

# Devotions with Your Feet

*It's not just a tour, it's a journey with eternal benefits.*

Top of the Arbel Pass, looking over into Upper Galilee

A Quarterly Newsletter

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The slogan “There is always something new to see in Israel!” could easily serve as an advertising campaign for the State of Israel’s Department of Tourism! We just returned from another trip to Israel and had the opportunity to visit, for the first time, the recently discovered synagogue at Magdala. This incredible site is a must see for any future tour to Israel! This issue of “Devotions with Your Feet” is dedicated to this amazing site.

Magdala was a thriving city with a prosperous fishing industry at the time of Jesus. The city also served as the main administrative center of eastern Lower Galilee until Herod Antipas built his capital, Tiberius, in AD 20. In AD 66, Magdala was the site of a naval battle between the Romans and the local inhabitants. Eventually, the city was captured by the Romans and all of the remaining inhabitants were executed in the stadium in Tiberius.

• ***The First-Century Synagogue at Magdala.***  
This recently discovered synagogue at Magdala is only one of four synagogues in all of Israel that has been positively identified as a first-century

synagogue. In addition, of these four synagogues, this is the only structure that was primarily built as a synagogue!

- ***Presence of mikvaots—baths for Jewish cleansing/ purification.*** Four Jewish ritual baths were found at this site, indicating the strong presence of Jews living in this city. It also indicates the importance of purification laws among the Jews living in the Galilean region at the time of Jesus.

Magdala serves as an identification marker for one of the Marys in the Gospels—Mary Magdalene (cf. Matthew 27:56). This fishing village and its surrounding region was also where Jesus traveled after feeding the four thousand (cf. Matthew 15:39).



In our recent visit, these well-preserved mikvaots even contained water!



First-century Synagogue at Magdala

Magdala is located three miles north of Tiberius and approximately six miles from Capernaum.





This prayer altar is undoubtedly one of the most exciting finds at Magdala! As noted by archaeologists, Dina Avshalom-Gomi and Arfan Najar: "The seven branched menorah chiseled on the stone in the synagogue is the earliest menorah from the Second Temple period to be discovered outside of Jerusalem; it is also the earliest menorah ever discovered in a religious structure."

• **Prayer Stone/Altar**—One of the most amazing finds at Magdala was this four-footed rectangular stone. A majority of archaeologists believe that this piece served as a podium in which to place a scroll for the purpose of reading. The piece is carved on five sides, with the menorah carved on the side closest to the reader. Archaeologists believe that these carvings represent the Second Temple. Undoubtedly, the stone served as central and significant role within the life of the synagogue. If Jesus ministered at this synagogue in Magdala—a most likely scenario—then this stone would have served as his pulpit!



One of the mosaics found in the synagogue at Magdala.



The first-century historian and commander-in-chief of the rebels' army in Galilee, Josephus, will make Magdala his headquarters and fortify it during the first Jewish revolt.



These recent findings in Magdala only strengthen our understanding and appreciation of the historicity of the Scriptures. This excavation also enhances our understanding of the first-century world—a world in which our Savior entered. However, we rejoice this Easter season that this world does not contain His body. Our Savior is risen. He is risen, indeed!

Blessings to you,  
~ Rich and David

*For additional information concerning our upcoming tours, you may visit our website or contact us at:*



Recent excavations at Magdala. For more information on this ongoing excavation, visit <http://www.magdalacenterarchaeology.com/>



*Ancient Tours, LLC*

12896 Reedy Court  
Carmel, IN 46032  
Ph: 937-545-1856  
Email:

ancienttours@gmail.com  
Website: [www.ancienttours.org](http://www.ancienttours.org)