

THE VALLEY OF JEZREEL

Introduction

- The Valley of Jezreel (also called the Valley of Esdraelon) is an interesting and very important place for Israel and the entire world. This *Glimpse of the Holy Land* will focus not only on events from the Old Testament but also from the New Testament and the future. It is impossible to overestimate the great role this valley will have for all of mankind.
- Mount Carmel is 20 miles northwest, the Sea of Galilee is 38 northeast, Bethlehem is 12 miles north, and Jerusalem is 80 miles south. This valley is about 10 miles wide and 35 miles long.
- The *International Highway* ran through the Valley of Jezreel. The great highway took travelers from Egypt to Damascus and then north and east. The current highway follows the same path.
- From the most ancient times to the time of Napoleon, the Valley of Jezreel was one of the great battle grounds of the world. Biblical battles have been numerous, including the following:



- ▶ Barak and Deborah overthrew Sisera and his chariots (Judges 5:19–21)
- ▶ Saul's last battle and Solomon's chariot fortress (1 Samuel 31; 1 Kings 9:15)
- ▶ Jehu's relentless pursuit of Ahaziah and the downfall of Jezebel and Josiah (2 Kings 9:20–24, 37; 23:29)
- ▶ King Josiah died in battle with Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23:29–30)
- ▶ In Revelation, John proclaims the final triumph of Christ at Mount Megiddo (Armageddon, Revelation 16:16)



Israeli Air Force plane over Megiddo

- An Israeli Air Force base is in the valley east of Megiddo. They keep all of their planes in bunkers below ground. A picture is included which shows a plane come over the hillside where our group was standing.
- Important biblical events took place in towns in the Valley of Jezreel.

Some biblical references

- Judges 6:33, *Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel.*
- 1 Samuel 29:1, *Now the Philistines had gathered all their forces at Aphek. And the Israelites were encamped by the spring that is in Jezreel.*
- 2 Samuel 4:4, *Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.*
- 1 Kings 21:1, *Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." 3 But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."*
- Hosea 1:14, *And the LORD said to him, "Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel."*

Cities in the Valley of Jezreel



The Valley of Jezreel and the International Highway

Jezreel

- David was not permitted to go with the army of the Philistines who were at Aphek and the Israelites were camped *by the spring of Jezreel* (1 Samuel 29:1).
- After Saul's death, Abner, the commander of the army set up Saul's son Ishbosheth as king over Jezreel and all of Israel (2 Samuel 2:8-9).
- Ahab, whose capital was Samaria, had a palace at Jezreel (21:1), adjacent to Naboth's vineyard. Ahab wanted the property for a garden but Naboth would not sell it to him. Ahab's wife, Jezebel, made false accusations against Naboth and he was put to death. Jehu who became king of Israel entered the city of Jezreel and ordered the attendants to throw Jezebel out the window (9:30–33). She died without burial, covered with disgrace as Elijah the prophet had said (1 Ki. 21:23). Jehu ordered the heads of Ahab's surviving sons to be sent to him at Jezreel from Samaria. Finally, Jehu killed the entire house of Ahab, 2 Kings 10:11, *So Jehu killed all who were left of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, all his leaders, close friends, and priests, until he left him no survivor.*
- Ahab's son Joram who was king of Israel after his father's death, went to war with Ahaziah King of Judah against Syria. He was wounded and returned to Jezreel.

Moreh

- It is a hill on the southeastern side of the Valley of Jezreel.
- The LORD appeared to Abram at the *oak of Moreh* and promised him the land, Genesis 12:6-7, *Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."* So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.
- This is the site of an attack by Gideon on the Midianites, Judges 7:1, *Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the troops that were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was north of them, below the hill of Moreh, in the valley.*
- On the southwestern side of Moreh, an Old Testament miracle took place in the town of Shunem. On the northwestern side, a New Testament miracle took place in Nain.



Left to right: Mt. Tabor, Hill of Moreh and Mt. Gilboa

Shunem, Endor, Mount Gilboa and Beth-shan

- Elisha stayed frequently at the home of a woman in Shunem. Her son died and Elisha raised him back to life, 2 Kings 4:8-37.
- The Philistines encamped in Shunem while preparing for battle against the army of King Saul, 1 Samuel 28:4, *The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shunem. And Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa.* Saul and his army were on Mount Gilboa, 8 miles south of Shunem. He became afraid, sought the Lord Who did not respond. He requested that his servants find a medium who could give him direction. He went to Endor and requested to speak with Samuel who appeared, 1 Samuel 28:4-25. Eventually, Saul and his sons were killed on Mount Gilboa, 1 Samuel 31:2-6. 2 Samuel 21:12, *David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, on the day the Philistines killed Saul on Gilboa.*
- King David had a nurse who cared for him shortly before he died. Her name was Abishag and she was from Shunem.

Nain

- Jesus was headed into Nain while a burial procession was headed out of the city gate to the burial site. A widow's only son was to be buried. Jesus touched the bier and the bearers stood still. Jesus had compassion on the woman and called out to her dead son, *young man, I say to you, arise*. And the dead man sat up and began to speak, Luke 7:11-17.
- The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. He is gracious.

Megiddo

Historical events

- From the hill of Megiddo, one can see the highway where Joseph was sold to traders by his brothers.
- Megiddo was a place where many battles took place in its immediate vicinity.
- It probably came under Israelite control during the wars of David to gain control of the Canaanite and Philistine occupied lands. It functioned as an administrative center for the Valley of Jezreel.
- The end of prosperity for Megiddo was at the end of Josiah's rule, 2 Kings 23:29, *In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him; but when Pharaoh Neco met him at Megiddo, he killed him.*
- The Megiddo water tunnel was built by King Solomon or possibly Ahab, note 1 Kings 9:15, *This is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the LORD and his own house, the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer.* It was an amazing feat of engineering which requires walking down 180 steps which were carved from limestone, with irregular heights, and usually wet. There is a passageway at the bottom that was carved through bedrock. The spring was diverted so it flowed into the tunnel. Outside access to the spring was blocked so no enemy could know the location of this entrance into Megiddo. To exit the tunnel, one must climb the equivalent of eight flights of stairs to exit this system. It was a challenge!



Looking toward Nazareth



Foundations of Megiddo
Northern Palace



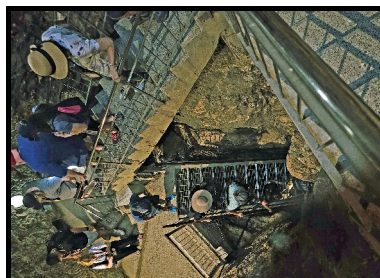
Megiddo City Gate



Megiddo Sacred Temple area



Megiddo Water Tunnel Entrance



Tunnel Stairs



Tunnel meets the spring

he future event

- Armageddon means Mount Megiddo. It will be the staging ground for the armies of world to battle the armies of the Lord Jesus Christ. Note Revelation 19:19, *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.*
- Robert Thomas, *The plain of Megiddo is admittedly not large enough to contain armies from all over the world, so this must be the assembly area for a much larger deployment that covers a two hundred mile distance from north to south and the width of Palestine from east to west (cf. 14:20). Some decisive battles against this massive force will probably occur around Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-3).*
- Warren Wiersbe, *Standing on Mount Carmel and overlooking that great plain, you can well understand why it would be used for gathering the armies of the nations.*
- Mark Hitchcock, *Several key military movements are part of this campaign ... Various armies will muster at Armageddon in the north of Israel (Revelation 16:12-16); Jerusalem will be attacked (Zechariah 12:1-3); Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives, and while He is coming, the armies gathered against Him will be slain by the breath of His mouth (Zechariah 14:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:11-21); Jesus will travel to Edom in southern Jordan evidently to deliver the Jewish remnant who fled there from the Antichrist (Isaiah 34:1-7; 63:1-3) ... After Jesus defeats armies of Antichrist and the rebellious nations gathered with him the kingdom of God will come to the earth ...*
- Charles Swindoll, *The final outcome of this battle is not described until Revelation 19, when we see the armies of Satan finally meet their match with the armies of Christ.*