



**VIEW SOUTH:** THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM THE HILL ABOVE THE BET SHEARIM NATIONAL PARK, LOOKING ACROSS THE SHEPHELAH OF GALILEE TOWARD MT. CARMEL (TOP).

**BELOW:** THE CAVE OF THE COFFINS (SEE PHOTO ON PAGE 145), FILLED WITH DOZENS OF SARCOPHAGI. RABBI YEHUDA HANASI AND HIS FAMILY ARE BURIED HERE.







**VIEW EAST:** CAVE OF THE COFFINS. DURING THE MAMLUK PERIOD (THIRTEENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURIES AD), THE CAVE SERVED AS A REFUGE FOR ARAB SHEPHERDS.

## BET SHEARIM NECROPOLIS

(SEE MAP ON PAGE 146)

In Hebrew, Bet Shearim means “House of Gates.” The site consists of more than thirty rock-cut tombs located near the ruins of the ancient town. The following description of the park and its history comes from its website:

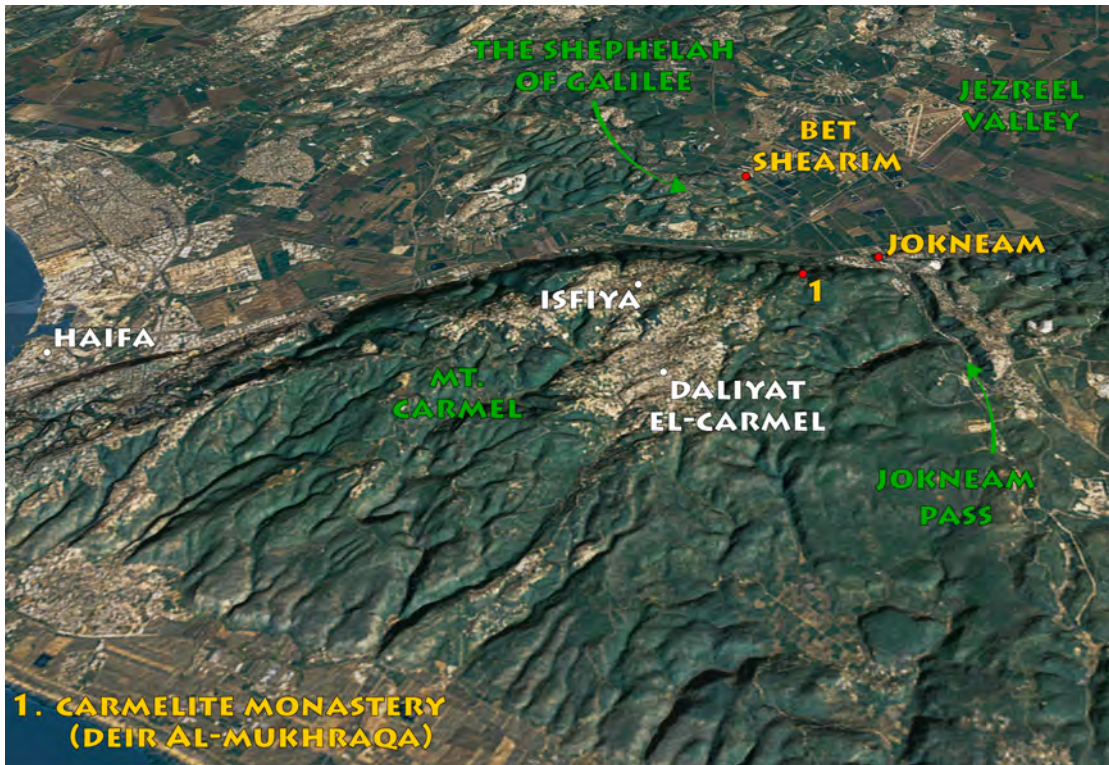
Bet She’arim National Park stands as a monumental testament to Jewish history and heritage. As the final resting place of many prominent Jewish figures, including Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, the park offers a unique window into ancient Jewish burial customs, art, and inscriptions.

Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi (or Judah the Prince) lived in the second century AD. He was head of the Sanhedrin and the chief redactor and editor of the Mishnah (written collection of Jewish oral traditions called the Oral Torah).

The site is located in the lowland hills of western Lower Galilee, also known as the Shephelah of Galilee. It sits near the highway below Mt. Carmel that runs from Acco on the coast of Palestine to Beit Shean at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley (see “Beit Shean” and “Acco/Ptolemais” in *Blessed Pilgrimage*, vols. 2 and 4).

Archaeologists found pottery shards that trace back to the Iron Age or the period of Israelite conquest. The town, however, was founded at the close of the first century BC, under the reign of Herod the Great. It gained prominence as a Jewish learning center following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD. With the Romans barring Jews from being buried on the Mount of Olives, Bet Shearim became an alternative. In the 1920s, its Arab owners sold the lands, including the necropolis, to the Jewish National Fund.





**1. CARMELITE MONASTERY  
(DEIR AL-MUKHRAQA)**

**VIEW NORTH:** MUKHRAQA IN ARABIC MEANS "THE BURNING." BY TRADITION, THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE ELIJAH MET AND DEFEATED THE PRIESTS OF BAAL ON MT. CARMEL (SEE "MT. CARMEL" IN BLESSED PILGRIMAGE, VOL. 4).

**BELOW:** THE "CAVE OF THE SIDONIAN HEAD OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY." THE CAVES WERE DISCOVERED IN 1936-1940 BY PROF. BENJAMIN MAZAR FOR THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION SOCIETY.







**VIEW NORTH:** THE MAUSOLEUM CAVE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF BET SHEARIM. A CAVE INSCRIPTION READS, "MAY YOUR PORTION BE GOOD, MY LORD FATHER AND MY LADY MOTHER, AND MAY YOUR SOULS BE BOUND IN IMMORTAL LIFE."

**BELOW (VIEW NORTH):** ABOVE THE PARK IS THIS STATUE OF ALEXANDER ZAID, ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF A SECRET DEFENSE ORGANIZATION CALLED HASHOMER. ZAID WAS KILLED BY ARABS WHILE ON GUARD DUTY IN 1938.

