

## BEIT SHEAN

### THE LOCATION

Beit Shean is located approximately 17 miles (27 km) south of the Sea of Galilee. It is situated in the Jordan Valley, a geological depression that runs from Syria to the Dead Sea. The surrounding topography is characterized by lush greenery (in season) and rolling hills.

### THE BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Beit Shean is mentioned several times in the Hebrew Bible. The King James Bible spells the city Bethshan. In the Book of Joshua 17:11, it is described as one of the cities of the tribe of Manasseh. In the Book of 1 Samuel 31:10, it is described as the location where the Philistines hung the bodies of King Saul and his sons on the walls of the city after they were killed in battle. The people of Jabesh-gilead later took the bodies down and buried them.

The name Beit Shean means "house of tranquility" in Hebrew.

### MATTERS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Beit Shean was an important city during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. It was part of the Decapolis, a group of ten cities in the eastern part of the Roman Empire that were centers of Greek and Roman culture. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in 749 CE and was never rebuilt on the same scale.

### AMAZING THINGS TO SEE

#### THE BATH HOUSES

Beit Shean has several well-preserved bath houses that date back to the Roman period. The bath houses were an important part of daily life in ancient Rome and were used for bathing, socializing, and relaxation.

#### THE ANCIENT PUBLIC RESTROOMS

The ancient public restrooms at Beit Shean are among the best-preserved in the world. They were an important part of daily life in ancient Rome and were used by both men and women.

#### THE CARDO

The Cardo is the main street of Beit Shean and was the commercial center of the city during the Roman period. It is lined with columns and has several well-preserved shops and storefronts. It is picturesque and the iconic Roman Cardo.

#### THE TEMPLES

Beit Shean has several ancient temples that date back to the Hellenistic and Roman periods. These temples were dedicated to various gods and goddesses and were important centers of worship and cultural activity.

#### THE TELL

The Tell, which is an important archaeological site, contains the remains of several civilizations that lived in Beit Shean over the centuries. It dates back to Egyptian times and has been the subject of many excavations and studies.

## THE THEATER

Beit Shean has a well-preserved Roman theater that could seat up to 7,000 people. It was an important center of cultural activity and was used for plays, concerts, and other performances.

## MATTERS OF MODERN SIGNIFICANCE

Beit Shean is a modern city located in the northern part of Israel, with a population of approximately 18,000 people. The economy of Beit Shean is largely based on agriculture, with a focus on growing fruits and vegetables. The city is also home to several factories and industries, including a textile factory and a plastics factory. The tourism industry is also an important source of income for the city, with many visitors coming to explore the ancient ruins and historical sites.

## BEIT ALPHA

### LOCATION

Beit Alpha is located approximately 5 miles west of Beit Shean. It is situated in the Jezreel Valley, a fertile agricultural region that runs from the Carmel Mountains in the west to the Jordan Valley in the east. The surrounding topography is characterized by rolling hills and farmland.

## BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE

There is no mention of Beit Alpha in the Hebrew Bible.

## MATTERS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Beit Alpha is also known for its ancient water system, which dates back to the Roman period. The water system consists of a network of underground tunnels and channels that were used to collect and distribute water for irrigation and domestic use. The system is a testament to the ingenuity and engineering skills of the people who lived in the area over 2,000 years ago.

## AMAZING THINGS TO SEE

Beit Alpha is home to an ancient synagogue that dates back to the 6th century CE. The synagogue is known for its well-preserved mosaic floor, which depicts several scenes from the Hebrew Bible, including the Binding of Isaac, the Exodus from Egypt, and the Spies in Canaan. The mosaic is considered one of the most important and well-preserved examples of Jewish art from the Byzantine period.

The mosaic floor of the Beit Alpha synagogue is also notable for its depiction of the zodiac, which is unusual for a Jewish religious site. Most scholars believe that this is evidence of the blending of Hellenistic and Jewish cultures during the Byzantine period. However, some scholars have argued that the depiction of the zodiac may have biblical roots that were known to the ancient Jews but have been forgotten in modern times.

## MATTERS OF MODERN SIGNIFICANCE

Beit Alpha is also home to a kibbutz, which is a collective community that was established in Israel in the early 1900s. The kibbutz movement was founded on the principles of socialism, Zionism, and communal living. Today, the kibbutz at Beit Alpha is home to approximately 500 people and is known for its agricultural products, including citrus fruits, almonds, and olives.

## EIN HAROD

### THE LOCATION

Ein Herod is located about midway between Beit Alpha (to the east) and Beit Shean (to the west).

### THE BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Ein Harod, also known as the Spring of Harod, carries significant Biblical importance. Its most prominent mention is found in the Book of Judges, specifically in Judges 7, where it is mentioned as “the well of Harod” (Jdgs 7:1). This location is where Gideon, the Israelite judge, gathered his army to confront the Midianites. Following God's instruction, Gideon used the spring to test his soldiers, reducing his army to 300 men by observing how they drank from the water. Those who lapped the water like a dog with their tongues were chosen. Gideon's unlikely victory over the Midianites with this small force is a key story of faith and divine intervention in the Bible. Thus, Ein Harod is symbolically associated with God's power to provide victory against overwhelming odds.

### AMAZING THINGS TO SEE

Today, visitors to Ein Harod can see the remains of the ancient spring, as well as the surrounding hills of Mt. Gilboa, and countryside. The visitors will see the “hill of Moreh” (Jdgs 1:7) nearby, being able to envision the battle between Gideon's small army at the spring of Herod and the vast army of the Philistines at the hill of Moreh.

## MATTERS OF MODERN SIGNIFICANCE

in Harod in modern times is associated with two kibbutzim: Ein Harod (Meuhad) and Ein Harod (Ihud). The kibbutzim were originally a single kibbutz founded in 1921, making it one of the oldest in Israel. Due to ideological differences, it split into two separate kibbutzim in 1952. The two communities have since evolved, and while agriculture is still a part of their economy, they have diversified into other industries as well.

One point of interest at Ein Harod is the Mishkan Museum of Art, one of the largest and most important museums in the north of Israel. It hosts a permanent collection as well as rotating exhibits and cultural events.

## MATTERS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Ein Harod is the site of a major battle between the Israel Defense Forces and the Arab Legion in 1948, during the Israeli War of Independence. The battle took place in the hills surrounding Ein Harod and was part of the larger campaign to secure the Jezreel Valley. The Arab Legion ultimately withdrew from the area, and the battle is considered a significant victory for the Israeli forces.