

# **WHEN FAITH CONFRONTS REALITY**

**BY ABRI BRANCKEN, 28 Oct 2018**

## **ISRAEL TOUR 2018 QUICK FEEDBACK**

We departed for Israel on Monday, 1 October, travelling via Hong Kong.

Tuesday, 2 October we arrived in Israel and travelled north to Mount Carmel where Elijah challenged 450 prophets of Baal. We then visited Nazareth Village where we immersed ourselves in the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth.

Wednesday, 3 October we visited various sites around the Sea of Galilee like Capernaum, which in Jesus' time was a flourishing border town and was called "his own city" because of the frequency with which Jesus visited it and the mighty works he performed there. We also visit the Mount of Beatitudes, the scene of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). In a Kibbutz along the shores of the sea of Galilee is a 2000-year old fisherman's boat which was discovered not too long ago. It gives you an idea of what a fisher's boat looked like during Jesus' time. We then enjoyed a sunset cruise on the Sea of Galilee.

Thursday, 4 October we travelled North to Caesarea Philippi, one of the sources of the Jordan River. The afternoon we baptised people in the Jordan River.

Friday, 5 October we travelled south towards the refuge city of Masada. Masada is an ancient fortification in the Southern District of Israel situated on top of an isolated rock plateau, overlooking the Dead Sea. Herod the Great built palaces for himself on the mountain and fortified Masada between 37 and 31 BCE. We then proceeded to Qumran, the place where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947. After lunch we enjoyed a swim in the Dead Sea, the lowest place on the face of the earth, over 400m below sea level. After our swim we travelled via Jericho to beautiful Jerusalem.

Saturday, 6 October we walked along the Via Dolorosa and visited the Garden of Gethsemane and the Church of All Nations where Christ prayed on the night of his betrayal. We then continue to the Pools of Bethesda. The Gospel of John describes such a pool in Jerusalem, near the Sheep Gate, which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. It is associated with healing in Jesus' day. The name of the pool is said to be derived from the Hebrew language and/or Aramaic language. Beth hesda meaning either house of mercy or house of grace.

Sunday, 7 October we enjoy a time of prayer at the Western wall after which we will continue to visit the ancient City of David, the place where King David lived and follow in the footsteps of the Kings and Prophets. We explored the subterranean passageways that aided the city's conquerors and we descend to the hidden spring where kings were crowned. We took a flashlight tour following the water flowing from Hezekiah's Tunnel.

Monday, 8 October we took a trip outside of Jerusalem and we visit Tel Shiloh, the religious capital of Israel during the times of the Judges. Shiloh was an assembly place for the people of Israel and a centre of worship. The afternoon we visited Yad

Vashem, the museum commemorating the holocaust of the second world war where 6 million Jews died.

Tuesday, 9 October we visited the Garden Tomb, the place where Jesus was buried and was raised to life. We also enjoyed communion at Notre Dame, a possible place where Jesus was flogged prior to His crucifixion. We also visited Saint-Peter-in-Gallicantu, located on the slopes of mount Zion. According to tradition, this was the place of the palace of high priest Caiaphas, where Jesus was brought to jail after his arrest. Its name (Gallicantu, means the cock's crow) is given after the story of Peter's triple denial of Christ and the cock crowing.

Wednesday, 10 October was an off day. We enjoyed the final day for shopping and walking around in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Thursday, 11 October After breakfast we made our way to the airport.

### **SHILOH IN THE BIBLE**

Shiloh (Hebrew: שילה - Šīlōh) was a city in ancient Israel. The Bible describes Shiloh as an assembly place for the people of Israel from the time of Joshua. Shiloh is located just south of Shechem and north of Bethel, in the hill-country of Ephraim (Judg. 21:19).

### **THE HEADQUARTERS OF ISRAEL**

The ark, which had been at Gilgal during the conquest of Canaan, was removed on the completion of the conquest to Shiloh where it remained from Joshua's closing days to Samuel's (Joshua 18:1-10; Judges 18:31; 1 Samuel 4:3).

During the period of judges, it was a major religious center and the permanent site of the sacred Tabernacle, which the Israelites had carried through the wilderness. The Ark stood there for 369 years. Shiloh formed the headquarters of the nation before David made Jerusalem the capital. Sacrifices were brought there by the Israelites during the period of judges, and it was also the site of various religious celebrations and festivals. The tribes of Israel were allotted their land areas from Shiloh.

### **SHILOH WAS HIDDEN**

No spot in Central Israel could be more secluded than this early sanctuary, nothing more featureless than the landscape around; so featureless, indeed, the landscape and so secluded the spot that from the time of St. Jerome till its re- discovery by Dr. Robinson in 1838 the very site was forgotten and unknown.

### **MEANING OF SHILOH**

The name Shiloh is generally understood as denoting the Messiah, "the peaceful one," as the word signifies (Gen. 49:10). The Vulgate Version translates the word, "he who is to be sent," in allusion to the Messiah.

### **SHILOH DESTROYED**

Here Eli judged Israel and died of grief at the capture of the ark by the Philistines. The sin of Hophni and Phinehas caused the loss of the ark and God's forsaking of His tabernacle at Shiloh. Shiloh declined in importance after this, and especially after the establishment of the Temple of Jerusalem. However, it became briefly famous as the

home of the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh, who commissioned Jeroboam I to become the king of Israel in opposition to the Davidic dynasty.

Shiloh virtually disappears from the biblical record after this. However, in the early sixth century B.C.E., the prophet Jeremiah would refer to Shiloh's shrine as a place of desolation, predicting that God would do likewise to Jerusalem if its priests and people did not repent:

Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!" ... Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel ... What I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your fathers (Jeremiah 7:4-14).

### **HANNAH PRAYED FOR A SON**

At Shiloh, Hannah prayed and Samuel was reared in the tabernacle and called to the prophetic office (1 Samuel 1; 2; 3). The prophet Samuel was raised there. Hannah is one of the most inspiring women in the Bible. Hannah was one of two wives of a man named Elkanah who lived "in the hill country of Ephraim near Shiloh. The other wife of Elkanah, Peninnah, had children, but Hannah had no child. Because of this, Hannah was very grieved. She desperately desired a child but could not conceive. To make matters worse, Peninnah taunted Hannah concerning her barrenness. Although Elkanah loved Hannah and was very kind to her (1 Samuel 1:5, 8), Peninnah's unkindness on top of her natural grief was too much for Hannah to bear. Hannah cried out to God about her situation. She promised the Lord that if He would give her a son, she would dedicate him to God as a Nazirite (a man set apart to serve God; see Numbers 6:1-8).

While Hannah was earnestly and silently praying, Eli (the priest at the tabernacle) saw her and mistook her distress for drunkenness. He made an ill-advised comment to encourage her to give up drinking, and she corrected his mistake. "I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief," she told him (1 Samuel 1:16). Hannah then explains her predicament, and Eli says, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." After that, Hannah felt better; she had received God's promise.

The Lord answered Hannah's prayer. She bore a son and named him Samuel, whose name means "Asked of God." Samuel was the last of the judges before the kings, he was also a prophet. When the child was old enough, she kept her promise to the Lord, taking him to Eli and giving him to the Lord to serve in the tabernacle. There, Eli worshiped God along with Hannah. And then Hannah spoke a beautiful prayer, recorded in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. God does not despise human desire. Hannah's longing for a child was obviously placed in her heart by God Himself. He understands our feelings. He knows that "a hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12). And He invites us to bring our requests to Him (Philippians 4:6).

### **1 Samuel 1:11**

"O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a

male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head”.

### **LESSONS FROM HANNAH'S LIFE**

Many of the greatest people in the Bible struggled with infertility issues. There are at least seven women in the Bible who were initially childless or what God's Word calls barren. Six of these seven women finally did have children after several years. Those included Hannah, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, the mother of Samson, the Shunamite and Elisabeth.

The Lord blessed Hannah with five additional children. The Bible tells us, “And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:21). Five is the number of grace.

Our trust and faith in the LORD will produce breakthroughs. When faith confronts reality, reality can change.