

MOUNT HERMON, BANIAS AND CAESAREA PHILIPPI

Mount Hermon

- It is the tallest mountain in Israel and is on the northern border with Syria where the peak is at 9,200 feet. It is a cluster of mountains. Its three summits are nearly equal in height and are the same distance from each other. The range extends almost 20 miles from north to south.
- Snow covers the top of the mountain most of the year. Water from melting snow flows into several rivers and is the principle source of water for the Jordan River.
- At the end of the 1967 War, Israel gained control of land formerly held by Syria. The next highest peak is called the Eyes of Israel which houses military surveillance equipment.



Zondervan Encyclopedia



Mount Hermon

Banias Nature Reserve

- There are 45 waterfalls in the area which is on the southern edge of Mount Hermon. The largest is Banias Falls which drops 33 feet.
- Psalm 42 pictures the psalmist who is going into captivity and is overwhelmed by remembrance of God's goodness as seen in a lovely waterfall which is probably Banias Waterfall. He mentions Mount Hermon and Mount Mizar which is another mountain in the Mount Hermon range.

- Psalm 42:1-2, *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God ...*
- Psalm 42:6, *My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.*
- Psalm 42:11, *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.*



Heading to Banias Waterfall



Banias Waterfall



Hermon River Springs
below Banias Falls

Panias

- Alexander the Great built a city called Panias, establishing Greek culture and worship of Greek gods.
- It was 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and 120 miles north of Jerusalem, on the southern slopes of Mount Hermon.
- On the site, a cave with a river flowing out of it was discovered. According to Greek worship, the cave was the gateway to the underworld and the home of Pan, the Greek god of shepherds, flocks and nature.
- Josephus on the cultic site of Pan, *a very fine cave in a mountain, under which there is a great cavity in the earth, and the cavern is abrupt, and prodigiously deep, and full of a still water; over it hangs a vast mountain, and under the caverns arise the springs of the river Jordan.*
- Augustus Caesar gave the city to Herod the Great and according to Josephus, *adorned this place, which was already a very remarkable one” with a “most beautiful temple of the whitest stone.*



Pan Cave where springs of water flowed

- Religious sites at Panias
- The Court of Pan and the Nymphs
The sanctuary is located on an elevated terrace above the Baniyas springs, enclosed on three sides by cliff walls. An artificial cave was quarried in the cliff-face opposite the courtyard, and there the statue of Pan was placed. Temples with statues and rock-carved niches were built on the rock face.
- The Temple of Zeus
It was built around 98 AD and was a temple for Pan and Zeus. The Corinthian stone cap topped one of the four columns of the facade of the temple.
- The Tomb Temple of the Sacred Goats
This building was erected around 220 A.D.. The bones of goats that took part in the rituals were buried in the rectangular niches in the main hall, together with offerings of pottery, glass vessels and coins. The rituals were conducted on the roof in front of the rock-carve niche. On a Panias city coin ... Pan appears playing the flute and making the goats dance.

- In the 7th century the Muslims called the region Baniyas because the Arabic language lacks a *p* sound and substituted the *p* for a *b*.



Niches with sculptures of Greek gods



The Court of Pan



**Tomb Temple of
the Sacred Goats**



**Column from the
Temple of Zeus**

Caesarea Philippi

- At the death of Herod in 4 BC, his son Philip was given the territory around Pan.
- Josephus, *Philip built the city Caesarea, at the fountains of Jordan, and in the region of Paneas.* Philip made it his capital and named it Caesarea Philippi after the Roman Emperor Tiberius Caesar and himself.
- The city was built over the 5 pagan temples destroyed by an earthquake. The earthquake redirected the river away from the mouth of the cave.
- Jesus' ministry at Caesarea Philippi
 - ▶ It was the northernmost area where Jesus ministered.
 - ▶ Charles Dyer, *Imagine what it was like for Jesus and His followers to enter this pagan city. A temple dedicated to Augustus stood directly in front of the cave of Pan, and the life-giving water from the cave seemed to flow out from this monument. Next to it was the court of Pan and the nymphs, and beside that stood the temple to Zeus, the king of the gods. Little wonder that most pious Jews were looking for a military Messiah, a conquering hero who would purge the land of its pagan overlords and their false gods ...Perhaps that's why Jesus took His followers on this field trip to Caesarea Philippi - away from the pious masses and into the very heart of a pagan stronghold. This was the perfect spot to quiz His followers on the key issues of His life and ministry.*
 - ▶ Jesus' question and Peter's response, Matthew 16:13-17, *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say 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 replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And 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.*

Jesus took His followers on a field trip. He had given a man physical sight and in Caesarea Philippi one of his disciples received spiritual sight. Interestingly, the false religion of Pan was built in the rock of a cave. Christianity is built on the solid rock, Jesus Christ - the Messiah and Son of the living God.

- ▶ The transfiguration, Matthew 17:1-5, *And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."*

It is believed that the transfiguration which took place a week after Peter's confession, took place on Mount Hermon. From that point forward, Jesus spoke directly to His disciples about His death and resurrection. Who He is determines what He could and would do, die for our sins and rise from the dead.



Looking toward Syria



The Jordan River south of Banias