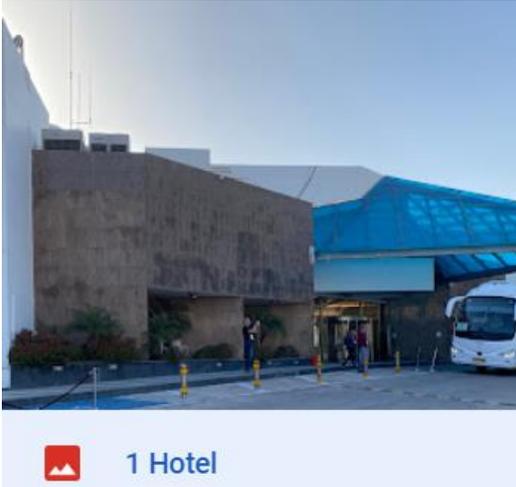


Day 2

- 1 Morning in Tiberius. A 6:15 wake-up call, a traditional Israeli breakfast buffet full of marvelous fruits, and an 8:00 a.m. departure from our hotel. We arrived in the dark last evening so we really did not appreciate the beauty of our hotel location. We could walk out the back of the hotel on to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Several folks set an early alarm to try and see the sunrise over the Sea – but unfortunately it was overcast and the sun did not peak out until well above the horizon clouds.



Once on the bus, we traveled about 90 minutes to our first destination. To begin the day while on the bus, Laura Katherine opened with a Traveler's Prayer which was shared with her by Charles Guyton – who received it from a Jewish traveling companion on his trip to the Holy Land. We were given a Spiritual Pilgrimage booklet by ACTS with prayers, poems, and songs for the journey. Todd led us in *Open Our Eyes* (and boy are we glad to have his voice!!).

- 2 Our first stop was the Nature Preserve which was formed when the Hula area was drained in 1952 to provide rich agricultural land. However, the Jordan River still needed to traverse the area so swamp areas were retained leading to a very diverse natural preserve.



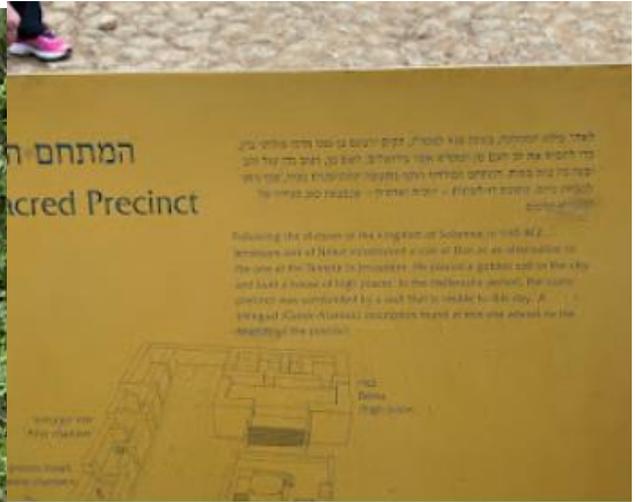
2a river Jordan



2b Nature preserve

This area is very close to the Lebanon and Syria borders. The trails within the preserve were used as escape routes in the 1940's prior to Israel becoming a state in 1948. Remnants of military bunkers which were used as hiding places along the trail remain at the site.

- 3 This area also contains the archaeological sites of the city of Dan, including the altar built by King Jeroboam (I Kings 12:28-29). The site of ritualistic sacrifices included a golden calf statue. The excavation of the city gates (constructed in 1700 BC) began 6 years ago.



3a Dan - Jeroboam altar



3b Dan Altar - Sacred Place



The name of the city is actually “Tel Dan”, Tel meaning man-made ‘built upon – or on top of’. As civilizations were developed, then conquered by other tribes, the original structures were not always completely destroyed. The foundations were used to build the conquering tribes’ structures. So, the city’s structures could be sitting “on top of” ancient ruins. It is an on-going debate on how far down to dig for even more ancient ruins, since to get to the next layer would mean destroying the most recently uncovered finds.



3d Dan - Entrance gates tot...



3e - Dan - City

- 4 Caesarea Philippi – So far, the most awe-inspiring moments (for me) of the trip. Standing at the base of natural springs that form the largest source of the Jordan River, on the ruins of a city built at the foot of Mount Hermon, we heard Laura Katherine read the scripture from Matthew 16. This is the recounting of Jesus asking his disciples “Who do people say that I am?” and “Who do you say that I am?”. Laura Katherine asked us to contemplate that question as we spent time at this holy site. To stand on this truly holy ground, believing in Jesus by our faith, and then to hear direct, historical evidence that Jesus actually stood in this very place – what an emotionally charged time!





4c Caesarea Philippi



4d Caesarea Philippi



4e Caesarea Philippi



4f Caesarea Philippi

- 5 Leaving Caesarea Philippi, our altitude increased as we ascended the mountains heading north toward the Golan Heights. One of the first sights in the distance was a stone fortress built atop a mountain - constructed in the 12th century during the crusades. In the distance we could see the snow-covered tops of 6,000 ft Mount Hermon. The snow melts from Mt Hermon form the 3 sources of the Jordan River. They run separately for 17 miles, then join to form the river which flows the length of the country – and provided the waters for the baptism of Christ.



5a Crusades fortress



5b Mount Hermon

6 After a lunch break at a small family-operated traditional sandwich shop, we began the steep ascent to the Golan Heights. The road ran within feet of the Syrian border which is defined by fences with bright yellow tags to identify the demarcation. Along the way, Rula, our intrepid ACTS guide, gave us lots of background information on the history of tensions within the region between Israel, Lebanon (to the north west), and Syria (to the north east).

Golan Heights was Syrian territory until the 1967 6-Day War. Rula gave 4 reasons why Israel does not want to give up the Golan Heights 1) it overlooks the 3 borders, looking down on Israel and would decrease Israel's security, 2) the waters of the Jordan River are controlled in the Golan Heights and could mean the loss of freshwater [Israel receives 80% of their water from the Jordan River], 3) atop the Golan range is a major wind farm which provides substantial electrical power to the country, and 4) the area has the best soil for the agricultural base which feeds the country.



6b Goland Heights

In the distance is a group of white buildings set in the center of the valley. This is the location of the UN peace-keeping force. It was very daunting to stand at the vista overlook and, for many of us in the group, remember where we were during those 6 days in 1967 – and then realize the conflict is still just as real today.



6d Golan Heights

- 7 We descended the Heights heading south to the newly excavated town of Migdal, home of Mary Magdalene. Construction of a beach front hotel was begun in 2010, but quickly halted by the Israeli Antiquities Authority when a bulldozer hit the corner of what is now known to be the Magdala stone – part

of the earliest ever located (1st century) synagogue. The carvings on the stone represent all the descriptions of the temple. And it is the earliest known depiction of a 7-branch Menorah. The property owner donated the land to Israel and a tourist center has been developed.

The Migdal Synagogue

This synagogue is dated to the first century CE, before the destruction of the Second Temple. It is the first synagogue discovered in Galilee and one of seven known from this period in the Land of Israel. The impressive structure was established by a community of Jewish farmers and fishermen.

The entrance hall: A rectangular room that apparently served as a study hall (Bet Midrash). A low stone bench ran along the walls of the chamber and in its center was a square-shaped mass of chalk that seems to have served as a table.

The study hall: An opening in the eastern entrance hall wall led into the central gathering hall. Three pairs of stone columns supported the hall's roof, which was made of wood and pressed earth. Low stone benches ran along the walls, which were covered with colorful frescoes and the mosaic floor was decorated in a rosetta design. Positioned in the center of the hall was a particularly grand stone furnishing, fashioned by an artist, unaccustomed with a variety of motifs, including a Menorah in relief.

The connected furnishing: This rectangular chalk stem placed in the center of the synagogue has four legs. All of its five faces are decorated in relief with a variety of patterns that form a model of the Temple and the special utensils that were used in it. This stone is the only known example of its kind, more resemble it. It apparently served as the synagogue as a table, upon which the Torah scrolls were placed.



7a Magdala Chapel



7b Magdala stone



7d Magdala



7e Magdala

Additionally, the ancient town of Migdal adjacent to the excavated synagogue, has also been excavated. We were allowed to walk the paths between the homes, the ritual baths (4 of them), and the bath drying house which has a mosaic tile floor with the same rosetta design as in the synagogue.



Also at this site is a building dedicated to the public life of Jesus and honors the women of the Bible in the Women's Atrium. The circular narthex is supported by marble pillars etched with the names of all the women in the Bible. This main chapel houses a life-size replica of Peter's fishing boat. The bottom floor is covered by stone from the 1st century building which could well have been used for a synagogue where Jesus as a rabbi would have taught.





7j Magdala - Peter's Boat



Exiting the atrium, a boardwalk leads to the water of the Sea of Galilee. Lots of photographs were taken as it was an amazing site to make incredible memories. As we were at a site that honors the women of the Bible, we were sure to have a photo of all the women on the tour! And Laura Johnson, we noted how much you were missed as our other female pastor called to preach the gospel.





7m - Magdala - Sea of Galil...



7n Magdala - Sea of Galilee

- 8 A quick 15-minute bus ride and we returned to our hotel having made a huge loop from Tiberius, north to the Golan Heights and Syrian border, and back to Tiberius. We ended our day with another fine meal at the hotel. The weather was so very pleasant, we ate outside on a terrace overlooking the water. A full moon reflecting on the water was a lovely way to end the day.

