

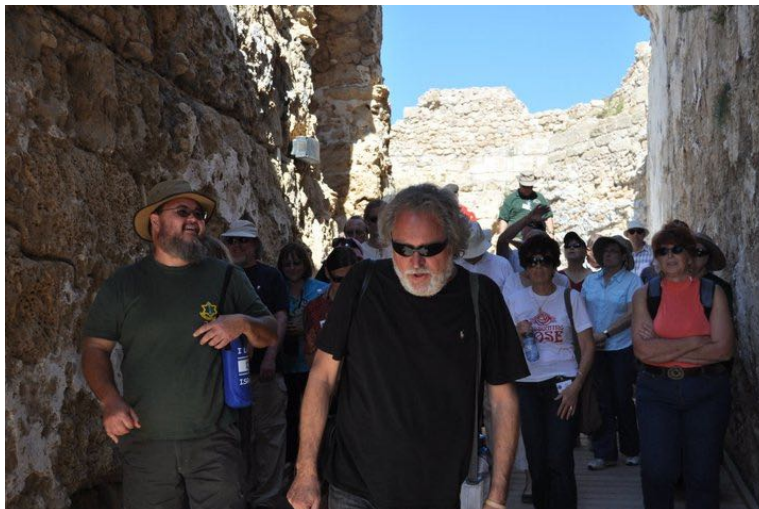
Dr. James D. Tabor

Israel Tour 2023

Walking the Ancient Paths

*See the Sites, Go Behind the Scenes
Experience the Holy Land on a Level that Most Tours Miss*

March 17 – 28, 2023



Tour Highlights

Prof. James D. Tabor is leading an exclusive tour of the Holy Land March 17 – 28, 2023. Whether you have traveled to Israel before or have never been, but dreamed of such a trip, this well might be the tour you are looking for.

Most trips to the Holy Land are sponsored by churches and their pastors, synagogues, or other cultural groups and each of these has their value. This tour, however, is decidedly different, one that is oriented to the history and archaeology related to a single question—*“What do we really know about the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth and how do we know it?”* Of Tabor’s 73 trips to Israel, Jordan, and Egypt only 12 of them have been leading tours. By far most were for his research, filming, or working at archaeological sites. In 2010 he began developing this very special tour, limited to about 30 people, to facilitate maximum interchange between participants and with Dr. Tabor directly. He has continued to shape and refine it based on these years of experience. Many of the sites visited are ones at which Dr. Tabor has excavated, so we are able to go behind the scenes and experience things from the inside. This tour is different from most other tours. It typically draws a very diverse group of people in terms of faith backgrounds and spiritual orientations—with the common denominator a love of *history and archaeology*, with no expectations regarding belief systems, politics, or faith orientations.

We walk the ancient paths—taking in the texts, geography, history, and archaeology—both on the ground and under the ground—that sheds light upon what our central question of what do we really “know”? We learn to rate assertions and ideas regarding the places we visit—from improbable to most likely and even quite certain—based on best evidence. Sadly, many of the sites people are taken to on Holy Land tours are often late, legendary, based on Byzantine or Crusader traditions, with no historical basis. Tabor has spent the past 40 years “tracking Jesus,” as he likes to call it. He has tried to sort out the differences between what we think we know, what is highly improbable, and how it all might fit together into an evidence based coherent whole—theology aside. We are looking for those “ancient paths” and following them as much as is possible after two millennia.

No tour can cover everything, but we will take you, quite literally, from Dan to Beersheba – and even 60 miles south, deep into the Arava, staying three nights in the desert at biblical Tamar at the end of our tour—one of the most important archaeological sites in the land of Israel with ruins dating from the Iron Age up through the 20th century (1 Kings 9:17-22). Tamar was the southernmost fortress on the border of ancient Israel, serving as a gateway to the Negev, the wilderness of Paran, and the Horeb region, which in the Bible is identified with Moses and the ancient Israelites.

Anyone interested in biblical history and literature will find this tour refreshing and educational from beginning to end. Dr. Tabor has no expectations regarding belief systems, politics, or faith orientations. All that is required to go on this tour is a strong orientation toward learning more about the Bible and its history and archaeology. Each participant receives a “Guidebook” with maps and textual resources directly related to this tour.

Tour Leader – Dr. James D. Tabor



Dr. James Tabor retired as Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2022 where he taught Christian origins and ancient Judaism for thirty-three years, serving as Chair of the Department for a decade. His Ph.D. is from the University of Chicago. He now devotes himself full-time to research, archaeological field work, and publishing. Tabor previously taught at the University of Notre Dame and the College of William and Mary. Tabor combines his work on ancient texts with extensive field work in archaeology in Israel and Jordan. Since 2008 he has been co-director, with Drs. Shimon Gibson and Rafi Lewis, of the acclaimed Mt Zion excavation in Jerusalem and he been involved in a half dozen other archaeological projects in the Holy Land over the past thirty years. In the early 1990s he was involved in the release of the unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls and was one of the first scholars to examine and publish several very important ones. In 1995 he testified before the US Congress on the Waco tragedy, drawing upon his expertise in understanding

ancient Biblical apocalyptic ideas. Tabor has published ten books: *Things Unutterable* (1985); *A Noble Death* with Arthur Droge (HarperSF, 1992); *Why Waco: Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* with Eugene Gallagher (UC Berkeley, 1995); *The Jesus Dynasty: A New Historical Investigation of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity* (Simon & Schuster, 2006); *The Jesus Discovery: The New Archaeological Find that Reveals the Birth of Christianity* with Simcha Jacobovici (Simon & Schuster, 2012); *Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity* (Simon & Schuster, 2012); *Paul’s Ascent to Paradise* (Genesis2000, 2020); *The Book of Genesis: A New Translation from the Transparent English Bible* (Genesis2000, 2020); and *Marie: De son enfance juive à la fondation du christianisme* (Flammarion, 2020), which will appear in English in a revised version as *The Lost Mary: From the Jewish Mother of Jesus to the Virgin Mother of God*, with Knopf in 2023.

Blog: <http://jamestabor.com>; Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/jamestaborvideos>

Tour Arrangements provided by Blossoming Rose

Blossoming Rose was founded by *Dr. DeWayne Coxon* in 1984 with a mission to contribute to the development of a historic understanding of the land of Israel through various programs, including the maintenance and restoration of the 55-acre [Biblical Tamar Park](#). Dr. Coxon, currently President Emeritus, has visited Israel over 150 times and his knowledge of Jewish, Christian and Muslim history gives him a unique perspective on contemporary events taking place in the Middle East. Blossoming Rose is the curator of the archaeology site at the Park. *Rob Coxon* serves as the President and oversees the operations of the Park and tours. He has been involved with Blossoming Rose since 1984 and has travelled to Israel over 60 times.

Tour Itinerary

Day One

Friday – March 17 – *Flights to Israel*



This is a travel day and most participants from the USA fly overnight in order to arrive in Israel on Saturday, March 18. Whatever your departure point you need to arrive in Tel Aviv at Ben Gurion airport before 5 pm on March 18. Our charter bus will leave the airport at 6 pm. If your flight arrives after this time, you will need to arrange a taxi or private transportation to our Netanya hotel.

Day Two

Saturday – March 18 – *Mediterranean, and Shabbat*



We arrive at Ben Gurion airport and depart at 6:00pm driving north along the Mediterranean coastal plain to our hotel in Netanya on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. We will check into our hotel, the [Netanya Leonardo Plaza](#), have dinner together, and settle into our rooms or take a leisurely stroll to the Sea just as Netanya comes to life as the Sabbath ends.

Day Three

Sunday – March 19 – *Caesarea Maritima, Sepphoris, Nazareth Village, Sea of Galilee and Tiberias*



Today we head north to the Galilee to Caesarea Maritima, the city built by Herod the Great (25-13 BCE). Named to flatter and impress the emperor Augustus Caesar, this site is situated on the Mediterranean Coast between Tel Aviv and Haifa. We will visit the theater, the hippodrome, and the palace area of Herod the Great that in the book of Acts is the scene of Paul's imprisonment and defense before King Agrippa and the Procurators before sailing to Rome as a result of his appeal to the emperor Nero.

We will then visit the ancient Jewish city of Sepphoris, the urban capital of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, where Dr. Tabor has excavated.

This important site is often overlooked by tourists as it is just four miles northwest of the tiny village of Nazareth—where everyone flecks. The first century Jewish historian Josephus calls it the “Jewel of the Galilee.” We will walk the original streets and view the splendid mosaics, the ruins of the theater, and see the excavated synagogue.



We will then visit Nazareth Village, which is a faithful recreation the ancient village as it might have been in the first century, right in the heart of the modern bustling Christian/Arab city, where we will learn about agricultural life and culture of such a village, sharing a meal reflecting that time.

We will make our way to our hotel, the [Caesar Premier Tiberius](#), where we will spend two nights. This hotel is situated in the heart of the city's promenade, surrounded by shopping, and is only a short walk from the Sea of Galilee.

Day Four

Monday – March 20 – *Caesarea Philippi, Tel Dan, Golan Heights, Lunch in Druze Village, Mt Hermon, Wine Tasting and Chocolate at Ein Zivan, Gennesaret and Ancient Fishing Boat, Boat ride on the Sea of Galilee*



We begin our tour of the Galilee with a stop at Caesarea Phillipi, mentioned in the the gospel of Mark as the area where Jesus ask his disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” Next we will visit the site of Tel Dan, where according to the book of 2 Kings, Jeroboam established the northern kingdom of Israel in opposition to the southern kingdom of Judah. We then travel to up into the Golan to the borders of Syria and Lebanon, where we have lunch at a Druze Village. From there we will see the foot of Mount Hermon which Dr. Tabor identifies as the most likely location of the “Transfiguration” as reported in Mark’s gospel. On our way back to Tiberias we will make a delightful stop at Kubbutz Ein Zivan, for wine tasting and canvisit the ajacent chocolate factory.

We will then go to Gennesaret, where the first century fishing boat was found in 1986 and then finish the day with our own boat ride on the Sea of Galilee where we will watch the sun set. We will spend our second night at the Caesar Premium and enjoy the night life of Tiberius before retiring.

Day Five

Tuesday – March 21 – *Magdala, Arbel Cliffs, Horns of Hattin, Capernaum, Jordan River, Bet Shean, Old City Night Walk (optional)*



We begin our day with a stop at Magdala on the shores of the Sea, which some identify as the home of Mary Magdelene, visting the recent archaeological discoveries that are transforming our understanding of first century Galilee. We then take in a breathtaking view of the Sea of Galilee from the Arbel cliffs, we will see the ruins of an ancient synagogue, and drive past the historic Horns of Hattin—where Saladin defeated the Crusaders in 1187.

Next we will travel to Capernaum where Jesus made his HQ and moved his family. Here we will tour a third Century synagogue, built upon the visible remains of a first century synagogue and see the recently uncovered remains of the first century port. We will make a stop at the Jordan River, at a popular baptismal site. Those who choose to immerse themselves in the waters of the Jordan may do so.

We will then travel towards Jerusalem, stopping at the spectacular ancient ruins of the Roman city of Bet Shean. Finally we will check into the [King Solomon Hotel](#) in Jerusalem, where we will spend three nights. This luxury hotel, just up the street from the famed King David Hotel, is surrounded by local attractions and within walking distance of the Old City.

On our first night in Jerusalem there will be an optional evening walk to the Old City. We will enter the famed Jaffa Gate, making our way through the winding streets from the Christian Quarter, through the Armenian Quarter, finally reaching the Jewish Quarter to visit among other things, the Western Wall.

Day Six

Wednesday – March 22 – *Garden Tomb, Mount of Olives, Dominus Flevit, Garden of Gethsemane, Church of all Nations, Kidron Valley, Zion Gate, Upper Room, Pilate’s Judgment seat, free time in the Old City*



We will begin our day with a bus ride to the top of the Mount of Olives. From this vantage point will look towards the west and view the Temple Mount and the entire ancient walled Old City before us. We will walk down the Mount of Olives visiting several places of interest along the way including Dominus Flevit, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Church of All Nations. Our walk will take us deep into the Kidron Valley, and then up to Mount Zion. Along the way we will visit the traditional sites of the Upper Room and King David’s Tomb, where recent archaeological excavations have reshaped our understanding of these places. We

will also visit the newly discovered site of Pontius Pilate’s Judgement Seat with the Gabbatha Pavement and the Praetorium where Jesus most likely taken for his trial the morning of his crucifixion.

We will end our day a bit early to allow for shopping on this day in the Old City. Tour participants will have plenty of time to walk the narrow corridors of Jerusalem’s Old City, going from shop to shop to find the perfect souvenirs from their time in the Holy City, or to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or other sites of interest.

Day Seven

Thursday – March 23 – *Temple Mount, Subterranean Jewish Quarter, and Jerusalem Archaeological Park – Davidson Center, City of David and Pool of Siloam, Hinnom Valley*



We will begin our day with a tour of the Temple Mount discussing its history, past, present and future and why it is the most contested real estate on the planet.

We will eat lunch in the Jewish Quarter, and then we will visit the Wohl Museum, descending 20 feet below the present city level to visit the Wohl Museum, which contains the best preserved ruins of 1st Century Jerusalem. We will make our way to the Jerusalem Archaeological Park – Davidson Center where we will view all the most recent archaeological discoveries that are transforming our understanding of ancient Jerusalem.

We will then tour the excavations south of the Old City in what is called the “City of David” area, with an optional chance to go through Hezekiah’s tunnel—ending up at the pool of Siloam. We will exit in the Hinnom valley—called “Gehenna” in the gospels—or “Hell Valley” and talk about the tombs of the area—including the notable “Tomb of the Shroud” discovered by Dr. Tabor and Dr. Gibson.

Day Eight

Friday– March 24 – *Qumran, En Gedi, and Biblical Tamar Park Sabbath dinner followed by relaxing and visiting in the Sukkah*



On this day we will leave Jerusalem and begin our journey south stopping at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. There Dr. Tabor will tell us about his own excavations and discoveries and we will visit the ruins of the settlement and see the famous caves where hundreds of ancient scrolls and their thousands of fragments were discovered, dating from the second century BCE down through the first century CE. We will discuss the significance of the group that produced this library, usually identified with the “Essenes.” Next, we will visit the beautiful En Gedi where among other things, the Bible relates David’s hiding place from King Saul. We will take a hike and enjoy the wildlife as we make our way to the caves and waterfalls. We will then continue on to the southern Biblical border of Israel, to Tamar and move into our rooms at Biblical Tamar Park.

[Biblical Tamar Park](#) is located along the ancient spice route, in the Aravah, in the midst of the Biblical wilderness region. On this 55-acre park, there is a lovely dining facility, an active archaeology site, and a peaceful sukkah—or open air shelter, perfect for morning and evening gatherings around a campfire. The park is also home to the oldest tree in Israel, and is surrounded on all sides by large date palm trees, a mango orchard, and rolling, sand covered hills. Here, during our three nights under the stars, participants will connect with each other, and experience a taste of life in this area of the Negev that is so critical in various biblical narratives. At Biblical Tamar Park we will stay in clean, comfortable, caravans situated around the centrally located dining facility and sukkah. It has become a favorite part of our tours, and we are most pleased to include it in this tour. Our wilderness stay is a great way to spend our final days in Israel as we debrief one another on our varied experiences.

Day Nine

Saturday – March 25 – *Sabbath Experience at Tamar, Prayer Mountain, Torah Study, Scorpion’s Ascent, Ancient Roman Tax Station, and Hazeva Research Center*



We awaken to a peaceful Sabbath, feeling the stillness of the desert as the sun rises over the Jordanian mountains. Those who want to rise early, can climb “Prayer Mountain” and watch the sun rise.

We will visit informally after breakfast, talking about the historic area where we are staying and the role it played in the lives of Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Jesus, and even Paul. We will offer an optional bus visit to Scorpion’s Pass, mentioned in the Bible as the Akkrabim Ascent, as well as the ancient Roman tax station, and then ride to the Hazeva Research Center to learn of various efforts to green the desert.

Day Ten

Sunday – March 26 – *Biblical Tamar Tour, Masada, and the Dead Sea*



We will begin our day with a special tour of the archaeological site at Biblical Tamar, learning of the ongoing work at this site to uncover evidence of occupation from the 10th Century B.C.E. through the modern era. We will then board our bus and go to visit the ancient fortress of Masada, “last stand” of the first Jewish revolt against Rome, where Josephus relates that nearly 1000 Jewish refugees refused to surrender to the Romans and chose to die rather than surrender. Dr. Tabor will share his own research on the site, including what we know about the bones of those in the southern caves, discovered in 1963, and DNA testing that he has been involved in. We will learn that Masada was originally built by the Maccabees, and fortified by Herod the Great between 37-31 BCE as a refuge for himself in the event of a revolt. From the top of Masada you will be able to look down upon the ruins of Roman encampments. We will visit an ancient “synagogue without walls” atop Masada.



We will then stop at a public beach along the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on planet earth. We will learn about its waters, rich in minerals and receding from overuse of water by Israel and Jordan. Floating “weightless” in the Dead Sea—and catching up on your reading of Dr. Tabor’s books, or having a drink at the “lowest bar on earth,” is one of the most unique experiences one can have. You will be able to shop, eat a leisurely lunch and enjoy the afternoon. That evening we will return to Tamar for dinner and then pack for our return home the following day.

Day Eleven

Monday – March 27 – *Beer Sheva, Valley of Elah, Talpiot Tombs, Promenade, Israel Museum, and Airport*



We will depart Biblical Tamar Park on our journey back to Jerusalem through the heart of southern Israel, passing Beer Sheva and stopping along the way in the Valley of Elah where David encountered Goliath. We will walk the stone filled brook marking the location just below the ancient ruins of Khirbet Qeiyafa, dating to the time of David and Solomon.



Just south of Jerusalem, Dr. Tabor will lead us on a rare and special visit to the sites of the “Talpiot Jesus Family tombs” that some think belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. Although these tombs are sealed—and one is under a condo building, seeing the locations offers a perspective of the area, with the spectacular view north of the Old City, and south to Bethlehem and the Herodium, Herod’s the Great’s tomb—that other “King of the Jews.” We will also have a spectacular view of the city of Jerusalem from the south, along the historic Promenade, experiencing the vantage point Abraham would have had in coming up to Mount Moriah. We will then visit the Israel Museum. Here we will see a large model of

Herodian Jerusalem, visit the Shrine of the Book, and walk through the Museum’s exhibits for the Biblical period. After our visit to the Israel Museum we will depart for Ben Gurion Airport for our flights home.

Day Twelve

Tuesday – March 28 – *Flights home to our various destinations*



Tour Package

\$3,295 for land only

Add \$895 for Single Supplement

Included in Tour Cost

- Hotels
- Breakfasts
- Dinners (except dinner on March 27)
- National Park passes
- All tips (except housekeeping)
- All meals at Biblical Tamar Park
- All listed sites with entrance fees
- Nazareth Village Special Lunch
- Masada Lift
- Galilee Boat trip
- Bus transfer to and from Ben Gurion Airport

Not Included

- Flight and/or trip Insurance
- Lunches
- Airline Ticket

You will be notified by email when there are sufficient registrations to buy your airline ticket. If you would like to use the travel agent that Blossoming Rose uses, the information is below. Blossoming Rose will provide group transportation to and from Ben Gurion Airport **at the designated times**. If you arrive or depart outside of these times you will be responsible for your own transportation to and from Jerusalem and Biblical Tamar Park. This itinerary is subject to change.

Reserve your place immediately by paying the \$500 deposit on-line at www.blossomingrose.org.

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