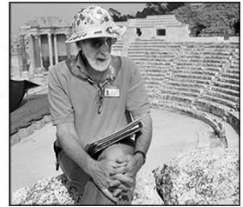


FROM JERUSALEM

A NEWSLETTER FROM WALTER ZANGER



My last Newsletter - Volume 16, Number 9, July 2015

SHILO

The scenery changes as you go north out of Jerusalem. Not so dramatically as it does going out to the east—you get out of the Mt. Scopus tunnel right smack into the Arabian desert—but the change is unmistakable nonetheless. The hills of the Land of Benjamin are the same hills we know from Jerusalem but there are no wide valleys there, and no signs of farming terraces, or that anyone ever tried to make a living there. And not much topsoil anyhow. Just scruffy, rugged, strong, and mean mountains. No wonder Benjamin was the most troublesome of the twelve tribes back then. Harsh countryside produces harsh people.

I wonder if the Jewish National Fund could have ever made something green and pleasant to this place by planting trees, as it did in Israel. But we're in the Palestine Authority, not in Israel, and will probably never know.

The good news is that Benjamin isn't very large (just as the tribe itself was small in those days). So things change as you get north of Ramallah, and in a few minutes we have passed through Benjamin and into the fertile lands of Ephraim. Green and fertile valleys open between the hills, and we are in a cultivated and civilized land again. That's where we were going that day; we had gathered a few friends, rented a van, and were on the way to Shilo, not far away. The trip there took less than an hour. The ancient town may not have that much to show us, but 'Oh my', what a story!

Because Shilo is a very important and very interesting place, of course, although there's a surprising lack of textual material about it and not much to see archaeologically either. No, that's not right; the ancient town is a proper tel and the usual collection of houses, walls, public buildings, etc. from back then are there. Nothing spectacular, or even very interesting if you're not a specialist archaeologist, and I had been there a couple of times before and left unimpressed.

We need to put together the pieces as they lie scattered throughout the Bible and put some structure and sense into this narrative.

In the first place, we know how to get there. Because Shilo is the only place in the Bible which gives you road directions. The text is Judges 21:19.

“...there is a yearly feast of the Lord at Shilo, which is north of Bethel, east of the highway that goes from Bethel to Shechem, south of Levonah¹.

Perfect! But why did they need to tell us that? Because Shilo was completely destroyed by then, a destruction so traumatic the place had nearly been wiped off the national memory. But that gets us ahead of our story.

How important had it once been? Very important indeed—apparently the first capital of Israel!—because Joshua had brought the tribes of Israel across the Jordan river as he conquered the country and cemented his grip in the mountain range of Judea and Samaria. He divided the land among the tribes there and had the Tabernacle of the Lord, the tent with the ark of the Covenant, set in Shilo.

Eli the priest presided over Israel from there; the first religious (or any other kind of) leader in the nation’s history. And Samuel the Prophet, first judge and political leader, conceived there after his previously barren mother, Hannah, prayed there² and who devoted his whole life to the service of that shrine, judged Israel from there. And, while headquartered in Shilo, Samuel appointed Saul, a Benjaminite, to be first King of Israel.

Important? Indeed so, at least for a while. Shilo was capital of Israel for nearly 400 years, until David set up the tabernacle in Jerusalem. But catastrophe struck. Chapter 4 of 1 Samuel tells how the Philistines came up from the south to fight Israel and how the battle was joined at Even-Ezer/Afek. That’s near Petah Tikva of today, and it’s just down the hill from Shilo up there. The Israelites saw they were losing the battle and called for heavy-duty reinforcements; bring the Ark of the Lord down from Shilo and God will fight with us. Oh, dear, bad move! The Philistines captured the Ark, a terrible slaughter ensued, and Eli the Priest, when he got the news, fell back from his chair in the shrine, broke his neck and died.

And that’s it; the end of anything the Bible has to say about Shilo, apart from our opening quote. It doesn’t even say that the Philistines destroyed the place, although they did, and it is left to Jeremiah to hint as much when we writes about “...my place that was in Shilo”.³ People with the name “Shilonite” show up from time to time, which means the town existed, but in Biblical times the city had gone and was lost to the historical record.

That’s why they needed to give road directions at the end of this brutal business with the Benjamites. It’s not all that much later, but the city has been wiped out—read that part in Judges, 19-21—and they need the young men to go there. So they have to tell them where it is! Remarkable. So important was Shilo, and so dead and destroyed.

¹ But this is part of a story only tangentially related to Shilo. It comes at the end of a particularly gruesome story that takes up the last 3 chapters of the book of Judges; chapters 19-21. Our quote is from Judges 21:19. And we will come back to it later.

² See 1 Sam 1

³ Jer 7:12. And there’s one note in Psalm 78:60 that says the same thing. That’s it.

I was the only one of us who had been there a couple of times before, so I wasn't impressed for a while. But the people of modern Shilo have prepared excellent guides to tell the story as you are walking around, and established a very good audio-visual presentation with the incidents we have mentioned and the history—such as it is—of the site. That was really impressive, well done, and good for them!

Near the end of our tour we looked down at where they say the sanctuary of the Ark had been. That was a new place to me; I had been shown sites much higher up on the hill when I was there before with the guides' course. I, in fact, didn't go down to see the place—it was too hot for me anyhow—but the others did. And they reported being extraordinarily moved by the energy of the place; quite overwhelmed, they said, with the holiness in the ground.

Not being a spiritual type by nature, I didn't know what to make of that. I don't do "spiritual" and don't feel "energy;" pity, perhaps. But I know that every group I guide in the future will need to see Ancient Shilo. A new and very interesting place. ■

MORE STATISTICS

The worldwide Jewish population is approaching the size it was before the Holocaust, a new report by an independent Jerusalem-based think tank says. The report, compiled by the Jewish People Policy Institute, indicates that there are 14.2 million Jews worldwide as of early 2015. Add in various "subgroups" (such as immigrants to Israel and American "partial Jews") and the number approaches 16 million — which nears the pre-World War II global Jewish population of 16.6 million, Ynet reported on Friday.

After Israel, which is home to 6,103,200 Jews, the United States has the second-highest Jewish population at 5,700,000. The JPPI report says that the last decade (2005-2015) has seen an eight percent increase in the Jewish population, or the biggest increase since the end of World War II. Following is the list of countries and regions with the highest Jewish populations.

Israel- 6,103,200
United States- 5,700,000
France- 475,000
Canada- 385,300
Latin America- 383,500
Britain- 290,000
Russia- 186,000
Germany- 118,000
Australia- 112,500
Africa- 74,700

South Africa– 70,000
Ukraine– 63,000
Hungary– 47,900
Iran– 20,000
Asia– 19,700
Romania– 9,400
New Zealand– 7,600
Morocco– 2,400

And where are they coming to Israel from?

Just in case you were wondering. The latest figures (end of 2014) are:
France: 7000, Former Soviet Union, 5904, Ukraine, 2990. USA? Down the list somewhere

OPERA AT MASSADA

This is not the sort of thing I would normally have gone to. I have known these pieces of music—Puccini’s opera **Tosca** and Carl Orff’s **Carmina Burana**—for many years, back to the days when I had 2 meters of LP records on my shelves. But I would not have shlepped an hour and a half each way to Massada in the evening two days in a row, and then back late at night (fortunately we had a bus to transport us), and I certainly don’t need to see Massada for the ten-thousandth time. Apart from the fact that the performances were taking place down on the plain below the mountain, which was, at best, a shadow in the background. And that the tickets were ferociously expensive: 500 and 600 shekels each for each performance, plus 120 shekels each for the bus.

But Noel and Carol were there to visit us, and they, American ex-US Airforce personnel living in Italy, were mad for the opera, insisted on our going, and generously financed the whole operation. So we went, and had a great time.

Turns out the performances were brilliant, and the atmosphere down there, festival-like with outdoor stage and big covered-tent gateway, were like nothing I had ever seen. TOSCA was familiar enough, and it was easy to sing along, but CARMINA BURANA was a surprise. It is a pseudo-medieval cantata (written in 1937 from 11th -12th century sources) of erotic poetry and musing about springtime and love and beautiful women, drinking, gluttony, gambling and lust (as Wikipedia so delicately puts it) and sex

and happy times and all that good stuff.⁴

Beautiful costumes, brilliant singing and dancing, a real treat. Frolicking in the springtime; the stuff young people do. **And NOW I understand what those maidens were doing in Shilo back then!!** ■

CORRECTION

Bye, Bones,

And thanks for everything.

LOVE YOU BOTH

Xxx

W

A small but important note from my cousin Joe. It's about the order of priests I wrote about in the last issue:

"You missed my point--it's not the **S**ilesian anything **at all**--the **S**Alesian Order (that's with an A, not an I) was so named by Don Bosco to honor St. Francis De **S**ALES. You persist in misspelling its name, which has nothing to do with Silesia."

Got it, right on, and thanks for being a careful reader, cuz. And if this isn't clear, **SILESIA** is an area of Germany, while **THE CHATEAU DE SALES** is a place in France. ■

**AND A NEW PLACE
TO VISIT THAT WE
OFTEN WONDERED
ABOUT**

This note came through to friends of the Albright Institute (archaeology and Biblical studies) in Jerusalem. "On behalf of Yotam Tepper, Jonathan David, and myself, I would like to invite you to visit our excavations of the Legionary Base of the Roman VIth Ferrata Legion at Legio, near Megiddo. We will have two open tours of the site on Tuesday, 7 July. The first will be at 10AM and the second at 5PM. All are welcome.

⁴ Yes, I know Carl Orff was a supporter of the Nazi regime in Germany, and was a Roman Catholic even though his grandfather had been born a Jew.

The site is located between Tel Megiddo and Megiddo Junction. Driving south from Tel Megiddo on Route 66, turn right onto a dirt farm road about half way between the Tel and the Junction.

If there are any questions you can callThanks and we'll see you in the field!
(Signed) Matthew J. Adams, Director of the Albright

We won't make that invitation, but it is important to know that they have found and started to dig out the only proper Roman Legion camp ever found in the country, or the whole of the Eastern Empire from that period, 2nd-3rd centuries CE. It was the permanent base of the Sixth Legion Ferrata ("Iron-clad") and stayed there, guarding the roads of the north of the country, from the time it got put there during or just after the Bar Kokhba Revolt of 135 CE, until Diocletian took them out at the end of the 3rd century.

We knew it was there somewhere, and the Arabs remembered it too; the village that was there until 1948 was called *Lejjun* (a corruption of "Legion", of course), just as we know the Roman village spread under the prison next door because we found a fancy Roman villa from that period, with a room paved in mosaic, with a picture of a fish and an inscription about donating "an altar to the God Jesus Christ." So the important Christian(!) worship site—earliest of its kind ever found in the country (maybe the world!)—is inside the prison and therefore off limits, unless you commit murder, etc. and end up an inmate of the place.

Another place to see. The Land of Israel is inexhaustible! ■

WHAT? Another one? (two?)

A new place at Shilo was plenty enough for me and I took myself off to bed for a good rest. But it wasn't to last. Archaeology faculty and classes are digging all over the place, all the time.

Bad news guys; I can't keep this up anymore. This issue has been sitting on my desk for 6 weeks and I don't even have the strength to finish it.



I have 4 unrelated things that have just ganged up on me and have knocked me out:

Shingles (10 months!). Troubles eating, malnutrition (can't eat!). And general fatigue. Oh yes, plus a cancer in lungs and liver that seem not to be doing much inside to complicate the procedure yet.

So we have come from 1982 to an end – - for now—here. I have had a few subscription checks come in recently; not going to bother cashing them. With any luck, I will be back to some sanity and healthy in a month or so and will be back to you.

Meanwhile, if any of you loyal subscribers feel that you may have invested in me more than is prudent, do write me a note and I will refund you. AND BLESSINGS

AND LONG LIFE AND GOOD HEALTH TO ALL!!!

And a special thanks to the inestimable Dr. Henri Guttel and the A.B.C. Printers, who, together, always made sure this Newsletter would be in a format and form you could read!

Final p.s.

As a token or...whatever, my children have commissioned a new professional WIKIPEDIA page for me, which you are welcome to visit.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Zanger

Bye for now.

Walter

Walter Zanger died in Jerusalem, August 28th, 2015