



**VIEW NORTH:** THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM APPROXIMATELY THE SAME PLACE AS THE PHOTO ON PAGE 21, WITH MY HANDHELD CAMERA INSTEAD OF MY DRONE. SAFED (ZEFAT) IS ALSO VISIBLE ON TOP OF THE HILL (TOP CENTER).

**BELOW:** I MET THESE HAPPY BUS DRIVERS NEAR THE ENTRANCE TO NAHAL ARUGOT (DEAD SEA REGION) AFTER HIKING OVER FROM EIN GEDI (SEE BLESSED PILGRIMAGE, VOL. 2). ON TOUR, TAKE TIME TO MEET AND TALK WITH LOCAL PEOPLE.





**VIEW NORTH:** THIS PHOTO LOOKS ACROSS TEL RAKAT AND THE RAKAT VALLEY TOWARD THE NORTHERN SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE. HALFWAY AROUND THE SHORE WAS THE CITY OF ANCIENT CAPERNAUM.

### 3

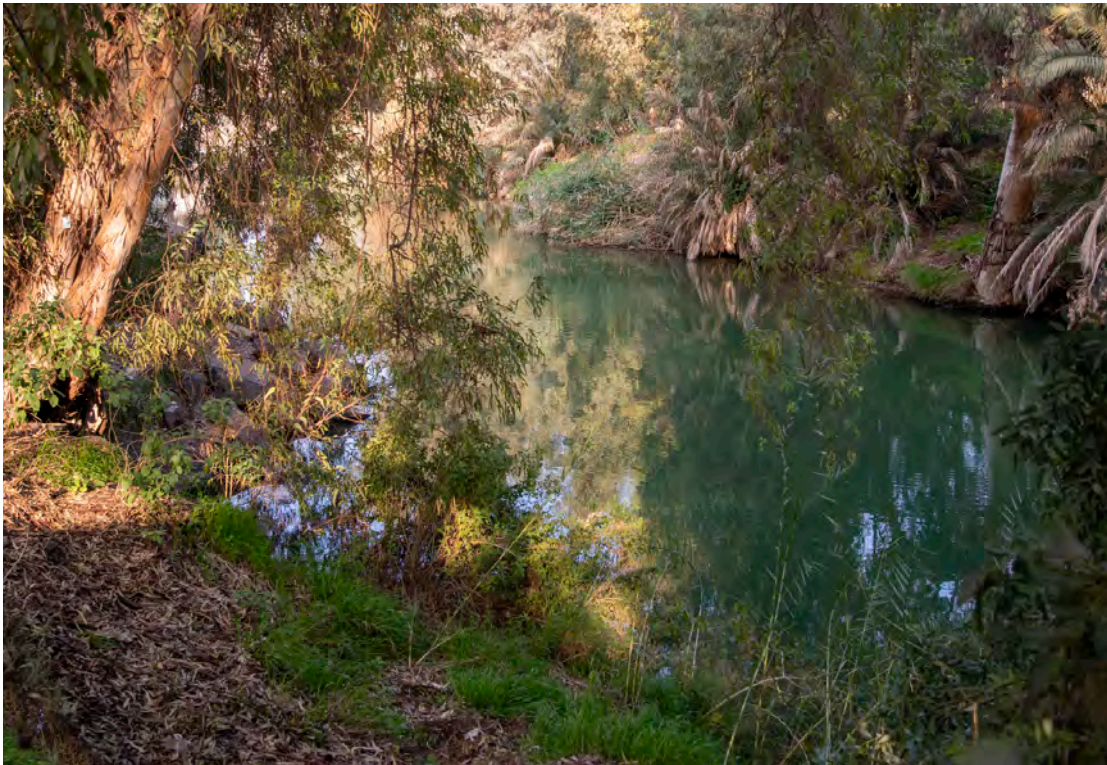
## EXPERIENCE TO LEARN

I took the photo above on a Friday. I remember the day because I hitched a ride to Tiberias with my friend Erich. Usually I would have taken the bus, but Israel’s public transportation stops early on Friday in preparation for the Sabbath. I describe the photo on the following pages, but first, the story.

After being dropped off in Tiberias, I took the bus to Yardenit at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee. It was a beautiful day, and I wanted to take pictures of the well-known baptismal site with my drone. The plan with Erich was to meet back in Tiberias at 2:00 p.m., where he dropped me off, and return to Haifa.

When I finished taking pictures, I had plenty of time to catch the bus back to Tiberias. But the bus was late, so I grabbed a taxi to the bus station. From there, I intended to catch the number 5 bus to the other side of town, where I was to meet my friend. I knew the bus and how many stops it would make and decided I could beat it by taking a shortcut. Along the way, I saw one photo opportunity after another and arrived a half hour late. Running up to the building, I told my friend, “I need five more minutes; the sun is perfect over the lake.” He smiled patiently and said okay. So I put my drone up in the air, capturing the photo *above*. Minutes made the difference before this view, with its splendid shadows, disappeared. It was a golden moment.

I took the photo at the top of page 20 from the same spot as the photo *above*, but with my handheld camera. The time was 2:34 p.m. in early November 2021, before the rain started to fall. It was a dry year, as you can tell from the photo. Precipitation had decreased from 15 inches (374 millimeters) in 2020 to 10 inches (248 millimeters) in 2021. I took the photo *above* in early February 2023, in the middle of the rainy



**VIEW EAST:** THE JORDAN RIVER NEAR YARDENIT (SEE “YARDENIT BAPTISMAL SITE” ON PAGE 293 FOR AN EXPANDED VIEW OF THE AREA).

season but still a dry winter for Israel. Notice the different colors depending on the time of year. The green landscape of the winter photo is typical of Galilee at this time of year.

## TOURING ISRAEL

As you tour the land, take time to notice your surroundings. What kind of day is it? Is the temperature hot or cold? Is the sun shining? If there are clouds in the sky, how quickly do they change? Is it windy? If it is, do you feel the wind against your face or at your back? How strong is the wind? Is it a cold wind or warm?

Be careful to avoid getting so caught up in what the guide is saying that you stop thinking about the land, no matter where you are or what you’re doing. Otherwise, you’ll begin thinking, “It’s hot. Where’s some shade?” or “It’s cold. How long before we get back to the bus?” In other words, you’ll miss an opportunity to relate to the land and experience it the way Jesus did. Thus every experience is a good experience, no matter how uncomfortable you may be. Appreciate it, even when you’re tired—no, especially when you’re tired.

What the guide has to say is important, but remember it’s information, the same information you can get anywhere: on the internet, in Sunday School, during a Bible study class, attending seminary courses, etc. You didn’t come to the Holy Land for the information. You came to experience the land, getting enough information to tie it and the Bible together. If your guide brings out a message with vital lessons, yes, by all means, pay attention. Even so, it’s essential to remember where you are and see the land as you take in a worthwhile lesson or spiritual message.

What do I see when I look at the photo *above* and the bottom photo on page 23, along with the maps and other photos taken in the same area? First, I remember the day and cherish the memory. I don’t have words, at least not ones that convey what it was like hiking around the southern end of the Sea of Galilee or stopping to eat a sandwich while looking out at the eastern shore. I can’t adequately describe how I got there and what happened earlier in the day that enabled me to recognize the spot and find it on my return.



**VIEW SOUTHEAST:** TIBERIAS AND THE SEA OF GALILEE. THE CENTRAL BUS STATION IS ON THE RIGHT SIDE BEHIND THE DARK BUILDING. THE SHORTCUT WAS THROUGH THE FIELD (BOTTOM RIGHT).

Second, I remember particular moments in the day. For example, on my way to the central bus station in the morning, I crossed an empty lot next to a yellow gas station. It was still early, and the view of Tiberias was spectacular, so I stopped to take pictures. I note the gas station because it was near the shortcut I took on my return when the sun was behind me. I knew the photos would be better than in the morning. I got a good view looking across Tiberias toward the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (*above*). It was getting late, so I ran from there to catch my ride back to Haifa.

Why do I mention running? Because it was part of the experience. Getting the pictures I wanted that

**BELOW (VIEW EAST):** THE SOUTHEASTERN SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE. THE START OF THE YARMUK CANYON IS ALSO VISIBLE ABOVE THE SOUTHERN PLAIN (TOP RIGHT).





**VIEW EAST:** AERIAL PHOTO OF YARDENIT WITH THE JORDAN RIVER BAPTISMAL SITES. I BAPTIZED MY EIGHT-YEAR-OLD SON HERE WHEN WE LIVED IN ISRAEL AS A FAMILY FORTY YEARS AGO.

provide so many memories now required a sacrifice. I had to forget the backpack’s weight, my fatigue from a long day of moving quickly from spot to spot to achieve my objectives, and my lateness in returning to the rendezvous point. I did my best to get there on time, but I couldn’t pass up near-perfect opportunities to get images that capture the land in a special way.

How does my experience translate into a lesson for you? The weather may be challenging as you tour the land, depending on the time of year. It may be scorching hot during summer months or cold and windy during winter months. It could be in the late afternoon of a long tour day. You’re tired. You’ve walked a lot, and the day isn’t over. At such times, let your thoughts turn to the Savior. Picture Him with His disciples walking on a hot day, also tired, ministering, teaching. The day isn’t over because they have one more village to reach before nightfall.

Their next meal probably wasn’t prepared and waiting for them. They didn’t have an air-conditioned bus, a nice hotel, or a comfortable bed. Remember what Jesus told a certain scribe: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matt. 8:19–20).

Compare and contrast. Before you end the day, write down whether you were tired and how you felt. You might even ask yourself, “How did Jesus and the disciples do it day after day?” Nothing you learn on tour will be more important than what you come to know by taking the time to experience the land.

## **COLD, WET, WINDY WEATHER**

I like taking pictures during the winter months because there are so many clear days. When I first got started, I would stay inside on rainy days, thinking I couldn’t get good pictures because of the weather. One of the things you quickly learn about Israel’s winter weather is how fast it changes. The following occurred just before I returned to the United States in February 2023.

I decided to walk the western cliffs overlooking the Upper Jordan (Hula) Valley (see photos on page 25), hoping to get some clear pictures across the valley toward the Golan Heights and Mount Hermon. The day started with a downpour. I took the photo of myself on page 25 from a video I made right after I



**VIEW EAST:** THE UPPER JORDAN VALLEY FROM UPPER GALILEE DURING A BREAK IN THE RAIN.

got off the bus. You can hear and see the rain in the video with me saying, “Well, this is going to be an adventure. It’s going to be a great day!” And that’s how you have to look at every day in the Holy Land regardless of the weather or how uncomfortable you are. Trust me; it’s all about the experience! You want as many as you can get. You *want* to feel the heat. Be *grateful* if you’re lucky enough to be out when the rain is coming down in torrents and you have nowhere to go. Why? Because as much as possible, you hope to experience what Jesus and His disciples went through in all kinds of weather, at all times of the year: “And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter” (John 10:22). Why did John think it important to tell us it was winter? I like to think it was to help us relate Jesus’s daily life and challenges a little more with our own.



**BELOW (VIEW SOUTHEAST):** THE UPPER JORDAN VALLEY WITH THE HULA NATURE RESERVE (TOP RIGHT).





**VIEW EAST:** UPPER GALILEE FROM THE WESTERN CLIFFS OVERLOOKING THE UPPER JORDAN VALLEY (COVERED BY CLOUDS). THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN DURING THE WINTER ON JANUARY 31, 2023.

**BELOW (VIEW SOUTH):** THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE ONE ABOVE. THE ORANGE, BLUE, AND WHITE TRAIL MARKER IDENTIFIES ISRAEL'S NATIONAL TRAIL BETWEEN THE SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN BORDERS.





**VIEW WEST:** THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN THE SAME DAY AS THE ONES ON PAGE 26. I LEFT THE UPPER JORDAN VALLEY RIM AND WALKED TO ALMA, WHERE I CAUGHT A BUS TO SAFED AND ANOTHER TO HAIFA. THIS IS THE ROAD I WALKED, MOVING TOWARD THE HIGH MOUNTAINS OF UPPER GALILEE (SEE "UPPER GALILEE" ON PAGE 47).

## WHAT CAN I DO FROM HOME?

Don't think you can't experience the Holy Land from home. Have you ever been caught in a storm without an umbrella or other protections? Have you ever stood against a wind that almost took you off your feet? Have you ever been cold or felt the sting of early frostbite in your hands or toes? Have you ever experienced debilitating heat, which is standard in Arizona, Texas, and parts of California? Have you ever been so thirsty you would give anything for a drink or so tired you didn't think you could take one more step?

If you've experienced any of these things, you can relate to physical settings in the Bible. Take, for example, the photos on page 26. I took them within minutes of each other in the same area overlooking the Upper Jordan Valley. Notice how, when you look at the second picture, you immediately warm up with the sunshine despite the muddy path. The rain had stopped, and the sun poked through for only a moment.

Put yourself in one of the wintry pictures, and take with you the times you were cold, wet, and wishing you were comfortable at home. Ask yourself, how did Jesus and His disciples endure such times? Cold, wet, and hungry after a long day of walking from village to village?

I recently hiked from town to my Utah home 10.5 miles (17 kilometers) away, wearing a light workout jacket. The day started nice, but the temperature dropped to 39°F (3.8°C) when a windy storm blew in. The windchill factor made it feel like 29°F (-1.6°C). I stayed below the highway, walking the whole way against a strong wind. Usually, it takes me three and a half hours. This time it took me four and a half hours, and I was miserable the whole way. By the time I got to my home, my hands were bright red and frozen. It was half an hour before I could unbuckle my backpack.

What did I learn? Halfway into the hike, I began thinking about the Holy Land. I pictured myself in a photo (images of the land I carry in my mind) but experienced the wind and cold where I was. I thought about Jesus and those who followed Him and what they endured on cold, windy days. How did they do it





**VIEW WEST:** THE JEZREEL VALLEY FROM MT. TABOR LOOKING TOWARD NAZARETH (TOP CENTER) AND MT. PRECIPICE WITH THE TREES ON THE NORTH SLOPE (TOP LEFT).

**VIEW WEST:** CABBAGE HARVESTING IN A MUDDY JEZREEL VALLEY. I TOOK THIS PICTURE WALKING FROM MT. TABOR TO NAIN ON THE NORTHERN SLOPE OF THE HILL OF MOREH, A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 6 MILES (9.6 KILOMETERS).





**VIEW EAST:** THE NORTHERN SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE, LOOKING TOWARD GAMLA AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE AFTERNOON ON A WET, RAINY DAY.

and stay on task, remaining true to their mission? Where did they find shelter after ministering and teaching all day? I thought of a passage from the Book of Mormon that reflects on several ways Christ suffered during His mortal ministry and on the cross of Calvary: “And lo, [Christ] shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mosiah 3:7).

We can’t suffer as Christ did, but as we do our best to relate our day-to-day experiences to His, we will value His life and gift to all of God’s children even more. We will be less inclined to complain and more willing to accept life’s challenges as opportunities to grow.

## CONCLUSION

Taking pictures of your traveling companions in the Holy Land will help you remember your visit. Writing down your feelings at the end of each day will help you recapture the moments later. Reading your thoughts from time to time and reflecting on your travels in the land will help you feel the blessedness of sacred moments as you re-experience what you felt on tour. Believe me. I have been there many times. I know how it happens and why, and how it will happen to you if you take the time to reflect.

There’s something magical about the land promised to Abraham and his descendants that is nearly impossible to capture in a photo, no matter how perfect the composition or time of day. Hinting at it is the best we can do. Many times the beauty of a landscape caught my attention as I was hiking around the country. I grabbed my camera and took a picture only to find later that I didn’t capture what my eyes saw and heart felt. Nevertheless, walking, viewing, and studying the land with Bible in hand, with or without a camera, is what it means to *experience* the Holy Land.