

Day 6 – En Gedi, Qumran & Jericho **(Written by Kane Crawford)**

We woke up on day 6 and said goodbye to our hotel on the shores of the dead sea. Today we were headed towards Nazareth but had several exciting stops along the way – it was going to be a terribly busy day!

First off was En Gedi, the largest oasis on the shore of the dead sea and thought to have been continuously inhabited since the Chalcolithic Period. Perhaps more famously, it is known as the main place of refuge for David when he fled from King Saul (1 Samuel). It is also believed that En Gedi is the site of the cave where David cut off the corner of Saul's robe. Unfortunately, due to flash flooding the night before, we were only able to venture in some of the way to En Gedi, but there was still plenty to see and take in. The oasis was teeming with flora and natural waterfalls, as well as wildlife and it was easy to be taken away into the old tales of David and his rebels. We shared a devo and worshipped at the foot of the waterfall and reflected on God's ability to keep us safe from harm.

Next was Qumran, the archaeological site near the dead sea which was once the centre of life for the Essene sect who lived in the many natural caves within the cliffs there. Qumran is also the site from where the famous Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1946. These scrolls contained many ancient Jewish writings and they showed us that the word of God had in fact not been changed or altered since their first writing back in the 3rd-4th century. What an amazing testimony to the trustworthiness of God's word given to His people, and irrefutable proof to the world that the prophetic writings of the coming Messiah predate the birth of Jesus.

And then there was Jericho, the oldest city on Earth and the site of the famous moment in the book of Joshua where the walls of Jericho came down through the faithfulness and obedience of the Israelites. It is also the setting of several key biblical locations; where Jesus met Zacchaeus the tax collector and Blind Bartimaeus, and the location of the Mount of Temptation where Jesus was tempted by Satan (otherwise known as Jebel Quruntul).

While it is impossible to know the true location of the temptation of Jesus, this site has been the site of pilgrimage since the early 12th Century. Perched on the side of the mountain is the Monastery of Temptation, built on the site of a 4th century monastery. We took a cable car up the ledge of the mount and climbed the stone steps to the very top where the monastery rested. Inside, it felt like I had entered another world, and the atmosphere changed in an instant. It was a solemn and beautifully presented place of worship and meditation that was integrated with the mountain itself, with ornaments and imagery fitting for a place that meant so much to so many people over the years.

Psalm 145:9 ESV

"The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made."

It was in this quiet place I was able to reflect on three key events in human history. God protected David, his anointed one, from a tyrant King. God gave us His word and declared that it shall not be changed through the ages – and He came through for us. Jesus stood in the face of temptation on our behalf and prevailed where we could not. And God did all of this for us, because of His ever-enduring love for His people.











