



**VIEW NORTHWEST:** THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN ON MT. GILBOA LOOKING TOWARD THE JEZREEL VALLEY AND THE HILL OF MOREH (CENTER RIGHT). LIKE THIS FENCE, JESUS ENCOUNTERED OBSTACLES IN HIS LIFE BUT KEPT MOVING FORWARD.

**BELOW (VIEW WEST):** THE WAY OF THE PATRIARCHS AS VIEWED FROM THE CITY OF ANCIENT SHILOH (SEE "SHILOH" IN BLESSED PILGRIMAGE, VOL. 2). THIS WAS ALSO THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM THROUGH SAMARIA TO GALILEE.







**VIEW EAST:** THIS ROCKY TRAIL LEADS INTO THE VALLEY OF THE DOVES BETWEEN MT. ARBEL (TOP CENTER) AND MT. NITAI, THEN INTO THE PLAIN OF GENNESARET. THE PATHS JESUS WALKED WERE RARELY SMOOTH.

# 1

## THE PATHS JESUS WALKED

A suggestion for anyone planning to visit the Holy Land is to read Elder Thomas S. Monson’s April 1974 General Conference talk, “The Paths Jesus Walked.”<sup>1</sup> He gave it on the day Spencer W. Kimball was sustained as the president of the Church after the passing of President Harold B. Lee.

It’s a blessing and a privilege to walk where Jesus walked, to see the land and experience its weather. It’s not, however, the most important thing a person can do, nor is it necessary to be happy or fulfilled in life, something everyone surely understands.

The New Testament contains very few details about the land of the Bible or where Jesus walked in it. The few descriptions it has are general. They include areas around the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem. It mentions only a handful of cities visited by Jesus, and then only in connection with an event bearing witness to Him as the Messiah. The Savior gave the Bread of Life sermon in the synagogue of Capernaum. He raised a widow’s son in Nain, six miles south of Mt. Tabor overlooking the Jezreel Valley. After His family left Egypt, they returned to Nazareth, where Jesus grew to manhood in fulfillment of prophecy. In Nazareth, Jesus’s friends and neighbors rejected Him after He read a passage from Isaiah that identified Him as the Messiah. These sites are among the few mentioned in the Gospels.

The New Testament contains a few geographical notes, such as Jesus went “*up* to Jerusalem” or “*down* to Capernaum.” These are fun because they accurately describe the situation on the ground. If you’re in Jericho, you go *up* to Jerusalem. If you’re in Cana of Galilee, you go *down* to Capernaum. And since there were only a few ways you could travel in these areas, anciently and today, and reach your destination, we

know something about where Jesus walked. We can visit these areas at different times of the year, experience the weather and other physical conditions Jesus encountered in His day, and get a feel for the distances involved. These are the paths Jesus walked. It's fun and rewarding to follow in His footsteps.

Nevertheless, every member of my Church can't visit the Holy Land. Those who do are typically in the country ten to fourteen days, with much of their time in a bus, and see only a handful of sites and places. Ninety percent of biblical events took place in what Palestinians call the West Bank, and what Jews call Judea and Samaria after their biblical names. Tours used to travel in this area, but they don't today because of the violence that occasionally breaks out between Arabs and Jews. People who know the biblical history of the land call the road through this region "the way of the Patriarchs" because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob walked this way between Shechem, Jerusalem, Hebron, and Beersheba. It's also called the Hill Road or Ridge Route because it follows the watershed line on the mountaintops of Judea and Samaria.

## **WE DO NOT TAKE SIDES**

Here is a good place to share a talk Elder Howard W. Hunter gave at BYU entitled "All Are Alike unto God." I quote him at length because it's vital that we, as Latter-day Saints, remember his message. The following statements come near Elder Hunter's closing remarks:

As members of the Lord's church, we need to lift our vision beyond personal prejudices. We need to discover the supreme truth that indeed our Father is no respecter of persons. Sometimes we unduly offend brothers and sisters of other nations by assigning exclusiveness to one nationality of people over another. As our Father loves all his children, we must love all people—of every race, culture, and nationality—and teach them the principles of the gospel that they might embrace it and come to a knowledge of the divinity of the Savior.

Elder Hunter continued, addressing the problem between Arabs and Jews:

Let me cite, as an example of exclusiveness, the present problem in the Middle East—the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. We do not need to apologize nor mitigate any of the prophecies concerning the Holy Land. We believe them and declare them to be true. But this does not give us justification to dogmatically pronounce that others of our Father's children are not children of promise.

We have members of the Church in the Muslim world. These are wonderful Saints, good members of the Church. They live in Iran, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. Sometimes they are offended by members of the Church who give the impression that we favor only the aims of the Jews. The Church has an interest in all of Abraham's descendants, and we should remember that the history of the Arabs goes back to Abraham through his son Ishmael.

Next, he spoke about God's relationship with His children:

Imagine a father with many sons, each having different temperaments, aptitudes, and spiritual traits. Does he love one son less than another? Perhaps the son who is least spiritually inclined has the father's attention, prayers, and pleadings more than the others. Does that mean that he loves the others less? Do you imagine our Heavenly Father loving one nationality of his offspring more exclusively than others? As members of the Church, we need to be reminded of Nephi's challenging question: "Know ye not that there are more nations than one?" (2 Ne. 29:7).

Elder Hunter explained how the Church was involved in helping to develop the beautiful Orson Hyde Garden on the western slope of the Mount of Olives:



**VIEW EAST:** A DARK MEGIDDO OVERLOOKING THE JEZREEL VALLEY SYMBOLIZES THE GREAT CONFLICT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL BEFORE CHRIST'S RETURN (SEE "TEL MEGIDDEO" IN BLESSED PILGRIMAGE, VOL. 2).

At the present time we are engaged in a project of beautifying the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem by a garden, in memory of Orson Hyde, an early apostle of the Church, and the dedicatory prayer he offered on that site. It is not because we favor one people over another. Jerusalem is sacred to the Jews, but it is also sacred to the Arabs.

Elder Hunter shared a conversation he had with a cabinet minister of Egypt, who told him that “if a bridge is ever built between Christianity and Islam, it must be built by the Mormon Church.” Elder Hunter “was impressed by his recitation of the similarities and the common bonds of brotherhood.” The Apostle added:

Both the Jews and the Arabs are children of our Father. They are both children of promise, and as a church we do not take sides. We have love for and an interest in each. The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring about love, unity, and brotherhood of the highest order. Like Nephi of old, may we be able to say, “I have charity for the Jew. . . . I also have charity for the Gentiles” (2 Ne. 33:8–9).

Next, Elder Hunter spoke to Jews and to all who are descendants of Abraham:

To our friends of Judah, we say: We are your brethren of the house of Joseph—we feel close relationship to you. We are messengers of the true covenant and bear a message that God has spoken in this day and time.

To our kinsmen of Abraham, we say: We are your brethren—we look upon no nation or nationality as second-class citizens. We invite all men to investigate our message and to receive our fellowship.

Elder Hunter concluded with a message to everyone, in which he identified the mission of the Church:

To our brothers and sisters of all nationalities: We bear solemn witness and testify that God has spoken in our day and time, that heavenly messengers have been sent, that God has revealed his mind and will to a prophet, Joseph Smith. And, as Andrew beckoned his brother, Simon Peter, to come and hear the Messiah, we say to one and all: “Come and see” (See John 1:35–42).

As our Father loves all his children, we must love all people—of every race, culture, and nationality—and teach them the principles of the gospel that they might embrace it and come to a knowledge of the divinity of the Savior. Only they are favored who keep his commandments.<sup>2</sup>

None of what Elder Hunter taught suggests that we shouldn't recognize evil when we see it and call it out.<sup>3</sup> Why? Because we hate evil wherever it rears its ugly head. We assign evil to individuals, however, not to nations or their citizens. Corrupt and wicked men account for most of the world's problems, primarily because they teach hatred and incite anger as a way of controlling people and advancing personal agendas.

## WHAT PATHS DID JESUS WALK?

When Elder Monson visited the Holy Land, he read scriptures in a boat on the Sea of Galilee with district president David B. Galbraith. In Elder Monson's talk, "The Paths Jesus Walked," he suggested another way to visit the Holy Land. He spoke not about physical paths but about spiritual ones, including disappointments, temptations, and pain. He invited us to recognize such times and their purpose:

Yes, each of us will walk the path of disappointment, perhaps due to an opportunity lost, a power misused, or a loved one not taught. The path of temptation, too, will be the path of each. "And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:39).

Likewise shall we walk the path of pain. We cannot go to heaven in a feather bed. The Savior of the world entered after great pain and suffering. We, as servants, can expect no more than the Master. Before Easter there must be a cross.

Other paths, also walked by the Savior, bring joy. Some of these are obedience, service, and prayer. After discussing each one, Elder Monson concluded:

Shall we have the faith, even the desire, to walk these pathways which Jesus walked? God's prophet, seer, and revelator [President Spencer W. Kimball] has this day invited us to do so. All we need do is follow him, for this is the pathway he walks. . . . As we do, and direct our footsteps along the paths which Jesus walked, let us remember the testimony Jesus gave: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . . I am the light and . . . life of the world. . . ." (3 Ne. 11:10–11). "I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father" (Doctrine and Covenants 110:4).

What was Elder Monson's message? The same one President Ezra Taft Benson gave in the following declaration:

That man [or woman] is greatest and most blessed and joyful whose life most closely fits the pattern of the Christ. This has nothing to do with earthly wealth, power, or prestige [or visiting the Holy Land]. The only true test of greatness, blessedness, joyfulness is how close a life can come to being like the Master, Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Following the counsel to walk the *way* Jesus walked, making every possible effort, is something everyone can and should do who desires to follow the Master. If you are fortunate enough to visit the Holy Land, you will get the most out of your trip if you focus less on *where* Jesus walked and more on *how*. If that is your purpose, you will encounter the spirit of the land—present wherever you go, at whatever sites you visit—and have an unforgettable experience.





**VIEW WEST:** THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN ON THE TRAIL ABOVE NAHAL DALIYOT AS IT MAKES ITS WAY TOWARD THE FIRST-CENTURY JEWISH FORTRESS OF GAMLA (SEE “GAMLA” ON PAGE 275).

## ENDNOTES

1 Thomas S. Monson, “The Paths Jesus Walked,” *Ensign* (May 1974), Gospel Library.

2 Howard W. Hunter, “All Are Alike unto God,” *Ensign* (June 1979), Gospel Library. Nephi was “favored of the Lord” because, as explained in the Book of Mormon, he “was more faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord” (cf. 1 Ne. 1:1 and Mosiah 10:13).

3 I was in Israel on October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists attacked and killed 1,200 Israelis (men, women, and children), and took over two hundred people captive, many of whom they later killed.

4 Ezra Taft Benson, “Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *Ensign* (Dec. 1988), Gospel Library. Additional quotes from the talk include the following: “[Jesus] gave us the perfect model—himself—after which we are to pattern our lives. He said, ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (John 15:13). Not only did he lay down before us the perfect example for earthly living, but for our sake he willingly gave us his life. He went through an agony both in body and spirit, of which we cannot comprehend, to bring to us the glorious blessing of the Atonement and the Resurrection (see Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–19).”

“[Jesus] has provided us the gift of a prophet. Of all mortal men, we should keep our eyes most firmly fixed on the captain, the prophet, seer, and revelator, and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is the man who stands closest to the fountain of living waters. There are some heavenly instructions for us that we can only receive through the prophet. . . . Although his prophet is mortal, God will not let him lead his Church astray. God knows all things, the end from the beginning, and no man becomes President of the Church of Jesus Christ by accident, nor remains there by chance, nor is called home by happenstance.”