

**Jordan Experience Study Guide**

Amman	4
Al – Karak	8
Aqaba	13
Dead Sea	17
Jerash	19
Lot’s Cave	24
Machaerus	27
Madaba	29
Mount Nebo	30
Penuel	34
Petra	35
Red Sea	41
Tishbe	44
Umm Ar-Rasas	46
Umm Qais	47
in’Ma Zarqa	51



## **Amman**

Being situated north, Amman is the administrative centre of the Amman Governorate. It is the capital and most populated city of Jordan, considered to be one of the most liberal and modernized Arab cities.

‘Ain Ghazal is the earliest known settlement dating back to the Neolithic site, Amman itself being built on the site of “Rabbath Ammon” an Iron Age settlement, the capital of the Ammonites. During the Greek and Roman periods it was known as Philadelphia before being renamed as Amman. Modern Amman dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD, being abandoned for most of the medieval and post medieval periods, when a new village developed with its municipality being birthed in 1909. Starting on seven hills, it has expanded over 19 hills, combining 27 district, which are managed by the Greater Amman Municipality with Yousef Al-Shawarbeh as its mayor. Each are is named after the hills they occupy or the valleys. The west of Amman is more modern and serves as the economic centre of the city while the East side of Amman is filled with historuc sites that host cultural activities.

Being found on the outskirts of Amman in 1974 by construction workers, the site of ‘Ain Ghazal was presumed to be inhabited 3000 during the 7000 BC, being a typical aceramic Neolithic village with rectangular mud-bricked buildings with walls made up of lime plaster. The remains of ‘Ain Ghazal provided a wealth of information, being known for the discovery in 1983 of a set of small human statues being made with white plaster, painted clothing, hair and ornamental tattoos. An uncovering of two caches revealed thirty-two figures, fifteen of them full figures, fifteen busts and two fragmentary heads with three of those two busts being two-headed, the importance is unknown.

Becoming known as “Rabbath Ammon ’in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as the capital of the Ammonites, it produced several natural resources ( sandstone, limestone etc) along with productive agricultural sectors making it a vital location along the King’s Highway. The trading brought a considerable amount of revenue for the Ammonites. Evidence shows that a deity call Moloch was worshiped by the Ammonites, with a temple being excavated, containg an altart with many human bone fragments which show evidence of burning leading to the assumption that the altar functioned as a pyre.

Even though the city was conquered by the Assyrian Empire and then the Persians Empire, there are still many Ammonite ruins that are located in Amman. The ruins of Rujm Al-Malfouf and the Qasr Al-Abd are a small example.

As Alexander the Great conquered the Middle East and Central Asia, he firmly consolidated the Hellenistic culture, finding new cities (Umm Qais, Jerash and Amman) with Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the Macedonian ruler of Egypt occupying and renaming the city Philadelphia, meaning brotherly love in Greek.

The village of Iraq Al-Amir, located in the valley of Wadi Al-Sir is one of the original monuments in Jordan and perhaps in the Hellenistic period as well. It is home to Qasr Al-Abd, Castle of the Slave, with a few other ruins nearby such as a village, an isolated house and a fountain, all barely visible due to the 362 earthquake that destroyed the area. The builder of Qasr Al-Abd is believed to be Hyrcanus of Jerusalem, head of the Tobiad family. Even though the family was known to be powerful, Antiochus IV conquered Jerusalem and ransacked the temple where Hyrcanus treasure was located in 170 BC. Presumed to be determined of attacking Hyrcanus, Hyrcanus committed suicide leaving his palace uncompleted. His family the Tobiads fought against the Nabataeans for twenty years before they lost the city and after that no written records of the Tobiad family exists.

During the Roman conquest of the Levant in 63 BC, with an inauguration that lasted four centuries, the Decapolis League was formed. The Decapolis League included the Greek Cities Gerasa, Pella and Arbila with cities of Palestine and Syria such as Scythopolis, Hippos, Capitolias, Canatha and Damascus. This confederation was linked by economic and cultural interest, with Philadelphia becoming a point along a road that stretched from Ailah to Damascus that was built by Emperor Trajan in 106 AD, providing an economic boost and later on during the Byzantine era, several bishops and churches were based in the city.

During the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Rashidun army took over the region, beginning the Islamic era in the Levant. It was renamed as "Amman" by the Muslims and becoming apart of the Jund al-Urdunn district since a large part of the population spoke Arabic which eased the integration into the caliphate as well as several conversions to Islam. Desert castles

were constructed during the Umayyad caliphs reign in 661 AD with a large palace being built on the Amman Citadel hill, known as the Umayyad Palace. Several earthquakes and natural disasters ate away at Amman before the 747 earthquake created some major damage with three years later the overthrow of the Umayyads by the Abbasids happened.

Several earthquakes in the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century caused a decline in Amman's importance to the point of it becoming uninhabitable with several finds of kilns showing that the Abbasids (750-969) and the Fatimids (969-1099) were there. Being noted as the capital of Balqa in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century by geographer al-Yaqubi and later in 985 the Jerusalemite historian al-Muqaddasi supported that statement, adding that it was a town in the desert fringe of Syria, surrounded by villages and cornfields with a source of lambs, grain and honey. It was also described as a "harbour of the desert" since Arab Bedouin would come and take refuge and its citadel, which contained a mosque, would overlook the city.

Based on the interpretations of Crusader sources the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem occupied the Citadel Hill. In *Historia*, William of Tyre wrote that in 1161 Philip of Milly received the castle of "Ahaman" which referred to Amman as part of the Lordship of Oultrejordain. Joining the military order of the Knights Templar in 1166, Philip passed on to them a significant part of his fief, which included the castle of Ahamant, otherwise known as "Haman" by the deed of confirmation that was issued by King Amalric. With Amman falling into Ayyubid hands by 1170 it is theorised that the Citadel Hill is actually from the Ayyubid period, not the Crusader era, leaving the location of the Crusader castle unknown. Damascene geographer al-Dimashqi wrote that Amman was a part of the province of Al-Karak and that only ruins remained of the town, during the Ayyubid period.

In the Mamluk era, Amman was a part of Wilayat Balqa, the southernmost district of Mamlakat Dimashq, also known as the Damascus province. In the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Hisban was the capital of the district even though it contained smaller garrisons than other centres in Transjordan, like Ajlun and Al-Karak, though in 1356, Amman became the capital because of Hisban's presumed financial situation. Emir Sirghitmish bought Amman to use revenues from the city so that he may fund the Madrasa (city) of Sirghitmish, which was built in Cairo the same year. Even though he transferred nearly everything from Hisban to Amman, he still funded new building works.

After Sirghitmish's death in 1358, the ownership passed on to his descendants until 1395 when they sold it to Emir Bayadamur Al-Khwarazmi, the na'ib as-saltana of Damascus. Then part of it was sold to Emir Sudun Al-Shaykhuni, na'ib as-saltana of Egypt. Due to the frequent division and sale of parts of Amman, a decline of revenues happened while Hisban became the major city of Balqa in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which led to Amman becoming an abandoned site which was used by farmers and bedouins as shelter until 1878.

Even though the Ottoman Empire annexed Amman in 1516, Al-Salt still functioned as the virtual political centre of Transjordan. Due to the Circassians arrival after the Caucasus exodus, Amman started being resettled with tens of thousands relocating to Ottoman Syria due to the Russo-Circassian War. In *The Land of Gilead* Laurence Oliphant wrote of his visit to Amman.

Due to the large amount of Circassian immigrants, the Ottoman authorities directed them to Amman and distributed land among them with the earliest settlers using stones from the Roman theatre for their houses. Even though the community was small in 1933, they still formed alliances with local urban, nomadic communities and regional grain merchants so that they could cement their status in the region. With the construction of the Hejaz Railway, linking Damascus and Medina, facilitating the annual Hajj pilgrimage and trade. Amman was soon transformed into a major commercial hub.

During the Middle eastern theatre of WWI and the Arab Revolt, the First and Second battle of Amman were included. Due to Amman's strategic location along the Hejaz Railway the British forces and the Hashemite Arab army captured it and moved on towards Damascus. The British Mandate was established after the second battle was won by Britain.

Amman was designated as capital of the Emirate of Transjordan by Abdullah I in 1921 and later on became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1950. Attracting immigrants from different Levantine areas, Palestine, Damascus, Al-Karak and Madaba allowed Amman to grow in size quite quickly.

Gaining its independence in 1946, and in 1948 with the Arab-Israeli war brought refugees from nearby countries. A second wave arrived in 1967 with the Six-Day War and in 1970 Amman was a battlefield in the conflict

known as the Black September between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Jordanian Army. With the defeat of PLO in 1971, they were expelled to Lebanon.

In 1991 Gulf War, a wave of Iraqi and Kuwaiti refugees settled in the city with the second wave coming in 2003, the invasion of Iraq. The most recent wave of Syrian refugees arrived in the ongoing Syrian Civil War in 2011, with Amman being the most secured and prosperous location for them.

2005, November 9<sup>th</sup>, three hotel lobbies were demolished by Al-Qaeda and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, resulting in 60 deaths and 115 injured. After that, the Jordanian security was increased dramatically and no major terrorist attacks since then.

### **Interesting Facts:**

1. Roman ruins include the Temple of Hercules, Roman Theatre, Odeon and the Nymphaeum.

## **Al – Karak**

Al – Karak is located 140 km south of Amman, on a hilltop 1,000 metres above sea level and surrounded by a valley on three sides. It is the capital city of the Karak Governorate and is well known for the Crusader Castle, Kerak Castle.

Sources say that the city was inhabited since the Iron Age and was a very important city for the Moabites, with the Bible calling it Kir of Moab. Finds have identified that the city was subjected to the Assyrian Empire rule.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Israelites, Judeans and Edomites attacked simultaneously due to the King of Moab, Mesha not paying tribute as was custom. The attacking forces withdrew after Mesha's heir was used as a burnt offering, which is vividly described in the book of 2 Kings

chapter 3. Isaiah and Jeremiah, in their prophecies of doom for Moab, also mention the city (Isaiah 15, 16; Jeremiah 48). In the 7th century BC the Moabite cities were destroyed by

the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, and later they were gradually repopulated by desert peoples, likely the Nabataeans.

It took its name from the Aramaic word for town, Kharkha and was a very important city during the late Hellenistic period. Evidence shows that the city contained some of the oldest Christian communities in the world, dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The Roman Empire aligned with the Arab Chassanid tribe to conquer it in 105 AD, becoming known as Harreketh in Late Antiquity.

Under the Byzantine rule it became a seat of a bishopric, housing the Church of Nazareth and remained Christian even under Arabian rule. The bishop Demetrius took part in the 536 AD Council of the three Palaestina, held in Jerusalem and theory is that there was another bishop who lived there in the 9<sup>th</sup> century named John.

During the Crusader periods, it fell under the Crusader Oultrejordain/Transjordan ( Name for an extensive and partly undefined region to the east of the Jordan river ). In 1132, King Fulk of Jerusalem made Pagan the Butler into Lord of Montreal and Oultrejordain.

Pagan made his Headquarters where he built the castle called by the crusaders, Petra Desserti – The Stone of the Dessert. It was under the crusaders control for 46 years before being threatened by the forces of Saladin and eventually fell under his command in 1188 AD, after siege

that lasted over a year. The castle was modified through time and now currently dominates the town.

Al – Adil, Saladin’s younger brother, was governor of the district until 1199 when he became ruler of Egypt and Syria.

The castle was used as a place of exile and a power base during Mamluk Sultanate. Due to its location, whoever controlled the castle controlled the caravan routes between Damascus and Egypt and the pilgrimage route between Damascus and Mecca.

During the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Mamluk ruler Baibars used the castle as a stepping stone on his climb to power and in 1389, Sultan Barquq was exiled there and gathered supporters before returning to Cairo.

Dominated by four major tribes known as the Al – Ghassasinah tribe, the Al Majali tribe, which originally came from Hebron, the Tarawneh tribe and the Sarairah tribe. In 1844, Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt held an expedition west of the Dead Sea where the troops occupied the castle, though they eventually left with a lot of casualties due to starvation. In 1868, Mohammed Al – Majali had control over the castle and was involved in the events that led to the destruction of the Moabite Stone. In 1893 it was established as a sub-province of Ma’an by Sublime Porte Abdul Hamid II, who brought on a resident as a governor under the Wāli of Syria based in Damascus.

Hussein Helmy Bey Effendi, one of the first governors in 1895, aged 40, formerly the General Secretary of Damascus had a garrison of 1,200 troops in 3 regiments and 200 Circassian cavalry, mostly conscripts from west of the Jordan River doing years of military service. He succeeded in his achievement of disarming the local population and established a Military Hospital with a Jewish doctor, enforced the regulations of coinage, measures and weights while introducing a weekly postal

service to Jerusalem, Damascus and Ma'an. He set up agricultural projects such as the planting of 5,000 grape vines in Madeba.

The Latin Mission was established in 1874 and in 1886, Al Majali allowed English mission to work in town. After the San Demo conference in 1920, Great Britain was given mandate to govern the areas.

January of 1921 is when Emir Abdullah Hussein assembled an army in Ma'an and announced his intention to attack the French in Syria while at the conference call of March, 1921, Abdullah was recognized by Britain as ruler of the Empire of Transjordan.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, 2016, there was an attack by gunmen that resulted with 19 people dead.

### **Interesting Facts:**

Birthplace of Ibn Al- Quff, an Arabian Christian Physician and surgeon who was the Author of the earliest Arabic Treatise intended solely for surgeons.

In 1958 and inscription was found in Wadi Al – Karak that dates back to the late 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC.

There are buildings from the Ottoman age of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **2 Kings 3 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)**

3 Y'horam the son of Ach'av began his reign over Isra'el in Shomron during the eighteenth year of Y'hoshafat king of Y'hudah, and he ruled for twelve years. <sup>2</sup> He did what was evil from Adonai's perspective; but he was not as bad as his father and mother, because he got rid of Ba'al's standing-stone which his father had

made.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Yarov‘am the son of N‘vat, with which he had led Isra‘el into sin; he never turned away from them.

<sup>4</sup> Mesha king of Mo‘av was a sheep-breeder, and he used to send the king of Isra‘el the wool of 100,000 lambs and of 100,000 rams as tribute.<sup>5</sup> But after Ach‘av died, the king of Mo‘av rebelled against the king of Isra‘el.<sup>6</sup> Y‘horam left Shomron and mustered all Isra‘el.<sup>7</sup> He also went and sent this word to Y‘hoshafat king of Y‘hudah: “The king of Mo‘av has rebelled against me. Will you join me in attacking Mo‘av?” He answered, “I will join in the attack — I’m with you all the way; think of my people and horses as yours.”<sup>8</sup> Which route should we take?” he added. “The road through the desert of Edom,” answered Y‘horam.

<sup>9</sup> So the king of Isra‘el set out, along with the king of Y‘hudah and the king of Edom. After a roundabout journey of seven days, there was no water for either the army or the animals following them.<sup>10</sup> “This is terrible!” exclaimed the king of Isra‘el. “Has *Adonai* called these three kings together only to hand them over to Mo‘av?”<sup>11</sup> But Y‘hoshafat said, “Isn’t there a prophet of *Adonai* here through whom we can consult *Adonai*?” One of the servants of the king of Isra‘el answered, “Elisha the son of Shafat is here, the one who used to pour water on Eliyahu’s hands.”<sup>12</sup> Y‘hoshafat said, “The word of *Adonai* is with him.” So the king of Isra‘el, Y‘hoshafat and the king of Edom went down to consult him.

<sup>13</sup> Elisha said to the king of Isra‘el, “What do you and I have in common? Go, consult your father’s prophets and your mother’s prophets!” But the king of Isra‘el answered him, “No, because *Adonai* has called these three kings together to hand them over to Mo‘av.”<sup>14</sup> Elisha said, “As *Adonai-Tzva’ot* lives, before whom I stand, if I didn’t respect the fact that Y‘hoshafat the king of Y‘hudah is here, I wouldn’t even look in your direction or take notice of you.”<sup>15</sup> But now, bring me a musician.” As the musician played, the hand of *Adonai* fell on Elisha;<sup>16</sup> and he said, “*Adonai* says to dig until this valley is full of trenches.”<sup>17</sup> For here is what *Adonai* says: ‘You won’t see wind, and you won’t see rain. Nevertheless the valley will be filled with water; and you will drink — you, your cattle and your other animals.’<sup>18</sup> That’s an easy thing to do, from *Adonai*’s perspective. He will also hand Mo‘av over to you.<sup>19</sup> You will conquer every fortified city and every choice town, you will chop down every good tree, stop up every well and ruin every good field with stones.”<sup>20</sup> The next morning, around the time for making the offering, water came from the direction of Edom, and the countryside was filled with water.

<sup>21</sup> When all Mo'av heard that the kings had come up to attack them, every man was summoned, from the youngest capable of bearing arms to older ones, and stationed on the border. <sup>22</sup> They rose early in the morning, when the sun was shining on the water. Mo'av, when they saw the water in the distance looking as red as blood, <sup>23</sup> said, "That's blood! The kings must have quarreled, and their soldiers killed each other. Mo'av! To the plunder!"

<sup>24</sup> When they arrived at the camp of Isra'el, Isra'el launched an attack, so that Mo'av fled before them. But they advanced on Mo'av and struck it. <sup>25</sup> They made ruins of the cities. Each man threw his stone on every good field, covering it. They stopped up all the wells. They chopped down all the good trees. Finally, all that remained was Kir-Hareset behind its stone wall, with the slingers surrounding and attacking it. <sup>26</sup> When the king of Mo'av saw that the fighting was too much for him, he took with him 700 men armed with swords and tried to break through to the king of Edom; but they couldn't do it. <sup>27</sup> Then he took his firstborn son, who was to have succeeded him as king, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. Following this, such great anger came upon Isra'el that they left him and went back to their own land.

## Aqaba

Aqaba, also known in ancient times as Elath, Aela ( Latin ) and Ayla ( Arabic ), is the largest city on the Gulf of Aqaba, on the most southern part of Jordan. Being the only coastal city in Jordan and apart of the Administrative centre of Aqaba Governorate, it has quite the history. It's strategic location at the north eastern tip of the Red Sea, between Asia and Africa.

Its close proximity close to copper mines made it the regional hub for copper in the Chalcolithic period. Excavations at Tall Hujayrat Al – Ghuzlan and Tall Al – Magass have revealed an inhabited settlement as far as 4000 BC with an incredibly large copper production. However, due to the absence of accurately written historical documents, it is known as an unknown place. The only part that could be considered a written document is the drawings of animals and humans on an excavated

house, found by the University of Jordan. Theory is that this house was used as a religious site.

To water the crops like grapes and wheat, there was an extensive water system build by the settlers, while various size clay pots were used for melting and reshaping the copper they had. According to scientist, two earthquakes occurred within a close time frame. The last one destroyed the site. Afterwards, during the 1500 BC the Edomites from Edom built the first port in Aqaba and named it Elath. The construction of the port allowed the copper trade to skyrocket due to it's spectacular location and with the backing of the Phoenicians, a maritime economy was developed.

During 735 BC, Aqaba was conquered by Assyrian Empire and due to the Assyrian wars in the east, the trading routes diverted to the city and the port allowing for it to prosper. Jumping to 600 BC in the Babylonian conquer, the economic growth was great due to the business background of rules, who saw the benefits of controlling the only port in Jordan. In 539 BC the Persian Empire took over and by the time the Greeks took control in 300 BC, it became so great that a Greek historian described it as "One of the most important trading cities in the Arab World."

The Ptolemaic Greeks called it Berenice. The Nabatean Kingdom, builders of Al – Khazneh in the city of Petra, easily overpowered the Greeks due to its mass numbers. Even though the Romans conquered the city in 64 BC and called it Aela, the Nabateans still had major influence over both Petra and Aela. It's peak was reached when the Via Traiana Road was build, which led south from Bostra, through Amman and terminated in Aela where it connected with a west road to Philistia and Egypt. As of 106 AD it was one of the main ports of Rome and the home origin of Ayla – Axum Amphoras and by the time of Eusebius it became the garrison of Legion X Fretensis which had moved from Jerusalem to Aela.

When the control shifted over to the Byzantine Empire in 300 AD, what is considered to be the world's very first purpose – built church was constructed in Aqaba. Becoming a Christian Bishopric in its early stages allowed its Bishop, Peter to attend the First Council of Nicea, the first ecumenical council, in 325 AD.

In 451 AD, Beryllus was at the Council of Chalcedon and Paul was at the Synod which was called by Patriarch Peter of Jerusalem in 536 AD against Patriarch Anthimus I of Alexandria. The council was attended by Palaestina Prima, Palaestina Secunda, Palaestina Tertia which Aela belonged to.

According to Ibn Ishaq, in 630 AD Muhammed extracted tribute from Aela in the Expedition to Tabouk. In 650 AD the Islamic Conquest had a decaying effect on the Ancient settlement and a new Arab city was build outside its walls under Uthman ibn Affan which translates to Ayla.

Shams Eddin Muqaddi, a geographer theorises that Ayla was built nearby the ruined ancient city.

The city itself prospered greatly under the influence of Ummayyads during 661 – 750 AD, going beyond that with the Abbasids from 750 – 970 AD and then with the Fatimids from 971 – 1116 AD.

Ayla, knowing the benefits of its central location took advantage of it as a bridge to India and Arab spices, situated between the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Peninsula.

In 1986 AD a Medieval city was excavated by the University of Chicago. Many archaeological artefacts are found in the Aqaba Archaeological Museum and in Jordan Archaeological Museum.

The city itself was a rectangle of 170 x 145 fortified metres with walls 2.6 metres thick and 4.5 metres high. The area of occupation was 35 x 55 metres with 24 towers defending the city and 4 gates on all four sides, bringing the conclusion that it was a typical Islamic settlement.

Bladwin I of Jerusalem took over in 1116AD with little resistance and the centre of the city was moved to 500 metres along the coast. Afterwards, the Helim crusader fortress was built and Pharaoh's Island, 7km west of Aqaba.

A decline was noted due to the Bedouin attacks, earthquakes and Malmuk forces.

Remaining under the control of the Kingdom of Jerusalem from 1116 AD until 1187 AD when it was captured by Saladin. The Sultan Al – Ashraf Qansuh Al – Ghuri rebuilt the Aqaba Fortress.

For the next 4 centuries it remained a simple fishing village until it regained its importance after Hejaz railway construction by the Ottomans in 1908 which connected the port to Damascus and Medina.

In 1917, during World War I, T.E. Lawrence and the Arab forces of Auda abu Tayi and Sherif Nasir mounted and attacked, forcing the Ottoman forces to withdraw. Later on in 1925, Aqaba ceded to British protectorate of Transjordan.

King Hussein sold 6,000 square kilometres of Jordanian territories were sold to Saudi Arabia for 12 km of prime coastline, including the beautiful

Yamanieh Coral Reef. It soon became a major site for import in Iraqi goods until the Persian Gulf War.

### **Interesting Facts:**

- 1.Aqaba is mentioned in the Arabian Nights
- 2.One of the oldest texts in Arabic alphabet is an inscription in Jabal Ram, 50 km east of Aqaba
- 3.It is a golden triangle of tourism between the Wadi Rum, Petra and Aqaba.
- 4.Due to Aqaba's Special Economic Zone Authority, it has low – tax, duty free city.
- 5.A few mega projects in the city are the Ayla Oasis, Saraya Aqaba, Expansion of the port and Marsa Zayed.

### ***Questions for Reflection:***

- 1.Why do you think Aqaba has had so many conquerors?
- 2.How could a city with so many wars around it still prosper?
- 3.Do you think any person from the Bible passed by or inside?

## **Dead Sea**

The Dead Sea also known as Yam ha-Melah or as the Romans knew it, the Asphalt Lake is the lowest point on the Earth. To the east is Jordan and to the west is Israel and the West Bank. It is said that Herod the Great used it as a health resort for himself.

The lake is an endorheic lake, located in the Jordan Rift Valley and runs between the East Anatolian Fault Zone in Turkey and the northern end of the Red Sea Rift offshore to the southern tip of Sinai.

In Biblical times it was used extensively as a dwelling place due to its numerous caves. One well known account is when King David hid there from Saul. According to biblical scriptures, Jericho is located to the Northwest and to the South-East is Sodom, Gamorra, Admah, Zoar and Zebam.

Prophecies from Ezekiel and Zechariah say that the Dead Sea will be restored and revived, allowing marine life to live in it,

During Greek and Roman times it is said that Aristotle wrote about the remarkable waters of the Dead Sea and that the Nabateans fished for natural asphalt which bubbled up to the surface and sold it to the Egyptians who used it in the embalming process that created mummies.

Herod constructed and reconstructed fortresses on the western bank. Fortresses like Masada where the Jewish zealots fled after the destruction of the Second Temple and committed mass suicide during the siege of 73 BC by the X Legion and Machaerus where it is said that John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Antipas and died there.

A popular but contested theory is that the Essenes who settled on the western shore of the Dead Sea are the real owners of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Plinius the Elder identifies their location with “on the west side of the Dead Sea away from the coast ... [above] the town of Engeda”.

Ein Gedi, which is mentioned a few times in Mishna, produced persimmon for the temple's fragrance and to export it with a secret recipe. The Sodomite salt was an essential mineral in the temple's holy incense but was said to be dangerous for house use and could cause blindness.

The Roman camps surrounding Masad were built by Jewish slaves using water from the nearby towns who gained their drinking water from sweet – water springs and Die Freshcha springs which were in the near vicinity.

After the Greek and Roman times, the Dead Sea became a place of refuge and escape, used by Greek Orthodox monks for its remoteness during the Byzantine Era. The Monasteries, such as St. George in Wadi Kelt and Mar Saba in the Judean desert, were places of pilgrimage.

In 1835 Christopher Costigan explored the Dead Sea by boat and was followed by Thomas Howard Molyneux in 1847, William Francis Lynch in 1848 and John MacGregor in 1869. In 1868 though the Moabite stone was discovered and in the late 1940's and early 1950's the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in nearby caves.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

Do you believe that eventually the Dead Sea will be 'revived' and have marine life?

## **Jerash**

Jerash is the capital and the largest city of the Jerash Governorate, located 48 kilometres north of Amman Jordan. Its architecture is a blend of Greco – Roman of the Mediterranean Basin and Ancient Arab orientated traditions. In the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, the village name was

Garshu and the inhabitants were Semitic/Arabs. During the Greco – Roman times, the name was changed to Gerasa and then later on into Jerash by the Arabs.

The city itself was flourishing greatly until the 749 BC earthquakes that destroyed huge parts of it. The subsequent Damascus earthquake in 847 BC only contributed to the overall destruction.

During 1120 BC Zahir Ad-Dib Toghtehin atabeg of Damascus ( **Atabeg is a governor of a nation. The title is hereditary and is of nobility with a Turkish Origin.** ) ordered the destruction and conversion of the Temple of Artemis into a fortress which later on in 1121 BC Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem captured and demolished it. Even to this day. One can see the burn marks from the 1121 destruction. Afterwards, the crusaders immediately left and travelled to Seecip, also known as Sakib, which is the eastern border of the settlement.

Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was supposedly deserted before the Ottoman rule but archaeologists have found Malmuk (Arabic slaves ) hamlets in the northwest quarter which supports the theory that Jerash was populated BEFORE the Ottoman Era. In the census of 1596, 12 Muslim households were built and the excavations which were handled in 2011 show that there were a lot of Muslim pottery and structures, reinforcing the idea of a large concentration of Middle Islamic inhabitants.

Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, German traveller, roamed the ruins in 1806 and wrote about all the ruins that he recognized, while in 1925 the excavations commenced and revealed the ancient city, albeit slowly.

During the excavations, it has been noted that many settlements were found by archaeologists and in August 2015, two human skulls were excavated by the University of Jordan along with the 'Ain Ghazal settlement, giving solid evidence of inhabitation in the Neolithic Age ( 7500 – 5500 BC) due to the estimation that there are only 12 max sites across the world containing similar human remains.

There are some settlements that were found that age back to the Bronze Age ( 3200 – 1200 BC). As mentioned above, during the Greco – Roman times, the name was changed to Gerasa, though it was also referred to as 'Anitoch on the Golden River 'causing people to think that the Seleucid King Antioch IV was the one who founded it due to the name Antioch of the Chrysorrhous while others believe that the Ptolemy II of Egypt was the true founder. Heavy evidence though stands in the Ancient Greek Inscriptions that Alexander the Great and Perdicas, his General, founded the city in 331 BC when he left Egypt and crossed Syria en route to Mesopotamia.

After the Greek period, going into the Roman, in 63 BC during the roman conquest, the city was added to the Roman province of Syria and then later joined the Decapolis structure. Famous Historian Josephus mentions that Syrian inhabitants co – lived with a small Jewish community. The city was absorbed into the Roman province of Arabia, including Philadelphia in 106 AD. The Romans provided peace and security allowing the people to devote energy and time into economic development and civic building activities, allowing Gerasa to flourish.

Due to the heavy Roman influence, Gerasa contains one of the biggest and most well preserved sites of Roman architecture in the world, outside of Italy, giving it the misleading name of Pompeii of the Middle East due to its size, extent of excavation and level of preservation.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Jerash was achieving great prosperity and in 106 AD, Emperor Trajan built roads throughout the province allowing more trade to move into Gerasa. In 129 – 130 AD,

Emperor Hadrian visited Gerasa and in celebration of his visit, the Arch of Hadrian/ Triumphal Arch was erected.

Afterwards, into the Byzantine period, Jerash reached a staggering 800.000 square metres inside its walls. Unfortunately, the Persian invasion in 614 AD created a rapid decline. Excavations have unearthed a mosaic floor with Ancient Greek and Hebrew – Aramaic inscriptions underneath a Byzantine church which was built in 530 AD. The presence of Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions point to a theory that previously, a synagogue was located there before it was converted into a church.

Going into the Early Muslim period, during the Umayyad caliphate ( 2<sup>nd</sup> of four major caliphates established after the death of Muhammad ) the city flourished with numerous shops and issued coins mint named “ Jerash “ in Arabic. Ceramic lamps with Arabic inscriptions that contained the potters name and the city as the place of manufacture, show that it was a centre for ceramic manufacture. Further evidence, in the sense of a large mosque with several churches around shows that during this period, a sizeable Muslim community co-existed with Christians.

In the mid to late Muslim period, the settlements continued to grow and many Middle Islamic mamluks were excavated around the temple of Zeus and in the Northwest Quarter.

The excavations started as early as 1920 and many remains were found.

### **Archaeological finds:**

- Corinthian Columns
- Tetrapylon of Jerash

- Hadrian's Arch / Triumphal Arch
- Hippodrome
- Zeus Temple
- Artemis Temple
- Unique Oval Forum ( Surrounded by a colonnade )
- Long colonnaded street / Cardo
- Large South Theatre
- Smaller North Theatre ( Focus in the centre of the pit in front of the stage marked by a distinct stone from which normal speaking can be easily heard in the auditorium. )
- Large Nymphaeum ( Fed by aqueduct )
- Almost complete circuit of city walls
- Water powered saw mill for cutting stone and wood ( Conversion to Cranshank for linear motion. Best examples in Hierapolis and Ephesus. )
- Two large bridges across nearby river

Most of these were built by donations of wealthy citizens in the city.

**Interesting facts and discoveries:**

- 1.In 350 AD a large Christian community lived in Jerash
- 2.400 – 600 AD more than 13 churches were built with superb mosaic floors
- 3.4<sup>th</sup> century a cathedral was built.
- 4.Underneath a church, another ancient synagogue was found with detailed mosaics, depicting the story of Noah.
- 5.Birthplace of famous mathematician, Nicomachus ( 60 – 120 AD )

### **Questions for Reflection :**

- Who do you think were the first inhabitants if they truly were Semitic/Arabs?
- How big was the city of Jerash in Biblical times?
- Why such a huge variety of different religions/cultures with so little bloodshed between them?
- Why did the Persian invasion create such a huge decline if Jerash was supposed to be flourishing?

## **Lot's Cave**

Lot's infamous cave is located south of the Dead Sea, past the Lisan Peninsula and 2km away from Safi village. The entrance is behind the Byzantine Basilica which is rumoured to have been built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. An inscription that says the name of Lot shows that he lived there with his daughters.

The basilica contains three aisles with three apses, a mosaic decorating the floor while the southern part has a cistern with 7km depth and the rooms in the north were used for monastery and pilgrim accommodations.

### **Genesis 19 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)**

**19** The two angels came to S`dom that evening, when Lot was sitting at the gate of S`dom. Lot saw them, got up to greet them and prostrated himself on the ground. <sup>2</sup> He said, "Here now, my lords, please come over to your servant's house. Spend the night, wash your feet, get up early, and go on your way." "No," they

answered, “we’ll stay in the square.”<sup>3</sup> But he kept pressing them; so they went home with him; and he made them a meal, baking *matzah* for their supper, which they ate.

<sup>4</sup> But before they could go to bed, the men of the city surrounded the house — young and old, everyone from every neighborhood of S’dom. <sup>5</sup> They called Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to stay with you tonight? Bring them out to us! We want to have sex with them!” <sup>6</sup> Lot went out to them and stood in the doorway, closing the door behind him, <sup>7</sup> and said, “Please, my brothers, don’t do such a wicked thing. <sup>8</sup> Look here, I have two daughters who are virgins. Please, let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them what seems good to you; but don’t do anything to these men, since they are guests in my house.” <sup>9</sup> “Stand back!” they replied. “This guy came to live here, and now he’s decided to play judge. For that we’ll deal worse with you than with them!” Then they crowded in on Lot, in order to get close enough to break down the door. <sup>10</sup> But the men inside reached out their hands, brought Lot into the house to them and shut the door. <sup>11</sup> Then they struck the men at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they couldn’t find the doorway.

<sup>12</sup> The men said to Lot, “Do you have any people here besides yourself? Whomever you have in the city — son-in-law, your sons, your daughters — bring them out of this place; <sup>13</sup> because we are going to destroy it. *Adonai* has become aware of the great outcry against them, and *Adonai* has sent us to destroy it.” <sup>14</sup> Lot went out and spoke with his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, “Get up and leave this place, because *Adonai* is going to destroy the city.” But his sons-in-law didn’t take him seriously.

<sup>15</sup> When morning came, the angels told Lot to hurry. “Get up,” they said, “and take your wife and your two daughters who are here; otherwise you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.” <sup>16</sup> But he dallied, so the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand and the hands of his two daughters — *Adonai* was being merciful to him — and led them, leaving them outside the city. <sup>17</sup> When they had brought them out, he said, “Flee for your life! Don’t look behind you, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain, but escape to the hills! Otherwise you will be swept away.” <sup>18</sup> Lot said to them, “Please, no, my lord! <sup>19</sup> Here, your servant has already found favor in your sight, and you have shown me even greater mercy by saving my life. But I can’t escape to the hills, because I’m afraid the disaster will overtake me, and I will die. <sup>20</sup> Look, there’s

a town nearby to flee to, and it's a small one. Please let me escape there — isn't it just a small one? — and that way I will stay alive.”

<sup>21</sup> He replied, “All right, I agree to what you have asked. I won't overthrow the city of which you have spoken. <sup>22</sup> Hurry, and escape to that place, because I can't do anything until you arrive there.” For this reason the city was named Tzo'ar [small].

<sup>23</sup> By the time Lot had come to Tzo'ar, the sun had risen over the land. <sup>24</sup> Then *Adonai* caused sulfur and fire to rain down upon S'dom and 'Amora from *Adonai* out of the sky. <sup>25</sup> He overthrew those cities, the entire plain, all the inhabitants of the cities and everything growing in the ground. <sup>26</sup> But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a column of salt.

We can see from this account that Lot's wife turned around when she was told not to and became a column of salt, bringing us to the realisation of how serious God is about His Word. The pillar of salt is near the Dead Sea at Mt. Sodom.

<sup>30</sup> Lot went up from Tzo'ar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, because he was afraid to stay in Tzo'ar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave. <sup>31</sup> The firstborn said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there isn't a man on earth to come in to us in the manner customary in the world. <sup>32</sup> Come, let's have our father drink wine; then we'll sleep with him, and that way we'll enable our father to have descendants.”

<sup>33</sup> So they plied their father with wine that night, and the older one went in and slept with her father; he didn't know when she lay down or when she got up. <sup>34</sup> The following day, the older said to the younger, “Here, I slept last night with my father. Let's make him drink wine again tonight, and you go in and sleep with him, and that way we'll enable our father to have descendants.” <sup>35</sup> They plied their father with wine that night also, and the younger one got up and slept with him, and he didn't know when she lay down or when she got up. <sup>36</sup> Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father.

<sup>37</sup> The older one gave birth to a son and called him Mo'av; he is the ancestor of Mo'av to this day. <sup>38</sup> The younger also gave birth to a son, and she called him Ben-'Ammi; he is the ancestor of the people of 'Amon to this day.

We see the act of the daughters who were considered righteous and see how they defile their father, bringing to life the Ammonites and Moabites.

## **Machaerus**

Machaerus is a fortified hilltop in Jordan, 25kms southeast of the Jordan river mouth and it is on the Eastern side of the Dead Sea. IT was originally built by the Hasmonean King Alexander Jannaeus (104 BC – 78 BC) around 90 BC. It was considered in an important strategic position due to the difficulty to access cause of the high rocks, the high vantage points and that invasions from the east could be easily seen. In addition, the line of sight between the other Hasmonean ( and later Herodian ) citadels allowed them to signal each other if trouble appeared.

It was destroyed in 57Bc by Pompey's general Gabinius and then rebuilt by Herod the Great in 30 BC for military purposes. After Herod's death it passed on to Antipas, his son, who ruled from 4 BC until 39 AD. On the account of Josephus, it is said that this is where John the Baptist was imprisoned and then later beheaded by Antipas. After the death of Antipas, Herod Agrippa I inherited the fortress before it eventually fell under Roman rule in 44 AD.

During the first Jewish Revolt in 66 AD the fortress fell into Jewish rebel hands. Six years later in 72 AD Roman Legate Lucilius Bassus began a siege with his men upon the stronghold, building an embankment and a ramp to facilitate Roman siege engines. The Jewish rebels capitulated before the siege began and as such were allowed to walk free and the fortress was torn down to its foundations.

### ***Design:***

It sits upon a hilltop, 1,100 metres above Dead Sea levels, surrounded on all sides by deep ravines which provided it with great natural strength and it was regarded by Herod the Great deserving of the highest and strongest fortifications found during that period due to its proximity to Arabia. He built a fortress wall that surrounded the crest, 100 metres in height and 60 metres in wide with 3 corner towers, each one being 90 ft high. Afterwards the palace was built in the centre and cisterns were provided to collect rain water.

The Royal courtyard is considered one of the closest and best existing archaeological parallels to the Herodian Gabbatha in the Jerusalem Praetorium where Jesus Christ of Nazareth was judged by Pontius Pilates.

### **Excavation:**

In 1968 Jerry Vardaman began the excavation which then turned over to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and then later to the Director of Cobb Institute of Archaeology at Mississippi State University. August Strobel, German Scholar in 1973, identified and studied the wall which the Romans used to encircle defenders within the fortress. Between 1978 and 1981, Virgilio Corbo, Stanislao Loffreda and Michele Piccirillo from Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem, excavated at the site and it has been noted that the ruins remain in a remarkable untouched condition.

The Herodian palace has many rooms, a large courtyard and an elaborate bathroom with the mosaic floor remaining, though in fragments. Down the eastern slope of the hill are walls and towers that indicate towards a lower town though that isn't confirmed. From the east of the palace one can find aqueducts that brought water to the cisterns of the fortress. The Pottery that has been found, extends from the Hellenistic period all the way to the Roman time.

Helpful links:

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/biblical-archaeology-sites/machaerus-beyond-the-beheading-of-john-the-baptist/>

### **Questions For Reflections:**

1. Where do you think John the Baptist died?
2. Did you think Herod the Great built any cities outside of Israel?
3. Did we expect Herod's reign to include across the Dead Sea river?
4. Do you wonder what happened to this fortress even though it was one of the most fortified places in Jordan?

## **Madaba**

Madaba is the capital city of the Madaba Governorate in central Jordan, 30 km south – west of Jordan. The city dates back to the Middle Bronze Age and is known for the many mosaics it contains, very often named the City of Mosaics.

During the Roman times up to the Byzantine rule, it was part of the Provincia Arabia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This Provincia was set up by Emperor Trajan to replace the Nabatean Kingdom of Petra.

In 451 AD we see the first evidence of a Christian community with its own Bishop and was found in the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Afterwards, during the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate rule it became a part of the southern district of Jund Filastin within Bilad al-Sham province.

Later on in 1880 the city was resettled by 90 Arabian Christians who were led there by two Italian priests from the Latin patriarchate which allowed the archaeological research to start.

### **Archaeological finds:**

First mosaic found when people were using old buildings to build new ones.

The northern part of the city has the most concentration of mosaics while the northern area was crossed by a colonnaded Roman road and saw the Church of the Map, Hippolytus Mansion, Church of the Virgin Mary, Church of the prophet Elijah with the crypt etc.

The Map of Madaba was discovered in 1896 and dated back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century where it was later preserved in the floor of the Greek Orthodox Basilica of St. George.

In 2010 a 3000 year old Iron Age temple containing various figurines of deities and more were discovered.

## **Mount Nebo**

Mount Nebo is an elevated ridge in Western Jordan, reaching 710 metres above sea level giving a great view of the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, The river Jordan and many more than fall under the category of what God described as The Promised Land. It's highest point is known as

Syagha and there are monasteries and a Byzantine church that were built in 1933.

### **Religious Significance**

Mount Nebo is mentioned a few times in the Holy Bible. One of the most known and iconic moments is in the final chapter of Deuteronomy where Moses ascended to the top of Mount Nebo, was shown the land of Canaan, which he was forbidden to enter by God, and eventually he died. Even though passages say that he died in the land of Moab, across Beit-Por, no burial place has been found to this day.

### **Deuteronomy 34:5-6 (CJB)**

“<sup>5</sup> So Moshe, the servant of *Adonai*, died there in the land of Mo'av, as *Adonai* had said. <sup>6</sup> He was buried in the valley across from Beit-P'or in the land of Mo'av, but to this day no one knows where his grave is.”

According to 2 Maccabees 2:4-7 Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, moved the Ark of the covenant under what is presumed to be God's authority and revelation.

A few important figures have visited the site on their pilgrimage walks like on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2000, Pope John Paul II visited and planted an olive tree beside the Byzantine Chapel as a symbol of peace. In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI gave a speech and...looked out the mountain top towards Jerusalem...Okay..

Italian creator Giovanni Fantoni decided to create what was said in Numbers 21:4-9 and John 3:14 by constructing the Brazen Serpent Monument upon Mount Nebo.

### **Numbers 21:4-9 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)**

“<sup>4</sup> Then they traveled from Mount Hor on the road toward the Sea of Suf in order to go around the land of Edom; but the people’s tempers grew short because of the detour. <sup>5</sup> The people spoke against God and against Moshe: “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt? To die in the desert? There’s no real food, there’s no water, and we’re sick of this miserable stuff we’re eating!”

**(LY: vi)** <sup>6</sup> In response, *Adonai* sent poisonous snakes among the people; they bit the people, and many of Isra’el’s people died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moshe and said, “We sinned by speaking against *Adonai* and against you. Pray to *Adonai* that he rid us of these snakes.” Moshe prayed for the people, <sup>8</sup> and *Adonai* answered Moshe: “Make a poisonous snake and put it on a pole. When anyone who has been bitten sees it, he will live.” <sup>9</sup> Moshe made a bronze snake and put it on the pole; if a snake had bitten someone, then, when he looked toward the bronze snake, he stayed alive.”

### **John 3:14 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)**

“<sup>14</sup> Just as Moshe lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up;”

The Church was built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century in commemoration of Moses death. The Church had the traditional basilica pattern and though it was enlarged in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D, in 597 it was rebuilt. The first written account that exists of said church was from a journal of a female pilgrimage named Egeria (Aetheria) in 394 AD. Said Journal was excavated in 1930’s.

Beneath the Church one can find six tombs that were hollowed from natural stone beneath the mosaics covering the floor of the Church. Different mosaics from various time periods can be seen in the presbytery which was built to protect the site and to provide space for worship. The oldest mosaic recorded in this site is a panel with a braided cross placed on the east end of the south wall.

The main mosaic is 9 metres by 3 metres and depicts monastic wine making, hunters and various animals.

This place was used as an early Christian pilgrimage and accounts say that Egyptian monks came during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century to construct a small church in commemoration of Moses death on Syagha peak.

Khillbet al-Mukhayyat is a small town to the east between Mount Nebo and Madaba. In the place of the old remains of the village of Nebo, which is mentioned in the Bible, two churches were built in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century. In the highest point of acropolis the 6<sup>th</sup> century church of St. George and the best preserved mosaics are located in St. Lots and Procopius churches both of whom the patrons were venerated as martyrs.

After the funeral chapel and the baptistery were dismantled and the floor was adjusted to be level with the rest of the basilica, it was made into a single large chapel which was divided into two separate rooms by stairs and railings. The eastern room contained countless of mosaic decorations of animals and flower depictions in a geometrical frame while the western room only contained geometrical motifs. Due to the chapel being elongated it is assumed that it was used as a Diaconicon of the basilica and a chapter room for monks. Once the ancient funeral chapel was dismantled and the new room with the mosaics was built, the Baptistery was constructed on top of it with it's own mosaics.

There is an inscription over the threshold of the entrance that says "Peace to All", giving a welcoming and peaceful atmosphere.

### **Theotokos Chapel**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the 7<sup>th</sup> century the western door leading to the Baptistery was walled up, three of the rooms inside the monastery were destroyed and the floor was levelled with the rest of the basilica which provided a basis and foundation for the Theotokos Chapel.

The chapel contains its own apse, is divided into two by a railing and contains rich geometrical multi-coloured designs with depictions of flowers, animals and a ciborium above the altar, flanked by two bulls and gazelles.

The sanctuary was constructed in honour of Moses and since the 4<sup>th</sup> of September of 1976, Christian communities and the Franciscan Fathers have celebrated Moses in an annual feast.

### **Other Interesting Places:**

1km east of Mount Nebo there lays the spring of Moses which is accounted for by the previously mentioned Egeria, Peter the Iberian and Theodorus. In Spring time the Eucalyptus tree is seen to adorn everywhere.

The churches of Deacon Thomas and Kayanos were built in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and in the 7<sup>th</sup> century were adorned with another mosaic pavement. Unfortunately, it was destroyed in an earthquake in 749 A.D

### **Questions for Reflection:**

## Penuel

Penuel is close to Succath, east of the Jordan River and south of the river Jabbok. This is where Jacob wrestled with God and had his name changed to Israel.

### **Genesis 32: 23-30:**

<sup>23 (22)</sup> He got up that night, took his two wives, his two slave-girls, and his eleven children, and forded the Yabok. <sup>24 (23)</sup> He took them and sent them across the stream, then sent his possessions across; <sup>25 (24)</sup> and Ya‘akov was left alone. Then some man wrestled with him until daybreak. <sup>26 (25)</sup> When he saw that he did not defeat Ya‘akov, he struck Ya‘akov’s hip socket, so that his hip was dislocated while wrestling with him. <sup>27 (26)</sup> The man said, “Let me go, because it’s daybreak.” But Ya‘akov replied, “I won’t let you go unless you bless me.” <sup>28 (27)</sup> The man asked, “What is your name?” and he answered, “Ya‘akov.” <sup>29 (28)</sup> Then the man said, “From now on, you will no longer be called Ya‘akov, but Isra’el; because you have shown your strength to both God and men and have prevailed.” <sup>30 (29)</sup> Ya‘akov asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he answered, “Why are you asking about my name?” and blessed him there.

### **Judges 8:8**

<sup>8</sup> From there he went up to P’nu’el and made the same request, and the people of P’nu’el gave the same answer as those of Sukkot. <sup>9</sup> So he answered the people of P’nu’el similarly, “When I return safe and sound, I will break down this tower!”

### **Judges 8:17**

<sup>17</sup> He also broke down the tower of P’nu’el and put the men of the city to death

### **1 Kings 12:25**

<sup>25</sup> Then Yarov‘am built up Sh’khem in the hills of Efrayim and lived there. After that, he left and built up P’nu’el.

## Petra

Petra is originally known to its inhabitants as Raqmu. The historical and archaeological city is located in Southern Jordan, where it lies on the slope of Jabal Al-Madbah in a basin among the mountains which form the eastern flank of Arabah valley that runs from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. The name “Petra” was given by Greek merchants who was the city’s inhabitants offering sacrifice to a deity on a large stone. Believed to have been settled as early as 9,000 BC and established as capital of the Nabataean Kingdom around the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC, the Nabataeans were nomadic Arabs who invested in Petra’s location close to trade routes by making it a major regional trading hub.

In 312 BC, Petra was attacked by Antigonus I as recorded by Greek Historians. Due to the Nabataeans knowledge of the terrain and ability to navigate inside of it, they were able to repel attacks. Aretas III Philhellen ( 87-62 BC ) was the first Nabataean ruler to embrace the Greek culture and Rabbel II Soter ( 70-106 AD) was the last one. With it’s population reaching 20.000 inhabitants and the creation of the Khazneh structure which was believed to be the mausoleum of Nabataean King Aretas IV, it was quite clear Petra was flourishing during the 1<sup>ST</sup> century AD.

Even though the Nabataean Kingdom was under Roman rule as a client state, it was only in 106 AD that they truly lost their independence after the Roman Empire conquer, annexed and renamed it into Arabia Petraea. A decline is seen in Petra once sea trading emerged and when the 363 earthquake hit, it destroyed many structures. Later on in the Byzantine Era, several Christian churches were built though the attacks from the emerging Sasanid Empire damaged the city and by the early Islamic era, it became an abandoned place where only a couple of nomads lived, remaining unknown to the world until 1812 when it was rediscovered by Johann Ludwig Burckhardt.

To access the city one must go through a 1.2 km long gorge called the Siq, leading directly to Khazneh, Petra’s most famous structure. Called the Rose city due to the colour of the stone that was carved, Petra is known for its rock-cut architecture and water conduit system. In 1985 it was implemented into the UNESCO World Heritage Site being described as “one of the most precious cultural properties of man’s cultural heritage”. The Al-Khazneh was voted as one of the New 7 Wonders of the World in 2007.

Some of the earliest recorded farmers that had settled in Beidha, a pre-pottery settlement just north of Petra, were in 2010 BC. Being listed in the Egyptian campaign accounts and the Amarna Letters as Pel, Sela or Seir shows its renowned in that age. A sanctuary existed since ancient times despite the relatively late founding and according to the Jewish historian Josephus, the Madianites inhabited the land since 1340 BC, governed by five kings. Most Nabataean sites and the infamous architecture of Petra were built during the indigenous rule in early antiquity, often having Greek architects involved.

Being one of the several nomadic Bedouin tribes that roamed the Arabian Desert, the Nabataeans moved with their herds to locations where water and pasture could be found, becoming familiar with their area as seasons passed having extreme difficulty during the years when seasonal rainfall diminished. Modern scholars deny the theory that the Nabataeans could be Arameanians with evidence of their religious, linguistic and archaeological finds that confirmed the northern Arabian tribe roots.

The Semitic name is presumed to be Sela, yet no hard evidence can be found. The expeditions of Antigonus against the Nabataeans in 312 BC shows that the “petra” (rock) that was referred in Diodorus Siculus’s passage was merely a natural fortress and place of refuge implying that the metropolis did not exist at that time.

An inscription in the rock wall of the Wadi Musa, opposite the entrance to the Siq was the name “Rekem”. Due to Jordan building a bridge over the wadi, the inscription was buried beneath tons of concrete.

The part of Arabia under the rule of Petra was absorbed into the Roman Empire as a part of the Arabia Petraea, becoming its capital in 106 AD. Even though the native dynasty came to an end, the city continued to prosper under Roman rule and it was around that time when the Petra Roman Road was built. Coinage came to an end a century later when the city was at the height of its splendor during the time of Alexander Severus. It is theorised that due to the neo-persian power under the Sassanid Empire and the invasion of Petra that the city underwent a

catastrophe and that's why there was a stop in the building of sumptuous tombs. Declination happened due to the importance of Palmyra grew and it drew Arabian trade away, leaving it to linger as a religious centre.

Having the new sea based trade routes caused Petra to decline under Roman rule and in 363 an earthquake destroyed many buildings, crippling the vital water management system. Abandoned by the inhabitants after another earthquake in 551 and the Arab invasion in 633. Being the capital of the Byzantine province of Palaestina III meant there would be a lot of churches built and later on excavated. In one such excavated church, over 150 papyri were found, most being contracts. Being an object of interest during the Middle Ages and having the Sultan Baibars of Egypt to visit in the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century showed Petra's infamy.

Johann Ludwig Burckhardt was the first European to describe them in his travels during 1812. During that time the Greek Church of Jerusalem operated a diocese in Al Karak named Battria and it was the opinion of the clergy of Jerusalem that Kerak was Petra.

Many treasures were stolen and the tombs looted by thieves due to the weakening of the structures because of age. A four person team, Agnes Conway, George Horsfield, Dr Tawfig Canaan and Dr Ditlef Nielsen excavated and surveyed Petra in 1929.

In October 1917, as part of a general effort to divert Ottoman military resources away from the British advance before the Third Battle of Gaza, a revolt of Arabs in Petra was led by British Army officer T. E. Lawrence against the Ottoman regime. The Bedouin women living in the vicinity of Petra and under the leadership of Sheik Khallil's wife were gathered to fight in the revolt of the city. The rebellions, with the support of British military, were able to devastate the Ottoman forces.

The Petra Bedouin were forcibly resettled from their cave dwellings in Petra to Umm Sayhoun/ Um Seihun by the Jordanian government in 1985, prior to the UNESCO designation process. Here, they were provided with block-built housing with some infrastructure including in particular a sewage and drainage system. Among the six communities in the Petra Region, Umm Sayhoun is one of the smaller communities. The

village of Wadi Musa is the largest in the area, inhabited largely by the Layathnah Bedouin, and is now the closest settlement to the visitor centre, the main entrance via the Siq and the archaeological site generally. Umm Sayhoun gives access to the 'back route' into the site, the Wadi Turkmaniyeh pedestrian route.

The Bidouls, the Petra Bedouin, belong to one of the Bedu tribes whose cultural heritage and traditional skills were proclaimed by UNESCO on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2005 and inscribed in 2008.

In 2011, following an 11-month project planning phase, the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority in Association with DesignWorkshop and JCP s.r.l published a Strategic Master Plan that guides planned development of the Petra Region. This is intended to guide planned development of the Petra Region in an efficient, balanced and sustainable way over the next 20 years for the benefit of the local population and of Jordan in general. As part of this, a Strategic Plan was developed for Umm Sayhoun and surrounding areas.

The process of developing the Strategic Plan considered the area's needs from five points of view:

- a socio-economic perspective
  - the perspective of Petra Archaeological Park
  - the perspective of Petra's tourism product
  - a land use perspective
  - an environmental perspective
- 
- The Nabataeans worshipped Arab gods and goddesses in the pre-Islamic era as well as a few of their deified kings.

One, Obodas I, was deified after his death. Dushara was the primary male god accompanied by his three female deities: Al-'Uzza, Allat and Manat. Many statues carved in the rock depict these gods and goddesses. New evidence indicates that broader Edomite and Nabataean theology had strong links to Earth-Sun relationships, often manifested in the orientation of prominent Petra structures to equinox and solstice sunrises and sunsets.

- A stele dedicated to Qos-Allah 'Qos is Allah' or 'Qos the god', by Qosmilk (melech – king) is found at Petra (Glueck 516). Qos is identifiable with Kaush (Qaush) the God of the older Edomites. The stele is horned and the seal from the Edomite Tawilan near Petra identified with Kaush displays a star and crescent (Browning 28), both consistent with a moon deity. It is conceivable that the latter could have resulted from trade with Harran (Bartlett 194). There is continuing debate about the nature of Qos (qaus – bow) who has been identified both with a hunting bow (hunting god) and a rainbow (weather god) although the crescent above the stele is also a bow.
- Nabatean inscriptions in Sinai and other places display widespread references to names including Allah, El and Allat (god and goddess), with regional references to al-Uzza, Baal and Manutu (Manat) (Negev 11). Allat is also found in Sinai in South Arabian language. Allah occurs particularly as Garm-'allahi – god dedided (Greek Garamelos) and Aush-allahi – 'gods covenant' (Greek Ausallos). We find both Shalm-lahi 'Allah is peace' and Shalm-allat, 'the peace of the goddess'. We also find Amat-allahi 'she-servant of god' and Halaf-llahi 'the successor of Allah'.
- The Monastery, Petra's largest monument, dates from the 1st century BC. It was dedicated to Obodas I and is believed to be the symposium of Obodas the god. This information is inscribed on the ruins of the Monastery (the name is the translation of the Arabic "Ad Deir").

- Christianity found its way to Petra in the 4th century AD, nearly 500 years after the establishment of Petra as a trade center. Athanasius mentions a bishop of Petra (Anhioch. 10) named Asterius. At least one of the tombs (the "tomb with the urn"?) was used as a church. An inscription in red paint records its consecration "in the time of the most holy bishop Jason" (447). After the Islamic conquest of 629–632 Christianity in Petra, as of most of Arabia, gave way to Islam. During the First Crusade Petra was occupied by Baldwin I of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and formed the second fief of the barony of Al-Karak (in the lordship of Oultrejordain) with the title Château de la Vallée de Moyse or Sela. It remained in the hands of the Franks until 1189. It is still a titular see of the Catholic Church.
- Two Crusader-period castles are known in and around Petra. The first is al-Wu'ayra and is situated just north of Wadi Musa. It can be viewed from the road to "Little Petra". It is the castle of Valle Moise which was seized by a band of Turks with the help of local Muslims and only recovered by the Crusaders after they began to destroy the olive trees of Wadi Musa. The potential loss of livelihood led the locals to negotiate surrender. The second is on the summit of el-Habis in the heart of Petra and can be accessed from the West side of the Qasr al-Bint.
- According to Arab tradition, Petra is the spot where Moses (Musa) struck a rock with his staff and water came forth, and where Moses' brother, Aaron (Harun), is buried, at Mount Hor, known today as Jabal Haroun or Mount Aaron. The Wadi Musa or "Wadi of Moses" is the Arab name for the narrow valley at the head of which Petra is sited. A mountaintop shrine of Moses' sister Miriam was still shown to pilgrims at the time of Jerome in the 4th century, but its location has not been identified since.

### **Interesting Facts:**

1. Numerous scrolls in Greek and dating to the Byzantine period were discovered in an excavated church near the Winged Lion Temple in Petra in December 1993.

## Red Sea

The Red Sea, also known as the Erythraean Sea is an inlet of seawater from the Indian Ocean, located between Africa and Asia. It is connected from the south, through the Bab el Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden while to the north side lie the Sinai Peninsula, the Gulf of Suez, which leads to the Suez Canal, and the Gulf of Aqaba.

The Red Sea is about 2250 km long and, at its widest point, 355 km wide. It has a maximum depth of 3,040 m in the central Suakin Trough, and an average depth of 490 m .However, there are also extensive shallow shelves, noted for their marine life and corals. Over one thousand invertebrate species live there and 200 soft and hard corals inhabit, being the world's northernmost tropical sea.

Then ancient Egyptians are the earliest recorded explores of the Red Sea due to their wish to establish commercial routes to Punt. Earliest recorded is around 2500BC and then later on, conducted by Hatshepsu, around 1500BC. In the biblical book of Exodus, it is recorded that the Israelites crossed a body of water which is called Yam Suph in Hebrew, identified as the Red Sea. Rabbi Saadia Gaon(882–942), in his Judeo-Arabic translation of the Pentateuch, identifies the crossing place of the Red Sea as Baḥar al-Qulzum, meaning the Gulf of Suez.

Darius the Great ( 6<sup>th</sup> Century ) sent reconnaissance missions to the Red Sea, improving and extending navigation by locating many hazardous rocks and currents. A canal was built between the Nile and the northern end of the Red Sea at Suez. During the reign of Alexander the Great sent Greek naval expeditions down the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Greek navigators continued to explore and compile data on the Red Sea.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, Agatharchides collected information about the sea. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea ("Periplus of the Red Sea"), a Greek periplus written by an unknown author around the 1st century AD, contains a detailed description of the Red Sea's ports and sea routes. The Periplus also describes how Hippalus first discovered the direct route from the Red Sea to India.

The Romans, starting with the reign of Augustus favoured the Red Sea as a trading route with India due to the ability to trade goods with China from Indian Ports and communication between the Chinese and Romans

depended on the Red Sea but around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD the route was destroyed by the Aksumite Empire.

The Red Sea played an important part in spice trade during the Middle Ages and in 1513, Afonso de Albuquerque laid siege to Aden, trying to secure that channel to Portugal, but was forced to retreat. He then became known for being the first European fleet to have sailed those waters once they cruised the Red Sea inside Bab Al – Mandab.

In 1798, Napoleon was ordered by France to invade Egypt and conquer the Red Sea. Even though the result was a failure, Jean-Baptiste Lepere, an engineer who took part, revitalised the plan for a canal which was thought of during the reign of the Pharaohs. Even though several canals were built decades ago from the Nile to the Red Sea, none of them lasted for long. Only the Suez canal, which was opened in November 1869, and used by the British, French and Italians for trading posts lasted until WW I where a declination took place before WW II when the Americans and Soviets exerted influence while the oil tanker volume intensified. The Suez Canal finally closed, after the Six-Day War, from 1967 to 1975. The damage done, the Suez Canal has never recovered its supremacy over the Cape route which is known for its lack of piracy.

## **Exodus 14 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)**

14 Adonai said to Moshe, <sup>2</sup>“Tell the people of Isra’el to turn around and set up camp in front of Pi-Hachiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Ba’al-Tz’fon; camp opposite it, by the sea. <sup>3</sup> Then Pharaoh will say that the people of Isra’el are wandering aimlessly in the countryside, the desert has closed in on them. <sup>4</sup> I will make Pharaoh so hardhearted that he will pursue them; thus I will win glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will realize at last that I am Adonai.” The people did as ordered.

<sup>5</sup> When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people. They said, “What have we done, letting Isra’el stop being our slaves?” <sup>6</sup> So he prepared his chariots and took his people with him — <sup>7</sup> he took 600 first-quality chariots, as well as all the other chariots in Egypt, along with their commanders. <sup>8</sup> Adonai made Pharaoh hardhearted, and he pursued the people of Isra’el, as they left boldly. <sup>9</sup> The Egyptians went after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, with his cavalry and army, and overtook them as

they were encamped by the sea, by Pi-Hachiroth, in front of Ba'al-Tz'fon.<sup>10</sup> As Pharaoh approached, the people of Isra'el looked up and saw the Egyptians right there, coming after them. In great fear the people of Isra'el cried out to Adonai<sup>11</sup> and said to Moshe, "Was it because there weren't enough graves in Egypt that you brought us out to die in the desert? Why have you done this to us, bringing us out of Egypt?"<sup>12</sup> Didn't we tell you in Egypt to let us alone, we'll just go on being slaves for the Egyptians? It would be better for us to be the Egyptians' slaves than to die in the desert!"<sup>13</sup> Moshe answered the people, "Stop being so fearful! Remain steady, and you will see how Adonai is going to save you. He will do it today — today you have seen the Egyptians, but you will never see them again!"<sup>14</sup> Adonai will do battle for you. Just calm yourselves down!"

<sup>15</sup> Adonai asked Moshe, "Why are you crying to me? Tell the people of Isra'el to go forward!"<sup>16</sup> Lift your staff, reach out with your hand over the sea, and divide it in two. The people of Isra'el will advance into the sea on dry ground.<sup>17</sup> As for me, I will make the Egyptians hardhearted; and they will march in after them; thus I will win glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh and all his army, chariots and cavalry.<sup>18</sup> Then the Egyptians will realize that I am Adonai, when I have won myself glory at the expense of Pharaoh, his chariots and his cavalry."

<sup>19</sup> Next, the angel of God, who was going ahead of the camp of Isra'el, moved away and went behind them; and the column of cloud moved away from in front of them and stood behind them.<sup>20</sup> It stationed itself between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Isra'el — there was cloud and darkness here, but light by night there; so that the one did not come near the other all night long.

<sup>21</sup> Moshe reached his hand out over the sea, and Adonai caused the sea to go back before a strong east wind all night. He made the sea become dry land, and its water was divided in two.<sup>22</sup> Then the people of Isra'el went into the sea on the dry ground, with the water walled up for them on their right and on their left.

<sup>23</sup> The Egyptians continued their pursuit, going after them into the sea — all Pharaoh's horses, chariots and cavalry.<sup>24</sup> Just before dawn, Adonai looked out on the Egyptian army through the column of fire and cloud and threw them into a panic.<sup>25</sup> He caused the wheels of their chariots to break off, so that they could move only with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Adonai is fighting for Isra'el against the Egyptians! Let's get away from them!"

<sup>26</sup> Adonai said to Moshe, “Reach your hand out over the sea, and the water will return and cover the Egyptians with their chariots and cavalry.” <sup>27</sup> Moshe reached his hand out over the sea, and by dawn the sea had returned to its former depth. The Egyptians tried to flee, but Adonai swept them into the sea. <sup>28</sup> The water came back and covered all the chariots and cavalry of Pharaoh’s army who had followed them into the sea — not even one of them was left. <sup>29</sup> But the people of Isra’el walked on dry ground in the sea, with the water walled up for them on their right and on their left.

<sup>30</sup> On that day, Adonai saved Isra’el from the Egyptians; Isra’el saw the Egyptians dead on the shore. <sup>31</sup> When Isra’el saw the mighty deed that Adonai had performed against the Egyptians, the people feared Adonai, and they believed in Adonai and in his servant Moshe.

## **Tishbe**

Tishbe is located 13 kilometres north of the Jabbok/Zarqa River in the historical region of Gilead and west of Mahanaim being a little beyond the Northwest limits of Ajloun in Ajloun Governorate in the Northern Jordan. The name translates to “settler” in Hebrew and there is evidence that points to it being identical to the historical town of Listib.

It is said that the eastern half of the Israelite tribe of Manasseh and possibly the Tribe of Gad possessed Gilead which indicates towards Tishbe being located in the territory of Eastern Manasseh or possibly in Gad territory.

Vos and Pfeiffer say that it is located IN Manasseh, on or proximate to Wadi Choruth near in present day Jordan.

A website called BiblePlace.com points that Tishbe is located at “Umm El-Hedamu” or “ Abu-Hummus”, proximate to Listib in vicinity of Tell Mar

Elias which is located in Gilead and contains ruins of a Byzantine Church commemorating the life of Elijah.

Another theory is that it is identical to Thisbe that is referred in Tobit 1:2, located west of the Jordan River in the territory of the Tribe of Naphtali because Listbit is known to be uninhabited during the Northern Kingdom of Israel period.

The evidence to prove the theory that Tishbe and Listbit are identical is a 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> AD century Byzantine Church that was excavated on site. The church was built in remembrance of the prophet Elijah who was said to be born in Tishbe. In the church itself lays an inscription with Elijah's name on it.

***Links to sites:***

<https://www.bibleplaces.com/gileadupper/>

**Questions for Reflections:**

1. Which theory do you think is correct?
2. Do you believe Elijah was truly born in Tishbe?
3. Why such a huge confusion in language and location?

## **Umm Ar-Rasas**

Umm ar-Rasas is situated 30 kilometres southeast of Madaba. It was once accessible by branches of the King's Highway, and is situated in the semi-arid steppe region of the Jordanian Desert. The site has been allied to the biblical settlement of Mephaat which is mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah. The site was utilized by the Roman military as a strategic garrison, though later it was converted and inhabited by the Christian and Islamic communities. UNESCO inscribed the site into its World Heritage Site in 2004, being valued by archaeologists due to its extensive ruins dating back to the Roman, Byzantine and early Muslim period. The Studium Biblicum Franciscanum carried out excavations at the north end of the site in 1986, but most of the area remains buried under debris.

The western banks of the Dead Sea and even beyond that, where densely populated during the Early Bronze Age III-IV , Iron Age II and the Roman-Byzantine Eras. The site of Mephaat, a part of these ancient settlements, has been mentioned in The Bible as one of the cities up to the plateau that was to be judged and destroyed ( Jeremiah 48:21 ).The Via Traiana Nova, built by Roman Emperor Trajan had the main route as a forerunner while branches of the King's Highway provided easier access to more remote cities. Roman military encampments were set in place to defend the travellers from barbarians known as the Limes Arabicus. Evidence supporting the theory that Mephaat and Umm – ar Rasas are one and the same, was provided when an inscription in a Byzantine church named the area as “ Castron Mephaa” or otherwise as Castle of Mephaa.

An important discovery was one of the largest mosaic floors in Jordan, at the site of the Church of St. Stephen that was made in 785, discovered after 1986, and is still perfectly preserved. The depictions of fishing and hunting were prominent while another panel showed some of the most important cities of that region. The signatures of the creators are still there, shedding light on the authors. This overlays another, older mosaic which is damaged.

Due to the advent of the pilgrimage, Palestine became the nucleus of the Christian World by the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, making scores of pious men and women to traverse through the desert to find important scriptural sites and communion with their creator. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the numbers of the pilgrims intensified and many Christians settled in the desert and established monastic communities, converting Umm ar-Rasas into an ecclesiastical centre which boasted countless Byzantine churches.

Due to the local Arab speaking tribesmen, whom lived in the desert and were discontented with the Byzantine control, the Muslim armies invaded during the summer of 634 AD and assaulted the Mediterranean coastal regions making their conquest easy. Many cities of the Holy Land surrendered to the Muslim rule and as a result many Byzantine Churches were transformed into Mosques. Once the Abbasid period rolled in, the Muslim government enforced restrictive laws against Christian images and the mosaics were defaced by the removal and reassembly of the colored tessaræ. Due to the threat of the Muslim officials, Christian pilgrims declined under the threat of imprisonment while many monasteries and churches were abandoned.

## **Umm Qais**

Umm Qais, also known as the mother of Qais in Arabic, is situated in Northern Jordan, perched on a hilltop 378 metres above sea level, overlooking the Sea of Tiberius, The Golan Heights and the Yarmouk River gorge. It is well known for its close proximity to the ruins of ancient Gadara. While also being a former bishopric and present Latin Catholic Titular see.

It is situated in the Bani Kinanah Department and the Irbid Governorate at the extreme northwest of the country, close to the borders of Israel and Syria.

Built at a very strategic location on a ridge that is only accessible from the east while protected by steep falls on the other three sides with access to the Ain Qais spring and cistern.

During the Hellenized periods, it was the centre of Greek Culture being the most Hellenized and it enjoyed special political and religious status. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC the town was of some cultural importance and as the Greek Historian Polybius said “ Strongest of all places in the region” in 218BC.

Due to the siege by Seleucid King Antiochus III of Syria, it’s surrender was imminent. Under the Seleucids, it became known as Antiochia/Antiochia Semiramis and Seleucia. The city was then passed in and out of the control of Seleucid Kings of Syria and Ptolemies of Egypt. Alexander Jannaeus went and captured and damaged Gadara.

In 63 BC the Roman general Pompey placed the region under Roman control and rebuilt Gadara before making it into a semi-autonomous city and a defensive wall against Nabatean expansion. While 33 years later, in 30 BC August gives Herod the city and following Josephus account, in 4 BC, after Herod’s death, the city was put under the Roman Province of Syria.

During 66 AD, at the beginning of the Jewish Revolt, Gadara was laid to waste and through Josephus we find that Vespasian marched and destroyed the city, killing all men, women and children.

“So Vespasian marched to the city of Gadara. He came into it and Slew all the you, the Romans having no mercy on any age whatsoever. He set fire to the city and all the villas around it.” – Josephus.

Gadarenes captured some of the boldest of Jews before imprisoning them and putting some to death. After their surrender in the city, Vespasian planted a garrison. It remained important in Eastern Roman Empire before in 636 AD after the battle of Yarmouk, it came under Muslim rule. In 747 AD it was largely destroyed by an earthquake and abandoned.

In 2017 an ancient temple was discovered by archaeologists and it is said that it was built in the Hellenistic Era in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and presumably dedicated to Poseidon. The pottery found on site is said to be Hellenistic and a network of water tunnels at the centre, being separated from the external tunnel that was discovered decades ago.

It was important enough that it became a suffragan bishopric of Metropolitan Archbishopric of Scythopolis, becoming a capital of Roman Province of Palaestina Secunda which faded after the Muslim conquer.

### **Luke 8:26-29 CJB**

<sup>26</sup> They sailed on and landed in the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite the Galil. <sup>27</sup> As Yeshua stepped ashore, a man from the town who had demons came to meet him. For a long time he had not worn clothes; and he lived, not in a house, but in the burial caves. <sup>28</sup> Catching sight of Yeshua, he screamed, fell down in front of him and yelled, “Yeshua! Son of God *Ha'Elyon!* What do you want with me? I beg you, don't torture me!” <sup>29</sup> For Yeshua had ordered the unclean spirit to come out of the man. It had often taken hold of him — he had been kept under guard, chained hand and foot, but had broken the bonds and been driven by the demon into the desert.

## **Ruins**

- Baths
- Two theatres
- Hippodrome
- Colonnaded streets
- Aqueducts
- Temple
- Basilica

### **Interesting facts:**

- Gader was referred in Jerusalem Talmud and Tosefta. It is a Sabbath day's walking distance from Hamath which was a town one biblical mile to the south of Tiberias.
- Aqueducts traced to the pool of Khab, 20 miles of Der'ah.
- Roman roads ran eastward to Der'ah.
- Ancient walls traces in an almost entire circuit of 3Km.
- It's longest underground section, running for 94Km, is the longest known tunnel from ancient times.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman aqueduct to Gadara supplied drinking water through a qanat 170 Km long.
- It is the Birthplace of Menippus ( 1 – 50 AD )
- Meleager was born into the early first century BC. He was admired by Hellenistic Greek poets.

## **Zarqa Ma'in**

Zarqa Ma'in contains 63 hot springs and a couple of waterfalls. It is located 120m below sea level, 58km south of Amman in the Madaba Governorate and 27km away from Madaba.

It is said the King Herod frequented these hot springs and decided to built a villa at Mukawer. Even to this day the springs are hot and are currently used in a modern spa resort. The main waterfall temperature is usually between 40 to 60 degrees Celsius.

6Km after turnoff for Zarqa Ma'in is Al Megheirat dolmen field which contains hundreds of dolmen which are prehistoric chamber tombs.

**All content is found across a broad spectrum of available online public domain sources.**