sits in the hills just north of Nazareth, on the road a Nazareth family would walk to reach the lake. A village wedding here was a whole town's celebration lasting days, and running out of wine was a family's public shame. The first sign did not happen in the Temple or on a mountain. It happened at a neighborhood party, to save a bridegroom from embarrassment. Heaven's opening move in the Gospel of John was an act of kindness at a family table. Nathanael, the disciple under the fig tree, was a Cana man.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Mary. She does not ask her son for a miracle. She simply tells him the problem, they have no wine, and then gives the servants the best one-line sermon ever preached: whatever he says to you, do it. **The servants.** The only people at the feast who knew where the wine came from. The ruler tasted, the bridegroom got the credit, and the servants who obeyed held the secret. Obedience always knows things the head table never learns.

THE 3D MOMENT

Look at the stone jars in the church here. Stone, not clay, because stone does not take on impurity under the purity laws. Six massive vessels for religious washing, each holding a hundred liters and more. Jesus filled the vessels of ritual to the brim and turned them into joy. The furniture of the miracle is the sermon.

THE HEBREW WORD

שִׂמְחָה · **Simcha**, joy. The joy of a wedding, the joy commanded at the feasts, the joy this land is always fighting to keep. The first sign was not a rescue from danger. It was a rescue of joy. Heaven takes celebrations seriously.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Whatever he says to you, do it. What is the last thing He said to you that you have not yet done, and what jars are standing empty while you wait?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You saved the joy of a wedding before You ever calmed a storm. Save our joy. Fill the empty jars in our homes to the brim. And when we taste Your goodness late in the story, let us say it out loud: You kept the best wine until now.
Amen.

2

Galilee of the Nations

the boat, Capernaum, Tabgha, the Mount of Beatitudes and Magdala

*"Galilee of the Gentiles,
the people who sat in darkness saw a great light,
to those who sat in the region and shadow of death,
to them light has dawned."*

MATTHEW 4:15, 16 · FULFILLING ISAIAH 9:1, 2

THE ROAD TODAY

08:30 **Depart the hotel.**

09:00 **The boat.** The same water, the same wind He told to be still. MARK 4:39

Capernaum. Kfar Nachum, the Village of Comfort. He left Nazareth and made this His own city. MATTHEW 9:1

Tabgha. Where little became enough, and where Peter was asked three times, do you love Me? JOHN 21:17

Mount of Beatitudes. The sermon that turned the world upside down, preached over this water. MATTHEW 5

12:30 **St. Peter's fish lunch.** From the lake. Look in its mouth for a coin. MATTHEW 17:27

Magdala. Home of Mary, the first to see Him risen and the first to carry the news. JOHN 20:18

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TODAY

גָּלִיל · **Galil**, a circle, a ring, a district. Isaiah called it Galil HaGoyim, the circle of the nations, because the roads of the world ran through it. Jesus did not begin in the Temple. He began on the crossroads, where the nations passed by. Evangelism was born on a highway.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY IN YOUR POCKET

He chose fishermen, not scholars. Which net is He asking you to leave behind, and which net is He asking you to cast again, on the other side?

THE PAGES WE OPEN TODAY

The Sea of Galilee · Capernaum · Tabgha · Mount of Beatitudes · Magdala

TONIGHT · **RAMOT HOTEL, SEA OF GALILEE**

The Sea of Galilee

on the water; in the boat, where the wind obeys

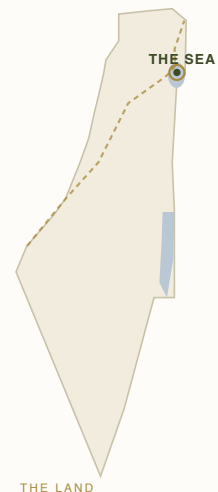
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let's go over to the other side." ³⁶ Leaving the multitude, they took him with them, even as he was, in the boat. Other small boats were also with him. ³⁷ A big wind storm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so much that the boat was already filled. ³⁸ He himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him up, and told him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are dying?" ³⁹ He awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" ⁴¹ They were greatly afraid, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

MARK 4:35 to 41

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The lake lies more than two hundred meters below sea level, a warm bowl of water ringed by cold heights, the Golan on one side and the cliffs of Arbel on the other. Cool air pours down those slopes through the gorges like water through funnels, and the storms arrive in minutes, out of nowhere, exactly as the text describes. The geography does not just allow the story. The geography wrote the weather report in the story. And this small harp of water carried more of the Gospel than any sea on earth.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

The fishermen. Peter, Andrew, James and John had worked this water since boyhood. When professionals who know a lake say we are dying, the storm is real. Their fear is expert testimony. **Jesus asleep on the cushion.** The only detail of its kind in the Gospels: He was tired enough to sleep through a storm and untroubled enough to do it. Then He speaks to weather the way a man speaks to a dog, and it lies down.

THE 3D MOMENT

In the museum at Kibbutz Ginosar rests a fishing boat pulled from the mud in 1986, carbon-dated to the first century, the very kind of boat this story happened in, found only because a drought lowered the water. Twenty-seven feet of wood that heard storms like this one. And out on the water, watch the Arbel gorges to the west. That is the door the wind comes through.

THE HEBREW WORD

כִּנּוֹר · Kinnor, harp. The Kinneret is named for its shape, a harp of water. An instrument, not just a sea. On that night the disciples learned who is allowed to play it.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

The storm was real and the fear was professional. What storm are you rowing against right now, and have you woken Him about it, or are you still bailing water alone?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

*Lord, You speak to storms and they lie down. Speak to ours. The ones over this land, and the ones inside our own boats.
Peace. Be still. And teach us to stop bailing alone while You are with us. Amen.*

Capernaum

Kfar Nachum, His own city, on the Via Maris

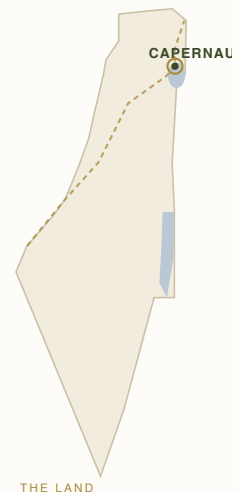
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ When he entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was heard that he was in the house. ² Immediately many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even around the door; and he spoke the word to them. ³ Four people came, carrying a paralytic to him. ⁴ When they could not come near to him for the crowd, they removed the roof where he was. When they had broken it up, they let down the mat that the paralytic was lying on. ⁵ Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." ^{6 to 7} But there were some of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak blasphemies like that? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ^{8 to 9} Immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you reason these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to tell the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven;' or to say, 'Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?'" ^{10 to 11} But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (he said to the paralytic) "I tell you, arise, take up your mat, and go to your house." ¹² He arose, and immediately took up the mat, and went out in front of them all; so that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

MARK 2:1 to 12 · ALSO: MATTHEW 4:12 to 17 · MATTHEW 9:9

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Capernaum sits on the **Via Maris**, the Way of the Sea, the international highway connecting Egypt to Mesopotamia, the two superpowers of the ancient world. This is why Matthew had a tax booth here: it was a border-and-customs town between the territories of Herod Antipas and Philip. When Jesus "left Nazareth and came and lived in Capernaum, which is by the sea" (Matthew 4:13), He was not retiring to a quiet village. He planted the gospel on the busiest road on earth, so that everything said and done here traveled out with the caravans, exactly as Isaiah promised: by the way of the sea, the people sitting in darkness saw a great light.



THE LAND

THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Peter. His actual house is here, under the modern church. His mother-in-law was healed in it: the loud fisherman had a wife, a family, a mortgage of worries, and he opened that ordinary home until it became headquarters. **The four friends.** Never named. Working men with a stretcher and a conviction, every person who ever carried somebody to Jesus who could not walk there alone.

THE 3D MOMENT

You stand in the synagogue built directly on the black basalt floor of the one where He taught. Your feet stand one meter above stones His feet knew. Peter's house is thirty steps away, and the highway of the ancient world ran right past the front door. Village and superhighway in one glance: that is the strategy of God.

THE HEBREW WORD

נחמה · **Nechama**, comfort. Kfar Nachum, the Village of Comfort. Before He healed a single person here, the town's own name was already a promise.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Who carried you to the roof? And whose stretcher are you holding now?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, we come to You carrying each other. Whoever cannot carry their own weight today, we lower them to You right now, through the roof if we must. See our faith. Heal our friend. Amen.

Tabgha

the seven springs, where little became enough

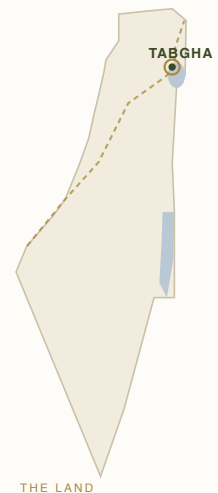
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

⁵ Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" ⁶ This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may receive a little." ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these among so many?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in that place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ Jesus took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to those who were sitting down; likewise also of the fish as much as they desired. ¹² When they were filled, he said to his disciples, "Gather up the broken pieces which are left over, that nothing be lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten.

JOHN 6:5 to 13

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Tabgha is Greek Heptapegon worn down by centuries of tongues: the Seven Springs. Warm mineral water rises here and slides into the lake, and the warmth draws the fish, which is why the fishermen of Capernaum worked these shores and why hungry crowds could find Jesus here, on the grassy edge between the springs and the water. A crossroads of paths along the northwest shore, close enough for a boy to arrive carrying his lunch. The mathematics of heaven happened at a fishing spot.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Philip. The local boy from Bethsaida, tested with a question about bread. He answers with arithmetic: two hundred denarii would not be enough. Philip calculates. Jesus multiplies. **Andrew.** The bringer. He finds a boy with five loaves and brings him forward while admitting it makes no sense. **The boy.** Unnamed forever, the child whose lunch fed five thousand because he handed it over whole.

THE 3D MOMENT

In the Church of the Multiplication, look at the famous mosaic by the altar: the basket holds only FOUR loaves. The fifth is not missing. The fifth is on the altar, the Byzantine artists' way of saying the miracle is still being distributed. Fifteen centuries later the sermon in the floor still preaches.

THE HEBREW WORD

לֶחֶם · **Lechem**, bread. The most ordinary word in the language, and the one He chose to multiply. He does not usually make something from nothing. He makes enough from what is handed to Him.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Philip calculated and Andrew brought what there was. Which one are you today, and what five loaves are still in your hands?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You asked for the little that was there, and it fed everyone. Here is our little. Our five loaves, our two fish, our small strength. Take it, give thanks over it, and make it enough. And let nothing be lost. Amen.

Mount of Beatitudes

the hillside above the Sea of Galilee

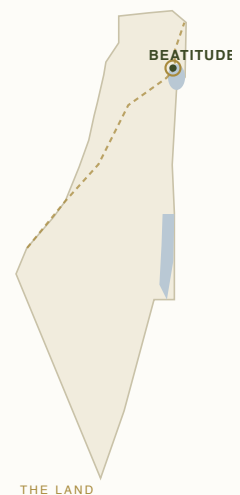
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ Seeing the multitudes, he went up onto the mountain. When he had sat down, his disciples came to him. ² He opened his mouth and taught them, saying, ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when people reproach you, persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

MATTHEW 5:1 to 12

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The hill rises directly above the northwest corner of the lake, directly above the Via Maris. Below the slope, the traffic of empires rolled between Egypt and Mesopotamia; on the slope, a rabbi sat down and announced the constitution of a different kingdom. The geography is the sermon's frame: the kingdoms of the world pass on the road below, and the Kingdom of Heaven is proclaimed on the grass above them, within earshot.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

The crowd. Galilean farmers and fishermen under Roman occupation, taxed to the bone, many sick, some desperate enough to walk for days. When He said "blessed are the poor," He was describing the audience. **Jesus the rabbi.** He sat down to teach, the posture of authority. A teacher in His early thirties from the village up the hill, redefining the word "blessed" for the rest of human history.

THE 3D MOMENT

The hillside is a natural amphitheater. Sound rolls down the slope toward the water; a voice at the top can be heard far below, a fact you can test with your own group. The land itself was the sound system. Creation cooperated with the sermon.

THE HEBREW WORD

אַשְׁרֵי · **Ashrei**, blessed, happy, on the right road. The word that opens the book of Psalms opens the sermon too. Not a feeling. A direction. Ashrei is the happiness of a person walking the right way, even uphill.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Which of the nine blessings describes your life right now, and can you hear it as a blessing?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You blessed the mourners before You blessed anyone else. So we bring You ours. Every empty chair. Every heavy heart. Comfort them the way only You can. Amen.

Magdala

the tower town, home of the woman who saw Him first

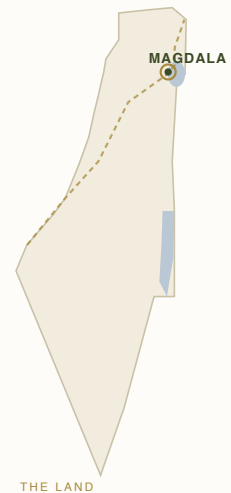
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ Soon afterwards, he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of God's Kingdom. With him were the twelve, ² and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out; ³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuzas, Herod's steward; Susanna; and many others; who served them from their possessions.

LUKE 8:1 to 3 · ALSO: JOHN 20:11 to 18

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Magdala was the fish factory of the lake. Its Greek name, Taricheae, means "the place of salted fish": here the catch of the Kinneret was salted, packed and exported across the Roman world. A working town of boats, warehouses and money on the shore road between Tiberias and Capernaum. Out of this smell of salt and trade came the woman whose name carries the town forever, and whose possessions, Luke notes plainly, helped pay for the ministry of Jesus. The Gospel had funders, and one of them was a fish-town businesswoman.



THE LAND

THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Mary of Magdala. Seven demons gone, and a life handed over whole. She funded the road, stood at the cross when most of the men had run, and on the third morning she was the first human being in history to see the risen Messiah. He said one word to her, her own name, and she recognized Him. The first preacher of the resurrection was a delivered woman from a fish town. **Joanna and Susanna.** Her partners in the quiet economy of the Kingdom, serving from their possessions.

THE 3D MOMENT

In 2009, builders digging foundations here struck a first-century synagogue, one of the only ones in the country from the very years of the ministry, with the carved Magdala Stone at its center. Matthew says He taught in ALL the synagogues of Galilee. Your eyes are looking at one He almost certainly stood in, buried under mud for two thousand years and opened again in our own days.

THE HEBREW WORD

מִגְדָּל · **Migdal**, tower. The town is named for a tower, and so is its daughter: Mary the Tower. God takes the person the town whispered about and builds the tallest testimony in the Gospels out of her.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

He called her by name and she recognized Him. When did you last hear your own name in His voice, and what did it turn you into?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You drove seven darknesses out of one woman and made her the first witness of the morning. Call us by name like that. Take what was broken in us and build a tower. And let us serve You from what we have, like the women who paid for the road. Amen.

3

Up to the Springs, Down to the Water

Tel Dan, Banias, the Golan Heights, Mount Bental and Yardenit

"But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered,

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

MATTHEW 16:15, 16 · AT CAESAREA PHILIPPI

THE ROAD TODAY

08:00 **Depart the hotel.** North through the Hula Valley into the Upper Galilee.

10:00 **Tel Dan.** The springs of the Jordan, the ancient gate, and Jeroboam's golden calf. 1 KINGS 12:29

11:30 **Banias.** The cave of Pan, the gates of hell. Of all places, this is where He asked the question. MATTHEW 16:18

The Golan Heights. My home. My farm is on these hills. Today you see the land the way I see it every morning.

Mount Bental. We look east into Syria and north to the snows of Hermon. PSALM 133:3

Yardenit. We are formed in water, in our mother's womb, and in water we are born again. ROMANS 6:4

Today is the seventh of October. Three years ago on this date the nation woke to war. On the ridge of Mount Bental we will stop, face the borders, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for every family of this land. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Those who love you will prosper." (Psalm 122:6)

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TODAY

יָרְדֵּן · **Yarden**, the Jordan, from yarad, to go down. It is born at the foot of Hermon and goes down and down to the lowest place on earth. Grace flows the same way. You cannot be baptized upward. You go down into the water, and God comes down to meet you there.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY IN YOUR POCKET

He asked who do you say that I am at the gate of a pagan temple. If you could not use a single word you were taught, how would you answer Him?

THE PAGES WE OPEN TODAY

Tel Dan · Banias · Mount Hermon Lookout

the Jordan study waits for Qasr al Yahud tomorrow

TONIGHT · **RAMOT HOTEL, SEA OF GALILEE**

Tel Dan

the northern gate of the land · the springs where the Jordan is born

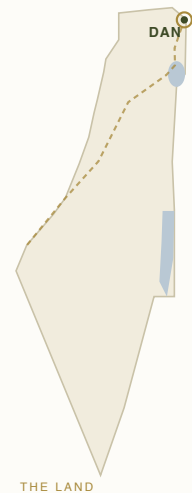
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

²⁶ Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to David's house. ²⁷ If this people goes up to offer sacrifices in Yahweh's house at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." ²⁸ So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look and behold your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" ²⁹ He set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. ³⁰ This thing became a sin; for the people went even as far as Dan to worship before the one there.

1 KINGS 12:26 to 30 · ALSO: GENESIS 14:14 · JUDGES 18

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

"From Dan to Beersheba." This is where the Bible's map of Israel begins, the northernmost city of the land. The largest of the Jordan's three sources bursts out of the ground here, a whole river born in one forest. Dan sits on the great road to Damascus and Mesopotamia, the northern gate of the country: whoever came from the empires of the north entered the story here. Abraham chased the four kings "as far as Dan" to rescue Lot, and here archaeologists found a mud-brick city gate from the very age of Abraham.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Jeroboam. A gifted young official who rebelled, won ten tribes, and then let fear do his theology. Afraid of losing his people to Jerusalem, he built them a nearer, easier god. The high place he built is still here, and you can stand on it. **Abraham.** Long before kings, the father of the nation passed this gate with 318 men, chasing an empire to bring back one nephew. Family was worth the whole journey north.

THE 3D MOMENT

You stand on the actual high place, the platform of Jeroboam's calf, with a metal frame today marking where the altar stood. Then you walk through the Canaanite mud-brick gate that was already old when the Israelites arrived. And all around you, the river roars up out of the earth. Living water and man-made worship, side by side. Your eyes can compare them.

THE HEBREW WORD

דָּן · **Dan**, "he judged." Named for the tribe, from Rachel's cry "God has judged me." At the north gate of the land, the name itself reminds you: every road into Israel passes under judgment and under promise at once.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Jeroboam built a nearer, easier worship because he was afraid. Where in your life have you chosen the convenient altar over the true one?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, we stand at the northern gate of Your land, where the river is born out of the rock. Keep us from the nearer, easier altars. You alone brought us up. You alone we worship. Let living water, and not convenience, decide where we bow. Amen.

Banias · Caesarea Philippi

at the foot of Mount Hermon, where a river bursts from the rock

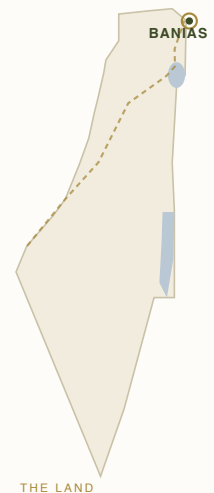
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" ¹⁴ They said, "Some say John the Baptizer, some, Elijah, and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ I also tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven; and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven." ²⁰ Then he commanded the disciples that they should tell no one that he was Jesus the Christ.

MATTHEW 16:13 to 20

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

This is the farthest north Jesus ever took the Twelve. The very edge of the land, where the international road leaves Israel for Damascus and the pagan world begins. Snowmelt from Hermon feeds the spring that pours from the cliff and becomes the Jordan. He walked them twenty-five miles from the lake, out of Jewish Galilee, to the loudest pagan shrine in the region, the cave of Pan, called the Gates of Hades, and asked His question there, at the border, in front of the competition.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Peter. Shimon, a married fisherman from Bethsaida, a few hours' walk from here. Fast hands, faster mouth, the one who leaps before he looks. Here his mouth finally lands on the truth, and Jesus renames him Kefa, the rock. **Jesus.** Around thirty, at the northern edge of His whole earthly journey. From this point He turns and sets His face toward Jerusalem and the cross. Banias is the hinge of the Gospel: the truth is spoken, and the road turns south.

THE 3D MOMENT

Stand facing the cliff. The niches carved for idols are still in the rock, empty. The cave of Pan is still there, silent. The spring still pours out and becomes the Jordan. Every god worshiped here is gone, and the One confessed here by one fisherman is worshiped this morning on every continent. Your eyes are looking at the scoreboard.

THE HEBREW WORD

צור · **Tsur**, rock. The Psalms call God "my Tsur." Jesus stands in front of a literal cliff of false gods and builds His community on a different kind of rock: a person who says the truth out loud.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Everyone repeats what the crowds say. What do you say, and would you say it here, in front of the competition?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, we stand together at the gates. You said the gates shall not prevail. So we are not afraid of gates. Guard this land. Guard these families. Guard Your church. Amen.

Mount Hermon Lookout

the white shoulder of the land, where the dew is born

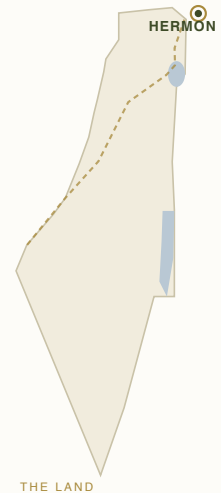
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ See how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity! ² It is like the precious oil on the head, that ran down on the beard, even Aaron's beard; that came down on the edge of his robes; ³ like the dew of Hermon, that comes down on the hills of Zion: for there Yahweh gives the blessing, even life forever more.

PSALM 133 · A SONG OF ASCENTS, OF DAVID

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Hermon is the roof of the land, a snow-covered massif rising over 2,800 meters where three countries meet today. Its melting snow and heavy night dew feed the springs of Dan and Banias, and those springs become the Jordan, and the Jordan becomes the life of the whole country. When the psalm says the dew of Hermon comes down on the hills of Zion, it is drawing a water line from this white mountain all the way to Jerusalem. Blessing in this land flows downhill, from here. An old tradition also looks at Hermon, the great "high mountain" of the north, as a candidate for the Mount of Transfiguration.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

David. A shepherd who slept under open skies and knew what dew does: it arrives silently, at night, taking nothing, watering everything. When he needed a picture of brothers dwelling in unity, he did not choose a storm or a river. He chose the quietest water there is. **The pilgrim brothers.** Psalm 133 is a Song of Ascents, sung by families walking up to Jerusalem together, three festivals a year, from every corner of the land.

THE 3D MOMENT

Look at the snow. You are standing in the Middle East, a land of desert and dust, and there is snow on the horizon for much of the year. Half the country can see this white shoulder on a clear day. The people below have always lifted their eyes to it and understood: the water that keeps us alive starts up there, where no one farms and no one irrigates. Grace has an address, and it is uphill.

THE HEBREW WORD

טל · **Tal**, dew. Not rain that comes in seasons, but the faithfulness that arrives every single night without being asked. The rabbis note that in the land's prayers, rain is requested but dew is never stopped. Some mercies never take a day off.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

The psalm says blessing flows where brothers dwell in unity. Which brother, of blood or of faith, is waiting for you to close the distance?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You send the dew of Hermon all the way down to Zion. Send it down on us. Make us brothers who dwell together in unity, in our families, in our churches, in this land. And let the blessing You command there rest on every home represented on this bus. Amen.

4

The Road Up to Jerusalem

Beit She'an, the Jordan Valley, Qasr al Yahud, Mount Scopus and the Shuk

*"Come, let's go up to the mountain of Yahweh,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."
For out of Zion the law shall go out,
and Yahweh's word from Jerusalem.*

ISAIAH 2:3 · THE NATIONS GOING UP

THE ROAD TODAY

07:45 **Depart the hotel.** South along the Jordan.

09:00 **Beit She'an.** On these walls the Philistines hung King Saul. Above them rose a Roman city of the Decapolis.

1 SAMUEL 31:10

The Jordan Valley. The pilgrims' road. Every festival, families walked this valley singing their way up. PSALM 122:1

11:30 **Qasr al Yahud.** Joshua crossed into the promise, Elijah crossed into heaven, and here the heavens opened over Jesus.

MATTHEW 3:16

The ascent. From below sea level we climb more than a kilometer into the hills of Judah.

Mount Scopus. Our first sight of the city. When He saw it, He wept over it. LUKE 19:41

Machane Yehuda. The market. Jerusalem is not a museum. It is alive, loud, and hungry. ZECHARIAH 8:5

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TODAY

עֲלִיָּה · **Aliyah**, going up. In Hebrew you never travel to Jerusalem. You go up to Jerusalem, from any direction, from anywhere on earth. The Psalms the pilgrims sang on this road are the Songs of Ascents. Today you sing them with your feet.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY IN YOUR POCKET

Joshua crossed here into a promise. Jesus went down here into the water. What do you need to cross, and what do you need to go down into, before you can go up?

THE PAGES WE OPEN TODAY

Beit She'an · The Jordan River · Jerusalem United

TONIGHT · **VERT HOTEL, JERUSALEM**

Beit She'an

where the Jezreel Valley meets the Jordan Valley

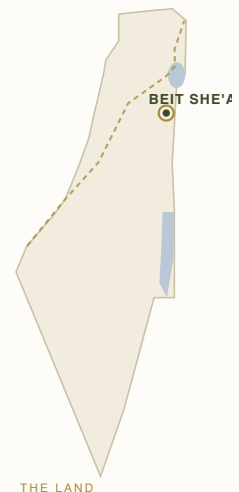
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain on Mount Gilboa. ² The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. ³ The battle went hard against Saul, and the archers overtook him; and he was greatly distressed by reason of the archers. ⁴ Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me!" But his armor bearer would not, for he was terrified. Therefore Saul took his sword, and fell on it. ⁶ So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor bearer, and all his men, that same day together. ⁸ On the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ¹⁰ They put his armor in the house of the Ashtaroth, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan. ¹¹ When the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² all the valiant men arose, went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and they came to Jabesh, and burned them there. ¹³ They took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

1 SAMUEL 31:1 to 13 (ABRIDGED: VV. 5, 7, 9 OMITTED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Beit She'an guards the meeting point of the land's two great corridors: the Jezreel Valley running east to west from the coast, and the Jordan Valley running north to south. The ancients said: if the Garden of Eden is in the land of Israel, its gate is at Beit She'an. Whoever held this junction held the flow of the world's traffic between Egypt, Mesopotamia and Arabia, and so Egyptians, Philistines, Greeks and Romans all planted themselves on this exact spot, layer upon layer under your feet.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Saul. The tall shy farm boy who hid among the baggage on coronation day and ended as a king consumed by fear of a younger man. How does an anointed beginning come to this end? **David.** Not present, and that is the lesson. He answered his hunter's death with the most generous eulogy in scripture: how the mighty have fallen.

THE 3D MOMENT

Climb the tel, turn west, and Gilboa fills the horizon: the actual mountain of the actual battle. Then look down at the Roman street of Scythopolis, snapped mid-column by one minute of earthquake in the year 749. Two empires in one turn of the head, both past tense. The text outlived them both.

THE HEBREW WORD

בֵּית שֵׁאֲנָן · **Sha'an**, at ease, secure. Beit She'an, the house of ease, sat rich and confident at the crossroads. Scripture keeps warning about security that trusts in walls. The walls are the ruins you are standing on.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

The men of Yavesh-Gilad repaid a twenty-year-old kindness at the risk of their lives. Whose old kindness to you is still waiting for its answer?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, kingdoms rise and fall under our feet. Keep our hearts from trusting walls. Make us like the men of Yavesh-Gilad, who walked all night to honor a kindness. Let no old kindness die unanswered in us. Amen.

The Jordan River

the water that runs through the whole story · two pages open in the same river

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · FIRST PAGE · THE STONES

¹ When all the nation had completely crossed over the Jordan, Yahweh spoke to Joshua, saying, ² "Take twelve men out of the people, a man out of every tribe, ³ and command them, saying, 'Take from out of the middle of the Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the place where you'll camp tonight.'" ⁵ Joshua said to them, "Cross before the ark of Yahweh your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you pick up a stone and put it on your shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel; ⁶ that this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask in the future, saying, 'What do you mean by these stones?' ⁷ then you shall tell them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of Yahweh's covenant... These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.'"

JOSHUA 4:1 to 7 (ABRIDGED: V. 4 OMITTED FOR READING)

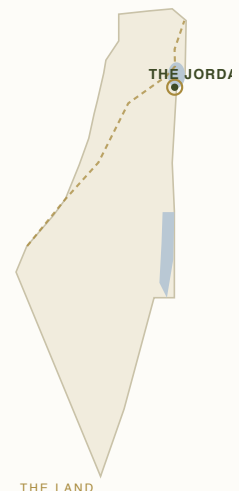
SECOND PAGE · THE BAPTISM

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ But John would have hindered him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus, answering, said to him, "Allow it now, for this is the fitting way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. ¹⁶ Jesus, when he was baptized, went up directly from the water: and behold, the heavens were opened to him. He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming on him. ¹⁷ Behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

MATTHEW 3:13 to 17

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The Jordan runs down the Great Rift Valley, the deepest scar on the face of the earth, falling from the snows of Hermon to the lowest place on the planet. In a land of mountains and desert, this green line is the border everyone must cross: Israel entering the promise, Elijah and Elisha, Naaman the Syrian, and finally the Messiah stepping into the sinners' line. The geography preaches: the way into the promise always goes through the water, and always goes down.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Joshua. Moses' aide since his youth, now an old soldier carrying a whole nation's next step. God's word to him here: as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. **John the Baptist.** A priest's son who traded the Temple courts for camel hair and wild honey. He tried to refuse, baptized his own cousin, and heard the voice from heaven.

THE 3D MOMENT

The river is smaller than everyone expects. That is the point. God's favorite canvas is the unimpressive: a shepherd boy, a fishing village, a narrow green river you can throw a stone across, and it runs through more of the Bible than any water on earth.

THE HEBREW WORD

יָרַד · **Yarad**, to descend. The Yarden is "the descender." Everyone who enters it goes down. In this land, the way down keeps turning out to be the way through.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

What stone are you lifting out of your own crossing, so your children will have something to ask about?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You commanded us to remember out loud. So today we stack our stones. Let our children find our faith standing

Walk this land with [The Jordan River App](https://www.golan.netlify.app) on the riverbank. Amen.

Jerusalem United · 1967

the prophecy with children playing in it

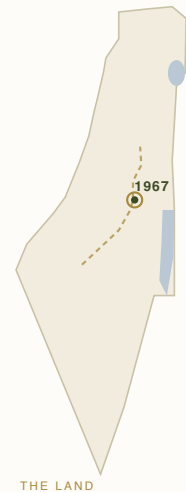
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

³ "I have returned to Zion, and will dwell in the middle of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called 'The City of Truth;' and the mountain of Yahweh of Armies, 'The Holy Mountain.' ⁴ Old men and old women will again dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. ⁵ The streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. ⁶ If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my eyes?" says Yahweh of Armies. ⁷ "Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; ⁸ and I will bring them, and they will dwell within Jerusalem; and they will be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness."

ZECHARIAH 8:3 to 8 · WRITTEN TO A RUINED CITY, ~2,500 YEARS AGO

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

For nineteen years, 1948 to 1967, a wall of concrete and barbed wire cut this city in two, and no Jew could reach the Kotel. Then came three days in June. On the seventh of June 1967, the twenty-eighth of Iyar, paratroopers came through the Lions' Gate, and a radio crackled three words that made a nation weep: Har HaBayit b'yadenu, the Temple Mount is in our hands. Men who had fought all night stood at the wall and cried like children. Zechariah wrote his promise to a generation staring at ruins, and dared them to find it marvelous. From thirty thousand feet, the marvel has a date.



THE LAND

THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Zechariah. A prophet of the ruins, promising grandmothers on benches and children playing ball to a city of ash. Notice what his sign of redemption is: not armies, not walls. Old age and play, the two most fragile things, safe in the streets. **The paratroopers at the wall.** Farm boys and clerks, mostly secular, who reached the stones their grandmothers prayed toward and found themselves weeping without knowing the words. The photograph of their faces became the mirror of a whole people.

THE 3D MOMENT

Go to any playground in the Jewish Quarter at four in the afternoon, or watch the grandmothers on the benches along the rebuilt streets, and read Zechariah 8 out loud right there: old men and old women in the streets, boys and girls playing. Your group will be standing inside a fulfilled prophecy, watching it play tag. It is the only archaeological site in this land where the evidence is alive and laughing.

THE HEBREW WORD

נִפְלָא · **Nifla**, marvelous, wonderful. God's own question in the passage: if it is marvelous in your eyes, should it not be marvelous in Mine? He invites the remnant to be amazed together with Him. Wonder, in this city, is a shared activity between heaven and the sidewalk.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Zechariah's proof of redemption was grandmothers and playing children, the fragile things safe at last. What fragile thing in your world would be the sign that God has truly returned to the middle of it?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You said You would return to Zion, and the streets are full of children to prove it. It is marvelous in our eyes. Keep the grandmothers on the benches and the boys and girls at their games, gather Your people from the east and the west, and dwell in the middle of this city, in truth and in righteousness. Amen.

5

The Mount of Olives to the Upper Room

the path of Palm Sunday, the garden, the cross and the room · erev Shabbat in Jerusalem

*"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.
Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."*

LUKE 22:42 · IN THE GARDEN OF THE OLIVE PRESS

THE ROAD TODAY

08:00 Depart the hotel.

The Mount of Olives. He left from here and He promised to come back the same way. [ACTS 1:11](#)

The Palm Sunday path. If the crowd keeps silent, the stones will cry out. [LUKE 19:40](#)

10:00 **Gethsemane.** The olive press, where He prayed the highest prayer a human being can pray. [MATTHEW 26:39](#)

St. Peter in Gallicantu. The rooster's crow, the denial, the pit, the look. [LUKE 22:61](#)

Lion's Gate and Ecce Homo. Behold the man. [JOHN 19:5](#)

The Way of the Cross. To the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the road ends at a tomb, and the tomb is not the end.
[JOHN 19:17](#)

The Jewish Quarter and the Cardo. The main street of the city He knew.

The Upper Room and Mount Zion. The Last Supper, and in the same room Pentecost. [ACTS 2:5, 6](#)

At sundown Shabbat begins. Jerusalem slows, the streets go quiet, and the city lights its candles. If you walk out tonight you will hear it before you see it, families singing at their tables.

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TODAY

שֶׁמֶן · **Shemen**, oil. Gethsemane is gat shemanim, the oil press. An olive gives its oil only when it is crushed. That oil anointed kings, and the Anointed One in Hebrew is Mashiach, Messiah. In the garden of crushing, the Anointed was pressed.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY IN YOUR POCKET

Prayer is the opposite of worry. In the garden He finished the sentence: not my will. Which of your prayers is still waiting for you to finish it?

THE PAGES WE OPEN TODAY

Mount of Olives · Bethphage & Bethany · Gethsemane · Gallicantu · Via Dolorosa · Calvary · The Old City Today · Mount Zion & the Upper Room

TONIGHT · **VERT HOTEL, JERUSALEM**

Mount of Olives

the ridge where the King descended, and wept

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

³⁷ As he was now getting near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!" ³⁹ Some of the Pharisees from the multitude said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" ⁴⁰ He answered them, "I tell you that if these were silent, the stones would cry out." ⁴¹ When he came near, he saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you, even you, had known today the things which belong to your peace! But now, they are hidden from your eyes."

LUKE 19:37 to 42 · ALSO: ZECHARIAH 14:4 · ACTS 1:9 to 12

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The Mount of Olives is the eastern wall of Jerusalem's world: a ridge higher than the Temple Mount, facing it across the narrow Kidron valley. Whoever descends its slope sees the whole city rise up to meet them, which is why the Palm Sunday road runs down this hill and why the crowds' shout and His weeping happened within the same few hundred meters. From this ridge He taught, here He wept, from here He ascended, and to this ridge Zechariah says the King returns: on that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Jesus, riding down. The only day He accepted the crowd's worship, and in the middle of the singing He looked at the city and broke down crying, a King in tears over the city that would not know its hour. Rejoicing and weeping on the same donkey, on the same slope. **The crowd and the stones.** Rebuke them, said the officials. He answered that silence was not an option that exists: if these were silent, the stones would cry out. On this mountain of ancient stones, that was not a metaphor chosen at random.

THE 3D MOMENT

Stand at the lookout and take in the view every pilgrim photographs: the golden city, the sealed Eastern Gate directly opposite, and below you, flowing down the slope, the oldest active cemetery on earth, generations of Jews buried facing the gates, waiting for resurrection morning exactly where Zechariah planted the promise. This whole mountainside is a congregation lying down, facing forward.

THE HEBREW WORD

זַיִת · Zayit, olive. The tree of this ridge and of this land. The olive gives its light only when crushed, and the oil of these slopes lit the menorah of the Temple across the valley. Remember that word when we walk down to the olive press at the bottom of this hill.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

He wept over a city for missing the things that belong to its peace. If He looked at your life today, what hidden thing that belongs to your peace would He weep over?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. We will not be silent, lest the stones outsing us. Show us today the things that belong to our peace, while it is still today. And come back to this ridge soon, as You promised.
Amen.

Bethphage & Bethany

the house of the friend, where death was called outside

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

³⁸ Jesus therefore, again groaning in himself, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see God's glory?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, "Father, I thank you that you listened to me. ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ He who was dead came out, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Free him, and let him go."

JOHN 11:38 to 44 (ABRIDGED: V. 42 OMITTED FOR READING) · READ THE WHOLE CHAPTER AT THE TOMB

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Two small villages on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, just over the ridge from Jerusalem, on the last stretch of the pilgrim road from Jericho. Bethphage is where the donkey was untied for the descent of Palm Sunday. Bethany was His Judean home: the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, the friends who fed Him and the table He returned to. Its name means house of the afflicted, and it earned the name honestly, and then one afternoon at its cemetery the affliction was ordered out loud to give back what it took.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Martha. The practical one, arguing logistics at a tomb: Lord, there is a stench. Faith and realism wrestling in a single sentence, and Jesus does not scold her. He raises the stakes: you will see God's glory. **Lazarus.** The friend. The text never records a single word he spoke, before or after. He is famous forever for one thing only: he came out when he was called. **Jesus, groaning.** Twice the text says it. He wept at this village and groaned at this tomb. He does not perform the miracle coolly. He does it moved.

THE 3D MOMENT

The tomb of Lazarus is still there in Bethany, cut in the rock, down worn steps into a cold chamber. Climb down into it, then climb back out into the sunlight, and feel what the story means with your legs. Every guest who walks up those steps is rehearsing the ending of the Book. Come out is the last command death ever hears.

THE HEBREW WORD

בֵּית עֲנִיָּה · **Beit Anya**, house of the afflicted, house of the poor. He made His home in the town named for affliction. He still does. If your house has ever carried that name, know who chooses such addresses on purpose.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Lazarus came out alive but still bound, and Jesus turned to the community: free him, and let him go. Who around you is already alive in Christ but still wrapped, waiting for hands to unbind them?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You groaned at our graves and wept at our gates, and then You called the dead man by name. Call ours. Roll the stones we have given up on. And when the ones You raise come out still bound, make us the hands that unwrap them. Free them, and let them go. Amen.

Gethsemane

the oil press, where the will of the Son was pressed

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

³⁹ He came out, and went, as his custom was, to the Mount of Olives. His disciples also followed him. ⁴⁰ When he was at the place, he said to them, "Pray that you don't enter into temptation." ⁴¹ He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and he knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ Being in agony he prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. ⁴⁵ When he rose up from his prayer, he came to the disciples, and found them sleeping because of grief, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

LUKE 22:39 to 46

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Gethsemane lies at the foot of the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron from the Temple, exactly where an olive grove's working heart would be: Gat Shemen, the oil press. Olives from the whole ridge were carried down here to be crushed, and the name was waiting in the ground centuries before the night it explained. As his custom was, says Luke: this was His regular place of prayer, which is also how Judas knew where to bring the soldiers. He was betrayed at the address of His own faithfulness.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Jesus, a stone's throw away. Close enough for the disciples to hear fragments, far enough to be alone with the cup. The prayer of this garden is the axis of the Gospel: not my will, but Yours. Everything after it, the trial, the cross, the tomb, was decided here, kneeling. **The sleeping three.** Peter, James and John, the same three from Tabor's glory, now unable to keep their eyes open in His agony. The Bible's honesty about its heroes is itself a comfort: He knows what we are made of, and He still says rise and pray.

THE 3D MOMENT

The garden holds olive trees of enormous age, gnarled giants whose trunks have been carbon-dated to many centuries, growing from root systems that may be older still, shoots of shoots of the trees of that night. Put your hand on the bark. An olive tree never really dies: cut it down and it returns from the root. Of all the trees that could have witnessed that prayer, God planted the one that comes back.

THE HEBREW WORD

גַּת שֶׁמֶן · **Gat Shemen**, oil press. Gethsemane. The place is named for the crushing that produces oil, and oil in this land means light and anointing. Messiah means the Anointed One. In the garden named for the press, the Anointed was pressed, and the light of the world was the yield.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Not my will, but Yours, be done. That sentence cost more here than it will ever cost us. What cup are you still negotiating over, a stone's throw from surrender?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, in the garden of the press You prayed the prayer that saved us: not my will, but Yours. Teach our mouths that sentence. Stay near us in our own dark gardens, wake us when we sleep through the hour, and let the crushing in our lives yield oil and not bitterness. Amen.

St. Peter in Gallicantu

the house of the high priest, the rooster's crow, and the look

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

⁵⁴ They seized him, and led him away, and brought him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed from a distance. ⁵⁵ When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard, and had sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ A certain servant girl saw him as he sat in the light, and looking intently at him, said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷ He denied Jesus, saying, "Woman, I don't know him." ⁵⁸ After a little while someone else saw him, and said, "You also are one of them!" But Peter answered, "Man, I am not!" ⁵⁹ After about one hour passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Truly this man also was with him, for he is a Galilean!" ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned, and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the Lord's word, how he said to him, "Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times." ⁶² He went out, and wept bitterly.

LUKE 22:54 TO 62

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The church stands on the eastern slope of Mount Zion, above the Kidron and the Pool of Siloam, on the place remembered as the house of Caiaphas the high priest. Beside it runs an ancient stepped street that climbs from the valley up the hill. Walk it slowly. It is the natural path between the Upper Room above and Gethsemane across the valley, the way Jesus went down that night after supper, and the way He was brought back up as a prisoner. Beneath the church a rock cut pit is remembered as the place He was held until morning. From the terrace you see the whole of the City of David laid out below.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Peter. A fisherman from Bethsaida, always the first to speak and the first to jump. Hours earlier he had promised he would die with Jesus. Here he warmed himself at a charcoal fire among the enemies of his Lord and denied Him three times. **Caiaphas.** High priest for some eighteen years, son in law of Annas, a careful political survivor between Rome and the Temple. An ossuary inscribed with his family name was found in Jerusalem in 1990. **The servant girl.** No name, no rank, and the most dangerous question of the night: weren't you with Him?

THE 3D MOMENT

Stand on the old steps and look down into the valley toward Gethsemane, then go down into the pit and stand in the dark where the Psalm is read aloud. Look up at the golden rooster on the roof. And remember the charcoal fire, because John uses the same rare word for the fire on the shore at Tabgha, where Peter was asked three times, do you love Me? Three denials at one fire. Three restorations at another. You have now stood at both.

THE HEBREW WORD

שוב · **Shuv**, to turn, to return. From it comes teshuvah, repentance. Earlier that evening Jesus had said to Peter: "I prayed for you, that your faith wouldn't fail. You, when once you have turned again, establish your brothers" (Luke 22:32). He knew about the fall before it happened, and He had already planned the return.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

The Lord turned, and looked at Peter. What do you think was in that look, and will you let Him look at you that way today?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, we stand where Peter fell. We have warmed ourselves at the wrong fires too. Turn and look at us the way You looked at him, not to condemn us but to call us home. And when we have turned again, let us strengthen our brothers.
Amen.

The Via Dolorosa

the way of sorrow, walked in the green tree

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

²⁶ When they led him away, they grabbed one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it after Jesus. ²⁷ A great multitude of the people followed him, including women who also mourned and lamented him. ²⁸ But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ³¹ For if they do these things in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?"

LUKE 23:26 to 31 (ABRIDGED: VV. 29 to 30 OMITTED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The Way of Sorrow threads today through the market streets of the Old City, from the area of the Antonia fortress toward Golgotha, fourteen stations deep in incense and noise. The exact Roman pavement lies meters below the present street, but the direction is true and the distance is short: the most consequential walk in history was a few hundred meters through a crowded city on a festival morning, past shoppers and soldiers and people who never looked up. The world's redemption elbowed its way through a market.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Simon of Cyrene. A pilgrim from North Africa, in from the country, grabbed out of the crowd and handed the beam. He came to Jerusalem for Passover and left carrying the cross of the Lamb. Mark names his sons, Alexander and Rufus, as men the early church knew, which tells you what that forced walk did to his family. **The daughters of Jerusalem.** Even under the beam, His concern ran toward them: do not weep for me. He was comforting mourners on the way to His own execution. That is who walked this street.

THE 3D MOMENT

Walk it early, before the shops open, when the street is quiet enough to hear your own steps on the stone. Or walk it at full market roar, which is more honest: it looked like this, crowded and loud and mostly indifferent. Either way, watch your group's pace change. Nobody strolls the Via Dolorosa. The body understands this street before the mind does.

THE HEBREW WORD

דֶּרֶךְ הַיְסוּרִים · Derech HaYisurim, the way of the sufferings. Hebrew keeps the plural: not one sorrow but the gathered sorrows, His and ours, carried down one narrow street. Isaiah wrote the caption seven centuries early: surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Simon was grabbed from the crowd and made to carry it. Grace often starts as an interruption we did not volunteer for. What interruption in your life might actually be the cross you were chosen to carry behind Him?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You walked the way of sorrows through an ordinary market morning, and You comforted the weeping while You bled. Give us Simon's shoulders when we are grabbed from the crowd. And as we walk Your street, let our hearts refuse to be one more face that never looked up. Amen.

Calvary · Golgotha

the place of the skull, where it was finished

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹⁷ He went out, bearing his cross, to the place called "The Place of a Skull", which is called in Hebrew, "Golgotha", ¹⁸ where they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the middle. ¹⁹ Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross. There was written, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." ²⁰ Therefore many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. ²⁵ But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother; and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ Therefore when Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing there, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" ²⁸ After this, Jesus, seeing that all things were now finished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty." ³⁰ When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished." He bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

JOHN 19:17 to 30 (ABRIDGED: VV. 21 to 24, 29 OMITTED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

John gives the geography in one phrase: near the city. Executions were held outside the wall but beside the road, where every passerby could read the charge, and Pilate's sign in Hebrew, Latin and Greek turned the cross into a proclamation to the whole world whether Rome intended it or not. From thirty thousand feet, every altar in the Book has been pointing here: the ram on Moriah just up the ridge, the Passover lambs bleeding that same afternoon inside the Temple, Isaiah's suffering servant, all of it converging on one hill shaped like a skull, near the city, beside the road.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Jesus, in the middle. Even His position preached: crucified between two others, numbered with the transgressors, exactly as Isaiah said. From the cross He ran a household: a mother given a son, a thief given paradise, a world given everything. **The women and John.** When nearly all the men had scattered, the women stood close enough to be spoken to. Love stood in range of the dying voice. **The last word.** One word in the Greek, tetelestai: finished, completed, and in the marketplace of that day, paid in full. Not a cry of defeat. A receipt.

THE 3D MOMENT

Two sites hold the memory, and both are inside this page: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the rock of Calvary rises glassed-in beside the crowds, and Gordon's Calvary by the Garden Tomb, the skull-faced cliff where the quiet lets you think. Take your group to either, or both, and tell them the honest truth: the argument between the sites changes nothing. The word spoken on the real hill covers both, and covers them: paid in full.

THE HEBREW WORD

גִּלְגֹּלֶת · **Gulgolet**, skull. Golgotha is simply the Hebrew word John translated for his readers. In the Torah, the census counted every head, every gulgolet, and each one owed a ransom. At the place of the Skull, the ransom for every counted head was paid at once.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

It is finished, He said. Not almost, not mostly, finished. What are you still trying to add to a payment that was made in full?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, at the place of the skull You said the word we could never say: finished. We bring You nothing but the counted heads You already ransomed. Let us stop paying a settled debt, stand with the women inside the range of Your voice, and live the rest of our days as people whose receipt reads paid in full. Amen.

The Old City Today

one square kilometer, four quarters, every century still open

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹² Walk about Zion, and go around her: Number its towers. ¹³ Mark well her bulwarks. Consider her palaces, that you may tell it to the next generation. ¹⁴ For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even to death.

PSALM 48:12 to 14 · THE PSALM COMMANDS THE WALKING TOUR

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The Old City is one square kilometer holding four quarters, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Armenian, wrapped in Ottoman walls built by Suleiman on far older lines. Eight gates, of which one, the Eastern, stands sealed, waiting. Within this square kilometer: the Kotel, the Sepulchre, the Temple platform, the markets, the rooftops, the bells and the calls to prayer and the Shabbat siren, all layered and simultaneous. Psalm 48 is the oldest walking tour in print, and its purpose clause is the whole reason guides exist: that you may tell it to the next generation.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

The keepers of the quarters. The nun sweeping her doorstep, the shopkeeper who inherited his shelf from his grandfather, the yeshiva student hurrying to the wall, the Armenian priest in the world's oldest diaspora quarter. Four communities keeping four sets of keys to one square kilometer. Every one of them is a living page. **The pilgrims.** On any given morning the Old City hosts more languages than Pentecost. Walk slowly and you will hear the nations arriving, exactly as the prophets kept promising they would.

THE 3D MOMENT

Take your group up to the ramparts walk or the rooftop lookout above the quarters, where all four quarters spread below in one view: domes, crosses, minarets and the golden Dome beyond, laundry lines over ancient stone. Then do what the psalm says, literally: walk about Zion, go around her, count the towers. The psalm is not describing the tour. The psalm IS the tour, and the next generation clause is riding home in your group's photographs.

THE HEBREW WORD

רֹבֵעַ · Rova, quarter. The Jewish Quarter is simply HaRova, THE quarter. One small Hebrew word carrying the weight of return: destroyed in 1948, rebuilt after 1967, children's bicycles now leaning on Byzantine columns.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

That you may tell it to the next generation, says the psalm. You have walked her and numbered her towers. Who exactly is your next generation, and when will you tell them?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, we walked about Zion today. We counted her towers and marked her walls, as Your word told us to. Now make us tellers. Give us the faces of the next generation across our tables, and the words to hand them this city. For this God is our God, forever and ever. Amen.

Mount Zion & the Upper Room

the table where the covenant was poured

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹⁴ When the hour had come, he sat down with the twelve apostles. ¹⁵ He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will no longer by any means eat of it until it is fulfilled in God's Kingdom." ¹⁷ He received a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, "Take this, and share it among yourselves, ¹⁸ for I tell you, I will not drink at all again from the fruit of the vine, until God's Kingdom comes." ¹⁹ He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in memory of me." ²⁰ Likewise, he took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

LUKE 22:14 to 20

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Mount Zion is the southwestern hill just outside today's walls, and tradition gathers the beginnings of the church onto it: the Upper Room of the last Passover, the room of the resurrection appearances, the waiting room of Acts chapter one. Understand the meal in its Jewish frame and every gesture ignites: a Passover seder has four cups, and the cup after supper, the third, is the cup of redemption, lifted over the words I will redeem you with an outstretched arm. That is the cup He chose. He took the redemption cup and filled it with Himself.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Jesus, the host. I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you: the Greek doubles the longing, with desire I have desired. He was not dreading the table. He was longing for it, because at that table He could finally hand them the covenant He came to cut. **The twelve around it.** One would deny Him, one would betray Him, all would scatter, and He knew it, and He served them the bread anyway. The communion table has never required perfect guests. Only hungry ones.

THE 3D MOMENT

The Cenacle shown today on Mount Zion is a Crusader-era hall standing over far older layers, and below it lies the traditional tomb of David: the Upper Room over the resting king, the new covenant poured out literally above the old kingdom. Whatever the archaeology finally rules, every communion table on every continent this Sunday is the accurate replica. This room has more copies than any room in history.

THE HEBREW WORD

בְּרִית · **Brit**, covenant. In Hebrew you do not sign a covenant, you cut it, because covenants cost blood from the beginning. This cup is the new covenant in my blood: at that table the cutting and the cup became one thing, offered around a circle of men about to fail Him.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

He earnestly desired to eat that meal with the very people about to fail Him. Whose failure are you holding at arm's length that He would still set a table for?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You longed for the table more than You feared the night. Give us that heart. Pour the cup of redemption over our houses, break bread with the ones who will fail us, and keep us at Your table until You drink it new with us in the Kingdom. Amen.

6

The Fortress and the Spring

Masada, Ein Gedi, Qumran and the Dead Sea · Shabbat Bereshit

*"God, you are my God. I will earnestly seek you.
My soul thirsts for you. My flesh longs for you,
in a dry and weary land, where there is no water."*

PSALM 63:1 · A PSALM OF DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS OF JUDAH

THE ROAD TODAY

07:00 **Depart the hotel.** Down from Jerusalem into the Judean wilderness.

09:00 **Masada.** Herod's fortress on the cliff and the last stand of the revolt against Rome. We ride the cable car up. **PSALM 18:2**

11:00 **Ein Gedi.** The spring in the desert where David hid from Saul and spared the king who hunted him. **1 SAMUEL 24:6**

12:00 **Qumran.** The caves of the Dead Sea Scrolls, where Isaiah came out of the dark. **ISAIAH 40:8**

The Dead Sea. The lowest place on earth, and the sea Ezekiel saw healed. **EZEKIEL 47:9**

This Shabbat the synagogues of the world read Bereshit, "In the beginning." The scroll has just been rolled back to its first page. You stand in the wilderness on the Sabbath of beginning again.

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TODAY

מְצוּדָה · **Metzudah**, fortress, the very word behind Masada. In the same desert David wrote "Yahweh is my rock, my fortress," metzudati (Psalm 18:2). Herod built his fortress of stone, and it is a ruin. David's fortress was God, and his songs are sung this morning in every language on earth.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY IN YOUR POCKET

Where are you building walls of your own, and where are you letting Him be your fortress?

THE PAGES WE OPEN TODAY

Masada · Ein Gedi · Qumran · The Dead Sea

TONIGHT · **VERT HOTEL, JERUSALEM**

Masada

the fortress of the end, with resurrection buried under its floor

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ I love you, Yahweh, my strength. ² Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower. ³ I call on Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised; and I am saved from my enemies.

PSALM 18:1 to 3 · DAVID KNEW THESE STRONGHOLDS: 1 SAMUEL 23:14

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

A diamond-shaped rock rising sheer from the desert floor, ringed by cliffs, holding Herod's palaces and storerooms in the sky. David hid in the metzadot, the strongholds of this wilderness, long before Herod built here, and the psalm he wrote gave the mountain its meaning in advance: You are my fortress, my metzuda. In the year 73, after Jerusalem fell, the last rebels of the great revolt held this rock against a Roman legion, and when the ramp was finished, chose death as free people over slavery. The mountain has been Israel's hardest question ever since.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

The defenders. Nine hundred sixty men, women and children, watching a ramp rise toward them day by day. Whatever one concludes about their final choice, their love of freedom was written at the price of everything they had. For decades, soldiers of the new Israel swore their oath on this summit: Masada shall not fall again. **David, earlier.** The difference between him and the defenders is the whole psalm: he hid in the strongholds but never called the rock his rock. My fortress, he said, is a Person. Stone Masada can fall. His cannot.

THE 3D MOMENT

Here is the detail that turns this mountain over. Under the floor of Masada's synagogue, the excavators found buried scroll fragments, and among them the vision of Ezekiel 37: the valley of dry bones, the promise that the dead nation would live again. The last free Jews of the revolt buried national resurrection under the floor of national death, and nineteen centuries later their descendants dug it up, in Hebrew, in a sovereign Israel. Read Ezekiel 37 on the summit at sunrise and try to finish it with a steady voice.

THE HEBREW WORD

מְצוּדָה · **Metzuda**, fortress, stronghold. The mountain's name is a word from David's psalms, and the psalms keep making one correction: the metzuda that cannot be taken is not made of rock. It is the Rock.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

The defenders trusted a rock that could be ramped. David trusted a Rock that could not. Name your current fortress honestly: which kind is it?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You are our metzuda, our high tower that no ramp reaches. We remember the ones who died free on this rock, and we read the dry bones prophecy they buried, standing in its fulfillment. Breathe on our slain, that they may live. And be Yourself our fortress, forever. Amen.

Ein Gedi

the spring of the wild goats, where David put down the knife

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

³ He came to the sheep pens by the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were staying in the innermost parts of the cave. ⁴ David's men said to him, "Behold, the day of which Yahweh said to you, Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand." Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe secretly. ⁵ Afterward, David's heart struck him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. ⁶ He said to his men, "Yahweh forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, Yahweh's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him." ⁷ So David checked his men with these words, and didn't allow them to rise against Saul. Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

1 SAMUEL 24:3 to 7 (V. 4 LIGHTLY ABRIDGED) · ALSO: SONG OF SONGS 1:14

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Ein Gedi is the desert's exception: waterfalls pouring down canyon walls above the Dead Sea, green ferns in a land of salt, the spring of the gedi, the wild goat. Because it is the only reliable water on this whole shore, everyone running for their lives has hidden here, and so the hunted David and the hunting king met in one of these caves. The Song of Songs remembers the oasis differently: my beloved is a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Ein Gedi. Refuge and romance share the same water.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

David, knife in hand. His enemy delivered to him in the dark, his men whispering that God arranged it, and all he takes is a corner of the robe, and even that makes his heart strike him. The future king's greatest victory at Ein Gedi was over his own opportunity. **Saul, unaware.** He walked into the cave with three thousand men outside and walked out alive because of one man's conscience inside. Some of us have been protected by mercies we never knew about. All of us, probably.

THE 3D MOMENT

Hike the canyon to the waterfalls and watch the ibex, the wild goats of the name, stepping along cliff edges with their young, and the hyrax sunning on the rocks, both straight out of Psalm 104: the high mountains are for the wild goats, the rocks a refuge for the hyrax. The animals of the psalm still keep its address. Then find a cave mouth and let the group sit in its cool dark for one minute, the length of a spared life.

THE HEBREW WORD

מַעְיָן · **Ma'ayan**, spring. In the desert, a ma'ayan is not scenery, it is the difference between life and death, which is why scripture keeps calling God one: the spring of living water. Ein Gedi is what that metaphor looks like with your shoes off.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

David's heart struck him over a corner of cloth. When did your conscience last strike you over something small, and did you listen while it was still small?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, be our Ein Gedi: water in the salt lands, a hiding place with a conscience. When our enemies are delivered into our hands, deliver us from our hands. Keep our hearts soft enough to be struck by small things, and lead us out of the cave clean. Amen.

Qumran

the caves that kept the Word for two thousand years

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

³ The voice of one who calls out, "Prepare the way of Yahweh in the wilderness! Make a level highway in the desert for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. ⁵ Yahweh's glory shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it." ⁶ The voice of one saying, "Cry!" One said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, because Yahweh's breath blows on it. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God stands forever."

ISAIAH 40:3 to 8 · THE VERSE THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY LIVED BY

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

A community of scribes withdrew to this shelf of desert above the Dead Sea to live out one verse: prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness. They copied scripture obsessively, and when Rome came in the year 68, they sealed their library in jars and hid it in the cliffs. In 1947, in the same season the modern state was being born, a shepherd boy threw a stone into a cave and heard pottery break. Out came the Dead Sea Scrolls: every book of the Hebrew Bible except Esther, a thousand years older than any copy previously known.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

The scribes. Men who ruled their lines, washed before writing the Name, and copied with a fidelity that still humbles science. They thought they were preparing for the end of their world. They were preserving the Word for ours. **The shepherd boy.** Muhammed edh-Dhib, chasing a stray goat, made the greatest manuscript discovery in history with one bored throw of a stone. Heaven has always been comfortable using shepherds around here.

THE 3D MOMENT

Stand at the lookout facing Cave 4, the honeycombed cliff that held tens of thousands of fragments. Then hold the fact your group came for: the Great Isaiah Scroll, complete, all sixty-six chapters, dated a good two centuries before Jesus, reads essentially as your Isaiah reads. And it contains the very verse: the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. The scroll survived to prove the sentence written on it.

THE HEBREW WORD

דָּבָר · Davar, word. In Hebrew, davar means both word and thing, because a word from God is not a sound, it is a fact. The jars of Qumran held davar in both senses: words that turned out to be the most durable things in the desert.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

The scribes prepared for a future they never saw, and their faithfulness fed generations they never met. What are you copying carefully today for readers you will never know?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, the grass withered, the empires faded, and Your word stood forever in a clay jar. Make us keepers like the scribes and finders like the shepherd. Seal Your davar in us, and in the wilderness of our days, prepare Your way. Amen.

The Dead Sea

the lowest place on earth, with a healing on its calendar

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

⁸ Then he said to me, "These waters flow out toward the eastern region, and will go down into the Arabah. Then they will go toward the sea; and flow into the sea which will be made to flow out; and the waters will be healed. ⁹ It will happen, that every living creature which swarms, in every place where the rivers come, will live. Then there will be a very great multitude of fish; for these waters have come there, and the waters of the sea will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river comes. ¹⁰ It will happen, that fishermen will stand by it. From En Gedi even to En Eglaim will be a place for the spreading of nets. ¹² By the river on its bank, on this side and on that side, will grow every tree for food, whose leaf won't wither; neither will its fruit fail. It will produce new fruit every month, because its waters issue out of the sanctuary. Its fruit will be for food, and its leaf for healing."

EZEKIEL 47:8 to 12 (ABRIDGED: V. 11 OMITTED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The lowest exposed place on the planet, more than four hundred meters below sea level, ten times saltier than the ocean, a sea with entrances and no exit. Water flows in and only evaporates, and that is the whole biology lesson: what only receives and never gives becomes the Dead Sea. Yet Ezekiel saw a river running from the sanctuary in Jerusalem down this desert, and the salt sea healed, with fishermen spreading nets at Ein Gedi. The deadest water on earth has a resurrection on its calendar.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Ezekiel, the measurer. The exile priest is shown water trickling from the temple threshold, ankle deep, then knee deep, then a river that cannot be crossed, growing with no tributaries, deepening as it goes. That is how the things of God grow: from a trickle at the threshold, unexplainably. **Lot's wife, on the horizon.** The southern shore holds her old warning: the danger of this valley was never the salt in the water. It was the looking back.

THE 3D MOMENT

Let your group float. There is no avoiding it and no reason to: this is the one sea on earth where sinking is impossible, where the water itself holds you up whether you believe it will or not. A guide can preach grace for an hour, or let the Dead Sea do it in thirty seconds. Then, floating, read Ezekiel aloud: one day, fish. The people bobbing like corks will never forget the prophecy.

THE HEBREW WORD

רָפָא · Rafa, to heal. Ezekiel uses it about water: the sea shall be healed. If this sea is on the healing list, nothing on earth is past it. There is no such thing, in the Book, as terminally dead.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

The sea died from only receiving and never giving. Where in your life has the flow stopped at intake, and what would an outlet look like?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You promised a river from Your house that heals even this sea. Send it. Heal the saltiest places in us, the ones with intake and no outlet. Hold us up like these waters hold us, and let fruit grow on our banks every month, with leaves for healing. Amen.

7

Moriah, Bethesda and the City of David

the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, Hezekiah's Tunnel, the Southern Steps and Yad Vashem

*"Concerning the foreigner, who is not of your people Israel,
when he comes out of a far country for your name's sake . . .
hear in heaven, your dwelling place . . .
that all the peoples of the earth may know your name."*

1 KINGS 8:41 TO 43 · SOLOMON PRAYS FOR YOU

THE ROAD TODAY

07:00 **Depart the hotel.** Early, while the city is still cool.

The Temple Mount. Mount Moriah, where Abraham said Yahweh will provide. The center of the center of the center.
GENESIS 22:14

St. Anne's and the Pools of Bethesda. A man ill for thirty eight years, and one question. JOHN 5:6

The Western Wall. Bring your prayers written small. The stones have heard everything.

09:30 **The City of David.** The stronghold of Zion, the oldest Jerusalem, with the film. 2 SAMUEL 5:7

Hezekiah's Tunnel. Through the water in the dark to the Pool of Siloam. Go, wash. JOHN 9:7

The Southern Steps. The pilgrims' stairway, where three thousand were added in one day. ACTS 2:41

13:50 **Yad Vashem.** A memorial and a name that shall not be cut off. ISAIAH 56:5

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TODAY

שֵׁם · **Shem**, name. Solomon built the house for the Name, and prayed that foreigners would come from far countries for that Name. This morning that is you. In the afternoon at Yad Vashem we stand before millions of names the world tried to erase. In the Bible, to be remembered by name is to be loved.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY IN YOUR POCKET

At Bethesda He asked a man ill for thirty eight years, do you want to be made well? Why ask a question with such an obvious answer, and what is your honest answer today?

THE PAGES WE OPEN TODAY

The Temple Mount · The Pool of Bethesda · The Western Wall · The City of David · Hezekiah's Tunnel · The Southern Steps · Yad Vashem

TONIGHT · **VERT HOTEL, JERUSALEM**

The Temple Mount · Moriah

the mountain where it is provided

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · FIRST PAGE · THE BINDING

⁹ They came to the place which God had told him of. Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, on the wood. ¹¹ Yahweh's angel called to him out of the sky, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He said, "Here I am." ¹² He said, "Don't lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." ¹³ Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and saw that behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh Will Provide. As it is said to this day, "On Yahweh's mountain, it will be provided."

GENESIS 22:9 to 14 (ABRIDGED: V. 10 OMITTED FOR READING)

SECOND PAGE · THE SAME MOUNTAIN

¹ Then Solomon began to build Yahweh's house at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where Yahweh appeared to David his father, which he prepared in the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

2 CHRONICLES 3:1

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

One verse ties the whole mountain together: Solomon built the Temple on Moriah, the mount of the binding of Isaac, on a threshing floor David insisted on buying at full price, saying he would not offer to God that which cost him nothing. Purchased ground, tested ground, provided-for ground. Two temples stood here and fell here, and the enormous platform your eyes see today is Herod's expansion of the second. No piece of earth carries more of the Bible's weight per square meter than this one.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Abraham and Isaac. The father who did not withhold, the son who carried the wood up the hill, and the ram caught by its horns at the moment of provision. Christian pilgrims standing here feel the echo run forward: another Father, another Son, wood carried up a hill in this same city. **David the buyer, Solomon the builder.** One generation purchases in repentance, the next builds in peace. Most of God's houses are built exactly that way.

THE 3D MOMENT

Stand at any lookout over the platform and grasp what you are seeing: the largest man-made platform of the ancient world, and somewhere beneath the golden dome, the bedrock summit tradition calls the Foundation Stone, Even HaShtiya, where the binding was, where the Holy of Holies stood, where Jewish tradition says creation itself began. The mountain called It Will Be Provided is still the most watched, most prayed-over, most contested piece of ground on the planet. Names are prophecies here.

THE HEBREW WORD

יֵרֵךְ · **Yireh**, He will see, He will provide. Yahweh Yireh, Abraham named it, and the saying survived: on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided. Seeing and providing are the same word in Hebrew, because what God sees, God supplies.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

David refused to offer what cost him nothing. What are you currently offering God that costs you nothing, and what would the full price look like?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, on this mountain You saw, and You provided. See us now. Provide the ram we cannot see for the need we cannot carry. And as You watched over this mountain through fire and centuries, watch over everything we have laid on Your altar. On Your mountain, it will be provided. Amen.

The Pool of Bethesda

the house of mercy, where the question was the healing

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

² Now in Jerusalem by the sheep gate, there is a pool, which is called in Hebrew, "Bethesda", having five porches. ³ In these lay a great multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, or paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. ⁵ A certain man was there, who had been sick for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had been sick for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to be made well?" ⁷ The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I'm coming, another steps down before me." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your mat, and walk." ⁹ Immediately, the man was made well, and took up his mat and walked. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.

JOHN 5:2 to 9 (ABRIDGED: V. 4 OMITTED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

By the Sheep Gate, where the flocks for the Temple sacrifices entered the city, lay a double pool with five porticoes, and under the porticoes lay the people nobody had a sacrifice for: the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, a waiting room of last hopes. Skeptics long doubted John's five porches until archaeologists uncovered the double pool by the Church of Saint Anne, five colonnaded sides exactly as written. The name tells you what happened here before anything happened: Beit Chesda, house of mercy.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

The man of thirty-eight years. Ask him about God and he answers about logistics: I have no one to put me in, someone always beats me. Thirty-eight years of almost. Jesus does not fix his theology or his queue position. He skips the water entirely. **Jesus, choosing one.** A multitude lay in those porches and He healed one man, who did not know His name, did not ask, and did not even answer the question. If grace waited for the right answer, the man would still be lying there. Grace picked him up anyway.

THE 3D MOMENT

Stand at the railing above the excavated pools by Saint Anne's church and look down into the deep cuts of the double pool. Then step into the church itself and sing one line with your group: the Crusader stones hold an echo of several seconds, and a single verse of Amazing Grace becomes a choir. The house of mercy still has the best acoustics in Jerusalem. Mercy always echoes longer than we expect.

THE HEBREW WORD

חֶסֶד · **Chesed**, mercy, covenant kindness. Beit Chesda, the house of chesed. The Bible's biggest little word: the loyal love that acts first and asks questions later. The pool was named for it centuries before the day chesed walked in on two feet.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Do you want to be made well? It sounds like a strange question until year thirty-eight, when the mat has become the identity. What mat has been under you so long that you have stopped wanting to stand?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, walk into our house of mercy. Find the ones who stopped answering the question, the thirty-eight-year cases, the ones with no one to carry them. Do not wait for our water to stir. Say the word You said here: arise. And we will carry the mats out as testimony. Amen.

The Western Wall

the Kotel, where the prayers of the whole earth land

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

²⁷ "But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens can't contain you; how much less this house that I have built! ²⁸ Yet have respect for the prayer of your servant, and for his supplication, Yahweh my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which your servant prays before you today; ²⁹ that your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there;' to listen to the prayer which your servant prays toward this place. ³⁰ Listen to the supplication of your servant, and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Yes, hear in heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive."

1 KINGS 8:27 to 30 · SOLOMON'S DEDICATION PRAYER · ALSO: ISAIAH 62:6

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

The Kotel is not a wall of the Temple itself. It is the western retaining wall of Herod's great platform, the closest place on earth an ordinary person can stand to where the Holy of Holies stood. Why do Jews pray here, and why do Jews everywhere face Jerusalem, and why do synagogues on every continent point at this city? Because of the prayer you just read: Solomon asked that every prayer prayed TOWARD this place would be heard in heaven. The Kotel is the address Solomon requested. Every prayer aimed here for three thousand years is taking him up on it.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Solomon, dedicating. The wisest man alive stands before his own masterpiece and says the most honest sentence ever spoken at a dedication: heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house. He built the house and then immediately talked God out of the walls: not dwell here, but listen here. **The generations.** Exiles who wept by Babylon's rivers facing this direction, grandmothers who never arrived, paratroopers weeping at these stones in 1967. Every one of them prayed toward this place, as Solomon asked.

THE 3D MOMENT

Lay your hand on the great Herodian stones, some weighing hundreds of tons, laid without mortar and standing through every conquest. Look at the notes folded into every crack, prayers mailed to the address Solomon opened. And look up: the swifts nest and wheel above the stones, the sparrow that found a home by Your altars, exactly as Psalm 84 promised. Then tell your group what Isaiah said over these ramparts: I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never be silent. Some of the watchmen are on the wall right now, and some are praying toward it from the far side of the world.

THE HEBREW WORD

כֶּתֶל · **Kotel**, wall. The word appears once in scripture, in the Song of Songs: behold, he stands behind our kotel, gazing through the windows. The old teachers read it about this wall: the Presence never left it, He is just behind it, listening.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Solomon asked God not to dwell in the house but to listen toward it. Where is your listening place, the spot your prayers aim from, and when did you last stand there?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, Your eyes are open toward this place night and day, as Solomon asked. Then see us standing here, and see every watchman praying toward this wall from every nation. We have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem, and they will not be silent. Hear in heaven, Your dwelling place. And when You hear, forgive. Amen.

The City of David

the narrow spur above the spring, where it all began

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

⁶ The king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, "The blind and the lame will keep you out of here," thinking, "David can't come in here." ⁷ Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion. This is David's city. ⁸ David said on that day, "Whoever strikes the Jebusites, let him go up to the watercourse." ⁹ David lived in the stronghold, and called it David's city. David built around from Millo and inward. ¹⁰ David grew greater and greater; for Yahweh, the God of Armies, was with him.

2 SAMUEL 5:6 to 10 (V. 8 LIGHTLY ABRIDGED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Here is the secret most pilgrims never learn until they stand on it: the original Jerusalem is not inside today's Old City walls. It is this narrow rocky spur running south from the Temple Mount, barely twelve acres, perched over the Gihon spring. Water and defense chose this hill, and David chose it for a third reason: it sat on the border between the tribes, belonging to none of them, a capital everyone could share. Three thousand years of Jerusalem begin on this little ridge. Everything else is expansion.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

David, around thirty. Seven years a king in Hebron, now taking the one city no tribe had taken, possibly through the very watercourse the taunt was shouted over. He would reign here thirty-three years, sin here, repent here, write psalms here, and buy the threshing floor up the hill that became the Temple. **The Jebusites.** So confident in their walls that they manned them with a joke: the blind and the lame will keep you out. Overconfidence has been losing this city ever since.

THE 3D MOMENT

In the excavations, archaeologists found dozens of clay seal impressions, bullae, baked hard by the Babylonian fire that destroyed the city, and on them, names from the book of Jeremiah: Gemariah son of Shaphan, officials from the very chapters your group has read. The fire that burned the city preserved the signatures of the men in the Book. Judgment and preservation in one flame. You can see them with your own eyes.

THE HEBREW WORD

צִיּוֹן · Tzion, Zion. This verse is the word's first appearance in scripture: David took the stronghold of Zion. Every later Zion, in the Psalms, in the prophets, in the prayers of every exile, and in the name of the modern return, points back to this narrow spur of rock.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

David made his capital on ground that belonged to no tribe, so it could belong to all. What ground in your life needs to stop being territory and start being shared?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, it all began here: a small hill, a spring, and a king You were with. Begin things in us again. Take the strongholds that mock us from their walls, build from the Millo inward, and be with us the way You were with David, greater and greater, for Your name. Amen.

Hezekiah's Tunnel & the Pool of Siloam

the water under the city, and the pool called Sent

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · FIRST PAGE · THE ENGINEER KING

³⁰ This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and brought them straight down on the west side of David's city. Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

2 CHRONICLES 32:30 · ALSO: 2 KINGS 20:20

SECOND PAGE · THE POOL CALLED SENT

¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but, that the works of God might be revealed in him. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground, made mud with the saliva, anointed the blind man's eyes with the mud, ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent"). So he went away, washed, and came back seeing.

JOHN 9:1 to 7 (ABRIDGED: V. 4 OMITTED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Seven centuries apart, one water system carries both stories. With Assyria marching, King Hezekiah's men cut a tunnel through a third of a mile of solid rock, two teams digging from opposite ends and meeting in the middle, to bring the Gihon spring safely inside the walls to a pool called Shiloach, Sent. To that same pool, in that same tunnel's water, Jesus sent a man born blind. From thirty thousand feet the whole Bible works like this tunnel: two testaments cut from opposite ends, meeting perfectly in the middle.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Hezekiah. The king who prayed AND engineered, trusting God with his knees and preparing with his hands. His workers left a stone inscription at the meeting point describing the moment the two teams heard each other's picks through the rock. **The man born blind.** He never asked to be healed. Jesus saw him, the mud went on his eyes, and the command had an address. His obedience was a walk through the city, blind, wet-faced, to a pool named Sent. He was sent to Sent, and came back seeing.

THE 3D MOMENT

You can walk the tunnel today, knee-deep in the same living water, in the dark, hand on Hezekiah's chisel marks, and come out at the Pool of Siloam, whose broad ancient steps were uncovered in our own generation. The blind man's pool sat lost under debris for centuries, and now your group can stand on its stones. The Book keeps handing us back its addresses.

THE HEBREW WORD

שִׁלּוֹחַ · **Shiloach**, Sent. John pauses his own story to translate the pool's name, because the name is the sermon: a sent man, washing in a pool called Sent, healed by the One who was Sent. Every believer since is standing in that water.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

The blind man obeyed a strange command with mud still on his eyes. What has God already told you to do that only makes sense after the washing?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You are the God of tunnels: You work in the dark, from both ends, and You meet us in the middle. Send us like the pool is named. Put Your hands on what we cannot see, tell us where to wash, and let us come back seeing. Amen.

The Southern Steps · Pentecost

the birthplace of the church, on the stairs of the Temple

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · FIRST PAGE · THE WIND AND THE FIRE

¹ Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² Suddenly there came from the sky a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³ Tongues like fire appeared and were distributed to them, and one sat on each of them. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak. ⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under the sky. ⁶ When this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because everyone heard them speaking in his own language.

ACTS 2:1 to 6

SECOND PAGE · THE HARVEST

⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. There were added that day about three thousand souls.

ACTS 2:41

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Read the story in its Jewish frame and it opens like a gate. Pentecost is Shavuot, the harvest feast, fifty days after Passover, when Jerusalem filled with pilgrims from every nation under the sky, the feast that also remembers the giving of the Torah at Sinai. At Sinai, tradition says, the Word went out in fire and in every language, and three thousand fell. At Shavuot in Jerusalem, the Spirit fell in fire and every language, and three thousand rose from the water. The church was not born at a new festival. It was born at the oldest one, right on schedule.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Peter, fifty days later. The man who denied Him to a servant girl now stands up before the pilgrim crowds of the world and preaches the sermon of his life. Fifty days is enough time for God to rebuild a man. **The three thousand.** Pilgrims who came for a harvest feast and became the harvest. They needed immersion, and the south side of the Temple had what no other place in the city had: dozens of mikvaot, ritual baths, built for the festival crowds. The infrastructure of the old covenant baptized the first church.

THE 3D MOMENT

Sit your group down on the Southern Steps themselves, the actual monumental stairway where pilgrims entered the Temple, where rabbis taught, where Jesus walked in and out of the house of His Father. These stones are original. Then walk them past the row of excavated mikvaot at the foot of the steps: the most likely baptistery of Acts chapter two, still open to the sky. Of every place in this land where you can say it happened right here, few say it louder than these stairs.

THE HEBREW WORD

שבועות · **Shavuot**, weeks. The feast of the counted weeks, seven sevens from Passover to harvest. God had the church's birthday on the calendar since Leviticus. Nothing in the Book is improvised.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Peter fell at Passover and stood at Shavuot, fifty days later. What failure are you still counting days from, and do you believe fifty days is enough for God to rebuild you too?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You kept the appointment You set in Leviticus and birthed Your church on the harvest feast, on these stairs. Fall on us the same way. Fill our mouths with words every listener can understand, rebuild our Peters in fifty days, and bring the harvest up out of the water gladly, three thousand at a time. Amen.

Yad Vashem

a memorial and a name that will not be cut off

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

³ Let no foreigner, who has joined himself to Yahweh, speak, saying, "Yahweh will surely separate me from his people." Do not let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." ⁴ For Yahweh says, "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast to my covenant: ⁵ I will give them in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that will not be cut off. ⁶ Also the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh, to serve him, and to love Yahweh's name, to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath from profaning it, and holds fast my covenant; ⁷ I will bring these to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

ISAIAH 56:3 TO 7

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Yad Vashem stands on the Mount of Remembrance in western Jerusalem, beside Mount Herzl where the nation buries its leaders and its fallen. The museum is a long prism of concrete cut straight through the mountain. You walk down into it, through the darkness of the years, and at the far end it opens out into light and the green hills of Jerusalem. That is the story of the people told by the building itself: from the ashes of Europe to the hills of the promise. Its name comes from the words you just read, yad vashem, a memorial and a name.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

The six million. Not a number. Grandmothers, tailors, rabbis, schoolgirls, each with a face, and about a million and a half of them children. In the Hall of Names their pages are gathered one by one so that no name is cut off. **The Righteous Among the Nations.** Gentiles who risked everything to hide and save Jews, honored here by name and by tree. Among them Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch watchmaker's daughter whose family hid Jews in their home in Haarlem. She has a tree here. You are walking in the footsteps of the nations who chose to stand with Israel.

THE 3D MOMENT

In the Children's Memorial a few candles are reflected by mirrors into what looks like an endless sky of lights, while a voice reads their names, ages and countries, one after another. Then you step out of the museum onto the terrace and see the living hills of Jerusalem. Your eyes will verify Isaiah: the name was not cut off.

THE HEBREW WORD

יָד · **Yad**, a hand, and also a monument. When Absalom had no son he set up a yad to keep his name alive (2 Samuel 18:18). **Yad vashem**: a hand and a name. The name is what God keeps. The hand is what He asks of us.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

In the Garden of the Righteous every tree stands for someone who acted when it cost everything. What would it take for you to be that someone, in your own generation?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You promised a memorial and a name that will not be cut off. Remember every name the world tried to erase. Make us righteous among the nations in our own day. Never let us be silent when Your people are hated. And bring all peoples to Your holy mountain, to Your house of prayer. Amen.

8

The Empty Tomb and the House of Bread

the Garden Tomb, Bethlehem, the Shepherds' Fields, Herodion and the Model

*"Don't be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy
which will be to all the people.
For there is born to you today, in David's city,
a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*

LUKE 2:10, 11 · THE ANGEL TO THE SHEPHERDS

THE ROAD TODAY

07:00 **Depart the hotel.**

10:00 **The Garden Tomb.** We end where everything begins. He is not here, for He is risen. [MATTHEW 28:6](#)

Bethlehem. Beit Lechem, the House of Bread, small among the clans of Judah. [MICAH 5:2](#)

The Shepherds' Fields. The first evangelists were shepherds. They saw, and they told everyone. [LUKE 2:17](#)

Herodion. The mountain Herod built for his own tomb, in sight of Bethlehem. Two tombs today. One was built to hold a king's name. The other holds nothing at all. [MATTHEW 2:16](#)

The Second Temple Model. Jerusalem as His eyes saw it. Now you will know where you have been all week.

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TODAY

בְּשׂוּרָה · **Besorah**, good news, the Gospel. The one who carries it is the mevaser. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news" (Isaiah 52:7). You came as Christ for all Nations. You leave as mevasrim, with feet that have stood on these mountains.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY IN YOUR POCKET

The shepherds came, saw, and went out to tell. You have seen. Who is the first person you will tell, and what will be the first sentence?

THE PAGES WE OPEN TODAY

The Empty Tomb · Bethlehem · Herodion · Jerusalem · Three Thousand Years

TONIGHT · **VERT HOTEL, JERUSALEM · OUR LAST NIGHT**

The Empty Tomb

the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb, and the linen lying folded

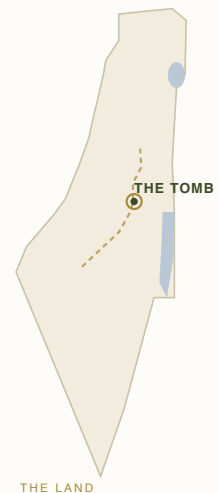
OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went early, while it was still dark, to the tomb, and saw the stone taken away from the tomb. ² Therefore she ran and came to Simon Peter; and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have laid him!" ³ Therefore Peter and the other disciple went out, and they went toward the tomb. ⁴ They both ran together. The other disciple outran Peter, and came to the tomb first. ⁵ Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths lying, yet he didn't enter in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and entered into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ So then the other disciple who came first to the tomb also entered in, and he saw and believed.

JOHN 20:1 to 8 · THE WOMAN FROM MAGDALA, FIRST AGAIN

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

John notes the geography with a gardener's precision: in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb. Calvary and the tomb were neighbors, which is why both memorial sites keep them side by side: the Holy Sepulchre holds Calvary and the tomb under one roof, and at the Garden Tomb the skull cliff and the rock-cut tomb sit a stone's throw apart. Death and resurrection happened within one garden's walk of each other. The distance between the worst day and the best day was a few dozen meters and one Shabbat.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Mary of Magdala, first again. The delivered woman from the fish town, last at the cross, first at the tomb, first to run, and soon, first to see Him and hear her own name. **Peter and John, racing.** John gives us the footrace with a reporter's honesty, who outran whom, who stooped, who entered. **The folded cloth.** Grave robbers do not fold laundry. The head cloth rolled up in a place by itself is the quietest detail in the Gospel, and John says it is the one that made him believe: whatever happened in that tomb happened calmly.

THE 3D MOMENT

At the Garden Tomb, your group will stand before a rock-cut tomb with a channel for a rolling stone, and on its wooden door four words that outrank every argument between the sites: HE IS NOT HERE. At the Sepulchre, they will stand in the two-thousand-year line of every nation shuffling toward a small empty room. Either way, the evidence your eyes verify is the same evidence John saw: the emptiness. This is the only shrine on earth venerated for what is NOT in it.

THE HEBREW WORD

קָם · **Kam**, risen, arisen. The shortest great word in the language. On this morning the watchmen's greeting was born, the one believers in this land still trade at Passover: Hu kam. He is risen. Two letters in Hebrew carry the whole of Easter.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

John saw the folded cloth and believed before he understood. What evidence has God already shown you that you have seen but not yet let yourself believe?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You left the tomb the way You do all things: unhurried, with the cloth folded. Meet us in the garden while it is still dark. Call us by name like You called Mary. And send us running like the two of them ran, out of breath, to say the two words this whole land whispers: He is risen. Amen.

Bethlehem

the house of bread, where the Bread of Life was laid in a feeding trough

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · FIRST PAGE · THE ADDRESS, ANNOUNCED EARLY

² But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, being small among the clans of Judah, out of you one will come out to me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings out are from of old, from ancient times.

MICAH 5:2 · WRITTEN SEVEN CENTURIES BEFORE

SECOND PAGE · THE NIGHT

⁴ Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to David's city, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; ⁶ While they were there, the day had come for her to give birth. ⁷ She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a feeding trough, because there was no room for them in the inn. ⁸ There were shepherds in the same country staying in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. ¹⁰ The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all the people. ¹¹ For there is born to you today, in David's city, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

LUKE 2:4 to 14 (ABRIDGED: VV. 5, 9, 12 to 13 OMITTED FOR READING)

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Bethlehem sits on the Ridge Route just south of Jerusalem, close enough that the Temple flocks grazed its fields. Some traditions say the lambs for the Passover sacrifices were raised in these very pastures, watched by these very shepherds, which would make the angel's audience the men who raised lambs for the altar, told to go find the Lamb. Ruth gleaned these fields, David was anointed here, and Micah named this small town as the address seven hundred years in advance. God does not improvise His geography.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Mary and Joseph. A young couple far from home, sorted by an empire's census into exactly the town the prophet named. Rome thought it was counting taxpayers. It was delivering a prophecy. **The shepherds.** Working men on night shift, the first audience of the best news ever announced. Heaven skipped the palace up the road and told the men in the field. It still works that way.

THE 3D MOMENT

In the Church of the Nativity, you enter through the Door of Humility, a stone doorway so low that every visitor must bow to come in, whatever their rank. Then down to the grotto and the fourteen-pointed star. Watch your group at that door. Nobody enters Bethlehem upright. The architecture preaches before the guide says a word.

THE HEBREW WORD

בֵּית לֶחֶם · **Beit Lechem**, house of bread. The One who would call Himself the Bread of Life was born in the house of bread and laid where food is laid, in a feeding trough. From the first hour, the message was the same: He came to be received.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Heaven announced the news to shepherds on night shift and made every visitor bow at the door. Where is your rank getting in the way of your entering?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, You chose the small town, the night shift, and the low door. Give us shepherds' ears for good news and the humility to bend at the entrance. Bread of Life, born in the house of bread, let us receive You the way a manger receives: simply, and with room. Amen.

Herodion

the man-made mountain, in sight of the manger

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ² "Where is he who is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him." ³ When King Herod heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked them where the Christ would be born. ⁵ They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is written through the prophet, ⁶ 'You Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no way least among the princes of Judah: for out of you shall come a governor, who shall shepherd my people, Israel.'"

MATTHEW 2:1 to 6 · THE MASSACRE FOLLOWS IN V. 16

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Herod the Great sliced the top off one hill, piled it onto another, and built himself a cone-shaped mountain fortress you can see from Bethlehem, four kilometers away. That fact is the whole page: the king who ordered the children of Bethlehem killed built his monument within sight of the village he feared, and chose to be buried facing it. Two kings entered history a few kilometers and a few years apart. One built a mountain to be remembered. One was laid in a feeding trough.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

Herod. The greatest builder this land ever knew: Caesarea's harbor, the Temple platform, Masada's palaces, and this private mountain. He murdered sons, wives, and the infants of Bethlehem to hold a throne he lost anyway, to death, within a year or two of the child's birth.

The wise men. Foreigners who read the sky, asked the wrong palace, and then obeyed the star past it. They gave their treasures to a toddler in a village and went home by another way. History remembers them as wise. It calls Herod great only in stone.

THE 3D MOMENT

In 2007, after a thirty-five-year search, archaeologist Ehud Netzer found Herod's tomb on the slope of this mountain: a shattered sarcophagus of rose-colored stone, deliberately smashed in antiquity. The king who moved a mountain to be remembered lies broken on its side, while the child he hunted is worshiped this morning in ten thousand languages. Climb the cone, look at Bethlehem, and let the view finish the sermon.

THE HEBREW WORD

עָפָר · **Afar**, dust. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return. Herod moved a mountain of afar to escape the verse, and became its illustration. In this land even the greatest builders end up as archaeology.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Herod built a mountain against being forgotten, and is remembered mainly for his fear. What are you building to be remembered by, and would the wise men call it wise?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, keep us from building mountains against our own smallness. Let us be like the travelers who followed Your light past the palace, worshiped low, and went home another way. And when we are dust, let what remains of us be worship, not walls. Amen.

Jerusalem · Three Thousand Years

one city, from David's spur to this morning's headlines

OPEN YOUR BIBLES · WE READ ALOUD TOGETHER

¹ I was glad when they said to me, "Let's go to Yahweh's house!" ² Our feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem; ³ Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together; ⁴ where the tribes go up, even Yah's tribes, according to an ordinance for Israel, to give thanks to Yahweh's name. ⁵ For there are set thrones for judgment, the thrones of David's house. ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Those who love you will prosper. ⁷ Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces. ⁸ For my brothers' and companions' sakes, I will now say, "Peace be within you." ⁹ For the sake of the house of Yahweh our God, I will seek your good.

PSALM 122 · A SONG OF ASCENTS, OF DAVID

THE GEOGRAPHY · WHY HERE OF ALL PLACES

Hold the whole story in one breath. David takes the spur, around three thousand years ago. Solomon builds the house. Babylon burns it and drags the singers to the rivers of exile, where they swear: if I forget you, O Jerusalem. They return and rebuild. Herod makes it magnificent, Rome makes it rubble, and for nineteen centuries the city passes hand to hand, Byzantine, Arab, Crusader, Mamluk, Ottoman, British, while the exiles keep praying toward it three times a day from every corner of the earth. In 1948 the state returns and the city is cut in two. In 1967 the paratroopers reach the wall and weep. And this morning, children walked to school inside the gates your feet are standing in. The psalm is not history. It is a live broadcast.



THE CHARACTERS, AS LIVING PEOPLE

The pilgrims of every century. The psalm was written for walkers: tribes going up, sandals on stone, the same three words in their mouths, our feet are standing. Roman-era pilgrims, medieval pilgrims who walked for a year, your own group who flew for a day. One unbroken procession, three thousand years long, and today you are the ones inside the gates. **The rememberers.** Every Jewish wedding for two thousand years has ended with a broken glass and this city's name, if I forget you. No city on earth has been remembered harder.

THE 3D MOMENT

In the Jewish Quarter, children play on a playground beside a massive stretch of stone called the Broad Wall, built by King Hezekiah when Isaiah walked this city, twenty-seven centuries ago. That one glance is the whole lesson of Jerusalem: the deepest past and the ordinary present, side by side, a toddler's ball bouncing against Isaiah's wall. Every layer of this city is still in use. Nothing here ever fully becomes the past.

THE HEBREW WORD

יְרוּשָׁלַיִם · Yerushalayim. The name ends in the Hebrew dual form, the ending reserved for things that come in pairs, like eyes and hands. The old teachers said: because there are two of her, the Jerusalem below and the Jerusalem above, and the city you are walking in is where they touch. And buried in her name is shalem: wholeness, peace. The city's name is a prayer the world is still learning to say.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Three thousand years of pilgrims said the same sentence: our feet are standing within your gates. Now it is your feet. What did you carry up here, and what will you leave?

WE PRAY, BEFORE WE WALK ON

Lord, we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, as Your word commands. Peace within her walls. Peace in her houses and her schools and her markets, for our brothers' and companions' sakes. Guard the city where heaven and earth touch, and count our feet among the generations that stood glad within her gates. Amen.

TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER · BEN GURION · SHALOM AND LEHITRAOT

Now the Book Stays Open

a blessing for the road home

From this day on, whenever you open your Bible,
it will not lie flat on the page.
Caesarea will have a sea breeze in it.
Capernaum will have the sound of water on a hull.
The garden will smell of olives,
and the tomb will still be empty.
That is the gift you carry home. It is yours forever.

THE PRIESTLY BLESSING, BIRKAT KOHANIM

*"Yahweh bless you, and keep you.
Yahweh make his face to shine on you, and be gracious to you.
Yahweh lift up his face toward you, and give you peace."*

NUMBERS 6:24 TO 26

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ

You have walked this land. Now keep praying for it.
Join the wall of watchmen at pray-the-land-golan.netlify.app
"I have set watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem." Isaiah 62:6

B'ahava, from the Golan Heights

Amitai (Tai) Elon

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