

# Beautiful Valley

**TAKE A TRIP THROUGH BIBLE STORIES TO TODAY'S JEZREEL VALLEY**

**Lior Elam**

**Tuscan Beauty: a row of vines sloping to the water reservoir at Sde Yaakov**

**T**HE JEZREEL VALLEY IS THE largest fertile valley in Israel and a travel destination that combines the glorious past and present of the valley created by the Third Aliyah settlers and their successors. Several significant biblical events occurred in the Jezreel Valley. Two of the most important ones are: the heroic story of Deborah the prophetess and the story of Naboth's vineyard.

## **Deborah the Prophetess – Mount Barkan Observation Point**

Deborah is one of seven prophetesses mentioned in the Bible and the only judge that was given the title “prophet.” Deborah was the one behind the war against Sisera, which led to the conquering of the Jezreel Valley from the Canaanites . The importance of conquering the valley, was due to its historic role as part of the “Via Maris, “ that joined in ancient times, Egypt with Syria, Anatolia and Mesopotamia (today's Iraq).

In order to view this valley of economic and strategic importance, which Deborah fought for, you can go to one of Israel's most beautiful vantage points on Barkan Mount. Here at 497 meters above sea level, the valley's crosspatch of colorful fields can be seen at their best. At the observation point you can be impressed by the importance of the valley or just relax and enjoy the scenery.

How to get there: Highway bar ( 65 ), turn right at the bar junction, to highway 675 – to the Ta'anach settlements . Continue straight at the intersection of Jezreel, and immediately after the Tel Jezreel turn right to the Gilboa views .





Statue of Alexander Zaid. Photo: Dr. Avishai Teicher, taken from Pickwicki Website

### **Naboth's Vineyard & Winery Fields**

Naboth was the owner of a fertile vineyard, near the estate of Ahab King of Israel. Naboth refused Ahab's request to purchase the vineyard and subsequently Ahab's wife Isabel falsely blamed Naboth of insulting his majesty and kingdom. Naboth was tried, found guilty and stoned to death. This tragic biblical story continues to resonate when visiting the charming little winery established in the Jezreel Valley in 2009, Winery Fields.

This family winery is among the few wineries in Israel, defined as an Estate Winery, as it means that the wine produced there is from grapes grown in the surrounding vineyards that belong to it. The vineyard, winery and visitors centre overlook the spectacular

view of the Jezreel Valley, enclosed by the view of the Mount Carmel ridge, and where the nearby water reservoir enhances a "Tuscan" atmosphere of peace and grace. On the other side overlooking the winery, a statue of the guard Alexander Zaid on horseback, as if guarding the vineyard.

The winery is currently launching two red wines from vintage 2012, these wines have spent an entire year aging in oak barrels. White wine lovers are invited to enjoy white & rosé wines, vintage 2013.

The winery is located in Moshav Sde Yaakov, in the west of the Jezreel Valley, about 2 miles south of Kiryat Tivon .

Directions: on highway 70 turn right at the "Tishbi " junction to route 722, after about 4 miles turn right to the village of Sde Yaakov .

Tours of the vineyard, winery and sample tasting ( kosher) are available from Sunday – Friday, bookings can be made with : Roy, 052- 8446228

### **And if you're in the area... The Valley Labyrinth**

This labyrinth is a real attraction for children and families. Located near Moshav Sde Yaakov, and built over an area of 8 hectares and boasts 2000 meters of winding and complicated trails. Visitors are aided by a map which holds eight clues that lead the correct way inside the maze. Nearby is a shaded seating area and a spacious lawn with a variety of "games from the past." The site is suitable for overnight groups, and is equipped with showers. (The labyrinth is closed on Saturdays and holidays).



The entrance to the Cave of coffins at Beit Shearim Photo: Rashad Chalaily, taken from Pickwicki website





Home of Hanna Levav at Alonai Abba

### Beit Shearim National Park

The ancient town of Beit Shearim was established in Talmudic days on a hill that towers north of the Jezreel Valley . Excavations in the area have uncovered the remains of a synagogue, public buildings and other structures. Excavation and exposure of this ancient town's cemetery gates is one of the most fascinating discoveries in Israeli archeology. Excavations have revealed more than 30 underground burial sites among the most magnificent in Israel. Israel's Nature and Park Association has preserved these impressive burial sites whilst making them well light and an interesting place to visit.

### Megiddo National Park

A visit to Megiddo National Park is a journey to the elaborate biblical period in which Megiddo was one of the most important cities in Israel, and is even mentioned in the Song of Deborah. The visit begins in a small museum portraying the history

of the place and model presentations that illustrate the structure of this complex archaeological mound. The excavated remains of the city of Megiddo will impress even those who are not fans of archeology: the Canaanite gate from the Late Bronze Age, remains of the palace, Solomon's gate from the Iron Age, horse stables from the days of Ahab - King of Israel, and the highlight – an aqueduct, believed to have been built probably in the time of King Solomon, which can be reached by climbing down steps through a wide shaft and carved tunnel of 70 meters long that carries water directly from a spring to the city .

### Templar Settlements in Galilee

Templars, who arrived from Germany in the 19th century, were responsible for leaving behind unique and beautiful buildings interwoven with fascinating stories. A tour in Bethlehem of Galilee and Alonai Abba may remind you of the rural atmosphere of Tuscany or Provence thanks to the construction style copied from European villages: houses built from cut faced stone, wooden windows, tiled roofs, gardens, and more. Among these prominent buildings in Bethlehem of Galilee you will find the House of the People, the water tower that resembles a military fortress tower, and the Wagner House which has been kept open for visitors and is still equipped with the carefully preserved home's original facilities such as: oven, washing tub, cistern and an assortment of other original items . The church in Alonai Abba, originally named "Waldheim", is a beautiful building with a large tiled roof and an impressive high bell tower. The artist Hanna Levav also has a studio in a characteristic Templar house which is situated opposite the church where she gives tours that combine the story of her childhood and the story of the settlement of the Templar community in the Land of Israel. ■

Megiddo (Armageddon) Outing. Photo: Doron Nissim

