

## CAESAREA PHILIPPI

### THE LOCATION

Caesarea Philippi is a historical and religious site located in the northern part of Israel, near the border with Lebanon. It is situated at the base of Mount Hermon, which is the highest mountain in Israel, offering a breathtaking view of the surrounding landscape. The Baniyas River runs through the site, and there are many beautiful natural springs and waterfalls in the area that add to its charm.

The site is located approximately 45 miles north of the city of Tiberias, making it easily accessible by car or bus. Visitors can enjoy the scenic drive through the Golan Heights and the Upper Galilee region on their way to Caesarea Philippi, taking in the beautiful countryside along the way.

### BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Caesarea Philippi is mentioned in the New Testament as the site of an important conversation between Jesus and his disciples. In Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus asks his disciples who they believe he is. Peter responds, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus then declares that he will build his church upon this confession, and promises Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus told His disciples that they would need to take up their cross and follow Him if they wished to continue with Him. In fact, the road from Caesarea Philippi led to a brief time in Perea, and then up to Jerusalem through Jericho and Bethany just weeks before His death. Therefore, Caesarea Philippi became the "point of no return" for any disciples who wanted a safe time to leave.

It could be argued that Jesus went to Caesarea Philippi only to avoid early arrest. Starting with the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall before His crucifixion the next spring, Jesus spent most of His time "in hiding" away from the Temple officials. Caesarea Philippi would have been an ideal place to "hide in the open," outside the jurisdiction of the Temple officials.

### MATTERS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Caesarea Philippi has significant historical significance as a site where several cultures and religions intersected over time. It was originally a pagan city dedicated to the god Pan, and the Greeks and Romans built temples and sanctuaries there in his honor. Later, it became a center of Hellenistic culture and was ruled by the Seleucid Empire before being conquered by the Romans. Caesarea Philippi has been a strategic location throughout history due to its proximity to the border with Lebanon and its position at the base of Mount Hermon. During the Crusades, it was an important site for both Muslim and Christian forces, and was the site of several battles. In the 20th century, it played a role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, with control over the city and the surrounding area changing hands several times.

Originally, the city was named Paneas after the Greek god Pan. However, in 3 BC, Philip, the son of Herod the Great, became ruler of the region and renamed the city in honor of Caesar Augustus. It was then known as Caesarea Philippi, with the Philippi added to distinguish it from other cities named Caesarea. Today, the site is known as Baniyas, a corruption of the original name Paneas.

### AMAZING THINGS TO SEE

Visitors to Caesarea Philippi can explore the remains of the ancient city, including the ruins of a temple dedicated to the god Pan. One will quickly note the backdrop to "the gates of hell," with the cave that was part of the temple to Pan and the remains of the altar still intact.

Interestingly, the English word "Panic" has its root in the worship of Pan. According to Greek mythology, Pan was the god of the wild, shepherds, and flocks, and was often associated with nature and rustic music. He was said to have the power to induce sudden, irrational fear in people, which is where the word "panic" comes from.

Visitors in the area who have enough time should check out the Baniyas Waterfall, one of the largest and most beautiful waterfalls in Israel. It adds to the charm of the surrounding area

## MATTERS OF MODERN SIGNIFICANCE

Banias is a popular tourist destination in Israel, but it is also a strategic location near the border with Lebanon and has several military outposts for security purposes. The border has been peaceful for the past decade or longer.

## TEL DAN

### THE LOCATION

Tel Dan is located approximately 6 miles west of Caesarea Philippi and 45 miles north of Tiberias. It is situated in a beautiful natural setting, surrounded by forests and rivers, and visitors can enjoy hiking and exploring the area around the site.

### BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Tel Dan Nature Reserve contains the archaeological site of the ancient city of Dan. The city of Dan was originally called Laish, and it is mentioned in Judges 18:27-29 as being conquered by the tribe of Dan. The city was then renamed Dan in honor of the tribe that conquered it.

### AMAZING THINGS TO SEE

At Tel Dan Nature Reserve, visitors can explore the archaeological site of the ancient city of Dan, which includes a gate complex dating back to the time of Abraham and a high place where people worshiped during the times of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The site also contains the remains of a Canaanite city, which may have been the city of Laish. Additionally, visitors can enjoy hiking and exploring the beautiful natural surroundings of the area, which includes forests and rivers.

### MATTERS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Tel Dan was inhabited from the Neolithic period until the Ottoman period, making it one of the oldest and most continuously inhabited sites in the region.

## THE GOLAN

### THE LOCATION

The Golan Heights is a rocky plateau located in the northeastern part of Israel. It is bordered by Lebanon to the north, Syria to the east, and the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River to the west. The region is known for its rugged terrain, which includes volcanic mountains, deep valleys, and rocky cliffs. In addition, the Golan is home to several important archaeological sites, including the ancient city of Gamla and the remains of several Jewish settlements from the Roman period. Today, the Golan Heights is a popular destination for hiking and outdoor activities, and is also a strategic location due to its proximity to several international borders.

### BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Golan Heights, known as Bashan in biblical times, was a region known for its fertile land and abundant pastures. It was inhabited by several different groups, including the Amorites, the Israelites, and the Syrians. According to the Bible, Bashan was the site of several important events, including the battle between King Og of Bashan and the Israelites, which the Israelites won. Bashan is also mentioned in several Psalms as a place of natural beauty and abundance.

In the New Testament, the region was part of an area called the Decapolis, a group of ten cities that were primarily Hellenistic in culture. Jesus visited the Decapolis on several occasions, including the healing of the demon-possessed man in Mark 5.

### AMAZING THINGS TO SEE

Visitors to the Golan Heights can explore the region's rugged terrain and natural beauty, as well as several important archaeological sites. One such site is the Nimrod Fortress, a medieval castle dating back to the 13th century that offers stunning views of the surrounding area. Another must-see attraction is Mt. Bental, a dormant volcano that was once used as a military outpost by Israeli forces. Visitors can hike to the summit and take in the breathtaking views of the Golan Heights and the surrounding area, including Syria. Near Mt. Bental is the Valley of Tears, the site of a major tank battle during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, which is discussed later in this article.

#### MATTERS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Golan Heights has been a site of strategic importance throughout history due to its location at the crossroads of several major trade routes. In ancient times, it was inhabited by several different groups, including the Amorites, the Israelites, and the Syrians. During the Roman period, the Golan was home to several Jewish settlements, including the city of Gamla, which was destroyed by the Romans in 67 AD during the First Jewish-Roman War. In the medieval period, the Golan was ruled by the Crusaders, who built several castles and fortresses in the region. The area was also fought over during the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 20th century, with several major battles taking place there.

#### MATTERS OF MODERN SIGNIFICANCE

The Golan Heights was captured by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967. The territory is not recognized internationally as part of Israel, but rather as part of Syria. In March 2019, the United States recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, making it the only country to do so. The territory remains virtually incident-free and a safe place for Jews to live today.

The Valley of Tears is a site located in the Golan Heights and was the site of a major tank battle during the 1973 Yom Kippur War between Israel and Syria. It was the largest tank battle since World War II, with over 800 tanks involved. The Israeli Defense Forces were able to defeat the Syrian forces and prevent them from advancing further into Israeli territory. The site is now a popular destination for military history enthusiasts and tourists interested in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.