



ANN HANSEN ON THE TANUR WATERFALL TRAIL IN NORTHERN ISRAEL, EXPLAINING THE SPINY SHRUB CALLED CHRIST'S THORN, FROM WHICH IT'S TRADITIONALLY BELIEVED THE ROMANS MADE JESUS'S CROWN OF THORNS.

BELOW: MICHAEL HANSEN EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR FORTRESS OF ATERET ON THE UPPER JORDAN RIVER. MIKE IS ALSO THE ARTIST WHO MADE THE DRAWINGS IN BLESSED PILGRIMAGE (SEE APPENDIX A).





VIEW SOUTHWEST: OLD MISHMAR HAYARDEN WAS DECIMATED AND ABANDONED IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1948). THE MEMORIAL IN THE ABOVE PHOTO WAS BUILT ON THE SITE TO COMMEMORATE ITS ROLE IN THE WAR. THE CURRENT MISHMAR HAYARDEN, WHERE THE HANSENS LIVED, IS UPHILL TO THE WEST A COUPLE OF KILOMETERS. IT WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE 1950S AND POPULATED BY NEW IMMIGRANTS FROM MOROCCO AND IRAQ.

FOREWORD

BY DR. ANN M. HANSEN

When I was about five years old, in around 1963, a photograph in a popular American magazine captured my attention. It showed a young mother with huge, dark eyes holding a baby who also had dark hair and eyes. She was sitting on the dirt floor of what appeared to be a dug-out cave. There was very little light, and to me the cave looked scary. The mother's eyes were full of fear but also strength. Because I hadn't learned to read yet, I asked my mother to tell me what the photo was about. She explained to me that this was in southern Israel and some bad people were trying to hurt this mother and her friends so that they would leave their homes. I didn't know what Israel was (it would have existed for only about fifteen years by that point), so my mother explained to me its history, ancient and modern. I asked her why they didn't just go somewhere easier to live. She then introduced me to the Old Testament and the history of the Jewish people. Since then I have never lost my love for or my fascination with Israel. As much as I loved growing up in northern Utah, the first time I set foot in Israel at age twenty, I knew that I was home. It completed a part of my heart and soul that I didn't know was missing.

My late husband Michael felt much the same way. Because of his father's work, his family moved all over the United States. Michael attended eighteen different schools before he finished high school. In 1973 the family had the opportunity to move to Israel. It was something his parents had always wanted to do (three of Michael's grandparents were Jewish). They ended up in northern Israel because of his father's work. They had been here only three months when the Yom Kippur War broke out. When Michael was drafted into the Israeli army the following year, he served in tanks because the tank corps suffered 90 percent casualties, so the decimated ranks needed to be filled. Michael was trained by and served with veterans of both the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. They inspired his love for Israel to increase. More importantly, he learned the price of Israel's continued survival.



VIEW NORTHEAST: TEL DAN (LEFT SIDE OF PHOTO) AT THE NORTHERN END OF THE UPPER JORDAN VALLEY BELOW MT. HERMON. THE TEL COVERS EVERYTHING IN THE PHOTO BELOW THE MOUNTAIN AND LEFT OF THE ORCHARD.

BELOW (VIEW NORTH): WELL AT TEL BEERSHEBA IN ISRAEL'S NEGEV REGION, 27 MILES (43 KILOMETERS) SOUTH OF HEBRON. ABRAHAM AND HIS SON ISAAC DUG SEVEN WELLS BETWEEN BEERSHEBA AND GERAR TO THE WEST (GEN. 26:18–22).





VIEW SOUTH: EXCAVATIONS AT SEPPHORIS. ANN TOOK HER OLDER CHILDREN ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIGS AT SEPPHORIS, WHERE THEY LEARNED TO LOVE THE LAND SIFTING THROUGH THE PHYSICAL REMAINS OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT PEOPLE.

new discoveries. One of the men he worked with in a metal foundry was a well-known metallurgist who was consulted by archaeologists not only in Israel but also in countries all over Europe. (This man was the one who suggested the name we chose for our daughter.) Michael learned a lot from him, especially about understanding scriptural references to metals.

I studied history, geography, and education at Utah State University and Middle East history at the University of Utah after spending eight months volunteering on a kibbutz in southern Israel. (My academic advisor was from an old Christian family from Nazareth.) In Israel I worked as a teacher, first in secondary schools and then at the college level. My students came from almost every ethnic, linguistic, and religious group in Israel, so my background in local history helped me to form better relationships with them.

When Michael and I married and made our home in Israel, we took every opportunity to continue learning. One of our favorite things to do was to take courses by the Ben-Zvi Institute, named after a former president of Israel and dedicated to learning the history of the land. One evening a week, we drove to Tiberias, where an expert in the period of history we were studying that year would give a lecture. During holidays we always went on field trips related to the subject we were studying, again led by experts. On one trip to Jerusalem, we were at a site south of the city, where the water system for Hezekiah's tunnel had originated. One of the old kibbutzniks taking the course told us that when they were in the Hagana in that area fighting during the War of Independence, it always seemed like the enemy Arabs literally disappeared. After a few months, the Hagana unit got a new soldier who was an archaeology student. When they told him about the disappearances, he just smiled, then explained the ancient stone water tunnels to them. Sure enough, once they started to look, they found the tunnels and were able to close them up.

We also wanted our children to love the country as we did. We took courses taught by experts in their fields, attended memorial ceremonies where we could talk to people who had built modern Israel, and took our children hiking nearly every Friday until they reached the age when they could not miss a day of school



VIEW NORTH: KIBBUTZ GINOSAR ON THE NORTHWEST SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE, WITH THE YIGAL ALLON CENTER (RIGHT). THE FIRST-CENTURY AD GALILEE BOAT WAS DISCOVERED HERE.

every week (Israel has a six-day school week). They always took their Hebrew Bibles with them on the hikes so we could read as we hiked. Frequently we met archaeologists at active digs who were more than happy to give the kids personal tours and answer all their questions, especially when the experts discovered that the boys were very well versed in the Old Testament. When the kids were older, I was also able to bring them with me a few times to the archaeological digs at Zippori (Sepphoris) and Tiberias, where I volunteered for a few summers.

Three of our children went to school at Kibbutz Ginosar on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Two of their teachers are the brothers who discovered what is now known as the ancient Jesus Fishing Boat. One of these brothers was also the teacher who took them on nature hikes around the Sea of Galilee every Friday. I remember one year when the boys were still in elementary school there was a memorial for Yigal Allon, one of the founders of Ginosar and a famous Palmach commander and Israeli general. That year Yitzhak Rabin came up to give a speech at the memorial. After the ceremony was over, my sons went over to meet Rabin. Instead of giving him the praises he was used to, my sons asked him why he hadn't included certain events from Palmach history that involved Yigal Allon instead of what he (Rabin) had chosen, then explained to him why they would have been better examples. Rabin was speechless for a moment, then called his secretary over to write down the examples the boys had given him so he could use them in his next speech.

When I was a new mother in Israel, trying to raise a family and work and learn Hebrew, it sometimes felt almost overwhelming even though it was where I wanted to be. I happened to find the memoirs of a former American GI who was Jewish and had fought in Europe in World War II. When that war ended, he came here to fight for Israel's independence, study at Hebrew University, and help build the country. Times were very tough, and it was easy to become discouraged. One particularly difficult week, his professor took him aside and gave him this advice: "When everything looks dark and impossible, go out and walk this land. It will replenish your soul."



VIEW NORTHEAST: MICHAEL AND ANN RAISED THEIR FAMILY IN LIVNIM, WHERE THEY LIVED FOR TWENTY YEARS. FROM THERE THEY TOOK THEIR WEEKEND HIKES AND EXCURSIONS ALL OVER GALILEE AND THE REST OF THE HOLY LAND.

In the more than forty years I have lived here, I have always remembered and practiced this advice. There is something about walking the land of Israel that heals my spirit and fills my heart and head with peace, especially in Galilee. (Ironically, I'm writing this after having spent the morning in a bomb shelter!*)

This advice is also something Dan has discovered, which is one of the reasons he and my husband Michael had such a deep friendship and why this book is so different from the normal travel guide. Dan spent months and months walking the land as much as possible. He listened to Michael's stories and picked his brain, then found others on his journeys to speak to and learn from as well. Dan has an amazing eye for the perfect photographic angle and the skills with a drone to take the picture. He was also blessed in his timing, because what he has done the past couple of years, gathering information and photographs for this book, would not be possible today. He would not have Michael to consult or Michael's drawings to work from, and the security situation would not permit the travels he made or the pictures he took.

Most travel guidebooks consist of a few photographs, a brief history of the site, and directions to get to it. While containing similar information, this book is not one of those guidebooks. It's so much more. The Savior chose this land to spend His mortal life in. He taught here. He worked here. He healed the bodies and souls of others, and He himself suffered, died, and was resurrected here. We don't know why the Savior chose this land to be his mortal home, but for me, Dan's book provides a glimpse of the answer.

*Ann sent me the foreword on September 27, 2024, the day before Israel confirmed the IDF had killed the sixty-four-year-old cleric, Hassan Nasrallah, who served as secretary-general of Hezbollah and was a close ally of the Iranian regime. Since October 8, 2023, Hezbollah terrorists have sent more than eight thousand rockets, missiles, and military drones into Israel, mainly targeting civilian populations. The daily attacks have forced Israelis like Ann and her family into bomb shelters throughout the day and night.

I hiked Israel from September 2021 to January 2024. It would have been impossible for me to do what I did two years later because of the security situation along Israel's northern border with Lebanon and because the attacks have forced the IDF to scramble GPS signals, which I depend on to fly my drone, establish photo coordinates, and check bus schedules around the country. Galilee is different today than when the project began three years ago. The Israeli people, both Jews and Arabs, suffer because evil men seek power, dominion, and glory above all else. This book has a very different message. Good people seek peace, which is available only through the sacrifice and teachings of Jesus Christ the Lord.



VIEW NORTH: TRAIL THROUGH WADI AMUD CANYON. THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN HALF A MILE (ALMOST A KILOMETER) NORTHEAST OF LIVNIM, WHERE THE HANSENS LIVED OVERLOOKING THE SEA OF GALILEE.