

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG49-Is This Not The Carpenter

You are going to enjoy this podcast today. We are going to talk about Yeshua, Jesus, and His youth; how He was raised, and how that influenced His teaching and His becoming the Messiah. But first I want to say that we at Hargrave Ministries are planning to go forward this year with our Israel tour for 2021. So I would like to give you some information before I begin the teaching about Yeshua in His youth. The trip is planned for November 7 through November 22. This is one of the great things that, to me, we do at Hargrave ministries, to try to do an annual tour to Israel. On our Hargrave Ministries tours we want to connect you with Yeshua, with His people, and with the Land.

In Romans chapter 11, Paul presents an interesting picture of how Gentile Christians should relate to the Jewish people, the descendants of Abraham. It reveals that the Gentile Christians have been grafted in among the natural branches of Abraham's descendants. We know from this chapter in Romans that the natural branches are the Jewish people of today. Paul adds that through this experience, we have become partakers of the rich root of the olive tree. Perhaps the most significant meaning of being grafted in to Abraham, and to his descendants, is that God established very important covenants with him and his seed. Since we are grafted in, we now share in the fulfillment of these promises.

On our tours to Israel, we experience this rich root of the olive tree in several ways. We cultivate a new, fresh love and excitement for God's Word; we visit the sites where many Scriptures actually took place; and we go back in time by touring excavations of these sites with an experienced Jewish rabbi as our guide. We walk through excavations at the City of David, seeing the location of David's palace and the original Jebusite walls that still remain. We walk through thousands of years of history at the Western Wall, or Kotel, as it is called. We see where the Tabernacle stood at Shiloh for 369 years. Imagine that – longer than it stood in Jerusalem.

In the south, we visit Hebron and Be'er Sheva, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spent much of their lives. We stand on a hill and we overlook the site of the actual battle between David and Goliath, and feel the Scriptures really coming alive for us personally in a new way. On our trips, we also interact with the Jewish people in Israel with whom we have relationships. We have opportunities to pray and worship with these people in their synagogues. And at the Western Wall, the Kotel, we experience the Jewish Sabbath; we learn what it means from an observant Jewish rabbi. We experience the Land of the Bible, the Land that God promised to the seed of Abraham over 3,000 years ago. And we see Israel today. It is a Land of miracles. The reborn nation of Israel itself is a miracle. Many of the battles and the wars, since Israel's independence, can only be explained by God's Providence.

During your trip, you will be eyewitnesses to the fulfillment of prophecies. God is faithfully fulfilling His Word. Cities are being built, swamps have been drained, and the desert is blooming. As Isaiah chapter 2 verse 2 talks about, the nations will stream to Mount Zion; we see this happening. They are to learn the ways of the Lord, and we see the fulfillment of this as we witness that millions from all nations are coming to Israel each year. They come to learn the Word of the Lord, but also to learn about medical advances, breakthroughs in science, and agriculture. Israel is one of the world's leaders in new patents.

We pray that God continues to fulfill every Word He has ever spoken over Israel and the Jewish people. We pray that our trip will create many ongoing blessings to Israel by building bridges of understanding between Christians and Jews. We encourage every Christian to come to Israel and experience all that the Lord is doing in His people there. So I really want to encourage you, go to our website, hargraveministries.org, and click on *Tours* at the top of the page. Then click on *Israel Tour November 2021*, and go to request additional information. You will receive a letter with all of the details. Also, on that page, you can download and review the trip itinerary for 2021. See where we are going, see all the exciting things that you are going to experience if you are part of this tour. Space is limited, and it will likely fill up very quickly because the tour last year was canceled due to COVID-19, so many are anticipating their trip for this year.

Because we are talking about Israel, one thing I want to do in this podcast is talk about one of my favorite sites when we go to Israel, one of the places to me that is really significant and brings to life the life of Yeshua, of Jesus, and how His ministry was formed. I am going to read some paragraphs from a book that is called *Jesus and the Forgotten City*, by Richard Batey. This book is something that I found after this city came so alive. The name of the city is Zippori, in Hebrew, and it is generally known by the name Sepphoris. We are going to look at this city, and we are going to look through the lens of this book to see what has transpired there in the archeology, and what it is showing us about the life of Jesus, of Yeshua, that really is new information. One thing that is amazing to me is the fact that this book is not necessarily new, and the archeological work that took place in Sepphoris is not new; and yet really, it has not impacted that much the way, in my mind, it should impact people's understanding or thought process about the Lord and how He was raised.

I am going to start on page 14. It says, "Continuing archeological excavations here are yielding evidence of a sophisticated urban culture that places Jesus in a radically different environment that challenges traditional assumptions about His life and ministry. The popular picture of Jesus as a rustic growing up in the relative isolation of a small village of four hundred people in the remote hills of Galilee must be integrated with the newly revealed setting of a burgeoning Greco-Roman metropolis boasting upwards of thirty thousand inhabitants—Jews, Arabs, Greeks, and Romans. Sepphoris—powerful, prosperous, peace-loving—was linked with other Greco-Roman centers on the trade routes of the Greek-speaking East."

What we are seeing here, and what I want to present to you, is that some of the concepts and ideas that we have about Jesus, about Yeshua, as He was being raised are really challenged by what we see when we go to the Land and we experience what has transpired there through the archeology, through the research that has been done; and this is going to change your relationship with Him. When we come into our salvation experience, it begins a relationship with Jesus, with Yeshua; and it is to be a relationship. One of the things, if you come into a relationship with somebody, you get together with them and you say, "Gee, where were you born?" "Where did you go to school?" "What was your experience?" "Who are your parents?" With all of these things, you try to get to know someone; and I believe that is really important for us. Paul said, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." There is a drive that we should have to really know who Yeshua is, who He was in the days of His flesh. And many people say, "Well, it's not important what happened in the days of His flesh, because now He has ascended." To me, it is extremely important, because I still relate to Him as somebody who is in the flesh, living in this earth; and I need to see how His life is a pattern for me and is evidence of how I should live and how I can walk with the Father, as He walked with the Father in the days of His flesh.

When we look at this beautiful city of Sepphoris, we see evidence of a life completely different than what most of us have ever heard about in the way that He lived, in the way that He was raised, in the way He was educated, in what He did. And so I want to continue reading some of the parts of this book, again to emphasize the difference between the old picture of what has been taught to us in church and in religious studies, versus what really is there and what the evidence shows His life must have been like.

“The new evidence being unearthed at Sepphoris is changing previous interpretations of Jesus and calls for a new appraisal of the man and the movement that He founded. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and the ruler who beheaded John the Baptist, constructed Sepphoris, after the death of his father in 4 B.C. For three decades following Jesus' birth, Sepphoris served as the capital of Galilee and Peraea, a large territory east of the Jordan river. Josephus, the first century Jewish general and historian, whose headquarters was at Sepphoris....” Is that new news for you? We all know about Josephus and the history that he wrote about Israel; but his headquarters was here in this city of Sepphoris. Also realize what he is saying, that this construction was going on for three decades. This is the whole youth of Yeshua before His ministry. So many times we ask that question about the Scriptures not really conveying to us how He was raised, or the days of His youth; but here we have a picture, in this one city that we can visit, of the unfolding of what it was really like in the days of His youth.

Josephus goes on to describe Sepphoris “...as the ornament of the Galilee. The proximity of Sepphoris to the satellite village, Nazareth, made contact with this influential urban center convenient and natural.” So, again, we are seeing painted for us here a picture of how and where Yeshua was raised that is very different than what we probably have seen in the past. I want to jump forward to page 20 and talk about how his interest, the author's interest, grew in this book. It says, “My interest in Sepphoris first began in 1975, when a student at Rhodes college brought to my attention *Jesus: A New Biography*, published in 1928 by Shirley Jackson Case, professor of New Testament at the University of Chicago. Case suggested the possibility that Joseph and Jesus, both described as carpenters in the Gospels, may have worked on the extensive construction of Sepphoris less than four miles from Nazareth.” Think about that, four miles from Nazareth! It was about an hour's walk for them to go from Nazareth down to Sepphoris to work. “Case's idea stimulated Leroy Waterman to excavate at Sepphoris for two months during the summer of 1931. Waterman clearly demonstrated that Sepphoris had been a beautiful city during Jesus' life.” What a beautiful picture.

Continuing on page 21, “Research for my book, *Jesus and the Poor*,” which was published in 1972, “made me increasingly aware of the need to interpret the life and teachings of Jesus in the light of his contemporary Galilean culture. A Galilean Jew, Jesus addressed current issues of his day and responded to questions put to him by the people he encountered. A clearer grasp of the cultural environment in which Jesus lived and taught will result in a better understanding of his ministry and message. One may compare the Jesus told about in the Gospels with the cultural setting recovered from ancient texts and archeological investigations. Sepphoris holds a key to this new understanding of Galilee and the world of Jesus.” This is really an amazing change from what we have known.

Jumping to page 70 it says, “This traditional scene of Joseph and Jesus working as carpenters in Nazareth must now be reexamined, keeping in mind the archeological evidence unearthed at Sepphoris—evidence that places Jesus' early years in an entirely different cultural environment. In 3 B.C., when Jesus is about three years old, Herod Antipas chooses Sepphoris as the site for his new capital of both Galilee and Peraea. For more than three decades while Jesus grows up in nearby Nazareth” – remember, an hour's walk away – “a huge construction project continues, as Sepphoris rapidly becomes the largest and most influential city of the region. The city's inhabitants, soon numbering almost thirty thousand,

are sophisticated and cosmopolitan Jews, Arabs, Greeks, and Romans.” So Jesus, was not just raised in this isolation of Nazareth, this small city of about 400 people. Instead, He was raised surrounded by this cosmopolitan city. He was probably immersed in it. He probably went there constantly. If He was working there, He went there daily; and being there, He was exposed to these different peoples, cultures, languages. He saw so many things, it is just beyond our grasp; and yet when we look at the teachings of Yeshua, we see how comprehensive they were. We see how educated He was really in the issues of His day and the culture that surrounded Him.

On page 71 it says, “It is difficult to believe that, during the approximately thirty years that Yeshua grew up looking at Sepphoris, He never visited the capital or met the people living and working there. Even casual contacts with the capital would have given Jesus firsthand knowledge of Greco-Roman city planning, architectural design, and sophisticated engineering technology—as well as the cosmopolitan citizens. The walk from Nazareth to Sepphoris takes about an hour.” What a wonderful picture that we see. And again, one thing that is interesting to me is how little this information has impacted people's belief or understanding about Yeshua and how He was raised.

I want to, in addressing that point, look at one more part of the book, one more quote from pages 24-25. This is so interesting to me that they were approached by National Geographic to write an article about what they were uncovering, and how it impacted our understanding about the life of Jesus. He goes on to say, “The editors of *National Geographic* magazine realized the potentially explosive nature of the evidence being recovered at Sepphoris and its importance for a new understanding of Jesus and Christian origins. The magazine offered me a contract in August of 1986 to write an article on Sepphoris and the world of Jesus. For three years I dedicated myself to drafting this article, working with gifted text editors, photographers, artists, and others. Carolyn and I traveled extensively in Europe and the Middle East, tracing out sources of relevant information. The article was completed and scheduled to appear as the lead article in the Christmas issue of 1989. Just before the presses rolled, the package was judged to be too controversial for the estimated 50 million readers of the *National Geographic*.” Think about that. The editors looked at it and felt like what was being said here was too controversial and would shake the Christian world. “One editor confided in me that in more than thirty years at National Geographic there had not been a firestorm to sweep through the editorial board as that ignited by the article on Sepphoris and the world of Jesus. The ideas set forth in the article have been preserved in this book, although with fuller explanations and source citations.”

We see that there is a different picture that can be painted of many things as we look at the Land of Israel and we study the life of Yeshua in the context of how He was actually raised. There are several key points that the book brings out. It brings out how He was influenced by the theater that existed in Sepphoris. There was a large theater there; I think it seated somewhere in the neighborhood of 4,000 people. And we know that Jesus, in His teachings, referred to the idea of theater. He talked about the hypocrites; well, hypocrite means “an actor,” “a stage actor.” And so when He talks about people who are religious phonies, He uses this context of hypocrites. So again, this is just one way in which we see; and there are many, many that the book brings out of how the teachings of the Lord were impacted by the way He was raised.

Think about it – He saw so many things. He saw rich people. He saw poverty. He saw farmers. He saw politicians. Imagine, this was the city of Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas is the one who killed John the Baptist, and He was after Yeshua to kill Him. But He was in the city as a youth and He saw the politics that was there. He saw the treatment of people. He saw everything from the sick and the educated to prostitutes. He was around and surrounded by many languages. We know that Yeshua probably spoke

Greek, that was the language of the area. We know that He spoke Hebrew. He probably spoke Aramaic, but more so Hebrew would have been His native tongue. But He also would have known to some degree Latin, because this was a Greco-Roman city and business was done, usually contracts made, things like that, in the language of Latin. So He himself was exposed to a cosmopolitan area beyond anything I think we have recognized or known.

One of the things about Sepphoris that gets to me in my relationship with Him is the fact that there was an ongoing Jewish community that existed in Sepphoris, and this was well known. I always picture, even before I found this book, I picture Yeshua going to work on Friday, and descending from Nazareth down to the city and working all day long; and probably they would have worked, especially in the summertime, too late to walk back to Nazareth for Shabbat. But there was this ongoing, thriving Jewish community as part of Sepphoris; and in it there were well-known scholars and priests that had connection to Jerusalem. I can see Him spending Shabbat in the homes of some of these Jewish people there in Sepphoris. We know that He was educated in the Scriptures. He knew the Scriptures; you listen to His teaching and He is constantly quoting from the Scriptures. He knew the Shema. He knew what was the greatest commandment of all, that we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our might, and we love our neighbor as ourself. They constantly tried to challenge Him on the Word of God, on the Law, and He knew the Word. Where did He learn that? I don't think He just learned it at home. I think He learned it being surrounded by this thriving Jewish community. I think He probably spent Sabbaths there. I think He probably visited with some of these.

We know the story that when His parents went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast, He stayed behind; and they found Him later, and He was talking to the scholars on the stairs of the Temple. Well, He may have known those people, because some of them may have been from Sepphoris itself. We know how the priesthood worked. We see in Luke, the first chapter, starting at verses 5-8, how Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was up serving in the Temple. He was a priest. It says, "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years. Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order...."

This is revealing things to us of how the priesthood worked. Remember that the priests were not given cities under Joshua; they were spread through the Land. And that was so necessary, because remember that Jerusalem was a long ways off. People who lived away from Jerusalem, how were they taught? How did they know what was going on in Jerusalem? How were they kept in connection? This was one of the problems with the idolatry that came about in Israel, the fact that they were so isolated from the Temple and they couldn't sacrifice, they couldn't make offerings, they couldn't do all kinds of things unless they went up to Jerusalem. Well, that was difficult for them to do. But to stay connected with Jerusalem and with the Temple, God spread the priesthood all through the Land of Israel. They were teachers, they lived in the communities throughout all of Israel. And this included the Galilee, it included Sepphoris; there were priests there.

And so we see what is being said here in verse 8, "Now it happened that while Zacharias was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division...." See, each division of the priesthood would go up to Jerusalem for their time of service in the Temple, then they would return home. They didn't all live in Jerusalem. This was according, verse 9, "according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense." The whole

multitude was outside and praying, and we know that the angel met him and talked to him about the birth of John the Baptist. But what we see here is the picture of the priesthood that is being drawn. And it's that picture of the priesthood and the reality that in the cities, throughout Israel, there were priests that lived there. The scholars would live there.

We know that in later years, Sepphoris was such a center that this was where the Mishnah came from. And so it was very much a stronghold of the priests and the scholars. It's not really covered well in this book, but there is one passage about it. On page 192, it says, "Members of the high priestly families resided at Sepphoris; they tended to gravitate to centers of economic and political power and influence. The archives at Sepphoris preserved registers of priestly genealogies. A revealing episode involving priests at Sepphoris occurred during the last years of Herod the Great's reign, during the time that Matthias served as high priest. On the night before the Day of Atonement, Mathias dreamed that he had sexual intercourse with a woman. When he awoke, he realized that he was defiled and disqualified from officiating at the next day at the temple. His cousin, Jose ben Illem, a priest from Sepphoris, substituted as high priest for the sacred atonement ceremonies. Priests from Sepphoris had close family ties with the Jerusalem priestly establishment and jealously guarded and nurtured these influential connections. From the rabbinic sources "it is apparent that in the period before 70 C.E. Sepphoris was one of the few priestly towns in Galilee."

So we see that there was this strong Jewish enclave in Sepphoris. We see that it was filled with priests, that there were scholars there. And I believe that this is part of where Yeshua received His education and His knowledge about Torah, about Judaism, about the Law, from those who were there. Again, it may be some of those who He was sitting on the Temple steps talking to after His parents forgot to take Him back from their trip for the Feast. But whatever it was, we know that this city was impacting the life of Yeshua. We know that He was trained here. We know that He experienced many things. He experienced culture, the Greek culture, the Roman culture. He was educated in the ways of construction. Jesus was a carpenter, it says that; but the carpentry experience or understanding is way different than what we have been taught. He was probably very experienced in the ways of construction that came out of Rome, and was experienced in the technologies and the architecture of things beyond our ability to understand.

This formed the life of Yeshua. These thirty years that He was being raised, He was being raised around this city. He may have lived in Nazareth, but I think this was a great deal of the influence of His life. It may not be able to be absolutely proven; it certainly isn't something that we can read in the Scriptures. But we also know that God was raising up the Messiah. He was bringing Him to the place that He could function as God's Son in the earth to bring our salvation. And He was not just some uneducated individual that lived in a small town of 400 people. He was one who experienced all there was to experience of the day that He lived in; and therefore, He was able to address it in many ways through His teaching.

I hope this gives you an idea of something different than the way we have viewed how Yeshua was raised, what He was exposed to, what He was influenced by; and all of these things, as we read the Gospels, come alive in His teaching. I bless this to you today. I want to encourage you from this to see what you will experience as you go to the Land of Israel. I encourage everyone, not just with our tours – somehow find a way to go to Israel. Visit the Land. It will change your life, and it will change your relationship with Messiah as your Savior. It will change your relationship with the Father. It will change your relationship to the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. And as you go, go with the drive to know Him, to know Yeshua, the Messiah.