

Jewish Awareness Ministries
3-3-2023

Ken Overby
Executive Director

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

Lesson 8 G.P.S. Bethlehem

Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:1-6

Augustus was Caesar 27 BC – 14 AD, **Herod** The Great was King 37 BC - 4BC

“**Cyrenius** (Quirenius) was governor of Syria” Luke 2:2 See link on the history of the taxation/census and of his title and a g summary of the Biblical interpretation. - B.A.R. Biblical Archaeological Review.ⁱ

G.P.S. – Not Global Positioning Satellite but **God’s Positioning System** Luke 2:4 mentions two regions and two cities Nazareth/Galilee & Bethlehem/Judah - provided by **APT Angel Prophet Technology**

Choose Starting Point: Nazareth/Galilee/Israel

Nazareth - Hebrew *Netzer* - derived from one of the Hebrew words for 'branch', namely *ne-ṣer*, נֶצֶר, It is used of a sprout. It alludes to the prophetic, messianic words in Book of Isaiah 11:1 “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a **Branch shall grow out of his roots**” Isaiah 53:2 “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a **root out of a dry ground**”

Choose Destination Bethlehem/Judea/Israel

Bethlehem *Beit Lechem* = House of Bread

Bethlehem called *Bat Zion* **the Daughter of Zion**

Micah 4:8 “And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to **the daughter of Jerusalem** (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם – Zion).”

Micah 5:2 “But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.”

Bethlehem *Beit David* **House of David** “house and lineage of David” Like 2:4

Luke 2:4 “And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the **city of David, which is called Bethlehem**; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)”

1 Samuel 16:1 “And the LORD said unto Samuel ...fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to **Jesse the Bethlehemite**: for I have provided me a king among his sons.”

Means of Transportation? Chariot Camel Donkey Walking

Wasn't there a donkey? There is no textual record of one. It reasonable to assume there was one to carry 2-3 weeks of supplies. Is it likely that a poor construction worker owned 2 donkeys? Even with 2 donkeys, one for supplies and one for Mary, as Joseph would be rope leading 1 or 2 donkeys, & stopping often – same slow pace.

Fastest Route? **Less Traffic?** **Similar route?**

The road best traveled.

Four routes are available of which only one is the most commonly chosen.

1. Suggest Alternative Route - We can safely rule out the shortest route in miles not only because it was the most arduous zigzagging through the perpendicular ridges but it was the most dangerous because of hostile Samaritans.

2. Romans Ahead The second option was southwest from Nazareth, across the Jezreel Valley, over the Mt. Carmel range then south on the *Via Maris* through the Mediterranean coastal plain of Sharon to Lod (south of modern Tel Aviv), then east up to Jerusalem (**110 mi.**). This was common for northern coastal residents but passed by Caesarea with a heavy Roman Naval and military presence.

3. Falling Rocks The third option was following the Jordan river valley to Jericho. From Nazareth they would have gone southeast through the lower valley of Jezreel past the Decapolis city of Beth Shean. They would have entered the Jordan valley at an elevation 283 feet lower than the Sea of Galilee which is at approximately 708 feet below sea level.) The distance from Nazareth to Jericho is **86 mi.** Turning west by Jericho on the north edge of the dead sea. (1358 feet below sea level) Then they would have had to trudge uphill **27 mi.** to the Mount of Olives at 2700 feet above sea level. (total elevation climb of over 4050 feet) From Jerusalem to Bethlehem would be an additional **6 miles.** The total distance via the Jordan river valley is **119 mi.** This route was not likely used by Joseph and Mary. The Jordan valley topography has drastic elevation changes with steep drops.

4. Recalculating The most common option from Nazareth due to safety reasons was also the longest. From Nazareth southeast through the lower valley of Jezreel past the Decapolis city of Beth Shean (a distance of **23 mi.**) then crossing the Jordan river up to Pella, (**30 mi.**) through the region known as Perea taking a route through the very flat plateau of modern Jordan for (**59 mi.**) then south through Sukkoth down in to the plains across from Jericho to Beth Arbah, then crossing the Jordan River to Jericho up to Bethlehem via Jerusalem (**31 mi.**)ⁱⁱ This route **total is 143 mi.**

ETA Next Week If they took this most common route it would take 57 hours, 8 days walking @ 6 hours a day. Factor in the walking speed of a 9 months pregnant woman. When you factor in adding a day and a half for Sabbath preparation and Sabbath the journey gets longer.

Shabbat Trip Advisor

Travel Days Optimal Sunday – Thursday

Sample Itinerary Week 1 ----- Travel Days -----

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
----- Shabbat -----			Beth Shean	Pella	Amman	Beth Arbah	-----

Sample Itinerary Week 2 ----- Travel Days -----

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
----- Shabbat -----		Jericho	Bethany	Jerusalem	Bethlehem		-----

Meals – See link for Women of the Book Food Kit ⁱⁱⁱ

Weather conditions It is unlikely that Jesus was born in the winter but rather at the Fall Feast of Tabernacles.

See link to our Website Blogs for an article from Israel’s Messenger, Winter 2017 issue. **“When was Jesus born?”** ^{iv}

Dan Bergman makes a great case against winter and for Feast of Sukkot for the birth of Messiah. Quoting an article *“Holy-Days and Holidays”*, by Cunningham Geikie states that this census *“could hardly have been at that season [winter], however, for such a time would surely not have been chosen by the authorities for a public enrollment, which necessitated the population’s traveling from all parts to their natal districts, storms and rain making journeys both unsafe and unpleasant in winter, except in specially favorable years. Snow is not at all uncommon at Jerusalem in the winter months, and I have known it so deep that people lost their way outside the gates.”*

The priestly order of John the Baptist’s father can narrow down the calendar as to when Jesus was born. Dan asserts that “If the above timing is correct, John the Baptist would be born almost exactly at the beginning of Passover! What is even more amazing, is that the announcement to Mary of her conception of the Messiah comes in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy according to Luke – *The Festival of Light* – Chanukah! This fits very well with the words of John:

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”.¹⁴

“If we follow our deductions from the probable timing of the Roman census, the shepherds abiding in Bethlehem’s fields at night, and the date of Zachariah’s priestly service (which gives us a fairly accurate timing for John’s conception), we really *can* ascertain a fairly accurate date for the Messiah’s birth! **If as previously mentioned, Jesus was conceived on Chanukah, a normal gestation period would place His birth on the 15th of Tishri, September 29th according to our calendar, which is... the Feast of Tabernacles!**”

“It is amazing to study the connections between the Messiah’s birth and this feast! ... It is to be one of the most joyful times of the year in the life of an Israelite. It is therefore, not surprising to see the wording that John uses when he describes the incarnation of the Messiah, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”*¹² The Greek word translated here as “dwelt” is σκηνώω (ske-NO) which literally means “to tabernacle.” *The Companion Bible* expounds on this thought: *The word tabernacled here receives beautiful significance from the knowledge that “the Lord of Glory” was*

“found in fashion as a man,” and thus tabernacling in human flesh. And in turn it shows in equally beautiful significance that our Lord was born on the first day of the great Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, viz. the 15th of Tisri, corresponding to September 29 (modern reckoning). The Circumcision of our Lord took place therefore on the eighth day, the last day of the Feast, the “Great Day of the Feast” of John 7.37.^{13v}

You have arrived at your destination.

Luke 2:6,7 “And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Is it possible to know where He was born in Bethlehem?

Micah 5:2 “But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.”

Micah 4:8 And thou, **O tower of the flock**, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even **the first dominion; the kingdom shall come** to the daughter of Jerusalem (Bethlehem).

“Tower of the flock” – Hebrew - *migdal edar*

Joseph Lenard in his article on “Jesus birth The Case for Migdal Edar” quotes Cooper P. Abrams III in his article regarding *Migdal Edar* in Jerusalem: “This watch tower from ancient times was used by the shepherds for protection from their enemies and wild beasts. It was also **the place ewes were safely brought to give birth to the lambs. In this sheltered building/cave the priests would bring in the ewes which were about to lamb for protection.** These special lambs came from a unique flock that was designated for sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem.”

Abrams then states the following: “Typically, “Migdal Edar”, (the tower of the flock) at Bethlehem is the perfect place for Christ to be born. He was born in the very birthplace of tens of thousands of lambs, which had been sacrificed to prefigure Him. God promised it, pictured it, and performed it at “Migdal Edar”. It all fits together, for that’s the place where sacrificial lambs were born! ... He was born in Bethlehem, at the birthing place of the sacrificial lambs that were offered in the Temple in Jerusalem which Micah 4:8 calls the “tower of the flock.” The Sheep and Shepherds of the Fields at Migdal Edar.

In his classic book, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah (1883; Latest Edition, 1993), Alfred Edersheim a Messianic Jew, had great insights regarding the birth of Jesus from a Hebrew-Christian perspective. He referenced the Jewish Mishnah (Talmudic oral repetition) and the Targum (The Targum is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible (Tanak)).

Edersheim states: “That the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem was a settled conviction. Equally so was the belief, that He was to be revealed from *Migdal Eder*, ‘the tower of the flock’. This *Migdal Eder* was not the watchtower for the ordinary flocks which pastured on the barren sheep ground beyond Bethlehem, but lay close to the town, on the road to Jerusalem. A passage in the Mishnah (Shekelim 7.4) leads to the conclusion that the flocks, which pastured there, were destined for Temple-sacrifices, and, accordingly, that the shepherds, who watched over them, were not ordinary shepherds.”^{vi}

How fitting it would be for the eternal Architect of Salvation who deemed that the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world to take away the sins of the lost sheep of the house of Israel should the world should take His first breath amongst flawless Temple lambs all wrapped in swaddling cloth awaiting their time of sacrifice which could never take away sins.

Joseph named him salvation. John proclaimed Him as the only Lamb who could take away sins.

Joseph and Mary arrived at the exact spot, the Tower of the Flock, Bethlehem Judea, in the fullness of time, precisely as God foretold to his prophets. He chose Temple lamb guardians to discover and announce the event to the world.

The Shepherds gave God’s Positioning System ★★★★★

Luke 2:10-15 “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

Like and Post this report to everyone you meet.

ⁱ [Quirinius: An Archaeological Biography - Bible Archaeology Report](#)

ⁱⁱ [3 Pilgrimage Paths from Galilee to Jerusalem - Biblical Archaeology Society](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://womenfromthebook.com/2012/09/11/food-for-ancient-travelers/>

^{iv} [WHEN WAS JESUS BORN? | Jewish Awareness Ministries](#)

^v [ibid](#)

^{vi} [Jesus’ Birth – The Case for Migdal Eder | Truth in Scripture](#)