

**June 11—Dan preserve + Jereboam’s Altar, Benais Waterfall (Headwaters Jordan), Caesarea Phillipi (Peter’s profession of faith), Nimrod’s Castle, Golan Heights, Bet Saida Dana archeology, (volcano, military post 1968-1999), return Nof Ginosa Kibbutz for night**

When we got on the bus, we noticed our names on a seat at the front. This was so the microphone could reach Steve, who prayed this morning. He remembered the flooding victims in Blair, as well as asking for blessings on us traveling today. I appreciated his prayer.

Hebrew words: bah-BAK-ah-shah (say it fast) : either “you’re welcome” or “please”

There are 3 tributaries to the Jordan: the first we will see is at Dan, with its view into Lebanon. It is in the Upper Jordan, the richest, greenest part. We are climbing the heights of Choriazim (There were 3 cities Jesus cursed: Capernaum, Choriazim and Bethsaida, and these 3 cities are pretty much ruins; another city in the area, Tiberias, remains thriving). Before 1948, this area was known as the Hula Swamp: there are 23 volcanoes in the region, all very active. Lava (basalt) blocked the Jordan River. In Jesus’ time there was a lake/swamp here. In 1952-1957 the new Israel drained the swamp—under Syrian artillery fire from the Golan Heights above. Today there are fruits and vegetables, growing well in an area that was covered with rocks and swamp.

The massive Mt. Hermon range is 100 miles long.

The drive up the Jordan Valley showed it to be a narrow entrance between what used to be the flooded areas of Jordan and Galilee.

Ronny Simon told us stories of history as we traveled on the bus.

We noticed Hazor, the chariot city of **King Herod (ruled 37 BC to 4 BC)**. After King Herod, there were **3 sons, including Archelaus**. Herod was married to 9 wives. His Samaritan wife had to do with Archelaus. **Another son, Herod Antipas**, became King of Galilee. This was the one who **beheaded John the Baptist**, who called Antipas out for marrying his brother’s wife before the third brother was dead. **The third son was Herod Philippos**. Antipas loved Philippos’ wife, so he divorced his own wife, a Nabatean, to marry Philip’s wife. Recall the story of Tamar and her brother Absalom (2 Samuel 13: 1-29). It actually was okay for people to marry their brothers’ wives, but only after they were widows (Deuteronomy 25: 5-10; quite a story Genesis 38; also Ruth and Boaz). The half-brothers were called Tetrarchs, and there was much tension between them.

Today there are lush orchards of fruit trees where once there was swamp: papayas, mangos, peaches and more.

The Golan Heights were called Bashan.

Driving along in the bus, Ronny Simon told more stories. Because we were at the front today, we could hear a bit more clearly. I promised to write up what I heard and send it out to the rest of the group.

Ronny spoke of the Zionist movement. In the old days, the land that is today Israel was called Palestine, and was part of the Ottoman Empire—Turks, not Arabs. The population of the land was 140,000, and most were poor Arabs who lived in the mountains. Most Muslims today are not Arabs. The Turks, who were Muslim, offered Palestine to an Arab family. Else they could have been murdered for selling to infidels (Jews or Christians). Then an amazing opportunity arose: the Arab landlords sold the wasteland to anyone who had money. A man called Herzl was a reporter at the Dreyfus trial in 1894. He saw the extreme anti-Semitism, and realized the Jews needed a place of their own. Some call him the father of the Zionist movement, which resulted in the modern State of Israel. The Jews in Europe considered themselves French, German or whatever, but only Jews by religion. They wouldn't contribute money to this dream of Zionism. So Herzl appealed to Eastern Jews. In 1897 the Zionist movement was founded as a secular dream to build a geographical place for Jews, so they could live in their own country.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel (the ones with the black long clothing and black big-brimmed hats) do not believe in the State of Israel because it was founded in violence. They want a theocracy. The Ultras are not Hasidim.

As we travelled along in the bus, suddenly we stopped. There were police and jammed up cars. It turned out that the roads were blocked to allow for a bike race (today is Saturday, which is their weekend). We changed direction, and went along some country roads—the “scenic” route. We drove through a town called Kiria (Qiryat Shimona)—in 2006 this town was heavily bombed. Each house there has a bomb shelter, and these were used—there was always bombing in those days.

The next road was also blocked by the bicycle race. Ronny left the bus, and we heard much Lo! (No!) from the police. Ronny was angry because if major roads are to be blocked, it would have been nice if tour guides would have been able to have been notified of this ahead of time.

Then there was a third roadblock. Steve and I were sitting at the front of the bus (so Steve could pray earlier this morning) and we heard much Hebrew muttering from Ronny. It reminded me of my father grumbling in Low German at certain frustrating times in his life, like when the cows, who should have been milked, would NOT come out of their cool shady place in the muddy creek—Dad got a bit louder when the muddy bank gave way, and then since he was wet anyway, he waded over to the lead cow and she MOVED.

Somebody asked about certain cables that were along the road at intervals and seemed to serve no purpose. Ronny said they mark the distance of a Sabbath day's journey. Since Ronny was speaking in English, his next muttering was in English: “It's a question of

who's observing the Sabbath!" Apparently this bike race covers the whole country. Ronny said, "I understand that biking's important, but why not do it off-road?!"

In Acts 1:12 the distance from the Mount of Olives to the Temple was "a Sabbath's day journey". According to something I later read on the Internet, over the years rabbis have made various determinations as to the precise length of a Sabbath day's journey. They measured it in cubits (distance from forefinger to elbow), and by Jesus' time the Pharisees finagled the length to be 8000 cubits (a cubit is about 18"—you do the unit conversions ☺). Jesus made it clear that the Sabbath rest day is made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Also He said that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, and when Jesus actually healed on the Sabbath, the Pharisees really were bent out of shape.

I kind of enjoyed seeing these back roads. They reminded me of the country around southeast Nebraska or northeast Kansas. We saw a little fox, dead on the road. I thought of the little fox we saw on our way to the Omaha airport—and the Bible verse about the little foxes ruining the vineyard (Song of Solomon 2:15). We saw vineyards in Israel, but here there were avocados growing by the road.

**Lebanon** is only a few miles away, behind the hills to our left. We saw 3 bikers ahead—swerving to cover both lanes of this narrow, winding road. On Highway 99, with Qiryat Semona to the right, Ramat Hazolan to the left, and Kefar Yuvat behind us, we noticed razor wire along the bottom of the fences. The **razor wire** was there because of military installations.

We sang on the bus: Jesus is Risen from the Dead, He's Coming Back to Take Me Home, Alleluia. Ronnie was still muttering, and then sitting grumpy, like my students in a developmental math class they don't want to be taking, but doing their best to be halfway polite since they have to be there anyway. We sang I've Been Redeemed, You Can't Get to Heaven on Roller Skates (verses like Roll right through them Pearly Gates; Rocking Chair, but Chair don't go nowhere, and finally our own Tour Bus, cause Sababa! (awesome!) doesn't work for us).

We entered Dan by the **back roads**. Since it is Shabat (Sabbath), many people go to the sea, or to the mountains of Galilee. We saw hollyhocks by the road. At the Dan Nature Preserve, Gabi (our bus driver) handed in 32 tickets for us all at the booth.

**Dan** is similar to Megiddo: highways + water. Judges 18 tells that 2 ½ tribes asked permission to settle east of the Jordan. They were allowed to do this, on condition that they help the other tribes conquer their lands. **Shiloh** is here, where the Ark of the Covenant was stored. The Danites inherited the foothills, and so they had a big fight (remember, nobody really wanted the mountains). The Danites inherited a warzone then, and even now it is, at times, a warzone. They were a **human shield** for the rest of the Israelites.

Judges 18 has an interesting account of the founding of the city of Dan, over an older city named Laish. According to Judges 17, there was a bad boy named Micah, who stole

1100 pieces of silver from his mother (Delilah??) but later returned it. The mother cast a silver image, and Micah made an ephod (vest). The time of the judges was just before the time of King Saul (1043 BC). Micah took a priest (a freelance Levite). Dan decided to leave his warzone, and sent a party of 5 up north, through the hills, through Micah's haunt, and asked a blessing from the priest. The Sidonians lived here. 600 men went to conquer, and actually asked not only the blessing, but offered this priest to be priest over their whole tribe. Micah was gone, but returned home and asked for his god. Now Judah had a problem. The identity of the priest is thought (by rabbinical scholars) to possibly be a son of Moses. Genesis 49:16-17 says that Dan is to be a judge, but also a serpent. Dan's land stretched from down south (Via Maris—road of the sea, and a war zone) to up in the north. **Dan was always the first to take the heat—and the first tribe to leave God in favor of idols.**

A major issue has always been over **water**. Egypt has the Nile. Syria has the Euphrates (from Turkey). Now a big dam takes the water from Syria. The **War of 1967** was not just to conquer the **Golan Heights** but to preserve a source of water for Israel.

Ronny is thrilled over the **desalinization** project for the Mediterranean, because the Sea of Galilee can be poisoned.

Muslims don't want to learn from Jews because that is somehow admitting superiority.

Israel is very protected. Ronny said, "We shot down their rockets even in the air, for the first time ever."

Finally we arrived at **Jereboam's altar** in the Dan nature preserve. The **tribe of Dan** had been given an allotment, but it was a war zone, and **they didn't like the allotment in life that God had given them**. Their **1<sup>st</sup> reaction** to their problem was to run. *Katie Mines* said that's what happens to a lot of marriages. **Then "things"** (idols) come in. We don't own God—He owns us (and make no mistake—when the Bible says no man can serve 2 masters, there is not the choice that you are your own master—it is either God or Satan). **2<sup>nd</sup>, they lost their vision**, and decided to conquer the Sidonians, a peaceful, quiet people. **They traded their purpose, and traded it for a lie, for idols.** *Perry Myers, Sr.* says that what you look for isn't always what you get: the Danites ran from one war zone to another.

Judges 19: **Jereboam** built a high place at Dan. We climbed the steps on the Tel of Dan (a man-made hill). Jereboam, grandson of King David, **was the king of the North**, and headed north to hide until **his father, King Solomon**, died. All tribes paid tax to Judah (silver and gold were as common as dirt). **Rehoboam, King of Judah**, was asked to ease taxes, but he didn't. In fact, he promised to oppress people even worse than they already were.

**David** was King by invitation. **Solomon** was King by toleration.

I Kings 12: Jereboam I (reigned ca. 931-ca. 910 B.C.) needed to provide an alternative place to worship. So he built 2 Temples of his own. He built one at Bethel in the South, and now here there was a “temple” in the North. Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. The “horns of the altar” were like a rectangle, with posts on the corners called horns. Jereboam, even though he wasn’t very good at worshipping the true God, did offer kosher animals (no pigs). We know this because there were many bones found around the altar, all kosher animals. All the kings of the north and many of the south were evil kings, like Jereboam. A consecrated high place is often seen as a high holy place to other peoples. Archaeologists found a Greek layer higher that was also a holy place to them. We were sitting on Jereboam’s layer—the stones were laid 3000 years ago.

We went higher on the hillside, and looked into Lebanon. The actual border of Lebanon is down in the valley below where we were standing. The border was set in 1923, and splits the town of Rijah between the two states. Recently the UN came in to arbitrate, and actually gave Israel 1 mile more. In the War of 2006 Israel did not do well at all. Hezbollah with its guerrilla troops did better. Lebanon was not involved in that war. Today Israel is trying new technologies. In 2008 in Gaza, Israel did do well. We saw an abandoned Russian tank on the seemingly peaceful hillside.

The walls of **Dan**, particularly those of the upper gate, are massive walls. They are the same type as those of Beersheba. The gateways were always a big place in town. But here in this little town, in **1993**, an inscribed rock, called **a stele was found**, indicating that Ben-Hadad, the Aramean king (Syrians) was killed by a general named Jaded, one of 2 kings in the line of David. This is interesting because **it is the ONLY item in the world found (so far) where King David was mentioned, other than in Scripture**. The date for the stele was **732 BC**. This corresponds to **I Kings 15: 9-20**, which tells about Ben-Hadad. Later the Assyrian armies came to this area and leveled the general area.

In Genesis we read of Jacob meeting up with his estranged brother, Esau, at a place called Lachish. This would have been in this area later occupied by Jereboam. We saw the **Gates of Lachish**, dated about **4000 BC**, and their arches, all close to this area. There was a river here, and of the two towns, this is the first town of Dan. The gate we saw was one of the most ancient gates still in existence.

We had to follow the signs on all fences: there are minefields, and when the Syrians sowed mines, against the Geneva Convention agreements they did not mark the places. In the winter time when people come up to the mountains for relaxation, there are occasional accidents. There are still cattle being raised in Bashan (the Golan Heights) but the mines have not been cleaned out of the cow pastures—and there are accidents that way, too.

The **Benais Waterfall** is another source of the Jordan River. We hiked up there too—very beautiful.

As we look out over the countryside, there is green and then there is the brown of desert. Generally speaking, the green marks Jewish land-owners. They have done amazing things, particularly considering that before 1948 they really were not farmers at all—nobody would sell them land, so they had to be shopkeepers and bankers. But they have a real work ethic, and can read books, and devise and plan their own crop ideas. Right now they are experimenting with sheer tenting over the banana trees—20% of their plants have that, and the thought is that sunlight can still enter, but perhaps less water is lost back into the atmosphere. The kibbutz idea of communal farms has helped too—really huge farms that allow the big machinery with the GPS planting systems, and double-cropping, like watermelon sprouting up after the wheat harvest is over. In a way it reminded me of Hutterite farmers in the USA. They live very simply, but have the latest technology for their farms. They are a Mennonite offshoot like the Amish, and even look a bit Amish, and speak an old German dialect somewhat similar to the Amish, but they definitely have electricity and are not horse and buggy anything. Since they don't spend a lot elsewhere, and live communally, their farms do better than many of their neighbors, and some of the neighbors don't like it much when the Hutterites come in.

Lebanon is at the top of the mountains. Since 1967, there are Druze and Jewish people—no more Syrians in this particular area.

**Caesarea Philippi:** another town by a spring. It was large enough in Jesus' day to entertain legions. Back in Joshua's day, it was probably known as BaalGad (Joshua 11:16-19). Then, after the Greeks conquered the land, it was called Banais, or Pnias, for the Greek god Pan, in about 20 BC. The Romans had really liked Herod (father, I think, of the tetrarchs) and gave this city to him. Herod built a temple to the god Pan. We were sitting with Ronny under a fig tree near the spring. In the old days, the place we were sitting was most likely covered with water—there are springs from the melting snow from Mt. Hermon, and also general springs here too. In 2 AD Herod started a town here, but Herod Phillipas really built it up even further. They drained the water, and moved the road to outside of town. There was an Acropolis—an elevated area by the cave, and niches for all sorts of idols. Hades was the Greek god of the dead—there was a deep dark place by the cave called the Gates of Hades (Hell). Jesus said even the Gates of Hell shall not prevail. Here, with all the various gods around, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" and then it got personal, not communal: "Who do you say that I am?" Jesus holds the Keys to the Kingdom. The Roman Catholics believe that salvation is through the Papacy only, and that Protestants are going to Hell. **Peter said that Jesus is the Living Cornerstone and there is no salvation in anyone else (Acts 4:11-12).** We are living stones in the church of Christ—we are a kingdom of priests. Spiritual sacrifices are offered to God by us. **Matthew 28: 18-20** **Jesus said "All authority has been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

As we wandered about Caesarea Phillippi (Banais/Pnais) we saw idol niches, and tombs for goats.

The Druze live on the Golan Heights. The Druze have a tomb of Elijah in Banais (there is no tomb for Elijah—remember, he was the one caught up in a whirlwind 2 Kings 2: 1-18). The Druze are an unusual people, splitting off from Islam about 1000 AD or so.

Damascus is 40 miles away—we saw a **Syrian bunker**. The Syrians controlled the Golan Heights until 1967.

Mt. Hermon is on what is politically known as the Golan Heights. The mountain is limestone, not the basalt of the volcanoes.

**Nimrod's Castle** was built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, partly using the ruins of Caesarea Philippi. Nimrod's Castle was never conquered. It was given to the Crusaders by the Turks. The name Nimrod is Assyrian for Mighty Hunter. Another name for this castle is Asubayba: Lion Ready to Pounce.

**We really enjoyed seeing this castle**—it was a surprise to us. We even sang in some of the echo-y stone gateways and hallways. It was just like castles in story books, and we wandered around and had fun.

An even bigger surprise was the **lack of bitterness by Ronny toward the Crusaders**. He told us the various stories, but I didn't hear even a tinge of bitterness—and Ronny was passionate about other groups of people, and it always showed then. The reason this surprised me was that whenever I try to speak of Jesus Christ to non-believers here in the USA, particularly to well-educated non-believers, they always pull out the trump card of how evil the Crusaders were back in the Middle Ages, and how that by itself should prove to any sane person that Christianity is just wrong. I get so TIRED of hearing about the Crusaders—and here we were in various Crusader ruins, listening to an intelligent, non-Christian Jew tell us history, and I wasn't hearing any of this hatred.

**Mt Hermon may be the Mount of Transfiguration**. It is about 6 days' journey from Caesarea Philippi, which puts it in the right location that way. 3000 miles downstream along the Jordan Valley is Egypt.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD the Vikings accepted Christianity—but they were a fighting people and they still wanted to fight. In 1095 AD, the Pope was in France to rebuke the King of France. At the end of his rebuke, the Pope called upon France to liberate the holy sites from the Muslims. The kings of Europe didn't want to leave their lands vacant by taking a Christian army down to Israel. But who was the leader of the knights? What were the choices? The Pope offered eternal life. The King offered taxes and some safety. The Pope wins. So the Popes excommunicated the Kings. There were many princes. The kings wanted to send all but a few sons, and told the ones who went to the Holy Lands that whatever you conquer is yours to have. 200,000 people walked from France to Palestine. The 1<sup>st</sup> Crusade had to fight through these Christians. There was need for support cities: Antioch, Tripoli, and Odessa were support cities. 50,000 people were left to attack Jerusalem. They didn't stay in Jerusalem, though. They survived by building fortresses to protect themselves. They did whatever they could to divide millions of

Muslims. The Crusades lasted 88 years. Saladin united the Arabs. The Crusaders were defeated by the Muslims near Mount Arbel.

Nimrod's Castle is the largest Crusader fortress. It was never captured, and existed to support and protect trade.

In 1191 there was a treaty between the Crusaders and Saladin. The Christians had no more access to the traditional holy sites of Bethlehem, Nazareth or Jerusalem (we didn't get to visit Bethlehem or Nazareth either, and the Muslims had some pretty harsh control when we visited Temple Mount—we got to walk around, but definitely not go into the Dome of the Rock). So what were the Christians going to do? They INVENTED holy sites. For instance: "Oh, remember Cain killing Abel? That was right here!"

The **Golan Heights** were called **Bashan**. There is a **story in Genesis of a King Og of Bashan** (Deut. 3:11 and Joshua 12:4), who lived in the days of Moses and had an iron bed that was over 13 feet long by 6 feet wide, and who was called a giant. **Amos 4:1-2** (written about 755 BC; a contemporary of Jereboam II—a time of real prosperity for Israel) **called women the "Cows of Bashan"**—a real insult because Bashan was known then, as now, for having prize, big, cattle—we saw some of these: **they weren't as big as our white Charolais here in Nebraska, but they were** (I think) bigger than the Holsteins we used to raise on our farm, **and golden brown with white--really nice looking**. But women then, as now, wouldn't appreciate the name. **King David, in Psalms 22:12, sang about the fierce Bulls of Bashan**. However, as we drove past, there were **signs on the pasture fences to be careful of landmines**. I guess the pasture is so valuable that the owners are willing to trade some loss of cattle.

The Golan Heights were in the fighting of 1967 and 1981. This area was annexed by Israel. Many Druze people live here—about 30,000 in four big villages. The Israelis worked hard to clear the minefields when they took over from the Syrians. The Druze won't carry Israeli documents, but they are counted as Israeli citizens. Druze are not Arabs, and not Muslims (though they did break off from Islam when they first started, about 1000 years ago).

The Druze practice a religion that is secret even from other Druze. Only a few are actually in on all the secrets. They started in Egypt in 1020 AD. Their leader at that time, one Hakkim, was a clever man who made commentaries on Islamic literature. At age 15, Druze boys and girls are given the choice to be a cleric or not. A **male Druze cleric is noticeable because of his white beanie, black robes, and a big black bag between his legs**. (We saw some of these as we drove through the villages—just really unusual). Their teachings are secret, but some have said that the Druze believe that the Messiah has not yet been born, but when He is, he will be born of a man, and the bag is to catch the baby Messiah. The Druze celebrate various holidays, but the non-cleric Druze are not even told why those days are to be called holy.

Someone on the bus asked if Israel has problems with drunk drivers. Ronny said they really didn't before the collapse of the USSR, but "those Russians really drink a lot" and



there is today a problem with drunk driving. The population of Israel doubled with the break-up of the USSR.

As we drove up what was a volcano, we saw layers of lava. The Syrians laid those mines during 1948-9, but they never made any record of where those mines were—which was against the Geneva Accords.

We drove past groves of eucalyptus trees. During the war of 1967, with Egypt, those lines of eucalyptus trees hid full armies of Israeli soldiers. False information had induced Syria to attack Israel. The Syrians did attack—and lost.

Then in May, 1973, Israel underestimated Syria—and lost to Syria. This was the Yom Kippur war. Maier had been warned by the United States that Syria was planning to attack, but underestimated Syria.

The following is from the internet:

[http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/yom\\_kippur\\_war\\_of\\_1973.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/yom_kippur_war_of_1973.htm)

The Yom Kippur War started with a surprise Arab attack on Israel on Saturday 6th October 1973. On this day, Egyptian and Syrian military forces launched an attack knowing that the military of Israel would be participating in the religious celebrations associated with Yom Kippur. Therefore, their guard would temporarily be dropped.

The combined forces of Egypt and Syria totalled the same number of men as NATO had in Western Europe. On the Golan Heights alone, 150 Israeli tanks faced 1,400 Syria tanks and in the [Suez](#) region just 500 Israeli soldiers faced 80,000 Egyptian soldiers.

We stopped at Mt. Bengal, an old Israeli military outpost that is now like a museum. There is a great view here, and right now we are closer to Damascus than to Caesarea Philippi.

Ronny Simon, our tour guide, who recently retired from Israeli intelligence, said that Israel was nearly annihilated in the 1973 war. But by January, 1974, the Golan Heights seem peaceful. Today Israel is prepared. But overall, things are very unstable: there is Syria, then Iraq, then Iran. Israel controls the air and the sea, but not the land. The big danger is Iran (“we Jews occupy Muslim sites”). Syria is an ally of Iran. If Syria really wanted the Golan Heights, they could have it from Israel if Syria would cut off relations with Iran, and then only if it would be agreed that the Golan Heights would be a demilitarized zone. Ronny said, “When the Arab peoples say they are fighting for “democracy”, but also still say “death to Israel”, well... We are NOT the aggressors. The Middle East is not the same as common sense. The Muslims teach that only weak people offer negotiations. Allah is a Muslim god.” Ronny said, “If Israel kills a few people, the United Nations says NO-NO. When Syria kills many people, the United Nations is not agreed.” Ronny is bitter.

We saw a lone stork flying by the roadside as we left this military post museum. Ronny said it probably was left behind from the main migration—it may have lost its mate (storks mate for life).

We saw several active Israeli military posts.

We saw rock badgers (rock hyraxes, coneys)—Leviticus 11:5 points out that although the rock badgers do chew their cud, they do not have a split hoof and are therefore unclean animals. They reminded me of prairie dogs in Nebraska, with sentries that warn the group. There were also rock badgers around Nimrod's Castle. I don't think we in the US would consider eating prairie dogs either!

We passed a milk factory—producing cheese, yogurt, and so forth. Milk production is very high in Israel, and the farmers feed the cattle oranges when the price of oranges is low.

Because the Golan Heights/Bashan is so politically unstable, Jewish people don't know whether to build houses or towns in the Golan Heights or not. If they had to give up the territory, the last thing the Jews would need to do when they left town would be to dig up the cemeteries. I asked about this, and Ronny said the last time Israel had to leave settlements, the Muslims dug up the cemeteries and strewed Jewish bones around, just to be mean. Human bones do make Jews feel unclean, so that cemetery moving really would be the last thing.

We stopped at the **Bethsaida excavations**, and saw the marker saying that **Dana College, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Grace University**, and other colleges/universities did excavating here. Biblically, **the disciples Peter, Andrew and Philip were born here**. Earlier, **King David** married the daughter of the King of **Geshur (another name for Bethsaida)**. This woman became the mother of **Absalom**. Later Absalom hid out here (**II Samuel 3:3; 14:32**). **There were a lot of cultic things around here, including a plastered, basalt altar**. The figure was a bull god, armed with a dagger, and there was a stone basin just below for sacrifices. Later yet, Josephus said **the name was changed to Julias** by King Herod Philip. Recent excavations have revealed a temple built by Philip in honor of Julia Livia, wife of Emperor Caesar Augustus. **This is a fisherman's village, very near to the River Jordan, but in Biblical times providing a protected anchorage for the boats**.

We returned, after a full day, hearing about giants, Crusaders, modern Israeli struggles and more, to the kibbutz by the Sea of Galilee. As we sat in chairs by the Sea, with our tired feet in the water, watching as the stars came out, and seeing the moon nearly full, we thought about all the things we had seen and heard today.

I liked the comment below by Pastor Chuck:

Israel Trip—Notes by Connie Buller—June 7-17, 2011

**We need to remember not to be afraid of the giants in the land.** *Pastor Chuck* says God determines when our spiritual battle is over. *Kathy Larson* said Trust and Obey.