

THE LOCATION

Ancient Megiddo is about 25 miles southeast of Mt. Carmel. The road takes us along the edge of the Carmel range and along the Jezreel Valley, also known as the *Valley of Armageddon*. The grass and fields are always green and beautiful, and you will also see several fish farms along the way. This drive is in the heart of Old Testament activity. Across the valley are the mountains of southern Galilee and the city of Nazareth. The West Bank city of Jenin is about 12-15 miles to the southeast. Jenin was *Ein Ganim* in Biblical days and was a Levitical city. Megiddo is at the southeastern end of the Carmel range, and a north/south valley separates it from the Gilboa range, which continue southeast. This valley contained the *Via Maris* “highway” from Egypt to Mesopotamia, thus Megiddo was always a strategic city.



BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Megiddo is mentioned 11 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, the first in Joshua 12:21 where the conquest of the city by the Israelites is recorded. Joshua 17:11-13 tells us that the Israelite tribe of Manasseh was not able to **utterly drive them out** (v. 13), and thus **the Canaanites would dwell in that land** (v. 12). Judges 5:19 is the first mention of **the waters of Megiddo**, which will explain a fascinating archaeological journey that makes Megiddo unforgettable to the modern tourist.

By the book of 1 Kings Megiddo is fully in Israelite hands. In 1 Kings 9:15 Solomon raises a levy to build Megiddo, and remains of his portion of the city can be seen today. This was an example of the heavy taxation that led to the division of the Kingdom under Rehoboam.

In 2 Kings 9:27 the king of Judah, Ahaziah, dies after being wounded by Jehu, king of Israel. The attack took place at **Gur, which is by Ibleam** (v. 27). Ibleam is believed to be modern Jenin. Ahaziah was able to make it to Megiddo, where he died. In 2 Kings 23:29-30, king Josiah of Judah was killed by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt near Megiddo, and **his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo** to Jerusalem, where he was buried. 2 Chronicles 35:22, speaking of Josiah’s death, speaks of **the valley of Megiddo**, the first time anything close to *the valley of Armageddon* is mentioned by this name.

AMAZING THINGS TO SEE

Walking up the ramp to the top of the “mountain” of Megiddo, the first entry point is an ancient gate, built in the time of the northern kingdom of Israel. This gate complex is a great display of ancient city gates as a protective zone for the city. There is a series of rooms on either side of the entry way, each of which would have had guards so that no enemy would survive an attempted entry.

Atop Megiddo is a beautiful view of the *Valley of Armageddon*, site of the future gathering of the nations for the final battle. In the distance is Nazareth and Mt. Tabor.

The largest Canaanite temple ever discovered is on Megiddo, its round altar (or the foundation thereof) easily visible. Thousands of bones of small animals (sheep, goats, and calves) have been discovered in the Temple vicinity.

There is an Israelite-era grain storage pit that remains largely intact today, save the domed roof. The ruins include a staircase that spirals down the side of the cylindrical pit. Though bare rock are displayed today, it would have originally been plastered with a smooth, painted finish.

There is a large complex of horse stables that have been discovered. These are believed to be from the time of King Ahab of Israel. The visible buildings would have held 30-40 horses, and it is believed that there were stables for approximately 450 horses within the gates. In the stables you will see a spectacular example of a *manger*, a feeding trough. The mangers are made of stone, as likely would have been the case in Bethlehem also.

The **waters of Megiddo** (Jdgs. 5:19) were plentiful, but unfortunately *outside* the city walls. This could be deadly in time of war. Therefore, a means of access was built from within the city walls. A shaft was dug straight downward, into the mountain. At the bottom of the shaft, a tunnel was carved until it reached the outside of the mountain at the location of the spring. The spring and the entryway were then covered and camouflaged, making the access *inside* the walls rather than outside. Today there are 180 modern stairs down the shaft, which itself is 230 feet long.

MATTERS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Megiddo is a fantastic site to learn the meaning of a *Tel*. A *Tel* is unique to the middle east, and is a *mound of civilizations*, one atop another. At Megiddo it is believed that there are 30 layers of civilizations, going back to the earliest days of recorded history, making Megiddo one of the oldest cities in the world. The city has Babylonian, Canaanite, Egyptian, Israelite, Greek, Roman, and Crusader-era artifacts.

The modern "Battle of Megiddo" was fought in World War I, led by General Edmund Allenby. In this war the Ottoman Empire lost its 400-year grip on the Holy Land and creating "British Palestine," until the modern State of Israel was birthed in 1914. The 1962 movie, *Lawrence of Arabia*, is about this military campaign.

MODERN SIGNIFICANCE OF MEGIDDO

In 1949 holocaust survivors from Poland and Hungary established *Kibbutz Megiddo*, just south of *Tel Megiddo*. From 1949-2000 it was a traditional socialized *Kibbutz*, with collective ownership of land, houses, and commercial enterprise, as well as financial provision for each member. Later, Jews from Mexico, Argentina, and Lebanon were welcomed into the *Kibbutz*. In 2000 the *Kibbutz* ceased its socialized economy and deeded all property to the residents, who now provide for themselves in a fully-capitalist community.