

## Searching for Bethsaida

In his lecture on searching for Bethsaida on January 26th at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, Dr. Notley stated that Bethsaida disappeared from the pages of history at the end of the 3rd century. It was the city of Andrew, Peter, and Phillip. For centuries, different sites have been declared to be Bethsaida. According to the Biblical Archaeological review article cited from Spring 2020, Rami Aarav made a case for Et-Tell as the site of Bethsaida. About twenty-five years ago, the Government Naming Committee for the State of Israel renamed a large mound on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, which had been known by the name et-Tell, as Bethsaida. According to the article, the site of Tabgha is also considered the Bethsaida of the Apostles. This site turned out to be a Byzantine-era site.

Numerous Historical figures were presented for El A' raj to be the site. Josephus Flavius only mentioned Bethsaida once in his writings and identified it next to the lake of Gennesar. While traveling through Israel, Eusebius Onomasticon had a map that was a travel guide with Bethsaida. In 530 CE, Theodosius mentioned Bethsaida after two hundred years. In 725 CE, Willibald, Bishop of Eistatt, Bavaria, traveled in the region and stated From Tiberias, they went around the sea. By the village of Magdala, he spoke of a church built where Peter and Andrew lived. An anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza, Italy, identified the church in Capernaum, where St. Peter lived. This is the church that count Joseph of Tiberias had built. One of the fascinating facts of the lecture was that Roman Mosaic was found at Bet/ Habek, El A 'raj. In the archaeological excavation by Mordechai Aviam and Dr. Notley, they discovered the remains of a

settlement, which date from the middle of the first century C.E. They identify it with the city of Bethsaida- Julias. I hope that the search for the real Bethsaida will be settled soon.

Dr. Mordechai Aviam, in his presentation, cited numerous archaeological finds for the search of Bethsaida. A coin of Phillip, the founder, suggested being minted for the founding of Julias in 30-31C.E. Bethsaida situated at the lake Gennesaret, crusader period coin. The discovery produced pottery and coins from the early Muslim period. Mosaic and pottery show the Roman period, and some marble slabs show Roman-style bathhouses. A second-century oil lamp and jars were found, away from where the church site is identified to the North of the Church site, coins, pottery, shikin jars, and cooking ware all pointing to the Roman period. Some of the artifacts represent Jewish life. A Denarius of Nero dated 63 C.E. and numerous lead fishing weights were found. Aviam declared Et-Tell is not the ancient site of Bethsaida.