

Tel Dan



Description

Tel Dan Reserve is an amazing park with streams, tall trees, beautiful flowers, and wildlife. Of the three sources of the Jordan River, the Dan River is the largest and most important. Its springs provide over 311 million cubic yards of water per year to the Jordan River. Every second, the Dan Spring provides over 3 cubic feet of water.

The natural drainage basin of the Dan River is very small, which means that the springs are the source of all of the water that flows here. This is the reason for the water's low, stable temperature. The springs are fed by the snow and rain that fall on Mt. Hermon. The water seeps into the mountain, dividing into hundreds of springs by the time it reaches the foot of the mountain.

The flora in the park include the Syrian ash, Jerusalem thorn, Atlantic pistachio, lotus jujube, Laurus, alaternus, and Christ's thorn. The river is home to several species of fish including the Damascus barbell, the Levantine sucker, and the Jordan loach. There are also birds which can be difficult to see through the thick woods. These birds include the Cetti's warbler, White wagtails, and jays. Among the animals found in the park are the Cairo spiny mouse, fire salamander, broadtoothed mouse, and the Tristram's jird, a rodent that lives in burrows and eats foliage.

Ancient Dan

In 1966 a team of archaeologists began to excavate Tel Dan. They found sections of city walls and gates, as well as a ritual site that dates to Biblical times.

The earliest findings were from the 5th millennium B.C. when apparently there was a settlement here. A city was first built at Dan during the early Canaanite period. It was populated between 2700 and 2400 B.C. In the 18th century B.C., during the Middle Canaanite period a earthen wall surrounded the city and protected it for centuries. The Tel is identified with the city of Laish which was captured by the tribe of Dan. The tribe of Dan had a hard time dealing with the Philistines, and therefore decided to head north.

One of the most amazing finds at the site was a piece of a fossilized tablet from the 9th century B.C. Carved onto it is an inscription of Hazael, King of Damascus, boasting of his victory over the king of Israel and the king of the House of David. This is the first time that the words “house of David” were discovered outside of the Bible.

Scripture

Bible References in Context

- Cornelius, the first Gentile Convert, lived here (Acts 10:1-5)
- Philip the evangelist made his home here (Acts 8:40)
- Herod Agrippa I was smitten by an angel of the Lord here (Acts 12:21-23)
- The apostle Paul visited Caesarea on many occasions (Acts 9:30;23:23-35)

Genesis 14:13-16

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

Deuteronomy 34:1

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan,

Joshua 19:47

And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.

Judges 18:1-2; 27-29

In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of

Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

Judges 18:27-29

And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.

I Kings 12:26-33

And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

I Kings 15:20

So Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelbeth-maachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali.

II Kings 15:29

In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

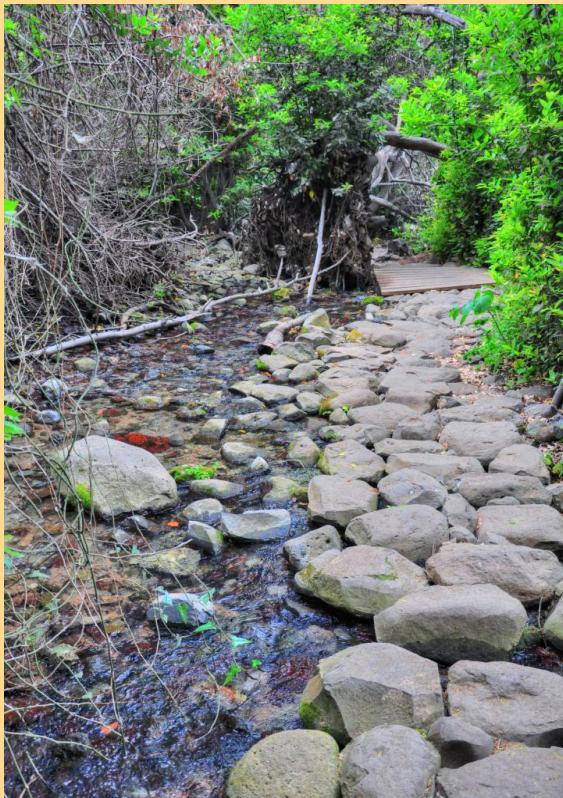
Points of Interest



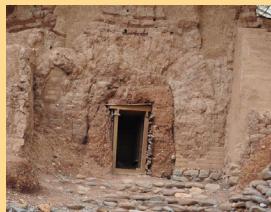
Nature Reserve

The Dan river, originating from the springs at Tell Dan, is the largest of the three sources of the Jordan river. The other two are the Hermon (Banias) and the Snir streams. The waters originate from two springs (Dan and Leshem) which are located on the north-western part of the site.

The Tell Dan nature reserve, covering a total area of 120 acres, has four nature trails that cross or follow the brooks and water channels amid the dense plantation growing in this wonderland.



Points of Interest



Canaanite City

The abundant source of waters, its strategic location on major ancient crossroads, and the fertile valley around it, were the reasons why a mighty Canaanite city was established here almost 5000 years ago. The Canaanite's city, known in the Bible as Laish (or Leshem), was a huge city (50 acres). It was heavily fortified by high glacis walls (reaching 10-15 meters), surrounding the whole city from all directions, and is the biggest Tell (ancient mound) in the north part of the Hula (Heleh) valley.

The 18th C BC Canaanite city had an impressive brick gate on its south-east side, 7m high, which was unearthed by the archaeologists.

A stepped path approaches the gate from the east. The gate is built of three arches which were constructed from sun-backed bricks.

The outer arch (2.4m wide) is visible above and to the sides of the entrance in the photo below. The arch-shaped lintel is one of the earliest complete standing arches found in the world, and the archway is the earliest intact structure in the world.

This was the gate where Abraham passed during his pursuit against the North Kings (Genesis 14:14): "And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan".

Points of Interest



Israelite City

The Bible describes the conquest of Laish (or Leshem) by the tribe of Dan. The Israelites rebuilt the city on top of the Canaanite city, and added new basalt walls (seen below) along the earlier walls.

The large Israelite gate, dated to the Kingdom of Ahab (9th C BC), was reconstructed by the archaeologists. A large paved open space (400m²) is located in front of the gate. The main gate, located on the south side of the city, was composed of three pairs of beams surrounding a paved road that enters the city. This design created four guard rooms which is typical of Iron age gates (for example, BethSaida/Zer).



Fragments of a basalt stone with Aramaic inscription, dated to the 9th C BC, was found in the wall. This unique stele includes to a reference to the "House of David", and parallels to the Biblical description (2 Kings 9) of the murders of Kings Joram and Ahaziah.

The **Israelite gate** is based on an outer gate, seen above, and an inner gate, which is located on the left of the wall in the center. The processional road winds its way to the left, passing through the inner gate, moving between two pairs of chambers on both sides, then continues into the city.

Points of Interest- Israelite City continued...



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The **paved road** passes the gate along the south wall. Then, after 70m, it then turns sharply up the hillside (north) as a wide (10m) road, winds around right and left, then enters the city through a secondary gate (seen below from the north side).



Inside the city are traces of ruins, in which the archaeologists excavated residential houses of the city dated to the Bronze (Canaanite) and Iron (Israelite) ages.

Points of Interest



High Place

On the north side of the mound, above the spring and overlooking the valley with beautiful views of Mt Hermon, is the area (45m x 60m) of the High Place . Here the excavation team unearthed and reconstructed the remains of a unique Israelite ritual place. It was in use since the times of King Jeroboam son of Nebat (930 BC), rebuilt by Jeroboam son of Joash (8th C BC), and reused during the Hellenistic period (3rd C BC) until the end of the Roman period.

The following photo shows a reconstruction of the altar on the left (the metal frame), the houses of the priests (behind the altar), and a large raised platform (“Bemah”, 18.2M x 18.7m) to the right of the great oak tree, with a wide (8m) staircase leading up from the altar.

The Bible described the acts of Jeroboam son of Nebat, erecting a golden calf and building an altar in Dan. The purpose of the ritual place was to serve as an alternative worship site for Jerusalem, after dividing the Kingdom. As per 1 Kings 12 28-31: “Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi”.