

WALKING THE LAND · EAGLES' WINGS YOUNG ADULTS · ISRAEL

The Days We Lived

a journey on eagles' wings · August 2026 · from the sea to the gates of Jerusalem

*"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians,
and how I bore you on eagles' wings,
and brought you to myself."*

EXODUS 19:4



ALL OF US · THE TEMPLE MOUNT, JERUSALEM · THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

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six days, four teachings, one road

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Walking into the Pages

why we read every verse standing on the ground it happened on

*"Weren't our hearts burning within us,
while he spoke to us along the way,
and while he opened the Scriptures to us?"*

LUKE 24:32 · THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

This whole journey ran on one idea. We did not visit places and mention verses. We opened the Book and walked into its pages. At every site we read the passage while standing on the ground it happened on, because the Bible was not written in a library. It was written on a port, a cliff, a lake, a river, a desert, a mountain, a city of stone. When you stand in the place and hear the words, the page gains a third dimension. The Bible becomes 3D. The Bible becomes alive.

And here is the gift you have given yourself, the best gift a pilgrim can give. It does not stay behind at the airport. Forever now, when you open the Book, Jaffa will have a harbor smell, the Galilee will have wind on it, the Jordan will be exactly as small and as mighty as you remember, and Jerusalem will be gold stone under your own feet. You will never again read these words flat. They are yours now, to hold and to walk through, for the rest of your life.

WHERE WE WALKED, WHERE IT IS WRITTEN

Day I · Jaffa — Jonah 1:1–3 · Acts 10:9–16

Day II · Independence Hall, Carmel, Magdala — Isaiah 66:8 · 1 Kings 18:20–40 · Luke 8:1–3 · John 20:11–18

Day III · Arbel, the Galilee & the Jordan — Psalm 121 · Matthew 5:1–12 · John 6:5–13 · John 21:15–17 · Mark 2:1–12 · Genesis 1:2 · John 3:1–8 · Matthew 3:13–17 · Mark 4:35–41

Day IV · The Desert and the Ascent — Joshua 4:1–7 · Psalm 122 · Luke 19:41–44 · Ezekiel 44:1–2 · Acts 1:9–12

Day V · The Empty Tomb and the Old City — John 20:1–18 · John 5:1–9 · Luke 22:14–20 · Acts 2:1–11

Day VI · The City of David — 1 Kings 1:38–39 · 2 Kings 20:20 · John 7:37–38 · John 9:1–25

The teachings — Isaiah 66:2 · 1 Corinthians 1:27–29 · Matthew 6:9–10 · Deuteronomy 16:16 · John 12:20–21

Read them again at home, one place at a time. That is how the journey continues after the airplane lands.

Same Port, Two Answers

the port of callings

*"But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh.
He went down to Joppa, and found a ship."*

JONAH 1:3 · AND ACTS 10, ON A ROOFTOP ABOVE THE SAME BAY

You came in on two planes, hours apart, strangers passing luggage carts in the same arrivals hall. Then Jaffa made you one.

We stood in the oldest working port on earth and met the only man in the Bible who paid money to get away from God. Jonah heard "Arise, go to Nineveh," and he arose, and he went down to Joppa, and he paid the fare, a real prophet with a real ticket, sailing in exactly the wrong direction. Eight centuries later, on a rooftop above that same bay, Peter fell asleep hungry and saw heaven opened and a sheet coming down, and heard the voice that would not accept his no. Same port. Same call. Two answers.

The Bishop opened our journey there, and we climbed to the house of Simon the Tanner, where hospitality came before the vision, the way it usually does. And we carried one warning down from that roof: if you can fully explain God, you have probably built yourself a golden calf. Peter thought he knew exactly what God would never ask of him. The sheet came down anyway.

One more ship. In 1898 Theodor Herzl stepped ashore at Jaffa carrying a country that did not yet exist, and one of the few who believed him was a Christian clergyman named William Hechler, who loved the people of the Book because he loved the Book. Your first night in Israel, you slept inside their dream.

יָפֹהּ · **Yafeh**, beautiful. Jaffa carries its own compliment as a name. But the most beautiful thing that ever happened there was invisible, a door opening in a dream.



THE JOURNEY OPENS ABOVE THE PORT



FIFTY FOUR STRANGERS, DAY ONE



THE GATE OF FAITH



THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE TANNER



THE DOOR AT NUMBER EIGHT



THE BAY, AND THE CITY THAT CAME LATER

A Nation Reborn, a Fire Answered

from a small hall on Rothschild Boulevard to the tower town of the Galilee

"Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?

Shall a land be born in one day?

Shall a nation be brought forth at once?"

ISAIAH 66:8 · READ IN THE ROOM WHERE IT HAPPENED

The day began in a plain room in Tel Aviv where, in thirty two minutes in May 1948, a nation two thousand years in exile stood up and answered Isaiah's question out loud. We stood in the present tense fact of Israel and read the story backwards, the way this land teaches you to read, from what is, back to the intention behind it.

Then north, past Caesarea, and up the ridge of Carmel to Muhraka, the place of burning. Carmel is the rain gate of the land, the first ridge the sea clouds strike, and Baal was sold to Israel as the rain god, so God set the showdown on Baal's home court. One man against four hundred and fifty, and a crowd that would not commit, until the fire fell and the people shouted the answer that had been walking around the mountain all day inside the prophet's own name: Eliyahu, my God is Yahweh.

And we ended by the water at Magdala, the tower town, home of the woman who saw Him first. In the hall of the pillars we walked the lineage of the ladies of the Bible, Sarah who laughed, Miriam with her tambourine, Deborah under her palm, Ruth the foreigner, Hannah whose lips moved without sound, Esther in the palace. Then the women of Luke chapter eight who paid for the road, Joanna and Susanna and Mary of Magdala, who stood at the cross when the men ran and heard her own name spoken in a garden on the third morning. And we stood before the pillar that was left blank on purpose. It is still waiting for names.

אָנעני · **Aneni**, answer me. The heart of Elijah's prayer on the ridge, and Israel still cries it on fast days, twenty eight centuries later. One man's prayer became a nation's.

Down Is the Way Through

Arbel, Capernaum, and the river of second births

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills.

Where does my help come from?"

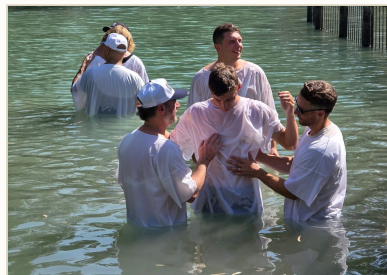
PSALM 121 · READ ON THE CLIFF OF ARBEL AT MORNING

The itinerary had a question mark next to Mount Arbel. You erased it before breakfast. From the top of the cliff you saw the whole Gospel in one look, Capernaum, Tabgha, the hill of the Beatitudes, the water holding them all together, and then you spent the day walking into the map you had just seen. The Kingdom was announced again over your heads on the hillside. At Tabgha you stood thirty steps from the table where a man who denied Him three times got his work back. In Capernaum you walked the floor of His own town.

And then the river. You have been in water before, all of you. The Spirit hovered over the face of the waters before there was light, and you floated nine months in your mother's womb before you ever breathed, and Jesus took the water you were formed in and made it a door you can walk through twice. So you walked through it. Hands laid on chests. Heads bowed into friends' shoulders. A huddle in wet white shirts holding each other like one body, and arms thrown at the sky. You did not get wet that day. You got born.



CLIMBING ARBEL



THE JORDAN · HANDS AND HEADS



ONE BODY, WET AND NEW

We ended on the water, in a boat like the one they pulled from the mud after two thousand years, the wind coming across from the Golan, the harp shaped sea playing us home.

נִשְׁעָן · Essa, I will lift. Faith begins as a movement, not a feeling. Before the help arrives, you lift your eyes. The day began a hundred and eighty meters above the water, doing exactly that.

From the Lowest Place to the Waiting Gate

Qasr el-Yahud, Qumran, the Dead Sea, the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane

*"I was glad when they said to me,
'Let's go to Yahweh's house!'
Our feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem."*

PSALM 122 · THE SONG OF GOING UP

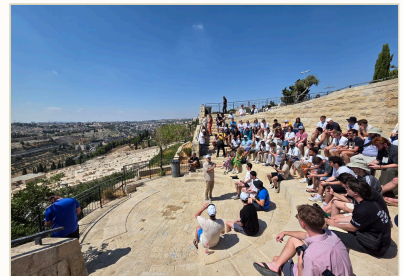
This was the day the land taught its deepest lesson in geography: you go down before you go up. Down to the Jordan at Qasr el-Yahud, where Joshua crossed and where the heavens opened. Down to Qumran, where scrolls waited two thousand years in desert caves for a shepherd boy to throw a stone, and where all fifty four of us stood laughing under one canopy. Down to the lowest place on the face of the earth, where you floated on water that refuses to let anyone sink, and discovered that even the Dead Sea holds you.



FLOATING WHERE NOTHING SINKS



FIRST SIGHT OF JERUSALEM



ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

And then, up. The bus climbed out of the desert and the ridge opened and Jerusalem was simply there, gold and stone across the valley, and before anybody said a word an arm went straight up in the air. We sat together on the Mount of Olives with the city spread below us. We stood under olive trees in Gethsemane old enough to be witnesses. And across the valley we faced the Golden Gate, sealed shut for centuries, looking back at us.



THE WITNESS TREES OF GETHSEMANE



THE GOLDEN GATE, STILL SEALED



ALL OF US AT QUMRAN

עֲלִיָּה · **Aliyah**, going up. In Hebrew you never travel to Jerusalem. You ascend to her. Every psalm of the road says it, and that day your feet learned it.

You Saw the Ending First

the Garden Tomb, Bethesda, the Via Dolorosa, the Upper Room

*"He is not here, for he has risen, just like he said.
Come, see the place where the Lord was lying."*

MATTHEW 28:6 · READ IN A GARDEN AT AN OPEN TOMB

The itinerary did something strange that day. It started with the resurrection. Before the city was awake we stood at an open tomb, the only shrine on earth venerated for what is not in it. Mary of Magdala at dawn, the stone rolled away, two disciples racing, the cloth folded neatly by someone who was not in a hurry. You already knew this Mary. You had met her three days earlier in her own town by the sea.

Then Damascus Gate, and the Old City swallowed us. At the Pool of Bethesda you looked down into the deep stone cuts where a man lay waiting thirty eight years for someone to carry him to the water, and Jesus asked the question that still stings, do you want to be made well, and skipped the water entirely.



BETHESDA · THE POOL OF THE LONG WAIT



THE WAY OF SORROW, IN THREE TONGUES



SINGING AT THE UPPER ROOM

And then the Via Dolorosa. Pilgrims have walked those alleys for centuries weeping their way toward a tomb. You walked it the other way around. You came to the sorrow already knowing it ends in an empty room. That is the whole difference between grief and hope, the same road, walked with different information.

We ended on Mount Zion, in the Upper Room above the tomb of David. Two stories live in that one room. The night a host who longed for that dinner lifted the cup of the new covenant over twelve guests who were hours from failing him. And fifty days later, the morning of Acts chapter two, when wind and fire filled the same walls and every nation in the street heard one sermon in its own language. Then it happened again, quietly. Fifty four of you stood outside those walls in the evening light, hands in the air, singing.

בְּרִית · **Brit**, covenant. A word that has always required blood to cut it. The table you grew up at was set in that room.

Sent

the center of the world, Hezekiah's tunnel, and a man who came up seeing

"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent").

So he went away, washed, and came back seeing.

JOHN 9:7

We began at first light on the Temple Mount, the center of the center of the center of the world. Mount Moriah, where Abraham raised the knife and God provided the ram, where Solomon built and Herod expanded, where the Holy of Holies stood. Before we went up I gave you the only definition of prayer I know. Prayer is the opposite of worry. To pray is to meditate on what you want. To worry is to meditate on what you do not want. And the highest level of all is to meditate on what God wants, *yehi retzoncha*, let your will be done. The Temple is not standing today. The Holy of Holies is standing forever. Some things do not need stones to exist.

Then we went down into the rock. Twenty seven centuries ago Hezekiah's men cut a tunnel through solid stone from both ends at once, working toward each other in the dark, to bring the water of the Gihon spring inside the walls before Assyria arrived. It is written down: "how he made the pool, and the conduit, and brought water into the city." Second Kings twenty, verse twenty. You walked it with water at your knees and the ceiling on your heads. You walked inside a verse.

The tunnel ends at the Pool of Siloam, whose steps were lost for two thousand years until a city crew came to fix a broken sewer pipe in 2004 and the digger hit ancient stone. The Bible does not need our permission to be true. It just waits.



INSIDE HEZEKIAH'S TUNNEL



TEACHING AT THE POOL



WORSHIP UNDER DAVID'S HARP

At that water Solomon was anointed king. From that water, at Sukkot, the priests carried a golden pitcher up to the Temple while the city sang, and it was into that ceremony that Jesus stood and shouted, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. And to that pool He sent a man born blind, with mud on his eyes, to wash in a place whose name means Sent. The man went in the dark, feeling the walls, looking like a fool, and came back up the pilgrim road seeing. The miracle did not happen where he met Jesus. It happened where he obeyed Him.

Then something happened on those steps that was not in any itinerary. You prayed for each other. Hands on shoulders, heads down, all over the stones, in the sun. And afterward you worshipped in the City of David, under a golden harp on a banner, in the town where the man who wrote the Psalms wrote them.



PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER ON THE STEPS OF SILOAM

שלוח · **Shiloach**, sent. The water is sent through the rock, the man was sent to the water, and the One who sent him called Himself the One who was sent.

The NIPs

the guest list of heaven

*"To this man will I look,
even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,
and who trembles at my word."*

ISAIAH 66:2

Every place we walked this week, the same secret was waiting. The world runs on VIPs, very important people, the guest list, the front row, the blue checkmark. God runs on NIPs. Not Important People. He is not impressed by the guest list, and He has spent the entire Bible choosing the people who were not on it.

Look at who we met. Ruth, a widow from Moab, a foreigner gleaning leftover barley at the edge of a field, legally excluded from the assembly, and she becomes the great grandmother of the most important family in history. Her great grandson David was the eighth son, the one left with the sheep while the prophet interviewed his taller brothers, not the biggest of the group, not the obvious one. That boy saved Israel from the Philistines, established Jerusalem, and wrote the songbook the whole world still prays from.

And when Yeshua came, He kept the family habit. He built His movement out of Peter, a fisherman from a village of two hundred people, the man you followed all week from the boats to the rooftop to the Upper Room. He walked up to Matthew sitting in the customs booth, a taxman everyone despised, and said two words, follow me, and made him a Gospel writer. He gave the longest conversation in John to a Samaritan woman with five broken marriages, His first resurrection appearance to a formerly demon possessed woman from a fish town, and paradise itself to a thief with no baptism, no restitution, and no time left.

And the deepest proof is the story itself. God came as a NIP. Born to a teenage village girl, laid in a feeding trough, raised in a town people mocked, executed between two criminals. Not one VIP credential in the whole account. Why does He work this way? Because when God works through the obviously unqualified, only one explanation is left standing, and it is not us. *"That no flesh should boast before God."* First Corinthians one, verse twenty nine. And because an empty cup is the only kind that can be filled.

So hear the end of the teaching, you who came here young and unknown and uncertain what you are worth. The rope between the important and the unimportant people was never real. The King of this whole story prefers your empty hands to a full resume. You are not waiting to become somebody. In the only book that matters, the NIPs are the main characters.

Peter the fisherman. Matthew the taxman. Ruth the foreigner. David the forgotten son. Mary of Magdala. And you.

Prayer

the opposite of worry

*"Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.
Let your Kingdom come. Let your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven."*

MATTHEW 6:9-10

Here is the whole teaching in one line. Prayer is the opposite of worry.

To pray is to meditate on what you want. To worry is to meditate on what you don't want. Simple as that. None of us knows what is about to happen, not today, not tomorrow. And because we do not know, there is no vacuum. There is no option called doing nothing. Your mind will meditate on the future either way. So you have exactly two choices. You can worry, and rehearse everything you do not want. Or you can pray, and rehearse everything you do.

Jesus said this, and He said it in one sermon, on one hillside, the one you stood on. First He taught them to pray, let your will be done. And a few breaths later, in the same sermon, *"Therefore don't be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself."* Matthew six, verse thirty four. He put prayer and worry in the same chapter because they are the same muscle, pointed in opposite directions.

And this is the deepest level. To meditate on what you want is prayer. To meditate on what God wants, until what He wants is what you want, that is the highest level of being. He prayed it Himself, under the olive trees you stood beneath. *"Not my will, but yours, be done."* Luke twenty two, verse forty two.

The Temple is not standing today. The Holy of Holies is standing forever. Some things do not need stones to exist. So do not worry there. Pray there.

יְהִי רָצוֹן · **Yehi retzoncha**, let your will be done. For two thousand years every Jewish prayer at that Wall has opened with almost the same words, yehi ratzon milfanecha, may it be your will. Jesus and the Jewish people are praying the same three words at the same mountain. That is not a coincidence. That is a family.

You Are Not Tourists

pilgrimage began while Jesus was still walking this land

*"Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast.
These came to Philip and asked him, saying,
'Sir, we want to see Jesus.'"*

JOHN 12:20-21

I said it to you every day and I will keep saying it. You are not tourists. You are pilgrims.

A tourist asks what a place can give him. A pilgrim asks what a place asks of him. A tourist collects. A pilgrim is changed. Same bus, same camera, same sore feet, completely different person getting off at the end.

And here is what most people never realize. Pilgrimage is not something invented later, in the Middle Ages, with staffs and shells. It was already ancient law and already the family rhythm while Jesus was walking this land. *"Three times in a year all your males shall appear before Yahweh your God in the place which he shall choose."* Deuteronomy sixteen, verse sixteen. Three times a year the whole nation walked up.

And He obeyed it. He grew up doing exactly what you did this week. *"His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast."* Luke two. That is the boy who stayed behind in the Temple, a pilgrim child on a pilgrim road, lost in a crowd that was enormous because the whole country was on it. They sang as they climbed, Psalms one hundred twenty through one hundred thirty four, the Songs of Ascents, the road playlist of the pilgrims.

Now the verse that puts you in the story. The first non Jews in the Gospel who came looking for Jesus were pilgrims who had come up for the feast, and they said six words, we want to see Jesus. That is you. Two thousand years later, in the same city, on the same stones, saying the same six words. You are not visiting their story. You are standing in their line.

And remember how the Church began. *"Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under the sky."* Acts two, verse five. Why were all the nations in Jerusalem that morning? Because it was Shavuot. Because they were pilgrims. God poured out the fire on people who had walked a long way to be there.

עֲלִיָּה לְרֶגֶל · **Aliyah la'regel**, going up by foot. Regal is foot. In this language pilgrimage is not a spiritual mood. It is a foot on a road going uphill.

THE JOURNEY

Carried Here

a blessing for the road home

Look at the shape of what has happened to you.

You began at a port where one man sailed away from his calling and another woke into his. You stood in the room where a nation was born in one day, and on the mountain where fire answered one man's prayer, and in the hall where a blank pillar still waits for names. You lifted your eyes on a cliff, went down into the river of your second birth, and came up new. You floated on the sea that holds everyone, and then you went up, the only direction Jerusalem allows. You stood at an empty tomb before you walked the road of sorrow, so you met the grief already knowing the ending. You stood in the room where the cup was lifted and the fire fell. And you went down into a tunnel in the rock and came out at a pool called Sent.

Word by word, the land taught you its language. Yafeh, beautiful. Aneni, answer me. Essa, I will lift. Aliyah, to go up. Brit, covenant. Shiloach, sent. Put them in a row and they are not a vocabulary list. They are a prayer.

You are going home now, and the temptation will be to file this week under the good trips. Do not let it become a photo album. It is a lens. When you open the Book at your kitchen table in November, the Galilee will have wind on it and the Jordan will be exactly as small and as mighty as you remember. That is the gift, and it does not expire.

So here is my blessing over you, the one this journey was named for. The God who told Israel "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" has been doing the same thing to you all week, whether you noticed or not. You did not just visit this land. You were carried to it. Go on being carried.

B'ahava, with all my heart,
Tai

Keep walking this land with us. Join the wall of watchmen who pray for the Land at **pray-the-land-golan.netlify.app**, and the gates of my farm in the Golan are open to you, always.